

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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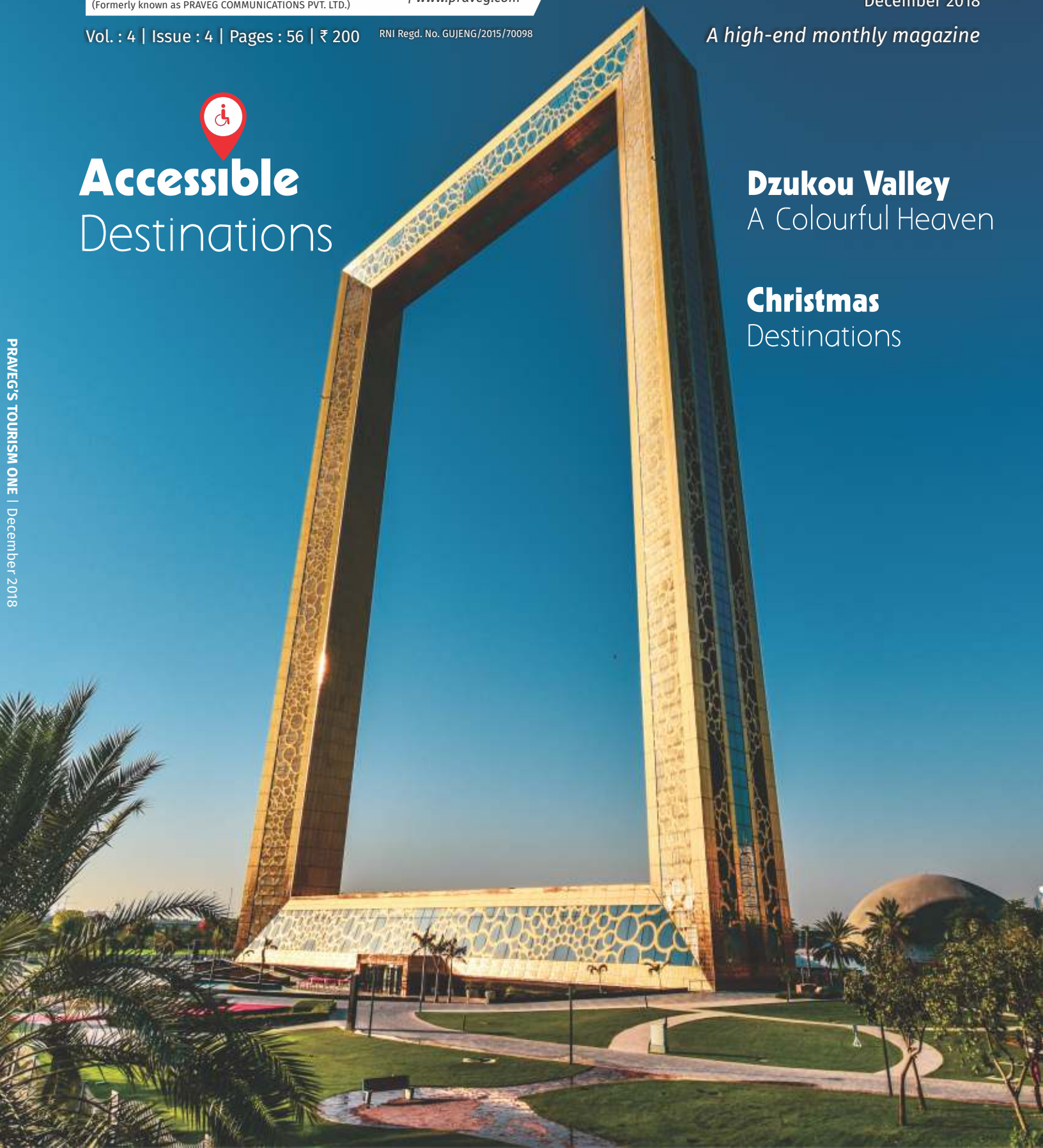
A high-end monthly magazine



Accessible Destinations

Dzukou Valley
A Colourful Heaven

Christmas
Destinations





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SANTA without a CLAUS

Christmas is beautiful when celebrated at home. But guess what is more exciting? Maybe an outing with family to faraway land, meeting new people and exploring their ways of celebrating the Festival. If this interests you, we present a list of alluring destinations from across the world to say 'hello' to Santa Claus in a new set-up.

3rd December is celebrated as the International Day of People with Disability. If you're looking for destinations that are tailor-made for your requirements, we've got you covered. With our extensive list of places and significant details, just pick a destination of your choice, pack your bags and say goodbye to 2018 in style!

And if the plan is to Eat-Sleep-Party-Repeat, jump to our article "Magnetic Fields Festival" and experience what paradise would look like for a party lover. Appreciate the splendour and magnificence of history and architecture while your mind sways to the tunes of fresh Indian sounds and underground International stars.

Read on!

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

December 2018

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CHRISTMAS DESTINATIONS

EXPERIENCE THE AURA OF DEVOTION AT BETHLEHEM

Gospels of Matthew and Luke identify Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly for almost 2000 years, Christians from around the world have made the Christmas pilgrimage to Bethlehem. At night, join one of the processions that pass through the plaza called Manger Square to reach the Church of the Nativity built in the 4th century by Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great over a grotto or cave called the Holy Crypt, where Jesus is believed to have been born. A 6th-century basilica was commissioned here by Emperor Justinian, this was again built over by the Crusaders in the 12th century. Celebrate Christmas at the square and attend a Roman Catholic mass at St. Catherine's Church, built by the Franciscans over an earlier church in 1881, facing the square. Visit the Milk Grotto where the Holy Family took refuge on their Flight to Egypt after Herod ordered the murder of all infant boys

in order to end the life of Jesus. According to the legend, a drop of Mary's blood fell on the floor of the cave and whitened the stone. Many people believe that a visit here aids fertility, and so the tiny five-meter by 10-meter grotto is a pilgrimage destination for women who have trouble conceiving. St. Jerome spent thirty years creating the Latin version of the Bible called Vulgate in a cave here.

In the morning, head for Shepherds' Fields, which has fine views of the surrounding countryside. There are some interesting churches near this field where the shepherds watched their

flocks by night. Protestants hold their services here. Later visit the Crib of the Nativity Theatre and Museum to see 31 3D models depicting the significant stages of the life of Jesus, and catch an animated show in the theater. Then relax at one of the cafes of Manger's Square and shop for souvenirs. Embroidery and Mother of Pearl Carving are must-buys in Bethlehem. Christmas is the time to look for traditional roast lamb, sweets made with nougat and sesame seeds, roasted chestnuts, a hot, sweet drink of rosewater, and nuts and semolina pancakes stuffed with nuts and cheese.





TAKE YOUR KIDS TO VISIT SANTA CLAUS IN FINLAND

The Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland is a top Christmas Destination. Here you can take your children to cross the Arctic Circle, which runs through Santa Claus Village, located eight kilometers north of the city centre, where the line is marked, and you can even get a certificate confirming you have been there!

Santa Park is Santa's own home cavern located underground at the Arctic Circle. The jolly and cheerful guides dressed as elves welcome you at this unique theme park in the Santa Claus Village. Walk along an underground tunnel to explore the Ice Gallery, where the temperature stays in minus degrees even during the summers. Drive the Fairytale Train as many times as you want, visit Santa in

his office, study the most essential lessons of being an Elf in the Elf School and decorate gingerbread cookies. The elves of Santa Park present their magical show at the main stage. Children can enroll in Elf School, take a calligraphy class and compose their Christmas wish lists with a traditional quill.

While in Rovaniemi, take kids to Ranua Wildlife Park, home to baby polar

bears, wolverines and moose and the Arktikum, which is a science center where the mystery of the northern lights is revealed.

You can even stay at the Arctic Snow Hotel, made entirely of snow and ice, but equipped with saunas and hot tubs in which to thaw.

Rovaniemi is an enjoyable and educational experience for the family during Christmas holidays.



GET SET TO ROCK AT NEW YORK'S ROCKEFELLER CENTRE

The beautifully illuminated Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center have been standing as a Christmas holiday beacon since 1931. In midtown Manhattan, the core of New York, the Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall and Saint Patrick's Cathedral offer a Christmas extravaganza like few places in the world. After gazing at the iconic Christmas tree, which is donated for lumber after Christmas, visit The Rink that is also about 80 years old. If you skate, try your hands at ice-skating on this superb rink. Across the street, watch the Christmas Spectacular starring the Rockettes. Don't miss George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, one of the most theatrical and staged ballets. As the clock chimes midnight, a brave young girl intervenes in a battle between toy soldiers and mischievous mice, and a blizzard of ballerinas reveals a wonderful world of confection.

There are some other Christmas time shows too at theatres like the Philharmonic. Continue to Columbus Circle where the holiday market hosts vendors selling Christmassy products, clothes, gifts, snacks and drink. As you go around the town, you can see department stores and glamorous designer stores on Fifth Avenue that put up stunningly beautiful window displays. Winter Village at Bryant Park is another place to shop for Christmas goodies.

Enjoy drinking apple cider, hot chocolate or hot buttered rum, and indulge in candy canes, chocolate fudge, eggnog, roast turkey, a creamy oyster stew, Persimmon pudding, pumpkin, sweet potato or pecan pie, yam and marshmallow casserole and other goodies. You can buy Christmas cookies, fruit cake and gingerbread houses.





EXPERIENCE AN ARTSY CHRISTMAS AT THE VATICAN CITY

Christmas is celebrated with great fervor at the Vatican City, which abounds in religious and cultural sites such as St. Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican museums. Visit St. Peter's Basilica, whose successive architects include Bramante, Michelangelo, Giacomo della Porta, Maderno and Bernini, the Sistine Chapel which is famous for its frescos by Perugino, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Botticelli as well as the ceiling and Last Judgment by Michelangelo. Artists who decorated the interiors of the Vatican include Raphael and Fra Angelico. The Vatican Museums have collections rich in historical, scientific and cultural importance.

On Christmas Eve, visit Saint Peter's Square to see the decorated Vatican Christmas Tree and the unveiling of a life-size nativity scene. Celebrate the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass at Saint Peter's and the Church of Santa Maria Aracoeli on Capitoline Hill, which are particularly spectacular. There are many superb shows to attend in Rome.



WANDER IN THE CHRISTMAS MARKET AT NUREMBURG

square in Nuremberg's old town and in adjoining squares and streets. With about two million visitors a year, the Nürnberger Christkindlesmarkt is one of the most famous in the world. This is



is an important part of the market. Initially impersonated by an actress, the Christkind has been elected every second year among local girls between 16 and 19 years of age since 1969. A large number of competitors enter via the Internet. Finally, a jury chooses the next Christkind out of several finalists who have to be at least 1,60m tall and free from giddiness as the Christkind has to make her speech from the church balcony, secured with a rope, possibly in inclement winter weather.

ENJOY THE LIGHTS OF TOKYO

Christmas in Tokyo is about illuminations - the lighting up of different areas of the city. Stroll along Omotesando and Marunouchi, and take in the shows at Tokyo Midtown (the illumination show around Midtown's lawn and there is a vibrant market here as well) and Canyon D'Azur in Shiodome. Some of the best lights are at Roppongi Hills, where the Christmas Market can get millions of people wandering around to look at the decorations and handmade ornaments, enjoy the carols and tucking into German style food.



Nuremberg in Germany is well-known for its museums, performing arts and heritage. This is where one of the world's largest Christmas markets, Christkindlesmarkt takes place during Advent in the Hauptmarkt, the central

where you can buy Christmas goodies and handmade ornaments. The Nuremberg Christkind or Christ Child, a young woman dressed in white and gold with curly blond hair, a tall golden crown and angel-wing-like long golden sleeves,

GET FESTIVE IN PUERTO RICO

What is a celebration without food and music, and Puerto Rico serves up a sunny Christmas with a salsa beat and spit-roasted pig. Old San Juan is amazingly beautiful at this time of year with many colored lights and decorations. You can attend mass at one of the oldest churches in this part of the world. Don't miss traditional Christmas food at one of the many fine restaurants.



SHOP FOR BRITISH ARTISAN GIFTS AT BATH

UK's World Heritage City, Bath has a Christmas Market set between the imposing Bath Abbey and the venerable Roman Baths. With over 160 twinkling chalets spread out across Bath's picturesque Georgian streets, it's the perfect place to catch the Christmas spirit. From unique homeware to personalised presents, Christmas decorations, handcrafted jewellery and more, this is where you can buy distinctively British handmade crafts in a quaint setting. Hungry after the long walks? You will find a variety of food - grab a delicious burger or hog roast, caramelized nuts and aromatic mulled wine.



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN OLD QUEBEC

Old Quebec is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Canada. Come Christmas, Old Quebec is turned into a picturesque Christmas village where the snow, lights and European architecture create an enchanting setting. Sausage and roast chestnut lovers can browse the wares at the German Christmas market. The more religiously inclined can wander an exposition of nativity scenes from around the world. Go down to Petit-Champlain district, a picture-perfect neighbourhood resembling a quaint riverside village in France. Hear artists from Québec and abroad sing all the best classic holiday songs.



EXPERIENCE THE WINTER WONDERLAND SCENERY OF ICELAND

Rows of small, beautiful huts make up the Yule Town Christmas market on Ingolfstorg square in downtown Reykjavík. Here, visitors can pick up colorful Christmas gifts, decorations and treats. Icelanders do not celebrate Santa Claus as much as they do the thirteen Yule Lads, scruffy pranksters of troll origin who live in a cave in the mountains and only come down around Christmas. You might see them projected on the walls of buildings in the city centre. These boys are not all well-behaved and they have strange names like Skyr Gobbler, Sausage Swiper, Door Slammer and Window Peeper, to name a few. Kids put a shoe in their window at home hoping for gifts from the Yule lads during the night. If children have behaved well, they'll wake up to find a little gift in their shoe but if they've been naughty, all they'll find is an old potato.

In and around the city, various events and small concerts are held. Visit the Árbær Open Air Museum before Christmas. This museum offers us all a glimpse at the Icelandic Christmas celebrations.



ENJOY A MEXICAN FEAST AT SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

Noche Buena is Christmas Eve in San Miguel de Allende, which is the largest day of celebration. This is when the life-size nativity will be set up in the main garden. There is a midnight mass and a feast of bacalao (salt cod). Many hotels and restaurants have prefix menus, some including traditional dinner or sumptuous Mexican cuisine.



EXPERIENCE A MUSICAL CHRISTMAS AT SALZBURG

In 2018, the 200th anniversary of the composition of Stille Nacht, known to the English-speaking world as Silent Night, the Salzburg Advent Festival at the Großes Festspielhaus hearkens back to the genesis of this famous carol. The small village of Oberndorf was cut off from its administration in the city of Laufen by the new border. The impoverished Salzach River watermen from "Austrian Laufen", however, refused to be discouraged. With their traditional watermen's troupe, they first performed a play for advent. They had no idea that after their performance for Holy Night, a

very special carol would be heard for the first time. The story of "Silent Night, Holy Night", the World's most popular Christmas Carol, is presented in the Museum and Chapel of Silent Night in the community of Oberndorf. On the end of the night vigil on Christmas Eve, most communities in Salzburg turn down the light to only candle light in the churches, silence the organ and end the service by singing "Silent Night" in its original German version: "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht". You could go to plays and concerts, some of them with children singing traditional songs in different dialects, exhibitions of Nativity Scenes with the Holy Family carved in wood or you could check out the events typical for the region.



GAZE AT VISUAL CHRISTMAS TREATS AT STRASBOURG

Christmas markets in Strasbourg are world famous, and the gigantic Christmas tree in the town square is part of the world. Themed Christmas villages and markets morph the city into a visual and gastronomic wonderland. 10 Christmas markets offer hundreds of stalls to choose from. Don't miss Christkindelsmärik at Place Broglie, which dates back to 1570 making it one of the oldest Christmas Markets in Europe.



VISIT THE VELVET CAVE OF VALKENBURG

Valkenburg's Velvet Cave is transformed into a Christmas Market and the residence of Santa, where visitors can see his room of presents and reindeer sleigh. While admiring the decorations and shopping for Christmas gifts and traditional crafts, you can see the artistic wonders like the sculptures, an 18th-century chapel and Roman period mural drawings.

ENJOY CHRISTMAS IN THE GARDENS OF CAPE TOWN

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens is one of South Africa's most beautiful gardens. Here you can catch an outdoor screening or carols by musicians, while families picnic on the lawns. The V&A Waterfront Amphitheatre usually hosts a choir around Christmas time too, and you could take the kids to Santa's Village at the V&A Waterfront's Victoria Wharf.



WALK TO SEE THE LIGHTS OF SYDNEY

They say you haven't seen Christmas lights until you see Sydney's spectacular light installations. Sydney comes alive for Christmas with choirs of carolers, family-friendly concerts, and glimpses of Saint Nick as he zooms through the city. Roaming entertainers, stage shows, markets and a banquet of food stalls are all on offer. On King St, you'll find carts, cafes and food trucks serving food under a canopy of 94,000 twinkling lights. Take a walk on George Street to view decked out department store windows and Christmas tree, and check out tens of thousands twinkling LEDs at the incredible Pitt Street Mall Boulevard of Light.



ENJOY FOOD AND THE MARKET AT COLOGNE

Enjoy serene sight of the lights and the people of the Cologne Cathedral Christmas market from the observation deck of KölnTriangle, the tower directly opposite the Cathedral on the Rhine. Regional specialities and organically certified food can be enjoyed, and you can shop for woodcarvings, glass balls, ceramics, accessories, children's toys and soaps.





SEE THE LARGE DISPLAY OF NATIVITY SCENES AT RIO

The Festival of Nativity at Rio is considered as perhaps the largest open exhibition of art full size cribs in the world, with unique works produced by Brazilian artists. The cribs can have at least six independent pieces, can be about six feet tall, and they are displayed at public places open at different points in the city of Rio de Janeiro. These are also cultural and classical music, theatrical and folkloric performances to be enjoyed, food courts, and "Santa's Village," aimed at children.

Ride a bike along the Rodrigo Freitas Lagoon to enjoy views of one of the world's largest floating Christmas trees from every angle.

SHOP ALONG SINGAPORE'S ORCHARD ROAD

As soon as you arrive at Singapore's Changi Airport, you get into the Christmas spirit. There are Christmas decorations at the airport itself. Head to enjoy Christmas on Orchard Road, which transforms into a wonderland filled with bright lights, enchanting decorations, irresistible festive buys and endless bustle from holiday makers. 2018's theme for the street light-up taps into the magic of Disney, with popular characters coming to life in a spectacle of wonder and imagination celebrating the Christmas festive light-up along Orchard Road. At the Civic Plaza, the Christmas Village is a place for amusements. Don't miss taking your little ones for the games. Spend the evening at the Christmas Countdown Party at Orchard Road.



GO BACK IN TIME FOR A VICTORIAN THEME CHRISTMAS IN LONDON

Experience Christmas as it would have been in Victorian times with a host of 19th-century decorations and activities to enjoy at Kensington Palace in London. Enjoy seasonal music on traditional instruments and learn about

the traditional Christmas traditions of UK. Also soak up the festive atmosphere at Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland, see the Warner Bros. Studio decked out for Christmas with *Hogwarts in the Snow*, view beautifully illuminated silk installations at the Magical Lantern Festival at Chiswick House, watch classic Christmas films at Cinema in the Snow and Snow Kingdom, wander along an illuminated trail through beautiful botanical gardens at Kew, and visit the Enchanted Woodland at Syon Park. 📍





Accessible Destinations

International Day of People with Disability has been promoted by the United Nations since 1992. This month, we look at some destinations that are accessible for those with vision, hearing or mobility impairment.

ENJOY THE BEACH AT PLAYA DE CARMEN

Mexico's Riviera Maya is famous for its sunny white sand beaches, turquoise waters, all-inclusive resorts and fine dining restaurants.

Along this glorious stretch of coastline, Playa del Carmen takes pride in its disabled friendly beach that offers shade, showers, drinking water, assistance and special amphibious apparatus for those who require additional help to enjoy the warm tropical water of the Caribbean sea. You can even snorkel to see the brilliantly coloured coral reefs and spot green sea turtles. Whether you are wheel-chair-bound, use crutches or canes, or

have difficulty walking through the sand, the broad walk helps you reach the water. A wide shower area is designed to give extra room to maneuver a wheelchair or space for attendants if needed. Beachside facilities include amphibious sun loungers and wheelchairs. The orthopedic beach walker is a wonderful assist for taking a walk on the sands while gazing at the blue seas and people watching.

Make base here to visit Mayan archaeological sites, Chichén Itzá and Tulum, where you can explore ancient ruins seated in a wheelchair.



EXPLORE THE RICH HERITAGE OF BARCELONA

Barcelona has a rich cultural heritage and is particularly renowned for the architectural works of Antoni Gaudí and Lluís Domènech i Montaner, which have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This city has made an enormous effort to become an accessible city for anyone with functional diversity like visitors with reduced mobility or communication with physically accessible access points, and facilities that take care of auditory and visual communication barriers. You can choose from museums adapted for the blind and partially sighted, hotels without barriers, accessible beaches and sign-language tours, travel by wheelchair-accessible buses. Wheelchair users are allowed to jump to the front of the queue for attractions such as the breathtaking Sagrada Família. You can also enjoy some of the accessible beaches.



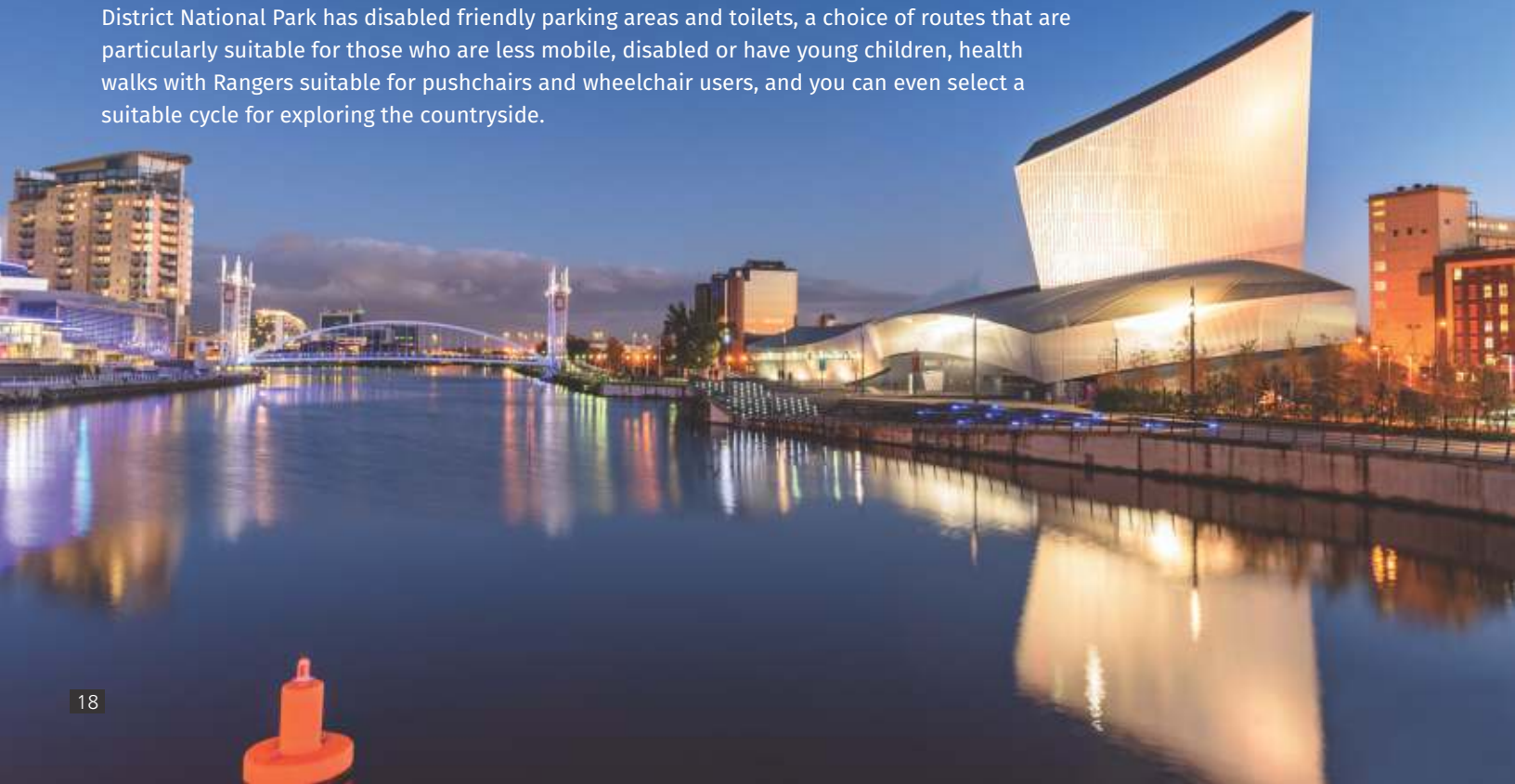
GO SCUBA DIVING IN SICILY

Well known for its botanical garden, Europe's largest active volcano, Mt Etna, mountainous sceneries, blue seas, olive oil and great food, Sicily has set records for the first paraplegic to dive to 59m and the first blind woman to dive to 41m! The PADI certified course for scuba diving in Sicily is approved by the Handicapped Scuba Association. If you want to combine your diving adventure with culture, visit the Tactile Museum in Catania with a bar in the dark, a sensory garden, a showroom and an internet cafe in the dark that allows visually challenged people to learn and acquire directly all new instruments and aids, playback designs printed in the lyrics, models of monuments, natural formations, works of arts, plans of cities and towns, schools and neighborhoods that can be examined by hand from Ursino castle of Catania to the temples of Agrigento, Milo's Venus and Michelangelo's David and even volcanic Mount Etna.



VISIT THE MUSEUMS AND PARKS OF MANCHESTER

Although it was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, much of central Manchester was rebuilt in the late 1990s and takes into account people with mobility impairments. Accessible public transport takes you to the Museum of Science and Industry. For nature lovers, the Peak District National Park has disabled friendly parking areas and toilets, a choice of routes that are particularly suitable for those who are less mobile, disabled or have young children, health walks with Rangers suitable for pushchairs and wheelchair users, and you can even select a suitable cycle for exploring the countryside.



GET OUTDOORS IN MELBOURNE

With its highly accessible public transport system and compact city centre, Melbourne has one of the world's best zoos and many parks open to visitors with challenges. The Werribee Open Range Zoo has seating for disabled travellers near the driver for their 45-minute safari tour that shows wildlife in their natural habitat. The wheel-chair borne can roll through the Eureka Skydeck in Melbourne, which is 88-storey high, offering patrons the best view of the city. Often considered the sports and culture capital of Australia, Melbourne is great for sports enthusiasts who have access issues – the Disabled Surfers Association of Australia makes it possible for the disabled to try out surfing, you can get a ride a hot air balloon as the baskets have a particular door that allows wheel chairs and the harness keeps your chair in place as you go drifting above Melbourne. Many sports facilities have been created that are universally accessible.



SEE THE SPECTACULAR SIGHTS OF LJUBLJANA

Ljubljana, the pedestrian-friendly capital of Slovenia is worth visiting even if you are wheelchair bound. Accessible electric vehicles and bus network with audio and video stop announcements, complemented by Braille bus stop signs and a network of city centre tactile paths make it very easy to get around in. Take the wheelchair friendly a funicular or train to the 16th-century Ljubljana Castle, which has a tactile model of the castle in the courtyard with Braille descriptions.



EXPLORE PARKS IN SINGAPORE

Stepless access to most buildings and no shortage of kerb-cuts are just some of the reasons why Singapore is one of Asia's most accessible cities. Mass rail transit (MRT) and buses have features for the visually as well as the motor impaired, and can be used to visit Singapore Zoo, Sentosa Cove and the Gardens on the Bay.



SPEND TIME AT SAN DIEGO

San Diego is justly famous for its Spanish and Mexican heritage, its enormous zoo and safari park, Balboa Park and beaches. You can get around with the fully accessible trolley or tram system, explore the wheelchair friendly historic Gaslamp Quarter, go around the massive Balboa Park and wind down at beachfront promenade with beach wheelchairs (a motorized one with caterpillar tracks at Mission Beach is well-known), and gaze out at the Pacific.





GO MALL HOPPING IN DUBAI

Fly into Dubai International Airport and you are sure to be impressed by the special services to wheelchair users and the accessible restrooms. From the airport, the modern metro system which is also barrier-free to people with reduced mobility leads to the city. You can hire one of the accessible taxis managed by the Dubai Taxi Corporation to get around, and select a hotel that has disabled-friendly rooms.

Dubai is known for its malls with their range of shops, entertainment options, polished floors, escalators, elevators and moving walkways. The Dubai Mall has wheelchairs provided at guest service desks, seating areas at regular intervals and other features. Explore the shops and the musical dancing fountains. Ibn Battuta Mall, often called the world's largest theme mall because it is designed to showcase the travels of 14th-century Arab explorer Ibn Battuta, has wheelchairs and you could even take the customer train.

VIENNA

Vienna is famous for its grand palaces, fabulous museums and musical heritage. Though a historical city, much of it is flat and compact with cobble stones removed from paths. Getting around is relatively easy with elevators to the metro and plenty of low-floor trams. Most museums, places of interest, the magnificent Schloss Schönbrunn, cafes and shops are fully wheel chair accessible. 10



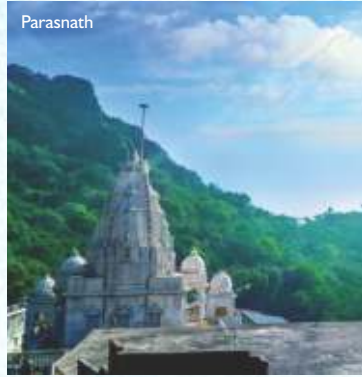


Jharkhand Tourism

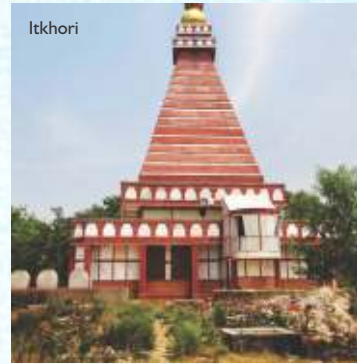
Nature's hidden jewel



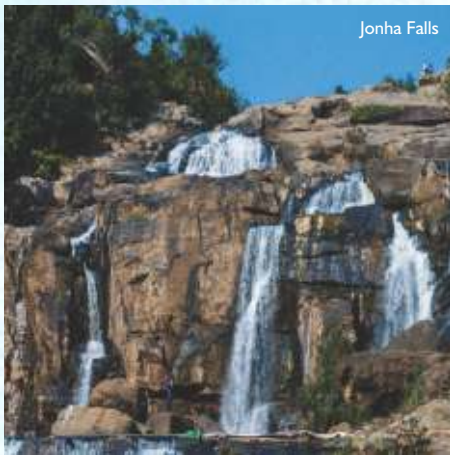
Belta National Park



Parasnath



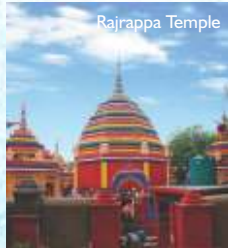
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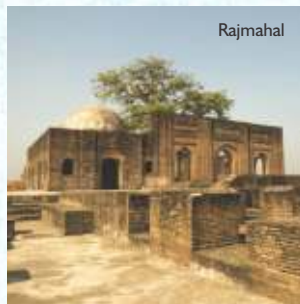
Jonha Falls



Mauli Temples



Rajrappa Temple



Rajmahal



Patratu Valley



Chandil Dam



Netarhat



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Sk Shahbaj Ahmed



COMMENT & WIN



Subha Sarkar

BUXA TIGER RESERVE, West Bengal



Cooch Behar, West Bengal

Souvik Basu



Tribal trail to Chhota Udepur

Chota Udepur, one of the newest districts of Gujarat, is among the most picturesque areas of the state. The headquarters, Chhota Udepur, was once the seat of the Khichi Chauhan Rajputs who ruled a princely state around 2,305 sq.km. in area containing about 546 villages. The Khichi Chauhan Rajputs held Pavagadh fort above the town of Champaner before it was conquered from the ruler, Patai Raval, by the Sultans of Gujarat. The descendants of Patai Raval moved their capital a few times before they founded the Princely State of Chhota Udepur. Chhota Udepur saw its golden period under Maharaja Fatehsinhji Chauhan who modernised the town with civic facilities, educational

institutions and healthcare centres in the late-19th and early-20th century. Many majestic buildings stand testimony to the rule of Maharaja Fatehsinhji Chauhan and his son Natvar Sinhji Chauhan.

Chhota Udepur itself is picturesque with a lake, a bustling bazaar, palaces, temples and old public buildings. It makes an excellent base to explore the

tribal areas. For an insight into life among the tribal groups, visit the Chhota Udepur Museum. This museum has dioramas with three-dimensional full-size models of tribal villages showing tribes like the Rathwa, Bhil, Nayak, and Tadvi in traditional attire. Look around the galleries to see the exhibitions of weapons, fishing traps, costumes, ornaments, idols, ritual





objects, utensils, agricultural implements and tools of the tribal groups. The museum has about 861 exhibits focused on tribal culture. You can also see the traditionally dressed tribal people unloading or selling their produce daily at the market - best during the Saturday Haat when tribal people from various villages come to buy and sell their products.

From Chhota Udepur, it is possible to visit numerous tribal hamlets in the surrounding hills, especially those of the Rathwas. The name of the tribe has been derived from the term "rathbistar", which means the forest and hilly areas. These tribes live in simple houses with thatch or tiled roofs with the interiors decorated with colourful paintings called Pithoras. Today, these tribal groups primarily work as peasant farmers, field labourers and village watchmen. With a growth in population, most of their land holdings are small and generally non-productive. The people are experts in handling bows and arrows. For years, the bow has been a characteristic weapon of the tribe; you can see bows and arrows, swords or knives for sale in the markets.

Each village is led by a head man who deals with disputes. Respect among family members is strong, and there is a great sense of connection between the living and the dead. The villages are rather widely scattered and most of them are located in fields of millet, maize, wheat and barley, amid palm trees that are tapped for toddy. Most of the houses are made from wood, straw and mud, set on the slopes of a hill. The roofs are made of clay tiles, straw and leaves, timber, thatched together as intricately as a beehive. Besides the Hindu pantheon, ancestor worship, animistic rituals and a belief in spirits and the supernatural are not unknown. You can see shrines of terra-cotta horses and other animistic figurines where sacrifices are offered under huge banyan trees full of fruit bats.



The men wear langoti (loin cloth), kachuta and the phenta (headgear), while the women wear brightly colored ghagra skirts and choli bloused, with attractive jewellery like a silver armband. Tattoos are not uncommon. Women are also active in agriculture and looking after livestock. Woodcarving, especially

sculpting wooden idols is an occupation of some of the tribal women.

A unique feature of a Rathwa village is the pithora painting or pithoro on interior walls of houses. The pithoro is not art simply for the sake of beautification but tied to their ritualistic lifestyle and beliefs with the execution of wall

paintings done to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to the families, to rid houses of any illnesses or grievances that may have befallen the family. When a person makes a wish, five dots called 'tipna' are marked on the wall and if the problem is solved to satisfaction, the pithoro painting ritual begins.



The pithoro painting is executed by the Lakahara, a group revered as witch doctors and trained by the community as pithoro artists with only the male members allowed to learn the art (we are told that when not painting the pithoro, the lakaharas go out to work in the fields with the other members of the



tribe), with the Badva officiating as the head priest for the rituals. The presence of Pithora Baba is considered as a solution to all the problems and the legends and events related to this revered tribal lord dominate the pithoro. One of the women showed us the interiors of her house with the central wall between the living area and the kitchen densely painted, and a few large paintings on the side walls. The process begins with treating the walls with cow dung and white chalk powder, usually brought by unmarried girls. Powders, earth and vegetable colours are mixed with milk and mahuda flower liquor to prepare the dye for the pithoro in colours like yellow, indigo, orange, green, vermilion, red and silver. The brushes are prepared from bamboo,

neem and other twigs that are frayed by chewing, beating and other methods. The painting begins after the offerings are made to the lord. The painting, the Rathwa lady tells us, begins from the left and fills the wall. The badvo chanting the prayers and tales goes into a trance while the pithoros are being painted.

While the marriage of Pithora Baba and Pithori with processions of vibrant dancing people and animals dominates most pithoros, they also show life among the Rathwas like musicians, dancers, protecting, feasting, men climbing palm trees, milking of cows, livestock at pasture, women churning butter, bullock carts ploughing a field. Animistic figures of bulls, horses, birds and tigers are part of each pithoro and live sacrifices are offered near the tiger

pictures. The elephants with Raja Bhoj are another distinctive feature of many pithoras. The God Pithora's wedding in the painting in this village was below a wavy line in the centre of the wall with the tipna of five orange dots next to it. To the right of the divine wedding are Khatri horses, the horses of their ancestors, in a vertical row, and white horses are for ghosts that have to be satiated with offerings, a part of ancestral worship traditions.

The pithoro painting ceremony, which could follow any problem - drought, crop failure, illness of children, loss of cattle - and invokes the blessings of God Pithora, we are told is an expensive one for the tribal groups. The preparations can start a fortnight ahead with invitations. The painting can be

followed by the ceremonies, which could include carving sculptures in honour of the deities. Song, dance, drinking and feasting are part of the ritual.

A short distance from Chhota Udepur, Tejgadh is opted for its Bhasa Research Centre (BRC) with the Bhasa Tribal Academy - a social service organization aiming for the development of local tribals. It also operates a museum showcasing tribal crafts and a library. In this area, there are prehistoric rock and cave paintings. The caves in the hills are inhabited by leopard.

For those interested in wildlife, Kevdi is a good habitat located in the Chhota Udepur forest division, located along a river. The star attraction of the area is the giant brown flying squirrel, which is often seen at dusk gliding between trees. The forests are also known for sloth bear, panther, hyena and antelope.

From Tejgadh or Kevdi, you can travel through Pavi Jetpur taluka and visit Bodeli, which is scenically situated on the river bank of the Orsang. From here, continue to Sankheda, famous for its lacquered furniture. Historical references from the writings of George Rocques and James Forbes suggest that this art has thrived here from medieval times, using teakwood from Valsad. The furniture is coated with the treated, dyed and dried sap of the screw-pine tree called kewda or similar trees, and painted with vegetable dyes. Traditional furniture like bajot stools, swings called jhoola or ichka, and low tables are made, but also more contemporary three piece settees, headboards, beds, garden swings, dressing tables, rocking chairs, tables, screens and divan are popular. Besides furniture, pedestal lamps, flower vases, pen stands, toys, kitchen ware and decorative items are also made.

From Sankheda, you can drive to Vadodara calling in on the way at Wadhvana to watch water birds and Dabhoi to see its 12th century fort famed for elaborate Hira Gate.



GETTING THERE

From Vadodara Airport, it is a drive of about 102 km to Chhota Udepur.

WHERE TO STAY

Kadwal County, Nana Darbargadh, Po. Kadwal, Ta. Pavi-Jetpur, Dist. Chhota Udepur

Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI Pics by DINESH SHUKLA

Life at Loktak Lake

”

From the moment I entered Manipur to my departure time, the charms of nature and people around tempted me to extend my stay. During my backpacking trip in this beautiful state of India, I got a chance to spend a few nights on an island located in the middle of Loktak Lake. I was able to observe the life around this lake much closely.

”



Boats are the only way to commute and transport luggage around the lake area



Staying in the middle of the lake will introduce you to such amazing sights during sunset and sunrise

Classic Countryside Charm

Loktak Lake has a countryside charm. At first look, you can see a large water body with phumdis, assorted mass of vegetation, soil and organic matter, floating over it.

The only way to commute in and around Loktak Lake is by boats. Small wooden boats that can carry two or three passengers at a time are often tied together in pairs of two, when transport is bigger in number. Homestays are located around the banks of Loktak Lake, while you can also pitch your tent on one of the floating islands to be closer to the nature.

Home of the rare Sangai Deer

Sangai Deer is the state animal of Manipur and is exclusive to the marshes of Loktak Lake. Keibul Lamjao National Park is the only floating national park and one needs to explore the area in a boat. Spotting a Sangai Deer is very rare because they are shy and avoid human contact.

The population of Sangai deer once reduced to 20 due to illegal poaching and hunting. However, with conservation efforts, the number has now gone up to 260.

Unique life at Loktak Lake

The fishermen who live here often sleep at one part of the lake and wake up at another. The islands are floating and they keep changing their position. The fishermen hunt for fishes in the night taking advantage of silence. Every island has a net that goes deep inside. These nets are taken out at regular intervals but only after announcement from the community.

The residential islands are small, and pathways are made using bamboos. Most of the islands can only accommodate two to three houses so living here is a chance to enjoy utmost privacy and peace.

An early morning boat ride is a must if you wish to see how fishermen work here


How to reach Loktak Lake

Imphal is connected via air from major Indian airports. There are flights from Kolkata and Guwahati, that are extremely cheap and save a lot of time. One can also take a shared sumo or bus from Dimapur station and travel 12 hours on road to reach Imphal.

From Imphal, shared and private vehicles are available till Moirang. From Moirang, you will have to reach Sendra, which is the middle of Loktak Lake. If you are booking a homestay, then you can also contact them to arrange pickup from Moirang.

Where to stay at Loktak Lake

Loktak Lake has a number of homestays. You will find budget-friendly stays in Sendra. You can also commute and see the Lake area if you choose a guesthouse in Moirang but you'll miss the exotic evenings and mornings.

Maipakchao Homestay and Aquamarine Homestays are two of the better places to stay here. 

A fisherman waits for the community announcement to take out the net and collect his daily catch

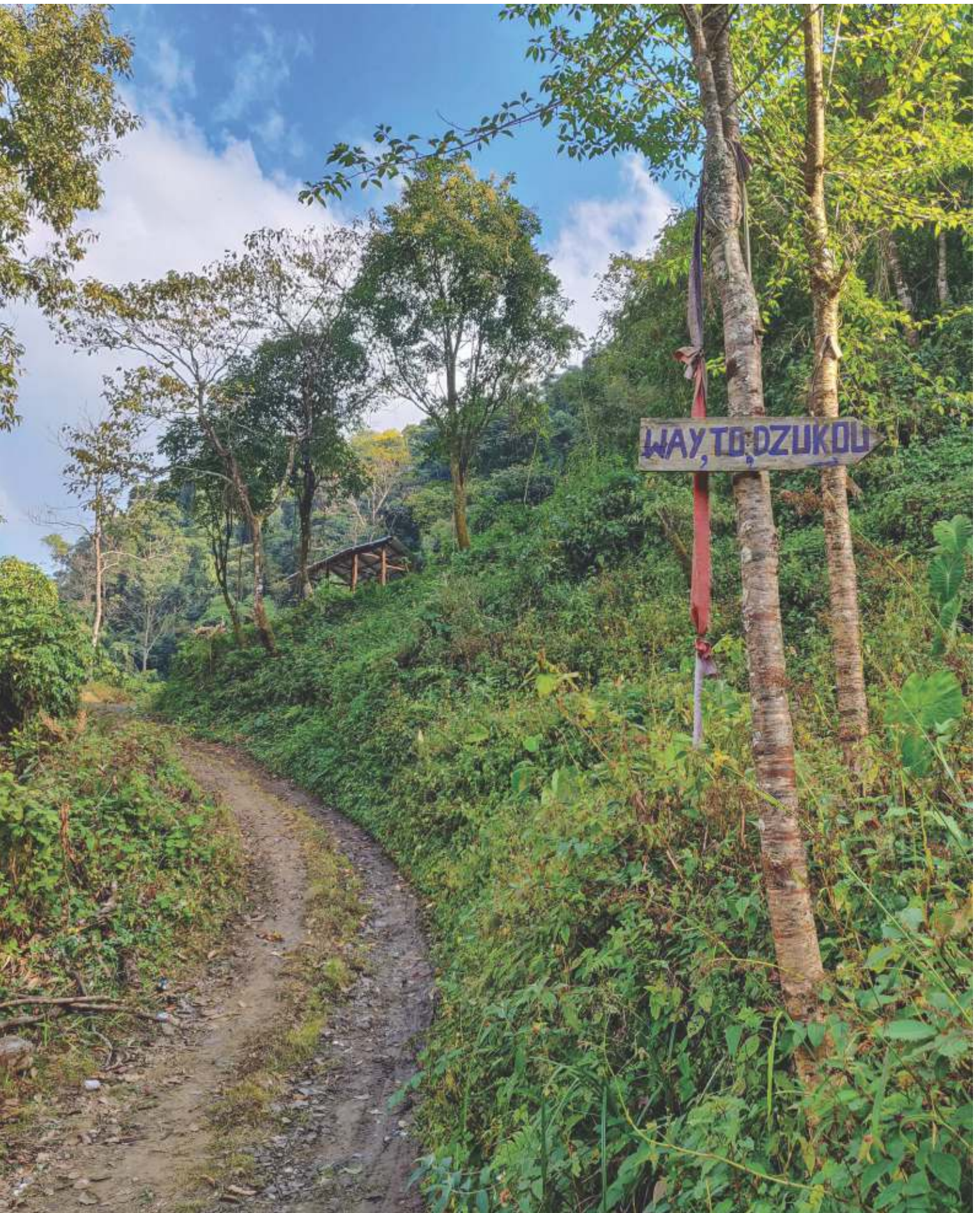
Loktak Lake is just one of the many unique places to explore in Manipur. Unlike the usual conventions, the place is very much safe to explore and enjoy natural delights at its best.

Incredible India

Dzukou *Valley*

A COLOURFUL HEAVEN

Located in the foothills of Himalayas, Nagaland is bestowed with colours of nature and a splendid amount of greenery at every corner. The Capital of Nagaland, Kohima, is a home to some of the splendid treks in Nagaland. Japfu Peak, Mount Teyozwu, Puliebadze and Tempu Peak being the nearest are always chosen by the travellers coming here. But nothing matches the charm and gorgeousness of the lush green Dzukou Valley.



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Dzukou Valley trek starts from two different villages and one needs to decide, which trail they wish to take. The one in Jakhama is hilly and involves climbing thousands of stairs. Another trail begins from Vishvema and is fairly easy. Most of the trekkers, who climb Dzukou Valley, do it from Vishvema side and then return from Jakhama side.

Dzukou Valley is doable in a day if you start early in the morning. Otherwise, you can spend your night on the top and then return after witnessing the sunrise. A couple of dormitories are present on the top of the hill where travellers can rent blankets and sleeping mats for the night. The temperature goes down between 5 and 0 degrees during the night.

Dzukou Valley is one of the most preserved trek trails of Nagaland. The amount of greenery spread across the region is simply a charm to witness. 📸

BEST TIME TO VISIT DZUKOU VALLEY

Dzukou Valley is a fairly easy trek and is open all times of the year. The month of December is when you'll find most of the trekkers going there as they come to attend Hornbill Festival. The early monsoon and post monsoon seasons are the best time to experience the greenery of the valley in the best form.

HOW TO REACH DZUKOU VALLEY

The base of Dzukou Valley, Vishwema is 18 km away from

Kohima. You can wake up early morning and take a shared taxi to the village and then start trekking further after getting your permits made.

TIP

Dzukou Valley is a preserved region and takes plastic consumption and disposal very seriously. Make sure that you don't leave your garbage on trek trails or leave burning firewood in order to avoid heavy fines by the authorities.

Words and pics by ANSHUL AKHOURY

A Place to Ponder



magnetic fields festival



eat | sleep | party | repeat



Sitting here, thinking of the right header and the right words to use so that I can do justice to what this place is all about. Although I know, no matter how hard I try I would fail to provide with the right words of the experience that I have had. It's a completely different zone altogether, something that you don't get to see a lot in this country. Something that takes you to a different place, far from cliché and normal. Because this is Magnetic fields festival!

What is THIS place?

Magnetic Fields Festival can only be experienced. Once experienced, it will leave a mark on your memories forever. The idea of partying for three straight days, the sound of it is enough to get you going. Add the never-heard-before hip-hop and psychedelic music and the people coming together from different parts of the country with their different stories. The vibe is perfect to take you to a different world, the one that comes only once a year.

You know they say, 'live in the moment' or 'Carpe Diem', this is one place to give it a meaning and truly live up to it. For three days, you have nothing to worry about in the world, your grudges, your worries, the sadness, the emotional breakdown, roll them in a paper and smoke it up. Magnetic Fields is just the answer to truly bust your stress. It will make sure you think of nothing else, at least for the time that you are there. The loud music won't let you hear anything else, the dance and party will make you too engaged to think about other things in life. To keep it short, it will escape your routine.

The party

I won't be exaggerating even by a bit if I say, the party never stops here. The music begins to play in the evening when the sun begins to set and continues till it is ready to shimmer again on our heads the next

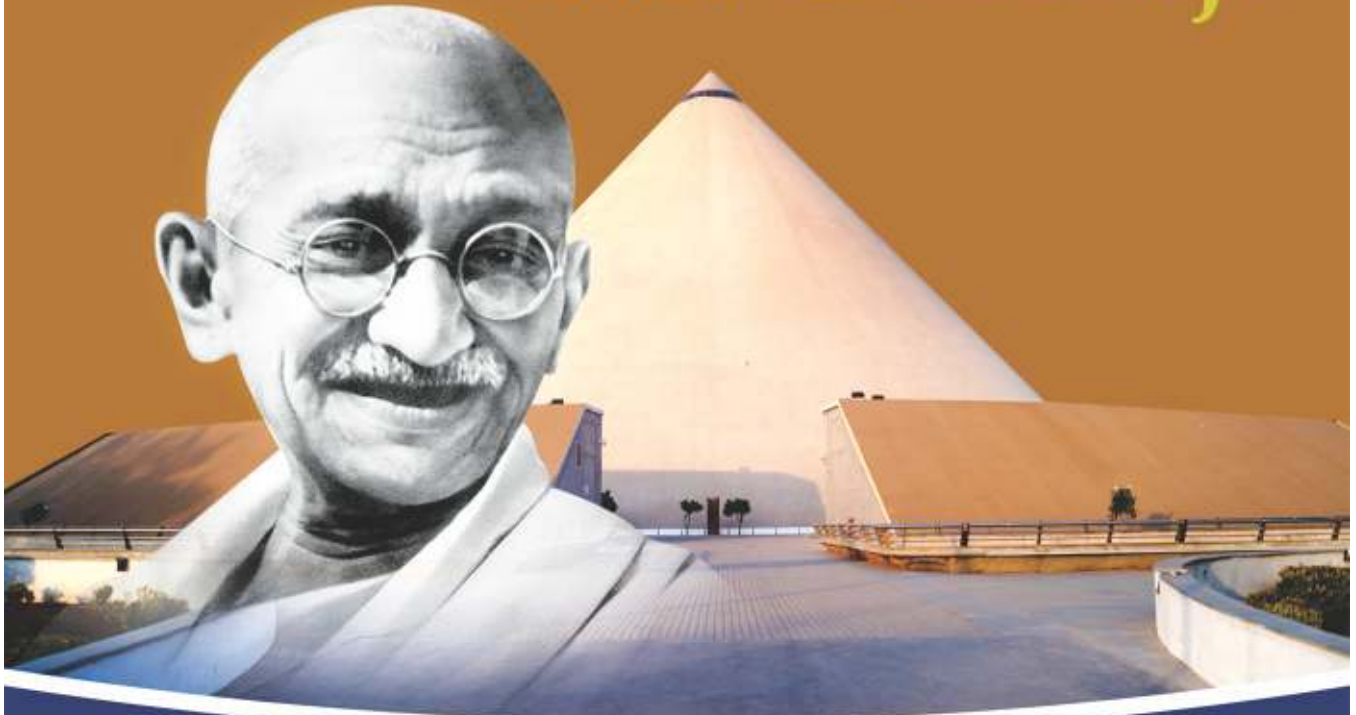
morning. There is pre-party, the main party, the after-party and some extra music thereafter to make sure you have enough of it. The stages are nicely lit; the music is just perfect for people on trips to make them feel in the right zone.

Party in the palace, crash in the camps

Magnetic Fields Festival is a 3-day extravagant music festival that takes place in Alsisar Mahal in a remote region of Alsisar in Rajasthan. The palace is magnificently built and you can't think of a creative place than this for a musical party. Alsisar Mahal that defines history, culture and architecture of the country is turned into a musical party venue for three days. The terrace of the Alsisar Mahal offers breathtaking view of the Alsisar village surrounded by the endless arid Thar desert.

Coming to the camping site, it is just a few steps away from the palace. The stay is arranged in the camps for you to party as hard as you can and then you can peacefully crash in your tent. To top it all, the bonfire makes the ambience warmer and welcoming. It not only attracts the heat but the people and their interesting stories. All great things come to one place. While the party is a place to let loose, go crazy and dance all you like, the campsite is where you meet people, make friends, make memories and stories. It is the two best experiences of life coming together, which is what makes this place so great. 📌

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Sea Safari in **SAURASHTRA**

The southern coast of the Gulf of Kutch is fast developing into a destination for nature and adventure tourism.



The Gulf of Kutch coastline stretching from Jodiya to Okha, and the coastal lands of Okhamandal region between Okha and Dwarka, comprise some of the most delightful areas for watching coastal birds and marine life.

Start your tour with a marine walk in the inter-tidal zone of the Narara Bet, an island connected by a bridge to the mainland. As you cross the bridge you arrive at the forest department centre on the island, which has a museum with stunning mirrors and informative

displays. A little further from here is the white sanded beach. From here, in the low tide, it is possible to walk in ankle deep water rich in marine life.

This island is part of the Marine National Park and Sanctuary, which covers 42 islands, most of them fringed



by mangrove forests and coral reefs that form rich habitats for marine life, bird-rich mud banks, rocky shoals and sandy beaches. The entire under-waterscape you can see when wading in the water is of sandy floors covered with a thin, clear film of water with an abundance of

marine vegetation like seaweed and algae, broken by rocky outcrops forming rock pools at places. Here you can see crabs sheltering in the rocks, brittle stars, sea cucumbers and sponges clinging to the rock bottoms, and brilliantly coloured fishes among reefs

and the rock pools. One of the most fascinating fish seen here is the puffer fish, which is named for its defense mechanism – when you approach the fish inflates rapidly, filling its elastic stomachs with water and air until it is almost spherical in shape, growing to a

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

size that could deter a predator. Though most puffers are poisonous to eat, they are a delicacy in countries like Japan and Korea where expert chefs sift out the organs containing the neurotoxins before cooking.

But, the star of marine nature reserve for most visitors is the octopus. This eight-armed marine mollusc is a master of camouflage, their specialized cells which can change the apparent colour, opacity, and reflectiveness of its skin works better than even that of the chameleons. It can also squish into unlikely crevices and squeeze through narrow slits in the rocks, which is a good defense against larger predators. If you try to approach it, the octopus will let out a jet of black ink and try to get away. Presently, you come to the coral reefs - here you can see brain corals. They are like round boulders with grooves that give it the name, star and moon corals that are stony formations with star or moon-like pores in which the polyps (animals that build the reef) dwell, and branching corals in finger-like formations. Because of the protection they offer to smaller animals, and the high nutrient turnover among the animals



and algae that dwell in the reef, the coral reef is justly called the 'rain forest of the sea'.

Spend some time here till the tide comes in. Huge flock of crab-plover, sandpiper, sanderling, stint and other birds can be seen coming in from the inter-tidal zone to the rocks and sands on the seashore. The star attraction is the crab-plover, a striking black and white wading bird, which gathers in flocks of several hundred between November and March at Narara.

One of the most exciting of the 42 islands, Pirotan is reached by a boat ride from one of the ports but requires special permission to visit. This island has a beautiful white beach and mangrove swamp forests. The roots of the mangroves form a nursery for fish and crustaceans, which are protected



from predators by the rib like formation of aerial roots. Wade in the inter-tidal zone of the island to see colourful rocks covered with sponges on different colours and lichen, beautiful coral reef formations, and an array of marine life.

From Narara, drive to Limdi Patiya and turn off the Dwarka Highway to come to Charakhla, an area known for its salt-works and shrimp-rearing ponds. Along the road to the salt pans, you can see painted storks and spoonbills feeding in the shallow waters of the narrow roadside canals and an oyster-catcher. But the greatest sight is the salt-works where thousands of flamingos and hundreds of pelicans could be seen creating an amazing splash of pink on the blue waters. The pelicans gather in a semi-circular flock pushing the fish into the centre of their crescent like formations and scooping them up in their pouch. Thousands of grebes gather at the wetlands.

From Charakhla, you can continue to Positara, which has a lovely beach. This is one of the finest places in Gujarat to see coral formations, especially soft corals.

Travel onwards to Okha, from where you can get ferries to visit Bet Dwarka, a historical island full of temples. The Dunny Point of Bet Dwarka is a nature

lover's paradise. The views are amazing, the water is safe for swimming and dolphins come fairly close to the beach. The reefs here are also excellent for marine life viewing and birdwatching. On the crossing from Bet Dwarka to Okha, you could spot dolphins and gulls.

From Okha, the road to Dwarka passes Mithapur, where the Tata's have an industrial township. Nearby villages of Bhopa Rabaris and Charans are worth visiting to see and buy their appliqué and embroidered fabrics.

A little further away are some beautiful beaches like Shivrajpur and Okha Madhi. Green sea turtles could be seen at the beaches. From here, you can enjoy scuba diving, which has been introduced by private entrepreneurs to explore the underwater world around Dwarka. 📍

GETTING THERE

Dwarka is accessible by train. Jamnagar and Porbandar are the nearest airports.

WHERE TO STAY

Toran Tourist Bungalow, Nr. Government Circuit House, Devbhoomi Dwarka
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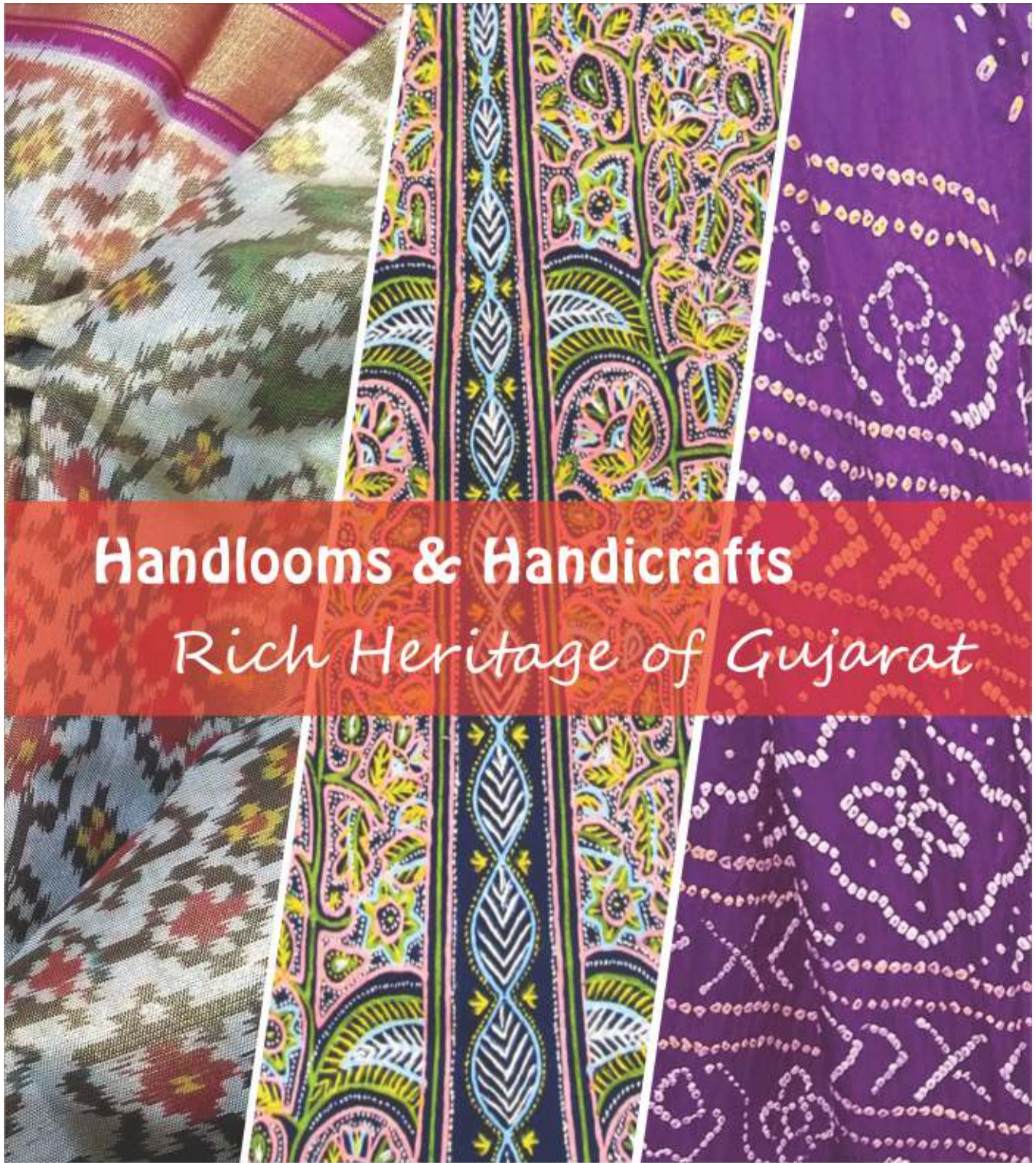
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