

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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A high-end monthly magazine

**Tips to travel in
BRAZIL
for thirty days with
900 dollars**

How to travel
the world for
almost
FREE!

**Dev Diwali in
Varanasi**



**Brahmaputra
adventure:
Seven days in
ASSAM**



Let's travel where Wi-Fi is weak



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October 2017



Dear Diary,

Hi... it's me.

I know it's been while since we last connected. Blame it on my professional commitments, other priorities and infinite thoughts about future that occupy my mind the most. And as always, our travel plans have taken a back seat.

I know we had a deal to explore new places, meet new people and experience the life at its best, as and when possible.

Besides, we both believe in the fact that "To Travel Is To Live".

Don't think that I am here to tell you stories about why we couldn't do it. Yes, I am here with some sound plans, just the way you like it to be. But hey, I said "plans", so help me choose the best one for us.

As Dev Diwali is round the corner, do you think a visit to Varanasi will be a good idea? The ancient city that is older than the time itself has so many fascinating stories attached to it and different colours to showcase, especially during the Dev Diwali festival. For centuries, Hindus have come here to get 'instant' moksha. Okay, if not moksha, we surely need a peace of mind at this point of time.

But if you're so much into adventure and fun zone, I also know how to "Travel the World for Almost FREE!" See, I told you I have sound plans. Don't judge. You don't need to be filthy rich to do this. Yes, there are some innovative hacks to finance your travel. If don't believe me, jump to the article in the "Far Far Away" section and read it yourself. And if you're convinced, maybe Brazil is the ideal destination to begin our journey, because we also have with us the tips to "Travel Brazil for thirty days with \$900".

Hope you like them all,

Cheers,

An avid and confused traveller in you



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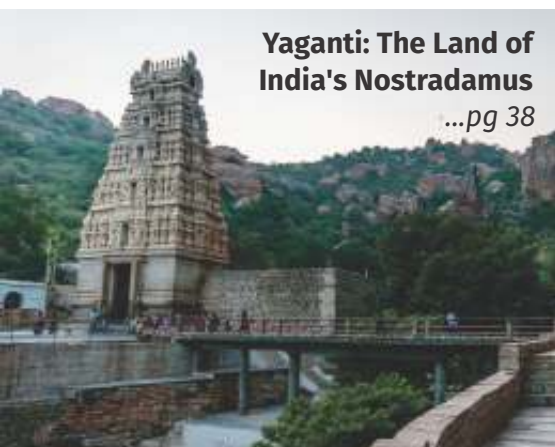
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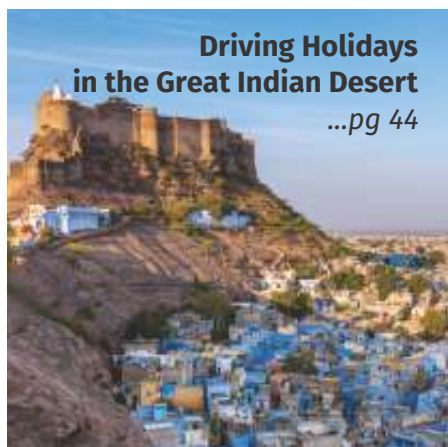
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PRESS RELEASE

Incredible India





Dev Diwali in Varanasi

Dev Diwali or Diwali of the Gods is the most beautifully celebrated festival in Varanasi.

**If you want to see the city at its best,
this is surely the time to be.**

Varanasi is considered to be the oldest inhabited city in the world. When you go to Varanasi for the first time, you might not like it immediately. You see the crowd and the filth and the noise. As you start observing and absorbing, you start loving it. Yes, this is how it happens for the most people who come here. And you want to come back again and again. There are people who have been visiting the place since more than two decades and have never got tired of it.

On Dev Diwali day, it is believed that the gods descended to take a bath in the Ganges. The Dev Diwali also marks the tribute to River Ganga, the day when the 5-day long Ganga Mahotsav culminates with soul-stirring musical and cultural programs.

We came a few days before Dev Diwali to capture the preparations of the celebrations. Though Varanasi has a lot of temples, the best part of being here is to spend time at the ghats watching the activities.

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One of the must see activities in Varanasi is the evening aarti. People who come to visit the city make sure that they remain present at the Dashashwamedh Ghat, where Ganga aarti is performed on daily basis. The atmosphere fills with energy with the recital of hymns from religious texts followed by the Ganga aarti. It is an unforgettable sight to see.

The Dev Diwali happens 15 days after Diwali. The preparation for the festival begins a few days ahead. Every person who stays close to the ghats takes it as a personal responsibility to clean the ghats, paint them, place the earthen lamps and then pour oil into them. Some create vibrant and elaborate 'rangoli' near the ghats. During this time, if you take a walk from the last ghat - Assi Ghat towards the Dashashwamedh Ghat, the sight is unbelievable. The whole ghat is filled with lamps and there is no space left vacant. Kids are burning crackers and rockets.

Walking around the ghats is an unforgettable experience.









Food

Varanasi is a heaven for food lovers. You get the best malai lassi, kachouris, jalebis and every North Indian food you would like to have. Since a lot of people from the south have settled here, you can also get the best of south Indian food here.

Nearby places

Most important temples in Varanasi are - Kashi Vishwanath temple and Sankat Mochan temple. You can visit the temples but photography is not allowed in both of them. We loved the Nepal temple on the ghats. It has beautiful wooden architecture. The Ramnagar Fort on the other side of the river is worth a visit.

Varanasi is also famous for the traditional wrestling schools. It is a great experience to watch the wrestlers practicing the ancient martial art form.

A visit to silk factory is a great way to learn how the sarees are manufactured.

Sarnath is a must visit place nearby. This is the place where Buddha preached his first sermon to his five disciples. Buddhist pilgrims come from all over the world to visit this place.

Walking around

Wear comfortable slippers, though shoes are allowed in ghats, you might need to take them off at few places.


Shopping

- Varanasi is famous for the Banasari silk and there are lots of places where you can buy them.
- Buy traditional Indian handicraft

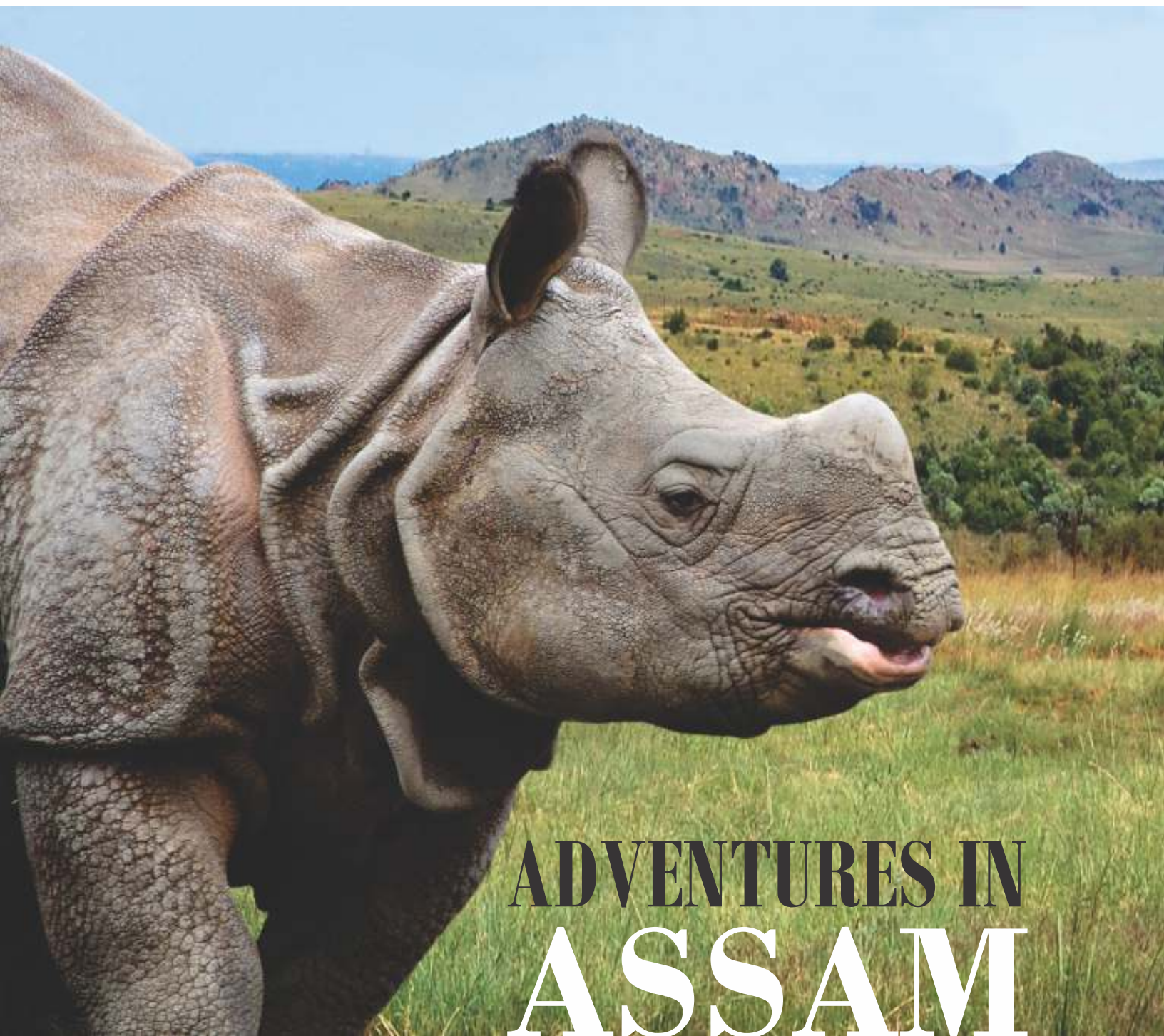
How to go

- Varanasi is well-connected by air and rail to major cities of India. It has an international airport. It is close to Mughalsarai, which has connectivity to almost all cities of India.
- If you are coming to Varanasi during the festival time, make sure you book your tickets early.

Where to stay

- There are lots of hotels of all budgets in Varanasi.
- During the festival, all hotels are overbooked, so do plan ahead.
- Book a place close to the ghats so that you don't have to spend too much time in transit. 





ADVENTURES IN ASSAM

“ We selected the Brahmaputra Valley
as one of the best places for motoring holiday
for three principal regions.”



Firstly, the Brahmaputra Valley Eco-region, comprising important national parks like Manas, Nameri, Kaziranga and Dibru Saikhova, is an exciting area for wildlife viewing with 75% of Asia's rhino population, a high density of Indian elephant, Asiatic wild buffalo, tiger and leopard, a variety of reptiles, and a rich birdlife encompassing rarities like Bengal florican, white-winged wood duck, white-bellied heron, spotted greenshank and slender billed vulture. Secondly, this is a culturally rich region, where you will find village people who love to sing and dance, Assamese monuments and distinctive weaves. Thirdly, this is one of the few areas in the northeast possessing adequate infrastructure for a motoring holiday – reasonably good roads including National Highway-37, interesting places to stay like heritage hotels, plantation bungalows and wildlife resorts, wayside eateries along the highways, fuel stations and automobile workshops, urban centres to stock up on

supplies, and air and rail connectivity from Guwahati or Dibrugarh to the metro cities. For our trip, we selected the Guwahati-Dibrugarh stretch of National Highway-37, which offers access to wildlife reserves, vantage points for viewing the vastness of the Brahmaputra, tea plantations and historical monuments.

The flight from Delhi to Dibrugarh offers views of the Himalayan peaks and the wide Brahmaputra. From the airport, we drove to Mancotta Bungalow, a colonial house owned by Manoj and Vinita Jalan, planters of Dibrugarh. Manoj Jalan explained, "Dibrugarh is one of the first places where tea plantations were developed in India. The Singpo tribe near Tinsukia, a couple of hours from here, is believed to have grown tea here as they did in China. Once the British started planting tea, besides local tribal groups, they took help of labours from Central Indian regions that are now in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa states." He invited us to watch



Chah Baguri Joomar Nach, a dance developed by various tea planting communities drawing from their origins and Assamese influences.

In the morning, we drove to the Brahmaputra River for a boat ride offering a view of the Arunachal Himalaya from where the Dihong River enters Assam at Pasighat and joins other rivers to form the vast river we know as the Brahmaputra.

We were back at the Jalan's estates and after a tea-tasting session, we drove to Shivasagar, where we saw the Shiva Dol, a temple built in 1733 by Ambika Kumari, wife of Shiva Singha of the Ahom dynasty. This temple is 33 meters tall, the highest Shiv temple of its time in India. The temple has a tall towering dome and the front porch in the Assamese turtleback style. Inside the temple is an unusual submerged

Shivaling. Beside the temple are two smaller temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Mother Goddesses.

Shivasagar is a major oil and tea industry town. A short distance away, there are ruins of monuments, including temples and tombs built during the Ahom dynasty's rule over Assam. The royal sports complex of Rang Ghar has now been converted into a public park, with the pavilion standing as a monument of the Ahom past. Our companion Bubu Bharali, who was from Dibrugarh, showed us the Ahom Palaces called Karenghar and Talatalghar. The Ahom royal complex dates back to the 1750s and is a mix of styles including Mughal influences. We ascended to an open terrace from where doors lead to annexes, temples, cells and enclosed chambers.

We drove to Jorhat, where we stayed at Thengal Bhawan, home from 1929 of Raibahadur Siharasad Barooah, son of tea planting pioneer Bisturam. Jorhat is a base for ferries to Majuli, which is one of the largest river islands in the world.

Shiva temple at Shivasagar





Ahom monuments at Shivasagar

It is the centre of Vaishnav culture of the Northeastern hill states, with monasteries (satras) dedicated to Sankara, a 15th century religious leader, and his disciple Mahadeva, where Vishnu is worshipped through dance-dramas. This heritage site is an important centre of science and arts. The monasteries are like self-sufficient hamlets. From the 16th or 17th century, this island has been changing shape because of the Brahmaputra floods. Local people keep building bamboo bridges to connect



their homes during such situations.

We caught the road to Kaziranga and checked-in at Wild Grass, an attractive theme resort with lodges, tents, dining area, pool and an Ahom style pavilion.

At dawn, we reached the riding point at Kohora, the entrance to the central ranges of Kaziranga. On elephant-back, we crossed a rivulet and then entered tall elephant grass. As the grasses parted before the elephants, we were treated to the sight of a massive male rhino with big horns, viewing us warily. We saw

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another rhino at a swamp and third one walking in our direction. The mahout was cooperative and had agreed to wait till the second rhino joined the first at the waterhole. Further on, we saw barasingha and hog deer in good numbers. Elephant footfalls flushed out a Bengal florican, an endangered hen-sized bird of the tall grasslands. Back at the riding point, a forest official talked proudly about the uniqueness of Kaziranga, a world heritage site.

After lunch, our driver took us to the western range of Kaziranga, which has maximum short grass areas, woodland and wetlands, one of the best for rhino viewing. We got off to an auspicious



start straight away – a rhino with her calf! We watched the affectionate interaction of maternal love between the rhino and her calf before they headed into the grasslands. We continued to where rhinos were at a waterhole. The grasslands gave way to forests and we saw the birds of the woods - red jungle fowl, khaleej pheasant, crested serpent eagle. At a water body, we saw bar-headed geese and other birds.

We watched the sun setting at a river with thousands of birds flying over the water. In about 20 km, we had seen more than 25 rhinos.

At night, we were excited to hear about the Bihu dance



performance at Wild Grass. A staff member of Wild Grass shared with us, "The entire village, boys and girls, can sing and dance. The girls are one up in that they also weave". First to appear in front of us were the boys playing the dhol (drum), pepa (buffalo-horn pipe), taka (split bamboo clapper) and tal (cymbals). When the music reached a crescendo, the women appeared in their colourful clothes and began the dance in circular and parallel formations as they stepped gracefully together to the rhythm of music that we were told were Assamese love songs.

In the morning, our driver was keen to make us visit Eastern Kaziranga, his favourite place for birding. Eastern Kaziranga is scenically beautiful, though everyone at the resort had told me that these forested tracts are not as rich in rhino and other mammals as the western and central ranges. At the entrance, we saw an adjutant stork catchin a keelback snake and swallowing it whole. The lake was covered with birds – we saw bar-headed geese and motley ducks. Just near the entrance, we could watch the nuptial behaviour of a pair of Pallas fishing eagle.

Further ahead, we saw a herd of elephants arriving to drink water. We hid the Gypsy behind a tall bush and waited for them to reach the river. It was a large herd and we enjoyed watching the



social behaviour of these gentle giants (the herds are fairly gentle though a single male is dangerous). Oblivious to our presence, they gave us an insight into their lives caressing one another, playing with the calves, one calf even suckling the mother.



After lunch, we drove on the road to Silghat, where we crossed the huge bridge across the River Brahmaputra to Tezpur. Boatmen took river dolphin viewing cruises at the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Bhoreli near the bridge. We came to a tea plantation at Balipara, where our room was booked in an old British bungalow.

At dawn, we drove to the swift-flowing Bhoreli River and were ferried across to Nameri National Park by country boat. We saw spoors of elephant, Indian bison and otter. As we walked along the permissible path through tall trees, grasslands and abandoned courses along the Bhoreli River, we were rewarded by the sights of kingfishers, hornbills, plovers

and ibisbill.

Back across the river, we started out for Guwahati, the "Gateway to the East" and "The City of Eastern Lights". Set on the shores of the River Brahmaputra, Guwahati does not really feel like a riverside city because of the bustle and squalor of the downtown areas. The most interesting sights are the temples – the Navagraha Temple that was once a major centre of astrology, Kamakhya Temple with tantric significance and an important Shakti worship centre, the Janardhan Temple with a Buddha image that blends Hindu and Buddhist features, the 16th century Umananda Temple on an island, the Basishta Ashram near three streams, and Digheshwari temple. ¹⁰



Imagine a weekend you are spending with absolutely no electricity, with like-minded people, eating fresh from garden, rediscovering lost mountain trails, hiking a bit (or may be getting high, your wish), waking up to birds' chatter, smelling the mountain after a fresh round of rain and ending the day with that perfect sunset that you yearn to see in cities.

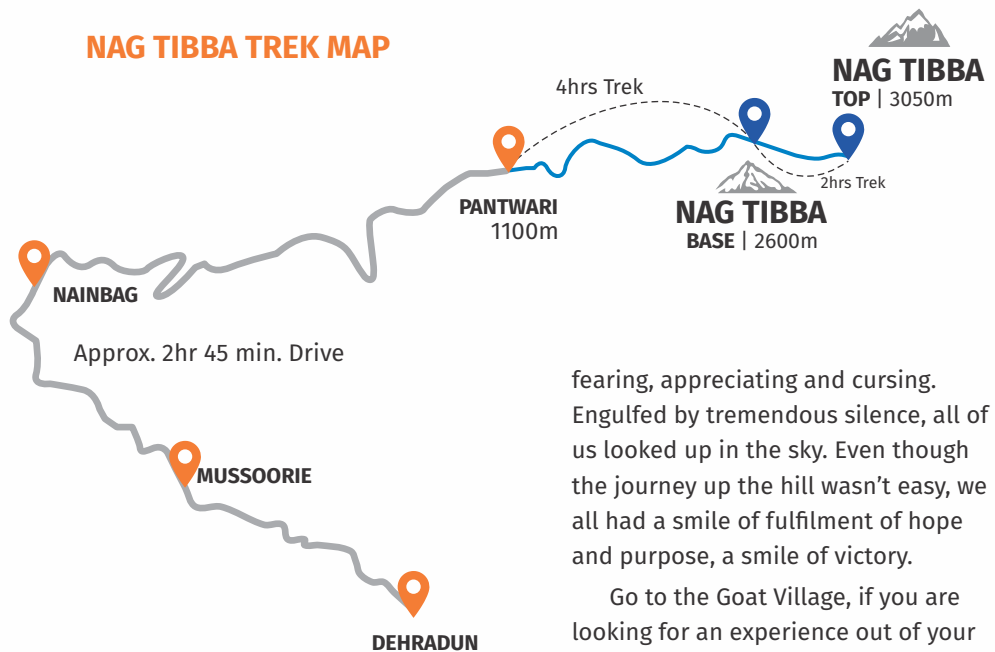


We visited the Goat Village in Tibba, which is a traditionally curated and crafted heaven in the hills of Garhwal. One should experience this beautiful place, chill and trek up to Nag Tibba Peak for a sumptuous view. Nag Tibba is a trekkers' delight. Though it is a relatively unknown trail near Mussoorie, it can easily be considered one of the best weekend treks for someone around Delhi. It is the highest peak (9,915 ft) in the Nag Tibba range of the Garhwal Himalayas. The trek takes you through dense forests rich in flora and fauna and presents stunning views of Bandarpooch peak, the Gangotri group of peaks, Kedarnath peak in the north, Doon valley and the snow peaks of Changabang. The advantage of this trek is that you can reach the base of the Nag Tibba range by jeep, making it possible to do it over a weekend.

About Goat Village - Nag Tibba


The picturesque Nag Tibba village of Tehri district is buzzing with a unique experiment in farm tourism. An organization called 'Green People', have taken two acres of land at the top of the village and named it 'Goat Village' to promote goat rearing. Plants are set up to supply goat milk and goat cheese, woolens are prepared from fine goat hair. These items and farming produce are being supplied under the brand name 'Bakri Chaap'. Besides providing a better livelihood to the locals, tourists at the homestay get a first-hand experience in cultivation of local vegetables and rearing of goats, cattle and hens around these cottages.

NAG TIBBA TREK MAP



fearing, appreciating and cursing. Engulfed by tremendous silence, all of us looked up in the sky. Even though the journey up the hill wasn't easy, we all had a smile of fulfilment of hope and purpose, a smile of victory.

Go to the Goat Village, if you are looking for an experience out of your comfort zone, go there if you want to forget the drudgeries and impositions of city life, go there if you want to be surrounded by beautiful stretch of mountains and gardens of Chinese cabbage, baby corn, endless chamo-mile spreads.

It's time to pay a tribute to our lost micro-cultures. It's time to be a part of India's goat economy. Yes, you read it absolutely correct. This experience was added to one of the best offbeat experiences and we are glad we could contribute to the underprivileged families in some way. 



Our Travel Story

It was relatively a long journey. To our surprise, the 2-km trek to the Goat Village was tough to start right after a long bus journey, but it was totally worth!

We stayed in their cottages that have been built using more than 1000 years old architectural technique called 'Koti Banal'. The technique is indigenous to Garhwal Himalayas. These cottages are cosy and beautifully done up by local artisans to provide for an excellent living experience. We hiked around the place, enjoyed our organic dinner and spent the rest of the night star-gazing accompanied with some guitar and beautiful songs.

The next morning, we started our trek to Nag Tibba, lesser we knew that it is going to be one hell of an adventure. Bewitched by the dark green thick trees arranged in a

perfect order, we were filled with both appreciation and fear. After 2 hours of rocky trek, we were greeted by few horses grazing over green meadows. We kept walking in the thick forest, while the multitude of dry leaves welcomed us along the trail. We had thought that walking on snow is difficult, but walking on dry leaves is equally challenging. You slip and the uncertainty that you have got a firm ground below is the same. At one point, some of the trekkers refused to move. The others sat on a log of wood, ate some snacks and motivated each other to go further up. And at the tip, each one of us were going through various emotions. There was a severe solitude and painful lonesomeness. A silence deeper than all silences prevailed. Each of us were into a pool of emotions - smiling, crying, braving,



TRELFESTAN OF

GUJARAT

It is nearly impossible to travel without seeing people posing for camera in a scenic background, requesting other people to take their perfect picture, working on that one special shot and ideal scene. It has now become a tradition to pose for travel selfies (trelfies) whenever you visit any destination.



So if you're also the one who work on those carefree, all-smile, funny, go-natural poses every time you visit new place, here we are suggesting you an exclusive destination located in Gujarat for all your "Click & Post" moments.

Not sure which place is this? Merely 300 km away from Ahmedabad, the white wonder of Kutch is one of the rare geographical wonders of the world. For the photo junkies, the White Desert will put many international destinations to shame with its captivating charm. Forget Instagram filters and photo editing mobile apps, the destination will touch your photographs with all the natural filters, from sparkling background on full moon night to many shades of orange during the sunset.

The best time to visit this place is during Rann Utsav when the white wonder gets a stunning makeover. The bonfire, tents, rajwadi bhungas, cultural performances, craft bazaar, adventure zone and attractive props placed around White Rann Resort make it "Trelfiestan of Gujarat".

So, the next time you are in Gujarat and wish to spice up your journey with a unique destination that can act as a perfect background for your trelfies, visit White Rann and make your social media friends and followers green with envy. 📸



Tips to travel in **BRAZIL** for thirty days with 900 dollars

Rio De Janeiro, its beaches and mountains are stuffs that travel dreams are made of. But, Brazil has a lot more to offer than the 'City of Gods'. There is one problem though; Brazil isn't the cheapest country to visit. Even with the slide of the real (Brazil's currency), the country remains a challenge for many a backpackers. Also, if you are from countries with a weaker currency than Brazilian real, then a budget trip is not going to be the easiest thing to do. And hence, I am guessing you could do with budget tips, like I needed them while travelling.



“
I spent four months in Brazil, extending my visa once. That was because I fell in love with Caipirinha (Brazil's national cocktail), Soteropolitanos (residents of Salvador) and Cariocas (people from Rio De Janeiro), and I just did not want to leave.
So here it is; our tips on how to travel in Brazil for thirty days with 900 dollars.”

Where to stay? How much to pay?

Rio has more hostels than you can imagine, and most of them are pretty decent for the price they are offered at. Hostelbookers is my favourite site for booking hostels, because somehow they have one or two cheaper hostels listed, which aren't on other sites. But it would be fair to have a budget of 800 INR/ 12 USD/ 40 reais per night, either for hostels or Airbnb. I used Airbnb way more than I used hostels while traveling, they were partners on my travel project called 'The 12 Project'.

However, the best thing to do is to use Couchsurfing. If you are already

active on the platform, and you speak English, there is a strong possibility that you will find hosts in Brazil. And the more you travel cities beyond Rio and Sao Paulo, the better your chances are of finding hosts on CS. In Salvador, I was able to live with Couchsurfers for 60 days. Yes! I kid you not. It helped that I was happy to help them practice their English.

So make a target to get hosted at least ten nights in that month. And no, it is not impossible to find those many kind Couchsurfers in Brazil.

TIPS SUMMARY

Hostelbookers, Couchsurfing, use your English language skills in exchange for accommodation

Is the food yummy? And, expensive?

Brazil is a journey of sights, smells and flavours. The country won't disappoint even if food was the only reason for your travel. The Buffet Al Kilo lunches are filling, extremely delicious and come with a wide variety of options. If you go beyond the tourist areas, you can find such meals for 12-15 reais. Generally, lunch is so heavy that Brazilians have only three meals, they are not really big on evening snacks.

In cities like Rio, they make really good and filling burgers which cost 8-10 reais depending on the area and type of establishment. My favourite early dinner in Rio was a burger with juice and then a cup of sweet creamy something. That was Acai.

Acai and juice cost 3-5 reais each in corner joints. The other option is to cook one meal. Brazilian service is not very fast, so cooking a small meal sometimes may mean the same amount of time. Also, looking for B&Bs is not a bad idea; it saves both time and money.

TIPS SUMMARY

Cook, eat local and look for B&Bs



Getting around?

Commute generally costs between 3-4 reals per ride in most Brazilian cities, Rio and Sao Paulo being the most expensive. So it does make sense to plan your day and ensure you aren't taking more rides than required. Cities in Brazil are massive, so it isn't like you can walk around at leisure either.

Also, Brazil's long distance transport is probably the most expensive in Latin America. Sometimes flights can cost the same as buses on certain routes, so look for good flight deals. I took a flight from Sao Paulo to Salvador, which costed me just 6000 INR/90 USD/285 reals. But to get back to Rio from Salvador was way more expensive by flight. This meant I had to take a bus, a 30-hour long one. Yes, really!

That bus costed me about 6300 INR/ 95 USD/300 reals, more than the flight from Sao Paulo to Salvador, which is a longer distance.



So it would be safe to say that you will need about 18000 INR/270 USD/ 860 reals for local and long distance transport for a month. This should allow you to take 3-4 long distance rides. Best is to focus on one region or maximum two, while travelling in Brazil. You do anything more than that, and your costs will multiply. Plus, Brazil is such a huge

and diverse country, trying to see too much in a short time would not be doing justice to places you visit.

ANOTHER PRO TIP

Stock up on food & snacks before you take long bus rides. The highway restaurants, where the buses make pit stops, are ridiculously expensive.



And activities?

Brazil is a country of active people; even on the beach, Brasileiros are always doing something. Yes, that is for free. But parties, excursions, music concerts are not. And that is why you will need to keep a budget for that.

Keep looking for complimentary shows and concerts (there are quite a few during the high season) through hostels and other websites. But a budget of 8500 INR/ 125 USD/405 reals should keep you going without feeling that you are missing too much. You could also take Capoeira lessons like I did. There are other free things to do in Rio, which you could have a look at.

The other tip is to attend Couchsurfing events. There are some really cool CS events in Rio and Salvador. Most of them are 'bring your own'. It is a great chance to meet new people, enjoy the beach and dance. Because, you know, money or not, Brazilians know how to party.

TIPS SUMMARY

Look for free things to do, attend Couchsurfing dos, go to the beach and request locals to let you participate in Fut-Volley.

Here is an easy table of expenses

Type of expense	Indian Rupees(INR)	Brazilian Reals(BR)	United States Dollar(USD)
Accommodation	800 x 20 = 16000(get CS hosts for 10 nights)	763	240
Food	600 x 30 = 18000(try to cook one meal at least once in two days, look for B&Bs)	858	270
Transport	18000(daily transport + 2-3 long rides)	858	270
Activities	8320(for a few parties and music concerts or other activities that you like)	397	125
	60,320	2875	905



But the Cerveja? Oh, you mean beer?

Brazil is a good place to have beer (is there any place that isn't good for beer?). The best brands change as per the state or region you are in. But a pint is about 3-4 reals; in smaller shops, you can get them for less than that too.

My favourite is Skol, which is pretty popular in the Nordeste or the Northeast.

Now that you know, how much does it cost to spend a month in Brazil, just look for flights and start saving. For dying without ever having visited Brazil, would be a bit unfortunate. Just kidding!



How to travel the world for almost **FREE!**

I left my home in Mumbai to fulfill my dream of taking challenges around the world. A little over a year later as I look back, I am grateful for having led this life. Despite the fair share of ups and downs (and many nights in Airbnb apartments), it has been no less than a dream.

I started with travelling non-stop on 25 trains in 25 days in India and then went to Thailand to learn rock climbing. From there to visit ex-war sites in Northern Sri Lanka and then to Brazil to explore a mystical religion called Candomble. And that's not all, I celebrated Christmas by attending and participating in a fighting festival high up in the mountains of Peru. It is certainly the weirdest cultural event I have ever been to.

When people listen to my stories, they think that I must have been filthy rich to do this. The fact is quite the contrary. There were a few innovative ways through which I made this happen. Hope these tips help you to live your dream too.



Airbnb

This website was pretty much my lifeline on this trip. A few months before I left, I started hosting travellers using this website. Slowly, our apartment started getting busy with travellers. My mother agreed to continue to host like-minded travellers and we continued to make a monthly income through Airbnb.

I managed the app and some technical details, while my mother was the host. In the first five months of this year itself, we managed to earn more than 1,20,000 INR/1790 USD through our listing. On an average, the listing helped us make around 25,000 INR / 373 USD per month, which in turn provided fuel for most of my travel.



Build a network and income

Apart from money, hosting travellers from different countries like China, USA, Colombia, Mexico and others helped me train myself for a long term trip. I also made friends all over the world who shared my passion for travel. These friends connected me to friends in other countries. I always knew someone before I arrived in a city as a stranger.

This is for anyone who has extra space available in their house (or even an extra home). If you are willing to meet travellers from across the globe, this is a great way to generate income while travelling. Hosting was the single biggest reason why my trip was made possible.

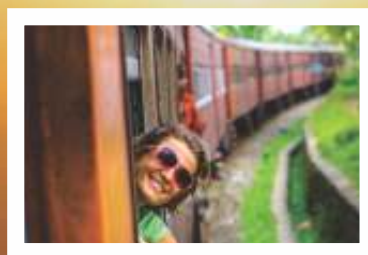
And becoming a host on Airbnb was really simple. All I had to do was visit the website to list my space. Living with locals was also a great way to travel at a reasonable cost and to get great experiences. You can create a profile here and Airbnb gives you credit for your first trip.



Writing

One of my deepest passions is to narrate unique stories. And probably that is why I travel to places and experience things that many others don't. So it just made sense to dabble in freelance travel writing. Well, becoming a freelance writer is easier said than done. Sourcing contacts, pitching ideas and getting articles commissioned are no easy tasks. But I still managed to make about 15,000 INR/ 225 USD on an average per month through writing.

Also payments can vary per word, but it does give you some income and the opportunity to work on bigger collaborations. And after one year of being regularly published, the satisfaction trumps the hard work.



Frugal lifestyle

Even with Airbnb and writing, it would have been impossible to fund my travels if I wasn't leading a frugal lifestyle. My monthly budget of 40,000 INR (which included food, travel and expenses for learning and experiences) helped me keep my expenses in check. I only bought things, which were absolutely necessary, cooked wherever possible and helped others in exchange for money and accommodation (like giving private English lessons in Brazil).

There are many young people who are working while travelling using www.workaway.info. Others are volunteering on farms using [wwoofing](http://www.wwoofing.com). A few are also using their passions like cooking and art to make some money on the road. I used a crowdfunding campaign before I started the project and many wonderful people decided to support me. I was able to collect about 1,00,000 INR/1490 USD, which helped kick-started the journey.

Like they say, where there is a will, there is a way. The question is whether you are going to find a way, or an excuse. I'd rather have you find a way, so we can meet somewhere on the road. ☑

Incredible India

Eat, Pray, Shop & Love in Amritsar



The holy city of Amritsar is deservedly a tourist honeypot of India with its stunning Golden Temple, impressive historical buildings and superb food.

From Amritsar Airport, we drove through the crowded city before reaching Mall Road, where we turned off for Welcomheritage Ranjit's Svaasa Heritage Hotel and Spa. The hotel is actually a converted heritage house, said to be about 250 years old, with pleasant courtyards and garden.

After taking rest at the hotel, we drove to the parking area near the bustling bazaar, with pushy vendors trying to convince visitors to buy scarves, prayer objects and souvenirs. At the end of the market, we reached the principal entrance to the Hamandir complex. It was remarkably non-commercial and free of any kind of hassles. We left our footwear and bags in the cloak room near the clock tower crowned gateway. The cloak-room is manned by *Kar Sevaks* or volunteers.

The shoes handled by them reflect the Sikh doctrine of caste equality and respect for labour.

Having washed our feet in the water and covered our heads with scarves available free from the bin, we came to the top of the gateway stairs from where we saw the Amritsarovar, the lake of the nectar, with the facade of the Golden Temple rising up beside it. Stepping down to the marble walkway, we joined a number of Sindhi, Sikh and other pilgrims walking respectfully on the



The Golden Temple

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

parikrama path that runs a circuit along the lake before reaching the entrance to the Har Mandir. The circumambulation of the lake offers different views and photography angles. We saw Sikhs bathing at auspicious points of the lake, marked by bathing steps or chains, and visiting the shrines along the marble pathway. Worshipping a tree shrine called *Dukh Banjani Ber* and bathing nearby is said to be a potent ritual for healing disorders, while the *Athsath Tirath* is a platform that represents 68 holy shrines of India. Because of the number of *Kar Sevaks* doing voluntary duty, the environs in the temple complex is spotlessly clean and litter-free. Pilgrims also bow and touch their head on the steps of booths along the *Parikrama*, where priests cite *Granthis* and spiritual verses from the Guru Granth Sahib, largely the work of fifth Guru Arjan Das and established as the *Adi Granth* or final edition by Guru Gobind Singh.

Continuing along the path, we came to the *Guru-ka-Langar*. This communal dining hall continues the *langar* or communal eating facility tradition established by Amar Das to encourage followers of the Sikh order to eat together without prejudice of caste, creed, colour, gender or income, and create goodwill among strangers. The *langar* here was established by the fourth Guru Ramdas who founded Amritsar in 1577 and feeds 10,000 people daily, sometimes 3000 at a sitting. There are now machines that make



1



2

it possible to serve the lunches and dinners to the thousands that sit on mats.

Further along the path is the *Akal Takht*, where important pronouncements are made. Founded in the 16th century by Guru Arjan Singh and built by Guru Govind Singh, the *Akal Takht*'s first floor was added by the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and contains a room with a balcony.



1. Jallianwala bagh memorial

2. Khalsa College

3. Langar at Golden Temple

4. Wagah Border





PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

5



6

- 5. Punjabi delicacies at dhaba
- 6. Papad and Wadis of Amritsar
- 7. Jalebi
- 8. Fish pakora
- 9. Lassi
- 10-11. Shopping delights



8



7

This is the community centre of the Sikh fellowship, founded by Guru Nanak as an alternative way of life in the 15th century. Guru Har Govind Singh, the 10th Guru whose shrine is nearby, organised the Sikh community into a political entity, a military power against the fanatical Aurangzeb, and a structured religious group with a solid permanent focus of attention. Flagstaffs symbolise religion and politics, and meet in the twin-sword symbol promoted by Har Govind Singh to represent religious and temporal authority.

Entering a gateway called *Darshani Deorhi*, we came to the marble causeway leading to the Harmandir, the spiritual centre of the Sikh faith. Beautifully intoned hymns in *Gurumukhi* floated around the complex. The temple facade is impressive with amazing pietra dura inlay work of semi-precious stones on the marble walls and floral gilt surrounding doors and windows. The dome, shaped like an inverted lotus, is covered with about a quintal of gold donated by Ranjit Singh, who rebuilt most of the temple, originally built by Guru Ramdas and his successor but badly damaged by Aurangzeb. The *Guru Granth Sahib* lies in the *Durbar Sahib*, court of the Lord, covered by a jewelled canopy and fanned by attendants.

On our way out, we took the *Karah Prasad* and dropped in to see the Sikh Museum in the clock tower.

Once out of the Golden Temple, we came to the Jalianwala Bagh, site of a horrendous massacre on the 13th April 1919. About 20,000 people had gathered in this garden on this day (the *Baisakhi* Festival important to Punjabis and also anniversary of Guru Govind Singh's *Khalsa* leadership in 1699) and protested the arrest of Indian nationalists under the Rowlatt Act, a legislation allowing detention without trial. British General Dyer positioned his troops inside the narrow entrance of the garden from where they opened fire wounding thousands and killing hundreds. The resulted uproar was felt even in England



where Winston Churchill raised the issue in Parliament, and resulted in Mahatma Gandhi's launching a non-cooperation movement and Tagore's renouncing his knighthood. Today, the rose garden retains poignant memories of this defining day in the Indian history, including bullet holes and the well in which people dove to get away from the bullets. You can see many lesser-known sites of historic significance in the lanes around the Golden Temple and the Jalianwala Bagh – Baba Atal Tower commemorating the martyrdom of Aurangzeb's son, historical Gurdwaras, hostels called *Akharas*, the remains of the 250-year-old Qila Ahluwalia still showing some of the beautiful works it once had, temples and some imposing old buildings. The medieval Durgiana Temple and other temples lie northeast of the Golden Temple. The Khalsa College and Rambagh Gardens, which house a good museum, are among the other attractions of the city.

Every afternoon, scores of tourist taxis take the 9km-road from Amritsar town to the Wagah Border between India and Pakistan where they witness a spectacular flag-lowering ceremony of soldiers from both the countries in full pageantry. The goose-stepping is so well-synchronised that it looks like a mirror image.

Amritsar is synonymous with good food – Amritsari fried fish, tandoori chicken, robust Punjabi and Sindhi food, and sweets. Crystal is a popular restaurant of Amritsar while famous



dhabas near the Golden Temple include *Bharawan Da Dhaba*, *Kasar Dhaba*, *Bobby Vaishno Dhaba* and *Sindhi Coffee House*. *Prakash*, *Sunder* and *Mama Meat Shops* are well-known *dhabas* near the Mall Road. *New Punjabi Rasoi* is a popular inexpensive restaurant near the Jalianwala Bagh. *Hall Bazaar* and other marketplaces near the Golden Temple are good for *lassis*, *jalebis*, *matthis* and *dal pind*.

After dinner, we visited the Golden Temple once again for a view of the facade illuminated at night. It was truly and uplifting experience.

Around Amritsar



Mughal Ruins in Sirhind Punjab

HARIKE BIRD SANCTUARY At the confluence of the Sutlej and Beas rivers, a barrage has created a shallow lake that is an important bird areas near Amritsar. Thousands of ducks can be seen here in winter and many resident water birds are spotted at other times of the year. The sanctuary is known for its population of darter or snake bird.

BEAS The town of Beas is a well-maintained spiritual centre. Every year, millions of Radha Swami followers travel to Beas to attend *satsangs*.

PATIALA The princely city of Patiala has a fort at its centre. The city's main attraction is the early-20th century Moti Bagh Palace set among terraced Mughal-style gardens with water channels. The *Sheesh Mahal* here has a gallery of paintings and princely

memorabilia. There are many palaces, imposing public buildings and gardens that speak of the city's royal pedigree.

SIRHIND This historical town has Mughal buildings and is also one of the most important Muslim religious centres in North India with the Rauza Sahib attracting many pilgrims. The Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara commemorates the martyred sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

KAPURATHALA The capital of a prosperous princely state, this palace has a rich architectural heritage patronised by

Maharaja Jagatjit Singh in the early-20th century. Inspired by French and Spanish architecture, the Maharaja built here impressive palaces and royal lodges.

BATHINDA A historical city, Bathinda has gurdwaras, gardens and an old fort. 📍



Bathinda Fort



Best places to visit in Hyderabad

Hyderabad is a city endowed with rich culture and architecture. The magical city has something for every traveller - awe inspiring architectures, bustling markets and great food.

According to National Geographic Traveler magazine, Hyderabad ranked 2nd best place in the world to see in 2015. To get the best glimpses of this city, here we present some of the places that should be a part of your itinerary when you visit Hyderabad.

1 Charminar



Charminar, constructed in 1591, is a monument and mosque built by the fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah after shifting his capital from Golconda to Hyderabad.

Charminar has become a global icon representing Hyderabad and is listed as one of the most recognized structures of India. The monument is situated close to the east bank of Musi River. To the west lies the Laad Bazaar, and richly ornamented granite Makkah Masjid in the southwest.

It is also listed as an archaeological and architectural treasure in the “List of Monuments” prepared by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The word ‘Charminar’ is combination of words - ‘char’ (which means four in Hindi) and ‘minar’ (means tower). The eponymous towers are ornate minarets attached and supported by four grand arches.

The best time to visit Charminar is during the Ramzan months to spot the best views, enjoy superb shopping and finger-licking good street food.



2 Mecca Masjid

Mecca Masjid, also known as Makkah Masjid, is one of the oldest mosques in Hyderabad and one of the largest in India. It is listed as a heritage building in the old city of Hyderabad, close to the historic landmarks of Chowmahalla Palace, Laad Bazaar and Charminar.

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, commissioned bricks made from the soil that was brought from Mecca - the holiest site of Islam. The bricks were used in the construction of central arch of the mosque, thus giving the mosque its name. It formed the centerpiece around which the city was planned by Qutb Shah, who had laid foundation stone for Mecca Masjid.

The three arched facades were carved from a single piece of granite, which took five years to quarry. More than 8000 workers were employed to build the mosque. The construction was later completed by Emperor Aurangzeb after conquering Hyderabad.

During the last Friday prayers in the month of Ramzan, thousands of people visit the mosque for the prayers, creating a spectacular sight.

**According to
National Geographic
Traveler magazine,
Hyderabad ranked
2nd best place in the
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2015.**

Also known as Chowmahallatu, which means 4 palaces, Chowmahalla is a palace of the Nizams. It was the throne of the Asaf Jahi dynasty and was the official residence of the Nizams of Hyderabad, while they ruled the state. The palace remains the property of Barkat Ali Khan Mukarram Jah, heir of the Nizams.

The palace is located quite close to Charminar if you walk through Laad Bazaar, which is famous for lac bangles.

All ceremonial functions, including the accession of the Nizams and receptions for the Governor-General, were held at this palace.

The palace is unique for its style and elegance. Construction of the palace began in the late-8th century and over the decades, a synthesis of many architectural styles and influences emerged.

3 Chowmahalla Palace



4 Laad Bazaar or Choodi Bazaar



It is a very old market popular for bangles. The market is located on one of the four main roads that branch out from the historic Charminar.

Laad meaning lacquer, which is used to make bangles, on which artificial diamonds are studded. In this long shopping stretch, most of the shops sell bangles, saris, wedding-related items and jewelry.

The market is in operation since the time of the Qutb Shahis and the Nizams. It is close to landmarks such as Charminar, M a k k a h M a s j i d and Chowmahalla Palace.

Laad Bazaar is popular for bangles, semi-precious stones, pearls, jewelry, silverware, Nirmal and Kalamkari paintings, bidriware, lacquer bangles studded with stones, saris and hand-woven materials of silk, cotton, brocade, velvet and gold-embroidered fabrics, traditional *khara dupattas* and perfumes.

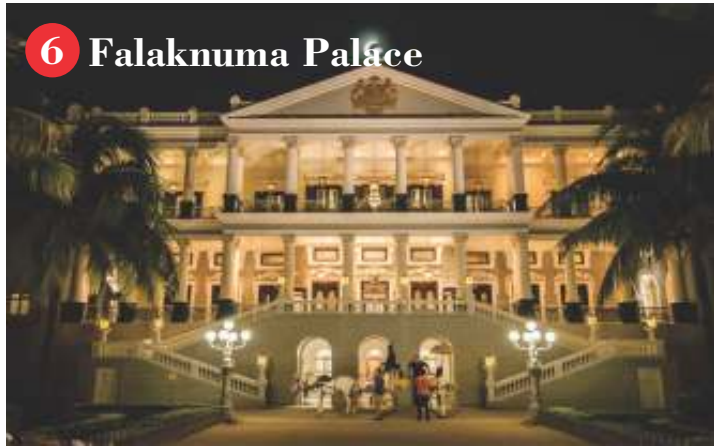
5 Golkonda Fort

Golkonda Fort is one of the oldest structures of Hyderabad. The fort was originally built by the Kakatiya dynasty and has been reinforced by many rulers. This is the place, where the world-renowned diamond 'Kohinoor' was stored.

The fort occupies an area of 11km. It is well known for its acoustics. A person clapping at the entrance can be heard easily from the top of the fort, and was thus used as a signaling system.

There is a delightful 'light and sound show', that takes place in Golkonda every evening. Golkonda Fort offers breathtaking view of the city from the top.





6 Falaknuma Palace

Falaknuma Palace (literal translation “mirror of the sky”) is undoubtedly one of the finest palaces in Hyderabad. Located at the height of 2000 ft, it is built in 32 acres of land in the shape of a scorpion.

Designed by British architect William Mard Marret, this palace was initially used by Sir Vicar (Prime Minister of Hyderabad and Berar) as a private residence and later used by the Nizam of Hyderabad as a royal guest house.

The palace has 60 lavishly decorated rooms and 22 spacious halls. It has some of the finest collections of the Nizam treasure. Falaknuma houses a large collection of rare treasures including paintings, statues, furniture, manuscripts and books.

The palace was closed from the early 50s to the year 2000. It was then leased to Taj Hotels for 30 years by the Nizam Prince Mukkaram Jah Bahadur when it underwent massive restoration work. Princess Esra Jah spearheaded the restoration work to its original shape.

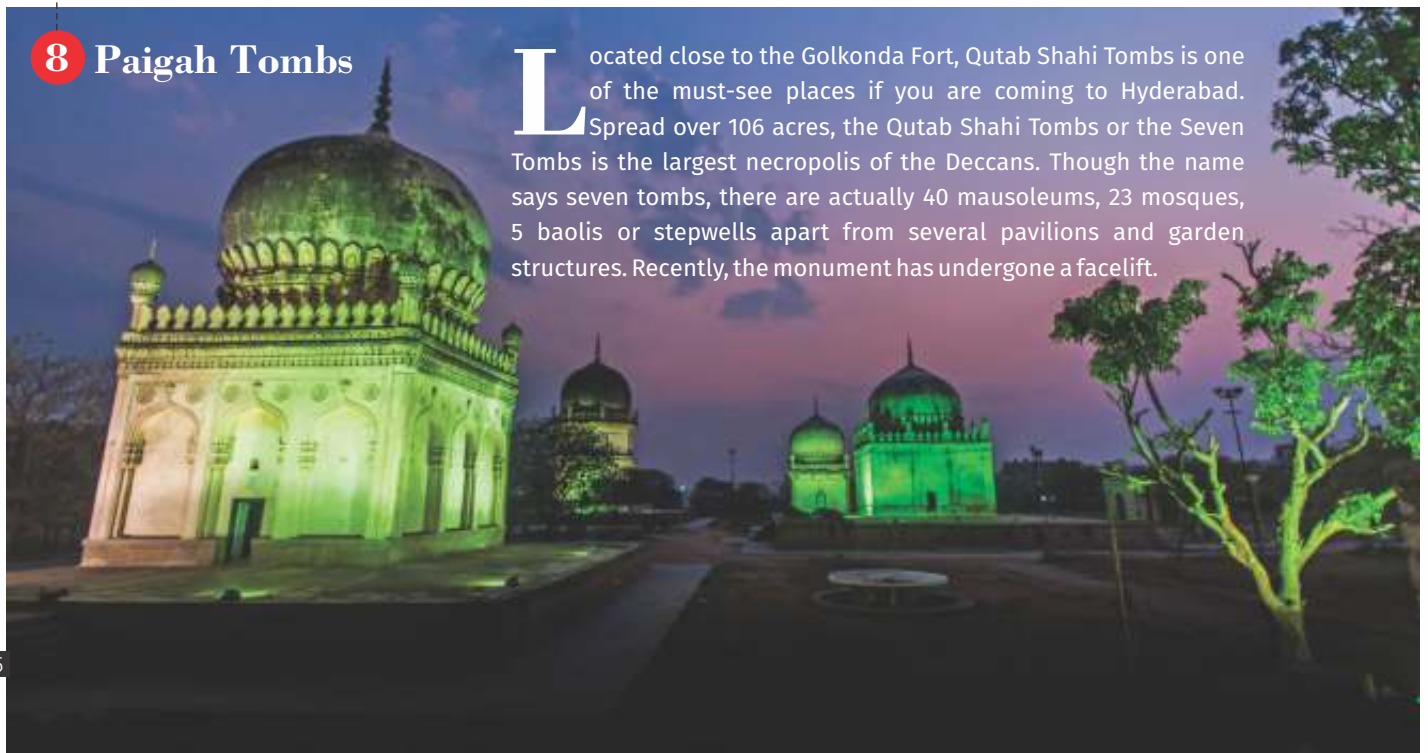
If you want to live a life like a king for a couple of days, this is the place to be. The in-house guests are carried to the promenade of the palace and this must be an unforgettable experience.



7 Qutab Shahi Tombs

Paigah tombs are the burial grounds of the nobles of Asaf Jahi family who were supporters of the Nizam. These beautiful mausoleums reflect the beauty of Mughal architecture. The wooden doors with intricate carvings show the high standards of workmanship of the era.

These 200-year old structures are built from a mixture of lime and mortar. The tombs have superb and intricate carvings. The place is not very crowded and hence offers great serenity.



8 Paigah Tombs

Located close to the Golkonda Fort, Qutab Shahi Tombs is one of the must-see places if you are coming to Hyderabad. Spread over 106 acres, the Qutab Shahi Tombs or the Seven Tombs is the largest necropolis of the Deccans. Though the name says seven tombs, there are actually 40 mausoleums, 23 mosques, 5 baolis or stepwells apart from several pavilions and garden structures. Recently, the monument has undergone a facelift.

9 Hussain Sagar Lake



This is a great place to spend an evening walking along the lake. Hussain Sagar was built by Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah in 1563. Spread across an area of 5.7 sq.km., Hussain Sagar Lake has a huge statue of Buddha in the middle of the lake, making it even more special.

Hussain Sagar Lake is the hub of water sports activities like yachting and sailing. On the other side of the Hussain Sagar Lake is the Eat Street, which has lots of eateries. Some other places to see around the lake are Lumbini Park, Birla Temple, Sanjeevaiah Park and NTR Gardens.

Badshahi Ashurkhana is a mourning place for Shias during the festival of Muharram. It is constructed in memory of martyrdom of Imam Hussain. Ashurkhana is a public place where the Shias congregate and mourn during Muharram.

Badshahi Ashurkhana was constructed by Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah in 1594 along with the construction of Charminar for installing Alam-e-Mubarak of Imam Hussain.

In 1687, the place was converted into *Bandi Khana* and remained in the same state for several years. In 1178, Hijri, the *Bandi Khana*, was removed and *Alam-e-Mubarak* was reinstalled and the religious activities were resumed.

The brilliantly coloured tile mosaic decoration was completed under Abdullah Qutb Shaj in 1611. The outer halls and wooden colonnades as well as the entry gate were added by

Nizam Ali Khan in 1764.

This building is definitely the most beautiful of all constructed by Qutab Shahi kings. The various parts of the Ashurkhana include Naqar khana, Niyaz khana, Abdar khana, Langar Khana, Guard rooms and the Mujawer House.

The main building is structured as a pavilion with walls on the three sides, enclosing a platform where *alams* are displayed during Muharram.

Alams are symbolic representations of the martyrs who died on Ashura day. Each *alam* was built in memory of each of the 72 persons who died with Imam Hussain - his brothers, sons, nephew, friends and followers.

This building has been declared as a protected monument.

In 2006, The Nizam Club got the award for “sensitive restoration” of Badshahi Ashurkhana.

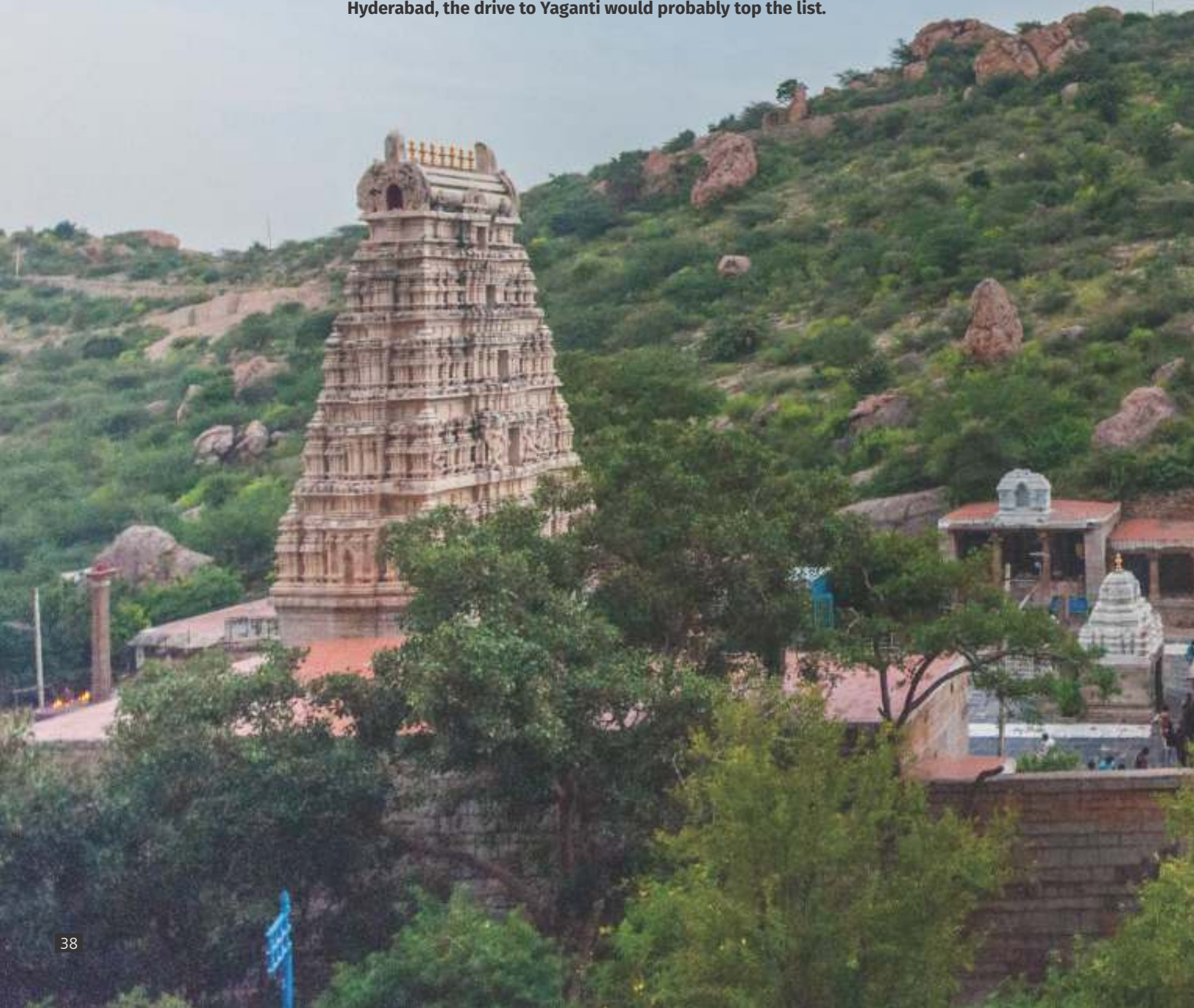
10 Badshahi Ashurkhana



YAGANTI

The Land of India's Nostradamus

If you want to have a weekend trip, which is a combination of pilgrimage, adventure, geological wonders and something close to nature around Hyderabad, the drive to Yaganti would probably top the list.





About the place

Yaganti is famous for the Sri Yaganti Uma Maheswara Swamy Temple. It was constructed by the first Vijayanagara Sangama King Harihara Bukka Rayalu in the 15th century.



About the journey

The best way to explore journey to Yaganti is through road. The road trip gives you the liberty to stop wherever you want, take out your camera and shoot. The route to Yaganti is breathtakingly beautiful with awesome roads covered with hills, open green fields and pleasant atmosphere.

On the way, Patapadu is a scenic village for a halt. Here you will find people dressed like mythological characters roaming through the streets. The old tradition of entertaining people, which has now become extinct because of television, has been practiced here from ages.



The temple

The famous Sri Yaganti Uma Maheswara Swamy Temple is located in forest area. There are several cave temples in Yaganti adjacent to the main temple. Agastya cave is believed to be the place, where saint Agastya performed penance to get Lord Shiva's blessings. Venkateshwara Cave is another one. Locals believe that the Venkateshwara idol in the cave existed much before Tirupati. Veera Brahman Cave is the place, where Potuluri Veera Brahman, who is known as India's Nostradamus, wrote some chapters of his prophecies – the Kala Gnanam.

The caves are open for worship from dusk to dawn. Though there is hardly any natural light, sufficient artificial lights are provided inside. The temple is adjacent to the cave.

There is a burning lamp called 'akasha deepam' (meaning sky lamp) on the top of the temple in the backdrop. It is lit up every day and it glows from dusk to dawn.



Growing Nandi

It's not just a belief but the fact that the Nandi idol facing Shiva has been growing in its size over the years. This has been confirmed by the Archeological Survey of India. Science explains this as a geological phenomenon. Worshipers think it to be a miracle.

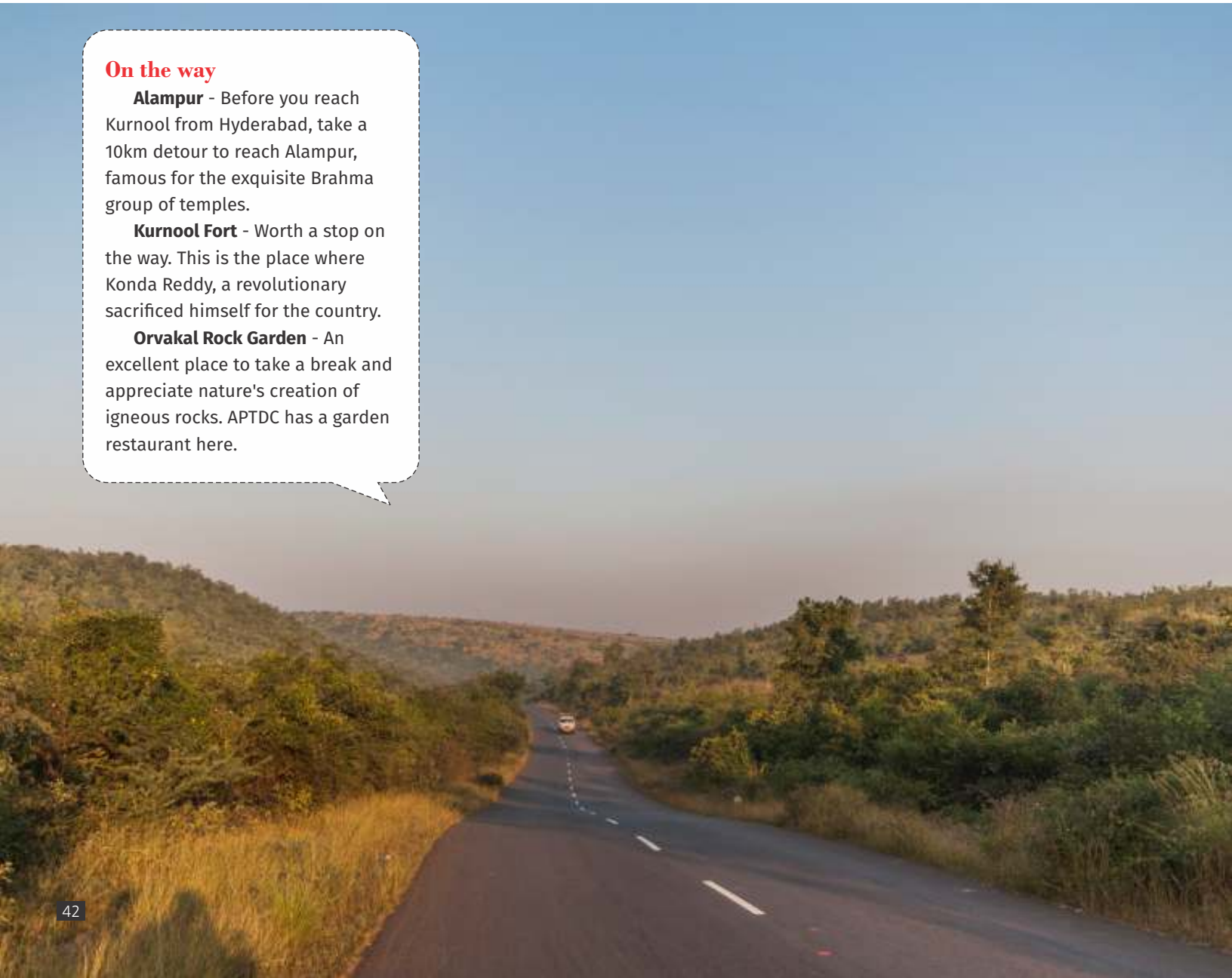
One of the salient features of the temple is the *Pushkarani* (or the temple pond), which remains full of water even during the most dry season. As a custom, people take bath in its holy waters before doing puja of Lord Shiva.

On the way

Alampur - Before you reach Kurnool from Hyderabad, take a 10km detour to reach Alampur, famous for the exquisite Brahma group of temples.

Kurnool Fort - Worth a stop on the way. This is the place where Konda Reddy, a revolutionary sacrificed himself for the country.

Orvakal Rock Garden - An excellent place to take a break and appreciate nature's creation of igneous rocks. APTDC has a garden restaurant here.



How to go?

By Road - Yaganti is located 340km from Hyderabad and 70km from Kurnool.

From Hyderabad, take NH7 to Kurnool and then NH18. Take right to Banaganapalle. Yaganti is another 18km from here.

By Rail - Nearest railhead – Panyam; there are regular trains from Secunderabad.



Where to stay?

There are limited facilities to stay in Yaganti. There is only one basic hotel with AC and non AC rooms – Brahmini Residency Cell: 9180011129, 9963150097. If you are going on a weekend, book your room in advance.

The best place with accommodation is Kurnool. Banaganapalle, which is the nearest town (17 km away), has basic places to stay.

Food

There are no restaurants in Yaganti, so don't forget to carry your own food and water. ¹⁰

DRIVING HOLIDAYS IN THE GREAT INDIAN DESERT



Jodhpur is the largest of the three cities that comprise the desert triangle. The cityscape is picturesque, with the Mehrangarh Fort and the Umaid Bhawan Palace rising up from rocky outcrops over the city.

The most important monument in the city is the 1459 AD Mehrangarh,

literally a majestic fort, with its huge walls strengthened by bastions. Walk through a succession of formidable gates to reach the royal palaces within the fort. These palaces exhibit works of art and crafts through the painted and gilded walls, carpets and princely heirlooms. Some of the chambers are simply beautiful. A courtyard of the palace has been given over to handicraft demonstrations. Beside the fort, Jaswant Thad is an elegant marble memorial with fine lattice carvings built by Maharaja Jaswant Singh-II





Jaswant Thada, Jodhpur



The magnificent Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur

who ruled Marwar in the 1800s and earned respect for irrigation schemes that brought water and prosperity to this parched land.

Another landmark of Jodhpur, the Umaid Bhawan Palace is an imposing palace with a 197ft. dome. The 347-room palace was built in 1929 and was completed in 1943. Today, it houses the family's residence, a museum and one of India's top luxury hotels, run by the Taj Group. Jodhpur is a major producer of wooden and wrought iron furniture, antique reproduction and handicrafts. The Sardar Market, set in a wall, pierced by eight gates and clustered around a 1912 AD clock tower, is good for silver jewellery, lacquer bangles, fabrics, camel leather *mojdis* and other products. The vegetable market should be explored for regional produce like chilies, mustard and ker sangri.



Samsara Resort, Decchu

North of the city, Mandore was the capital of the Rathore Rajputs until the 15th century, when Rao Jodha built Jodhpur. Set around terraced gardens are the red sandstone *chhatris* of early rulers, including a temple like cenotaph of Ajit Singh. The Hall of Heroes has 15 life-size statues of religious deities and folk heroes. Further up the hill are the *Raniyon ki Chhatri* and the tall and narrow 17th-century Ek Thamba Palace.

From Jodhpur, you can explore the countryside with scattered villages and small farms. Dominated by the Bisnois, followers of Jabhoji principles that are dedicated to tree and wildlife conservation, the countryside is delightful for those interested in wildlife with herds of blackbuck and chinkara gazelle that roam unafraid around the farms and hamlets. There are craft villages that specialize in weaving, pottery and other handwork.



Manvar Desert Camp, Decchu

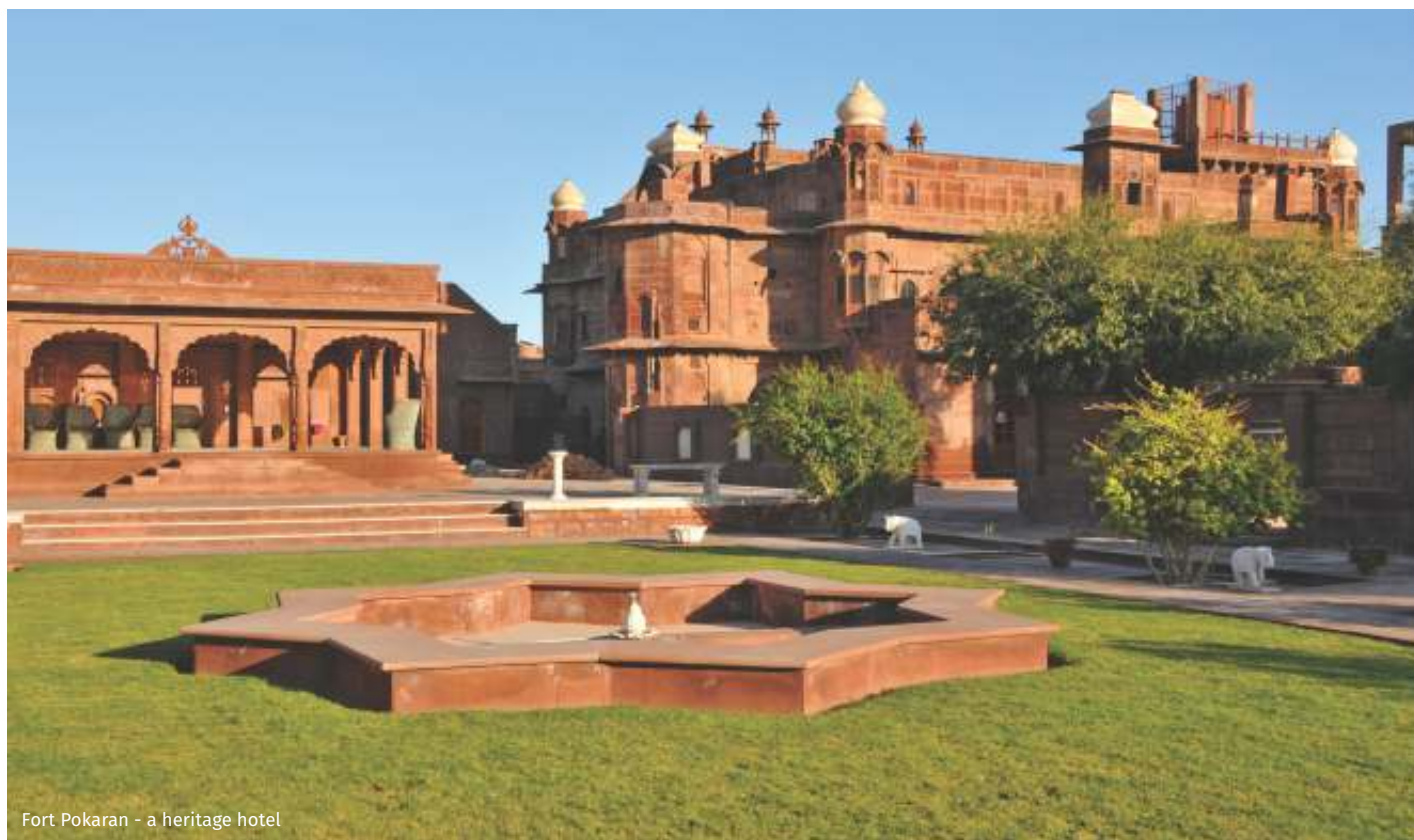
PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

From Jodhpur, the road to Jaisalmer goes through Shergarh Tehsil, which has some of India's largest sand dunes. There are many well-facilitated resorts here like Manvar Resort, Manvar Desert Camp and Samsara that offer camel safaris and cross desert jeep drives. The Desert Hermitage is a new property coming up among the dunes. Another option is to take the road to Osian, which has historical Jain and Hindu temples built by wealthy traders between the 8th and 12th centuries, when Osian was an important stop on the caravan trade route to Central Asia. The temples represent the earliest phase of temple architecture in Rajasthan.

Just outside Osian are some fine sand dunes with camping arrangements. Further ahead of Osian, Khichan near Phalodi has beautifully carved Oshwal Jain havelis. The local people feed the birds here - in winter the flocks of cranes that gather to eat grains make an



Desert safari in the dunes



Fort Pokaran - a heritage hotel

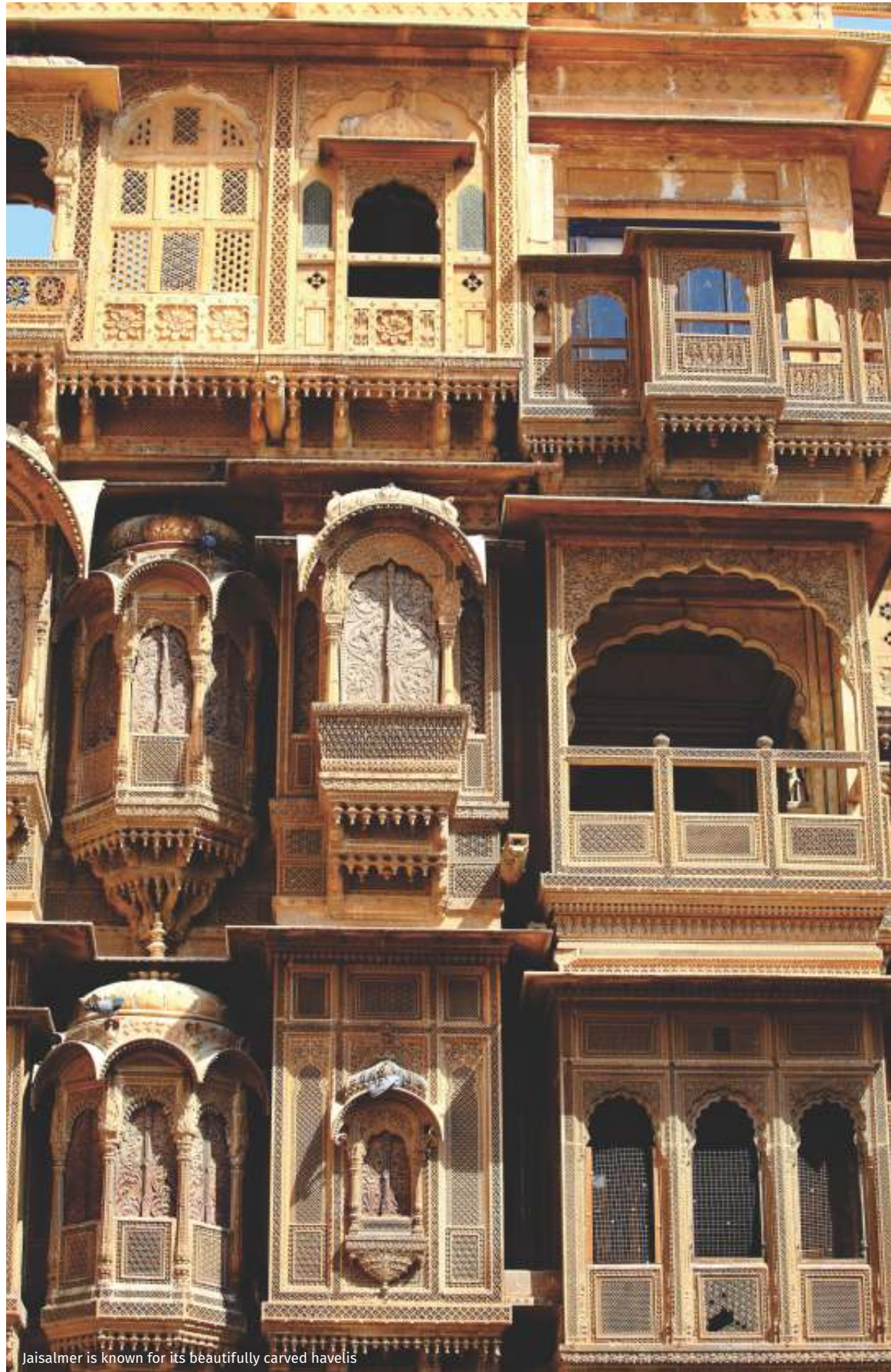
impressive sight. Bisnoi villages around Phalodi can be explored for gazelle.

Both highways lead to Pokaran, which has an imposing fort that is now a hotel. Pokaran is also famous for its pottery.

From Pokaran, continue to the golden sandstone citadel of Jaisalmer, which rises up from a rocky outcrop like a vision from the Arabian Nights. Though Jaisalmer has now become congested with a growing number of hotels and tourist facilities, the 12th century fort is still one of India's finest sights. The fort is a living citadel with residences, temples and guesthouses. The superbly carved facades of palaces and finely sculpted temples are worth seeing. The best views of the citadel are from the canon guarded ramparts.

Below the fort are a number of ornate havelis. Built in the 19th century by the town's merchants and ministers, these mansions dominate its labyrinthine lanes. Three stunning havelis are Salim Singh Haveli, Nathmalji Haveli and Patwon ki Haveli with finely carved golden stone façades. The Mandir Palace, now a Welcomheritage Hotel, is a fine Rajput palace. The stone carving masons of Jaisalmer still continue to practice their skills, in demand outside Rajasthan and abroad as well.

Jaisalmer makes an excellent base to visit a number of interesting places.



Jaisalmer is known for its beautifully carved havelis



Royal cenotaphs of Jaisalmer

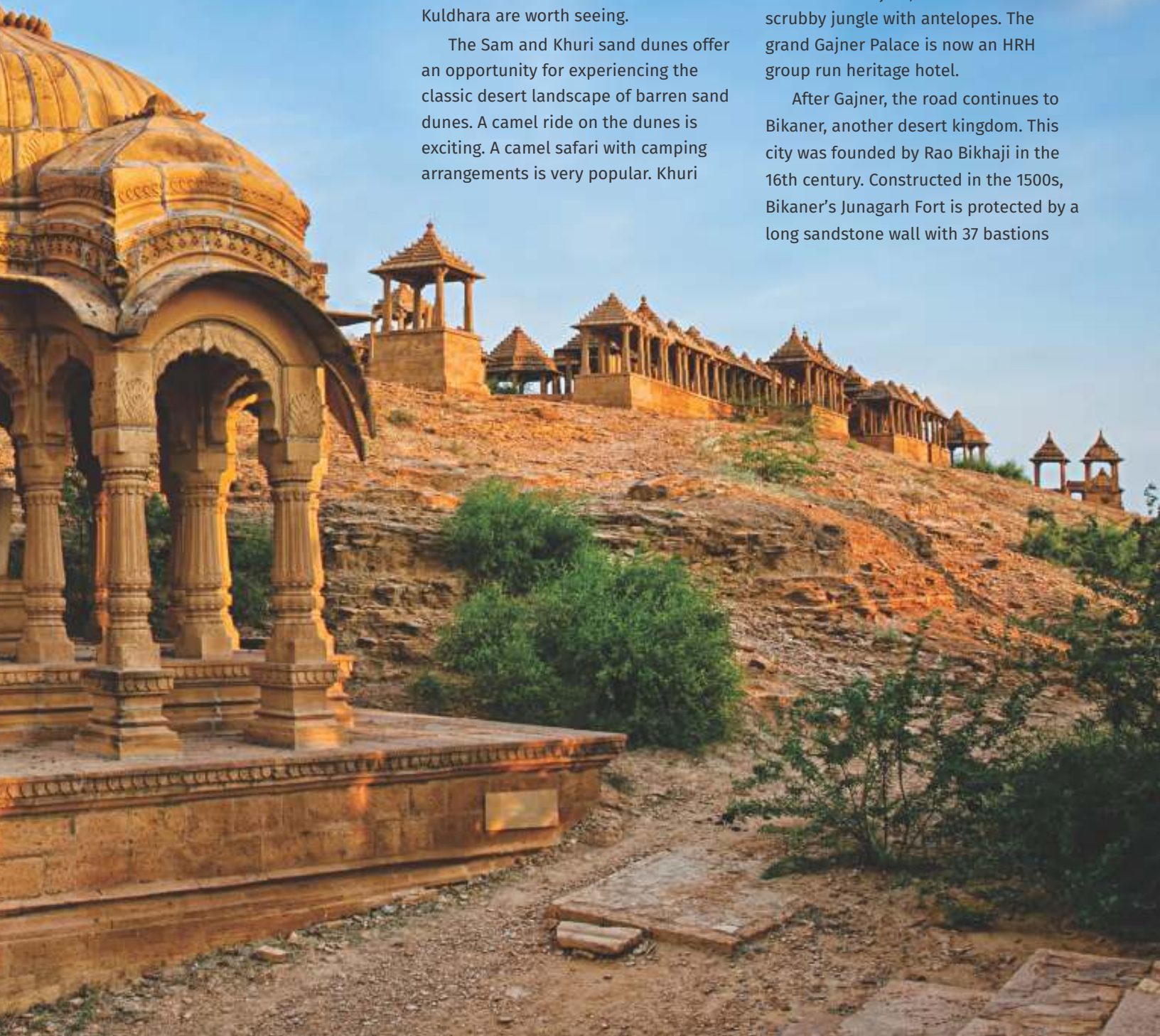
The Aakal Fossil Park has 180 million years old wood fossils. The Desert National Park is one of the few places where the Great Indian Bustard can be seen as many other endangered species. The cenotaphs of Bada Bagh, the Jain temple of Lodurva and the ruins of Kuldhara are worth seeing.

The Sam and Khuri sand dunes offer an opportunity for experiencing the classic desert landscape of barren sand dunes. A camel ride on the dunes is exciting. A camel safari with camping arrangements is very popular. Khuri

village is also excellent for seeing the desert hut architecture.

From Jaisalmer, take the road to Ramdevra, which is named after Baba Ramdev, a medieval spiritual leader. It is an important place of pilgrimage. Continue to Gajner, which has a lake and scrubby jungle with antelopes. The grand Gajner Palace is now an HRH group run heritage hotel.

After Gajner, the road continues to Bikaner, another desert kingdom. This city was founded by Rao Bikhaji in the 16th century. Constructed in the 1500s, Bikaner's Junagarh Fort is protected by a long sandstone wall with 37 bastions



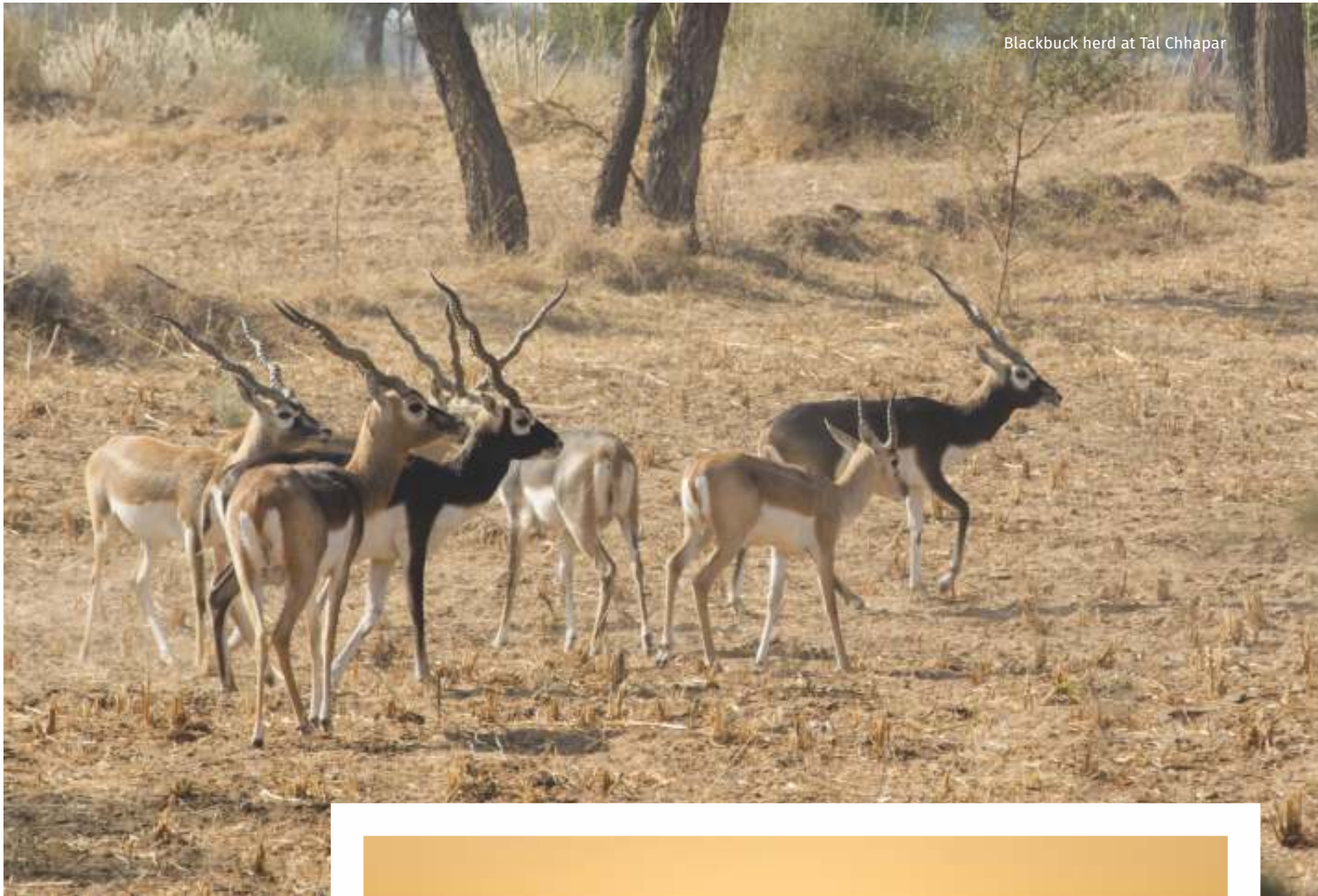
Camel safari



Junagarh Fort, Bikaner

and a moat. Inside are some profusely decorated palaces and temples. The Lalgarh Palace and its surrounding buildings are fine works of early-20th century palaces. The walled city is also worth exploring with fine havelis and medieval Jain temples. On the outskirts of Bikaner, the royal cenotaphs can be good for viewing the sunset. The camel breeding and research farm is one of Bikaner's top tourist draws. Another quaint site is Deshnok, the Karni Mata temple where rats are sacred.


From Bikaner take the road to Tal Chhapar, where you can see some of Rajasthan's largest



Blackbuck herd at Tal Chhapar

antelope herds. This sanctuary for the blackbuck or Indian antelope is also good for bird watching.

Travel down from here to Pushkar, a temple town scenically set among rocks and dunes. Pushkar has India's most sacred Brahma Temple in the heart of town and Savitri and Gayatri temples on nearby hilltops. The town has many other temples. The lake is one of the five sacred lakes for all Hindus.

From Pushkar, you can explore the desert and nearby rose gardens. A camel cart ride in the evening offers a glorious view of the desert sunset. 



Sunset



Madame Tussauds Delhi opening on 1st December, 2017

and bookmyshow. To indulge audience excitement, exclusive pre-booking offers on tickets are open at Rs 860 for adults, and Rs 660 for kids. These tickets are flexible as it is valid for a year from the day of purchase and allows guest to visit at any time of their choice. Post opening of the attraction, the tickets will be dated tickets, priced at Rs 960/- for adults and Rs 760/- for children.

detailed portrayal of the fascinating world of glamour, sports, history, politics and history under one roof, through planned themed and interactive areas, by the skillful and innovative interpretation of renowned celebrities through wax figures. The visitors will be encouraged to interact with the life-like figures of the celebrities, which marks the uniqueness of the wax attraction.

New Delhi, September 2017: Madame Tussauds Delhi announces the much-awaited opening dates of the attraction slated for 1st December 2017. Located in the heart of Delhi's - Connaught Place, the attraction is set to introduce a whole new world of entertainment to Indian audiences.

Commenting on the same, Ms Sabia Gulati, Head Sales & Marketing, Madame Tussauds Delhi said, "Madame Tussauds will serve its Indian guests with a unique and fun filled experience especially strategized and developed for them. Finally, we are here to change the way entertainment had been perceived till date. With the opening of the attraction on 1st December, Indians will behold a new era of entertainment allowing them to own their moment of red carpet in showbiz. We are sure our guests will welcome the attraction enthusiastically and will love it for most exciting celebrity experience it will bring to them."

Madame Tussauds tickets can also be booked at nearby, cleartrip, goeventz

As a precursor to the opening of the attraction in Delhi, the brand has unveiled many celebrity figures who will be part of the Delhi attraction. Adding to this, Madame Tussauds today unveiled 'The Flying Sikh'- Milkha Singh's figure at an event in Chandigarh. The figure, which will be displayed in the sports zone of the Delhi attraction has been created meticulously by several highly skilled artists from Madame Tussauds from more than 300 measurements and photographs during the sitting sessions with the celebrity. It is sculpted in a spectacular sprint pose chosen from his victorious win at the Common Wealth Games in 1958. Viewers are bound to be awestruck and will be driven back to this moment of pride, seeing Milkha Singh's figure at the immersive zone of the attraction.

Madame Tussauds Delhi is an attraction known for the incredibly



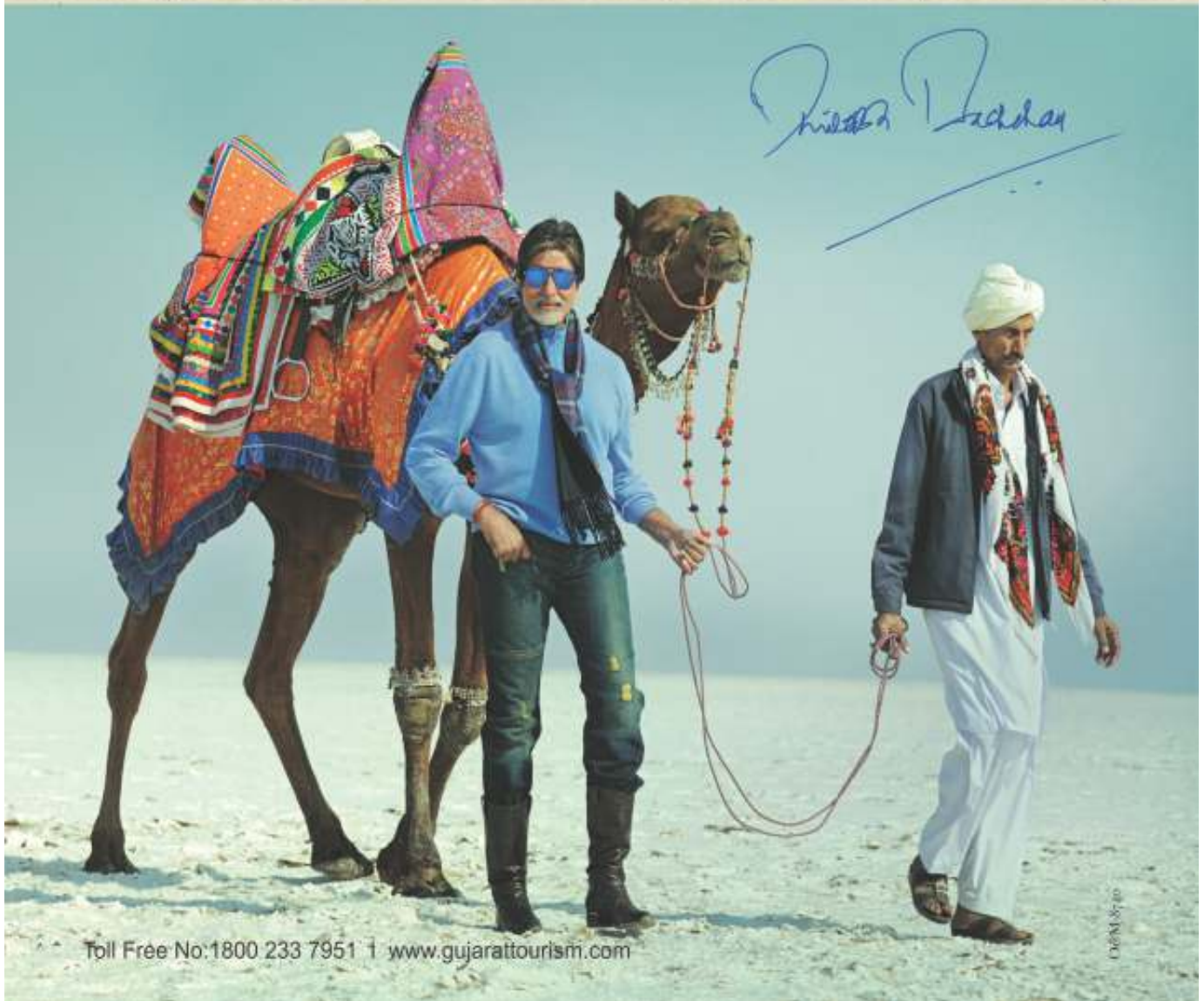
Magical scent of nature



During the Rann Utsav, Gujarat's festival of art, crafts and dance, I saw spinning skirts with mirror work that would make a goddess jealous. The Aari embroidery done here was so intricate, even the vendors looked sad to part with a piece. The music hypnotised me, the food tempted me, the colours dazzled me. Set against the white desert, I felt as if the festival was our way of showing off to the heavens; almost saying 'look at what we can do!'



Shirish Doshi



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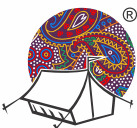
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