

Travel Links

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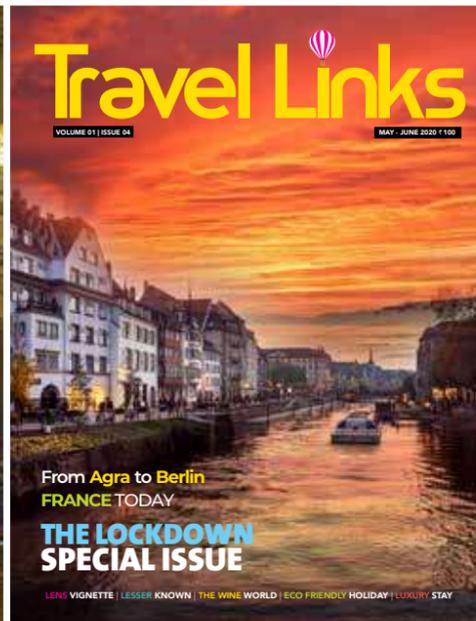
COVER STORY

**CULTURAL AND RICH
DIVERSITY OF ODISHA**

WINDMILLS OF ZANSE SCHANS

JUBILENCE OF JAISALMER

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



Travel Links

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Travel Links New Year's issue has given us a renewed perspective. It is time to think, act, react and travel responsibly. We bring you the arts, culture and rich diversity of Odisha. The state is unique to itself, influenced by its history of maritime ties.

For a weekend gateways, the village-Martoli is covered. It is known among trekking connoisseurs for pristine examples of Bhotia community, with their signature wool apparels, and for tasty Indo-Tibetan, and grazing yaks that were once raised for trading alongside salt in the 19th century.

Kumaon in Uttarakhand has prominent citation in some of the earliest religious scriptures. The many pilgrimage sites in the region bear testimony to it. Kumaon may have gained its initial popularity in the 20th century through Jim Corbett's adventures, but the region has manifold layers of fascination to offer.

Jaisalmer in Rajasthan is a treasure that cannot be ignored; there are the stories of love, stories of the brave warriors, of the king's wisdom and the life stories of various families which have been carved in the walls of forts for ages. One feels the vibe of royalty.

For the lesser-known destinations, we have covered the windmills in Zanse Schans which are the least explored of Netherland's countryside regions, where time stands still to preserve an important memory.

The Ageless Impressions of Cartagena(Colombia) is a remarkably beautiful city, with the roots of its opulent and sporadically vehement history embedded deep in the 16th century.

It is our continuous endeavor to bring you an interesting content to read. Wishing you all a very happy and prosperous year ahead.



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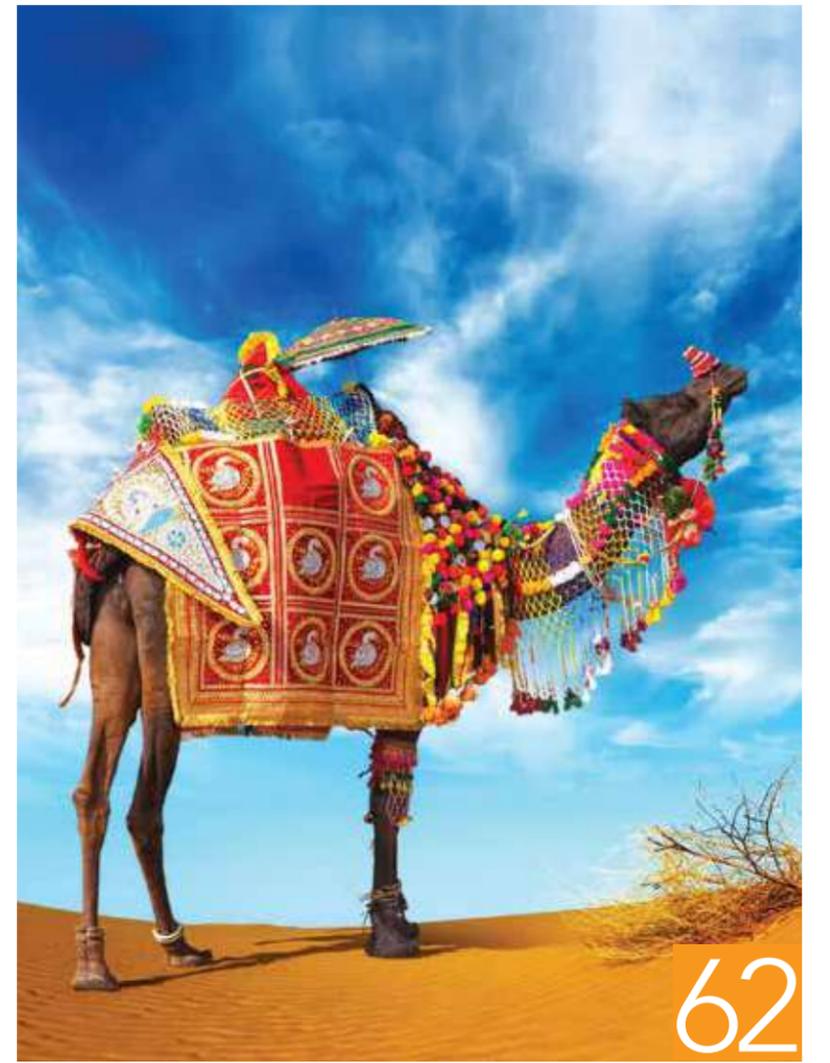


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Revisiting the Unseen Corners of Uttarakhand: Martoli

Beyond Uttarakhand's most-visited destinations, there's a wealth of wonders hidden in this Himalayan village, as long as you know where to look

SNEHA CHAKRABORTY

The untouched trails between Terai and the Kumaon division of Uttarakhand take travelers through the Johar Valley, a vast region of virgin forests speckled with high-altitude vegetation and seemingly populated by a handful of native residents. There are a few attractions that pop-up on Google

maps and the touristic bustle is even scarce. Yet a 24-hour trek leads those who dare to wander off to an oasis of sorts, one of the most vibrant villages in the Indian Himalayas, perched on a surprisingly fertile patch watered by narrow streams flowing down from the Pindar River.

Discovering Johar Valley's Cultural Capital

Most people don't get to know of the

paths that lead to Martoli until they get to Munsiri, the all well-known hill station frequented by off-season travelers to catch fleeting moments of summer. A quick weekend that translates to escapism. The village, Martoli, sometimes has the look of a hollow cluster of abandoned homes, but it is known among trekking connoisseurs for pristine examples of Bhotia community, with their signature wool apparels, and for tasty Indo-Tibetan, and grazing yaks



that were once raised for trading alongside salt in the 19th century. Improbably, in recent decades, only a few suburban colonies have found permanent roots, and they are often the only locals who operate businesses for incoming visitors.

Quickly beguiled by its languid charm, the compact village that has a dozen street-side eateries and traditional artifact shops, and plainspoken homestays that let you feel like you are staying in your grandparent's house over the vacation.

Of course, there's ambivalence in exploring the inner regions of the village because what makes it exceptional is its aura of being undiscovered. Nevertheless, adventure travelers are increasingly finding their way there just as the village is increasingly finding ways to entice domestic and international travelers who can now visit the Johar Valley and make their way to Martoli without the mandatory hike.

Take a stroll on the colorful main road, feel the ancient wood carvings on the doors, and gaze at the backdrop of soaring Nanda Devi in daylight and a transcending view of the starlit sky after sundown. The time it takes driving over the dizzying switchbacks of a rocky gravel passes straddled by pinnacles that don't budge is a reason some travelers will take the long way via Panchu Glacier toward the fabled, Rargari towards Kathgodam. When you keep going along the sheer-drop cliffs, the paved mountain pass becomes an easy hike whose beauty is lodged inextricably in this district.

The spine of the Martoli community is graced with more than a dozen Tibetan buildings, some draped in prayer flags and adorned with traditional relics. But wherever you pause, look around, it is hard not to ponder what a curious and unlikely spot Martoli is.

Along the back roads of Martoli

Go around town on an early morning walk and encounter an antique repetition of two-storied buildings. The locals live on the upper floors and use the space below as a front for their businesses. From homestays to local tours that provide trekkers with a comfortable stay and traditional meals as they pass through.

At Martoli Aunty, a homestay hosing built among a row of galleries, which



Take a stroll on the colorful main road, feel the ancient wood carvings on the doors, and gaze at the backdrop of soaring Nanda Devi in daylight and a transcending view of the starlit sky after sundown. The time it takes driving over the dizzying switchbacks of a rocky gravel passes straddled by pinnacles that don't budge is a reason some travelers will take the long way via Panchu Glacier toward the fabled, Rargari towards Kathgodam.

can be described as a stone-walled residence. But when the tired bodies of those walking for miles lay down after a steaming meal made from local grains, it is nothing less than a paradise. The women who prepare the meal, like every other elderly local in the town who understands the journey of outsiders often extend more than just hospitality, they take care of the visitors like a guardian, pouring words of wisdom in their journey. A lot of people just pass these grounds and carry on to the trails they were meant to conquer, reach the literal end. But for others, the conversations they have in Martoli are end game, it's all they needed to hear and consider their journey complete, a successful one.

Back outside, it is hard not to be struck by the sharp contrast, even in the slightly urban center, between the modern routines and beeping gadgets of trekkers, and the more subtle and traditional roots of the original settlers who work in the hotels, shops, and farms that are owned and managed by city dwellers. On the streets, barefoot children sometimes pose for photographs, curiously staring at all the funny equipment every outsider seems to carry.

The only attraction that the locals



would point towards before you set foot out of this village is a historic temple devoted to the peaks of Nanda Devi. It is frequented by the locals every morning for performing daily prayers. You learn from the temple that the nearby Tibet border from Johar, the once-bustling trade route, a short-lived boom of indigenous communities, and a touristic potential that fizzled all contributed to the present-day appreciation of the village, which today has 3,000 inhabitants, roughly 86 percent of them are from the Pithoragarh District.

Martoli is also known for its exotic spices and on your strolls, strong indulgence is recommended. Sitting in the woody shade of a quiet side garden of a small cafeteria, you will experience the sound of crackling fire upon which rice bubbles, spiced dal sprinkled with Pahadi jeera, stocked with a plate of

savory offerings — pickle, rock salt, pepper, and an unknown mix of other spices. The cuisines here are scared, kept away from the world that upstages the culinary world. Here, people gather around the table as a ritual, every bite is savored and thought of as a blessing the originated to nourish them. It may be a recipe hundreds of years old that you get served, and it will be a flavor unlike any other that's there in the outside world.

Foggy wonders off the beaten trail

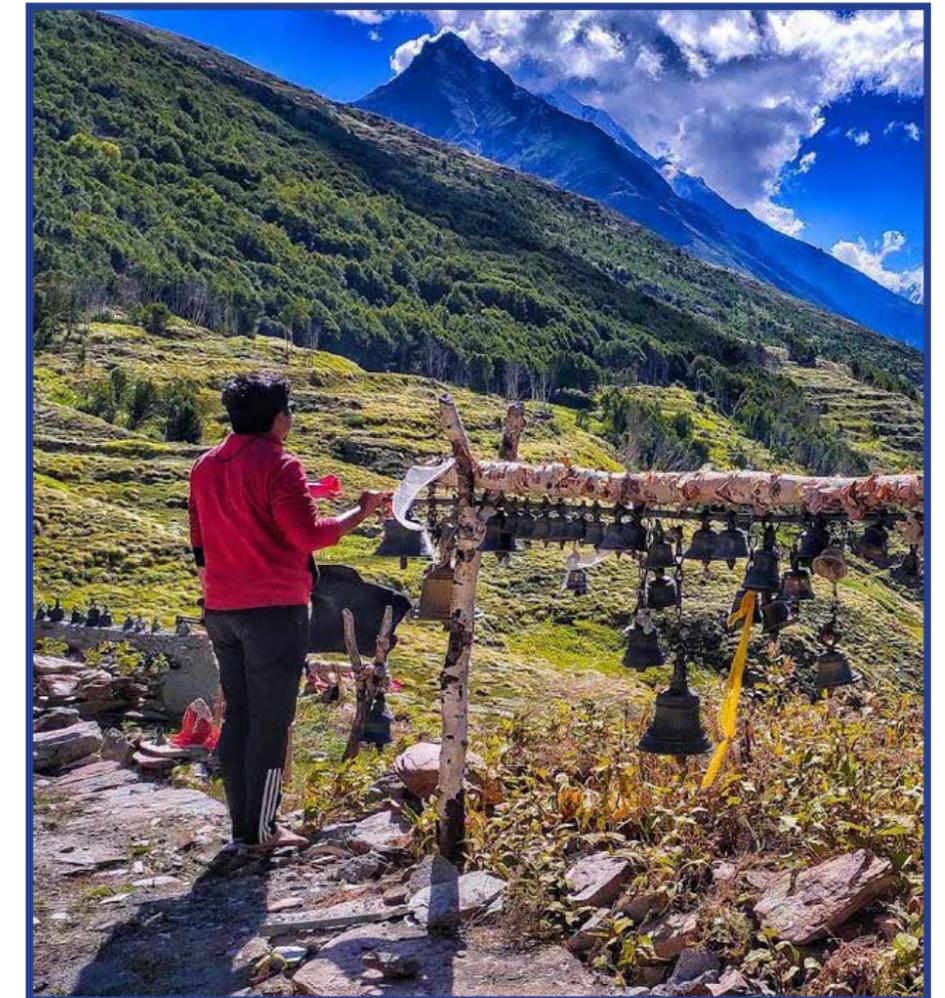
Martoli is virtually non-existent, a green blob on the map that captures a small group of people who occupy the territory. Even the travelers that may have passed through this town might never have thought of it as a place to reside, even if it's for a while. But no matter how few, visitors here have seen

themselves changing, finding what they needed to when they started traveling, and sometimes, finding what they were looking for in their lives. The magic exists.

Isolated in the Johar Valley, the vibrant village was unheard of until it wasn't. Once limited to original settlers, newfound popularity on social media boosted this destination to the top for many explorers, which are still not enough in numbers to s. Today, this place is appreciated mostly by trekkers for its languid charm, derelict stone houses, and its ode to preserving the Himalayan charm.

— SNEHA CHAKRABORTY —

She is a multimedia journalist and writer of essays, commentary and features, with a particular focus on travel. Based between London and Delhi, she has lived in two continents and traveled to 8 (and counting). Follow her travels on Instagram @fuzzygreysoc.





Getting Closer to Nature in Rural Kumaon

Dev Bhoomi (Land of the Gods), as Kumaon and Uttarakhand in general have been addressed on various tourism platforms, is a treasure trove for seekers of adventure, favourable climate, tranquillity, fresh air and natural beauty.

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

The name Kumaon is a derivative of the word Kumanchal which itself is an offshoot of the word Kurmavtar (Lord Vishnu's tortoise incarnation). Uttarakhand has prominent citation in some of the earliest religious scriptures and texts where the present day Kumaon region is referred to as Manaskhand (while the present day Garhwal region is referred to as Kedarkhand). The many pilgrimage sites in the region bear testimony to it. Kumaon may have gained its initial popularity in the 20th century through Jim Corbett's adventures, but the region has manifold layers of fascination to offer.

Uttarakhand, in a broad-spectrum, has seen a flourishing tourism industry in recent times, although sadly in certain locations it may have been at the cost of sacrificing the forest cover of some areas. Deforestation has been a major concern in various parts of Kumaon (and the administration has taken note of it). Deforestation has proved itself as an ill element of the modern-day era which can only promise devastation. Keeping our environment protected is the most crucial need of the hour and the sooner we learn that lesson, the better for all of us.

Some of the rural villages of Kumaon have done very well in keeping the green cover intact to try and preserve



all what Kumaon has been known for, and contributed towards ameliorating the ecological health of the region. Koon, Charkhet, Pangot, Baggad, etc. being some of those villages in proximity of Nainital and Bhimtal.

The fresh veggies and seasonal fruits in the markets of nearby towns are procured from such rural villages. Coriander, potatoes, garlic, cucumber, pumpkin, peas, radish, leafy beans, corn being some of the principal crops apart from some native fruits and vegetables. Various varieties of local citrus fruits such as malta, keenu, kaku, lemon (kaagzi as well as the big sized oval shaped ones) have grown with much ease in this climate. Kiwi in recent times has seen a good produce too with Charkhet being among the first villages in the region pioneering in kiwi farming. A fair share of walnut trees has been giving a decent yield. The land though fertile enough to yield crops, is a bit rocky and bears a lot of stones in the natural soil, which lead to the size of the potatoes, radish, cauliflower, etc. being smaller in size. Though smaller in size, they taste much better than the

regular size crops.

The revolutionary Kiwi produce at Charkhet is interesting to note. An exotic fruit which has been in high demand in recent years, owing to its lifesaving properties in many ailments such as dengue, has found fertile ground here. This expensive fruit can be transported to bigger towns from here substantially lowering its hefty price in the markets and making it more affordable.

A lot of other such exotic fruits and veggies are being tried out now in other parts of Kumaon. In the opinion of some locals, cultivation of medicinal plants can be another revolutionary idea in some parts of these rural Kumaon villages and should be given a serious thought.

Colourful flowers such as rhododendron (which contour the picturesque road to Kilbury and Pangot), wild daisies, Bougainvillea, Mirabilis Jalapa (which bloom to life every day around 4pm and just shut down in the morning around 10 am), Horn Lilies, Roses, Gladioli (these make the perfect bouquet), hydrangea (in 3 different colours), and many others

paint the surroundings in the most vibrant colour shades. These flowers grow naturally on many hill slopes and valleys giving a cherubic look to the area.

The fauna is as attractive as the environs which contain them. You are likely to sight barking deer, mountain goats, yellow throated martens, hares, leopards (occasionally), variety of birds such as wrynecks, red billed magpies, drongos, koels, owls, eagles, wood peckers, green breasted pigeons, parrots, black headed jays, roufus sibia, Verditer Flycatcher, hoopoe, bulbuls, khali pheasants among many others.

The general populace here is into the occupation of farming and have to toil very hard for getting the crops to harvest. They start their day as early as 4am in order to organise their cattle, sort out their bucolic routines, even before they perform their daily prayer rituals. Almost each farming family has a cohort of cows / buffalos for the milk and manure, bulls to till the land, pet dogs to guard the crops from the monkeys and langours.

Certain people have taken to rain water





harvesting by collecting rain water drained off their roofs into man-made tanks / ponds and some have even kept fish in the tank as a part of efforts to initiate a permaculture drive. This water is then used for small scale irrigation purposes.

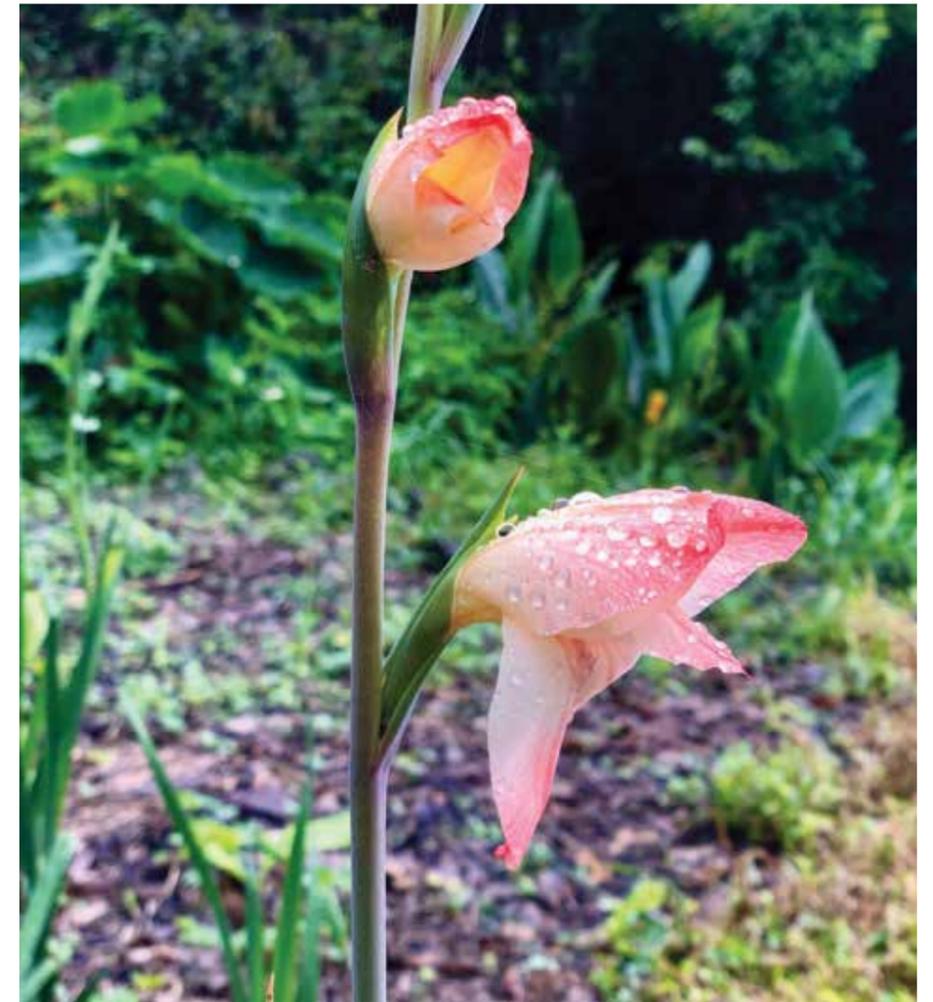
The people here have to commute to Nainital or Bhimtal for their simple daily needs. For the replenishment of their seed banks, fertilizers, farming equipment and tools they have to travel downhill to Haldwani or Kaladhungi which is marginally over an hour's journey by road.

Leaving their homes for a long duration isn't an option for most as the crops need to be guarded from the birds, monkeys and goats that pillage the fields. Not all family members can be out together because of this predicament. Getting labour to help farm the land isn't easy so they have to do all the work and most of it is manual labour as farming vehicles are not possible to maneuver in the sloping hilly area (though some farmers have kept a small hand driven tractor which can be maneuvered around with ease in certain fields). The hardships faced by the local farmers doesn't end here, as the extreme weather too destroys crops or delays and diminishes the crop yields. Monsoons, when heavy, cause landslides at various scales. Winter, when severe, doesn't permit the manual labour from venturing out in the fields.

But all of this hasn't deterred the people here who have been farming for survival generation after generation. To fend for themselves, to lead a simple and modest life, they labour through the day in their fields, fatiguing themselves for a good night's rest.

Though today mobile networks are available with reasonable signal strength, living without telephones (land lines) is not a distant memory for them as some villages got their first land line connection as late as in the year 2001, when mobile phones were already a thing elsewhere.

In recent times, as a result of the boost in tourism sector in Uttarakhand, an appreciable number of cottages, home stays, lodges have sprung up in the region by these very own farming families. Having something more to bank on is always a great option and they have wisely cashed on it. The area is especially a perfect one for eco-tourism



in a sustainable framework altogether. Why eco-tourism should be the course of action for these kind of places needs no crediting argument given the uncertainty driven around in recent times due to the fast-paced way of life amidst mass scale industrialisation across the globe. There are many such remote hamlets which could capitalise on this opportunity. The world is raring to go out on a vacationing spree after the pandemic has shackled those dreams, and the best way to go ahead would be to consciously indulge in the remote eco-tourism hubs such as these in rural Kumaon. It would very well serve the purpose of being vocal for local too, when you can only spend on the indigenous goods of the land.

Tourists here can binge on farm fresh food, enjoy the salutary influence of pure air, watch the local fauna in close proximity and get besotted by the colourful flora all around. From hiking over and across the nearby mountains through the



ubiquitous pine and deodar forests, to just sitting by the seasonal waterfalls one can rejuvenate the mind, body, and soul which get worn down by the mundane city life. I would call it an all year-round tourism friendly locale, barring the monsoon season in its peak. The snowfall in winter too is a pacifying experience here when everything goes absolutely silent with the



falling snow. Cooking your own meal over a crackling bonfire while being nestled in the woods, falling asleep in the midst of lush greenery with high mountains on your horizon, waking up to the melodic chatter of the birds, and watching the oblique angled sun rays percolating through an otherwise impenetrable curtain of pine and deodar forests are experiences that one would carry in their minds

There is no dearth of spectacular beauty of myriad forms in the expanse of these Himalayan regions and anyone who has visited these places would definitely testify for that.



forever. In the words of Ruskin Bond (who is a resident of Uttarakhand) – It's always the same with mountains. Once you have lived with them for any length of time, you belong to them. There is no escape.

There is no dearth of spectacular beauty of myriad forms in the expanse of these Himalayan regions and anyone who has visited these places would definitely testify for that.



I would not advocate (and I hope the locals too would strongly object) for big luxury hotel structures and malls over here that could overshadow the pristine beauty of the region, though some moderate scale adventure / amusement parks for children could help.

Mingling with the locals (their parlance will please and even amuse you) and exchanging experiences with them is going to be a lasting and pleasant memory for the tourists. The Kumaoni people have always shown warmth and hospitality for visitors, an innate trait they possess. They are generally conservative people who follow their Kumaoni traditions unfailingly and have kept their culture alive with each passing generation.

The local industries in and around Nainital / Bhimtal are mainly the decorative and aromatic candles, local and organic fruit squashes and hand-woven woollens. A good amount of effort and labour goes into producing these goods and visitors must try them, it does embolden the vocal for local agenda. 'Fruitage' is a local manufacturer of fruit squashes, jams,

pickles, canned fruits and even chutneys. They use the indigenous and organically grown fruits of the Kumaon region for making their products. Their hampers are the ideal gifts to take back home for friends and relatives. The decorative and aromatic candles have always been the most prominent local product of Nainital region and these candles have decked many living rooms. Some of the villages near Khurpatal sell beautiful root wood carvings in various designs and these can be the perfect memento. The hand-woven woollens are indigenous products again and mostly crafted by the local women from various Kumaon regions. Purchasing these local products would certainly augment the local economy and provide for the needy and hard-working locals.

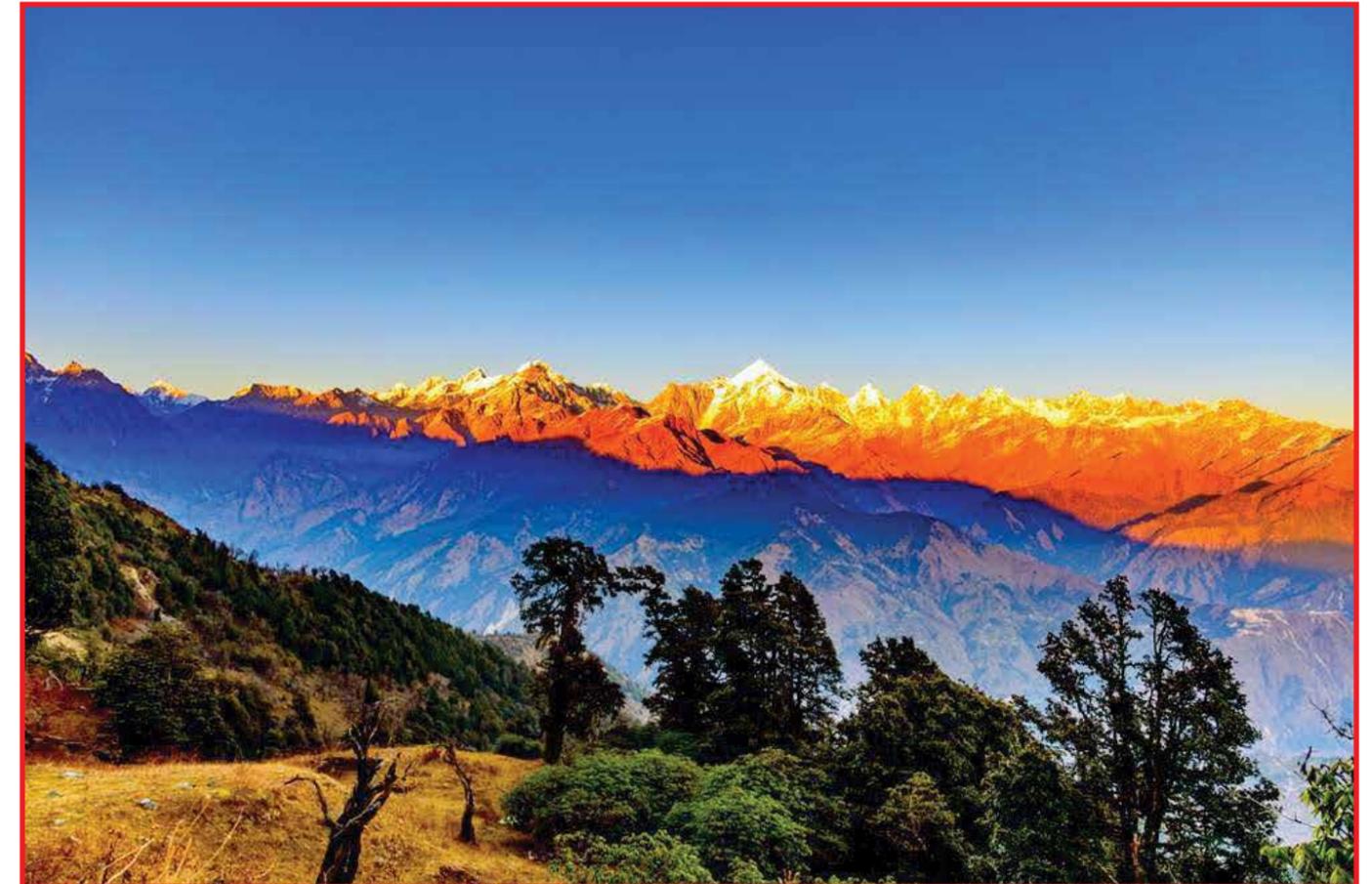
Some of the local food you will get to try are very delectable to say the least. It's better to have it cooked by an experienced local and you would definitely want to make a note of the recipe. Bhatt dal (in the form of chudkani or joola) with plain rice is something I would strongly recommend. Mandue ki roti and the

spicy kumaoni raita are not to be missed either. Gahat dal is also popular especially during the winters.

In my own personal advice to those who would want to try being environment conscious travellers, I would like to close by saying - Make the journey up the winding roads to these rural stretches of Kumaon, but don't look for luxury. Instead experience the hills and the countryside way of life. Don't look for malls, instead give the local and ethnic goods a try (it will give you some joy). Don't chase the pub culture, instead immerse yourself in the exotic nature and provide your soul with a deeply halcyon feel. Much like the maxim from Ralph Waldo Emerson – Don't go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

He works aboard merchant ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid for travelling, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time.



Sophisticated, subtle and serene!

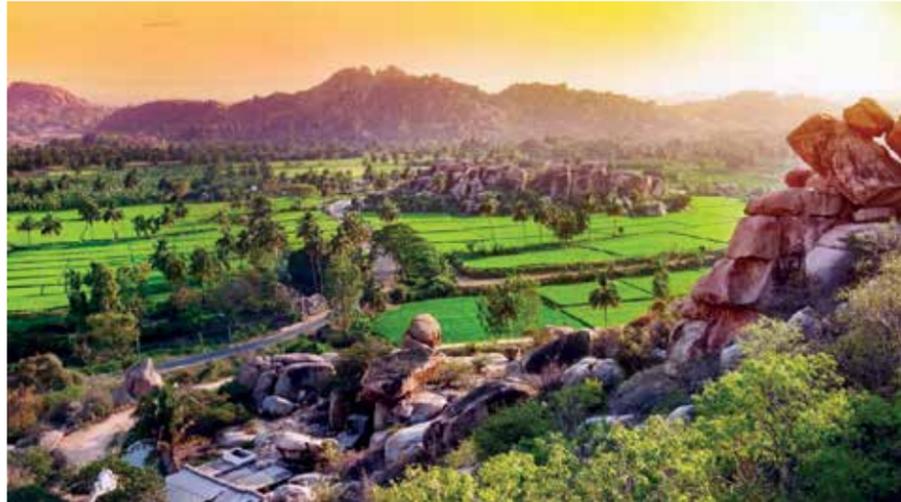
Decoding Odisha - India's understated travel wonder and truly, its most well-kept secret!

MATULI MADHUSMITA SWAIN

There are places people long to visit. There are places that travellers stumble upon. There are destinations that are truly off the grid. Then, there are cities and places which people come on a second thought and wonder why they didn't visit earlier. Odisha clearly is best described that way. Blessed with a vast coastline with the Bay of Bengal, the state which is enjoying its moment in the sun has more to it than temples and tribal culture! The understated travel gem is truly a perfect wonder for those who look for culture, arts and spirituality topped with a dash of adventure and wildlife.

Odisha has a culture that is unique to itself, influenced by its history of maritime ties, architecture that are engineering and artistic marvels paying homage to Hindu scriptures and Buddhist lineage. Much like how the battle-thirsty conqueror King Ashoka laid down his weapons and converted to Buddhism; leading a life that was never thought possible of him – Odisha has an undeniable softness to it that grows of you. Rich in culture, art, and literature and blessed with abundant geographical wealth for flourishing of wildlife and fauna; the best time to discover the state is between October and March.

The winters are pleasant with a nip in the air and festive cheer all around and numerous arts, dance, musical and cultural



festivals all lined up.

So, if you are a first time visitor to this gorgeous Eastern state of India, here are few things to strike off your travel checklist! The easiest itinerary to draw up would be Bhubaneswar, Puri and Cuttack on your first visit with detours to visit Chilika Lake, Konark Temple and some of the famed ecotourism and wildlife hotspots. With good air connectivity, an international airport and plenty of cab and train services to choose from, travelling within the state is a breeze.

Beaches, Sand Art and Swoon-worthy Sunsets

Singularly oozing serenity and calmness, the 480 meter coastline of Odisha is home to pristine beaches, orange hued sunsets and nature kissed backdrops that truly don't need any filters! Start your travel by visiting the serene majestic beaches of Puri and if you are lucky, you can watch some fantastic sand art being done. Go for an early morning walk or see some gorgeous sunsets and opening up of the bustling beach-side markets selling artefacts and knick-knacks.





Chandrabhaga beach at Konark is majestic as such and offers a plethora of activities from bonfires, to boating. Gopalpur beach was a famed maritime entry point to the state, and has spectacular beaches. Enjoy a stroll by the seaside and grab yourself some snacks to munch. Lastly, not to miss is the Chandipur beach, home to amazing biodiversity and the famed Panchalingeswar temple. A must visit. If you still have time on your itinerary, visit the Paradip Port, with due permits and enjoy a quick visit to the Marine Aquarium rounded off with a soothing marine drive

along the coastline.

Culinary Wonder

Odias love their food with a childlike simplicity that is endearing to watch, hard to replicate and almost near impossible to find the culinary gems of the state, outside its borders. Not to be missed is the 'Mahaprasad' at Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri; a diverse vegetarian thali that is ode to those chefs who helm the temple kitchen to appease and tantalize the palate of Lord Jagannath. Different varieties of rice – Kaanika, ghee laced served with a thick dal, assorted vegetables and more.

The food is surely going to lull you into a food coma. Savour a bowl of 'Dalma' – the quintessential Odia must have lentil dish – that is mildly spiced, nutrient dense and topped with toasted cumin and fresh coconut. For those with a sweet tooth – there is a never ending spread of sweets. Especially popular are the ChennaPoda – caramelized cottage cheese with sugar syrup and the ubiquitous Rasagolla. Street food in Odisha is a treat. Fried savouries are popular. The king of street food is the 'DahibaraAloodum' a combination of spicy potato curry and soft curd laced fried

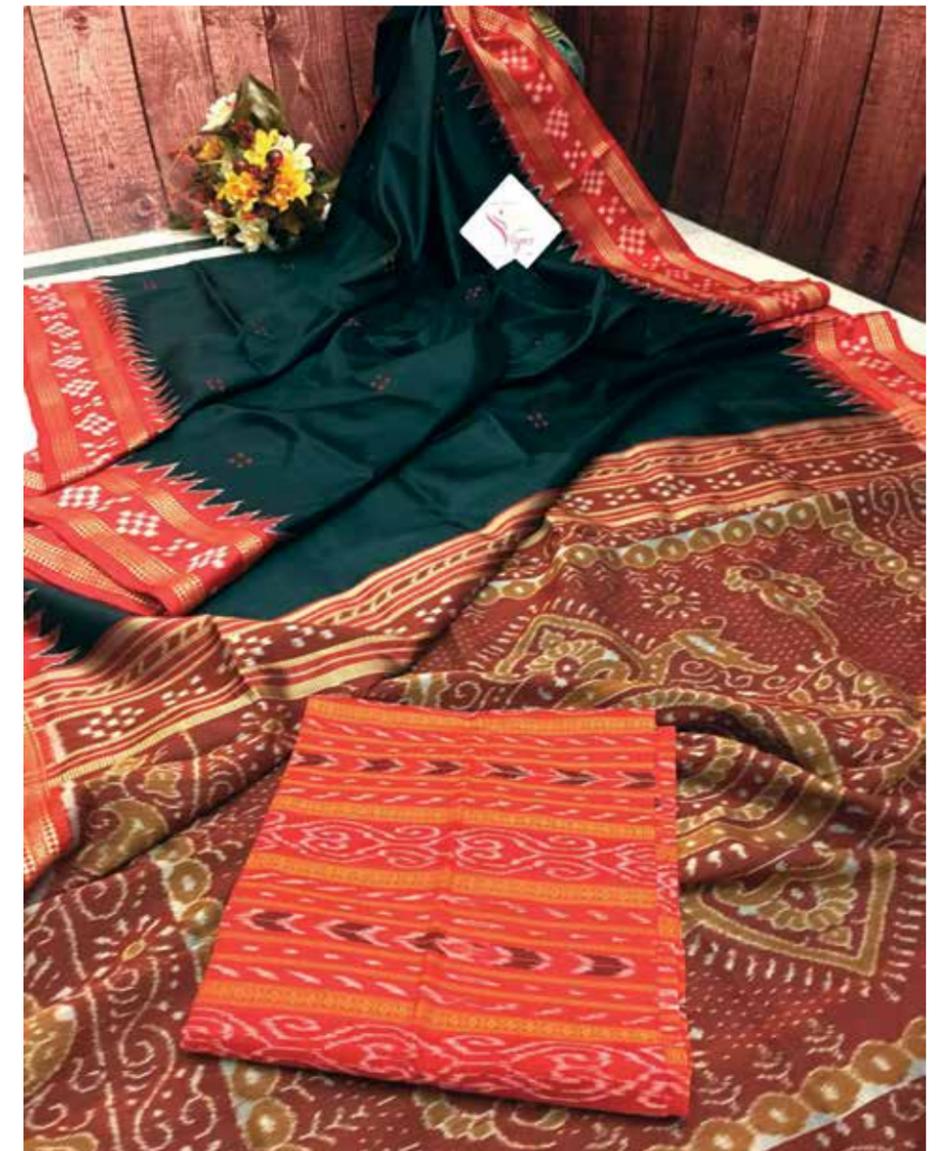
dumplings topped with tangy masalas and sev. A lip smacking on-the-go addictive snack. Seafood lovers, rejoice! Crabs, prawns and fresh fish is abundant, so are the various ways in which they are cooked and served. The favourite for Odias remains though seafood cooked in mustard sauce, best paired with hot rice and a simple salad. In case you happen to visit in summers, get yourself an invite to an Odia home to savour the rustic 'Pawkhalaw' – rice fermented overnight, spiced with green chillies, salt and lime and served with assorted platter of vegetables, seafood, condiments. The art of eating it is an acquired skill and a short nap is much advised, post a traditional Odia 'Pakhlaw' lunch. A satiated slumber.

Crafts, Textiles and Tribal Artefacts

Odisha is a shopper's paradise. From budget to big spends, you will find it all.

Odisha enjoys Nature's bounty like no other state. Wildlife sanctuaries, National Parks and Tiger reserves – the state has it all. So for those who enjoy travel trails chasing the Big Cat or watching baby Olive Ridley turtles hatch, the state epitomizes what can only be described as absolute authentic luxury in the lap of nature.

Unusual, understated and oozing subtle glam, the arts, textiles and artefacts of the state are definitely a love at first sight. Odisha has textiles which are art pieces woven in thread. Splurge on stunning SambalpuriIkat sarees, which are often adorned with patterns of flora, fauna, conch-shells, depicting the state's ancient maritime history. Bomkai silks are another staple of the state, known for their intricate designs and motifs. Be sure to buy yourself a double Ikat, Passapalisaree, the grandeur of which is best known when worn. For those culture enthusiasts, a trip to the famed art





scientific and artistic mastery of ancient Odisha.

Wildlife and Eco Tourism

Odisha enjoys Nature's bounty like no other state. Wildlife sanctuaries, National Parks and Tiger reserves – the state has it all. So for those who enjoy travel trails chasing the Big Cat or watching baby Olive Ridley turtles hatch, the state epitomizes what can only be described as absolute authentic luxury in the lap of nature. Adventurers can choose from bird watching to trekking; jungle safaris to glamping. Start your adrenalin rush with a trip to Bhitarkanika – a mangrove sanctuary and among the few



villages of Raghurajpur and Pipili is highly recommended. Raghurajpur is famous for the intricate art of 'Pattachitra' which depicts mythology on palm leaves and cloth. It is delicate art form, highly prized and preserved with care. Pipili is home to the famous 'applique' work that is characterized by the use of bright colourful motifs – the Pipili applique work is used to adorn the chariots of Lord Jagannath and his siblings during the world famous RathYatra /Car/ Chariot Festival of Puri. Be sure to grab yourself a souvenir in form of a lampshade, a wall décor or a vibrant bedspread.

Temple Architecture

Art, history lovers can have their fill marveling at the stunning temple architecture the state has to offer. A must visit is the majestic Lord Jagannath temple at Puri. Famed to be the abode of Lord Jagannath, the sheer splendor, grandeur

and mysticism of the temple premises cannot be summed up in words. Built in the 12th century, the temple is an architectural marvel. Fun fact: The main temple is constructed in a way that no shadow of the temple falls on the ground at any time of the day. The famed RathYatra of Puri is an annual festival, usually held in the months of June – July. Make sure you tick off the grand Konark Temple, dedicated to the Sun god. An UNESCO World Heritage site, the temple is famous for its symmetry and detailed stone sculptures. The Konark Dance Festival, held annually in November is a treat for dance lovers, having an impressive line-up of famed classical dancers performing amidst the stunning backdrop of Konark Temple. In Bhubaneswar, the imposing 180 ft Lingaraj Temple is a breathtaking piece of architecture, showcasing the finesse of the stone masters – the impressive carvings, detailing, proportions is the epitome of

marine sanctuaries in India. Have a closer look at the majestic saltwater crocodiles who reside among the mangroves. Chilika Lake, India's largest brackish water lagoon is famous for nesting of migratory birds and a treat for bird watchers. Love the Big Cat? A visit to the Tiger Reserves at Satkosia and Similipal are a must. Majestic tigers, spotted deers, Bisons and Elephants lounging amidst the Sal forests – this is a scene straight out of Jungle book! Explore the listed eco-retreats for an enchanting, luxurious eco-vacation!

Odisha is truly an underrated travel gem, waiting to be explored.

—MATULI MADHUSMITA SWAIN—

She is an author, speaker, and marketing and communications expert with over 10 years of professional experience working with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt, Movenpick Hotels & Resorts, IHG, Grey Group and Dr. Reddy's Foundation. She loves marketing, leadership, new age work place practices, economics, entrepreneurship, sustainable travel and tourism.

ART ARENA



BADAL TYAGI

He is a software engineer based in USA and painting is his passion since childhood. description: This painting is created in the series to depict all classical dances of India. The medium used is soft pastel pencils on sanded paper.

5 Rules to Cooking with Wine



AKSHAY PANDIT, EXECUTIVE CHEF
CROWNE PLAZA JAIPUR

The wine scenario in India has come a long way and thanks to the connoisseurs of good food and high spirited dining we have all understood the ways of celebrating a wine not just for drinking but for its use in cookery as well. There are lot many ways in which you

can use the flavour of the wine however there are a few thumb rules to follow in order to cook with wine like a pro!

A wine could be used in many different ways like a cooking broth for soups and poultry, in poaching of vegetables or fruits or fish, in marinades for roasts (as the wine contains acidic properties and helps keep the meat moist and tender), as dressings for salads, as a finishing ingredient to

sauces, to add moisture while roasting and even in batters for frying and baking. Wine is great in desserts too.

Rule 1 - Quality

The most important rule is to use a good wine. By that I mean a wine that is drinkable and not the one which has gone bad due to oxidation, too acidic or the one that has lost all of its flavour. Always

remember good food comes from the best ingredients! That does not mean you use the most expensive wine for cooking but the ones that are good enough to drink.

Rule 2 – Classic Combination

As many of you would probably be aware of the fact that both red and whites have traditional/classical rules of pairing where reds are paired with heavier and stronger

flavoured ingredients like red meats and whites are paired with lighter meats like poultry, fish, seafood and veggies.

This usually occurs as the red wines have a higher tannin content which has a slight bitter after-taste (somewhat like in a coffee) and hence these go well with strong flavoured meats or heavier gravies. The whites are more acidic (somewhat like a sharp taste that you get in a lemon) and

hence they go well with lighter flavoured meats and veggies.

However, once you have mastered the art of pairing food and wine you can always get a lot more experimental by using wine in cooking Indian delicacies, gravies and biryanis.

The idea is to keep it subtle in order to compliment the dish and not over-power the other ingredients.



Rule 3 – Dry vs Sweet

Differentiate between dry and sweet wines.

Dry wines are usually the ones where all of the natural sugars have been lost and hence are more acidic or ‘crisp’; while the sweet wines are naturally sweeter. Ensure you know which wine you are using while cooking in order to get the expected results.

Dry wines for savoury while sweet wines for desserts.

Rule 4 - Full bodied vs Light

A full bodied wine can match bolder tastes in stews, gravies and sauces with higher spice content while a light wine does wonders in creamy, cheesy and mild flavoured gravies and sauces.

Rule 5 – Respect the wine

Wine like any other ingredient needs to be used in diligence. Too little and it won’t impart any flavour and too much will

surely mask the taste of your original dish.

Allow the wine to simmer in the food to impart all its flavours. Too little time or adding the wine right towards the end will make the food taste both acidic and bitter. Keeping these simple rules in mind am sure you will barely go wrong in cooking with wine. However always remember to cook with a good mood (may be some wine can work here too!) as it always shows in the food you cook. 🍷

Discovering lesser-known Dutch neighborhoods in Northern Holland

The windmills in Zaanse Schans are the least explored of Netherland's countryside regions, where time stands still to preserve an important memory.

SNEHA CHAKRABORTY

Take a huddle of six rustic-green windmills exuding a whiff of oil paint and cocoa with gigantic, blades moving-slowly in the background, a pace that makes you stare at it longer than intended. Located 11 miles north of Amsterdam, these windmills are observed throughout the Netherlands as historic and significant – but a place that has also remained mysteriously untouched for decades. Back in the 17th-century, the modern-day riverside town was home to more than 600 working windmills. The industrial trade would support countless communities of factory workers and

artisans such as cheesemakers who would travel from afar and settle in the Dutch continent for a living. Before the glory of internet fame, the town would become a secret discovery for travelers who would dare to stray further from the city. But nowadays, it is found scribbled in almost every European itinerary as a must-visit for its scenic allure.

In a sparsely populated region, I sit in the village of Zaanse Schans surrounded by an orchestra of crashing waves, waiting for the wind to slow down. The old wooden rooftops of nearby houses vibrate and squeak. It's quiet – just a handful of people in a cafe drinking Chocomel. And quieter inside

the Zaanse Schans Museum on the main street, where a collection of animated clocks – from the Dutch golden age – stands proudly as the only establishment in the country that pays homage to the intricate craft of timekeeping.

During the afternoon, in a brewpub somewhere nearby, a fillet of cod drowning in a batter of flour and breadcrumbs sizzle in hot oil, as Kibbeling, a Dutch favorite is prepared for a large group of tourists. I sit with a couple of fishermen in their late 40s on barstools facing the sea, oozing athleticism. Last night, they say, a jeep full of tourists wearing masks and hazmat suits were begging to reopen De Kat,



which I later understood was a reference to the oldest printmaking windmill. We strained our eyes for what feels like the hundredth time at the shore, 11 miles away. The windmill was barely visible on the horizon, a smudge of wood standing

afar from civilization.

Captain and retired mill-engineer Fabian Leery gave me a ride the next day; four hours sailing on his dinghy boat, which he lovingly named Martha after her wife, describing Zaanse as a place of

immense historic significance. “When the pandemic started, we were sure that it was going to be quiet autumn. Many weeks passed by and nobody showed up anywhere near the village and the virus was already in Amsterdam. But we were wrong. When the city went under lockdown, travelers flocked here, to the Zaandam neighborhood. One particularly quirky backpacker claimed that Zaanse holds the power to protect him from the virus.” A trout with a canary-gold stripe flings itself in the air as we sail closer to the De Kat windmill.

De Kat was originally built as an oil mill in 1646. It was an industrial structure and was considered an important landmark. When the mill caught a devastating fire in 1782, the town immediately engaged in rebuilding it. Owned by Vereniging De Zaanse Molen, the mill today is the last standing operational station for printmaking.

After eavesdropping on a guided tour and fascinating myself with an ancient process that traditionally yields pigments of color, I wander around. A photographer politely whisks some workers for a snapshot. There is the other cluster of windmills—and the Zaan river—a serene landscape that can make you gasp. Wooden benches and big fans and silence. A young

woman, olive-skinned, sits on the edge facing the town-wide reading Gerard Reve’s De Avonden.

A wooden pathway shaped like a mini-bridge, De Kat’s one walkway is crowded with squashed blueberry crops that infuses the air around with a tart aroma. There is no public transport for miles, just a small community of farmland Dutch settlers of less than 8,000 living on a peat soil landmass in houses made from upcycled 19th-century wood with slivers of the industrial revolution in their design. A significant reminder of the 17th-century industrialization: Shipyards, spice factories, paper industry. Museums dot the bay.

Now and, then a dinghy comes along carrying passengers tinkering with their face masks, trying to forget the reality of the pandemic. During the evening, a much larger crowd of teenagers and young adults stinking of Heineken drive in from Amsterdam for enormous mounds of Patatje Oorlog (War Fries) and then

During a year with limited travel possibilities, a backpacker from London finds a home in Dutch farmland where she stumbled upon one of the Netherland’s best-kept secrets. After discovering a landscape as peaceful as it is pristine, this essay retracing her steps in Zanse Schans.



stay into the night, roaming in circles around town. The vintage local bar De Hoop op d’Swarte Walvis offers a limited dinner menu, where the barkeep whispers praises of the Veal Loin with a side of asparagus and some potato pancakes. A humble meal with a touch of Zaanse, warm, comfortable, and just the right amount of fancy.

The next day, I walk for hours with Abbe, the son of my host, and a history buff. Abbe has a long-lost connection with this place and now lives with his mother, finishing the renovation of his home in a hamlet called Zuideinde on the suburban landscape away from the city. I walk behind her, cautiously navigating puddles of mud as she swiftly walks on almost invisible trails, leading the way. The scene suddenly changes as we emerge from the tall shrubs and stand in a colony of miniature houses: a tribute to the original settlers of Zaanse. The image in front of me is of a random cluster of 18th-century Dutch homes, painted dark green on the outside – almost like they were trying to camouflage, hide in plain sight. At that exact moment, the significance of the original settlers who built the town was



too empowering – all their traditions and sacrifice over the years coming into light.

Midday at Zuideinde's port a few days later. An hour away by boat, some 63 miles away from Amsterdam, the Zaanse village rises, aesthetic, quieter. A population of less than 5,000 in winter. Tourists on bicycles stop for mere moments to gaze at the windmills that line the horizon. No cars, no wheels. In the 17th century, paintings of windmills weren't just art, they would exude strength. In recent years, many locals still come to the shore to stare at the windmills and gather whatever vigor they can. Some say that it is greater than praying in the church.

This afternoon, a group of elderly women is talking about the many ways to make carbonara, and a mill worker explains to a group of millennial travelers the importance of manual labor in the olden days. I spoon Boterkoek, an exotic form of butter cake in the Café "Van Ouds" Oost-Indië near the central square, where the cafe owner peeks from over the counter, as though he doesn't want to get away from the radiator, and passes a shy smile, 45-year-old Gilonio.

That night the water in the Zaan river was still. A few tourists chat with Captain Leery, preparing to take me back to Amsterdam on an early sail toward the city. He passionately recalls his past and tells stories about his days as a mill-worker back in the days, never for a moment caring about the tidal waves that kept coming his way, as if he knows them too well. The adventure was his fate, not a stagnant life. Hours later, through my rental-room windows, I gave the town one last look. In those somewhat emotional and semi-conscious moments before dawn, in all parts of the world, there was silence; but in this place, the profound steering of the windmills made me smile. In such moments, Zaanse can define serenity better than any other place in the world, and in others, it is just another suburban village in Holland that couldn't care less. [ii](#)

— SNEHA CHAKRABORTY —

She is a multimedia journalist and writer of essays, commentary and features, with a particular focus on travel. Based between London and Delhi, she has lived in two continents and traveled to 8 (and counting). Follow her travels on Instagram @fuzzygreysock.

The Ageless Impressions of Cartagena (Colombia)

A remarkably beautiful city, with the roots of its opulent and sporadically vehement history embedded deep in the 16th century. A colonial city which has evolved into the biggest tourist destination in Colombia, apart from being an important economic hub. A city which showcases diversity in attractions for the modern-day traveler who seeks more than an all-round feel of any place – Cartagena.

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

A short drive from the Manga Bay Harbor led me to the entrance of this comely city. The freshness in the mornings land breeze along the coastal drive did well in priming me up for the treat of a trip that lay ahead in Cartagena. Had always been excited in making this trip for a long time and it finally happened. Without any sort of planning on how to go about exploring I just drove off from the port limits.

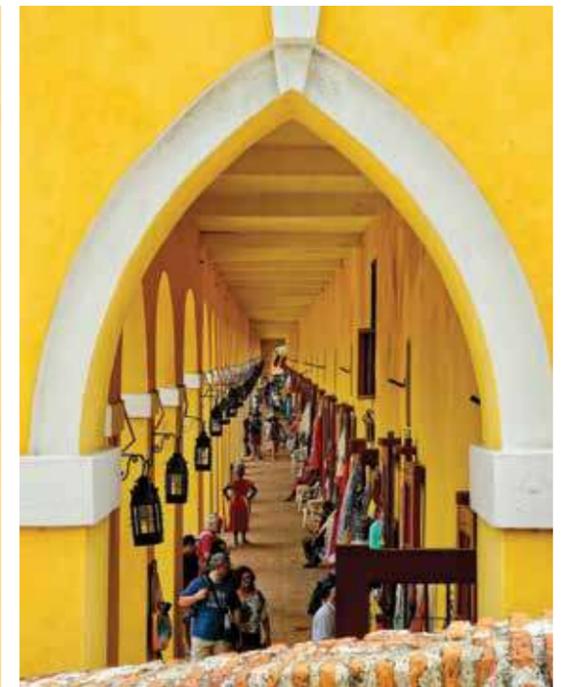
Situated on the Caribbean Sea shoreline of Colombia, this port city acted as a convenient passage to Latin America for centuries. Owing to its strategic location on the Northern coast of the country, it used to be a dynamic port for the slave trade during the colonial times. Cartagena is also the place where Colombia's independence journey started off. It was the first city to rid itself of the Spanish crown in Colombia and that's what gives great historic importance to Cartagena. The city of Cartagena (Cartagena de Indias) was considered to be militarily the most secure and safe city in all of South America back in the colonial times. The fortifications built around the walled city were constructed to defend Cartagena from the repeated attacks it had been subject to by foreign aggressors (mainly the rival European Colonies of Spain) and ruthless pirates (including Sir Francis Drake) trying to capture it. The robust and tall standing walls of the city's defence systems which have weathered those repeated attacks are

perfect proof of the military engineering might of the Spanish colonial masters.

As you step into the premises of the city, you will be smitten and spellbound in no time by the old-world ambience that exudes from every corner of the area.

The retro Spanish colonial architecture in the entire area is just awe inspiring where the alternately bright colored houses, cobbled stone pathways (well maintained), spacious plazas and various sculpture give you a certain charming feel and even leave you feeling possessed.

Some of the houses are around 250 years old with beautiful protruding wooden balconies, huge doors at the entrance and sloping corrugated roofs. Tastefully painted walls with creepers and shrubs grown against them will mesmerize any onlooker. Occasionally you will spot cute vintage American cars parked around some of the houses and even being driven by. A majestic statue of Don Pedro de Heredia, the founder of the city (founded way back in the year 1533), is well placed in one of the plazas. You would really





Walking around the city is the best way to explore it so you can explore every nook and cranny of the mysterious streets and alleyways. However, many horse-drawn carriages ply around the city which is a great way to explore as well if you want to cover more in lesser time. Almost every photo you click in these streets can be a postcard or a calendar shot.

Many of the locals manage to speak decipherable English, but it's fun to try and converse in the local language. They are very jovial people in general. I've always been a fan of the Spanish language.

The street side stalls sell pretty souvenirs including sporty t shirts, bags, shoes, crockery, etc.

The heat and the humid stickiness in the air can drain you a bit while walking around, so one must keep hydrated. But that problem is easily solved as there are quite a few hawkers selling fresh fruits on the streets. Some of them are local women dressed in bright yellow traditional attire of Palenque (a nearby town settlement founded by the first free slaves of the region). These local women stall keepers are fun to pose with for a photograph.

A plethora of lovely cafes, bars, restaurants and pubs with live music and unparalleled variety of food and drinks, are scattered all over town. You could spend more than a week in trying out all the cafes and restaurants alone if it was to be a gastronomic expedition. Cazuela soup with sea food is a thing not to miss. Coffee

want the moments to pause, the time to stand still and will be compelled to have your camera out and on all the time. The centuries old colonial infrastructure is one of the many reasons that make you fall in love with the city. One will easily notice that the architecture of the city gives it its main character.

There are a lot of these authorized tour guides available in the city who make your trip easy and more extensive. You learn a lot about the Colombian history and culture from these guides. I noticed in general that the locals over there enjoy talking about their history.

Witchcraft, black magic and related superstitious practices were widely prevalent in the olden days of Colombia. Many of the houses are built with sharp

protruding edges on the roofs which people believed was to catch a flying witch, hurt and disable her powers.

There is a Palace of inquisition where one can visit and learn more about the history of the subject. People guilty of practicing witchcraft and black magic were tried in the Palace of Inquisition and were subject to torture.

There is a church dedicated to St Pedro Claver which also has his mortal remains. The infrastructure of the church and the palace are equally impressive like the rest of the colorful city.

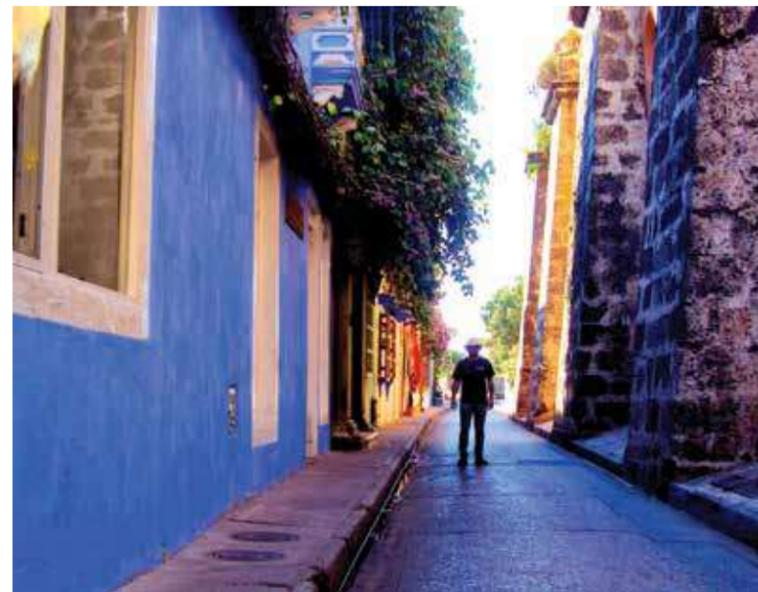
Beautiful flowers embellish the colorful walls against which they've grown. The vivacity of the exotic flora is like a signature on these radiant walls. Geraniums, Jasmine, Bougainville,

Trinitarians, Surfinias among others adorn the walls decorating them with manifold tones.

Some of the houses have a metal iguana embossed on the doors which meant that the person living in it was an important personality working in the Spanish government during the colonial rule. The largest plaza in the colonial Latin America and the tallest building in colonial Latin America are in Cartagena and have been very well preserved.

My guide pointed out some of the houses saying they are owned by some celebrities.

Colombian singing and dancing sensation Shakira, has invested in many development projects in and around the city mainly related to education.





is a specialty of Colombia and the various styles of coffee are something to indulge in.

I remember brunching in Hard Rock Café, where the first round of beers was free for all. Café del Mar is one popular bar in Cartagena which is constructed into the fortifying walls of the city and is fun place to enjoy a beverage, though a bit expensive. The guide pointed out to one restaurant (La Vitrola) and said that its Shakira's favorite restaurant in Cartagena, though I didn't try it out as I was already stuffed. Museo del Oro Zenu (a Gold art and artefacts museum) in Cartagena proves to be an educative visit. Some of the gold relics belong to the Zenu tribe, one of the earliest inhabitants of the region. Gold and Colombia were almost synonymous at one time. The yellow color on the Colombian flag is symbolic their gold



rich past. The Spanish rulers exported the gold stocks (hoarded in the port city from all over Latin America as well) from Cartagena to Spain. Colombians are passionate about music, soccer and they love celebrations. In fact, the Christmas celebrations in Colombia last the entire month of December. Visiting the city of Cartagena does prove to be a unique and once in a lifetime experience.

Now Colombia may have had a greatly scandalous reputé in the drug world, but this is not necessarily the case in present day Colombia. Just as we can't use old measurement techniques as a yardstick for modern day estimations, we shouldn't rely on the country's notoriously drug immersed past as a sign of danger to present day tourists. Colombia is among the emerging economies of South America with petroleum, minerals, coal and coffee



being its chief exports. Colombia was originally a much larger country when Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador were a part of Colombian territory. Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador subsequently became independent countries as they gradually withdrew between early 19th to early 20th century. Thus, I would reinstate that Cartagena is overall very tourist safe. In fact, it was Columbia's safest place even when the drug-days were at their zenith. It would just share the same crime problems that plague other cities in general. The currency is quite lopsided, 1 INR is about 50 Colombian Peso, so you would be proudly carrying a wad of cash when you change USD to Colombian Peso.

The overall experience you get when walking the castle walls (which has well preserved the city's military heritage)



during sunset, drinking beverages on the exquisite balconies and rooftops of cafes and restaurants, shopping goods souvenirs from the stalls in the narrow streets, being entertained by live music and salsa dance performers, riding a catamaran to Rosario islands (a good one for the beach bums), absorbing the historic fables of the land and just watching the colorful architecture, is unmatched and unforgettable to say the least. One major attraction which I regret not having experienced is bathing in the warm volcanic mud at the crater of El Totumo (a volcano). People who've visited

the volcano and bathed in it say they feel effortlessly buoyant and weightless when submerged in the craters moderately viscous mud, and that it has a cleansing effect on the skin too. If I ever visit Cartagena again, I'm surely climbing the volcano for the mud bath.

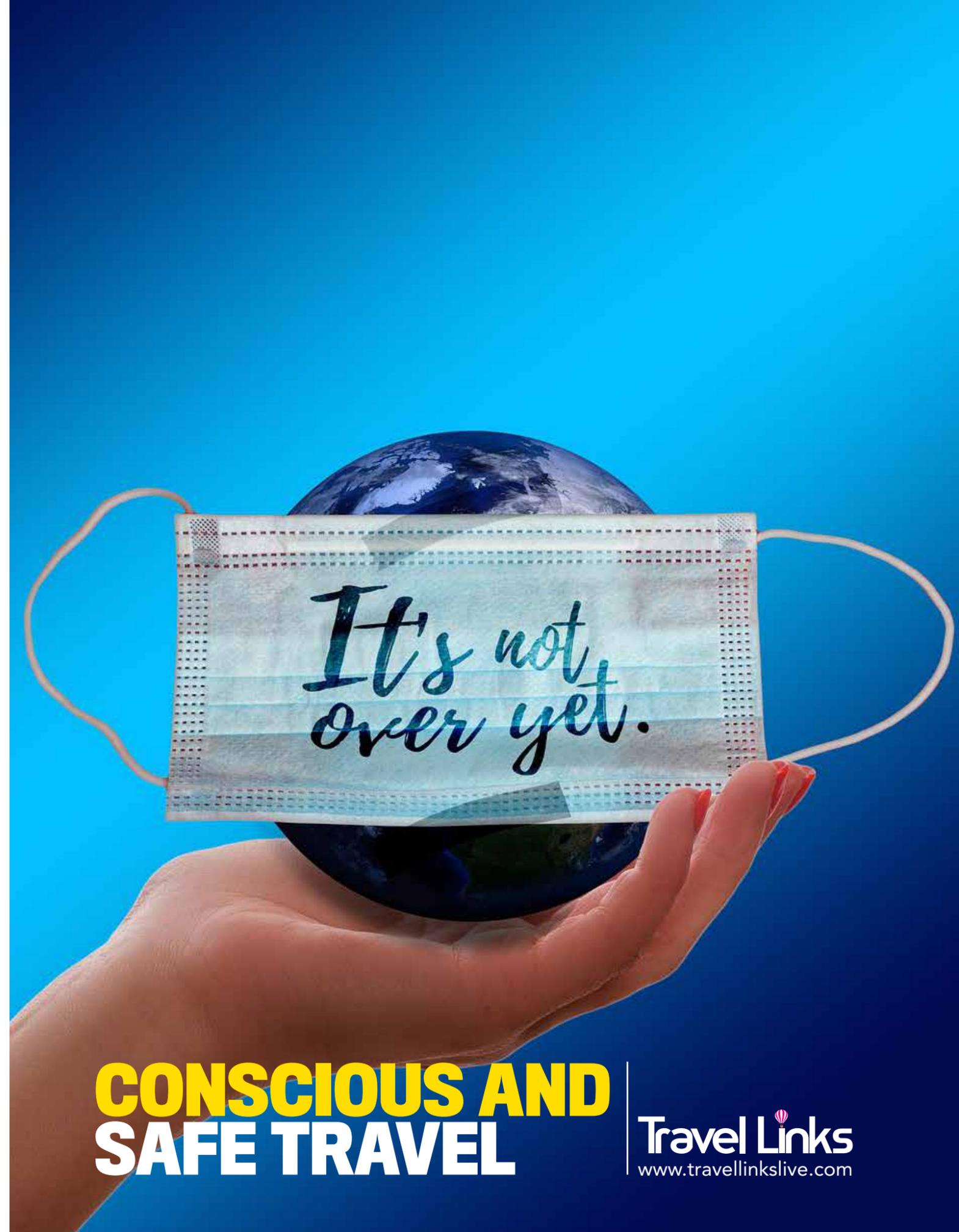
All in all, I would strongly recommend Cartagena as a must visit destination for people who feel the urge to travel, discover and learn the valuable lessons only travelling can teach.

I have always considered myself extremely fortunate to have been able

to visit the beautiful city of Cartagena in Colombia, some 500 years after Christopher Columbus set foot over there. A very memorable trip, one that I hold very close to my heart and will surely cherish lifelong. [iii](#)

→ GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL ←

He works aboard merchant ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid for travelling, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time.



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The Rustic charm of Gulmohar Sariska Resorts

PAYAL SAHNI

Set in 10 acres of lush green landscaping, Gulmohar Sariska Resort is located in the beautiful valley of Viratnagar and surrounded by Aravalli Hills. It is an ideal holiday destination, tastefully designed in harmony with the peaceful surrounding and a perfect setting to commune with nature.

Suitably located facing a picturesque valley, it is an ideal place, economical, affordable, and yet with uncompromising comfort for the persons seeking rest away from hectic city life.

Designed with all the constituents of modern-day architecture, Gulmohar Sariska still stays very much in touch with the beauty of nature. It provides you a chance to experience the blend of luxury and comfort along with the sense of being in the middle of the jungle. One of the most important elements of the stay here is, it is also pet friendly and one can happily enjoy the staycations here.

During my course of stay here and conversations with Mr. Shubham Sardana, many insights about the property and strategic locations are discussed which I present in the form of Q and A.

Q Can you please let us know the thought behind the inception of Gulmohar Sariska resorts?

The main idea behind inception of Gulmohar Sariska Resort was to create a peaceful getaway for 'people' which provides them a much needed break from the hassles of city life. Just about 4 hours away from Delhi/NCR, Gulmohar is a place where people can visit frequently to unwind, relax and press the much needed pause button in their fast paced urban

life. It is a place where you can experience simple pleasures like hear the birds chirping, star gazing, enjoy a traditional Indian cuisine with its major ingredients organically cultivated in-house, bonfire to beat winter chills and the list goes on. Gulmohar, as a property, weaves all these experiences together with the modern comfort and best-in-class hospitality that travelers seek from a resort.

Q Would you like to stress 'upon' the importance of the strategic location of the place?

As a property located in Viratnagar (near Sariska National Park), Gulmohar has a lot to offer. Situated in the lap of Aravali Hills, it not only brings one closer to nature and wildlife, but also gives a rural retreat to its visitors. There are local sightseeing spots within a radius of 6 km from the resort that are from the times of



Shubham Sardana - Business Owner

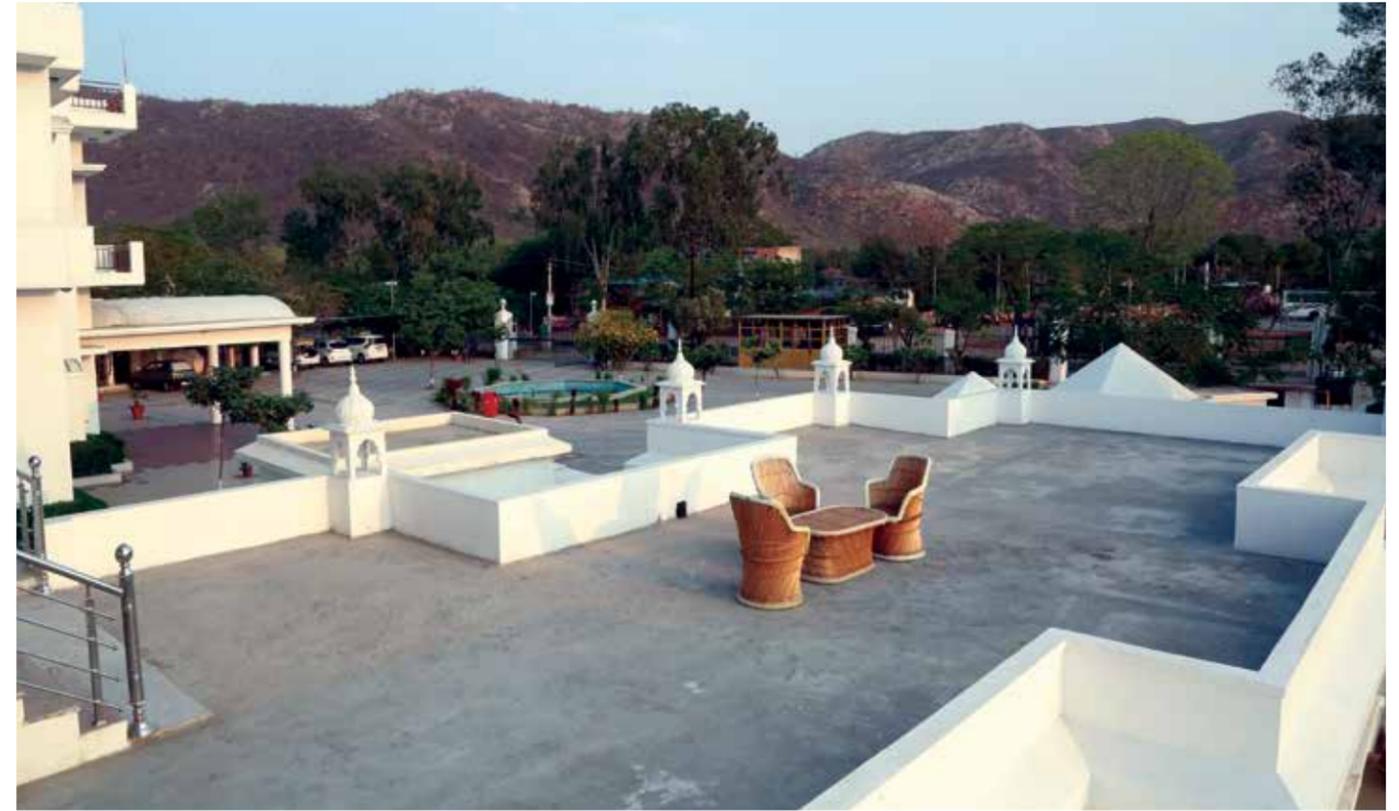


Mahabharata and Mughal Era. Remains from the times of Buddha were found here in Viratnagar at Bijak Pahadi, which also has an inscription by Ashoka. A lot of books have been written about this place. It is a holiday destination that gives a wholesome experience filled with the adventures of spotting wild cats, relaxation amidst nature and exploring the places with huge historical and mythological significance.

Q What are the current challenges you are facing and how would you like to overcome them?

I would say Covid-19 is a challenge that not only us, but the entire travel and tourism industry is currently facing. As a responsible entity of the hospitality sector, we are following all the prescribed guidelines such as regular sanitization of rooms and common areas, daily staff

temperature checks, kitchen hygiene etc. Ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for our guests is of utmost priority to us. Infact, it has always been that way, which is why the impact of tourist influx at our property has not been hit that hard. Being a property that has been around for over a decade, there is a trust we have gained among our regular visitors. Our dedicated compliance is certainly going to help us



in the post-covid landscape with highly defined and cautious traveler preferences.

Secondly, I think a challenge that we constantly face is the relatively low level of awareness among travelers about Sariska and Viratnagar as tourist destinations. We are certainly working with our marketing team to make more and more people aware of the unexplored and understated hidden treasures that these places have. Along with all our internal efforts, overcoming this

challenge involves an interplay of many external factors including the tourism policies and heritage restoration steps at the level of Government and related agencies to bring Sariska and Viratnagar among top-of-the-mind tourist destinations.

Q What is the vision you have to expand/improve/upscale the property?

Well, given the highly dynamic trends in

the travel and hospitality sector, there is always a scope of improvement. We are constantly working on seamlessly meeting the requirements of all our guests. If we talk about my vision as a whole, it goes beyond this property. I want to make Sariska and Viratnagar the most preferred tourist destinations, not only in India but across the globe. Historically, there is a lot that is present here and yet to be explored within travel circles. The combination of mythology and tourism is noteworthy. The tiger population in Sariska is showing a reasonably positive growth. 'Destination weddings' as a concept is now being highly sought after by stratas of society who represent our target audience. We aim to open up all these doors and make this geographical belt a "Gateway to Rajasthan" for all forms of tourism worldwide.

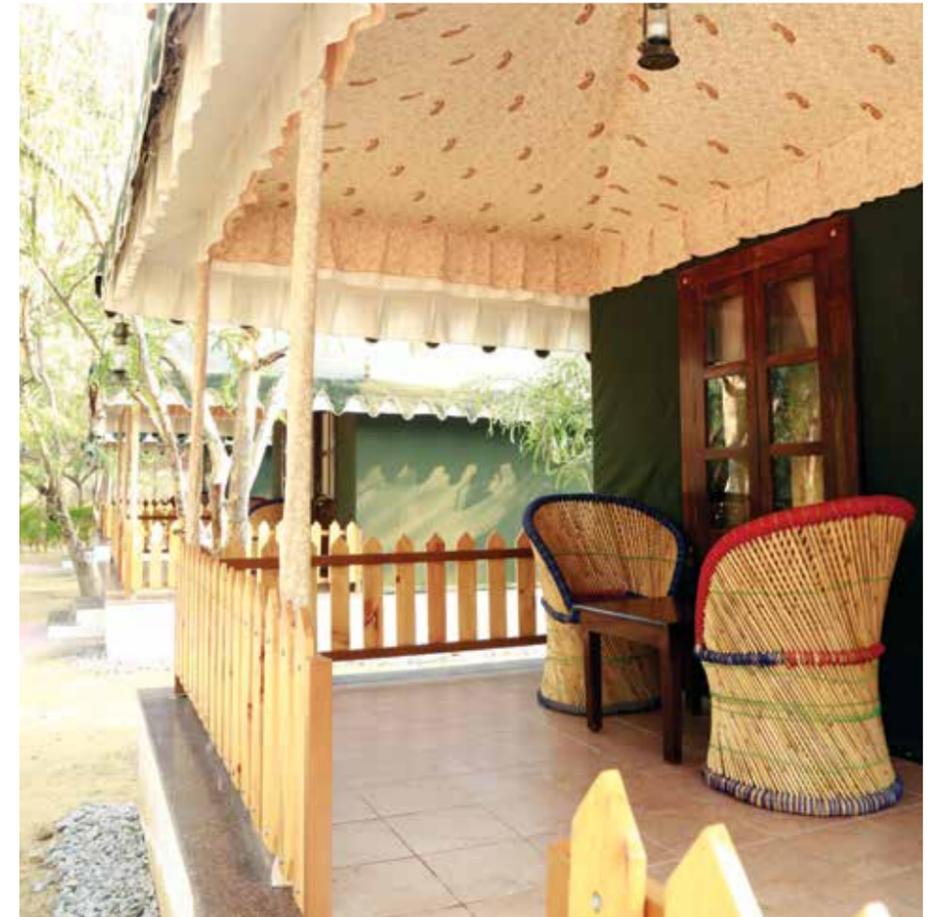
Q How would you like to achieve it and by when?

We are constantly working on many things such as ensuring a unique experience for our guests, acquiring new clientele, adding more keys to our property with different accommodation concepts, extending the scope of recreational

activities within the property, working across different channels of marketing to enjoy first mover and fast mover advantage in the growing tourism market of Sariska by 2025. Post that, we will surely try to explore the possibilities of taking our brand and its proposition to other destinations.

Q Would you like to throw some light on the importance of conservation, sustainable tourism, and maintaining the ecological balance how does this property help in the above issues?

I believe it is of utmost importance for the hospitality industry to treat nature in a respectful manner and use natural resources judiciously. As a foresighted attempt in the same area, we have taken many crucial steps. Almost 30 percent of our electricity consumption is derived through an in-house solar plant. A sewage water treatment plant has been installed in our campus to conserve water. All our expansion projects are meticulously planned to ensure it does not come at the cost of compromising on greenery. An in-house dairy farm and organic farming of vegetables within the property are some of the initiatives we have taken towards sustainability and self-sufficiency. [\[i\]](#)



The Jubilance of Jaisalmer

Rajasthan is a state of treasures, there are the stories of love, stories of the brave warriors, of the king's wisdom and the life stories of various families which have been carved in the walls of forts for ages. One feels the vibe of royalty and how they use to respect each other.

SHREYA KULSHRESTHA

Every city in Rajasthan holds some beautiful facts and significance of its existence. We usually talk about spending vacations outside India but our Indian culture is equally versatile.

One such place is Jaisalmer, the city of gold. Jaisalmer is said to be the heart of the great Indian Thar Desert. The city is located 575 kilometers west of the state capital, 'Jaipur'. It is always best to choose a road trip instead of taking up flights or trains; it gives more aesthetic views to

capture. Specially, in the state of desert, the beauty lies on the roads and that one would never want to miss.

The best time to visit Jaisalmer is during New Years i.e. from January till March because one can enjoy the pleasant weather and on New Year's many camps



host the New Year carnivals and fun activities.

Jaisalmer will never disappoint with not fulfilling the expectations. If one is willing to do a long drive from Jaipur then, Jaisalmer is a journey of 10 hours. The best time to start the journey is 7 A.M and discover different districts during the drive. The namely districts will be Jobner, Kuchaman and Naguar. After crossing all these places around 5 P.M one will reach Jaisalmer.

To connect with the culture & lifestyle without compromising on luxury stay one should check in the Camps sites which will be another 30 -45 minutes drive from the city of Jaisalmer and situated in Sam desert. The people out there are very humble and loving; they always welcome their guests with utmost warmth and respect.

After reaching to the camp site the check in will commence, welcome drink will be served and later in the evening they prepare traditional Rajasthani dishes along with the Chulha Rotis .



The ultimate destination for a spiritual and patriotic connection.

First Day in the golden city can start by gearing up the car and driving to Tanot Mahal, it is a temple situated 122 km from the city of Jaisalmer, Tanot Mahal is a historical temple at the Laungewala border in Rajasthan. It is enveloped with numerous legends that instill curiosity in every visitor. Although it is located very close to the India-Pakistan border, it remained untouched during the war in 1971. It opens till 8 P.M so it's good to visit the temple in morning

To listen the war stories fought here, head towards Laungewala War Museum also known as Laungewala War Memorial which is established in the military station designed with the view of honoring the war heroes. It embraces the bravery and sacrifices of the Indian Army. This Museum has the real war tanks and the models used by the soldiers at the border for strategizing the attacks and defense during the war of 1971. They host a great sound and light show where they demonstrate the entire story of the brave Indian soldiers that how they fought fearlessly with minimal Ammunition during the war at Laungewala border in 1971.

As the day one comes to an end with the patriotic mood and with this the travelers can enjoy the traditional kalbelia dance at the camp site sitting in front of the bon fire.

Another day is all set to write a new page of Jaisalmer Journal.

The city will immensely take care of the adventure-holic travelers, It will compel them to wear the best boots and step into the jeep for grumpy Jeep safari in the Thar desert. There are skilled desert safari drivers for Jeep safari who get a specific training certificate before driving in for the tourist. This safari will amaze the riders to an extent that they will feel the thrill of the desert roller coaster.

Travelers often want to discover the ancient histories of the Kilas and the Mahals, for that the best place to visit could be the Bada Bagh. It is primarily a cenotaph adjoining a garden, located about 6 kms north of Jaisalmer, on the way to Ramgarh. The set of royal cenotaphs are basically chhatris of the Maharajas which once ruled the Jaisalmer state. The gardens are now largely neglected, but the hill with



To connect with the culture & lifestyle without compromising on luxury stay one should check in the Camps sites which will be another 30 -45 minutes drive from the city of Jaisalmer and situated in Sam desert. The people out there are very humble and loving; they always welcome their guests with utmost warmth and respect.

the cenotaphs is still quite an interesting sight in the middle of the sand dunes, forming a delectable sight for the eyes.

Another story of the king is written in a haveli named as Patwon Ki Haveli, Dipped in an enchanting shade of yellow, Patwon ki Haveli grabs the attention of every visitor. It is a cluster of 5 Haveli which was believed to be built by Patwa, a wealthy trader who constructed the stories for each of his 5 sons.

After unveiling the historical junction enjoy the blissful evening by going for a serene boat ride where the birds chirp with joy, the crinkling sound of water rejuvenates the mind and soul. The best



place for experiencing this nature loaded treat will be at The Amar Sagar lake, it is an oasis near the palace of Amar Singh. The 17th-century citadel was constructed by Maharawal Akhai Singh. It is located on the outskirts of Jaisalmer city. The palace complex comprises of number of wells and ponds along with chhatris and an ancient Shiva temple made of marble in the 18th century.

As the chapter of the historical Jaisalmer is completed for the day, a great gala dinner awaits the energetic step-ins of the travelers to dance and sing on the true rajasthani vibes with the talented artists performing.

Discovering the ecstasy in route.

Soon the Day 3 starts, still there are few places which can be discovered such as Pokhran Fort, Pokhran means the place of five mirages enclosed by sandy, rocky, salt ranges. Although a small temple made



of red sandstone, the fort is dedicated to Goddess Durga, Salim Singh ki Haveli is a beautiful edifice at the heart of the city Jaisalmer. It is one of the major tourists' attractions built in the 1815 CE and commissioned by Salim Singh, the then prime minister of the Kingdom. It also holds another beautiful name - Jahaz Mahal as the front facet of the Haveli resembles a ship stern. The drive can start off from Jaisalmer now and take a

break off in Bikaner for a day which will be proved as an add on for the traveler's palette of expedition and enjoy the adventurous and cultural festivities over there.

Bikaner becomes the most happening destination in January travelers specially can witness and enjoy the famous Camel festival and unveil the stories of the forts.

Food is the heart of every trip and Bikaner is especially famous for its

relishing food items and popular cuisines which are Kachori, dal bati churma, khata, gatta ki sabzi, pakodi, raj bhog, ghevar, fini, and more. Best places to eat in Bikaner are Heeralal's, Gallops, Chappan Bhog.

It's time to take off from Bikaner and drive back to Jaipur .

Travelling always rejuvenate our mind and moreover our heart. It is not only exciting and adventurous but also gives us the answers of many questions we might always had for the different traditions and culture. We should always take part from our lives to establish a cultural connection with our Indian roots. Trips like such always connect us from our roots and somewhere our heart lies in those places which have the simplicity in living. [u](#)

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She is as sales and marketing personnel working in a corporate sector and belong to Rajasthan. She loves to write about her experiences. She believes writing is a great way of expressing the beauty of the element. Rajasthan is a state of art and culture and she always wanted to be vocal about its history and traditions because it has many hidden and authentic realities which need to be discussed.



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