# TODAY'S CONTRIBUTE CONTRIBUT

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, MICE & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021 -₹50

4 GREAT CHEFS TALK ABOUT FOOD

CHEF MANISH MEHROTRA

CHEF VICKY RATNANI

CHEF RANVEER BRAR

CHEF SHANNON BENNETT

STATUE OF UNITY: BEACON OF HOPE PUMP UP THE

**ADRENALINE** 

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

## TOPAY'S VEICE



# 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TODAY'S TRAVELLER AWARDS





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### **Editor's Note**



#### The Road Less Travelled

We bring in 2021 on a high note with our first print issue after the pandemic, celebrating the two main trends of the year gone by...a great love for food and discovering ourselves through travel of a different kind.

Looking forward as 2021 unfolds, we see fresh promise on the horizon as the world opens up to new opportunities in travel and tourism, in business and leisure, in the way we understand and express ourselves.

New travel patterns have developed as we braved a world of restrictions. Hygiene and safety protocols have come to play a big role in the selection of destinations and stay.

Looking back, the year 2020 has been an unprecedented one for all of us. Technology came to the rescue in ways not imagined as businesses scrambled to restructure and reinvent themselves, Enterprises created new methods to serve their customers and in many cases reinvented themselves to survive.

Yet, there are business lessons that 2020 left us all with. The service industry came up with no-contact service delivery, not only helping them to sustain but also to tap new markets; thinking out of the box and finding opportunity in crisis through working remotely; and learning and leveraging new technologies so as to maintain continuity.

As we look back at the past year, we know that the simple straight line is the best way to communicate and we bring new work ethos to our business strategies in 2021.

This extends to new ways of communication. With kids playing in the background, virtual meetings have been rather eye opening, making us all more respectful of work-life balance. Spending time with our loved ones, building stronger and meaningful relationships with our families, teams and customers have all come to fore in this past year.

Today's Traveller wishes you all good health, happiness and prosperity in 2021.

**KAMAL GILL** Executive Editor, Today's Traveller



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ORGANIC CUISINES AND GLUTENFREE FOOD

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**CORPORATE JET-SETTER** DR ABHIJIT SARKAR, VICE PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL HEAD - CRE, ADMINISTRATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, SHAREKHAN LIMITED SHARES HIS TRAVEL **EXPERIENCES** 

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## FOOD TO LIVE FOR

Till travel opens freely across countries you can bookmark these wonderful restaurants across the globe incorporating organic cuisines and some creating their entire menu on gluten free food

#### **TT BUREAU**

inally, it is that time of the year when festivities are over and New Year resolutions of maintaining a healthy diet can come into effect. With post-Christmas weight on your back, it would seem difficult to shift to a diet which demands all-healthy, leafy greens, no sugar and no carbs.

But who says you have to compromise on taste when the healthiest restaurants in the world are offering outrageously delicious cuisines. The culinary creativity at some of these restaurants has redefined the culture of healthy diet. Conceptualised with the vision of serving nutritiously-potent and sumptuous flavours, these restaurants have food lovers



raving about their innovative take, which is inevitable for todays stressed lifestyle.

Till travel opens freely across countries, you can bookmark these wonderful restaurants. Meanwhile fixed menus and takeaways are the new Normal and can be enjoyed if you can visit and enjoy the wonderful fare on offer.

#### ALAIN DUCASSE AU PLAZA ATHÉNÉE, PARIS

Alain Ducasse, the mind behind the restaurant, represents the naturalness cuisine inspired by the fish-vegetable-cereals trilogy.

Housed in Hotel Plaza Athenee, Alain Ducasse Au Plaza Athénée is known for its menu which centres on ingredients that are healthier, more natural and respectful of the Planet. Innovative, authentic yet simple flavours build the meal into an experience that engages the entire body. Dishes served are instinctive interpretation of Haute Cuisine, revealing the produces' original flavour.

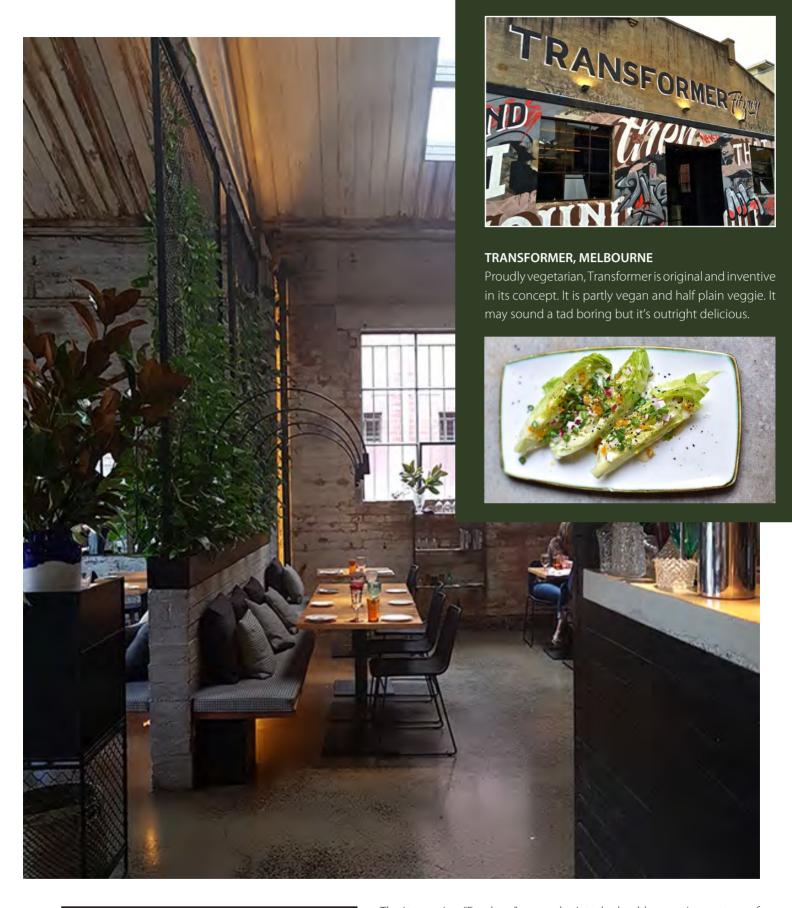
Ducasse menu is strictly no meat; instead it offers seafood (turbot, langoustines, lobster, caviar), vegetables from the gardens at Versailles and a variety of pulses including green lentils and bulgar wheat.

#### **FLAX & KALE, BARCELONA**

One-of-its-kind, Flax & Kale is the first flexitarian restaurant in Barcelona. Don't be surprised if you didn't get this term either. To be a flexitarian means you are a vegetarian with benefits. Thus, the menu here comprises mostly vegetarian dishes. The cuisines are created to maximise the organoleptic experience without compromising on their nutritional value. Among food choices 80 per cent is plant-based and the remaining 20 per cent have oily fish.

With a lineup that includes, Gluten Free Healthy Pizzas, Healthy Asian Fusion Cuisine and Kombucha Lab, people won't find it hard to follow a disciplined diet. Infact, the vision of Flax & Kale is to feed people happiness that gifts illness-free health for a longer life. For a healthy stop during lunch, Flax & Kale à porter includes Healthy Grab & Go Eatery + Cold-pressed Juice Bar + Coffee Specialty Bar.





### SOME OTHER HONOURABLE MENTIONS:TAKE AWAY & DELIVERY OPTIONS

- TENDER GREENS, CALIFORNIA
- SEQUEL BISTRO AND JUICE BAR, MUMBAI
- EARTH TO TABLE, MELBOURNE

The interesting "Feed me" menu depicts the health-conscious nature of the restaurant and ranges fusion dishes from various continents.

Marinated olives, Piquillo peppers, roasted fennel, blood orange oil Avocado, Zucchini and sesame dip with apple & chive salsa, chili salt and tostadas are a sampling. The dessert section offers Aged balsamic strawberries, ginger nut crumb, meringue & coconut yoghurt sorbet. The healthy combination of flavours make you want to visit the Transformer over and over again.





## For the Love of Food!

Celebrating all things food pre and during Covid days, four gifted global Masterchefs speak about their food philosophy.





A people's person Manish Mehrotra says his mantra is "Cook exactly the way people want" in a pre-Covid interview with Today's Traveller

#### **TT BUREAU**

here in the world would you get this – Tawa Lamb Ribs, Spiced Amaranth, Korma; Pork Belly Tikka, Punjabi Lobhia Curry, Slowcooked Egg; Roast Pumpkin and Cheddar Kulcha with Pumpkin Seed Butter, followed by Raspberry Aloo Chips, Vanilla Bean Ice cream and Maple Chutney? This is a typical meal at Indian Accent, pre-Covid days crafted by multi-award winning Chef, Manish Mehrotra, who promises to take you on an exciting and unique culinary journey that marries global ingredients and techniques with Indian flavours and traditions. While giving a nod to the classic, Mehrotra's creations are distinctly contemporary, a collision of vivid colours, textures and flavours and they grab your attention. Part of the new global foodie zeitgeist, Mehrotra believes in innovation in the kitchen and the ability to surprise with every mouthful. In an inspiring and enlightening session with Today's



Chef Heston Blumenthal with Chef Parminder Singh

Traveller, Mehrotra elaborates on how Food and Beverage is moving increasingly towards innovation, how trends will continue to challenge and lure the industry and his own leap of faith from the conservative to the contemporary.

Mehrotra begins by taking us through the food milieu, which, until recently, was more about imitation rather than innovation. However, this is gradually changing and international food trends are making a foray into the Indian food scene.

It's the metro cities of India that are trend setters as far as food experimentation is concerned, says Mehrotra, particularly Mumbai and Delhi, followed by Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Kolkata, from where they percolate to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Within the last five years alone, believes Mehrotra, there has been a sea change in the Indian food scene, not merely in terms of restaurateurs, or the Food and Beverage industry, but in terms of the guest experience as well. It's a two-way street – trends can be successful when the chef is creative and the customer is open to experiments.

Continuing, Mehrotra expands on the trends that are transforming India's culinary landscape. A major trend within the last 2-3 years is to do with young Indian chefs, who are growing at a faster pace than ever before. Bringing a fillip to India's food movement, they are reinventing, pampering our palates and bringing the accent back to great local and seasonal tastes and ingredients. Many of them have trained with international chefs and are returning to open their own restaurants, including Pummy Canteen, Prateek Sadhu from Masque, and Nege & Ju, in Delhi's Lodhi Colony, one of the Capital's hottest new restaurants. Chef Aditya Jha, who worked in Gaggan and Abu Dhabi, has opened his own restaurant in Delhi, called IN-Q. Opetro restaurant in Mumbai is a fine example of how a restaurant is eminently successful because of its team young chefs with innovative ideas, techniques and cuisine.

The reason why young chefs are returning is because they're gung-ho about the changing food scene and how diners are more knowledgeable and receptive to new food trends and cuisines. Shares Mehrotra, "Ten years back nobody knew what truffles were, but now everyone knows what a truffle is. Now, small roadside restaurants and standalone restaurants are getting truffles from Italy and France and shaving them in front of guests who are willing to pay the price for fresh truffles. I see truffle counters at weddings, which amounts to Rs 4-5 lakh, just for one counter in a wedding party."

Mehrotra is happy to note that "the food industry is developing from the professional point of view, in terms of the advent of new chefs, new techniques and equipment. Mehrotra points out that we're seeing more and more technology in the food and restaurant industry and how it allows restaurant owners to be more efficient and effective in the areas they feel can be streamlined by hardware and software. Combi ovens, blast chillers, paco jets and suwit machines, earlier a scarcity in hotel kitchens, are now a necessity, especially as aids in the whole hygiene process.

Personally, I have evolved, now I understand flavours, textures, different techniques and colours, in a dish, which, sometimes, my other chefs cannot see, because they are still learning... just as I still am."

—Manish Mehrotra



Amongst Mehrotra's predictions for the future includes a Regional Cuisine trend, which, he says, could kick in within the next five years. Chefs will explore and redefine indigenous cuisines from across the country, but the accent will be on subregional food. Mehrotra elaborates – "Region-specific food does not refer to South Indian, West Indian or North Indian food, but a proper sub-regional food, as in cuisine from the Tamil Brahmin or Chhettiyar community or a Kashmiri Pandit khana...or Konkan, not Maharshtrian cuisine... it will be more community or sub-region area, specific cuisine."

Chef-inspired meals at home is another buzz that takes its premise from the eat-what-grandma-ate concept. Going with the eat healthy trend, chefs are showcasing home recipes with a twist, as well as 'generic innovations by commoners,' such as the Aloo Dum from Orissa or a Cheeni Malai Toast from someone in Kolkata. Consumer demographics indicate a rise in the food delivery business, which is becoming increasingly innovative, involving not only effortless ordering and instant delivery, but a gourmand experience rather than a necessity based one.

International cuisine in India though still at a nascent stage, is evolving gradually, admits Mehrotra – "Ten years back, at least four tables used to send my Balouchi back to my kitchen, now it happens once a week, so I can clearly see the difference. Now, people have acquired a taste for Balouchi, as also for wasabi or dried fish sauce."

The dynamic Chef's personal philosophy centres on the whole dining experience and not the food alone. "You can't run a restaurant based on food or ambience or service alone. It has to



be a complete package, where people come and spend a good amount of money for the experience, where they find excellent food with a beautiful ambience, served in a very professional and a Hindustani 'khatirdari' way."

A people's person to the hilt, Mehrotra's mantra is, "Cook exactly the way people want." His defining narrative takes guest feedback into account and "creating dishes which are universal favourites, whether they're Indian or international." Possessed with a learning mindset, Mehrotra's positive attitude predisposes him to be open to new experiences, to learn and evolve from them. "Personally, I have evolved, now I understand flavours, textures, different techniques and colours, in a dish, which, sometimes, my other chefs cannot see, because they are still learning... just as I still am," says Mehrotra, signing off.







favour a personalised approach to cooking, one that is incredibly healthy, soul cleansing and sustainable. In sync with this perception is maverick Chef Vicky Ratnani, who, by his own admission, dishes out food with a global appeal, while keeping its Indian soul intact. Chef Yotam Ottolenghi once said, "Fusion food... is trying to guite consciously fuse things that are sometimes quite contradictory, sometimes quite far apart, to see if they'd work." For celebrity Chef Vicky Ratnani, good food is all about mixing seemingly contradictory ingredients to create unique flavours and taste. Trained in the classical European tradition, Ratnani uses western techniques with Indian spices to give familiar dishes a quirky touch. In two of his most popular on-air television shows, namely, 'Vicky Goes Veg' and 'Vickypedia,' Ratnani combines the finesse of classic European-style cooking with the earthiness of Indian spices and ingredients, bringing us dishes that are both creative and flavourful. In an exclusive conversation with Today's Traveller, Ratnani talks about his philosophy of fusion food, the highlights of his illustrious career and the food trends he is most excited about.

"I am discovering India through its food. My thoughts are very global but the soul is Indian and I am working with different spices, herbs and produce from various parts of India."

—Vicky Ratnani

The conversation begins with a discussion on Ratnani's career milestones. For a celebrity chef constantly in the spotlight, bagging an award or getting a personal cookery show could well be moments of glory, but not for Ratnani. Instead, cooking for Nelson Mandela in the capacity of a personal chef during his trip from Durban to Cape Town was his most memorable moment.

Opportunities to work on global platform have constantly come Ratnani's way. His culinary expertise led him to be a part of the opening team for Queen Mary 2 (QM2) – a luxury cruise ship. In preparation for this voyage, Ratnani taught at the White Star Chef's Training School on board Queen Elizabeth 2, in Manila and St. Nazaire, training over 180 chefs on board. Ratnani also opened up the Britannia Restaurant & Kitchen – the largest restaurant at sea during its inaugural opening in 2004 and then progressed to

the position of Executive Sous Chef of the QM2. The vibrant gourmand then moved on to become Executive Chef for the Queen Victoria. As of 2010, he was the first and only Indian Executive Chef in the history of the Cunard Line.

Moving back to Mumbai, Ratnani took over Aurus, a hip restaurant decked by the sea His inpoventive method of cooking qualities.

Moving back to Mumbai, Ratnani took over Aurus, a hip restaurant docked by the sea. His innovative method of cooking, qualitive ingredients and quirky take on traditional Indian cuisine won over the hearts of the city's socialites and catapulted him to the category of India's A-list chefs. In 2014, Ratnani joined Ever Stone Capital and revamped the existing brands under its belt. He was also responsible for tweaking the flavours for Burger King India and working on new flavours specially tailormade for the Indian market.

However, it was his shows that made him a household name. Thanks to round-the-clock television shows, his name and fame quadrupled. Shows













like 'Vickypedia,' 'A Taste Down Under' (shot in Australia), 'Vicky Goes Desi,' 'Vicky Goes Foreign,' 'Gourmet Central,' 'Vicky Goes Veg,' 'Pressure Cooker,' 'Sanjeev Kapoor Ke Kitchen Khiladi' and 'Health Mange More' brought to the fore his unique and quirky style of cooking.

Ratnani, who is best known for his fusion creations, believes in combining the best of Indian and Western flavours. "I worked all my life in western kitchen with global chefs. I learnt cooking the old-fashioned way - the classical European style. Since I have moved back 11 years, I am discovering India through its food. My thoughts are very global but the soul is Indian and I am working with different spices, herbs and produce from various parts of India," declares Ratnani.

For Ratnani, wholesome, delicious food will never go out of fashion. In fact, mulling on the upcoming food trends, Ratnani says that concepts such as farm-to-table cuisine, hyperlocal food, clean eating, artisanal food, use of ancient grains (millets, etc) and zero-wastage cooking are becoming increasingly popular. Younger chefs like Prateek Sadhu, Gresham Fernandes, Chef Hussain, Chef Manuel, Vanshika Bhatia, Deepankar Khosla and Chéf Himanshu are talents he has his eyes on.

For a chef whose dishes are loved by millions, one wonders if there is any particular dish that he likes the most. The Sindhi in him replies, "Fote Mein Bhugal Mutton – a braised mutton dish with lots of cardamom, black pepper, fresh coriander, bay leaf and ghee. It is both simple and complex."



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LIFE ON A PLATE

Celebrity Chef Ranveer Brar gets candid about his food philosophy and the importance of being resourceful in the kitchen in a pre-Covid interview

**TT BUREAU** 

hat makes an exceptional cook? Most would say an abiding passion for the job, the ability to go out of one's comfort zone and a perfect sense of balance. Said the late Leon Lianides, once owner and creative force behind the Coach House restaurant in Manhattan, "If you don't have that love and...appreciation for the ingredients, you are not going to do anything. It's like being a musician. You can teach anybody to play the piano, but there are those special few who really bring out the melody." Celebrity Chef Ranveer Brar brought out the melody and orchestrated a culinary philosophy that dwelt on an innate passion for food - an emotional connect that translated on the plate. Brar is committed to sustainable food practices and resourcefulness is perceived as a valuable asset in his lexicon, one that opens the door to innovation and creativity.

In an exclusive interaction with Today's Traveller in a pre-Covid interview Brar speaks on a variety of issues, including the ever-changing consumer trends in the food industry, his personal culinary philosophy and how an encounter with one Shanti Devi taught him the value of resourcefulness in the kitchen.



#### **TOWARDS A TECHNO-CULINARY FUTURE**

Brar informs how technology has brought a sea change into the F&B industry and how the advent of state-of-the-art gadgets, access to technological innovations and newer machinery have greatly enhanced the whole cooking process.

The astute Chef is cognizant of the fact that he is in a space that is overtly competitive, where the chef's credibility is constantly being questioned by well-informed customers and guests. Brar also has the ability to recognise true talent when he sees it. Speaking about some upcoming chefs, he notes, "My bets are on amazing chefs, such as Thomas Zacharias, Amninder Sandhu, Rishim Sachdeva, Akshraj Jodha, and Abhishek Basu, among others."

Food is deeply intertwined with popular consciousness and societal norms and changes in the food scene are symptomatic of the larger changes prevalent in society. Brar rightly notes that when it comes to domestic cooking, increasingly, more males are donning the apron. Gone are the days when the kitchen was considered the rightful domain of women.

Use of indigenous ingredients, embracing and promoting local food cultures and food tourism are some of the key trends to be observed in the commercial kitchen. Transition towards older methods of cooking and the use of conventional tools and equipment are also becoming popular. Slow cooker, says Brar, will surely make an impressive comeback.

#### **FOOD PHILOSOPHY**

Food is a deeply emotive subject for Brar, who declares, "Food to me is an emotion; it provides a deep connection with memories, especially those related to childhood, travel and so on. One of the



Watermelon Sashimi Salad

main reasons I love travel is because it connects me as much to cultures as it does to cuisines and people. Understanding the culture and history of a place adds that extra dimension to any dish." This emotional connection with food gets translated on the plate for Brar. He says his style of cooking is deeply experiential in nature. "What I serve on a plate is all my experiences and memories interpreted into a dish, through which I aim to make that connect with the taster and make it a conversation-starter," says Brar.

"What I serve on a plate

is all my experiences and

memories interpreted into a dish, through which I aim to make that connect with the taster and make it a conversation-starter." Ranveer Brar







#### **SHANTI DEVI'S KITCHEN**

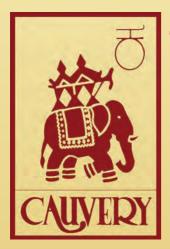
Being resourceful and being Indian, says Brar, are two sides of the same coin. During his travels through the length and breadth of the country, he has come across several examples of people being creative and resourceful with their food. One such person was Shanti Devi, whom Brar met during his travel show, The Great Indian Rasoi. Widowed at a very young age, Devi has been supporting her family by making rotis for the local Anganwadis (daycare centres).

"Her pantry," says Brar, "consisted of less than 10 ingredients, including millets, spices, dairy, sun-dried gwar phali, ker and sangri. Through what I gathered from our mixed-language conversation, she claimed she could whip up as many as 50

dishes from those ingredients!" Devi treated him to some of the simplest yet creative dishes he had ever tasted.

Although Brar, as a Chef, has come across several credible efforts being made in terms of sustainable food practices and resources, it was Devi's village that had devised indigenous and ingenious techniques and methods to co-exist with nature. The villagers there believe in seasonal eating, sun-drying ingredients for later use and storing food in a home-made, earthen 'fridge'. The Ker-Sangri, Rabodi and Raab, which Devi made for Brar, were lip-smackingly delicious. "Her story was one of the many examples where one's struggles and life events change the course of one's thinking and also gets reflected in your cooking, a philosophy I deeply identify with," says Brar, signing off.





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## THE GREEN CRUSADER

Clean and sustainable culinary practices are not just fads, but a way of life says Australia's favourite chef, Shannon Bennett in a pre-Covid interview

**TT BUREAU** 

or possibly centuries now, human beings have been gorging on food that is harmful, not only for the human body, but also for the earth and its sustenance. Thankfully, a handful of chefs are promoting food that is sustainable, organic and locally sourced.

Australia's beloved Chef Shannon Bennett is dedicating his culinary expertise to put food on the table that is both scrumptious as well as environmentally conscious. His food values rest on the principles of local

Australia's beloved Cher Shannon Bennett is dedicating his culinary expertise to put food on the table that is both scrumptious as well as environmentally conscious. His food values rest on the principles of local sourcing, organic cultivation and bio-dynamism. These principles are reflected, not just in the food he serves at his award-winning restaurant, Vue de Monde, but also at his kitchen table at home. Today's Traveller met up with this maverick master, who spoke at length about his personal food philosophy, upcoming chefs to watch out for and the dish he relates to the most.

#### **GLOBAL FOOD TRENDS**

The conversation starts with the trends that can be observed in the global food scene. Bennett says that increasingly, chefs around the world are turning towards locally sourced produce and sustainable food practices. Another trend that is quickly gaining popularity is the importance of local cuisine. This, Bennett says, is surely a part of a broader move towards experiential travel



Today's Traveller • January - February 2021



no longer a curated package of experiences pre-decided by your travel agent or hotel. Travellers today want to immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of a place, explore local culture, sample local food. Restaurants and hotels around the world are gradually attempting to showcase their local flavours rather than serving done-to-death culinary classics that are found in almost every menu card across the world. Bennett says, "I am a huge believer in restaurants and chefs trying to reflect their city in the food they serve. I don't want just beautiful food while travelling that is not from the city I'm visiting – it has no sense of purpose."

#### **Food Philosophy**

Continuing, Bennett turns the conversation towards his personal food philosophy and the milestones in his journey as a chef. Shares Bennett, "My food values are local, organic and biodynamic; they don't change either at home or in a restaurant set-up, where I am working in a professional capacity. Restaurant food should be dishes that cannot be replicated in the home. While they should be aspirational in nature, at the same time, they should look simple and make the key ingredient the hero. Sustainability is a key ingredient for me."

It is this penchant for sustainability that led him to install a system that allowed his first restaurant, Vue De Monde, to cut down on energy consumption. Further, use of local ingredients



and non-toxic building material were also encouraged. Moreover, 10 years ago, he set up his own farm, where he cultivated truffles and some select vegetables. Although he sold the group three-and-a-half years ago, he still keeps in touch with the culinary team there, mentoring and inspiring a new generation of chefs and sommeliers.

Bennett now focusses on running Burnham Beeches – an iconic Art Moderne mansion and estate located in Sherbrooke, 45 minutes from the city of Melbourne.

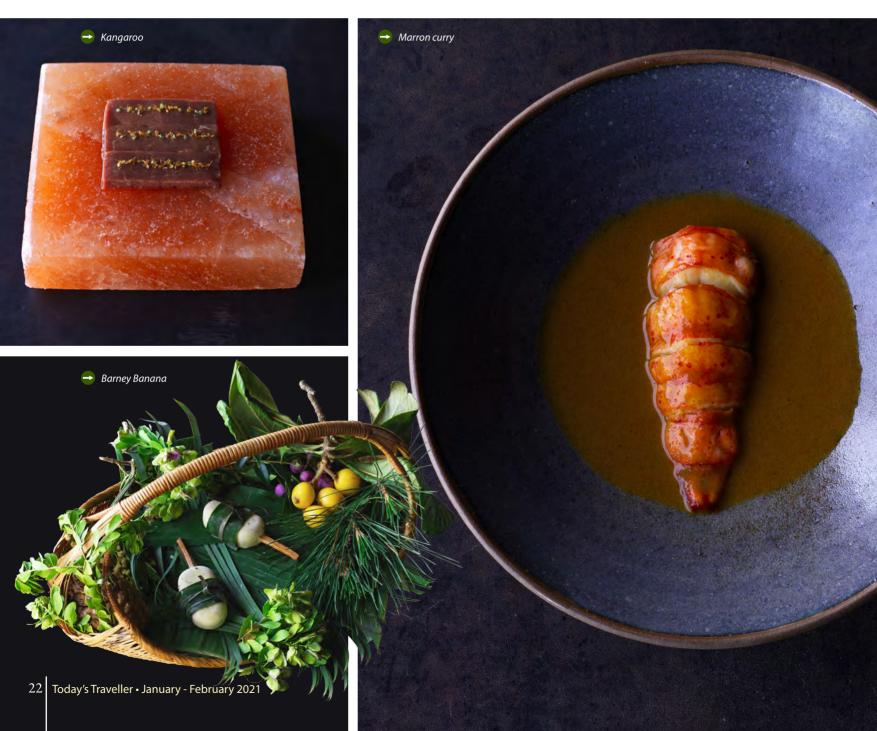
He is also on the verge of opening a 6-Star hotel and is working on some great dining concepts. Bennett lives in Byron Bay with his new partner Kyra and seven kids. "It is the most inspirational town in Australia for kids and food," says Bennett.

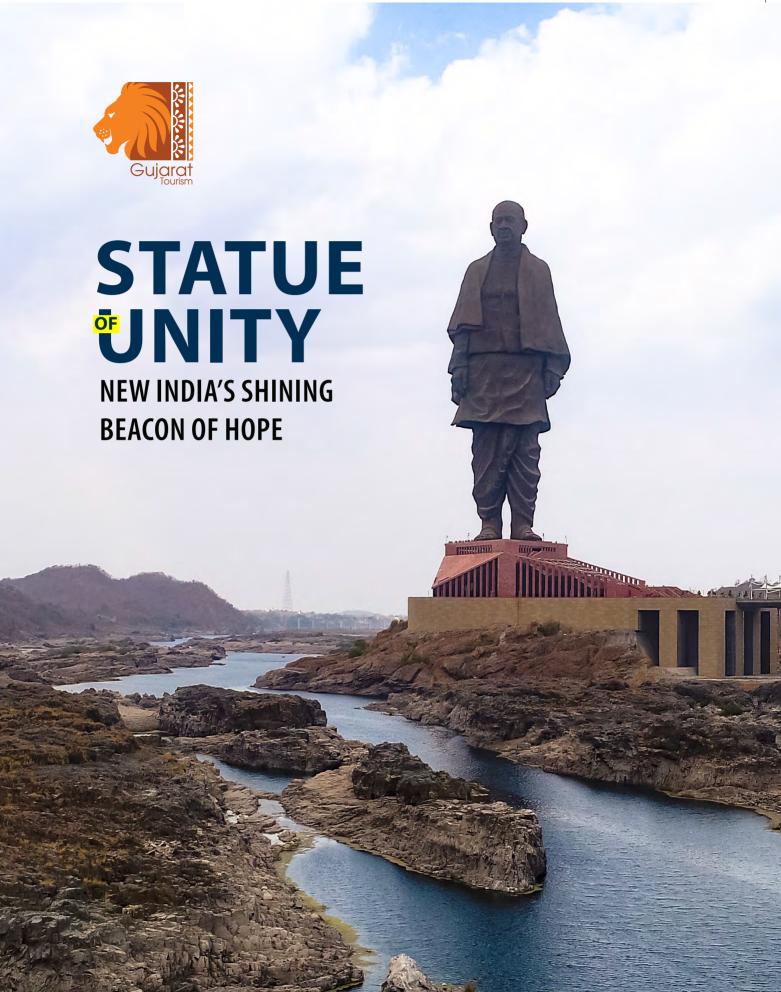
#### **UPCOMING TALENTS**

Though a Rockstar of the culinary world, Bennett acknowledges the upcoming talents who are taking the food industry by storm. "Hugh Allen," says Bennett, "who is the Head Chef of Vue de Monde, is a great talent. Allen has spent three years at Noma and has done his apprenticeship with Neil Perry and Vue de Monde. Josh Nialand, another young talent, is, without a shadow of doubt, the best fish cook in the world. St. Peter's, in Sydney, is his restaurant." Going back to the issue of sustainability, Bennett feels that local, seasonal and sustainable would be nonnegotiable in the next five years. Consumers may not have the time for an elaborate dining experience during workdays, but while they are travelling, they want to enjoy the full experience of how food is prepared – from the cooking to the serving.

#### **FAVOURITE DISHES**

The creator of delectable and innovative dishes, Bennett himself is a lover of food that requires minimal ingredients and have a timeless quality to them. He likes Truffle Risotto, because it's seasonal and has been a menu item in his restaurants for over 20 years. Another favourite is Marron Tail with Tarragon and Butter Emulsion. Both dishes are simple and timeless, declares Bennett.





#### 1 Statue of Unity

World's tallest statue welcomes you all



- Natural Paradise
  Discover a world of flora and fauna near the Statue of Unity
- **5** Outdoor adventures
  For the adventurous souls, the surrounding areas of the statue is a veritable paradise with facilities for river rafting, helicopter rides and jungle safaris





Discover fascinating details of the statue

3. Tourist Attractions

From the exhibition area to laser light and sound shows, the statue offers a wide range of choices for tourists





- **6.** Fun activities
  Shop till you drop at Ekta
  Mall or have fun with kids at
  Nutrition Park
- **7.** How to reach Statue of Unity

#### THE STORY BEHIND STATUE OF UNITY

The project was first announced in 2013 by Shri Narendra Modi, who was then the chief minister of Gujarat, to mark the beginning of the 10th year of his tenure. It was supposed to be Gujarat's tribute to the nation - a fitting homage to the towering personality of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the person who was singularly responsible for uniting the nation during the time of Independence.

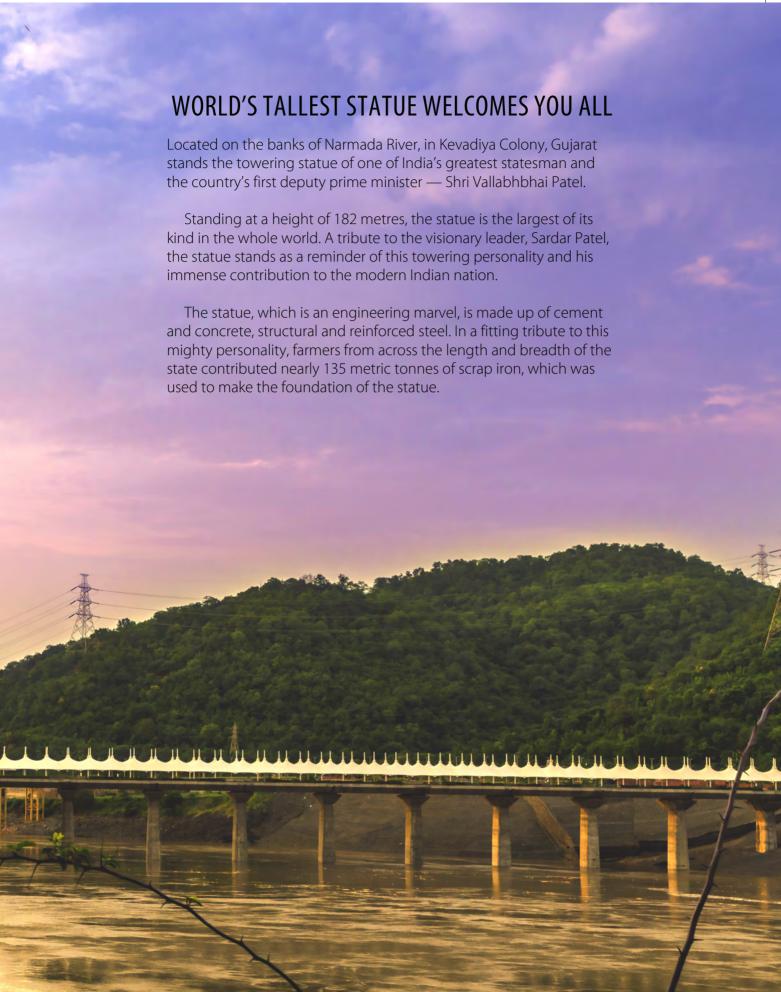
An outreach programme called Statue of Unity movement was organised that helped in collecting construction material for the statue. Farmers were

asked to donate their used farming instruments. By 2016, a total of 135 metric tons of scrap iron was collected, of which 109 tons of iron was used to make the statue.

By 2018, the construction of this marvelous statue was completed and the inaugural ceremony took place in October 2018. It was presided over by Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, who extolled the engineering skills that went into making the statue and reminded us of the contributions by Shri Vallabhbhai Patel.







#### **EXHIBITION AREA**

The Statue of Unity has five zones of which only three are accessible to the general public. The first zone has the exhibition area, the mezzanine floor and the roof. The expansive state-of-the-art exhibition area depicts the life and times of Sardar Patel.



## TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

#### SARDAR SAROVAR DAM

The Sardar Sarovar Dam is itself a sight to behold. Standing at a height of 163 metres, it is the third tallest dam in India and the second largest in the world. The dam presents a wonderful vista of the Narmada River and is a perfect spot for taking a selfie.



#### SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW

Brush up the knowledge of history with a laser light and sound show at the statue. The laser show involves projecting laser beams on the statue, depicting the achievements of Sardar Patel, accompanied by excellent narration.



#### **EKTA NURSERY**

The Ekta Nursery was envisioned by Honourable Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi, who inaugurated the nursery as a tourist destination to promote ecofriendly practices. Visitors can not only admire the staggering variety of saplings that are grown in the nursery but can also dabble in making bamboo craft products, areca leaf utensils and organic pots.

#### **CACTUS GARDEN**

One of the most miraculous plants in the world is the Cactus. It can thrive in some of the harshest conditions in the world and comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. A botanical garden, known as the Cactus Garden, is situated at the State of Unity and is a fitting tribute to this wonder of nature.









#### **BUTTERFLY GARDEN**

Situated next to the Cactus Garden is Butterfly Garden, which features as many as 38 varieties of butterflies. The garden has been constructed in such a way that it attracts the butterflies, providing them with a safe habitat to thrive.



### SARDAR PATEL ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN

Be up close with exotic wildlife at Sardar Patel Zoological Park. Spread over 550,000 square metres the park is the home to magnificent big cats, including the Asiatic lion, Royal Bengal Tiger and leopard. The sanctuary also features several varieties of deer, antelope, giraffe and bison.



#### **ZARWANI WATERFALL**

Situated at a distance of 14 kilometres from the statue, there is Zarwani Waterfall. Here you can take a dip in the flowing waters or simply enjoy the calmness that surrounds the place.



#### **TENT CITY**

Enjoy quintessential Gujarat hospitality at Tent City – a luxurious complex featuring 75 luxury tents, 75 deluxe tents and 100 standard tents.

These tents harmoniously combine the simplicity of outdoor living with all the amenities and facilities that modern life can offer.



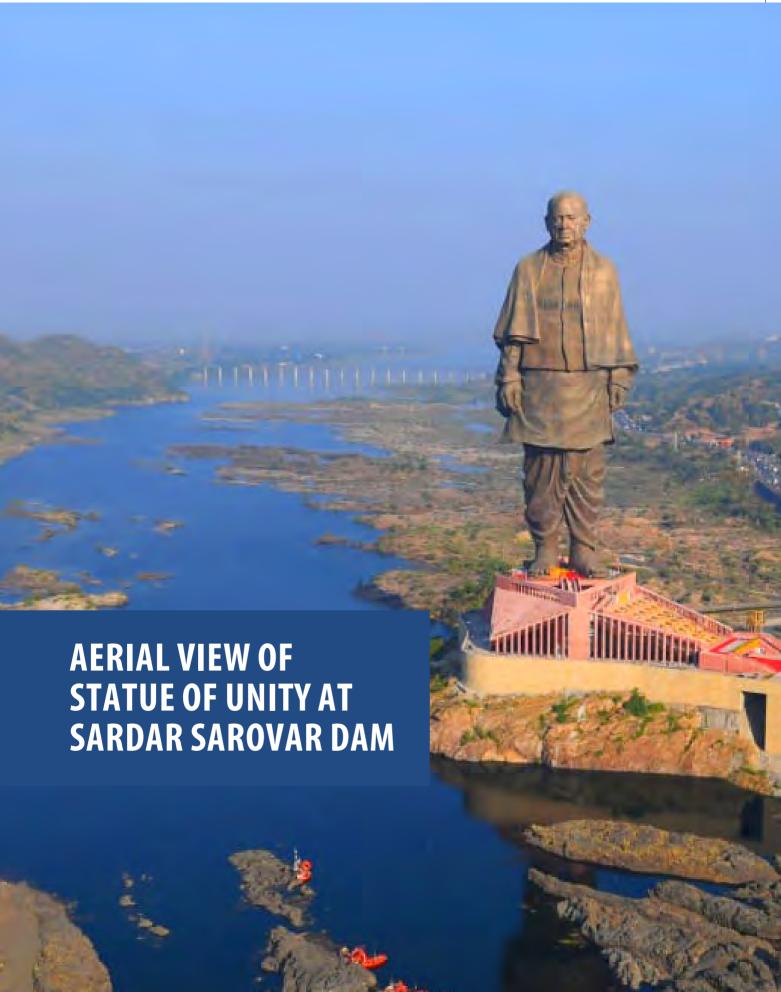
#### **EKTA MALL**

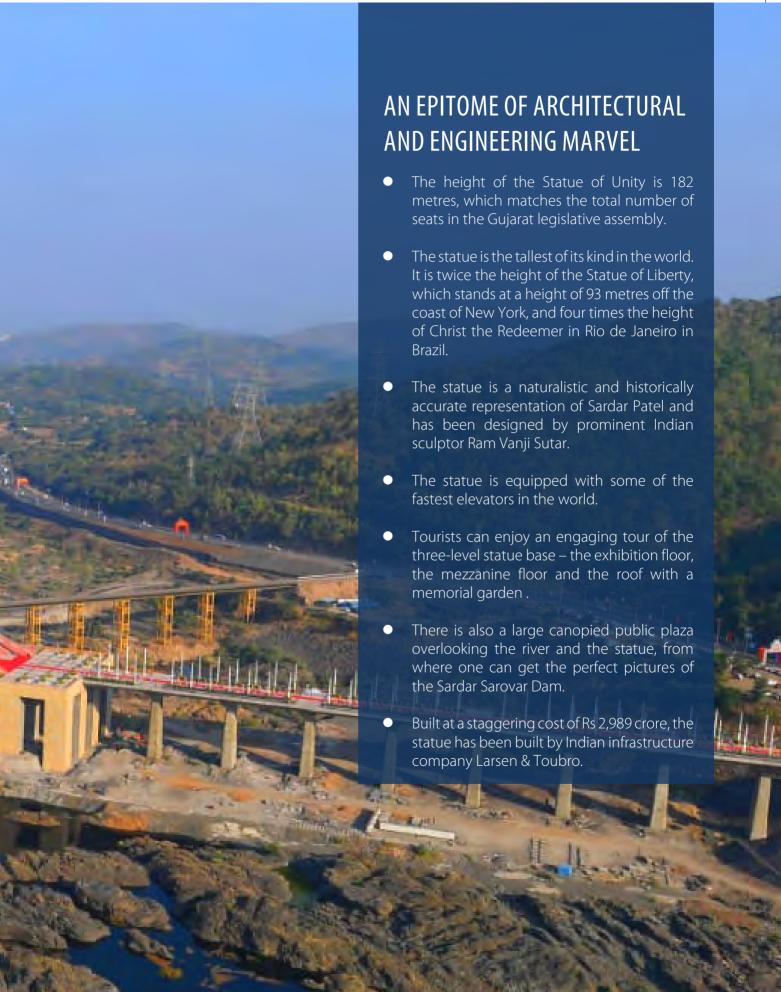
Take time out to shop at Ekta Mall. Situated at a stone's throw distance from the Statue of Unity, this mall welcomes visitors with a dazzling array of handicraft and handloom items sourced from over twenty different states of the country.



#### **NUTRITION PARK**

Discover the child in you at Children's Nutrition Park. Built around the theme of children's nutritional development, the theme park combines fun rides with education. Hop on the Nutri Train or get lost in the Mirror Maze.





#### HOW TO REACH STATUE OF UNITY

Statue of Unity at Kevadia is located at a distance of around 90 kms from Vadodara. You can reach here by taxi or bus in approximately 2 hrs.

#### HOW TO REACH VADODARA



Vadodara is very well connected by road to neighbouring states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Within Gujarat, Vadodara is connected to all cities by roadway buses and deluxe air-conditioned coaches. Vadodara Central Bus Depot to Statue of Unity – 93 km.

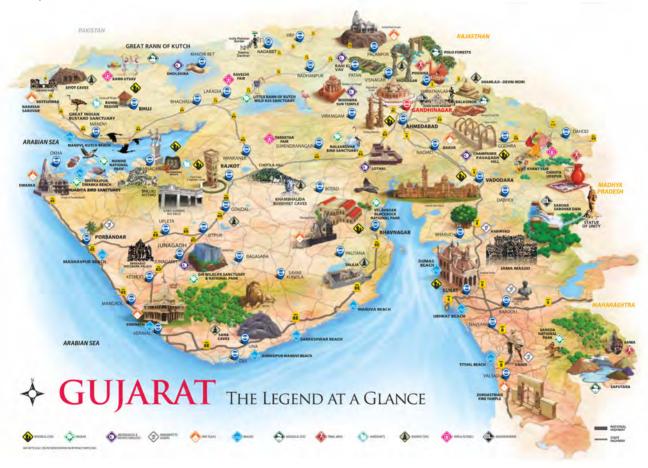


Vadodara lies on the main broad gauge railway lines between Mumbai-Ahmedabad and Mumbai-Delhi, with several trains to choose from.

Vadodara Railway Station to Statue of Unity – 92 km.



Vadodara's new airport has daily and weekly connections to major Indian destinations. Vadodara Airport to Statue of Unity – 96 km.





#### TOURISM CORPORATION OF GUJARAT LTD.

Udyog Bhavan, Block No. 16, 4th Floor, Sector - 11, Gandhinagar - 382011 Phone: 91-79-2322523 / 23222645 / 23220002, Fax 91-79-23238908 | www.gujarattourism.com

# CORPORATE JET-SETTER

### SABYASACHI DUTTA Managing Director, Vidatec

### TT BUREAU

### Most memorable trip to any destination?

It was always my dream to visit at least one of the Seven Wonders of the World. My wish finally got fulfilled when I got a chance to visit Egypt. The country is more than just Giza Pyramids in Cairo. Abu Simbel, Luxor, Nile river cruise, hot air balloon ride — all added up to make the trip a memory one.

### You dream of going to?

The movie, The Martian, made me think of exploring Mars on my own. Considering the fact that it may not be feasible in this lifetime, how about the option of exploring Atacama Desert in Chile instead?

### Favourite airline and why?

Jet Airways was my favourite airline before it went broke. While travelling international, Lufthansa is my other favourite airline.

### Best hotel experience and why?

Hilton and Taj stays have always been pleasurable. I still remember, as a kid, I entered Taj Bengal, Kolkata, and was zapped by its grandeur and opulence.

### A place you plan to visit again?

London — I can go there any number of times, and yet, it seems unexplored.

### A family vacation that stands out?

A fortnight-long road trip we undertook almost a decade ago. It commenced from the northern end of Kerala to the southern tip, finally culminating at Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu.

### An event with friends?

An evening in full Viking regalia at a small town in Sweden.

### Great food you enjoyed and where?

I make it a point of savouring popular local dish wherever I travel to. Be it Cashew Feni in Goa or Tiramisu in Italy or a delicious







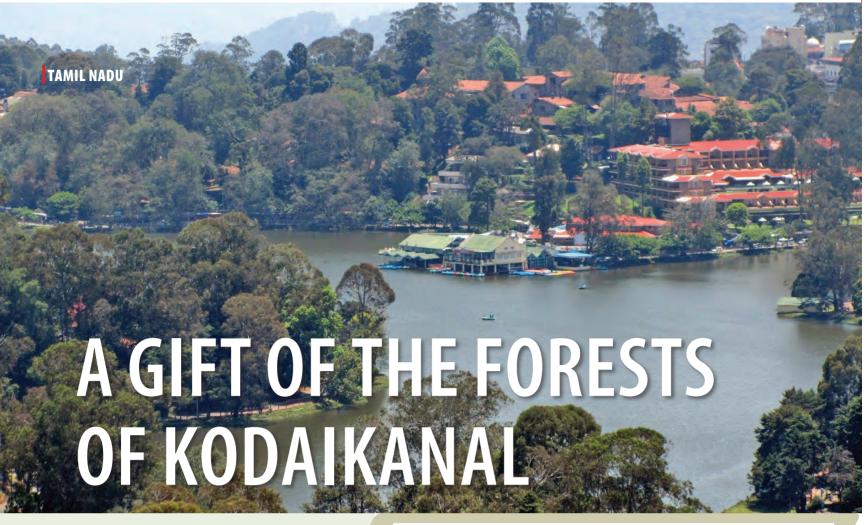
serving of Haggis in Scotland, I try not to miss them. Wasabi by Morimoto and Yauatcha are couple of places in Mumbai I adore.

### What to watch out while travelling?

- Travel light but do carry as much bare essentials as required.
- Study in advance about the customs and the local rules of the place you are visiting.
- · Regularly update about the progress of your visit.
- Be humble and show respect to others.

### As a travel buyer, what's your philosophy?

While needless extravagance should be avoided, cheaper options may not be always be the best. A fine balance between perceived value and cost must be made. Every new travel might call for specific purchases, so avoid recycling. People often tend to be 'penny wise, pound foolish' with disastrous consequences.



Experience true happiness as you loosen yourself in the arms of the Princess of Hill Stations – Kodaikanal

**TT BUREAU** 



ave you ever thought what it would be like to be enveloped with verdant forests, gushing waters, and mighty mountains, away from the stress and strain of every day life, in experiencing Nirvana in the lap of nature? Well, if you haven't, then do think twice.

Trekkers will love the winters for the Kodaikanal weather offers some amazing winter trekking routes and views for the traveller. With the cold weather and warm sunshine, walking around the hill town with its gardens and quaint shops, visiting museums and heritage sites is a great experience. But, it is the hills that capture the heart and mind of the visitor as the mist wraps around the trees and thick foliage and you breathe in the fresh air.

A winter picnic is a definite try and the best place to pick one is at the Pillar Rocks. The view from the three vertical boulders at Pillar Rocks is heart-stopping. Green Valley View and the Silent Valley are brilliantly scenic and you can capture some wonderful Instagram pictures.

Another interesting spot is the Devil's Kitchen located just 1 km away from the Pillar Rocks. The gorge is deep and filled with

thick forests, waterfalls and when white clouds descend into its hollows, the scene is mesmerising.

This winter season take time out to explore the quaint hill station of Kodaikanal and be lost in its olde- world charm.



### **KODAIKANAL LAKE**

Created in 1863 by Sir Vere Hendry Levinge, the then Collector of Madurai, who retired and settled in Kodaikanal, the 24-hectare Kodaikanal Lake is the focal point of the town. His efforts paved the way for the formation of a Boat Club, in 1890, by when boating had already become a pleasurable pastime for locals and tourists alike.

You can enjoy the views around this 154-year-old lake by hiring rowboats or pedal boats. The entire lake is skirted by the surrounding virgin forests of the Palani hills. You can also buy some local spices, homemade chocolates, and eucalyptus oil from the shops that line periphery of the lake.

Winters get surreal on this lake, as you meander on the fogcovered waters rowing straight into the mist. If you wander along the lake's edge, you're sure to discover more and more to satiate your inner traveller.

### **DOLPHIN'S NOSE**

Dolphin Nose is an enormous rock formation where the tip of the peak resembles a dolphin's nose, from where it gets this name. It's a flat rock projecting over a breath-taking 6,600 ft deep cliff in an undisturbed area 1km down a very steep rocky trail.

One of the most scenic places to see in Kodaikanal, the views from Dolphin nose are breathtaking with amazing high mountains covered in trees. The journey towards this spot is also amazing because of the sharp hairpin bends and tea plantations on both sides. The weather remains a bit foggy as you proceed onwards. It's a perfect spot to connect with nature and click selfies.

### **BRYANT PARK**

Located close to Kodaikanal Lake, this is one of most beautiful parks in town, opened in 1908 by HD Bryant, a forest officer from Madurai, and showcases a variety of colourful blossoms in combination of fragrances.

The park is a rainbow of colours reflecting from stunning flowers during the blooming season. The park houses 325 species of trees, shrubs and cactuses, and a large section is dedicated to nearly 740 varieties of roses. It's an ideal place to enjoy leisure walks and relax amidst swathes of greenery. This kind of a place can instantly bring a smile to anyone's face.





### **LAKE VIEW POINT**

Head to Lake View Point, after you're done relaxing at Bryant Park, for a good 45-minute walk and from here you can observe the blueness of the Kodai Lake and the enveloping beauty all around you. The sunset view from here is like a cherry on top, as the setting sun spreads its golden hues on the green mountains, making the scenery even livelier with colours.

### **COAKER'S WALK**

Constructed by Lt. Coaker in 1872, Coaker's Walk is a 1km-long paved pedestrian path offering scintillating views from all four corners. This watch point is situated at a height of 2000ft. from where you get spectacular views of clouds descending on lush green mountains, verdant misty valleys, and serene waters of the lake below.

On several occasions, you can also get a glimpse of a rainbow cutting across the clouds. Though on a clear sunny day, you can see Dolphin's Nose in the south, Pambar River valley in the southeast, Periyakulam town and even the city of Madurai.





## **BEYOND NIRVANA...**

Start the year, with a stimulating journey on the iconic Buddhist trail in Bihar and experience serenity, joy and well-being

### TT BUREAU

alking a spiritual trek is not just at the dispensation of the believers, it's something that attracts us all. To discover the path taken by Gautama Buddha, some 2,543 years, is like delving in the past and present simultaneously.

This winter season, head out to Bihar and experience what it's like to be in the constant fold of time, as you discover the state's rich cultural legacy, architectural wonders and heritage sites through its many Buddhist-era buildings.

### **BODH GAYA - ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE**

Often called the focal point of Buddhism in India, Bodh Gaya is the place where Gautama Budhha attained Enlightenment or Buddhatva under what came to be known as the Bodhi Tree. A place of pilgrimage and veneration for Hindus and Buddhists, the Mahabodhi Temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the four major pilgrimage sites related to the life and times of Gautama Buddha.

The temple complex is located 110km from Patna and features the pyramidal Mahabodhi Temple, a diamond throne, and the holy Bodhi Tree. An architectural marvel in its own



right, the temple stands tall at 170ft, featuring Chhatras built atop the temple, symbolising the sovereignty of religion.

The sanctum sanctorum has a black stone statue of Lord Buddha in the sitting posture, touching the earth with his right hand – the very posture in which he attained Enlightenment. The temple courtyard has several votive stupas, built 2,500 years ago.

Spend some time at Animesh Lochan Chaitya – the same spot, where several centuries ago, Lord Buddha spent an entire week looking unblinkingly and with gratitude at the Bodhi Tree. A must-visit spot on every traveller's itinerary, Bodh Gaya has many other tourist worthy spots as well – an 80-ft statue of Lord Buddha, a Buddha Kund, Rajayatana, Brahm Yoni, a Chinese temple and monastery, a Burmese temple, a Buddhist Monastery of Bhutan, an International Buddhist House and Japanese temple, a Thai temple and monastery, a Tibetan monastery and an archaeological museum.

### **NALANDA - BEYOND THE MYTH**

Your next stop on the Buddhist circuit should be in Nalanda, which takes you back to periods of antiquity. This ancient city lies 62km from Bodh Gaya and is renowned for its first residential international university of the world.



Steeped in history and covered in awe-inspiring ruins, this is where you will find the famous archaeological museum that houses a beautiful collection of a number of undamaged statues of Lord Buddha. To understand the significance and architectural grandeur of this place, it is highly recommended to hire local guides, whose colloquial anecdotes and insights will make your journey to this place interesting and worth visiting. Check out the stupas, monasteries, hostels, laboratories, meditation halls, lecture halls and temples inside this visual retreat.

### **RAJGIR - WELLNESS ABODE**

Located in a valley, the quaint little town of Rajgir lies15km from Nalanda and it is believed that Lord Buddha spent many years here. Rajgir is best known for warm water springs with medicinal properties and the ropeway ride to the Shanti Stupa at Gridhakuta, built atop a hill by Japanese devotees.

Take a dip in the warm waters before leaving for the Stupa, either by taking a two-hour trek or using the ropeway to the site. Visit Sonbhandar caves, which are best for meditation; Venu Vana, a monastery built by King Bimbisara for Lord Buddha to reside in; Swarna Bhandar, which, it is still believed, holds a store of gold which dates back to King Jarasandh's rule.



### **VAISHALI - ATTAINING NIRVANA**

After the attainment of Enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, Lord Buddha is said to have visited Vaishali to preach his teachings on life, resulting in mass followers. A spiritual destination of great importance, this is where Buddha announced his proximity to Nirvana, which is one of the eight great events in the life of Buddha. It was here that he preached his last sermon at a Buddhist monastery in Kolhua, on the outskirts of Vaishali.

Explore the old architectural beauty of this town through its many buildings, standing as testimony to an era of yore. Places of Buddhist interests include Ananda Stupa, KutagarasalaVihara, Lion Pillar, and Buddha's Relic Stupa. The nearest airport to Vaishali is at Patna, 70km away. Hajipur (35 km) is the nearest railhead, and Vaishali is also well-connected by road to Patna (56km). The place attracts historians and archaeologists from far and wide who want to know more about this significant journey in the life of Gautama Buddha.





ispense with daily work-life WFH stress, awaken your inner adrenaline junkie and take off for winter sports destinations. Let go and and indulge in experiences and activities that will bring you out of your year-long hibernation.

India offers numerous winter activities you can enjoy with family, a few friends or just by yourself. Popular winter sports include skiing, trekking, ice-climbing, ice-skating, ice-hockey and sleigh-riding. You can select from destinations that are driveable or close to where you reside.

Winter destinations that host such activities include the regions of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir.

### UTTARAKHAND FOR THE EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELLER

Uttarakhand is synonymous with Experiential Travel. From the Himalayan peaks, to the Bhabhar and Terai grasslands, Uttarakhand has place for everyone in its snow-friendly

countryside. The northern state invites people throughout the year, but in terms of winter adventures, you could build a treasure trove of memories even if you are not a trained sports person.

**SKIING:** Whats a few bumps and spills amongst friends! Amateurs can attempt the smaller slopes, but if you are a freestyle skier, you could race down one of the best skiing slopes in the world on Auli's four snow slopes, which are 5.2km long. For added convenience, Auli also has the entire lifts and ski lifts. Altenately, take a snow board and enjoy a ride downhill Not feeling up to it? Equally memorable are sunsets, when the sky is clear and you can see the mighty peaks of Nanda Devi, Man Parvat and Kamat from the top of the slopes. You can take in the most beautiful views and be an Instagram star!

**TREKKING:** Snow treks are a high that are cannot be missed. Make sure you have an experienced guide and select from any number of easy and more energetic treks. An easy trek is to make it to the top of Nagtibba at 10,000 feet. Other great snow treks include Kedarkantha trek; Har ki Dun trek; Brahmatal trek, Kuari Pass and Binsar trek.

These popular treks remain the most sought after in the Indian Himalayas for a reason. Just to be able to walk through endless meadows covered with snow is an unparalleled experience. You can trek through beautiful forest sections, take in magnificent sunrises and sunsets, enjoy the bonhomie of campsite stays, and relive the treks through iconic high mountain passes through panoramic pictures shared with friends and family.

### HIMACHAL PRADESH: THE GO-TO WINTER HOT SPOT

Known for its vast landscapes that encompass popular hillstations, cultures and traditions, Himachal Pradesh is the goto destination for people who are looking to fit in the most exciting getaway with the least travel time.

**ICE CLIMBING:** In just a few years, Spiti has become the holy grail of ice climbing destinations, with its frozen waterfalls and ice-capped peaks. The small town near Shimla also hosts the annual ice climbing festival.

**ICE SKATING:** Ice skating is one of the most sought after winter adventure sports in Shimla, which is home to the only natural ice skating rink in the country. Shimla also hosts the



annual ice skating festival that includes carnivals, feasts and other festivities that will add that extra zing to your visit.

## JAMMU & KASHMIR: STUNNING VIEWS AND ROMANTIC LOCATIONS

The very name conjures images of mesmerising snow-capped mountains, romantic locations, placid lakes, and scenic valleys, which have the Himalayas as their backdrop.

Jammu & Kashmir has opportunities for heliskiing, ice skating, ice hockey, snow autocross and snowboarding. During normal times, the state holds national level winter sporting events in Gulmarg include the alpine ski championship and snowboarding championship

**ICE HOCKEY:** In Gulmarg, ice skating and ice hockey are some of the most popular winter sports amongst locals and tourists alike.

Gulmarg translates to Meadow of Roses, and the town is located in the Western Himalayas, so you can expect some stunning views and some Instagram-worthy sights.

**SLEIGH RIDING:** The popular Christmas carol alluding to 'a one horse open sleigh' comes alive in Gulmarg, with sleigh riding being the one activity that you cannot miss out on. Gulmarg and Sonmarg are two well-known places that you should visit if you really want to know what sledge riding in snowy Kashmir is all about.







Great geographical diversity and a varied landscape have made India a favoured destination for adventure sports

### TT BUREAU

estowed with towering peaks and mountains, fascinating rivers, challenging terrains and other natural marvels, India has become a favoured destination for adventure sports. Across its length and breadth one can find multiple opportunities to plunge in and experience the activities that not only give one an adrenaline rush, but also transcend one to a fearless world. Be it in the East, West, North or South, the country has ample options that offer the desired adrenaline kicks to adventure junkies. And, when you hit on the right adventure sport at the right destination, the fun, thrill and rush multiplies exponentially. Here are some adventure destinations that you must experience at least once during your lifetime in India.

### **SKI DOWN GULMARG SLOPES**

Gulmarg, once known as Gaurimag, translates to 'The Meadow of Flowers', is an incredible place in the Kashmir Valley. Whether you are a skier or snowboarder looking for the ultimate adventure or simply a cultural experience to remember, Gulmarg has the ingredients to provide you with everything you need, with offers to suit individuals, groups, or pro teams looking for a personalised big mountain free-ride, ski touring, heli-skiing or heli-boarding adventure games.

India may not be an obvious destination for skiing, but the resort at Gulmarg, which has been around since the British colonial age, makes it one of the premier hill resorts and ultimate ski destination in the country. While Gulmarg is an all-weather resort with refreshing summer meadows and pastoral scenes to keep the camera busy, the main reason to come here, at least in winter, is the off-piste, deep-powder, long-run skiing and snowboarding snowy slopes with the world's highest gondola ski lift and eye-popping vistas of the great Himalayas. Gulmarg is also the capital of Winter Games and has a dedicated ski institute for comprehensive ski training.

Gulmarg provides natural slopes, inclines and plenty of snow, making it a favourite winter destination. Skiing in Gulmarg is a wonderful combination of incredible curry powder skiing and the unique and hospitable Kashmiri culture – which makes it one of the world's most adventurous and memorable skiing experiences one could ever have.

### **MAKE TRACKS IN ROOPKUND**

The trek to Roopkund Lake, known as the Mystery Lake of Uttarakhand, is a must for everyone, irrespective of whether you are into trekking or not. It's got everything one would expect, with deep virgin forests, gurgling brooks, breathtaking







campsites, miles of undulating meadows, snow and ice and the taste of great adventure as you climb from 8,000 ft to 16,000 ft.

The Roopkund trek being one of the most popular treks in India, is almost picture perfect. The trail leads you through a splendid dark forest and suddenly, you come upon Ali and Bedni Bugyal, arguably India's most beautiful high altitude meadows, which are sure to blow your mind away. It almost feels like you're walking into the meadows of the Shire, and your eyes wander, expecting Bilbo (the title character and protagonist of J. R. R. Tolkien's 'The Hobbit') to run out of his burrow. Out of the meadows, the trail quickly bends into superb alpine stretches. The climb, over the crunchy and slippery snow to Roopkund Lake, is a heart pounding thrill. The impressive Mount Trishul looms over the setting, getting closer as you climb higher, until at a ridge above Roopkund, only air separates the trekker from them and Trishul.

Throughout the trek you're fed with magnificent views of Mount Trishul and Mount Nandagunti. Apart from these two, you see the imposing Chaukhamba range, Neelkanth Peak, Kedarnath, Kedar Dome and several other high risers on the Roopkund trek, which offers the right dose of adventure with a bunch of steep climbs and slippery, but fun descents. No roller coaster can give you the adrenaline rush you will get as you walk along a sharp exposed ridge towards Junargali, while holding onto a rope.

### **UP THE GOECHA LA TREK**

Sikkim has been given many names. The Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the land, called it Nye-mae-el or `Paradise.' The Limbus named it Su Khim or `New House,' while to the Bhutias it was Beymul Demazong, meaning 'The Hidden Valley of Rice.' It has steep mountainsides and comprises a mixed vegetation, like cactus, orange trees, oak, and orchids. This is why trekking in Sikkim is considered a mecca for trekkers. Goecha La trek is the perfect trek trail to be explored by every adventure lover throughout the country. The trekking trail starts from Yuksom town, a prominent destination in Sikkim for its historical significance. The rich and traditional culture of Sikkim can be well explored here. Along the way one can also spot a distinctive and unique style of wooden fences close to the trail, which is quite charming. The second highlighted feature of the trek is the sight of the fascinating and mesmerising snow-covered peaks of Kanchenjunga, with amazing green landscapes and lush meadows at the foothills. The magnificence of the third highest peak of the world is so impressive that one can spend hours soaking in its aura. Breathtaking views of Mount Pandim, Kabru and Rotang on the Goechala Trek are both astounding and captivating, urging the trekkers to visit the destination again and again. Last but not the least, for the sheer love of nature, this trek is ideal, since it comprises many exciting destinations that glorify the



beauty of nature, such as a vast array of wild flowers, lush oak plantations and dense rhododendron forests.

### JUMP OFF A PLANE IN MEHSANA

Mehsana, known for its 'Dudhsagar Dairy' plant, is one of the best destinations for skydiving in India. Located approximately 75km away from Ahmedabad, is the only such drop zone in India. Skyriders, associated with Indian Wildlife & Adventure Sports, is affiliated to United States Parachute Association and their activities are approved by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India. Jumping from a plane at 10,000ft, going over 220kmph and opening the chute at 6,000ft, sky diving is enthralling to say the least. The best activity that can be experienced here is the Tandem Experience.

Mehsana is indeed the gateway to the world of skydiving, giving you an instant un-adulterated euphoria. At around 10,000ft above MSL, take off elegantly into the space with instructors into instant nirvana. The overall experience is guaranteed to leave an everlasting impression on your mind.

Instructors often allow you to manoeuvre the parachute as desired to enjoy the aerial view of the city before landing at a predetermined place at the airport. As a part of the process, instructors will first train you thoroughly till the time they are satisfied with your various body positions which are needed to be maintained during the free fall. This training includes various communication signals, landing postures and procedures. The training lasts for at least an hour, depending on individual aptitudes.





# CORPORATE JET-SETTER

DR. ABHIJIT SARKAR, Vice President and National Head - CRE, Administration and Infrastructure, Sharekhan Limited

### **TT BUREAU**

### Q: Most memorable trip to any destination?

I am very passionate about visiting historic places and ancient locations. As a nature lover, I prefer southern India. Places such as Madurai, Rameshwaram and Dhanuskodi are some of my favourite destinations. I still fondly remember our journey through the sand in Dhanuskodi, which in itself was a thrilling experience. This serene island — which is also known as the "lost land of Tamil Nadu" — connects India and Sri Lanka. It provides breath-taking views and an experience to cherish forever.

### Q: You dream of going to?

Spain is a place I want to visit.

### Q: Favourite airline and why?

Earlier, Jet Airways was my favourite because of its rich hospitality and connectivity. I also like Vistara for its excellent ambience and hospitality. When we talk about international airlines, I prefer Emirates for its admirable hospitality, connectivity and ambience.

### Q: Best hotel experience and why?

I firmly believe in brand value. For me, every brand of Indian Hotel Company Ltd (IHCL) has always given me a wonderful experience. While choosing a hotel, I look at various factors, such







as hospitality, customer service, amenities, food and location. Apart from IHCL, another brand that ticks all the boxes is Taj Hotels.

### Q: A place you plan to visit again?

Being a passionate traveller, who has been always attracted to nature and wildlife, Kenya is my preferred choice of destination. Its magnificent parks, reserves, world-class birding sanctuaries and private conservancies are fascinating.

### Q: A family vacation that stands out?

My trip to Himachal Pradesh, also known as Dev Bhumi, has been my most memorable trip with my family.

### Q: Your best holiday with friends?

Goa and Kerala, among Indian destinations, and Dubai, among international ones, are my favourites.

### Q: Great food you enjoyed and where?

The street food of Amar Kolkata — a spicy dish made with a special concoction of ingredients — is the most authentic version available in the city. Mishti Doi is also delectable.

### Q: What to watch out for while travelling?

When I plan a luxury tour, I always weigh my options and choose the right destination. Exceptional customer service and value for money will always be at the top of the priority list. I always choose the accommodation that can add a rich flavour of experience to my tour. For me, the perfect holiday means a combination of cultural exploration, exceptional hotels and outstanding guides.

### Q: As a travel buyer, what's your philosophy?

Being someone who loves travelling, my philosophy is to be very careful while selecting a destination. Luxury lies in the experience. I would prefer selecting new destinations and off-the-beaten-track experiences. When on a holiday tour, I prefer to relax, chill and come back with great experiences and memories. Every tour should be a tour of my dreams.



ur diverse nation is a treasure trove of cultures and traditions, which also includes a vast spread of diverse cuisines. Whether it is the fiery fare of Northeastern India, or the sweet savouries of West Bengal, whether you want a bite of authentic coastal food or authentic mountain cuisine... it is all there for you.. And if you are more adventurous you can add fiery flavour with a tasting of the delicious Mahua of tribal India to the tangy Goan feni to the flavourful Toddy, a palm wine indigenous to Kerala and so on.

### **SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR**

They say Kashmir's scenic beauty makes it a heaven on earth for travellers; we also say it is 'Paradise Found' for food lovers.

Kashmiris love mutton and there are close to thirty mutton recipes originating from the valley, the most popular being Rogan Josh. You also have Gushtaba – lamb meatballs in yoghurt curry; Tabak Maaz – lamb ribs with turmeric, cinnamon and saffron; Kashmiri Haakh – a traditional Kashmiri collard green preparation. For dessert, try Khubani ka Halwa, a delightful apricot pudding mixed with dried fruits. The high point of the Kashmiri food experience comes in the form of Wazwan, a multicourse meal with almost all dishes made of chicken and lamb – its preparation is considered an art

**Special Beverage** – Kawah, the traditional tea

To die for experience - Wazwan

Oomph factor – Boat ride on Nagin Lake,



### **AMRITSAR, PUNJAB**

The haven of Punjabi cuisine, this northern region of India is all about big-hearted eating and living life king size. Punjab is also home to the delicious tandoori style of cooking, be it chicken or paneer. In Amritsar, one can find the flavours of authentic Punjab, the fragrant Kasoori Methi (dried fenugreek leaves) and butter-laden delicacies.

When in Amritsar, do try the authentic and very famous Butter Chicken – chicken in creamy gravy; the ultimate Sarson ka Saag and Makki ki Roti – a traditional dish where spinach and mustard meet com bread or roti; Fish Tikka – an oven-cooked Amritsari delicacy; and Amritsari Lassi. Find your way to one of the many places that serve some tasty Amritsari Jalebi to end the food fest on a sweet note.

Made to Measure – Patiala Peg, pride of Punjab

(basically an extra-large peg of liquor)

To die for experience - Butter Chicken

Oomph Factor - The Golden Temple

### **LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH**

Reminiscent of the Nawab culture, Lucknow is every foodie's delight. What you get in Lucknow in terms of food is better known as Awadhi cuisine and it would entirely be your loss if you do not try the wonderful dishes.

The very first item on your list should be the famous and the delicious, Galouti Kebab; Lucknowi Biryani – the version of Biryani found this side of India comes straight out of the kitchens of the Nawabs; Kakori Kebabs – these amazing kebabs are made of minced mutton and are mixed with aromatic spices before being grilled, in order to get the beautiful colour. Kakori, a city on the outskirts of Lucknow, is where the Kakori Kebab originated.

Check out Pasandey – mutton cooked till tender, in spices and gravy, along with cream and almonds. Complete your culinary journey at Lucknow with Shahi Tukda – a delicious bread pudding, and Malai Ki Gilori, which is an authentic sweet delight.

Sweet delight – The incredibly delicious dahi Jalebi

To die for experience - Kakori Kebab

Oomph factor – The Mughal Shrine, Bada imambara



### **KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL**

Once the capital of India, Kolkata was a cosmopolitan city with Jews, Armenians and Anglo-Indian settlers, paving the way for some of the most sumptuous foods you can find in the country.

Start your culinary journey by heading to Tiretta Bazaar early in the morning. Home to the Chinese community, you will be in for a treat, which includes Chicken Momos, Park Momos, Shu Mei, Sausages, Prawn Wafers, Tai Paos, Fried Dough Sticks and Chicken Rolls.

Move on to authentic Bengali dishes later in the day, with Kosha Mangsho – an aromatic Bengali mutton curry; Sorse Ilish – a preparation of "Ilish," (The King of Fishes) with mustard seeds and green chillies; the quintessentially Bengali Alu Posto – potato with poppy seeds.

While you are at it, try the various green veggies and roots and shoots, most of which are prepared with fish head or small fish. Do not miss out on Kathi Rolls and other street food, and, of course Flury's, the legendary Kolkata tearoom.

Festival Pancake – The pitha, a sweet snack connected with the harvest festivals

To die for experience - Sorse Ilish

Oomph Factor – The iconic Howrah Bridge above

the holy Ganges

### KOHIMA, NAGALAND

Home to over 15 indigenous tribes, the state of Nagaland is a potpourri of Naga cooking. In general, Nagas love their poultry and fish, however, their favourite meats are pork and beef.

It is a common practice in the state to rear animals which are prized as meat at feasts, and keep a stock of smoked and salted meat to be used through the year. The meat is first smoked over a large kitchen fire at home, and then it is fermented underground for longevity.

While talking about local food in Nagaland, you cannot ignore the extensive use of freshly available herbs into their cooking. Often, the cooking involves large chunks of meat with the most basic condiments.

One of the most sought after traditional dishes of Nagaland is the pork smoked in their traditional way. The authentic smoked pork is crisp on the outside and succulent from within. The dish can be tossed dry with other ingredients or prepared into a curry with local flavours and paired with steamed rice.

Hottest spice – The Bhut Jolokia (raja mirchi) is

considered to be one of the hottest

chilies in the world.

To die for experience – Smoked pork

Oomph Factor – Hornbill Festival (1-10 December) is

Nagaland's biggest annual

jamboree.

### **KANNUR, KERALA**

The southern paradise of India has some of the most delicious foods you can ask for and it is not just idlis and dosas.

Try the local style of eating appams with curries, especially non vegetarian ones. Then, there is the out-of-the-world Malabar Biryani; Fish Mappas—a curry cooked in coconut milk, which is also eaten with appams; Pomfret Moilee or any other fish moilee – cooked with curry leaves, tomatoes, mustard seeds and turmeric; and Cheera Thoran – a fried dish of fresh vegetables, which is mostly eaten as a side dish.

Kerala is also widely famous for its very spicy beef fry, a musttry for meat lovers.

**Heady wine** – Toddy, palm wine indigenous to Kerala

To die for experience – Fish Mappas

Oomph factor – The gorgeous Kerala backwaters



Fish Mappas, The Spice Adventuress





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# 13 Great Places to visit in India

SRINAGAR

DALHOUSIE

RISHIKESH

As we move into 2021, we unveil a new selection of India's city-townships that are waiting to be explored. Holding unexpected surprises, these cities are vibrant hubs of culture, knowledge, tradition, and commerce

TT BUREAU

UDAIPUR

**AHMEDABAD** 

**AMRITSAR** 

KHAJURAHO

GAYA

RANCHI

BHUBANESWAR

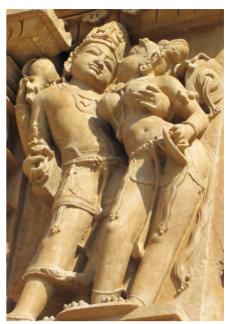
HYDERABAD

PANAJI

MYSORE







The exquisite and intricate sculptures at a Khajuraho temple

eing from the corporate world, you always remain on your toes. From state to state, city to city, you crisscross the country exploring new business opportunities and ties.

And, if you thought a business trip is only about clinching corporate deals and winning over your clients, think again! You are missing something – a chance to relish the distinct tastes of the cities that play host to your crucial business meets and presentations.

To enable you to savour the quintessence of different cities during your business trips Today's Traveller comes up with the distinct flavours of 13 Indian cities.

**KHAJURAHO: LOVE AND** 

EROTICISM

A popular heritage city in Madhya Pradesh, Khajuraho makes you witness varied shades and colours of life. Though capturing different human moods through their magnificent sandstone sculptures, the Khajuraho group of temples best reflect love and eroticism. The world-famous temples, designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, were built by the Chandela Rajputs. Of the 85 original temples in the group, today, only 22 temples stand tall surviving the ravages of time.



Panaji, Goa, is synonymous with entertainment and parties

The exquisite and intricate sculptures depict numerous deities, their attendants and celestial maidens. Broadly, the temples of Khajuraho are divided into three geographical groups—Western, Eastern and Southern. The Western group comprises the largest of the Khajuraho temples, Kandariya Mahadev.

As many as 900 sensuous and vibrantly alive figurines depicting dancers, musicians and erotic groupings adorn the walls of the Kandariya Mahadev. Another magnificent temple that draws tourists in large numbers is Chitragupta. The temple, dedicated to Sun god, is embellished with sculptures reflecting the lavish lifestyle of the Chandela courts.

PANAJI: FULL OF CHARM
A visit to Panaji, also known as
Panjim is full of charm. With a
river flowing along one side
of the city, the undulating topography
is dotted with low-rise and red-roofed
buildings, and even a Latin Quarter at the
eastern end of the town.

True to its character, Panaji is becoming a global cultural hub where creativity flourishes. Put on your walking shoes and walk down the alleys of Panaji enjoying the arresting Portuguese architecture. Visit the Panjim church, heritage houses around Altinho, The Goa state museum, Central Library, the oldest public library in India and the Maruti and







Lingaraja Temple, Bhubaneswar, is famous for its intricate sculptures

Mahalaxmi Temples. Pay a visit to the green islands across the river which you can reach in just a few minutes as you cross on the car ferry and enjoy beautiful serene views.

One of the most popular river cruises in India, the Mandovi River Sunset cruise sails up and down the river, with a cheerful band, a cool breeze and dancing revellers. There is also a floating restaurant that has come up.

The Miramar beach is a stone's throw and it is wonderful to lie on the white sands, a cool breeze in your hair as you hear the waves lap the shores and watch the iron ore barges make their way in the distance.

For bird watchers, the city has a dream prepared for you...the Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary on the western tip of the Chorao island, along the Mandovi

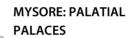
river. An estuarine mangrove habitat it is rich in flora and fauna and there are many species of migratory birds visiting the sanctuary from as far as Siberia.

**BHUBANESWAR: CULTURAL** COLLAGE For any Indian city, it's hard to

rival Bhubaneswar's cultural heritage. The city's rich and colourful heritage gets best reflected in its ancient temples that are nothing less than architectural wonders.

Some of the city's magnificent temples that would catch your fancy include Mukteswar Temple, Lingaraj Temple, Rajarani Temple and Brahmeswar Temple. The graceful sculptures and intricate figures on the walls of these temples attract culture vultures from different corners of the country.

Bhubaneswar derived its distinct cultural vibrancy, primarily, by serving as a kingdom of ancient rulers. It was in Bhubaneswar where the Odishan-style temple building activities first attained prominence. Enriching the city's culture scape is the world-famous classical dance, Odissi, which originated in this Odisha's capital city.



Next time you happen to be in Mysore on a business trip, do make the time to explore its royal lineage, best manifested by the numerous palaces the city possesses.

Tagged as a city of palaces, Mysore offers you interesting insights into the royal world of the bygone era. If you don't have much time to go about exploring all the palatial palaces in the city, make Mysore Palace as your sole destination.

An ode to the regal past of the city, the Mysore Place bedazzles you with its ornate ceilings, jewelled corridors, lavish paintings, stained glass windows and a jewelled throne.

You can also set out on a royal journey of exploring other palaces, including Karanji Vilasa, Vasantha Mahal and Rajendra Vilas. Some of the major palaces in Mysore have been transformed into government offices and hotels.



Mysore Palace is an ode to the city's regal past



**RANCHI: SPECTACULAR** WATERFALLS

you deem waterfalls



Hundru Falls is one of Jharkhand's most picturesque waterfalls

among nature's most prized bounties, you'll get them in plenty in Jharkhand's capital city, Ranchi. A number of picnic spots have been developed around Ranchi's waterfalls.

Some of the picturesque falls that draw tourists in hordes from different parts of the country include Hundru, Jonha, Dassam and Panch Gagh. At the Hundru Falls, the Subarnarekha River falls from a height of 320 feet.

The pools at the bottom of the falls are favourite picnic and bathing spots. The picturesque surroundings of Jonha Falls can be best savoured by descending around the 500 steps here. At the Dassam Falls, the Kachni River falls from an altitude of 144 feet. The Panch Gagh Fall consists of five streams, formed in a row due to the breaking up of the Banai River, which falls from a good height.

UDAIPUR: SHIMMERING
LAKES

Tagged as the `city of lakes',
Udaipur will make you fall
in love with calm waters, thanks to its



St. Patrick's Church adds to Dalhousie's colonial charm

enchanting lakes that lend a magical touch to the picturesque beauty of this Rajasthan's royal city.

Some of the most beautiful lakes that would transport you to an entirely

different world of serenity include Pichola Lake, Udai Sagar Lake, Fateh Sagar Lake, Rajsamand Lake and Jaisamand Lake.

Located in the heart of the city, Pichola Lake is the oldest of all the lakes



Pichola Lake is one of Udaipur's oldest lakes

in the city. Boat-rides in Udaipur's lakes and watercourses are a tourists' delight. During the rides you get to savour the fabulous views of the mountains and the picturesque beauty that surround the lakes.

SRINAGAR: SHIKARA RIDES
In Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, you get the extra advantage of enjoying the bounties of nature while 'living on the water', thanks to the shikaras (traditional houseboats) that are characteristic of the city.

These shikaras are decorated fancifully and named romantically. Offering all the conveniences of a hotel, houseboats bob on the famed Dal Lake and other enchanting water bodies. You get a lifetime experience when a shikara takes you along the backwaters of the Dal Lake, past tall trees, bushes and narrow tracks. On the way, as you observe the crimson sky being lit by the colours of the setting sun, you feel of getting transported into a different world that is hard to put into words.

## HYDERABAD: ARCHITECUTURAL BRILLANCE

The city of Nizams, Hyderabad, is a treasure trove of architectural marvels. You get to witness some of India's most authentic and majestic displays of architectural works in Hyderabad's forts, palaces, and religious centres.

From exploring the city's rich architectural legacy, head to the Paigah

Tombs, a stunning fusion of Islamic and Rajputana styles of architecture with hints of Persian, Turkish and Greek art forms. Visit the Chow Mohalla Palace, designed in Mughal and European styles of architecture; Birla Mandir, carved from all pure-white marble; Mecca Masjid, the country's second largest mosque famed for its single slab granite columns and arches; Golconda Fort, which artistically blends Hindu and Mulsim architectural



The fancy shikaras on Dal Lake in J&K offer all the facilities of a hotel

patterns; or the Charminar, a protected monument famous for its minarets and Arabic-style architecture.

### **RISHIKESH: SPLASH OF FUN**

So, you always believed you aren't a faint-hearted? Why not put it to test at Rishikesh?

You just need to tame the wild waters and ride over the tumultuous currents while rafting at the Ganges here, and let others rate your strength.

Branded as India's white water rafting capital, Rishikesh attracts adventure-seekers from all corners of the country. With the Ganges here gushing down from the icy height of the Himalayas and bursting into white water rapids, Rishikesh serves as the perfect spot for rafting and a host of exciting water-based activities.

### **GAYA: BUDDHA'S SHELTER**

If you want to go beyond materialistic pleasures in pursuit of inner peace, come to Gaya, a prominent Buddhist pilgrimage city in Bihar.

Here, Lord Buddha attained the supreme enlightment under a banyan tree, famous as the Bodhi Tree. Standing in close proximity to the tree is the Mahabodhi Temple. Inside the temple, in the main sanctum, there's a colossal statue of the Lord Buddha in sitting posture.



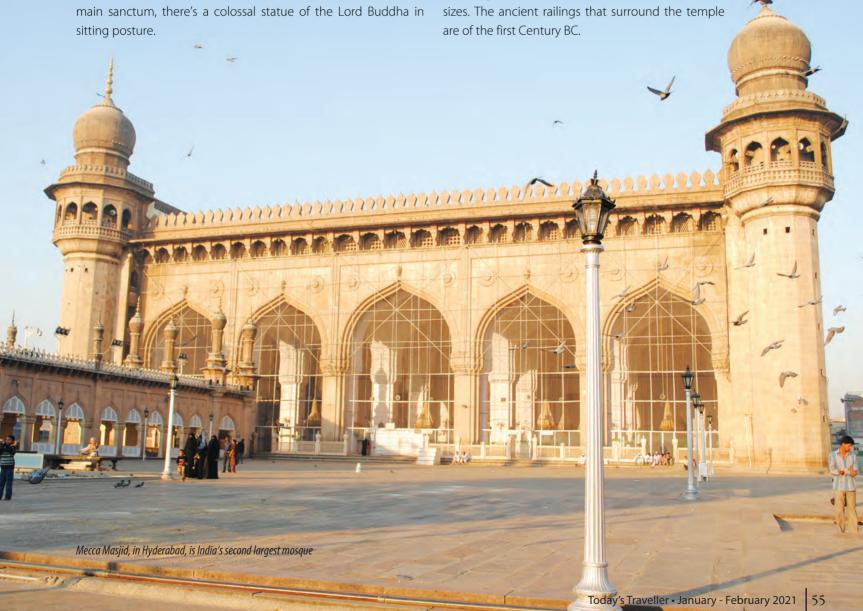
Chow Mohalla Palace, Hyderabad, blends European and Mughal architecture



The entire courtyard of the temple is studded

with large number of stupas of varied shapes and

Birla Mandir, Hyderabad, is carved from pure white marble





Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, is a perfect spot for river rafting

### AHMEDABAD: **GANDHI'S FOOTSTEPS**

If Gandhian thoughts and principles have inspired you, it's your turn to know the Mahatma from close quarters. And, for it, choosing Ahmedabad, which for many years remained as the centre of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggle, as your base would be a right option. Visit the Gandhi Smarak to get a sense of Bapu's life and other persons who had worked closely with him. The small museum also houses a library of Gandhian literature and paintings, and an archive of letters written by Gandhi.

**AMRITSAR: DIVINE GURUS** Punjab's Amritsar city holds a special

significance for Sikhs, for the holiest of

all Sikh gurudwaras, Golden Temple or Harimandir Sahib, is situated here.

The Golden Temple was designed by Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth Sikh Guru. Made of white marble overlaid with a gold leaf, the temple stands in the centre of Amrit Sarovar, a pool of fresh water. The water of the pool is believed to have curative properties.

The nightly ritual of moving the Guru Granth Sahib from the temple to the neighbouring Akal Takht building in a golden palanguin is worth watching. For coming face to face with the divinity, you can also visit other gurudwaras like Goindwal Sahib, Tarn Taran and Khadur Sahi.

**DALHOUSIE: THE GREAT OUTDOORS** Dalhousie, situated in western Himachal Pradesh, is one of the country's ideal places to soak in the great outdoors. Nestled in the Chamba District at an altitude of 1970 meters above sea level. this township is built on five hills-Kathlog, Patreyn, Tehra, Bakrota and Balun. Dalhousie, primarily, derives its charming colonial atmosphere from the fact that it is named after the British General, Lord Dalhousie and was built as a summer retreat.

Its colonial heritage include ancient Victorian and Scottish architecture which can be enjoyed across the town, as well as numerous churches like St. Andrew's Church, St. Patrick's Church, St. John's Church and St. Francis Church, belonging to the 1800s. You can enjoy the flavour of ancient temples, rich Rajput and Mughal heritage, local culture and cuisine as well as local handicrafts. Just one kilometre out of town is Khajjiar which offers a small gem of a lake and where adventure activities such as trekking and zorbing are available. You can take a trek to the Dainkund Peak, which offers a panoramic view of mountains around.

Take in a quick trek to Satdhara Falls which has therapeutic waters and overlooks beautiful vistas of the Chamba Valley. It is surrounded by thick green deodar and pine forests, not to mention the snow-capped mountain ranges beyond. Drive to the Kalatop Khajjiar Sanctuary which has wonderful views of snow-capped mountains and is a treasure trove of the great outdoors... white water streams, rich wildlife, verdant grasslands and deep deodar forests.







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