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OCTOBER 2024 - ₹50

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Katajanokan Laituri

# AVANT-GARDE 2035: NEW LIFESTYLE TRENDS

The world of lifestyle has always been a stage for innovation, creativity, and radical shifts

**KAMAL GILL**

**A**t the intersection of art, design, and technology, the avant-garde spirit continues to push boundaries, crafting spaces, experiences, and concepts that challenge and redefine our everyday perceptions. As the world faces a growing need for sustainability, the avant-garde movement is finding its new purpose—melding ecological responsibility with futuristic visions of travel, food, and living.

In this journey through the future of avant-garde lifestyle, we explore how the hotels we stay in, the food we eat, and the way we live are about to be revolutionized.

## REDEFINING THE FUTURE OF HOTELS

The conventional idea of luxury is being redefined by hoteliers who dare to experiment with space, materials, and sustainability, creating immersive and deeply personalized experiences that break away from the opulence of the past. Takeaways would be experiences like checking into a hotel room that has no walls, no typical roof structure, but rather is enveloped by towering trees or is submerged below sea level with marine life swimming overhead. This is not science fiction, but a glimpse into the future of avant-garde travel and hospitality.



For decades, luxury hotels were defined by their indulgence—crystal chandeliers, marble floors, and extravagant amenities. But in the era of avant-garde hospitality, luxury is no longer about excess; it's about the experience. The future is taking travellers to unexpected places, both figuratively and literally, with hotels nestled in uncharted territories or designed to interact harmoniously with their surroundings. Avant-garde hotels are not just places to sleep; they are works of art, environmental sanctuaries, and hubs of futuristic innovation.

Take, for instance, the rise of eco-resorts that marry environmental sustainability with avant-garde design. These resorts redefine the idea of luxury by incorporating renewable energy, biodegradable materials, and conservation-focused architecture. Soon, you will find an island retreat powered entirely by solar energy, with villas made from reclaimed wood and sustainable materials that blend seamlessly into the landscape.

Recently Ayana Bali, the island's premier integrated resort, set the bar for luxury eco-tourism higher with the opening of Tevana Garden. With over six hectares of land, it has created a garden oasis featuring flowing streams, sparkling waterfalls, and local white limestone formations, to offer a sensory nature experience. Through its walking paths guests connect in an unparalleled way through the island's rich biodiversity with over 80 species of tropical flora.

Katajanokan Laituri, the new wooden landmark building in Helsinki, houses a hotel aiming to be the most sustainable one in Finland is an excellent instance of an avant-garde lifestyle. The experience is one of minimal environmental impact yet maximal comfort and beauty, offering travellers a sense of connection to both nature and cutting-edge design.

In urban settings, the future of hotels is equally daring. Avant-garde architects are designing towering structures that



*Tevana Garden*

not only shape city skylines but also rethink the very purpose of buildings. Architects are reimagining skyscrapers wrapped in vertical forests or city hotels that double as greenhouses, growing food for their guests on-site. The fusion of nature and technology will characterize the avant-garde hospitality of the future. Guests won't just stay in a building; they'll be immersed in a self-sustaining ecosystem that nourishes the environment as much as it pampers its occupants.

Furthermore, the concept of travel itself is evolving. Soon, avant-garde hospitality will move away from the cookie-cutter experience of generic hotel rooms toward hyper-personalized stays. AI and virtual reality will allow travellers to customize every aspect of their visit, from the room's temperature and ambience to the artwork on the walls. Hotels will adapt to guests' needs in real time, creating environments that feel not only luxurious but also deeply personal and unique. No two stays will ever be the same.

In the culturally rich town of Thanjavur, the heritage Svatma Hotel embodies an avant-garde approach to



*Svatma Thanjavur*



hospitality, seamlessly blending traditional Indian heritage with modern eco-consciousness. The meticulously crafted rooms, with balconies and contemporary aesthetics, offer a perfect balance of history and innovation. Here regional cuisine is elevated with high-quality vegetarian and vegan options, embracing global trends like plant proteins and meat replacements, while staying rooted in Tamil Nadu's rich culinary tradition. Wellness at Svatma offers expert-led yoga and meditative practices, a sound therapy room and a spa providing luxurious treatments.

At The Brando resort in French Polynesia, luxury goes hand in hand with sustainability. This avant-garde eco-resort runs entirely on renewable energy, including solar power and coconut oil biofuel. Each villa features sustainable construction using local materials, while the hotel's air-conditioning system is powered by seawater. This resort redefines luxury by focusing on preservation, creating a place where guests can experience an untouched tropical paradise while minimizing their environmental footprint.

Similarly, Atmantan Wellness Resort in Pune, India redefines hospitality by focusing on healing and holistic wellness. Built on eco-friendly principles, it offers wellness programs while ensuring minimal environmental impact, with rainwater harvesting systems and organic, farm-to-table food offerings. Atmantan shows how wellness and environmental responsibility can be seamlessly blended to create a new type of luxury retreat.

As the lines between luxury and sustainability blur, avant-garde hospitality is rewriting the rules. One of the most intriguing innovations is the development of "nomadic hotels," which challenge the very notion of permanence. These avant-garde retreats are designed to be portable, set up in remote and beautiful locations, and dismantled without



*The Brando Resort*

leaving a trace. Travelers can stay in luxury tents in the heart of the desert, on glaciers, or in lush rainforests, enjoying the ultimate immersive experience while also preserving the natural beauty of their surroundings. The White Desert's eco-luxury camp in Antarctica offers guests the chance to sleep in luxury pods on one of the world's most remote continents, providing an experience that blends luxury with an extreme environment.

The hotels of tomorrow will not just be places to visit—they will be transformative experiences that engage all senses, inspire awe, and create memories that last a lifetime.



*White Desert Eco Luxury Camp in Antarctica*





*Nomadic Resorts*

## A NEW ERA IN CULINARY ARTS

While travel may satisfy the soul, food delights the senses. In the avant-garde culinary world, food is no longer just about nourishment; it is an artistic expression, a scientific endeavour, and a gateway to new cultural experiences. The future of cuisine will see chefs pushing the limits of what is possible - from molecular gastronomy, sustainable practices, and technology to craft dining experiences that are as thought-provoking as they are delicious.

At the heart of avant-garde culinary arts is the philosophy of challenging expectations. For decades, food has followed certain predictable patterns, but avant-garde chefs have taken it upon themselves to surprise, bewilder, and excite their diners. They deconstruct classic dishes, reimagining them in completely new ways that are almost unrecognizable yet tantalizing to the taste buds.

Restaurants of the future will not just serve food—they will curate entire experiences. Imagine dining in complete darkness, relying on taste, smell, and texture to guide your meal, or participating in a dinner where virtual reality transports you to the origin of the dish, immersing you in the culture and landscape that inspired it.

Consider the rise of multi-sensory dining and culinary robotics, where technology and gastronomy merge to create immersive, futuristic experiences. Chefs are now incorporating AI-driven flavour pairings, 3D-printed food, and edible augmented reality, where diners interact with their plates through visual and sensory projections. Techniques

like ultrasound cooking, which uses sound waves to alter textures, and electric food stimulation, which enhances taste sensations through mild electrical currents, are pushing the boundaries of what food can be, creating a dining experience that engages all senses in unprecedented ways.

Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet in Shanghai is perhaps one of the best examples of a multisensory dining experience. The restaurant immerses diners in a futuristic atmosphere where technology plays a central role—flavours are enhanced by synchronized lighting, sound, and scent, creating an unforgettable experience.

Pushing the boundaries of what is considered food is the increasing orbit of molecular gastronomy, where science and cooking merge textures and flavours and techniques like spherification, where liquids are transformed into solid orbs that burst with flavour, or the use of liquid nitrogen to create instantly frozen delights, are being taken to the next stage.

Always serving up something new is celebrity chef Gaggan Anand's avant-garde take on Indian cuisine. His eponymous restaurant in Bangkok, which was ranked among the best in the world, is known for its deconstruction of traditional Indian dishes using molecular gastronomy. Dishes like yogurt explosions and charcoal bites challenge diners' perceptions of familiar flavours, while also focusing on sustainability and local sourcing.

These culinary creations play with our senses, defying the conventional idea of a meal. In the future, the dining experience will become even more interactive.



Sustainability is at the heart of avant-garde cuisine. The shift to “farm-to-table” dining, where restaurants collaborate directly with local farmers to ensure that their ingredients are fresh, seasonal, and sustainably sourced is an instance. The future of avant-garde dining will focus on hyper-local ingredients, with chefs exploring their own backyards for inspiration and incorporating foraged items into their menus.

Chefs are increasingly turning to plant-based proteins, locally sourced ingredients, and zero-waste kitchens to create meals that are as kind to the planet as they are to the palate. Expect to see more innovative uses of ingredients that were once considered humble or even undesirable, such as seaweed, insects, and food by-products, transformed into gourmet dishes that excite the senses while promoting sustainability.

Chefs are exploring zero-waste cooking, where every part of an ingredient is used. The Narisawa restaurant in Tokyo’s satoyama-inspired menu reflects both the biodiversity of Japan and avant-garde culinary methods.

In India, chefs like Manu Chandra of Toast & Tonic in Bengaluru are also innovating with foraged and seasonal ingredients locally sourced and experimental cooking. For instance, using jackfruit as a meat substitute or combining traditional South Indian spices with Western culinary techniques. Similarly, Masque in Mumbai, blends farm-to-table principles with molecular techniques, taking guests on a gastronomic journey that highlights the richness of India’s seasonal produce.

Renowned avant-garde chefs like Ferran Adrià, Heston Blumenthal, and René Redzepi have already begun to transform the culinary landscape, but the next generation will take their innovations even further. Expect to see more cross-cultural collaborations where chefs from different countries come together to create hybrid dishes that combine the best of both worlds. The result will be meals that tell stories, transport diners to distant lands, and break down cultural barriers through the universal language of food.

## A BRAVE NEW WORLD

Rather than accumulating material possessions, the avant-garde lifestyle promotes the idea of accumulating experiences. This shift has already begun with the rise of the sharing economy, where people are opting to rent items like cars, homes, and even clothes rather than owning them. In the future, this trend will expand, with more services that allow people to access what they need, when they need it, without the burden of ownership.

As the world becomes more connected, the avant-garde lifestyle will also embrace digital minimalism. In an age where technology permeates every aspect of life, the future will see a backlash against constant connectivity. People will seek ways to unplug and focus on what truly matters—human relationships, personal development, and mindfulness.



*Cuisine - Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet*

Avant-garde living spaces will likely incorporate “digital detox zones,” areas designed to be free from technology, where people can recharge mentally and emotionally.

In this brave new world of avant-garde living, wellness will take centre stage. Health and wellness will no longer be confined to gyms and spas; they will become integrated into every aspect of life. Homes, workplaces, and even public spaces will be designed to promote physical and mental well-being. Imagine parks equipped with meditation pods, office buildings with yoga studios, and homes with air purification systems that filter out pollutants. The future of avant-garde wellness will be holistic, addressing the needs of both body and mind.

Avant-garde living is also about rethinking our relationship with time. The fast-paced nature of modern life has led to a growing interest in slow living—a movement that encourages people to take their time, savour moments, and live more intentionally. This philosophy will influence everything from the way we eat and travel to the way we interact with others. In the future, we can expect to see a resurgence of practices like communal dining, where meals are shared with family and friends, fostering a sense of connection and community.

As we look toward the future, it’s clear that the next wave of avant-garde trends will be defined by sustainability, innovation, and a deep respect for the planet. Whether it’s through the eco-friendly hotels we stay in, the experimental cuisine we enjoy, or the minimalist homes we live in, the avant-garde lifestyle is set to reshape our future in exciting and unexpected ways.





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# INDIA'S NEW FANCY : VILLAS



*Suján The Serai*

India's luxury travel scene is welcoming a new wave of villas, chalets, and boutique retreats that prioritise privacy and personalised experiences

## TT BUREAU

In recent years, India has experienced a growing interest in luxury villas, chalets, and exclusive boutique retreats. This trend reflects a growing desire for privacy, bespoke experiences, and an intimate connection with nature. From the arid deserts of Rajasthan to the lush forests of Kerala, the tranquil hills of the Western Ghats to the serene beaches of the Andaman Islands, a new breed of luxurious and exclusive retreats are emerging, each carving out its niche in the world of high-end travel.

These properties offer a perfect blend of luxury, wellness, seclusion, sustainability and unique cultural experiences, making them the ideal choice for discerning travellers.

## DESERT RETREATS: OPULENCE IN THE SANDS

Rajasthan, the land of royal forts and palaces, is taking luxury to a whole new level in its desert landscapes. Travellers delight in the vast, golden sands of the Thar Desert stretching out before them as they relax in a plush villa or a boutique resort, where every detail whispers opulence.

Take, for instance, The Serai in Jaisalmer, a jewel in Suján's luxury camps. Find yourself stepping into a spacious tent, not your ordinary camping gear, but a lavish setup with intricate interiors, private plunge pools, and expansive decks that open out to the endless desert. The experience doesn't stop there. How about pampering yourself with a spa treatment,



savouring a private dinner under the starlit sky, or heading out on a thrilling desert safari? It's here where the desert becomes your playground.

Now, if you find yourself somewhere between Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Manvar Desert Camp & Resort promises an equally enchanting retreat. Here, luxe tents and cottages blend tradition with modern comfort, creating the perfect escape. Guests love the excitement of camel safaris across the dunes, jeep tours into the rugged landscape, and evenings filled with vibrant cultural performances that immerse you in Rajasthan's desert life.

Isn't it tempting to trade the ordinary for something extraordinary in the heart of the desert? The retreat options here are so alluring, you'll be wishing your escape could last forever.

### FOREST ESCAPES: LUXURY IN THE WILDERNESS

India's lush forests and rich biodiversity create the ultimate setting for luxurious retreats where nature takes centre stage. Who wouldn't love waking up to the sounds of birds, surrounded by wilderness, while enjoying the comforts of a high-end escape? These forest getaways offer the perfect mix of adventure, wildlife encounters, and top-notch luxury.

RAAS Chhatrasagar in Rajasthan, perched on the edge of a serene reservoir offers luxury tents dotting the landscape, each with elegant interiors and modern amenities. You can spend your days birdwatching by the water's edge, taking guided nature walks through the landscape, or indulging in farm-to-table dining. It's a retreat that offers intimacy and tranquillity in the heart of nature.

Then there's Saj in the Forest, nestled on 32 acres right on the edge of the Pench Tiger Reserve. The rustic charm of independent rooms and suites seamlessly blends into the natural surroundings. Wildlife enthusiasts will find this a dream come true—imagine spotting tigers on jungle safaris, enjoying campfires under a starlit sky, and soaking in the

beauty of the forest. It's the perfect spot for those who want to combine luxury with the thrill of the wild.

If the Vindhya Range is calling your name, then Pashan Garh in Panna National Park is where you should head. This Taj Safari property is set on a rocky outcrop, with 200 acres of private forest as your playground. The stone masonry exteriors give way to elegant interiors, with a spacious courtyard and a stunning pool perfect for cooling off after a safari. The lodge overlooks a wildlife watering hole, and the twelve luxury cottages lining the stream offer the ideal vantage point for wildlife spotting. Spend your days exploring the park on guided nature walks and safaris, and enjoy bush dinners under the vast night sky.

For a truly regal experience, Samode Safari Lodge in Bandhavgarh offers an opulent retreat amid nature. Spanning 35 acres, the lodge's luxurious villas are inspired by traditional



*Manvar Desert Camp & Resort*



*RAAS Chhatrasagar*





*Sitara Himalaya*

Indian architecture, complete with private gardens, sun decks, and outdoor showers. From bespoke safari experiences to rejuvenating spa treatments and gourmet dining, Samode Safari Lodge brings you the best of both worlds—wild adventure and refined luxury. The design is harmoniously integrated with the nearby Mardari village, ensuring it blends seamlessly into the breath-taking landscape.

### **HILL AND MOUNTAIN RETREATS: ELEVATING LUXURY**

The serene hills and majestic mountains of India offer the perfect retreat from the daily grind, where luxury chalets and boutique resorts provide not only tranquillity but also breathtaking views and unparalleled comfort. Imagine waking up to the sight of towering peaks, crisp mountain air, and the peace that comes with escaping into nature's lap, all while enjoying world-class amenities.

At Shakti 360° Leti in Uttarakhand, you'll find yourself in the remote Kumaon region, far removed from the noise of modern life. This exclusive mountain retreat offers a unique blend of luxury and isolation. Guests enjoy contemporary cottages with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to panoramic views of the Himalayas. Your days here are filled with adventure—whether it's a guided walk through the stunning landscape or connecting with local communities for a glimpse into their cultural traditions.

For a more cosmic connection, Relais & Châteaux Sitara Himalaya sits at a fantastic 8,200 feet, offering more than just scenic beauty. With activities like stargazing, hiking, and yoga, this luxurious retreat near the Kullu Valley aims to reconnect you with both nature and the universe. The lodge's ten rooms frame snow-capped peaks with expansive windows, while inside, Tibetan rugs, hand-painted murals, and cosy sofas dressed in floral and tartan patterns create an intimate atmosphere. The Paro Svasthi spa's Vedic-inspired treatments, including Reiki and Marma therapy, alongside a plunge pool with panoramic views, ensure your journey to rejuvenation is complete.

If tea plantations and colonial charm are more your style, Glenburn Tea Estate in Darjeeling offers an experience unlike any other. Nestled on a hilltop with the Kanchenjunga mountain range as a backdrop, this luxurious estate welcomes you with colonial-style bungalows featuring private balconies and garden terraces. Guests wander through the tea gardens, enjoying a picnic by the river, and taking a guided tour of Darjeeling town before retreating to their elegant bungalow for a tranquil evening.

In Manali, Baragarh Resort & Spa, an IHCL SeleQtions property, provides a lavish escape amidst the dramatic mountain landscape. With stunning views and luxurious amenities, this resort promises relaxation and indulgence. And not far from here, Palchan Hotel & Spa, a member of Radisson Individuals, combines traditional design with modern comforts. Cedarwood rooms, hand-carved stone pillars, and intricate woodwork add a touch of Himalayan heritage, while the heated outdoor pool, igloo dining cabins, and a rooftop restaurant overlooking the Beas River and snow-dusted peaks offer the ultimate in luxury.

### **BEACH AND ISLAND ESCAPES: TROPICAL PARADISE**

India's vast coastline and pristine islands create the ultimate backdrop for luxurious beach retreats, where the sun, sand, and sea come together to offer the perfect escape.

In Kerala, Athirappilly Green Trees offers a peaceful eco-resort experience near majestic waterfalls and lush forests. For those who crave the beach, Marari Dreamz is a beachfront villa with direct access to the Arabian Sea. Both properties emphasize sustainable tourism, blending luxury with eco-friendly practices, allowing guests to enjoy nature without compromising on comfort.

Goa, with its laid-back charm and vibrant beaches, offers some of the most elegant stays, including Maison 9. This stunning villa features a private pool, daily breakfast, and all the modern amenities you could need, such as free WiFi. Whether you're enjoying the stunning ocean views from The Glasshouse on the



Bay or finding peace surrounded by nature at Villa Nimaya, Goa's luxury villas promise comfort, style, and an unforgettable getaway.

For a tropical island experience, head to Taj Exotica Resort & Spa in the Andamans. Situated on the beautiful Havelock Island, this resort is nothing short of paradise. Luxurious villas offer private pools, outdoor showers, and direct access to the beach. Days here are spent exploring the rich marine life through snorkelling and diving or taking a sunset cruise over turquoise waters.

### HERITAGE BOUTIQUE RESORTS: UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

India's heritage boutique resorts offer an exquisite fusion of luxury, personalization, and deep cultural immersion. These hidden gems, often tucked away in off-the-beaten-path destinations, invite guests to experience a truly exclusive retreat where history and tradition, come together seamlessly.

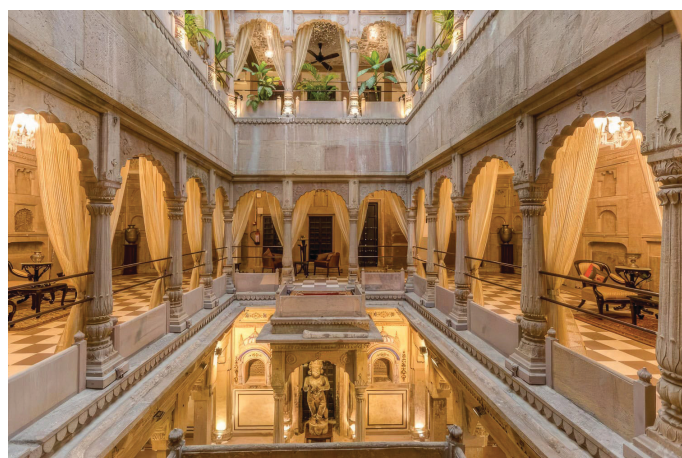
Take Pilibhit House in Haridwar, for instance, a serene oasis on the banks of the sacred Ganges River. Guests wake up in an elegant room with stunning river views, the air filled with a sense of spirituality that only Haridwar can offer. You can participate in yoga sessions, find peace through meditation, and explore the rich spiritual heritage of this holy town.

In Varanasi, the spiritual heart of India, Brijrama Palace offers a majestic experience right on the banks of the Ganges. With opulent rooms, adorned with traditional decor and private balconies overlooking the river, you witness the iconic Ganga Aarti or take a peaceful boat ride along the sacred waters. The palace itself tells the stories of Benaras, with its design reflecting centuries of legends and lore.

For a more historically immersive experience, Chavni in Pune is a boutique resort unlike any other. Inspired by 16th-century transit camps, this unique retreat sits at the foothills of Lohagad and Visapur Forts, offering guests a taste of Maratha and Peshwa-era grandeur. Guests love the experience of lavish tents, royal carts, or a grand Wada, surrounded by art and architecture that harken back to a royal past.

### DISCOVERING BESPOKE LUXURY RETREATS

Discovering the world of bespoke luxury retreats takes you beyond the familiar into a realm of exclusivity and personalization, where each stay is crafted to be as unique as the destination itself.



Brijrama Palace, Varanasi

At Storii by ITC Hotels, the focus is on offering bespoke luxury through a collection of intimate villas and retreats that reflect the local culture and heritage. Storii Moira Riviera in Goa or Storii Amoha Retreat in Himachal Pradesh, have every detail—from the architecture to the service—thoughtfully curated to provide an authentic yet luxurious experience. With private pools, dedicated butler service, and a sense of tranquillity, these retreats are a sanctuary for guests seeking both comfort and cultural immersion.

Then there's Ama Stays & Trails, part of the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), where charming heritage bungalows and villas offer a homely yet luxurious feel. Visitors enjoy walking into the heritage-rich Ama Stays & Trails Cardozo House in Goa or the beautifully preserved Braganza House in Maharashtra, where the comforts of modern luxury are paired with the charm of historical architecture. Personalized services, sustainability, and a deep connection to local culture make these properties stand out.

If you're looking for something truly intimate and off the beaten path, The Postcard Hotels redefine luxury with an emphasis on authenticity. Guests enjoy the serene surroundings of The Postcard Gir near Gir National Park, or in the coastal elegance of The Postcard Cuelim in Goa. Each property boasts spacious villas with private gardens, personalized services, and gourmet dining, all designed to leave a lasting impression.

These bespoke retreats go beyond the standard luxury hotel experience, blending heritage, art, architecture, and nature with modern comforts and personalized services. For discerning travellers seeking something more than a cookie-cutter vacation, these boutique properties are the gateway to discovering India's rich cultural landscape in unparalleled style and exclusivity.



Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans



Villa Nimaya, Goa



# TRAVEL SMART, STAY FIT

Stay active on the go with simple fitness tips, easy workouts, and smart choices to maintain your health while travelling

## TT BUREAU

**H**ave you ever wondered why we often make excuses like having less time or work pressure when it comes to putting in the effort to stay fit? And when you're on a trip, whether it's for business or leisure—it's as if those excuses become even more common, almost like the question of staying fit never existed.

But what if we tell you that maintaining fitness while travelling can be easier than you think? By incorporating a few simple habits into your routine, you can keep your energy levels up and stay healthy on the go.

### WALK WHILE YOU TALK

When you're travelling, finding time for fitness can feel like a challenge, but walking while talking on the phone is a perfect way to stay active on the go.

Whether you're in an airport waiting for your flight, exploring a new city, or even pacing in your hotel room, walking during phone calls turns what could be idle time into a chance to stay fit and energized.

Imagine this: you're navigating through a bustling airport, catching up on a work call or checking in with family. Instead of sitting around at the gate, you're walking, adding steps to your day while staying connected. You could be strolling through unfamiliar streets, soaking in the sights, or simply taking laps around your hotel lobby. It's a natural, stress-free way to keep moving even when your travel schedule is packed.



*Walk While Talk*



Travel can sometimes leave you feeling drained, but incorporating walking during calls keeps your body active and your mind alert. You're not just passing the time; you're boosting your fitness, improving circulation after long periods of sitting, and keeping your energy levels high. It's a simple, effective way to blend movement with your travel routine, all while staying connected to the world around you.

### **WATER FOR LIFE**

Drinking enough water is essential for staying fit, especially when travelling. Whether you're on a long flight, exploring new places, or moving between destinations, hydration plays a vital role in keeping your body energized and healthy.

When we travel, we often forget to drink water, leading to dehydration, which can cause fatigue, headaches, and muscle cramps. Proper hydration helps maintain energy levels, improves focus, and supports digestion, all of which can become easily disrupted during travel.

Water also helps combat the effects of jet lag by replenishing the fluids lost during flights, where dry cabin air can cause rapid dehydration. Staying hydrated ensures your joints and muscles function smoothly, reducing the risk of cramps or discomfort, especially when sitting for long periods. It also keeps your skin fresh and prevents bloating, a common side effect of travel.

Moreover, drinking enough water can help curb unnecessary snacking, which we often do out of boredom or dehydration misinterpreted as hunger. Carrying a refillable water bottle ensures you can stay hydrated throughout your journey, no matter where you are. By making water a priority, you're not only keeping your body in peak condition but also making your travel experience more comfortable and enjoyable.



*Eating Green Salad*



*Athleisure Wear, Allows To Move Freely*

### **CRACK THE CALORIE GAME**

One of the key aspects of staying healthy on the go is managing your calorie intake effectively. This can be tricky when you're surrounded by the convenience of fast food, airport snacks, or restaurant meals, but it's manageable with a bit of forethought.

Calorie Maintenance involves making conscious decisions about what you eat and how much. For example, if you're travelling by plane, it's easy to grab a large meal at the airport or snack throughout your flight. Instead, opt for lighter, healthier options such as a salad, grilled chicken, or a vegetable wrap. These choices are lower in calories and won't leave you feeling sluggish. Bring your snacks, like nuts, fruit, or protein bars, to avoid the temptation of high-calorie foods like chips or candy.

While dining out, which is inevitable when travelling, look for dishes that are grilled, baked, or steamed rather than fried. Choose meals that include lean proteins like fish or chicken and pair them with vegetables or whole grains instead of fries or creamy sauces. For example, if you're at a restaurant, instead of a burger and fries, try ordering a grilled chicken sandwich with a side salad.

Portion control is also essential. Restaurants tend to serve larger portions, so consider splitting your meal with a companion or asking for a to-go box to save half for later. This way, you can still enjoy local cuisine without overindulging.

### **COMFORT WEAR, STAY FIT EVERYWHERE**

Wearing comfortable clothes while travelling or during daily activities can greatly impact your movement and fitness levels. The right clothing provides ease of movement and encourages you to stay active without feeling restricted. For



example, breathable fabrics like cotton or stretchy materials such as spandex help you feel relaxed, whether you're sitting through a long journey or exploring a new destination.

Imagine you're on a sightseeing trip in a bustling Indian city like Jaipur (Rajasthan) or Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh). If you're wearing tight jeans or stiff formal attire, it might become uncomfortable to walk long distances or climb stairs at popular attractions like Amber Fort or the ghats along the Ganges. However, wearing comfortable clothes, such as loose-fitting pants or athleisure wear, allows you to move freely. This could result in you walking more, taking stairs instead of elevators, or even doing a quick stretch in a garden or park.

Another example is during long-haul flights or road trips. Wearing restrictive clothing for hours can lead to discomfort, making you less inclined to move around. But opting for comfortable travel outfits like joggers, leggings, or sneakers encourages you to walk around the airport, stretch during layovers, or take breaks for quick exercises during a road trip.

In the end, comfortable clothes serve as a motivator for staying active and healthy, allowing easy movement into your daily routine. Small wardrobe adjustments can lead to big improvements in your fitness levels, especially when travelling.

## WORK OUT WHENEVER YOU CAN

Finding time to work out while travelling can be a challenge, but with a little creativity, it's entirely possible to stay fit on the go. Incorporating short workouts or stretches into your routine whenever possible is an effective way to maintain your fitness. You don't need a full gym session; even small efforts can add up and make a big difference in how you feel.

Imagine you're on a business trip, staying in a hotel with a tight schedule. While you may not have time for an hour-long gym

session, you can take advantage of small windows of free time. For instance, you could wake up 15 minutes earlier and do a quick bodyweight workout in your hotel room, including exercises like push-ups, squats, lunges, and planks. These simple movements require no equipment and can get your heart rate up in no time.

Another example is utilizing hotel gyms, even for short sessions. Many hotels now offer well-equipped fitness centres, so even a 20-minute session on the treadmill or stationary bike, combined with a few weight exercises, can help you stay on track. Stretching is also a great way to stay active. After sitting on long flights or during meetings, taking 5-10 minutes to stretch your legs, back, and shoulders can reduce stiffness and boost energy levels.

By squeezing in these small workouts, you'll not only stay active but also feel more energized and focused throughout your travels.



*Doing Yoga in Hotel Room*



*Quick Workout In Hotel Room*





# *Traditional Wonders*

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# COMING IN 2026 - THE BUGATTI TOURBILLON

With its lightweight construction and instantaneous torque from electric motors, the Bugatti Tourbillon delivers extraordinary performance

TT BUREAU

In 2004, the reborn Bugatti brand transformed the world of automotive performance and luxury with the launch of Bugatti Tourbillon a 1,001 hp hypersports car: the Veyron. Now, 20 years after Bugatti invented the hypersports car, it redefines the concept completely with an entirely new powertrain and platform. This is the Bugatti Tourbillon.

The Bugatti Tourbillon now enters its testing phase, with prototypes already on the road in anticipation of customer deliveries in 2026. A total of 250 examples will be built, with a starting price of 3.8m EUR net. Hand-assembly will take place at the Bugatti Atelier in Molsheim, following the final W16-powered Bugatti models, Bolide and W16 Mistra.

## THE BUGATTI TOURBILLON: AN AUTOMOTIVE ICON 'POUR L'ÉTERNITÉ'

The Tourbillon is 'shaped by speed'. The ability to travel at more than 400km/h requires every single surface, inlet and ridge to be finely honed to ensure it is not only aerodynamic but also beneficial to the car's thermodynamics. This is the guiding

principle of the Tourbillon, which then evolved around four Bugatti design elements inspired by history: the horseshoe grille, the Bugatti Line, the central ridge and the dual colour split.

Although beautiful in its design and proportions, every surface, intake and vent is carefully honed to balance the enormous aerodynamic forces of a car travelling at over 400km/h as well as the thermodynamic requirements of a V16 engine, electric motors and battery at full performance.

The Tourbillon features a number of patented technologies. As a result, the rear wing even remains submerged during top-speed runs, with a perfect equilibrium of forces generated by these new innovations. Much of this aerodynamic equilibrium is thanks to the new diffuser concept, which starts to climb from just behind the passenger cabin, rising at an ideal angle to keep the Tourbillon in perfect balance. The diffuser is built around a completely new crash concept, which is fully integrated within the structure of the diffuser itself, keeping it both enormously effective but also hidden from sight, enabling the open rear-end design.



The Bugatti Tourbillon





*The Bugatti Tourbillon*

At the heart of the Tourbillon's design ethos is the iconic horseshoe, from which all lines of the car originate, shaping the central fuselage volume. A set of advanced, electrically actuated dihedral doors not only allow for easy entry into the vehicle but provide a dramatic sense of arrival, able to be opened and closed from the key fob, the door opening button found just underneath the Bugatti Line and on the centre console.

The design and engineering teams pioneered an authentic analogue experience in the cabin. This intricately engineered masterpiece remains a focal point of the driving experience, fixed in place as the rim of the steering wheel rotates around it – a set-up known as a fixed hub steering wheel. Through this ingenious concept, Tourbillon drivers have an unobstructed view of their instrumentation independent of the steering angle because the spokes reach around the back of the instrument cluster.

The centre console is a blend of crystal glass and aluminium, revealing the intricate workings of the switches and the engine start 'pull' lever that it hosts. The only screen in the car – capable of displaying Apple CarPlay, as well as vehicle data – is completely hidden from view unless drivers request it. An intricately engineered mechanism deploys the touchscreen from the top of the centre console; portrait mode for the reversing camera in just two seconds and full landscape mode in five seconds.

Every interior decision is made with ultimate performance in mind. The seats, for example, are fixed to the floor to be

as light and as low as they can be, and the pedal box can be electrically adjusted forward and backward to ensure a comfortable driving position for everyone.

Even the audio system is being engineered without traditional speakers and woofers, opting for an advanced system that features exciters on the door panels and throughout the car to use existing interior panels as speakers.

## POWERTRAIN AND PERFORMANCE

This next-generation Bugatti hypersports car is powered by an all-new 8.3-litre naturally aspirated V16 engine – engineered with the help of Cosworth – paired with a front e-Axle with two electric motors and one electric motor mounted at the rear axle. In total, the Tourbillon produces 1,800 hp with 1,000 from the combustion engine itself and 800 hp from the electric motors. It's an extraordinary achievement – delivered thanks to a host of cutting-edge materials and technology. With its lightweight construction and instantaneous torque from the electric motors, the Bugatti Tourbillon delivers extraordinary performance. 0-100: 2.0 s 0-200: <5 s 0-300: <10 s 0-400: <25 s Top speed: 445 kph.

Thanks to the combination of an extremely advanced hybrid powertrain and lightweight engineering, efficient packaging and advanced aerodynamics, the Tourbillon will be reducing significantly the emissions in comparison to its predecessor while still enhancing the driving experience and bringing to new levels the pinnacle of the automotive industry.





HUAWEI Mate XT Ultimate

# GLAM UP YOUR TECH: LUXURY GADGETS

Choose from our curated list of luxury gadgets with high-tech features to keep you ahead

TT BUREAU

**D**iwali's just around the corner, and it's the perfect time to light up your gifting game! Choose from our curated list of luxury gadgets with high-tech features to keep you ahead and elevate your style. This festive season, gift something that truly shines!

As the gifting season kicks into high gear, luxury tech is stealing the spotlight like never before. With the trend of luxury gadgets rapidly evolving, it's clear that blending cutting-edge technology with style is the new way to make a statement. This Diwali, give something extraordinary to that special someone who truly deserves the best—yes, even if it means burning a hole in your pocket.

## HUAWEI MATE XTULTIMATE

The HUAWEI Mate XT Ultimate showcases cutting-edge triple-fold technology, seamlessly combining style and functionality. Its legendary star diamond design pays homage

to craftsmanship and artistic excellence. The device boasts a remarkable 10.2-inch ultra-modular three-fold large screen that unfolds to provide an expansive 3K ultra-high-definition resolution, ensuring every visual experience is extraordinary. The HUAWEI Mate XT Ultimate, featuring its advanced triple fold technology and stunning design, is priced at INR 236,748.40.

## HUAWEI MATE 50 PRO

Meet your glamorous new buy - HUAWEI Mate 50 Pro. Featuring stunning symmetry aesthetics and a refined Clous de Paris pattern, this device is built to last with its durable Kunlun Glass and 6-metre water resistance. Enjoy a new era of mobile photography with the Ultra Aperture XMAGE Camera, equipped with an F1.4 ultra-large aperture and a 10-step adjustable physical aperture. Capture every moment perfectly with its Super Night Mode, Professional Portrait capabilities, and Super Macro features.



### HUAWEI WATCH 4 PRO SPACE EDITION

Here's something your heart will cry out for! HUAWEI Watch 4 Pro Space Edition lets you shoot for the stars with its Aerospace-Grade DLC Titanium<sup>1</sup> | Health Glance 2.0<sup>2</sup> eSIM Cellular Calling! Inspired by the "de Laval nozzle" on supersonic rocket engines, the Space Edition watch is a fitting tribute to the daring machines that have taken humanity to new heights. The lightweight titanium case and tough-as-nails diamond-like carbon (DLC) coating make its surface twice as hard. It can accompany you on 30-metre dives, having been certified as an EN13319-compliant diving accessory. A smart dual-core architecture 2.0 allocates computing on a seamless basis, freely switching between two battery modes to balance power and performance.

### APPLE VISION PRO 2

The Apple Vision Pro 2, the next-generation mixed-reality headset, is an embodiment of cutting-edge technology and luxury. Designed for both augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences, this headset offers a seamless integration of the real and digital worlds.

One of its standout features is the ultra-high-resolution display, offering 8K visuals for an immersive experience. The spatial audio system enhances the experience with 360-degree sound, creating a truly lifelike environment. The Apple Vision Pro 2 is priced as a luxury item, retailing at approximately INR 3,00,000.

### TESLA CYBERQUAD

The Tesla Cyberquad is an all-electric, four-wheel ride-on toy designed for adventure, drawing inspiration from Tesla's iconic Cybertruck. Built with a full steel frame, it boasts a



Apple Vision Pro 2



Tesla Cyberquad

sturdy yet sleek design that includes a cushioned seat, rear disk braking for safety, and LED light bars for both headlights and taillights.

Powered by a 36V lithium-ion battery and a 500W motor, the Cyberquad offers a top speed of 10 mph, with a high/low-speed switch to reduce the speed to 5 mph if needed. With a range of up to 15 miles, this ride-on is ideal for children aged 9-12, providing a fun and safe driving experience. The Tesla Cyberquad is priced at approximately INR 1,20,000 in India, though this may vary based on import duties and shipping fees.

### BANG & OLUFSEN BEOLAB 90 SPEAKERS

The Bang & Olufsen Beolab 90 Speakers are a pinnacle of audio engineering, designed to deliver unprecedented power and acoustic performance for the most discerning audiophiles. These floor-standing speakers, with an output of 8,200 watts per speaker, bring an extraordinary level of power into any home entertainment setup. Equipped with 18 premium drivers, the Beolab 90 ensures an immersive and detailed listening experience, allowing users to appreciate their music and soundtracks in their finest form fully.

### DJI INSPIRE 3 DRONE

For gadget enthusiasts, the DJI Inspire 3 is an exciting breakthrough in aerial cinematography. It sets a new standard for power, performance, and creative freedom, allowing filmmakers to capture cinematic shots with unmatched precision and efficiency. With its impressive 8K camera, the Inspire 3 opens up new dimensions in visual storytelling, maximizing the potential of every frame. For those passionate about aerial filmmaking, the DJI Inspire 3 is an indispensable tool, empowering creators to produce stunning visuals and explore creative possibilities.



# MOUNTAIN CHIC: HIMACHALI JEWELLERY

Himachal Pradesh jewellery is mountain chic at its finest - a repository of the region's rich culture and heritage

TT BUREAU



Himachal Pradesh, nestled in northern India, forms a captivating part of the world's grand and majestic Himalayas. An anonymous writer beautifully portrays Himachal Pradesh with poetic imagery: eternal snow, lush green forests, flowing streams, melodious birds, serene lakes, vibrant valleys, emerald meadows, sparkling glaciers, and cheerful women.

The region's natural splendour is awe-inspiring, offering a stunning range of scenery, from snow-capped peaks to flourishing forests, crystal-clear streams, diverse wildlife, and thriving flora.

Known as the 'land of snowy mountains' or the 'abode of snow,' Himachal Pradesh boasts ancient forests, high-altitude lakes, and deserts, and has long served as a spiritual refuge for saints and sages. The cultural richness of Himachal Pradesh, with roots tracing back to the Vedic era, remains vibrant today, reflecting the unbroken spiritual heritage of the region.

This cultural depth permeates the daily lives of its people, as seen in their diverse religions, languages, and regional customs. The locals of Himachal Pradesh are admired for their distinctive clothing, striking physical features, warm hospitality, and simple way of life, all of which form the essence of their rich and beautiful culture.

Gold jewellery holds deep cultural and emotional significance in the lives of Himachali women, symbolizing not just wealth but heritage, identity, and social status. It plays a central role during festivals, weddings, and religious events, where the ornate designs often carry traditional and spiritual value.

Himachali gold jewellery is particularly treasured for its intricate craftsmanship, which blends both tribal and royal influences, a fact honoured by gold jewellers in Himachal Pradesh.

This fusion is evident in the bold, statement pieces that incorporate motifs from nature, such as flowers and animals,

*Himachali Jewellery*





*Chak Necklace*

reflecting the deep connection of the people with their surroundings.

Tribal influences bring earthy, geometric patterns and unique techniques of metalworking, while royal designs add a sense of grandeur and refinement, with delicate filigree work and the use of gemstones like emeralds and rubies. The result is jewellery that not only enhances the beauty of the wearer but also represents the region's rich cultural legacy, passed down through generations.

#### **CHAK NECKLACE- CHAMBA**

The Chak necklace is a prominent and culturally significant piece of jewellery from the Chamba region of Himachal Pradesh, revered for its beauty and deep-rooted heritage.

Its origin can be traced back to the royal and tribal traditions of the area, where it evolved as an emblem of wealth and status. The Chak holds special importance during weddings and festivals, particularly for brides, as it symbolizes social status, familial prosperity, and blessings for a prosperous future.

#### **CHIRI TIKKA- KULLU**

The Chiri Tikka is a traditional gold head ornament from the Kullu region of Himachal Pradesh, symbolizing both beauty and spirituality in the lives of Kullu women. Worn primarily on the forehead, this exquisite piece is often an integral part of bridal jewellery and is also prominently worn during festivals and religious ceremonies. These motifs are carefully crafted in gold, sometimes adorned with small gemstones, making the ornament both visually stunning and culturally meaningful.

The Chiri Tikka plays a crucial role in complementing the traditional attire of Kullu brides, typically paired with vibrant Pattu shawls and other regional garments. Its placement on



*Chiri Tikka*



*Karn Phool*

the forehead is symbolic, as it is believed to channel divine blessings, protect the wearer, and enhance her beauty on her wedding day.

#### **KARN PHOOL- SIRMAUR**

The Karn Phool is a stunning pair of gold earrings shaped like flowers, cherished by women in the Sirmaur region of Himachal Pradesh. These exquisite earrings are expertly crafted, often featuring intricate detailing that highlights the delicate petals and leaves.

The design not only emphasizes aesthetic beauty but also embodies cultural significance, as Karn Phool is a vital component of bridal jewellery sets, symbolizing purity and elegance during weddings.



Traditionally worn by brides, these earrings serve as a representation of beauty and femininity, enhancing the bride's overall appearance on her special day. Moreover, the Karn Phool is steeped in local customs, often associated with celebrations and rites of passage, reinforcing the connection between adornment and cultural identity.

### **BOOMANI- KANGRA**

The Boomani is a delicate gold necklace deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Kangra, a region known for its rich traditions and artistry. Historically, the Boomani dates back centuries, crafted by skilled artisans who have honed their techniques over generations.

Each piece embodies not only exquisite craftsmanship but also a tapestry of cultural beliefs; its design often features intricate patterns that carry symbolic meanings, reflecting the artistry of the region.

In Kangra's wedding traditions, the Boomani holds a significant place, serving as a cherished symbol of protection and good fortune for brides. Families often pass down Boomani pieces as heirlooms, imbuing them with a sense of heritage and continuity.

### **TORA- KINNAUR**

The Tora is a unique gold belt-like ornament traditionally worn around the waist, celebrated for its representation of both strength and beauty in Kinnauri culture. Crafted with meticulous attention to detail, the Tora often features delicate gold designs that blend intricate filigree work with traditional motifs, such as floral patterns and geometric shapes, each symbolizing various aspects of life and nature.

### **CHUDAMANI- MANDI**

The Chudamani is a traditional gold headpiece with its origins in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, renowned for its significance in religious and wedding ceremonies. This exquisite ornament is meticulously crafted, showcasing elaborate designs that often incorporate motifs of celestial elements like the sun and moon, symbolizing the harmony of life and the universe. The intricate craftsmanship of the Chudamani reflects the skilled artistry of local jewellers, who have preserved these techniques over generations. Worn primarily by brides, the Chudamani plays a pivotal role in bridal attire, serving as a powerful symbol of marital bliss and prosperity.

### **CHANK- KULLU**

The Chank or Chanki is a large, ornate nose ring of great cultural significance, traditionally worn by brides in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, as a cherished gold ornament. Expertly crafted with intricate detailing, the Chanki often features elaborate engravings, floral patterns, and sometimes gemstones, showcasing the exceptional skill of local artisans.

Himachal Pradesh's gold jewellery is a dazzling tapestry that vividly reflects the region's rich cultural heritage and artistic mastery. Each piece, from the graceful Chak necklace to the ornate Chanki nose ring, is a symbol of identity, tradition, and social standing.

These exquisite treasures passed down through generations, not only enhance a woman's beauty but also embody the deep-rooted connection between the people of Himachal and their breathtaking natural surroundings. Celebrating these stunning ornaments allows us to appreciate the intricate craftsmanship and cultural stories that make this region a true goldmine of heritage, tradition, and timeless artistry.



*Chank - Nose Ring*





## 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.

### **BENEFITS AVAILABLE/SALIENT FEATURES:**

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- Single window clearance concept.
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- Well connected to NH 8-A, Railway Station- 2km away.
- Un-interrupted Power Supply and water supply
- Round the clock security by Ex-servicemen.
- Installation of Software based LED streets lights
- Single point entry and exit
- 24x7 Customs clearance at doorstep

### **COMPLETE EXEMPTION FROM :-**

1. All customs duties levied upon all imported goods.
2. Both basic custom duty as well as IGST on goods for development, maintenance and authorized operation of SEZ units.
3. Stamp duty levied on lease deed and other documents from SEZ units.
4. GST on goods brought from Domestic Tariff Area to a SEZ unit.
5. GST on services provided to SEZ units consumed within SEZ

More than 25 Ready to move Factory Buildings & Warehouses are available in Kandla SEZ, Vacant land/plots are available in Adani Port SEZ, Sterling SEZ, Dahej SEZ and other SEZs in Gujarat. Kandla SEZ also Notifies available space from time to time on website.

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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# TIMELESS MAGIC OF INDIAN WEDDINGS

Hello! I'm Jatin Oberoi, Founder of Reet Entertainment, and I'm excited to take you through my deeply emotional journey of planning Indian weddings

JATIN OBEROI

From long days to sleepless nights, it's been an incredible experience turning Indian weddings into unforgettable celebrations. Let me show you the magic behind the scenes! Long days of working every detail to the T and months of sleepless nights with just one dream in our eyes - to make their wedding the grandest, most memorable day of their life. It is this dedication and teamwork that keeps everything together to make any wedding, a "GREAT WEDDING" !!

Today's wedding trends emphasise personalisation, comfort, and a blend of traditional and modern elements. Couples are more focused on creating a unique experience that reflects their personalities and values. This shift is evident in the growing popularity of custom elements, from personalised vows and décor to bespoke experiences.

## VISION VS REALITY - A HELICOPTER MOMENT

In the business of emotions and dreams, our ultimate goal is always to meet the needs of every member of the wedding party, no matter how sudden or unusual the request might be. However, achieving this can sometimes be more challenging than anticipated.

I remember a particular incident while planning a beach wedding in Goa. On the morning of the event, the groom expressed a sudden desire for a more dramatic entrance. He wanted to arrive via helicopter, Bollywood-style, and land next to the Varmala Stage, which was set up right on the beach. With the DJ, band, and décor all prepared for the Baraat scheduled to begin in the next three hours, this request posed a significant challenge.

Newly Wed Couple





*Grand Entry of the Couple*

As event planners, our instinct is to explore every possibility before turning down a request. Our team promptly sprang into action and managed to arrange a helicopter on very short notice. Unfortunately, due to the unique nature of the request and the constraints of the venue, we were unable to fulfil it. Nonetheless, this unusual set of circumstances presented a considerable challenge for our team.

### **REINVENTING DREAMS - AND LOCATIONS!**

In another schedule, during the difficult times of COVID, we faced a challenge like never before. Transforming a couple's vision into reality, especially in the context of weddings, involves a blend of creativity, technical skills, and effective project management. Being sensitive to the couple's

emotional needs and cultural or family considerations is important in making their vision truly personal. But this comes with its fair share of challenges.

Planning a wedding typically takes several months to nearly a year. However, when COVID-19 struck, it brought everything to a halt. The wedding we had meticulously arranged for months was set to take place at Leela in Jaipur. Due to the changing circumstances, the family decided to move the entire event to their farmhouse in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Initially planned as a destination wedding in Rajasthan, our team had to quickly reimagine, redesign, and adapt the entire plan within just two months to meet the family's needs and ensure the event remained aligned with their original vision.



*Grand Floral Wedding Theme*



## HIDDEN CHALLENGES - FEAR OF JOY

Every wedding we orchestrate begins as a blank canvas, ready to be infused with the couple's unique love story and dreams, transforming every detail into a masterpiece. However, even when everything appears to be going smoothly, hidden challenges can arise.

One such challenge emerged when a friend of the groom while joking around, exaggerated the importance of the wedding and the number of guests expected. Unfortunately, this playful banter unknowingly intensified the groom's fear of crowds. The situation came to a head right after the sangeet night when the groom, overwhelmed by anxiety, confided in me that he was considering cancelling the wedding. The couple's relatives had travelled from across the country to Mumbai—where they had met and fallen in love during college—because it was a significant place for them.

At that moment, the groom's anxiety overshadowed his excitement about marrying his beloved, leading him to contemplate a drastic decision. I spoke with him and helped him calm down, and he eventually shared his concerns related to his friend's comments. It was challenging to reassure him that the remarks were meant in jest and posed no real threat.

We also explored alternative venues with fewer guests as a potential solution. Ultimately, it was the heartfelt discussion about his love for his bride-to-be that helped him overcome his fears and agree to proceed with the wedding. In such a delicate situation, we had limited control over the circumstances, but our focus remained on handling the crisis with care and empathy.

## KEY TRENDS AND INSIGHTS IN INDIAN WEDDINGS

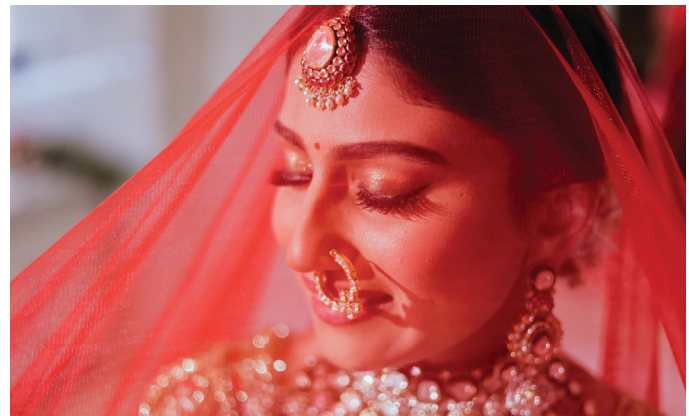
While traditions in Indian weddings are important, the event itself is deeply personal and cultural and reflects not

only the couple's tastes but also the broader trends shaping the celebration. As we navigate through today's wedding landscape, several trends stand out, influencing everything from colour schemes to attire and jewellery. Here's a look at what's trending in the world of weddings today.

## TRENDING COLOURS - INDIAN WEDDINGS

In recent years, wedding colour palettes have shifted from traditional choices to more contemporary and vibrant selections. Classic whites and pastels, once the norm, are being replaced by a broader range of nuanced hues that reflect modern tastes. Earthy tones like terracotta, sage green, and ochre have gained popularity for their natural and calming qualities. These shades work particularly well in rustic or bohemian-themed weddings, bringing an organic and grounded feel to the celebration.

At the other end of the spectrum, bold jewel tones such as emerald green, royal blue, and deep burgundy are becoming favourites for those looking to add drama and sophistication to their weddings. These rich, striking colours are perfect for evening events or formal settings, where they create a sense of



*The Bride*



*Wedding Celebrations*





elegance and grandeur. Despite these shifts, soft neutrals like blush pink, ivory, and champagne remain enduring choices. Their timeless elegance and versatility continue to appeal to couples seeking a classic look, providing a perfect backdrop for weddings that prioritize subtlety and refinement.

### **MUST-HAVE JEWELLERY AT WEDDINGS**

Jewellery plays a pivotal role in enhancing a bride's attire, with current trends reflecting a balance between classic elegance and modern innovation. Statement pieces are gaining popularity, as bold and eye-catching jewellery adds a dramatic flair to wedding ensembles. Large, ornate earrings or chunky necklaces are often chosen to make a striking impact, elevating the overall bridal look.

At the opposite end, minimalist elegance is also in vogue. Brides are increasingly drawn to delicate, understated pieces that exude sophistication and timeless appeal. Simple diamond studs or thin gold chains provide a refined, elegant touch without overwhelming the overall aesthetic.

Personalised jewellery is another rising trend, with custom pieces that feature initials, birthstones, or meaningful symbols becoming favourites. These unique touches not only enhance the bride's look but also add sentimental value, making the jewellery more personal and memorable.

### **WEDDINGS TAILORED WITH UNIQUE THEMES**

Weddings tailored with unique themes offer couples the opportunity to create memorable and personalized celebrations. One of the standout themes we've crafted is Celestial Dreams, which draws inspiration from the beauty of the cosmos. This wedding theme incorporates deep blues, silvers, and golds, with star and moon motifs adding a magical touch. The décor features starry backdrops, galaxy-patterned tables, and ethereal lighting, transforming the venue into a starlit wonderland. From glittering attire to cosmic-inspired floral arrangements and cakes, the celestial theme creates an enchanting experience, making the wedding feel like a journey through the universe.

Another unique theme is Petals of Paradise, inspired by the vibrant bougainvillea flower. This wedding bursts with bold pinks, purples, and fuchsias, creating a lush and tropical atmosphere. Bougainvillea blooms are heavily featured in floral arrangements, aisle décor, and arches, adding a rich and colourful touch. The bride and bridal party often wear vibrant hues or floral patterns that reflect the tropical essence of the theme. Invitations and cakes continue the floral motif, creating a cohesive and lively celebration that highlights the natural beauty of the bougainvillea.

For couples seeking a more traditional approach, the Cultural Heritage wedding blends time-honoured customs with modern elegance. This theme showcases refined décor, formal attire, and ceremonies that pay tribute to the couple's cultural roots. Elegant floral arrangements, classic linens, and formal furniture contribute to the sophisticated atmosphere. Key highlights include ornate arches or mandaps, luxurious table settings with fine china, and a candle-lit ambience. This theme honours cultural traditions while providing a timeless, elegant setting that offers a memorable and meaningful experience for both the couple and their guests.

Planning a wedding around a specific theme requires careful coordination and a structured approach. Every detail, from the grand vision to the smallest nuances, must align seamlessly to tell the couple's unique story. Wedding planning is truly an art, transforming dreams into reality by crafting unforgettable experiences. Whether it's a fairytale fantasy, a spiritual celebration, or an elegant soirée, each wedding we plan is a masterpiece, designed to reflect the couple's desires and create memories that last a lifetime.

### **TRANSFORMING WEDDING FEASTS**

Food trends at Indian weddings have evolved significantly, reflecting shifts in tastes, dietary preferences, and a desire for unique culinary experiences. One of the key trends is the incorporation of fusion cuisine, where international dishes like Italian, Mexican, or Japanese are paired alongside traditional Indian fare. This blend of flavours offers guests a diverse and exciting gastronomic journey.



Another trend is personalized menus, with couples increasingly tailoring their wedding feasts to reflect their own tastes and regional specialties. This customization allows for a more intimate and meaningful dining experience, often featuring favourite dishes that hold personal significance. Interactive food stations, where guests can customize their meals at live counters such as chaat stations, pasta bars, or taco counters, have also become popular, adding a playful and engaging element to the dining experience.

Dietary considerations have gained importance, with many weddings offering vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, and low-carb options to accommodate guests with specific dietary needs. There's also a trend toward reimagining traditional Indian dishes with a modern twist, using contemporary presentations or innovative ingredients like deconstructed samosas or mini dosas with gourmet toppings. Showcasing regional cuisines while adding a modern flair brings a unique touch to wedding menus.

Themed food experiences are also becoming prominent, with menus crafted to match the wedding's overall theme. For example, a regal wedding might feature a royal Mughlai feast, while a beachside celebration could offer coastal seafood spreads. Engaging guests through interactive experiences, such as cooking demonstrations or chef-led tastings, adds a layer of fun to the event.

Gourmet and artisanal touches have gained popularity as well, with the use of luxurious ingredients like truffles, saffron, or artisanal cheeses. Handcrafted desserts, bespoke cakes, and custom macarons elevate the overall dining experience with their elegance and uniqueness. Even traditional desserts are being transformed with a modern flair, with fusion mithais and creatively presented sweets becoming popular. Dessert bars that offer a variety of traditional and contemporary treats allow guests to indulge in a wide selection of signature sweets.

These trends reflect the dynamic nature of Indian wedding cuisine, where tradition meets innovation to create memorable and delightful culinary experiences for guests.

### **CURATING THE PERFECT SETTING**

For a Big Fat Indian Wedding, several picturesque locations can offer a stunning backdrop and add to the grandeur of the event. Popular destinations include Udaipur, Jaipur, Goa, and international locations like Bali or Phuket. These locations stand out for their unique blend of cultural heritage, architectural splendour, and natural beauty, providing an unforgettable setting for a Big Fat Indian Wedding.

Have detailed conversations to understand their vision, including style, theme, and overall ambience and if they have any specific, such as outdoor spaces, historical features, or modern amenities. Ensuring that the location can handle the number of guests and that the layout suits the different events. For instance, a location with separate areas for ceremonies, dining, and dancing can be ideal.

A beach setting might be perfect for a relaxed, tropical theme, while a palace or heritage site could suit a more



*Varmala Celebrations*

formal or royal theme. Ensuring its accessibility for guests, considering travel and accommodation. Choosing a location that's suitable for the season and weather conditions. Some venues are ideal for year-round events, while others may be seasonal. By thoroughly evaluating these aspects, we can ensure that the chosen location complements the couple's vision and accommodates the scale of their wedding, creating a memorable and harmonious celebration.

Indian weddings is all about celebrating love, tradition, and family with grandeur and style. With careful planning, attention to detail, and a touch of creativity, you can create a wedding that is not only grand but also deeply personal and memorable for everyone involved.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

(Jatin Oberoi, is the Founder of Reet Entertainment. With his natural charm and commitment, Jatin Oberoi doesn't just plan events; he becomes a cherished part of his client's lives, building trust and making every celebration truly special. Based in Mumbai, Reet Entertainment specializes in offering unique and innovative event-planning solutions for all types of occasions. With a focus on delivering top-notch services while staying within budget, Reet Entertainment has built a reputation for creating stunning and elegant weddings at some of the most breathtaking venues)

All images courtesy: Reet Entertainment





## 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.



# JUMP, DIVE, AND FLY!

Gravity got you down? Flip the script with these skydiving destinations that will have you flying high and laughing!

TT BUREAU



*Skydiving Couple in Interlaken, Switzerland*

Nothing says “I’m brave” quite like jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane at 12,000 feet. Have you ever wondered if you trust your parachute more than your best friend? Skydiving is the ultimate trust exercise, after all. Do you want to face your fears head-on? Skydiving lets you experience flight, minus the feathers or the graceful landing.

This experience will give you the ultimate bragging rights and thrilling lifelong memories to cherish. Come let us go through one of the best skydiving destinations across the globe which you can’t afford to miss if you are an adventure enthusiast or thinking of turning into one.

## INTERLAKEN, SWITZERLAND

Interlaken, Switzerland, is a dream destination for skydiving, offering jumps from 14,000 feet with breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps. As you freefall, you’ll see stunning snow-covered mountains, clear lakes, and beautiful green valleys below. The combination of adrenaline and incredible scenery makes it a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The place is known for its expert instructors, making it safe and exciting for both beginners and experienced skydivers. If

you’re seeking an adventure and want to see the Alps from a new perspective, skydiving in Interlaken is a perfect choice.

**Detail - Drop Zone:** The drop zone is in Reichenbach im Kandertal, 27 km from Interlaken. Skydivers jump from 4,000 to 4,600 meters, freefalling for 60 seconds at 200 km/h, followed by a 5-7 minute glide. Spectacular views include the Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau, and Interlaken peaks, with a gentle landing to conclude the adventure.

## AAMBY VALLEY, MAHARASHTRA

Skydiving at Aamby Valley in Maharashtra is a truly unforgettable experience, offering an exhilarating blend of adventure and natural beauty. As you leap from 10,000 feet, you’re greeted by expansive views of the Western Ghats- one of the world’s major biodiversity hotspots, with rolling green hills, calm lakes, and winding roads stretching out below. The sensation of freefalling through the air is unmatched, made even more special by the stunning landscapes that surround you.

Aamby Valley stands out as a skydiving destination because it offers a unique combination of adrenaline and peaceful nature. Instead of just urban views or endless plains,



you'll enjoy the contrast of vibrant green hills and tranquil waters as you descend. For anyone seeking a thrilling jump in a serene environment, Aamby Valley is a perfect choice.

**Details - Drop Zone:** The skydiving drop zone is a 2-hour drive from Mumbai, located in Pune District, Maharashtra. They currently offer 10,000-foot tandem jumps year-round, except during high winds or heavy monsoons. The site is accessible via Lonavala Railway Station, by road from major cities like Mumbai and Pune, or via Pune Airport.

### **PALM JUMEIRAH, DUBAI, UAE**

Skydiving over Palm Jumeirah in Dubai is an amazing adventure from 13,000 feet, offering a breathtaking view of the iconic Palm Island below. Once you jump, you'll see the sparkling blue waters of the Arabian Gulf and the impressive Dubai skyline.

The sight of the palm-shaped island makes the whole experience even more special. With experienced instructors ensuring your safety, it's an exciting and unique way to see Dubai from above. Whether you're new to skydiving or a thrill-seeker, jumping over Palm Jumeirah is an unforgettable adventure.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Skydive over Dubai's Palm Jumeirah from Skydive Dubai's Palm Dropzone, located near Al Seyahi Street, Dubai Marina. Easily accessible via taxi from Dubai city centre.

### **MYSORE, KARNATAKA**

Mysore, Karnataka, offers one of India's most thrilling skydiving experiences, with jumps from up to 10,000 feet. As you leap into the skies, you're greeted by breathtaking aerial views of

the lush landscapes below, including the iconic Chamundi Hills and the vast greenery that surrounds the city.

The serene backdrop contrasts with the adrenaline rush of freefall, making it an unforgettable adventure. Mysore's clear skies and well-managed dive operations ensure both safety and excitement, making it a perfect spot for first-time divers and seasoned adventurers alike who seek a unique way to explore this historic city from above.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Mysore skydiving takes place at Mysore Airport, about 10 km from the city centre. The dropzone offers tandem and static jumps from 10,000 to



*Palm Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE*



*Aamby Valley, Maharashtra*





Waikiki, Hawaii, USA

15,000 feet. Easily accessible by road, you can reach Mysore from Bengaluru (140 km) via bus, train, or taxi.

## HAWAII, USA

Skydiving in Hawaii is an unforgettable adventure, offering a perfect mix of excitement and the natural beauty of the islands. Jumping from 12,000 feet, you'll be treated to stunning views of lush green mountains, dramatic volcanic craters, and the endless expanse of the blue Pacific Ocean.

As you soar through the skies, the vibrant coastline and tropical scenery create a breath-holding backdrop, making the experience even more special. The beauty of Hawaii is unlike any other, with its diverse landscapes of beaches, forests, and volcanic peaks all visible in one thrilling jump. This exhilarating skydiving adventure allows you to fully appreciate the magic of Hawaii from a unique, high-flying perspective that will stay with you forever.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Hawaii's top skydiving spots include Oahu's North Shore and Maui, offering jumps from 12,000 to 14,000 feet with stunning ocean and mountain views. Reach them by car from Honolulu (1-hour drive), or via public buses and shuttle services from Waikiki or nearby towns. Air and sea travel to Oahu and Maui is available from major U.S. cities.

## DEESA, GUJARAT

Deesa in Gujarat is a hidden gem for skydiving enthusiasts, offering an exhilarating jump from 12,000 feet. As you freefall, the sprawling landscapes of rural Gujarat unfold beneath you, with the serene waters of the nearby lakes adding to the breathtaking views.

The site's flat terrain provides a unique vantage point, allowing divers to take in the vast expanses of green and

golden fields. Deesa is one of the few certified skydiving spots in India, making it a must-visit for adventure seekers looking to experience the thrill of freefalling in a less-travelled, yet stunningly scenic location.

**Details - Drop Zone:** The destination offers skydiving at Deesa Airstrip, known for its scenic open landscapes. Jumps range from 10,000 to 15,000 feet. Reach Deesa via road from Ahmedabad (150 km), or take a train or bus to nearby Palanpur, followed by local transport to Deesa.

## QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

Skydiving in Queenstown, New Zealand, is the ultimate thrill for adventure seekers. Known as the adventure capital



Queenstown, New Zealand



of the world, Queenstown offers jumps from up to 15,000 feet, providing stunning views of snow-capped mountains, shimmering lakes, and vast valleys. The adrenaline rush of freefalling over the dramatic landscapes is truly unmatched.

As you descend, you'll take in the breathtaking beauty of Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkables mountain range. This iconic destination combines adventure with jaw-dropping scenery, making skydiving in Queenstown a must-do experience for anyone looking to feel the rush while surrounded by one of the world's most beautiful settings.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Accessible via Queenstown Airport, it's a short drive of 15 mins from the town centre by taxi, shuttle, or rental car. Wanaka, Glenorchy, Milford Sound, Franz Josef, and Te Anau are top skydiving spots near Queenstown with stunning alpine and coastal views.

### **DHANA, MADHYA PRADESH**

Dhana, Madhya Pradesh, offers one of the most exhilarating skydiving experiences in India. Located in a quaint rural area near Sagar, it provides wide, open skies and vast farmlands, ensuring both a safe descent and a breathtaking aerial view. As you freefall, you can witness the serene countryside unfold below, providing a unique perspective on central India's beauty.

Dhana is well-known for its organised skydiving camps, catering to both tandem and static-line jump enthusiasts. The location is perfect for beginners due to its spacious landing zones and professional instructors, ensuring safety and thrill in equal measure.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Dhana Skydiving Point in Madhya Pradesh is located at the Dhana Airstrip, 12 km from Sagar. You can reach it by road from Bhopal (180 km), or by train to

Sagar Junction (30 km). The nearest airport is in Bhopal, and local taxis or buses are available for onward travel.

### **MOSSEL BAY, SOUTH AFRICA**

For an unforgettable skydiving experience, Mossel Bay in South Africa offers a unique mix of stunning coastal views and peaceful landings. Jumping from heights of up to 12,000 feet, you'll be greeted by sweeping vistas of the Indian Ocean, golden beaches, and rolling green hills. As you descend, you'll enjoy a calm and picturesque glide, with plenty of time to appreciate the natural beauty below.

Conveniently located along the Garden Route, Mossel Bay is just a 40-minute drive from George Airport or around four hours from Cape Town. With experienced instructors ensuring a safe dive, Mossel Bay is perfect for both new and seasoned skydivers looking to enjoy South Africa's scenic charm from a whole new angle.

**Details - Drop Zone:** Mossel Bay Skydiving Point is located at Mossel Bay Airfield, 40 km from George Airport. Reachable via a 4-hour drive from Cape Town on the N2 Highway, it offers stunning ocean and mountain views. Buses also connect from major cities, with taxis available for local travel to the airfield.

Skydiving offers an exhilarating way to conquer fears, test your limits, and experience the rush of freefall. If you are a seasoned thrill-seeker or new to adventure sports, these top skydiving destinations promise unforgettable moments and a fresh perspective on bravery. From breathtaking views to the adrenaline of the jump, each location provides a unique adventure that will leave you with memories to last a lifetime. If you're ready to challenge yourself and embrace the excitement, these skydiving spots are a must-visit.



*Mossel Bay, South Africa*



# ADVENTURE MEETS SPIRITUAL BLISS

If you're up for a mix of adventure and spiritual vibes, the Tungnath trek in Uttarakhand's Himalayas is the perfect journey

TT BUREAU



*Tungnath Trek*

Looking for an adventure that's equal parts thrill and tranquillity? The Tungnath trek in Uttarakhand offers just that, with stunning landscapes and a touch of spiritual charm. This trek, known for attracting both nature lovers and devotees, takes you to the Tungnath Temple, the highest abode of Lord Shiva in the world, perched at an impressive altitude of 3,680 meters (12,073 feet). It's not just a religious site, but also a fantastic spot for those looking to soak in the beauty of the mountains.

The adventure begins in the charming village of Chopta, often called the 'Mini Switzerland of India.' From there, the trail leads you through stunning landscapes filled with lush green

meadows, dense forests, and incredible views of towering peaks like Nanda Devi and Chaukhamba. The trek is relatively short—about 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) to Tungnath—but it packs in all the exploration and scenic beauty you could ask for.

As you walk, you'll find yourself surrounded by rich biodiversity, with rhododendron trees, alpine flowers, and a variety of birds adding colour to the experience. The clear, crisp air and the majestic views of the snow-capped mountains make every step feel rewarding. And just when you think it can't get better, you'll reach the temple, where the serenity of the place and the spiritual energy is overwhelming.



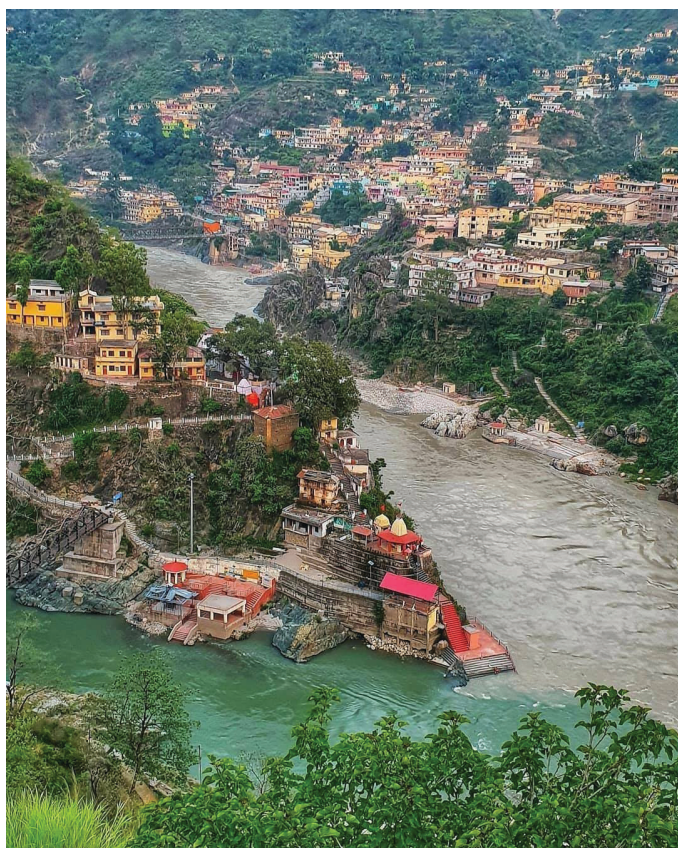
For those who want a bit more adventure, a short, steep climb from Tungnath takes you to Chandrashila, a summit that offers 360-degree views of the Himalayas. Whether you're here for the trek, the spiritual significance, or simply to be among the mountains, the Tungnath trek promises an unforgettable experience that will stay with you long after you've returned home.

### KNOW THE HISTORY BEHIND TUNGNATH

Tungnath is one of the few sacred sites where three great figures from ancient epics—the Pandavas, Lord Rama, and Ravana—are intricately connected through powerful stories. As part of the Panch Kedar, Tungnath Temple holds deep spiritual significance, especially in the Mahabharata.

After the Kurukshetra war, the Pandavas, burdened by guilt for killing their cousins, sought forgiveness from Lord Shiva. However, Lord Shiva, displeased with their actions, disguised himself as a bull and hid in Guptakashi. The determined Pandavas eventually discovered him, but Shiva's body reappeared in five different places: his hands at Tungnath, his hump at Kedarnath, and other parts at Rudranath, Madhyamaheshwar, and Kalpeshwar. In honour of this divine manifestation, the Pandavas built temples at each of these locations, now revered as the Panch Kedar.

Tungnath's sacred connection extends beyond the Mahabharata. According to another legend, Lord Rama meditated at Chandrashila, a peak near Tungnath, seeking peace and atonement after his victory over Ravana in the Ramayana. This spiritual link to Lord Rama adds further depth to the temple's significance.



Rudrapur



Chandrashila

Moreover, Tungnath is tied to Ravana, the central antagonist of the Ramayana. It is believed that Ravana, a devoted worshiper of Lord Shiva, performed penance at Tungnath to seek Shiva's blessings and strength. This intricate intertwining of stories from both the Mahabharata and Ramayana, involving the Pandavas, Lord Rama, and Ravana, makes Tungnath a place of profound spiritual importance, drawing pilgrims seeking blessings, forgiveness, and divine connection.

### ROUTE TO DIVINITY

The journey from Haridwar to Tungnath takes you through the captivating Garhwal Himalayas, offering a blend of spirituality and natural beauty. Tungnath, standing at 3,680 meters (12,073 feet), is the highest Shiva temple in the world.

Starting from Haridwar, the first stop is Rishikesh, a spiritual hub known for its iconic Lakshman Jhula and the peaceful Triveni Ghat on the banks of the Ganges. From Rishikesh, the route takes you to Devprayag, where the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers merge to form the Ganges. Devprayag's confluence is considered sacred, and the Raghunath Temple is a key highlight.

Moving further, Srinagar in Uttarakhand is a serene stopover, offering a peaceful break before heading deeper into the mountains. The journey continues to Rudrapur, where the Mandakini and Alaknanda rivers meet. This town holds religious importance, with temples like Rudranath and Koteswar drawing visitors. The next stop, Ukhimath, is where the deities of Kedarnath are worshipped during winter. The Omkareshwar Temple and stunning views of Himalayan peaks are the key attractions here.

From Ukhimath, a short drive leads to Chopta, a picturesque hill station often referred to as "Mini Switzerland." Surrounded by lush meadows and dense forests, Chopta is the base for the trek to Tungnath. The 3.5 km trek offers breathtaking views of rhododendron forests and the majestic Himalayan



ranges. Tungnath Temple, perched at a high altitude, exudes a serene, spiritual atmosphere.

For those seeking more adventure, the trek can extend to Chandrashila Peak, 1.5 km above Tungnath, providing panoramic views of peaks like Nanda Devi, Chaukhamba, and Trishul, particularly stunning at sunrise or sunset.

## ROUTE OVERVIEW

- Haridwar to Rishikesh (20 km, 45 mins): Spiritual town known for Lakshman Jhula and Triveni Ghat along the Ganges.
- Rishikesh to Devprayag (75 km, 2–3 hours): Confluence of Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers, forming the Ganges; visit the sacred Raghunath Temple.
- Devprayag to Srinagar (35 km, 1 hour): A peaceful town and educational hub, ideal for a short rest stop.
- Srinagar to Rudraprayag (33 km, 1 hour): Famous for the confluence of Mandakini and Alaknanda rivers; home to Rudranath and Koteswar temples.
- Rudraprayag to Ukhimath (42 km, 1.5–2 hours): Religious town where Kedarnath deities are worshipped in winter; notable for Omkareshwar Temple and Himalayan views.
- Ukhimath to Chopta (29 km, 1.5 hours): The “Mini Switzerland” of India, is the base for the Tungnath trek with panoramic Himalayan views.
- Chopta to Tungnath Trek (3.5 km, 2–3 hours): Moderate trek through rhododendron forests to the revered Tungnath Shiva temple.
- Chandrashila Peak (Optional) (1.5 km, 45 mins): A steep climb from Tungnath offers 360-degree views of the Himalayas, especially stunning at sunrise or sunset.

The best time to undertake this journey is between April to June or September to November, with pleasant weather and clear skies. The trek requires moderate fitness and proper preparation, ensuring a rewarding experience in both natural and spiritual aspects.

Hence, it's a must-visit for its spiritual significance as the highest Shiva temple and its stunning Himalayan views. The trek through serene forests and meadows offers both adventure and tranquillity, while the optional climb to Chandrashila Peak rewards you with breathtaking panoramic vistas. This trek is an unforgettable experience that leaves a lasting imprint on your heart and soul.



Tungnath Trek



Shri Tungnath Temple



# WHY? TO GET A STEP AHEAD OF DISEASE.

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# THE ECO-FRIENDLY HEART OF INDIAN CRAFT

Handcrafted from wild grass, Moonj baskets are eco-friendly, vibrant, and packed with heritage

TT BUREAU

**M**oonj Baskets, made from sustainable moonj grass, showcase traditional craftsmanship, its versatile uses and the techniques behind this unique art. Basketmaking is a cherished handicraft in India, deeply rooted in the country's cultural heritage. Artisans across various regions skillfully weave baskets using materials such as bamboo, cane, grass, and palm leaves, each technique reflecting local traditions and artistic expressions.

These handcrafted baskets serve a multitude of purposes: they are essential for carrying goods, storing items, and even playing a role in rituals and festivals. In various Indian festivals, moonj baskets are used for ceremonial purposes, such as carrying offerings to deities or serving food during community gatherings. Their aesthetic appeal makes them a popular choice for festive decorations. In rural areas, baskets are vital for agricultural tasks, helping transport harvested crops efficiently.

They often transform into decorative pieces that enhance home aesthetics in urban settings. The intricate designs and

functional versatility of these baskets not only support local economies but also preserve age-old craftsmanship, making basket-making a vital aspect of India's artisanal landscape.

Among the various types of baskets, moonj baskets stand out for their use of moonj grass, a resilient and eco-friendly material. These baskets, known for their durability and aesthetic appeal, are commonly used in homes and for traditional purposes, showcasing the blend of functionality and artistry in Indian basket making.

The Moonj basket handicraft is an ancient, eco-friendly weaving tradition that exemplifies the harmonious relationship between nature and craftsmanship. Primarily crafted by rural artisans in Uttar Pradesh, particularly in regions like Allahabad, Varanasi, and surrounding villages.

Made from a natural fibre that is both durable and sustainable, this traditional craft has deep roots in Indian culture, reflecting the resourcefulness of local communities and their commitment to utilizing available materials in environmentally conscious ways.



Modern Moonj Basket





*The Dying Process - Boiling The Colour With The Grass*



*Dyed Raw Material*

In Indian craft traditions, Moonj baskets hold a significant place, symbolizing not just functional artistry but also the skills passed down through generations. Today, they are increasingly relevant in contemporary sustainable fashion and home decor, appealing to a growing audience that values eco-friendly products.

The significance of Moonj baskets extends beyond their practical use; they are integral to daily life in local communities, often used for storage, carrying goods, and even as decorative elements that add a touch of rustic charm to homes. As we explore the intricacies of Moonj basket making, we uncover a rich heritage that continues to thrive, bridging traditional practices with modern sensibilities.

## **ORIGIN OF AN ANCIENT HANDICRAFT - MOONJ GRASS WEAVING**

The technique of basket crafting is an ancient tradition practised by Indians for various purposes. The people have demonstrated

remarkable adaptability, utilizing the abundant resources nature provides. The craft of weaving baskets is almost as ancient as the skill of making ceramics. Reeds were woven together to create baskets that the old nomadic food gatherers used to store their food and other items that they gathered.

Later on, with the development of a variety of civilizations, the art of making baskets for both everyday use and ceremonial reasons began to take form. According to the customs and practices of the local community, unique designs have developed. Although the method that goes into making these items hasn't changed much over the years, natural colours are now being utilised to make them seem more appealing.

Allahabad region's fertile land supports the growth of a wide variety of plants and weeds, with bamboo being particularly abundant. Located near the banks of the Yamuna River in Allahabad, the village of Naini stands out as a major hub for the production of Moonj wild grass products.



*Women Making Moonj Baskets*



Moonj and Kaasa, two types of wild grass, flourish along the riverbanks in the vast areas surrounding Allahabad. In addition to basket weaving, the area is also known for its thriving production of bamboo and cane products, which are sold in large quantities.

### HOW ARE MOONJ BASKETS MADE?

Moonj basketry can be found in nearly all local marketplaces throughout contemporary Prayagraj or Allahabad, where it is highly sought after by both residents and visitors. The wild grasses known as moonj and rara thrive along the banks of the rivers surrounding Allahabad. Moonj refers to the outer layer of the grass, which is scraped off and twisted together. Initially, the “Sarpat” grass appears lush and green.

After being harvested, the skin is removed, and the strands are tied into knots, referred to locally as “balla of the moonj.” This coiled grass is then dried in the sun, a process that requires careful monitoring; if it dries too much, it becomes difficult to bend during weaving. To create intricate designs, some of the coiled grass is dyed using boiling water, resulting in a variety of colours.

The colour of the grass is achieved with the use of dye. The grass is dyed with hues derived from the kaccha rangraw plant. In a container made of metal, water is brought to a boil at an elevated temperature, and then the colour powder is added to it. For the dried, off-white Moonj grass to absorb the colour, it is submerged in a boiling solution.

Salt is added to the boiling liquid during the dying process because it allows the colour to last for a longer period after it has been applied. When the grass has reached the desired colour, it is cut down and left to dry in the shade. After being dried, this coil is first submerged in cold water, and then the weaving process may begin. Twigs are twisted into coils, and then the baskets themselves are constructed.

Often, the twigs are dyed to create designs. At the very end, softer grass, also known as kaasa grass, is used for

retouching. The final products are jars, pots, trays, and baskets that are capable of holding a certain amount of weight while also being sturdy and long-lasting.

### TRADITIONAL USES OF MOONJ BASKETS

The skill of basket weaving is put to use for routine tasks. The Moonj basketry skill has mainly been in the spotlight because of the significant participation of rural women in its production.

The most important reason for weaving these baskets is so that they may be put to use in the kitchen to put away food. The flour and other food grains are stored in the baskets, which are used in the kitchen. When food, particularly rotis, a kind of flatbread is kept in them, it does not become stale.

The simpler and more compact baskets are the ones that are intended for day-to-day usage. In contrast to the other villages, where it is only practised as a hobby, basket weaving provides a means of subsistence for its practitioners in Allahabad.

It is possible to recognise the Tharus of Behraich baskets by their daring shapes and the sculpted animal and human patterns that they often include.

In some parts of Uttar Pradesh, the mothers of the brides make these baskets by hand as a wedding gift for their daughters. For the wedding of her daughter, a mother would craft one-of-a-kind baskets embellished with shell tassels.

Some circular baskets or maunis are given to the bride to take with her, and it is loaded with sweets, grain products, and other presents.



Modern Moonj Wall Plates Set



Moonj Basket





**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.





*Lord Krishna Giving Upadesha To Arjun*

# FOOTPRINTS OF MAHABHARATA

In today's fast-paced world, where stress feels like a constant companion, Kurukshetra is the ultimate escape

TT BUREAU

**K**urukshetra offers an enriching experience for seekers and travellers alike. Known for being the battlefield of the epic Mahabharata and the birthplace of the Bhagavad Gita's timeless wisdom, this ancient city is a spiritual hub that invites exploration beyond the ordinary. Let's begin our visit to Kurukshetra by understanding the fascinating history that makes this place so sacred and revered. The history of this region dates back thousands of years, intertwined with tales of valour, righteousness, and cosmic duty.

According to Hindu mythology, the area was named after King Kuru, a forefather of the Pandavas and Kauravas, who performed great penance here, turning Kurukshetra into a land of immense spiritual significance. Over the centuries, the city has witnessed countless pilgrimages and remains a focal point of devotion, attracting those seeking inner peace and divine knowledge.

Today, its sacred ponds, temples, and historical landmarks offer visitors a deep connection to the past and the spiritual wisdom embedded in the land.





*Jyotisar – The Birthplace of The Bhagavad Gita*

Here are some of the sacred sites in Kurukshetra that trace back to the epic Mahabharata. Let's take a closer look at each one to give you a deeper understanding of that yuga (time).

### **JYOTISAR – THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

Jyotisar, located on the banks of the Jyotisar Sarovar in Kurukshetra, Haryana, holds immense significance in Indian mythology. Even before the Mahabharata war, Kurukshetra was considered a sacred land, which is why Lord Krishna chose this place to guide the forces of dharma in the battle. It was here that Lord Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna, an event celebrated annually as Gita Jayanti on the Shukla Ekadashi (11th day of the waxing moon) in the month of Margashirsha.

During this time, the Gita Deepotsav is celebrated with thousands of lamps illuminating the sacred banks of Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, and Jyotisar Sarovar. The name 'Jyotisar' is a combination of "Jyoti," meaning light of knowledge, and "Sar," meaning essence. It represents the essence of wisdom from the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas, all distilled in the Bhagavad Gita, which continues to bring spiritual enlightenment to people's lives. It was here that the essence of the Bhagavad Gita was conveyed to Arjuna through the timeless shloka:

*"यदा यदा ही धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानम सृज्याहम॥"*

**Translated as:** "Whenever there is a decline in righteousness (dharma) and an increase in unrighteousness (adharma), O Bharata (Arjuna), at that time, I manifest Myself on earth."

In this verse, Lord Krishna promises that whenever evil rises and righteousness wanes, He incarnates to restore balance and protect the virtuous.

At Jyotisar, visitors can witness the spot where it is believed Lord Krishna spoke the Gita under the ancient Akshaya Vata (banyan tree). This sacred tree, known as the 'Gitopadesha Sthala,' is marked to honour its legendary significance. Pilgrims often visit to pay respects, and a sculpture of Krishna's chariot stands nearby, symbolizing the divine conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. The Haryana tourism department also hosts a captivating light and sound show, reenacting this profound moment each evening.

### **BRAHMA SAROVAR – THE ANCIENT SACRED WATER BODY**

Brahma Sarovar is one of the most prominent tourist attractions in Kurukshetra. While this site is not solely famous for the Mahabharata battle, it is renowned for various fascinating events that have taken place here. Located in Thanesar, Kurukshetra, Brahma Sarovar is a sacred man-made reservoir, the largest of its kind in Asia, measuring 3,600 feet in length, 1,500 feet in width, and 45 feet in depth.

In Hinduism, bathing holds great significance for both internal and external purification, and many religious sites feature water pools or sarovars near temples and gurdwaras. The Hindu genealogy registers of Kurukshetra are preserved here. According to legend, Lord Brahma created the universe from this holy land after performing a grand yajna, which is why the place is named Brahma Sarovar.

During the final days of the Mahabharata war, Duryodhana hid underwater in this reservoir to escape Bhima. There is also a spot where Draupadi washed her hair with Dushasana's blood.

Local beliefs suggest that the reservoir was first renovated by King Kuru. In the centre of the lake is Sarveswar Mahadev Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, where it is believed that the



*Brahma Sarovar*





*Sri Krishna Museum*

Shivalinga manifested itself. According to the Mahabharata, the Pandavas were absolved of their sins by bathing in the lake during the war.

A grand fair is held here during solar eclipses, drawing millions of devotees who take a holy dip in the waters of Brahma Sarovar.

### **BHISHMA KUND – THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF BHISHMA**

Bhishma Kund, a stepwell named after Bhishma Pitamaha, is believed to be the spot where he lay on a bed of arrows, crafted by his grandson Arjuna. This site in Kurukshetra holds a deep connection to the epic Mahabharata.

Bhishma was revered by both the Pandavas and Kauravas, and according to legend, he possessed a boon that allowed him to choose the moment of his death.

After being wounded in battle, Bhishma came here to rest and observe the ongoing conflict. As the story goes, while lying here, he grew thirsty and requested water.

To quench his thirst, Arjuna shot an arrow into the ground, releasing a stream of water that formed Bhishma Kund. This site also features a temple and remains a popular destination for visitors drawn by its historical and mythological significance.

Bhishma Kund, located in Narakatari village near Kurukshetra, is a holy place linked to the Mahabharata battle. It is said that on the 10th day of the battle, Bhishma, after being wounded, asked for water.

In response, his grandson Arjuna shot his Parjanyastra arrow into the earth, causing a fountain of water to emerge and quench Bhishma's thirst. Today, this sacred kund continues to attract tourists and pilgrims alike.

### **SANNIHIT SAROVAR – THE CONFLUENCE OF SEVEN SACRED RIVERS**

Located on the outskirts of Kurukshetra, this sacred water reservoir is believed to be the convergence point of the seven tributaries of the now-vanished Saraswati River. According to legend, the Sarovar is the eternal abode of Lord Vishnu. Local lore holds that on the night of a new moon, the sanctity of all pilgrimage sites, or Tirthas, gathers here. It is said that performing shraddh, a memorial prayer for ancestors, during a solar eclipse and bathing in the tank grants the merit equivalent to a thousand Ashwamedh sacrifices, an ancient Vedic ritual signifying a king's sovereignty.

### **THE SRI KRISHNA MUSEUM – PRESERVING THE MAHABHARATA LEGACY**

The popular Krishna Museum in Kurukshetra, established in 1987 by the Kurukshetra Development Board, showcases the city's rich history. The museum is dedicated to themes centred around Shri Krishna, the Mahabharata, and Kurukshetra, offering a glimpse into the region's ancient legacy.

These themes are vividly brought to life in the museum's galleries, displaying rare artefacts such as pottery, miniature paintings, sculptures, terracotta items, palm leaf etchings, ivory and bronze castings, and tableaux related to these historical events. Lord Krishna is depicted in various roles – as a war hero, philosopher, divine incarnation, godhead, benevolent lover, and master statesman. The museum also features an impressive collection of folk art in Madhubani, Kangra, and Pattachitra styles, captivating visitors with their beauty.

Visitors to this ancient land explore its historic battlefields and connect with the enduring teachings of dharma and the essence of Indian spirituality.



# FAMOUS DISHES OF KHASI CUISINE IN MEGHALAYA

When in Meghalaya, don't count calories, count the delicious dishes that Khasi cuisine offers!

TT BUREAU



*Meghalaya Cuisine*

**H**ave you wondered how to learn more about the Khasi people and their amazing food? They're the largest tribal community in Meghalaya, and their culinary heritage is fascinating. Let us take you on a delicious journey through the vibrant and diverse cuisine of Meghalaya.

First off, the Khasi kitchen is a special place, usually run by the women in the family. It's where age-old recipes are passed down through generations and often given a modern twist. Imagine a space where the flavours of the past meet the innovations of today, creating something truly unique.

One of the coolest things about Khasi cuisine is the stories and legends behind it. There's this beautiful tale about two friends, one rich and one poor, who stay loyal to each other.

Because of this, it's a tradition in Khasi homes to serve kwai (betel nut) as a symbol of friendship and equality. Another interesting aspect is their use of weiñ, black clay pots, for cooking dishes like putharo and pusain, which adds a special touch to the meals. The Garos, another tribal group in Meghalaya, use these pots to ferment rice wine, making their celebrations even more special.

You can't talk about Khasi food without mentioning their staple ingredients: rice and pork. But there's so much more! Bamboo shoots are a big hit, often stir-fried with mushrooms, chicken, or pork. Jadoh, a rice and pork dish, is a must-try, usually served with fish and eggs.

Then there's Dohkileh, a pork salad that can be as simple or as fancy as you like, with fresh vegetables and a tangy mix





*Dohkileh*

of onions, green chillies, and ginger. For something versatile and tasty, try Pumaloi, a steamed rice cake with coconut, or end your meal with Pukhlein, a sweet treat made from rice and jaggery.

Khasi cuisine isn't just about home-cooked meals; their street food scene is vibrant too. If you find yourself in Shillong, check out the food stalls selling Jadoh, Dohneiong (pork with bamboo shoots), and Tungrymbai (fermented soya bean chutney).

For a dining experience with a view, head to Sky Grill or Sohra House in Cherrapunji, where you can enjoy authentic Khasi dishes while taking in the breathtaking views of the Seven Sisters Waterfalls. And don't miss the culinary magic of sisters Daphimanroi and Dakiwanri Warjri in Shillong. Through their home chef venture Symbai, they're putting traditional Khasi food on the map with pop-up events across India.

## UNIQUE INGREDIENTS AND COOKING STYLES IN KHASI CUISINE

The Khasi people from Meghalaya use unique ingredients and cooking techniques that make their cuisine stand out from other Indian culinary traditions. Let us tell you all about it!

One of the standout ingredients is Lakadong Turmeric. This turmeric is known for its high curcumin content, which gives it a vibrant colour and health benefits. It's a prized ingredient in Khasi cooking. Another staple in Khasi food is bamboo shoots. They add a distinctive flavour and crunch to both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

Black sesame seeds are also commonly used, especially in dishes like Dohneiong, which is pork cooked in a black sesame paste. These seeds give a rich, nutty flavour to the food.

Fermented soya beans, known as Tungrymbai, add depth to many dishes, particularly pork preparations. They have a strong aroma and are a key part of the Khasi culinary tradition. Wild mushrooms foraged from local forests enhance the earthy flavours of many Khasi dishes.

And then there's Kwai (betel nut), which is more than just an ingredient; it's a cultural practice. Chewing kwai is common among the Khasi, often served with betel leaves and lime paste as a social gesture.



*Jadoh*



*kwai (Betel Nut)*

When it comes to cooking techniques, Khasi cuisine tends to use minimal spices, relying on ingredients like onions, ginger, and turmeric to enhance flavours without overpowering them.

Smoking meats and fermenting ingredients are traditional methods that give dishes unique flavours, especially in smoked pork salads.

## POPULAR KHASI DISHES

Now, let's talk about some popular dishes. Jadoh is a beloved dish made with rice and pork, often cooked with aromatic vegetables and spices. It's a perfect example of the region's culinary simplicity.

Dohkileh is a pork salad that emphasizes the natural flavours of the meat, prepared with minimal seasoning.



Pumaloi is a steamed rice cake made from powdered rice, typically enjoyed at any meal.

Khasi cuisine also has some fascinating fermented foods. Tungrymbai is a fermented soybean product with a pungent flavour, often used as a condiment or in salads. Tungtap is fermented fish, usually salted and left to ferment in earthen pots, giving it a distinct umami flavour used in curries or as a side dish. Lungsiej, and fermented bamboo shoots, add a sour and tangy taste to various dishes.

The Khasi people also enjoy unique fermented beverages. Chubitchi is a traditional fermented rice drink from the Garo Hills, with a slightly alcoholic content and a unique flavour. It's often consumed during festivals and gatherings. Another interesting drink is Khar, made from the alkaline water of the "pencil tree" (*Alstonia scholaris*). And, of course, there are various forms of rice beer brewed across Meghalaya, each tribe having its own method and recipe.

Then there's the Nongkrem Dance Festival, a vibrant celebration of traditional dance and music. Alongside the performances, there's a feast of local delicacies, including Dohkileh and Pukhleim. It's a fantastic opportunity to taste the rich and diverse flavours of Khasi food while enjoying the cultural festivities.

#### EXPLORE KHASI TRADITIONAL FOOD: STREET FOOD

When you're out and about, especially in Shillong, you can't miss the famous street food. One must-try dish is Jadoh, a signature Khasi meal made of red rice and pork, often served with fish or chicken. It's rich in flavour and a definite must-try.

Another popular street food is Doh-Khlieh, a minced pork salad mixed with onions and chillies. It's both delicious and healthy, showcasing the fresh ingredients of the region. Dohneiong features pork cooked with black sesame seeds and soy sauce, creating a rich and flavorful experience. For those who love bold flavours, Chilly Pork combines pork with

spicy chilli sauce, making it a favourite among locals. You also can't miss Momos, steamed dumplings filled with pork or chicken, served with a spicy chutney. For a sweet treat, try Pukhleim, made from fermented rice and often served as a dessert. Fried Noodles, garnished with vegetables and spices, provide a quick and delicious meal option.

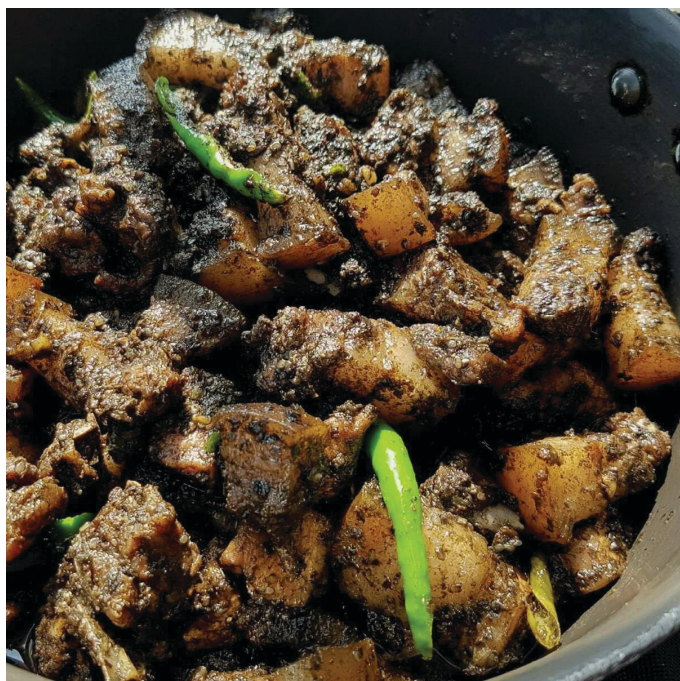
If you want to experience Khasi cuisine in a more curated setting, check out the Symbai pop-ups. Run by sisters Daphimanroi and Dakiwanri Warjri, these events showcase traditional dishes like Soh Khleh and Pumaloi, introducing Khasi flavours to a wider audience.

Vegetarians, don't worry—Shillong's street food scene has plenty of unique options for you too. Tungrymbai is a fermented soybean dish, often enjoyed with bread or roti. Aloo Muri is a spicy potato snack made with boiled potatoes, mustard oil, and local spices. Pukhleim, the sweet fermented rice dish, is also a beloved treat among vegetarians.

You'll also find various chaat options, like pani puri and bhel puri, which offer a mix of flavours and textures. Vegetable Chowmein, prepared with vegetables and local spices, is another popular vegetarian option. And don't miss Phan Tungtap, a dish made with boiled red potatoes mixed with fermented dry fish and wild edible greens for a unique taste experience.



*Chubitchi*



*Dohneiong*



*Pukhleim*



# DIWALI WITH A TWIST

Ever wondered how different parts of India celebrate the same festival in unique ways? We bring you stories, rituals, and traditions that make Diwali festivities shine in every corner of India

TT BUREAU

When we think of Diwali, the Festival of Lights, images of twinkling diyas, vibrant rangolis, and bursting fireworks flood our minds. Across India, people celebrate this five-day festival in many familiar ways—cleaning their homes, wearing new clothes, exchanging sweets, and praying to Goddess Lakshmi.

Diwali, also known as Deepavali's core theme remains consistent—symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil—the stories, rituals, and traditions vary widely across regions. In North India, Diwali marks the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after defeating the demon king Ravana, a story central to the celebration. Meanwhile, in the East, the festival takes on a different tone, with devotees worshipping Goddess Kali, emphasizing her strength and power.

But beyond the well-known customs lie lesser-known traditions that add unique flavours to this dazzling celebration. In Himachal Pradesh, for instance, the Pathar Mela, a lively stone-pelting festival, adds an adventurous twist to the celebrations. In Chhattisgarh, the festival is celebrated with 'Diyari,' a tradition that revolves around agriculture and cattle, reflecting the region's strong connection to farming. Each of these unique customs highlights India's incredible cultural diversity during Diwali.

Let's explore the vibrant customs and rituals that make this celebration truly one-of-a-kind!

## THE BOAT FESTIVAL IN ODISHA

While most of us light up the streets with firecrackers, Odisha lights up the water! During Diwali, locals in Odisha celebrate a special tradition called "Boita Bandana," or the Boat Festival,



Diwali Festival Celebration





*Boita Bandana Festival*

to honour their maritime heritage. People make tiny boats out of banana bark, paper, or cork, decorating them with small oil lamps, betel leaves, and flowers. They set these miniature boats afloat in rivers, ponds, and the sea, paying homage to their ancestors who were once sea traders. The sight of these boats drifting in the water, lit by the soft glow of oil lamps, is a unique and picturesque way of celebrating the festival.

#### **PATTHAR MELA IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

The Pathar Mela, or stone-pelting festival, is an ancient tradition celebrated with enthusiasm in Halog village near Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. Held annually the day after Deepavali, this unique event draws large crowds from nearby villages. The festival's origins lie in a centuries-old practice where, according to local folklore, human sacrifices were once made at the Bhadrakali Temple to appease the goddess. One of the queens of the Dharmi estate named Sati abolished this

practice, replacing it with the symbolic act of stone pelting.

During the festival, two groups, the Katedus and Jhanogis, throw stones at each other in a friendly manner. The pelting starts in the afternoon and ends when someone is injured.

The Pathar Mela continues to be celebrated as a symbol of sacrifice and community unity. The villagers keep the tradition alive with respect for their cultural heritage. Although unusual, this festival highlights the strong ties to local traditions in Himachal Pradesh, making it a significant event for the people of Halog.

#### **CROP MARRIAGE AT BASTAR, CHHATTISGARH (DIYARI)**

In the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, the festival is celebrated uniquely as 'Diyari', a festival deeply connected to agriculture and the well-being of cattle. The celebration begins with an important ritual called the marriage of crops, where freshly harvested crops, typically rice or millets, are symbolically married to an idol of Lord Narayana. This act represents a bond



*Crop Marriage (DIYARI)*





*Bandi Chhor Diwas*

between the farmers' harvest and divine forces, performed to ensure a successful and bountiful farming season ahead.

Following this, a puja (worship) is conducted to seek blessings for the health and protection of the villagers' cattle, which play a crucial role in farming activities. Farmers decorate their cattle, often with garlands and painted horns, to honour them for their indispensable role in agriculture. This ritual highlights the close relationship between the people of Bastar and their livestock, acknowledging their importance in the agricultural cycle.

The Diyari festival reflects the region's strong agricultural traditions and the villagers' gratitude towards nature and animals. Rather than focusing on fireworks and lights, this version of Deepavali emphasizes the vital connection between the land, its produce, and the livestock, ensuring prosperity for the community in the coming year.

### **BANDI CHHOR DIWAS: THE SIKH FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM**

Bandi Chhor Diwas is a significant Sikh festival celebrated to mark the release of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Singh Ji, from imprisonment by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1619. The term "Bandi Chhor" means "Liberator of Prisoners," as Guru Hargobind Singh not only secured his own freedom but also released 52 Hindu princes who were wrongfully imprisoned alongside him.

The story behind Bandi Chhor Diwas is deeply rooted in Sikh values of justice and compassion. Guru Hargobind Singh was imprisoned for standing up against Mughal oppression. Upon his release, he refused to leave unless the 52 princes

were also freed. In a clever agreement with Jahangir, he ensured that all of the princes were released by using a cloak with 52 tassels, allowing each prince to hold onto one as they walked out of captivity.

Bandi Chhor Diwas coincides with the Hindu festival of Diwali, and the Golden Temple in Amritsar is illuminated with thousands of lights and diyas in celebration. Sikhs around the world commemorate the day with prayers, kirtans, and community meals (langar), celebrating not only the Guru's release but also the Sikh values of freedom, equality, and justice for all.

### **BHUT CHATURDASHI IN WEST BENGAL**

Another unique tradition from West Bengal, celebrated just before Diwali, is Bhut Chaturdashi, which can be loosely translated as the "Night of the Spirits." According to belief, on this night, the spirits of ancestors return to visit their families. To honor them, 14 diyas (earthen lamps) are lit to guide the spirits back home and ward off evil entities. Along with lighting lamps, families also consume 14 different kinds of leafy greens (known as choddo shaak) to protect themselves from harmful spirits. This eerie yet fascinating tradition brings an element of spirituality and respect for the afterlife to Diwali celebrations.

### **CHOPDA PUJAN IN MAHARASHTRA**

Diwali marks the start of a new financial year for many businesses in India, but Maharashtra takes this tradition to another level with a special ceremony called "Chopda Pujan." On this day, businesses big and small worship their accounting books, also known as "chopda." It's believed



that starting a new accounting book on Diwali will bring prosperity to the business in the coming year. In today's digital age, some people even perform puja on their laptops or accounting software! This ritual signifies starting fresh with renewed energy, making it an important day for merchants, traders, and entrepreneurs.

### HOOKAH PAATI IN REGIONS OF BIHAR

Laxmi Ghar, Daridra Bahar (Lakshmi in, Poverty out) is a special Diwali tradition in the Anga, Mithilanchal, and Kosi regions of Bihar. Known as Hookah Paati (हुक्का पाती), this ritual symbolizes the welcoming of Goddess Lakshmi into homes.

It is believed that even King Karna of Anga used to follow this tradition during Diwali. Despite modern influences, the tradition of Hookah Patti, made from sanathi (संठी- jute stick), remains strong in these areas.

In the afternoon, the head of the household prepares a Hookah Patti using a rope made of sanathi and paat (flax). A ghee lamp and a Hookah Patti are placed in the home and near the family deity's shrine to invite prosperity. These Hookah Pattis are also kept at various locations where gods and goddesses are worshipped.

This tradition dates back to ancient Sanatan times. Even today, people place Hookah Pattis in their homes and take them to nearby temples. Before starting the ritual, a lamp and Hookah Patti are placed in each household and taken to the temple for blessings.

Scientific Reason: The sanathi fire is believed to have antibacterial properties. Jute (sanathi) releases very little carbon dioxide when burned, and the smoke is said to help

eliminate harmful insects and bacteria, much like the lighting of a lamp. Roaming around the house with a burning sanathi is thought to purify the surroundings.

### NARAK CHATURDASI IN GOA

In Goa, Narak Chaturdashi celebrated a day before Diwali, is a vibrant and unique festival symbolizing the victory of good over evil. It commemorates Lord Krishna's slaying of the demon king Narakasura, freeing the world from the demon's tyranny and marking the dawn of a new era of light and goodness.

The celebration in Goa is marked by a fascinating tradition where large, colourful statues of Narakasura are created by locals. These effigies, often as tall as buildings, are made from paper, wood, and straw, depicting the demon king in fearsome forms. In the early hours of the morning, the effigies are paraded through the streets accompanied by music and fireworks, creating a lively spectacle. The climax of the celebration comes when these effigies are set ablaze, symbolizing the destruction of evil forces and cleansing the community.

Following the burning, people take oil baths and wear new clothes, signifying purification and the readiness to embrace prosperity. Traditional Goan sweets, like neureos and fov, are prepared and shared among family and friends. Narak Chaturdashi in Goa is a spectacular fusion of mythology, community, and celebration, lighting the way for the grand festivities that follow.

There is much more to discover about the vibrant diversity of celebrations across India - and this is just the beginning.



Narak Chaturdasi



Chopda Pujan





Chhath Vrati

# THE MAGIC OF CHHATH PUJA

Chhath Puja Purvanchal Mahaparv celebrates the deep bond between humanity and nature, bringing Bihar's rich cultural heritage to life

TT BUREAU

What makes a festival stand out from the countless others across India's vibrant cultural landscape? In the case of Chhath Puja, it's the deep connection between people and nature. This ancient festival, especially popular in Bihar, is dedicated to the Sun God, Surya, and his consort, Usha. What's truly special about Chhath is that it's celebrated outdoors, on the banks of rivers or other water bodies, where devotees offer prayers to the setting and rising sun, symbolizing the endless cycle of life.

What also makes this festival stand out is its simplicity. There are no grand processions or extravagant rituals—just pure devotion. Millions of people across India and the world take part, making it a deeply personal expression of faith,

strength, and gratitude. For the people of Bihar, Chhath is more than just a religious observance; it reflects the deep bond they share with nature and their community.

Let's explore and understand the rituals and significance that make Chhath Puja such a unique and powerful celebration.

## AN ANCIENT FESTIVAL ROOTED IN NATURE

The history of Chhath Puja is ancient, with references to the festival found in the Rig Veda, one of the oldest known scriptures in human history. The Vedic rituals performed during Chhath were originally meant to thank the Sun God for sustaining life on Earth and to seek his blessings for prosperity and well-being.



The festival is unique in its worship of natural elements—primarily the Sun (Surya), water, and earth. Unlike many other Hindu festivals that involve elaborate temple rituals, Chhath is observed along riverbanks and other water bodies, under the open sky. This closeness to nature highlights the deep ecological and environmental consciousness embedded in the festival's rituals.

The mythology surrounding Chhath is also fascinating. According to Hindu legends, it was first performed by Karna, the son of Surya, a key figure in the Mahabharata. Another story connects Chhath to Draupadi and the Pandavas, who performed the ritual to reclaim their kingdom. These tales highlight the power of the Sun God and underscore Chhath's importance as a source of strength, prosperity, and spiritual awakening.

A popular story about King Priyavrata, the son of the first Manu, Svayambhu. He was very sad because he and his wife, Queen Malini, had no children. Following the advice of the sage Kashyapa, the king performed a special yajna (ritual) to pray for a son. Soon after, Queen Malini gave birth to a baby, but sadly, the child was born lifeless. The royal family was heartbroken.

In their moment of despair, the goddess Shashthi appeared in the sky. She introduced herself as Chhathi Maiya, the sixth form of Goddess Parvati, and said, "I protect all children and bless those who are childless." With her divine touch, she

brought the baby back to life. Filled with gratitude, King Priyavrata worshipped Chhathi Maiya, and it is believed that this marked the beginning of Chhath Puja, which eventually became a widespread tradition.

### THE RITUALS OF CHHATH PUJA

Chhath Puja spans over four days, with each day carrying a deep symbolic meaning that reflects the devotees' journey towards spiritual purity.

#### Day 1: Nahay Khay (Bathing and Eating)

The first day of Chhath Puja marks the beginning of the devotees' spiritual cleansing. On this day, devotees bathe in holy rivers, usually the Ganges or local water bodies, and bring home water to prepare offerings. The home is thoroughly cleaned, symbolizing the removal of impurities. The meal prepared on this day is simple, often consisting of rice, dal, and pumpkin collectively called Kadua-Bhaat, cooked without garlic or onions to maintain purity. This day sets the tone for the rigorous fasting that will follow.

#### Day 2: Kharna

The second day of Chhath is marked by rigorous fasting and purification. Devotees observe a full-day fast without



Chhath Prasad Soop/ Daali





*Sandhya Arghya*

even drinking water, symbolizing self-discipline and spiritual cleansing. The fast is broken after sunset with a simple meal known as “prasada,” typically consisting of jaggery kheer (rice pudding), chapati, and bananas, prepared without salt, onion, or garlic to maintain purity. The prasada is shared with family and neighbours, signifying communal harmony. After Kharna, devotees begin a 36-hour fast without water, leading to the main rituals of offering prayers to the Sun God.

### **Day 3: Sandhya Arghya (Evening Offerings)**

The third day of Chhath is the most important, marked by the offering of Thekua, a traditional sweet that is crunchy, flavourful, and long-lasting. As the sun sets, devotees gather at riverbanks, standing in knee-deep water with bamboo baskets filled with fruits, sugarcane, and Thekua to pray to the setting sun.

This unique ritual, symbolizing the cycle of life and death, highlights the significance of both. Chhath is one of the few festivals that worship the setting sun, reminding us to respect life’s highs and lows. The Sandhya Arghya, with thousands offering prayers, is a mesmerising sight.

### **Day 4: Usha Arghya (Morning Offerings)**

The final day of Chhath Puja begins before dawn, with devotees returning to the riverbanks to offer their prayers to the rising sun. The morning Arghya is a moment of hope, as devotees thank the Sun God for sustaining life and seek blessings for their families and communities. After the prayers, the fast is broken, and the Prasada is distributed among family members, neighbours, and friends.

The Usha Arghya signifies renewal, optimism, and gratitude. The rituals performed during these two days symbolize the cycle of life—death (evening sun) and rebirth (morning sun)—and our constant connection to the natural world around us.

## **CHHATH PUJA AND ITS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE IN BIHAR**

For the people of Bihar, Chhath is more than just a religious observance; it’s an integral part of their cultural identity. One of the most striking aspects of Chhath Puja is the role



*Chhath Vrati / Devotee Waiting For The Sun God*

of women in the festival. While both men and women participate, it is often the women who undertake the fasts and lead the rituals. This gives Chhath a unique position among Indian festivals, as it empowers women as spiritual leaders within their families and communities.

Chhath Puja also emphasizes the values of simplicity and purity. The offerings used during the festival are humble—fruits, sugarcane, and Thekua—“highlighting the idea that devotion lies not in the grandeur of the offerings, but in the purity of the heart”.

The image of thousands of devotees standing in rivers, praying to the sky, highlights Bihar’s deep bond with nature. Chhath Puja serves as a reminder of the sacredness of water, land, and sunlight—vital elements that sustain life. In today’s era of growing environmental awareness, this ancient festival celebrates the harmony between humans and the natural world.

While Bihar remains the heart of Chhath Puja celebrations, the festival has spread far beyond its borders. With the migration of Biharis to other parts of India and the world, Chhath is now observed in cities as far-flung as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, and even internationally in countries like Nepal, Mauritius, and the United States.

Chhath Puja goes beyond religious rituals, teaching important values of humility, gratitude, and community. In today’s fast-paced, individualistic world, this festival brings people together—families, neighbours, and even strangers—breaking barriers of caste and community through shared devotion.





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