

# Travel Links



VOLUME 01 | ISSUE 06

SEP - OCT 2020

## EASTERN ARUNACHAL

***Yoksa Ride***

***Magnum opus  
of history***

***Golden hand of  
Indian weavers***

**SANCHI Stupa**



LENS VIGNETTE | LESSER KNOWN | THE WINE WORLD | ECO FRIENDLY HOLIDAY | LUXURY STAY





# Travel Links

## EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Payal Sahni

## ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER & DIRECTOR

Pankaj Sahni

## MENTOR

D.P. Sharma

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

Radhika Narang

Trivdes Singh

## EDIT DESK TEAM

Radhika Narang

## COPY EDITOR

Sameksha

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Siddhi Shintre

Gautam Singh Kanwal

Sanchi Aggarwal

Ritu Ghai

Balaji Devanathan

Manjulika Pramod

Pujarini Mitra

Arvind Passey

## SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Sanchi Aggarwal

## CIRCULATION

J P Nagar

## PRINT DESIGNER

Lokesh Kumar

## ACCOUNTS MANAGER

Amit Agarwal

## HEAD OFFICE

39, Shahpur Jat, 1st Floor

New Delhi 110049

Phone 011- 40105499

Mob: 9818114451

email & Subscriptions-

travellinkstugo@gmail.com

## COVER DESIGN

Lokesh Kumar

Printed by Payal Sahni on behalf of Times Advertising and Media Services. Copying the articles without the prior permission of publishers is prohibited. The expressions in the articles are of the writers and the management do not hold responsibility for the same.

Come September and here we are with the first Anniversary issue of Travel Links. Who would have thought that all our visions, dreams and focus would be facing such a big hit in the form of the world Global COVID pandemic?

However we stood tall and strong, did and will do what we do the best; to bring forth the world class product in the form of Travel Links Magazine.

The anniversary issue focuses on the Indian arts, culture, heritage, roads less travelled and the real archaeological treasures, yet not very well known in the tourism sector.

The road journey of **Easter Arunachal Pradesh-"Yoksa"** ride is still an enigma for many of us. It is a land of vast flowing rivers, rugged mountains, exotic wildlife, and spending time with the locals in an old bungalow; the article is full of thrill, adventure and **pleasure of knowing the lesser-known**.

The Golden hands of weavers' covers **"The Indian Textiles"** where we focus on rural alcoves of states, blessed with the range of tantalizing and heterogeneous artworks, village artists for their prime simplicity and enchanting artistry.

The **pottery** article focuses on style of the making, which as old as the humankind itself, their origin, history, art and the skill.

We have a story on the **magnum opus of history, heritage, and archaeological** sites. We have unfolded the marvels that boast of intricate workmanship, rare and rich tapestry of Indian art and architecture.

About Goa we focus on the **Portuguese origin** and cultural aspect of it.

The detailed write up about **Sanchi Stupa** in Madhya Pradesh is a dance of Buddhist arts and literature.

Stepping into the **English heritage** gives an insight of the world renowned structures.

We have an unforgettable **odyssey of Mauritius** focusing on slow travel.

I sincerely hope that our readers will thoroughly enjoy this issue. It is your inputs and appreciation which makes it our endeavor to give you an entertaining pleasing and knowledgeable product to read and keep you motivated enough for the conscious, sustainable and environment friendly- travelling times ahead.

Stay Tuned.

Editor

[travellinkslive.com](https://www.travellinkslive.com)



[www.travellinkslive.com](http://www.travellinkslive.com)



travellinkslive



travellinkslive



travellinkslive



travellinkslive



travellinkslive



CONTENT

# CONTENT

YOKSA RIDE



NOT-TO-BE-IGNORED  
MAGNUM OPUS OF HISTORY...



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH  
THE CULTURAL GOA



FROM DEATH TO LIFE

ILE MAURICE – AN UNFORGETTABLE ODYSSEY



SANCHI STUPA – A MESMERIZING DANCE OF  
BUDDHIST ART AND LITERATURE



GOLDEN HANDS OF THE INDIAN WEAVERS



STEPPING INTO THE ENGLISH HERITAGE



# Getting acquainted with the cultural Goa



We grew up with the cult-classic DilChahtaHai, watching Aakash, Sameer and Sid go on a wild tour to Goa. They engage in all activities that one would want with their friends on an idyllic getaway to this picturesque paradise. There are many other Bollywood movies that paint this picture of Goa too. Pristine beaches, scintillating drinks and a pulsating nightlife, but there is a side much more profound. To nobody's surprise, Goa is swarmed year after year by tourists from all over the world. Probably because this **smallest state went untouched by the divide and rule policy of the British Colonizers, allowing the native and Portuguese to consort in harmony.** But why and how is Goa different from the rest

of the country? As a tourist do you want to experience this little slice of heaven in a way that most don't? Then you've come to the right place, let me take you on an exclusive behind-the-scenes journey from the perspective of a native Goan. Long-Standing Culture and its Influence The History- Portugal's reign on Goa lasted two centuries longer than Britain's rule over India, making lasting impressions. That is why when you land in Goa, it makes you feel like you have descended down into another country. They set up a spice trade and propagated Christianity and European food habits, cultures and fashion to gain more control over the natives. **If the urban myth is to be believed, Goa has never been struck by a natural calamity owing to the omnipotent presence of Patron Saint Francis Xavier.** The Basilica de Bom Jesus is an intimidating Gothic Church that holds his relics, attracting lakhs of Pilgrims and voyagers each year. **A fine blend of Baroque interiors, Corinthian**

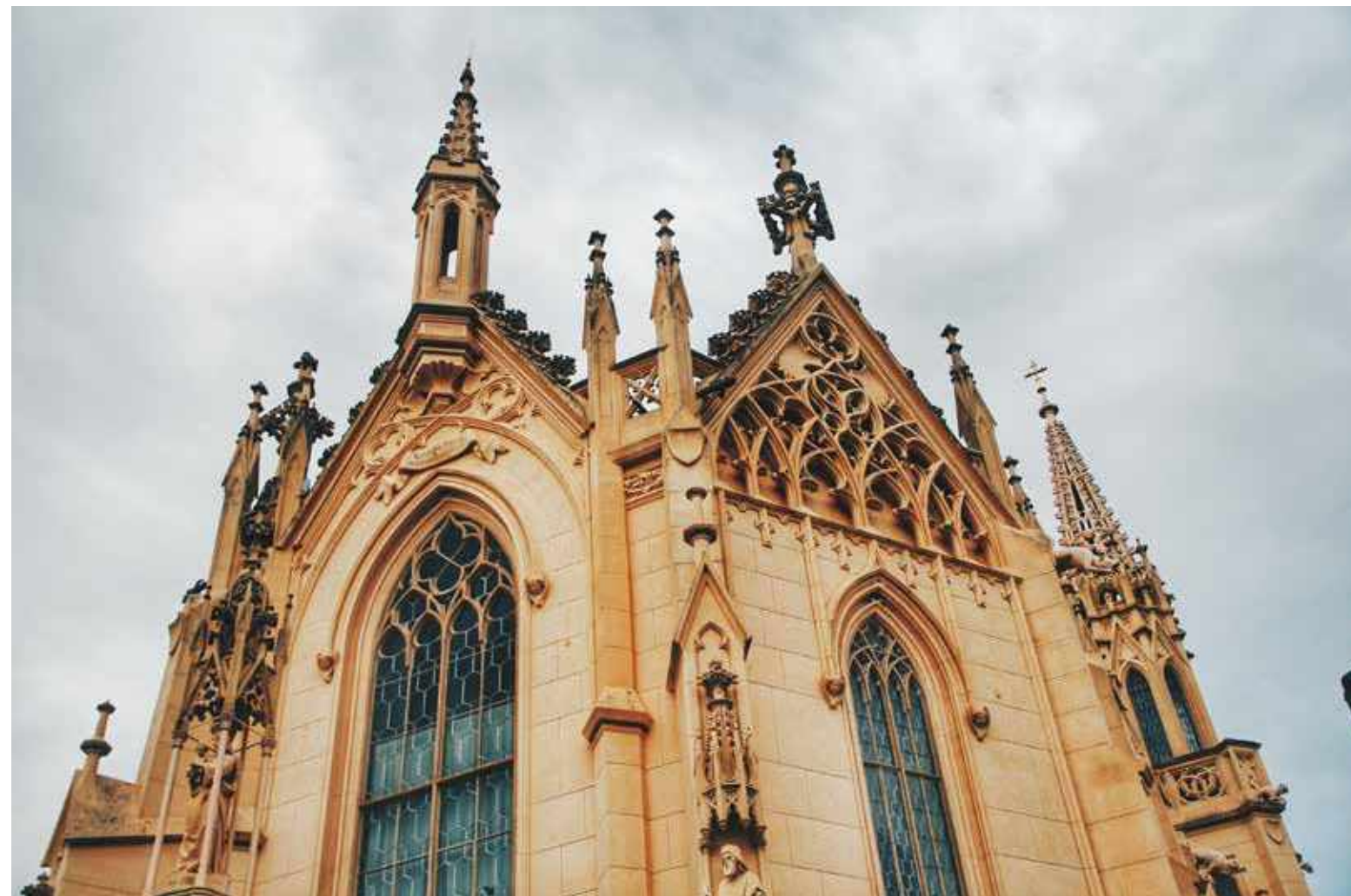




**architecture and built with native woods, Goan churches are one of their kind not to be found anywhere else in the world.** Built between the 16th and 17th century, these churches are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Similarly unparalleled are the temples of Goa. A synthesis of native Goan customs and the colonizers firmly rooted heritage. Mangeshi temple, dedicated to Lord Mangesh, an incarnation of Lord Shiva, is located in the native village of the ‘Nightingale of India’, LataMangeshkar. It is believed that it was here that her late father and she rehearsed. The Mahadev temple of TambdiSurla, the oldest in Goa built by the Kadamba dynasty. For those who like to break a sweat, there are several serene hiking routes available. This holy abode is surrounded on all sides with untapped wildlife, a placid stream and a waterfall not so further away. Rumour has it that there is a King Cobra permanently residing in the interiors, though it remains to be verified. One of the few things that all temples in Goa have in common is a welcoming Stambh, multi-storeyed oil-lamp pillar, casting a spectacular haze on the temple behind. Make sure you get there in time to

catch the weekly procession of idols from their respective temple, taken on a round around the premises in a palanquin, taking place before the evening aarti. Para Comer Queria..... (I would like to eat...) Goan food culture is a treasure for your Instagram page. Colourful, exotic and versatile, it is sure to earn envious likes from friends you left behind. The selection of eateries is vast, budget-friendly and rewards you with an all-immersive sensory experience. The colonisers not only brought Christianity and architecture but also influenced the culinary scene to undergo a modern European twist. The sight of a Fish Thali alone will do treacherous things for your cravings. A typical fish thali comprises the classic Goan staples: Hooman, rich curry with braised fish in fresh coconut and spices, crispy marinated Rawa-fried Fish, a crunchy side of stir-fried greens and a mound of Sheith, steamed Goan brown rice. The fish is sourced from local “catch of the day” freshly bought at dawn on the shore. Other native staple dishes that you must-try include: Sukke – dry spicy preparation of fish eaten as a side dish made with Tisryeo(clams), Bangde(Mackerel), or



Sungte(prawns). Sautéed vegetables are made with fresh seasonal farm produce. Ambot-Tik, a sour and hot fish curry. Kismoor, a dry preparation made with dried shrimps. Sol Kadhiis a digestive drink consumed towards the end of a meal made from coconut milk and Kokum. Portuguese slaves of multiple descents also added a lively touch of South-East Asian, African and South American flavours to Goan food. Foreigners are delighted by the overwhelming amount of options available here, things that they are familiar with. An excellent example of this is a smoky roast known as Chicken Cafreal – now grilled, where originally it was roasted – has its origins traced back to Mozambique Galinha. Similarly, Sorpotel, a raunchy Goan Pork curry, is said to have evolved from Sarapatel, a dish eaten by the African Slave Community. Balchao, a shrimp pickle, is rooted in Burma. Chicken Vindaloo, a widely relished piquant curry was made by the Portuguese using wine and garlic. But, Goan households, for whom it was difficult to come by an exclusive wine, substituted it with Palm Vinegar. Goa owes Chourizo sausage to the age-old Portuguese tradition, salted, spiced and sun-dried, vinegar is usually added to elate its already titillating flavours.

**City Bakes:** In a country that otherwise makes their own assortment of Flatbreads, **Goans savour Portuguese’ parting legacy, Pao/ Poei / Uned (Leavened Bread).** Most of the meals in Goa are accompanied by these freshly baked bread-rolls bought from a local Poder(bread baker), who sells this variety going lane to lane on cycle. Attached to his cycle is a honk, which sends out an alert to the buyers. Another unique home-made bread in Goa is Sanna, which is a steamed roll made with rice flour, ground coconut and coconut toddy, ideally eaten with spicy dishes.

**Sweets:** Offering an impeccable blend of European extravagance and simplicity of Konkan cooking, the sweets are a must-try for every holidayer. A plate of dessert is incomplete without Bebinca, a widely relished multi-layered sweet made from a mix of refined flour, egg yolk, sugar and coconut milk. Batica is a coconut



flavoured cake, meant to be savoured fresh. Dodol is a gooey sticky pudding, prepared from rice flour and jaggery in coconut milk, flavoured cashew nuts. It is a festive dessert found in abundance during Christmas. These are just a few in the wide array of fabulous desserts made available at each every Goan bakery.

**Street Food around Goa:** Goa has a spirited street food culture. You will see small shed-like structures erected where Goan middle-aged ladies, aided by their husbands or other ladies are hustling after patrons waiting to experience their specialities. These food joints will cater to every craving. From snacks such as battatwada, kappa pav, mirchipav to other stands granting signature Goan refreshment like Beef/Chicken Cutlet-Pao, Pork chops, Prawn Resios, Ross-omelette with Poie, Chicken and Cafreal- Pao.

**Goan Alcoholic Beverages:**

Move over the usual Buds and KFs and try the local ‘Feni’s and ‘Urak’s. They have an acquired taste and have been produced for over 400 years. Urak appeared on the scenes in the 1700s, made from either cashews or coconut palm sap. Urak has an alcohol of up to 30%. When distilled further, it gives a more potent ‘Feni’, having a stronger aroma and a solid aftertaste with an alcohol potency of up to 43%. The drink was even granted a Geographical Indication (GI) certificate back in 2000. Urak, is sweeter with a fruity taste and is available only in the summers unlike ‘Feni’ which is available throughout the year. These are made in small breweries, using traditional methods over firewood, containing zero preservatives or flavourings hence they have a short shelf life. These breweries are often open to curious tourists wanting to take their spirited interests a step ahead.

**Ethnicity and Festivals of Goa**

Unlike in other states of the Southern Hemisphere tourists in Goa encounter no interaction-barriers. Natives can fluently speak English, Hindi and Marathi, aside from locally spoken language Konkani. As you travel around you would see that Goa is a tolerant state, with all religions flourishing together in harmony. A



great example would be to witness the enchanting festivities celebrated in Goa. They serve as a vital attraction for tourists. Consider yourself lucky if you are met with the opportunity of experiencing this enthralling festival marking the onset of spring (March). Shigmoor Shishirotsava, is a parade that portrays folk dances, street plays and floats illustrating scenes from the local and Hindu mythology. Participating artists play a large number of instruments like flutes, dhols, and trumpets and carry heavy props.

Sao Jao might appear a bit bizarre to Non-Goans, but really there is little reason involved when you do something heartily. **Locals are seen diving into wells chanting ‘Viva Sao Jao’ to honour Saint John the Baptist, one that baptized Jesus in River Jordan.**

Ganesh Chaturthi called as Chavthin Goa is celebrated with remarkable fervour. The idol of Lord Ganesh is installed at home following several pujas, aartis and bhajans ranging from two and a half to twenty-one days. Finally, on the day of AnanthChaturdashi, the idols are sent off in a huge parade to be submerged in nearby rivers or lakes.

Diwali is celebrated inimitably from anywhere else in India, burning down huge intimidating effigies of the demon Narkasur to be burnt at midnight. Legend has it that, vexed from the constant state of terror enforced by Narkasur overGoa, the natives turned to God with prayers following which Lord Krishna descended down to help. At dawn, the people have baths with scented oils and soaps in order to purify themselves of evil traces from the Narkasur. The people of Goa then welcome Diwali by visiting temples and feasting over different preparations of Pohe.

**Even if it does not snow in Goa, it goes unnoticed because instead every nook is covered with tinsels, fairy lights and carols everywhere creating an enigmatical affair. There are many ways to celebrate Christmas in Goa. You can party it up along some sea-side, with a drink in hand while the fireworks illuminate the midnight sky or have a scrumptious meal.** Christmas brings in its wake celebrations for New Year’s Eve. It’s no secret to the rest of the country that no other place comes to life the way Goa does on this occasion. The best part, of course, is



when everyone comes to a screeching halt just to countdown the last ten seconds to midnight.

**Art, Music & Craft**

What Sydney Opera House is to Sydney, is what Kala Academy is to Goa. Over a thousand plays are performed each year along with which it is a headquarters for the International Film Festival of India that sees various celebrities of the B-Town in attendance. Serendipity Arts Festival, one of the largest multi-disciplinary arts events across South Asia provides a platform for popular and debutant artists to showcase their work, it has over 1500 artists participating with its venues spanning 11 destinations across the capital city, Panaji. Wendell Rodríguez, was a renowned Fashion designer of Goan origin that changed the panache of the contemporary fashion world starting late 90’s. You must have heard the popular song “ghegheghe re, ghe re Saiba...” it has been sampled from traditional Dekhni - a rare blend of traditional and modern music performed by women.

Local artisans are well respected in Goa, with their artistry on sale in the local market such as the Mapusa Municipal Market where art enthusiasts and international tourists seek out the famous pottery artefacts, therapeutic scents and oils, handloom and ethnic tribal jewellery.

**The most famous city Panaji:**

All of the world’s most prominent cities are perched on the banks of equally famous rivers, such as London on Thames and Budapest on Danube River. So is the Goan

cosmopolitan capital of Panaji set on the shores of River Mandovi, lounging on which are various cruise boats and casinos. While you see intangible traces of Europe in Goan culture, Panaji is a connotation of European memorabilia, unveiling a succession of colonial buildings which are still in use, backstreet wine bars, cafes and antique book shops that still retain their old names.

But it’s the maze of narrow streets in the old Latin Quarter of Fontain has that instantly teleport you to Lisbon. Welcome Heritage Panjim Inn located in this Latin Quarter, enamours guests by providing them with heritage ambience adorned with period furniture and magnificent artefacts, a built-in museum and Goan themed restaurant in its veranda. One would unexpectedly be met by the sight of pastel-coloured mansions with terracotta tiled roofs and ornamental iron balconies. The back streets are filled with shops that sell magnificent artefacts, antique furniture and abstract cafes that offer sedate pleasures.

**Two States**

Many these days are under the impression that Goan beaches are over-crowded. This might be true for a handful of beaches along the Baga-Candolim belt. But the truth is that very few go beyond these in the far-north or down south to explore our extensive shoreline.

South Goan beaches are blessed with pristine beauty and untapped reservoirs of wildlife repose. Patnem, Agonda, Benaulim and Cola are other options for those wanting to experience crowd-less never-





ending shores and azure water. But less crowds don't mean they are abandoned, you will find modern resorts and five-star hotels here as well. The North Goan belt is more developed and it is where the partygoers head to. A hippie haunt known for laid back vibes, shacks, quaint cafes & flea markets – the Goa that you usually see in ads or movies. Calangute, Baga, Anjuna, and Vagator are our most popular beaches. During the month of December these get more crowded and raucous. From stalls selling everything from handmade jewellery to leather goods and activities such as snorkelling or paragliding. However, there are a few beaches left in the North that provide tranquillity to its seekers like Ashwem, Mandrem, Morjim etc.

### Traversing around Goa:

Disclaimer: There is no Ola or Uber in Goa! The best way there is to navigate the

streets is to rent a scooter, which will cost you around Rs.100-150/day inclusive of a helmet, but make sure you carry your licence, the Goan Police aren't forgiving.

Taxis and Rickshaws are to be hired at your own risk, because chances are that you'll be scammed. There is a cab service run by the Government of Goa, although prices can be a bit on the steep side. Bus fare is dirt-cheap and a convenient way of getting to places in Goa. In recent years, where people have become more eco-friendly, renting out cycles is gaining credence. Taking a ride on the Goan ferry is another beautiful way to cross the inland rivers. They coast small routes and are free of cost for people on foot (meagre charges applicable for vehicles). The most popular route, Panjm-Betim will provide a rare experience where on one side you will see giant billboards, fishermen boats docked at the shores and the eminent Atal Setucable bridge. On the other hand, various casino cruises stand invitingly against the shining suburban background of Panjim city.

### Defining new norms:

However, all these activities came to an abrupt standstill early in 2020. Limping back to normalcy post COVID 19 has been a slow process. The state government has set up a few norms to be able to host tourists again. Around 250/300 hotels have been granted to accommodate guests, provided they follow the norms. A significant note has to be taken by those planning a vacation in Goa. A brief summary of what needs to be done goes as follow:

- The traveller must carry a COVID-19 with a negative status, conducted within the past 48hrs. Upon failing to do so, travellers have to get tested in Goa and quarantine themselves for the next 48hrs till the test results are declared.
- If tested positive, they would either have to go back or stay in quarantine in Goa. Stay can be arranged at paid institutions offered by the government or the accommodation facility where you have booked your stay (depending on the policies of the brand). One can also take asylum in their own homes if they have one.

- Hotel bookings done in a non-approved abode will not be allowed and legal action will be taken against the perpetrator. With the all-time threat of the virus invading public spaces, government approved hotels, restaurants and stores are taking no risks. Staff are being trained on constant vigilance of public spaces, touch-less interactions with guests and enforcement of hygienic practices. Ceaseless sanitization is being conducted of all public gathering areas and staff lockers etc. Temperature checks are performed at entry points for staff and guests alike who are entering and leaving the facility.

A silver lining in the otherwise gloomy scenario is that amongst few other domestic travel destinations, Goa has stayed statistically inert. So we could say that where the rich were heading to Marrakesh, Seychelles, Tuscany, and St Lucia have now changed plans, much of their euphoria is likely to ebb or be transferred to domestic destinations like Goa. For an enthusiastic place like Goa with its unprecedented lifestyle and culture, is what makes it the perfect travel destination, adding justiceto all its credits.



• SIDDHI SHINTRE •

Part-time freelancer. Full-time free-thinker. A stay-at-home explorer of books, people, cultures and food. Loves to make a day out of the night and dreams out of realities....







# ***YOKSA RIDE: Exotic Tribes of Eastern Arunachal and their legendary “YOKSA”; swords from ancient Tibet.***

I sit at my desk, looking out of the window, wondering, for how long it has been raining. May be just few days or may be over 10. It does not seem to matter any way. Some feel trapped indoors whilst others are out and about seemingly oblivious of the fully formed drops of rain exploding on their wet backs. Then there

are the shirtless boys from the village nearby, who cheer rain, run out on bare feet to play football in ankle deep slush. The second's hand of my watch is ticking away and the ceiling fan continues lumber along, drawing circles in air. My drowsy mind starts to drift. Drift to an interesting time spent on a motorcycle, exploring parts







of the world, I had only seen on maps. I had already fallen in love with western Arunachal Pradesh. Eastern Arunachal is still an enigma. A land of fast flowing rivers that have, over many millenniums, carved a landscape of deep gorges and rugged mountains. Created conditions for dense jungles and support exotic wildlife. For thousands of years some of the hardest people on this planet have flourished on these seemingly inhospitable slopes by evolving subsistence lifestyles, sustainable choices and survival strategies. All the planets seemingly lined up in Nov 2019 for me to get a shot at exploring two river valleys and some more. I set off on my motorcycle with a desire to



ride along the Dibang river and then along Siang.

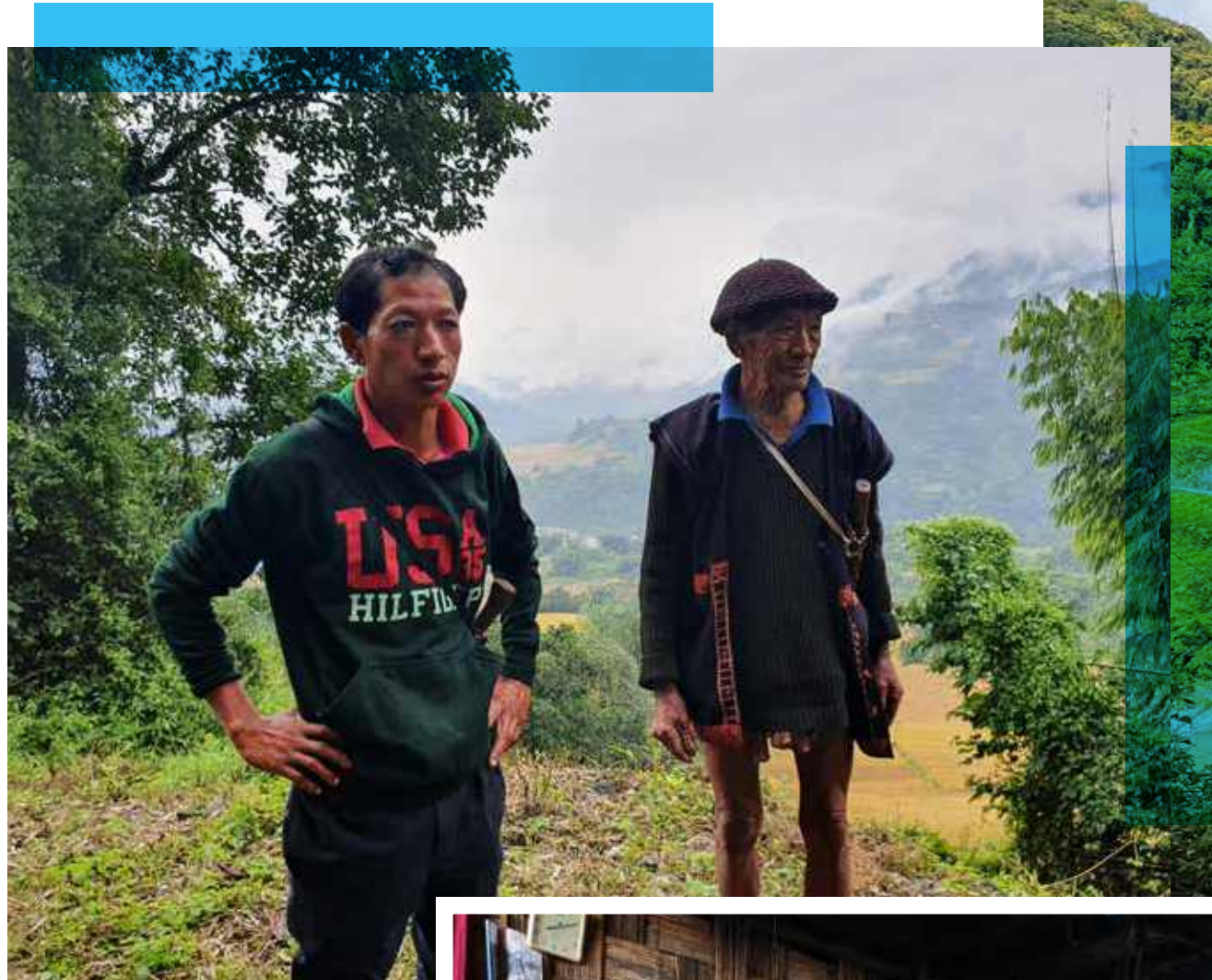
Roing: Entry to the Dibang Valley

After three days of riding away from Kolkata, I reached Roing. My travel essentials; off-line google maps, some dry fruits & chocolates, loads of optimism, strong faith in the abundance of the universe and a big smile. My Royal Enfield Himalayan, has over the years shed a lot of unwanted weight and gained what is absolutely necessary for such exploratory adventure rides. I stayed at a beautiful rustic eco resort called Mishmi Hill Camp on the banks of the river Dev Pani. The owner JB is a splendid host. This by far is the best place to stay in Roing.

Roing is a small town that sits at the confluence of two rivers, Dev Pani and Dibang. There is a lot of cultivable plain land. The Mishmi tribe farmers are hardworking and largely prosperous. Roing has good schools, hospitals, markets,







a petrol pump, Hotels and is the district headquarters. The highways leading in to town from Tezu, Dumduma and Dambuk are fantastic. So riding up to Roing was easy and fast.

### ***Hunli: Riding along Dibang River***

The following day I set off before dawn towards Anini. The climb up to Myodia pass, starts immediately after crossing the bridge over the Devpani River. The first 15km is a biker's dream road. Superb surface, excellent visibility, well-engineered cambers and loads of twisties. Speed picked and I was cornering at the limits of adhesion. Like all dreams, this road too ends abruptly. From here on it's a



single road, paved but uneven and broken. The spectacular jungle with giant trees and creepers, chirping of birds and many waterfalls on the way, more than make up for it. The distance of 50km from Roing to Mayodia pass (alt. 2655m ) takes about 2 hours. However I slowed down to a crawl, to soak in the views of Roing and the lower Dibang Valley. Near the pass there is a small lodge called Mayodia coffee house. They have 4 to 6 rooms and is normally used by bird watchers. At 65km from Roing is the Maya cafeteria. This is pretty much the only place a traveller can get something to eat. So tank up. I decided to slow down







further and stay the night at the next village called Hunli.

By the time, I reached Hunli, the sun was setting. Being in the extreme east, sun sets by about 3:30pm in winters. The Circuit House that sits at the edge of a cliff with spectacular views was unavailable. This disappointment turned in to a blessing in disguise, when I got a room at the PWD IB (Inspection Bungalow). It was a completely run down wooden cottage, sitting alone on top of a hill. The elderly caretaker lady introduced herself as IB nani (nani

in Hindi, means grandma) and went in to prepared dinner. I sat on the porch with a drink in hand and enjoyed the symphony of colours on the western sky.

IB Nani served dinner and talked about the history of Hunli, its families, their struggles, beliefs, daily life and how her world had changed. After about 2 hours, IB Nani's dog ran in and was restless. She said her dog had come to take her back home at the bottom of the hill. Apparently he did this every time the weather was about to turn bad.

The night spent alone in the eerie old bungalow was by far the most interesting in my life. A thunderstorm had swept in, blowing the lights out. Lightning, followed by thunder, raindrops crashing on the tin roof and the old wooden structure creaking and protesting. Just as I had got used to this rhythm, rain water pouring down from the roof started drumming on some empty beer cans.

Finally all the imaginary demons of the night were vanquished by sun rise. It was a beautiful clear day.



### ***Anini: Top of the Dibang Valley***

The name Anini has a beautiful ring to it. But covering the 140km from Hunli to Anini would take close to 10 hours. Three decades back, the Border Roads Organization had cut through mountains and laid a single road to access the border with Tibet. Anini happens to be last village on the road. Now NHAI has taken over an ambitious project to build a highway all the way from Roing to Anini. Large sections of the old road have disappeared under landslides and the new road is still under construction. This made riding to Anini one of the most difficult and adventurous. The unseasonal deluge had turned dirt tracks in to slush pools. Streams were flowing over the road and every once in a while a waterfall would wash the muck off dirt covered travellers. I reached Anini at about 9pm and checked in to the only lodge in town.

The lodge does not have a name, but fortunately it has spacious rooms. Everybody I met, recommended me to visit Damben.

Damben (Past the last civil settlement called Acheso) is about 30km from Anini. This road ends at an ITBP check post. One has to leave behind all cameras (phones included) and walk for about 10 mins to get to one of the most serene river side spots I have ever seen in my life. Now I too would recommend this place on the banks of crystal clear Dri River, to every traveller. At about mid-way from Anini to Damben is a beautiful little village called Alinye (also called LG). There is a lovely little resort with three large cottages. It is run by the family of a local priest. This is definitely a better place to stay while in this area.

Yingkion: Ride along Mighty Siang

Journey to Tuting from Roing started with a lot of unknowns. This would be the first time, I would be riding along the Siang. In Arunachal, each river valley is dominated by a different set of tribes. Language, cultural sensibilities, construction of houses, dietary habits and even the way they greet strangers is different. For eg. A loud “Hoy!” in some places is a threat/ warning while in others it is a friendly greeting. Fortunately almost everybody speaks Hindi.



The road from Roing to Dambuk and all the way to Yingkiong is well made, wide and largely straight. Dambuk is said to be the Orange capital of North East. They even conduct an Orange Festival in Oct every year.

At the confluence of the river Yamne and Siang, is lovely view point to see Ponging village in the distance and crystal clear Yamne pouring in to turquoise Siang. Ladies from Ponging village sell locally grown fruits. These are completely organic and taste fantastic. Every village on the way proudly display their name and declare themselves as “Open Defecation Free”. Effective implementation of the “Swatch Bharath Abhiyan”.

Yingkiong is a very small town with a fantastic Circuit House, a rudimentary market and few places to eat. There are two lodges too. Beyond the one main road, it's a very charming town. Mobile connectivity was poor in town but one could get super-fast 4G connectivity 2 km out of town, near what is called Gandhi Bridge, over Siang. This bridge is also one of the most beautiful places to hang out at dawn as well as dusk. I was soaking in the spectacular sun set colours and watching a bunch of kayakers taking on the rapids of Siang. I waited to find out where they had come from. They turned out to be local boys (note to myself, not to assume). Kishon Tekseng seemed to be the prime motivator of the group. Kishon still looks like a teenager, but he belonged to the elite club of mountaineers who have climbed Mount Everest. He was training his buddies to become kayaking guides. The more I got to know him, the more I realised that under that seemingly shy mild demeanour was a man of steely determination and boundless energy. They now have a beautiful river side camp just outside town, for visitors to stay.

### ***Tuting: Top of the Siang Valley in India.***

In 2013, the Indian Air Force landed their monster cargo aircraft C-17 Globemaster at the advance landing ground in Tuting. That was the first time I heard of this place. It was just a “dot” on the Indo - Tibet border. A combination of going to bed at 8 pm and the excitement of being so close to reaching Tuting, had me waking up every half hour or so to check if it was time to leave. Finally





it was 3:30 am and I quickly set off from Yingkiang. Waited for the sun to rise at Gandhi Bridge, took some pictures, crossed Siang for the first time and headed north towards that elusive “dot” on the map. 2 hours in to the ride, I was invited into a very nice house. It turned out to be the bungalow of an ADC. He treated me to some traditional rice cakes and tea. I was told that the road is narrow and in a bad

state of repair and that I must keep moving if I were to reach Tuting before dark. Being local and having served Tuting as ADC, everybody knew him. It was very nice of him to ask me to call him or use his name if I got into trouble and needed help on the way. It was a beautiful clear day and I was treated to some of the most spectacular views of the Siang, hundreds of waterfalls

and small streams. I made good time, stopping only once in a while for a swig of water and pictures. Finally I saw the milestone that said Tuting 0 km. I had reached that “dot” on the map, after looking at it for about 6 years. Tuting is a charming little village, surrounded by a beautiful weave of mountains and small flat cultivable land. There is one lodge that is owned by a

local school’s science teacher, who also is a farmer. A well informed man who has chosen to stay back in this remote hamlet to continue the family tradition of farming and to contribute to the society by teaching at the local school. The Sun effortlessly climbs over tall mountains colouring the dark blue sky with pink and orange hues. A blanket of

lazy night-mist that protect Siang and her valley from evil eyes of demons that walk the night sky, slowly burn away. Revealing to all those willing to savour, fast flowing turquoise water with little rapids, that look like jumping cauliflowers. The main street of Tuting is abuzz with activity at about 4am. By 5 am, this only main street wears a deserted look. Everybody leaves to work their farms before 5 am. With nobody to talk to in town, I walked up to see the Advance Landing Ground, which was the genesis of my interest in Tuting. This being on a sensitive border with Tibet and of importance to National Security, it is heavily guarded. But one can walk up to the gate to see. The Tuting Gompa and Monastery is an interesting place to spend few hours. If you are lucky and I was, then one of the Lamas might invite you to have tea. Where you take it from there is up to your interest. I learnt a lot about the daily life of a Lama, Buddhist philosophy, how difficult it is even for Lamas to truly live this philosophy. My take-away from this discussion was that it is important for at least a small percentage amongst us, to dedicate their life in spiritual pursuit. This becomes a compass, pointing towards sustainable happiness for all humanity. Only the determined travellers reach Tuting. Having got this far, it’s best to

spend 2 or 3 days poking around this far-far away little interesting village. The short news clip about Tuting, 6 years earlier was the trigger to look it up on the map, not being able get there in 2018, due to heavy rains, finally getting to spend some time there, the connection with locals and the pull to go back...all this could just be coincidence or perhaps an old connection established in a previous life. Leaving Tuting, felt like riding away from home and that one day soon, I will be back. From Tuting I started making my way to the magical high altitude Menchuka valley. The objective was to meet the family who had hosted me in one of my earlier trips. However destiny had other plans. I ended up in a village so remote that only resident villagers, the Indian Army and the brave men of Indian Intelligence go there. Monigong got its road only in 2013. That road turns in to a mule and ends at a Army Heli Pad, just 25km from the Indo Tibet Border. I will talk about the ride to Monigong in chapter two of Yoksa Rides series.

→ BALAJI DEVANATHAN ←  
Riding motorcycles, travelling to offbeat places and listening to folk lore, has excited me for long. Having indulged in adventure travel, for over 2 decades, I now want to enable others to seek their own travel stories. I continue to explore and also lead motorcycle rides for Red Panda Adventures.



# Not-to-be-ignored magnum opus of History...

*Replete with a rich history and richer heritage, India boasts of many archaeological sites, architectural delights and numerous monuments regularly visited by tourists, historians and travel enthusiasts. Taj Mahal, Konark Sun Temple, Golden Temple, Hawa Mahal in Jaipur, Ellora caves and other famous historical sites.*

*But India is also home to many un-touristic landmarks and historical jewels that remain in oblivion.*

*Its time to unfold and discover these marvels that boast of intricate workmanship, rare art and enough information on the rich history and culture of India. Almost like an illustrated storybook.*

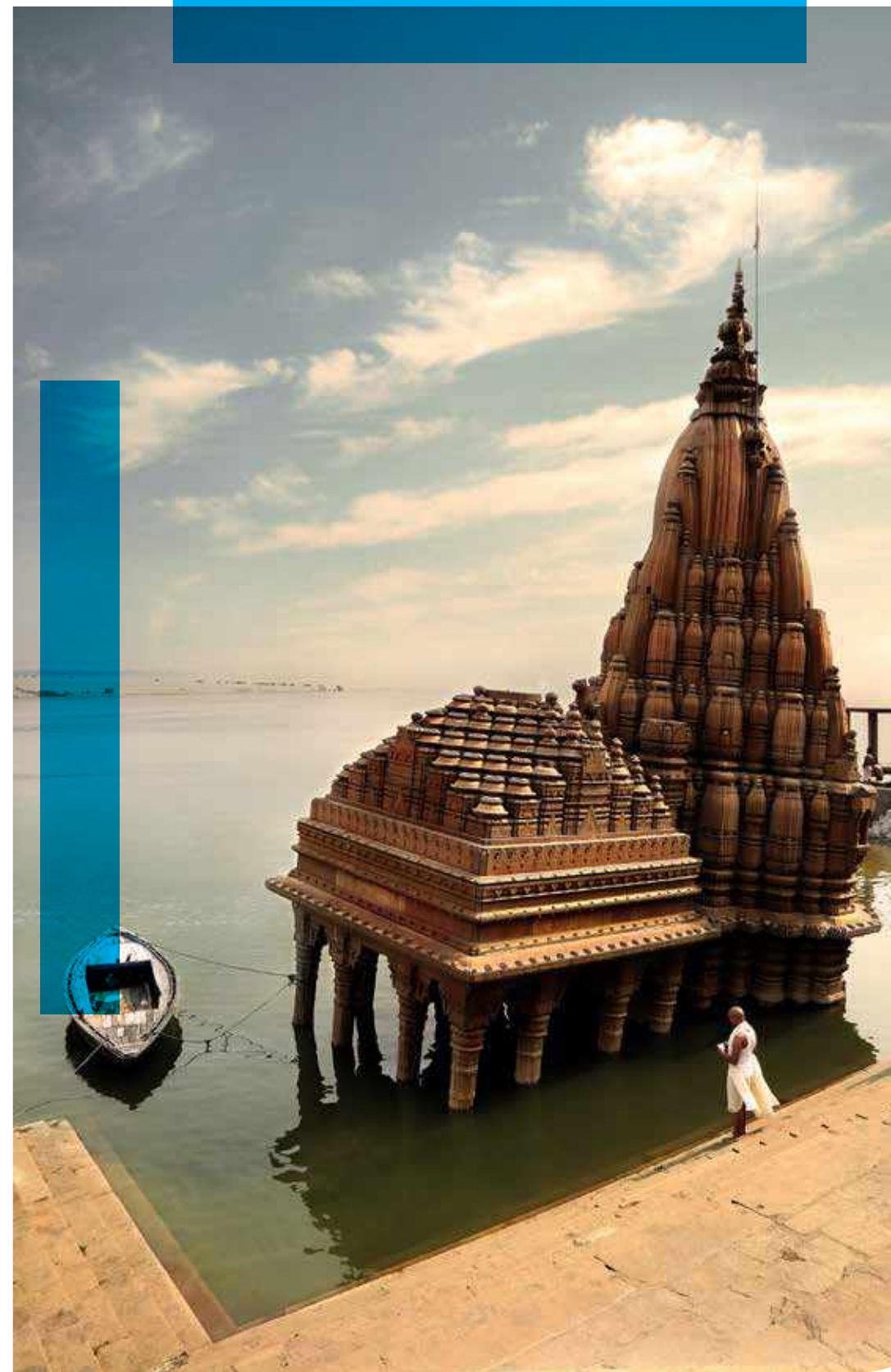
*Ritu Ghai attempts to list a few such places that will compel you to visit and get mesmerized by the rich tapestry of Indian art and architecture.*



The Masrur Temples, an early 8th-century complex of rock-cut Hindu temples in the Kangra Valley of Beas River in Himachal Pradesh are like stone blocks cajoled with chisel and hammer to create masterpieces. Originally dedicated to Hindu deities Shiva and Vishnu, the main sanctum sanctorum houses idols of Lord Rama, Lord Lakshmana and Goddess Sita. A fine example of North-Indian Nagara style architecture, this temple complex is a cluster of 15 rocks that have been carved out of a single rock. The complex has 19 shrines including the main shrine, mandapa and 16 subsidiary shrines. Five panelled doorway embellished with scrolls, diamonds, ornamented pilasters, ganas and miniature Ganesha, Kartikeya, and Shiva on the doorway beam, Masrur temple complex faces the snowy peaks of the Dhauladhar Mountains. The sacred water reservoir in front of these temples depicts its reflection exquisitely. This temple compound is often cited as the 'Ellora of the North' and bears a slight resemblance to Angkor Wat of Cambodia.

## Udayagiri Caves,

elegant and intricate rock-cut architecture in the town of Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh. Lying upon the banks of Betwa river, this set of twenty magnificent caves house incredible carvings of Vishnu as a Varaha (boar) rescuing goddess Earth (Bhudevi, Prithivi) from the depths of cosmic oceans, an amazing rock-cut sculpture of a reclining Vishnu, Brahmi inscriptions



and many other remarkable examples of classical Gupta art are here at Udayagiri. These caves also contain one of the oldest inscriptions belonging to Jainism and abundant rock-shelters and petroglyphs (rock carvings made by pecking directly on the rock surface using a stone chisel and a hammer) - almost like a story in stone. The massive **Temple of Vishnu at Thirukurangudi village** in the remote Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu is believed to have existed since pre-Chola era, around 8th century. Sprawling across eighteen acres, this less-explored temple has been restored by the famous TVS Iyengar family.

Ample nooks and corners replete with Pallava style of architecture, elaborate detailing, small sculptures from mythology of Lord Krishna stealing butter, horses, elephants, miniature figures of Vaishnava saints, larger than life-size sculptures of Hindu gods and other engraving running like a commentary about life back then. Something that will grab your attention is a sculpture of a beautiful woman of short stature wearing a waist band made of gold, rubies and diamonds. Probably one of the queens, as learned people around the temple inform. Unique sculpture of Ganesha with the body of a female and legs of a lion. Inside, in a corridor flanked by large granite pillars on either side, are large **mythical creatures known as Yaalis**. Inside one of the Yaali's mouth is a stone ball. The entire statue is made of one solid block of granite but the ball is of the material, Onyx. This piece of architecture is so fascinating and unique because one can roll this ball, rotate it but cannot pull it out of the mouth. How this expert piece of architecture was created during that era, remains a mystery even today.

The temple also boasts of another life-like sculpture of Arjuna being taken into the battlefield of Kurukshetra on his chariot, driven by Krishna.

**Ratneshwar temple in front of the**





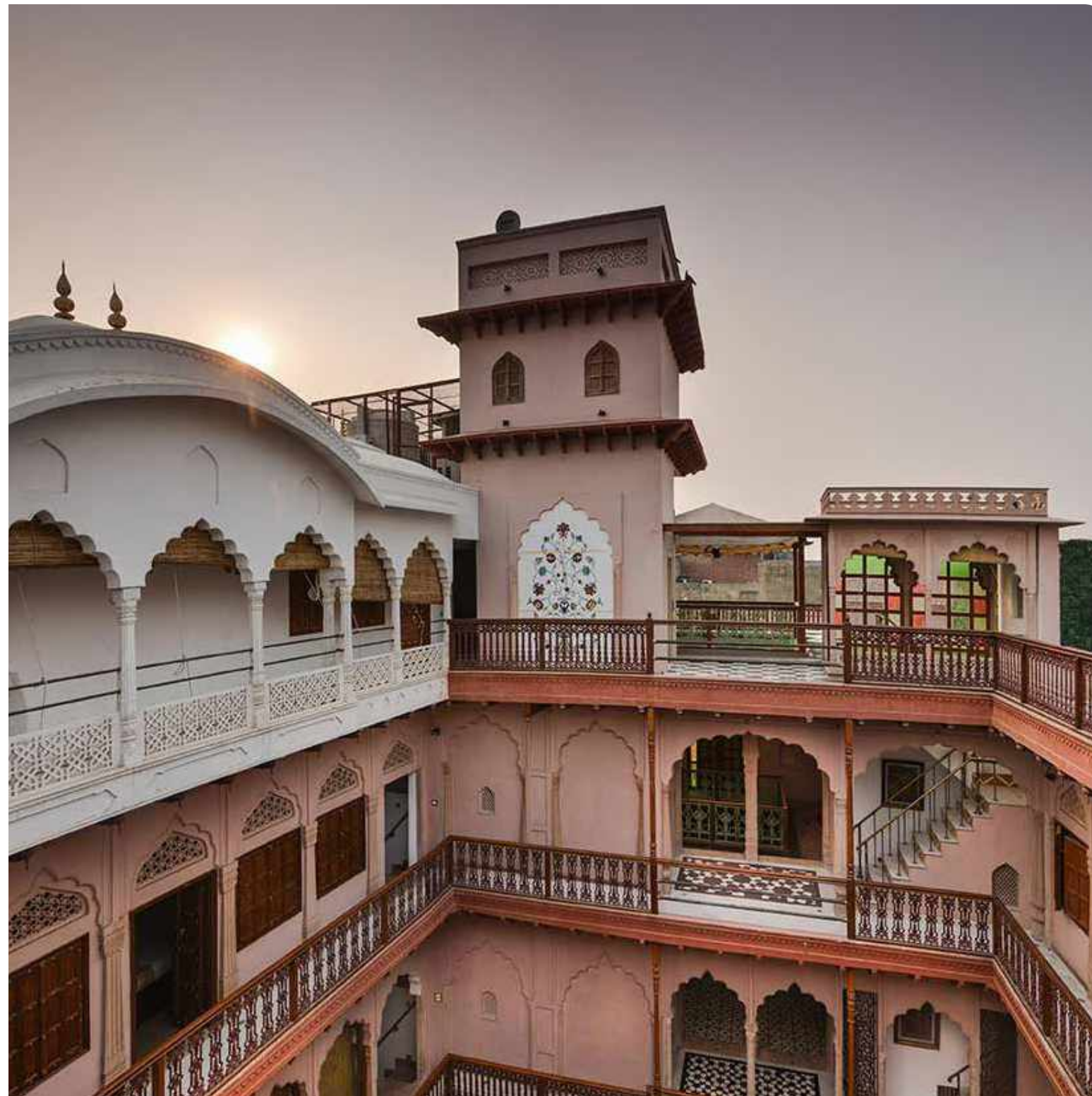
### Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi is 9 degrees inclined from its foundation,

which is more than the tilt of Leaning Tower of Pisa i.e 4 degrees from its foundation. This temple at a height of 74 m and bent for hundreds of years has recently been brought into notice for its marvellous architecture. Indeed a mystery how this weighed temple made of stones has

remained reclined for so long.

The Murudeshwar temple on the Kanduka hill in the town of Murudeshwar, lies in the Bhatkal Taluk of the north Kannada district. Surrounded by beautiful views of the Arabian Sea on three sides of the temple, this was constructed to its present

form by businessman and philanthropist R. N. Shetty. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple has a 20 storey Raja Gopurum, the only one with an elevator. This 249 feet structure is guarded by two big elephants at the entrance. Travellers to this temple are astounded by the massive 123 feet tall Shiva statue, strategically placed in a way that it sparkles alluringly when the morning sunlight falls on it.



Replete with the historic ruins of Hampi, Murudeshwara temple is a story in stone. Legend says that Ravana had acquired Atma-Linga from Lord Shiva on a condition that he would not keep it on the ground before reaching Lanka. Devatas, with help from Lord Ganesha, tricks Ravana to give him the Atma-Linga in Gokarna, as he did

not want Ravana to become immortal. He places the Linga on the ground where it gets fixed. Ravana, in his anger tries to take the Linga but breaks the Linga. The pieces of Linga gets scattered around Gokarna and the cloth covering the Atma-Linga falls in Murudeshwar. Haveli Dharampura in Delhi dates back

to the 1887 AD and is a luxe boutique hotel now. Spread over 500 square yards, the haveli boasts of beautiful ornate architectural elements of the Mughal era such as intricate motifs and carvings and wood work. With sculptures engraved in stone and steel and antique balconies with jharokas, coupled with red sandstone

brackets and lime concrete flooring, high-quality workmanship, use of traditional materials, painstaking construction techniques and modern interventions have made this structure existent even today. All credit of its maintenance and restoration goes to Vijay Goel, Rajya Sabha member. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu is about 1,200 years. Spread over 156 acres on an islet sandwiched between the Cauvery and Coleroon rivers, this temple is dedicated to Lord Ranganatha, a form of Lord Vishnu in a reclining pose. Constructed in Dravidian style of architecture, the Temple offers free food to the devotees every day. Apart from the 7 prakarams, 80 shrines, 21 exquisite gopurams (consecrated gateways with towers) and 39 grand pavilions, the temple has more than 900 granite pillars, teeming with a life of their own. Mini-Mandapams housing the blessed feet of the Lord, 640 inscriptions dating between the Chola and Nayak periods are evidence of the history and culture of that period, festivals celebrated during that time, irrigation facilities, land measures, tax structure and the presence of Arokyasala - health Centre that rendered medical service to the people of that time.

Its interesting to note that the main deity idol is made of Stucco (a unique combination of lime, mortar and stones) bound together by a special paste, Thailam (made of musk, camphor, honey, Jaggery and sandal). Indeed unique and different from the usual use of Granite stone. The temple complex houses several chariots namely Garuda vahana, Simha vahana, Hanumantha vahana, and Sesha vahan used during festivals and various religious occasions.

Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur – A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this 1000 year old temple is an architectural masterpiece. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this Hindu temple, built by Raja Raja Chola, is an example of exemplary Dravidian architecture.. Built entirely of granite, the tall Vimana tower above the sanctum, a massive Shiva linga and a 20 feet Nandi weighing 25 tonnes at the entrance makes it hard to believe that these structures were built without modern tools, equipment and machinery. The towering Dwarkadhish temple, on the





banks of Gomati River where it meets the Arabian Sea, is also called Jagat Mandir. Legend says that Lord Krishna left Mathura forever and formed a new kingdom called Dwarka in Gujarat.

It has two gateways called as Swarga Dwar (gate to heavens) and Moksha Dwar (gate to liberation). Tourists climb 56 steps to enter through Swarg Dwar and exit through Moksha Dwar.

Believed to have been built by Vajranabh, the great-grandson of Sri Krishna around 5200 years ago, this temple stands at an elevation of about 250 feet, almost as tall as a 25-story modern day building. On top of it is 25 ft long flagstaff.

The magnificent Solanki style architecture of this temple continues to baffle historians and mesmerize travel enthusiasts.

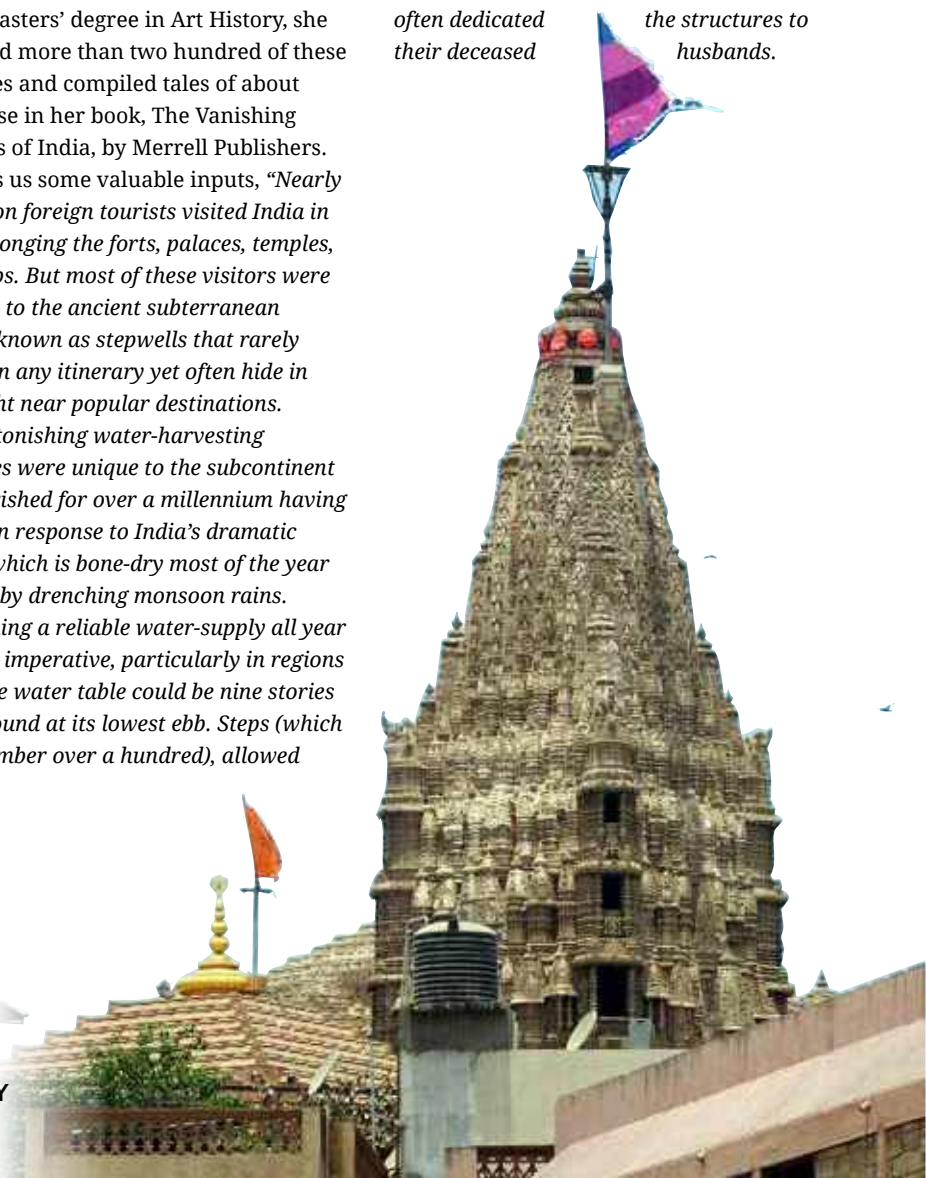
### Classic cisterns

**Stepwells** are unique to India. An essential connection between Indian civilizations and water harvesting techniques, these stepwells are glorious architectural marvels and sustainable structures that fulfilled the socio-economic needs of local communities during the ancient times. But with technologist advancements, these sacred water spaces are long forgotten, left in ruins and rarely visited by tourists. Distinguished American journalist,

**Victoria Lautman** talks in detail about these fascinating structures. Her

first visit to India in 1985 led to many subsequent trips and fascination with the country's vanishing stepwells. Armed with a Masters' degree in Art History, she sojourned more than two hundred of these structures and compiled tales of about 75 of these in her book, *The Vanishing Stepwells of India*, by Merrell Publishers. She gives us some valuable inputs, "Nearly ten-million foreign tourists visited India in 2019, thronging the forts, palaces, temples, and tombs. But most of these visitors were oblivious to the ancient subterranean marvels known as stepwells that rarely appear on any itinerary yet often hide in plain sight near popular destinations. These astonishing water-harvesting structures were unique to the subcontinent and flourished for over a millennium having evolved in response to India's dramatic climate which is bone-dry most of the year followed by drenching monsoon rains. Establishing a reliable water-supply all year long was imperative, particularly in regions where the water table could be nine stories underground at its lowest ebb. Steps (which could number over a hundred), allowed

direct access to water at low ebb during the dry season, while during the rains the stairs gradually submerged as the water-level rose. It was a clever and efficient system that evolved over the centuries to produce some of the most impressive architecture that few outside India even know exist. The earliest rudimentary rock-cut stepwells are thought to have developed between 300 and 500 CE., but by 800 CE, they'd evolved into complex marvels of architecture, engineering, and art. By then they were performing many other roles besides simply harvesting water: stepwells were cool refuges against intense heat, subterranean temples for Hindu communities, rest stops along remote trade routes, and active social centers where women leading constrained lives could gather daily. Commissioning a stepwell for the local community was an important charitable gift from wealthy or royal patrons, and it's thought that perhaps a quarter of those were women, who often dedicated the structures to their deceased husbands.



PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA LAUTMAN

By the 18th century, stepwells (known as baoli, vav, and various other local terms) had proliferated throughout the country in a wide array of styles, sizes, shapes, and materials. They were found in cities, villages, and the hinterlands, built within forts, on palace grounds, and in private gardens. They numbered in the thousands but despite their former importance, most of these magnificent structures eventually lapsed into obscurity and were abandoned. Once stepwells were untethered from their original purpose of providing water, their maintenance was no longer essential. Today, so little documentation exists about



PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA LAUTMAN

most stepwells and until stepwells appear on every tourist itinerary, in more guidebooks, and in classrooms the world over, their future continues to be bleak. I saw my first stepwell during a visit to India over thirty years ago and was smitten, returning well over a dozen times to the subcontinent through the years, photographing over two hundred structures throughout the country - a fraction of what still remains. In 2017, my book *The Vanishing Stepwells of India* (Merrell publishers, London) appeared, which is soon to be released in paperback.

**MAHILA BAGH JHALRA** (c. 1780, Jodhpur, Rajasthan) stepwell lies beside the road leading into Jodhpur's old city, surrounded by modern structures and noise, making it impossible to imagine the serene garden that once occupied this area. Commissioned by the wealthy royal concubine Gulab Rai, this dainty little baoli would have been a cool oasis and even now, despite its shabbiness, a colorful history of the fluctuating water-level is written directly on the rich red local sandstone: green moss, white mineral scaling, and rosy walls. Unfortunately, the stepwell is poorly maintained with no "official" oversight or professional conservation, so the water is often generally marred by trash.

**RAJON KI BAOLI** (Delhi c. 1516) is a gorgeous stepwell with its long arched





PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA LAUTMAN



PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA LAUTMAN

arcade – a bit eccentric, incorporating rocky outcroppings directly into its walls and columns. Delhi once boasted over a hundred stepwells to supply its thirsty residents through the centuries, but most have long disappeared and those that remain are largely ignored. While Agrasen ki baoli near Connaught place became famous thanks to its appearance in the Aamir Khan blockbuster PK, few visit the larger and more intricate Rajon ki baoli, embedded in Mehrauli Archeological Park. Commissioned in the early sixteenth century, the name has puzzled scholars and led to all sorts of speculation, the most common being that the well was named after the stonemasons who used it. Historians have pointed out the unlikelihood that masons would have warranted such an extravagant baoli, although in the early 20th century, a group of stoneworkers began living in the adjacent mosque, and perhaps that gave rise to the name.

**MUKUNDPURA BAOLI** (c. 1650 Mukundpura, Haryana) stepwell is a pretty

and diminutive construction that supplied water to the local farming community. Rising above the fields outside the Mughal city of Narnaul, four delicate chhatris mark the presence of Mukundpura baoli, commissioned by Rai Bal Mukund Das, prime minister of Narnaul during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan. He has gifted Das the revenue from an estate now occupied by Mukundpura village, and Das in turn donated the baoli to the villagers (he also built himself a five-storey palace and a sarai for travelers in the city). Typical of a rural, utilitarian well, it's almost devoid of ornamentation although, as in the case of many baolis, the plaster that still clings to some walls may have been frescoed in places. The scale and proportions are beautiful and the graceful chhatris lend Mukundpura a regal feel, but vegetation is overtaking the structure which is gradually crumbling away”, concludes Victoria. Taking a cue from her expertise in this area, Travel Links names a few other stepwells which are undoubtedly architectural pieces such as:

Neemrana Baori (1700 c), located just a few kms of the busy Delhi/Jaipur highway: Ujala baoli (1500 c), in the magnificent Mandu Fort in Madhya Pradesh has survived wars and weather changes. Ujala (meaning 'light') is built as steps in geometric patterns combined with carved-out niches and arched chambers – thus appearing as a 3D painting work. Chand baori in Abhaneri, Rajasthan with 13 levels and geometric steps, this 800 C structure is a rare sight to behold. Adalaj Stepwell is another prominent structure in Gujrat, built during the reign of Rana Veer Singh of Dandai Des. Fine carvings and designs grace this five storey structure which was hastily completed by Mohammed Begda, a Muslim ruler who invaded the entire area. All these alluring masterpieces bear testimony to the sculptors' talent in that era.

→ RITU GHAI ←

Ritu Ghai is an experienced writer for more than 20 years. She loves to read and play with her dogs in her free time.





# FROM DEATH TO LIFE -

माटी कहे कुम्हार से तू क्यों रोन्धे मोय  
एक दिन ऐसा आएगा मैं रेंदू की तोय

*Mati Kahe Kumhar Se Tu Kyo Rondhe Moy  
Ek Din Aesa Aayega Mai Rondhu Ki Toy*

*Clay says to the potter, "Today, you  
are moulding me...  
...such a day will come when, I  
shall be moulding you"*

## HISTORY

The thing which was necessity after humans learned hunting , fire , wheel an apart from farming , spare money hereit was discovered long after, was pottery. World over pottery can be first traced back 10000 years ago to Middle East and Africa , simple and brown in texture. It is believed that the art of pottery is as old as humankind. In India one can trace it to Mesolithic age and Indus Valley Civilization , we used all vibrant colours red , black brown and cream , I think by then we discovered rasam and sambhar in south so they



were designed to hold liquids and also matka (earthen pot). I don't believe Hindu or any religious traditions in India discouraged pottery in eating use , as otherwise mentioned in some research. Lighting of Diya's(oil lamps)since Sri Rams entry into Ayodhya after " vanvas

"is marked by Diwali celebrations even today. We always used to drink water from Matka in peak summers , even before we were enlightened with discovery of refrigeration in 1740s.

## STYLES OF POTTERY

- Glazed pottery
- Unglazed pottery . Unglazed pottery is of three different styles:

1. Paper-thin
2. Scraffito technique
3. Highly polished

**Black pottery is another famous form of unglazed pottery in Indian villages and it resembles the Harappan pottery style.** Excavations at Harappa , Jaipur Kolkata are reminder of extensive pottery usage

each place having its own unique designs.

## HOW POTTERY IS USED

In Bengal tea is served in " Kulhar cups ". In other regions desserts like Kulfi and phirni(rice pudding) or curd matured in pots or cooking of fish in coastal regions , is inherent usage methodology and traditionally passed over times immemorial.

Pottery making was prevalent in terra cotta figurines in Bengal.

Indians did not like routine , so they made glazed , unglazed , ceramic and papier-mâché.

Glazed we're getting really in white backdrop with blue and black embossing. Things that can be made from pottery and their uses:

- Diya (oil lamp)
- Lamps made usually with clay and cotton





wick made locally by almost all states in India.

- Ghara (clay pots)

Ghara is an earthen pot made in India and Pakistan. It is used for storing drinking water and keeping it cool. The word comes from Sanskrit meaning pot.

- Kulhar (clay cups)

Clay cups made strong with Kiln

.Manufactured in all parts of India .Used because it's highly hygiene .

Pottery traditions

- Andretta, Himachal Pradesh

Andretta is a village and an artists' colony

in Himachal Pradesh. The artists' colony was established in the 1920s

In 1983, Mansimran "Mini" Singh, son of noted potter Gurcharan Singh, and his wife Mary Singh moved here and started Andretta Pottery and Craft Society with a production studio which produces earthen slipware and a terracotta museum.

- Jaipur, Rajasthan

Blue Pottery is widely recognized as a traditional craft of Jaipur, though it is Turko-Persian in origin.

Name comes from cobalt blue dye and Eurasian type blue and white colour and

### *Islamic designs.*

- Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh

Khurja pottery is traditional Indian pottery work manufactured in Khurja of the Bulandshahr district in Uttar Pradesh state, India. Khurja pottery has been protected under the Geographical indication (GI) of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

- Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh

The black clay pottery of Nizamabad in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India has unique type of clay pottery known for its dark shiny body with engraved silver



patterns

- Khavda, Gujarat

A traditional art form using 'Rannki Mitti', it originates in the village of Khavda, Rann of Kutch. The colour of the clay gives earthy feel with painted symmetric black and white designs.

- Ukhrul district, Manipur

Longpi pottery is a sturdy nature and has acquired international prominence. It is baking and microwave friendly.

- Pachdhar Seoni, Madhya Pradesh

Famous for black pottery .Potters of Pachdhar, practice this timeless

handcraftsmanship as their primary occupation next to only subsistence agriculture. Painted with white and blue, almost every house is made of mud (kaccha houses), has huge verandahs for moulding earth into earthen utilities and beautiful crafts. Being an avid traveller and a passionate





photographer , my pursuits take me to remote places .One such pursuits a year ago evoked my interest in pottery when I took a group to Seoni, Madhya Pradesh-when I reflected on my attraction towards , pottery making is the very epitome of human tool making ability , the whole dawn of human civilisation progressed would surely have seen the inflection after the very invention of wheel and the dexterity and skill involved in making a pottery can only be realised once a person put his hands on potter's wheel.

When I realised it's purely meditative experience I was dragged into its art involuntarily. Having heard the pathos and hardships of the potters made me go into something unthinkable few years ago. In the capital of India, Delhi too has a potters village located in Uttam Nagar. There are around 800 families practicing the art of pottery since the time of their ancestors.

I visited a few number of times, to capture this art and most of the images are from there.





*Another potter's paradise is Singhasni which is 20kms south of Jodhpur, Rajasthan. One can see villagers creating amazing shapes out of mere lump of clay.*

#### ***Economic perspective***

Pottery today is a good industry and adds to our overall GDP in Indian economics from 733 million usd in 2018 to nearly 1227 million usd in 2019.

Especially in ceramics it has been estimated that over 40 lakhs rural potters still work with the help of conventional pottery wheels. Of the 15 lakhs traditionally skilled potters, about 95% are involved in the work of conventional red local pottery.

Bricks terracotta are still baked traditional way in rural areas and used as building materials. There is lot of scope in this industry. Low capital investment is a big issue which gives out low output due to incapacity to buy raw materials. Although ceramics has huge scope in terms of overall GDP, the day to day pottery is

more or less seen in study of anthropology in its pure form. Many reasons attributed Pottery involves moulding of mud ,procurement of which Has proved very expensive and also the other process like , mixing with other ingredients and heating to toughen Apart from being labour intensive sells for less than the effort and time put forward Returns are quite less People's appreciation to imported machine processed products , has also lost the appreciation to antiquity and style Other being capital and style of pottery being limited to family art Due to low income generation , the influx of younger generation of family migration for jobs to towns forsaking the age old art Is also a factor



Banking of help from government is only option to revive the industry.

#### ***Few places which are really interesting to learn and photograph potters are***

- Kumbharwada in Mumbai
  - Pachdhar Seoni, Madhya Pradesh
  - Potters colony in Delhi
  - Pottery village of Khavada, Gujarat
  - Aruvacode village near Nilambur , Kerela
  - Terrapondy , Puducherry
- Pottery is now gaining popularity apart from it being a studio display art , it's being used in daily life being eco-friendly ,cheap and futuristic Use in refreshment in travel to raw material to homes including home ornamentation to clay figurines in processions to name few . Life being creative in itself , I see pottery is going to pave way

for huge employment ad economics I am sure after 10000 years further when future generations try to gather information our pottery will speak self . As the saying what comes from earth goes back to earth , more to unravel . As clay feels happy to be moulded in our hands the way it shapes up , we feel happy in nature resources , it's like ying and yang effect

• SANCHI AGGARWAL •

She is an avid traveller and a professional photographer. Her work can be seen on Instagram by the name of nomadic\_eyes and portraits by Sanchi.





# ILE MAURICE – An Unforgettable Odyssey

*A Vibrantly Tranquil Island Offering Countless Experiences.*



Sea front at Bay Watch Apartments, La Gaulette.

**I**le Maurice – An Unforgettable Odyssey  
A Vibrantly Tranquil Island Offering  
Countless Experiences.

Smack in the middle of the Indian ocean lies this beautiful piece of land the world knows as Mauritius (Ile Maurice). An island known for its beaches, reefs, avifauna and vegetation among other attributes, is beyond all measure when it comes to splendor and magnificence. Merely calling it an island of sublime beauty would be putting it rather mildly considering the countless experiences it has to offer to travelers from all over the world. My own experience of Mauritius was nothing short of a dream right from the moment we landed there.

After some scouring homework on how to go about exploring the island we booked the direct AI flight from New Delhi. The near seven hours flight lands in Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport (named after the first Prime Minister of Mauritius) in the south eastern part of the island.

Upon clearing immigration, we took a cab from to La Gaulette (a town on the south western tip of the island). Reaching after roughly an hour's drive through scenic routes on a smooth road, we got settled in a studio apartment at Bay Watch Apartments (pretty well-furnished with a scenic sea front view). From a supermarket at walking distance, we got the basics (local sim cards most importantly) and grabbed some dinner at Enso (the most popular restaurant in La Gaulette), and relaxed at our balcony, watching the sun go down while planning for the next day. Before knocking off for the night we managed to rent a car through the owner of the apartments. A Kia Picanto it would be that would take us around Mauritius for the next 17 days.

The purpose of choosing to stay at La Gaulette initially was to start the trip by visiting one of the most unique locations in Mauritius – The Seven Colored Earths and the famous Rum Distillery, both located at Chamarel, a hilltop village area very close to La Gaulette.

Having a smooth road to drive on is one of the unsung pleasures of life. This unsung pleasure was experienced in abundance all over Mauritius. The near 6 kilometers



View of the ocean from Chamarel

uphill drive to Chamarel couldn't have been more than 15 minutes, but the scenic routes made us stop for photographs every now and then, stretching the journey to over half an hour.

The Rhumerie de Chamarel, or the rum distillery (commonly called rum factory by the locals) is housed in a beautiful complex. They make fine rum from sugarcane which

they grow themselves and carefully select. A guided tour of the distillery shows the visitors the entire machinery and process involved in making the rum right from scratch. Though we were lucky to get a booking on arrival, it is advisable to book a slot for the guided tour a day in advance. There is a very elite restaurant within the complex of the rum distillery (some of the



The Seven Colored Earths – Chamarel, Mauritius. A one of a kind miracle of Nature.



cocktails there are excellent). It's probably the best restaurant in all Mauritius offering a wide range of delicacies. The tour of the rum factory was very interesting and really educational. After the detailed tour of the rum factory it was time for the next stop – The Seven Colored Earths. Just 5 kilometers downhill from the rum factory is located the geopark where the seven colored earths lay bare for visitors to get a visual treat. A winding drive with directions within the park takes you to the well protected and well-preserved location.

At first sight it was well beyond my ken as to how the terrain got these colors amalgamated in such fashion. It would fascinate yet flummox anyone at first sight. The description on a signboard solves that mystery for everyone – volcanic activity dating over a billion years ago along with prolonged hot and humid climate has eroded the basalt rock layers in that area revealing this intriguing layer of colorful rock surface called saprolite. The rock being chemically weathered over ages gets its different hues from the deposits of iron and aluminum oxide on this layer. Aluminum and iron repel one another causing the colors to be prominently displayed. A walk around the colorful earth could remind you of the famous line from Alice Walker's masterpiece (...it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple....and



Chamarel Waterfall

don't notice it). Nothing short of a miracle of nature, the Seven Colored Earths is deservedly among the topmost tourist attractions of Mauritius. The Chamarel waterfall is another major attraction in the geopark. Svelte looking twin waterfalls plunging from a height of 272 feet over a concave faced rock are picturesque in every sense and can be viewed from a raised deck. Being the tallest waterfall in Mauritius it is well provided for by two different rivers (St. Denis and



The pristine beach at Flic en Flac that stretches up to 13 kilometers.

Viande Salee). The viewing deck allows for a good photo session. The geopark closes at 5 pm, therefore one can easily plan and cover both the Rum Distillery and the Geopark within a day if they start timely in the morning. Driving back from the geopark to the apartment with a hangover of the colorful images was mesmerizing in its own way. Something I can't forget for an eternity. Having covered 2 major attractions in pretty much detail, it already felt accomplishing as a good start to any trip would normally feel. Dinner at Enso followed by lazing on the balcony with the signature shades of the setting sun over the Indian Ocean and soaking in the experiences of the day was the only thing playing on the mind and body for the rest of the evening. The following morning was going to be a new destination with some promising experiences. After a hefty breakfast (self-cooked at the apartment), we got all packed to drive off to Flic en Flac. 26 kilometers north of La Gaulette and no more than a 40 minutes' drive we had booked another Studio Apartment facing the beach. La Plage Apartments would be our den for the next 4 days. A 13 kilometers long white sand beach facing clear blue water in quietude remains like an indelible mark in my memory bank. The view was so inviting that walking bare feet on the beach with



an occasional dip in the sea and gazing at the variety of birds that flock the area were some of the things we did for over an hour after arrival, even before we moved into the apartment. Restaurants, souvenir shops, apartments, hotels line the parallel road against the beach. Barbecue meals on the beach are a thing to experience on the beach at Flic en Flac. After moving into the apartment, we wasted no time in getting back on the beach. Walking, running or just lying on the white sand and occasionally strolling into the water was more pleasurable than one could imagine. Having skipped lunch, we booked our dinner at a barbecue place on the beach itself. Cool breeze, dim lighting and foot tapping music on the open beach, and it could have been a whole night to munch through if one could glutton away. Rising early in the morning the next day and the first thing to do was jump into the sea for a smothering feel of the blue ocean. That swim session lasted over 2 hours and was most relaxing. And we were sure this would be repeated daily during our stay at Flic en Flac. The next thing we'd been looking forward to was a tour of Casela Park. A huge amusement park with jungle safari tours where one can interact with lions, cheetahs, feed giraffes, ostriches go zip lining and take a safari tour on a quad bike or a segway. Located at Cascavelle which is about 7 kilometers from Flic en Flac, one must arrive timely in the morning (the park opens at 9 am) in order to catch all the action (primarily the African safari tour and the interaction with lions, giraffes and ostriches). We were late to arrive Casela Park and we were advised that



we wouldn't be able to do all the main activities on that day therefore we made a booking for the next day and arrived timely. Set in a salubrious environs Casela park houses a huge infrastructure for adventures apart from the African Safari. We got the passes for the African Safari and hopped onto our quad bike for the tour. Along the rugged and bumpy jungle route which we followed behind our guide we spotted zebras, rhinos, gazelles, ostriches, turkeys, oryxes, and a variety of tortoises among other African fauna. The beauty of it was that we rode past most of the animals and birds at very close quarters and got a very good look at them, while even touching and feeding some zebras. The safari was a feast for the cameras. They could run out of battery and memory space, but you could not run out



of enthusiasm. That was followed by a session of feeding giraffes and ostriches which was an experience as unique as can be. The giraffes, being as friendly as possible





while feeding from your palms was heartwarming to see. The ostriches were a bit scary as their long neck jerked down with great speed to feed from a pan with a long handle that we were holding. A bit scary in the beginning but real good fun as the ostriches continue to eat. But the real thrill is experienced when you interact with and pat lions. We interacted and patted an albino lioness. She had a name. Zaza. Rescued from different parts of Africa these lions, cheetahs have been raised by humans and have become comfortable in the company of humans. It wasn't easy leaving Casela Park as we had a great time there gazing at the variety of wildlife it houses. Before leaving the premises of the park we made sure to pick up some souvenirs from a shopping store towards the exit.

The next two days at Flic en Flac were spent lazing around on the beach, swimming in the sea, driving around the village and eating at different restaurants. Flic en Flac is a perfect area to unwind without any care while soaking in the serene ocean view by the beach. One could not tire of it. After bidding adieu to Flic en Flac we drove up to the northern most part of Mauritius, Grand Bay (Grand Baie). A 50 kilometers drive from Flic en Flac to Grand Bay lasted



Sunset at Grand Bay.

well over an hour as there was converging traffic while crossing the Capital – Port Louis. Having booked a place at Ocean Villas (a lovely location with a great ambience, wonderful restaurant, pretty beach side beds and picturesque sea view) we were set for 3 days of eventfulness as



well as relaxation. After dumping our luggage in the room, we headed straight for the hotels resto-bar by the beach. Grabbing a drink each we lay down on the beach beds, watched the yachts go past the bay, planned on our own activities for the following day as well. Dinner at the resto bar was complimentary for us on the first night and a live band played while dinner was served. Unable to hold our excitement we discussed the things to do around Grand Bay with other travelers as well as the staff of the hotel. Early next morning we went to the beach front and took kayaks out to the sea. We glided the kayaks across the bay winding around the buoys, anchored yachts and ferries as the sun rose with mellifluous humming of the birds all around. Kayaking around the bay early morning for an hour made us really hungry before breakfast. Breakfast was scrumptious to say the least with a wide range of cuisines in both veg as well as non-veg. An hour of kayaking made up for the overeating that we indulged in. The highlight of our stay at Grand Bay was a boat ride to Benitiers Island and swimming with dolphins on the way to Benitiers island. The sight of dolphins jumping out of water and diving back again lifts up the mood exponentially. And when it's happening in all directions around your boat it's a treat to watch and one could watch tirelessly. Benitiers Island (Ile Aux Benitiers), is situated about 400 meters off the mainland

(off the SW side of Mauritius), but is around a 60 kilometers boat ride from Grand Bay and it's a fun boat ride getting there (stopping for the dolphin experience on the way). After getting down at the island which appears so peaceful and secluded, we looked all around and soaked in the sequestered feel of the place. White sand, turquoise colored water, green shrubs. An oval shaped island with a clean white sand beach all around its coast which outlines the shrubs and coconut trees at the center. Scampering in and out of the water, laying on the beach and watching the catamarans come and go was making me a child all over again. One of the most eye-catching sights of the island was the crystal rock which is a coral island. A rarity in nature. It's the only one in Mauritius. There are five in Seychelles we were told and some in Maldives as well. The 'Crystal Rock' appears to be floating on water even when viewed from close quarters. It is possible to get on it if you take your boat close by carefully. For thrill seekers, seaplane trips over the island and skydiving activities are also available at Grand Bay. Having lived these experiences in other destinations we decided to skip them for now. After a blithe time at Grand Bay, we headed for the capital city – Port Louis. A 30 kilometers drive took around 45 minutes. We had booked an apartment at the Citadel Mall. An apartment on the 2nd highest floor of the 3rd tallest building of Mauritius (it was the tallest at one point of time),



A sea side view of Grand Bay from Ocean Villas.



Crystal Rock off Ile aux Benitiers – An iconic symbol of Mauritius and a marvel of nature. It is a coral island, the only one in Mauritius, which appears to be floating on water.





offered us the most stunning view of Port Louis. A 3 BHK with a big balcony was high on luxury and space. After travelling around the natural and remote areas we were finally in for a city life feel. The capital of Mauritius is well planned with the port infrastructure being surrounded by the city architecture in an arc shape. Orderly traffic and well-maintained roads and other infrastructure in general make it a conducive environment for a leisurely city. Since we were at the heart of the city, we were at walking distance from the main attractions of the city. Those being the Aapravasi Ghat, Caudan Waterfront and the museum (Mauritius Institute of the Mauritius Museums Council). Sauntering from our apartment towards the museum and the Aapravasi Ghat, we walked past the Office of the Prime Minister. Right in front of his office door.

It took us by surprise and as one would have expected such a place to be heavily barricaded. A visit to the Aapravasi Ghat was like transporting ourselves back in time and living Mauritian history. This is the immigration depot through which came the original population of Mauritius. Indentured labor from India were brought to Mauritius by sea and the Aapravasi Ghat is where they entered Mauritius from in the year 1834. A record is still maintained there of each and every indentured laborer who came to Mauritius all the way from India when under British rule (Mauritius was discovered by Dutch sailors and subsequently ruled by the Portuguese, French and the British). It is these laborers who populated the island and made it inhabitable. A tour of the area shows the rooms they were allotted, their tools and equipment. Photographs of these indentured laborers, the founders

Port Louis viewed from Citadel Mall Apartments.

of Mauritius (fair enough to say) are put on display. Relics belonging to former Prime Ministers including their very first, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam are put on display including their books. From 1834 to 1910 almost half a million workers arrived in Mauritius not only from India, but also from China, Comoros, Yemen, Madagascar, Mozambique and some South East Asian countries as well. They worked as slaves only for a fixed period of time after which they would be freed. Their main task was cultivation of sugarcane, the main agricultural produce of Mauritius (Vanilla is also an agricultural produce of Mauritius. Madagascar being the only other place in the world where vanilla is grown). About 65 percent of them stayed back in Mauritius permanently starting their new life after completing their contracted period. 70 percent of the population of Mauritius are descendants of these indentured laborers. After



An engraved stone commemorating the landing place of the indentured immigrants.



Hospital Block at the Historical Aapravasi Ghat

a beautiful complex with shopping and entertainment spots and a wide array of restaurants, souvenir shops including a casino, cinema, craft market and a marina. This place hosts regular live entertainment shows on the street. The prettiest sights include a colorful umbrella roofing over



successfully reaping the benefits of indentured laborers in Mauritius, it became a widespread practice in other European colonies. All in all, the Aapravasi Ghat is a very well-preserved historical site that offers an excellent insight into history and must be paid a visit by every traveler in Mauritius. Portraits of some of the Indentured Laborers and a Kitchen at the Historical Aapravasi Ghat A panoply of birds and other wildlife are displayed at the Natural History Museum, near the government house. It's not too far from the Aapravasi Ghat. Great Dodos are on display with in depth description on their history along with a short movie on

the dodos. But there are other displays at the museum which can hold your interests as well if you admire wildlife, marine wildlife in particular. The Dodo, it's worth noting, has only been assumed to be a stupid bird. There is no evidence of it. The dodo is an extinct flightless bird that was endemic to Mauritius and was first spotted by the Dutch in 1598. It is another symbol of Mauritius and you would even find a picture of a dodo on the currency notes of Mauritius. There is a dodo skeleton on display which is unique as all the bones are from a single bird as opposed to the assembled ones. The Caudan Waterfront at Port Louis is



A Dodo Skeleton at the natural History Museum.





Blue Bay, Mahebourg.

the street and the SBM fountain at the sea front that starts every evening with its changing decoratively lit patterns. 3 days at Port Louis were very satisfying and insightful for us.

The last stop for us at Mauritius was Blue Bay. A quiet and peaceful spot on the South Eastern end of the island. Very peaceful, white sand and blue glistening water. Greenery, rocky beaches, white sand beaches, parks, bird watching spots, steady breeze and the soothing sound of moderate waves crashing against the shore all day made it a perfect spot to feel

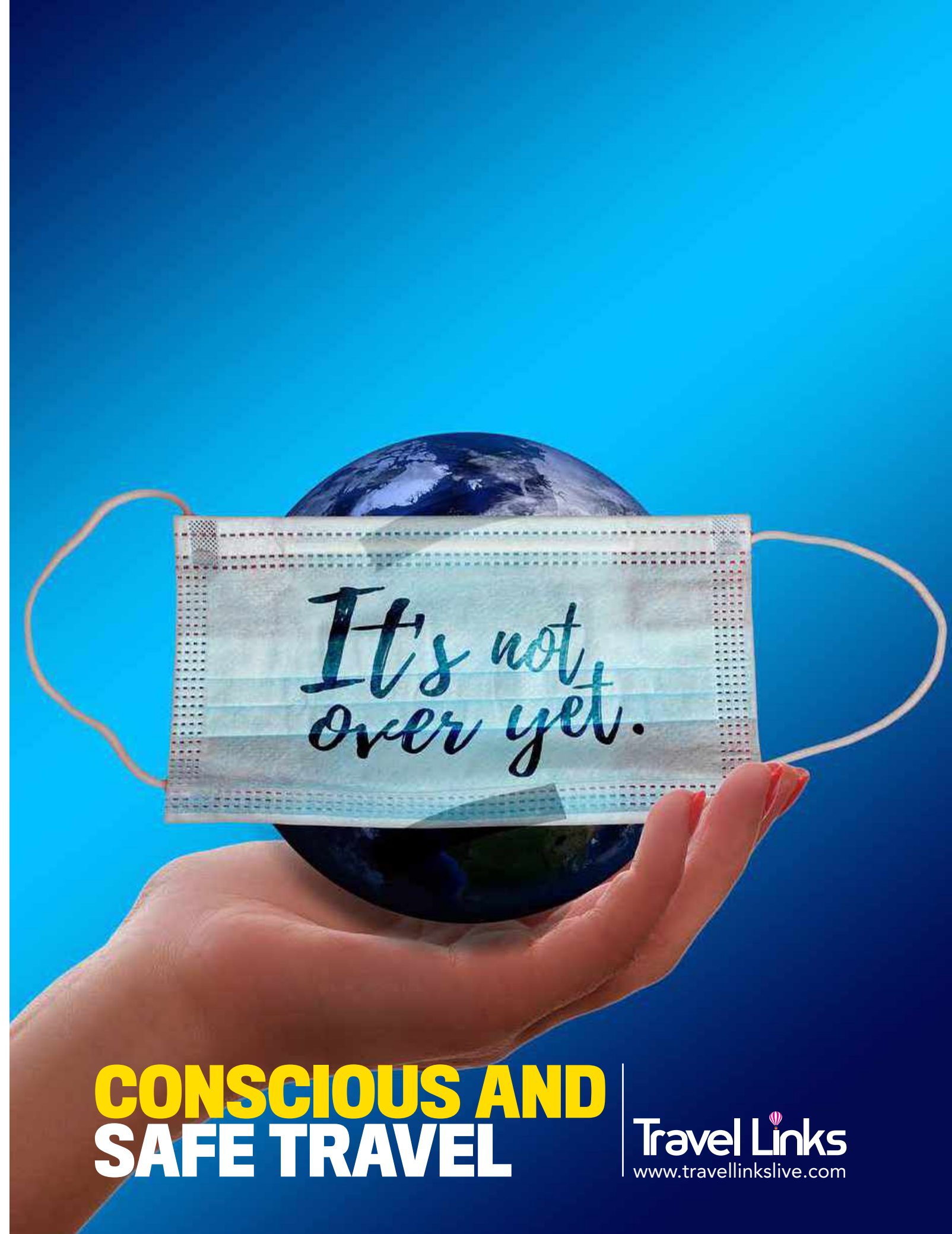
relaxed right to the soul. For our last few days in Mauritius, Blue Bay was a perfect place to finally relax and reflect upon after a whirlwind trip across Mauritius. Blue bay also happens to be a popular spot for scuba diving and para sailing. Being only a 15-minute drive to the airport from Blue Bay, it was a convenient place to end the trip.

After a few peaceful days at Blue Bay, we drove back to the airport calling it curtains to our 17-day odyssey across Mauritius. And as I mentioned in the beginning, it was with a very heavy heart but a load full

of memories that we left from Mauritius. I could go on extolling Mauritius, but one must go there to know what a marvel it is. \*Keeping in mind the current COVID situation, it is advisable to travel once clearer guidelines are issued by the government of Mauritius. Mauritius has done well enough to contain the pandemic as they have only 3 active cases currently. As of now the entry of aircrafts and ships are prohibited till 31st August 2020. One must consult the embassy for more accurate information on travel to Mauritius.

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

About the author: The above article is authored by Gautam Singh Kanwal (Master Mariner) who works aboard Merchant Ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid for travelling, music, art, adventure sports, etc. he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time. He travelled to Mauritius with his wife (Ritu Danu Kanwal) in September 2019 for a holiday.

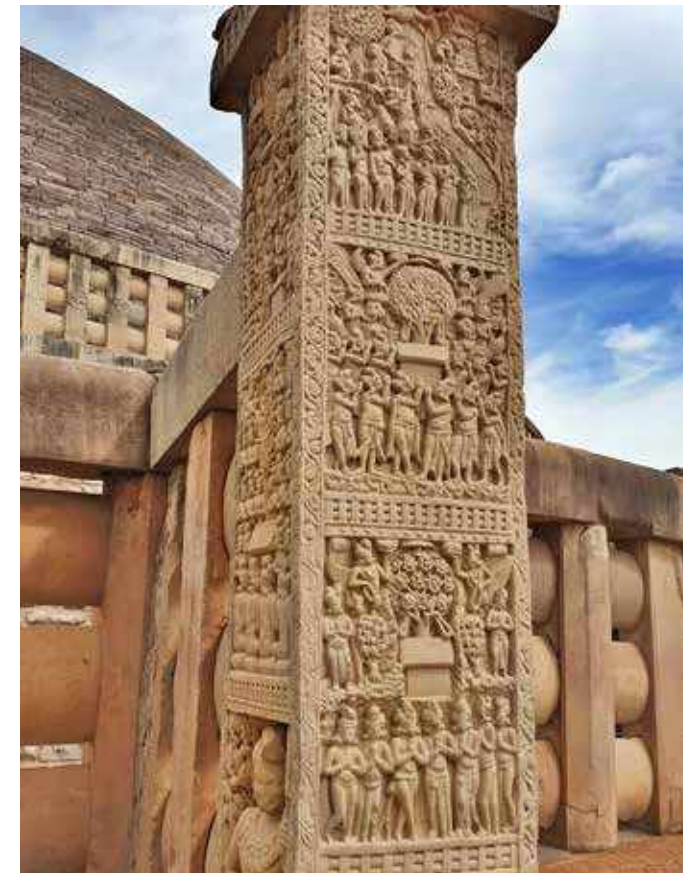
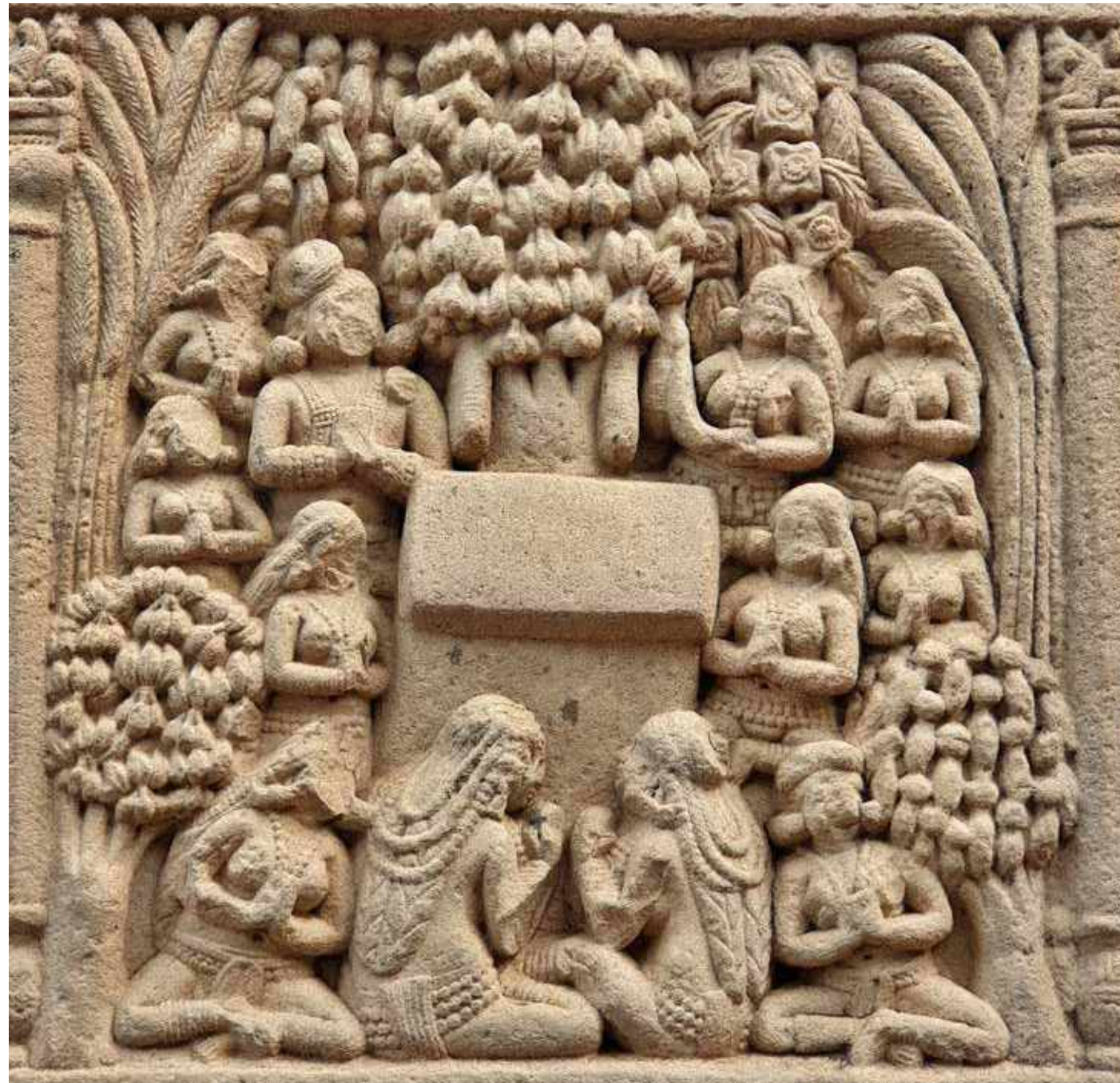


**CONSCIOUS AND  
SAFE TRAVEL**

**Travel Links**  
www.travellinkslive.com



# ***Sanchi Stupa – a mesmerizing dance of Buddhist art and literature***



If you reach Sanchi without knowing what our jataka tales are and without having at least one Rs 200 currency note in your wallet, you're going to miss out on the two big experiences you can have there. Not knowing the jataka tales will mean you will remain amazed by all the well-preserved stone carvings but will miss out on the connected stories... and without that Rs 200 currency note, you'll never get the opportunity to boast on the social media that you know about Sanchi Stupa being featured on the reverse. If you study the angles correctly, you may even manage to click a picture that is similar to the one on the note.

Sanchi and the Stupa there, however, are much larger than a few tales and a selfie. *Let me add here that if you ask people who have been to Bhopal, you'll surprised at their surprise when you tell them that Sanchi and its UNESCO world heritage site (declared in 1989) are less than 50 kms and absolutely worth a day trip with a picture opportunity at the spot where the Tropic of Cancer crosses the highway as a bonus! An*



*over-night stay at Sanchi in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh* will also mean that you'll be able to watch the sound and light show at the Stupa and, if you are adventurous enough, plan a trip to *Udaigiri caves* as well. But for now, let us focus on the Stupa at Sanchi where Buddha never came in his lifetime... yes, only his

relics rest within the domed structure.

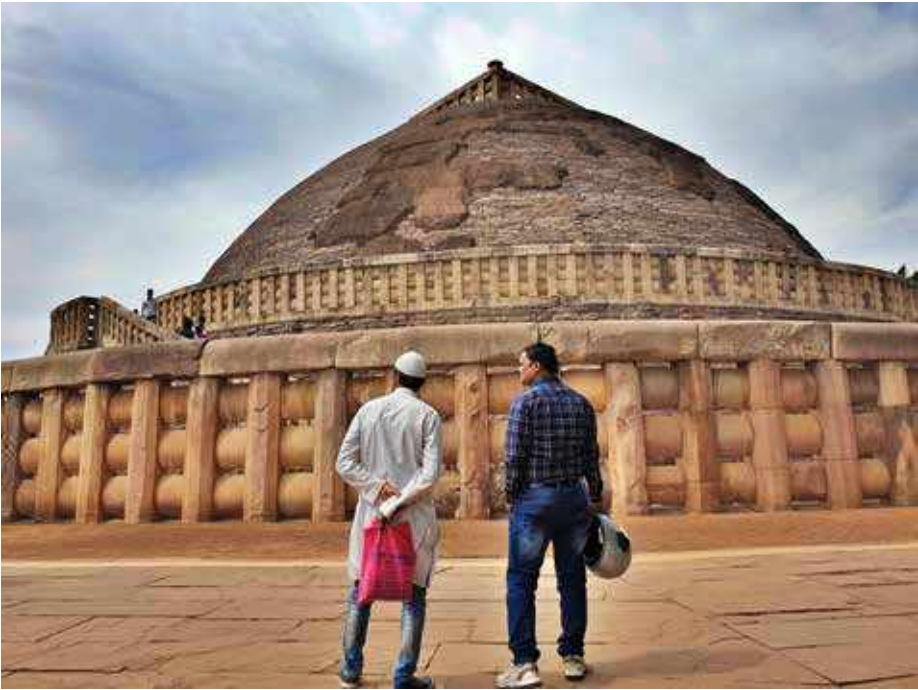
***The hop at Sanchi spans hundreds of years***

The four ornamental gateways or Toranas with all the charming stories in stone came up around 200 years after the



simple hemispherical brick structure was commissioned by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC. This structure has a chhatri on top that gives the monument a symbolic high rank as Buddha's relics are sheltered here. Why Sanchi? Well, Sanchi also happens to be the hometown of Devi, Emperor Ashoka's wife. This rather sums up that decision, doesn't it?

We were fortunate to be in the company of Dr K K Muhamed, the world-renowned archeologist, who told us that during the Mauryan period the initial construction of the Stupa was with bricks and then, with a twinkle in his eyes, he added, 'The top of the dome isn't a perfect sphere. It looks more like an inverted bowl that Buddha carried.' The significance of this may be symbolic but the interpretations can go beyond mere tales and enter the world of



metaphysics. Multiple centuries and the rules of the Mauryans, Satvanas, and the Shagunas ensured that the Stupa went way beyond being just a house for Buddha's relics to being one with fanciful architectural adornments. I could see the top of a wonderfully carved and polished sandstone half a pillar under a canopy there... the bottom half still standing and possibly wondering if any of the travel enthusiasts milling around with smartphones in their

hands could even read the inscription in Sankha lipi from the Gupta period! These additions went on until the 12th century AD despite a fair degree of violent desecration attempts even in the intervening period... for instance, Pushyamitra Sunga vandalized it but history of culture will surely thank his son Agnimitra for rebuilding the Stupa. However, what we see today is because of hundreds of manhours of painstaking restoration work and the process was

majorly done between 1912 and 1919 under the supervision of Sir John Marshall. Travel enthusiasts must spend a few hours browsing through the notes and replicas kept inside the Sanchi Archaeological Museum. And once the evening sets in, one can trudge upwards again to the Stupa for a revision of cultural history at the Stupa sound and light show.

### *The gateways are eager to tell stories*

Stories related to Buddha must have tended to become significant in both number and their public demand because the later additions include the highly ornamental gateways that not only narrate his story but the stories that he was fond of narrating... and this brings us to the jataka tales. In simple communicable language, the jataka tales are about the former lives of Buddha while he was a Boddhisattva (the stage prior to his attaining enlightenment) and are an important part of Buddhist art and literature. These tales or fables include those where morality and good behaviour are extolled and people of all ages find them interesting. The best part is that the tales are self-explanatory though the presence and narration by an expert or even a guide does help. One of the panels on the gates is about Bimbisara and his royal cortege from the city of Rajgriha out to visit Buddha because



the throne in the panel is empty. Then there are panels that are visual treats of the Buddha's many miracles... one of them being of Buddha seemingly walking on the river Nairanjana. The river is in spate and the boatmen are hurrying as they assume Buddha needs assistance, but he is there appearing to levitate and walking on water. One of the stories shows that Buddha wasn't really happy to find non-Buddhist ascetics displaying their spiritual powers by doing things to impress people. Buddha then decides to let the monks know that showing-off of supranormal power to impress isn't quite the right way... and all these stories are there on the panels.

### *There is no end to learning in Sanchi*

The entire gamut of artworks here is story-telling done with a lot of style. The stupa has stairway balustrade reliefs include







flame palmette, flame palmette and lotus, peacock, woman riding a centaur, half lotus, lion, elephant, elephant with branch, and floral motifs besides others. The architecture that one see here at Sanchi includes classical Greek designs and Persian Achaemenid influences besides works done by the local artisans. Sanchi celebrates a convergence of talents and this is what we need to appreciate. However, to get a complete view of things, one does need to visit the Archaeological museum as well where one can see some of the things that aren't there at the Stupa site. This place compels one to go round the stupa many times, admiring not just the stone carvings but also the fact that there are excavations of a site where monks stayed and prayed, and one can admire the shalabhanjika or the dancing nymph at the corner of a pillar, the apsidal in the backyard outside the stupa, a lotus base of an Ashokan capital, and a few Gupta-era Hindu temples still there in the precincts.



Mason marks that tell their own stories and inscriptions, of which some are in a language different from others which indicates that workers were from different places and communicated in different languages. The place is full of mind-boggling cultural and historical tales that needs one to spend time reading about them... or at least pause and wonder at the kind of cultural convergence that and harmonious co-existence that was present in the region even centuries ago.

### *The tourist perspective*

Even in mid-March, the time I was there, the temperature soared and at times the heritage-oriented narrative went

unheeded... it was partly because I was interested in also going around and photographing the monument from various angles. The township is developing and does have a few hotels with basic amenities. In between all this information and visual delights, I had almost missed hearing two rather important stories. The first is during all the phases of the Stupa build-up, it was donations from devotees that helped construct every little sculpture that one sees. This is because royal patronage was absent. These devotees often had the option of requesting for their favourite scene from the life of Buddha carved on the panels and thus we also find their names inscribed at places. Our esteemed guide

told us that this is one reason why some scenes and episodes have been repeated. The other valuable story that must be included in this short article is that the first instinct of the 19th century Europeans was to try and pull out interesting works here. An example is of the French wanting to cart away the nearly completely preserved Eastern gateway to France. However, Shahjehan Begum, the then ruler of Bhopal and her successor Sultan Jehan Begum insisted that only plaster casts be made. In fact, they also contributed to restoration efforts during this time. It isn't that foreigners were all forces out to pillage because it was General Henry Taylor who first documented the existence of this place in 1818 and, in more ways than one, prevented it from going into desolate degradation. Sanchi is as much about aesthetic stone carvings as it is about Buddhist art and literature. It is as much about multiple influences in its construction as it is about multiple religions and creeds coming together to restore and preserve it. Sanchi, to my mind, is a great example of the world coming together to let the future have a glimpse into our glorious past.



ARVIND PASSEY

Only writing is on his mind. He is into travel writing, tech writing, book reviews, and political satire besides hundreds of poems, short stories and essays.





# Golden hands of the Indian Weavers

With geographical salient, disparate regions and rich cultural diversity, India is steeped into cultural lore. The 28 states of India are endearing in more ways than one. *As we foray into the rural alcoves of one state and navigate into the urban landscapes of another, we realize that perhaps we are a unique country blessed with a range of tantalizing regional cuisines, fabulous architectural marvels, sublime natural beauties and heterogeneous art works.* The vibrant Indian bazaars spread happiness and our festivals are source of jubilation. While we thrive on our culture and folklores, we are described best as the oldest creators and connoisseurs of art, craft and handlooms. It is no hidden fact that the golden hands of the Indian weavers and artisans give



shape to emotions into designs and India boasts of vast range of handlooms and embroidery. ***When it comes to their origination, we must thank our villages and the artists for their primitive simplicity and enchanting artistry.*** India is one of the biggest treasure troves of hand-crafted products and the list is exhaustive and globally acclaimed. From Pashmina shawls of Kashmir, Patola of Gujarat, Muga Silk of Assam, to Kancheepuram sarees of South India, we excel in both, traditional handloom sand old-school artistry.

Let us equip ourselves with the distinctive characteristics of some of our time-honoured handloom and crafts. Undoubtedly, we will indulge in the epitome of fine craftsmanship and cultural ethos.

## ***Puthukali of Toda Tribes***

The Toda shape earned popularity for being one of the most unusual ethnic group in the Nilgiris or the ‘Blue mountains. Having been around for several centuries, they prefer to adhere to secretive customs and casteless system of their own. They are also known for their unique love for buffalo herding and authentic embroidery garments. So, while you are exploring the beautiful green outskirts and rolling tea estates of Kothagiri, Ooty and Coonor, you must not forget to ask for the Toda tribes and their bamboo huts. And if you see a white fabric (usually one piece or a shawl), enriched with rich red and black motifs, you must know its Puthukali. This artistry

that emerges from this area is a rich and embossed embroidery work, done on the reverse of the cloth. Colloquially, it is also known as “pukhoor”.

The art of decorating cloth with needle work using different types of threads is called embroidery. ***These Nilgiri tribes make use of nine unique embroidery patterns, which include the sun, moon, squirrels, rabbits, and buffalo, quite prominently.*** They make use of three colours, pale white, red and black only for they are of great significance to the tribes. The ladies of the tribe do not use any particular stitching pattern but are inspired by nature and local mythologies. A finished product is reversible with both sides. Along with the art, don’t miss the rich biodiversity of the Nilgiri region which is home to nearly 3500 species of flowering plants.

## ***Rumaal (handkerchief) embroidery from Chamba***

And they say ‘Shimla nahinbasna, Kasaulinahinbasna, Chamba janazaroor’ Don’t settle in Shimla, not even in Kasauli but do check out Chamba.

Let us head to the quintessential region of Himachal Pradesh’s unique kerchiefs, once patronised by the royals. While the state is blessed with rich history, architecture, art and agricultural delights, its needle art work is one of the most precious and aesthetic art forms from the region. ***Chamba Rumaal embroidery or the***

***kerchief with double-sided embroidery is believed to be the favourite pastime of the queens of the 17th century.*** There are many embroidery practices in India but this has a distinct characteristic of its own. Beautiful figurines and patterns were used from the mythological stories. Some of the motifs were also taken from Ramayana and Mahabharata. Later, when the King and the nobles hired artists to record the court happenings in Pahari paintings, the ladies copied them with their stitches. Since the royals had a fascination for these kerchiefs, the cloth used were usually handwoven cotton (khaddar), muslin (mal-mal) or silk. The best part about these rumaals is that there are no visible knots giving a smooth effect on both the sides, thanks to ***(do rukh) double satin stitch.*** ***The technique of the stitch is such that it is done in downward to upward manner which creates an outstanding finesse.*** These kerchiefs were exchanged as gifts during weddings and royal ceremonies. Many self-help groups and individual artists have kept the art alive even today and one can buy these art works during your visit there or in art exhibitions.

## ***Tangaliya from Gujarat***

There are many unique craftsmanship of Kutch Saurashtra region of Gujarat and one such is Tangaliya woolen shawl from Saurashtra. Mostly carried out by Dangasia community, there goes a lovely legend behind this art. ***A shepherd married his ladylove from the weaver’s community and later when he was disowned by his own family, he stayed with his in-laws where he combined the two skills.*** He used the wool from the sheep and did weaving on the cloth made by it. Another folk tale says that there was a barter system between two communities, Bhadwads and Dangasiyas. The former provided wool and the latter thrived on their weaving craftsmanship. The word Tangaliya signifies lower part of the body. It was supposed to be a drape for the waist but gradually it evolved into a shawl. The other name of Tangaliya weaving is ‘Daana weaving’ which is inspired from the style of it. The high density of tiny and bright-colored dots lend a bead effect to the embroidery. The placement of these ‘danas’ on the dark or light cloths gives birth to four different







styles- Ramraj, Charmalia, Dhunslu and Lobdi. The danas are weaved by wrapping up of small pieces of yarns and are placed in patterns inspired by floral and geometrical motifs.

The craft is not just restricted to the preparation of shawls or dress material but is also quite popular from home décor accessories.

#### **Chendamangalam dhotie**

When we are talking of handlooms, God's own Country, Kerala cannot be forgotten. Some of the world class hand-woven fabrics are produced in this region. When it comes to white sarees and dhotis worn during marriages and festive times, the unique combination of Kerala sarees and mundus with a kasavu(gold zari) border win hands-down. Chendamangalam is a village of weavers in the Ernakulam district in Kerala and one must visit the place for its dhoties. This charming region has rich and traditional handloom quality. The magic of the dhotie lies in the



rounding of its warp threads. One of the most prominent features of a genuine Chendamangalamdhotie is that the dhoti is woven with undyed grey cotton yarns. For a fine texture, there is no room for compromise with thread density. The dhoti has a very fine surface due to fine count cotton yarn and is patterned with Kasavu Zari.

#### **Balarampuram sarees of Kerala**

Balarampuram is also one of those villages of India that safeguards the traditional varieties of hand loom textiles. The sarees



produced here reflect the contemporary cloth wearing style of Kerala. Located some 13 kilometers away of South East of Thiruvananthapuram, Balaramapuramis the place where the national costume for women of Kerala comes from.

It is believed that handloom was weaving was introduced in this region by Highness Maharaja Balaramavarma (1798 – 1810) and it started with 7 weavers who had come down from Nagarcoil and Thirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. Today, all the families are descents of them. Though it is believed that the age-old techniques are still followed and that's the beauty of these sarees, either inzari designs or coloured yarns.

Do explore Balarampuram for its temples and cuisine.

#### **Kasooti or Kasuti from Karnataka**

This one brings a lot of cultural significance from the state of Karnataka. It is one of the most popular art forms of the state and is one of the oldest forms of Indian embroidery. ***It is believed to have been originated in the Chalukya dynasty.*** Every thread must be counted for its accuracy and that also becomes its USP. Drawing the pattern or design with a pencil or charcoal is how it should begin. The name Kasuti (Kannada) is made from two prominent words Kai (hand) and Suti (cotton).

The four prominent stitches are like strong pillars of this embroidery- the gavanti or double running stitch, the muragi or zig zag running stitch, the neygi or darning stitch and henthe or cross stitch. Kasuti

work involves intricate stitching and some of the common patterns used are gopura, palanquin, lamps and chariot. Parrots and other geometrical motifs also adorn a Kasuti saree. One very interesting observation about the embroidery is that it that sometimes it's pallu design may not have any theme and patterns and that makes it unique. Kasuti is usually done on silk fabric or matty/canvas like material.

#### **Mangalgiri Cotton Sarees**

A pure cotton weave is the most environment friendly and sustainable fashion product from any place. Just 16 kilometres from the city of Vijayawada in the state of Andhra Pradesh lies the small temple town of **Mangalagiri, where you can actually see the process of handicraft weaving of the popular and vibrant Mangalagiri sarees.** This age-old art of weaving the softest cotton, a perfect summer wear, has a history of more than five hundred years. The tight weave and the use of bright colours with contrast makes them stand out from the rest. An impressive range of saris and fabric, crafted by skilled weavers is there. Woven from pure cotton, these sarees stand out







with two distinctive characteristics - Nizam design borders with golden thread and plain body. The non-zari versions are equally pretty and elegant. Another very charming feature of the Mangalgiri cottons is that they can be dyed in variety of colours and can also be used as base for umpteen crafts. And last but not the least, while you are in the state of Andhra Pradesh, you must not miss the spicy cuisine, temples, and some of the most popular black sand beaches.

### Unique works of North east

Have you heard about the Assamese, Mishing, Bodo, Naga, Mizo textiles, as well as the eri silk, mulberry silk, dupion silk as and mugaghicha? Well this is just a small glimpse; the list is endless. North-eastern states of India are a treasure trove of heritage art and work. **While they are known for their deep-rooted and intimate culture, they also have their own distinct, dynamic set of traditions, mythology, history and more.** If you have an eye for something created artistically by human hands, the tribal art and craft of the whole of North East India will leave you overwhelmed. With time, some changes have also come like Lepcha weaves that used nettle yarn originally are now made with cotton. The motifs and designs used in these textiles are unlike the rest of India. They are largely inspired by the rituals and the



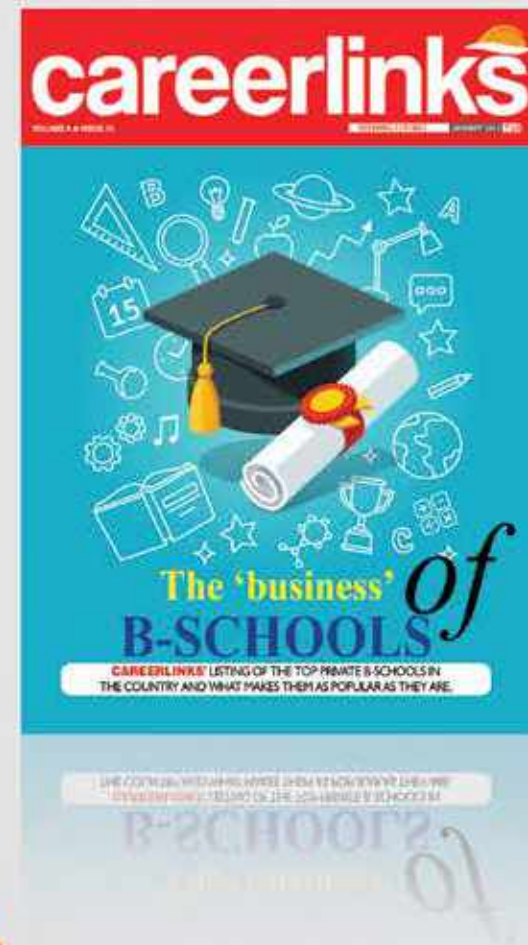
tribal cultures of the locals. Different ethnic groups use different materials and some even use animal skin and hair. Manipur swears by its embroidery and every motif, colour and weave has a meaning. At the same time the Angami Naga shawls are eye-catching for their animal motifs. And while you are exploring the states of North East of India, do look for the fringed Endi cloth with red and white stripes or the variety of waist bands (gamcha aka towels) that they boast of. Kuki ethnic group have a very interesting Jang Jenateun. The ladies of Kabui Naga ethnic group wear beautiful cotton skirts called Engewina. The Sangtam Naga warriors have their Rongsis, square shaped woven designs on cotton cloth. The fine Tripuri cotton is used to make many kinds of dresses. While the red, black and blue stripes make for diverse waist towels

and dresses for different Naga ethnic groups, untwisted silk thread on the border of the phanek (a lungi or lower body wrap worn by women) makes for Manipuri style. The GI (Geographical Indication) tags have been one of the beststeps to calibrate the uniqueness of some of the products of an area. The Indian fashion industry has also been trying to lure a whole new generation of consumers by championing the cause of Indian weaves. Now, the onus lies on us. We need to revive our passion for handlooms and embroidered clothes. It is important to have an eye for the genuine products, whenever and wherever we travel. When Gandhiji revolutionised Khadi, handloom weaving emerged as one of the core aspects of our self-reliance but sadly, the business proposition and the interests of the artisans have not found balance even today. **The weavers are worst affected**

**and still not able to support substantial livelihoods. The rising numbers of power looms, imitations with low-grade materials and absence of strong frameworks to safeguard the weaver's interests, have been detrimental to our rich crafts.** 7th August is indeed celebrated as National handloom day but one day is just not enough to safeguard this legacy. As consumers, it's high time we join the force and make these products a part of our home and lifestyle. **Let us become aware of our products and continue learning and sharing.**

— MANJULIKA PRAMOD —

Author of 'Kaleidoscope of Cheer and Hope', travel writer, hobby artist, and a telecom engineer. She owns a blog called 'PENDOWN', where she chronicles her experiential travel tales of India and abroad.



ALL YOUR  
CAREER  
SOLUTION



**careerlinks**  
Monthly Magazine



# Stepping into the English Heritage



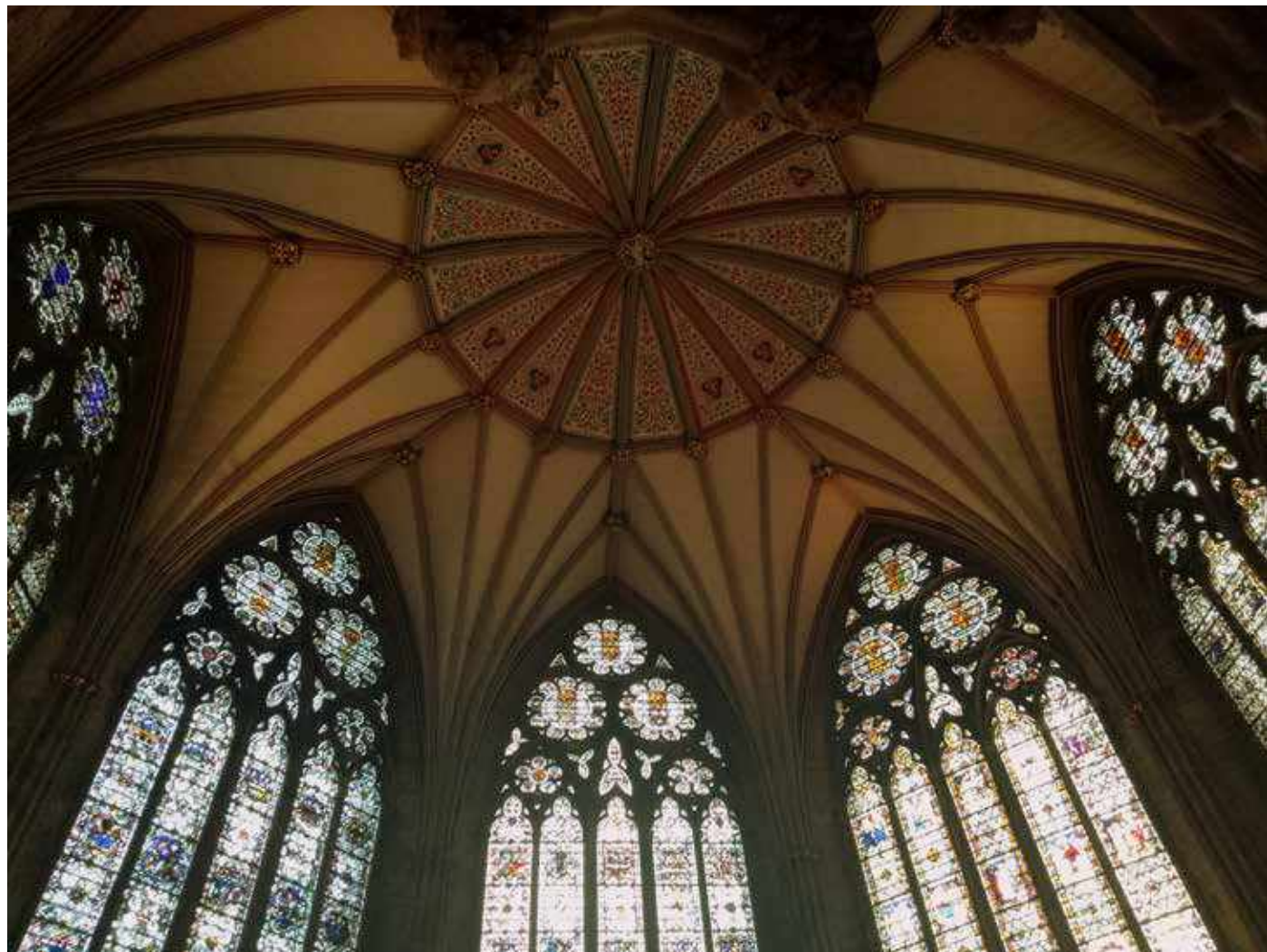
England has a monumental place in world history. London especially being the center of British royalty, has acquired layers of history and intriguing tales through the rules of several monarchs over the centuries. Many prominent historical events that we read about in our history books at school happened here. Not just history, our literature books were full of stories of quaint villages in the English countryside with cobbled streets and stone cottages. Having an interest in cultural and architectural heritage, London had always captured my imagination and fueled my wanderlust. My first visit to London felt magical and I could instantly feel the connection. Over the next few days as I visited the popular historical sights, I experienced a growing desire to explore



more and find the back stories. My next visit to UK was a result of this urge as I set to find hidden historical gems beyond the usual touristy neighborhoods of England. There are hundreds and hundreds of historic sites sprawled across England that have links to different eras of time, civilizations and cultures. From royal castles to historic gardens to world-famous prehistoric sites, England offers a plethora of heritage attractions. These are not just architecturally marvelous but also well preserved. Many of the British landmarks are wrapped with legends and folklores that have been passed down for generations. The castles and colleges of England represent the cultural and intellectual traditions of the country and







the palaces remind you of the opulence of the bygone days. And set amidst beautiful nature and the pristine English countryside each site has a charm of its own. Here are a few such hidden gems that I came across on my journey to discover the English Heritage.

### ***Kensington Palace***

Most tourists who travel to London visit Buckingham Palace, the royal residence of the current monarch of UK, Queen Elizabeth. However, the palace is open to public only for a few months. One palace where you can have a tryst with royal lifestyle throughout the year in London is Kensington Palace. Usually skipped, but a tour through this royal palace guarantees you a walk through the royal residence of young Victoria and Princess Diana's apartment to see the grandeur and opulence. During our visit there were two exhibitions dedicated to queen Victoria's childhood and her journey from a young



girl to becoming an Empress. Another exhibition displayed the crown jewels of Queen Victoria and her descendants and you can see some spectacular tiaras and jewelry in there.

Kensington Palace is surrounded by Kensington gardens which is a green serene oasis amidst a hustling and bustling city. As I walked through the extensive gardens towards the exit, I was awed by the lush greenery around me. Some of the trees looked centuries old making me wonder what tales they would tell if only they could speak.

### ***Windsor Palace***

The oldest and largest working palace in the world, Windsor Palace is located on the banks of river Thames in the district of Windsor and Maidenhead. The original fort was built by William the Conqueror in the 11th century and was later converted to a palace by his successors. The palace





has served as royal homes to 39 monarchs and preserves many of their belongings. Some areas of the palace are open to the public through the year and the palace state rooms are a treat for the eyes. As you walk through the state rooms, you will find paintings created by many famous artists hanging on the walls. The royal collection also includes porcelain, furniture, displays of arms and armour, silver gilt and sculpture.

Another gothic architectural marvel inside the palace grounds is St George Chapel where 10 kings and many other family members are buried. The chapel is the spiritual home of the Order of the Garter, the senior order of British Chivalry. The royal wedding of Harry and Meghan also took place here.

The queen uses Windsor castle for official events and state dinners. Just an hour away from London, Windsor Palace is also her favorite holiday retreat. You can infact make out if she is at home or not, by looking at the flag hoisted at the royal residence. A trip to Windsor combined with a tour of the historical town of Eton makes the perfect day out for history lovers.

**Warwick Castle**

The rich history of Warwick castle goes back to the Saxon times, when a warrior princess called Ethelfleda defended the town of Warwick against Danish invaders. The actual fort was built by William the conquerorbut was managed by the Earls of Warwick thereafter. The castle has been a part of many plots, wars and betrayalsbut is mostly remembered for the role it played during the Wars of the Roses, a power tussle between Edward IV and Henry VI. Today the castle has been converted into a family friendly historical site that allows you to experience the history yourself. Dress up like a knight, shoot arrows or rescue the princess. What else could be a better way to be part of the castle's history!The castle is an adventure not just for children but for adults alike. Some of the highlights of the castle are the dungeon tour, time tower and the mighty trebuchet, the largest surviving siege machine from the medieval times.

The unknown history of Warwick castle and the tales ingrained in its stones are brought to light through some interesting

live shows like the Falconer's quest and the enactment of War of the Roses. There is quite a lot of history in the air but it does not feel heavy. And despite of being in an ancient castle, I still felt close to naturebecause of the picturesque surroundings around the castle.

**York Minster**

At the first glance of York city, I felt like I had traveled back in time. York has somehow managed to preserve it all, the cobbled streets, the quaint alleys and the gothic buildings. It probably can't get more British than this city located in Northern England. Full of tales, some dark, some spooky and some quirk, York will manage to make you feel at home. With a mixture of Roman, Viking, gothic and neoclassical, York is every architecture lover's favorite. There is history in every nook and corner of the city but the what stands out as a masterpiece undoubtedly is the enchanting cathedral, York Minster. With 2000 years of history, York Minster sends you on a journey of discoveringforgotten history andcaptivating stories. The exquisite stained-glass artwork on the windows of the cathedral, created in the medieval

times will not fail to amaze you. There are more than 300 exquisite window panels that depictlife in the city, tales of Christian faith and scenes from Christ's life. York Minster has cruciform plan with an octagonal chapter house linked to the northern transept. The chapter house has its upper walls covered with stained glass windows and gothic sculptures making it truly unique.

**A slice of England's story**

The history of England is long and diverse. While most of the history is documented, many sites like the Stonehenge and Grime's grave are still a mystery today. These prehistoric sites reflect the stone ages and bronze ages and with limited evidence still baffle archaeologists and historians. Some medieval marvels that are one of the best in the world make us wonder about political dramas, family feuds and wars. Their age-old stories and history enchant and entertain visitors who go looking for them. The gothic era of art inspired many cathedrals and abbeys in England that stand tall with hundreds of years of history and art. The renaissance and neoclassical eras not only influenced the architecture of the relatively newer buildings but also brought a literature movement that



transformed England. You can get a glimpse of England's rich past in the historical books but visiting places that were once the center of this history makes your journey even more interesting. The list of historical sites in England is vast and extensive.

**Written by Pujarini Mitra**

— PUJARINI MITRA —

She is an entrepreneur, a travel writer and a content creator. An engineer and MBA by qualification she has 10 years of rich experience in IT, Marketing and HR. She is the founder of MySoulTravels (www.mysoultravels.com), a luxury family travel blogthat encourages traveling more with young kids.





Pujarini Mitra - Blogger

MySoulTravels was created in 2016 by Pujarini Mitra to share family travel stories and kid-friendly tips to help parents travel better with kids.

Pujarini Mitra is a travel writer and mom travel blogger working with travel companies and brands as a Brand consultant and influencer. She has a Management degree in Business Administration and 10 years of corporate experience in IT, HR & Marketing. She quit her successful corporate job in 2017 to pursue her dreams to become a fulltime travel blogger and continue her journey as a traveler. Her aim is to bust the myth that travel needs to take a back seat once you have a family and encourage travel with kids. She loves to learn about heritage, culture and food through her travels. **Social Media Links** - Blog - <https://www.mysoultravels.com>, Insta - [www.instagram.com/my\\_soultravels](https://www.instagram.com/my_soultravels), FB - [www.facebook.com/mysoultravels](https://www.facebook.com/mysoultravels), Twitter - [www.twitter.com/my\\_soultravels](https://www.twitter.com/my_soultravels) **Achievements** Major contribution to Google's Touring Bird application. Regular contributor for ASEAN tourism website. Winner of Rising Digital Lady 2020 in the Travel category Recognised amongst the Top 100 family travel blog worldwide Recognised by Instagram as a top influencer for Born On the Instagram program, India



Arvind Passey - Writer

Huffington Post, Business Insider, InsightBuzzar, & MarketingBuzzar. He has been discussing technology on UNBOXED and TownHall on NDTV, moderated a few education-related discussions on DilliAajTak, attended Kumaon Lit Fest and SMVDU Lit Life as a speaker, moderated a discussion on journalism vs blogging with Saeed Naqvi etc. His blog: <http://www.passey.info>

<http://twitter.com/arvindpassey>  
<http://www.facebook.com/arvindpassey>  
<http://in.linkedin.com/in/arvindpassey>  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/arvindpassey>  
<https://instagram.com/arvindpassey>

G.Nivedith a.k.a #MacroTraveller® is a Leading Travel Writer, Content Creator & lifestyle, Fitness (Lost 43 kgs in 5 Months) blogger from Bengaluru, India Since 2008. Ranked top 10 Travel influencers in India and collaborated with 3000+ Campaigns.



G.Nivedith - Influencer

A Social Media Maverick & Digital Marketing Entrepreneur by profession. Founded GVMediatech in 2015, A leading influencer & digital marketing firm in India. #MacroTraveller was invited for #OSCARS 2018, The only Indian Blogger to cover it officially in 2018. #MacroTraveller FB page is part of #Facebook official content creators India with a verified page. #Born Instagram India Member. #GoProIN ambassador #MacroTravellerRoadTrip did an inter-country road trip in Car from #BLR2Bhutan 7000 kms in 3 weeks in 2019. Blog: <https://www.macrotraveller.com> MacroTraveller @ 3,00,000 page views monthly Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MacroTraveller/> : 2,03,000 Fans (Verified Page) <https://www.facebook.com/nivedith007> : 5,000 Friends Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nivedithg/> : 2,00,000 Followers Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nivedithg> : 35,000 Followers Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/macrotravellertamil> 1400 Subscribers LinkedIN : <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nivedithg/> : 17000 Connections

When you travel, you become the World My earliest memories are of me clinging to my father as we rode his Rajdoot motorcycle away from town and towards the hills. The orange candy coloured rising sun in the horizon, cold air bouncing off my face, the vibrating motorcycle adding to my occasional shivering and me being wonderstruck by the rural scenery racing past. In the years that rolled by I trekked, hiked and cycled with Dad, with friends and solo too. Layered with responsibilities of life, travelling became a scarcely affordable luxury. Yet as a family we managed to go on road trips, off road expeditions, camped in deserts, snorkelled and enjoyed riding motorcycles; finally reaching a point in life, when I could travel more and work less. Travelling by motorcycle gives no certificate to hang on a wall. Travelling is by far, the best education in life. It teaches one to “accept the unexpected”. The Universe conspired to let me explore. My dear wife holds the fort while I am away. My larger purpose in life is to become an enabler for others to dip in to the true wonders of this world. To be free, to ride a motorcycle thru challenging terrain, to overcome self-created mental blocks and to gain new perspectives. To give themselves a real shot at reconnecting with Nature and oneself and write their own life script. Red Panda Adventures is the enterprise that I use to organize these special motorcycle travel experiences. Some may think, I do this for a living, but I see it as a strong reason to feel alive every day.



Balaji Devanathan: Explorer



TRAVEL  
SAFE  
STAY  
SAFE

Follow [travellinkslive](#) on [instagram](#)





YOUR  
TRAVEL  
PARTNER  
Bi-Monthly Magazine

**Travel Links**

[www.travellinkslive.com](http://www.travellinkslive.com)

