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A high-end monthly magazine



WOMEN'S Memorial IN INDIA



**SNACKING IN
SOUTHERN
INDIA**



**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS
IN INDIA**



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'March'ing Ahead

International Women's Day is the reason to celebrate the month of March; every year 8th of March is celebrated all over the world as an ode to womanhood. Women have conquered and achieved milestones in all the spheres of life, all around the world. So to celebrate womanhood, here we bring you some monuments that reflect glorious stories of feminine strength, power and courage.

March also holds importance for the food world as it celebrates March 30 as World Idli Day. The story of this day is as interesting as the food associated with it. It all started some 6 years ago when a passionate idli lover decided to dedicate a day to idlis and soon it became a trend. Let's celebrate the delicious South Indian staple that can be served in any meal and has actually become a staple for the entire country, along with many other interesting snacks of South India.

Read on!



Khor Rori Beach, Oman

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March 2022



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Incredible India



WOMEN'S Memorial IN INDIA

On women's day, we look at some monuments closely associated with women in India.



Taj Mahal, Agra



Rani Mahal, Jhansi

THE PALACE OF THE WARRIOR QUEEN IN JHANSI

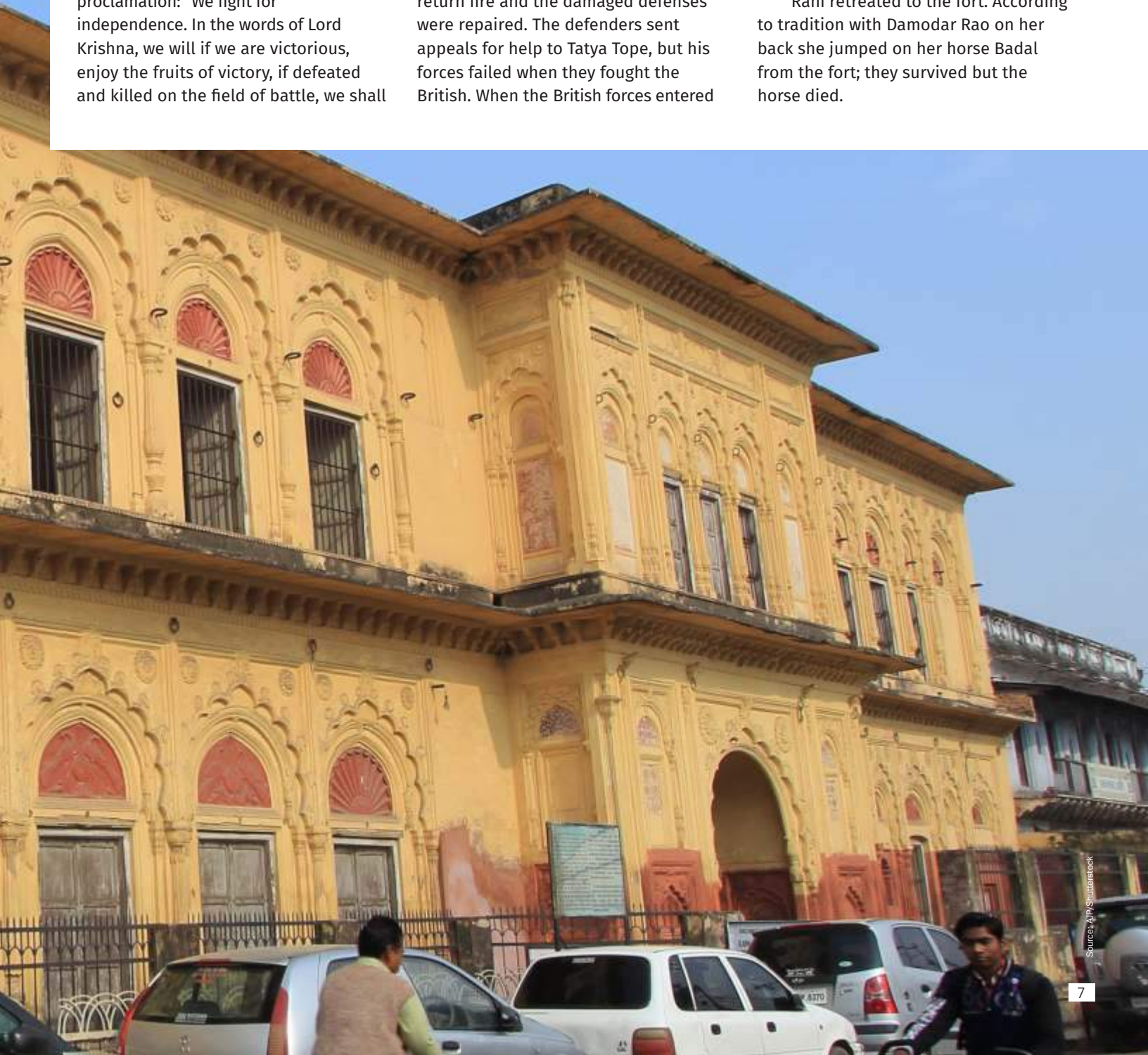
From August 1857 to January 1858, Jhansi was ruled by Rani Lakshmi Bai. The Rani issued a proclamation: "We fight for independence. In the words of Lord Krishna, we will if we are victorious, enjoy the fruits of victory, if defeated and killed on the field of battle, we shall

surely earn eternal glory and salvation."

The bombardment of Jhansi began on March 24 but was met by heavy return fire and the damaged defenses were repaired. The defenders sent appeals for help to Taty Tope, but his forces failed when they fought the British. When the British forces entered

the city, determined resistance was encountered in every street and in the palace.

Rani retreated to the fort. According to tradition with Damodar Rao on her back she jumped on her horse Badal from the fort; they survived but the horse died.



THE TEMPLE BUILT BY THE PHILANTHROPIC QUEEN IN KOLKATA

The Dakshineswar Kali temple was built by Rani Rashmoni, a Mahishya woman well known for her philanthropic activities. By blocking the shipping trade on a part of the Ganges, she compelled the British to abolish the tax imposed on fishing in the river, which threatened the livelihood of fishermen. When Puja processions were

stopped by the British on the charge that they disturbed the peace, she defied the orders. The British withdrew the penalty imposed on her.

Profoundly affected by a dream, Rani looked for and purchased a 30,000-acre plot in the village of Dakshineswar to build a Kali temple. The large temple complex was built

between 1847 and 1855. The cream-and-red, turreted 1847 Kali Temple is an impressive sight. It is a part of a riverside complex, where the Bengali mystic Ramakrishna started his remarkable spiritual journey. His room can be visited in the northwest corner of the temple precinct, now a place of special meditative reverence.





Dakshineswar Kali Temple



Source: ImagesIndia/Shutterstock

Pattadakal Temple Complex



THE TEMPLES BUILT BY TWO SISTER QUEENS AT PATTADAKAL

Pattadakal is a UNESCO-notified World Heritage, which is architecturally important as the complex here represents the crossroads of the Dravidian style of South India and the Nagara style of the northern states reflected in the temples here. Once the site of coronation ceremonies of the Chalukyan rulers, Pattadakal has temples dating from the 3rd century to the 7th century that are considered to be the climax of Western Chalukya architecture and some that were built by the Rashtrakutas after they took over the kingdom from the Chalukya dynasty. Two kinds of temple roofs can be seen in the same group of temples – curvilinear towers and the square roofs with receding towers. Built from the local sandstone, the temples are generally clustered at the foot of hills and the most important group is in the compound of the archaeological park. Most of them are Shiva temples.

The highlights of Pattadakal are the Mallikarjun and Virupaksha Temples, a pair that must have been among the most elaborate temples in this part of India in the 8th century. Built by two sisters, who were queens of the Chalukyan ruler, Vikramaditya, the temples are said to have commemorated the conquest of Kanchipuram by the Chalukyas who

brought back great Pallava architects. Typifying the Dravidian tradition in their architectural details, the temples have richly carved three-storey towers, with striking panels showing different forms of Shiva and Vishnu, and a carved base. Like most South Indian temples, the interiors are also exquisitely carved with the pillars of the Virupaksha Temple relating tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics and those of the Mallikarjuna Temple carved with scenes from Krishna stories in delicately executed relief. Carvings in the temples also reflect the courtly and social life of the Chalukyas. The best carvings are flanking the porch with a majestic one of Shiva appearing out of a fiery lingam and of Vishnu. Both temples have a circumbulatory around their shrines. Virupaksha temple, interestingly, is the only living shrine in the complex with a magnificently carved chlorite Nandi covered by a cloth in a pavilion and a black lingam in the sanctum that attracts Shiva devotees. Virupaksha Temple is also called Lokeshwar Temple after the Queen Lok Mahadevi who built it in the 8th century to commemorate the victory of her husband Vikramaditya II over the Pallavas.



THE MEMORIAL TO A FATHER IN AGRA

While the Taj Mahal was built by Shah Jehan to honour Mumtaz, the tomb of Itmad Ud Daulah - believed to be the real inspiration behind the Taj Mahal - was built between 1622-1628 by Nur Jahan in memory of her father Mirza Ghiyas Beg who was also known as Itmad Ud Daulah since he served as the lord treasurer of Mughal Emperor Akbar.



Itmad-ud-Daula's Tomb



THE FORT OF THE PEPPER TRADE QUEEN IN KARNATAKA

Queen Chennabhairadevi of Gersoppa used the Mirjan, which is 32 kilometres (20 mi) to the southeast of Karwar, for shipping pepper, saltpetre and betel nut to Surat. Gersoppa, a district annexed to Bednur, was famous for the pepper exported from this region. Consequently, the Portuguese gave the epithet "Rainha de Pimenta", the pepper queen.


She is credited with building the fort on the banks of Aghanashini River. This monument in Uttar Kannada district

of Karnataka is known for its remarkable architectural elegance. Known to have witnessed several battles in the past, this historic monument is believed to have been built by Queen Chennabhairadevi of Gersoppa, also known as the pepper queen of India in the 16th century. The Queen who stayed in the Mirjan fort used it as a location for shipping pepper and also to take care of her business. Belonging to the clan of Tuluva-Saluva, she ruled for 54 years under the Vijayanagara Empire as the queen of Gersoppa.



Mirjan Fort

THE SAMADHI OF KASTURBA GANDHI IN PUNE

The Aga Khan Palace served as a prison for Mahatma Gandhi, his wife Kasturba Gandhi, his secretary Mahadev Desai and Sarojini Naidu. It is also the place where Kasturba Gandhi and Mahadev Desai died. The palace has a number of photos and portraits depicting glimpses from the life of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation of India, and other personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. 

Aga Khan Palace



Snacking In SOUTHERN INDIA

ON WORLD IDLI DAY,

We look at some of the famous
breakfast & snack foods of the
Southern States of India!



DOSA AND IDLI TRAIL IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka is well-known for its dosas with about a 100 varieties depending on the ingredients or preparation

Udupi is synonymous with the vegetarian food of south India. Cooks from Udupi's temple kitchens have made their home in many cities of India and their cafes popularised the dosa from being a breakfast item of Southern India into a household dish eaten all times of the day in other parts of India. A classic Udupi dosa is the Uppu Puli Dosa, which uses tamarind in the batter to give a slightly tangy taste to the crepe. The Neer Dosa of the Tulu-speaking belt of Karnataka is made from a watery rice batter and eaten with a coconut-and-jaggery paste, sambhar, chutney or various curries.

South of Udupi, Mangalore too is famous for its cuisine. A Mangalorean favourite breakfast item is the moode, idli steamed in screwpine leaves. You can find many places for snacking in Mangalore, and even the posh hotels will have some good breakfast items of the region.

From Mangalore, travel to Mysore, which has given its name to dosa varieties. You can get the Mysore Dosa made from the rice-and-lentil batter or the Mysore Rava Dosa made from a semolina batter. Mysore's Mylari eateries are famous for their thick, soft and silky dosas, with chutney and sambar. The oldest ones have people standing out on the footpaths in the morning for their dosas. Hotel Dasaprakash is one of the oldest restaurants and its legacy has included many celebrity diners and political leaders. Dasaprakash special idli is a must-have – it is stuffed with cashews, mustard seeds and carrots that make it both delicious and decorative. Here, you can also try guliappa – fried rice balls that you can dip in tamarind and coconut chutneys.

On the highway from Mysore to Bengaluru, there are a number of places for regional foods. Try the ragi mudde, balls of finger millet flour with curry.

In Bengaluru, MTR is a legendary place for rava idli. They are said to have introduced



Udupi Dosa

during a rice shortage, using semolina instead of rice, and it has stayed on the menu. For dosa, a legendary place is Vidyarthi Bhavan. Another food breakfast place, New Krishna Bhavan is famous for millet dishes – try the ragi dosa or jowar dosa. Also, try their green masala idli.

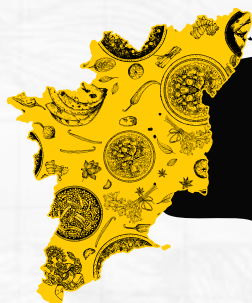
Some of the other institutions of Bangalore are Veena for vada and idli or Brahmin's Coffee Bar.



Neer Dosa



Guliappa



IDLI TRAIL FROM CHENNAI TO KERALA

Chennai is the birthplace for many well-known restaurant places, but for breakfast, visit Mylapore with its little eateries called a 'Mess' for inexpensive food. Try idli, dosa, keraï vada, which uses amaranth leaves, pongal and pumpkin halwa.

Tamil Nadu has smaller and thicker dosas like the Adai, which is also a staple breakfast for the people of the state made from a thick ground batter with rice and different types of lentils. The Muringaila Adai is prepared using drumstick leaves in the batter and is eaten with mixed vegetables cooked in coconut oil, a tamarind and jaggery mixture or the usual dosa accompaniments. The late K.T. Achaya in his book, *The Illustrated Foods of India*, wrote that Adhai has been mentioned as a seaside snack in Tamil Nadu's Sangam literature of the sixth century AD.

In Tamil Nadu, you also get a steamed oil-free dosa called Kal Dosa, which is served with curries. The people of the Chettinad region, like the mercantile Chettiar community, make ten der rice bread called Illian Dosa eaten

with various meat, fish and vegetable curries. You will also find various pancakes and crepes prepared for temple gatherings and festivals – there are different ones at Krishna, Shiva and Shakti Goddess temples. There is also a green Mudakathan Dosa, made using a medicinal herb called mudakathan that is said to have curative properties in ayurvedic sciences in the batter.

Other dosas include Vela Dosa, which is a sweet dosa with jiggery and clarified butter, Set Dosa which is cooked only on one side and is served in a set of two, Benne Dosa, which is well-buttered Set Dosa from the Davanagere district of Karnataka, Kumbh Dosa made from sorghum grain, the crisp Roast Dosa, Muttai Dosa that has eggs beaten into the batter, among others. The Paper Dosa, which is a thin and crisp dosa that is spread till it can be 2-feet long is commonly served in restaurants. Dosas with fusion fillings, like the Chinese Dosa, which has vegetables fried in Chinese-style sauces as the filling, Paneer Dosa, which has a North Indian-style cottage cheese curry inside and Cheese Dosa with grated cheddar cheese, are gaining popularity.

From Chennai, travel to Kanchipuram well-known for its exquisitely carved temples and rich silk sarees. The famous food item of Kanchipuram, the cylindrical Kanchipuram idli is wrapped in a traditional Mandharai leaf from a Bauhinia Creeper that lends a unique flavour. Idli can even be part of the Prasadam at the Varadharaja Perumal temple.



Continue from Kanchipuram to Coimbatore, famous for its Kongunadu food. One of the crowd-pullers is Paatima's idlis at Kamalathal, in Vadivelampalayam on the outskirts of Coimbatore.

From Coimbatore, head for Palakkad, which has some unique Brahmin foods that show both Tamil and Malayali influences. A short drive from Palakkad, Ramasseri is famous for places like the Sree Saraswathy Tea Stall and the Ramassery Idli Kada. The Ramassery idli is a mix of dosa and idli. The tradition is said to have been started by weavers who lost their work in a crisis and instead turned to food business.







THE ATTU OF ANDHRA

When you travel to Vijayawada, Rajahmundry and Visakhapatnam, where you can try the attu, a pancake similar to the dosa. Pesarattu is made with batter of green lentils called moong dal. There are many other Attus, which are made from different kinds of lentils. You can enjoy these at Dasappala and other restaurants in Visakhapatnam.



Pesarattu



APPAM ON THE KERALA COAST

From Kochi as you head along the coast to Kottayam district, you can enjoy the Appam, bowl-shaped thin pancakes made from fermented rice flour. They often use yeast, salt and a little sugar. They derive their shape from the small cast iron wok vessel called Appachatti in which they are cooked. These works are said to be an influence from trade with China. Appams can also be baked. Typically, an Appam has a soft centre and lacy edges. The Syrian Christians in Kerala eat Appam for breakfast with egg roast or for lunch with meat stews. Appams form part of the menu of Syrian Christian

weddings and functions. Indri Appam is made by Syrian Christians and Jews in Kerala on the day of Passover. This type of appam is dipped in jaggery syrup before being served. Appam batter fermented using fresh toddy instead of yeast makes Kallappam. Vegetarians like the Brahmins of Kerala eat Appam with Aviyal, a dish generally made of various beans, green bananas, drumsticks, assorted vegetables, herbs and coconut gratings, or a chickpea curry called Kadala Curry.

As you travel north from Kochi to Thrissur, you can have appams that are made on a heated griddle instead of in the traditional vessels. They are called Vellayappam. Vellayappam is popular in the Trissur and Palakkad regions of Kerala. Puttu, a cylindrical breakfast dish, is also popular in these regions.

Further north, the districts of Kozhikode and Kannur along the Malabar coast have strong Arabic influences. The Kerala Parotta is the griddle pan cooked bread from the Malabar region of North Kerala. It is made from refined flour which adds to the elasticity of the dough, which is stretched and folded into fine layers. It is eaten with meat, vegetable and chickpea curries. This is probably an influence from the Arabic countries that traded with Kozhikode or Calicut and other cities on the Malabar Coast. You also have the whole wheat Mukkan Paratha, possibly a North Indian import into Kerala.



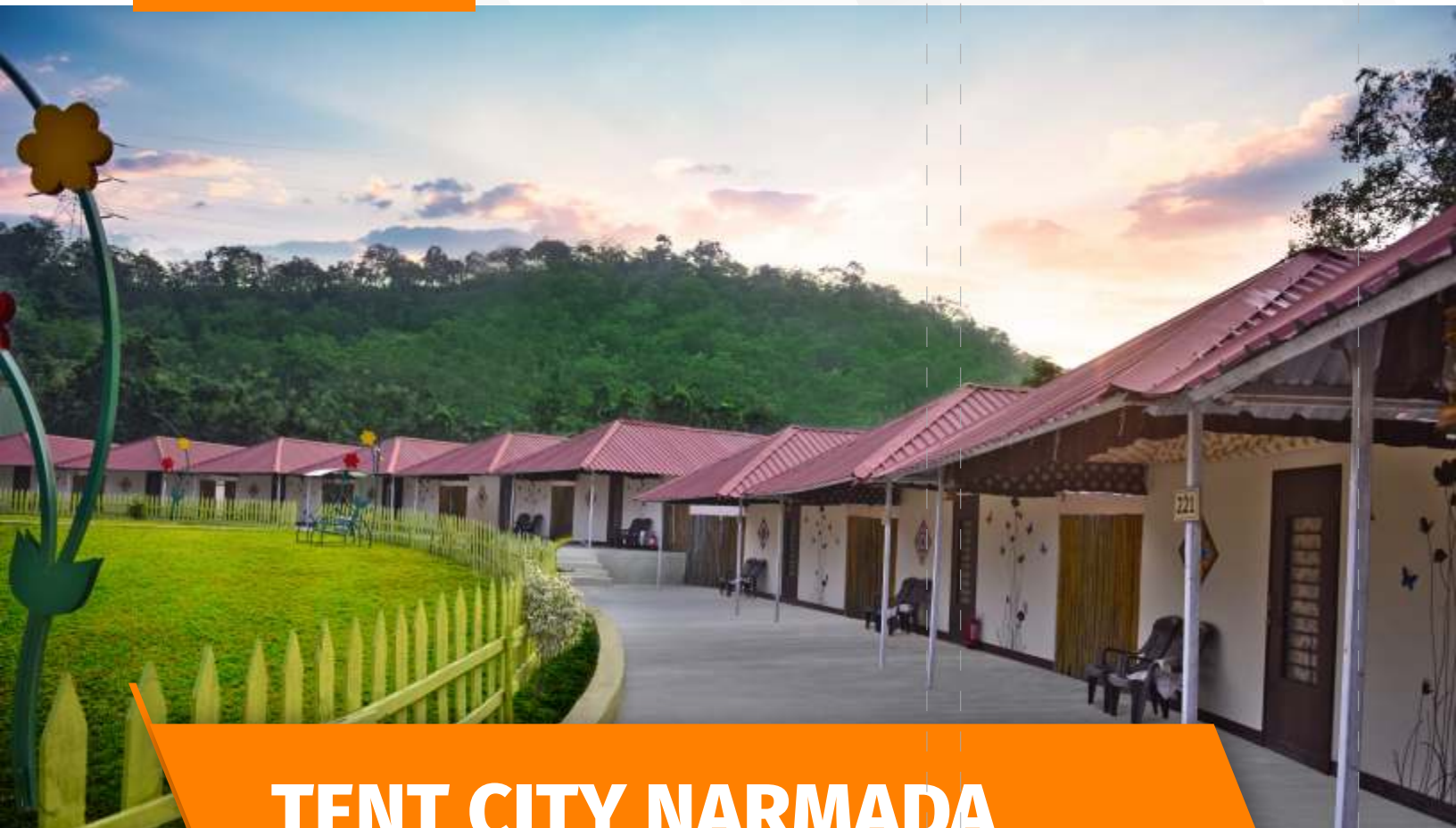
Kerala Parotta

Another Arab influenced bread is the baked rice flour pancake called Pathiri, said to have evolved as a result of the mixing of Arabs with the local population. It is often served with beef and other meat curries at the houses of the Moplah or Mapilla Muslim community of Northern Kerala and neighbouring areas like Mangalore in Karantaka. The Pathiri is regularly served during Iftar in the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Thin wheat Pathiri pastry is also stuffed with spicy meats and made into small bites. ■



White Rice Puttu





TENT CITY NARMADA

Emerges as a Preferred Conference Venue
with one more high profile conference to its name






Tent City Narmada successfully hosted 'Aarambh 3.0 - 96th Foundation Course' on 11-12 January, 2022. With the theme 'Moving towards a Sustainable \$5 Trillion Economy', the Event was attended by Officer Trainees (OTs) of the Indian Civil Services at LBSNAA.

Aarambh was started as part of the 94th Foundation Course in 2019, where officer trainees from 20 services participated in a week-long program at Tent City Narmada, Kevadia, Gujarat.

Tent City Narmada, operated and managed by Praveg Communications India Limited for Gujarat Tourism, possesses a track record of successfully organizing large-scale government events that are attended by VVIP

delegates like state heads and country heads.

A spectacular collection of 200 air-conditioned tents, Tent City Narmada sprawls across an area of 50,000 sq.m with a fascinating backdrop of hills, wooded areas and fresh air. Modern amenities like room décor and services, delectable cuisines by a five star hotel chain, professional and humble staff, a wide array of entertainment and cultural programs and sightseeing tours add to the charm.

Redefining the concept of 'Business with Leisure', Tent City Narmada is an ideal conference venue well-equipped with modern amenities and three sophisticated conference halls that can host 100-1000 guests. 



Far Far Away

THE INCENSE OF KINGS

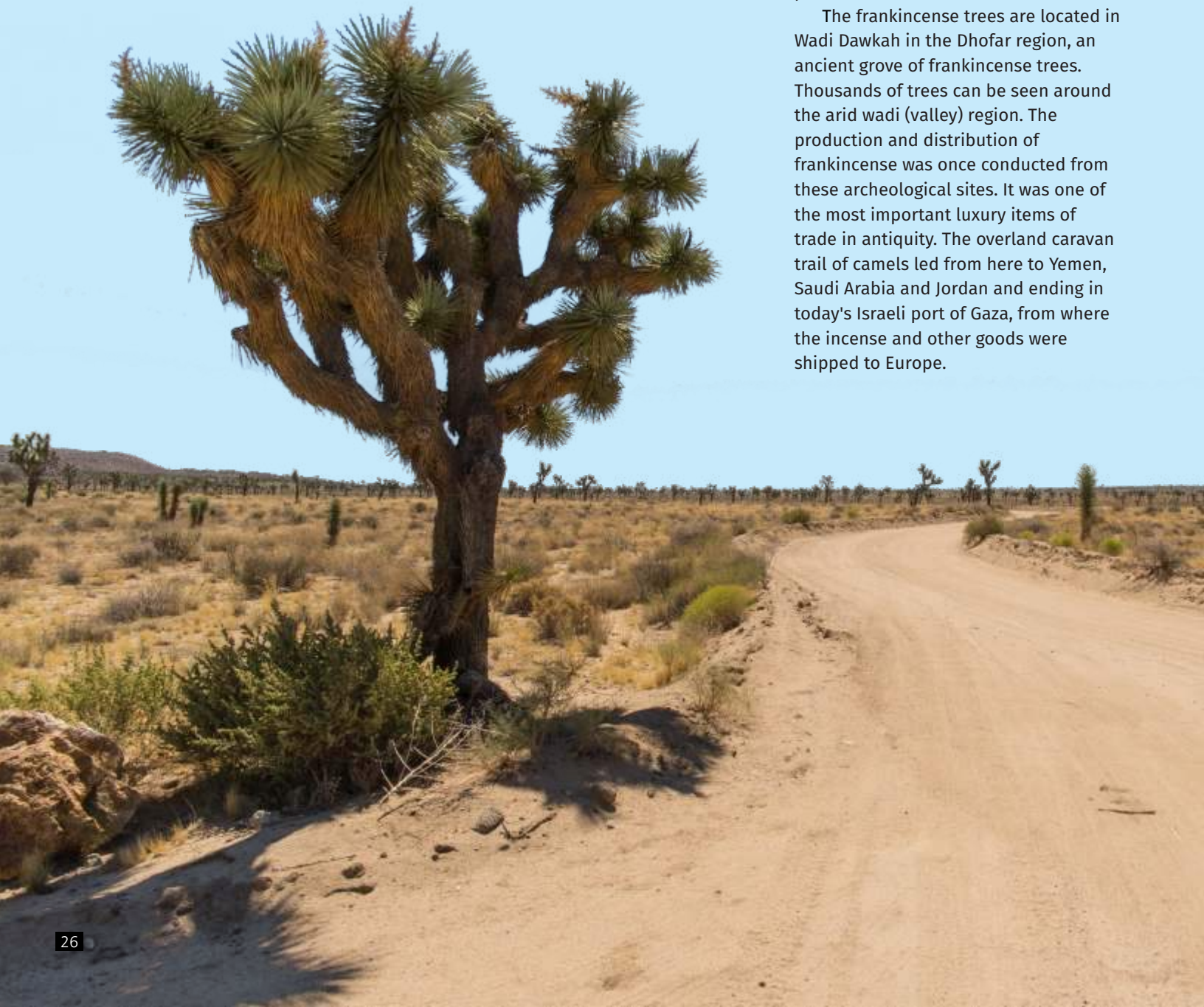
It was one of the gifts the three wise men carried, when they went in search of infant Jesus. Some believe that it was the first substance to have been traded on a worldwide basis. It is believed that this substance alone was

responsible for creating the trade routes linking the Middle East to India and China in the east and the Mediterranean countries in the west. For the people of Oman, it is a symbol of life. The substance is frankincense.

The frankincense trees of Wadi Dawkah, the remains of the oasis of Shisr in Wubar and the nearby ports of Khor Rori and Al-Baleed, are all evidence of the trade in frankincense that flourished in this region from ancient times. It is on the UNESCO world heritage list, as one of the most important trading activities of the ancient and medieval world.

Frankincense is a hardened gum-like material (resin) that comes from the trunk of the Boswellia tree. The trees start producing resin after about 8 to 10 years. Tapping is done two to three times a year, just as it is done in rubber plantations.

The frankincense trees are located in Wadi Dawkah in the Dhofar region, an ancient grove of frankincense trees. Thousands of trees can be seen around the arid wadi (valley) region. The production and distribution of frankincense was once conducted from these archeological sites. It was one of the most important luxury items of trade in antiquity. The overland caravan trail of camels led from here to Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Jordan and ending in today's Israeli port of Gaza, from where the incense and other goods were shipped to Europe.

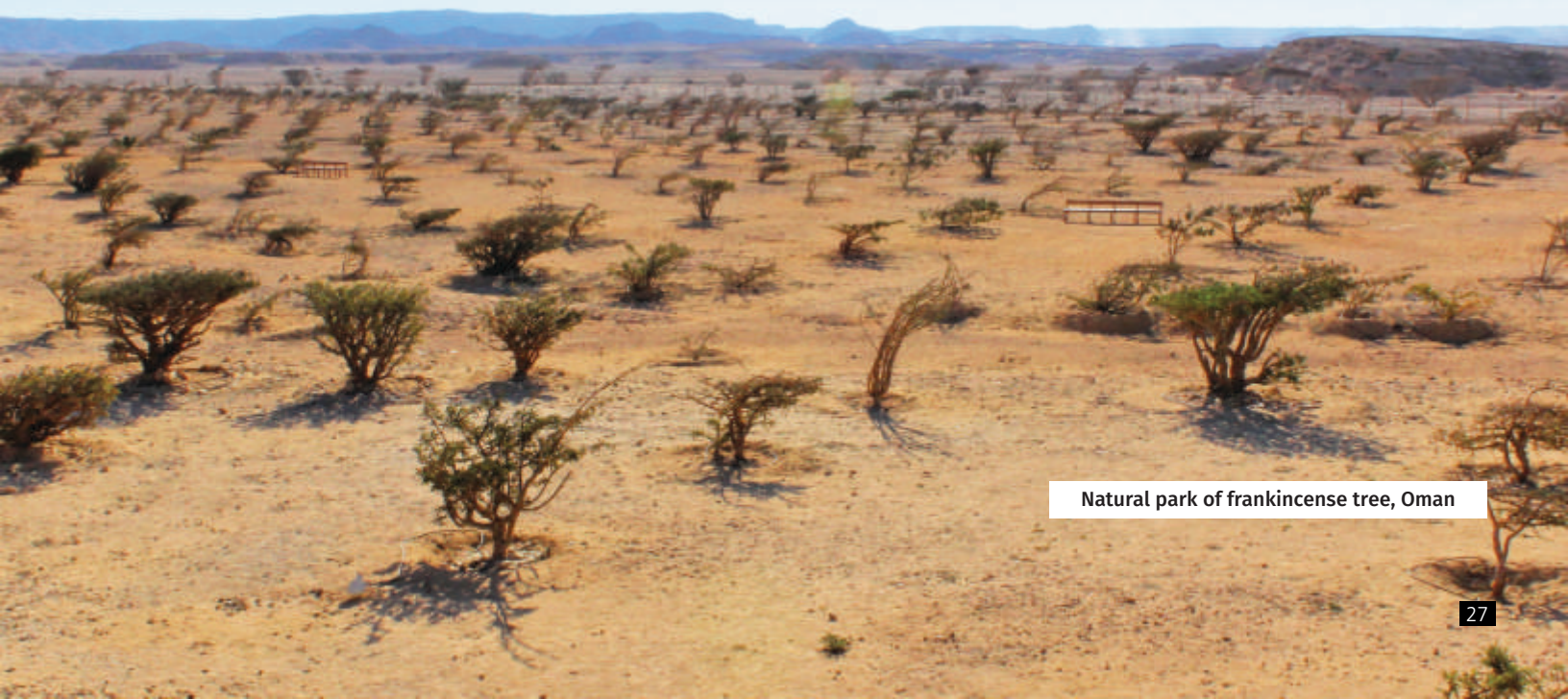


Frankincense is a hardened gum-like material (resin) that comes from the trunk of the Boswellia tree. The trees start producing resin after about 8 to 10 years. Tapping is done two to three times a year, just as it is done in rubber plantations.



It is believed that the production and distribution of this incense go back to more than 5000 years - from the Neolithic to the late Islamic period. Frankincense has always been an integral part of Oman's culture and heritage. Most frankincense comes from the Horn of Africa, India, Yemen, West Coast of Africa and Oman. The best frankincense grows on the desert plateau of the Dhofar region of southern Oman. The country has a reputation for producing superior quality frankincense meant for the royalty. The climatic conditions of extreme heat and the alluvial bed are ideal for the frankincense to grow. The Dhofar ranges with desert/semi desert conditions scrub are an ideal habitat for growing high-quality frankincense trees.

The intrinsic value of frankincense can be gauged by its extensive use across the world. Alexander the Great had imported huge quantities of incense from here. It was used by the Egyptians to cleanse the body cavities in the mummification process; used in Persian and Ayurvedic medicines; the people of Abrahamic religions (Christians, Jews, Muslims and others) used it to cleanse the house or building of bad or evil influence; It is therefore also used in exorcisms; it is given as a sign of divinity. In the New Testament, it was one of the three gifts presented to the Christ Child. It was given as an acknowledgement of Jesus' priesthood. It is possible but not certain, that the frankincense presented to baby Jesus originated in Oman.



Natural park of frankincense tree, Oman

Khor Rori is the port of the ancient fortified city of Sumhuram. It was a natural harbor, which was founded in the 3rd century BC. A bustling port that catered to all kinds of trade, particularly frankincense. The presence of bronze vessels and pottery and other artifacts indicate the port's trading connections with India, China and Europe. However, the gradual formation of a sandbar across the mouth of Khor Rori sealed the fate of this once thriving port. It was finally abandoned in the 5th century. The ruins of the port are still visible.

After the decline of Khor Rori, the port of Al Baleed rose into prominence in the 8th century for the frankincense trade. Though the town was heavily fortified, it was attacked and destroyed on several occasions. By the late 15th century, with the ascendancy of Portuguese maritime power in the region, the importance of this port began to decline. The port did not last beyond the 16th century AD.



The Ruins of Khor Rori



The Ancient City of Ubar, Shisr



In February 1992, an ancient bedouin Well in Shisr in the Dhofar province was discovered. It was believed to be the rich ancient city that traded in frankincense thousands of years ago. More excavations revealed octagonal shaped stone walls, remnants of tall mud-brick towers, and rooms with frankincense burners and thousands of pieces of pottery were found here. Shisr was an agricultural oasis and caravan site on the trade route. It was an important station as a source of water supply for the traders coming from the hinterland to the ports along the coast with their cargo of incense. It was once a thriving city. Col Thomas Edward Lawrence, more popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia romanticized the place by dubbing the city as "The Atlantis of the Sands," after the legendary sunken continent. It is believed that the city was destroyed during a disaster in A.D. 100. There appears to be evidence that the city fell into a sinkhole and remained neglected and forgotten over many millennia.

Cities rise and fall. When histories are reconstructed from the remnants, we get an intriguing glimpse of their glorious past and understand the various interconnected events associated with it. Historical remains need to be preserved. By delving into the past, we trail the glory of bygone times. 10





INDIAN VILLAGE THEATRE

From Gujarat to Assam, there are many folk dramatic traditions in India. They range from temple dance dramas to folk forms for entertaining the villagers. We look at a few that tourists can enjoy on World Theatre Day.

LEARN ABOUT KOODIYATTAM IN IRINJALAKUDA

Koodiyattam is a traditional performing art form in the state of Kerala. It is a combination of ancient Sanskrit theatre with elements of Koothu, an ancient performing art from the Sangam era. It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The main actor is a Chakyar who performs the ritualistic koothu and koodiyattam inside the temple or in the koothambalam. Chakyar women, Illotammas, are not allowed to participate. Instead, the female roles are

played by Nangyamma. Koodiyattam performances are often lengthy and elaborate, ranging from 12 to 150 hours spread across several nights. A complete Koodiyattam performance consists of three parts.

The best place to know more about this folk theatre is Natanakairali, an institution in Irinjalakuda. The legacy of Koodiyattam is kept alive at Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam in Irinjalakuda. You can also check about Kathakali and Koodiyattam performances of the Margi Theatre Group in Thiruvananthapuram.



Source: Santhosh Varghese/Shutterstock



Source: Santhosh Varghese/Shutterstock

ATTEND A YAKSHAGANA PERFORMANCE IN UDUPI

Yakshagana is a popular folk theatre form of Karnataka, and also prevalent in the Kasaragod district of Kerala with a long history of nearly four hundred years. It is a unique harmony of musical tradition, eye-catching costumes, and authentic styles of dance, improvised gestures and acting, with its dialogue holding a wide appeal. The

themes are generally derived from the mythological stories and epics. Traditionally presented from dusk to dawn, this folk theatre is predominantly seen in the coastal districts of Karnataka.

Yakshagana Kendra is a centre where students learn Yakshagana through Guru-Shishya parampara of oral- verbal teaching and learning. You can check with them for performances by Yaksha Ranga, the troupe of the centre.



ATTEND A RAAS LEELA PERFORMANCE AT MAJULI



Source: [shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)

Raas Leela is the story of the life of Lord Krishna presented in the performing art form. The folk theatre of Raas Leela as mentioned in the 'Bhagavata Purana' depicts a blissful story with Bhakti Rasa. The narrative talks about the Raasa Leela that takes place one night when the Gopis of Vrindavan, upon hearing the sound of Krishna's flute, sneak away from their households and families to the forest to dance with Krishna throughout the

night, which Krishna supernaturally stretches to the length of one kalpa, a Hindu unit of time lasting approximately 4.32 billion years. In these traditions, romantic love between human beings in the material world is seen as a reflection of the soul's original, ecstatic spiritual love of Krishna, God, in the spiritual world.

One of the best places in Assam to watch this tradition is Majuli, the world's largest river island. This island on the

Brahmaputra is considered the cultural heart of Assam and is the centre for monastic Vaishnavism. Raas Leela in Majuli is observed and celebrated at the different Satra institutions, permanent community halls and in temporary stage pandals arranged by the organisers. The Raas festival is usually held on the full moon day (Purnima) in the months of October-November (Kati-Aghun). There are many such events from October to November.





WATCH A RAMALILA AT RAMNAGAR



From Ramnagar near Varanasi to Saraiharkhu near Jaunpur, there are many places that are known for their Ram Lila performances. At Ramnagar, it can be a 31-day event, where the entire Ramacharitmanas is recited. A number of stages have been constructed, each named after the major sites of events in the Ramayana epic like Ashok Vatika, Janakpuri, Panchavati, Lanka etc. during the performance. Ramnagar turns into a giant open-air set, and the audience moves along with the performers with every episode, to the next location. The audience joins the chorus so that the spectators are participating and the crowd is a part of the play.

ATTEND BHAVAI AT AMBAJI

Bhavai, also known as Vesha or Swang, is a popular folk theatre form of Gujarat and also other states like Rajasthan. Bhavai is partly entertainment and partly a ritual offering made to Goddess Amba. In the courtyard of the Ambaji temple near Mount Abu the Navratri festival is celebrated with Bhavai performances. Amba is the presiding deity of Bhavai.



Source: Rudra Narayan Mitra/Shutterstock



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WATCH A TAMASHA IN MAHARASHTRA



Tamasha is a popular folk art that originated in rural Maharashtra, created by Ram Joshi in the 18th century, a man well versed in Sanskrit and Marathi with Marathi writer Moropanta. They created a form of singing known as Lavani, which forms the core of Tamasha. Lavani is a musical dance performance by women moving to the beats of the dholki, attired in gaudy paithani sarees, and wearing heavy ghungroos.

Tamasha is a form of theatre, with a heavy focus on music and dance. It is famous for carrying lyrics with a double meaning, with soft erotic themes and dance movements. Traditionally tamasha had dancers known as Nachya, a poet known as Shahir who was also the Sutradhar, and a Vidushaka or jester.

You can see Tamasha performances in villages of Maharashtra. 📺



Source: JIN STUDIO/Shutterstock

Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI

Incredible India

Wildlife Holidays IN INDIA

On World Wildlife Day in March, we look at some of the best wildlife holiday destinations in India.





TIGER TRAIL IN CENTRAL INDIA

One of the most important tiger reserves in India, the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve is located in three ranges: Moharli, Tadoba and Kolasa in West Chandrapur Forest Division. The Tadoba National Park was declared in 1955 and is one of the oldest national parks of India, and with the Andhari National Park it forms a 62,540 hectare tiger reserve. The park is said to get its name from a ruler named Taru who was killed by a tiger and has a shrine in his memory – a tribal fair is held in his name in December-January. The reserve comprises of Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests, which are interspersed with several large meadows that attract large herds of deer and Indian bison. The park checklist includes 41 species of mammals, 30 species of reptiles, 5 species of amphibians, 74 species of butterflies, 26 species of spiders, and 23 species of fishes. The Tadobalake, Kolasa and Jamni lakes here are visited by large flocks of winter migratory birds. Moharilake on the outskirts also attracts birds. The lesser adjutant is one of the many interesting birds seen here. The park drives in Tadoba are excellent for watching mammals. There is a good chance of seeing tiger, leopard and sloth bear. Other mammals worth looking for Indian bison, nilgai, dhole, striped hyena, small Indian civet, jungle cats, sambar, spotted deer, barking deer and four-horned antelope. Tadoba has a wide choice of good quality accommodations including resorts, camps and lodges.





Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, Chandrapur

Source: Sourabh Bharti/Shutterstock

From here, drive to Pench National Park, which is one of the premier tiger reserves of India straddling across two states - Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Meghdoot dam built across Pench River at Totladoh has created a large water body of 72 sq. km. out of which 54 sq. km. falls in M.P. and rest in the adjoining state of Maharashtra. As summer approaches, the water recedes leaving behind lush green meadows which are excellent for viewing sambar, spotted deer, nilgai, wild boar, Indian bison and other herbivores. Pench is the hunting ground of tiger, leopard, dhole or wild dog, jungle cat and small Indian civet. The Bor Tiger Reserve is nearby.







From Pench, you can travel to Kanha National Park, which is deservedly one of India's most visited Tiger Reserves. Few are disappointed by the striking beauty of the Maikal Hills of Kanha, the forested slopes of the Kanha, Banjar, Halon Valleys, the plateaux and plains covered with grasslands and low scrub, called maidans or meadows, fringed by bushes and trees.

High herbivore densities are

characteristic of these maidans. Huge herds of chital or spotted deer, looking strikingly beautiful in the dappled light of the shady forests, the larger sambar deer and the hard-ground barasinga swamp deer whose resurgence has been as much of a success story of Kanha's conservation project. These open maidans offer the best chances of seeing tiger when they leave the safety of forest cover in search of the large

deer herds.

From Kanha, it is a drive of about 260km to Bandhavgarh National Park, which is one of India's best places for tiger spotting. The national covers about 1162 sq km of forests around the historic Badhavgarh hill fort. The drive goes through lush sal and bamboo forests, interspersed with riverine forests, open grasslands and marshes. The forests and wetlands are excellent for bird watching.



Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh

MEGA MAMMALS OF THE NORTHEAST INDIA

From Bagdogra airport, travel to Jaldapara National Park, which is one of Bengal's finest wildlife reserves. Located in the flood plains of the River Torsa and other small rivers, its large tracts of grasslands offer good viewing of wildlife. The variety of habitats and many rivulets makes this is an important habitat for mammals and birds. One-horned rhinoceros is one of the star attractions. A good population of Gaur or Indian bison is another attraction. Indian muntjak or barking deer, hog deer and sambar are also likely sightings. Leopards are often seen. Indian elephant is commonly seen. There is also a population of sloth bear.

From Jaldapara, travel to Gorumara National Park, where elephant rides take you through riverine forests, savannah and other habitats in search of wildlife like rhino, elephant and Indian bison. There are also viewing towers set at

strategic places or along the river, where you can spend time waiting for wild animals.

From Gorumara, travel to Bagodra for the flight to Guwahati. As you drive from Guwahati to Kaziranga, you can hope to see elephant, rhino and birds on the way.

One of the best viewing of rhino is on an elephant ride from Mishimukh riding point. The morning elephant ride is magical, the mist rising to reveal towering stands of elephant grass. From elephant back, you can get close views of rhino and hog deer, and perhaps a Bengal florican, an endangered bird. This is also tiger habitat.

In the evening, drive in the Western Kaziranga Range, which has many oxbow lakes, water bodies formed when a wide meander from the main stem of a river is cut off to create a lake. At these wetlands, we saw the mega-herbivores -

rhino, elephant and wild buffalo, besides swamp deer, mongoose, great adjutant stork, black necked stork, bar-headed geese, ducks and herons. This is the optimum short grass habitat for the endangered Indian one-horned rhino.

For bird photograph, visit the Agoratoli Rangamatia Eastern Range. This part of the park is extremely scenic with good stands of forest, and is good for birding as also offering good sighting of river turtles. Elephant or rhino sightings are possible.

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Source: Anubhab Roy/Shutterstock



Jaldapara National Park, West Bengal

ELEPHANT VIEWING IN SOUTH INDIA

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is the largest protected forest area in India, spreading across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. It includes the protected areas Mudumalai, Mukurthi, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Silent Valley National Park, and Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad, Karimpuzha and Sathyamangalam wildlife sanctuaries.

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and adjacent areas host the largest Asian elephant population in India, estimated at about 60000.

The Kabini River is one of the major tributaries of the river Cauvery which originates near Kavalumpara in Kozhikode district of Kerala state by the confluence of the Panamaram River and the Mananthavady River. It flows eastward through Wayanad district, entering Mysore district of Karnataka, to join the Kaveri River in Mysore district of Karnataka.

In Karnataka, the Kabini runs between Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks. This is one of the best areas for wildlife viewing.

You can join a motorboat safari for sighting wildlife in the Nagarhole National Park. At times, the scene is reminiscent of the African Savannas. The river is dotted with elephants, grazing on the aquatic grass, the petrified trees protruding over the river surface covered with birds, crocodiles bask by the water, deer are gathered on the river shore for their evening drink, and a wild boar with large tusks is wallowing in the marshes by the river. A crested serpent eagle swooped down from a nearby tree - it had probably sighted potential prey in the long grasses along the river. Kites and kingfishers hovered over the water. Wagtails strolled along the edge of the river.

The boat gets close to where elephants in large numbers gather to browse the fresh grasses along the river. You can watch them pulling out the aquatic grass, cleaning each bunch, and then gulping it down. Crocodiles can be seen basking along the river.

Jeep safaris in Nagarhole National Park offer good viewing of barking deer, spotted deer and sambar deer, and rich birdlife. There are chances of seeing tiger, panther, sloth bear, wild dog and wild elephant too.

From Nagarhole, travel to Bandipur National Park, where drives can take you through a cross-section of wildlife habitats.

From Bandipur, the road to Mudumalai and Ooty is productive for wildlife viewing. Deer abound, and elephant, sloth bear or even leopard are possible.



Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka



Nilgiri Hills



Lion Tailed Macaque, Silent Valley National Park, Kerala



Leopard, Kabini Forest Reserve



Osprey, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve



Nilgiri Tahr, Nilgiri Hills



Elephants, Nagarhole National Park

LION SPOTTING IN GUJARAT

The Gir National Park and the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary together comprise a 1412 sq km protected wildlife reserve with deciduous forests, evergreen flora, scrublands, grasslands and seven rivers. This reserve is the remaining habitat of the Asiatic lion, which once roamed vast areas of Eurasia. Gir boasts a large population of both the lion and the leopard, making this one of the few wildlife reserves in Asia from where few return without seeing a big cat over a two or three day stay.



CYCLE RICKSHAW SAFARI AT BHARATPUR



Keoladev National Park

Though its official name is Keoladeo Ghana National Park, most people know it as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary - one of the richest bird areas of the world supporting more than 350 bird species and India's top attraction for birdwatchers. The wetland sanctuary was created 250 years ago, around a Keoladeo Shiva temple by the Ajan Bund

constructed by Maharaja Suraj Mal of Bharatpur in the 1700s at the confluence of two rivers, the Gambhir and Banganga. This park is a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site. The mix of habitats like marshes, lakes, acacia groves, scrublands, dry grasslands and mature woodlands in a relatively small area makes this national park outstanding for birdwatching. It is not uncommon to see

a hundred thousand birds in winter. The cycle rickshaw drivers know the likely sites for many of the sought after birds. In years of good rainfall you can also enjoy a boat trip among the birds. Deer, antelopes, jackal, mongoose, jungle cat and other mammals are often seen during the visit, and there are chances of spotting fishing cat and porcupine. The Indian rock python is regularly seen.





Jim Corbett National Park

LODGE HOPPING AT CORBETT NATIONAL PARK

Corbett National Park was established in 1936 as India's first national park. Originally called Hailey National Park, then Ramganga National Park, it was renamed in 1957 after Jim Corbett, who put Kumaon on the map with his books.

This is perhaps the only tiger reserve in India, where it is possible to stay at lodges or rest houses inside the park itself. One of the best is at Dhikala. Those staying in the lodge here can take safaris that go past grasslands called Chauras and rivers. There are good

chances of seeing large herds of wild elephant, sambar and spotted deer at the grasslands. This is also an excellent place to see hog deer. This is also habitat for tiger.



Deer



Elephants



Indian Roller



Bengal Tiger

LEOPARD SPOTTING IN RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan has some excellent places for those who want to spot leopard.

From Jodhpur or Udaipur Airport, travel to Jawai Bandh, the biggest dam in western Rajasthan. This historical dam has the capacity of 7887.5 million cubic feet and covers an area of 102,315 acres (414.05 km²) of cultivable command area. Its height is about 61.25 feet (18.67 m). Sei dam and Kalibor dam are the feeder dams of the Jawai dam. The catchment area of the Luni River at the dam site is 720 square kilometers. Driving along the dam, you can spot basking crocodiles and flocks of birds. Saras crane is often seen in the cultivated fields. In winter, large flocks of bar-headed geese and migratory ducks gather at the lake.

Near Jawai is a stunning landscape of rocky outcrops marked with caves and boulders. These are the dens of leopard or panther. Jeep safaris offer an opportunity to get views of leopard in the evening.

From Jawai, travel to Jaipur. Spread in an area of 23sq km, Jhalana Leopard Safari Park in the heart of Jaipur city is home to 30-35 leopards. Drives in the park offer a good chance of spotting leopard, striped hyena and jackal.

Proceed from Jaipur to Ranthambore National Park, one of India's best tiger reserves. Ranthambore is productive for wildlife sightings because the driving routes go past lakes and nullahs where sambar, spotted deer and even tiger could be seen drinking water, open grassy plains where herbivores graze and deciduous forests.

The landscape is pretty with the Ranthambore Fort being a historical landmark. Located at the junction of the Aravali and Vindhya, there are some deep valleys. One of the best places for leopard-spotting is the Kachida Valley, where leopards stay in scrubby habitat to avoid conflicts with the tigers. It is also home to a sizable population of sloth bear.

In Karnataka, the Kabini runs between Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks. This is one of the best areas for wildlife viewing. ■



Leopard, Jhalana Leopard Safari Park



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