



Travel Links

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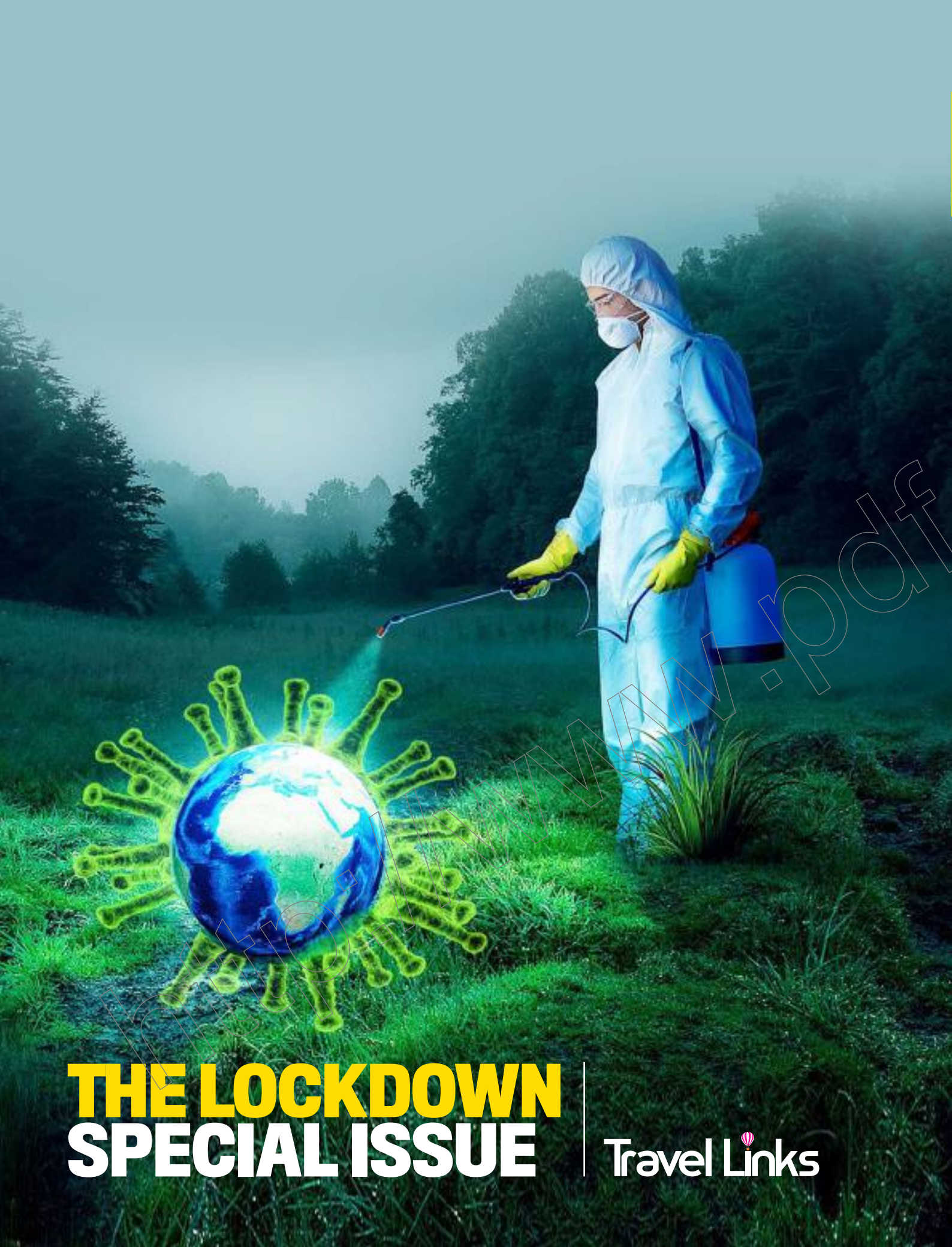
MAY - JUNE 2020 ₹ 100

From **Agra** to **Berlin**

FRANCE TODAY

**THE LOCKDOWN
SPECIAL ISSUE**

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



THE LOCKDOWN SPECIAL ISSUE

Travel Links

Travel Links

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Payal Sahni

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER & DIRECTOR
Pankaj Sahni

MENTOR
D.P. Sharma

CONSULTING EDITOR
Rahul Gupta

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Radhika Narang
Trivdesh Singh

COPY EDITOR
Sameksha

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Sumeet Kumar
Srishti Verma
Ritu Ghai
Riya Jain
Aditi Rath
Alaana
Matuli Madhusmita

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Nishchey Arora

MARKETING CONSULTANTS
Ashish

CIRCULATION
J P Nagar

DESIGN
Lokesh

ACCOUNTS MANAGER
Amit Agarwal

HEAD OFFICE
39, Shahpur Jat, 1st Floor
New Delhi 110049
Phone 011- 40105499
Mob: 9818114451
email & Subscriptions-
travellinkstugo@gmail.com

COVER DESIGN
Lokesh

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Amidst the Chaos and confusion of the Lockdown pandemic, the Unpredictability of the Global economy and the travel tourism Industry, it is the deep rooted desire to bring forth yet another issue of Travel Links Magazine which has kept me sane all this while.

It is very encouraging indeed to bring forth the expected change in the behavior pattern of the Travel Industry. Current situation is bound to inculcate the concept of being the responsible traveler, reducing carbon footprints, the minimalistic approach, being more ecological and environmental conscious. We have always been focused on sustainable tourism, the ecological balance, slow travel which is all the more relevant in times ahead.

The experience of staying in the DevShree Deogarh transports you to the world of Royal Era.

The Travelogue journey of Berlin to attend ITB 2020, only to miss the world's biggest travel fair, and instead enjoy living like a local on the outskirts in a small town Ingolstadt just before the Lockdown and its commotion is sure to keep you engaged.

We have insights of adventurous life of South France which is so very famous for the film festivals, The French Riviera Sun and its sunsets.

According to the studies and the past experiences, it is believed that once the virus has been contained, and the international transport returns to the normal situation, the French tourism industry will pick up its pace and recover fairly quickly.

Weekend destination special brings to you Auroville in Pondicherry, which is a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The town of Auroville is a bucolic place, full of verdure, life, security, possibilities, and mostly, inspiration.

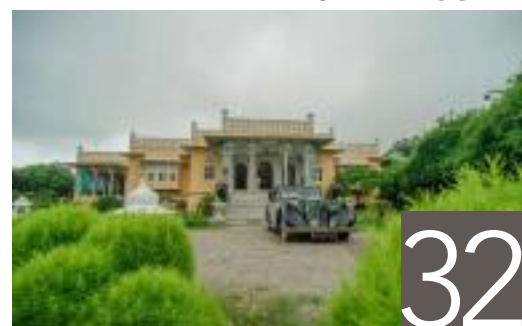
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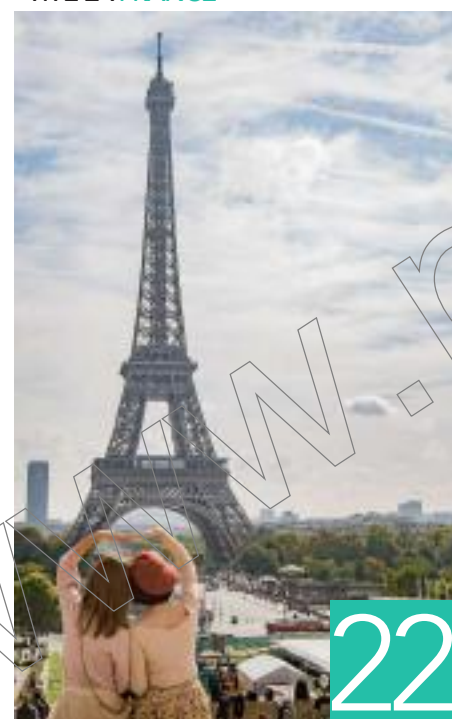
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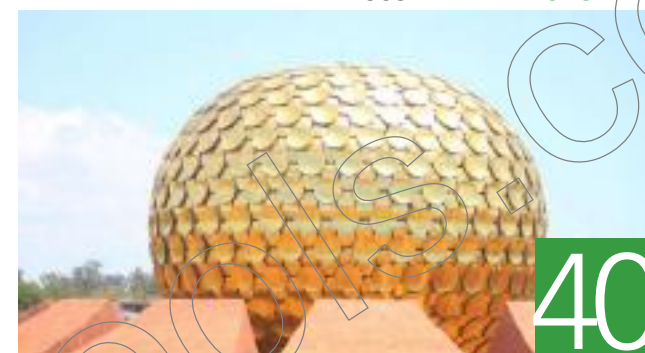
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LENS VIGNETTE

The Rise of 'Conscious Travelling'; exploring the world, post the global pandemic PAUSE



In the blink of an eye; those social media posts of gorgeous landscapes, sun-kissed smiles, waves crashing on the beach, happy enthusiastic airport layovers became a thing of the past. The world hit a sudden pause button and travel, when we resume it will never be the same again!

As we stay put, practicing 'social distancing'; perhaps for the first time, in modern history - we have a generation that is witnessing the environment healing in front of their eyes, when our economic activity stands still. Surely, when the ports open, airport queues start buzzing again; how will travel and travellers embrace this new opportunity to revel in the joy of wanderlust?

A sneak peek to the next-gentravel trends!

Conscious Travel: As the world opens up, in the post pandemic era – there will be a generation of travellers who definitely are more conscious and appreciative of the privilege and opportunity of being able to see more of the world. While the world is available at the click of a button – from travel bookings to hotel stays; to revel in the culture, beauty of another country beyond borders is truly an opportunity. Conscious travelling will bring in more respect and an underlying sense of gratitude to travel.

Keeping It Simple: The world can and did stop and for those who have navigated days hopping airports, stranded in a cruise liner or perhaps just not able to get back home – it possibly was the ultimate nightmare! How will COVID19 change the travel habits of people? A lot many of us, will possibly simplify our travel and factor in some sudden halts and emergencies better. Minimalistic, travel practices will see some serious converts as a new wave of travellers will prefer to travel light and travel right!



Counting Our Carbon

Footprint: We have seen the Earth healing before our eyes with this economic activity pause. Travelling and travellers ahead will be more ecological and environmental conscious. We will definitely look at calculating our carbon footprint and making our stays greener and eco-friendly as much as we can. Stay preferences will be for hotels and homestays which have sound environmental friendly practices and use as much local produce as possible.

Small Steps for Sustainability:

How sustainable can our travel be in the days, months to come? Every flight, every cruise ship, every bus ride, every train track means a use of environmental resources. Travel is indeed the biggest industry and the largest generator of economic activity; however in the post-pandemic world; sustainable travel will become the norm. Carry your own reusable coffee mug, pack in a reusable straw; mix and match your travel wardrobe, use green gadgets, shop less, more mindfully and know that travel is a dialogue with culture.

Local, Immersive Experiences:

A major shift in travel trend in the coming months will be a focus on local, immersive travel experiences. Travel, connectivity, culture is a social need and in the days to come; more demand will come in for local, closer-to-home travel experiences. Travel hitherto majorly has been a cross-country hopping one; to collect more visa stamps and full passport pages. Now, it will be looking at our own culture, respective countries with new eyes and soaking in short-trips, road trips, camping, culture stays over choosing to fly more!

Travel & Fitness: Fitness will become a travel mainstay! If at all, this pandemic has opened our eyes and collective minds to the truth that travel is as much as a health carrier as an economic one. We cannot ignore the impact global health has on travel and economic activity and post the global pause; our travel habits, intentions and journeys will also be tailor-made to be fitter physically! Going forward, we will see the emergence of 'fit-tourism'; as countries gear up to welcome physically fitter tourists to explore and enjoy the beauty of travel. 🇮🇳



• MATULI MADHUSMITA SWAIN •

Matuli Madhusmita Swain is a seasoned marketing and communications expert with over 10 years of experience in hospitality, social development and advertising with different brands. A writer, speaker and artist, Matuli loves good content, digital storytelling and champions conversations on marketing, leadership, new age work place practices, economics, entrepreneurship, sustainable travel and tourism.

The ITB BERLIN 2020 and the commotion of COVID

I attended ITB-Berlin for the first time ever while working with a major traveling publishing house, way back in 2006. Since then I had always wished to go back and attend it again, but with my own endeavor.

When Travel Links magazine was launched in August 2019, one of our first targets was to reach ITB-Berlin. After visiting SATTE-another travel fair in India-where we met a few clients with the 2nd issue of our magazine, and seeing their encouraging response, I decided now is the time to visit Germany with Travel Links. With just the 3rd issue, we tried our best to make use of it to reach maximum target clients.

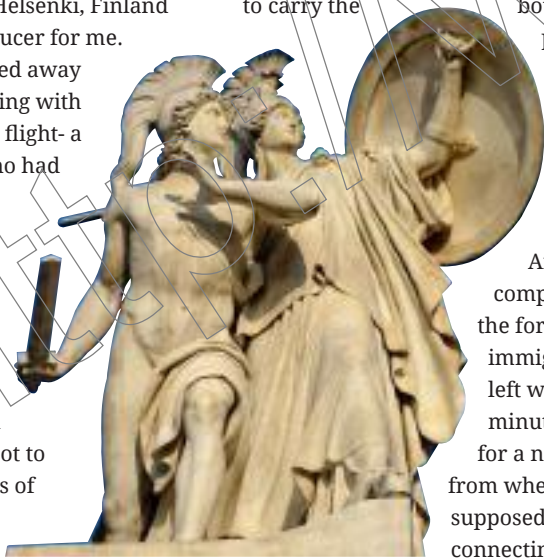
I reached out to ITB Berlin group in the 2nd week of January to get entry for the fair and complete the formalities required to apply for the appropriate VISA (Shangen). After the long wait of 5 weeks, I finally had the VISA. With the help of my cousin who recently moved to Germany, I was able to find a good deal on a hotel near the airport, and fairly reasonable flight tickets. This was it-I was finally going to fulfill my dream of 14 years, I was going to a major travel fair with my own magazine, my own endeavor, something I could be proud of. Now started the agonizing wait for the day to come. I could barely contain my excitement, and already had my bags packed, ready to go at any given moment. As fate would have it, just 2 days before I was supposed to go, COVID-19 warnings started coming in, and ITB-Berlin was cancelled. While it was certainly for the better that the fair was cancelled, that news crushed me. Since it was still in the early stages, and the importance of social



distancing had not yet been realized, I decided to continue with my trip to Germany, only without the fair. I decided to utilize this time to reconnect with my cousin and his family and explore Germany, have a little trip for myself.

The Journey

Since it had been a long time since I had taken a flight longer than 2 hours, the 7-8 hour long flight to Helsinki, Finland was a huge anxiety inducer for me. However, a lot of it eased away when I started conversing with my co-passenger in the flight- a lady from Denmark who had just spent 6 months at Bodh Gaya, where she had been volunteering for the last 10 years as a teacher and a social worker. Surprisingly, thanks to her company as well as a comfortable seat-not to mention the two glasses of white wine I enjoyed along with the in-



flight meal, the flight didn't seem too long. The view of the beautiful city of Helsinki was a sight to behold, the pure blue lake and lush green hills visible from between the white clouds made me forget all about my anxiety and the cancelled fair. The airport was alive with the hustle-bustle of tourists arriving and rushing to catch their connecting flights to other European countries. At security check, I was allowed to carry the bottle of scotch I

picked up from the Delhi airport but not my favorite deodorant. After completing all the formalities of immigration, I was left with only 90 minutes to look for a new terminal from where I was supposed to catch my connecting flight to

Munich. I tried asking a few people but that proved to be of no help. I somehow managed to find the information desk from where I got to know that the terminal I was supposed to be on was on the other end of the airport. Once again my anxiety kicked in, and I somehow managed to reach just in time to be able to buy a small snack-which was much needed-after the unplanned jog of a little over 20 minutes.

I reached Munich after a flight of 2.5 hours, and surprisingly everything went smoothly until the exit. The next challenge was to find the right bus to Ingolstadt, where I was supposed to meet my cousin after a 1 hour long bus ride. Without any understanding of the German language, I somehow managed to reach the bus station with 15 minutes to spare, with information signs once again coming to my aid. I purchased a two way ticket, paying in advance for my return journey on 10th March, and smoked a cigarette to calm my nerves. At exactly 8PM, as promised, I was dropped off to Ingolstadt bus station after a smooth bus ride, which I spent admiring the beautiful city and the small cafés that we passed by. My cousin got there in another 10 minutes,



and we finally reached his house which was only 10 minutes from the bus station. Since it had been a long day for me, with over 20 hours of traveling, we decided to relax with a few drinks and chatted with his beautiful family in their lovely apartment, and enjoyed a hearty Indian meal. It was a good start to my trip.

Ingolstadt

After a well deserved good night's sleep, I enjoyed a warm cup of tea early in the morning at 7 AM, taking in the cool winds and the light drizzle; it truly felt like a good retreat from the commotion of everyday life. Later in the day, I went sight-seeing with my cousin and enjoyed visiting the city centre as well as the small stores, cafes,

and a few brand showrooms. I marveled at the organized public bus transport infrastructure, which definitely came as a shock to me being a Delhiite. We stopped at a food van to have beer, which was a lot of fun on a cold afternoon, in open air with the sun playing hide and seek from time to time. After a nice lunch at Hans Im Gluckburger Grill Restaurant, and walking around for a bit looking for cigarettes, we took a random city bus to explore whatever part of the city we landed in. We had delicious coffee at roadside cafes, and enjoyed the sight of expensive cars driving on the left side of the road at a speed over 120km/h, with people obeying traffic rules and zebra crossings, a sight unusual on the busy roads of India.

Our next stop was West Park Mall, one of the famous malls there, which was lit up beautifully and had wonderful parking facility. We decided to eat at an Italian restaurant called Vapaino, and were surprised to know that all the stewards were from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Needless to say, they were extremely hospitable, which made our experience of



the great food even better. We postponed shopping and decided to call it a day. We had an interesting cab ride home, as the driver was the one who drops and picks up my cousin's kids to and from school every day. Simon, who had come from Kazakhstan 30 years back with his family, is one of the loveliest and most interesting people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He knew every nook and corner of the city and tried his best to converse in English, with the help of google translate. My cousins are teaching him English, in exchange of him teaching them German, as they are still relatively new to the place. I learned that he is extremely fond of India and wishes to visit once he retires, and that his brother is a Yoga trainer in Sri Lanka.

Munich

Next morning, we planned to go Munich for a day. We boarded a local bus from our place to reach Ingolstadt Railway station

and took a local double decker train which takes 57 minutes to reach Munich. Unlike Indian trains, it was not crowded and had comfortable seats with a lot of space to relax and enjoy the beautiful view outside-small towns & fields on a cold morning with a light drizzle.

Munich is a big city and has a huge railway station like Mumbai, Kolkata etc. with big eating joints, cafés, & juice corners all around platform. Like any other metro city, it was full of hustle-bustle of cars, buses, trams, small cafes, big showrooms etc. We went to one of the big city centers of Munich city, which was lined with old German architectural buildings on both sides. We sought shelter from the cold in a small roadside café and enjoyed local beer and snacks for a very reasonable price. We came across quite a few shady restaurants, strip clubs, cabarets etc. as well. We enjoyed some local delicacies and left to go back to Ingolstadt.

We picked up some liquor for the night





from a super store near the station, and to my surprise, I found out that alcohol consumption is allowed on trains there. The train was quite crowded, as it was around the time when offices disperse, but somehow we managed to find 2 seats together. Encouraged by people drinking around us, we also gave in to our temptation and decided to open the bottle of Ballentine Scotch that we had picked up. Needless to say, it was one of the most relaxed train journeys I have ever experienced; where we comfortably chatted and had 2-3 drinks each, without anyone staring at us.

Berlin

Next day early morning we left for Berlin, and Simon, the taxi guy, dropped us at Ingolstadt railway station. I was excited to experience a bullet train for the first time. I was pleased with the transport management system yet again, as when we had to change our train at Numberg

station to reach Berlin, the trains had been planned in such a way that the next train was at the parallel

platform right as we got down from the first

train. One thing I noticed throughout

all my train and bus rides was that

all the small towns have a well planned

architecture, with very similar looks, yet a unique

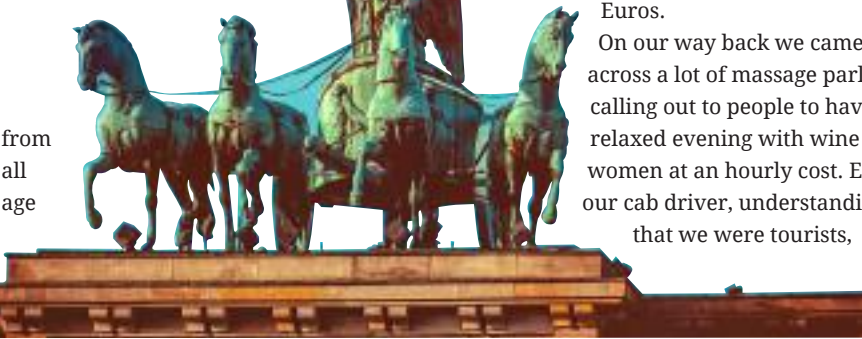
feel for each city.

I experienced a restaurant coach for the first time. With a tasteful orange décor consisting of comfortable booths to sit in and stewards at our service, it looked like a proper restaurant. We had a wonderful meal for a very reasonable price and didn't realise that the journey of 3 hours passed by in a flash, talking and enjoying our meal. I was also supposed to meet one of my clients who had also come to Germany originally to attend the ITB fair.

We stayed at Hotel Riu Plaza, which was not very far from the railway station. It was in the heart of the city, a beautiful well-designed building with nice, cordial staff, who obliged with all our concerns and made sure we got the room of our



preference. We got an executive room for 2 people, which had well designed modern luxury beds and separate cupboards, a well-furnished spacious washroom and complimentary kettle with the necessary supplies for tea and coffee. The room also had a huge TV set with a lot of channels with English and German programs. For 89 Euros, we got ourselves a pretty good deal. The place where I was supposed to meet with my client was only a 15 minute walk away-ALTBerliner Biersalon-a big German café with people



from all age

groups enjoying beer, wine, scotch etc. with their peers at 4pm. After the meeting, around 7PM, the city transformed into a whole different look with beautifully lit buildings and huge LED displays of advertisements of big brands. For dinner, we decided to try out an authentic Indian restaurant called Maharaja. It was a typical Mughlai restaurant with ambience very similar to restaurants in India. It is run by 2 Sikhs, who have been in Germany for a long time. Service was really quick as we got our order of butter chicken and tandoori roti/naan within 10-15 minutes, and the food was also really cheap as our entire meal was covered within 13-15 Euros.

On our way back we came across a lot of massage parlours, calling out to people to have a relaxed evening with wine and women at an hourly cost. Even our cab driver, understanding that we were tourists,

offered to take us to explore strip clubs and cabarets, but warned us that it would cost a lot as it was a weekend. Since we had had a long day and we were already content with our meal, we decided to call it a day and go back to the hotel to get a good night's sleep and explore Berlin again the next day.

The Berlin Wall

The next morning, after coffee in the room itself, we checked out of the hotel as we were supposed to head back to Ingolstadt at night. We planned to visit the old part of Berlin, and took a metro to visit Berlin wall. After a 20-25 minutes journey, we reached our destination and decided to have breakfast at a traditional café. The café was run by a very old family, who had been running it for the past three generations. We enjoyed delicious muffins and tea, and then walked to the Berlin Wall which only took 10 mins. Due to corona virus restrictions, there were not many people there. The wall has a rich history and it is full of captions and slogans related to various

topics. On the opposite side is a huge Mercedes showroom which is open to visitors. There are also a lot of souvenir shops which sell mufflers, caps, gloves and even antique pieces at reasonable prices. We also visited another popular tourist attraction called Checkpoint Charlie, which used to be the Berlin Wall crossing point between East Berlin and West Berlin during the Cold War. It now serves as a memorial point for soldiers with some original remnants of the border crossing blend with reconstructed parts. There is also a small museum right opposite the checkpoint which contains more information and detailed history of that area. Old Berlin has lots of narrow lanes, small shops, old buildings, even some new showrooms, museums, and hotels, with beautiful roads, and it is rich with history and culture-all of which contribute to a wonderful experience. Once again, on our way back to the train station, we decided to grab some wine and snacks to get through the journey to Ingolstadt. We reached there just in time as the train was about to move in less than 10 minutes. Following a similar journey back

to Numberg station where we had to switch trains, and enjoying a fantastic meal at the restaurant coach, we were back home by 8PM, had dinner and crashed on the bed tired from the trip with our hearts full of good memories to carry for a lifetime.

Picnic at Danao River

The next day was the first day since my visit to Germany that the sky was clear and it was a bright sunny day. After a good breakfast of French toasts and coffee, we got ready for a picnic at Danao river side. We reached there by local bus and walked around 3 kilometers to reach a beautiful spot which had a small lake with people sitting and relaxing on both sides of the lake. The area was surrounded by a huge garden, which also had a police museum and a jungle area with all kinds of swings for kids to play and have fun. After spending a good two hours there, we decided to go to a famous restaurant called Swept Away. It opens at only 5:30PM and gets packed almost immediately. The restaurant has beautiful ambience and the best Mexican, Italian food I've ever had. We ordered a pizza, pasta, burgers and

some beer. For dessert we decided to visit another café called Roffles to have ice-creams and muffins. We headed back home after that and decided to go to sleep early, and leave the next day-which was going to be my last day there-for shopping.

THE LAST DAY

My last day started with a visit to the local market for some wine shopping, and then a small trip to the Audi office, where my cousin works. I had lunch at their buffet and had superb salad along with beer. I must mention that I am not a hard core non vegetarian, and I am not fond of seafood as well, thus before going to Germany I was a little nervous about food. However, I got great variety and delicious food everywhere we went, which made my trip all the better. For shopping, we went to Ingolstadt village, situated on the outskirts of the city-the last leg of my trip. Entering the village was truly an out-of-this-world feeling. There were huge showrooms of anything and everything you can name under the Sun. From garments, apparels to handbags, perfumes, shoes-there was everything you





could possibly need. I picked up 2 pairs of Nikes for my wife and daughter and got a pair of jeans for myself. I had great fun roaming there for 2-3 hours in the chilly weather, and the place looked magical once it got dark- with all the beautifully lit up buildings totally transforming the place. We enjoyed a variety of street food-spring rolls, noodles, and veg sticks. Simon came to pick us up as we were too tired to travel back by bus which would've required us to change buses twice. As usual Simon kept us entertained with his stories about the city which he was communicating to us via Google translate. After reaching, we spent time relaxing and talking about the favourite parts of the trip as well as reminiscing old times. I packed my bags and went to sleep with a heavy heart, this trip was coming to an end. The last morning was emotional; saying



goodbye to them after the most wonderful week was extremely hard. I thanked them for their hospitality and left with Simon to catch a bus to reach Munich airport for my return flight. While coming to Ingolstadt it was dark so I could not see the city much, but this time I took in the beauty of the small busy roads with cars, trucks, buses moving in their lanes, without honking or overtaking others, green lush fields on both sides, small towns with beautiful houses of similar patterns, bidding farewell to the city. I reached the airport on time, and had to walk a lot with my luggage, once again without proper support from the information center, only following the signs. I got through security check without

any hassle and reached the gate for my flight to Helsinki. The flight was smooth and we landed on time, leaving me with 5 hours to kill before my next flight to Delhi. I explored the beautiful Helsinki airport and did a good amount of window shopping to pass time. I picked up 2 boxes of premium liquor chocolates for home and waited at my gate to board the flight. Once again, I had a pleasant flight experience with comfortable seats, good food, 3 glasses of wine and the company of a Russian gentleman who was going to Mathura-Vrindavan to chant and explore that culture. We landed before the scheduled time which came as a huge relief, and were made to fill forms with the entire travel details as a precaution upon landing. We



got checked at 2 separate points at the Delhi airport for any symptoms and were then allowed to leave with the advice of being home quarantined for 14 days. Overall, it was the most wonderful and exciting trip, which exceeded my expectations. I had a very good exposure of experiencing Germany up close while travelling via public transports. A plan which had been there in mind for the last 14 years was finally completed, albeit without the ITB Berlin fair, but it taught me to travel independently. I hope to go again next year for work as well as pleasure, and hopefully also visit some nearby countries. As I write this, COVID-19 is on its peak in India and all over the world, many people have died & so many others have contracted this deadly virus. There is total lockdown in India and many parts of the world. Travel industry is in gloom for the time being.

I hope and pray that this gets over soon and we can resume life as earlier and move anywhere, anytime without much fear, but surely behave nicely, maintain social distancing, and respect the nature. God Bless All. Rab Rakha. 🙏

— PANKAJ SAHNI —

Pankaj Sahni is Sales and marketing professional for 30 years and avid Business traveller. He can be reached at pankajsahnitams@gmail.com.

“Vive la France”



It's dawn on the seafront in Antibes, and the water is still enough that the day's first swimmers leave long wakes. Behind the promenade, along Boulevard Charles Guillaumont, the room curtains are yet to open.

Living in the South of France is an adventure in itself. Following the legendary road of the last trip of Napoleon, Cannes has an unexpected history of the palm trees that line its famous boardwalk. A lot of cultures revolve around this town, which now is famous for its Film Festival.

The heartening and reassuring radiant Riviera sun emerges to get the view from the battlements. *There's just something so hopeful about a sunset.* Leaving the grey days behind, and waiting for the sun to rise, *the sky takes on the shades of orange-the colors that give hope, that sun will set, only to rise again.*

DISCOVERING SOUTH FRANCE

To begin with, the exploration of South France, let's take a ferry ride to a small island, Saint Marguerite- an island famous for its fort and the prison: A prison where the man in the iron mask or should we say, the mystery prisoner was housed for several years. Covered with pines and eucalyptus forests, one can experience the crystal clear water and stunning views of the Riviera Coastline.

A small fishing village, an old encampment turned into a metropolitan, overtaken by hotels and apartment buildings competes for the best sea views in the whole world. Watching the luxury cars trundle past, the thoughts keep on wandering to nowhere. One of the Côte-d'Azur première destinations, Cannes has seen lots of stormy and calm history.

Moving towards the northeast, Antibes has always been a relevant trading post. The





central square, Place de Gaulle, being one of the main tourist spots of this city, houses a Grimaldi Castle turned Musee Picasso, a temporary home to Pablo Picasso around 1946. This town is the perfect blend of the extraordinary yet ordinary living place. Once a royal city, it became the outermost stronghold of the Roman Kingdom, facing the county of Nice. The expansion towards Cap d'Antibes and the establishment of Juan-Les-pins gave a phenomenal growth to the tourism on Cote d'Azur and became one of the most prominent fashionable summer destinations on the coastline welcoming the international elite. The French Riviera does not stop here. **Nice, a veritable kaleidoscope of history, traverses scoundrels, artists,**

aristocrats, monarchs, and martyrs. The unusual "Rock-filled" beaches of Nice are naturally occurring, the smooth river stones being washed down, and deposited on the shores of Nice. The beauty of these beaches is unparalleled. It is rightly said: **"After the chaos of life, you want to be here, here in Nice, where everything ends with a glass of wine and a long walk on the beach."**

LIVING THE FRENCH LIFE!

Talking about wines, they are an esteemed and influential part of living a "French life." French people have always loved wines. So, under a good sun, and above a good soil, drinking wine in French culture is not only acceptable but an etiquette in social gatherings. Want to live like a French?



Learn to drink wine. Whenever we think about South France, the most elite tourist destination in the whole world, we tend to picture yachts in France and beachfront hotels that we are never able to afford. But beyond these clichés, the area boasts the beautiful natural surroundings, pleasant weather, delicious cuisines, and plenty of lesser-known towns, which offer a slower pace of life, as to what is led in Paris, or even Monaco. Having a beach picnic, or just a cycle tour along the coastline, there are plenty of things to do, for affordable experiences that make even the locals sigh with pleasure. The French Riviera is an astonishing yet ironic place; you can work on the weekdays

in Sophia Antipolis, Europe's most significant technological park and head for skiing on weekends, in French Alps, and when you get back, have a refreshing swim in the Mediterranean sea. Life in the south of France is all about living in the moment. No one moves fast and just takes the leisure stroll through the town's daily market. One would have a better time in the afternoon, under the shade, noticing locals perfect their boules games, "Petanque". There may be no better way to spend your day than soaking in the Mediterranean sun and have frosty drinks and lunch, gazing deep into the sea, wandering in thoughts to nowhere, to reach somewhere.



CULTURE OF FRENCH RIVIERA

French Riviera is not only about the monumental places and sunbathing on the beach; there are various cultures and festivals celebrated throughout the year. One of the must live French moments, is to experience the fullness of life carnival of Nice. This carnival tradition dates back to the middle ages and justifies the stay in Nice. Far from the grey skies, Nice is to be savored at this time of the year without moderation. Artists design the live sized floats and other figurines in traditional paper-mache for the colorful parade. Indeed there is so much narrative related to the culture and civilization, which dates back to thousands of years. Still, the advancement in the modernization of humans has had a drastic effect on the customs and traditions of South France. The way of life and lifestyle has changed drastically; the perception of people has changed.

COVID-19 AND FRANCE

There is so much to experience while living



a luxurious life in the French Riviera, but will it continue? Will France and especially South France be able to claim its position as one of the top tourist destinations after the Covid-19 Pandemic has passed? The epidemic has had such a drastic effect on the daily lifestyle of everybody that we

have been forced to live in the cages. The worldwide impact of this alleged “China Virus” has been so insane that in the last three months, the French economy has already been shrunk by 8%, and more is yet to come. The schools and colleges have been closed,

the daily businesses are suffering as the operations have been stopped, and the major hit is experienced by the travel and tourism industry. This is a scene out of a movie. ***It is as if we slept in one world, and woke up in another. Suddenly Disney is out of magic, Paris is no longer Romantic, New York doesn’t stand up anymore, Mecca is empty and the Chinese wall is no longer a fortress. Hugs and kisses suddenly became weapons, and not visiting the loved ones, an act of love.***

It is as if nature is trying to say, ***“You are not necessary. The air, sky, earth, and water are more than fine without us, and we are the guests and not the masters to it.”*** Life has been stopped, and the world continues to battle the disasters caused by the novel coronavirus across the globe. But let’s look at the positive side. The Covid-19 is jeopardizing tourism in the most visited country in the world. Being a country, which ranks among the top 5 states to be affected by the virus, it is as if the pause button has been pressed on the remote. No visiting to the beaches, no socializing, instead of focusing on social distancing, the French culture has been impacted in such a way that it might take even years to get back to a healthy life.

But according to the studies and the past experiences, it is believed that once the virus has been contained, and the international transport returns to the normal situation, the French tourism industry will pick up its pace and recover fairly quickly.

The various steps taken by the French government to uphold the economy states that the country is trying its best to fight against this invisible virus and yet, take care of its citizens. The effective implementation of isolation and social distancing has proved to be working in favor of the country in controlling the spread of this virus, but has it helped the people? Hands down, no argument on the positive effect on the physical health of its people, but is it all that we have to focus on? What about the mental health and emotional health of people? Staying locked in one room for months takes a toll on the mind of people and on the economy, which ultimately affect the lives of the common man.

The government should start drafting policies on the lines for the revival of the economy to minimize the impact of the lockdown after it is over. Right now, the

French economy is in sleep. It is vital to be ready with the tools to fight the recession, which will follow this pandemic. Lockdown can be understood as deep sedation of the economy, which will take time to rise and stand on its own.

Tourism has been a significant contributor to the revenue generated in France, but now who would like to risk their lives and travel to France, just to experience the history and culture, which was for about the past 100 centuries, and which will stay there for the next 100.

The visit to France has always been on the

bucket list for travelers, but now what are they left with? Sitting in a room, scrolling the pictures, and living in the virtual moment is all anybody can do. Indeed, the lockdown has led to the reduction of the carbon footprints, but how will we be able to cope up with it?

No doubt, the traveling and enjoying the local culture of France is being missed, but the question that arises here is till when and how will be able to cope up with it?

“Our memories of the ocean will linger on, long after our footprints in the sand are gone.” 🇫🇷



RIYA JAIN

A masters student, residing in France, exploring her passion through travelling and living life like a local. In a pursuit of becoming a digital marketer, she loves to pen down her thoughts, after living them.

Cold desert, warm sunshine, and welcoming hearts- Ladakh

How often do you look at your old pictures and smile to yourself? The pictures with your parents in them, holding you tight because your fancy has been caught by the monkeys on the side of the road. Or the ones, in which you are perched atop the dining table, happily clapping your tiny hands. Some of my favourite pictures have been clicked in the mountains- my brother and I hugging each other with our toys clutched in the other hand; my grandma trying to evade the snow ball that my brother has thrown at her; my cousin, who was a little over two feet tall and a little over two years old then, gladly lying in snow and eating a chocolate; my parents holding my brother and me as we stand near the Hidimba temple in Manali almost twenty years back, barely reaching their knees.

For some reason, I have never stopped admiring and adoring the mountains, and they have always seemed to return the love, as if gift wrapped for me to keep safe in my heart. The people in the hills have been very welcoming, with their care and affection as warm as the happy sunshine. I find their simplicity awe inspiring. With the same thought as my muse, I happily share with you an exciting trip to the Ladakh valley.

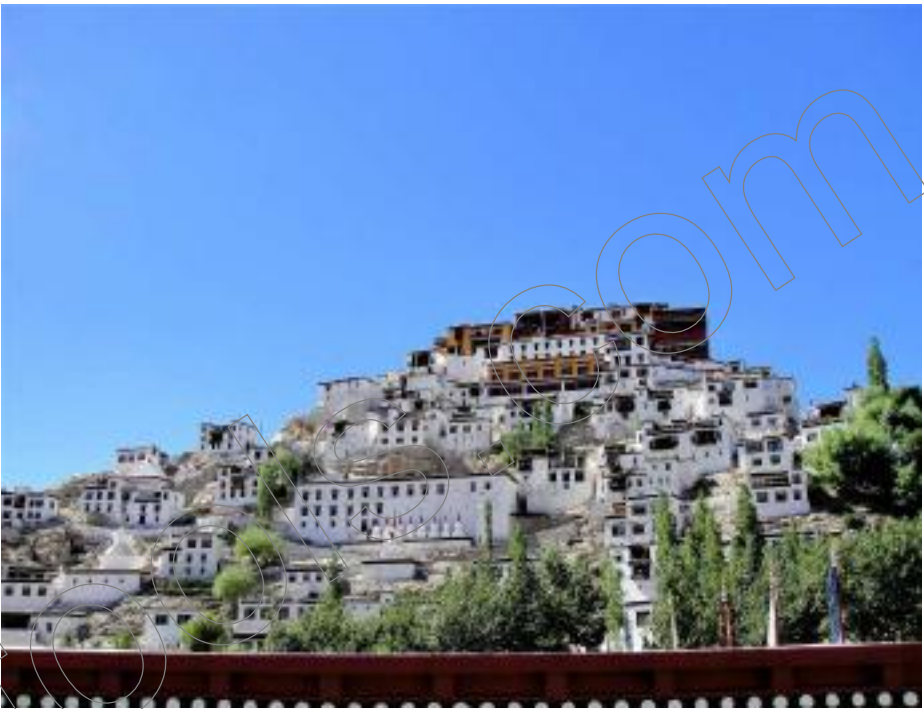
As the long summer vacations approach (I'm reminded of the Phineas and Ferb theme song here), a delightful trip awaits. When adrenaline, natural beauty and quiet is what you desire, set in the mighty mountains, Leh can be your go-to. Home to 'the world's highest motorable road', large deposits of Uranium, and nature at its best, the Ladakh valley is like no other. It is well connected to the major cities



through road and air. You can drive through Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, or, take the alternative route through Manali, Himachal Pradesh. In the former, you would encounter the Magnetic Hill, Kargil, Tiger Hills, Dras and Lamayuru, among others. Magnetic Hill is a Cyclops hill. Owing to the area, the slopes around ‘create’ a hill, in essence, they create the optical illusion of a hill. Hence, when you think you are going uphill, defying the gravity like some superhero, you are actually rolling downhill. The War Memorial at Dras, Kargil is built in the memory of the brave soldiers who laid down their lives fighting the Operation Vijay in May 1999. July 26 is celebrated as Kargil Vijay Diwas each year. If you are going by the Manali Leh highway, there are going to be numerous mountain passes, each replete with breathtaking views and difficult drive. There’s Rohtang pass, the first one, about 52 km from Manali. Then there’s a decent to Gramphu. It is here that you can take the road to Lahaul and Spiti valley. Following Gramphu is Kokhsar, Sissu and then Tandi with its last petrol pump before Leh. You would then encounter Keylong, Jispa, Darcha, Zingzingbar, and then a steep and arduous ascent to Baralacha La, crossing hundreds of streams with their melted ice waters on the road, some deep enough to reach your knees. Sarchu, Pang, Tanglang La, and then the Moore Plains. Drive to your heart’s extent in the vast plains here amidst the mountains. You would then cross the Indus river at Upshi, and finally reach Leh. Leh is a town nestled in the Himalayas, central to most activities in the Ladakh region. Abundant sunshine blesses it, paving way for solar energy pursuits here. A lot of people these days fly to Leh, and then rent motorbikes to tour around. Yet others ride through knee-deep waters at the passes, deal with sludge and mud, streams on roads which look like rivers, with the petrol tanks from Tandi keeping company to the bikes and the riders. Leh has many monasteries to visit and stroke your spirituality. Managed by Buddhism’s Drukpa sect, Hemis Gompa has a copper statue of Buddha in Nubra valley, situated at an hour and a half’s drive from Leh. Masked dance performances are held here between June and July, dedicated to Lord Padmasambhava. Then there’s the



Thiksey Gompa, managed by the Gelugpa sect, and a statue of Maitreya Buddha. Visit the Diskit monastery and experience the inner peace and quiet take over you. There is Likir monastery, Spituk, Lamayuru, Shey and Phyang, among many others, managed in a splendid manner by the Buddhist sects. No trip to Leh is complete without the drive to Khardung La. About two hours away from Leh is this world-renowned pass, known as the highest motorable road. You would see many people here who are riding their bicycles to reach the pass. Bravehearts and quite fit individuals indeed! To keep our bellies happy, there are small stalls selling instant noodles and a hot cup of tea. The journey is worth the effort and time. It is worth a mention to go to Diskit village, and stay there overnight. You would like the rest; the roads are bumpy and the drive is indeed a challenge. Diskit is home to the 106ft tall mesmerising statue of Maitreya Buddha facing the Shyok river at Diskit



monastery. The little child and the spiritual old soul within you meet over the beautiful scene of valley that is visible from the monastery. It is serene and peaceful like night-time stories heard in grandma’s lap, yet exciting enough to force you to look around, to let your mind run wild amidst happy thoughts, and say a mindful prayer. Hunder village has the Gobi desert’s native double-humped camels, a major tourist attraction in Nubra valley. Bactrian camels are blessed with two rows of long eyelashes, which protect their eyes from dust. Visit Hunder for the maximum number of Bactrians in Ladakh, and revel in the admiration of this miracle of nature. As I was thinking about the route that would take you to Nubra, it struck me that I hadn’t mentioned about the one place Ladakh is well-known for. Pangong Tso. It has about one-third area in India, two-third in China. If you are planning to stay overnight in the tented accommodation, you are in for pleasant panorama. Stars dot the night sky in numbers as many as one can count, and then some more. Constellations abound, Milky Way surrounds, and there is enchanting beauty all around. Words fall short when you try to describe something that showers your soul with peace, fills you with appreciation for the Creator, and blesses you with spirituality unmatched. Such is Leh, with so much to do, so much to see, and so much to soak in. Visit this wonder, my father did on his bike and yours truly waits for that opportunity ardently. This article is a feeble attempt to talk about the Ladakh valley. Words cannot do justice to it, the warm and welcoming people with kind hearts and simple lives. Do remember to carry your disposed off bottles, plastic packets and other waste to help maintain the cleanliness. Nature unfurls itself to you here, baring all that it has seen through these years-hundreds of men, animals elusive to human eyes, storms of snow and storms of rain, all giving it the character and base that make it seem resilient and invincible. Happy travelling to you!

An article by Srishti Verma. 🇮🇳

— SRISHTI VERMA —

I am Srishti Verma, a Delhi-based freelance travel writer. I love reading and travelling, with a special place for lofty mountains in my heart. When not studying, I can be found trying to click my dog’s pictures (my furry boy hates the camera!)

DevshreeDeogarh



Asking in the rich culture of Rajasthan, **DevshreeDeogarh**, in the heart of Aravalli Hills, transports you to a royal era that makes you feel like a king.

A two-hour drive from Udaipur, three from Jodhpur, and four from Jaipur takes you to this enchanting seven-room resort poised at the height of 2100 feet and located on the edge of the RaghoSagarlake. An ideal spot to relax in every season as the hottest day in Deogarh is 38 degrees Celsius, thus making it much more relaxed than the neighboring Rajasthan.

Home to **Shatrunjai Singh** from the Chundawat clan of Rajputs of Mewar and his wife **BhavnaKumari** (from Ghanerao in Rajasthan), this place is a perfect blend of modern architecture and royal lineage. Surrounded by woods, with the Gokul



Fort at the far end, Devshree has been constructed in a traditional haveli style with deep verandahs, spacious rooms, and a contemporary décor punctuated by the not-to-be-missed Rajput architecture. Blaze of multicolored light from the stained glass windows in the rooms offer views of the gardens. They are inspired by the craftsmanship of local artists from Deogarh, especially the works of Chokha and Baghta, (who worked on Baghore Ki Haveli), and other internationally reputed architects, Deogarhis aesthetically alluring. Replete with intricately carved pillars, deep, airy verandahs, immaculate stonework with Nimbahera stone hand-carved over two years, stunning floors made of marble from Makrana and Ambaji, state of the art, impeccable bathrooms, a huge roof terrace perfect for yoga at dawn and drinks at sunset, the artistry is



outstanding. The seven spacious and well-appointed bedroom suites with large luxurious bathrooms offer views of the surrounding flower gardens. Vignettes of royal life run all through the beautifully carved pillars, chequered marble tiles, open courtyards to soak in the sun all day long in winters. Patios and terraces are all surrounded by gorgeous lawns and gardens, just a few meters from RaghoSagarlake. For the avid bird watchers, it is a sight to behold as over 100 varieties of migratory, and 500 varieties of non-migratory birds visit the lakeside, and peacocks frolic around the garden. The colorful strands of culture and heritage, coupled with welcoming hosts and friendly people, making this an exhilarating experience. One can also lose themselves in the bar, the dining room, or the light-filled sitting room. No wonder Devshree evokes an instant ‘wow’ factor from all its visitors. Step outside to visit umpteen picnic spots and enjoy plenty of activities and nature’s

scenic splendor. Watch the sunrise over the fort and filter through the palm trees onto the swimming pool. After a splash in the refreshing pool, hop onto the rural train for a morning ride to experience the invisible but strong thread that instantly ties us to the city’s heritage. The magical journey in this 1930s train takes you from Deogarh, down the Aravalli Hills through the KumbhalgarhWildif Sanctuary, to arrive at Phulad. Explore the unique culinary delicacies of Rajasthani local sweet shops and restaurants or get a local haircut. The hosts, Shantrunjai Singh and Bhavna, personally take you for a ride in their newly enhanced jeep to the village nearby and introduce you to the local villagers. There is an exciting session, “Chaibucks,” hosted by Shantrunjai Singh at the local tea stall where village people and guests interact with each other and exchange views over a cuppa. Dev Shree is a divine blessing. A perfect tapestry of clear blue skies and blue waters of the lake interspersed with history and heritage. It’s a unique experience to hear

villagers returning to their homes with their cows and goats at a particular time of day referred locally as “gaudhuli.”Or watch the birds cover branches of trees with their bright plumes as they fly back home. Get smitten for life as you watch in delight the culinary delicacies of Rajasthan and delicious European options prepared with handpicked vegetables from the onsite garden. Friendly staff willing to cook up homely Indian meals with local Mewari specialties to please your palate. It’s a harmonious synergy between luxurious living and urban comfort. It is a perfect place for those wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of city life to seek a good slice of royal lifestyle presented with exquisite attention to detail. “DevshreeDeogarh is an experience, and nothing can leave you feeling more blessed or in touch with nature,” reflects Shatrunjai Singh, feeling grateful for the transcendental bliss experienced by himself and his wife while creating this new home that is an absolute do-as-you-feel-like. **Inputs: Ritu Ghai** 🇮🇳



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Mesmerizing Mughal Gardens: Agra beyond Taj

Agra, the heritage city of Mughal Empire, holds India's treasure, the Taj Mahal. The city full of tourist is visited to see one of the world's wonders. I take you to an Agra which represents a remarkable ensemble of Mughal heritage beyond the Taj. Glimpses of some rare places which make Agra much more interesting will make you spend a whole week embracing the beauty of Mughal culture. The resemblance of Persian architecture can be seen in the astonishing Mughal gardens of Agra. Architecture from Persia has always been a part of the rich heritage of Agra's monuments. As per the holy Quran, the Mughal Gardens were made to resemble the Gardens of Paradise on earth. They indeed do that. A recent visit to Agra took me to these Mughal Gardens on the banks of river Yamuna. The Mughal Gardens can be the reserves for history enthusiastic and explorers that

they may wander around them for days. Our guide was particularly helpful and shared information about the history, arts and architecture. He talked us through the gardens with ease. The historical facts, interesting and exciting, were told and helped us in appreciating these gardens much more. One of the oldest Mughal Gardens of Agra is the Aram Bagh, which was later renamed as 'Ram Bagh' under the British rule. This 'Bagh-e-Nur Afshan', meaning 'the light scattering garden' was conceptualized by the first Mughal emperor in India, Babur. The explicit Persian design of fountain with water channels covering the entire garden of Charbagh pattern is an attraction for tourists. This astonishing piece of Mughal architecture has numerous stories behind them. The 'Lazy Garden' with its two sides incorporating 'takhana' has a tale related to Babur's grandson Akbar and his wife. Mehtab Bagh, another beautiful attraction,

is located on Yamuna's Eastern Bank. 'Mehtab' meaning 'light of the moon' was identified by Emperor Shah Jahan to ensure that there would be no monument behind the Taj, made for his beloved. Overlooking Taj Mahal, this garden is splendid for a moonlight view of the Taj. The garden spread across a 25acre plot is adorned with fountains, flowers, pools and shaded pavilions, reminiscent of the beautiful architecture of Mughal Era. This romantic destination provides a beautiful view of Taj Mahal with its reflection in the pond. The tomb of poet and scholar Allama Afzal Khan, the Prime Minister of Shah Jahan, is situated in the monument 'Chini ka Rauza' which fashions unusual and exotic architecture along with a Mughal sultanate dome. The increasing pollution and natural calamities have, however, taken away the intricate pietra dura work from the walls, but its glorious architecture is still visible.



Touring Agra, I came across a small draft of Taj Mahal, known as Itmad-ud-Daulah. This Taj-like structure is often designated as a 'jewel box' and consists of a number of gardens and outbuildings. The beautiful walls of red stone are incarnated with white marble. The mausoleum consists of four hexagonal towers giving it a Taj like look. The gold painted ceiling gives it a jewelry box resemblance. A water channel system accompanies the walkway towards 'bachcha Taj' (little Taj) with gardens blooming with flowering plants. 

Inputs by Payal Sahni



The marvelous architecture took my heart at the first glance. The red entrance gate reminded me of the red stone from Rajasthan culture with marble designs inscribed in it. The remarkable windows of the monument represent classic Mughal architecture with concrete net-type structure. Another appealing destination for tourists

is the lush green Shah Jahan Bagh. The emerald colour floor adds to the glamour of this alluring garden which is stretched towards Taj Mahal in the west. The ambience and enchanting beauty of this garden increases with an expanded golf course, making it one of the most attractive Mughal Gardens in Agra. My history-rich thoughts ripened here as the Agra air



worked its magic on me. Moving further ahead, another popular attraction of Agra lies in the old city's streets and food. The crowded streets of the old city define its own heritage, along with several spots which are considered to be iconic. The street consists of a handful of local milk products shops, flowers and pickle shops as well. How can I forget the iconic paan shops? These paan shops get their betel leaves from the town of Varanasi and Mahoba, which are situated nearby and are famous for their paan shops.

The Mankameshwar Mahadev temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. A tale behind this temple included the presence of this temple at the time when Shiva met Krishna in Mathura. The ancient temple left a serene impact on me and I was thankful to have come across the fascinating religious beliefs of Agra dwellers.

Havelis from late 19th century have running households till date. Living in an ethnic Indian house and maintaining it since ages are the jobs beautifully done by the tradition rich people of Agra. Walking down, I happened to meet a one of its own kind spice market selling every spice of India. The spicy fragrance would add a pinch of flavor in the ambience.

Agra is also a hub of traditional Indian

food blend with spices and a lot of sweets. Talking of sweets, the special pethas of Agra are delightful. You will find many shops selling these pethas made of pumpkin in the market. Eating pumpkin could not get sweeter; not to forget the delicious deep fried 'aalo tikkis' and other street food savories.

The history behind every nook and corner of Agra has left me amazed. What disheartens

me is the condition of these monuments. Many of them are in need of a restoration. There are broken bits, having suffered at the hands of time and miscreants. It would be a blessing to have these monuments maintained and restored by the government agencies involved. Also, let us all, as tourists, ensure to not pollute this city. The seat of Mughal throne was in Agra, as is Taj, acting like a jewel in India's crown. Let us pledge

to not litter and pollute this history-laden city, for the deeper you dig in Agra, the more you get. The tales from rich Mughal era gone by provides meaning to every bit of Agra. If you are planning to visit Agra, rest comfortable as the drive is smooth and easy on the Yamuna Expressway.

Go beyond the beautiful Taj and take a glance of these attractions for views that will bedazzle you. 🇮🇳

Inputs by Payal Sahni



Sustainable Auroville



It took me five minutes to soak in the vibrant atmosphere of what looked like a very modern village that seemed to be brimming with life. However, more than its beauty, it was the essence of the place that left me enthralled. The town of Auroville is a bucolic place, full of verdure, life, security, possibilities, and mostly, inspiration.

I had spent the last few days in Pondicherry, another beautiful place steeped in history and culture, boasting its French heritage, its eclectic landscape, some excellent architecture and mostly its quaint hotels and restaurants. I had spent hours cycling in the French Quarters, visiting their museums and churches, admiring their graffiti filled walls (they make for a perfect picture back-drop), and visiting their small but lovely boutiques. It was lovely...but in a modern way.

As I walked through the town of Auroville, I couldn't help comparing the simplicity of this place with the modernity of Pondicherry - the stark differences in lifestyle everyone followed here vis-a-vis a city driven life were highlighted to their maximum. Pondicherry is a place where four different quarters, French, Muslim, Christian and Tamil, live together. But the sense of unity that was present in Auroville

was missing in Pondicherry.

Not a car in sight, children roaming the streets freely, there was a carefree and yet a purposeful spirit that one could instantly perceive. The entire place felt Utopian, and the vibe of the visitors and the locals combined created a magical buzz.

Then we met Gopi, a local Aurovillian. His simplicity, so characteristic of Auroville, made him incredibly easy to talk to. His beliefs and ideals were very simple, pragmatic and impactful and by the end of it, he became a friend.

He explained all about the several projects the Aurovillian residents had taken up. They had set up alternative ways of producing energy in order to not exhaust fossil fuels, by harnessing nature's bounty - wind, sunlight, etc. The sustainable development projects have encouraged the residents to use only "kinisi e-cycles". These electric bikes are one of the most ecological forms of transportation, bringing the best of two worlds together.

Gopi enlightened us about Auroville starting out as a barren wasteland, but the citizens worked together as one to transform it in the paradise it is by planting a desert plant, the acacia, to instil life in that vast land. The acacia brought in other life



forms and Auroville, as we know it today, came to flourish. He went on to show us the images of some of the vegetables that were now cultivated, including a lady finger the size of a human arm! Vegetables and other commodities are bartered amongst other families and Auroville has the aspiration to become a cashless community one day.

What they have done to their learning centres is worth emulating. They have no curriculum; some do not have campuses and some without fixed teachers. It provides an opportunity for children to think by themselves, learn through nature, be connected to the earth, and open their minds to things they never knew existed. The locals contribute to each other's learning by volunteering at the education, meditation and yoga centres.

Devouring algae is one thing I never thought I would do. Gopi took us to a Spirulina plantation which was surprisingly stunning. I entered through a passage of vibrant flowers and leaves brushing my arms as I walked in. As we sat down in a little store in the middle of this garden, he told us all about Spirulina and its properties. Spirulina is a tiny spiral shaped blue-green algae. It is one of the healthiest things to have. It strengthens the immune system, enhances



natural cleansing and detoxification, etc, and these are just some of the benefits. In layman language, Spirulina is super food, literally. Post this; we all went berserk exploring the range of items the shop had to offer.

It took a while for me to reflect on the heady experiences I had had during the course of that day as Gopi took me back to the visiting centre on his motorcycle. After eating a completely organic yet scrumptious meal at one of the local restaurants and shopping for scented candles and signature Auroville pots with their famous papaya leaf motif, I readied myself to say goodbye to the

euphoria and step back into reality.

Our last stop before heading back to Pondicherry was the Matrimandir, the number one attraction of Auroville. Matrimandir is a meditation centre in which only the most dedicated and patient souls are allowed entry. The Matrimandir is a large, round, golden dome in the centre of a vast meadow. I could smell the serenity in the air and the music of the meadow echoed in my ears. It looked like a hideaway of the lost heaven. The sense of inner peace and harmony was paramount. The lush green, the landscape, the warmth of the sunlight, everything seemed so coherent. You could

hear the chorus of the pleasant sounding birds. The trees looked like silhouettes in the glorious expanse. If heaven really has a stairway, this is the final destination. I never wanted to leave.

Alas it was time. No matter how much I wanted to spend more time there, I could not. But I was not sad that it ended. I was happy that it happened. Auroville, a place as fascinating as its name, has undoubtedly been one of my best visits in the country.

Having been in Pondicherry for a while now, I expected this day to be just as the others. Undoubtedly all my days in Pondicherry were enjoyable, but this day was not just pleasurable, it was a day worth remembering. Everyone in that community, worked united and not divided. They managed to create a perfect balance between enjoying the moment and working towards a bright future. When one taps into their emotions and thinks for the greater good of the civilisation, even if it means less remuneration, the future immediately become more profitable. When young children are given the liberty to think for themselves and explore their own creativity, the barriers in the mind which all people are born with, break! "Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity," said Mirra Alfassa, the founder of Auroville, and holding up that ideal has never been a challenge for them.

The amount I learnt on this day has no match to what I've learnt all my life, because I did not just gather information, I gained experience. And all this experience, adventure and most importantly this lesson in life was not taught to me by a person. It was taught to me by a place, Auroville. 🌍



Hello Friends



Our previous column was on wine and cocktails to celebrate Holi, along with a few interesting non alcoholic beverages. We will move closer to home, in fact, in your own home due to the current status worldwide. To enjoy our very own Indian dishes with wines from India.

Indian food and wine pairing was not popular sometime back, however with the introduction of several winery around the country, wine has taken a major role in pairing with the local cuisine now a days. Keeping in mind the complex and flavors already existing in Indian dishes, it is a challenge to pair the correct type of grape with the food.

We will pair the wines by dividing them in parts, creamy curries, red sauce based food, and the green based vegetarian dishes and of course desserts.

Riesling balances well with creamy curries with rich flavors and tends to add a fair of sweetness to your palate which is full of the strong flavors of the curry. Paneer tikka masala made in a creamy curry or a chicken korma are good examples with the Riesling balances well and can be enjoyed.

The infamous red sauce based foods, pairs well with several wines white or red as a matter of fact, due to the complexity of the spices involved in the dish, that a light red such as a Pinot Noir or a fruity Sauvignon Blanc marriages well with the full flavors of the red curry, chicken tikka masala, and a vegetable makhni.

The heavily loaded Saag Paneer/ lamb dishes would be best matched with a choice of white wine or even a red wine. A moderately sweet Riesling would cut the spice level and a Shiraz would accompany well with full flavors in the dish such as Rogan Josh, lamb Curry and Lamb Chops. Pinot Noir with its fruity flavors light in character goes primarily well with chicken tikka and the famous tandoori chicken given the smokiness of the dish. Coming out of a tandoor the chicken snacks catch the smokiness character with the burning charcoal in the tandoor, therefore paired with a Pinot Noir establishes a well balanced agreement between the two.

A Chardonnay tends to go better with

dishes such as saag paneer and palak paneer. With the dish having the cheesy characteristics, the Chardonnay adds with its creamy velvety texture. The silkiness of the Chardonnay on your palate soothes the tone of greens in the dish.

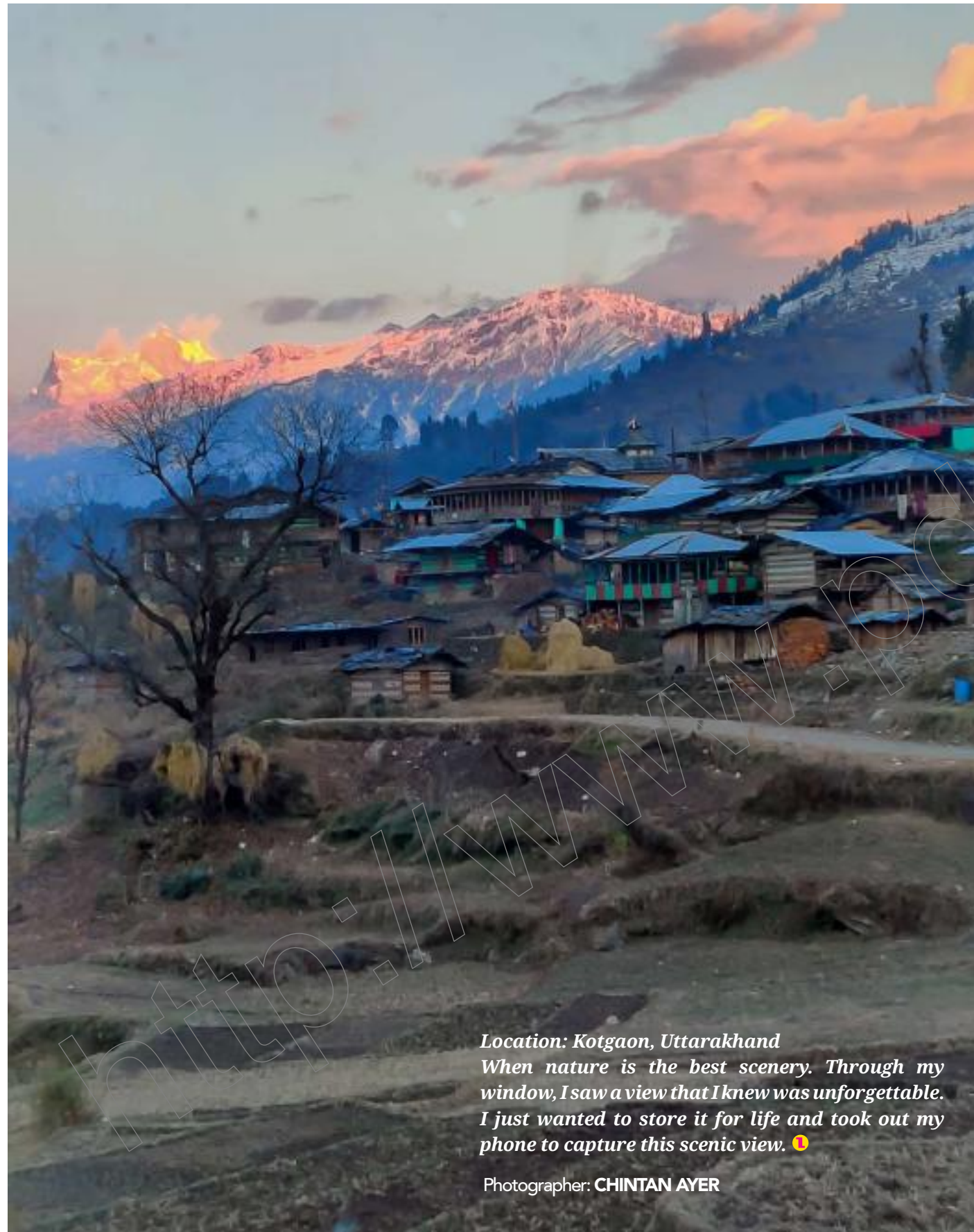
Ever thought of having wine with a warm kesari gulab jamun or fully loaded dry fruits kheer? Based on the individual palate and taste, a Riesling does wonders to your taste buds with the explosion of the sweetness in the dessert and the wine for that matter. 🍷

— SUMEET KUMAR —



Over 25 years of multi-faceted experience, in the hospitality industry. A Bachelor of Science with Honors Graduate from Swiss Hotel Association Global Hospitality Management Institution in Switzerland. Today, he has set up his own business in Jaipur, Tif Kitchen Cafe * Restaurant.







*Khujey, Uttarakhand
The beautiful camp site under the
blanket of stars is breathtaking.
The cold breeze would set us in the
mood to sit down by the bonfire and
cherish the travel to the northern
part of India. 🇮🇳*

Photographer: **CHINTAN AYER**

I have been wanting to visit Japan during sakura blossom since I was a child when I started watching anime. So in this drawing, I also tried to bring an anime/cartoon style to represent my fascination for both. 🇯🇵

By Shamit Ranjan Barman



Life on the banks of Chambal, in a small town Nagda



Ever since I was born, my life has been rooted here in this natural green setting. A small town in the heart of India has taught me to dream big but seek happiness in simplicity. Nagda in Madhya Pradesh is a small

town spread over 5 to 6 kilometers in the district of Ujjain. It is divided into two parts connecting the main town and industrial area of Aditya Birla Group. Being the resident of the industrial side, the campus has been made lush green to bring

environmental balance, and has a diverse culture. The qualities schooling from the builder group never made a change our school in 14 years. Also, residing in the same colony never kept friends apart, in fact we all could be together the entire day.

The safe town situated on the banks of Chambal has ample peaceful places and a view of the river. These can easily make a soul fall in love with place. The river has always been my favourite. Whenever troubling thought reaches the door of my



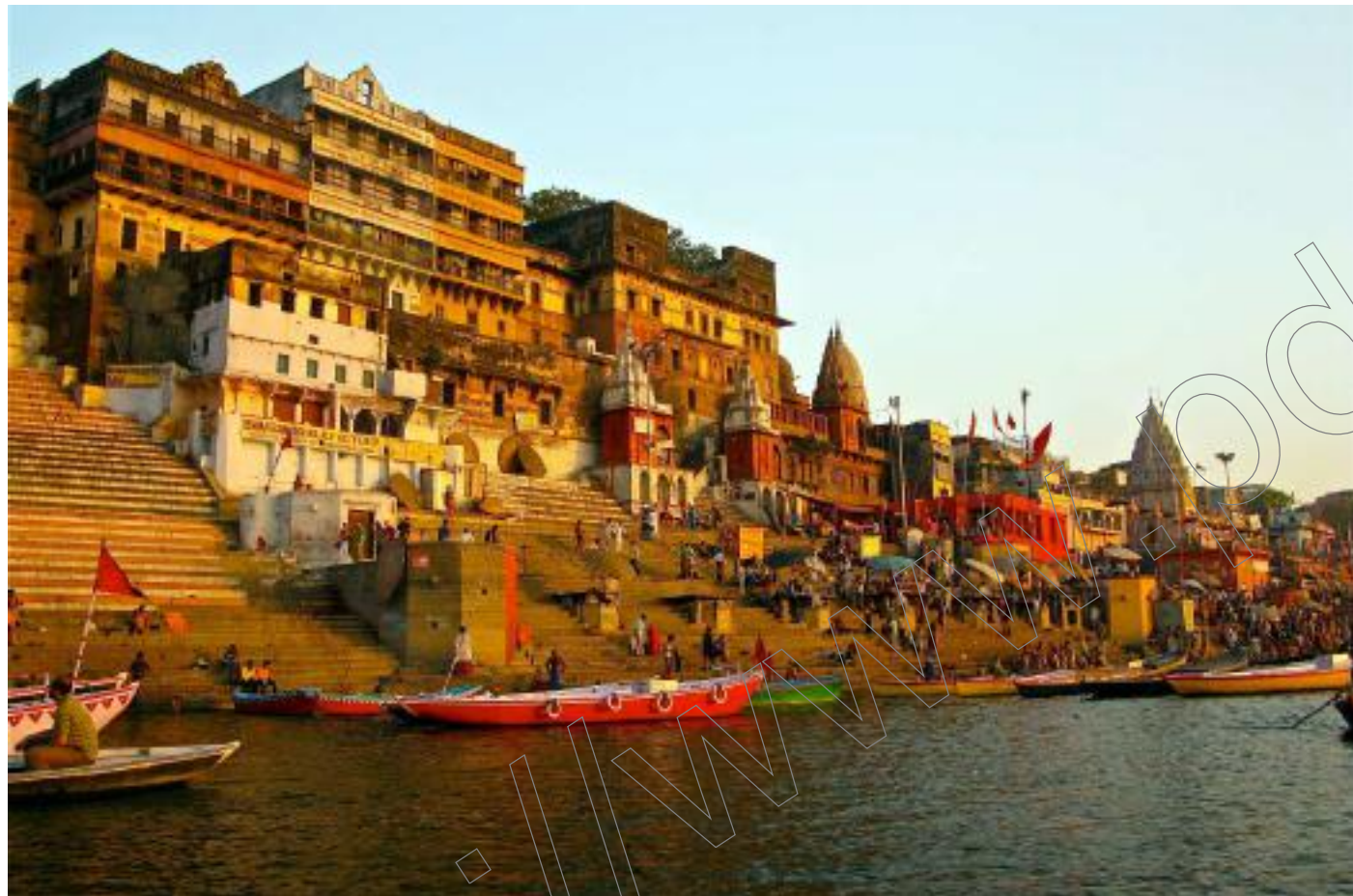
mind, I let it flow with the river sitting on its side. Situated at the centre on Delhi-Mumbai railway, the junction owns a use train station with almost every train stopping on the way making it way easy to reach. The two iconic places in Nagda are: a garden situated on one side of the river around a bungalow, Birla house and temple of Lord Vishnu, the Birla Temple. Describing them in words would be injustice to the beauty of these landmarks and being the one attached to them it is nearly impossible. Birla house is a bungalow surrounded by a plethora of flowers species living in the garden. A pathway for walking goes through a small jungle, manmade waterfall and a favourite river. Walking down the pathway a small zoo like structure is made having a variety of birds in rabbits. Birla temple brings a smile to my face. Being a design and architecture enthusiast I always admire how magnificently the temple is built. The marvelous stone carving is just remarkable. Unlike the ones in Delhi and Jaipur Nagda Birla temple is

surrounded with a serene landscape perfect for picnics and family gatherings. Living here for the past 20 years, we found and discovered and ample of places to set in peace. In the outskirts there are a number of lakes as well which fields of wheat and soybean. This place has always kept us safe, entertained and loved. On the verge of development it is now welcoming a lot of MNCs for their projects. As a kid we could play till 11 at night in the vacations outside and even today. It is being kept away from the chaos of the city and at the same time has every activity we could ever imagine. I completed my degree in Kathak dance staying here. We have courts for every sport and the diversity made us celebrate every single festival in the town. It's a place I can never get over with. Away from the city lights, it is a delight to grow up here. 🌈

→ ADITI RATHI ←
An extrovert, studying Journalism and Mass Communication who loves exploring various fields of interest from a Kathak dancer, homecook, painter to writing my heart out. A Believer of Jack of all Master of none.

An Unplanned Visit to the Spiritual Capital of India, Varanasi

It is often said, unplanned trips are the best trips and when I happen to experience one it was indeed the best.



“Let’s extend this trip for one more day. Who’s in?” one of my friends asked. “I am”, I replied. On our way from Darjeeling to Jaipur, a 30 hour journey suddenly took a twist. Well, this required me to convince three of my friends making the total of 7. While coming back from a week long trip to Gangtok and Darjeeling it was hard for us to go home. We were in Patna as we had to change our connecting train. There was rush on the platform and due to a 5 minute

halt, three of our friends couldn’t make it to the train. We all were stressed seeing them standing on the station while we were moving forward towards our home, but with the presence of mind they travel to the next station and got onto the train and that’s how our unplanned journey to the spiritual capital of India began. The bundle of memories and the togetherness weren’t easy to let go and here we were choosing city on our way to explore. While going through the the list

game Lucknow, Bareilly, Mirzapur and all of us stopped as I read Varanasi. It was decided. We bid goodbye to our friends looking forward to visit the ghats of Banaras. As we inhaled the spiritual air of Banaras, we knew we were charmed. Considered to be dirty e and congested tourist place, excited minds neglected all these factors. Varanasi is one of the only places to have the most number of narrow streets in India. One can never doubt that after visiting this holy place. We hired

to auto-rickshaws and headed towards a hostel we picked on Google. Well, it ain’t easy to find something in Banaras. the fascinating part was that, the auto rickshaw drivers of Banaras can speak at least 7 languages. Well, that is incredible India. After struggling for one and half hour we finally met the owner of our hostel. As we complaint about the Google maps his words were, “This is Banaras Bhaiya. Google might show directions to the moon but cannot figure out the streets of Banaras.” He was right, Google actually failed in the home of Kashi Vishwanath. The rooms of the hostel were a dream come true. The bunk bed, ethnic wallpaper, Indian decorations all took our heart. We were on one of the ghats named Pandey Ghat. To bless ourselves with the holy water of Ganga we reached the ghat in the evening. This is green environment, chilled water of the sacred river and the cold breeze made it as mesmerising as we dreamt. Walking down the small journey, we went for a stroll in the nearby market. The street food was delicious and so was the special “lassi” of of Banaras. It was 11 at night as we went back to the ghat. I have never experienced any other peaceful place than this. It was like a dream as I could actually here the silence of the Ganges. We went back to the hostel and planned to visit the temple of Kashi Vishwanath the next morning. Continental breakfast came complimentary with the hostel. After feeding our Tommy we headed to the markets of Banaras. Time was not left for us to visit the temple and with our bags full of memories and some clothing from Varanasi we moved towards the train station. As we caught the train and bid goodbye to the colourful city, we promise ourselves to come back to this place for reunion as we were on the verge to step out from the college life. We couldn’t visit the temple but sometimes it is important to leave a few things for a hope to visit again. 🙏

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