

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2024 - ₹50

ABOARD THE
ROMANTIC EXPRESS

EPIC RIDES AND
MAGICAL MOMENTS

LOVE UNCHARTED

SICIS O'CLOCK



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MADE IN SINGAPORE

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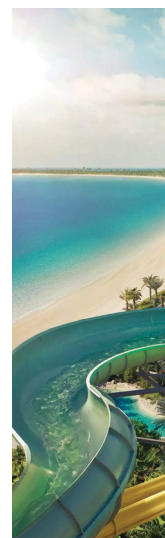
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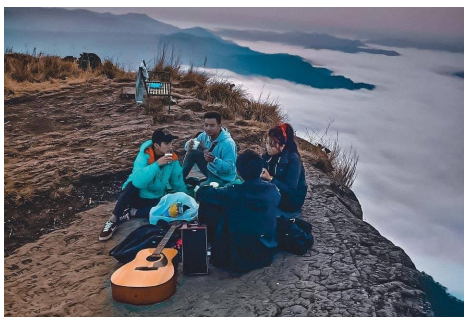
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LOVE UNCHARTED

In the quest for love and luxury, the world continuously unveils hidden gems that redefine romance with luxury romantic retreats

KAMAL GILL



As a luxury travel curator, Today's Traveller has scoured the globe, including the enchanting landscapes of India, to bring you the latest, most talked-about romantic luxury destinations. These hideaway retreats and private islands offer an unparalleled blend of intimacy, opulence, and beauty, perfect for those seeking a love-filled escape.

GREEK ELEGANCE: SANTORINI'S CLIFFSIDE WONDER

Santorini, with its iconic whitewashed buildings set against the azure Aegean Sea, stands as a quintessential romantic destination. This Greek island enchants couples with its stunning sunsets, which paint the sky in hues of orange and pink, best viewed from the charming town of Oia. Santorini promises an unforgettable experience in the heart of the Cyclades.

The dramatic caldera, a vestige of a volcanic eruption, offers a breathtaking backdrop for intimate moments. Santorini's allure extends to its secluded beaches, such as Red Beach, where lovebirds can enjoy quiet strolls along

the unique, colourful sands. The island's vineyards offer an opportunity to taste exquisite local wines, perfect for a romantic evening. Santorini is not new to the romantic scene, but its cliffside wonders have set a new standard in luxury.

CLIFFSIDE ELEGANCE: A SENSORY RETREAT IN ANDRONIS LUXURY SUITES

The ultra luxurious Deluxe Suite, perched atop the cliffs, offers a mesmerizing panoramic view of the sea. This haven of peace is designed to transport its guests on a unique sensory journey, combining comfort with breathtaking vistas. Featuring a spacious bedroom, and a living room area, it extends into the outdoors with a relaxing hot tub.

Of course, the ultimate romance is in the 80m² Honeymoon Suite, ideally positioned on the hotel's upper levels to capture the stunning views of the volcano and the Aegean Sea. The suite boasts a private terrace and hot tub, perfect for witnessing the majestic surroundings. Inside, find serenity in the bedroom with a walk-in closet, a separate living room, and an authentic Santorinian touch - an indoor cave plunge

pool. Each suite at this hotel is more than just a place to stay; it's a sanctuary offering an unforgettable cliffside retreat.

THE HIGHLAND ROMANCE: SCOTLAND'S CASTLE RETREAT

Imagine whisking your loved one away to a stunning Scottish castle, perched majestically amidst the rolling highland hills. This hidden gem combines historical grandeur with modern luxury. Each accommodation is uniquely designed, offering breathtaking views of the lush landscapes, while the castle's private chef indulges you with bespoke gourmet experiences.

ALDOURIE CASTLE: A FAIRYTALE ROMANCE IN THE HIGHLANDS

Aldourie Castle, commanding a breathtaking position in the Highlands, blends tradition, opulence, and style for a fairytale experience. Set on a 500-acre estate along Loch Ness, the castle features a leafy marina, woodlands, and a tree-lined drive. Enjoy formal gardens, a sprawling lawn leading to the Loch, and a terrace ideal for outdoor dining. The preserved Kitchen Gardens with historic greenhouses and walkways offer a picturesque setting.

Available exclusively for your stay, whether for a night or an extended period, Aldourie Castle offers butler service, private chefs, housekeeping, and a dedicated concierge to cater to all desires. The interiors exude quality, comfort, and a welcoming warmth, perfect for an unforgettable romantic getaway.

Aldourie Castle promises a blend of luxury, history, and natural beauty, making it an ideal retreat for those seeking a romantic and exclusive Highland experience.



Aldourie Castle

RAJASTHAN'S ROYAL LOVE AFFAIR

Rajasthan, India's land of maharajas and ancient forts, is home to some of the world's most stunning palace hotels. These palatial abodes, many of which were once the residences of royal families have been meticulously restored and transformed into luxurious hotels, blending historical grandeur with modern comfort.

From the opulent Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, one of the world's largest private residences, to the enchanting Oberoi Udaivilas, with its beautiful courtyards, gentle rippling fountains, reflecting pools, and verdant gardens, each palace hotel tells its own unique story of heritage and splendour.

Couples can enjoy majestic views of rugged forts, serene lakes, and lush gardens, often accompanied by experiences such as royal banquets, folk performances, and elephant rides. Staying in these palace hotels is not just about luxury; it's about immersing oneself in the rich tapestry of Rajasthan's history, culture, and unparalleled hospitality.

TAJ LAKE PALACE - A PALACE HOTEL IN THE HEART OF A LAKE

Presenting its fabled jewel – a restored palace in the heart of Lake Pichola in Udaipur, Rajasthan showcases its finest. The Taj Lake Palace, a marble heritage hotel, stands majestically in Udaipur's Lake Pichola. Once a Mewar Royal family summer residence, it now houses 65 lavish rooms and 18 grand suites, all restored to their original glory. Merging royal Indian traditions with contemporary luxury, this palace hotel is a testament to love and opulence.



Taj Lake Palace



Sungai Jungle Villas

Famed for its feature in the James Bond film 'Octopussy', the palace offers stunning lake views from every room, overlooking the City Palace and surrounding hills. Its exclusive restaurants cater only to resident guests, ensuring a private, luxurious dining experience.

Each room, draped in traditional Indian silks and adorned with dark teak furniture, reflects the palace's royal heritage, offering guests a taste of princely luxury. Taj Lake Palace is a romantic retreat where elegance and exclusivity converge, promising a memorable experience in the heart of Udaipur.

TROPICAL SERENITY: BALI'S HIDDEN JUNGLE PARADISE

Deep in the heart of Bali's lush jungles lies a fabulous retreat that promises a serene escape. With just two luxury residences that are seamlessly integrated into the natural landscape, offering stunning jungle views and complete seclusion. Indulge in spa treatments beside tranquil rivers, dine under the stars, and experience the spiritual heart of Bali.

SUNGAI JUNGLE VILLAS: BALI'S LUXURIOUS WILDERNESS ESCAPE

Nestled in Cepaka village's lush hillside, Sungai Jungle Villas offers a luxurious escape with two chic, private residences. These villas blend sophisticated design with seclusion, featuring romantic canopy beds, private infinity pools, and dedicated staff for a personalized stay.

Experience the luxury of a five-star resort in your own private villa, ideal for a romantic getaway. Situated just 20 minutes from Canggu's beachside, these two villas offer an authentic Balinese experience with a balance of tranquillity and adventure.

Jungle Villa I is a highlight, boasting 1-3 bedrooms, an 18m pool, a spa room, and outdoor dining under a pergola, ensuring a luxurious stay amidst Bali's enchanting jungles.

UNDER THE AFRICAN SKY: SOUTH AFRICA'S EXCLUSIVE SAFARI LODGE

For the adventurous couple, South Africa unveils an exclusive safari lodge where luxury meets the wild. Well established, this lodge offers private safari experiences, where couples can witness the majesty of Africa's wildlife. By night, dine under the vast African sky and retreat to your secluded luxury tent, echoing the romance of a bygone era.

Nestled within some of the world's most renowned wildlife reserves like Kruger National Park and Sabi Sand Game Reserve, these lodges provide an intimate glimpse into the untamed African wilderness. Guests can embark on thrilling game drives to witness the majestic Big Five, enveloped by the raw beauty of the savannahs.

The lodges themselves are a testament to luxury, with private plunge pools, elegant suites, and panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Personalized service

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SINGITA SABI SAND - AN EXCLUSIVE SAFARI RETREAT

Singita Sabi Sand is an exclusive safari retreat set in the Sabi Sand Reserve, renowned for its high concentration of wildlife and exquisite luxury lodges. The reserve offers an intimate wildlife experience, with guided safaris to witness Africa's Big Five in their natural habitat. The lodges at Singita Sabi Sand are a testament to eco-friendly luxury, offering private and serene accommodations with breathtaking views of the African bush.

BOULDERS LUXURY LODGE- SOUTH AFRICA

Set along the boulder-strewn banks of the Sand River, Boulders Luxury Lodge seamlessly blends the beautiful light, colours and textures of its surroundings into vast interiors that spill onto expansive wooden decks. Simplifying the essence of comfort, it welcomes complete unwinding. Each of this contemporary retreat's 12 glass-fronted suites offers the utmost privacy, ultra-spacious interiors and heated pools, with handmade furnishings and soft, natural fabrics mirroring the breathtaking scenery outside.

JAMAICA'S ENCHANTED FOREST RETREAT

In the heart of Jamaica's forests, a new luxury retreat offers a fairy-tale experience. Couples can stay in ultra-luxury treehouses, suspended above the forest floor, combining intimacy with nature. These retreats offers outdoor adventures by day and romantic, starlit evenings by the fireplace.

Imagine enjoying champagne on a private balcony amidst lush rainforests, or relaxing in a claw-foot tub overlooking breathtaking mountain scenery. These arboreal retreats offer the ultimate in comfort, from sumptuous king-sized beds draped in fine linens to exquisite dining experiences high in the treetops.

KANOPI HOUSE TREEHOUSES: A LUXURIOUS TREETOP RETREAT

The Kanopi House Treehouses are luxury accommodations connected by a series of staircases and jungle-lined walkways and strategically built in the surrounding treetops, on a hill overlooking the famed Blue Lagoon in Port Antonio, Jamaica.



Kanopi House Treehouses



Boulders Luxury Lodge

Each treehouse, enveloped in the jungle's embrace, offers an intimate and secluded experience, with thoughtful designs ranging from open-plan to partitioned spaces. Every treehouse features a deck, inviting guests to relax and absorb the tranquil vistas.

The interior décor of the treehouses reflects a harmonious blend of nature and local craftsmanship. The prevalent use of wood celebrates the surrounding trees, while contributions from local designers and artisans add to the eco-friendly ethos. Couples at Kanopi House Treehouses often face a delightful dilemma: the temptation to luxuriate in the beautifully designed interiors or to answer the call of the nearby Blue Lagoon. The lure of its shimmering waters for a refreshing swim makes it a joyous challenge to choose between the allure of nature and the comfort of luxury.

FIJI'S OVERWATER ELEGANCE

Lastly, Fiji's overwater resorts are a haven of tranquillity, and the epitome of peaceful luxury. Floating above clear turquoise waters, each overwater villas feature private infinity pools and glass floors, to experience the edge-of-the-world feeling.

LIKULIKU LAGOON: FIJI'S PREMIER ADULTS-ONLY GETAWAY

Easy Access to Serenity Just off Nadi's coast, Likuliku Lagoon Resort is a tranquil paradise on a small island in Western Fiji. Reachable by a quick speedboat transfer, it offers a peaceful escape. Likuliku Lagoon, combines eco-consciousness with luxury. These adult-only bungalows feature natural materials, direct water access, glass floor panels, and baths with lagoon views.

The resort caters to all aquatic interests, from jet-skiing to scuba diving among marine life and historic wrecks. Island hopping and cruises offer additional excitement. Likuliku prioritizes conservation, especially of the rare Fijian Crested Iguana. Guests can take guided forest walks to learn about local ecology.

Romantic Island Excursions include a visit to nearby Mociu (Honeymoon Island) and Monuriki, the 'Castaway' movie location, for unique romantic experiences.

Likuliku Lagoon Resort is an all-encompassing retreat for couples, blending romance, adventure, and environmental care for an unforgettable luxury experience.

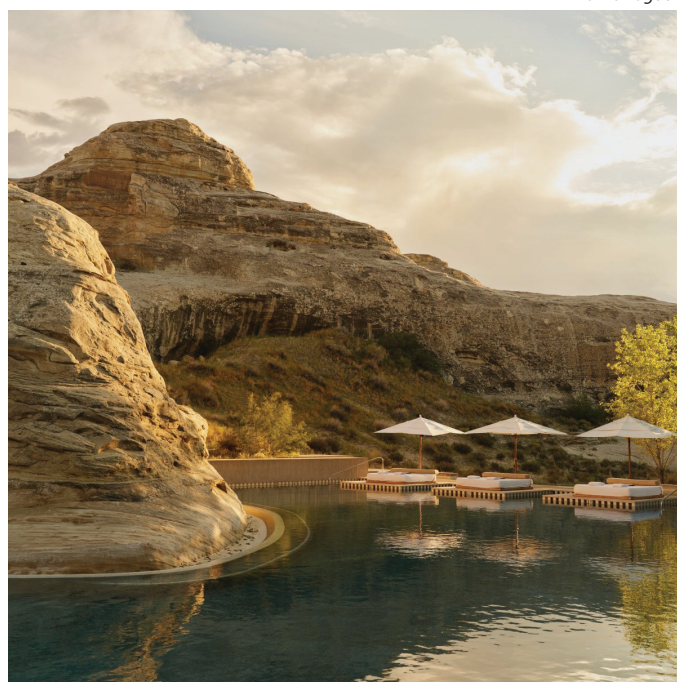
In each of these destinations, the promise of romance and luxury awaits. As a curator of luxury travel, we invite you to explore these havens, where love and luxury meet in the most extraordinary settings. Remember, in the world of romantic getaways, the journey is as splendid as the destination.

CANYON POINT, UTAH: A DESERT ROMANCE

Nestled in the heart of the American Southwest, Canyon Point in Utah emerges as an unexpected yet enchanting destination for romance-seekers. Known for its striking



Likuliku Lagoon



Amangiri Resorts

landscapes and serene atmosphere, this secluded spot is perfect for couples looking to escape into nature's embrace.

Canyon Point is surrounded by some of the most dramatic scenery in the United States, including the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and the borders of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The area is characterized by its sweeping vistas, towering rock formations, and deep canyons, offering a stunning backdrop for a romantic getaway.

A REMOTE HIDEOUT UNDER THE STARS - AMANGIRI

Tucked away in the rugged landscapes of Canyon Point, Utah, Amangiri is a remote hideaway that blends seamlessly with its desert surroundings. This luxury resort is known for its minimalist design, which emphasizes the breathtaking panoramic views of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.



Soneva Jani

Amangiri seamlessly integrates into the pristine red-rock expanse of over 900 acres in the Colorado Plateau, the heart of the original Wild West. Set amidst a dramatic desert landscape of canyons, mesas, ridges, and gorges, Amangiri's modernist suites and the tented pavilions of Camp Sarika offer a captivating entry into one of the world's most secluded and striking environments. Each suite boasts an outdoor lounge and fireplace, offering sweeping views of the desert, with select suites featuring private pools or rooftop terraces for an immersive experience in this rugged, yet majestic setting.

Amangiri offers a peaceful retreat with activities that explore the region's dramatic natural beauty like the evenings which bring stunning sunsets, transforming the desert into a palette of colours, perfect for a romantic evening under the stars.

ISLES OF LOVE: FRENCH POLYNESIA'S ROMANTIC LUXURY GETAWAY

French Polynesia, a mosaic of enchanting islands in the heart of the South Pacific, stands as an epitome of romantic luxury. Renowned for its dream-like scenery, the region boasts idyllic beaches, crystal-clear turquoise waters, and lush tropical forests. Luxury resorts on islands like Bora Bora and Tahiti offer overwater bungalows that provide a private slice of paradise, where couples can wake up to the soothing sounds of the ocean and enjoy breakfast with a view of the majestic Mount Otemanu.

FOURSEASONSRESORTBORA BORA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

Nestled on a private island in the heart of French Polynesia, the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora epitomizes island luxury. With its overwater bungalows that extend into a turquoise lagoon, the resort offers breathtaking views of

the surrounding seascape and Mount Otemanu. Known for its world-class service and exquisite dining, guests can enjoy a range of water sports, relax on white sandy beaches, or indulge in spa treatments that incorporate traditional Polynesian techniques.

AZURE BLISS: THE MALDIVES' SECRET ISLAND HAVEN

Nestled in the heart of the Indian Ocean, the Maldives has long been synonymous with romantic luxury. But here's our recommendation, which really spells romance. How about a private atoll, that offers an exclusive sanctuary?

With a private freshwater pool and sunken dining area, couples can immerse themselves in the oceanic wonder while enjoying unparalleled privacy.

SONEVA JANI: LUXURIOUS RETREAT IN NOONU ATOLL

Soneva Jani, set in the Noonu Atoll, offers a blend of over-water villas and grand island residences. This low-density resort provides privacy, space, and stunning views, ideal for romantic escapades.

Among the 51 over-water and seven island residences, the One Bedroom Water Reserve stands out. The One Bedroom Water Reserve epitomizes luxury with a spacious over-water setting. It features a unique retractable roof in the master bedroom, revealing the night sky at a button's touch.

The villa includes an ensuite bathroom with both indoor and outdoor showers, a signature sunken bath, and direct lagoon access. The large outdoor deck, facing either sunrise or sunset, is equipped with a private freshwater pool, sunken dining area, daybeds, a swing, and catamaran nets, perfect for lounging and enjoying the serene environment.



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As the train's wheels go clickety-clack, your heart feels the rhythm, and you get lost in a world where time moves slowly. It's a place where you make deep connections, like sparks flying from the train's wheels.

The gentle swaying of the train matches the way hearts come together like destiny. Beautiful scenery passes by, making a perfect backdrop for stolen glances and secret confessions. When you share a meal in the dining car, it's like a feast for your soul, with laughter and meaningful talks. On this timeless journey, love knows no limits. Here are some best romantic train journeys to board with your loved ones for a journey to cherish.

ROVOS RAIL SOUTH AFRICA

Considered one of the most luxurious trains in the world, embarking on a Rovos Rail expedition is akin to immersing

yourself in a world where the allure of a vintage steam train is paramount. As you look out of the window, the train gracefully traverses through a landscape reminiscent of a dream, weaving its way through Africa's wonders.

In this picturesque journey, you'll be introduced to the mesmerizing grandeur of the African landscape. The vintage coaches reveal a captivating tapestry of terrains, from rugged mountain ranges to sprawling savannahs. As the train glides past ancient baobab trees, majestic wildlife, and distant horizons, the golden African sun bathes everything in a warm, leaving an indelible mark on all who partake in this extraordinary voyage.

This scenic journey unveils the breathtaking beauty of the Dandenong Mountains and the captivating allure of the Yarra Valley. As the train gracefully winds its way past cascading waterfalls, meandering creeks, and vibrant lime-green ferns, the gentle caress of sunlight filters through the majestic,

slender gum and mountain ash trees, casting a spell upon all who embark on this voyage.

DARJEELING TOY TRAIN

With a passionate serenade of its shrill whistle, plumes of steam caress the air, and wisps of smoke elegantly dance from its coal-powered heart. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway embarks on its enchanting journey along a slender ribbon of tracks through the mist-kissed mountains.

Fondly christened the 'Toy Train,' this locomotive has been an ardent courier of tea and souls, ascending the steep embrace of the Lower Himalayas since the late 1800s, a testament to timeless devotion. As it gracefully traverses the distance from Darjeeling to Ghum, the loftiest station in India, the azure carriages of the train graze past architectural whispers and urban hustle, maintaining an intimate connection along the historic Hill Cart Road.

Only to finally unveil an amorous panorama of terraced tea gardens and the majestic, snow-crowned Himalayas. Find sanctuary in the embrace of the Dekeling Resort, where your gaze can linger lovingly upon the Darjeeling Hills and the ethereal Kanchenjunga Range.

BATTAMBANG BAMBOO TRAIN

The Battambang Bamboo Train is a delightful warm-weather adventure reminiscent of a toboggan ride, ingeniously powered by a petite motorbike engine. In the heart of Battambang, a charming town in northwestern Cambodia, this renowned 'bamboo train' is a captivating testament to simple yet exhilarating engineering, beckoning adventurous souls with its allure.

As you perch gracefully upon straw mats atop a bamboo platform, the world around you transforms into a whirlwind of sensory delight. You'll whisk through emerald rice paddies,

glide gracefully over rickety bridges, all while embracing the thrill of speeds reaching up to 40 kilometers per hour. Clutch your beloved close as the wind tousles your hair, allowing the lush Cambodian landscape to sweep you off your feet in a whirlwind of tropical enchantment.

For a cosy and budget-friendly stay in the heart of Battambang, the Ramchang guesthouse awaits with its inviting orange and yellow hues, promising a romantic haven amidst your Cambodian escapades.

PUFFING BILLY, AUSTRALIA

While it meanders through the lush embrace of a mountainous landscape, transforms Australia's Puffing Billy into an enchanting and unforgettable experience.

This scenic journey unveils the breathtaking beauty of the Dandenong Mountains and the captivating allure of the Yarra Valley. As the train gracefully winds its way past cascading waterfalls, meandering creeks, and vibrant lime-green ferns, the gentle caress of sunlight filters through the majestic, slender gum and mountain ash trees.



Battambang Bamboo Train



Darjeeling Toy Train



Puffing Billy, Australia

The true pièce de résistance of this picturesque train ride is the Monbulk Trestle Bridge, a charming relic of a timber bridge that guides the train from Belgrave towards Menzies Creek, offering the perfect backdrop for timeless photographs. Just an hour away from Melbourne, this whimsical journey beckons for a leisurely afternoon picnic amidst the untamed beauty of the bush. For a delightful base in the city, consider the highly-rated apartment nestled in the heart of South Yarra, Melbourne, ensuring your loving escapades are just a train ride away.

DURANGO & SILVERTON NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD, USA

Boarding an adventure through Colorado's mesmerizing landscapes, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railway beckons with its rich heritage and a journey through some of the state's most breathtaking scenery. Dating back to 1882, this railway is a timeless treasure, where vintage steam locomotives still grace the tracks, igniting the passions of eager tourists yearning to bask in the extraordinary vistas.

As you traverse the railway's path, the Animas River guides you through a wilderness untouched by roads, unveiling a majestic tapestry of river canyons, pine-clad valleys, cascading waterfalls, snow-kissed peaks, and the occasional appearance of elk, deer, and moose, adding a touch of enchantment to your voyage. You have a choice of open-air viewing gondola cars to breathe in the crisp mountain air or the Historical Narration cars, where period-costumed narrators regale you with tales of the railroad's history and the region's lore.

With a 3-and-a-half-hour journey each way and the flexibility to board at either end, consider a stay at the highly acclaimed Leland House in Durango or The Hotel Telluride, a scenic hour's drive from the remote Silverton.

THE PRESIDENTIAL TRAIN, PORTUGAL

The Presidential Train, Portugal's most illustrious treasure, has been a cherished host to monarchs, presidents, statesmen, and even pontiffs for over a century. Dating back to its construction in 1890, this magnificent railway is a living time capsule, where passengers embark on a voyage through history, accompanied by the evocative scents and purposeful melodies of a bygone era.

Travelling from the enchanting city of Porto to the idyllic Quinta do Vesuvio on the eastern shores of the Douro Valley, the Presidential Train orchestrates a symphony of culinary excellence. World-renowned chefs join forces with the freshest regional ingredients, all harmoniously paired with



Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, USA

the finest local wines. Within the private cabins, passengers recline in plush comfort, gazing out of the windows as they await the arrival of an exquisite meal.

This train journey is an embodiment of luxury, history, and epicurean delight, inviting you to savour each moment as you traverse the golden landscapes of the Douro Valley aboard the opulent Presidential Train.

THE SAGANO ROMANTIC TRAIN, JAPAN

The Sagano Romantic Train, a whimsical voyage orchestrated by the Sagano Scenic Railway in the enchanting Saga-Arashiyama region of western Kyoto, is a true testament to love's allure. Known as the "Sagano Torokko Ressha" in Japanese, this endearing train carries a moniker inspired by the charming railway truck cars that once transported goods along its path.

Nowadays, this railway transports passengers aboard vintage trains, meandering along a narrow gauge railway that harkens back to the 19th century, weaving through a countryside of pure picturesque splendour between Saga-Arashiyama and Kameoka. En route, the train glides alongside the mesmerizing Hozugawa River gorge, treating passengers to vistas of lush forests and majestic mountains.

While it is particularly beloved during the autumn foliage season, the Sagano Romantic Train offers unique enchantment throughout the year. In spring, it cradles passengers amidst cherry blossoms; in summer, a gentle breeze and the melodious chorus of cicadas serenade your journey; and in winter, the landscape transforms into a captivating snowy wonderland.

The most cherished route takes you from Saga Torokko Station to Kameoka Torokko Station, but upon reaching Kameoka Torokko Station, a world of romantic possibilities unfolds. You can opt for a scenic return journey by boat along the tranquil Hozugawa River, completing your love story with an unforgettable voyage.

BELMOND VENICE SIMPLON-ORIENT-EXPRESS: PARIS TO ISTANBUL

Immortalized by Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, the Belmond Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is the epitome of romantic train travel. This opulent train has been painstakingly restored to recapture the resplendent charm of the Gilded Age.

In 2018, it introduced three exquisite Grand Suites, each a lavish ode to the iconic cities of Paris, Venice, and Istanbul. These Grand Suites offer a haven of love and luxury, complete with a cosy double bed, a sumptuous bathroom, a separate living area, panoramic windows to gaze out at the passing landscapes, and the promise of limitless champagne, delivered by attentive room service.

Even if you choose not to indulge in a Grand Suite, every passenger is treated to a culinary extravaganza with four-course gourmet dinners served in one of the three

elegantly appointed dining cars. A sophisticated bar car, accompanied by a talented pianist, awaits those seeking a romantic interlude, while a brand-new champagne bar adds a sparkling touch to the journey.

For the pinnacle of romanticism, the Paris to Istanbul route, graced with stops in Budapest and Bucharest, departs just once a year, usually in August. This rare and splendid voyage promises an unparalleled immersion into the art of amour on wheels, as you traverse Europe's most enchanting cities aboard the Belmond Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.



The Sagano Romantic Train, Japan



Belmond Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF LAKSHADWEEP

Lakshadweep, a tropical archipelago of atolls, islands and coral reefs in the Arabian Sea, is often celebrated for its sun-kissed beaches and turquoise waters

TT BUREAU



Lakshadweep Love Affair

The island comprises smaller islands of Amini, Kavaratti, Andrott, Kalpani, Agatti, Kitten, Chetlat, Minicoy, Bitra, and Kadmat. However, there's much more to this Indian Union Territory than its postcard-perfect scenery. In this travel exploration, we discover the lesser-known aspects of Lakshadweep, uncovering its rich history, vibrant culture, and unique experiences that escape most itineraries.

Lakshadweep, translating to "a hundred thousand islands" in Malayalam, is not just a name but a poetic tribute to its sprawling beauty. This archipelago, India's smallest Union Territory, is a spectacular cluster of islands located off the southwestern coast of Kerala in the Arabian Sea.

The atolls, with their sandy beaches and lush green landscapes, span over an area of just 32 sq km, yet their geographical spread covers about 78,000 sq km of the Arabian Sea. This disparity between land and aquatic territory adds to the mystique of Lakshadweep, making it a place where land, sea, and sky merge in a dazzling display of nature's artistry.

Originally known as the Laccadive Islands, this archipelago was renamed Lakshadweep Islands in 1956 when it became a Union Territory. The inhabitants of the Amindivi and Laccadive groups of islands have cultural ties with the

coastal communities of Kerala. In contrast, those living in the Southern Minicoy Islands exhibit cultural parallels with the people of The Maldives, even sharing the Mahl language.

The islands are celebrated for their sun-kissed, white sandy beaches and the crystal-clear turquoise waters that surround them. But the true essence of Lakshadweep's charm lies in its remarkably preserved natural state. Unlike many popular tourist destinations, these islands have remained relatively untouched by the heavy footprints of industrialization and commercial tourism. This unspoiled quality not only ensures an authentic experience for visitors but also plays a crucial role in preserving the delicate marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

CULTURAL MOSAIC

Originally known as the Laccadive Islands, this archipelago was renamed Lakshadweep Islands in 1956 when it became a Union Territory. The inhabitants of the Amindivi and Laccadive groups of islands have cultural ties with the coastal communities of Kerala. In contrast, those living in the Southern Minicoy Islands exhibit cultural parallels with the people of The Maldives, even sharing the Mahl language.

The islands' history is as fascinating as their landscapes. Archaeological evidence suggests that human settlement existed

in the region during the Mesolithic period. Folklore is rich and intertwined with the sea; tales of sea spirits and mythical creatures abound, shaping much of the local culture and traditions.

The human element of Lakshadweep is as fascinating as its natural beauty. The islands are home to a small but diverse population, predominantly Muslim, with their culture being a blend of South Indian and islander influences. The local language is Malayalam, with each island having its unique dialect and traditions. The art and craft scene is modest but meaningful. Items made from coconut shells, coral, and oysters are popular. Traditional Minicoy sailboats, known as "Jahadhoni," are a testament to the exceptional craftsmanship.

The lifestyle here is a reflection of the simplicity and purity of the islands, with communities leading a life that is deeply connected to the sea and their environment. The sense of community is strong, and guests are often treated with great hospitality.

Lakshadweep's administration has been commendably proactive in adopting eco-friendly practices to protect its fragile ecosystems. Plastic is banned across the islands, and there is a significant emphasis on sustainable tourism. This not only helps preserve the pristine condition of the islands but also educates and encourages visitors to be mindful of their environmental impact.

A WORLD OF VIBRANT MARINE BIODIVERSITY

Lakshadweep's coral reefs, often referred to as the underwater rainforests of the Indian Ocean, are a pulsating heart of marine biodiversity. These complex ecosystems, integral to the identity of the islands, rank among the most dynamic and vibrant in the world. The reefs are home to an astonishing variety of marine life, ranging from tiny, colourful reef fish to larger, majestic sea creatures.

These reefs host a kaleidoscope of marine species, each playing a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance.

Among them are several species of fish, including the clownfish, famously known for its vibrant orange and white stripes, and the parrotfish, whose vivid colours mirror the hues of the corals they inhabit. The waters are also home to graceful sea turtles, gliding through the reefs and occasionally coming ashore to nest on the island's beaches.

The coral formations themselves are a spectacular sight. They come in a myriad of shapes, sizes, and colours, from deep reds and purples to bright yellows and greens. These living structures are not just visually stunning; they provide critical habitats for countless marine organisms and play a significant role in protecting the shoreline from erosion.

Lakshadweep's commitment to conservation is evident in the pristine condition of its reefs. The local authorities, along with various environmental organizations, have implemented measures to protect these delicate ecosystems. This includes regulating fishing activities, restricting the use of harmful substances, and promoting eco-friendly tourism practices.



Tropical Delight



Lakshadweep : Ocean Bliss



Kayaking Activity

Furthermore, Lakshadweep's coral reefs are not just a destination for leisure. They provide a valuable educational experience for visitors, offering insights into the importance of marine conservation and the role of coral reefs in our ecosystem. Interactive experiences, such as guided snorkelling tours with marine biologists, add an informative dimension to the adventure, enriching visitors' understanding of these complex ecosystems.

As a sanctuary for marine life and a beacon for conservation, Lakshadweep's coral reefs invite us to dive deep, not just into the waters, but into a greater understanding of our planet's precious marine environments.

A HAVEN FOR DIVERS AND SNORKELERS

For snorkelers and divers, Lakshadweep offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore these underwater wonders. The clear waters provide excellent visibility, revealing the intricate details of the coral formations and the vibrant marine life that inhabits them. Diving into these waters is like entering a different world, where every dive site tells a different story and every nook of the reef presents a discovery. Scuba Diving is best on Kalpeni Islands. As a matter of interest, the PADI certificate for scuba divers is conducted only at Kadamat island.

SERENE BACKWATERS AND HIDDEN CHANNELS

The islands of Lakshadweep are surrounded by calm lagoons and intricate networks of backwaters, making them ideal for kayaking and canoeing. Canoeing is best done in the Minicoy Islands. These activities offer a serene yet adventurous way to explore the less accessible parts of the islands. Paddling through these tranquil waters, visitors can discover hidden beaches, secluded coves, and mangrove-lined channels that are not reachable by larger boats.

Kayaking and canoeing are also eco-friendly ways to explore the islands. Renting a yacht or a kayak from Kavaratti island which is one of the most developed islands in



Scuba Diving

Lakshadweep is a good idea. Kayaking and canoeing allow visitors to be up close with nature without disturbing the delicate marine environment. It's an opportunity to experience the islands' natural beauty in its most pristine form.

DEEP SEA FISHING: AN ANGLER'S ADVENTURE

Deep sea fishing in Lakshadweep is a thrilling adventure, offering the chance to catch a variety of game fish, including Barracuda and Sailfish. These waters are rich in marine life, providing an exciting challenge for both novice and experienced anglers.

Guided fishing trips are available, offering the expertise of local fishermen who know the best spots and techniques to catch these prized fish. These excursions are not just about the catch; they're about learning the local fishing culture and the sustainable practices that are part of responsible fishing.



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ALLURING DELHI WEDDINGS

Experience the vibrant splendour of a Delhi wedding, where tradition meets modernity in a celebration filled with colorful rituals, sumptuous feasts, and joyful festivities

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Traditional weddings in Delhi epitomize the city's cultural splendour. These grand celebrations seamlessly merge age-old customs with contemporary opulence, creating unforgettable matrimonial experiences. A Hindu wedding is a traditional and lovely ceremony. Hindu wedding festivities last about 3-4 days and are a lot of fun.

PRE-WEDDING RITUALS

• **Roka Ceremony** : Traditional Weddings in Delhi Start with the Roka ceremony as the first stage in the process of getting married. It's almost like a formal invitation from the bride's and groom's families to marry each other. In a little ceremony, the families meet and exchange sweets. Before the joyful couple embarks on their future together, both families usually bless them.



Wedding Couple

• **Engagement Ceremony** : The period between a marriage proposal and the actual wedding is known as an engagement. A couple is said to be fiancés during this time. The bride and groom exchange rings in this ceremony, which takes place a few months before the wedding. Close friends and family members are invited to the ceremony to meet the families and rejoice.

• **Sagan And Tilak Ceremony** : The male relatives of the bride's family pay a visit to the groom's house to apply Kumkum on his forehead, which is considered auspicious.

People have become a little more affluent in recent years, and they now celebrate the occasion with music and dance. The Tilak Ceremony is considered the first step in solidifying the relationship between the two families.

• **Mehendi Ceremony** : Mehndi, which is applied on the bride's hands and feet a few days before her wedding, is regarded with happy spirits and good luck.

According to some customs, even the groom gets a little mehendi on his hands and feet. The strong love between the pair is symbolised by the darkness of the mehendi colour on a bride's hand. It also provides a cooling effect, which helps the bride and groom relax and forget about their wedding worries. Traditional melodies are sung as well as musical instruments such as the dholak and dhol are played during this ceremony.



Engagement Ceremony

• **Sangeet** : A typical sangeet ceremony in traditional weddings in Delhi includes a lot of singing and dancing, and the bride and groom's family work together to make the evening more entertaining. It is, without a doubt, one of the most anticipated and finest ceremonies of all time.

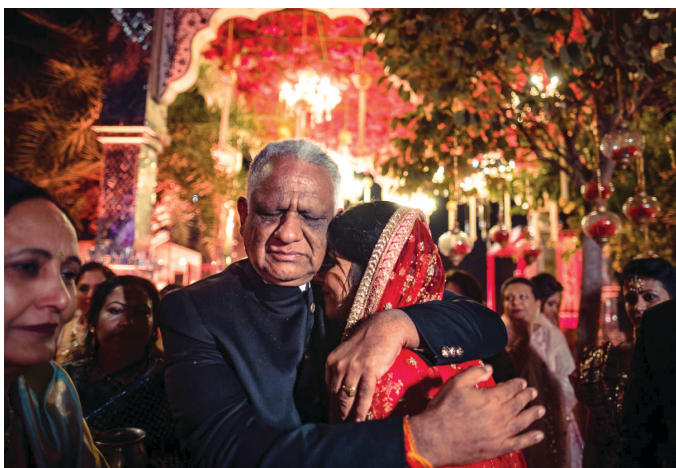
• **Haldi Ceremony** : Before the wedding, the haldi ceremony is a sacred bath. In different places, it is known by different names, such as ubtan, mandha, and tel baan. In Hindu tradition, the bright yellow colour of Haldi is considered auspicious. It represents purity, fertility, and radiant health. On the morning of the wedding, married ladies apply turmeric on both the bride and groom. Before the wedding, the couple is said to



Haldi Ceremony



Varmala



Vidaai

be blessed with this concoction. The bride and groom are thought to be protected from evil by the colour yellow.

WEDDING RITUALS

- **Varmala** : The couple exchanges varmalas before taking seven pheras to make their wedding official in front of a priest and receive blessings from family elders at the main celebration. It is such a beautiful and quiet ceremony.

- **Vidaai** : The vidaai ceremony is the final step of a wedding, during which the bride's parents wish their daughter and son-in-law farewell and bless the pair for the future. The bride's parents are overjoyed for her and wish to bless her with all of

their hearts and souls. As she leaves her home, the bride also throws rice behind her and expresses gratitude to her parents for providing her with such a good life. The bride's brothers push the doli or automobile and bid their sister farewell.

POST-WEDDING RITUALS

- **Griha Pravesh** : Following the vidaai ceremony, the groom's family welcomes the bride into her new house with griha pravesh customs, games, and celebrations. The bride is to use her right foot to tilt a Kalash Laden filled with rice, then walk into a dish with Alta and into her new home.

WEDDING ATTIRE

A churidar with kameez (loose) trousers or a Western suit are worn by the groom. However, many modern grooms like to wear an ornate Mughal-style sherwani or kurta. The preferred hues are cream or off-white, with a lot of zari threadwork, beading, and stone adornment. He wears a dupatta over his neck as well. With the entire ensemble, he wears a traditional jooti or more modern loafers. He wears a headpiece with dangling flower strands, colourful ribbons, and even pearl strings that cover his face. Sehra is the name for this unique headpiece.

On her wedding day, the bride loves to wear a red, maroon, or pink lehenga. There are no restrictions, and she is free to wear any colour she likes. The colours black and white are typically avoided. A nose ring, or nath, is an important

element of her solah shringar, alongside her regal attire and other items of jewellery.

FOOD

At traditional weddings in Delhi, food is a captivating symphony of flavours and aromas. Elaborate feasts feature a diverse array of regional delicacies, from rich curries to delectable sweets, showcasing the city's culinary heritage and hospitality.

- **Tandoori Chicken** - Tandoori chicken, the Punjabi rendition of chicken wings, has a mouthwatering flavour that will make you drool. They're made with hanging yoghurt that's been combined with all kinds of Indian spices and then grilled before being presented in platters.

- **Palak Paneer** - Palak paneer is served in a nutritious rich creamy sauce with garlic, tomatoes, onion, and spinach. Before even being added to this decadent recipe, the cottage cheese cubes are toasted.

- **Butter Paneer/Chicken** - Its buttery texture is blended and cooked to perfection with onions, tomatoes, garlic, green chilli, and dry herbs. It's usually served with rice or naan bread.

- **Dal Makhani** - This lentil meal is the pride of a Punjabi menu, and it has everything a dish needs, from taste to texture to luscious flavours all rolled into one. Dal Makhani is typically served with Jeera Rice or Naan and is cooked overnight to bring out the greatest flavour.

- **Chana Masala** - Chana, commonly known as Chickpea, is prepared with a large amount of roasted tomatoes and other pepper spices, making it a hearty dish.



Chana Masala

- **Sarson Da Saag With Makki Roti** - Mustard leaves and cornflour bread are used to make Sarson Saag and Makkai Roti, a delicious dinner. This mini-meal, made with a blend of wonderful Indian spices, keeps you warm in the winter thanks to its natural food features. This savoury is best served hot and fresh since it provides a lot of comfort.

- **Atta Halwa** - Roasted wheat flour is combined with sugar syrup and warm water to make this dish. It's served with dry fruits on top once the texture has thickened into a pleasure.

- **Dahi Bhalla** - Dahi Bhalla, a sweet and spicy complement, is a must-have with every meal to bring out the flavours of the other meals. It has a cool temperature because it is made up of yoghurt and spongy lentil batter pieces. For flavour, they're garnished with mint and tamarind chutney.



Dahi Bhalla



Dal Makhani

EPIC RIDES AND MAGICAL MOMENTS

Get ready to explore the top amusement parks around the world, each offering unique and unforgettable adventures

TT BUREAU

These parks are the best of the best, providing thrilling rides, captivating entertainment, and memories that last a lifetime. Whether you're seeking great roller coaster rides or immersive family-friendly attractions, our list has something for everyone.

These extraordinary destinations promise heart-pounding rides, immersive experiences, and endless fun for all ages. Whether you seek the enchanting world of fairy tales, the adrenaline rush of roller coasters, or the immersive magic of themed lands, this list showcases the ultimate amusement park experiences around the globe. Get ready to add these thrilling destinations to your must-visit bucket list and create unforgettable memories.

AQUAVENTURE WATERPARK, DUBAI

36km away from Dubai airport located in lavish Atlantis, The Palm resort in Dubai, the Aquaventure Waterpark stands as an

aquatic paradise for thrill-seekers and families alike. Spanning 42 acres along the beautiful Palm Jumeirah island, this waterpark offers an unrivaled blend of adventure, relaxation, and sheer aquatic delight.

Aquaventure's star attraction is the record-breaking Ziggurat, home to the Leap of Faith, a near-vertical water slide that propels riders through a clear tunnel submerged in a shark-filled lagoon. It's a heart-pounding experience like no other. For those craving a more leisurely vibe, the lazy river and pristine private beach provide ample opportunities to unwind.

Families with kids will love Splashers, a dedicated area with numerous water slides, fountains, and climbing frames designed for younger guests. The Dolphin Bay and Sea Lion Point nearby offer the chance to interact with these majestic creatures.

With its breathtaking views, exhilarating rides, and serene surroundings, Aquaventure Waterpark promises a memorable day of aquatic fun in Dubai's scintillating desert landscape.



Aquaventure Waterpark, Dubai

GARDALAND RESORT ITALY

At the enchanting landscapes of northeastern Italy, Gardaland Resort emerges as a romantic escape for two. A haven of love, it comprises not only Gardaland Park but also Gardaland Sea-Life, Legoland Waterpark, and the charming Gardaland Hotel, Adventure Hotel, and Magic Hotel. As if fate itself placed it, the resort rests beside the captivating Lake Garda, adding a touch of allure to its ambiance.

In this sprawling 445,000 m² (4,789,940 sq ft) realm of dreams, the amusement park alone spans 200,000 m² (2,152,782 sq ft), beckoning lovers with traditional attractions and mesmerizing entertainment shows. Yearning hearts, numbering nearly 3 million annually, find solace within these romantic grounds. Gardaland has been cherished under the loving care of British company Merlin Entertainments.

Among the stars of this romantic wonderland are Mammut, Jungle Rapids, Fuga Da Atlantide, Shaman, Blue Tornado, Raptor, and the breathtaking Oblivion: The Black Hole, which unfolded its splendor on 28th March 2015. Prezzemolo, the park's mascot, has held the hearts of many, a symbol of timeless love in the Italian licensing market throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

WONDERLA, INDIA

Amidst the vibrant tapestry of India, lies a realm of boundless enchantment and romance - Wonderla, the nation's most extensive network of amusement parks. This mesmerizing haven is lovingly crafted by Wonderla Holidays Limited, nestled near Bidadi, a mere 28 kilometers (17 miles) from the bustling heart of Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Intriguingly, Wonderla weaves its magic across three distinct locations: the captivating cities of Kochi, Bangalore, and Hyderabad. Each park boasts its unique charm, whispering sweet promises of unforgettable moments.

The enchanting allure of Wonderla unfolds across 82 acres in Hyderabad, where lovebirds can lose themselves in thrilling rides and tranquil hideaways. Meanwhile, the lush greenery of 30 acres beckons couples in Kochi, offering a romantic escape amidst the beauty of nature. In Bangalore, Wonderla extends its romantic invitation across 82 acres, crafting a tapestry of adventure and affection.

DISNEYLAND, PARIS

Nestled in the embrace of romantic France, Disneyland Paris stands as an enchanting realm, a mere 32 kilometers (20 miles) to the east of the City of Love, Paris. This haven of dreams, adorned with two spellbinding theme parks, resort hotels, a delightful shopping and dining wonderland, and even a golf course, beckons lovers to a world of eternal wonder.

The heart of this enchantment is Disneyland Park, where fairy tales come to life, having opened its gates in the year 1992. Nearby, Walt Disney Studios Park unveiled its cinematic charms in 2002, adding a dash of magic to the love story.



Gardaland Resort Italy



Wonderla, India



Disneyland, Paris

More than just a destination, Disneyland Paris is an eternal love story, wholly owned by The Walt Disney Company. Amidst this dreamland, seven charming hotels await, offering romantic escapes that echo with whispers of forever.

With 17,000 hearts beating in harmony, Disneyland Paris becomes not just a theme park but the largest single-site employer, painting a picture of love and enchantment that knows no bounds.

PLEASURE BEACH, UNITED KINGDOM

Along the picturesque shores of Blackpool, amidst Lancashire's enchanting embrace in North West England, lies the timeless wonder of Blackpool Pleasure Beach. This amusement park, like a love story etched in steel and thrill, boasts Europe's first fully inverting steel coaster, the Revolution, igniting hearts with every loop.

Among its romantic treasures is the Steeplechase roller coaster, the last of its kind in the world, a testament to enduring love and timeless adventures. The Grand National, with its Möbius loop design, weaves a tale of parallel tracks racing together, like two souls entwined in an eternal journey.

For those who dream of escaping to the UK from the shores of India during summer, Pleasure Beach, Blackpool, beckons with promises of once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Renowned globally as one of the finest amusement parks, it offers legendary stage shows, Nickelodeon's enchantment, head-spinning roller coasters, and a symphony of discounts, creating memories that linger like the sweetest of romances. Come, let us discover love's thrilling embrace amid the magic of Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS, ORLANDO

Nestled within the enchanting Walt Disney World Resort in Bay Lake, Florida, Disney's Hollywood Studios transports visitors into the glitz and glamour of classic Hollywood from the 1930s and 40s. Under the tender care of The Walt Disney Company's Experiences division, this magical park stands as a testament to the visions of Marty Sklar, Randy Bright, and Michael Eisner.

Each corner of Disney's Hollywood Studios showcases a world of cinematic wonder. From the iconic Hollywood Boulevard to the serene Echo Lake, the nostalgic Streets of

America, the artistic Animation Courtyard, the whimsical Toy Story Land, and the captivating Pixar Place, it's an immersion into the golden era of cinema.

Visitors can revel in awe-inspiring stage shows, catch glimpses of the Magic Kingdom, embark on 3-D motion-simulated space flights, savor exquisite dining experiences, and so much more.

FUJI-Q HIGHLAND, JAPAN

Located in the picturesque vicinity of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, at the base of the iconic Mount Fuji in Japan, the Fuji-Q Highland Amusement Park is a remarkable destination that caters to visitors of all ages, making it one of Japan's top amusement parks. Its breathtaking natural setting alone is enough to captivate



Pleasure Beach, United Kingdom



Disney's Hollywood Studios, Orlando



Gröna Lund, Sweden

anyone's heart. The park's claim to fame lies in its record-breaking rides, offering adrenaline-pumping experiences that attract thrill-seekers from around the globe. Names like Fujiyama, Eejanaika, and Tondemonai are etched into the memories of those who have dared to take on these exhilarating attractions.

But Fuji-Q Highland is not just about heart-pounding rides; it offers a well-rounded experience. Visitors can explore a variety of mazes and puzzle rooms, adding a cerebral challenge to the excitement.

ESSEL WORLD, INDIA

On the outskirts of Mumbai, Essel World is not just India's largest amusement and waterpark, but also a timeless haven for lovers seeking romance amidst exhilarating attractions. As one of the world's oldest amusement parks, it weaves together a magical tapestry of nostalgia and adventure.

Essel World is a paradise for couples, offering a diverse array of rides to cater to every age group. With 14 family rides, 11 heart-pounding thrill rides, and 15 children's attractions, it ensures there's something for everyone.

In the embrace of its sprawling 700-acre landscape, this amusement park extends a warm invitation to create cherished memories together.

The park's enchanting catchphrase, "EsselWorld me rahunga mein, ghar nahi jaunga mein," translates to "I will stay in EsselWorld and do not want to go home." It beautifully captures the sentiment of visitors who, ensnared by its romantic allure, find themselves reluctant to leave this captivating haven of love and excitement.

GROANLUND, SWEDEN

On the scenic Djurgården island's seaward side, Gröna Lund stands as a splendid beacon among the world's finest



Berjaya Times Square Theme Park, Malaysia

amusement parks, captivating the hearts of children and families alike. Despite its modest size, this centrally located gem is a testament to quality over quantity.

Gröna Lund boasts more than 30 captivating attractions, ranging from thrilling mechanical rides that send shivers down your spine to delightful experiences that cater to all ages. Its compact 3.8-acre expanse ensures that every corner is filled with entertainment, making it a favored venue for summer concerts, where the harmonious blend of music and amusement creates an atmosphere of sheer joy.

Established in 1883 by the visionary James Schultheiss, Gröna Lund's rich history adds to its charm. It continues to enchant visitors with its timeless appeal, offering an immersive experience that leaves lasting memories in the hearts of those who revel in its captivating aura.

BERJAYA TIMES SQUARE THEME PARK, MALAYSIA

Berjaya Times Square Theme Park is an enchanting destination suitable for the whole family to revel in. It is thoughtfully divided into two distinct themed zones, offering a delightful array of attractions. The park's rides transport visitors to a world of wonder, with whimsical botanical drives and the lively Cosmo's Party World providing endless entertainment.

This attraction was conceived with a grand vision in mind - to be the "largest indoor, all-weather, all-ages, entertainment destination in the region." It stands as the second-largest indoor amusement park in Malaysia, living up to its ambitious aspirations.

Within the amusement park, a plethora of amenities awaits visitors during operational hours. From shopping to delectable food and beverages, the Kidz Theatre for entertainment, and the Kidz Playground for the little ones, every member of the family is catered to.



Bengali Traditional Jewellery

GOLDEN THREADS OF TRADITION

In the vibrant cultural tapestry of West Bengal, traditional jewellery stands out as a distinctive art form, embodying the region's rich cultural heritage

TT BUREAU

These ornaments are not merely accessories; they are artistic masterpieces, deeply intertwined with the fabric of Bengali life. Worn with pride and reverence, these ornaments play a pivotal role in the most honored rituals and significant occasions - from the sacred bonds of marriage to the grandeur of bridal and groom attire, and the joyous celebrations of various functions.

As such, Bengali jewellery occupies a prominent position within the cultural legacy of the cultural ethos. Handcrafted Bengali jewellery serves as a testament to the enduring traditions and exceptional artistry that have been inherited

through time. Here are some West Bengal Jewellery designs which mark traditional and historical references:

TIKLI OR MAANG TIKA

Tikli, a distinctive form of Indian jewellery, finds its traditional roots in the northern regions of India, notably in Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Gujarat. This ornamental piece, typically crafted as a pendant, graces the centre of the forehead, positioned just above the eyebrows.

Crafted from materials like gold, silver, or other precious metals, Tikli showcases elaborate designs and intricate embellishments, including pearls, diamonds, and gemstones.

Revered as a symbol of femininity, beauty, and grace, Tikli holds particular significance for brides, often adorning them on their wedding day as part of their bridal jewellery ensemble.

Beyond weddings, Tikli embellishes other celebratory occasions such as festivals, religious ceremonies, and cultural events, adding an exquisite touch of charm and elegance to the wearer's attire. More than a mere accessory, Tikli embodies India's rich cultural heritage, symbolizing its vibrant history and cherished traditions.

RATANCHUR

Gold Ratanchur, a cherished traditional Indian jewellery, has adorned women for centuries, particularly donned by brides on their wedding day across various regions of India, including Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Karnataka.

Derived from the Marathi language, "Ratanchur" combines "Ratan," meaning "gems," and "Chur," signifying "bangles." This jewellery ensemble comprises a necklace, earrings, and bangles, all meticulously crafted from gold and embellished with precious stones like diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. Inspired by nature's motifs such as leaves, flowers, and birds, the intricate designs of Gold Ratanchur epitomize India's rich cultural heritage, showcasing the remarkable craftsmanship passed down through generations. More than just adornments, Gold Ratanchur represents an integral facet of Indian wedding culture, essential to a bride's wedding attire, serving as a timeless symbol of tradition and elegance.

JHUMKO

Jhumko earrings are a type of traditional Indian jewellery known for their bell-shaped design. These earrings are loved by women across South Asia, especially in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The term "jhumko" comes from Hindi, where "jhumka" means "hanging earring". They're usually made of gold, silver, or other precious metals and are often decorated with intricate designs, pearls, beads, and gemstones.



Tikli

Jhumko earrings come in various sizes and styles, from small and simple to large and elaborate, suitable for different occasions and personal preferences. They're versatile accessories, complementing both traditional ethnic wear and modern Western outfits, making them essential for every woman's jewellery collection. Beyond being mere accessories, jhumko jewellery holds cultural and traditional significance, reflecting the elegance and beauty of South Asian women.

SHAKA POLA

Shaka Pola, a traditional bangle, is worn by married Bengali women in West Bengal, India. Typically crafted from red and white coral or sometimes conch shells, these bangles are worn in pairs, typically in odd numbers like three, five, or seven on each wrist.

The red and white hues of Shaka Pola hold deep cultural and religious significance. Red symbolizes the strength of the goddess Durga, while white represents purity and peace. Believed to bring good fortune and ward off evil, these bangles are considered auspicious in Bengali culture.

Traditionally gifted by the mother-in-law to the bride on her wedding day, Shaka Pola signifies the bride's new marital status. They're also worn during religious festivals and family gatherings. Crafting Shaka Pola demands skill and expertise. Coral or conch shells are meticulously selected, polished, and shaped, then adorned with intricate designs by skilled artisans using small hand tools.

Despite evolving fashion trends, Shaka Pola remains an iconic piece of Bengali jewellery, serving as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and traditions of West Bengal.



Shaka Pola



Ratanchur

AYODHYA: SACRED TOWN

Ayodhya, a land steeped in mythology and spirituality, is a destination of profound historical significance. Revered as the domain of Lord Rama, this sacred city echoes his name, signifying his eternal reign as held by belief and legends

NAVEEN KAKKAR



Shree Ram Janam Bhumii

From the epoch of Rama's birth in the Treta Yuga to the recent restoration of the Rama Temple, Ayodhya has witnessed many historical transformations, yet the faith of its people remains unshaken. For travellers seeking a journey of spiritual awakening, a visit to "Ram Nagri" is essential. The city offers a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in a blend of spirituality and myth, rejuvenating both the soul and mind through its significant sites.

Travellers planning a spiritual rejuvenation trip to "Ram Nagri, Ayodhya" must visit pilgrim sites of historical significance and experience a spiritual and mythological escape.

RAM JANAM BHUMI

The term "Ram Janmabhoomi" translates directly to "the birthplace of Lord Ram." According to Hindu belief, Lord Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, spent his early years

in the vicinity of the Sarayu River, as narrated in the ancient Indian epic, the Ramayana. Devotees of the Hindu faith hold Ram Janmabhoomi in the highest reverence, considering it a premier destination to visit.

This sacred site holds a prominent position as one of the seven most significant pilgrimage destinations for Hindus, and it is an integral part of the Ayodhya Darshan itinerary.

KANAK BHAWAN

This renowned temple, situated near Rama Janam Bhumii, the birthplace of Lord Rama, stands as a testament to a legendary tale. According to the folklore, this palace, known as Bhawan, was bestowed upon "Sita" as a wedding gift by Kaikayi when she married "Rama." Not only is this temple rich in historical significance, but it also showcases exquisite architectural and design craftsmanship, making it the most captivating

structure. It is worth noting that this temple is a private abode for Devi Sita and Lord Rama.

With its splendid Bundelkhand architectural style, this temple is a true masterpiece and the sacred township's crowning jewel. The meticulous reconstruction of this structure, under the patronage of King Vikramaditya, has transformed it into an even more breathtaking marvel, drawing visitors from far and wide.

HANUMAN GARHI

Situated a mere 1km from the railway station, the Hanuman Garhi temple holds a significant place in the township's history and mythology. This temple, attributed to the reign of King Vikramaditya, carries profound historical and religious importance. It is widely believed that Hanuman, the devoted servant of Lord Rama, resides here, serving as the guardian of Ayodhya and upholding the ideals of Rama Rajya, the rule of Lord Rama.

The primary deity of this temple is Lord Hanuman, who is depicted seated on the lap of his mother, Anjana. The temple's walls are adorned with inscriptions of the Hanuman Chalisa, providing visitors with a deep spiritual experience and a profound connection to the divine.

RAM KI PAIDI

Ram ki Paldi comprises a series of riverfront ghats nestled along the banks of the tranquil River Saryu. This picturesque riverside setting comes alive, especially when illuminated at night, creating a breathtaking landscape. These ghats hold great spiritual significance, as they provide devotees with platforms to cleanse themselves of sins through a ritualistic dip in the river. Each day, a significant number of pilgrims flock to this site to partake in this sacred bathing ritual in the holy waters of the Saryu.

These ghats have a remarkable history, having been reconstructed after being submerged during periods of heavy



Kanak Bhawan



Hanuman Garhi



Ram Ki Paldi

rainfall and flooding. Their resilience stands as a testament to the unwavering faith and devotion of the pilgrims who frequent them.

One of the most captivating moments at Ram ki Paidi occurs during Diwali when the entire area is adorned with countless diyas (oil lamps). This dazzling spectacle symbolizes the triumphant return of Lord Rama, accompanied by his beloved wife Sita and devoted brother Lakshman, after their 14-year exile. The illuminated display not only marks a joyous celebration but also pays homage to the legendary homecoming of Lord Rama to his homeland, adding a spiritual dimension to the scenic beauty of Ram ki Paidi.

SITA KI RASOI

The temple's name, Rasoi, carries profound significance in itself. In Hindi, "Rasoi" translates to "Kitchen," and according to mythological accounts, this temple holds the historical kitchen of Sita, where she prepared meals for her family.

Within these hallowed walls, visitors can witness the depictions of Lord Rama alongside his three brothers – Lakshman, Bharat, and Shatrughan – accompanied by their respective spouses. This temple serves as a tangible embodiment of sacred and deeply spiritual beliefs deeply rooted in Hindu culture.

RAJA MANDIR

Located at the banks of river Saryu in Guptar Ghar, Faizabad, Raja Mandir holds a special place in Hindu mythology. This temple is home to beautifully carved idols of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses, adorned with silk garments and intricate jewellery.

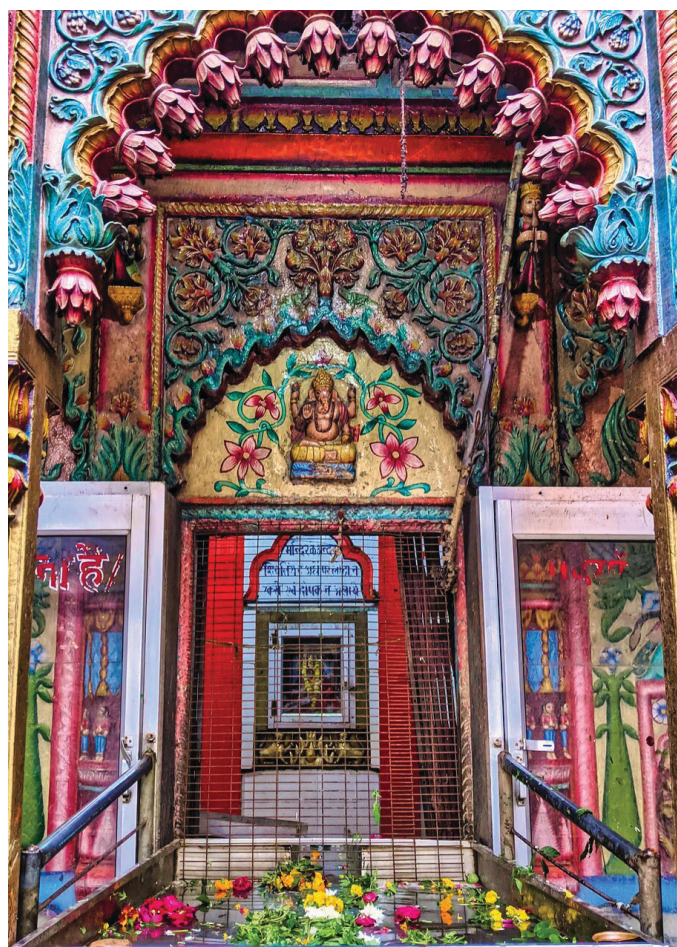
The temple's stunning architecture showcases the mastery of Hindu design. While it was once closely linked to Lord Sri Ram, the ruler of Ayodhya, today it serves as a regular temple housing statues of many deities.

What makes Raja Mandir even more enchanting is its location right at the river's edge, creating a captivating reflection of the temple in the water, a sight that truly delights the eyes.

NAGESHWARNATH MANDIR

The Nageshwarnath Temple has its roots in a fascinating legend associated with Kush, the son of Lord Rama. According to local tales, Kush once lost his armlet while bathing in the sacred waters of the Saryu River. This lost armlet was discovered by a Nag-Kanya, a serpent maiden, who immediately fell in love with Kush. In deep devotion to Lord Shiva, Kush built the Nageshwarnath Temple as an expression of his love and reverence for the Nag-Kanya. This beautiful tale of love and piety adds an enchanting layer to the temple's history.

Throughout the ages, the Nageshwarnath Temple has remained a symbol of immense religious significance. Even



Nageshwarnath Mandir

during the reign of Vikramaditya, it remained in pristine condition, serving as a place of worship and veneration. In 1750, during the tenure of Safdar Jung's minister, Naval Rai, the present temple structure was constructed, preserving the sanctity of the site. The temple showcases the timeless Nagara style of architecture, known for its harmonious fusion of aesthetics and spirituality.

A particularly noteworthy time to visit the Nageshwarnath Temple is during the grand celebration of Shivratri. Its rich history, coupled with its architectural charm and the grand celebrations of Shivratri, make it a captivating destination for those seeking a deeper connection with spirituality and the legends that have shaped the sacred township's cultural landscape.

TRETA KE THAKUR

The Treta Ke Thakur Temple is situated in the Naya Ghat locality. Within this temple, there are several idols, including depictions of Lord Ram, Laxman, Hanuman, Sita, Bharat, and Sugreev. It is said that these statues were meticulously carved from single blocks of black sandstone.

According to legend, this very spot is where Lord Ram conducted the renowned Ashwamedha Yagna on Earth, and the temple now stands on this sacred ground. In the 1700s, during the reign of Ahilyabai Holkar, the Maratha queen, the temple underwent significant renovations and enhancements, further adding to its historical significance.

CHOTI CHAWNI

Choti Chawni, also known as Valmiki Bhawan or Maniramdas Chawni, is an impressive building made entirely of white marble. It's such a stunning place that you really should visit it at least once in your lifetime.

There are a total of 34 ancient caves here. Out of these, 12 are related to Buddhism, 17 to Hinduism, and 5 to Jainism. This large number of caves makes this area a significant and intricate example of remarkable architecture. And to make it even more beautiful, there's the Kailasha Temple inside one of the caves, adding to the overall magnificence of this place.

DASRATH BHAVAN

Dasrath Bhavan is an important religious site in Ramkot and is a popular destination for visitors. It stands right in the heart of the city and is believed to have been built on the same spot where the original palace of King Dasaratha, Lord Ram's father, once stood. It was in this very area that Lord Ram and his siblings spent their childhood and youth.

Inside Dasrath Bhavan, you'll find a shrine with idols of Lord Ram, Lakshman, and Sita. To enter the temple, you'll pass through a large and colourful entrance. The palace often echoes the melodious chants, songs, and dances performed by monks dressed in saffron robes. Although the Bhavan may not be as large as the original historical palace, it holds a special attraction during various festivals like Ram Vivah, Karthik Mela, Diwali, Ram Navami, and Shravan Mela. It's a place filled with religious and cultural significance that draws people in during these celebrations.

KALE RAM MANDIR

The Kaale Ram Mandir, a lesser-known temple tucked away in the corners of Ram-ki-Pairi, can be found behind the Nageshwarnath Temple. It is believed that a single visit to

this charming temple dedicated to the dark-skinned Lord Ram can grant one's prayers. Despite its relative obscurity, the temple's renowned evening aarti still attracts devoted worshippers. Nearby, you'll also find its counterpart, the Gore Ram Mandir, which is dedicated to the fair-skinned Lord Ram.

MANI PARBAT

A small hillock called Mani Parbat near Kami Ganj rises approximately 65 feet above sea level. This hillock not only offers a fantastic panoramic view of the city but also hosts a Buddhist monastery and a stupa built by Emperor Ashoka. At the hilltop of Mani Parbat, where numerous sacred sites can be found, it sits close to another elevated mound known as Sugriv Parbat.



Dasrath Bhavan



Valmiki Bhawan

BEAUTIFUL TEMPLES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Which of the most famous temples in Andhra Pradesh that one must visit, is a question that faces most travellers to this great cultural destination

TT BUREAU

Andhra Pradesh is situated in India's southernmost state. It has seen the rise and fall of emperors and kingdoms over the centuries and is rich in heritage and history. Andhra Pradesh is known for its temples. These shrines were initially designed not just for devotion but to display the grandeur and culture of the period. This led people to witness the most magnificent and well-preserved temples today.

These sacred edifices are the living, beating heart of Andhra Pradesh's heritage, drawing visitors from across the world with their stunning beauty and serene ambience.

In this journey through the 11 most beautiful temples of Andhra Pradesh, prepare to be enchanted by the intricate carvings, towering gopurams, and the mystical tales that weave through their hallowed halls. The top 11 temples to visit in Andhra Pradesh are:

TIRUMALA VENKATESWARA TEMPLE, TIRUPATI

The Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, located in the hill town of Tirupati is one of the most ancient temples in Andhra Pradesh, India, and is a beacon of Hindu spirituality and one of the most revered pilgrimage sites in the world.



Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, Tirupati



Bhimeswara Swamy Temple Draksharamam

This is one of the most revered and visited temples in India, dedicated to Lord Venkateswara, an incarnation of Vishnu. It is famous for its Dravidian architecture and is located atop the seven hills of Tirumala. Dedicated to Lord Venkateswara, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this ancient temple is nestled atop the seven peaks of the Tirumala Hills and draws millions of devotees annually.

The temple's history dates back over a millennium, with rich contributions from various kingdoms and dynasties, which is evident in its intricate Dravidian architecture and the opulent gold-plated dome (Ananda Nilayam) atop the main shrine.

The temple is renowned for its legendary 'Laddu' prasadam, a sweet offering to devotees, and for the ritual of 'Tirumala head shaving' or tonsuring, symbolizing the shedding of ego and surrender to the divine. The temple follows strict traditional worship practices and upholds a series of complex rituals and ceremonies each day, offering a deeply spiritual experience to pilgrims.

Additionally, the surrounding natural beauty and the temple's rich cultural heritage enhance the serene and divine atmosphere and make visiting Tirumala Venkateswara Temple a profoundly uplifting and unforgettable journey for every pilgrim.

BHIMESWARA SWAMY TEMPLE DRAKSHARAMAM

Bhimeswara Swamy Temple Draksharamam is situated in the East Godavari district, which is only 6 kilometres from Ramachandrapuram, and based on the teachings of Shiva reverence and Manikyamba Devi (Parvati Devi). The Bhimeswara Swamy Temple is thought to be the location where Daksha Prajapati was in charge of practising Yagna, thus the name of the temple.

The lingam used was claimed to be extremely strong and to have a fire-like nature. To combat such a great force the Sapta Rishis built eight additional linkages around the core linga. The Eastern Chalukyas have done various restorations in history. The style of the shrine is comparable to that of the Bhimeswara mandir in Samalkot.

The religious site is surrounded by two prakara walls made of polished sandstone. All four sides of the outermost prakara wall have a gopura entryway. Ardha mandapas flank each of the



Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple Antarvedi

four gopura entryways. The internal enclosure wall is divided horizontally into two portions divided by a cornice, with a two-story arcaded mandapa stretching along the inner surface.

LAKSHMI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE ANTARVEDI

The Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple was built in the 15th century and is also known as the Antharvedi Temple. Situated in Antarvedi, on the banks of the Eastern Godavari, this temple is one of the few where the primary Goddess, Bhagwan Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy (one of Bhagwan Vishnu's 10 avatars), looks West rather than East (usual direction of other temples in India).

This temple also marks the point at which the Godavari River joins the Bay of Bengal and is renowned for its

tremendous splendour. The temple tower features five floors and four lion statues symbolizing numerous avatars of Vishnu. Also, according to Hindu mythology, Lord Rama is said to have arrived here after killing Ravana in Sri Lanka.

ANNAVARAM TEMPLE

The Annavaram Temple is a prominent tourist attraction in Andhra Pradesh. This temple, renowned for its Dravidian-style grandeur, is one of the must-see attractions in Andhra Pradesh. The word Anna originated from the term food and has since followed up to its name by delivering food to the poor and underprivileged.

The temple is built on a hill called Ratnagiri and is shaped like a chariot that symbolizes the passage of time. The temple has two floor levels, one for the Chakra and another for the King's Peetham. Around the temple complex, there are a few smaller shrines. The distinctiveness of this shrine draws many followers and visitors to admire everything here.

SIMHACHALAM TEMPLE

The name of this temple is derived from the Simhachalam hill which is approximately 800 feet above sea level. Simhachalam Temple in Andhra Pradesh is famous for worshipping Lakshmi Narasimha. This temple's structure is remarkable since it is influenced by several cultures such as the Cholas, Orrisan, and Chalukya. It was constructed over a thousand years ago, and the religious practices were influenced by Sri Ramanuja.

The Shiva Lingam at the temple is completely enclosed with sandalwood powder. Tourists from all walks of life are attracted here to witness two temple tanks here: Gangadhara



Simhachalam Temple

and Swami Pushkarini, which hold significant importance in history. Therefore, this temple is one of the top ten temples in Andhra Pradesh, with a variety of sub-shrines and mandapams.

VENKATESWARA SWAMY TEMPLE DWARAKA TIRUMALA

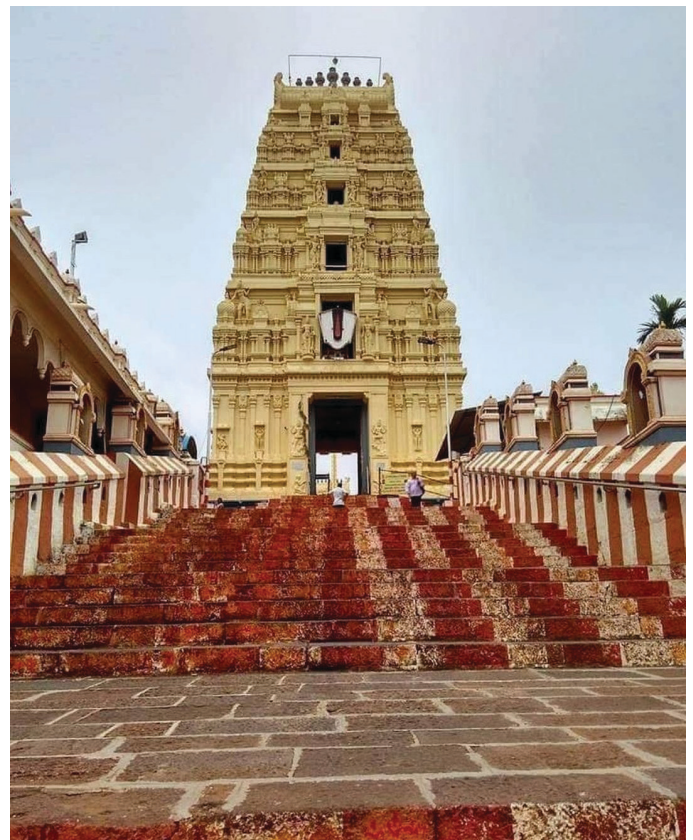
Chinna Tirupati is another name for the Venkateswara Swamy Temple, which is situated in the Andhra Pradesh district of West Godavari in Dwaraka Tirumala. According to Brahma Purana, the territory encompassed by Dwaraka Tirumala commands the highest and most prominent role in the country, being garlanded by these two major Indian rivers Krishna and Godavari.

It is a Hindu temple where people worship Lord Balaji. It is stated that the title originated from Saint Dwaraka, who discovered a statue of Lord Balaji. Travellers who want to adore Lord Balaji but cannot go to Tirupati frequently choose Chinna Tirupati as an alternative option. Aside from that, the temple is a wonder of South Indian craftsmanship.

AHOBILAM TEMPLE

The Ahobilam Temple is situated in the centre of Anantapur, in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This location is around 220 kilometres from Nandyal. The sacred site is blessed to Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy and features a five-foot-three-inch-tall statue of the very same likeness. Ahobilam is typically associated with Vishnu killing the rakshasa Hiranyakashipu in the avatar of Narasimha trying to save his disciple Prahlada.

According to folklore, Narasimha appeared from a rock pillar to defeat the rakshasa. The scene is depicted in a range of murti at various temples. The Ahobilam temple exhibits remarkable stone workmanship, as well as a narrative



Venkateswara Swamy Temple Dwaraka Tirumala



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Ahobilam Temple

constructed in stone construction. The environment and scenery in this region are wonderful. The name of the location was motivated by the title of the cave where the god was formerly situated. One of the largest Narasimha temples, Ahobilam, is still used for wedding rituals.

YAGANTI TEMPLE

Famous for its growing Nandi statue and the unique rock formations, this temple in Andhra Pradesh, dedicated to Lord Shiva, offers a blend of natural beauty and spiritual tranquillity.

A monarch named Hari Raya Bukkaraya built the Yaganti Temple in Andhra Pradesh during the 15th century. It was originally built to honour Sri Venkateshwara, but after the temple was built, the Lord's statue was smashed and replaced by a Shiva Linga. This site is situated on the Pushkarini hills, through which the river Nanda streams.

Pushkarini, Agastya Cave, Venkateswara Cave, and Veera Brahmam Cave are all part of this shrine. Before idolizing Lord Shiva, Sage Agasthya is supposed to have dipped in Pushkarini. Many people feel that soaking in the Pushkarini is therapeutic. The temple celebrates Maha Shiv Ratri, which occurs each year in October or November, with considerable grandeur and display. During this period, pilgrims, particularly worshippers of Lord Shiva, travel to the shrine in significant masses.

AMARALINGESWARA SWAMY TEMPLE AMARAVATHI

The Amaralingeswara Swamy Temple is one of the Guntur town's Panchakarma Kshetras, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva is one of the oldest temples in Andhra Pradesh. The ancient temple is known for its historical significance and sculptures, it reflects the rich cultural heritage of the region.

The temple, nestled on the banks of the Krishna River, is said to be where God Indra personally placed the Shiva Linga. They think the Shiva Linga used to expand each day, which is why a nail was placed on the sculpture's head to limit its development. It is stated that the crimson bloodstain formed by striking the nail right on the head of the Shiva Linga is still accessible to the public. Aside from it, there are various monuments and paintings of historical rulers.



Sri Padmavathi Ammavari Temple



Yaganti Temple

MANGALAGIRI TEMPLE

Mangalagiri temple may be found on the Mangalagiri hill in Andhra Pradesh. This location is supposed to be one of Lord Vishnu's eight locations and hence a must-visit for every Hindu devotee. The hill is shaped like an elephant, and there are beautifully carved-out stairs leading to the temple.

The deity, which is celebrated by distributing jaggery drinks or Panakam, is the primary aspect of this temple. After a certain quantity of this drink has been consumed, the remaining is presented to the idol. Mangalagiri Temple's gopuram is one of the tallest in South India, which stands 153 feet tall, 49 feet wide, and has eleven levels.

SRI PADMAVATHI AMMAVARI TEMPLE

This temple is devoted to Goddess Padmavathi and is located a few kilometres from the city centre. This is one of Tirupati's sacred spots, and it is the setting for numerous folk stories.

The people living here believe that Akasha Raja of Thondamandalam was conducting a yajna when he churned the soil in search of a maiden in a lotus flower. Then, Padmavathi Devi, the deity Mahalakshmi, appeared on the gold lotus in the middle of Padma Sarovaram-the shrine tank. The girl afterwards wed Lord Venkateshwara. This temple has its unique importance, and worshippers travel from all over to deliver their devotion.



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FEBRUARY FROLIC: GREAT FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

Get ready for a fantastic getaway and enjoy the wonderful traditions and vibrant celebrations made during February festivals and Fairs. These celebrations can be religious, cultural, or related to the changing seasons and it is a reason for communities to get together and rejoice

TT BUREAU

February 2024 calendar is a particularly joyful period in India, marked by the occurrence of some of the most beloved festivals. India hosts a wide variety of festivals all year round, each with its own special stories and customs. India's diverse culture and heritage shine through these numerous festivals held throughout the year.

A multitude of festivals are observed with abundant rituals, enjoyment, enthusiasm, and merriment in this month. Here are the key fairs and festivals happening that are being celebrated and enjoyed in this month of love.

JAISALMER DESERT FESTIVAL

The Jaisalmer Desert Festival, also known as the "Rajasthan Desert Festival" or "Maru Mahotsav," is a yearly celebration held in the picturesque city of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Coinciding with the Hindu month of Magh, the festival takes place in the stunning Thar Desert's Sam Dunes, about 42 kilometres from Jaisalmer, three days before the full moon. Renowned for its historical and cultural significance, this festival is a vibrant testament to the unique lifestyle of the people in and around Jaisalmer.

The festival is a kaleidoscope of cultural displays, showcasing various aspects of Rajasthan's rich heritage. Visitors can enjoy a multitude of activities, ranging from traditional turban-tying and moustache competitions to the elegance of Ghoomar dance and the excitement of camel polo. Adventure seekers can embark on exhilarating camel and jeep safaris deep into the desert.

The festival also features a wide array of cultural performances and activities. From lively puppet shows to soul-stirring folk music performances by Manganiar and Langas artists, and dances like Kalbelia and Ghoomar, there's an abundance of cultural richness to experience. Spectators can witness exciting camel races, polo matches, and engage in fun contests like tug of war and juggling. Unique competitions such as the longest moustache contest and the 'Maru Shri' (Mr. Desert Pageant) add to the festival's uniqueness and appeal.

Adding to the charm are Gair dance forms and folk fire dances, with participants dressed in colorful Rajasthani attire, embodying the essence of local folk culture and traditions. A special feature of the Jaisalmer Desert Festival 2024 is "Astro Tourism" or "The Skies of Jaisalmer," an offering that includes



Jaisalmer Desert Festival

stargazing sessions and astronomy workshops, perfect for those with a keen interest in the stars and the cosmos. This celebration is a vibrant mix of art, music, dance, and food, truly encapsulating the diverse and rich culture of Rajasthan.

DATE: 22 - 24 February 2024

VENUE: Jaisalmer

MATHO NAGRANG FESTIVAL LADAKH

Experience the mystique of the Oracle Matho Nagrang Festival at the Matho Monastery in Ladakh, during the first month of the Tibetan new year which indeed is February. Two chosen monks become oracles, or Ronstang, believed to foretell the village's future and that of its people. While outsiders may find these traditions astonishing, they are an integral part of life for the local community.

This festival is a significant celebration within the Tibetan Buddhism Sakya School, observed with grandeur, much like other Tibetan festivals. The festival serves as a period of cleansing and rejuvenation for the local residents while also playing a crucial role in the region's economy by attracting tourists who contribute to its revenue. For visitors to Ladakh, the Matho Nagrang Festival offers a distinctive and memorable experience.

DATE: 23rd to 24th February 2024

VENUE: Matho Monastery, Ladakh

TAJ MAHOTSAV AGRA

Taj Mahotsav, an annual event, pays tribute to the rich culture and heritage of Uttar Pradesh, India. This 10-day extravaganza unfolds every February along the banks of the Yamuna River in Agra, the city renowned for the iconic Taj Mahal. The festival is a vibrant showcase of Uttar Pradesh's culture and traditions, featuring a diverse array of colourful performances, folk dances, music, art exhibitions, and delectable food stalls.

With its origins dating back to the Mughal era, when Emperor Shah Jahan would host an annual Mahotsav in the Taj Mahal Gardens, the festival has evolved over the years to encompass a wide range of activities and performances. It attracts renowned musicians, chefs, dancers, and artists who contribute to making it a truly unforgettable 10-day experience.

DATE: 18th to 27th February

VENUE: Shilpgram, Agra

LOSAR FESTIVAL, LADAKH

The Losar festival, also known as the Tibetan New Year, is celebrated by the Memba tribe in February, a month earlier than other tribes. This New Year celebration lasts for five days and involves various traditions. During the festival, there are prayers, the raising of religious flags in homes, the reading of Buddhist scriptures, and the lighting of butter lamps inside houses.

The first three days of Losar are the most significant and are marked with grand celebrations. On the eve of Losar, a special



Taj Mahotsav, Agra



Matho Nagrang Festival, Ladakh

dinner called the "Guthuk dinner" is prepared. It includes dishes made from barley, rice, buckwheat, and wheat flour, usually containing nine different ingredients that symbolize the nine auspicious qualities of Buddha's teachings.

DATE: 10th to 12th February 2024

VENUE: The Ladakh monasteries

GOA CARNAVAL

The Goa Carnival is an exciting four-day event that people eagerly await, attracting visitors from all around the world to Goa. It wonderfully showcases the traditions and culture of Goa. This festival is a blend of street performances, musical shows, vibrant floats, and delicious local Goan cuisine.

Tourists often join in the street parade, dressed in colourful outfits and fun masks. The parade itself boasts a variety of floats,

dancers, and musicians, all adorned in elaborate costumes. Leading the procession is King Momo, a mythical figure believed to be the King of Carnaval.

The history of Carnaval harks back to the time of Portuguese colonial rule when it was introduced to mark the beginning of the Lent season. Everyone is invited to partake in this unique blend of fun, entertainment, fashion displays, delectable food, and live performances. Come and experience the Goa Carnaval's delightful fusion of festivities!

DATE: February 11 - 14, 2024

LOCATION: Panaji, Vasco, Mapusa and Margao

ROSE FESTIVAL CHANDIGARH

The Department of Tourism, Chandigarh Administration, hosts the Rose Festival every year in the last week of February in Chandigarh. This event showcases a wide array of rose varieties, including polyanthus, hybrid teas, climbers, and more.

In addition to the beautiful roses, the festival offers a range of enjoyable activities such as the creation of an amusement park and daily cultural programs. The celebration also includes three grand Musical Nights for visitors to enjoy as part of the festivities.

DATE: Last week of February

VENUE: Zakir Hussain Rose Garden, Chandigarh

THE ATTUKAL PONGALA FESTIVAL, KERALA

The Attukal Pongala festival celebrated at the Attukal Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, is recognized as the world's largest gathering of women for a religious event.

During this festival, women engage in a ritual called Pongala, meaning 'to boil over'. This involves preparing a sweet dish known as payasam, a pudding-like mixture of rice, jaggery, coconut, and plantains, which is then offered to the Goddess or 'Bhagavathy'.

This sacred ritual is exclusively performed by women, leading to the city's streets being filled with devout followers. Known affectionately as 'Attukalamma', the Goddess is believed to be pleased by this offering.

Thiruvananthapuram becomes a hub of festive excitement during this time, attracting such a vast number of participants that it has earned a place in the Guinness World Book of Records. Experiencing this festival is a uniquely profound event, one that truly must be witnessed first-hand to grasp its extraordinary splendour.

DATE: 25th February

VENUE: Attukal Bhagavathi Temple

GARDEN FESTIVAL, DELHI

The Delhi Government organizes the Garden Festival in Delhi, a delightful floral extravaganza annually in February. This event showcases a diverse array of plant species and flowers.

During the Delhi Garden Festival in February, visitors will be



Garden Festival, Delhi



Rose Festival, Chandigarh

treated to an array of stunning flowers. The garden in Said-Ul-Ajaib Village will showcase diverse blossoms, including roses, hibiscus, protea, and the native lotus. Expect to see flora from around the world, such as lilies from Italy, irises from France, maple leaves from Canada, chamomiles from Russia, cornflowers from Germany, tulips from Turkey, and many more.

Additionally, guests are invited to participate in various entertaining competitions held during the festival, ensuring an enjoyable experience for all visitors.

As February unfolds its charm, these festivals and fairs offer an incredible opportunity to immerse yourself in the vibrant cultures and traditions of these remarkable destinations. You too can be a part of these unforgettable experiences and create memories that will last a lifetime.

DATE: 17th to 19 February 2024

VENUE: Garden of Five Senses, Saket

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MESMERISING MIZORAM

Mizoram is known for its beautiful rolling hills, valleys, rivers and lakes. As a result, visitors to this North East state of India have so many amazing experiences that shortlisting unique places of beautiful Mizoram that you must explore, is not easy

TT BUREAU

There are up to 21 major hill ranges or peaks of various heights that run the length and breadth of the state, with plains strewn about. The hills to the west of the state average roughly 3,300 ft. To the east, these progressively ascend to 1,300 metres (4,300 feet). Higher ranges, however, can be found in some regions, reaching heights of over 2,000 metres (6,600 ft).

At 2,210 metres, Phawngpui Tlang, commonly known as the Blue Mountain, is Mizoram's highest mountain. It is located in the state's southeastern corner (7,250 ft). Forests cover 76 per cent of the state, while fallow land makes up 8% and barren ground makes up 3%.

One of the northeastern Indian states, Mizoram has Aizawl as its capital. Mizoram means "Land of the hill people." and is derived from Mi (people), Zox (lofty site, such as a hill), and Ram (land).

Chhimtuipui, also known as Kaladan, Kolodyne, or Chintuipui, is Mizoram's largest river. It begins in Burma's

Chin state, runs through Mizoram's southernmost districts of Saiha and Lawngtlai, and then returns to Burma's Rakhine state.

Although the hill ranges are drained by many more rivers and streams, the Tlawng, Tut, Tuirial, and Tuivawl rivers, which flow through the northern area and eventually join the Barak River in Cachar District, are the most important and valuable. The rivers, especially in the south, have a gentle drainage grade.

AIZAWL

Aizawl, the capital of the state of Mizoram in northeast India, sits at an elevation of 1132 metres above sea level. Aizawl and its adjacent environs, ruled by the Mizo Tribe, are beautiful with undulating hills and plentiful flora. The city, like the rest of the state, is well-known for its agricultural products as well as ethnic handicrafts and clothing. Aizawl is well connected to other important hubs in northeast India, such as Silchar and Guwahati in Assam, via road and air.

Hmuifang Tlang



Reiek Tlang

Aizawl, one of the oldest cities in India's northeastern area, is a great spot to unwind while sampling the local cuisine and culture. Tourists have few alternatives for sightseeing tours in the city, which is home to the Mizoram State Museum and a few other tourist facilities. Aside from them, a trip of the adjacent hilly areas of Hmuifang, Tamdil Lake, and Chanmari is available.

REIEK

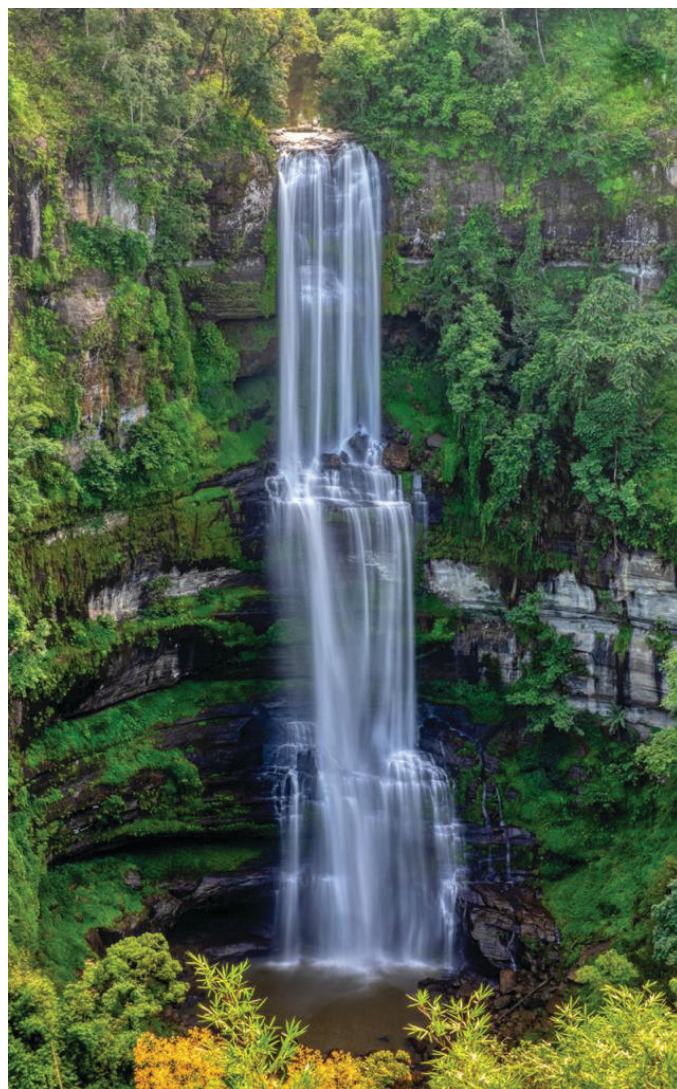
Reiek Tlang, or simply Reiek, is one of Mizoram's tallest hills, standing at 1465 metres. Reiek Tlang is a great viewpoint offering panoramic views of Aizawl and the surrounding valley with a backdrop of scenery borrowed from the Mizo Hills, located 29 kilometres from the city of Aizawl. The climb to the summit is also a fantastic hiking experience, best enjoyed on calm bright days.

The Reiek Hills also have a heritage monument that is home to a little Mizo settlement. Aside from sightseeing, the hill is a birdwatcher's paradise. Nests and chirping of native species, especially tanagers, can be heard as one climbs the hill.

HMUIFANG

Hmuifang or Hmuifang Tlang, one of Mizoram's most attractive places, is a magnificent hill station located 50 kilometres from the capital city of Aizawl. Hmuifang is a hill town in Mizoram's central region.

The hill station is noted for its adventure and wildlife-related activities, which attracts a large number of visitors. Hmuifang is also known for hosting the Thalfavang Kut festival, which showcases diverse Mizo dances such as



Vantawng Falls



Thalfavang Kut Festival

Cheraw, Sawlakai, Siktuihiang lam, and Chheihlam and is sponsored by the Tourism Development of Mizoram.

VANTAWNG FALLS

The Vantawng Waterfalls, the highest in the state and the 13th highest in the country, is one of the most fascinating waterfalls in the North East. Mizoram's pride and one of its main attractions are the Vantawng Falls. The waterfall, which is 137 kilometres from Aizawl, is a sight to behold in and of itself. From distance, the waterfall, nestled amid verdant



Rih Dil Lake

valleys with thick foliage all around it, appears to be a river of white milk.

Because of the dense forest that surrounds it, the waterfall can only be seen from afar. It is found near Thenzawl on the Vanva River, which is noted for its raging rapids. Vantawng Falls are a monument to the incredible natural beauty of the area.

SERCHHIP

This small town may provide the feel of a small village, including the life, activities, and colours that it maintains on a daily basis. The villages of Neihloh and Buangpuri are two of the most popular places to visit. Natural attractions such as the Vantawng Khawhltha waterfall contribute to tourism. The Chhingpui Thlan and Hriantrengna lung are two other spots worth visiting.

LUNGLEI

It is a small hamlet around 170 kilometres south of Aizawl, named after a bridge-shaped rock found near Nghasih, a

branch of the Tlawng River. Lunglei is a great off-the-beaten-path resort for individuals who want to combine natural sightseeing with adventure sports. Tourists flock to Lunglei for a variety of activities such as trekking, bird watching, and camping.

Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary and Saza Wildlife Sanctuary are located in Lunglei, a biodiverse region. While the Saza Wildlife Sanctuary is known for its migratory and endemic bird species, the Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a variety of animals including leopards, tigers, porcupines, and leaf monkeys. Another popular activity while here is visiting the Lunglei Rock Bridge on the Nghasih Stream. The Saikuti Hall is a must-see for anyone interested in learning about the region's culture and traditions.

CHAMPHAI

It is 188 kilometres from Aizawl, Mizoram's capital, and is strategically and commercially significant for both



Serchhip



The Dampa Tiger Reserve

Mizoram and India. The natural beauty of Champhai and its neighbouring regions, as well as extensive rice-field valleys, are well-known. It also has a sentimental and artistic appeal thanks to its colourful seasonal blooms.

Champhai features a variety of tourist attractions, most of which are natural surroundings. A cave known as Kungawrhri Puk, a river known as Tiau Lui, Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang, and others are among them. Another popular natural feature in Champhai is Rih Dil Lake. Adventure seekers can go trekking at Thasiama Seno Neihna, which is about 83 kilometres south of Champhai.

MAMIT

The village of Mamit, located roughly 95 kilometres west of Aizawl, is known for its magnificent picturesque settings and splendour. The Dampa Tiger Reserve, one of India's most famous natural protected areas, is a popular tourist attraction. People will also enjoy seeing Pukzing's longest cave network in Mizoram. Oranges are a prominent crop in this area.

This region is culturally dynamic, with a number of events held throughout the year with great fanfare. While the traditional Christmas and New Year celebrations are the most important, the ethnic holidays of Chapchar Kut and Mim Kut, which commemorate the yearly agricultural harvests, are also quite important.

SAIHA

Saiha, located at an average elevation of 729 metres above sea level, is renowned as Mizoram's fastest-growing town, with a population that has increased dramatically in the recent decade. Anglers flock to this town since it is considered a sanctuary for them.

The town's name was originally Siaha, with 'Sia' standing for elephant and 'ha' meaning tooth - an elephant tooth, revealing the enigma of the name. However, the Mizos refer to it as Saiha.



Vaipuanpho River Joining The Mighty River Tlawng

KOLASIB

Kolasib is located in northern Mizoram and shares a border with Assam's Cachar district. It is located 79 kilometres north of Aizawl. Kolasib, like most other Mizoram districts, is rich in culture and natural beauty.

The Tlawng River, with its picturesque river banks and accompanying forests, is Kolasib's most popular tourist attraction. Leisurely boating can be arranged by contacting certain locals who are prepared to ferry tourists about. In addition to sightseeing, travellers can sample local cuisine and learn about handicrafts.



Biryani

The aroma of expertly crafted traditional biryani dishes masterfully prepared, has the power to captivate even the most discerning palate, presenting a dish that is the ultimate expression of kitchen wizardry

TT BUREAU

Take a flavourful journey through India with its biryani dishes, where every spoonful is an aromatic escapade that captures the essence of the country's diverse culinary landscape. From the aromatic alleyways of Lucknow to the bustling streets of Hyderabad, India's culinary landscape is dotted with the rich tapestry of biryani dishes, each narrating tales of bygone eras, royal courts, and age-old traditions.

This introduction to the Biryani of India invites you on a gastronomic voyage, exploring a dish that is a marvel of the culinary world.

Biryani, much more than a mere dish, is an embodiment of India's diverse culture, a melange of flavours inherited

from sultans, traders, and local chefs. The treasures of India's biryani legacy showcase the distinctive varieties that have captivated palates and withstood the test of time.

BIRYANI - A WELL-KNOWN RICE DELICACY

Biryani, India's renowned rice delicacy, traditionally features mutton, but chicken versions have also gained immense popularity. Additionally, regional variations of this dish abound. The core of biryani comprises marinated meat and rice seasoned with spices like cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves.

Other frequent mutton or chicken biryani ingredients include yoghurt, cashews, saffron, onions, and mint leaves. The final creation is often complemented with raita, a

Malaysia Kuala Terengganu Redang Island

yoghurt-based side, and chutney. Often the centrepiece at Indian events like weddings, parties, and festivals, biryani has garnered global admiration for its unique taste and aroma.

Beyond its scrumptious taste, biryani is nutritionally balanced. The rice supplies carbs for energy, the meat offers protein, and the accompanying vegetables deliver vital vitamins and minerals. The spices, apart from amplifying the flavour, bring forth health benefits, including anti-inflammatory properties.

The preparation of biryani varies with personal tastes and regional traditions. While some opt for ghee (clarified butter), others might choose oil. Spicing can be tailored to one's liking. For example, the preparation of Hyderabadi biryani stands out, as the meat is marinated in yoghurt and spices prior to being layered with rice. In India, biryani is predominantly prepared using the Dum Pukht method, where it's cooked in a sealed pot. Yet, each region boasts its distinctive biryani rendition and preparation technique.

THE ESSENCE OF HYDERABADI BIRYANI

Hyderabadi Biryani, a celebrated dish from Hyderabad, India, masterfully blends the traditions of Hyderabadi and Mughlai cuisines. This iconic delicacy, which traces its roots back to the royal kitchens of the Nizams, showcases two prominent versions: Pakki and Kacchi.

The Pakki style involves layering cooked meat and basmati rice. In contrast, the Kacchi variant places uncooked marinated meat, be it chicken or lamb, between layers of saffron-infused basmati rice, adorned with onions and dried fruits. Both styles undergo a slow-cooking process inside a dough-sealed earthen pot placed over a charcoal grill. The result is a deeply

aromatic, flavorful, and indulgent biryani that stands as a testament to the region's rich culinary heritage.

THE ROYAL FLAVORS OF AWADHI BIRYANI

Hailing from the grand courts and royal kitchens of Awadh, historically known as the present-day northeastern part of Uttar Pradesh, the Awadhi or Lucknowi Biryani stands as a testament to the region's opulent culinary heritage.

Distinctly known as the 'pakki biryani', this variant uses a unique 'dum' style of cooking, where cooked meat and partially cooked rice is layered, allowing them to simmer together, ensuring each grain of rice is infused with the flavoursome juices of the meat.



Hyderabadi Biryani



Awadhi Biryani

Often referred to as Lucknowi Biryani, this dish is more subtle and fragrant compared to its robust southern counterparts. Moreover, the use of specific Awadhi spices, rose water, and kewra (screw pine) sets it apart, offering a delicate and aromatic dining experience. It's not just a meal; it's a journey back to the lavish feasts of the Nawabs of Awadh.

THE MELTING POT: THALASSERY BIRYANI

Steeped in a rich tapestry of maritime trading history, the coastal town of Thalassery in northern Kerala boasts a unique culinary palette that beautifully melds Arabian, Persian, Indian, and European culinary traditions.

One of the shining stars of Thalassery's diverse cuisine is the famed Tellicherry Biryani. Unlike the typical biryanis that use basmati rice, Thalassery Biryani employs Kaima rice, a short-grain rice known for its rich aroma. Delicately spiced and combined with succulent chicken, this biryani stands out in taste and texture. Often referred to as Kerala Biryani due to its distinctive place in Kerala's gastronomic landscape, Thalassery Biryani isn't just a dish—it's a flavorful testament to the region's rich culinary heritage and trading legacy.

KOLKATA BIRYANI: A LUCKNOWI LEGACY REIMAGINED

While its roots trace back to the regal kitchens of Lucknow, Kolkata Biryani has carved a niche for itself, celebrating the ethos of the city it's named after.

This adaptation of the Lucknowi Biryani has undergone a culinary evolution to suit the palate of Kolkata's vibrant populace. Characterized by its lightly tinted yellow rice, generously layered with yogurt-marinated meat, the Kolkata Biryani incorporates unexpected, yet delightful additions of soft-boiled eggs and potatoes.

What truly sets it apart, though, is its nuanced flavours - a gentle balance of savoury with an understated sweetness, and a judicious use of spices that allows each ingredient to shine. In every bite, one can taste both its regal legacy and the unique charm of Kolkata.

AMBUR AND CHETTINAD BIRYANI: THE TAMIL TREASURES

In the southern heartland of India, biryani takes on flavours and tales as rich as its history. Ambur Biryani, also revered as Arcot Biryani, carries the legacy of the Mughal kitchens that thrived in the region.

The 18th-century Nawabs of Arcot, who prominently ruled the Carnatic region of South India, made Arcot their strategic hub. It was within their royal kitchens that the recipe of Ambur Biryani was meticulously crafted. This biryani uses Seeraga samba rice, a variety peculiar to the region, harmoniously mixed with meat marinated in curd and adorned with mint and coriander, encapsulating the essence of Tamil Nadu.

Parallely, Tamil Nadu introduces another culinary marvel, the Chettinad Chicken Biryani. A fiery sibling to the more



Thalassery Biryani



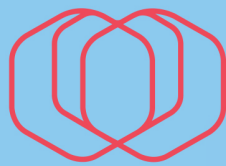
Kolkata Biryani

muted Dum Biryanis, this dish brims with bold spices like kalpasi (stone flower), star anise, and Marathi moggu (dried flower pods). Occasionally, this biryani chicken recipe sports a concoction of tomato and mint puree amalgamated, and the inclusion of coconut milk introduces a creamy, tantalizing twist to this aromatic rice dish.

Both biryanis, in their unique ways, exemplify the rich, diverse culinary traditions of Tamil Nadu.

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MEMONI BIRYANI: A SPICY LEGACY OF THE GUJARAT-SINDH REGION

Emerging from the rich culinary traditions of the Memon community in the Gujarat-Sindh regions of India and Pakistan is the tantalizingly spicy Memoni Biryani. Unlike other biryanis that boast a vibrant orange hue, the Memoni variant is distinctive in its appearance, largely due to its restrained use of food colouring. This conscious choice allows the deep, natural shades of the meat and spices to remain unmasked, presenting a dish that is visually as arresting as it is flavourful.

Prepared predominantly with succulent lamb, creamy yoghurt, crisply fried onions, and potatoes, it strikes a balance by using fewer tomatoes, creating a fiery yet harmonious blend that stands testament to the Memon community's rich culinary expertise.

BHATKALI BIRYANI: A COASTAL DELIGHT WITH PERSIAN ROOTS

Nestled within the coastal contours of Karnataka lies Bhatkal, the birthplace of the distinct Bhatkali Biryani, a gem in the crown of Navayath cuisine. The genesis of this dish can be traced back to the Persian merchants who sailed to these shores, introducing an array of kebabs and flatbreads. But their most cherished legacy remains the Bhatkali biryani. Unlike its more colourful counterparts, the Bhatkali version champions simplicity: white rice with occasional orange flecks.

Yet, its flavours are anything but simple. Layers of aromatic rice envelop meat steeped in a robust masala of onions and green chillies, resulting in a biryani that's both fiery and rich, capturing the essence of its coastal Persian lineage.

KALYANI BIRYANI: HYDERABAD'S HUMBLE CULINARY GEM

From the historic terrains of what was once Hyderabad Deccan emerges the Kalyani Biryani, often fondly termed the "poor man's" Hyderabad biryani. At the heart of this biryani is buffalo meat, meticulously diced into small cubes and infused with a medley of spices. Ginger, garlic, red chillies, turmeric, cumin, and coriander powder converge with generous amounts of onions and tomatoes to form the base.

Initially prepared as a rich curry, the meat then dances with rice in a slow simmer, ensuring every grain absorbs the robust flavours. The result is a humble yet flavorful biryani, exemplifying the rich culinary traditions of Hyderabad.

BOMBAY BIRYANI: THE MELODIOUS MÉLANGE OF MUMBAI

Amidst the diverse biryani landscape of India, the Bombay Biryani emerges as a harmonious blend of distinct flavours, capturing the eclectic spirit of Mumbai. This particular rendition features aromatic basmati rice layered beautifully with potatoes and succulent pieces of meat - be it chicken, mutton, lamb, or even a medley of vegetables. The inclusion of fried onions,

fresh mint leaves, and intriguing dried plums adds layers of complexity. Each bite is a flavorful journey, with the rice and meat cooked to perfection amidst a symphony of spices.

The dish's unique charm lies in its nuanced sweetness, derived from dried plums, kewra essence, and golden fried onions. As a final touch, the biryani is drizzled with melted ghee, sealing in its aromatic essence. Traditionally accompanied by a cool raita and crisp salad, Bombay Biryani is a gastronomic salute to Mumbai's vibrant culinary tapestry.

RAWTHER BIRIYANI: A FIERY FUSION OF TRADITION

Dive into the tantalizing world of Rawther Biriyani, a dish that commands attention with its vibrant dark red hue, a testament to the lavish use of fresh tomatoes and the fiery touch of Kashmiri red chilli powder.

At the heart of this biriyani lies the Jeerakasala rice, an aromatic short-grain variety, which cradles the spices and ingredients beautifully. Rooted deeply in the culinary traditions of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, this spicy dum biriyani holds a special place among the Rawther Muslim communities of Coimbatore and Palakkad.

Yet, its allure doesn't stop at regional boundaries. Rawther Biriyani, with its robust flavours and fragrant allure, has begun captivating taste buds far beyond its traditional communities, making it a rising star in the vast galaxy of biriyani dishes.



Memoni Biryani



Rawther Biriyani



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Warm your tastebuds with delicious dishes

TT BUREAU



Tulsi tea

As the cold season blankets the world in snow and frost, there's no better time to discover the enchanting flavors and comforting recipes that will chase away the winter chill. Sooth yourself on a journey through the heartwarming world of winter cuisine with an array of mouthwatering dishes designed to tickle your taste buds and keep you cozy all season long.

From hearty soups and stews that warm you from the inside out to decadent desserts that satisfy your sweet tooth, here is a collection of recipes that will make your winter dining experience truly magical.

TULSI TEA

During the winter season, the onset of common health issues like cold and cough is a familiar concern. Frequent doctor visits can be inconvenient, but luckily, many of these minor ailments can be alleviated with simple home remedies. Among these natural remedies, Tulsi (Holy Basil) stands out as a revered Ayurvedic herb, readily available in Hindu households.

Tulsi holds a sacred place in Hindu culture and traditions. However, its benefits extend beyond its spiritual significance.

Drinking Tulsi tea in the winter season can offer a multitude of advantages for the body. Not only does it provide relief from the discomfort of a cold, but it also serves as a potent ally in fortifying the immune system and guarding against infections.

Tulsi's medicinal properties, including its antiviral and antibacterial qualities, make it a valuable asset in maintaining good health during the colder months. So, by sipping on a comforting cup of Tulsi tea, you not only soothe your winter ailments but also nourish your body with the healing power of this revered herb.

BAJRA ROTI

Bajra," also known as pearl millet, is a venerable grain with deep roots in Indian agriculture. Its history dates back to ancient times, and it continues to be a nutritional powerhouse, offering a multitude of health benefits. This robust grain is an abundant source of essential nutrients, making it suitable for consumption across all age groups.

Bajra boasts a rich fiber content that promotes digestive health, making it particularly valuable during the winter months. It is also replete with vital nutrients like iron, magnesium, phosphorus, and B vitamins, which play a

pivotal role in bolstering immunity and maintaining overall well-being, especially in colder seasons.

Beyond its nutritional merits, bajra serves as a provider of warmth. Its high carbohydrate content furnishes the body with energy, making it an ideal choice to stave off the chill during winter. Whether enjoyed with a delectable combination of white dairy butter and jaggery, creating a heartwarming flavor, or paired with a variety of sabzi (vegetable dishes) or curd, bajra, in the form of roti or other preparations, brings both nourishment and comfort to the winter dining table.

MAKAI BHAKRI

Makai, also known as corn or maize, and Bhakri, a popular dish in Gujarat, combine to create a heartwarming culinary experience that not only provides warmth during the cold winter months but also offers remarkable health benefits.

One of the most appealing aspects of Makai Bhakri is its gluten-free nature, making it an excellent choice for health-conscious individuals. This dish is a simple yet delicious creation: Makai roti is crushed by hand and generously enriched with ghee. To enhance its flavor profile, fried spring onions are delicately incorporated into the mixture. However, the pièce de résistance lies in the infusion of a smoky essence.

A burning coal is placed within the dish, along with a dollop of ghee, and the entire mixture is covered for approximately half an hour. During this time, the Bhakri absorbs the captivating smoky flavors, transforming it into a culinary masterpiece. For food enthusiasts, especially during the winter season, Makai Bhakri is an absolute must-

try delight, offering both taste and nourishment in a single, delectable dish.

KHARODE SOUP

Kharode or paaye soup, made from the bones of the rear leg of a goat, is a hearty and warming delicacy that finds its place at the heart of winter cuisine. This spicy and flavorsome Kharode soup is a must-add to your winter dining experience. The richness of this soup makes it an ideal companion for the cold season.

Kharode soup can be relished in its own right or paired with roti if prepared with a thicker consistency. Beyond its delightful taste, this soup boasts a wealth of health benefits. Rich in calcium, it is highly recommended by physiotherapists for individuals recovering from bone injuries. Additionally, the soup's inherent warmth helps combat the winter chill and provides comfort and nourishment during the colder months.

So, whether you savor it for its delectable taste or embrace it for its healthful properties, Kharode soup is a winter treat that promises to warm both your body and soul.

HARE LEHSUN KI SABZI

Green garlic, a vibrant and seasonal gem, comes brimming with an antioxidant powerhouse known as Allicin. This remarkable compound takes center stage in promoting your well-being by offering a host of health benefits.

Allicin is a key player in the battle against high cholesterol, working diligently to lower it and safeguard



Makai Bhakri



Kharode Soup



Hare Lehsun Ki Sabzi



Besan Halwa

your cardiovascular health. It doesn't stop there; this potent antioxidant also steps in to reduce inflammation throughout the body, alleviating discomfort and enhancing overall health.

Furthermore, green garlic's formidable properties extend to bolstering your immune system, a crucial aspect during the cold winter months. By doing so, it aids in fending off common ailments like colds, coughs, and flu.

Another noteworthy attribute is its ability to aid in cellular regeneration, a process often compromised by oxidative stress. Thus, green garlic emerges as a versatile ally in your pursuit of a healthier life.

And when it comes to culinary delight, Hare Lehsun ki Sabzi, prepared from green garlic, becomes an ideal winter dish, delivering both taste and well-being in a single, satisfying serving. So, this winter, savor the flavors of green garlic while nourishing your body with its remarkable health benefits.



Goondh Laddu

BESAN HALWA

Besan, or gram flour, is a nutritional powerhouse, abundant in protein, vitamins, and crucially, antioxidants. These attributes make it an excellent weapon against the cold and cough that often afflict us during winter. Besan has soothing qualities, helping to maintain throat moisture and providing instant relief from irritating coughing spells. Its nutritional composition not only helps combat winter ailments but also nourishes the body, making it an ideal addition to your winter diet. Enjoy the comforting benefits of besan-based dishes as they not only delight your taste buds but also fortify your health, offering a welcome respite during the chilly season.

GOONDH LADDU

As the winter season arrives, you may have noticed your grandmother preparing a delightful treat known as Gond Ladoo. These sweet and wholesome balls are crafted from a blend of edible gum, whole wheat flour, assorted nuts, jaggery, and ghee. Beyond their delicious taste, Gond Ladoos offer a treasure trove of nutritional benefits.

These delectable creations are rich in calcium, protein, and iron, making them an ideal choice for maintaining your health in cold weather. They play a pivotal role in keeping your body warm and cozy when the temperatures drop. Additionally, Gond Ladoos possess anti-inflammatory properties and are particularly beneficial for individuals suffering from arthritis, as they help lubricate joints and provide relief from back and joint pain.

For pregnant women, these ladoos are a nourishing delight, strengthening bones and aiding in the prevention of postnatal back pain. Loved by both children and adults, Gond Ladoos are the perfect winter snack, especially cherished in North India, where they not only warm your soul but also contribute to your overall well-being during the chilly season.



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