**Mumabai**

Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra, attracts dreamers with sky-high ambitions from every corner of the country. It is a unique place where the past is mixed with the future and history meets modernity, a city that lies at the cross section of business and entertainment and beats to a pulsating rhythm of its own. Located by the Arabian Sea, Mumbai is an amalgamation of heritage and culture and glitz and glamour. So from historic art deco buildings, which are recognised by the UNESCO, to plush new-age homes of the super rich, Mumbai has it all!

India's financial capital, Mumbai is home to the most important financial institutions of the country such as the Reserve Bank of India, the National Stock Exchange of India, the Bombay Stock Exchange, SEBI and is the corporate headquarters of numerous Indian companies and multinational corporations. It is also home to some of India’s premier scientific and nuclear institutes.

Mumbai is the epicentre of Hindi cinema thanks to its flourishing filmmaking industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Every year, many new faces arrive in this city eager to make a name for themselves in the glitzy movie world. Mumbai is an oasis of truly vibrant working class cosmopolitanism including - entrepreneurs, traders, artists, industrialists, software engineers and labourers.

The geographical land area that makes up Mumbai today was actually spread over seven different islands, which were home to fishing communities for many centuries. These islands were initially under the control of successive indigenous empires and then were ceded first to the Portuguese and eventually moved to the British East India Company. During the mid-18th century, the Hornby Vellard Project was launched where major roads and railways were constructed over the sea to connect these seven islands in one of the biggest land reclamation development drives in India. This move consolidated all the land and created a city that went on to become a major sea port in the Arabian Sea, eventually aiding its transformation into an economic and trading giant. Upon India’s independence in 1947, this city was incorporated into Bombay State. In 1960, a new state of Maharashtra was created with Bombay as the capital. Bombay was renamed Mumbai in 1996.

**Delhi**

With old monuments and busy neighbourhoods subtly merging with a vibrant and contemporary cosmopolitan world, Delhi, the capital of India, is a fascinating tourist destination. Poised along the banks of River Yamuna, Delhi, which is almost 1,000 years old, offers a mesmeric mosaic of experiences, both heritage and contemporary. While the former honour the elegant ageing of centuries-old Delhi, the latter reiterate that the capital is the heart of Indian democracy, and can keep pace with the most advanced of the metropolitans of the world.

The bustling old quarter of the capital, centered around Old Delhi, preserves its antiquity and awes with its vibrant food culture and winding by lanes lined with shops selling almost everything under the sun. Strolling through Old Delhi is an unforgettable experience as you can sample some of the oldest recipes - which trace their origin to Mughal kitchens - and soak in essentially ethnic culture as you explore exquisite handicrafts, wholesale clothes and customised jewellery, all of which are available at budgeted deals.

In the midst of the maze-like Chandni Chowk (moonlight street), stands the glorious Jama Masjid, one of the largest mosques in the country. A stone's throw away is the pride of Delhi, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Red Fort, a legacy of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. A smattering of old forts, the iconic Qutub Minar and ancient temples stand as archaeological gems of the capital, paying tribute to the great Mughal kings who ruled their empire from Delhi. The more modern counterpart of the capital, New Delhi, is home to the powerseat of the world's largest democracy, speckled with iconic government structures, glitzy malls, sprawling residential complexes, plush restaurants and cafes, grand temples and lush gardens. A haven for foodies, who can try authentic cuisines of almost all Indian states, Delhi offers everything from international to local delicacies that would appeal to the most discerning traveller.

The national capital is a hub of shopping, with markets catering to all your needs - from books, fashionable clothes and exquisite jewellery to accessories, electronics and footwear. Delhi is home to most high-end retail stores and brands that offer straight-off-the-runway options to shoppers, along with stores that give a hefty dose of vintage crafts and textiles. Delhi's prominent place as the political centre of the country is indisputable.

A Union Territory, it is home to awe-inspiring structures like the Indian Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhawan or the President's residence, and Raj Ghat (the memorial of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi), along with neighbourhoods like Connaught Place and Lodhi Colony. Delhi has been the capital of India for more than a century. Having been ruled by some of the greatest and powerful rulers in the bygone era, the city traces its history to the Hindu epic Mahabharata, when it known as Indraprastha, the home of Pandavas.

In 1192 Afghan warrior Muhammad of Ghori captured the area, and the Delhi Sultanate was established (1206). In 1398, Timur, a Turco-Mongol ruler, invaded the city and founded his kingdom. It was later ruled by the Lodi dynasty kings, who were overthrown by Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire in India. Delhi became the capital of the Mughal empire during the reign of Shah Jahan. The Mughal period lasted for over three centuries and later India fell into the hands of the British, who shifted their capital from Calcutta to Delhi in the year 1911. Delhi has also served as the capital for other major dynasties such as the Tughlaqs and the Khiljis. Post-Independence, New Delhi became the official capital of the Republic of India in 1947.

**Agra**

The city of the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world, Agra in Uttar Pradesh is India’s most popular tourist destination. Steeped in history, this ancient city is dotted with monuments, architectural wonders and beautifully landscaped gardens, which are remnants of the Mughal reign's majestic legacy.  The city also enjoys a vibrant culinary scene while preserving its exquisite arts and crafts.

Situated on the banks of River Yamuna, the city, once the capital of the mighty Mughals, stands proudly today with a royal heritage that beckons to one and all. While visitors admire the grand structures here and weave through bustling chowks and bazaars, they can also check into luxurious hotels, shop at malls and plazas, and indulge in contemporary delicacies at upscale restaurants.

Agra finds a mention in the epic Mahabharata, where it is referred to as ‘Agraban’ or an integral part of the Braj Bhumi or the land of Lord Krishna. A lot of significant historical events in the city are said to have unfolded during the reign of Raja Badal Singh, a Sikarwar Rajput king, who is believed to have founded the city in 1475. However, it gained political prominence during the rule of Sikander Lodhi (1498-1517) of the Lodhi dynasty. It was given a new lease of life in 1526 AD, under the reign of Mughal emperor Babur. He was a patron of arts and wanted the inhabitants of the city to adopt the finer things in life. This resulted in the city being filled with skilled craftsmen, artists, statesmen, warriors and nobility. Thus began Agra’s golden age.

Babur’s legacy was carried forward by his progeny, emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, all of whom added to the city’s grandeur in terms of wealth, patronage and incredible architectural marvels. Agra transformed into a hub of art, culture, learning and commerce. The city’s lip-smacking food, awe-inspiring monuments, and arts and crafts stand as relics of this illustrious antiquity. Its rich repertoire of arts and crafts has seeped into its modern personality too: Agra is a haven for crafts like marble and soft stone inlay work. It is said that Mughal empress, Nur Jahan, personally looked into the development of arts and handicrafts here. It is said that she was an expert in zari embroidery herself.

**Chennai**

Ancient temples, vibrant arts, natural wonders and a bustling culinary scene make  Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the southern fringes of the country. Located on the Coromandel Coast, this busy metropolis was formerly called Madras. From the resplendent classical dance form of bharatnatyam to the rich flavours of its iconic cuisine and from the lustrous silk sarees traded here to the gorgeous temples and churches, Chennai is the gatekeeper of South Indian art, culture and traditions. The city is also the perfect base from which trips to other locales in Tamil Nadu can take off.

Alongside heritage, flourish natural and contemporary highlights: sprawling beaches with natural and man-made wonders, a bustling seaport, quirky cafes, a multi-transport system, theme parks, industrial hubs, hi-tech parks and universities. Its population is a heterogenous mix of locals, expats and people from the rest of India. Chennai is widely known as the “Detroit of India”, a moniker it earned because of the high concentration of automobile factories located in and around here.

There are several stories about the origin of the city’s name. Initially, during the Nayakars rule, its name was Madras, which was inspired by Madraspattinam. At that time, it was a fishing village that was situated to the north of the area that is now Fort St George. The king of Vijaynagar sold the piece of land to the British on which now stands Fort St George, which houses the Secretariat Complex of the Government of Tamil Nadu. It was the British officers who retained the name Madraspattinam. For local populace, it was more common to call the city Chennapattinam. According to another legend, the city was named Chennai in honour of Damal Chennappa Nayakkar, a Nayak ruler. In the year 1996, the government renamed it to Chennai officially and the name stands even today.

**Bengaluru**

A city catering to almost all the creature comforts of a metropolitan, a pleasant year-round weather and a bustling shopping and culinary scene, Bengaluru, the capital of Karnataka, is the perfect destination to mix work with pleasure. Once famous as an ideal city for senior citizens looking for a relaxed life after retirement, today it's popular as the information technology hub of India, drawing young technocrats from across the country. Lush green parks and well laid-out gardens rub shoulders with art galleries, pubs and restaurants, giving the city a unique eclectic energy. From a sleepy cantonment area during the British era to a modern cosmopolitan, Bengaluru has had an interesting journey. Bengaluru is an ideal landing pad for shoppers, who can indulge in both street shopping and high-end retail buys. The heritage highlight of the city are the Mysore sarees, which are made of premium quality silk and sandalwood artefacts, which can be used for home decor. The city enjoys a scattering of prominent sites like the Bangalore Palace, the Attara Kacheri (High Court), St Mary’s Basilica, Tipu’s Palace, ISKCON Temple and the Bull Temple that draw tourists from far and wide. The city is known by many sobriquets like the City of Gardens, India’s Silicon Valley, Pensioners Paradise, Pub City, Pensioners’ Paradise, IT City, BT City and Pub City. It is an ideal location for tourists desirous of travelling to the hill stations and coastal towns in the southern region of the country.