

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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A high-end monthly magazine

Kenya Beyond the Great African Safari



Adurru
An Ancient Unknown Village

Meghalaya
Nature's Paradise

Ecuador
**The Curious Case of
the Original Equator Line**

Camel Fair

Photography Tour in Pushkar





Wrong place, dude

How exciting is it to experience the geographically-significant locations of the world? Climbing a huge mountain to read the signboard that says that it is the highest point of the country (Whoa! What a microscopic form of the world! Totally worth the efforts). Or, fighting all the odds to travel to that northern-most location (Am I on an isolated blood-chillingly cold island or what? Never mind, it is at the top of the country).

And then one fine morning, you read headline in the newspaper that makes you realize that “Dude, wrong place. The mountain you climbed like a lunatic wasn’t the highest one or the location you crawled crazily to was not the northern-most one.” What will be your reaction? For a moment, it will be like “My whole life was a lie” or “I was cheated on”. Similar was the reaction of millions of tourists at geographic center of South America, the Equator Monument in Indonesia, the Geographic Center of Scotland, the Geographic Center of the Contiguous United States, the Oldest 45th Parallel Marker in the U.S. and the Middle of the World monument in Ecuador, among many others.

Measuring this gigantic globe is no easy task. Many such cartographic errors surfaced with the evolution of technology. In the current issue, we present “The Curious Case of the Original Equator Line”, which will talk about the monument that was built to mark the middle of the world point located in Ecuador. Wait, did you just say you have already been to Ecuador and visited the flawed monument? Hey, you have visited the historically-important monument. However, it will be interesting to find out the curious case of the original equator line. And for those who are yet to experience what it is like to place one foot in the northern hemisphere and one on the southern hemisphere, you’re at the right place now.

Have a happy trip!



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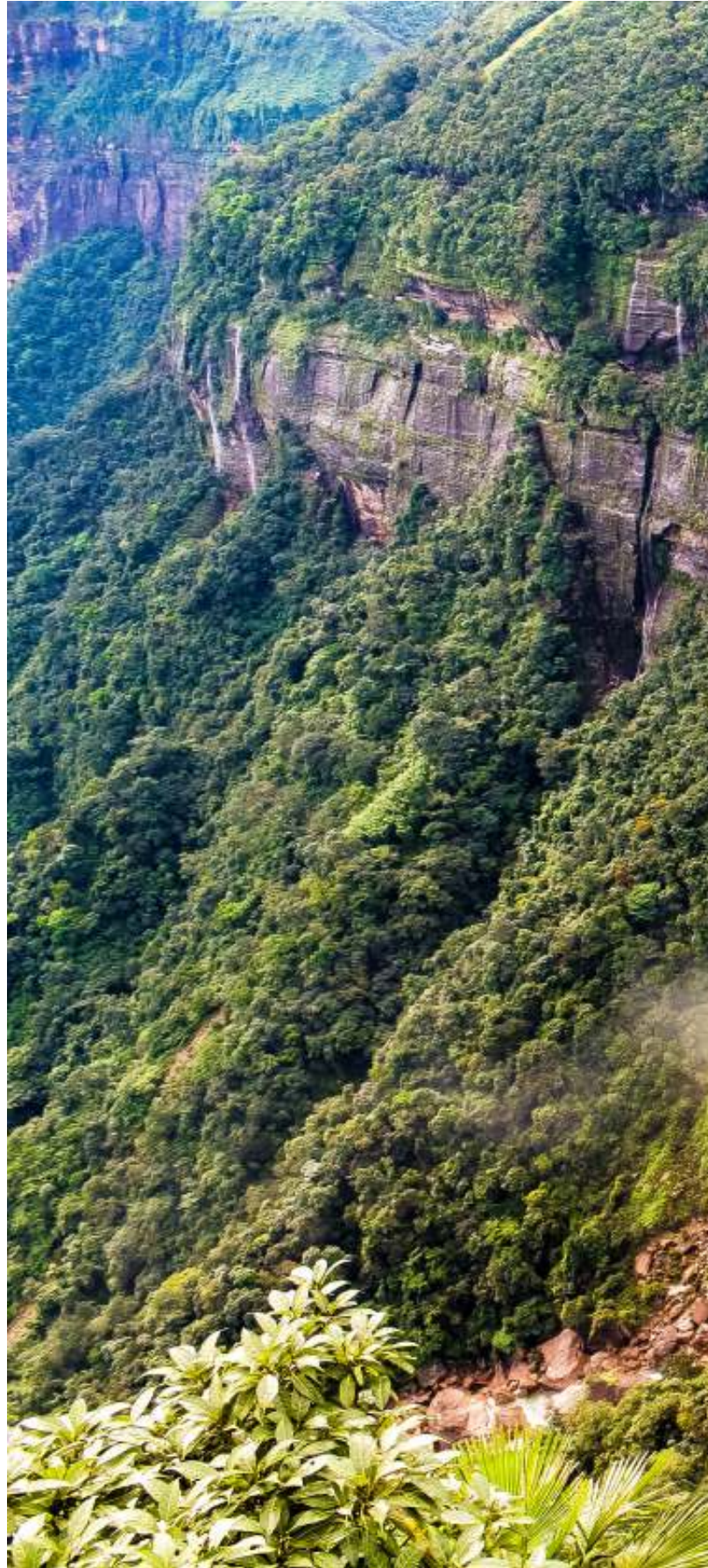
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Incredible India

MEGHALAYA

Nature's Paradise



The Northeastern states of India have mysterious charm that lure the attention of travellers from across the nation and the world.

Bounded to the south and west by the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the north and east by India's Assam state, Meghalaya is endowed with incredible natural beauty.

Literally meaning 'Abode of Clouds', Meghalaya is frequented by honeymooners and nature lovers. Though every season will give you a reason to visit this beautiful hill station, October to April is the best time to witness the flourishing nature.





Shillong Peak

Known mainly for the magnificent view of Shillong it provides, Shillong Peak gives a scenic view of the city from the elevation of about 1965m above the sea level. Lush greenery, picturesque landscape and pleasant environment lure tourists all around the year. One of the highest points of the state, Shillong Peak is one of the famous attractions of Shillong.



Cherrapunji

The second wettest place on earth, Cherrapunji is a scenic town in Meghalaya. As it receives rain for almost throughout the year, the town is an abode to the unexplored forests and stunning greenery that make it the most sought-after destination.

There are several waterfalls in and around the place. Nohkalikai Falls here is one of the most majestic waterfalls in India. What better season than the monsoons to see the waterfalls in their full glory. However, it is a sight to behold even during the other seasons.

We spent some time driving past the old houses of the town. Cherrapunji also has the oldest church of Northeast India.

Living Root Bridge, Nongriat

Not very far from Cherrapunji is one of the biggest attractions of Meghalaya - the living root bridges. They are crafted by hands, intertwining and weaving together the aerial roots of the ficus elastica, a species of fig tree.

Living Root Bridge is one of the greatest examples of eco-friendly development. The tribals have to cross the streams and sometimes, when the streams are flooded with excessive water, it is difficult to

cross them. Hence, they started joining the aerial roots of the ficus elastica, a species of fig tree across the streams. After the efforts of a decade or more, the roots transformed into fully functional bridges. Depending on the size of the structure, up to five people can use the bridge at one time.

There are several root bridges but the most remarkable one is the double decker root bridge in Nongriat village. You have to take a flight of 4,000 stairs to get down to the village, where it is located.

Mawsmai Caves

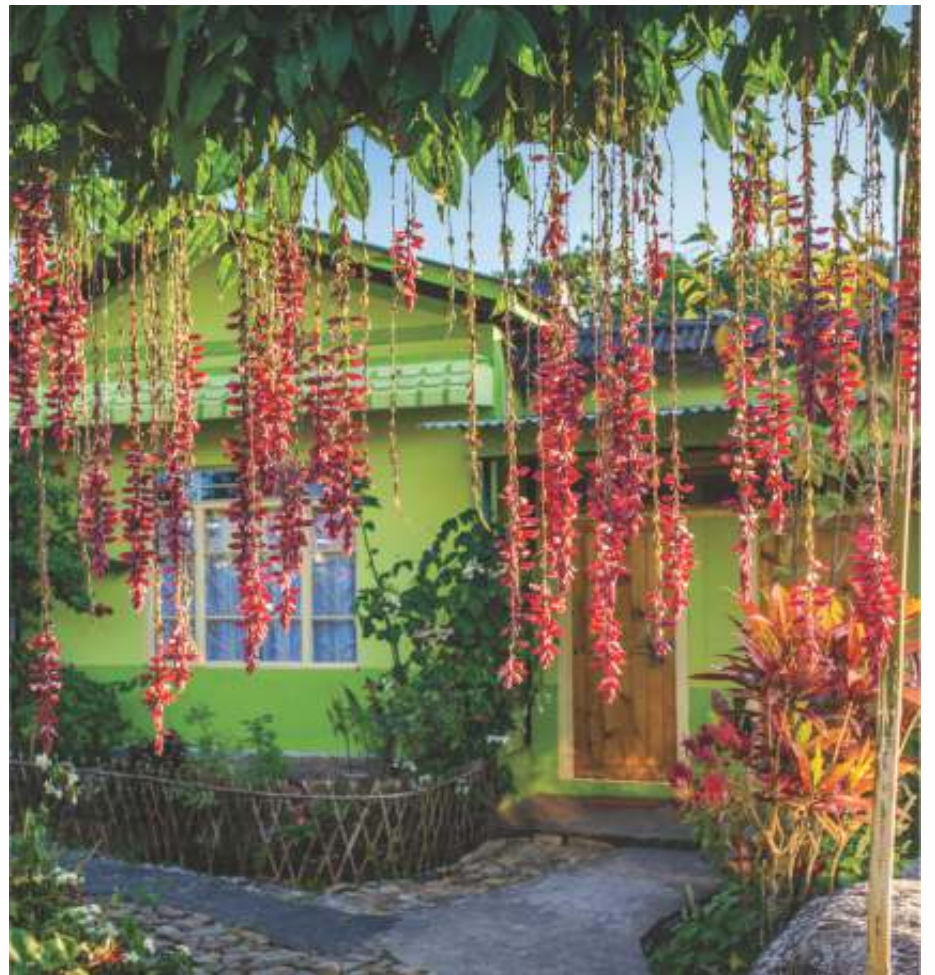
Meghalaya is a caver's paradise. You can spend several days exploring the known and the unknown caves. Mawsmai are the most famous caves, located just 6 kilometers from Cherrapunji. Here you will see excellent formations of stalactites and stalagmites. The striking natural cave is flocked by visitors in great numbers. It is one of the best places for history buffs and experience seekers.



Mawlynnong

Located at about 90 km from Shillong in the East Khasi hills is the small village of Mawlynnong. It rose to popularity after being awarded as the cleanest village in Asia. The locals refer to the place as “God's Own Garden”.

Get up before sunrise and go to the skywalk of the bamboo-made machan from where you can get a great view of the Bangladesh plains. Later, take a walk in the village or visit the village church.





Dawki

Dawki is a small town on the banks of Umngot. The speciality of the place is the crystal clear water of Umngot River. The water is so transparent that the boats on it look as if they are floating on a crystal glass surface. You can buy some Bangladeshi stuffs from here. 1.5 kilometers from here is the Bangladesh border Tamabil. It is an interesting place to spend some time.

ACTIVITIES

Caving, cycling and trekking in the hills


HOW TO GO

The best way to go to Meghalaya is to take a flight to Guwahati and then take a vehicle to go around. All places in Meghalaya are well-connected by road network. Regular sharing taxis from Guwahati to Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya are also available.

WHEN TO GO

If you want to experience the monsoon, you should go in July or August. The waterfalls will be at their best during those times. Some of the low lying areas might get inaccessible though.

WHERE TO STAY

Shillong has hotels of all categories. Cherrapunji has some good hotels as well. Mawlynnong has a lot of clean home-stays. 

Incredible India

Street Eats in Mumbai



Street vendor making Pav Bhaji, Juhu Beach



Pav Bhaji

The cosmopolitan population of Mumbai has made a variety of cuisine available on the street sides - Idlis and Dosas, Indian-style Chinese dishes, Fried Rice and Noodles, Parathas, Lassis, Chaats, Dal Pakwan, Kebabs, Tikkas, Omelets, Fish, Chicken Rolls, Burgers, Hot Dogs, Frankies, Grilled Sandwiches, Salads and much more. The signature snack is Bhel Puri, a mix of puffed rice, crispy puri and sev, with diced onions, tomatoes, coriander, a tangy chutney and masalas, sometimes with channa or peanuts added to the mixture. Almost everywhere in the city, you can see Bhel Puri walas tossing all the ingredients together before serving it in a paper cone.

While Vada Pav comprises a fried patty of mashed potato placed in a

Mumbai is synonymous with its street food. Its many emblematic street food dishes include Bhel Puri, Vada Pav and Pav Bhaji. The street food scene has few parallels in the world: millions of people of different economic classes eat on the roadside. From the surrounds of colleges to railway stations, beaches to parks, markets and office districts, street foods are sold at all hours of the day - you see people thronging the hawkers' carts and stands for tea, coffee, freshly squeezed juice, cut fruits, toasted sandwiches, breakfast, snacks, lunch, dinner and late night bites. A special feature of Mumbai is its Khau Gallis - streets dedicated to street food vendors and small eateries.



Vada Pav

sliced bun with spices and chutneys, Misal Pav is a spicy curry made of sprouted beans, which is eaten with pav. Mumbai's famous Pav Bhaji is a more substantial street food often as a single pot meal – it is a mélange of mashed vegetables, cooked with gravy, spices and butter. Pav Bhaji is said to have its origin in cotton markets and other wholesale business centres, where the merchants were attracted to the simple meal of mashed vegetables and bread eaten by workers. Thus, the rich version came about with a dollop of butter. Sugarcane is crushed by vendors to extract juice and corn on the cob is roasted to be served as 'Bhutta' garnished with lime and masala.

To catch the spirit of Mumbai, start from the south of the city, where countless people get off the trains at CST Station (originally Victoria Terminus) or Churchgate Station and walk briskly to work places at Fort, Fountain or Nariman Point. On the way, those who have missed their breakfast stop at carts or stands for food on the go – a toasted sandwich, a vada pav, fruits cut into chunks, fresh juices and so forth. At lunchtime, people look for something more substantial and head for places serving anything from a South Indian meal to fish curry. Snacking is big in this



Dosa



Idli Sambhar



Samosa and Kachori



Bhel



Malpuas in the making



Phirni

side of the city – everyone has their favourite bhel puri wallah, vada pav vendor or sandwich stand. And at night, you can see cars parked near stands making smoky Kebabs and Baida Roti. Juice and milkshake bars are ubiquitous on the roadside. The share market, cloth markets and other business centres in this side of town are a heaven for street food.

The area between SNDT and Cross Maidan is popular with students and office-goers for a late meal – anything from Veg Manchurian Rice to Chicken Curry with Rotis can be enjoyed here.

As you head towards the centre, Zaveri Bazaar is the popular jewellery, gold and diamond hub of Mumbai. The Khau Galli here is deservedly iconic, you can see colourful umbrellas, rows of



Pani Puri stand



Gobi Manchurian and Cauliflower Pakoras



Lassi



Chana Puri

carts, tiffin providers and popular eateries like Bhagat Tarachand, Mohanbhai Pudlawala and Jagannath Chaturbhuj. Pudla, Kachoris, Papdi, Moong Dhal Bhajiyas, you see them all being made here. Around Mangaldas Market, Princess Street has street vendors and superb sweet shops. Look for Dal Pakwans, Samosa Toasts, Badam Barfis, Ice Halwas and Parsi Dairy's Kulfis.

Mohammed Ali Road and its adjacent market lanes are also worth exploring for drool-worthy delicacies - Channa Puri, Tikkas, Kebabs, Malpuas, and curries. Eateries near the Minara Masjid are legendary for Nalli Nihari, Paya and Haleem, and don't miss the Phirni and Halwas.

Another central market district, Tardeo's street is the place to lunch on Puri Bhaji, South Indian or biryanis.



Girls having Faluda Kulfi



Chai and Pakora

After sunset, take the road to Chowpatty, a beach along scenic Marine Drive. Crowds gather here each evening, to enjoy Bhel Puri, Chaats and Kulfis.

Further north in Bandra, Carter Road offers a variety of global influenced foods like Shawarma, Chinese, Momos and Falafels. Juhu Beach is one of the destinations packed with vendors selling Bhel Puri to Ice Creams.

Ghatkopar has a bustling eat street with fusion vegetarian fair like many takes on Dosa.

Navi Mumbai or New Bombay has also become a street food hub. The street near Utsav Chowk in Kharghar is the place to have Momos, wok-fried Chinese and many other foods. ¹⁰



Ragda Pattice



Aloo Paratha




Dal Pakwan



Momos

Incredible India

CAMEL  FAIR

PHOTOGRAPHY

Tour in Pushkar



“

Rajasthan is a land of vibrant culture. Besides magnificent forts, royal palaces and thrilling desert safaris, it is also famous for Pushkar Camel Fair - the colourful celebration of Rajasthan's traditional mode of transport, camels.

”



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Just like any other photography enthusiasts, capturing beauty of this fascinating fair was top on my list. And so after a flight to Jaipur and a 4-hour ride by car, I reached Pushkar - the land of wonders.

Every winter, the temple town of Pushkar hosts Camel fair, in which livestock traders from nearby towns and villages participate. Traders with their camel or livestock travel for days to be a part of this fair. The vast stretch of plain ground turns into colourful affair, as the camels and other livestock are adorned with the colourful pompoms and mirrors.

The fair of Pushkar hosts competitions such as matka phod (breaking earthen pots), longest moustache and bridal competition. Men with their traditional attire and beards compete for longest moustache and women beat each other with the brimming pots on their head. The mela turns into hunting ground for photographers from all over the world.

The mela marks excellent cultural performances by musicians, dancers, acrobats, magicians, etc. Hot air balloons is an amazing recreational activity where one gets to experience and enjoy the sight of the mela from the sky.



1



2



3



4

1-6 Magical moments at Pushkar fair



5



6

Apart from the Fair, the best thing to do in Pushkar is spending an evening at ghats watching evening aarti and taking *parikrama* of the ghat. Some of the main attractions that one shouldn't miss are temple dancing, arts and crafts bazaar and folk and classical music. Pushkar is also famous as the only place that has temple dedicated to Brahma.



- 7. Ghat
- 8. Brahma Temple
- 9. Art and Crafts Bazaar





10

HOW TO GO

The best way is to take a flight to Jaipur and then a taxi to Pushkar. It took us about 4 hours to complete the 152-km journey by a taxi. If you want to travel by train, Ajmer is the nearest railhead with connections to trains from all over India. Pushkar is just 15-km from Ajmer.

There are also state transport buses to Ajmer and Pushkar.

WHEN TO GO

If you want to witness the fair and the camels, you should go during the Camel Fair, which happens during Kartik Purnima, in October

or November. Pushkar is very calm and peaceful during other time of the year. If you don't like crowds, winter is a good time to be here. It gets really hot in summer. This year, the fair will take place from October 23 to November 4.

WHERE TO STAY

There are lot of options for staying in Pushkar, right from low budget homestays to 5-star hotels. If you are coming for the fair, I would recommend the state operated - RTDC Hotel Sarovar, which offers clean rooms at reasonable price. The hotel is located very close to the fair site.

NEARBY PLACES

If you are coming to Pushkar, you must spend a day in Ajmer and see the Ajmer Dargah and Dhai Din Ka Jhopra apart from Sohni Ji Ki Nashiyan.

TIPS

- Respect the local traditions.
- Footwear are not allowed on ghats.
- Photography is not allowed when people are taking bath in the lake.
- Consumption of alcohol is not permitted in Pushkar.
- Refrain from any activity that can hurt the religious sentiments of the locals. 10



11

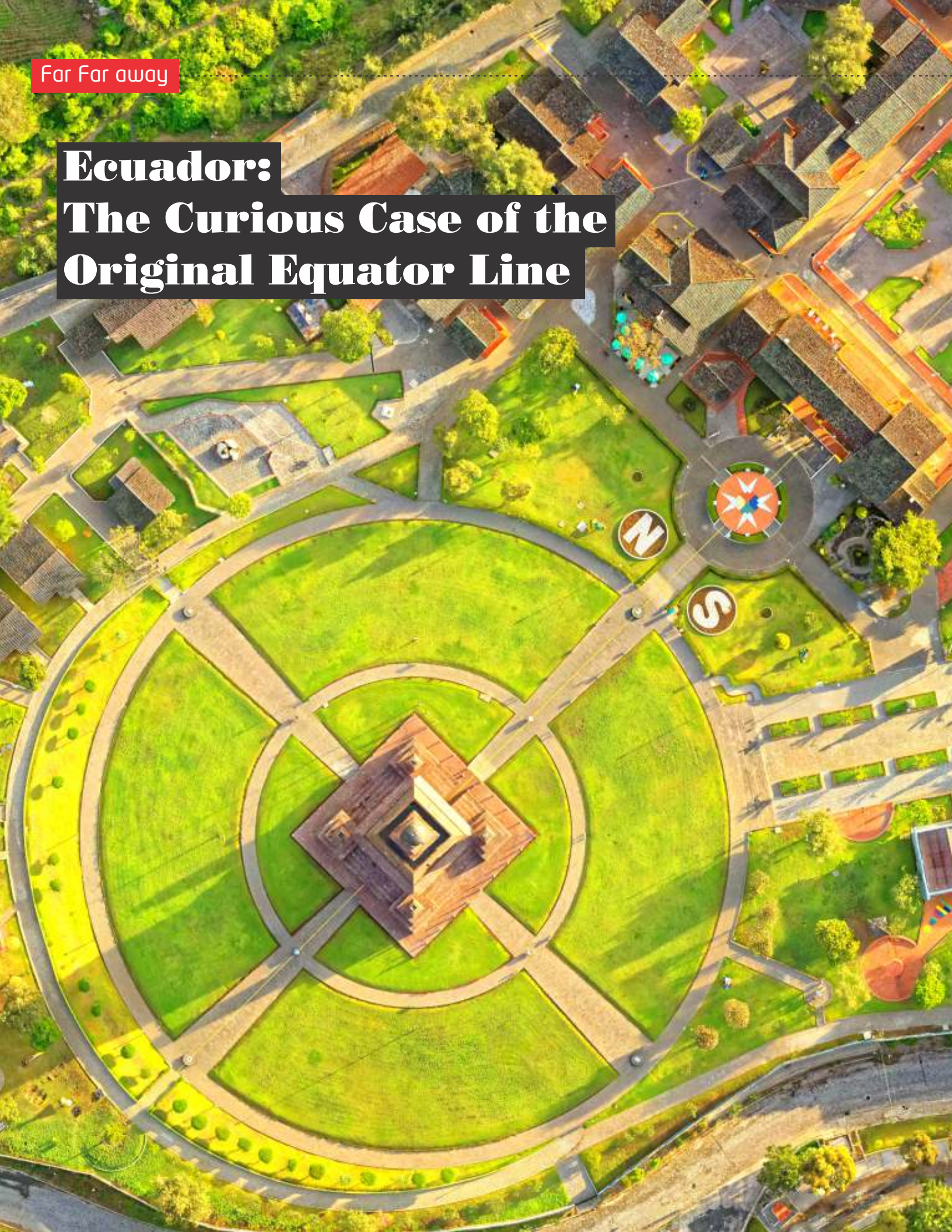


12

10-12
The colours of culture
and people

Far Far away

Ecuador: The Curious Case of the Original Equator Line





“

Take me to the
equator, please!
Which one, the old one
or the newly-founded
one? –
Oh well!
Can there be two
equators in the first
place?

”

This is commonly-heard dialogue when you visit Mitad del Mundo, meaning Middle Of The World, a monument that was built and owned by the province of Pichincha and is located in Quito, Ecuador. The Equator is an imaginary line on the surface of the Earth, which equidistantly divides the planet into the northern and southern sections. With only a handful of countries that lie near or on the equator line, they hold a special importance and attract tourists from all around the world. Being one of those lucky countries, Ecuador has its capital, Quito that lies on the equator and is a popular tourist destination. Along with exquisite architecture, splendid city views and breathtaking nature scapes, the monument of Mitad del Mundo remains to be one of the favourite tourist spots in the country's history!

Mitad del Mundo is that one place, where you could live your dream of having your feet in two different hemispheres at the same time. The 30-foot tall monument is a concrete structure that was built during 1979-82 by the Pichincha's Province. With an objective of replacing an older and smaller monument built by the Govern-



ment of Ecuador, the structure was established. And since then, it has been a famous spot for tourists. Funnily, after years of importance and visitors flocking over the site, it was discovered that the equator line was about a hundred meters away from the claimed spot!

Unfortunately, the mistake occurred in 1700's when there was no existence of accurate measurement machinery or GPS. However, in the recent past after the GPS was introduced, the mistake was

1. *Monument Mitad del Mundo near Quito in Ecuador*
2. *Sundial at the Inti Nan Museum at the Equator indicates morning (tuta manta), noon (pajta) and night (chisi)*

found. And the exact equator spot was claimed to be found a little further away. To mark the said spot, the Intinan Museum was built. The museum houses history about Ecuador's culture, people and most importantly, the line of equator that is marked with the red line.

Focussing on the previous flawed monument, one could visit the structure and walk along the yellow line, which was claimed to be the line of equator. The premises houses interesting

activities that strive to prove that gravity is lesser and is open to tourists who are interested in trying their hands at it. Tiny shops along the way sell trinkets and all kinds of souvenirs for visitors who choose to invest in memory sake goodies. Coffee shops have been built in the area for visitors and tourists to chill around. The destination also houses a museum, where one could get their passports stamped as a proof to your visit to the equator. Sounds like fun, isn't it?

Moving on to the newly-founded original line of equator, which is around 250 yards away, one could visit the Intinan Museum, which houses the line of equator with the red line and a spinning globe to mark its presence. The grounds have interesting activities that are of tourist attraction and people have always loved to try their hands on those experiments. Magical indulgences for tourists include balancing an egg on the tip of a nail, walking on the red line with closed eyes and watching water swirl

from right to left and the other way round through a basin demo by guides who try to prove the Coriolis Effect, which is a function of motion along the curve of the earth. The phenomenon discusses how free-moving objects in the northern hemisphere turn to the right and southern hemisphere turn to the left. Apart from all these engaging exercises by tourist guides and authorities, a photo opportunity remains to be the main reason why tourists visit this place.

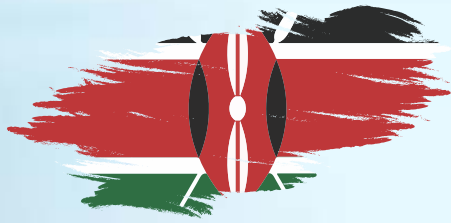
For many travellers who have visited this place, it comes across as an amusing discovery of how naively wrong the invention of the equator is? While some feel that it's okay to be ignored and just enjoy the experience, others feel cynical about visiting the wrong site and to have been given incorrect information. It is noticed that due to the flaw, many tourist guides who are hired tend to take tourists only to Mitad del Mundo and never mention about the correct spot at the Intinan Museum.

For those planning a trip to Ecuador with Quito, make sure that you try and visit both the sites as both are historically important and you could probably decide yourself, which one is original? As for the best months to visit this beautiful country, one should choose to travel between June and September with sunnier days and clearer skies, thus making it the perfect ambience for exploring the country and for the perfect photography as well. Ecuador is a small country but it definitely has so much to see and do. Choosing this country as a holiday destination will never disappoint you. 📷

#JustSaying: *There are some people who claim that neither of the equators is original. They claim that the real equator is even further up! Well, with so much confusion, we feel that you should just take a trip to Ecuador yourself to figure out the original equator! Sounds like a plan?*



Far Far away



KENYA

*beyond
the great
African
safari*



It is hard to think of Kenya without thinking of the great African safari, a sea of rolling yellow framed by greens and blues, filled with beautiful animals and endless adventure. Who wouldn't want to experience giraffe sightings, searching for the great prides of lions, and riding jeep-side along a knowledgeable guide while taking in one of the most exquisite natural landscapes of the world? But when planning a trip to Africa and to Kenya specifically, pack your bags for more than a safari - Kenya is home to a variety of other sights, entertainment and adventures, too. As you're planning your trip, don't forget to check out these alternative ways to see this diverse African country.

*Immerse yourself
into local village life*

Anyone who travels knows that moving from city to city and crowd to crowd while on the road can be exhausting. Cities, while culturally fascinating with the endless opportunities for art, theater, music, and culinary exploration, can also be chaotic and crowded. Travelling in tourist hubs gives you a glimpse of the city culture of a country, but it can leave you with an incomplete picture. What better way to slow things down and discover different aspects of local Kenyan culture than to find a smaller, more remote village to visit or volunteer? Kenya is a home to 42 unique tribes whose cultures have survived and thrived into modern day, and these tribes' ancestors still live amongst the natural beauty of Kenya in small, independent villages scattered throughout the country.

In some places, stays with local families can be arranged. In this vein,



visitors have the unique opportunity to experience authentic Kenyan village life. You will live in the same house as your host family, share the same amenities as these people, and really spend time getting to know one corner of Kenya and

its people intimately and thoroughly. You can also volunteer in various villages through cultural exchange sites like Workaway or WWOOF. Activities range from organic gardening to working with orphans and school children.

Volunteering offers a different way to travel, and working with locals adds another layer to the relationships you will build during your stay. Plus, you might leave with a new skill, though you will be sure to leave with countless stories. Whichever route you go, be it touring or volunteering, you are sure to get a taste of Africa.



Kick off your shoes and spend some time on the coast

Coastal Kenya is an often-forgotten playground for marine lovers and beach goers alike. With a large portion of the country bordering the Western Indian Ocean, Kenya offers a variety of beach and coastal activities to enjoy boating, scuba diving, marine life viewing and tropical beaches. Kenya's reefs are accessible year round, though the waters are more disturbed in July and August and can make underwater life harder to see. One of the best places for diving and marine wildlife viewings is Watamu Marine National Park, where depending on the season, you can see green sea turtles, whale sharks and migrating whales from South Africa. At Watamu, the beautiful landscapes are not just found in the waters of the ocean - stunning cliffs and pristine shorelines will wow and awe any traveller, and regardless of your desire to scuba, a trip to Watamu will not disappoint.



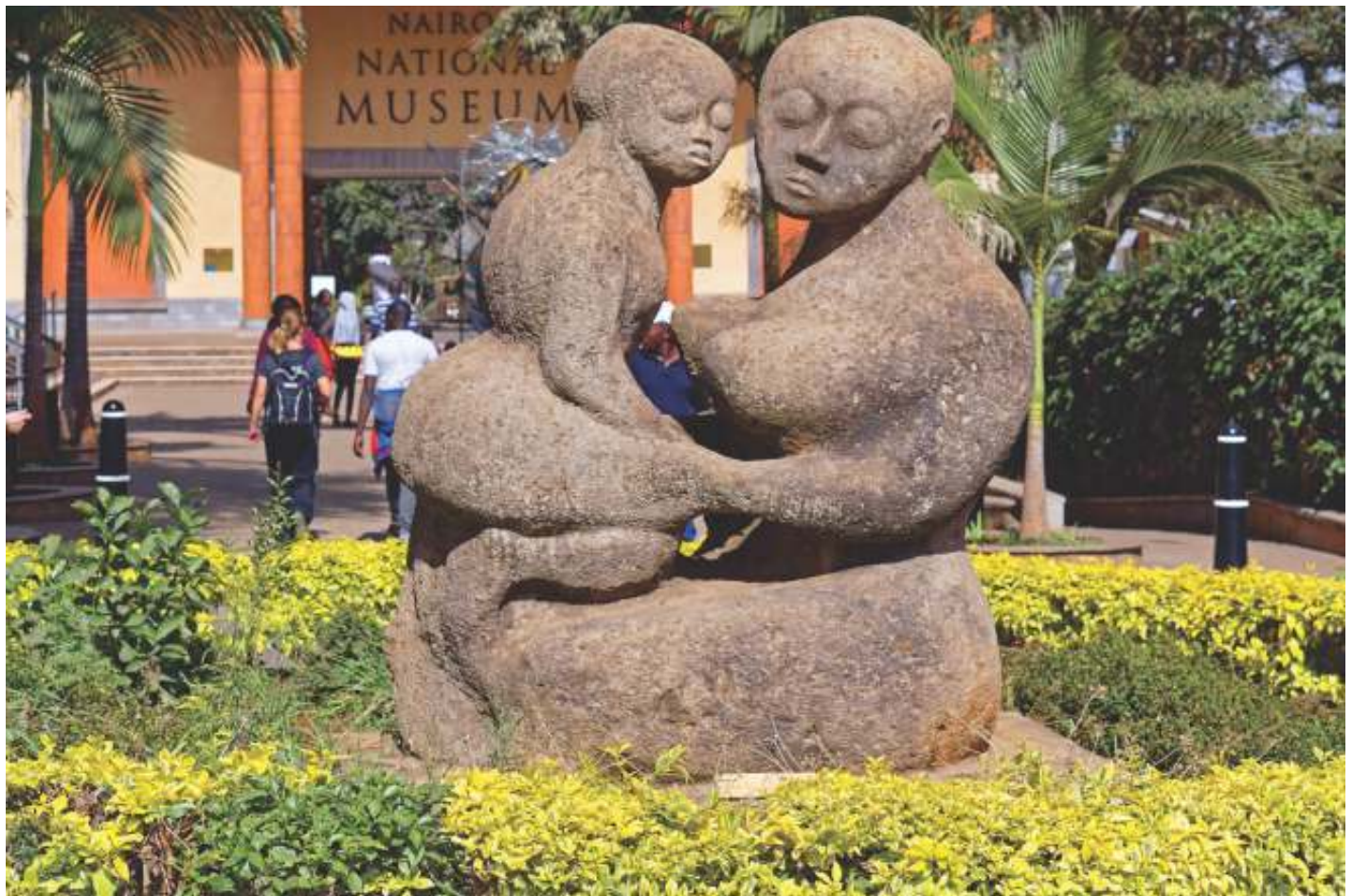
A paradise of white sand and tropical vibes awaits you at one of the many beaches on Kenya's eastern coast



In addition to excellent diving opportunities, Kenya is a home to myriad of beach towns that can provide sun, surfing and seafood to the beach-bums of the travelling world, while still satisfying the cultural urge to explore a new place. Make sure to plan your coastal Kenya trip around the Mombasa Carnival, taking place the entire month of November in Mombasa, an island in the southeast. This ever popular festival gathers international visitors every year, and it is clear why! Every sound of drums and Kenyan singing fill the air as tourists and locals alike wander around the vibrant streets of downtown Mombasa near Fort Jesus. Relish local food and drinks, listen to local music, enjoy a stroll down the streets, bask in the sun on the beach and browse artisan crafts and arts. The Mombasa Cultural Festival is a fun and exciting way to explore the rich cultural history of Kenya while remaining in a coastal environment.

Explore the proud heritage of Kenya at cultural sites and museums

The beauty of any place lies in its history and culture, and as travellers, we can learn so much about a place by taking the time to understand its past in all its complexities. Kenya is no different, and there are countless cultural sites and museums spread throughout the country, where you can learn and appreciate Kenya and Africa's historical significance. One of the major museums in Kenya is the Nairobi National Museum. Here, exhibits and galleries are all centered around exploration: explore heritage while viewing art galleries dedicated to modern and historical artworks; learn about the wildlife at the natural history exhibits; and discover human history by learning about both evolution and the history of Africa.



Kenya is full of distinct culture and offers travellers an opportunity to learn about its history

In addition to museums, be on the lookout for cultural landmarks like Fort Jesus, which was built in the late 16th century and served as a Portugal's only foothold in Africa during European colonisation of Africa. The stone structure stands today, overlooking the ocean and serving as a significant reminder of the realities of colonialism in Africa and the changes brought to Kenya and other countries by western influences. You should also take time out to explore the significant archaeological African sites as well, such as the Gedi ruins in Eastern Kenya. The ruins are stunning display of medieval Swahili-Arab civilisations. The once bustling civilisation can be seen now in the imaginations and interpretations of the visitors. Walk among the stone walls and try to picture it as it was in the 13th century - a bustling trade town with advanced technology such as streets, running water, and flushing toilets. Marvel at the craftsmanship and advanced, complex nature of this ancient African civilisation, the ancestors of Kenya and the people who still reside there today. Sites include mosques, a palace, and homes and can be toured daily. 📍

Whether you are a casual traveller or one who would rather get down and dirty, Kenya is sure to surprise you! This diverse, vast country offers endless opportunities to explore nature, to learn about the history and culture, and to leave with a better understanding about this beautiful place and its people. The only question that remains now is: when are we getting our plane tickets?



The ultimate guide to finding **FREE STAYS** while travelling

The headline may make you laugh with surprise, and you might think, “How is it even possible? Isn't money the reason why travel is just an annual vacation for most people?”

As impossible as it may sound, free stays are actually quite possible. And it is not a big secret. Many young backpackers and travellers have been using different ways to save up on cost for a few decades now.

I was fortunate enough to take a sabbatical and travel to about 14 countries in a year and a half. Like most Indians, money was a limited resource for me too, and it was cutting down drastically on accommodation expenses that made the long trip possible.

Here's how you could find a complimentary stay the next time you take a trip.

1

couchsurfing



Hands down, Couchsurfing is the best community platform to find accommodation with local hosts all over the world. Well, the term free stay is slightly limited because hosts like to extend hospitality to guests who have themselves hosted others at their homes or have an interesting profile.

So it might be prudent to start hosting travellers from all over the world right away if you are looking for free stays while you travel. Also, the best part about the platform is that it's a cultural exchange, and you get to share meals, stories and memorable moments with the travellers and hosts.

Getting started is simple. All you need to do is log in to the website and create a profile. The website will guide you on how to create a great one. Also, Couchsurfing members organise events in most big cities, which is another great way to meet travellers and make friends.

2



If you are young, and planning to take a break or even take some time off after studies before you start your career, Workaway is a great platform to get actual work experience and cut down your travel costs drastically.

A paid subscription to this website allows you to look at part time work options available in your places of interest. You mostly get to work with hostels, hotels or any other listing available on the website. Hosts offer free stay and one meal in return of 4-5 hours of work for 4 or 5 days of the week. Workaway is especially useful in countries, which are expensive to travel and live in. Again, all you need to get started is to subscribe and start browsing.

3



Just like Workaway, Wwoof is another popular way for the travellers to do some meaningful work while cutting down on costs.

Wwoofing basically means that you get to live and work on a farm in return of helping farmers with physical work. For many travellers interested in agriculture, the countryside and a simple life, Wwoof has turned out to be an interesting option.

4

Trusted housesitters and others

Just like the above three, there are many other platforms, which were born out of necessity of hosts. Thanks to the connected world of the internet, it has become possible for two parties with complimentary interests to connect ever so easily.

A little bit of research online will show you quite a few options of finding free stays, while travelling. The only thing is to find an option that actually works for you.

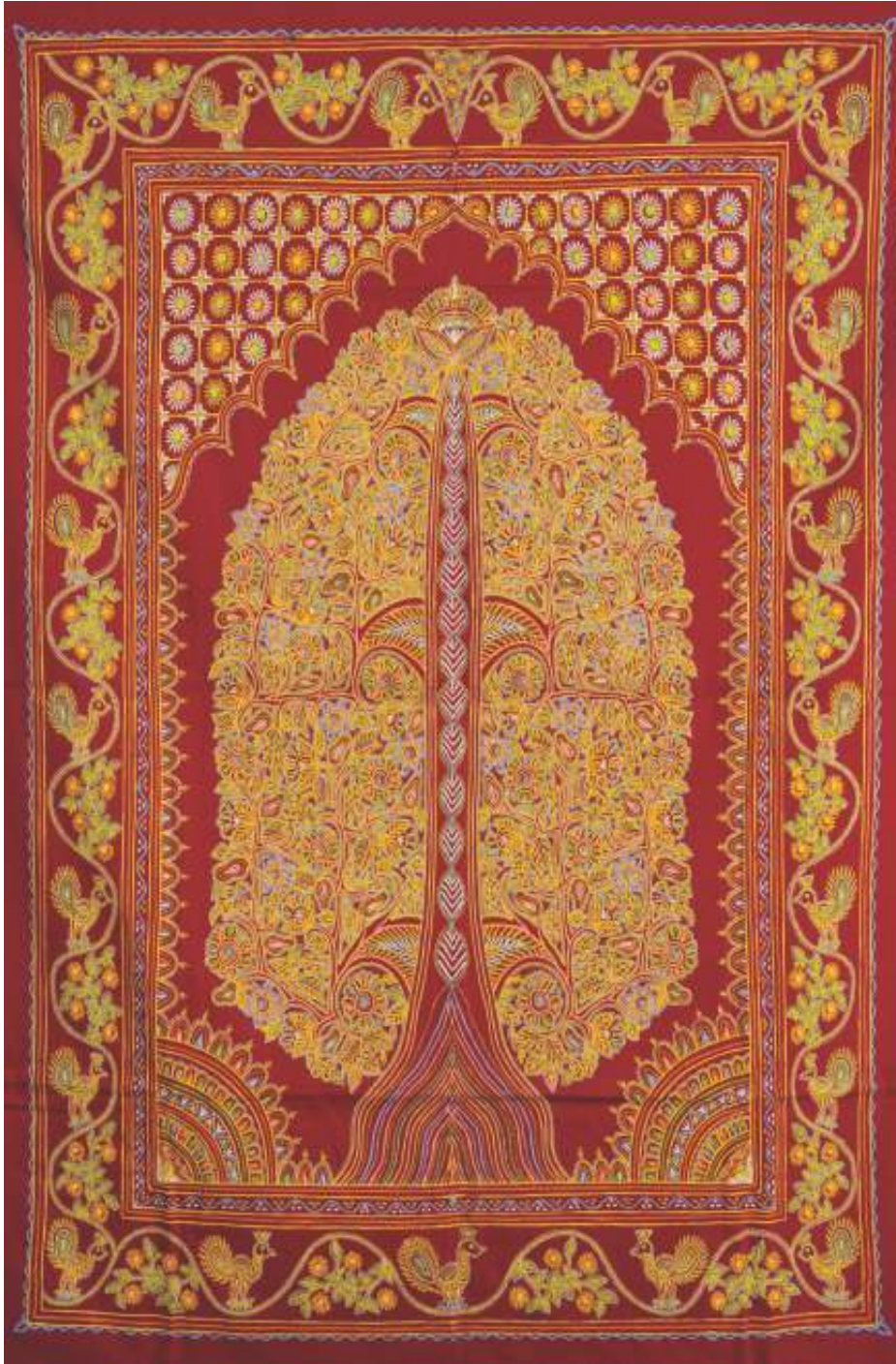
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Loyalty programs

It is also possible to use conventional stay options and still get free accommodation every once in a while. Most OTAs, hotel chains and even Airbnb offer loyalty programs. For every booking, you get reward points, which can be later redeemed for stays and other freebies.

Like most things, budget travel is about getting started. So if you're equipped with a curious and experimental attitude, you can bring down the cost of your trip by using these or other platforms for free stays.

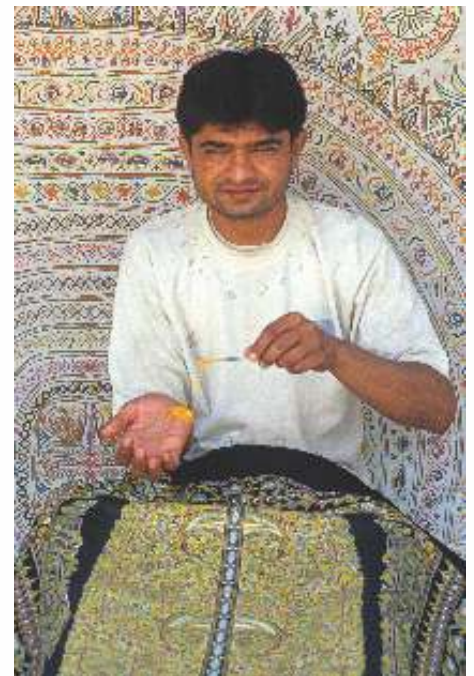
Happy travelling! 📌



“

Rogan is the art of decorating fabrics with colours that use a castor oil base. The process begins with boiling the castor oil till it thickens to the required extent and then adding the colours that the oil will take. The paint, created by this mix, is applied to the palms of the artisan's hand and through the friction of rubbing palms together becomes a stringy goeey paste from which the colour can come off on an iron rod or wooden stick like threads. A wooden or metal stick serves both as a brush and stylus, and the canvas is usually a dark coloured cloth.

”



The Rare ROGAN ART of Nirona

With the 'threads' of paint, the artisan painstakingly makes the outline on half portion of the cloth and then folds the piece to repeat the pattern in the other half. After that, the outlines are filled with colours. The entire process is a freehand work. The price of the piece depends on the intricacy of the design. A 3-sq.ft. piece that takes two or three months to make with artistic motifs in many colours could cost Rs. 3,000 while a cloth-bound file folder with simple designs of the same size would just set a buyer back by Rs. 2,000 - 3,000.

According to Khatri Abdulgafoor Daud, a national award winning Rogan artisan, *"The art of Rogan paintings probably originated in Persia and was practised across Sindh and Kutch with Nirona, Khavada and Chaubari being the major centres. The Rogan technique of painting was used to decorate fabrics for the trousseau of gaghra-choli-odhni and household linen like bed sheets, cushion covers and quilt for weddings in certain communities. As this is a laborious and time-consuming art, and involves working with terribly smelling oils, the Rogan painted pieces became expensive, and cheaper options like printed fabrics began to take over. The work was also*




seasonal, and when it was not wedding time, we had to go out for labour on fields. Also, the hard work of creating the Rogan colour, working with foul-smelling oils and then painting a fabric using the colour put-off many of the younger generation of the Rogan painters from continuing the art. I myself gave up the art and went to work at a printing and dyeing factory of a Kutchi entrepreneur in Mumbai".

During early-1980s, artisans like Khatri Arab Hasham, who were awarded at the district level in Kutch, gave an impetus to other members of the



community to return to their craft skills. *"Since then, younger members of our extended family returned to the art to execute orders that the elders were not able to undertake for reasons like age",* says Daud. The artisans today create beautiful silk and cotton pieces for wall hangings and decorations, sarees, tablecloths, skirts and various other products, which are in demand among foreign tourists, and even expensive sarees. Many members of the family like Khatri Sumar Daud have won national awards and others have state awards to their credit.

About the dangers of fakes, Khatri Sumar Daud says, *"Some artisans try to pass off raised block prints as Rogan instead of the castor-oil based freehand work that is the actual art".* 



Incredible India



Adurru

An Ancient Unknown Village

Andhra Pradesh has some of the most prominent areas where Buddhism flourished for centuries. One such place is Adurru.



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

We got down at Palakollu, and asked about how to go to Adurru. Unfortunately, no one knew about the place. Language was another barrier to communication. After many efforts, we came to know that Adurru is known as Dubaraju Dibba by the locals.

We decided to embark upon a weekend trip to Adurru with an overnight train from Hyderabad to Palakollu. The train journey to Palakollu is an experience in itself with scenic green fields, coconut trees and water bodies keep peeping through the train window.

We took a shared rickshaw and it took about one hour to reach Adurru aka Dubaraju Dibba. It is a small village situated on the bank of river Vainetaya, a tributary of river Godavari. With a few visitors to the place, the village was serene and breathtakingly beautiful.



**HOW TO GO**

The most convenient way from Hyderabad to Adurru is to take an overnight train to Palakollu and then a rickshaw to Dubaraju Dibba.

WHEN TO GO

Plan your trip during winters. With the fog all around, it makes the place look magical. In summers, it becomes too hot and humid.

WHERE TO EAT

There are no eateries around the village, please carry your food and water. ¹⁰

The History

Adurru is famous for a mound, which the localites call Dubaraju Gudi. The history of Adurru dates back to 2,400 years. The site was unearthed by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1923 and was later declared a protected monument in 1955.

The foundation of the stupa was laid by King Ashoka's daughter - Sanghamitra who became a Buddhist nun and spearheaded missions to spread Buddhism in India and the neighboring countries.

This place was one of the biggest centres of Buddhism

during those days. There are several stupas, chaityas and viharas. One of the prominent structures is the mahastupa, which looks like a giant wheel.

After spending about an hour there, we walked around the village. Most of the houses were traditional with thatched roofs and spacious courtyards. Even the smaller huts were very neat and clean with muggulu or rangoli drawn in the frontyards.

For a person who is interested in discovering Buddhist culture, heritage and architecture, a weekend in Adurru will be a fascinating journey.



1. A traditional house in the village
2. Fishing pond
3. Village road
4. Cow-dung cakes on the tree

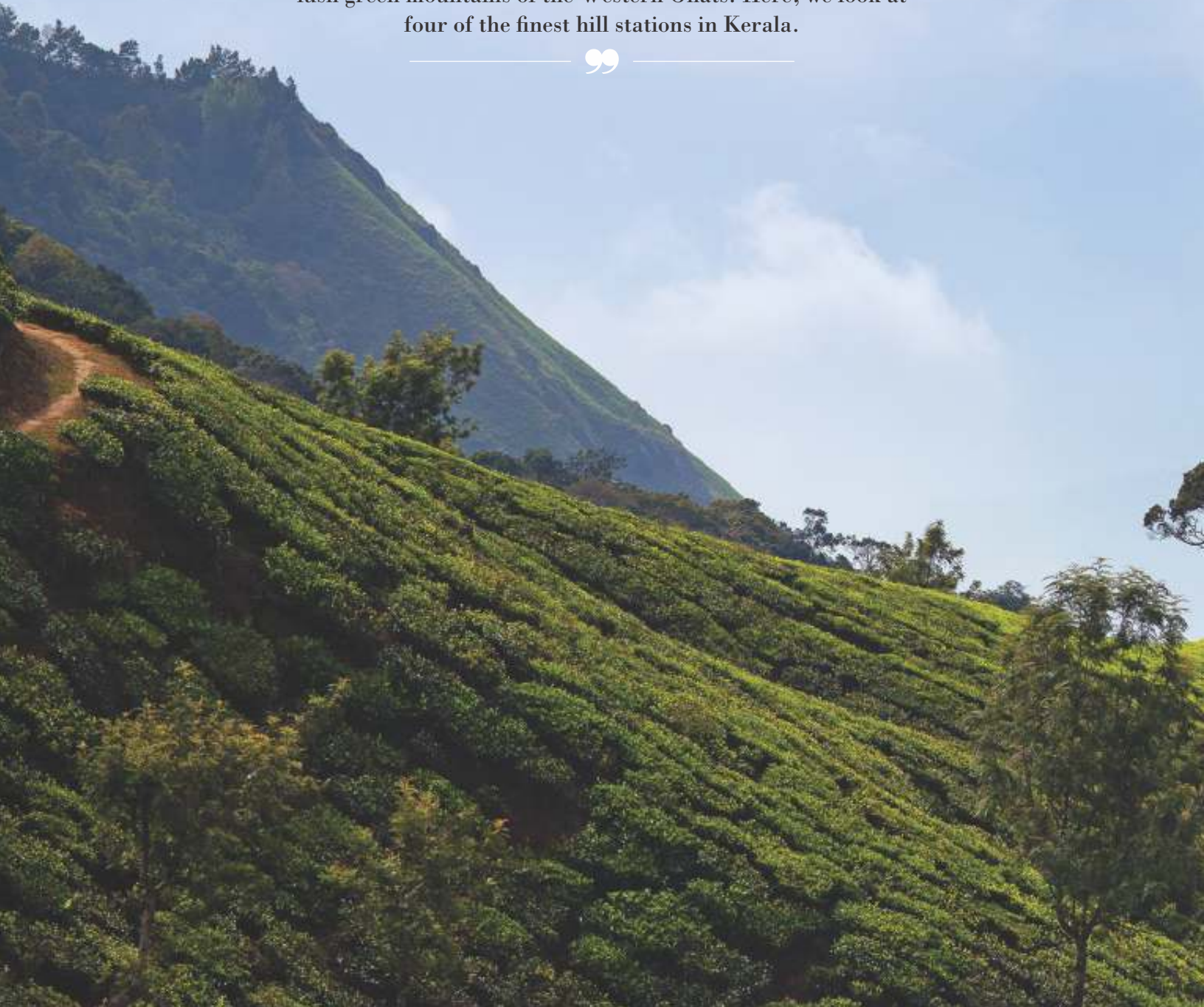
Incredible India

HILL STATIONS OF KERALA

“

Kerala's leitmotifs are the backwaters and beaches along its coastal plains, but this state also has breathtaking landscapes of lush green mountains of the Western Ghats. Here, we look at four of the finest hill stations in Kerala.

”





High ranges of Munnar

Munnar, originally a plantation town inhabited by Scottish planters and people working at the tea estates, has grown to become one of the most popular hill destinations of Southern India over the last two decades because of its picturesque views of mountainsides, covered with manicured tea plantations rising to wild hilltops, and tropical evergreen forests.

At about 5250ft above sea level, it offers a climatic refuge from the warm and humid coastal cities of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka during the summer months, and is a good place to view some of the highest peaks of Southern India like the 8,842ft high Anamudi Peak rising about 13km from Munnar town among evergreen forests of the Eravikulam National Park.

As is the case with most hill destinations, the drive to Munnar is as exciting as spending time there. From Cochin



1

Airport, the highway crosses the Periyar River. Those with an interest in birds must make the 20km detour from the highway to Thattekad. Located at just 70km from Kochi, Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary (Thattekad) is surrounded by rivers. This sanctuary, described by late Dr. Salim Ali as one of the richest bird habitats in India, has more than 270 species of birds. It is extremely popular with bird-watchers who want to see endemic species of the Western Ghats and birds typical of the Indian tropical moist forests.

From here, the road begins to climb the hills passing forests of evergreen trees and bamboos, coffee plantations and then the tea estates called 'The High Range', before arriving at Munnar. While Munnar town has shanty houses and tea-worker quarters, there is a large choice of hotels along the three rivers that flow through the area, resorts and clubs away from the town centre, and



2



1. Tea plantations in Munnar
2. Woman picking tea leaves in a tea plantation
3. The Nilgiri Tahr resting on a rocky mountain at the Eravikulam National Park in Rajamalai
4. Raw green coffee beans

3



4

even accommodations in plantation bungalows.

Some of the world's highest tea estates can be seen while driving from Munnar to Top Station, 36km away, on the road that winds through plantations and natural forests. Keep a lookout for wild elephants, Indian bisons, wild boar and colourful birds among the trees surrounding the road. Mattupetty Dam is a popular stopover for boat rides and possible wildlife sightings. Some of the other pretty sites are privately owned by the Tata Group of Companies requiring special permissions for visits. Top Station is a good point to view the forested hills and the plains.

Another attractive day excursion is north to Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. Take an early start and visit Rajamalai, where endangered mammals like the Nilgiri Tahr and a variety of birds can be seen. Walk through evergreen

forests, and the sandalwood forests of Marayoor, where you can trek to prehistoric sites in the hills with local guides. Chinnar Sanctuary is the habitat of tiger, leopard, elephant and the grizzled giant squirrel, though none of them are easy to spot in these forests. You can see monkeys, deer and good birdlife here.

Munnar's quintessential experience is visiting tea and cardamom plantations. Most hotels can arrange a tour where you see 'two leaves and a bud' being plucked by tea plantation workers, watch the tea processing at factories, and walk through the spice plantations that are shaded by tall plants fragrant with the scent of cardamom.

Being a popular hill station, Munnar offers a wide choice of places to stay from budget guesthouses to star-rated hotels, resorts, plantation houses and clubs.



5

The wildlife-rich hills of Wayanad

Wayanad, one of the most forested districts of Kerala, has a high tribal population. The district is known for its waterfalls and wildlife. The name, Wayanad, is believed to be a shortened version of the word Valnadu, meaning land of paddy. The local economy thrives on rice fields, tea, coffee, spice plantations and other agriculture.

The road to Wayanad's district capital, Kalpetta, from Kozhikode offers mind-blowing scenery all the way. Ladikki has a panoramic valley view and Pookote is a lake that has been developed for recreational tourism with boating facilities. Opposite the lake is Narayana Guru Ashram. Continuing

- 5. *Wayanad ghats*
- 6. *Pookodu Lake - Pookote*
- 7. *Spotted Deer in Wayanad*
- 8. *Prehistoric art, Edakkal Cave, Ambukutty Mala*

towards Kalpetta, Vythiri has developed as a resort destination with most of Wayanad's famous resorts and eco-tourism facilities. There is much to explore around Vythiri and Kalpetta, including treks to waterfalls and splendidly scenic drives along tea, coffee and spice plantations. The district is also one of the highest producers of areca nuts (betel nuts). The Patchilakkad Arecanut Factory usually welcomes visitors to see the process of getting the areca nut ready for the market.

The main attraction of Wayanad is the wildlife sanctuary, which is accessible from Tholpetty near Manantwadi - north of Kalpetta, or Muthunga - near Sultan's Bathery on the Kalpetta-Mysore Road. Jeeps available on hire usually

stand along the Forest Department office, where you pay the permit fees for the sanctuary. The permit fees also include charges for drivers. The guides arranged by the Forest Department are usually excellent spotters, though you are unlikely to get one who speaks English or Hindi. During the visit, you are likely to see elephants, sambars, spotted and barking deer, gaurs or Indian bison, wild boars, hanuman langurs and bonnet macaques. Lucky visitors could spot sloth bear but tiger, panther and dhole (wild dog) sightings are rare. These forests of the Western Ghats are also rich in birds like grey jungle fowl, peafowl, red spurfowl, Malabar pied hornbill, racket-tailed drongo, hill mynah, crested serpent eagle, hawk eagle, honey buzzard and many colourful species of the Western Ghats. The drive leads to the Kabini River, where in the warm months, the scene can be reminiscent of the African Savannah with hundreds of elephants cooling-off in the river and plenty of wildlife arriving to drink at the waterfront all day long. Rides in local leather-bound boats, called coracles, are sometimes possible on the river along the Nagarhole National Park in neighbouring Karnataka. Just outside the entrances to the sanctuary, guides can take you to see tribal villages.

Besides the wildlife and natural beauty, Wayanad has much to offer to the visitors. The Edakkal Caves comprise Kerala's most famous prehistoric site. The caves feature prehistoric petroglyphs sculptured on rocks. The drawings are formed by geometric lines and are generally dated to the megalithic period about 10,000 BC. The scripts are believed to date around 3rd century BC. The gap offers views of the surrounding hills. The Wayanad Heritage Museum exhibits archaeological finds from the district, mainly 14th to 16th century sculptures of deities, as well as tribal artefacts like local jewellery,



6



7



8

weapons, fish traps, and agricultural implements.

Manantwadi has a 19th century church that serves the Christian converts among the local tribal population especially the Kuruchiyas. The churchyard has old tombstones. Sultan's Bathery, named after Tipu Sultan, has Jain temple in the town that probably dates back to the 12th or 13th century. Set behind an iron gate, the temple has carved ceilings.

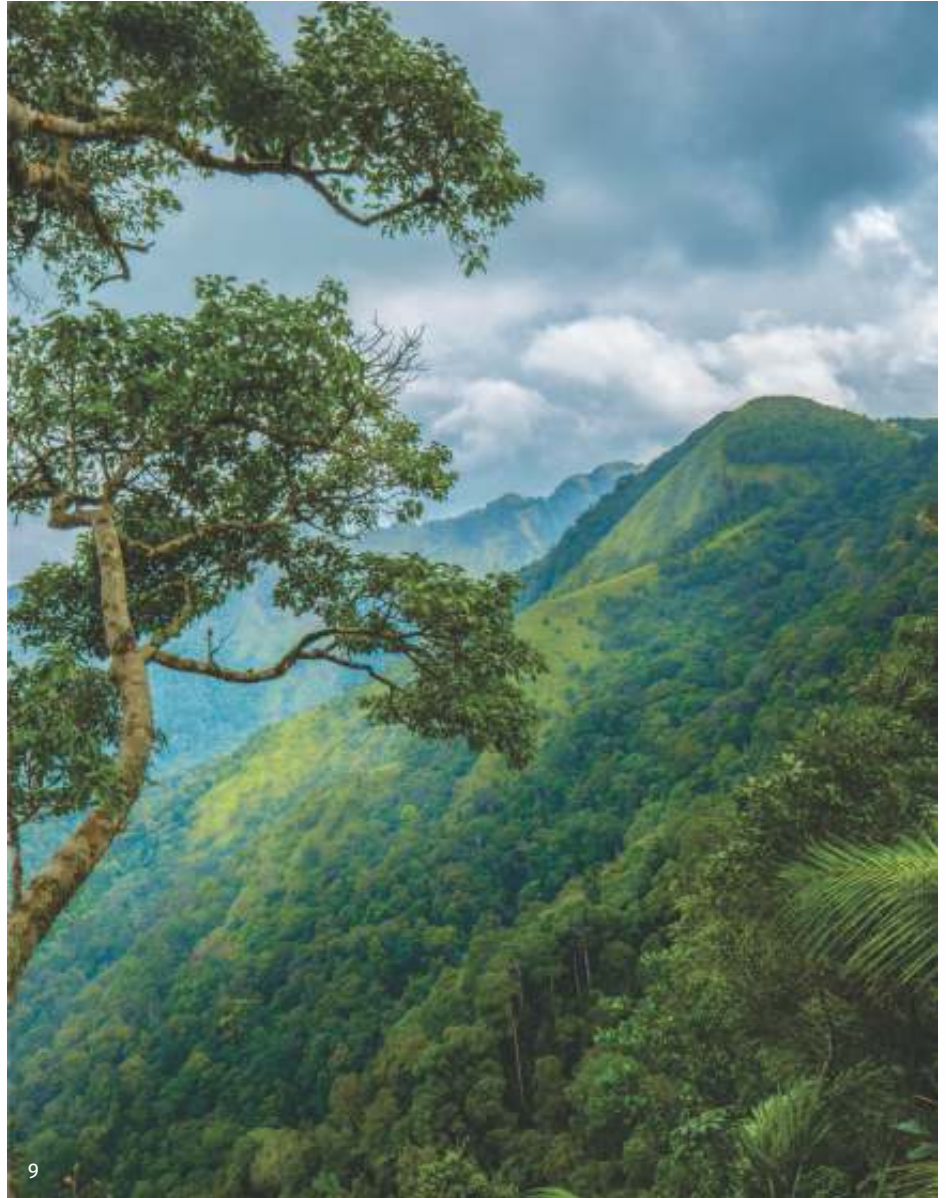
Thirunelly has an important Vishnu Temple, sometimes called 'the Kashi of Kerala'. Devotees bathe at a mountain stream called *Papanasini* that they believe brings visitors eternal bliss.

Wayanad has many good resorts, ecotourism properties, plantation retreats, hotels and budget accommodations at Vythiri, Kalpetta and

The Cardamom hills of Ponmudi

Ponmudi, reached by a scenic drive from Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), is one of the finest hill destinations of Southern Kerala. Once out of Kerala's capital city, the road rises through rich spice, nut and fruit plantations, and crosses river Kallar. You can stop here for a short trek to the waterfall. After the bridge, the drive becomes even more scenic as it takes hairpin bends through black rock formations, bamboo jungle and teak forest. As you come close to Ponmudi, a habitation about 3500ft above sea level, tea estates and cardamom covered hills sprawl on both sides of the road. Ponmudi is a small hill station, where there is little to do. However, it is best for pleasant walks and high peak views. Avoid Sundays as day trippers gather at Ponmudi with their picnic lunches and beer bottles. The Peppera Sanctuary, near Ponmudi, has a long checklist of mammals and birds, but is not easy to visit.

Instead, take the diversion from the Trivandrum-Ponmudi Road for Neyyar Dam. This 9-sq.km. reservoir is the centrepiece of the 128-sq.km. Neyyar sanctuary, which has evergreen forests covering the western slopes of the Western Ghats in the southeast corner of Kerala. The sanctuary has elephants, tigers, bears, gaurs, deer, wild boars, lion-tailed macaques, Nilgiri langurs, bonnet monkeys, scaly anteaters, slender loris, etc. The landscape is breathtakingly beautiful, reminiscent of Periyar. The boat-ride through narrow channels, past islands and along woodlands can be exciting with good chances of seeing elephants, deer, wild boars or monkeys who visit waterfront to drink water. Also, keep a watch for grey-headed fish eagle sometimes seen hovering over the water, besides kingfishers, egrets and herons, even the occasional otter. The higher ranges are covered by grassland inhabited by the



9. Ponmudi hill station

10. Cardamom plant

11. Tourists enjoying boating in Periyar National Park, Thekkady

endangered Nilgiri Tahr and other herbivores, but it is difficult to get permission for trekking. A walk in the forests could also yield a birdlife, including great pied hornbill, Nilgiri wood pigeon, Nilgiri flycatcher, blue-winged parakeet, etc. Tuck into a Kerala meal at the rest house with a good view of the lake and its surrounding hills.

There is a lion safari park, where some lions can be seen in an enclosure from mini-buses, and a crocodile park at Neyyar, while the nearby Sivananda Ashram is famous for its yoga lessons.

Kerala's Golden Peak is one of the good places to stay in Ponmudi.

The spice gardens of Thekkady

Thekkady, about 145 km from Cochin International Airport and 114 km from Kottayam Railway Station, is the headquarters of the Periyar Tiger Reserve, famous for its dense evergreen, semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forests. Besides wildlife, Thekkady and Kumily boast excellent plantations for tea, black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, nutmace, ginger, clove and also some coffee. The cocoa produced in these hills is used to make chocolates by local people.

After Kottayam, the drive is superbly scenic going past rubber plantations, spice gardens, tea estates and thick forests. From the road, the views of mountain peaks and deep valleys are simply amazing. There are a couple of waterfalls that can be seen on the way. At Thekkady and Kumily, there are many

facilities for travellers like hotels, resorts, restaurants and banks. From here, you can get permits to enter the wildlife reserve. The centerpiece of the 777-sq.km. wildlife reserve is the Periyar Lake formed by the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar River. A boat safari on the lake can yield splendid sightings of wildlife. Herds of elephant, Indian bison, sambar, wild boar and packs of wild dogs called dhole are often seen from the boat. If lucky, visitors can also spot sloth bear, tiger or leopard near the lake. The trees are full of Nilgiri langur and bonnet monkey. Large birds like the hornbills and eagles are also seen here. It is also

worth taking treks in the forest to look for smaller wildlife.

There are many resorts in and around Thekkady, while wildlife enthusiasts can choose from three Kerala Tourism-run properties within the wildlife reserve. 10

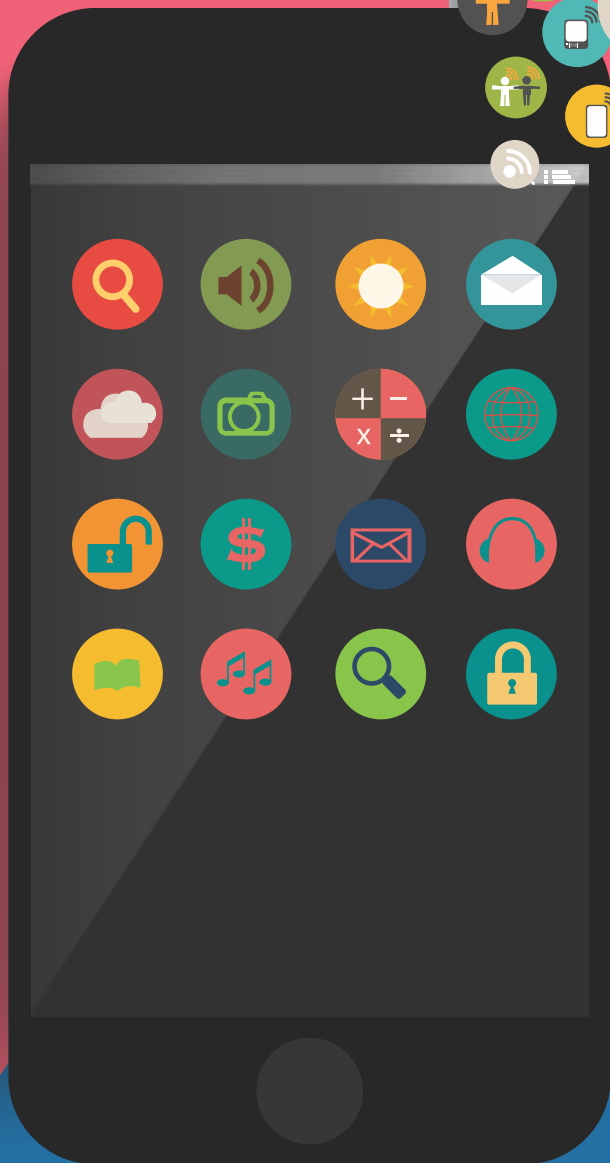


11



the mobile way

Some interesting facts of Travel & Tourism Industry apps



85% leisure travellers use smartphones to plan their travel

30% use mobile apps to find the best hotel and flight deals

15% download travel apps to plan a trip ahead

7th most downloaded category of apps are the Travel & Tourism-related applications



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!'



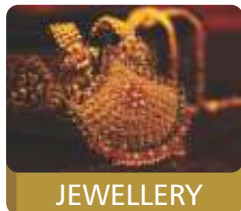
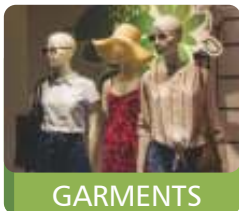
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