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BHARAT AGGARWAL

TRAVEL CHIC

HAVE YOU GONE "Bespoke" yet? Style and exclusive is the new mantra while travelling and if you haven't gone that route yet, you are missing out big time. Custom-tailored is always better than off-the-rack and this realisation has changed the face of travel lately, opening up a beautiful world of unique experiences for the connoisseur.

In the last couple of years I have discovered a whole bunch of lovely people who are curating experiences and in most cases they are highly customised to address your likes and dislike—be it a preference for small intimate inns, grand hotels or homestays, the finest dining or the most local *dhabas,* your sightseeing passion, or the desire to spend the day with a duchess, want to meet local artists, see cutting edge architecture or go shopping in secret boutiques… These people can open doors and make your travel dreams come true.

There are city walks of all varieties, gourmet tours, heritage, spiritual, adventure tours and the people playing the tour guide are smart, passionate about their area of interest who now quitting regular corporate jobs to extend their knowledge and passion to others with a similar wont. Closer home, Sunil Raman who was our expert speaker at the last **Travel Plus Adda** (Reader's Meet) moved out of the BBC to conduct heritage walks in Delhi. Our regular contributor Anand Shankar, a journalist turned adventure coach in a residential school has now taken his madness for biking to another level by settling down in Dehradun and launching IndusRiders to do customised motorcycle tours of India… wonderful, creative, people who are adding a dash of style and substance to our travels.

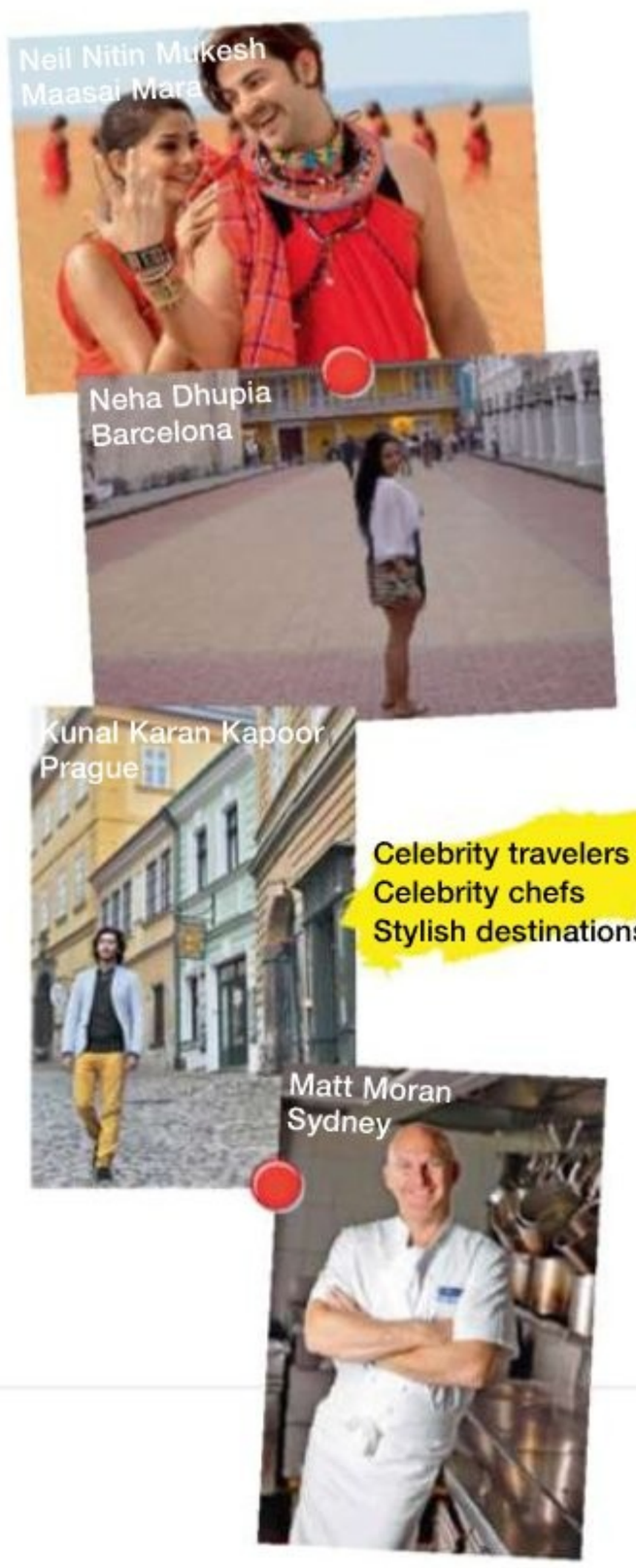
So to up the style quotient turn the pages to find in this issue a curated experience of Venice, a Bespoke Bali, the cool side of Cape Town as it takes on the World Design Capital 2014 mantle, a homestay in a West Bengal Rajbari (mansions of Bengal's erstwhile *zamindars*), a custom-made itinerary of Jaipur and our discovery of the month, a virgin destination, Pollachi, in Tamil Nadu nestling between forests, mountains and wildlife parks.

In our Food + Drink section we have a gorgeous pick of the latest stylish restaurants from around the globe led by celebrity chefs including the very intimate 'Chiswick' near Sydney that is a baby of MasterChef Australia's Matt Moran.

A crackling Plus List where some celebrity travellers share their pick of stylish destinations—Maasai Mara is actor Neil Nitin Mukesh's pick, San Francisco Bay Area it is for sarod player Amaan Ali Khan, and it is uber luxurious Monaco for TV actor Aman Varma.

We also have a pick of some stunning resorts like the Lalit Resort & Spa, Bekal in Kerala and the Paradis Hotel & Golf Club Mauritius.

Time to travel chic folks.



Celebrity travelers
Celebrity chefs
Stylish destinations

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ON THE COVER **JYOTHSNA CHAKRAVARTHY** PHOTOGRAPHER **PRATCH SIRIDHARA** PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT **TSERING TOPGYAL** ART DIRECTOR **YURREIPEM ARTHUR** FASHION ASSISTANT **BIDISHA ROY CHOUDHARY** FASHION EDITOR **RAHUL VIJAY** MAKEUP AND HAIR **CARLA GERSIE AT INEGA MODEL MANAGEMENT** LOCATION **RAJASTHAN** COVER COURTESY **HARPER'S BAZAAR INDIA**

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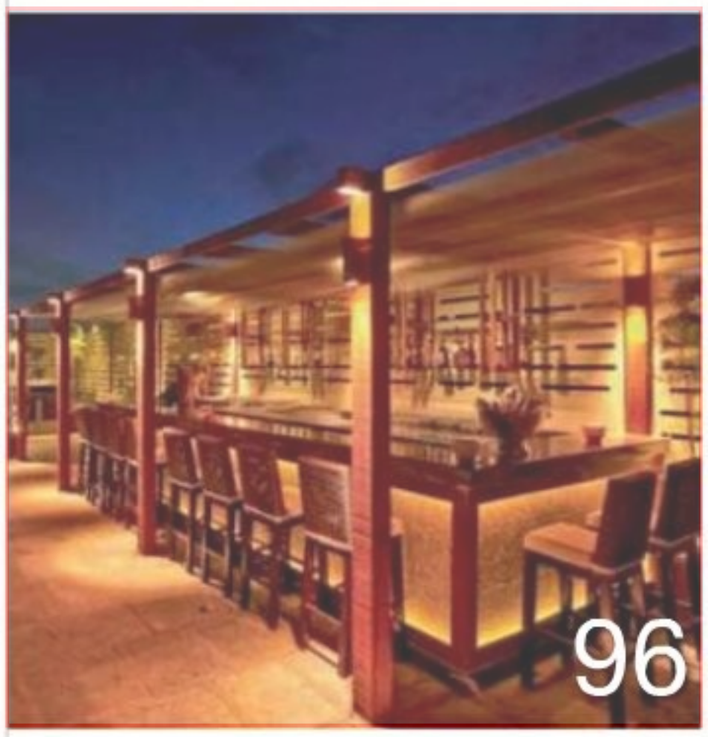

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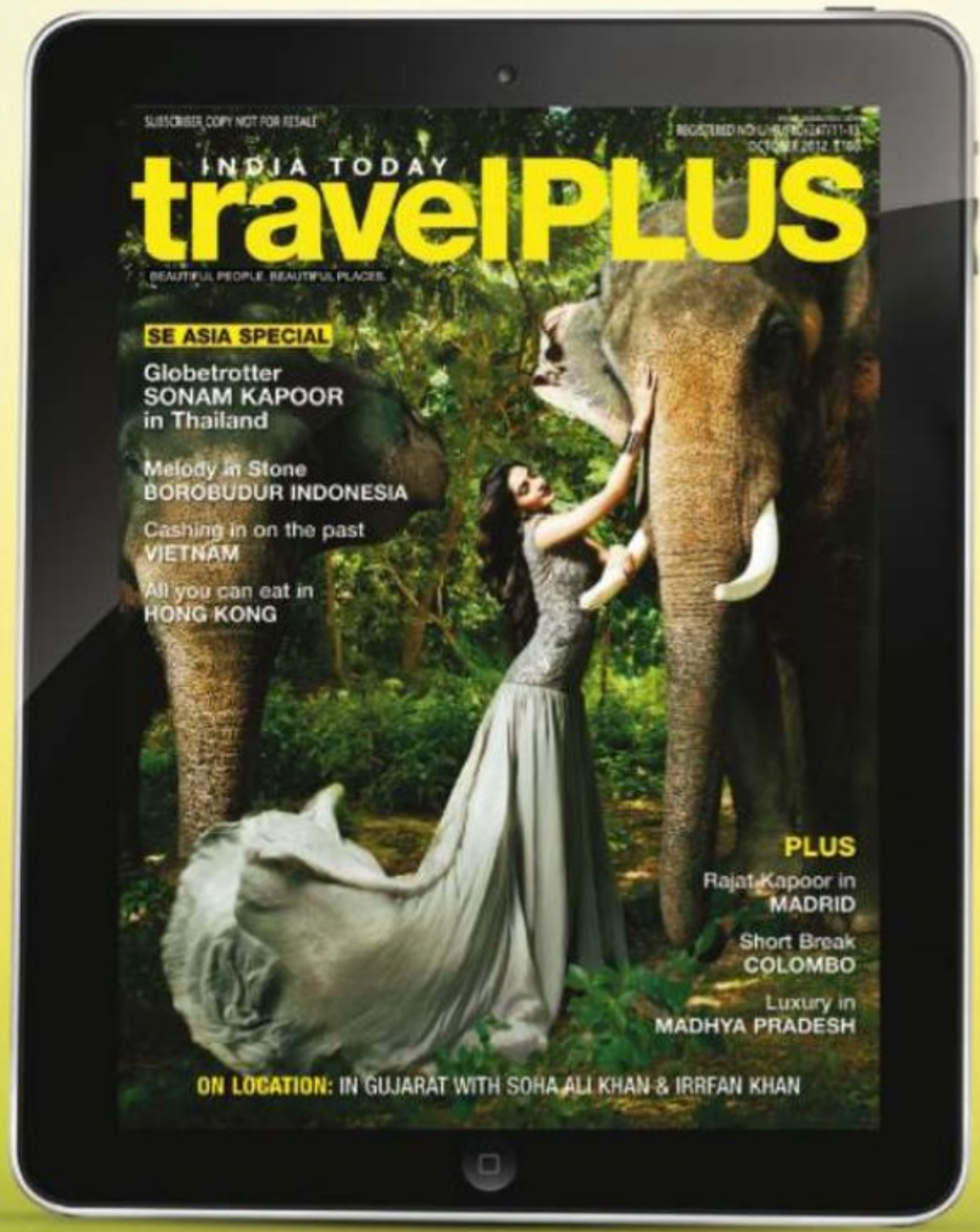

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Raised in one of the oldest mansions of Kolkata, **TANMOY CHATTERJEE** was probably seduced by the subtle play of light among Gothic pillars to take up photography early. He crisscrosses the country to capture the festival of Puli Kali.

DEEKSHA NANDA has a passion for the good things in life—food, travel, fashion, art to name a few. Being bitten by the travel bug at a fairly young age, Deeksha's travels have taken her across the globe, however, Venice, which she writes about here stays her favourite.

ROBIN BANSAL is a Delhi-based entertainment journo who lives and breathes cinema. Being perhaps the youngest scribe from India to have covered the Grammys and the Oscars live, he gets talking to some movers and shakers and puts together the Plus List

BOBAN JAMES

As an editor at a travel magazine in New York City, **SARAH KHAN** believed travel could transform your life. She visited South Africa on a whim and fell in love with Cape Town and with a Capetonian. Here, Sarah brings her unmatched knowledge of the city.

DIVYA DUGAR is a journalist, photographer and author—her first book *Slumgirl Dreaming* is a biography of Rubina Ali from the popular film, *Slumdog Millionaire.* She loves to travel and brings us the story of the Rajbaris from West Bengal.

Q

A stylish holiday

A trip to Waiheke Island, about an hours' ferry ride from Auckland New Zealand, is perhaps the most stylish holiday I've been on.

I've done most of the eastern coast and think Pondicherry stands out for its colonial style

Barecelona tops my list of the most stylish destinations. The people, architecture, street style—almost every corner you turn to oozes style.

OUR EXPERTS & COLUMNISTS

CAR & BIKE
Yogendra Pratap
Editor of *Auto Bild*, he is the first one to drive the Golden Quadrilateral and one of India's best in automotive journalism.

GOLF
Rishi Narain
Once India's national champion and Asian Games gold winner, he now runs the Rishi Narain Golf Management.

FOOD
Chef Saby
He is the man who rustles up the delicious fare at acclaimed restaurants like ai, Olive Bar & Kitchen and LAP.

THE SPIRITED TRAVELLER
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Globetrotter and jewellery designer, she is a shopaholic ideally placed to bring you up-to-date information.

TRAVEL LOG
Jug Suraiya
Called our very own Art Buchwald, the popular column by this well-known satirist continues to pack a punch.

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TOP5 LETTERS OF THE MONTH

1 TECH WOES

Referring to Jug Suraiya's humorous travel log *Telephoney* (ITTP October 2013). Travelling around the world has become much more convenient with technology as one can get connected to anyone around the world, book e-tickets, make reservations etc. It is wonderful thing especially during emergencies. Yes, there is no doubt technology has made our life easier but social interaction has lessened as a result. The younger generation has lost patience and become way too self-centred. Therefore, it is pertinent that there should be some control and we must balance its use.

—Mahesh Kumar, New Delhi

2 THE CALIFORNIA HILLS ARE CALLING!

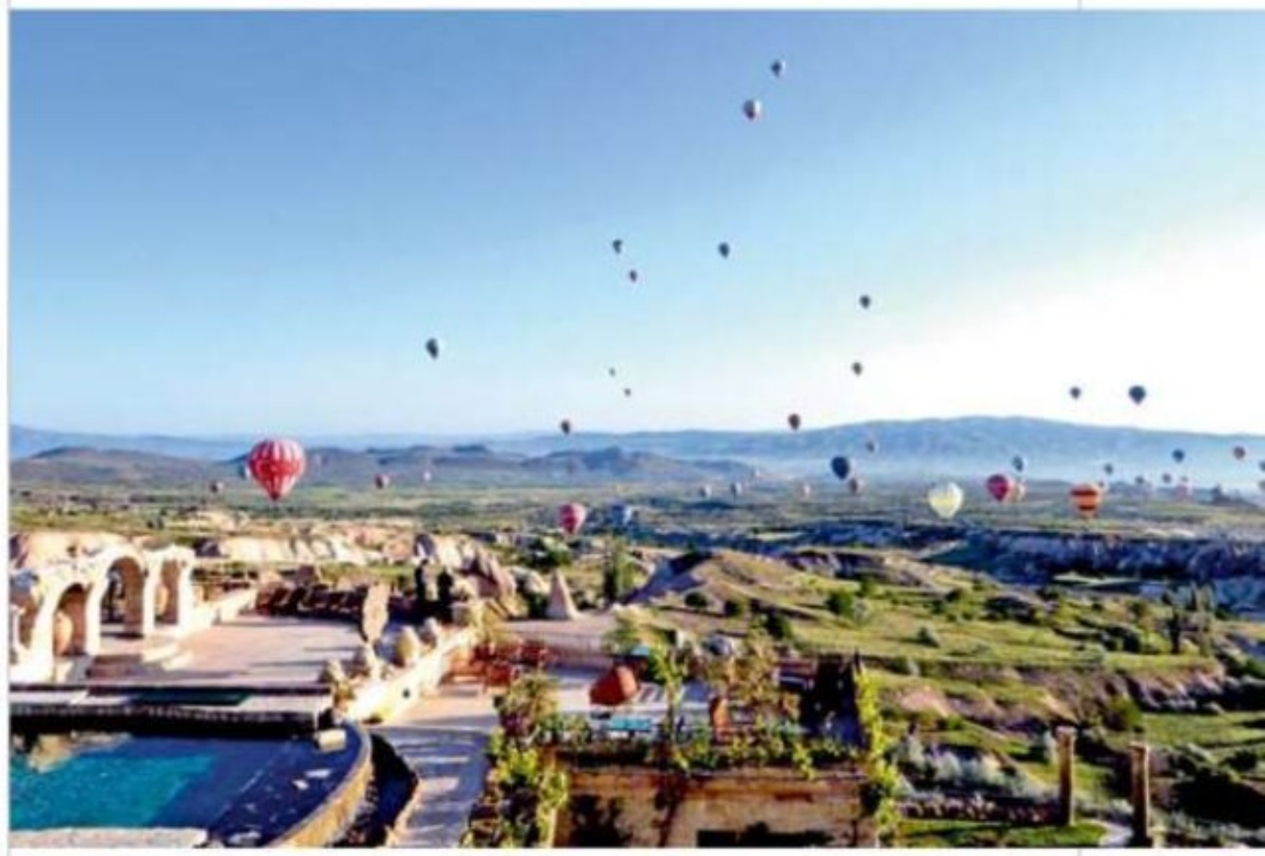
I was really surprised to read about trekking in the Santa Monica region. I have travelled in that part of the world but wasn't aware that such good and gentle treks were possible there. Great job in highlighting that aspect and a well written piece with good pictures.

—Ankit Verma, Mumbai

3 KUDOS ITTP

I just went through the October issue of the magazine, congratulations. What a great issue, including fantastic photography, especially the '10 hotels with mind blowing locations', 'Walk on Fire' and even the "Santa Monica Dreams' where I used to spend much time.

—Beate, Mumbai



4 WHAT A COVER!

To be honest I have always wondered what purpose a celeb serves on the cover of a travel magazine, but this time, I've got to say, I have no complaints. What a superb cover. Jacqueline Fernandez has never looked better and in the black and white cover she just stood out. Congratulations. I am now eagerly awaiting your next celeb cover.

—Rahul Sharma, Delhi

5 BUDGET TRAVELS PLEASE

I have recently acquired a taste for your magazine and I must add that it's a good all round travel magazine that has a bit of everything. What I particularly like is the idea of the Plus List which undoubtedly gets better with each issue. In the October issue, the list of hotels in mind blowing locations is just top notch. Though I do have one complaint-most of the places that make your list are usually unaffordable for the average traveller. Can we have some budget correction please!

—Sunanda Dutt, Bangalore

ERRATA

In the arcticle 'Chasing the rising sun' by Naren Tripathi, October 2013, the car used for the drive was Amaze and not as mentioned (pg 86).

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Hrithik and Priyanka Chopra in London

He's possibly the most popular superhero in India. Actor Hrithik Roshan, accompanied by co-star Priyanka Chopra hit the streets of London to promote their upcoming superhero flick *Krrish 3.* The third in the *Krrish* series, the film is said to have super graphics. It is scheduled for release in the first week of November.

Rishi Kapoor and SRK head to Cannes

After making an appearance in NZ and Australia, like a true globetrotter SRK flew to Cannes to attend a wedding. Also spotted was actor Rishi Kapoor who's taking a break after his recent film *Besharam,* in which he stars along with wife Neetu Singh and son Ranbir Kapoor.

Karan Johar and Ranbir take a break in New York

New York is a hot favourite in the Bollywood celeb travel list. It's also where Ranbir Kapoor and Karan Johar go to get lost in the crowd. The two were spotted in New York; while Ranbir took time off after his latest release *Besharam,* Kjo is said to be on a month long trip to concentrate on his next directorial venture.

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Kajol steps it up in New York

She's perhaps the finest example of beauty with brains in Bollywood. Actor Kajol was in New York at the UN headquarters in town to campaign for further reductions in child mortality rates in developing countries. The focus of her campaign is remarkable for the simple nature of its message: wash your hands She said, "For the first time in my life, I was star struck. I was among heads of state, world leaders, heads of international organisations and NGOs, who spoke about what they're doing to make the world a better place."

Varun Dhawan and Nargis Fakhri shoot in Bangkok

Varun Dhawan was spotted in Bangkok wrapping up his upcoming movie *Main Tera Hero.* Directed by David Dhawan, the film also stars Nargis Fakhri and Ileana D'Cruz. After completing the Bangkok shoot, Varun tweeted: "Shooting my first big action sequence before we end this schedule." And Nargis added: "Last day on set of *Main Tera Hero.* So sad…Loved everyone and had so much fun. What a lovely memorable bunch! Cast and crew included." They are scheduled to head to London to shoot the second leg of the film.

Madhuri and Rani visit NZ and Australia

Both have stayed under the radar for a while now, but not anymore. The *Tezaab* girl, Madhuri Dixit Nene along with Rani Mukherji, Shahrukh Khan and our last cover girl Jacqueline Fernandez headed down under to perform at the annual show—Temptations Reloaded. After a packed show in Auckland, New Zealand, the four headed to Australia to perform in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney.

AUSTRALIA TOURISM

Hyatt celebrates 30 years in India

Celebrating 30 years of successfully operating in India, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts has added 16 hotels and four new brands across India—Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt, Hyatt and Hyatt Place. The celebration activities will include a series of exhibitions and sale of affordable art by famous Indian artists in conjunction with the Smile Foundation to raise funds for the education of underprivileged children; special promotional offers and discounts for Hyatt's loyal guests; open and free sharing of an E-Foodbook by food writer and columnist Karen Anand. Currently the group has 17 full service hotels in Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Bangalore, Delhi, Goa, Chennai, Gurgaon, Hampi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune.

The Ritz-Carlton opens in Chengdu

Introducing the South Western region of China to world class luxury, the Ritz-Carlton officially opened doors to customers. Located in the heart of the city, this was once the site of an imperial palace. The 353 room property is the ninth Ritz-Carlton Hotel property in China. With interior design inspired by traditional Chinese courtyard homes, oriental motifs have been skillfully blended into a contemporary luxury hotel. The 41-storey hotel has stunning views over downtown Chengdu with the highest guestrooms in the city. www.ritzcarlton.com/chengdu.

APPOINTMENTS

- Kerzner International Holdings Limited has appointed Guenter Gebhard as the new General Manager for One&Only Hayman Island, ahead of its relaunch in April 2014. He joins One&Only with over 20 years experience, having joined Kerzner International in 2011.

- Vivek Vinod appointed as the General Manager—Sales & Operations at The Tamara, Coorg. He will hold the reins of the sales functions at The Tamara while also overseeing the operations of the resort.

- The Lalit Chandigarh appointed Ashish Gawari as its new General Manager of the 179-room property. He will be responsible for the management of this business property. Gawari brings with him strong operational background in the F&B segment.

- SM Shervani has been elected as President of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) for 2013-14. With over 25 years of experience, Shervani is also the Managing Director of Shervani Hospitalities Ltd.

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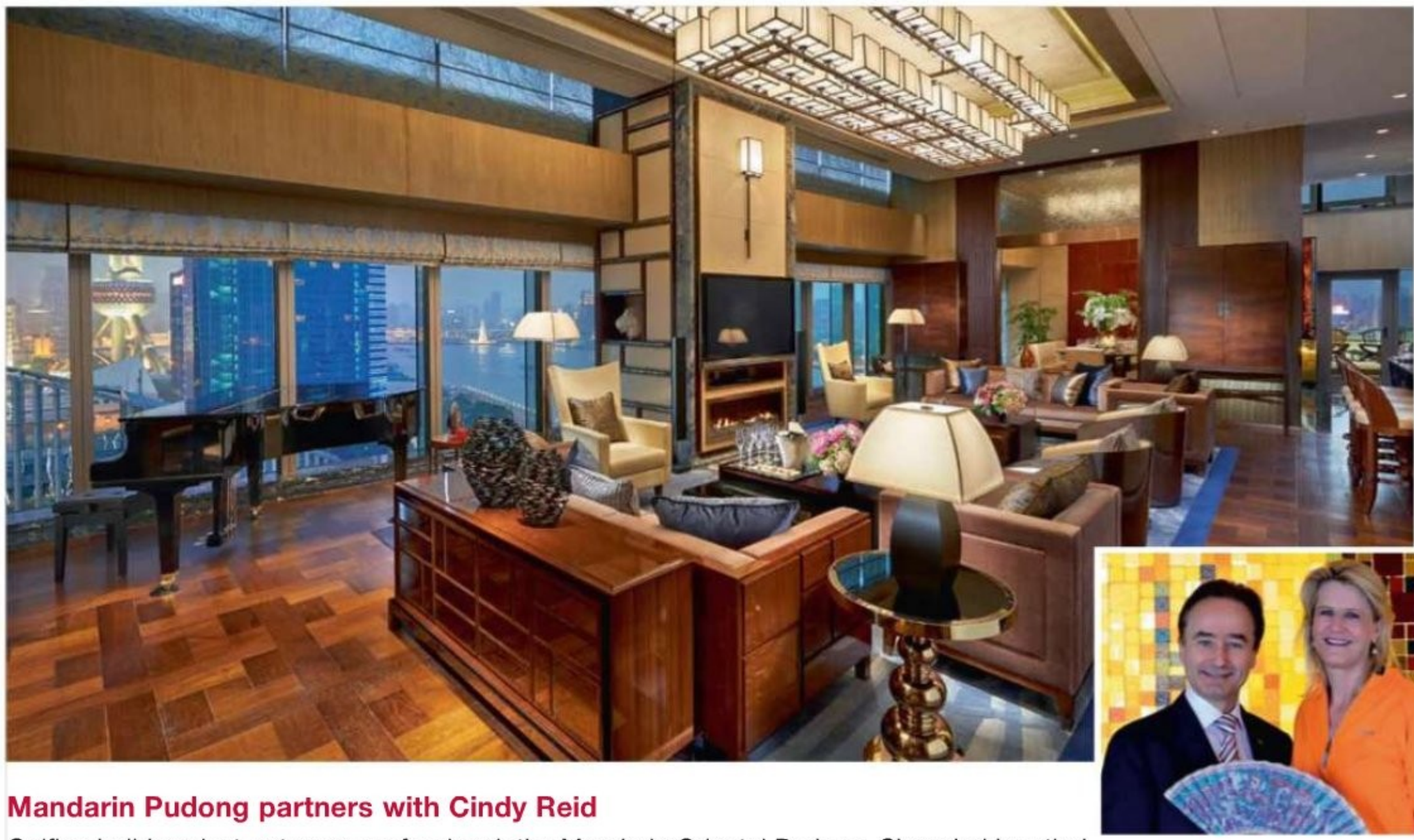

Mandarin Pudong partners with Cindy Reid

Golfing holidays just got more professional; the Mandarin Oriental Pudong, Shanghai has tied up with the Cindy Reid Golf Academy to make the most of your golfing trips. Hotel guests and those staying in the executive apartments can benefit from exclusive five-star instruction and VIP privileges at Shanghai's premier golf academy. The CRG Academy Privilege Card is an initiative to bring the hotel guests closer to Shanghai's rich lifestyle. You can contact the butler or the hotel concierge to make a reservation at the CRG Golf Academy. Guests can choose between hourly sessions or packages ranging from 10 to 120 hours for both adults and children. Rates begin from CNY 750 for adults and CNY 600 for kids between 10—17 and CNY 500 for kids 9 and below. www.mandarinoriental.com

Rickshaw tours by the Taj Mahal Hotel

To get the true essence of Old Delhi, the Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi has started rickshaw tours in association with When in India tours. Adding their signature touch to the ride, the hotel has specially designed rickshaws for comfort and style. Get transported 400 years back through eloquent memorials like the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Fatehpuri Masjid and Digamber Jain Temple. Or you could stroll through Chawri Bazaar and Kinari Bazaar that keeps alive the city's living legacy.

Stay at the Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central and avail the DreamWorks package at HK$1,298 per night. It includes accommodation for two, breakfast and more. Valid till Feb 28, 2014 www.holidayinn.com

Celebrate with Carlton Hotel St. Moritz

This winter, the Carlton Hotel St. Moritz celebrates its 100th anniversary. The hotel will give away a personal 100th anniversary gift to those staying between Dec 12, 2013-Mar 30, 2014 and offer special packages. These include two nights stay with breakfast, spa, private butler service and transfers. Prices start at 1,200 swiss francs per person. www.carlton-stmoritz.ch

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Harper's BAZAAR INDIA

Where Fashion Gets Personal

Fantasy Kingdom opens at Madame Tussauds Hong Kong

To celebrate the opening of Fantasy Kingdom in HK, five protagonists from the film, *The Monkey King,* got together to unveil five new wax figures at Madame Tussauds Hong Kong. The new zone is inspired from the 3D action movie and will house its five key characters—Monkey King, Buffalo Demon King, Princess Iron Fan, Silver Fox and Nu Wa. Guests can enjoy the experience that comes with special lighting and visual effects and tailored interactive experiences. In addition, there will also be a new royal family area, authentic history area and TV studio. For a complete new look, the attraction will also be renewing the music icon zone and the souvenir shop.

Deltin Royale Goa's floating casino

Since the party never stops in Goa, the beach town had another reason to celebrate. Delta Corp Ltd. launched its latest casino in Goa—'Deltin Royale' on board a ship. Making it India's largest casino on water, Deltin Royale has over 800 gaming positions spread over 40,000 square feet across four levels. In addition, it has private gaming suites for select guests and has 'Vegas'—the ship's dining and entertainment section and an exclusive lounge bar 'Whiskys' that stocks a fine selection of single malts.

Attend India's first yoga and life spirit festival, Zambhala at Morjim, Goa on December 21-22 for ₹1,600 (day pass). Activities include yoga, Sufi whirling, Shamanism and more. www.zambhala.in

Christmas the US way

There is no mystery behind why the Christmas season is often described as the most wonderful time of the year. This time, celebrate it differently at the annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade. Watch the boat parade held for five nights from December 18-22. The parade kicks starts at the Bay Island at 6:30 pm every evening. For more information on schedules visit www.discoveramerica.com

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Festive Germany

Celebrations in Germany are as abundant as they are varied from the carnival on the Rhine to wine festivals, from smaller events in the towns and countryside to the two biggest volksfest celebrations held anywhere in the world. Berlinale International Film Festival is to Germany what the Oscars are to Hollywood. The fun continues in Hamburg as people flock to Heiligengeistfeld to enjoy the DOM fun fair. End your vacation at the Cologne Carnival—which is known as the 'fifth season of the year.' This is when people really let their hair down. What are you waiting for?

Delhi Tourism to work with DTC

To make Delhi a more tourist friendly destination, Delhi Tourism (DTTDC) and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) have joined hands to modernise bus depots. The two are aiming at making budget hotels, retail outlets and passenger amenities at selected stops. DTC has initially identified six bus depots for the project, at Vasant Vihar, Sarojini Nagar, Sriniwaspuri, Kalkaji, Nehru Place and Raja Garden. This concept, is said to help create more budget hotels in the city and is aimed at tourists who prefer budget hotels.

"KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK HAS LAUNCHED A WORLD TRAVEL CARD THAT DOES AWAY WITH THE HASSLES OF CARRYING FOREIGN CURRENCY AND TRAVELLER'S CHEQUES"

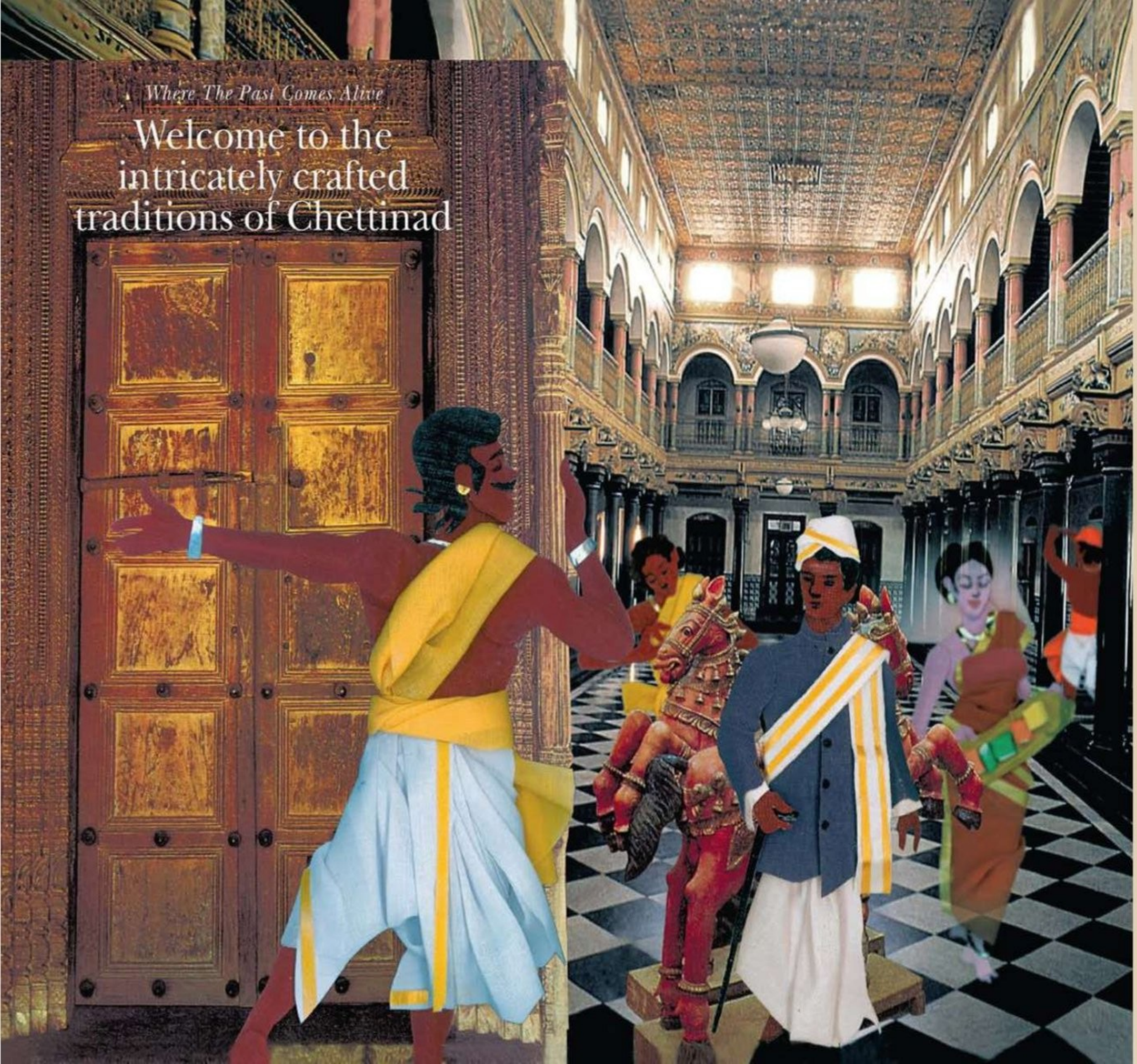
MANIPUR TOURISM

Festival time in Manipur

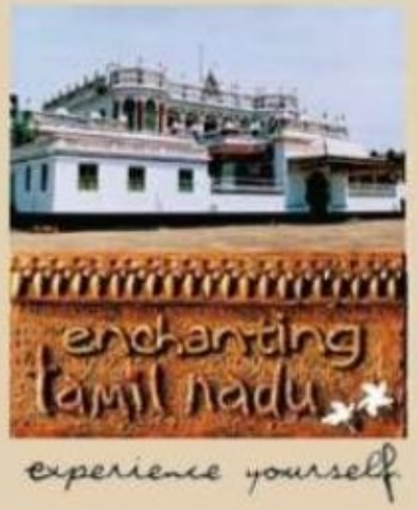
If northeast is on your travel itinerary this November, make your way to the Manipur Sangai Festival from November 21-30. It is held each year to promote the best of Manipur's art and culture, music, handicrafts, cuisines and more.
A magnanimous effort by the Government of Manipur and the Tourism Department, the festival is great place to get acquainted with Manipur traditions and rituals. The festival comes loaded with thrilling activities; Music lovers can feast on super rock music. Visit www.sangaifestival.gov.in

Where The Past Comes Alive

Welcome to the intricately crafted traditions of Chettinad



Chettinad's craftsman were renowned for their unique architectural styles - readily seen in the raised floors and the massive doors that took up to 3 years to build! Come, live the opulent Chettiar lifestyle yourself, at a palatial Chettinad mansion



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Etihad flying to LA

Etihad Airways will start direct flights to LA by mid next year. The airline will commence non-stop daily flights between Abu Dhabi and Los Angeles from June 1, 2014. It will deploy a three cabin ultra-long range Boeing 777-200 LR that can carry 237 passengers and has 8 diamond first class suites, 40 pearl business class flatbed seats and 189 coral economy class seats. The airline is also scheduled to purchase five Boeing 777-200 LRs from Air India. The Boeing 777-200 LR has a design range of 17,370 km, allowing it to connect to almost any city in the world.

SpiceJet starts direct flights to Bangkok

SpiceJet has launched direct flights between Bangalore and Bangkok, a popular holiday destination in Southeast Asia. Bookings for this route are now open. Flight SG 91 will depart Bangalore Airport at 03.35am every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. The airline is offering an introductory fare of ₹7,999 one way on this route. Travellers can now book tickets on www.spicejet.com or call (0) 987 180 3333 (toll free).

Air France is offering discounts up to ₹1,0000 on tickets purchased on www.airfrance.in from Oct 15 to Dec 15, 2013 (for departure till March 31, 2014). Discounts vary in business, premium economy and economy class. www.airfrance.in

Air India and SBI launch travel credit card

What happens when India's largest government-run commercial airline gets together with the country's most popular public sector bank? You have the Air India SBI Card. Air India and SBI Card launched its new travel credit card that allows a customer spending ₹5 lakh in a year to earn up to 3 Delhi-Mumbai return tickets on Air India. It also comes with a joining gift of 20,000 reward points. The card will offer 4 reward points for every ₹100 spent and 20 reward points for every ₹100 spent on the Air India website. For more info visit www.sbicard.com

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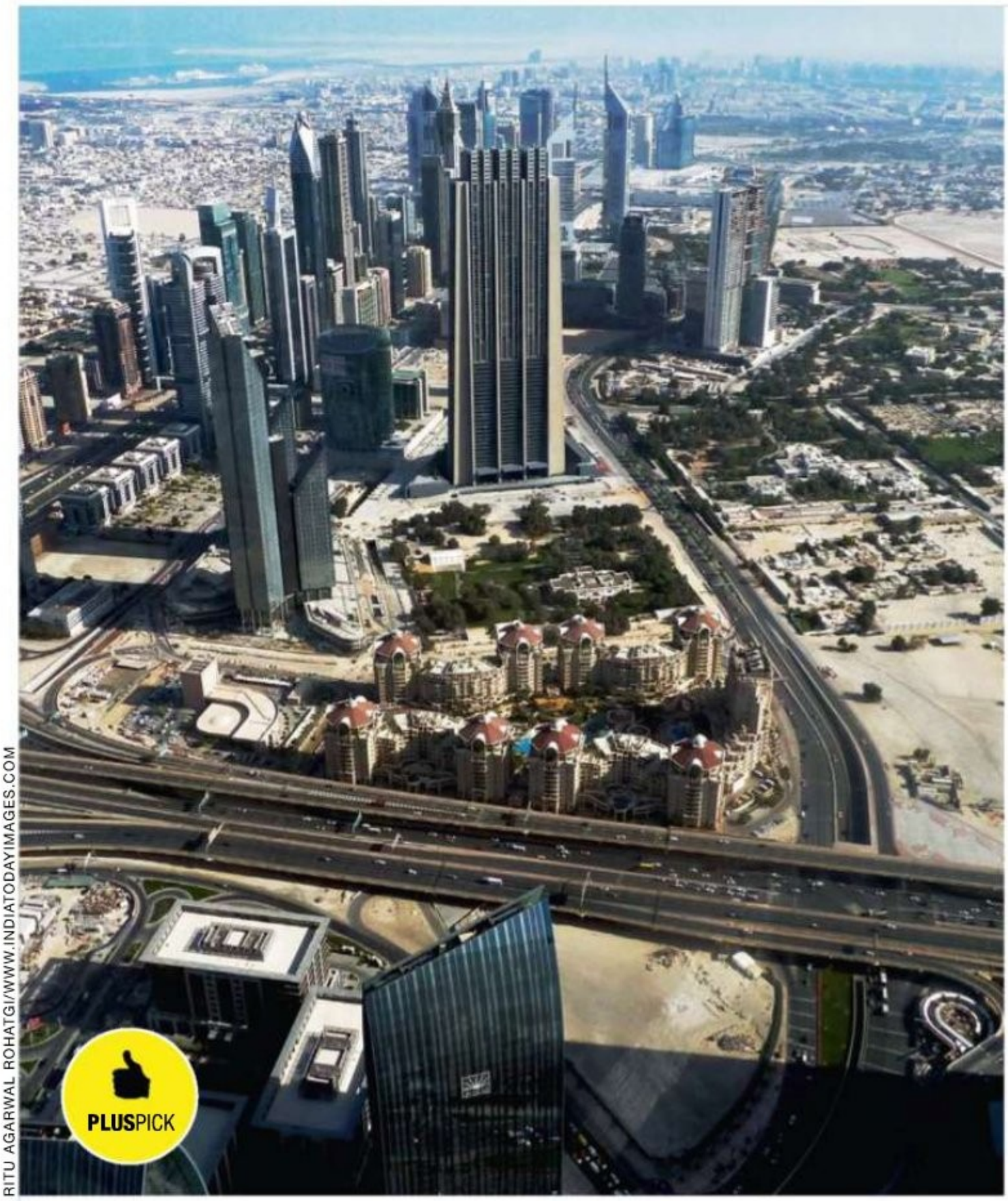

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Emirates announces special fares to Dubai

If you're looking for special fares to Dubai, Emirates may have the answer. The airline has introduced a range of fares for passengers from India. The return economy class fare from Mumbai to Dubai is ₹16,352. The fares are valid for sale and travel until March 31, 2014. The fares are on offer from all 10 Emirates gateways: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Kochi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata and have been specially designed for travellers from India. Visit www.emirates.com/in

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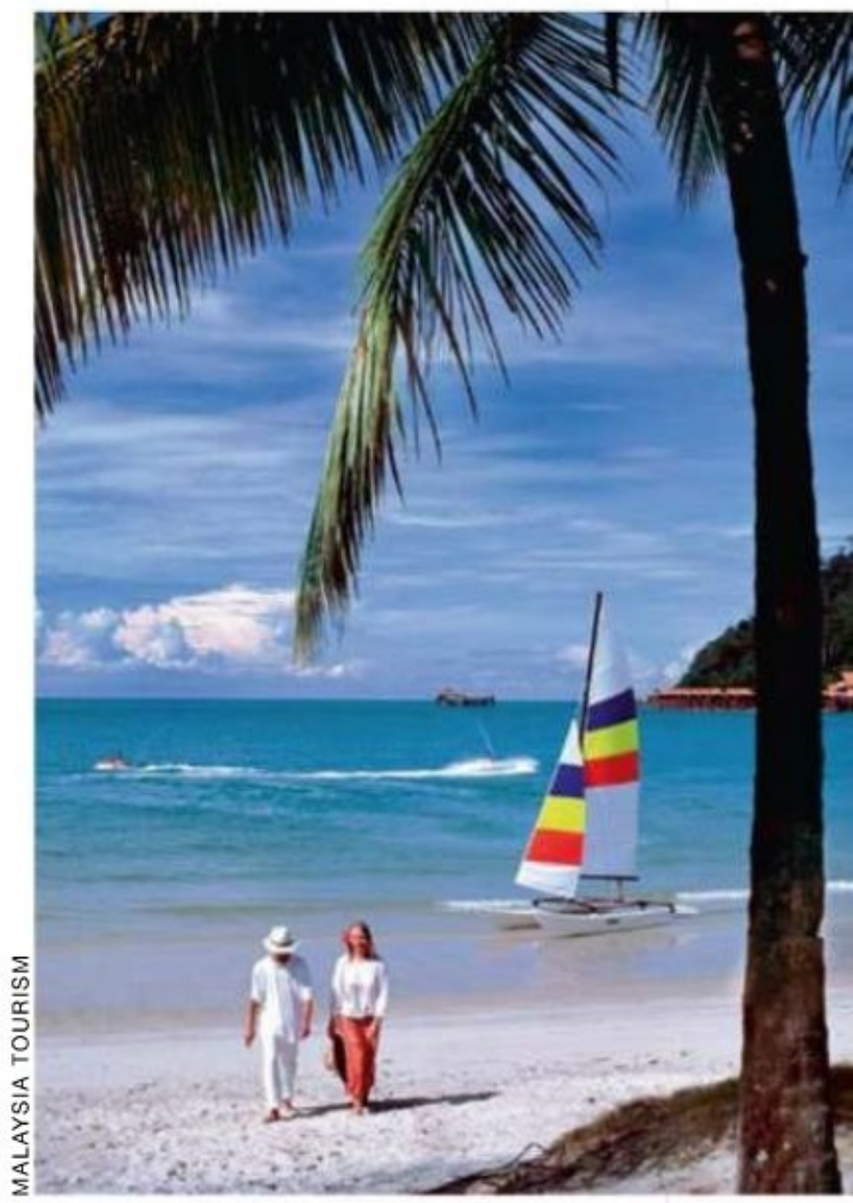
Malaysia Airlines adds new destinations

Malaysia Airlines is expanding its capacity, increasing its frequencies from regional destinations and also adding new international destinations with more flights to Kuala Lumpur. The airline will add two additional weekly flights from Delhi, taking the figure up to 14 flights per week. The additional flights from Delhi now depart every Tuesday beginning October 1, 2013 and Thursday, effective October 31, 2013. Similarly since October 4, 2013, the airline has doubled its daily flights from Bangalore on Fridays. You can get flight schedules and book tickets at www.malaysiaairlines.com or call 1 300 88 3000 (toll free).



MALAYSIA TOURISM

Bhutan Airlines get new booking technology

A technology provider for aviation and travel related software solutions, Bird Information Systems Private limited (BIS) has entered into a partnership with Tashi Air, operating as Bhutan Airlines, for the use of its Airline Inventory and Reservations System (AIRS). BIS will provide Bhutan Airlines the booking technology for the Airline Inventory Hosting, reservation at all city and airport offices, call centres and internet booking engines. Further, through the use of AIRS, Bhutan Airlines will have access to a user friendly GUI (graphical user interface) which will enable their partners—be it travellers or travel agents—to make online reservations quickly and easily.

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KEMPINSKI AMBIENCE HOTEL, DELHI

WHAT: Special Moments retreat package for couples.
DURATION: 1 night/2 days
PRICE: ₹14,900 for two
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation with an upgrade to club tower, surprise amenities in the room, meals at Café Knosh and 45 min couple spa therapy at Shanaya
VALIDITY: Valid from November 1, 2013-March 31, 2014.
CONTACT: email: reservations.delhi@kempinski.com or call (011) 4908 8888; www.kempinski.com

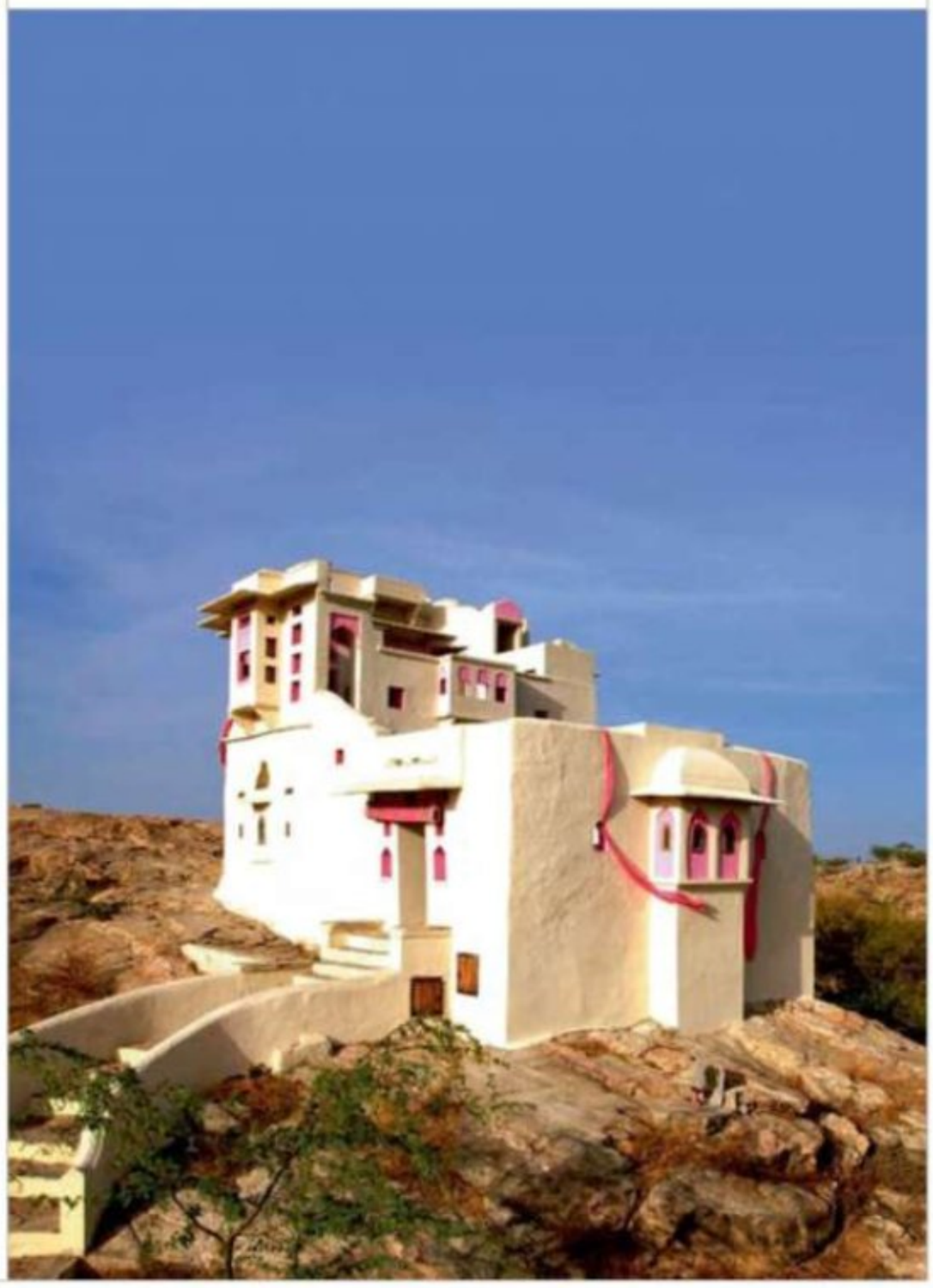
THE TAJ MAHAL HOTEL, NEW DELHI

WHAT: Culinary journey package at Varq
DURATION: Minimum 2 nights
PRICE: Starting at ₹18,500 per person per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: A choice of a luxury or Taj Club room, breakfast, complimentary wine bottle, airport transfer, a 30 minute head or foot massage, a cooking session with the chef.
VALIDITY: April 1, 2014
CONTACT: For reservations call (011) 2389 0555 or 1800 11 2122 (toll-free); www.tajhotels.com

TRIDENT, JAIPUR

WHAT: A fun filled holiday at an exceptional value
DURATION: Minimum 2 nights
PRICE: ₹7,750 per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation and breakfast
VALIDITY: December 31, 2013
CONTACT: For reservations call (011) 2389 0555 or 1800 11 2122 (toll-free); www.tridenthotels.com

Avail Ananda's Free Night Offer. Stay for 7 nights and pay for 6 at ₹14,000 per night. It includes spa treatments, yoga sessions, consultations per day & all meals. Valid till Dec 20, 2013
tel: 1800 102 5333
www.anandaspa.com



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AAMOD, DALHOUSIE

WHAT: A honeymoon package filled with snowy peaks, flower filled valleys and misty woods
DURATION: 3 nights/4 days
PRICE: Starts at ₹14,400
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation, welcome drinks and seasonal fruit basket
VALIDITY: November 30, 2013
CONTACT: For more info visit www.aamod.in

IMPERIAL HEIGHTS, ALMORA

WHAT: A rejuvenating and soulful holiday at a never before value, deep in the Kumaon mountains
DURATION: Minimum 2 nights (twin share)
PRICE: Starts at ₹6,900 per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation, breakfast and dinner
VALIDITY: August 31, 2014
CONTACT: For reservations call (05962) 251 010/ (0) 86502 69454; www.imperialheightsbinsar.in

INTERNATIONAL

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, PARIS

WHAT: The 'Romance in Paris' is an ideal package for lovers.
DURATION: One night
PRICE: From €1,050 per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation, daily American breakfast for up to two guests, a €85 food credit per stay (excluding beverage), upgrade on availability
VALIDITY: From October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014
CONTACT: 10 Avenue d'Iéna 75116 Paris; tel +33 1 53 67 19 98 www.shangri-la.com/paris

HOTDEAL

Stay at Atlantis The Palm, Dubai on New Year's Eve and enjoy a gala dinner for ₹50,000. It includes pre-dinner aperitif, dinner by the water and more. Valid on Dec 31, 2013
www.atlantisthepalm.com

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, PRAGUE

WHAT: The Bohemian Christmas package
DURATION: 2 nights in the deluxe room
PRICE: Starts from €355 per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Daily buffet breakfast for two, special daily €50 credit to be used in the hotel restaurant, bar or in the spa, late checkout (until 4pm, subject to availability), a Prague Christmas market map
VALIDITY: December 27, 2013
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INTERNATIONAL

ONE & ONLY REETHI RAH, MALDIVES

WHAT: Stay for 4 nights and pay for 3 nights
DURATION: Minimum 3 nights
PRICE: Starts from US$ 900 per night
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation, complimentary fresh fruit basket and afternoon tea service at Rah Bar, non-motorised water sports, 24-hour villa host service and the use of bicycles
VALIDITY: December 19, 2013
CONTACT: For reservations call +960 664 8800
www.oneandonlyresorts.com

CHEDI CLUB, TANAH GAJAH, BALI

WHAT: The 'Explore in Style' holiday package is for the young & restless
DURATION: 4 nights/5 days
PRICE: Starting at US$ 390 per night
ITINERARY: A half-day Kintamani tour, drive through Tegallalang, the handicraft village and a Balinese coffee plantation. The journey continues to Tirtha Empul, Mount Kawi, Goa Gajah (Elephant Temple) and more.
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation and meals
VALIDITY: March 31, 2014
CONTACT: email: reservation@ghmhotelsbali.com
tel: (62) 361 975685; www.ghmhotels.com

DHARA DHEVI, CHIANG MAI

WHAT: The Residential Meeting Package is specially designed for corporate houses
DURATION: One night
PRICE: Starting from THB 17,000
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Single accommodation, daily breakfast complimentary full day meeting package
VALIDITY: November 1, 2013-March 31, 2014
CONTACT: 51/4 Chiang Mai-Sankampaeng Road, Moo 1, T. Tasala, A. Muang, Chiang Mai 50000, Thailand; email to parichayan@dharadhevi.com; tel:+66 (53) 888 941
www.dharadhevi.com

Stay at the Avari Dubai Hotel for 2 nights at AED 900 per night and get a 10% discount. The package includes accommodation, an array of services & facilities. Valid till April 30, 2014. www.avari.com

GRAND LAPA, MACAU

WHAT: Diamond Anniversary Celebration Package for the Macau Grand Prix.
DURATION: One night
PRICE: Starting at HKD 1,888
PACKAGE INCLUDES: Accommodation and transfers between the New Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal and the hotel
VALIDITY: November 9-17, 2013
CONTACT: For reservations call +853 8793 3261
www.mandarinoriental.com

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Actress EMMA ROBERTS heads out in LA wearing the new Report Signature TOBY booties that add a dash of personal style

BAG IT

This Neverfull bag from Louis Vuitton's new collection is a roomy & colourful travel companion. Price on request

CLASS ACT

A perfect collector's item, this Montblanc Leonardo Limited Edition can note down every memory on your travels. Price: ₹2,80,000

A TOUCH OF GLAM

Add a dash of style to boring baggage with these peppy luggage tags from Basecamp. Price: ₹520

GET COLOURFUL

Trendy Swiss army knives from Victorinox for the festive season. A great gift for the avid adventurer
Price: ₹1,000-1,800

STYLE UP

Hip bags from Paul Smith's latest fall winter collection. They make great ready-to-go companions
Price: ₹6,500

FLAUNT IT

Since neon is in, go all out with American Tourister's Vivolite collection that comes in hot pink, purple and lemon.
Price ₹6,590

Louis Vuitton's Neverfull bag is available at all exclusive stores/outlets across the country. Visit www.louisvuitton.com to spot a store near you. Pick up the Victorinox knife at all leading outlets including Basecamp, Westside, Central and Shoppers Stop. Visit www.victorinox.com The Montblanc pen is available at all leading stores in the country. Visit www.montblanc.com to find a store near you. Pick up the luggage tags at any Basecamp store in the country. Visit www.basecamp.com to locate a store near you. American Tourister luggage is available at leading stores across India Log on to www.www.americantourister.com for more details. The Paul Smith bag is available at all Paul Smith boutiques in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai. Visit www.paulsmith.co.uk to spot a store.

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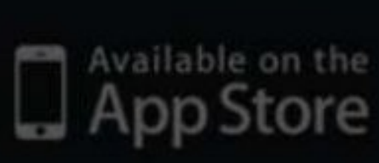
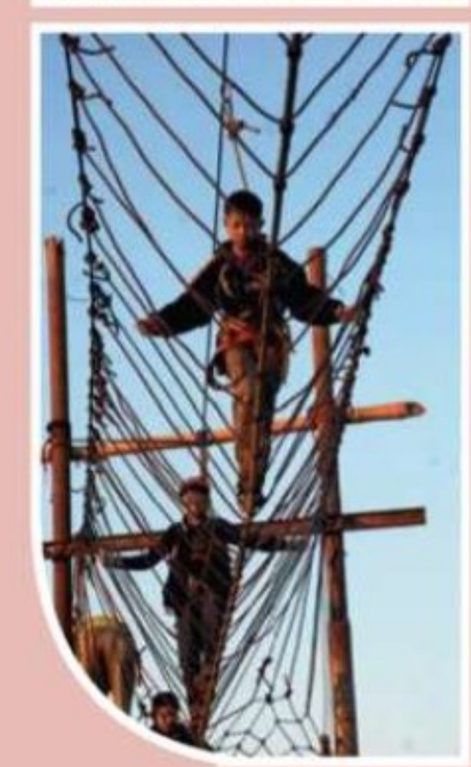


MANIPUR

Little Shangri-La of India

A beautiful state with rich traditions and almost untouched, Manipur promises to be the great tourism discovery of the 21st century

Manipur, a beautiful, scenic state located in the north-east, literally means "The Jewelled Land". This state of blue-green hills, rich in art and tradition is one where nature has been generous with her bounty.



An oval-shaped valley with its meandering hills, cascading waterfalls, free-flowing rivers, varieties of flowers and beautiful lakes, Manipur is a land of unparalleled natural beauty. The people of Manipur include Meitei, Nagas, Kuki-Chin-Mizo and Gorkhas groups and Muslims and other colourful communities who have lived here for centuries.

Manipur is the land of intriguing folklore, myths and legends, dances, indigenous games and martial arts, exotic handlooms and handicrafts. And bringing all this together on a single platform is what the Manipur Sangai Festival sets out to do each year. Organised by the Govt. of Manipur and spearheaded by the Tourism department, this cultural extravaganza held every year from 21-30 November celebrates the very best of Manipur.

Named after the gentle, shy deer Sangai, an animal native to Manipur and found in the ecosystem of the Loktak Lake, the festival is a vibrant, colourful extravaganza of life. It brings together artistes from different parts of the country as well as participants from abroad. The core of the festival is a respect for the state's glorious traditions of music and dance as well as sports and martial arts.

In keeping with time, the Manipur Sangai Festival has adapted itself to include adventure sports, fashion shows and a rock concert in its itinerary. It is a treat to see people of all age groups come together for this grand celebration! Visit Manipur during the Sangai Festival for a unique holiday.

Manipur Sangai Festival

Experience the magic of the north-eastern state with a unique festival that showcases its art and culture, handicrafts, indigenous sports, fantastic cuisine and vibrant music—all in the backdrop of sloping hills and beautiful meadows

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR
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Websites: www.manipur.gov.in, www.tourismmanipur.nic.in
www.sangaifestival.gov.in

NAGALAND

SONGS OF THE EAST

If it was ever possible to encapsulate all of Nagaland's wonder and variety into one packed event, the Hornbill Festival would be it.

This is your chance to dive into the warmth and hospitality of the Naga people and explore what the state has to offer. The Hornbill Festival is named after the bird, Hornbill displayed in the folklore and admired in the state for its alertness and grandeur. Organised by the Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Nagaland, the Hornbill Festival is a forum to protect and preserve the rich heritage of the state and attract tourists from far and near. This unique event brings together the essence of Nagaland, a picturesque destination in the North-east.

The festival - which is being extended to 10 days this year - witnesses all the tribes of Nagaland celebrating with gusto and fervour. Visitors at the Hornbill Festival witness colourful and dramatic performances, indigenous sports, traditional crafts, local cuisine and plenty of fun games and ceremonies including a thrilling motor and bike rally along winding mountain roads. Traditional arts and crafts- paintings, wood carvings and sculptures are on sale and display.

At colourful stalls you can buy exquisite local weaves and jewellery and sample local cuisine - including the fiery Naga chilly. Each of the tribes have their own dedicated stalls, so this is the ideal place to experience the culture of the region without travelling the distance. If you wander around, you'll find everything from a fashion show to photography contest, marathon to motor rally, naga chilly- eating duels to the highly popular Hornbill Rock Contest, that draws plenty of talent from across the region and country.

Situated at about 10 kilometers from Kohima, the Naga Heritage Village at Kisama is the main venue for the festival. It offers a panoramic view of nature which mingles with the hospitality of the Naga people for a unique holiday experience. The Heritage Village aims to uphold and sustain the distinct identity of dialects, customs and traditions of all the ethnic tribes of Nagaland. For the young and the old, the tourist and the local alike, this is an opportunity not to be missed.

During the festivities of Hornbill

HOW TO GET THERE

BY AIR: There is an airport in Dimapur, which is regularly serviced by major airlines. The city is linked to all major cities in India by air. Air India and Jet Airways fly to Dimapur. The distance between Dimapur and Kohima is 74km.

BY ROAD: The state is well connected by roads. Kohima is linked to Shillong and Guwahati. Proceed to Dimapur and then travel to Kohima, 74 km away.

BY RAIL: Dimapur is a major railhead in the state that is linked to Guwahati. Most of the country¹s important railheads are connected to Guwahati.

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BLOCK YOUR DATES
The 10-day festival will be held between December 1-10, 2013

Festival, the Naga Heritage Village serves as the perfect union of the various tribes of Nagaland to showcase their rich cultural heritage and tradition in one platform.

The Naga Heritage Complex consists of a cluster of 16 houses, constructed in the specific architectural styles of different tribes carrying significance of their distinct concepts.

Colourful life and culture, song and dance, mythology and folklore are a vital part of the people of Nagaland. They are unique in their customs and traditions. Songs and dances form the soul of these festivals through which the local history and mythology has been passed down generations. Nature has been kind to the state, bestowing natural beauty. Little wonder then that Nagaland has been tipped as one of the must-visit states in north-east. The Heritage Complex also houses the World War II Museum with artifacts, an interesting place for history buffs. Visiting Nagaland during the Hornbill Festival - whether with friends or family - makes for a truly unique travel experience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

THE DIRECTORATE OF TOURISM, NAGALAND
Opp. Indoor Stadium, Raj Bhavan Road,
Kohima - 797 001, Nagaland
Telefax: (0370) 224 3124
http://www.hornbillfestival.com/
www.tourismnagaland.com

WHAT'S ON WHERE AND WHEN

NOV 01 TO 02
MEXICO

Get into Mexico's Carnivalesque remembrance of departed souls at the **Day of the Dead** Festival, observed with papier-mâché skeletons and candy skulls, to understand the Mexicans' upbeat treatment of immortality.

NOV 01 TO 05
PERU

Bizarre but fascinating, during **La Diablada Peruvian** men dress as demons while women are in multilayered dresses and bowler hats. Held to remember the departure of the devilish conquistadors in the late 19th century, the parade is all fun and gaiety.

PURUSHOTTAM DIWAKAR ©VISITBRITAIN/BRITAIN ON VIEW

NOV 05
ENGLAND

Participate in a classically English affair at the **Bonfire Night** also called the Guy Fawkes Night where burning effigies and fireworks illuminate the winter night in memory of centuries-old skullduggery which ended with the blowing up of the Parliament.

NOV 09 TO 17
INDIA

Wander among an estimated 50,000 camels at the popular **Pushkar Camel Fair,** in the tiny desert town of Pushkar in Rajasthan. The animals are dressed up colourfully, shaved, entered into beauty contests, paraded, raced and traded too.

ADITI SENGUPTA

NOV 14 TO 17
INDIA

Held along the banks of the Ganges, the **Ganga Mahotsav** is a unique festival that features programmes of classical music and dance, which ends with the surreal floating of more than a million clay lamps down the river amidst chanting of Vedic hymns.

NOV 15
JAPAN

Witness young Japanese girls being fussed over during the ancient festival of **Shichi Go San** in Japan. It is also called the 'Seven-Five-Three' wherein parents give little girls their first kimono and take them to the temple for coming-of-age rituals.

© JNTO

NOV 17 TO 21
DUBAI

Get a load of some of the world's best flying machines at the very popular **Dubai Air Show**. Nearly a thousand exhibitors will showcase their wares before the public with displays, both static and aerial, that are bound to awe and fascinate.

WWW.DUBAIAIRSHOW.AERO

NOV 23 TO 24
HONG KONG

Let your hair down at the **Lan Kwai Fong Carnival** in Hong Kong, one of the largest street parties, with a carnival parade, exotic costumes, amazing live shows to keep everyone surprised. There's also a Kids' Street with games and cartoon characters.
www.lankwaifong.com/

NOV 24 TO 28
AMSTERDAM

Illegal in most places, or at least not conspicuous, Amsterdam is the ideal place for the four-day **Cannabis Cup**, an expo featuring seminars and activism sessions with leaders of the marijuana movement, and major cannabis celebrities.
www.cannabiscup.com

NOV 28
USA

With roots in religion, history and the country's agrarian calendar, **Thanksgiving** usually extends into the weekend and is more of a secular holiday. Feast on traditional food such as roast turkey, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie.

COMPILED BY ANITA RAO KASHI

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WHAT'S NEW IN THE BIG CITIES

LONDON

Restaurant: At the quirkily named Grain Store (Granary Square, 020 7324 4466), a new European restaurant by chef Bruno Loubet, the food is excellent and presented beautifully. Especially enticing is the wine list with an array of cocktails. Try kimchi and potato dumpling in chilli oil lobster broth and the spiced mash with confit lamb belly.
Bar: If not anything Aqua (The Shard, Level 31, St Thomas Street) will give its guests a high just from the sheer height. At 31 floors up, the place offers spectacular night views of London. It has an extensive beverage menu with its delectable cocktails, many of which are tea or gin based.
Musical: The Scottsboro Boys (Young Vic Theatre, 66 The Cut, 020 7922 2922) is about the 1931 incident when nine young black men were falsely accused of rape. The event kick-starting a legal process that became a touchstone for the US civil rights movement. Runs till mid December.

Exhibition: Tate Modern's (Bankside, 020 7887 8888) major autumn show which opened in mid October is about Paul Klee's intense abstract compositions. On display are key paintings from the 1920s along with a group of his final works from the last exhibition staged before his death in 1940. Runs till beginning March.

NEW YORK

Broadway: Tennessee Williams' famous play The Glass Menagerie is back (Booth Theatre, 222 W 45th Street, Midtown West, 212 239 6200) with stage legend Cherry Jones, alongside Zachary Quinto and Celia Keenan-Bolger. The production is staged by the acclaimed John Tiffany. Runs till February end.
Cantonese cuisine: Visitors agree that Lake Pavilion (60-15 Main Street, 60th Avenue, Flushing, Queens, 718 886 6693) is NY's snazziest banquet-style Cantonese restaurant. It's brightly lit with sparkly chandeliers and silk bows on the chairs. Recommended dishes include winter melon soup, house special Dungeness crab, sautéed Dungeness crab with ginger.

Exhibition: German artist Isa Genzken whose Retrospective (MOMA, 11 w 53 Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues) opens in end November, is among the most prominent figures in the postwar generation of German artists. Among the most famous works is the gigantic rose. Runs till December end.
Store opening: Schott (236, Elizabeth St between E Houston and Prince Streets, 212-219 1636) has opened its first ever outlet celebrating its 100th anniversary. Products include iconic motorcycle jackets for men and women, bomber jackets and more.

M'BOURNE

Mexican eatery: La Tortilleria (72 Stubbs Street, Kensington, 03 9376 55 77) is a brightly lit place which forms the perfect backdrop for its fare Mexican street food. The runaway favourite is the tacos al Pastor, in which pork is marinated with, among other things, cola.
Clubbing: Boney (68 Little Collins Street) is hip nightclub meant for grooving and boogieing away the night. The place is all glitzy with sparkly cushioned stools and tables, with the red light adding a bit of edge to the stone-lined space. Food comes in the form of soft, fluffy zucchini pikelets, thin slices of raw lemony kingfish with a plethora of cocktails and other brews.
Exhibition: Star Trek fans can trip on The Art of Star Wars: Super Heroes & Star Trek at Silver K Gallery (1092 High Street, Armadale, 03 9509 5577). On display are over 120 pieces of artwork including 'The Final Frontier'—Alex Ross's limited edition print on canvas, that features Star Trek characters like Captain Kirk and Spock. Runs till November end.
Theatre: Agatha Christie's famous *A Murder Is Announced* is now on stage at The Comedy Theatre (244 Exhibition Street, 1300 723 038). The story takes place in the English village Chipping Cleghorn and unfolds in true Christie fashion. Runs till Nov 17.

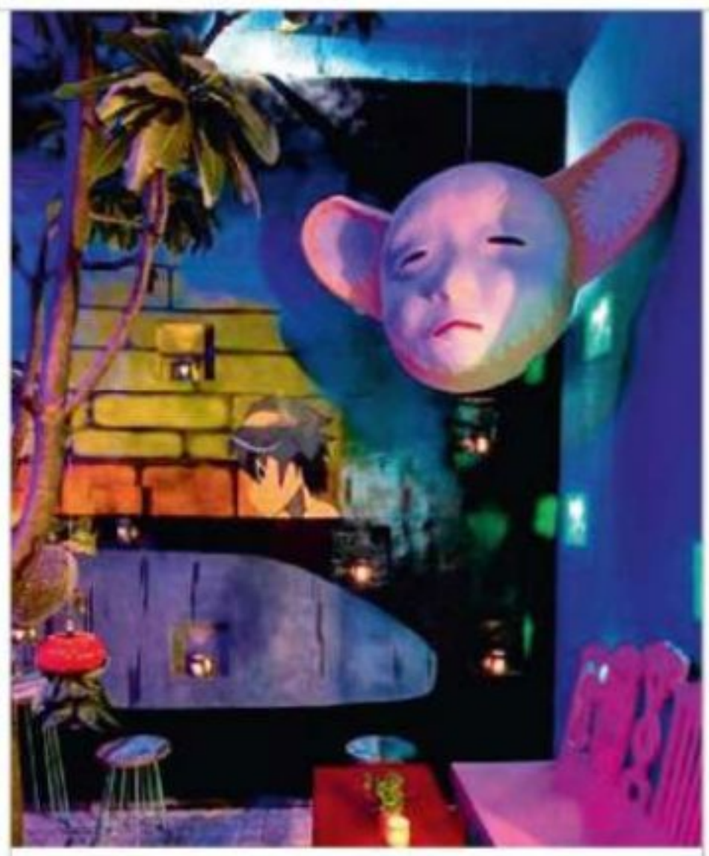
V'COUVER

Exhibition: A Call for Justice (Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre, 6688 Southoaks Cresent, Burnaby, 604-777-7000) tells an emotional story of the Japanese Canadian community who suffered from 1942-1949. It celebrates their struggle to receive an acknowledgement for unjust treatment, though historic photographs, artefacts and poetry. Runs till December end.

Restobar: Tappo (757 Richards Street) is a beautiful bar that dishes up equally lovely Italian food. Cosy and comfortably, the bar's wine list is projected on a wall making it easy to order while the food is uncomplicated and delicious.

Tea time: A tea salon need not be boring. That's what Neverland Tea Salon (3066 West Broadway, 604 428 3066) proves with its tea infused cocktails. The teas are sourced from various places, picked and chosen with a lot of fuss and combined with scones, muffins and baked goods.

Seafood: Seventeen 89 resto-lounge (Connox Street, 604 428 0705) dishes out some of the freshest seafood caught off the coast of Vancouver. Occupying prominent place is an oyster bar that serves up fresh fare, shucked and served with an array of condiments. A must try is the seafood chowder.



DELHI

Japanese cuisine: At Guppy by Ai (28, Main Market, 011 2469 0005) sushi and sashimi rule the roost. Large, airy and noisy, the atmosphere is one of chic-pop with kitschy decor. The runaway favourite are the maki rolls, but do taste also the braised pork belly and jumbo prawns.

Restaurant: Thai Pavilion (Vivanta by Taj, Sector 44, Gurgaon, (0124 6671 234) is spacious, comfortable and made up in warm browns and oranges. Must try dishes include the chicken in holy basil, pan-grilled scallops, foie gras, soft shell crabs in red chilli paste.

New store: Despite the bit ticket neighbours, Bobbi Brown (Select Citywalk, Ground Floor (011) 4101 8275) is holding its own with its cheerful, sparkly space, lined with mirrors and make-up counters. Go for the wide variety of the blushes, bronzers, foundations and lipsticks expressly chosen for Indian skin tones.

SE Asian cuisine: Ritu Dalmia's latest production is Diva Kitsch (D-17, Defence Colony, 4064 8861) continues with clean and delicious flavours that she is known for, but the cuisine is Southeast Asian, a different direction from the Med flavours she's known for. Things to try include the mushroom salad, shredded duck salad, pan-seared beef salad with green apple, John Dory in miso broth and end with jiggery crème brulee.

MALAYSIA

WITH VIDYA MALVADE

● *Is an actress and is best known for her role in Chak De! India*

Malaysia for me has always been intriguing. The sheer beauty coupled with its pristine beaches, heritage and culture have been drawing my interest for a while now. Therefore on a recent trip, I set aside my daily grind and decided to rejuvenate my soul. Places that I have fond memories of include KL, Melaka, Johor Baru and Legoland. My trip to the Langkawi Island was pure bliss, perfect for those who love luxury. And while you're in the act of spoiling yourself, the Pangkor Laut Resort in Pangkor Island is simply breathtaking. My holiday would've been incomplete without visiting the Hilton Batang Ai Longhouse Resort in Sarawak. It's located in the thick of pristine tropical rainforest. Malaysia is also a perfect place for the fashionable shopper. The Pavilion KL is the place to be if you're into branded stuff. It has exclusive stores of Audemars Piguet, Bvlgari, Vertu, M Missoni, and Chopard. A perfect way to end your trip.

—AS TOLD TO HS

COMPILED BY ANITA RAO KASHI

SANCTUARY OF SILENCE

TRAVEL LOG
JUG SURAIYA

EX-FIGHTER PILOT and former tea planter, Steve Lall is a retailer of the country's most priceless and endangered commodity. Together with his wife Parvati, he zealously guards his product for an exclusive clientele who come to sample it at his estate Jilling in Uttarakhand: Forty-five acres of densely wooded Kumaun hillside, some 6,500 ft above sea level, and about 300 km from Delhi by road and, if you are taking the train, 38 km from the rail head at Kathgodam.

Cloaked in a forest of oak and chestnut and deodar, with brief but bewitching views of Nanda Devi, Jilling is part of the erstwhile Stiffles estate and was bought in 1965 by Steve's mother who is said to have got it for the price of a second-hand car. Taken together with the contiguous tracts owned by neighbours, Jilling runs to some 140 acres of a customised Eden, a perfect place for chilling out.

Scattered over the hillside at discreet intervals are four wood and stone cottages, simply but comfortably furnished, for visitors. Natural trails ramble through the woods, inviting exploration: from the seven km-long, level Lovers' Walk, to steeper hikes that lead up to the ridge, from where the valley on the farther side falls away in an escarpment as sudden and swift as the swoop of a falcon.

There is wholesome home-cooking, eclectically crammed bookshelves to browse through, and, in the quiet cold evenings, blazing bonfires spiralling sparks into star-filled skies. There are no telephones, no television, no cars. This is the secret of Steve's unique product—which is silence.

The first thing that strikes you about silence is that it is not an absence of sound, for that would make it a sterile vacuum. Listening to silence is like watching a glass being filled with water, drop by careful drop. When the glass is full, the water brims over the top without spilling, the convex curve of liquid held in place like a drawn bowstring. The silence I listened to at Jilling was like that resonant arc, a supple filament that strung together the ratcheting feathers of a partridge in flight, the sharp call of a barking deer, the leafy conversation of trees, the bubbles of air exploding in the bottle of soda on the table.

I realised that the silence was a gift as fragile as the finest porcelain, as evanescent as the shimmer of a butterfly's wings. Like most gifts worth the getting, or the giving, Jilling's silence is hard won; it is based on uncompromising solitude. The nearest motorable road is two kilometres away, where guests can park their cars. From there it is a brisk 40-minute climb to Jilling; for those faint of limb or heart, ponies or palkis are provided.

> THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES YOU ABOUT SILENCE IS THAT IT IS NOT AN ABSENCE OF SOUND, FOR THAT WOULD MAKE IT A STERILE VACUUM. LISTENING TO SILENCE IS LIKE WATCHING A GLASS BEING FILLED WITH WATER, DROP BY CAREFUL DROP

Jilling's deliberate isolation has kept at bay what Steve calls the 'tootak, tootak, tootian' Marutised holidaymakers from the plains. If anyone tries to build a road up here, I'll shoot him, says Steve in what is surely a joke—I think.

Tara Devi, a sprightly widow and mother of 10, drops in while we are there. She reports a rogue bear who has mauled two women cutting grass, and almost in the same breath mentions a daughter-in-law who is getting fat, an ominous sign of indulgence. She herself is well, except that try as she might she cannot achieve a bowel movement more than once a week. I suggest that she drink a bottle of beer daily to ease her malady. The thought of drinking *Angrezi sharab* at 65 rupees a bottle makes Tara Devi cackle so hard that she swears that the demon gripping her innards has been exorcised straightaway.

A baby barking deer—all huge, liquid eyes, velvet button of a nose and twitching ears, Bambi incarnate—is found by a grasscutter and brought to Jilling. The mother has probably been taken by a leopard, of whom there are at least three in the area. A spirited debate ensues, the fate of the fawn is in the balance. No-nonsense Steve is all for putting it back in the forest, letting nature take its course. Parvati and his daughter, Nandini, are equally vehement about harbouring the waif till it can find its adult feet in the wild. Fortunately, as is usual in the hills, the womenfolk have their way. Steve grumbles but looks pleased as punch.

When it is time to leave, Bunny and I are not in the least sad. Quite the contrary. For we know, deeper than any words, that having once experienced Jilling and its resonant silence we can never really leave it, but we will return. Our goodbye is also a greeting.

That's all very well, but how the hell does one actually get there? Well, that's just it you see. Jilling, as I said, is a gift. And as a gift, you can't just go there and claim it; you have to wait till it's given to you, when you've earned it. And once you have, let others also earn it for themselves. Remember: to ensure Jilling's code of silence, which makes it incomparable. Mum's the word.

Noted satirist Jug Suraiya is a columnist, writer and author of several books.

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JAIPUR

A glorious history, fabulous architecture and a shoppers' paradise—the Pink City makes for a blissful vacation. **BY AKASH DEEP ASHOK**

They say you cannot but carry back a bit of pink from here. Founded by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber in 1727, Jaipur, if ever applied for, will get the GI (geographical index) tag for vibrancy and royalty. The entire city was painted pink to welcome the Prince of Wales during his 1853 visit and looked so perfect then that a change of colour was never thought of.

Day 1

TO THE ROYALTY: It all began in the courts here. The forts are the pride of the pink city. Nahargarh Fort, Jaigarh Fort, Amber Fort offer a magnificent view of the city. A visit to the Jantar Mantar, Hawa Mahal, Ram Niwas Bagh, Albert Hall Museum, Jal Mahal can keep you engaged for the an entire day.

Day 2

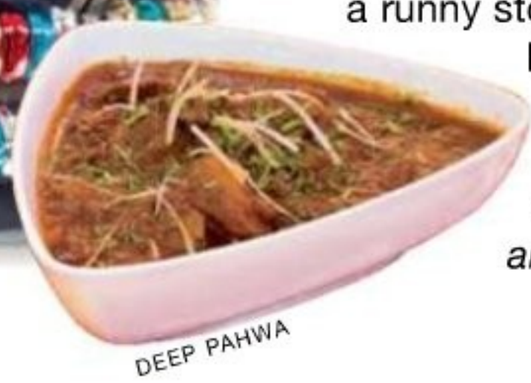
FOR DEVOTION: The city's religious pulse can be felt during a visit to the temples, or during a festival when devotees do not mind walking all through the night to climb the Galtaji temple, which sits atop a hillock. Cast in white marble, the Birla temple is worth a visit. The Govind Devji temple on the lawns of Jai Niwas Garden attracts thousands of Lord Krishna devotees. It's a lifetime experience to be here during Holi because of the unique way of celebrating the festival with flowers. The magnificent Lord Ganesha at the Moti Doongri temple is much revered by the city people. The temple is modeled after a Scottish castle.

Day 3

AND INDULGENCE: Shopaholics would fall in love with the city instantly. Jewellery, textiles, *saris,* handicrafts, carved furniture and a host of other items are sure to interest shoppers. A *bandhani* suit or *sari* and lac jewellery are a must buy. Bapu Bazaar and Jauhari Bazaar offer a range of these items. Maniharon Ka Rasta is a hub for lac jewellery, including bangles. City Palace is one destination where one can get everything under one roof. Also, take a look at the gold-embellished blue potteries on the Mirza Ismail (more popularly MI Road).

Shopping without delectable street food can be boring. The spicy and tangy food served here is sure to tickle you taste buds. *Lal maas,* the signature dish of Rajasthan, is a must try. The fiery *junglee maas* is also good but can give you a runny stomach if not had in moderation.

Foodies can explore restaurants on MI Road and the street food of Old City. Try the *mirchi vadas, kadhi, makhaniya lassi and* the succulent *mawa kachoris.*



DEEP PAHWA

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HORSLEY HILLS, ANDHRA PRADESH

For some peace and quiet head to these quaint hills for a quick getaway from Bangalore. **BY ARCHANA PANDEY**

ARCHANA PANDEY

WHAT HAPPENS when you're a quixotic traveller and a caprice to break out of your cubicle starts nudging you mid-week? Well! If that traveller is me, then the answer is simple. I decide to whisk away for a quick weekend break to some quiet place near the city. As always I took this a step further and even 'higher' up. I decided to ditch the car and take one of my friends for a ride, literally. And off we were to the lesser known and quite unexplored Horsley Hills. About 140 km from Bangalore, close to the south western border of Andhra Pradesh, the place stands at a height of 4,312 feet above sea level. And if you're on a Bullet, the ride takes an different meaning altogether.

Bangalore weather just blended perfectly with the landscape around that had plenty on offer, eucalyptus, jacaranda, gulmohar trees and the likes with small houses that can be spotted in the midst of the greenery down the steep descent.

Madanapalle is the closest town near the hills and definitely your last stop to stock up anything that you may need. Although a biker's delight, the roads leading up to the hills are narrow. Not the most ideal recommendation, but we started our climb up the hills a little after sunset with the roads appearing darker than usual and the rains playing truant every once in a while. And knowing that the surrounding forests are home to several wild animals, while my heart thumped a bit every once in a while looking back at the stretch gone by, the kid inside me smirked quietly. Once inside Horsley hills, you can find an accommodation in any of the resorts that are run by the APTDC. An overnight stay at the Governor's Bungalow is a good option.

The next morning came creeping in on us with the sun peeping in right through. A quick round of morning tea and filter coffee along with some local breakfast and we were ready to explore what the resort had in store for us. A climb up the Highview Point gives a beautiful view of the valleys and forests around. Much to our delight, the resort itself also has an array of activities like zorbing, rappelling, rock climbing in addition to some fun time at the pool for the water babies.

It has only been a couple of weeks since I got back and I'm itching to make that climb once again. If you love nature and are longing to take a quick break from your overworked schedules, this one is a must.

✓ How to get there: One can take the route that goes to Chintamani via Hoskote and reach Madanapalle in less than 4 hours by road

✓ Places to stay: APTDC-run hotels cost anywhere between ₹1,650-3,000 a night. Book at (08571) 279323/24

✓ Places to see: The Horsley Hills Museum, Environmental Park, Highview point, Lake Gangotri and the Shiva Temple located around 15 km on the road towards Madanapalle

✓ Places to eat: Do not expect restaurants in the vicinity, however the closest town Madanapalle offers some local shopping

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ENGLAND

Royal Household Golf Club

A private playground of the British royalty, this golf course at Windsor Castle is a place you'd want to get invited to. **BY RISHI NARAIN**

WITH MORE than 770,000 golfers affiliated to England's 1,900 or so golf clubs, England boasts of having more golf courses than Ireland, Wales and Scotland put together. Besides many top quality members only private courses, the accessibility of golf in England is underlined by the number of public and daily fee (pay and play courses). My recent experience though was at perhaps the most exclusive course in the entire country—the Royal Household Golf Club inside the grounds of the famed Windsor Castle, on the western outskirts of London.

We were invited to play the course as a member of the Indian delegation for the Duke of Edinburgh global charity golf tournament, joining golfers from a dozen different countries as diverse as Bahamas and Zimbabwe. The RHGC is a private 18 hole par 66 golf course of the royal family, where the playing rights are exclusive for members and their guests only—making it one of the most exclusive courses in the world.

The RHGC, due to its hilly nature, severe bending fairways and wicked roughs, throws up strong shot making challenges to us visiting golfers. The difficulty of the course may not be like its more famous neighbours Wentworth (home of the European PGA championship) or Sunningdale (for many years home of the World Matchplay) but certainly makes up for this with its settings on the "front lawns" of the stunning castle.

We were playing with Susan whose husband was a member of the royal household and she pointed out one of the royals and their children calmly trotting their horses between fairways as we were halfway through the round. The course is in surprisingly good condition considering how few players use the course and the size of the 2,000 acre estate put us in awe of the beauty and vastness of the green expanse.

The results of the tournament were in our favour as the Indian contingent put on a good show and won the day's competition by a healthy margin of three strokes.

It certainly made the day all the more special for us. The golf was followed by a black tie sit down champagne dinner in the state ballroom attended by the Earl of Wessex, Prince Edward. All in all, a right royal experience!

At a Glance

GETTING THERE: Windsor Castle is 40km west of Central London via the M4 motorway. Leave the M4 at junction 6 and follow signs into Windsor center. It takes about 45 minutes to drive.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: ROYAL HOUSEHOLD GOLF CLUB

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GOLFING GEAR

Ping Anser

Tech Talk: Each Ping Anser driver features a slim adjustable hosel that alters the loft by plus or minus half a degree, and the company offers four shaft options as standard to accommodate four types of feel and four ball-flight effects.

Price: ₹24,750

THIS MONTH'S **TIP**

When playing a hilly course keep in mind that in case of playing shots where the ball is either above or below the level of your feet, the ball will swing in the air in the direction of the slope of the ground. So if the ground you are standing on slopes away from your feet towards the ball, with the ball lying below the level of your feet, the ball will curve from left to right. In this case you have to adjust by aiming further left of your target. Conversely if the ball is above your feet, the ball will swing from right to left so you have to aim to the right of the target. Making these adjustments on hilly courses can improve your score considerably.

EDINBURGH CUP: The Duke of Edinburgh Cup is one of the most well known charity golf events dedicated to help young people worldwide by giving them support in health, education and welfare. The 36 hole world finals of Duke of Edinburgh Cup take place over two days on two prestigious golf courses close to London. There is also a match with the members at the Royal Household Golf Club, which is the royal family's private golf course at Windsor Castle.

If you are interested to participate, write to us at srijan@rngolf.in

The Top Five

1. STOKE PARK: Stoke Park, a 27-hole course with three distinct nines, features one of the special clubhouses, a sporting, leisure and hotel facility, and was the backdrop for the James Bond movie *Goldfinger*. The original 18 holes on the 300-acre estate, the creation of Harry Colt, are still the preferred section, but the newer nine are blending in. It offers fantastic practice facilities including putting green, driving range, short game area and a swing studio.
Green Fees: ₹8,400 (Weekdays), ₹14,300 (Weekend); tel: 01753 717171
www.stokepark.com

2. SUNNINGDALE GOLF CLUB (OLD): Sunningdale's Old Course, which opened in 1901, was laid out by Willie Park Jr. It is pure enchantment that characterizes Sunningdale Old. The Old course has held many championships and has become a world-class venue.
Green Fees: ₹11,800 (Weekdays & Weekend); tel: +44 (0)1344 621681
www.sunningdale-golfclub.co.uk

3. FOXHILLS GOLF CLUB: Foxhills Resort, with 60-room hotel and leisure facilities, is home of two 18-hole typical Surrey parkland/heathland courses. The 6,892-yard Bernard Hunt championship layout is longer but more wide open and forgiving. The Longcross is easier and shorter spanning 6,743 yards of beautiful, gently undulating and wooded terrain offering the challenge of the best features of classic inland course design. There is a 9-hole Manor Course for the less experienced. The club has staged many prestigious tournaments, like the European Tour Qualifying School.
Green Fees: ₹7,900 (Weekdays), ₹8,900 (Weekends); tel: 01932 704465
www.foxhills.co.uk

4. THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GOLF CLUB: Buckinghamshire Golf Club with its 18 Hole, is set in 226 acres of magnificent English parkland. Whilst situated only 18 miles from the centre of London & 12 miles from Heathrow the course offers a delightful oasis of calm and privacy. The practice ground is located a short walk from the clubhouse, with the putting green immediately outside. Adjacent to the first tee you will find a superb short game area, to practise chipping, pitching and bunker shots.
Green Fees: ₹8,900 (Weekdays), ₹9,900 (Weekend); tel: 01895 835 777
www.buckinghamshiregc.com

5. WENTWORTH CLUB (WEST): This course is probably the most famous in Britain as it hosts the televised PGA Championship and World Matchplay each year. Constructed by Harry Colt in 1926, local resident Ernie Els toughened it in 2006 by introducing new bunkers and lengthening holes.
Green Fees: ₹23,600 (Weekdays & Weekend); tel: 01344 842201
www.wentworthclub.com

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THE LALIT RESORT & SPA, BEKAL

BY RITU AGARWAL ROHATGI

SO, THERE IS life beyond Kumarakom in Kerala. And how. "Bekal, who?" went a friend who I am trying to lure into holidaying with me. Kasargod makes little headway with her, but "Kerala" does the job. We land at Mangalore Airport. The green, very green surrounds mesmerises me. Oh yes! If there is paradise on earth, this is it! The 75 km drive from Mangalore to the The Lalit Resort & Spa, Bekal meanders through backwaters, coconut tree lined roads and beautiful titled roof houses which have us ogling. "Gulf money" says our driver with a smirk. Sure, but it has been put to some great use, going by row upon row of stunning bungalows that we drive past.

One of the first luxury beach resort to come up in Northern Kerala, The Lalit is set up on 26 acres of virgin stretch in the lap of the Arabian Sea, surrounded by natural backwater from three sides and with internal lagoons meandering though the entire green beautiful property.

ROOMS

We are still dazzled by the green around us as we get off at an open space lobby built in typical Kerala style architecture. We are greeted with a welcome drink of giant tender coconut water. Our room comes with our 24 hour dedicated 'Holiday Host' who is the guest's one point contact; arranging everything from in-room check-in to restaurant reservations and spa appointments.

The resort has 37 rooms (built like double decked cottages) each with a private jacuzzi and a lovely balcony. Ours faces the backwaters and the herb garden with boggling number of coconut trees strewn around. It is very spacious, comes equipped with a television, tea-coffee maker etc. There is a sprawling presidential villa and a floating cottage, called Kettuvallam (house boat) also available for the rich and the adventurous. It's criminal to stay locked in when surrounded by such gorgeousness. We quickly unpack and head out for a stroll and find ourselves walking by the backwaters and reaching a point where it merges into the Arabian Sea. The sun is setting. We have a ball of fire going into the waters in front of us. There is sand, there is the river, there are palm fringed backwaters. We sit atop a machan like structure while our Holiday Host provides us some masala tea and munchies.... Time simply melts away unnoticed.

FOOD

Nombili, named after the pristine river that surrounds the property, is an all day dining space that opens out by the swimming pool. As darkness descends and the lights go up around us it is a fabulous feeling to sit under stars, surrounded by flowering champa trees, sipping a chilled beer. The food at the property turns out an absolute high point. The multi-cuisine menu excels in every aspect but I would seriously recommend total

HOTDEAL

DETOX SPA EXPERIENCE

For ₹1,34,000 stay for 6 nights/7 days and avail the detox therapy

1. The resort is surrounded by backwaters 2. The Kerala cuisine at the resort is top notch 3. The rooms come with private balconies. 4. The Rejuve Spa

surrender to the local Kerala food… over the next few days we dig into the most amazing prawns, chicken and mutton fry, Kerala *parotta, rasam,* freshest of fish—*pollichathu* (fish fried in banana leaf) *molee* (fish curry in coconut milk) crab roast (baked in a spicy *masala*)

It is a greedy gourmet's dream come true. The chef is fabulous and ready to customise anything you may feel like eating, you absolutely do not need to stick to the printed menu.

I would go back in a blink to this resort for the food, if it were not for the wonder spa which gives close competition for the top slot.

REJUVE THE SPA

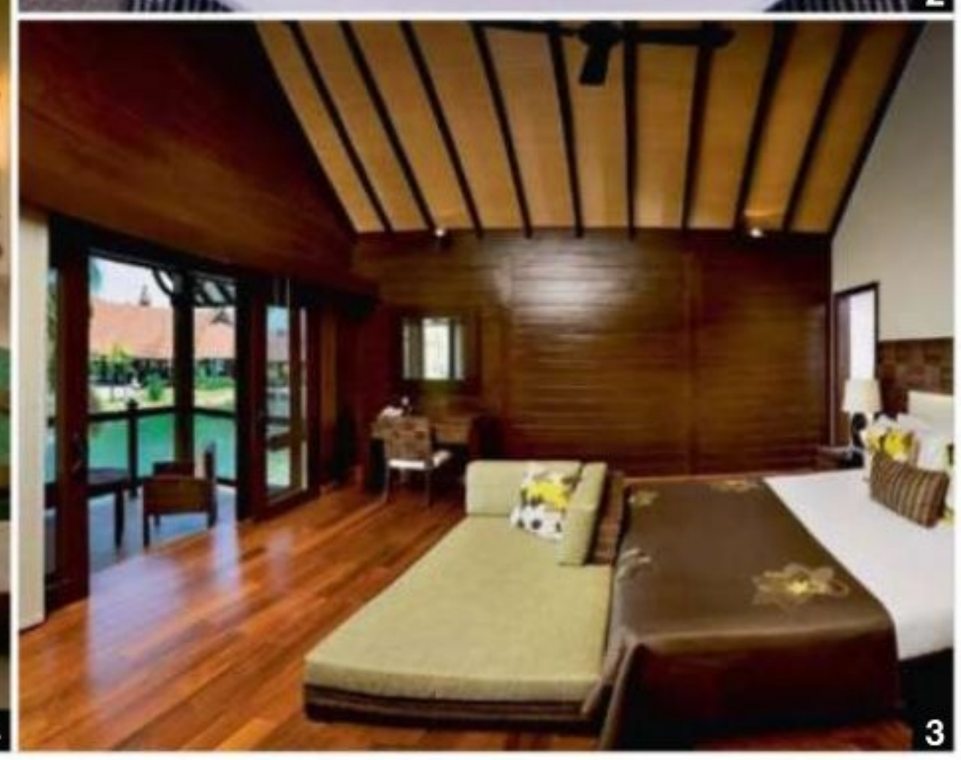
The focal point of the resort is the Rejuve Spa, almost 20,000 sqft of exclusive and dedicated spa facility. It offers health and lifestyle consultations, ayurvedic treatments, western and eastern therapies, beauty treatments and yoga. It is beautifully set up, very elegant yet soothing—just the way a perfect spa should be. I have an appointment for a body scrub and the Rejuve Signature Massage. My therapist turns out to be a Coorgi girl. We strike a bond as I reminiscence my past life in Bangalore while she scrubs me up with a coconut and honey pack and then has me all soft and supple with a light oil massage. The resort offers many packages for well researched ayurvedic healing and curative therapies with dietary consultations.

GOING AROUND

We spend an evening driving down to the Bekal Fort which is one of the largest forts in Kerala built right into the sea with waves continuously breaking against the citadel. On the way back we stop at Kasargod town to visit the cashew factory and pick up some local weave sarees. This one has been a fabulous find and will probably become my secret getaway in the years to come. Only you know.

At a Glance

WHAT: A luxurious spa & wellness resort
WHERE: Bevoori Udma, Kasaragod District, Kerala-671319
Tel : (0467) 2237 777
COST: Starts at ₹20,000 for a deluxe room
VERDICT: A great family getaway with nature, history and wellness woven in



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REVIEW

The hotel is designed to meet the needs of the business traveller

The Courtyard Marriott, Chakan

BY ABHINAV VERMA

If you want to move away from the bustle of daily life and yearn for comfort and a touch of green then drive a little out of Pune for that quick getaway. Lush green is the word which comes to mind when you think of Chakan, an hour's drive out of Pune. Chakan is also a well known automobile and manufacturing hub. Located here is the brand new Courtyard by Marriott, which is specifically designed to suit the needs of today's business traveller.

ROOMS AND FACILITIES

The hotel has 175 rooms, including 12 residence suites. The rooms are spacious and stylishly designed. All rooms come equipped with a refrigerator, coffee maker and a 37 inch LED TV. The rooms also have an I-pod docking station and an ironing board. The soft plush bed is inviting after a tiring day of exploring the scenic locality. If you feel like refreshing yourself then take a dip in the pool or go for a workout in the hotel gym.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

Since it's a hotel designed to cater to the business traveller, it offers superb business center facilities. It has four meeting rooms with a total space of 11,725 sqft, which can accommodate around 6,400 people. All of them are equipped to meet all business needs and the rooms have audio visual facilities, wireless connectivity and video conferencing services.

FOOD

Momo Cafe is one of the best features of the hotel. It's an all day dining venue and serves buffet as well the a la carte menu. The chefs also customise the meal as per your preference. So go ahead enjoy your waffles for breakfast or the delicious fish and chips, the food will surely not disappoint you. In the evening if you feel like having a drink then drop by at the bar, which offers a variety of exquisite wines and also many classic contemporary cocktails. It also has a varied range of international beer as well. The well stocked bar with with stylish decor provides a perfect opportunity to relax and unwind after a day of hard work.

AROUND CHAKAN

The hotel provides concierge services and the staff is friendly and open to feedback. If you are interested in visiting the city and exploring the nearby tourist attractions, like the Sinhgad and Torna Fort or the Kamshet Dam, the hotel prepares an itinerary to make sure you can explore the areas the way you like. The hotel has also taken many positive green initiatives to help save energy and water. The Courtyard Marriott definitely makes the cut as a comfortable and classy stay option in the Pune region.

At a Glance

WHAT: A classy business hotel
WHERE: Chakan Industrial Area Phase-1, Talegaon Chakan road, Khalumbre, Pune
tel: (021) 3566 6666
COST: Rooms start at ₹6,000 per night
VERDICT: Good option for the business traveller

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Novotel Visakhapatnam

BY HARSIMRAN SHERGILL

I hear the waves loud and clear. Perhaps it's a dream. When the sun shyly makes its way through my window that overlooks the Bay of Bengal, I know this is not a usual day. The sea, in its mesmerising shades of blue, is a reminder that this is going to be a different experience. The Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach Hotel is just that and more.

USP

The concept of the hotel is based on the fact that no matter what room you stay in, the sea is not just across the road but right in your living space. Built architecturally like the word 'X', each room ensures that guests enjoy every moment—from the rising sun to the blush of dusk. Madhav Bellamkonda, the Chief Operating Officer of the Varun Group, that manages the hotel, tells me that the inspiration came from cruise liner. "We wanted our guests to have a view of the sea even from the bathroom; therefore, we decided that every room in the hotel and yes that includes the bathroom overlooks the sea."

ROOMS

Needless to say, all the 225 rooms have stunning views of the sea (the higher you go, the better they are). Divided in three categories, superior, premium and extended stay, the rooms are warm and inviting. Each is equipped with Wi-Fi, flat screen LEDs, tea and coffee making facility, an ipod dock, a mini bar and an electronic safe. The interiors are modern, sophisticated with a dash of pastel shades that leave a soothing effect. Arguably, the couch that overlooks the blue sea could end up making the list of your favourite spots in the property.

FOOD AND SERVICE

The hotel has three restaurants, each catering to your moods. For the casual catching-up-with-friends kind of experience, there's The Square done up in European décor. It serves Asian, Indian and Western influence cuisines and has the largest buffet in town along with live kitchen cooking counters, teppanyaki and wood-fired pizzas. If you're in the mood for an intimate dinner, there's the dimly lit Zaffran that ensures that you have your bow tie experience and the hotel makes sure it's sprinkled with tonnes of romance. It has two private dining areas that guard your privacy perfectly. What's more, the food is mouth watering no matter what you order. And if you think you aren't spoilt for choice yet, there's Infinity—the roof top all glass restaurant with alfresco seating. Though the restaurant serves only sizzlers, the spectacular view of the ocean will make the menu take a backseat.

What works for Novotel Vizag is that each corner in the hotel is built for a purpose—a practical one.

The hotel offers breathtaking views of the sea from all sides

At a Glance

WHAT: A hotel with a 360° view of the sea
WHERE: Varun Beach Road, 530002 Visakhapatnam; tel: (0891) 2822 222
COST: Starts at ₹6,000 (single occupancy)
VERDICT: A complete experience, one that keeps you glued to the hotel

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REVIEW

Paradis Hotel & Golf Club Mauritius

BY KALPANA SUNDER

The tropical, airy lobby of the hotel sets the tone for the next few days: mirror like ponds with thatched roofs and day beds with filmy canopies, carved wooden chairs and even a small telescope. The sprawling hotel belonging to the premier hotel group of the island, Beachcomber Hotels (with eight luxury properties across the island), occupies an idyllic location against the backdrop of the brooding Morne Mountain, with seven kilometers of golden beach.

ROOMS

The hotel has a wide choice of accommodation ranging from luxurious deluxe rooms, junior and senior suites as well as 13 self-contained luxury villas set on private beaches, all surrounded by the constant motif of lush tropical gardens. My large junior suite decorated in pleasing neutral tones, comes with rattan furniture, a comfortable bed, study table, free Wi-Fi, television and an electric coffee maker. The palatial bathroom comes with a bathtub, a shower area, wardrobes and twin wash basins. I love the large balcony with wicker furniture that looks onto the tropical gardens and lagoon.

RESTAURANTS

Fine gastronomy is one of the highlights of the hotel with the unique option of also dining at their adjacent sister property called Dinarobin Hotel Golf & Spa. One night I have an international buffet at the main restaurant Le Brabant which seats 350, another night I have Chef's special pasta at the Italian restaurant La Palma with my toes curling in the sand. I wish I had time for the open air Creole restaurant La Ravanne on the edge of the property, where you can even arrive in a traditional boat! My best evening is at Le Paradis Bar overlooking the main swimming pool and lagoon, sipping on a rum cocktail and watching a scintillating local Sega dance performance.

SPA

I walk through a Zen path with pebbles and bamboos to the exclusive Spa by Clarins with thatched roof cabins around a central

The hotel has an idyllic location with a large expanse of beach

garden with frangipani trees. My signature Clarins treatment with aromatic ginger oil by a trained masseuse leaves me levitating. The spa offers a pampering menu of massages and treatments sourced from across the world and signature Clarin treatments.

ACTIVITIES

Along the edge of the lagoon is the 18 hole golf course with the Paradis Golf Academy offering customised coaching. I try some of the extensive range of water sports offered by the hotel like sailing, snorkeling, water skiing and wind surfing. The hotel like every Beachcomber property has a Bob Marlin kids club to keep the children happy.

At a Glance

WHAT: A five star luxury property.
WHERE: Le Morne Peninsula, Mauritius; tel: +230 4015050
COST: Deluxe doubles start at approximately US$ 529 per night.
VERDICT: Luxurious hotel with the sea and mountains at its doorstep, great for families!

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10 BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE BEAUTIFUL PLACES

Add a generous dose of style to your travel itinerary and take a journey with these celebrities who take you around the world to their favourite fashionable destinations.

BY ROBIN BANSAL

1 AMANPREET WAHI
MODEL
BALI, INDONESIA

"Even though Bali is a beach destination, people who come there from across the world add to its style quotient. The women wear the best bikinis during the day and the best formal gowns at night. Not many people know that Bali is also known for its high end designer boutiques."

PLUS SAYS: Beaches, surfing, nightlife, food, music, shopping… the list goes on. A relatively small island, it is often called the Island of the Gods. But despite teeming with tourists this stylish city offers a combination of unique cultures with a calm and pleasant environment. It's not without reason why Bali is the Love in *Eat Pray Love*.

MUST DO: Do visit Seminiyak Street for high end designer stuff. You also cannot miss visiting the Rock Bar there which is on top of a cliff, facing the ocean. And stay at the Bulgari Hotel which is just another world. It is like a picturesque fantasy straight out of a Bond movie.

2 KUNAL GANJAWALA
SINGER
CAPRI ISLAND, ITALY

"This place is phenomenal. The girls are beautiful and coy while the boys are flamboyant and flirty. Everyone and everything around is all so cool and beautiful. People there are slaves of their clothing and to looking good."

PLUS SAYS: A popular resort island, just three miles off the coast of Italy's Naples and Sorrento, Capri is one of the glitziest islands in the Mediterranean. The mountainous island is surrounded by a blue stretch of sea and it oozes style with its hot springs, chic cafes and restaurants. If you're visiting we recommend, you do get a pair of Capris from there-even Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had hers made there.

MUST DO: Don't miss having oysters, caviar and champagne on the beach as you watch the sun go down.

3 NEHA DHUPIA
ACTOR
BARCELONA, SPAIN

"This place can be whatever you want it to be. It has a very eclectic culture and is very cosmopolitan with people from everywhere. The architecture is beautiful. I also picked up Spanish while I was there six months ago and would try my hand at the new language but with little success, though I enjoyed it immensely. I got tanned on the beach, went to the Picasso Museum and did almost everything there. The people are very warm and hospitable with a cool and comfortable sense of fashion."

PLUS SAYS: Referred to as the pride of Catalonia, Barcelona is one place to take long walks while feasting your eyes with maverick architect Antoni Gaudí's whimsical and fairy tale like architecture, Picasso's artworks, music and dance on the streets and the beauty of the beach. Besides its natural and cultural heritage, the city is also known for its world famous football team FC Barcelona. Bridge jumping, chocolate massages, F1-you name it, they have it all.
MUST DO: Definitely go and see everything from the Picasso Museum to the Gaudi buildings and the La Sagrada Familia. You can see the entire city from one of Gaudi's buildings. Don't miss that. The city has much to offer and you might also want to witness some football fever and see one of the local games.

4 RITU KUMAR
FASHION DESIGNER
LONDON, ENGLAND

"London has got a mixture of tradition, fashion and absolutely stunning architecture. I find the entire atmosphere there exceedingly familiar. It may not be Paris or Italy in terms of fashion but it still has that irresistible charm and oodles of style. The men and women dress really well and conduct themselves with a certain elan and have an element of class. There is a certain amount of reserve but that is how you expect Brits to be."

PLUS SAYS: If the stiff upper lip accent is a tad difficult to comprehend, the ethnic mix of people and centuries old history is what makes London so enchanting. Its iconic skyline, grey skies and brick houses contribute to the scenic beauty of the English capital. The culture, tradition and lifestyle of this stylish city and its amazing people leaves one enthralled.
MUST DO: Do take a walk on Old Bond street for an international exposure in fashion. Every brand has its couture outlet there. Also don't miss the food there. You don't find such variety of international cuisine in most places as in London. It's both sophisticated and qualitative. Whatever if might be, you will find the food of your choice.

5 AMAAN ALI KHAN
SAROD PLAYER
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, USA

"It's very laid back and at the same time the night life is amazing there. The best part about this place is that you just might find someone like Tom Cruise or Robin Williams walking down the road casually or sitting on the next table in the café having a coffee. This place lets you be who you are. No body bothers you, everybody is just too cool and busy having a blast on the beach or in the night clubs."

PLUS SAYS: Surrounding the San Francisco Bay in northern California, this place is known for its unique lifestyle and culture. People from all over and from different ethnicities give this area its character and there is a visible tolerance of different cultures and beliefs. Everybody exists here and everybody seems to be having a really good time.
Great beaches, quaint architecture, an abundance of galleries and restaurants, amazing nightlife, and fashionable people makes Bay Area stand out as a stylish place.
MUST DO: Drive from Santa Barbara all the way to San Francisco. Try the yacht ride and visit Universal Studios and the San Diego Zoo. Also if you are a foodie than make sure that you stop by the sea food restaurants and stall along the way.

6 AMAN VARMA
ACTOR
MONACO

"Monaco is built on a mountain and the moment you come down, you straight away hit the beach. It's absolutely scenic and feels out of this world. I felt it was something both picturesque and heavenly. The buildings there have a gothic feel about them and many of them house showrooms of luxury cars such as Ferrari and Rolls Royce. Fantastic luxury, it is truly a playground of the rich and famous. The combination of the old and new is what sets Monaco out for me."

PLUS SAYS: The playground of the rich and famous, Monaco is a beautiful province on the French Riviera. The second smallest country in the world is the crown jewel of the annual Formula 1 calendar. But Monaco is much more than the home to the Grand Prix with its beautiful people, swanky houses and luxurious yachts. It's all about style and substance.
MUST DO: Try to be there when the Grand Prix is on. It is when the entire place turns into one large picnic spot and is buzzing with activity. Make sure you have your partner with you while visiting Monaco and try to be there for at least two weeks. Do visit the golf courses there. It is one of the most picturesque places, stylish and romantic places to be.

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7 KUNAL KARAN KAPOOR
ACTOR
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

"Prague is the most stylish city I have visited. Call it the dancing woman by the Vltava river, Prague with its Baroque architecture, art nouveau and a cityscape of spiraling domes and stylish spires, charming cobbled streets is pure style for me. Keep walking through the streets of the Old Town till you get lost and you let the city find you. A moment to keep is to be at the Town Square when all the church bells ring at the same time."

PLUS SAYS: Prague is one of those rare places whose architecture suffered next to no damage during two world wars and the Soviet occupation. Buzzing with tourists, the city bursts with artistic overtones and its crisp cold weather, amazing food; cheap shopping and strong tradition of concerts keep the footfall coming. What makes the city stylish is the mix of the modern and an undeniable old world charm of cobbled streets, museums, art studious, music on the street and people who love the good life.

MUST DO: If you are into clubbing and want to enjoy the nightlife in Prague then drop by the Cross Club which has a very gothic vibe and the Bombay Bar which plays some awesome mainstream electronic dance music (EDM) and where the staff is also Indian. Great place to spend an evening.

8 RAMNEEK PANTAL
MODEL
MAURITIUS

"It is the happy go lucky attitude of the people there makes it so special for me. Nobody is in a hurry there. Everything is so laid back, that you forget all about time once there. They have beautiful cafes and very friendly people. The best part is that despite being a major tourist destination, it is still very clean. I love the casual attitude of the place. You can simply let your hair down and forget about things like wearing make up. It lets you be yourself."

PLUS SAYS: An island nation in the South-West Indian Ocean, Mauritius is often called the Paradise Island. Tourists and especially honeymooners dig it for its picturesque white sandy beaches, turquoise blue lagoons; tropical setting, adventure sports and amazing hospitality. If you are looking for a stylish beach vacation with lots of adventure activities, then Mauritius waits for you.

MUST DO: Do visit the shopping arcade next to the sea with cafes in the middle with live music. It's not a mall but that's what makes it really amazing; it is really magnificient. It's amazing to spend a chilled out evening listening to music, eating great sea food and sipping wine at the arcade.

9 AMBIKA PILLAI
STYLIST
PARIS, FRANCE

"Paris is the most stylish city for me for its street fashion. Everybody dresses up for a purpose in Paris. Everything is an accessory there. The men are all eye candies and wear the best suits in the world and their shoes and cufflinks are all well thought out and everything about the women there is just so cool. They dress so casually and yet they are so stylish and really for me the residents are the last word in fashion. It is a delight to see people walking on the streets with such colourful umbrellas. It looks so good that it almost works as an accessory."

PLUS SAYS: It is the city of lights and romance, the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower, and the proclaimed fashion capital of the world. France's enchanting capital Paris brims with art, culture, architecture, fashion and history, but, it is the innate style quotient of its people, their enormous sit down lunches that gives the city its irresistible allure.
MUST DO: You must eat the chocolate crepes and sweets sold near the Eiffel Tower. Also don't forget to check out Manish Arora's collections in stores in Paris. I was proud to see an Indian name in luxury stores in the fashion capital of the world.

10 NEIL NITIN MUKESH
ACTOR
MAASAI MARA, KENYA

"I was stationed there for 35 days for my last film. The moment we landed there, the region took my breath away. It rejuvenated me completely and brought me closer to nature. As I am also an avid photographer, I went crazy clicking photographs. The culture of the Maasai tribe is really amazing; they are so disconnected from the material world and so connected with nature. There is nothing man made about Maasai Mara, it is 100 percent natural. I would recommend this place to anyone who loves nature, wildlife and the outdoors."

PLUS SAYS: One of Africa's greatest wildlife reserves, Maasai Mara is situated in southwest Kenya and is famous for its big cats. Vast stretches of grassland, nearly 100 species of mammals and close to 600 species of birds can be found there. Apart from being a regular migratory ground for over two million wildebeest, zebra and Thomson's gazelle, Maasai Mara is also regularly flocked by nature loving tourists and film crews.
MUST DO: Go for the incredible balloon safari. They wake you up at 3 am and you get to see the sunrise from the balloon. And once it's over, you have to land in the middle of the jungle. Don't miss the Big Five Safari as well. It is one where you spot the elephant, the buffalo, the lion, the rhino and the leopard. It is very rare to spot all of them.

ITALY

VENETIAN HOLIDAY

This one is different. It is curated. Next time in your favourite city, go one step further and get a unique luxurious experience especially curated for you. We did it for the evergreen and ever romantic Venice. BY DEEKSHA NANDA

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM INDIA PICTURE

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The grand and sprawling 16th-century Villa Foscarini Rossi

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN riveted with seeing the world, must've been bitten by the travel bug fairly early on in life. One evening I chanced upon a poignant quote by Rumi: *"Travel brings power and love back in to your life."* That quote was the very inspiration behind my spontaneous summer time visit to Italy. I could almost pass for Julia Roberts in search of her own version of Eat, Pray, Love, I thought to myself. Thus, I packed my bags and set off to The Floating City.

While my earlier visits took me through cities like Rome, Naples, Capri, Florence, what truly stole my heart was the island of gondolas—Venice. The charm of getting lost among Venice's romantic, labyrinthine streets and canals is unparallel. It is true when people say it doesn't matter how many times you visit this city, there is always something new to discover. The beauty of this destination lies in afternoons spent wandering around Piazza San Marco, exploring the small art museums, shopping from thrift stores that are abundant and encountering a fascinating amalgamation of influences—Roman, Ottoman and Italian.

Stepping out from St Lucia Station, the heat and humidity instantly greeted me, being dressed in jeans and a tee didn't help either. All I remember is how I was in a tearing hurry to get to my villa, slip into a comforting bubble bath, sip on some Prosecco and start my Venetian adventure. Given that Venice was my last stop in Italy, I decided to pamper myself a little and get a lifestyle expert to 'curate' my trip. Spread over 3 days, the experience changed my view on vacations altogether. Called Venice By Invitation Only, the enigmatic title was every bit the promised World of Elan made—walk through closed doors, sneak into the houses of local aristocrats, and explore the backstage of haute couture. I soon realised I was no longer Julia Roberts but Alladin instead, with a personal genie.

A few hours after my arrival, I decided to waltz off to Piazza San Marco to enjoy the mania of the day. Sitting at The Caffè Quadri, I watched the world go by. Bustle of tourists, patrons of the basilica, music from the church a few feet away mixed with the wafting tunes of the cello and piano in front of me; it was a heady mix. I was exhausted from my travel to Venice but in that moment, I felt so alive. Taking in all the sounds and smells, discovering alleys befitting clandestine lovers, waving at welcoming shopkeepers, smiling at flirtatious Italian hunks, I was in love, just like Rumi had promised.

I caught the ferry from San Marco to Lido beach, just in time to soak up some sun and watch the glowing sunset. The view was spectacular and the folks scattered around were too. I've always been a beach and bikini kind of girl and Lido was the perfect spot to unwind. Pristine and untapped, the Adriatic Sea seemed to merge with the sky. Content with my glowing Italian tan, I made my way back to San Marco. Settling into a café near the Rialto Bridge lane, I ordered the most sumptuous seafood risotto I had ever tasted, post that strolled to the nearest gelato shop; clearly gluttony was the order of the day. A few hours of promenading around, interacting with complete strangers and a gondola ride around the Grand Canal later, I made my way back to the villa my curators had picked out for me. Interestingly, the villa was nestled in a corner of the Venetian lagoon still unexplored and immune to mass tourism, where time ceases to exist. Close Venice, yet miles away from the noise, the villa gave me a feeling of being in a painting. I slept that night excited at the thought of beginning my carefully curated experience.

The morning dawned and the first rays of sun played against my satin pillowcase. I got out of bed to admire the scenery of this ancient fish farm caressed by the morning light when suddenly noticed a shining Rolls Royce stop at the front door. Alessandro Dal Corso, my lovely Italian host and the owner of the grand villa, stepped out of his enviable ride like a scene from a movie. Interestingly his family has been in the hospitality business for generations, making him a magical host who opens doors to incredible experiences. I hustled myself to get dressed and match his sartorial sense. We were to start the day at the Island of Torcello for brunch at the LocandaCipriani. A beautiful inn located far from the hustle and bustle of San Marco Square, the inn is a rite of passage for gourmands, run by descendants of the Cipriani family. Upon entering found the bar adorned with pictures of Hollywood stars, members of the English Royal Family and

Throughout your curated holiday, food will be top notch, as you stop at exquisite gourmet restaurants in the city

Curate a holiday

Lifestyle curation is all about bringing you a never before experience. So be it fashion-driven vacations, rejuvenating on a private beach or sharpening your food & wine connoisseur skills, curators add exclusivity to your holiday, redefining the very essence of luxury.

✓ **World of Elan:** *Well known lifestyle curators in India, they claim to try, taste and curate experiences for their clients. Pick from their menu that ranges from Scotland to Latvia, and even Israel. www.worldofelan.com*

✓ **Tastes of Italy:** *They are the expert curators for Italy with a long list of recurring clients. Their expertise in Italy will ensure you have a great time. www.tastesofitaly.co.uk*

✓ **Epicure Me:** *Epicure Me pride themselves on creating boutique experiences. Their mantra for everyone is 'Travel More, Eat More, Drink More'. What better! www.epicureme.com*

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DEEKSHA NANDA

RISTORANTE QUADRI

musicians such as Elton John. Clearly, this place had seen its fair share of who's who. A hearty meal and laughter filled afternoon later, it was time for us to depart.

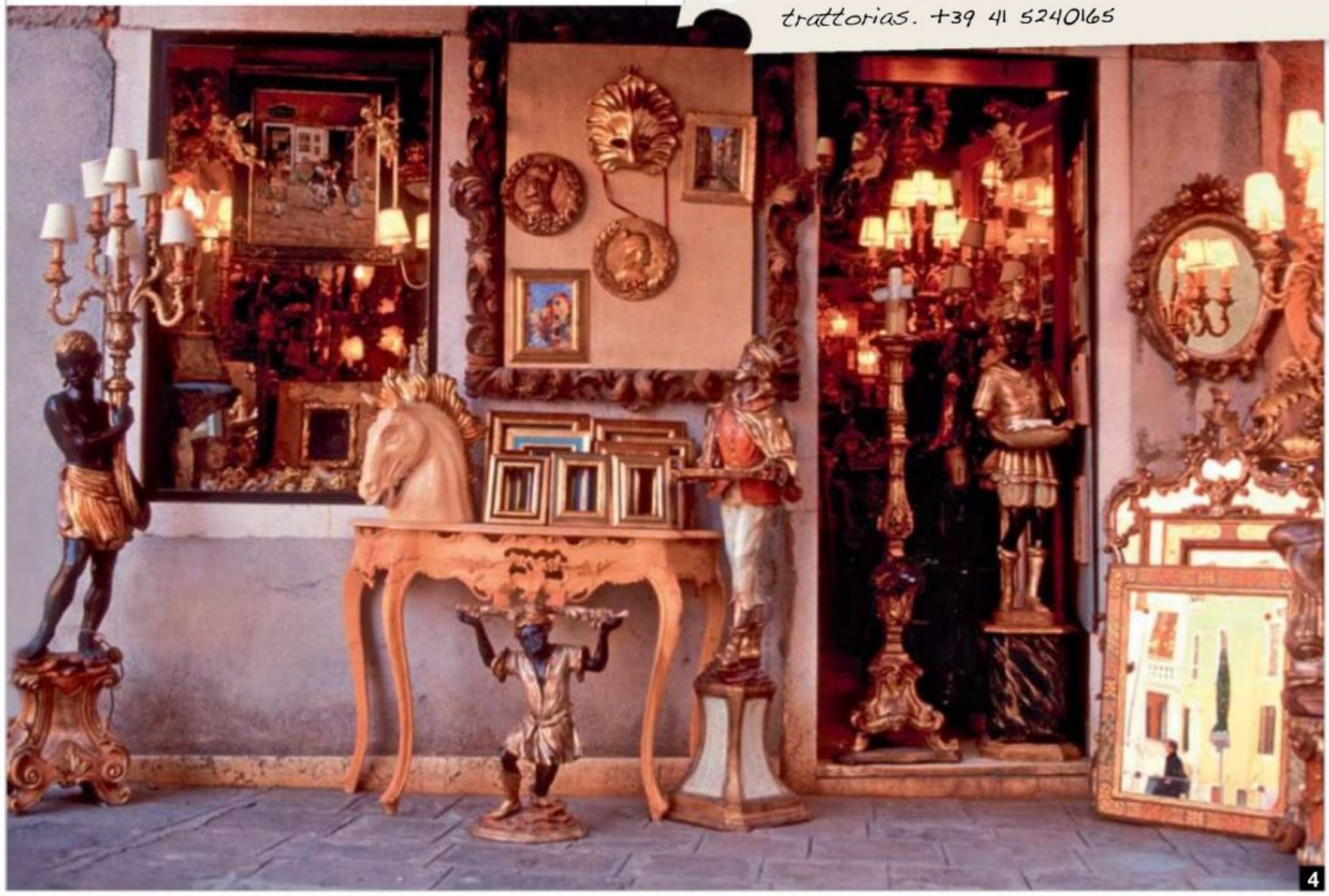
Venice is one of the finer places of Europe to buy art, antiques, glassware, shoes and bags; Alessandro was a living example of such fineness. His suit was so impeccably tailored that I couldn't resist complimenting him. After all a handsome, debonair man is a definite heart racer for any girl. We visited the Murano glass factory, shopped at the exclusive boutiques and spent the evening chatting about art and architecture. Calling it a night, Alessandro realised my immense love for fashion and planned the following day around it.

I was up and ready much before Alessandro arrived, making him laugh in amusement at my eagerness. Arriving along the Brenta Canal, our first stop for the day was with Cristina Rossi at her family's 16th century villa, Foscarini Rossi, richly adorned with frescoes and home to the family's private shoe museum. Since 1942, Cristina's family has partnered with some of the most admired stylists, producing shoes for Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Fendi, Emilio Pucci, Givenchy and Christian Lacroix, to name a few. Stunned, awed, overwhelmed were only a few ways to describe my state of mind. I was in fashion heaven, surrounded by a room of exquisite shoes a girl could only dream of. The Italians really do have panache for fashion, and my visit to the Rossi mansion confirmed it. Alessandro knew the magic formula to open any door, be it at the Louis Vuitton factory or the factory of Grazia Pelletteria Bijoux, who are considered to the be the finest manufacturers of the leather bags for some of the biggest fashion houses. Upon arriving there, I was already certain of what I wanted my personalised bag to be—in fact I witnessed the very birth of it, individually crafted with iconic images.

1. Go Boho in the city of art and romance 2. Designer presentation makes the food drool-worthy 3. Get a bespoke piece of Murano glass 4. Browse fabulous antique boutiques

Stop To Eat At

- Al Ponte do Rialto: Located near the Rialto bridge, meant for a quick bite and take away
- Osteria Boccadoro: Located in city centre, the pastas are impeccable. Tel: +39 41 52.11.021
- Locanda Cipriani: Romantic little place on Torcello island, 30 mins from city centre Venice. +39 41-730150
- Antiche Carampane: Located near the Rialto bridge, this is one of the oldest trattorias. +39 41 5240165



4

The city of eternal romance, Venice is a place you can keep revisiting to discover something new and wonderful each time

Post my fashion expedition, I had the rare privilege of being invited to supper with Countess Rizzardi at her family house and one of Italy's most influential architectural monuments, Villa Valmarana ai Nani. I looked over at my modern day genie dressed in his urbane suit and wondered if every day of his life was spent in such opulence. His Rolls Royce pulled into the estate, making me admire the view around. The villa enjoys an enchanting location on a hill top overlooking Vicenza with the town on one side and the Valley of Silence on the other. I expected the Countess to be this larger than life individual but she turned out to be surprisingly grounded, warm and affectionate. She even made a joke about how she cooked the meal herself and extended to me the Italian hospitality I had quickly grown to love and admire.

The meal was wonderful and apparently picked from the garden, dressed with the estate's own extra virgin olive oil. I found a little hand printed menu with details of the courses and wine to be tasted, ending with a surprising sweet red wine that went perfectly well with the warm chocolate dessert we ate. After taking leave from the Countess, we headed back to Venice and hopped into one of the slipper boats, for there is no better way to see Venice than from a gondola. As we arrived back to the villa, tailors from Canali were waiting to take my measurements—Alessandro takes compliments about his suit seriously.

As my little royal sojourn in Venice came to an end, I strolled down to St Mark's, late into the night, reminiscing my whirlwind romance with this city. I let the magic of Venice sweep over me until it filled me up. Napoleon was rumoured to have called it the greatest drawing-room in Europe. Within a few minutes, I felt that Venice belonged to me and me to Venice. As the July summer sea breeze played against my skin, I breathed in the last few moments of Venetian air I knew I'd sorely miss upon my return to reality.

The Venice By Invitation Only Itinerary

- Check into a luxurious private villa, picked by World of Elan after discussion with you
- Spend the morning at Island of Torcello with brunch at the LocandaCipriani, a heritage home still run by the Ciprani family
- Visit the Murano glass factory and pick up bespoke pieces of your choice. At Castello, 4623, 30122 Venice; tel: +39 041 241 2202
- Spend the evening at art boutiques around Venice, with dinner at a restaurant of your choice
- On day two, meet Cristina Rossi at her family's 16th century villa, Foscarini Rossi, to look at the private shoe museum.
- Keep your date with fashion this day with visits to the Louis Vuitton factory or the factory of Grazia Pelletteria Bijoux, and get a personalised bag
- Appointments at the villa with Canali or designer of your choice for a tailor made outfit
- Supper with Countess Rizzardi at her family house, Villa Valmarana ai Nani

At the Villa Valmarana ai Nani, dine with a Countess who cooks the meal herself

VILLA VALMARANA AI NANI

SOUTH AFRICA

CAPE TOWN *cool*

There's a palpable energy on the streets of Cape Town this year, as it takes on the mantle of World Design Capital 2014. We dig out the coolest of the many cool places, so you know where the best action is. BY SARAH KHAN

INDIA PICTURE

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The iconic V&A Waterfront is the ultimate chilling zone of the city

MARK MY WORDS: this will be Cape Town's year. Its already stylish citizens are rising to the occasion of the label of World Design Capital 2014 with a host of new dining and shopping openings, but local classics are also generating new buzz. As a recently transplanted Capetonian, I've reveled in uncovering the city's gems. There's no dearth of chic places to lay your head in Cape Town, in a mix of locations ranging from the beach to the center of town. One of the city's most exclusive addresses? Ellerman House, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean from a bluff in posh Bantry Bay. A former residence converted into a 13-room hotel with two private villas, the sleek property is laden with contemporary art and boasts an über-modern wine cellar stocked with 6,000 bottles. If you prefer being in the heart of town, I recommend the rose-hued Mount Nelson. It's a Mother City institution, with elegant grounds and a gracious high tea—one of my personal favorites. You'll be greeted by a familiar face after you've made your way down the long, palm-fringed driveway: a statue of Mahatma Gandhi presides over the entrance. For the ultimate wow factor, the One&Only Cape Town in the central V&A Waterfront area is the place to book. It was the very first place I stayed when I first arrived in Cape Town, and I was blown away when I saw what lies beyond the floor-to-ceiling windows: they merely serve as expansive picture frames for capturing the stellar views of Table Mountain.

So you've booked your flight and reserved your room; now what? The next thing to do as soon as you have all that squared away is to reserve one of the coveted tables at the Test Kitchen or the Pot Luck Club, the two restaurants by celebrated local chef Luke Dale-Roberts. Both eateries are located in the hip Old Biscuit Mill and serve his inventive cuisine; if you only have time for one, I'd recommend the Pot Luck Club, with its great vantage point overlooking the city and more casual ambience. Every weekend, the Old Biscuit Mill turns into the city's best outdoor party, and that's where you'll find me most aturdays: dozens of local food vendors open up stalls in this former Victorian warehouse, selling everything from ostrich jerky to shawarmas to steak pies. For pricey Asian tapas that are worth every rand, head to Haiku. Bonus: the sleek new location at the popular V&A Waterfront mall shares a roof with Bukhara, Cape Town's best Indian restaurant, which means you can order off either menu—perfect for when I'm craving some dim sum paired with

Good food Cape Town

Steak salomie: Spicy, curried beef wrapped in a flaky, buttery Malaysian-style roti

Bobotie: A classic Cape Malay dish of minced beef topped with egg custard

Biltong: SA-style dried jerky—beef is the most popular, but varieties range from ostrich to tuna

Boerewors: Sausage rolls—get one from one of the many street carts that sprout up along Long Street, they're perfect for a late-night snack

Gatsby: The ultimate sandwich, a huge hoagie stuffed with spicy meats and French fries. One can feed four

1. Book in advance at The Test Kitchen, the popular restaurant run by Chef Luke Dale-Roberts 2. Take in the plush side view at the One&Only 3. The Shimmy Beach Club is a great place for food and party 4. Sample some gourmet cheese at the outskirts of Cape Town 5. Quirky curio boutiques line this stylish town

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INDIA PICTURE

chicken *makhni!* En route to the Cape of Good Hope, I've stopped by the scenic village of Scarborough, where top chef Bruce Robertson invites diners into his personal beach home for two intimate lunch sittings a day. He serves a multi-course seafood meal along with some rollicking anecdotes—he's quite the character. For a sugary treat, I head to Jason Bakery, where a local version of New York's cult cronut is on offer (around here, though, it's known as a dough-ssant).

When I'm looking to exercise my wallet, I usually drive straight to the fabulous mall at the V&A Waterfront. But let's be honest: a mall is a mall. If you're on the hunt for some finds that are a little more unique, Long Street and Kloof Street are peppered with chic boutiques and indie shops catering to a more niche clientele. Lately, I've noticed that Cape Town's stylish set are descending in droves on nearby Bree Street, which has undergone quite a transformation in the past two years. At Skinny LaMinx, illustrator and designer Heather Moore sells quirky textiles and home goods that make for fun souvenirs, like boldly patterned tea towels and colourful satchels. You can't miss British fashion label Paul Smith thanks to the bright blue façade, behind which you'll find edgy men's and womenswear with the designer's signature striped motif. I adore the supple bags, belts, and iPad cases by Chloe Townsend for her luxury leather label Missibaba, where she incorporates her world travels into her work. The Robert Sherwood Design Showroom on Bree is a must-stop on the itinerary for anyone who dabbles in interior design—the locally and globally sourced range of pop art, industrial-style lamps, and contemporary furniture has been curated carefully.

Capetonians are famously laidback, but that doesn't mean they don't know how to party. The sultry Asoka bar, with its Asian-inspired Zen aesthetic, has been plying chic Capetonians with cocktails for years, and remains a fixture on the nightlife scene. For an even more festive, beach-party vibe, I like Shimmy Beach Club, which opened last year on the water and has quickly become the place to be. '&Union' helped herald Bree Street's resurgence a few years ago, and has since become something of an institution, thanks mostly to its craft beers. There's a different live act every night at the Piano Bar, making it the perfect venue for a low-key, jazzy night out. It brings a New York-style music scene to Cape Town, but with local flair—and as a New Yorker in Cape Town, I appreciate that vibe.

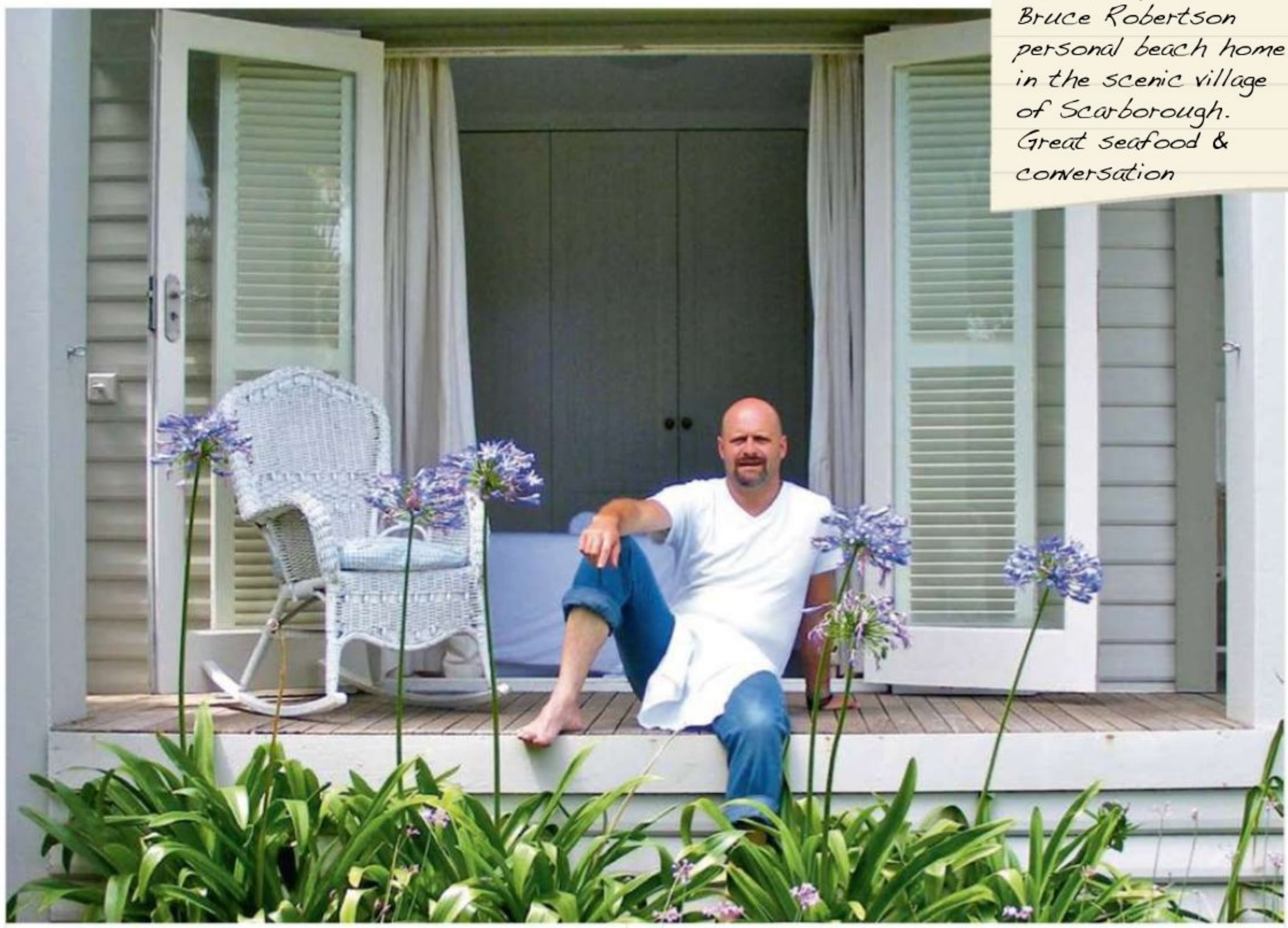
Come December, summer is in full swing in Cape Town, and sun-starved people are drawn to the sprawling expanses of pristine beaches and glittering waters—Bay and Clifton are the top attractions. The most scenic swath of sand, however, remains under the radar: Llandudno beach is devoid of shops and businesses, and feels like it's miles away from the city. If you're not keen on being a beach bum, there are plenty of other stunning sights to keep you occupied as well. From the moment your plane descends toward Cape Town it's hard to miss the iconic Table Mountain, a hulking plateau seemingly dropped from above right into the center of the city. It's worth taking the cable car to the top on your first day, both to let the

HOTDEAL

Celebrate any special occasion with Mount Nelson Hotel and get a sparkling wine, a one-hour massage, breakfast, as well as transfers to Table Mountain and more.

Tel: +27 21 483 1000

The saltwater pool at Babylonstoren, a less known vineyard farm house perfect for a cool escape



Dine at top Chef Bruce Robertson personal beach home in the scenic village of Scarborough. Great seafood & conversation

staggering ocean and city views blow your mind, but also to get yourself oriented with the landscape below. Active types may want to hike it instead of taking the easy route, but I recommend climbing Lion's Head mountain next door instead—you get the same jaw-dropping vistas, only these include Table Mountain itself as well. And take it from me, a confirmed city girl who's far from athletic: it's not that strenuous a trek to the top. One of my favorite things to show visitors to Cape Town is the drive toward the Cape of Good Hope, which is easily one of the world's most scenic routes.

There's plenty to keep you occupied in Cape Town for days, but as lovely as my adopted hometown is, sometimes I crave a quiet escape. A mere 45 minute drive east of the city will take you to the heart of the Winelands, where South Africa's world-famous bottles are produced. Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are lovely towns with fabulous restaurants, but I also urge visitors to spend a night or two at Babylonstoren, a super-chic farm resort with impeccable design and impeccable food—it doesn't get more farm-to-table than this. An hour and a half up the coast, Paternoster is a breathtakingly beautiful seaside village notable for its lovely whitewashed cottages that seem to blend into the ivory sand. Book a getaway at the ultra-modern Strandloper Ocean Boutique Hotel, which has 16 cozy white-on-white rooms and suites, and thank your luck that you decided to come to Cape Town.

At a Glance

STAY

Ellerman House: 180 Kloof Road, Bantry Bay; +27 21 430 3200; ellerman.co.za

Mount Nelson Hotel: 76 Orange Street; +27 21 483 1000; mountnelson.co.za

One&Only Cape Town: Dock Road, Victoria & Alfred Waterfront; + 27 21 431 5800; www.capetown.oneandonlyresorts.com

EAT

Test Kitchen: The Old Biscuit Mill, 375 Albert Road, Woodstock; +27 (0) 21 447 2337 thetestkitchen.co.za

Pot Luck Club: +27 21 447 0804; thepotluckclub.co.za

Haiku: 58 Burg Street; +27 21 424 7000

Chef's Bruce Robertson Table: www.chefbruce robertson.com/p/boathouse.html

Jason Bakery: 185, Bree Street; jasonbakery.com

SHOP

Skinny LaMinx: 201 Bree St; skinnylaminx.com

Missibaba: 229 BREE STREET; missibaba.com

Robert Sherwood Design Showroom: 173 Bree Street; robertsherwooddesign.com

SEE

Llandudno beach: on Victoria Road, Babylonstoren: + 27 (0) 21 863 3852; babylonstoren.com

FUN

Asoka bar: 68 Kloof Street; asokabar.co.za

Shimmy Beach Club: South Arm Road, V&A Waterfront; shimmybeachclub.com

&Union: 110, Bree St

Piano Bar: 47, Napier St; thepianobar.co.za

COURTESY: AYANA RESORT

INDONESIA

BESPOKE BALI

If you've been to Bali, you must have walked across those lovely boutiques wondering which one to stop at… Here's a guide for you. If you haven't been to Bali, what are you waiting for? BY RESHMA KRISHNAN BARSHIKAR

You must sample the lobster menu at the stunningly located Ayana resort in Jimbaran

WHAT IS IT about Bali? Je ne sais quoi. Yes, that is the only expression that can describe it. It has miles of sandy beaches, but so does Phuket. It has mouthwatering fresh seafood, but that's just as good in Sri Lanka. It's been bombed to bankruptcy and tsunamis have beaten it to rubble and yet the international jet set throng Kudeta in their Oscar De La Renta kaftans and their Shivan Naresh malliots, learning how to surf.

The good life in Bali begins with where you stay. Sure you can sit back and watch the Indian Ocean lap at the edges of the stylish Legian, or the elegant St Regis, but the only way to really vacation in Bali is to sip a lychee martini by your very own pool in your personal villa. While there are few to choose from, my picks would be The Elysian, Pentai Lima, Latitude Bali, the decadent Puri Ganesha or you could just choose **Villa Bali Becik** where Gado Gado, your butler not the salad, caters to your every whim. Think of arranging a personal yoga session with Kathy Cook, the island's premier yoga instructor.

Begin your day with a head rush by doing a downward dog as the sun rises from the ocean. Otherwise, call Elisa Senese for **aqua pilates** in your pool and she will make sure that your core is pumped for a breakfast of bacon-topped pancakes all served by your personal butler who has also made sure that your Stella McCartney linen shift is ironed and crisp for your day in the sun.

Bali pulls at the heartstrings of the bohemian and the diva in a way incomparable to the rest of Asia and this has made it a haven for resort wear and lifestyle goods that have slowly become more than just travel clothes and holiday souvenirs. In the last decade, the heart of spring clothing clientele has arrived in Seminyak in droves.

If you happen to stay at The Legian, then it's best to begin at their boutique stocked with stunning resort wear from **Shiva Diva**. Step out and you'll find a cluster of boutiques. My favourite are **Nafsu** for lovely fashion trinkets but jewellery hoarders will love **Maru** that stocks Indonesian inspired baubles made of copper, silver and gold. Jump into a cab, go past the Kudeta Beach Club, and get onto Ji Lakshmana to find **Quarzia** at 3A, which stocks stunning silk dresses hand painted using the traditional batik technique by two Italian designers. Turn a corner where Ji Lakshmana meets Jalan Kayu Aya road and you'll find Seminyak Square, a commercial restaurant and shopping hub. This is where you stock up on holiday reading at **Periplus**, Indonesia's largest provider of English books, and groceries shopping at Casa Gourmet and **Bali Deli**, a favourite with expats.

Step out of Seminyak Square and head down the road and you will find the **The Hobo Store** at 8B. The Hobo is the perfect blend of international design by Indonesian craftsman, all conceived by Anna Pretty who creates both mass production and high quality bespoke products. Want your home to look like The Legian or St Regis? Try The Orchard at number 33, the retail showroom of Ibal Designs, suppliers to over 70 hotels around the world.

Bamboo Blonde is on the right of The Orchard and great for casual fashion. But if you prefer a name on your jeans then head to **Lily Jean** at number 58 and Nico Perez for breezy billowing linen shirts for the Heathcliff in your life. Ahead you'll find irreverent hand-woven cotton and silk robes at Paul Ropp and natty lace dresses at the French Magali Pascal. Follow the bend and you'll find over 50 brands including Alessi, Melissa, Baby Manis, Vivienne Westwood, design brand COVO at **SimpleKonsepStore**.

Rent a villa at St Regis Bali and get 20% off on rates, breakfast, transfers, free wifi. Till Dec 31

www.stregisbali.com

The Little Bali Book

If you got no time for all, tick at least these off on your itinerary:

The Elysian: Ji Saru Dewi, Seminyak; +62 361 730 999

The Hobo Store: No 105, Seminyak, +62 361 733 369

Niluh Djelantik: 144, Ji Raya Seminyak; +62 361 744 6068

SimpleKonsepStore: Ji Kayu Aya 40, Seminyak; +62 361 730 393

Spoiled: Jl Umalas II No. 90, Kerobokan; +62 361 847 5141

Jari Menari: No. 47 Ji Raya, Basangakasa; +62 361 736 740

Cendana Spa: +62 361 785 5024

Bali on Horse: +62 361 731402

You could rent the plus private bungalows at The Legian

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Maru

From the host of boutiques, we pick the best of brands & stores for you. Browse to buy or simply for the pleasure!

Bespoke pieces

Bamboo Blonde

Enfant Paradis

Niluh Djelantik

The Hobo Store

COURTESY: METIS 1

2

3

1. Bali is a shopper's paraside but you need to know where to get what 2. Dine at the fab eatery, Metis 3. The chic club Kudeta

If you care for something more vintage then head to Shalom Art Shop, next to the Oberoi, which specialises in mirrors and Venetian frames made in Java. Surfer boys, heads up! Dues Warung of Simple Pleasures at 32B is where actor Orlando Bloom shops for custom made motorbikes and **Drifter Surf Shop**, down the road, is where he probably goes for all things surfing. Skin is great for casual natural fiber men's wear. Aluminum lovers should head to YES, right opposite the fine art gallery Kebath and then to Café Zucchini for a glass of iced tea.

Now hop into another cab and head for Ji Raya Kerobokan and hop out at the junction and saunter into the famous **Niluh Djelantik**, a favourite with the likes of Uma Thurman and Gisele Bundchen, for bespoke footwear that combines high heels with comfort by using rubber platforms. A right on Ji Basangkasa will lead you to the Australian brand **Enfant Paradis** where heavenly scents will elevate your mood and make you want to pack your bags only to use their luxury travel skin care.

By now your feet will be ready for Jari Menari's 'dancing fingers' and yoga influenced 'long massage strokes'. Make sure to book ahead. Before you continue down the road for lunch at Made's Warung, take a peek into **Galeri Esok Lusa**, which specialises in glass sculptures by Japanese artists. Made's Warung is an icon in dishing up home-cooking Balinese style but if you're feeling less coconut water and more Apple martini, then head back for a fashionable lunch at Kudeta before you head home for a long well deserved snooze.

Time to be a Bond girl. Having spent the morning exercising, the credit card I mean, it's time to savour the ocean and nothing says Bond girl more than galloping on a stallion, the wind in your hair and sea salt spraying your face. Hire from **Bali on Horse**. Follow that up with a massage in the privacy of your own home. Most local masseurs couldn't find a knot if it stared at them in the face but Cendana Spa will make sure your every muscle

COURTESY: BALI HORSE ADVENTURE

For a bond girl moment, ride on the beach of Seminiyak

goes soft, pliable as clay. If it's a facial that makes you smile, then the Crème de La Mer facials at the cliff top Ayana Resort's **Spa on the Rocks** will make you swoon; it might also empty your wallet.

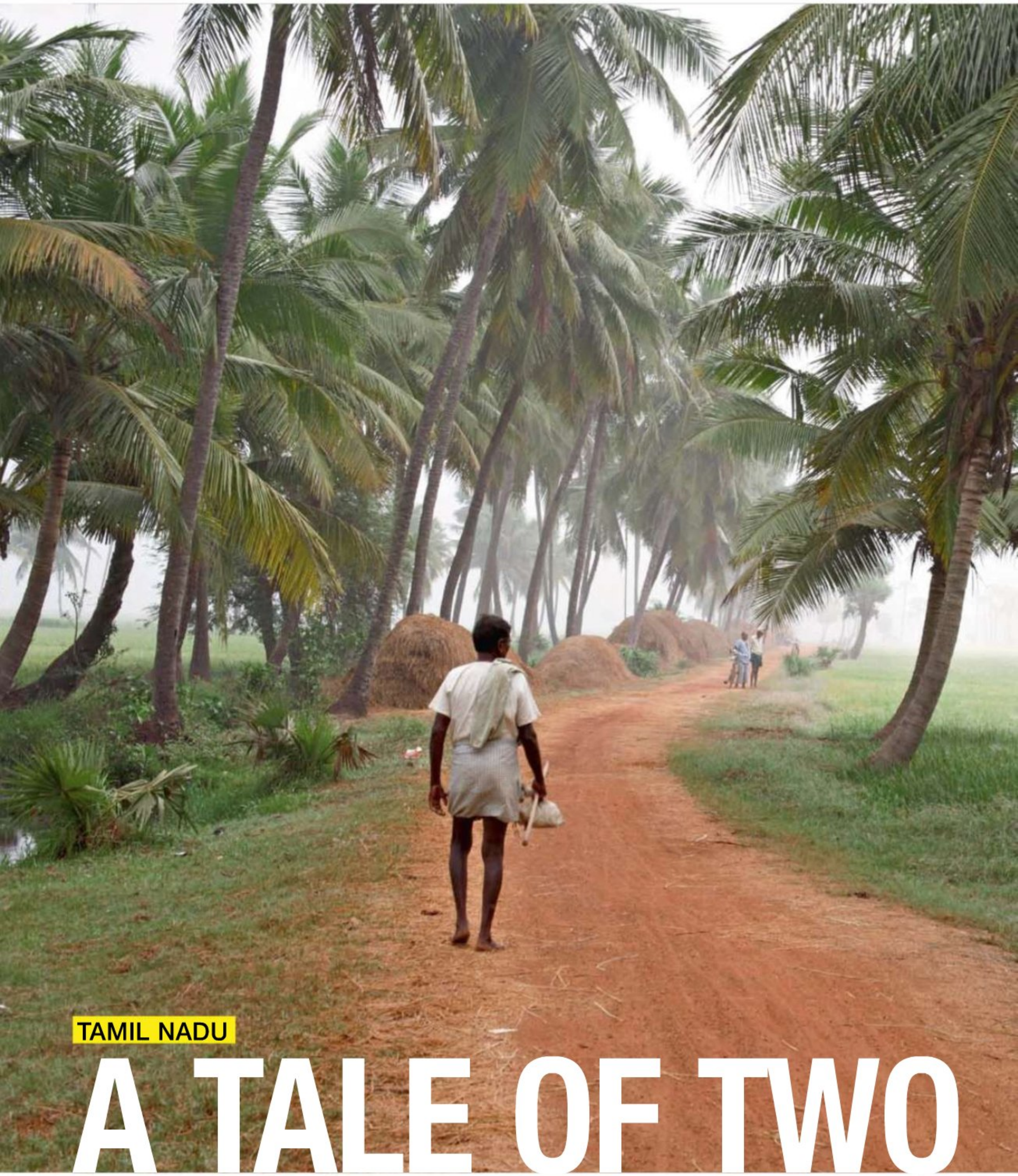
After a blow dry, or perhaps a shave, at **Spoiled** at Kerobokan (book ahead), you are now prepped for the evening. Wine, dine and shop at the French food extraordinaire **Metis**, which comes attached to a divine boutique that sells intricate mother of pearl and silver hair accessories. I still wear mine. If you are looking to encapsulate your Bali moment, try the Pesta Lobster at the Ayana Resort in Jimbaran. Tucked away in their private jetty is your one table restaurant overlooking Jimbaran bay with your own personalised framed lobster menu and *rinkik* orchestra. This is the moment solitaires were made for.

If you're ready to mingle and show off that rock, head back into Seminyak and pull into **The Potato Head Beach Club** and join revellers who've been sipping bellini's and having the perfect sundown. If you're less Pucci and more Picasso, there are many art and antique emporiums like Horn Emporium and Aulia in Kerkoban, Stephanie Sensey and Icon Asian Arts in Seminyak but my favourites is **Bali Gucci** at Jalan Raya Basangkasa, which stocks an eclectic mix of antiques.

If you've been everywhere and done all of that, just one phone call to Diana von Cranach at wellkeptsecrets.com will guide you to hidden beaches and whispered experiences that will have the most cynical globetrotter saying, there's *something* about Bali.

Keep In Mind

- ✓ Though Bali gets pretty busy in December, remember that October-March is the wet season. August is when all of Europe comes to play.
- ✓ Most shops are closed on Sunday during off season. So if there's somewhere you want to go especially, call in advance.
- ✓ Hire a car and a driver: It's cheap and you're cheerful. Remember that they overestimate the travel time of most places. One hour often means twenty minutes.
- ✓ Small warungs and cafés are cash only and make sure you ask them how much that tasty looking crab weighs when you pick it from the tank.
- ✓ Avoid vendors and touts that walk up to you selling handicrafts. We are now stuck with a totem pole carved by a five-year old.



TAMIL NADU

A TALE OF TWO

DINODIA PHOTO LIBRARY

With forests, mountains, friendly people, and a brand new resort, Pollachi, nestling between Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is a real discovery and makes for a different holiday option. BY KALYANI PRASHER

AS YOU TRAVEL more and more within India, two things become clear. One: it's difficult to imagine that you are travelling through one single country. What is common between, say, Itanagar and Pollachi? Or forget Itanagar, what is common between Delhi and Pollachi? As I land in Coimbatore and take the road through lush coconut farms to the Great Mount Resort Coco Lagoon in Pollachi, I make, as I have done before, comparisons between my home, the capital, and the city I am visiting—and, once again, come up with nothing. Perhaps the only thing that binds us as a country is our inability to follow traffic rules. In the two hours between Coimbatore and GMR, many cars come the wrong way and trucks whistle past us at suicidal speeds.

The other thing that is clear is how farcical state boundaries can be. Pollachi could well be Kerala, with slim roads snaking past fields lined with coconut trees. Fresh coconut water is available more widely than air. The only thing that reminds me that I am in Tamil Nadu is the 'Only Filter Coffee' signage now and then. I stop at a stall near the resort and have some sweet and strong refreshing coffee. It's cool, there's greenery around and someone's offering me filter coffee and *dal vadas.* My holiday has begun even before I reach the hotel.

Great Mount Resort in Pollachi is the first ever hotel by the group and opens up a whole new tourist circuit that was before this only available to backpackers and those with a more adventurous spirit. For a first resort, it is pretty impressive. Beautiful cottage-style rooms surrounded by manicured gardens, punctuated with drift wood furniture, gives the whole resort a rather appealing look. The room is spacious with a sit-out looking out to a waterbody; it is spanking new and so clean that I can walk around barefoot without worrying about my feet. The journey from Delhi—three hours by flight and two hours by road—means you only get to the hotel after darkness falls, so the first night all I do is eat.

Dinner is, surprisingly, Chinese. I am a bit disappointed as I was looking forward to Chettinad food and perhaps something more local. Dinesh at the restaurant is friendly and I put forward my request. He promises me local food next day, something called Kongu cuisine, and I happily start at my mint soup. (Not really Chinese food, but actually quite good!)

The entire staff is as enthusiastic as you would expect

Coconut tree lined roads lead to your destination in Pollachi

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a new resort's staff to be and it is rather nice to see all the good cheer and happy faces around.

I wake up before the birds. It's 4.58 a.m. and I am already sitting outside the reception, waiting to leave the hotel for my jungle safari. I look up to see a sky shockingly full of stars—I have only seen such a sky in the mountains and am quite surprised to see the spread of stars at this time in the plains. A strong wind blows across the coconut trees that line the hotel—it is so noisy that it sounds like cars are going by. But nothing is. All is still, except the wind. It is cool and damp. I could have sworn it will rain if not for the stars.

Then a car does come. We are off to Topslip, a vantage point in the nearby forest. Except when we reach at 6 a.m. we find that the gates to the forest do not open till 7. Someone wisely suggests breakfast and the GMR staff dishes out fluffy *idlis* and yum tomato chutney. They even have *paranthas* but I stick to the fresh and light *idlis.* You can tell the north Indians from the south Indians in the group that has come for this journey by what they are eating—yes, the south Indians attack the *paranthas*.

The gates finally open and we start our journey; it is another 10 km to the forest but then there is a change of plan. We don't want vantage point. We want jungle safari. We always thought we were out for a safari, not a drive to a point with a view. Confusion ensues, sorted after a brief halt, and we are off to the safari instead. The park's name is Parambikulam and we are to drive on, on the same road, for some half hour more to reach there.

As if to prove my point about geographical boundaries, half an hour later we find ourselves in Pallakad. Yes, Parambikulam is in Kerala, the entry from TN is managed by TN government but we are definitely in Kerala. We are

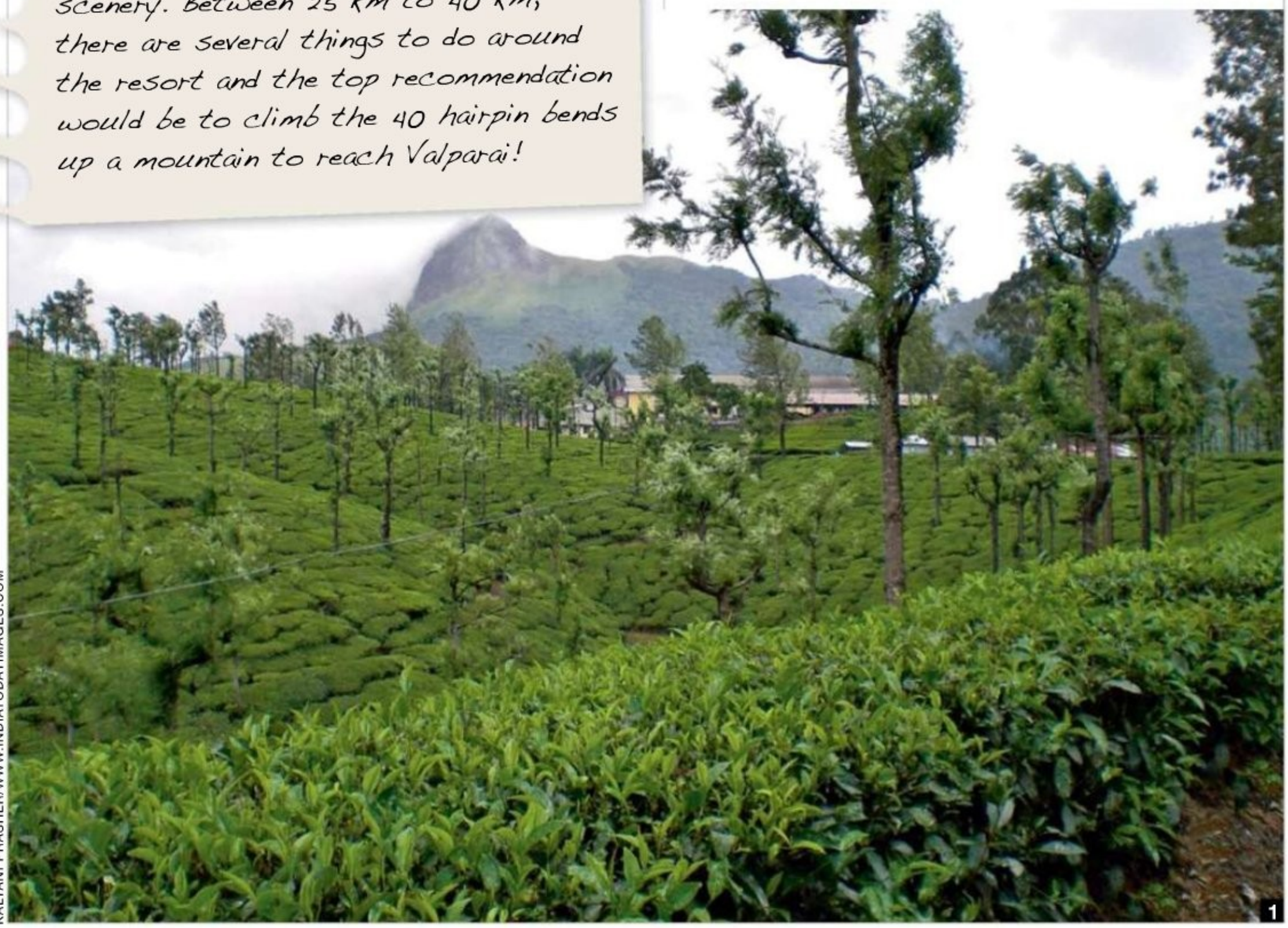
HOTDEAL

WEEKEND PACKAGE
₹12,100 for two in Deluxe Suite for two nights. Includes stay, breakfast, dinner, and discounts on food and laundry

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Opt to stay for longer at GMR or, for a more local experience, go for a homestay in the nearby villages and see more of the local sights and scenery. Between 25 km to 40 km, there are several things to do around the resort and the top recommendation would be to climb the 40 hairpin bends up a mountain to reach Valparai!

1. The impossible greenery of the tea gardens, 40 km away from Pollachi, are made prettier by an overcast sky 2. The design and architecture of GMR is green and appealing



KALYANI PRASHER/WWW.INDIATODAYIMAGES.COM

2

KALYANI PRASHER

even greeted by a 'Welcome to Kerala' signboard! The safari turns out to be a bit of a joke, as we get into a bus instead of a jeep—apparently the government fears that a bison will make lunch of us—and the bus rattles noisily through the jungle for three hours. We are making such a racket that no respectable animal would stay in its place and give us a sighting. On top of that we fairly race through the jungle; clearly, the driver had more things to accomplish within the day.

The teak forest is still beautiful and how I wish I knew that we could have trekked inside instead of getting onto that torture vehicle that shook my bones like one of those weightloss machines of yore. We come away having spotted a giant squirrel and having a good laugh about the whole thing. For your journey into Parambikulam, make sure you ask GMR for a trekking guide and do not, take my word for it, get into this bus.

The comfort of GMR restored me somewhat and I headed to the spa for additional comfort. Blessy, the widely-smiling gleeful masseuse, is not the best I have experienced but she applies oil with earnestness and after a hot shower I am back to cheerful spirit. And some local food! I couldn't make out Kongu cuisine from Chettinad but I had some delicious fish fry with *kadi patta* and a great local version of the *biryani.* Dessert was in a glass—a light *payasam* that is made with tender coconut cream and milkmade! I paused at that, had two satisfying sips and a long restful sleep.

Next time, I told myself, I must return to Great Mount Resort Pollachi for a longer trip. There has to be a next time. There was much more to explore in this region—a friend had suggested Valparai, about 40 km from Pollachi, another had suggested Palani, a small place nearby linked to mythology; there was an ashram for those who are inclined to yoga and meditation and, of course, one could always go back to Kerala.

At a Glance

GETTING THERE

Fly to Coimbatore and take a car to the resort. Approx two hours by road.

WHEN TO GO

You can head to Pollachi any time of the year, because of the proximity to the hills the weather is always nice.

STAY Great Mount Resort Coco Lagoon, Pollachi; tel: (04259) 253 405; http://greatmountresort.com/

EAT Ask for Kongu cuisine at the hotel, and stop for *vadas* and filter coffee at roadside stalls.

SHOP Buy *Mysore pak* and coffee powder; or tea from the gardens nearby.

SEE Aaliyar Dam, a 25 km scenic drive away from GMR.

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WEST BENGAL

STAYING WITH *heritage*

Away from the chaos of Kolkata is Khanyan, in West Bengal's countryside, where a homestay provides you an unmatched glimpse into the rich past of the zamindars.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIVYA DUGAR

SITTING ON A cushioned armchair, which might have cradled many thoughts and ideas over the years, I felt I have entered a space that is timeless. The heat of the day gave way to gentle breeze and the shifting light of the evening with constant chime of bells drifting from the thakurdalan roused me from my reverie. Welcome to the forgotten world of Rajbaris.

Constructed in 1766 by Safallya Narayan Kundu, Itachuna Rajbari, my home for next two nights is located at Itachuna, near Khanyan. For the family of Kundu, who were previously known as Kundans, belong to a Maratha warrior groups called 'bargis' who settled in Bengal from 1741, this sprawling brick red coloured mansion was a symbol of their wealth and glory.

I took a local train from Howrah station to reach Khanyan. Blink an eye and one can easily miss this tiny station. The fresh air of a small town and an empty platform that stretched out languidly overwhelmed me. A bumpy 10-minute auto rickshaw ride past fields of rice dropped me to my destination, a sprawling mansion with a distinctively European atmosphere perched amidst a small village.

I stood at the palatial entrance, trying to imagine what it must have been like a few hundred years ago and a profusion of pictures played through my mind. An ageing caretaker greeted me and guided me towards a small room, which was once used as an office by the East India Company but now acts as a reception.

I have lived most of my life in Kolkata, surrounded by majestic architecture, though at various stages of ruin, and I always wondered what it would be like to live and breathe among the ageing walls dripping with history and stories of the Bengal's erstwhile merchant princes and landlords, which are mostly forgotten.

Rajbari at Itachuna, which literally means brick and lime mansion, is a 'teen-mahal' rajbari, out of which most impressive and awe inspiring is the middle part, which houses a thakurdalan, with a beautiful temple occupied by an idol of the family deity of Narayan. The courtyard leading to the temple flaunts a mix of indigenous and gothic architecture complete with iron wrought lamps. Most of my evenings were spend walking through the delicately lit corridors or taking photographs from the terrace, which gives a good overview of the grandeur of this lovely palace.

Stepping inside the inner courtyard, the place starts to breathe a life, the lower part houses a restaurant which only churns out home cooked Bengali meals, a maze of stairs takes one to first level where most of the guest rooms are located, some come with airy verandas held by columns and lined with colonial furniture. It is impossible to map the size of the house, it holds anywhere from 50 to 70 rooms, though most are not in use. My room on the first floor came with a huge four-poster bed and there's a cosy window seat with has a direct access to corridor perfect for reading or lounging.

The grand Raj-era building is unimaginably sprawling, with over 50 rooms and several haunting corridors to explore

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Ask the staff to show one around; as it is fairly easy to get lost in the maze of corridors plastered with old back and white family pictures. One must visit the baithakkhana, or the living room, though in dire need of restoration, it does gives one a glimpse of life back then, spacious high ceiling room complete with a chandelier and crumbling teak wood furniture. This grand rajbari is also where period flick Lootera was shot and the staff will smilingly show you all the spots where the movie was shot.

Just opposite the rajbari stands an abandoned lone temple with bleached red walls housing an elegant life-like statue of Shiva inside a round chamber. The outside walls of the temple are plastered with moss and creepers after the monsoon, lending the place a mysterious feel. Just as I was entering the ruins, a passerby hissed in a low voice, "No one has ever worshipped in this temple, though it belongs to Kundu family." Curious, I probed further with an ageing caretaker of the house—according to him the women of the family refuse to pray at temple due to an unknown superstitious occurrence on the day of temple inauguration…

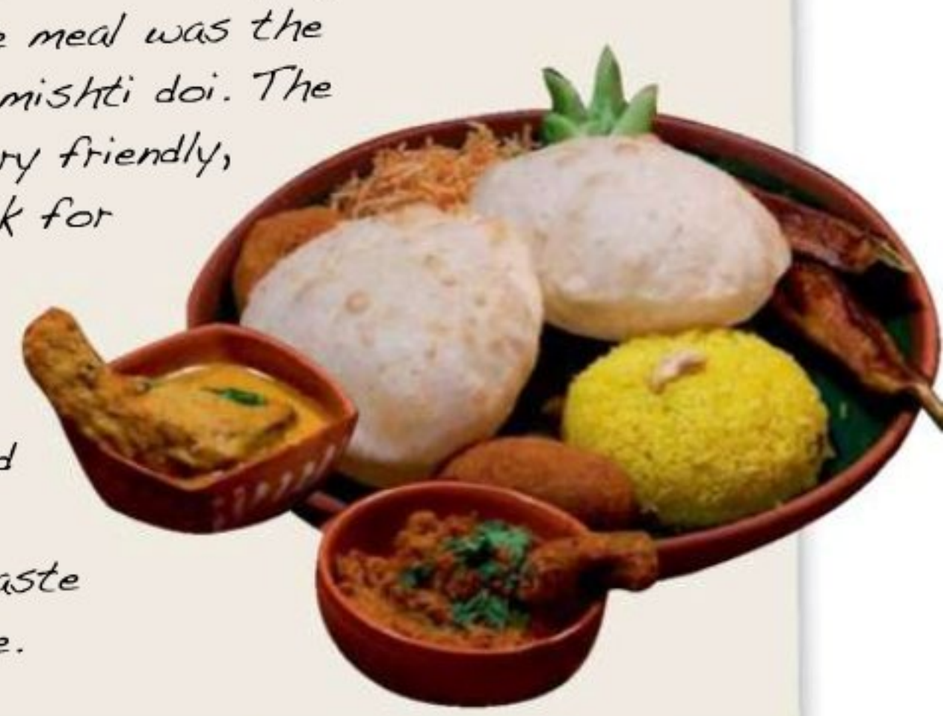
There is not much to do in the village around, if you love nature, take a walk for a rare opportunity to see rural life, as the rajbari is surrounded by paddy fields dotted with mud plastered houses and small lakes. One can also borrow the hotel bikes and cycle through the fields and village around.

For history seekers, the place is a goldmine and one is spoilt for choice. Next morning after a hearty breakfast of luchi, aloo bhaja and simmering sweet tea, we drove to the old French colony of Chandannagar, a quaint little town perched on the river Hoogly. Complete with boulevards, bakery and mansions, Chandannagar is quite the heritage buildings and the church are perched. One can also include a visit to the historical Bandel Church built by Portuguese as well as imposing Imambara in their itinerary.

Don't go to Itachuna for luxury or frills of a heritage hotel, just go for the history, architectural grandeur of a mansion lost in the folds of time, which is a standing testament to the power that landed gentry enjoyed back in time. It indeed is a perfect antidote to chaotic city life.

HOME FOOD

Itachuna Rajbari churns out some simple yet delicious Bengali culinary delights. I pre-ordered a vegetarian meal—I was served some aloo posto, patol bhaja, begun bhaja, cauliflower gravy, dal with a hint of sweetness and big pile of rice accompanied by a sweet and sour chutney. Non-vegetarians have no reason to be disheartened, as there is ample of maach and mutton dishes to gorge on. The best part of the meal was the homemade mishti doi. The staff is very friendly, one can ask for a special Bengali dish to be prepared according to their taste and choice.



1. The grand courtyard is the centre of all activity at Itachuna Rajbari 2. The old world living room is dilapidated but full of atmosphere 3. Rooms have charming four-poster beds 4. The resident priest goes about daily rituals at the in-house temple

At a Glance

GETTING THERE

Easily accessible by both train and car, Itachuna Rajbari is located at a distance of 80 km from Kolkata. It falls in Hooghly district and it takes approximately two and a half hours to reach Itachuna by road. It is best to leave early to beat the city traffic at Kolkata.

If one prefers to take a train, then get on any local Burdwan bound train, and get down at Khanyan station, which takes approximately an hour and a half.

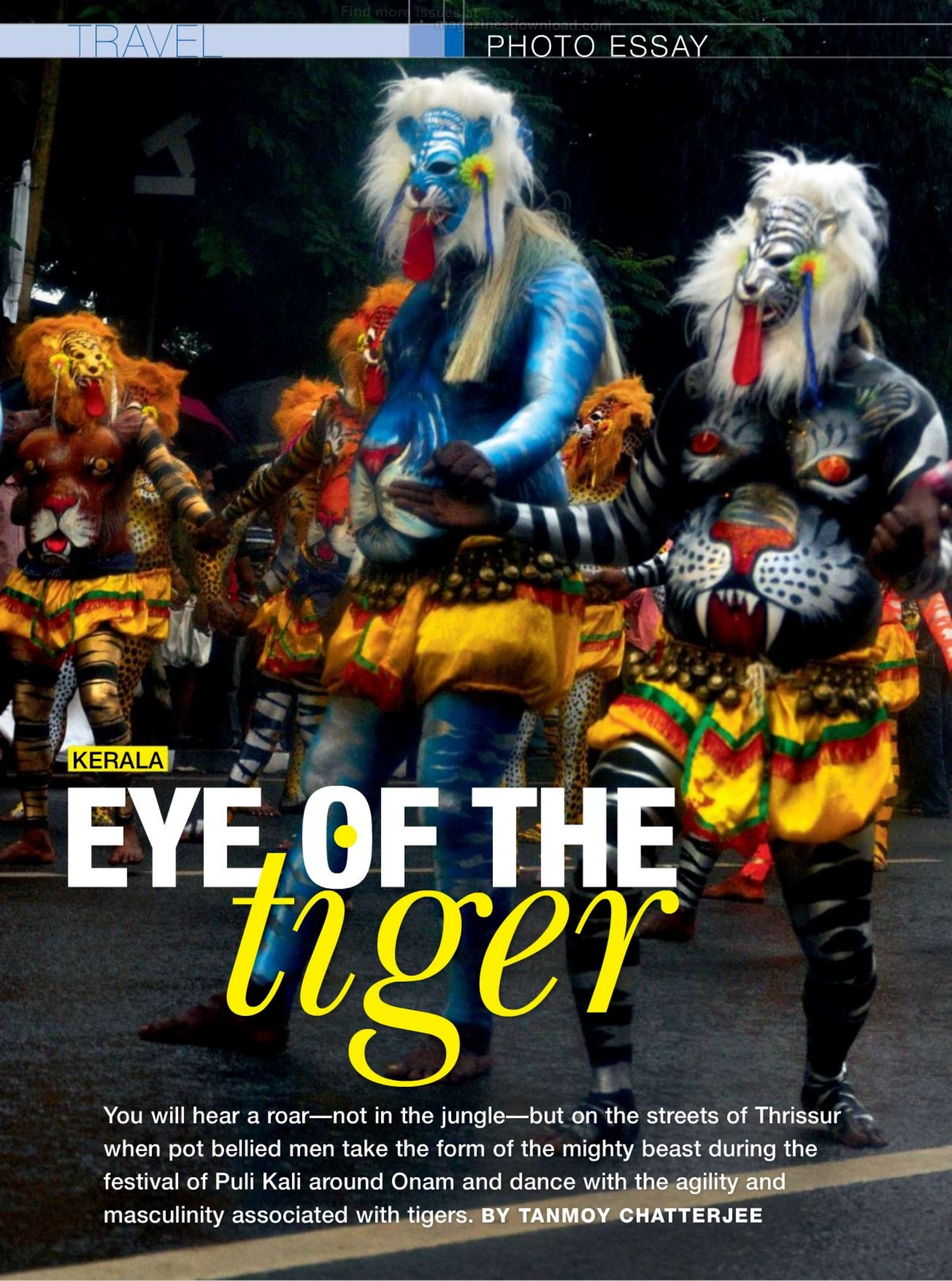
CONTACT

Itachuna Rajbari currently offers 11 rooms to guests. The tariff ranges from ₹1,000 to ₹6,000 and most of the rooms have air conditioning.

Tel: (0) 98301 42389; www.itachunarajbari.com

SEE The town of Bandel is located at a distance of 19 km from Itachuna; it takes about half an hour by car. Itachuna Rajbari can also arrange for a day visit to nearby attractions at a cost of ₹2,000 to ₹3,500.

TIP It is better to pre-order meals if one is travelling with family—be prepared for completely simple fare.

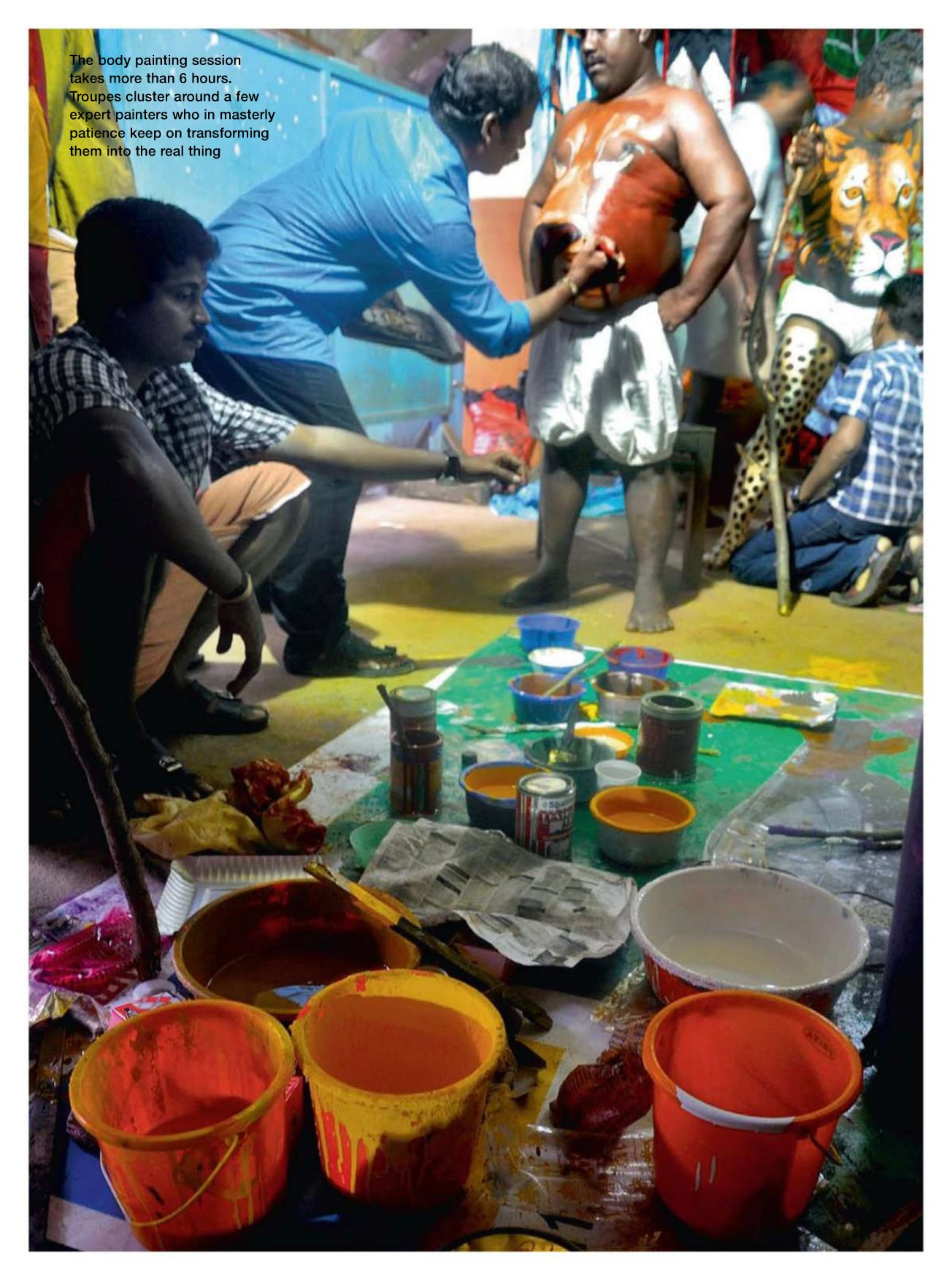


KERALA

EYE OF THE *tiger*

You will hear a roar—not in the jungle—but on the streets of Thrissur when pot bellied men take the form of the mighty beast during the festival of Puli Kali around Onam and dance with the agility and masculinity associated with tigers. **BY TANMOY CHATTERJEE**

1. To produce brilliant and striking shades only natural dyes are used in body painting 2. A Puli Kali dancer midway into his transformation. Somewhat surrealistically, the pot belly is given the look of a grimacing tiger



The body painting session takes more than 6 hours. Troupes cluster around a few expert painters who in masterly patience keep on transforming them into the real thing

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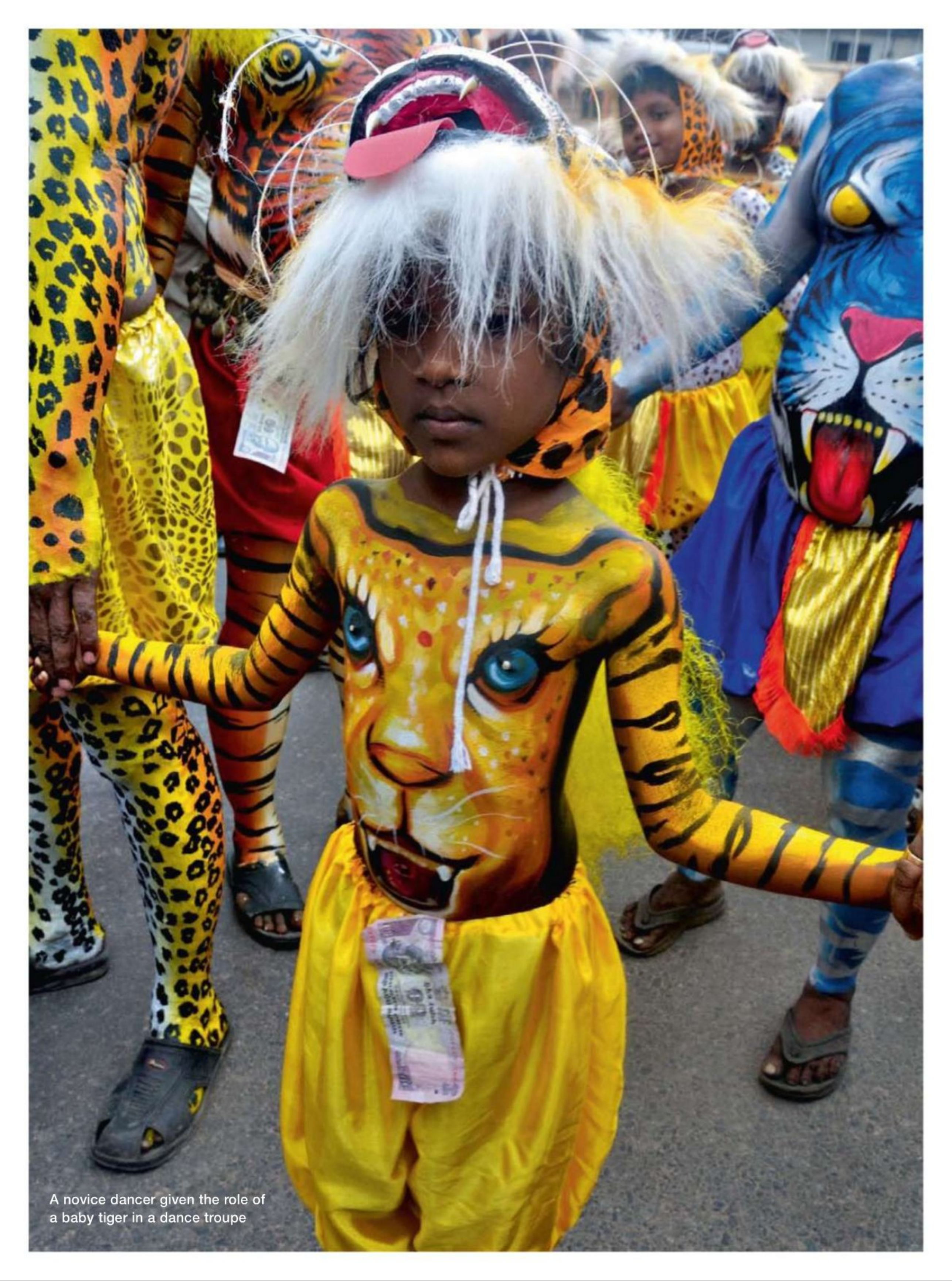
1. Tiger masks are now being used for making up the face. Earlier even the face was finely painted. 2. The tigers dance to the beat of drums known as Udukku



A novice dancer given the role of a baby tiger in a dance troupe

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Festival

Festival of Caribbean rum

Food and wine festivals are not exactly a novelty. Here, then, is a gourmet event devoted to rum as well. The Barbados Food, Wine and Rum Festival runs from November 22 to 25 and promises four sun-drenched days dedicated to one of the islands' most famous products. Guests get to indulge in fine rums, attend tasting sessions and take classes in making classic and innovative rum cocktails. Top chefs from the region will be serving up their signature specials, making for a spectacular food and rum experience in one of the world's most beautiful places. The Caribbean vibe adds to the fun. www.foodwinerum.com

BARBADOS TOURISM

Wine show in London

It's billed as Europe's finest wine show. On November 16 and 17, over 100 top wineries will be present at the Decanter Fine Wine Encounter at London's Landmark hotel, hosting extensive tasting sessions and giving connoisseurs insights into their best vintages. There'll be wines from France, Italy, Germany and the Southern Hemisphere. The in-demand master classes this year are by big names such as Taittinger and Chateau La Fleur-Petrus. www.decanter.com

Festival

Michelin stars collect in Portugal

60 Michelin stars—that's how many culinary decorations the chefs at the International Gourmet Festival being held at Algarve, Portugal, from November 7 to 17, have between them. They represent an eclectic mix of contemporary tastes from all around the world. Tsuyoshi Murakami from Brazil, Andreas Caminada from Switzerland, Quique Dacosta and Joan Roca from Spain, are among the 37 master chefs who will be presenting dynamic gourmet innovations at the festival. www.internationalgourmetfestival.com

Celebration

British Sausage Week

From November 4 to 10 this year, it's an annual celebration of the taste, quality and diversity of the traditional pork sausage that's the star of the big British breakfast fry-up. The sausages being celebrated aren't the pale imitations you find in the supermarket, but fresh products—using top quality meats and flavoured with an array of condiments, herbs and spices. There are awards for the best sausage makers, sausage-centric meals and other promos across the country. So, if sausages get you sizzling, then you should aim to be in the UK during Sausage Week and enjoy the meaty offerings. www.lovepork.co.uk

Shopping

Nuremberg Christmas market

Germany's Christmas markets are famous the world over and Nuremberg's is widely recognised as the very best. It opens nearly a month before Christmas, on November 29. Stroll about, taking in the aromas of mulled wine and roasting chestnuts. Eat your fill of gingerbread and German bratwurst. The stalls burst with Christmas goodies. Much of it is local and hand-crafted for mass-produced goods are frowned upon here. www.christkindlesmarket.en

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FOR MANAGING TOMORROW

NEW DELHI

KYLIN PREMIER & SKY BAR

T-302, 3rd Floor, Ambience Mall, Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj

Cusine: Chinese, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Oriental, Lounge
Price: Meal for two ₹3,000 (without alcohol)
Bar License: Yes

REVIEW

So, we have a booking at Kylin Premier, and since they have a special menu happening, our table is held at their Teppanyaki Grill. The Oriental interiors are pleasing enough but my irrepressible friend throws a fit and drags me up to the terrace. "You haven't done the Sky Bar?!"

I am glad I gave in, even though we threw the management into a bit of tizzy. The Sky Bar is beautiful; the German coolers kept the muggy weather somewhat in control and the place was packed and full of vibrant energy. We park ourselves at the bar as we await a table.

Since fine dining inside malls is not exactly a favourite with me I had walked into this Oriental restaurant a bit of a skeptic. But, by the time we were on to our second spicy, tangy special basil martini, I was already sold. Crunchy yasai roll with pickled radish, green apple, cucumber, chilli mayo with tempura flakes topping and Vietnamese chilli fish keep the martinis' some excellent company, as the al fresco environment around us turns up the party quotient.

Owner Saurabh Khanijo, who has in his kitty the popular Kylin and Sartoria in Vasant Vihar and the erstwhile Poison Ivy in New Friends Colony, is around, friendly and very wonderfully accommodating. Since he cannot dislodge any of his guests to accommodate Very Truly Yours, he shuffles around the space to set up a completely new table for us!

It turns into a glorious night. Platter full of food from the grill: pork chops, lobster and sea basa, a fish that is topping the menu cards in India but which most aficionados wrinkle their nose at… we order simply because we cannot handle all the bones otherwise! The lobster comes a bit dry and chewy but the rest are charred to perfection.

We also try a few picks from their prized Oriental menu. Malaysian chilli sambal prawns (semi dry), hot basil chicken lettuce cup, braised bok choy, bamboo shoot, water chestnuts in light soya sauce and some sliced chicken in grainy mustard sauce with broccoli. Most starters are priced around ₹400. The main courses between ₹500-700 and desserts at ₹225.

Saurabh is a foodie and says the absolute craving for authentic good food got him into the business. He is now taking Kylin to Chandigarh.

The sushi menu at Kylin is vast and versatile. They have the famed Japanese whiskey Suntory Hibiki on the bar. Get some with the yuzu miso scallops, kick back the stress and have a fabulous evening!

—RITU AGARWAL ROHATGI

The USP of Kylin Premier is the Sky Bar

MUMBAI

PING PONG

First International Finance Centre, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai; Tel: (022) 6741 3333

Cuisine: Fashioned around the concept of a modern, casual dim sum kitchen
Cost: ₹2,500-3,500 for two (without alcohol)
Reservation: Recommended

REVIEW

While a string of London-based gourmet restaurants have set up successful outposts in Mumbai, it must also be said that upscale dim sum kitchens seem to have become something of a trend in the city. Ping Pong, the newest entrant into the list of Mumbai's 'international' restaurants attempts to recreate the culinary wizardry of its much-lauded kitchens in London and Dubai. The casual, vibrant and buzzing ambience of the eatery is what sets it apart.

MUST TRY chive, prawn dumpling

The easy, interactive menu showcases mainly dim sums—fried, griddled, baked and steamed—complemented by salads, vegetables and a small selection of rice and noodles. Among the dim sums, we were most impressed by the delicate textures and aromas of the coriander and prawn dumpling and the chive and prawn dumpling, while the sweet and salty steamed chicken bun was flavoured to perfection. A special mention to the baked hoisin vegetable puff, which was a delightful mélange of crispy filo pastry and the soft veggie filling. The steamed edamame beans left us completely unimpressed as they were too simple and required far too much effort to shell and eat. Service was prompt and friendly, and the staff was well-versed with the products and ingredients on offer, which is a big plus, in my opinion.

—RIAAN J. GEORGE

GERMANY

AUERBACH'S KELLER

Madler Passage Grimmaische Strasse 2-4 D-04109 Leipzig; tel: + 49 341 216100

Cuisine: Traditional Saxon food with a modern twist
Cost: 2-course menu starts from €20

REVIEW

Old world charm and history come tumbling in droves at Auerbach's Keller. Located in the basement of the hip and happening Madler's Passage, the restaurant is a series of low-ceilinged rooms with wooden décor, floor and furniture. The food is largely traditional with touches of the contemporary, the restaurant is supremely proud of its history. It has a continuous history of over 400 years and is considered to be among the oldest in this part of Germany. It was here that Goethe was inspired to write his masterpiece *Faustus.* More interestingly, it was a surreptitious watering hole for Bach, Mendelssohn, Schiller and Wagner, and a regular haunt for Martin Luther.

So settle in with such august company and try some of the restaurant's mainstay dishes. Start with a hearty potato and leek soup, which comes loaded with cheese and is a full meal in itself. Go on to try the Black Angus steak, the local specialty Jungbullen steak, home braised meat with cabbage and potato dumplings, Fried chicken breast or beef roulade, and end with traditional Saxon desserts such as Leipziger Quarkkaulchen (hung curd cheese dessert) or the Leipziger Lerche (pastry parcels filled with almonds, nuts and cherries).

—ANITA RAO KASHI

AUSTRALIA

GAZI

2 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: +61 (3) 9207 74444

Cuisine: A low key Greek food eatery
Cost: approx AUD 120 for two
Reservations: Required

REVIEW

Gazi housed in a beautiful heritage building in Melbourne, serves up authentically good Greek fare. Open since the summer this year, this grill room is the brain child of Chef George Columbaris of Master Chef fame; a Greek by descent which is a nice blend to start with.

With over 30 items on the menu, even the choice of mezedes or starters is a difficult one. They include a dazzling array of bite-size items from marinated olives, taramosalata with prawn crackers to sword fish from the wood fired grill. Moussaka,

literally the Greek national dish, reaches perfection in the hands of George. If you like lamb's brains you would love it here, as it is captured in a golden crumb crust with pickled grapes bringing a sweet acid kick towards the end.

I opt for the ten course sharing menu 'Doing it Greek style', which is superlative. It starts with dips and golden slabs of fried saganaki to lamb ribs with trimmings and more as per your preference. The souvlaki here is a winner, a cushiony flatbread enveloping juicy charred chicken, with plenty of mustard and mayo, wisps of red onion, parsley, and a bundle of salty French fries…decadent to the core!

—RUPALI DEAN

SPIRITED TRAVELLER
SOURISH BHATTACHARYYA

TRIPLE MALT, TRIPLE CASK... TRIPLE JOY?

AFTER DELHI Gourmet Club's dinner with John Walker & Sons Odyssey at The Chambers, the members-only lounge at the Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi, my description of the drink as a 'triple malt' set off a debate on the group's Facebook page. How can you have a 'triple malt', when, by definition, any Scotch with more than one single malt is a blended whisky?

I could only say in my defence then that three is still a special number, compared with the 42 malts that go into a regular Johnnie Walker blend, which may be why a bottle of Odyssey retails at US $990 (₹63,000 approx) at Delhi Duty Free. What makes it even more special is that of the three very rare single malts, whose identities are not revealed, one is from the stock of a distillery that no longer is operational.

The single malts were married in European oak casks to produce just 5,000 cases (or 60,000 bottles, each with 700ml of the whisky in it), which were released last year to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Sir Alexander Walker's creation, the 'swing' bottle, which was special because it didn't topple over even on choppy seas, making it the favourite of the travelling elite of his time. The crystal-grade glass decanter housing the Odyssey is a work of art in itself, much like the super smooth 'Rare Triple Malt' created by Master Blender Jim Beveridge from Sir Alexander's handwritten notes. When nudged, the bottle swings to and fro, eventually rotating a full 360 degrees, without once compromising on its innate elegance. The Balvenie Triple Cask, which has also been introduced at the Delhi Duty Free and is a fraction of what the Odyssey costs, marries three expressions of a single malt matured in three kinds of wood—'traditional refill casks' to mature and mellow the spirit, but not dominate its flavour; 'first-fill ex-Bourbon barrels', which add vanilla and coconut to the flavour; and 'first-fill Oloroso sherry butts', which typically impart rich dried fruits and spice to the spirit.

TIP OF THE MONTH

BUYING duty-free today is all about coming home with something memorable. Good old Red Label has lost what seemed to be its deathless charm. For today's traveller, it seems so yesterday, so out of sync with the changing tastes of outwardly mobile traveller. Booze-makers have been quick to catch up with this tectonic shift in consumer preferences. Airport shopping is no longer about going home with the predictable. Sensing this change, Diageo has released the limited Blue Label City Edition, whose bottles have engravings inspired by the skyline of one of seven cities—Singapore, Hong Kong, Mumbai, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Auckland.

EACH CASK HAS A STORY

NOW THAT we are trawling the world of whiskies, let's also talk about Glenfiddich. William Grant & Sons, the makers of the whisky, have rolled out the Cask Collection at Heinemann and DFS duty-free shops precisely to inveigle airport shoppers looking for something different o talk about. Glenfiddich's Select Cask and Reserve Cask are already in the stores, but the third expression, the Glenfiddich Vintage Cask, will be available from early 2014. It's the taste profile of each expression that makes the three collections different from the Glenfiddich that you may have in your bar. Each Glenfiddich cask tells a different and unique story and takes you down a memorable journey.

100 YEARS

That's the number of years a closed bottle of whisky remains drinkable. Whisky, unlike wine, stops maturing in a bottle. Once opened, a half-full bottle will remain drinkable for five years.

ROYAL SALUTE FOR DIAMOND JUBILEE

SIXTY YEARS AGO, on June 2, 1953, Queen Elizabeth II succeeded her father, King George VI, to the throne of the United Kingdom. It was also the year when Chivas Brothers launched the Royal Salute to honour the newly crowned queen. To mark the Queen's diamond jubilee, this past June, the Scotch whisky company, now owned by Pernod Ricard, released a blend of its most precious aged whiskies kept in the Royal Salute vault at Strathisla, the oldest working distillery in the Scottish Highlands. None of the whiskies aging at Strathisla is less than 21 years old, which makes the Diamond Tribute special. And now, you don't have to travel to Europe or the United States to drink it. Pernod Ricard has released the whisky into the Asian travel retail market.

Sourish Bhattacharyya writes on food and drink. Mail your questions for him to editortravelplus@intoday.com

YOGEN SHAH

National award winning actress Seema Biswas is known for her performances in films such as *Bandit Queen, Khamoshi* and *Water.* She takes us down foodstreet in the Assam town of Nalbari where she was born

NALBARI delights

WITH SEEMA BISWAS

TEA AND SAMOSAS

MAHA MAYA RESTAURANT

Main Market

I used to visit this restaurant often with my classmates. The best part was that it was very calm and not noisy like restaurants of today. The tea and *samosas* there were very famous. The tea was high quality and refreshing while the *samosas* were always fresh.

RASGULLA AND IMARTI

CANTEEN

Main Market

This restaurant, opposite the Natya Mandir cinema hall, was aptly called the Canteen and was a hub for artists. My dad used to take me there and I was really fond of the *imartis* they served, which were soft and juicy and used to melt in the mouth. The *rasgullas* were yummy too that I couldn't resist having at least four to five.

ASSAMESE THALI

PAK GHAR

Near fish market

Assamese food has very little spice and I fell in love with this place for its authentic Assamese food the first time I went there. I still go there whenever I visit Nalbari. While the ambience of this restaurant is very spacious and just like a typical bamboo hut, the food is divine. The food is cooked with very little oil and the *thali* there is my favourite. It consists of *daal*, seasonal mixed vegetables, a soupy fish curry and typical Assamese chicken, mutton or pigeon cooked in local flavours.

PARANTHAS

MARUTI RESTAURANT

Palla Road

My elder sister used to take me to this restaurant and my all time favourite was the *anda parantha*, generally called Mughlai *parantha* in the north-east. I relished the *paranthas* there and they tasted different from any I have had elsewhere.

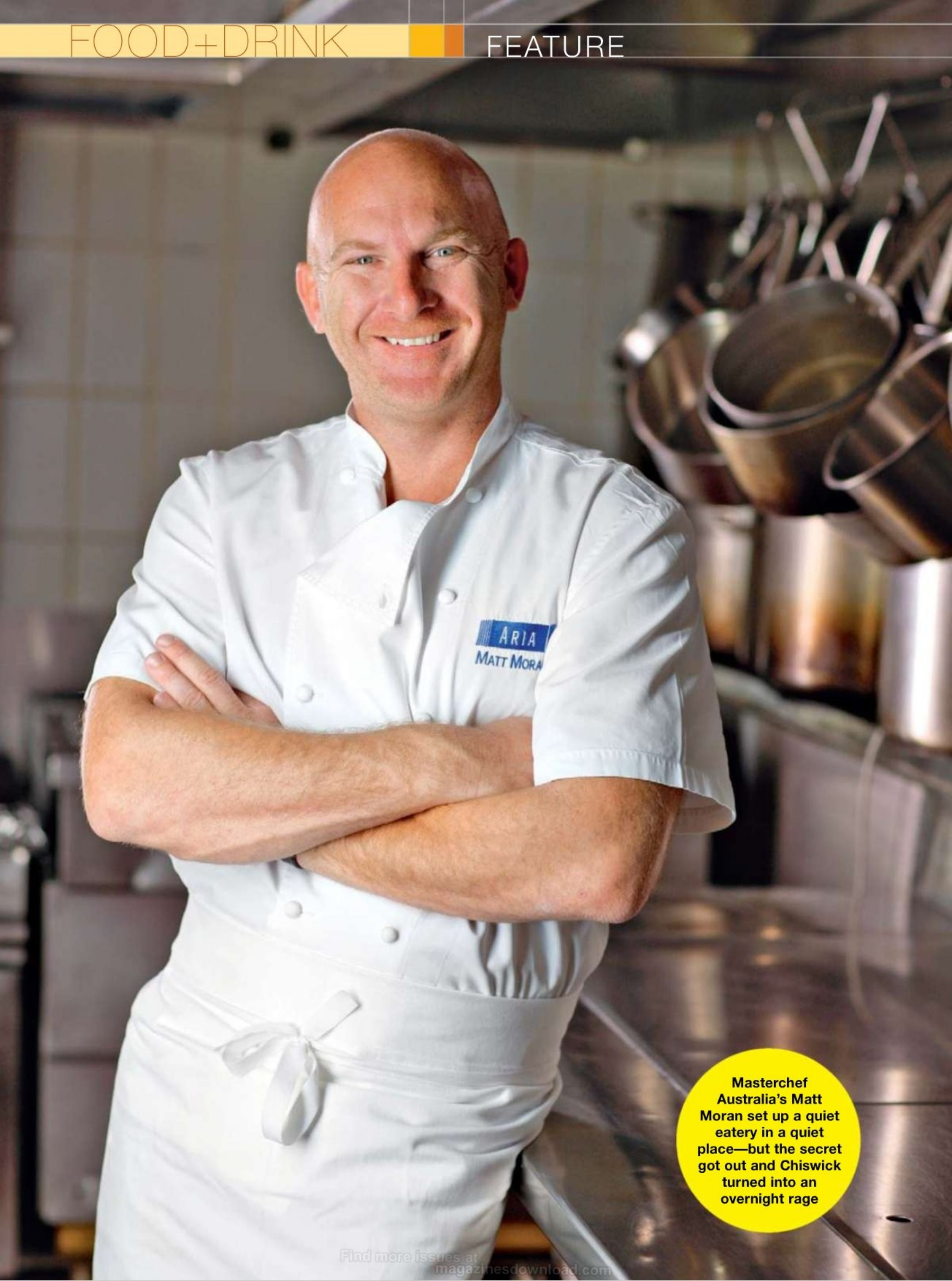
MUTTON CURRY

MARUTI RESTAURANT

Near Masjid

The mutton curry served in this popular restaurant is out of the world. It has that typical Assamese taste with very little spice and finely chopped minced meat. I used to go there with my theatre group. Apart from the great food even the service in this restaurant was really quick and efficient.

—AS TOLD TO ROBIN BANSAL



Masterchef Australia's Matt Moran set up a quiet eatery in a quiet place—but the secret got out and Chiswick turned into an overnight rage

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PLATEFUL *of style*

Great food is a given, but if you want to make your dining experience truly glamorous and stylish, then this pick of the latest international restaurants led by celebrity chefs ups the ante. **BY PRIYA BALA**

Chiswick

Australia

You've seen Matt Moran on previous seasons of Masterchef Australia, mentoring teams and conducting masterclasses. Now, you can dine at his restaurant, Chiswick, in Woollahra, not far from Sydney. Chiswick was designed as a neighbourhood restaurant, a local place to drop in for a bite or a drink at the bar. But you can't keep news about a good thing in the neighbourhood a secret forever. The word has spread, Chiswick has caught the fancy of Sydney's A-listers and that's where they are brunching these days.

This restaurant is a light-filled space with a contemporary dining room, casual bar area with a large communal table and shaded outside seating. The dishes are meant for sharing and reflect the goodness of great produce and changing seasons. The heart of Chiswick is its kitchen garden where much of the produce for the menu is grown. All of the beef and lamb at Chiswick comes from the Moran family farm and the wood-roasted lamb with chickpeas, za'atar and mint is a winner.

Where: Chiswick,65 Ocean Street, Woollahra, NSW 2025; www.chiswickrestaurant.com.au

Little Social

United Kingdom

Jason Atherton is the new rockstar of British cooking, following in the footsteps of Marco Pierre White and Gordon Ramsay, both of whom he has worked with. His Pollen Street Social won a Michelin star in quick time and earlier this year he opened the Little Social right across the street. Designed as a heady mix of classic design, with ox-blood banquettes, intimate dining booths, and antique elm tables, it has had London's hardened food critics raving ever since. Jason Atherton creations here are a nod towards some typically French plates, and bring the best British produce to the table in spectacular dishes. A slow-cooked egg with roast mushrooms and croutons is gently cloaked in a silken soup of parmesan and squash. A perfect pork chop is served with butternut squash purée, pinenut, pecorino and endive; and desserts win applause with the likes of goat's milk rice pudding with rhubarb and ginger jam and jam ripple ice-cream.
Where: 5 Pollen Street, London, W1S 1NE; www.littlesocial.co.uk

Jason Atherton

Paco Pérez

Black
The Caviar Lounge

Spain

It's billed as a clandestine spot. And, yes, Black is reached through a secret door in the bathroom of upscale burger joint La Royale in the posh part of Barcelona. Even if you discover the door, you'll need a reservation to get in. Inside, it's all dark walls, sleek fittings and reflective tables. But Black's real draw is not its style or hidden location; it's the menu by Michelin-star chef Paco Pérez. It comprises super quality raw foods, such as oysters, ceviches and delicious tartars of Angus beef or oyster to accompany the caviars. The hot dishes like steamed mussels and deer burger, besides luscious desserts have all won rave reviews. There's an excellent line-up of vodkas and champagne to wash your caviar down with. They'll serve you Beluga if you want the best.
Where: La Royale, Plaça del Camp 5; 08022 Barcelona; tel: +34 691 403 599

Duddell's

Hong Kong

Hong Kong's reputation as a gourmet destination is unassailable. Even as it is home to revered temples of gastronomy, the city has a remarkable ability to throw up new and fashionable restaurants all the time. The current newsmaker is Duddell's which opened in June 2013 atop the flagship Shanghai Tang Mansion in Central. Its vantage location is complemented by a vast tropical terrace garden. Part art gallery, part fine dining restaurant, this unique space is where Hong Kong's swish set prefers to party these days. Chef Siu Hin Chi serves up high-end Cantonese cuisine here. Star dishes on the menu include Deep Fried Bombay Duck with Spicy Salt, Braised Imperial Bird's Nest and Sauteed Pigeon Fillet with Asparagus. A line-up of exquisite dim sum and a fine selection of tea feature in the all-day Yum Cha menu. All this comes at a price. But glimpses of Hong Kong's movers are free.

Where: Duddell's, 3-4/F, Shanghai Tang Mansion, 1 Duddell Street, Central, Hong Kong; www.duddells.co

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The elegance of balance

Skoda's Octavia is back and it certainly looks good. We take it out in the Himalayan foothills to see how the car shapes up. **BY KSHITIJ SHARMA**

Engine: 2.0-litre 4-cylinder TDI
Max power: 143bhp@4,000rpm
Max torque: 320Nm@1,750rpm
Gearbox: 6-speed manual
Wheelbase (mm): 2,688mm
LxWxH (mm): 4659 x 1814 x 1476
Top Speed: NA
0-100kmph: NA

HOW DO YOU know if a car is a great one? Does it need to be fast? Or fuel efficient? Or great value for money? A good handler? It is actually a bit of all, the markings of a great car can be summed up in just one word, balance. When we first laid our eyes on the new Octavia in the pictures, there was little denying that it looked good. The simple angular lines from the dome on the bonnet to the redesigned badge and the simplicity of the design around the whole car appeared to give it an elegant yet purposeful stance. But seeing it in the metal, it looked even better.

The only thing it shares with the old car is the name. The front grille, the lines, the badge and even its dimensions are different than the old one. It is now longer and features a longer wheelbase too. All this has resulted in making the cabin roomier than ever before, you get almost superb levels of space, especially at the back. But by far the most striking feature of the car is the boot. It features a notchback style and the space is staggering. It can swallow 590 litres of luggage with the seats up and you can easily host a dinner party in there.

The cabin feels like a hotel suite. The seats are clad in ivory leather; the dash is a combination of black and ivory, which matches the colour of the seats. The entire interior just flows flawlessly and the whole dash is finished in soft-feel plastic. Park yourself on the driver seat and the interior looks rich and luxurious even on the Ambition model. Skoda has improved its safety as well. The Elegance line comes with six airbags and ABS and EBD are standard on all models. It also comes loaded with features such as two-zone climate

TOUR REPORT

There are two attributes that make the Octavia an exceptional touring car. First there's the ride quality, which is sublime, especially when the going gets rough. The Octavia has an uncanny ability to absorb all bumps and undulations without batting an eye. Then there is the boot space, at 590 litres it is the by far the biggest boot you will find and if you drop the rear seats down it can be expanded by a further 1,000 litres. Which means you can carry enough to tour the entire country in one go.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: AUTO BILD

Triumph Bonneville

IT'S OFFICIAL NOW. The iconic British motorcycle brand, Triumph, will thump its way to the Indian markets this November. It will hit the road with the Bonneville and the Bonneville Special Edition models. The Bonneville attained cult status after it broke the land speed record for two wheelers at the Bonneville Slat Flats, Utah in 1956 and was the production-based bike to beat on the racing scene right through the 1970s. It has been immortalised in several Hollywood blockbusters like *The Wild One* featuring Marlon Brando, *The Great Escape* and *Coogan Bluff*. The current generation bike is a direct descendent of the model that was completely redesigned and re-engineered in 2001. Designed as a retro classic, drawing heavily on the spirit of its heydays in the '70s, the Bonneville is a thoroughly modern bike. So much so, that it has dummy push rods and a carburettor that conceals the modern fuel injectors to maintain its classic appeal.

The Bonneville is powered by a modern 856cc air-cooled parallel twin that develops a healthy peak power of 67bhp@7,500rpm and max torque of 68Nm@5,800 rpm. This power is put down on the road with the help of a five-speed gearbox with wet multi-plate clutch. It stands at 790mm on its wheels with a seat height of 740mm and comes with a fuel tank of 16 litres. Upfront, it gets a 310mm single disc and a 255mm disc at the rear with Nissin two-piston floating callipers at both ends. The bike relies on 41mm telescopic forks with 120mm travel at the front and conventional coil over dampers with adjustable preload and 100mm travel along with tubular swingarms at the rear. It runs on 17 inch cast aluminium alloys at both ends. With a kerb weight of 225kg, the bike isn't light and claims a fuel efficiency of 18.2kmpl. The company will also introduce the Bonneville Special Edition at the same time. The special edition gets a two-tone paint job apart from minor changes to the instrument cluster. Price: ₹5.5-6 lakh approx

—KINGSHUK DUTTA

control, 12-way seat adjustment for the driver with memory function, proximity sensor for infotainment, and a lot more Start the engine and you can barely hear the 2.0-litre TDI engine. At first, I thought I was in a petrol car. Even when the revs climb, the cabin is well insulated and you just hear a grunt from the engine rather than a growl.

The six-speed manual gearbox is easy to use and the gear shifts are slick and precise, but if you don't push the throttle enough the car tends to stall. But get it moving and even in second gear it will climb an incline if you take your foot off the accelerator. The torque comes soon enough and 320Nm for the 1,500kg car feels adequate. In the hills, I barely got it over the third gear, but then you don't need to. As long as the tacho needle stays between 1500-3000 rpm you will not need to shift the gears. By far the piece de resistance is the tuned-to-perfection suspension setup on the car. There is plenty of grip from the 205/55 R16 tyres and the car feels planted at all times and yet, when you hit a bump or even a bigger pothole you won't feel a thing. The potholes will make themselves heard, but the jerk will not be transferred to you. The ride on the Octavia is simply sublime. It can virtually glide over anything.

At one point I was struggling to find faults with the car. Then I found two critical ones, the steering lacks feedback and in a car, which handles this well, it's a bit of a letdown. But the bigger problem is that it has lost a lot of its big, fun to drive notchback charm. It has become and large comfortable and rather cold, the warmth you received earlier is missing. It has everything in almost perfect balance to be a top-seller in the country, but to be a truly great car you need a dash of emotion too. Price: ₹16.55 lakh (estimated)

CLOSE UP

- The elegance line comes with six airbags
- ABS and EBD are standard on all models
- It comes with a two-zone climate control, 12-way seat adjustment for the driver with memory function and proximity sensor for infotainment

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NOKIA LUMIA 1020

Last year, Nokia's 808 mobile phone made a huge splash with its 41 MP camera. The Nokia Lumia 1020 takes that technology forward, with an improved camera that could well give it the title of having the best mobile camera in the market. Along with 32GB of memory, the device has a 1.5 GHz processor with 2 GB of RAM and runs Windows Mobile 8. The phone retails at ₹49,999 and more info is at www.nokia.co.in

PLUS PICK

GARMIN APPROACH S4

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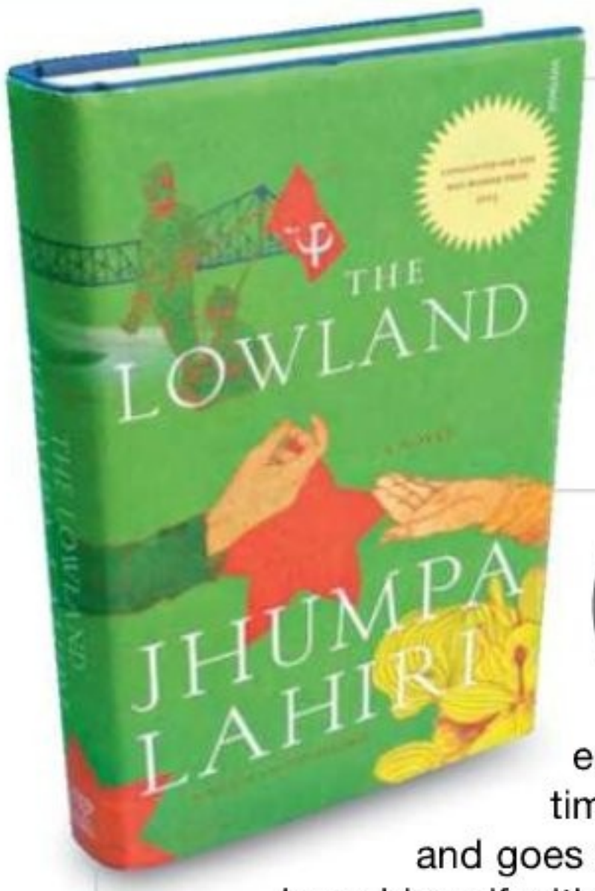


Lowland highs

Jhumpa Lahiri chronicles the story of two brothers with a sharp eye for detail and description. **BY SHAITAN SINGH**

ONE OF THE myriad drawbacks of exile—a trope that Jhumpa Lahiri returns to often enough—is that it slows down time. When a man leaves India and goes to America to do a PhD, he will busy himself with the everyday mundanities of life: he will buy textbooks, he will learn how to cook, he will find a place to live.

In other words, it takes time for things to happen. And especially in New England, where Jhumpa Lahiri tends to send her men to do their doctoral programmes. You could even say the narrative slows to a glacial pace.

Of course, it is this unhurried pace that allows Lahiri to show off her best side. An eye for detail, the prodigious amounts of research work that must have gone into explaining both Rhode Island in America and Calcutta in the 1960s, when young men and women began to believe that a violent overthrow of the government was the only way for the country to truly achieve independence.

It is an unhurried pace that allows Lahiri to show off her best side: an eye for detail and prodigious amount of research work to create the background for the story

Lahiri's third novel—she has also written a collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, for which she won the Pulitzer prize for fiction—revolves around the brothers Subhash and Udayan. Subhash is 15 months older but it is Udayan who is the "leader". You know, the type of boy you looks to jump first over a boundary wall when trespassing on private property, who finds it impossible to listen to his parents—although the quality also makes it easier to love him, rather than the older, blander version of him. And when he gets older, the type who will have a love marriage and tell his family only after the act, and also the type to embrace the doctrine of Mao and Majumdar.

Subhash, on the other hand, continues to study, leaving for America to do his PhD. He returns when Udayan is killed, and offers to marry his wife Gauri—who is pregnant—and take her back with him. Gauri, who is an orphan and not beloved by her in-laws because of the unconventional manner in which she was brought into their lives, goes along with the idea.

Like that other descendant of the subcontinent, Khaled Hosseini, who has now made America his home, Lahiri does not tell "stories" in the strictest sense of the word. What both writers do is chronicle family histories. A sort of sequencing of events over generations.

So while we are told about Subhash marrying Gauri about a third of the way into the book, the other 200-odd pages do not tell us only of what became of Subhash and Gauri but also of the other people who come to be a part of their lives.

It is obviously not a perfect history—marrying your brother's wife will have repercussions no matter how far you run. Plus, extended families very often make for jagged-edged histories. Anybody who has partaken of a Sunday lunch with more than just parents and sibling(s) will tell you as much.

But a few glasses of wine later, when the sun has lowered its stance in the sky, softening the cruder shadows it had thrown up at the beginning of the afternoon, those same people, those odds and ends, will somehow fit together to form what is called a family. Looked at with a kinder, softer eye, the same thing could be said of what happens with Subhash and Gauri.

Vintage Books, Random House India; ₹499

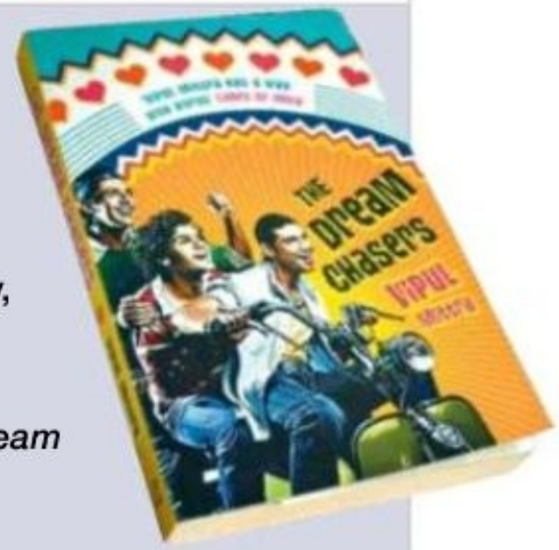
New on the shelf

THE DREAM CHASERS

This book written in an easy and flowing style by Vipul Mittra tells the story of six friends at a university pursuing MBA. Viraat, Sandy, Karan, Mallika, Vandana and Preeto are a gang who hang out together and get into trouble together. The fun in the life of the gang seems to be never ending. And when the boys are not in the classroom they're indulging in some high octane activities—from experimenting with dope, riding bikes semi-naked and even sneaking into cabarets. To add to the drama, they are all vying for the attention of the same girl—Mallika.

As their term ends, a disillusioned Viraat discovers that his gang that was once inseparable has disintegrated and his wild carefree days are now over, even as his past catches up with him. Will Viraat get past the hurdles that life poses and pave a path of his own? Will he finally get Mallika, the girl of his dreams? Most importantly, are his dreams even worth chasing? *The dream chasers* is a hysterical and candid story about fate, love and the follies of youth.

Random House India; ₹199



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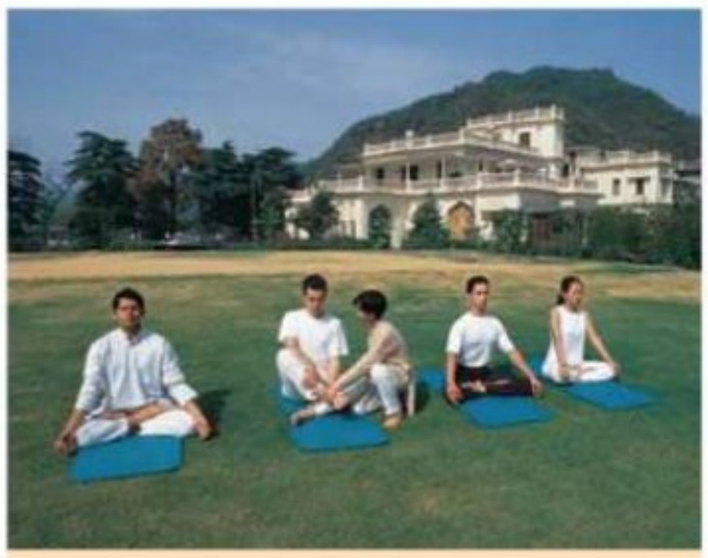

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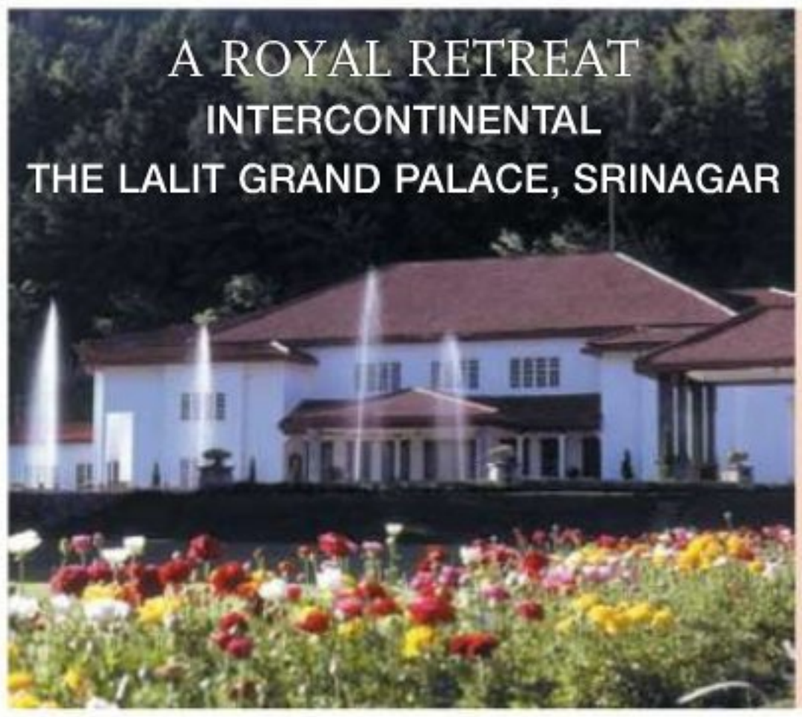

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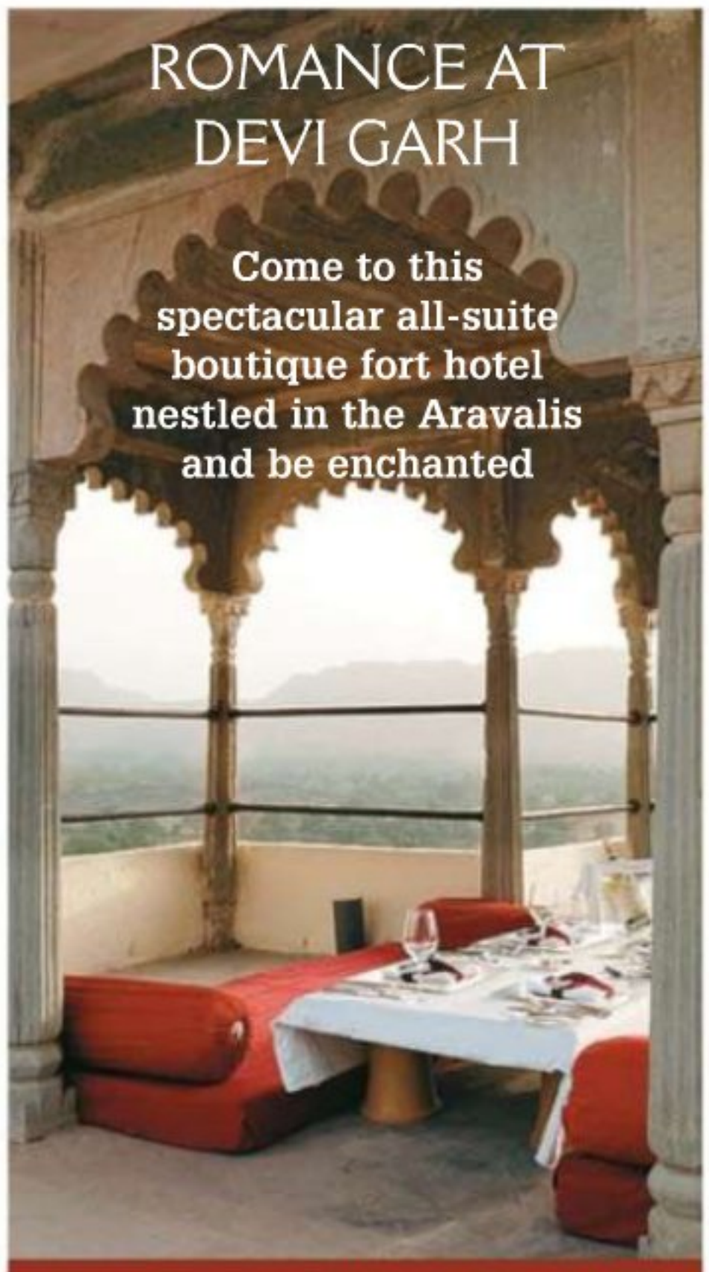

For details contact: Village Delwara, Tehsil Nathdwara, District Rajsamand, Rajasthan, India. Tel: 2953-289211
http://www.deviresorts.com

HARD KAUR

She is a British Indian rapper and hip-hop singer who has carved a niche for herself. She talks about what makes Jamaica special and why New York is the best city for musicians

YOGEN SHAH

1 Recent vacation

I recently went to Chiang Mai in Thailand and I had a really good time. I got to see the tigers and ride on an elephant. The markets in Chiang Mai are definitely worth checking out and the food was fabulous. I also got to interact with the locals and see all the sights. It was quite a unique holiday.

2 Weird conversation on a flight

Once I got into a conversation with a co-passenger on what if the plane we were in were to crash. The conversation got quite interesting with my co-passenger going into details of how these planes were good for gliding and we would land safely even if something happened.

3 Newest thing tasted

Lately I've been having a lot of French cuisine which is absolutely delicious. There's a special roast duck with potatoes that they make which is simply to die for.

4 What can't you travel without

I really can't travel without my i-pod. If there's no music I can't have any fun. And being a performer, I can't make do without music.

5 Your latest shopping acquisition

I spend a lot of money on sunglasses. A recently bought a pair of very expensive D&G sunglasses. They are quite cool and funky. Just my style.

> "I love New York. I think as a rapper I feel very comfortable there because there are so many musicians there, so much hip-hop music, so many clubs that you can perform at."

6 One destination you would recommend

If I had a choice I'd be in Jamaica right now. It's one of my favourite places in the world. I love West Indian food, the fabulous music which is in the blood of the people and the people themselves. Jamaica has such clear blue water and some of the best beaches in the world.

AS TOLD TO AJAY KHULLAR

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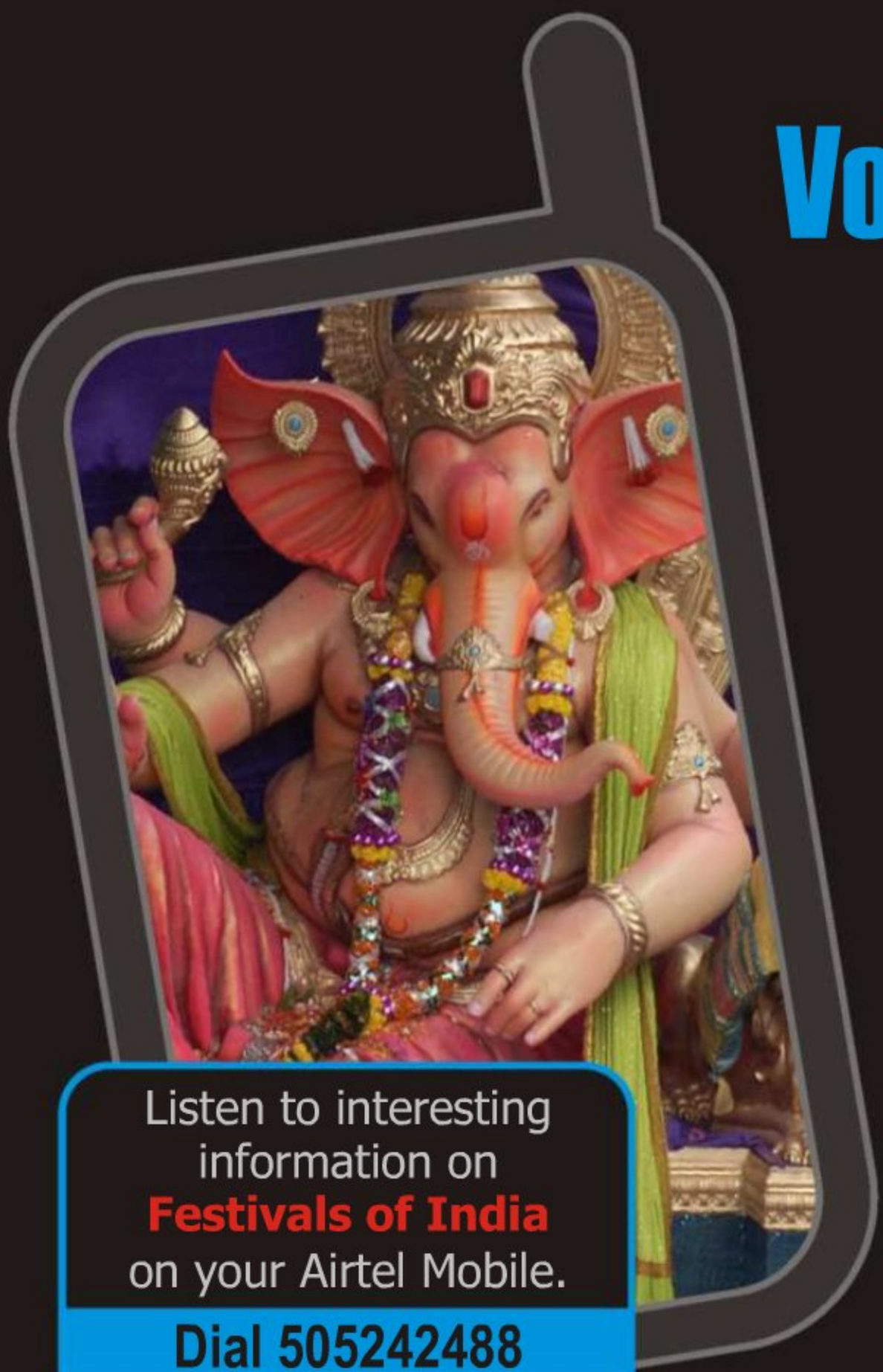

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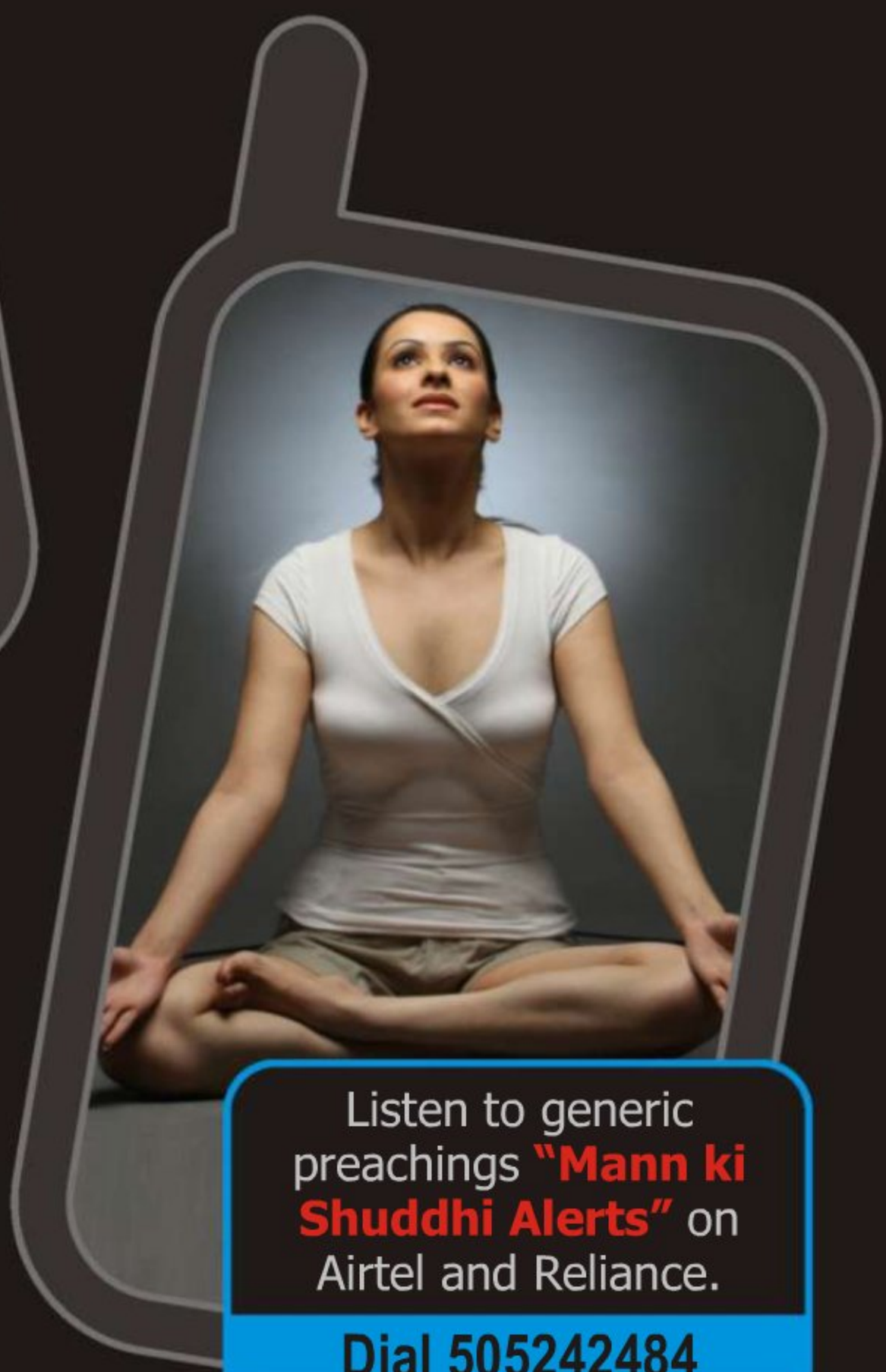

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