

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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A high-end monthly magazine

FLYING VISITS

Tabo Caves

Spiritual oasis
in a barren land

JHARKHAND'S JEWELS

Dwarka

Krishna's
Coastal kingdom

15 Reasons

Why You Must Visit

Maldives

REVIEWS
TO
REVISH



Shhh...

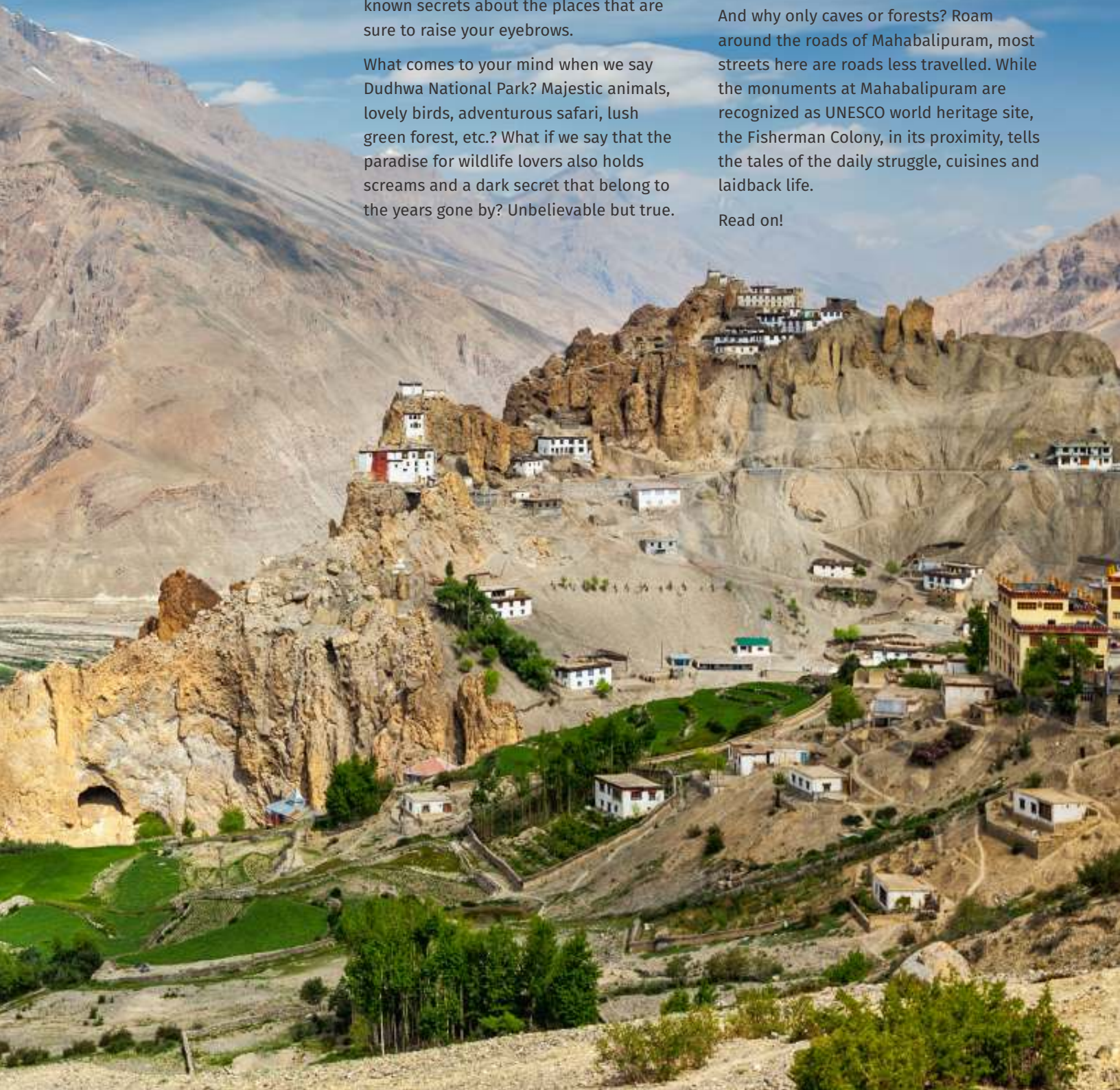
Travel is so much more than just the destination. Around every corner, there is a great story waiting to be discovered, lived and retold. We are referring to the stories that only a few travellers, who make efforts to go beyond the commonly known facts about the destination, get to know. In this issue, we present lesser known secrets about the places that are sure to raise your eyebrows.

What comes to your mind when we say Dudhwa National Park? Majestic animals, lovely birds, adventurous safari, lush green forest, etc.? What if we say that the paradise for wildlife lovers also holds screams and a dark secret that belong to the years gone by? Unbelievable but true.

Away, in Himachal Pradesh, Tabo is a little pocket of frozen times. The caves is spiritual oasis in a barren land that cuts you off from the world. Besides its aweinspiring structure and beauty, Tabo unfolds many stories about the monks, their crave for self-realization and teaching of Lord Buddha. Quite enlightening, isn't it?

And why only caves or forests? Roam around the roads of Mahabalipuram, most streets here are roads less travelled. While the monuments at Mahabalipuram are recognized as UNESCO world heritage site, the Fisherman Colony, in its proximity, tells the tales of the daily struggle, cuisines and laidback life.

Read on!



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

April 2018

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A hidden secret of a **Jungle**




“
The dense sprawling jungle of the Dudhwa National Park seemed like any other game park that I had been to. It resembled more like Jim Corbett National Park with dense foliage and tall grasses. It was in the early hours of the morning. The jungle was eerily silent. Even the birds chose to stay away.

T here were two of us in a jeep. At places our progress was slow because of the dense cover and the badly rutted road. There was very little conversation in the vehicle. Often the driver stopped to scan the ground for evidence of any wild animal. We came across the bones of cattle, picked clean by birds of prey. The silence was deafening.

It was March, not the best month to sight the tigers. The ideal season would have been midsummer when the sweltering heat would force the tigers from their slumber to come to the water holes. However, we did spot other denizens of the jungle. After a short while, we came upon a glade. There, in the clearing, stood a cheetah in all its splendour. With its fully developed antlers, the animal looked regal as it stood there with the slanting rays of the morning sun caressing its resplendent skin.

It had heard us and was waiting immobile except for the swishing of its tail. We too stood there, entranced by its majestic





aloofness. It looked at us with those beautiful and soulful eyes. I could see that it was tense and ready to sprint away. Then without a warning, it turned and with balletic grace, effortlessly cleared a two meter mound and disappeared into the dense undergrowth - an essential attribute to possess in the amphitheatre of the jungle where the only law that prevails is the law of claw and fangs.

As the joke goes, there are two types of people who come on a safari - the alert one who say, "There! There! And the laggards who say, "Where? Where?" I too happened to belong to the later category. So when the driver screeched to a halt and pointed to a tree, I looked in the direction pointed and looked back at him in askance. "There," he said pointing to a tree. I looked again. There was nothing, only a tree. Then I saw. On one of the branches of the tree, a giant monitor lizard was resting, basking in the morning sun. It was so effectively camouflaged against the tree that it was impossible to spot it at the first glance - another essential attribute to possess for the habitants of the jungle world, for survival and hunting. It was absolutely still except for its blinking eyes. How the driver managed to spot it, beats me.

Next we spotted a giant owl on a tree, turned well away from us. On hearing us, it turned a full 180 degrees and stared at us with unblinking eyes. It gave me quite a turn and reminded me of the little girl possessed by the devil in that blockbuster horror film, 'The Exorcist.'

It was then the driver stopped the jeep and pointed to a clearing on the

side, which was corralled with a crude fence with a small platform at the center. Pointing to the place, the driver said that it was the place where sati-pratha was implemented about 150 years ago. The abhorrent hindu custom of burning the surviving wife on the pyre of her husband manifested itself in this remote part of India. The significance of the location was not lost on me. We were in the deepest part of the jungle. The thick cover of the jungle would have

— HOW TO GO —

The most convenient way would be to travel to Lucknow and then reach Dudhwa by road or train. Lucknow is the nearest airport. Many airlines operate a number of flights to Lucknow from major cities across India.

— WHERE TO STAY —

If you plan to stay here, Dudhwa and the adjoining Palia town have a few hotels, while the national park has some rest houses with basic facilities.

— THE BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE —


Between November and May



doused any agonised screams of the woman.

We stared at it in horrified silence. There was no rustle of leaves, even the wind seemed to be holding its breath in mournful reverence to the dead. A deep sense of sadness plucked at my heartstrings. Tragedies often do not have any explanations. They just happen. But this was senseless!

I turned to the game warden to prize any bit of information about this gruesome incident. All he could tell me was this incident may have taken place about 150 years ago. Thoughts come unbidden to me. Who was it? Was it an old or a middle aged woman? Or was it a young bride, an underage girl child plucked away just as her life was beginning in all its innocence? I looked at the crudely plastered grave, seeking the answers for the excruciating questions that raced through my mind. None came. The jungle was silent as a tomb.

My enthusiasm to further explore the jungle had waned. I looked around me. There was so much variations of greenery - just about every shade of green. A cool morning breeze wafted over me. I spotted a lone butterfly nonchalantly fluttering over the bushes. I envied its freedom. It was with a profound sense of relief that we drove away from the place. 

Incredible India

Flying Visits

With flights to more and more places in India, many destinations have now become accessible to travellers for short breaks. A look at a few of such destinations:

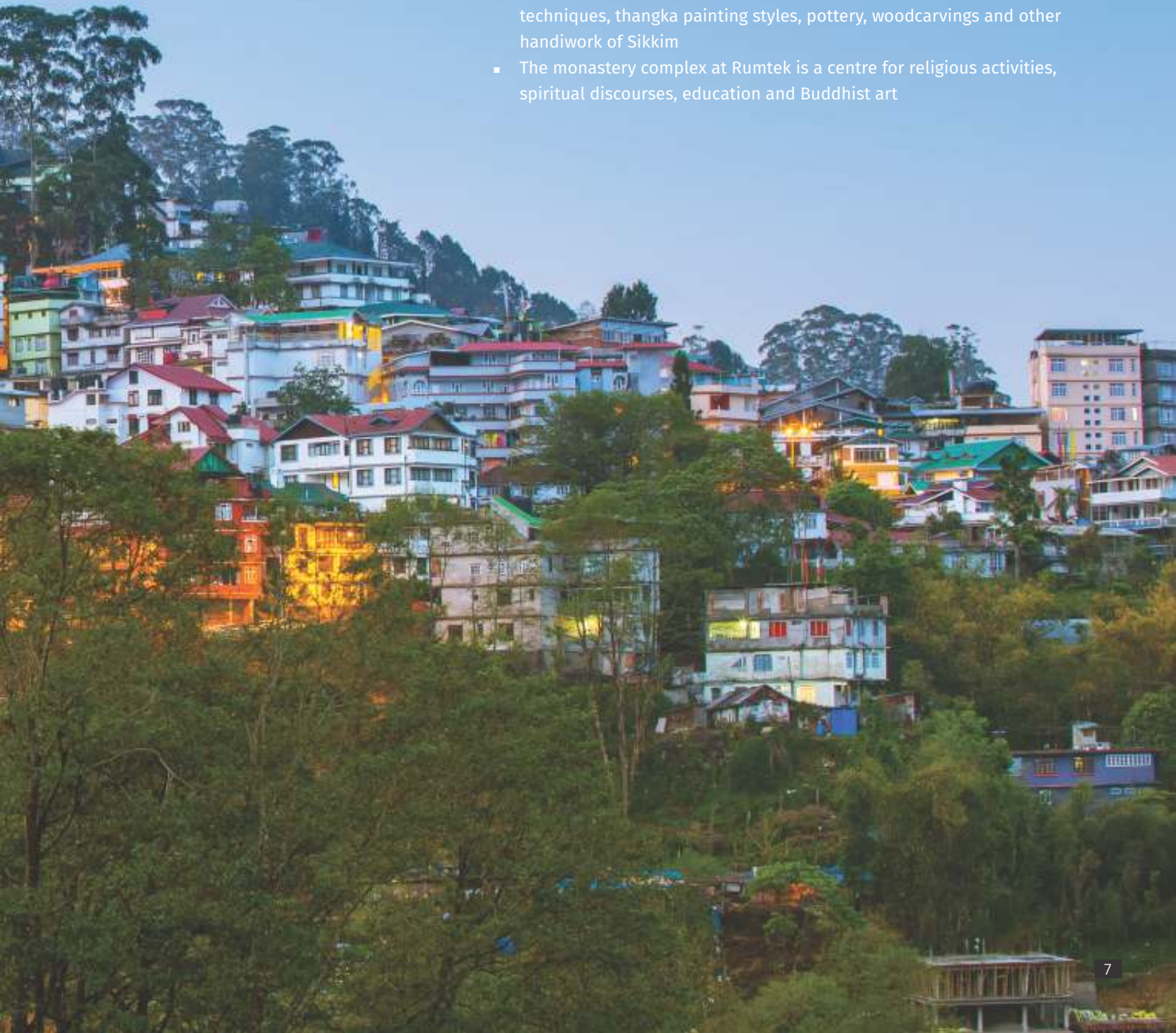


A Gorgeous Mountain Break in Gangtok

Gangtok is a short helicopter ride from Bagdogra Airport. The commissioning of the Pakyong aerodrome in Sikkim soon will make Gangtok accessible by regular flights as well.

The state capital of Sikkim, Gangtok is a crowded city but prettily set in tiers on the hillsides with a superb view of Kanchenjunga on a clear morning. It is also known for its gardens, housing superb collections of orchids and other flora. As the main city of Sikkim, Gangtok is also a good place to get an insight into the art and culture of the state. The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology has a large collection of Buddhist books, manuscripts, art and ritual objects. Other attractions include:

- The Do-drulChorten - a fine Tibetan pagoda
- The EncheyGompa - a good example of a regional Buddhist monastery with murals and tantric statues
- The Cottage Industries Institute - a good place to see the weaving techniques, thangka painting styles, pottery, woodcarvings and other handiwork of Sikkim
- The monastery complex at Rumtek is a centre for religious activities, spiritual discourses, education and Buddhist art



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A popular excursion from Gangtok is to Tsomo or Chhangu Lake, about 12,500ft above sea level with snow views around it. You could apply for permits to go across 14,140ft high Nathula Pass to the Indo-China border. The road along the lake is lined with little snack places and tourist amenities, including rentals for boots for snow-walking. Yak rides are on offer at the lakefront.

Among the interesting places to stay are:

- Norkhill, which was once a palatial house of the rulers of Sikkim
- Family-run properties like Mintoklin and Netuk House
- Traditionally-designed properties like Tibet Hotel or the Hidden Forest, which is a plant nursery with accommodations

On the way to Rumtek are Orange Valley, an upscale resort and Bamboo Resort, an eco-retreat. Mayfair is one of the most luxurious stay options.



- 1 Kangchenjunga view from the Tashi View Point
- 2 Do Drul Chorten - A buddhist stupa
- 3 Gangtok ropeway
- 4 Beautiful buildings of Rumtek Monastery
- 5 Tibetan monks at Rumtek Monastery
- 6 Yak at Tsangmo Lake

1





3



4



5



6

HOW TO GO

Gangtok is well linked by road with Siliguri, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The closest railway station is located in New Jalpaiguri. If you are planning to reach Gangtok via airways then the nearest airport is in Bagdogra.

BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

March-June



Serene Hills of Shimoga

Bellary Airport offers access to many attractions of North Karnataka, including the magnificent Hampi monuments.

For a summer break, Bellary makes a base to visit the Malnadu hills of Karnataka. Shivamogga (better known as Shimoga) is located in the heart of agricultural countryside with paddy fields, arecanut gardens and coconut groves. Shivamogga is considered the Gateway to Malenadu, and is a major educational and commercial centre of this hill region. It is set on an elevation by the River Tunga, while the industrial town of Badhrawati is set on the Badhra River. Both rivers meet to form the Tungabhadra a little distance away. The Sacred Heart Cathedral is one of Shivamogga's landmarks.

Shivamogga's Government Museum is located in a palace, named for Shivappa Nayaka

who was an able administrator of the Malnad region in the mid-17th century. The present building, however, is said to have been built by Sultan Hyder Ali. The centerpiece of the palace is the Darbar Hall with wooden pillars and arches. The museum exhibits sculptures, inscriptions and hero stones found at archaeological sites in Shivamogga district and neighbouring areas. A short distance from town, the Tyavare-koppa Lion and Tiger Reserve is a park, where lion, tiger and other animals from circuses, zoos and rescue centres have been rehabilitated. It has a safari park, where you can go around in a vehicle and spot animals as well as a zoo. From Shimoga, the road to Tirthahalli offers access to the Elephant Camp of Sakrebailu.

From Shimoga, travel to the Bhadhra Reservoir, created by a dam constructed across the Bhadhra River near Lakkavalli. The backwat-

- 1 *Elephants at National Preserve and Elephant Training Center*
- 2 *Jog water falls*
- 3 *Landscape view of mountains near Jog falls*
- 4 *Tiger Beetle, Agumbe*
- 5 *Asian paradise fly catcher*



ers of the dam are good for watching darter and lesser adjutant stork besides ducks, herons, egrets and kingfishers. The islands on the lake are nesting sites for terns. Boats take tourists for a tour of the lake. There are good opportunities to spot wildlife like elephant, gaur (Indian bison), sambar and spotted deer, the dreaded wild dog called dhole and crocodiles from the boat. Crocodiles are often seen. The reserve can also be explored on a jeep safari along trails that run through forests and grassy areas. There are good chances of seeing sambar, spotted deer, barking deer, gaur, wild boar and giant squirrel. Leopard is sometimes seen on the driving trails but tiger sightings are less likely. The trees abound with attractive birds, including Western Ghats endemic species.

Agumbe is another naturally beautiful place, justly famous for its rich forests, river views, waterfalls and rainforest conservation efforts. The tropical evergreen forest is rich in flora including endangered plants. It is also the habitat for many mammals, reptiles and birds. There are many good forest trails for bird and butterfly spotting.

HOW TO GO

Shimoga has its own domestic airport named as Shimoga Airport, roughly 10 min. drive from city. Shimoga Nagar Railway Station, which is connected to the major cities of Karnataka and other states. The city is well connected through Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and some private travel services.

BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

October to March

A Sacred Retreat to Shirdi



Connected by Alliance Air flights, Shirdi is famously known as the home of the late 19th century saint Sri Sai Baba. He is revered by both his Hindu and Muslim devotees and even had Parsee followers as his teaching combined elements of various religions. He preached the importance of realization of the self and criticized love towards perishable things. His teachings concentrate on a moral code of love, forgiveness, helping others, charity, contentment, inner peace and devotion to the God and guru. The Sai Baba Temple in Shirdi is hugely visited with the statue of Sai Baba and the Samadhi carved out of Italian marble draped with rich fabrics. He wears a gold crown and is adorned daily with fresh flower garlands. The interior is made of old stone bricks.

A visit to Shirdi is typically combined with Nashik, one of the holiest places

for Hindus. Nashik is located by the Godavari, which has its source at the Brahmagiri Kund. From the kund, it flows down past Anjeri Fort to nearby Trimbak, a town set among a semi-circle of hills with Gangasagar Dam, temples and kunds. The holiest temple at Trimbak is the Shiva temple of Trimbakeshwar, built over one of the 12 jyotirlingas, shrines that are especially important to Shiva devotees as 'self-emerging' lingams. The temple, built in the 18th century on a paved platform, has carved walls and an ornate shikhara (temple tower over the sanctum). Inside, the lingam, which is the main draw, is said to symbolize the Hindu trio of deities on three sides and is embellished with a gold crown.

Not far from the temple, Nandur Madhmeshwar Sanctuary is located by a dam at the confluence of the Godavari and Kadva Rivers. The resultant water body with islands, many shallow ponds

and marshes, forms ideal bird habitat. The water storage tanks have also created excellent agricultural countryside – wheat, millet, sugarcane, grapes, various fruits grow in the area.

In the town of Nashik, Ram Kund is a focal point of pilgrimage – Rama and Sita are said to have bathed here during their exile period. The kund is the site for immersion of ashes. Another place associated with Lord Rama, the Kala Rama Mandir was built around 1794. The temple contains unusual black-stone images of Rama, Sita and Lakshman. Devotees believe that this is the place, where Lakshmana sliced off Surpanakha's nose.

A short distance from Nashik, Pandavleni has fine Buddhist caves that are about 2000 years old. Nearby is Dadasaheb Phalke Memorial, dedicated to the pioneering Indian movie producer, set in a pleasant park.

HOW TO GO

The nearest airport to Shirdi is the Aurangabad Airport which is 130km away from Shirdi. Maharashtra State Transport buses are available from major cities like Nashik, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, Pune and Kopergaon to Shirdi. Kopergaon Railway Station, 16km away, is the nearest railway station to Shirdi.

BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

All through the year

Surat's Heritage Sites

Surat is most famous for its textiles, diamond polishing industries and huge projects, but within the city are some interesting heritage buildings. The city gained much importance in the 16th century when the Mughal Emperors made it their key port and an embarkation point for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. In the 17th century, British and Dutch factories were built in Surat, which was the headquarters of the British East India Company till 1677.

One of the oldest British monuments on India's west coast is the Cemetery near Surat's Katargam Gate. The cemetery has the grand pavilion-like mausoleum of George Oxenden, the President of Surat's English factory and East India trade operations since 1662 till his death in 1669. An inscription talks about the family's political and commercial power, which is reflected in the impressiveness of the mausoleum. It has a mix of Hindu, Islamic and European architectural elements, including doors crowned by low relief

carvings, pointed arches, columns and Indo-Saracenic domes. Another impressive mausoleum in the complex is associated with Gerald Aungier who was President of Surat's English factory and later Governor of Bombay after the East India Company headquarters were moved to Mumbai till 1677.

A short distance from the British Cemetery is the Dutch Cemetery, which contains the mausoleum of Baron Adrian Van Reed. This eclectic mausoleum has a Baroque façade, Indo-Saracenic features and a double domed cupola supported by attractive columns. Inside the mausoleum are galleries, carved ceilings, epitaphs to Lord Henry Adrian Baron of Reede and a description of the woodwork. It also has holy inscriptions and murals that the mausoleum once contained before they were destroyed by ravages of climatic conditions and human visitor. Next to the Dutch cemetery is the churchyard of the Armenians who formed an important trading community in Surat from the 16th century. Their cemetery has tombstones with one of epithets

dedicated to the wife of a priest named Marinas who died in 1579 AD.

From here, you can continue to see impressive 16th century Muslim mausoleums, the 17th century Chintamani Jain Temple, a Portuguese building now called Ukkadji's Dharamshala, the colonial LP Mission school building and the Mughal Sarai with its huge dome and archway surrounded by intricate workmanship. The monumental square called Chowk is surrounded by British-period buildings like the J.J. Sorabji Training College, which was established as a school by the industrialist Jeejeebhoy in the late-1800s, the Andrews Library building erected in 1907 AD and an Anglican Church built in 1895. The Surat Castle is one of the city's most imposing structures.

HOW TO GO

Surat Airport is well connected to other major cities of the country. The city has a railway station. You can easily get regular buses to Surat from other major cities of the country.

BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

October-March

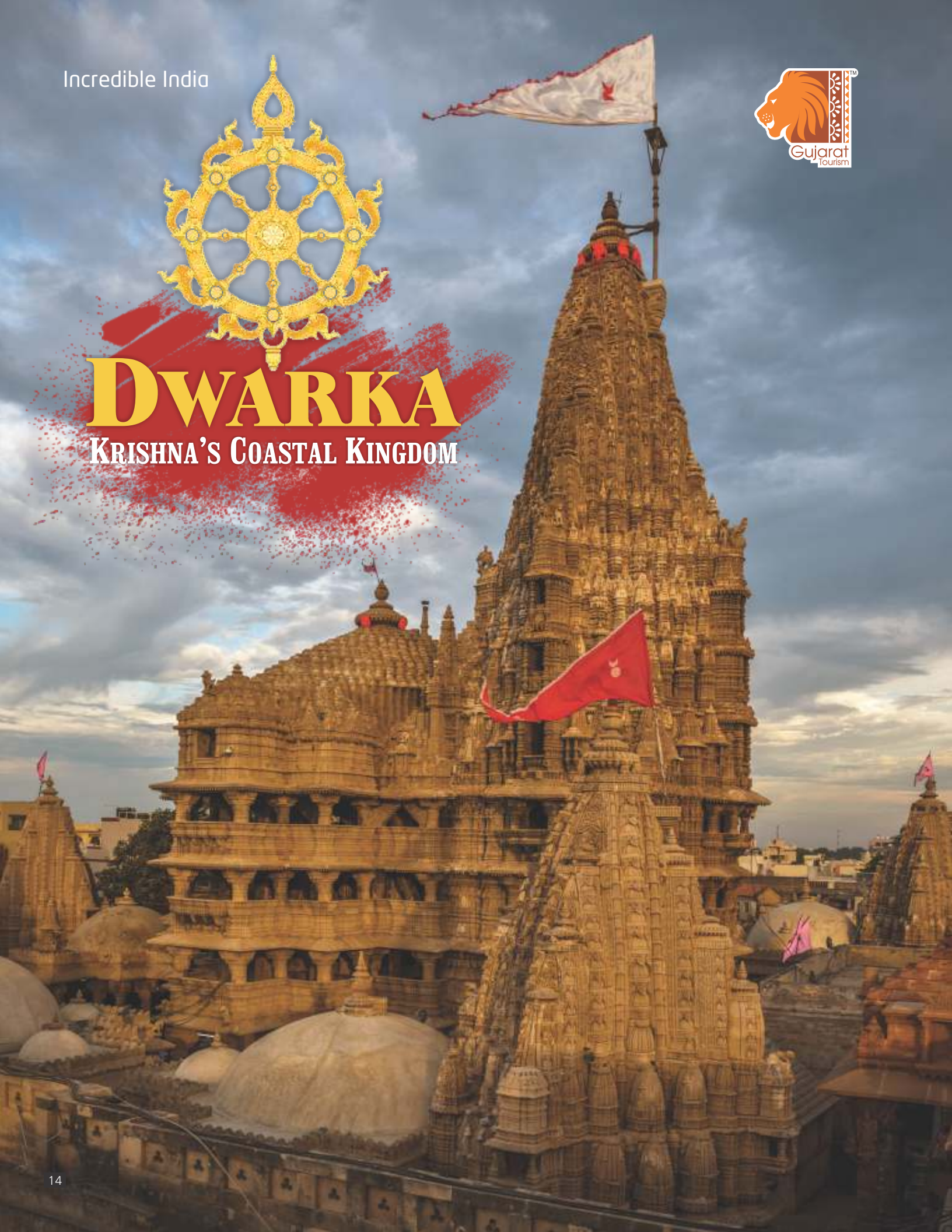


Incredible India



DWARKA

KRISHNA'S COASTAL KINGDOM





The Toran Tourist Bungalow – Dwarka is superbly situated facing the Arabian Sea. From this property, you can walk out on the beach to see the confluence of the Gomti River with the sea and the towering Dwarkadish Temple. The view especially is spectacular at sunset when the glow of the setting sun is reflected on the sea waters.



The townscape of Dwarka is dominated by the Dwarkadish Temple, one of the four-dhams of Hinduism. Dwarka was said to be the capital of Lord Krishna who left Mathura and set up this township to defeat the forces of Jarasandha, king of Magadha. This temple is, therefore, significant for Hindus and worshipped as one of the abodes of the Lord. Locals claim that this temple is 2500-year old and that it was built in one night after Krishna transported his family, friends and followers here from Mathura. This association with Lord Krishna makes Dwarka one of the seven most important places of pilgrimage.

According to a story, King Vasudev-II of Dwarka was defeated by Mahakshatriya Rudradama. Upon the death of Rudradama, his wife, Queen Dheeradevi invited his brother Pulumavi seeking guidance to rule. Rudradama had embraced the Vaishnava religion and worshipped



Krishna at Dwarka. Vajranabha, his successor, built a chhattri (an umbrella-shaped dome) with an idol of Krishna in it.

Dwarka is mentioned in the copper inscription dated 574 AD of Simhaditya, the Maitraka dynasty's minister. He was the son of Varahdas, the king of Dwarka.

As we approached Dwarka, we could see the spires of the Dwarkadish Temple built in the architectural style, popular in 13th to 16th century period. Walking to the temple, we saw the impressive five-storeyed spire supported by 60 attractive columns. The hall interior has some interesting carvings.

Near the temple, the Sankracharya Math is a monastic complex following the principles of Adi Shankara, an early 8th century philosopher and theologian. Credited with unifying and establishing the main currents of thought in Hinduism, Adi Shankara travelled across the Indian subconti-

ment to propagate his philosophy through discourses and debates with other thinkers. He is reputed to have notified the four dhams - Dwarka, Rameshwaram, Puri and Badrinath.

In 885 AD, Dwarka was renovated by Nrushinh Aashrma, the head of the Shankaracharya Pitha.

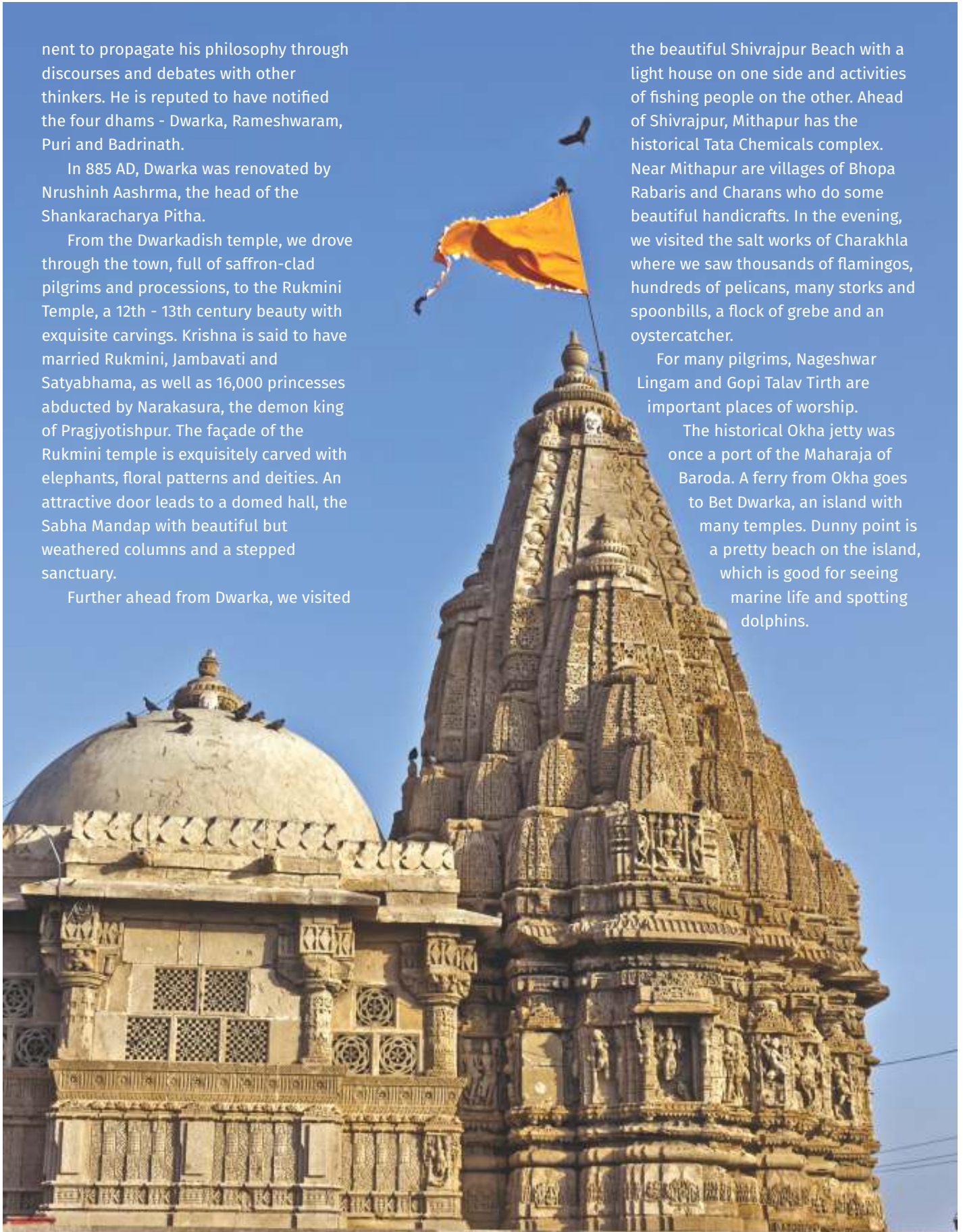
From the Dwarkadish temple, we drove through the town, full of saffron-clad pilgrims and processions, to the Rukmini Temple, a 12th - 13th century beauty with exquisite carvings. Krishna is said to have married Rukmini, Jambavati and Satyabhama, as well as 16,000 princesses abducted by Narakasura, the demon king of Pragjyotishpur. The façade of the Rukmini temple is exquisitely carved with elephants, floral patterns and deities. An attractive door leads to a domed hall, the Sabha Mandap with beautiful but weathered columns and a stepped sanctuary.

Further ahead from Dwarka, we visited

the beautiful Shivrampur Beach with a light house on one side and activities of fishing people on the other. Ahead of Shivrampur, Mithapur has the historical Tata Chemicals complex. Near Mithapur are villages of Bhopa Rabaris and Charans who do some beautiful handicrafts. In the evening, we visited the salt works of Charakhla where we saw thousands of flamingos, hundreds of pelicans, many storks and spoonbills, a flock of grebe and an oystercatcher.

For many pilgrims, Nageshwar Lingam and Gopi Talav Tirth are important places of worship.

The historical Okha jetty was once a port of the Maharaja of Baroda. A ferry from Okha goes to Bet Dwarka, an island with many temples. Dunny point is a pretty beach on the island, which is good for seeing marine life and spotting dolphins.





From Dwarka, another interesting excursion is to Barda Hills. Ghumli, Gop and Bileshwar in the hills have a number of historic temples. The temple of Gop, dated to about the sixth and seventh centuries, is among the oldest structural temples found in Gujarat. Ghumli has a finely carved temple and an exquisite 12th century stepwell, which is among the largest in Saurashtra – best known for its ornate pavilions. 10



GETTING THERE

BY TRAIN

Dwarka has rail connections to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and other major cities.

BY ROAD

Dwarka is connected by many state highways. State transport services provide buses to Dwarka and nearby cities.

BY AIR

The nearest airports are Porbandar (101km) and Jamnagar (141km), both of which receive flights from Mumbai.

ACCOMMODATION

Experience the comfortable stay at The Toran Tourist Bungalow – Dwarka, which is beautifully located near the sea.

FOR BOOKING, CONTACT

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Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI
 Words and photos for the article "Gujarat – The Land of Rich Pasi Heritage", published in March 18 issue were provided by ANIL MULCHANDANI and DINESH SHUKLA respectively.

Incredible India

TABO CAVES

Spiritual oasis
in a barren land



“

It's March and I shivered as a cold gust of wind blew down the mountain side. The sun was just coming over the ridge of the mountains. I zip up my Jacket and wonder how anybody could live here in winter, when the temperatures plummeted to Siberian conditions of - 45 degrees centigrade. I was standing in a cave that was hewed from the rocks. I was in the Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh exploring the Tabo Caves. These were meditation caves that were used by monks more than 1000 years ago and are still used today.

”

The cave was small in size and basic. But as I walked up the mountain, on the narrow rubble strewn path, I came to another cave much larger in size with a small annex. The walls are plastered smooth with mud. The main portion of the cave had a small hole on top. It was probably meant to let the sunshine in during the day time. And at night, to let off the smoke when logs were burnt to stave off the bitter cold. There were more than a dozen caves perched at different levels on the mountain.

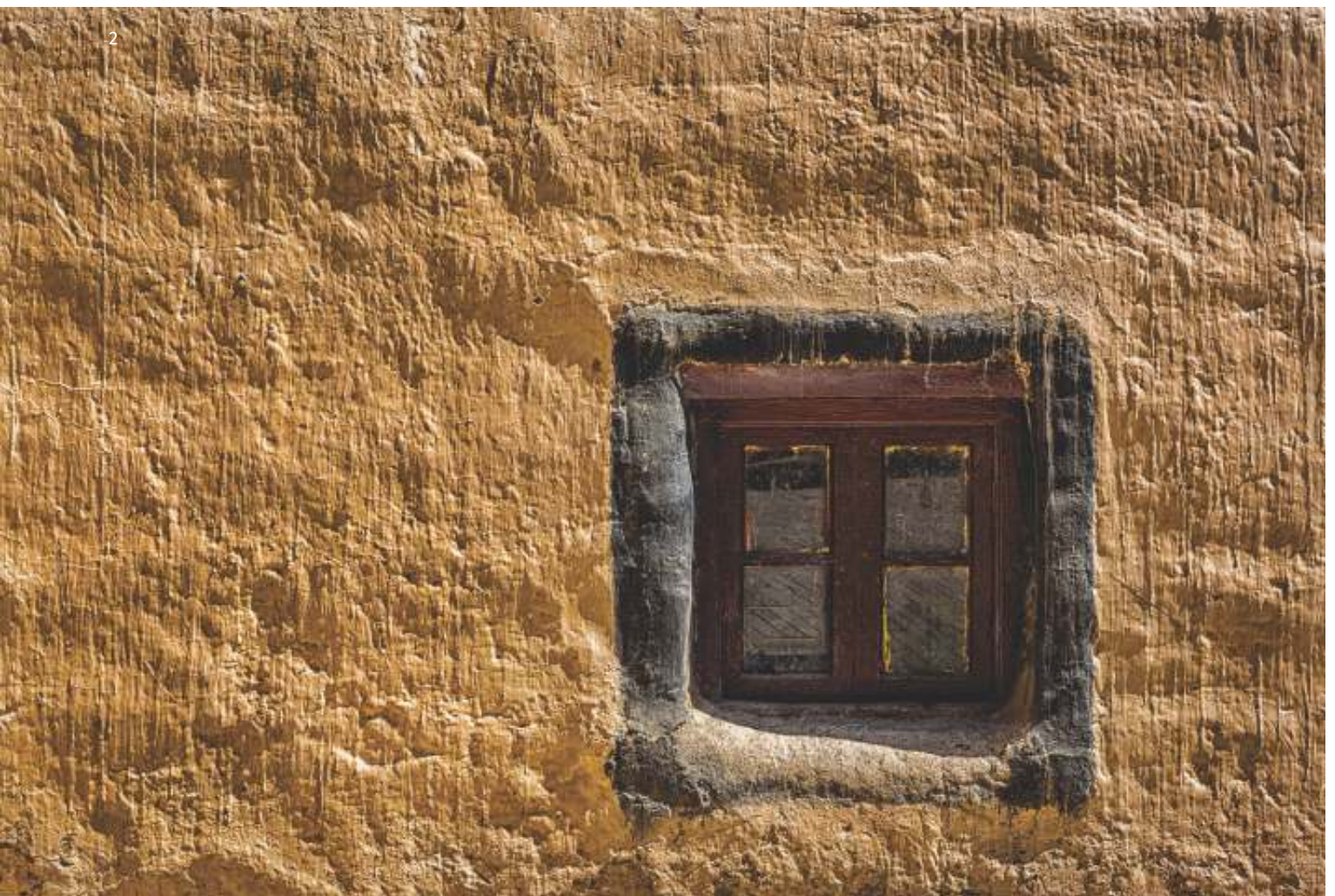
From the vantage of the caves, which was about 100 meters above the road level, I could see the monastery surrounded in verdant foliage. The River

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Spiti flowed nearby with menacing calmness. At other places, where the gradient deteriorated, the silt laden waters sped with savage intensity.

All the caves overlooked the Tabo Valley and the monastery below. The monastery was probably coeval with the caves. In the early morning, the monastery stood in majestic solitude and silence.

Who were the original inhabitants of these caves? Did these monks come over from Tibet, which was less than 100km away? If so, why did they come to this isolated and demanding environment? Did they come to these parts for





3

- 1 Stupa in Tabo Monastery
- 2 Mud exterior of Tabo Monastery
- 3 Prayer wheels
- 4 Buddhist stupa in old Tabo Monastery
- 5 Mani Stone



4



5

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

meditation and self realization? Or was it to disseminate the teachings of Lord Buddha?

Lord Buddha never advocated inflicting pain upon oneself to attain self realization, though he himself initially did practice the painful ritual. In his later years, he forbade needless mortification of the flesh.

The monastery was a cluster of mud-plastered huts and looked quite modern. There was nothing to indicate the antiquity about the place. I was ushered into one of the larger huts referred to as the assembly hall. No sooner had I entered the place than I was transported to another bygone era. The hall was very dimly lit. The walls were covered with mural paintings, depicting the various Gods from the Buddhist pantheon.

Outside, there were a few shops that sold Tibetan brass and other art-wares. Here too, in this isolated Buddhist enclave I could, not without some hard bargaining, bring home a few good wares.

Tabo is not an easy place to reach. It is 3500 meters above sea level. The journey by road was a good 8 to 9 hours from Recong Peo. We had to pass through miles of barren and inhospitable land. At many places, we were warned that the area was prone to landslides. At quite a few places, there were evidences of landslide; the frequency of the occurrences was a mite too uncomfortable.

Piles of rock were strewn across the road that was yet to be cleared. At one point after we had traversed a particularly nightmarish stretch of road, we spotted a notice board put up by the Border Road Organization that had this terse chilling warning - 'You are passing through one of the most dangerous roads in the world.' At this point, we had seriously thought that perhaps it was a jolly good idea to turn back and go home. Forget Tabo. But then, we discovered that we had spotted the notice only after we had crossed that dangerous stretch. The notice was meant for the oncoming traffic!

At one point, we ran smack into a shower of sands falling off the mountain. We braced ourselves for heavier rocks to follow. Fortunately, nothing bigger than grains of sand fell on our car. The incident brought forth once again that life could change in a moment, in the hills too.

En-route we passed through a few villages. Signboards put up by the local authorities declared the population of



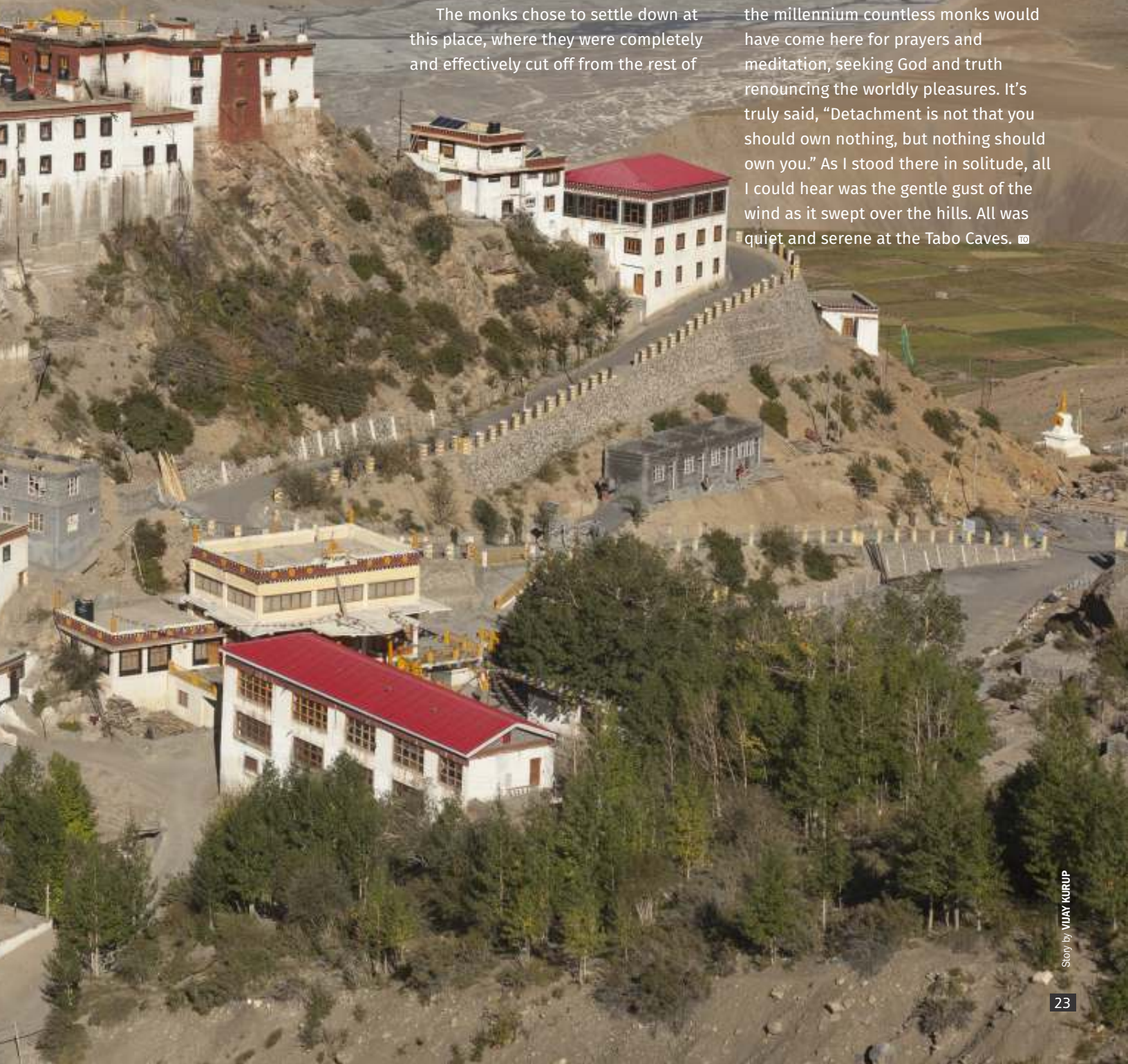
each village. At no place did the population exceed 500. In one of the villages, it was below 100. We were passing through some of the most desolate places in India.

It is advisable to stock yourself well with food and water for the grueling journey. Refreshment points are far and few between. The Tabo Village was like small oasis in an otherwise rugged landscape.

The monks chose to settle down at this place, where they were completely and effectively cut off from the rest of

the world. Traveling this far was akin to taking an irrevocable decision from where there was no turning back. They had to mentally gird themselves up for the rigors ahead in whatever quest they had embarked on.

Standing here and looking out from the caves, I could detach myself from the world. Far down below, I could see the monastery and the gay colorful prayer flags fluttering in the wind. Over the millennium countless monks would have come here for prayers and meditation, seeking God and truth renouncing the worldly pleasures. It's truly said, "Detachment is not that you should own nothing, but nothing should own you." As I stood there in solitude, all I could hear was the gentle gust of the wind as it swept over the hills. All was quiet and serene at the Tabo Caves. □



Incredible India

While Pondicherry is where every traveller craves to be, it is the fascinating Mahabalipuram that provides a break from the fast and chaotic life. UNESCO has already declared Mahabalipuram as a world heritage site because of its beautiful rock cut temples. However, the serene beauty of and around this place is yet to be explored by many travellers.

Mahabalipuram gained its name and fame during the rise of Pallavas. The strategic location probably made them realize its importance as a port town. They gifted this land with the art of rock cut sculptures and the same legacy has been carried since then. The main street leading to the Fisherman Colony has several shops where you'll easily see the skilled craftsmen working and creating fine sculptures as if it will come to life in moments. Since granite was the primary material used during the construction of these temple and chariots, you'll find the said stone as the main constituent for the modern miniature sculptures as well.

Fisherman Colony is a secluded village adjacent to the temple town. The locals are simple folks who spend their life fishing.

“

Buses plying between Chennai and Pondicherry travel through the lovely ECR route. This 2-hour drive is enough to make you fall in love with Tamil Nadu's beautiful coastal region. The East Coast Route is a beautiful place for long drives, cycle rides and bike trips.

”

Today, the colony thrives as a locality for the hippies on a cross country trip. Some entrepreneurial minds have converted their homes into fully fledged guest houses, where you can get a room with an attached washroom at cheap rates. The local restaurants serve amazing sea-food and Mediterranean cuisines. Because of a huge number of Israeli tourists visiting here, it is easy to find Falafels, Hummus and Schnitzels in every restaurant.

The adjoining villages are also known for the lush green paddy fields, where the visitors like to take a walk to experience the rural charms. The men from these villages are skilled in a variety of arts and run their own workshops here. You can learn surfing, bouldering, music and painting during your stay here and that too for a nominal fee.

The best way to explore Mahabalipuram is on a bicycle or on foot. The temple area is well connected to the colony and you can make an early morning or a golden hour visit to the premises. However, the temple area is also the most crowded and will make you feel as if you have come to some different place altogether.

Secrets of the East Coast Road



A small road, often mistaken by the visitors, divides into many lanes leading to the nearby villages.



The tranquil beach is also one of the cleanest beaches located near Chennai.



Every morning, you'll meet these locals working on their fishing nets and boats before finally hitting in the sea. Their equipment, in the best condition, guarantee the best catch at the end of the day.



Chennaiites travel all the way to Mahabalipuram just for a heavenly lunch or an early dinner in these unique and creative cafes of the town.



A local artisan working on a new sculpture. Every design requires immense amount of precision and concentration.



The locals of the village leave with their boats and return with a fresh catch by afternoon. On request, they also provide trip to the middle of the sea if the weather is fine.



The fisherman's beach also provides beautiful views of the temple area at a distance. The sunset behind the temple is a sight to behold.



The famous Krishna's Butterball is a huge rock that seems to be in the defiance of all the laws of physics. It stays in the same position despite people attempting to push it with their full might



There is nothing better than living a laidback life without an itinerary and a world open to observe the way we want to. After attaining some peace and comfort, you can either end your trip and return to Chennai or continue further towards Pondicherry.



The beautiful Shore Temple is also the host of the annual Mahabalipuram Dance Festival. Located in between of a lush green compound, you'll find a number of granite structures excavated during the years.

HOW TO GO

Take a direct train from Chennai to Chengalpattu, the nearest railway station to Mahabalipuram, which takes around an hour. Chengalpattu railway station is located at a distance of approx. 30 km from Mahabalipuram and can be covered by cab, bus or taxi. Chennai Airport (approx 52 km) is the nearest airport to Mahabalipuram.

WHERE TO STAY

Homestays are the best option to experience the local life.

THE BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

November to February has nice and pleasant weather and is the perfect time to enjoy sightseeing and adventure activities.



Owing to its bright blue seas, blissful beaches, pleasant weather, clear skies, luxury resorts and a huge list of adventures sports, Maldives is one of the most desirable destinations for all the holidaymakers.

Located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives presents you the best opportunity to realize your dreams of visiting a secluded island that would definitely give mainstream beach-cities a run for their money.



Here's a list of

15

Reasons Why
You Must Visit
MALDIVES



A woman wearing a large white straw hat and a white backless dress stands on a sandy beach with her arms raised in a 'V' shape. The background shows a clear blue sky and the ocean. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

1

Pleasant Weather

The weather in the Maldives is pleasant all throughout the year, so even if you're looking for an off-peak getaway, you won't be disappointed. Calmer waters with temperatures of up to 25° average during the daytime is one of the many reasons that this paradise is most popular amongst holidaymakers, offering opportunities to unwind oneself.

2

Amiable People

Beautiful people with a smiling face, happy heart and warm welcoming gestures are exactly the hospitality everyone looks for. Moreover, People in Maldives know how to live and enjoy a full life.



3

Serene Beaches

The white sands, smooth winds and deep blue-colored water complete the definition of beauty of Maldives beaches. Located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives has the most romantic as well as the quietest beaches in the world. Whether it is exciting sports or a peaceful walk down the silky sands, the beaches here will blow your mind.



4

Hire a Flying Taxi

Seaplanes are yet another travelling method between the islands, apart from boats as they are capable of taking off and land on water. They have skis in place of wheels. Flying over the Indian Ocean by seaplane can make your vacation all the more exciting!



5

Glowing Neon Blue Water

It might sound like a dream to see the glowing water of the ocean. Guess what? You don't have to dream to see such miracles of nature as you can witness this gorgeous effect at Vaadhoo Island in Maldives. Technically, this amazing effect has a name "The Firefly Effect ". Do charge your phone before heading to see this glittering effect as you won't be able to hold your horses and keep clicking photos again and again.



6 Spot the Sea Angels, Dolphins

Maldives presents you one of the most lovable aquatic creatures in their natural habitats, Dolphins. You can go on a cruise/speedboat ride to spot these lovely creatures in the beautiful ocean. Stop at a certain distance from the shore, where your guide will point you towards dolphins that will be a treat to watch.



7

Wander in the Local Markets

The perfect way to experience any destination is by visiting the local markets. Male feels a million miles from the island resorts, many of which are uninhabited islands taken over entirely by tourism. The local market is where people from the atolls bring their items for sale. Buy some souvenirs from these local shops as a memory to the good times you had in this paradise.



8

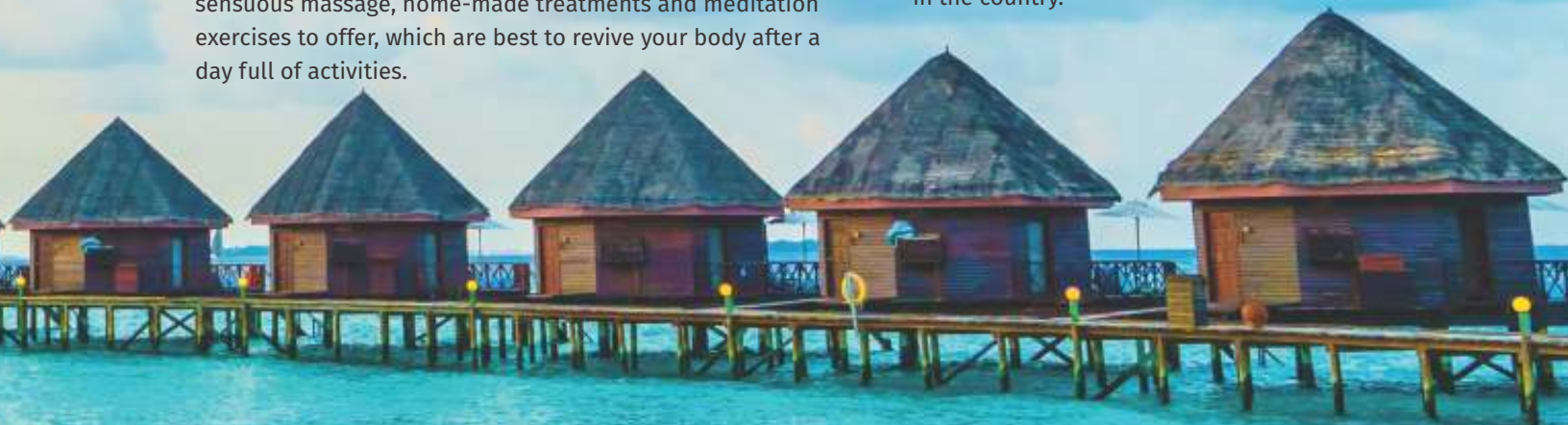
Fingerlicious Seafood

Being a country with more than 1000 islands, Maldives is a perfect place to enjoy the Seafood. From prawns to crabs to Tuna fish, you can taste the delicious cuisines this paradise can offer. Try the famous Mas huni, shredded smoked fish with grated coconuts and onions. This is considered the most popular breakfast in the country.



9 Relax, Renew, Refresh at Exotic Spa Centres

Rejuvenate your mind and your body with heavenly spas at Maldives. The spa in this island country is incomparable. There are numerous Spa centers, which have a variety of sensuous massage, home-made treatments and meditation exercises to offer, which are best to revive your body after a day full of activities.





10 Say Hello to Marine Life

Dive deep into the Indian Ocean to witness the coral reefs, colorful fishes and huge sharks, feeling every second of your life. Scuba Diving might be a sport but it is more of an experience that will be always in your head and heart.



11 Photographer's Paradise

Maldives is a retreat for all the photographers. This is the place to click a LOT of pictures and show them off on your social network accounts. The sunrise and sunset, pristine beaches, crystal clear water and beautiful people everywhere will create indelible memories.



12 No Visa Hassle

As Indian tourists, visa rules and regulations for Maldives are pretty relaxed. Indian nationals do not require a pre-visa arrival and can safely get a tourist visa valid for 90 days on arrival.



13 Perfect Sunrise and Sunset

How would it feel to waking up facing the ocean with crystal clear beaches, watching the sunrise or drinking wine with your loved one and watching the sun going down? Great, right! You can feel the same way in Maldives as you can witness the perfect sunrise and sunset here.



14

Live Life King Size at Lavish Resorts

As the economy is largely based on tourism in Maldives, this island paradise has embraced the global demand for luxury resorts. Live in the sunshine, swim in the sea and drink the wild air at the famous Maldives resorts like Soneva Jani, Four Seasons, Cheval Blanc and many more. It's not about the money but the lifestyle at the best resorts in Maldives.



15

Sleep Underwater

You won't be able to find a sea life like the one found in Maldives. You'll have a delightful experience watching beautiful coral reefs, whale sharks, manta rays and many more such sea animals. Explore the underwater world and become friends with one or two of these creatures. Oh, and you can also sleep and dine with the fishes in this nation. In Maldives, you can opt for total relaxation right by the sea. Imagine how amazing it will be to experience something which is so magical! ¹⁰



Plan your Maldives holidays and be occupied throughout your stay with beautiful surroundings, delicious food and abundance of water sports activities.



BEST SEASON TO VISIT

November-April

HOW TO GO

Most of the popular airliners ply from India to the Maldives, taking you to Malé International Airport – the prime airport in the Maldives. However, if you're looking at saving on expenses, you can take a train or bus from your respective cities to Kochi, Bangalore or Chennai and then take a flight to the Maldives.

ACCOMMODATION

There are 106 resort islands to choose from, ranging from affordable to ultimate luxury. If you want to experience the 'real' Maldives then you might want to consider one of the Guesthouses that are now available on 5 inhabited islands, offering rooms at very reasonable rates.

An initiative of



Lens  **Magic**

The Photography Club

presents

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



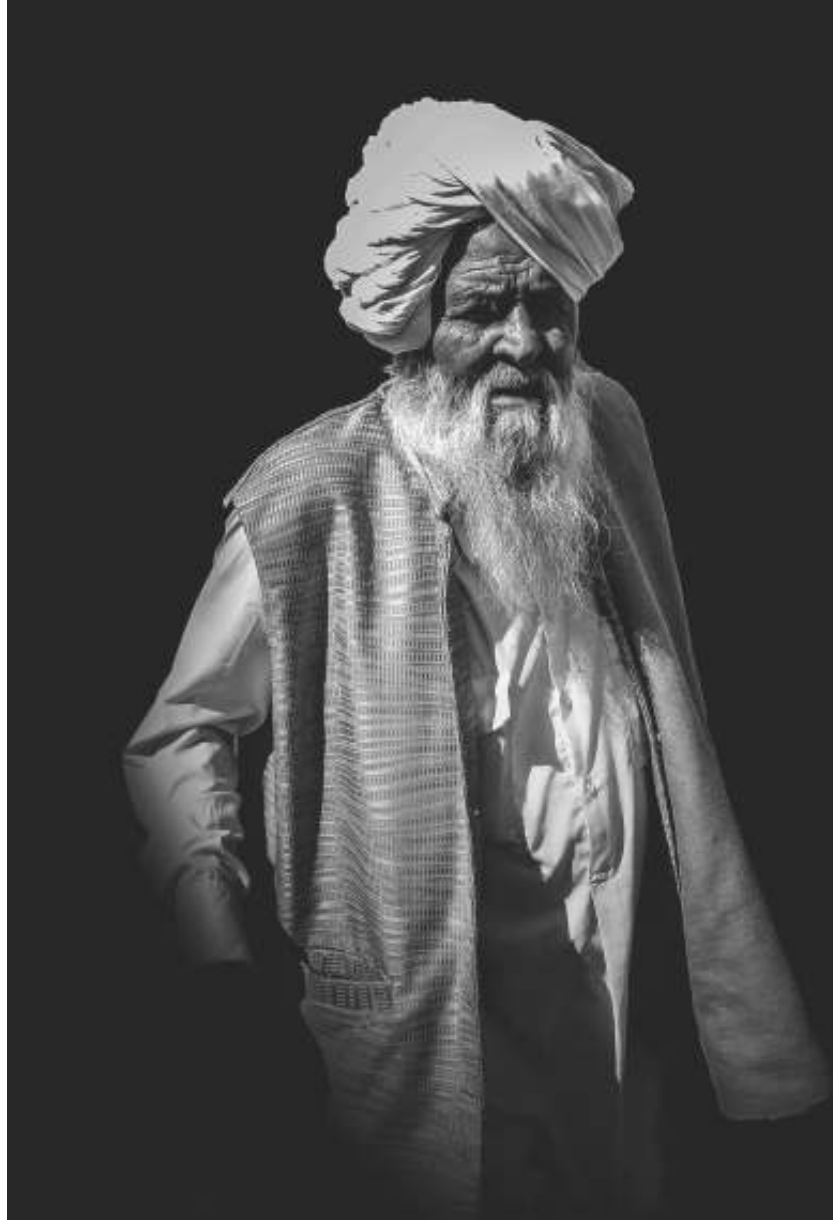
LensMagic,
the Facebook group dedicated to
providing networking platform to the
photographers, organizes
PHOTO OF THE WEEK CONTEST
on weekly basis.

For more information, visit

 [/groups/LensMagicPhotographyClub/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LensMagicPhotographyClub/)

Abhishek Shivhare

10-16 March, 2018



The photo was clicked at Baba Badakhshani's Urs - an annual event celebrated at the Rajgarh Sharif Dargah that commemorates the death anniversary of Sufi saint Hazrat Haji Hafiz Syed Qurban Ali Shah Baba Badakhshani. It is the second largest Muslim fair in India.



About the photographer

Abhishek Shivhare is an engineering student and a mobile photographer. His favourite genres of photography are Street, Travel and People. He believes that photography is all about perception, not the device you use to click a picture.

presents
PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Rajkumar Lahiri
17-23 March, 2018



The photograph was shot at Rajarhat, Kolkata. The bird "Black Drongo" was catching insect around the burning bushes as the heat helps the bird by flushing out the insects around. The painting effect is the result of the heat and the vapour caused by the fire.

The location is perfect for bird-watchers. Many types of bird species are found at the spot.



**About the
photographer**

Rajkumar Lahiri is passionate about photography. He started photography in year 2016.

presents
PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Rupai Saha Mandal
24-30 March, 2018



The photo was taken at Lungthung in East Sikkim. The place, situated at a height of 12,000 ft., is also known as Old Silk Route.



**About the
photographer**

Rupai Saha Mandal is a Kolkata-based home-maker. Travelling and photography is her passion. She travels as much as she can, and freezes her memories with her camera.

The Mouth of Nohkalikai Falls

Falling from a height of 1115 meters, Nohkalikai is the tallest plunge waterfall in India. The waterfall was named after a lady whose daughter was killed by her second husband. The lady decided to jump off the waterfall and end her life. The name Nohkalikai can be translated from Khasi to 'Jump of Ka Likai'. The point from where the lady (which translates to 'Ka' in Khasi) whose name was 'Likai', jumped and ended her life was later known as Nohkalikai Waterfall.

Most of the visitors make a day trip to Cherrapunjee either from Shillong or spend a night in Cherrapunjee itself to

escape the chaos of the crowded capital of Meghalaya. Nohkalikai is an important stop during the sightseeing trip and you'll see a majority of travellers coming here to enjoy the sunset behind the plains of Bangladesh.

But little do they know that a small patch of road is the way to a hidden beauty. A small but arduous trek takes you all the way to a lush green valley where the same waterfall exists as a tiny stream flowing and ready to fall off 1115 meters. This is the mouth of the Nohkalikai Waterfalls and the trek downhill is adventurous and dangerous at the same time.



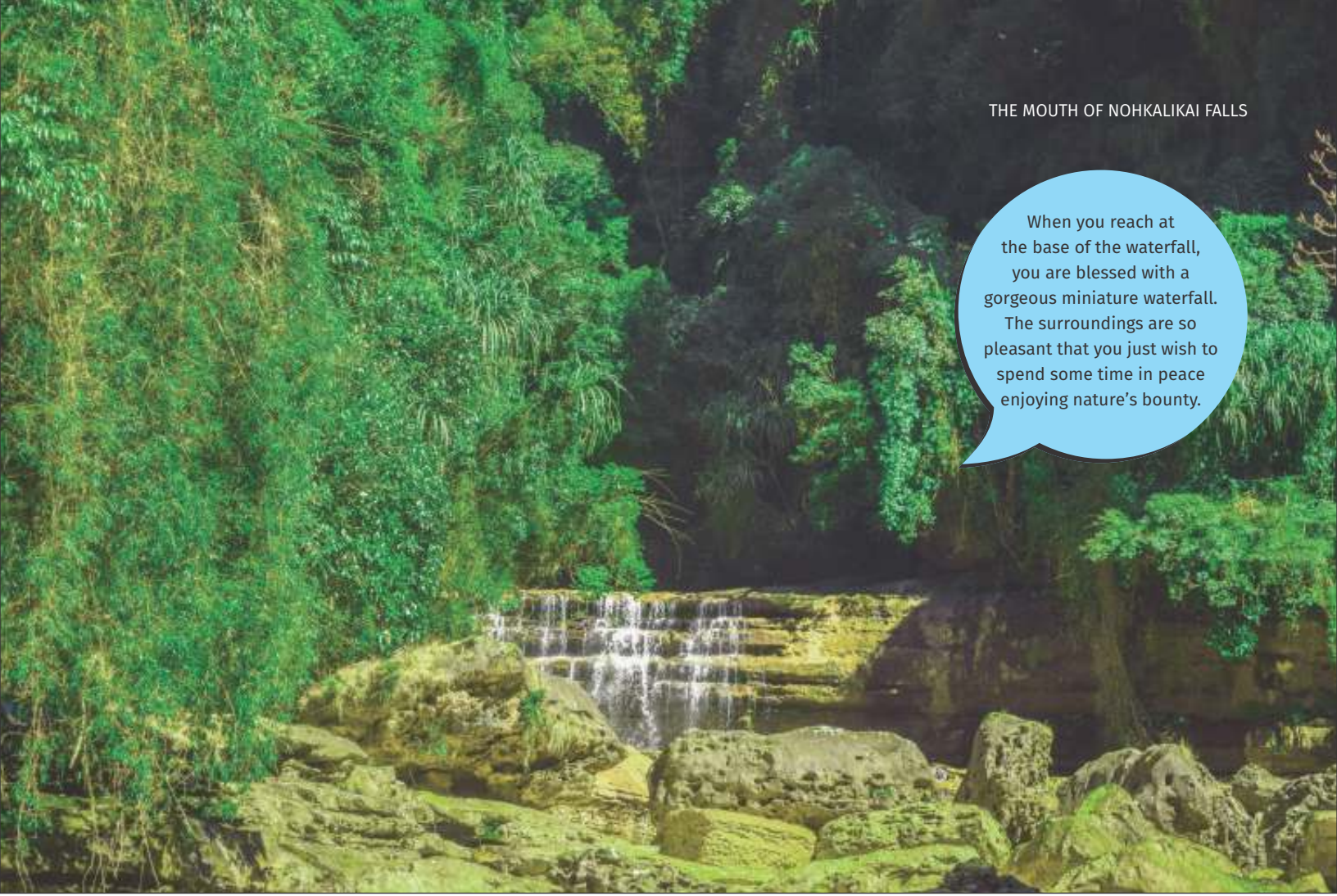
The tallest plunge waterfall of India, Nohkalikai, drops from a height of 1115 meters. The force of the cascade increases by multiple times during the monsoon.

The moment you cross Shillong, you start coming across beautiful meadows and endless grass plains. No wonder, The British officers stationed here called Meghalaya, 'The Scotland of the East'.



The trek starts from a small pathway, which diverts from the main road leading to the waterfall. The closer you reach towards the Nohkalikai's mouth, your surroundings become greener. A pleasant breeze surrounds you and the sound of the water gushing towards the plunge point becomes clearer and clearer.



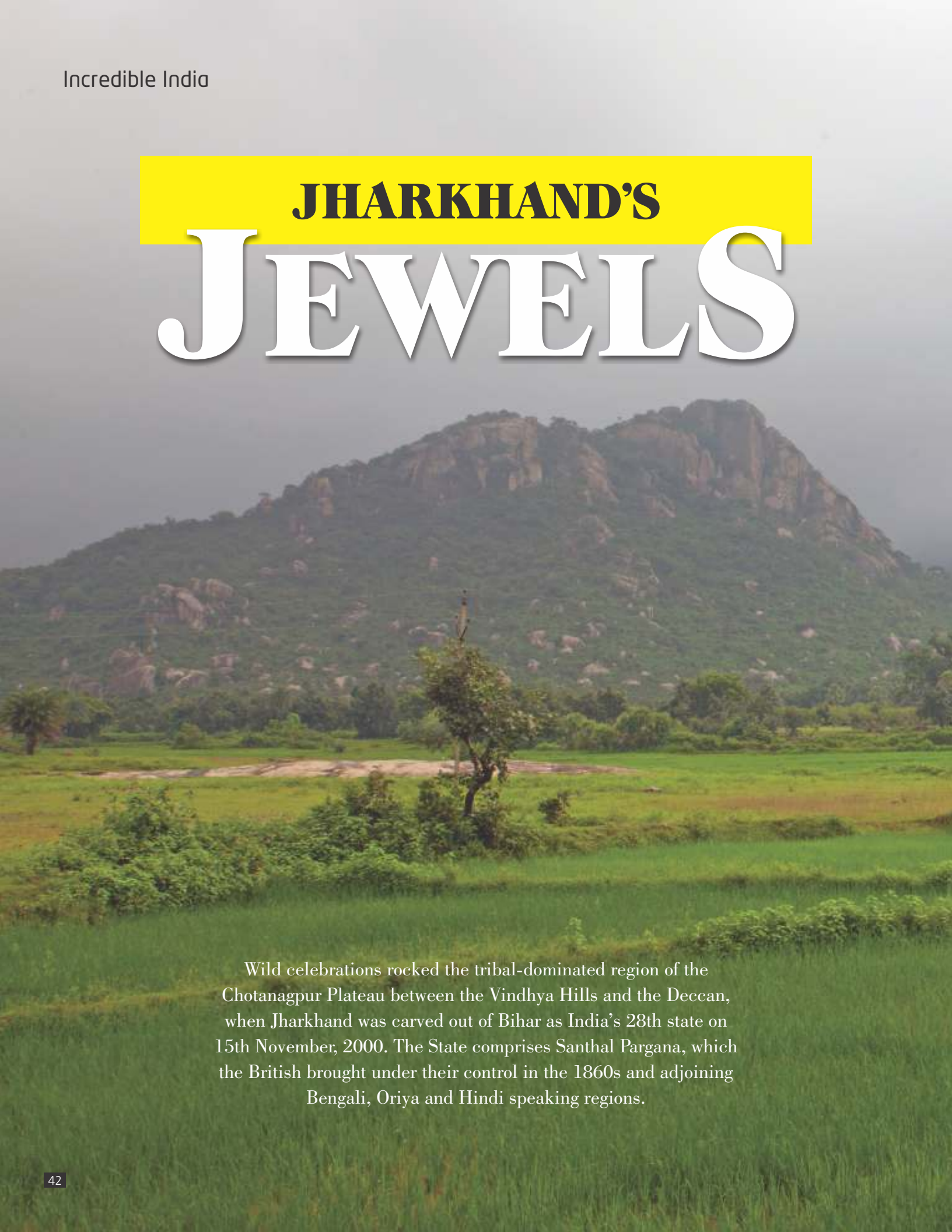


When you reach at the base of the waterfall, you are blessed with a gorgeous miniature waterfall. The surroundings are so pleasant that you just wish to spend some time in peace enjoying nature's bounty.



Make sure that you are able to trek back by the golden hour so that you can enjoy the beautiful sunset behind farmlands of Bangladesh. On a clear day, these farmlands are visible and visitors often complain about their phones catching international roaming signals from the neighbouring country. 📶

JHARKHAND'S **JEWELS**



Wild celebrations rocked the tribal-dominated region of the Chotanagpur Plateau between the Vindhya Hills and the Deccan, when Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar as India's 28th state on 15th November, 2000. The State comprises Santhal Pargana, which the British brought under their control in the 1860s and adjoining Bengali, Oriya and Hindi speaking regions.



Jharkhand was the preferred summer destination of the British officers residing in Bihar because of its cooler elevation of about 2000ft to 3000ft. They made Ranchi the summer capital of the Bihar provinces. Netarhat became a hill station retreat with a prestigious public school. After independence, the relatively cooler climates of the Chotanagpur Plateau continued to attract tourists of the eastern states of India.

Even today, Jharkhand is a stepped plateau rich in forests and inhabited largely by tribal groups. Though densely populated, it is still one of the 10 most forested states of India. It is rich in wildlife with some of India's largest elephant concentrations inhabiting Palamau Betla National Park and Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary. It is also home to a good variety of birds.



Ranchi cityscape

Ranchi

Ranchi has many natural attractions, including waterfalls like the Johna, Sita Dhara, Hundru Falls, Dassam Falls, Panchghah and Hirni. A city of lakes, gardens and hills with plenty of old colonial bungalows, Ranchi is now a crowded state capital with traffic snarls, concrete jungles and congested markets. However, it still retains some attractive spots in its precincts.

One of the best known monuments of Ranchi, the Jagannath Temple was built in the 17th century in the same architectural style as the 12th century temple in Puri. The temple has some fine carvings outside and four shrines inside. Like the Jagannath Temple in Puri, this one too has a Rath Yatra.

Another tourist attraction is the Ranchi Hill, which is famous as Pahar Mandir because of the temple on the



Dassam Waterfalls



Hazaribag Sanctuary

summit. Climb the hill for a panoramic view of the city, including the attractive Ranchi Lake and surrounding hills.

Just outside Ranchi, the Birsa Mrig Vihar at Kalamatia is a pleasantly green park with huge enclosed areas, where sambar and spotted deer are breeding in recreated settings of their natural habitats. This is a well-made complex with the feel of being in a wildlife sanctuary. The path is well-designed with stepped platforms strategically situated to get a view of water holes or feeding stalls. The park is good for bird spotting. The Birsa Munda Zoological Park at Ormanjhi has some interesting animals.

Ranchi's Tribal Research Institute on Morabadi Road has a museum, offering an insight into the cultures of 32 tribal groups. The museum stores information about their history, customs, performing arts and religious rituals, and exhibits weapons, musical instruments and arts. The Ranchi University also has an excellent collection of archaeological finds of the Chotanagpur plateau, which covers Jharkhand and neighbouring areas of Andhra, Orissa, West Bengal, Chhatisgarh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Ranchi also has some impressive churches.



The Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church



Ranchi hill temple



Nature in and around the city of Jamshedpur

Jamshedpur

Jamshedpur is the result of the vision of Jamshedji Tata who decided that the country should have a steel plant after hearing experts speak about the importance of this industry during his visits to Europe in the 1800s. Jamshedpur is largely an industrial city with companies like Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Tata Tinplate, Indian Steel and Wire Products among many others. However, the city's planning, abundance of parks & gardens and surrounding forested Dalma hills make it a city worth a visit.

The main highlight is the Jubilee Park, inaugurated by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India in 1956 to mark Jamshedpur's golden jubilee. The driver took us around to see the roses, the lake, the fountains and the water cascades across the park,

which spans about 225 acres. This park, we are told, is a favourite hangout of the citizens – whether it is for walking, jogging, cycling or workouts. People come here to enjoy the musical fountains, laser shows and illuminated water bodies. Stalls around the park make the most of the huge number of daily visitors, offering a variety of street food – the dalmoth (salty nibbles), littis (Bihari snacks) and puchkas (golguppas or panipuris).

In a corner of the park, the Tata Steel Zoological Park beside Jayanti Sarovar or Jubilee Lake is a zoo worth-visiting.

Saraikella

Saraikela Princely State, also spelt Seraikela, Saraikella or Seraikella, was founded in 1620 by Raja Bikram Singh Deo. It has many palatial buildings and temples built by the ruling family. Saraikela is most famous as one of the

three major places for the Chhau dance, a classical Indian dance with martial, tribal and folk origins. The three forms of Chhau are Purulia Chau of Bengal, Seraikella Chau of Jharkhand and Mayurbhanj Chau of Odisha.

The dance ranges from celebrating martial arts, acrobatics and athletics performed in festive themes of a folk dance, to a structured dance with religious themes found in Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism. The Saraikela dancers wear masks to identify the character. The dancers enact scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Puranas and other epics.

The dance is traditionally an all-males troupe, regionally celebrated during spring every year. It is a syncretic dance form that emerged from a fusion of classical Hindu dances and traditions of ancient regional tribes.



The Anglo-Indian heritage of McCluskieganj



Jain Pilgrimage to Parasnath

Parasnath is the highest mountain peak in the state of Jharkhand. It is set in beautiful countryside with woodlands and waterfalls. The hill is one of the most important pilgrimages for the Jains because 20 of the 24 tirthankars attained Samadhi here. The 9km trek to the Samed Shikhar is through forested hills and worth the effort. The pilgrimage to Shikharji is a round trip of 27km through the Madhuban forest. The section from Gandharva Nala stream to the summit is the most sacred to Jains. Along the paved track are shrines to each of the 24 tirthankaras.

Rajmahal

In the northeastern corner of Jharkhand, Rajmahal was once capital of an Islamic kingdom. There are impres-

sive mosques and tombs in Rajmahal town.

Around the town, the Rajmahal hills are home to plant fossils that are 68 to 145 million years old.

Udhuwa Lake

About 11km from Rajmahal, this bird sanctuary comprises two water bodies connected to the River Ganges by a 25km canal. It is one of the important bird areas of Jharkhand and an amazing birding place in winter when waterfowl gathers in incredible numbers.

Maluti

Maluti town has a group of 72 extant terracotta temples. Most of these temples were built between the 17th and 19th centuries by the local Baj Basanta dynasty, inspired by goddess Mowlakshi. The temples are grouped under five categories.

Baidyanath Dham

Worshipped as Kamnalinga (a linga that fulfills wishes), this temple is located in Deogarh and attracts millions of devotees. The holy shraavan pilgrimage from the Ganges in Sultanganj to Deogarh is an 80km trek carrying holy river waters. Don't miss the Deogarh pedas.

Palamau Tiger Reserve and Betla National Park

Considered one of the best places to see the wild elephant in India and also home to tiger, leopard, Indian bison, sambar, spotted deer, mouse deer and pangolin, these sal forests and mixed deciduous highlands are outstanding for bird watching. It gets its name from the historic Palamu fort.

Netarhat

Netarhat is a beautiful hill station about 3700ft above sea level with a



tourist bungalow that offers a superb view of sunrise and the Magnolia Point known for its sunset. It grows good pears and guavas. Netarhat Public School is very famous where many of India's top IAS officers studied. Netarhat Dam and Upper Ghaghri are other hot spots for visitors. This is about 160km from Ranchi. The wooden tree house in Maromar, perched atop a Kesumi tree, is another specialty.

Rajrappa

Leave the highway at Koderma for a drive of about 60km to this cave-like Kali temple that attracts devotees in numbers beyond comprehension.

Sarand

One of the finest sal forests in India and recommended as an educational excursion for forest officers and botanists to see sal species, this sanctuary is home to the flying lizard and is considered a good place to watch elephants, birds and butterflies. Unfortunately, after seven forest guesthouses were attacked by Maoists, the tourists who once enjoyed the sunset in Kiriburu and the huge natural Ligrida swamp have started avoiding the sanctuary.

Hazaribag

A historical city and once a British Cantonment, Hazaribag has a wildlife sanctuary with forests and lakes.

HOW TO GO

Jharkhand state is well-connected to the important cities of India, by an excellent network of roads. The main railway stations of Jharkhand are Ranchi Railway Station and Hazaribagh Railway Station. The main airport of Jharkhand is the Ranchi Airport that is well-connected with major Indian cities.



Dumka District

One of the remotest areas of Jharkhand near the Mayurakshi River is 2,100ft-long Massanjore Dam. It is considered one of the most scenic sights imaginable with green hills on all side.

Tilaiya Dam

The waterfront sandy place is popular with picnickers as an inland beach retreat.

Ghatshila

The late Bibhutibhushan's Pather Pachali, which the late Satyajit Ray made into one of his famous movies, describes Ghatshila.

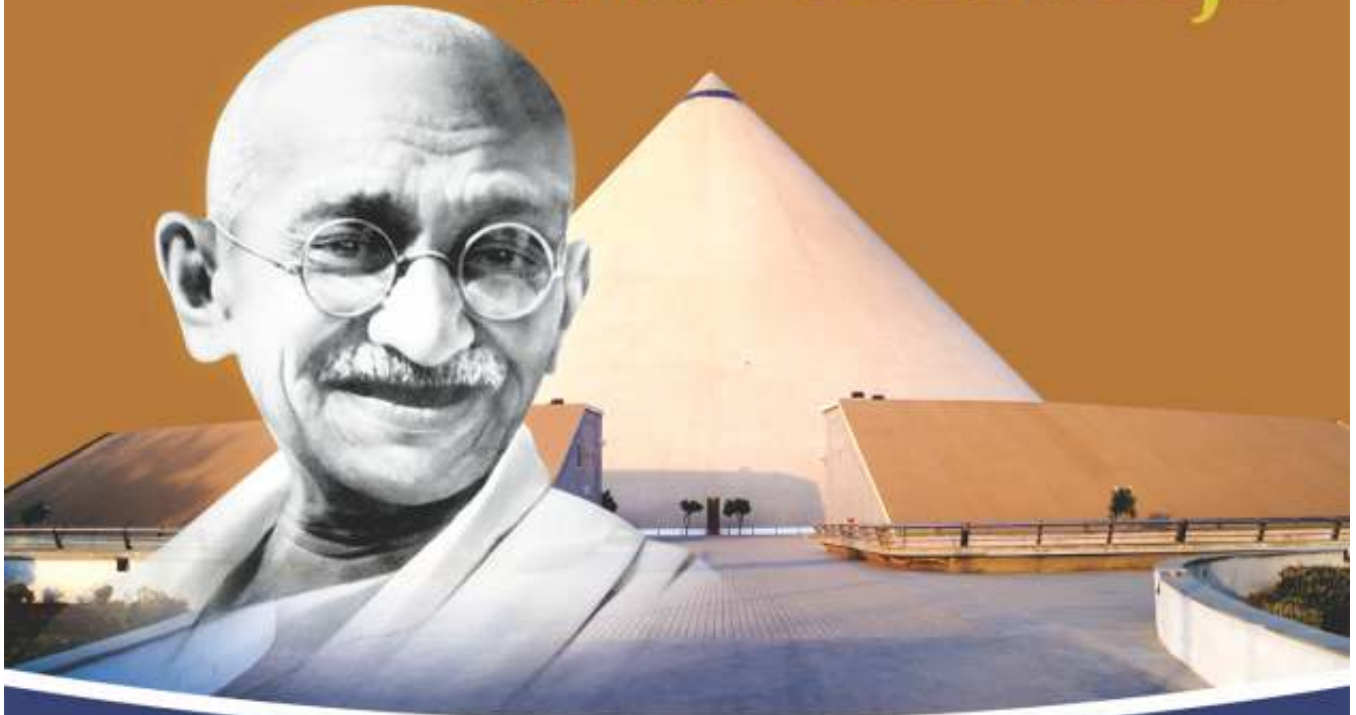
WHERE TO STAY

There are several stay options in Jharkhand that suit the budget and preference of the visitors. Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Deoghar, Bokaro and Dhanbad are the major cities of the state that have range of hotels, guesthouses and resorts for a comfortable stay.

THE BEST SEASON TO VISIT THE PLACE

The best time to visit Jharkhand is in winters i.e. October to March. ■

'There is Something
about **Gandhiji**'



DANDI KUTIR
THE GANDHI MUSEUM



Sports, Youth & Cultural Activities Department
Archeology And Museums

**Gandhiji's vision and legacy is at
the core of the Dandi Kutir Museum**

A batch of 50 people leaves at an interval of 30 minutes, assisted by a tour guide.

Tuesday-Sunday : 10.30 am - 5.00 pm | Closed on Monday.

Dandi Kutir : The Gandhi Museum, Nr. Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

079 232 55793 | info@dandi-kutir.com | www.dandi-kutir.com



DANDI KUTIR



MEMORIES OF THE MAHATMA

Gujarat is famous for its cultural diversity, enchanting wildlife, lasting heritage sites, vibrant festivals and generous hospitality. While the state has preserved its monuments and other heritage sites to tell the tales of its rich legacy, it has embraced memories of its beloved sons that have made the land proud.



In the heart of Gujarat's capital, Dandi Kutir is one such establishment that holds in it the inspiring life-events of the Father of the Nation – Mahatma Gandhi. The name “Dandi Kutir” is derived from the historic Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi in March-April 1930 from Sabarmati to Dandi to protest against the nefarious provisions of the salt tax imposed by the British.

A salt-mound-shaped museum is dedicated to the life, ideology and works of Mahatma Gandhi. Conceived and built by the Government of Gujarat, Dandi Kutir is the museum based on the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

In this three-storey building, the biography of Mahatma is beautifully depicted with the help of





sophisticated technology. There are special sections portraying his early life and his journey to South Africa. Glimpses of Independence Movement are showcased in the form of 3D short film and audio visual presentations. Special feature of this museum is the use of technologies such as 3D mapping, holography, 360 projection, 4D virtual reality, digital LED floor, laser light shows, etc. The museum is equipped with all the modern gadgets to bring the story of Mahatma to life.

Dandi Kutir is truly an unconventional concept of story-telling. The first-ever museum dedicated to the Father of the Nation keeps its visitors engaged right from the beginning till the end with its audio visual tour. The quotes of Mahatma Gandhi along with the visual graphics are beautifully inscribed on the walls that act as a source of inspiration for the visitors.



Next time, when you're in Gujarat, do not forget to visit the digitalized interactive museum that will not only enlighten you about the life of the Father of the Nation, but will also present you an implausible experience by recreating the moments for you with its uniquely-designed concept. ¹⁰

The duration of visit is : 01.30 hours

The museum is open for : Tuesday to Sunday

The timings are : 10.30 AM to 5.00 PM

Week-off : Monday

Charges Rs. 10/- for Indian Nationals and Rs. 200/- for Foreign Tourists

CHANDERI

A DESTINATION WORTH EXPLORING

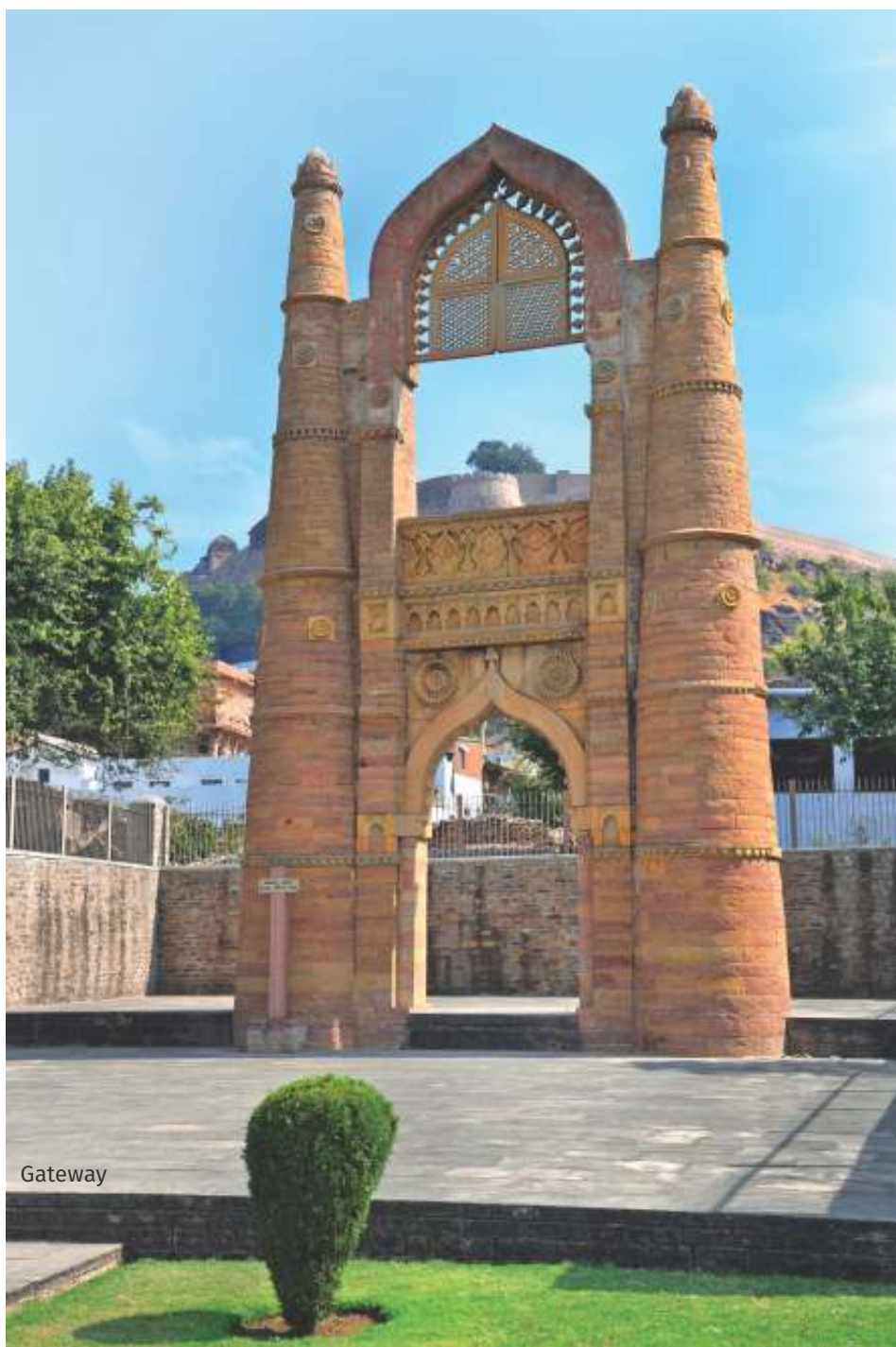
Chanderi is most famous for its saris. This historical city enjoyed a strategic location on trade routes in the 11th century. Set between Malwa and Bunderkhund, Chanderi prospered from trade caravans travelling within important regions of Gujarat, Malwa, Mewar, Central India and the Deccan and was an important military outpost.

Some of the earliest mentions of Chanderi weaving are from the time of Hazrat Wajihuddin Yusuf, a khalifa of the great sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. He reached Chanderi in 1305, established his khanqah and soon gained thousands of followers from Bengal. Perhaps, the weaving in Chanderi was the result of connections with Dhaka, which was a major weaving centre even in those times.

The Ain-e-Akbari mentions the weaves of Chanderi. Ma'asir-e-Alamgiri also says that Chanderi produced an extremely fine cloth with gold and silver worked into it. During the reign of the Bundelas, the cloth was marked with their seal that consisted of a crown flanked by two prancing lions. The British gazetteers mention the importance of Chanderi textiles in the Gwalior princely state.

Today, Chanderi is a town of saree weavers. The major concentration of the looms is in the older part of the city called Bahar Shahar. In this city, every family works on weaving textiles. According to estimates, 2500 looms in Chanderi are owned by the artisans.

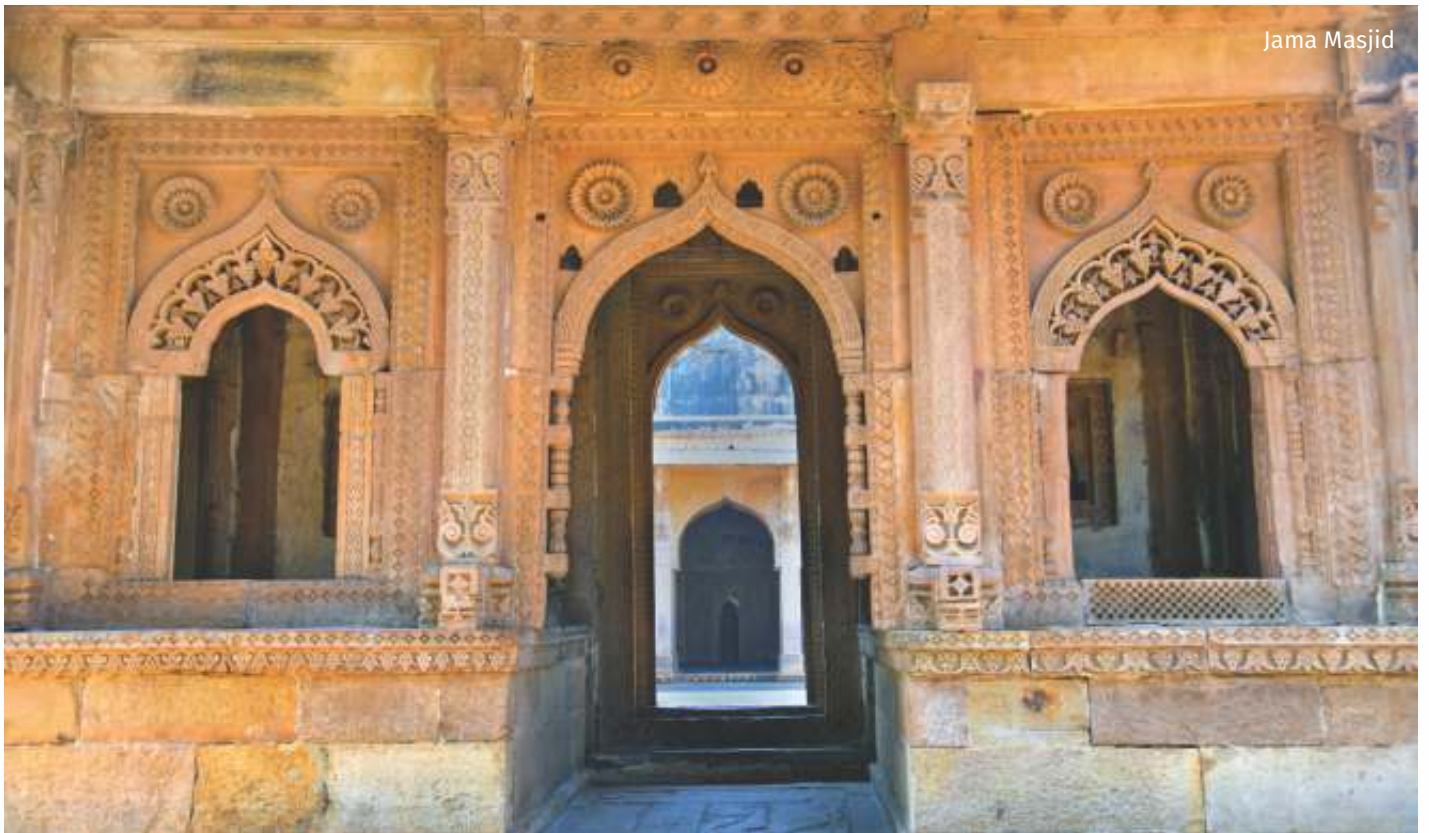
Till about the 1920s, Chanderi was whitish in colour with zari borders. Safas, pagdis, dupattas, lugadas and saris were the main products woven by them using cotton thread, which required skillful handling. The courts of



Gateway

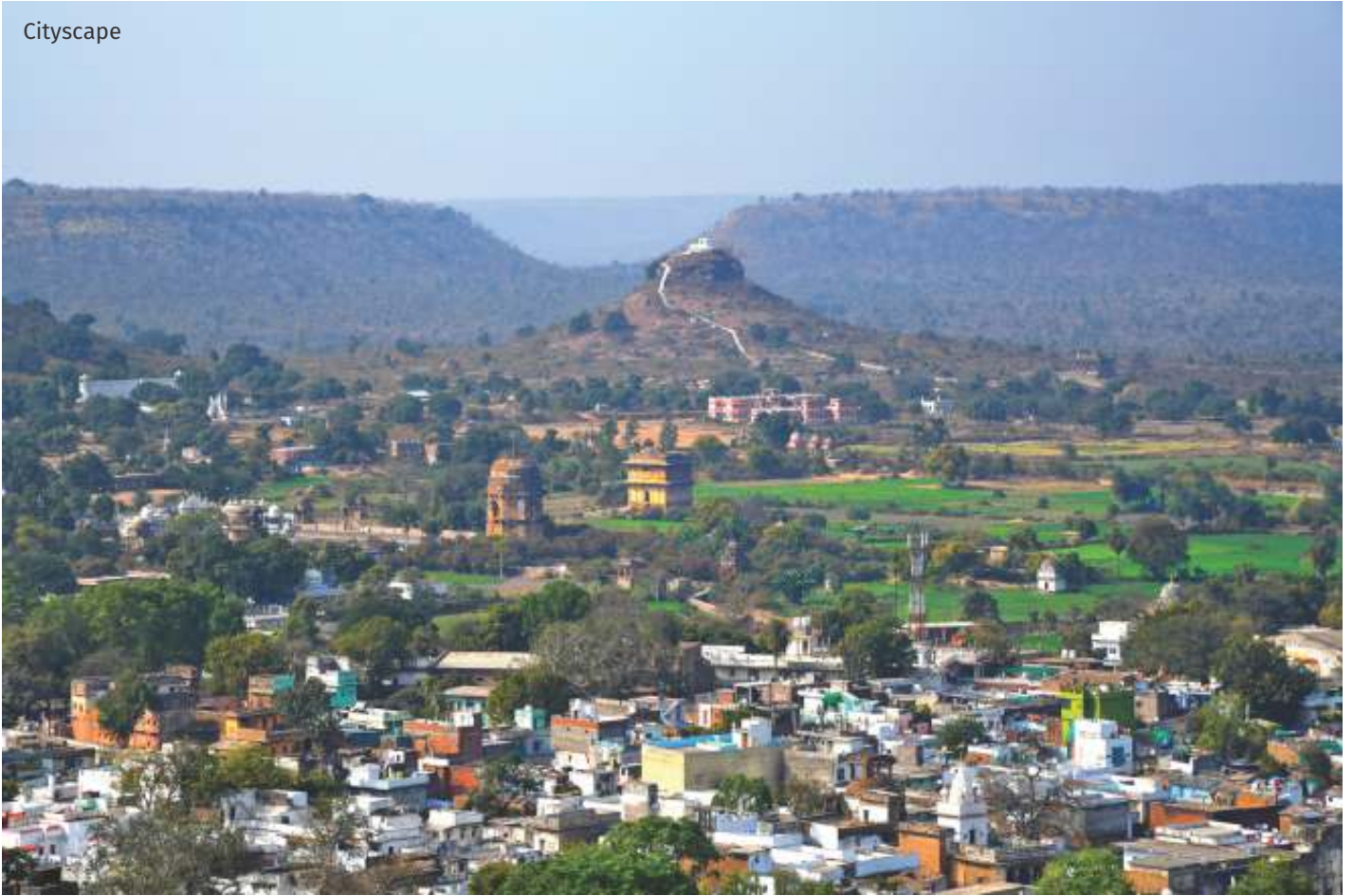


Badal Mahal



Jama Masjid

Cityscape



Chanderi Fort



Koshak Mahal





Museum



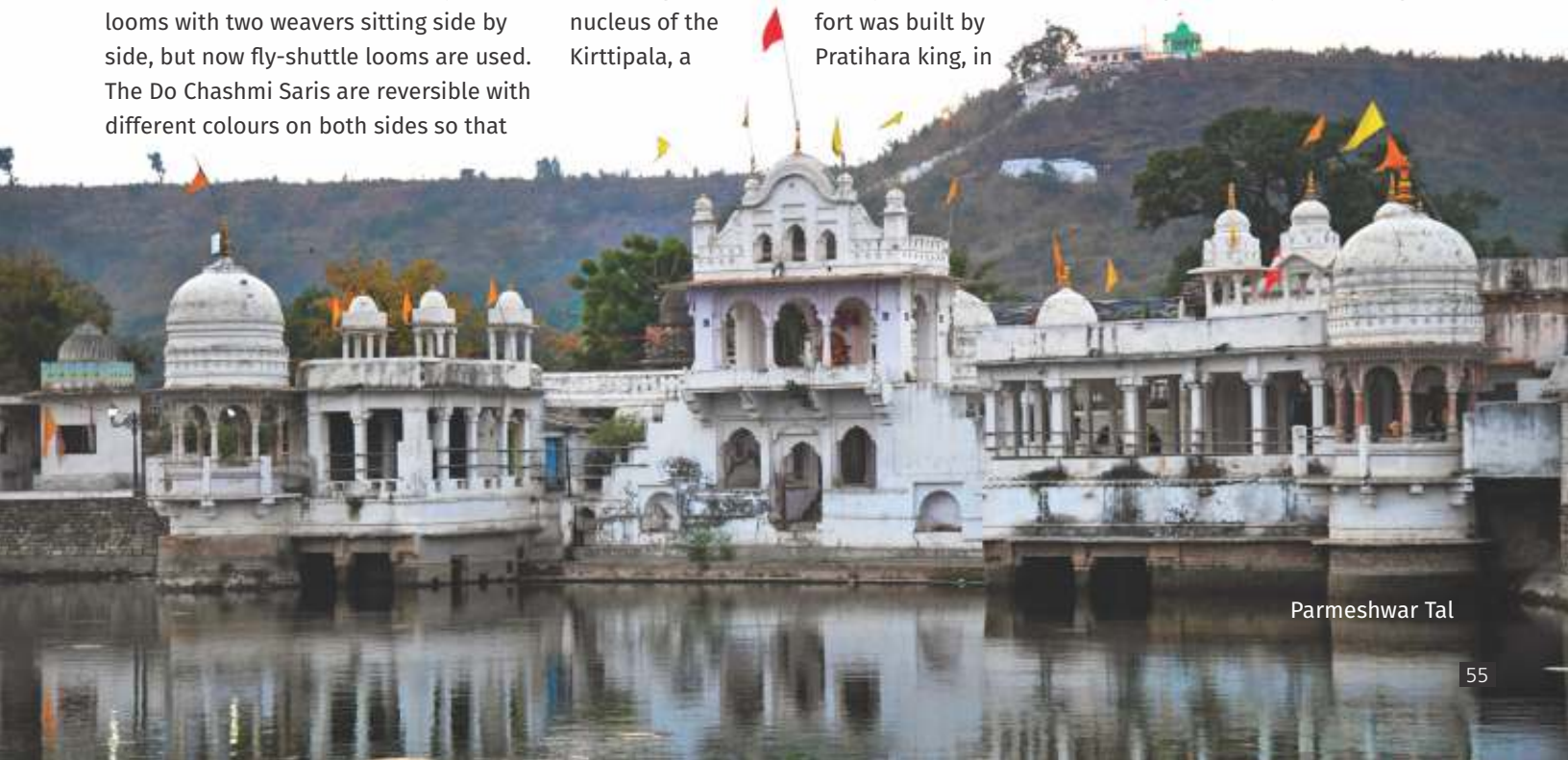
Jain Statue

the Princely states of Gwalior and Baroda were major buyers of the fabric. In Baroda, a 120-foot long Chanderi pagdi was part of the royal ceremonial dress for the princes and maharajas. Later, silk began to be used by the Chanderi weavers. Traditionally, Chanderi fabrics were woven on pit looms with two weavers sitting side by side, but now fly-shuttle looms are used. The Do Chashmi Saris are reversible with different colours on both sides so that

can be worn on different occasions. In the 1970s, many new designs were introduced to the Chanderi sari.

The city is dominated by Chanderi Fort, set on a 200m high hill with a panoramic view of the city and countryside. The fort has impressive gateways. According to a Sanskrit inscription, the nucleus of the fort was built by Kirttipala, a Pratihara king, in

the 11th century and was named Kirtti-durga after its builder. Another imposing gateway, the Badal Mahal Gate is a double arched entrance flanked by circular and tapering bastions. The Battisi Baodi is the largest and the best preserved of the step wells. It is named for the 32 flights of steps. According to a



Parmeshwar Tal



Shahzadi Roza

Persian inscription, the well was built in the reign of Sultan Ghiyas Shah of Malwa in 1485.

The most impressive of the Chanderi monuments, Koshak Mahal is a complex of four palaces with some fine carving and screens.

The city is known for its Jamma Masjid, a Friday mosque that has a spacious open court and sanctuary on its west and arched cloisters on its north and south. The nave and the square hall are roofed by elongated, massive domes and there are beautiful mihrabs with prominent ogee curves. This mosque is unique among those in the area in having no minarets.

The tombs of the Muslim families also have some impressive stonework. The most notable among these is a finely carved panel or niche on a tomb in the family graveyard of Saint Nizamuddin. Shahjadi ka Roza, probably a princess's tomb, is a square building built entirely of grey coloured sandstone with attractive brackets and bands of the geometrical designs inlaid with blue enamel. From extant remains, it appears that it was covered by a single dome, each side of which has series of five closed ogee arches resting on 20 pillars.

Another unique aspect of Chanderi is that it is a major centre for Jains – the Chanderi Parwar Jain community carries much influence in the town. The



Chanderi Saree



Jain Bhattarakas of Mula Sangh, Balatkara Gana had a center at Chanderi that flourished for several centuries. Some of the key Jain temples are the Shri Choubesee Bara Mandir, Shri Khandargiri Jain temple, Shri

Thobonji Jain temple and Shri Chandraprabha Digambar Jain temple.

Despite its many monuments, rich textiles and temples, Chanderi remains a hidden gem waiting to be discovered by the tourists. 📌



Story by ANIL MULCHANDANI Pics by DINESH SHUKLA

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