In the last four years, UP has emerged as the growth engine of the country. We aim to make the state India’s biggest economy in terms of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

—Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh
UP’s turnaround in four years under Yogi regime

In a short span of only four years, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has stood out as an administrator par excellence by virtue of the landmark steps taken by his government for the overall development of Uttar Pradesh. During his tenure, the state has made rapid strides, thanks to a slew of public welfare initiatives, which have underlined the Chief minister’s steele resolve and firm commitment towards all-important issues such as the development of industries and infrastructure, safety and empowerment of women, the prosperity of farmers, health care facilities, education for all, convenient modes of travel, adequate employment opportunities and, above all, a fearless society.

Leading by example with a remarkable vision and hard work all through his stint so far as the Chief minister, Yogi Adityanath has emerged as a leader extraordinaire, who has dedicated his life to the selfless service of society, especially for the uplift of women and marginalised people. His numerous achievements over the past four years have cemented his image as an able administrator, who has left no stone unturned to realise the dreams of the people of his state. This year, he has presented a budget worth Rs 550270.78 crore for the speedy welfare of all strata of society. Focussing on inclusive development, it has sought to distribute equal benefits among all sections of people in the state.

Inspired and guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh has been marching on the road to development by leaps and bounds. The State has attained the top position among all states, in as many 44 schemes launched by the Centre in the country. At a time when the entire world seemed to have come to a standstill on account of the sudden outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, UP continues to forge ahead on its developmental path primarily because of Yogi Adityanath’s farsightedness and commitment towards the all-round growth of the state. His handling of a rather difficult situation arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic not only helped contain the spread of the deadly virus but also kept the wheels of economic activities moving all the time. The Chief minister’s prompt measures earned him widespread praise at the national level and beyond. Of all the institutions, the World Health Organization (WHO) lauded the Uttar Pradesh government’s management of Covid-19 as the best in the country. The reasons behind it were not far to seek.

The Yogi government’s achievements in other fields have proved to be equally outstanding. During his tenure, it has carried out the maximum work towards developing infrastructure in UP. That is why the health infrastructure did not collapse even in the face of such a huge calamity. It set up altogether 771 Level I, II and III Covid hospitals, which were made operational in no time. In the public and private sectors, a total of 242 testing labs also came up. Significantly, UP remains the only state where 1.75 lakh beds are available for Covid patients.

In fact, a leader is the one who leads from the front in the face of adversity. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath himself took up the cudgels to contain the spread of the Covid-19 in UP, having personally monitored the situation and directly holding talks with the officials. He inspired the officials to work round the clock which resulted in contact tracing of
about 16 crore people. Meanwhile, all hospitals were also equipped with intensive care units (ICUs) and ventilators. Such efforts paid off, as UP emerged as the first state to test more than 3 crore people, on an average of 1.75 lakh tests per day. Also, the biggest plasma bank in the country has been set up in Lucknow. UP also remains ahead of other states in the ongoing vaccination drive, with more than 35 lakh people taking the anti-Covid jabs till now. The Yogi government is committed to vaccinating each and every eligible citizen in the state and has established cold storage with a capacity of 2.50 lakh liters at 1,300 centres across the state.

A state is as good as its administrator. The Yogi Adityanath government has proved this adage right with a plethora of initiatives intended for UP’s development over the past four years. Owing to various beneficial schemes and other economic activities, the state’s economy also soared high registering a jump from Rs 10,90,000 crore to Rs 21,73,000 crore in this period. It now ranks only second in the country on the economic front. Once bracketed among the so-called BIMARU (underdeveloped) states, UP today is a strong and prosperous state, where per capita income has doubled. According to the latest report of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), UP’s unemployment rate went down from 17.5 per cent in 2017 to 4.1 per cent, as of February 28, 2021. The Yogi government also kept the unemployment rate under check despite facing the adverse situation. When more than 40 lakh migrant workers returned home from other states during the lockdown, the government promptly got the skill mapping of the incoming workforce done so as to provide employment to all of them in their village itself. The migrant workers were also given free ration for 15 days apart from a sum of Rs 1,000 which was transferred online to their bank accounts. Employment was also provided through Abha Atmanirbhar mobile application.

The Yogi government believes in timely action. That is why it has been laying emphasis on the construction of new expressways, highways, medical colleges and airports, which started paying dividends and a ‘Nivesh Mitra portal comprising 227 services, has been set up to attract the investment. As a result, UP which was ranked 14 on the ease of doing business index has jumped to the second spot now.

The Yogi government is a firm believer in providing good governance to the people. It has taken a firm and stringent stand against criminals with all its resources. Today, women are stepping out of their homes without any sense of fear and the common man is leading a peaceful life in a crime-free state. The government has also taken adequate steps under its avowed policy of zero-tolerance against crime. As part of its drive against the mafia, properties worth Rs 1,000 crore, illegally acquired by the criminals of all hues, have been either confiscated or demolished during the reign of Yogi Adityanath. Now, girls are also moving about without any fear due to anti-Romeo squads set up by the Yogi government. A help desk has been set up at all the 1535 police stations across the state as well. Besides, one crore women are being linked to 10 lakh self-help groups in a bid to empower them. In all, 58,758 women have been appointed as Banking Correspondent Sakhi (BC Sakhi) while pink woman toilets have been constructed in as many as 651 urban civic bodies.

As a matter of fact, the Yogi Adityanath government has been focusing on all fields, which were left unattended since Independence. Having dedicated his life to the causes of public welfare, Yogi Adityanath has been working for the uplift of the state and its people with strong determination and untiring zeal.
Health is the real Wealth

In keeping with this age-old adage, the Yogi government has metamorphosed the healthcare facilities in UP. It was amply manifested during the Coronavirus crisis in the past 12 months. Covid was an unknown enemy which nobody had any clue about. The situation was getting from bad to worse with reports of deaths pouring in from across the globe, but the Yogi government wasted no time and did everything it could to check the spread of the virus. UP remains at the top position in the country as far as the Covid management is concerned. It is entirely because of the vision of Chief minister Yogi Adityanath that the government could keep the state out of harm’s way and converted the calamity into an opportunity. Due to the government’s policies and their immediate implementation, Covid’s chain was broken and the epidemic did not go out of control in the state. While the government took on a new and deadly disease in right earnest, the Yogi government remained committed to eradicating diseases like encephalitis and Japanese Encephalitis (JE). Every year, the government runs a special vaccination campaign to eliminate encephalitis that claims the lives of innocent children.

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has lauded the UP government’s management of Covid pandemic.
- In view of the severity of the epidemic, a total of 771 Covid hospitals of Levels 1, 2 and 3 were made functional immediately.
- The state has 1.75 lakh Covid beds, more than any other state.
- Uttar Pradesh is also at the forefront of the Covid vaccination drive. About 35 lakh people have already been vaccinated.
- 30 Medical Colleges established in the span of 4 years.
- OPD has started operating at Gorakhpur and Rae Bareli AIIMS.
- Construction of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University is underway.
- Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat), 6.47 crore people from 1.18 crore families have benefited.
- 42.19 lakh people are provided insurance cover under Mukhyamantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
- Vaccination in 100% of children to eliminate diseases like encephalitis and JE. This led to a 75 percent decline in the cases of encephalitis, while the death rate has decreased by 95 per cent.
RIGHT TO BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The Yogi government has written a new text on infrastructure development. The UP government has done tremendous work in these four years. Yogi Adityanath wants to take the state to new heights. He believes that every citizen of the state has the right to health services, good roads, and other resources. The Chief minister understands the importance of roads in a state very well and that is why he has given express speed to the construction of the expressways. During his tenure, work on several expressways has gained momentum, which will bring about change in a big way. Emphasis is being laid on regional development with new airports coming up in the state. Four-lane roads are also being constructed to connect the airports. For security, the boundary walls of airports are being fenced with barbed wires.

CONSTRUCTION OF 4 NEW EXPRESSWAYS COVERING 1322 KM IS UNDERWAY.

The 341-km-long Purvanchal Expressway will soon be dedicated to the public.

Construction of 297-km-long Bundelkhand Expressway is in progress.

17 airport terminals in the state are being connected by a two-lane route.

Metro work started in Kanpur and Agra.

Plans to start light metro in Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Prayagraj and Jhansi soon.

DOING BUSINESS IS SO EASY IN UP

If other states of the country run in the matter of trade, then Uttar Pradesh simply scampers away. This statement may sound exaggerated but the fact remains that it has become pretty convenient to do business under the Yogi government. Uttar Pradesh is becoming a capable and prosperous state under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath. Once dismissed as a Bimaru (sick) State, UP has now become the second-largest economy in the country. The per capita income in the state has also doubled. The Yogi government puts job and job creation at the top of priority.

Uttar Pradesh has moved from 14th place to second position in Ease of Doing Business.

- The size of the state’s economy has increased from Rs 10,90,000 crore to Rs 21,73,000 crore in four years.
- Set up of ‘Nivesh Mitra’ Portal, for ease of doing business. It includes 227 services.
- Proposals for the investment of Rs 56,000 crore received during the Corona period.
- Help Desk set up under Invest UP initiative.
- More than 50 lakh MSMEs in just four years. A loan of Rs 42,700 crore was disbursed to the units.
Safe women, safe society

It is the responsibility of everyone in society to give protection to women. There is no kind of fear for women under the regime of Yogi government. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath does not compromise on women’s safety, identity and freedom. A fearless woman builds a fearless society. The government’s continuous efforts to ensure the safety and security of women has brought good results and women are now fearlessly and confidently coming out in all walks of life. The Yogi government knows that providing security to women is an important step towards empowerment. Through Mission Shakti, the government is also making them aware of their rights.

- Anti-Romeo squad to protect the female students.
- Women help desks have been set up in all 1535 police stations.
- One crore women have been linked with 10 lakh self-help groups.
- 2.61 crore Izzat Ghars were built in UP.
- 58,758 appointed as women have been Banking Correspondent Sakhi.
- Pink Woman Public Toilets have been built in 651 urban bodies.
- More than 1.52 lakh poor girls have been married under the Mukhyamantri samuhik vivah yojana.
- 6.94 lakh daughters benefited from Mukhyamantri Sumangala Yojana.
- 1.47 crore gas connections distributed under the Ujjwala scheme.
- 34.63 lakh mothers benefited from Pradhan Mantri Matri Vandana Yojana.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

The Yogi government is trying its best to remove the darkness of the state by providing education. It is the result of the policy and vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that Uttar Pradesh is also marching ahead in the field of education. The Yogi government is determined to provide quality education. Education requires good teachers in schools and colleges. The state government has recruited lakhs of teachers by adopting a transparent process for recruitment. At the same time, the Yogi government is opening many new schools and colleges, so that education becomes universal for all.

- Process for recruitment of more than 1.30 lakh teachers in the state.
- Establishment of three State universities, 51 new State colleges, 194 government secondary schools, 28 engineering colleges, 26 polytechnics, 79 ITIs, 248 Inter Colleges, 771 Kasturba schools.
- Recognition of 28 new universities is under consideration.
- Plan to open new Sainik School in Gorakhpur.
- For the free education of the children of labourers, Atal residential schools have been established in 18 divisions.
- Under the Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Yojana, free coaching has been arranged for the students preparing for competitive examinations. More than 52 thousand students have been registered.
Leader in providing Employment

Yogi Adityanath wants to make the slogan of every hand gets work reality at the ground level. This is the reason why the government continues to focus on all types of employment, big and small. Within four years, it began to give results. The government has separate schemes for each category for employment. The government has paid equal attention to the SC-ST category and also introduced a new employment umbrella scheme for the SC-ST category. Even in the time of the Corona pandemic, the government did not deviate from its goal of providing employment and continued to generate employment for every section.

The Yogi Adityanath government has planned to set up a modern film city in Greater Noida to give a boost to the film industry in the state. The state-of-the-art studio and editing facility will also be available here. According to many well-known filmmakers, the film production facility in the Hindi state for regional films including Hindi and Bhojpuri will throw open a new path for the progress of the state. It will have connectivity to the two international airports in Delhi and Jewar in UP.

More than 50 lakh new MSME set up in four years. Over 1.80 people have been provided employment by providing loans of more than Rs 2.13 lakh crore to MSME units.

Recorded sugarcane value of over Rs 1.27 lakh crore has been paid to 45.44 lakh sugarcane farmers.

A Crime free state

There is no bigger hindrance to the growth of the state and society than crime. But the Yogi Adityanath government has adopted a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards criminals so that every section of the society can live in peace in a crime-free state. Illegally acquired assets and property worth more than Rs 1000 crore of the small and big criminals of all hues have been confiscated/demolished. To maintain the law and order, the Yogi government has recruited the police personnel in a fair and transparent manner. The government is firmly committed not to let crime take place in the state. The Yogi government has made its plans clear by taking action against land mafias and musclemen. The Yogi Adityanath government has pushed the anti-social elements to the margins with its strict action.

Happy farmer, happy state

The Yogi government has accorded top priority to the prosperity of the farmers. Many farmers' welfare schemes were run in the past four years which benefited hundreds of farmers. During the pandemic, the Yogi government took care of the farmers and almost doubled the MSP. The Government of India has bestowed the Krishi Karman Award on the UP Government for improving the condition of the farmers. The Yogi government is working hard to realise the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to double the income of farmers. It has made big strides in this direction. Thanks to his policies, Uttar Pradesh will soon achieve this goal. The Yogi government has underlined its resolve by increasing the MSP by almost double.
Agra
LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Rewa
A TALE OF TIGERS

Goa’s Best Restaurants

Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh is all about unspoilt beauty

REDISCOVERING INDIA
THE LITTLE THINGS WE DO FOR A GREENER FUTURE.

OUR LITTLE THING IS TO SAY NO TO CHEMICALS IN OUR EAST INDIA LEATHERS. WHATS YOUR LITTLE THING WE CAN DO TOGETHER?
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The beauty of India is that it is a destination with almost limitless possibilities. The last one year has forced us all to take a closer look at it. This is, possibly, one of the more positive outcomes of a pandemic which seems to have—implausible though it may seem—changed the course of humanity forever. We at Outlook Traveller like to count our blessings.

This issue we set about rediscovering India. It was a revelation, from the white tigers of Rewa in Madhya Pradesh to an eco-friendly farmstay near Srinagar that is all about hope. Goa is a culinary gift that keeps on giving, and we bring you our pick of the 10 best standalone restaurants of the moment. Besides that there is a compact list of destinations from across the length and breadth of India to give you all the travel inspiration you need for the summer holidays.

But perhaps the biggest surprise of this issue is Agra. Who would have thought Agra has a life beyond the Taj Mahal, so much so that we bypassed the monument completely? Not only did we discover hidden and forgotten monuments but also a buzzing city with a street food scene worthy of reverence. Wildlife safaris on the Chambal River are not too far away either. Surprises like these ensure that travel never loses its appeal.

Now that the vaccination drive is in full swing, there is more than a glimmer of hope that travel—so essential to our well-being, as we’ve painfully realised in recent times—will make a full comeback, this time in a sustainable and more responsible avatar. If nothing else, it will certainly make people more confident about travelling. The poet T.S. Eliot called April the cruellest month. For once, we hope he’s proved wrong.

Amit Dixit @omitdixit

Rediscovery of India

Who would have thought Agra has a life beyond the Taj Mahal, so much so that we bypassed the monument completely?

The World Below Zero Fahrenheit
Suhas Munshi

This book captures a crucial moment in the contemporary history of Kashmir, after Article 370 was abolished.

Up Next
The Automobile: An Indian Love Affair
Gautam Sen

3 things I did this month

- Saw the world’s most beautiful sewage pumping station in Varanasi
- Went on a heritage walk in Kolkata led by Husna-Tara Prakash of Glenburn Penthouse herself
- Had a fine Bengali lunch with art connoisseur Bomti Iyengar at his home

Something I ate

- A sumptuous Odia thali at Novotel New Delhi Aerocity rustled up by the über-talented duo of Alka Jena and Madhulika Dash

CROSSED OFF MY READING LIST

The World Below Zero Fahrenheit
Suhas Munshi

This book captures a crucial moment in the contemporary history of Kashmir, after Article 370 was abolished.

UP NEXT
The Automobile: An Indian Love Affair
Gautam Sen

OUTLOOK TRAVELLER

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Welcome to a journey you’ve never imagined

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5 nights/6 days
Visit: Jeddah, Yanbu, Umluj

Highlights of Saudi
6 nights/7 days
Visit: Riyadh, AlUla, Jeddah

Duo Discovery
6 nights/7 days
Visit: Riyadh & Jeddah

Top things to see and do

Edge of the world
Not for the faint hearted, uninterrupted views from the edge of a sheer precipice

Diving in the Red Sea
Discover shipwrecks, clownfish, lionfish, eels, bull sharks and more!

Moon Mountain
Otherworldly outcrops, pitted dunes, and the vast solitude of the sands!
Perfect for stargazing under a jet-black night sky

Adventure Trail in AlUla
Hit the mountains for an 8 km journey led by an expert guide through rocky terrain and pools of water

Yanbu
A scenic lake, stunning waterfronts and beaches and a night market Souq Al Lail to get your hands on local dates and green mulkhiah leaves

Umluj
Known as the Maldives of Saudi with over 100 small islands known for their white sands swaying palms, turtles and dugongs living in the aquarium-like waters

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FCM • PART OF FCM • 25+ CITIES • OVER 1 MILLION HAPPY CUSTOMERS
Biting the Buggie Bug 18

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Cordelia Cruises is planning to launch cruises in India from May 2021.

As India successfully launches the world’s largest vaccination drive, the travel industry gets ready for a major rebound this summer. After a year-long hiatus, the Indian travel industry, which was one of the hardest-hit sectors due to the pandemic, is preparing for a big comeback as it takes the ‘Blue Route’. Cordelia Cruises, a Mumbai-based company, will begin its cruise operations in India from May 2021. The company plans to target the west and east coasts of India, catering to domestic destinations like Goa, Diu, and Lakshadweep and international destinations like Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee, Jaffna, and the Maldives. Waterways Leisure Tourism Private Limited has forayed into the Indian cruise industry under the maiden brand, Cordelia Cruises, and is affiliated with the Dream Hotel Group which is a hotel and brand management company with more than 30 years of experience in managing properties around the world. Asserting his belief in the potential of the Indian cruise market, Founder and Chairman of the Dream Hotel Group, Padma Bhushan Sant Singh Chatwal said: “Success through innovation has been the foundation for all our brands over the last three decades. We have seen the growth and evolution of cruise tourism around the world. With 7,500 km of coastline and recent initiatives by the Indian government for coastal development, India is ready for cruising. Incredible India will soon be an incredible cruise destination as well for travellers around the world.”

With facilities and services at par with international standards, Cordelia Cruises is launching 2-, 3-, 4-, 5- & 7-night itineraries.
Having been banned in 2015 for animal cruelty, Mumbai’s iconic horse-drawn Victoria carriages are returning to the city’s roads. Called Victoria 2.0, these updates are eco-friendly (battery-operated) and hi-tech. Maharashtra Tourism, in collaboration with the transport company Ubo Ridez, has equipped the 12 carriages with GPS-driven audio tours. Under the first phase, the carriages will connect iconic city landmarks like the Gateway of India, Nariman Point and Marine Drive.

» With a seating capacity of six, the buggies will run from 4pm to 2am.

TRAVEL WITH TECH
Namsai

Arunachal Pradesh’s Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein recently launched a mobile app called My Namsai to promote Namsai district as a tourism hotspot. The app has been designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre and aims to give a boost to tourism in Namsai and its nearby regions. The app will allow tourists to gain credible information directly from the government, which will help them in planning their trip to Namsai district. Home to the Tai Khampti and Singpho tribes, the quaint little hamlet promises to be an enriching experience for travellers looking for off-beat destinations and meaningful experiences.

» Namsai is famous for its grand pagodas, picturesque landscapes and rich tribal culture.

NOT PICTURE PERFECT
Nepal

Nepal has put restrictions on taking and circulating photos and videos of members of other teams while climbing Everest. Mira Acharya, Nepal Tourism Department, told the media that “such activities have given negative publicity about Everest so we decide to put a ban...We honour the personal freedom of climbers but that does not mean they can post images and videos of others without their consent.”

» The move comes after a picture of a traffic jam on Mt Everest went viral on social media.
I have never considered myself a foodie. Over the years of travel across Europe, I have gotten by with whatever I have come across, which being a vegetarian has at times been only bread and cheese. Food was not a priority and I spent the least amount of time searching for the specialities that a place had to offer. Now I wonder though if I was missing something in my travels.

When I look back now, I remember those travels more clearly in which I had tasted the local flavours, and eaten well. One that has remained etched in my memory is the trip to Rome. We were newly married and it was our first trip to Italy. We were in Rome for a week, and after spending long days on the streets we would eat at a local restaurant next to our hotel. However, no ordinary restaurant it was, for it was always crowded with locals and we had to wait to be seated. If we placed an order, and the waitress didn’t agree with our choice, she showed no restraint. “I don’t like it,” she told us bluntly on more than one occasion. Taking away our menus, she would order vegetarian fare of her choice. And her recommendations worked every time, so much so that we remember the food as much as the sights. Those were the days before Google Maps, and we had stumbled across this place without reading any reviews. Years later when we went back to Rome, we couldn’t locate the restaurant. But we still search for it every time we go to Rome.

In contrast, there isn’t much that I remember about Doha, which I visited a decade ago. Except for a little memory... I had gone there to meet a friend. I stayed with him and his wife made sure that I remained well fed with Indian food throughout. On my last evening though, my friend took me to the nearest souk. We sat inside a local restaurant while he ordered the food — an Arabic flatbread called manousha. It came with a dollop of hummus placed in the centre. I was non-committal, sensing which my friend gently nudged me to try it. The creamy layer of hummus, peppered with sesame seeds and drizzled in olive oil, scooped in soft bread melted in my mouth, exploding into rich earthy flavours. There I was, sitting in that small Arabic café, encountering tastes that I had never experienced before, and the memory of which has remained with me till date. Coming laced with these memories are the smells and the feverishness of that souk, ever fresh and still not sandpapered by the years and the countless other experiences that I have collected since then.

The pandemic has restricted us to mostly armchair travelling. Given the time at hand, I have now started recollecting my travels from the past decade. While doing so I realised that the sharpest memories on the road have been when food was integral to the experience. A further thought comes to mind — by putting labels on ourselves, foodie or non-foodie, we often restrict the experiences that we collect. For what’s learning the culture of a city without absorbing the noises from its neighbourhood, without walking its streets, and without tasting the food on offer.

*Food makes travel memorable, and a trip can become a moveable feast*

ILLUSTRATION: NITIN CHAUDHARY
Odisha is a coastal state noted for its varied landscapes offering boutique tourism experiences to the discerning traveller. What is not so well known is that, along with its 482-km-long coastline, wildlife sanctuaries, forests, temples and monuments, Odisha is also home to many hill stations. Oozing with natural beauty and enjoying balmy weather, these destinations offer travellers some much-needed relief from the punishing heat of the summer months.

**Daringbadi**
Set at a height of 915m from sea level in Odisha’s Kandhamal district, Daringbadi is the perfect summer getaway. Popularly referred to as the ‘Kashmir’...
of Odisha: Daringbadi has beautiful pine jungles, sprawling coffee estates, alluring rain forests rich in fauna, and beautiful valleys. A veritable ecotourism hub, Daringbadi—named after a British officer—provides an eclectic mix of cultural, tribal and nature tourism. It is home to tribes like the Kutia Kondha and Dongri Khond, as well as the Belghar Wildlife Sanctuary. The series of waterfalls punctuating the landscape are a must visit. Some of the most popular are Daringbadi waterfall, Putudi waterfall, Dadubaba waterfall and Ludu waterfall. Nature lovers can book their stay at the Daringbadi Nature Camp and go birdwatching, undertake guided treks and jungle safaris to experience the beauty of the Eastern Ghats and watch the breathtaking landscape unravel itself with the rising sun.

Mahendragiri
Located in Ganjam district, Mahendragiri is a little-known hill station situated on the second-highest peak of Odisha, and is revered for its mythological, religious and cultural significance. Legend has it that some of the temples here were built by the Pandavas themselves. On top of the hill are the Shiva, Parshuram, Kunti, Bhima, and Yudhishtir temples. The hill does not draw the devout alone. Tourists come to enjoy the view of the mountains and the river flowing nearby. Another famous hill next door is Chandragiri. This one is dotted with numerous Buddhist monasteries. Located next to a mesmerising waterfall named Khasada, this lush green valley presents an ambience of peace and serenity. On the way to Chandragiri from Berhampur falls the small town of Jeerang, where there is a Tibetan settlement. Tourists stop at this town to take in the impressive Jeerang Monastery and to experience a slice of Tibetan culture right here in Odisha.

The Chandragiri hills also house the Padmasambhava Mahavihara Monastery, which happens to be the largest Buddhist Monastery in South Asia. It was inaugurated by the Dalai Lama in 2010. There is also a nunnery called Namkha Khyung Dzong Monastery. Tourists who visit this place generally stay at accommodations available in Taptapani, which is a scenic hot-water spring 35km away from Jeerang.

Deomali
To truly experience something refreshing atop Odisha's highest, head off on a road trip to Koraput starting from Bhubaneswar via the enigmatic landscapes of Rayagada, or from Visakhapatnam via the Araku valley. Reaching Deomali at an elevation of 1,672m is a mesmerising experience. Once you’re here, you can trek to several beautiful waterfalls such as Gulmi, Duduma and Rani Duduma. or to the cave shrine of Gupteswar which nestles on a green hill 58km from Jeypore and 80km from Koraput. The cavernous interior of the cave shrine enshrines a huge lingam. It is believed that Lord Rama passed through this region on his way to Panchabati in Dandakaranya. The wooded valley all around is a blessing for adventure seekers. For ethnic encounters, visit villages of the Dhuruba and Gadaba tribes. If you happen to be here on a Thursday, visit Onkadelli to interact with the Bondas at their weekly market. They are different from the other tribes, and noted for their colourful ornaments. You can also encounter the Didayi tribe here.

If Odisha is India's best kept secret, then these hill stations must surely be Odisha’s best kept secret.
Escape Window

Stealing glances from our fast-paced, everyday lives, these monochromatic visuals celebrate what is around us all the time, but more often than not, missed.

@_fatema_lokhandwala

DELHI
Aligning towards faith

AGRA The stillness of time while moments pass by
@ricardo_hecha

MUMBAI Pacing through art and life in the ‘City of Dreams’
@bhuvangaur

KOLKATA Getting lost while tracing a familiar path
@hikmosense

KUTCH The streets of Gujarat always have interesting tales to tell
@bertspiertztravel

OMKARESHWAR Holding that powerful gaze
@premgit_photography

KOLHAPUR Wondering what went by and how
@ram_balmur

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Swaying along the greys and waves
@lange.benoit

Nestled is the pristine and salubrious landscapes of Garhwal Hills, IVY Green promises to leave you with indelible memories of your often-ignored relation with nature.

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As you spend your special moments with us, you would experience serenity as well as rejuvenation.
We don’t travel to escape life, but for life not to escape us.

extplore
Flowing calmly through a tangled town, the river Ganga in Varanasi is truly a sight to behold. While the day witnesses rituals of death and despair, the evening transitions to a serene one with reverberating holy chants. One of the most sought after experiences for any visitor here is the Ganga aarti. Saffron-clad priests, the sky in hues of fiery orange, echoing chants and calmly floating diyas in the river make for a surreal visual treat. Some even call it a soul-stirring experience.
Rediscovering India

*** Back in Time ***
Khajuraho and Varanasi

*** Serene Escape ***
Gurudongmar Lake and Mechuka

*** Along the Coast ***
Pondicherry and Odisha
Packing woollens is an absolute must and to avoid high-altitude sickness, carry medicines, inhaler, oxygen spray, chocolates, popcorn and lots of water.

Gurudongmar Lake

One of the world’s highest lakes, the sacred Gurudongmar Lake is north Sikkim’s very own Shangri-la.

Indian Citizens need an Inner-line permit to visit the lake.

There are lakes, there are extremely gorgeous lakes and then there’s Gurudongmar. Perhaps the most spectacular destination in Sikkim, Gurudongmar Lake promises to be an experience like none other. Encompassed by stunning snow-capped mountain peaks, this utterly magnificent lake sits at a dizzying altitude of 17,800 feet. Blessed with aquamarine waters that shimmer under the bright sunshine and reflect the gorgeous peaks, the lake is considered sacred by Buddhists and Sikhs. While some attribute the lake’s name to Guru Nanak, who is believed to have visited the place, others claim that it is named after Guru Rinpoche. Gurudongmar has to be on your list if you are a lover of nature and the great outdoors.

- It’s best to leave as early as 4am from Lachen to visit the lake since the chances of an avalanche are high after 11am.

Amid lands already known, hide certain gems that are worth revisiting. Here is Team OT drawing the road map for you.

Photographs: Shutterstock
Khajuraho

Chasing the architectural legacy of the Chandelas in the temple town is an experience history buffs would not miss for the world

**KHAJURaho IS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

A town of superlative cultural and aesthetic value, Khajuraho is home to some of South Asia’s grandest temples. Embark on a heritage trail as you hop from temple to temple marvelling at their brilliant architecture and intricate carvings. Notable among Khajuraho’s 24 temples are the rectangular Chausath Yogini Temple, the Matangeshvara, Lakshmana, Kandariya Mahadeva, Jagadamba, Chitragupta, Varaha and Vishwanatha Temples in the Western Group; the Vamana, Javari and Ghantai Temples of the Eastern Group and the Shantinatha, Parsvanatha and Adinatha Temples of the Southern Group. What’s fascinating to note, is the fact that the carvings at Khajuraho are not just about the Kama Sutra poses. In fact, they represent all the navarasas or the nine human sentiments. All you need is a fresh lens.

» Do carry hats, sunscreen, umbrellas and water when exploring the temples and don’t forget to hire a registered tourist guide.
Varanasi

Traditional, culture and ancient beliefs rule the city of Varanasi

IDEAL TIME TO VISIT IS FROM NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY

Characterised by saffron-clad priests and reverberating holy chants, Varanasi is an experience like no other. One of the world’s oldest inhabited cities, it is a continuous cycle of life of death here. Whether it is strolling along the ghats, or watching the sun rise over the horizon in a boat, or temple trailing, its mysticism unfolds by the minute. Ancient structures, narrow lanes, flavourful food and meditating sadhus will make the most of your journey here. Varanasi, for many, is the land of their first true-blue Indian experience.

» Beware of the touts that you might encounter on the ghats.

Odisha

The beaches here are a quiet escape for nature lovers and a birder’s delight

BEST TIME TO VISIT IS OCTOBER TO MARCH

Boasting of an expansive coastline, Odisha is home to some exotic beaches and has recently reclaimed its glory amid travellers. With solitude dominating the air around the beaches in Odisha, spirituality, nature and culture walk hand in hand here. Ranging from Chandrabhaga to Gopalpur to the recently Blue Flag-certified Puri Beach, there is no dearth of seascapes here. The state is also home to less frequented, virgin beaches that continue to hide their charm in little nooks and crannies.

» Sustainability lies at heart of tourism in Odisha. Make sure to visit the ecotourism nature camps and retreats.

Plan to drive along the coast and let the splashing waves accompany you. The State Tourism Board has devised multiple routes for a scenic drive-through.
Pondicherry

Aesthetically pleasing and culturally abundant, Puducherry welcomes all with open arms

**BEST TIME TO VISIT IS FROM OCTOBER TO FEBRUARY**

An age-old French connection with a soft tinge of south India, Puducherry is a combination we didn’t know we needed. It is not just home to pristine beaches with soft, white sand but also bee-lined colonial-style bungalows with free-falling bougainvillea, lip-smacking food, art galleries and ‘gram-worthy walls. While mornings here can be spent watching the sunrise, marvelling at the architecture and indulging in wholesome meals, the breezy evenings pave way for boulevard walks and some beach therapy.

» If you’re looking for some spiritual awakening, Auroville is only a short drive away. Here, indulge in yoga sessions, soak in the community spirit and engage with people from all walks of life.

Mechuka

From lush valleys to thrilling adventure sports and rich tribal heritage, Mechuka is as offbeat as they come

**MECHUKA CAN BE REACHED FROM AALO THROUGH PRIVATE TAXIS AND SHARED CABS**

Located in Shi Yomi, one of the newly carved districts of Arunachal, Mechuka is a high-altitude valley, arguably the most picturesque in the region. The place was literally hidden from the outside world, which has led to Mechuka’s cultural diversity being intact and uncorrupted from urbanisation. Over the last few years, it has emerged as a prominent adventure hotspot in the state and continues to draw discerning travellers with its vibrant landscapes and unique culture. When here, you can take peaceful walks through coniferous forests that lie on the outskirts and spot migratory birds that arrive here from the upper reaches of the Himalaya. Blessed with myriad seasonal streams, azure skies, rufous valleys and snow-covered peaks, Mechuka is a paradise for solace seekers and nature lovers.

» Mechuka is home to the Memba tribe and the word ‘mechuka’ roughly translates to ‘a land of snow and medicinal water,’ in the local dialect.
IF IT AIN’T BROKE. FIX IT

Once broken, things are hard to mend. The cracks will never close. Your business edge comes from anticipating the break, and fixing things before its veins begin to show. Even if it means starting anew. That’s the only way to stay ahead.

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SHASHANK ND
Co-Founder & CEO
Practo

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Hunched over a piece of fabric, she transforms... stitch by stitch, pattern by pattern, weaving in every colour, every hue in the palette, and transplanting it with a galaxy of tiny mirrors or abhla ward off evil spirits. Her hands move deftly, impelled by the invisible forces of muscle memory and tradition, creativity and craft. She’s unstoppable. She’s a force of nature. And she’s in Kutch, in the westernmost district of Gujarat, where everyday lives and identities are tightly interwoven with textiles. The Rabaris, Mutavas and the Garasia Jat each have their own styles of embroidery, protected under the list of Geographical Indication. It is these local communities that ensure that Gujarat is still a living museum, a keeper of long-held secrets. And we must protect, preserve and celebrate such beautiful communities. At Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative that is exactly what we do. Be a responsible traveller. Join the movement!
Hunched over a piece of fabric, she transforms... stitch by stitch, pattern by pattern, weaving in every colour, every hue in the palette, and transplanting it with a galaxy of tiny mirrors or abhla to ward off evil spirits. Her hands move deftly, impelled by the invisible forces of muscle memory and tradition, creativity and craft. She’s unstoppable. She’s a force of nature. And she’s in Kutch, in the westernmost district of Gujarat, where everyday lives and identities are tightly interwoven with textiles. The Rabaris, Mutavas and the Garasia Jat each have their own styles of embroidery, protected under the list of Geographical Indication. It is these local communities that ensure that Gujarat is still a living museum, a keeper of long-held secrets.

And we must protect, preserve and celebrate such beautiful communities. At Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative that is exactly what we do. Be a responsible traveller. Join the movement!

responsibletourismindia.com
DODGING THE Taj

*** Secret Hideouts
Savouring grand sunsets

*** Flavour Frenzy
Beyond petha and dal moth

*** Chambal Rumble
Spotting crocs and gharials
On his first visit to Agra,

**PRANNAY PATHAK**

returned from the gates of India’s most-recognised monument. As he found out, there was more fun stuff to do outside.
Akbarabad, as it went by a few hundred years ago, was the city of the shayar Mir Taqi Mir (some bad students of history are hell-bent on having it renamed Agarwala). First referred to as Agra by the Greek polymath Ptolemy, this city was a Mughal capital for close to a century. It was here that Akbar desired to erect palaces of copper and it was here that the marble mausoleums of Itimad-ud-Daulah and Taj Mahal were later raised. It’s one of three vertices of the hallowed Golden Triangle. Every year, thousands of foreign tourists pack their bags and set off for a trip to India for Agra alone, bravely ignoring every stereotype that you have sold and bought about travelling in this country.

But as we drove through the dusty roads depositing you into its unassuming tier-II environs, none of that crossed my mind. Wherever I threw my somnolent gaze, shop after shop selling more authentic Panchhi petha than the last slapped my field of view with the persistence of the tangawalas of Meena Bazaar. Thankfully, before long, our hosts at Ekaa Villa intervened, telling us that there were just two original Panchhi Petha outlets in the city—the original ones could always be identified by their distinctly green branding and a woman toting a carry bag.

Going behind its back—literally

Initially, choosing to not visit the Taj Mahal was without reason and probably too dramatic and self-important, but I realised Agra had much to see after our first evening experiencing high tea at a tilla-top. We drove through a veritable dust bowl of the Taj Reserve Forest and got down just before the access to the said perch. Our hosts, a couple of enterprising gentlemen assiduously carving out a new dawn, a ninth life for Agra in a pandemicked world, along with a staff member, had a table laid out at the edge of what is a rather low precipice. Was this the same Agra whose heat and dust Babur had complained about in his memoirs?

Our gaze issued from higher up, where we stood close to a mazaar, and ricocheted off the snacks table onto the silhouette of the mausoleum. Its domes and minars, oblivious of our surreptitious private viewing session, canoodled blithely with the departing sunset. The eavesdroppers were caught without arrest and punished without harm. Anyway, in no time, the damned cameras, lenses and polarisers came out, mine included, and the familiar rush to catch the celebrity’s gorgeous back as the sun went down behind, began. The table stood right in everybody’s field of view as an interesting detail in the frame but secretly hoping the party would soon land at its shores.

That happened when the sun finally sank behind the monument. For me, personally, the return to simple desi snacks—bakery-
Sandwiched between Chini-ka-Rauza and Itimad-ud-Daulah’s Tomb, on the banks of the Yamuna lies the now-abandoned tomb of Shah Jahan’s elder brother and Jahangir’s eldest son Sultan Parvez, a name largely unheard of unlike Dara Shikoh and Shah Shuja, brothers of emperor Aurangzeb, and thrown into oblivion thanks to his alcoholism and debauchery.
Checking out the inwards of Itimad-ud-Daulah’s Tomb
style biscuits, choti kachoriyaan, gulab jamun and samosas and the indispensable office-party staple dhokla—was the most charming part of the deal. The platter was indulgence at its plainest best, indulgence reminiscent of casual snacking after a knackerbanger game of eight-grade football with no fear at all of getting fat. Petha was inevitably offered, and so was dal moth—I don’t need to tell anyone that the couple are to Agra what chaat and chhole bature are to Dilli.

**PANCHHIS AND PATRONS**

We chewed the sweet, fragrant, candied pumpkin cubes with the refinement that we thought only a sarpech- and attar-wearing Mughal ruler could exercise with the sweets in his mouth. The chalk to this cheese was the tangy, spicy, slightly wet crunch of dal moth that is an incredibly versatile snack consumed all over UP. Different people credit Lucknow, Agra and Farrukhabad with its invention, but when in Agra, you know how the dal moth crumbles. It is had with puris, on top of rice or palmuls with chai in a steel tumbler.

Coming to petha, on the surface, it is the second flagship offering that Agra has for the undiscerning visitor. For the others, there are no frontmen really in this ageless boy band. The rapid proliferation of the Panchhi Petha brand has also meant that connoisseurs have come to place exceptional trust in Gopal Das Pethe Wale that goes back a century. The legacy shop has quite a few variants available and the brand doesn’t believe much in aggressive expansionism. As for what’s happened to the other petha patron, I think a lot of credit goes to the catchiness of the name itself—Panchhi, which means birdie.

Agra is full of such names. Rambabu Paratha Corner at Belanganj, Pushpak Mishthan Bhandar in the city’s old quarters. Gopal Das at Tajganj, Civil Lines and Fatehabad Road. And Panchhi? They’re perched on every branch. But if you’re one toanker after the real thing—and trust me there is such a thing as a real thing if you don’t want to start hating petha. The crowded promenade of the Sadar Bazaar, near the Chaat Gali, has one of the two original Panchhi outlets in the city. Buy during the day, and in the night, just take a left in under a hundred metres for a taste of some of Agra’s perkiest street food. We tried the aloo chaat, ras malai and kadahi dodh on our second night in the city, and we didn’t need to bother our friends for dinner.

On our final morning in Agra, we would be up early and driving through the cold morning past benign colonial structures and the curious old buildings of the old city, to savour bedhai, another rather special Agra heirloom. The fare at Pushpak Mishthan Bhandar sells like hot cakes and no matter what the actual origin of the eatery’s name is, it sure is a great illustration of why the flying chariot of the Ramayana was called so: it’ll make you fly; it’ll make you come home. As the server hands you a dona, warm with piping hot aloo ki sabzi, you wonder why another marble monument could have been dedicated to this delicious darling. It’s after you’ve polished off the bedhai and washed it down with a kulhad of thick kadahi dodh, that you realise it’s probably because monuments are made for the dead.

**Croc-Spotting and Hoax-Busting**

Of course, Agra is more than just the Taj Mahal—in fact to keep repeating that fact defeats its undeniable validity. But Agra is more than the stand-ins—Fatehpur Sikri, Agra Fort, Chini-ka-Rauza, Itimad-ud-Daula’s Tomb and Sikandra—as well. Excursions and heritage tours to the crafts market of Gokulpura and the heritage buildings of Holipura are stimulating experiences. An hour’s drive away is the bustling glass bangle-making town of Firozabad. Itimad-ud-Daulah’s Tomb and the nearby Aram Bagh merit a visit not just for their calming environs but also to experience the closest version of the original idea of the tomb-gardens, which the arrival of the British turned into landscaped and manicured lawn-style gardens.

No, don’t expect to see the free-growing foliage of the Mughal-era charbagh, but at Itimad-ud-Daulah’s Tomb—the striking mausoleum of Nur Jahan’s father Mirza
Ghiyas Beg—the information hall at the entrance does a good job at briefing the visitor so they don’t miss the minute architectural details on the structure and the fledgling restoration efforts in the riverfront gardens. In the same way, enigmatic structures are to be found all over Agra, from Akbar’s Church, said to be commissioned by the Mughal emperor at the close of the 16th century, to a huge iron water tank constructed during British rule that never rusted in the old city.

The second day, we had to relinquish our haveli walk in Holipura, which has for some time been on the radar of Agra tourism authorities as a rural tourism hub, owing to fears expressed by locals about a couple of Covid cases that had come up in the village. So, we drove due south towards the border with Madhya Pradesh and reached Chambal Wildlife Safari Lodge, a calm, unperturbed oasis of considerable verdure near village Jarar. The director, Kunwar Munendra Pal Singh, an unassuming man with a passion for horses, showed us around the farmstay-style cottages painted in mud green, and then sent his motorboat operator with us for the safari. Singh, from the local zamindar family, expressed his desire to promote his place as a domestic destination wedding venue, but also considered our suggestion that visitors’ pillaging and littering ways might not make it a very good idea.

The next lap was a short drive to the town of Pinahat, which is the base for the safari. I walked down to the bank entranced by the dance of sunlight on the Chambal’s ample belly, feeling already the full breeze that rose from the heart of the river, and hardly expecting to see gharials. The Chambal divides the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh here, and my excitement was pretty much limited to wading through the river astride the hood of the MP border. But as the boat forged ahead, harmonising with the steady current, the spiky ridge of the river reptile’s tail materialised from behind a bush.

There were more of them to be seen as we went deeper—the little craggy islets one after the other looked scarcely different than their sunbathing inhabitants. Save for a couple or three, the gharials all stayed largely beneath the water, revealing only their cockle-warming snouts, while the crocodiles lay deader than their lonely island homelands and threw themselves heavily and resignedly into the river only when the boat drew closer.

Stranger things happened later in the day. First, having feasted comprehensively on the delicious north Indian platter at the Ekaa kitchen and feeling the need to take a lengthy stroll and the desire to spend our hard-earned money on some knick-knacks, we set off for the Taj promenade. Having sauntered half of its length, we asked a shopkeeper about the whereabouts of Meena Bazaar. “Sir, what you get in my shop, you get everywhere in Meena Bazaar,” he said wisely before proceeding to shatter our naïve illusion of the old-world grandeur of the said market.

Giving it our best shot at looking unfazed, we floated further into the quagmire, increasingly emboldened against the soliciting wails of the tangawalas. Curiously, it seemed to be shutter-down time for shops on both sides selling clunky marble living-room decorations and jootijan embroidered in no specific style. Before long, the massive West Gate of the Taj Mahal appeared, and as we drew closer, we stole a peek at the majestic central dome of Agra’s most

athlon
Agra has a well-documented street food scene.

traveller

AGRA

Where to Stay

- Ekaa Villa & Kitchen, Agra's only boutique hotel at this point, has 13 well-appointed and tastefully done rooms across four categories. All-inclusive packages with curated tours are available.
- Hotel Clarks Shiraz, 3km away from the Taj Mahal, offers a luxury experience with 237 rooms and 25 Taj facing ones (in-house restaurant and business centre available).
- The Oberoi Amarvilas on Taj East Gate Road blows the budget but offers a bespoke luxury experience.

What to Do

- Try Ekaa's Secret Taj Experience and the Secret High Tea away from the city, and with an unparalleled view of the Taj with no fellow tourists in sight. Or what we call social distancing done right.
- If you're one of those that are always on the lookout for cheap leather shoes and bags, Sadar Bazar has a Leather Gali with several shops selling dirt-cheap but acceptable-quality products. Dawar Shoes has great picks that attest to the city's status as a leather hotspot.
- Revealing a fresh facet to Agra's heritage appeal are the havelis of Holipura, a village on the outskirts of the city, and the Gokulpura crafts bazaar.
- A trip to these parts can just as easily be a wildlife retreat—Chambal Wildlife Lodge in Jarar (84km) has nice cottages with mod cons. Don't miss the Chambal safari; excursions to Ater Fort and Bateshwar Temples could also be undertaken.

How to Reach

Kheria Airport, though closest, is only occasionally serviceable. Instead, fly to the IGI Airport in Delhi (165km or 3hrs away via the Yamuna Expressway). Do check for any travel restrictions or required tests before departure.

Trains to Agra run from Delhi, Udaipur, Varanasi and Jaipur. Within Agra, electric buses and cycles on rent in the Taj Ganj area are available.

What to Eat

- Panchhi's keesar petha will reinstate your faith in the no-frills sweet and Gopal Das Pethe Wale will top it off with spicy dal moth and ghevar.
- Ekaa Villa does decadent meal platters bursting with authentic north Indian flavours and textures, with eclectic varieties of achar and bathua and makhana raitas and some exquisite classical music to boot.
- Hit up Pushpak Mishthan Bhandar in the old city—the bedhai and kadahi doodh here are to die for, but also try the novelties of mokhan ka samosa and mokhan ka tarbooz.
- At Chaat Gali, you'll have all your cravings satisfied, with unique flavour spins to the offerings available here.

illustrious resident through the arch of the gate. No wonder the walk back to the hotel proved especially difficult.

The poverty of novelty at Meena Bazaar affected our minds, accustomed to Dilli Haat and Tripolia Bazaar in the other vertices of the hallowed Golden Triangle, such that we could only realise later what we had come looking for. It was Agra's unrivalled leather goods; footwear emporiums can be found all over the city, be it the 'Leather Street' in Sadar Bazaar or standalone establishments named Berry Shoes and Dawar Shoes where the ambience and distinct school of bohni hustle—and probably the prices, too—are a throwback to the early 2000s if not the late 1990s. The next morning, we dropped by at one of these showrooms, picked up a leather bag and set out of the city, thinking of the different ways to describe our raid once we got back home.
THE LAND OF FORESTS BECKONS
Blessed with abundant natural beauty and a rich tribal heritage, Jharkhand has everything that the compulsive traveller is looking for.
These are pretty unusual times that we are living in. The world has learned to slow down over the past one year and people have started appreciating the little joys of life. And travellers? Well, they too are yearning for rare experiences...Experiences that allow them to relax and soak in the charm of the great outdoors.

The forested land of Jharkhand, blessed with immense natural beauty, could well be a great option for the discerning traveller. Home to uncharted forests, lush hills, gushing waterfalls and ancient tribes, the landlocked state is a sheer delight, to say the least. Planning a trip to Jharkhand may just be what the doctor ordered.

**ECO SOJOURN IN THE STATE**

Jharkhand’s bountiful wealth of nature calls for tourism of the kind that sustains the local populace that inhabit its picturesque landscapes. The state is a perfect match for travellers who believe in promoting responsible tourism, thanks to the untrammelled landscapes that carpet it.

Soak in the old-world charm in the quaint hilly hamlet of Netarhat or explore the hidden gems of McCluskieganj, which prides itself on being the oldest Anglo-Indian settlement in India.

**NETARHAT**

Located at an elevation of 3,600 feet, Netarhat is not the stereotypical hill station that tourists are used to. It’s one of those calm and idyllic places that has inspired many a poet and artist. Dotted with narrow roads and forests, it’s a sheer balm for the tired soul.

Netarhat is also known for its stunning sunsets and sunrises. While here, you must visit the Sunrise Point and the Magnolia Point, which offers spectacular sunsets. Other places of interest include Netarhat Dam, Koel Viewpoint, Upper Ghagri Falls and Lower Ghagri Falls.

Enjoy a sip of hot morning tea as clouds come to greet you at your doorsteps in the hilly towns of Meghahatuburu and Kiriburu. Nothing less than little paradises for nature lovers, the hill stations of the state promise to be some of your most cherished travel memories.

**EMBARK ON A TEMPLE RUN**

Home to some of the most revered and vibrant temples and other spiritual destinations, the state is a treasure trove of history and heritage. Embarking on a temple trail in the region can be a truly rewarding experience. Here, you will find one of the world’s tallest shivalingas and one of India’s 12 jyotirlingas.
Jharkhand is a leading spiritual destination, and boasts a large number of popular temples and pilgrimage sites.
The magnificent Chandil Dam; and (below) Bhatinda Falls
Then there are important Hindu and Jain pilgrimage destinations like Parasnath, Deoghar and Maa Chhinnamastika Temple, which draw devotees in the droves throughout the year. From the iconic terracotta temples of Maluti to the recently built Sun Temple in Bundu and Kalika Maharani Temple in Bokaro, the temples of the state stand as fine specimens of ancient and contemporary temple architecture.

The temples of Maluti are scattered across the small village of Maluti, located at a distance of 60km from Dumka. Almost all of the temples here are dedicated to Lord Shiva; most of them have a small shivalinga in them. There are also a few temples dedicated to Goddess Durga. The beauty of Maluti lies not only in its beautiful terracotta temples, but also in the sheer incongruity of these structures right next to village lanes and dainty little houses.

**Parasnath**

One of the most important sites in Jainism, the pilgrimage site located on the Parasnath Hill is called Shikharji by the Jains and translates to “venerable peak”. Jain pilgrims have been coming here to seek blessings from the divine for centuries now. Inscriptions at the base of the idol in the main temple suggest that the temple dates back to 1678.

Also of special note are the Jagannath Temples of Ranchi and Bokaro, which are modelled after Puri's Jagannath Temple and the Lugut Buru Temple, a Santhal shrine near Bokaro. And not to forget the famous Deori Temple near Ranchi, which is famed for being visited by Indian cricketing superstar Mahendra Singh Dhoni before important matches.

**Waterfalls and Dams**

Jharkhand is one of the few states in India to be gifted with absolutely enchanting waterfalls and waterbodies. With as many as 14 major waterfalls and many other known and unknown falls, the state’s verdant landscapes hold many lovely surprises for you.

In fact, five of these major waterfalls are located within a 50km radius of the state capital Ranchi. Setting foot on an adventurous waterfall trail in Jharkhand not only offers you a refreshing and rejuvenating time but also introduces you to stunning back-to-nature tribal habitats. The biggest waterfalls here are Dassam, Hundru, Jonha, Sita, Hirni, Panchghagh and Lodh.

The state has its share of stunning and tranquil dams too. Some of the most beautiful dams include Getalsud Dam, Chandil Dam, Massanjore Dam and Tilaiya Dam. But if there’s one dam that you must definitely visit, it’s the one in Patratu.

Patratu's nascent beauty can be savoured by
locals for its dam, which is situated at an elevation of more than 1,300 feet. Also known as Nalkari Dam, it offers scenic vistas and verdant trails. You can spot a large variety of birds near the lake. When here, you can stay at the Patratu Lake Resort, managed by the Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation.

**EXPERIENCE THE LOCAL LIFE**

Jharkhand is home to as many as 32 tribal communities. Their traditions, customs, costumes, arts and crafts, dance and music, festivals and cuisine make the state an interesting destination on the itinerary of any ethno-tourist. The tribal communities of Jharkhand reside in small villages and hamlets known as tolas in regions that are closer to the forests. They dwell in simple earthen houses that boast of beautiful paintings on their outer walls with various figures and patterns. The tribes have a deep sense of respect for Mother Nature.

The Santhals are one of the most important tribal communities in Jharkhand and are amongst the largest such communities in India. They mostly reside in the districts of Santhal Pargana, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Singhbhum, Ranchi and Palamu. Another important tribal community is the Munda, which lives mostly in the Chotanagpur Plateau. Witnessing their daily lives and rich culture and traditions can be an absolutely enriching and one-of-its-kind experience. Taking an early morning walk across a local village, watching...
women paint the walls of their thatched mud houses, shopping at a local haat, enjoying indigenous tribal cuisine are some of the rare and meaningful experiences that this state has in store for you. In the post-pandemic world when travellers are choosing experiences over places, exploring the cultural heritage of the tribal communities of Jharkhand comes highly recommended.

**DISCOVERING THE AMAZING MEgalITHS OF THE STATE**

Not many people are aware of the fact that Jharkhand is one of the few places in India where megalithism is a living tradition. Megaliths like the UK’s Stonehenge and France’s Newgrange are a huge tourist draw. Jharkhand is among India’s leading megalith destinations whose history is slowly being unravelled, much to the delight of archaeology and culture buffs.

This invaluable cache of megaliths ranging from prehistoric to modern times found in many pockets of the state has been attracting scholars and tourists from around the globe. Places like Khunti’s Bhuth village, Chokahatu, Marcadih, Barendah and Tamar are some of the most important megalith sites in the state.

These megaliths are such an intrinsic part of the everyday lives of the tribal communities as you will encounter them clockwise from here:

- the Patratu valley;
- a majestic tiger at Betla National Park;
- and Patratu Dam

**WHAT ARE MEgalITHS?**

A megalith is a structural design of dressed or undressed stones, created by tribal communities from prehistoric to modern times, and serves as a burial or memorial stone for the community. Tribal communities are known to worship these sacred monuments, as many of them enshrine relics of their revered ancestors.

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Clockwise from here: the Patratu valley; a majestic tiger at Betla National Park; and Patratu Dam

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**FESTIVALS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

The tribal communities of the state are blessed with a rich culture which is reflected in their vibrant festivals. Some of the most important festivals of the communities include the spring festival of Sarhul, Karam, which is celebrated in the monsoon, and the Santhal festival of Sohrai, which is celebrated on the night of a new moon, sometime between December and January.
in the courtyards of their homes, in their fields, in the village squares and even in the narrow alleys dotting the village.

WILDLIFE HAVENS
Escape the hustle and bustle of busy cities and head to the off-beat and lesser-explored wildlife havens of Jharkhand for a thrilling time. Destinations like the Betla National Park, Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary and Palamu Tiger Reserve are flocked by avid wildlife enthusiasts, bird watchers and lovers of the great outdoors.

The Palamu Tiger Reserve was created in 1974, under the Indian Forests Act. In 1986, Betla National Park was carved out of this reserve. Betla is one of the nine initial tiger reserves in India under the Project Tiger initiative. The park also houses the Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary within its precincts. Commonly spotted animals at Betla include nilgai, chital, sambhar and mouse deer. Other animals that can be seen include the elephant, rhesus monkey, gaur, langur, wolf, sloth bears and the occasional panther, mongoose and porcupine.

The park also has a large population of avian life, which includes hornbill, peacock, dove, quail, black partridge, white-necked stork, red jungle fowls, black ibis, crested serpent-eagle, green pigeon and forest owlet. When here, you can take a jeep safari or an elephant safari.

ARTS AND CRAFTS
Jharkhand’s relationship with art goes back to the days of the Stone Age, when cavemen would express themselves through paintings. Archaeological excavations in the state have revealed cave paintings, tools and pottery from the Stone Age. Since then, Jharkhand has come a long way with its wide array of artistic styles developed by different tribal communities of the state.

From the Khobar wall paintings practiced by tribal women in Hazaribagh to the Jadopatia or Paitkar paintings of the Santhals and the Sohrai paintings found on the walls and floors of tribal houses, the state is known for its many vibrant art forms. The state is also well-known for its exquisite centuries-old dokra metal craft, which is used in the making of beautiful ornaments and decorative items.

Being a land of forests, there’s no surprise that the skilled craftsmen of Jharkhand also excel in bamboo and
**DOKRA**

The term 'dokra' comes from a tribal community of smiths called the Dokra Damar, who inhabit sections of central and eastern India. The process of metal casting is painstaking. The sculptor first creates a hollow wax mould of the sculpture, which is then covered by a fireproof mould. Molten metal is poured into the mould and once it has cooled down, the outer mould is broken and the wax melted away, leaving the metal sculpture behind. Dokra figurines are simple yet powerful, drawn from folklore and traditional village life. They depict humans and animals.

**LOCAL FLAVOURS AT AJAM EMBA**

A slow food eatery in Ranchi, Ajam Emba is aimed at promoting indigenous food and cuisine. The menu at Ajam Emba features an entire bouquet of forgotten raw materials representing the real flavours of the tribal hinterland of the state. Some of the popular dishes here include wild rice kheer, ragi momos, country chicken, pitha and dumbu or rice balls made of jaggery. The food is not only delicious, but also provides great nutritional benefits.

wood crafts. Terracotta and clay pottery is another art form that has been handed down the generations.

Supporting local artists during our travels must be one of our top priorities, keeping in mind the turbulent year they have had. Jharkhand’s communities of artists and craftsmen need your support too. Take back a slice of the state with you in the form of souvenirs, handicrafts and artefacts as you traverse its length and breadth.

**THE DELICIOUS CUISINE**

Any trip to Jharkhand is incomplete without savouring its sumptuous local cuisine. As a gastronomic experience, the state will not disappoint any traveller who is adventurous, curious and willing to sample the unique and delicious dishes that it has to offer.

The magnificent forests of Jharkhand are not just pretty to look at but they also serve as the lifeline for the tribal communities. The indigenous communities obtain their nutritious and tasty dishes from unlikely sources. They use a variety of flowers and leaves in place of vegetables. And they even use the fauna available to them. For instance, the red ant chutney, which is made with, well, red ants!

Then there’s meat ka salan, which is a well-known local preparation, essentially a mutton curry with diced potatoes and spiced with garam masala. Some of the other must-try dishes include chilka roti, dhuska, mitha khaja and thekua.
Tigers are luminous beings, and white tigers are the brightest of them all.

**PUSHPRAJ SINGH**

—the current Maharaja of Rewa—recounts an extraordinary legacy
It

WAS THE SUMMER OF 1951,
in the month of May. It was very hot, with the scorching sun above, but it was also the best time to see wild animals or even hunt them, which was permitted then. So the royal party, comprising of obviously the Rewa royalty as hosts and M.K. Ajit Singh-ji, Jodhpur Rajasthan, uncle of Maharaja Martand Singh-ji Rewa, saddled up for the shoot.

They left for ‘Khakri’, an outhouse 25km away from Rewa, situated on the foothills of the Kaimur range and facing an astonishingly beautiful lake, which was often used as a base camp for proceeding towards the Sidhi jungles, which today is the Sanjay-Dubri National Park.

The news came that a tiger had been spotted near a place called Bargarhi, some 50-70 kilometres away. The royal party headed for the place. Without wasting time, they took their position on the machaan about 17 feet above the ground, among the long sal trees. The drumbeats signalled the start of haanka (shikar/shoot) and the loud noises got the animal to appear in front of the shooters. Ajit Singh shot the animal, but to the horror of Maharaja Rewa, it turned out to be a female. The rule of the game is you don’t shoot a female animal. But there was much more to the drama. Out of this debacle, history was going to be inked! Out came a white tiger cub, about 14 months old. The barrel rose again, but HH Rewa lowered it, saying it’s enough. “We have to capture the cub and save it.”

The task was difficult. A temporary cage was made and kept on the natural cave cut in a rock where the cub took shelter to save his life. Some water and chicken was provided as he would be thirsty and hungry, and would hopefully be lured into the cage. Two days later, he succumbed and came to be caged forever.

On 27th May, 1951, the BBC announced that a white tiger had been captured by the Maharaja of Rewa. The cub was brought to Govindgarh Lake Palace. By that time a part of the courtyard had been converted into a homeland for the cub. Named Mohan, the tiger was brought up like a family member.

He later mated with two tigers—Baghum and her daughter Radha—and from this the clan of white tigers began, perhaps never to end! The first litters were sent to the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who
had them sent to the Delhi Zoo. They were named Raja and Rani!

It’s indeed amazing that in 1950-70s—when medical science or infrastructure hadn’t made the grade in India—the breeding of these tigers was being successfully carried out, with the feeble veterinary support available. The white tigers kept breeding, although at a slower pace, mainly due to inbreeding, but no damage was done in the process.

After a long innings, during which Mohan rendered an immense service to the world by giving his clan to various zoos around the country and the world, he left us forever in 1968. His death was consoled all over the world. Mohan’s last son, Virat, who bore his quintessential looks, carried the flag for two decades, till he too left us in 1970. My father was so dismayed by this that he decided to drop the curtain. The white tiger bid adieu from Govindgarh, and the majestic palace fell into ruin bit by bit.

**The Resurrection**

After a long struggle to place Govindgarh back on the tourism map, I with my team handed over one lakh signatures to the then President Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who took note of it. But we lost him too! There were two major conferences in which the white tiger was discussed, namely ‘Vindhya Conclave’ and ‘Re-Rediscovered.’ But then the government fell.

But, as luck would have it, the local MLA and minister at the time Rajendra Shukla took up the task and ultimately in April 2016 a White Tiger Safari Park was created where we got back the white tiger. The clan of Mohan is back in its domain, now to stay! The CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan very rightfully and emotionally named the safari after my father Maharaja Martand Singh-ji. They both now live in the annals of history. 🌹
NURTURING THE ROOTS
It is a complete antithesis to the unfortunately predominant public image of Kashmir. An initiative at socially and ecologically harmonious living, it is a glimpse of what Kashmiris are capable of, if left to their own destiny.

Sagg—“to nurture like water nurtures the roots of plants”—is a small resort near Srinagar. Well, resort is a misnomer for its rather down-to-earth character. Conceptualised by the youth civil society group Mool, Sagg is an experiment in providing culturally rooted, environmentally responsible lifestyle examples and experiences to people, especially children and youth. For anyone willing to try something very different from the run-of-the-mill tourist and culinary experience that Kashmir offers in plenty, Sagg is well worth exploring.

Having been in touch with its founder, Fayaz Dar and facilitators Shaheena Parveen and Lubna Rafiqi, through the national Vikalp Sangam process, we were fortunate to be invited to spend a couple of nights at Sagg in the summer of 2019. Late June, and just the right temperature though a tad rainy (unusual for this time of the year; climate change?). We were plied with diverse (mostly Kashmiri) cuisine, and plenty of steaming hot cups of kahwa made just as it should be (not the insipid readymade powder variety one gets in the market). Not to mention the ubiquitous nun chai, salty tea, that is proffered to visitors anywhere one goes in Kashmir.

Two spacious cottages with thatched roofs, mud walls, beautifully adorned in Kashmiri style, make for a calm, cosy stay. Over meals and beverages, and on a full tour of the campus, Fayaz gave us insights into the motivation behind Sagg and the various activities it hosts.

**ASHISH KOTHARI**

**SHRISHTEE BAJPAI**

check into Sagg Eco Village near Srinagar and come away smitten

**PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHISH KOTHARI**

Sagg started with a thought to integrate needs of self, family, and community by building relationships, and enabling collaborative learning amongst each other. The values underlying all the work that Sagg does are co-existence and collaboration, dignity and trust, freedom and responsibility, equality and justice, inclusiveness and self-sufficiency, sustainability and everyone’s well being. The team mentioned above, and two other
facilitators Sajad Qadir and Mukhtar Sheikh, also organise collaborative, educational and recreational camps for school children and youth. The aim is to develop critical thinking, reflection, leadership, planning, decision-making and entrepreneurship abilities. They have consolidated their experience in a contextual educational and development methodology; this is being offered in their educational, counselling, consulting and coaching work through mouaj bab sufficiency school and the village academy. Sagg also organises recreational activities like eco-therapy sessions, treks, and rides.

THE Experience

The stay at Sagg is therapy in itself! Located at the base of a hill range near Srinagar, Sagg is soaked in the silence of nature, yet so pleasurably alive with sounds of birds and other creatures. There is a strong belief in reviving traditional recipes of Kashmir, as also trying new combinations. The idea stems from promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle that is based on integration of local resources, regenerating local livelihoods, and promoting old and new knowledges. There are a number of products that Sagg makes and sells, like Kashmiri wuer (a traditional mix of herbs and spices that boosts immunity, especially useful in winters), wild honey, dried apples, lotus stem and other pickles, jams, etc. All of these products are hand-made with love, care and ecological sensitivity. We tasted some of these products and spent hours sipping a wide variety of herbal teas, which were simply delicious!

Shaheena Parveen tells us that Sagg has deliberated quite a lot on the pricing of their services and products, realising that most are too costly for the local people. But they try to resolve this by subsidising the vocational training for local students
and also charging 20 per cent less price on products for locals.

Using our visit as an occasion, Fayaz had also called a gathering of people associated with Sagg and Mool. It was a diverse crowd in various occupations, all interested in doing something about the ecological devastation and social disruption that the ‘developmental’ strategy and militarisation of the region had unleashed. There was a lively discussion on the politics of the mindless ‘development’ being promoted, such as mass tourism, with disastrous consequences for fragile ecosystems and local rural populations.

**LAP OF Nature**

In two short walks in the campus, we listed about 25 species of birds, very likely just a fraction of the diversity that must exist in and around Sagg. The slopes leading away from the campus towards mountainous meadows must in particular be rich in wildlife; Fayaz told us they take treks up for adventure, experiencing nature, and getting some great views of the landscape.

While we were there, Sagg inaugurated their Ecoclub ‘tamah’ of friends and associates for promoting multi-dimensional lifestyles, taking up local issues and running public awareness campaigns on wetland destruction, water scarcity, sand mining and crushers.

Sagg is focused on envisioning a future that is ecologically sensitive and regenerative, socially integrative and equitable, economically self-sustaining and self-determined. It is a must visit for all those who wish to learn more about Kashmiri culture and lifestyle, to see how the region’s youth is trying to re-imagine lives in a particularly challenging context. You can find more information about Sagg at www.saggecovillage.earth.
Goa’s

TOP 10
MUST TRY STANDALONE RESTAURANTS

Brave New Plates
Chefs in Goa are adventurous

Casual Chic
Laidback settings, serious food

Global + Local
Authentic flavours, international vibe
Olive Bar & Kitchen

UNIT 1, VAGATOR HELIPAD, BIG VAGATOR, ANJUNA

A little sun-kissed, a little windblown and decidedly lazy, perched on a cliff overlooking the Arabian Sea. Candlelit with an intimate setting, soft music, and gourmet café food with a view of the sea for company. Oh, so romantic...Chef Manu Chandra and Chef Evan Gwynne have put together a yummy menu to welcome you back to this haven on the cliff. Recommendations go all out for the mushroom tortellini, prawn and chorizo pil pil, baked sardines on toasted ciabatta and a Snickers Bar to satiate your sweet tooth, from the delightful epicurean café menu populated with indigenous ingredients, fresh seafood and the spirit of Goa. The vibe is right, the crowd is cool, the food is decadent without the fuss, and it’s hard to think of a better date night spot in Goa right now (or ever).

Tel: +91-7888037772

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Goa is a foodie paradise.

RUPALI DEAN
came back sated—and with this list
As a Goan of Indo-Portuguese heritage, Chef-Owner Avinash Martins had a specific vision in mind: a restaurant that shows off his food philosophy of combining unexpected ingredients. The kitchen is not so large, and he often brings the food to your table. He seems to be a friend or soon to be friend of almost everyone in the room. Food to him has always been about sumptuous elements coming together to create a balanced plate that stays on one’s mind long after it has been eaten. So be prepared to see your steak come with a side of ‘tendli’ or cheesecake made with coconut jaggery.

Tel: +91-8322770607

The Black Sheep Bistro

1ST FLOOR, VILLA BRAGANCA, DR BRAGANZA PEREIRA ROAD, PANJAI

The Black Sheep Bistro is a comfortable, cosmopolitan space where one feels one could be anywhere in the world. This is a place with personality, but it’s not all display—these guys can truly cook, and their dishes are a victory of wary alignment and texture. Recommendations go all out for the Malwani mushroom stroganoff, the paan cocktail and the arancini. The house-made burgers, where the bread and sauces used are all made in-house daily, are a must try.

Tel: +91-8322465901
Ping’s Bia Hoi

**HOUSE 78, MAE DE DEUS VADDO, CHOGRAM ROAD, SANGOLDA**

For a come as you are, Goa’s much-loved local neighbourhood Vietnamese-themed beer garden, nestled in the heart of the quaint streets of Sangolda, has an assuredly un-cool approach—so much so that it becomes cool. See the quirky tees hanging outside, vintage barbershop, Vietnamese hats as lamps and potted plants. To top it off, it serves up the best of Asian street food, delicious cocktails and freshly brewed beer. The menu blends expertise and guilty pleasures perfectly: the dimsum is given a new level of complexity by its Philadelphia cream cheese filling. The hand-pounded pork and sugarcane skewers are so savoury and rich that you just want to chuckle like a school kid who just got away with something. The sticky pork ribs feature gooey, rich meat and are topped with the most opulent sauce you’ll ever try. The standout, however, is the Goan Nasi Goreng.

Tel: +91-7823888360

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Zbf Ziggy’s by Fame

**OPPOSITE ALILA DIWA GOA, PACHECO VADDO, MAJORDA**

You wouldn’t expect to find such an amazing restaurant on a little street in Marjorda, but that’s part of Goa’s fun. The menu features crowd-pleasers like peri-peri fish fingers, Tangda chilli chicken and Punjabi-style shepherd’s pie, but the real treats here include the pan-fried herb-crusted crab cake with feni mayo, the pork vindaloo, the chorizo-stuffed squid and, in fact, every single Goan dish on the menu. If you are unsure where to start, the seafood thali, which consists of six or seven dishes showcasing the Goan menu’s range, is a good choice. No pretence—just good food. Do say hello to Chef Richard, he’s a rockstar!

Tel: +91-9607958742
The Chikoo Tree Project

**DR MIGUEL MIRANDA ROAD, PAJIFOND, MARGAO**

A neighbourhood restaurant that still manages to be elegant. And although the menu is small, all of the dishes are thoughtful, flavourful, and unpretentious. The setting is fancy and spacious, with high ceilings, panoramic windows and a counter for watching the chef while you eat. Portions are petite, but at least that gives you an excuse to sample as much as you can eat. The kal dosas are yummy and so are the thukpas and the cakes and bakes. Do not miss the homemade ginger ale.

Tel: +91-9920064597

Antares

**SMALL VAGATOR, OZRAN BEACH, VAGATOR**

It’s not possible to have a bad time at Antares. Sure, you will perhaps have to queue up, but even that is tolerable, because then you get to feast on Australian MasterChef finalist Sarah Todd’s menu and catch the best sunsets in Goa from the spectacular Vagator cliffs. The bar has a variety of specials from classics like kiwi mojito to drinks like the exotic spicy mango martini, bestselling kokum margarita or the plum berry martini. The fresh and fruity cocktails leave one asking for more and are great to go with small bites. Other excellent choices are fresh-off-the-sea grills or a mix of small plates and snacks, like fish and chips and garlic prawns.

Tel: +91-7350011528
Jamun

190, MAZAL VADDO, ASSAGAO

Located in the heart of Assagao, this restaurant revels in the rich ethnic legacy of Indian cuisine based on recipes from venerable homes across the country. Menu standouts include chakundar & amaranth galouti, beef chapli with alsi ki chutney and the Goan pork chilli fry with chorizo. Save room for dessert, if possible; the jamun sorbet and caramel custard are sublime. Pop in for a glass of Jamun or Cochin from the bar or come with friends to linger over a meal in the backyard. Those who don’t want to fly to Goa can still try the pop-up menu at Jamun in Lodhi Colony Market, Delhi. Some highlights from the Goa menu were served all of March.

Tel: +91-7823899945

Florentine

CHOOM ROAD, PEQUENO, MOROD, SALIGAO

This small eatery has an incredibly strong brand identity. It’s pretty minimalistic in design but they know how to make the cafreal like no one else. Ingredients are unfussy and the flavours shine—from fried fish to local vegetables with a medley of condiments. And, of course, there’s a menu of other Goan dishes, including caramel custard. Good luck resisting eating more than one. A literal bite of happiness.

Tel: +91-8322278122

Bhatti Village

BHATTI VADDO, NERUL

The owners of this home joint want us all to ‘make friends with Goan food’—and I am certainly sold on the place, with its low-key backstreet vibe, pretty plants in pots and nutritionally balanced home cooking. Top marks for the desserts and basic fresh lime soda too. Some of Goa’s favourite ingredients are still here, but the style is more rustic, from an incredible salad of tomato, chorizo with pao to a two-part dish involving stuffed squid alongside a piece of breaded fish with sauce. Also pray that they are serving their drool-inducing xacuti with red rice the day you are there. It’s all ridiculously good value, and then there’s the service—affable, clued-up and flawlessly patrolled to make you feel at one with the world.

Tel: +91-9822184103
They are bashful creatures, often spotted in dull green or brown ‘plumages’, with their necks craned upwards and their eyes focused far into the distance… Birdwatchers — usually, the gentlest, most responsible species of travellers — love flocking together to beautiful, biodiverse wetlands like Manglajodi on the northeastern edge of the Chilika Lake in Odisha. With 19 wildlife sanctuaries, one national park, two tiger reserves and several other microhabitats along its coasts and inland, Odisha and its wilderness not only draws droves of birdwatchers, but wildlife lovers of all stripes! Because Odisha is where the earth breathes easy…

And we must protect, preserve and celebrate the wild side of our planet. At Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative that is exactly what we do. Be a responsible traveller. Join the movement!

Northern Pintail, Mangalajodi

LOOK WITHIN

STEP OUTSIDE

LOOK WITHIN
They are bashful creatures, often spotted in dull green or brown ‘plumages’, with their necks craned upwards and their eyes focused far into the distance... Birdwatchers — usually, the gentlest, most responsible species of travellers — love flocking together to beautiful, biodiverse wetlands like Manglajodi on the northeastern edge of the Chilika Lake in Odisha. With 19 wildlife sanctuaries, one national park, two tiger reserves and several other microhabitats along its coasts and inland, Odisha and its wilderness not only draws droves of birdwatchers, but wildlife lovers of all stripes! Because Odishaah is where the earth breathes easy...

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Northern Pintail, Mangalajodi

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When local meets global, the dining experience promises to be like no other
Marking Michelin star chef Atul Kochhar’s much awaited comeback to the land of culinary magic is this modern Indian, uber-chic restaurant—SAGA: Cuisines of India. With a hard-to-miss glistening façade and one of the tallest bar displays—as high as 40 feet—the restaurant is all about stories. Right from its interiors to the seating arrangement as well as the uniforms, each element has a tale to tell.

And when Chef Kochhar is involved be assured that something larger than life is coming your way. Chef’s curated menu hits too close to home but also does not completely do away with a contemporary spin. With familiar flavours from all across the country, the menu traverses across land and sea alike and eventually diversifies into a burst of flavours. We recommend starting off with the Garhwali Kulth ki Kachori and Kandmool, moving on to Khari Paneer Tikka and going all out with the Punjabi Saag Paneer and Himachali Sepu Vadi.

And that’s not all when it comes to stealing the show. Akhilesh Sheoran, the bar manager, also spins up some signature SAGA cocktails that draw inspiration from the length and breadth of India and seamlessly blend with the overall experience.

Vishal Anand’s brainchild exudes a modern Indian vibe by day that fades to make way for a chic evening spot and eventually possesses the ability to transform into a party outpost as soon as the music soars high. Gurugram definitely has a bang-on entrant in its culinary space!

» Keep an eye out for the fusion desserts that will quite literally leave you spoilt for choice

— SIMRRAN GILL
months’ time, when I went to London, I saw a machine in a kitchen equipment shop. I got it packed, got the base plates changed and the rest is history.

**What has your experience with fusion food been like?**

One of the first restaurant menus that we did, we turned it into Cal-Indian cuisine—a fusion of Californian and Indian food. That was the time I created the Nazza—the naan-pizza. We did a ceasar salad with chicken tikka, in 1991, and roasted corn soup with turmeric popcorn. Anybody who does fusion must know the basics of both the cuisines that they are dealing with.

If the espuma in kombucha cappuccino overpowers the kombucha or doesn’t gel properly with it, you are gone! Chargrilled prawns (Indian-style) with parmesan espuma—come on, a tandoori recipe with parmesan espuma? Rosemary chicken tikka—where’s the sense in that?

**What is the concept at your Chef’s Studio?**

A table of eight, a show-kitchen, cameras inside and flat TVs on top to show food as it is being cooked—the whole experience is about unlimited luxury. I brought in silver cutlery, crystal, luxury tableware from Rosenthal, Ercuis and Versace. Every course is served differently. The ingredients are sourced from all over the world; it really is an exclusive offering.

— PRANNAY PATHAK

**The well-known celebrity chef separates fusion food from confusion food—and fleshes out what the luxury dining experience means to him**

**How do you describe redefined food, or refined cooking?**

See, every restaurant and dhaba makes butter chicken—some with a lot of chillies, some with honey and tomatoes and so on and so forth. But when you refine butter chicken, the question is: how do you present it? How will the taste linger on the palate? We once did a dish called Can-Can Chicken where the chicken is sealed along with spices and tomatoes in a can, and cooked in vacuum. When you open the can, the aroma is completely different... that’s what I mean.

**What’s the story behind your famous chocolate shawarma?**

I was going through an Emirates in-flight magazine on a long-haul flight once from Dubai to LA and there were stories about shawarma in Istanbul, shawarma in Dubai, shawarma in other Middle-Eastern countries. I wondered why there was no dessert shawarma yet. I wanted something that would go to the table and people would watch it like a food performance, so in two

**Of late, you’ve done a lot of Peruvian cuisine...**

I fell in love with the country. We have a lot of Peruvian picks in our BKC restaurant, like ceviche, corn crème brulee and a tortilla pizza. At a pisco factory in Peru I noticed guavas which are eaten a lot in the country. So one evening, I made a guava puree, added pisco and lime, and made a cocktail. In Mumbai, guavas are called Peru, and so I called the cocktail Peru Peru!

**The national drink of Peru, pisco sour was invented by an American bartender in Lima in the 1920s**

**CHEF RECOMMENDS**

**CHEF HEMANT OBEROI’S SIGNATURE CREATIONS**

**Chocolate shawarma**

An inventive take on the sinful chocolate cake that undergoes roasting on a portable shawarma machine—crisping the exterior and turning the core mushy and gooey. Served with rose ice cream.

**Brie and Truffle Soufflé**

We took one whole year (1988-89) to perfect it. It is an iconic offering with its origins in the Zodiac Grill menu. The fluffy soufflé is known for its unique hit of umami and is doused in a creamy sauce.
SINGAPORE SWING

PRETTY IN PINK

UNLESS YOU’VE HAD THE pleasure of visiting the little cosmopolitan nugget of culture that Singapore is, you’d be hard-pressed to define its cuisine. But Mai Bao comes at the perfect time to fulfill some of our international cravings without the risks of taking a flight. The restaurant serves hawker-style Singaporean street food with a blend of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian flavours, much like the country itself.

The giant neon sign lighting up the Commons at DLF Avenue is hard to miss, as is the Merlion sentinel guarding Mai Bao’s entrance. Let’s just say your Instagram will not be disappointed. The cozy restaurant can seat about 50 people, and the colour scheme is right up all the younger millennial-Gen Z’s alley. But be warned, the food knows no generation.

Start your meal off with the fresh pomelo salad. There’s an assembly line of satays to taste, and the pork and yam puff make for great deep-fried appetisers. If you’d like to go the healthy route, the green summer rolls—popiah—are incredible.

There’s an assortment of dumplings and baos to choose from, but also dishes for a more developed palate. We’re looking at the salted egg prawns. They’re exactly what they sound like.

Most of the gravy-based main course items come with a lovely blue pea jasmine rice, naturally coloured with specks of blue grains. They use butterfly pea flower, or aparajita.

The portions are not enormous, but they’re not small either. Try not to get carried away while ordering like we did. You can go for some safe options like the laksa, which was surprisingly light and refreshing, or the more heavy duty lamb rendang. Let your stomach guide your order, you really can’t go wrong here.

And if you’re wondering, we recommend brunch!

MAI BAO

NEW DELHI

Commons, DLF Avenue, Saket

• 11.30am to 11pm

• If there’s nothing else you try, definitely try the boba. They have a range of delicious bubble teas like strawberry cheesecake and matcha. The coconut cream is heavenly, and they also have a vegan option.
They once strayed as far as the Indus... But today, the Indian Wild Ass gallops gracefully across the shimmering moonscapes of the Little Rann in Gujarat. It's the only place in the world, where they feel at home now. Free, safe, and at last count, 6,000-strong! It's easy to forget that by the mid-1970s, there were barely 720 of them walking on this planet. Fifty years on, they attract researchers and lovers of wildlife from every continent to these parched, salty plains almost on the western edge of our map. The journey of the Indian Wild Ass is an incredible one.

And we must protect, preserve and celebrate such rare, elegant creatures found only in our country (and not just the big cats!). At Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative that is exactly what we do. Be a responsible traveller. Join the movement!

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STAY WILD
STAY HOPEFUL
They once strayed as far as the Indus... But today, the Indian Wild Ass gallops gracefully across the shimmering moonscapes of the Little Rann in Gujarat. It’s the only place in the world, where they feel at home now. Free, safe, and at last count, 6,000-strong! It’s easy to forget that by the mid-1970s, there were barely 720 of them walking on this planet. Fifty years on, they attract researchers and lovers of wildlife from every continent to these parched, salty plains almost on the western edge of our map.

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stay

HOTELS, HOSTELS AND NOTHING LIKE HOME

TAJ MAHAL HOTEL 76

NOOR MAHAL 78
Amid the bucolic woods, this luxury property is an escape into the wilderness

**KABINI**

I try to make myself comfortable in a coracle and can’t help but notice the unusual mist over the Kabini River this morning. It’s the perfect day to spot the rare, elusive black panther, I’m told. I try and pay attention to the jungle calls—something that I’ve learnt in the past two days at the KAAV Safari Lodge—but fail as soon as I spot the green bee eater.

Sharing a boundary with the Nagarhole National Park, KAAV is an escape—into the wilderness, and from the madness. Done tastefully and in harmony with nature, the safari lodge is one of a kind. Its accommodation units perfectly balance your privacy while making sure you have visual access to the jungle. And for a fuller view, the observation deck is only a staircase away.

Twenty-four hours in a day seem less when you are at KAAV, and there is a constant internal conflict—whether to simply snooze around or engage in a series of activities that the lodge has to offer. I somehow manage to find the near-perfect balance, or so I’d like to assume.

As opposed to a grand entrance that one might expect, a narrow rustic path and two furry friends greet all guests here. At KAAV, luxury and day-to-day operations work in sync with environmental consciousness and sustainability.

As for the meals, they are fairly simple, comforting and wholesome, with most raw ingredients sourced from the villages nearby. Owing to COVID, the buffet has been done away with, but the individual servings make for a colourful delight on your plate. Although not one with a sweet tooth, I do shyly help myself to another dessert serving, as I overlook the jungle and continue to be wooed by its mysticism.

— SIMRRAN GILL
Old Wine, New Bottle
TAJ MAHAL

Taj Mahal Hotel, the crown jewel of our national capital, is set to present itself in an all-new avatar. With the patronage this property has already garnered in the past—Prince Charles, the Dalai Lama—the renovations are going to attract guests, old and new. Architect David Edwards of Aston Designs has executed the redesign, retaining elements from India’s rich architectural heritage. Details of Lutyens columns and traditional art put forward in a contemporary style adorns the walls of the aesthetically renovated suites and rooms, with some of the best views central Delhi has to offer. Early 2022 should see the completion of this project; for now, the elaborate hospitality of certain renovated sections is open to patrons.

THINGS TO DO Due to the hotel’s central location, there’s no dearth of activities. Activities at the hotel include a spa, gym, dining at signature restaurants—Varq and Machan, a swim at the pool (reopening soon), cocktail hour at Rick’s, and Sunday Brunch at the Poolside Lawns.

Escape
Witness the Change of Guard Ceremony at the President’s residence. Special excursions to experience this tradition are organised by the property.
Sanchi Sehgal, Founder, Ozone Signature Range shares her SKINCARE ROUTINE TO MANAGE ACNE AND ACNE-PRONE SKIN.

The frequent appearance of the uninvited guest acne and pimples can be daunting, especially if they tend to leave behind a mark on exit. Following a simple, but meaningful skincare routine can ensure the uninvited guest leaves without a mark and shows up less often.

A fulfilling AM and PM routine plays a pivotal role in treating inflamed skin, or to maintain good skin health in general. In the day, the skin goes through exposure and stress, therefore the purpose of skincare should remain to properly hydrate and protect. At night, on the other hand, we must ensure treatment and recovery.

Follow this simple, yet meaningful NIGHT skincare routine for treatment against acne

1. Cleansing (but make it double)

Double-cleansing may sound like an unnecessary complication to some. However, to effectively let your skin recover from the day’s stress, its essential that skin is able to breathe (and the pores are un-clogged). For oily, acne-prone skin, this extra step can ensure removal of excess oil that has accumulated bacteria over the day.

Take a few pumps of Ozone Signature Biphasic Makeup Remover on a cotton-pad and gently wipe face and neck. The jojoba oil and aloe vera formula breaks sunscreen cast, make-up pigments, accumulated dirt and effectively wipes the impurities off the skin. Rinse with water.

Complete the cleanse with Ozone Signature Purifying Face Cleanser.

2. Toning with Rose Water (Preparing the skin)

Rose Water is a natural astringent. A simple, yet powerful formula to pacify the pores and return the skin to its natural balance. It is rich in vitamin C and phenolics, making it a natural anti-inflammatory solution. Spray a few pumps of Ozone Signature Gulab Jal all over the face. Wait for 5-10 minutes for it to absorb.

3. Treatment with Hardiradya Taila

This classical ayurvedic recipe made with wound healing and anti-inflammatory herbs is the holy grail for acne and damage caused by acne. Use 7 drops of Ozone Signature Hardiradya Taila and generously dab on acne or affected areas. Apply a thin layer all over the face as well. Let it work and absorb overnight.

The sesame oil base of this serum allows it to absorb and take the herbs deep into the skin without clogging pores. It is the ideal nutrition to let your skin recover and receive treatment at night.

THE PRODUCTS LISTED ABOVE ARE AVAILABLE AT: www.ozonesignature.com
NOOR MAHAL
Karnal, approx. 138km from Indira Gandhi International Airport
» 125 elegant rooms and suites

MARVEL » The interiors boast of fusion elements inspired from Mughal and Rajputana architecture. The traditional royal essence here embraces and preserves India’s deep-rooted heritage

SOJOURN » Arched stonework, rich drapes, gold-leaf frescoes, opulent furniture and accessories in the spacious chamber envelop you in contemporary decadence

ENGAGE » Adorned with memorabilia, the colonial-style English bar serves signature cocktails inspired by the royal sport of polo, while the Frontier Mail restaurant draws inspiration from the legendary namesake train that operated in pre-independent India

Escape
Head to Kurukshetra, a pilgrimage centre, where the battle of Mahabharata took place and reflects the historical myth of the Kauravas and Pandavas
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Hope can be a powerful, palpable thing... Holding out an abundance of such hope and inspiration, while turning the page on a year that tested the travel community like never before, the sixth edition of the Outlook Indian Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards was held on the beautiful shores of Konark in Odisha. Marking two crucial ‘firsts’, it was hosted outside New Delhi for the first time in six years, and as a hybrid event, with a mix of live and virtual sessions. Announced after a rigorous six-month long process, the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards 2021 too broke with tradition. The awards that usually honour best practices in the Indian travel industry went a step further this year by celebrating fantastic innovations and alternatives that were devised primarily in response to the pandemic.

With an eye on recovery and rebuilding, the axis of all conversations at India’s only platform for celebrating and supporting people- and planet-friendly tourism was sustainability. The focus was squarely on carbon, waste and water, and on sharing ideas across disciplines to build resilience in (and through) tourism.
Presented by

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1. Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Odia Language & Literature, Odisha, with Ruben Banerjee, Editor-in-chief, Outlook magazine
2. Shri Sachin R Jadhav, IAS, Director & Additional Secretary, Tourism
3. Shri Vishal Dev, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Sports & Youth Services, Government of Odisha
4. Shri Sanatan Pancholi, Senior Officer, Gujarat Tourism
5. Indranil Roy, CEO, Outlook Group
BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION
GOLD: Mountain Homestays & Augtraveler
SILVER: Immersive Trails

BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT
GOLD: Waste Warriors
SILVER: Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES) & Kalap Trust

BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVE
GOLD: Kaarwan
SILVER: Pashoo Pakshee & Aathun by Rajasthan Studio

BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN
GOLD: Delhi Food Walks
SILVER: Booking.com

BEST FUTURE-FORWARD STATE
GOLD: Kerala
SILVER: Odisha

OVERALL WINNER
Delhi Food Walks
BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION

GOLD: Mountain Homestays & Augtraveler

SILVER: Immersive Trails

GOLD: Waste Warriors

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GOLD: Delhi Food Walks

SILVER: Booking.com

GOLD: Kerala

SILVER: Odisha

BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT

OVERALL WINNER

Delhi Food Walks

BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVE

BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

IRTA 2021

1. Pattachitra tags for all our guests
2. Sun Temple at Konark
3. IRTA participants
4. Eco Retreat, Konark
Ms Mendiratta offered a wider view of the travel industry today and positive projections for “the next (not new) normal” based on global data and her own decades-long experience. She also shared words of hope from Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General, UNWTO, who said, “Travel will return — stronger, safer, more unified, and more sustainably.”

Sharing a wonderful example of sustainable architecture, a stepwell-inspired-spa in Haryana built as a private project, Mr Nath highlighted how it was possible to “revive lost skills and techniques, and to arrest urban migration too”. He also reminded us that sustainability also exists beyond built-heritage: “We need to take pride in our bhojan (cuisine), bhasha (language) and bhesh (attire).”

“Nobody needs help! What we need is a partnership,” said Dr Hande, speaking on working with communities at large. He also urged the responsible travel practitioners to inspire travellers to move the needle, to actively make a change, and not just visit a place.

Mr Bansal asked the audience to mull on “how to leverage technology, how to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and how to truly empower local communities, and in turn achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals even in the farthest corners of the world.”
Ms. Shah said, “We need more and more people to understand the science of water, so they can take ownership of the problem and work together on sustainable solutions.” And that can only happen with the help of the communities and frontline workers like Ms Das. 

Kalyani Das, 
Krishi Mitra, Odisha Livelihoods Mission, Nayagarh

Chirag Mahajan, 
Sr. Manager, Waste Warriors

“By changing the way materials are circulated in eco-tourism circuits, I believe we can address climate change and air pollution, and create models that can work not just for tourism but for the wider world.”

Bharati Chaturvedi, 
Founder & Director, Chintan, Environmental Research & Action Group

“By changing the way materials are circulated in eco-tourism circuits, I believe we can address climate change and air pollution, and create models that can work not just for tourism but for the wider world.”

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Anita Mendiratta, 
Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the UNWTO

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“We need to take pride in our bhojan (cuisine), bhasha (language) and bhesh (attire).”
back

— BOOKS —

The World Below Zero Fahrenheit
Kashmir and its people post the abrogation of Article 370

Travel Classic
Hemingway’s lost characters in a post-war world

The Longest Kiss
Devika Rani and her life on celluloid
Nestled calmly on the banks of the Chilika Lagoon, Mangalajodi is a pristine bird paradise that holds one of the world's greatest conservation stories in its folds, and beckons travellers from far and wide. The softness of the magical marshes, the riveting beauty of the habitat as well as the jostling flocks of birds that carpet the scape and the skies here are an inviting escape. When in Mangalajodi it is almost as though being on nature's canvas, where the silence is only disturbed either by the rowing boats or the sounds of the birds. Now a major ecosystem conservation project site—by the locals and the state government—Mangalajodi is a sequestered destination in India's best-kept secret.
Cry, the Beloved Valley

On August 5, 2019, Suhas Munshi was on his way back to Srinagar from Gurez, when Article 370—which accorded special status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir—of the Indian Constitution was abrogated. This book is about that moment, and its aftermath. Through travels and conversations with people across the Valley in the wake of the event, Munshi tries to stitch together a portrait of what it meant for the common Kashmiri.

The book opens with a memorable line: “This is not a goddamn ‘Heaven.’” That’s a ‘corrosive’ cliché we’ve all been guilty of at some point or the other, which, as Munshi says, “reduced a living place to an amusement park.” This is after all a real place, with all the attendant imperfections.

Over the course of his travels, Munshi runs into a plethora of eclectic characters and experiences—from attending a Christmas service with the tiny Christian community of Baramulla to meeting the lone Pandit family in a ghost colony in Shopian, watching a football match in Srinagar and embarking on a gruelling walk with the Bakarwal shepherds over the majestic Pir Panjal range from Srinagar to Jammu.

There are two encounters in the book that I found particularly impactful. One is with the poet Madhosh Balhami of Pulwama, whose house—including his work and library of over 800 books, some of them quite rare—was reduced to ashes in a gunfight between militants and security forces on 15 March, 2018. The second is a meeting with the playwright, actor and director Bashir Bhawani, who went from rural south Kashmir in the 1980s to study at the National School of Drama in New Delhi—an extraordinary feat for the time. Bhawani has risen to national prominence in recent times after cameos in Haider and Bajrangi Bhaijaan. Then, of course, there is the extraordinary coda of the Bakarwals, sitting snugly by itself at the end like a self-contained novella, even though it had a somewhat inauspicious start.

The World Below Zero Fahrenheit is a time capsule, an extraordinary book about an extraordinary moment in the history of the Indian subcontinent.

—Amit Dixit
The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani
by KISHWAR DESAI
WESTLAND ₹599

While this is the story of Devika Rani and Himanshu Rai, their relationship and the studio, Bombay Talkies that they struggled to set up, what comes through is a woman’s struggle against a patriarchy that judges her on the basis of her beauty and assumed behaviour. Tagore’s grandniece locked eyes with the much older producer through a window at midnight in London, as stagey an introduction as any. The relative she was staying with at the time warned Rai off the beautiful young girl, but karma intervened and eventually brought them together.

The first part of the book is about Rai’s struggles to finance his studio which involved seducing naive German frauleins, one of whom gave him a daughter, and while detailed and well researched the book does have readers wondering when Devika Rani will finally sweep in and take centre stage. Desai does not disappoint—Devika Rani enters and becomes Mrs Himanshu Rai. The first film that they starred in was fittingly called Karma. Launched in London’s Hyde Park, Karma dazzled all beholders and became infamous for the longest kiss in Indian cinema, two minutes of screen time in which Devika Rani liplocked with an unconscious Himanshu Rai.

Launched in London’s Hyde Park, Karma dazzled all beholders and became infamous for the longest kiss in Indian cinema, two minutes of screen time in which Devika Rani liplocked with an unconscious Himanshu Rai. Hyped as Tagore’s grandniece, she began attracting attention at a time when Indian cinema was in a nascent stage and when most actresses were women from doubtful backgrounds.

To do him credit, Himanshu Rai, billed as the Indian Casanova and chased by creditors—mainly female—was solely devoted to setting up his production company. He and Devika advertised for educated actresses and the production crew they assembled was mainly German with a talented Bengali faction at its head. Desai keeps the interest in their personal life going by hinting at a dark secret and intersperses the text with letters from Devika Rani to Svetoslav Roerich whom she was later to marry. Desai’s research is based on 4,000 letters and studio documents, which Roerich had advised her to archive, and lockdown helped the author to organise the papers.

The fact that a beautiful actress’ life is not easy emerges from the book—driven to elopement by Rai’s abusive behaviour, Devika Rani chose to be branded a seductress rather than reveal Rai’s psychological issues and weaken the foundations of Bombay Talkies. The kind of strength that enabled her to hold her tongue while being misunderstood on all fronts—Manto shredded her character in his story of the actress Lateeka Rani—would seem strange in these kiss-and-tell tabloid days. The Longest Kiss is as much a story of the setting up of Indian cinema as it is the story of the actress who became a studio head and who could sing and develop film concepts with ease. Ultimately internal politics shredded Bombay Talkies and Devika Rani found love in Svetoslav Roerich and abandoned the tumultuous film world. Her life is the stuff of films, and was the subject of a successful play scripted by Kishwar Desai. The star struck as well as film historians will find much to relish in her story.

—ANJANA BASU
India is full of myriad secrets—in its maze-like streets, historical structures, colourful culinary space, its people and their stories. Its rich history is shaped by numerous rulers, their dynasties and fortified structures, ancient memorabilia and a conscious attempt to preserve it all.

While multiple stories float around the rock-cut caves of Ellora, the one that fascinates travellers and historians alike is that the entire structure has been built out of a single basalt rock. And the largest one that has been cut out, today stands in the form of the Kailasa Temple—or colloquially Cave 16—and was aimed at representing its namesake, Mount Kailasa (Kailash), Lord Shiva’s abode in the daunting Himalaya.

Unlike the honeycomb caves that the structure is believed to be, the temple is a freestanding one, depicting tales from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the life of Shiva. With two monolithic obelisks and ancient carvings, the Kailasa Temple is an architectural marvel with a royal patronage.

While intricately carved figurines and motifs dominate the structure, it is the forgotten ones a few steps away that have a tale of their own to tell and one that is best experienced rather than talked about. Even though the caves sprawl across two kilometres in area, only 34 of them are accessible to the public with the rest sealed with royal secrets.

—Simrran Gill
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