

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JUNE 2024 - ₹50

**SPLASH
INTO FUN**

**DARK SKY
DESTINATIONS**

**THE ULTIMATE
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**LOVE, LIGHT
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**VINTAGE GLAMOUR: ICONIC
HERITAGE LUXURY HOTELS**

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CON

06 VINTAGE GLAMOUR: ICONIC HERITAGE LUXURY HOTELS

FROM ROYAL PALACES TO ICONIC LANDMARKS, THESE HOTELS SERVE AS CUSTODIANS OF HERITAGE AND LUXURY

16 THE ULTIMATE BEACH BUCKET LIST

JOIN US TO EXPLORE THE ULTIMATE BEACH DESTINATIONS THAT PROMISE MORE THAN JUST A TAN

22 SPLASH INTO FUN

INDIA'S BEST WATERPARKS, CAN TURN YOUR NEXT VACATION INTO AN UNFORGETTABLE AQUATIC EXTRAVAGANZA

26 DARK SKY DESTINATIONS

EXPLORE THE BEAUTY OF THE COSMOS AND EXPERIENCE THE NIGHT SKY LIKE NEVER BEFORE

32 THE MAGIC OF DHOKRA ART

DISCOVER A SPELL BINDING ART WHERE ANCIENT TRADITIONS FORGE BRONZE WONDERS

36 THE FIVE PILLARS OF FAITH

FIVE SIKH TAKHTS, THAT STAND AS A SUPREME SEAT OF AUTHORITY





TENTS

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE | VOLUME 27 | No. 06 | JUNE 2024

40 SACRED SHAKTI PEETH TEMPLES

GET ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO THE SHAKTI PEETH TEMPLES OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

44 NAGERCOIL TEMPLE JEWELLERY

THIS TEMPLE JEWELLERY SHOWCASES THE RICH CULTURAL LEGACY OF TAMIL NADU



48 MOST EXPENSIVE SAREES

DISCOVER THE ULTIMATE IN LUXURY WITH OUR GUIDE TO THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE SAREES

52 LOVE, LIGHT AND TRADITION

INDULGE IN THE UNIQUE AND FASCINATING RITUALS OF PARSİ WEDDINGS

56 MORE TO BIHARI FOOD THAN LITTI CHOKA

GET READY TO ELEVATE YOUR TASTE BUDS WITH THESE DELECTABLE BIHARI DISHES



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VINTAGE GLAMOUR: ICONIC HERITAGE LUXURY HOTELS

Explore heritage luxury hotels, where the chandeliers have seen more drama than a blockbuster movie

KAMAL GILL

Around the globe, heritage luxury hotels offer guests more than just opulence; they offer a doorway to the past, wrapped in the comfort of modern luxury. From royal palaces to iconic landmarks, these hotels serve as custodians of heritage and luxury.

The resplendent service style is carefully nurtured and maintained: a finely dressed butler arriving at your door, silver tray in hand, to serve afternoon tea in the same fashion as it was presented to royalty centuries ago. The gleaming silver teapots, delicate china cups, and perfectly baked scones create a tableau of elegance.

Or imagine the discreet and attentive service of a personal valet, ensuring your every need is met with a grace that feels like stepping into a bygone era. These hotels preserve the art of hospitality, where every detail, from the monogrammed linens to the grand chandeliers, whispers stories of an age where luxury was defined by personalized, impeccable service.

REGAL RETREATS: EUROPE'S GRAND PALACE HOTELS

In Europe, the blend of history and luxury finds a distinguished representation in the continent's many palatial hotels.

The Ritz Paris, located in the heart of Paris on the Place Vendôme, has hosted famous names from Ernest Hemingway



The Hotel Sacher



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Steigenberger Hotels and Resorts

to Coco Chanel, each adding to its legendary status. The hotel's recent restoration ensures that its timeless elegance remains untouched. Opened in 1898 by César Ritz, the Ritz Paris boasts sumptuous suites, including the famous Coco Chanel Suite, decorated with exquisite antiques and artworks. The hotel's opulent interiors, featuring crystal chandeliers, gilded mouldings, and plush furnishings, reflect the grandeur of the Belle Époque era. Guests can enjoy world-class dining at the Michelin-starred restaurant L'Espadon, indulge in luxurious spa treatments, or sip cocktails at the iconic Bar Hemingway.

Venturing into the United Kingdom, The Savoy in London offers a similar blend of historic grandeur and contemporary luxury. Opened in 1889, The Savoy was the first luxury hotel in Britain to feature electric lights and elevators. Today, it continues to celebrate its rich history while offering state-of-the-art facilities to its guests, standing out as a must-visit landmark.

Claridge's in London is a bastion of British elegance and luxury. Situated in the prestigious Mayfair district, this heritage hotel has been a favourite of royalty and celebrities since it opened in 1856. Claridge's combines British aristocratic charm with modern sophistication, offering sumptuous rooms and suites decorated with art deco elements and bespoke furnishings. The hotel's renowned afternoon tea, served in the elegant Foyer & Reading Room, is a quintessentially British experience. Guests can also enjoy fine dining at the Michelin-starred restaurant Davies and Brook or unwind at the chic Claridge's Bar.

The Hotel Sacher in Vienna is an emblem of Austrian elegance and tradition. Established in 1876 by Eduard Sacher, son of the creator of the famous Sachertorte, this historic hotel has been a beacon of luxury and refinement. Located near the Vienna State Opera, the Hotel Sacher combines classic Viennese charm with modern amenities. Its lavish rooms and suites are adorned with antique furniture, rich fabrics, and original artwork. Guests can savour the legendary Sachertorte at the hotel's Café Sacher or dine in style at the gourmet Restaurant Rote Bar.

Palazzo Versace in Milan is a testament to Italian fashion and luxury. Located in the fashion capital of the world, this



The Ritz Paris

grand palace hotel was designed by the legendary fashion house Versace. The hotel's interiors are a stunning blend of classical architecture and contemporary design, featuring Versace's signature opulence. Guests can indulge in lavish suites decorated with Versace's iconic motifs, and enjoy gourmet Italian cuisine at the on-site restaurant.

Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo is an icon of luxury and glamour. Established in 1864, this grand palace hotel is situated in the heart of Monaco, adjacent to the famous Casino de Monte-Carlo. The Hotel de Paris boasts lavishly decorated rooms and suites, offering stunning views of the Mediterranean Sea. Its opulent interiors feature marble columns, crystal chandeliers, and rich fabrics, reflecting the Belle Époque splendour. Guests can dine at the hotel's renowned restaurant Le Louis XV – Alain Ducasse, which holds three Michelin stars, or relax at the luxurious Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo spa.

The Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof, an emblem of luxury and history, stands proudly in the heart of Frankfurt, Germany. Established in 1876, this grand hotel has long been a symbol of sophistication and elegance, welcoming royalty, dignitaries, and celebrities through its storied doors. The Frankfurter Hof blends classic architectural grandeur with modern comforts, featuring opulent interiors adorned with intricate detailing and plush furnishings. Guests can dine at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Français, or relax in the luxurious spa.

From Paris to Vienna, Milan to London, and Monte Carlo to Bavaria, Europe's grand palace hotels are timeless havens of elegance and grandeur.

ASIA'S GRAND HERITAGE PALACE HOTELS

Moving to Asia, the continent's history is rich with empires and dynasties, each leaving behind remnants of their grandeur in the form of palaces turned luxury hotels.

Raffles Hotel in Singapore is a symbol of colonial elegance and luxury. Established in 1887, this historic hotel has hosted numerous literary figures, celebrities, and royalty over the years. Its grand colonial architecture, featuring white façades, spacious verandahs, and lush tropical gardens, exudes a timeless charm. The interiors are equally opulent, with teakwood floors, lofty ceilings, and antique furnishings. Guests can enjoy the legendary Singapore Sling at the Long Bar or indulge in a lavish high tea at the Tiffin Room.

The Peninsula Hong Kong, often referred to as the "Grande Dame of the Far East," opened its doors in 1928. This grand hotel is renowned for its blend of Eastern and Western influences, reflected in its majestic architecture and sophisticated interiors. The Peninsula boasts elegantly appointed rooms and suites, offering stunning views of Victoria Harbour.

Located on the iconic Bund in Shanghai, China, The Peace Hotel is a landmark of Art Deco architecture and luxury. Originally opened in 1929 as the Cathay Hotel, this historic property has been a symbol of glamour and sophistication for nearly a century. The hotel's interiors feature lavish décor, with marble floors, grand chandeliers, and elegant furnishings. The Peace Hotel is famous for its Jazz Bar, where guests can enjoy live performances by the legendary Old Jazz Band. With its rich history and stunning views of the Huangpu River, The Peace Hotel offers a unique glimpse into Shanghai's golden era.

Perched on the shores of the Bosphorus, Çırağan Palace Kempinski in Istanbul is a stunning example of Ottoman grandeur. Originally built in the 19th century as a royal palace, this opulent hotel combines historical elegance with modern luxury. The palace's architecture features intricate

marble work, ornate ceilings, and grandiose halls, reflecting the splendour of the Ottoman Empire. Guests can enjoy panoramic views of the Bosphorus from the luxurious rooms and suites, dine at the award-winning Tugra Restaurant, or relax in the infinity pool overlooking the strait.

INDIA'S HERITAGE HOTELS: ECHOES OF REGAL SPLENDOUR

India, often dubbed a land of myriad colours and narratives, offers some of the most exquisite palatial hotels that narrate stories of its regal past. These heritage properties are former palaces, forts, and mansions of India's maharajas and are steeped in the country's rich history and tradition.



The Peninsula, Hong Kong



Çırağan Palace Kempinski, Istanbul



Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur

The Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai is a striking example. This hotel has witnessed historical events that have shaped India. Its majestic architecture and prime location by the Arabian Sea have made it a favourite among dignitaries and celebrities alike. Opened in 1903, this historic hotel has become a landmark of Indian hospitality, blending Moorish, Oriental, and Florentine architectural styles. The hotel's lavish interiors, adorned with hand-woven silk carpets, crystal chandeliers, and a grand marble staircase, reflect its grand heritage.

Built on an eight-acre estate, The Imperial New Delhi houses over 5,000 original artworks from the 17th and 18th centuries throughout its common areas and accommodations. Since opening in 1936, it has been the site of significant social gatherings, hosting royalty, celebrities, and dignitaries. Conceptualized by Blomfield and inaugurated by Lord Willingdon, the hotel's iconic 24 royal palms mark the entrance, symbolizing the creation of New Delhi. The Imperial's pillared verandahs, elegant dining rooms, famous tea lounge, Royal Ballroom, and lush gardens have hosted countless celebrations, making it a cornerstone of Delhi's heritage.

One of the crown jewels among India's luxury heritage stays is the Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur. Originally built in 1746 as the pleasure palace of Maharana Jagat Singh II, it appears to float miraculously on the serene waters of Lake Pichola. Today, it's renowned for its unique setting, intricate architecture, and lavish hospitality that truly makes guests feel like royalty.

Nestled on the banks of Pichola Lake, stands the magnificent Shiv Niwas Palace owned by the royal HRH Group of Hotels, which also runs the Jagmandir Island Palace in Lake Pichola – an early 17th-century island palace. Originally constructed



Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad

in the early 20th century during the reign of Maharana Fateh Singh, this crescent-shaped palace has been transformed into a luxurious heritage hotel. The interiors of Shiv Niwas Palace are adorned with ornate frescoes, antique furniture, and intricate glass mosaics, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan.

Another iconic establishment is the Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, which offers a taste of the royal lifestyle. This former residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur is famed for its exquisite gardens, elegant rooms, and marbled corridors. Built in 1835, Jaipur's Rambagh Palace later became the residence of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II and Maharani Gayatri Devi. Now



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRIES **KANDLA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE**

Kandla Special Economic Zone bearing the distinction of being the first SEZ in the Asia-Pacific region, was inaugurated by Late Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri on 7th March, 1965 as an Export Promotion Zone which was seamlessly converted into a Special Economic Zone in 2006. KASEZ has been awarded as "First Green Industrial City of India" in Platinum Category for the year 2021-2026, under IGBC Green Cities rating for existing Cities in industrial cities category. This zone is home to 281 exporting units providing employment to over 28,000 persons.

Kandla Special Economic Zone offers opportunity to set up new manufacturing units in various sectors such as engineering, pharma and chemical, Textiles, timber and plywood and new emerging technologies including E-Vehicles and their accessories. 36.92 Ha (100 Acres) is being developed into 75 plots of size ranging from 2800 sqm to 6300 sqm which is an opportunity ready to be seized by investors.

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5. GST on services provided to SEZ units consumed within SEZ

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a grandly restored Taj property, this 47-acre estate is known as the “Jewel of Jaipur.” The palace, with its Indo-Saracenic architecture, exemplifies Rajput traditions and heritage. It features hand-carved marble ‘jalis’, sandstone balustrades, cupolas, ‘chattris’, and royal Mughal gardens.

In Jodhpur, the Umaid Bhawan Palace divides its grandiose space between a royal residence and a heritage hotel managed by Taj Hotels. Constructed between 1928 and 1943, this golden-hued desert sandstone monument is one of the world’s largest private residences and displays a fusion of Indo-Saracenic, Classical Revival, and Western Art Deco elements. The palace complex spans 26 acres of land.

Heading south, the ‘Falaknuma Palace’ in Hyderabad, which means “Mirror of the Sky”, is perched 2,000 feet above the city. Originally the residence of the Nizam of Hyderabad considered the richest man in the world at one time, it has been restored by the Taj Group to offer a glimpse of the lavish lifestyle of the Nizams.

In Kerala, the enchantment of palatial stays continues with the likes of the Bolgatty Palace in Kochi. This exquisite property, originally built by Dutch traders in 1744 and later taken over by the British, is now a heritage hotel managed by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation. Its luscious lawns, waterfront views, and historic ambience make it a preferred choice for those seeking tranquillity and a peek into colonial elegance.

Another gem is the Hill Palace in Thripunithura, the largest archaeological museum in Kerala, which showcases the royal heritage of the Maharajas of Kochi. Though not a hotel, its

sprawling grounds and well-preserved artefacts provide a cultural backdrop that complements the luxurious stays in nearby heritage hotels.

These palaces, whether functioning as hotels or museums are a window into the lavish, intricate lifestyle of India’s royal past.

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA’S TIMELESS TREASURES

Across the Atlantic, American historic hotels tell newer, yet equally compelling stories. The ‘Waldorf Astoria’ in New York City, established in the 1890s and rebuilt in 1931, mirrors the ambition and glamour of the city. Known for its Art Deco interiors and impeccable service, the Waldorf Astoria has been a symbol of high society’s social gatherings and significant political meetings.

Further south, in Cuba, the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana offers a peek into Cuba’s dynamic history. Since its opening in 1930, it has been a witness to the island’s tumultuous history, hosting world leaders and global superstars. The hotel’s vintage charm is a time capsule of the 1930s, offering a unique perspective on Cuban history.

In South America, the allure of historic palace hotels offers a similarly enchanting experience. From the opulent splendour of Palacio Duhau in Buenos Aires, with its elegant gardens and regal architecture, to the majestic Belmond Copacabana Palace in Rio de Janeiro, these establishments encapsulate the rich cultural tapestry and grand history of the region.

Guests are treated to an experience that blends colonial charm with modern sophistication. Imagine enjoying a



The Hotel Nacional de Cuba



The Palace of the Lost City, Sun City

leisurely breakfast on a sunlit terrace, surrounded by lush tropical gardens, or being attended to by staff trained in the traditions of old-world service.

REGAL RETREATS: HERITAGE PALACE HOTELS IN AFRICA

Africa's rich history and diverse cultures are beautifully reflected in its iconic heritage palace hotels. These luxurious establishments allow guests to experience the grandeur and elegance of bygone eras.

Nestled at the foot of Table Mountain, the Mount Nelson Hotel, in South Africa often referred to as "The Nellie," is a pink palace steeped in history. Opened in 1899, this iconic hotel has hosted numerous celebrities, politicians, and royalty. Its colonial architecture, lush gardens, and remarkable interiors reflect a blend of Victorian elegance and contemporary luxury.

The Palace of the Lost City in Sun City, South Africa, deserves mention for its extraordinary grandeur and architectural brilliance. Inspired by a mythical African kingdom, this palace hotel features opulent interiors, lush gardens, and breathtaking views of the Pilanesberg Mountains. Guests can enjoy luxurious accommodations, world-class dining, and a range of recreational activities, from golf to safari adventures.

La Mamounia in Morocco is a legendary palace hotel that has enchanted visitors since it opened its doors in 1923. Located in the heart of Marrakech, this hotel is a masterpiece of Moroccan architecture and design. Its lavish interiors are adorned with intricate mosaics, carved woodwork, and plush fabrics. The hotel is surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens that date back to the 18th century, offering a peaceful retreat to countless dignitaries and celebrities.

Owned by Sir Richard Branson, Kasbah Tamadot in Morocco is a stunning palace hotel located in the Atlas Mountains. This exquisite retreat, once the private home of an Italian antique dealer, is a blend of traditional Moroccan architecture and contemporary luxury. Each room is uniquely decorated with artefacts from around the world, creating a serene and luxurious ambience.



Mount Nelson, A Belmond Hotel



The Sarova Stanley

Perched on the banks of the Zambezi River, just a stone's throw away from the magnificent Victoria Falls, the Royal Livingstone Hotel in Zambia is a testament to colonial elegance. Named after the famous explorer David Livingstone, this hotel combines Edwardian-style architecture with African-inspired decor. Guests can savour gourmet meals on the terrace with views of the river or enjoy a sunset cruise on the Zambezi. The hotel's proximity to one of the natural wonders of the world adds to its allure, providing a unique blend of adventure and luxury.

As Nairobi's first luxury hotel, the Sarova Stanley has been a landmark of sophistication since 1902. This historic hotel has retained its colonial charm while offering modern amenities. Its grand lobby, adorned with vintage photographs and period furnishings, transports guests back to the early 20th century. The famous Thorn Tree Café, once a meeting point for explorers and travellers, continues to be a popular spot.

These iconic heritage palace hotels in Africa are nestled in bustling cities, serene mountains, or majestic rivers, and invite guests to indulge in the regal splendour of Africa's heritage.

THE MIDDLE EASTERN HERITAGE LEGACY HOTELS

The Middle East, with its ancient civilizations, also hosts several palatial hotels that offer a glimpse into its rich past. The Middle East, a region steeped in history and cultural richness, boasts some of the most opulent and historically significant heritage hotels in the world. These hotels serve as living museums, showcasing the architectural brilliance and grandeur of bygone eras.

Located in the shadow of the Great Pyramids of Giza, Mena House in Cairo run by Marriott is a historic palace hotel that exudes timeless elegance and grandeur. Originally built in 1869 as a hunting lodge for Egypt's Khedive Ismail, it was transformed into a luxury hotel that has hosted royalty, dignitaries, and celebrities for over a century. The



The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel



Mena House, Cairo

hotel's lavish interiors, featuring Moorish architecture, ornate wooden panelling, and intricate arabesque designs, reflect its rich history and cultural heritage.

Nestled between the rugged Al Hajar Mountains and the sparkling Sea of Oman, Al Bustan Palace is a testament to Omani elegance and hospitality. Originally built to host the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in 1985, this majestic hotel reflects a blend of traditional Omani architecture and contemporary luxury. The hotel's grand atrium, with its soaring 38-meter-high domed ceiling, intricate carvings, and lavish chandeliers, sets the tone for an opulent stay.

Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi is a modern-day palace that exudes Arabian opulence and grandeur. Opened in 2005, this architectural marvel was designed to showcase the very best of Arabian culture and hospitality. The hotel run by Mandarin Oriental features 114 domes, each adorned with gold leaf, marble, and mother-of-pearl detailing. Its interiors are equally lavish, with intricate mosaics, plush furnishings, and state-of-the-art amenities. The Emirates Palace offers guests a royal experience with its private marina, pristine beaches, and exquisite dining options.

The King David Hotel in Jerusalem is a historic landmark that has hosted royalty, dignitaries, and celebrities since it opened in 1931. Overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem, this hotel combines classic elegance with modern sophistication. Its stone façade, grand public spaces, and lush gardens reflect the heritage and history of the region. The King David Hotel is renowned for its impeccable service and luxurious accommodations, offering guests a unique blend of historical charm and contemporary comfort. Its location provides stunning views of Jerusalem's ancient landmarks, adding to its allure.

While straddling the border of North Africa and the Middle East, the Taj Palace in Marrakech deserves mention for its blend of Middle Eastern and Moroccan heritage. This palatial hotel is set against the backdrop of the Atlas Mountains and features architecture inspired by Arabian, Moorish, and Indian styles. The hotel's grand courtyards, intricate mosaics, and opulent interiors transport guests to a world of timeless elegance.

Situated in the vibrant city of Istanbul, the Pera Palace Hotel is a beacon of European and Ottoman luxury. Established in 1895 to accommodate passengers of the famed Orient Express, the hotel has maintained its historical charm while incorporating modern amenities. The Pera Palace Hotel is

renowned for its elegant décor, featuring original furnishings, vintage photographs, and a collection of artefacts that tell the story of Istanbul's rich past. Guests can enjoy traditional Turkish tea in the opulent Kubbeli Lounge or explore the bustling streets of the historic Pera district.

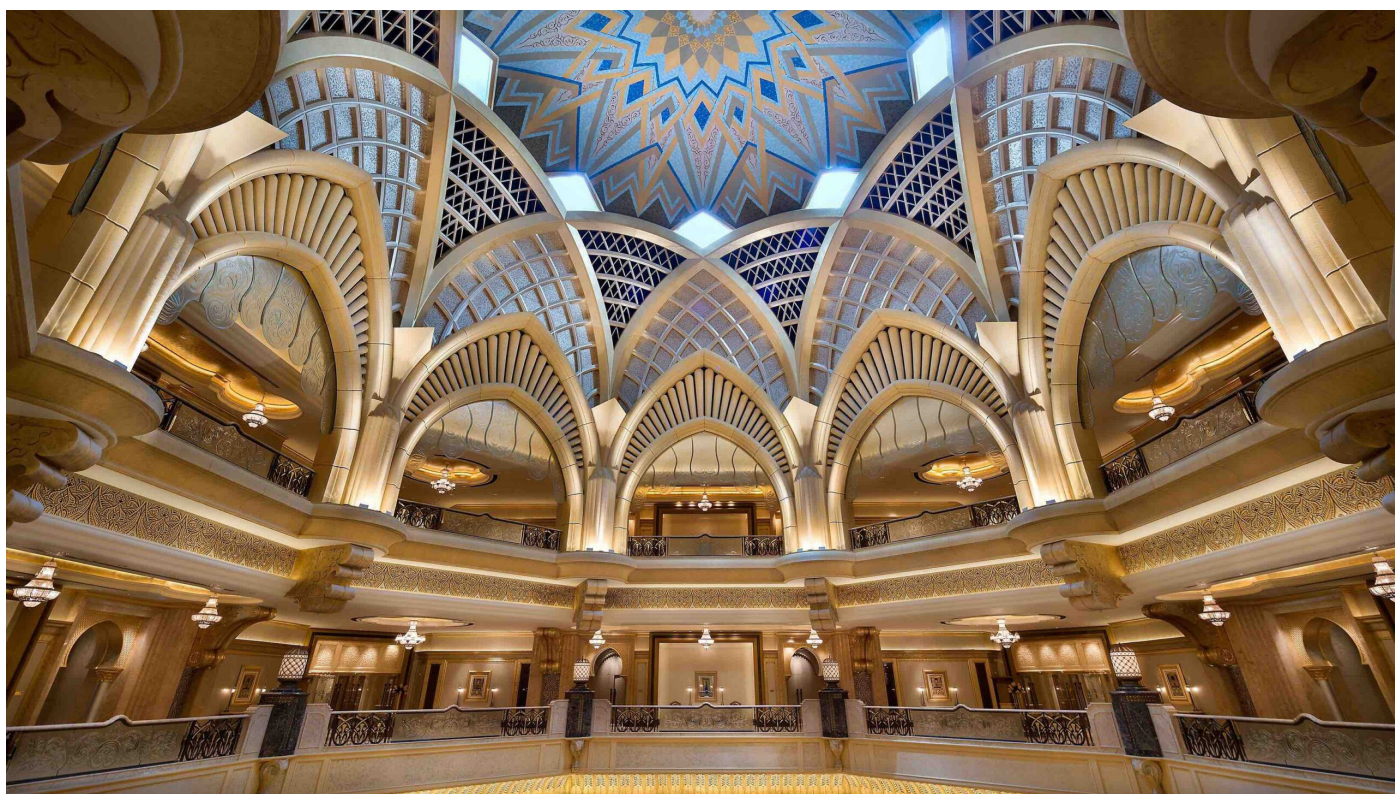
These Middle Eastern heritage legacy hotels offer guests a unique opportunity to experience the rich cultural heritage and architectural splendour of the region.

A PASSAGE TO THE PAST

Staying in these historic luxury hotels is more than a night's stay; it is an immersive experience into the depths of a locale's culture, history, and soul. Each hotel, with its unique narrative and preserved heritage, offers an enriching journey not just into the comforts of luxury but into the very spirit of the place it belongs to. For the discerning traveller, these hotels are destinations in their own right, promising memories that are as grand as their storied halls.



The King David Hotel, Jerusalem



Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental, Abu Dhabi

THE ULTIMATE BEACH BUCKET LIST

Summer is sending out invites and the dress code is swimsuit-only! Dive into the best beach destinations where the shores are pristine and the waters are as clear as your vacation agenda

TT BUREAU

As the sun climbs higher and the days longer, the lure of golden sands and azure waters becomes irresistible. “Beach Destinations for Your Perfect Getaway” whisks you away to the most enchanting beach destinations around the globe, where every grain of sand tells a story and every wave sings a song of escape.

From secluded coves cherished by locals to expansive shores thronged by travellers, our journey spans hidden gems and popular paradises alike. Whether you’re dreaming of a tranquil retreat or a vibrant beach party, join us as we explore the ultimate beach destinations that promise more than just a tan—they offer a slice of paradise tailor-made for your perfect getaway.

BONDI BEACH, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

“Bondi” derives from an Aboriginal term for “water breaking over rocks” or “noise of water breaking over rocks.” Famous globally, Bondi Beach in Australia captivates tourists with its breathtaking views and lively beach culture and remains one of the best beach vacation destination.

Located just 7 kilometres east of Sydney’s Central Business District, this crescent-shaped sandy beach is a summer hotspot for locals and international visitors.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

From June to August, temperatures range from a cool 8.8 to 17°C. The ideal time to visit is from January to March when the weather typically warms up to 24-28 degrees, sometimes even reaching the 30s.

ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY

Bondi Beach destination in Australia offers a plethora of activities for everyone.

- **Surfing:** Bondi Beach is synonymous with surfing. With waves suitable for all levels, you can either start your surfing journey here with lessons from local surf schools or hit the bigger waves if you’re more experienced.
- **Paddleboarding:** Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is another popular activity at Bondi. It’s a more relaxed way to enjoy the water and get a full-body workout, with paddleboard rentals and lessons readily available along the beach.



Surfing at Bondi Beach



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Snorkelling in Waikiki Beach

- **Bodyboarding:** For those who prefer staying closer to shore, bodyboarding is a thrilling alternative to surfing and suitable for all ages.
- **Snorkelling and Diving:** While not as famous for snorkelling or diving, the north end of Bondi Beach near the rocks can be an interesting spot to explore marine life, especially during calmer sea conditions.
- **Beach walk:** The Bondi to Coogee coastal walk is a scenic trail that offers stunning ocean views and passes by several smaller beaches.
- **Swimming:** The waters at Bondi are great for swimming, especially in the designated areas patrolled by lifeguards. The Bondi Icebergs Club is also a popular spot for those who enjoy pool swimming right next to the sea.
- **Beach Volley and Yoga:** For the adventurous, beach volleyball and oceanfront yoga classes are available.
- **Food and Beverage:** From casual beachfront cafes where you can grab a quick coffee or a fresh smoothie, to upscale restaurants serving gourmet Australian cuisine with stunning ocean views, there's something for everyone. The local food scene is highlighted by fresh seafood dishes, trendy health-conscious cafes offering organic and vegan options, and classic Aussie barbecues.

Bondi Beach also hosts several watersport events throughout the year, which attract competitors and spectators from around the world.

WAIKIKI BEACH, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Waikiki, translating to 'spouting waters,' boasts a rich surfing history. In the 19th century, Hawaiian royalty would surf here with their longboards, setting the stage for it to become a surfing hotspot. The area gained international fame when the Moana Surfrider, its first large beachfront hotel, opened in 1901, cementing Waikiki's status as a premier surf destination.

Waikiki Beach is Honolulu's most beloved sandy spot and the heart of Hawaiian tourism. Framed by towering hotels and gentle palm trees, it epitomizes the Hawaiian vibe. For many, it's the first stop upon arriving in Hawaii.

This stunning 2-mile white sand beach stretches from the Sheraton to the Honolulu Zoo and boasts turquoise waters that are perfect for beginner surfers all year round. Surfing here is an essential experience. Above it all, the majestic Diamond Head volcano provides a breathtaking backdrop. From water sports and beach leisure to cultural experiences, Waikiki Beach is a hub of endless activity and iconic Hawaiian charm.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

The best time to visit Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, Hawaii, depends on what you're looking for in your trip. April to June and September to November, These months typically offer the best weather. The temperatures are warm but not too hot, and there is less rain compared to the winter months.

ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY

- **Surfing:** Known globally for its excellent surfing conditions, the beach offers lessons for beginners and challenging waves for seasoned surfers.
- **Stand-up Paddleboarding:** Stand-up paddleboarding at Waikiki Beach offers a tranquil yet engaging way to explore Honolulu's serene waters. Glide over clear waves with a view of Diamond Head, ideal for beginners and enthusiasts alike.
- **Canoe ride:** Experience a traditional Hawaiian canoe ride at Waikiki Beach. Paddle alongside experienced guides and enjoy the camaraderie as you navigate the gentle waves, all with a stunning backdrop of Honolulu's coastline.
- **Jet Skiing:** For adrenaline seekers, jet skiing is a popular choice at Waikiki. Safety gear and instructions are provided, ensuring a fun and secure experience on the water.

- **Parasailing:** Offering an aerial view of Waikiki and the surrounding Pacific, parasailing here can take you up to 500 feet in the air. It's a breathtaking way to enjoy the Hawaiian scenery, combining the thrill of flight with unparalleled views of the ocean, beach, and city. Operators like X-Treme Parasail provide various packages, including tandem flights.
- **Snorkelling:** The waters at the far ends of the beach, near the natural and artificial reefs, offer the best chances to see tropical fish, sea turtles, and occasional reef sharks. Equipment can be rented from numerous stands along the beach.
- **Food and Beverage:** Indulge in Hawaiian cuisine at Duke's Waikiki, and sip Mai Tais at Beach Bar at Moana Surfrider.

From water sports and beach leisure to cultural experiences, Waikiki Beach is a hub of endless activity and iconic Hawaiian charm.

COPACABANA BEACH, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is one of the world's most famous and vibrant shorelines, stretching over 4 kilometres of golden sand bordered by the bustling Avenida Atlântica.

Known for its lively atmosphere, Copacabana is the epicentre of outdoor activities, sports, and festivals in Rio. The beach destination hosts a spectacular New Year's Eve celebration that draws millions of visitors for its massive fireworks display and live music performances.

The iconic black-and-white wave-patterned promenade, designed by landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, adds a touch of elegance and a distinctly Brazilian character. With breathtaking views of Sugarloaf Mountain and the constant pulse of Brazilian culture, Copacabana Beach is a must-visit destination that embodies the lively spirit of Rio.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

The best time to visit Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is from April to June and September to November. These months

offer milder temperatures, fewer crowds, and lower prices, making it ideal for beachgoers and tourists. For those seeking vibrant festivities, December to March, especially during New Year's Eve and Carnival, provides an exciting, albeit crowded, experience with lively celebrations and warm summer weather.

ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY

- **Beach soccer:** Beach soccer at Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro is an exhilarating experience that embodies the spirit of Brazilian sports culture. On the golden sands where the sport is believed to have been popularized, locals and tourists alike dive into spirited matches against the backdrop of the bustling cityscape and rolling waves of the Atlantic.
- **Stand-up Paddleboarding (SUP):** This is a popular activity at Copacabana, with calm days offering perfect conditions for beginners and those looking for a more relaxed way to enjoy the water.
- **Bodyboarding:** For those who find surfing a bit daunting, bodyboarding is an exciting alternative, with opportunities to rent boards right on the beach.
- **Jet Skiing:** Rentals are available for those seeking faster-paced action on the water. It's a fun way to get a different view of the beach and the surrounding Rio coastline.
- **Kite Surfing:** When the wind conditions are right, Copacabana Beach is a suitable spot for kitesurfing. The sport is more common at nearby beaches like Barra da Tijuca but can occasionally be enjoyed at Copacabana as well.
- **Beach volleyball:** As one of the hotspots for this popular sport, the wide stretches of sand at Copacabana are constantly dotted with nets and enthusiastic players diving, jumping, and spiking under the sun.
- **Bike rentals:** The beach features a dedicated bike path that runs alongside the iconic wave-patterned promenade, providing stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean and bustling beach activities.



Beach Volleyball at Copacabana Beach

- **Food and Beverage:** Savour traditional Brazilian snacks at beachside kiosks, and enjoy Caipirinhas at Copacabana Palace Pool Bar.

The beach is well-equipped with rental facilities for most water sports, and there are plenty of instructors and guides who can provide lessons and tours.

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA

Myrtle Beach started as a simple area with a few cottages along the shore but has transformed into a vibrant hotspot for tourists. Visitors can walk along the 2-kilometre Oceanfront Boardwalk in the downtown area or enjoy a meal at one of the many restaurants facing the ocean.

Golfers have their choice of over 90 top-notch golf courses, and there's plenty of live entertainment and nightlife to keep everyone entertained. Known as "The Beach" to locals, Myrtle Beach invites couples, families, and anyone looking to relax on the sand to come and enjoy this beach paradise.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

The ideal time to visit Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, is from April to June and September to October. These months provide pleasant weather, fewer crowds, and reasonable prices, perfect for beach activities and golf. The summer months from June to August are popular for warm temperatures and family vacations, though they can be crowded. Winter months are cooler and less crowded, making them suitable for a quieter getaway.

ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY

- **Jet skiing:** If the conditions of the ocean are favourable Jet skiing in Myrtle Beach offers an exhilarating way to explore the scenic coastline and experience the thrill of speeding over the waves in beautiful South Carolina, USA.
- **Parasailing:** Start an exciting parasailing journey in Myrtle Beach! Hop on a banana boat ride across the waves to the parasail boat. Then, soar above the ocean, marvelling at stunning views that will leave you awestruck.
- **Fishing Charters:** For a family-friendly adventure that's sure to bring everyone closer, consider spending quality time together inshore or deep sea fishing in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. It's a fun way to bond with loved ones.
- **Surfing:** Myrtle Beach offers a variety of surfing experiences suitable for beginners and intermediate surfers. The waves here are generally mild but can provide enough challenge for some fun on a surfboard. Surf schools and rental shops are readily available along the beach.
- **Kayaking and Canoeing:** The calmer waters of the Intracoastal Waterway are perfect for kayaking and canoeing. Paddlers can enjoy a more serene environment, exploring the local marine life and the beautiful natural scenery.
- **Paddleboarding:** Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is increasingly popular at Myrtle Beach. It's a great workout



Kiteboarding at Myrtle Beach

and a fun way to navigate the waters while enjoying the sun and sea.

- **Banana Boat Rides:** For fun-filled group activities, banana boat rides are a popular choice among families and groups of friends. These rides are fun and suitable for all ages.
- **Kiteboarding and Windsurfing:** For the more adventurous, the windy conditions at certain times of the year make Myrtle Beach a good spot for kiteboarding and windsurfing.
- **Scuba Diving and Snorkeling:** The waters around Myrtle Beach are home to several artificial reefs, providing exciting opportunities for scuba diving and snorkelling.
- **Places to Hang Around:** Broadway at the Beach for shopping, Myrtle Beach Boardwalk for scenic strolls.
- **Food and Beverage:** Feast on seafood buffets at Captain George's Seafood Restaurant; sip craft beers at The Bowery.

Myrtle Beach offers not just a variety of watersports but also all the necessary facilities, including rental equipment and lessons, making it easy for everyone to enjoy the water during their beach vacation.

From Bondi Beach to La Concha, these summer beach destinations have it all: relaxation, adventure, and enough delicious food to make your swimsuit slightly tighter! Whether you want to conquer the waves, dance the night away, or perfect your tan, these destinations are calling your name.



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SPLASH INTO FUN

Discover India's best water parks, perfect for cooling off and making unforgettable memories on your next vacation

TT BUREAU



Water Kingdom, Mumbai

Are you ready to get into a world of endless fun and splash-tastic adventures? India's best water parks are waiting to turn your next vacation into an unforgettable aquatic extravaganza! From thrilling water slides that twist and turn to massive wave pools that bring the ocean right to you, each park offers a unique blend of excitement and relaxation for all ages.

Imagine slipping down a towering slide, water spraying in your face, your heart racing with every twist and turn. Or perhaps you'd prefer to float lazily along a winding river, soaking up the sun as the world drifts slowly by. Whether you're a thrill-seeker looking for your next adrenaline rush or a family in search of a safe and enjoyable day out, India's water parks have something special for you.

These parks aren't just about the rides; they are fully equipped resorts with world-class amenities, offering

everything from luxurious lounging areas to mouth-watering dining options. Safety and hygiene are top priorities, ensuring a carefree escape for everyone. So pack your swimsuits and sunscreen, because we're about to introduce you to the best water parks across India, where unforgettable memories are just a splash away! Join us as we explore these magical havens of fun, one exciting ride at a time.

WATER KINGDOM, MUMBAI

In 1998, Essel World opened the Water Kingdom in Borivali, making its mark in amusement park history. This water park is now the biggest themed water park in Asia. Its unique attractions and rides are located in a fantastic spot, making you feel like you're in international waters.

Water Kingdom follows all safety and hygiene standards and has all the amenities needed for a safe and enjoyable experience. It's a great place for fun for all ages.

ATTRACTIONS

Water Kingdom also boasts India's largest aqua play pool, The Lagoon. Covering a huge area, The Lagoon draws people from all walks of life, including corporate groups and families. The park offers a variety of rides with different levels and types of excitement, ensuring there's something for everyone looking for an adrenaline rush.

ADLABS AQUAMAGICA, PUNE

Adlabs Imagica is the perfect place to visit during your summer vacation to escape the heat. Located in Khopoli village, halfway between Mumbai and Pune, this park was developed by media mogul Manmohan Shetty's Adlabs Entertainment.

Aquamagica serves as an addition to the Adlabs Imagica theme park that opened in 2013. Covering 138 acres, it's now one of the largest entertainment destinations in India, offering an international quality experience right here at home, as noted by a park spokesperson.

ATTRACTIONS

While Adlabs Imagica features many local myths and includes Bollywood elements, the themed waterpark Aquamagica draws inspiration from Mykonos, Greece. To maintain an international standard, the Adlabs team chose not to use local Indian suppliers for its waterpark. Instead, they sourced 14 major slides and attractions from international companies Polin and WhiteWater.

WONDER LA, BANGALORE

WonderLa is one of the biggest amusement and best water parks in India, located just outside Bengaluru in the Ramanagara district. Spread over 82 acres, WonderLa Bangalore offers more than 60 exciting rides suitable for all ages. It also features a unique resort within the park, making it the first amusement park in India to have an integrated resort.

Situated about 30 kilometres south of Bengaluru, near Bidadi off Mysuru Road, it is conveniently accessible. Bidadi



Adlabs Aquamagica, Pune



Wonder La, Bangalore



World of Wonder (WoW), Noida

is the nearest railway station, and there are good bus connections from Bengaluru to the park.

ATTRACTIONS

WonderLa boasts more than 60 diverse rides, ranging from high-speed thrillers to relaxed, family-friendly options. Unique attractions include a resort within the park premises, enhancing the visitor experience with convenient accommodation. Ideal for all age groups.

WORLD OF WONDER (WOW), NOIDA

Worlds of Wonder, often called WOW, is a water and amusement park located in Sector-38A, Noida, near Delhi. Owned by Entertainment City Limited—a partnership between International Amusement Limited and Unitech Holdings Ltd.—the park is a popular destination in the heart of Noida, attracting visitors of all ages.

Since its opening in mid-2007, it features over 20 rides, a water park, and a go-karting area. It's a great spot for recreation and regularly hosts various events, making any visit there particularly exciting.

ATTRACTIONS

Worlds of Wonder in Noida is a vibrant amusement and water park featuring a range of attractions. It includes exciting rides like the Turbo Tunnel and Rapid Racer, thrilling adventures in the amusement park, and a refreshing water park ideal for cooling off. The park also boasts a popular go-karting track for racing enthusiasts. With events frequently held on-site, Worlds of Wonder offers endless entertainment and fun for visitors of all ages.

GRS FANTASY PARK, MYSORE

GRS Fantasy Park, located 7 km outside Mysuru city, is a favourite destination for those seeking amusement and



GRS Fantasy Park, Mysore

adventure. Easily accessible from Bengaluru by air, road, or rail, the park offers a variety of thrill rides, family-friendly rides, games, and entertainment.

Visitors can enjoy over 50 water and dry rides at GRS Fantasy Park, experience real snow at -6°C in the GRS Snow Park, and explore unique photo opportunities at the GRS Updown Museum, India's first upside-down photography attraction. Since its inception in 1999, GRS Fantasy Park has delighted over 10 million visitors.

ATTRACTIONS

GRS has recently added several new and innovative attractions, including the rocket slide, blizzard slide, and GRS Augmented Reality experiences.

OCEAN PARK, HYDERABAD

Located 15km from Hyderabad City, Ocean Park is home to a wide array of water games and rides suitable for all age groups. Highlights include the wave pool, aqua ride, splash, and Tornado, among other popular water attractions. For

kids, there are monkey rides, Mini Columbus, tube slides, and a toddler's pool. The park also offers dry rides such as the super loop, bumper cars, bumper boats, and a ropeway. If you get hungry, choose from a variety of cuisines available within the park. Ocean Park Hyderabad is a great destination for family fun, with something for everyone to enjoy.

ATTRACTIONS

Ocean Park offers a variety of attractions, including water rides, a kiddies pool, a wave pool, water slides, and dry rides. Key attractions include the Kiddies Pool, the 60-foot High Ride, the Slam Bomb, and Bumper Cars. For those looking for more adventure, Jet Skiing is also available.

FUN 'N' FOOD VILLAGE, DELHI

Fun N Food Village is one of Delhi's oldest and most cherished amusement and one of the best water parks. Located on the Old Delhi Gurgaon Road, just three kilometres from the International airport, it remains a popular destination for both locals and tourists. If you're looking to escape the city's chaos for a day, this is your spot.

Fun N Food Village boasts India's largest collection of water slides and attractions, catering to everyone from toddlers just learning to swim to thrill-seekers looking for an adrenaline rush. Don't miss the thrills, chills, and spills at Delhi's best water park, where we promise a new adventure around every twist and turn.

ATTRACTIONS

The Village features over 22 water slides. Whether you're a fan of water rides or simply enjoy splashing around, this place has a lot to offer, especially in the summer. The water rides are designed to cater to different age groups, ensuring safety and fun for children.

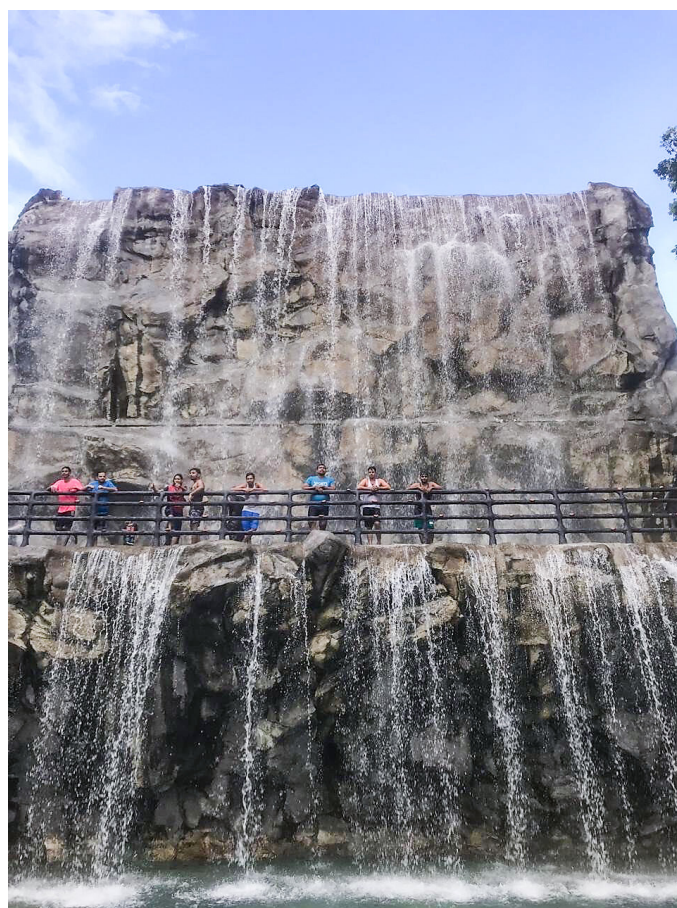
DREAMWORLD WATER PARK, THRISSUR

Dreamworld Water Park in Thrissur offers a unique amusement park experience set against the backdrop of Kerala's largest waterfalls, Athirappilly and Vazhachal. This modern facility features over 42 rides, with a majority being water-based, including an 8ft deep Wave Pool and a thrilling Raft Ride over 30 ft high, making it one of the top amusement parks in the country.

The park is known for its family-friendly atmosphere in a scenic location renowned for its waterfalls. Well-kept paths, charming signs, and numerous food stalls enhance the visitor experience. Seasonal events add to the park's appeal.

ATTRACTIONS

Popular features include the Rain Dance event, where visitors can dance all day under a spray of fresh water. The park also has a Mermaid Pool designed for women and children. Additional amenities include a multi-game complex for kids, video games, prayer halls, spacious changing rooms with lockers, and a clothing shop. The park boasts excellent dining options, a clinic staffed with qualified personnel, conference



Aquatica Water Park, Kolkata

and meeting halls with modern audio systems and buffet options, ice cream parlours, and fast food centres.

AQUATICA WATER PARK, KOLKATA

Aquatica, located in Kolkata, is a water theme park and resort featuring a wide range of exciting rides, slides, and entertainment options. Spanning over 75,000 square feet, it offers a delightful escape from the summer heat. Visitors can enjoy everything from relaxing in the pool to experiencing exhilarating water slides.

If you're feeling peckish, the on-site restaurant offers a variety of local and international dishes. Aquatica is also a popular spot for hosting events such as birthdays, weddings, engagements, anniversaries, team outings, and award ceremonies.

ATTRACTIONS

For thrill-seekers, Aquatica has several adventure water rides including the Jungle Safari, Black Hole, Raft Slide, and Cyclone. Other attractions include the Wave Pool, Lazy River, Family Pool, and Niagara Falls, ensuring there's something behind its reputation as one of India's best water parks with fun for everyone to enjoy.

So, why wait? Explore the exciting world of India's best water parks, where each splash and each ride weave unforgettable memories with every visit. Pack your excitement and let these aquatic paradises cool and thrill you on your next vacation.

DARK SKY DESTINATIONS

Explore the beauty of the cosmos and experience the night sky like never before at these beautiful Dark Sky Destinations

TT BUREAU



Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada

In our fast-paced, modern world, the natural beauty of the night sky is often obscured by the pervasive glow of artificial lights. Yet, there are special places where the heavens still reveal their full, awe-inspiring splendour. These are known as dark sky destinations—sanctuaries where light pollution is minimal or entirely absent, offering crystal-clear views of the cosmos.

Dark sky destinations are increasingly popular among travellers seeking to reconnect with the natural world and experience the universe's grandeur. Far from the glare of city lights, these locations provide an unobstructed view of stars, planets, and celestial phenomena. They are perfect for stargazing, astrophotography, and simply soaking in the serene beauty of the night sky.

Visiting a dark sky destination is more than just an opportunity to see stars. It's a chance to immerse yourself in nature, learn about astronomy, and gain a deeper appreciation for the

vastness of the universe. Whether you're an avid astronomer or a curious traveller, dark sky destinations offer a unique and profoundly moving experience, reminding us of our place in the cosmos and the timeless beauty of the night sky.

Gazing up at a star-studded sky has always held a magical allure, drawing us to ponder the vastness of the universe. In an age where artificial light dims our view of the cosmos, dark sky destinations offer a sanctuary for stargazers seeking a pristine celestial experience. These special locations, far from urban light pollution, provide an unparalleled opportunity to connect with the night sky's beauty and mystery.

JASPER NATIONAL PARK, ALBERTA, CANADA

Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada, is a mesmerizing dark sky destination perfect for stargazing enthusiasts. As the second-largest dark sky preserve in the world, it offers an unparalleled view of the night sky, free from the interference of light pollution.



**CARL F. BUCHERER MANERO
CENTRAL COUNTER**

Carl F. Bucherer Manero Central Counter is a sporty chronograph in manly shades of green and black with just the right hint of glamour. With a hybrid rubber strap, domed sapphire crystal and stainless steel casing, this is a limited-edition timepiece.

Imagine standing under a blanket of countless stars, with the Milky Way stretching across the horizon in vivid detail. The park's vast wilderness, clear skies, and high altitude make it an ideal spot for observing constellations, meteor showers, and even the elusive Northern Lights.

Every October, Jasper hosts the annual Dark Sky Festival, where visitors can participate in astronomy workshops, guided stargazing sessions, and listen to talks by renowned astronomers. Whether you're an avid astronomer or simply looking to reconnect with nature, Jasper National Park offers a magical experience that will leave you in awe of the universe's beauty.

ACTIVITIES

Travellers at Jasper National Park can enjoy a variety of activities that highlight its stunning natural beauty and dark skies. Popular options include guided stargazing tours, where expert astronomers help you navigate the night sky, and photography workshops to capture the breathtaking celestial views.

Visiting a dark sky destination is more than just an opportunity to see stars. It's a chance to immerse yourself in nature, learn about astronomy, and gain a deeper appreciation for the vastness of the universe. Whether you're an avid astronomer or a curious traveller, dark sky destinations offer a unique and profoundly moving experience, reminding us of our place in the cosmos and the timeless beauty of the night sky.

PENCH TIGER RESERVE, INDIA

Recently recognized as India's first dark sky destination and the fifth in Asia, Pench at Madhya Pradesh in India has earned this title for its efforts in protecting the night sky and preventing light pollution, making it an ideal spot for astronomy enthusiasts.

Pench is emerging as a premier dark sky destination, offering a celestial haven for stargazing enthusiasts. Located within the Pench National Park, this region boasts minimal light pollution, making it an ideal spot for observing the night sky's splendour.

The clear skies and pristine environment provide a perfect backdrop for astronomy lovers to marvel at constellations, planets, and the Milky Way in their full glory. The tranquillity and natural beauty of Pench enhance the stargazing experience, making it a memorable retreat for those seeking to connect with the cosmos.

The park's efforts to preserve its natural darkness have earned it recognition as a dark sky reserve, where the nocturnal environment is protected and cherished.

ACTIVITIES

Apart from stargazing, travellers at Pench can enjoy wildlife safaris to spot tigers and leopards, guided nature walks and trekking, bird-watching tours, cultural experiences in nearby tribal villages, and camping under the stars with bonfires and storytelling, offering a perfect blend of adventure and relaxation.



Pench Tiger Reserve, India



Red Sea International, Saudi Arabia

RED SEA INTERNATIONAL, SAUDI ARABIA

Around the world, efforts to protect dark skies are gaining momentum, highlighting the impact of light pollution on local environments. Saudi Arabia's desert landscape remains one of the few places with pristine dark skies, and few organizations are as committed to preserving these natural beauties as Red Sea Global. With a strong focus on supporting local communities and ecosystems, The Red Sea aims to become the only certified Dark Sky Reserve in the Middle East.

The Red Sea is on track to earn global Dark Sky Reserve status from DarkSky International, emphasizing the deep connection between the stars and Arabian culture. This connection dates back to nomadic peoples who relied on the night sky for navigation. Red Sea Global collaborates with this leading organization to create new lighting standards for the hospitality industry.

Adopting a 'nature first' approach, The Red Sea's luxury resorts, including the newly opened Six Senses Southern Dunes, implement innovative lighting strategies. These provide sustainable lighting for guests without emitting harmful levels of light. The resorts use programmable digital lighting control systems with astronomical timers to adjust artificial lighting according to seasonal changes. This strategic use of lighting optics minimizes light pollution, protecting the surrounding wildlife.

Guests at The Red Sea can enjoy activities like astrophotography sessions, campfire storytelling, and stargazing excursions, with the chance to see the Milky Way—a sight now obscured by light pollution for one-third of the global population. Red Sea Global also plans to work with nearby villages and cities to reduce sky glow and enhance sustainable lighting practices.

Reducing light pollution not only preserves the dark sky but also protects both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife. Many endemic creatures rely on natural light cycles for their behaviour and



Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA

survival, and light pollution can be incredibly harmful to these animals. By maintaining natural lighting conditions, these initiatives support the health and balance of local ecosystems.

ACTIVITIES

At Red Sea, travellers can enjoy guided stargazing tours, capturing the cosmos in astrophotography workshops, and desert camping under the stars. These activities offer a unique opportunity to explore the night sky, learn from experts, and experience the serene beauty of the desert landscape at night.

MAUNA KEA, HAWAII, USA

Mauna Kea, located on the Big Island of Hawaii, is one of the world's most renowned dark sky destinations. Standing at an impressive 13,796 feet above sea level, its summit is far above

much of the Earth's atmosphere, providing unparalleled clarity for stargazing. The location's unique geographical features, including its high altitude, dry environment, and stable airflow, contribute to some of the clearest and most stable viewing conditions on the planet.

Free from the interference of light pollution, the night skies above Mauna Kea reveal a breathtaking array of stars, planets, and celestial phenomena that are often obscured in other parts of the world.

This pristine visibility has made Mauna Kea home to some of the most advanced telescopes and observatories, drawing astronomers and researchers from around the globe. Beyond its scientific significance, Mauna Kea is also a place of cultural and spiritual importance to the native Hawaiian people, adding a rich layer of history and tradition to the stargazing experience. Visitors to Mauna Kea can immerse themselves in the awe-inspiring beauty of the cosmos, gaining a deeper appreciation for both the natural wonders of the universe and the cultural heritage that surrounds this majestic mountain.

ACTIVITIES

Travellers to Mauna Kea can engage in a variety of activities that cater to both adventures. For those interested in hiking, the Mauna Kea Summit Trail offers a challenging ascent with breathtaking views of the island and beyond. The Onizuka Center for International Astronomy Visitor Information Station, located at 9,200 feet, provides educational programs, displays, and guided stargazing sessions. Additionally, cultural tours offer insights into the significance of Mauna Kea in Hawaiian mythology and traditions.

AORAKI MACKENZIE DARK SKY RESERVE, NEW ZEALAND

Aoraki Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve, located in the heart of New Zealand's South Island, is a premier destination for

stargazing and astronomy enthusiasts. Covering 4,300 square kilometres, it is one of the largest dark sky reserves in the world and was the first in the Southern Hemisphere to receive this designation. The reserve encompasses the Mackenzie Basin, which is renowned for its clear skies, low humidity, and minimal light pollution, creating ideal conditions for observing the night sky.

Visitors to Aoraki Mackenzie are treated to spectacular views of the Milky Way, the Southern Cross, and the Magellanic Clouds, all of which are often obscured by light pollution in other regions. The reserve's commitment to preserving its dark skies is evident through local lighting regulations and community efforts to minimize artificial light.

At the heart of the reserve lies the Mount John Observatory, which hosts some of New Zealand's most powerful telescopes and is a hub for astronomical research and public tours. The reserve is also a place of natural beauty, with stunning landscapes including lakes, mountains, and open grasslands. Whether you are a seasoned astronomer or a casual stargazer, Aoraki Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve offers a unique and awe-inspiring opportunity to connect with the wonders of the universe in one of the most pristine environments on Earth.

ACTIVITIES

Popular activities include stargazing tours, where visitors use high-powered telescopes to explore the night sky and learn about constellations from expert guides. Hiking the Mauna Kea Summit Trail offers a challenging ascent with stunning views of the island. The Onizuka Center for International Astronomy Visitor Information Station provides educational programs, displays, and guided stargazing sessions. Cultural tours offer insights into the mountain's significance in Hawaiian mythology, blending natural beauty with rich cultural heritage.



Aoraki Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve, New Zealand

OLFACTORY SENSATION

One of the most expensive perfumes in history, Bulgari's limited edition Opera Prima has notes of orange blossom, florals, lemon and musk. But it is the bottle that is a collector's item. Showcasing fine Italian craftsmanship, it is finished in gold leaf and studded with diamonds.



AN ICON IN A BOTTLE

When it was first introduced in the year 1921, it sent shockwaves through the world of perfumery. Initially reserved for the 100 most valuable customers of Chanel, the perfume went on to become one of the most iconic smells of the 20th century. Prepared by French perfumer Ernest Beaux, this perfume has notes of rose, jasmine and synthetic aldehydes. Perfect for evening wear, this is one iconic smell that is hard to be forgotten.

THE MAGIC OF DHOKRA ART

Explore the enchanting world of Dhokra Art, where ancient techniques meet unique designs and eco-friendly materials

TT BUREAU



Odisha Dhokra Art

The Bronze Age in India, beginning around 3300 BC with the rise of the Indus Valley Civilization, introduced remarkable advancements in metallurgy that remain unparalleled today. The process of casting non-ferrous metals using the lost-wax casting method is known as dhokra (sometimes spelt Dokra). Casting metal objects using this method has been done in India for almost 4,000 years, and it is being done today.

The Dancing Lady of Mohenjo-Daro is recognised as one of the oldest known examples of an artefact made of lost wax. Because of their austere appearance, endearing folk

themes, and straightforward simplicity, the wares produced by Dhokra craftsmen are very popular not just in India but also in international markets.

Dhokra objects such as horses, elephants, peacocks, owls, religious pictures, measuring bowls, and lamp caskets, amongst other things, are very highly valued. Using the lost wax method, copper-based alloys have been cast in several places, including China, Egypt, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Central America.

Named after the nomadic Dhokra Damar tribe from West Bengal and Odisha, Dhokra art has deep roots in these regions. Where is Dhokra art from is a popular question. Odisha, in

particular, has been a central hub for this traditional craft. While traces of Dhokra art can be found across the Indian subcontinent, Odisha's interior and rural areas became the primary centres where artisans honed their skills, creating unique and timeless pieces.

THE UNIQUE CHARM OF ODISHA'S DHOKRA

Dhokra art is inherently unique, with no two pieces ever exactly alike. Odisha's Dhokra stands out for its distinctive darker hue, attributed to the specific soil and wax used in the region. Known as 'Black Metal Dhokra,' these pieces from Kandhamal and Dhenkanal may also exhibit a bluish tint. The smooth curves and clean lines of Odisha's Dhokra further distinguish it from those produced elsewhere in India.

Initially, Dhokra handcrafted items were produced in several districts of Odisha, including Puri, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal, and others. Over time, Dhenkanal emerged as the



Dhokra – The Tribal Art of Chhattisgarh

primary epicentre for Dhokra art, preserving the craft even as its popularity waned in other regions.

In Dhenkanal, the villages of Sadeibareni and Navjeevanpur stand out for their Dhokra artistry. The Ghantara tribes in these villages are dedicated to various stages of the Dhokra crafting process, from mould-making to wax softening and thread wrapping.

Visiting the Dhokra artisans in Odisha offers a rare glimpse into the ancient world of the Bronze Age. The traditional methods, largely unchanged over millennia, involve meticulous handwork, making each piece labour-intensive and time-consuming. Despite the pressures of modernization, the Ghantara artisans remain steadfast in preserving the authenticity and beauty of their craft, even as they adapt to contemporary tastes.



Chhattishgarh Dhokra Art

Each piece reflects the tribal lifestyle, with designs inspired by traditional attire and natural motifs such as the sun, moon, branches, leaves, and flowers. The laborious process, which can take months, imbues each creation with a unique beauty and a touch of the artisans' daily hardships.

Exploring the secluded villages of Odisha, such as Sadeibareni, about 65 km from Bhubaneswar, and the more remote Navjeevanpur, allows one to witness firsthand the enduring legacy of Dhokra art. Here, the past and present blend seamlessly, creating a timeless testament to the region's rich cultural heritage.

HISTORY OF DHOKRA ART

The nomadic Indian tribe known as the Dhokar Damar, which is native to the eastern region of the nation, is where the art form that bears their name got its strange and appealing moniker. The Bankura-Dariapur tract in West Bengal, as well



Handcrafted Bastar Dhokra Art



Dhokra Art & Craft of Bastar and Ekatal

as some regions in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, were the original homes of this tribe.

Historians think that the groups of tribal people who live in this area and are responsible for the Dhokra art that is so well-known in West Bengal are the primary keepers of this heritage. It is interesting to note that this highly valued form of Indian art is not confined to a single area of the nation.

It is thought that the craftsmen could have gone from one section to another and brought with them the experience and abilities of Dhokra, passing it on from one family to the next as they went. The outcome of this is that the tribal community that was mainly involved in making Dhokra art and lived in the region encompassing Birbhum, Purulia, Burdwan, and Midnapore has now spread to the neighbouring regions as well, having evolved this heritage to include regionalized and interpretations of the art they created.

Today, members of this tribe may be found living in all of the states that make up India's eastern belt, from Jharkhand to Chattisgarh to Telangana to West Bengal and Odisha. There is reason to believe that some of India's oldest tribes, such as the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and the Bhils of Rajasthan, Western Maharashtra, Western Madhya Pradesh, and southeastern Gujarat, have been practising this folk art for many years.

These regions include Rajasthan, western Maharashtra, western Madhya Pradesh, and southeastern Gujarat. As a consequence of this, the art form is also often known as the Dhokra art of Jharkhand and the Dhokra art of Chattisgarh. In addition, the area of Bastar in Chattisgarh is well-known for the significant contribution it has made to this art form.

The Bastar Dhokra Art has earned a reputation and a place of prominence not only in the domestic market but also in the global market. The local weekly marketplaces in the area were the only places in the past where one could purchase the ethnic designs that are used in this art.



Process of Casting Dhokra



Process of Casting Dhokra

PROCESS OF CASTING DOKRA

Casting in solid wax and casting in hollow wax are the two primary procedures involved in lost wax casting. The former is more widespread in the southern part of India, whilst the latter is more prevalent in the central and eastern parts of the country. Hollow casting is by far the more conventional approach, and it utilises the clay core.

Solid casting, on the other hand, employs a large piece of wax to produce the mould, as opposed to hollow casting, which uses clay. The first thing that has to be done to create a hollow cast using the lost wax method is to construct a clay core that approximately corresponds to the form of the finished cast.

After that, a coating of wax made of pure beeswax, resin from the plant *Damara Orientalis*, and nut oil is applied on top of the clay core. After that, the wax is moulded and carved into its final form, complete with all of its intricately designed and decorated elements.

It is then coated with compacted clay, which takes the negative shape of the wax on the inside and transforms it into a mould for the metal that will be placed within it. This process is called "lost wax casting." When the clay is heated, drain tubes are left for the wax, which disappears as it melts away. After that, the wax is removed and replaced with molten metal, which often makes use of brass scrap as the primary raw material.

The molten metal that is put in solidifies somewhere between the centre and the inner surface of the mould as

it travels through the mould. The metal is poured into the mould, and it solidifies into the same form as the wax. After that, the outermost layer of clay is chipped away, and the symbol made of metal is polished and completed to the required degree.

SYMBOLISM OF DHOKRA ART

You just need to take one glance at the relics to start feeling sentimental about the prehistoric age, back when hunting was the primary occupation of people. Miniatures of men, women, and children, as well as Hindu deities and goddesses, are typical subjects in Dhokra art. Other popular subjects include animals.

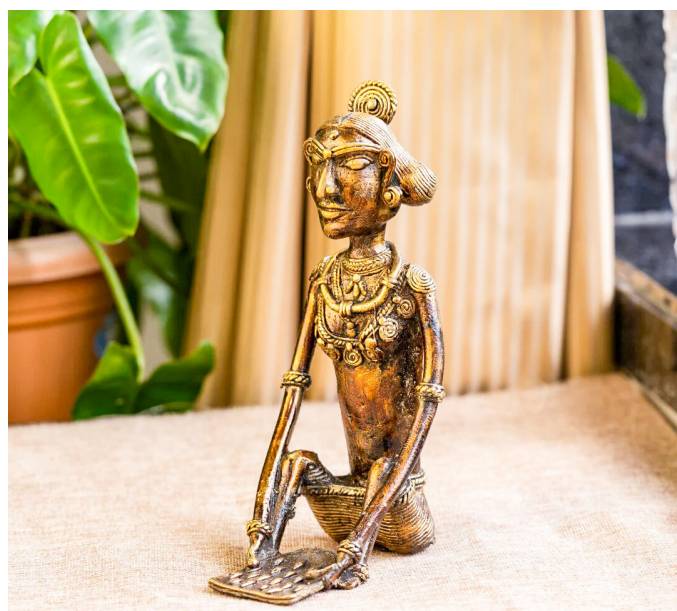
The diversity of creatures, from equines to elephants, tortoises to owls, and everything in between, is another recurring motif. In Hindu mythology, each of these animals is associated with a certain concept or has some kind of importance. For instance, the owl is associated with wealth and death, but the elephant is associated with sage advice. Both the horse and the tortoise are symbolic of motion, yet the tortoise is more often associated with the feminine gender.

All of these animals are profoundly ingrained in the Hindu faith, and each one has played an important symbolic role in the development of the religion throughout time. Craftspeople have, throughout time, experimented with teaching different types of art based on their day-to-day lives to produce dhokra wall art. The spectrum of Dhokra art form now includes things like sacred lamps, urns, bowls, and other utensils and implements.

WHERE TO BUY

The Bastar area of Chhattisgarh is where the Dhokra art style originated. This kind of art is also practised by indigenous people in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. It may be purchased at Indian Crafts House, in addition to shopping areas in the city such as Greater Kailash and Malviya Nagar in Delhi.

Dhokra Art is a remarkable blend of ancient techniques, unique designs, and eco-friendly materials. Its rich history and cultural significance make it highly valued both in India and globally. The intricate process and symbolic motifs of Dhokra pieces reflect the timeless beauty and creativity of this traditional Indian craft, celebrating the artisans' skill and heritage.



Tribal Women - Dhokra Brass Art



Artisan Crafting Dhokra

THE FIVE PILLARS OF FAITH

The profound spiritual heritage of Sikhism is embodied in its five sacred Takhts, each a beacon of faith and leadership

TT BUREAU

Takht" is a Persian word meaning "seat" or "throne," and in Sikhism, it represents the spiritual and temporal centers of authority. There are five Takhts, which are Gurudwaras of special significance to the Sikh community. Three of these are located in Punjab, while the other two are outside the state.

These five Gurudwaras, collectively known as the Panj Takht, or "five thrones," are important pilgrimage sites. Visiting all five Takhts at least once in a lifetime is considered crucial for followers of Sikhism. The Takhts serve as the highest seats of temporal power and religious authority in Sikhism. The leaders at these Takhts are responsible for making key decisions on both spiritual and secular matters that significantly impact the Sikh community.

Following are the 5 Takhts which stand as the supreme seats of authority, each asserting its preeminence in matters of judgment and religious governance.

AKAL TAKHT SAHIB

The Akal Takht is the central religious authority in Sikhism, located in Amritsar, Punjab, in northwestern India. It's part of a larger complex that includes the Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple, the most important Sikh place of worship. The Akal Takht is situated just past a large gateway that leads to a causeway across a pool to the Golden Temple.

The term "Akal" means "The Timeless One," referring to God, and "Takht" means "throne" in Persian. Established on June 15, 1606, by Guru Hargobind, the Akal Takht serves as a place for both spiritual and temporal decision-making within the Sikh community. It was originally built as a symbol of political resistance against the Mughal Emperors in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Guru Hargobind, along with Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha, constructed the original structure themselves, without employing any other builders. Defying the royal



Akal Takht Sahib

decree that no one but the Emperor could sit on a platform higher than three feet, Guru Hargobind raised this platform to twelve feet. From this raised throne, he would dispense justice and address the disputes of Sikhs.

While the Akal Takht is slightly lower than the Golden Temple, symbolizing that spiritual pursuits should take precedence, Guru Hargobind's daily routine balanced both spiritual and temporal activities. His day began with worship at the Golden Temple, followed by hunting in the late morning. In the afternoon, he held court at the Akal Takht, and he returned to the temple in the evening for prayers and hymns. Nights were spent at the Akal Takht, listening to martial songs that celebrated heroic deeds.

TAKHT SRI KESHGARH SAHIB

Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib, located in Anandpur Sahib, is one of the most sacred sites for Sikhs. It marks the birthplace of the Khalsa, founded by Sri Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The foundation of Anandpur Sahib was laid on March 30, 1689, and it was here during the Vaisakhi festival of 1699, attended by thousands, that the Khalsa was established. At this site, Guru Gobind Singh initiated the 'Panj Pyaras' (the five beloved ones), administering Amrit to them.

On Vaisakhi 1699, Guru Gobind Singh abolished the deeply entrenched caste system by formalizing the concept of the Khalsa, which eradicated racial prejudices tied to birthright, caste, and privilege. He also initiated the five Panj and had them induct him into the new order, signaling an end to historical biases. This revolutionary act not only changed regional history but also challenged the prevailing social order, a challenge Sikhs continue to navigate today.

Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib is situated about 40 km from Rupnagar city, the district headquarters, and 78 km from Chandigarh, the state capital.

TAKHT SRI DAMDAMA SAHIB

Damdama Sahib, located in the village of Talwandi, 18 miles south of Bathinda, is famously known as the vibrant venue of the Baisakhi fair. Following intense battles with the Mughals at Anandpur Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib, and Muktsar, Guru Gobind Singh retreated to the Malwa jungle. He rested in Talwandi Sabo, thus naming it Damdama Sahib, which means a place of rest.

Here, the Guru spent nine months and nine days, transforming it into a hub for spreading his teachings, referring to it as Guru-ki-Kanshi. During his stay, he re-dictated the Adi-Granth, calling the place Khalse Da Takhat, and a seal was created bearing the inscription "Akal Sahai Guru Gobind Singh ji ki Jagha-Takhat Damdama Sahib."

Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh's father, had also visited this site. Damdama Sahib serves as the headquarters for the Nihangs and houses ten Gurudwaras and three sacred tanks: Nanksar Sarovar, Akalsar Sarovar, and Gurusar



Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib

Sarovar. The first tank is linked to Guru Nanak, who visited the village in 1510 during his travels to Rajputana. Akalsar Sarovar is associated with Guru Gobind Singh, and its water is believed to protect against diseases. Gurusar Sarovar was commissioned by Guru Teg Bahadur.

The Takht itself is a two-meter high square platform lined with white marble, decorated with numerous columns, located in the southern part of the hall. This platform, where the Guru Granth Sahib is placed, is considered the most sacred area. After evening prayers, the Holy Granth is ceremonially taken to the old Manji Sahib amid hymn-singing Sikhs.

The interior of this sacred space is adorned with reflecting glass pieces in various colors arranged in geometric and floral patterns. Above, a domed room with a gold-plated pinnacle and an umbrella-shaped finial features a khanda at the top. The hall's corners are marked with octagonal towers, topped with domed pavilions, all lined with glazed tiles in white, light yellow, and light blue.

TAKHT SRI PATNA SAHIB

Takht Sri Patna Sahib is a site of great historical and religious significance in Sikhism. It is one of the Five Takhts—central authorities in Sikhism—and it marks the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth and final human Guru of Sikhism.

Located in Patna, the capital city of Bihar, Takht Sri Patna Sahib is a key pilgrimage destination for Sikhs worldwide. The site dates back to the early 17th century, when Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born here on December 22, 1666, to Guru

Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji, the ninth Sikh Guru, and Mata Gujri. The actual house where Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born is preserved within the Gurudwara complex and is referred to as “Harmandir Sahib” or “Guru ka Bagh”.

The Gurudwara features stunning Sikh architecture, including domes and marble inlays, and is decorated with ornate frescoes. Devotees visit to honor Guru Gobind Singh Ji, seeking spiritual guidance and participating in activities like special prayers, devotional singing (Kirtan), and the communal kitchen (Langar).

Various Sikh religious festivals and events, such as the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji (Gurpurab), are celebrated here with great enthusiasm.

More than just a place of worship, Takht Sri Patna Sahib is a center for learning, community service, and the promotion of Sikh principles like equality, compassion, and selflessness. It is a beacon of Sikh heritage and spirituality, drawing pilgrims and visitors in search of spiritual insight and blessings.

TAKHT SRI NANDED SAHIB

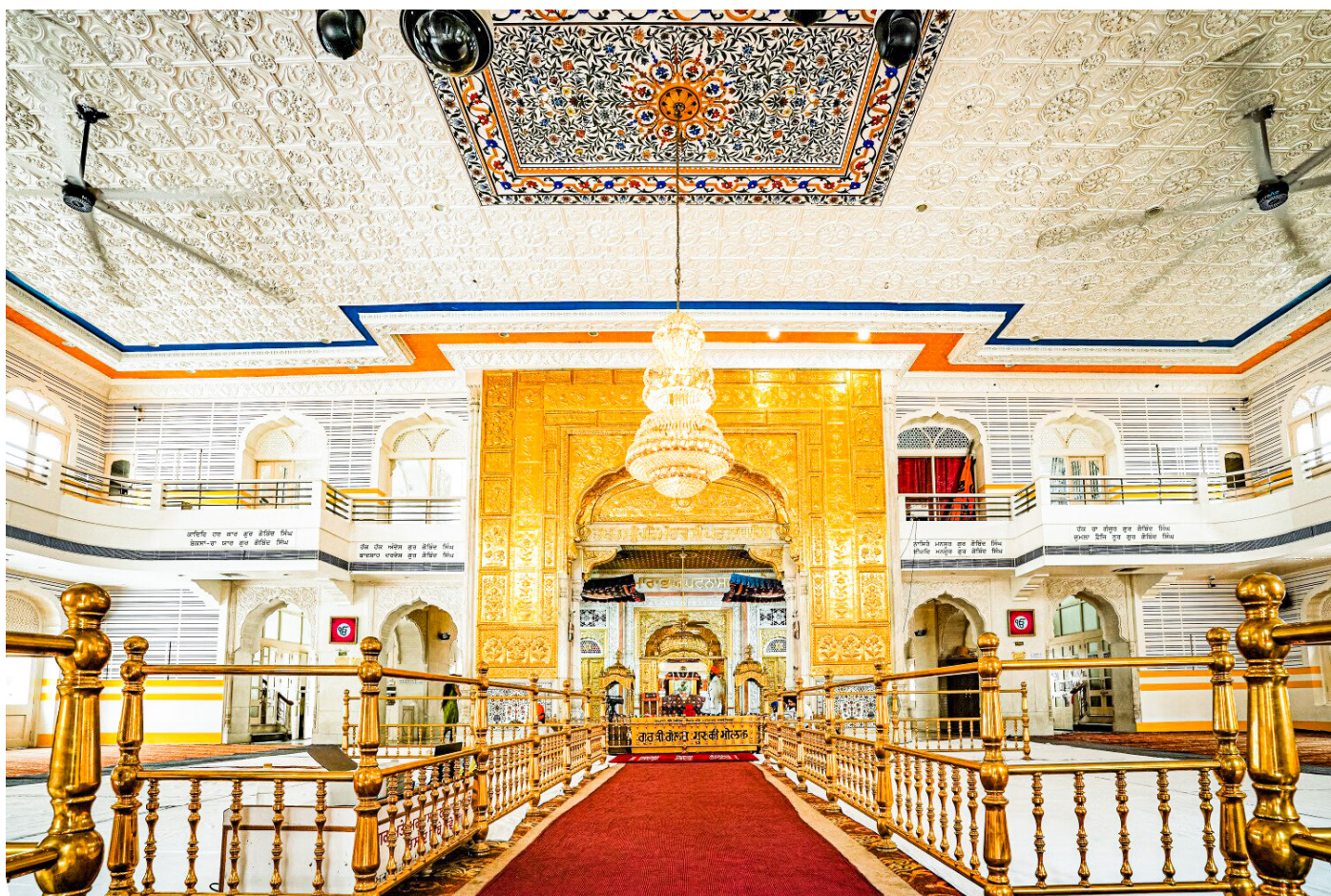
Takht Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, one of the five main Sikh Takhts, is located along the banks of the River Godavari in the holy city of Nanded, Maharashtra. It is a principal site of Sikh worship and the place where Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the last human Sikh Guru, passed away. Here, he declared that there would be no more human Gurus after him and named the Guru Granth Sahib as the eternal Sikh holy book.

The Gurudwara itself is a two-story structure raised on a high platform. It features a small room on the top floor topped with a gold-plated dome and a decorative golden finial shaped like an umbrella.

The inner sanctum, known as Angitha Sahib, is adorned with gold plates carved with floral designs, sacred symbols, and Sikh inscriptions. The interior walls and ceiling are richly decorated with intricate carvings and latticework, enhancing the Gurudwara’s magnificence.



Takht Sri Nanded Sahib



Takht Sri Patna Sahib

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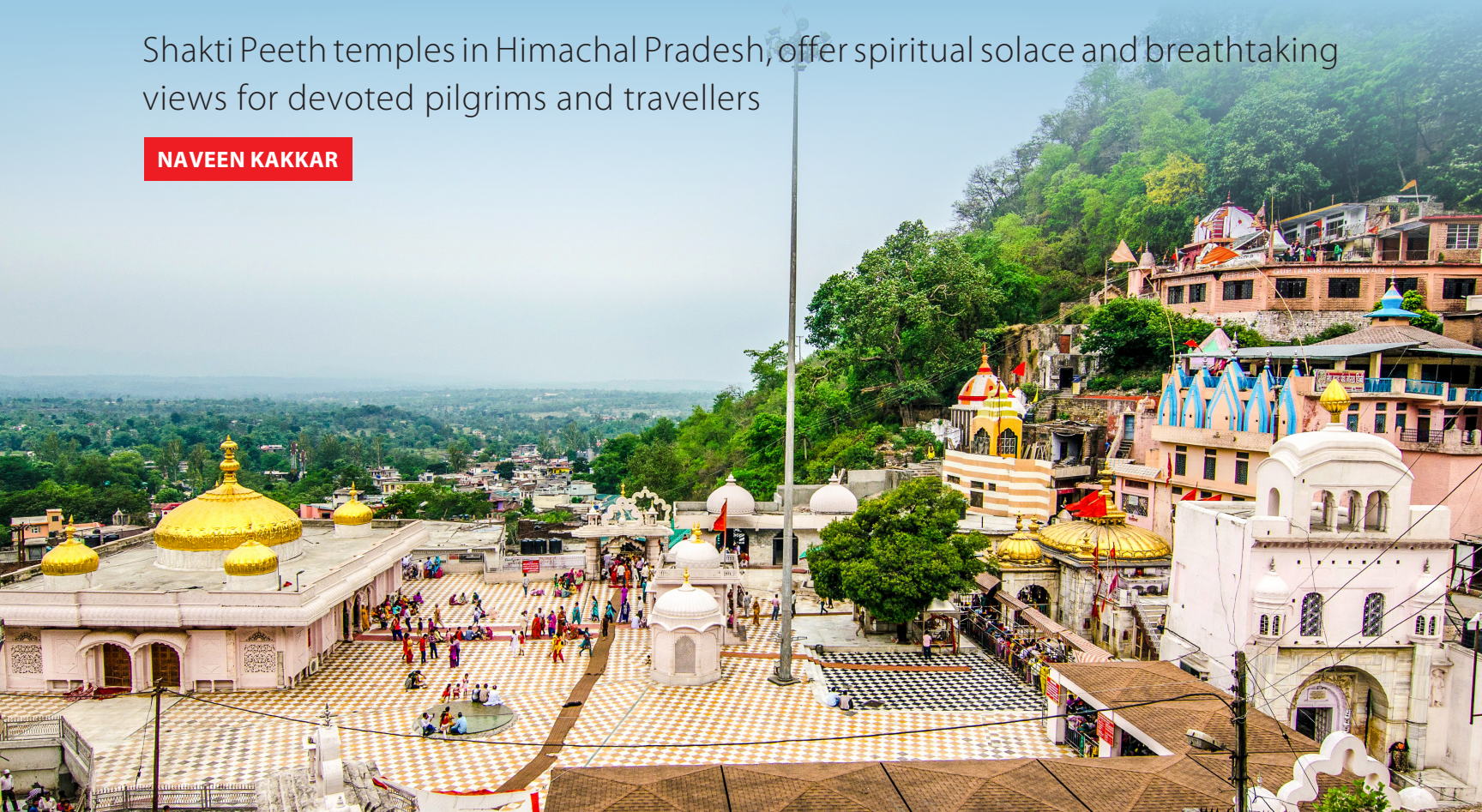
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SACRED SHAKTI PEETH TEMPLES

Shakti Peeth temples in Himachal Pradesh, offer spiritual solace and breathtaking views for devoted pilgrims and travellers

NAVEEN KAKKAR



Jwala Ji Shakti Peeth in Himachal Pradesh

India is a land of diverse cultures and deep religious sentiments. Its temples are renowned worldwide for their grandeur and beauty, attracting not only Hindus but also people of various faiths from around the globe. Among these revered sites are the Shakti Peeths, significant pilgrimage destinations for Hindus.

Shakti Peeths, meaning “seats of power,” are dedicated to Goddess Shakti, the principal deity in Shaktism. There are 51 such Peeths in India, each devoted to Devi Shakti, considered the power of Lord Shiva, the destroyer of evil. According to legend, when Sati immolated herself in protest of her father Daksha’s disrespect towards her husband, Lord Shiva carried her charred body in sorrow. To ease his pain, Lord Vishnu used his Sudarshan Chakra to cut Sati’s body into 51 pieces, which fell across the Indian subcontinent, each location becoming a Shakti Peeth.

Each such temple is associated with a specific body part of Sati and has its own unique legend, rituals, and traditions.

These temples signify her presence and are among the most revered and spiritually charged places in India. They attract countless devotees who seek the blessings of Devi Shakti.

MOST FAMOUS SHAKTI PEETHS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

These ancient temples, deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, are believed to be the divine abodes of Goddess Shakti, the powerful feminine energy. Pilgrims are drawn to these holy sites not just for their religious significance, but also for the tranquil and transformative experiences they offer.

The spiritual ambience, coupled with the breathtaking natural beauty of the Himalayas, creates an irresistible draw for those seeking solace, enlightenment, and a deeper connection with the divine. Whether it’s the legend behind each temple or the mystical energy that envelops them, the temples of Himachal Pradesh stand as beacons of faith, drawing countless devotees and curious travellers alike to their sacred grounds.



Jwala Ji Temple

JWALA JI TEMPLE

Jwala Ji, or Jwala Devi Temple, is one of the 51 Shakti Peeths in India and is highly revered. Located in the Shivalik range of Kangra Valley, known as "Kalidhar," it is believed to be the first temple built by the Pandavas. This Devi temple, dedicated to the "Goddess of Light," is situated in Jwala Mukhi, Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh.

Sati's tongue is believed to have fallen at the site where Jwala Devi Temple now stands, represented by the perpetually burning holy flames. These flames make Jwala Devi Temple unique and unparalleled as a centre of faith. History tells us that Raja Bhumi Chand, a great devotee of Goddess Durga, dreamt of this sacred place. He sent people to find it, and upon locating the site, he built the temple.

The shrine features a gold-gilded dome, various pinnacles, and a silver entrance door. Situated within the Dhauladhar mountain range, the temple worships Goddess Jwalamukhi as an eternal flame emerging from a small fissure in a rock inside the sanctum sanctorum. Nine flames, symbolizing the Navadurgas, are worshipped here.

The origins of these flames remain unknown, with scientists suggesting they are fueled by natural gas from an underground volcano. Mughal Emperor Akbar once tried to extinguish the flames but failed, reinforcing his belief in the goddess. He even presented a golden parasol to the shrine, which transformed into an unknown metal. Thousands of pilgrims visit the shrine throughout the year to fulfil their spiritual desires.

CHINTPURNI TEMPLE

Chintpurni is a highly revered Hindu shrine located in the Una district of Himachal Pradesh, situated atop one of the highest peaks of the Sola Singhi Range. The temple is



Chintpurni Temple



Naina Devi Temple

dedicated to Chintpurni Devi, the goddess who is believed to relieve devotees of their worries and stress. The goddess is worshipped in the form of a headless pindi (round stone).

According to legend, a part of Sati's feet fell at this location during her self-sacrifice, leading to the construction of the temple. Another story tells of the goddess appearing to defeat the demons Sumbha and Nishumbha. After killing them, she beheaded herself to quench the bloodthirst of her companion.

The temple is surrounded by beautiful landscapes, offering tourists picturesque views and opportunities for sightseeing and various activities. Visitors can enjoy both the spiritual atmosphere and the natural beauty of the area.

NAINA DEVI TEMPLE

Shri Naina Devi Ji, a major Shakti Peeth, is located in Bilaspur District, Himachal Pradesh, India. The temple is named after the legend that Goddess Sati's eyes (Nayan) fell at this spot.



Chamunda Devi Temple

It is one of the most sacred temples in the country, attracting devotees from around the world.

Surrounded by the majestic Shivalik range of the Himalayas, the temple is watched over by the highest peak, Mt. Nanda Devi, believed to be the sister of Goddess Naina Devi. An old Peepal tree within the temple premises provides shelter to pilgrims, while a statue of Lord Hanuman blesses and guards the temple entrance.

Inside the temple, two eyes in the centre represent Naina Devi, with Mata Kali to the left and Lord Ganesha to the right. Two lion statues, symbolizing the goddess's vehicle, guard the inner shrine.

BAJRESHWARI DEVI TEMPLE

The left breast of Sati fell at this spot, making it a Shakti Peetha. The original temple was built by the Pandavas during the time of the Mahabharata. According to legend, the Pandavas dreamt of Goddess Durga, who told them she was in Nagarkot village. She warned them to build a temple for her there to ensure their safety. That very night, they constructed a magnificent temple.

The temple has been looted several times by Muslim invaders, with Md Gaznavi looting it at least five times. It once contained tons of gold and many silver bells. In 1905, a powerful earthquake destroyed the temple, but it was rebuilt by the government within a year.

The main entrance gate features a Nagarkhana, or drum house, similar to the Bassein fort entrance, and the temple is

surrounded by a stone wall like a fort. Inside the main area, Goddess Bajreshwari is present in the form of a Pindi. The temple also has a small shrine dedicated to Bhairav. In front of the main temple stands an idol of Dhyanu Bhagat, who offered his head to the Goddess during Akbar's time. The present structure has three unique tombs within it.

CHAMUNDA DEVI TEMPLE

Chamunda Devi Temple, also known as Chamunda Nandikeshwar Dham, is a famous Hindu temple located in Padar on the banks of the Baner River in Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh. This temple is dedicated to Shri Chamunda Devi, a form of Goddess Durga. It is situated 19 km from Palampur town in Dharamshala Tehsil in Himachal Pradesh.

Chamunda Devi Temple is a sacred shrine where the ears of Sati are believed to have fallen. Dating back to the 16th century, the temple holds great historical and spiritual significance. The name Chamunda comes from two demons, Chanda and Munda, who were slain by Goddess Kali in a fierce battle. Thus, the goddess is worshipped here as Chamunda.

Himachal Pradesh's temples are not just places of worship but also epitomes of divine energy and natural beauty. Visiting these temples provides a spiritual retreat and a chance to connect with the rich cultural heritage of India. Whether you're a devout pilgrim or a curious traveller, these special temples of Himachal Pradesh offer an unforgettable experience.

Plan your pilgrimage to these sacred sites and immerse yourself in the divine aura of the Shakti Peeth temples.

A BIT OF SPARKLE

Small, stylish and superbly elegant – this pair of cufflinks by William Penn can uplift any humble white shirt. Made from tough Basildon steel and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, this nifty piece is a must-have in any gentleman's wardrobe.



HAPPY RABBIT TIE BY HERMES

Perhaps the most visible piece of formal garment is also the most neglected one. But not anymore. Hermes is on a mission to save men from stylistic disasters and its new range of quirky ties is the perfect tool in its arsenal. Wear it with pride!

NAGERCOIL TEMPLE JEWELLERY

Nagercoil Temple Jewellery showcases the region's rich cultural legacy and intricate craftsmanship, reflecting centuries of tradition and devotion

TT BUREAU

Temple jewellery is known for its red stones, available in dark reddish maroon or dark green. Initially used for temple decorations, this jewellery was later worn by temple dancers and eventually became part of Indian bridal jewellery.

Temple jewellery is significant for Tamil brides and is also a key component of the costumes for Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancers. South Indian women often wear these ornaments during important festivals, keeping the tradition alive and vibrant.

Artisan families in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, have been mastering the art of crafting temple jewellery for over 100 years, preserving many age-old designs. The jewellery from Tamil Nadu showcases the pinnacle of goldsmith craftsmanship.

Nagercoil is a city in the Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, named after the famous Nagaraja Temple located in its centre. This temple, an important site for Hindus and a tourist attraction features deities adorned with traditional temple jewellery crafted exclusively in Vadasery.

Vadasery, a small village near Nagercoil, specializes in making temple jewellery, which is designed to decorate statues of gods and goddesses. This tradition originated in South India, where local rulers like the Chola, Pandya, and Krishnadeva Raya dynasties donated jewellery to temples. These rulers established workshops with skilled artisans to create jewellery specifically for the deities. Today, 58 units with 224 traditional artisans continue this craft in Vadasery.

Temple jewellery is made from silver covered with gold leaf, and features natural uncut stones. The gold leaf forms a lining for the stones, ensuring the jewellery retains its shine for years. This traditional jewellery was also used by the Rajas of Chettinad and Ramnad.



Woman with Nagercoil Temple Jewellery

RAW MATERIALS USED IN NAGERCOIL TEMPLE JEWELLERY

- **SILVER FOR BASE:** The primary material is high-quality silver, which forms the base of the jewellery. Silver is chosen for its durability and ability to hold intricate designs.
- **GOLD LEAF FOR COATING:** The silver base is coated with a thin layer of gold leaf. This coating gives the jewellery a luxurious appearance while maintaining affordability.
- **NATURAL UNCUT STONES:** The jewellery features natural, uncut stones, such as rubies, emeralds, and other semi-precious gems. These stones are valued for their raw beauty and traditional appeal.
- **WAX FOR MOLDING:** Wax is used to create detailed moulds of the jewellery designs. This ancient technique, known as the lost-wax casting method, ensures precise and intricate patterns.
- **LAC FOR SETTING STONES:** Lac, a natural resin, is used

to set the stones securely in the jewellery. This traditional method ensures the stones remain firmly in place.

- **COPPER FOR REINFORCEMENT:** Sometimes, copper is used to reinforce the structure of larger pieces, adding strength without compromising the aesthetic.
- **ENAMELS AND DYES:** Colored enamels and natural dyes are occasionally used to enhance the visual appeal, adding vibrant touches to the intricate designs.
- **TRADITIONAL TOOLS:** Artisans use specialized traditional tools, passed down through generations, to craft and finish each piece with meticulous attention to detail.

This combination of raw materials and traditional craftsmanship results in the stunning and enduring beauty of Nagercoil temple jewellery. After the raw materials let's move towards the making process of the divine temple jewellery:

DESIGN CONCEPTUALIZATION

Artistic Inspiration - The process begins with artisans drawing inspiration from temple architecture, mythology, and nature. Traditional motifs like peacocks, flowers, and deities are common. Sketching - Detailed sketches are made, translating these inspirations into intricate designs that will be brought to life.

WAX MOLDING

Wax Modeling - Using beeswax, artisans create detailed moulds of the jewellery. This stage involves precision as the wax models will form the basis of the final product.

Lost-Wax Casting - The wax model is encased in clay or plaster and heated. The wax melts away, leaving a hollow mould ready for metal casting.

METAL CASTING

Silver Base Creation - High-quality silver is melted and poured into the hollow mould, forming the base of the jewellery.

Initial Shaping - Once the silver cools and solidifies, the rough cast is removed from the mould and cleaned.

GOLD LEAF APPLICATION

Coating with Gold - The silver base is meticulously coated with a thin layer of gold leaf, giving a luxurious and radiant finish to the gold temple jewellery necklace.

Burnishing - The gold-coated piece is polished and burnished to enhance its shine and smoothness.

STONE SETTING

Selecting Stones - Natural uncut stones such as rubies, emeralds, and other semi-precious gems are chosen for their colour and clarity.

Embedding with Lac - Lac, a natural resin, is used to set the stones into the jewellery. This traditional method ensures the stones are securely embedded and aligned.

Fine Adjustments - Artisans carefully adjust and align each stone to ensure uniformity and aesthetic appeal.

DETAILING AND FINISHING

Hand-Carving - Skilled craftsmen add fine details and intricate patterns by hand, using traditional tools. This step showcases the artisan's expertise and attention to detail.

Enamelling - Sometimes, coloured enamels are applied to add vibrancy and contrast to the designs.

Final Polishing - The piece undergoes multiple stages of polishing to achieve a smooth, lustrous finish.

ORNAMENTS OF NAGERCOIL TEMPLE JEWELLERY

- **MAANG TIKKA:** A decorative forehead ornament featuring intricate designs with uncut stones and gold leaf. It symbolizes marriage and enhances beauty, traditionally worn by brides.
- **NETHI CHUTTI:** A more elaborate forehead ornament covering a larger portion of the forehead. It highlights facial expressions in classical dance performances.
- **JHUMKAS:** Bell-shaped earrings adorned with stones and intricate carvings. Essential for dancers and brides, they add a traditional touch.
- **VANKI (ARMLET):** An inverted V-shaped armlet with motifs like peacocks and flowers. It symbolizes strength and beauty and is worn by brides and dancers.



Detailing and Finishing of Jewellery



Stone Setting



Haaram (Necklace)

- **KADA (BANGLES):** Thick, ornate bangles made of silver coated with gold leaf and embedded with stones. Worn during festivals and weddings, they symbolize prosperity and marital happiness.
- **HAARAM (NECKLACE):** Long, elaborate necklaces in styles like Lakshmi haaram (depicting the goddess Lakshmi) and Kasu mala (coin necklace). They represent wealth and divinity, essential for bridal wear and dance costumes insofar as temple jewellery necklaces go.
- **ODDIYANAM (WAIST BELT):** A broad, decorated belt with motifs of gods and goddesses. It accentuates the waistline in bridal and dance attire, symbolizing grace and femininity.
- **CHUTTI (HEADPIECE):** An ornate headpiece for decorating the hair, commonly worn by dancers. It enhances the beauty of the dancer and adds to the visual appeal.
- **ANKLETS (KOLUSU):** Intricately designed anklets with small bells. They complement dance movements and traditional ceremonies with their pleasing sound.
- **MOOKUTHI (NOSE RING):** A delicate nose ring adorned with stones and intricate designs. It symbolizes marital status and is a traditional accessory for South Indian brides.
- **KUNJALAM (HAIR ORNAMENT):** Decorative pieces for the end of braids, featuring beads and stones. They add elegance to bridal and dance hairstyles.
- **JADA BILLALU (HAIR ACCESSORIES):** Ornaments worn along the length of the braid, depicting floral or divine motifs. They enhance the overall appearance of classical dance and bridal wear.



Oddiyanam (Waist Belt)



Mookuthi (Nose Ring)



Kada (Bangles)

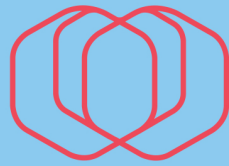
- **KAMARBANDH (WAIST CHAIN):** A delicate chain is worn around the waist, adorned with small pendants or stones. It adds elegance and is popular among brides.
- **BAJUBAND (ARM BAND):** An ornate band for the upper arm, featuring intricate designs and stones. It symbolizes valour and is used in traditional and bridal attire.
- **THALAI SAAMAN (HAIR JEWELRY):** A comprehensive set of hair ornaments, including sun and moon clips, traditionally worn by dancers. They add grandeur to the hairstyle, essential for Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi performances.

As a symbol of continuity, Nagercoil temple jewellery remains a relevant accessory, blending tradition with contemporary elegance, and celebrating the enduring legacy of India's rich artistic heritage. From the intricate Maang Tikka and elaborate Nethi Chutti to the regal Haaram (temple jewellery gold necklace) and elegant Anklets, each piece tells a story of devotion, tradition, and beauty.

This enduring tradition highlights the deep connection between spiritual devotion and cultural heritage, preserving the legacy of temple jewellery for future generations.

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MOST EXPENSIVE SAREES

Who said luxury couldn't be draped? Explore the world's most expensive sarees, where threads of pure gold and precious gems meet exquisite craftsmanship

TT BUREAU

Whether it's Kanjeevaram silks or Banarasi brocades, these sarees are heirlooms of elegance, narrating tales of artistry and tradition. Because who wouldn't want a little history woven into their wardrobe?

TIMELESS BEAUTY - THE SAREE

Discover the ultimate in luxury with our guide to the world's most expensive sarees. Each saree is a masterpiece of traditional weaves and designs, showcasing exquisite elegance, intricate craftsmanship, and timeless beauty.

Revered as a symbol of grace and cultural heritage, the saree transcends its utilitarian roots to become a canvas for artistic expression and beauty. The allure of the most expensive sarees lies not only in their exquisite materials and intricate designs but also in the stories they tell—of tradition, artistry, and the ultimate in luxury living.

Imagine draping yourself in a saree woven with threads of pure gold, adorned with precious gemstones, or embellished with intricate embroidery that took master artisans years to perfect. These sarees are heirlooms, passed down through generations, each one narrating a tale of meticulous craftsmanship and extraordinary attention to detail. Owning such a saree is akin to possessing a piece of history, a testament to the rich cultural tapestry from which it originates.

In a country like India, where wearing a saree is a special affair, it's like magic draped in nine yards. Nowadays when even fashionistas take sarees as a style statement, it's slowly emerging as the 'forever dress' for women.

From the traditional Kanjeevaram silks of South India to the opulent Banarasi brocades, join us to explore the exquisite craftsmanship, luxurious materials, and sheer elegance that define these masterpieces. Here is a list of the most expensive Sarees in India:

VIVAAH PATU SAREE

The Vivaah Pattu saree, a masterpiece of design, hails from the culturally rich state of Tamil Nadu, India. Renowned for



Vivaah Patu Saree

its extraordinary craftsmanship, this saree is a celebration of luxury and tradition. Priced at an astonishing INR 40 lakh (approximately USD 54,000), the Vivaah Pattu saree is woven from the finest silk and adorned with threads of pure gold and silver.

The elegance of this saree is further elevated by the intricate zari work and the inclusion of precious gemstones such as emeralds, rubies, and pearls. Each element is meticulously handwoven by master artisans, ensuring that every saree is a unique work of art. This is not just a garment, it is a symbol of grandeur and a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu, making it a prized possession for those who value luxury and tradition.

NALLI'S BRIDAL SAREES

Nalli's Bridal Sarees are the epitome of elegance and tradition, perfect for the most special day in a bride's life. Established in 1928, Nalli has been a trusted name in the world of silk sarees, renowned for their impeccable quality and timeless designs. Each bridal saree from Nalli is a masterpiece, woven from the finest silk and adorned with intricate zari work, creating a stunning interplay of gold and vibrant colours.

These sarees are designed to make a bride feel like royalty, with rich textures and exquisite motifs that tell tales of heritage and artistry. Nalli's collection ranges from classic Kanjivaram silks to contemporary designer sarees, ensuring that every bride finds her perfect match.

The luxurious feel and stunning beauty of Nalli's Bridal Sarees make them a cherished possession, symbolizing grace, beauty, and cultural richness. The prices of these sarees can range from INR 20,000 (approximately USD 270) to over INR 2 lakh (approximately USD 2,700), reflecting their quality and craftsmanship.

KANJEEVARAM SAREES

Kanjivaram sarees get their name from Kanchipuram, a small village in Tamil Nadu where they are traditionally made. These sarees are known for their thick fabric adorned with gold or silver lace and motifs. They are woven from pure mulberry silk, making each saree a true masterpiece. In South India, Kanjivaram sarees are a popular choice for bridal attire.

Wearing a Kanjivaram saree is a delightful experience, thanks to its heavy silk, intricate patterns, and vibrant colours. The silk from Kanjivaram is renowned across India and beyond for its quality and the skill of its weavers. Every Indian bride's trousseau is incomplete without one.

The hallmark of Kanjivaram sarees is their bright colours and heavy zari work on the hem and pallu. This zari work is crafted with silver threads dipped in gold, creating intricate designs. The exceptional craftsmanship and labour-intensive nature of making these sarees contribute to their high cost. High-end Kanjeevaram sarees can cost up to INR 5 lakh (\$7,500).



Kanjeevaram Sarees



Nalli's Bridal Sarees



Paithani Sarees

PAITHANI SAREES

Paithani sarees are named after Paithan town in Aurangabad district, Maharashtra, where they were first handmade. Their history dates back to the 2nd century BC during the Satavahana Dynasty when they were made with pure gold wire along with cotton and silk. Today, the town of Yeola in Nashik, Maharashtra, is the largest producer of Paithani sarees.

Paithani sarees are known for their oblique square borders and peacock designs on the pallu. They come in plain and spotted designs, with single-coloured and kaleidoscope-coloured varieties also popular. The kaleidoscopic effect is created by using one colour for the lengthwise weave and another for the widthwise weave.

Made from silk and zari, Paithani sarees feature plain weaves with intricate weft designs, following tapestry principles. Traditionally, they had a coloured cotton muslin field with zari patterns, but by the 19th century, silk fields became common. Prices for Paithani sarees range from INR 15,000 (around USD 200) for simpler designs to over INR 5 lakh (around USD 6,800) for more elaborate pieces.

SAMBALPURI SAREE

Sambalpuri Sarees originate from the land of Goddess Samalei, symbolizing strength and kindness. This spirit is reflected in the distinctive and alluring designs of the sarees.

Known for their famous Bandha prints, Sambalpuri silk ikat sarees feature intricately woven pallus and borders with contrasting colours and motifs inspired by Odisha temples.

The Bhulia community, who fled northern India after the fall of the Chauhan empires and the rise of the Mughals in 1192 A.D., settled in western Odisha and began weaving these beautiful sarees, giving birth to the art of Sambalpuri Ikat.

Sambalpuri handloom sarees tell a story through their fabric. They are renowned for their double ikat weaving, also known as Sambalpuri Ikat handloom, which is a resist dyeing and weaving technique called bandha kala or "tie art" in Odisha. This intricate process can take anywhere from three days to three months, depending on the design.

The price of Sambalpuri sarees ranges from INR 3,000 (approximately USD 40) for simpler designs to over INR 50,000 (approximately USD 680) for more elaborate pieces. These sarees are highly valued for their craftsmanship and cultural significance, making them cherished additions to any wardrobe.

MUGA SILK SAREE

Muga silk is a type of wild silk unique to Assam, India, known for its exceptional durability and natural yellowish-golden sheen with a glossy texture. The silk is produced in the West Garo Hills of Assam, the sole habitat of the muga silkworm. The silkworms, which feed on som and soalu trees, produce the silk threads, and silk farmers work hard to cultivate these worms.

Historically reserved for royalty, Muga silk sarees are renowned for their exquisite beauty and rich texture. The fabric's natural gold sheen, derived from the cocoons of muga moths, sets it apart. A Muga silk saree can cost up to \$6,500, making it significantly more expensive than other sarees.

Muga silk is one of the most expensive fabrics in the world, catering to the high-end market due to its longevity, organic qualities, and strength. Some Muga silk sarees are passed down through generations, outlasting their wearers. This silk is highly valued globally, from the USA to Europe, South Africa, the Middle East, and Japan, where it is also used for making high-end kimonos. Designers are incorporating Muga silk into Western fashion trends, showcasing its versatility and timeless appeal.

Each of these sarees, from the regal Vivaah Pattu and the elegant Kanjivaram to the opulent Sambalpuri saree, tells a unique story of tradition, artistry, and unparalleled attention to detail.

These sarees, with their distinct characteristics and historical significance, are more than just garments; they are cherished heirlooms and symbols of status and elegance. Their prices, which can range from modest to extravagant, reflect the level of craftsmanship and the quality of materials used. Owning one of these sarees is not merely about possessing a piece of clothing but about embracing a piece of history and a work of art that has been meticulously created by master artisans.



LAUREATO 42 MM

The Laureato 42mm showcases the iconic combination of polished and satin finished surfaces in its stainless steel case. With a slim profile of 10.68 mm, it easily fits under a shirt cuff, while the well-designed steel bracelet ensures a comfortable fit for the wearer.



LOVE, LIGHT, AND TRADITION

Parsi weddings are a beautiful blend of ancient traditions and joyous celebrations, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of the Parsi community

TT BUREAU

Rooted in Zoroastrianism, these weddings are not just about the union of two individuals, but also a celebration of life, family, and faith. The vibrant ceremonies are marked by intricate rituals, each holding deep symbolic meanings that have been preserved through generations.

A Parsi wedding is celebrated for its simplicity and strong adherence to traditions and rituals. The Parsi Lagan, or wedding, is filled with vibrant and joyful customs that take place over several days. The unique and fascinating rituals start at the engagement and end with a grand post-wedding reception. This event showcases rich Parsi culture with great music, wine, and dining.

From the auspicious Rupiya-Pervi (engagement ceremony) to the sacred Lagan (wedding ceremony), Parsi weddings are

a testament to the community's devotion to their customs. The rituals, such as the Adarni, where gifts are exchanged to welcome the bride into the groom's family, and the Madhavsaro, involving the planting of a tree to symbolize growth and prosperity, add layers of significance and joy. Amidst the prayers, blessings, and playful traditions, Parsi weddings are a joyous celebration of love, unity, and timeless traditions. Let's explore the traditions and rituals of the Parsi wedding:

POST WEDDING TRADITIONS

RUPIYA-PERAVANU

Rupia Peravanu is an informal engagement ceremony where both families celebrate the acceptance of the marriage



Divo Adarni Rituals

alliance. On this day, the groom's female relatives visit the bride's home, presenting her with silver coins and traditional gifts. After refreshments, they return home. The bride's family then adds more silver coins to the gift and visits the groom's home to repeat the ceremony. This tradition is believed to bring prosperity and luck to the couple's new life together.

MADHAVSARO (PLANTING OF THE TREE)

The Madhavsaro ceremony takes place four days before the wedding. In this special Parsi wedding tradition, the bride's and groom's families plant a sapling in a flower pot to symbolize fertility. The plant, usually a mango sapling, is placed near the house entrance and nurtured daily. Seven to eight days after the wedding, it is transplanted to a permanent spot. The soil used for planting is mixed with metal chips (like gold and silver), paan (betel leaf), supari (betel nut), haldi (turmeric), and dry dates.

DIVO ADARNI

Adarni is a pre-wedding ceremony in Parsi weddings where the groom's family visits the bride's home to formally accept her into their family. They bring gifts like clothes, jewelry, and sweets. The bride may also visit the groom's home for this tradition, but the groom does not do the same.

The festive atmosphere is filled with music, laughter, and camaraderie, with guests enjoying a traditional meal of sev and dahi, boiled eggs, and bananas. This ritual symbolizes the merging of two families, mutual respect, and love, marking an important step in the wedding celebrations.

SUPRA NU MURAT (RITUAL BATH)

In a Parsi wedding, the Supra Nu Murat ceremony is similar to the colorful Haldi ceremony. Five married women sit in a circle and take turns pounding a special bundle of betel nut, betel leaf, dates, turmeric, and coconut, called Supra. Four of these women each receive a supra with auspicious items like paan, supari, haldi, dates, and coconut.

While singing ritual songs, they exchange the supras seven times in various directions. The fifth woman sits in the



Rangoli Patterns Decorations

middle with a pestle and dry turmeric. After the supras are passed, all five women join to beat the turmeric with milk, creating a paste. This paste is then applied to the groom and bride by their family members, accompanied by blessings.

NAHAN (PURIFICATION CEREMONY)

Before the Parsi wedding ceremony, the bride and groom undergo the Nahan ritual for body and soul purification. During this ritual, the family priest symbolically bathes and purifies them. After the Nahan, tradition dictates that the bride and groom cannot touch anyone outside their family or caste. The bride then dresses in her madhavate, a white,



Supra nu Murat (Ritual Bath)



Wedding Day

ornate wedding saree given by her parents, while the groom wears the traditional Parsi dagli, a white kurta-like garment, and a black cap. The completion of this ritual marks the beginning of the wedding day ceremonies.

WEDDING DAY TRADITIONS

Parsi weddings usually take place either at a baug (garden) or an agiary (Fire Temple). Zoroastrians consider the time just after sunset or early in the morning as auspicious for marriage, so most weddings happen around 6:40 p.m. On the special day, chalk or rangoli patterns decorate every staircase and doorway. Even the gates of the venue or baug are adorned with large, colourful designs.

ACHUMICHU (WELCOMING RITUAL)

Achu Michu is the first wedding day ritual in a Parsi wedding, performed by both families to ward off any evil vibes that might affect the bride and groom. At the wedding venue, a stage is set for the couple. Before they step on it, the groom goes first for the achu michu ritual.

The bride's mother takes a tray with a raw egg, supari, rice, coconut, dates, and water. She circles the coconut around the groom's head seven times before breaking it on the floor to his right. This is repeated with each item on the tray, except for the water, which is thrown on either side. The bride then steps onto the stage for her future mother-in-law to perform the same ritual for her.

ARA ANTAR

During the Ara Antar ceremony, the couple sits facing each other. Seven married women circle around them seven times with a white thread. After this, the bride and groom throw grains of rice at each other over a veil given by their mothers. It's believed that whoever throws the rice first will rule the household! Throughout the ceremony, the Parsi priest chants prayers in Persian.

CHERO BANDHAVANO

After Ara Antar, the Chero Bandhvanu ceremony takes place. The couple sits beside each other, bound by seven strands of string. Witnesses sit next to them, and lighted lamps are placed on tables on either side. The priests begin an hour-long marriage prayer (aashirwaad), during which rice and rose petals are showered on the couple.

At the end of the prayers, the bride and groom exchange wedding rings. The priests then wish the couple well and bring fire from the agiary for them to pay their respects. Everyone showers rice on the couple to bless them with love and abundance.

HAATH BORVANU

Fun-filled ceremonies follow the completion of the lagan. The groom's sister-in-law starts by extracting money from her new brother-in-law in a ritual called haath borvanu. She makes the groom put his hand into a glass of water, which he can't remove until he pays. Next is pag dhovanu, where the

groom is threatened with having milk poured on his shoes unless he pays. Then comes chero chorvanu, where the sister-in-law removes the seven strands of string binding the couple, again for a payment. Finally, the newlyweds visit the fire temple for blessings.

A VISIT TO THE FIRE TEMPLE

After completing all the rituals and customs, the bride and groom leave the red and white stage and head to the fire temple to seek the Almighty's blessings. The oil lamps lit on either side of the couple during the ceremonies are extinguished by placing a rose flower on the flame.

POST-WEDDING RECEPTION

Parsi nuptials are famous for their grand receptions, where food, drink, and music flow freely all night. The traditional dinner features a lavish four-course meal with Parsi delicacies like sarya (crisps), achaar-rotli (pickle and rotis), patra ni macchi (steamed fish), salli margi (chicken with potato crisps), lagan nu custard, pulao-dal, and ice cream.

The wedding day ends with the couple being escorted home by the bride's family, where the groom's mother performs the achumichu ceremony again for the newlyweds.

PARSI WEDDING ATTIRE

FOR THE BRIDE

The bride wears a white ornate silk or chiffon saree, traditionally called the Parsi Gara. These heirloom sarees are passed down through generations. They are both stunningly beautiful and comfortably wearable. During the ceremony, the saree is delicately draped to cover the head with one end.

Similarly, the jewellery is not too extravagant. The bride wears simple heirloom pieces along with auspicious red bangles gifted by her mother-in-law.

FOR THE GROOM

The groom's attire matches the bride's elegant simplicity. He wears a Parsi Dagli, which is a white overcoat, and a Fetah,

the traditional long black Parsi hat. His outfit also includes a white cotton short kurta and an off-white shawl draped over his shoulder. Black formal shoes complete the look.

Parsi wedding customs may appear simple, but they are truly unique. Despite their simplicity, Parsi nuptials are filled with zeal, passion, and an extra dose of fun during the rituals.



Wedding Couple



Newlyweds Visit The Fire Temple For Blessings



Blessings to The Couple



Post-Wedding Reception



Flavours of Bihar

MORE TO BIHARI FOOD THAN LITTI CHOKA

Bihari food isn't just a Bihar secret—it's a sensation from Jharkhand to Eastern UP!

TT BUREAU

Imagine the elegance of Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi cuisines, all drizzled with the magic of mustard oil and sprinkled with the charm of panchphoran (Meaning "five spices", which includes cumin seeds, fennel seeds, fenugreek seeds, mustard seeds, and nigella seed - a distinctive aspect of Bihari cuisine). Get ready to elevate your taste buds with these delectable Bihari dishes. Bon appétit, with a twist of spice and style!

FLAVOURS OF BIHAR: A CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

Nestled on the fertile Indo-Gangetic plain, Bihar is a veritable agricultural heartland, particularly known for its extensive rice cultivation, with over 60 varieties grown across the state.

The staple dish, daal-bhaat (lentils and rice), is a beloved staple that exemplifies the region's culinary simplicity and wholesomeness. Adding a smoky touch with red chili is another hallmark of Bihari cooking, enriching both flavour and aroma. Bihari cuisine is distinctively marked by its use of mustard oil and a unique blend of five spices called panchphoran, along with cooking techniques such as deep-frying, roasting (bhoonna), and steaming.

In the evenings, Bihari culture comes alive with a delightful array of snacks, typically enjoyed with tea. These include bhunja, a variety of spiced, dry-fried grains. Popular versions are chooda ka bhunja (fried beaten rice flakes with onions and green chillies), chana ka bhunja (fried Bengal gram), and jhaal murhi (puffed rice with onions, green chillies, peanuts, and mustard oil).

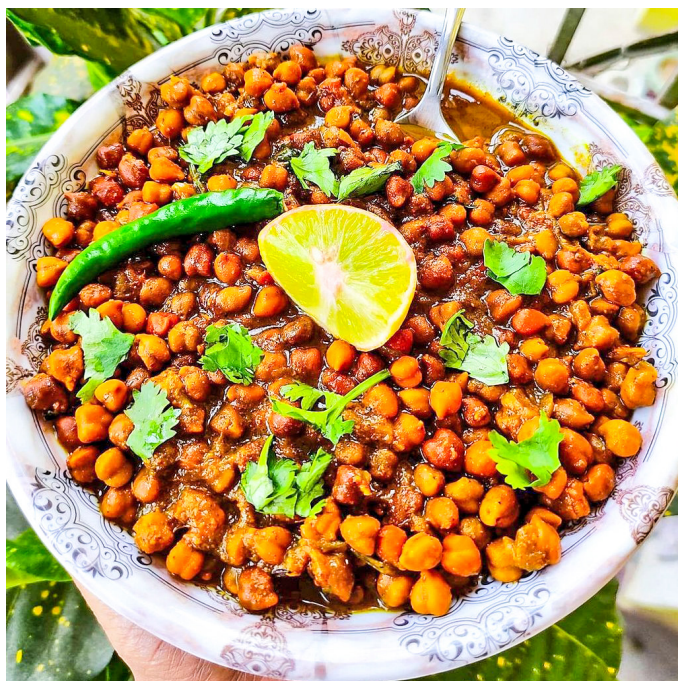
Predominantly vegetarian due to its socio-religious traditions and abundant vegetable production, Bihari cuisine nevertheless boasts a rich array of non-vegetarian dishes, a legacy of the region's historical Muslim influence. Favourites include shami kabab, nargisi kofta, and Champaran meat (Ahuna meat), a slow-cooked mutton curry marinated with ghee, mustard oil, garlic, onions, ginger, and spices, sealed in an earthen pot for hours to develop deep, rich flavours. Among the standout dishes is Bihari Kabab, made with boneless lamb marinated in a mix of spices and raw papaya pulp, then roasted over coals.

In the Mithilanchal region, which includes parts of northern-central Bihar, Jharkhand, and Nepal, fish is a dietary staple, diverging from the general vegetarian trend. The region's proximity to rivers like the Ganga and its tributaries ensures a plentiful supply of fish varieties such as Rohu, Catla, Patiya, Mangur, and Tengda. Culinary techniques here often mirror those of neighbouring Bengal, with fish commonly prepared in mustard paste and featured in dishes like Maach-bhaat and Machak-jhor. Fried shrimp, or jhinga, is also a cherished delicacy.

Bihar's culinary traditions are a rich tapestry of techniques, reflecting its diverse history and cultural influences. Whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian, each dish tells a story of the region's agricultural bounty and the intricate interplay of spices. Indulge in the culinary elegance of these mouthwatering Bihari dishes that you will love.

PURI SABZI

This delicious curry is made with mashed cooked potatoes with a spicy tomato and onion sauce and is one of the dishes that you must try. Potatoes are a versatile component that may be utilized in a variety of recipes. Unlike other traditional Indian curries, it simply requires a few ingredients and takes only a few minutes to create. It's a spicy curry that's best



Chana Ghugni

eaten over puffed poori, but it's also good with other Indian flatbreads or plain rice.

CHANA GHUGNI

It's known as ghughri in Bihar. Ghugni is traditionally made using dried white peas. Some recipes call for minced lamb, while others do not. Black chickpeas, dried green peas, and even black-eyed beans can be used to make ghugni. In the eastern portion of India, it is the most popular evening snack. It goes well with nearly everything, including puris, parathas, and rotis, as well as plain ghugni.

DAL PEETHA

Bihari Dal Pitha is a rice flour dumpling recipe famous in Bihari cuisine. Pithas can be packed with either a sweet or a spicy filling. Pithas come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Fresh rice flour and spicy masala lentil filling are used to make Bihari Dal Pitha. This protein-rich snack is suitable for any occasion and is enjoyed by people of all ages. Pithas with Hari Dhaniya ki Chutney, Tomato Chutney, or Mint Chutney make a delicious appetizer or special dinner alternative.

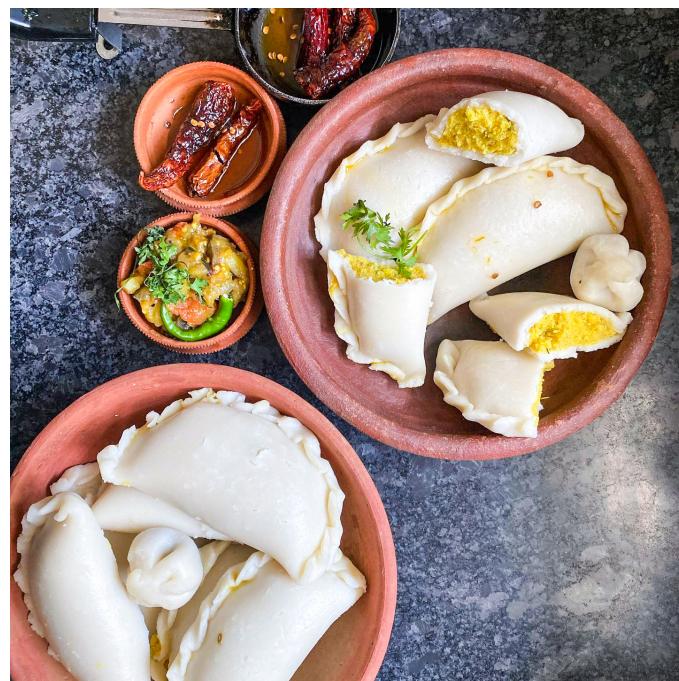
KHAJA

Khaja is a traditional coastal dish that is offered as part of India's Puri Jagannath temple's "Sukhila Prasad." This is a sweet meal made with fewer ingredients that consists of stacked fritters dipped in sugar syrup.

Khaja should be served at room temperature. You could also eat them while they're still hot. This Khaja recipe can be kept at room temperature for up to 2 weeks in an airtight container.

KADHI BADI

Bihari Style Kadhi Badi is a creamy kadhi made using a traditional blend of yogurt and spice masala. In Bihar, Kadhi



Dal Peetha

Badi is one of the most popular dishes. Kadhi Badi is an essential part of any important celebration. It's a calming sour curd foundation recipe with badi (chickpea flour dumplings) (besan). For an ordinary supper, serve Bihari Style Kadhi Badi Recipe with Jeera Rice, Kachumber Salad, and Masala Khichia.

NAIVEDYAM

The well-known Hanuman Mandir near Patna Railway Station is also well-known for its Prasad and Naivedyam. Its origins can be traced back to Andhra Pradesh's Tripuri Balaji Temple. It's made using Besan, sugar, cashews, and raisins. Green cardamoms, Kashmiri saffron, and other spices are fried in ghee and shaped into balls. The heavenly delicacy melts in your lips and leaves an unforgettable taste.

BALUSHAHI

Balushahi is a popular North Indian confection. The same sweet is known as badusha or badhusa in South India. Balushahi or badusha can be found in almost every mithai shop. Indian doughnuts are also known as balushahi. Balushahi, on the other hand, has a distinct flavor and texture from doughnuts. As a dessert, serve balushahi or badusha.

GUR ANARSA

Gur Anarsa is a typical Bihari sweet dish that is delicious. Rice flour and jaggery (called Gur in Hindi) are mixed together to make a dough that is covered in sesame seeds and fried till golden brown. It's commonly made for festivals like Holi and Diwali, as well as other special occasions.

THEKUA

It's a deep-fried sweet recipe made with wheat flour and sugar that's both traditional and unique. It is a bihari delicacy that is served as an evening snack in Bihar, comparable to biscuits or cookies. It is also served as prasad to gods, particularly at the chhath puja, and at feasts.

PEDAKIYA

Gujiya (Gujhia) is a popular North Indian festival meal. In India, this delicacy is known by a variety of names. It's a joy to eat a Gujiya. The half-moon form creates a visually distinct identity that attracts you; the crispy outer crust provides a delightful taste of light sweetness, while the mawa and dried fruit filling within melt in your mouth.

SATTU PRATHA

Sattu Paratha is a popular Bihari dish known for its nutritional value and unique taste. It is made from roasted gram flour (sattu), mixed with spices like cumin, coriander, and ajwain. The filling often includes chopped onions, garlic, ginger, green chilies, and fresh coriander. This mixture is stuffed into whole wheat dough and cooked on a griddle with ghee or oil, resulting in a flavorful and hearty paratha.



Balushahi

MALPUA

Malpua is a beloved Bihari dessert, often enjoyed during festivals. It's made from a batter of flour, milk, and mashed bananas, flavoured with cardamom. The batter is fried in ghee until golden and then soaked in sugar syrup. Garnished with chopped nuts, malpua is a sweet, rich treat.

TILKUT

Tilkut is a traditional Bihari sweet, especially popular during Makar Sankranti. It's made from roasted sesame seeds (til) and jaggery (gur). The mixture is heated and moulded into round, crunchy treats. Sometimes flavoured with cardamom, Tilkut is cherished for its nutty taste and energy-boosting properties.

CHAMPARAN MEAT

Champaran meat, also known as Ahuna meat, is a cherished Bihari delicacy. This mutton curry features tender pieces of mutton marinated in ghee, mustard oil, garlic, onions, ginger, and an array of spices, including a whole garlic bulb. The marinated meat is slow-cooked in a sealed earthen pot for several hours, resulting in a rich, aromatic curry. The slow-cooking process melds the flavours beautifully, making Champaran meat a flavorful testament to Bihar's culinary traditions.

Bihari food not only nourishes the body but also offers a glimpse into the vibrant and resilient spirit of Bihar. As this cuisine continues to gain recognition and appreciation beyond its regional boundaries, it stands as a delicious reminder of the importance of preserving and celebrating our diverse culinary heritage.



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