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Unique Travel Experiences
For Your Bucket List



Who doesn't like to explore the uncharted & widely unexplored destinations in India? So, it's time to get over the same touristy destinations because we are here to inspire you to travel to some jaw-dropping and beautiful places in our huge and diverse India. Places we are sure you will include in your bucket list without a doubt. These destinations and experiences are truly seem unrealistic and, we are here to take you to these exciting and exotic experiences.



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From ramparts of the Red Fort on the 73rd Independence Day



Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

The Book has been inspired by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to visit 15 tourist destinations across India before 2022, when we mark 75 years of freedom.

“

Our country can be a fascinating tourist destination for the world, but for some reason, we have not been able to do it as fast as we need to. Come, let all of us, the countrymen, take the decision to boost tourism in the country. As tourism grows, capital investment provides more employment opportunities. The country's economy also gets a boost. People all over the world are ready to see India in a new way today. Let us think how we can attract tourists to our country from the world over, how we can strengthen the tourism sector and what arrangements should be made at tourist destinations...

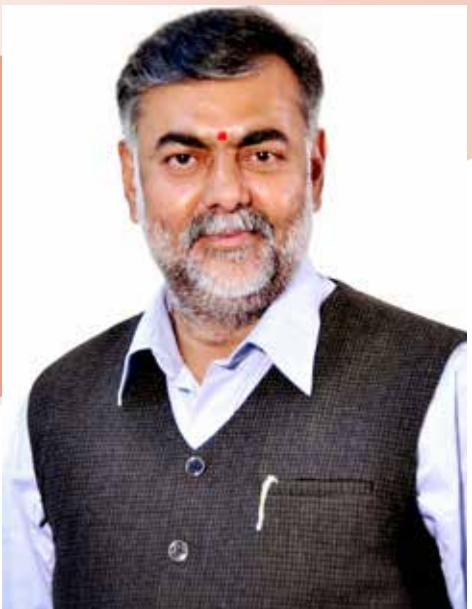
...Why don't we develop 100 good tourist destinations, why shouldn't there be target of developing 2, 5 or 7 top class tourist destinations in every state? North-East of India has huge natural resources but how many universities make that part of the country as their tourist destination? You do not have to spend much, neither do you need to spend a lot of time; in 7 to 10 days you can visit within the country...

...I know people travel abroad for holidays but can we think of visiting at least 15 tourist destinations across India before 2022, when we mark 75 years of freedom...

...A new world will come into being in the places you visit. You will get bliss in life. Once we Indians visit the tourist spots of North-East, foreigners will also follow suit. But, think over when we go out of the country and the people there ask, whether you have seen that temple in Tamil Nadu and we say "No"; then how does it feel. They would be surprised and say that they being foreigners, have visited that temple but you being an Indian have not seen it so far. So, before we go abroad we must know our country well...

Jai Hind!

”



Message

Shri Prahlad Singh Patel,
Minister of State,
(Independent charge) for Tourism,
Government of India

G

t gives me immense pleasure to know that Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Business of Travel Trade (BOTT), India have come together to bring out a book, *Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations*, to showcase the immense tourism potential of India at India Tourism Mart (ITM), being organised in New Delhi by the Ministry of Tourism.

Today, tourism is a fast-growing industry all over the globe. It has immense opportunity to provide jobs in organised as well as unorganised sector. Tourism also plays a very important role for the development of Indian economy. India has the potential to provide a variety of tourism products in order to cater to the needs of different categories of tourists.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 73rd Independence Day, Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi rightly said that India has much to offer and if domestic tourism increases, international footfalls too will also increase. In sync with Prime Minister's call to visit 15 domestic tourist destinations by 2022, it is commendable that the book is featuring 50 unique tourist destinations in India for the young population of India.

I hope that the Indian stakeholders would be able to create similar successful partnerships in the travel and tourism industry to highlight the immense tourism potential of our country.



Message



Shri Suman Billa IAS
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

J

t is heartening to know that Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Business of Travel Trade (BOTT), India have published a Book, *Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations*, to showcase the immense tourism potential of our country at India Tourism Mart (ITM), from September 23-25, 2019 at The Ashok Hotel in New Delhi.

India Tourism Mart is a niche platform to establish Indian tourism among the international stakeholders and a great opportunity to showcase the beauty of our nation. Our tourism industry has long felt the need of a national platform for our players to showcase themselves to the best international buyers. Like the inaugural edition, ITM 2019 will further strengthen the identity of brand Incredible India.

India with its diverse cultural heritage and varied geographies, offers huge opportunities in catering to the demands of international tourism market. Ranging from the introduction of e-Visa to vastly improved hospitality eco-systems, we have endeavoured to create seamless travelling experience for all the visitors. The growing influence of the tourism sector as an economic powerhouse and its potential as a tool for development are irrefutable. Not only does the tourism sector spearhead growth, it also improves the quality of people's lives with its capacity to create large scale employment of diverse kind. It supports environmental protection, champions diverse cultural heritage and strengthens peace in the world.

In order to achieve its true potential, it is high time we focus on the unexplored tourist delights across the country. Taking honourable PM's message forward, we urge and request all Indians to visit 15 domestic tourist destinations by 2022. In this context, TAAI and BOTT India are appreciated for bringing out the book, which focuses on unexplored tourist destinations of India for the young population of our country. I am sure, more and more citizens will be inspired to travel to these destinations after reading the print or digital copy of the book.

I convey my best wishes for the success of the Book.



Sunil Kumar R
President, Travel Agents
Association of India
(TAAI)



Message

W

e are delighted to be presenting to our readers and tourism leaders, this exceptional publication, which promotes key Destinations of India. This initiative supports TAAI's mission to educate the world on travel and tourism matters.

The destinations published in this book have a history; culture and purpose, which make tourism in India, even more prominent. Tourism can never be general. It must be backed by a purpose. It is aimed to promote not only natural offerings but also historic happenings from the past as well as our culture that adds value to our purpose of existence and transitioning from one era to another.

This publication will reach out to many within and beyond India and we at TAAI shall do our utmost to continue getting involved in such profound initiatives.

Our partnering with BOTT India, who have developed this publication, acknowledges TAAI's appreciation for the effort invested to create this most valuable content.

Enjoy reading and getting updated...



Jyoti Mayal
Hon. Secretary General
Travel Agents Association of
India (TAAI)



Message

W

e at TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India) are pleased to co-publish, Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations for India Tourism Mart 2019 along with BOTT India to highlight the immense tourism potential of India.

This Book has been initiated to share the vision of our Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's, to travel within India and it has featured 50 unique tourist destinations from across the country, keeping in consideration the young population of the world. The topic is so relevant that it will surely have a long lasting impression on the 200+ buyers and exhibitors from 75 countries who are participating at ITM 2019 along with the Indian travel and trade industry.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 73rd Independence Day, Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi so beautifully stated that India has so much to offer and if domestic tourism increases, international footfalls too will increase. Domestic Tourism in India has immense opportunities, the increased footfall will not only generate employment in organised as well as unorganised sectors, but will also play a very vital role in the development of the Indian infrastructure and economy. India has the potential to provide a variety of tourism products in order to cater to the needs of different categories of tourists.

The book has both print as well as digital version, which shall be circulated far and wide within and outside the country and incite the traveller to visit the unique destinations of India.

Let this book initiated by TAAI contribute further to the success of Incredible India, nationally and internationally and pave the path of increased tourism. Let India be a country where all that a traveller can dream is found.

Jai Hind!



Subhash Goyal,
Hon. Secretary, FAITH
(Federation of Associations
in Indian Tourism and
Hospitality)



Message

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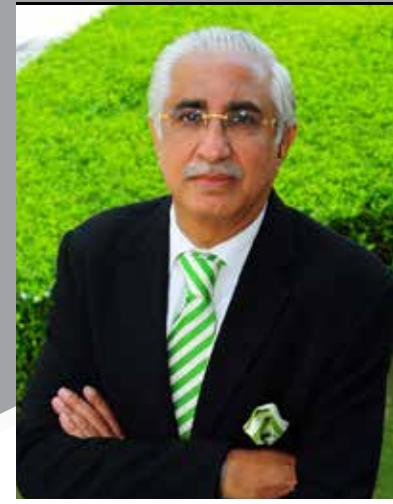
am glad to learn that BOTT India, like other publications is coming out with a Special Book (Print as well Digital version), *Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations*, which will coincide with the upcoming India Tourism Mart (ITM 2019) from September 23-25, 2019 at The Ashok Hotel in New Delhi.

The India Tourism Mart which is jointly being organised by FAITH (Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality) and supported by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is also one step moving towards the target of 20 million in the next few years.

Today, tourism is a fast-growing industry all over the globe. It has immense opportunity to provide jobs in organised as well as unorganised sector. Tourism also plays a very important role for the development of Indian economy. India has the potential to provide a variety of tourism products in order to cater to the needs of different categories of tourists.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 73rd Independence Day, Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi rightly said that India has much to offer and if domestic tourism increases, international footfalls too will also increase. In sync with Shri Modi's call to travel within India, it is commendable that the book is featuring top 50 tourist destinations in India targeting the young population of India.

On behalf of FAITH (Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality) and all the other associations I represent, I convey my best wishes for the success of the book. Let it contribute further to the success of Incredible India, nationally and internationally.



Nakul Anand,
Chairman, FAITH
(Federation of Associations
in Indian Tourism and
Hospitality)

J

his is indeed a memorable moment in the history of Indian Tourism. As India Tourism Mart (ITM) celebrates its second year of uniting the diverse flavours of Indian travel and trade industry, we also applaud the launch of the special book titled – *Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations*.

As founding Chairman of FAITH, it gives me great pleasure to see how far we have come together. Each of the ten member bodies of FAITH have contributed immensely to the cause of Indian tourism. Good intent, great partnerships and support of the government has helped us strengthen brand Incredible India.

It is heartening to know that Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), one of FAITH's member bodies is the co-publisher of this book along with Business of Travel and Trade (BOTT) ; very well timed with the upcoming India Tourism Mart (ITM 2019)

Drawing inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of India's 73rd Independence Day, I feel no other country is as blessed as India, with natural resources and highly skilled manpower. Together, we can achieve the incredible. As PM Modi said, "High-jumps are needed in progress, one needs to dream together if India has to become \$5 trillion economy."

My best wishes to each and every one who has contributed to this wonderful piece of work that celebrates 50 Unique Destinations. However, the experience of any destination lies in its local ethos. Let us take this opportunity to commit ourselves to sustainable tourism and conserve our natural resources and rich heritage.

After all, we are the land of "Atithi Devo Bhava."



Message

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Exploring India 50 Unique Destinations



Editor's Note

Taking inspiration from Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to visit 15 tourist destinations across India before 2022, TAAI and Business of Travel Trade (BOTT), India have published this Book, *Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations*, to showcase the immense tourism potential of our country.

With the young population in mind, we have featured unique destinations from across the country ranging from unexplored national parks to exotic beach destinations to scenic hill locations, weekend getaways and much more. A lot of effort has gone into selecting the destinations representing almost all the states, creating interesting and exciting content along with sourcing authentic real pictures. To widen its reach and readership, the Book has both print and digital versions, which can be downloaded free of cost from either TAAI's official website, ITM's official website or BOTT India's official website.

Happy Reading!

Priyanka Saxena Ray
Editor, BOTT INDIA
priyanka@bottindia.com

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About TAAI

TAAI, India's oldest and largest travel & tourism association boasts of its unique conglomerate in terms of it being the only Nationally-functional Nodal Body of Travel Agents, Inbound and Outbound Tour Operators, Hotel Companies, Airlines, Govt. Tourism Bodies, Overseas Members, International Tourism Boards in India and Educational Institutes broadly categorized as Active, Associate, Allied, Government and, Non-Resident.

- TAAI is a Non-Political, Non-Commercial and Non Profit making organization, catering to all segments of Travel and Tourism & Hospitality Industry.
- TAAI is recognized by the world body of Tourism – UFTAA (United Federation of Travel Agents Associations). Currently TAAI President Sunil Kumar is also the President of UFTAA.
- TAAI has its membership spread through the length and breadth of the country. There are currently over 2450 satisfied members who are proud to be associated with TAAI.
- In order to optimize its goals and to be effective TAAI has 4 regions and 16 chapters that meet at regular intervals. The Office Bearers and the Managing Committee, which is its elected body, meets at least 7 – 8 times in a year.
- TAAI organizes many roadshows, seminars, as well business meetings throughout the year for International Tourism Bodies which not only help travel trade professionals from the point of view of networking but also serve as a strong platform to educate its own staff & business partners from other regions of the world by exchanging the local knowledge on a professional level.



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and Airport Advisory

Disclaimer: TAAI has been invited as a co-publisher to promote the destinations contained herein. The content of this special publication is totally compiled by Business of Travel Trade (BOTT) who are the co-publishers.

Disclaimer is hereby given by TRAVEL AGENTS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (TAAI) that we are not responsible for the content and our activity is restricted to promote the publication & its destinations.



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JOURNEY SNAPSHOT: THE EMPEROR'S TABLE - CULINARY TRAILS THROUGH INDIA

India may be synonymous with spices and "curry", but its cuisines are as varied as its people. Led by a food historian, consultant and author, this journey is an enticing exploration of the many flavours of India – from the spicy street food of Old Delhi to royal dining in Rajasthan and the distinct romance of Avadh. For more such journeys, contact us below:

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Akshardham Temple Delhi

W

hen one thinks of visiting popular touristy places in Delhi, names of Red Fort, Qutub Minar, India Gate come to fore – for their obvious legacy of culture, history and beauty. However, there is another monument in Delhi NCR, which is most definitely worth a visit – The Akshardham Temple. Visit it not for its religious heritage but for its sheer beauty, magnitude, grandeur and experience.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple, which is the second of its kind in India, after Ahmedabad, witnesses good amount of tourist traffic, yet leaving scope for much more. It comprises 200 sculptured stone figures of India's sages, monks, Acharyas and divine incarnations. It also consists of 234 ornately carved pillars, 9 ornate domes, Gajendra Pith and 20,000 statues of divine figures of India.

A garden in the shape of a Lotus, which is surrounded by stones carrying famous quotes of Shakespeare, Martin Luther, Swami Vivekananda and more, is a breath-taking sight, especially if photographed from the top. With the firm belief that good and positive energy can enter the complex from all or any side, the Akshardham Temple has 10 Gates, which represents the 10 directions according to Vedic literature.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Delhi NCR holds world-records for many of its intriguing facets, such as the 'Yagnapurush Kund', which is the largest yagna kund in the world. It comprises 108 small shrines and 2870 steps leading to the kund. The 'Parikrama' surrounding the temple is spread in the form of a beautiful garland and on a nice breezy day, one would immensely enjoy walking the path.

The Garden of India or Bharat Upavan, which are the green lawns of the temple are decorated with bronze statues of the popular personalities of India and not divine beings. The real life heroes, whom we all can relate to. A musical fountain show depicting the circle of life is an added attraction to the place.



*When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon,
my soul expands in the worship of the creator.*

Mahatma Gandhi

NEAREST AIRPORT: Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: New Delhi Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.delhitourism.gov.in

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.

Helen Keller



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Visakhapatnam Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Araku Railway Station

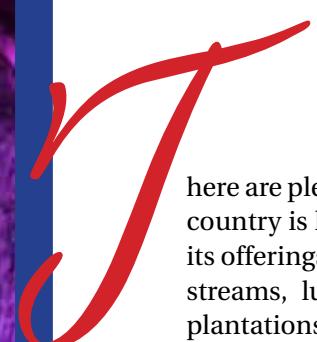
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.ap.gov.in

Araku Valley

Andhra Pradesh



There are plenty of hill stations in India. Infact, almost every state of the country is home to few – each more unique than the other, varied in its offerings and different in its typography. Besieged with enchanting streams, lush green forests, beautiful waterfalls, sprawling coffee plantations, rich landscape and wonderful weather, Araku Valley in Vizag, Arunachal Pradesh is one of the most popular hilly destinations in the region.

Situated at an altitude ranging from 600-900 m above the sea level, Araku Valley offers visitors an extremely pleasant climate all through the year, which makes it one of the most sought after places in the district. Surrounded by mountains, namely, Galikonda, Raktakonda, Sunkarimetta and Chitamogondi, the splendour of this place is tough to put down in words and can be best left to experience. Extremely rich in biodiversity, coffee plantations and high quality bauxite ore, these hills are one of the highest in Andhra.

One of the most visited places in the region is the Borra Caves that are located in the middle of the Ananthagiri Hills in Araku Valley and are mysterious and majestic. These are completely naturally formed and are believed to be around 150 million years old. Research conducted by anthropologists have discovered stone tools of middle Paleolithic Age that date back to 30,000 to 50,000 years. There are many crystal white calcium stones which have also taken sculptural forms. All these shapes create an optical illusion of hidden treasure as it is illuminated, decorated and glittered by 63 lamps of made of mercury, sodium vapour and halogen.

Araku, a pleasant hill station, offers plenty of touristy options for the discerning traveller. The Botanical Garden at Padmapuram, Government Silk Farm with Mulberry gardens are some of the live examples to know better the socio-economic conditions of the area. In addition to hus, the Tribal Museum is also big attraction of the Araku. Chaaparai, a picturesque place about 15 km from Araku is a popular picnic spot in this region.

Auli

Uttarakhand

J

For many people, the state of Uttarakhand is synonymous with the names Haridwar and Rishikesh. Those with more religious bent will add Badrinath and Kedarnath also to it – but the beauty and lure of Uttarakhand goes far beyond these few well-known places. Auli, is one such gem, hidden away from the eyes of a short-sighted explorer and awaiting the discovery of the discerning traveller, such as you.

Apple orchards, oak trees, pine trees not just provide plenty of fresh air in Auli but also makes up for its scenic beauty. Located at a height of 2800 metres above the sea levels, the quaint hill station of Auli is home to the mountain ranges of Nanda Devi, Mana Parvat and Kamat Kamet in addition to the few other religious destinations scattered around the region. The place is said to have been blessed with the visit of Shankracharya himself.

But religion is just one of its alluring aspect. The other is adventure with skiing topping the list. If you too feel the urge of trying your feet and hands at the ice on the slopes, you need not to go Alps for it but come down to Auli, stay in one of the many ski resorts and glide through its snow-capped peaks and slopes. For the more competitive ones, there is also an Auli National Skiing Championship, which has just recently started.

Offering breath-taking views of the crescent Himalayas, Auli also offers plenty of trekking opportunities for the adventure enthusiasts. The numerous hills of the Garhwal Himalayas are home to many trekking opportunities, which is again a point of attraction to the region. The area is dotted with many wooden huts and resorts, which gives it a look of a quaint European village.



Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent schoolmasters, and teach some of us more than what we could learn from books.

John Lubbock

NEAREST AIRPORT:
The Jolly Grant Airport,
Dehradun

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:** Dehradun
Railway Station,

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
www.uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world.

Gustav Flaubert



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Hubli Airport, Belgaum Airport
NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Yaragoppa Railway
Station, Badami Railway Station,
Lakhampur Railway Station
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year
IDEAL FOR:
Couples, Friends and family
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.karnatakaturism.org

Badami, Pattadakal & Aihole Karnataka

here are some destinations in India, which are inter-linked in such a way that seeing just one of them is not enough and one needs to visit them in their entirety to take in its true beauty and significance. The trio of Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole falls in this category. Situated in close proximity to each other, the destinations are unique not just in their offerings but also in the history that binds them together.

When you talk about Badami, what instantly comes to mind are its Rock Cut Cave temples, which are four in number and breath-taking in their scenic grandeur. Badami was once the capital of the Chalukya Empire, who were leaned towards Hinduism and art, as a result of which, they ended up constructing more than 150 temples of various styles. There is also a beautiful Agasthya Lake in the region, which is considered holy because of its healing powers.

At a mere distance of 20 km from Badami is Pattadakal, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to many Hindu and Jain temples. While the trio of Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole are captivating enough, it is the sophistication and intricacy of Pattadakal that will enthrall you the most. This was the place where the kings would be crowned and thus always enjoyed a very princely status.

Aihole, which is 10 km from Pattadakal, is once again a temple complex, which houses the oldest temples in the region. This region was the capital of the Chalukya Empire, before it got shifted to Badami. Since it is the most ancient place in the trio, it houses the maximum number of temples, which showcase the beauty and grandeur of a bygone era.



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A home away from home. You love to get away from the chaos that is city life, yet the cozy comfort of home never leaves you. Forested hill, secluded space, and a slumbering village in sight! Sigh! Could life get any better!



Vasudha Sonndhi
Co-founder

How do you get here?

You can get to Parvada Bungalows either by bus, car or train from Delhi, along with convenient connection from other nearby cities.



Parvada Bungalows is a tranquil private boutique resort located not far from the temple town of Mukteshwar. The 3 acre expanse located within VS Fruit Tree Estate has, apart from the bungalows, a still budding orchard laden with apple, plum, peach, apricot, pear and walnut trees. The retreat has postcard views of the rolling hills, and reserve forest on its south, east and north.

Parvada Bungalows, offers accommodation experience with a local traditional décor integrating modern amenities. All the rooms have beautiful views facing the south gola range and the reserve forest. Parvada Bungalows is among the few boutique resorts in Kumaon to be elderly friendly and wheelchair friendly allowing easy access to most facilities on the estate.

Vast terraces, antique furniture mingling with contemporary, massive glass windows, breathtaking views of the landscape and high ceiling rooms styled in minimalistic decor ensures serenity throughout your stay.

You can also venture into neighbouring villages to enjoy the history in and around the village of Parvada, indulge in various adventure activities and gain some once in a lifetime experience before you head back to the hectic city life.

Parvada Bungalows... A stay to cherish

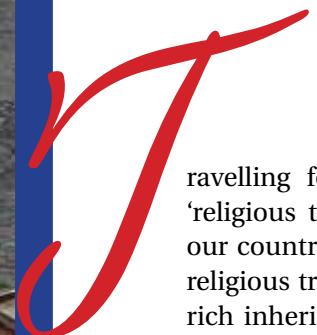


Book Now: + 91 7428408999 - parvadabungalows@gmail.com
www.parvadabungalows.com



Badrinath Kedarnath

Uttarakhand



Travelling for the purpose of religion, often referred to as 'religious tourism' is one of the strongest forms of travel in our country. Numerous people, of all age groups, undertake a religious trip atleast once (if not more) in a year. Given India's rich inheritance of temples and other places of worship, one is truly spoilt for choice here. In such a scenario, the twin holy destinations of Badrinath and Kedarnath are often a prominent feature on many people's list.

An integral part of the famous 'Char-Dham' yatra, the twin-cities of Badrinath and Kedarnath in the state of Uttarakhand receives millions of tourists each year, who swarm the place in hope to catch a glimpse of the divine power. In the last few years, infrastructure at both the places have improved manifold, with smooth roads, helicopter services, plush hotels and luxury camps, all ensuring that the tourist has a soulful and comfortable experience.

Legend has it that Adi Shankaracharya found the idol of Lord Badri in the Alaknanda River and put it up in a cave near the Tapt Kund. Later, in the 16th century, a Garhwal King got the temple erected, which over the years, has been renovated many times as a result of natural calamities. Sandwiched between Nar and Narayan peaks, the beauty of Badrinath Dham is further enhanced with the glorious background of Neelkanth peak.

The temple of Kedarnath, situated at a distance of 40 km from Badrinath in the Rudraprayag District of Uttarakhand, has been recently made more popular amongst the youth basis on a movie made on it. It is believed that the temple of Kedarnath was built by Pandavas and that Adi Shankaracharya got the present structure constructed in the 8th century adjacent to the old temple site. The grey stone structure is an architectural marvel because of its imposing design and its ability to survive for so many centuries in such a harsh terrain.

See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories. Ask for no guarantees, ask for no security.

— Ray Bradbury

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jolly Grant Airport, Dehradun

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Rishikesh Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
May – October

IDEAL FOR:
Family, Senior Citizens,
Couples

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Barren Island

Andaman Islands

B

arren Island, located in the Andaman Sea at a distance of around 135km from Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, is the only active volcano in India. It is one those beautiful and rare spots, which you may not be able to step on, stay or touch, but just watching its splendor from afar will leave you with memories that will last a lifetime. This 354-m-high island is the emergent summit of a volcano that rises from a depth of about 2250 m.

Barren Island, as the name suggests, is a small, uninhabited 3-km wide island, which roughly contains a 2-km wide caldera along with walls as high as 250-350 m. The morphology of a fresh pyroclastic cone that was constructed in the center of the caldera has varied during the course of historical eruptions. Lava flows fill much of the caldera floor and have reached the sea along the western coast during eruptions in the 19th century and more recently in 1991 and 1995. The volcanic eruptions keep taking place at regular intervals.

The black bedrock of the island lends the sand on the beach a deep purple-black hue that contrasts beautifully with the vibrant blue of the ocean and underwater vibrant marine life, giving an instant appeal to the picture it puts up. While the existence of this volcano is not a hidden fact and is infact common knowledge since centuries before, because of limited research and other restrictions, the island continues to remain an unexplored mystery.

For those who wish to see it, there are a number of ferries and boats that can take you around to visit the island. However, due to the unpredictability of the volcanic eruptions, visitors are not permitted to land on the shores and have to sustain with a view from the sea, which is equally memorable and breathtaking.

We wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfilment.

Hilaire Belloc



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Port Blair Veer Savarkar
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Nil

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
November-February

IDEAL FOR: Nature and
adventure lovers, family
vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.andamantourism.gov.in

All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveller is unaware.

Martin Buber



Bekal

Kerala

This is the hidden gem of South India, which has all the ingredients in place that makes any destination popular on the international tourist map. The name Bekal has travelled down from Baliakulam, meaning big palace, to Bekulam and then finally settling to what we call it today. The place is believed to have once been a seat of power of a big palace, built as a giant keyhole shaped fort, remains of which are a popular tourist attraction called the Bekal Fort.

Located on the shoreline of Pallikkara village of Kasaragod, Bekal, under the sovereignty of Kolathanadu became an important maritime centre and an important port town of Thulunadu. Over the years, the place kept attracting many rulers who kept successively attacking and taking control of the region. The economic importance of the port town prompted the Jeheri Nayak dynasty to fortify Bekal.

A quaint and serene village, Bekal is a land which has a storied past – tales of royalty and vigour, remains of which can still be felt and seen at the popular Bekal Fort. Another popular attraction in the region is its beautiful shoreline, which offers a perfect sun-kissed beach, ideal for couples to take a walk or for kids to build a sand castle along the shore or for a loner to simply sit back and bask in the beauty of a sunrise or a sunset.

The majestic hills surrounding the area adds more beauty and regality to the place that you would have ever hoped for. The meandering rivers along with rich cultural traditions gives the town of Bekal a special place on the tourist map. The fact that it is not frequented by tourists in large numbers has only helped in retaining the erstwhile beauty and significance of a bygone era, which can best be experienced anytime of the year.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Mangalore Airport, Calicut
International Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Kasargod Railway
Station, Kanhangad Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Friends and
Family Vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.keralatourism.org

Bhimbetka

Madhya Pradesh

J

or those who appreciate history, the rock shelters of Bhimbetka, which are located in the Vindhyan Range in the heart of India, are a mecca to understand what cave paintings are all about. Declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003, some of the paintings in these rock shelters date back to as many as 30,000 years and exhibits the earliest traces of human life on the Indian Subcontinent, which is what we refer to as the Stone Age era.

The numerous paintings – broadly divided into five clusters, have been broadly classified under periods of Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Historic and medieval. Every era represented through the various cave paintings and period had its own unique artistic and decorative style. Thankfully, the paintings have been well preserved because of the dense foliage surrounding the caves, thus preventing them from exposure to extreme climatic conditions.

The cave paintings at Bhimbetka has been mainly made using white and red colours along with the sporadic use of green and yellow. Studies over a period of time have revealed that these colours were made with the combination of hematite, manganese, soft red stone and wooden coal with the occasional addition of animal fat and leaf extract to the mixture. The use of such unique combination is perhaps the reason why the colour has not vanished over the years.

These paintings take us back in time and are often treated as evidence of the socio-cultural aspects of the earlier civilizations and ages. They depict scenes such as hunting, dancing, horse riding – other everyday activities along with popular religious symbols and animals like bisons, tigers, elephants, lions and reptiles. Of particular interest are the Auditorium Rock Shelter, Zoo Rock and Boar Rock in the Bhimbetka Cluster. Experiencing and seeing them in real life will simply transport you to another era, which we have heard and read so much about.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
The Raja Bhoj Airport, Bhopal

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Bhopal Junction

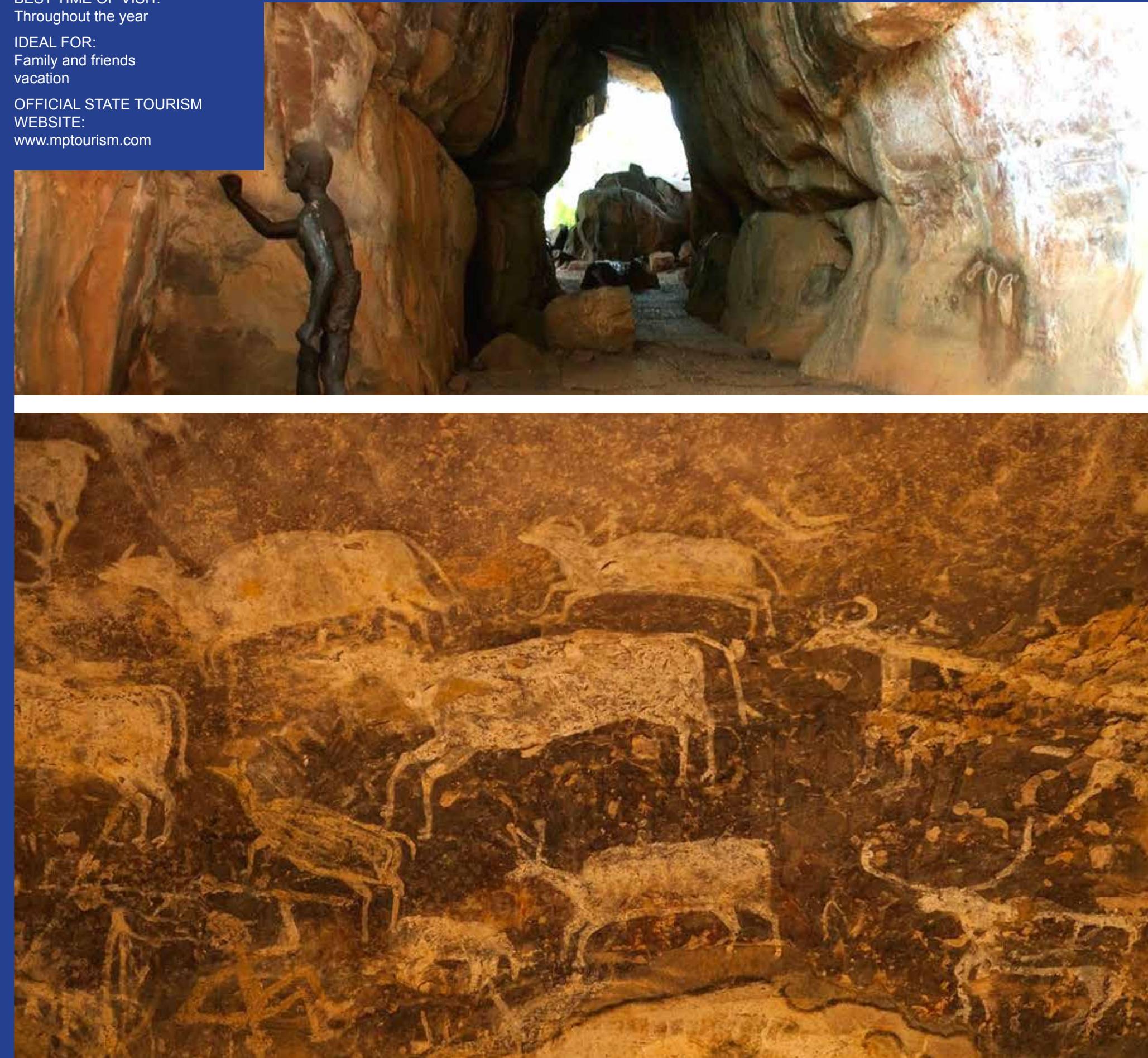
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends
vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.mptourism.com

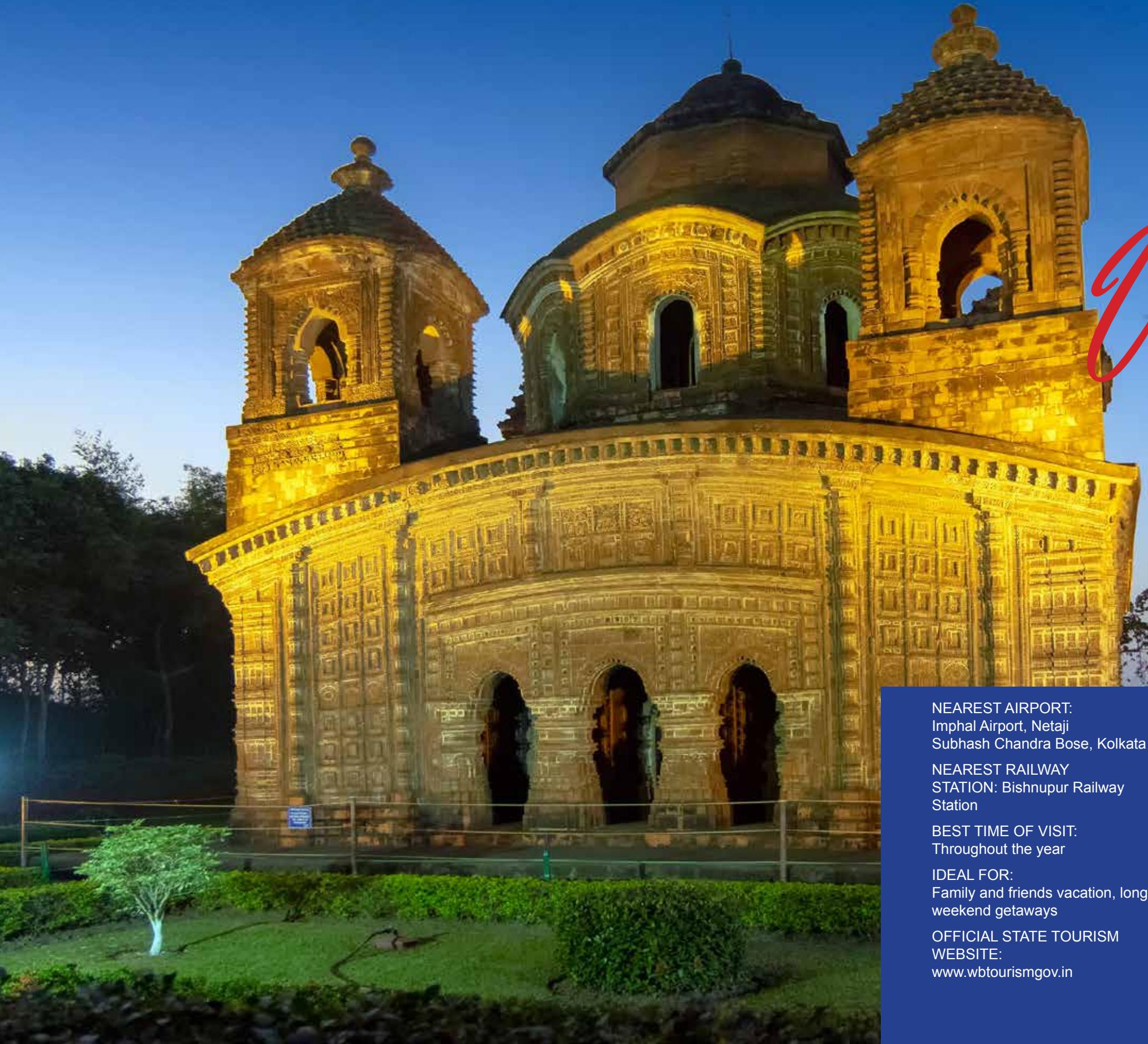
Our happiest moments as tourists always seem to come when we stumble upon one thing while in pursuit of something else.

Lawrence Block



Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.

Andre Gide



W

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Imphal Airport, Netaji
Subhash Chandra Bose, Kolkata

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Bishnupur Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends vacation, long
weekend getaways

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.wbtourismgov.in

Bishnupur

West Bengal

While almost everything in Kolkata reminds you of a legacy – a bygone era, the quaint town of Bishnupur (or Vishnupur) enjoys the exclusivity of being the only place named after Lord Vishnu. Located in the Bankura District of West Bengal at a distance of 130 km from Kolkata, the culturally rich town of Bishnupur is home to a unique style of fabric and artefact, which is exclusive only to this region.

Ruled by a line of Hindu Rajas of the Malla dynasty, Bishnupur developed a unique form of architecture and has perhaps the most brilliant and detailed terracotta work in Eastern India that has withstood the ravages of time. The Terracotta tiles depict stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Temples like the Shyam Ray Temple, the twin shrines of Jorbangla and the Rasmancha are a must visit.

With a rich cultural legacy dotted with historical excellence, the small town of Bishnupur is also a prominent spot for people who are looking for unique and authentic designs – in both fabric as well as Jewellery. The Terracotta handloom and Baluchari sarees, which are famous all over India are actually native to this land and can be found in the numerous shops dotting the region. No two designs or layout would be similar – spoiling a customer for choice.

The pottery, artefacts and even Jewellery, made of Terracotta and found in Bishnupur is unique to the region and difficult to find in any other part of the country. Bishnupur is also famous for the School of Hindustani Music which flourished under royal patronage along with the Bishnupur School of Painting. This style of music is still being kept alive in local academies of music.

Brahmaputra River Cruise

Guwahati

J

here are many rivers that flow in India but only some of them are suitable for carrying out 'cruise activity', such as the Brahmaputra River. It runs for 1800 miles from its source in the Tibetan Himalayas to the delta in the Bay of Bengal, passing many states and cities on its route. The mighty Brahmaputra is the lifeline of the city of Guwahati and divides it into two halves. What is also unique about Brahmaputra in Guwahati is the cruise option it offers for the locals and tourists both.

Small experiential cruises are offered by the Assam Tourist Department as well as few private operators for the enjoyment of the local people as well as tourists coming to the region. There are different types of short cruise rounds that you would love to go for such as Lunch Cruise, Sunset Cruise, Dinner Cruise, Candlelight Cruise etc. Onboard one of the miniature cruises, guests can enjoy cool breeze on the deck, live music, nice food, serene views and a brief narration on the history and mythology related to this part of the mighty Brahmaputra River.

In addition to the short cruise options, tourists and locals can also choose to go on long duration cruise trips, such as those ranging from 4 to 10 days on the Brahmaputra River. Some cruises cover the Kaziranga National Park and Nameri National Park, World Heritage Sites, and Majuli, one of the largest riverine islands in the world along with Guwahati. Some of the cruises plying on the Brahmaputra River feature visits to attractions such as wildlife viewing, village walks, visits to tea gardens, exploring country towns in cycle rickshaws, barbecues on deserted river islands, dance performances, and visits to craft workshops.

The ideal time to take a Brahmaputra River Cruise is during the season from November to April, when the monsoon rains are over and the floods have receded, leaving the landscape lush and temperatures pleasant.



Our happiest moments as tourists always seem to come when we stumble upon one thing while in pursuit of something else.

— Lawrence Block

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Guwahati Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Guwahati
Station, Kamakhya Jn.

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Couples, friends and
families

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.assam.gov.in

Travel expands the mind and fills the gap.

Sheda Savage



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Civil Airport, Tiruchirappalli
NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Thanjavur Junction
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year
IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tamilnadutourism.org

Brahadeeswara Temple

Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

0

One of the oldest temples in the Group of Chola Temples, the Brihadisvara Temple was built in the year 1010 AD – 10 centuries back and is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Nataraja – the King of cosmic dance. While the main temple stands the way it was built, several additions have been made to the complex over the years, which have only added to the beauty and grace of this monolithic structure that is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Over the years, series of wars between the Muslim invaders and the Hindu rulers caused great damage to temple. However, the Hindu dynasties that ruled the land after this phase repaired the temple and added several shrines to the main temple. The significant shrines of Kartikeya (Murugan), Parvati (Amman) and Nandi are from the 16th and 17th century, during the rule of Nayaka era. The Dakshinamurti shrine was added much later.

In their attempt to cover-up the damage, the succeeding rulers did paintings on the walls, which today are a great example of the Chola Paintings on the walls of massive colonnaded prakara, corridor (circumambulatory pathway) around Brihadisvara Temple. Another unique things about this temple is that here the gopurams (the gates) are smaller than the main Vimana (temple tower), which is not the case in most of the temples in South India.

The entire Brihadisvara Temple is made of granite, which is also a noteworthy thing as in those times, there was no granite-cutting quarry or even sources to get the stone around Thanjavur –atleast not up till 50 km. Just imagine how the task of sourcing the granite from afar and carrying it to the temple site would have been carried out almost 10 centuries back! Thus, this temple must be visited to not just say a prayer but also experience and witness its grandeur and poise.

Chitrakote Falls Chhattisgarh

Fondly called as the Niagara Falls of India, the Chitrakote Falls is a gift from nature and a spectacular sight to one's eyes. Waterfalls are anyway a delight to watch and as one gazes at them in awe, you realise the power and glory of nature, which can be witnessed through these gushing streams of water in high speed and momentum from a great height. One of the widest waterfalls in India, it is located 38 km from Jagdalpur and is accessible only by road.

Flowing from 95ft above with intense force, the falls are a treat for eyes and senses. Located in Jagdalpur of Bastar district on Indravati River, Chitrakoot Falls attracts thousands of tourists throughout the year. With wild swirling eddies and a roar that can be heard for miles, these falls have an untamed character that evokes equal amounts of fear and awe. The large amount of silt in the Indravati River during the monsoon makes the water quite muddy and swimming is out of the question. The Falls are surrounded by a surfeit of resorts, camping sites, picnic spots, yoga and meditation centres.

Not only waterfall, Chitrakote is also popular due to the Hindu legendary Lord Ram. There has many Hindu spiritual temples and pilgrimage place. And also various Hindu festivals like, Makar Sankranti, Ramnaamvi and Somvati Amavasya are celebrated here with a complete spiritual system.

The state of Chhattisgarh is blessed with some amazing eco-tourism destinations and the Chitrakote Falls is one of them. It is an ideal place for picnics, getaway and stunning panoramic views, which offers plenty of opportunity to click good pictures. One can spend some time in isolation away from the commotion of the cities for detoxification amidst nature.



The biggest adventure you can take is to live the life of your dreams.

Oprah Winfrey

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Raipur Airport or
Visakhapatnam Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jagdalpur Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family, Couples,
Adventure Enthusiasts

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.cg.gov.in

Coonoor

Karnataka

*J*n the polluted cacophony of everyday living, where the desire to see star-lit skies and breathe in fresh air has become a dream for many, it is refreshing to have a hill spot closer to the populous city, offering a perfect breakaway option for many. Coonoor is located at a distance of 18 km from Ooty, 71 km from Coimbatore and 32 km from Mettupalayam and is a popular choice for the youth of not just South India (primarily Bengaluru) but also those across the country.

Located at an altitude of 6,000 feet above the sea level, Coonoor is the second largest hill station nestled in the Nilgiri Hills and can be coupled along with Ooty if time permits you to visit two hill stations. Known as the lungs of the South, the greens spread across the region can help detox any person who is tired of the city traffic, pollution and mundane routine. The wide-spread lush Tea Gardens not just make for an amazing trip but also offers enriching flavour to carry back home.

Sim Park – a well-maintained botanical garden spread over 12 hectares houses many unknown and unheard varieties of plants. In addition to this, Dolphins Nose, St. Catherine Falls and Law's Falls are some of the popular places to see in the region. For the adventurous lot, the Trekking Trails to Lamb's Rock, which is 9 km from Coonoor is an experience worth undertaking. The Lam's Rock overlooks the Coimbatore plains and offers splendid views of the tea and coffee plantations.

Bird watching is a popular activity enjoyed by the locals and visitors alike in Coonoor. The region houses unique variety of birds such as thrushes, babblers, larks, cuckoos, robins, vultures, eagles and song birds. A major fruit and vegetable festival is held in the month of May at the Sim's Park which draws a major crowd. The tea and tourism festival is another important festival of Coonoor held in the month of January. The festival attracts tea specialists from all over the world.



He who climbs upon the highest mountains laughs at all tragedies, real or imaginary.

Friedrich Nietzsche

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Coimbatore International
Airport

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:**
Coonoor Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Couples, family and friends

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
www.karnatakaturism.org

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go."

T.S. Eliot



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jamshedpur Airport (Sonari)

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Chandil Railway Station

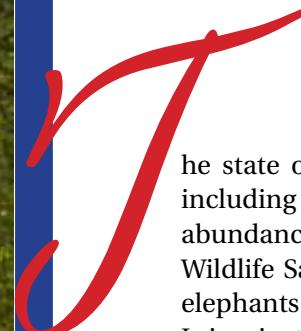
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
October – June

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.jharkhandtourism.gov.in

Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary

Jharkhand



The state of Jharkhand has much to offer in a variety of segments, including the travel and tourism contributions, which can be found in abundance in the region. A popular one amongst them is the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, which is best known for forest tourism and wild elephants – both of which can be found in abundance in the state. Lying in the catchment area of Subarnarekha River and adjoining Purulia District of West Bengal, this wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of 193.22 sq km.

The forests here at the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary comprises mostly Dry Mixed Deciduous with few Dry Peninsular Sal, the main tree species being Terminalias, Jamun, Dhaura, Kendu, Karam etc. The sanctuary is very much favoured by the Elephants primarily because of availability of water, even during summer. 'Dalma Haathi' or the 'Elephants of Dalma' is a known and quite fearful term in the Jamshedpur-Puruliya region. Other animals in addition to elephants include Leopard, Barking Deer, Mouse Deer, Sloth Bear, Monkey, Giant Squirrel are abundant here.

Established in 1975 and inaugurated by Sanjay Gandhi, the Dalma forest is home to a horde of animals, birds and tree species as well. Overlooking the shimmering Subarnarekha River, the Dalma hills nestle the dense green forests like an offspring. This ambience of the forest and the odd chance of having a glimpse at the wild animals is what makes Dalma so special among those who love to travel around jungles.

For those who wish to experience adventure in its most natural habitat can either take a drive through this Sanctuary or better still can spend a night at the various rest houses and bamboo huts accommodation offered by the Forest Department. Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary offers excellent bird watching experience, exciting in-jungle lodging and spectacular view from atop the Dalma peak which also has a couple of temples you can visit.



Patratu

Jharkhand

A

about 40 kilometres from Ranchi, the state capital of Jharkhand, Patratu is quietly nestled between lush forests and winding roads at an elevation of 405 meters. Known for its Patratu Dam, which was constructed under the planning of the legendary Indian engineer, Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, this picturesque valley town, full of unexplored untrodden trails is a must-visit for any adventure and nature lover.

Along with exploring the beauty of its forests and lush greenery, Patratu Dam is a sight to watch in all its glory. It supplies water to Ramgarh cantonment area and act as the main reservoir of Patratu Thermal Power Plant (PTPS). The Nalkari River on which it proudly stands is major tourist destination. Bird watchers and nature lovers can enjoy calm and peaceful boats rides for hours. It is said that one can see flying fishes during sunrise by sitting at the coast of the Dam.



VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Ranchi Airport
NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Ranchi Railway Station
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year
IDEAL FOR: Family Vacations & Nature Lovers
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jharkhandtourism.gov.in



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Dausa

Rajasthan

D

ausa district, situated on NH 11 enroute from Jaipur to Agra, is spread over an area of 3400 sq km and lies at 333m above the Sea Level. Dausa is primarily known for its fertile soil that allows almost any type of crop to grow in it. The region, surrounded by Alwar, Karauli, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Bharatpur and Jaipur with the Northern Aravali ranges safeguarding the climate from the Thar Desert, was the first-ever headquarter of the former Kachhwaha Dynasty.

With much historical and archaeological significance attached to it, Dausa offers the ideal rural experience for a tourist who wishes to get a taste of authentic village experience in Rajasthan. The Sawa and Ban Ganga are the two rivers that run through the district and there are around 36 Dams that have been built around these rivers to store the river water. The region also has many micro servicing units related to agricultural equipment and submersible pump.

The people of Dausa are a culturally enriched lot who love to celebrate numerous festivals throughout the year with much vigour and enthusiasm. There are many places to visit in the Dausa district, such as Kalakho, Bhangarh, Bhandarej, Harshata Mata Temple, Chand Baoli and Fort Madhogarh. Each monument or place of tourist interest has a story to narrate and is visually extremely appealing to the travellers visiting the region.

Though Dausa has a long way to go in terms of beefing up its infrastructure, especially in areas of health and education, the region, with its easy going set of people, is ideal for a day visit for tourists who wish to see the rural life of Rajasthan and get a taste of culture tourism. Meeting and chatting with the local people and visiting the touristy attractions of the place will give you an insight into how every little town of Rajasthan is bubbling with a historical legacy, which deserves a mention.



Take the time to put the camera away and gaze in wonder at what's there in front of you.

Erick Widman

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Sanganeer Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Dausa Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveller is unaware.

Martin Buber



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhuj Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Dholavira Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.gujarattourism.com

Dholavira

Gujarat

J

India is a land that houses some of the oldest civilisations of the world, thus to witness some of those is an extremely fascinating experience. Dholavira, some 250 km from Bhuj in Gujarat is home to the remarkable excavations of the Indus Valley Civilisation. This historical site will enthrall you as any other scenic destination would, especially if you happen to have a love for history.

The excavations, which happened some 4500 years ago, even today hold the charm to invite numerous tourists who swarm the place to take a trip down history and witness evidence of what they have only read in the books. Locally called Kotada timba, the site is the second largest Harappan site in India and fifth largest in Indian sub-continent. Amongst the Harappan sites discovered so far, Dholavira is the only place that marks the presence of Harappan culture from 2900 BC to 1500 BC.

One of unique features of Dholavira is that unlike other Harappan cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, the city is built almost exclusively of stones instead of bricks. Another striking feature of the ancient city was its sustainable use of water resources. The wisely planned and constructed network of reservoirs and water channels allowing the successful harvest of rainwater and diversion of rivulets, exemplifies the ingenuity of the Harappan people inhabiting the city.

For the locals, Dholavira is an ideal weekend destination, which is not too far from the Rann of Kutch and the government too is now developing the site into a major tourist destination. For those looking for an additional attraction other than history, there is also the option of visiting the Kutch Desert wildlife sanctuary while in rustic land of Dholavira.

Divar Island

Goa

J

The island of Divar is one of the best kept secrets of Goa. Lying along the shores of the Mandovi River, this quaint island is home to a unique blend of cultures and people. It is not an island frequented much by tourists except for that time of year when two major festivals take place here – Bonderam and Potekar. Bonderam is a carnival that takes place every fourth Saturday of August while Potekar is like Halloween, which is celebrated three days before Lent and is a sight to behold as one watches people walk around with masks and bells!

The best way to reach Divar Island is through a Ferry ride. The southern end of the Island is connected with the Old Goa while the northern end is linked to the Naroa Village. The Naroa village is frequented by many people for a visit to the Saptkoteshwar Temple, which is one of the most sacred temples of Hindus in Goa. Those in Panaji who wish to visit the Mayem Lake can enjoy a picturesque shortcut offered by the Divar Island.

If you too have visited Goa multiple times and are in search for something new and unique, a day trip to Divar Island, especially during the Bonderam Festival celebrated on the last Saturday of August, will showcase a captivating and blissful side of the state. This hidden treasure of Goa offers you a perfect getaway, quaint and romantic, away from the rush and noise of city life.

Divar is divided into three villages – Piedade, Malar and Naroa; the largest of which is Piedade. The ruins of Kadamba Dynasty in Piedade is a sight that will surely take you back in time, leaving memories that will last a lifetime. Next to see is the famous Sao Mathias Church, which is a 400-year old Portuguese church at the heart of the village. This beautiful structure plays an integral part during the Bonderam Festival.

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Goa Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Karmali Station, Thivim
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
February – April and
October – December

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Couples'
vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.goa-tourism.com

Every man can transform the world from one of monotony and drabness to one of excitement and adventure.

Irving Wallace



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Dabolim Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Ankola Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.karnatakaturism.org

G

f a peaceful beach holiday is what you are looking for, away from the bustling crowds and cacophony of city populous, Gokarna – the ancient temple town located in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka is the ideal destination for you. Often rated as the favourite beach destination by many enthused travellers, the peaceful town of Gokarna, which means ‘Cow’s Ear in Sanskrit, is a perfect hideaway, nestled at a safe distance from the maddening city.

The town of Gokarna lies between the rivers Gangavali and Agnashini and is situated along the Karwar coast by the Arabian Sea. Gokarna also finds mention in the Shrimad Bhagawat Purana. This temple town is also called the Kashi of the South and has been attracting numerous pilgrims for hundreds of years. Gokarna is also an important centre of Sanskrit learning and houses Bhandikeri Math and Toggu Math. Many Hindus perform the last rites of their loved ones here.

Given its pristine beaches and mythological significance, this trend has divided Gokarna into two parts, one that is for the religious devotees who come to seek blessings of Shiva, and the other of the carefree tourist looking for some peace and quiet in nature's lap. Owing to its growing popularity, several hotels and restaurants have come up in Gokarna. Most accommodation is in thatched bamboo huts along the town's several stretches of blissful coast. The temple town is now an emerging beach destination that offers something to different types of tourists with its natural beauty and its history seeped in mythology.

So if a beach holiday has been on your mind for some time but you have been postponing it because of crowded spaces, high-priced resorts and bustling shorelines, visit Gokarna to enjoy an ideal beach vacation. Though it is getting popular among the beach lovers, the town somewhere still falls in the category of lesser known holiday spots in India.

Gokarna

Karnataka

Gopalpur

Odisha

S

ecuring an important place in the history, the tiny town of Gopalpur with its sea port was the bustling centre of trade and commerce in the Colonial Era. Located in the southern coastline of Odisha just 15 km from the city of Behrampur, Gopalpur is an ideal beach destination for a relaxing holiday and for those looking to spend some quality time with their loved ones.

The sea port today is largely in ruins but the beaches are truly a sight to behold. The beaches of Gopalpur are considered to be one of India's most beautiful beaches largely due to its remoteness, its peace and its offbeat crowd. The beaches are sparkling gold which along with the azure water of the Bay of Bengal provide a perfect place to relax and immerse yourself in nature. Besides the beach, the food is also pretty great in the town with many outlets offering a plethora of options.

Gopalpur was the place where the first ever modern hotel was built in Odisha and probably the first ever beach resort of the country. The Palm Beach Resort was built in 1914 by an Italian gentleman by the name of Signor Maglioni to cater to the merchants and businessmen. The hotel was bought by the Oberoi group of hotels in 1948 in what was the group's first venture into the hospitality business. Currently the hotel is owned by the Mayfair Group of Hotels.

Since the beach here is east-facing, it offers spectacular views of the Sunset and the Sunrise – whatever you prefer. Silver Filigree or Tarakasi as it is locally known in Orissa is one of the finest and most exquisite craft works. While Cuttack is the main centre of Silver Filigree work in Orissa, smaller shops in Gopalpur also sell Silver Filigree souvenirs to carry back home. For the sea food lovers, a walk along the fish market early in the morning will prove to be pure delight.

We travel, some of us forever, to seek other states, other lives, other souls.

Anaïs Nin



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhubaneshwar Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Berhampur
Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.odishatourism.gov.in

Travelling tends to magnify all human emotions

Peter Hoeg



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Leh Kushok Bakula Rimpochee
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jammu Tawi
Railway Station, Kalka
Railway Station

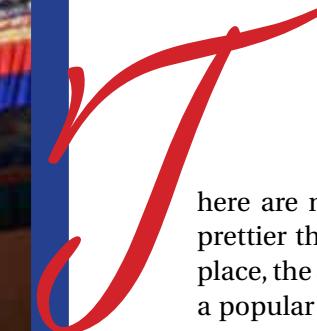
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
May-September

IDEAL FOR:
Friends, family, couples and solo
travellers

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.jktourism.jk.gov.in

Hemis

Ladakh



here are no dearth of touristy places in Jammu and Kashmir, each prettier than the other. The charm, the charisma and the lure of the place, the scenic beauty along with a pleasant climate makes the valley a popular tourist destination all through the year. Amongst its many treasures, Hemis deserves a special mention and a visit next time you make a plan to visit the state.

Hemis is a popular tourist attraction given the number of options that it provides to its visitors. The primary attraction in the region is the Hemis Gompa, which is located 40 km south-east of Leh on the west bank of the Indus River. The Monastery, situated on top of a green hill is surrounded by breathtaking mountains, offering a captivating view with its beauty and serenity. The Hemis monastery was built in 1630 and belongs to the red sect, Brokpa.

One can also visit the Hemis National Park, which is popularly known as the Snow Leopard capital of India and is home to a variety of other animals such as langurs, wolves, marmots, deers, red foxes etc. The park, infact, has been identified as a Snow Leopard reserve under a project launched by the Central Government aimed at conserving the species, its prey base and its fragile mountainous home.

Another attraction to the region is its annual festival, which is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava. The festival is held for two days in the months of June-July, enlivening the courtyard of the monastery. The festival of dances, where good triumphs over evil in a colourful pageant, is also the annual 'bazaar' where Ladakhis from remote areas buy and sell wares. Besides its other attractions, Hemis is also popular for activities such as trekking, where one can make the most of the royal, widespread and pristine scenic surroundings.

Imphal Valley

Manipur

J

ough Imphal, as the capital of Manipur is a bustling town surrounded with beauty, its best kept secret is the serene Imphal Valley, which is a treasure trove of natural bounty. The Imphal Valley is a rejuvenating retreat far away from the mad complexities and deafening cacophony of the urban settlement and is extremely engrossing. Such is its lure that people from far and wide frequent the place in search of solitude, magnificence and peace.

The Imphal Valley is spread across an area of 1843 sq km and accounts to one-tenth of the area of Manipur. The Valley also accounts for 70 per cent of the population in the state. Some of the rivers that flow down to the Valley are Imphal River, Khuga, Irl, Thoubal and Sekmai. There are numerous lakes, swampy areas and marshes in the Valley but the most famous of the lakes in the area is the Loktak Lake, which is also known as the 'Floating Lake'.

The Loktak Lake is known to be the largest freshwater lake in north-east India. It is a major tourist attraction in the region and people from all age groups visit the spot in large numberS only to leave back with lifetime memories. Besides this, one can also indulge in an excursion to the Palace of Kangla. The Kingdom of Manipur in the bygone days had its royal seat in the Palace of Kangla, which even today is a visual delight as it is surrounded by an artificial lake and houses many historical and religious places inside it.

Manipur is one of the most culturally rich regions in the North East, an example of which is the way fairs and festivals are celebrated in the state. A variety of festivals are celebrated amidst the riot of colours in Imphal, such as, the Leela Festival, Lai Haraoba, the Ratha Jathra, Ningol Chakouba Festival and Cheiraoba Festival.

The most beautiful in the world is, of course, the world itself

Wallace Stevens



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bir Tikendrajit International
Airport

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:**
Dimapur Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family, Couples, Adventure
Enthusiasts

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
www.manipurtourism.gov.in



PRIDE PLAZA HOTEL AEROCITY, NEW DELHI

The Pride Plaza Hotel, standing tall in the heart of Aerocity, New Delhi resonates true Indian hospitality, by following the ideology of "Truly Indian, Traditionally Luxurious and Purely Pride".

The Pride Plaza is the first luxury hotel in the capital by The Pride Group of Hotels. The beautiful hotel houses 385

majestically designed opulent rooms which are well equipped with premium amenities and contemporary technology to serve the best for the comfort of the guests. Within a short span of time the Pride Group has positioned itself as an eminently successful chain with fully owned Hotels in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune and Nagpur and also manage hotels at Goa, Jaipur, Vadodara, Indore, Puri, Manali, Mcleodjang and Rajkot.

The intoxicating fragrance of tuberose, along with the soothing time honored Indian instrumental music and the humble "Namaskar" greetings of the staff welcomes the guests benevolently to the beautiful vicinity of the Pride Plaza. The stunning paintings by Krsnaa Mehta, renowned as a designer to the stars and farmers, placed all over the hotel, gives a resplendent, luxurious touch to the first

impression of the Plaza. Retaining the essence of being the first traditional hotel in Aerocity, New Delhi, Pride Plaza proudly hoists the tricolor flag of our nation. The palatial rooms are decorated with the magnificent monumental images of India. The most striking aspect of the lovely images highlighting the beauty of the country is that they are absolutely authentic. Being a quintessential traditional hotel, the Pride Plaza offers its guests a host of opportunities to feel at home and relish the true Indian treats in the form of home-made jams, pickles, conventional 'chaats' in buffet, the relaxing welcome drink, tamarind candies, hot water bottles amongst many others. All these features are a part of the fabulous Five Senses Programme to ensure that the Plaza marks an everlasting impression in the lives of their guests.

In order to achieve complete guest satisfaction the Pride Plaza Hotel has also initiated a guest centric system where every team member is well trained to meet a guest's expectation and contribute to creating a lasting impression. All external and internal calls are received at the Pride Services

desk for centralized and smooth communication.

The hosts of dining options available are a paradise for food lovers who wish to experience the refinement of bona fide Asian recipes or relish the aromatic flavors of cosmopolitan cuisine. The 24 hours dining restaurant – Café Pride, the seasonal poolside barbecue restaurant Aqua Grill, the Pan-Asian restaurant – Oriental Spice and Mr. Confectioner – the patisserie offers an array of confectionaries and bakery products. Designed with enticing décor, the lounge bar, Stallion lets one unwind after a long day with refreshing cocktails, mocktails and world-class beverages. What's more, for a dose of tranquility and relaxation, one can head to Spa, the wellness center featuring a fully-equipped fitness center.

The Pride Plaza hotel, with all its eminent features from Five Senses Programme to the one point contact programme, collectively contribute to making it a traditionally luxurious and a truly Indian hotel.



Kailasa Temple

Maharashtra

J

here wouldn't be any who wouldn't have heard of the famous rock carvings found in the Ajanta and the Ellora Caves in India. But there is another hidden gem, tucked at a mere distance of 30 km from Aurangabad in Maharashtra – the Kailasa Temple at Ellora. This 16th century structure is one of the 32 Cave Temples in Ellora but it is definitely the most striking and the memorable one.

The Kailasa Temple, which shares striking resemblance to the Virupaksha Temple in northern Karnataka, was believed to have been built by the 8th century Rashtrakuta King Krishna I between the year 756 and 773 AD. Further, the non- Rashtrakuta style temples, located close, by denotes the involvement of Pallava and Chalukya artists. This rock temple is undoubtedly the largest monolithic structures in the world.

What is most unique about the Kailasa Temple is that it is carved out of a single rock! Yes, all of it was a singular stone at a point, which was hollowed out into what we know as the Kailasa Temple. The temple, it is believed, was built for Lord Shiva and was supposedly designed to mimic the Mount Kailash. The pyramidal structure of the main temple is said to represent the shape of Mount Kailash.

A little climb will take you to the top of the temple and view from there is simply breath taking. The magnitude of it all will surely leave you impressed. The sculpture of Ravana trying to lift Mount Kailash is a definitive landmark in Indian Architecture. There are multiple sculptures around, and like the sign at the entry says, each of them have a definitive legacy. It is also believed that more than 400,000 tons of rock were scooped out to build the Kailasa temple in Ellora caves. It is larger in area than the Pantheon in Greece.



To move, to breathe, to fly, to float, To gain
all while you give, To roam the roads of
lands remote: To travel is to live.

Hans Christian Andersen

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Aurangabad airport
NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Aurangabad
Railway Station
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year
IDEAL FOR: Family and
Friends
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.maharashratourism.gov.in

You don't have to be rich to travel well.

Eugene Fodor



Kanatal

Uttarakhand

Lo

located at a high altitude in the suburban area of Mussoorie on the main Chamba – Mussoorie road, Kanatal is a serene and picturesque hilly town that offers solace and peace from the maddening rush of the city. With picture perfect sceneries and plenty of greens, this quaint town has much to offer in terms of recreation and adventure to the discerning traveller visiting the region.

Popularly served as a weekend getaway for the local populous, Kanatal is a picture perfect hub that boasts of heavenly scenery, luxuriant vegetation, and bountiful adventure activities. If you are looking for a holiday with solemn peace but wouldn't really mind a bit of fun as well, take a trip to Kanatal – away from the urban hassles. Besides stunning natural beauty, there are a number of interesting things to do in Kanatal as well.

The destination also offers plenty of adventure opportunities and is often chosen as a favourite spot for campers. You can take a walk through the Kodia Jungle, which is a dense forest area located at a distance of around one kilometre away from Kanatal. You can spot a few wild animals by taking a ride through the jungle in a jeep, and you can also see Tehri Dam and many natural springs that are quite prevalent in the region.

Not just summers, Kanatal is also best enjoyed during the winter months as it experiences good amount of snow – making it a destination perfect for celebrating a White Christmas or a Snowy New Year. There are many places that you can visit during your trip to Kanatal and the Surkanda Devi Temple is the most popular religious destination, situated at a distance of around 10 km from Kanatal. Thus, be it for adventure, religious or just a getaway into the quiet and beautiful place – Kanatal can be your perfect getaway to spend some quality time with your loved ones.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jolly Grant Airport, Dehradun

NEAREST RAILWAY:
STATION: Dehradun Railway Station, Rishikesh Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Weekend getaway with friends and family

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Konark Dance and Music Festival

Odisha

G

India is a country widely known for its rich cultural heritage and legacy. However, with the course of time, efforts are being made to preserve the various unique forms of arts and culture of the country. One such initiative in this direction is the Konark Dance and Music Festival, which was started in the year 1986 at the Konark Natya Mandap by its Founder-Director Padmashree Guru Gangadhar Pradhan.

The sole aim behind this festival is to bring in many artistes into its cultural family and creating of international cultural amity and brotherhood. This festival has established its own unique identity in the sense that eminent artistes of national and international repute participate and perform Odissi, Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam and other classical, folk and tribal dances/music of our country on the enchanting stage of the Natyashala in the monumental Sun Temple, Konark.

To understand the true essence of the Konark Dance and Music Festival, it is vital to attend one. The stage and the atmosphere is magnified by the spiritual and aesthetic flavour, in the natural ambience of casuarinas and cashew trees. An annual affair, the festival is always held in the winter months and the dates for the three-day festival are decided much in advance. Watching the unrivalled talent from different parts of the world perform Kathak, Odissi, Mohiniattam, etc. is a sight to behold.

An added attraction to this annual festival is that along with the classical dances, a fair is also organised on the side-lines, which displays handmade items, handicrafts and stalls specialising in different cuisines of India. The fair adds a special charm to the colourful dance festival and people visiting the festival of other part of the country or world can take back some authentic souvenirs. Also, the festival serves a wide array of delectable cuisines, making it a perfect venue for a joyful experience at Konark.

Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.

Dalai Lama



Madhumita Raut

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Biju Patnaik International
Airport, Bhubaneswar

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Puri

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
November to February

IDEAL FOR: Family, couple
and friends' vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE
www.odishatourism.gov.in

Travel is never a matter of money but of courage.

Paolo Coelho



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Gorakhpur

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Ramkola & Gorakhpur Railway
station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.uptourism.gov.in

Kushinagar

Uttar Pradesh

B

uddhism is a path of practice and spiritual development leading to insight into the true nature of reality. For people who follow Buddhism as a way of life, Kushinagar, near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, is the holy place where Lord Buddha attained his salvation or the Mahaparnirvana. It is one of the must-visit destinations for people practicing Buddhism and is also a popular tourist site.

From Buddhist followers to the Indian devotees, this is one of the major pilgrimage destinations in Uttar Pradesh. Referred to as the Kushinara in ancient period, the city is a storehouse of architectural marvels. Archaeological excavations have unearthed a number of temples and Stupas which belonged to medieval India. Kushinara was earlier part of the Malla kingdom and its popularity spread all over because of Lord Buddha.

Another major tourist attraction in Kushinagar is the Nirvana Temple. It was near this temple that Lord Buddha passed away and thus it houses a tall statue of Lord Buddha. The Mathakaut Temple in Kushinagar is also one of the important tourist places in Uttar Pradesh. It is in this place, the archaeologists discovered a black stone image of Lord Buddha which was called the 'Bhumi Sparsha Mudra'. The last sermon of Lord Buddha was delivered over here.

The Watt Thai Temple, which is a Japanese temple, is one of the most visited temples in Kushinagar. Along with it, the Chinese temple with Oriental design and décor also attracts plenty of tourists. Every year, on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, there is a month's long fair in Kushinagar, where one can buy a variety of artefacts and souvenirs to take back home. Although this shrine is related to Mahatma Buddha, the surrounding area is Hindu dominated, which is why during fair time, many people from around the place participate with complete reverence and perform puja and worship in various temples.

Two roads diverged in a wood and I took the one less travelled by.

Robert Frost

Lachung

Sikkim

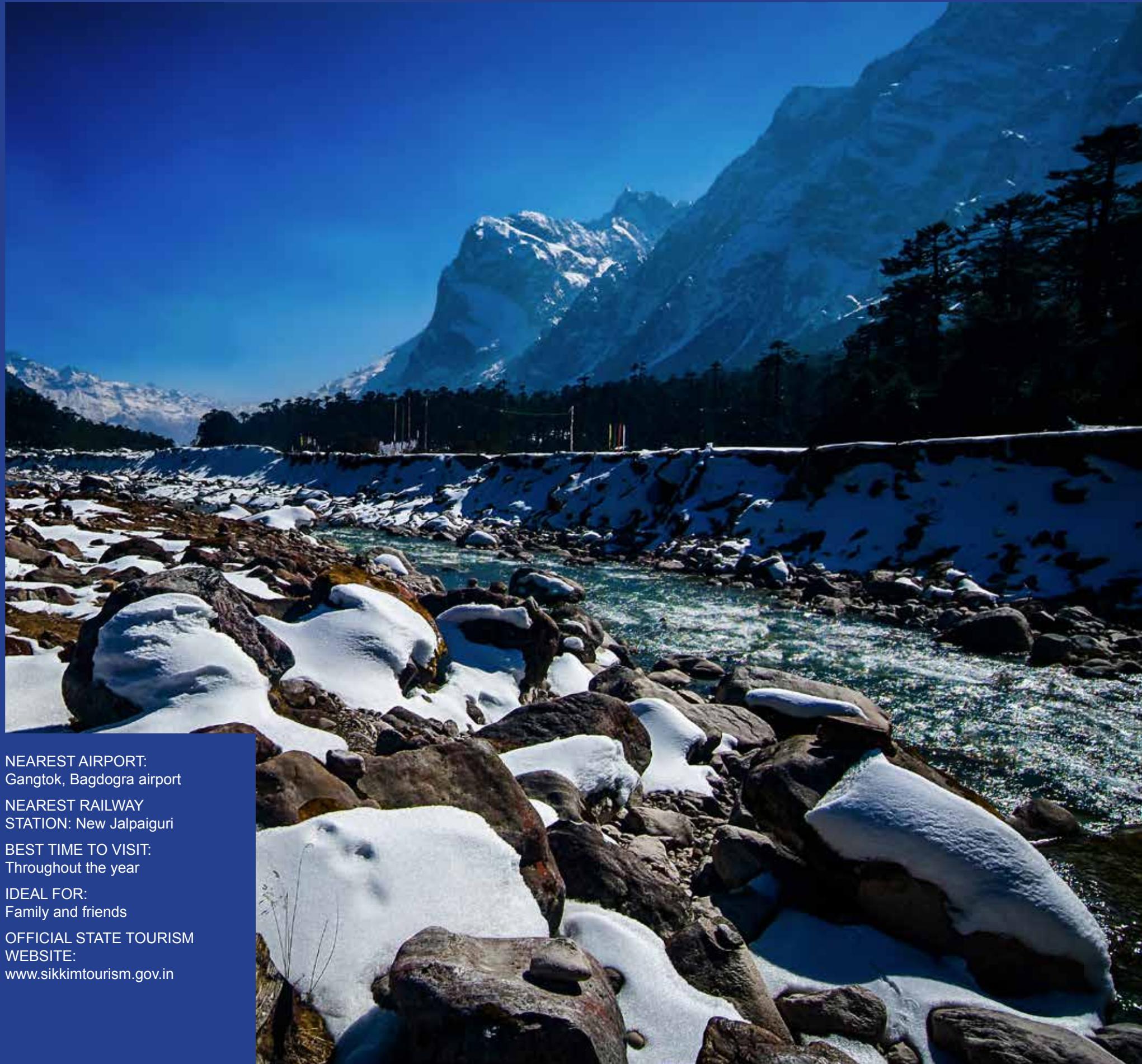
A

small mountain village located at a distance of about 120 km from Gangtok, Lachung is a quaint hub brimming with scenic beauty and natural splendour. From an adventure enthusiast to a honeymoon couple, there is something in store for everyone visiting this destination. Once in Lachung, you will immediately fall in love with this small pretty town that has much to hold a tourist captive for numerous days.

A breath taking Himalayan village, nestled in the lap of North Sikkim, Lachung is an epitome of scenic beauty peppered with tall dark mountains, gushing waterfalls, striking fruit orchards and meandering glacial rivers. You can be a vacationer, a honeymooning couple, a nature lover, a photography geek or an adventure aficionado, Lachung will hold you captive with its beauty and send you back with memories that will last a lifetime.

Travellers who are up for some adventure in Lachung, would be spoilt for choice in this town, thanks to its numerous offerings. The 'Zero Point' also known as 'Yumesamdong' is a popular trekking destination that leaves every adventure junkie with some thrilling and breath-taking vistas of nature. For true adventure lovers, 'Mt. Katao' sits as a must visit place and which is sure to leave them enthralled with never-ending fun of snow-boarding, skiing and snow-tubing. However, prior permission from the Indian Army is a must for visiting Mt. Katao.

Lachung, meaning 'Small Pass' houses the beautiful Lachung Monastery (or gompa), which is decked with wonderful wall murals and also several ancient statues. The monastery holds religious dance on 28th and 29th day of the 10th Buddhist month (December). When in Lachung, one must also visit the Carpet Weaving Centre where you can see the local ladies weaving exquisite woollen carpets. The Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary is also a place of tourist interest in the region.



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Gangtok, Bagdogra airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: New Jalpaiguri

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.sikkmtourism.gov.in

Tourists don't know where they've been, travellers don't know where they're going.

Paul Theroux



Manas National Park

Assam

atching Wildlife in their natural habitat is as soothing as watching the waves' splash in an ocean or basking in the sun on a cold day. While there is no dearth of wildlife options in India, it is indeed unique how each state of the country in varied in their offering of the same. One such reserve is the Manas National Park in Assam, North East, which is home to some of the most unique and exotic wildlife species.

Manas, at the base of foot hills of the Bhutan-Himalayas in the state of Assam, North East, with unique biodiversity and landscape is one of the first reserves included in the network of tiger reserve under Project tiger in 1973. About the half of the Park is covered by Grasslands of Terai and Bhabar type and most areas have colonising grasslands and woodlands of several species. There are more than 650 species of Angiosperms alone. The commonly seen trees are the Simul, Oxi, Sissoo, Khaie, Gamari, etc.

Manas National Park is the only place that has been marked as a biosphere reserve, a natural heritage site, Project Tiger Reserve, and Project Elephant Reserve all at the same time. Located in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, the park is flanked by the giant Manas River separating it from Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan. Home to the Royal Bengal Tiger and Wild Buffaloes, it offers you a myriad of activities to appreciate the diversity of the region.

The park is open every day from the period of November to April, which is also the best time to visit it mainly because the weather is pleasant and there is higher probability of spotting more fauna. The park is partially opened in the months of May and October. Since June to September is the monsoon period, the park remains closed. The main attractions of forest are Leopard, Tiger, and Panther.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Guwahati airport
NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Barpeta Road
BEST TIME TO VISIT:
April to November
IDEAL FOR: Family, friends and solo travellers
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE
www.tourism.assam.gov.in

Mandu

Madhya Pradesh

M

adhya Pradesh, the heart of India, is brimming with touristy offerings, so much so that a vacationer is truly spoilt for choice. Perhaps, this is why some of its most prized jewels are lost in the bouquet of options and not given their due prominence, despite having all the ingredients of a popular tourist attraction. One such place is Mandu, which is now slowly gaining prominence on the tourism map of MP.

Mandu or Mandavgarh is a ruined city, which is celebrated for its fine architecture, created during Malwa period. Located in the Dhar district of Western Madhya Pradesh, Central India, Mandu provides various impressive views of lakes, waterfalls, and incredible monuments, to lure tourists to visit the region. The region is an epitome of architectural excellence that our ancestors seemed to have achieved. This city is testament to the unconditional love between Prince Baz Bahadur and Rani Roopmati. Mandu also boasts of the oldest erected monument of India.

The city of Mandu is adorned with spell-binding Afghan architecture surrounded by baobab trees, native to Africa. The grand palaces are still alive with royal romance while the gateways (darwazas) speak of a history of imperial conquests. A walk through Mandu will leave you awe-struck, the way you used to be listening to stories from grandparents.

Floating over its own reflection, the Jahaz Mahal in Mandu looks like a ship that's about to sail. However, for centuries, this ship, made of stone and mortar never did. Instead, it stood floating over the twin lakes, bearing a silent witness to Mandu's long, rich and varied history.

There are several places to visit in Mandu, such as, palaces, mosques, Jain temples of the 14th century and other buildings and the oldest mosque here dates from 1405. The finest of them all is Jama Masjid, which is a unique piece of Pashtun architecture. Some of the buildings in this region are recognized by UNESCO World Heritage Site, including Rupmati's Pavilion, which is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Mandu.

Travel far enough, you meet yourself

David Mitchell



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Indore, Devi Ahilya Bai
Holkar

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Ratlam Junction

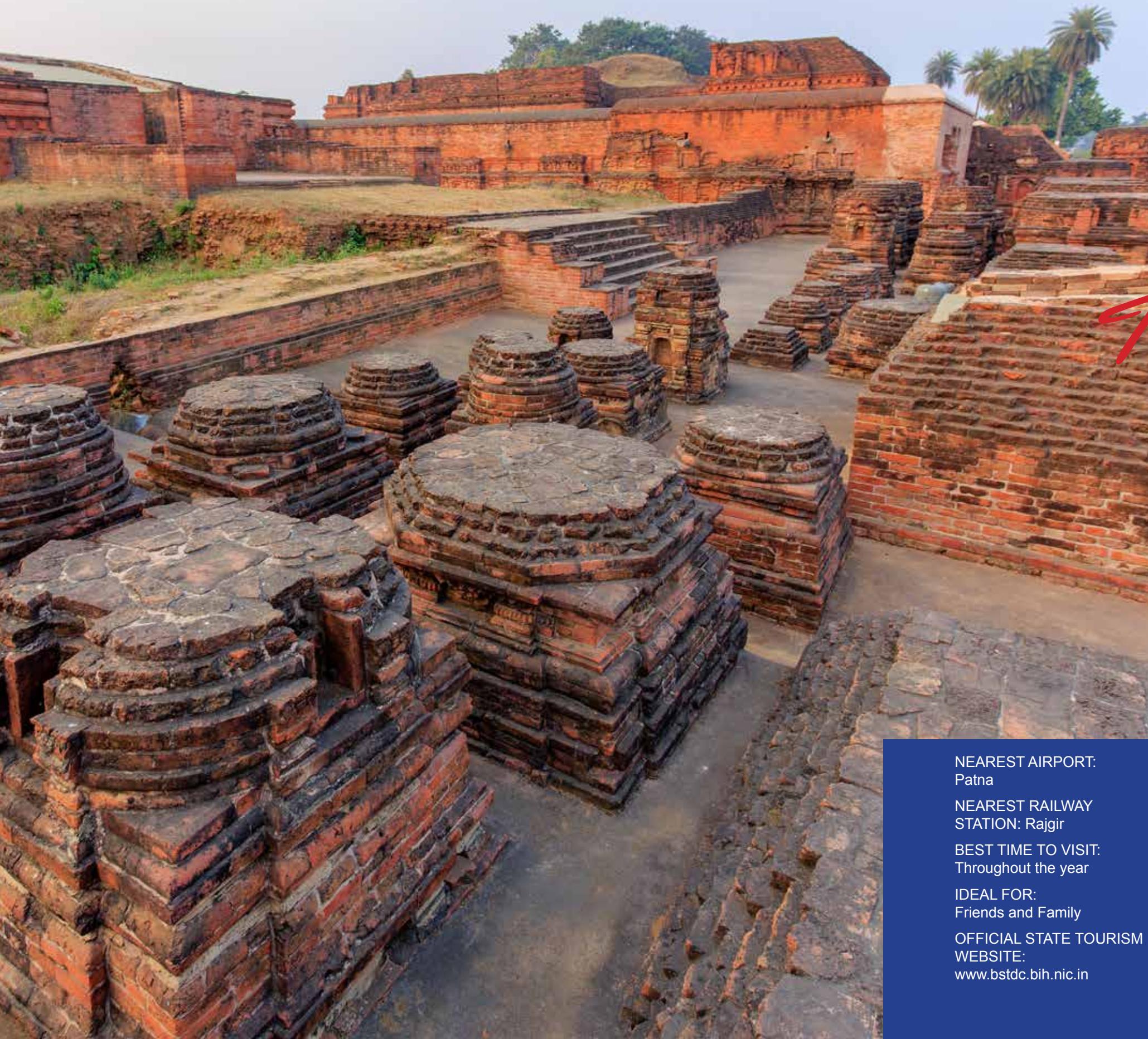
BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family and
friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.mptourism.com

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

Marcel Proust



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Patna
NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Rajgir
BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year
IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.bstdc.bih.nic.in

A

UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Nalanda Remains is a landmark destination for those who follow Buddhism as a way of life and for those who don't, it is a unique destination which is a storehouse of historical significance. Evidence shows that Nalanda was a learning centre in the early 5th to the 7th century BCE. According to sources, Gautam Buddha gave away lectures in a close-by mango grove called Pavarika and saviour Jain Thirthankara and Mahavira also stayed at Nalanda for about 14 rainy seasons, thus validating the existence of the place to the time period mentioned.

Nalanda, which was once a large Buddhist monastery, now in ruins, was one of the most publicly acknowledged Mahaviharas of ancient India located in ancient Magadha kingdom (modern Bihar). The place today not only boasts of being one of the most revered Buddhist tourism sites in India but also continues to draw attention of scholars, historians and archaeologists from across the world.

The Tibetan Lama Taranatha of the 17th century mentioned that a huge temple was constructed at the site of chaitya of Shatiputra at Nalanda by the great Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, Ashoka who later embraced Buddhism. Taranatha also stated that Nagarjuna, a 3rd-century CE luminary and Mahayana philosopher remained chief of the institution while his contemporary, another luminary Suvishnu constructed around 108 temples in the area.

The Great Stupa, the Nalanda Archaeological Museum and the Nalanda Multimedia Museum are the other attractions in Nalanda. With a host of several stupas, monasteries, temples and chaityas built by the Gupta Kings, Ashoka and Harshadhana, Nalanda is a rare combination of outstanding achievements in institution-building, site-planning, art, and architecture, Nalanda symbolised the multiplicity of knowledge production, the innovative processes of the organised transmission of ideas through education, and a shared heritage of people living in multiple regions of Asia. The new Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, constructed in 1951 and dedicated to the research and study of Buddhism and Pali Literature is a new stopover for guests visiting Nalanda.

Nalanda Remains

Bihar

Netarhat

Jharkhand

9

If one were to closely see and examine the tourism treasures that are in bounty here, one would realise that the tourism potential of the state of Jharkhand remains highly unexplored. From hills to forests to falls and dams; from mines to temples to caves and springs, the region has it all – in plenty and flourishing in its natural habitat. One such hidden jewel is the quaint town of Netarhat, which is even touted as the ‘Queen of Chhota Nagpur’.

Encircled by low hills, forests and hilly springs, Netarhat nestles like a secret refuge in the heart of Jharkhand. Once home to several tribes, the hills caught fancy of the British rulers who converted it into a hill station and also gave it its popular title - ‘Queen of Chhota Nagpur’. However, with time, the hill station has moved far beyond its colonial days and in today’s time is known for its natural beauty and a public residential school, which was opened in 1954.

Tales ranging from birth of Hanuman to that of unrequited love will colour your visit to naturally beautiful Netarhat, which is also a popular weekend getaway from Ranchi, the state capital, about 150 km away by road. Reaching Netarhat from the plains is part of the fun. The rolling hills are covered with sal, palash and muhuwa trees. The steep hill road ('ghat' road) cuts through the forests, runs past some sharp bends, finally flattening into a plateau on which perches Netarhat at a height of 1,250 metres, amidst cypress and pine trees. Upon reaching, a huge gate welcomes you to the town.

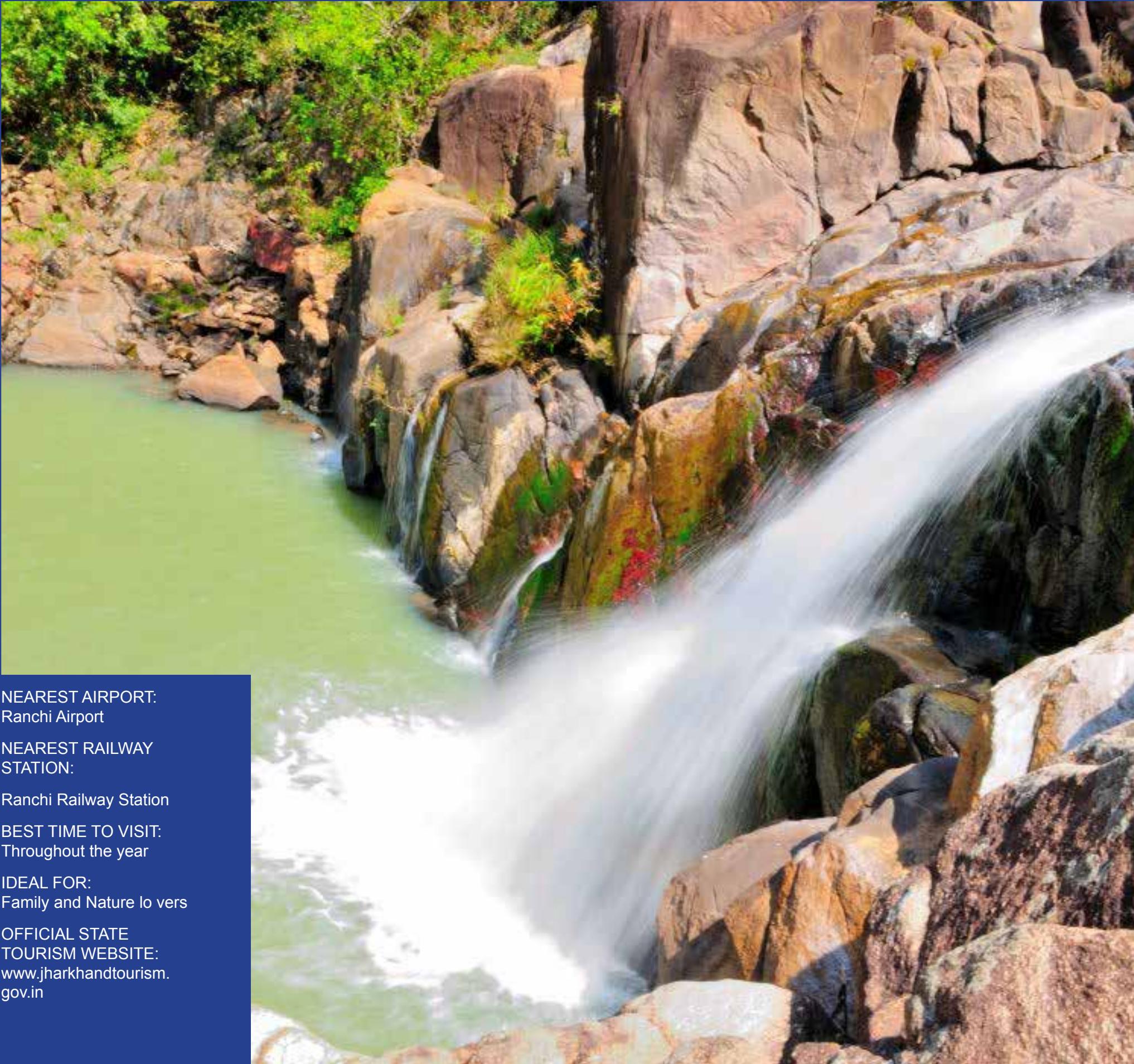
The hills surrounding Netarhat are dotted with hilly springs and waterfalls. The Upper Ghagri waterfall is located at a distance of about 6 km from Netarhat while the lower Ghagri is at another 4 km away from here. The area has many orchards growing pears (nashpati). To reach both the waterfalls, you will have to leave the car behind and walk through the forest, which is also an adventurous walk full of beauty amidst abundant natural flora and fauna.

Besides the waterfalls, while in Netarhat, one can also visit the popular Sunrise Point to enjoy spectacular views of the rising Sun and take a tour of the famous Betla National Park, which is home to many wild animals.

MARIAN KISPOTTA

Without new experiences, something inside of us sleeps. The sleeper must awaken.

Frank Herbert



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Ranchi Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:

Ranchi Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and Nature lovers

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jharkhandtourism.gov.in

Nothing lasts forever, except the day before you start your vacation.

Gayland Anderson



Neemrana Fort-Palace

Rajasthan

P

assion was the force driving two indefatigable travellers on the roads of Rajasthan, Francis Wacziarg and Aman Nath, the founders of the Neemrana Hotels. Today Neemrana stands as a paradigm of heritage conservation, and is an epitome of grace, simplicity and luxury, giving you a glimpse into authentic India.

What was first spotted in 1977 as a vast and splendid ruin of the Fort Palace of Neemrana has since become synonymous in India as a foremost example of architectural restoration-for-reuse. The brand has been continuously focussed on restoring India's past historical wonders into modern day heritage hotels, which can give a true picture about our culture, heritage and values to the discerning traveller.

Neemrana Fort Palace takes a lot of pride in being a premier heritage hotel of Rajasthan as also a unique hotel of India. Special care has been taken in ensuring that these time-honoured structures are restored and preserved with authenticity to take you back to the medieval times. This awe-inspiring heritage hotel near Delhi Jaipur highway is a perfect destination for your regal vacation in Jaipur.

This 15th-century heritage hotel in Rajasthan is among the most popular resorts near Delhi for weekend breaks and is ideal to invent your own past at the dream site of history. Nine palace wings built over 14 levels tiered into a hill across 2.5 hectares/6 acres of garden-palace, make this heritage hotel one of the best places to stay near Jaipur. Hanging gardens, two pools to swim out to the horizon, an Ayurvedic spa, and India's first zip-line is what the world comes to experience!

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Indira Gandhi International
Airport, Delhi

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:**
Alwar Railway Station,
Rajasthan

ACCOMMODATION:
74 rooms & suites

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the Year

IDEAL FOR:
Family Holidays & Couple Stay

OFFICIAL WEBSITE:
[www.neemranahotels.com/
fort-palace-neemrana/](http://www.neemranahotels.com/fort-palace-neemrana/)

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Nubra Valley

Jammu and Kashmir

O

ne of the pristine and unexploited destinations from the Northern India, Nubra Valley is a gift from the heaven above. Though it is a remote area but it was never segregated and the destination enjoys a good tourist footfall. The place catches a lot of enthusiasm from trekkers. Nubra Valley has a lot to offer to tourists from around the world and one will never go insatiated from here.

Nubra Valley is a high height desert land in Ladakh with a lack of vegetation except for river banks. Known as the Orchard of Ladakh, Nubra Valley, is an absolute paradise for an avid nature admirer. It offers breath taking scenery, with green oasis villages surrounded by thrillingly stark scree slopes, and harsh arid mountains, strongly reminiscent of Pakistan's Northern Areas. There are sand dunes, monasteries, and a ruined palace and – at Turtuk and Bogdang – a whole different culture (Balti) to discover.

It is not just scenic natural beauty of Nubra that attracts tourists. The valley is predominantly Buddhist and boasts of several centres of Buddhist learning. Ensa, Samsteling, Diskit and Hunder monastery are famous Buddhist monasteries. The Nubra Valley is often also regarded as the Orchard of Ladakh, which is a major trade Centre for horticultural crops, Pashmina wool and woollen textiles. Moreover, it's famous for producing fruits such as walnuts, apples, almonds, apricots, and staple crops like barley, wheat, etc.

Surrounded by the Himalayas, summers are pleasant and winters are harsh in the Nubra Valley. Overall Ladakh experiences extremely cold climate throughout the year. During winters, the entire valley looks like the scene of the moon and in summer loaded with greenery. The best time to visit is in the hotter summer months from June to August, when one can relish the chilling Himalayan Mountains.



To awaken quite alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world.

Freya Stark

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Leh Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Jammu Tawi Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
April to June and
September to October

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and solo travellers

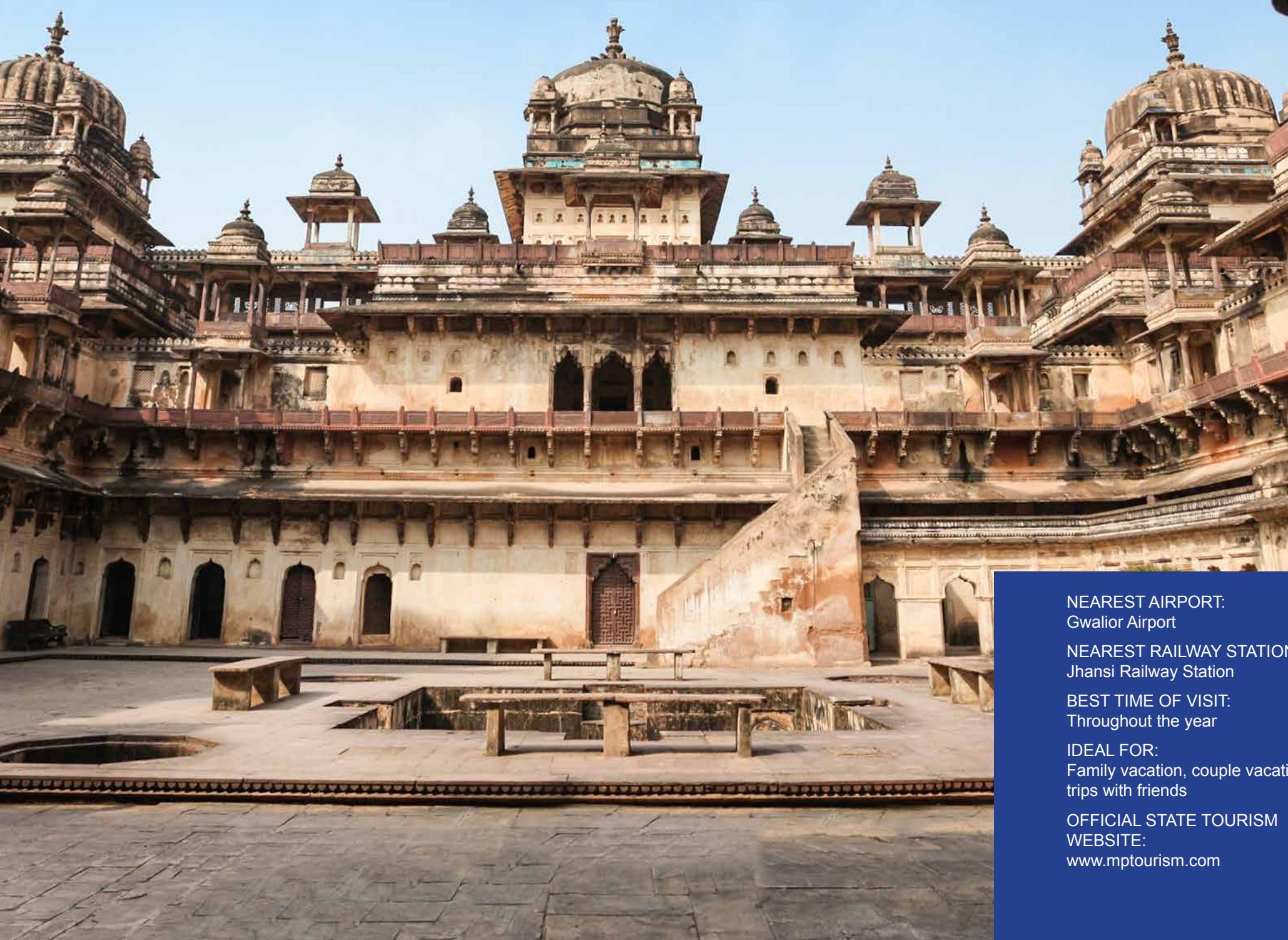
OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jktourism.jk.gov.in

Orchha

Madhya Pradesh

Don't tell me how educated you are, tell me how much you have travelled.

Mohammed



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Gwalior Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Jhansi Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation,
trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.mptourism.com

The historical and cultural town of Orchha enjoys a prominent place on the tourism map of central India. Located on the banks of the Betwa River, Orchha was once the capital of one of the largest and most powerful kingdoms of Central India – the Bundela rulers. The Bundela Rajput chieftain, Rudra Pratap had founded the city that went on to become home to many forts, palaces and temples, which continues to attract visitors till date.

Orchha highlights the magnificence and splendour of the Bundelas. Snuggled in the lustrous Bundelkhand countryside, this beautiful place is bestowed with natural beauty and grandeur. It's a must visit destination that gives a delightful experience to leisure travellers. A small sleepy village encircled by a woody forest looks more beautiful with its majestic temples and garish monuments. In Orchha, you will be spoilt for choices regarding what to see and what not to.

Any visit to Orchha is incomplete without visiting the famous fort complex called Orchha Fort. The Fort comprises three main palaces within it called Raj Mahal, Jahangir Mahal and Rai Parveen Mahal – each having a story and history of its own. The Orchha Fort is the centre of the heritage and cultural legacy of the region and is visited by tourists in large numbers all through the year. Here Lord Rama is not treated as God but a King.

Up next, the Chaturbhuj temple at Orchha has its own unique charm. Built on a massive rock platform opposite to the Raja Mahal, this temple was constructed by Raja Madhukar in the 16th century and is an abode of Lord Vishnu. There are a good number of steps to climb in order to reach the temple but the view from the top is simply breath taking. Besides these, the cluster of the Chhatris along the Kanchana Ghat of the Betwa River is another imposing and attractive features in Orchha, which date back to the 17th and 18th century.

Panchmarhi

Madhya Pradesh

J

The state of Madhya Pradesh is most popular for its temples, caves and wildlife. While there is no dearth of touristy options in the area, every region has a best-kept secret, tucked away from the cacophony of everyday life and offering the perfect solace, which is much-needed in today's hectic life. Panchmarhi, by virtue of being Madhya Pradesh's only hill station, is the state's best offering for those who are looking to spend some quality time with nature.

A large plateau surrounded by lofty hills of the Satpura range, Panchmarhi, standing at an altitude of 1067 m is a land full of greens and deep ravines, which makes an unconquerable combination for any nature lover. A land that is home to more than 65 waterfalls, each more beautiful than the other, Panchmarhi has plenty to offer to the adventurous youth, who are not happy just gazing at the beauty and want to try their hand at some sports and fun activities also.

The town of Pachmarhi has an interesting connection with history. Legend has it that the year that Rani of Jhansi and her Maratha soldiers declared Mutiny, a rather ordinary English officer who had a way with words, was sent to the dense Satpura jungles to quell a rebellion. After walking for 17 miles, Captain Forsyth of the Bengal Lancers found himself 2000 feet above the sea and a saucer-shaped plateau spread out before him and this is how Panchmarhi was discovered.

Recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the vegetation of Panchmarhi has changed over the years paving way for denser forests and greener banks. The destination is famous for its ancient caves, monuments, waterfalls, natural beauty, forest and the flora and fauna. Some of the must-see places include Handi Khoh, Jata Shankar Cave, Pandava Caves, Apsara Vihar, Bee Falls, Duchess Falls and more. An ideal sunset is best enjoyed in Panchmarhi.



We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.

Jawaharlal Nehru

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhopal Airport and
Jabalpur Airport

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:** Pipariya and
Bhopal Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
www.mptourism.com

Live life with no excuses, travel with no regret

Oscar Wilde



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Indira Gandhi International
Airport, Delhi

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Panipat Junction

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Winter Months

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.haryanatourism.gov.in

P

anipat, the textile city of India, is situated in the heart of Haryana and is one that holds immense importance in the history of India. It is perhaps the only place where the history took shape within its borders. Historical connection along with its numerous monuments is what marks Panipat as an important tourist destination. Forts, temples, museums, Panipat has everything in store catering to all kind of tourists.

For those who wish to read the narratives of what happened during the battles in Panipat, the best option is to visit the Museum, which is one the major attractions in the vicinity. The museum also houses some of the must see pieces of contemporary art and craft belonging to the bygone era. Occupying a glorious place, in the history of India, it is said that, at the time of battle of Mahabharata, out of the five villages which were demanded by the Pandavas from Duryodhana, "Panipat" was also one of them.

If art and craft fascinates and interests you, then Panipat is just the right place for you to satiate your travel taste buds. As many as three battles were fought in the city that gave it a historical significance in true sense. The area is dotted with monuments and places of great historicl significance and legacy.

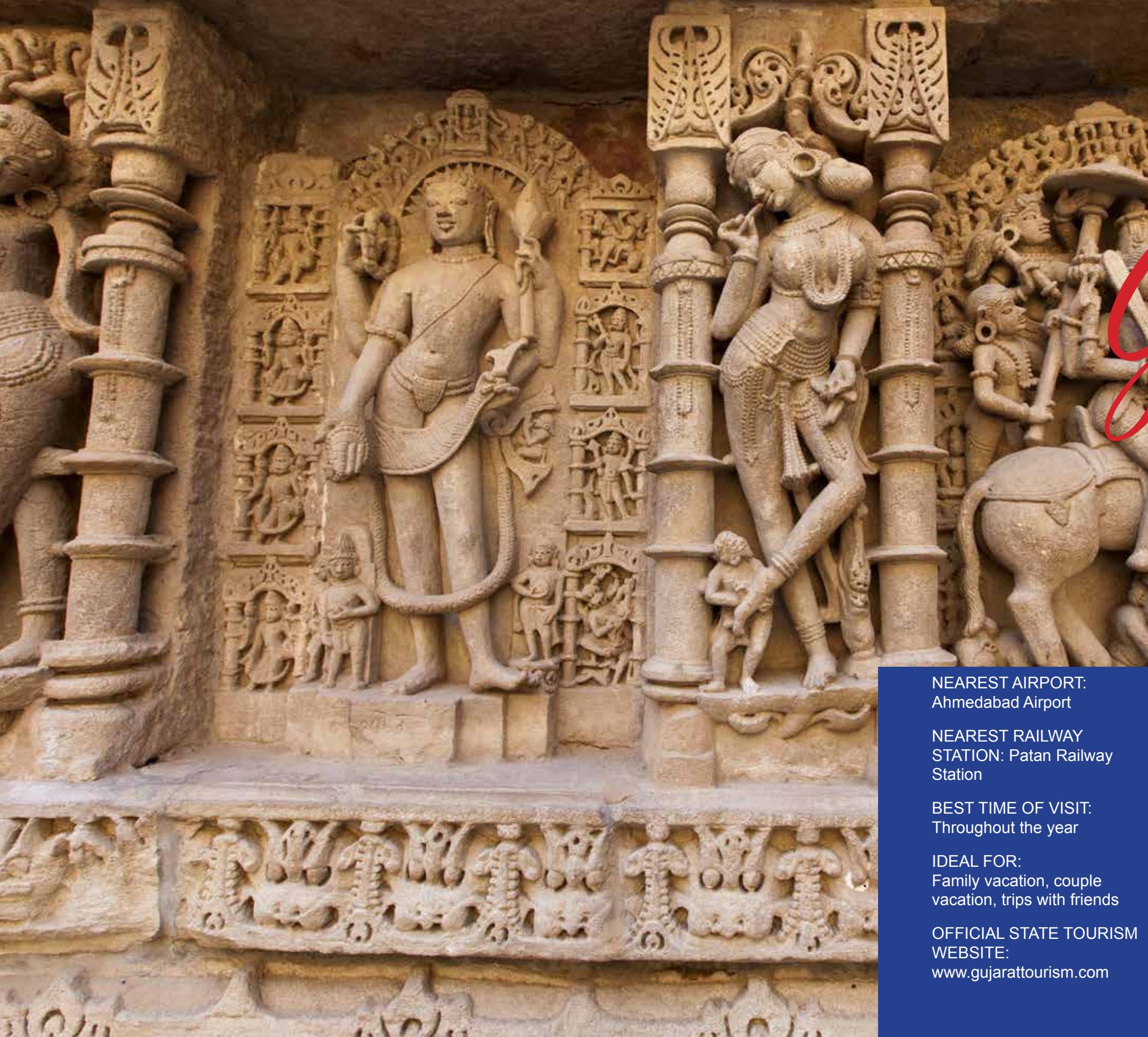
Also called as the city of weavers, Panipat manufactures textiles such as *darri*, carpet mat, table cover, bed sheet, bed cover, curtain etc. which are exported to Canada, Japan, Germany and Australia. The city has developed over a period of time and has unlimited employment opportunities to offer. Not only from Haryana but businessmen, engineer, weavers and labourers from other states of India as well visit here in search of employment and settle here permanently.

Panipat

Haryana

If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light. Take off all your envies, jealousies, unforgiveness, selfishness and fears.

Cesare Paves



Patan Gujarat

Gujarat is a treasure trove of tourist offerings no matter where you go. From its tiniest of towns to its big posh cities, each destination has a bouquet of attractions of varied nature that are enough to keep a traveller hooked for long. One of the lesser known amongst the lot is the historic town of Patan, which is situated at a distance of 130 km from Ahmedabad and which was once of the Rajputana state before independence.

Patan, an ancient fortified city, was founded in 745 AD by Vanraj Chavda, the most prominent king of the Chavda dynasty. He named the city "Anhilpur Patan" or "Anhilwad Patan" after his close friend and Prime Minister Anhil Gadariya. Today, Patan is celebrated the world over for its exquisite Patola silk sarees besides numerous places of interest to visit and festivals to celebrate.

Not many of you would know that the famous 'Rani ki Vav' – a stepwell, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site is featured on the new 100 rupee note of India. This historical place with over 1500 intricate sculptures, big and small is a unique step-well that is an exquisite example of world-class craftsmanship in the bygone era. The stepwell was built as a memorial to an 11th century AD King Bhimdev I.

There are as many as 100 and more temples in Patan dedicated to various gods including a number of Jain temples. The most famous of these are Mahavir Swami Derasar in Dhnadherwad and Panchasara Derasar. In addition to this, there are other five jinalayas in this complex. Also worth seeing is the Sahasralinga Tank or Sahasralinga Talav, which is a medieval artificial water tank in Patan, Gujarat. It was commissioned during Chaulukya (Solanki) rule and is a monument of national importance protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Ahmedabad Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Patan Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.gujarattourism.com

Travel and change of place impart new vigour to the mind.

Seneca



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Patna Airport (Lok Nayak
Jayaprakash Narayan
International Airport.)

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Patna Railway Junction

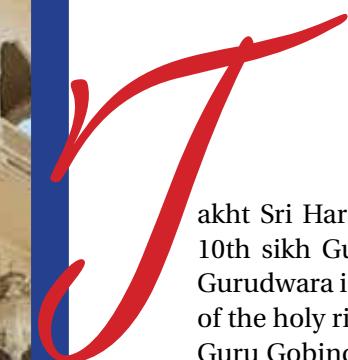
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.bihartourism.gov.in

Patna Sahib

Bihar



Takht Sri Harmandir Ji, Patna Sahib Gurudwara is birth place of the 10th sikh Guru named Shri Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj. This famous Gurudwara is situated at the north-eastern part of Patna on the banks of the holy river Ganga. Commemorating the 10th Guru of Sikhs, Shri Guru Gobind Singh, the Gurudwara has both historical and religious significance in the lives of many people.

Being one of the holiest pilgrimages for the Sikh community, Patna Sahib witnesses a massive tourist footfall from all regions, religions and beliefs. One can actually connect directly with the Almighty here in the serenity and calmness of the Gurudwara remaining spiritually motivated. The grandeur of the Gurudwara can be seen in the glittery marble building, which is the epitome of Sikh architecture.

Takht Sri Harimandir Sahib is the principal shrine at Patna Sahib and one of the five Takhts or the highest seats of religious authority for the Sikhs. It also marks the site of the Chhoti Sangat. The present five-storey building was constructed during 1954-57 through kar-seva. The sanctorum representing the room where Guru Gobind Singh was born has a circumambulatory passage around it. Adjacent to it is the spacious high-ceilinged congregation hall. The arch of the door of the inner sanctum opening on the congregation hall is covered with gilded copper plates embossed with floral design matching the marble sculpture on the interior walls. Of the three canopied seats facing the hall, the central one has Guru Granth Sahib (holy book of the sikha) seated on it. The relics preserved here include a pair of wooden sandals, an old gown, several weapons and hukamnamas.

The months of winter from October to February make an ideal time to visit Patna Sahib Gurudwara. Also, in December the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Ji is celebrated with much pomp and pride, attracting the maximum number of visitors.

Ponmudi

Kerala

J

here is plenty to see in God's own country. From hill stations to temples, beaches and more, the state is flushed with natural bounty, offering a traveller plenty of options to choose from. So if you want to experience a holiday, where the greens are a shade greener, air a degree cleaner and environs extremely soothing, without the hustle bustle of thronging tourists, visit Ponmudi, a quaint hill station in Kerala.

Situated at a distance of 60 km from the capital Trivandrum, Ponmudi is located at an altitude of 600 m above the sea level and is often regarded as the 'Golden Peak' of the South. For all adventure seekers, the destination has much to offer in the form of adventure sports such as trekking, rock climbing, mountaineering, etc. Tourists here can go on long leisurely walks along the meandering roads that wind up the hill. This beautiful hill station offers breath taking scenic views and is also home to many natural springs that helps keep the valley lush green.

The hill station of Ponmudi houses lush and full tea gardens that make it a picture perfect location. The view from the cottages and resorts up the hill at Ponmudi is breath taking and it feels as though time has left this place untouched. The quaint place is also an ideal picnic spot least haunted by tourists and therefore the most peaceful of all Kerala hill stations. Embellished with rapids flowing over the road, and misty peaks thronged by an exotic vegetation, the hill station of Ponmudi is a hikers and trekkers paradise. Ponmudi offers to soothe your work worn mind and body to rejuvenation. One can hike through the slopes of tea gardens to watch the pickers at work or just fascinatingly observe fish in the emerald waters of the Kallar River to make the most of the Ponmudi hill station.

Travel makes a wise man better, and a fool worse.

Thomas Fuller



NEAREST AIRPORT:

Thiruvananthapuram
International Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY

STATION: Thiruvananthapuram
Central Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:

Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:

Family vacation, trips with
friends, couple vacation

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM

WEBSITE:
www.keralatourism.gov.in

The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are.

Samuel Johnson

“



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhuj Airport and Ahmedabad Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Bhuj Railway station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.gujarattourism.com

Rann of Kutch

Gujarat



ough the place has been fairly publicised and talked about on various platforms by Gujarat Tourism, the destination still has huge potential to receive more visitors who would like to see and experience a unique region. World's largest salt desert measuring about 10,000 sq km, the region here is divided into two distinct areas -- the Great Rann and the Little Rann -- each offering different experiences. The former is best known for its spectacular landscapes, while the latter destination is a hub of wildlife and salt farming.

Kutch, which means “intermittently wet and dry”, is a unique destination for its distinctive feature of staying submerged in water during the monsoon season and then drying up to become this white salty plateau during the winter months. Given the tempestuous climate, most travellers visit the Great Rann in winter for the best chance to see the lunar-like landscapes. There is nothing more breath taking than to watch these white expanse of lands during a full moon-lit night – a sight that will leave you with memories to last a lifetime.

The Rann of Kutch region is also home to a range of ecologically rich wildlife such as the flamingos and the wild ass that can be spotted around the desert often. Rann is also a part of a few sanctuaries such as the Indian wild ass sanctuary, Kutch desert wildlife sanctuary etc. It is a paradise for wildlife photographers and nature enthusiasts alike.

A popular time to visit the place is during the Rann Utsav, organised by the Gujarat Tourism from November to February, each year. A temporary city with hundreds of luxury tents is set up near the Gateway to Rann Resort at Dhordo along with rows of food and handicraft stalls.

It is a Carnival of Music, Dance, natural beauty of White Rann and much, when visited under the full Moon. Kutch Rann Utsav is the shimmering landscape that gives the enchanting moments of this Fest, which feels like 'Heaven on Earth' during festival time.

Sadda Pind

A Portrait of Punjab

A

culture of multi-hued heritage of ancient civilisations, full of high spiritedness and compassion, with its diversity reflected in its fine poetry, spirituality, artistry, cuisine, traditions and over-the-top festivity in heart-warming dance genres like *giddha, bhangra, jhumar, sammi*, Punjab, earlier known as *Sapt Sindhava* is a land of celebration, gaiety, merriment, revelry and jubilance.

It may take a lifetime to soak in the beauty, culture, tradition, euphoria and high spirits (literally) of Punjab but for *Sadda Pind*, an exquisite Punjabi living museum which offers an exceptional opportunity to experience rich authentic culture, colours and flavours of Punjab's traditional village at one place. Nestled in the divine city of Amritsar and not very far from, Golden Temple, *Sadda Pind* has recreated a typical Punjabi village in all its glory with great attention to detail. Spread over 12 acres and marked by Punjab's vibrance and tradition, it showcases the lifestyle in a pre-Independence Punjabi village.

As in a Pind (village) of earlier times, it is amusing to see the real brick-and-stone houses of the *sarpanch, zamindar, nambardar, sunar, kumhar, lohar, kissan, and tangewala*. They have been decorated with authentic rustic interiors featuring the life of a rural artisan. Interestingly, the whole village including the guest rooms have been adorned with antique objects, motifs which have been thoroughly sourced from interiors of Punjab to reflect the rusticity of a traditional village.

Its *baraat ghar* and the village haveli are the places to witness the soulful musical culture of Punjab where folk songs and dances are performed all day. The display of folk dances like *bhangra, jhumar, kikli, gidda*, and musical instruments like *nagara, gagar* and *tumba* represent the endless energy of Punjab. From blacksmiths, potters, weavers and host of artisans displaying their work and products like *juttis, clay toys, phulkaris, durries, parandis*, hand-made shawls, and agricultural implements, *Sadda Pind* is in true sense a celebration of Punjabi culture. Not to forget, *Sadda Pind* also offers special culinary experience with authentic Punjabi food like *Makki Di Roti, Sarson da Saag, Kadhi Chawal, Rajma Chawal, Amritsari naan & chole, lassi*, traditional thali and much more.

There are so many traditional activities and experiences for the guests to enjoy including kids that everyone feels engrossed and immersed in an era gone by. It is precisely the reason that so many heads of countries have visited this cultural milieu including Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Mauritius President Ameenah Gurib.



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Sri Guru Ram Das Jee
International Airport, Amritsar

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Amritsar Junction

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the Year

ACCOMMODATION:
20 Spacious Guest Rooms

IDEAL FOR:
Family & Couple Vacations

OFFICIAL WEBSITE:
<https://www.saddapind.co.in>

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
<http://punjabtourism.gov.in>

Shekhawati

Rajasthan

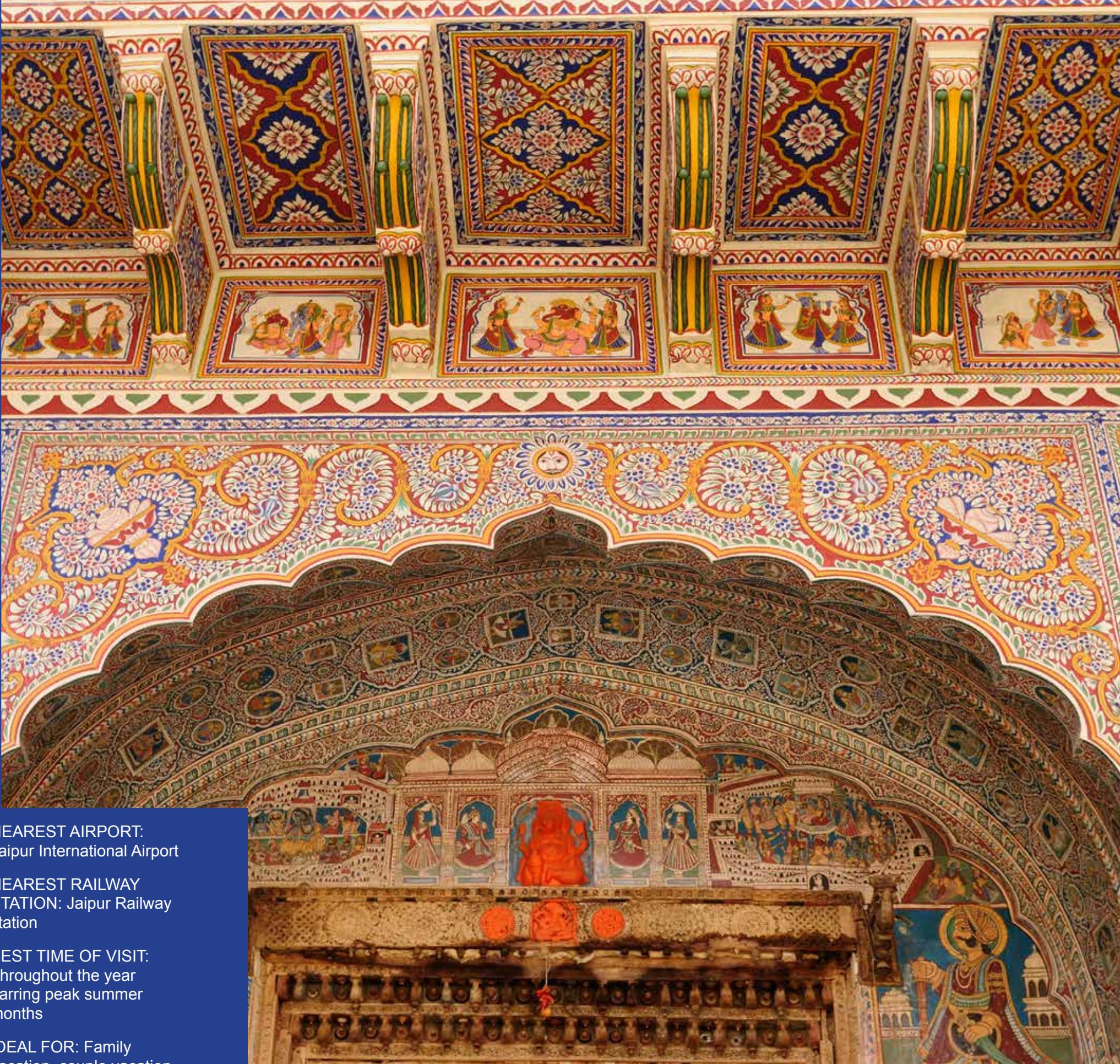
W

hen we think of Rajasthan, images of culturally rich cities, lavish palaces, havelis, royal houses, heritage museums immediately come to our mind. This is because the region is blessed with abundant tradition, which has for years been attracting visitors who come to see the place and get a taste of royalty. Shekhawati, though small in size compared to its other counterparts, also does not disappoint a tourist who has come in search of majestic offerings and opulence seeped with history.

The sprawling old havelis of Shekhawati are an architectural marvel that were built between the late 18th and early 20th centuries by local Marwari merchants, who had migrated to the port cities of Mumbai and Kolkata to seek their fortunes. With a touch of British influence and urban inspiration, their homes, over the years, grew increasingly grand, reflecting their newfound wealth and social status. These havelis like the Bhagtonki haveli, Anadilalpoddar haveli, Khedwal Bhawan and others are one of the main attractions in the region today. These mural paintings are an expression of the artisanship of yesteryear Rajasthani people.

Nawalgarh, a small town in Shekhawati region is known as 'the land of Havelis'. The charming place features two grand havelis – Morarka Haveli and Podar Haveli, which have been transformed into museums and are definitely must a visit. Besides, this, you can see the Sethani Ka Johara, which is one of the finest reservoirs that holds water from one monsoon to the next and fascinates several animals, birds and Nilgais. Kanhaiyalal Bagla Haveli is also a popular attraction.

Sikar, which is home to a plethora of outstanding temples and havelis like Bansidhar Rathi Haveli, Ram Chokhani Haveli, Kedia Haveli, Sanganeria Haveli, Mirijamal Kyala Haveli, the Jeen Mata temple and Radha Murli Manohar temple is a popular attraction in the region. When in Shekhawati, you must not forget to visit the Ratnagarh Fort. This 18th century fort boasts of many monuments, striking gateway and a clock tower.



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jaipur International Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jaipur Railway
station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year
barring peak summer
months

IDEAL FOR: Family
vacation, couple vacation,
trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it.

Greg Anderson

A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving.

Lao Tzu



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Lucknow Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Lucknow Junction

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.uptourism.gov.in

Shravasti

Uttar Pradesh

S

hravasti, located at a distance of 160 km from the state capital of Lucknow is an important place in the Buddhist circuit in India. Legend has it that Shravasti is one of the eight sites that are known as "The Eight Great Places" or Attha-mahathanani for the Buddhist followers. These include Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Shravasti, Rajgir, Sankassa and Vaishali. Thus for those who follow Buddhism or have adopted it as a way of life, Shravasti is a landmark place to visit.

It is said that Shravasti is also known as the place of Twin Miracle since Lord Buddha showed his supernatural abilities in performing miracles here. The destination is closely associated with the life of Gautama Buddha because this is the place where Lord Buddha stunned the non-believers with a million fold manifestation of himself, seated on the thousand-petaled lotus and emanated fire and water from his body and thus Shravasti became popular as it experienced the Twin Miracle.

It is also widely believed that Shravasti was one of the most developed cities in ancient India and was the capital city of the Kingdom of Kosala. Besides its Buddhist significance, Shravasti is also an important centre for the believers of Jain religion since Sobhanath Temple is believed to be the birthplace of Tirthankara Sambhavanath of Jainism.

There is much to see and explore in Shravasti. The Jetavana Monastery is one of the most famous Buddhist monasteries of India. It is the second monastery that was donated in respect to Lord Buddha. The Place of Twin Miracle is the place where Lord Buddha is believed to emanated fire and water out of his body and the place where Twin Miracle took place. Another must-see in the Shobhanath Temple, which is an old temple located at Shravasti, dedicated to Jain Tirthankara and is quite popular among Jain people.

Somnath

Gujarat

Gujarat has a wide bouquet of offerings of varied nature for the discerning traveller to choose from. Be it temples, forests, national parks, deserts or monuments – the region has it all. One of its most popular temple place is Somnath Temple that is visited by millions of people every year who come to say a prayer, bask in the beauty and take in the serenity that the place has to offer.

Somnath Temple is a significant temple comprising one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. Located in Prabhas Kshetra near Veraval, Somnath Mandir falls in Saurashtra region that lies on the western coast of Gujarat. The temple stands as a symbol of rich cultural heritage of India and finds its mention in the popular scriptures like 'Rig Veda' of the Hindu origin. The term Somnath suggests 'the protector of Moon God'. Lord Shiva is depicted here in the form of a Jyotirlinga (linga of light), as the protector. The temple is also called as 'the Shrine Eternal' since the temple has been shattered six times and successfully resurrected every time.

The seven-storied structure of Somnath is almost 155 feet tall and has been constructed in the Chalukya style of architecture. The temple reflects the expertise of the Sompuras that are master masons of Gujarat. The temple is sited in such a manner that no mass of land can be seen from Somnath seashore up till Antarctica. This information is presented in an inscription, written in Sanskrit on the Arrow-Pillar of the sea-protection wall at the temple.

Somnath, primarily a temple town, is one of those places where a strong scent of religion and legends lingers around tourism and even daily life. However, it also offers beaches, museums and other attractions, such as, Gita Mandir, Balukha Tirtha, Kamnath Mahadev Temple and the famous Somnath Museum.

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.

Albert Einstein



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Rajkot Civil Airport and
Aerodrome at Diu

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:** Veraval Railway
Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, trips with
friends

**OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:**
www.gujartourism.com

Bizarre travel plans are dancing lessons from God.

Kurt Vonnegut



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Kullu Airport and Chandigarh Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Joginder Nagar railway station, and Shimla railway station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year except peak winters

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation, trips with friends

WEBSITE:
www.himachaltourism.gov.in

Spiti Valley

Himachal Pradesh

Y

ou may have seen it in movies and held your breath every time you did for such is the effect of its spell-binding beauty. Monasteries, landscapes, culture, there is so much in the region and you would want to extend your stay in the region from sure. Spiti Valley, at an altitude of 12,500 feet above Sea Level, is the most important centre of Buddhism in Himachal and the monasteries here are a favourite with the Dalai Lama himself.

Spiti is bordered by Ladakh in the north, Tibet to the east, Kinnaur to the south east, and the Kullu Valley to the south. The term Spiti means 'The Middle Land', as it separates India from Tibet. Scantly populated, Spiti is a haven for adventure lovers as there is so much they can indulge in while staying here. There are a number of trekking trails that tourists can choose from and almost all of them start from Kaza (Spiti's capital from where you make your base camp) to various peaks from where you can get panoramic views of the Himalayan Mountains.

Besides trekking, another beautiful adventure is the Chandra Taal, which is located at an altitude of 4300 m and offers picture-perfect setting for photographers and nature lovers a like. This crescent shape lake, located near Kunzum is one of the best places to visit in Spiti valley in the summers. The colour of the lake keeps changing from blue, green to reddish and orange throughout the day and this phenomenon along with clear views of the place due to June weather, make the scene even more magical and panoramic.

One of the must-see places in Spiti Valley is the Ki Monastery, which is situated next to the Spiti River and could not have been set on a more beautiful location. A thousand year old Tabo gompa is perched on an amazing elevation of 3050 metres and looks like a honeycomb on a hillside. The historic Trilokinath Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is also worth a visit.

With age, comes wisdom. With travel, comes understanding.

Sandra Lake

Statue of Unity

Gujarat

A

dded to the list of big attractions from Gujarat like the Great Rann of Kutch and the Gandhi circuit, the Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue stands at 597 ft. stands on an island in the Narmada River. Designed as a memorial to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, popularly known as the 'Iron Man of India', the statue is just 3.5 km away from Kevadia town and about 200 km from Ahmedabad. Inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on Sardar Patel's birth anniversary on October 31 in 2018, it is gradually becoming a major tourist destination nationally and internationally as it was visited by over 1.3 lakh tourists in just first 11 days of its opening. It draws a decent number of foreign tourists besides domestic visitors from all over the country.

Towering over the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the remote corner of Gujarat, the 3,000 crore statue offers breath taking panoramic views of mountain ranges, entire Narmada river and dam from its chest. It is twice as tall as the Statue of Liberty in New York, 100 times larger than a normal human being, and at 70 feet, Sardar Patel's face is bigger than the faces of the US Presidents cut out on Mount Rushmore in the US. Designed by Maharashtra's legendary architect Ram V Sutar, the statue is built to withstand winds of up to 290 km ph and earthquakes of magnitude up to 6.5 point on Richter scale. The Sardar Patel statue was conceived as a naturalistic depiction of the freedom fighter in his characteristic style in a walking pose, rising out of a star-shaped geometric base that covers the entire Sadhu Hill. The base of the Statue is constructed with over 129 tonnes of scrap iron, donated by nearly 100 million farmers from across India.

Besides the statue itself, there are several other tourist attractions around including the valley of flowers, natural beauty of the Satpura and Vindhya hill ranges besides the Sardar Sarobar dam on the mighty Narmada River.



EAREST AIRPORT:
adodara Airport

EAREST RAILWAY
TATION: Vadodara Railway
tation

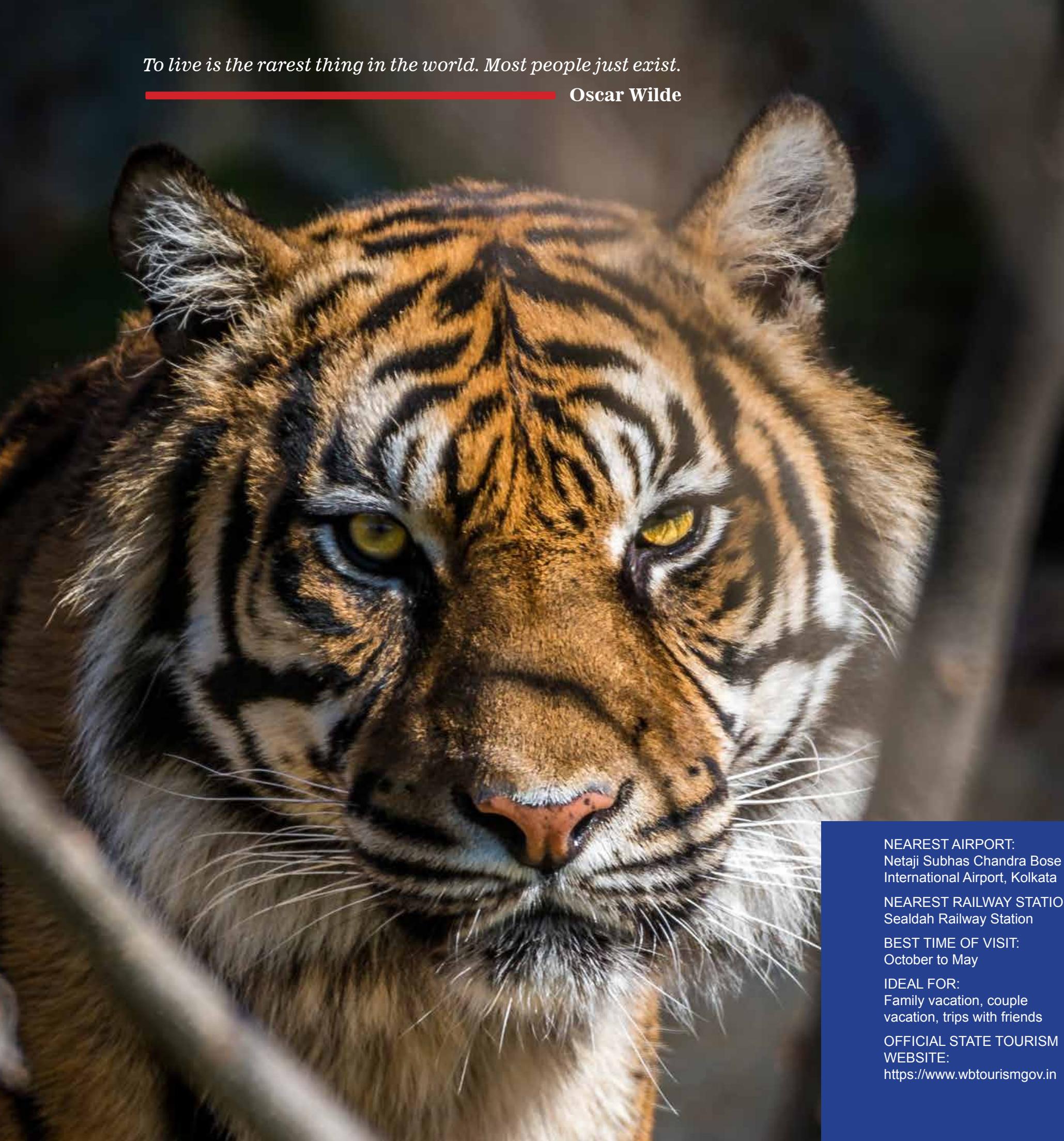
EST TIME OF VISIT:
roughout the year

DEAL FOR: Family vacation,
ouple vacation, trips with
ends

FFICIAL STATE TOURISM
/EBSITE:
www.gujartourism.com

To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people just exist.

Oscar Wilde



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
International Airport, Kolkata

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION:
Sealdah Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
October to May

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
<https://www.wbtourismgov.in>

Sundarbans

West Bengal



The Indian Sundarbans, covering the south-westernmost part of the delta, constitutes over 60 per cent of the country's total mangrove forest area and includes 90 per cent of the Indian mangrove species. This active delta region is among the largest in the world, measuring about 40,000 sq km. They are one of the largest such forests in the world (140,000 ha), situated on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers on the Bay of Bengal. It is adjacent to the border of India's Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987.

The Sundarbans is the biggest delta, back water and tidal phenomenon of the region and thus provides diverse habitats for several hundreds of aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species. The property is of sufficient size to adequately represent its considerably high floral and faunal diversity with all key values included within the boundaries. The site includes the entire landscape of mangrove habitats with an adequate surrounding area of aquatic (both marine and freshwater) and terrestrial habitats, which is essential for the long term conservation of the Sundarbans and its rich and distinct biodiversity.

The area is best known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile, leopard cats, ridley sea turtle, wild boar, jungle cat, fox, flying fox, fishing cats, chital, pangolin and the Indian python. The Sundarbans is home to the Sunderbans National Park, which is a tiger and biosphere reserve located in the Sunderbans delta in the state of West Bengal (India). The Sunderbans is named after the Sundari trees which are found in bulk in this area. The park was established as a national park in 1984.

Thanjavur

Tamil Nadu

J

hanjavur, is one of the most revered temple sites in the region of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is one of the most important and most visited historical sites in India today. Thanjavur is also listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. With a hazy past, historical legacy and mesmerising beauty, the town has today turned into a busy and hectic modern hub.

This ancient temple destination has been a cultural centre for more than a millennium. The place is one of the most popular tourist centres in Tamil Nadu and attracts a large number of visitors from all over the world. From magnificent temples and buildings to cultural and artistic venues, there are no dearth of options to visit in the place and a visitor here is truly spoilt for choice.

No write up on Thanjavur would be complete without the mention of the Brahadeeswara Temple, which is one of the most important landmarks in Thanjavur. The 11th century structure is one of the foremost examples of the Chola architecture and was constructed using some of the most advanced architectural techniques of the time. Mahashivratri is one festival that is celebrated with a lot of pomp and zeal here.

A perfect souvenir to carry back home are the extremely creative and attractive Tanjore dolls and Tanjore paintings, which are the perfect examples that best define the cultural importance and relevance of art and architecture down south. Dating back to many centuries, the painting styles of Tanjore played an important role in influencing the later Indian art forms and movements.

The royal preserves in the city of Tanjore inhibits one of the oldest churches in the region, the Schwartz Church in Thanjavur. The church boasts of a unique heritage since it was constructed without the influence of imperial administration. The church is noteworthy for its architectural style and features sculptures by famous Italian sculptor, John Flaxman.

The traveller sees what he sees. The tourist sees what he has come to see.

G.K. Chesterton



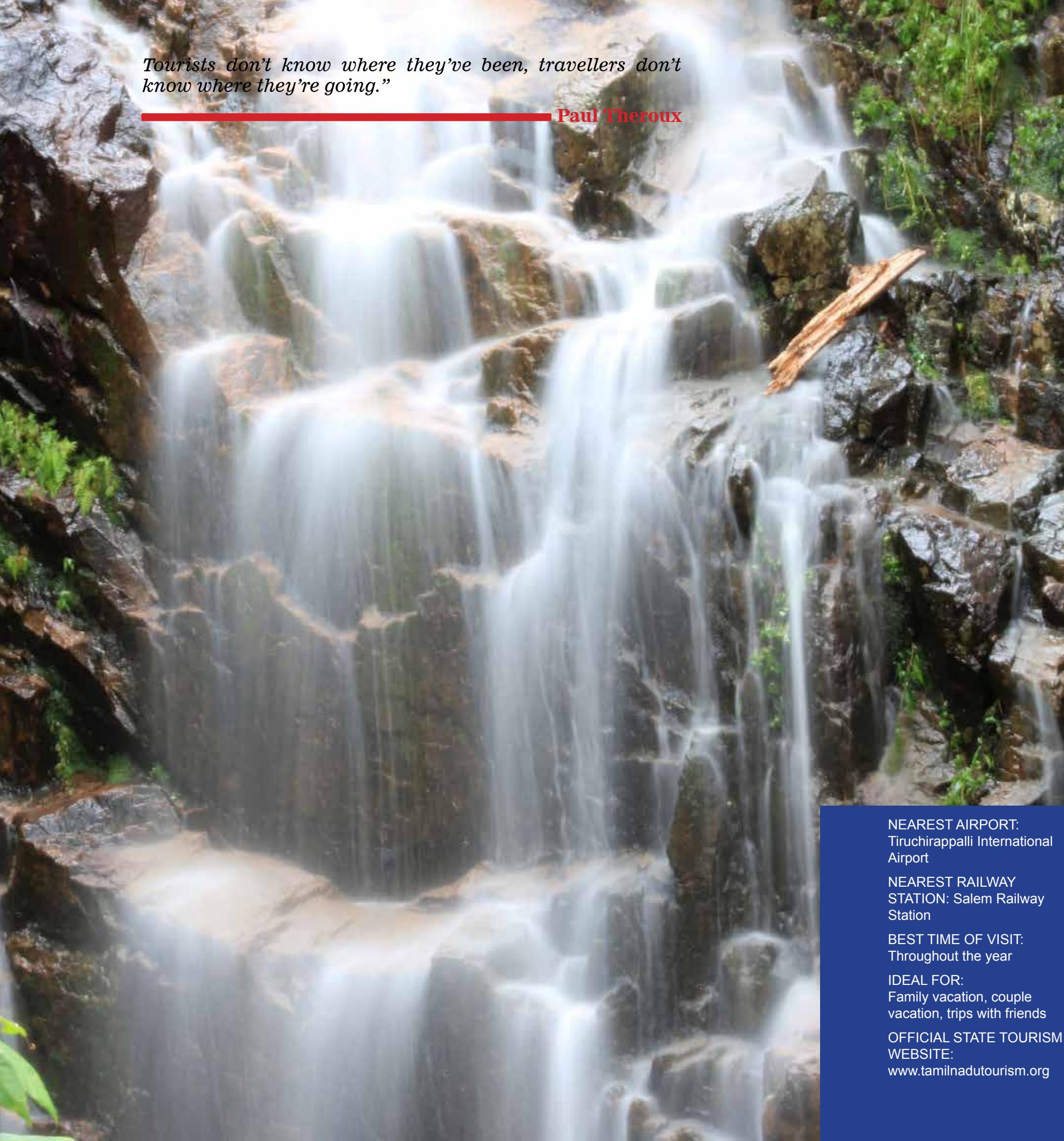
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Tiruchirappalli International
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Trichy Junction

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tamilnadutourism.org



Tourists don't know where they've been, travellers don't know where they're going."

Paul Theroux

Puliyancholai Falls

Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

P

uliyancholai is a breath taking scenic spot on the foothills of the Kolli Hills. It is a forest region splashed with a small stream and covered with lush green foliage and tamarind groves. The place is a favourite haunt among the tourists throughout the year who visit to enjoy bathing in natural springs. This forest region is cool and green with the added attraction of the stream, which offers a natural bathing area for the tourists throughout the year.

In the vicinity of the Puliyancholai Falls there is another water fall in the higher hills, which is called Akaya Gangai. It is believed that the water in this fall carries medicinal value. The 18th day of the Tamil month Adi is the time for worshipping the river here and thus people in large numbers visit Puliyancholai that day. Puliyancholai to Agasa Gangai Falls (Hill top) is a five hours hard trek journey.

The scenic charm and picturesque attractions make Tiruchirapalli amongst the most travelled destinations in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, the city has a rich cultural heritage, which can be easily seen through its various monuments and temples. Tiruchirapalli boasts of some more equally enthralling tourist places that are definitely worth checking out while in here which include Rock Fort and Railway Museum.

The Puliyancholai falls is a terrace waterfall, which appears like a stream of water that cascades through rocky terrain. Puliyancholai is a thick forest region, best suited for trekking and other adventurous activities. Located far away from the hustle and bustle of the urban areas, this place offers you a quite escape from busy city life. Besides the falls and the forests, there is also a Shiva Temple which is situated about 12 km inside the thick forest. Devotees come here to trek up to Shiva temple in June and July.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Tiruchirappalli International Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Salem Railway Station

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.tamilnadutourism.org

Zanskar

Ladakh

*L*ocated in Ladakh, Zanskar is a high altitude deserted area which has a lot to offer in terms of lush greenery, gompas, monasteries, high and rocky hills and much more. The place has got its name as Zanskar, which means copper star, mainly because there are many segments of the copper flowing into the river Zanskar. The place is located at a distance of 235 km from the city of Kargil.

The Zanskar valley is situated across the Suru Valley and over the Pensi La in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. This pristine place has primarily remained untouched because it stays hidden in the spectacular Himalayas, which is why perhaps it is one of the most enchanting places to visit in the Himalayas. Once you happen to visit the place you will fall in love with the massive glaciers, gushy and refreshing blue waters – not to mention the beauty of it all.

These days adventure enthusiasts and Himalayan lovers embark on their journeys to these remote places in trans-Himalayas. In the recent past, Zanskar Valley has started getting enough attention of travellers from all walks of life across the globe. Thanks to the much popular Chadar trek where hikers walk over the frozen Zanskar River.

When it comes to remote and pristine location, Zanskar gets as close to isolation as it can and could be reached only through a long 15 hours road drive. The journey along treacherous and potholed terrain follows Suru River or gets complete through an arduous trek. The region lies on the Northern flank of the Great Himalayan Mountain Range. Bikers today have garnered a lot of thrill and adventure through this magnificent and isolated paradise.

The best season to travel to Zanskar Valley is between June to September/October. In the early season, the roads are in bad conditions and take couple of weeks after opening to stabilise for safe travels. In winters, the only way to reach Zanskar Valley is through long freezing walk over the frozen Zanskar River.



You need not even listen, just wait...the world will offer itself freely to you, unmasking itself.

Franz Kafka

NEAREST AIRPORT: Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport in Leh

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Jammu Tawi Railway Station

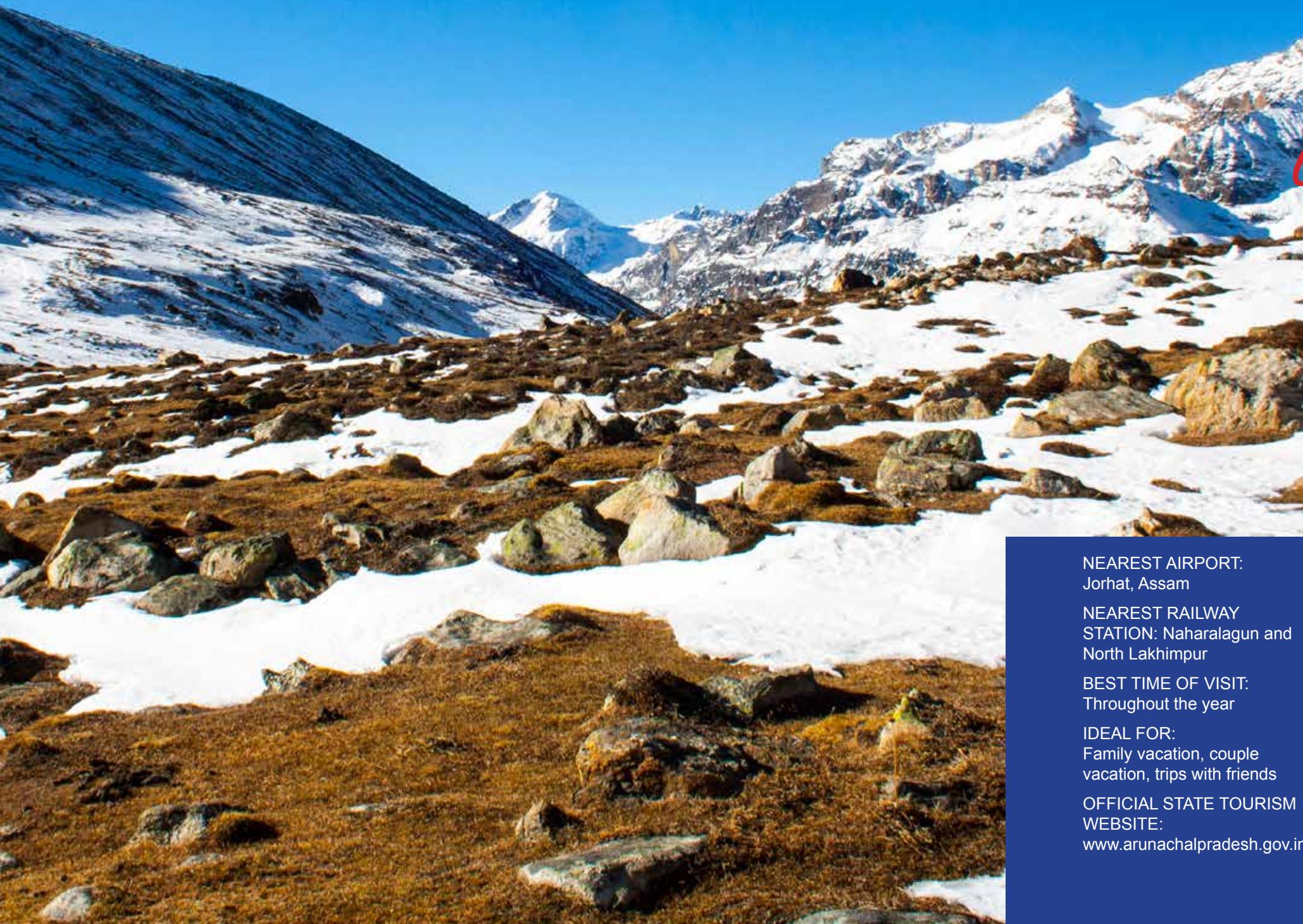
BEST TIME OF VISIT:
April to October

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jktourism.jk.gov.in

To get away from one's working environment is, in a sense, to get away from one's self; and this is often the chief advantage of travel and change.

Charles Horton Cooley



NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jorhat, Assam

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Naharlagun and
North Lakhimpur

BEST TIME OF VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.arunachalpradesh.gov.in

Ziro Valley

Arunachal Pradesh

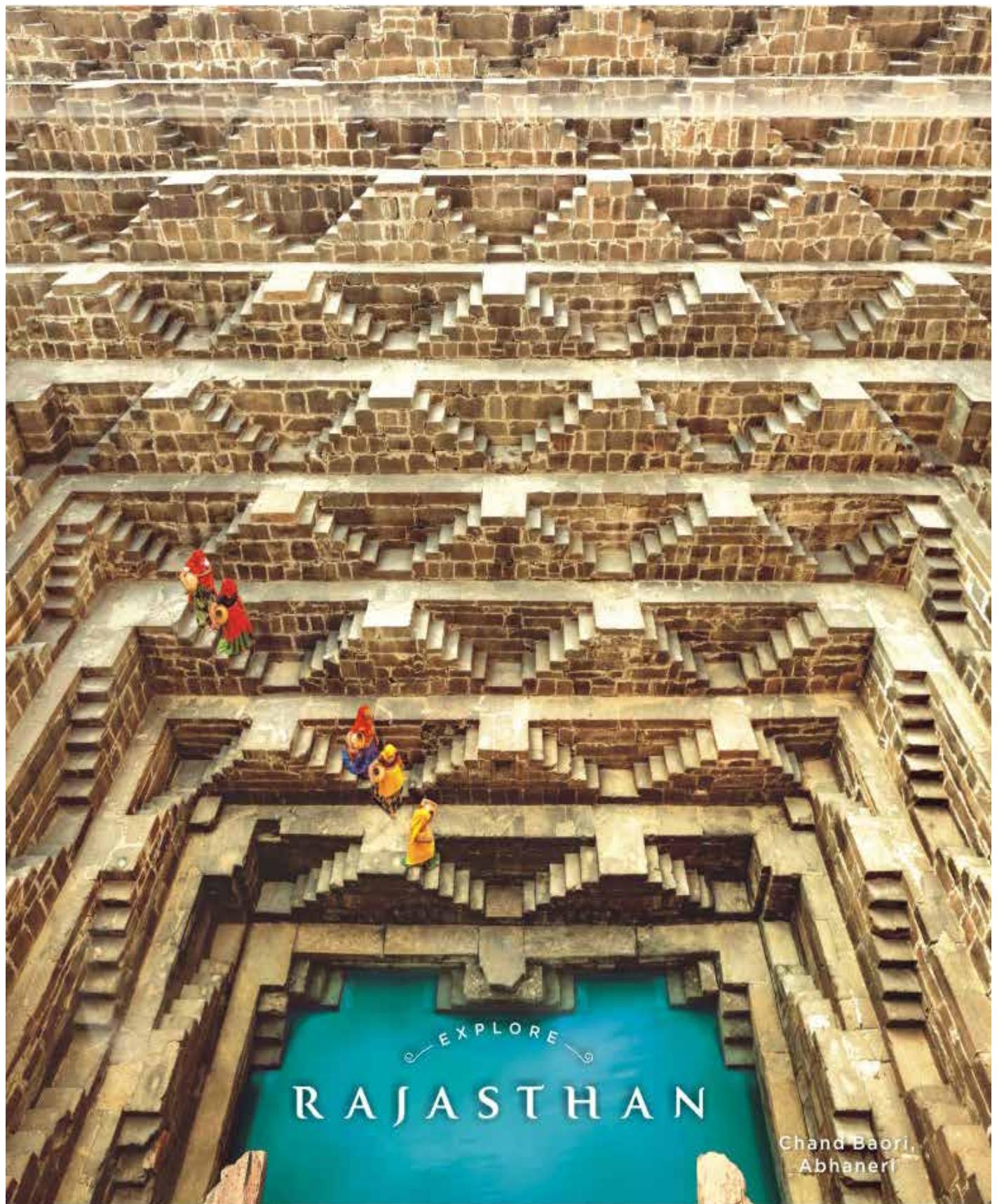
3

Ziro Valley, situated in the lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, rests at a distance of around 115 Km from the state capital Itanagar and lies at about 1500 m above the sea level. Tucked amidst the mountainscape of Arunachal Pradesh, the tranquillity here will leave one completely at peace and is often treated as the perfect place to meditate or spend some time with Mother Nature. Innumerable nature admirers and avid photographers travel here from far to soak in the serenity of its natural splendour.

One of the major Apatani village is Hong vilage. Houses in these villages are made of bamboo. Each house has a huge stove in the middle; they sleep just near it to keep themselves warm. To visit these villages one should take a local guide along as he would be able to better explain the culture, traditions and lifestyle of the people living in these areas. Since Paddy cum fish cultivation is also a popular activity here, people who have interest in them can treat it as an added attraction in Ziro.

The hidden gem of Arunachal Pradesh – Ziro Valley is also known for the vibrant and multi coloured clothes. If you ever get a chance to shop here, it will definitely add value to your wardrobe. Peace seekers won't go disappointed from here as calmness of the destination makes it a peace lovers' paradise. Enclosed by lush green forests and hills, Ziro valley is a picturesque eastern Himalayan town that offers stunning landscape to behold.

Besides vibrant garments, Ziro is also famous for bamboo items such as bamboo baskets, Apatani handlooms and locally made handicraft items. Also worth buying in Ziro are colourful rugs, scarves and jackets. It is home to the Apa Tani Tribe, Pine Hills and rice fields.



www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in, www.rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

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Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan



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