

April - June 2016

A high-end quarterly magazine

**PRAVEG'S**

# TOURISM ONE

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**Tinsukia** and  
**The Lake of No Return**

**Rajasthan**  
**A Shoppers' Paradise**



**Dishes**  
**That Will**  
**Make You**  
**Want To Go**  
**Back To**  
**Thailand**

**The Wonderful West**



Glorious Gujarat



Mesmerizing Madhya Pradesh



Magnificent Maharashtra



Glamorous Goa

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE | April - June 2016



Artistic **Colors** of Desert Plains



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## *Escape to Ecstasy*

Summer is fast-approaching. And with Summer comes the yearning to escape from the hot and humid climate to a pleasant and cool hill station. Which place to go this time? The Indian peninsula appears like a burner, the wasteland seems barbequed and the Deccan goes drip-dried.

However, the diversified landscape of the country is still secluded with abundant wonders, from the majestic Himalaya and the mystic hotspots of Mahabaleshwar to the verdure of the Northeast India. Oh! No, we are not missing out on the eccentric travellers. Chase the atypical shades of Golden in the desert of Rajasthan or experience the captivating visual treat of the underwater fantasy land in Goa. Just go for it BUDDIES!

If not so keen on going out, live the experiences of the ardent travellers. Explore the unexplored destinations of the Northeast India. Did you know there exist a place called 'Tinsukia' in Assam? Embark on the road trip from Tinsukia, India-Myanmar Border to 'The Lake of No Return' with us. Yes, sounds pretty mysterious! Actually, quite a thrilling combination of enigmatic destination, unfamiliar surroundings and an exciting road trip. Or head to Sri Lanka as an 8-day tour is all designed for you. For the eternal foodies, we bring the mouth-wateringly yummy Thai cuisine. Savor the fresh and fragrant flavors of Thailand (for now in pictures, of course).

Yes, there's something for everyone. Even for the spiritual souls. Through the river trail in Madhya Pradesh, celebrate the largest religious congregation in Ujjain on the bank of River Kshipra – Simhastha Kumbh 2016.

Read on!

Team Tourism One



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April - June 2016

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**Have some suggestions for us?**

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

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# RAJASTHAN A SHOPPERS' PARADISE



Once the land of Rajas, Rajasthan's arts and handi-crafts won a consistent patronage from Maharajas, Thakurs and affluent Marwari business families. The growth of tourism has continued to breathe new life into the artistic skills and handiwork of Rajasthan. Almost everywhere in the state, you can find a rich living heritage of handicrafts, whether it is weaving, block printing, pottery, marble carving, metalwork or embroidery.

## NORTH RAJASTHAN

The capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur is also widely recognized as one of the Crafts Capitals of India. In and around this bustling city, artisans produce a variety of handmade products like polished gems, jewellery, blue pottery, cotton razais, block printed fabrics, stonework, etc. North of Jaipur, Jhunjunu in the Shekhawati region is known for its leather footwear called mojari. Churu near Jhunjunu is famous for its sandalwood carving and silver ware.

Start your handicraft tour from Jaipur's Badi Chaupar Square, Tripolia Bazaar and other buzzing lanes renowned for puppets, jewellery and other handicrafts. In this area, you can see the skill of stone setting at Haldiyo ka Rasta, Jaidyon ka Rasta and Gopalji ka Rasta. Jaipur's artisans make jewellery catering to every taste and budget from the chunky silver ornaments made for peasants and pastoral people to refined pieces of jewellery made for the rich, royal and glamorous. The most famous techniques of Jaipur's jewellers are Meenakari and Kundankari. Meenakari is enamel work on jewellery. Kundankari uses gold as the base, which is inlaid with lac and set with precious and semi-precious stones to create a beautiful design outlined with gold wire. Walk to Maniharon ka Rasta, where you can watch artisans making lac bangles. The markets of Jaipur are shoppers' paradise - Babu Bazaar, Johari Bazaar, Siredeori Market and Kishanpol Bazaar to buy laheriya and bandhani tie-dye, footwear like mojdis and jootis, and jewellery.



You can see gemstones being cut and polished in the workshops of Pahar Ganj. At Topkhana ka Bazaar and Chandpole, you can buy light-weight quilts called the Jaipur Razai. A technique of felting to create non-woven fabrics is also produced in Jaipur, with a number of felt products available around Baans ki Puliya. Puppets can be bought from Hawa Mahal or Katputli maker's colony. Jaipur is also famous for stone crafts, including relief work and lattice screens.

One of Jaipur's most famous handicrafts, Blue Pottery gets its name from the blue patterns of the glazed pottery. The potters turn necks and bases on the wheels, and fashion the body in a mould, combining both elements to make a piece. Traditionally, surahi pitchers and cylindrical jars were made, but now with a growing demand from tourists, many more products like soap boxes, lamp stands, crockery, etc. are made by the potters.

Head for Sanganer, known for its handmade paper factories. You can buy a variety of stationery made using handmade paper. Sanganer's block printing heritage developed with patronage from the Jaipur princes. Laheriya is a tie-dye technique used to produce colourful stripes across the fabric. Bandhej is a tie-dye process, like Gujarat's bandhani, but using dots and concentric circles. Another village known for its block prints, Bagru is west of the city.

## CENTRAL RAJASTHAN

Travel west from Jaipur to Kishangarh. With many famous marble mining areas nearby, Kishangarh abounds in marble carving units that make ornate fountains, sculptures and furniture pieces.

Once a prominent princely state, Kishangarh became known for



its school of miniature painting that emerged in the middle of 18th century under the patronage of Maharaja Sawant Singh. The distinctive painting style was developed by Nihal Chand, who produced some highly sophisticated paintings, portraying Radha and Krishna. The elongated neck, the long stylized eyes with drooping eyelids, the thin lips and pointed chin of Radha standing in a graceful pose with her head covered with a muslin odhni is a signature subject of Kishangarh paintings. Many of the paintings show beautiful landscapes as the backdrop. A famous Gita Govinda series of miniature paintings was produced in 1820. Some of the paintings have figures inspired by a singer named Bani Thani, who was known for her beautiful eyes.

Today, artists in Kishangarh continue to paint miniatures inspired by old works.



A miniature painting done on old paper at Kishangarh

Bangles are made in Jodhpur, Jaipur & other cities



Furniture with Kishangarh-style paintings are also produced here.

West of Kishangarh, Ajmer is an important centre for leather crafts. Trendy bags, purses, belts, waistcoats, jackets and footwear are some of the leather artisans of Ajmer.

**WEST RAJASTHAN**

Continue from Kishangarh to Jodhpur, a major centre for the furniture industry. Many furniture showrooms are located in Jodhpur, in areas like Raika-Bagh, where you can buy or order traditional and contemporary wooden furniture, replicas of antique furniture, elegant



Bani Thani inspired many court paintings of Kishangarh.

wrought iron furniture, painted furniture, handmade accessories and decorative woodwork. A number of emporiums offer excellent antique reproductions and a gamut of handicrafts.

The walled city near the Clock Tower is good for handicrafts like

mojdis, tie-dye, block-prints, Meghwal embroidered bed linen, and silver jewellery. If you like cooking or want to pick up gifts for someone who does, you must not miss Mohanlal Verhomal Spices (MV Spices) near the Clock Tower. It offers a variety of hand-mixed spices packed with the recipes inside for making masala chai, vegetable curry, mutton masala, South Indian curries, etc. from the mixtures. You can get chillies, mustard and other local spices in the surrounding market.

Woodcarvers of Jodhpur also produce flour grinders - Cots, Carts, Cradles, Figurines and small pieces of furniture. Salavas near Jodhpur is famous for its durrie weavers and its Chhipa mud resist printing. Sepa-kaam is mother of pearl decorative work done by

artisans on boxes and lampstands. To buy traditional music instruments, visit Thaliyon ka Baas near Jodhpur. North of Jodhpur, the potters of Nagaur produce utensils, clay toys and idols in a range of sizes. Bikaner to the north of Nagaur is famous for its





Pokaran's pottery



Usta-kaam (camel leather crafts), meenakari and kundankari jewellery, and idols made for the Gangaur Festival. Miniatures are painted at the Swamiyon ka Mohalla of Bikaner. Bandhej or tie-dye is also practiced in the Jodhpur-Bikaner-Jaisalmer triangle.

West from Jodhpur, Pokaran is famous for its pottery imprinted with ornamentation-lines, dots and stylized vegetal motifs. Another specialty of Pokaran is the pattu-weaving of the Meghwals. From Pokaran, the highway goes to Jaisalmer, which is one of Rajasthan's top tourist attractions. The market here is worth-exploring for various handicrafts. Here you can also find good tailors to make Rajasthani clothing. Just outside Jaisalmer, RICCO Handicraft Area is worth-visiting for its exquisite stone carvings – from sandstone penstands to jarokha balconies, latticed screens and ornate pillars, you can get it all here.

From Jaisalmer, go south to Barmer, which is a major centre for a variety of handicrafts like embroidery, block printing, woodcarving, furniture making and weaving. Driving in the city, you can see wood carvers

at work. Walk into the lanes, where block printers work on printing fabrics using blocks. The villages around Barmer are known for their embroidery and appliqué. The Meghwal women in particular do intricate stitches. Choutan is one of the well-known craft villages near Barmer.

East from Barmer, Bhinmal in Jalore district is famous for its leather work – the mojdis from here are especially famous. From Jalore, travel east to Sheoganj, which is a market for traditional textiles and garments, including Rajasthani bridal wear.

### SOUTH RAJASTHAN

Continue east to the Srinathji temple of Nathdwara, one of the major pilgrimage cities of Rajasthan. Nathdwara is well-known for its pichwai paintings. A pichwai is a cloth hanging painted with religious scenes. In pichwais, Shrinathji is often depicted with his left hand held aloft. This depicts him in the act of lifting Govardhana, the sacred hill of Vrindavan-Mathura as protection to the people and cattle of Vrindavan from the rain caused by the



Puppet



The pichwais of Nathdwara

Barmer is known for its embroidery, appliqué, block printing and tie-dye.



anger of the rain god Indra, whom the population of Vrindavan had not appeased by performing an annual puja at the behest of Lord Krishna. The raised hand may also be a call to devotees.

Gopashtami, the day Shrinathji was promoted to cowherd from a herder of calves, is another popular theme for pichwais showing Krishna playing his flute among cows. Pichwais show various festivals. For example, the depiction

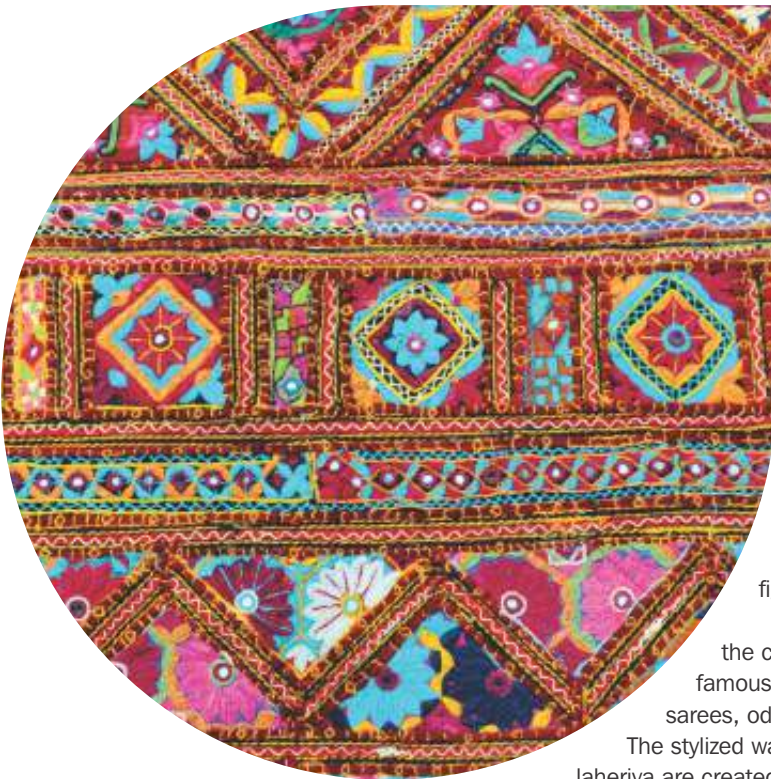
dyeing process. The city is also famous for its meenakari i.e. artisans ornament doors, furniture, boxes and other produces with various materials. A short walk from the City Palace will bring you to the Clock Tower, called Ghantaghar, near the Jagdish Temple that marks the entrance to the markets of Udaipur. Walk around Babu Bazaar, Hathipol and other market areas to look for laheriya tie-dye stoles, pieces and sarees, meenakari enamel work, silver jewellery, woodcrafts and inlaid marble pieces. In the more touristic areas closer to the palace, you will find miniature paintings, pichwais and folk arts. There are also

NGO-run outlets like Sadhna near the Jagdish Temple, which sells textiles hand-embellished by women living in the area.



**EAST RAJASTHAN**

From Udaipur, the road goes east to Chhittorgarh district, which is known for metalwork.



of Sharad Purnima has the complete Rasa, where Krishna and the Gopis dance in a circle holding sticks in their hands. Yamuna and lotuses are often depicted to show Mathura-Vrindavan. From Nathdwara, drive to Molela, where you can watch potters work on modelling clay into votive plaques and figures.

South from Molela, the city of Udaipur is famous for its laheriya sarees, odhnis and turbans.

The stylized wavy patterns called laheriya are created by a resist tie-

Bassi to the east of Chhittorgarh is home to a woodworking community called Kumawat - famous for carved and painted wood crafts. Bhilwara is famous for its narrative paintings called Pabuji ka Phad, carried by storytelling artists to different villages. A few artists from the Soni (jeweller families) now practice the art of pichwai painting.

Continue from Bassi to Kota. The city is famous for its Doria Sarees. Kota is also known for its doll-making artisan.

North of Kota, Sawai Madhopur has a small potter's community that makes decorative terracotta figures. ■



Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA

# Tinsukia and The Lake of No Return



The Lake of No Return

**H**ave you been to Tinsukia? Sorry, have you heard of Tinsukia? Let me try again, have you been to the North-East of India? There is a high chance that you answered 'No' to all of the above! North-East is a region, which seems to have been ignored by most of India at least as far as travelling and holidaying is concerned. When you can go to Singapore and Bangkok for the same amount of money, why visit Assam or Arunachal Pradesh? That seems to have been the reasoning amongst most Indians (including me) so far.

I visited Assam 22 years back, but those memories faded away long back. Now, I once again got a chance to see the region. This truly is one of the few remaining parts of India, which is still unexplored and offers that calmness and peace for which we travel 1000s of miles away from home. If you are looking to dream away in the lap of nature; if you want 'organic' food, air and water; if you want to feel that nature belongs to you and only you; if you want to travel for hours and hours without being honked at your backside, you need a dose of the North-East India!

I decided to take out a few days to visit Assam. I landed in Tinsukia – a small 'Tea town' in the north east of the North-East! It is tucked away between Arunachal,

Nagaland and Myanmar. It takes 1 hour to drive to the Arunachal Pradesh border, 2 hours to enter Nagaland and only 3 hours to reach the India-Myanmar border. In Tinsukia, I stayed at an area called Padumani Tea Estate. It is owned by Mr Raj Kumar Modi and his son Vivek who also owns a resort called 'Padmini Resort', located right in the middle of their estate. I got a chance to speak to Vivek to find out how life is in this part of my country.

'It is slow-paced, calm, and safe', he said. As most people, I am under the impression that North-East is anything but safe. So I ask the question, 'But is it not true that North-East is under a lot of terrorist attacks and kidnapping?'

'If you had asked me this question 10 years back, my answer would have been

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'Yes'. But today, North-East is as safe as Delhi or Mumbai. Yes, parts of North-East are still not safe after dark, but overall it is safe for holiday makers unless you are very unlucky', he said.

Well, I was already in the North-East and his sincere answer was encouraging. He invited me to visit his tea estate and I was eager. As we sat in his Jeep and entered the tea garden, I was greeted by the fresh smell of tea leaves and warm smiles of the tea workers. The local 'tea ladies' were plucking the leaves and stuffing them in their shoulder bags with clockwork precision. I spoke to some of them and they all seemed happy with the work and content with their lives. We drove around 300 acres of the estate and saw hundreds of workers plucking away the leaves, while drinking black tea with rock salt. 'It's a local drink that keeps them energised and refreshed throughout the day', Vivek told me.

After a couple of hours, I thanked Vivek and went to my room in Padmini Resort. The sound of wildlife around me put me to sleep in no time.

Next day, I decided to drive to the India-Myanmar border via Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. 'It is only 3 hours away', I was told by a local in Tinsukia. 'Have you been there?', 'No', came the quick reply. I went to a few tourist offices and asked a few people about India-Myanmar border, but surprisingly no one could give me any concrete information. They just pointed towards East and said it is somewhere in that direction. So I bought a couple of road maps of the North-East and decided to explore.

Before I made my little trip, I went online and found some interesting bits of info about the area around India-Myanmar border. I saw a picture of a road called 'Stilwell' road, which climbs up the mountain like a giant snake and looks absolutely unbelievable in the pictures. I made a mental note that I must enquire about this road and see it with my own eyes. I kept researching and came across an article talking about a lake near the border called the 'Lake of No Return'. I was intrigued.

I read and read and read some more. This lake lies in the area of Pangsu Pass on the India-Myanmar border. The most

common account of the origin of the lake's name is due to a number of allied aircraft, which crash-landed in it during World War II. The Americans called it the Lake of No Return, on account of all the crashed planes concealed in its depths.

At least three more stories explain the name. According to the second story, a group of Japanese soldiers returning from battle lost their way and ended up at the lake. There, they were stricken with malaria and died. Hence, it is called the Lake of No Return. According to a third story, US Army soldiers, working on the Ledo Road (Stilwell Road), were sent to examine the lake and got trapped by the undergrowth and perished trying to escape. A fourth story says this "is the 'lake of no return' [because] retreating British troops in 1942 got lost in quicksand. According to folklore, aircraft that fly over the lake never returns. The lake's reputation is advertised in hopes of making the area more attractive to tourists: "Who knows, the 'Indian' Bermuda Triangle might just turn out to be the next tourist-puller of the region."

All this was enough for me to turn off the computer and turn on the engine. I asked Vivek, if he was free to go on this little adventure with me, and fortunately, he was. I was secretly feeling lucky to have a

local accompanying me to the Lake of No Return hoping really that at least we will be returning back in the evening!

We started driving out of Tinsukia and after an hour, we were stopped by a barricade in the middle of the highway. A sign next to it read 'Welcome to Arunachal Pradesh'. AP is a restricted area and even Indians need a permit called 'Inner Line Permit' to enter the region. Ours was an impromptu plan so we had no permits with us. The Soldiers of Assam were guarding the post and we were intimidated. 'Permit, please', one of them asked. We got out of the car and explained the situation. Surprisingly, the guard smiled when we told them that we were on a road trip and only want to drive around a bit in Arunachal. Having Vivek with me was a big bonus as he could speak the local language and it helped a lot in convincing the guard to let us through for just a couple of hours. 'You can go about 20 km inside. But from there, you will not be allowed to go further'. 'No problem, sir. Thank you', we said and moved ahead. We drove about 5 km and were stopped again at what seemed like a bigger check post. Here, the guards wouldn't let us through and ordered us to turn back. Persistence pays. In the end, the guard told us that they could have issued



India-Myanmar Border

the permit, but as it was a Sunday, permits can be obtained only by visiting the DC's (District Commissioner?) Bungalow. We quickly went to the DC Bungalow and knocked at the door fully prepared to be kicked out and shown the door. But, we couldn't be more wrong. The DC welcomed us and seeing our smiling faces and eagerness to see Arunachal, he sat and wrote the permit to let us through! We thanked him and left the bungalow feeling very proud. We were finally in Arunachal Pradesh. A region that always brings to mind mountains, lakes and a cool breeze. As we crossed the border, I felt like we are in a different country. People looked different and wore traditional sarongs, which I couldn't relate to at all. We passed tiny huts and beautiful monasteries, while waving at ladies carrying babies strapped on their backs.

We kept driving for about an hour before we were stopped at another check post, which read 'Pangsu Pass'. A guard approached and asked for the permit. 'Where are you going?' he asked. 'We want to go to Myanmar', I replied. 'That's not possible today. India Day is on 10th, 20th and 30th of every month, but today is the 11th' he replied. 'India day? What's that?' I asked. 'On India day, the India-Myanmar border is opened for locals and a market is setup on the Myanmar side. Anyone from India can visit the market. If you had come yesterday, you could have gone to Myanmar but now you will have to come on the 20th', he explained. We were disappointed, but at least we learned something. 'Do you know anything about the Lake of No Return?' we asked. 'Yes, it is on the other side of the border and you can see it on India day'. We wanted to only catch a glimpse of the lake and asked if it is possible to see it today, but the guard said that we need to be very close to the border to be able to see the lake but today it will not be possible. We kept insisting and the guard decided to make us meet his senior officer. The officer told us that we can go near the border and even arranged for 2 guards to accompany us... just in case.

We crossed the check post and started climbing a hill. Suddenly, the area looked abandoned and the road turned into gravel. There were trees, rocks and sand all around. No sight of cars or people. The



Stilwell Road

guard told us that we were actually driving on the Stilwell Road. I had seen the 'snakish' aerial view of the road and now I found myself actually driving on it. I was excited. We were on the Stilwell Road along with Assam Rifles Soldiers escorting us and the roads were leading to Burma! About half an hour later, the soldiers asked us to stop the car and walk. We were close to the border and the guards didn't want to surprise the Burmese guards as they wouldn't be expecting anyone from India today. We walked for a few minutes and saw a board, which pointed to India in our direction and to Myanmar ahead of us. We realized that Myanmar lay a few metres ahead of us. The border post was still a few km away, but we crossed the sign and stepped on Myanmar soil!

The guards asked us to stay there while they went further to survey the area. We spent our time

clicking pictures of the sign feeling very excited to stand on Burmese soil. The guards returned after a few minutes and looked a bit concerned. They had received a wireless message to not go further and we were told sternly that this is farthest we could travel to today and that now we should head back. We insisted that we want to just catch a glimpse of the Lake of No Return, but it's not easy to melt the heart of a soldier guard.

We respected their decision and started driving back towards Tinsukia loaded with the knowledge that we could always come back on the India day to see the market on the Myanmar side and to look at the Lake of No Return.

It was a fantastic day. I only saw the tip of this North Eastern iceberg and needless to say, I will be returning again. We were lucky today to have been able to drive so far in the east towards the India-Myanmar border. We didn't see the lake and we returned home safely. But will we be lucky enough to return, when we finally get a chance to visit the Lake of No Return? ■

By TUSHAR AGARWAL  
Co-founder, Adventures Overland



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# GOURMET GOA





*Fish in coconut milk  
with lime, tomatoes and chilli*

**R**anging from the long sea coast to the green hills, Goa has a rich culinary bounty – abundant catches of fish and other seafood along the coast, paddy and sugarcane fields, crops of leafy vegetables, gourds and radishes, plantations of coconut, jackfruit, banana, pineapple, areca nuts, cashews and spices. This coastal state has many distinctive cuisines from Goan Brahmins' traditional vegetarian foods, coastal fish curries to Portuguese pork and seafood dishes. With the growth of tourism, Goa has become even more of a foodies' delight – anything from a vegetarian thali to meat-heavy Russian food can be enjoyed here.

## GOAN FOOD OF PANAJI AND AROUND

Panaji (Panjim) being the capital of Goa is one of the best places to look for a variety of Goan cuisines including those of the Catholics and the Hindus. The Bhat Brahmins of Goa are pure vegetarian, and many of them do not even eat onions, garlic and some root vegetables. The Saraswat Brahmins are often vegetarian, but some of them will eat fish and seafood, and a few will have chicken and mutton. The most popular Goan Hindu dishes are Sonak (peas curry), a coconut-based Rassa eaten with rice, Mungcho Dal (moong dal cooked with coconut and jaggery), Varam (red lentils), cabbage caldeen in coconut milk, Vaal Shaak (beans/peas curry) and dishes



*A spice plantation near Ponda*



*Goan seafood*

made with local produces like banana flower, bamboo shoot, jackfruit, colocasia and drumstick. Most of these dishes have a tanginess that comes from the use of kokam or tamarind. Mustard seeds and curry leaves are used in many dishes.

Seafood from the coast and fresh water aquatic catches from the Mandovi and Zuari rivers are used for dishes like the tangy ambotik or the coconut curry called Caldinho. Vinegar, dry mango, kokam or tamarind may be added to give a sour taste to many dishes, while sugarcane or palm jaggery is sometimes added for a slight sweetness. There may be differences in the ingredients used by Goan Catholics and Hindus. Xacuti is a meat dish common to Hindus, Muslims and Christians of Goa.

Many dishes in Goa have evolved due of Portuguese colonial rule. Some of the signature Goan dishes are the pork stew called Vindaloo, the sweet sour Prawn Balchao with Malaysian influences, Chicken Cafreal with African influences, Feijoada with sausage, beans and tomatoes that has Brazilian influences, Peri Peri Sauce from Mozambique, and Portuguese dishes like spinach and cabbage soups, seafood

*A Saraswat Brahmin meal at Cidade de Goa*



soups, Piexe Caldeirada (fish, onion, potato and tomato soup with olive oil and wine), and chicken Portuguesa. These have become a significant part of Goan Catholic cooking. Manggannem is a Goan Hindu sweet like a 'chana dal halwa' with coconut, cashew and cardamom. The most famous Goan sweet is the jelly-like Bebinca - an egg batter with coconut, jaggery and ghee.

If you start your morning with a walk, you can see the local pao-wala on a cycle delivering breads to houses. You can get a breakfast of pao with local dishes at popular cafes in Panaji. Mum's Kitchen is a

famous place to try both Goan Hindu and Goan Catholic dishes in Panaji. Horseshoe specializes in Portuguese-influenced Goan food. For a heritage ambience, visit Venite or Viva Panjim in the old quarters of Fontainhas. Ernesto's in Fontainhas is famous for its pork dishes. The Rio Rico Restaurant at the Mandovi Hotel is an attractive place for Goan dishes like Prawn Curry with Kishmur. The Upper House is a famous place for Goan Catholic food like Pork Sorpotel, Beef Roulade, Fish Balchao and Samarachi Kodi as well as rice cakes called Sannas.

One of the most popular vegetarian eateries in Panaji, Café Bhonsle's signature dish is Patal Bhaji, which is a Goan





*Goa's famous cashew nuts*

chickpea dish. Their vegetarian thali is also very popular. Many come here for breakfast.

Dona Paula is a popular beach trip from Panaji. Here you have the famous - Bay 15 Restaurant for multi-cuisine dishes including Goan specialties. Nearby, Cidade de Goa is one of Goa's signature resorts designed by Charles Correa, where you can get both Goan Catholic and Saraswat Brahmin food.

As you head east from Panaji to the Christian spiritual heritage town of Old Goa, you will see vendors selling Sausage Pao, a classic Goan street food. Further ahead, Ponda is largely a Hindu heartland. On the road from Ponda to the hills are a number of spice plantations like shakahari spice farm, tropical and savoi verem spice plantation. The ticket includes a guided tour of the plantation and can often cover lunch too. This is an excellent opportunity to sample authentic Goan food cooked in clay pots with hand-pounded masalas. The plantations and food processing factories can be good places to buy cashews, fruits, spices and masalas.

## DINING BY THE BEACH IN NORTH GOA

For many travellers, a holiday in Goa is limited to relaxing, eating and drinking by the beaches of Sinquerim, Calangute, Candolim and Baga in North Goa. There are about 200 restaurants, cafes and shacks on this long and beautiful beach stretch. For an upmarket Goan dining experience, head for a meal at the Beach House of Vivanta by Taj Holiday Village. They offer many outstanding Goan Portuguese dishes. Along the beaches, restaurants offer an excellent range of cuisines, including British, Italian, Russian, Thai, North Indian and South Indian. For fine-



dining, visit the Le Poisson Rouge for European food at Baga.

House of Lloyds at Candolim is an attractive old house, where you can enjoy Goan and European foods.

Anjuna is famous for its shacks and cafes, mainly hangouts for backpackers.

Further north, Vagator has Goa's iconic Greek restaurant - Thalassa and also one of state's best Tibetan restaurants called Yangkor Moonlight. Continue from here to Morjim, which is a popular beach for Russian tourists. Papa Jolly's is one of Goa's best Russian restaurants but open only during the tourist season.

## SOUTH GOA

South Goa has most of the upscale resorts of Goa, and many of them have fine dining restaurants to match. Park Hyatt is especially famous for offering Goan foods. Fisherman's Wharf is a well-known riverside restaurant that offers Goan Catholic dishes like Prawn Recheado, Prawn Balchao and Chicken Cafreal. Martin's Corner is perhaps the most popular South Goa restaurant. Many flock here for Fish Caldin, Prawns or Fish Balchao, Pork Vindaloo and other dishes served with local rice. It enjoys patronage of celebrities like film stars and cricketers who come for Crab Masala. For a heritage ambience, dine at Nostalgia in an old Goan house, where you can indulge in many vegetarian and non-vegetarian specialties of Goa.

At the southern end of Goa, Palolem abounds in beach-facing restaurants, where you can get Israeli, Thai, Italian and other cuisines. ■

*Fish Balchao**Lobster Balchao at Cidade de Goa*

Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI  
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA

## ZOROASTRIAN TRAIL IN SOUTH GUJARAT

Following the persecution in Persia, a Zoroastrian group called Parsees fled to Gujarat more than a 1000-year ago. The sea and land routes to Hind or India were well-known to the Zoroastrians because of trade between the Persian-speaking lands and the Indian coast. According to the medieval text called Kisse-i-Sanjan, the Zoroastrians landed and settled first in Diu Island and then set sail for Sanjan, which they are believed to have reached in the eighth century. During a storm en route, the Zoroastrian group promised to build an Atash Behram, a Parsee temple with the highest grade of ritual fire.

*Garas in Ahmedabad's Medora family's heirloom collection*

The Parsees approached the ruler named Jadi Rana to settle in Sanjan. According to the story, the Rana was reluctant to give permission and sent a bowl of milk to indicate that his kingdom had no place for new settlers. The Parsee priests added sugar to the milk and returned it, a message that they would not interfere with the culture of the area, but instead enrich it like sugar does not increase the quantity of milk but sweetens it. The Atash Behram was consecrated using 16 fires, including Asfan – a fire by lightning.

While Parsees prospered at Sanjan and nearby towns along the Gujarat coast, the Islamic invasion of Sanjan led to their fleeing with the fire to the caves of Bahrot. After this, the fire was housed in Navsari for centuries, and for a short while in Surat, before it was moved to Udvada in 1742.

The sacred fire was first housed in the residence of Mr. Bhatthela and then was moved to a small house of Seth Minocher Bahman from Nargol.

Another important Zoroastrian group is called Iranis who came to India during the Mughal and British periods. Like the Parsees, the Iranis are predominantly found



*Gara and tanchoi crafts were introduced in India by the Parsees*

on the west-coast of India, in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Zoroastrians played a notable role in Indian industries - the arts, theatre, cinema, entertainment, sports as well as the freedom struggle, and the post

independence governance of India. Many of them distinguished themselves in the Indian armed forces.

The Parsees became prominent citizens of Gujarat with their mansions and institutions coming up in many cities from Bhuj, Bhavnagar to Bharuch. The Parsee



*A fire temple at Surat*

*The Atashbehran, a holy place for Parsees at Navsari*



heritage village of Udvada is the most sacred place of Zoroastrian pilgrimage in India. The temple here is called the sacred Iranshah Atashbehran and houses the highest grade of ritual fire. There is an Atashbehran at Navsari, two Atashbehran in Surat, two in Mumbai and one in Iran.

As you enter Udvada, you see striking façade of the recently restored Seth Sohrabji Jamshedji Sodawaterwala Dharamshala, an 80-year old building, which went through repairs, restoration and renovation before being re-opened in September 2011 as a guest house for Parsee religious tourists. This Dharamshala gets its name from Bai Aimai Sorabji Sodawaterwala, who handed over her residence to a trust when she passed away in 1945. This was given over to the Udwada Samast Anjuman in 1949. However, as there were few visitors then, this structure was sold to open a school for starting a school and the sale proceeds were utilised to buy this present structure earlier known

as 'Rezashah Hotel' at Udvada. Sohrabji Jamshedji Sodawaterwala Dharamshala was inaugurated by the Udwada Samast Anjuman on 17th April 1956. Thanks to the interest taken by the priests, and heritage architects Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla and Pankaj Joshi, this structure was restored with the financial support of philanthropists from the Parsee community. Besides restoring the structure from August 2010, the rooms have also been upgraded with new facilities and the old furniture now gleams with fresh polishing. Interestingly, the high-ceilinged reception hall has a plan of Udvada showing key buildings, historical information about



*The Jeejeebhoy museum at Navsari*

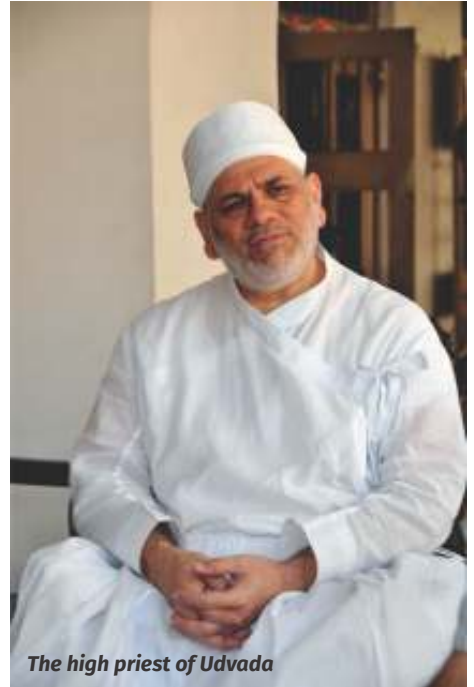


*Old weaving equipment at the Jeejeebhoy museum at Navsari*

the village, and 'Did You Know' facts about Zoroastrianism and Parsees. Caricatures of Parsis by Mario Miranda decorate the lobby. The plan shows that the village of Udvada

lies on a north-west axis between Jhanda Chowk and the Iranshah Temple at its core, with the Merivadi Street and Sea View Street running parallel to the main spine. Most of the heritage buildings and Parsee residences are in the core area.

Just outside the dharamshala, Jhanda Chowk is a road junction at the beginning of Udvada's heritage precinct. The Mirza Memorial Hall, Unwalla Library and other historic buildings can be seen on the way to the fire temple. The sacred Iranshah Atashbehram Fire Temple has figures of winged bulls with human heads, considered auspicious for all Parsees. The purpose-built temple was first constructed in the 18th century by Seth Edulji of Surat and expanded in 1812 by Seth Jamdhedji Guzder. In 1830, Seth Dadabhai and Mancherji Wadia built a new structure. The present day Udvada fire temple was constructed by Lady Motlibhai Wadia in 1894, replacing the older buildings. The architect and builder of the temple was Dinshaw Dorabjee Mistry from Mumbai. The temple structure is spacious and well-



*The high priest of Udvada*

decorated. The façade of the temple is in the typical eclectic style of Parsee buildings, with Iranian, European and Indian features. On festive days like Behram Roj or the



*The Sacred Iranshah Atashbehram at Udvada*



*The Zoroastrian Information Centre at Udvada*



*The museum at Udvada*

annual Navroz celebrations, you can see a flow of Parsees, some of them dressed in traditional clothing, coming and going through the entrance. The anniversary, known as salgiri, corresponding to the date of establishing the Atash Behram in Udvada and also in other Atash Bahrams in India, is celebrated every year, according to the Shenshai Zoroastrian calendar on the day (called Adur) of the month (also called Adur - the ninth Zoroastrian month and the ninth day of the month). Pilgrims visit the place throughout the Adur month. Shops

and vendors sell sandalwood, ritual objects, religious artifacts, Parsee food products, handmade ice-creams and souvenirs on weekends, festive days and auspicious days.

Around the temple are other historic buildings like the Dastur Baug and the Petit Dar-e-Maher, built by first Baronet Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit in 1891. Some of the old hotels, near the fire temple, like Globe and Ashishvang also retain their old facades.

Since Udvada was a religious place, it was mainly the priestly families that lived here. The non-priestly families include those that have established hotels and shops to cater to Parsee pilgrims visiting Udvada. The typical Parsee homes here with their high ceilings, ornamental skirted sloping roofs and double otlas (twin porticoes) - some of them over a century old, are now under the threat of booming real estate in this part of Gujarat. Eminent Parsees, Udvada's Parsee residents and conservation organizations are now working to improve the infrastructure,



**The museum at Udvada**

has been converted into a museum dedicated to Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet, merchant and philanthropist of the late-18th and early-20th century who made a huge fortune in the opium trade between India and China. He endowed hospitals, schools and charitable shelters in Mumbai, Navsari, Surat, Pune and other cities of India. First Dastoor Meherjirana Library in Navsari has a huge resource of information about the Parsees.

About an hour from Navsari, Surat has a number of schools, hospitals and other institutions built by Parsees. The fires of the Modi (Shenshai) Atash Behram and the Vakil Atash Behram in Surat were both consecrated in 1823. Surat was a prominent Parsee stronghold during the Mughal period. After the Mughal emperors allowed the British and Dutch to establish their factories in Surat, Parsees were employed in the European trading bases. While in Surat, you can shop for bakery products from Parsee-owned bakeries.

North of Surat, Bharuch, Ankleshwar and Vadodara have many old Parsee heritage relics.

Many Parsees made their mark on Ahmedabad's industry after the growth of the textile industry in the city. The city's oldest surviving star-rated hotel - Cama Hotel, was built by the Parsee Cama family in 1960. Nearby is the Zoroastrian Ladies Industrial Cooperative Society and the Agjary is in Khamasa. Many Parsees have scripted success stories in textiles, chemicals, aviation, tourism, restaurants, insurance and other enterprises in Ahmedabad over the last 100 or so years.

restore and renovate heritage buildings, and protect the environment of Udvada.

As the fire temple is not open for non-Zoroastrian, the Zoroastrian Information Centre nearby offers information about the Parsee rituals. This centre was conceptualized by Foundation for Development of Udvada with inputs from trustees like Homai Modi and Dr. Homi Dhalla. The architects Pankaj Joshi and Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla restored a colonial-style building that was in a dilapidated condition for this centre. There is a museum with a shop at one end selling Gara embroidery and Parsee objects. The centre has five rooms that offer an insight into various aspects of the Parsee legacy. Here, you can see visuals depicting the intricate Navjote Ceremony after which the child is considered as a member of the Zoroastrian community, models and informative panels that show rituals in the sanctum, and a display of costumes like the Jabhla that is like a silk kurta and the Gara (embroidered saris).

In one of the rooms, there are panels depicting the history of ancient Persian dynasties. Another set of panels explains

the contribution of Parsees like JRD Tata, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Homi Baba, Madam Cama, etc. in the development of India.

From Udvada, drive to Navsari, which has the Bhagarsath Desai Atash Behram set in a temple built in 1765 AD surrounded by palms. According to Parsees, their ancestors found the city's atmosphere to that of Sari region of Iran, and so the NAO SARI or New Sari came into being.

Many prosperous Parsee families of today trace their origin to Navsari and Valsad. You can see the heritage house of the Tata family in Navsari, birthplace of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata. Nearby is a house that



**Historical Parsee building at Udvada**



A shop at Udvada

## THE PARSEE INFLUENCE ON GUJARAT'S HANDICRAFTS

The Gara embroidery dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries when Parsees became successful ship-builders and traders who traversed the Silk Route taking Indian commodities to China and bringing back silk for Surat's textile industry. The Parsee traders brought back porcelain and artifacts from China - that can still be seen in many Parsee homes, and embroidered textiles and robes from China, which inspired them to formulate two craft techniques that are essential to the Indian textile heritage – the Tanchoi weave and the Gara embroidery. Essentially inspired by the Chinese embroidery traditions, the Parsees also drew from various sources introducing Persian motifs, the Mochi or Aari embroidery popular in Gujarat and neighbouring Sindh, the Zardosi that they learnt from other parts of India where they settled, and the European influences that came from interaction with European colonial powers like the British, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch like chintz and curtains made in Gujarat for the British, Dutch and Portuguese markets.

Thus, evolved the Parsee embroidery tradition drawing from many stylistic influences to become the sought-after textiles of the Parsees. With the intricate work done by artisans on rich silk fabrics, the Gara saris are much sought after, and are heirlooms passed on from mothers to their daughters or daughters-in-law.

The themes of traditional Garas are based on Chinese symbolism like the 'Eight Immortals of Taoism' carrying symbols of longevity; Divine Fungus, which is symbolic of immortality and said to give protection; the pomegranate signifies fertility and a desire for a child; the bamboo stands for strength and the resilient spirit; peach represents immortality. Flowers represent the four seasons like a plum or a rose stands for winter; peony and orchids symbolic of spring and good fortune; lotus stands for summer; and chrysanthemum represents autumn and longevity. The crane denotes immortality; the horse is the epitome of speed and intelligence; butterflies indicate summer and joy; the peacock is a representation of nobility. Ribbons fluttering from the beaks of birds characterize marital bliss.

A key feature of the Parsee Gara is the depiction of nature, including the animals using fine stitches that give the birds, butterflies and flowers a sense of fluidity and movement. China Chini Garas are those with scenes from China like pagodas, shrines, boatmen on the river, landscapes, soldiers and cranes. Kanda -Papeta Gara with large pink and yellow polka dots or circular motifs, which we call by this funny name because the onion or kanda in Gujarat is pink and the papeta is our name for potatoes represented by yellow. The karolia or spider design, which is actually a floral pattern, the chakla-chakli with sparrows or other birds, the Zoroastrian reverence for nature has been celebrated in

the motifs of their embroidery since time immemorial.

The embroidery techniques were usually satin stitch and a Chinese version of the French knot in which the preferred colours were red, black or purple. The embroidery was generally done with white or cream silk threads that stood out on the dark background, sometimes with coloured highlighting stitches, while the Kores or borders were often multicoloured. The fabric was usually Gajji, Ghat and Hojerum silk. At Khordad Creations in Ahmedabad, Chinoy sells saris, salwar kameez sets and duppatas with Gara embroidery. Villoo Mirza, Project Director of Ahmedabad-based Sewa Trade Facilitation Centre (STFC) has been involved for many years with the UNESCO Parzor Project, set up in 1999 by UNESCO for the preservation and promotion efforts of Zoroastrian culture and heritage. The Parzor foundation was created to carry forward the work initiated by the world body and the Craft Documentation Programme. The programme is researching into the origin, history, development and technique of Gara or Parsi embroidery, documented through various field trips and exhibitions across the nation. As a Director of NIFT, she guided NID student Priya Mani who took field trips for her research project on the Parsi textile traditions. During the field trip, she met Parsi ladies who were among the few left with the skills and intricacy of the embroidery techniques. The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India has recognised the heritage value of Parsi embroidery and supported the projects for its revival.

Saadeli is a form of Marquetry practiced by a few artisans in Surat. Surat's Saadeli bears much resemblance to Khatam, Persian marquetry that developed in Iran during the reign of Safavid dynasty from 1501 to 1722. The Zoroastrians or Parsees who came to Gujarat from Iran, brought the marquetry techniques to Surat about 150 years ago. After making the wooden object, which is to be ornamented, the artisans obtain the slices from composite sections of wood and then apply these slices to create a patchwork on the surface. 250 pieces could be applied in one square inch or cubic cm of a wooden surface. ■

Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI  
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA



**D**riving on the foreign lands is definitely fun. The excitement to discover the unfamiliar roads, the pleasure of experiencing natural beauty on the way and the never-felt-before aroma of the soil. But how about following traffic rules? If you think that driving on the right or left side of the road depending on the country you're in and staring at traffic signals is all you should know, you're wrong. In many countries, there exist some weird driving laws that can drive you absolutely craaaazy, if you don't know about them. But why to worry when we're here. Let's take a quick look.



# Weird traffic laws around the world

## RUSSIA Fine for dirty car

For the lazy bums, who don't like to clean their cars every time they hit the road, Russia is not the country to get behind the wheels. If you don't believe us, try driving dirty car, and be ready to pay 2,000 roubles as a fine.



## ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND No yelling or cursing in public

Unlike India, where the one who yells the first is considered to be the right person, it is totally illegal to curse or yell in public in Rockville, Maryland. If someone can't resist his anger and starts cursing, he is fined up to \$100 or charged with imprisonment of up to 90 days.



## SWEDEN A big NO to turn off your car headlights

In a country like Sweden, you can't turn off your car lights during the daytime also. It is compulsory to



keep the lights on 24 hours a day. While the rule seems reasonable during winters as Sweden is a cold place, don't ask why to keep the headlights on even in the month of June or when the weather is just fine.



## COSTA RICA Yes to Alcohol, but CAUTION

Yes to alcohol must have grabbed all your attention. Let's discuss the CAUTION part now. In Costa Rica, alcohol is permitted while driving. However, if your blood alcohol level is above 0.75 per cent, you're breaking the rule. Now decide.



## SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA Do not wipe the car with a used underwear

Really? Who wipes a car with a used underwear anyway? And does that mean buying a new one to wipe a car is okay? Well, it is as good as asking for a professional help.



## MACEDONIA Drunk? No front seats for you

Drinking and driving is illegal - this one is quite common. But in

Macedonia, if you've consumed alcohol, you are not permitted to occupy the front seats.

## JAPAN Like Passenger, like Driver

I know the idiom was different. But I think Japan must be using this one instead. Because in Japan, being a sober passenger (the one who is not under the influence of alcohol) is just not enough. If your driver is drunk, you can also be punished. So beware!



## SPAIN An extra pair of glasses

If any of us is wearing vision-correction glasses, we would think that one pair of glasses will be enough. But but but... if you're driving in Spain, carrying an extra pair of glasses is compulsory. Else, you can be fined.



## SAUDI ARABIA No women drivers, please

Surprised? But well, Saudi Arabia is a country that allows no women to get behind the wheels.



## MANILA Watch your number plate

Just like Odd-Even rule in Delhi, Manila has a rule that if your number plate ends with 1 or 2, you cannot drive your car on Mondays. Interesting, isn't it?



## THAILAND No Salman-stunt while driving

If you're a fan of Salman Khan, driving is not recommended for you. Oh, yes. Going shirtless while driving can lead to a fine of few hundred baht.





# 7 DISHES THAT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO THAILAND

Thailand is a country that assaults all senses. And each assault is pleasing. Apart from pristine beaches, beautiful mountains and even nicer people, Thailand is home to mouth-wateringly delicious food. Another BIG plus point - the food is really cheap. Here is a list of some of the most amazing

dishes that one can savor in the country. And no, the famous green curry or the Pad Thai is not on the list.

Thai cuisine is too vast and diverse to be covered in a single article (or even in a few, for that matter).

So let's relish some of the most loved and delectable delicacies.



## Massaman Curry

Massaman curry is one of the many interesting Thai dishes that you will come across.

There seems to be a bit of a debate on the origin of the dish. Some say, it is a word that evolved from 'Musalman' (muslim) and the dish was introduced by Islamic traders in Central Thailand. Others say it is a mixture of Malay and Indian curries.

The dish is high on aroma and uses cardamom, cinnamon and many other spices generally not found in Thai cooking. You can choose from beef, chicken or vegetable Massaman curry.

Crunchy peanuts give a unique flavor to the curry.

Though the origin of the dish is uncertain, the taste is certainly worth-savoring.



## Thai Duck Noodle Soup or Kuay Tiaw Pet

Bangkok streets or Sois are lined with numerous food stalls. There are so many of them that you probably won't need to enter a restaurant.

One of the dishes that you will spot often on these Sois is noodle soup laden with eggs, meat, chillies and greens.

But if you decide to try just one of the many noodle soups, try Kuay Tiaw Pet. The sliced roasted duck is added to a noodle soup.

Slurp off the soup and bite into the tender & juicy duck meat. I tried this at the Nonthaburi Market and the taste still lingers on my tongue.



### **Ginger Tea With Sweet Yogurt**

To be honest, I don't know the name of this sweet, refreshing and crunchy tea-meets-soup dish.

This is probably a Thai-Chinese dish and I accidentally found this on Soi 20, Silom. An old lady to the right of this 200 metre street offers this delight.

Arrive between 6am-9am to indulge in it and to feel fabulous throughout the day.



### **Pork Balls And Skewers**

You wouldn't miss these small eats even if you wanted to.

There are many different varieties constantly being skewered on Bangkok street corners.

Gobble up these delicious bite sized snacks. And yes, don't forget to ask for the sweet & tangy sauce!



### **Sticky Rice With Mango**

If you don't know what heaven feels like, this dish should give you a fair idea.

This meal or dessert is famous among locals and tourists for a good reason. Fresh and sweet mango served along side sticky white rice and a sweet sauce. The result is a feeling of instant high.



### **Thai Pancake**

Another delight waiting for you in the country of smiles is the pancake. And the Thais have their own way of making it. The pancakes are shallow fried with eggs and topped with coconut cream, chocolate or other toppings.

Salivating? I certainly am.



### **Black Sticky Rice With Custard**

Confession – I found this amazingly delicious sweet through migrationology.com. Like most other food stalls on Silom Soi 20, the lady who sells this also stays from 6am to 9am.

For a few bahts, the lady makes a ball out of black rice and smears sweet custard on to it. Then she packs it in a banana leaf. And there, you have one of the tastiest sweets on the planet. And if you happen to taste this, please do come back and tell us.

These were the not-so-common or odd yet super-delicious Thai dishes.

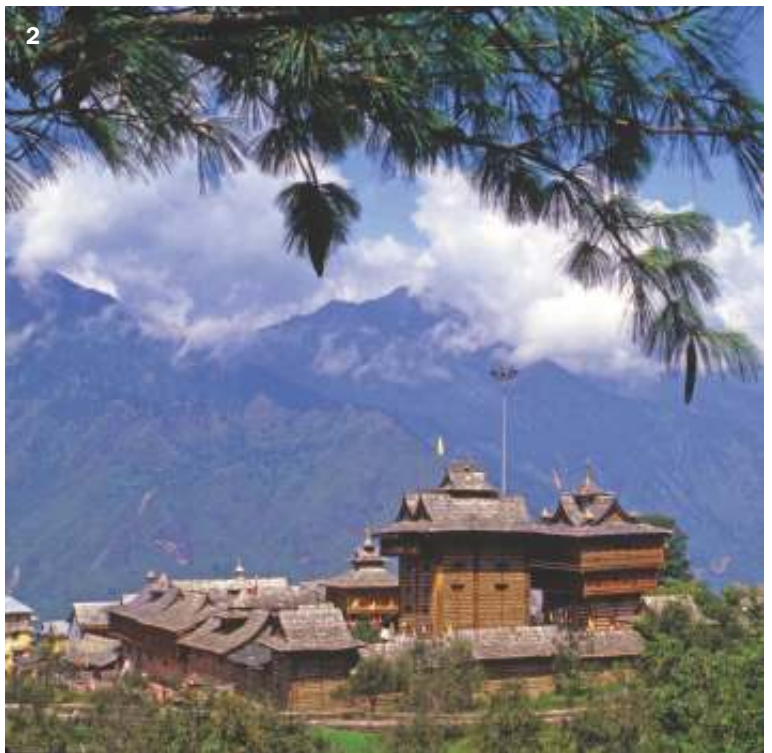
# adventure in the trans-himalaya



The regions of Kinnaur, Spiti and Lahaul offer spectacular scenery from fruit orchards to cold desert. A 7-day drive from Shimla to Manali through these regions encapsulate a dramatic landscape from alpine valley pastures and mixed forests of oak and rhododendron in the Sangla Valley to the rugged rocky landscapes and high passes of Spiti.



Sangla Valley



**1** Once the summer seat of the British Raj, Shimla is packed with British buildings, churches and palatial mansions. The most impressive British building is the Viceregal Lodge, now called Rashtrapati Niwas.

**2** From Shimla, the old Indo-Tibet Road travels past Narkhanda and the market town of Rampur Bushahr, once an important princely state. From here, you can travel to the attractive town of Sarahan, perched high above the Satluj River with impressive views of the sacred Srikhand Mahadev Mountain. Here, the Bhimkali Temple presents an awe-inspiring sight with its dramatic setting. Worth-seeing are the superb ornamental woodcarving on the balconies and the silver doors.





8



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- 3 The traditional dress of a Kinnaur family near Sangla.
- 4 The alpine valley pastures of Sangla.
- 5 The breathtaking landscapes of the Sangla Valley.
- 6 A popular day trip from Sangla, Chitkul Village is located near the Chinese Tibet border.
- 7 As you head from Sangla Valley to Spiti, Kalpa and Recong Peo on the way are worth-visiting for their Buddhist temples.
- 8 Spectacular views of rivers like the Satlaj and Spiti can be enjoyed on the road between Kalpa and Tabo.

- 9 The remote and barren landscapes near Tabo.
- 10 Spiti's pride, Tabo Monastery houses a good collection of Buddhist art. This is one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist institutions, founded in 996AD.
- 11 Handicrafts and souvenirs of Spiti are sold around Tabo Monastery.
- 12 The desert landscapes of Spiti can be seen on the road from Tabo to Kaza.
- 13 Bare multi-shaded rock faces are a classic feature of Spiti's landscape.

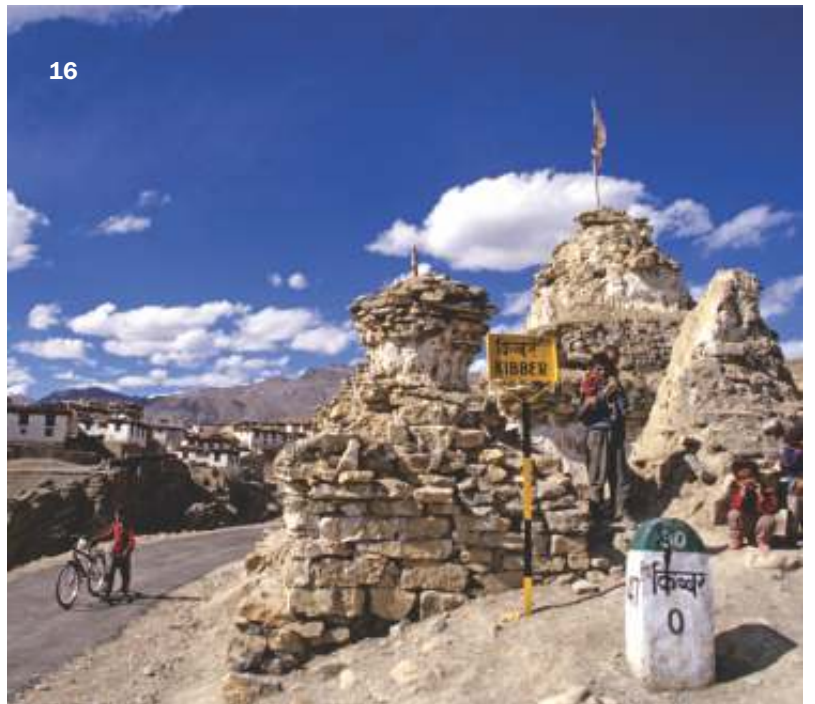


14



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16





- 14** Set on an escarpment, key monastery is one of the largest monasteries in Himachal.
- 15** Tashigang near key monastery is one of the highest inhabited villages in the world that is connected by road.
- 16** Kibber is a village about 4205m above sea-level with a bus stand and a post office.
- 17** Houses above Kibber village.
- 18** The ghoral or goat antelope is one of the inhabitants of the Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary.
- 19** 4551meter high Kumzum Pass.
- 20** The Manali – Keylong – Leh Highway.

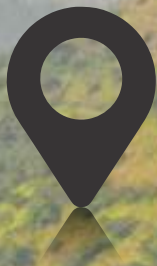
**M**ahabaleshwar is one of the highest, largest and most popular hill stations in the western India. Set on a plateau, about 4,440 ft high, Mahabaleshwar gets its name from three words, Maha, Bala and Ishwar, the land of the mighty lord. It has been a holy city for centuries with regional rulers building temples here from the 13th century. This was one of the first territories of the great Maratha warrior king, Shivaji, and his fort can be seen at Pratapgarh.

The British developed Mahabaleshwar into a hill station retreat from the hot and humid weather of Mumbai. Sir Charles Malet visited in 1791



The lake is the centre of recreational activities in Mahabaleshwar

and General Peter Lodwick started promoting the idea of a sanatorium here from the 1820s. The British after defeating the Peshwa of Pune restored Pratapgarh to Shivaji's descendant - the Raja of Satara, who helped develop the site. After Sir John Malcolm's visit in 1828, work began in earnest on developing Mahabaleshwar as a hill station with a sanatorium. Malcolm built the majestic Government House at Mahabaleshwar. While in Mahabaleshwar, Malcolm wrote to Sir Walter Scott, "I must, if not born an enthusiast, be rendered one by my present position. I write by the light of a window through



# Mahabaleshwar

## The Hill Station With History

which, from an elevation of 4700 feet, I have a fine view of the sea – looking over what those, 3000 feet below, call high mountains. The air in this hottest of our months is such as to give a spring to both body and soul, and were it not for my occupation and absence from those I love, I could be content to dwell amid such scenes as those by which I am surrounded, for the remainder of my existence. But I am toiling from dawn to sunset to bring to a good finish the labors of my public life.”

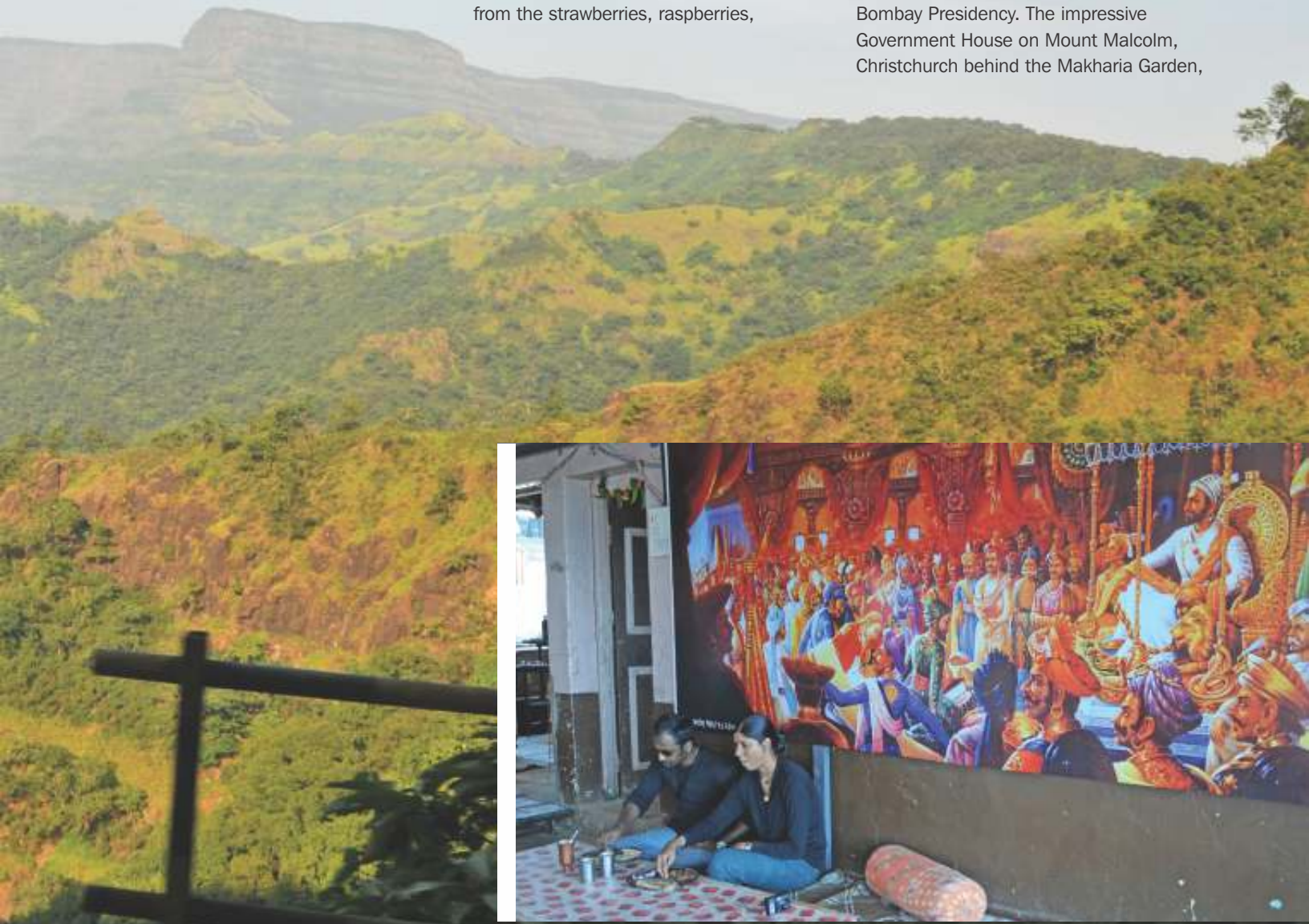
Many British villas and cottages mushroomed at Mahabaleshwar. The Parsees began to build bungalows here. Soon, Mahabaleshwar became a hill resort of the Raj. After independence, this hill station saw a tourism boom. Today, it is a crowded hill town with many hotels, resorts, budget accommodations and eateries. But

around the town, the Western Ghats here are lush green and forested, and these hills form the source of many rivers including the sacred Krishna. One of Mahabaleshwar’s prime appeals is its horticulture – it produces excellent berries and stone fruits. Between January and May, families from cities like Mumbai head for Mahabaleshwar on weekends to enjoy the fruits of the harvest with many kiosks coming up to serve strawberries, raspberries, mulberries or sliced mangos with cream.

As you drive to Mahabaleshwar, you come to Panchgani, which is known for its convent schools, Parsee houses and colonial bungalows. The main attraction on the road is the park-like Mapro Gardens run by Mapro Foods Pvt Ltd, with retail outlets selling organic jams, jellies, ice-creams, crushes, dessert toppings and pickles made from the strawberries, raspberries,

mulberries, pineapples, custard apples and oranges grown around Mahabaleshwar. Vendors through Mahabaleshwar selling fresh berries with cream, ice-cream or milkshakes, which is as much an attraction for weekenders as the pleasant weather and greenery of this hill resort set in the wettest section of Maharashtra’s Western Ghats. Some of nurseries and orchards along the road also have outlets outside offering fresh strawberries and cream to the tourists. Near Panchgani, a paragliding facility has been developed in the open meadows. Most tourists take tandem flights, in which an experienced pilot flies the paraglider with the tourist strapped on as the passenger.

In the city, Mahabaleshwar’s colonial buildings stand as reminders of the days when this was the summer capital of the Bombay Presidency. The impressive Government House on Mount Malcolm, Christchurch behind the Makharia Garden,



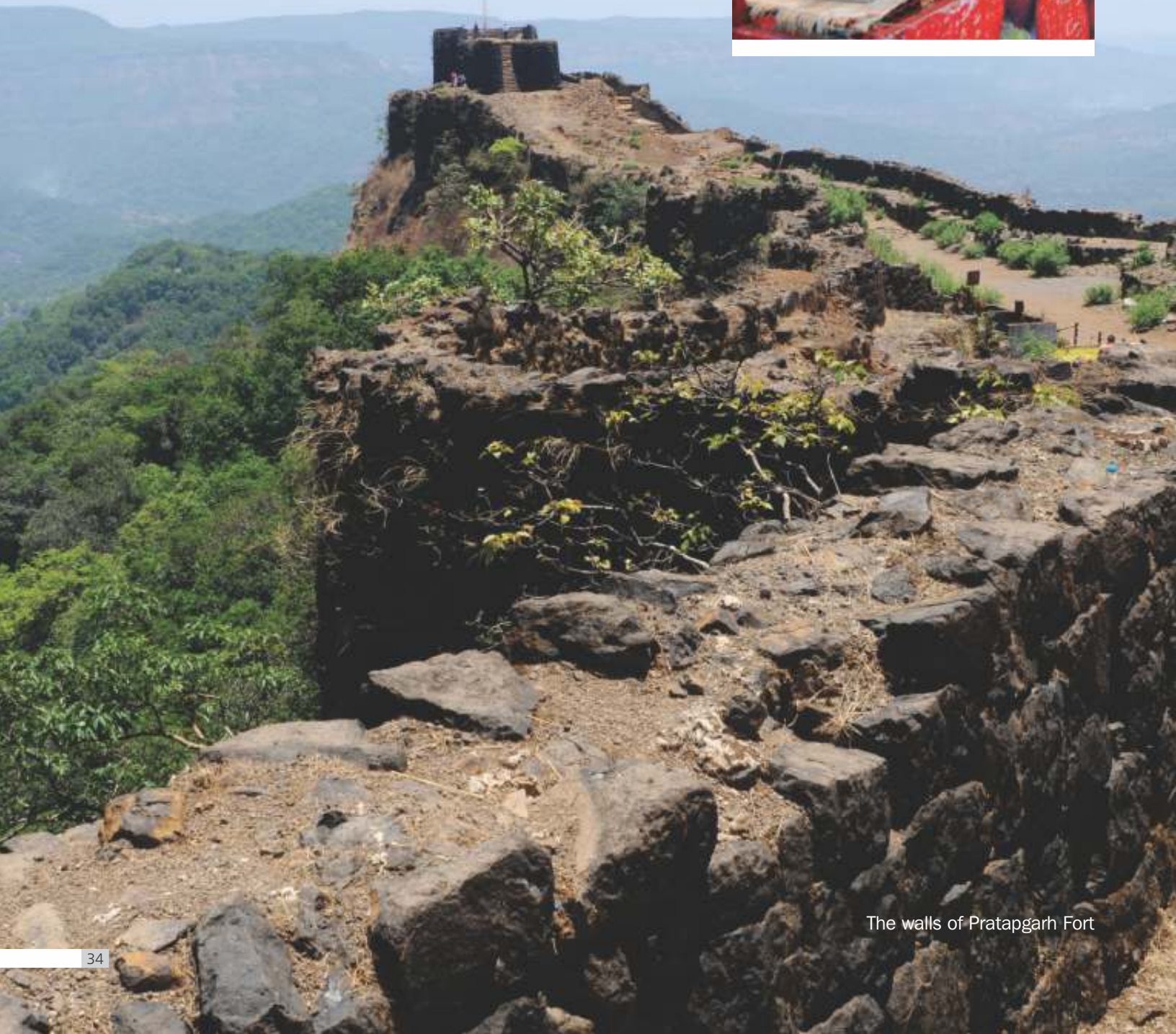
Frere Hall, the Holy Cross Church near the bus stand and the Mahabaleshwar Club are some of these colonial creations from the days when this a hill station for troops posted in the hot and dry Deccan or the humid coastal areas of Maharashtra, with clubs and sports grounds.

Venna Lake is the recreational hub of Mahabaleshwar with boating facilities on the lake, horse riding and a nearby amusement area for children. Shops and vendors sell a variety of snacks and other products for tourists.

Away from the colonial centre, Old Mahabaleshwar has historic temples built

from local stone, one of them with a natural lingam. The medieval Krishnabai Temple is one of such historical temples with a tank built in the 13th century by the Yadav dynastic ruler Singhan. The tank is located at the source of one of the streams that forms the Krishna River some distance away, before it flows 1400km through the Western Ghats, across the Deccan, and

forms a fertile delta along the Bay of Bengal in Andhra. There are a couple of other temples



The walls of Prapatgarh Fort



peace treaty, but the latter came with a knife to stab Shivaji when they greeted each other. Shivaji had expected this and came wearing tiger claws on his fingers. As soon as Afzal Khan greeted him with an embrace, Shivaji killed him. The fort commands

Point overlooking Koyna Valley, and then past a lookout along the edge of the plateau facing a waterfall, to Falkland Point. Bombay Point looks west towards the coast. This lookout has expansive views and covers the fort as well. Standing around one of the points, tourists wait patiently to witness the sunset in the west, one of Mahabaleshwar's most popular attractions. ■



nearby and in the picturesque countryside near the temple, you can see some farms.

Drive to Pratapgargh Fort, about 38 km away, which is impressive with a dual wall featuring spiked gateways, corner bastions and towers with hooks for lanterns. Upstairs is a Shiva temple. The fort is the site for many stories and legends associated with Shivaji, the most famous Maratha ruler. Shivaji and Afzal Khan were to meet for a

superb views of the countryside.


Around this area, you can find places to have local food like koshimbir (a chopped vegetable salad with yogurt and peanuts), pithla (besan curry), bhakri (jowar rotis), bhajis, vanyache bharit (mashed brinjals), rassas (vegetables in a watery tomato curry), varan (dal), and pineapple halwa.

Taxi drivers in Mahabaleshwar take you to a circuit of viewpoints like the Babinton



# An 8-day Trip to Sri Lanka





**A**n island country rich in forests, wildlife, beaches and history as well as the home to some of the world's finest teas, Sri Lanka is one of the few countries where the Indian rupee stands stronger, making it a perfect place for an affordable international vacation. You can more than enjoy an 8-day trip to Sri Lanka with a budget of just Rs. 60,000\* or less!

Sri Lanka is accessible from almost all the major airports in India, but a flight from Chennai will be the easiest on the pocket, with return flights starting at Rs.9,000 only! An 8-day trip to Sri Lanka means that you can cover at least 4 to 5 major places of interest in addition to some sight-seeing on the way. Ideally, this is what your trip will look like:

Bandarnaike International Airport (Colombo) - Pinnawala - Nuwara Eliya - Kandy - Dambulla - Anuradhapura – Bentota, and finally - Colombo

## **Day 1** Pinnawala and Nuwara Eliya

Upon landing at the Bandarnaike International Airport in Colombo, take a cab directly to Nuwara Eliya with a stop at Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage on the way. A 2-hour drive from the airport, the orphanage is a welfare center for the old or abandoned elephants. To enter the orphanage, Rs.500 is charged. It also offers several other attractions like elephant rides, feeding elephants, which are charged extra. After spending some time at the orphanage, you can drive further for another 2 and a half hours to reach Nuwara Eliya. If you're planning to visit during the winters, be sure to carry jacket/s in your handbag as Nuwara Eliya can get quite chilly. Once you've reached the destination, check into a hotel of your choice. Generally, the tariff of basic hotels in Nuwara Eliya starts from Rs. 10,000. Take a day off to enjoy the weather and if time permits, visit Lake Gregory in the evening.

PRAVEG'S

# TOURISM ONE





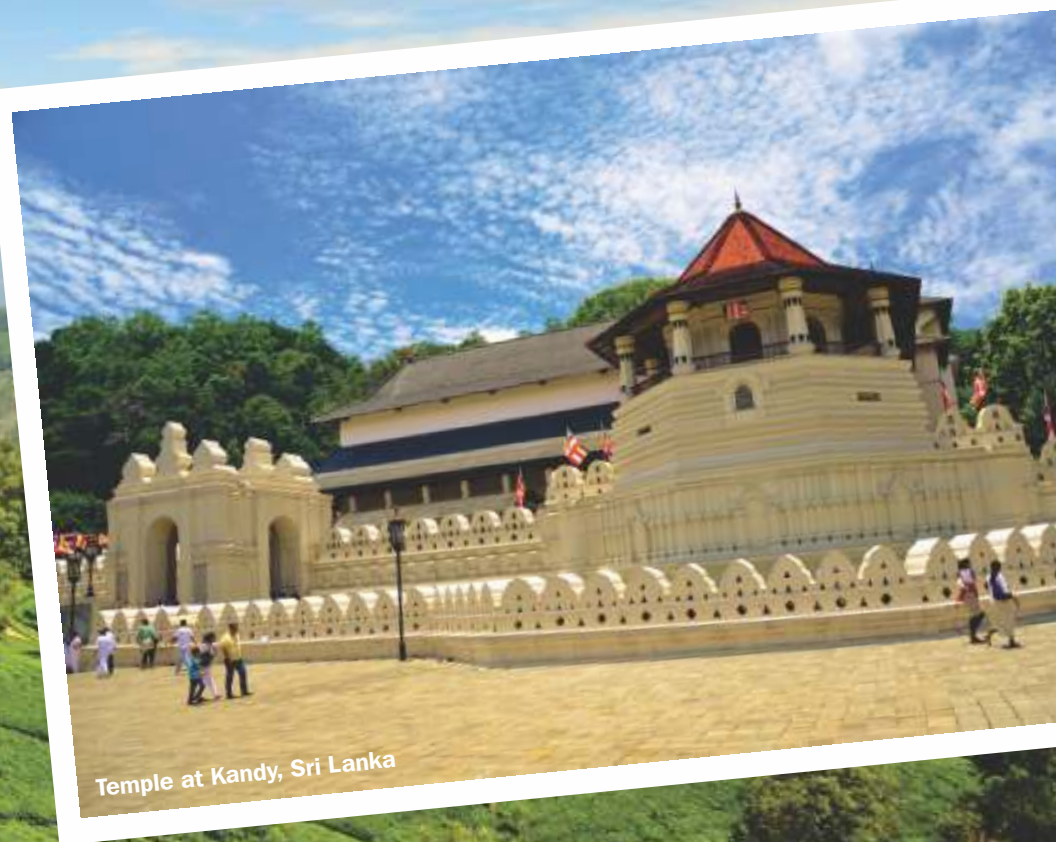
## Day 2

### Nuwara Eliya and Kandy

Discover the marvelous sights around Nuwara Eliya, including the Seeta Kovil, breathtaking views of the Adam's Peak and St. Claire's waterfall along with a visit to one of the tea estates. Mackwoods Labookellie Tea Estate in Nuwara Eliya is one of the most mysterious, awe-inspiring landscapes I've ever seen. The lush-green expansive landscape and pleasant aroma of tea plants make it a worth-visiting place. To make the most out of your day in and around Nuwara Eliya, an early start is a wise decision. Post lunch, drive down to Kandy, which is 2 hours away from Nuwara Eliya.

On the way, you will find numerous handicraft shops selling authentic Sri Lankan masks and other artifacts. In fact, Kandy is famous for its handicrafts and makes for the perfect place to pick some souvenirs for your loved ones.

If you are interested in exploring the cultural dances and a bit of Sri Lankan history, visit the Kandyan Art Association & Cultural Centre that hosts dance shows every evening with moderately priced entry. Tickets cost around Rs. 1000 and the show usually starts at 5.30 pm, but the seats are available on first-come-first-served basis. After the show, save the evening time for a walk around the city and a visit to the Temple of the Tooth, which is believed to house the tooth relic of Buddha himself. Unfortunately, you won't get a view of the tooth as it is cased inside a small gold stupa.



Temple at Kandy, Sri Lanka

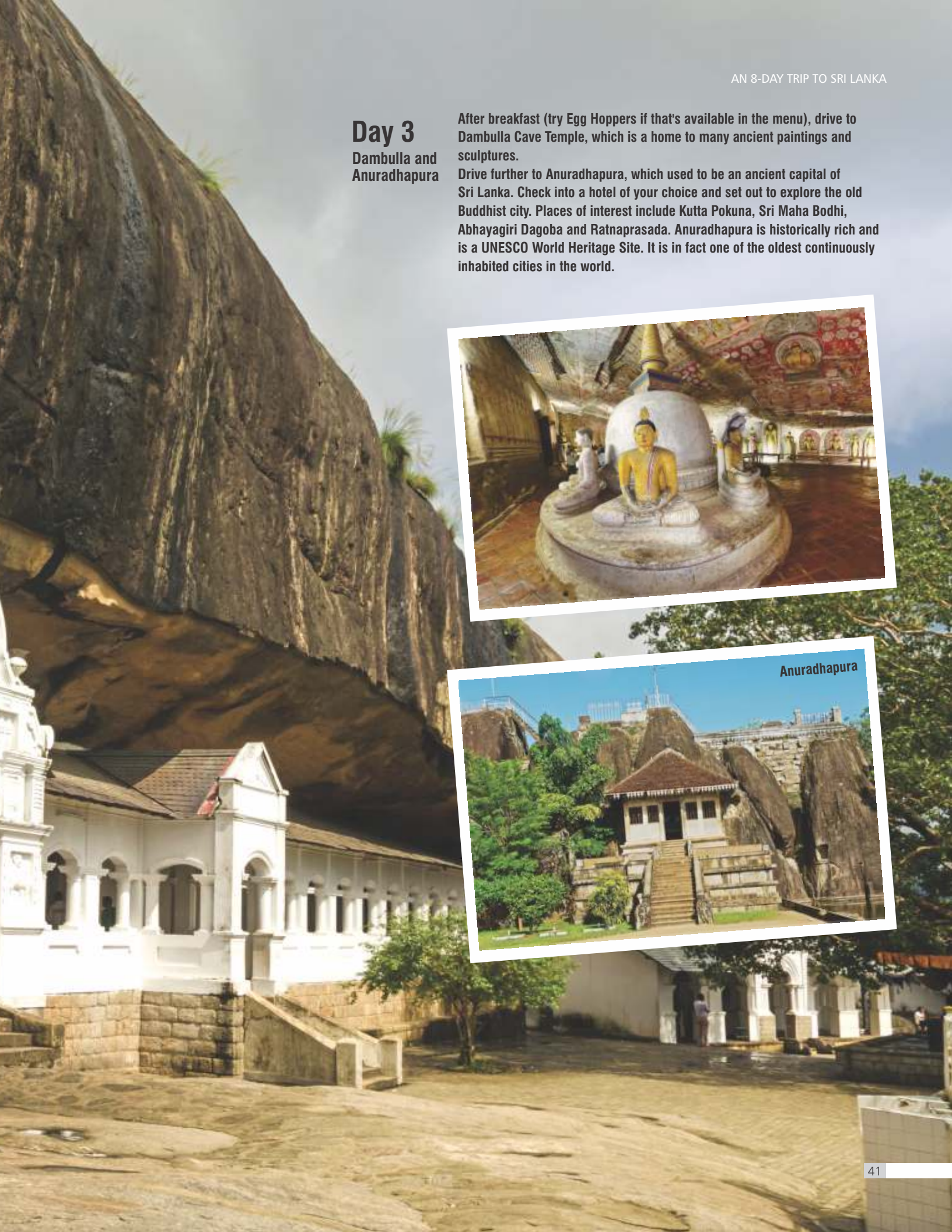
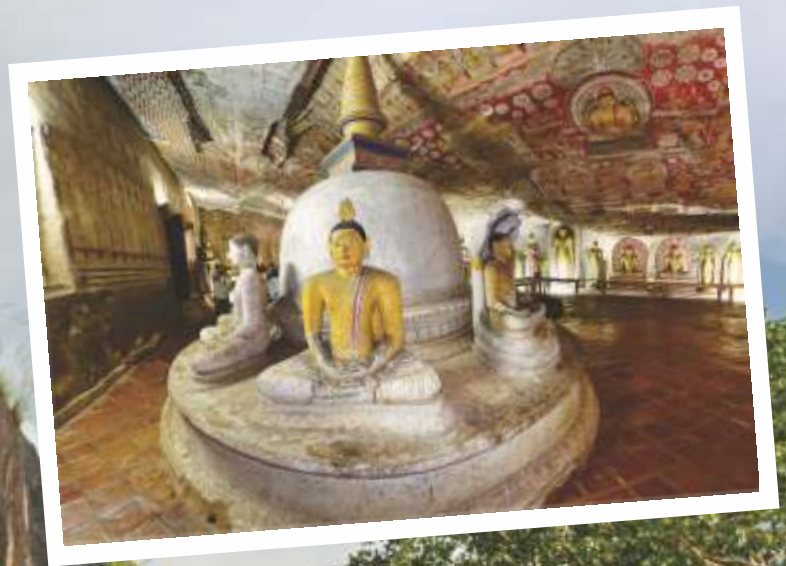


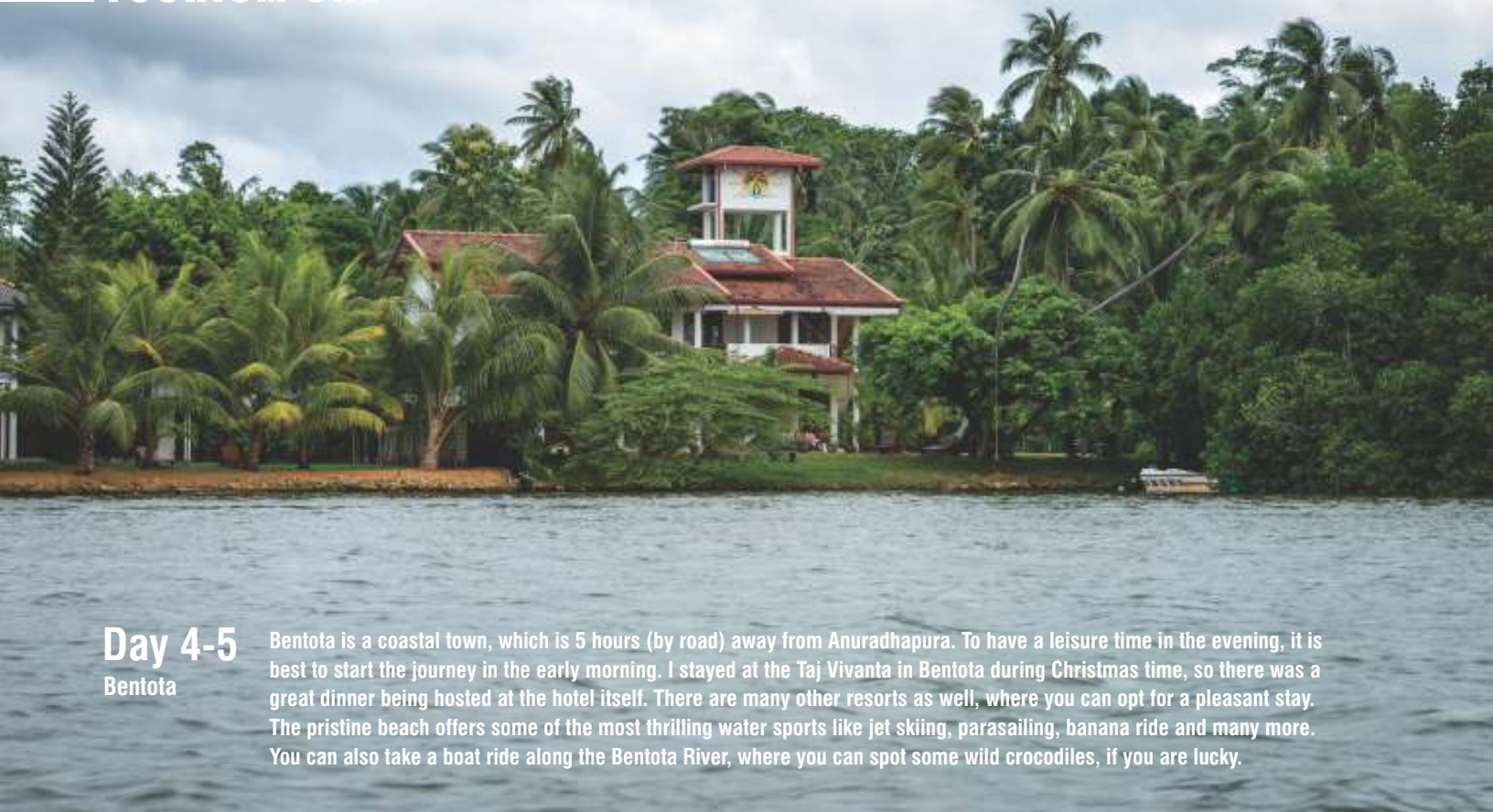
### Day 3

Dambulla and Anuradhapura

After breakfast (try Egg Hoppers if that's available in the menu), drive to Dambulla Cave Temple, which is a home to many ancient paintings and sculptures.

Drive further to Anuradhapura, which used to be an ancient capital of Sri Lanka. Check into a hotel of your choice and set out to explore the old Buddhist city. Places of interest include Kutta Pokuna, Sri Maha Bodhi, Abhayagiri Dagoba and Ratnaprasada. Anuradhapura is historically rich and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is in fact one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.





## Day 4-5 Bentota

Bentota is a coastal town, which is 5 hours (by road) away from Anuradhapura. To have a leisure time in the evening, it is best to start the journey in the early morning. I stayed at the Taj Vivanta in Bentota during Christmas time, so there was a great dinner being hosted at the hotel itself. There are many other resorts as well, where you can opt for a pleasant stay. The pristine beach offers some of the most thrilling water sports like jet skiing, parasailing, banana ride and many more. You can also take a boat ride along the Bentota River, where you can spot some wild crocodiles, if you are lucky.

## Day 6-7 Colombo

Colombo is a short drive of 1 and a half hours from Bentota. After two leisurely days at Bentota, it's time for some crazy shopping in Colombo. Sri Lanka is a manufacturing hub for some of the biggest high street and premium brands in the world. Factory-rejects often find their way into upscale stores here. Colombo has some amazing outlets. For the best shopping picks, visit Beverly Street and Odel. Personally, my shopping experience in Colombo was better than Bangkok. The place also has some good pubs, where you can take a break in the evenings. You can even visit some sea-view restaurants to gorge on some scrumptious crabs and shrimps. The Sea Spray Restaurant at Galle Face Hotel was one of the hotels that offered a memorable dinner.



## Day 8

A time to say goodbye to Sri Lanka

### Approximate Cost

Estimates Per Head (costs are estimated on the assumption that 2 people are travelling together):

- Flights - Rs. 10,000
- Visa - Rs. 1500
- Car-on-hire for 5 days (within Colombo, you can take the local taxis and buses) Rs. 15,000
- Hotels - Rs. 1500 onward per day, so Rs. 10,500 in total (approx.) for 7 nights.
- Food - Rs. 10,000
- Entry fees to attractions - Rs.5000

**Total - Rs. 52000**

**You still have Rs. 8000 for shopping!**

### Tips for Travellers

Carry Sunscreen

Don't fall prey to Tips

Wear your seat belt when in the car or get ready to cough up a fine.

Story by ADYASHA DASH

Yala National Park

\* At the time of this trip, the currency value of dollar was Rs. 63.84.

# Madhya Pradesh's River Trail

**M**adhya Pradesh has many substantial rivers like the Narmada and the Tapti that have their origins in the Vindhya and Satpura hills of the state. The rivers comprise one of the state's finest tourism resources providing spectacular settings, sacred islands and ritual bathing ghats, heritage sites like riverfront forts, palaces and temples, sanctuaries for bird-watching, wildlife viewing and aquatic life spotting as well as suitable locations for boating, fishing, water sports and other water-based activities.

## THE NARMADA YATRA

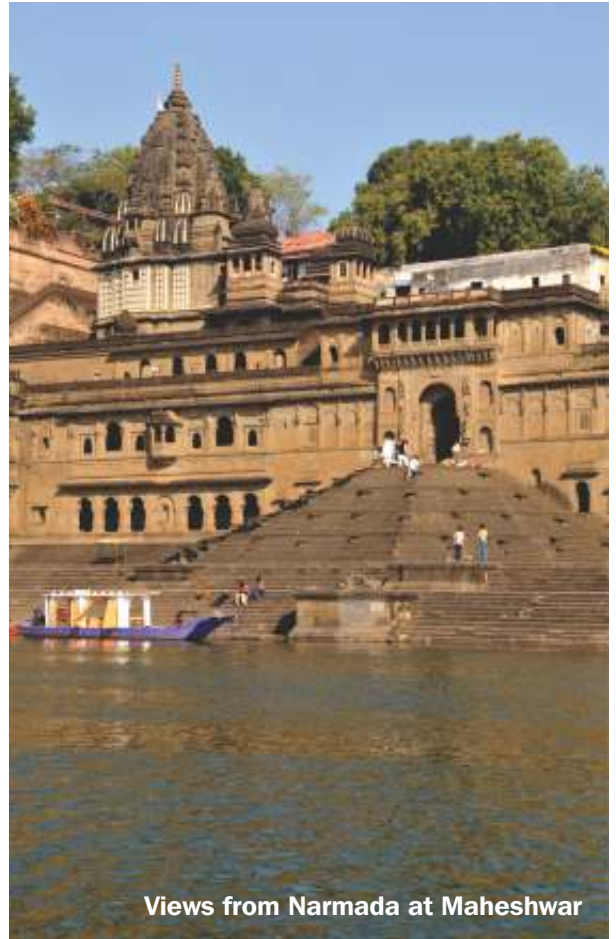
The 1300km long Narmada is the fifth longest and the oldest river in India. Kalidasa, the 4th century poet wrote about the Narmada in his love poem, Meghdoota, which is about a yaksha (tree spirit) who was banished to the hills of Madhya Pradesh. The Narmada pilgrimage runs from Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh to Bharuch in Gujarat.

The Narmada originates in the Amarkantak Plateau, where the Vindhyas meet the Satpura at the highest point.

Besides the Narmada, the Son and Johila rivers also emerge from this plateau region. The Narmada Kund is the place of pilgrimage with many temples around it. Those interested in heritage sites can visit the remains of temples built by Kalachuri Maharaja Karnadeva (1041–1073 AD) near the tank.

From Amarkantak, take the road west to Jabalpur by the Narmada. West of the city, the Dhuandhar Falls is a scenic spot where the river suddenly narrows and plunges 82ft down from the plateau. Dhuandhar means stream of smoke, getting its name from the white sprays thrown up by the force of the river at this drop. After this dramatic waterfall, the river runs through a gorge between cliffs and globulous shapes of marble rocks. This gorge is overlooked by Bedaghat, where stone-carvers work on shaping idols out of this translucent rock. Rowing boats take you along the river for 30 to 45 minutes, showing you the spectacular rock formations along the boat ride. Chausat Yogini Mandir is a

Dhuandhar Falls on the Narmada



Views from Narmada at Maheshwar

medieval temple here. Many Hindi films have been shot on Beda Ghat location.

After Jabalpur, the highway going west offers a good view of the Narmada near Hoshangabad. Near Indore, you can take the road to Omkareshwar Island on the Narmada. This sacred island is 2-km long and 1-km wide sandstone outcrop with ravines cut into the sides that enhance its spectacular appearance and Aum-like shape

The Narmada squeezes past the marble rocks at Bedaghat

that gives it the name. The pilgrimage begins with a ritual bath at the Sangam of Narmada with other rivers, before climbing the sand beach and the rocks to the plateau atop the island. From here, the 'parikrama' begins at the ghats below the Shri Omkar Mandhata Mandir, which is more like a cave except for the shikhara that rises over the sanctum, and has a hallway with intricately carved pillars and a finely carved upper half leading to a low-ceilinged sanctum. The shrine worshipped as one of the 12 jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. From here, the pilgrims travel clockwise around the island. Some of the highlights of the island are the decorous Surajkund arch flanked by three-metre figures of Arjun and Bheema leading to the Siddesvara Temple, built around the 10th century with attractively-carved doorways depicting mainly apsaras and a plinth with an elephant frieze, the medieval Sidhnath Temple carved with a frieze of elephant sculpture more than 1.5m high and some finely sculpted apsaras, and many old Hindu and Jain temples.

After Omkareshwar, you can visit Maheshwar, where beautifully-carved

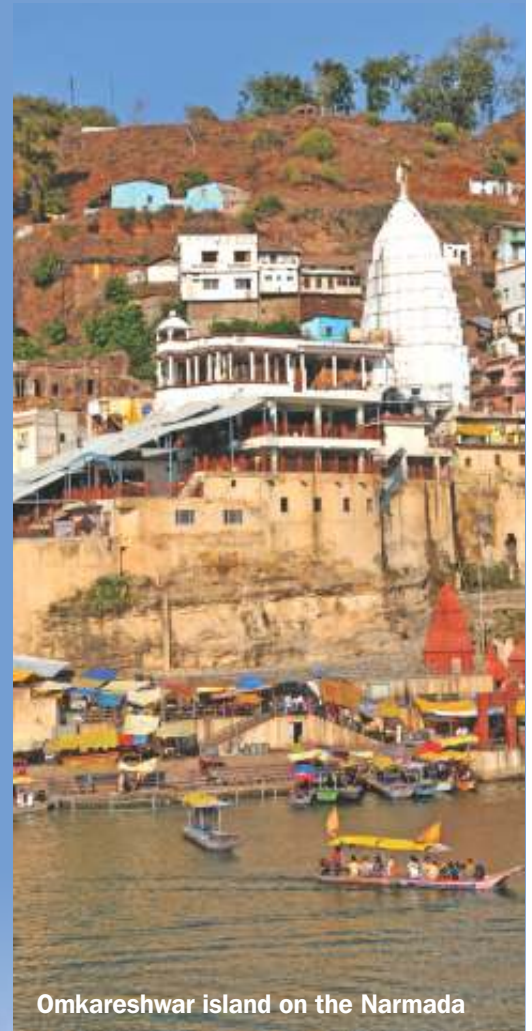
temples are seated along the Narmada. You can bathe at one of the riverside ghats, take a boat ride to enjoy the views, and visit the historical Ahilya Fort that has a heritage hotel within. Maheshwari sarees are woven near the river.



**Weavers of Maheshwar**



**Maheshwari sarees**



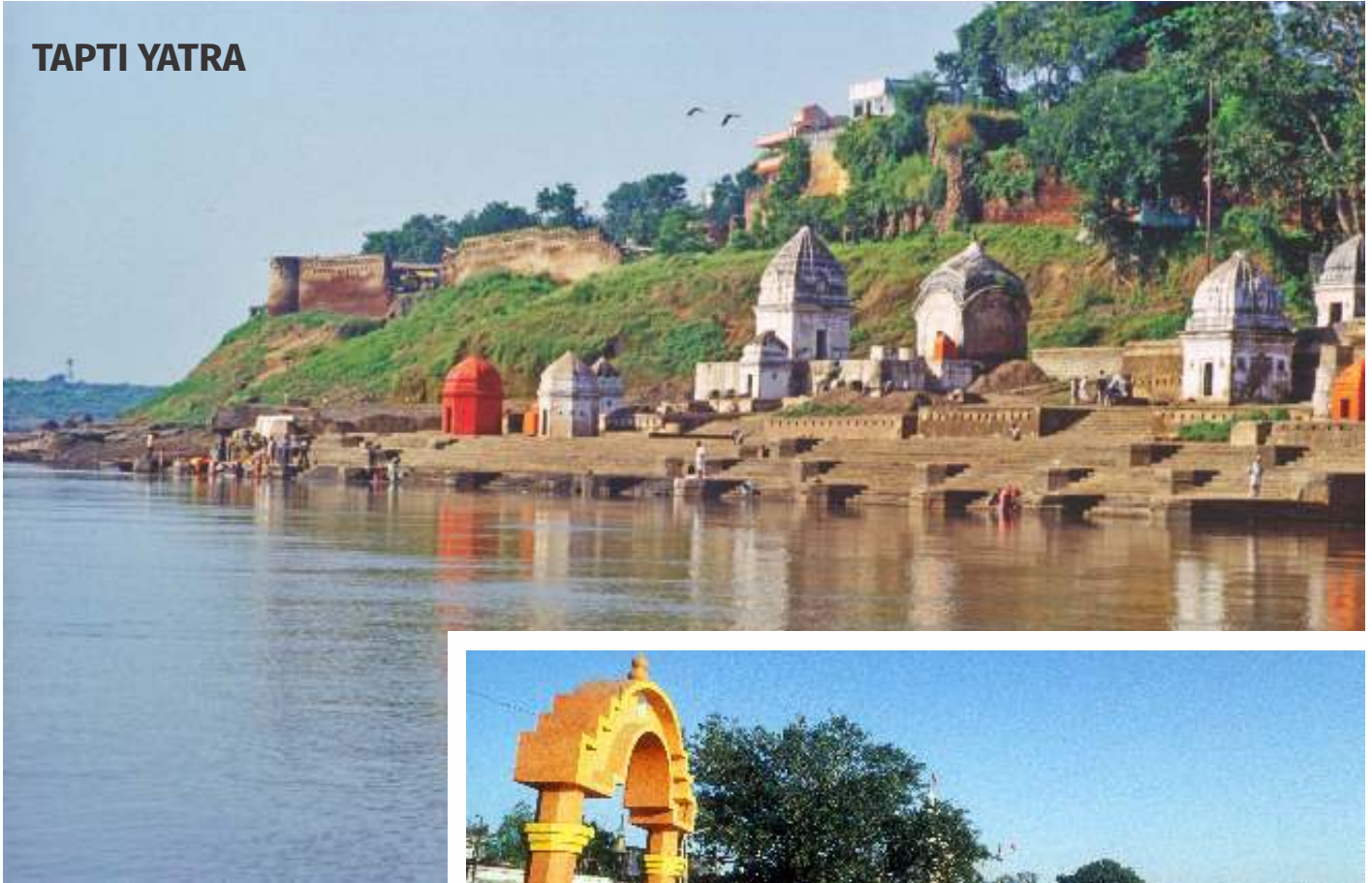
**Omkareshwar island on the Narmada**



**Ahilya Holkar's fort at Maheshwar**



## TAPTI YATRA



Like the Narmada, the Tapti originates in eastern Madhya Pradesh and meets the sea in Gujarat's Gulf of Khambat. Along its shores in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat are some rich agricultural areas.

According to Hindu legend, the Sun God gave birth to the Tapi or Tapti River through his wife Chhaya following a penance by his devotees to save them from droughts. Intrigued by this story, we set out from the Tapti riverside city of Surat to Multai, the source of the river. The road east from Surat took us to Bhusaval, which is the heart of a banana and brinjal-growing region – if you are fond of Bengan bharta, you must try the local version of it, and there are also sev bhaji, aloo vada and dalgandori bhaji among many local favourites. As it was getting to evening, we spent the night at Pioneer Hotel before starting out in the morning for Burhanpur whose medieval charms came as a surprise – the town has walls and gates, a fort rising by the river with formal gardens and old royal baths inside, an imposing Jamma Masjid, a couple of Gurdwaras commemorating the visit of Sikh Gurus, and

hammams fed through water harvesting and channelising systems called 'khuni bhandars', which used the Tapti waters effectively for public works in the town. After Burhanpur, we drove to Morsi followed by a pretty drive through the Satpura hills that brought us to Multai, the source of the Tapti. While we had expected Multai, short for Mul Tapi, to be a serene place in the Satpura, it turned out to be a dingy town around a filthy 'kund' from where the river begins as an unlikely trickle of water through a 'gaumukh'. In the evening, as people crowded for aarti at Suryaputri Temple and diyas were floated on the kund, the aura of devotion was really touching.

From Multai, the road winds through the hills along the Madhya Pradesh – Maharashtra border, and reaches the historic city of Burhanpur. With the Tapti, Utavali & Mohna rivers flowing through it,

Burhanpur has been ruled by several dynasties. Morning rituals occur by the Tapti, while the great fort overlooking the river offers a splendid backdrop. The fort has the remains of Mughal-style gardens and hammams. Nearby is a historical mosque with minarets and cupolas. Inside the mosque, the pillars and ceilings have superb artwork. The Gurdwara Bari Sangat is in the northwest of the walled city of Burhanpur at the site, where Guru Gobind Singh stayed in 1708AD while travelling south to the Deccan. The Dargah of Saiyedi Abdul Qadir Hakimuddin, a Dawoodi Bohra religious leader in the 1665-1730 AD period, is an important Shia Muslim pilgrimage site in Burhanpur.

After Burhanpur, the Tapti goes to Bhusaval in Maharashtra and Surat in Gujarat before draining into the Gulf of Khambat.

## HERITAGE SITES BY THE BETWA



The Betwa River flows through the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh meeting the Yamuna in the latter state. The most important tourist destination by this river, Orchha was the medieval capital of the Bundela Rajas and contains many architectural gems located near the bank of the Betwa. The riverside chhatris or cenotaphs, built in honour of Bundelkhand's former rulers, are best viewed from the narrow road bridge or the boulder strewn opposite bank, where you get the full effect of their reflection in the still waters of the Betwa. Nearby is the Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary.

From here, you can visit the village dotted with beautiful temples. End with the Jehangir Mahal and other palaces in Orchha's walled complex.



## THE NATURAL WONDERS OF THE KEN RIVER



Kanchan Ghat of the river Betwa

A tributary of the Yamuna, the Ken River is a major river of Bundelkhand flowing through Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. This beautiful river flows through the Panna National Park, where tiger, leopard, sloth bear, sambar and spotted deer, and other wildlife abound. Gharial crocodiles could also be spotted in the river. The Ken is also a paradise for anglers, offering opportunities to fish for the mahseer, which is one of the fiercest fighting fish of the world.

After the Bijawar-Panna hills, the Ken River cuts a 60 km long, and 150–180 m deep gorge, where a number of streams drop to form waterfalls in the canyong. The Raneh Falls on the Ken River present a spectacular view of variously hued rocks of granite, dolomite and quartz.



## CROCODILE SPOTTING IN THE SON RIVER

The Son originates near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, just east of the headwater of the Narmada River, and flows northwest through Madhya Pradesh state. The Son Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary stretches across much of the Son River's length from the Bansagar dam site and to the Piparghar village, where Son enters the Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh. This sanctuary is known for its birdlife and the gharial crocodile.



## WILDLIFE WONDERS OF THE CHAMBAL

The Chambal originates from the Janapav near Mhow Mountain in the Vindhya Range, and flows northeast through Ujjain, Ratlam and Mandsaur, before entering Rajasthan. It re-enters Madhya Pradesh after meandering through parts of Rajasthan and touches Moraina and Bhind. This is the area, where the river runs through spectacular ravines. A boat ride on the Chambal offers opportunities to see the critically endangered gharial crocodile, the mugger crocodile, the red-crowned roof turtle and the rare gangetic dolphin. In winters, the river is a birdwatchers' paradise, attracting huge flocks of migratory birds. One of the finest sights here is that of the Indian skimmer. Saras cranes, flamingos, black-bellied terns, red-crested pochard, ferruginous pochard and bar-headed goose are other birds that can be seen here. Many mammals like antelope, gazelle and fox come for water to the riverfront.

## THE SACRED KSHIPRA

The Kshipra starts her journey in the Vindhya Range from a hill called Kokri Tekdi and then goes through Ujjain, Ratlam and Mandsaur before joining the River Chambal. The Simhastha Fair (Kumbh Mela) takes place on the city's elaborate riverside ghats. There are many temples along or near this holy river.



Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI  
Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA



Organized by:



Marketed by:



# VGITM 2016

## A new vibrancy of Gujarat Tourism

**Investors from India and abroad expressed their interest to invest an astonishing INR 4135 crore with 85 Intentions/ Strategic Partnership at the Vibrant Gujarat International Travel Mart 2016**





The 4th edition of Vibrant Gujarat International Travel Mart (VGITM), a Global Travel Exposition, was held during 19 -21 February, 2016 at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (India) to promote tourism in Gujarat. The exposition, organized by Government of Gujarat and Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited in association with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and marketed by Praveg Communications Ltd, received an unprecedented response from the travel professionals from Gujarat and across the world.

The VGITM was inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt. Anandiben Patel in the presence of Secretary (Tourism) - Government of India and Minister of State for Tourism & Culture, Odisha along with dignitaries from United Kingdom, Canada, Malawi and Yemen. During the event, a Coffee Table Book on "Gujarat Tourism through the Lens of Arts & Crafts"; a dedicated web application named "Hello Innovators" under Gujarat Tourism Policy and a Yes Bank report on "Tourism Roadmap of Gujarat" were released. Besides these, young men

and women were given away certificates and placement letters for successfully completing the training programmes conducted across Gujarat.

Declaring tourism as one of the most important economic drivers for growth in the State, Gujarat Tourism Minister Saurabhbai Patel said that VGITM was a unique Travel Mart with a confluence of Tour Operators, Hoteliers, Airlines, Destination Management Organizations, Training

Institutes, Medical Service Providers and IT Companies under one roof. 250 National and International Buyers from 49 Countries actively participated in VGITM 2016. India's biggest travel associations like Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) & Tour Operators & Travel Agents





Association of Gujarat (TAG) etc. were also present to lend support and co-operation to the Tourism Industry of Gujarat.

85 Intentions/Strategic Partnerships were received by the Gujarat Government to invest INR 4135 crore during the Tourism Policy period, out of which 67 Investment Intentions amounting to an investment of INR 3110 crore were declared across Hotels, Amusement & Theme Parks, Wellness Centres, Wayside Amenities and many more. Some 4272 Pre-fixed B2B meetings were held during the event days. 18 Strategic Partnerships were inked in





the areas of Skill Development, Medical Tourism, Heritage Management and Handicrafts across the State.

On the second day of Travel Mart, a Seminar on "Tourism for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth" was organized. The Seminar was attended by renowned speakers discussing the Tourism Roadmap, Enablement of ICT in Tourism Sector and Community-led Tourism initiatives. A panel discussion on "Skill Development and Youth Empowerment" was organized to identify the importance of capacity building for overall development.

All in all, VGITM successfully promoted the vast bouquet of tourist destinations of Gujarat and complemented the highly successful "Incredible India" campaign of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. ■

# Kumbh Resort's Luxurious Tented Accomodation

## Experience the divine living at Ujjain Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2016



Ujjain is one of the seven holiest cities in India situated on the bank of the River Kshipra. The city of Mahakaleshwar is hosting the largest religious congregation from 20th April to 23rd May at the Simhastha Kumbh 2016 with millions of Hindu pilgrims from around the world.

Kumbh Resort, strategically located near River Kshipra, offers the ultimate stay experience to the Indian and Foreign devotees visiting Kumbh for the spiritual enlightenment. The resort hosts one of the

largest and most contemporary, convenient and unique temporary residential camp to the Kumbha pilgrims. It houses 70 luxurious, comfortable tents and is spread in 23,000 sq. m. area.

The resort offers all the modern amenities, spiritual ambience and 24x7 security. The dining at the resort serves delectable vegetarian cuisine for the guests.

Kumbh Resort is the ideal choice to enhance your religious fervor and pursue seamless journey to sanctity and spirituality.



### Distance from Kumbh Resort

Ujjain Railway Station	: 3.5 KM
Ujjain Bus Stand	: 2.3 KM
Mahakaleshwar Temple	: 2 KM
Ram Ghat	: 3 KM
Omkareshwar Temple	: 139 KM
Indore	: 56 KM

Operated by



### Schedule of Events

Pancheshani Yatra Start	Vaishakh Krishna 9, 1st May, 2016 (Sunday) to Vaishakh Krishna 30, 6th May, 2016 (Friday)
Vratparv Varuthini Ekadashi	Vaishakh Krishna 11, 3rd May, 2016 (Tuesday)
Vaishakh Krishna Amavasya	Vaishakh Krishna 30, 6th May, 2016 (Friday)
Akshaya Tritiya	Vaishakh Shukla 3, 09th May, 2016 (Monday)
Shankracharya Jayanti	Vaishakh Shukla 5, 11th May, 2016 (Wednesday)
Vrishabh Sankranti	Vaishakh Shukla 9, 15th May, 2016 (Sunday)
Mohini Ekadashi	Vaishakh Shukla 11, 17th May, 2016 (Tuesday)
Pradosh	Shukla 13, 19th May, 2016 (Thursday)
Nrusihn Jayanti	Vaishakh Shukla 14, 20th May, 2016 (Friday)
Pramukh Shahi Snaan	Vaishakh Shukla 15, 21st May, 2016 (Saturday)



# What's Travelling

## Goa to develop rivers to boost tourism

Goa is planning to develop waterfronts like the Chapora River, Mandovi, Zuari, Chapora, Sal and the Kushwati, several smaller rivers to attract tourists and share the burden of transportation. The BJP-led coalition government is looking to scout for the right investors to bring in money and technical knowhow to execute such projects. As per the present government records, the state has waterways which are around 650 km in length.

## Ajay Devgan and Kajol to be brand ambassadors of Andhra Pradesh Tourism

Bollywood actor-couple Ajay Devgan and Kajol will be the brand ambassadors of Andhra Pradesh Tourism as the state attempts to appeal to a broader pan-India audience in its bid to become the country's most preferred tourist destination. Devgan offered to don the mantle of brand ambassador at a meeting with the Chief Minister Naidu in Vijayawada in April. It was not immediately clear if the Bollywood actors would be compensated for their role as brand ambassadors.

## Barring Maharajas' Express, India's luxury trains face low occupancy

Incredible India's luxury trains or super luxury cruise trains aimed at luring the international tourists with deep pockets are running into serious trouble. Occupancy levels came down from 35 to 40 percent in these trains during 2014-2015, from nearly 60 percent and above in 2011-2012. This is despite the number of trips being cut down in some of these trains. The Economic Times reported in April that the Palace on Wheels had cancelled a trip for the first time in 34 years. It had no bookings in one week and only 18 bookings the week prior to that.

## Indonesia and India attempt to boost their tourism relations

India and Indonesia have agreed to explore together the huge potential for tourism between them. Both the countries are planning to simplify visa procedures, boost marketing activities and develop direct flights connecting the countries. Indonesian Ministry aimed to see a 30 percent increase in Indian travellers visiting Indonesia this year (15-16). India has introduced an online visa system so that interested visitors do not need to travel to Indian consulates to acquire one.

## Air India looks to woo tourists with Delhi-Vienna service

According to Hindustan Businessline, Air India's decision to start three-times-a-week flight to Vienna might prove to be a money spinner. Air India started the flight connecting Delhi with Vienna on April 6. The airline started the service after Austrian Airlines withdrew from the sector. Pankaj Srivastva, Commercial Director, Air India, said that the flight is expected to link Vienna not only to the Indian subcontinent, but to South-East Asia and Australia as well. "The first flight to Vienna had 106 transit travellers, 53 of them from Bangkok," he added.

## Agra tourism bodies slam monuments entry fee hike

Times of India reported that Agra tourism leaders expressed displeasure over the fee hike, they said that the government should first improve the deteriorating infrastructure in the city and then had thought of increasing fee. They demanded from Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma that Taj's and other monuments ticket fees should not be hiked till the time.

## E-Visa for tourists to Malaysia

Indian tourists travelling to Malaysia can obtain e-visa, according to AP Air Travellers Association Vice President O. Naresh Kumar. The Hindu stated that the e-visa system was commissioned on April 15, 2016 at the web address <http://www.windowmalaysia.my>. The period taken to process e-visa is between 24 hours and 48 hours (weekdays). The processing fee is \$25 (approximately Rs.1660) + Visa fee Rs.1000 + transaction fee of Rs.50 online. The total estimated cost is Rs.2,710 through the only available online payment.

## Centre forms task force to develop cruise tourism in India

In order to boost cruise tourism along the vast coast, including that in financial capital Mumbai, Central Government has instituted a task force apart from planning several incentive schemes to turn around the fate of this industry in India. The announcement was made during a maritime event held in Goregaon on April 15, as reported by DNA India.

## Foreign tourist inflow increases in India

As reported by One India, the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India during 2013, 2014 and 2015 were 6.97 million, 7.68 million and 8.03 million, respectively. Ministry of Tourism has not fixed any year-wise target. However, the Twelfth Five Year Plan (FYP) document of the Niti Aayog (the then Planning Commission) had recommended that India strives to increase its share to 1 percent in global foreign tourist arrivals by the terminal year of the Twelfth FYP.



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