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# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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January - March 2017

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A high-end quarterly magazine

**ROUND  
-THE-  
WORLD  
TICKET**

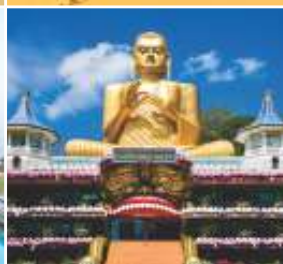
**World  
Tour?  
Dream  
On!**



**Easy Guide:  
Blissful  
Bhutan**



**Going Green  
with  
Farm  
Tourism  
in India**



**Food  
trail  
in the  
Northeast**



**The Wild  
West  
Bengal**



*Let's Get Away*





# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

January - March 2017

## *Fly High*

Which country to travel this year? Mmm... why not to begin with the most romantic and sassy city of the world – Paris? But catching up with Mickey Mouse in Hong Kong's Feng Shui environment has been a childhood dream. Definitely, there's nothing better than discovering over two million years of human history and culture stored in the British Museum in London. Wait, but didn't I promise myself to embark on a trip to Niagara Falls while watching 'Tammy' last month?

If this sounds like you, we've got you covered. Have you ever (in your wildest imagination) thought of striking off all the destinations from your wish list at one go? Hmm... surely that might have been limited to the imagination only, as such trips are way too expensive and involve a chaotic process of booking a dozen flights and many other things. However, what if we tell you that we have something that might change your opinion about world tour and flight bookings. Yes, we are talking about Round-the-World ticket. The RTW ticket enables you to cover multiple continents with just one ticket. Want to know more? Jump to our 'Far Far Away' section, where we have decoded the concept of RTW for you.

Cash crunch because of demonetization? We totally understand the situation and suggest some exhilarating local destinations for farm tourism in India to breathe in some fresh air. Winters herald the beginning of peak season for agriculture in India, which makes it the best time to behold the scenic landscapes and experience the rustic life, local culture and agricultural diversity of the ever-flourishing nation. If in need of some culinary adventure, we take you to the enthralling Northeastern States of India. Just like its rich culture and traditions, these states have a lot to offer in terms of scrumptious dishes. Don't believe us? Go through the article and find out the distinctive blend of Northeastern flavours.

What's more? Read on!



# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

January - March 2017

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Incredible India

# GOING GREEN

**With Farm  
Tourism in  
India**





“

Farms, plantations and orchards are hot new destinations for tourism in India, offering opportunities for accommodation, farm-fresh food, agricultural experiences and an insight into local culture. Apart from enjoying the lush green environs, guests also get to stay in well-facilitated properties.

”



1

## Tea Tourism in Eastern India

During the British Raj's plantation era, masters and managers of the tea estates enjoyed a lavish lifestyle of elaborate parties, picnics and high teas, golfing and clubbing with the other 'Burrasahibs'. The 'Burra Bungalows' of tea plantations with their planters' chairs, carved tables and elegant dining chairs, old dressers, teak or mahogany four-posters, British silverware and Chinese crockery continued to be the social hubs after independence. Today, colonial bungalows in or around the tea estates have been converted into upmarket, character-rich accommodations offering a taste of the old plantation lifestyles.

From Bagdogra Airport or New Jalaiguri/Siliguri Railway Station, drive to **Kurseong**, which has some of the finest tea plantations in India, including famous ones like



2





3

- 1 *Cochrane Place at Kurseong is themed on the plantation heritage of the Darjeeling hills.*
- 2 *Ambootia Tea Estate produces some of the finest teas in the world.*
- 3 *Chai Country, a famous tea lounge at Kurseong*
- 4 *Glenburn Tea Estate's Burra Bungalow is open for tourists.*
- 5 *Room with a view of Glenburn Tea Estate*
- 6 *Chang Bungalow at Dibrugarh offers a good view of the tea plantations.*



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- 7 *Mancotta Bungalow at the Dibrugarh tea plantations*
- 8 *Tourists can visit tea plantations while staying in heritage bungalows.*
- 9 *Tea-based drinks at Mancotta Bungalow in the Dibrugarh tea plantations*
- 10 *Tea tasting at Dibrugarh*
- 11 *Coffee in Karnataka*
- 12 *Kalgreen Resort in Karnataka*



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Makaibari, Ambootia, Goomtee and Castleton. **Kurseong** is a home to several famous tea gardens in India. Some of the tea estates with their factories are open for tourists. On his visit to England, the Prime Minister of India, Sri Narendra Modi presented to H.H. the Queen the Silver Tips Imperial from Kurseong's Makaibari. **Ambootia** is famous for its biodynamic and organic practices. These estates run a worker

homestead program – homestay facilities with the income directly benefiting the host. One of the most popular places to stay in Kurseong, the Cochrane Place is appointed in keeping with the British colonial heritage of the town. Its Chai Country is a lounge that serves a variety of blended teas.

The Kurseong Station has a collection of railway memorabilia from the British period. You can take the mountain train to

**Darjeeling**, which chugs past tea estates.

Darjeeling is the hub for tea tourism. For years, visiting tea estate has been a part of the sightseeing itinerary for visitors to Darjeeling. Some of the tea estates now have resorts or homestay facilities. One of the most stunningly situated tea estates, Glenburn Tea Estate, has 1600 acres of sal and other forests, tea plantations and orchards sloping down to the Rungeet and The Rung

Dung rivers.

The columned veranda of the Glenburn Burra Bungalow leads to interiors with floral embroidered draperies and linen, flower vases as well as ornate fireplaces. The Planters Suite has an imposing mahogany four-poster bed, fireplace, colonial furniture on the patio and a long bathroom with an old fashioned freestanding bathtub fitted with a hand-held shower. Other rooms are named for their views like Rose Room facing the rose garden, Butterfly Room facing flowering bushes, the Simbong Garden Room has a view of the Simbong Tea division, the Kanchenjunga Suite has a view of Mt Kanchenjunga on a clear day with motifs to match the name. The bungalow offers meals using its own produce of beetroot, broccoli, cabbages, carrots, chillies, radish, peas, spinach, turnips and lettuce, basil, mint, mustard, parsley and sage as well as a variety of fruits. Those staying here can go down to the river for



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a picnic and visit the factory, which follows an orthodox method of tea-processing. The fresh leaves are dried by fans till the moisture content reduces and the internal

juices start expressing themselves. They are then kept in a humidifier to get the original aroma and finally, dried before grading.

From Darjeeling, drive down to the Duars, the foothills of the East Himalayas. These are the tea-growing areas of **Bengal and Assam** between the Himalayas and the river plains. In this region is the 660-acre Phaskowa tea-estate, once run by a British company before it came to the Chamarias in 1967. It now offers rooms like Tropicana with a teakwood bed, French lace bedspread, scatter cushions and luxurious drapes, a pleasantly old-fashioned bathroom with a bathtub,

lace curtains and huge windows with views. The Sunset Room is done in a Southeast Asian theme with Thai silk fans, ceramics and Buddhist artifacts.

The Chamaria family highlights the many advantages of tea-estate accommodations like the in-house medical facilities, kennel facilities for those travelling with pets and well-trained staff round the clock. Besides the tea estate, guests can also tour the pineapple, rubber, vanilla, cocoa, coffee, areca nut, pepper plantations and watch the CTC and traditional methods of tea processing at the factory.

From Siliguri station or Bagdogra Airport, you can take a train or fly to

Assam. About 20 minutes north of the Tezpur Airport, **Balipara** has a couple of tea tourism accommodation options. The 1870's Adabari Tea Estate has old British bungalows with furniture to match the period on 22 acres of tropical land surrounded by tea gardens. Wild Mahseer is a British period bungalow that largely promotes fishing and nature treks in the area.

**Jorhat** is a tea tourism destination in Assam. Thengal Manor, the 1920's house of the Barooah family - well-known planters of Assam at Jalukonibari, has Indo-European architecture and majestic furniture typical of the late-19th and early-



- 13 *Pepper*
- 14 *Bungalow at Stanmore Tea Estate in Valparai*
- 15 *Room with a view at Valparai*
- 16 *Tea estates of Valparai*



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20th century. They arrange stays at the Burrasahib's Bungalow in the Sangsua Tea Estate, which has a large sitting room, verandas, old furniture and fireplaces.

East of Jorhat, **Dibrugarh**, where the

Chang Bungalow and the Mancotta Bungalow are run by the Jalan family of tea planters, has become a tea tourism destination. The two properties are appointed in British colonial style and guests are served Assamese and

British food. In the evening, guests can watch Chah Baganar Jumur Nach performance by the tea workers. This dance is a synthesised form developed by the various tea planting communities drawing from their original

homelands in Central India and local influences of Assam.

## Fruit Picking Tourism in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is well-known for its variety of rich and sweet tasting fruits, like the mangoes grown in coastal towns like **Ratnagiri** and **Devbagh**, the oranges of **Nagpur**, the sapotas or chickoos of **Dahanu-Golwad**, the grapes of **Nashik** and the strawberries of **Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani**.

With its huge grape production, Nashik has fast become a wine capital of India. Just four hours from **Mumbai**, Nashik has several vineyards and wine factories. Many Nashik



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with chikoo orchards. The economy of this area is based mainly on its horticulture produce. Save Farm has an agritourism facility, where guests can stay and learn about farming. Squash, jams, pickles and other products created out of freshly picked fruits are sold here.

Mahabaleshwar is famous for its berries - strawberries, raspberries, mulberries and gooseberries. The strawberries are sold at farms and by street vendors. You can enjoy strawberries & cream, fresh strawberry ice cream and strawberry milkshake during the strawberry season. Many of the fields can be visited. Mapro is a popular place to buy jams, juices and crush.

If planning a trip during summer time, travel down the **Konkan** coast for the famous alphonso mango of **Ratnagiri** and **Sindhudurg** districts.



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vineyards now have tasting rooms that are open to the public.

One of the most famous wine tourism properties, Sula Vineyards has exclusive, all-access tour with a knowledgeable guide who explains the history of wine in Nashik, the story of Sula brand, and making of wines. Tours take place every hour and

end with a personalized wine tasting at The Tasting Cellar from 11:30am to 6:30pm throughout the week except on official dry days.

Overlooking Gangapur lake, York Winery has a good-sized tasting room, attractively decorated in warm and earthy tones. Soma is another vineyard open for tourism- it is

known for its restaurant, amphitheater, conference, wedding facility, rooms and pool. North of Nashik, Chateau d'Ori and Chandon are among the finest wineries. Between Nashik and Mumbai, Grover Zampa and Vallome are famous wineries.

North of Mumbai, thousands of hectares of land in Dahanu is covered

## Spice Tourism in Goa

As you enter Goa from Maharashtra, the road to the coast goes through the Western Ghats and the

- 17 *The oranges of Nagpur*
- 18 *Grape harvest at Niphad, Nashik*
- 19 *Vintage winery at Niphad*
- 20 *Wines of Nashik*
- 21 *Wines at The Gateway Hotel, Nashik*



midlands of laterite rock that are rich in plantations, supported by high rainfall and moderate weather. Some of the most accessible plantations are situated on the Ponda Priol Road. Farms on this road offer tours during which you learn about spices like pepper, vanilla, cardamom, nutmeg, chilly, turmeric and cinnamon. Some of these farms also have cashew, pineapple, papaya, betel nut and other produce. The tour usually includes a traditional meal. You can buy spices and products too.

Further south of Goa, there are some interesting plantations like Tanshikar Spice Farm.

## Coffee Tourism in Karnataka

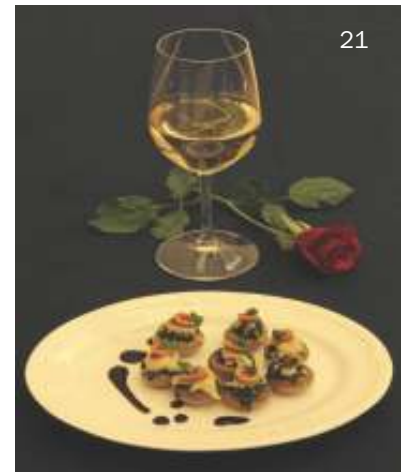
Off the beaten track of most travellers, the Western Ghats of Karnataka offer views of

lush green forests, tall mountains, tea and coffee plantations, picturesque drives along the fields and green hillsides as well as hill destinations with a serene environment.

The most famous coffee-growing region is **Chikkamagaluru** (better known as Chikmagalur). Chikmagalur means Younger Daughter's Town. The town is said to have been given as a dowry to the ruler's younger daughter. This historical town has the Hoysala style Kodandarama Temple, mosques, a cathedral and the remains of a fort. The city's main claim to fame is its coffee – the Central Coffee Research Institute was started here in 1925 and coffee curing units abound. Visit the Coffee Museum, which offers an insight into coffee production in India through illustrations, exhibits and models. Some of the coffee and spice plantations are open to visitors. This hill

town lies just south of the Chandradrona Mountain Range, an eastern offshoot of the Western Ghats, which form a short-shoe shaped chain of high ridges opening out to a valley in the north. Start your tour with **Baba Budangiri**. It has a shrine to the 17th century Sufi Baba Budan who is said to have brought coffee from Arabia to these hills. Nearby is the 6,330 ft high **Mulayyanagiri**, which offers spectacular sunset views. Further north, **Kemmangundi** is a small hill station, which used to be a summer retreat for the Maharaja of Mysore in the 1930s and '40s.

From Chikmagalur, drive west to **Kudremukh**, which is a paradise for nature lovers with a tapestry of evergreen forests, temperate shola forests and luxuriant grassy slopes fed by rivers and streams. This mosaic is good for trekking or adventurous jeep safaris



with excellent opportunities for sighting birds like thrushes, hornbills, parakeets, flycatchers, tree pies and bulbuls. The Kudremukh National Park is very rich in mammals, but sightings are difficult because of the terrain. The endangered lion-tailed macaque is one of the key species of the national park. Further north from Kudremukh, the road to **Addagadde** offers views of neatly manicured tea estates as well as coffee and spice plantations. From Addagadde, the road west towards the coast goes through farms producing paddy, rubber, ornamental plants, flowers, areca nuts and pepper. This is also a culturally interesting area with villages, temples and

historical sites.

Travel to **Madikeri**, at the heart of the Kodagu district also called **Coorg**. Lush green and well-forested, Kodagu is also famous for its coffee, pepper and cardamom plantations. Many small coffee gardens offer homestays, while larger ones have resorts.

## Plantation Tourism in the Nilgiris

One of the destinations that has become synonymous with its spices, **Kerala** is well-known for its tea, coffee, rubber, spice, cashew and ayurvedic herb plantations. An increasing number of these plantations are becoming an integral part of tourism in Kerala. While travelling in the state, especially to hill destinations of **Idukki** and **Wayanad** district, tourists can ask their hotels and resorts to arrange a guided tour of nearby plantations. It is also possible to stay in plantation bungalows at some of these destinations.

One of the most popular destinations for spice tourism is **Thekkady** in the Cardamom Hills. Since **Thekkady** and nearby **Kumily** have an enormous number of hotels, resorts and lodges catering to the tourists visiting the Periyar Tiger Reserve, they have become obvious locations for tours of the plantations that thrive on the slopes of the Western Ghats nearby. The High Range Tea Factory at



**Puttady**, north of Kumily, is a rewarding place to visit in order to see the processing of tea from chopping, sifting and fermenting to drying and packing. There are a number of spice plantations near Kumily like Abraham's Spice Garden, high range spices and also working tea plantations that welcome visitors. Hotels and resorts usually have tie-ups with a number of spice or tea gardens for their guests to

visit on a sightseeing tour.

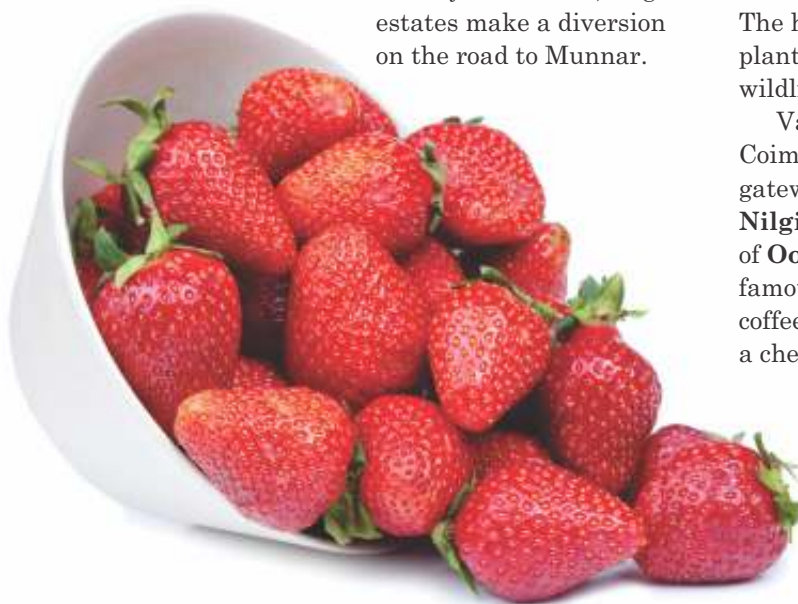
If you want to stay at a farm/plantation, there are many resorts around Kumily that are located in working plantations or have their own spice gardens. For instance, **Shalimar Spice Gardens** has accommodations at the edge of a cardamom and pepper estate, while **Spice Village** is a resort that has plantation of the most famous spices of Kerala.

On the road from Kumily to Munnar, large estates make a diversion on the road to Munnar.

**Munnar** itself is a hill station surrounded on all sides by tea-planted slopes. The tea museum here offers an insight into the history and processes of tea planting in the high ranges of Munnar. Some of the tea plantations also offer accommodations.

From Munnar, take the road north to **Valparai** in Tamil Nadu bordering Kerala. Valparai has a number of tea estates that offer accommodation in British period bungalows. The highlight of this tea planted area is the rich wildlife that can be seen.

Valparai is located near Coimbatore, which is also a gateway for visiting the **Nilgiris** – the hill stations of **Ooty** and **Coonoor** are famous for their tea and coffee plantations and also a cheese factory. ■





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# Kerala's Cultural Heartland

While Kerala has become famous for its beaches, backwaters and green hills, it is also a state rich in culture. Many of these cultural destinations lie off the beaten track of travellers.

**S**tart your trip at **Cochin**, a port city with many historical buildings. Travel north to **Thrissur** or Trichur. Thrissur is the abbreviation of Thiru, Shiva and Perur, meaning the city named for Lord Shiva, and has been for centuries an important religious and cultural centre of Kerala. It is famous for its temples, churches, arts colleges and training schools for performing arts.

Located at the western end of the Palakad Gap or Palghat Pass, Thrissur was a vital link between the coast and the interior of the peninsula. The Rajas of Central Kerala reigned from here before moving their capital to Cochin. Thrissur fell to the Zamorin of Malabar, then Sultan Hyder Ali and eventually the European colonial powers.

The city of Thrissur has many great temples and churches. The Lourdes Cathedral has an impressive Indo-European façade with pink spires. Its imposing bulk makes it a major landmark. The interior of the cathedral has a pretty underground shrine. The centre of Thrissur is dominated by a temple complex with roads radiating on all sides. Predominantly a Shiva Temple, it also has shrines dedicated to other deities. The main sanctuaries are dedicated to Shiva as Vaddukkanath and Sankara Narayan, with a Ganesh shrine between them. The temple has fine wood carvings decorating the roof and façade. The interior has beautiful murals near the main shrines.

Nearby, the Sakthan Thampuran Palace now houses a museum containing archaeological finds, bronzes, earthenware and princely relics of the Rajas of Kochi. The piece de resistance is a wooden treasure chest with spikes and locks, a measure of princely riches. The state museum nearby also has some fine murals, woodwork, sculpture and ornaments. As a cultural hub of Kerala, we are told, Thrissur has a number of institutions for performing arts and literature.

An important cultural centre in Thrissur district is the village of **Cheruthuruthy**, a town by the Bharatpuzha River. The Kerala Kalamandalam here was founded in the 1920s and '30s by the late poet Vellathol Menon and his associate Mukunda Raja. It is an important academy for teaching the performing arts of Kerala like Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Kuttiyattam and Onam Thullal. The centre is credited with the revival of Kerala's dance forms and for opening the doors for training all Hindus and non-Hindus in these performing arts. The academy has also established international links for promotion of Kathakali overseas. The highlight of the academy is the theatre attractively designed like the performing halls of Kerala's temples with fine woodwork.

Another village of note is **Irinjalakuda**, where the Natana Kairali Research and Performing Centre is dedicated to the performance, preservation, documentation and promotion of Kerala's performing arts like Kuttiyam, Nangiar Koothu and puppetry. The Koodal Manikhyam Temple at Irinjalakuda is an unusual temple of Rama's brother Bharata, depicting his joy when he learned about the victory of Rama and his reunion with Sita. Irinjalakuda also has the St. Thomas Church, an impressive building erected in 1917 on the site of an older church built here in 1845. The feast is organized in January, during which the images of saints are taken out in procession that are welcomed with fireworks. You can buy bell metal, bronze and brass lamps at nearby Nadavaramba. Angamali is an important Syrian Christian centre and nearby **Akaparambhu** has a church with murals narrating stories from the Bible.

An important place of pilgrimage near Thrissur is Guruvayoor, a great religious centre for the worship of infant Krishna. According to one of the legends associated with the temple, the site for



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this temple to infant Krishna was selected by Guru - preceptor of the gods, and Vayu - lord of the winds, when they met Lord Shiva and Parvati with Parsurama - creator of Kerala, at the tank of **Guruvayoor**. The tank has a statue of Krishna playing the flute. Nearby is the place with huge elephants.

Guruvayoor is the base to see megalithic sites with the hat-stones that are distinctive Iron Age megalithic remains locally called topi-kals. Substantial remnants of Kerala's megalithic era can be seen at **Porkalam**.

Also in Thrissur are the Athirapally and Vazhachal waterfalls set in the Western Ghats. Many tribal villages can be seen in the rainforests near the falls.

From Thrissur, travel to **Kozhikode** and visit **Thekkepuram**, which is one of the historic neighbourhoods of Kozhikode. This area has classic Keralian mansions called 'tharavadu' and is also one of the most important quarters of the Mappila Community (also called Moplah or Malabari Muslims). See the collection of mosques that have retained the traditional Malabari architectural style distinguished by a multi-tiered roof in the traditional

- 1 *Chinese fishing nets at Cochin*
- 2 *Masks at Cochin*
- 3 *Guruvayoor is the temple town of Kerala*
- 4 *Tribal in Thrissur district*

pagoda-style of Kerala, slatted screens, angled teakwood beams, Kerala-style carved gables and carved doors. The hallways of the mosque have enormous timber rafters supporting an elaborate ceiling with fine carvings. These mosques are rarely visited by tourists but must rank among the finest buildings in Southern India and are an important architectural heritage of Malabar. Another distinctive aspect of this neighbourhood is the domination of Kazis, a judge ruling in accordance with the Sharia or Islamic religious law, which is not common in other parts of Kerala. The mosques have ornate ceilings covered in colourful stucco and bearing



intricate script from the Quran. The magnificent Mithqal Palli Mosque, named for Nakuda Mithqal, who was a well-known merchant of Kozhikode in the 14th century, has a turquoise wall with a series of doors surmounted by semi-circular arches. 24 wooden columns support the four-tiered timber roof of the mosque. The Pazhassiraja Museum has, besides coins, bronzes and paintings, an interesting collection of models showing the megalith monuments of Kerala, Kerala's historical architecture and copies of original murals. It is named for the Lion of Malabar, Pazhassiraja, who challenged the might of the British. He is respected



by the people of Kerala as a freedom fighter of the 19th century. The Kozhikode Art Galley has an extensive collection of paintings by Raja Ravi Varma and other Indian artists, besides wood sculptures and ivory carvings. The Krishna Menon Museum has a section in honor of the great Indian leader Vengalil Krishna Menon (May 3, 1896 –October 6, 1974), an Indian nationalist, diplomat and statesman. Close to the museum complex in Kozhikode on East Hill Street is the Jay Bees Art Gallery, which has fine displays of arts created by the owner of the gallery - Jayan Bilathikulam, who is a well-known designer and artist from Kerala. Mananchira has imposing public buildings like the Town Hall, the Public Library and the Commonwealth Trust's office, most of them dating to colonial times, besides temples, mosques, an attractive public park and a medieval pond. This district was once the palace of the Zamorin, ruler of Kozhikode when it was a major port allied with the Portuguese forces. It was conquered by Tipu Sultan. The British built most of the present day buildings.

You can stay at Harivihar, a heritage home of a Nair family, which has been



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sympathetically renovated and opened for tourists. The rooms are in a horse-shoe shaped house surrounded by well laid out lawns. We entered the house, which has wooden floors and staircases leading to teak furnished rooms. You can try the traditional vegetarian meal of Kerala called a 'Sadya' here.

In the morning, visit the CVN Kalari, one of the important centres of the Kalaripayattu, a martial art form that includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms and weaponry. The northern school of this martial art is known for its use of weapons, meippayattu (physical training), healing methods and body massages. CVN Kalari is popularly known for choreographing combat scenes of Ashoka, Dil Se and Lajja, and the weaponry scenes of the Jackie Chan starrer movie, The Myth, a 2005 martial arts period drama, action and adventure film directed by Stanley Tong.





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- 5 Kerala Kalamandalam, deemed University of Art and Culture by the Government of India, is a major center for learning the performing arts of Kerala and other Southern states of India.
- 6 Harivihar Heritage Homestead at Kozhikode is one of the best heritage hotels.
- 7 Mohiniattam, Kerala's classical dance performance by Pooja Vijayan of Thrissur.



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- 8 *Interiors of the Harivihar Heritage Homestead promote the arts of Kerala.*
- 9 *Yoga at Harivihar Heritage Homestead*
- 10 *Kalaripayattu, the martial arts of Kerala*
- 11 *Theyyam dance is a daily ritual at the Parassinikadavu Muthappan Temple, Kannur*
- 12 *Traditional food*

Since **Kozhikode** or Calicut was an important port, there are many religious influences - Parsi Fire Temple, churches, temples and mosques. Just outside the city, Beypore is a picturesque place with fishing boats, a scenic landscape and a weaving centre called TASARA.

Travel north to the French colony of Mahe and continue to **Thalasseri**, still well-known as its colonial name of Tellicherry. See the squarish 18th century British Fort and a mosque that has a tiered roof with a profusion of copper and topped by a gold covered dome and old buildings. 'It was here that Dr. Hermann Gundert, a German missionary and scholar, compiled a Malayalam grammar book, Malayalabhaasha Vyakaranam (1859), the first Malayalam-English dictionary (1872), and the first Bible in Malayalam, apart from works in astronomy and history. You can stay at Ayisha Manzil, an enormous





mansion built by a British officer in the late-19th or early-20th century, which later became a family home of the Moosa family. It is appointed with rosewood, teak and mahogany furniture.

At dawn, you can watch a Teyyam dance at the Parsinnadukavu Temple. The Teyyam dance is a spiritual possession ritual, featuring colorfully costumed performers and depicting fascinating folk tales performed in selected temples. The Teyyam at this temple is a ritual enactment of Sree Muthappan, considered to be a manifestation of an integrated or unified form of Vishnu (with a fish-shaped crown) and Shiva (with a crescent-shaped crown). People of all castes, religions and nationalities are permitted to enter the temple and take part in the worship of this incarnation of Lord Shiva, during which fish is offered. Dogs are considered sacred here.

Travel north to **Kannur** or Cannanore, called the Land of Looms and Lore. The Portuguese period St. Angelo Fort, built on a promontory, northwest of Kannur, dates from the 16th century with a moat protecting the landward end and imposing bastions strengthening the laterite walls.

Kannur is also the centre for handloom weaving cooperatives.

From the coastal cities, head to the hills of **Wayanad**. These densely forested hills are home to many tribal groups. They also have prehistoric sites and caves. ☐





# FOOD TRAIL IN THE NORTHEAST

The Northeastern States of **Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram** and **Arunachal**, together with Bengal's mountainous regions, offer cuisines that are unlike anything you can taste in other parts of India. With many rivers, including the majestic Brahmaputra and myriad Himalayan streams, heavy rainfall and lush greenery, the Northeast is rich in fresh produce. In addition to the natural features, the cuisines here are influenced by the bordering countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Start your food tour at Bagdogra Airport or **Silliguri** Station, from where you can travel to **Gangtok** and other cities in Sikkim. Along the way, the links with Tibet can be seen in the number of places serving hot steamed flour dumplings called Momos (stuffed with minced meat or vegetables). Another popular and easily available Tibetan item is 'Thukpa', a broth with noodles

◀ *Cochrane Place at Kurseong serves interesting regional food like Anglo-Indian, Tibetan and Nepalese*





Cochrane Place, Kurseong

and vegetables or meat that make a one dish meal. 'Gyatuk' is made with thin noodles, 'Thenthuk' with flat noodles, and 'Bakthuk' with dumplings.

Traditional Sikkimese food includes many fermented foods that are also used as flavouring agents, together with spices. 'Chhurpi', a fermented milk product is a mildly sour tasting cheese. It is often used with 'Ningro', a wild fiddlehead fern to make the most exotic

combination. 'Hard Chhurpi' is made from yak meat, while 'Soft Chhurpi' that are used in pickles and soups are made using buttermilk.

'Kinema', a fermented soybean food, rich in protein with a woody taste, is matured in fern lined baskets. You can find them being sold in leaf wrappings. They are used to make chutneys and in curries eaten with rice. 'Gundruk' and 'Sinki' are two traditional fermented

vegetable products, which are sun-dried after fermentation and stored for consumption. These are later used for soupy dishes, curries and pickles.

'Selroti' is a fermented rice bread made by Gorkhas in Nepal and Sikkim, usually cooked on special occasions. Bamboo shoot is another commonly used ingredient in Sikkimese food. This can vary from fresh bamboo shoot called 'Tama', which is often used with pork to make an irresistible curry to Mesu, a traditional fermented bamboo shoot product used to make pickles.

Another unusual dish of Sikkim is 'Sishnu Dal', a dish prepared from leaves of edible wild varieties of stinging nettle. The leaves are also served stir-fried, while the flowers go into soupy dishes. For meat eating Sikkimese, a meal often includes pork dishes. The local stimulating drink is 'Chhang', made from millet, rice, corn, barlet, cassava or buckwheat, or a blend of these. Netuk House Hotel and Hotel Tibet are known



Assamese meal at Vivanta by Taj-Guwahati



*Bilehi Masor Tenga, a tangy fish curry at Vivanta by Taj-Guwahati*



*Pakku*



*Tenga*

for serving Sikkimese food. On prior booking, other hotels like The Elgin Nokhill will also cook a special Sikkimese meal for you. Café Culture is one of the restaurants serving Sikkimese specialties. In West Sikkim, you can stay in home-stay facilities that serve traditional home food of Sikkim.

From Sikkim, travel to the hill towns of Northern Bengal like **Kalimpong**, **Darjeeling** and **Kurseong**. Gompu's Bar & Restaurant is famous for its pork momos. Besides Tibetan, Nepalese and Bengali food, the food in these towns also show influences of the British tea planters. Cochrane Place is a hotel in Kurseong that serves Anglo-Indian food.

From Northern Bengal, travel east to **Guwahati**, the capital of Assam. A traditional meal in Assam begins with 'Khar' - stews named after the main ingredient - and ends with 'Tenga', a sour dish. These two dishes characterize a traditional meal in Assam. 'Xaak' refers to green leafy vegetables that are plentiful and varied in the waterways, floodplains, farmlands and jungles of the Brahmaputra basin. Each 'xaak' has a different taste. Rice is a major part of the Assamese meal. Powdered rice goes into making a sweet called 'Pitha'. Fish is an integral part of most Assamese

meals. Pork and duck are also widely eaten. Paradise, Delicacy and Khorika are well known restaurants for Assamese food. For a very special meal of Assamese and other Northeastern food, visit Vivanta by Taj, Guwahati.

Homestays and tea plantation houses in Assam also offer traditional cuisines. Assamese food is typically served in bell metal utensils made by an indigenous community called Mariya. 'Tamul' (betel nut, generally raw) and 'Paan' generally conclude the meal.

From Guwahati, drive to **Shillong**, which is the capital of Meghalaya. Rice and pork are the main foods eaten in Shillong. The popular dishes of the local communities like the Khasis and Jaintia are 'Jadoh', 'Ki Kpu', 'Tung-rymbai' and pickled bamboo shoots. Rice is also used to make breads and cakes.

From Assam, take the road to **Arunachal Pradesh**, where food varies from community to community. Like Sikkim, Ningro, Chhurpi, Momo and Thukpa are widely consumed, especially at places, where there are Buddhist monasteries. The mainstay is rice with plenty of greens and fish or meat. Lettuce is a popular vegetable here, boiled with spices and salt. Boiled rice cakes wrapped in leaves is a famous



Chhurpi soup

snack or accompaniment

**Nagaland** has hot chillies and grows hot spices. The Naga cuisine typically comprises smoked, dried or fermented meat, fish or soybean. Leafy greens are served boiled. A chutney called 'Tathu' accompanies the meal. Rice is a mainstay. Famous dishes are 'Akshi' (pork and bamboo shoot) and 'Amerso' (Chicken cooked with rice and bamboo). Yams or sweet potato are common additions. In Manipur, fish is widely consumed. 'Nga Thongba' is a fish stew with mustard seeds and other spices. A daily meal here would comprise fried marinated fish, a vegetable stew like Kangsoi and Iromba, a mashed potato and fermented fish chutney called 'Ngari' and plain rice along with bamboo, which is a common ingredient for pickles, salads or side dishes. While



Gundruk



Momo

meat, fish and prawns are relished in Manipur, there is a wide range of vegetarian dishes with peas, paneer, chickpea, bamboo shoot, green paw paw, banana flower & stem, cabbage and a local flat green bean.

In **Mizoram**, meals centre around a class of dishes called 'Bai' with seasonal greens and other vegetables. Smoked meats and bamboo shoot may be added. The food here is not very spicy, with fermented or smoked foods, giving much of the flavor. In **Tripura**, the classic dish is 'Muya Bai Wahan Chakhwi', a rice-thickened stew of bamboo shoots, pork, jackfruit, papaya, lime leaves and turmeric. Side dishes include potato and

mashed eggplant, roasted on coal. Some foods are stuffed into the hollow of a bamboo before roasting.

Throughout the northeast, people prefer to cook food on coals and local stoves rather than gas. 📸

Bamboo shoot



**R**anging from thick jungles to soaring snow covered peaks, Uttarakhand is an exciting destination for those who love wildlife and adventure. Trekking, mountaineering, skiing, white water rafting, sport fishing, elephant safaris, paragliding and many other activities are possible in the state over a week or two.

**Rishikesh** is one of the top places in India for the extreme sport of white water river rafting. A number of operators offer this sport with multi-person rafts propelled by single-bladed paddles and steered by an experienced river guide at the stern. The main challenge of rafting is navigating through 'Rapids', where there is a high increase in water velocity – called 'white water' because



# OUTDOORS IN UTTARAKHAND



Trekking in Uttarakhand



*Pangot near Nainital is superb for birding*

of the frothy and bubbly appearance of this water in areas of high gradient. Grade-1 rafting involves easy navigation across mild waterways. Grade-2 involves stretches with some rough water, small rapids & rocks and is very popular among tourists visiting Rishikesh. Grade-3 requires good skills to navigate the rapids. Grade-4 rapids are strong and can tumble the raft, so exceptional skills are needed for sharp maneuvers. Grade-5 has high risk level, and is only for those who are highly skilled and experienced. Rafting trips begin with safety presentations to understand problems that may arise. Rafting camps are set up at Brahampuri, Shivpuri and other beaches along the Ganges.

For those interested in wildlife, Rajaji National Park is easily accessible from Chilla near Rishikesh. Elephants are prolific and there are also leopards, some tiger, herds of elephants and a multitude of birds.

From Rishikesh, you can also head for the starting places for some of the most popular treks in the Garhwal Himalayas like **Kauri Pass**, **Har-ki-Dun**, **Gangotri-Tapovan** and **the Valley of Flowers**.

Take the road up the hill to **Uttarkashi**, which has the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. It offers basic and advanced courses in mountaineering.

**Joshimath** makes the base for trekking in the Nanda Devi area. Near Joshimath, **Auli** is one of India's top skiing destinations. Apart from the ski slopes, the Nanda Devi view from the cable car station is breathtaking. Auli is also the trailhead for the Kauri Pass trail, which is among Uttarkhand's most accessible treks. The three to five day trek offers beautiful views of the Nanda Devi mountains.

From Auli, you can take the road to the **Kumaon Himalayas**. One of the major towns is **Almora**, which has many historical places. From Almora, head for **Binsar**, which is good for nature treks and birdwatching.

East from Almora, **Jageshwar** has an impressive temple complex set among deodar and rhododendron forests. There are some



*Spotting birds in Uttarakhand*



*The Alanknanda Ganga near Rishikesh offers one of India's best rafting stretches*



**Verditer flycatcher at Pangot**



**River Rafting**

*Motorcycling on Uttarakhand's roads offers picturesque Himalayan views*



good nature treks here. This is a popular place for yoga lessons.

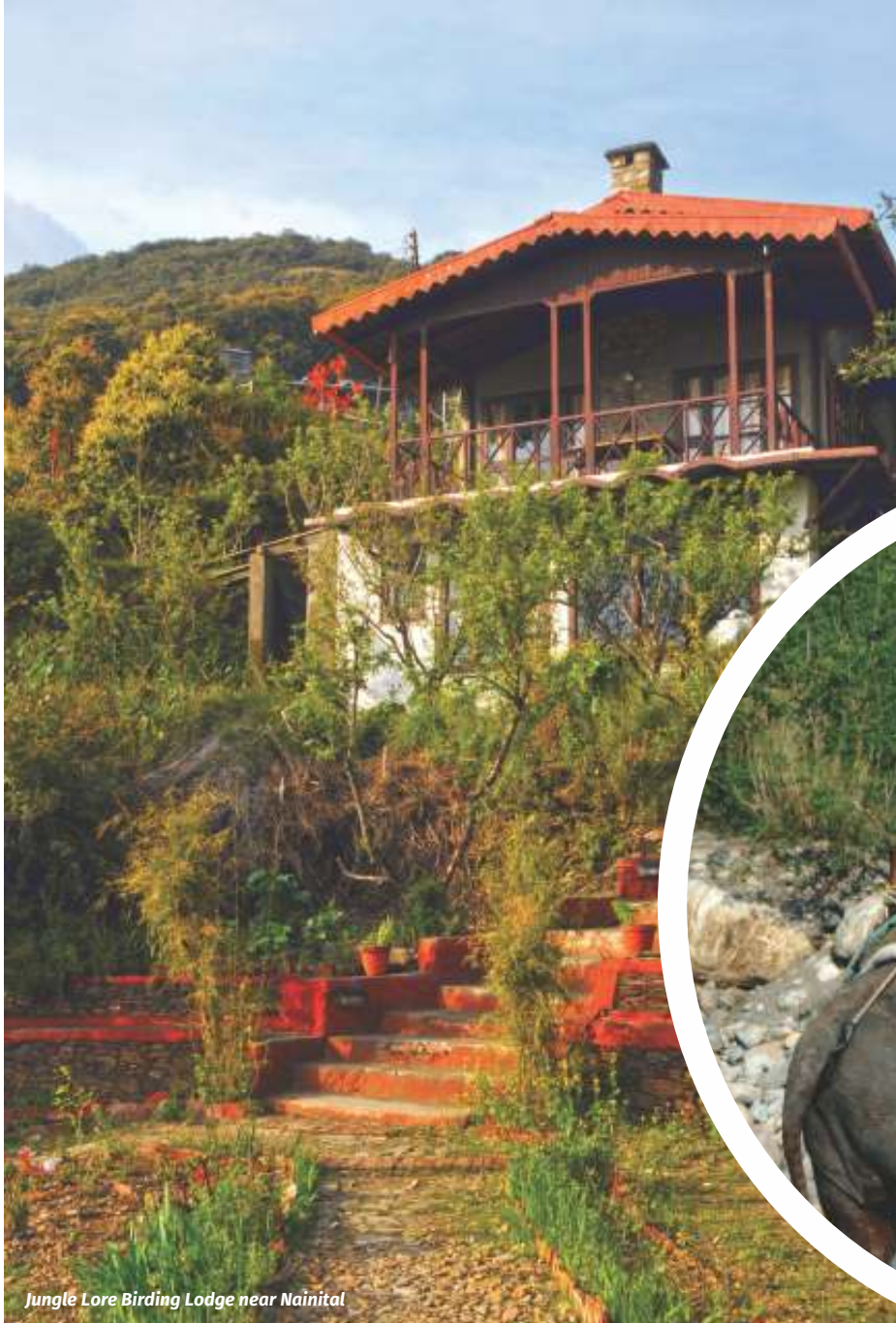
For those, who enjoy sport fishing, the **Sharda River** (also called Mahakali River) has a good sized population of the mighty golden mahseer and other large fish. **Pancheshwar** at the confluence of the Saryu and Mahakali is one of the top sites, which also hosts an international angling competition. **Abbot Mount village** has some good accommodation, where you can make base to explore this remote part of Uttarakhand.

One of the popular treks in the Kumaon region, the Pindari Glacier trail begins at Loharket near Bageshwar. This 6-day trek goes through pristine countryside, largely inhabited by shepherd communities, and goes to the 3353m high glacier. A more challenging 8-day trek to the



*Birdwatching at Pangot*

River to the Himalayan foothills, Corbett has a diversity of habitat like grasslands, deciduous forests and mountainous areas. It is named for Jim Corbett who was one of the champions for protection of these forests. The forest is very popular with birdwatchers – the checklist includes about 600 species of



Jungle Lore Birding Lodge near Nainital



Elephant safari at Corbett

Milam Glacier begins near **Munsiyari**.

In this corner of Uttarakhand, **Pithoragarh** is being promoted for aero sports like paragliding - the adventure sport of flying lightweight and free-flying - foot-launched glider aircraft.

For nature lovers, **Nainital** is delightful. Though this hill station city is too crowded, there are some lovely walks and hikes not too far from the chaotic centre. The walk to Land's End covers oak, deodar and pine forests.

**Pangot** near Nainital is a paradise for birdwatchers. The thick forests around the village abound with colourful birds.

There are some good lodges where you can stay and get close views of birds, as also possibly some mammals too. Even leopards could be sighted here. The treks to places like Kilbury offer opportunities to spot beautiful pheasants and magnificent eagles.

**Sattal lake** is a popular day trip from Nainital – the vegetation around the lake comprise a hot spot for watching birds.

From Sattal continue to the **Corbett National Park**, which is among India's oldest and finest wildlife reserves. Rising from the valley of the Ramganga

birds. The animals are largely seen in the chours, as the Savannah grasslands here are called, where large herds of spotted deer, sambar and antelope can be seen. These are also excellent for viewing wild elephant. Some of the best chours are near the **Ramganga Reservoir**, where gharial crocodile is a big attraction. Ducks and other waterfowl can also be seen along the Ramganga. During jeep or elephant safaris, there are chances of spotting a tiger or leopard. The king cobra and other large snakes could also be seen during the drives. ■

# A Wildlife Trail in West Bengal

**R**anging from the coastal forests of the **Sundarbans** to the high altitude forests of the East Himalayas, Bengal is a home to magnificent wildlife like the Indian elephant, great one-horned rhinoceros, royal Bengal tiger, leopard, Himalayan black bear, clouded leopard, gaur (Indian bison) and a variety of deer. The Himalayan forests shelter red panda, leopard cat, yellow-throated marten, serow and takin. Apart from mammals, many large reptiles like the estuarine salt water crocodile, python, king cobra and water monitor can be seen in the forests. The rich birdlife includes colourful species like the scarlet minivet, kalij pheasant, blood pheasant, satyr tragopan, brown and fulvous parrotbills, rufous-vented tit and a variety of kingfishers.



*Sundarbans Jungle Camp.*



*Sundarban boat cruise*

From **Kolkata** Airport, travel to the Sundarbans National Park and its adjoining Sajnekhali Sanctuary, covering much of the Gangetic Delta. This national park is densely covered by mangrove forests, providing a nursery of life for many fishes. It is also one of the most important areas for the royal Bengal tiger. The Sunderbans Tiger Reserve has a total geographical area of 2585 sq.km., continuous with the mangrove habitat in Bangladesh. The Sundarbans mangrove forest, one of the largest swamp forests in the world, lies on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal. The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including more than 260 bird species, many threatened mammals and reptiles, aquatic fauna and marine life.

From one of the jetties, you can hire a boat to explore some of the waterways and islands in the vast river delta formed by Ganges, Brahmaputra and

Meghna. The first stretch of journey passes inhabited islands, subsisting on agriculture and fisheries. As you go deeper, the dense mangrove forest fringes both sides of the rivers and creeks. The forest is famous for a kind of mangrove called 'Sundari' with specialised roots called pneumatophore, which emerge above ground and help in gaseous exchange even when the forest is waterlogged during the rains.

From the boat, keep a watch for wildlife in the forests and on the island shores. Spotted deer are often sighted and there are good chances of seeing the estuarine salt water crocodile, one of the world's largest reptiles. Water monitor lizard is also sighted by many visitors. One of the specialties of the park is the fishing cat. Rhesus monkey and Jackal are quite common. The river shores offer good opportunities to see wading birds like sandpipers, stints, plovers, curlews, nine species of gulls

and terns and also storks. Out of 12 species of kingfishers found in India, six can be seen in the Sundarbans National Park.

A popular stop on a Sundarbans cruise, **Sajnekhali** has enclosures for estuarine salt-water crocodiles. The bushes are good for great tits, green bee-eaters, a sunbird and other birds. Another stop is at **Sudhannokhali**, where a tightly-meshed walkway leads to one of the well-known watchtowers of the Sundarbans reserve. On both sides of the meshed fence are the mysterious-looking mangrove forests with their tightly packed canopies that hardly allow light to penetrate and the strange-looking protruding roots reaching out for oxygen and nutrition from the marshy soil. The watchtower overlooks a fresh-water pond, one of the few drinking water sources for the local wildlife like deer, wild boar and water monitor. Another island stop, **Dabonki**



*A popular stop on the Sundarbans tour*

has a very attractive walkway called a 'canopy walk' as it is raised on pillars passing through the dense forests at the treetop level, giving not only an amazing view of the surrounding forests but also an opportunity to get close to the denizens of the upper canopy like birds. The aerial walk is also a good way to experience the mangrove eco-system, for the protruding roots of the mangrove trap nutritious debris which, together with the protection offered by the rib-like root formations, make the trees a nursery of life. You could see mudskipper fishes dragging themselves on the swampy soil and fiddler crabs named for their large claws that are quite out of proportion to the rest of their tiny bodies, making them look like musicians. The Dobanki watchtower is an open rooftop with a superb view on all sides, taking in a number of water points on the island. Much of the Sundarbans is a birdwatchers' paradise, especially Sajnekhali Bird Sanctuary

with unusual species like masked finfoot, mangrove whistler and spoonbill sandpiper.

Return to Kolkata and take the flight to Bagdogra or train to **Siliguri/New Jalpaiguri** Station. Close to Siliguri, Mahananda Sanctuary is located on the west bank of River Teesta in the southern part of Darjeeling district. Entered from Sukna, this sanctuary has a variety of landscapes from the plains to the hills along with sal forest, dry mixed forest and wet mixed forest. The birdlife is pretty rich. This is a habitat of elephant, spotted deer and big cats – besides tiger and leopard, the rare clouded leopard is also said to be present.

Further north of the Mahanada Sanctuary, **Gorumara National Park** is a prime habitat of mega-mammals – the rhino, the elephant and the gaur (Indian bison). It is also home to tiger and leopard. Elephant rides take you through riverine forests, savannah and

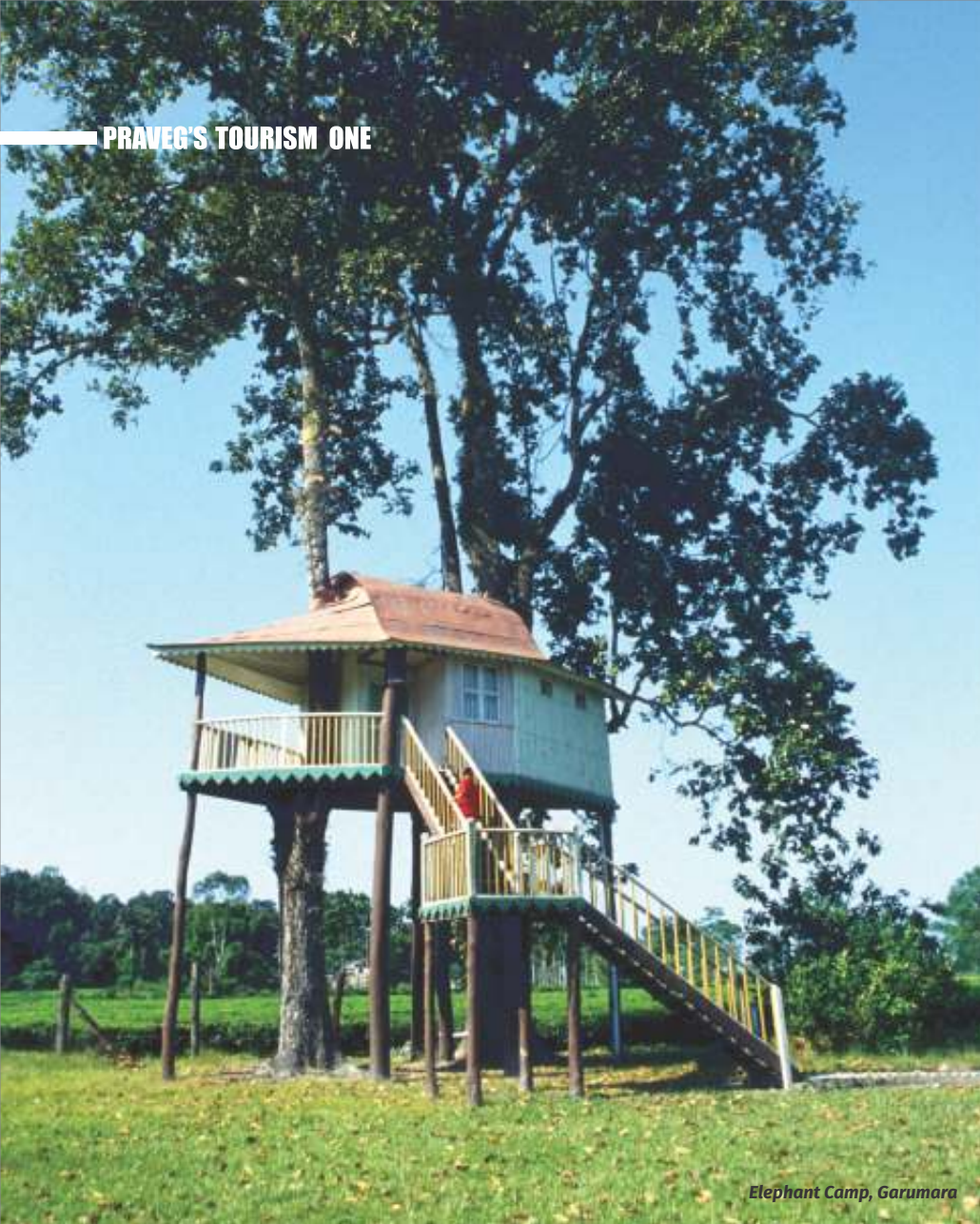




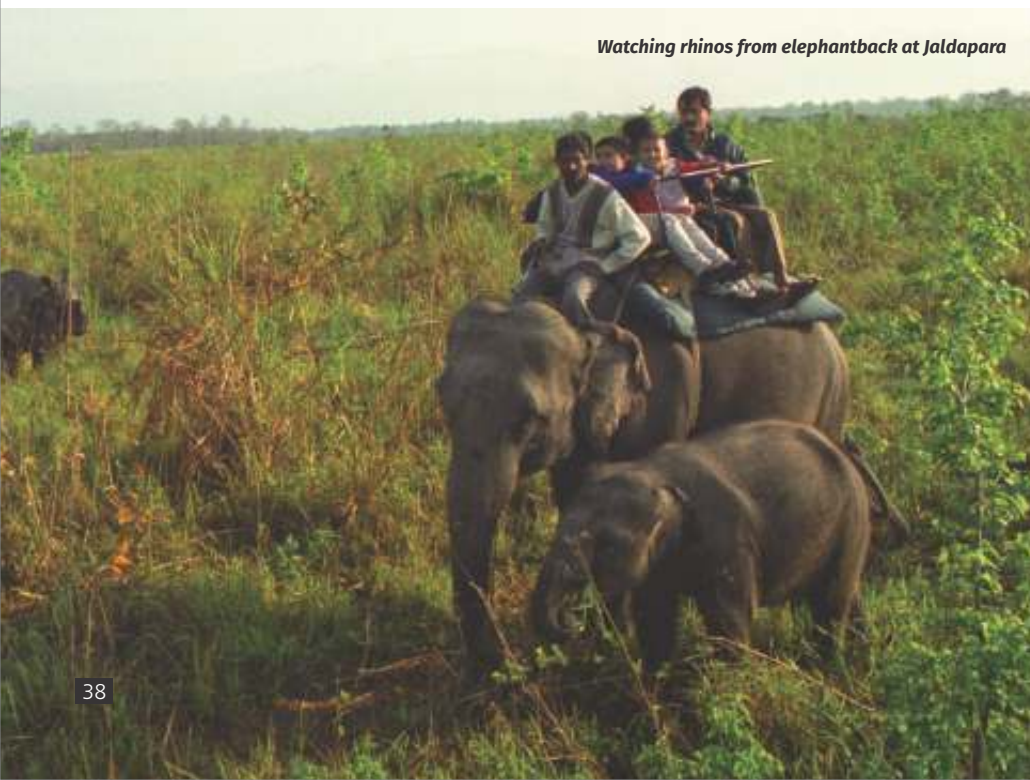
*The dreaded royal Bengal tiger at Sundarbans*



*Sundarbans is a home to the estuarine salt water crocodile, the largest reptile in the world*



*Elephant Camp, Garumara*



*Watching rhinos from elephantback at Jaldapara*

other habitats in search of wildlife. There are also viewing towers set at strategic places or along the river, where you can spend time waiting for wild animals.

From **Gorumara**, travel east to the Jaldapara National Park, which is one of Bengal's finest wildlife reserves. Located in the flood plains of the River Torsa and other small rivers, its large tracts of grasslands offer good viewing of wildlife. The variety of habitats and many rivulets make this an important habitat for mammals and birds. One-horned rhinoceros is one of the star attractions. A good population of gaur or Indian bison is another attraction. Indian muntjak or barking deer, hog deer and sambar are also likely to be spotted. Leopards and Indian elephant are often seen here. There is also a population of sloth bear.

These parks are part of the Duars or Duars, flood plains that are excellent for butterfly spotting. Endangered birds like white-bellied heron, greater adjutant and bengal florican are found here. Buxa Tiger Reserve is located in the north-eastern corner of Jalpaiguri district in the Duars. It has a good diversity of flora and fauna.

As you head north from the Duars to the East Himalayas, one of the best of the high-altitude wildlife reserves is the **Neora Valley National Park**. The park is one of the three protected areas in Darjeeling district and one of the most undisturbed forests. Neora Valley and the nearby town of Lava are very popular among birdwatchers because of the excellent variety of birds seen here. Virgin natural forests, dense bamboo groves, colourful flowering trees, lush green valley, meandering rivers and streams as well as snowcapped mountains make this a beautiful region. The semi-evergreen forests are home to birds like satyr tragopan, crimson-breasted woodpecker, Darjeeling woodpecker, hawk cuckoo, mountain imperial pigeon, Jerdon's baza, moun-





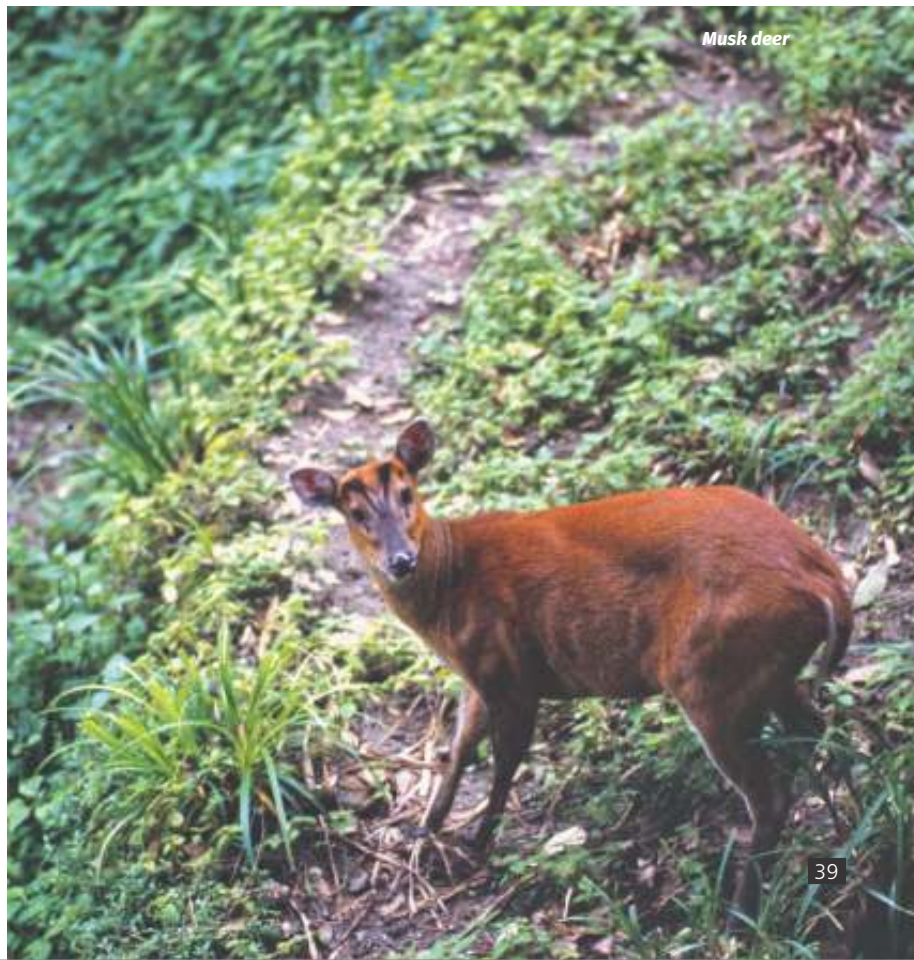
A rhino at Jaldapara

Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI Pictures by DINESH SHUKLA

tain hawk eagle, dark-throated thrush, flycatchers, laughing thrushes, fire-breasted flowerpecker, fire-tailed sunbird, maroon-backed accentor, dark-breasted rosefinch, red-headed bullfinch and gold-naped finch. And high altitude mammals like leopard, civets, red panda, Himalayan black bear, golden cat, goral, serow, Himalayan flying squirrel and tahr.

Continue from here to **Singhalila National Park**, situated at the Northwestern border of Darjeeling district. The forests are rich in flora like rhododendron, magnolia, orchids, medicinal plant, mosses, lichens, mushrooms, tree ferns and climbers. The forest has a rich bird diversity. Satyr tragopan, blackbacked kaleej pheasant, blood pheasant, hill partridge and redbreasted hill partridge are some of the sought after species. Himalayan mammals like the red panda, clouded leopard, black bear and Himalayan mouse hare inhabit this forest.

This national park borders Sikkim. A trip to the wildlife reserves of Bengal can be combined with those of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Assam or Bangladesh. 📍



Musk deer

# Trip on Culture

Beginning of the year - new resolutions, new travel goals and some of the amazing festivals are celebrated in India and around the world, which offer a unique way of experiencing the destination and an opportunity to bond with like-minded folks. We bring the most unique and fabulous celebrations of this quarter from India and all around the world, so wherever you plan to go this quarter, keep it high on festivity.



**International Kite Festival**  
GUJARAT



**Losar Festival**  
LADAKH



**Attukal Pongala**  
KERALA



**Holi**  
VRINDAVANA

## Far Far away



**Chinese New Year**  
HONG KONG



**Thaipusam**  
MALAYSIA



**Battle of the Oranges**  
ITALY



**Mardi Gras**  
NEW ORLEANS



## *International Kite Festival - Uttarayan*

GUJARAT

### WHAT

The International Kite Festival is an annual event, coinciding with Uttarayan/Makar Sankranti. It is an official celebration of Uttarayan, which marks the shift in the movement of the Sun towards the Northern hemisphere. The festival offers an unusual sight of thousands of adults and children of all caste and classes, standing high on the rooftops tugging at the kites, dancing on the tunes of air in the sky. The celebration continues throughout the day. Undhiyu is a special Gujarati dish prepared on this festive day.

### WHEN

Uttarayan is celebrated on January 14 every year, followed by Vasi Uttarayan on January 15. International Kite Festival 2017 will be organized during January 8-13, 2017.

### WHERE

Uttarayan is celebrated across Gujarat, with major centers of kite-flying in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Nadiad, among others.

The International Kite Festival 2017 will be held at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad.





## *Losar Festival*

LADAKH

### **WHAT**

Losar means new year. Losar Festival is the Tibetan New Year. Commemorating the struggle between the good and the evil, people come out in the street, chant, dance and sing – making it a worth-visiting festival. The local houses are all decorated to welcome the new year, new dresses are worn and special festive dishes are prepared.

### **WHEN**

February 27, 2017

### **WHERE**

All over Ladakh





## *Attukal Pongala*

KERALA

### WHAT

On Pongala day, millions of women throng the Attukal Devi Temple, Thiruvananthapuram to offer 'Pongala' (naivedhya) to the Goddess Kannagi. Millions of women build millions of fires in the open street and prepare a pot of rice on the flames, transforming the city of Thiruvananthapuram into holy ground for women to prepare 'pongala'. The festival earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1997, when 1.5 million women attended the religious event.

### WHEN

March 11, 2017

### WHERE

Attukal Bhagavathi Temple, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala





## Holi

VRINDAVANA

### WHAT

While Holi is celebrated in almost every part of India, the celebration at Vrindavana holds special importance as it is believed to be the place where Lord Krishna grew up. Banke Bihari Temple in Vrindavana hosts Holi for a week. During this week, the Bihariji (another name of Lord Krishna) is dressed up in white clothes. Devotees play holi with Bihariji. Gulal, coloured water, organic colours made of flowers and kesar are used to play holi. With the tunes of bhajans and religious songs playing in the background, the festival of colours and excitement gets a spiritual touch.

### WHEN

March 13, 2017

### WHERE

Banke Bihari Temple,  
Vrindavana





## Chinese New Year

HONG KONG

### WHAT

The most colourful festival of the city, Chinese New Year catches you up in the vigour as you throng the crowded temples for a good fortune, explore the festive markets selling a variety of foods & goodies and capture the lanterns embellishing the sky of the city. Hong Kong gets a festive makeover during the new year. A wide range of entertainment and engaging activities like superb fireworks show over the harbour, enthralling performances by the international and local performers, a stunning parade of floats among many others make it a must-visit festival.

### WHEN

January 11 to February 28, 2017

### WHERE

Hong Kong





## Thaipusam

MALAYSIA

### WHAT

Thaipusam traditionally falls on the full moon. The celebration is held as a tribute to the Hindu God of War, Lord Muragan. A procession is held along the streets of Kuala Lumpur led by a chariot that presents a statue of Lord Muragan. There is a long barefoot walk to the Batu Caves, which is the most attractive part of the celebration. During the pilgrimage, devotees carry ornate frames i.e. Kavadi, which are supported by a series of spikes, piercing skins of many devotees' chest and back as a measure of their faith.

### WHEN

February 9, 2017

### WHERE

Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Penang & Selangor. The festival is also celebrated in India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh), Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and in many other parts of the world.







## *Battle of The Oranges*

ITALY

### WHAT

The Battle of the Oranges is the festival of freedom and rebellion. The annual food fight is an orange version of popular Valencia's La Tomatina festival, and is celebrated by players dressed as guards throwing oranges from horse-drawn carriages, while nine teams of commoners on the ground return fire with the oranges. The battle is the most exciting part of the carnival. A fiery display and huge procession end the festival, followed by a massive clean-up.

### WHEN

February 25-28, 2017

### WHERE

Northern Italian city of Ivrea



## *Mardi Gras*

NEW ORLEANS

**WHAT**

If you want to party like there is no tomorrow, New Orleans is the place where you should go. The best time to visit New Orleans is the extended weekend before Mardi Gras. During this time, you are sure to catch up the most popular parades in different parts of the city. Mardi Gras is the last day of the carnival.

**WHEN**

February 25, 2017

**WHERE**

New Orleans



*Travel with Safer & Luxury*



Online  
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[www.pttbus.in](http://www.pttbus.in)

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# Easy Guide: Blissful Bhutan



**B**hutan is a serene place surrounded by higher mountain peaks of the Himalayas. The pristine destination attracts all types of tourists throughout the year, but is most sought after by the mountain-lovers, religious people and adventure seekers. The country, where Buddhist values meet modernity and Gross National Happiness is the measurement of success, offers exotic sights of the Himalayas, tranquil Buddhist monasteries, untouched & unique culture, uncountable tales from history and a chance to meet fun-loving people.

If visiting Bhutan is on the cards, here we present all the details you need to know before your trip.

## The weather

The climate in Bhutan is extremely varied due to the vast differences in altitude present in the country. Southern part of the country has a hot and humid climate that doesn't evidence major shifts throughout the year. The temperature ranges from 15-30 degree Celsius. Most Central part of the country is covered with forests, affecting its temperature. This part of the country has warm summers and dry & cold winters. The Northern part is cold during winters. Mountain peaks are covered in snow throughout the year.

### **Spring**

Early March to mid-April

### **Summer**

Mid-April to late June

### **Monsoon**

Late June to late September

### **Autumn**

Late September to late

November

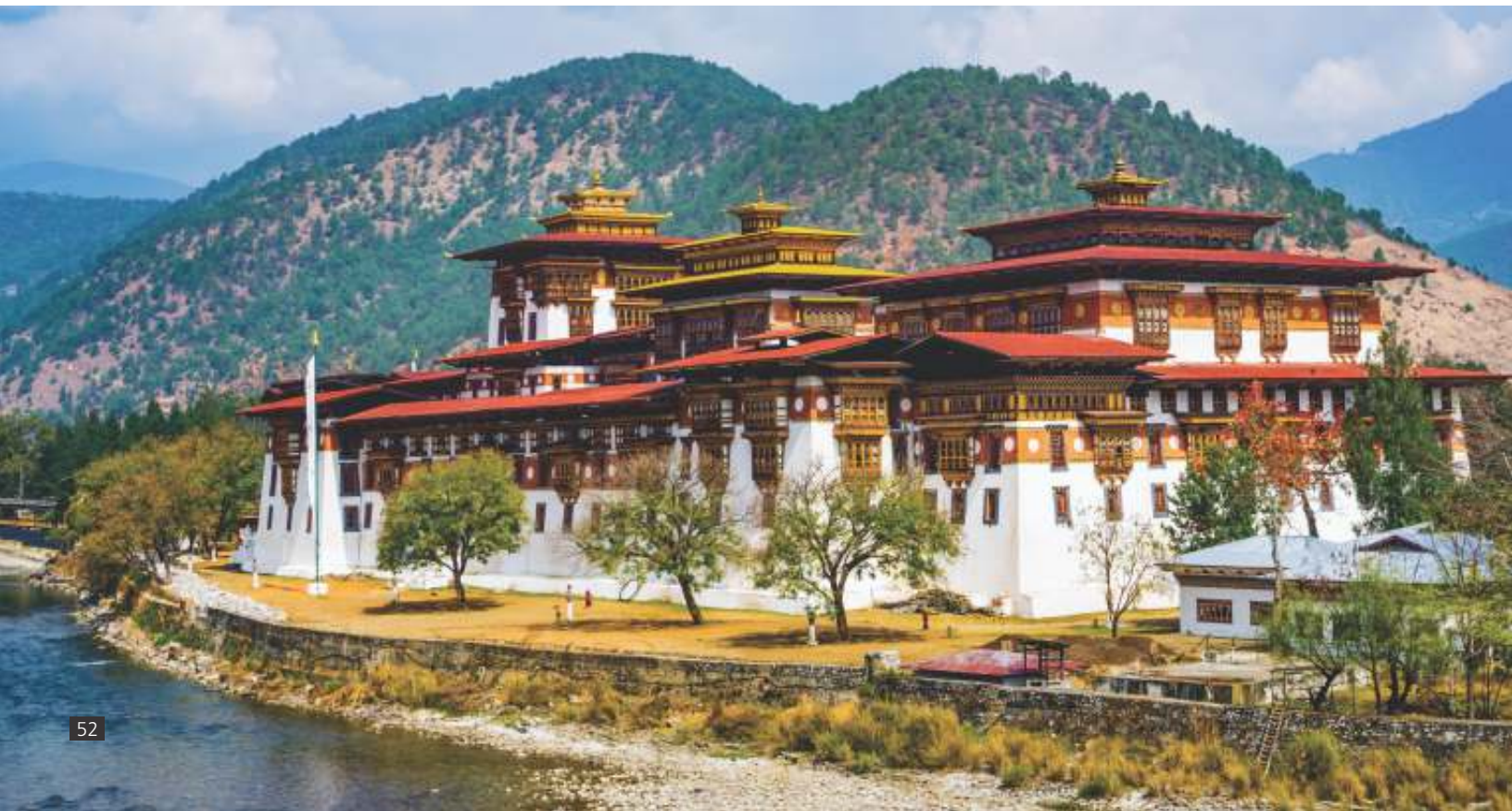
### **Winter**

Late November to March

## The best time to visit

Though Bhutan is a year-round destination, the best time to explore the colourful culture of the country is during February to July and October to December because of the stunning atmosphere and Tshechu Festival (annual Bhutanese festival held in each district of Bhutan on the tenth day of a month of the lunar Tibetan calendar). The festival tours in Bhutan offer a complete insight into the nation's vibrant tradition & culture.

For those interested in climbing the mountains, travel during March to May or September to November for the best views of mountains that bloom with flowers.





For photography and nature, prefer visiting the country during July-August. During this time, the rain is not very heavy. Moreover, the low season offers attractive deals on hotels and air-tickets. Plus, there is no better time to capture the flourishing nature than the monsoons.

### Bhutanese currency

Ngultrum (Nu) is the Bhutan's currency. Nu is at par with the Indian Rupee (1 INR = 1 Nu). Small denominations like INR 50 and INR 100 are accepted in Bhutan. However, it is advisable to exchange the Indian currency at the Bhutan airport.

ATMs are not widely available in Bhutan and most do not accept international cards, except MasterCard. Traveller's cheque can be carried as a backup option for ATM. Credit Cards are now accepted widely. Most hotels and handicraft stores, except in Central/Eastern Bhutan, accept Visa & Mastercard credit cards. However, don't forget the surcharge (of as high as 4% ) on your credit card transactions.

### Cellular and internet services

The service providers that work in Bhutan on international roaming are Airtel and Vodafone. However, once in Bhutan, it is advisable to

purchase Tashi or B-Mobile SIM card to avoid the international roaming charges. It will cost Rs. 100 per SIM card and will need a photocopy of your passport/voter ID. The charges are Rs. 5 per minute for calling India and Rs. 2 per minute for a local call.

Most standard class tourist hotels, luxury hotels and lodges offer Wi-fi facility. However, some more remote valleys like Phobjikha have irregular supply of power and internet.

### What to pack

- For a summer trip, light clothing. However, carry light woollens as the nights can be cold.

- Carry sunglasses and sunscreen lotion
- For a winter trip, heavy woollens or jacket
- Comfortable shoes, hiking gears
- Camera
- Flashlight (for occasional power cuts)

### Is road-trip to Bhutan a good idea?

There are two ways to reach this beautiful land:

- 1) By road
- 2) By flight

The Flapper Life - A Leading Women Journey Planner based in Mumbai suggests to take a scenic route – by road from Bagdogra to experience the picturesque landscapes on

the way. It takes around 5 hours to reach the border town of Bhutan – Phuentsholing. Once the travel permits are in place, it is best to leave for Thimphu – the capital of Bhutan.

An ideal way to cover the major portions of Bhutan would be - visiting Thimphu, Paro and Punakha. These places can be covered well in the span of 7 days. The ideal season to explore these places would be during the Spring time as the flowers flood the valley with colours during this time.

### The cost factor

A trip to Bhutan, including airfares should not cost you more than Rs. 70,000/-, provided all your bookings are done at least 2 months prior to your travel dates.

### Must-do activities in Bhutan and the associated cost

- 1) River Rafting in the icy waters in Punakha – Rs. 2000 approximately
- 2) Taking local archery lessons from the locals in Thimphu – Rs. 1000 approximately
- 3) Hiking to Tiger's Nest Monastery in Paro – Rs. 2000
- 4) Experiencing a hot stone bath – Tsachu in Paro – Rs. 1500 approximately
- 5) Village tour on your way to Chimi Lhakhang Monastery, Punakha – Zero cost
- 6) Visiting live museum in Thimphu – Rs. 100 approximately
- 7) Wearing traditional Bhutanese clothes – Rs. 50 approximately

8) Visiting various Dzongs and Monasteries at three different locations – No cost

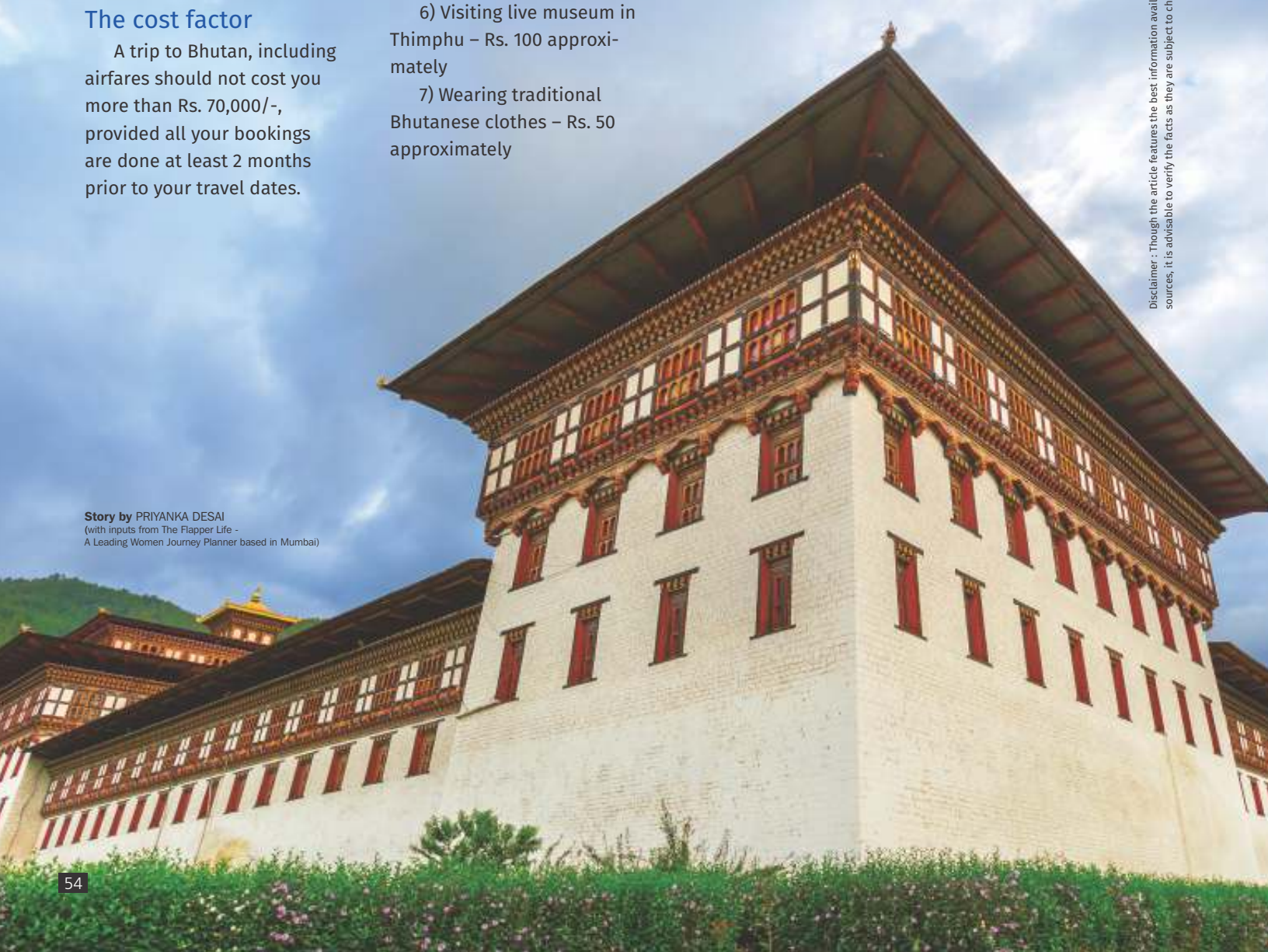
### Stay and Food

The cost of stay depends on the budget of a traveller. Comfortable and luxurious stays would not cost you more than Rs. 4000/- per day excluding taxes.

For food, your per day cost for breakfast, lunch and dinner would be Rs. 400, Rs. 450 and Rs. 550 respectively. ■

Story by PRIYANKA DESAI  
(with inputs from The Flapper Life -  
A Leading Women Journey Planner based in Mumbai)

Disclaimer: Though the article features the best information available from the authentic sources, it is advisable to verify the facts as they are subject to change from time to time.





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If you've ever found yourself googling 'How to travel the world' or 'World tour' or 'The best ways to travel the world', you're surely one of those bitten by the travel bug. Of course, it is not as easy as it sounds, like you have your work commitments, your family to look after and importantly, a trip like that is way too expensive, right? However, if it is only the cost factor that is holding you back from exploring this amazing world, we can help in some ways. Yes, 'Round-the-World Ticket' enables you to travel multiple continents with just one ticket. It is much cheaper than booking a dozen one-way flights. One of the largest airline alliances that offers 'Round-the-World Ticket' is OneWorld. In a candid conversation with Mr. Michael Blunt, VP - Corporate Communications, OneWorld Alliances, we try to decode the concept of 'Round-the-World Ticket' for you. Let's find out more...



**ROUND-THE-WORLD  
TICKET  
WORLD TOUR?  
DREAM ON!**



**1. How does the concept of 'Round-the-World Ticket' function?**

It's very simple really – you buy one ticket for a series of flights stopping off at your own choice of cities, flying all the way around the world. The key rule governing round-the-world, or RTW tickets is that you do have to fly right around the world, circumnavigating the planet, starting and finishing at the same place.

OneWorld offers two distinct types of RTW ticket. The first one is OneWorld Explorer. This is a unique fare with its price based on the number of continents you visit, rather than the distance you fly, making your trip plans much more flexible.

The second one is Global Explorer, which is priced based on the length of your journey (There are three levels – 26,000 miles, 29,000 miles and 39,000 miles in Economy Class and 34,000 miles in Business and First Class). It also includes flights offered by some airlines that are not part of OneWorld, expanding the network you can choose from further still.

Both the fares include a generous number of stopovers and all the usual perks of flying with OneWorld and its group of leading airlines. If you are a member of any of the OneWorld member airlines' loyalty schemes, you can earn reward points or miles along the way and enjoy all your usual privileges throughout your journey.

**2. Which are the routes offered by OneWorld?**

OneWorld member airlines serve more than 1,000 destinations in 150 plus countries all around the world – including almost 20 cities in India.

Our network is focused on all the places most international travellers want to visit – and we are the only airline alliance with a member airline based in Australia, making OneWorld the obvious choice if your RTW trip consists of this huge and attractive country.

**3. How much does a 'Round-the-World Ticket' cost?**

From India, price starts from INR 2,00,530 in Economy Class, to INR 4,28,875 in Business Class and INR 8,05,340 in First Class.

**4. Which kind of travellers should opt for RTW tickets?**

To state the obvious, one who wants to fly right around the world! That could be a businessman visiting customers in different countries around the globe, someone on a career break taking a trip of a lifetime, or a student backpacker on a gap year.

**5. Besides financial benefits that are attached to RTW, what are the other benefits offered by OneWorld?**

OneWorld is an alliance of some of the world's leading airlines, committed to providing the highest level of service and convenience to frequent international travellers – Air Berlin, American Airlines, British Airways,





Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Iberia, Japan Airlines, LATAM Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian, S7 Airlines, SriLankan Airlines along with around 30 affiliates.


OneWorld member airlines work together to deliver consistently a superior and seamless travel experience with special privileges and rewards for frequent flyers, including earning and redeeming miles and points across the entire alliance network. Top tier cardholders (Emerald and Sapphire) enjoy access to more than 650 airport lounges and are offered extra baggage allowances. The most regular travellers (Emerald) can also use fast track security lanes at the selected airports.

## 6. What is the most useful advice you would like to give to

**someone who wants to travel maximum countries, but not sure where to start from (or which route to opt for)?**

Start from your home base – remember you will need to return there at the end of your trip. Then write a list of all the places you would ideally like to visit during your journey – let your imagination run wild! And then open the journey planner on OneWorld.com. The journey planner will let you plot your trip step-by-step and provide an instant price quote at the end of it.

## 7. Which nationals travel the most using RTW? Where does India stand?

OneWorld's alliance fares are booked by people from all around the world – including many from India. 

“

**So if you're a little flexible about your route and destinations, loyal to a particular airline and want to really max out your rewards, let's realize the wildest dream of flying around the world by picking a dozen countries you would want to see before you die and hitting them all by airplanes.**

”





# Gujarat Chief Minister inaugurates the much-awaited

# Rann Utsav

2016-17

To celebrate the unique white desert of Gujarat and colourful Kutchi culture & traditions, Shri Vijay Rupani, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat inaugurated the annual Rann Utsav on December 13, 2016.

Every year, Rann Utsav is organized bringing together the distinct aspects of Kutchi culture & traditions in the backdrop of white desert – the geographical wonder of the region. The largest salt desert is frequented by thousands of tourists from India and around the world during the Rann Utsav

to witness the mesmerizing amalgamation of full moonlight and the white desert that glitters like thousands of gems scattered on land.

As quoted by MIG, Shri Rupani mentioned these glorious views in his address and said that it is such rare experiences that attract visitors here and are making this event a success. Other dignitaries to attend the inauguration included Shri Rajendrabhai Trivedi - State Minister, Shri S. J. Haider - Principal Secretary and Shri Ganpatsinh Vasava - State Tourism Minister.



## Hon'ble CM Shri Vijaybhai Rupani along with Tourism Minister Shri Ganpatsinh Vasava and other dignitaries visited White Rann Resort

The most attractive features of this unique festival are White Rann Resort's tented accommodation and Rajwadi Bhunga i.e. traditional circular mud-huts that are set up to offer authentic Kutchi hospitality to the tourists. The resort also offers the spectacular glimpses of Kutchi culture, handicrafts, lip-smacking Gujarati cuisine by Courtyard Marriot, soulful cultural performances, complimentary Rann Safari by open-top double decker bus and other engaging activities to make this desert carnival a perfect vacation destination.



# Incredible India Tourism Investors' Summit 2016: 86 agreements worth Rs 15000 crore inked

The Incredible India Tourism Investors' Summit was organized from 21st-23rd September, 2016 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi with the objective of attracting large investments and presenting the tangible investment-ready projects to the investors in the different States/Union Territories of India.

The summit provided a global platform for interaction to the investors, policy makers and Indian industry leaders, other stakeholders and showcased the investment opportunities in the tourism sector in India by presenting a bouquet of investment-ready projects from the states/union territories. The issues discussed included Investment in Core Infrastructure for Tourism; Digital India and Start-up India: Investment in Tourism Technology; Panel discussion on MICE and Medical Tourism, etc.

At the valedictory function of the summit, Tourism and Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma said, "We will assist and support investors for making India the tourist destination of choice." The number of MoUs signed by various States, along with investment involved in is presented in the following table.

States	MoUs signed	Amount (Rs.in crores)
Gujarat	29	8235.00
Karnataka	2	2595.00
Rajasthan	45	847.70
Uttarakhand	9	507.00
Chhattisgarh	1	12.00



Among the major announcement made to promote investments are: Institutionalisation of IITIS to be held annually with the next summit to be organized in September 2017; Setting up of a task force headed by Secretary, Tourism with membership from relevant ministries, state governments, and

industry associations to undertake strategic planning; Setting up of an investor facilitation desk to handhold investors and facilitate projects; And organising investor meets in states with the support of Ministry of Tourism.



**At IITIS 2016, Praveg Communications Limited, Ahmedabad-based leading communications company with a diversified portfolio in Advertising & Promotion, Event & Exhibition Management, Hospitality and Publications, signed MoUs with the Government of Gujarat for the development of various tourism infrastructure.**

## What's Travelling



### Fly high: Direct air-connectivity between India and Vietnam

A new agreement is signed by Air India and VietJet, according to which non-stop flights will be launched, initially between Delhi and Ho Chi Minh City. The deal was signed by Air India's Commercial Director, Pankaj Srivastava and VietJet's Vice President, Dinh Viet Phuong in Delhi. Other areas covered by the partnership include distribution, sales, trade promotions & tourism, training and personnel exchanges. The launch date and other details of the new direct flights have not been revealed.



### Travel made easy: A messaging service launched

Thrillophilia, one of the largest tours and activities company in Asia, has announced a messaging communication service that allows its millions of users to interact directly with the local service providers before and after the trips. The company brings this technology to the fastest-growing sector of travel and hospitality. The messaging service can be used in two ways. One, where travellers can send message to the local tour operators before or after booking. Two, suppliers can also initiate chat with a customer who has booked a tour with them. A supplier needs to enable chat service for oneself on the ThrilloSupplier App. Another interesting feature here is that users can start conversation with Thrillophilia Experience Officers at any given point of time. There are dedicated channels for general enquiry, booking request and on trip support. Thrillophilia said the messaging technology is now available to all users, but it's being rolled out to Thrillophilia's supply partners in phases.



### Glamour quotient: Priyanka Chopra to be the face of Assam Tourism

The awesome Assam has signed a 2-year contract with Bollywood diva Priyanka Chopra to promote the state tourism both nationally and internationally. This is the first time that the state government has engaged a celebrity of Priyanka's stature to promote Assam at the national and international levels as a favourite tourist destination.



### Feel the thrill: Website to book a mystery vacation for yourself

Feeling adventurous? Jubel can plan a surprise vacation for you. Just let it know your interests and it will deliver a sealed envelope, which will contain a surprise destination with the detailed itinerary. It creates personalized adventures based on your chosen 'path'. It'll deliver letters at different points during your journey with instructions on where you should go next to turn your trip into a unique experience. Now, that's what you call a thrilling trip, isn't it?



### Sky is not the limit: Moon holidays to be a reality in 10 years

For a £8,000 ticket, Moon Express - a travel company aims to offer space tourists unprecedented moon trip experiences within the next decade. In August 2016, Moon Express, founded in 2010 by billionaire Naveen Jain, has received the US Federal Aviation Administration's approval to travel from the earth to the lunar satellite. Moon Express will partner with SpaceX for this project.

### See the sea: Five seaports to receive tourists with e-Visa

The Union Cabinet on 30th November allowed foreigners to immigrate with e-visas at Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Goa and Mangalore ports. The 5 additional ports of entry are over and above the 16 designated airports from where e-visa holders can enter India. The freshly-approved liberalised visa policy has also revised the annual income threshold for employment visa from the existing \$25,000 to Rs. 16.25 lakh.





Escape to Ecstasy





# GLORIOUS INDIA

# CONTEST

1. To participate in this contest, subscribe to the Tourism One magazine for 2 years at a special rate of Rs. 1000 against the cover price of Rs. 1600 (for 8 issues).
2. Send the duly filled 'Glorious India Contest Entry/Tourism One Subscription Form' along with the account payee cheque of Rs. 1000 in favour of 'Praveg Communications Limited' to - '102, Shanti Arcade, Near Jaymangal BRT, 132ft Ring Road, Naranpura, Ahmedabad – 380013', before 30th March, 2017.
3. Lucky draw will be carried out at the Head Office of Praveg Communications Limited on 31st March, 2017.
4. Contest entry closes at midnight on 30th March, 2017.
5. The lucky winner will be announced in Tourism One's forthcoming (April-May-June 2017) issue, which will be published in the month of April 2017.
6. Terms and conditions as applicable

## PRIZE

1. An exhibition stall of 9 sq.m. (worth Rs. 3,00,000) in the Glorious India Expo
2. Visa support letter



### Glorious India Contest Entry / Tourism One Subscription Form

Please send the duly filled 'Contest Entry/Tourism One Subscription Form' along with the account payee cheque of Rs. 1000 as a subscription charge in favour of 'PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED' to '102, Shanti Arcade, Near Jaymangal BRT, 132ft Ring Road, Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380013', before 30th March, 2017.

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Cheque no: \_\_\_\_\_ Bank: \_\_\_\_\_ Cheque Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By entering this contest, an entrant is indicating his/her agreement to be bound by the mentioned terms and conditions.

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



#### Terms & Conditions

1. The Contest is organized by Praveg Communications Limited, Ahmedabad and is binding on all participants in this contest and all applications of participants.
2. Only one entry is permitted per organization, entries made in bulk or by third parties will not be considered. Praveg Communications Limited reserves the right to cancel any duplicate entries and debar all such entries from the contest at its own discretion.
3. Entries received after the closing date will not be entertained.
4. The results announced by Praveg Communications Limited will be final and no further queries or complaints or questions will be entertained and Praveg Communications Limited will not be obliged to respond to the same.
5. There is no cash alternative and the prize is non-transferable.
6. The winner of the contest shall manage/arrange for the travel documents including passport, visa and ensure that they meet all foreign entry requirements and have the appropriate medical insurance.
7. The prize is limited to the exhibition stall of the above-mentioned size only. The winner will have to arrange for air tickets (along with applicable taxes and other charges), accommodation, gratuities, meals and other travel expenses, including shipment of the products to be displayed at the exhibition.
8. In case of visa rejection by the US Embassy, the winner will not be eligible for the contest prize.
9. Praveg Communications Limited reserves the right to change/modify the terms and conditions of this offer or to withdraw this offer at any point in time if circumstances arise beyond our control.
10. The winner shall pay and be responsible for the income tax and other statutory taxes before claiming the prize.
11. Praveg Communications Limited will not be responsible for any delay that occurs for reasons beyond control.
12. The contest closes at midnight on 30th March, 2017.
13. The lucky winner will be announced in Tourism One's forthcoming issue (April-May-June 2017), which will be published in April, 2017.
14. Praveg Communications Limited will not abide claims, damages or liability of any kind, including personal injuries, death or property damages of any direct or consequential incident or other damages, which the winner or anyone may suffer as a result of participation in this contest or the acceptance, use or misuse of the prize.
15. Praveg Communications Limited will not be responsible if the contest prize can not be redeemed due to war, terrorism or any situation beyond our control.
16. Other terms and conditions as applicable

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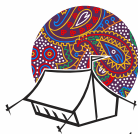
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