

# Travel Links

VOLUME 03 | ISSUE 01

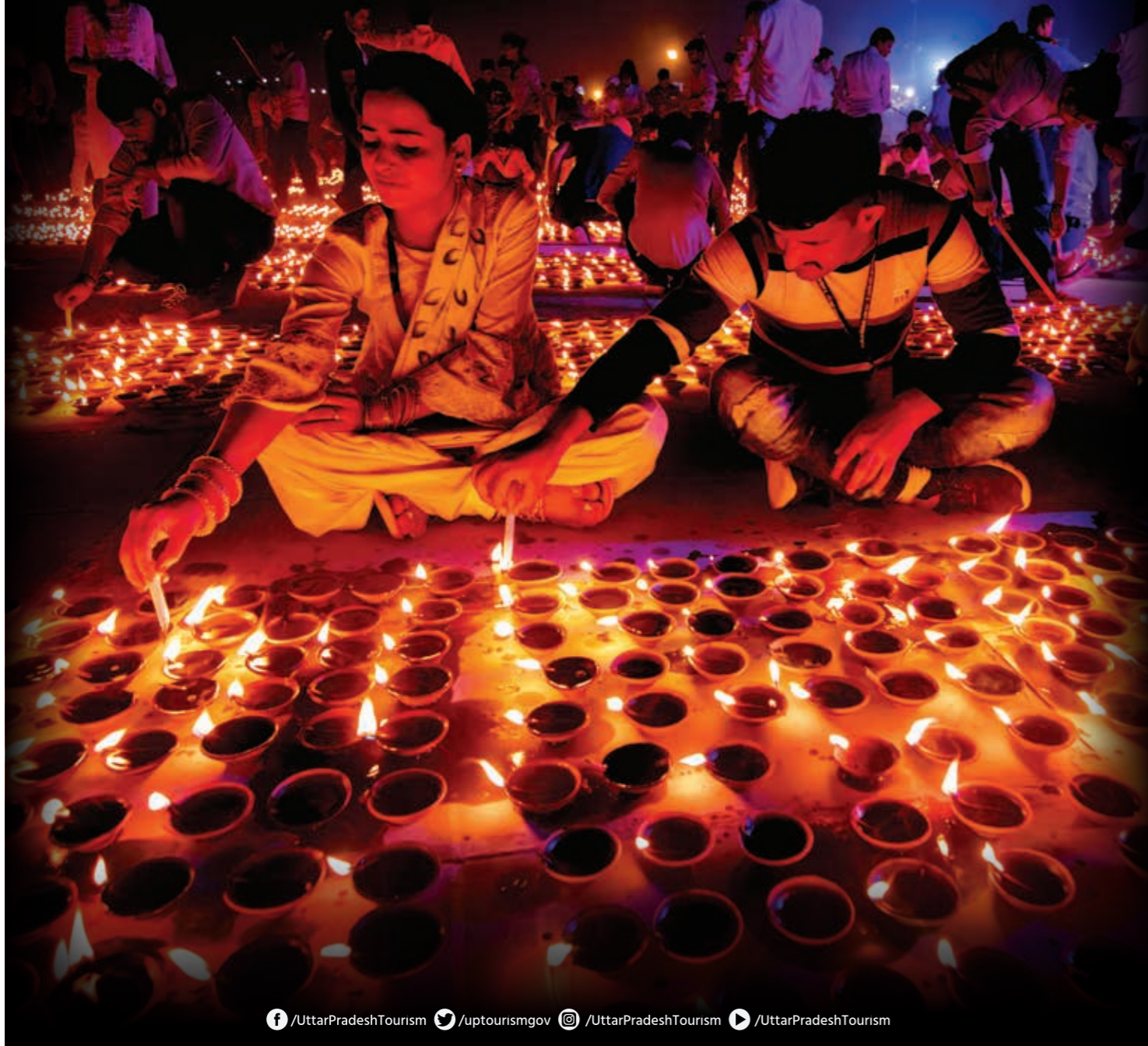
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2021



**PHANG NGA  
EXPERIENCE  
MT. EVEREST  
EXPEDITION  
DENMARK  
KOAHSUING**



# Deepotsav in Ayodhya



## 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

Lt Col Sudeep Vijai (Retd)  
Guatam Singh kanwal  
Srishti Verma

### CIRCULATION

J P Nagar

### PRINT & DESIGN

Ashok Kumar

### Cover Photo

© Richard Clark

### ACCOUNTS MANAGER

Amit Agarwal

### HEAD OFFICE

B- 10, Green Park Main New Delhi-110016

**Mob:** 9818114451

**Email & Subscriptions**

travellinkstugo@gmail.com

The last few months have been a roller coaster ride for me personally. My daughter was going abroad to pursue her master's degree and the amount of groundwork it requires has made me so much more aware of a lot of things, be it for a student visa or a tourist visa. A lot of tedious planning is required from scratch as to the TSA locks function, proper baggage's with suitable sizes, airlines with best options, quarantine rules changing now and then, it has been a tedious task, completing all the paperwork and documents. Never the less it has also been a satisfying experience in terms of crossing each hurdle with grace and a vision to resolve. Another of my dreams is and has been Travel Links which most of you are well aware of by now and it seems like yesterday when we started this Journey.

Now we are ready with our second Anniversary issue which has a bouquet of stories.

The trek experience to the Everest Base Camp gives you a good adrenaline rush. They say travel changes your outlook towards life. If that be true, the experience of staying in plywood cubicles, using sleeping bags, wet wipes & toilet paper, drinking chlorinated water & eating Nepali dalbhaat & sabzi certainly does.

India is a very vast country with hidden gems in every corner just waiting to be explored. Nizamabad is no different & boasts of a plethora of temples, forts, waterfalls & lakes in & around the city.

Straddled diagonally between China and Japan is the island country of Taiwan, and sitting at the Southwestern edge of Taiwan by the shores of the Taiwan Straits is the city of Kaohsiung (the second-largest city in Taiwan). From a mere fishing hamlet in the olden days, the city of Kaohsiung has seen many ups and downs on its turbulent journey to becoming the business, industrial and trading powerhouse of Taiwan as well as its busiest port.

In the land where stories come alive, there is no mountain. But do they need one? Denmark is ranked one of the happiest countries in the world. The architecture is inspiring and breath-taking. And the coziness is in the air is honest.

Stay tuned while you enjoy reading this issue, we are constantly aspiring to better.

**Editor**

[@travellinkslive.com](#)



TIME TRAVEL WITH VIKINGS  
AND LITTLE MERMAIDS DENMARK

06



42

KAOHSIUNG A WELL PRESERVED  
SECRET OF THE FAR EAST

A TREK TO ALMOST TOP OF  
THE WORLD



26



20

FIRAT SUNEL AMBASSADOR  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY TALKS ABOUT  
SAFE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INITIATIVES...



54

4 MUST-VISIT RESORTS FOR A TRUE  
PHANG NGA EXPERIENCE



58

A DATE WITH 1100 YEARS  
OF HISTORY

# Time Travel with Vikings and Little Mermaids

# Denmark

AN ARTICLE SERIES BY SRISHTI VERMA

In the land where stories come alive, there is no mountain. But do they need one? Denmark is ranked one of the happiest countries in the world. The architecture is inspiring and breath-taking. And the cosiness is in the air, honest! In this concluding post on Scandinavian countries, we are going to share our take on the Danish way of life in “Scandinavia on your list: plan now, plane later.”

In the previous issues, we had taken you through a word trip to Scandinavia. As promised, here we are with the third Scandinavian country, Denmark.

A popular legend says that the name Denmark comes from the mythological King Dan. According to Old Norse, Denmark was called Danmark. Danmark referred to the marches of the Danes and gave Denmark its name.

Denmark was shaped during the Ice Age with primarily flat terrain. The glaciers moved gradually and created a flat landmass with gently rolling hills.

The Danish traditions for Easter, Fastelavn, Christmas and other festivals bring the community together for a celebration. Tourists also partake in celebratory activities. But what about illuminating the soul? Hygge is the Danish

tradition that is all about enjoying the warmth of the heart and the good things in life. We will tell you how to pronounce it because it is not pronounced as “hi-gee.”

Denmark shares its borders with Germany. The Danish capital Copenhagen is located on the east coast of Zealand Island, and a portion lies in Amager. It became the capital in the 15th century and has a historical touch to it.

If you are visiting Denmark, do not worry about the season. Danes know to make the best of all four seasons and celebrate them in their own way. Let’s find out how.

**Denmark shares its borders with Germany. The Danish capital Copenhagen is located on the east coast of Zealand Island, and a portion lies in Amager. It became the capital in the 15th century and has a historical touch to it.**

**The cosy hygge—why Danish life is a happy life**

Pronounced “hoo-gah,” hygge is a Danish concept that translates into relaxing and relishing life. Stopping by to smell flowers is hygge. Cuddling your loved ones is a hygge. And sitting with family and friends to talk about big and small in life is a hygge too.

You can set up a picnic in a park or attend an outdoor concert, or you can hygge on a solar-powered self-drive boat. Everything is hygge when you relish the relaxation and bask in the togetherness.

During the long dark Danish winters, hygge offers the most warmth. Christmas



© DANIEL VILLADSEN



© DANIEL OVERBECK – VISITNORDSJÆLLAND





© RIKKE KJÆR POULSEN



© DANIEL VILLADSEN

**When you walk around Munkemose Park, you will find sculptures out of his fairy tales. Little Mermaid and The Seahorse sculptures? I am excited already! Children often play with the natural elements like leaves, fish and butterflies made large in this park.**

comes with lights, blankets, oversized scarves, and lots of happy feelings—just the perfect hygge moment!

Holiday homes are popular among the Danes when they go for a retreat. With over 40,000 holiday cottages available, you can be sure to find a cosy one for you. Danes hygge in their holiday homes and spend quality time with their families. It's all about the simple things being celebrated!

## LEGO and the Little Mermaid

I grew up with a heavy dose of fairy tales. Thumbelina and the Little Mermaid are

close to heart, and I thank Hans Christian Andersen for them. A Danish writer, Andersen, wrote some of the most famous fairy tales for children. You can visit his home situated in Odense.

When you walk around Munkemose Park, you will find sculptures out of his fairy tales. Little Mermaid and The Seahorse sculptures? I am excited already! Children often play with the natural elements like leaves, fish and butterflies made large in this park. There is an Odense Aafart where you can go for a canoe or boat ride too.

Do you remember playing with LEGO blocks? I can recall the green tray that I used for the base to build castles and houses





upon. When you are visiting Denmark, you should definitely head to the LEGO House. The LEGO Group is headquartered in Billund, about 3h 30m from Copenhagen by train and bus. You can head here for LEGO vehicle races, unleashing imagination with millions of LEGO blocks, and eat in a LEGO restaurant. You can start at the Tree of Creativity, then trip to the LEGO Masterpiece Gallery and the 6 Experience Zones. Say yes to LEGO!

## Where all the Santa Clauses meet in July

In July each year, a gathering of Santa Clauses—the world's largest—takes place at the world's oldest amusement park at Bakken. The World Santa Claus Congress is a professional and social meeting for Santas from across the globe. This meeting is attended by Santas' wives and elves, and more recently, Christmas pixies and thousands of eager spectators. That certainly sounds like a fun Christmassy meeting!

During the Santa Claus Congress, there are parades, and children get presents and sweets from Santa. You can attend the day 1 parade at Copenhagen main street. If you are in Bakken, there will be parades on all 3 days. There is a pixie-orchestra and open-air stage shows in Bakken during this "Christmas in July."

## The Vegetable and Energy Island

Danes believe in living life sustainably and are making efforts to be carbon neutral. You can support the local communities and travel sustainably on your trip, and the Danes have it covered. There are sustainable hotels, non-meat restaurants, neat public transport, and sustainable cities.

You can head to CopenHill, the waste-to-energy plant with a ski slope, hiking trail and the world's highest climbing wall. How about exploring Denmark on two wheels? You can venture into the Danish countryside, the mesmerising coasts, and the city routes on a cycle. There are 7 designated national cycling routes, including the longest one, Baltic Sea Cycle Route, at 820 km.

You can also visit Samsø for a sustainable relaxation time. Disconnect from the city





© NICLAS JESSEN



© NICLAS JESSEN

and check the strawberries and potatoes here because this is Denmark's own vegetable garden. There are freshly made open sandwiches that you can munch on, buckthorn ice cream and rhubarb compote that you can try. Samsø is also the Energy Island of Denmark because the entire island runs on renewable energy.

### Not without the Vikings and Starlings

Your trip to Denmark cannot be complete without knowing about the Vikings. You

can set sail on a Viking ship for a day at The Viking Ship Museum. Do you not have any sailing experience? That's all right. You will still be an active crew member and enjoy a swim in Danish fjords. Keep a notepad handy for the many Viking stories that you will hear.

1 million starlings moving over a marshland is a sight to behold. At South Jutland, you can experience this in late August and thank nature for this dance party!

If you are more of a star-ling, you may like resting in a hammock in the Brofelde

Observatory in Zealand. Hike around the area, look at stars through the telescope (which was used to discover over 100 asteroids) and lay down in the observatory's open-air hammocks. Bliss, yes!

### Takeaway

The Danish way of life is centred around looking after their well-being and that of nature. With the open cycling routes, simple architecture, and sustainable food (88% of Copenhagen's public institutions consume organic food), the Danes are leading the way to celebrate life and the

joys it offers.

With this post, we say yes to hygge and the sustainable, fun and happy Danish life.

The credits for all the pictures here are given to [visitdenmark.com](https://visitdenmark.com). Go to [visitdenmark.com](https://visitdenmark.com) to know more.

Till then, stay in, stay safe. [u](#)

She is a Delhi-based freelance writer. She loves reading and travelling, with a special place for lofty mountains in her heart. When not writing, she can be found working on her book and looking at pictures from when she was 2 feet tall.



# FIRAT SUNEL

Ambassador of The Republic of Turkey talks about safe travel and tourism initiatives, presented by Travel Links Magazine

PAYAL SAHNI

**Q** Please let us know about the current travelling opportunities of the country now post COVID and the safety initiatives taken by the country to ensure safe travel.

I am very pleased to declare that, as of September 4th fully vaccinated travellers from India will no longer be subjected to mandatory 14-day quarantine rule in Turkey. The vaccines that have been approved by WHO or Turkish Government are covered under this exemption. In addition to WHO approved vaccines, the vaccines approved by Turkish Government are Pzifer Biontech, Sputnik V and Sinovac. Indian traveller must be taken the second dose (if Johnson&Johnson one dose is sufficient) at least 14 days prior to the date of travel. For Indian travellers who are vaccinated with Covishield will also be



exempted from quarantine. I also believe that, once Covaxin gets a nod from WHO, travellers vaccinated with Covaxin will also be able to visit Turkey as the people who have been vaccinated with Covishield. The fully vaccinated travellers are also required to submit their negative PCR test report taken 72 hours before departure in order to exempt the quarantine. Non-vaccinated travelers are required to undergo mandatory quarantine for 10 days in a hotel or a location mentioned in the declaration.

**Q** What are your top recommendations when one visits Turkey in terms of arts, history and cultural travel?

As known, Turkey is considered as an open-air museum having 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. My recommendation differs for the visitors whether they are coming to country for the first time or not. For the first time visitors I would recommend Istanbul, Antalya and Cappadocia which are relatively more popular destinations in India.

Istanbul is one of the world's great metropolises and offers limitless experiences. Tourists can enjoy the city lights in Istanbul with a breathtaking Bosphorus view and be mesmerized by the exciting blend of traditional culture and modern life. Luxurious hotels and royal palaces testify to the city's affluence. Antalya is a resort heaven that provides the ultimate

luxury combined with breath taking views. The city offers an excellent blend of cultural and natural beauty, turquoise blue waters, colorful bazaars, sunsets & moonlit skies, significant historic sites, and stunning landscapes. To create dreamy moments, the mysterious Cappadocia is the right choice. From sunrise hot-air balloon tour to bird's-eye view of the fairy chimneys - every experience here makes you feel you are part of an adventure. And finally, Izmir, my hometown. As one of the oldest cities with continues settlement for 8500 years Izmir offers a lot to culture and history lovers. One of the best-preserved ancient cities Ephesus is located 80 km away from Izmir too. In addition to that Cesme-Alacati which is one of the most popular resorts in Turkey is just 70 km away from Izmir where people can enjoy the white sandy beaches stretch lazily along a road lined with exquisitely built houses, several large hotels and a number of restaurants, serving excellent seafood and Turkish specialties.

**Q** Our readers would also like to be recommended about the less travel parts of the country. Please tell us something about which is not commonly known about- less travelled but unique experiences

The natural beauty, cultural richness and foods of the Black Sea region attract many. Popular destinations on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, including Marmaris, Çeme, Bodrum and Fethiye, are a must for those who love sun, sand & beaches. Sunsets & hot air balloon rides in the Cappadocia valley have become a top tourist attraction so no one should miss it. For foodies, Gaziantep is a must visit as one gets to savor some authentic Turkish cuisine there. Gobeklitepe has the UNESCO world heritage site, which gives you a glimpse of the early history of civilization. Those who are interested in Sufism must visit Konya to understand Rumi and his teachings and see dancing dervishes.

**Q** What are your marketing and promotion strategies for the travel and tourism for 2021 and 2022?

Turkey is on the crossroads of Europe, Asia and that in itself makes it unique. Marketing & strategizing is key for every destination in today's scenario and it is equally important for us. We have been actively



Firat Sunel, Ambassador of The Republic of Turkey

**Istanbul is one of the world's great metropolises and offers limitless experiences. Tourists can enjoy the city lights in Istanbul with a breathtaking Bosphorus view and be mesmerized by the exciting blend of traditional culture and modern life.**

working towards this across key markets. Turkey has some classical source markets in terms of tourism. Russian Federation, Germany, United Kingdom, Iran, Poland and Ukraine were the main source markets for our tourism industry. However, one of the main goals of our tourism policy is the diversification of markets which contributes to overcoming of the seasonality issue in our tourism industry. In this regards we attach great importance to the countries called as emerging markets for our tourism industry. India is considered as one of the most potential emerging tourism markets for our country. Hence, we will continue to conduct different marketing activities in India in the years to come and will actively promote our country as a destination in India and strive for increasing the numbers of Indian tourists visiting Turkey.





The weather conditions, mountainous terrain and turquoise coasts make Turkey the perfect place for a paragliding vacation. Blue Lagoon of Fethiye is one of the top paragliding spots in the world. Turkey's Cappadocia and Pamukkale regions are the best places on earth for hot air balloon ride, where nature and history come together most beautifully within the world.

#### **Q Tell us about the Safe Tourism certification program**

Safe Tourism Certification Program has been at the heart of safety protocols of our tourism industry since the mid of 2020. As known, Turkey is one of the first countries in the World to introduce the Safe Tourism Certificate Program for the tourism industry. This certificate covers

**Windsurfing in Turkey is a great attraction for solo adventurers and families alike. Several spots along Turkey's Aegean coast are particularly good for windsurfing because of the location of their bays and islands A great variety of fish species, coral reefs, wrecks and all other underwater beauties are perfect for scuba diving lovers at diving destinations**

#### **Q Please share the insights about adventure tourism**

Turkey is perfectly placed taking advantage of recent trend for the most popular adventures and exciting sporting holidays, with such a varied landscape that it can provide for almost every type of activity. Whatever your sport, you will relish it. Turkey's geographical position and good snow conditions create great potential for those who want to have a ski holiday in Europe. Turkey is very suitable country for

rafting with its beautiful rivers and regions. One can find lots of great rivers and creeks for white water rafting in the country

Windsurfing in Turkey is a great attraction for solo adventurers and families alike. Several spots along Turkey's Aegean coast are particularly good for windsurfing because of the location of their bays and islands A great variety of fish species, coral reefs, wrecks and all other underwater beauties are perfect for scuba diving lovers at diving destinations

a broad range of measures including transportation, accommodation, health condition of employees of the facilities and passengers. Granted by the international certification institutions, this system ensures the safety of the visitors, both domestic and international. Thanks to the Safe Tourism Certificate Program the number of international visitors was more than 15 million in 2020 and we also aim to reach 25 million international visitors by the end of 2021.



ALL YOUR  
CAREER  
SOLUTION



**careerlink's**  
Monthly Magazine

# A TREK TO ALMOST TOP OF THE WORLD

LT COL SUDEEP VIJAI (RETD)

The trek to the Everest Base Camp had been on my bucket list for a long time. Sometimes you need to kickstart your life & what better way to do that than a climb to almost 18000 feet!

## SO WHAT IS THE EBC TREK?

The Everest Base Camp (EBC) is a small patch of land at the foot of the mountain from where the actual climb to the Everest summit commences passing through the various Camps. This is the place uptill which the average trekker is permitted, anything beyond requiring special permits, climbing gear, technical expertise & bags of money to afford the mountaineering team. That said, reaching the EBC itself is no mean feat & does require a certain level of preparation & physical fitness. The actual location of the EBC keeps shifting each season depending on the snowfall accumulation, melting & of course the popping up of crevasses all around it.

The EBC trek will have you cover a distance of about 65 kms each way on foot starting from Lukla. It is a small hamlet in the Nepal Himalayas which owes its reputation to being the launch pad for anyone headed towards the Everest, & also equally famously, for its small airport with a smaller runway where small planes with loads of trekkers do actually manage to land & take off safely each year which though earns it the dubious tag of being the 'most

dangerous airport in the world'!

## HOW DO YOU REACH LUKLA

Catch a flight to Kathmandu. From there you have multiple domestic airlines flying the 45 mins route to Lukla. If you have deeper pockets you could also take a seat in one of the many chopper companies who also service the same route in a slightly longer time.

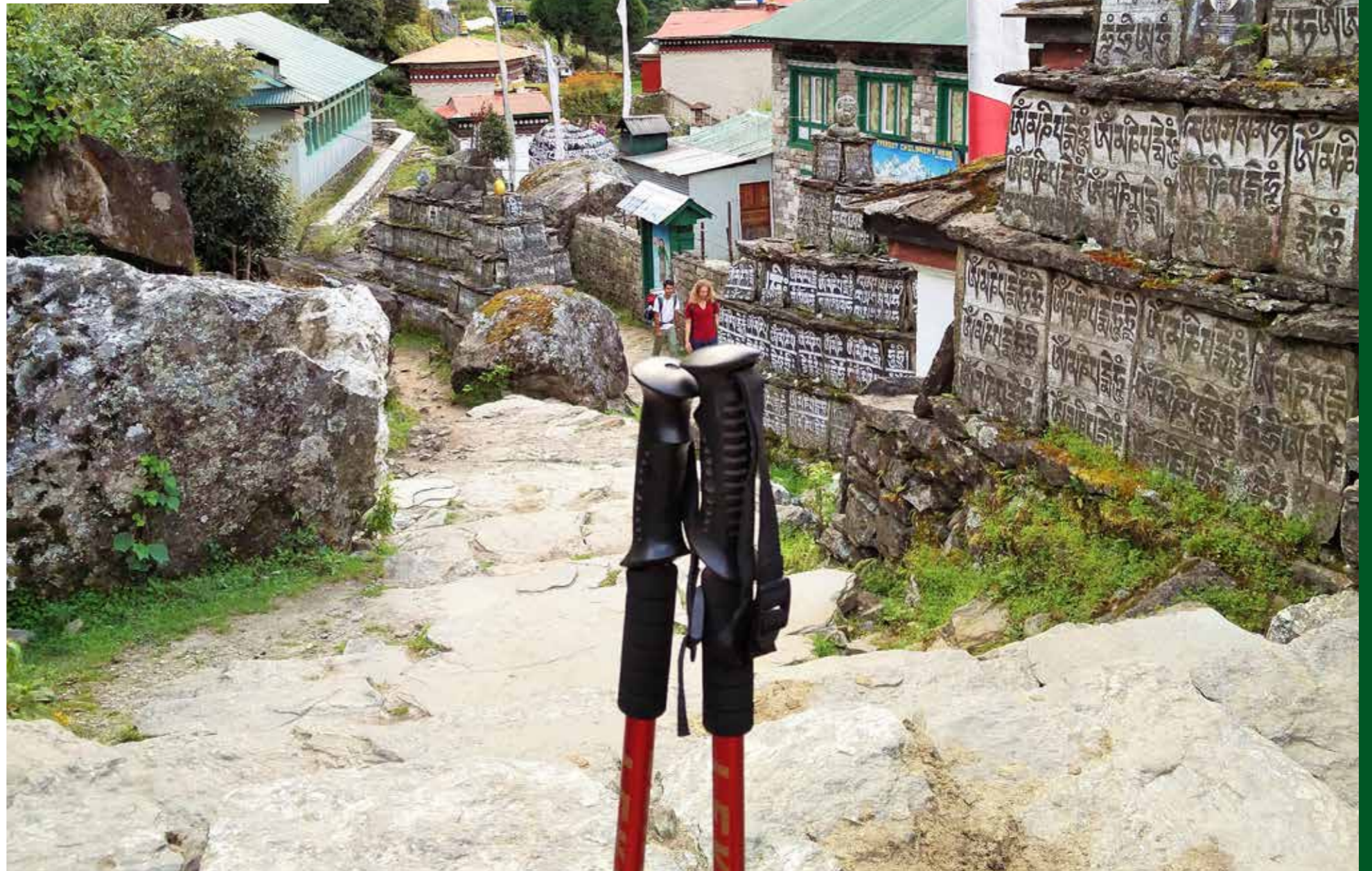
## THE PLANNING & PREPARATION

My tickets to Nepal were booked 6 months before the planned departure period of Oct 2017. What followed then was extensive research on Youtube for the trek videos, on Tripadvisor for all related information & sifting through many travel websites for the do's & don'ts. All this culminated into preparation of exhaustive lists of clothing, equipment & accessories followed by multiple visits to the Decathlon stores to buy the necessary gear. Physical fitness wasn't much of a concern as I was already into a regular gyming & cardio routine.

## I MAKE IT TO LUKLA

Finally the day of departure dawned. Thankfully the Royal Nepal Airlines aircraft took off on time, or so from Delhi! A can of Everest beer (the obvious choice!) on the flight set the tone for the next 2 weeks! The excitement was palpable. I was embarking on 'the mother of all treks'.

After having been received at the Kathmandu airport by Apar Dutta from





the trekking company, I & a fellow trekker were transported to Thamel (a locality in Kathmandu) for overnight stay in a hotel. Post freshening up & having lunch we sat down for a round of briefing where we got an idea of the activities envisaged over the period of the trek.

Later we stepped out on to the street to check out our sleeping bags, trekking poles and buy some still missing stuff. The narrow lanes of Thamel are crammed with shops selling trekking/mountaineering related equipment & if you don't want to spend a bomb on something branded back home then this is a good place to pick up a decent workable alternative.

The next most important item on the agenda was to exchange INR for NPR. Though INR are accepted (with a grudge)

in Kathmandu, on the trek only NPR or international currencies like USD or Euro are preferred. The exchange rate was fixed at 1 INR=1.6 NPR (check the current position). I also picked up a local Nepalese sim card which I was told would work well for most of the route except in the higher reaches where they have another arrangement which works like a satellite phone & can be used at a cost.

We reached the domestic terminal of the Kathmandu airport early next morning. The airport was full of trekkers and locals waiting for their flights to Lukla, Pokhara (launch pad for the Annapurna trek) & elsewhere. Flight delays due to weather were common in the Nepal mountains & we were told that no Kathmandu-Lukla flight had taken off in the previous two days! We prayed & waited for good luck.

A 4 hour delay in take-off didn't dampen our spirits. At least we were leaving the same calender day! The small Dornier aircraft made rapid progress & we soon began our descent towards Lukla. With a prayer on the lips & trust in the pilots' skills we were soon on terra firma to a round of applause from the 'shaken but not stirred' passengers.

We were now met by our team consisting of Lokendra Rai, our guide who was also to be our friend, philosopher, saviour, doctor & much more till trek completion & Jeet Rai, our porter, a young, frail boy probably in his teens but who would effortlessly carry the weight of our two full rucksacks like a yak on the entire trek!

## THE ROUTE

The whole trek was going to take about 11 days from Lukla to Lukla involving 8 days of climb (including 2 acclimatisation days) & 3 days of descent. Starting from an altitude of 9383 ft the itinerary further looked like this

- Day 1 – Lukla to Phakding (8563 ft)
- Day 2 – Phakding to Namche (11,286 ft)
- Day 3 – Acclimatisation halt at Namche.
- Day 4 – Namche to Dibuche (12,500 ft)
- Day 5 – Dibuche to Dingboche (14,800 ft)
- Day 6 – Acclimatisation halt at Dingboche
- Day 7 – Dingboche to Lobuche (16,210 ft)
- Day 8 – Lobuche to Gorakshep (16,942 ft) to EBC (17,598 ft) & back to Gorakshep
- Day 9 – Gorakshep to Pangpoche (13,074 ft)
- Day 10– Pangpoche to Jorsarle (8990 ft)
- Day 11– Jorsarle to Lukla



## STUPAS, MANIS & HANGING BRIDGES

The first two days of the trek took us from Lukla to Namche through beautiful countryside dotted with gorgeous Stupas & Manis & over magnificent rope bridges hanging precariously over deep valleys with rivers in full flow. The narrow trail was dotted with rocks inscribed with Buddhist sermons & prayers that we could not read but couldn't help admiring the calligraphy either.

The guest houses (or tea houses as they are popularly called) where the trekkers halt for the night are not exactly bastions of luxury & it takes a while getting accustomed to the small room with hardly any space to dump the backpacks or move around freely. The washrooms are common & one has to be a real early bird to catch them clean in the morning.

Bathing, should one wish to indulge in, comes at a premium. They are no elaborate affairs - just a little cubicle with an overhead shower rose connected to a gas geyser, or, in the higher altitudes a hot water bucket bath! You are timed, you have to pay (more as you go higher) & you can't complain!

After registering at the entrance to the Sagarmatha National Park we reached Namche, the metropolis of the Khumbu region, a vibrant & lively mega village & our first acclimatisation stop at 11286 ft.

It didn't appear as if we were actually in the Himalayas above 11000 ft! The whole area was brimming with activity. Shops were stocked with trek equipment, groceries, clothing & all other kinds of imaginable necessities. If one still had something missing from the list then this was the last place to pick it up.

## ACCLIMATISATION HALT AT NAMCHE – THE REST DAY THAT WASN'T!

If you have a room with a window overlooking the ranges then you're in luck. Put an alarm for sunrise time to catch the peaks of the neighboring Kongde Range bathed yellow in the rays of the rising sun & appearing as if they were on fire.

They say, when trekking in the mountains, always climb high & sleep low to avoid mountain sickness. Thus the 'rest' day's itinerary included a visit to the Everest View Hotel at 12726 ft, a further 1500 ft higher than Namche. The climb looked daunting but we were lured & trapped with



a possible first view of Mt Everest which clinched the deal in Lokendra's favour!

It took us about 2.5 hours of a tough & steep climb to reach the top. On the way we visited the Sherpa museum which gives a glimpse into the Sherpas' daily lives & is stocked with the tools & equipment used by them on their world famous summit climbs. Once at the top, we waited patiently for

Everest to show up but it proved to be an elusive customer, playing hide & seek with the clouds while the neighboring Lhotse peak was clearly visible all the time.

Even though we could not sight Mt Everest the climb was definitely worth it for the magnificent views it offered of Namche & surrounding areas. A hot water shower brought the day to a fitting close. The



real action was to begin the next morning onwards when we would start climbing into remote Khumbu region.

### CLIMBING INTO THE KHUMBU

We were now eager to get back on the road. Acclimatisation days always come with mixed feelings - while the trekker wants to reach his or her destination earliest, the guide has to slow the pace down to let the trekker's body get accustomed to the physiological rigours of exposure to high altitude. Having begun from Lukla at about 9383 ft AMSL, we were now headed to Dibucho at an altitude of about 12500 ft & were going to be climbing higher with each passing day.

The day began early as usual. On way to Dibucho we got our first clear view of the Everest in all it's mighty glory & couldn't stop clicking pictures.

Yaks were our constant companions on the trek. They had the undisputed right of way. When you heard them coming by the distinctive tinkling sounds of the bells hung around their necks, you knew that you had to step aside unless you fancied a little toss, a summersault & a few broken bones :)

One amazing thing about the EBC trek is that however tough as it may seem because of the altitudes that it reaches, it is reasonably easily doable. We saw people of all nationalities & ages right from 8 years old (accompanied by parents) to 80 years old (some of them being repeaters!) on the trek. The most inspiring sight however was to encounter a totally blind man from the US who had a guide leading him throughout ringing a little bell & giving verbal guidance! What more can one say about human willpower?

The Tyangboche or Tenngboche monastery is located just short of Dibucho & is the largest monastery in the Khumbu region of Nepal. We took a little time off to visit the premises & then descended towards Dibucho, our halt for the day.

### THE KINGDOM OF AMADABLAM

Our next destination, Dingboche, was in Amadablam territory, the presiding deity of the region. It is the tallest peak in the area & towers majestically over its subjects spread out in the valleys below it.

At this altitude the wind & sun were big deterrents to trekking. Though the day wasn't cold & one could easily trek just wearing a



long-sleeved t-shirt, the wind speed was such that it cut into your face & the UV radiation & strong sunlight could soon tan your skin badly. Hence it was really important to keep yourself covered & expose as little of your skin to the elements as possible. By noon we approached Dingboche where we were to carry out our second acclimatisation halt.

We were under strict instructions from Lokendra to not sleep in any of the afternoons so that we would then sleep early at night & wake up well rested the next morning for the day's trek. So after a well deserved lunch we stepped out to explore the little village & its few shops.

The acclimatisation day was spent in a climb to at least 15000 ft. The views presented were picture postcard perfect. The winds were strong & biting & exposed skin stood no chance against the elements here. I shuddered to think of the hardships



which the Evereststeers face when they climb to 28000 ft plus!!

Another hot shower, the second in 7 days made my day! Every paisa of those 500 bucks was worth it!

### DEEPER INTO THE KHUMBU

We continued our further ascent towards Lobuche. We were now entering serious high altitude terrain.

Passing through stark landscape over non-existent tracks, rickety bridges & resting spots, the only colour in this black & white world was provided by the trekkers' clothes & the Tibetan prayer flags fluttering in the wind.

On the way we came across a place where memorials to fallen Evereststeers had been made. We stopped, rested & prayed for the departed souls while thinking of their hardships & icy ends.



Lobuche was a small settlement of a few lodges which, it appeared, owed its existence on the map solely because of its proximity to the Everest & use as a possible night halt. The conical peak of Pumori was distinctly visible in the background like a giant craning its neck to see what was happening on this side of the world!

We checked in & post lunch proceeded to climb the neighboring hill to catch the first glimpse of the massive Khumbu glacier. The general area of the Everest Base Camp was also visible in the far distance.

After marking my presence there in stones we returned to our lodge. During dinner I came across this interesting piece of information tabulating the effect of altitude on the Oxygen content in the human body. We were now in the 5000 m zone with the Oxygen level having dropped to 75-80% of its regular proportions.

## THE PUSH TO GORAKSHEP & CONQUEST OF EBC

The day started unusually early. There was a lot of ground to cover. It was already snowing lightly & the view outside my room looked definitely intimidating! But not to be cowed down, we stepped out into the sub-zero temperatures again.

We were now almost at 17000 ft & the landscape resembled an otherworldly terrain!

*We checked in & post lunch proceeded to climb the neighboring hill to catch the first glimpse of the massive Khumbu glacier. The general area of the Everest Base Camp was also visible in the far distance.*

By almost 10 o' clock we hit Gorakshep. We were now just a step away from the Base Camp & the excitement was palpable! The restaurant at the lodge was brimming with excited trekkers hearing stories from the ones who had already 'done' the Base Camp the previous day.

But we couldn't afford to waste much time. The weather looked ominous & dark clouds were building up all around. We had to hurry. Getting caught out in the cold, rain & snow at this altitude would be disastrous. Emptying out our day packs in the room & keeping just the bare essentials like a poncho, an extra pair of socks & some eatables etc we headed out again.

It was really cold & I could feel my goosepimples in spite of the multiple layers of clothing & two pairs of socks & gloves that I was wearing! Freezing temperatures & icy winds however weren't enough to break our morale & we continued our relentless march towards the goal.

By about 11 a.m. we had reached the general area of the Base Camp. The landscape was surreal & we could see gaping crevasses in the ice.

Stepping carefully & skirting around them we charted our way to that coveted piece of earth known as the Everest Base Camp. The place was already swarming with trekkers in a state of partial hysteria





excitedly taking pictures, making videos, some praying & thanking their respective Gods, others marking their presence there with little spithuks! We had made it! This was the culmination of all our efforts, the pinnacle of our trek, fulfillment of a dream which I had nurtured for 2 years!! An elevated pile of stones & rocks was the grand stage for everyone to take pictures & I waited for my turn.

Emotions overwhelmed us as we pecked our guide, friend, philosopher, doctor & God...Lokendra for making this happen for us.

We hung around & soaked the environment in. After spending about an hour & a half there we said goodbye to EBC as we started our trek back for Gorakshep.

We now had a story to exchange with other fellow trekkers. Today Lokendra allowed us to rest a while in the afternoon. Probably there wasn't any other option - it was snowing lightly outside & we were

***We now had a story to exchange with other fellow trekkers. Today Lokendra allowed us to rest a while in the afternoon. Probably there wasn't any other option - it was snowing lightly outside & we were thus confined to the lodge!***

thus confined to the lodge!

After an early dinner we packed off for the day. EBC had been conquered. But we still had Kala Pathar (literally meaning Black Rock) to climb the next morning!

### **KALA PATHAR PROVES TOO TALL**

Lying at an altitude of 18500 ft (an almost 1000 ft higher than the Base Camp) next to Gorakshep, Kala Pathar gives a direct & a spectacular view of Mt Everest in that region. The climb is best done early morning rather than the evening to catch the first rays of the sun from behind the Everest. Of course its not mandatory to do this climb but any trekker who's come this far definitely wants to scale this too for the 'up, close & personal' views of Everest that wait for him or her at the top!

We were woken up the next morning (or rather, in the dead of the night) at 3.30

am by Lokendra. The climb was to begin at 4 a.m. to avoid the 'traffic jam' of trekkers on the slope & make it to the top by sunrise. With Lokendra leading us through the dark lit only by our torches & starlight, we commenced our slow ascent towards Kala Pathar.

The slopes were already swarming with trekkers who had stolen the march on us. It was about 200-300 feet up the slope that my head started to feel dizzy & I felt vomitish typical symptoms of high altitude sickness! I tried to continue but after another 100 ft or so the body just gave up. After informing Lokendra I returned to Gorakshep, tucked myself into the sleeping bag & slept the symptoms off. It was the end of Kala Pathar for me.

### **THE DESCENT TO CIVILISATION**

Hereafter it was all descent upto Lukla which we would reach after two days.

As we marched we joined the hordes of other trekkers either climbing up or descending down, with aspirations in their hearts or stories to tell!

We reached Pangpoche by late afternoon, checked into our lodge for the night & settled down. A hot water shower, my third in 10 days, was but of course much

needed!

Passing through Namche the next day we scouted for souvenirs & gifts for folks back home. T-shirts, woollen caps, mittens & socks were all bought & loaded into the daypack but I didn't mind the extra load now.

We made it to Jorsarle by the evening. The lodge here was the first decent one that I had seen since leaving Namche Bazar on the way up. It did appear that we were gradually headed towards civilisation!

And finally the sun rose to announce the last day of the trek. We were now just a few hours of descent away from Lukla. There was a bounce in the steps, a song on the lips & joy on the face. We could notice the looks of admiration from the climbing trekkers much as we had given when we were on the way up.

We made it to Lukla post noon. I needed to pose with the gate passing through which the whole journey had begun.

We reached our lodge & checked our room excitedly. A double bed with mattresses, an attached washroom with running water, a geyser...ohh the luxuries of life!! It was time for the 4th & a leisurely hot water shower again.

Later in the evening we invited

Lokendra & Jeet Rai for a get-together. It was our way of saying thanks to both of them without whose help this monumental adventure wouldn't have been successful. We recounted those 10 days of the trek, laughing over silly things, remembering how we felt at different places & even how we sometimes got upset at a lower than expected lodge or a meal. We sang songs & Lokendra & Jeet regaled us with some of their best Nepalese numbers. It was a fitting end to a lovely trek.

### **THE RETURN HOME**

Our departure for Kathmandu was scheduled early the next morning. I had a flight to catch to Delhi the same afternoon onwards from there & so definitely didn't want to miss this connection!

We reached the Lukla airport, a short walk away, by 5.45 a.m. Lukla is a very cute & small airport. It actually resembles more a bus stand with higher ambitions! Even at that hour, the airport had already started to crowd up with the trekkers checking in for their return flights to Kathmandu. On the other side of the runway the helicopters were busy operating to various regions of the Khumbu.

The news wasn't too good! In a reversal,





the weather at Kathmandu wasn't too favourable & hence no flight had as yet taken off from there. I had a few hours up my sleeve for such a contingency & prayed hard for the conditions to improve. Good news came sooner than expected - the Gods had listened to me & the aircrafts were getting airborne from Kathmandu.

Within the next couple of hours we were safely onboard our flight to Kathmandu where we were again received by Apar & bundled into his ramshackle car for transfer to Thamel.

Post-lunch I was dropped back at the airport. Apar had been primarily instrumental in bringing my EBC dreams to fruition. We hugged & I promised him that one day soon I'd return to Nepal again for another trek with him, Lokendra & Jeet. (Just for the record, I am still in touch & connected with both Apar & Lokendra).

With that I said goodbye to him, to Kathmandu & Nepal & entered the airport for my return flight to Delhi.

They say travel changes your outlook towards life. If that be true, the experience of staying in plywood cubicles, using sleeping bags, wet wipes & toilet paper, drinking chlorinated water & eating Nepali dal, bhaat & sabzi for close to 2 weeks certainly did!!

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A trek of this magnitude does teach you a thing or two! Here are my key takeaways, not in any particular order.

### PLANNING & PREPARATION

The key to a good plan is to plan early & prepare well. Watch as many trek videos on youtube as you can, read as many Tripadvisor forums as you can & gather as much information as you can. In short, get as much idea as you can so that you're not taken by surprise at any point.

There aren't too many airlines operating to Kathmandu from India so be sure which one to book. It'll be helpful to know of the airline's fleet strength, punctuality & safety record.

Keep a day surplus at either ends to cater for delays, cancellations & unexpected contingencies.

Negotiate a good price with your trekking agent. Be sure of the inclusions & exclusions. Ask him to provide you the sleeping bag & trekking poles as



complimentary so that will save you the hassle of carrying them on the international flight with you.

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

Of course you need to be sure of your capabilities to do the EBC trek. Its not very strenuous & if you have a good guide he will pace it well for you, but its not a cakewalk either by any means! If you have planned in advance, use the time to get into a physical fitness & cardio regime to get into shape. Once on the trek, listen to your body & don't push it if it begins to show signs of giving up. Like they say – DON'T BE A GAMA IN THE LAND OF LAMA!

### CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

You will read a lot about what to wear & how to wear it. Layering is the key. Keep yourself light & mobile.

Buy a good pair of trekking shoes. That's the best investment you'll make in

the clothing department! I bought a pair of Quechuas from Decathlon, Gurgaon.

You will need a good pair of sunglasses with a strong uv protection. I bought myself a pair again from Decathlon but they turned out to be more of a hindrance than help as the glasses kept fogging up every few mins because of the breath rising up the face due to the face muff. I have now bought a pair with vents on the upper frame to let the vapours pass through.

Carry a good daypack. This is the only item you'll be lugging on your back & it better be nice & comfortable to wear.

### CAMERAS & ELECTRONICS

If you are a fond & professional photographer, carry your DSLRs & the multiple lenses & tripods by all means. But remember that all those are costly equipment & you'd have to lug them on your person all the time in addition to your 7-10 kgs daypack, a prospect which doesn't seem very exciting halfway up the 15000 ft hill!

For me, my mobile phone camera worked well. The about 10 mega pixel shooter was good enough to capture decent images without making them too heavy for social media uploads. Of course I was also carrying a small Nikon digicam as a backup. Be sure to carry your power bank & be sure to keep charging all your equipment regularly on the trek, of course at a price :)

I saw some trekkers carrying solar panels on their daypacks to charge their electronics on the go. With the unpredictable weather & sunlight in the higher Himalayas I wonder whether it was really worth carrying that extra weight on their backs. I had toyed with the idea too but dropped it when I didn't find too many positive & encouraging reviews of the same.

### SNACKS & EATABLES

Carry chocolates, protein bars, dry fruits, cheese slices & whatever else that can give you energy. Water discipline is very important. Carry chlorine tablets. To eliminate its peculiar taste & also act as a rehydrating salt, carry Tang or Glucose in different flavours. Morning & evening tea lovers like me can carry Girnar tea sachets (order from Amazon). Just buy/request a cup of hot water & you're good to go.



### SIM & DATA CARD, CURRENCY

Like I have said earlier, you can buy a local Nepalese sim from Thamel or anywhere else in Kathmandu. This sim will serve you well for most of the trek except at Gorakshep & ahead for which, if you really have to, you can use the local Khumbu area satellite phone like service that they have there. Of course its not very cheap & if you can tell your folks, wives & girlfriends (or husbands & boyfriends as applicable) back home that you'll be out of touch for a couple of days then you should. On the sim you don't need calling minutes. Just invest in a decent data plan which will be good for whatsapp calling back home as well as for social media uploads of your pictures.

Calculate how much Nepalese currency

you might need on the trek, add 10% to that & exchange at Kathmandu. Up the climb, you will need money for your hot water showers, to pay for charging of your phones, cameras & power banks, for your morning & evening cups of hot water (some lodges can offer this as complimentary too), for your shopping from Namche Bazar & finally to tip your guide & the porter. [\[1\]](#)

Sudeep wears many hats. He is an ex-Army officer, a Helicopter Pilot and an avid trekker. He likes to call himself a 'part time flier & a full time adventurer'. He is always seeking out new destinations to explore & brings them to us through his blogs & captivating pictures which can be found at [www.ghumakkarindian.com](http://www.ghumakkarindian.com). He also hosts a YouTube channel & is present on Instagram, both under the moniker of [ghumakkarindian](#).

# KAOHSIUNG

## A WELL PRESERVED SECRET OF THE FAR EAST

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

Straddled diagonally between China and Japan is the island country of Taiwan, and sitting at the South western edge of Taiwan by the shores of the Taiwan Straits is the city of Kaohsiung (the second largest city in Taiwan). Influence of these two powerful countries of Japan and China has been believed to play a major part in development of the port city of Kaohsiung. From a mere fishing hamlet in the olden days, the city of Kaohsiung has seen much ups and downs on its turbulent journey to becoming the business, industrial and trading powerhouse of Taiwan as well as its busiest port. Having been under Japanese rule for some 50 (1895-1945) years, the city was the point of contact for Taiwan to the outside world and vice versa under rule as it was the Japanese garrison city. Fortunately, the city of Kaohsiung didn't have to bear the brunt of war

outbreaks to a great extent despite being a strategic military base, because the consequences of war are incalculable, and damage to Kaohsiung could mean suffering (economic and social) in all of Taiwan. Having grown steadily from there, it comes as no surprise that today Kaohsiung is the largest municipality in Taiwan and its most important port.

But there's much more to Kaohsiung than just the industrial and trading facets. Having undergone colonisation under the Dutch, the Japanese and the Chinese, Kaohsiung's culture and tradition is fairly versatile and traces of each

influence can be felt around the city.

Located at a distance of 360 kilometers from Taipei (the capital of Taiwan), it can be reached by HSR (High Speed Rail) in 2 hours from there, while distance from Tai Chung is roughly 200 kms which can be covered in a little over an hour.

Love River is more or less the focal point of Kaohsiung which runs through the core of the city and is a great place to catch your breath by. A walk by the river will slow down time as you watch ferries and gondolas pass back and forth. Walking under the tree shades on either side can be very soothing to the eye as you admire the glistening and shiny water that flows by. This river was barely a stream in its prime times, but the locals have worked







hard to revive it to what it is today and that is a true testimony of the hard-working origins of the people of Kaohsiung. It is probably named Love River as a lot of couples on a date frequent this place, it was earlier called Kaohsiung canal and by other oriental names in olden days. A big statue of 'Ao', a mythological half dragon – half fish figure makes a good selfie spot by the Love River. Best time to visit is in the evening when the bridge over the river is lit up and the promenade running parallel to the river comes alive with bustling pretty cafes and open-air restaurants. During a certain Dragon Boat Festival, boat races are held in the Love River while during the lantern festival the riversides are decorated with lit up lanterns.

Probably the most popular area of Kaohsiung is Lotus lake. This is one of the largest lakes (being 1500 meters long and 500 meters wide) in Taiwan and is a man-made lake. It is one of the most popular attractions where locals and tourists can be seen hanging around throughout the day and the evening. With a variety of colourful pagodas, temples, pavilions and statues at the lakeside, it has a lot of photogenic spots which are Instagram worthy.

The most interesting and coolest attraction at Lotus Lake is the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas. A zig zagging pathway from No.9 Liantan road directs you to the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas. These twin pagodas have a dragon and a tiger at their entrance and popular belief has it that to get rid of bad luck and get good luck in your life one must enter through the dragon's mouth and exit from the tiger's mouth. Be sure to climb the seven-story pagodas and enjoy the views from the top while also admiring the art on the walls within the pagodas. There is a depiction of the 18 levels of hell in the Taiwanese mythology and it is displayed in a manner to discourage people from committing sins.

Right opposite the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas is a beautiful temple built in honour of Baosheng Dadi (God of Medicine).

A very prominent structure at Lotus Pond is the 72-meter-high statue of the mysterious warrior Xuan Wu (believed to be the ruler of the North Pole in the local mythology). Visitors can even walk into the statue through an entrance at the base and climb up several floors inside the towering statue which houses shrines at each level.



The Spring and Autumn Pavilions overtly showcase traditional architecture. On the outside the Pavilion is a visual treat with the backdrop of the lake, and you can enter the dragon mouth which has steps leading in and is shaped like an inclining tunnel within. On either side in the tunnel you will sight colourful murals depicting their mythology, tradition and culture.

Being at Lotus lake makes one feel care free. Best way to explore the area is on foot. By the road that runs parallel to the Lotus lake are many food stalls serving a variety of snacks and fresh cut fruit to take care of hunger calls and quench your thirst.

It is a great place to watch the sun go down towards the end of the day and one should not miss out on capturing the beautiful sunsets here. Enchanting views take shape across Kaohsiung when the sun sets and the city lights up.

Chi Jin Island at Kaohsiung is a well-known fishing power house. The place has been intensely involved with fishing probably ever since the time of its habitation. This island can be easily reached by short ferry rides from the ferry jetty at Shiziwan. It is barely a 10 minutes ride. Lots of fishing families have been here generation after generation. You could rent a bicycle to get around this island. Among the most popular places to visit are Thean Hou Temple in Chi Jin Island, which is dedicated to the Goddess Martu – The protector of sailors. Monkey mountain is a great hike where you can see cohorts of playful monkeys among other flora and fauna. The sea food at Ya Jiao restaurant is quite popular in Chi Jin Island and most tourists prefer having lunch over here. A seafood platter with cold beer really checks the box for me on a hot tiring day. And I'm quite sure it's the same for most enthusiastic travellers. The lighthouse at Chi Jin island (built by the British) offers great panoramic views of the city, the sea and the far-off horizon. This lighthouse has a great collection of old photographs on display from the time the lighthouse was newly built.

85 Sky Tower is the most prominent landmark in Kaohsiung. One cannot miss this building especially while taking the ferry to Chi Jin island or when getting back from there. At the top of the 85 Sky Tower is a viewing deck for tourists to soak in authoritative views of the city. The building has as many as 92 elevators. One of these

elevators can reach the 77th floor in just 45 seconds making it the 3rd fastest lift in the world. This imposing structure can be prominently sighted from various parts of the city and is the most iconic landmark of Kaohsiung among foreign tourists. One can notice the co-existence of modern concrete and glass buildings with traditional oriental architecture in Kaohsiung. The city can be seen mingling the old with the new in various areas. Taiwan's largest Confucius temple is also in Kaohsiung.

The art on the ceiling at Kaohsiung Formosa station is worth looking at from various angles. Even if one is passing by this station on his journey, he should step off at Kaohsiung station and get a look at it before resuming his journey. Designed by the renowned artist Narcissus Quagliata, this



art on the ceiling showcases a theme of love and pardon in the lifetime of Person. This work of public art is also called 'Dome of Light'. This is the biggest glass installation of its kind in the whole world. One has to see this ceiling lit up in all its glory to feel awestruck by its beauty. One can easily notice that the Taiwanese appear to be a very ordered society which can be seen in the metro stations how people assemble in a

tourists throng this place throughout the night and fill their stomachs with tasty grub at a reasonable price.

There is an interesting rail road museum in Shiziwan, which showcases the history of Kaohsiung's first railway station (established by the Japanese) and the important role it played in the city's industrialisation and civil modernisation aspects. This is a fine place to visit for an

a big and beautiful golden Buddha statue (36 meters high) sitting on top. The order of this monastery encourages the practice of Humanistic Buddhism. Fo Guang Shan literally means Buddha's Light Mountain and this place enshrines the spirits of Buddhist teachings, philosophy and lifestyle in a majestic atmosphere. There are enough attractions within the premises for drool worthy sights and for enlightening oneself



on a spiritual plane. For those who are not Buddhists, a trip to this monastery proves to be very insightful as you learn a lot about various aspects of Buddhism, and those who are Buddhists or are aware of Buddhism will sharpen their knowledge and be grateful to have visited this monastery. The highlight is the Jade Buddha and Gold Buddha displayed at the main Pagoda. Photography inside is prohibited, but one look at these magnificent statues will remain like a photographic memory in your mind. Lots of master craftsmanship can be noticed in the statues (stone as well as wooden) erected in various parts of the monastery. This is like a big palatial museum where Buddha's tooth relics are also kept. Even after leaving from the monastery one can feel its warmth and aura for a long time. One must visit this monastery when exploring Kaohsiung and preferably keep it for towards the last part of his / her trip.

Something not to be missed in Taiwan is 'Pearl Milk Tea' or 'Bubble Tea'. Pearl milk tea was invented in the late 80's right






here in Taiwan (in the neighbouring city of Taichung which is only an hour's journey from Kaohsiung by the bullet train from the High-Speed Rail Station). This marvellous beverage was invented as a result of a simple experiment by a local restaurateur using tapioca pearl and regular tea. The result was astonishingly great, so much so that the business of this refreshing beverage has grown by cosmic scales and turned into a multi-million-dollar global industry in recent times. A very refreshing beverage specially when served cold with ice and the best place to have it is at 'The Original store of Chun Sui Tang', that's where the idea of bubble tea came up with subsequent successful experimenting. Today probably a hundred (or even more) varieties of bubble tea would be served across restaurants and stores in Taiwan. This beverage is an absolute must in Taiwan.

If one is a bit of a thrill seeker, then Kenting is a great diving location 100 kms (90 Minutes' drive) south of Kaohsiung. It's the southernmost tip of Taiwan. One can visit this place to satisfy his thrill-seeking side. This place has a beautiful beach and various activities such as diving and

***The Original store of Chun Sui Tang', that's where the idea of bubble tea came up with subsequent successful experimenting. Today probably a hundred (or even more) varieties of bubble tea would be served across restaurants and stores in Taiwan. This beverage is an absolute must in Taiwan.***

surfing. ATV's are available here for riding around the area. The place is particularly great for a morning excursion and has a very peaceful environment in general.

In my opinion the city of Kaohsiung is a very underrated tourist destination, but that's probably a blessing in disguise, because one of the best things about this

place is that a tourist rush hasn't mobbed this place like some of the popular destinations in the South East and the Far East, and one can patiently go through the various moods of the city with time on his side. It's quite incredible when you think of how much variety a small place can offer to its visitors. If one is willing to indulge in fancy foodstuff, inexpensive transportation (though more expensive than some of the South East Asian destinations which are dirt cheap) with hills, rivers, sea side, beaches, fast paced city streets with laid back zones too, and enchanting monasteries, one must visit Taiwan. And once in Taiwan, Kaohsiung is a recommended destination. I strongly feel the tourism aspects of Kaohsiung will only get better and better, and that the best part of Kaohsiung's story is still being written. 

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, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time.

SPECIAL FEATURE

# A SOULFUL SOJOURN

Nestled amidst cedar forests of the magnificent Dhauladhar range in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort offers a perfect setting for a truly immersive experience in tranquil surroundings



With more and more people seeking to get away from the humdrum of city life, the idea of taking a wellness vacation to detox and heal has seen an upswing in recent times. And, if you are looking for a therapeutic getaway that combines luxury, safety, and comfort, nothing comes close to the experience at Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort. Ensnconed in the sprawling 6.5-acre verdant Dhauladhar range in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort introduces you to the old-world charm of the hill station, whilst offering new adventures.

With a scenic setting amidst nature's bounty and plush accommodations designed to indulge your need for comfort and privacy, the upper-upscale resort offers a slew of exceptional experiences tailored to foster a sense of familial bonding. Whether it is

experiencing the wilderness with a rustic picnic in the outdoors amidst the pine trees, guided day treks or nature walks; sampling global cuisines or a humble organic farm-to-table meal; a relaxing session at Shanti Spa or a rejuvenating yoga class—the plethora of unique experiences at Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort will stay with you forever.



**HYATT  
REGENCY**  
DHARAMSHALA  
RESORT

For more information, visit  
[hyattregencydharamshalaresort.com](https://hyattregencydharamshalaresort.com)



A mountain shaped like a crouching elephant, stalagmite and stalactite caves, islands by the gentle sea, and artificial flowers made from rubber tree leaves—Phang Nga has it all! Phang Nga is an hour's drive from Phuket in the north.

For stunning views, tourists often visit the geological wonder Phang Nga Bay National Park. The sheltered Phang Nga Bay also offers sea kayak expeditions and has spectacular islands throughout.

One of the most peaceful Thai resort destinations, Khao Lak is an oasis for calmness, cool tropics, and wide sand beaches. The centrepiece is the Lak Mountain, which gives Khao Lak its name. Couples looking for a stunning Thai wedding, honeymoon close to the nature, or families looking to get away from the hustle bustle of the city—Khao Lak is your destination!

To enjoy the most of your stay, resorts here have been built to provide quality accommodation that you like. Here are a few resorts one can look at while planning a stay at PhangNga.

## JW Marriott Khao Lak Resort & Spa

With pristine white-sand beaches, azure Andaman waters, and tropical greenery, JW Marriott welcomes you at Khao Lak, Phang Nga. The ten restaurants and bars here provide the perfect opportunity to indulge your senses. And to nourish your soul, head over to the Quan Spa for massages and luxury wellness therapies.

If you and your beau are planning to tie the knot soon, Marriott



PHOTO CREDIT TO JW MARRIOTT KHAO LAK



PHOTO CREDIT TO JW MARRIOTT KHAO LAK

has you covered. At JW Marriott, you are guaranteed artful venues both indoors and outdoors for a splendid destination wedding. With their on-site wedding planner and catering options, you can be sure to have a wedding that goes down beautifully in your memory and photo albums.

To ensure that your body and mind are healthy, connected, and fit, JW Marriott has fitness services that you can utilise. Fitness classes are free, and registered in-house guests can use the free fitness gym too.

If you are in Phang Nga, you cannot miss the water! At Marriott Khao Lak, you can head over to the KhakKhak Beach, enjoy in the Outdoor Lagoon Pool, or go surfing, kayaking or scuba diving.

How about a game of squash or tennis? Or maybe going on a fitness trail and biking? And a sauna session to kick off all the muscle soreness? At JW Marriott Khao Lak, you can enjoy all this and more.

A short drive away are many attractions, such as the five-tier Chong Fah Waterfall in the Lumru National Park, the Evening Market at Ban Niang, one of Phuket's famous Patong Beach, and definitely the Sarasin Bridge that connects Phang Nga with Phuket..

## Le Méridien Khao Lak Resort & Spa

On the stunning white sands of Bangsak Beach in Khao Lak is the Le Méridien Khao Lak Resort & Spa. The resort features panoramic



PHOTO CREDIT TO JW MARRIOTT KHAO LAK



PHOTO CREDIT TO LE MERIDIEN KHAO LAK

ocean views and a secluded location to soak in the beauty. With ten types of rooms, suites and villas available, Le Méridien Khao Lak has some accommodations, including private terraces with direct pool access. Do not forget to try the local Thai cuisine at six hotel restaurants and bars!

You can head over to the luxury spa, the fitness centre at the hotel, or the Kids' Club for your recreation. We are sure you won't mind taking a dip in one of the three lagoon pools, which are a signature addition at Le Méridien Khao Lak.

Sit back, relax, and soak in the magic of sunsets over crystal Andaman waters at Méridien. You can choose to stroll the white sands of Bangsak Beach or head straight to the Similan Islands from

the resort. A fan of the rainforests? You would love to go trekking and white-water rafting. The hotel's tour desk will happily help you.

If you are in the mood for a full-service spa, the facilities at Le Méridien Khao Lak will elevate your spirits. For your little ones, babysitting services are available, so you can take that much-needed me-time for yourself.

Fancy luxury much? How about a Limousine service for you? Le Méridien Khao Lak wants to enjoy and relax and understands that you like Limousine. Who doesn't, though, right? Do not forget that you can take vows with about 420 guests in the Merlin Grand Ballroom for a beach wedding that you deserve!!



PHOTO CREDIT TO LE MERIDIEN KHAO LAK

# The Sarojin Khao Lak Resort

Each day of your Thailand should indulge you and bring hearty delight. Keeping this in mind, The Sarojin Khao Lak is a luxury hideaway for the peace that you crave. Secluded, tranquil and serene, this resort is a sanctuary amidst nature close to Similan Islands, five national parks, and the Phang Nga Bay.

There are 56 guest residences in 7 two-storey buildings and 10 acres of lush tropical gardens. Whether you getting

married or celebrating your romance, the team at The Sarojin will help you create beautiful memories that make you smile.

The Sarojin Khao Lak Resort is sheltered by the Pakarang Cape and provides year-round water sports. From luxury escapes and adventure trails to romantic getaway and wellness experiences, the Sarojin caters to all.

Throughout the resort, you will find seating areas to sit back and enjoy the

greenery all around. Do take a minute to appreciate the canopy that The Sarojin has curated. Drawing inspiration from the surrounding jungles, the pathways in the resort have foliage that resembles the tropical jungles of Khao Lak. As a guest, you can also take the complimentary garden tour and learn about the plants and animals in Khao Lak. Keep your eye out for ripe coconuts, lotus, white orchids and rare species.

PHOTO CREDIT TO ROBINSON KHAO LAK

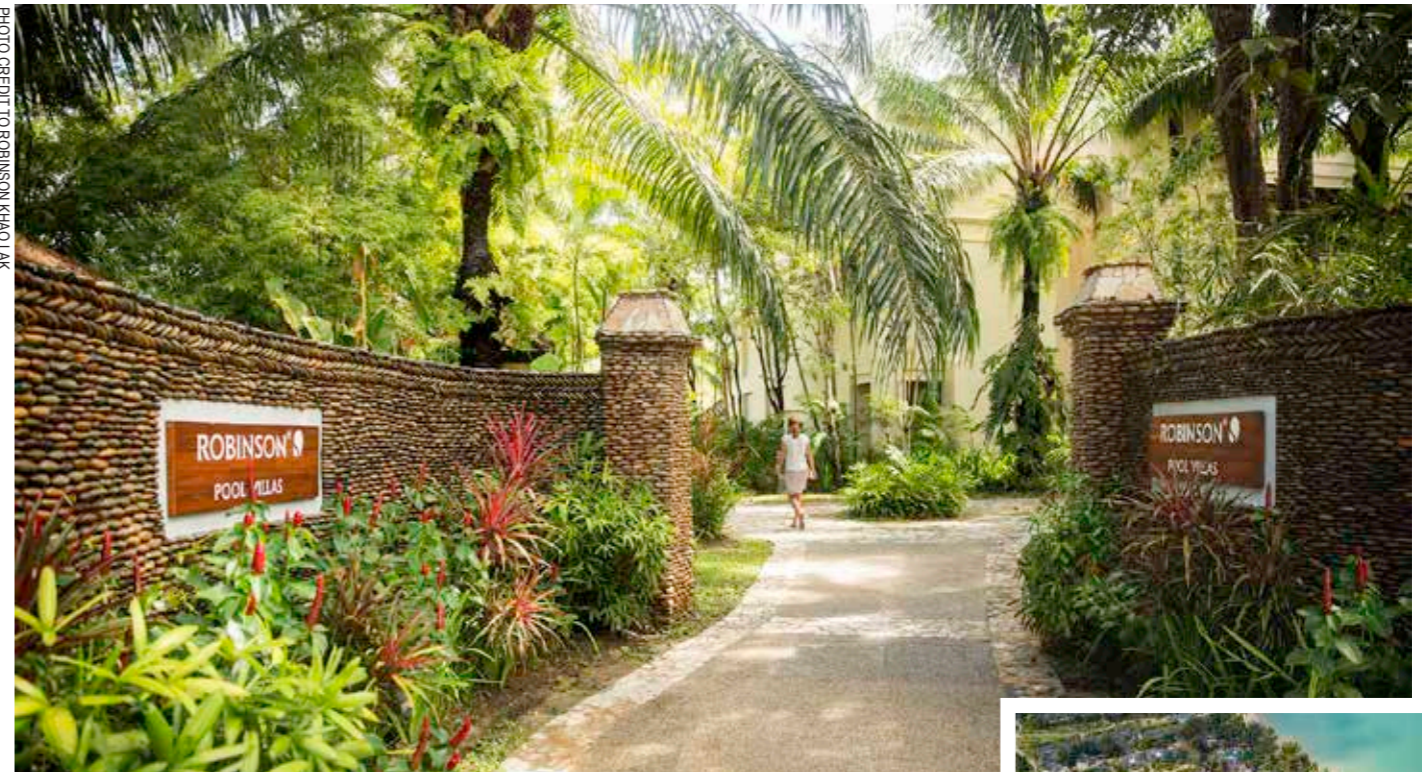


PHOTO CREDIT TO ROBINSON KHAO LAK

## Club Robinson Khao Lak

Spacious resort grounds amidst the nature, variety of sports, adventure excursions in the national park, Thai cuisine, and views that look straight out of a painting—we are talking about the Robinson Club Resort.

Head over to Robinson Khao Lak for a relaxing sauna session or a soothing massage. Looking to burn some calories? How about indoor cycling? Or maybe yoga to ground you? Robinson WellFit offers you a fitness program that is balanced and calms you.

The four restaurants and five bars cater to your gastronomical needs and are a delightful experience indeed. WellFood program offers healthy meals, while you can enjoy Hawaiian living once a fortnight during the Luhana day. For all the street food lovers, there are mobile stands and music experiences in the tasteJAM session. You can also ask for special diets if you are allergic.

At Robinson Khao Lak, you can choose between double rooms, a bungalow, a villa, a suite, or a family room. To keep your adrenaline jumping and pumping, you can enjoy stand-up paddling and kayaking or partake in tennis with a trainer. And for the evenings, there is live music, costume parties and themed galas to entertain.

While Phang Nga is a beautiful destination, the resorts strive to make your stay safe, healthy and fun. As Thailand opens up safely for visitors, make the best of your time and head over to the mesmerising country for an unforgettably engaging, relaxing, exciting, and grand time! For more information on Thailand Reopening please visit [www.tatnews.org](http://www.tatnews.org)



The entrance gate of Nizamabad Fort

# A DATE WITH 1100 YEARS OF HISTORY

LT COL SUDEEP VIJAI (RETD)

If you happen to find yourself in Nizamabad, don't despair. India is a very vast country with hidden gems in every corner just waiting to be explored. Nizamabad is no different & boasts of a plethora of temples, forts, waterfalls & lakes in & around the city. I fished out two gems to investigate, but first a little about the city itself. Nizamabad, a popular princely district in

Telangana is situated at a distance of 175 kms north west of Hyderabad. The district derived its name as Nizamabad (Nizam-a-abadi) from the Nizam of Hyderabad Asaf Jahi, VI who had ruled Deccan during the 18th Century A.D. Originally the district was known as INDUR after King Indradatta who had ruled this region during the 5th Century A.D. Some of the major dynasties which extended their rule to the district were the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Rastrakutas, Chalukyas and Kakatiyas in the ancient

period, the Bahamani Sultans, Qutub Shahis and Barid Shahis in the medieval period and in the modern period the Mughals and Asaf Jahis. Although previously part of Hyderabad State and then Andhra Pradesh state, Nizamabad became a part of the newly formed state of Telangana by the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

### Nizamabad Fort

Also known as Nizamabad Quilla, it was built in 10th century by Rashtrakuta Kings and is situated in the southwest of the city. Later it was occupied and renovated by the Kakatiyas. In 1311, the fort was occupied by Alauddin Khalji . It further fell to the Musunuri Nayaks who revolted against Delhi Sultanates and eliminated them out of Telugu land. The Qutub Shahis and then the Asaf Jahis who were the Nizams of Hyderabad, were the last ones to rule & renovate the fort.

It takes about 15 mins through the city to reach the fort. The dilapidated gate, hinting of once having seen better times but now in a state of complete neglect with peeling



Entrance gate of the Raghunath temple

plaster, fading paint & tree shoots sprouting out of cracks in the walls doesn't look promising enough for further indulgence but you must! Driving through the gate & up a gently

curving & sloping road one reaches the parking area. Hereafter the further journey is on foot. Climbing up the stone pathway the first notable monument that you come across



The pathway from the parking area to the interior of the fort



**If you have managed to tick these two sites off your list then you have seen Nizamabad.**



## Lake near the Nizamabad fort

is a temple. The Jagannath Temple, also known as Qilla Ramalayam or Raghunath Temple, is situated at the top of the fort and was built by Samarth Ramdass, the Guru of Chattrapati Shivaji.

Skirting around the perimeter will lead one to another entrance. The fort boasts of robust walls which although covered with moss & lichens telling stories of almost a 1000 years of existence still look strong.

The temple has spacious halls which are spread over an area of 3,900 sq. ft & have a unique system of ventilation that always keeps them cool. The sanctum sanctorum houses a trio of beautiful Ram, Sita & Lakshman idols.

The fort has a large area surrounded by masonry walls which has huge bastions at the corners. Standing on one of these one can see a lake not very far away. It is believed that there is a secret tunnel from the fort to the lake which was built by the

orders of the Nizam.

Legend also speaks of a 53 ft tall pillar over which diyas (earthen lamps) used to be lit in the evenings in early times. It is said that after seeing this lamp, the residents of surrounding villages used to light lamps at their homes.

Walking along the parapet, another old structure which catches one's eye is the 'Mulaquat Gate' meant for receiving the prisoners as during the Asaf Jahi dynasty the fort also functioned as a jail.

A large compound with rooms on all sides & a central hut is also visible, the former being prison cells & the latter a sentry post meant for keeping watch on the surroundings.

The pillar or the Mulaquat Gate is not situated at this level. For that you have to come up to the main level & then take an elevator two levels down to their location.

The pillar, from closer quarters, reveals



### The Dichpally Ramalayam temple

a strange picture. It appears embedded in the boundary wall. Or contrarily, it also appears that the boundary wall was built to go right through the pillar, almost with a vengeance.

With its elaborate carvings of lotus flowers & a Ganesha at the very top it is clearly a Hindu relic but is just about 25 ft tall & not 53 ft as the legend claims. It appears that the wall was constructed much later than the pillar by the subsequent occupants of the Fort & that half of it has either been destroyed or buried under the earth over time.

#### Dichpalli Ramalayam

From the fort it takes another about 20 mins to reach Dichpalli. It is a small locality of multi coloured houses about 18 kms on the outskirts of Nizamabad, its claim to fame being the magnificent Ram temple located there.

The temple was built in the 14th century by Kakatiya kings. As the temple has a lot of resemblance in its style and structure with Khajuraho, it is also called the Indhoor Khajuraho or the Khajuraho of Nizamabad.

An intricately carved stone arch gate marks the entry to the narrow pathway leading up to the temple.

The first view of the temple leaves one stunned. It looks incomplete with only the lower structure built & the upper storeys & the 'shikhar' missing!

The temple was built of black and white basalt stone, with the finest architecture and excellent craftsmanship of goddesses, animals, devils and Khajuraho style erotic structures on it. It appears though that the said sculptures have either been destroyed or removed from their enclaves over time.

The 'Garbhagriha' (the sanctum sanctorum) of the temple again reveals

mesmerizing idols of Ram, Sita & Laksman. It is said that the construction of the temple was abandoned mid-way due to the Muslim invasion. Whatever had already been built was allowed to remain on the condition that no worship would be carried out there. Thus the idols were installed only in 1949 after independence & since that day they are being worshipped daily.

The four corners of the temple complex are again guarded by bastions indicating further planned architecture which never saw the light of the day.

Sudeep wears many hats. He is an ex-Army officer, a Helicopter Pilot and an avid trekker. He likes to call himself a 'part time flier & a full time adventurer'. He is always seeking out new destinations to explore & brings them to us through his blogs & captivating pictures which can be found at [www.ghumakkarindian.com](http://www.ghumakkarindian.com). He also hosts a YouTube channel & is present on Instagram, both under the moniker of ghumakkarindian.

# Ocean Potion

Nature's remedy for your senses

Let the warm tropical waters of Sabah heal your senses while the charm of the underwater scenery calms your soul and mind. An essential entry in your travel desire list.

Enchanting SABAH Malaysian Borneo

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

fb.sabahtourism.com @sabahtourism @sabahtourism youtube.com/sbhtourism

# Does the secret to a balanced life lie back in 1500 BC?

Or a few hours away from the Delhi NCR?



Amidst the continuous unsettling waves of the pandemic, the world is recognising India as the cradle of healing and wellness. It's because, for ages, holistic living has been culturally imbibed into the soul of this nation with the practice of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy.

At Naad, we combine these ancient healing techniques to offer the key to a balanced and healthy lifestyle with a stronger body, mind and spirit. Just a short drive away from New Delhi, we are waiting for you to take the first step towards healing from within.

Schedule a call with our doctors and begin your journey towards wellbeing today!

---

Naad Wellness, Delhi-NCR, India

Call us on +91-124-6030-400 or e-mail us at [namaste@naadwellness.com](mailto:namaste@naadwellness.com)

 NaadWellness  naad\_wellness  naad\_wellness  [www.naadwellness.com](http://www.naadwellness.com)  Naad Wellness

