

lonely planet
INDIA

JULY 2020

Also in this
Issue

#LPMIMadeWithYou:
Into the Local
Sustainable
Stays in India
and across
the World

PLAN
NOW,
TRAVEL
LATER

TRAVEL TO SAVE THE



**50+ SIMPLE WAYS
YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**GET OUTDOORS IN INDIA
GO CAR-FREE ON THE GREENWAYS OF SPAIN**



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 WEST

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

Mumbai

GENERAL MANAGER

Neelam Menon neelam.menon@wwm.co.in

Jiten Shivlani jiten.shivlani@wwm.co.in

Shveta Somvanshi shveta.somvanshi@wwm.co.in

Pune

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

SOUTH

VICE PRESIDENT SOUTH AND BUSINESS HEAD - FEMINA TAMIL

Pravin Menon pravin.menon@wwm.co.in

EAST

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

GOT FEEDBACK?
CLICK ON THE
EMAIL ADDRESS
BELOW



NEED TO GET IN TOUCH?

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Manager, Marketing
Asha Kulkarni
asha.kulkarni@wwm.co.in

CAREERS

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

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
initiatives, which invite you to be part of our digital issue.

All this and much more coming up.

Follow us on:

📍 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



Conscious travel is not just an enriching experience for the traveller, but also beneficial to the planet and our various communities

Listen to the planet breathing

While mankind has been in lockdown, the rest of the world has emerged. And, every time we've heard of dolphins in the canals of Venice, or, closer home, off the *ghats* in Kolkata, mountain goats descending into Welsh towns, wild deer wandering through Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, we've acknowledged that our absence has been a blessing to nature. As conscious travellers, we know there are lessons to be learnt, and we know that, the next time we journey out, it will be to **travel to save the world**. The collective wisdom of the 20 passionate advocates of responsible travel we've collaborated with for our main story is distilled into 50+ tips that will help us all make better choices to benefit the planet. Sure, there are some overlaps in their thought starters, but, together, their experience and advice makes sustainable travel seem accessible and possible.

Thus inspired, we know you'll be happy with our roster of over **35 sustainable properties** to take a break at – across India and the globe. And, because so much of conscious travel is about the privilege of living like the people in the destinations we travel to, we're thrilled to showcase your immersive experiences in our **#LPMIMadeWithYou** feature – pure inspiration to get under the skin of a new place when we travel again. When we do, we will, of course, seek nature; start planning with our 10 great ideas to be **outdoors in India**; and, more long term, dream of **cycling the greenways of Spain**.

Because, there is no doubt about this: as the planet breathes better, we do, too.
For now, let us continue to be inspired and to plan, and may our planning be for good.



In this issue...

EXPLORE

Your world from the comfort of home

- 08 Weekend planners: As lockdowns across the country start easing up, plan yourself a socially-distant adventure. Explore India's wide open spaces in **Yumthang Valley, Sikkim**, and **Kozhikode, Kerala**, among others
- 14 More reasons to plan for travel: Many countries across the world, from **Dubai** and **Sri Lanka** to **Puerto Rico** and **Cuba**, are starting to open up, with restrictions in place, of course

FEATURES

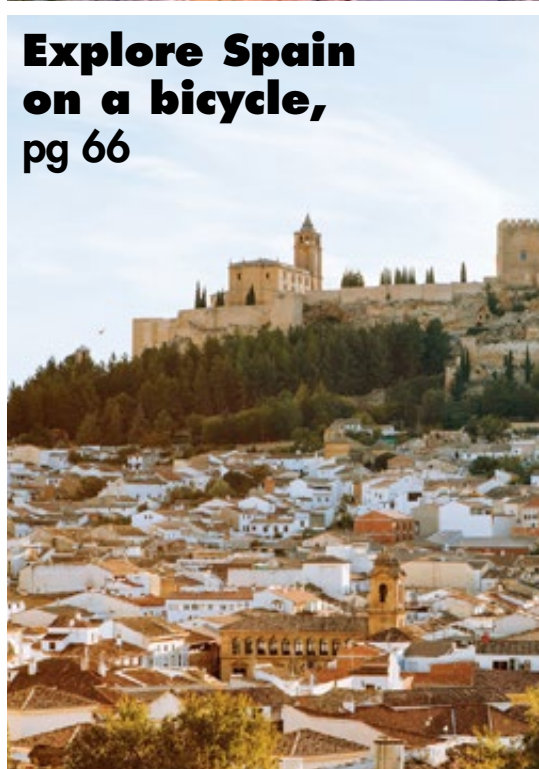
Travel to save the world

- 18 We need sustainable travel now more than ever so that the planet and people can thrive. We consult with **20 responsible travel advocates** to bring you a guide on how to ensure the only impact you have when travelling is positive
- 39 Join our readers as they recount their favourite tales of amazing local experiences in our special **#LPMIMadeWithYou** feature
- 44 These are properties that draw from local resources or blend in with the natural world – have a peek at some of the **most environment-friendly places to stay at** across the world
- 56 India isn't too far behind when it comes to sustainability. Explore responsible properties in **Palampur, Himachal Pradesh** and **Chikmagalur, Karnataka**, among others
- 66 Discover the **greenways** of **Spain** – on a bicycle. Follow an epic route down former railway lines repurposed for grand, eco-friendly journeys

**#LPMIMadeWithYou:
local experiences from
our readers, pg 39**



**Explore Spain
on a bicycle,
pg 66**



**Sustainable stays
across the world,
pg 44**





LONELY PLANET TV

**Lonely Planet launches first-ever travel-only TV platform and
a range of tools for temporarily-grounded travelers!**

Homebound travel lovers can delight in the world with the launch of Lonely Planet TV, which will transport sofa-surfers to remarkable destinations via iconic programming, stunning cinematography and unique insights with over 350 episodes of award-winning travel shows.

(tv.lonelyplanet.com)

EXPERIENCE

THE BEST OF TRAVEL AT
YOUR FINGERTIPS

SUBSCRIBE TO THE DIGITAL ISSUE



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



JioMags
There's always more to read



AVAILABLE ON

explore

THE BEST OF THE MONTH'S TIPS & TRIPS

PLAN NOW... TRAVEL WHEN IT'S TIME! INSPIRATION HAS NO EXPIRY DATE!

Walking, cycling or trekking, choose your adventure. There's ample room for everyone in the great outdoors. Start planning your socially-distant vacations with our ideas from across India

PHOTOGRAPH: JYOTHY KARAT

The Great Indian Outdoors

Escape to our country's wide, open spaces, right from the confines of your four walls

Words SAMARPAN BHOWMIK @sum.err.pun

The past few months of staying indoors under lockdown have got to have gotten to even the most dedicated of homebodies. By now, most of us are itching to get outside and explore beyond our four walls. We must adapt our lives and lifestyles to the new normal. While governments across the world figure out best practices and ease up on restrictions, we can find hope in the fact that there's plenty to explore still, away from urban hubs and crowds, and more in the soothing lap of nature in India.

Across the length and breadth of our country, there are many places to get out amid nature and reconnect with the planet and the other species that inhabit it. Travelling locally has many advantages. Not only does it minimise risks by eliminating international air travel but also makes your holiday much more carbon-conscious. Not to mention the benefits to the local economies.

The best part? Out in the great outdoors, there's plenty of space for everyone, with safe distance in place. Take a look at our list of destinations that will transport you far from the madding crowd and into adventures with a natural bent.



Udaipur, Rajasthan

It might be famous for its lakes, palaces and herds of tourists, but Udaipur takes on a very different face if you choose to explore beyond the well-oiled and conventional tourism machinery. Ditch the tour van and hire a bicycle instead. Leave behind the photogenic monuments and head out into the countryside. Lovely hills, picturesque lakes, panoramic landscapes and friendly locals will make it a memorable experience. While a trip by yourself is fairly doable given how welcoming the people in these parts are, taking a local guide along will only make your experience all the more authentic and give you an unparalleled insight into regional customs, traditions, culture and lives.

Yumthang Valley, Sikkim

Sikkim, the tiny mountain state tucked away in the Himalayas, is still one of those places where commercialisation hasn't managed to find a firm foothold. Especially if you venture towards the more remote areas of the state, you could go weeks without having to jostle for space with other visitors. Closed through the winter months from December to March, the most colourful season to visit Yumthang Valley, also known as the Valley of Flowers, is from March to June, when the entire valley floor is covered in blooms. If you want to get an insight into local culture, traditions and people though, it's a better idea to go there in February, during the Losar Festival. Locals celebrate the Tibetan New Year in traditional attire, and festivities continue for a week or two. If you're just looking to relax, there's also a hot spring in the valley to soak up some therapeutic minerals in. The best part is there aren't any places to stay in Yumthang Valley, the closest town being Lachung, where you will find accommodation. This is definitely one of the more relaxed trips you will have in the lap of nature.



PHOTOGRAPHS: PIRAN ELAVIA (SIKKIM), VIBHAV MEHTA (INDRAHAR PASS), VIADIMIR SKLYAROV (UDAIPUR), KREATINEART (TAMIL NADU), REALITYIMAGES (KARNATAKA) / 123RF



Indrahar Pass, Himachal Pradesh

The Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas presents as breathtaking views as it does provide engaging trekking trails to the many visitors to these parts. Indrahar Pass, which forms the border between the Kangra and Chamba districts of the state, is a rather sought-after trek destination, especially if you want to get away from people and into the lap of nature. The trek starts from Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, where there's plenty to do in town. From an elevation of roughly 2,900m, you can undertake a moderately difficult trek up to nearly 4,500m. The trek begins from right above the village of Dharamkot, close to Dharamsala, and, on the way, you will have amazing views of the Kangra Valley, pass little Himalayan settlements and wander past lush meadows dotted with boulders and coniferous trees. To the north, the glorious Pir Panjal range is visible on clear days. There will also be a chance to spot local wildlife such as the ibex. Unless you're looking for a serious challenge and have a lot of time at hand, avoid the trek during the monsoon months as rains in the mountains can delay schedules and even close some routes.



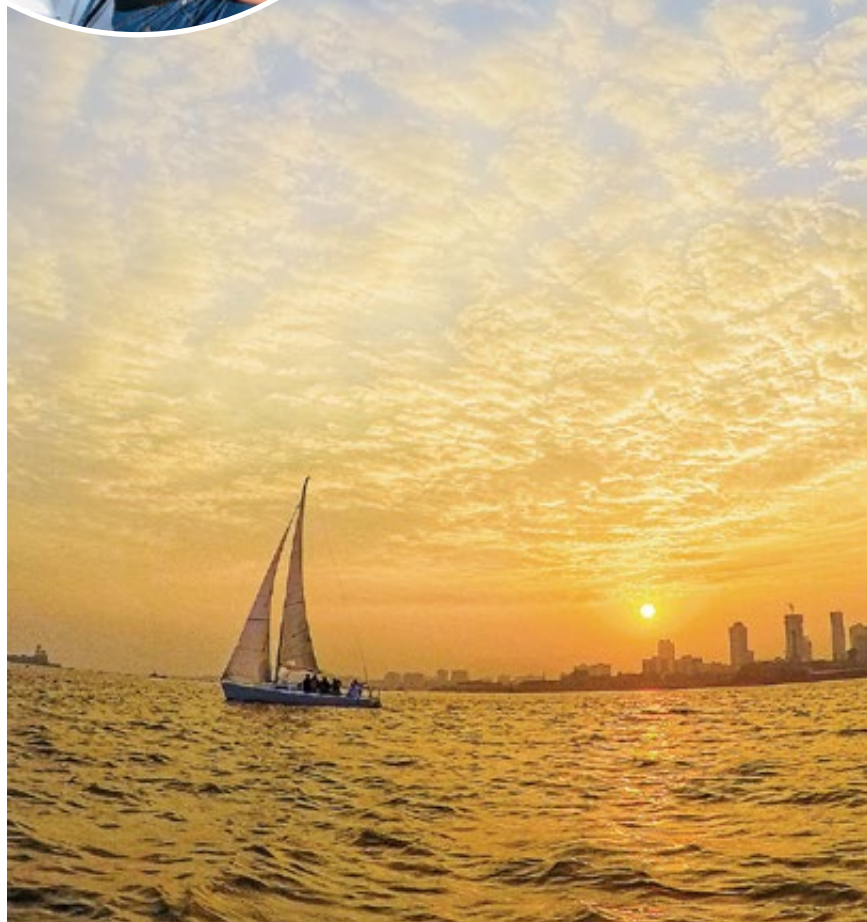
Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu

From towering mountains to rolling hills. Kodaikanal is located in the Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu. While it isn't exactly removed from civilisation owing to its status as a summer getaway for over the last two centuries, the proliferation of visitors has resulted in many stay options. And, if you manage to avoid peak holiday season, you'll be rewarded with more affordable rates for everything. The reason Kodaikanal finds place on this list is for the great walking and hiking trails all around town. Surrounded by dense forests and with a lake at its centre, it is ideal to wander about in, through groves of fruit-bearing trees, stretches of flowering shrubs or over thick carpets of green grass stretching across hilly slopes. Sure, you can try the usual touristy patterns and visit the popular spots such as waterfalls and viewpoints, but we'd suggest you take off on your own. One activity that is quite popular and a must-try is cycling around Kodai Lake. There's also plenty to shop for, such as spices, homemade chocolates, locally-produced cheeses, and herbal oils, among many other things. While not strictly an off-the-beaten-path destination, Kodaikanal has plenty of outdoorsy options and open spaces.



Dandeli, Karnataka

Yet another destination nestled in the Western Ghats, Dandeli in Karnataka is relatively less known among travellers. It's particularly famous for the wide variety of birds that live and visit here, especially four species of hornbill. Bird-watching tours are popular, and guides are fairly easy to find; in some cases, the hotel you're staying at will have staff in-house to help. There's also the Kali Tiger Reserve here, and morning and evening safaris can be booked in advance. Aside from Bengal tigers, panthers are said to have been spotted here, though, you should know that a sighting is rare. For fans of adrenaline, the Kali River, which cuts through town, is riven with rapids, and white-water rafting is a popular activity here, though avoid the monsoon season if you want to get on the water. Many of the hotels in the area, especially those located on the banks of the river, provide the option of rides in a coracle, a South Asian, circular boat. Keep an eye out for the crocodiles that inhabit the waters in these parts but are known to avoid humans rather proactively. Dandeli offers a great blend of several outdoor options – from rafting and coracle riding to safaris in the forest and bird watching in timber yards. →



Mumbai, Maharashtra

Not the most obvious name on a list of outdoorsy places, Mumbai is a great destination if you enjoy sailing. The Gateway of India, which is a popular draw for visitors to the city, is among the usual starting points for sailing activities here. Step away from the busy streets of South Mumbai and onto a boat. If you have the skills required to navigate said vessel by yourself on the high seas, you could simply hire one, or, if you prefer a more passive role in the sailing business, book a spot with one of the many operators here. There are plenty of great sights right as you take off from the jetty, with the Taj Mahal Palace and the Gateway making for great backdrops. If you venture a little distance away from shore on a quiet day, and if you're lucky, you might even spot a dolphin or two.

Kheer Ganga, Himachal Pradesh

Parvati Valley in Himachal Pradesh is among one of the most popular places for visitors to the state. While there's an abundance of tourists in Kasol, the town that serves as the base for most looking to explore the region, once you start moving further upwards, the crowds thin out. Once you're past Manikaran, which is a big draw for the faithful, it gets a lot quieter. Kheer Ganga is a little village near the summit of a mountain and the hike up to it takes a few hours from the closest motorable road. The trail is beautiful, with views of little villages, shy locals herding cattle and sheep, and over the Parvati River. There's a spring at the top, with a few makeshift restaurants and amazing views of the surrounding mountainscapes. It's not a very difficult trek, however, you'd do well to pack light and engage a local guide. There are some options to stay overnight, but be prepared to rough it out.



Kozhikode, Kerala

From the snake boat races to the recently-introduced kayak festival, fans of watersports will have heard of the different water-related activities in God's Own Country. And, while we'll leave snake boat racing to the professionals, kayaking is a leisure activity that is picking up in India. The Chaliyar River, which is the longest in Kerala, is ideal for beginners. It's also perfect for budding enthusiasts with a love for spending hours on the water, watching life as it goes by on the banks of the river. Time your trip for the cooler months of the year, as the sun can get harsh in the Kerala summers. Kayaking down the river, especially on multi-day itineraries, provides a unique perspective, along with a wholly authentic immersion into the lives of local communities. It's an experience that few come away unchanged from and most cherish for years.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHAN (MUMBAI), MIHITANDER (KERALA), ASARELIASON (PARVATI VALLEY) / 123RF

CASAMIA
PRESENTS

D/code
A Times Group Initiative

DESIGN
BIENNALE

INDIA'S
FIRST

JAIPUR
EDITION

CURATED BY

SHANTANU GARG

CURATED
VIRTUAL
ART

AND

DESIGN
FESTIVAL

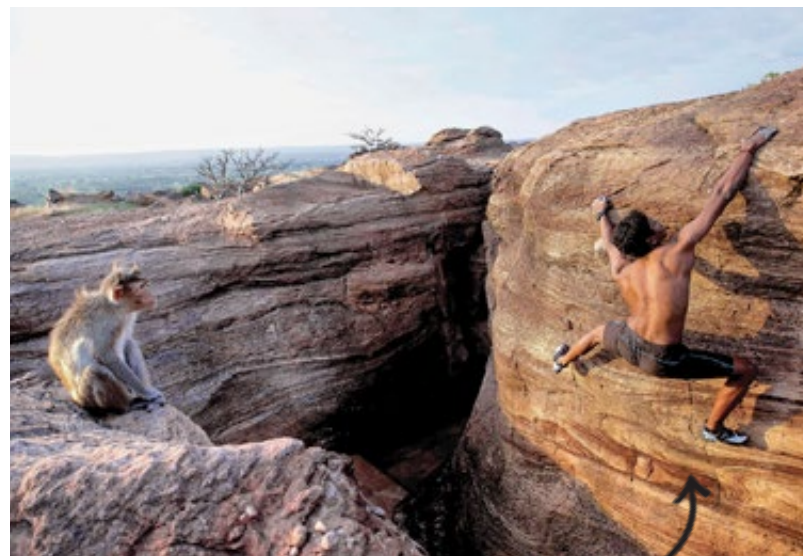
TO
PARTICIPATE,
COLLABORATE
AND
KNOW MORE...

DM US OR WRITE TO US AT
dcode@wwm.co.in



Kovalam, Kerala

Surfing is not a new phenomenon in India any longer, with quite a few places on our long coastline now not just hosting surfers and starting up surfing schools but even holding surfing competitions. Kovalam in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, was among the first places in India to catch on to the trend, owing to the beach's popularity with international visitors. The surfing schools here have today evolved to not just benefit visitors interested in surfing but also improve the lives of the local community. The entire stretch of Kovalam Beach is split into three or four (depending on who you ask) beaches and most of the upscale resorts are on Samudra Beach. Sign up with one of the surfing schools for crash courses or stay on for longer ones. There are also diving schools here, for those who want move on from riding the waves to plunging into the depths beneath them. When worn out by all the exertion, simply curl up with a cool drink at any of the beach-front properties. You can literally spend days outdoors in Kovalam.



Hampi, Karnataka

While this popular getaway is usually known for its ancient architecture and rich historic and heritage value, those looking for an active vacation can consider Hampi too. There are numerous boulders and rock formations here that are ideal for climbers. Skill level is not too much of a concern in Hampi as there are different climbing areas for all kinds of climbers. There is one thing to bear in mind though: the rocks and boulders here are made of granite, and this can be harsh on fingers, hands and the other body parts you might end up using to climb. On the plus side, granite is strong and holds up well under pressure, making it suitable and safe for repeated climbs on the same stretches of rock. Tie some history-seeking in with your outdoor adventures, and Hampi will make for a truly engaging getaway. 📍



TALES BEHIND LENSES WITH STUDIO GAABA



The power of creativity is one not too many forces can match up to. Photographers have the ability to stop the hands of a moving clock. They have the ability to rewind time, the ability to take you to your wildest dreams in just an instant. But the most important aspect is that they allow you to see beauty in the smallest particles, in things that are usually ignored or overlooked.

Elegance in minimalism. Studio Gaaba strives to showcase subtle visuals with a loud impact. Capturing fleeting moments and making them last forever, this is what the budding creators of Studio Gaaba work towards. Travel, luxury, and all things elegant and fine, these are the tools they use to create their awe-worthy visuals.

With exceptional talent, an eye for aesthetics, vigor and drive like no other, this production and content communication agency is a ruckus filled with innovativeness and unconventional creation.

for more information, visit
www.gaaba.net | [/studiogaaba](https://www.instagram.com/studiogaaba)

More reasons to plan for travel

Lockdowns across the world and even in our country are being eased up. While we might still be some time away from beating the virus, what we are beginning to do is learn how to live with COVID-19. Start planning your future trips in a way that doesn't just keep you safe but the destination you travel to free from harm too.

Of course, the situation is dynamic across the world. Consult advisories, too, before planning travel

REOPENING FOR BUSINESS



1 EGYPT

While domestic travellers have already been allowed to move around starting this month, visitors from other countries will be allowed entry into Egypt from July 1, with some conditions in place. While they will be able to stay at resorts along the coast of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean and visit cultural highlights such as the **Pyramids of Giza**, the **Egyptian Museum on Tahrir Square**, the **Karnak temple complex** and **Abu Simbel**, some parts of the country will be off limits. Hotels will have to be certified by the government on safety and hygiene before they can start welcoming guests, and will operate at 50% capacity. On the plus side, those who travel to Egypt via EgyptAir or Air Cairo will get 20% discounts on tickets to museums and archaeological sites. Tourist visa fees will also be reduced, and travellers can expect a hefty discount on entry to various attractions.

2 CUBA

The Latin American country has among the best records of fighting COVID-19 across the world. Cuba, which relies heavily on tourism, is planning to reopen to international visitors in three phases. In the first phase, slated to begin end-June, citizens will be allowed to travel within the country. In the second phase, scheduled to start around end-August, visitors from overseas will be allowed entry only, however, to the outlying islands of Cuba and to specific resorts, to which they will be transported directly from the airport. All arrivals will be subjected to a mandatory swab test and temperature screening. The mainland and interiors of the country will only be accessible to international travellers from phase three, a specific date for which will be decided upon later.



3 EUROPE

From **Spain, France and Italy to Iceland and Denmark**, most countries have started allowing movement of travellers within the EU zone from mid-June. Those from outside the zone will have to wait until July for confirmation of entry conditions, with reports from the European Commission suggesting that some member countries will allow entry to visitors based on COVID-19 conditions in their home countries. A website called **Re-open EU** (www.reopen.europa.eu/en) has been set up to provide the most up-to-date information regarding which countries are open and the attractions or services that will be functional in those areas. While July looks to be the month when travellers will finally be able to enter Europe, testing upon arrival or within a stipulated time period of arrival will be the primary strategy followed to ensure safety. Some countries will allow health certificates from the country of origin while others will mandate a test upon arrival. Some nations will even allow travellers to skip quarantine if all health certificates are in order.

WORDS: SAMARPAN BHOWMIK PHOTOGRAPHS: DMITRIY KAZACHENKO (EGYPT), KAREL MIRAGAYA (CUBA), ANNA OM (EUROPE), SOME PHOTOGRAPHS USED FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. CONTENT ON THESE PAGES IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. LONELY PLANET MAGAZINE INDIA DOES NOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY MISHAPS ARISING FROM THE SAME.



4 TURKEY

While Turkish residents have been allowed to travel internally since June 1, it's taken a bit more time for visitors from other countries to be allowed in. With restrictions on international travel now lifted, and visitors being checked and tested upon arrival, the government is now looking for ways to instill confidence in visitors. It has come up with a 'healthy tourism certificate' programme for businesses catering to tourism-related services. The certificates will be granted by international certification institutions based on the implementation of hygiene and social distancing measures at hotels, restaurants, and transport facilities.

6 SRI LANKA

Our neighbouring country will start welcoming visitors from August 1. Those reaching Sri Lanka will have to stay for a minimum of five nights and produce a negative COVID-19 test result done within 72 hours of boarding the flight. If you exhibit symptoms upon arrival, a test will be conducted at the airport free of charge, while a second test will be done in four to five days by a mobile team. Those staying for more than 10 days will have to take a third test. To ensure accommodation facilities are safe, these will be certified by independent professional auditors and listed on the government's tourism website. Public transportation will not be available to visitors and they will have to pre-arrange transportation.



5 PUERTO RICO

The Caribbean island is currently in the third phase of its economic reopening, with locals allowed to enjoy its popular attractions. Hotels are allowed to operate at 50% capacity and tourism-related businesses have been granted permission to resume operations. The tourism industry is readying itself to welcome international visitors, who will be allowed in from July 15. Those arriving by flight will be screened for temperature, and free and voluntary COVID testing will also be available. While there is a mandatory 14-day quarantine for arrivals, the government is figuring out exceptions such as those who can provide negative COVID test results.



7 DUBAI

With restrictions easing up over recent weeks, Dubai is now looking to restart international travel. While residents have been allowed to travel out of the country from June 23, those wishing to enter the country will be allowed to do so from July 7. Of course, there are conditions in place. Those arriving in Dubai will have to have international medical cover include COVID-19 and also present documents to prove that they have recently been tested negative for the virus. There is also the option of undergoing a test upon arrival at the airport.



More ways to stay home

VIRTUAL VISITS

While some options to get out there are emerging again, it's safest to stay put for a little while longer. While you bide your time, here are some ways to travel right from the safety and comfort of home



COOK AWAY ISOLATION BLUES

Japanese company **airKitchen** has launched a new live platform that provides private cooking classes online. Hosts from different countries across the globe can teach you to make traditional dishes over Skype or Zoom video portals, with over 90 classes registered on the website currently. Hosts also provide a list of ingredients and the preparation required for each recipe in advance. As such, these online classes cost less than classes in person. Imagine mastering that perfect Japanese, Polish, Italian or Vietnamese dish, with just a screen at hand.

www.airkitchen.me

ACCESS HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF TRAVEL FROM LONELY PLANET

Lonely Planet has unveiled a new premium video streaming platform that lets travellers go around the world, exploring destinations and reliving unique experiences, all from the comfort of home. The platform has over 350 episodes of award-winning travel shows, from **Globe Trekker** to **Planet Food**. Join hosts and celebrities as they explore destinations and experiences across the planet. Subscribe today and get set to travel! <https://tv.lonelyplanet.com>

LONELY PLANET TIPS COMING TO APPLE MAPS

At Apple's annual WWDC this year, a new feature for the Apple Maps app was announced. Lonely Planet will be bringing its extensive collection of curated content as a new feature on the app.

To be launched later this year with a software update, the collections will feature solo and outdoor activities, and will initially be available for **San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and London**. The feature will have expert tips on each city's iconic architecture, street art, and walking and running routes, among others. We're keeping our fingers crossed for some Indian cities to get on the featured list soon!

EXPERIENCE THE BEAUTY OF JAPAN

JRPass has curated a list of 20 destinations across the 'Land of the Rising Sun' that you can access virtually, put together with the help of Google Maps and Street View. www.jrpass.com



PLANE NEWS

TURKISH AIRLINES SHOWS THE WAY WITH INTERNATIONAL AVIATION

The aviation industry is one of the crucial pillars of the global economy, and plays an especially important role when it comes to travel. With the pandemic shutting down flights across the world in March, aviation was critically affected.

Now, months later, with lockdowns across the world easing up and international travel gradually resuming, there's some great news from Turkish Airlines. It was reported last week, as the busiest operator in Europe. In just the first week of June, the airline operated 359 flights out of Istanbul. Eurocontrol, a pan-European civil-military organization that supports European aviation confirmed that on June 17, the airline had 400 flights in the Eurocontrol zone, the first time any airline has hit that number since March.

Of course, all safety and health protocols are being adhered to, with hygiene kits, containing face mask, disinfectant, and antiseptic tissue, being distributed on all flights and dedicated cabin crew members enforcing strict social distancing measures. Hopefully, this is an indicator of how the aviation sector and all connected industries will make their way to recovery as the world strives to overcome the pandemic.

FEATURES

PLAN NOW... TRAVEL WHEN IT'S TIME! INSPIRATION HAS NO EXPIRY DATE!

Batting for the planet and immersing yourself in the local can be very soothing indeed. We have 35 great stay options across India and the world (like the Yard Hostel in Thailand pictured here) at which to lie back and enjoy the fruit of your good choices



Travel to Save the World



*Responsible travel. Conscious travel. Sustainable travel.
Immersive travel. Many phrases to indicate that we're ready
to give back to the planet when we travel. Read on for
practical ways you can make that happen*

WORDS **PRIMROSE MONTEIRO D'SOUZA**  @PrimroseDSouza



EVERY six months, we have an induction for new joiners at Worldwide Media. Editors talk about their brand's pillars and philosophy. I'm always in an afternoon slot, when most of my new colleagues are almost asleep. I always start by asking them where they had travelled last.

Suddenly, everyone brightens up. Rahul will talk about his last trek, Samira about her long-awaited trip to Barcelona.

And, then I ask:

WERE YOU A TOURIST OR A TRAVELLER?

My colleagues are heartwarming honest. They will admit that they have probably been tourists. Rahul will tell us that he was immersed in nature, but he also bought three bottles of water from stalls along the way, and that he was shocked at the amount of plastic littering the trail. Samira would cede that she had rushed through her two days in Barcelona.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY, I ask.

"Carry my own water bottle."

"Go plogging – carry a big bag into which I could bring back some of the plastic I saw along the way."

"Give Barcelona another five days, and eat at some of those local joints that I rushed past."

"Think a little more before I travel."

Sometimes, all it takes is a mindset shift. It is when we make that shift that travel becomes a force for good

There are two main aspects to travelling for good:

DO NO HARM. DO SOME GOOD.

Travelling responsibly, sustainably, consciously is about making choices. And the thing about choices is that you must know the options.

The planet benefits when we learn from others: Which is why I have 20 responsible travel advocates in this feature. So that, the next time we travel,

THE ENVIRONMENT, NOT THE CUSTOMER, WILL BE KING.

Experts Panel



ANSOO GUPTA

is a Mumbai-based media professional and serial traveller, on a quest to see the world in the most sustainable way possible.

She is considered by many to be a role model for responsible travel.

"As we emerge from months of lockdown, with no real end in sight of these new, but not unexpected, threats to our life and wellbeing, it will bear us well to change not just the way we travel but our very approach to travel. I believe that every traveller should be a conscious traveller, and everyone should travel with a sense of purpose and responsibility."

JEREMY SMITH

is a writer, speaker and sustainable tourism consultant. In January 2020, he co-founded **Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency**, an initiative that supports tourism destinations, businesses and individuals in declaring a climate emergency and working together to reduce their carbon emissions in line with IPCC

(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

advice. Jeremy is the author of *Transforming Travel – Realising the Potential of Sustainable Tourism* (2018).

(See box: **Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency**) →





DIVYAKSHI GUPTA

is a freelance travel writer, blogger and content creator who narrates offbeat travel stories at www.quirkywanderer.com. She loves doors and ancient cities, and discovering new cultures, new people, and, in the process, herself.



“Conscious travel isn’t a fad; it has to be a way of life. Everyone can be a change bearer and educate

their own little circle about how conscious travel needs to be incorporated into our routine travel. How we should behave in a destination we travel to is how we would like visitors to behave in our own homes.”

SHOBA MOHAN

is the founder of **RARE India**, a community of some of the finest ‘conscious luxury’ hotels and travel experiences in India and the sub-continent.

“Sustainability is no longer an option, especially in travel and hospitality; it is imperative to think long term, regenerative and sustainable. Tourism has to minimise negative impact, create transformative experiences, engage the traveller and ensure that the integrity of the destination is maintained. To travel consciously, one has to be aware of the issues that arise from travel globally, believe we can make a difference as travellers, and be willing to make choices to mitigate them.”



JULIE KAGTI

is the Assamese founder and curator of **Curtain Call Adventures**, which encourages immersive travel in the Northeast and benefits local communities. She knows her guests are her contemporaries with similar travel and cultural expectations and hence has a heightened sensitivity to ensuring getting the small details right.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that we don’t live as isolated societies, but, as humankind, share this planet. Sustainable or low-impact travel

is a way of taking responsibility to benefit and help local communities prosper. They are the guardians of our environment and our traditions.”



SHRAMONA PODDAR

is a travel and lifestyle content creator (@mishti.and.meat on social media), a writer on good days, and also co-runs her business @amrapaliboutique. The strong connect between her dual life is her approach to be more conscious of her choices and the impact they have on the world around her.

“Sustainability is the only way to move forward in a world that has already been half destroyed due to our mindless choices and careless travel. It is a practice that I first started adopting on my travels; now I make it a habit to carry it forward in my life too.”

JOHANN DANIELS

is the founder of **Jack & Hill Adventures**, an adventure tourism company that creates specialised outdoor experiences in and around Mumbai for small groups.

“People need to decide their travels today based on the impact it will create tomorrow.”



INIR PINHEIRO

is an award-winning social entrepreneur, co-founder and director of **Grassroutes Journeys**, a community-based tourism venture in which local communities ‘own, manage and run’ hospitality services. A TED speaker, he has also co-founded **Grassroutes Connect**, which helps professionals and students demystify rural India through experiential learnings and reflections.

“Social distancing has led to a disconnection from reality, an obsession with self, a paranoia about tomorrow. We will need to step out of homes, perceptions and fears to help rebuild a more humane society.”





VANDANA VIJAY

has a deep-found love and passion for the Himalayas and India's cultural diversity. In 2016, she established **Offbeat Tracks**, an experiential travel company that promotes experiential and sustainable travel across India, working with rural communities to encourage homestay-based experiential travel with a focus on rural micro entrepreneurship and skill development.

"I feel COVID-19 will be a watershed moment in the future of travel. I encourage people to bring about a change in their travel behaviour to make this industry a more sustainable and responsible one."



LOVELEEN ARUN

is an avid traveller, explorer and seeker of transformational experiences through travel. She runs **Panache World**, a boutique travel company in Bangalore, and takes pride in assisting all her clients to become responsible travellers and better human beings through travel.

"Now, more than ever before, there is a strong need for all of us to travel with intentional responsibility. Mother Nature is telling us that we need to be mindful. There are eons of ancient knowledge inside people of different cultures and lands. When we travel responsibly, we open our minds to an exchange of this wisdom, to starting a culture of 'tourism for regeneration'."

NAYANTARA JAIN

has been a scuba instructor for the past nine years.

She has studied marine biology and now runs **ReefWatch Marine Conservation** – an Indian not-for-profit dedicated to the protection of our coasts, coastal communities and marine biodiversity.

"This period has been a dark time for almost everyone, but our planet has had a breather.

The air is cleaner, the water is clearer, reduced consumption has led to emptier landfills – and we have finally realised the value of a healthier planet.

We must let our lockdown realisations inform our choices as we slowly open up again."



NAVPREET ARORA

used to be "an average city-bred, convent-educated, monotony-ridden individual" before an undying love for Kolkata was transformed into an endeavour to show people the myriad colours, flavours and nitty gritty of the City of Joy, though her tour company **FunOnStreets**.

"The Coronavirus has changed our lives forever. We need to adapt and adapt responsibly, evolving as Nature does, and starting a whole new cycle. The road for travel and tourism is definitely going to be rough and patchy, but bounce back we must, even if it's going to be in a totally different avatar and with a whole new set of 'normal' norms."

RAMKI SREENIVASAN

is a Bangalore-based technology entrepreneur, known for his passionate interest in wildlife. An avid birder and wildlife photographer, he co-founded **Conservation India** in January 2012 to be a watchdog and conscience in the nation's nature conservation efforts. His guide to ethical photography has been much appreciated for its practical approach to sensitivity in getting good images that do not impact flora and fauna.

(See box: Go Beyond The Pretty Picture)



RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

is a travel writer who is happiest writing about and making videos of his road trips. He did a road trip first in every Indian state and then in various countries. His stories talk about food, history and the joy of interacting with and being invited to experience local communities. "In today's world, travel will call for common sense, caution, hearty compassion and, most importantly, a firm handle on paranoia." →



PRERNA SINGH BINDRA

is a wildlife conservationist, writer, and communications policy strategist, focussing mainly on conservation of wildlife habitats and critically-endangered species.

“We have been hit really hard by COVID-19.

The other, more insidious threat is the climate crisis.

Both are ‘invisible’, and their impacts devastating.

We are hit by biodiversity loss – a massive mass

extinction event – and we know how such extinctions

and deforestation are linked to zoonotic diseases such

as coronavirus. This is a time for reflection, and I hope our actions in the future make us responsible citizens and travellers who leave nothing behind but positive change.”

PHILIPPA KAYE

is the founder of **Indian Experiences**

and author of *Escape to India*. She has

specialised in travel to India since 1998.

She has spent 13 years living in and extensively exploring India and has always advocated getting off the beaten track.

“If the travel industry is to recover, there needs to be a shift to a much more experiential model, focusing on showcasing the real India, focusing on real-life experiences, meeting people, learning skills, engaging with local communities, even in cities. My mantra has always been: monuments create the backdrop, people create the experiences. It is only by creating truly memorable journeys for people that repeat business will occur.”



RAJEEV B LAMBA

is a Mumbaier, who, after 20 years in corporate life, set up the sustainable **Nest Farms** in Dahanu, Maharashtra, where guests can expect to see water harvesting, green energy processing, and ethical dairy and free-range poultry.

“Travelling sustainably is different from travelling frugally; nobody likes free loaders. As a traveller, be aware that every distance travelled and every morsel of food consumed is a cost either to you or to the one who provides it for you. Be judicious about seeking favours from people; you’re not doing anyone a favour by choosing to be a traveller. However, the more sustainable the travel, the more miles and knowledge you can add through your travel experiences.”



SHARANYA IYER

is a solo traveller, digital content creator (she goes as **@TrulyNomadly** on social media) and adventure travel enthusiast. With a penchant for offbeat travel and places untouched by mass tourism, her journeys have taken her from Mechuka, a tiny hamlet on the Indo-Tibetan border, to her favourite region in the world: the Stans of Central Asia.

“While travelling, we tend to overuse resources, pollute our surroundings and leave behind irreversible damage, but, now, more than ever, the focus is high on healing our planet. I believe human and animal welfare and nature preservation need to be prioritised; our goal as sustainable travellers should be to leave the place we visit better than we found it.”



SUMESH MANGALASSERI

is the founder of **Kabani Community Tourism and Services** in Kerala, whose main activities include research, advocacy, creation of awareness and the facilitation of better, community-driven tourism models. He is an active campaigner, researcher, policy analyst and consultant for sustainable tourism, at the state, national and international levels.

“COVID-19 has reduced tourism activities to nil. Travel has been severely affected, but I believe post-pandemic travel will be a renewed experience. Travellers’ roles as change makers for better tourism remain significant.”

MANDIP SINGH SOIN

is an explorer, mountaineer, environmentalist, and founder and managing director of **Ibex Expeditions**, one of India’s earliest adventure and luxury travel companies. An advocate for responsible tourism, he is the founder-president of the **Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI)**. “If we can basically morph the traveller into a responsible traveller, we can have customers becoming the ‘auditors’ of travel companies, hotels and lodges by putting additional pressure on industry and, to some extent, on government policy as well.”

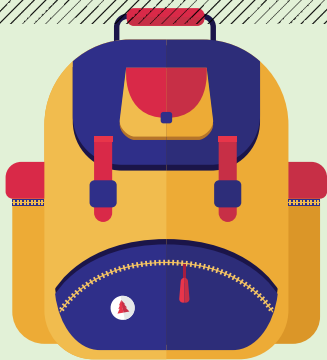


FIRST STEPS

1 TRAVEL LIGHT

"I'm not talking about your baggage!" laughs Loveleen Arun. "Of course, it's always good to carry fewer things, but consider shedding some prejudices and preset ways of thinking too. Travelling with an open mind will help you absorb and welcome the new culture that you will see and the people you will meet. Prepare your mind and your heart for the things you are going to be experiencing. Set aside some time to pack humility and compassion along with a large dose of curiosity." Adds Ansoo Gupta, "As a conscious traveller, one of the most important things that we bring to a new place is our sense of respect towards it and a sense of wonder. We must respect the beautiful places that we travel far and wide for, respect the local people, respect local culture and the local environment. Go with a sense of awe, don't think of yourself as the customer. **A lot of our behaviours would change if we start seeing travelling as an act of exploration and reverence.**"

2 TRAVEL WITH LITTLE

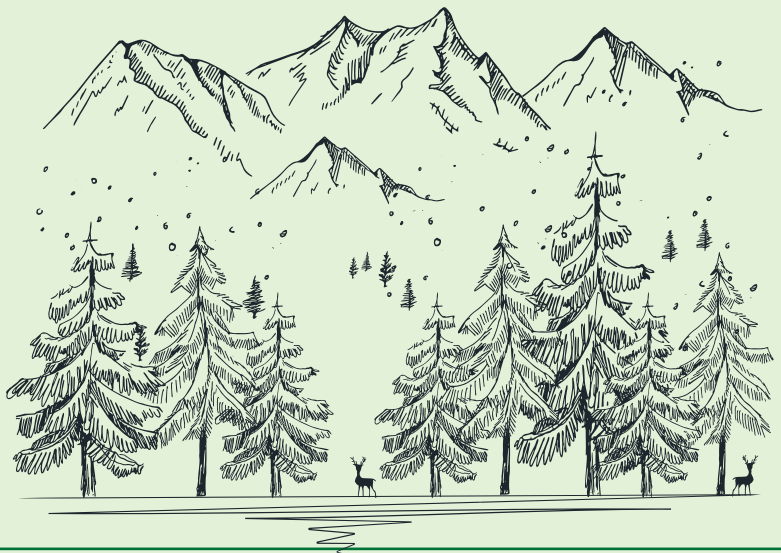


"If there's one thing that this pandemic has taught us, it is that we don't need so much to lead a comfortable life; carry this lesson into travelling as well," says Ansoo. "Don't pack for 10 days of three costume changes each day, pack as if you are going on an adventurous hike, because you are! Don't carry what is not essential. In any case, with the new flying and check-in rules, it might become costlier and cumbersome to carry anything more than cabin bags. So learn to pack light. **It's less baggage to carry – literally and metaphorically.**"

3

TRAVEL LOCAL

"With countries being more cautious and quarantine protocol murky at the moment, there is no better time to explore India more deeply," Sharanya Iyer points out. **"Find what you're seeking in our diverse country, while contributing to the local economy.**" A white Christmas in Europe can wait. Instead, how about a snowy winter in Landour? Let the hot chocolate and aromatic cinnamon rolls at the local bakehouse transport you into a different era. And, if you're up to brave colder heights and idyllic hamlets further away, a winter in Spiti awaits the adventurer in you. Think cosy hearths in a local's home, steaming butter tea with spicy instant noodles, cheerful monks chilling between their prayer times, sending letters from one of the world's highest post offices, and, if you're lucky, spotting the elusive snow leopard." Inir Pinheiro agrees that **this vocal-for-local philosophy is particularly needed in the post-COVID-19 scenario:** "Start with smaller villages in the vicinity of your city with a view to supporting local economies and building confidence." Nayantara Jain invites you to **"explore the coasts of India –** look for off-beat interesting holidays that not only keep you out of crowded areas but also take your business to small companies that need it the most." Or actually **explore your own backyard.** "With the influx of tourists being greatly reduced, new walks and events will focus on generating the interest of the locals to explore their own city," says Navpreet Arora. "Find a tour company that focuses on encouraging locals to be tourists in their own city; what better way than by walking through the lanes and alleys?" →



4

"A golden rule of thumb is to not buy or use any single-use items when a reusable option is available," advocates Ansoo.

"Replace bottled water with your personal bottle, sanitary pads by menstrual cups; avoid taking along drinking straws, plastic ear buds, toothbrushes, plastic throwaway coffee cups, packaging materials such as polybags and boxes. This is even more important when you're travelling to fragile ecosystems like beaches, hills, or if you are in places where the recycling industry is not developed (that's 85% of the world, by the way). If you buy a cup of coffee with a plastic lid and an innocent-looking plastic stirrer and enjoy it by the sea, even if you are conscientious and throw it in the bin, in the absence of a proper recycling process, **it will finally end up in that beautiful ocean, threatening marine life and, eventually, our lives too.**"

Says Shramona Poddar, "A simple reusable water bottle can save money as well as save nature. While travelling in the mountains, the natural water in streams and waterfalls is safe for consumption. **A one-time investment in a LifeStraw bottle that automatically purifies water makes great sense.**"

"As a responsible travel company, we provide safe drinking water and reusable water bottles to our guests," says Julie Kagit. "The water bottle becomes a souvenir to take home."

"Pick a snazzy flask made of steel; plastic and aluminium are down the pecking order," urges Mandip Singh Soin.

"Every hotel or lodge you stay in will have water dispensers with UV filtered water or RO water."

Making other personal choices is important too.

"One of the difficult choices I made was to **stop consuming instant noodles on my expeditions,**" Shramona tells us.

"Instant noodles and mountains is an ideal combination, but it also results in most of the plastic waste in the mountains."



**AVOID
SINGLE-USE
PLASTIC LIKE
THE PLAGUE
CORONAVIRUS**

CHOOSE 'NEW' DESTINATIONS

So many destinations both in India and across the world have suffered overtourism. Now is the time to pick a place to explore that's different. Says Sharanya, "The likes of Jaipur, Kodaikanal, Mussoorie and Shimla have long been overburdened with throngs of tourists, and an unbalanced demand-supply can do great damage to the environment; resources are depleted far quicker than they can be replaced. Instead, **go beyond.** For every McLeodGanj, there's a Dharamkot. For every Alleppey, there's a Munroe Island. For every Pangong Tso lake, there's a Tso Moriri. Putting in that little extra effort not only challenges you to step out of your comfort zone, but also gifts you emptier landscapes where you can truly feel like the world belongs to you." **Even in popular destinations, there are ways to reduce your negative impact.** "Choose offbeat, less-trodden routes in populated tourist destinations for trekking, bicycling and walking holidays, as, this way, the environment is least harmed," advises Julie. Says Vandana Vijay, **"Ditch the cities and explore the villages.** Gandhiji always said that the true India is the India that lies

in the villages. Village-based tourism makes for some really unique experiences and memories to cherish for a lifetime."

And **choose to go back to places,** Jeremy Smith suggests.

"Move beyond a 'seen that, done that' bucket list mentality, towards the deeper understanding and connection that takes time and repetition.

Plus, the anticipation of knowing you are soon returning to a place you already know that you love is one of the best feelings around."

5



KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

This one should be obvious, says Perna Bindra: "Make sure you take all possible safety precautions when you travel — not just for yourself, but to safeguard the destination or place you plan to visit. **Keep in mind the safety of the people, the culture, the environment of the place you are going to visit.**" Adds Shoba Mohan: "Always remember that **residents have first right over any destination and its resources.**"

6

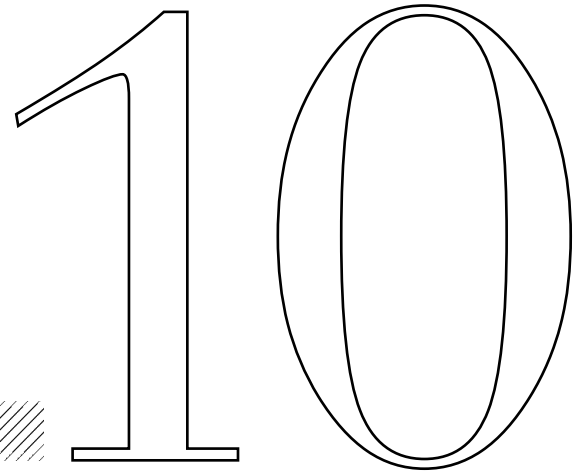
LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE BEHIND

"Adventure is not just about bungee jumping, white water rafting, trekking; adventure is a state of mind," Ansoo tells us. "Stretching the boundaries of your comfort zone is adventure. Staying in a mud hut when you are used to air-conditioned rooms is adventure. Cycling around the city when you are used to cars and taxis is adventure. Catching a local bus or a metro or just walking like the locals do, eating foods you have never eaten, trying to speak a few words in a new language, discovering the bylanes of a quaint town without a map — this is all adventure and fires the neurons in much the same way as the excitement of white-water rafting. **Don't miss out on the heady exhilaration that travelling offers.**"



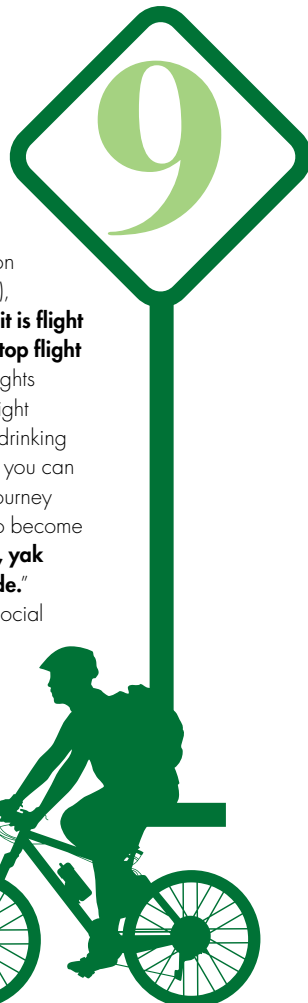
OFFSET YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Mandip tells you how: "If you have to take a flight, keep in mind that many airlines have tied up with projects where the carbon offsetting can be done, and it's worth paying the extra rupees. Calculators like **Carbon Footprint** (www.calculator.carbonfootprint.com) can, even when you're not taking flights, help with offsetting transport, air-conditioning during hotel stay, etc."



CHOOSE HOW YOU WILL TRAVEL

Consider how you will get to your destination "Ask yourself: (once it is safe again to do so), could you take a train?" advises Shoba. **"If it is flight distance away, what is the quickest non-stop flight there?"** While on flights, keep in mind that flights amass a lot of garbage and waste from inflight services. Reduce this by carrying your own drinking water, snack and coffee mug." "Pick places you can get to overland," urges Jeremy. "Make the journey part of the experience. Flying is not going to become more fun; **travelling by train, boat, bicycle, yak or on foot is where the memories are made.**" And, of course, in this time when we need social distancing, there are **road trips** (see section in this feature). **"Travelling in small groups (with all precautions in place) also helps to reduce carbon footprints** as transport and accommodation costs can be shared," Julie adds. "It also works out better economically for the travellers as most villages and interiors in the Northeast are only accessible by road or boat."



11 AVOID THE ONE-NIGHT STAND

It might be tempting to spend just one night in a destination and move on to the next, but that doesn't work well for the destination or the stay option in the long run. **"Take one long holiday to reduce your transportation footprint,"** advises Nayantara. "Staying longer in one place allows you to immerse and impact better," agrees Shoba. "It also allows you to participate by learning about initiatives from your hotel or in the destination itself such as composting, cooking and craft traditions, and to create transformations." "In the highly instagrammable world that travel had become, much of the focus has been on the selfie, having the perfect picture in a best-known location," Philippa Kaye points out. "Over tourism has also become a major problem, with people focusing on the key monument, site or beauty spot, and then moving on. The short-stay tourism that this results in is rarely beneficial to local communities, not to mention the ecological impact of one-night stays." →

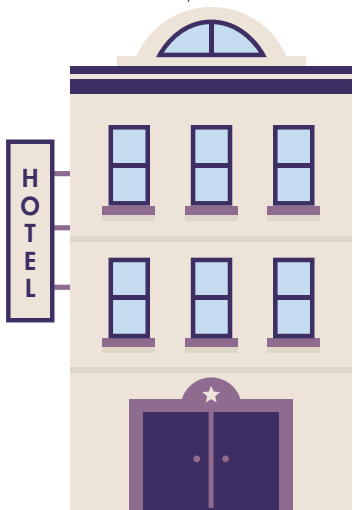
12

CHOOSE YOUR STAY OPTION RESPONSIBLY

"Choosing a hotel that reflects many of your values of sustainability adds to your efficiency as a green traveller," Shoba points out. "How they manage their resources, their location, how they impact the community and environment they are set in all add up to travelling consciously." (See box below) Adds Vandana, "A small homestay tucked away far from the city will often make for a safe and more authentic stay option. Your stay options can be super quirky, right from camping with the Changthang nomads in Ladakh to a cosy boutique property in the lap of luxury in the tea estates of Assam." **"Look for travel companies or hotels that have a clear eco-policy and might have won some awards or certifications in that sphere,"** advises Mandip. "A lot of these will be members of the **Responsible Tourism Society of India** (see box right) and will be on the website and, finally, in the RT app, which we are looking forward to the government developing."

TIPS TO PICK YOUR GREEN HOTEL

- **Look for a hotel that follows the LEEDS (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard guidelines...** using low-energy light bulbs, offering menus of locally-sourced food, with recycling and linen reuse programmes in place, and, if possible, a fleet of bicycles that guests can use.
- **Pick a hotel that makes it easier for you to get to it and around without a car** – whether by location (close to a transportation hub) or by offering complimentary shuttle service, public transit cards, or bicycles.
- **Check for sustainability on the menu.** Look for the use of fresh and local ingredients (this also applies to restaurants you choose at the destination).
- **Check if the hotel supports local communities** – by offering employment and welfare schemes – or eco-voluntourism initiatives.
- See if the hotel offers you **a chance to buy carbon credits.**



GOOD BEGINNINGS

MANDIP SINGH SOIN TELLS US ABOUT THE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM SOCIETY OF INDIA

The Responsible Tourism Society of India was formed in 2008 as the Ecotourism Society of India at the behest of industry demand and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India's proactive action. Thirteen members who were passionate about sustainability and devoted to eco principles were drawn from the hospitality and travel industry, government, parliament, NGOs and conservationists.

The guiding principles were to educate the travel industry in becoming more eco friendly in its operations and to help governments and key ministries with eco-sensitive policies for the tourism and environment ministries.

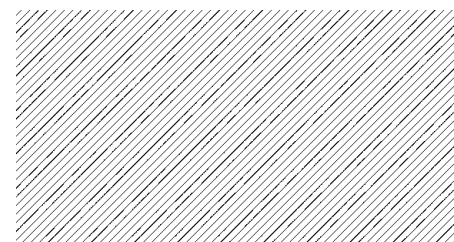
So far, over 20 workshops across India, four publications and the creation of a sustainable certification label and process called the STCI (Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India), based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), have been achieved. The name has been re-registered as the RTSOI so the ambit is larger to include ALL stakeholders of tourism.



TRAVEL IN THE OFF SEASON

A wonderful way to not add to overtourism, **travelling in the off season comes with both advantages and pain points.** Many sights, activities, tours might be closed, transport routes suspended or reduced, but this only gives you a chance to live in a destination just like the locals do. Your daylight hours will probably be fewer, and the weather might be iffy (hence 'off' season), but you do get major savings on airfares, stays, car rentals, attraction prices and even at eating options. Crowds will be sparser, and you are more likely to spend more time with locals, getting under the skin of the place. And, most importantly, you will not be adding to the pressure of overtourism.

13



OUT AND ABOUT IN CITIES

14 GO DEEPER

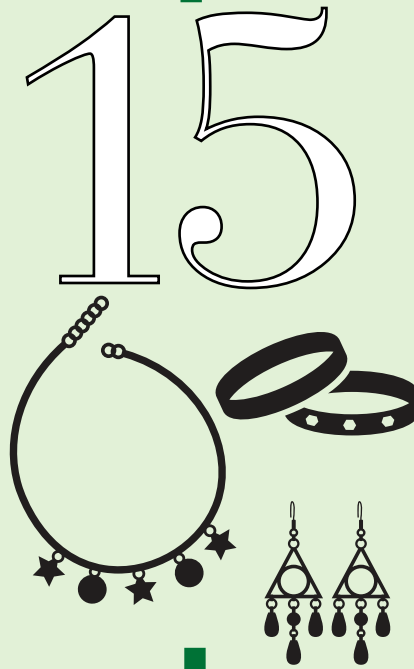
"For 20 years, city sightseeing has tended to be exactly the same, although things are now starting to change," Philippa points out. "Jaipur sightseeing for the majority consists of a morning visit to the Amber Fort, forced shopping, afternoon observatory and City Palace, and then you leave for the next destination. But why else is Jaipur famous? It's because 80% of the world's jewels used to come through Jaipur on their way to market. You can see priceless jewels being polished in tiny shacks in the back streets, gold rings being modelled the traditional way; there is block printing, blue pottery.

Slow your travel down, delve deeper, engage with the local communities, wander the old streets, visit the local *chaiwallah*, engage in a street-food walk, make purchases from local vendors. Use local, specialist tour companies who can showcase all of these elements and more."



CHOOSE HOW TO GET AROUND... SAFELY

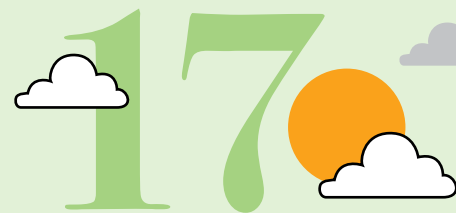
At the *LPMI Travel Talks* sessions, one of the points we always discuss is the wonderful immersiveness of taking local transport; that might have changed post COVID-19, but there are still ways in which you can manage low impact but maximum exposure to local life. **Walking tours and cycling tours with companies who embrace the new reality are now the way to go.** "With social distancing being the new norm, we encourage small group walks and private tours at no extra charge," says Navpreet. "Where vehicles are used, alongside the cloth towels and sanitiser we were already providing, going forward, the vehicles will be thoroughly sanitised between tours, and the front seat beside the driver will be kept empty to maintain social distancing." Look for tour companies that state their standard operating procedures up front, not just with regard to sanitisation issues, but also in keeping with planet friendliness.



SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

"To sustain local communities (even in cities), it's important to **bring economic benefits to them by connecting the world to their craft**," Navpreet points out. Choose to interact in a way that contributes. Do like Sharanya does. "At a destination, find a local bootmaker and customise new shoes, shop for fresh produce at the local vegetable stall instead of the supermarket, sit down with the ladies in Leh market as they knit woollen caps, get a colourful braid done from the girl on the beach, and go to a flea market to pick up some locally-made jewellery. These experiences often come with meaningful local interaction, a deeper understanding of their lives; **your purchases will often come with stories straight from the heart.**"

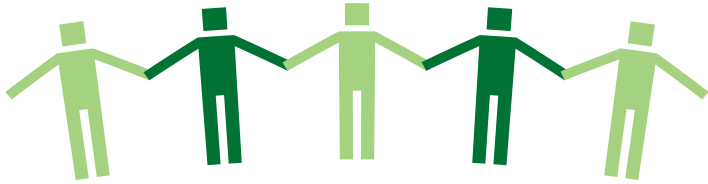
"Be their champion, spread the word," Purna urges. Loveleen agrees. "Seek out local businesses in the place you travel to and support them. It could be small restaurants, an artist, a candle maker, a guide, your driver. Set aside a budget for this. **Think of it as your own little 'carbon-offset' effort.**"



INCLUDE TIME IN NATURE

"Even if you are travelling in an urban scape, try to find a spot, preferably surrounded by nature and watch a sunrise or a sunset or just spend time with yourself," advises Loveleen. "This puts what you are experiencing in a destination into perspective and **it will make you grateful. When that happens, you will always treat the place with more respect** and be a responsible traveller naturally." →

GOING INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES



18 CHOOSE A LOCAL ORGANISATION THAT SUPPORTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Even if you usually explore on your own, it makes sense to get in touch with a responsible travel company when you go into rural communities in order to avoid a superficial visit. **"Getting in touch with a trusted, local organisation allows for a deeper level of understanding of the communities and their culture,"**

agrees Divyakshi Gupta. "This organisation can be the bridge between the community and you, can help you understand the dos and don'ts of the community, and build a comfortable rapport with them." Adds Inir, **"Research is key in choosing a sustainable tour company."** It is very important to check up about your potential travel company's policies with regard to the environment and their interaction with the local community to provide livelihoods." Says Julie, "Ask your chosen operator to include local homestays, guides and home chefs as options both in urban and rural destinations as this inculcates a sense of onus among the local communities to maintain and preserve the environment around them.

The various tribes in the Northeast have distinct traditions and customs, which are best explored through a local connection."

19

RESPECT CULTURES AND SENSIBILITIES

It is a privilege when we are admitted into authentic communities; it allows an actual immersion into their way of life that is quite different from what you will see in a museum setting or with a tourism show village. "Respecting the culture of local tribes and communities is an important part of responsible travel," agrees Divyakshi.

"Respect is seen in basic things like not photographing them without their permission and not publishing their photographs on social media if they are not comfortable with that." At the simplest level, **"respect house rules and expectations,"** Rajeev Lamba says.

20

KEEP EXPECTATIONS IN CHECK

When you seek authenticity, you have to **realign your ideas of what to expect in terms of tourism facilities in a less-developed area.** Julie agrees: "As a travel venture looking to promote sustainability in the region, we clearly communicate with our clients to set realistic expectations before their visit."

21

STAY LOCAL



"When you choose to stay in a homestay, you **help a family and contribute to the livelihood of local people,**" says Shramona.

"Homestays are usually very sustainable, and provide a raw, authentic experience of the destination." Divyakshi adds, "Staying with a local is one of the best ways to learn about local culture, giving you a chance to mingle, converse, learn a local dish, and understand their way of life. One of my most memorable homestay experiences was in Darap village, near Pelling in Sikkim, where I learned organic farming, saw local *chang* being brewed, and made friends for life." Look out for the homeowners.

"Communicate with the homeowner beforehand to get introduced, and to find out about the infrastructure and facilities," says Rajeev. "Especially in India, ask upfront about the stay cost and what is included; some homeowners are shy and not business minded. **Insist on paying fairly for their service and foodstuffs."**

22

BE LOW IMPACT

Staying with a local brings them no benefit if we overburden their – often limited – resources. “Leave the place just like you found it: it’s imperative we keep our privilege in check while visiting local communities,” Divyakshi reminds us. “They find it very cumbersome to deal with overtourism even though it provides revenue. As responsible travellers, we cannot burden them with the trash we generate, especially in sensitive ecosystems like Ladakh. **We must constantly remind ourselves that we are guests in someone else’s home.**” Inir has some **practical ways to do this**: “Take with you more reusable items than use-and-throw materials. Throw your garbage only in the dustbins. Your plastic is your responsibility. Carry your own bed sheet, if possible, if you are staying overnight.”

23

Drop some Money

Make purchases that will sustain the community. “A small purchase will not cost a fortune, but it definitely boosts the local economy as well as the local community’s morale,” Divyakshi asserts. “You can either buy from local markets or directly from farms during farm visits, from family-owned eateries or local artists or artisans.” Inir adds, **“Locally-made items make brilliant gifts for colleagues and friends,** if you don’t have place for them at home.” Vandana agrees: “Purchasing a souvenir can be much more than a quick stop to buy a postcard or fridge magnet. Imagine an experience where you can build your own souvenirs as a takeaway from the region, right from bamboo basket-making in Nagaland to weaving your own Angami printed shawl. The options are many and the experiences are priceless!”



25

GO IMMERSIVE

Folk demonstrations and workshops with artisans are a treat if you’re interested in culture and traditions, but they also serve a greater purpose. **“Encouraging their economy gives locals an incentive to hold onto their culture** while adding to the immersive experience for the traveller,” says Julie. “Seek out demonstration- and workshop-based itineraries with artisans like weavers and potters. Look for local dance performances if you’re interested in culture, or go foraging with a local if you’re keen to be outdoors. When a decent living can be earned in the village, it controls rural depopulation and overcrowding in urban sectors.” **“Choosing local experiences will help you understand the lives of that land better,”** adds Inir. “And it helps the community preserve their culture, traditions and art and encourages them to pass them down to the next generation. It keeps diversity alive. Learn a local art form to keep it alive.”

Eat local food locally, and drink too

“Food explains a lot about a region’s culture; **food is a big experience in itself,**” says Vandana. “In-house dining experiences make a warm and intimate setting for people to bond and understand local folklore and culture. Visiting a farmers’ market in Nagaland or walking through terrace fields of paddy, followed by a cooking demonstration using the hottest chilli in the world, and a hearty home-cooked feast are some of the unique food experiences that people should savour. **Home-cooked meals are also often a very safe eating option.**” Inir adds, **“Local food is made from locally-sourced grains and produce, which keeps the ecosystem in balance,** promotes a shorter supply chain and hence a smaller ecological footprint. When you travel, make it a point to have at least 50% of your meals at a local food stall, shack, restaurant or homestay (preferably run by women). Not only do they ensure the best cuisine, but the money stays within the local economy.” “Forget aerated drinks, packaged mineral water, and juices that come in tetra packs, when you travel,” advises Philippa. **“Focus on local Indian drinks that are healthy, suitable for the body as per the Indian climate,** and do not come in single-use non-biodegradable packs. Opt for *lassi, jal jeera, aam panna, carrot kanji, chhach, tea,* and fresh juices.” →

26

GIVE BACK AS YOU TRAVEL



Voluntourism-based vacations can help you make a positive impact for the community you've chosen to spend time with.

"In the coming months, more than ever, smaller local businesses, NGOs and farms will need help reviving their projects," says Inir. "Look out for organisations you could connect with. When you travel to a new place, it could be a chance to share your skills with them. This is a slower, more invested form of travelling, with so much scope to learn and ample opportunity for every area of interest." Adds Julie, "Areas of interest could include remote education, environment projects, waste management, farming and craft projects; helping out is a great way to connect one's interests and benefit the environment. These can be done solo, with friends or as a family. **It is also a great way to connect children to nature and heritage** and make them conscious, responsible global citizens." Perna agrees: "**Travel with a cause**; that way you give back to the place and people you visited, the landscapes you dwelled in and found peace in. Contribute your skills, energy and time. For example, if you are a designer, perhaps you can help in training or giving the extra edge to local handlooms or handicrafts; or you could help build a website to give their produce or products a wider market."

27

Travel local

All the great travelogues come about when you do like the locals, and travel like them. When we go back to travelling after this time, Inir suggests you buy an extra ticket to ensure social distancing on local transport; it usually doesn't cost too much. "Not surprisingly, **taking local transport is a great way to interact with locals** who follow the same route for commerce or travel in general. In waiting for the seats to fill in a *tum-tum* (small local bus), boarding a ferry or even hitching a bullock-cart ride, you get a unique glimpse into the lives and stories of rural India, and meet people like you, on their own adventure. And, of course, it's easy on the pocket and great for the environment!"



28



BE UNINTRUSIVE

"Offbeat tourism cannot be purely voyeuristic, it needs to be inclusive but not intrusive," insists Philippa. "The indigenous populations around the national parks are the ones who were removed from their villages and relocated in order to turn the land into national parks. Many lodges employ people from outside the local area, but research has shown that where the local communities are engaged and see the benefits to them of wildlife tourism, conservation efforts are more successful. The tiger and other wildlife and their survival becomes important to them."

One lodge in Kanha only employs local staff, arranges for meal and home experiences at the homes of their staff (who are paid extra for this) and offers clients visits to the local tribal markets to encourage people to learn a little more about and engage with the local community, as well as to be able to buy some unique souvenirs that aren't classic tourist tat."

She adds, "Keep in mind that wildlife tourism is seasonal, so try and choose lodges to stay in where staff are paid a wage all year round."

Think, too, before you contribute material items; it should not contribute to a situation like in *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, when the cola bottle fell inadvertently in the Kalahari desert, and the Bushman didn't want it there. It's best to ask the local organisation you're liaising with before you hand anything over – even with good intentions. "Very often, people distribute chocolate, pens, bottles etc; this should not be encouraged as, in rural areas, it creates an attitude of asking," Shoba avers. "Besides, in the absence of dental care, sweets are often not a good idea. **Avoid, too, school visits to rural areas**, which can be very disruptive. If there is some advantage to the children, this can be worked out during spare hours."

LEAVE A BIT OF YOURSELF BEHIND

Immersion cannot be a one-way process; you must give of yourself too. **"Have conversations with a family or a local,"** Inir says. "Ask them how the lockdown affected them, listen to them, listen to their story. We need to provide a space for locals to share their feelings and anxieties."

29



THE TYPES OF RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLERS

Which one are you?

SUMESH MANGALASSERI details the types.
You could be many, but be one at least

THE BENEFACTOR lives for the moment, enjoys responsibly, lives like a local and contributes to the betterment of the community through choosing locally-owned goods and services.

THE FAIR PRICE PAYER: Many local communities in destinations are heavily dependent on travellers for their livelihood. Being empathetic to their humble means of livelihood and understanding the local realities can go a long way. One way to practise this is to avoid haggling with local businesses.

THE EDUCATOR AND LEARNER uses his or her expertise, experience and skills to bring positive changes and enhance the skills of the host communities and the traveller for a more resilient world. Post COVID, this information and knowledge will be magnified when used to support the local community.

THE AWARE TRAVELLER knows about the environment, customs and traditions of the destination, and is aware of the impact of his or her activities. A prior review of the place you are visiting will help you understand the vulnerability of the place and the precautions you should be taking such as ensuring your health status prior to travel.

THE SUSTAINABLE EXPLORER only engages in sustainable tourism accommodations and activities. This means living like a local during the duration of your stay there. Doing so makes you highly responsible in ensuring discipline and respect to not carry items and activities that might hamper the local flora and fauna. →

GOING INTO THE OUTDOORS

JOHANN DANIELS DETAILS HOW YOU CAN BE A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

30

PLAN AND PREPARE

Research everything there is to know about the area, the climate, hazards and your food requirements. Packing the right items and ensuring you carry only what you really need will not only reduce waste but will make for a more comfortable trip. This includes carrying a reusable bottle and filling it up often whenever you find a clean source of water, and ditching disposable utensils and using reusable cutlery and plates.



32

USE EXISTING TRAILS

Walk in a single file and use the existing trail; **do not create multiple trails** that can cause further deforestation and soil erosion.



31

CARRY OUT EVERYTHING YOU CARRIED IN

The forest is sacred and whatever you carry in does not belong there. Before you leave your campsite or rest spot, make sure you scan the area and pick up the tiniest of intruders. In India, proper waste management is not easily found and is uncommon at base villages. It is best to dispose of the garbage where you are certain that the waste will not be burned. Carry it back to the city to ensure that it is managed properly. Even when consuming fruits, **do not discard the fruit or seeds into the environment**; native species of plant life are put at risk, and wildlife is introduced to foreign elements in this way.

33

JOIN SMALL GROUPS

Avoid going into the outdoors in large groups; that has a huge impact on the environment. Instead opt to join small groups to visit less-crowded locations, thus reducing overall impact.



34

RESPECT WILDLIFE AND NATURE

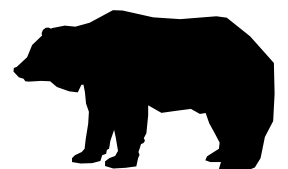


35

Manage human waste properly

To properly dispose of human waste and organic waste, **dig a hole and bury it**. Use spaces that are at least 200 metres from a water source to avoid contaminating them, and 100 metres from a trail.

Observe wildlife from a distance and do not cause a disturbance. You are the visitor in this situation. Rocks, plants or other natural objects... no matter what you find interesting, leave them alone. **Leave nature alone.**





36

AVOID CAMPFIRES

Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the environment.

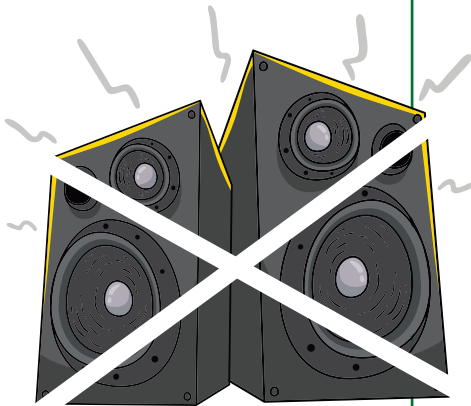
Use a small camp stove instead. If you need to light a fire, keep it small and use only sticks that can be broken by hand. Be extremely careful not to cause a forest fire, and ensure that your fire is completely extinguished all the way down to the embers.

37

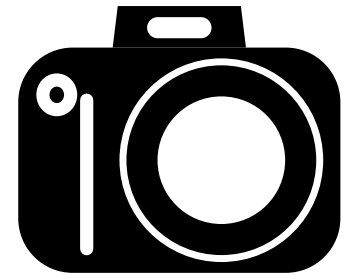
Be

Considerate of others

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Avoid loud voices and noises. Portable speakers are becoming the latest nuisance in Indian forests. **Let nature's sounds prevail.** Camp away from any hiking trails. Most importantly, be very respectful of any tribals or locals.



38



GO BEYOND THE PRETTY PICTURE

A REQUEST TO WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS
FROM **RAMKI SREENIVASAN**

Unfortunately, this lockdown has seen several major environmental and forest clearances across the country. These clearances threaten to cause irrevocable damage to the ecosystem in ways we cannot even imagine.

It is time for all those who derive pleasure from our natural heritage to give back – by helping the world see the ugly side of it.

When you head back into the wilderness – sooner rather than later, hopefully – please continue creating your amazing images. But, in the interest of India's wildlife, **it is time to add conservation photography to your skillset.**

Capture photos and videos of manmade threats – hunting, poaching, roadkills, mined slopes, biodiversity losses, deforested hillsides, monoculture plantations, ugly constructions within forests, feral dogs attacking wild animals, plastic waste in the midst of jungles, wild species on sale in markets. **With a record of the location, date and time, these can help conservation immensely.** Share them widely on your networks. Send them to us (www.conservationindia.org).



Volunteer with local conservation NGOs. There are so many ongoing hard-fought conservation battles these days; they could do with your help. They also need your visual storytelling skills. Reach out to them today! →

UNDER THE SEA

NAYANTARA JAIN TELLS YOU HOW TO KEEP YOUR WATER ADVENTURES LOW IN NEGATIVE IMPACT



39 CHOOSE RESPONSIBLE DIVE OPERATORS

Do your research before you book to ensure that your dive operator is doing their best for the environment.

41 GIVE BACK TO THE OCEANS

Use some of your trip to give back through voluntourism initiatives – use your dives towards collecting conservation data, giving back to local communities; it's a great way to holiday while also learning lots of interesting things about our planet and its ecosystems.

42

DON'T ENCOURAGE MARINE ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY

Do not go to attractions that keep wild marine animals in captivity, or dive with operators that feed or 'chum the waters' to attract big animals for you to see.

40 DON'T BE WASTEFUL

Be extra mindful of the waste you generate especially when visiting small islands that often do not have the facilities to process waste. Drink coconut water instead of bottled colas, eat fresh food instead of buying packaged snacks – it's better for the environment, your own health and the local economy.



43 ARM YOURSELF

Equip yourself with the apps and information needed to ensure you make sustainable choices when it comes to your seafood – both on holiday and at home. (For example, @KnowYourFish on Twitter provides guidelines on which fish to eat on the west coast of India in each season – Editor)



ON THE ROAD

ALLOW **RISHAD SAAM MEHTA** TO TELL YOU HOW TO BE PLANET-FRIENDLY ON ROAD TRIPS. THE FIRST STEP, OF COURSE, IS TO ENSURE THAT YOUR CAR IS IN GOOD SHAPE, AND NON POLLUTING.

44

BE CAUTIOUS BUT FRIENDLY ON THE ROAD

There is a lot of talk of the road being unsafe post the pandemic; **be wary but don't treat everyone with suspicion.**

CHOOSE LOCAL – YOU'RE ON THE ROAD!

Take advantage of being on a road trip to get far off the beaten track, and **support local businesses, homestays or B&Bs.**

EAT AT LOCAL DHABAS

Favour local *dhabas* en route rather than fast food chains in food courts. If you have to stop at a food court, pick a local enterprise to eat at. Local *dhabas* might look ramshackle, but I have never ever fallen ill from eating at even the most nondescript ones.

46

47



48

CARRY LOTS OF WATER

This doesn't get said enough – carry stainless steel canteens for each traveller and a jerry can of water in the car, so you don't have to buy drinking water along the way. **Carry mugs or cups** so you don't need to use plastic at tea stops if you're not comfortable with drinking from *dhaba* glasses.

SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

Tip generously. Abroad, you would conscientiously calculate and hand over a 20% tip. Do the same at tea stops and *dhabas*, especially to the guy serving you and the cook. →



CONSIDER WHERE YOU STAY

49 BE SUSTAINABLE EVEN IN A HOTEL



"You can **incorporate small sustainable ways in your travelling even while staying in a hotel**," says Shramona. "I always carry my own toiletries; that way I don't have to use the plastic bottles of shampoos and body washes in hotels." Philippa agrees: "I love hotels that provide shampoo in refillable pots, but we need to consider the impact of COVID-19 on this."

Be conscious of energy consumption



"It's important to turn off the AC when you leave the room," Shramona reminds us. This is especially **vital in hotels that don't have a key-card cut-off**. Switch off all the lights and fans, too, so that energy is not unnecessarily used the whole day while you are out and about.

51

50 REUSE AS YOU WOULD AT HOME



It's tempting to feel entitled because you've paid for the use of a hotel room, but consider the environmental cost. "Reuse your hotel towel to save a lot of power and water consumption," says Shramona.

Although many hotels now ask you to place a given card to indicate that you don't need daily changes, in places where this is absent, you can still **leave a note for housekeeping** that your bath and bed linen does not need changing every day.

52 BE CONSIDERATE

Hotel staff is usually busy and overworked; **leave your room in a reasonable condition**, so housekeeping doesn't have to work extra hard to get it back into shape.

END NOTES TO NEW BEGINNINGS

53



"Strictly say 'no' to animal tourism," urges Shramona. "Over time, I have made a conscious choice to not visit animal parks, zoos and any such places where animals are abused, used as entertainers and made to perform tricks for tourists." Where it comes to animals in the wild, research carefully about the impact on them before going on whale-watching trips or swimming with dolphins, to **reassure yourself that the operator you will use is planet-friendly**. Ask for an **alternative to elephant rides on safari**; there usually is one and will be provided if you enquire and insist.



54

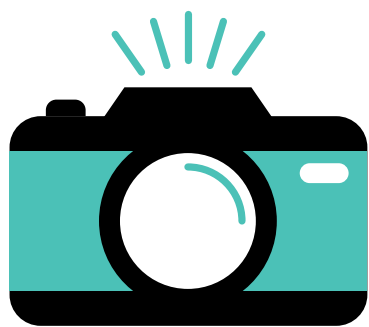
DON'T ENCOURAGE **CHILD** EXPLOITATION

"Places such as Pushkar and Jaipur have a lot of child exploitation in tourism," Philippa points out. "Children often dress up in fancy clothes and walk around asking for alms in exchange for a photograph. These children are made to miss school for a certain period when the tourist season is at its peak. Refrain from interacting with children in any way that could drag them into the cycle of earning through tourism and not being educated."

GO BEYOND BEST PRICE

55

Keep in mind that conscious travel might not be the most budget-friendly, but it can still be quite affordable when you consider the benefits to the planet and to people in the destinations you visit. **Look for fair pricing**, Philippa urges. "Bargaining, undercutting and underselling benefits no one at the end of the day; standards drop, and hygiene and safety levels are compromised." Also consider that the communities you are going into need the money you are willing to bring into them; the privilege we enjoy in being able to travel brings with it a responsibility to share. →



THINK BEYOND THE PHOTOS

"How about travelling without a camera?" asks Philippa. "People are so focussed these days on taking a picture that **they miss out on the chance to immerse themselves in the experience they are witnessing.**" Engaging, she points out, results in meaningful experiences and better memories. She agrees that this suggestion is controversial, but it is a thought worth keeping in mind.

56

57

Do Try This at Home!



"Be a traveller at home," suggests Jeremy. "Take all these principles, and bring them into your daily lives. Tourism should be about seeing the world with curiosity and wonder. You don't need to go anywhere else to do that. You just need to slow down and look."



Responsible travel. Conscious travel. Sustainable travel. Immersive travel.

Philippa says, "There needs to be a big shift from travelling for the self to travelling for others." It all comes down to the fact that we have a duty of care to communities and to the planet. ^{UP}

TOURISM DECLARES A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

by JEREMY SMITH, co-founder

We declared a climate emergency in January this year because we felt that too many in tourism were not taking the climate emergency seriously enough, and that the industry's focus was on aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, while using an over-reliance on offsets to get to 'neutral'.

The climate emergency is happening now.

2050 is too distant a deadline, and using it as a (time) frame makes it too easy to delay meaningful action. We are building a collective of companies and organisations who know that they have to act now.

We have 86 members now, including The Blue Yonder, Mitrandir Journeys and the TOFTigers Initiative from India. We believe that

by building a growing collective of companies and organisations from all parts of the industry, all across the world, and through sharing solutions and ideas, we can not only meet our commitments to reduce, but work together to design better, slower, more connected forms of tourism, where local communities' interests come first.

When the COVID-19 emergency shut tourism down, we took a step back to allow everyone to focus on the immediate crisis, as we did not wish to be a distraction. Now that the focus is shifting towards imagining what the recovery might look like, we are restarting our public advocacy to ensure that the next chapter of tourism has climate action at its heart.

INTO THE LOCAL

We asked our fellow travellers to share stories of immersive local experiences on their travels. We're happy this feature is **#LPMIMadeWithYou**



HIKING OUT IN BALI, INDONESIA,

Sameera Jagtap, Pune, Maharashtra

📍 @memories_per_mile

“ It's really tough to explore beautiful Bali in just a week, especially on a budget. I had my itinerary planned for a week with beaches and tourist attractions I had found on the Internet. Little did I know that a local coconut vendor would change the way I looked at this place. I was so lucky to have struck up a conversation with this young lad, a passionate trekker. He told me about a hidden gem, convincing me to take a detour from my day's plan, and, with his guidance, I managed the trek and got back in time for the last ferry out. I was able to do the beautiful hike up and down the hill to a destination I could never imagine existed on Earth. The best part of my entire trip was getting to the pretty treehouse Rumah Pohon in Molenteng on Nusa Penida Island, overlooking the majestic blue Diamond Beach, and, yes, it had been totally unplanned! That was the moment I really felt like a traveller and not a tourist. ” →



GOING *PIDE* IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Karthik Murali H, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

@hkmurali | anasiantraveller

@Karthik_Murali

“Exploring the delicacies of a new city is a delightful pastime. I knew I had to try three things on my Istanbul trip: Turkish coffee, *baklava* and Turkish pizza. Although the strong black Turkish *kahve* (coffee) is found everywhere, it was a challenge when it came to pizza. All I could see everywhere was international pizza chains, and that was the last thing I wanted. So I asked my hotel, and they directed me to a quaint little *pide* (pizza flatbread in Turkish) place in a residential area near Sultanahmet. That night, as I strolled down the dimly-lit street and just before I decided not to go any further, I saw a tiny little pizza place with street seating. Though the guy didn't understand English, I managed to establish that I was pure vegetarian. He took me down to the basement, where a few locals were busy with a card game, cigar smoke swirling atmospherically in the air. He pointed towards the ingredients – tomato, cheese, chillies – and assured me of a great *pide*. It arrived about 10 minutes later, hot from the woodfired oven, garnished with a green chilli. It turned out to be one of the most delicious pizzas I've ever had.”



GETTING ARTFUL IN RADHANPUR, GUJARAT

Dr Bahaar Meera Jain, New Delhi

@bahaaron_ka_karwaan

“The diverse crafts of Gujarat have always fascinated me, so, on a work trip to Ahmedabad, I coaxed my friend to take me to Radhanpur, which houses a heritage embroidery museum run by SEWA. And, 30km from there, at Bakutra, SEWA runs a homestay at one of the artisans' homes. We booked ourselves a room there for the night.

“Dusty roads lined by fields of fennel led us to Kamala Sadan, where we were greeted by the women artisans themselves. After a guided tour of the museum, we left for Gauriben's homestay. Peacocks perched on the roof, and the courtyard was shadowed by a fruiting chikoo tree. Over a traditional meal of *rotlo* and *kadhi*, Gauriben showed us the embroidery she had brought in her dowry, including her grandmother's 120-year-old *ghagra*. Such was the quality of the needlework that not a thread was out of place. Seeing my enthusiasm, she offered to teach me some basics. The next morning, I learned how to stitch *sheesha* (glass) onto cloth. Gauriben also taught me some of the more traditional patterns that I immediately embroidered on my tee!

She shared her concerns about the craft dying out, lamenting that the younger generation is neither interested in creating nor wearing the pieces. We left, sad in the bittersweet knowledge that we had glimpsed a craft that might die out with our generation.”



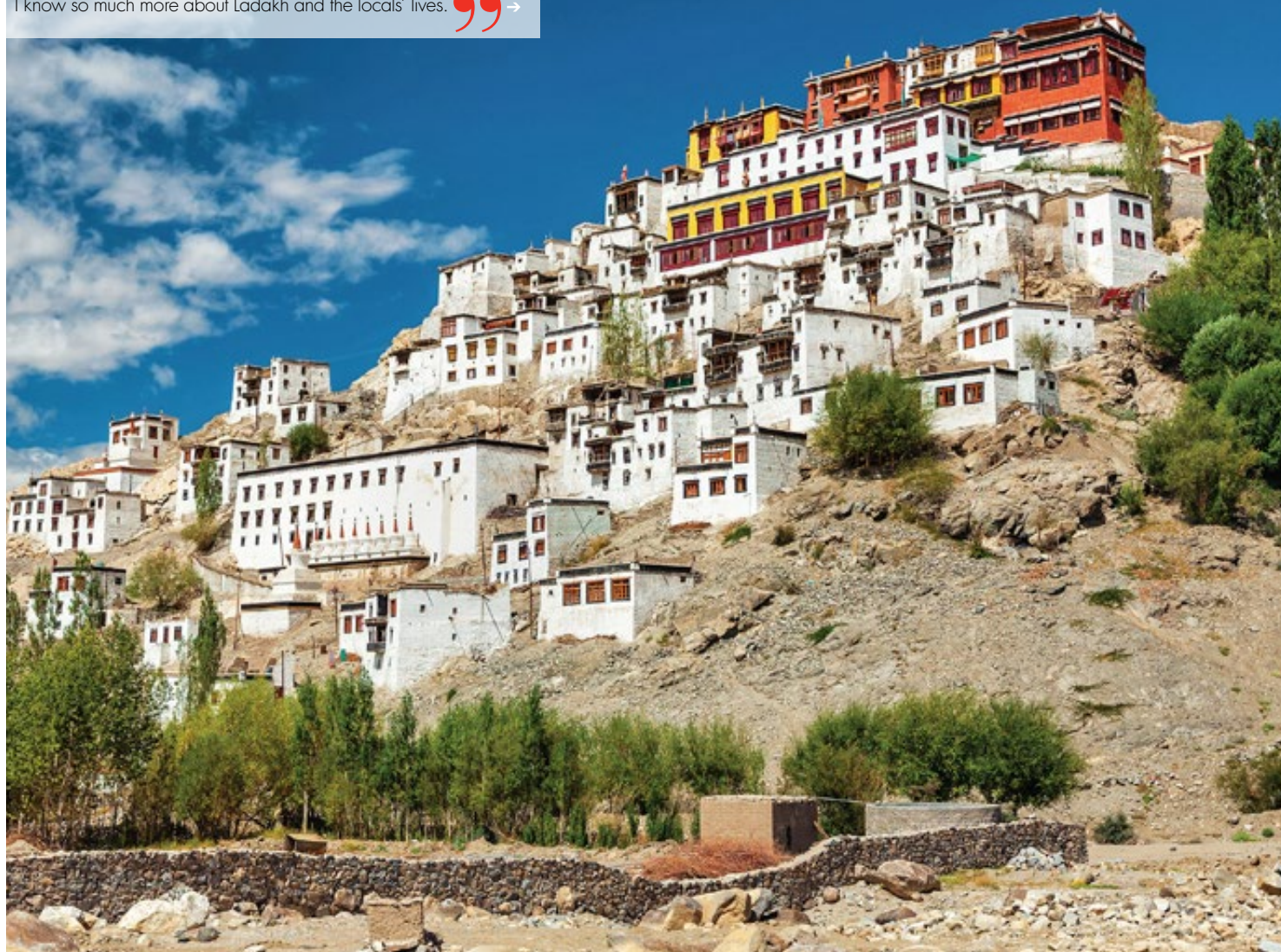


LIVING THE *VIDA LOCAL* IN LADAKH

Neha Timande, Mandrem, Goa

Instagram icon @stroll_the_world_with_neha

“ To travel beyond Leh town to get to know the Ladakhi people is an incredible experience very few are blessed to have. On my trip last year, I visited Temisgam, a small village 94km from Leh town, with scenic views – perfect for a weekend road trip. I stayed in a homestay with Tashi *didi* and her family because I wanted to know more about the daily life and lifestyle of the locals. They made me feel very welcome, and I was privileged to observe their home very keenly. They served me hot Ladakhi butter tea with *takki*, homemade biscuits that go really well with it. I enjoyed looking at their collection of utensils, used and preserved by their ancestors, made with different metals like copper, bronze and brass, and also of stone (*inset*). The jars at the top are used for serving *chhang*, the homemade Ladakhi drink brewed from rice. The black stone pots are used to cook vegetables and *dal*. Thanks to my incredible time in Temisgam, I feel I know so much more about Ladakh and the locals' lives. ” →





HARNESSING HOPE IN CAPPADOCIA, TURKEY

Atisha & Arunava Guin, Mumbai, Maharashtra

@piggy_love_tales

“ In Cappadocia, after a day of seeing amazing sights across the magical fairytale landscape, we returned to our small B&B, Goreme Mansion. Mohammad, the assistant caretaker, invited us for Turkish tea and *pide* (Turkish pizza). He was excited that we were Indian. He started singing Bollywood songs; imagine our wonderment at hearing the latest chartbusters from home sung by a foreigner in Turkey. Over more tea and *pide*, we shared our stories: he was from Afghanistan and had wanted to study in India but hadn't been able to afford it. Instead, he had migrated to Turkey along with his family to find employment. He shared his dream of watching an El-Clasico football match in Barcelona. We shared our lives. Then, we started an impromptu karaoke session. From pop beats to sombre ones, from modern to classical songs, we sang. He forgot his worries; we scrapped our to-do list. Under the setting Turkish sun, an Indian couple and a war immigrant Afghani youth came together for music. Happiness and hope met and sang. Joy is often made up of these fleeting moments. Fairytale landscapes are glorious, but fairytales of human beings are equally beautiful. As we write this, we pray that Mohammad's fairytale comes true: that the boy who left his country for a brighter future cheers for his favourite FC Barcelona. “We will probably never meet Mohammad again but, in that one evening, he provided us a memory for a lifetime. ”



PHOTOGRAPH/MARINA BOMBINA / 123RF



BARRING NONE IN BARCELONA, SPAIN

Ann Maria Vincent, Thrissur, Kerala

@backpack.with.ann

“Wherever I roam on this planet, I look for local experiences because I believe that they are the key to blending in with new cultures and travelling responsibly. My friend and I were looking for a local bar on our trip to Barcelona last year, simply because we wanted to drink like locals. And we found Nevermind. This skate-themed bar, with its punky and quirky ambience, had so much to offer explorers like me who always want to experience new things. It's not a place where you will find a lot of visitors; it's usually just local young people. When we walked in, we were the only Indians there, actually the only non-locals. But that didn't deter us. We moved from the bar area to the skate ramp area inside, picked some cool seats, and it was easy to socialise and blend with the local crowd. People were very welcoming, we played foosball with some of them, and headbanged together to the Spanish metal played by a local band. Honestly, we didn't expect to have such a great experience in this Spanish local bar while walking in, but the more time we spent, the more we felt at one with the locals.”



FARMING FRESH IN OOTY, TAMIL NADU

Raghuvarmsh Chavali, Hyderabad, Telangana

@raghuvarmshchavali | @MrChavali

“Those were the days of our graduation, and the trip to Ooty (Udhagamandalam) is memorable because it came about as a surprise from one of my best friends; I had no clue where I was heading. On the first day, we woke up early. The vegetables at breakfast were absolutely delicious, totally fresh. I found out that they had just been gathered from a nearby farm. I knew I had to go there with my friends Akash and Vijay to see the harvest. It was a cloudy day and drizzling by the time we reached the farm, which cultivated vegetables like carrots, cabbage and potatoes. We found the local farmers working in the fields; they received us warmly and told us how to pull the veggies out from the ground. It wasn't as simple as we had first thought, but we could master the process in little time. At the end, the farmers presented us with those veggies, a great gesture that topped the amazing experience in which we could practise and learn something we would never have done otherwise. That trip really taught me that travelling is all about learning new, unexplored things.”





20 SUSTAINABLE PLACES TO STAY

From lodges with cutting-edge eco-technology to tours designed to protect wildlife and empower communities, these planet-friendly escapes will make you feel better than ever about getting away

DOMINICA SECRET BAY

In the wake of 2017's Hurricane Maria, Secret Bay was one of Dominica's comeback stories. The intimate eco-luxury retreat, on a cliff above the sea, partially reopened in late 2018 with six villas and a new wellness pavilion and fine-dining restaurant showcasing indigenous herbs grown onsite. Meticulous care was taken to develop the site without heavy machinery, with vetiver grass planted to fortify the cliff for decades to come.

Intimacy and mindfulness are at the forefront here. Each decked-out villa has a full kitchen, private plunge pool, deck, and privacy provided by Mother Nature. Sure, there are plenty of activities – everything from yoga and sea-cave exploring to private art lessons with a local artist – but the real treat here is being lulled away from 'doing' in favour of simply 'being'.

That said, there are some not-to-be-missed experiences. Guests can venture to **Prince Rupert Bay** with a local fisher to learn how to hunt lionfish, an invasive (and delicious)

species that threatens local biodiversity. After diving in to practise throwing spears at the bay's sandy floor, it's time to aim for the beautifully striped lionfish themselves. Whatever is caught comes back to shore for a beachside barbecue.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP There are 531 hectares of protected wetlands, coral reefs and tropical forests to explore at **Cabrils National Park**, set around a peninsula just 15 minutes' drive north. Find local produce, spices, and more at the Portsmouth Saturday Market.
www.secretbay.dm; three-night stay from ₹2,00,000

THAILAND YARD HOSTEL

Yard Hostel in Bangkok is flying the flag for a new model of environmentally-friendly big-city living on a small budget. Recycling is just one social initiative at the hostel, as even the buildings are recycled – the rooms were shipping containers before being insulated with recycled paper to keep out the heat.

Set in an enclosed garden, Yard supports environmentalism – guests are provided with water bottles to refill with purified water from a shared water station, low-energy lighting is triggered by motion sensors and timers, and the breakfast yoghurt and jam is hand-made onsite. Room rates help fund good causes, such as Karen community forest conservation projects.

But this still feels like a proper Thai hostel, down to the free wi-fi and yoga classes and the library of well-thumbed travel novels and guidebooks. The name riffs on the Thai meaning of ‘yard’ (relative), and staying here feels like visiting an eccentric family member who is happily doing their own thing. In this urban oasis, you’ll hardly notice that the edgy streets of Ari are just outside.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP BTS Skytrain provides a low-carbon way to explore the newer parts of Bangkok and the legendary Chatuchak Weekend Market. To reach the historic old quarter of Ratanakosin, you’ll have to finish your journey on foot or by taxi. → www.theyardhostel.com; dorm beds from ₹1,300/ person





THE NETHERLANDS CONSCIOUS HOTEL WESTERPARK

This Dutch boutique hotel group is all about sustainability, and the newest of its Amsterdam properties also has bragging rights as the Netherlands' first wind-powered hotel. One side overlooks the buzzy Westergas arts complex, the other a tranquil green space, and it's a 10-minute cycle ride from Jordaan and the city's historic centre.

Rooms are spacious, stylish and streamlined, with comfortable beds and large windows, and all materials

are cradle-to-cradle (made with future reuse in mind), recycled or vintage. The all-day dining Kantoor bar and restaurant serves creative dishes made with organic ingredients – think lamb shank, Atlantic wolf-fish or yellow coconut curry, rounded off with vegan banana bread and cacao sorbet. Savour it with an organic craft beer.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Putting the design flair into fair trade, **Nukuhiva** is just a 20-minute walk southeast, and is the place to go for fashion, accessories and shoes for both men and women who put people and nature first (www.nukuhiva.nl).

www.conscioushotels.com; from ₹5,700

SWEDEN GEUNJA SAMI ECO LODGE

To visit the Geunja Sami Eco Lodge is to completely disconnect from the modern world. This low-impact operation (which only welcomes guests 12 times a year) invites visitors to learn bushcraft skills, study medicinal herbs, take a dip in the lake, light the wood-burning sauna, fish for dinner, and forage in the forests.

Reindeer herder Mikael Vinka and his Sami family will regale you with local wisdom, traditions and legends over a bonfire in the *goathie* (a type of teepee used by Sami for millennia). You can join Vinka on a trek following his ancestor's footprints into the nearby Vindel Mountains, where

it's possible to learn about the conservation work he does with the Swedish government to protect the Arctic fox.

There are no roads to Geunja; access is by boat. You sleep on reindeer hides in the *goathie* or under a kerosene lamp in a shared timber cabin with six beds. A crackling fire ensures you survive the crisp Lapland night, fresh for more Sami-inspired detoxing.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Ammarnäs is near the southern end of the famed **Kungsleden** (King's Trail), a 270-mile hiking route through Sweden's far north. The path traverses varied landscapes of the Lapland mountain world from low-lying birch forests to craggy alpine plateaus. → www.bjorkexperience.com; three-day, all-inclusive tour from ₹1,00,000/ person



ARGENTINA

AWASI IGUAZÚ

Just a 20-minute drive from South America's most recognisable waterfall, this luxurious safari-style lodge on the banks of the Iguazú River is surrounded by the Atlantic Rainforest. Built on stilts for minimal environmental interference and an easy walk from the main lodge, the 14 spacious villas are replete with private living rooms, extensive decks with sun loungers and plunge pools, indoor-outdoor showers and traditional textiles and baskets woven by the indigenous Guaraní people.

With a private guide and a four-wheel drive vehicle included with each villa, guests can tailor-make their exploration of the rainforest, with over 1,000 species of plants and wildlife, from tropical orchids to capuchin monkeys. Awasi, which opened in 2018, worked with local Guaraní communities and renowned biologists to create excursions, including to crystal-clear pools only accessible by boat. Perks include entering Iguazú National Park from a secret location, allowing 30 minutes of exploration before the crowds arrive.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Visit the **Mbya Guaraní settlement** to meet the original inhabitants and guardians of Iguazú Falls and join nature walks to study wild medicinal plants. You can also join art classes to make works from clay and leaves.

www.awasiguazu.com; two-night, all-inclusive stay from ₹1,40,00/ person



UGANDA

VOLCANOES SAFARIS

Volcanoes Safaris offers luxury lodge-based accommodation and mountain gorilla and chimpanzee tracking in East Africa. Its model protects and preserves the region's impressive wildlife and local cultures. Guests can visit Volcanoes Safaris' three lodges in Uganda and one in Rwanda individually, or book a multi-lodge safari, with ₹7,300 from each booking benefiting the Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust, a non-profit that supports local communities and conservation activities.

At Mount Gahinga Lodge in Uganda, at the base of the Virunga Volcanoes next to Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, guests can stay in luxury *bandas* (stone huts with papyrus roofs) and set out to track golden monkeys or endangered mountain gorillas. Overlooking the primeval Bwindi Impenetrable Forest,

Volcanoes Bwindi Lodge in Uganda envelops guests in a jungle canopy within easy reach of trekking with gorillas, while, at the eclectic and contemporary Kyambura Gorge Lodge on the edge of Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park, you can track chimpanzees in a sunken forest. Extend your trip into Rwanda at Virunga Lodge, a 10-*banda* property on a ridge with views of the Virunga Volcanoes and the Musanze valley, an ideal base for tracking gorillas.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Travellers can visit and support many social projects near each hotel, including **Bwindi Bar** near Bwindi Lodge, a community restaurant and training institution, and a women's coffee co-op near Kyambura Gorge Lodge. → www.volcanoessafaris.com; from ₹23,000



PHOTOGRAPHS: ARIEN VELDHOVEN; ROBERTO M. GONZALEZ; JONATHAN GREGSON



PERU

SACRED VALLEY & LARES ADVENTURE

The silver lining to the ever-increasing flow of tourists to Machu Picchu is that alternative pathways to it have been devised. Beginning near the village of Lares, the three-day, two-night Lares Trail is a great option for escaping the crowds. But, with most people camping en route, the benefit to locals can be minimal.

Owned by Peruvians with a passion for Andean culture, **Mountain Lodges of Peru's**

Sacred Valley and Lares Adventure sustains local communities and minimises the environmental footprint. Combining visits to key Sacred Valley Inca sites and the most interesting hiking sections of the Lares Trail, the tour can be completed in five or seven days. En route, guests stay in luxurious, low-impact lodges constructed in consultation with local communities. Locals are given the hospitality training necessary to join lodge personnel teams and are also investors in the properties. The tour includes exclusive experiences from a traditional lunch prepared by a farming village

that once reaped no benefit from tourism, to a visit to a traditional weaving community.

Led by a highly-trained Peruvian guide, the expedition is topped off with a visit to Machu Picchu on the final day before heading back to Cuzco.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Check out the **Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cuzco**, a not-for-profit set up to support Andean weavers, which also has a small on-site museum (www.textilescusco.org). → www.mountainlodgesofperu.com; five-day, all-inclusive tour from ₹1,40,000/ person

CANADA

FOGO ISLAND INN

Off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, a stay at Fogo Island Inn is all about immersing yourself in the wild. A gateway to the Labrador Strait's famous Iceberg Alley, this retreat is on the largest of a 100-island archipelago and is built on stilts for minimal environmental impact. Each of the 29 guest rooms has boundless views of the sea and sky.

Founded by entrepreneur and Fogo Island local Zita Cobb to advance the cultural and economic resilience of her hometown, the hotel's profits are reinvested in the community, which is actively involved in hospitality. With community hosts as guides, guests can enjoy a range of excursions: exploring the island's 125 miles of ancient paths, sailing off the Atlantic coast with a crab fisher, or learning to make jams and jellies from wild partridge berries and blueberries with an expert forager.

On the property, you can cosy up to one of six wood-burning fireplaces and work your way through the inn's extensive library, take in a film at the in-house cinema, relax in the rooftop spa with hot tubs and a sauna, and have delicious meals at the restaurant with its floor-to-ceiling views of the Atlantic.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP The lodge is an ideal base for visiting all four locations of **Fogo Island Arts Studios** designed by Todd Saunders, a native of Gander who built the off-grid studios with compost toilets, solar-powered energy, and wood-burning stoves.

www.fogoislandinn.ca; two-night, all-inclusive stay from ₹2,20,00/ two persons

INDONESIA

BAMBU INDAH

John and Cynthia Hardy's sustainable masterpiece Bambu Indah is a tranquil, village-y jungle resort on the outskirts of Ubud in the lush interior of Bali. Stay in one of the 11 repurposed antique Javanese bridal homes, decorated with treasures found on the owners' travels, or in one of the awe-inspiring bamboo structures.

Guests are encouraged to reuse towels and linens, and the all-natural organic bathroom amenities help to keep Bali's waterways clean. There's a swimming pond fed by a stream that gurgles through the property, two on-site restaurants serve local cuisine crafted from produce grown on the property, or sourced locally, and many of the delicious meals are served on banana-leaf plates.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Join a tour of nearby **Bamboo U** to learn about bamboo's potential as the sustainable timber of the future. Choose from a one-day intro or immerse yourself in design courses of three to 11 days. → www.bambuindah.com; from ₹8,000/ person





NEW ZEALAND HAPUKU LODGE & TREE HOUSES

Created by a family of food-loving architects just outside Kaikoura, a little coastal town with a big, environmentally-conscious heart, Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses was destined to be special. The luxury lodge, with its two nature-inspired suites, came first in 2003, but the five tree houses built four years later really put Hapuku in a class of its own. They're 10 metres above the ground to take in views over the tops of 100-year-old native *kanuka* trees of the nearby Seaward Kaikoura

mountain range and the Pacific. The whole place is a model of sustainability – important in Kaikoura, a zero-waste community that banned plastic bags in 2007 and is regularly EarthCheck-certified.

Included in the room rates, gourmet dinners showcase the region's fresh produce and seafood, including Kaikoura's famous crayfish, and venison. In addition to having its own organic vegetable garden and olive trees, Hapuku is a working deer farm.

Low-impact activities include beach and botanical walks, swimming in the solar-heated pool and biking mountain trails,

while the Mangamaunu surf break and Kaikoura's marine wonders are just down the road. Best of all, Hapuku plants native trees to offset guests' return flights to New Zealand from anywhere in the world.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Love sealife?

You'll love Kaikoura. A Māori-run whale-watching business put it on the tourist map in 1987, and it's still one of the best places in the world to see whales of all kinds and to swim with fur seals and huge pods of dusky dolphins (www.whalewatch.co.nz). www.hapukulodge.com half-board from ₹47,000/ two persons



MOROCCO TOUDA ECO LODGE

More like a large family gathering where everyone is warmly welcomed, Touda Eco Lodge is comfortable but modest, as is everything about staying here. The rooms are decorated with local hand-made rugs; the hot water is solar heated; and electricity is used sparingly. All the materials, the stone, wood and mud used to build the lodge, are from here. Cars are a rare sight, as villagers walk or ride horses and mules to get around.

In the quiet lounge, coffee-table books celebrate the culture

of the nomadic people of the High Atlas, who have lived here in harmony with the landscape for millennia. Meals are lovingly prepared each day by staff from the village and consumed either outside, with dramatic views of the mountains, or inside, with other guests drawn to the lounge and fireplace.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Take a horse-trek across the mountains to visit nomadic families and share a meal, before joining in with the afternoon siesta in their temporary camp. Communal living here means everything is shared. →

www.touda.co.uk; from ₹5,900



WASHINGTON STATE, THE USA ROAM BEYOND KALALOCH

A micro-community in the middle of nowhere, Roam Beyond's mobile dwellings give exclusive access to the wilderness of Washington state without disrupting it. With hammocks, communal tables, a covered lounge area and lawn games, the site features fully off-grid, portable cabin-like pods powered by the sun and built with responsibly-sourced materials.

Both the UNESCO-listed Olympic National Park and Hoh Rain Forest are on your doorstep, as is the coast, meaning near-limitless hiking and far more animals than people – look for Roosevelt elk in the forest. Thousands of old-growth logs on the beach are perfect to perch on and toast the sun as it sets over the water, rippling with humpback whales and sea otters.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP An easy three-mile hike north ends at **Kalaloch Lodge**, where you can refuel with a hot meal and a stiff drink. Restock basic supplies at **Queets Trading Post**, a small store a 10-minute drive southeast.

www.roambeyond.travel/kalaloch; May – October; two nights from ₹38,000/ four persons

MADAGASCAR EDEN LODGE

Imagine spotting migrating whales from your sunlounger, or perhaps a nocturnal lemur on your way to dinner. Accessible only by boat from the nearby island of Nosy Be, Eden Lodge, on a remote beach in north-western Madagascar, is ideal for spotting endemic critters, from 99 species of lemur to parrots and chameleons, and its colourful reefs teem with marine life.

With four-poster beds built from fallen trees and furnished with Malagasy crafts, rooms at the eco-luxe lodge – which claims to have been the world's first solar-powered hotel – are high-end safari tents under traditional thatched roofs. A ravenala tree is planted for each guest to offset carbon impact. By using only solar power, buying local, and recycling wastewater, Eden Lodge became the first hotel in Madagascar certified by international sustainability organisation Green Globe.

Between hikes, dives, massages, and boat tours, you can enjoy meals at the restaurant, made with fish straight from the sea and veg from the organic garden.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Beach activities are complimentary, and excursions to fishing villages or waterfalls are affordable and easily arranged. Be sure to spend an hour or so walking around the island's baobab grove; one of the massive trees is more than 700 years old. →

www.edenlodge.net; all-inclusive from ₹15,000/ person on twin-sharing basis





AUSTRALIA LONGITUDE 131°

Australia's most famous rock, Uluru, looks incredible from any angle, but its colour transformation from a luxury tented room at Longitude 131° is mesmerising.

The resort's 16 tented pavilions, furnished with every low-impact amenity you could want, are designed to 'float' above the ancient sand dunes southeast of Yulara, Uluru's tourism hub. Part of the boutique Baillie Lodges group, a collection of ultra-sustainable luxury lodges in unique Australian wilderness destinations, Longitude 131° harnesses much of its power from the sun, has showers instead of baths to save water, pumps waste out to Yulara, and grows fresh produce (food waste is used as compost) to further reduce its carbon footprint. The lodge works with the local Aboriginal community, which led to the launch of an artist-in-residence programme in 2019 and gives the chance to talk to artists as they create their works.

After an extensive refurbishment in 2017, Longitude 131° looks better than ever, but, with climbing Uluru banned in 2019, the views, too, have arguably never been better.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Rates include sunset viewing and walks around Uluru and Kata Tjuta, plus bespoke experiences such as a tour of the **Ernabella Arts Studio**, Australia's oldest continuously-running indigenous arts centre.

www.longitude131.com.au; two-night, all-inclusive stay from ₹1,50,000/ person

ITALY

LEFAY RESORT & SPA LAGO DI GARDA

Lefay Resort & Spa Lago di Garda is a stylish lakeside playground for socialites with a conscience. In 11 hectares of parkland cascading down the hillside towards Lake Garda, it's a Modernist/Art Deco homage with serious eco-tech backstage. A hidden power plant digests woodchips to heat the infinity pool, switching to methane-fed micro-turbines in winter. An absorption cooling system keeps guests as chilled as a freshly-mixed Bellini in summer.

Elegant rooms are set into the hillside beneath living green roofs, with silent radiant heating and

cooling. Meals at the lemon-scented restaurant are crafted with local produce, including olive oil pressed on the lakeshore, and spa treatments use local herbs and essences. Scanning systems monitor light levels across the complex to minimise the use of electric light. Anything the resort can't minimise or avoid is offset by carbon credits; it's some of the best eco-living money can buy.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Visible from almost every corner of the gorgeously-landscaped grounds, the shimmering waters of **Lake Garda** call out like a beacon. To keep your carbon footprint low, skip the motorboat rides in favour of wild swimming from the beaches at Sirmione, or windsurfing at Riva Del Garda. → <https://lagodigarda.lefayresorts.com/en>; from ₹36,000



PHOTOGRAPHS: GEORGE APOSTOULIS, DANNY IACOB / SHUTTERSTOCK, JEREMY WOODHOUSE / GETTY IMAGES



CROATIA HOTEL LYRA

The name 'Lyra' echoes the 'harp' that is one of the 88 constellations – an astronomical nod to the dark skies beneath which this hotel slumbers, bordering Croatia's UNESCO-listed Plitvice Lakes National Park. There's so little light pollution that stars are keenly visible, especially through telescopes in Hotel Lyra's rooftop rooms and gardens.

Nature is a constant companion at Lyra. The hotel sits in a wooded clearing, with Plitvice Lakes' emerald pools just 10 miles away. Hiking the park's web of trails is encouraged, and there's a small chance of spotting a European brown bear, lynx or eagle. The hotel runs daily tours to little-explored Una National Park in Western Bosnia, where you can white-water raft.

Inside, this four-star design hotel has a Balkan flavour. Lyra opened in 2019 with a mission to gain Green Key status, and to embrace responsible

tourism by regenerating the community, which still bears the scars of the Balkan War. A charitable foundation has been established to help locals rebuild, and the hotel employs people from different communities (including Bosnians from across the border) to bring them together and facilitate unity. People from the surrounding villages were also invited to share their recipes, now served in the hotel's restaurant. Food is sourced locally, handicrafts are sold in the shops, and brandy made from local plums is the traditional welcome drink. As the Croatians would say: *živjeli* (cheers!) to that.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Karstic limestone created both Plitvice Lake and vast caverns nine miles northeast of the park (well signposted from the D1). Visits are by 45-minute guided tour (minimum two people) through chambers with names such as 'Hall of Lost Souls'. Wear warm clothes and sensible shoes. → www.hotelpplitvice.com; from ₹15,000/ two persons



LAOS

ELEPHANT CONSERVATION CENTRE

Get to know 29 Asian elephants in a 530-hectare protected forest along the shores of Nam Tien Lake. On a one- or two-night stay at this conservation centre, you'll sleep and eat in their midst while learning about their plight from a team of international vets and local guides. Longer, seven-day volunteer stays are more in-depth as you help with current projects and assist in the caretaking of the animals.

Arriving at the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) on a small wooden boat gliding through the green weeds that carpet Nam Tien Lake is a memorable experience. You drop your belongings in either fan-cooled bungalows with shared bathrooms or the more comfortable rosewood lodge (a stilt house based on the traditional Tai Lue style).

The ECC has the largest herd under human care in Laos and a strict no-riding policy. Most animals have been rescued from the logging industry or brought for the breeding programme (the ECC hopes to re-create sustainable breeding populations in the wild). You'll help fund one of the last hopes for Laos's elephant population. There are just 400 in the wild, but, with the ECC's help, the future will be brighter.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Stop by **Big Brother Mouse**, a publisher that produces colourful Lao-language children's books, many of them local fairytales (www.bigbrothermouse.com). www.elephantconservationcenter.com; two days from ₹15,000/ person with meals and activities

ETHIOPIA

COMMUNITY TREKS

With nine UNESCO World Heritage sites, dramatic scenery and peerless history, it's no surprise Ethiopia has been drawing a growing number of tourists after years of being associated with unrest and famine. With the nation recording the world's largest tourism growth in 2018, the need for sustainable tourism has never been greater.

Founded as a non-profit and now Ethiopia's most prominent community tourism company, **Tesfa Tours** specialises in multi-day guided hikes designed to empower local people to conserve their culture and protect the environment while delivering incredible guest experiences. Since developing its first routes in Lalibela

and Tigray, known for ancient rock-hewn churches, Tesfa expanded to include rural villages in Simien National Park and the verdant forests of Wof Washa with species you won't see anywhere else on Earth. Routes and the building of new guesthouses for hikers are planned with local communities to bring sustainable benefits – this is trekking for good.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP If you trek from Wok Washa, don't miss the chance, after having admired the views from Lik Marefya guesthouse, to descend into the valley to see an unusually laid-out monastery. The community that lives there, although Christian, claims to have converted from Judaism several centuries ago. →

www.tesfatours.com; minimum three-day community trek from ₹5,000/ day with meals



PHOTOGRAPHS: OLEKSANDR RUPETA/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES; PHILIP LEE HARVEY; ANDRÉS CHUMACHER/LAIF SENGKIT/SHUTTERSTOCK

NEPAL

DWARIKA'S HOTEL

This family-run luxury hotel has become a saviour for Newari architecture, dating back to the Malla dynasty (1201 – 1769AD). In the 1970s, Indian-born Dwarika Das Shrestha built his hotel in the red-brick style of the Kathmandu valley's palaces, incorporating wooden carvings salvaged from Kathmandu and beyond as the city began its march towards modernisation in the 1950s. The 83-room property has become the showcase of indigenous design.

To help preserve the art of Newari carving that makes it so unique, an on-site wood workshop teaches young craftspeople the ancient skill, now particularly valuable as the city continues to rebuild the temples damaged in the 2015 earthquake.

The hotel has also taken measures to reduce its environmental footprint by minimising single-use plastics in its bathrooms, and sources produce for its three restaurants (as well as the charming Kaiser Café in Thamel) from its own organic farms.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Dwarika's is handy for two top city sights: the **Shree Pashupatinath Temple** with its Hindu funeral *ghats* (15 minutes' walk), and **Boudhanath**, Nepal's largest Buddhist *stupa* (15 minutes' drive). Taxis line up in front of the hotel.

www.dwarikas.com; from ₹19,000/ two persons



MONGOLIA

LIVING WITH NOMADS

Living in *ger*, large circular canvas tents that can be dismantled in less than an hour, makes Mongolian herders mobile in their search for grasslands to feed their animals.

Nomadic families have started hosting travellers, which provides additional income and an incentive to keep up traditions. Several local operators include horseback, camel or yak riding in their packages. But be warned: it can leave you saddle-sore.

Stone Horse Expeditions & Travel's Train to Ger trips can be combined with Trans-Siberian railway journeys. You'll be driven from Ulaanbaatar to join your

hosts in Darkhid Valley. Staying with the family in their *ger*, or in one of your own, you'll share meals that include foods made from the milk of their livestock. Stone Horse Expeditions take protecting the environment seriously, and treat the herder families fairly.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP In Ulaanbaatar, you'll find traditional handicrafts at fair trade **Mary & Martha Mongolia** (www.mmmongolia.com); the **Mongolian Quilting Shop**, which sells handmade quilts produced by low-income families (www.dragonflyquilts.com/mongolia.htm); and the non-profit **Tsagaan Alt Wool Shop** (www.mongolianwoolcraft.mn). 

www.stonehorsemongolia.com; two-night ger + one night city guesthouse with Stone Horse Expedition & Travel from ₹22,000/ person



IMMERSIVE INDIAN IDYLLS

Want to be more a traveller than a tourist? To immerse yourself more fully in the local life and in the environment around you? These 15 stay options make it an easy choice

WORDS: PRIMROSE MONTEIRO-D'SOUZA, AMIT GAIKWAD, SAMARPAN BHOWMIK, AURELIA FERNANDES & AISHWARYA MENON

LEH, JAMMU & KASHMIR Tsermang Eco Camp

Sited just 15 minutes away from Leh town, Tsermang Eco Camp has spacious, welcoming tents spread across a meadow alongside the Indus River. Laurige and Camie are warm hosts, which helps given the often-cold weather in Ladakh. The facilities are basic but adequate, just what you need to immerse yourself into the region without impact. The camp's eco-friendly stance also includes solar power for the lamps, and buckets of hot water delivered to your tent for bathing. The use and showcasing of local ingredients is important, too. You'll sip zesty berry juice by the river, go sightseeing with a packed lunch; the food here is far from typical camp grub. Chef Leony transforms local ingredients

into unusual dishes – pasta with yak cheese, organic salads made with local greens, and custard infused with sweet apricots. She'll even teach you how to make momos and *thukpa* if you want to take some Himalayan cooking skills home.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP You can choose to hike through the farmland behind the camp all the way to the 14th-century **Spituk Gompa** five kilometres away. If you want to head out further, hire a taxi, or, better still, a Royal Enfield motorbike, and take your pick from the **Thikse, Hemis and Chemre monasteries** to the east, or the **Phyang, Likir and Alchi monasteries** to the west. **AM** 00-91-98990-20227, 00-91-97975-80656; www.tsermangecocamp.com; near Palam Village, Leh; tents from ₹9,500 with breakfast and dinner





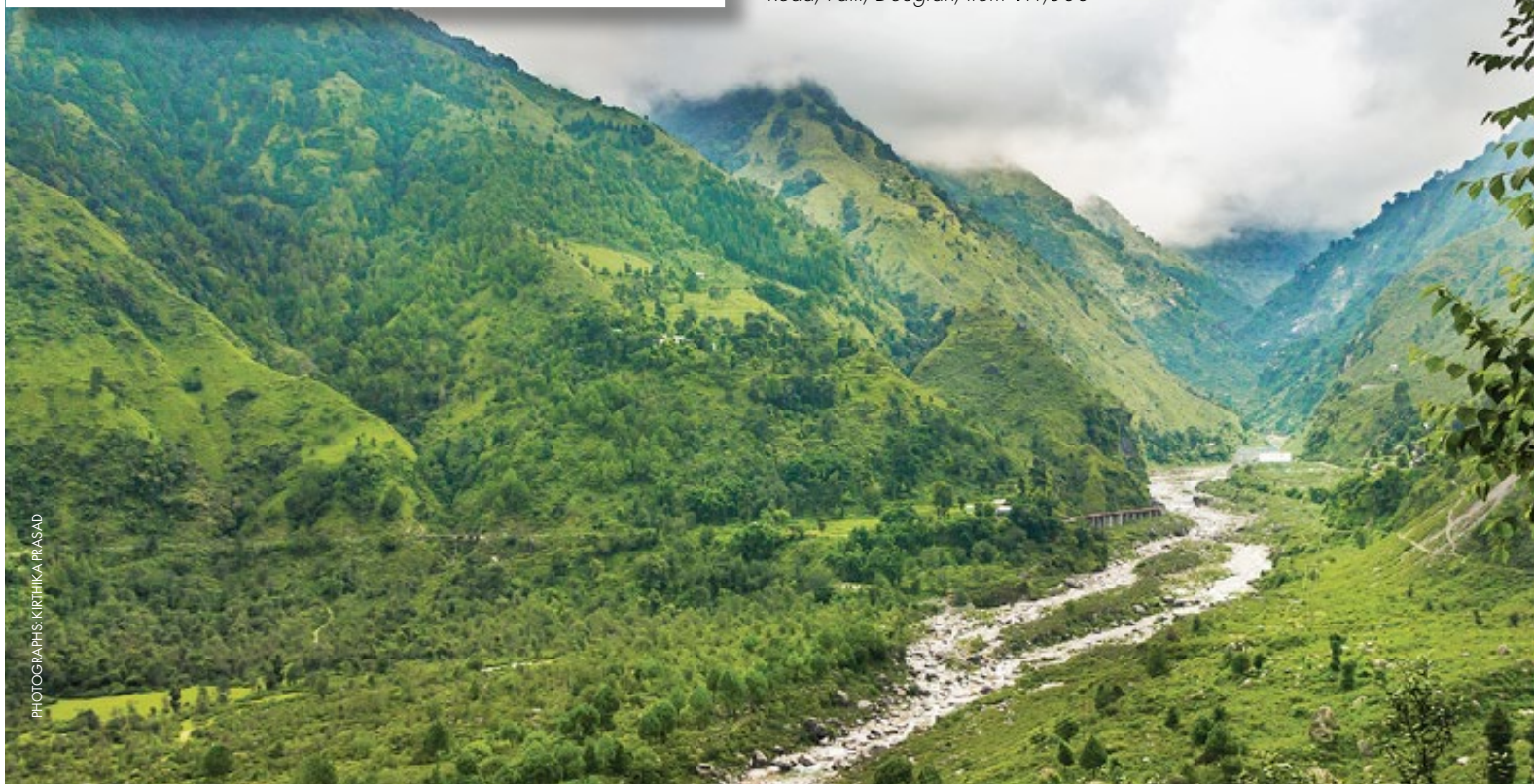
PALAMPUR, HIMACHAL PRADESH

THE LODGE AT WAH

Set within the sprawling Wah tea estate, the Lodge is a charming and sweet homestay. Everything is sourced locally. Owner Deepak Prakash has extensively used local building materials such as mud, stone and slate, and the skill of local craftsmen. All the wood you'll see was salvaged from a demolished, century-old public building. No chemicals or paints were used either; everything is natural and recycled. Even the architecture is inspired by traditional design used in *Gaddi* (local shepherds) homes, with weather elements utilised to cut out the need for any artificial cooling or heating. Locals make up the staff, living close to the property or in nearby villages. The food is made from produce either grown on the tea estate or from local sustainable and organic farms. Even the toiletries provided in the rooms are chemical-free and sourced from a small local company. If you are so inclined, along with tours of the estate to see the tea production process in detail, you could also try your hand at plucking tea. Of course, a tea-tasting session is the crowning glory of any such outing. There are a fair number of other activities to keep you busy too. Borrow a cycle from the property to explore the local landscape or go on foot, carrying a picnic hamper along to set down under the many fruit-bearing trees that invariably attract birds such as the Himalayan thrush and the Indian grey hornbill. Still, you needn't even venture out to enjoy nature here. Retreat into one of the many reading corners in the Lodge and let birdsong happily interrupt your session from time to time. You can rest assured that everything around you has been painstakingly designed to ensure no harm comes to the environment.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP *Hastan*, a transit hut used by local shepherds, is a great spot to hike to. The climb is a bit steep, but it comes with wild flowers along the way, and the views from up top are worth the effort. There's also *Andretta*, a village just a 20-minute drive away, that's famous for its pottery. A jeep safari can be arranged by the property on request; it includes a picnic, a nature walk and a visit to a temple at the top of the mountain. Day-trips to hubs such as *McLeodganj* and *Dharamsala* are also doable with local drivers, if you are so inclined. **SB** →

00-91-080-2609-0666; www.thelodgeatwah.com; Panchrukhi-Paprola Road, Patti, Deogran; from ₹11,000





DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL TATHAGATA FARM

High on a hillside and a world of calm away from Darjeeling, Tathagata Farm, started by brothers Pravin and Navin Tamang, is a working organic farm, and a part of Sanjukta Vikas Sanstha, a small farmers' collective. Unless your driver knows it, you're almost certain to go past the gates and miss the stay. There are no sign boards, just a narrow opening by the side of the road, with prayer flags dancing. Situated within a green forest overlooking a river, this eco-conscious stay option is a delightfully rural and oddly comforting place at which to spend your vacation. Choose to stay in spartan but comfortable cottages made with local bamboo, or spacious tents on stilts – great for families, all decorated with local art and colourful quilts, and with en suite bathrooms. Spend your evenings here around the bonfire, and don't forget to cuddle the friendly resident puppies that make for great company. Mornings are perfect for a spot of exploring; take off on an unhurried village trek with Junior Navin from the farm (*four hours; ₹500/ person*), and catch up on local gossip and lunch at one of the villagers' homes. Or you could just go ahead and volunteer – that's why they call it a working farm...

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Days on the mountains tend to be shorter, so wake up bright and early for the **Majitar Trek (16km)**. An invigorative five-hour walk takes you, on idyllic mountain paths, through blooming tea gardens and tall forests, to the Sikkim border (*₹3,500/ two with lunch, guide and return by local taxi*). **AM** 00-91-99320-21569; www.tathagatafarm.com, navin@tathagatajourneys.com; Aanp Botay, Mineral Spring, Lebong, Darjeeling; cottages from ₹4,800, tents from ₹5,400, with all meals

THEKKADY, KERALA INDHRIVANAM

'Indhrivanam' means 'a sense of forest' in Malayalam, and this 1.6-acre, cosy property in Kumily is indeed situated at the heart of a private forest, also home to slender lorises, Asian palm civets, squirrels, Malabar grey hornbills, wild boar, mouse deer, hares, rabbits, porcupines and monitor lizards – an ideal setting for relaxation close to nature.

Perfect for couples, small families or groups looking to get away from the bustle of the city, the cottage has a veranda, a spacious bedroom and an attached bathroom. As part of the owners' championing of sustainable practices, all biodegradable products are composted, rainwater is harvested, and you get to use a dry toilet that uses sawdust and water to get rid of waste, which collects in a bucket at the back and is regularly emptied into the composting area – all very doable, we assure you. Meals are vegetarian and delicious.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP For a bit of local culture, head out to the **Kadathanadan Kalari & Navrasa Kathakali Centre** in Kumily for great performances (www.kalaripayattu.co.in). **AG** 00-91-96331-10645; www.indhrivanam.com; Valiyapara Road, Chakkupallam, Kumily; March to September; ₹6,500 with breakfast, afternoon snacks and dinner



PHOTOGRAPHS: VINOBA NATHAN (INDHRIVANAM), VAIBHAV MEHTA (TATHAGATA FARM)

CHIKMAGALUR, KARNATAKA**HALLI BERRI**

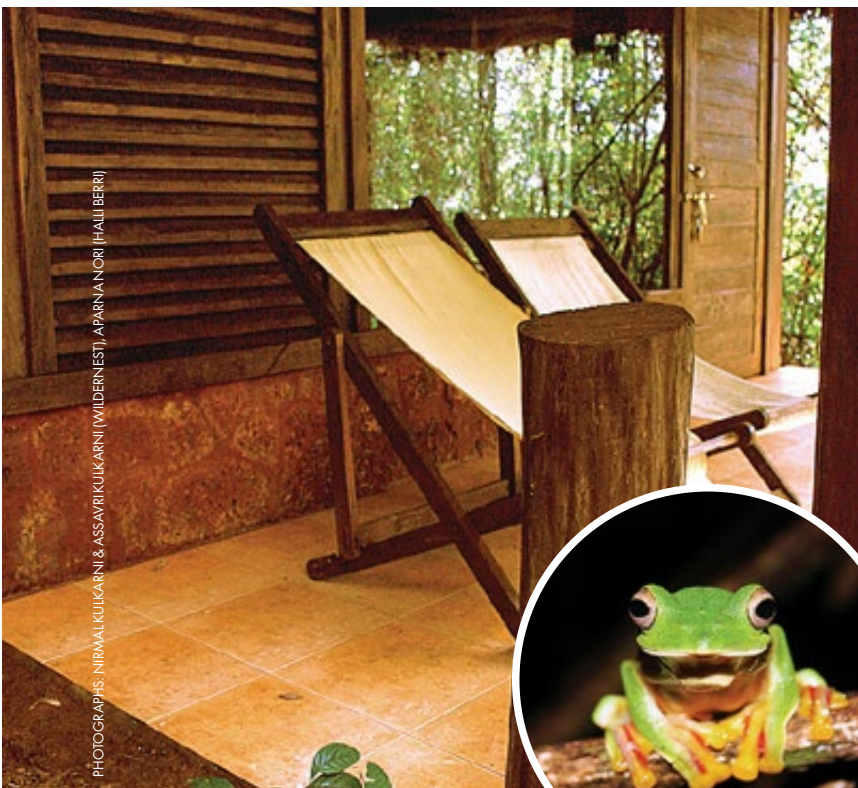
If you love a cuppa joe, allow yourself to be a coffee planter for a few days on the Kambihalli Estate plantation. Built to give guests the coffee country experience in the midst of nature, the Halli Berri cottages on the 220-acre working property take you back to a gentler time. Each is a cocoon of heritage tiles, brick walls, antique furniture, and copper buckets and mugs in the bathrooms. Some come with traditional fireplaces, open-to-the-sky showers, and varying views over the coffee yard, plantation and the mountains. To further immerse yourself into the java life, wake up before 7.30am to be part of the staff roll call at the heart of the estate, and see where the coffee beans are pulped, dried and stored; don't miss a chance to meet charismatic fourth-generation owner Nalima Kariappa, who has empowered the locals to work with her on the Halli Berri enterprise. Take a walk with a plantation worker to see the Arabica and Robusta plants (the coffee is Rainforest Alliance-certified for its sustainable farming), as well as pepper and shade trees, and the *kalli* bushes that are planted as natural barriers to gently deter animal intruders. Sink your taste buds into local cuisine with meals at **Mari's Kitchen** that showcase regional ingredients and tastes – the *pandi* (pork) curry is soured with Coorgi vinegar made from the *garcinia gummi-gutta* fruit, the cheesecake uses bitter orange rind from the farm's organically-grown oranges, while spices from the onsite nursery infuse the *noolputtu* and *kozh* curry (rice noodles with chicken curry). And, because night gives the area back to the wild, stay put inside; let wild boar, panther and sambar have their run of the place in the silence.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP The **Hoysala temples at Belur** (53km) and **Halebid** (69km) are must-sees in this part of the world, while the **Bhadra Wildlife Tiger Reserve** is 78km away. **PMD** 00-91-94835-23003; www.halliberri.com; Kambihalli Estate, Santaveri Post, State Highway 57, Chikmagalur District, Athigiri; from ₹6,900

**CHORLA HILLS, GOA**
WILDERNEST

Probably one of Goa's best-kept secrets, the Wilderndest eco-tourism lodge is much loved among responsible travellers, especially since it was built to prevent mining in the area. The 450-acre property serves as a wildlife corridor that protects the wildlife that passes through. Made entirely of acacia and other recycled wood, the 18 comfortable cottages are eco-friendly, completely plastic free, and offer no television or air-conditioning. Which makes it rather easy to get out and concentrate on nature. The property organises treks, bird trails, night walks in the forest, and much more. The ever-smiling staff will engage you in outdoor activities and help you learn a thing or two about nature. Perhaps you would like a botanical walk around the property with naturalists who explain the traditional medicinal use of plants and trees in the area? If you'd rather spend your time indoors, pick any corner and immerse yourself in the interesting selection of books available at the reception, go for a massage, or just lounge around the beautiful infinity pool.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP Take on a 15-minute trek to the 'highest point', the tri-state boundary of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra, for a 360° view of the Chorla Ghats and the Mahadayi Wildlife Sanctuary. **AG** → 00-91-98814-02665; wilderndestgoa.com; off Sankhali, Chorla Ghats; from ₹4,000 with welcome drink, meals, evening tea, henna session and all treks, including forest walks, and morning bird-watching trail



PHOTOGRAPHS: NIRMAL KULKARNI & ASSA/RIKULKARNI (WILDERNEST), APARNA NORI (HALLI BERRI)

MADIKERI, KARNATAKA THE TAMARA COORG

Set amid a 170-acre plantation of coffee, cardamom, pepper and honey, and built with consciously-sourced pinewood, The Tamara Coorg's environment-friendliness is evident right from the moment you set foot on the property. Especially when you notice how the place has been built around the local flora, streams and natural contours, integrating nature into the very soul of the construction. And, indeed, nature is an integral part of the experience at The Tamara. Try outdoor yoga with inhouse instructors, or, if you want to take it easy, take a hamper to one of the property's three picnic spots – Cardamom, Wild Fig and Green Pepper. Better still, take a tour of the plantation, learn about spices, wild figs, jasmine, Coorg orange plants and the *rudraksh* trees on site from local cultivators; it's only "natural" that you might want to get your hands dirty and get involved in some of the on-site processes. The Verandah, a restored plantation worker's home on the property, has a unique experience, **Blossom to Brew**, on offer, where guests can learn about drying, hulling, sieving and roasting coffee beans on miniature machines. Try your hand at making your very own cup of coffee with the plantation's beans; you'll be given all the information needed to make just the kind you want. There are few feelings that compare to sitting down with a cup of coffee in the middle of a forest, while contemplating the mist-shrouded hilly land of the Kodavas.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Pathi Pole Falls is a few hours' climb away from the property (13.5km), over green-shrouded slopes, and through forests buzzing with a huge variety of local fauna. The sweeping views of the gushing falls and the verdant valleys below make the climb worth it. If you have more time on hand, a day-trip can be planned to the **Nagarhole National Park** (86km). **SB** 00-91-80-2609-0666; www.thetamara.com; Kabbinakad Estate, Napoklu Nad, Yavakapadi Village, Madikeri Taluk; from ₹15,000





BHADRAVATI, MAHARASHTRA TIGRESS@GHOSRI

Run by conservationists Poonam and Harshawardhan Dhanwatey, Tigress@Ghosri is a unique boutique resort situated in the buffer zone of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. The property is surrounded by lush forest, and attracts an array of birds and wild animals. Watering holes such as the Tiger Taka and the Leopard Pool are highlights. Guests enjoy the live stream of animals coming to these; visitors include leopards, tigers, wild boar and langurs. It's amazing to realise that the elusive fauna is just a half-minute walk away. Further your understanding of these marvellous creatures on **The 5-Sense Hike**, a low-intensity walk that gives you a feel of the forest, and on which you can learn about alarm and mating calls, identifying animals from their droppings, and tracking pugmarks (₹750/person). Keep in mind that this is an unfenced property, and the Dhanwateys have long decided that the wildlife is king; never wander about alone.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP The staff can book a safari for you at the **Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve**, or you can do it yourself online. **AG** 00-91-90119-30649; www.tigressghosri.com; 505, Ghosri Village, Bhadravati, Chandrapur; from ₹11,000 with all meals, low-speed wi-fi, and nature walks

PUDUCHERRY THE DUNE ECO VILLAGE & SPA

For a getaway that's relaxed and luxurious with no added guilt, The Dune Eco Village & Spa offers 35 villas built around gorgeous landscaped gardens, with a stunning view of either the gardens or the sea. Dune takes its eco-friendly status rather seriously – the villas come with solar hot-water systems, energy-saving bulbs and waste-water plants. Most of the food comes from the onsite organic farm. Take the time to explore the seven acres of organic farmland and, if you're up for it, book in advance to pluck produce and cook it yourself with a chef, rather than just watch it being cooked. Spend the rest of your day walking around and exploring this vast property, covered in artwork, thanks to the inhouse Artist in Residence programme. You're sure to come across many interesting pieces, ranging from a totem pole with a wooden chair at its base to a repurposed water tank converted into a play-house for kids.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP Make a trip down to Puducherry proper, 20km away, to spend the day out on the town. You can also make a pit-stop at **Auroville** while you're there, in case shopping for crafts and eating local are on your agenda for the day. **AF** →

00-91-413-324-4040, 00-91-93644-55440; www.thedunehotel.com; Pudhukuppam, Keelputhupet [via Pondicherry University]; from ₹7,000



HACRA DHANI, RAJASTHAN

HACRA VILLAGE HOMESTAYS

Rajasthan is synonymous with luxury; with its palace hotels, five-star resorts and heritage stays, the state is known as the 'Land of Kings'. But, if you're seeking a taste of Rajasthan life that's truly local, make your way to Hacra Dhani, a tiny hamlet in the Thar Desert. Leave all your novelty village notions behind - Hacra comes with *jhumpas* (thatched huts), simple meals of *roti-sabzi*, and a plastic bucket that you'll need to fill when it's time to bathe, and there's no electricity. Unlike most places that promise authenticity hidden under a whole lot of luxury, Hacra's focus is simple - living life as it is. But, there's definitely more to this hamlet than meets the eye. Sit down for a chat with Gemar Singh, the man behind this project, as he delves deep into legends and myths of the desert and very real stories of the past. You can also hop onto a camel (or be mounted on one, more likely), and head deep into the desert for a night under the stars. And, if you find yourself here during the rainy season, get ready to break a sweat and help with farm work - you'll soon find out it's far more effective and rewarding than any gym workout.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP If your holiday tends to feel incomplete without sightseeing, drive down to **Osian** (17km). It's often referred to as the 'Khajuraho of Rajasthan', and you'll be met by - you guessed it - an array of brilliantly-sculpted temples. The **Sachiyan Mata Mandir**, located atop a hill, in particular, is also worth checking out. **AF** 00-91-2922-272-313, Gemar Singh Bhati: 00-91-94605-85154; www.hacra.org, guidedesert@gmail.com; Hacra Dhani, Kerli-Nadi, Bhikamkor; from ₹12,000 for two with all meals and transport



VENGURLA, MAHARASHTRA

MAACHLI

Set amid a working areca and coconut plantation in the Sindhudurg district, the cottages at Maachli invite you to leave life as you know it behind. To help you with that, there is no television, no telephone, no wi-fi, no air-conditioning. The Samant family has been on this farm for many generations, and Pravin Samant built each of the distinctive, inverted V-shaped cottages to fit right into its surroundings, harnessing the principles of cross ventilation. The decor is earth-inspired, you'll pour your drinking water out of a *tambya* (copper vessel) and sip out of a copper tumbler; even the bucket in the airy bathroom is a large copper *urli*. The food at Maachli is perhaps your best introduction to life in the district. Mrs Samant transforms fresh produce from the home farm into jewels of Saraswat Brahmin cuisine, served at the rough-hewn table just

a few steps away from the smoky kitchen, and eaten off biodegradable plates of dried betel-nut tree branches. Seafood lovers are particularly in for a treat with the delicate *rava*-fried fish, and the clams in a nuanced coconut *masala*, all washed down by exquisite *solkadi*. When you get back to your cottage, and sit in easy chairs on your little verandah, you'll realise that, while there is nothing between you and the monkeys and birds you can hear around you, the same tall trees that cocoon them form a screen between you and the cacophony of the outside world.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Plantation walks on and off the property reveal the diverse landscapes of the region; you can even try your hand at milking a cow. **Bhogwe Beach** is a 15-minute drive away, while **Tarkarli**, good for snorkelling or scuba diving, is 17km away. **PMD** 00-91-96373-33284, 00-91-94238-79865; www.maachli.in; Ishavasyam, Major State Highway 4, anjardewadi, Parule Village, Vengurla, Sindhudurg District; from ₹8,500 with breakfast



SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA

RI KYNJAI - SERENITY BY THE LAKE

Located on the banks of Barapani Lake, on the outskirts of Shillong, Ri Kynjai is a stunning 44-acre property, set amid lush green forest. True to its name – which translates to ‘land of serene environs’ – Ri Kynjai’s location isn’t the only thing that draws visitors, it’s the resort’s architecture too. Influenced by Khasi culture, the cottages here are built on tall stilts with upturned boat-like roofs that are an interesting take on traditional architecture, meant to withstand Meghalaya’s unforgiving monsoon. While the indoors is littered with artefacts, paintings and musical instruments from the Khasi, Mizo and Naga tribes, the outdoors is no less fascinating. Walk past the tea garden down to the lake onto a traditional wooden boat, as a Khasi boatman guides you across the vast expanse of Barapani. A day of exploring definitely earns you some pampering. **Khem Janai**, the inhouse spa, offers traditional massages, complete with an old-fashioned Khasi hot bath, also called a water massage. End the day in your room by a crackling fire or chill on the balcony, and watch as day turns to dusk, with Barapani keeping you company.

AT YOUR DOORSTEP Shillong is about 22km away from Ri Kynjai, allowing you to plan a day-trip to the city. For insights into the North East’s various tribes and their cultures, visit the **Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures**. **AF** → 00-91-98624-20300; www.rikynjai.com, bookings@rikynjai.com; UCC Road, Umniuh Khawn, Ri Bhoi District; from ₹10,500



CUMBUM VALLEY, TAMIL NADU

HARVEST FRESH FARMS

The *panchagavya* at Harvest Fresh Farms is a concoction of dung, ghee, milk, yoghurt and urine – from the farm's *desi* cows – mixed with bananas, jaggery and tender coconut water. It brings home very sharply to guests that this farm, sited atmospherically amid mist-covered mountains in the Cumbum Valley, is dead serious about organic farming. Since 2010, when he bought this 35-acre property, Kurian Jose has gone about that endeavour with great patience, shaving the land to different levels to prevent soil erosion, allowing no chemicals to contaminate the ground, using natural remedies and innovative methods such as coco traps powered by solar energy and baited using pheromones to keep insects away, and spraying the plants with the pungent-smelling *panchagavya*. As if to prove the efficacy of these methods, the farm grows a profusion of pomegranate, coconut, banana, mango, papaya, passion fruit, soursop, jackfruit, custard apple, chikoo, and other fruit that city dwellers might not even have heard of. There is also an opportunity to wander – or cycle – freely through the property, admire the cows, quack back at the ducks and other fowl, and buy plants from the nursery. Guests stay in three compact rooms, and eat delicious Malayali food in alarming quantities. It truly is a great way to immerse yourself in nature, as long as you stay away from the nauseating *panchagavya*.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Walk through the **Jenis Vineyard** in Greater Cumbum, and pick up boxes of grapes to take home; palm jaggery, garlic and, in season, different types of jackfruit can be found at the Tuesday weekly market in the town. Asking the manager at Harvest Fresh Farms nicely will also get you directions to a waterfall near the property that is great for splashing about in. **PMD** 00-91-75588-67799; www.harvestfresh.in; Lower Camp, Melegudallur; from ₹4,000 with breakfast



MADLA, MADHYA PRADESH

THE SARAI AT TORIA

An easy escape from worldly chaos, The Sarai at Toria is situated on the banks of the River Ken and makes for the perfect base from which to explore Panna National Park. Set up by Raghu Chundawat, one of the world's leading tiger biologists, and his wife, wildlife photographer, writer and conservationist Joanna Van Gruisen, The Sarai is an ecologically-sensitive showcase of a delicate balance of detail and design. Modelled on local village dwellings, the eight mud houses spread across nine acres here are designed keeping sustainability in mind. The mud walls keep the interiors cool; the furnishings are pretty, and the cottages themselves merge effortlessly into the lush forest cover.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Besides safaris into **Panna National Park** and a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed site of **Khajuraho**, The Sarai at Toria has a carefully-curated list of excursions that ensures interesting visits; Raghu and Joanna will be happy to help you choose. **AM** 00-91-124-4062-480, 00-91-97522-70337, 00-91-96852-93130; www.saraiattoria.com; Mela Wali Gali, Toria Village, Chhatarpur District; from ₹16,300, with three meals and on-site activities, jeep safari from ₹8,000/ two persons

DUNAGIRI, UTTARAKHAND DUNAGIRI RETREAT

Piyush Kumar's 15-acre Dunagiri Estate is a study in setting up a property in tune with the environment. Leaving a job with the World Bank in Washington in 2005, he built 12 suites across five cottages and in the main house, which also houses the kitchen and dining room. Each of these is built of local stone and wood to withstand the biting cold in the winter, with efficient *bukhari* stoves to provide additional warmth. Special low-wattage lamps are fitted everywhere, and a rainwater-harvesting system is in place; one bucket of water is allotted per bath. Grey water is filtered and reused across the property, and the vegetable plots are enriched via composting. Many of these methods came from Piyush's close interaction with the locals; the property is staffed by farmers from the three villages in the area, and he works to generate sustainable livelihoods for them, and to supplement educational resources and provide healthcare resources. This localisation shows in the food as well; simple and hearty, meals at Dunagiri Retreat include ghee-drizzled *rotis*, hearty *pulaos*, *sabzis* cooked local-style, and desserts such as fruit salads in yoghurt and *sabudana kheer*; between meals, you'll be plied with *pahadi chai* and *mishri* (rock candy) and freshly-squeezed juice.

Piyush believes in the Irish concept of 'thin places' – where the distance between Heaven and Earth is very 'thin' – and he believes that

Dunagiri is one such place. It is perhaps why Dunagiri Retreat is also well regarded as a location for yoga teachers, healers and masters of the spiritual arts to aid seekers in these disciplines.

ON YOUR DOORSTEP Dedicated to Goddess Durga, **Dunagiri Temple** is reached by climbing over 400 steps. Seasoned trekkers might enjoy the steep, four-kilometre climb from Kukurcheena through the forest to **Pandavkhali**, a Himalayan *bugyal* (meadow), from where you might see the Nanda Devi, Panchachuli and Trishul peaks on a good day. You might also see five mostly-submerged monoliths that locals believe symbolise the five Pandavas who passed this way. On your way back down towards Almora, stop at the town of **Dwarahat**, also known as Uttari Dwaraka (after the abode of Lord Krishna), and visit the group of 44 richly-carved temples, dating back to the 10th to 12th centuries. **PMD** 00-91-96901-32425, 00-91-98102-67719; www.dunagiri.com; Chari Village, PO Dunagiri, Block Dwarahat, Almora District; from ₹10,000 with meals



PHOTOGRAPHS: MAHESH SAGARI

REVOLUTIONARY ROADS

Take a spin on the greenways of the Andalusian interior – former railway lines reinvented for epic cycle journeys, passing whitewashed villages and wild landscapes at the southernmost cusp of the continent

WORDS OLIVER SMITH  [@olismithtravel](https://twitter.com/olismithtravel) | **PHOTOGRAPHS** DANIEL ALFORD  [@danielalford](https://www.instagram.com/danielalford)

A cyclist on the Greenway of the Mountains passes the Peñón de Zaframagón rock, home to a population of griffon vultures

5 Stops on the Olive Oil Greenway

0 MILES The city of **Jaén** is the starting point for west-bound cyclists on the Olive Oil Greenway. A handsome provincial capital, it sees a fraction of the crowds of neighbouring Granada, but merits at least a day's exploration for its 18th-century cathedral and Moorish baths. **Hotel Europa** has spacious rooms downtown (www.hoteleuropajaen.es).

31 MILES **Alcaudete** is home to one of the best-preserved medieval castles in Andalucía, its lofty keep looking out over endless olive groves. A 12-mile ride south brings you to **Alcalá La Real**, crowned by an even-grander Moorish Alcazba (www.castillosybataallas.com/en) with an excellent microbrewery overlooking the battlements (www.tierradefrontera.es).

45 MILES Sleepy **Zuheros** is a staging post for hikes into the Subbética mountains. Alternatively, rest up at **Hacienda Minerva**, which has rustic rooms and a small hammam for saddle-weary souls (www.haciendaminerva.com). Push on three miles to somewhat busier **Doña Mencía** – **Bodegas Luque** is a winery serving a potent array of sherries (www.bodegasluque.es).

62 MILES Workaday **Lucena** sits close to the western end of the greenway. It was once home to Andalucía's largest Jewish community. Visit the **Jewish necropolis**, unearthed during the building of a bypass in 2006. **Hotel Santo Domingo** has rooms arranged around an 18th-century cloister at the centre of Lucena (00-34- 957-511-100).

Stopping off at Hacienda Minerva, which offers accommodation on the Olive Oil Greenway



IT IS A CLOUDLESS MORNING AS THE 09:04 service departs **Alcaudete railway station**. The wheels grind into motion. There is a creaking of joints, a gasp, a ring of the bell for bystanders on the platform. It picks up speed, accelerating past lineside huts, clattering over viaducts, sweeping forth through a landscape stirring in mid-morning sunshine. Until, suddenly, the wheels veer off the trackbed, skidding down a little slope, coming to a halt beside a picnic bench. The machine tips onto its side. A solitary passenger dismounts and eats a cheese sandwich.

The 09:04 service is, in fact, just me on my bike – I am the only passenger, and I am also the driver and the engine. The two KitKats in my bag and the (ex) cheese sandwich count as the dining car. The last time a real train hauled out of Alcaudete station was four decades ago; since then, the abandoned track has been reincarnated as a cycle path – the **Vía Verde de Aceite**, translated as Olive Oil Greenway. ‘Greenways’ exist all across Europe – railway lines repurposed as convenient trails for two-wheeled adventures – but Spain has embraced them more than most. In the Andalusian interior, greenways come into their own.

Greenways connect villages at which you can rest in orange tree-shaded squares, fill up water bottles from gurgling fountains, and chat with locals watering potted palms. They swerve around scrubby hills, where marble Virgins stand sentinel on the summits. They dissect the unfamiliar hinterland to one of Europe’s most familiar holiday coastlines. There are towers built by the Moors, sparrows nesting in the battlements. In place of the waterparks of Torremolinos, there are ruined watermills in the ravines, where timbers rot and rabbits leap, and time passes slowly.

To cycle the greenway is to feel like the landscape is somehow bending to your will – miraculously accommodating every pedal. There are no inclines: you slice effortlessly through steep hills in cool tunnels, you swoosh down gentle gradients, you take flight over viaducts and spy rushing rivers in the gaps between the slats. You need not look out for cars, nor check the map. When the tarmac is smooth, you can tilt your head up from

the road ahead to watch the passing scenery, like a passenger at a train window.

The Olive Oil Greenway stretches 75 miles along the former Linares-Puente Genil railway. Built in 1893, the line was built to export olive oil from the Jaén province northward to the salad bowls of Madrid, and south to ships moored at the Port of Málaga. After the Civil War, the railway began to decay. In the 1980s, trains went from being slow to stopping altogether, and that was that.

The trains might be long gone, but the olive trees that supplied their cargo have not. Pedalling west from Alcaudete, cyclists are deep in the so-called ‘sea of olives’. And it is no exaggeration. Olive trees extend as far as the eye can see: rows of trees cascade down the slopes like breaking waves. In this green ocean, distant *cordilleras* (mountain ranges) appear on the horizon like faraway islands, and medieval watchtowers rise like lighthouses.

“Olive oil is our medicine and it is our gold,” says Manuel Sanchez of the **Perpetuo Socorro Olive Oil Cooperative**, a short detour off the greenway at Alcaudete. “When you open a bottle, you should feel like you are suddenly in a field. You should be able to smell the flowers, the cut grass, the leaves on the trees.”

Manuel is very busy because it is the first day of the harvest: farmers are arriving at the co-op with trucks loaded with olives. Olive trees have been cultivated in Jaén province since before Roman times – today, it is the biggest olive oil-producing region in Europe, but ancientness is still a key ingredient. Trees only really begin their career at about 50 years old. Some are old enough to remember the days when the Moors ruled over Andalucía, and the call to prayer echoed out over the sierras.

Even in the age of half-a-million tonne harvests, Manuel explains he can still taste a story in every individual olive – especially those from trees rooted high on the mountain, which come with a bitter tang, and a hint of nuts and spices.

“We are not growing things in a greenhouse,” he says. “This is outside, in the hands of God. That is why it tastes so intense.” →

GREENWAYS CONNECT VILLAGES AT WHICH YOU CAN REST IN ORANGE TREE-SHADED SQUARES, FILL UP BOTTLES FROM GURGLING FOUNTAINS, AND CHAT WITH LOCALS

*Looking down onto the streets
of Jaén from a balcony of its
Renaissance-style cathedral*



WITH A WARM WIND ON MY BACK, I head westward on the greenway, past whitewashed *haciendas* and parched *lagunas*, over wrought-iron bridges built by students of Gustave Eiffel, whose bolts and joints hum satisfyingly under moving tyres. Soon the trail reaches the **Subbética Mountains**, where little towns – Luque, Zuheros, Doña Mencía, Cabra – huddle against a karst escarpment. It is the most beautiful section of the Olive Oil Greenway, and, suddenly, there is more traffic. Lycra-clad cyclists whoosh past, plumes of dust billowing behind them. These are the express trains of the greenway. I pass families with young children learning to ride – stopping and starting, fixing plasters and resolving tantrums. They are subject to strikes and sudden cancellations. There are runners, skateboarders, rollerskaters, disabled people exploring parts of the countryside that would otherwise be off limits. The greenway has its roots in the past, but in some ways it is also a vision of the future – a thoroughfare meant for people, not combustion engines.

There are also locals for whom the greenway is tied to the arrivals and departures of life. At the station in **Cabra**, I meet Marisol Maiz, whose grandfather worked on the railway

as a signalman and was killed in an accident at Lucena station. Decades later, Marisol's water broke while walking a remote part of the greenway outside Cabra. Lately, travels on the greenway come with a tinge of sadness for Marisol: her pet labrador recently died of diabetes after a lifetime of greenway walkies.

"For locals, it's usual to walk here every day," says Marisol. "You might walk your pet. You might walk with your partner. You see young people on Saturday evenings, or old people carrying their shopping. It is close to our hearts."

Journeys on the greenway generally begin and end in one of the old stations along the line – reinvented as staging posts with cycle-hire shops and car parks. A few – Luque, Cabra, Doña Mencía – now house restaurants and cafés, where retired engine drivers sometimes meet to reminisce about long-ago accidents. One or two have engines rusting in the sidings, with cobwebs sprouting in their boilers.

My journey on the Olive Oil Greenway ends one lunchtime in **Lucena** station, close to its western terminus. In an old goods shed, there is a restaurant: cyclists are refuelling with *jamón* and *tortillas*, cooling their boilers with ice-cold beer. And dishes are drizzled with extra virgin olive oil, as golden and lustrous as Andalusian sunshine. →



Cycling the Olive Oil Greenway close to Alcaudete railway station

Olive oil was traditionally transported in amphoras, like these still made at Cerámica Granados in the town of Lucena

3 STOPS ON THE GREENWAY OF THE MOUNTAINS

0 MILES Olvera is visible for miles around, the towers of its neoclassical church teetering high above the whitewashed hilltop town. As well as being the starting point of the greenway, Olvera's **station** is home to a slick visitor centre, with exhibits on the history of the line. Stay at perennial cyclist-favourite **Hotel Sierra y Cal** (00-34-956-130-303).

9 MILES Occupying an old station building, the **Observatorio Peñón de Zaframagón** welcomes passing cyclists. The highlight is peering right into griffon vultures' habitat via video monitoring systems, with a remote-controlled cliff-top camera. It's four miles from here to the midpoint of the line at **Coripe** station.

22 MILES Unassuming **Puerto Serrano** marks the western terminus of the greenway: the station houses a small café in which to toast your journey's end. If you don't fancy cycling all the way back to Olvera, carry on westward, with onward buses linking Puerto Serrano to the cities of **Jerez** and **Cádiz** (www.tgcomes.es).



THE JEREZ-ALMARGEN LINE MIGHT be one of the strangest railways that was ever built.

There are stone viaducts that you imagine once coaxed coos of admiration from passengers. There are mustard-yellow stations with handsome ticket halls, and left-luggage offices suggesting guards with twirly moustaches and silver whistles. But there were never any guards, no moustaches, no whistles – no rails were laid here. Anyone sitting in the waiting room for a train in the 1930s would be twiddling their thumbs almost a century later: not one train ever ran on the line.

A pet project of dictator General Primo de Rivera (who coincidentally hailed from Jerez), the railway

went bust amid the upheaval of 1930s Spain, and stood for years half-finished, with the eeriness of a film set. After a happy career change, it is now the **Vía Verde de la Sierra** – the Greenway of the Mountains, 22 miles long, easily cycled in a day and perhaps the most beautiful trail of its kind in Iberia. It slaloms through mountains at the southern cusp of Europe, racing rivers to the Atlantic in places no cars can go.

Setting out early one morning from its eastern terminus, **Olvera**, I soon discover its defining feature: tunnels, two dozen of which line the route. Outside, the sun is brutal. For an overheating cyclist, the tunnels feel wondrous and fridge-like as you pedal through the cold innards of the mountain. Before the days of the greenway, shepherds took their flocks on shortcuts through the tunnels, →



Spanish bulls grazing close to the Olive Oil Greenway



1. One of the many tunnels that the Greenway of the Mountains passes through



2. Francisco Cruces at the Peñón de Zaframagón

3. The town of Olvera

4. Olive trees line the Greenway of the Mountains



OUTSIDE, THE SUN IS BRUTAL. FOR AN OVERHEATING CYCLIST, THE TUNNELS FEEL WONDROUS AND FRIDGE-LIKE AS YOU PEDAL THROUGH THE COLD INNARDS OF THE MOUNTAIN

and bandits hid from the law in gloomy nooks. These were daring feats of engineering: it was during construction of tunnel number six that the grandfather of Cristobal Salas Pernia was killed by a stray stick of dynamite, one afternoon in 1930.

"These were strong men," he tells me among the ticking clocks of his jewellery shop in Olvera. "But it was a time of much hunger and pain."

Cristobal explains that there were rumours that desperate railway workers had taken to eating all the cats in Olvera. Tragic legends live long in this landscape. There are also stories of a burning figure stalking the greenway – said to be the ghost of a miller's daughter, struck by lightning and set aflame, running for the river in vain. There are reports of faint lights on the hillsides too: some say the spectral cigarettes of smugglers from the Civil War. And, cycling deeper into the hills, passing gloomy forests where the air is rich with juniper and rosemary, pedalling beneath contorted rock formations and mountains where, someone tells me, archaeologists discovered a curved Arabian sword on a summit, it seems plausible.

"If there were trains here, this would all be different," says Francisco Cruces. "Here, you are deep in the past." Francisco worked at Five Guys in Cardiff before he felt the call of the wild, and came home to Andalucía to work as an ornithologist at the **Peñón Zaframagón Nature Reserve**, midway along the greenway. He lives close by, and opens his bedroom window at night so he can hear the hoots of eagle owls.

For much of his working day, his binoculars are directed at a monolithic rock. The 'Peñón' is a waymarker for migratory birds on their journeys between Europe and Africa. Resident bonelli eagles and peregrine falcons also glide about the crags in a kind of avian metropolis.

You don't, however, need binoculars to see griffon

vultures – the monolith is home to one of the biggest colonies in Europe. To cycle beneath the Peñón in the late afternoon is like passing under an airport runway – their mighty wings catching the thermals as they scan the landscape for carrion. Like cyclists, they are resting in the still, sweltering midday heat.

"They conserve energy. They look over the landscape. It is almost as if they are meditating."

Francisco recounts the life story of the griffon vultures on the Peñón. In their first years, they make epic journeys: south across the Pillars of Hercules, high over the *medinas* and minarets of Morocco to the mountains marking the threshold of the Sahara. Some ascend up to 3,000 metres or more, and have been known to come eye-to-eye with the pilots of light aircraft. After a youth of carefree roving, they return to the rock where they were born. They make a nest on the Peñón, find a mate for life, and can live up to 30 years (an eternity in avian terms). "They are like humans," says Francisco.

"You travel when you are young. Then you get a house. You settle down, have kids. When you are an adult, you don't have so much time to travel any more."

I continue down the greenway and the Peñón vanishes out of sight – but the griffon vultures are sometimes visible further down the trail, a pinprick presence among the cliffs and the clouds, ranging out to the far corners of the sky. Theirs is a freedom cyclists on the greenway might easily imagine. The warm Andalusian wind on your face. Travelling smokelessly and soundlessly. And under your own steam. 🍷



OLIVER SMITH travelled with support from the *Vía Verde de Aceite* and the *Vía Verde de la Sierra* (www.viasverdes.com/en).

MAKE IT HAPPEN: CYCLING IN SPAIN

Essentials

We accept that travel to Spain is not advised at present; we hope that this information will prove useful once restrictions are lifted.

→ GETTING THERE

Both the Olive Oil Greenway and the Greenway of the Mountains are located close to Málaga Airport. SWISS, Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa, among others, fly to Málaga from major Indian cities. Alternatively, it's possible to reach Andalucía by train from Barcelona (return fares from ₹52,000).

→ VISA

Indian citizens visiting Spain will require a Schengen visa, which usually takes three to four days to process and costs around ₹8,000 (www.vfsglobal.com).

→ EMBASSY ALERT

Embassy of India, Madrid, Spain:

www.eoimadrid.gov.in

→ CURRENCY

€1 = ₹85.74

→ FANCY A CURRY?

Head to **Amigo Hindu** for Indian fast food at affordable prices (00-34-953-183-845; Calle Teodoro Calvache, 2, 23001 Jaén).

→ MORE INFORMATION

Lonely Planet's *Spain* guide has all the information you need to plan a perfect trip. For more information, you can also visit the official websites for the Olive Oil Greenway (www.viasverdes.com) and the Greenway of the Mountains (www.fundacionviaverdedelasierra.es).

Fortaleza de la Mota looms over the town of Alcalá la Real



ACCESSING THE GREENWAYS

From Málaga, it's around two hours by car to Jaén, at the eastern edge of the Olive Oil Greenway, or three hours on the train, changing at Córdoba (www.renfe.com). The Greenway of the Mountains can also be reached by public transport – from Málaga, it's a two-hour bus ride to Olvera, its eastern terminus (www.alsa.com).

CYCLING THE GREENWAYS

Rides along both greenways can be as easy or as strenuous as you want them to be – the paths are smooth, there are hardly any inclines, and few sections are far from help in the event of mechanical or medical problems. Consider whether you want to travel in summer when Andalucía can be fiercely hot: always carry plenty of water and sunscreen. Bike hire stations of varying quality are available on both routes. **Centro Cicloturista Subbética** at Doña Mencía station is recommended for the Olive Oil Greenway (00-34-691-843-532), while **Sesca** rents out bikes for the Greenway of the Mountains from Olvera station (www.sesca.es).



BEHIND THE SCENES

Photographer Daniel Alford wanted to shoot the Peñón Zaframagón and Zaframagón viaduct at sunset. Its rather remote location meant that he and writer Oliver Smith had to cycle back to their hotel in darkness soon after, pedalling along the greenway by moonlight, passing through gloomy tunnels, and navigating by the light of their mobile phones.



DOWNLOAD YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINES FOR FREE!

Stay Indoors. Stay Safe.

