



Travel Links

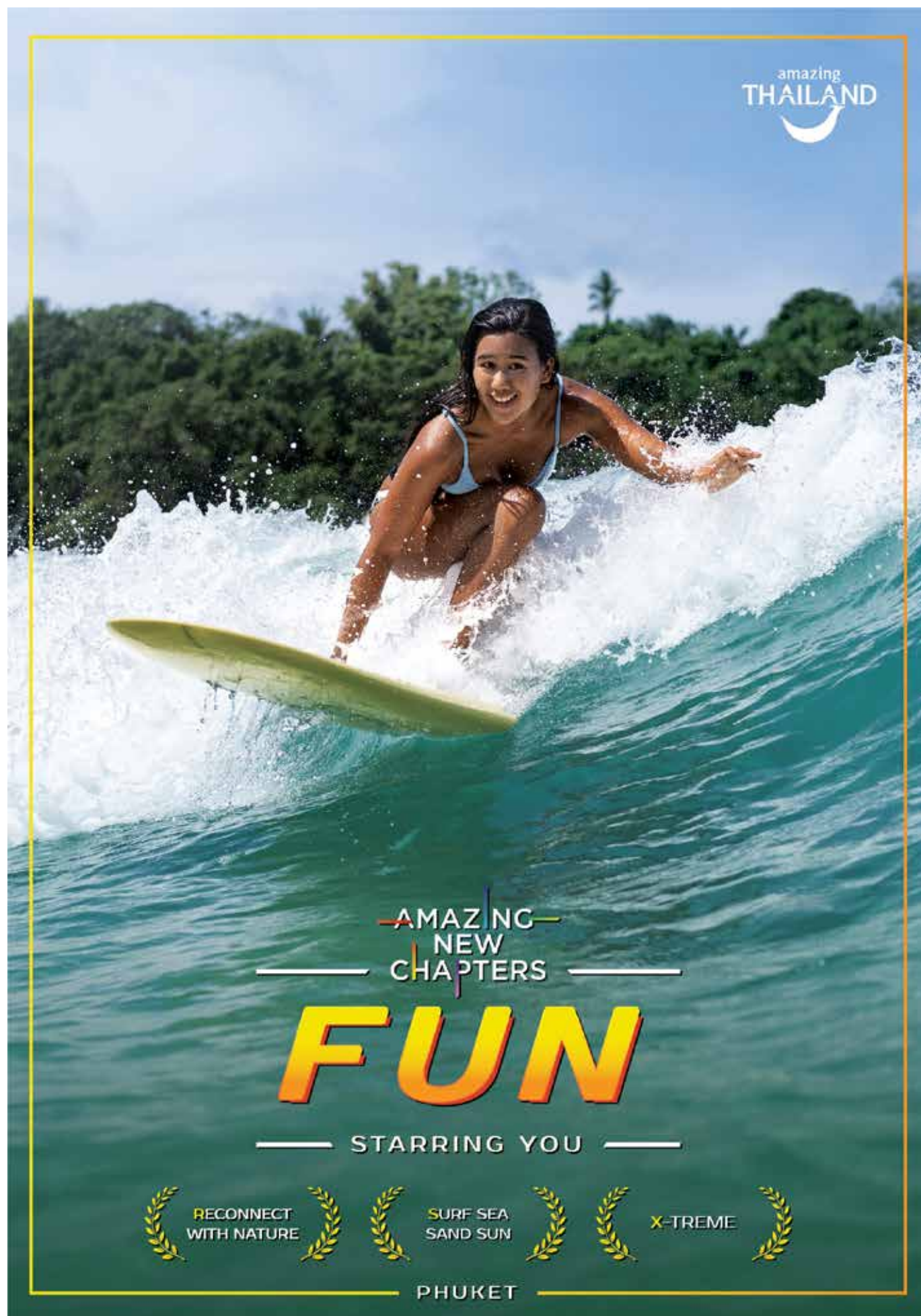
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HOSPITALITY
NAMASTE
to the neighbours!
DISCERNING
The Future of Tourism

South Africa



Travel Links

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Our childhood summer vacations were spent going to the ancestral home in the Kullu Valley and drinking water from the Jaarus, which means natural drinking water flowing from in between the mountains. The servants used to go and fill large pots of the copper vessels with fresh flowing water that was so digestive. We were perpetually hungry and use to eat freshly homegrown meals the entire day.

The taste of that water still remains vivid in my memory and how much urbanisation has revolutionized the restoration of water, hence the article on water bars.

Ekaanta which means solitude, an experience filled our minds and hearts with tranquillity, and peace when we seek mindfulness and try to incorporate values of sustainability into it, it is only rarely that you find places that align with your ideas. A retreat built in the holy land of Haridwar overlooking the magnificent Ganga, Experience by Ekaanta is one such place.

The tourism sector is a crucial source of revenue for countries all around the world. Not only does it further the economy, but it is also an important thread that connects different cultures. In recent decades, the sector has gained significant attention from governments across the globe, resulting in several campaigns and promotional activities. To understand where global tourism stands and where it is headed, we spoke to tourism representatives of Spain, Bhutan, South Africa and Malaysia.

Travelling is fast evolving. With increasing interconnectedness and awareness, cultural travelling has grown to be a favourite among travellers. This involves experiencing a culture from within, rather than as a tourist. And what better country to do this in than South Africa? The resplendent cultures, heterogeneous community life and complex history have made South Africa a curious study in nation-building. It is a country with incredible riches, stunning landscapes, exceptional biodiversity, and thrilling safaris.

We also have hiking experience of Trithan, travelogue in Brisbane and wonders of the ancient world.

We are also happy to present the current issue of Travel Links Magazine in ATM Dubai 2023.

Love and Light

Editor

Payal Sahni

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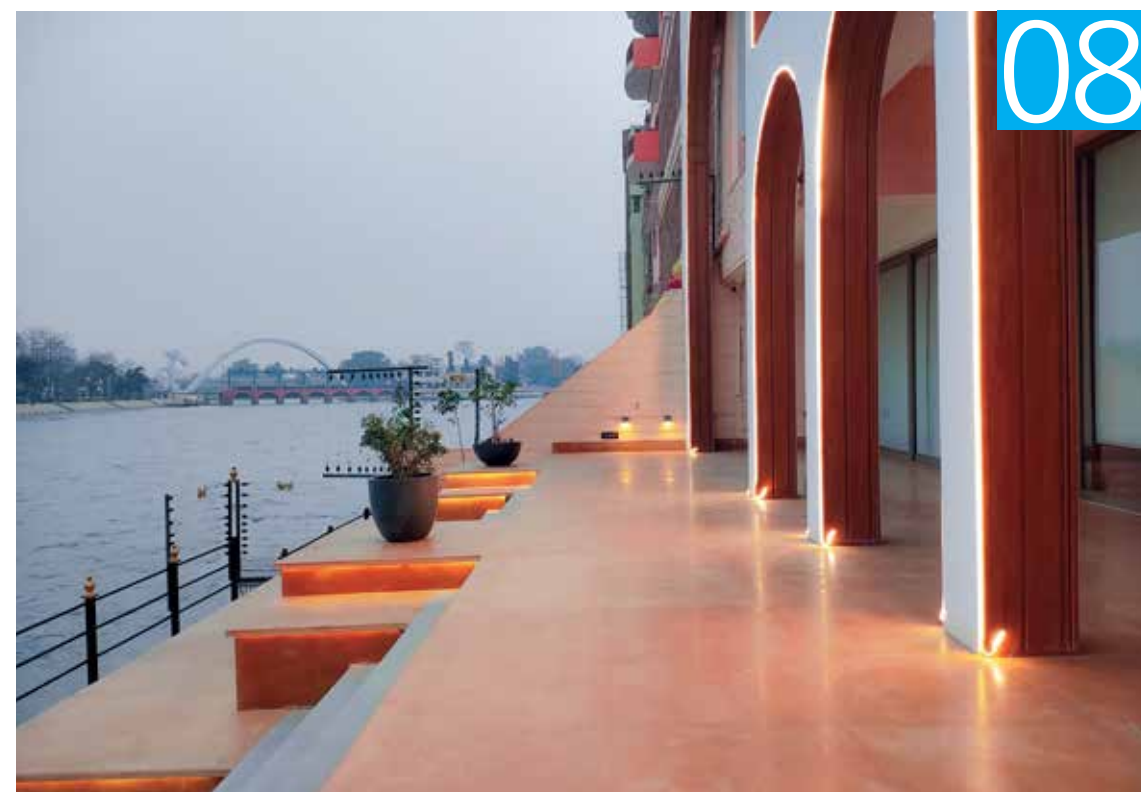
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Mindfulness, an Experience by Ekaanta

By Payal Sahni

When you devote your life to learning about mindfulness and trying to incorporate values of sustainability and portion control into it, it is only rarely that you find places that align with your ideas. A retreat built in the holy land of Haridwar overlooking the magnificent Ganga, Experience by Ekaanta is one such place. Ekaanta which means solitude is not your usual weekend getaway, but a place where you go to learn. You truly experience the world that surrounds you, you become more aware and centred, and most importantly, you learn more about yourself.

A luxury wellness retreat, Ekaanta emphasises on peace, relaxation and higher focus. The methods they teach are extremely

helpful in making your everyday life better. It is situated right on Har ki Pauri, a place of worship in Haridwar. Calm, serene and soulful- these words so aptly describe my feelings as I made my way through the place. I thought, “This is a place where I can find solace and be one with myself.”

The place where the resort now stands is where sadhus and saints lived. The now-owners, Shradha Lohia and Saumya Lohia-Agarwal are a mother-daughter duo. Strong and determined, they ideated Ekaanta, a process that evolved over a period of 10 years. They have the ability to beautifully synchronise their expertise: Saumya with her educational background in Economics and Finance has the sharpness of a businesswoman and Shradha with her great curiosity of the world of spirituality knows the needs of those who seek peace and

mindfulness. They transformed the location into a centre for mindfulness practices. Now it stands, tall and proud, beckoning every seeker with warm, welcoming arms.

I also became acquainted with Manvi Lohia, Shradha’s daughter and Saumya’s sister. She is a brilliant person with a strong grasp over her subject. With many accolades under her belt and having worked with world-renowned places, Manvi is an impeccably trained nutritionist. With special focus on diabetes and genetics, she has just finished her work as a lead researcher at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital. It was through our interaction with her that I learnt a lot about mindful eating.

Reaching the Place
The journey was absolutely hassle-free. We



made our way via Rourke on the Meerut Expressway, and reached within 4 hours. For those travelling by air, the nearest airport is the Jolly Grant Airport at Dehradun. From there, you can take a cab to reach the place. There are also a number of buses that ply to Haridwar from popular locations such as Delhi, Chandigarh, etc.

Experience by Ekaanta is a versatile location. It makes for a perfect weekend getaway for those living in Delhi. However, the place, being the meditative centre that it is, is ideal for those who want to spend longer durations, even months. After all, who would not want to take their time immersing themselves in the serenity of the holy city of Haridwar.

The Stay
The rooms are a unique blend of the

modern and the ancient. These rooms are the physical manifestations of Ekaanta’s philosophy of mindfulness. The architecture is so sublime with the rooms overlooking the Ganga that they emerge as wonderful reflective spaces.

Spacious and beautifully decorated, the living spaces lend an artistic stroke to the already enchanting place. The owners have found ingenious means of incorporating modern features to the property while maintaining its sanctity and heritage.

Additionally, the resort also offers “Prasanna Kutir”, meaning Huts of Happiness. These are designed masterfully to suit the needs of solo travellers. However, these are not just any rooms. We were informed that these were designed by Anagram (one of Architectural Digest’s

Top 50 Architects) to imitate the hexagonal shape of a honeycomb. The unique shape induces tranquil sleep even in the restless.

In my initial interaction with the people there, I understood that there has been much thought out behind even the minutest things.

The Soulful Bites
The meals at Ekaanta are the product of deep evaluation and planning. Every meal is prepared keeping in mind your needs and dietary requirements and taste. Since this is not your usual vacation but rather a retreat focusing on nourishing the soul and the body, meals are curated by trained nutritionists and chefs. On our first meal here, we were served an authentic Garhwali Thali. We were also able to interact with





Maanvi Lohia and Deepak Sharma, from whom we learnt a lot about mindful eating. The conversation over lunch proved very insightful- knowing what to eat, how to eat and when to eat, this forms the crux of mindful eating. I genuinely enjoyed the food served here. While it was absolutely delicious, it was also of the right amount and nutritional value. An amazing blend of local flavours, the meals were organic and wholesome. It was lovely to learn more about aspects that I was already passionate about.

EXPERIENCE BY EKAANTA

What makes Ekaanta unique is not just its healthy food and thoughtful architecture, but the wonderful and

enriching experiences they offer.

Tales by the Ganges

One of the most wonderful experiences for me was ‘Tales by the Ganges’. The expert story teller Shri Ankit Sharma ji shared some beautiful stories of the trilling river, the holy ghats and the vibrant history of the region. The calming atmosphere, the sound of the flowing Ganges and Ankit ji’s soothing voice- the entire experience was absolutely magical.

Yoga Session at Neeldhara

The walk to Neeldhara would be another memorable activity. The untouched and untamed beauty lies on the banks of the Holy river. The sounds of chirping birds and the fresh, clean air made the entire walk absolutely refreshing. The yoga and meditation session we had at the end on the river bank was both calming and rejuvenating.

Shibin-Yoku and Micro Yog

The most enlightening session for me, however, was the heartfelt conversations we had with Rajinder Ji. He specialises in

Shirin-Yoku, which is a Japanese concept of ‘Forest Bathing’. A wonderful session ensued in the Rajaji National Park on the outskirts of Haridwar. An esteemed yoga instructor, Rajinder ji is also an amazing person to talk to. A renowned master of yog, he is no stranger to the worries of human life. Performing yoga under his guidance was definitely a highlight of the stay, and the important lessons he imparted created a profound impact on me.

Sound Meditation on the Rocks

This was another unique experience. It is basically sitting atop rocks and absorbing the sounds around you. Listening to the splashing of the water against the rocks, the whistling wind and even your own breath makes you realise how much we gloss over in our everyday lives. It is an exercise in increasing our awareness of our surroundings, to stop once in a while and just listen.

Movie Under the Stars

What is a better end to your day than just lying down and watching your favourite movie? Now, exchange your ceiling for a roof of stars, and there you have it- Movie Under

the Stars. A perfect end to a perfect day.

Exploring the cities

Ekaanta also helps you plan your exploration of Haridwar and Rishikesh. We were able to witness the scintillating Ganga Aarti, and go on a Heritage and Culture walk in Haridwar. While the average traveller is no stranger to the magic of the Ganga Aarti, the Heritage and Culture walk was a truly educative experience.

Rishikesh

In Rishikesh, we first visited the Chaurasi Kutiya, which houses the famous Beatles Ashram. However, the place is more than just The Beatles. It is a group of 84 huts which used to be inhabited by sadhus. It is now an abandoned meditation ashram. With wonderful artwork and lush greenery, this is a prime spot if you want a peaceful meditation session. While it is in absolute ruins now, the area could seamlessly be revived into its former state of a serene meditation ashram. We also visited the Parmarth Niketan Ashram. A pleasant and beautiful place, the ashram with its statues of Hindu deities is a perfect visit for those wanting to explore the religious side of the town. It overlooks the river and

is a prime spot for viewing the Ganga Aarti. We then walked around the hill town and ate at the cafe “Kaafe” which offered a beautiful view of the Ganges.

New ways of exploring the mind

While we did have our fill of experiences, we were also exposed to new ways of exploring our spirituality. One was meditation through dance, a method where you enter a trance-like state simply by the act of dancing. As your body flows with the tune, the mind is opened to new possibilities. For those with a more religious leaning, chanting, praying and keertans are also windows to this new world of mindfulness. Ekaanta also caters to the needs of corporate retreats. With their well-equipped conference hall, knowledgeable professionals and thought-provoking presentations, a stay at Ekaanta would be beneficial to a team of stressed out, hardworking office-goers. The property is also ideal for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) and Events. With its private ghat and beautiful environs, Experience by Ekaanta would be a wonderful choice for any company planning a relaxing, yet insightful and incredibly helpful retreat for its employees.

The weekend retreat helped me relax my mind, understand mindful eating better and improved my yoga and meditative practices. My body was truly rejuvenated from the experience.

The views of the gurgling river, the ambiance of the rooms and the starry skies made me yearn to go back for a second visit. Under the expert guidance of yog instructors and dieticians, my personal life has seen considerable improvement. This is what makes Experience by Ekaanta stand out to me- the profound impact their teachings have on individuals. They have cracked the code to harnessing the power of a holiday with that of self-improvement.

What more could one want? My stay came to an end with an absolutely nutritious breakfast. It was now time to leave for Delhi, and along with the city comes the stress of managing a magazine. But my heart felt lighter and as I took my leave, I knew I was leaving a more enriched person. It is hard enough saying goodbye to Haridwar, which was a fond part of my childhood, but bidding adieu to an experience like the one at Ekaanta is even more difficult. [\[3\]](#)



Wonders of the ancient world

By Shanta S.

When we hear the word "wonders of the world", our mind immediately conjures up an image of Taj Mahal at the crack of dawn or the remains at Machu Picchu. What we may not think of are the wonders of a different age. While it may seem understandable that we often do not pay heed to what may no longer remain in physicality, we do miss out on learning about the world, its history and culture. Be it the enigmatic rituals of the Pharaohs of Egypt or the astute engineering of the Greeks,

decoding these mysteries adds flavour to life. After all, who would say no to stepping into a different time, a time where ships sailed past the Colossus of Rhodes or when prayers were said at the altar of Artemis. Hellenic travellers wrote poems and made art marvelling at these structures, proclaiming them to be "wonders". While regions left unexplored by the Greco-Romans have suffered in the process, we still get to learn about ancient marvels- structures and ideas that would have withered away if not for these accounts. The wonders still have a strong grasp over popular imagination. While all but one

have been unable to withstand the ravages of time, the poems and art works of those who did see these stupendous creations have fascinated historians. Efforts at excavation and linguistic analysis are in process, while many models replicating these structures have been made. The stories of these wonders also elucidate the cycle of time, the toppling of empires and the building of new cities. They are stories not only of destruction, but also of preservation. So we shall take a leap into the past, travel a few millennia and take a peek into the time when Pharaohs ruled Ancient Egypt and Zeus was worshipped in Greece.

Statue of Zeus
Installed in the fifth century BC in the Temple of Zeus in the city of Olympia, the Statue of Zeus was a towering 40 foot image of the King of Gods. Revered in Ancient Greece, it is believed that athletes offered sacrifices to the statue, promising not to cheat, before competing in the Olympics. The statue was made under the supervision of the famed sculptor Phidias who also built the Athena Parthenon.

A mixture of iconoclasm and natural disasters has completely destroyed any remains of the Statue of Zeus. Beginning in the 18th century, excavations have found archaeological remains of sculptures and columns of the temple. While the legendary statue itself has not been found, its depictions in artworks have helped historians reconstruct pretty accurate, albeit smaller, models. One of these is at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia and another at Kotsanas Museum of Ancient Greek Technology in Athens. While these may not inspire in you the awe that the original statue did in the minds of those who gazed upon it, they do help you understand the intricate sculpting and the replete



symbolism in Zeus' image. Moreover, even today, you can see the ruins of the temple in Olympia.

Temple of Artemis
Artemis, the goddess of fertility and hunting, was a central figure in Greek mythology. Her temple at Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) was built in the sixth century BC. It went through cycles of destruction and rebuilding,

until it was destroyed by Herostratus, who burnt it to the ground in search of fame in the fourth century BC. Considered one of the most beautiful creations of Ancient Greece, the destruction of the temple elicited unprecedented fury from the Greeks who forbade even the mention of Herostratus' name. Today, only the foundation and a solitary column of the once-magnificent





temple remain. However, the ancient city of Ephesus is a gem for any history enthusiast. Around the remains of the temple are Greco-Roman structures of Agora, the Library of Celsus, the Grand Theatre, and so on. Thus, even if the legendary temple no longer exists, a visit to Ephesus needs to make its way onto your bucket list.

Great Pyramid of Giza

Constructed over a period of two decades, the Pyramids of Giza are colossal structures of 5 million metric tonnes. While it is difficult to discern how such huge quantities were moved at a time of limited technology, the pyramids are testimony to the immense wealth and power of the pharaohs. The Great Pyramid remained the tallest structure in

the world for over 4000 years.

The northernmost (and tallest) pyramid, also called the Great Pyramid of Giza, is that of Khufu who belonged to the 4th dynasty. Constructed in 2550 BC, it is 481 feet tall. The middle pyramid of Khafre is 471 feet tall while the smallest pyramid of the lot is that of Menkaure, which is 218 feet.

Pyramids and their functionality have been mysteries for historians. While we know that pharaohs were mummified, the significance of the pyramids has been hotly debated. Were they a stairway for the spirit to reach heaven or did it have a deeper symbolism? Even as they remain mysteries, the city of Giza welcomes thousands annually to visit its world renowned pyramids.



Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

The mausoleum was built in the mid-4th century BC. It stood for 1800 years before being completely destroyed in an earthquake in the 1500s. The mausoleum was built as the tomb of Mausolus, the ruler of Caria, by his widow Artemisia II.

So, what was so special about it if it was just an ordinary tomb? Well, not only is the word “mausoleum” borrowed from the name of this magnificent structure, more tombs used it as a blueprint for its design. About 40m high, the mausoleum at Halicarnassus was intricately decorated with sculptures that depicted Mausolus’ life, and the Greek envisioning of after-life.

The entire structure was adorned with sculptures of animals and statues of gods and goddesses. However, the piece de resistance is the quadriga (a four-horse chariot) that stood at the top. Inside the chariot, the likeness of Mausolus and Artemisia II was sculpted. Today, only the foundation and a small museum stand at the original site, with the fragments preserved at the British Museum.

Colossus of Rhodes

The colossus was a statue of the Greek sun god Helios placed beside the harbour at Rhodes. While popular depictions portray it as straddling the harbour entrance, it seems improbable taking in considerations of the technology at the time.

Built in the 3rd century BCE to commemorate the end of Demetrius I’s siege of Rhodes, the statue was a colossal 104 feet high. It took 12 years to finish it (282 BCE), but an earthquake brought it to its knees in 226 BCE. However, it remained there till the

7th century CE until the statue was broken up and sold for scraps by invading Arabians under Muawiyah I. Today, there remain no discovered remains of it.

Historians are also unsure about the exact location of the statue. While some believe that it was built on the two existing pillars of the Mandraki harbour, others argue that it was not built over a port at all, but rather in the Acropolis of Rhodes.

Even on its knees, the statue continued to awe those who beheld it, and it was considered an exemplary indication of ancient technological feats. Emphasising the stronghold of historical legends over modern imagination, there have been talks of reconstructing the statue to boost the Grecian economy and to highlight world peace.

The Lighthouse of Alexandria

Finished under the reign of Ptolemy II of Egypt in 280 BCE, the Lighthouse of Alexandria has been the subject of keen interest for both scientists and historians. A marvellous engineering feat, the lighthouse was a colossal 350 feet, only smaller than the Great Pyramid of Giza at the time. Also known as the Pharos of Alexandria, it was a boon for the city as it guided ships safely to land. The light came off a burning flame that was reflected off a bronze mirror.

Atop the lighthouse was an enormous statue. In the 1500 years that the pharos stood, the statue could have been that of anyone- Alexander the Great, Ptolemy II, Zeus or Helios. It was subsequently toppled by continuous earthquakes that struck the region in the 14th century.

Excavations beginning in the 1960s

have discovered its remains underwater. UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is currently trying to add the Bay to a list of the World Heritage List of submerged sites. In 2016, the Ministry of State of Antiquities in Egypt turned the submerged ruins of ancient Alexandria, including those of the Lighthouse, into an underwater museum. Today, you can dive underwater and take a look at sphinxes, statues and other remains in the park. The entire experience is truly one of its kind.

Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The case of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon is a curious one. Not only is it the only Wonder whose very existence is questioned, its history (or, more precisely, legend) is utterly unclear. Historians debate on its exact location (Babylon or Nineveh), on who created it. (King Nebuchadnezzar II or the semi legendary queen Sammu-ramat) and on the engineering behind it.

Anyway, popular belief holds that the gardens were gifted by King Nebuchadnezzar II to gain the favour of his wife Amytis who missed the mountains and greenery of her homeland. The hanging gardens were a result of ingenious rooftop gardening, with vaults and terraces sealed with bitumen and reeds to prevent leaking.

Thus, while the Gardens remain a mystery, travellers and writers have recorded its beauty and its architectural brilliance. And maybe, it is not the magnificence of the garden itself, but rather its enigma that allures us.

The Ancient World was a fascinating place. Travel was a privilege- most people died without having stepped out of their city. However, those who did travel wrote extensively on their experiences. They saw the world for what it was- a marvellous wonder enhanced by the genius of humankind.

They were on a quest to understand what they saw, and that is our link to the past: the curiosity and the wonder that motivated travellers. The fact that structures that crumbled centuries ago still sway popular imagination shows the tenacity of history. Travellers of antiquity bestowed upon us the ability to discern the past and travellers of today embark on those same adventures to teleport to a time unlike our own. [\[1\]](#)



Weekend Getaway at Courtyard by Marriott

By Payal Sahni

The mark of a successful resort stay is the satisfaction you feel after it- the relaxation that seems to have permeated every bone in your body, and your mind that is finally at rest. Even though you know you need to take your leave, your heart yearns to stay; even it is for just a little longer.

This is what we felt on our weekend getaway to Courtyard by Marriott, located in the Aravali hills. It's a short car ride from Delhi, but the changing scenes outside the window were a mere reflection of our own changing temperaments. Having waved goodbye to the hustle and bustle of the busy cosmopolitan, we were ready to breathe in fresh air, take in the luscious greenery, and bask in the glorious winter sun.

A warm welcome

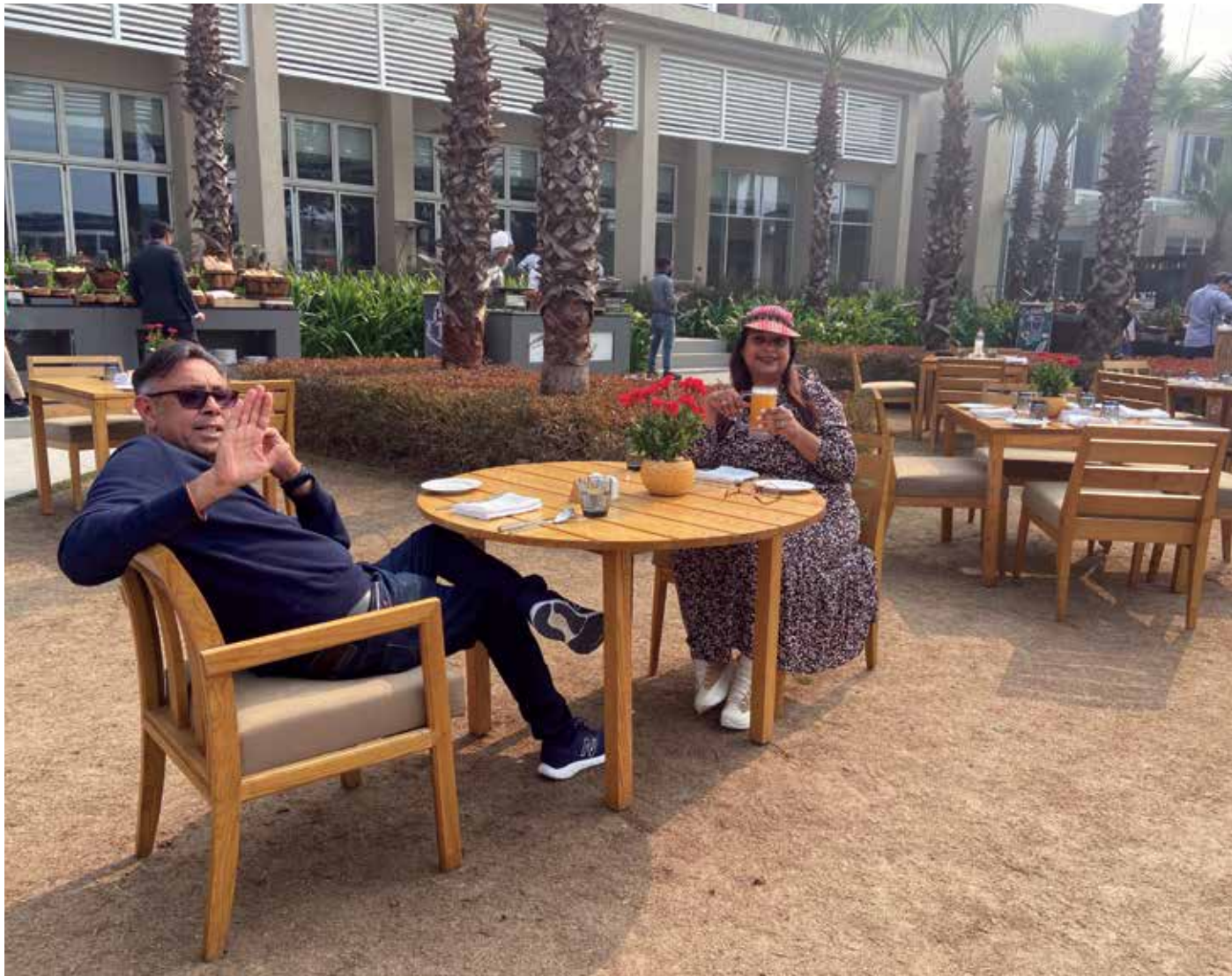
Our arrival in the resort was a pleasant one. Though tired from the journey, we were eager to take a look at this newly-inaugurated resort. Courtyard by Marriott is a secluded property that bows down to all your needs. The first thing that stood out to us was the vastness of the property. It is absolutely beautiful, with its turquoise pool and modern architecture. Additionally, the place is spotless. The sheets smelled so fresh, and the rooms, with their sleek decor and balcony overlooking the gardens, became our own little cocoons.

Delectable Food

Courtyard by Marriott has four distinct restaurants- Glaze, The Aravali Kitchen, Olive Grove, and Huang, in addition to the usual in-room dining option. Glaze is a beautiful, casual lounge with some of the most delicious teas and coffee. The Aravali Kitchen serves some of the most delectable and authentic delicacies of the region, while Huang is a Pan-Asian restaurant which embodies the culinary spirit of the East. However, it was the Olive Grove, with its poolside setting, vibrant Sunday brunch accompanied by a live concert that stole our hearts. Not only was the food scrumptious, the chefs were very accommodating of our needs. Since we eat mono meals and follow portion control, this stood out to us.

Sunday, the second day of our getaway, was my birthday. The staff went beyond their means to set up a barbecue in our backyard. When we told them that we did not prefer large meals such as these, they were accommodating enough to arrange a special in-room





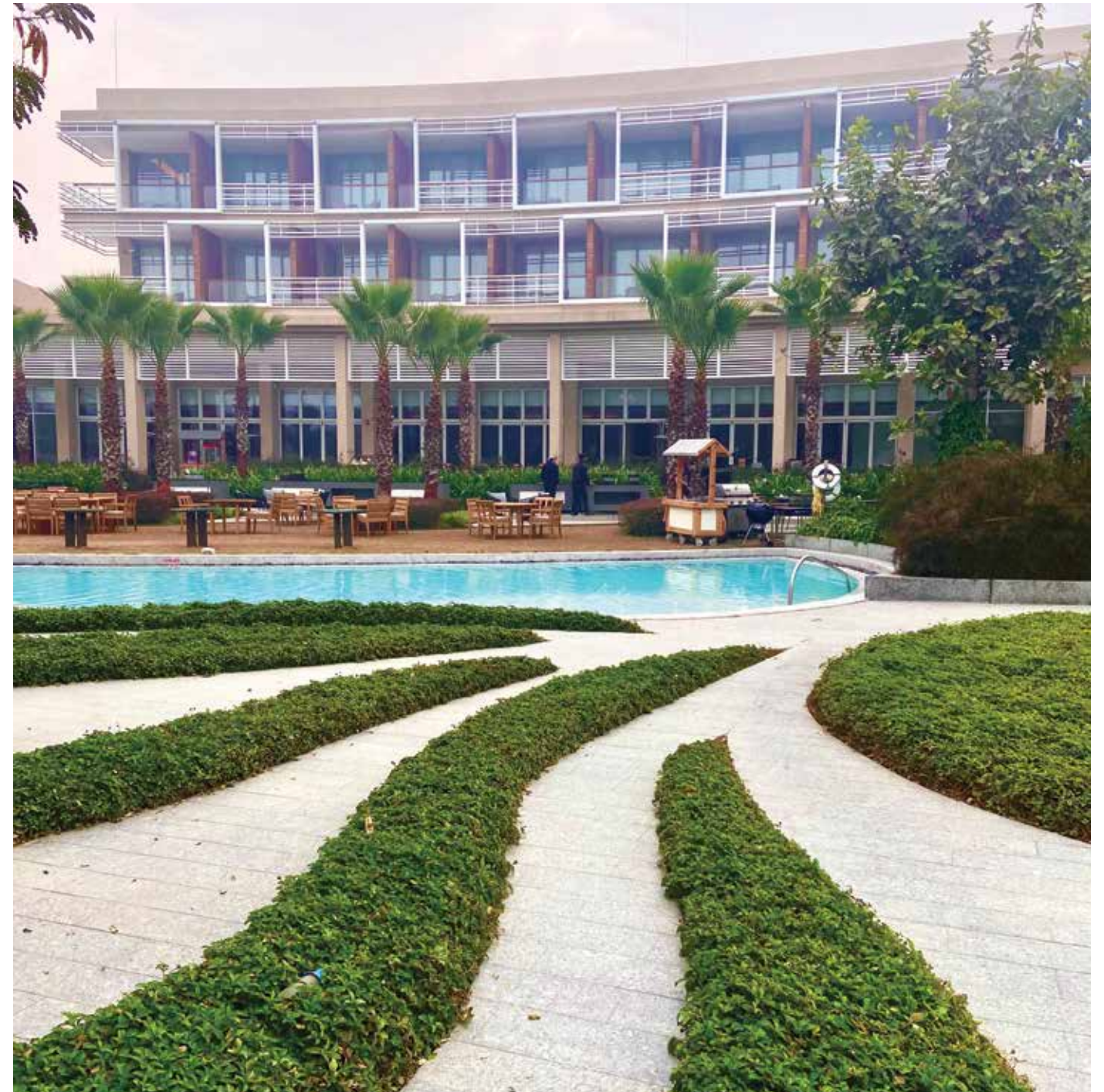
meal for us. The Sunday brunch is something you should definitely not miss. With a range of mouth-watering dishes, delicate desserts and refreshing beverages, it was a heartfelt experience. The sunny hours spent on the poolside with lively music playing captured the essence of a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Gracious Hospitality

The next most memorable thing for us at Courtyard by Marriott was the warmth of the service staff. The hospitality that we received here was truly one of a kind. The synergy among the service staff was exemplary, with everyone not only knowing their own roles, but also taking on some responsibilities of other members when necessary. There were multiple instances where their thoughtfulness and genuine care shined through. If we wanted a harder pillow, it was immediately provided. These few extra steps were a testament to their impeccable training.

Perfect Venue for Events

The Aravali Resort of Courtyard by Marriott has beautiful, sprawling rooms which are perfect for organising events. With over 20,000 sq ft. of indoor and outdoor area, the dream-like rooms of the resort would make for a gorgeous backdrop to your most cherished



memories, be it a wedding or an anniversary. The rooms are also equipped for any official meetings and events. What more, the lush green lawns, well-furnished indoor spaces, the hospitable staff and luscious decor make the resort the ideal destination for memorable gatherings.

Rejuvenating Spa

Another glistening example of the hospitality we received at Courtyard by Marriott was by the staff at the spa. I was in immense pain from having pulled my back. However, the masseuse gave me such a good massage that I came out feeling like I had been “fixed”.

The soothing atmosphere, the calming music and the experienced service staff made my time there truly therapeutic.

Our stay at Courtyard by Marriott was fulfilling. A true luxury experience which stands up to the Marriott legacy. We brought back the warmth of the service staff and the soulfulness of the resort with us. Waking up to the sound of birds chirping, going on walks in the serene calmness of the property and getting to explore its beauty- these are memories etched in our minds. Listening to the honking and traffic on my way back to Delhi, we yearned to go back to the tranquillity of Courtyard by Marriott. It has been aptly named “your urban retreat”.[\[1\]](#)

Everything you need to know about Water Bars

By Team TL

The idea of a water bar is something that has not yet been explored by Indians. For many of us, this might be the first time hearing of it. The idea in itself might seem ludicrous at first. After all, who needs a BAR for WATER! However, once you step into this truly fascinating world of water bars, your heart will keep yearning for it.

The sweltering summer heat is setting in. The parched throat refuses to be quenched even by a wide array of sodas and beverages. So, why not try out something new by stepping into a truly wonderful experience of a water bar.

Travel Links, India's top travel magazine presents a totally unique experience that you MUST try out!

What exactly is a water bar?

A water bar is a place where 'water-sommeliers', that is, people with the ability to differentiate between these types of waters, gather to partake in the joy of drinking truly delicious waters. As anyone would agree, water has taste. And it takes an expert with a refined palate to be able to differentiate between different types of waters. Water, depending on the brand and location can be salty, sweet, smooth, fruity, complex, metallic. For some, the differences in their tastes can be as profound as those in wines.

It is easy enough to taste the difference between brands, but only a trained tongue can even spot the source of the water, its depths to mineral consistencies. The makers of these waters tinker with different levels of magnesium, calcium and iron, among other minerals, to create the perfect experience. Additionally, many of these may be infused with different flavours. Cucumber, melons and strawberries are popular choices

for providing the perfect refreshment in summer.

The spread of Water Bars

While water bars are an established concept in the USA, other countries too are catching up. In 2016, London inaugurated its first water bar at Selfridges. Serving water treated with charcoal, minerals and herbs, the Water Bar was designed by Arabeschi di Latte. It was part of Selfridges' Project Ocean campaign which is committed to raising awareness of the danger that plastic poses to the world's oceans.

Water Bar DC in Washington DC is a bar dedicated to the art of water-tasting. They have 39 brands on their menu, serving 18 imported waters and 21 domestic brands. They also serve water-based cocktails. Similarly, the Crag Inn, a pub near Middlesbrough in UK is dedicated to selling water. The pub owner transformed the erstwhile ordinary pub to a water-based one after discovering a spring beneath his outlet.

Water menus

Some restaurants around the world have introduced water menus dedicated to providing their customers with an impeccable taste experience.

For example, in 2013, the Ray's and Stark Bar at the Los Angeles County Museum of Water. The 45-page curated water menu included 20 waters from 10 countries with wide-ranging prices. Petit Ermitage and Fellow in Los Angeles, and Biltmore Coral Gables in Coral Gables are also superb options.

In Italy, the La Pergola in Rome offers 55 different varieties of waters to choose from. Offering both Italian and international options, La Pergola is a dream for any true water enthusiast. I Du Matt in Parma and I Doria in Lerici are also good options.

The Great Room in Belfast (Northern Ireland) offers 13 varied brands, with the top being Iceberg Water from Canada costing £26.45 per bottle. They also offer waters sourced from local Northern Ireland.

At Claridges in London, you would be able to find a spectacular list of around 40 mineral waters from all over the world. These are sourced anywhere from Japan to Hawaii to India. AOC Aarø & Co in Copenhagen (Denmark) offers 8 different types of waters from 4 brands. They also have fascinating water pairing packages for £70.

In Asia, Paris 1930 in Taipei in Taiwan, Water Library in Bangkok and Fusion in Al Khobar in Saudi Arabia are leading names.

Paris 1930 has a water menu with ultra-premium labels which complement the oriental cuisine of the restaurant. The menus are expansive, informing about the country of origin and mineral levels. This is a must-visit for any true water sommelier. Restaurants and bars around the world charge differently for their waters depending on the brand.

What makes the water "special"

The waters in a water bar are no ordinary ones. Recent years have witnessed a surge in designer H2O. Of these, Japan's Fillico Jewellery Water holds a special spot. It comes from a spring in Kobe in Japan known for its purity and sweetness. Many of the waters served in these bars are sourced from pristine glaciers in Iceland to clear springs in Fiji and deep wells in Germany. The bottles in which they come are stylish works of art. A Swarovski crystal-studded bottle of this particular stuff will set you back thousands of dollars for a litre.

You might be wondering how water can be so expensive. The exorbitant prices are not simply because of the water itself. They are sourced from some of the most pristine parts of the world, and also have high brand



value. Additionally, many of these products are collaborations with projects that aim at conserving water resources. Much of the money generated is funnelled towards further research and conservation.

How to pair

It is best to consult the water sommelier at the restaurant. However, if they do not have one, try to order a wide variety of water brands which have different mineral levels. It is best to start with the water which has the highest mineral content and make your way to the one with the lowest mineral content. Waters with higher mineral content open up your palate, making it more sensitive to tastes.

Water bars in India

The idea of a water bar has not yet made its entry in India. India with its numerous fresh water springs, be it in the Nilgiris or far reaching parts in the North east, would make for an ideal venue for exploring the concept. Especially in regions like the Himalayas, each hill produces water that has a completely unique taste.

Upgrading technology required to maintaining the water at its correct temperature is also vital. Not to forget, it is equally important to maintain the health of these remote regions and not deplete their natural resources. All we need is an enterprising mind!

Water, the most abundantly available

liquid on the planet, is integral to human survival. There is nothing that can quench our thirst like it. The pain of not finding it when thirsty and the relief of gulping it down once you do is simply unparalleled.

Imagine this. You have had a long day and are exhausted. You make your way to your favourite bar, hoping to spend a couple of hours relaxing and having your favourite drink. It arrives, and you sip it. The coolness, the crystal-like sparkle and the absolute deliciousness makes it the drink of the gods!

Be it a wine or water, what difference does it make. The taste and satisfaction is still the same. Now, the idea behind water bars may not seem so ridiculous.☑

Recipe

FOR QUBANI KA MEETHA

Ingredients

250 Grams : Dried apricot with seeds
300 Grams : Sugar
300 Grams : Water
10 Ml : Rose water
3 Grams : Green cardamom powder
For vegan vanilla whip
250 Grams : Dairy free whip topping (sweetened)
10 Grams : Cornstarch
20 Ml : Water
5 Ml : Rose water
For cocoa spray
100 Grams : Cocoa butter
100 Grams : Vegan white chocolate
2 Grams : Orange food coloring (fat soluble)
For seabean & fennel sorbet
100 Grams : Fresh seabears
50 Grams : Water
25 Grams : Sugar
15 Grams : Liquid glucose
2 Grams : Fennel powder
20 Ml : Lemon juice
1 Gram : Sea salt
Lavender & almond soil
100 Grams : Almond slivers
100 Grams : Icing sugar
20 Grams : Tapioca maltodextrin
1 Gram : Lavender flower powder
100 Ml : Olive oil.

Equipments required:

Mini sphere moulds
(for qubani ka meetha inserts)
Mock apricot moulds
Chocolate spray machine
Ice cream / Sorbet churner



Method

1. For Qubani ka meetha, Soak dried apricot in water overnight. Once swelled, deseed and cook with sugar and cardamom powder. Strain & use the same water in which the apricots were soaked.
2. Keep cooking on slow heat until it gets thick compote consistency.
3. Turn off the heat, stir in rose water.
4. Allow to cool and freeze in small sphere molds.
5. For Vegan vanilla whip, Cook 100 Grams of vegan vanilla whip cream in a sauce pan.
6. Mix cornstarch with water & rose water to make a slurry, slowly stir in the boiling vanilla whip cream to make a custard.
7. Whip the remaining cream to soft peak consistency and fold in the custard.
8. Fill mock apricot molds with this vegan vanilla whip and insert the frozen qubani ka meetha spheres.
9. Allow to freeze for 12 hours in the freezer
10. For cocoa spray, Melt vegan white chocolate with cocoa butter.
11. Once completely melted, blend with orange food coloring, strain using a cheesecloth.
12. Fill in the chocolate spray machine at 40C & spray the frozen apricot desserts to get the velvety finish.
13. For seabean & fennel sorbet, Boil water, sugar, glucose, fennel powder, lemon juice & sea salt. Once completely boiled, blend with fresh seabears.
14. Strain using a cheesecloth. Allow to cool on ice bath and then further churn in ice cream / sorbet churner machine.
15. For lavender & almond soil, Toast almond slivers to get a nutty aroma. Mix everything together in a large mixing bowl and slowly rub with olive oil to get sand consistency.
16. For assembly, Decorate the apricot with chocolate leaf and assemble on a plate with lavender and almond soil, seabean & fennel sorbet and a dehydrated betel leaf.

RUCHIT HARNEJA

An IHM Bangalore graduate, I'm the brainchild behind the extremely innovative pastry program at one of the most opulent Indian restaurants – Musaafer, Houston.

Prior to joining this grand Indian jewel in Texas as an executive pastry chef, I used to look after the pastry operations at Andaz Delhi – a concept by Hyatt.

I began my career with the Taj Hotels group as a Teppanyaki chef at Wasabi by Morimoto. Later, I took over the pastry operations of the Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi.

I am not only well-known for my flavors, techniques, and expertise in Indian desserts, but also for inventing unusual ayurvedic spice blends, as well as using indigenous Indian superfoods.

My favorite dessert recently has become qubani ka meetha from Hyderabad. The humble preparation consists of boiling apricots with rosewater and cardamom until they resemble a thick compote. They usually serve it along with apricot kernels and thick cream.

I reinvented this traditional delicacy into a vegan dessert and remodelled it into the shape of an apricot using modern pastry arts techniques.

Betel chewing is a very popular practice in Indian culture after meals as a mouth freshener. So, I added dehydrated betel leaves to the plate to add a distinctive flavor with dimension. With an eye toward heterodox food pairing, I also added a very intriguing sorbet made with fresh sea bean and fennel to add a refreshing briny component as well as a soil of lavender & almonds to enhance textures & floral components.



Explore the magic of Thailand with your loved ones



This summer, unbox the magic of the pristine islands, beautiful temples and vibrant markets of Amazing Thailand with your family and loved ones! With its exotic beaches, adventure activities and enchanting culture, Thailand is a country that has it all. You can backpack; go with friends, as a couple, and even with your children. After all, what better way to spend your holidays creating wonderful memories with your loved ones?

Be it a day out exploring the street food and great shopping in Bangkok or blowing off steam on jungle hikes and canoe trips in KhaoSok National Park or simply relaxing at a luxurious resort, a visit to Thailand is

bound to be the perfect way to bond with your family and create memories for a lifetime. You can go rock climbing, kayaking, scuba diving or on a night safari. And while you are there having the time of your life, do not forget to snorkel among tropical fish in Ko Tao or Mu Ko Surin. The crystal clear waters teeming with brightly coloured fish and coral reefs are an object of utmost wonder for children.

Cities like Bangkok and Pattaya are a must visit for kids. Art in Paradise (a fascinating 3D arts museum), Safari World (with the chance to see hundreds of wild animals in their natural habitat), and Frost Magical Ice of Siam (with beautiful, huge ice sculptures) in Pattaya are some of the

places that cater to children of all age groups and are sure to make your family holiday an unforgettable one. Also popular waterparks such as Ramayana and Cartoon Network Water Park in Pattaya are must visit attractions for children visiting Thailand.

The beaches of Thailand are some of the most exquisite in the world. If you want a relaxing getaway with your loved ones, opt for one of the serene beaches in Krabi Province. On the other hand, if your family yearns for thrill and adventure, head over to Phuket Island. Klong Dao Beach is one of the best places to visit with children. With its string of kid-friendly bars and restaurants and plenty of play area, it makes for the perfect family destination.



Last but not the least; delve into the local culture and cuisine of Thailand. Take a bite of its delicious and flavorful local food, and even try a simple Thai cooking class with your kids! Be it the humble Som Tam salad, the comforting Tom Yum soup or the popular Mango Sticky rice dessert, eating in Thailand is bound to be a gastronomical treat.

The biggest and widely celebrated festivals in Thailand are Songkran (the Thai New Year) in April and Loy Krathong celebrated in November. Songkran is an amazing time to visit Thailand as it marks the beginning of the traditional Thai New Year. For Thai people, the New Year period means family gatherings to enjoy festive meals and uphold holiday traditions. One very important Songkran tradition is paying respect to elders. For this, Thai children gently pour, scented water over the palms of parents and grandparents as an act of gratitude and devotion.

Loy Krathong festival is a beautiful amalgamation of Indian and Thai cultures. During this festival, krathongs (small boats made of banana leaves) are decorated with candles, incense and flowers, and set afloat into the waterways. It is the Thai way of



The biggest and widely celebrated festivals in Thailand are Songkran (the Thai New Year) in April and Loy Krathong celebrated in November. Songkran is an amazing time to visit Thailand as it marks the beginning of the traditional Thai New Year. For Thai people, the New Year period means family gatherings to enjoy festive meals and uphold holiday traditions.

asking forgiveness from Ganga, the Goddess of Water. This unique festival is celebrated across Thailand as is a must experience for visitors.

The friendly and warm Thai people, beautiful nature and wide range of tourism offerings make Amazing Thailand stand out as a holiday destination. The experience of exploring the country with your friends and family is bound to fill your heart with joy and cherished memories. Spread the love for travelling and bring your loved ones with you to the Land of Smiles. [📌](#)

ODE TO THE NONPAREIL NORTH-EAST



By Team TL

Magnificence dwells in every nook and corner of the Indian subcontinent. One may entitle this country to a poet's poet-verse, a business arena, or a traveler's utopia; all titles will adorn the country's status. Eclectic landscapes, cultures, languages, and culinary delicacies transition every few kilometers. This makes the organization of a trip tricky as no two states are the same. In spite of this, many travelers bypass the breathtaking views of North-east due to its lack of promotion.

Continuing to be well-known is its diverse and varied culinary culture. The topography, climate, and ethnicity of North East India have all had an impact on the region's complex and distinctive culinary culture. The area is renowned for using fresh ingredients, flavorful herbs, and spices that give its food an exceptional flavor. Momos, thukpa, chhang, bamboo stalk pickles, and smoked meat are some of the most popular foods. Several recipes use bamboo shoots, and the food is prepared in an old-fashioned earthen pot over a wood fire. North East food flavors and smells are a treasure trove that will excite one's taste

senses and leave them wanting more. Persistent efforts are being made by both the state and central authorities, along with the travel industry core practitioners to boost a healthy travel culture in the eastern part of the country. A visit to these places can be planned as the inner traveler craves a place to awe at the scapes:

Varshey 'Sikkim' a trek junkie's charm!

For travelers looking to spice up their journey with excitement, Varsey Trek in



Sikkim is the ideal location. Given that it rises to 3300 meters, a hike can be pursued. There is a huge variety of plants and fauna along the trail, making it unique. One can even reserve campgrounds to stay under the stars during the three-day trip. This will

give this area an otherworldly shade thanks to the red and yellow Rhododendron plants. Best time to visit: October to May

Krem Puri Caves, Meghalaya
The longest sandstone caves in India are in



Meghalaya at Krem Puri. The 24,583-meter-long caves were only recently discovered in 2016 and if a traveler's ever wanted to embark on a spelunking trip, this area offers everything required. The Krem Puri cave is a treat for archaeologists looking for prehistoric fossils. Stay can be planned in Shillong, followed by a transit of 90 kilometers to the village of Laitsohum, where the caves open out, to get here.

The ideal months to explore are May - September.

Anini, Arunachal Pradesh
A fairy tale comes true in Anini. This area of the Dibang Valley is Far East and less explored. It is a dream come true to live in a wooden hut next to a river, waking up to the sounds of singing birds and insects, and relaxing by the river listening to the stream melody.

Nongriat Village, Meghalaya
Nongriat is a little settlement deep within Cherrapunji's jungle. There are no highways passing through this village, which is completely cut off from urbanization. The closest one can get is Tryna village on the road. From there, the journey continues up and down a set of 3600 stairs to get to the



village. This area is a refuge for hikers and contains the "Double Decker root bridges," a hidden gem. 600-year-old bridges are constructed from banyan trees' living roots. Also, this location features a sizable waterfall known as "Rainbow Waterfall" and other miniature turquoise pools with waterfalls.

Tamenglong, Manipur
Tamenglong is close to the border between Manipur and Myanmar in the west of the state. A fantastic place to stay if one wants to see rare orchids, uncharted forests, lush meadows, and magnificent waterfalls. This spot, known for rare bird sightings, is ideal for adventurous travelers. When visited during the rain, the Buning Meadow is a visual pleasure. The scene is bizarre as the entire meadow turns rich green. Tharon Cave is another well-liked adventure destination. The cave's 655.6 m length makes it seem like a time gate. This location is ideal for nature lovers because it has a lot of forest cover. This makes it quite likely that they may see the infamous tiger here as well as several uncommon bird species.

Well, it isn't just it. This part of the country desperately awaits your arrival and is ready to shower the visitors with serenity.

Whilst certain individuals have been overlooking the charm of the north-east, our current government can be seen taking a significant interest in that part of the country primarily to resist international and geopolitical tensions on those fronts and to ease up the burden that is being faced by the rest of the states due to the flooding numbers of tourists as an entirely new venture in the world of travel is presented in a diligently polished manner.

Following are certain steps being taken by the government to promote trade, tourism, and work culture in North-east [source: pib.gov.in]:

With technical assistance from NITI Aayog and UNDP, MDoNER created the nation's first district-level SDG Index. North Eastern Area's growth trajectory relies heavily on this unique tool. Based on a district indicator framework specific to the northeast, the SDG NER index uses 84 indicators to gauge NER progress on 15 SDGs. SDG India Index aligns with it.

PM-DevINE is a 100% Central Sector Program launched to address the backlog of developmental work in the 8 NE States. It aims to fund initiatives with a major impact to promote the region's rapid and all-encompassing development.

Eighty projects totaling Rs. 2598.15 crores have been approved under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) for the region's tourism-related infrastructure, including connectivity, power, and water supply.


SAMBHAV (Saturation of Model Blocks and Villages) is a mission-mode program designed to help isolated and underdeveloped communities reach their full potential and gain access to essential resources and opportunities. It is prioritized in NER and aims to aid these communities in their quest for better governance and access top techniques and case studies from around the nation.

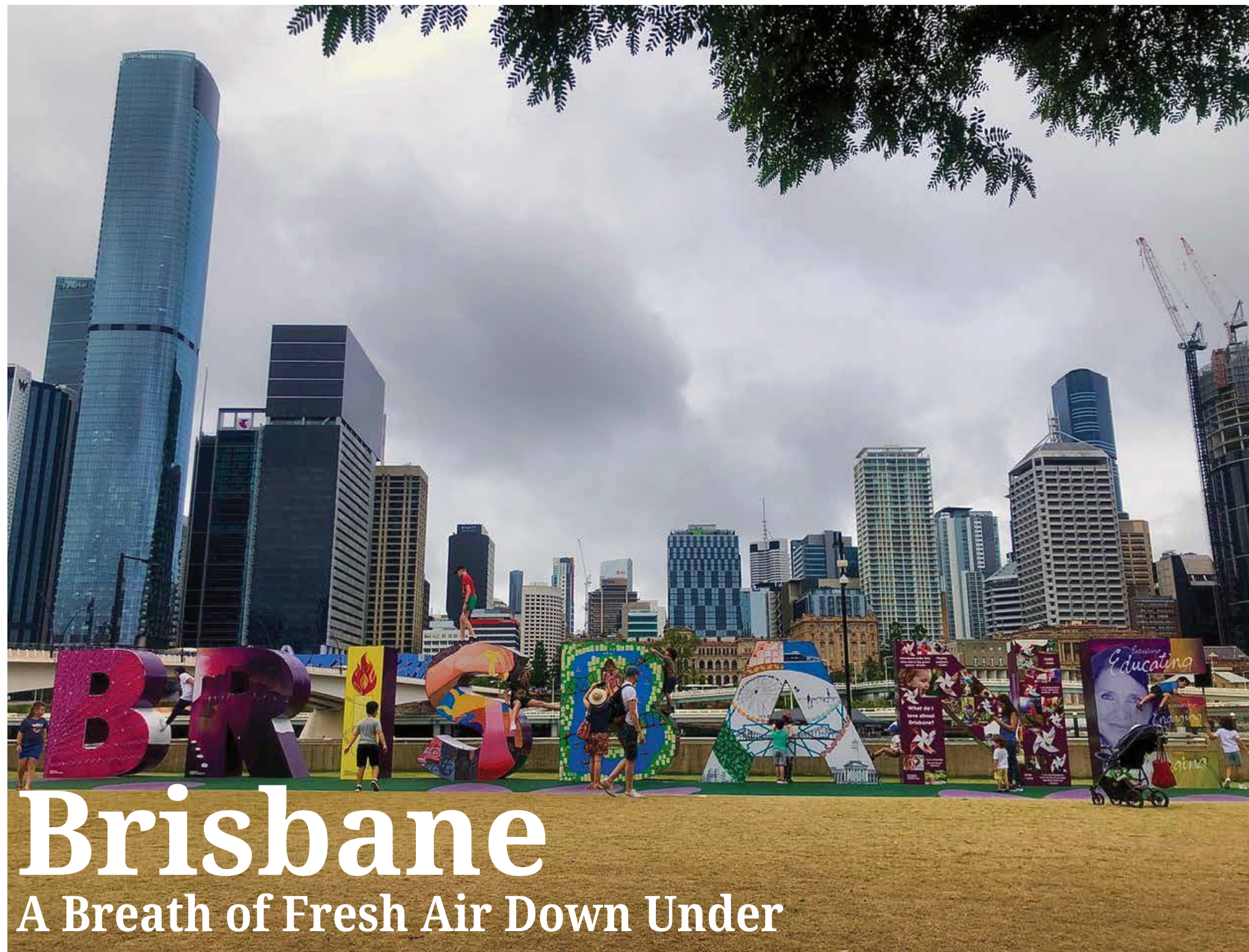
An enormous number of tourists visit North East India each year due to its rich cultural heritage and beautiful natural surroundings. The total turnaround of the northeastern states has been one of the PM Modi Ji's administration's greatest successes. The shift these states have seen since 2014 is characterized by seamless connectivity, quick infrastructure development, peace, stability, and inclusivity.

As India's entryway to Southeast Asia, he saw the northeastern states. The Agartala-Akhaura rail and the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway are only two of the projects actively being worked on to realize this promise. They will revolutionize the area once finished.

While government policies have fostered a stronger sense of national identity that serves as a better yardstick to judge their effectiveness than statistics or facts. Has it eliminated the psychological hurdles keeping the Northeast out of the mainstream? The administration has been extraordinarily successful in this area.

The Hornbill Festival, Nagaland's largest annual cultural event, draws tourists from throughout the nation annually. Within months of taking office as prime minister, PM Modi launched the Hornbill Festival in 2014 in an entirely new and vibrant form.

Northeastern states are now India's greatest growth sources after being disregarded for decades. The key to maximizing this synergy is to foster seamless interconnectedness among all citizens across the nation. In addition, it is to manage cultural assets in every region that honor these states' rich history. North East region is a stunning and diverse travel destination with something to offer everyone. 



Brisbane

A Breath of Fresh Air Down Under

By Gautam Singh Kanwal

The east coast of Australia is dotted with quite a few tourist friendly locales, few of which I had the good fortune of visiting in sunny Queensland, Brisbane being one of them. The capital of Queensland and also the

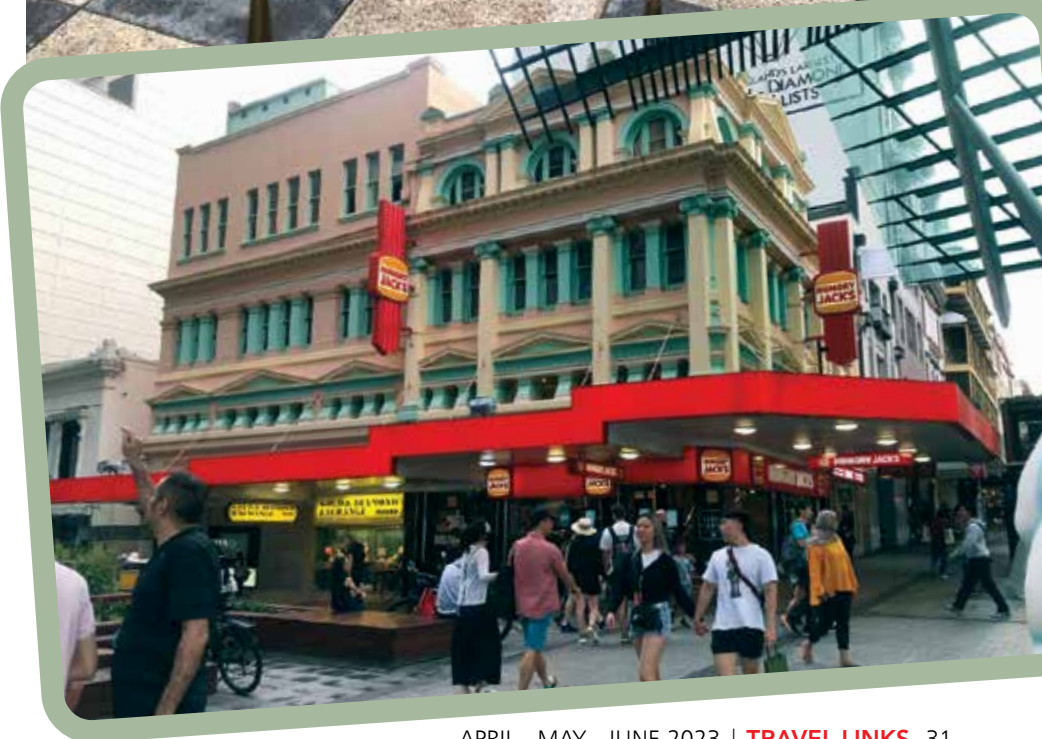
3rd largest city in Australia, Brisbane has adequacy in sight-seeing and many other experiences for a decent 4 days tour of the city.

Sydney being on the east coast as well is usually the major attraction for tourists, but skipping Brisbane might not be all that wise a move as Brisbane has a lot to offer

from wildlife, city-street life, parks, bare nature, beach experience, riverside views, etc. embellished with perennial pleasant climate. In short, it's a great place to explore all round the year. While Brisbane may feel a bit expensive by some standards it is reasonably priced in everything when compared to the other big cities in Australia.

So here are some spots in Brisbane that are worthy of every traveller's time.

Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary: This is the world's oldest and largest Koala sanctuary, and for 49 Australian Dollars you can spend an entire day immersed in admiring the local fauna. You will come out quite educated in many aspects of wildlife. I never





knew that a baby Koala weighs just about 1 gram at birth. Australia's most lovable native resident can be seen up-close and their playful demeanour is sure to melt your heart. And it's not just Koalas that you get to see up-close here, but cohorts of kangaroos, sheep dogs as well apart from catching glimpses of Tasmanian Devils, wombats, Kookaburras, duck billed platypus and Emus among other local fauna. A full day can be kept aside to be spent here comfortably if you're a wildlife buff. There's a well provisioned canteen-restaurant for meals and has a nice souvenir shop side by side. As a heads up, if you plan on holding / hugging a Koala for a pic, which is not possible in most other sanctuaries, book the ticket for it online and well in time. Counter tickets are mostly sold out as these are in very high demand and the time slots for this activity are limited and fixed. Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary is sure to fill your heart with joy in abundance.

Botanical Gardens: Lush green environs that reach far and wide in expanse (well over 100 acres) are placed well adjacent to the river. A peaceful recluse style area to calm the mind, away from the madness of the everyday and mundane life. The gardens are all organic. There are separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians running through the botanical gardens. On certain evenings you could spot some event or live performance being held here. The botanical gardens have beautiful ponds which were once shared by the garden's original natural creeks. Stylish sculpture adorns some areas of the gardens and are a real treat to watch. Over 20 species of bamboo are planted in a dedicated grove as a special collection. Entry to the botanical gardens is free and it's a thing not to miss if you're in Brisbane, whether for work or vacation.

South Bank Parklands: This is the perfect place for morning walks as well as evening walks or runs. Laced with rows of trees, street bands playing foot tapping music, eateries, etc. this place can't be missed. Soak in the majestic views of the towering skyscrapers of Brisbane and have fun clicking pictures against the



'BRISBANE' sign. You can enjoy a 'City Cat' ride across the river. A city cat is a fast and compact ferry that runs across the Brisbane river to designated wharves. It's never a bad idea to roll on the river on a cute ferry. The South Bank Parklands are another area where an entire day can be spent. Restaurants, pubs, cafes, shops, vendor stalls in plenty to keep your mood in a steady holidaying temperament. There is a Performing Art Centre within the premises and the promenade along the river leads to a beach where one can leisure laze. A great place to dine nearby is the 'Riverland Brisbane'. This is a very popular bar and kitchen overlooking the river and great views can be enjoyed in the evening as the sparkling lights and neon signs light up the city skyscrapers glowing on the glistening

river. In case you're here on New Year's Eve, a great fireworks show can be enjoyed from this spot as you witness 18 minutes of spectacular madness with colourful fireworks blazing into the sky welcoming the New Year.

Story Bridge: Every popular city across the world has a prominent landmark which gains iconic status among world travellers. In Brisbane it is the story bridge. A view of the heart of the city is best seen from here. Motorists, cyclists and pedestrians use this bridge equally and a lot of people just spend their time gazing at the gushing river, watching vessels pass under and the city sights on either side. You can do some adventure climbs on this bridge if you have a slight thrill seeking bent of mind. In fact, this is one of only three bridge climbs in the entire world. Once you get to the top with a safety harness you will walk a suspended walkway which is the thrilling part and the view from the top is the icing on the cake.

ANZAC War Memorial: Engage yourself in the history of Australia's and New Zealand's contribution in the 2 World Wars as well as the Boer war (South African War). ANZAC is short for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps and the cynosure of the memorial is the Shrine of Remembrance where an eternal flame is lit and kept burning at all times in memory and honour of the brave martyrs. Flamboyant bronze architecture in the parks that depict the ultimate sacrifice made by the soldiers will leave visitors in awe. Visiting this





place early in the morning will give you a freshness and quietude as there is no crowd and the place feels absolutely calm and unbelievably silent.

Queen Street Mall: Shop, eat, get entertained, relax all at one place. In close proximity of the Brisbane City Hall and King George Square, Queen Street Mall is easily accessible by Bus, Taxi and even by foot if you're staying at the city centre area. I had stayed at the Holiday Inn which is at the city centre and is just a 10 minutes' walk from the Queen Street Mall. A plethora of options are available on what to eat from a variety of cuisines. Quite a few restaurants with open air seating arrangements and live bands are here which create an exciting atmosphere. 'Pig N Whistle' is popular for breakfast at the Queen Street, while 'Strike - Bowling Bar' is a full-on entertainment pad with not just bowling, but laser tag, pool tables, karaoke and more. Ample of locations for Instagram worthy selfies are all over the Queen Street Mall. Though most restaurants close around 9 pm there's a 24 hours restaurant-cum bar here by the name of 'Jimmy's on The Mall' which has ample tables indoor and outdoor and has a great vibe throughout the day. Showrooms of major high-end international brands and Australian brands are located here for shopaholics could go out of control. Some classy souvenir shops are well positioned by the main street such as 'Nextra' which have a wide range of mementos and gift options to take back home. Queen Street is a must-must when in Brisbane. Museum of Brisbane: Learn about the city's history, its evolution from its past to its present. The museum is at a stone throw distance from Queen Street Mall which is a rising Victorian style architecture building with a soaring clock tower rising above the main structure supported by 8 columns at the entrance. The museum showcases various exhibitions including a special one on the famous World Expo which was held in Brisbane back in 1988 and is remembered as a major event in Australia's history. The theme of the museum mostly depicts the city's development as well as the



social history of the Brisbane populace. A great collection of photographs is on display dating back to the mid 19th century period. You would be amazed by these photos as you see the stone, timber houses from that period, the horse drawn carriages as their vehicles and then realize the amount of development and transformation the city has gone through to be where it is at present. This museum will surely be an enjoyable visit. Commendable amount of effort and record keeping / archiving has been done to maintain this museum in the way it has been.

Mount Coot-tha: Well, ask anyone the best place around for a great view and you'll be guided to Mt Coot-tha. The drive to the top is very picturesque as well with lots of greenery to sooth the eyes. Situated at the outer fringes of Brisbane city limits, the almost 1000 feet high hill top offers a stunning panoramic view of the city. Neat cafes at the hill give a perfect blend to the ambience as you watch a serene sundown on the Brisbane Skyline including glimpses of Moreton Bay. A lot of picnic areas are set up within the forest area to enjoy family time in a peaceful environment. And there's Botanical garden here too (Mount Coot-tha Botanical Gardens), which also has a free of cost entry. There's



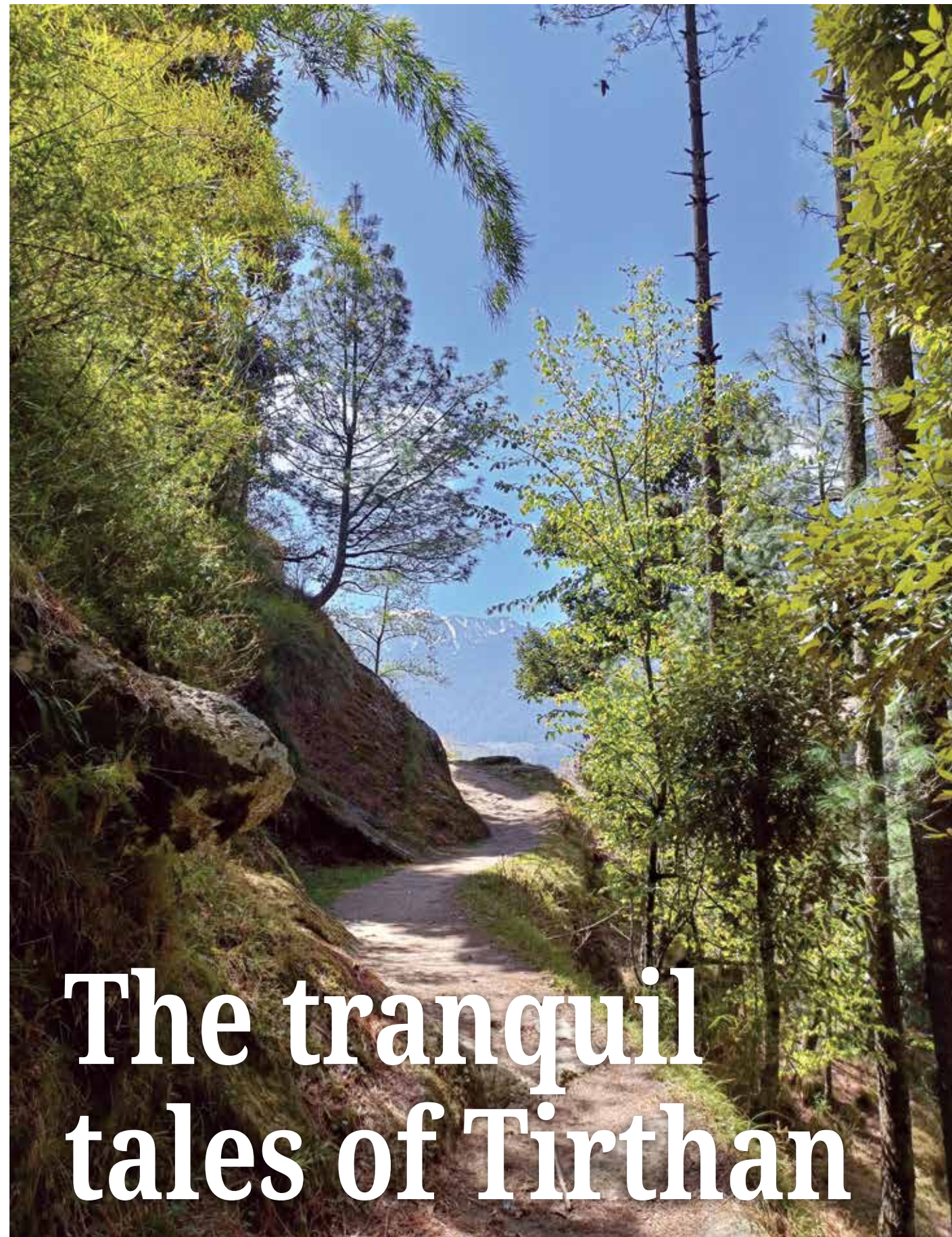
certainly much more to do in Brisbane, for e.g., there are a number of beautiful old churches in the city and even a Nepali temple (Peace Pagoda) that you can visit. You can hop on to a train and go to Goldcoast (one-hour ride) for a beach holiday where 70 kms of sandy beach enthral surfers. I'm sure you'll discover much more than I've listed out in this article if you ever visit

Brisbane.

While Brisbane doesn't pop up as a major tourist destination on popular media, a trip to Brisbane will make you think as to why it's not listed among trending tourist destinations. You will realise that this city deserves much more attention than it has got so far on the tourism front. It might end up being one of your favourite trips.

• GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL •

The above article is authored by Gautam Singh Kanwal (Master Mariner) who works aboard Merchant Ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. Having traversed the globe fairly well, he has collected rich experiences from different parts of the world. An avid for travelling, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time. Find him on Instagram@gsk9.polaris



The tranquil tales of Tirthan

By Shanta S.

Situated in the Himalayas is Tirthan Valley. It is a quaint region with villages peppered on cascading hills. We, my family and I arrived here in March 2023. It was an overnight trip by bus lasting around 12 hours. We got off at Aut and made our way by cab to Gushaini where our resort was. The ride was approximately an hour long, and my heart soared as I peeked out the window. I was transfixed by the beautiful environs. Lush greenery, clear skies, and clouds like cotton candy I was enchanted. Wide-eyed, I tried to take it all in, afraid to miss out on any detail. After all, it was these 4 short days that were to sustain me for several months till my next trip.

How to reach

We went by HPTDC's New Delhi to Manali bus which cost Rs. 1600 per person. The seats were quite comfortable to sit in although sleeping in them was not the best experience. There are several Volvos and private buses that ply between New Delhi and Manali that would take you through Aut. You could also take state transport buses which would cost you around Rs. 700. From Aut, we took a cab to Gushaini, our destination, which cost us Rs. 1500. There are also local buses that will take you to Gushaini which would cost around Rs. 150 per person.

Buses are the easiest and most direct way to reach Gushaini. Travelling by Himachal roadways is always a pleasure. The view that meets your eyes when you awake in the morning and the consequent exhilaration is quite unmatched.

However, you may also choose to travel by train or by air. The nearest railway station is Kiratpur which is around 200 km from Gushaini. From there, you may take a cab or the local bus. Chandigarh and Ambala Cantt railway stations are also considerable options.

If you want to travel by air, the nearest airport is Bhuntar. This is the most expensive option with tickets costing around Rs. 4000. However, it is also the least time-consuming with the air travel lasting 1.5 hours. From there, you could take a taxi to Gushaini which would take you around 1.5 hours. Chandigarh, Dehradun and Dharamshala airports are other options.

When to visit

The best time to go to Tirthan Valley is from March to June. The weather is beautiful though a little chilly in March. From May, you would be able to see the hillside in full bloom with pears, cherries, apples, apricots, persimmon, and walnuts sprouting on trees. July to September witness the monsoons and are not the best time to visit the valley.

If you love chilly winters, November to February is the time for you. Temperatures drop to -5 degrees. For a week in January,

there is snowfall here. However, some places like Sarchi would be covered under 5 feet of snow, making it unviable to visit.

What I packed

Since I visited Tirthan in March, I packed a couple of sweaters, a sweatshirt and a jacket. On all days, I wore a woollen top, a sweatshirt and in the evenings, a jacket on top. My jacket also helped when it got pretty windy at times. Make sure to pack a good pair of sports shoes since you will





have to walk a lot, and do not forget your sunscreen!

The resort

We reached the resort exhausted from the journey. But I needed no rest. The place was just too beautiful to not be explored immediately. With a stone and wood facade, the cottage was a stunning visual. The interiors were masterfully decorated with intricately carved wooden panels, skilfully painted Himalayan birds and comfortable furniture.

The rooms were bliss to stay in. It was a penthouse housing 4 people with all amenities- running hot water, room heater, etc. With a direct view of the river, the balcony soon became my favourite

spot. The room cost us Rs. 10,000 per night, including taxes and breakfast. Lunch and dinner were paid buffets and they charged Rs. 500 per person per meal.

Two things remained constant throughout the trip- the river Tirthan and the vibrant red Rhododendrons (locally called Brans). The river was a musical being. She meandered her way around the rocky beds, descending the valley as a steadfast presence. Sometimes she roared, at other points, she gurgled, but she was always there. The white foamy waters, the coolness that emanated from her and the melodic tunes made her a dear companion during my stay in The Valley.

Rhododendron was a beautiful flower that decorated every path we walked on.



It was also an intimate part of Himachali culture, heavily featuring in beverages, food and festivals. I was quick to fall in love with the rhododendron juice, having at least 5 glasses every day!

A curious experience

There were aspects of the trip that I was unfamiliar with. The serene silence here was somewhat eerie to me. As someone born and bred in noisy cities, it was strange to be in what seemed absolute stillness. Where were

The night sky was pitch black and curiously starless. This was the kind of darkness you could only see in the hills. While the lights from lone houses twinkled on faraway mountains, the stark contrast between this night sky and the permanently lit one I see in Delhi was evident to me.

the roaring bullets that woke me up every morning or the Municipal van doing its daily rounds around the colony blasting its jingle? All I could hear here were the gurgling river and the chirping birds. Even more shocking was the clean air. I am sure my Delhiite lungs were bewildered and somewhat panicked with the sudden ease in breathing!

The night sky was pitch black and curiously starless. This was the kind of darkness you could only see in the hills. While the lights from lone houses twinkled on faraway mountains, the stark contrast between this night sky and the permanently lit one I see in Delhi was evident to me.

Itinerary

Chhoi Waterfalls

On our first day here, we made our way to Chhoi Waterfalls. It was a 2km trek (one way) from the closest motorable road. The trek was pretty straightforward requiring only basic agility and fitness. Most of the path was made of stone making it easier to



find footing. However, this did not mean that I did not struggle. I had to concentrate on my breathing and take regular rests on the way. So much for trying to be physically fit!

Here too, the river flowed next to us. Two young girls offered to take us through the trails. They hopped across rocks and skipped through mushy patches. Their warm, smiling faces and constant chattering made the experience so much better.

The waterfalls were a wonderful sight. They fell from a height of around 300 feet, spraying all those who stood around the pool with water. Standing there, feeling the cold water splash on my face and the chilly breeze making my face go numb was an exhilarating experience. Having sat there to our heart's content, we then made our way down the same path, only stopping for tea.

Trek to The Great Himalayan National Park

The agenda for the next day (Monday) was going on a 5 km (one-way) trek to The Great Himalayan National Park. It seemed a daunting task, although our driver assured us that the path was "plain and straightforward". Little did we know that the Himalayan "straightforward" would prove to be a literal uphill task! While difficult, the trek proved to be one of the most calming experiences of my life. I concentrated on my breathing (inhale through your nose, hold your breath in, and then exhale through your mouth) and made my way up the winding path, my head clear of thoughts.

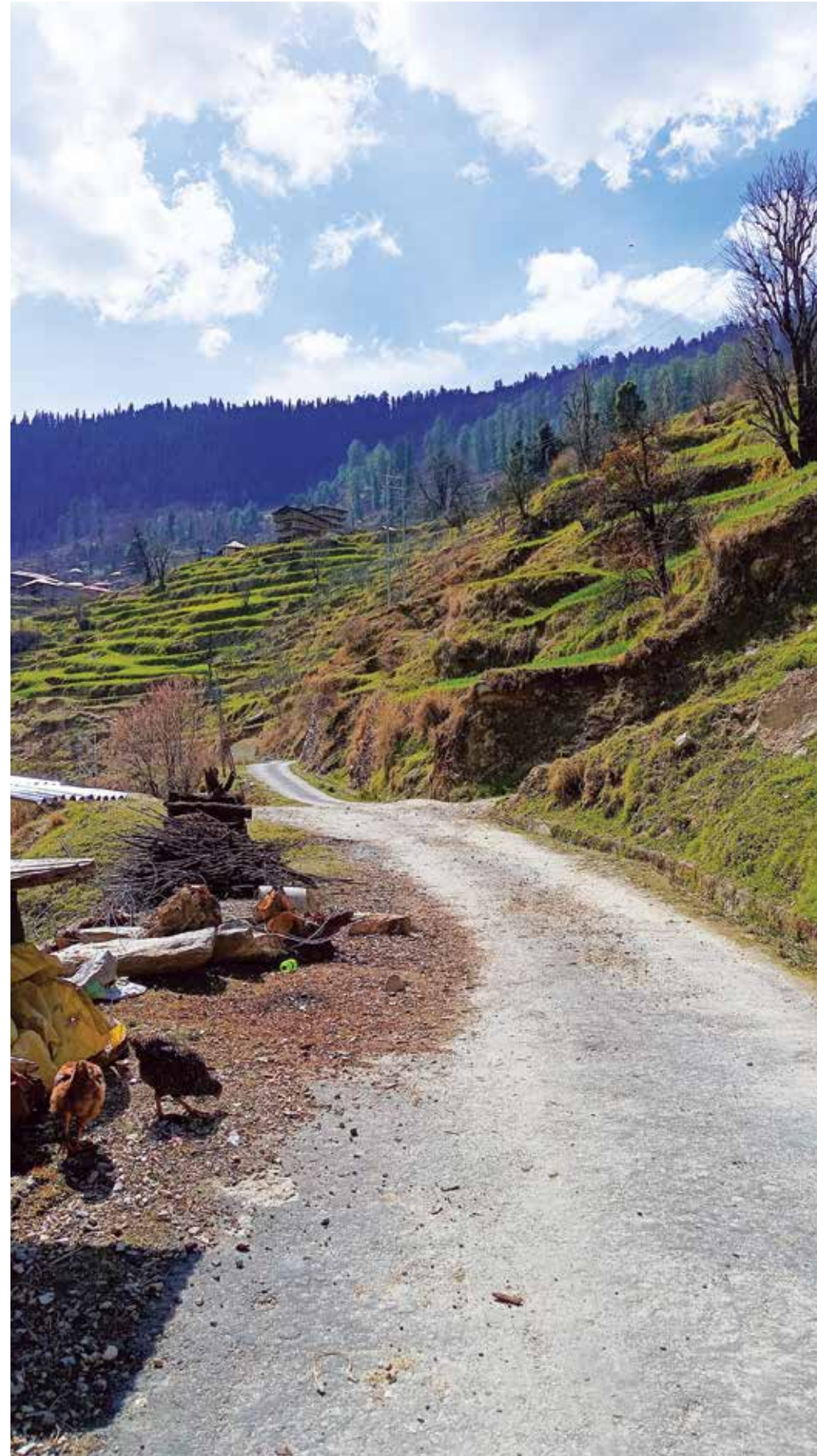
We stopped regularly, not just to catch our breath but to take in the beautiful sight around us- the imposing mountains, the

lush green plants, the tall pines, and, of course, the River Tirthan. We touched the cool waters of one of the many springs that made its way through the mountains to join the river. Oh, how wonderful it was! To breathe air unpolluted, to see sights so magnificent and to live a life so full!

We made our way to the entry gate of the National Park. Going beyond would have needed a permit, something we had not applied for. Many travellers set up camp inside or go on treks of varying lengths and difficulty. We made our way downward with much more ease, taking an hour lesser.

A short trek in Sarchi

On our third day here, we decided to go to Sarchi, a remote village 17 km from where we stayed. While 17 km is not of much significance on the plains, in the hills it led us to much higher altitudes. The car dropped



us at the entry point from where we made our way up by foot. This was a short trek to meadows which offered a 360-degree view of the surroundings. Enormous mountains were now to our eye level and birds flew below us.

The trek was comparatively easy but the magnificent Himalayan vultures that soared the skies, the shepherds with their lambs and the friendly locals who guided our way made this a much more immersive experience. There were adorable dogs with thick fur, mustard flowers that dotted the paths and the warm sun on our faces. It was such a languid experience that we fell asleep on a gentle slope under the shadows of the mountains, quite literally in nature's lap. This was the highlight of my trip- the stress-free, languid side of life that I yearned for. While I wanted to stay longer, it was time to return. Gut-wrenching as it was, I had to bid adieu to what will forever be my happy place.

None of the treks required a guide because the locals were very willing to help us. However, if you want to trek beyond the gates of the National Park, a guide would be a welcome addition. With innumerable species of flora and fauna, the hills are best explored with someone who can guide you. Remember to take the permit beforehand. It costs around Rs. 300 for Indians and Rs. 1000 for foreign visitors per night.

On our last day in Tirthan, we decided to rest before leaving for Delhi in the evening. I was quite sad to return to the city. Who would want to return to the noisy, polluted airs of Delhi after staying in the hills? It also meant a return to the hustle and bustle of everyday life, something I dreaded. But how much can one hope to, in modern terms, vacay? It had to come to an end, so it did.

This trip was unlike any other I have been on. It was slow, offbeat and stress-free. We went at our own pace, not thinking about what to do next.

The cottage we stayed at was owned by Himachalis who were passionate about their region. They were avid trekkers who knew the landscape by heart. It was a refreshing change from the usual corporate dealings. There are so many reasons why this trip would be my favourite one so far, something I will cherish for life.

It was a time of togetherness and happiness, of peace and tranquility. It enriched me and gave me a much-needed break from life. 🏠

South Africa

An inspiring culture of resilience

By TL Team

*T*ravelling is fast evolving. With increasing interconnectedness and awareness, cultural travelling has grown to be a favourite among travellers. This involves experiencing a culture from within, rather than as a tourist. And what better country to do this in than South Africa! Here is a go-to guide to knowing the best things to experience in South Africa for a cultural traveller.

South Africa is a land of ineffable beauty. It is often almost exclusively known for its safaris, conjuring up images of roaring lions and trumpeting elephants. But the country is so much more than





that! The resplendent cultures, heterogeneous community life and complex history have made South Africa a curious study in nation-building. It is a country with incredible riches, stunning landscapes, exceptional biodiversity, and thrilling safaris.

South Africa is also called the Rainbow Nation. The term was coined in the post-apartheid era in an attempt to unify the country's diverse cultural, racial and ethnic groups, and as a symbol of hope for a bright future. Today, the country is inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana, and four major racial groups. It also has eleven official languages, with most South Africans being at least bilingual. This intricate multi-ethnic diversity has led to a uniquely South African culture, influencing their cuisines, art, dance forms and customs.

There is no question about the ethereal beauty of South African landscapes. There are numerous safaris one can embark on in the country's myriad of national parks and game reserves. The Great Escarpment has created beautiful landscapes on the eastern side of South Africa. On the southwestern coast, the Cape Fold Mountains are a sight to behold (Table Mountain is part of this). The Fynbos biome is narrow shrubland with exceptional endemic plant biodiversity.

However, the best way to experience South Africa is by immersing yourself in the vibrant, local culture. There is so much to learn from their history- from their traditional values of community living to the culture of protest against oppressive systems, South Africans have shown remarkable resilience.

South Africa has a long, complex history. Maropeng which is near Johannesburg is dubbed the cradle of humankind. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a large collection of hominid fossils dating back 3.5 million years. The word 'maropeng' means "returning to the place of origin". A visit here is a journey back in time, it is a place where we come in close connection to our history as a species.

The 20th century in South Africa was a tumultuous period, especially for blacks and racial minorities. With the formalization of apartheid in 1948, the country experienced institutionalised racial segregation. Although the system was abolished in the early 1990s, South Africa continues to struggle with equality, although there has been commendable progress in the past years.

Urban life

Cape Town and Johannesburg are South Africa's largest cities. For those interested in learning about the country's history and fascinating urban culture, Cape Town serves as a wonderful site.

The city is a cultural melting pot with different communities living together.

While here, a visit to !Khwatla Cultural Centre is a must. It is a guide to understanding the practices of the San people, the original inhabitants of South Africa. While the Stellenbosch Village Museum is a treat for anyone interested in architecture, it is in the Bo-Kaap that one can experience the intermingling of various South Asian communities. The distinctive architecture with its brightly painted houses is a treat for the eyes, and the mosques, shrines and Islamic cemeteries add a sense of austerity. However, the highlight of the neighbourhood is its lip-smacking Malay food, and there are many Cape Fusion Tours that offer cooking courses. The Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum is a fascinating visit that explains the lives of Muslim and freed slaves after the abolition of slavery and showcases Islamic culture in South Africa. Forty kilometres outside Cape Town is the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum which provides insight into what life was like for a migrant labourer.

Johannesburg, too, is littered with galleries. Here, one can visit the Apartheid Museum, Hector Pieterse Museum, Mandela House Museum, and Constitutional Court. While economic development has transformed it into a city of tall buildings, Johannesburg (or 'Jozi') retains its vibrant culture. The Neighbourhoods Market is a must-visit due to the lively music, local products, delicious cross-cultural food, and wonderful views of the city. Maboneng (meaning 'place of light') is the centre of the city's creative energy. With unique cafes and enviable nightlife, the district has some of the world's greatest street art.

Cuisine

South Africa is not limited to its astounding natural beauty. Offering a range of lip-smacking dishes, the country is a paradise for any food lover. South African cuisine has been heavily influenced by Dutch, French, Malaysian and Indian flavours and techniques, apart from the traditional African ones. Meat is integral to South African food. In addition to just chicken, beef, and lamb, you can also find dishes made with ostrich, impala and springbok. Braai, a special technique similar to American barbeque, is a favourite among South Africans and is the go-to for special occasions. One can also try to set up their own braai in campsites at Beaverlac or Khomeesdrift. Bobotie (considered South Africa's national dish), boerewors, chakalaka, biltong, and potjiekos are popular and absolutely delicious South African dishes.

Vegetarians can not only look for vegetable-based variations of these dishes, but traditional dishes such as umngqusho are also splendid options.

South Africa is also the place to be for a wine sommelier. While the local shebeens are a must-visit, the Wine Route (Route 62) takes visitors through the wine-growing regions of Wellington, Worcester, Robertson and Klein Karoo. One of the longest wine routes in the world, it has some of the most delicious wines and exquisite resorts.

Art

South Africa's pre-colonial art forms are vehicles of ethnic identities, and preserving them is crucial to protecting indigenous cultures. Raw materials like clay and wood are transformed into beautiful pieces of art by expert artists. With broad patterns and vibrant colours, these artefacts are used for ritual and household purposes. Beaded works



are an important part of indigenous South African culture for both men and women for momentous occasions such as weddings and coming-out ceremonies.

Mural art is another important element of South African culture. The pots, plates, vases and paintings produced here are priced possessions of art enthusiasts the world over. Body painting is also done to commemorate rituals and is of immense cultural significance.

South Africa's chequered history has produced a vibrant art culture. The visual medium was an important political tool for black African artists to combat the apartheid system. Cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg house famous art galleries and museums such as the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art, The Iziko South African National Gallery, the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Goodman Gallery.

Dance and Music

It is while studying the country's art forms do we realise the multiplicity of South Africa's culture- the intertwining of different ethnicities, religions and languages. Dances such as indlamu, isicathamiya, maskandi, pata-pata, and umzabalazo are integral parts of South African culture.

In the Zulu culture, dance and music are interlaced. During Zulu ceremonies, dance is accompanied by music and sometimes musical instruments such as izigubhu (drums), isiginci (guitar), or imintshingo (flutes). Traditional performances are awe-striking especially when the performers are decked in their traditional attire.

These dances are not simply for display. They hold innate meaning and tremendous cultural significance. Performed during important occasions, dances such as indlamu and ingoma are visual remnants of a thriving culture.

The annual Royal Reed Dance (Umkhosi woMhlanga) near Durban is a traditional South African ceremony held in September.

It is an elaborate affair providing an intimate view into the Zulu kingdom's natural beauty and cultural life. An occasion that symbolises the unifying of the nation and the king, the Royal Reed Dance Festival has been celebrated for centuries and attracts thousands of visitors from across the world.

Like its art, much of South Africa's modern-day dance styles grew out of the country's struggle with discriminatory practices, specifically apartheid. In the mid-twentieth century, as thousands of workers flocked to urban spaces like Johannesburg, music styles such as isicathamiya and maskandi emerged. They fluttered with the migrants' nostalgia for their homelands, and their yearning to return home. From such multicultural hubs also sprang urban music genres such as tshaba-tshaba and marabi. While they drew on traditional Zulu beats, they were also influenced by contemporary international trends, especially jazz. Today, dance forms such as toyi-toyi, patha-patha, umgubha, contemporary, ballet, and gumboot are popular in the country. There are multiple art festivals held in the country throughout the year. The most popular among these are the Splashy Fen Music Festival in Durban, the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, the Cape Town Jazz Festival, and the Cape Town Minstrel Festival.

The ethnic-racial diversity of South Africa has been the product of centuries of contact and oppression at the hands of European powers. Once the country gained independence, it faced a dark period under apartheid. It was during this time that art forms evolved under a culture of protest. Even as the country tries to overcome its past, the remnants can be seen today in the large socio-economic gap that exists between Afrikaners and black South Africans. However, today, the country boasts one of the most inclusive constitutions in the world. There have been multiple attempts at preserving indigenous culture, condemning the apartheid and making reparations. With various communities living together in close quarters, South Africa is a cultural melting pot. Thus, the Rainbow Nation is a must-visit for cultural travellers. 

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Discerning the Future of Tourism

The tourism sector is a crucial source of revenue for countries all around the world. Not only does it further the economy, it is also an important thread that connects different culture. In recent decades, the sector has gained significant attention from governments across the globe, resulting in several campaigns and promotional activities.

In order to understand where global tourism stands and where it is headed, I interviewed tourism representatives of Spain, Bhutan, South Africa and Malaysia.

By Payal Sahni

Q How important is tourism to your country especially in terms of its economic ramifications?

Ms. Robles-Fraga: Spain is a leading tourist destination globally. Before the pandemic, in 2019, it was the second most visited country in the world and welcomed over 83 million international visitors. For over a decade, Spain has been in the top five destinations as choice for holidays, MICE events or studying abroad, among others. Tourism is indeed one of the major contributors to the Spanish economy. Yes, Spain too suffered economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, but I am pleased to say that we are well on the path of recovery. Just to give you some numbers – Even after considering effects of pandemic, in 2021, tourism sector contributed around 8% of GDP and generated approximately 11.4% of total employment.

Mr. Dhradhul: Tourism is very important to Bhutan, being one of the largest contributors to the economy and an important source of employment and opportunities for cultural exchange.

This year the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) has been revised. The tourism industry in Bhutan was founded on the principal of ‘High value, Low volume’ and the SDF was introduced since the start of tourism business in the country in 1974. Visitors from all countries are levied an SDF of USD 200 per person, per night, while Indians are levied 1,200 rupees per person, per night. There is a concessionary levy of 50% on the SDF for children between the ages of 6-12 years and exemptions of SDF for children aged 5 years and below.

From our reopening on September 23, visitors to Bhutan will make an active contribution to the country’s economic, social, and cultural development. The SDF funds go to the national exchequer and are allocated to various projects that enhance facilities, services and infrastructure for nationals and guests who visit Bhutan, as well as funding free healthcare and education.

Mr. Aziz: The tourism sector is crucial to Malaysia’s economy because it generates income, creates jobs, and promotes the

country’s cultural and natural heritage. It has made a significant contribution to the growth and development of the nation’s economy. A record-breaking 28.1 million tourists visited Malaysia in 2019, bringing in RM86.1 billion (US\$20.6 billion) in revenue and making up 15.9% of the nation’s GDP. However, the share of tourism to the economy fell to 14.1% of GDP in 2020.

Ms. Nkani: South Africa is blessed with beautiful landscapes, enchanting wildlife, and thrilling adventures. Such attractions have allowed us to leverage the abundance of tourism landmarks across provinces and invite travellers for an unforgettable experience from around the world. Tourism contributes to our country’s GDP and socio-economic development. Over the years, the country has witnessed a significant increase in tourism resulting in growth of historically disadvantaged communities through means of job creation and sustained income for locals residing around popular tourist spots. The sector contributes 3.7% to South Africa’s



Elisa Robles Fraga
Tourism Counsellor and Director of Tourism Office of Spain in Mumbai

Throughout her professional experience, Ms. Elisa Robles-Fraga has been mainly working at the Spanish General Administration both at national and international levels. In a previous position as Director General of the CDTI (Center for Industrial Technological Development), she has had the opportunity to bilaterally work with India for several projects.

Her role and responsibilities as Tourism Counsellor and Director now consists of promoting Spain as a touristic destination by coordinating the elaboration of reports and market studies and marketing activities, both as B2B as well as B2C.



Dorji Dhradhul
Director General of the Department of Tourism – Bhutan

Mr. Dhradhul served as Dzongda (Governor) of Gasa district for almost four years and has worked in various capacities in the fields of agriculture research, policy, and development. He was also the founding Director of the Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives and the founding Registrar of Cooperatives in Bhutan. Mr. Dhradhul is a writer and has published articles in a national newspaper – Kuensel. He also authored ‘Escapades Awakenings’ – a novel that presents a uniquely different take on life in Bhutan. He was awarded the Best Professional – Destination Marketing, by Pacific Area Travel Writers’ Association (PATWA) in 2020.



Muhammad Akmal Hafiz Abdul Aziz

Acting Director for Tourism Malaysia in New Delhi.

Mr. Aziz is a seasoned tourism professional. He overlooks the functioning of the tourism board in North & East India, Nepal and Bangladesh. He is passionate about providing travellers with an unforgettable Malaysian travel experience through various programmes and initiatives since he first set foot in India in March 2022.

Prior to this, he served as the Assistant Director for South Asia Unit in International Promotion Division and Statistics Unit in Research Division at Tourism Malaysia.

GDP, more than agriculture, utilities and construction and is responsible for the employment of roughly 5-8 individuals for every tourist that visits the country. This not only benefits the tourism and hospitality sector comprehensively but also trickles down to various other industries and makes a significant and well-rounded contribution to the overall economy.

Q How is tourism in your country recovering from the post-pandemic economic dent?

Ms. Robles Fraga: Tourism is indeed recovering well in the post-pandemic era, thanks to the joint efforts of the Spanish Government and various private and public players in the tourism sector. You can say that life is almost back to its normal, of course, with some necessary health precautions in place.

The multiple product offerings shape Spain as an all-season tourist destination. It is one of the few destinations that offer such a variety of tourism products almost 365 days a year: art and culture with the

famous museums like Guggenheim in Bilbao, World Heritage Sites such as Segovia or Salamanca, luxury and shopping in many cities as Madrid and Barcelona. Apart from some already popular destinations, there are some relatively lesser known destinations that have their own charm, like Menorca in the Balearic Islands.

Mr. Dhradhul: After a year-long pandemic, Bhutan is considered as one of the safer and flexible destinations to travel to. Bhutan offers natural beauty, unique culture and perfect weather to unwind

after the year of turmoil. Although the number of guests visiting Bhutan has been low, it is still more than we expected, and the revenue generated has been good.

International tourism is set to consolidate its recovery in 2023, backed by pent-up demand, particularly from Asia and the Pacific as destinations and markets open. Tourists are expected to increasingly seek value for money and travel close to home in response to the challenging economic development. Therefore, experts believe global tourism to reach 2019 levels by 2025.

Various initiatives are underway to stimulate tourism growth and the year 2023 forecast around 100,000 tourists and targeting pre-pandemic levels by 2025 in line with the global tourism outlook.

Mr. Aziz: Malaysia reopened its borders on April 1, 2022, and removed all entry restrictions; since then there has been a steady influx of visitors. With more than 9.2 million arrivals in 2022, it has exceeded its target for the year. The increase has been driven by the return of both business and leisure air travel globally.

Ms. Nkani: As international travel gains momentum, South African Tourism board has accelerated its recovery initiatives and embarked on a strategy to multiply its travellers from across the world. The country is promoting its various adventure tourism products and diverse portfolio ranging from 3000+ adventure activities to exciting culinary, socio-cultural and sustainable travel. Owing to the success of its recovery efforts the country received an overwhelmingly positive response and welcomed over 5.69 million tourists in 2022, compared to 2.6 million tourists in 2021. By 2030, we aim to attract 21 million tourists to South Africa from all over the globe.

India is one of the largest international source markets for us and we have made constant efforts to entice Indian travellers to visit the Rainbow Nation. In 2022, we rolled out the first phase of our ‘More & More’ campaign; this was specifically tailored for the evolved Indian traveller who seeks more out of every opportunity that a holiday presents.

In 2023 the tourism board is aiming to achieve an increase of 72% in Indian travellers over their previous year’s targets. We are optimistic for 2023 and

have further raised our targets aimed at going beyond the arrival numbers that we witnessed last year.

Q How is the industry evolving, particularly regarding accessibility and sustainability?

Ms. Robles-Fraga: In Spain, we always look at tourism as a sustainable way of life. This sustainability is not just environmental and territorial, but social and economic as well. We always work towards ensuring a fair share of the benefits to all the Spanish regions and communities involved in this

In Spain, we always look at tourism as a sustainable way of life. This sustainability is not just environmental and territorial, but social and economic as well. We always work towards ensuring a fair share of the benefits to all the Spanish regions and communities involved in this profession – be it the economic returns or be it maintaining the environmental balance of the protected areas.

profession – be it the economic returns or be it maintaining the environmental balance of the protected areas. By working towards promoting tourism in the lesser known regions and promoting it during the traditionally non-peak tourist seasons, Spain has always tried to establish a good balance in the tourism sector to make it sustainable for future generations.

Mr. Dhradhul: Bhutan is not just a place for adventurous activities, but it is also a friendly destination for travellers with disabilities. Accessibility is easier than expected in Bhutan. A lot of hotels have lifts for people in wheelchairs, and specific experiences can be arranged for those who are mobility challenged.

After a year-long pandemic and the travel restrictions, travellers are looking forward to a well-earned getaway which is more sustainable and responsible. The world is seeking new measures to reduce the impact of climate change and the environmental footprint of the sector and have started prioritising sustainable tourism. Bhutan recently announced that it would raise its Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) from USD 65 to USD 200 per person, per night, which will go towards projects that support Bhutan’s economic, social, environmental, and cultural development. The fees raised will also fund sustainability projects and infrastructure upgrades.

Mr. Aziz: The Malaysian government has been working to promote universal accessibility in the travel and tourism sector in recent years, making sure that all tourists can access tourist attractions, facilities, and services regardless of their physical capabilities. In addition to accessibility, sustainability is also a growing focus in the Malaysian tourism industry. In order to maximize the positive economic and social benefits while minimizing the negative effects on the environment and local communities, the government is promoting sustainable tourism practices such as reduced plastic waste and the promotion of energy-efficient construction.

In addition, Malaysia has created several eco-tourism programs that benefit the community while preserving the environment, like community-based tourism initiatives and mangrove conservation projects. A National Sustainable Tourism Policy has also been created by the Malaysian government to direct the nation’s tourism sector toward a sustainable future. The policy outlines tactics for the growth of sustainable tourism, such as promoting sustainable tourism.

Mr. Nkani: The pandemic provided everyone with an opportunity to slow down, reflect on, and restructure their practices. In context of the travel and tourism industry, there has been a shift towards eco-tourism and responsible travel, where travellers are encouraged to minimize their carbon footprint and support local communities.

South Africa prides itself on being a welcoming nation that continuously

strives to improve universal access in all its tourism offerings. We work in partnership with various stakeholders to create awareness and encourage the implementation of best practices.

Sustainability holds the stage in every discussion – right from our dining rooms to boardrooms. Tourism brands are actively showcasing their new product offerings which are experiential and planet-friendly at the same time. The sector is actively seeking innovative methods to reinvest in destinations and communities.

Q Does travelling help in making global citizens by increasing cultural awareness and interconnectedness?

Ms. Robles Fraga: Of course, no doubt in it. Travelling helps to understand the intercultural differences. Through travel, one realizes the value of various aspects of life such as respecting each other, respecting nature, and above all, enjoying and celebrating life while ensuring that we don’t do it at the cost of long term sustainability. If planned correctly, travel brings the world closer and promotes harmony between various cultures.

Mr. Dhradhul: Travelling is vital for developing cultural awareness. Travelling fosters courteous and effective communication among people from many cultures. Going outside of your comfort zone and geographical region broadens your understanding of different cultures. The cross-cultural exposure through travel creates a more empathic society and a more compassionate planet, which eventually strengthens individual, community, national and international relationships.

Mr. Aziz: Yes, travelling can be a powerful tool for increasing cultural awareness and interconnectedness, which are key elements of global citizenship. People are exposed to new ideas, customs, languages, and perspectives when they travel to various nations and engage with various cultures. Their exposure to different cultures and peoples can help them gain a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of the world. Travelling can also aid in dispelling prejudices and stereotypes that may develop as a result of little exposure to other cultures. It highlights the connections and interdependencies between various



Ms. Neliswa Nkani

Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism

Ms. Nkani is currently spearheading initiatives of the national tourism board in the Middle East, India and South East Asia. She comes with holistic tourism experience that includes marketing, strategic government relations, negotiating, tourism, sales and investment facilitation. She exudes passion, drive & commitment and a never-ending quest for learning.

An industry veteran of 20 plus years, Ms. Nkani has exhaustive knowledge of South Africa’s beautiful landscape and befitting destination packaging. She is now dedicated towards taking the Indian market forward by leaps and bounds for South Africa as the Regional General Manager for Asia, Australia & Middle East and fostering long-standing relationships in the region.

cultures and peoples. Travellers may learn about the effects of globalisation, environmental deterioration, and political unrest in various regions of the world, for instance.

Ms. Nkani: I am of the strong belief that travel is one of life’s greatest teachers. It challenges us to see the world from a different perspective and this exposure to new ideas and ways of life can inspire us to become more empathetic, engaged, and committed to creating a more just and sustainable world for all.

In my personal experience, travel has been a constant source of inspiration and learning. It has exposed me to diverse practices, helped me gain invaluable insights, and allowed me to build strong connections with people from all over the world. While it is true that the world is a global village and technology has made it easier for people to connect with one another from all corners of the world, there is still no substitute for experiencing the world firsthand through your own eyes.

How has over tourism affected your country, be it its effect on carbon footprint or on local communities?

Ms. Robles Fraga: The success of tourism in Spain is notably due to high quality of the hospitality industry in Spain, as both private and public institutions have the expertise, detailed and care to bring out the most of each experience for the traveller. The excellent connectivity and infrastructure illustrate this aspect: thanks to internal flights, high speed trains and an extensive road network, most Spanish cities are easily reachable.

In parallel, accommodation is up to the standards. Five and four star hotel chains satisfy the requisites of our tourists. For instance, the Paradores, a state-owned network of 90 hotels providing unique accommodation opportunities because they are mainly historic palaces and castles that have been refurbished.

Mr. Dhradhul: Mass tourism imposes the gravest consequences on the natural and the cultural situation of a tourist destination. However, Bhutan has adopted comprehensive environmental policies. The country is mandated by its Constitution that at least 60% of the country’s land must be covered with forest for eternity. Bhutan is the first carbon neutral country in the world. It continues to protect its environment and raise its voice in the global stage and demand climate change action. This robust tourism policy of ‘High value, Low volume’ has been steering the exclusive journey of Bhutan tourism for nearly five decades. Bhutan aims to welcome responsible and conscious travellers while providing high quality infrastructure and services. Low volume tourism also ensures that the number of visitors is compatible with the carrying capacity of the country’s infrastructure,

environment and socio-cultural fabric. Amid the intensifying threat of climate change, Bhutan is stepping up its efforts to keep itself carbon-negative and promote green destination for tourists.

Mr. Aziz: In some of its well-known tourist areas, Malaysia has experienced over-tourism, which has had a variety of negative effects. Increased carbon emissions from transportation and other activities contribute to climate change. Tourists' increased demand for water, energy, and other resources may also strain nearby ecosystems. Pressure on local communities is yet another result of over-tourism in Malaysia. In some instances, the influx of tourists can cause crowding and other disruptions that may lower local residents' quality of life.

Ms. Nkani: Sustainability is at the core of all the travel decisions travellers make. We are proud to say that travellers are more conscious of the kind of accommodation they choose, where they dine, and how they travel. At South African Tourism, we have enhanced efforts to make our itineraries, properties and transport facilities more sustainable.

We are also actively promoting our sustainable product offerings and ecotourism experiences, like cycling tours, nature safaris, conservation projects and rural experiences. We have ensured that we increase our marketing efforts towards promoting new regions, also known as “Small Dorpies” to reduce the environmental burden in well-known places and increase job opportunities where it's needed the most. This has also allowed travellers to explore some of the purest environments in South Africa such as West Coast of the Cape, Coffee Bay in the Eastern Cape, Sodwana Bay, Robertson and Mc Gregor – offering the most authentic and scenic beauty.

Q What are your aspirations for 2023-24?

Ms. Robles-Fraga: We have great hopes from the Indian markets. Spain was indeed one of the preferred European destinations in India during the pre-pandemic era with more than 210,000 tourists each in the years 2018 and 2019. There was obviously a downturn in tourist arrivals during the pandemic period, but in 2022 we already showed great signs

of recovery. I am hoping that this market soon achieves the pre-pandemic arrival numbers and even surpasses them soon through various promotional campaigns and events that we are currently working on. Stay tuned for some exciting Spanish celebrations coming your way!

Mr. Dhradhul: Bhutan is rigorously branding, advertising, and pursuing promotional activities to enhance Bhutan's presence in the travel industry. We work closely with media and travel partners and we are also engaging with influencers and KOLs who share Bhutan's vision for

Sustainability is at the core of all the travel decisions travellers make.

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--Ms. Nkani

sustainable and responsible tourism.

We aim to establish Bhutan as a destination for everyone, a destination where you do not only travel to once as a 'bucket list destination', but as a must-visit destination and experience. As various initiatives are underway to stimulate tourism growth, Bhutan aspire to receive 100,000 tourists and target pre-pandemic levels by 2025 in line with global tourism outlook.

Mr. Aziz: We hope to bring in 15.6 million foreign visitors this year, bringing in MYR 47.6 billion in tourism revenue. Out of that, we anticipate over 5-6 lacs new visitors from the India market. Airfare rationalization and route stabilization for India-Malaysia flights should significantly

help us achieve these tourist arrival figures.

We will leverage the niche product segment which could be a big platform for Malaysia, especially as a preferred wedding destination from the Indian market. Additionally, we are keen to promote Malaysia as a destination of choice for Golf and film-induced tourism.

Ms. Nkani: India remains a core market for South African Tourism and holds much promise in the coming years. Through our strategic outreach and productive conversations, we have enabled our trade partners to sell the destination more innovatively and effectively. We want Indian travellers to go beyond the usual tourist places and experience the joy of discovering new and hidden regions of South Africa.

We believe that the introduction of e-visas will significantly contribute towards this growth trajectory. The pilot roll-out has been well received and shall soon be fully operational, allowing travellers to have their visas within 24 hours. Further, we are also concentrating our efforts and are in conversation with various airlines for establishing non-stop flights between India and South Africa. In 2023, the tourism board is aiming for a 35% increase in MICE travellers from India and eventually looks forward to becoming a preferred business destination for Indian corporates in the coming years.

The travel industry has seen its ups and downs in the past 3 years. Although countries are well into recovery, the pandemic transformed the way we travel. As new trends emerge, brands continue to alter their strategies- new niches are being explored and travel is being made more seamless.

In this process, there is an increasing focus on sustainability and eco-tourism-aided with technology, the tourism industry is on the path of going green. Technology is also key in making travel 'frictionless'. However, travellers continue to look for a personal touch, be it in from hotel staff or the locals. Social media has emerged as an important tool for promotional activities with influencers emerging as crucial brand ambassadors. Thus, the future of travel is going to be shaped by these emerging trends, travellers' wants and technological advancement. 



Summers knocking at the door and the travellers are all set to enjoy their vacations/staycations. With the new trends in the travel industry Madhya Pradesh has emerged as one of the hotspots for travel lovers post covid because of its responsible and activity-based tourism. MP is home to several verticals which can attract any travel lover. The state is rich in wildlife, heritage, culture and spirituality and on top of that there are countless potential destinations which are relatively untapped in MP. However, talking about the unique summer experiences, 'The heart of Incredible India' offers an eclectic mix of forests, waterfalls and hills which is rich with natural beauty and recreational activities specially designed to promote wellness tourism.

Talking about the best summer spots of Madhya Pradesh, its impossible to miss out on the crown jewel of Madhya Pradesh; Pachmarhi. The hill station provides a sublime tourism experience for the visitors for wellness and spiritual tourism.

Pachmarhi is one of the most enchanting hill stations of central India which flourished around 10,000 years ago and is an exemplary example of archaeological treasure. Its also regarded as 'Satpura ki Rani' and is situated over 1000 meters from sea level which is also the highest point of Madhya Pradesh. The administration of the Pachmarhi is under Pachmarhi Cantonment Board, which serves the Indian Army. The hill station is developed around the Satpura Forest Area and there are plenty of natural recreational activities that are arranged for the tourists. These activities include gypsy

camping, tree camping, bird watching, star gazing, mobile camping and many more activities. Tigers, Leopards and Bisons are easily sighted in this region which is a once in a life time experience for many tourists. Other than that, plenty of adventure activities



like paragliding, ziplining, trampolining and bungee jumping are also facilitated. Sunrise-Sunset walks and cycling tours have also emerged as one of the most anticipated activities in Pachmarhi. The laser and sound show is conducted for the tourists to enjoy after the sunset, along with that tourists can also enjoy bonfire and live music. Pachmarhi is a great family destination which fits the adventure needs of all members of family. Waterfalls like Bee Falls, Apsara Vihar Falls and Silver falls are a must visit for visitors traveling in the summers.

HOW TO REACH PACHMARHI

By Flight

The nearest airport is Raja Bhoj Airport in the state's capital Bhopal (around 222 km) which has daily flight services from Delhi and Mumbai and 13 major cities of India. One can easily get a taxi from Bhopal to Pachmarhi. Jabalpur to Pachmarhi is also just 300 km, so one can opt for this route as well.

By Train

Pachmarhi is just 54km by road from the Pipariya railway station. Several direct trains link Pipariya with important cities like Surat, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Patna, Pune, Kolkata, Agra, Delhi, Varanasi, etc. One can easily get a taxi from Pipariya to Pachmarhi as it is the most accessible way of reaching Pachmarhi.

By Road

Plenty of state-owned and private buses are available for Pachmarhi from nearby cities like Bhopal, Jabalpur, Nagpur, Indore, and from prominent tourist attractions like Kanha National Park and Pench National Park.



The International Clock Ticks sport o'clock!

By TL Team

Hello travel junkies! Does your heart go "VROOM" when the race cars rev, or do you like the "back-bock" of the tennis ball? Are you a fan of some other sport; a sport so unique that makes your friends and family question your choices?

Whatever sport you may like, doesn't it feels a bit monotonous to just be sitting on the same sofa or your bed and watching the sports event's telecast? Why not spice things up? This article elate to sports tourism and how sports affect culture and society.

INDIA AS A SPORT JUNCTION

India's civilization and history are steeped in a strong sports culture. Sports have always been a significant component of the social fabric, from ancient sports like kabaddi and kho kho to contemporary sports like cricket and football. Here, one can find a fantastic location for sports vacations, providing a singular and unforgettable experience, due to the different landscapes and rich

cultural heritage.

The country's sports culture is as diverse and voluminous as the nation itself. A country with a population of more than 1.3 billion, offers a wide variety of sports that are performed and enjoyed by people from all social classes, has a thriving sports culture that is an essential component of its character, ranging from classic games like kabaddi and kho-kho to contemporary sports like cricket and football.

Cricket - The National Obsession

The most popular sport in India is cricket, which is often regarded as a national obsession. One of the most successful teams in the world, the Indian cricket team has taken home numerous prestigious international championships, including the Cricket World Cup and the ICC Champions Trophy. Eight clubs representing different Indian cities compete in the Indian Premier League (IPL), a professional Twenty20 cricket league. Every year, millions of viewers and spectators tune in to watch the league, which



is a must-see for every cricket fan. Tickets for the IPL, which takes place every year from March to May, can be bought online or from accredited ticketing agents.

Football - Gaining Popularity

India is becoming a more popular football market, and the Indian Super League (ISL) has contributed to the growth of the game. Ten clubs representing different Indian cities compete in the ISL, a professional football league, in India. The league is a fantastic chance to experience the sport and draws elite players from all around the world. Tickets for the ISL, which runs from November to March each year, can be bought online or from accredited ticketing agents.

Hockey - The National Sport

The country's national sport is hockey, and has a long history with the game. The Indian hockey team is regarded as one of the greatest in the world and has won eight Olympic gold medals. Tickets can be acquired online or from accredited ticketing brokers, and watching a hockey game here is an amazing experience.

Kabaddi - The Traditional Game

The goal of this contact sport, which consists of two teams of seven players each, is to score points by tackling or touching opponents. Twelve teams from different cities compete in the Pro Kabaddi League, an elite kabaddi tournament. The league is a fantastic way to see the sport and draws millions of fans and spectators each year. Tickets for the Pro Kabaddi League can be purchased online or from accredited ticketing agencies every year from July to October.

Wrestling - The Ancient Sport

Indians have long participated in wrestling, an age-old sport. Northern part of the country is home to the traditional sport of "Indian wrestling," also known as "kushti." In this sport, two wrestlers engage in combat while attempting to pin their opponent to the ground. Tickets for many national and international wrestling competitions organized by the Wrestling Federation can be purchased online or from accredited ticketing agents.

Martial Arts - The Discipline

Known also as Kalaripayattu, Indian martial arts have a long and fascinating

history that goes back more than 3,000 years. To increase physical fitness and combat skills, the art form uses a variety of tactics, such as hand-to-hand combat, weapon training, and flexibility exercises. Traveling to see these martial arts in action is a special and thrilling experience since it gives visitors a chance to see a traditional art form that is ingrained in Indian culture. The smooth and forceful performances display the practitioners' exceptional abilities and focus. Also, experiencing Indian martial arts firsthand gives visitors the chance to learn more about the history and culture of the nation, which makes it a fascinating experience for anyone looking to immerse themselves in new and diverse cultures.

Sports fans may have an amazing experience traveling abroad to attend exciting sporting events. Attending sporting events abroad can have a variety of advantages, from observing distinctive sporting customs to discovering new cultures and cuisines. These occasions offer the chance to see some of the most thrilling sporting events in the world, whether it be the Olympics, the World Cup, the Tour de France, or Wimbledon.

Witnessing sporting events while traveling abroad can be advantageous in several ways, including:

Cultural encounters: Attending a sporting event in a foreign nation can provide you the chance to get a taste of the local customs and way of life. This can involve visiting nearby markets, experimenting with new cuisine, and learning about regional traditions and customs.

Getting to know new people - Going to sports events abroad might provide you the chance to get to know people from all around the world who are also interested in sports. New contacts and friendships may result from this.

Discovering new athletic customs - Sports have long had a place in culture in many nations, and seeing these customs firsthand can be fascinating. It can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in these customs, such as the Running of the Bulls in Spain or Sumo Wrestling in Japan.

Seeing the world's top athletes compete - The best athletes in the world compete against one another at many of the world's major sporting events. Seeing these sportsmen in action firsthand can be an incredible and unforgettable experience.



Top sports events to witness overseas

Olympics - The largest sporting event in the world, the Olympics are held every four years in a different host nation. Witnessing the opening and closing ceremonies of the event, which has athletes from all over the world competing in a variety of sports, maybe an unforgettable experience.

World Cup - Held every four years, the World Cup is the world's most prestigious football competition. The top national teams from around the world compete in this event, and the competition is held in a nation where the atmosphere is tremendous.

Wimbledon - Wimbledon is the oldest and most renowned tennis competition in the world. Every year, the event is held in London, and watching the matches on Wimbledon's grass courts may be an unforgettable experience.


The Tour de France is the most well-known cycling competition in the world, and it is held each summer in France. Millions of fans go from all around the world to see the race, which is more than 2,000 miles long.

Super Bowl: The top two American football teams compete in the Super Bowl, the country's biggest yearly sporting event, for the championship. The game's atmosphere and the activities nearby can be exciting.

Rugby World Cup - Held every four years, the Rugby World Cup is the biggest rugby competition in the world. The competition includes the best national teams from around the world, and watching the matches live can be thrilling and stressful.

Both sports enthusiasts and casual fans can find sports travel to be immensely enjoyable and exciting. It presents a special chance to see other cultures and regional cuisine while watching top athletes compete in some of the most famous athletic events in the world.

Sports travel offers the ability to fully immerse oneself in a new environment, which inspires fun. These events have a contagious excitement and energy that can make for an unforgettable experience.

Meeting new people who have a similar enthusiasm for sports often happens as a result of sports travel. This may result in long-lasting ties and new friendships. Ultimately, traveling for sports offers a special fusion of excitement, adventure, and cultural immersion that is sure to make anyone who goes on such a trip have pleasure. 



An Aesthete's Guide to Exploring German Architecture

By TL Team

Architecture is a physical manifestation of history. As time's arrow marches on, it leaves behind stupendous structures that serve as a reminder of bygone ages. Each caveat, each statue and each arch are not just unique styles in art, but can also be indicative of the inter-mixing cultures. Not only are these fascinating studies in history and architecture, but they also add to the cultural value of a place, thereby being huge attractions for travellers.

Germany is often under-represented

as a cultural destination although it has 51 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the third-highest in the world. It houses sites with 7,000 years of history: from the caves and ice age art in the Swabian Jura to Bauhaus sites of the twentieth century, a visit to Germany is meant to be an experience in human history. Castles, churches, gardens, and even entire towns are cherished sites of immense cultural significance.

A Short Account of German Architecture

The architectural styles of Germany have

imbibed elements from other parts of Europe. During the medieval period, the Romanesque style dominated while in the 13th century, the Gothic style grew popular. 15th century Renaissance saw the emergence of a uniquely German style called the Weser Renaissance in central Germany. The Gothic style resurged during the 17th century, with the Rococo style and its French and Italian influence developing in the first half of the 18th century. During the 19th century, the Prussian military spirit gave way to the Neoclassic style of the period.

The Bauhaus school fundamentally shaped modern German architecture with

its insistence on practicality and a Puritan disdain for decorativeness. In West Germany, postmodernism led to more free-ranging styles while East Germany saw the growth of immense buildings under the communist regime. Here are 8 wonderful architectural beauties of Germany, some World Heritage Sites and others not, you need to visit.

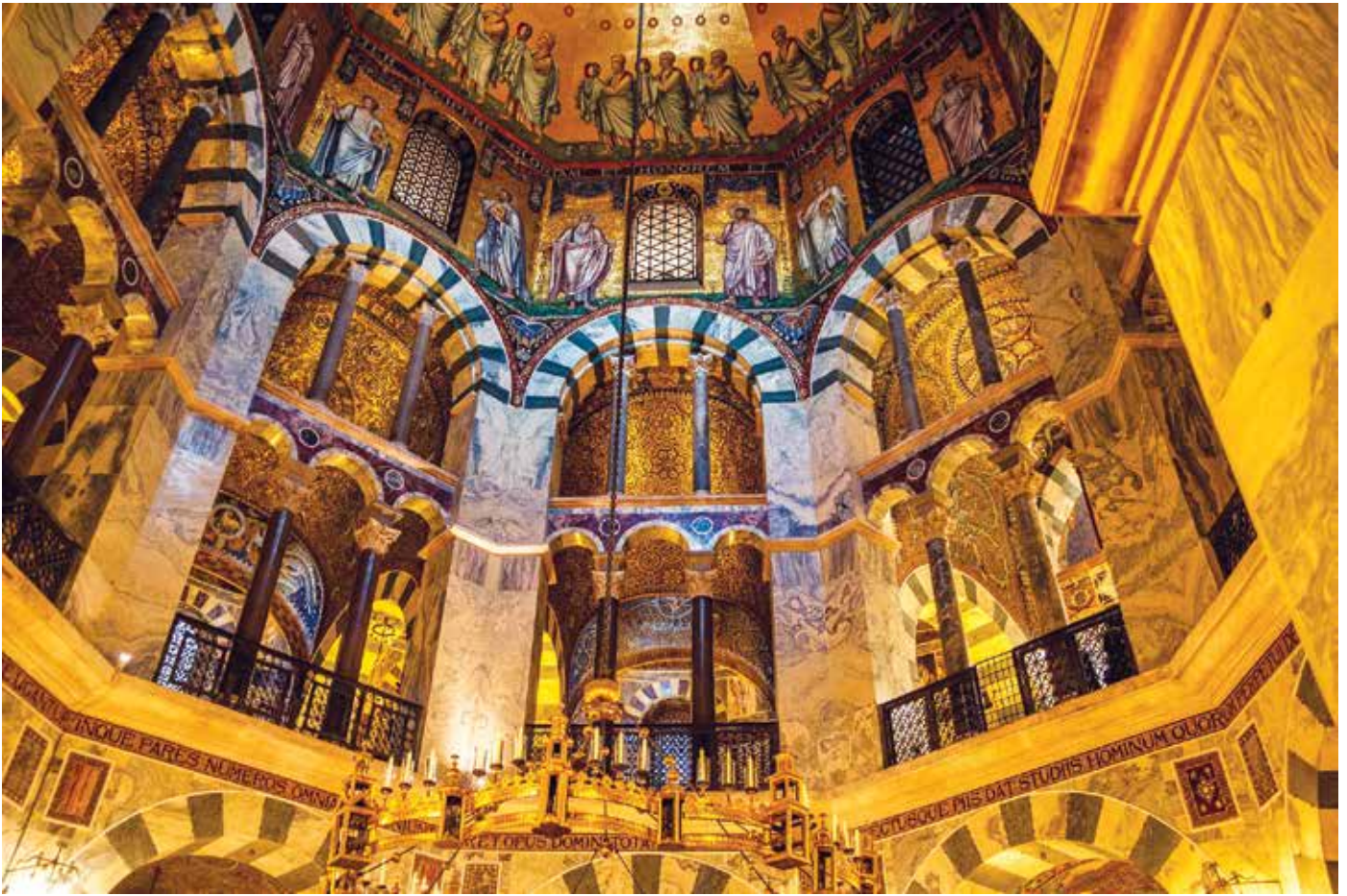
1. Aachen Cathedral, Aachen-Carolingian-Romanesque, Gothic and Ottonian style

Built in the 8th century at the behest of the first Holy Roman Emperor, the Aachen Cathedral is one of the oldest and most important architectural structures in Germany. The first site to be classed as a World Heritage Site, it receives more than a million visitors annually. Large stained glass windows, mosaics, an octagonal chapel, and an opulent treasury make this cathedral a must-visit in Germany. The treasury includes numerous invaluable items including chalices, gems and a Gothic golden bust of Charlemagne. Being the final

resting site of the emperor, the Cathedral is also a place of pilgrimage. In December, the vibrant Aachen Christmas Market is set up near it.

2. Townhall and Roland Statue, Bremen- Gothic and Weser Renaissance style

The Town Hall in Bremen is a fascinating study not only in architecture but also in renovation. Originally built in the 15th century in Gothic style, it was renovated



by incorporating elements of the Weser Renaissance in the 17th century. A New Town Hall was built next to the original one after it suffered severe damage during World War II, and the entire town underwent extensive renovations for much of the twentieth century. The Town Hall and Roland Statue were given the title of a World Heritage Site in 2004 because they were “outstanding representations of the development of civic autonomy and sovereignty” in Europe. The Town Hall has been the seat of municipal self-government since it was built in 1405, making it an important building in German political history.

3. Margravia Opera House, Bayreuth- Baroque style

Built between 1744 and 1748 by Margravine Wilhelmine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, the Margravia Opera House was meant for lavish festivities. It saw two periods of renovations, one in the twentieth century and one in the past decade. In addition to being a museum, the theatre also hosts concerts and drama performances in the summer. The intricate carvings and decorations, tiered boxes, and illusionistic painted canvas have earned the Opera

House the title of World Heritage Site. It is the best-preserved example of Baroque theatre. In the renovations that took place between 2013-18, additions from the 20th century were removed, meaning that the original light and airy atmosphere of Wilhemine's age has been restored.

4. Gendarmenmarkt, Berlin

The Gendarmenmarkt is one of Berlin's most beautiful public squares. It is the site of three impressive buildings: the German Cathedral (Deutscher Dom), the French Cathedral (Französischer Dom), and the Konzerthaus. In summer, classic melodies float in the air at the Classic Open Air as orchestras play on the steps of the Konzerthaus, and in winter, the world-renowned Christmas market takes place. Built at the end of the 17th century, it housed many Huguenot refugees from France, which is why a special French Cathedral was built. The square lay in ruins after the Second World War, and it was due to the efforts of East Berlin's government that it has been rebuilt to its current form.

5. Wiblingen Monastery Library, Ulm- Baroque-Rococo style

The Wiblingen Monastery Library became

popular as one of Germany's most beautiful libraries. Although originally built in the 11th century, the library in its present form emerged during renovations in the 18th century. Located in Wiblingen Abbey, it was built as a space to “awaken a new desire and a new love for spiritual and learned exercises among monks.” The two-storied library is one of the finest examples of Rococo architecture and is covered in impressive fresco paintings by the painter Franz Martin Kühn. The many statues, delicate pillars, extensive stucco work, and natural lighting combine to convey a message of complete harmony.

6. Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria- Gothic-Romanesque style

Receiving more than a million visitors every year, the Neuschwanstein Castle was built in the 18th century at the behest of King Louis II. It is called a fairytale castle due to its stunning architecture and idyllic location. The castle was built as a place of seclusion for Louis II, although he died a few weeks after he moved here, not living to see the completion of his project. Two months after this tragedy, the castle was thrown open



8. Bauhaus sites in Weimar, Dessau, Bernau

Between 1919 and 1933, the Bauhaus movement spread across Germany and revolutionised art and architecture. Important representatives of Classical Modernism, Bauhaus buildings in Weimar, Dessau and Bernau indicate a new direction in architectural innovation, namely austere design, functionalism, and social reform. Included as a World Heritage Site in 1996, it originally comprised buildings in Weimar and Dessau. In 2017, additional buildings in Dessau and Bernau were added to the list. Designed by important figures of the movement such as Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Wassily Kandinsky, these buildings paved a path to a new wave

to visitors who have thronged its confines ever since, fascinated by its beauty and the legend of the “Mad King”. The castle's hold over popular imagination is obvious: both Cinderella's (1950) castle and the Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland have been modelled after the one in Neuschwanstein. Situated in the hills, the castle has required constant renovations of both the interiors, the façade and the trail leading to it.

7. Speicherstadt- Gothic Revival style

Speicherstadt is the world's largest continuous warehouse complex built in the

late 19th century. It is a collection of brick warehouses 7-8 stories high adjacent to the main port area of Hamburg. Stretching for at least 1.5 kilometres, it is connected by canals. It is while taking a barge through these waters that we get to see the beauty of this architectural delight: turrets, windows and eaves decorate the brick-red façade of these buildings. At night, 800 spotlights illuminate the complex, creating beautiful reflections in the water. Many of these warehouses, like other heritage buildings in Germany, suffered severe damage during the Second World War, and these too were rebuilt. Speicherstadt was included in the list of World Heritage Sites in 2015.

of architectural designs that hold great influence over modern architecture.

Germany is a testament to preserving its cultural heritage. For centuries, the country has witnessed many historical sites, ravaged by time and war, be rebuilt with immense care and attention to detail. Today, many of these buildings form the core of German tourism. People from all across the globe visit the country to experience its fairytale castles, artistic libraries, and imposing cathedrals. Finally, Germany stands as testimony to the intermingling of different cultures, and nowhere is this better witnessed than in the evolution of its architectural styles. [\[4\]](#)



NAMASTE TO THE NEIGHBOURS!

Experience an off-grid adventure in lands whose borders touch India. The adventure of traveling can be fully enjoyed while cherishing nature and its fantastic landscapes, and adoring them at the same time. Imagine traveling from India to another country. The following list provides a list of countries that are our neighbors and where Indians can easily travel and make the most of their vacations. Learn more by continuing to read. What is the best place to knock?

By Akshita Bhatnagar

NEPAL

Nepal is a popular travel destination due to its rich culture, abundance of natural beauty, and the size of the Himalayas. It has several well-known tourist destinations, but also has hidden treasures. India and Nepal are close neighbors with excellent travel connections, and Indian citizens do not

require a visa to enter Nepal, though they may require a government-issued identity card if they travel there by land. Indians make up 17% and 20% of Nepal's foreign visitors.

USP

Nepal's unique selling point should be being part of a country with unspoiled nature, tranquility, wilderness, and a sustainable and equitable tourism model.

Best months to visit the country:

The ideal time to travel to Nepal is from October to December when the weather is beautiful and the landscapes are breathtaking. Temperatures vary throughout the locations, and the weather is dry until April. With an average temperature of 6°C at Namche Bazaar in January and February, it can get very cold, especially at night.

The estimated cost of a week's trip to Nepal: The estimated cost of one week's travel from India to Nepal will depend on various factors such as mode of transportation, accommodation, food, and activities. A budget traveler can expect to spend around INR 10,000-15,000 (\$135-200) on transportation and INR 5,000-10,000 (\$68-135) per day on accommodation, food, and activities. However, the cost may vary depending on individual preferences and travel styles.

Nepal as a finger-licking-good destination:

The staple food of Nepal is Dal Bhat, which is mainly rice served along with lentil soup and vegetable curry or chicken (or meat). Other famous Nepalese dishes include Momos, Sel Roti, Chatamari, Chow Mein, and Thukpa.

How to visit?

Nepal from India is a popular choice. Nepal can be reached from India via air, with flights available from major Indian cities to Kathmandu. Another option is to travel by road, either through private taxis or buses, which connect various Indian cities to Nepal. Indian nationals do not require a visa to enter Nepal, while foreign nationals can obtain a visa on arrival at the airport or at the border crossing. It is advisable to carry Indian currency, as it is widely accepted in Nepal.

Documents are required.

For Indian citizens:

Valid photo ID such as an AADHAAR card, passport, or driving license.

For foreign nationals:

Valid passports. Visa on arrival at the airport or border crossing. It is also advisable to carry a copy of your passport and visa while traveling to Nepal.

Here are some offbeat locations visitors shouldn't miss:

- The Rupa Tal
- Khumjung
- Siddha Gufa
- Hiranya Varna Mahavihar
- Janakpur
- Dhulikhel

BHUTAN

Traveling to this neighboring country



shouldn't be a problem because Bhutan and India have a free movement agreement. In reality, many adventure seekers have always wanted to visit Bhutan by road. Although a passport or visa is not necessary for the trip, one must pre-register their vehicle before crossing the border.

USP of Bhutan:

- Bold, confident logotype
- Contemporary, clear thinking
- Traditional/ warm feelings

Tagline that defines: Belief Ornaments, Auspicious Symbols, and Mythical Animals as graphic elements Contemporary Constellations and Future Folk Patterns

Culinary treats from the "happy country": Some of the famous Bhutanese dishes include Ema Datshi, a stew made with hot chili peppers and cheese, Jasha Maroo or Maru, a spicy chicken dish, Phaksha Paa, a pork dish with red chilies, and Momos, a type of dumpling.

Other popular Bhutanese dishes include Shakam Datshi, Khewa Datshi, Red Rice, Shakam Paa, and Sicaam Paa.

Best months to visit:

The months of March and April are among the most popular for travel because of the excellent weather and the abundance of natural beauty in the valleys. This is particularly as the flowers begin to bloom.

Estimated cost for a week's travel from India: The estimated cost of one week's travel from India to Bhutan can vary depending on various factors such as transportation, accommodation, food, and activities. On average, a budget traveler can expect to spend around INR 25,000-30,000 (\$340-410) on transportation and INR 1,500-2,500 (\$20-35) per day on accommodation, food, and activities. Luxury travelers may

from a registered tour operator in Bhutan. COVID-19 negative RT-PCR test report (727 hours before arrival). Travel insurance with COVID-19 coverage.

Here are some offbeat locations visitors shouldn't miss:

- Phobjikha Valley
- Haa
- Jangtsa Dumtseg Lhakhang
- Lama Tshering Dorji General Shop, Paro
- Champaca Café
- Philatelic Bureau

MYANMAR

A trip to this location will be visually pleasing. This location, well-known for its pagodas and tranquil surroundings, is a must-see for all types of tourist. To avoid problems, one must plan their visit to this location carefully. A valid passport, special

What to taste while in Myanmar?

One of the must-try dishes is Mohinga, a popular breakfast soup flavored with fish broth, rice noodles, and an array of fragrant herbs and spices.

Other notable dishes include Burmese curries, seafood dishes, and street foods like samosas and fried bread.

Best months to visit the country:

The most suitable time to visit Myanmar is during the dry season, which runs from November to February. Temperatures can be high during this time, and the rainy season, which runs from June to October, can be difficult due to flooding and



spend significantly more.

How to visit?

Three border crossings in India are required to drive to Bhutan: Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar, and Jaigaon-Phuensholing. Paro International Airport is located in Paro and can be accessed directly from Delhi, Kolkata, and Bagdogra International Airport.

Documents required

Valid Indian passport or voter ID card. Bhutan entry permit, which can be obtained

permits, and an MMT permit are some of the paperwork needed, especially if one plans to drive into Myanmar.

- USP of Myanmar:
- Delicious local cuisine
- Hiking trails
- Beautiful pagodas
- Very friendly locals
- Budget-friendly experiences
- Refreshingly cool weather
- Courtesy of Kelly Iverson
- Breathtaking beaches
- Abundant Buddhist monasteries

transportation disruptions.

The estimated cost of a week's travel from India:

A one-week trip from India to Myanmar costs approximately INR 35,000 to INR 50,000 per person, excluding international travel insurance and additional expenses. The cost varies based on factors like transportation, accommodation, food, and activities. Flights cost between INR 15,000 and INR 25,000 and accommodation ranges from INR 500-4,000 per night.



How to visit?

Travel to Myanmar from India can be done by plane, car, or train. Flights from Bengaluru to Yangon start at Rs. 11703.19, while the cheapest way to travel is by plane, costing Rs. 11866.87 and taking 5¼ hours. Flight deals to Myanmar start at Rs. 8511.41 for one-way flights and Rs. 18250.43 for round trips. The driving distance between India and Myanmar is 2144 miles, taking approximately 46 hours.

Documents required

You must have a current passport and a valid e-Visa for Myanmar. Vacation Checklist. Passport. Here are some offbeat locations that you might want to check out during your stay there: Bagan Mandalay Yangon Hsipaw Kyaiktiyo Nay Pyi Taw

INDONESIA

The largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia is a mix of flavors, sights, sounds, and fragrances. The nation, which is spread out over 17,000 islands, offers an enormous variety of experiences that invite travelers from all over the world to explore them. Indonesia is ripe for adventure for the keen traveler, with everything from the

smoldering volcanoes of central Java to Bali's rice terraces. It also offers Jakarta's huge luxury shopping malls, Rajah Ampat's pristine marine environment and Borneo's lush jungles. Together with the incredibly welcoming locals, Indonesia is rising to the top of popular tourist destinations worldwide.

USP of Indonesia:

Indonesia's unique selling point is its vast archipelago comprising over 17,000 islands, diverse cultures, rich biodiversity, and abundant natural resources, including palm oil, coal, and minerals. It is the world's largest Muslim-majority country and a rapidly growing economy with a strategic location in Southeast Asia.

What to taste while in Indonesia?

Must-try dishes include Nasi Goreng, Satay, Gado-Gado, Rendang, Soto Betawi, and Nasi Padang. Desserts such as Es Campur, Klepon, and Dadar Gulung are famous. Indonesian coffee and tea are worth trying.

Best months to visit the country: The best months to visit Indonesia are from May to September when the weather

is dry and sunny. The peak tourist season is from July to August, so expect higher prices and larger crowds during this time. However, the shoulder months of May, June, and September offer fewer crowds and lower prices while still having great weather.

The estimated cost of a week's travel from India:

A week's travel from India to Indonesia costs around INR 40,000 to INR 75,000 per person. This includes flights, accommodation, food, and activities. The total cost depends on factors like season, transport, and lodging type.

How to visit?

Via air: Indonesia is roughly 4483 kilometers from India and the flight time is around 5 hours. Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta is the busiest airport and is a mere 20 kilometers from the city center. India's airlines offer connecting flights to these destinations. Air India, All Nippon Airways, Asiana Airlines, Cathay Pacific, China Southern Airlines, and Emirates are some of the international carriers that can fly you to Indonesia. Ngurah Rai



International Airport in Denpasar can cater to large and small aircraft making it your preferred choice if you're heading to Bali.

Documents required

A valid passport. Passport-size photos. Old passports and visas. A copy of your completed and signed visa application form. Details about your itinerary. Proof of hotel and flight reservations. Copy of the return ticket. A cover letter with all the necessary details about your itinerary. Here are some offbeat locations that you might want to check out during your stay there: Moyo Island Pulau Sumba Nglanggeleran Tourism Village Mentawai Islands Tana Toraja Regency Pentingsari

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is a stunning travel destination that offers a unique blend of culture, history, and natural beauty. From soulful Buddhist monasteries and temples to exotic and impeccable spots rarely explored, the country has everything that makes your escape worthwhile. There are amazing travel destinations offering a wide range of places to visit, including

ancient civilizations, incredible wildlife, tea plantations, and a stunning coastline. The Pearl of the Indian Ocean has amazing food, history, and wildlife, making it a perfect destination for Indian travelers. With so much to offer, Sri Lanka is a good choice for Indian travelers looking for a unique and unforgettable travel experience.

USP of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's unique selling points include its rich cultural heritage, diverse wildlife, stunning natural beauty, warm hospitality, and strategic location in the Indian Ocean. It is also recognized for its efforts to promote sustainable tourism practices and offers a wide range of activities for visitors to enjoy.

What to eat while in Sri Lanka?

The cuisine is highly centered around many varieties of rice, as well as coconut which is a ubiquitous plant throughout the country. Seafood also plays a significant role in the cuisine, be it fresh fish or preserved fish. Most Sri Lankan dishes include rice, curry, and coconut milk, accompanied by curried vegetables, lentils, or tropical fruit.

Best months to visit the country

The best months to visit Sri Lanka are typically from December to March when the majority of the country experiences dry, sunny, and pleasant weather. The most ideal time to travel to some places, like the east coast, is from April to September. Sri Lanka's monsoon season lasts from May to September.

How to visit Sri Lanka?

Sri Lanka can be reached from India in several ways. Getting a direct flight to Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, from key Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, or Bangalore is the simplest option. Airlines run nonstop flights between Sri Lanka and India. As an alternative, you can travel by ferry from Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu to Talaimannar in Sri Lanka. You can enter Sri Lanka through its northernmost land border.

Documents required

A valid passport with at least 6 months validity from the date of entry into Sri Lanka. A valid visa, which can be obtained online or on arrival for most nationalities.

A return or onward ticket to another destination. Proof of sufficient funds to cover the stay duration. Yellow fever vaccination certificate, if arriving from a country with yellow fever risk. Here are some offbeat locations that you might want to check out during your stay there:

Mannar Island, Jaffna Peninsula, Knuckles Mountain Range, Horton Plains National Park, Mihintale, Dambulla Cave Temple, South Asia is a region of the world that is rich in culture, history, and natural beauty. India, with its deep cultural roots and a rich heritage, is a popular destination for budget travel, known for its forts, palaces, and yoga retreats.

Sri Lanka, the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, is an island nation with spectacular beaches, thousand-year-old Buddhist temples, abundant wildlife, and rich archaeological history. Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives are all unique destinations that offer a glimpse into the diverse cultures and landscapes of South Asia.

These undiscovered destinations are perfect for travelers looking for an off-the-beaten-path adventure. With so much to offer, South Asia is a must-visit destination for any travel enthusiast. [Read more](#)

Sustainable Tourism Awards

June 23rd 2023, New Delhi India



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