

April - June 2015

A high-end quarterly magazine

PRAVEG'S

TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG Communications Pvt. Ltd. | www.praveg.com

Vol.: 1 | Issue: 2 | Pages: 48 | ₹ 200

Incredible Heritage of Rajasthan

Interview with
Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State for Tourism, Culture & Civil Aviation, GOI

Adventurania
Crazy Festivals around the World

10 Places
You Must Visit
Before You Die

The Wonderful West



Glorious Gujarat



Magnificent Maharashtra



Glamorous Goa



Mesmerizing Madhya Pradesh

HOLIDAY WITH A DIFFERENCE

- GOLF AND 'TEE' GARDEN





PRAVEG'S

TOURISM ONE

April - June 2015

The Roller-Coaster Ride

We will go ahead and say that 'there's never been a better time to travel'. For both domestic and foreign tourists. The new waves of budget has extended visa-on-arrival facility to 150 countries, declared development plans for world heritage sites, announced investment of Rs 2 lakh crore towards sanitation, and encouraged digital coverage and debit, credit card penetration. Moreover, there are surprises at every turn, whether it is privileges of sharing local tradition and culture by opting for Homestay or exploring stories attached to difference places. The only question is 'Where to start from?'

There are plenty of wonderlands in India. As a head-start, 'Praveg's Tourism One - The Wonderful West' will drive you through the 10 ultimate places of the country that will leave you spellbound. In addition to this, for those travelers who think that 'normal is boring' - visit some of the mysterious lands of India to boost the 'spirit' of adventure. The thrill of 'The Wonderful West' will divulge astonishing locations of Royal Rajasthan apart from the exhilarating visuals of Surendranagar's Cottage Industry that will unfold the intricate process of the legendary handicrafts of Glorious Gujarat in addition to the atypical sights of Magnificent Maharashtra, Glamorous Goa and Mesmerizing Madhya Pradesh.

So stay tuned and enjoy the assured moments of roller-coaster ride with 'Praveg's Tourism One - The Wonderful West'.



PRAVEG'S

TOURISM ONE

April - June 2015

Editor-in-Chief

Paras Patel

Editorial Team

Prolina Barada
Priyanka Desai

Design Team

Mahesh Patel
Yagnesh Bhavsar
Vipul Gadhavi

Published By



Praveg Communications Pvt. Ltd.
102, Shanti Arcade, 132ft Ring Road,
Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380013.
Tel.: +91-79-27496737
e: tourismone@praveg.com
www.praveg.com

Printed At:

Le Griffe Offset Pvt. Ltd.
3, Lower Ground Floor, Popular House,
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad - 380009

TITLE CODE NO: GUJENG01171/06/1/2014-TC

DISCLAIMER: All information in Praveg's TOURISM ONE is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. All images are copyrighted by their respective owners unless otherwise stated. Opinions/views expressed by third parties are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced, whether in part(s) or in whole, without prior permission.

Be a part of Praveg's Tourism One:

Share with us some enthusiastic inputs like photographs, essays or anything related to tourism.

Have some suggestions for us?

Go ahead and send us your ideas, valuable opinions or topics you would like to see more coverage on

FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES, CONTACT:

tourismone@praveg.com

Owned, Printed and Published by

Paras Patel
For Praveg Communications Pvt. Ltd. ,
102, Shanti Arcade, 132ft Ring Road,
Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380013.
Tel.: +91-79-27496737, 99251 71538
Email: tourismone@praveg.com.



Incredible Heritage of
Rajasthan

4

The Adventurania
Crazy Festivals around the World

22

Om Banna
The Motorbike God of Rajasthan

8

**FOODIES' PARADISE
MAHARASHTRA**

24

Bhavai
The Ancient Lure of Gujarat

10

**Flocking to
Goa's Flea Market**

30

**HIGH ON
SPORTS** >

12

**INTERVIEW:
Union Budget 2015
Leveraging Tourism Sector**

32

Handicraft Tourism
Surendranagar District

16

10 Places
You Must Visit
Before You Die

33

Ujjain Simhastha 2016

20

What's Travelling!

44



Incredible Heritage of Rajasthan

by Anil Mulchandani

Few places can match Rajasthan's high concentration of forts, palaces and other heritage buildings. While the state has, for long, been a tourist attraction, it was only in 2013 that the hill forts of Rajasthan were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

AJMER

Dargah Sharif, the tomb of the great Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, is located in the heart of a complex that was largely funded by Akbar, Jehan gir and Shah Jehan. Akbar came to the tomb when he was childless and, on the birth of Salim, is said to have walked barefoot all the way from Agra to Ajmer, a distance of 363km (226 miles), as thanksgiving. The complex includes the domed mausoleum of the saint, tombs of Shah Jahan's daughter, the saint's companions and prominent people, mosques built by Mughal Emperors, and a series of gates including *Shah Jahani Darwaja* built by Shah Jahan and the

Ajmer Included in Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana' (HRIDAY)

Recently, Ajmer, one of the holiest places in the Indian sub-continent, is incorporated in 'Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana' (HRIDAY) announced by the Union Ministry of Urban Development on 21st January 2015. Ajmer has been included in the list of twelve sacred cities to get benefit of the heritage-revitalizing scheme of the government.

In India, most of the old areas of cities that have many historical monuments have inadequate civic facilities like water supply, sanitation, roads, accessibility, etc. Realizing that a planned approach is necessary for tapping the tremendous potential of these historical cities, the Government of Gujarat has launched HRIDAY, Heritage City Development & Augmentation Yojana, which proposes to achieve urban planning, economic growth and heritage conservation in an inclusive and integrated manner, enhancing livelihoods, skills, cleanliness, security, accessibility and service delivery. The scheme will provide support infrastructure projects, which link heritage facilities with trunk infrastructure of the city.

The 12 cities selected for the project are:

1. Ajmer
2. Amravati
3. Amritsar
4. Badami
5. Dwarka
6. Gaya
7. Kanchipuram
8. Mathura
9. Puri
10. Varanasi
11. Velankanni
12. Warangal

massive *Buland Darwaja*. There are *Mughal-period* cauldrons (one donated by Akbar and the other by Jehangir when he came to the throne), where donations can be dropped. The domed marble mausoleum contains the tomb surrounded by silver railings and crowned by gilt. Devotees place richly brocaded silk *chaddars* as offerings for the saint's grave, and are blessed with the brush of peacock feathers. Millions of pilgrims come to Ajmer for the saint's annual Urs (death anniversary) in October, when *Sufi* music can be enjoyed. *Kheer*, cooked in giant iron cauldrons in the Dargah's courtyard, is offered to devotees.

West of the Dargah Sharif is the *Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra*, or "Hut of Two-and-a-Half Days". Though in ruins, the early 13th-century mosque complex, built on a hillside, is Ajmer's architectural jewel with an exquisite seven-arched screen and a hall with elaborately-carved columns.

Ajmer also has an attractive 19th-century Jain shrine called Nasayan Temple. Situated in the heart of the old city, the temple is one of its prime attractions. The *Svarna Nagari* Hall here is richly decorated with coloured-glass mosaics and gilded wooden figures that

reveal Jain stories. Near the temple, Akbar's fort palace is now the *Rajputana* Museum, exhibiting a fine collection of sculptures and art pieces.

Ajmer is also a famous educational centre because of Mayo College, an impressive Indo-Saracenic architectural building. This prestigious public school was set-up in 1875 by the British Viceroy, Lord Mayo, especially for *Rajput* princes.

To the northwest of the city, the recreational centre of Ajmer, the Anasagar Lake, has a pretty garden called *Daulat Bagh* and elegant *Mughal* marble pavilions. It offers an alluring experience for watching herons, ibises, ducks and other birds.

From Ajmer, a road winds up Beetli Hill to the 12th-century Taragarh Fort. Though largely in ruins, the fort is worth-visiting for spectacular views of Ajmer and the surrounding hills.

THE FORTS OF RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan's forts include *Giri Durgs* (hill forts), *Dhanva Durg* (desert forts), *Vana Durg* (forest fort), *Mahi Durg* (mud-walled forts), *Jal Durg* (water forts) and *Nara Durg* (city centre fort).

Amber Fort, Jaipur

The fort palace of Amber was the *Kachhawaha* citadel until 1727, when its capital moved to Jaipur. The fort was built in the 11th century but it was established as a citadel in the 16th century by Man Singh and most of the magnificent buildings were added by Jai Singh I in the 17th century.

The fort has a central garden patterned like a Persian carpet, faced by the *Sukh Niwas*, literally the pleasure palace named for its view and architecture that created a natural air-conditioning system that allowed winds from the mountains to pass through narrow passages before being cooled by perfumed water, and then dispersed through marble filigree screens around the royal chamber. The walls are embellished with powdered marble, crushed pearls, lavish mirror work and painted ceilings. The hall of private audiences has latticed windows and a floral ceiling.

The massive ramparts of Amber are further protected by Jaigarh Fort, which has a record-size canon.



Amber Fort, Jaipur



Nagaur Fort

Lohagarh Fort, Bharatpur

Lohagarh is an excellent example of a mud fort with massive double ramparts of packed mud and rubble surrounded by protective moats. It has three palaces of the *Jat* rulers.

Nagaur Fort

The Ahichhatragarh Fort of Nagaur is a fine example of a town-centre fort. The fort is said to date from the 12th century. In the mid-18th century, the *Mughals* gave it to the *Maharaja* of Jodhpur, who added palaces inside its massive walls. These palaces have superb wall paintings. A unique feature of the palace is the water system, which includes beautifully-decorated channels and an ingenious system of airducts that cooled the air in the rooms.

Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur

Mehrangarh Fort, which was founded in 1459AD, is one of the most magnificent forts of Rajasthan. Visitors are awed by the high walls rising up on a hilltop over the

cityscape of Jodhpur. Inside, it has opulent palaces with gold-leaf embellished ceilings, mirror mosaics, lavishly painted walls and other decorations.

Junagarh Fort, Bikaner

Constructed in the 16th century, Junagarh Fort has a long sandstone wall strengthened with 37 bastions and further protected by a moat. The walls contain palaces, temples and pavilions including the profusely-decorated 17th century palace called *Anup Mahal* with a sumptuously-

decorated hall of audiences decorated with red and gold lacquer work, mirrors and gilded surfaces. The *Durbar Niwas* has a fascinating armoury, a sandalwood throne, and other exhibits.

Sonar Killa, Jaisalmer

Made famous as the Golden Fort by Satyajit Ray, who set the detective story and movie *Sonar Killa* in Jaisalmer, this 12th century marvel looms impressively with 99 bastions and rugged walls over a rocky outcrop. It is an excellent example of a desert fort. Huge gateways and winding paths lead to the *chowk*, a large square dominated by five-storey façade of the Maharawal's palace, which displays the fine stone masonry of Jaisalmer in its balconies and screens.

The fort has clusters of Hindu and

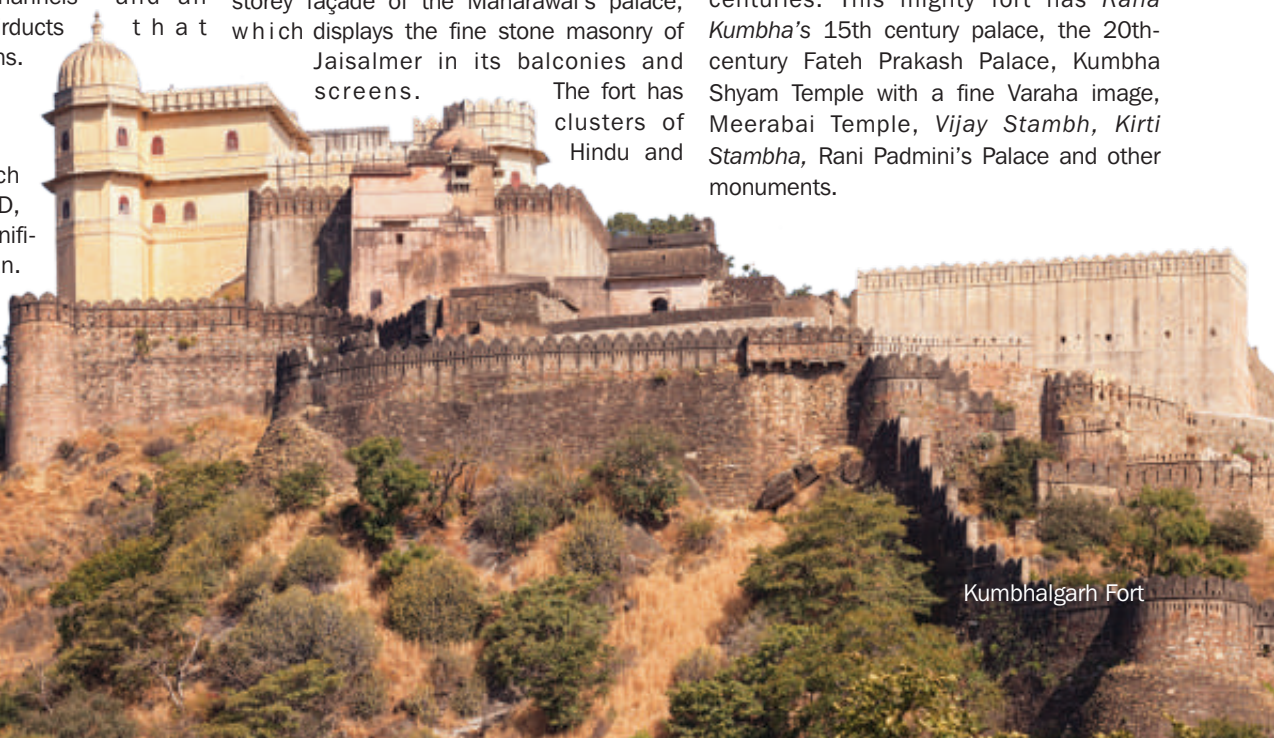
Jain temples. The seven Jain temples, most of them built in the 15th and 16th century by wealthy Jain traders, are exquisitely-carved with finely sculpted motifs on walls, columns and windows. The *Gyan Bhandar* has an outstanding collection of beautifully-illustrated Jain palm leaf manuscripts, some of them almost thousand years old.

Kumbhalgarh Fort

The 15th century Kumbhalgarh Fort rising from a hilltop stands testimony to the military might of the *Maharanas* of Mewar. Set about 3400 ft above sea level commanding views of the surrounding hills down to the plains, the hill fort has been described as the 'Eye of Mewar'. This fort was one of over a dozen built during the reign of *Rana Kumbha*, who ruled from Chittorgarh, and among the most historically significant in Rajasthan. The sprawling ramparts contain many temples some of which are architecturally interesting. The historical toilets with a ventilation system that kept them airy and the kitchen with chimneys are some interesting features of the fort. The palace has a blue *darbar* hall with floral ceiling motifs and the *Zanana* rooms for women have attractive elephant, crocodile and camel murals, while the *Badal Mahal* has a pastel painted dome.

Chittorgarh

One of Rajasthan's mightiest forts, Chittorgarh or Chittaurgarh sprawls across a rocky hill top. It is a citadel containing ruined palaces, temples and towers that bear witness to the glorious history of the *Sisodia* rulers of Mewar, between the 12th and 16th centuries. This mighty fort has *Rana Kumbha's* 15th century palace, the 20th-century Fateh Prakash Palace, Kumbha Shyam Temple with a fine Varaha image, Meerabai Temple, *Vijay Stambh*, *Kirti Stambha*, Rani Padmini's Palace and other monuments.



Kumbhalgarh Fort



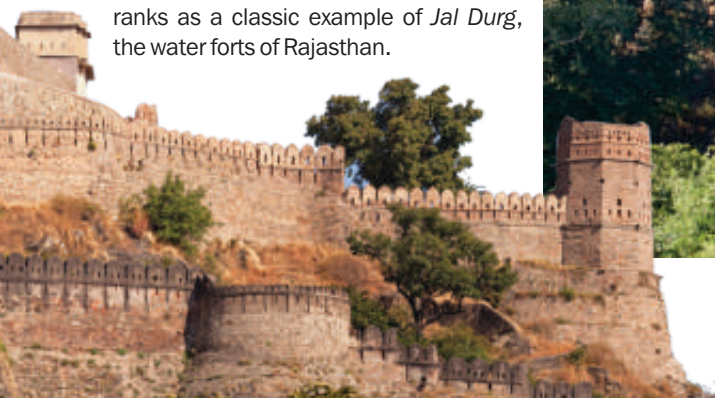
Chittorgarh

THE FORTS OF SOUTH EASTERN RAJASTHAN

Ranthambhore Fort in Sawai Madhopur is a good example of a fort protected by forests. The fort is said to be 1000 years old and rises from a 705ft high hill. South of Ranthambhore, Bundi town is dominated by Taragarh Fort which crowns a steep hill with the palace set along the hillside. It is one of the most striking forts in India. The fort was founded in the 14th century by Hada Chauhan and the palace was built by successive rulers between the 16th century and 18th century with curved roof topped pavilions, temples, ornate brackets and wall paintings. The paintings are superb, specially those in *Chattar Mahal* and the *Chitrashala*, which are regarded among Rajasthan's finest murals. South of Bundi towards Jhalawar, the Gagron Fort, which is surrounded by rivers on three sides, ranks as a classic example of *Jal Durg*, the water forts of Rajasthan.



Ranthambhore Fort



Om Banna

The Motorbike God of Rajasthan

Mystery - the word is enough to arouse human senses. Wrapped in the coats of attention-grabbing stories, the chase for reality induces us to embark on an expedition.

An expedition to explore strange, mysterious, weird or just unusual tales associated with different places. For all those travelers who think that travelling is all about visiting popular and known attractions, here is the place in Rajasthan that will refresh your definition.

Rajasthan - The Land of Mysteries

The colorful land of Rajasthan is covered with mystery and splendor that attract even the most avid traveler. Famous for its tales of the chivalry and valor of its rulers that still reverberate in the palaces, the royal Rajasthan has its mysterious side too. ***The ghost town, haunted forts, obsessed objects or anything that you get to read in a horror mystery novel are present here. Some of the unbelievable occurrences***



are decoded, some are still mysteries and others, for all you know, are rumors. One such story awaits your attention at the Pali-Jodhpur highway, Rajasthan.

Om Banna - The Motorbike God

About 20 kilometres away from Pali and 50 kilometres away from Jodhpur, the highway near Chotilla village holds a shrine. In the usual setting of number of villagers and tourists bowing down, few shops around the temple offering fragrance sticks, flowers, red threads, coconut and other devotional offerings, the God of this holy place is unusual - 350cc Royal Enfield Bullet. Yes, the shrine has a Royal Enfield 350cc Bullet enclosed in a glass box with a photo of Om Banna, who died in a road accident around 24 years ago in that same spot. This shrine of Rajasthan attracts number of visitors due to its unique form of God.

The Motorbike God of Rajasthan is worshipped as the inherited God. During wedding, the newlyweds come and worship here. The members of *Rajput* families bring their newborns here. The ritual of removing baby's hair has been performed here. As Om Banna belonged to the *Rajput* clan, offering liquor/beer to Om Banna is a tradition followed by the devotees.

Not only villagers, the number of tourists and passerby visiting this unprecedented, miraculous temple keep on increasing day-by-day. Om Banna is



believed to be a God of Safety. Hundreds of devotees turn up every day to pray for a safe journey. It is believed that any passerby, who doesn't stop and bow down in front of Om Banna, invites misfortune.

Let's find out how this unique God came to be.

The Flashback

The story behind the shrine and worshipping the bike is filled with supernatural twists. The Singh family was heading Chotilla village. Jog Singh was the Chief of the village. When the youth belong to *Rajput* clan use to suffix 'Banna' to their names, Om Singh, son of Jog Singh, was known as Om Banna. His love for his Bullet was very unusual. In the year 1988, Om Singh was riding his Bullet from Bangdi

near Sanderao of Pali to Chotilla, when death bestowed its cold hands upon him in the form of a fatal accident. His bike collided with a tree, instantly claiming the life of Om Singh Rathore. The body was thrown apart and the bike fell into a nearby 20 feet trench.

Following morning, police took the bike to police station. Mysteriously, the bike was found at the accident site. The bike thwarted number of

efforts of police to keep it in the police station. As such instances kept on recurring; the bike was sold to a person from nearby village. To add to the astonishment, the bike once again returned to the accident spot.

Amazed by the strange incidents, people considered the place and the bike as divine and started worshipping Om Banna. Interestingly, it is said that Om Banna acted as a protector for the victims of accidents in nearby areas. Many claimed that a guy on bike helped them to reach hospital, later realizing that it was Om Banna himself. These incidents led to strengthen the belief of people in Om Banna.

The Shrine

Though the word 'temple' gives you visuals of systematic set up of roof, basement and walls, Om Banna's temple carries basement attached with the tree where the Bullet was struck. The colorful scarves, threads, bangles and handkerchiefs tied at the tree act as a unique element for the temple.

The Bullet bike of Om Banna is placed in the centre just like a saint wearing *kumkum* and sacred *bhasma*. The rear of the Bullet has been covered fully. Near the bike, a photo of Om Banna along with the idol created of marble adorn the temple.

More than a matter of trust and belief, places like this can be a fulfilling experience to boost up your 'spirit' of adventure. The journey, in search of reality, can land you to the world full of curiosity and surprises.



Bhavai

The Ancient Lure of Gujarat



Imagine a play consisting of male members in feminine dress-up and a huge wave of laugh in audiences with each satirical dialogue delivered with womanly tantrums. As exciting and blissful as its depiction here, it is the unique folk drama of Gujarat - Bhavai.

THE DANCE ELEMENT IN FESTIVALS OF GUJARAT

Gujarat is having rich, colorful, dazzling, and magnificent traditions and culture. To keep the spirit of traditions alive and aroused, festivals play a very important role. Festivals in Gujarat are about lights, colors, religious emotions, feeling of patriotism, enjoyment, variety of food

delicacies and many more... But dance has a unique connection with the festival celebration of Gujarat. There are many festivals, which are celebrated through different forms of dancing like Navratri, Modhera Dance Festival, Tana ri ri Dance Festival and Bhavai.

THE PLAY

Bhavai is normally performed during Navratri festival in Gujarat. Many places like Ambaji and Tarapur have still maintained the originality of the folk drama. With so many means of entertainment available today, Bhavai still mesmerizes rural Gujarat due to its unique format.

The folk drama usually does not need any stage or dais. It is performed in open space like courtyard of temple or a ground. Bhavai has a typical format. It starts with *Nayak* i.e. Chief of the troupe marking circular performance arena on the ground using *kumkum* or castor oil, both are considered to be divine symbols, to keep the evil spirits at bay. Viewers take their seats in circle. In one corner of the performance area, a person with a lighted *mashal* in hand takes his place. The *mashal* provides the lighting for the performance. It is also believed that the light symbolizes the *Devi (Jwalamukhi)*. *Nayak* applies vermilion to the *mashal* and the *mashal* bearer. Flower petals are showered on the musical instruments, artists, and audiences. *Nayak* stays on the performance area throughout the play to give commentary. With the sharp and shrilled notes of musical instruments like Bhungals, Pakhawaj and Cymbal, *Nayak* indicates the initiation of Bhavai. After prayer to Goddess Amba, he invites Lord Ganesha, Goddess Kali and Lord Brahma on the performance area. All the characters playing the divine roles appear in center and give blessing to the crowd. Any Bhavai performance will take place after these appearances only.

The script unfolds through dialogues, songs, speeches in prose and verse with a lot of singing and dancing. The satirical and sarcastic language is used to convey the message. Main humor is of 'Ranglo' and 'Ranglee' characters, which create a center of attraction for the audience. Music and dance are used in Bhavai to enhance the dramatic effect of the performance. The Bhavai dance is a long and continuous performance, lasting through the entire night.

Take a tour to Gujarat to see this peppy drama. To get the unusual and meaningful touch of ancient, colorful and thrilling culture and tradition of Gujarat, Bhavai is a must-watch folk drama.



THE HISTORY

The history of Bhavai is as glorious as the art itself. Asaita Thakar, who is considered to be the founder of Bhavai, created the folk drama back in 14th century.

Originated at Ambaji, a place in North Gujarat, which is famous for Goddess Amba's temple, Bhavai stands for divine offering of emotional feelings to Goddess Amba through expressions. The Bhavai dance of Gujarat derives its name from the term 'Bhava' that implies "expression of emotions". The founder of this folk drama, Asaita Thakar, has composed more than 360 Bhavai vesh. Vesh literally means costume of the characters but here the word signifies different plots of the drama. These veshas generally portray life-style of communities or their culture. In the initial stage, Bhavai was carrying mythological characters in its play. But as Bhavai is believed to be born out of social injustice to lower caste from upper caste, it started including various social issues like injustice, child marriage, and barbaric practice of untouchability as a subject of the play. Bhavai is an oral form of traditions as a very few of the compositions have been recorded. Thus, artists do take advantage of this flexibility and add their own elements to it. With the ripple effect of time, the famous characters of 'Ranglo' and 'Rangli' have also been introduced to enhance the entertainment appeal of the art.



HIGH ON SPORTS

by Anil Mulchandani

Sport Tourism, also called Sports Tourism, refers to travel with the purpose of participating in a sporting activity for recreation or competition, watching a major sporting event, observing a sport or visiting places associated with a sport/sportsperson. Sport Tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growth areas in the Travel Industry today. Sport tourists include:

- 1** Those, who travel principally to watch or observe a sporting event like Cricket, Rugby and Football World Cups, the Olympics, tennis championships like the one at Wimbledon, Formula 1 Grand Prix, horse racing and regional events.
- 2** Those, whose holiday plans include watching sports at grassroot or elite level. For example, the archery contests of Shillong or Tai Chi in Thailand are among the respective destination's tourist attractions.
- 3** Those, who travel to participate in sporting events like marathons, cycle races, equestrian sports, tournaments, competitions, etc.
- 4** Those, who travel to destinations specially or partly for sporting activities like golf, swimming, watersports, adventure sports, riding, etc.
- 5** Tourists, who participate in sports or play a game as one of the activities when on travelling, on holiday or on a business trip.
- 6** MICE tourists attending conventions, exhibitions and conferences, where sporting activities like exhibition matches or participatory tournaments are part of the program.

GOLF TOURISM

Golf is one of the high potential products in the Sport Tourism Sector. It is estimated that the global Golf Tourism Market is worth over US\$20 billion. The golf tourist is much sought after with high spend on tourism. While Delhi, Chandigarh, Bangalore and Kolkata are among the states of India having high potential

areas for Golf Tourism because of the tropical climate, which is largely predictable with rain-free days outside the few months, attractive locations, beautiful sights, lower costs compared to most highly developed countries, and a growing number of golf courses.

Mumbai has elite golf clubs, like the United Services Club in Colaba, Willingdon Sports Club in Mahalaxmi and Bombay Presidency Golf Club (BPGC) in Chembur, which are frequented by golf tourists and those visiting Mumbai for business or leisure. Cidco's Kharghar Valley Golf Course (KVGCC) is a public course that offers reasonably priced golfing.

One of Maharashtra's top golf courses, the Aamby Valley Golf Course situated 2700ft above sea level, offers superb views of an amphitheatre of Sahyadry hills in the Western Ghats. Designed by David Hemstock and Associates (UK), the 18-hole golf course follows the natural contours of the hilly terrain and has been modified by PGA Design according to international championship standards. The course has state-of-the-art Golf Academy with practice bays, air conditioned teaching bays, GASP Teaching Software enabled areas and modern equipment. Pune too has some fine golf courses like the Oxford Golf & Country Club, which is among the best in the state.

Gujarat is also fast-growing as a Golf destination. The India Golf Awards named the Nicklaus Design's 18 hole part-72 layout at Kalhaar Blues & Greens as the Best Golf Course of India for 2015. The course is spread over 175 acres and plays to 7,425 yards from the championship tees, making it one of the longest golf courses in India. Players on the course face, challenges like sand bunkers, huge water bodies, and a scenic island green on Hole 7. The Kalhaar Blues & Greens campus includes a Golf academy, practice areas, residential villas, a clubhouse and other infrastructure. The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) tournaments are held at this course. Tournaments were also staged here during the Vibrant Gujarat Summit.



- Kensville Golf & Country Club has an 18 hole golf course with a Jeev Milkha Singh signature hole, a club, residential areas and a resort. Sports and recreational facilities include a swimming pool, tennis, squash, cricket pitch, badminton, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, pool table and an *ayurvedic* resort. Gulmohar Greens Golf & Country Club has a 9-hole golf course and an indoor sports complex besides residential rooms, restaurant and other facilities. Cambay is a resort with a golf course, academy and spa. Aaloo hills also offers golfing facilities.
- The Lukshmi Vilas Palace in Vadodara is one of the few palaces that has a golf course in its precincts. Golfing began here in the 1930s but the course was revived and upgraded in the 1990s.
- The armed forces also run golf courses in Ahmedabad, Vadodara and other destinations of Western India. The Army AEPTA AEC Golf Course in the cantonment of Pachmarhi is a pretty 18 holes, 5546 yards, Par 68 layout course located on a plateau about 3500 ft above sea level. There are some attractive properties like MPTDC's Rockend Manor, Welcomheritage Golf View and Evelyn's Own near the golf course. At Bhopal, the Army Sudarshan Chakra Env Park and the BHEL campuses have golf courses. The armed forces also run golf courses at Mhow, Jabalpur and other cantonment towns. The Royal Garha Golf Club at Indore is one of the few private golf clubs in Madhya Pradesh with a 9-hole course. Madhya Pradesh Tourism, in its new policy, has announced plans for golf courses, water sports and extreme sports, and even an 18-hole golf course in Bhopal.
- In Rajasthan, golf goes with its USP as a heritage destination - you can enjoy views of the Taj-run Rambagh Palace in Jaipur or the Umaid Bhavan Palace in Jodhpur while playing golf in either of these cities.

ENDURANCE SPORTS >

Marathons, cycle races, long-distance races, endurance riding and other sports are big attractions for tourists who like to participate in sporting events.

The Pune International Marathon was the first marathon race in India, run in 1983, and attracted thousands of participants not only from India but abroad as well. In 2010, Pune also hosted the Asian Marathon Championship. The Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon is the largest marathon and also the largest mass participation sporting event in all of Asia, and perhaps the richest race in India. Maharashtra hosts a number of long distance races like Run Powai Run, Lasava Hill Run, Run for Safe Pune, Hiranandani Thane Half Marathon, Alibag R&L Half Marathon, night marathon, Pune Triathlon, etc.

Gujarat has, in recent years, started promoting sporting events like the annual Sabarmati Marathon in Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad Cyclothon, Surat Night Half Marathon, Khel Mahakumbha and the Vadodara Marathon. The 65-km long Tour De Polo, a cycle race through the Polo forests near Vijaynagar, also attracted much participation from upstate tourists and got much needed exposure for the pretty hill landscapes of Sabarkantha district. Races are also held on the flat terrain of the Rann of Kutch like Run the Rann. There are active clubs in Gujarat like Ahmedabad Distance Runners and Ahmedabad Bicycling Club that are holding events regularly.

Riding enthusiasts from different states participate in endurance races that are organised in Rajasthan, and also in Gujarat. Rajasthan also hosts some exciting endurance sporting events in the desert and at Mount Abu.

Goa also makes the most of its sceneries to offer events like the Goa River Marathon along the Mandovi and Goa Beach Run.



Photo by Dinesh Shukla

POLO >

Polo is a spectacular team sport, which is fast and played on a large lush green playing field. Since Rajasthan has a long legacy of polo, tourists enjoy the polo season at Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur. Exhibition polo matches are also held, together with gala dinners, at destinations like Jaipur. Mumbai, Delhi and other cities are known for their active polo seasons. Acrysil is a company in Bhavnagar that is trying to promote arena polo in Gujarat.



Photo by Dinesh Shukla



HORSE RACING >

Tourists travel to watch horse racing and bet on horses in different parts of the world. Mumbai and Pune in western India have horse racing seasons.

WATER AND AIR SPORTS >

The coastal areas and inland waterbodies of Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Daman-and-Diu, and the lakes of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, offer excellent conditions for water sports. Madhya Pradesh Tourism has developed boat clubs and water-based activities at lakes and along Narmada River.

Malvan in Maharashtra has become a destination for scuba diving and snorkeling. The Maharashtra coast has many sites where parasailing, jet-skiing, sailing and other watersports have been developed. Some water sports have also developed at Diu Island and Gujarat's Ahmedpur Mandvi beach.

Maharashtra has successfully promoted paragliding at Kamshet, Panchgani and other hill sites. Gujarat is also promoting paragliding and other air sports at Saputara (which has also been the site for hang-gliding) and Pavagadh. Goa's beaches offer an array of water sports.

India has over the last few years seen the growth of Professional Leagues like Indian Premier League (twenty20 cricket), Hockey India League, I-League Football, Indian Badminton League, Indian Super League Football, Champions Tennis League India and Pro Kabaddi League (kabaddi), which have led to enthusiasts of each sport travelling to watch matches.



CAR RALLY >

Motorsports are a big draw for tourists and India has entered the big league of Formula One at Buddh International Circuit at Noida.

Rajasthan's challenging terrain of desert and hills have made it a popular place for automobile events like the Mahindra Adventure's Great Escape and the Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm. Gujarat has also experienced rallies in the Kutch area.



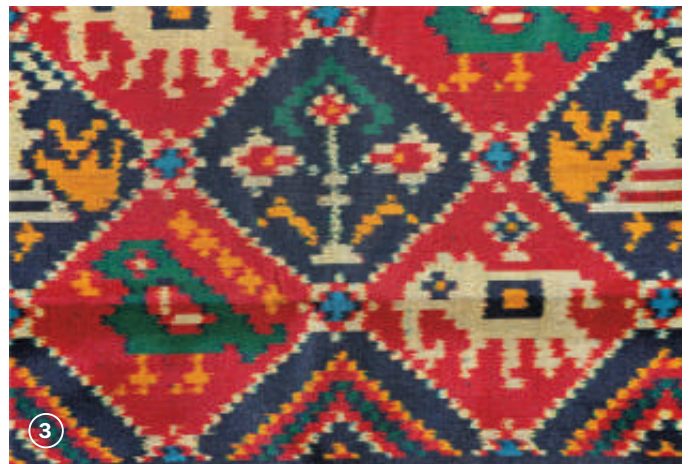
Photo by Dinesh Shukla

Handicraft Tourism Surendranagar District



A PHOTO-FEATURE BY DINESH SHUKLA

Surendranagar district has large handloom and handicraft clusters. The craftspeople of this district, in Gujarat, produce fine stone sculpture, brass utensils, tangaliya shawls, *bandhni* tie-dye fabrics, *ikat* silk sarees, recycled material rugs and blankets, *khadi*, beadwork and embroideries. Despite being easily accessible from major airport cities like Ahmedabad and Rajkot, the handicraft clusters of Surendranagar district are not as well-known to tourists as they deserve to be. In this feature, Dinesh Shukla shares some colourful photographs of textile crafts of Surendranagar district for the Travel and Tourism Industry to realize the potential of this handicraft circuit.





1. A HERITAGE HOME IN SAYLA

Bell Guest House at Sayla is a home-stay accommodation facility near the handloom and handicraft clusters of Surendranagar district.

2. SINGLE IKAT PATOLA FROM SAYLA

Weavers in Sayla weave *ikat* sarees called *Patolas*. The silk cloth is made by first dyeing either the warp or the weft threads into intricate patterns. This whole process can be repeated several times, to build up variegated patterns in different colors on the threads. The yarns are then taken out of the dye bath and dried, before setting them on the loom. This detail process is the reason why *ikat* fabrics are so valuable.

3. THE EXQUISITE IKAT FABRICS OF SAYLA

The process of *ikat* dyeing and weaving creates intricately patterned silk fabrics at Sayla, Somasar and other villages of Surendranagar district.

4. WEAVERS AT SAYLA

Weavers in Sayla recycle patches of fabric and other materials to create blankets and other cloths.

5. BANDHANI IN SURENDRANAGAR DISTRICT

The art of *Bandhani* is a highly skilled process. It involves dyeing a fabric which is tied tightly with a thread at several points. The process may be repeated several times to create variegated patterns. This technique produces effects like dots, squares, waves and strips.

6. A TANGALIYA WEAVER AT VASATDI

A weaver at Vasatdi, near Sayla, works on a pitloom to create Tangaliya shawls. The Tangaliya, a 700-year-old hand-woven textile from Surendranagar district, has now got a GI mark. The Tangaliya Hastkala Association has members from villages like Dedara, Vastadi, Godavari and Vadla in the district.

7. TANGALIYA OR TANGALIO WEAVING

Tangaliya is the process of knotting contrast colour threads with the warp threads, which are woven into the textile to create the patterns like geometric figures or raised dots effects.

8. THE PATTERNS OF TANGALIYA

The Tangaliya process creates fabrics with beautiful patterns and effects.

9. BEADWORK AT SEJAKPUR

About 20km from Sayla, Sejakpur is a historic village with a stunning 12th century temple. The village is largely dominated by the *Kathi Durbar* community. The girls and women of Sejakpur attach beads to create attractive products.



10



11



12



13



14



15



10. BEADWORK PRODUCTS

Beadwork at Sejakpur is done to create wall hangings, *torans* and other decorative products.

11. A RESORT IN SURENDRANAGAR DISTRICT

Rann Riders is a resort at Dasada in Surendranagar district that is made using indigenous materials and handiwork.

12. RABARI EMBROIDERY AT DASADA

Dasada village is home to Kharapat Rabaris who do fine embroidery using mirrors and herringbone stitching. Kharapat *Rabari* girls and women embroider their skirts, blouses and veils, dowry sacks and a set of eight wall decorations including *toran*, *chakla*, and *pardo*.

13. SHOPPING AT DASADA

Tourists can now shop for embroideries at the homes of Kharapat women in Dasada.

14. TANGALIYA WEAVER NEAR DASADA

At villages near Dasada, Tangaliya weaving is practiced to create shawls and skirts for *Bharwad* shepherds living in Ambala and other nearby villages.

15. THE PATTERNS OF TANGALIYA

The Tangaliya or Tangalio is an exquisite woven textile that is specially made for the traditional shawl and wraparound skirt (*chaniya*) worn by *Bharwad* women weavers.

16. TANGALIYA FOR SALE AT AMBALA VILLAGE

Tangaliya is now done in various colours for the modern market besides the traditional ones.

17. THE MIRS OF DASADA

The Mirs are adept at beadwork using opaque beads, out of circulation coins, bells, buttons and mirrors. Traditionally they create braids, tassels and necklaces.

18. BEADWORK OF THE MIRS

In the last few years, Mir women of Dasada have begun to make beaded bangles commercially to supplement family earnings.

19. TOURISTS AT A MIR SETTLEMENT

Tourists visiting Dasada can buy beaded bangles from the Mir women themselves.

20. BEADED BANGLES AT DASADA

Since international tourists visit Dasada, the girls and women of the Mir communities have learnt to make beaded bangles in a variety of designs.



Ujjain Simhastha 2016

The ancient city of Madhya Pradesh proposes a supreme spiritual experience. Famous for its cultural and spiritual importance, the city is a habitat to one of the twelve jyotirlingas of India – Mahakaleshwar. The Mahakal is considered to be the God of all deities and demons. Mahashivratri, celebration of marriage anniversary of Lord Shiva and Parvati, is another occasion to sight the indivisible devout spirit of the city and the Lord Shiva.

Ujjain, the ancient city of Madhya Pradesh, holds importance because of the Simhastha Kumbh Mela - the world's largest religious gathering. Organized every 12 years, when the Jupiter enters the Leo sign of the zodiac, known as *Simha Rashi*, the Simhastha Kumbh Mela adorns Ujjain with the divinity and spiritual aroma through the visuals of millions of pilgrims worshipping and taking dips into the sacred River Kshipra.

The spiritual fest is an experience to cherish for any revered spirit. With the roaring of elephants and camels, the breeze of Ujjain is embellished with the beautiful and exhilarating chants of praises to the lord, the harmonious sound of cymbals and the visuals of the religious people drowned in the prayers. Major attraction of Simhastha is *Shahi Snan* (royal bath), which takes place on predetermined dates. The ceremonial bathing in the holy waters of Kshipra begins with the full moon day of *Chaitra* month and continues throughout the succeeding month of *Vaishakh* culminating on tenth full moon day. The celestial atmosphere of the heavenly city touches its peak during this time.

It is believed that the holy waters of Kshipra curtail sins of the previous births. There are stories about the significance of *shahi snan* and Simhastha's origin. The most popular one relates to the *Samudra Manthan* or churning of the ocean. It states that once upon a time, demigods found themselves

weak and felt deterioration in their strength. Helplessly they visited Lord Brahma and requested for directions. The lord showed them way to nectar by the process of churning the *Kshir Sagar*. The churning of the ocean yielded a jar full of nectar to the gods and demons. As Gods didn't want to share nectar with demons, a plan had been plotted. As per the plan, Jayanta, God Indra's son, eloped with nectar. He was then followed by demons. During the struggle of its possession, which persisted for twelve days in heaven (equals to twelve human years), few drops of nectar dropped at four places - Prayag, Nasik, Haridwar and Ujjain on the earth. The drops of nectar were received by the rivers of these places.

Beyond the tales associated with the *Sahi Snan*, the festival represents the philosophy of *Sanathan dharma*. Through the eye-catching and spiritually-drenched sights, it induces onlookers to remember the divine force that connects us all with its unique



Boosting Religious Tourism of the State Globally!

In an effort to promote Madhya Pradesh Tourism on global-level, the State Government will be branding Simhastha 2016 internationally. Promotional events will be organized overseas and foreign nationals will be invited by the government to attend the event. The government is targeting countries mesmerized by the Indian culture and traditions.

International seminars will be held to give a global look to the event. Importantly, earlier also Madhya Pradesh Government gave a 'global touch' to the tourism by inviting ambassadors of a dozen countries in the Global Investors' Summit, which was held in Indore in October.

The gigantic event would be organized in more than 3,000 hectares of land and over five crore devotees are expected to participate in the religious congregation. According to astronomy experts, the auspicious date on which the Simhastha would be organized, is being witnessed after a prolonged gap of more than 5,000 years.



The Holy Bath of Faith

Main dates of holy bath

First bath
22 April 2016 (Friday)
Full Moon Night

6 May 2016 (Friday)
Vaishakha Krishna Amavasya

9 May 2016 (Monday)
Shukla Tritiya

11 May 2016 (Wednesday)
Shukla Panchmi

21 May 2016 (Saturday)
Poornima

Apart from this, 17th and 19th May 2016 are also main dates for taking the holy bath.

traditions, recognitions and beliefs. During Simhastha, the ghats of Kshipra notice the united spirit of India with all the diversities. Ujjain becomes the hub of salvation-seeking devotees during Simhastha, who immerse themselves in the holy Kshipra. One of the major attractions of the festival is when hundreds of *Naga sadhus*, showing up rustic appearances, rudraksh and weapons, take *shahi snan* in Kshipra.

To experience the unique form of festivity, attain liberation and salvation as well as embrace the unity in diversity, Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2016 will be a grand celebration of faith and devotion of humankind.



Sinhastha Kumbh 2016 Dates: 22nd of April to 21st of May

Mahakumbh Start	22 April, 2016
Pancheshani Yatra Start	1-5 May, 2016
Mesh ka Surya + Chandra ke sath simh ke guru ka yog	6 May, 2016
Akshya Tritiya	9 May, 2016
Shankracharya Jayanti	11 May, 2016
Mohini Ekadashi	17 May, 2016
Pradosh	19 May, 2016
Pramukh Shahi Snan	21 May, 2016

The Adventurania

Crazy Festivals around the  World



For adventuramics, there cannot be any other synonym for adventure. Mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, mountain biking, canoeing, rafting, zip-lining, paragliding, and rock climbing can be few sources of thrill. But have you ever come across festivals, which fulfill this need of adventuramics? Let's discover...



South Korea celebrates a mud festival in July. Boryeong Mud Festival makes you see good enough number of revelers, who make their way to South Korea for a summer-long sludge fest, taking a mud bath. You can jump into mud wrestling, mud races, mud sliding, mud fireworks and just about any mud-related activity. On a good note, you save your expenses on lavish clothes (at least for this fest ;)



Can you imagine a bunch of people running crazy after a cheese-ball?

The Cheese-Rolling Festival of England somehow works in that way. On every last Monday of May, a wheel of double Gloucester cheese is rolled from the top of an amazingly vertical hill. And what is next? A bunch of folk crazily chase it. The idea of the festival is to grab the rolling cheese before it reaches the bottom. No wonder if some absurd tumble of crazily-adventurous individuals make them reach at the bottom of the hill before the cheese does. And if someone is lucky enough to get a steady hold of a rolling cheese, a prize of some cheese awaits in the ambulance.

Not as cheesy as the above one,

Nigeria celebrates an exciting Argungu Fishing Festival in March. Held at the northeast state of Kebbi, the 4-day cultural event is power-packed excitement for the fisherman community. The razor-sharp voice of a gun makes the fishermen jump into the river Matan Fada. The one-hour competition for finding the biggest fish begins with this. After an hour's hard-work of fetching fishes, the winner gets a new minibus and a million naira. Not to mention, the childlike excitement will be a bonus!



A bit dangerous and so adventurous,

Las Bolas de Fuego is celebrated in El Salvador on 31st of August every year. To resemble volcanic eruption of 1658, the fest is celebrated with some wire-tied rags, which are soaked in kerosene. To give the lava balls effect, the rags are lit and thrown at the participants. For someone who is not familiar about this 'organized' fest, it guarantees to give a battle-ground experience.



What all can you imagine about a vegetarian festival?

May be few prayers and loads of vegetarian cuisines! But that's not all for Phuket Vegetarian Festival organized at Thailand in September. This veggie fest, which has its own importance to make people go vegetarian in September, has some surprising elements like body-piercing, fire-walking and many more to invoke the god. With no connection to turn vegetarian, bundle of people pierce their bodies with knife, niddle, pins, screw and all the sharp stuffs. Harsh as it may sound here, can this fit into your adventure-list?



It is certainly an art to turn common tasks into full-of-life experience by adding a bit of creativity and crazy elements to it. These kinds of fests are celebration of that eccentric human spirit.

FOODIES' PARADISE MAHARASHTRA

Story by Anil Mulchandani
Photo by Dinesh Shukla

Food Tourism is an important sector of the Travel and Hospitality Industry. Food tourists range from those who travel in pursuit of unique and memorable experiences related to eating, drinking, culinary cultures or cooking to others for whom food is part of an overall travel experience. According to international travel organizations, food ranks high with climate and accommodation among the factors that lead tourists to decide their travel plans to a destination.

Maharashtra is one of the most exciting states for Food Tourism – from street food to Michelin starred restaurants in Mumbai, a wide variety of vegetarian food to the seafood of the Konkan coast and the mutton dishes of Kolhapur, the hot and spicy food of Vidharba to the sour flavours of *kokam* in the food of the coast, *dhabas* to five-star hotels, there is much to be enjoyed while travelling in Maharashtra. Tourists come to enjoy the variety of food in Mumbai, including its happening street food zones, *khau gallis* and plush restaurants, the oranges in Nagpur district, alphonso mangoes along the Ratnagiri coast, the seafood of Sindhudurg district, wine and grapes in Nashik, strawberries at Mahabaleshwar and chikoo orchards at Dahanu. However, there is much more potential for Culinary Tourism still to be explored in Maharashtra.

MUMBAI

Mumbai, India's bustling metro and financial hub, is well-known for its street food. Almost everywhere food is available on the go – *vada pav*, toasted sandwiches and fresh juices that office-goers and students pick up for a quick snack. *Khau Gallis* have mushroomed at most of the busy places – some of the famous ones are near the diamond market at Opera House, in the jewellery market of Jhaveri Bazaar, around the share market of Dalal Street, amid the offices and banks of Fort, near the shopping areas of Bandra, etc. Shoppers, businesspeople, vendors and those working in these markets rush to kiosks, carts and small eateries selling Chinese *bhel*, *vada pav* (a Mumbai speciality), *dosas* sandwiches, *ragda pattice*, *bhelpuri*, *sev puri*, *dahi puri*, sugarcane juice, milk shakes, *kulfi*, cold drinks, *chai*, coffee and so on. The rush to grab some grub around railway stations like Andheri, Churchgate, Ghatkopar, Lower Parel, or colleges in different parts of Mumbai is amazing. In the evening, families gather at food stalls along the sea beaches like the *Chowpatty* Sea Face and Juhu Beach. For non-vegetarians, Mohammed Ali Road, Byculla and Apollo Bunder are the benchmark for *kebabs*, *nihari* and *Mughlai* curries.

The commercial areas of South Mumbai like Colaba, Bellard Estate and Fort are known for their cafes, Irani restaurants and small eateries. This highly cosmopolitan area of the city is where you can get a variety of food – North Indian *chaats* and *Sindhi* food at Kailash Parbat, *Parsee* food at Café Britannia and Paradise, Goan food at New Martin, South Indian at Kamat, and so on. For South Indian food, many head for Matunga while the Sion – Koliwada area is known for its *Punjabi* food. Aaswad Upahar, Diva Maharashtra, Mi Maratha, Panshikar Aahar and Prakash are some of the famous places for *Marathi* food in Mumbai. Coastal food of Malvan and Mangalore is also a rage in Mumbai.

Being India's major metro, Mumbai abounds in international cuisine – here you have excellent restaurants for Italian, Mediterranean, European, Chinese, Thai, Japanese, and other cuisine.



Wine Dinner



Desserts at Trattoria



Thai Pavilion at Vivanta



Berry Pulao - Britannia & Co. Café



Dal Puran Poli

PUNE AND THE DECCAN

Pune too is a cosmopolitan city and has mushroomed restaurants for a huge variety of cuisine. Central Pune or the walled city with its *peths* is known for Maharashtrian foods, while areas like the Camp and MG Road are famous for breads, biscuits, Parsee and European foods. Koregaon Park with the Osho Ashram has an international scene. The university and college areas have eateries catering to students from across India and also international students. With Pune booming as a centre for infotech, automobiles and other industries, there are many restaurants for cuisines ranging from Kashmiri to Japanese in the city.

Pune is a good place to have *Taat*, the traditional Maharashtrian *thali*. A *taat* comprises of *chutneys*, pickles, *raita*, *koshimbar*, crunchy bites like *vada* and *papad*, leafy green vegetables, a 'wet' vegetable with lots of *gravy/sauce*, *dal* rice and breads. The dishes are made tasty with *goda masala*, which is a mix of spices, seeds and dried lichen, roasted and then ground together, with a sour or jaggery flavouring. Breads are made from wheat, *juvar* (sourgam), *bajara* millet or *raagi* / *nagli* finger millet depending on the area. Rice is also part of the meal and usually had with a *daal*-dish like *aamti*. *Dal Puran poli* is a favourite sweet, as are *halwas*, and *modak* is popular specially during the Ganpati festival. Peanuts are widely-used in Maharashtra's cooking. Chitale Bhandu, Good Luck Restaurant, Vaishali and Shreya's are some of places, where you can get local food. There are many no-frills places and streetside kiosks like Kalyan Bhel, Girija Restaurant Pure Veg, Badashi Snack Center, Sujata Mastani, Johsi Wadawala where people gather for snacking in Pune.

For elaborate cuisines like the Peshwai food of Pune, Mystic Masala at Vivanta by Taj Blue Diamond is one of the must-visits in the city.



Coastal Food

When travelling around Pune, you will find many simple places serving a chickpea porridge called *pithla* with *bhakri*, a thick flatbread made from millet, sorghum or rice.

One of the popular snacks you will find in Pune and other parts of Maharashtra is the *Misal*, a mix of *usal* (typically sprouted *moong/moong dal* cooked with onions and spices) with a variety of other ingredients and *masalas*. There are many different *misal* - it could have rice and potato flakes in Pune, curd in some areas, and the *misal* of Kolhapur is more pungent. *Poha* or puffed rice/potato flakes with chopped onions, mustard seeds, turmeric and chillies is a ubiquitous breakfast dish in the state. *Sabudana Vada* and *Sabudana Khichadi* made from pearls of sago palm are popular specially during religious fasts.

South of Pune, Kolhapur is famous for its mutton dishes made with a thin gravy called *tambada rassa* or white gravy called *pandhra masala*.





KHANDESH

The cuisines of Nashik and the Khandesh region of Maharashtra is spicy and rustic typically using peanut oil, dry coconut (*khopra*) and dark, tiny *lavangi* chillies. Nashik lies in an area known for its excellent produce like grapes, onion, brinjal, fenugreek, okra, carrot, sweet potato, potato, cabbage, tomato, radish, etc, which reflects in the food here – Panchratna at The Gateway Hotel in Nashik is one of the best places to taste the food of Nashik. The Khandesh region, including Jalgaon, Dhule, Nandurbar and Malegaon, produces good quality brinjal and banana.

VIDHARBA

Eastern Maharashtra, around Nagpur, has Varhadi cuisine or Saoji cuisine heavily flavoured with spices like black pepper, dry coriander, bay leaves, grey cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, poppy seeds and plenty of chillies. Mutton and chicken are commonly used in this area. The Savji bhojanalays of Nagpur are good places to try this cuisine. Nagpur is known for its oranges - orange *barfi* is a signature sweet of Haldiram's, the famous Nagpur-based national eatery chain.



THE COAST

The coast of Maharashtra from Dahanu in the north to Sindhudurg in the south is also known for its food. Dahanu and nearby Golwad are producing areas for *chikoos* and other horticultural produce. A few Parsee families have settled here, making it a good area to have Prawn Patio and *Patra* Pomfret besides buying biscuits and *mawa* cake. Alibag near Mumbai also has a cosmopolitan mix of people, including Jews and Parsees, who have contributed to the cuisine. From Raigad to the borders of Goa and Karnataka, the Konkan coast, offers excellent seafood, cashews, bananas, jackfruit, eggplant, okra and mango. Coconut (grated, dry, fried, paste and milk), *kokum*, local red chillies and spices are much used in the cooking. Malwan is one of the main towns of Sindhudurg, the Southwestern district of Maharashtra, and has become known for its fish and prawn dishes - coriander seeds, peppercorns, cumin, cardamom, ginger, garlic, are used in most dishes, while some also use *kokum*, *amsul*, tamarind and raw mango. Malvani fish dishes get their distinct reddish colour from locally grown chillies.



Some of the dishes you are likely to find in hotels, restaurants and *dhabas* along the coast from Mumbai to Malwan are *Kombdi Vade* (chicken curry eaten with vade, onion, lemon and *solkadhi*), *Mori Masala* (shark curry), *Bangda Fry* (fried mackerel), *Mutton Malvani*, *Paplet Saar* (pomfret fish curry), *Kaju Chi Aamti* (cashew curry) *Phanasachi Bhaji* (a jackfruit dish), etc. *Solkadhi* is a curry-drink made from coconut milk and *kokam*.

Many shops near the beaches sell Konkan produce like the extract of *kokam* and *amla* fruits which are popular buys for tourists.

With so many delicious foods and great produce, Maharashtra certainly offers high potential for the growth of Culinary Tourism.



Shopping in Goa can make you go a bit topsy-turvy. Beyond the beauty of its wavy waters, adventurous water sports, finger-licking seafood, shiny sands, colorful amalgamation of sun and sea at the horizon and happening night life, Goa is the shopaholics' paradise.

The narrow lanes towards beaches hold the enthralling flea markets. The colourful objects displayed at the flea markets echo its shades beautifully up in the sky, creating captivating ambience for the sightseers. Reflecting and bawling the multi-ethnic culture and essence of Goa, the flea markets have something for everyone. So what are you waiting for? Indulge in innumerable opportunities to shop from the hand-picked stalls from the famous flea bazaars of Goa.

Flocking to Goa's Flea Market

Haute picks for the shopaholics

Anjuna Flea Market (Wednesdays)

Starting from the month of October, beaches and streets of Goa begin to fill up with tourists zipping around on rented scooters and prices start their annual upward trajectory. The charm of the night and flea markets shift into high gear as visitor numbers start swelling.

The popular beach of Goa – Anjuna is an abode to the most happening flea markets of Goa. The brainchild of Hippies to make a quick buck, Anjuna Flea Market became famous for the second-hand goods, anything from miniature items like cellular phones, junk jewelry, cameras to bike.

However, the present market has transformed considerably from its Hippy days. If you're an art-lover or trend-setter, Anjuna Flea Market has everything from ornamental crafts, fabrics,

clothing, spices, oxidized silverware, trinkets, incense sticks, beach wear, semi-precious stones, spices, imported cigarettes etc. Embellish yourself with temporary body tattoo, hair braids, piercing or even a haircut and Ayurvedic massage. The heaven for the bargaining fanatics, the flea market creates an irresistible one-stop shopping experience.

Everything from tasty delicacies to choicest garments will blow your mind with its unbelievable varieties and uniqueness. The Orchard Stores and Oxford Stores are the two most famous stores in Anjuna Market.

Mapusa Market (Fridays)

Fridays are indeed fundays at Mapusa Market. The vibrant, colourful and morning market - Yes, it usually begins at 8 in the morning on Fridays and goes on till dusk sets in.



The Tibetan Market in the middle of Calangute is the centre of attraction for the visitors. The apt market for the art-, gems- and jewelry-lovers, whose passion is to explore aesthetic silver-work, precious stones, Kashmiri embroidery, carpets and other art merchandises. The market is famous for the wooden figures of *Hindu* deities and Buddha.

Baga Beach Market (Saturdays)

The fascinating beach of Goa, Baga beach is an expansion of the Calangute. As mesmerizing as the beach itself, the Baga Beach Market unfolds its full colours during the sunset time with the lighting of lamps and lanterns at the stalls. The ambience is further embossed by the live music, which makes it a thoroughly enjoyable experience to visit the market.

The market-for-all will re-define the shopping experience with amazing products, starting from house ware, textiles, fish, grocery, meat to pottery items. It has different kinds of trinkets, home decors, toys and exotic Goan cuisines. The rich blend of traditional and rural products like eggs, chicken, brooms and piglets. The intricate artifacts are the highlight of the market. Along with ultimate wandering time, the Baga Beach Market is an experience to cherish with tarot card readers, funky haircuts, palm reading and memories carved in wooden objects.

Panjim City Markets

Different from North Goa markets, the capital city of Goa is offering an exclusive shopping experience. With the modern and exotic touch, Panjim City Market is the place to find everything from labels to local items. Cherish the indigenous art of rural Goa from smaller shops and markets near the Miramar beach. On the other hand, get the trendy and international designer wear from malls, boutiques and upscale shops.

Head to Panaji Corporation Market to relish the freshly-caught seafood. This local market will have everything from fresh and dried fish to exotic fruit and vegetable. The 'daily appearance' of the market consists of mackerel, tiger prawns, squid, kingfish, mussels, pomfret, crabs and oysters. Apart from these, bags, cloths, electronic gadgets, spices, shoes, sweets and flowers are other famous items available in the market.

Goa is the land with innumerable opportunities to make you forget you are still in India. The multi-hued flea markets of the state add unique colours of music, food and shopping to the popular exotic landscapes.

Step in the Mapusa Market and be welcomed by the dominating aroma of the variety of spices, sausages and dried fishes. Well-known for its wide range of exotic fresh fruits like mangoes, plantain bananas, plentiful supply of locally produced vegetables and fresh fish, the market offers preserves, pickles, earthen pots, coir mats and many more things for the admirers of the Goan cuisine.

The live and full-of-activity Friday market reflects the lives of locals. Visit one of the few authentic bazaars found in the state and enjoy the flavors of art, culture and tradition of Goa.

Calangute Market Square (Saturdays)

One of the popular and crowded beaches of Goa has given a bit of commercial touch to

the Calangute Market. Maintaining its own charisma amid the commercial flavor, the Calangute Market is a bliss for the seafood-lovers. The sundown time features the local fishermen with the catch of the day. Lined with the beach stretch, the stalls at Saturday market sell a range of beers, fried prawns to attractive objects made of seashells. The sarongs sold by hawkers at the beach side and the fortune-readers enhance the charm of Calangute.

Proffering enticing deals for the discerning buyers and shoppers, Calangute Market has, besides standstill shops presenting huge collection of metal crafts, souvenirs, clothes, leather items and jewelry from not only Goa but also from other parts of the country, the vendors selling meat, fish, textiles, groceries, pottery, and many other provisions.

WELCOME TO

INDIA



Dr. Mahesh Sharma

Minister of State for Tourism (IC),
Culture (IC) & Civil Aviation, GOI

INTERVIEW: Union Budget 2015 Leveraging Tourism Sector

India's Tourism Sector evidenced two significant government announcements in February 2015. In an effort to liberalize the visa regime, initiatives like extension of Visa-on-arrival to 150 countries and electronic travel authorization have been introduced.

The government is hopeful that the initiatives will be implemented from the next tourist session beginning October. Initially, the implementation of the visa-on-arrival is limited to 9 airports including Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Kochi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram. The ease in process and linearization will give a fillip to the Indian Tourism Sector.

India currently offers visa-on-arrival to tourists from 11 countries like Finland, the Philippines, Singapore and Japan. The decision was taken in a meeting convened by the Planning Commission that included representatives from the PMO, Ministries of Home Affairs, External Affairs and Tourism.

Interview of Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Tourism (IC), Culture (IC) & Civil Aviation, GOI is an attempt to focus on the various aspects of the initiatives taken by the government to leverage the sector.

Q. What are the expectations from the Visa-on-Arrival extension to 150 countries?

A. Presently, we are offering visa-on-arrival to 44 countries. And we are getting good response with that showing almost 1200% growth. Now, with the announcement of extension of the visa-on-arrival by Prime Minister and Finance Minister, we can expect a tremendous growth rate.

Currently, with 43 countries, we are sharing 42% of the world tourism. In case, we extend the list of countries adding China, US, UK, Spain and Italy, we will be able to share about 60% of the world tourism share. In addition to this, if the number of countries is extended up to 150, there will be incredible response. Importantly, this will lead to boost tourism of our country.

Q. How is introducing VoA facility to 9 international airports making a difference?

See, it is very convenient. From the launch of Visa-on-arrival in India on 29th November 2014, the response has been wonderful. Within 3 months from its launch date, we noticed 1200% growth. Major response was received from the USA, followed by Australia.

Q. Considering that many potential tourists combine a visit to India with Nepal and Bhutan or Sri Lanka, the VoA limitations like '30 days' and 'only one entry' will go against the goal. Do you agree?

Actually, the number of days and number of entries have been restricted for security reasons. Of course, we are working on this and would like to curtail the limitations.

Q. What is the contribution of Tourism Sector to nation's GDP?

India shares about 0.68% of the world tourism. We share almost 1 lac and 7 thousand crore of the foreign exchange, which is about 6.88% of the GDP. If we can take this up to just 1%, the GDP share is going to increase.

Q. In Tourism Sector, we are developing so many circuits like Buddha. What do you think about these circuits and possibilities of their development?

Yes, we have 5 circuits in total. Rs. 100 crore has been allocated to each of the

circuits. We are focusing on these 5 circuits namely Buddha, Himalayan, North-east, Krishna (we launched the first-of-its-own-kind) and especially coastal circuit. We need to explore 7500 km of our coastal belt. And I think we will make best of our coast, which will eventually boost the tourism of our country.

Q. Lastly, what is the aim or goal of your ministry in this sector and what kind of role tourism plays in increasing nation's GDP ?

If we are able to raise the 0.68% of India's share to 1%, it will increase our GDP to 3%. With the policies our government has declared, 8-10% growth in GDP is very possible.



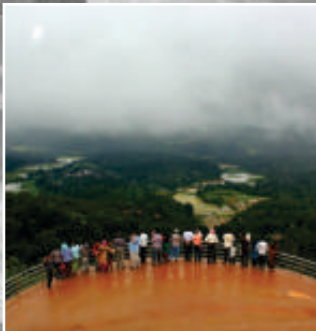
10 Places You Must Visit Before You Die



The world is a beautiful creation of God. Painted with mesmerizing colors of nature, the creation of God is beyond human imagination. While cherishing diversity of landscapes is a deep desire of any humankind, a life-time would not be enough to view all the beautiful sights that the world has to offer.

However, for those who want to experience some of the most beautiful destinations of India, here is a list of 10 breathtaking places in India that you cannot miss out on. Find out everything about the paradoxical land of India – from the profound valley to skyscraping hills, golden reflection of sands to blue waves of water, dark greenery of forest to maze of tall buildings.

Enjoy and Add India's Most-beautiful Destinations to Your Bucket-list.



Sikkim - Yumthang Valley



The 'Valley of Flowers'

Yumthang Valley is a grazing pasture surrounded by the Himalayan mountains in the North Sikkim district of Sikkim. Situated at the height of 11800 feet, Yumthang is popularly known as 'Valley of Flowers'. A heaven for nature-lovers with a fascinating amalgamation of flora and fauna and magnificent scenic beauty is located at a distance of 148 km from Gangtok.



Munnar - Tea Garden Hill

Kashmir of South

Located in the state of "God's own country", Munnar is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams – Mudrapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala. This green hill station is surrounded by the country's highest tea gardens.



Ladakh - Nubra Valley

The Road Ends Here!

Nubra Valley about 150 km north of Leh is where the Shyok River meets the Siachan River to form a large valley separating the Ladakh and Karakoram Ranges. Nubra valley is as a must do in a Leh trip and it is identified as a tourism circuit by the local administration of Leh district.



Nohkalikai Falls

Jump of Ka Likai

It is the tallest plunge waterfall in India. This waterfall drops a height of 1115 feet or 340 meters to form chasm at its base. Nohkalikai waterfall is located near Cherrapunji, which is considered as one of the wettest places on Earth. Name of the falls is Jump of Ka Likai in Khasi language.

Cherrapunji



The Wettest Place on Earth

High above misty valleys and foaming rivers, ensconced in swirling clouds and perched on an escarpment, lies Cherrapunji (4,500 feet). The stunning location, where the rainfall can be recorded in feet rather than in millimeters, coveted entry long ago into the Guinness Book of World Records as the wettest place on earth.



Nanda Devi

The Second Highest Mountain in India

Nanda Devi is the highest mountain {7,816 m (25,643 ft)} in the state of Uttarakhand in Northern India. The second highest mountain in India is the highest summit in the two massifs, another one is called as Nanda Devi East, located at the eastern part.



Mizoram

The Mountainous State

Mizoram is nestling in the southern tip of the north-eastern region of India, between Myanmar and Bangladesh. The scenic landscapes of bluish mountains and hills, serene lakes, steep rocky cliffs and deep valleys make the state an ideal destination for nature lovers.



Matheran

The Lush Green Hill Station

Matheran is located around 90 km from Mumbai, and 120 km from Pune. Sprawling languidly at an altitude of 800 metres is Matheran - an undulating hilltop cloaked in green.



Himachal Pradesh - Deodar Forest

The Magic, Mist and Magnificence

Deodar forests are forests dominated by *Cedrus Deodara* and are found in Western Himalayas.

Andamans



In the Middle of Nowhere

The Andaman Islands form an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal between India, to the west, and Myanmar, to the north and east. The Islands represent a Mini India with rich diversity of language, religion and culture.

What's Travelling

The Next Tourism Hub: 28 Lakh Foreign Tourists to Visit Uttar Pradesh by 2017

The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) has projected that Uttar Pradesh will attract over 28 lakh foreign tourists by 2017 up from about 20.5 lakh overseas tourists that visited the state in 2013.

Increased thrust on the development of Tourism Sector of the state through steps like enhanced air connectivity, development of heritage sites, better management of pilgrimage places and others can lead to add about 10 lakh direct and indirect jobs in UP alone.

According to a study, total tourists arrival in UP had increased by over 34% from the level of about 17 crore in 2012 to about 23 crore in 2013.

UP had been ranked as the second most-visited destination for domestic travellers as over 22.6 crore Indian tourists visited the state in 2013, thereby accounting for almost 20% share in total number of over 114.5 crore domestic tourist visits in India.

Indian Heritage Centre to open in Singapore

Singapore will soon have an Indian Heritage Centre. "A new Indian Heritage Centre, which will open soon in Singapore, also testifies the key role that the Indian community has played and continues to play in Singapore story," Singapore President Tony Tan Keng Yam said while inaugurating the Peranakan World exhibition at National Museum here. He said an Indian culture festival would be hosted in Singapore later this year.

The Singapore President stressed on sharing experiences for better understanding between the two countries. "The more

experiences we share, the better our two countries would be able to understand each other," he noted. Yam also recalled the co-operation between the cultural institutions of India and Singapore. "Our cultural institutions have a long history of close cooperation. Singapore's National Heritage Board has worked with museums in India for more than 20 years," he added.

Now Pay More on Air travels

The Union Budget 2015 though was satisfactory in economic front, but may become a burden to the common man. The air fares will see a rate hike due to the revised service tax on tickets. After 1st April, 2015, the Service Tax will be levied at 7.41% on first and business class fares and 4.94% on the economy class fares.

Nowadays, travelling on air being a normal thing for Indians, which is a positive note for the growing economy; raising the taxes may be considered as a hidden charge as it will not impact in a four digit for the domestic travels and so is called inflation.

Social Media Fever – '#JetInstant' on Twitter for Jet Airways

Jet Airways, India's premier international airline, today unveiled #JetInstant, a first of its kind online feature that enables guests to access information on fares and flight status in real-time through Twitter. The customer-centric initiative is a part of Jet Airways' strategy to simplify the travel experience and engage with guests on a real-time basis. The initiative, developed in collaboration with Twitter and technology partner, TravelSpends, will see Jet Airways set a new industry benchmark in customer service.

To take advantage of #JetInstant, guests will first need to follow the official Jet Airways

Twitter account @jetairways.

To get the flight status, guests can Tweet "@jetairways fltstatus <Flight No> <Departure Date in DDMM format>". Within seconds, the update will be sent as a Direct Message (DM) to their Twitter account.

For LoFares details, guests need to Tweet "@jetairways lofares <Origin> <Destination> <Departure Date in DDMM format> <Return Date in DDMM format>". The #JetInstant service sends the lowest fare available as a DM with a direct link to complete the booking process seamlessly on jetairways.com. Twitter users can Tweet @jetairways #JetInstant for any assistance with regards to the service.

Get Luxurious Check-in at Marigold Sarovar Portico – Mashobra, Shimla

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts is one of the fastest growing hotel management companies and chain of hotels in India with over 70 operational hotels in 48 destinations in India and overseas, under Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico, Hometel, Radisson, Park Plaza and Park Inn brands.

As a part of expansion, the hotel & hospitality giant has signed up a resort property in Mashobra Hills in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. The hotel, being owned by AB Tools Pvt. Ltd., will be named as Marigold Sarovar Portico. The hotel facilitated with 50 rooms and cottages will be launched by May, 2015.

The resort offers a virtual bonanza for nature-walk lovers and trekkers. The cottages at the resort are made of Himalayan Stone, which are a unique and specialised specimen of Shimla Architecture. Besides, the hotel will offer all modern facilities including all day dining restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym and spa, meeting rooms, banqueting facilities, conferencing and destination weddings and other services of a good 4-Star Hotel.

Kanha National Park gets a new wildlife resort from Club Mahindra

The Madhya Pradesh Government is observing 2015 as "Tourism Year" and Mahindra Holidays will give a boost to that by launching its new resort "Club Mahindra Kanha". The resort located on the outskirts of Kanha National Park is a wildlife lover's delight and a vacation destination.

The resort is spread in 15 acres of land, 50 rooms for members, which includes 32 studio rooms and 18 one bedroom apartments. The other facilities supplemented are a spa, an activity centre, a fun zone, a swimming pool and a dedicated kid's area. With a short drive from the Kanha National Park, it offers all the facilities and comforts of modern living along with the thrill of wildlife to Club Mahindra members.

Goa – More than a Beach Destination, Promises GTDC

According to a report by Economic Times, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) is putting forward its foot to develop 8 properties by inviting private sector participation in a PPP Model.

Nikhil Desai, the Managing Director of GTDC, said public-private development of tourist attractions in the state would include an Oceanarium (aquarium that uses the sea) at Miramar Beach, a ropeway across the Mandovi River, and a family water park in Bicholim, among other facilities. The ropeway will take tourists from Panjim into fort Reis Magos across the river. He said the aim is to reposition the state as more than just a beach destination.

Rs. 2,000 crore investment that Goa Tourism Development Corporation expects to attract through 8 different projects. The Oceanarium at the Miramar Beach will come up in place of a 52-room GTDC resort with a nearby land allotted for a five-star hotel facility with a marina. The water park and a five-star resort are planned at the Mayem Lake resort of GTDC. Besides these, there will be Luxury Yacht Services, Segway Tours, Hop-on Hop-off Bus, Motorised Paragliding and Hot-air Balloons. The news of the PPP tenders from the GTDC comes even as bids are being accepted for creating a new airport at Goa, to overcome the limitations of the Dabolim airport.

After Gujarat, it's West Bengal to adopt Homestay Policy

The West Bengal Government is introducing Homestay Tourism Policy to financially aid those who are interested in putting up travellers at their residences.

Earlier in November, 2014, the Gujarat Tourism has come up with the Homestay Policy.

Homestay Policy allows travellers to board and lodge with locals and gets a first-hand feel of the regional customs and culture. This gives an opportunity to the residents to earn a livelihood as well.

According to A.R. Bardhan, Principal Secretary of West Bengal's Tourism Department, the State Government under the policy could chip in to help homestay hosts to add extra rooms and toilets. "At least, the government could chip in bringing up the toilet section. If someone invests Rs.1 lakh to construct a new room, then the State Government can invest Rs.50,000 to add a toilet because tourists usually look for decent toilet facilities," Bardhan adds.

AAI to build 5 small airports

The Airport Authority of India has undertaken construction of small airports at five locations at Hubli and Belgaum in Karnataka, Kisangarh in Rajasthan, Jhasuguda in Odisha and Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh.

A task force under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation has been constituted for identification of other locations based on certain broad criteria such as, minimum population of 10 lakh, tourism potential, commercial viability, details of the flight movements in the past, social obligations etc. Government of India is open to private participation in the process of providing regional and remote area connectivity to Tier-II and Tier-III cities through construction of small airports across the country. However, such consideration depends upon various factors such as willingness of the private players, commercial viability, socio-economic responsibility of the government, support from the concerned state governments etc

Celebrity Chef Cyrus Todiwala is back with new taste for the Goans

The multi-award winner celebrity chef Cyrus Todiwala, based in United Kingdom, is back in India to give Indians the taste bursting delicacies and luxurious hotel facilities in his newly launched property "Acron Waterfront Resort", which is located at the point of contact of Baga River with the Arabian Sea. The resort has 29 well-equipped and modern facilitated rooms with the options of different views; river view, sea view and courtyard rooms.

Now, staying in Acron Waterfront Resort is also accompanied by the tasty bites of food prepared by the Genius Chef Cyrus Todiwala.

A woman is performing on a stage, wearing a highly elaborate and glamorous costume. The costume is primarily pink and silver, featuring a large, voluminous feathered headdress. She is wearing a two-piece top and bottom piece, both heavily embellished with sequins and beads. Her legs are wrapped in silver, sequined leg warmers that extend up to her thighs. She is also wearing silver high-heeled sandals. Her arms are adorned with long, sequined gloves. She is striking a confident pose with one arm raised and the other extended. The background is dark, with a bright red light source visible on the right side, creating a dramatic atmosphere.

*Exclusivity
Defined
by
Uniqueness*