# DREAM DISCOVER EXPERIENCE

# GREAT EXPERIENCES AT EVERY TURN

Delhi • Agra • Jaipur

Discover the extraordinary wealth of cultural, architectural, and historical splendour of India's classic Golden Triangle



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AKHIL ANAND, DIRECTOR

# Step into the Nature of Luxury and Style



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Situated beside the road to Munnar from Thekkady, in the hamlet of Anakkara, Spice Grove is a distinctively stylish hotel surrounded by spice plantations on three sides. Enter the property through a paved driveway flanked by manicured lawns. An elegant lobby furnished tastefully with wooden furniture and chrome accessories welcomes guests. Beside the front desk, on display are folk artefacts and natural produce. Elevators transport guests to their room.

The rooms are arrayed along pleasantly illuminated The trees all around come alive at the break of dawn with corridors, all of them furnished with spacious soft beds vividly plumed birds in song and late in the afternoon, draped with fabrics in muted shades, sturdy wooden drifting towards sunset a gentle breeze settles in. Warm chairs and tables and provided with a small refrigerator, smiles in greeting, the rustle of soft silk and crisp cotton work spaces and private balconies with splendid views of as your hosts move about unobtrusively to cater to your the surrounding plantations. needs - allow yourself to be seduced by Spice Grove - it Below, beside the lobby is the hotel's multi cuisine restauis an experience of a lifetime.





rant surrounded on three sides by large expanses of glass that look out a line of trees. A beer and wine parlour offers an eclectic range of libation to guests. Outdoor, in a corner of the lawn is a barbeque corner.

In a corner, behind the hotel, a paved courtyard leads to an open to the air swimming pool with changing rooms and deck chairs. On another end is a spa that offers traditional Ayurvedic cures along with international wellness and beauty treatments.

### Spice Grove Hotels & Resorts (P) Ltd.

No. IV/426A, Thekkady-Munnar Road Anakkara P. O. Idukki. Kerala - 685512, India Phone: +91 4868 282114, 282115 mail@spicegrove.in www.spicegrove.in



### **FESTIVALS** APRIL – JUNE 2019



### Thrissur Pooram May 13, 2019

The Thrissur Pooram is considered the most colourful of all temple festivals in Kerala. It is celebrated every year on Pooram - the day the moon rises with the Pooram star in the Malayalam Calendar month of Medam. The Vadakkumnathan Temple serves as the venue for the festival

In the temple premises, figures of gods and goddesses sit atop unusually decorated elephants along with grand ensembles of Chenda melam and pancha vadyam (traditional percussion). Around 50 elephants wearing the nettipattam (decorative golden headdress), beautiful bells and ornaments, impressive Kolam with umbrellas perched atop, make for a spectacular sight.

The Thrissur Pooram was started in 1798 by Raja Rama Varma, the Maharaja of Kochi from 1790 – 1805.

### Buddha Purnima May 18, 2019

Buddha Jayanti or Buddha Purnima is celebrated to commemorate the three most significant events that influenced Buddhism. Celebrated every first full moon day in May, the festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautam Buddha.

A divine celebration, Buddha Purnima sees prayers, sermons, and continuous recitals of sacred Buddhist scriptures before the statue of the Buddha. Aromatic incense, flowers, and candles are offered, along with fruits. People also sprinkle milk and scented water on the roots of the Banyan tree - better known as the Bodhi tree - and illuminate them by lighting rows of lamps around them.



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VOL 4, ISSUE IV, JAN - MAR 2019

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Owned and published by Le Passage to India Tours & Travels Pvt Ltd, Malhan Arcade, Building No. 9, LSC First Floor, Sector-B, Pocket 1, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, India and printed on its behalf at Pritha Offsets Pvt. Ltd., B 62/11, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase - II, New Delhi – 110028.







Explore Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur with our excellent summer tour itinerary that's well priced and time-smart.

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### FROM THE CEO

#### Dear Partners,

Our desire to revisit the classics sets the theme and mood for the stories we want to feature in Inspiring Journeys this year. Our first edition of the year begins with an old favourite on India's tourist circuit. It's a 'golden' one too, because the highlights, sights, experiences, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites on this route are exceptional, exquisite, and much treasured.

Easing you into a country that can be vast and overwhelming (especially if you're new to it) our Cover Story takes you across three of northern India's most famed and splendid destinations – opening windows to a world that is uniquely moving and unforgettable.

Take in the cities of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur with our excellent summer tour itinerary that's well priced and time-smart. Enjoy quality accommodation and service, and explore key sights.

Experience faith and fellowship as India comes together to celebrate an ancient festival that marks the end of winter and heralds the arrival of spring with joy, playfulness, and much merrymaking.

Nowhere is India's food more delicious or satisfying than on its bustling streets – this is where real India lives and eats. Experience the roadside flavours of three cities and discover the country's rich multi-cultural culinary traditions.

Fascinating and bustling, India's urban nightlife scene reveals the country as a destination replete with a fantastic afterhours life. We present a quick guide to some of the best in Delhi and Jaipur.

India stands out not only for its wildlife species of astonishing beauty and diversity but also its serious conservation efforts. Our naturalist guides you through tiger reserves, a bird sanctuary, and a sloth bear rescue centre.



In order for you to discover, experience, and enjoy the full banquet that is India, our endeavour is to offer you perfect portions...with just the right balance of culture, history, people, and food.

We hope you enjoy the rich spread we have prepared for you this edition and come back for more!

With warm regards,



Amit Prasasd Chief Executive Officer, Le Passage to India Journeys

If you would like additional information about the articles published, please contact us at corporate@lepasspagetoindia.com



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### **35 AMAZING RESORTS, HUNDREDS OF CURATED EXPERIENCES** AND ONE ENTIRELY NEW WAY **TO HOLIDAY!**



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# **THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE** Great Experiences

at Every Turn

India's famed Golden Triangle is the route between three cities in the country's north-west – Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur – which are all connected to each other by good road and rail links. When plotted on the map, they form a roughly equilateral triangle, some 200-250 km along each side. Why 'golden'? Well, for the extraordinary wealth of cultural, architectural, and historical splendour that each of the three cities has to offer. Starting in the national capital, Delhi, and taking in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Golden Triangle is India's most well-trodden tourist track.

The Golden Triangle is the quintessential introduction to India: if you have never been to the subcontinent before, it is a great idea to begin here.

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### COVER STORY







### ...a city as old as time, yet as new as they come

elhi is the crux of the classic Golden Triangle of Indian tourism. The city is, for an overwhelming number of tourists, their first stop in – and their first taste of – India. Even domestic travellers usually make Delhi their base as they either head out to interesting destinations surrounding the city or prepare for a trek into the Himalayas, in India's extreme north.

The capital city of India, Delhi was once also the capital of the British Empire in India. Its richly layered history has seen a succession of empires come and go, since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It has been captured,

ransacked, and rebuilt several times, particularly during the medieval period. But it has, perhaps, received its greatest legacies from the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, and the British Empire. Their combined wealth of heritage endures in the city's splendid monuments, architecture, cuisine, and culture.

Yet, Delhi is a city that constantly renews itself. Its charm lies in its beautiful balance of the ancient and the modern. A true metropolis, Delhi boasts state-of-the-art infrastructure, is a financial and educational hub, has superb museums and art galleries, hosts some of the finest cultural events, festivals, and fairs, and is home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and great botanical beauty. A range of excellent hotels and gourmet restaurants complete its attractions.

Most of Delhi's tourist sites are spread over three broad areas – Central Delhi, the seat of

government, bureaucracy, and politics; Old Delhi, which continues to keep its rich, unique heritage alive; and South Delhi, the realm of upmarket residential spaces, markets, designer boutiques, hip cafes and restaurants, and glittering malls.

Built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Shahjehanabad or Old Delhi, as we know it now, is where the streets have no names...except mere descriptions of what they hold! But what alluring streets they are! There is the Dariba Kalan, where silversmiths and jewellers line the walls; then Chandni Chowk, the silver square; there is Khari Baoli, where the khara masalas (whole spices) fill the air with their aroma and richness; Chooriwalan, where the bangle-sellers entice you with their colourful and delicate wares; and more... With its 400 year-old web of alleys held together with great big meshes of electric cables, fascinating spice markets, old world mansions, bustling lanes, loud music, and the flavours of brewing tea and delicious street foods, Old Delhi displays a remarkable and unexpected culture; and an ambience that is a lovely blend of the past and present.

The spectacular heart of the city that is Central Delhi or Lutyens' Delhi (after Edwin Lutyens, the British colonial architect who designed and developed it), is marked by its grand buildings, ministerial residences,

spacious vistas, tree-lined avenues, and Imperial monuments such as India Gate, the Parliament, the Rashtrapati Bhavan (the President's residence), and the two Secretariat buildings. British-era Connaught Place is Delhi's famed arcade-style district boasting cinema halls, commercial establishments, retail stores, pavement stalls, bookstores, government emporia, and superb hotels and restaurants.

Experience the Delhi of a bygone time, as you explore iconic landmarks that evoke the city's rich past - the Red fort, Jama Masjid, Jantar Mantar, Purana Qila (Old Fort), Humayun's Tomb, Lodhi Gardens, Safdarjung's Tomb, Qutub Complex, Tughlagabad Fort, and Hauz Khas Complex. If places of worship interest you, then here are the famous sites to visit: the Jama Masjid, Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya, Baha'i (Lotus) Temple, Birla Temple, Bangla Sahib Gurudwara; and colonial-era churches such as the St James' Church, St Thomas

Church, and Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Delhi presents a fascinating array of goods for shoppers of every budget and interest. Silver jewellery, ittar (traditional perfume), wedding finery, spices, textiles, traditional Indian sweets, musical instruments, antiques, second-hand books and more define Old Delhi. Central Delhi's street stalls sell bargain-worthy clothes, accessories, footwear, costume jewellery, books, and even electronic goods; while its old bazaars and shops specialise in interesting Indian handicrafts. South Delhi has a great mix of swanky malls, designer boutiques, bookstores, furniture stores, homeware stores, organic products stores, flea markets, and Asia's largest IT market that sells all sorts of hardware and software at competitive prices. DELHI HAS, PERHAPS, Received its greatest Legacies from the Delhi sultanate, the Mughals, and the British empire.









### ...a marble mausoleum and astounding Islamic symmetry

gra, located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, came up on the alluvial plains between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Agra had long been a commercial and religious centre but came into its own when the Mughals established their capital here. The enduring legacy of the Mughals can be seen in the city's monuments, forts, and gardens – all testament to their love of nature, elegance, and the arts.

The city's heat, dust, and chaos may take a toll but, all is forgotten when you see the Taj Mahal, adorning the banks of the River Yamuna.

Built in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the ethereal **Taj Mahal** took nearly 20 years, 20,000 workers, and skilled craftsmen and jewellers from Samarkhand, Constantinople, Kandahar, Baghdad, Bukhara, Syria, Persia, Balochistan, and Southern India, to complete! The white marble mausoleum was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan in memory of his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal, who died tragically young. The Taj Mahal is considered to be the greatest monument to love and is also the 'Seventh Wonder' of the modern world. With its beautiful minarets, a mosque, a fountain, water canals, gardens, and exquisite precious stone inlay work, the Taj Mahal is truly deserving of its **UNESCO World Heritage Site** status.







Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the **Agra Fort** stands testament to his reputation as one of the greatest and most prolific Mughal builders. The majestic Fort's ramparts are built in red sandstone and rise up to 70 feet in height. Within the Fort's complex lie the royal harem, an area where the women shopped, the royal quarters, the royal hall etc.

Located around 37 km from Agra, **Fatehpur Sikri** ('Place of Victory') was the 16<sup>th</sup> century imperial capital of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Akbar built the city in gratitude and tribute to Salim Chishti, a renowned saint in Sikri. The saint's grave is in an exquisite marble tomb here, and is now a much revered pilgrimage spot. Fatehpur Sikri is a magnificent complex of forts, palaces, pavilions, courtyards, domes, balconies, cupolas, tanks, baths, and mosques built in red sandstone, mixing elements of Persian, Timurid, and Indian styles.

The city's remarkably efficient drainage and water-supply system speak for its superb planning and design. The highlights here are the Jama Masjid, the Buland Darwaza (the highest gate in India), the tomb of Salim Chishti, the palace of Maryam-uz-zamani, and Birbal Bhavan. The first planned city of the Mughals, Fatehpur Sikri is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The lovely 17<sup>th</sup> century **Sikandra Tomb**, the resting place of Emperor Akbar, is all elegant pavilions and cenotaphs. Beautifully carved red-ochre sandstone, majestic gateways with classic mosaic work, the charbagh garden setting, and the tomb amidst it all, rest on immaculately maintained grounds. The Sikandra Tomb is a five-storied pyramid, with artistic bays, huge piers, and arches.

Agra is famous for its handicrafts – pietra dura or marble inlay work, carpet-weaving, zardozi (gold wire embroidery, usually on silk), and handmade leather works are some of the specialties.

### COVER STORY

The land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the world combined.

- Mark Twain, More Tramps Abroad, 1897





ringed by the Aravalli Hills, Jaipur lies in East Rajasthan, on the edge of the Thar Desert. The capital of Rajasthan's heroic and fearless warrior kings, Jaipur (also known as the 'Pink City' for its red-washed buildings) is steeped in centuries of history, culture, and royal tradition. Behind its pink walls, you will find the original Old City, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Outside, 21<sup>st</sup> century Jaipur gives way to multi-storied buildings, gleaming malls, and chaotic traffic.

The Old City is flamboyant, fascinating, vibrant, colourful, and chaotic – its narrow lanes are studded with enchanting bazaars that bear their heritage with pride.

Head to Ramganj Bazaar to watch leather shoemakers at work. Tripolia Bazaar is famed for brass and steelware. Johari Bazaar has traditional jewellery shops, as well as bandhani (tie & dye) and block-printed textiles. To see Rajasthan's renowned meenakari (the Persian art of colouring the surface of metals by fusing brilliant colours was introduced to India by Persian enamellists during the Mughal era) artisans, gem-cutters, and polishers at their craft, head to Gopalji ka Raasta and Haldiyon ka Raasta lanes. In Manhariyon ka Raasta, watch lac bangle-makers at work. In the tiny Rangwalon ki Gali, bandhani makers skilfully impart bright colours to fabrics. Marble workers, sculptors, and painters are to be found practising their art in Chandpol Bazaar. Gorgeous Jaipuri quilts, stunning mojaris (a Mughal-era style of handcrafted footwear traditionally made of tanned leather, delicately embroidered and embellished), elegant antiques, and beautiful handicrafts will also vie for your attention in these charming markets.

The Amer (or Amber) Fort is around 10 km north of Jaipur. Amer was the capital of the Kachchawa Rajputs for 700 years (1037-1727). The magnificent Fort rests on a hill high above the city and offers a stunning view from the top.









Constructed in a blend of Mughal and Rajput architectural styles, the resplendent City Palace or royal complex has an excellent collection of miniature paintings, carpets, royal memorabilia, and rare astronomical works in Arabic, Persian, Latin, and Sanskrit.

Built by Sawai Pratap Singh in 1799, the Hawa Mahal is Jaipur's most famous monument. The elegant structure, with its curvilinear roofs, domes, and finials, is unusual because all ornamentation can be seen only in the rear portion of the building, giving the entire palace the ambience of a facade! But this fantastic facade has, in fact, 953 ornate sandstone windows that were designed especially for the women of the royal family – so that they could watch processions and celebrations on the street below without being noticed!



### COVER STORY



Built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1728-1734), the Jantar Mantar Observatory is remarkable for its accuracy even today! The Jantar Mantar has an extraordinary collection of complex astronomical instruments. It is the largest and the best preserved of the five that Jai Singh built.

Jaipur's undisputed attractions might be its glorious old forts, palaces, and bazaars but one of the biggest draws of modern Jaipur is the much feted Jaipur Literature Festival. Held in January every year, the Festival draws writers, authors, scholars, and lovers of literature from all over the world to Jaipur.

INSPIRING JOURNEYS 2019 | 1



A Golden Triangle tour with extensions will give you the chance to discover little travel gems and experiences around the three cities. Here, we present Varanasi and Khajuraho.

# VARANASI

...sunrise, sunset, and centuries-old rituals



Dicturesquely situated on the crescent-shaped left bank of the holy River Ganga, the legendary city of Varanasi (also called Benares or Kashi) in Uttar Pradesh, has endured from pre-Vedic times, which perhaps accounts for its air of laidback constancy.

An ancient seat of learning, culture, and the arts, in India, Varanasi is also considered one of the greatest pilgrimage centres for Hindus and is revered as one of their most sacred spots. This is the city where they come to honour – and release – loved ones who have passed on. While religion breathes through the dark, smoky lanes and crowded ghats, the 'luminous' city hides a heart of joyous peace that is quite irresistible. Varanasi today is a fascinating, endearing paradox – a city of modern shopping centres that is still surrounded by the aura of its antiquity.

The evening Ganga aarti (ritual of offering prayer to the River Ganges with lit oil brass lamps) ceremony on the ghats (flights of steps leading down to the River) is a truly wondrous experience. Brilliant lights, soulful bhajans (devotional songs), the mesmeric clanging of bells, the rhythmic chants of mantras, the fragrance of camphor and incense, the sound of conch-shells being blown, and priests performing the rituals for the pooja (worship) – all set against the stunning backdrop of the sun setting on the Ganga.

The experience of an early morning boat ride on the Ganga as you watch other boats float past, and soak in the endless ghats and temples that stand beautiful on the banks, is quite unmatched. The moment becomes pure joy when you see the first ray of light as the sun rises from the eastern bank of the Ganga, colouring everything it

touches a magical golden. See also the incredible sight of thousands of devout pilgrims, who bathe in the holy river in the hope of attaining nirvana (salvation).

Varanasi's famed Kashi Vishwanatha Temple is ringed by mandala-like layers of shrines to over 350 other gods and goddesses; the Bharat Mata Temple is dedicated to India; the Durga Temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga; and the Alamgir mosque, originally a temple dedicated to Vishnu, is an unusual mixture of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles.

Varanasi is also the pilgrimage of those hunting exquisite old brassware and bell metal utensils, the famed gold-threaded silk brocade textiles called 'Benarasi', and...musical instruments. For this is the seat of Hindustani music – the classical music tradition of North India.





he town of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh is world famous for its magnificent complex of 25 temples built in the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries

CE by the Chandela dynasty. The 25 temples, are together a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The internal and external walls of these fabulous temples are embellished with exquisite stone carvings which portray every facet and mood of life, from the erotic to the divine, the commonplace to the sublime. A week-long festival of classical dances is held at Khajuraho in February-March every year in which India's foremost exponents of dance perform against the spectacular backdrop of the floodlit temples.

The temples are divided into three groups – the Eastern, Western and Southern groups.

**Eastern Group:** First visit the Ghantai Temple, on the edge of the old village. Here you see pillars decorated with carved bell and chain motifs. Next are the Javari and Vamana Temples, both dedicated to the god Vishnu. The Vamana Temple enshrines the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, Vamana. Close by is the Brahma Temple that enshrines a fourfaced lingam (the phallic symbol of Siva).

**Western Group:** The temples here are beautifully decorated and are dedicated to either Vishnu or Siva.

Built in 954 CE, the striking Lakshmana Temple is the seat of Vishnu. The idol here is 4 feet high and has three faces (lion, man, and boar). The base is sculpted with depictions of marching armies, daily life, dancers, and even orgies! The Lakshmana Temple is one of the three largest temples of Khajuraho and also the earliest. The nearly 107 feet high Kandariya Mahadeva Temple, built in 1030 CE, is a magnificent Siva temple with a marble lingam in the sanctum. On the same platform stands the Devi Jagadamba Temple, which was, in fact, originally dedicated to Vishnu. Built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, it is especially noted COVER STORY

# **KHAJURAHO** ...of love, life, and divinity

for its sculptures of shardulas (mythical beasts with the body of a lion and the head of a parrot, boar or elephant). The Chandragupta Temple is the only Sun temple in Khajuraho and has a 7- foot idol of the Sun God Surya, dressed in an armoured coat, on a chariot. The Parvati Temple is a small shrine that has an idol of the Goddess Parvati standing on an iguana! The Vishwanatha Temple, dedicated to Siva, is the most magnificent of the group. Especially outstanding here are the Nandi shrine, apsaras (celestial dancers) writing letters, playing music, and one plucking a thorn from her foot!





### **GOLDEN TRIANGLE | SUMMER SUPERSAVER** India | 05 Nights / 06 Days

Type of tour: Culture Departure day: Saturday Validity: April 01 – September 30, 2019

The Golden Triangle is a classic introduction to India. If you have never been to the *subcontinent before, this is the perfect* introduction. The three Indian cities - Delhi, Jaipur and Agra - speak history like no other book can. See with your own eyes the glory of the iconic yesteryear, giving a sense of nostalgia and a sense of belonging. Delhi wears its Mughal and British colonial architectural heritage with pride. Jaipur, considered India's first planned city, is where Rajputana architecture shines with

its beautifully laid out parks, gardens, monuments, and palaces-turned-heritage hotels. While Agra, once the heart of the Mughal Empire, boasts the unparalleled beauty of the Taj Mahal which adorns the banks of the River Yamuna.

### DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 | ARRIVAL DELHI Arrival at the Indira Gandhi International



### **TOUR HIGHLIGHTS**

**DELHI:** Old and New Delhi come to life during visits to the Jama Masjid, Qutab Minar and the grandiose colonial district.

**JAIPUR:** Admire the magnificent Amber Fort, visit the dazzling City Palace, and see the romantic Palace of the Winds.

AGRA: Behold the love poem written in stone that is the Taj Mahal and explore the city's imposing Red Fort.

Airport with meet and greet by a representative followed by transfer to your hotel. In the evening, enjoy a welcome briefing session with the tour manager. Delhi is a bustling metropolis where the past and the present merge, and where the old and the new cities define the capital's cultural and architectural heritage.



### INCLUDED

#### TOUR GUIDE:

• English-speaking local guide in each city for the sightseeing tour

#### ACCOMMODATION:

• Five nights on twin sharing basis as indicated on a bed-and-breakfast basis

### MEALS:

• Breakfast starting from Day 2 till Day 6

#### TRANSPORT:

- Air-conditioned transportation for the entire trip
- Airport transfers

### ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

• All tours as indicated: sightseeing tour of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra

### NOT INCLUDED

- Expenditures of a personal nature, drinks and meals if not stated explicitly in the programme
- Entrance fee to the places of interest/monuments
- Any airfare, airport taxes, supplement for which are quoted separately (if applicable)
- Tips to drivers, local guides, and hotel staff
- Any service not listed above







### DESTINATION





### tour of Delhi visiting highlights of Old &

**New Delhi.** Start the tour by visiting the largest monument of Old Delhi, the imposing Red Fort (Closed on Mondays), built in red sandstone. The walls of the massive Red Fort rise to a daunting 33 metres (108 feet) above the commotion of Old Delhi as a reminder of the magnificent power of former emperors. Close to the fort is the 17<sup>th</sup> century **Jama** 

Masjid ('Friday Mosque'), the largest mosque in India. Walk through the famous bazaars of Chandni Chowk to experience the hustle and bustle of a crowded oriental bazaar. Also visit Raj Ghat, the Mahatma Gandhi memorial, a simple black marble platform that marks the

spot of his cremation.

In New Delhi, visit the India Gate, the memorial of the First World War and the road that leads from there to the President House, flanked by the houses of Parliament, the Secretariat building followed by the Humayun's Tomb, also known as the forerunner of the Taj Mahal. End your tour by visiting the **Qutub Minar**, the tallest brick minaret of its kind in the world.

• Overnight in Delhi hotel on a bed-andbreakfast basis.

DAY 3 | DELHI - JAIPUR (235 km - 5.5 hrs) Depart for Jaipur after breakfast at the hotel, arriving in the 'Pink City', as it is popularly known, at about lunchtime. Check-in on arrival with the rest of the afternoon at leisure.

• Overnight in Delhi hotel on a bed-andbreakfast basis.



#### DAY 4 | JAIPUR

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a **morning tour of Amber Fort.** Located on a spur overlooking a lake, the Amber Fort's robust, time-ravaged walls appear imposing from the outside but hide an interior packed with beautifully decorated palaces and temples, and landscaped gardens. Be dazzled by the Sheesh Mahal, a room with all the four walls and the ceiling completely embedded with glittering mirror pieces. Admire the frescoes of the Ganesh Pol gate and the colonnade of the **Diwan-i-Aam**.

Return to the old city to visit the **City Palace** and the beautiful palaces within, such as the Chandra Mahal and Mubarak Mahal, and the intricately decorated Peacock Gate. Also of interest is the Armoury Museum, which houses an impressive collection of antique weapons such as blunderbusses, flintlocks, swords, rifles, and daggers, which belonged to the royals.

Continue to **Jantar Mantar**, the astonishing largest stone astronomical observatory in the world. Consisting of 14 major geometric devices for measuring time, predicting eclipses, tracking stars in their orbits, ascertaining the declination of planets and determining the celestial altitudes, the observatory is a major attraction in Jaipur.

Finish your tour with a stop at the spellbinding Hawa Mahal or **Palace of the Winds** (photo stop) and the famous **Johari Bazaar** famous for its jewels and saris, the Tripolia Bazaar with bronzes, sculptures, and lacquerware, the Bapu Bazaar renowned for its perfumes and textiles, and the Chandpol Bazaar for pottery and bracelets.

 Overnight in Jaipur hotel on bed-andbreakfast basis.

DAY 5 | JAIPUR – AGRA (250 km – 6 hrs) Take to the road after breakfast at the hotel, driving to Agra on the banks of the River Yamuna. Check-in on arrival. Agra rose to fame in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the capital of the Mughal Empire and was beautified with gardens, waterfalls, bathhouses and canals. In modern times, the city houses a thriving crafts industry, including marble inlay work and carpets.

• Overnight in Agra hotel on bed-andbreakfast basis.

### DAY 6 | AGRA – DEPARTURE DELHI (200 km – 3 hrs)

After breakfast, go on a **sightseeing tour** of Agra. Your first stop is the awe-inspiring Taj Mahal. Built in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century by the heartbroken Shah Jahan following the death in childbirth of his queen, Mumtaz Mahal, this mausoleum is an eternal love poem written in stone. Admire the intricacy of the work of the 20,000 craftsmen who were brought from Persia, Turkey, France, and Italy to build this astonishing monument. (Closed on Fridays). Continue the tour and visit the Agra Fort, whose forbidding red sandstone battlements hide a number of majestic Mughal palaces. Explore the delightful Diwan-i-Am (Hall of Public Audience) where once the emperor sat on his throne to address his people, and the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience) where he hosted kings and foreign dignitaries. The white marble Mina Masjid (Heavenly Mosque) stands in contrast to the rest of the Red Fort. Afterwards, you shall be driven back to Delhi and transferred to the airport to board your flight for your onward journey.

• Breakfast included.

### END OF SERVICES

The above tour starts at US \$149 per person on a twin share. If you would like to know more details and the applicable T&C, contact us at corporate@lepasspagetoindia.com

### DESTINATION



### FLYP@MTV

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### **HEADPHONES**

# **STEPPING OUT:** India's Urban Nightscapes

HOW DID IT GET SO LATE SO SOON?" - DR. SEUSS

# DELHI

– more than enough to keep your evenings exciting and busy. Live gigs, open-air terraces, dizzying discos, relaxing lounges, fabulous restaurants, and even visiting international acts – Delhi boasts all this and is what you fancy or a cosy lowfor everyone. Here's a quick guide to just the sort of thing you may be looking for.

### CITY LIGHTS

outlet has come up in the heart of South Delhi. Need we say more?

### THE FOOD AND BOOZE EXCHANGE

offers the thrill of the stock market and the pleasant ambience of a lounge. The prices of the drinks are not fixed and the fluctuations are displayed on huge screens – just like the stock market.

### SMOKE HOUSE DELI

### **OUT OF THE BOX**

highly popular bar in Hauz Khas with a terrace faces a lake There aficionados. Out of the Box American, Chinese, and European cuisines.

### **KYLIN SKY BAR**

Everything is just so perfect about this setting, live sushi and teppanyaki counters, foot-tapping music, and absolutely more can one ask for? At least, most people don't.

### **KITTY SU**

Central Delhi, Kitty Su has hosted some of the biggest names in EDM (Electronic Dance Music). The décor is a stunning and interesting fusion of uber-modern and old-world elements. The place is simply



# JAIPUR

There is much more to Jaipur than just sightseeing and shopping. The Pink City has definitely come of age and now woos party animals, insomniacs, and other fun seekers in good measure with its fine collection of bars, restaurants and discos.

...Getting wild at a snazzy nightclub, enjoying drinks at a stunning rooftop bar or spending a lazy evening over hookah at a lounge – Jaipur has something for every



### F BAR & LOUNGE

### STEAM -TAJ RAMBAGH PALACE

station – complete with a steam engine





### GRUNGE. THE FASHION AND MUSIC LOUNGE



### 100% ROCK

### AZA

### CITY LIGHTS





### SALSA LOUNGE BAR



# THE GREAT LEVELLER

### TO OTHER COUNTRIES, I MAY GO AS A TOURIST, BUT TO INDIA, I COME AS A PILGRIM. - MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR

ife is a wonderful journey, and in this land of plenty, it is celebration every step of the way.

All over India, Holi is celebrated during the Phalgun month (roughly between end-February and mid-March) of the Hindu calendar. Marking the end of winter and heralding the arrival of spring, Holi, in an agrarian society, is symbolic of thanksgiving for a good harvest and fertility of the land – a sign of the new life and energy of the season.

The ancient festival (finding references in Indian texts from as early as the 3rd century CE) commemorates events from Hindu mythology involving demons and deities. The mythological stories surrounding Holi may vary from region to region but all of them essentially celebrate the triumph of good over evil, the conquest of the spirit over the flesh; and the deeper message that those who seek to torment the faithful will be destroyed.

Holi is all about joy, playfulness, and much merrymaking. The exuberant festival brings people together and reminds them how important human relationships are.

Social and cultural barriers are cast aside, differences of faith are forgotten, inhibitions are shed, broken bonds are



rebuilt, distinctions of age and gender are suspended, and all is forgotten and forgiven as people seem to riot in the streets with water pistols, paint-filled balloons, and clouds of powdery pigments!

Anyone and everyone is fair game, friend or stranger, rich or poor, man or woman, children and elders. Celebrations take place in streets, homes, parks, temples etc. Groups playing traditional drums and other musical instruments move from place to place, sing, dance, and smear each other with colours. The occasion is also a time for families and friends to get together, give gifts, and eat delicious food – prepared especially for Holi.





The festival has come to be woven into all the great mythic cycles: of cowherd-god Krishna, of ascetic-lover Siva, of the Lord of Nanak, and the Buddha...

In South India, the festival is celebrated by worshipping Kaamadeva, the God of love. According to legend, Kaamadeva shoots Siva with a love arrow to break Siva's meditation and entice him to take an interest in worldly affairs. In the East, especially West Bengal. Holi is known as Dol Jatra or Dol Purnima. The festival is celebrated by placing the idols of Krishna and his consort on a beautifully decorated palanguin which is then carried through the streets.

Another interesting ceremony is the 'breaking of the pot' practiced in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. A pot of buttermilk is hung high on the streets, inviting boys and men to form a human pyramid to break the pot with their head. All the while women try and dissuade them by throwing water on them. The tradition has its roots in the story of Krishna as a child. Krishna loved butter and would do all he could to steal it from any house in the village; and the womenfolk would try and keep it out of his reach!

For the Sikh community, Holi is a celebration of their martial skills and military prowess. They call it Hola Mohalla and mark the occasion with equestrian feats at a spectacular fair one day before the festival. Hola Mohalla is held at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab.

Holi is of particular significance in the Braj region (western Uttar Pradesh state): Here, in Mathura, Vrindavan, and Barsana - places traditionally associated with the birth and childhood of Krishna – festivities, celebrations, and cultural programmes begin several days before the actual day of Holi; and it has now become a significant event in an international tourist's calendar.

In the villages and towns of the Braj region, Holi is celebrated at high octane levels. With vibrant and interesting Holi traditions that are unique to this region, the festival takes on a form that is rarely witnessed elsewhere in the country. During this time, people take a holiday and daily trade comes to a halt. On the special day, prayers are offered early morning in temples, blessings are sought, and then it is time to play...HOLI!!





### HOLI AT DIGGI PALACE

JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN



### The Palace of Colours

Spring in Jaipur is simply enchanting. Come March and a delightful time is in store for those who want to celebrate the beautiful festival of Holi in an especially earthy and homespun yet regal ambience.

Come with us as we take you away from the noise and crowds of the streets outside... in through the majestic wooden doors...and enter the vast, lovely lawns of the quietly elegant Diggi Palace. As the doors shut behind you, the garden is transformed into a riot of brilliant colours!

### Let's Play Holi!

The Diggi Palace is iconic of Jaipur and is renowned for hosting some of the city's finest cultural events - it is, in fact, the ideal setting to celebrate Holi and enjoy the bounties of spring.

With traditional drums and folk dancers, shimmering mounds of organic colour, tubs of cool water, and classic preparations of sweets, eats, and local brews, Holi at the resplendent Diggi Palace, is truly an affair to remember!

So go on, wear your immaculate whites and join us at the Diggi Palace, to play Holi...Experience pure joy as you watch the first burst of colour transform your clothes into a multihued canvas, feel the shower of petals, and the smear of coloured powder, as you soak in the comfortably intimate, old-world surroundings and make new friends...join in the song and dance, taste fabulous foods, and savour every unforgettable moment of your special time here.

### Welcome to the **Diggi** Palace!

Built in the 1860s, the Diggi Palace stands amidst its havelis (grand old mansions), structures, and gardens, on acres of land, in the heart of Jaipur. Originally the ancestral haveli of



the Thakurs (land owning noblemen) of Diggi, the Palace was also the bagh (garden retreat) of the Diggi family, and soon became the permanent residence of the erstwhile rulers.

Today, the family continues to reside at their beautiful garden estate, a large part of which has been converted by them into a splendid heritage property.

Hidden behind cool blue walls and lofty wooden doors, lies an abundant leafy garden dotted with deckchairs, and framed by potted plants and bougainvillea. Surrounding it are beautifully manicured, expansive lawns... where the occasional peacock struts his glorious stuff!

The superb architecture gives you stately. stylish, and harmonious rooms that face the lush garden, separated by sunny courtyards and covered passageways.

### **Programme**

traditional music instrument played especial Holi and a reserved non-alcoholic welcome d Guests are then escorted to the exclusive v

Now it's time to play Holi in the law can play and enjoy Holi with dry 'Gula from an organic cornflower base – the stocked with thalis (platters) of Gulaa for all!

Guests will experience and enjoy live performances, and are keenly encouraged to awaits them soon after. After lunch, guest their respective hotels

**ALL THE GREAT MYTHIC CYCLES: OF COWHERD-GOD KRISHNA, OF** ASCETIC-LOVER SIVA. OF THE LORD OF NANAK, AND THE BUDDHA.



The Diggi family ensures that every guest enjoys not only the luxurious comforts and tranquil ambience of an aristocratic home but also the warmth and welcome of a truly distinguished family.

### At Home with a **Royal Family**

Meet Thakur Ram Pratap SinghJi and his wife Thakurani Jyotika Kumari. Gracious and warm, the Thakur and Thakurani endeavour to uphold their regal legacy by not only restoring their historic haveli into an exquisite heritage property but also through the old royal tradition of extending patronage to the fine arts - every January, the Diggi Palace is the venue for the hugely popular Jaipur Literature Festival; and in March it hosts the fabulous Holi celebrations.

### Guests arrive at the Diggi Palace

They receive a special Welcome with the chung, a the Holi celebrations. At the venue, they will h opportunity to meet and interact with the hos other guests. Guests are served snacks

participate, if they want to. A sumptuous Buffet L









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*If a country's culture could be known* through its food, then India's flavours flavour beautifully complements the to be enticed again! And nowhere is India's food more delicious or satisfying

providing sustenance to those who worked odd hours. This is true in India as well.

legacies of food are classic examples of the country's rich multi-cultural culinary traditions.

In India's capital city Delhi however, the secret lies in assimilation. Delhi sits on of which street food here has benefited *immensely from the constant influences* and addition of techniques, ingredients, and spices from both the east and complex, fitting for a capital city that is both ancient and modern. This is a city newer Delhi over the earlier cities. All of them brought their food traditions with them, all were beautifully integrated into

### DELHI

Delhi's most traditional food is to originally named Shahjehanabad. In the narrow streets of Chandni Chowk secrets – recipes fiercely guarded by generations of families who live and cook here.

Either walk or take a rickshaw ride culture. Here's a pick of Delhi's finest:

**INSPIRING JOURNEYS** 2019 32

Samosa is an all flour covering stuffed with potatoes, lentils, green peas or cauliflower; alternatively with minced lamb or chicken fillings; deep fried and served with mint chutney and tamarind - a mix of dry ginger powder and tamarind sauce.

Aloo Tikka/Tikki is a fried potato patty or croquette stuffed with either just potatoes or lentils and green peas, served with coriandermint sauce and tamarind sauce. It has a crisp outside and a soft inside.

Chhole Kulchey, another Delhi delight, is a white flour bread (kulchey), served with chhole garnished with onion, tomatoes, spices and lemon; sometimes tamarind or dry mango powder chutney is added to the chhole.



Chole Bhature, a Delhi classic, is a puffed bread (bhature) made of semolina or wheat flour, deep fried in clarified butter or oil, and sometimes stuffed with cottage cheese or mashed potatoes. It is served with chickpeas (chhole) cooked in whole spices, onion, green chilies, and pickles.

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Jalebi is made by deep-frying refined white flour in a pretzel or circular shape and then soaked in sugar syrup. The ultimate jalebi is crisp on the outside, soft and chewy on the inside: and has to be had with Rabri - a sweet, slightly thick in consistency, made by boiling milk for long hours.

Paratha: Choose from a plain one or select a stuffing of your choice- potato, cauliflower, radish, eggs, keema (minced meat), banana or even last night's left over dal (lentils) the options are galore.

Rajma Chawal is a curry made of red beans cooked in aromatic spices and served hot with steamed rice.

Chaat, that iconic street snack, is made up of yoghurt, onion, tamarind, and a mix of spices. Again, there are varieties of chaat: Dahi Bhalla is made of fried lentil balls soaked in yoghurt and topped with tamarind, spices, pomegranate seeds and sev (small dried salty noodles). Papdi Chaat consists of little fried and crispy, flat wheat flour crackers with the same toppings. The other two common chaats are aloo tikki chaat and samosa chaat.



Karim's, Old Delhi's most iconic restaurant, was started in 1911, and finds mention in the Lonely Planet guide books. They serve divine mutton stew, mutton korma, mutton biryani, seekh kebab, brain curry, and assorted Indian breads - to crowds of customers who just don't seem to stop pouring in!



Golgappas are deep-fried hollow balls made of whole wheat or semolina flour. A hole is pinched into the golgappa and chopped cubes of boiled potato and mashed chickpeas are added with tamarind chutney. They are then dipped into a bowl filled with spicy tangy tamarind or mint water, and served.

Delhi's elusive but mouth-watering Ram Ladoos are made with boiled golden gram pulses and filled with chutney and radish.

But if there's one street food that sums up the magic and mystery of Old Delhi, it's Daulat ki Chaat. Actually a dessert, the sweet chaat could hold its own with the world's most outstanding delicacies!

Apparently, Daulat (meaning 'wealth' in Urdu) ki Chaat is made only during winter nights (preferably by the light of a full moon!) when gallons of sweetened milk and cream are whisked continuously

for hours into a foamy cloud which is then set by the dawn dew. The foam is carefully removed and collected in a separate dish, sprinkled with saffron, and decorated with vark (silver leaf). By morning the Daulat ki Chaat is just solid enough to be served sprinkled with chopped pistachio nuts, khoya (condensed milk), and bhoora (unrefined sugar).

Sitting in its thaal (a wide metal platter), the Daulat ki Chaat is like a soft meringue that tastes of heaven - it melts instantly in the mouth, creating an elusive sensation of cream and sweetness. The delicate balance of foam, saffron, sugar, and nuts is sublime

### JAIPUR

One of the most popular tourist and holiday destinations in India, Jaipur, known also as the Pink City, is part of India's classic Golden Triangle (the other two being Delhi and Agra) Tour. Rajasthan's vibrant capital city, lying on the edge of the state's mighty Thar Desert, shows glimpses of its majestic past in its architectural splendours and historic bazaars.

Desert land this may be but, don't doubt Jaipur's long-held reputation as a food-lover's paradise. For the city will simply win you over with its unexpected and vast variety of delicious street foods.

Eating out in Jaipur is not just about savouring excellent local food; it is, in fact, a cultural experience in itself. While some of these street foods may be available in other parts of the country, Jaipur is second to none, when it comes to sheer innovation, ingredients, and flavours. We handpick some of the Pink City's best street eats for you to enjoy.

assortment of herbs and spices, are added to the batter.

### Golgappa

Also known as phuchka and paani-puri, this spicy wonder tastes out of the world. These are small hollow balls filled with flavoured water and other fillings. What's wonderful is that you can enjoy customised gol gappas by choosing from a variety of sweet, tangy, and spicy chutneys (paste condiments).



### Kulfi (traditional Indian 'ice cream')

Sodhani Mirchi

Wada

**Boiled** 

potatoes

enhanced

with dry dhania

(coriander) and black

batter, and deep fried.

pepper, are stuffed in wax peppers,

coated in seasoned besan (gram flour)

Similar to ice cream in appearance and taste, the kulfi is, however, denser and creamier. Unlike ice cream, kulfi is not whipped, resulting in a solid, dense frozen dessert. Traditional flavours include ream (malai), rose, mango, cardamom, saffron, and pistachio. The kulfi is one of the best loved Indian desserts, so do make it a point to try at least one flavour while in Jaipur.

### Lassi (yoghurt-based summer drink)

Lassi is a blend of yoghurt, water, spices and sometimes fruit. Traditionally served in kulhads (earthen tumblers), the rich, creamy lassi is made from homemade curd (yoghurt). This incredibly simple yet wholesome drink is flavoured with kewra water and sugar, and topped with dahi ka malai (cream of yoghurt). No water or ice is added. Available in two sizes!

Have the large and chances are you will skip your next meal! Cannot miss.

### Dal Cheela (lentils pancake)

To make the cheela, a batter of whole moong (green gram) is used, lending the cheela its unique taste and texture. Onion, ginger, green chillies, along with an The result is fluffy, flavourful cheelas...served best with green chutney or even tomato ketchup.

### Chicken Tikka (bar-be-cue preparation)

This bar-be-cue dish is a hot favorite with the city's meat lovers. The tikkas come in different flavours such as lehsooni (garlic) and hariyali (spearmint). Another popular bar-be-cue dish is the tandoori chicken. Similar mutton dishes are a rage too.

### **Jaipur Omelette**

There are around 20 different types of omelettes to be found in Jaipur's street food stalls. Sounds tempting? Well, go head and treat yourself to these scrumptious omelette varieties

#### Falooda

The cold dessert is a heady mix of rose syrup, vermicelli, sweet basil (sabza/takmaria) seeds and milk, often served with ice cream and nuts. An absolute must if you have a sweet tooth. And a terrific way to bust the desert heat.



Jalebi (fried pretzel-shaped sweet)

Jaipur has its fair share of Jalebi fans. Made with flour and sugar syrup, this sweet, deep fried preparation is simply heartwarming. Truly, nothing like piping hot jalebis and milk for breakfast.

### Pyaaz Kachori (crispy fried ball with onion fillings)

Pyaaz Kachori is a specialty of Rajasthan. This fiery dish is loaded with caramelised onions stewed in peanut oil, and a spicy mixture, heavy on red chillies and garlic powder. Besides pyaaz kachori, many other kachori variants also rule the street food scene in Jaipur.



### EAT

### Sabudana Khichdi (sago porridge)

Sabudana is the local name for sago. This dry, spicy dish is made with onion, peanuts, sago, boiled potatoes, green chillies, and spices. Best enjoyed as a warm snack, it is also served with srikhand and fruit on the side. Various versions are available in Jaipur's street food stalls.

### White Korma (Mughlai mutton dish)

As the name suggests, this is a mutton dish with white gravy. Suffice it to say that the white korma has attained cult status with its unique aroma and taste.

### Srikhand (yoghurt-based dessert)

Served with fruit, this yoghurt-based sweet and sour dish is a delicacy here It is usually made with a lot of nuts and thick creamy yoghurt. You may have it warm or chilled.





#### Masala Chai and Bun-Maska (Spiced tea and bun with fresh cream)

Steaming cups of aromatic masala tea go down smoothly with the bun-maskas. For locals, this is comfort food, meant to be enjoyed with friends or even total strangers...replete with much chatte, laughter, and gossip.

### Dahi Vada (lentil dumplings in yoghurt)

Fried urad daal dumplings are set to soak in whipped creamy yoghurt and topped with the irresistible flavours of sweet, tangy, and hot chutneys (coriander, tamarind) and spice powders. Light, mouthwatering, not to be missed!

### Dal Kachori (fried ball with tangy black gram filling)

The Dal Kachori has been winning hearts for generations now! This fried crispy ball is stuffed with urad daal (black gram) cooked in spices and flavored with asafoetida. It is served with sweet jaggery and dried ginger chutney.

# VARANASI

Situated on the banks of the River Ganges in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi (or Benares) is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. No surprise that its street cuisine is as layered and elaborate as its history. Neighbouring states, including Bihar and West Bengal, have also influenced Varanasi's culinary heritage. The fascinating city, considered one of the most sacred Hindu pilgrimage sites in India, is predominantly vegetarian. Since food is an inherent element of Varanasi's rich culture, a trip to the city would be incomplete without experiencing its fabulous street foods.

#### Kachori Sabzi (crispy fried balls stuffed with curry

Kachori Sabzi is a hot favorite breakfast dish in Varanasi. There are two different types of Kachoris - Badi (big) and Choti (small) Kachori. While Badi Kachori is stuffed with a spicy lentil mixture, Choti Kachori is stuffed with a spicy mashed potato mix.

### Lassi (yoghurt-based summer drink)

Lassi is a blend of yoghurt, water, spices and sometimes fruit. Traditionally served in kulhads (earthen tumblers), the rich, creamy lassi is made from homemade curd (yoghurt).

In Varanasi, there are dozens of flavours to choose from. Fruit and trimmed pistachios are largely used to garnish this amazing drink.



shaped sweet made with flour and sugar syrup), and this is an understatement. The combination of jalebis or imarthis (a bigger version of the jalebi) with rabri (condensed milk-based sweet Malaiyyo (popular winter dish) is sheer heaven!

Rabri Jalebi (sweet dish)

of jalebis' (fried pretzel-

Benaras is often called the 'king

### dessert)

Influenced by Persian cuisine, Makhan Malaiyyo or Nimish is prepared by slowly churning milk to create a creamy texture. The milk foam is then flavoured with cardamom and saffron. Pistachios and almonds are used for garnishing.

### Thandai (cold drink)

In the searing heat of India's northwest, the tantalising thandai brings tremendous sweet respite. Tracing its roots to Mughal cuisine, the thandai is traditionally a creamy blend of milk, sugar, almonds, fennel seeds, poppy seeds, whole white peppercorn, rose petals, cardamom, saffron, and sugar.

The Banarasi Thandai is famous for its refreshing taste. Made from seasonal fruit puree, the thandai is flavoured with rose essence, dry fruit, ice-cream, nuts, pepper, fennel seeds, and various other ingredients.

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### **Choora Matar** (Varanasi's fusion dish combining elements of Maharashtra and Bihar)

Made of flattened rice soaked in desighee (pure clarified butter) and cooked with spices as well as green peas, raisins, and saffron, Choora Matar is a famous breakfast and evening snack in Varanasi.



The cold dessert is a heady mix of rose syrup, vermicelli, sweet basil (sabza/takmaria) seeds and milk, often served with ice cream and nuts. An absolute must if you have a sweet tooth. And a terrific way to bust the desert heat.

#### Launglata (a regional delicacy)

This delightful preparation is usually made during the festival of Holi but, is available throughout the year in Varanasi. Launglata has a crispy covering made of pastry dough and filled with mawa (whole dry milk), nuts, and sugar. It is then soaked in flavoured sugar syrup and served.



#### Paan (betel leaf stuffed with fragrant spices)

An after-food mouth freshener, paan is a common treat almost all over India; and in many Indian households. The betel leaf used to make paan has not only traditional uses but also health benefits it aids digestion and is believed to cure headaches even.

The famed Banarasiya Paan is something that you must try in Varanasi. It is stuffed with lime, betel nut, and various other natural flavouring ingredients such as gulkand (a sweet preserve of rose petals) and fennel seeds.

### Tamatar Chaat (snack)

This is a delightful mashed mixture of boiled potatoes, tomatoes, onions, green chillies, and fresh coriander leaves. Spices such as pounded ginger and red chilli powder are sprinkled to lend it a fiery flavour.



# **A NATURALIST IN WILD INDIA**

**S**Adopt the pace of nature: her secret

is patience. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

### **Ranthambhore**

Situated at the junction of the Aravalli and Vindhyachal ranges, the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve is a unique combination of natural and historical richness. It was declared the Sawai Madhopur Game Sanctuary in 1955, and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1973 when Project Tiger was started. It became a National Park in 1981. In 1991, the adjacent Sawai Man Singh and Kailadevi Sanctuaries were added to the Tiger Reserve. The total area of the Reserve is 1473.55 sq. km.

The Ranthambhore Fort was the centre of the Hindu kingdom that was besieged by Allauddin Khiliji in 1301 CE; and later he defeated Raja Hamir. This was when the Rajput women committed Sati (an ancient and now obsolete custom in the warrior aristocracy of North India in which a widow would immolate herself on her husband's pyre or take her own life in another fashion shortly after her husband's death) to protect their dignity from the invading army.

Later, the Fort once again went into the hands of the Raiputs and became a powerful kingdom. Mughal Emperor Akbar attacked it in 1569 and took over after 40 days of warfare. It was ultimately given by the Mughals to the Kachchawa rulers of Amber (Jaipur State)





and it remained with them till 1949 when Jaipur state merged with Rajasthan. The forest surrounding the Fort was the private hunting ground of the Maharaja of Jaipur and the royal family. They preserved the wildlife for hunting which survived long enough to be covered by Project Tiger.

Ranthambhore is famous for its tourist friendly tigers and is one of the top wildlife tourist areas of India. The Reserve also has a good population of leopards, the second largest predator of this forest. However, since both cats are dependent on common resources, and the leopard is weaker than the tiger, the leopard has moved to the periphery of the Tiger Reserve to avoid conflict. Other predators are

Educated and trained as a wildlife biologist, Vibhav brings with him 12 years of experience in the field– five years of which he spent studying the various aspects of wildlife and ecology in different national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. At Le Passage, Vibhav designs various wildlife programs and also accompanies clients on tours. He can be contacted at vibhav@indian-escape.in

the hyena, jackal, caracal, and jungle cat.

The Reserve is dotted with several lakes and these lakes support a sizeable population of marsh crocodiles. Over the years their number has increased and the reptiles are not uncommon. The areas with the lakes are prime habitat for the tigers; and often, fights take place between the residents and intruders!

### **VIBHAV SRIVASTAVA**

Tigress Machhali, one of the most famous and photographed tigresses of the world, was controlling the area with numerous lakes for long. She was photo documented as she fought and killed a marsh crocodile.

Other fauna here include the spotted deer, sambar deer, chinkara or Indian Gazelle, nilgai or blue bull, wild boar, sloth bear etc.

Ranthambhore is also famous for its avian diversity; it has more than 272 species of birds which are supported by dry deciduous forests, grasslands, and wetlands habitats. The Eastern Imperial Eagle, White Rumped Vulture, Long billed Vulture, and White Browed Bushchat are among the threatened species here.

The main entry point of Ranthambhore takes the visitors to the foot of the Ranthambhore Fort and Jogi Mahal. Near Jogi Mahal one can see



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### EYE ON INDIA



India's second largest Banyan Tree, but nowadays this area is closed for tourists. The Jogi Mahal overlooks Padam Talao which takes its name from the water lilies that grow in it. There are two more ponds called Raj Bagh Talao and Malik Talao. The lakes attract many ungulates which further attract tigers. On many occasions, tourists can witness a tiger chasing his prey in these ponds.

A hike to the Fort is also guite interesting, you can see several troupes of langurs (monkey species) jumping and climbing up its walls; and if you are lucky you can also see a leopard walking silently and stealthily on the ramparts. From the top of the Fort you can look over Padam Talao, and sometimes with a good pair of binoculars, you can even spot a tiger near the pond.

Once you enter the jungle, it starts advertising the presence of the striped predator – with the alarm calls of deer and monkeys; and yes, if you wait with patience you will certainly get good results.

Agra – Ranthambhore: Approximately six hours by road.

### Bandhavgarh

Nestled in the beautiful hills and valleys of the Vindhya hill ranges of the Central Indian highlands, Bandhavgarh is a paradise for nature lovers. Although comparatively new, the tiger reserve has a long history. The forest was once owned by the erstwhile Maharaja of Rewa. It was declared a national park in 1968, at which time the park covered an area of about 106 sg. km. the present day Tala Range. In 1984, three more ranges were added to the park namely, Kalwa, Magadhi and Khitauli, with a total area of 448 sg. km. It was upgraded to the status of a Tiger Reserve in 1993.

The main area of the Park is Tala, which is surrounded by 32 hills with a magnificent natural fort at the centre. The fort's cliffs are 800



metres high, and 300 metres from the surrounding sides. Over half of the area of Bandhavgarh is covered by Sal forests while the rest is a mosaic of mixed dry deciduous forests, bamboo forests, and grasslands. Many natural streams run through the park but only few are perennial; one of them, called Charanganga, has its origin at the base of the fort.

The forests of Bandhavgarh and its surrounding areas have been a centre of human activity and settlement for over 2000 years. The Ramayana (a major Sanskrit epic of ancient India) narrates the life of Rama the legendary prince of the Kosala Kingdom. It is believed that he stopped here (Bandhavgarh) on the way back from Lanka after defeating and killing the demon king Ravana. Two monkey architects are said to have built the Bandhavgarh fort. Later, Rama handed over the fort to his younger brother; and that is why it is called Bandhavgarh (Bandhav means brother and Garh means fort).

There are numerous manmade caves inside the reserve; they are the earliest known signs of human settlement here. The walls of the caves are inscribed in the Brahmi script, which dates back to the 1st century BCE. From that time onward Bandhavgarh was ruled by different dynasties including the Chandela kings of Bundelkhand, and later the Baghel kings who established their dynasty at Bandhavgarh in the 12th century CE.

In Central India, Bandhavgarh is undoubtedly the best place to see tigers in the daytime. Apart from tigers, the other co-predators are leopards and wild dogs. There is also a sizeable population of omnivores such as the sloth bear and wild boar. Two species of monkey, the Northern Plains Langur and Rhesus Macaque are found here in abundance. The prey species mainly consist of deer such as Spotted Deer, Sambar Deer, and Barking Deer. There are two species of antelope found in this reserve namely Nilgai or Blue Bull and Chinkara or Indian Gazelle. Recently the Indian Gaur, the largest species of wild cattle in the world, has been reintroduced here, and is now doing well.

Bandhavgarh is also home to over 250 species of birds including endangered species like the long billed vulture, lesser Adjutant, Sarus Crane, Red Spurfowl, Plain backed thrush, long tailed Minivet, and Racket tailed Drongo.

Over 600 species of flowering plants, 50 Species of Aquatic plants, and 18 species of rare plants including insectivore plants such as Drosera or Sun dew and medicinal plants such as Indian Buch or Sweet Flag, are to be found in Bandhavgarh.

A morning drive to Tala Zone of the reserve first takes you to the elephant camp that lies to the left of the road; going straight down from here, you will see a rocky outcrop with lots of fern and moss; here you might see a leopard...and if you scan the area carefully, you will see a brown fish owl. As you drive ahead, keep a lookout for the Drosera; further down the path is a shrine where local and forest department people pray for the well-being of the forest and wildlife. Soon after that you'll see a board which says 'the area of the tiger starts from here'... and you'll experience a sudden adrenaline rush! From here, take a left turn and you'll find yourself on the road which leads to the fort. Tourists are not allowed to visit the fort but one can go to see the 10th century statue of the Hindu god Vishnu reclining on his seven-hooded serpent. On the way you can see manmade caves, and if you're lucky enough, a tiger. Coming downhill, you might hear the alarm calls of the sambar and monkeys; and if you wait patiently, a tiger will emerge from the grasslands or from the forests to quench his thirst.

Returning from all the thrill, excitement, and sightings of your jungle experience, you'll see, near the exit gate, a board with a tiger's photograph. It says "Perhaps you may not have seen me but please don't be disappointed I have seen you".

### Khajuraho - Bandhavgarh: Approximately five and a half to six hours by road

Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary & Sloth Bear Rescue Centre

Located 17 km away from Agra is a bird sanctuary (popularly known as Keetham Lake) that is home to over 300 different species of birds. The Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary was declared a protected area in 1991. It is one of the most prestigious and well maintained sanctuaries of the Uttar Pradesh forest department. In the Lake are about 21 islands that are exposed in the winter, when the water level goes down. The islands support 30,000 water birds in the winter. The Black crowned night Heron, grey Heron, Eurasian spoonbill, northern pintail, northern Shoveler, Bar Headed Geese, and spot billed ducks are some of the birds found here.

The Sanctuary also houses the world's largest sloth bear rescue facility, run by an organisation called Wildlife SOS. The rescue centre houses more than 200 sloth bears rescued from the Kalandar community, which uses them as dancing bears. The centre invites volunteers to come and work for the bears, and also organises various fund raising and awareness activities.





The Royal State of Uniara

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### THE POSTCARD MOIRA

On the Birdsong estate, tucked away in the quaint village of Moira, is the quiet premise of The Postcard Moira. The carefully restored 214 year-old ancestral home promises modernity and an unmistakable Goan spirit in equal measure.



### LIVING

Lush outdoors form the perfect backdrop to the pared back, modernist aesthetic of the hotel's nine rooms indoors. Think four poster beds, brass fittings, and statement lamps. All rooms let the outside in and let a little bit of themselves out. The result? Dawn breaking. First light. And birdsong.

### **EXPERIENCES**

The neighbourhood of Moira is perfect for that one thing you've always wanted to do but never get around to. Walking. Lush banana plantations and fish mongers dot the quaint neighbourhood, along with brightly hued houses you'll only find in Goa.

### THE OTHER SIDE OF GOA ON FOOT

Set out on a heritage walk, discover Portuguese architecture, visit ancestral homes, and meet wonderful people. No-tech and slow, explore Goa the old fashioned way with an immersive foot tour narrating its past. Enjoy fresh Goan fare prepared in a charming traditional home.

### **NATURE THERAPY**

A paradise for birds and birders. Sail down to thick mangrove forests at the break of dawn to acquaint yourself with Goa's avian beauties along with expert bird watchers. The Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary is host to colourful kingfishers, cormorants, striated heron, black bittern, jack snipes, and several other bird species.

### SURF WITH LOCALS

Head out to enjoy a day of surf lessons with the locals, riding the best swells with uninterrupted views of the Arabian Sea.

### **CYCLE CITY TOURS**

The charming cycling route covers paddy fields, ancient temples, pretty churches, hidden caves, small houses and winding roads as you discover the city's past. Take a short ferry ride to Divar Island, across the historic Portuguese quarter, for some secluded riding along the River Mandovi.

### The Postcard Hotels & **Resorts**

The Postcard is a collection of intimate hotels hidden in holiday destinations across India. Each of the hotels is chosen and designed to take you to a world where holidays were simple and filled with beautiful experiences. Where holidays are slow, free of complications, and sun-kissed. Where romance and charm meet contemporary needs, both in design and impeccable service.

Neighbourhoods and local communities are the soul of the Postcard hotels. The hotels are sustainably made, the food is made with fresh local ingredients and you won't be greeted with any sugary welcome drink on arrival. Quite simply, if it is not authentic, it is not in the hotel.

The Postcard is led by a group of carefully chosen hospitality talent that has experience in the best hospitality names in India and the world. Which means, you're looked after by the best, from check in to check out.

### **PURE TASTE**

Moira's roots as an agricultural village offers culinary riches unseen in other parts of Goa. Browse through the village market, meet the old fish monger, pick up fresh spices, and carry back Goan cooking traditions. With our local village lady, prepare a home meal and enjoy a lunch of outstanding flavours.





### LIVING

There's no such thing as too much nature. Eight sun-kissed villas and suites lie in the shade of the forest, with private balconies overlooking lush gardens and the valley beyond. With their tropical aesthetic and plush interiors, they're the perfect place to rest and reinvigorate.

### **EXPERIENCES**

There's just the right amount to do at The Postcard Velha. From exploring the city's UNESCO protected Portuguese neighbourhood to surfing in the Arabian Sea, or cycling across secret island routes, there's plenty to help immerse you in a Goa you've never known before and make your stay a memorable one.

### **WELLNESS**

Nudging you to ditch your devices and detox from the daily grind are traditional Ayurveda massages and treatments that focus on



the core principles and values of this time tested knowledge system. The best part? The Ayurveda doctor and specialists are available for consultation at any time during your stay.

### DINING

The glorious cuisine of this former capital



### THE POSTCARD CUELIM

In the quiet neighbourhood of the rarely visited Cuelim, lies a treat in the form of The Postcard Cuelim. Rooted firmly in the past, this historic site is now home to a property overlooking 3500 acres of lush green paddy fields. The centre piece? A 350 year-old chapel housed inside the premises from which the hotel draws its historical and architectural significance.



### THE POSTCARD **VELHA**

The secluded world of Old Goa or Velha Goa is where you'll find The Postcard Velha, a modernist colonial hideout tucked away atop the sprawling two-acre Champakali estate. The hotel is the perfect place to enjoy the simple pleasures of Goa, and the rare luxury of complete privacy.

of Portuguese India can be attributed to its cultural heritage. Shining examples of this legacy can be found in the likes of Fish Dangar, Pork Feijoada or the traditional, spicy favourite Prawn Balchao. All of which can be enjoyed in serene and scenic dining pavilions overlooking the River Zuari.

### LIVING

The timeless style and classic elegance of Goa's Portuguese heritage is apparent the moment you open the doors to your room at The Postcard Cuelim. Rich in light, space, and architectural details, the hotel's eight rooms hark back to an older Portuguese way of life; and with views of endless green paddy fields to match.

### **EXPERIENCES**

The Postcard Cuelim is ideally suited for a number of unique experiences. The beach, for instance, is a 15 minute walk away, leaving room for early morning walks. If you'd like a walk of the more languorous or historical variety, why not try one of the hotel's guided tours? Whether it's exploring, swimming or surfing, they've got you covered.

### DINING

Fish, curry, and rice is all a Goan needs. Or so the adage goes. Given the universal appeal of all three, you'll also find them come lunch or dinner at The Postcard Cuelim. And much more. So if you're craving a Pork Sorpotel, Mushroom and Green Pea Xacuti or the day's fresh pomfret, all you have to do is ask.



### THE ROOMS AT

### THE POSTCARD MOIRA

### **THE MOIRA SUITE**

Overlooking the quaint village of Moira, the 1100 square feet suite comes with an adjoining living area, and a step out balcony. Row windows, wooden flooring and the fourposter bed, lend the suite a generous sense of space and warmth.

### **MOIRA DUPLEX SUITE**

Spread over 750 square feet, the rooms come with a mezzanine floor and can house up to four guests. A private outdoor shower allows you a relaxed bath with a background soundtrack of the rustling leaves and bird songs.

### THE POSTCARD VELHA



### PREMIER ROOM WITH PRIVATE COURTYARD

A dreamy private courtyard for two sets the 650 square feet room apart. Highlights of the room also include easy access to the sprawling gardens and the pool, all of which combine to give these rooms a distinctly spacious and airy feel.

### Perched on the first floor, the 400 square feet rooms come with an intimate sit out terrace on one side and access to the common lounge and balcony on the other. Exposed laterite walls lend an old-world charm to these spaces.

### **BANYAN ROOMS**

Modern, minimalistic, and bathed in natural light, the airy rooms open out to lush views of the garden, at the heart of which lies a striking 300 year-old banyan tree. The rooms also come with a private verandah fitted with a handpicked chaise lounge, offering the perfect space to enjoy those ambling minutes found only on holidays.

### MANDOVI ROOMS

Perched on the first floor of the villas, the rooms offer sweeping views of the hillock and the delta formed by the Mandovi and Zuari, in the distance. Spacious, exquisitely appointed, and with balconies, the rooms have a breezy home away from home feel about them.

### THE POSTCARD CUELIM

### **DR TB CUNHA SUITE**

The original room of the father of the Goan liberation movement, Dr Tristao de Briganza Suite is the most influential address you could get in Goa. It has a king-size bed, a sit-out terrace overlooking the greens of Cuelim village and the iconic Three Kings chapel.

### **CUELIM SUITE**

Located on the first floor of the hotel, the Cuelim Suite has sweeping views of verdant rice paddies. The interiors have teak and marble decorative along with a king-size bed. Designed in the original baroque style of the colonial era, it evokes sweet nostalgia.

### PREMIER ROOMS WITH PATIO

The charming Premier room offers a spacious sit-out courtyard overlooking 200 year-old coconut trees and the lush garden of Nossa Bela Casa.







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