

July - September 2015

A high-end quarterly magazine

PRAVEG'S

TOURISM ONE

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In & Around Ujjain

The Excursion of God's Own Land
Dang District of Gujarat

Monsoon in Maharashtra

Nabakalebar – Transformation of Lords

The Wonderful West



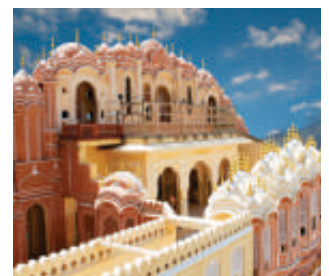
Glorious Gujarat



Magnificent Maharashtra



Glamorous Goa



Royal Rajasthan

A young woman with long, dark brown hair and blue eyes is the central figure. She is wearing a black bikini with shimmering sequins. Her hair is styled in long, loose waves, and she has a serene expression, looking slightly to her right. She is surrounded by tall, vibrant green grasses that frame her. Her right hand is on her hip, and she wears a black and white beaded bracelet. A gold necklace with a circular pendant is visible around her neck. The background is a soft-focus field of similar grasses, creating a natural, outdoor setting. In the upper right corner, there is a graphic element consisting of three black, jagged, claw-like scratches that reveal the text below.

Nature's **'wild'** perspective



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Not all those who wander are lost

A famous line of J.R.R. Tolkien seems appropriate for a story of a journalist who gave up a \$95000 job to move to an island to scoop the ice-cream. Trapped in a mundane lifestyle that surrounds itself with high-rise buildings blocking the glimpse of nature, noise of cell phones disconnecting direct conversation and screen of laptop blacking out the marvelous spectacles wrought the idea of saying goodbye to the life directed to realize some indeterminate moment of future possessing enough money and vacation days.

The urge to explore new shores landed her on an unknown island. With no plan, no friends, and no clue, she began to realize new dimensions of her own personality. The new job of scooping mint chocolate chip for \$10 an hour made her happier than the six figures corporate job as it rendered her the joy of face-to-face conversation. The island without formal addresses, chain stores and spotlights endowed a tradition of gathering on the beaches at dusk to watch the sunset together.

Such life-changing inspirations may come in different forms. Sometimes it takes an unplanned trip to admire the masterpiece created by the Almighty. The perk of the trip is the inquisitiveness of what is next? The idea of experiencing 'the unfamiliar' stores in it a sort of wild happiness. It is this thrill that inspires the wanderers to opt for such adventures. What a marvelous thing it is - 'Not Knowing'.

So put down the map and get wonderfully lost. There are so many places to go! So many stories to explore! Move around every few years and live many different micro lives. It is enlightening and fulfilling to discover that you're not meant to settle in one place.



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

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In & Around Ujjain

Last issue of 'Praveg's Tourism One' presented deep insights of the Ujjain Simhastha 2016. The journey to discover the sacred city and its atypical locations continues with the highlights on some of the top sights in and around Ujjain that you must visit.

Ujjain was destroyed in 1234 by Iltutmish after which it was ruled by sultans of Mandu and then by the Moghuls. The city evidenced number of makeovers under the ruling of Raja Jai Singh from Jaipur and the Scindia dynasty between 1750 and 1810. Right from the time of emperor Ashoka, the city of Ujjain was the birthplace of mathematical astronomy in India.

Ujjain is also considered as the centre for research into the motion of the stars and planets. Like the other surreal complexes called the Jantar Mantars of Jaipur and Delhi, Raja Jai Singh presented traditional observatory to Ujjain in the year 1725 - Vedha Shala.

During 1720-30, Raja Jai Singh built observatories at Jaipur, Delhi, Ujjain, Mathura and Varanasi. The Vedha Shala of Ujjain is still in use and publishes the Ephemeris (*Panchang*).

Hindu astronomers fixed both the first meridian of longitude and the Tropic of Cancer here. The guide demonstrates how accurate the many dials here are – the reason local astronomers continue to use its five instruments, or *yantras*, to formulate charts predicting the positions of the planets, available at the site. One of the earliest known descriptions of standard time in India appeared in the 4th century CE astronomical treatise *Surya Siddhanta*, which defined the prime meridian, or zero longitude, as passing through *Avanti*, the ancient name for the historic city of Ujjain.

Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA



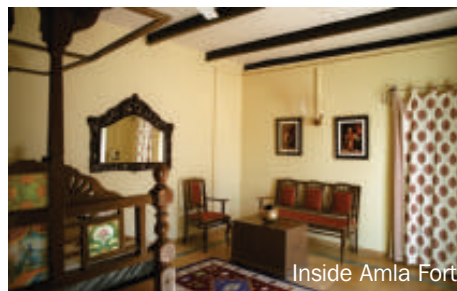
The complex is in excellent condition with good labeling of the instruments. A vertical gnomon, called *Shanku Yantra*, is fixed at the centre of the circular platform having a horizontal shape. The seven lines drawn according to the shadow of the gnomon indicate the twelve zodiac signs. Among these lines, 22nd December makes the shortest day, 21st March and 23rd September make the days and nights equal, and 22nd June makes the longest day of the year. With the help of shadow of the gnomon, the angle of elevation and zenith distance of the Sun can be determined. On equinoctial days, the mid-day shadow of the gnomon represents the latitude of Ujjain. The complex contains the *Ram Yantra* (a cylindrical building with an



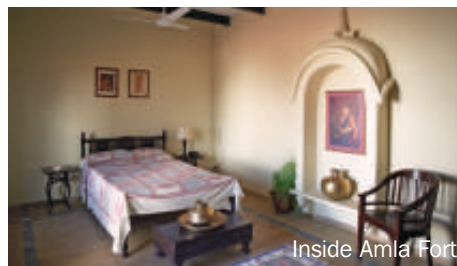
Vedha Shala



Amla Fort



Inside Amla Fort



Inside Amla Fort



The White Church of St Anns, Indore

open top and a pillar in its center), the *Jai Prakash* (a concave hemisphere), the *Samrat Yantra* (a huge equinoctial dial), the *Digamsha Yantra* (a pillar surrounded by two circular walls), and the *Narivalaya Yantra* (a cylindrical dial). The *Samrat Yantra* is a huge sun-dial with two quadrants in the plane of the celestial equator, which measure time depending on the shadow that falls on the dial. It can be used to estimate time, to locate the pole star and to measure the declination of celestial objects. The *Rama Yantra* can be used to measure the altitude of celestial objects.

From here, go down the hill past the Rudra Sagar tank to the Harsiddhi *Mandir*, which is one of the 51 *shaktipiths*, places of worship consecrated to the mother



Rajwada, Indore

goddess. **The temple site is one, where Sati's elbow fell on earth while Shiva was carrying her burning body from the sati pyre. According to the Skanda Purana, Shiva called upon Goddess Chandi to destroy Chand and Prachand, and on being pleased, bestowed upon her the epithet of Harsiddhi, one who vanquishes all!**

At the entrance of the temple are two lamp towers, a feature of *Marathi* architecture, while inside is the shrine, erected by the Scindias, with images of Goddesses Mahalakshmi, Annapurna and Saraswati.

The marketplace of Ujjain, with the *Chattri Chowk* in the heart of the city market, has the *Gopal Mandir*, another Scindia initiative. The temple is typical of the eclectic architecture that prevailed in India during the 1800s with *Moghul* domes, Moorish arches and Indo-European features. The temple tower looms over the surroundings, and the silver-plated doors were placed here by



Lalbag Palace at Indore

Jain Temple, Indore



Kund at Mahakaleshwar temple

the Scindias, who are said to have rescued stolen silver doors looted from temples. The marble sanctuary has a profusion of silver and mother-of-pearl decorations.

From Ujjain, take the road to Ratlam – on the way you can visit Amla, the heritage village. Fort Amla is a *Rajput* home with the owners tracing their ancestry to the *Maharanas* of Mewar. In the 17th century, a member of the *Suryavanshi Sisodia* dynasty of Udaipur came to Malwa and conquered this area, which since remained a *Rajput* principality surrounded by *Maratha* kingdoms of the *Holkars* and *Scindias*. ■



The Mumbai - Dapoli Highway in the rains



Green Getaways in

Maharashtra

**Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA**



Monsoon Flowers of The Kaas Plateau

Near Satara, the Kaas Plateau is a great place to enjoy the flowering season in August and September. Millions of flowers, stunning views of green hills and waterfalls in monsoon enhance the beauty of Kaas during August-September. UNESCO has listed Kaas on the World Heritage Site list because of its huge diversity of flora, about 850 different plants out of which about 600 are endangered and a few are found only in Satara Tehsil. This region of Thoseghar, Chalakewadi, Kaas and Bamnoli abounds in yellow, pink and purple flowers, including Smithia, Sonki, Balsam and Karvi, and orchids. This is where you can see endemic geckos, brightly-colored frogs, and birds like larks and buntings. Because of the large concentration of flowers, this is also an outstanding area for spotting butterflies. The greenery of forests around the Kaas Lake, the picturesque splendors of Sajjangarh Fort & the Kanher Dam as well as the captivating sights of the Thosegarh & Vajarai falls are impressive in the monsoon. The Koyna forests are also worth-visiting for its flora, fauna and sceneries.

The Western Ghats are recognized as biodiversity hotspots by UNESCO and other organizations. The rich tropical, moist deciduous, semi-evergreen and evergreen forests covering much of this mountain system is home to a great floristic and faunal diversity.

During the monsoon, the Sahyadri hills of the Western Ghats range in Maharashtra can be exciting to explore attractive flowers, brilliantly-colored butterflies, lush forests, mighty waterfalls and birds in beautiful breeding plumage. The scenic beauty combined with good road systems and other infrastructures make Maharashtra a perfect monsoon destination.

Let's walk around the exhilarating hill destinations of Maharashtra.

Kaas Plateau





The Jungles of Amba Valley

Amba Ghat is a mountain pass with evergreen and semi-evergreen forests. It makes an ideal base to visit historical places like Vishalgad, which is a fort with the *dargah* of the venerated Hazrat Malik Raihan Baba. The *dargah* attracts pilgrims and the memorials of *Maratha* martyrs like Baji Prabhu Deshpande and Phulaji Prabhu Deshpande, who defended the Pawankhind pass with 300 soldiers against the enormous forces of the Adil Shahi *Sultans*, enabling Shivaji to escape the blockade of Panhala to reach Vishalgad. After the battles of Pawankhind and Vishalgad between the forces of Adil shah and warriors of Shivaji in July 1660, the *Marathas* were recognized as the independent power in the Deccan.

Safaris to Pawankhind are typically offered in jeeps with mattresses on the top so that you can look into the surrounding undergrowth for birds and small mammals. The hills between Amba and Pawankhind offer good trekking and mountaineering experience. The presence of birds like malabar grey hornbill, pied hornbill, crimson-backed sunbird, yellow-browed bulbul, black bulbul, speckled piculet, malabar crested lark, malabar whistling thrush, scimitar babbler, brown-headed barbet and even the nilgiri wood pigeon can be enjoyed in the trees with fruit and flower. Gaur or Indian bison, civet, jungle cat and other mammals could also be seen. Owls also roost in the forest. During the monsoon, this is the area of colorful butterflies.

The destination ahead is the Radhanagari Sanctuary and Chandoli National Park, notified as part of the Western Ghats World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Amba Ghat has some good places to stay like Amba Jungle Resort.



Dapoli



The Mumbai - Ratnagiri Road is a beautiful highway offering superb views of hills in the monsoon. From this highway, turning for Dapoli passes a lovely landscape of lush green hills with streams and small falls abundant during the rains. Located at an altitude of 240m, Dapoli has a long seaboard densely-covered with coconut palms. The long coastline offers exciting beach leisure with mesmerizing beauty of Murud Harnai beach, recreational activities like Dolphin spotting and the thrills of water/beach sports.

Dapoli has some good resorts like Fern Samali.



Chiplun



Located on the Mumbai–Goa Highway, Chiplun is a historic town situated on the banks of the Vashishti River. The town is famous for the Parshuram Temple and wide range of bakeries. From Chiplun, the road to Pune is breathtakingly beautiful in the rains with views of waterfalls and seasonal streams near Mulshi, Paud and Lavale on the way.

Chiplun is especially famous for its riverside resorts.



Lonavala

At more moderate altitudes than Mahabaleshwar or Matheran, Lonavala is easy to reach in the rains being right on the Mumbai–Pune Expressway. Lonavala has beautiful forests around Bhushi Dam, INS Shivaji institute, Lion's Point, Linga View, Tungarali Dam and Rajmachi Point, the latter offering a good view of Shivaji Fort. A must-visit is Khandala, even more famous than it always was by the Bollywood number 'Aati Kya Khandala', to enjoy the panorama of an amphitheatre of hills, including the famous Duke's Nose and a waterfall. The waterfall is most impressive in the rains.

From Lonavala, you can visit the Buddhist cave at Karle to see the superb architecture and Bhaja Caves, dating back to the 2nd century BC (among the oldest cave complexes in India).



Mumbai - Pune Expressway



Lonavala on the Mumbai - Pune Expressway



Mahabaleshwar

Mahabaleshwar is situated in one of the wettest sections of Maharashtra's Western Ghats. Therefore, this hill station, like most others, has a commercialized and congested centre. Its principal draw is the scenic drives to the 'points' along the edges of the plateau named for various British officers, Arthur's Seat, Wilson Point, Elphinstone Point, Kate's Point, that offer panoramic views of the rivers, dams and forested slopes around the town.

The British discovery of its cooler climes and scenic charm began in the 1790s, when Sir Charles Malet visited the place. Its settlement as a hill station began after the arrival of General Lodwick and Malcolm Marshal in the 1820s. Among the British colonial period, buildings of the 1800s in Mahabaleshwar are the government houses on



Thoseghat waterfall

Mount Malcolm, the Anglican Christchurch behind the Makharia Garden, the Holy Cross Church, where services are still held, the Mahabaleshwar Club, a number of British and *Parsee* homes around the town and at Panchgani.

But, long before the British settled Mahabaleshwar, it was the site for medieval temples that can be seen in the area called Old Mahabaleshwar. Shivaji realised the strategic importance of the hills during a visit to these temples and built one of his impressive forts at Pratapgarh, about 20km from the centre of Mahabaleshwar, which is worth a visit.

The main hub of tourist activity at Mahabaleshwar is Yenna Lake with its boating facilities and a horse gallop area on a plateau overlooking it, though now there are more contemporary entertainments like an amusement park for children near Yenna, a go-karting centre and paragliding facilities from Sydney Point. ■



Jeep safari at Amba Ghat



Tapola



Satara



Nabakalebar Rath Yatra, 2015 Promoted as International Tourism Event

Lakhs of people visited the Nabakalebar Rath Yatra 2015. Government facilitated the sharp inflow of tourists by making glitch free arrangements for the event.

To enhance the charm of one of the biggest festivals in the country, the state of Odisha took up several infrastructure development projects and sanctioned Rs. 50 crore for the Prasad Scheme.

Odisha State Tourism, Tourist guides, Hospitality Industry people, Travel Industry and the Culture & Tourism Ministry of the Government of India made consolidated efforts to promote this even as an international tourism event.

NABAKALEBAR

Transformation of Lords

Positioned on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, Puri is one of the four holy *dhamas* of India. The eminent abode of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balarama and Goddess Subhadra offers a blissful experience to the devotees with the religious temples, scenic spots, and colorful fairs and festivals, especially the *Rath Yatra* i.e. the car festival.

According to the lunar calendar of India, the 2nd day of the *Shukla Paksha* in the month of *Ashadha* observes the Chariot Festival or *Rath Yatra* every year. Thousands of tourists throng the city in Odisha State to celebrate the religious act of pulling the sacred *rath* bearing the idols of Lord Jagannath and siblings Lord Balarama and Goddess Subhadra along with Lord Sudarshan by the ropes. The festivity lures good number of national and international tourists in Puri. To facilitate devotees, Puri Rath Yatra Tour is widely-organized in the country.

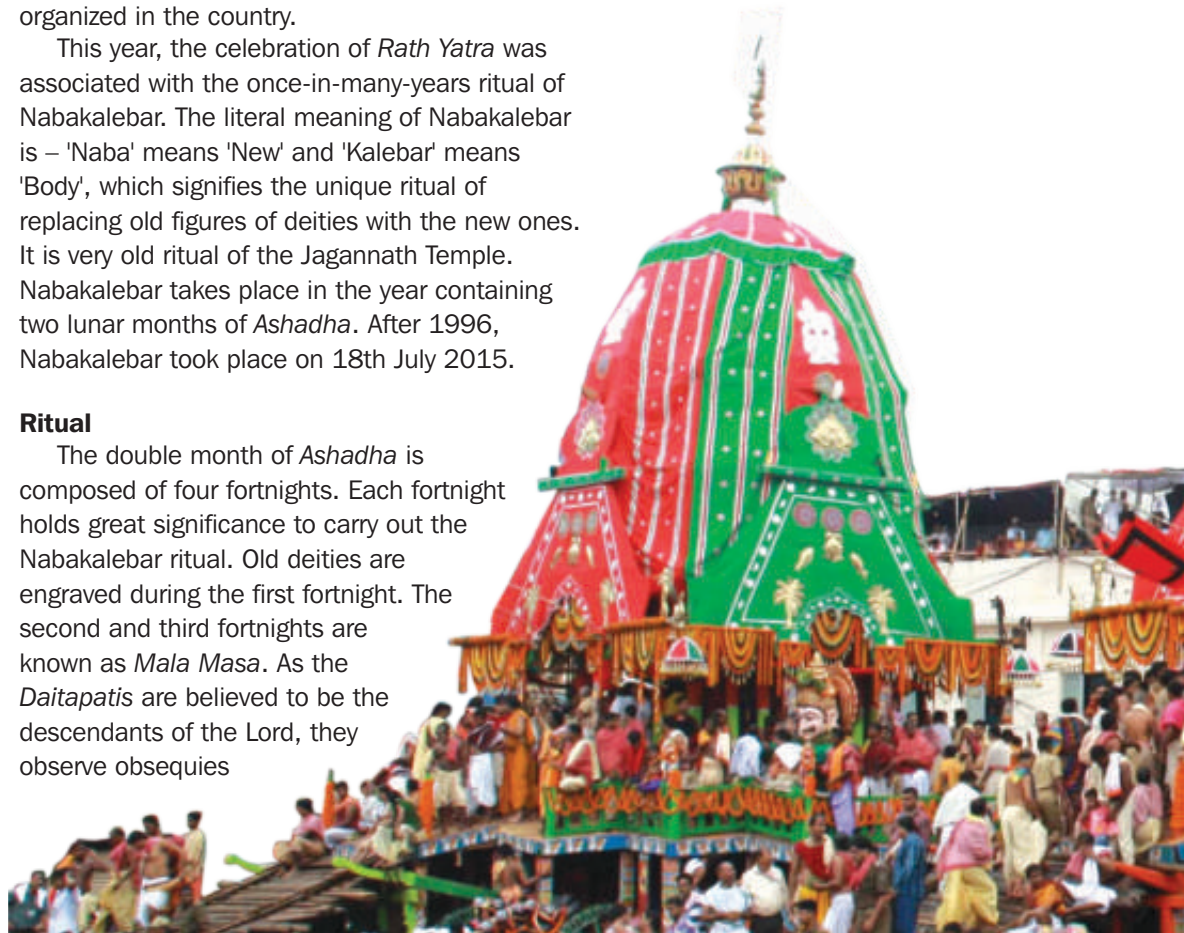
This year, the celebration of *Rath Yatra* was associated with the once-in-many-years ritual of Nabakalebar. The literal meaning of Nabakalebar is – 'Naba' means 'New' and 'Kalebar' means 'Body', which signifies the unique ritual of replacing old figures of deities with the new ones. It is very old ritual of the Jagannath Temple. Nabakalebar takes place in the year containing two lunar months of *Ashadha*. After 1996, Nabakalebar took place on 18th July 2015.

Ritual

The double month of *Ashadha* is composed of four fortnights. Each fortnight holds great significance to carry out the Nabakalebar ritual. Old deities are engraved during the first fortnight. The second and third fortnights are known as *Mala Masa*. As the *Daitapatis* are believed to be the descendants of the Lord, they observe obsequies

during the second fortnight because of the death of their family Lord. In the third fortnight, the *Maha Anabasara* duties are performed, covering the wooden idols of the deities with the silk or cotton clothes. The temple remains closed throughout the month of *Ashadha*.

It is believed that the statue of Lord Jagannath possesses a sacred *Brahma Padartha* known as *Daru Brahma* (The supreme matter). During Nabakalebar ceremony, this supreme matter is also transferred from old deities to the new ones. The whole procedure starting from engraving the old deities to transferring the souls demands grand preparations.



Grand Preparation

As the deities are created from Neem trees, the procedure of searching for the wood logs begins from *Shukla Paksha Dasami* i.e. 65 days before the Bathing Festival of new deities. According to the tradition, a group consisting of specific people is formed. The treasure-hunt for the *Daru* (wood log) starts with the permission of four deities and the King of Puri.

The journey begins with the prayer at the Mangala Temple near Kakatpur. It is said the Goddess appears to them in their dreams revealing the location of the holy trees. Chasing the hints corresponding with the dream location, the search team matches all the pre-requisites to qualify the tree as sacred to create the idols of deities. Few of the many specific features of the trees are as below:

- They should bear a symbol of *chakra*
- There must be a snake-pit at the roots of the tree
- Presence of tamarind tree and funeral yard in the vicinity of the area
- There should be no nest of birds on them

- Each tree should have 4-7 branches over the main trunk

After locating the holy trees, fire sacrifice is performed. The ritual of cutting the trees begins with the touch of golden axe followed by the silver and iron axes. Carts with four wheels are created out of smaller branches of the trees, which are loaded with the main trunk to create the deities. The wood enters the Jagannath Temple before the scheduled date of Annual Bathing Ceremony of the deities.

Carving the idols

From the next day of Bathing Ceremony, more than 50 carpenters start the process of carving the new deities under the supervision of *Daitapatis*. The work is done at utmost privacy. The carpenters are not allowed to leave the temple during the carving period of 21 days. Before *Ashadha Chaturthi*, the new deities are formed and are shifted to the inner sanctum by the *Daitapatis*.

Transferring Souls

The process of transferring souls from old deities to new deities is a matter of curiosity for many.

The secret custom is performed in the dead hours of *Amavasya* night. Special *bhog* is offered to the old deities before the great transformation process starts. The hereditary functionary of the temple is made to be completely blindfolded and his hands and feet are covered with thick layers of clothes so that he can't feel or touch anything about the sanctified process. The old deities are considered to be dead as soon as the soul is taken out of the idol. After which, they are carried to the burial ground as per the rituals mentioned in the century old Odia scriptures.

The following dawn marks the new beginning for the deities. After the gap of many days, the temple experiences the excitement and curiosity of the spiritually-drenched devotees for the grand *darshana* of the new deities.

The *darshana* is followed by the much-awaited *Rath Yatra* as the city of Puri adorns itself with great enthusiasm to welcome the Lords to visit the city. ■





Mount Abu Hill Station of The Maharajas



Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA

Once the summer getaway of *Maharajas*, *Nawabs* and the British *Raj*, Mount Abu offers interesting accommodations in palaces and colonial buildings that are now heritage hotels.

Mount Abu in Rajasthan has been a favourite hill resort for the people of Ahmedabad. Rising from a 3900ft high township set on a plateau about 20-km in area to the 5760-ft high pinnacle of Guru Shikar, it offers a fine retreat from the cities specially away from its crowded heart. The charm of the place also lies in its heritage of buildings, from the ancient temples to the palaces and colonial bungalows.

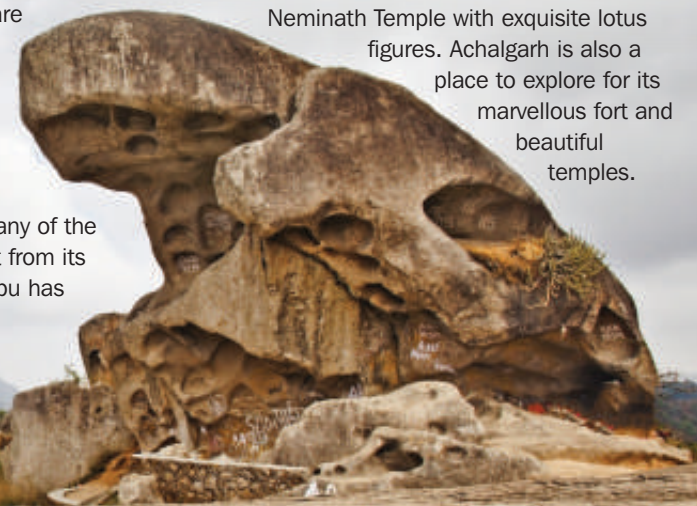
The drive to Mount Abu rises from Abu Road. As you enter the resort town, there are hotels and boards pointing to various resorts. All around the town are scrub jungle and deciduous forests that are

inhabited by a variety of birds and mammals. A popular place to see them is Trevor Tank in the Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary. The drive to the tank is on a trail through trees and dense undergrowth, where you could see grey jungle fowl, red spurfowl, black-naped hare and jackal. Eagles are often seen hovering over the scrub jungle.

At the tank, you could see crocodiles along with the flycatchers, warblers, and other birds in the woodlands. Bear, leopard, deer, antelope and wild boar are also present here. However, they are unlikely to be around during the day time.

The Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary is home to many of the sightseeing points. Apart from its natural beauty, Mount Abu has

much to offer by way of historic sights. The real jewel of these hills is Dilwara, the Jain temples with their really fine marble interiors. The 11th to 13th century sculptures are so intricate to believe that they are the work of human hands. Some of the unimaginably exquisite highlights of the place are the interiors of the 11th-century Adinath Temple with superbly-crafted cusp arches and a dome with eleven bands of splendid carvings depicting deities like Goddess Saraswati as well as the 1231AD Neminath Temple with exquisite lotus figures. Achalgarh is also a place to explore for its marvellous fort and beautiful temples.





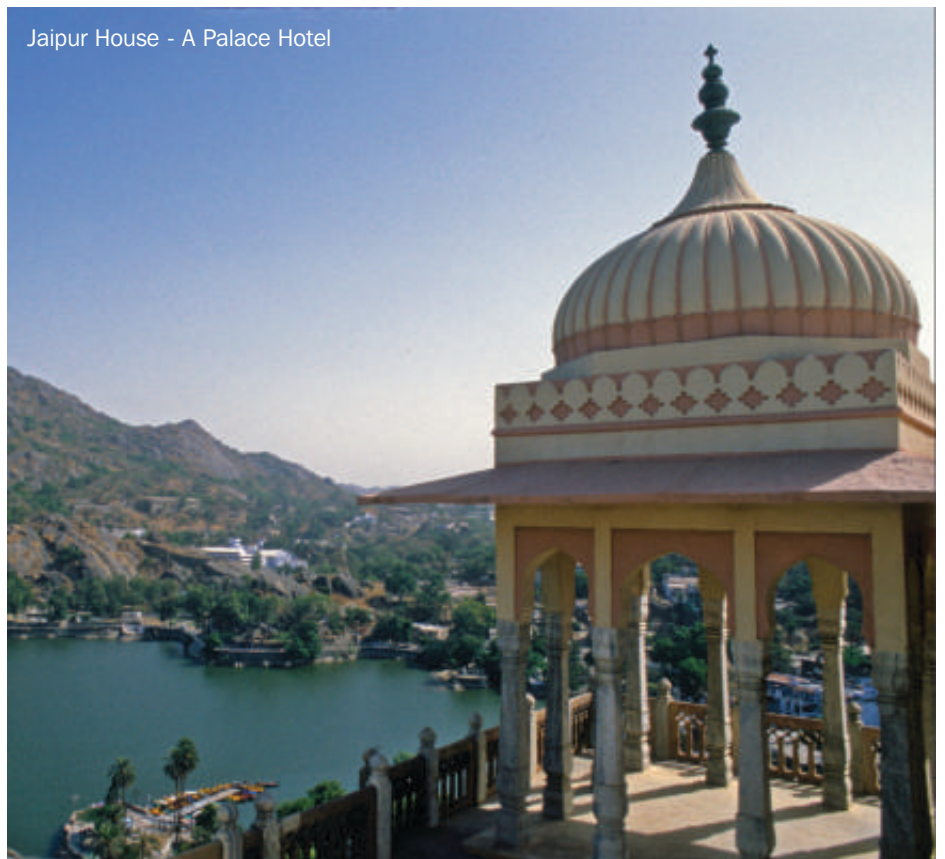
Jaipur House - A Palace Hotel

The mountainous beauty with a glorious past lost its magnificence for centuries before it was re-discovered by the British, who made it their hill station, taking it on lease from the Maharaja of Sirohi. As Mount Abu flourished as a British getaway, Maharajas, Nawabs, Jagirdars and wealthy families also began to build their houses on the plateau.

The popularity of Mount Abu in the late-1800s and early-2000s can be seen in a number of attractive palatial buildings and colonial cottages that abound in the hill. Some of these are now heritage hotels that have become Mount Abu's main attraction.

The Palace Hotel, better known as Bikaner House, was the palatial summer residence of the *Maharaja* of Bikaner. It is located on Dilwara Road, away from the bustle of the town. This majestic palace was built in

Jaipur House - A Palace Hotel





Bikaner House - A Palace Hotel

1893 and was designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, best known for the numerous buildings he designed in the Indo-Saracenic style. **In the year 1962, Maharaja Karni Singhji made the choice to alter this splendid residence into a hotel, which turned out to be one of the first luxury hotels in this hill station. The palace has impressive gateways that open to a driveway leading through sprawling grounds to the facade, which has an imposing portico.** The palace has a grand lobby and banquet halls that were once known for hosting lavish dinners and balls. Now it is a heritage hotel full of antiques, curios, oil paintings and pieces of old furniture. The rooms are large and high-ceilinged, and appointed with furniture that is in keeping with the palace's history. With mature trees and wilderness, the palace grounds attract wildlife from the nearby Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary.



Bikaner House - A Palace Hotel

The centre of the aristocratic social life of Mount Abu in the early 20th century, Rajputana Club, was built in 1895. It had wide-ranging sports facilities. The colonial clubhouse enjoys a scenic location among hills. In 1995, Cama Hotel of Ahmedabad took over the club on lease and opened it

as Cama Rajputana Club Resort with the addition of modern amenities. The rambling tiled-roof clubhouse has the public areas and indoor games (including an antique billiards table), while accommodations are in modern cottage-like rooms set in 18 acres of gardens with a view over the club



Cama Rajputana Club Resort



Cama Rajputana Club Resort

one of the oldest palaces in Mount Abu built in the 1800s by the royal family of Sirohi. Set on an elevation, the palace has large windows and balconies, which keep it breezy and offer a superb backdrop of hills.

Another royal residence near the Polo Ground, Kishangarh House, is situated on a terraced-plateau overlooking the south-west panorama of Mount Abu. Surrounded by Silver Birch, Mango and Palm trees covering an area of over five acres, this palace was called Victoria House by the *Maharaja* of Kishangarh, who stayed here in summer.

Welcomheritage Connaught House is also conveniently situated near the town. This British-style bungalow with tiled-roofs, angled-ceilings, dark wood furniture, old photographs and pretty garden was once home to Sir Donald Field, the British Minister of Marwar Princely State, in the 1930s and 40s. The *Maharaja* of Jodhpur opened it as a heritage hotel. The old rooms have original colonial period furniture and bric-a-brac.

One of the first heritage hotels of Mount Abu, earlier called Mount Hotel or 'Hotel Skeltania', was once the summer palace of Nawab Sher Mohammed Khan and his son & successor, Nawab Taley Mohammed Khan of the Palanpur Princely State. It has now been modernised and renamed as Palanpur Palace.

A number of smaller colonial-period houses at Mount Abu have also been converted into low-key heritage hotels. ■

complex to the hills. There is a nice swimming pool and kids' play area.

In town, the Jaipur House is an impressive summer palace, where the *Maharajas* and *Maharanis* of Jaipur once stayed. Occupying a hilltop rising up above Nakki lake, this palace offers superb views of the lake, the town and the hills. The rooms offer a superb blend of old world charm and modern amenities, with some fine wooden furniture.

A short distance from the lake, near the Polo Ground, Kesar Bhawan Palace Hotel is



Kesar Bhawan Palace Hotel

Until early 1990's, the scenario of the Travel Industry was quite different. For example, the job of travel agents used to be quite comprehensive, which included advising clients on destinations along with assisting them in the complicated processes like tickets and hotel bookings. It is the wave of Information Technology that changed the face of Travel & Tourism Industry drastically. The communication advancement offered by the technology took the industry on another level.



Internet –

The Powerful Medium:

The emergence of Internet and the unbelievably quick development of telecommunication technology have shrunk the world in a real sense. Internet has facilitated a new way of communication. By providing better sources of information around the globe, Internet has enabled direct



TAKING TRAVEL TO THE NEXT LEVEL

communication with the existing/potential customers/clients. The possibility of expansion, rapid data transfer and flexibility offered by the Internet encouraged Travel Industry to adopt the technology.

For Travel Industry, Internet has become a crucial part of media planning. It provides readily available information to potential customers from around the world. As an effective medium of marketing communication, Internet signifies relationship between the subjects of offer and demand in tourism. The concepts of World Wide Web, Emails, Multimedia and Databases have fuelled the marketing efforts of travel businesses. The notion of blogs and social networking sites turned out to be the best-ever marketing communication channels to target people with similar interests.

Reservations Systems

The emergence of booking engines re-defined the complicated reservation processes for both customers and travel professionals.

While the usage of booking engines led to trim down costs for travel professionals with the reduction in the volume of call, it offered control to the travelers over their purchasing process.



Computer Systems

The centralized system of computer outlined the flow of information. With the expansion of businesses, computer systems enabled inter-connection of different branches of the organization. It is a single information platform to streamline company policies and share data like guest preferences, reservation details and housekeeping on the same page.

Mobile Communication

Mobile opened up new possibilities for engagement that were once closed to merchants. With smartphones and tablets rapidly gaining popularity, corporations have had no choice but to at least consider the impact of mobile services on their travel programs. Travel suppliers in all sectors are assessing the best fit for mobile services among their offerings. Analyzing customer activity on the app, retailers can send targeted push notifications, in-app notifications and email with product recommendations. A well-targeted mobile marketing campaign can lead to unprecedented amount of user engagement that was thought impossible before.

Go Mobile

Traveling around with the compasses, maps and guide books is the talk of the days gone by. Today, all you need to do is to fetch a mobile application encompassing all travel-related information to make yourself travel-ready. Mobile applications have been fuelling the growth of Travel & Tourism Industry by making all the travel arrangements available to travelers on their fingertips. If you're a leisure traveler or business traveler, mobile applications have end-to-end solution for everyone, be it finding travel agents/guides, hotel reservation, booking tickets, location updates, route mapping, security information during the crisis time, financial transactions and many more.

Let's explore the list of various mobile applications that can be your ideal travel-companions.



MapFactor

A free turn-by-turn GPS navigation app is an apt mobile application if you're looking for an offline help to locate places. Through MapFactor, maps are stored in the SD card, enabling the application to run without the internet connection. MapFactor also makes the popular NavigatorFREE for PC, Pocket PC and WinCE.



Triplt

Triplt, an itinerary management solution, helps you organize trip in best-possible manner. Just send your travel confirmation email on plans@triplit.com, and get restaurant reservations, hotels, flights, car rentals and other travel plans automatically in your master itinerary. It helps to get directions, maps and weather for each and every destination.



MakeMyTrip

The app for iPhone, Android, and BlackBerry devices, MakeMyTrip offers flight and bus bookings, holiday packages and hotel reservations. Book cheap tickets, get unbelievable discounts on hotel bookings along with post-purchase requirements like making cancellations, generating e-tickets, tracking refund status and travel alerts.

**IRCTC (Connect)**

An online ticketing app helps to search, book and cancel train tickets, retain recently-added passenger list and provide upcoming journey alerts. It contains mobile app version of the IRCTC mobile website.

**redBus**

The fastest and easiest way to book bus & volvo tickets. A single window to access over 67,000 routes and 1,800 operators. The app allows you to track your bus live on the map.



TripAdvisor

Your best-ever trip adviser gives all the detailed information about any place. Now it is easy to find the destination, which matches your requirement through millions of reviews from travelers. Get the list of best resorts, lowest airfare and hotels. The Near Me app along with Trip Advisor helps you search nearby destinations.



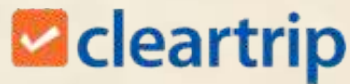
ixigo

If you're a budget-conscious traveler, Ixigo is the app for you. Compare the rates offered by various airlines and hotels and select the one that fits your budget. It also tracks the flight status and delays.



HolidayIQ

HolidayIQ is a travel and holiday information portal, which presents all the information pertaining to more than 30,000 travel destinations of India. The app provides number of options for the resorts and hotels available within your budget.



Cleartrip

Simplify your travelling with this easy-to-use and one-touch application. Book trains, flights and hotels with ease of booking, comprehensive information and massive discounts.

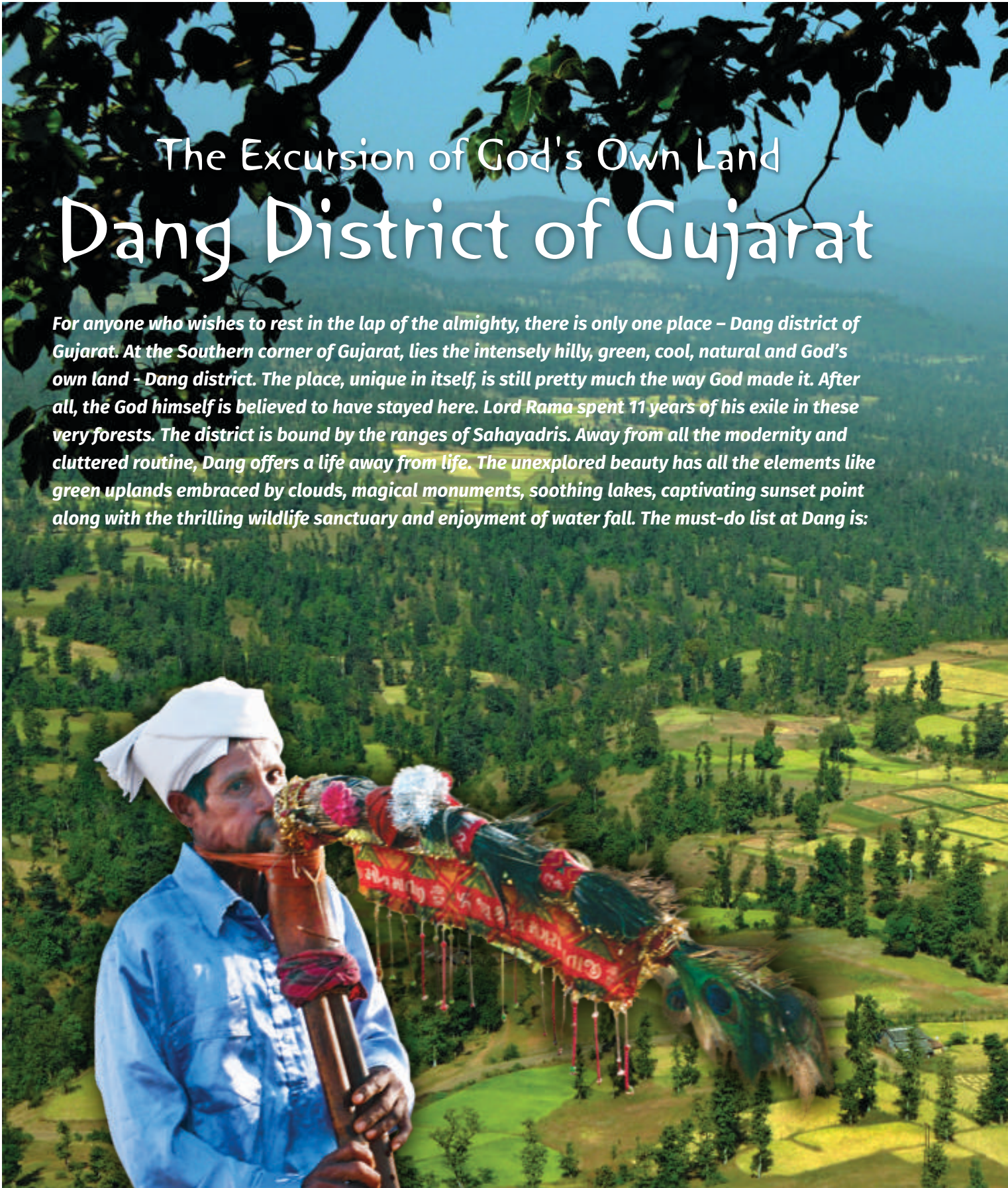


NGPay

A one stop solution for all your need, NGPay assists you book bus, train and air tickets along with movie tickets. It enhances your shopping experience through the availability of thousands of online shops. And guess what, the app even takes care of your mobile recharge, when you're roaming.

The Excursion of God's Own Land Dang District of Gujarat

For anyone who wishes to rest in the lap of the almighty, there is only one place – Dang district of Gujarat. At the Southern corner of Gujarat, lies the intensely hilly, green, cool, natural and God's own land - Dang district. The place, unique in itself, is still pretty much the way God made it. After all, the God himself is believed to have stayed here. Lord Rama spent 11 years of his exile in these very forests. The district is bound by the ranges of Sahayadris. Away from all the modernity and cluttered routine, Dang offers a life away from life. The unexplored beauty has all the elements like green uplands embraced by clouds, magical monuments, soothing lakes, captivating sunset point along with the thrilling wildlife sanctuary and enjoyment of water fall. The must-do list at Dang is:





The Sahyadris: Trek Away

Trekking is an exciting way to explore forests, waterfalls, dams, forts and caves that flourish the region. The ranges of Sahyadris offer tremendous zones to trekkers of all levels with its sloping hills and profound valleys. Situated at the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, Sahyadris unfolds the rich cultural heritage, mythological background and the tales of heroism of both of the states. So go on and enjoy the proximity to Mother Nature...

Saputara

Positioned 1000m above sea level, the magnificent hill station of Dang district is one of the popular destinations of Gujarat. Saputara, literally means 'abode of serpents', is a heaven on earth with its magical mist, thrilling touch of clouds and refreshing breeze. The season of monsoon offers a unique adventurous ambiance to the visitors with the enchanting sight of the rain droplets fall over the thick forest cover. Natural beauty such as this is unique in Gujarat.



Saputara Monsoon Festival

(16th August 2015 to 20th September 2015)

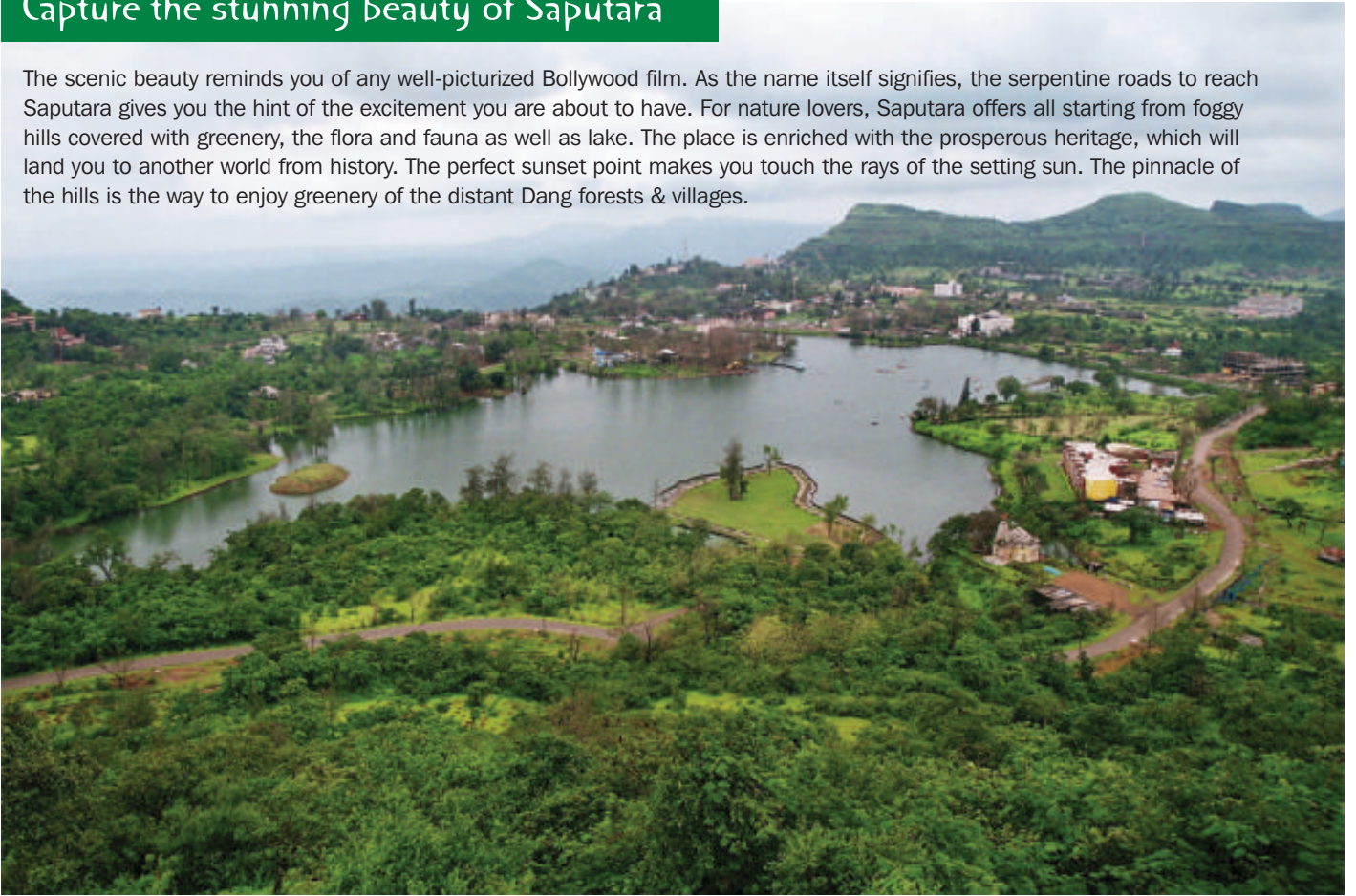


Saputara Monsoon Festival is organized by Gujarat Tourism to promote Saputara as a hill resort destination. The month-long event, hosting variety of activities/attractions for the tourists, presents monsoon delight to the nature-admirers and adventure-seekers. Water sports, laser show, photography exhibition, heritage walk, cultural evenings, food festival, contests are some of the activities organized during the event.



Capture the stunning beauty of Saputara

The scenic beauty reminds you of any well-picturized Bollywood film. As the name itself signifies, the serpentine roads to reach Saputara gives you the hint of the excitement you are about to have. For nature lovers, Saputara offers all starting from foggy hills covered with greenery, the flora and fauna as well as lake. The place is enriched with the prosperous heritage, which will land you to another world from history. The perfect sunset point makes you touch the rays of the setting sun. The pinnacle of the hills is the way to enjoy greenery of the distant Dang forests & villages.



Boating at Saputara Lake

The craggy Saputara's popular attraction is the Saputara Lake, which is located right in the middle of the valley amidst lush greenery. To enjoy the tranquil lake, boating is a popular leisure activity at Saputara for tourists and getaway seekers. The boating is a lot more fun when your eyesight has a visual of beautiful blend of hills and water at the horizons. Besides boating, long walks along the beautiful lake are some of the treats.



Pandava Caves

As the name reveals, Pandavas are believed to have spent their time in these caves during their hideout days in forest and offered prayers to God Shiva. Hence, it is the best place for fans of the great mystical Mahabharat story. The road to the caves gives an amazing chance to touch the lives of local tribes of Dang.



Gira Waterfall



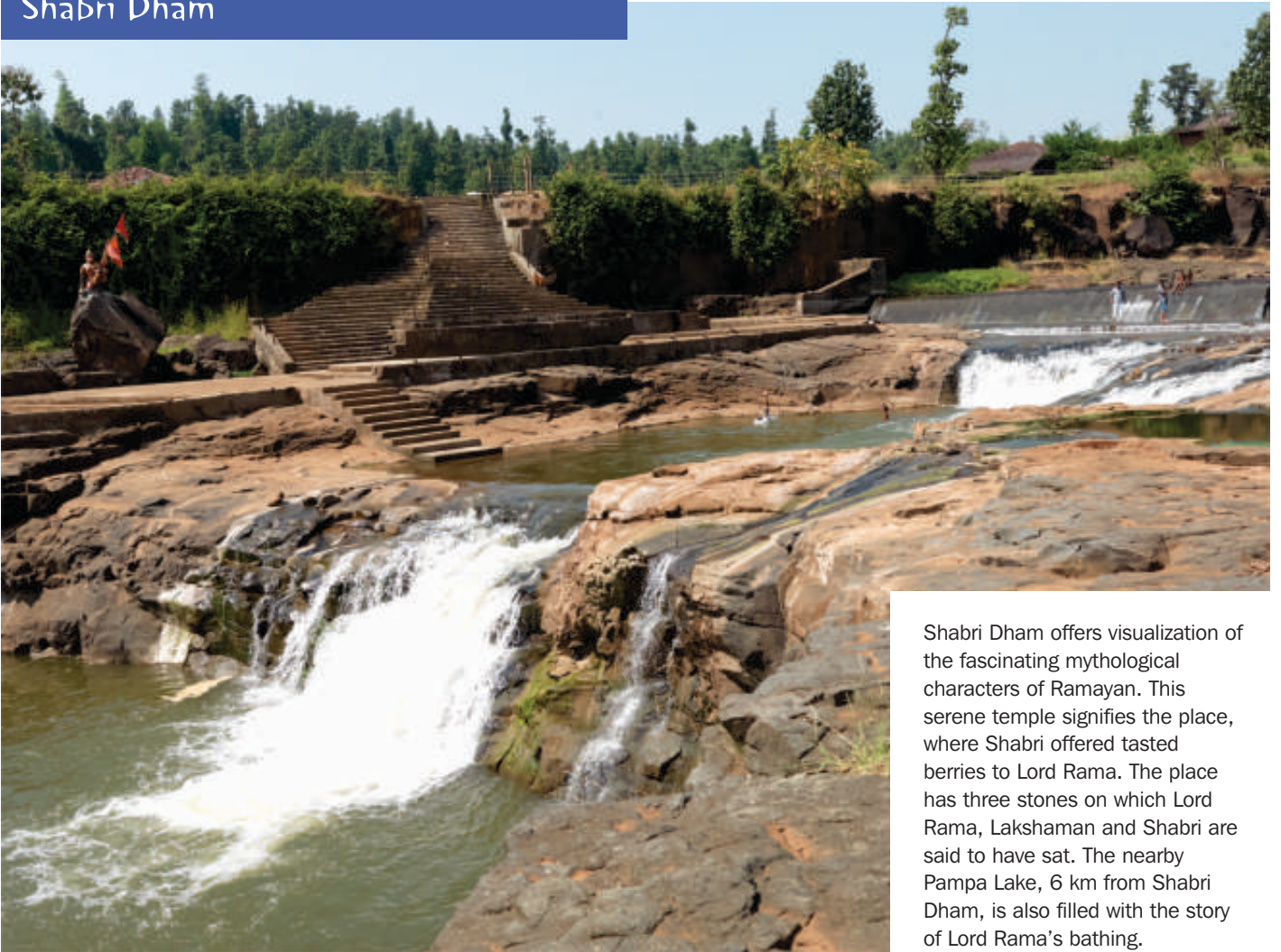
The Gira Waterfall emerges from the Kapri Tributary and merging into the Ambika River. Capturing the beauty of Gira Falls in its true form never gets better. The speed of the water plunging into the river creates a foggy look giving it a charming touch. The best season to visit Gira Waterfall is during or after monsoon.

Purna Wildlife Sanctuary

Purna is the thickest forest cover in the state situated at the Northern part of the Dang district. The sanctuary is a part of forests. On the banks of Purna River, Purna and Vansda together are the only protected forest areas in South Gujarat. For an eco-tourist wanting to enjoy the flora and fauna of forest, this is the place to visit.



Shabri Dham



Shabri Dham offers visualization of the fascinating mythological characters of Ramayan. This serene temple signifies the place, where Shabri offered tasted berries to Lord Rama. The place has three stones on which Lord Rama, Lakshaman and Shabri are said to have sat. The nearby Pampa Lake, 6 km from Shabri Dham, is also filled with the story of Lord Rama's bathing.

Dang Darbar Fair

Dang Darbar Fair, also called as Jamabandi Darbar, is a three-day cultural extravaganza organized in Ahwa every year before Holi. The festivity evidences large number of tribal inhabitants and visitors, including merchants from the nearby cities visiting the fair from all over the district to enjoy the live colors, sound of *shehnai* and the beating of drums. Embellished with the excitement of thousands of people attired in riots of color, the cultural celebration hosts folk dances, dramas, and songs. Dang Darbar Fair is the perfect cultural exhibition to experience lifestyle and traditions of the native tribal people. **A perfect tourist destination with blend of colors, fun, adventure, culture, tradition, nature, spirituality and what not is inviting you to explore the yet-to-be-discovered feeling of yours.**





Chapel in Panaji

THE PORTUGUESE CHARM OF PANAJI

Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA

While Goa is a holiday hotspot known for its beaches and churches, equally fascinating is the Portuguese heritage that can be seen in its capital, Panaji.

Panaji or Panjim as it is known to most, is often called the New Goa as it replaced the former Portuguese capital - Velha Goa (Old Goa). When Velha Goa was the seat of power, its strategic location between the Mandovi River estuary and the laterite hill of Altinho was recognised by Adil Shah. He built a fort palace at the place known as Panaji now. This was the fort Albuquerque's Portuguese forces had to overcome to capture Goa from the Sultan in 1510.

Realising the importance of Panaji, Albuquerque reinforced the fortifications and posted a garrison at the fort palace. The Dominicans founded a college here in 1584 and Convents came into existence. However, Panaji was merely a military and custom's posts until 1634, when land was reclaimed to create a causeway between Old Goa and Panaji. This proved to be a far-sighted move that led to the development of Panaji.

Following a malaria epidemic, the Viceroy moved his residence to Panaji in the 1750s and beautified the palace into a splendid residence. By the early 19th century, Panaji was outclassing Old Goa. Under the governorship of Dom Manuel Port'e Castro, large-scale development took place during the 1820-30. Streets, electricity and other civil services were developed and a land drainage project was initiated. Eventually, Panaji became Nova Goa, the capital of Goa, by a Royal Decree of 1843 and retained its status after 1961, when the Government of India took it over. Today, Panaji has administrative offices, shopping plazas, the Archbishops' residence, a port and town planning in a grid formation with the main roads running parallel to the waterfront.

The Latin Quarter of Panaji or Panjim is one of the few places in Asia, where Latin-based languages were spoken. The neighbourhoods in this area, like Fontainhas and Sao Tome are characterised by colonial buildings, quaint old houses, feni taverns and bakeries.

Church of the Lady of Immaculate Conception



Bishop's Palace on Altinho hill



Chapel in Panaji



Walk along the 1870s and '80s roads to reach blocks of ochre, blue, light yellow and green Portuguese colonial-period houses. This part of Panaji is said to have been developed from flooded fields and marsh into palm groves by Antonio Joao Siquerra, who was called Mossmikar because he amassed fortune in Mozambique. Laterite steps lead to the High Court of Mumbai, a complex of buildings that once comprised the Lyceum school campus. The court building is one of the best preserved mid-19th century historical landmarks of Goa with a high-pitched tiled roof, elegant windows, arched entrances and mature palm trees. Near the steps, the St Sebastian Chapel has the

huge crucifix brought here from the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa. It is a lifelike depiction of Jesus with head held up and eyes open. It is said to have been designed to inspire fear and remorse in those being interrogated.

Near the chapel is a 19th century mansion that houses office of the delegation of the Fundacao Oriente, a Portuguese foundation for Cultural, Educational, Artistic, Scientific, Philanthropic and Social projects. The building houses a small exhibition gallery, library and accommodations for Fundacao Oriente scholars.

From here, a lane through more decorated houses in yellow, ochre, green or indigo with white trim, the old Portuguese color code still followed in Fontainhas, leads to Panjim Inn, an 1880s mansion

A tour of these heritage neighbourhoods starts from the impressive Church of the Immaculate Conception, overlooking the church square. Built in 1541, this church served the ship crews, making landfall in the Mandovi River estuary as a landmark and as a place to offer thanks to the Lord for a safe landing. It was rebuilt in 1619 after becoming a Parish church in 1600. Situated in a beautiful square of Panaji, a distinctive feature of the church is the impressive zigzag four-tiered staircase built in the 18th century, when land was reclaimed in front of the building. Its arches were strengthened to bear the weight of the huge golden bell moved here in 1871 from St Augustine Church. Inside, the church, there is an altar to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, flanked by two ornate and heavily-gilded altars to Jesus the Crucified and to Our Lady of Rosary, with marble statues of St Paul and St Peter on either side.



The former Latin Quarter of Panaji



converted into a heritage hotel & art gallery, and the Panjim Peoples, a heritage hotel. A path from here leads to Fonte Phoenix or Fonte Fenix, a stepped reservoir with a fountain that is said to have spouted a phoenix giving it the name. The Mala area here has old Hindu houses with a tulusi *brindavan* outside them.

From here, the road called Rua de Natale snakes up Altinho Hill offering a view of the old Latin quarters. En route is the Maruti Temple, which has a colourful *façade* and good views from its veranda. At the top of the hill is the Bishop's Palace, built in the 1880s and '90s as the residence of the Archbishop of Goa and Daman. This huge and imposing white mansion has a silver-painted Jesus. Walking past the Chief Minister's residence to the junction, the road descends to Querem Creek.

Along the waterfront is the Idalco Palace - the castle of the *Sultan* of Bijapur, Yusuf Adil Shah. The building has been completely revamped so it looks like a Portuguese colonial structure with sloping tiled roof, wooden veranda and coat of arms sculpted on stone. It became the Viceregal Palace from 1754 and the administrative hub of Panaji, when the Viceroy moved residence to Cabo Rajniwas in 1918.

After Goa became part of India in 1961, the Idalcao Palace was the first secretariat with the Indian Ashoka *Chakra* symbol replacing the Portuguese emblem. Today, it



Art gallery at Panjim's People



Quaint old quarters of Panaji

houses government offices like the Passport Department.

Across the road from the palace is the mansion of the Mhamay Kamat family that owned a large brokering house of the Western India. This mansion is considered as one of the finest surviving Hindu buildings of Panaji.

In a small square, about a hundred meters east of the palace, is the statue of Abbe Faria hypnotising a woman. Considered as a major contributor to the modern concept of psychology, Abbe Faria insisted that hypnosis was the result of suggestion and not produced by fluids. Born in Candolim, Faria studied in Lisbon and moved to Paris, where his interest in hypnosis developed.



Hand-painted stiles at the library



Pastel shaded walls of Panaji



Panjim's Peoples, a heritage hotel

Ajazulejos set in a clockwise frieze depicting the mythical story of the Portuguese conquest of Goa hand-painted by Jorge Calaco in 1935. Most Goans know this institute as 'the library' as it houses one of India's oldest public libraries with a large collection of priceless books. Upstairs is an art gallery exhibiting European and Goan paintings, rare prints and a table from the 'Inquisition' period.

His courses and 'performances' attracted a large following but they were denounced by the clergy and even the scientific community, especially as many of his students and patients were women, bringing an end to his career. His book on the causes of lucid sleep was published around the time of his death in 1819.

Half a km from the statue, the Institute Menenzes Braganza was established in 1871 to encourage literary and scientific interests among the people of Goa. Originally called Vasco Do Gama Institute, it was renamed after Menenzes Braganza, an important figure in the freedom struggle of Goa against the Portuguese. The entrance hall of the institute has the illustrated blue tiles called





Kerala to Kanchenjunga

Monsoon Travels In India

Photo-feature by Dinesh Shukla



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- ① The historic city of Kochi or Cochin is located on the southwest coast of India. It is a cluster of several islands and a portion of mainland strung out along backwaters. While the city's long and diverse history has endowed it with Portuguese, Dutch, British, Jewish and Hindu monuments, its most distinctive feature is the Chinese fishing net - shore operated cantilevered lift nets that are photogenic because of their size, elegant construction and unusual formation.
- ② The Periyar Tiger Reserve is reached by a superbly scenic four hour drive from Cochin. A boat ride on the Periyar Lake offers a breathtaking view of forests and chances of spotting wildlife like elephant, bear, Indian bison, sambar deer, wild dog and otter. In the monsoon, the boat ride is a beautiful experience.
- ③ The giant wood spider or golden silk orb-weaver is often seen among the trees on the road to Periyar. Their large and impressive webs, specially in the monsoon periods, are a real fascinating sight.



7

- ④ On the road from Periyar to Munnar, some of the tea and spice plantations are now open for tourists. A few like Carmelia Haven are resorts.
- ⑤ The hill station of Munnar is nestled among mountains covered with tea plantations and forests. The highest peaks of South India can be seen from Munnar. During the monsoon, Munnar is at its greenest.
- ⑥ From Munnar, you can travel north to the Wayanad district, which has fine forests. Even in the monsoon, the tracks through the Tholpetty and Mutunga ranges of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary are often drivable offering opportunities to spot wildlife like spotted deer and barking deer.
- ⑦ An alternative route from Munnar to Mysore goes through the sandalwood forests of Marayur and the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. The watchtowers at Chinnar are vantage point to view wildlife like giant squirrel.
- ⑧ As you enter Karnataka from Kerala, the picturesque Kodagu district (also called Coorg) is scenically beautiful with forests, coffee and spice plantations, waterfalls and rivers. The Abby waterfall, near the town of Madikeri, is magnificent during the rains.



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- ⑨ East of Madikeri the Kabini River passes through Nagarhole and Bandipur National Parks. The river is visited by herds of elephant that come to eat the fresh grasses in the shallows.
- ⑩ North of Nagarhole National Park, the road goes to Mysore, which is situated among fertile fields and wooded hills. Mysore's tree-lined streets are enhanced by majestic palaces and elegant buildings. The Amba Vilas Palace is open to visitors and the Jagmohan Palace houses an art gallery. The Lalita Mahal Palace, seen in the photo, is a hotel.
- ⑪ About 16km from Mysore, Ranganathithu Bird Sanctuary occupies a stretch of the Cauvery River. A boat ride is a magical experience as you can get close views of large flocks of birds nesting in the trees. Ranganathithu is an important breeding area for birds - thousands of nestlings can be seen between June and September.



15

- ⑫ The *Maharaja* of Mysore's jungle lodge in the Biligiriranga Swamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary in the B.R. Hills is the focal point for K.Gudi Wilderness Camp. The sanctuary has a rich diversity of flora and fauna because of its location east of the Western Ghats and west of the Eastern Ghats, making it a bridge between the two ranges.
- ⑬ A drive through the B.R. Hills in the rains offers breathtaking views as the range rises to 4000 ft. The forests with its green leaves are the habitat for many big mammals like tiger, leopard, bear, elephant and Indian bison. The gaur or Indian bison is commonly seen in the hills.

- ⑭ From Mysore, the highway to Bangalore passes ancient granite boulders. One of India's fastest growing cities. Bangalore is the capital of Karnataka and the centre of thriving technology industries. The most imposing building here, the Vidhana Soudha was constructed in 1956 with a 66ft dome surmounted by the Ashoka lion emblem, *jarokha* balconies, impressive pillars, granite walls and woodwork.



16

- ⑮ From Bangalore, take the road to Kurnool and then continue into the Krishna River Basin, which is one of the most fertile regions in India with important archaeological sites and ancient Buddhist sites. Vijayawada on the shores of Krishna River is one of the major trading and business centres of Andhra. It is also an important transportation hub with a huge railway station and one of India's largest bus stations. Andhra Pradesh Tourism operates hotels at Berm Park by the river and on Bhavani Island, one of the largest river islands in Southern India.
- ⑯ From Vijayawada, NH5 travels north past the culturally rich city of Rajahmundry to Barkul on the edge of Chilika Lake. Chilika is India's largest coastal lagoons and one of the biggest of its kind in the world. The lagoon hosts a huge variety of birds and a high density of Irrawady dolphin. It is also known for its fishery resources.





⑰ From Chilika, the road to Kolkata offers the opportunity to explore the sacred town of Puri, the handicraft villages like Pipli, the historic city of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and other places of interest. Kolkata's centre is the 988-acre Maidan, which is lush green in the rains. The city's most famous landmark, the Victoria Memorial rises up near the Maidan with impressive marble facades and domes.



⑱ North Kolkata's bridges over the Hooghly River are among the famous symbols of West Bengal. The Howrah Bridge is an engineering marvel, which withstands the Bay of Bengal storms and is among the world's busiest cantilever bridges.

⑲ The historic city of Howrah is connected to Kolkata by bridges and ferries across the Hooghly River. One of the best views is from Strand Road.



⑳ From Kolkata, take the train to Siliguri and then catch the Darjeeling Mountain Railway which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The attractive journey on the narrow gauge line, rising 6850 ft over a length of 80km offers some good views of tea plantations and wooded hills.

㉑ There are some great places to break journey on the train journey, like the colonial tea town of Kurseong. Beautiful lakes can be seen around Kurseong.

㉒ As you drive from Darjeeling into West Sikkim you pass superb waterfalls and crystal clear streams gushing down the hills in the rain. At places the waterfall gushes down on the road and covers the vehicle in a mist of water.

㉓ The road to Rinchengpong in West Sikkim runs along the river offering picturesque views below.

㉔ On a clear day after a few rainy days, there is a chance of getting a good view of the Kanchenjunga, one of the three highest peaks in the world, from West Sikkim. It is called Five Treasures of Snow after its five high peaks and is locally worshipped in Sikkim.

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HUMTUM
ONE LOVE ONE HEART
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DISCOVER ANOTHER SIDE OF THE COUNTRY
LAMHE
RELIVE THE NICKEL TOPERS
10 NIGHTS & 11 DAYS

POSITIVELY TRANSFORMING
GURU
FEEL IT OR IN TRIP, FEELER
6 NIGHTS & 7 DAYS

EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM OF EXCELLENCE
CORPORATE
FOR ALL BOTTOM LINE LOVERS
6 NIGHTS & 7 DAYS

WHEELS ARE THE BEST FRIENDS
RUN
WE WILL RUN, YOU'LL JUST BE LEFT BEHIND
5 NIGHTS & 6 DAYS

WHEELS ARE THE BEST FRIENDS
DAUD
WE WILL RUN, YOU'LL JUST BE LEFT BEHIND
6 NIGHTS & 7 DAYS

FOR BEACH LOVERS
SAAGAR
THE OCEAN IS MY ONLY HOME
12 NIGHTS & 13 DAYS

Speed Means the Style
SHOOT
LET YOUR SOUL AND SPIRIT FLY
14 NIGHTS & 15 DAYS

FOR THE GLASSY & FINEGLASS
Gulaab gang
LET'S HIT THE ROAD
13 NIGHTS & 14 DAYS

SECRET JOURNALS FROM MYSTIC PLACES
HIGHWAY
LET'S HIT THE ROAD
15 NIGHTS & 16 DAYS

ENJOY THE FREEDOM
MADHOSH
EAT, DRINK & BE HAPPY
13 NIGHTS & 14 DAYS

FOR OUR LITTLE MASTERS
CHERRY & BHEEM
Experience the best of New Zealand
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Naya Daur
AS UNIQUE AS IT SOUNDS
25 NIGHTS & 26 DAYS

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LAGAAN
CLOSE TO MOTHER EARTH
12 NIGHTS & 13 DAYS

RICHIE RICHES
MUGHLE-AZAM
JOURNEY AT ITS LARGEST REST
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LOSE YOURSELF
DIL CHANTA HAI
LIFE COMES ALIVE, JUST AFTER SUNSET
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INTERVIEW

Mr. Ashwani Lohani, MD of MP Tourism, talks about the issues, strategies and brand 'Madhya Pradesh' in a candid conversation with 'Tourism One' Team

Q. How is the Madhya Pradesh Tourism brand evolving, in general?

A. The finest tourism brand in the country has evidenced a massive growth in the number of domestic tourists - a scenario virtually unthinkable barely a few years ago. The state has moved up on fifth rank as a destination of choice amongst domestic tourists from the number 9 position in 2007. The state now enjoys a 3.9 per cent market share in the country's domestic tourism segment. The state tourism has achieved a 100 per cent improvement in the year 2008 with 1.10 crore tourist footfalls recorded in 2006.

The state has bagged three awards - Best Civic Management of a Tourist Destination in India, Best State in the country and Innovative/Unique Tourism Project in the country. Caravan Tourism of the state has received appreciation across all the section of tourist market and recognized as "Most Innovative Tour Product" by GMR Express Travel World Awards. The awards are the fact that the communication strategy is not only successful in terms of achieving sales but are also acclaimed by an external entity.

To keep on improving all the aspects of MP Tourism in the pending time, we are continuously looking to improve infrastructure, private sector investment, publicity promotion, security and state tourism corporation as a commercial body.

Q. What differentiates tourism in Madhya Pradesh from tourism in its neighboring states?

A. The "Heart of India", as it is known as because of its location in the center of the country, has been home to the cultural heritage of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Jainism and Sikhism. Embellished with exquisitely carved temples, royal palaces & forts, stupas and innumerable monuments, Madhya Pradesh is also known as Tiger State because of the tiger population. Famous national parks like Shivpuri, Kanha, Bandhavgadh, Sanjay and Pench reflect the rich wildlife of the state.

The state has luxurious tourism properties, guest houses and restaurants. To accommodate need of different categories of tourists, Madhya Pradesh tourism has tie-ups with the best city hotels, wildlife sector hotels, tourist center hotels and restaurants.

Q. What are the issues that need to be addressed, if any, to further develop Madhya Pradesh Tourism?

A. In view of today's scenario, MP Tourism is changing its role from facilitator to an implementer. The state is encouraging active participation of private sector in the development of Tourism by creating an enabling environment.

MPSTDC is aiming to leverage the hospitality infrastructure in smaller regions of the state to underline the destination's multiple tourism offerings and achieve higher tourist footfalls. Under this initiative, private players will be invited to convert heritage properties into heritage hotels. The properties will then be given on a 99 year management lease. The regions



selected under this PPP model include Datia, Orchha, Pachmarhi and Maihar among others.

Q. What are the strategies to promote "Kumbh of Ujjain" as an International Tourism Event?

A. The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (MPTDC) has stepped up efforts to improve the infrastructure in Ujjain to cater to pilgrims who will be visiting the temple town for Simhastha 2016. However, promotion of Kumbh of Ujjain is basically a job of the Commissioner - Public Relations. MP Tourism is supporting them by assisting them in creating promotional materials like brochure, pamphlet, films, exhibition, guide book etc.

Q. Why 2015 is celebrated as "Tourism Year" for Madhya Pradesh Tourism?

A. To augment the influx of tourists in the state and spread awareness about the beauty of its geographical diversity nationally and internationally, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) declared 2015 as 'Madhya Pradesh Tourism Year'. To serve the purpose, the state tourism board has planned road shows in different cities and food festivals in different regions of India during the course of the year. The state tourism board will be participating in major travel trade exhibitions to increase the brand visibility.

Witness the Wonderful Wildlife of Gujarat

The absolutely effervescent state of Gujarat is one of the wealthiest wildlife destinations in the country. Not to mention, Gujarat is the only home that shelters a sizable population of a threatened species - the Asiatic Lions. Indian wild ass and blackbuck are some of the rare species protected in Gujarat. All in all, Gujarat is an idyllic wildlife getaway for the nature lovers, bliss for the ornithologists and paradise for wildlife. Let's witness the wonderful wildlife of Gujarat with Pranay Patel.

The Wildlife Photographer

Pranay Patel is a 16-year old photography enthusiast from Ahmedabad. At a comparative young age, Pranay has been on photographic expeditions in India and many countries across the world and has an enviable collection of photographs covering wildlife of different regions, in addition to the cultural heritage, historic monuments and places of pilgrimage.



Pranay Patel



Asiatic Lioness, Gir National Park

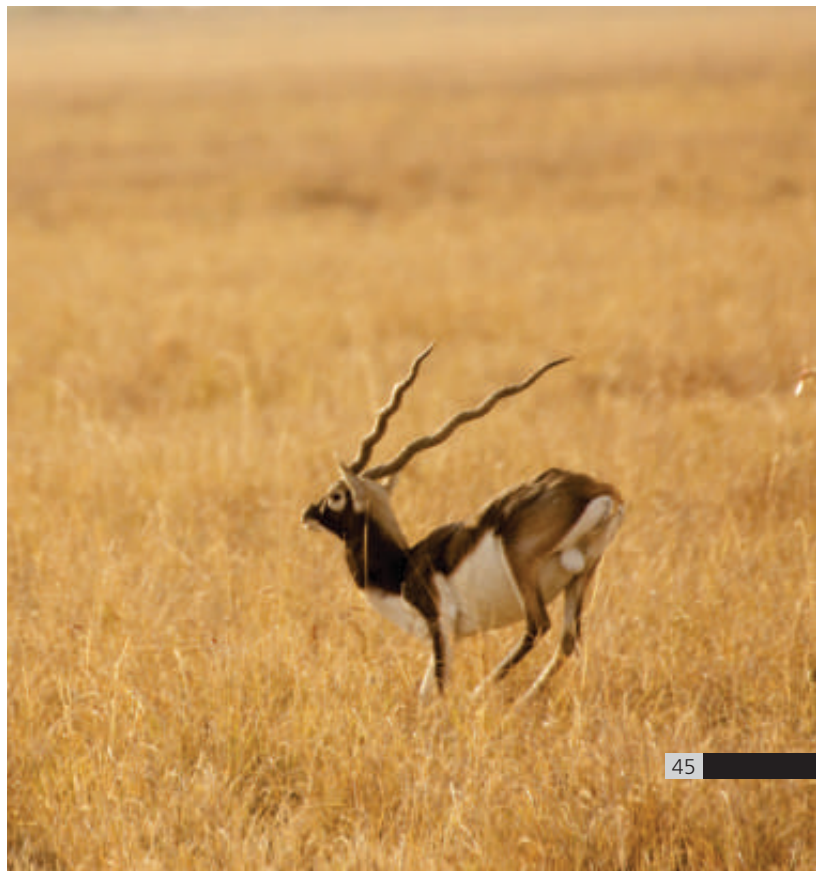


Blackbuck, Velavadar National Park





Indian Leopard, Gir National Park





Asiatic Lion with cub, Gir National Park



Flamingos, Nal Sarovar



Common Tailorbird, Hingolghadh Sanctuary



Blackbuck, female with calf, Velavadar National Park



Indian Scops Owl, Hingolghadh Sanctuary



Blackbuck, Velavadar National Park



Indian Monitor Lizard, Gir National Park



Wild Ass, Little Rann of Kutch



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What's Travelling

Air India seeks US pre-clearance travel facility

India's airports like Delhi and Mumbai may soon facilitate US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility, which will enable America-bound passengers to clear all immigration, agriculture and customs inspections required by the US at these facilities during the time of departure. Upon landing in US, the passengers can simply collect their baggage and walk off the arrival airports like domestic flyers.

Competitive airfare for IRCTC unconfirmed ticket-holders

Pairing up with Go Air and Spicejet airlines, IRCTC offers option to the waitlisted passengers to fly at a competitive airfare. Once the reservation chart of the train is prepared, IRCTC will send mail to all waitlisted passengers. To avail the facility, the ticket booking date has to be three days prior to the date of journey.

Call for privatization of railway stations

To develop railway stations on PPP model, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu invited industrialists to come forward. Addressing industrialists at the Jodhpur Industries Association hall, he shared that this feature will play an important role in taking the country to desired heights in the Manufacturing Sector. The declaration of drafting new tourism policy was also made.

Tatkal ticket booking rules modified

After changing Tatkal ticket booking time to reduce load on booking window and ticketing website, the Ministry of Railways has taken another step for the convenience of passen-

gers. According to the modified rules, passengers do not need to furnish photocopy or number of identity proof, while booking Tatkal ticket through internet. However, original proof of identity will be needed to be produced by one of the passengers at the time of the journey.

MoT initiative: Wildlife, Desert, Spiritual & Ramayana circuits

Four new theme-based circuits under the 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme are planned to be developed by the next year. Wildlife, Desert, Spiritual and Ramayana circuits will be developed in addition to the five already-existing circuits developed by the Ministry of Tourism. The initiative has been taken to promote India as a 365-days tourist destination.

New board to promote Medical Tourism in India

A new board, National Medical and Wellness Tourism, has been set up to boost medical tourism in India. The board will showcase various streams of medicine consisting of Yoga, Ayurvedic, Naturopathy, Unani and low-cost allopathic treatments available in India on international platform. The decision to form a new board will shape the organized structure to promote Medical Tourism.

Goa's seaplane tourism launched in August

To thrill tourists desirous of getting a bird's eyeview of state's breathtaking natural beauty, Goa has launched a seaplane facility in August this year. The seaplane routes start from Goa's Dabolim airport to the picturesque Mandovi and Chapora rivers and the popular Coco beach, a beautiful bay some distance from Panaji.

Brand new logo for West Bengal

In an effort to promote West Bengal as an industry-friendly and tourist destination during Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's London visit, the government came up with a brand new logo for Tourism. Brand Ambassador of Bengal, Shah Rukh Khan, will shoot a new promotional advertisement campaign that will be set up keeping in mind the international audience.

'Resurgent Rajasthan Summit' on November 19 & 20

The 'Resurgent Rajasthan Partnership Summit 2015' will be organized by the Rajasthan Government's Department of Tourism on November 19 and 20. In this context, the State Tourism Department is compiling information and details relating to heritage properties and hotels. The owners of heritage properties and hotels are invited to fill the requisite proforma, which is available on www.rajasthantourism.gov.in.

India to sign tourism agreement with China

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a new deal, which will officially be signed during PM's forthcoming state visit to China. The agreement will encourage bilateral investments between India and China in the Tourism and Hospitality sectors.

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