

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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A high-end monthly magazine

Autumnal Splendour
In The Southern
Hemisphere

Best Places for
Stargazing in India

Holidays For Women



Say yes to new

Adventures



The Fantasy Land

The moment we hear “Twinkle Twinkle Little Stars...”, it straight away transports us to our childhood and tickles imagination of the dark and infinite sky, the thousand twinkling stars and the different hues. How we wish we could see them whenever we want to and relive those amazing moments! Unfortunately, it is not possible. The domination of concrete jungle and cloud of smoke and fumes overpower those mighty gems.

But what if we say that there are some amazing places in India that can still offer you the views of stars and make you forget everything else? Oh, yes! We are talking about “Best Places for Stargazing in India That Are Way Too Unreal”. So make a plan with your loved one to experience the aroma of fresh air and splendor of open sky that are studded with a million stars.

If the warm month is holding you back, we also present “Autumnal Splendour in the Southern Hemisphere”, which will guide you on the destinations of Southern Hemisphere to enjoy the autumn from March to July.

Read on!



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

March 2019

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Share with us some enthusiastic inputs like photographs, essays or anything related to tourism.

Have some suggestions for us?

Go ahead and send us your ideas, valuable opinions or topics you would like to see more coverage on.

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The Many Colours of

SPRING

The arrival of spring is celebrated in many different ways in India.

A look at the harvest festivals in March - April...

Shigmo at Panaji

If you are fond of music and dance, Shigmo, also called Shishirotsava or Shigmotsav, is the festival for you to attend. Shigmo is a spring festival of Goa and is celebrated widely by the Konkani speaking diaspora. Festivities span a fortnight with celebrations in different villages or parts of Goa at different times. Vhadlo Shigmo is a mass festival celebrated by everyone together beginning on the full-moon day of Phalguna, continuing for five days, largely celebrated in the temples with the village deity bathed and dressed in saffron robes. Food is offered to the deity and a feast is held. Dhakto Shigmo or Small Shigmo is celebrated by farmers, which begins some five days before the full-moon day of the Indian lunar month of Phalguna and ends on the full-moon day. The villagers gather at a predetermined place and sing in devotional songs called 'naman' in chorus as collective obeisance of villagers. Jot is another form of song. Talgadi, Hanpet, Lamp Dance and Gopha

are the main dances. Villagers dressed in finery go from door to door beating drums like the 'dhol' and the 'taso', collecting donations and singing auspicious songs called 'talli' wishing the donor. They go in procession with flats, drums and flutes to the temples where they sing and dance to the beat of the drums. 'Rang Panchami' of Shigmo is similar to Holi – people throw coloured powder like the gual at each other.

For tourists, the best introduction to Shigmo is the parade organized by the government on Panjim's 18th June Road. Here you can see a cross-section of Goan people attired in their traditional dresses performing their typical dances. Artistically designed and beautifully lit up floats are highlights of the parade. The parade can also be seen at Ponda, Vasco, Margao and Mapusa. Community bathing is also a feature of Shigmo.





The Painkuni festival at Thiruvananthapuram

Painkuni in March-April is an important festival celebrated at the Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala's capital. This impressive temple is built in an intricate fusion of the indigenous Kerala style and the Tamil kovil architecture with high walls and a towering 16th-century Gopuram gatehouse. As part of Painkuni festival, massive images of Pandavas are erected at the eastern entrance of the temple. The

festival starts with kodi yettu - the hoisting of the ceremonial flag. Over the 10 days, festival rituals are offered daily at the temple. The festival culminates in the palli vetta ritual by the royal family of Travancore and the arattu procession to the Shanghumugham Beach for the ritual immersion of the idols in the sea. Arattu (Holy Bath) is a part of the rituals performed at major Kerala temples, where the priest or head takes the Deity form of the god with him and takes a bath. The royal family males take part in the Painkuni Arattu.



Panguni Uthiram at Kanchipuram

Panguni Uthiram on the Purnima or full moon of the month of Panguni, coinciding with Holi, is an important festival of Tamil Nadu. The day is intended to underline the glory of grahastha dharma - the married life of a

householder, and celebrates the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, Rama and Sita, Murugan and Deivanai. It is also associated with the day Goddess Mahalakshmi incarnated on earth from the ocean of milk (after the ocean was churned by the Gods and the demons) and hence, it is celebrated as Mahalakshmi Jayanti.

On this day, Goddess Parvati in the form of Gowri married Lord Siva in Kanchipuram and hence this day is also celebrated as the Gowri Kalyanam day.

At Kanchipuram, the 13-day Panguni Uthiram sees colourful events, rituals and processions.



Bhagoria in Malwa

Bhagoria Haat is an important harvest festival for the tribal groups like the Rathwas of the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. Some of the important locations for Bhagoria fairs are Badwani, Dhar, Alirajpur and Jhabua. Tribal people gather in large numbers at the fair grounds for shopping at the haat market, amusements and rituals. One of the special features of the fairs is match-making – you could see tribal boys running away with the girls of their choice.





Chitra Vichitra Fair at Poshina

Chitra Vichitra Fair is held about a fortnight after Holi around the Chitra Vichitra Mahadev Temple near Poshina. At Poshina's marketplace, you can get a first glimpse of tribal culture - brightly-dressed tribal girls gather here and turbaned men unload their produce. Walking into the village, you can see pottery workshops, where the famous votive terra-cottas are made. The potters, called Kumhars, make the various hollow parts of the terracotta horse on their wheels and then join them together with some parts moulded by hand and added in grooves. The horse is especially sacred to the Garasias as their local deity, Bakar Bhavsingh, is said to ride a horse in the Aravalli foothills called Bakar. Symbolic sacrifice of terracotta horses for fulfillment of wishes is common. At some sites, you can see scores of terracotta horses that have stood here for decades. After buying the terra-cotta from the potter, the horses and other animistic figures are placed in a shrine usually located under a sacred tree or on open land near a water-source, and hundreds can be seen together, some of them decades old. After worshipping, the horses are said to give away their holy powers to the spirits who are given these as offerings with requests to ward off evil spirits and give a good harvest, and they are left at the site. Sometimes, these terra-cotta horses and wall-paintings adorn tribal homes as a means of warding off evil spirits. From Poshina, it is a short drive to the Chitra Vichitra

Temple. The fair starts at night on the confluence of the rivers with the Sabarmati. This is also said to be the site, where Chitraveer and Vichitraveer repented for their sins in the Mahabharata. Ancestor worship is followed with the tribal groups from villages nearby coming together to mourn the dear departed and making offering to the flowing rivers for their ancestors.

In the mornings, you can see colourfully-dressed women hug each other warmly while mourning together. The women are typically brightly attired and glittering with chunky gold and silver ornaments. Some of the girls sport tattoos and a few have a gold-ornament on their tooth. The Chitra Vichitra Mahadev Temple is crowded with Rabari men and women, all in colourful dresses and artistic ornaments.

As the morning progresses, mourning gave way to rejoicing with the turbaned men and brightly-attired women dancing at the fairgrounds, singing and playing local instruments. In one corner of the fairground, women hold each other by the waist and dance in a circle singing together. The fairground atmosphere is enhanced by the ferris wheels and other amusements. A haat or bazaar sells freshly harvested produce, utensils and jewellery for the tribal people, local snacks, and objects like mirrors, talc powders and cosmetics. Eloping or marriage by capture prevails among the Garasias of this area and it is sometimes possible to see men running with women towards the hills.

A number of fairs occur at nearby sites in the month following Holi.





Yaosang at Imphal

Yaosang is a harvest festival celebrated in Manipur for five days in spring, starting on the full moon day of the month of Lamda (February–March). The Meitei people celebrate their indigenous rituals as well as Hindu rituals during this festival.

The best place to experience this festival is at the Shree Govindajee Temple, the largest Vaishnav temple in Manipur located next to the palace of Imphal's former rulers. Yaosang begins just after the sunset in every village with the Burning of the Straw Hut. On the second day, groups of local bands perform devotional music in the Govindagee Temple in the Imphal-East district of Manipur. Ras Lila, a dance form of Manipur, is held with great enthusiasm during Halangkar or Holi when people pour or splash water on one another and use coloured powders.

Another feature of this festival is Thabal Chongba - a dance performed in the moonlight by men and women forming a circular chain.



Lathmar Holi in Mathura

Lathmar Holi is celebrated at Barsana and Nandgaon near Mathura. The festival recounts a legend of Lord Krishna's visit to his beloved Radha's village on this day and playfully teasing her and her friends. Taking offence at this, the women of Barsana chased him away. The men from Nandgaon visit the town of Barsana every year, only to be greeted by lathis (sticks) of the women there. Males also sing provocative songs in reply to which women start hurling sticks – the men protect themselves with shields. The unlucky ones are captured by the enthusiastic women who then make the men wear female clothing and dance in public. The most important venue for this festival is the Radha Rani temple in Barsana, which is said to be the only temple in the country that is dedicated to Radha. On the second day, men from Barsana go to Nandgaon to play Holi with women.



Manjal Kuli at Cochin

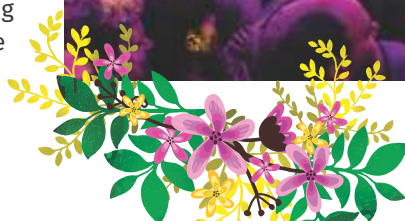
Manjul Kuli celebrations in Kerala begin at the temples on the day of the Holi. The Kudumbi community is most active in the celebrations. Persecuted by the Portuguese in Goa, a section of the Kudumbi community fled Goa. Those who reached Kerala brought the festival of Holi with them and were welcomed by the ruler of Cochin.

In some of the Kudumbi temples in Ernakulam, an arecanut tree is felled and carried to the shrine, symbolizing Durga's victory over the demons. Travel from here to Thrissur, where a figure of a crocodile is modelled out of mud. According to belief, the goddess, in the form of a crocodile, helped the Kudumbis when they faced trouble while migrating to Kerala.

On the second day of the celebrations, the Kudumbis get themselves sprayed with coloured water containing turmeric and dance to local music. The ceremony is called Manjakkuli.

Holi in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is one of the best states where a visitor can enjoy the Holi celebrations. The festival starts on the night before Holi with a Holika Dahan, where people gather, perform religious rituals in front of the bonfire and pray that their internal evil be destroyed the way Holika, the sister of the demon king Hiranyakashipu, was killed in the fire. The next morning is celebrated as Rangwali Holi or Rang Panchami when people pour and splash water on each other, smear each other with colours and throw coloured powders. 📸



HOLIDAYS FOR WOMEN

With International Women's Day falling in March, Praveg's Tourism One describes some must-visit places for women in this month.

Homestay holiday in *Sikkim*

Well-known for its lofty mountain peaks, alpine lakes, rich flora and organic agriculture, Sikkim offers the opportunity to stay in homestays and farmstays.

One of the best known for these is Yangsum Farm near the village of Rinchingpong. The drive from Bagdogra Airport to Rinchingpong goes through tea plantations and forests before

ascending to cooler climes, where you can see the beautiful foliage of pine, Himalayan alder, chestnut, magnolia, rhododendrons, cherry trees on the slopes. The drive to the farm goes past a couple of waterfalls. The farm is managed by Pema and her brother and covers 44 acres of cardamom, ginger, orange, peach and vegetables. The interiors are appointed with colourful Sikkimese furniture and canopies, and the rooms are adorned with wooden floors, attractive wooden beds, carved tables and cupboards, paintings on the walls and sit-outs facing the hills. The housekeeping is especially noteworthy. There is also a Buddhist altar good for meditation. Make base here to visit the historical Pemayangste Monastery,

Pelling town and other sights of West Sikkim.

Wake up to bird song and walk around the property - the views of Kanchenjunga are breathtaking.

From here, travel to Gangtok - the capital of Sikkim, where you can stay at Hidden Forest Retreat in a plant nursery. The cottages are high quality and very well-maintained. Stroll around the grounds to see the flowers, vegetables, fruits and livestock. From here, visit the many Buddhist sites, cottage industries and markets.

One of the finest Buddhist monasteries near Gangtok, the Rumtek Monastery has a beautiful setting. Nearby, the Bamboo Retreat is an attractive place to stay.



Yoga and Wellness in *Rishikesh*

Beautifully located on the Ganges where it still an unpolluted and swift flowing river, Rishikesh is the “Gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas” and is often considered the “Yoga Capital of the World”. If you are looking for a holiday in a pristine hilly region with yoga lessons and ayurvedic treatments, Rishikesh is the place for you. With many temples and ashrams, Rishikesh has always been a spiritual destination but its status as a global destination was established in February 1968, when the Beatles visited the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh. The Beatles composed numerous songs during their time at the ashram, including those that were featured in their "White Album". Several other celebrity artists, including Mike Love of the Beach Boys, Paul Horn, Donovan and Gyp Mills visited the site to contemplate and meditate.



You can meet many of the rishis at the Shivanand Ashram or one of the many notable ashrams in the area called Swargashram. For a more luxurious ayurvedic and yoga retreat, go up the river where there are many good resorts. One of India's finest spa resorts, Ananda-in-the-Himalaya is located on a hilltop at Narendranagar near Rishikesh.

The more adventurous can go white-water rafting on the Ganges and take a safari in Rajaji National Park.

Visit the palaces of *Gondal*

Gondal was once the capital of a princely state in Gujarat. It brims over with grand and elegant buildings of the late-1800s and early-1900s. Here you can stay at the Riverside Palace or the Orchard Palace, managed by the erstwhile Maharani herself. She has also designed the museum in the Darbargadh or old palace, which is a festival of stone carvings. The museum is beautifully done up to exhibit the family heirlooms – the textiles, the silverware, the princely memorabilia, antiques, dolls and doll houses, toys, costumes, turbans, furniture, clocks, chandeliers, trophies and utensils, each have designated areas, and there is a carriage room with superbly maintained old buggies.

Apart from the heritage buildings, Gondal is known for its khadi factory, ayurvedic herbal medicine pharmacy and the gaushala-and-ashwapalak, which houses indigenous breeds of horses and cattle.



Explore the monuments of *Hampi*

If you like historical architecture, Hampi is an outstanding place to wander among majestic monuments set in a surreal landscape that ranges from barren undulating terrain strewn with giant boulders typical of the Deccan to lush palm groves, banana plantations and paddy fields along the river. With many good hotels and luxurious resorts, Hampi makes a great place for a woman traveler to spend a few days exploring the many – the sacred area comprises the Vittala Temple, Virupaksha Temple and the Achyutaraya Temple, while the royal enclave has the Zenana Enclosure, the Queen's Bath and the Rama temple. If you are interested in wildlife, the Daroji Sanctuary is one of the best places to see sloth bear and dryland birds.

A good combination with Hampi is Sandur, where Banjara women do colourful appliqué work. At Sandur, you can stay at the Shiva Vilas Palace, which is a fine heritage hotel.



Buy textiles in north *Kerala*

Kannur is called the Land of Looms and Lore. Located along the Arabian Sea, this city bustles with markets for silks, jewellery and food products. You can visit some of the textiles cooperatives located around the city, where women weavers work on handlooms, including the traditional Malabar frameless looms. You can buy beautiful sarees as also furnishing fabrics, household linen, shirt pieces and dhotis.

Another interesting cultural aspect of Kannur is the Teyyam dance that can be witnessed at Parassinikadavu Muthappan Temple. Also visit the Arakal Heritage Museum to see princely relics and the Folklore Museum.

Also in Kannur district, Thalassery is a heritage town. Here you can stay at Ayisha Manzil where Faiza Moosa is your host and can even give you tips on South Indian cooking.

Discover the grandeur of *Mysore*

Mysore is a destination with multiple attractions, from impressive monuments, museums and art galleries to its silk and sandalwood products, from one of India's largest zoological park to a unique railway museum. Mysore's palace is among the grandest of India's royal heritage buildings while some of the other palatial buildings are now museums or hotels. Devaraja Market is worthwhile for shopping but you can also visit the silk factories and the sandalwood factory to shop directly from the manufacturing centres. The 13th-century Keshava Temple is one of the finest examples of Hoysala architecture while Chamundi hill with its temple is a top site of pilgrimage.

Nature lovers should also visit Ranganatithu Bird Sanctuary - a magical place where you can enjoy close viewing of birds on islands, and those interested in history will find the Srirangapatnam citadel worth spending time exploring.



Explore handicrafts in *Jodhpur*

Jodhpur is one of the most fascinating cities of Rajasthan - the 1459AD Mehrangarh Fort is among the most majestic in Rajasthan and the early-20th century Umaid Bhawan Palace is one of the state's largest residences. One of Jodhpur's top attraction is shopping - from furniture, woodcarvings and antique reproductions to jewellery, embroideries, mojdis durries and pottery, even spices and vegetables, you can shop till you drop in Jodhpur.

Start at the Clock Tower and explore nearby shops for beautiful embroidery and patchwork. Sadar Bazaar here is worth exploring for spices and local produce like mustard, chilies and ker-sangri. Mochi Bazaar is where you can look for mojdis and jootis. Around the market place are shops where you can get achkans, sherwanis and gaghra-cholis. Also look for lacquered and glass bangles.

Drive to other areas of the city where showrooms sell furniture made from wood, wrought iron and other materials.

Around Jodhpur are villages famous for durrie weaving centres.

Hangout in *Pondicherry*

If you are looking for a place where you can relax in informal cafes and lively restaurants, Puducherry (Pondicherry) is your kind of destination. You can find streets with old world charm and others with a Bohemian vibe, chic cafes in the French Quarter and old coffee houses in the Tamil areas. Stroll along quiet, clean and neatly laid out

streets lined with bougainvillea covered bungalows and French buildings, and dine at villa-style restaurants or snack at cute little cafes. In the morning and evening, the boulevards along the sea are pleasant for walks.

For a spiritual escape, you can visit French colonial churches, Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the Auroville commune.



Take a heritage holiday in *Puri*

Puri is one of the holiest pilgrimage places in India with the great Jagannath Mandir being one of the biggest Hindu religious centres. If you like architecture, the Konark Sun Temple is one of India's most magnificent monuments. There is also a good range of handicrafts like ikat, boyanika, Pipli's applique, Raghurajpur's paintings and stone sculpture. When you are done with the heritage, relax on the long beaches.



Unwind in *Goa*

Few places are as evocative of a relaxing beach holiday as Goa. From the tranquil Tiracol in the north to the happening Palolem Beach in the south, there are beaches to meet everyone's expectations. Enjoy the beachside amenities of North Goa's beaches like Baga, Calangute and Candolim lined with restaurants, shacks, vendors and water sports operators. To escape the crowds, go south to less visited but beautiful beaches. With some of India's most luxurious resorts, South Goa is a paradise for holiday goers. 📍

SURAT

THE BUSINESS DESTINATION

Surat is one of the fastest growing cities in India and ranked among the fastest growing in the world in terms of population, GDP growth and economic progress. It is also being considered as one of the potential Global Cities of the world. Surat's diamond industry cuts and polishes 80 to 90% of the world's diamonds. Its textile industry is one of the most highly developed in India with a huge number of weaving units and more embroidery machines than perhaps anywhere else in the country. Surat's nearby industrial zones like Hazira and Kamrej are centres for heavy industries - petrochemicals complexes, steel plants, gas processing

plants, cement plants, heavy engineering, fertilizer plants, etc. Essar, Reliance, L&T, Birla, ONGC, Gail, GSPC, Gujarat Gas, GIPCL, KRIBCO and multinationals like Shell and Niko have their presence in and around Surat. The second largest city in Gujarat and one of the 10 most populous in India, Surat is the country's new boomtown. It has become a new burst of energy and lifestyle that is visible in new hotels, restaurants and shopping areas that have come up in the city.

The growth of Surat as a booming business hub has built up, more or less organically, over the last five decades with a rise in the textile and diamond

processing industry from unorganized sectors to corporatized ones. The development of the city was evidenced after the worst plague epidemic in 1994. Today, Surat has computerized water distribution and drainage systems, one of the best water treatment plants in India, infrastructure like drainage and street lights in every conceivable locality and a wide range of modern facilities. The sandy shores of the Tapti River, where popular street foods and kulfi candies were sold by pushcarts at a place called Chowpatty, is now a paved boulevard and has gardens with fountains.

Drive over the Varachha Flyover, one of the longest in India. From here, you get a panorama of the Textile Market, which is now a neatly planned complex of modern building. After the Flyover, you come to trendy shops, luxury showrooms, restaurants and cafes that symbolize the modern Surat.

Surat's greatest claim to fame today is its diamond industry. The diamond industry is said to have come to Surat at the start of the 20th century when local Patels of the city brought the techniques with them from Africa. By the 1950s, Surat is said to have thrived as a diamond cutting centre because of the city's proximity to Mumbai, which is the major trading centre for diamonds, the domination of Palanpuri Jains and other Gujarati speaking people in the diamond trade at Mumbai, the industrial infra-





structure of the city and the large workforce including the Patels of Surat who had established their reputation for workmanship. The Palanpuri Jains began to export diamonds after the 1962 Indo-Sino War when the local market for jewellery declined with the post-war economic situation. The Palanpuri Jain and other diamond merchants of India began to look at new opportunities in centres like Antwerp, where the global diamond exchanges are located. The strategy of the Palanpuri Jains and other Gujarati merchants was to look at low-end diamonds, like the diamond dust, which were neglected because they were low in value or difficult to cut, and improvised ways to cut them. Today, high-end diamonds are handled in Surat. The Palanpuri Jain, Kathiawadi, Sindhi and other diamond merchants from Surat have become major players overseas as well. They have set up units in Belgium and Israel, offices in New York and Russia. Indian merchants are among the biggest in the multibillion-dollar diamond business.

The days when diamond polishing was done in family-run units with one hall, where workers squatted around cutting wheels called ghanthis is now giving way to corporatized diamond polishing factories with computerized modelling technologies, automated machinery, inventory and quality control systems, and better working conditions for more than 1000 personnel each.

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Today's factories use a combination of computer-aided technologies and expert human judgement to get maximum yield and quality from rough-stone. Once the sorting is done, the stones go for various stages of planning, shaping, cutting, faceting and polishing that will convert cloudy stones into valuable polished stones to stud jewellery. The planners use computerized planning systems to determine how many diamonds of what size and shape can be cut out of the rough stone they are viewing on the monitor, and guidelines for cutting are marked for the cutters before it goes for cleaving and sawing. At this stage, the diamond is cut into pieces using laser technology or the mechanical sawing process, the latter is used for soft stones that need to be handled differently to prevent cracks. From here, the diamond goes for bruising, which will give the shape to the stone. Hand-operated wheels with the operator are used to give the finish to the final stage cutting. For grading and certification of the diamond, both manual assessment under an eye-glass and a microscopic study are important to judge colour, luster, fluorescence, clarity, cut, symmetry, shape appeal, carat, polish, grains, and other factors that determine the value of the diamond. Surat has about 10,000 units varying in size from small-scale enterprises to the corporate companies.

The textile industry in Surat has also gone through many phases. Historically, Surat was known for its Gajee silk. The Parsis brought new weaves to Surat from China called Tanchoi. Later Surat became the centre for staple fibre and viscose yarn used to make artificial silk saris in the 1960s, later growing availability of nylon and acrylic in the 1970s and the entry of petrochemicals like polyester shaped the sector. The industry began to get organized in the 1980s. Now, the textile units use computer-controlled, automated and



semi-automated processes, and work on reducing the water consumption of their units and generate less heat than the conventional processing factories.

In the Surat Metropolitan Region is the port of Hazira. The port town is known as an industrial hub of India and is located on the bank of the Tapti River, 8 kilometers away from the Arabian Sea. Many large companies like Essar, Kribhco, Shell, Larsen & Toubro, NTPC, ONGC, GAIL, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation, UltraTech Cement and Reliance Industries have their units here.

Surat is gearing up for some big ticket projects like the Surat Metro and its airport is getting improved connectivity. TheDREAM City that houses Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) will be a game changer for the city.

Travel south from Surat to Valsad, which is a hub of agriculture, best known for its mango market. Nearby, Atul Ltd is a chemical conglomerate and one of the companies of Lalbhai Group.

South of Valsad, Vapi is known as the City of Chemicals. It is among the largest industrial areas in South Asia.

Vapi also makes a base to visit Silvassa and Daman, both of which are rich in industry.



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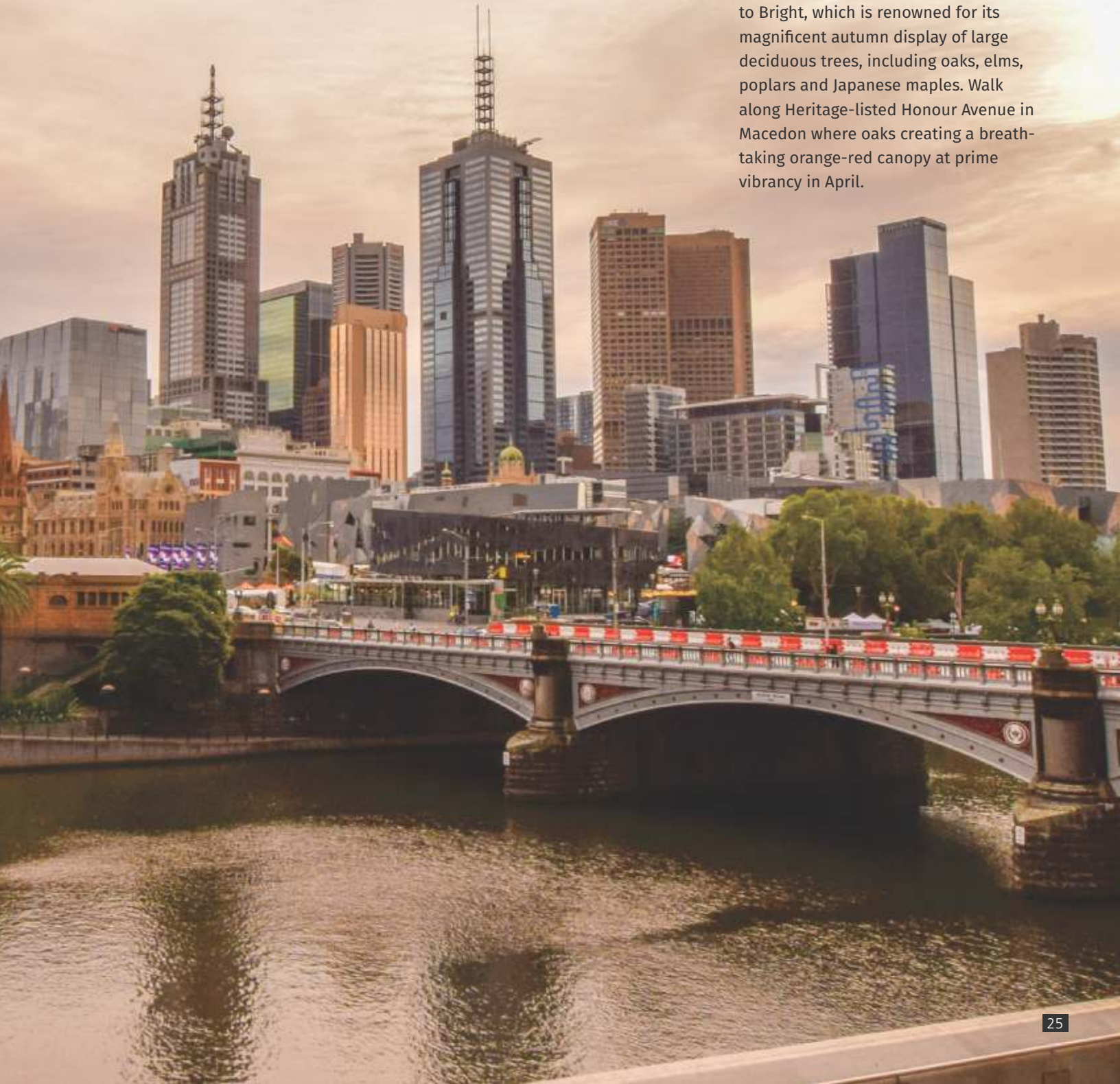
AUTUMNAL SPLENDOUR IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

*When Indian cities
swelter in the
summer sun, go
down to the
Southern
Hemisphere,
where you can
enjoy autumn from
March to July.*

MELBOURNE

Fresh mornings, cool days and spectacular autumnal colours define Australia from March to June. This is the time when there are many sports events and outdoors festivals. One of the best places to enjoy autumn is Melbourne where there are many events in this season – the Australian Formula One

Grand Prix, Yarra Valley Grape Grazing, Begonia Festival in the Botanic Gardens, Moomba Festival with cultural and aquatic events, flamboyant St Patrick's Day Parade at Hyde Park, international Comedy Festival, International Flower and Garden Show and the Bright Autumn Festival. The gardens here are an explosion of red, orange and gold foliage. Drive on the Great Alpine Road to Bright, which is renowned for its magnificent autumn display of large deciduous trees, including oaks, elms, poplars and Japanese maples. Walk along Heritage-listed Honour Avenue in Macedon where oaks creating a breathtaking orange-red canopy at prime vibrancy in April.





CAPE TOWN

South Africa is beautiful in the Autumn when trees and grape vines shed their leaves, the weather is mellow and pleasant, and there are many good country fairs. At Cape Town, this is the time to enjoy the wine harvest at nearby vineyards and wineries. This is also the time for the Jazz Festival, a musical extravaganza accompanied by exhibitions and other events.

White shark diving is excellent with good visibility for spotting sharks, and many outdoor pursuits like walking, hiking, abseiling and paragliding can be enjoyed. You can also get good views from a helicopter flight. Check out the comedy circuit around Long Street during the evenings.

CENTRAL OTAGO

Autumn is brilliant in Central Otago as the extensive orchards and poplar shelterbelts turn red, yellow and gold. Temperatures range from minus 3 to 24 degrees Centigrade. Central Otago is located in the inland part of the Otago region in the South Island of New Zealand. The motto for the area is "A World of Difference". The area is

dominated by mountain ranges and the upper reaches of the Clutha River and tributaries. Deciduous trees turn brilliant hues of yellow, gold and hot orange, and it's all set against a sky that seems far too blue to be true. This is a great place explore a cycle trail, go for long walks and try fly fishing.

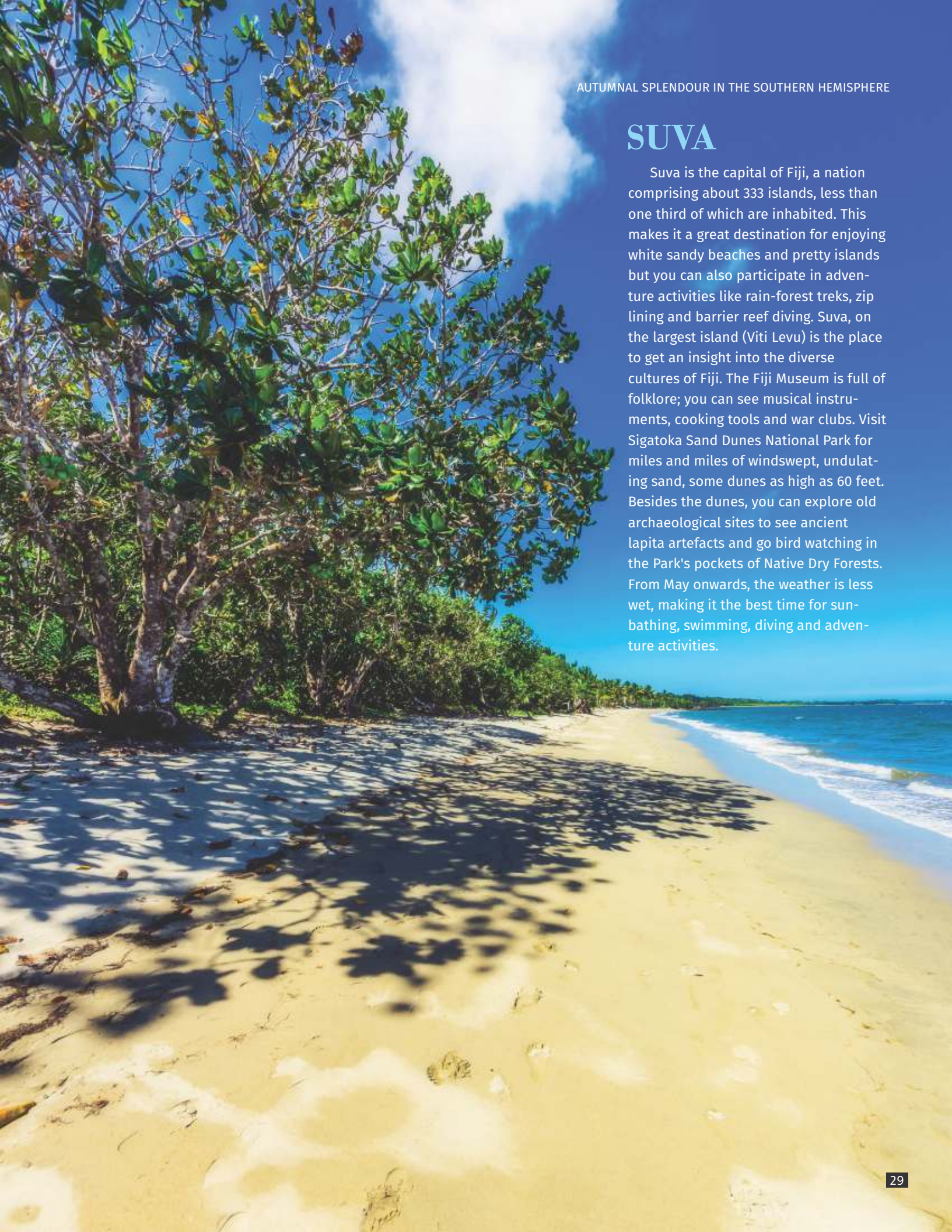


PANTAGONIA

Known for its strong Antarctic winds and volcanic activity, Patagonia is characterized by breathtaking landscapes. The weather can be unpredictable. However, autumn is less windy, not too hot or too freezing, which makes it a good time for hiking. You could get to see the migrating Southern right whales

escaping north for the winter from Valdes Peninsula, penguins during the autumn months and even a puma sighting in May is not impossible. Autumnal colours of the lands with the light dusting of snow on the top reaches of the mountains make dramatic sceneries.






SUVA

Suva is the capital of Fiji, a nation comprising about 333 islands, less than one third of which are inhabited. This makes it a great destination for enjoying white sandy beaches and pretty islands but you can also participate in adventure activities like rain-forest treks, zip lining and barrier reef diving. Suva, on the largest island (Viti Levu) is the place to get an insight into the diverse cultures of Fiji. The Fiji Museum is full of folklore; you can see musical instruments, cooking tools and war clubs. Visit Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park for miles and miles of windswept, undulating sand, some dunes as high as 60 feet. Besides the dunes, you can explore old archaeological sites to see ancient lapita artefacts and go bird watching in the Park's pockets of Native Dry Forests. From May onwards, the weather is less wet, making it the best time for sunbathing, swimming, diving and adventure activities.

BOLIVIA

If you like mountains, Bolivia is largely dominated by The Andes, the largest mountain range in the world with many attractions like scenery, wildlife, culture and history. This is where you find one of the highest ski slopes in the world called Chacaltaya, the highest forest in the world at Nevado Sajama, the salt flats of Uyuni and Coipasa, the largest salt flats in the world with the only hotel totally fabricated of salt, found in the Uyuni, and lakes like Green lake and Red Lagoon covered with Andean flamingos and one of the largest active volcanoes in the world, the Licancabur. The best time to visit the highlands of Bolivia is April to October - this is the cooler winter period, which is mostly dry with plenty of sunshine. 



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and blue pants, sits on a rocky ledge in the foreground. She is holding a red-handled walking stick. The background features a vast mountain valley with snow-capped peaks under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and scenic.

Go

*where you
feel the
most alive.*

A tale of fort and allegiance





From the vantage point on the ramparts of the fort, I looked out into the vast infinitude of the ocean. I could barely hear the sound of the waves as it spilled over to the beach. Tufts of clouds lay suspended in the azure sky. I was at the ancient Vattakottai Fort about 7 km away from the Indian southern tip of Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. Built in the 18th century, the fort was rebuilt by a Commander who was captured from the Dutch East India Company when its forces were defeated by the soldiers of the Travancore kingdom. The defeat was only a prelude to the waning of the influence of the Dutch East India Company in India.

Like all forts in India, this citadel too had an interesting tale to relate. It was built in the 18th century as a coastal defensive fort of the Travancore kingdom. The Kingdom of Travancore existed from 1500 until 1949. It was located at the southern tip of India and was ruled by the Travancore Royal Family. This Hindu kingdom in its heydays encompassed territories from parts of modern day southern Kerala and the southernmost parts of Tamil Nadu.

King Marthanda Varma, who reigned from 1729 to 1758, founded the modern Kingdom of Travancore. He defeated the powerful feudal lords and aggrandised his territory from the present day southern tip of Tamil Nadu to large swathes of Kerala. His fame to popularity was attributed to his defeating the Dutch at the Battle of Colachel in 1741. Thiruvananthapuram became a prominent city in Kerala under Marthanda Varma.

The Dutch had sought to curtail the expansionist moves of King Marthanda Varma and established a trading post in Colachel near the southern tip of India. The company was seeking to acquire and monopolize the trade of pepper and other spices, which were sold in the European markets at considerable profits. It was with this intention that the Dutch East India Company sent its



forces from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to subdue the Travancore king.

Captain Eustachius De Lannoy, a native of Belgium, was the naval commander of the Dutch East India Company. He arrived at the port of Colachal with the objective of establishing a trading post for the company. However, the events did not pan out as planned. Due to a quirk of fate, the entire supply of rice, meant for the Dutch soldiers, was consumed in a devastating fire, resulting in one of the rare defeats inflicted by an Indian king on the European forces. The battle, though not directly pivotal, led to the decline of the Dutch influence in India. In the battle, De Lannoy and his men were captured by Marthanda Varma's army.

During his incarceration, De Lannoy expressed his willingness to serve the king. The king in turn offered a condi-





fort commanded a panoramic view of the ocean. The beach is lined with trees and coconut trees. As one turned towards north, he could see the distant hazy Western Ghats lining the horizon.

There was a biggish water tank in the center of the carefully curated park. The tank probably served as a fresh water source for the inhabitants. In this quiet and placid setting, it was difficult to imagine that this fort had once held off forces inimical to the city beyond.

Was Captain Eustachius De Lannoy a defector in the conventional sense of the word? Perhaps not. He did not betray his own country or fight against its army thereafter. But as a subject to a new king, his allegiance was absolute. He won plaudits from all, to whom he served and earned the sobriquet “Valiya Kappithaan” meaning “The Great Captain”.

The English translation of the Latin inscription on his tombstone said it all, “Stand Traveller! Here lies Eustachius Benedictus De Lannoy: who was Commander of the general Travancore Army and for nearly 37 years with the greatest faithfulness served the King, to whom by the strength and fear of his armies he subjugated all kingdoms from Kayangulam to Cochin. He lived 62 years and 5 months and died first day of June 1777. May he rest in peace!”

tional amnesty to De Lannoy and his men. He demanded that De Lannoy train and modernize the Travancore army. The captives accepted the king's offer.

De Lannoy set about organising the Travancore Army on European lines. He extensively modified the fort. He introduced, for the first time, gunpowder and firearms, which greatly enhanced the royal army's striking power. He trained the regiment in European tactics of war. These and other measures greatly enhanced De Lannoy in the king's estimation. As a reward, he put him in command of the entire Travancore armed force that had once defeated him.

It was under his stewardship that the Vattakotti Fort was rebuilt and modified. Under his leadership, the Travancore Army made a number of successful military forays into the neighbouring lands.

Captain Eustachius De Lannoy never went back to his country. He served the Travancore Army for 37 years as a Commander. He outlived his captor king and died in 1777. He was buried in the chapel in the Udayagiri Fort near Padmanabhapuram Palace.

The beach on the seaside fort near Kanyakumari has a unique peculiarity. The sands in the beach have a distinct coloration. Apart from the predominant yellow color, there are black and red in colored sands in stretches. Three different explanations have been ascribed to the variation in color. One explanation is attributed to the conflu-

ence of the three seas - the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, each bringing with it its own constituent sands.

The second reason is based on the stories in Ramayana, when a Pandava princess spilt food on the beach, which turned the color of sand into black and red.

The third reason for the coloration is more prosaic and credible of the three. The mineral content of the sand in that area had given it a distinct coloration.

The Vattakottai Fort, meaning a circular fort, is not circular as its name suggests in Tamil. Its shape is rectangular and is spread over an area of 3.5 acres. It is surrounded by high reaching walls almost 25 feet in height. As a defensive fort, it had watchtowers and armoury rooms. Strategically built, the



Best Places for Stargazing in India That Are Way Too Unreal

Space and stars are always the greatest mysteries for human beings, and we all know that a mystery always attracts a curious heart. As toddlers, gazing at the sky with our glittering eyes and mouth open was always the best thing to do. Guess what? With time we grew up but this feeling didn't go away.

Getting a chance to witness the beauty of a starry night sky is no longer an everyday affair when you step outside. Even when the sky is the clearest, artificial lights don't let the natural darkness to prevail, making night canvas of the sky look a lot less majestic than it is. So here's the list of 10 best places for stargazing in India where you're sure to awestruck as you gaze up.

1. Spiti, Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh, Spiti Valley is the one heck of a place. With barren landscapes and towering heights, Spiti valley has a night sky so ethereal that you might feel like it's a dream. A cloudless sky is what you have to pray for, and the rest will be taken care of by the universe - its great canvas laid out in all its glory in front of you. The Milky Way cluster and the shooting stars are an experience. For those wanting to capture their perfect star trail to those appears to lie down and stare at infinity, a cloudless night spent stargazing in Spiti is time well spent. If you're looking to add more beautiful moments, watch the starry skies while camping at Chandratāl Lake. It is absolutely magical!



2. Pangong Tso Lake, Ladakh

Remember the last scene of the famous Bollywood blockbuster '3 Idiots'? Yes, we are talking about Pangong Lake. Located at the height of 4,350 m, Pangong Tso Lake is the world's most noteworthy saltwater lake. Its water, which appears to be blue, stands in stark contrast to the arid mountains encompassing it. Guess what? Not just in the daylight, Pangong continues to amaze the travellers in the night with the canvas up in the sky. With no pollution and artificial lights to alter, you can see the constellations twinkling in front of your eyes. If you haven't planned a trip to Ladakh, make sure you stay a night at Pangong as you get to sleep beside this serene lake sheltered by the millions of stars.



3. Coorg, Karnataka

Being the charming hill station of Karnataka, Coorg remains the pride of the state. The serene landscapes of this hill station mesmerized the Britishers to such an extent that they decided to call it 'The Scotland of India'. True it is, the unspoiled sceneries of Coorg have every element to be known so. But, it isn't just the alluring nature's vistas that Coorg has to offer. Coorg is a home to one of the best stargazing spots in India too. In South India, there are a few right spots for star gazing, but Coorg is where an incomparable view of the night sky would be possible. The lofty peaks like Tadiandamol are the major spots where star gazing is simply easy. Book a hotel or even a tree house in the middle of the forest as you get to enjoy this original cosmo movie played in front of your eyes while the adoring the green side of life.



4. Lonar Crater, Maharashtra

Located in Maharashtra, Lonar Crater is a major attraction, not only in India but around the globe. It is a result of a meteorite falling on our planet years ago. Astronomers have titled it not only as one of the largest craters in the world, but also the perfect place to do star gazing. If you are one of those who love astronomy, you'll be bombarded with the beauty up in the sky. It's like a live video of Milky Way played in front of you, but there is no camera or screen.

Encompassed by the thick forests and mountainous formations, this lake is an ideal place for adventure. Trekkers, mountaineers, nature lovers and many others are repeatedly come here to enjoy some unique moments.

5. Neil Island, Andaman & Nicobar

Located 40 km away from Port Blair, Neil Island is a secluded spot to enjoy the painting of nature in the sky during the night. With practically no light pollution, the deserted beaches are ideally suited for a night of stargazing. Just imagine, the ocean in front of you, the quietness, and of course this fantastic canvas above your head. Well, you have your answer! Although, the solitude can be disturbed by like-minded people who have also come to do the same thing (but who minds a company with same interest).



6. Rann of Kutch, Gujarat

The Great Rann of Kutch is a vast salt desert that lies at the top of the Kutch district in Gujarat, the westernmost state in India. Spanning over 7,000 sq. Km, the beautiful white expanse is a surreal sight for the tourists. Have you ever watched a film scene in which a person is standing alone on the white soil with no one around as far as the eyes can see? Well, you can experience the same at Great Rann of Kutch. Once the day show of this barren land is over, the stars come out to play and mirror the shimmering stretch of white salt all the way to the horizon. If you want to have the best experience, make sure you come here on a full moon. We can bet you that it will definitely add up in the best moments of your life list.

7. Katao, Sikkim

Perched 15,000ft above the sea level, Katao is one of the most spectacular places in India. Due to the heavy snowfall, this place wears a white sheet over it and hence, it is also known as the Switzerland of Sikkim. The lesser number of tourists has kept this place away from commercialization, which means less artificial lights, less pollution and of course clear sky to tempt your eyes. It seems as if you can touch the glittering astral circles with your hands and the breeze floating over the canopies (if you choose to camp) will surely spread a smile on your face and peace in your heart. Still, have some doubts? Let the picture speak for itself!



8. Nubra Valley, Ladakh

Another gem of the rooftop of India which deserves to be on this list is none other than the Nubra Valley. This desert between snow-capped mountains is genuinely magical. Offering Arabian Nights-like experience to the tourists, it is a home to double-humped Bactrian camels. A day at Nubra Valley is a day well spent, but when the sun goes down, this surreal desert offers the best views to the astronomy lovers. Peace is the synonym you can confer on Nubra, especially when the moon is up above the sky playing games with its friends and family consisting of trillions of stars cluttered in circles, rectangle and unknown shapes.



9. Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

Sun shines in the world, but it paints gold in Jaisalmer. Well, this comes as no surprise. Yellow sand and sandstone used to make the structures in this city have entitled it to the name of the Golden City of India. Although, the fort and palaces are magnificent here, when it comes to the desert night sky, you shouldn't dare to miss it. Being free of light and pollution, it offers a fantastic opportunity to witness the stunning constellations and spectacular pathway of the Milky Way as it spans over the sky. If you stay there for long, you are sure to see many shooting stars. Not just the night show, but the camp stay in the desert is also one of a kind experience. So, it's a Win-Win thing!

10. Sonamarg, Jammu & Kashmir

Sonamarg, literally translated, means "Meadow of Gold," and understandably so. Not only is this tranquil valley set against the backdrop of snowy white Himalayan peaks, but at night, these mountaintops provide the perfect frame for the arc of the Milky Way. Stargazing in Sonamarg is a whole new level as the beauty of the surrounding mountains, captivating streams and chilled air enhances it. Astronomers, who come here, fall in love with the sky again. Although there are many hotels in Sonamarg, we suggest you to stay in the camps as you can connect with nature in a far better way.

Relive your childhood watching the stars dancing over your heads with the Milky Way. Choose any place to watch stargazing, you won't be disappointed. Moreover, there are so many things to do at these places, either on a day or at night. You are going to have a good time for sure. 📺



Incredible India



Tribal tourism in the
SAHYADRIS

The Dang and its neighbouring districts are home to the villages of tribal groups who still practice historical traditions, rituals and customs. Most of these tribal villages are easily accessible from Saputara and Ahwa, which have many homestay facilities. One of the most exciting cultural trails runs from Saputara through hilly areas of Navsari and Valsad district to the Dadra & Nagar Haveli Union Territory.

In this region of thick deciduous forests full of teakwood and bamboo, you find the tribal groups who blend Gujarati and Maharashtrian culture mixed harmoniously with aboriginal lifestyles and rituals. Music and dance are integral to the culture and society of most of the tribal groups of this region like Bhil, Varli, Dodiya, Dubla or Halpati, Kunbi and Kokna. The Kolis and Kotwaliyas are among the other groups found in this region. The Tarpa or Pavri

is a popular wind instrument of the region made from a gourd with a bamboo pipe, while Ghanghri is a string instrument made using gourds played as an accompaniment during singing and story-telling performance, mainly by the Varlis. Percussion instruments include the tur, a drum made out of clay and leather, the dhol and the metal plates called thali with a striker. The dance called Dangi Nritya in the Dang district, and Tarpa or Pavri Nritya in other



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

districts, begins with dancers standing with arms around each other's waist or holding hands, forming a chain or circle. One person leads the movements, which are usually quick, sharp and smooth, though the pace may vary depending on the music, and the dancers are so swift that choreographic patterns can change in seconds. Dance expert Parul Shah writes that there are 27 varieties of chalas, the range of steps and movements in a Dangi dance. The tribal people create a human pyramid during these dances. The Tarpa is typically performed at night after dinner, and is especially significant in the Autumnal harvest season from September to November. The Tarpa and the Ganghri often feature in Varli drawings as they have religious association with Naran Dev. In Valsad, Navsari and Dadra & Nagar Haveli, you can see the Dhol Dance performed by men with the drummer as the central figure – the drum beats can drive the dancers to fast and acrobatic movements. Bohada and Bhavada are masked dances most commonly seen around Khanvel – the dancers wear masks made from wood and bamboo, typically depicting Hindu and tribal deities, and the steps may match the character they are represent-



ing in the dance. The dances are performed to the tune of Sur, Kahali and Sambal. The Gheria is a group dance, most often associated with the Dublas. The dance is led by a Kavio or singer who sports elaborate headgear. The other participants dance holding sticks in their hands, which are struck together at regular intervals. A feature of this dance is a bagaliwala – a person with a long pole carrying the depiction of a 'bagla' or water bird.

Tribal groups are often animistic in their beliefs - objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Stones are worshipped, and many tribal deities are also symbolized by stone or wood at their shrines. Varlis and other tribal groups worship the Sun and the Moon as supreme deities, Jamdev who is probably equivalent to Yama, Waghdev or tiger, Naran Dev Himai and Hirwa. Stone images of these deities

are found in tree groves. When travelling around the tribal areas, you may see memorial stones for ancestors. Some of them are hero stones for warriors.

The food of the tribal groups is mainly centered on pulses, locally grown vegetables, jackfruit, wild mushrooms and bamboo shoots, while the breads are made from jowar, finger millets called raagi or nagli and rice (chawal roti). A characteristic feature of tribal homes is the ghandi, a hand-carved stone mill for grinding grains. Depending on the season, side dishes and pickles may be made from raw mangoes, Ajoola leaves, Karanda berries and local herbs.

The tribal groups rear poultry like hens and ducks. River and lake fish is caught using bamboo traps like the cylindrical bhot or conical structures called tonda, satta or shiba. They may be fitted together to make a trap stitched together with bamboo. The fish is kept in bamboo baskets for transporting to the villages. The fish is usually cooked when still fresh. Crustaceans like crabs are often hunted at night.

Start your tour at Saputara, where a tribal museum offers an insight into life among the tribal people – there are about 420 exhibits covering tribal musical instruments, tribal costumes, tribal ornaments and tools. This hill station of Gujarat, about 3000 ft above sea level, has a lake as its centerpiece and hills on all sides. In the villages near the hill station, you can meet the Dangri tribal groups like the Bhils.

From Saputara, as you drive towards Ahwa - the district capital of the Dang, you can see totems or palia of Wagh Dev, the tiger deity - some of them are decorated with vermilion paint and can be accompanied with other religious symbols like the sun, the moon or snake. Travelling along this road, you can see villages of the Kunbis and the Koknas. The name 'Koknas' may have derived from the Konkan coast, and this is reflected in their dialect, which has Konkani, Marathi and Gujarati influ-



ences. Kokna women wear colourful saris - some of them cut the sari into two parts, the upper part is called fadki and the lower part is wrapped around their waist. Traditionally, tattooing was common among the Koknas. You can see these tribal groups working in the fields or cutting grass for their thatched roofs.

At Ahwa, there are a few homestays. In the morning, drive into the Mahal Bardipada forests and visit the Gira

Falls. Near the forests, you can see the traditional homes of the Gamits and the Varlis (also spelt Warli). Gamit believe that they belong to the Sun dynasty Rajput community and the word 'Gamit' comes from their settling in villages. It is believed that they came from Sindh through Marwar to Gujarat, and this is reflected in their songs during the Holi festival. They are also known as Vasava (those who settled). Women wear long



PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

sarees but only till their knees and a choli or blouse and sport ornaments – traditionally silver armlets, rings and necklaces with antique coins. But now for economic reasons, they wear brass jewellery.

From Ahwa, take the road to Vansda National Park and the nearby parks that are botanically interesting, and then take the road to Silvassa. Along this road, you can see villages of the Dhodia tribal group, which is said to get its name from Dhondi or hut, and the Dodhia, therefore was always settled

with their own houses. Dodhia men wear knee-length white dhoti, a shirt or waist coat and a cap. The women wear a dark blue saree. The Dodhias sport plenty of jewellery, a symbol of their status.

Dodhias are usually agriculturalists, and many have their own bullock carts. There are many Dodhia residents in and around Silvassa, and their popular shrine in Silvassa is dedicated to Bramdev depicted by a votive terracotta pot, and the potters make votive offerings for these tribal groups. During festivals and marriages, Dodhias celebrate with the

Tur and Thali dance. They have a distinctive dialect. South of Silvassa, Maghval, also known as Megwal, is a village in the Kaprada tehsil of Valsad district in Gujarat. Here, you can meet the Dublas who are also called Halpatis (bearers of the plough) because they till the soil. They are usually farm labourers. The men wear dhotis and shirts while the women wear colourful knee length sarees with the upper part covering their heads. They also wear ornaments like earrings, bangles, metal necklaces and thick metal kaddas around the ankles. Like the Dodhia, they perform the Tur and Thali dance.

From here, continue to Khanvel and Dudhni. In this area, you will find many villages of the Varlis who are said to have come from the Vindhyas and Satpuras to the hilly areas of Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Northern Maharashtra. The Varli women wear a knee-length sarong like sari called lugden and the upper cloth is a blouse-like padar. The Varli men wear a loincloth and a small waistcoat, and often sport turbans.

Varlis are known for their paintings – the painting style started with sacred pictographs on the walls of their huts but now they also make paintings in white on dung-paste covered cloth to create a background similar to the traditional mud walls. Souvenir versions on paper and other materials are also painted for tourists, and some of the recognized artists now make contemporary canvases and water colours that draw from their traditional style. You can see these paintings at the art gallery in Silvassa. The line drawings use mainly geometric forms to depict human hunting, farming, dancing or performing daily chores, trees and animals. The goddess of trees and plants often makes a central theme motif.

Around Khanvel, you can see small settlements of Kolis. The men have a distinctive headdress and use a simple large cloth to cover their waist down to





their thighs. The women usually wear nine yard sarees.

The Kolis, Varlis and Koknas can be seen using traditional fishing traps and handmade nets for fishing at Dudhni Lake, but nowadays synthetic nets are also used.

The Kathodis derive their name from the kaath, extract of the Catechu plant used for preserving nets and sails of the fishing community. The Kaath extract is also used as a dye and an astringent. They usually live in forest areas and get their livelihood from forest produce.

From Dudhni, it is a drive of about three hours back to Ahwa. ☐



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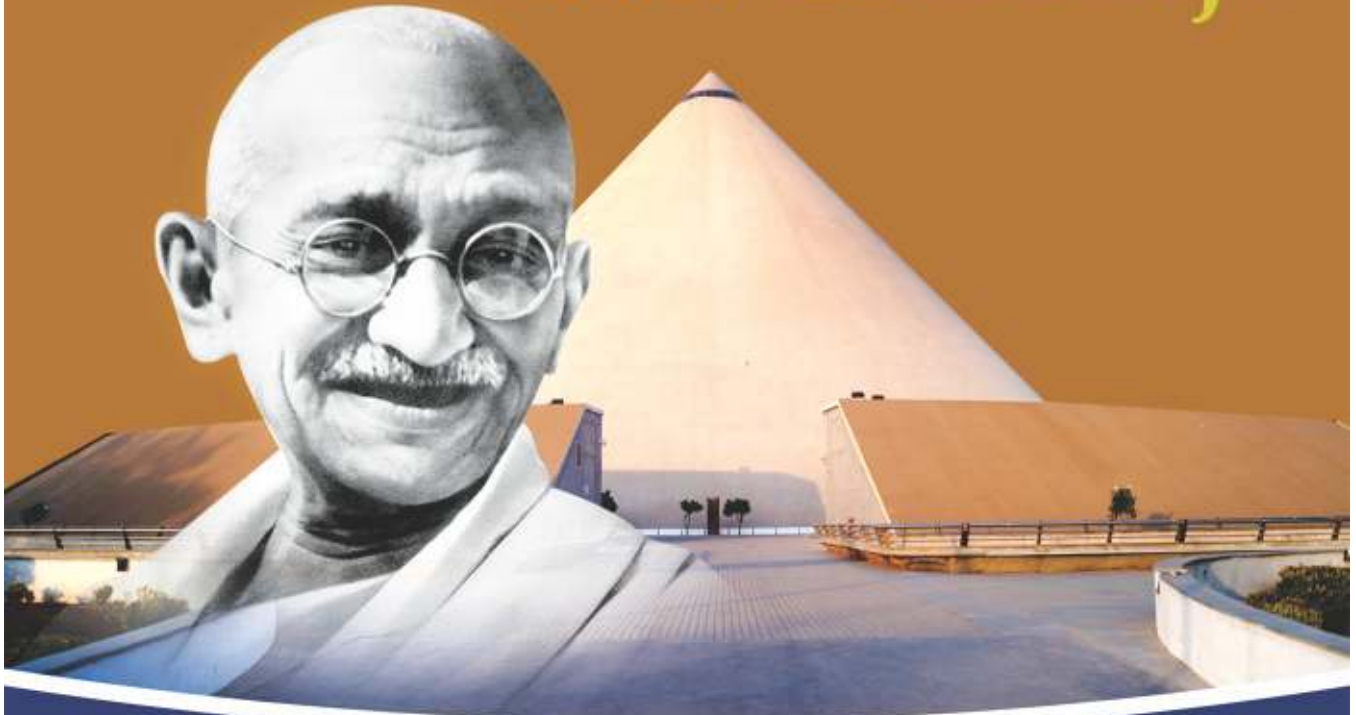
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'There is Something
about **Gandhiji**'



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.

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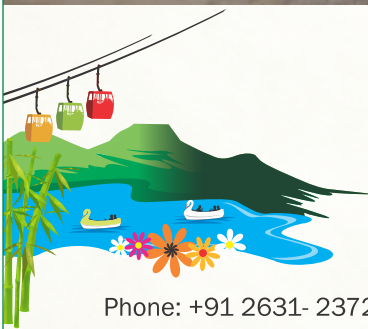
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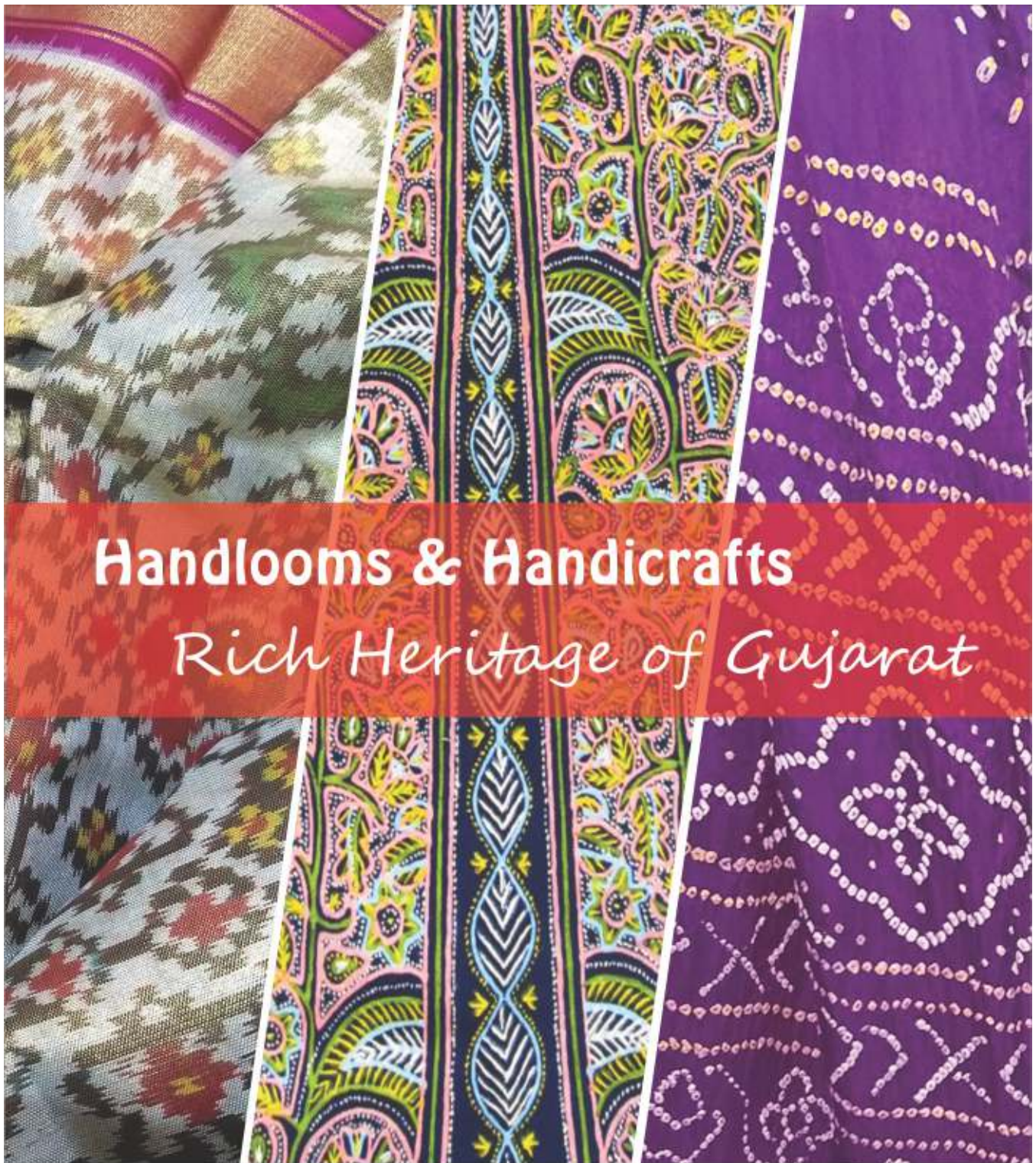
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