

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2025 - ₹50

ROCK ART
HERITAGE

ROYAL HEADGEAR
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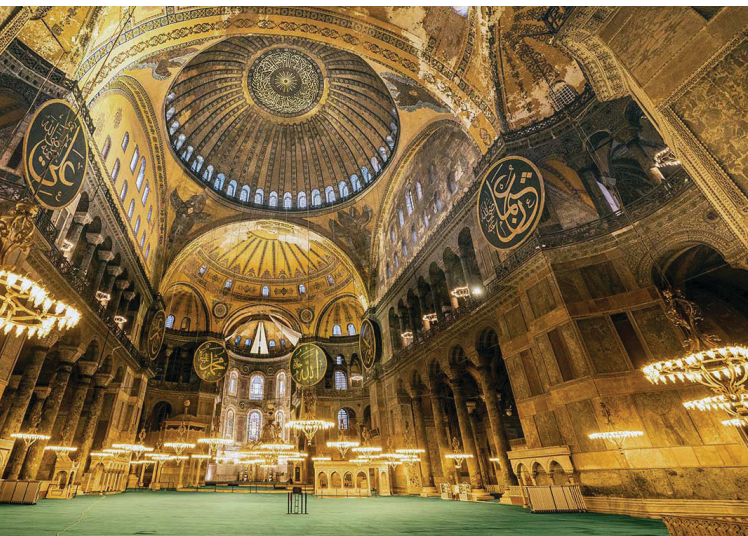
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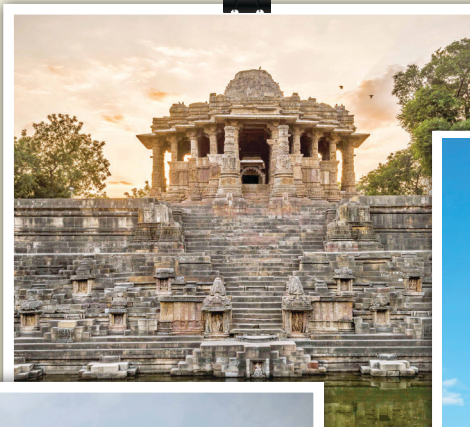
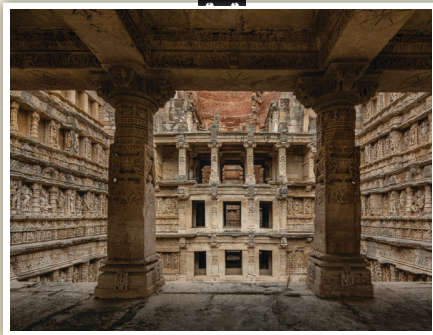
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TIMELESS GUJARAT: STORIES ETCHED IN TIME

Exploring Gujarat is a journey through time, celebrating the artistry and ingenuity of ancient civilizations.

TT BUREAU

Nestled in western India, Gujarat is a land steeped in legends and cultural brilliance, offering a vibrant blend of historical and architectural heritage. Its awe-inspiring sites narrate tales of devotion, resilience, and ingenuity, making it a treasure trove of history.

RANI KI VAV: THE QUEEN'S STEPWELL

Located in Patan, Rani ki Vav is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an 11th-century masterpiece built by Queen Udayamati in memory of King Bhima I. Designed as an inverted temple, this seven-tiered stepwell celebrates water and divinity. Its intricately carved walls feature over 1,500 sculptures depicting Vishnu's incarnations, celestial beings, and motifs of prosperity.

Ingenuously constructed to address the region's arid climate, Rani Ki Vav reflects the brilliance of medieval engineering. Excavated in the late 20th century after being buried by Saraswati River silt, it was designated a World Heritage Site in 2014, cementing its status as one of Gujarat's gems.

MODHERA SUN TEMPLE: A TRIBUTE TO THE SUN GOD

The Modhera Sun Temple, built in 1026 CE under the Chaulukya dynasty, stands as a timeless tribute to Surya, the Sun God. Located on the banks of the Pushpavati River, the temple's design ensures that the sanctum sanctorum is illuminated by the sun during equinoxes. The complex features the Gūdhāmandapa (shrine hall), Sabhamandapa (assembly hall), and Kunda (reservoir).



Detailed carvings narrate tales from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas, while the Surya Kund houses exquisite miniature shrines. Listed on UNESCO's tentative World Heritage list, the Modhera Sun Temple showcases India's architectural excellence.



ADALAJ STEPWELL: A FUSION OF CULTURES

Located near Ahmedabad, the Adalaj Stepwell is a five-story multicultural architectural marvel built in 1499 by Queen Rudabai. Originally a water reservoir and social space, its walls blend Asian floral motifs with Hindu and Jain symbolism. Gods, birds, and geometric patterns are depicted via carvings as well.

According to legend, Queen Rudabai completed the stepwell under duress from a rival ruler before ending her life. Today, it stands as a symbol of artistry and resilience.

UPARKOT FORT: A BASTION OF HISTORY

Uparkot Fort, in Junagadh, dates back to 319 BCE and served as a strategic military outpost under dynasties like the Mauryas, Guptas, and Rajputs. Enclosed by granite walls towering up to 20 meters, the fort features sophisticated water systems, Buddhist caves, and the elegant Jama Masjid.

Uparkot encapsulates centuries of Gujarat's cultural and military history, making it a site of immense significance.

VADNAGAR: A LIVING TAPESTRY OF TIME

Situated in Mehsana, Vadnagar traces its roots back to the 3rd century BCE. Once a thriving centre during the Mauryan and Gupta eras, Vadnagar's landmarks include the 12th-century Kirti Toran, a ceremonial arch of architectural brilliance.

Historically significant as a Buddhist learning hub and trade nexus, Vadnagar remains a vibrant testament to Gujarat's enduring cultural resilience.

CHAMPANER-PAVAGADH: BLENDING FAITHS AND ARCHITECTURE

The Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, spans the period from the 8th to 14th centuries. This site blends Hindu and Islamic architectural styles across forts, palaces, temples, mosques, and stepwells.



Highlights include the Kalika Mata Temple and Jama Masjid, both showcasing elaborate craftsmanship. Set

amidst lush landscapes, Champaner-Pavagadh offers a glimpse into Gujarat's diverse history and artistic brilliance.

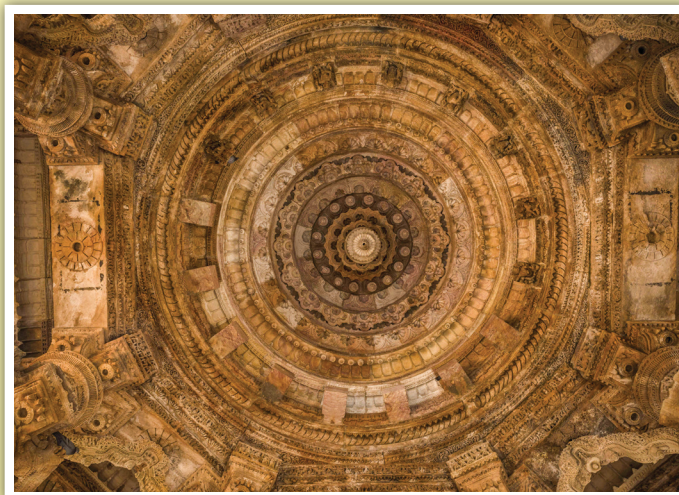
AHMEDABAD: INDIA'S FIRST UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CITY

Ahmedabad, India's first UNESCO World Heritage City, embodies a vibrant culture and rich history. The Sabarmati Ashram reflects Mahatma Gandhi's enduring legacy of freedom and simplicity. Architectural landmarks like the Sidi Saiyyed Mosque, renowned for its "Tree of Life" latticework, and the Hathisingh Jain Temple, exemplify artistic finesse.

The Bhadra Fort and the Old City's Pols (gated neighbourhoods) preserve Ahmedabad's timeless charm.

GUJARAT: LEGACY OF ART AND RESILIENCE

Gujarat's heritage sites weave together stories of devotion, resilience, and artistic brilliance. From the intricate carvings of Rani ki Vav and the Modhera Sun Temple to the cultural harmony of Adalaj Stepwell and the historical treasures of Champaner-Pavagadh, Uparkot, and Ahmedabad, the state stands as a vibrant tapestry of history waiting to be explored.



INDIA'S ROCK ART HERITAGE

Listen to the echoes of the ancients through the timeless Indian rock art, from prehistoric paintings to mysterious engravings that speak through stone

ATUL KISHORE



Bhimbetka Rock Paintings

India's ancient rock art is like a storybook written on stone, telling us about the lives, beliefs, and creativity of people from the past. From the cave paintings of Bhimbetka to the rock carvings of Ashoka and the massive sculptures like the Kailasa Temple, these artworks show how art and culture changed over time. Each painting, engraving, and sculpture has a story to tell—of hunters, rulers, and spiritual seekers. So what are we waiting for, let's take a journey through time and discover the artistry that still speaks across centuries!

ROCK PAINTINGS OR PICTOGRAPHS

India's ancient rock paintings are windows into early human life and creativity. From the prehistoric Bhimbetka paintings to the romantic frescoes of Jogimara and the spiritual Jain murals of Sittanavasal, these artworks depict evolving societies, artistic expressions, and cultural traditions.

BHIMBETKA ROCK PAINTINGS (30,000 BCE – MEDIEVAL PERIOD)

The ancient Bhimbetka Rock Shelters in Madhya Pradesh carry India's oldest prehistoric paintings, dating back over 30,000 years. These caves depict hunting scenes, warriors on horseback, ritual dances, and animal figures. Painted using natural pigments like red and white ochre, they show the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to early agricultural life. Also, an interesting thing to notice is that many of the paintings overlap, which suggests that the rocks were painted on multiple times over time. The site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offering a rare glimpse into early human creativity and evolving social life through layered paintings from different time periods.

JOGIMARA CAVE PAINTINGS (2ND CENTURY BCE)

The Jogimara Cave paintings in Chhattisgarh are among India's earliest known love-themed frescoes. They depict

celestial beings, dancers, and floral motifs, created with red and white pigments. Unique inscriptions in Brahmi script narrate a romantic tale of a prince and a dancer, making them India's earliest literary representations of love.

The paintings, though faded, showcase early artistic traditions and serve as an important link between prehistoric rock art and classical Indian murals found in later Buddhist and Hindu sites.

SITTANAVASAL CAVE PAINTINGS (7TH CENTURY CE)

The Sittanavasal Caves in Tamil Nadu house exquisite Jain frescoes, painted using natural vegetable dyes. These paintings depict monks meditating in lotus-filled ponds, surrounded by ducks, fish, and flowers, symbolising Samavasarana, a Jain spiritual gathering.

Similar to Ajanta murals these were created in the Pallava and Pandya period. The paintings use the fresco-secco technique where colours are applied on dry plaster instead of wet since it allows detailed artwork and corrections. Though time has eroded many details, the site remains a rare example of early Jain artistic heritage, showcasing the spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities of ancient India.

ROCK INSCRIPTIONS OR ENGRAVINGS

India's rock inscriptions are stories engraved on stones, each telling a different tale. Be it Ashoka's peace lessons popularly known as Dhamma or it's the great Samudragupta's triumph or the engineering marvels of the Junagadh, these inscribed rock pieces offer a glimpse into the minds of great rulers and the civilisations they shaped.

ASHOKA'S ROCK EDICTS (3RD CENTURY BCE)

Ashoka's Rock Edicts are the earliest written records of Indian history, found across India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. These inscriptions promote Dhamma (righteousness), non-violence, religious tolerance, and ethical governance.

The Dhauli Edict in Odisha is particularly significant as it expresses Ashoka's remorse after the Kalinga War, leading him to embrace Buddhism and non-violence. The edicts were written in Brahmi, Kharosthi, Greek, and Aramaic, ensuring their message reached a diverse audience. These inscriptions played a key role in spreading Buddhist ideals across Asia. Today, many of these sites are recognised by UNESCO for their historical and cultural importance.

ALLAHABAD PILLAR INSCRIPTION (4TH CENTURY CE)

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, also known as Prayag Prashasti, glorifies Samudragupta, one of the greatest rulers of the Gupta Empire. Written in Sanskrit by poet Harisena, it details his military conquests, governance, and patronage of scholars. Interestingly, it is engraved on an Ashokan pillar, reflecting how later dynasties reused earlier monuments.

This inscription is crucial in understanding the Gupta Empire's golden age, marked by advancements in politics,



Jogimara Cave



Sittanavasal Cave Paintings

economy, and culture. It remains an essential source of historical knowledge, shaping our understanding of ancient Indian administration and warfare.

JUNAGADH ROCK INSCRIPTION (150 CE)

The Junagadh Rock Inscription is unique as it features inscriptions from three different dynasties—Ashoka (3rd century BCE), Rudradaman I (2nd century CE), and Skandagupta (5th century CE). Rudradaman's section is particularly important as it is the earliest known Sanskrit inscription.

It records the repair of Sudarshana Lake, showcasing advanced water management techniques of the time. The inscription reflects centuries of governance continuity, influenced by Mauryan, Shaka, and Gupta rulers. This site stands as a testament to India's engineering expertise, political stability, and cultural richness.

ROCK SCULPTURES

India's ancient rock sculptures are history carved in stone, each site revealing a different chapter of the past. Be it the Kailasa Temple, sculpted from a single rock, the Deopahar Rock Sculpture, echoing Assam's medieval artistry, or the Gomateshwara Statue, symbolising Jain renunciation, these monolithic wonders offer a glimpse into the skill, devotion, and artistic vision that shaped India's heritage.

KAILASA TEMPLE, ELLORA (8TH CENTURY CE)

This stone marvel is truly special as it is the largest monolithic(single-piece) rock-cut Hindu temple in the world, carved out from a single basalt rock in the 8th Century CE by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I. With huge pillars, intricate carvings, life-sized elephants and whatnot, its walls tell the story of Ramayan and Mahabharat.

What makes this UNESCO site different from other structures is, that it was made through vertical excavation meaning top-to-bottom sculpturing. The Dravidian-style design and amazing craftsmanship make it a great wonder of Indian rock art, attracting visitors and historians from all over the world.

DEOPAHAR ROCK SCULPTURE (10TH CENTURY CE)

This fascinating rock sculpture stands as a testament to Assam's medieval artistic heritage. Located on Deopahar Hill in Numaligarh, Assam, it features intricately carved deities, floral designs, and a striking rock-cut Shiva Linga. The craftsmanship reflects the skill of the Kachari Kingdom, with partially buried monolithic sculptures hinting at a once-thriving temple complex.

What sets this site apart is its weathered yet detailed engravings, which continue to intrigue archaeologists and history enthusiasts. Despite centuries of natural erosion, Deopahar remains an enduring symbol of India's ancient rock art tradition, drawing visitors with its mysterious and historic appeal.

GOMATESHWARA STATUE, SHRAVANABELAGOLA (981 CE)

This colossal monolithic statue is among India's greatest sculptural achievements, carved from a single granite block in 981 CE by Chamundaraya, a minister of the Ganga dynasty. Towering 57 feet high, the Gomateshwara (Bahubali) statue symbolises Jain principles of detachment and spiritual awakening. The lifelike sculpting, with vines growing around the figure's arms and legs, represents deep meditation.

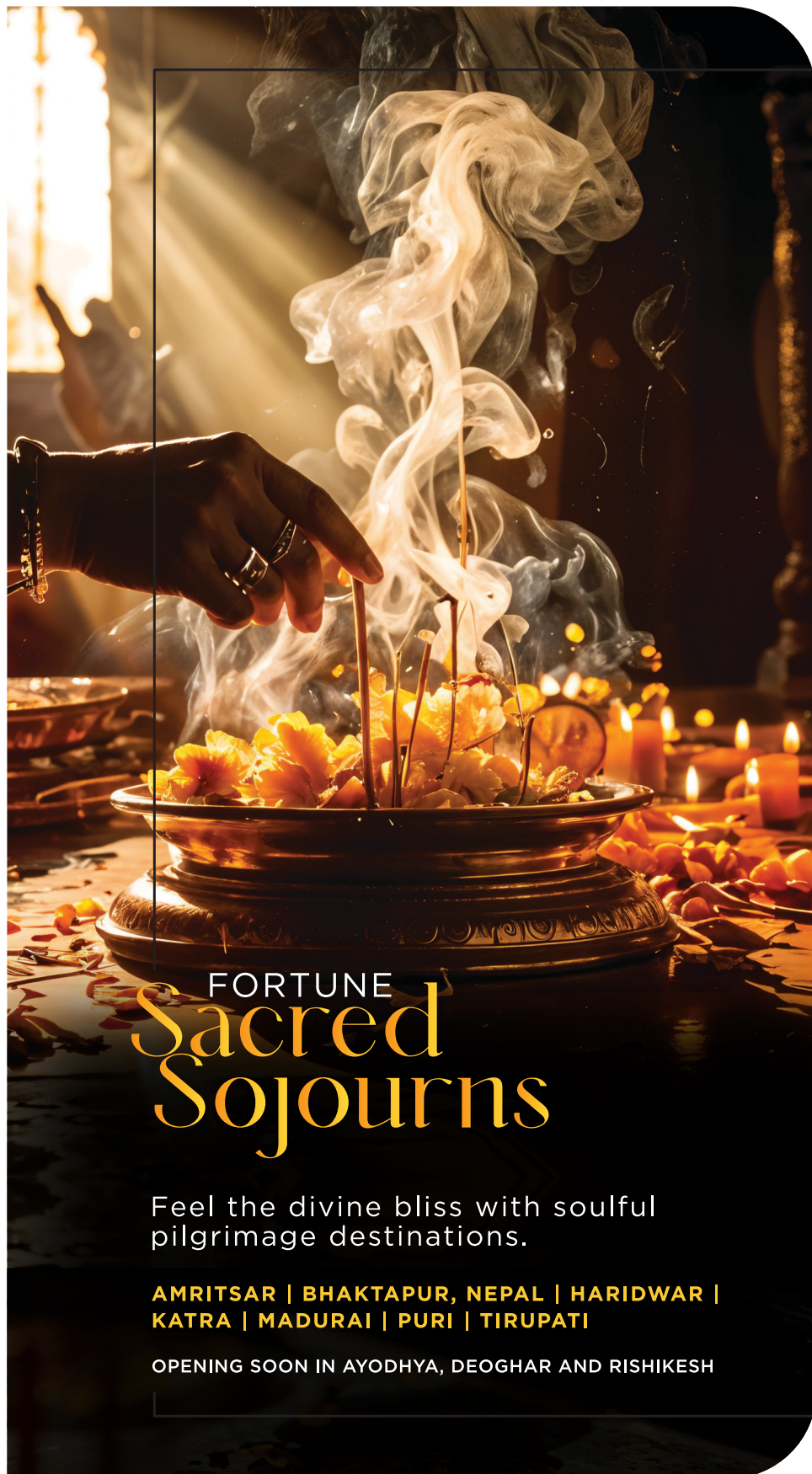
Shravanabelagola is also historically significant as Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya Empire, is said to have renounced his throne and embraced Jainism here, spending his final years in ascetic solitude. The grand Mahamastakabhisheka festival, held once every 12 years, further cements its status as a remarkable landmark in India's rock art and spiritual legacy.



Deopahar Rock Sculpture



Kailasa Temple, Ellora



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BLACK POTTERY: ANCIENT, ARTSY, AUTHENTIC

From the kilns of Uttar Pradesh to the charm of Manipur, India's black pottery is the OG of ancient craftsmanship. This pottery is history, culture, and undeniable style all rolled into one!

TT BUREAU



Ever wondered how something so old-school can look so cool? Today's Traveller takes you on an exploration into this mesmerizing art form, revealing the legends and techniques behind its bold beauty and the artisans who've truly mastered all that makes this craft so iconic. Because when it comes to style, black is always in.

AN ANCIENT CRAFT

The craft of pottery can be traced back to the start of human history. One of the oldest known crafts, pottery has exceeded mere utility to become a symbol of artistic expression and cultural heritage. It is a testament to human ingenuity and creativity, rooted in history and steeped in tradition. Among the myriad forms of pottery India is famed for, black pottery from Uttar Pradesh and Manipur stands out for its unique techniques, aesthetic allure, and cultural significance.

THE LEGACY OF BLACK POTTERY IN UTTAR PRADESH

The black pottery of Nizamabad in Uttar Pradesh has a history as captivating as its glossy, silver-etched designs. Though its origins trace back to the Kutch region of Gujarat, this craft gained prominence during the Mughal era under the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, when skilled potters migrated to Nizamabad, enriching the region's artistic tapestry.

In December 2015, Nizamabad black pottery earned its Geographical Indication (GI) tag, cementing its status as a cultural and artistic treasure. This GI recognition ensures the craft's authenticity and protects it as a regional identity.

The creation of Nizamabad black pottery is a meticulous blend of tradition and innovation. Clay sourced locally is first

shaped into elegant forms and then fired in kilns. A striking transformation occurs during the smoking process, where rice husks are burned, enveloping the clay in thick smoke that imparts its signature black colour.

Designs, ranging from geometric patterns to floral motifs, are etched using sharp twigs. The finishing touch involves rubbing



Black Pottery of Nizamabad

silver powder made from zinc and mercury onto the designs, resulting in a gleaming, silver-on-black contrast. Mustard oil is used at various stages to add a glossy finish, enhancing the pottery's aesthetic appeal. Around 200 families in Nizamabad are engaged in this craft, with their products finding homes as far afield as Russia, Australia, and beyond. The demand for these intricate pieces, including vases, plates, and decorative items, underscores the universal appeal of Indian artistry.

THE ENCHANTING BLACK POTTERY OF MANIPUR

Longpi, cradled in the picturesque hills of Manipur, is home to a distinctive pottery tradition practised by the Tangkhul Naga tribe. Known as Longpi Hamlei pottery, this craft is a confluence of heritage and utility. Unlike conventional pottery, it is made without a potter's wheel, showcasing the artisans' unparalleled skill.

The women of the "Loree Hamlei" Village Pottery Collective have revitalised this age-old craft, making it accessible to contemporary markets. Their handcrafted cookware and decor items have gained popularity in India and abroad, bridging the gap between rustic tradition and modern design.

The raw materials used for Longpi pottery, weathered and serpentine rocks, are exclusive to the region. These rocks are ground into powder, mixed with water, and kneaded into a clay-like consistency. Unlike the mechanised process of wheel pottery, Longpi pottery relies entirely on hand-moulding techniques using wooden boards and traditional tools.

Once shaped, the pottery is dried and fired in open bonfires at over 1200 degrees Celsius. The pieces are then polished with machee leaves, which impart a smooth finish and natural sheen. Finished products often feature cane accents around handles and knobs, adding to their charm.

Historically, Longpi pottery was reserved for the royals and elite, serving as an essential element in rituals and festivities. Today, it is a cherished part of Manipuri households, used for cooking during special occasions. From teapots and kettles to decorative bowls and trays, Longpi pottery embodies a blend of practicality and elegance.

BLACK POTTERY TODAY: BRIDGING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The black pottery of Uttar Pradesh and Manipur is a testament to India's rich craft heritage. Its journey from traditional village homes to global markets reflects the resilience and adaptability of Indian artisans. However, the survival of this craft requires continued patronage, innovation, and recognition.

The Geographical Indication tag for both Uttar Pradesh and Manipur black pottery is a step toward preserving their unique identities. However, challenges remain. Artisans often face issues like insufficient funding, lack of awareness, and competition from mass-produced alternatives. Government initiatives, collaborations with design houses, and consumer support are crucial for ensuring the survival of these time-honoured crafts.

By choosing black pottery, we not only celebrate the intricate artistry of Indian craftsmen but also contribute to sustaining an ancient tradition that continues to evolve, one piece at a time. Let these timeless creations grace your home, serving as a reminder of India's unparalleled cultural and artistic heritage.

WHERE TO BUY

Visitors can explore the heart of these crafts in their places of origin, Nizamabad in Uttar Pradesh and Longpi in Manipur. For urban buyers, design firms like Objectry in Delhi curate and sell exquisite black pottery pieces, offering a slice of tradition with a contemporary touch.



The Process of Making Black Pottery



Manipur's Longpi Hamlei Pottery

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

Welcome to Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre (JECC) – Managed by Accor, where innovation thrives against the backdrop of Jaipur’s vibrant heritage

TT BUREAU

Just 15 minutes from Jaipur International Airport, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre offers state-of-the-art venues ideal for meetings, conferences, and grand events. Designed to provide the perfect blend of comfort and functionality, it’s a destination that promises memorable experiences.

Whether you are here for a business meet or a big summit, a celebration of a grand scale or the one closest to your heart till date, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre - Managed by Accor bring the perfect setting with unmatched hospitality and world-class facilities to make every moment extraordinary.

VERSATILE VENUES FOR EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS

From grand conventions to intimate gatherings, these event spaces redefine versatility and elegance. The Convention Centre, with its pillarless design, spans 11,543 sq. ft., offering seating for 1,100 guests and a spacious pre-function area. For smaller meetings and private events, choose from 14 flexible Meeting Rooms, including the 4,000 sq. ft. Banquet U6.

Outdoor enthusiasts will love the Convention Lawn (50,000 sq. ft.) and Poolside Lawn (24,000 sq. ft.), perfect for team building activities and outdoor celebrations. Hosting trade shows or exhibitions? The JECC Exhibition Halls, covering a massive 106,372 sq. ft. each, can accommodate up to 9,000 attendees.

For larger-than-life concerts and outdoor events, the sprawling JECC Exhibition Ground, covering 8.5 lakh sq. ft., offers endless possibilities. These thoughtfully designed venues ensure every event, big or small, becomes an inspiring experience.

A STAY TO REMEMBER

Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre offers everything you need for a comfortable and enjoyable visit. With 226 modern rooms, including 8 premium suites and 1 luxurious presidential suite, every guest is guaranteed a relaxing stay.

For food lovers, the hotel’s culinary offerings are a treat. Enjoy a fine dining experience at Food Exchange Jaipur, or unwind with drinks and light bites at The Gourmet Bar.



Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre



India Stonemart, 2024

After a busy day, guests can unwind and recharge at the hotel's spa, a serene retreat offering a tranquil atmosphere where you can relax, rejuvenate, and let go of stress.

PROVEN EXCELLENCE

With a track record of hosting over 190 successful events, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC – Managed by Accor, have established themselves as India's leading MICE destinations.

The Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit 2024 put Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC in the spotlight, hosting luminaries like Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Deputy Chief Minister Smt Diya Kumari, and business titans like Gautam Adani and Anand Mahindra.

Also adding a unique twist, JECC Hall 1 turned into a vibrant indoor cricket stadium for the Entertainment Premier League 4.0 while notable events like India Stone Mart 2024 and the Jaipur Jewellery Show further underscored its expertise.

The hotel complex came alive with electrifying performances by icons like Diljit Dosanjh, Karan Aujla, and Arijit Singh, transforming it into a stage for unforgettable musical nights while proving that this venue isn't just a space—it's an experience.

Manuj Ralhan, General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre & JECC-Managed by Accor, shares, "2024 has been a landmark year for us. We have been profitable since our first month of operations and are laser-focused on positioning ourselves as the leading MICE destination in the country. Our strategic pricing, exceptional service, quality of food &



Poolside Area Complemented by a Lawn

beverage, and multiple expansive venues, have resulted in some of the highest revenue per SQM per key in the country for 1st year of operation for a Mice hotel even with inflation accounted for. We look forward to continuing to raise the bar for world-class events in 2025."

LOOKING FORWARD

With major events like Dermacon 2025, Zomaland by Zomato, and the prestigious IIFA Awards 2025 on the horizon, the hotel complex is gearing up to create even more unforgettable experiences.

These iconic events will bring together leaders in dermatology, food enthusiasts, and Bollywood stars, making the venue a vibrant hub of innovation, entertainment, and celebration, solidifying its reputation as a premier destination for world-class events.



Arijit Sing Live- JECC Exhibition Ground



Suite Bedroom- City View



Rising Rajasthan, 2024- Convention Centre

INDIA'S ROYAL HEADGEAR LEGACY

From jewel-encrusted mukuts to feather-plumed turbans, royal headgear was a statement, a legacy, and sometimes, an impressive way to hold up some serious bling

KAMAL GILL

When it comes to flaunting status, power, and an unmatched sense of style, India's royal families knew exactly how to crown their achievements—literally. The Mukut was a masterpiece

of gold and gemstones, crafted with meticulous care and a dash of divine inspiration. Adorned with rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and sapphires, this conical crown wasn't just reserved for kings—it was reserved for emperors. Pearl borders and dangling pearl strands added the final touch of opulence, because, royalty does not stop at "just enough".

Take, for example, the Jigha of Nawanagar, an all-diamond showstopper remodelled by Cartier in 1935. Not only could this piece blind anyone who dared look at it in direct sunlight, but it was also designed to multitask as a brooch. Practical royalty, indeed!

The Satara Royal Pagdi brought drama to the headwear game with 200 diamonds, 17 emeralds, and a string of pearls trailing behind like a mic drop for anyone who doubted their regal flair.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENTS BY REGION

- **Karnataka's Mysore Peta:** These silk turbans, wrapped in golden-threaded lace, were the hallmark of the Wodeyar royal family. If subtlety was ever an option, the



The Jigha of Nawanagar



The Maharaja of Nawanagar Wearing The Cartier Diamond Necklace

Wodeyars clearly did not want it.

- **Rajasthan's Pagaris:** Royal Rajasthani turbans were engineering marvels, with some weighing more than your average watermelon.
- **Punjab's Dastar:** A symbol of strength and pride, the Sikh turban influenced headgear design far and wide. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's variations came with middle dips and neck flaps for added style.

THE MUGHAL MASTERPIECES

The Mughals were known for their love of grandeur and their ability to transform the everyday into the extraordinary, and their approach to headgear was no exception. They elevated turbans from simple accessories to breathtaking symbols of power, art, and craftsmanship.



Shah Jahan's Sarpech



Patiala Royal Sarpech

Emperor Humayun was a trendsetter in his time, introducing the Taj-i-Izzat, or "Crown of Glory," a turban design that became synonymous with his reign. Its distinctive pointed style was a departure from the traditional Mughal turbans, standing as a bold statement of his authority and vision.

The Mughal passion for opulence reached new heights with the Kalgi, an ornate turban ornament that became a hallmark of royalty. These jewelled creations, often featuring exquisite gemstones set into elaborate designs and adorned with delicate plumes, added an undeniable sparkle to their already magnificent attire. Reserved primarily for the emperor, the Kalgi symbolized power and prestige. On rare occasions, it was gifted to favoured nobles or princes, making it a token of immense honour.

Perhaps no emperor embodied the Mughal love for luxury better than Shah Jahan, the visionary behind the Taj Mahal. His Sarpech, a dazzling ornament crafted with emeralds and diamonds, exemplified his penchant for intricate craftsmanship and unparalleled grandeur.

KINGS WHO TOOK HEADGEAR TO THE NEXT LEVEL

When it came to flaunting authority and wealth, Indian royals knew how to bring in star power. Their headgear was more than an accessory—it was a statement of power, style, and, let's be honest, some jaw-dropping dazzling headpieces that graced history.

Nizam of Hyderabad: A Sarpech for the Ages: The Nizam's sarpech (turban ornament) was nothing short of legendary. Crafted with five intricate openwork foliate diamond panels and encased in gold, it featured nine emerald drops that hung like green teardrops of envy. The craftsmanship was unmatched, reflecting the grandeur of the Hyderabad court.



The Nizam's Sarpech

Maharaja of Kapurthala: Maharaja Jagatjit Singh was not one to settle for ordinary. His Cartier headdress, a Belle Époque creation, boasted a massive 117.40-carat hexagonal emerald as its centrepiece, surrounded by 19 smaller emeralds, pearls, and white diamonds. This masterpiece was so stunning that it became a showstopper at royal events for King George V and VI. Talk about a head-turner!

Patiala Royal Sarpech: The Patiala royal family's sarpech was a kaleidoscope of opulence, adorned with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and intricate enamel work in red, green, and blue. Its foliate motif design added a touch of elegance. Sold at Christie's in 1999, this heirloom continued to dazzle even outside royal circles.

Maharaja of Ratlam (Ranjit Singhji): The Maharaja's dastar (turban) wasn't just a headpiece; it was a treasure trove. A mesh of intricate sarpattis made of diamonds, pearls, and precious gemstones wrapped around his turban, punctuated by circular diamond-encrusted brooches. The jewel game didn't stop there—his portraits often revealed an elaborate



Maharaja Jayachamaraja Wodeyar Wore His Peta

kundan haar (necklace), a pearl choker, and diamond earrings. To top it off, his angarkha (traditional coat) shimmered with gold-thread embroidery and sequins, while a jewelled sword hinted at his royal swagger.

Maharaja of Benares (Prabhu Narayan Singh): Though fewer details survive about his specific headgear, the Maharaja of Benares was part of a lineage that treasured their collection of diamonds and gemstones. Known for their simplicity paired with exquisite taste, his headpieces reflected the understated elegance of Benares royalty, focusing more on cultural and ceremonial significance than flashy embellishments.

The Wodeyars of Mysore didn't hold back either. Their Mysore Peta was a bejewelled silk turban that doubled as a

status symbol. Maharaja Jayachamaraja Wodeyar wore his Peta with such swagger that it became a cultural icon, often gifted as an honour to esteemed guests.

The Gaekwads of Baroda took emerald devotion to dazzling heights. Maharaja Pratap Singh Rao Gaekwad wore an emerald aigrette—a feathered turban ornament inspired by European design—seamlessly blending global elegance with Baroda's royal traditions.

FEATHER POWER

Feathers and plumes on royal headgear were like the mic drop of monarchy—loud, proud, and impossible to ignore. From black egret feathers to peacock plumes, these additions transformed turbans into symbols of divine authority and unmatched swagger.

For the Mughals, feather plumes were declarations. Emperor Humayun's Taj-i-Izzat featured an iconic black egret plume, that declared, "Bow down,"

Akbar, always on trend, opted for an upright plume in his turban, inspired by Iranian aesthetics, while Jahangir took it up a notch with softer plumes weighted down by pearls, proving even feathers could have layers of luxury. The kalgi, a jewelled turban ornament crowned with feathers, became a Mughal signature, reserved exclusively for emperors and gifted to only the most elite courtiers as political statements.

In the Sikh Empire, the kalgi took on a spiritual and royal flair. Maharaja Ranjit Singh featured slender black heron feathers on his turban, a nod to the heritage of Guru Gobind Singh, who popularized the plume as a symbol of temporal authority. These plumes carried the weight of Sikh sovereignty and tradition.

Rajput kings weren't ones to shy away from grandeur. Their pagris (turbans) rocked peacock plumes, adding a touch of elegance to their warrior swagger. Each feather was a bold proclamation of lineage, bravery, and the unshakable pride of their clans. For Rajputs, the more elaborate the plume, the higher the honour.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the Maratha rulers used feathered headgear to symbolize their sovereignty and military prowess. The plumes were always prominently displayed, serving as a visual representation of their martial dominance and authority over their territories.

LEGACY OF THE BEJEWELLED TURBAN

From the Nizam of Hyderabad's diamond-drenched sarpechs to Maharaja of Jodhpur's winged turban designs, India's royal headgear was all about powerful symbols of sovereignty. Today, these masterpieces remain as shimmering relics of a bygone era, ensuring that long after their wearers are gone, their crowns still reign supreme.

So, the next time you think your accessories are on point, remember the Maharajas of India, who truly put the "crown" in "crown jewel."



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GOLDEN CONCEPT UNVEILS LUXE IPHONE CASES

Two special edition cases to celebrate the Snake in the 2025 Lunar New Year

TT BUREAU



Magnetic Shield Snake Edition iPhone Case

Golden Concept has unveiled two exclusive iPhone case designs: the Python Leather Edition and the Magnetic Shield Snake Edition in honour of the “Year of the Snake” and to celebrate the Lunar New Year. These extraordinary pieces are more than accessories, they are symbols of transformation, resilience, and the wisdom that the snake represents in the Chinese zodiac.

The snake holds a special place in the Lunar New Year, representing adaptability, intelligence, and the courage to embrace change. These qualities inspired Golden Concept to create a collection that celebrates this timeless emblem, inviting wearers to carry its transformative energy throughout the year.

THE SNAKE IN THE LUNAR NEW YEAR

The snake holds a prominent place in the Chinese lunar calendar, representing adaptability, intelligence, and strategic thinking. Known for its ability to shed its skin, the snake symbolizes renewal and personal growth—qualities that inspire individuals to embrace change and navigate challenges with patience and determination. The Year of the Snake in 2025 is anticipated to be a time of thoughtful decisions, steady progress, and cultural transformation, resonating with these themes of resilience and transformation.

PYTHON LEATHER EDITION: A UNIQUE MASTERPIECE

This case is crafted from genuine python leather, offering a natural texture as distinctive as the snake itself. The design

features a striking snake embellishment, meticulously crafted to embody the spirit of transformation and renewal. Combining bold aesthetics with meaningful symbolism, the Python Leather Edition serves as a powerful reminder of adaptability, strength, and personal growth.

MAGNETIC SHIELD SNAKE EDITION: BOLD AND POWERFUL

The Magnetic Shield Snake Edition redefines luxury with a bold snake design that symbolises transformation, wisdom, and strength. The intricate embellishment takes centre stage, honouring the mystique of the snake and its powerful energy. This case blends high-quality materials with a meaningful symbol, creating a statement piece that inspires confidence and adaptability.

WHY THE SNAKE COLLECTION?

Golden Concept’s dedication to blending modern luxury with meaningful design is at the heart of the Snake Collection. By releasing these cases during the Lunar New Year, the brand pays homage to the snake’s significance and offers its customers a chance to celebrate this symbolic year with style and purpose.

Both the Python Leather Edition and the Magnetic Shield Snake Edition are available in limited quantities, emphasising their unique appeal to discerning customers. With these designs, Golden Concept invites individuals to carry the spirit of the Year of the Snake and step into the future with confidence.



20th Hotel Investment Conference - South Asia

8 - 10 April 2025 | The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake

20 YEARS

PAST, PRESENT AND *Prophesies*

SOME NOTABLE SPEAKERS



Abdulla Al Abdoulli
Chief Executive Officer,
Marjan



Anil Chadha
Divisional Chief Executive
ITC Limited Hotels Division



Anuraag Bhatnagar
Chief Executive Officer
The Leela Palaces
Hotels and Resorts



Ashish Jakhanwala
Chairman, MD & CEO
SAMHI Hotels



Arun K. Saraf
Chairman and MD
Juniper Hotels



Atul Jain
Chief Operating Officer
India, Sri Lanka, & Bangladesh
Best Western Hotels



Barbara Muckermann
Chief Executive Officer
Kempinski Hotels



Bhanu Chopra
Chairman & MD
RateGain



Behzad Kharas
Chairman & MD
BNK Group



Dillip Rajakarier
Group CEO, Minor International
& CEO Minor Hotels



Dimitris Manikis
President – Europe,
ME, Eurasia, & Africa
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



Dr. Jyotsna Suri
Chairperson & MD,
The Lalit Suri
Hospitality Group



Dr. Sanjay Sethi
Managing
Director & CEO
Chalet Hotels



Elie Younes
Executive VP & Global Chief
Development Officer
Radisson Hotel Group



Gautam Birudavolu
Chief Executive Officer
GreenPark Hotels
& Resorts



Harshavardhan Neotia
Chairman
Ambuja Neotia Group



Jatin Khanna
Chief Executive Officer
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



Kenneth Macpherson
Chief Executive Officer
EMEA, InterContinental
Hotels Group



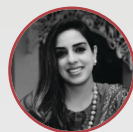
Kevin Goh
Chief Executive Officer
The Ascott Limited



Nathan Andrews
Strategic Advisor
DS Group



Nitan Chhatwal
Managing Director
Shrem Infrastructure



Pooja Ray
Managing Director,
Mayfair Hotels & Resorts



Rahool Macarius
Market MD Eurasia
Wyndham Hotels &
Resorts



Rajeev Menon
President - Asia Pacific
(excluding China)
Marriott International



Rajesh Magow
Co-Founder & CEO
MakeMyTrip



Ritesh Agarwal
Founder & Group CEO
OYO



Sébastien Bazin
Chairman & CEO
Accor



Shahid Balwa
Vice Chairman & MD
DB Realty



Shruti Shibulal
Director & CEO
The Tamara Leisure
Experience



Sonica Malhotra
Joint Managing Director
MBD Group



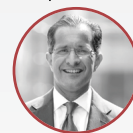
Vibhas Prasad
Director
Leisure Hotels Group



Vikram Garg
Senior MD & Head of
Asia Real Estate Asset
Management, Blackstone



Vikram Lalvani
Managing Director & CEO
Sterling Holiday Resorts



Vikram Oberoi
Chief Executive Officer & MD
The Oberoi Group



Zubin Saxena
Senior Vice President
& Country Head - India
Hilton



Sterling OrientWoods Pench

STERLING JUNGLE RETREATS: STAY WILD, STAY LUXE

Escape the hustle and bustle of your daily life and experience Sterling's luxury jungle resorts

TT BUREAU

For those who crave the raw beauty of the wild but refuse to compromise on luxury, a jungle retreat is just as much an escape as it is an intimate dialogue with nature. Sterling Resorts, lauded for its bespoke hospitality, has expertly woven luxury into India's untamed landscapes, redefining the wildlife travel experience.

From Jawai's leopard trails to Pench's tiger corridors, from Gir's lion heartland to Wayanad's elephant sanctuaries, each Sterling resort is a seamless blend of design and experience, celebrating the region's distinct wildlife and cultural heritage.

STERLING ANAIKATTI – THE CALL OF THE SIRUVANI

Nestled along the Siruvani River, Sterling Anaikatti is a haven of tranquillity. Its 33 pinewood chalets offer rustic elegance, complemented by an Ayurvedic spa and curated wildlife excursions. The Gaja Hut restaurant serves Kerala's culinary

gems, including Meen Pollichathu, a delicately spiced, banana leaf-wrapped fish dish.

Nearest Airport: 50 km from Coimbatore International Airport

STERLING CORBETT – LEGENDS OF THE KUMAON WILD

Set against the Shivalik Hills, Sterling Corbett is an homage to India's first national park. With 42 luxurious rooms and cottages overlooking the Ramganga River, guests can embark on exhilarating safaris in search of the Bengal tiger.

The Tree House restaurant serves Pahari Bhuna Gosht, a slow-cooked mutton delicacy that encapsulates Kumaoni flavours.

Nearest Airport: 75 km from Pantnagar Airport

STERLING GIR – IN THE REALM OF THE ASIATIC LION

Sterling Gir immerses guests in the rugged beauty of Gujarat's lion territory. Its 26 kumbas—traditional Kutch-inspired

cottages— sit by the Hiran River, offering a gateway to thrilling safaris.

Hiran Kinaro, the in-house restaurant, serves Kathiawadi specialities, from satvik dishes to contemporary Gujarati delights.

Nearest Airport: 95 km from Diu Airport; 160 km from Rajkot Airport

STERLING KANHA – WHERE THE BARASINGHA ROAMS

Sprawled across 8.5 acres of lush sal forest, Sterling Kanha is an award-winning retreat. Its 25 elegantly designed rooms and exclusive machans (tree-top viewing decks) offer unparalleled vantage points to spot Kanha's famed Barasingha deer and Bengal tigers.

The Taste of Jungle restaurant presents regional delicacies like Aloo Dal Badi.

Nearest Airport: 160 km from Jabalpur Airport

STERLING PENCH – KIPLING'S JUNGLE, REIMAGINED

Sterling's twin retreats in Pench—Padam Pench and Orient Woods Pench—offer distinct yet equally captivating experiences. Padam Pench's wooden chalets and private plunge pool villas embody refined luxury, while Orient Woods Pench blends seamlessly with nature through eco-conscious design.

At Padam Pench, Alikatta pays homage to Kipling's inspiration with a rich culinary experience, while Sigri at Orient Woods offers intimate, candlelit dining under the stars.

Nearest Airport: 90 km from Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport, Nagpur

STERLING BAGH RANTHAMBORE – A ROYAL JUNGLE ESCAPE

Set across two lush acres, Sterling Bagh Ranthambore blends Rajasthan's royal heritage with the wild spirit of Ranthambore. Its 36 grand accommodations, curated safaris, storytelling sessions, and starlit bonfire evenings create an immersive experience.

At Sawai, guests can savour local specialities like Jungli Maas and Ker Sangri, topped off with the region's signature guava-infused desserts.

Nearest Airport: 145 km from Jaipur International Airport



Sterling Lontano Wyand



M. Harinath Senior Vice President - Marketing

STERLING REWILD SARISKA – THE UNTAMED ARAVALLI

Set against the Aravalli hills, Sterling Rewild Sariska offers heritage-style rooms and luxury tents with plunge pools. Guests can explore guided tiger safaris, village excursions, and birdwatching sessions, immersing themselves in the rugged beauty of Sariska.

Wayanad—capture the mystique of the Western Ghats. From Muthanga's wildlife corridors to Vythiri's misty pathways, each resort is an ode to nature. Malabar Pavilion showcases Kerala's culinary artistry, with authentic Malabar flavours.

Nearest Airport: 95 km from Calicut International Airport

EXPANDING HORIZONS: THE FUTURE OF STERLING'S WILD ESCAPADES

Sterling's wildlife footprint continues to expand. The soon-to-launch Sterling Ratan Villas Jawai will offer an exclusive gateway to India's renowned leopard sanctuary, while new properties in Bandhavgarh and Tipeswar promise even more breathtaking wildlife experiences.

Beyond adventure, Subuthi Spa, Sterling's in-house wellness brand, ensures guests return rejuvenated. Available at select resorts, it offers a fusion of Ayurveda and contemporary therapies to complement the wilderness experience.

For the wildlife lover, a Sterling jungle retreat is not a mere residence but a chance to enter a realm of the extraordinary. With its early morning safaris and midnight dinners under a sky full of stars, every encounter intensifies one's harmony with nature.



Sterling Corbett

LOVE + CHAI



Couple Enjoying Tea

Chai isn't just a drink in India, it's a ritual, an emotion, and a unifier, bringing comfort and conversation from street corners to drawing rooms

TT BUREAU

More than just India's most-loved brew, it has silently witnessed countless love stories—of strangers becoming lovers over shared cups, of furtive glances exchanged across steaming earthen mugs, and of lifelong friendships cemented over endless refills. Whether during a monsoon downpour, a crisp winter evening, or a bustling college break, chai possesses a magical ability to bring people together. In India, love does not always begin with grand, cinematic gestures but often with a simple, heartfelt question: "Ek cup chai piyoge?"

CHAI AND ROMANCE: LOVE IN EVERY SIP

In a society where arranged marriages remain prevalent, courtship often unfolds in quiet, unspoken ways. Unlike in the

West, where dating is more overt, Indian romance thrives in fleeting moments—stolen glances in a bustling marketplace, whispered exchanges at family gatherings, and, more often than not, conversations over chai.

For generations, arranged marriage introductions have taken place over a cup of tea. Families gather in drawing rooms, exchanging pleasantries while a prospective bride gracefully serves chai on a tray.

This simple yet poignant act—both traditional and cinematic—has been romanticised in countless Bollywood films. Films like *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* depict young couples exchanging nervous smiles over chai, turning this humble act into a defining moment in their love stories.

For students, chai stalls are more than just places to grab a quick drink—they serve as informal dating spots. In cities like



Chai At Maharaja Express

Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata, chai vendors outside universities provide the backdrop for countless budding romances.

Students huddle around these stalls, sharing dreams, ambitions, and heartbreaks over a cup of cutting chai. In Bengal, tea shops are central to the famous adda culture, where intellectual debates and poetry readings effortlessly intertwine with romance. Kolkata's College Street, with its historic chai addas, has long been a meeting ground for young lovers and revolutionaries alike. Many love stories have begun over long, heartfelt discussions at these tea stalls.

TRAIN JOURNEYS, MONSOONS, AND BOLLYWOOD'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH CHAI

Chai has also played a role in many real-life love stories across India's vast railway network. No train journey in India is complete without the rhythmic calls of "chai, chai, garam chai!" Vendors weave through packed carriages, offering steaming cups of tea, and countless travellers have struck up conversations with fellow passengers over a shared sip.

There are many tales of people meeting their future partners on long train journeys, bonding over their mutual love for chai and the thrill of travel. The nostalgia of railway chai, sipped from a clay kulhad, has been immortalised in literature and cinema, reinforcing the idea that sometimes, love finds you when you least expect it—over a simple cup of tea.

Bollywood has long used chai as a metaphor for love, longing, and companionship. In *Wake Up Sid*, a rainy-day chai moment marks the growing intimacy between the protagonists. In *Chai Pani Etc.*, chai symbolises comfort and belonging, illustrating how something as simple as sharing a cup of tea can foster deep emotional connections. There is something undeniably romantic about chai and rain.

Across India, monsoon season brings with it the tradition of sipping hot tea while watching raindrops dance on rooftops. This perfect pairing has inspired poets, musicians, and lovers alike. Ruskin Bond, in many of his writings, beautifully describes the charm of sipping tea in the hills of Mussoorie, where mist rolls in and conversations flow effortlessly. The sound of rain, the scent of wet earth, and the warmth of chai create the perfect backdrop for love to blossom. Whether it



Rainy Day + Tea



Enjoying The Tea In Rain

is a couple sharing an umbrella at a roadside stall or a family gathered on their veranda, the simple act of drinking chai in the rain evokes a deep sense of nostalgia and romance.

With the rise of coffee culture and global café chains, one might assume that chai's popularity is waning. However, the opposite is true. The emergence of contemporary chai cafés like Chaayos and Chai Point has modernised the tea-drinking experience while staying true to tradition.

These cafés offer everything from classic desi masala chai to experimental blends like saffron and tulsi, catering to both old-school tea lovers and young romantics. Even online dating has embraced India's love affair with chai. Many dating apps now list "chai" as a common interest, and phrases like "Let's grab a chai" have become modern-day equivalents of a coffee date.

From arranged marriage meetings to college romances, from train journeys to rainy-day confessions, chai has silently witnessed love in all its forms. As the steam rises from a freshly brewed cup and the aroma of cardamom and ginger fills the air, one thing remains certain, chai will always be at the heart of India's love stories, fostering connections and warming hearts with every sip.

NIGHT TOURISM IS THE NEXT BIG TREND!

As travellers continue to seek unique, magical experiences, the world after dark is proving to be the next big adventure waiting to be explored

TT BUREAU



Bioluminescent Tour

From buzzing night markets to glowing bioluminescent waters, night tourism or noctourism is all about embracing the magic that only the night can offer. There's something undeniably magical about the world after dark. As the sun sets and the stars flicker to life, everything shifts—familiar streets take on a mysterious glow, cities transform into dazzling lightscapes, and nature reveals some of its most breathtaking secrets. This is the beauty of night tourism or noctourism where you travel specifically to experience the world at night.

Gliding through ancient canals illuminated by lanterns, standing beneath a sky ablaze with stars, or wandering haunted alleyways under the eerie glow of street lamps, noctourism unveils a destination in an entirely new light. It is more than just nightlife, it's about discovering the magic and mystery that only the night can offer.

A recent survey found that 62% of travellers are now interested in visiting "darker sky destinations" to engage in nighttime adventures such as stargazing, aurora hunting, and astrophotography. Natural spectacles like the Northern Lights have become bucket-list experiences for many travellers, fueling this trend. The night tourism market in the U.S. is witnessing an annual growth rate of 5.2%, with

cities like New York and Las Vegas leading the charge. This growth is largely driven by the rising demand for late-night entertainment, cultural events, and immersive experiences tailored for nighttime explorers.

THE RISE OF NOCTOURISM

Not too long ago, travel itineraries followed a predictable pattern. One would go sightseeing during the day, dinner in the evening, and an early night in preparation for another day of exploration. But that's changing fast. More travellers are deliberately seeking out after-dark experiences, looking beyond the traditional attractions to discover the hidden wonders of the night.

One of the biggest reasons for this shift? The rise of 24-hour cities. Places like London, New York, Tokyo, and Bangkok have nightlife scenes that extend far beyond bars and clubs. From late-night food markets and midnight museum openings to interactive light festivals and immersive theatre experiences, cities are catering to visitors who want to experience the night on their own terms.

Governments and tourism boards are also catching on. Cities like Paris and Hong Kong now offer entire itineraries designed around noctourism. Think after-hours river cruises,



Rot Fai Market

moonlit walking tours, and night safaris. Some of these experiences have even helped ease overcrowding in popular destinations, spreading out visitor numbers and creating a more balanced tourism economy. Instead of cramming into famous landmarks during peak hours, travellers can now experience them in a quieter, more atmospheric setting, often enhanced by creative lighting and storytelling.

NIGHT MARKETS AND LATE-NIGHT FEASTS

If there's one thing that truly captures the spirit of noctourism, it's a bustling night market. Across Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, these lively hubs come alive after sundown, filling the air with the scent of sizzling skewers, the hum of conversation, and the occasional performance by street musicians or snake charmers.

Take Taipei's Shilin Night Market, where you can grab everything from crispy fried chicken to the infamous stinky

tofu, or Marrakech's Jemaa el-Fnaa, where fortune tellers, fire-eaters, and storytellers create an almost mythical atmosphere. Bangkok's night markets, like Rot Fai Market, serve up everything from vintage antiques to the city's famous pad thai, all under a neon glow.

Food is a huge part of the noctourism experience. In Madrid, the tradition of 'madrugada tapas' sees locals and visitors alike gathering for small plates and drinks well past midnight—turning the city's plazas into social hubs of food and laughter. Over in Mexico City, the humble taco stand is an institution, serving up some of the best street food you'll ever eat—because nothing beats a fresh al pastor taco at 2 AM.

For many travellers, these late-night feasts become the most unforgettable part of their trip as they soak up the energy of a place, connect with locals, and experience a destination in its most authentic form.



Taipei's Shilin Night Market



Stargazing View

STARGAZING AND BIOLUMINESCENT WONDERS

Away from the bright lights of the city, noctourism takes on a more ethereal, almost otherworldly quality. Some of the most breathtaking experiences happen in the dark, far from the distractions of modern life.

One of the most breathtaking noctourism activities? Stargazing. In places like Chile's Atacama Desert, Namibia's NamibRand Reserve, and New Zealand's Aoraki Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve, visitors can witness skies so clear and star-filled that it feels like stepping into a different dimension.

Watching the Milky Way stretch across the heavens, spotting distant planets through a telescope, or catching a meteor shower streaking through the night are moments that put life into perspective.

Then there's bioluminescence, one of the most surreal natural spectacles on the planet. In places like Mosquito Bay in Puerto Rico, the Maldives, and Halong Bay in Vietnam, microscopic organisms cause the water to glow an eerie blue-green whenever it's disturbed.

Kayaking through these glowing waves is like floating through a real-life fantasy world—a reminder of just how strange and beautiful nature can be.

But as with all delicate ecosystems, these wonders need protection. Over-tourism, pollution, and climate change threaten their existence, making sustainable tourism more important than ever.

NOCTURNAL WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

For wildlife lovers, noctourism opens up a completely different world. Many animals are nocturnal, meaning they only emerge once the sun has set—giving travellers a chance to see rare and elusive creatures in their natural habitat.

One of the best places for this? Night safaris in Africa and Asia. Instead of a typical daytime game drive, these after-dark adventures offer a glimpse of predators on the prowl, from stealthy leopards to hunting lions. In India's Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, lucky visitors might spot elephants, civets, and even big cats moving under the cover of darkness.



Kayaking in Glowing Waves



Night Safaris in Africa

And then there's firefly tourism which is going big in 2025 as it offers one of the more enchanting noctourism experiences you can have. Imagine drifting down Malaysia's Selangor River, surrounded by thousands of tiny fireflies twinkling in perfect harmony, as if the trees themselves are lit from within. It's a scene straight out of a fairy tale. However, one that needs careful conservation efforts to ensure it remains for future generations.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOCTOURISM

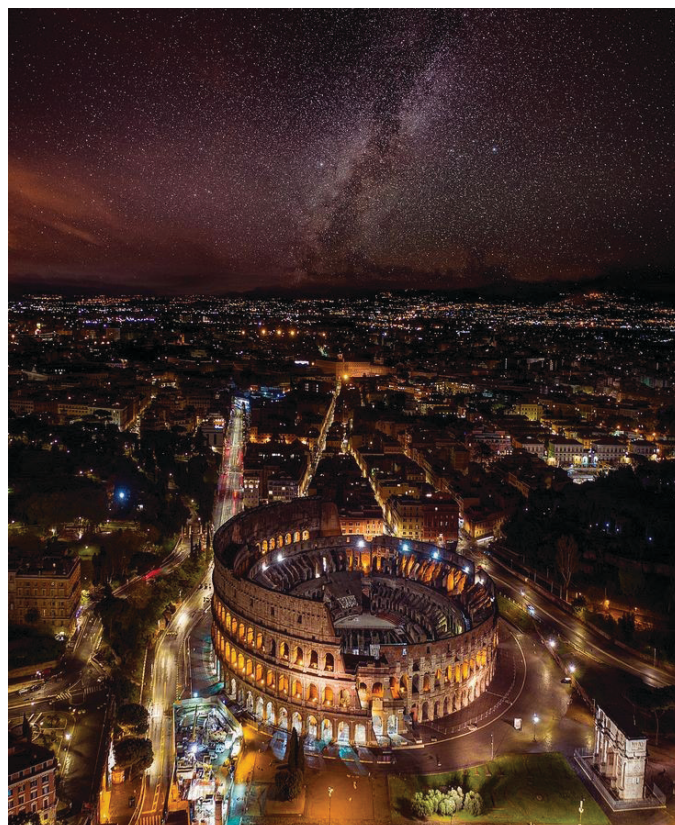
Some of the world's most famous landmarks take on a whole new energy at night. In many places, after-dark tours add layers of mystery and atmosphere, turning familiar sites into something extraordinary. If you loved watching *Night at the Museum*, now you can experience it, without everything coming to life of course.

Take Rome's Colosseum, where special nighttime tours let visitors wander through the ancient ruins under soft, golden lighting, creating a more intimate and eerie experience. Or the Great Wall of China, where certain sections are now open for moonlit hikes, making for an experience that's as haunting as it is breathtaking.

And for those who love a good ghost story, noctourism has plenty to offer. Cities like Edinburgh, New Orleans, and Prague have capitalised on their haunted histories, offering ghost tours through underground vaults, eerie cemeteries, and abandoned asylums. Even if you don't believe in ghosts, the sheer atmosphere and storytelling make these tours a thrilling addition to any trip.

WHY NIGHT TOURISM IS THE NEXT BIG TREND IN 2025

The world of travel is transforming, and 2025 is set to be the year when night tourism takes centre stage. From nocturnal safaris and starlit city tours to moonlight treks and midnight food markets, the concept of experiencing destinations after dark is gaining immense popularity. With advancements



Rome's Colosseum Nightview

in lighting technology, urban planning, and immersive experiences, travellers are now embracing the magic of the night like never before.

One of the biggest advantages of night tourism is the avoidance of daytime crowds. Popular landmarks and attractions that are often overcrowded during the day offer a more peaceful and exclusive experience at night. Cities like New York, Paris, Tokyo, and Dubai have embraced late-night tourism by keeping major attractions open past midnight.

For destinations with hot climates, night tourism provides a cooler and more comfortable way to explore. Cities like

Dubai, Bangkok, and Marrakech see a surge in nighttime street markets and open-air performances, making the experience more enjoyable than under the scorching sun.

Governments and tourism boards are increasingly investing in well-lit streets, extended public transport hours, and dedicated night-time attractions, making night tourism safer and more accessible. Cities like Singapore and New York have developed “night-time economy” strategies to boost local businesses and tourism.

With the rise of digital nomads and social media influencers, there’s a growing demand for Instagrammable night spots, rooftop bars, light festivals, and evening adventure sports. The appeal of capturing unique moments under the stars is driving more travellers to explore the world at night.

Governments are recognizing the economic potential of a thriving night tourism sector. Extended operating hours mean restaurants, museums, amusement parks, and entertainment hubs benefit from increased revenue. Cities like London, Dubai, and Seoul are offering special night passes for tourists to explore multiple attractions after sunset.

SOME OF THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER NIGHT EXPERIENCES IN 2025 INCLUDE

Night tourism offers travellers an opportunity to experience cultural, natural, and urban landscapes in a completely different way. Some of the most sought-after night experiences in 2025 include:

- **Astronomical Tourism:** Stargazing trips in remote locations such as the Atacama Desert (Chile), Ladakh (India), and Iceland are drawing space enthusiasts.
- **Moonlight Treks & Night Safaris:** Destinations like Serengeti (Tanzania), Ranthambore (India), and Kruger

National Park (South Africa) offer rare chances to see nocturnal wildlife in action.

- **Neon Nightlife & Cultural Shows:** Cities like Tokyo, Bangkok, and Las Vegas are leading with futuristic neon districts and late-night cultural performances.

- **Bioluminescent Beaches:** Places like Mosquito Bay (Puerto Rico), Vaadhoo Island (Maldives), and Thailand’s glowing shores are becoming social media sensations.

THE FUTURE OF NIGHT TOURISM

The trend of night tourism is only set to grow in 2025 and beyond. As noctourism grows, new trends are emerging — pushing the boundaries of after-dark experiences.

Augmented reality night tours are becoming a thing, blending digital projections with real-world locations to bring history and folklore to life. Midnight wellness retreats are popping up, offering experiences like moonlit yoga, night meditations, and sensory deprivation floats.

Cities are investing in safer nighttime transport, better street lighting, and night economy strategies, making after-dark exploration easier and safer than ever. With these developments, more destinations will continue embracing after-dark exploration. Whether it’s midnight museum visits, ghost tours, or firefly kayaking, night tourism is redefining the way people experience travel. Noctourism is the perfect gateway to a world transformed after dark. The vibrant hum of night markets, the serenity of a starlit desert, or the thrill of ghostly encounters, the night unfolds with endless possibilities waiting to be explored. So next time you travel, don’t rush back to your hotel when the sun goes down. Step out, embrace the darkness, and see what magic the night has in store for you.





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Supporting Partners



LOVE, LUXE, AND SPARKLE

Valentine's Gifts for the special one that goes beyond the material value

TT BUREAU

Valentine's Day is a moment to truly celebrate your partner, making them feel cherished in a way that lingers long after the day is over. In 2025, the most meaningful gifts aren't just about luxury but creating unforgettable experiences woven with love, thoughtfulness, and a personal touch. This year, it's all about going beyond the expected, choosing something that speaks directly to your partner's heart and the moments you share.

The sparkle in their eyes as they unwrap a piece of bespoke jewellery, designed just for them, or the thrill of an extraordinary adventure, becomes a cherished memory for years to come. Every detail counts, from exclusive fragrances crafted to reflect their essence to handwritten love notes hidden within a beautifully wrapped box. Thoughtful, elegant, and deeply personal, these exceptional gifts transform Valentine's Day into a celebration of romance and connection, one that will be remembered long after the last candle has burned out.

PRIVATE ISLAND GETAWAY: THE ULTIMATE ROMANTIC ESCAPE

Imagine waking up in 2025 on your own private island, where the first thing you see is the endless blue of the ocean

stretching beyond the horizon. The air is warm, the waves whisper secrets to the shore, and there's not a soul in sight, just you, your love, and the kind of serenity that feels like a dream. Mornings begin with a lavish breakfast prepared by a private chef, featuring the freshest tropical fruits and artisanal delights. Afterwards, indulge in a couple's spa treatment, where every touch is designed to soothe, relax, and bring you even closer together.

A private island trip is the best Valentine's gift in 2025 if you want to take your romance and relaxation to extraordinary new heights, curating experiences that go beyond indulgence and into pure bliss. At Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal, "sleep tourism" is transforming the way couples unwind, offering dreamy escapes where soft linens, ocean lullabies, and custom wellness rituals guarantee the most restful sleep of your life. Elsewhere, Sindalah, an architectural marvel in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea, is redefining private island luxury with its superyacht haven, world-class spas, and a championship golf course that meets the untouched beauty of nature.

When adventure calls, dive into crystal-clear waters for an intimate snorkelling session, paddle along hidden coves, or set sail into a fiery sunset, champagne in hand. And as the night falls, retreat to a candlelit dinner on the beach, where



Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal



Dior's Spring-Summer 2025 Haute Couture Collection

time slows, the stars shine a little brighter, and every glance, every touch, becomes a memory you'll cherish forever.

BESPOKE JEWELLERY: SPARKLING SYMBOL OF LOVE

Jewellery has always been a timeless way to show love, but this year, bespoke creations will carry this sentiment to new heights. Imagine gifting your partner a piece that's not just beautiful but also uniquely theirs that reflects their personality and the special bond you share.

Picture slipping a Cartier Love Bangle with custom engravings or diamond accents onto your partner's wrist to reaffirm your commitment. Or perhaps the allure of Bvlgari's Serpenti collection speaks to you, with its serpent-inspired designs offering endless options to personalise gemstones and settings, creating a piece as unique as your love story.

HAUTE COUTURE FASHION: TAILORED GESTURE OF AFFECTION

Haute couture is more than fashion, it's a statement of artistry, luxury, and deeply personal expression. Gifting your partner a bespoke haute couture piece isn't just about the garment itself; it's about celebrating their individuality and the shared appreciation for craftsmanship and beauty that defines your relationship.

Luxury fashion houses offer private consultations, where you and your partner can step into the exclusive world of haute couture. Sit with designers, select fabrics, and witness sketches come to life, knowing that every detail is tailored just for you. The experience often extends to visits to prestigious design ateliers, where skilled artisans meticulously stitch, drape, and embellish by hand, each piece a labour of love.

There's something inherently romantic about this journey, watching the creation unfold, knowing that this one-of-a-kind piece will forever be a symbol of your devotion. Dior's



Bvlgari's Serpenti Collection

Spring-Summer 2025 Haute Couture collection, unveiled at the Musée Rodin, captures this magic perfectly, blending historical inspiration with modern craftsmanship, inviting clients to be part of the creative process. Meanwhile, Schiaparelli's latest collection embraces surrealism, sculpting the body into avant-garde forms, proving that couture is as much about imagination as it is about elegance.

DESIGNER TIMEPIECES: GIFT THAT STANDS THE TEST OF TIME

A luxury watch is more than just a gift for Valentine's Day, it's a keepsake that marks moments and memories meant to last

forever. Personalisation adds an extra layer of intimate touch, with many luxury watchmakers offering engraving services for initials, a significant date, or a heartfelt message—transforming a beautifully crafted timepiece into a lasting expression of devotion.

If you are looking to gift your partner a luxury timepiece, choices include the iconic Rolex Cosmograph Daytona, favoured by athletes and celebrities alike for its timeless appeal. Meanwhile, the Audemars Piguet Royal Oak “Jumbo” stands out with its distinctive design and heritage making it the ultimate expression of individuality and style.

Whether given as a declaration of love or as a treasured piece to celebrate life’s shared moments, a luxury watch is a gift that, much like love itself, only grows more valuable with time.

PERFUMES: CAPTURING MEMORIES IN A BOTTLE

Fragrances have a magical way of capturing emotions and memories, making them one of the most intimate and romantic gifts you can give. A scent isn’t just something you wear, it’s a signature, an invisible imprint that lingers long after you’ve left the room.

Choosing a luxury perfume for your partner is more than just picking a bottle; it’s about selecting a fragrance that tells their story, reflects their personality, and becomes a part of your shared moments.

For something truly unforgettable, many luxury brands like Chanel, Clive Christian, and Maison Francis Kurkdjian offer bespoke fragrance services, where you can create a scent

tailored to your partner’s essence. Imagine sitting down with a master perfumer, selecting notes that remind you of cherished moments together—perhaps the warm, sensual embrace of amber and musk, or the bright, floral elegance of jasmine and rose.

And for the cherry on top, one can opt for a limited-edition bottle, adorned with intricate crystal embellishments or personalised engraving. Because when love is this special, its scent should be too.

ELEVATING THE VALENTINE’S DAY EXPERIENCE

A beautifully chosen gift is only part of the magic—how you present it can make the moment truly unforgettable. The thought, the setting, and the effort behind the surprise all come together to create an experience that lingers in your partner’s heart. A surprise getaway to a secluded luxury retreat could turn Valentine’s Day into an adventure, filled with stolen moments and breathtaking views. Even a heartfelt evening at home, bathed in candlelight with soft music and handwritten love notes, can be just as enchanting, proving that the most cherished memories are often crafted in the smallest, most thoughtful details.

Every one of these luxury gifts is more than just an item, it’s a story, a reflection of love, care, and the deep understanding you have of your partner. Selecting something that speaks to their personality and passions is a way of saying, “I see you, I know you, and I cherish you.” This Valentine’s Day, it’s about creating a celebration of love and luxury, one that will be treasured long after the day has passed.





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SIP INTO SPRING BLISS

Exceptional wine choices that are ideal companions for springtime

TT BUREAU

Spring is a season of renewal, and with it comes the perfect opportunity to refresh your wine palate. The lighter, more vibrant flavours of spring wines blend beautifully with blooming gardens, picnic lunches, and breezy afternoons. Indulging in a crisp white, a fruity rosé, or a lively red can perfectly capture the essence of the season.

The right wine brings the vibrancy of spring to life, enhancing every moment with its fresh and flavourful charm. Today's Traveller brings you a curated guide to five exceptional wines ideal for springtime.

SAUVIGNON BLANC: A CLASSIC CHOICE FOR SPRING

When it comes to spring wines, Sauvignon Blanc is a perennial favourite. Known for its crisp acidity and bright citrus notes, this wine is the perfect partner for the season's lighter fare. The taste profile of Sauvignon Blanc could be described as zesty lime, tropical fruit, and herbal undertones, evoking the vitality of springtime.

Sourced predominantly from regions like New Zealand, California, and France's Loire Valley, Sauvignon Blanc showcases distinct regional variations. A standout example is the Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough, New Zealand. Its vibrant aromas of grapefruit, passionfruit, and freshly cut grass are as invigorating as a spring morning. Pair it with goat's cheese, asparagus dishes, or a light salad for a delightful seasonal meal.

ROSÉ: THE QUINTESSENTIAL SPRING WINE

Few wines embody the spirit of spring quite like a well-crafted rosé. With its delicate pink hue and flavour profile ranging from fresh strawberries to tangy rhubarb, rosé is versatile, approachable, and endlessly enjoyable.

Provence in France is renowned as the spiritual home of rosé, producing wines that are dry, crisp, and brimming with finesse. The Whispering Angel Rosé by Château d'Esclans is a benchmark example, celebrated for its pale pink colour and notes of red berries, peach, and citrus. It is best paired with smoked salmon, Mediterranean seafood, or a vibrant charcuterie board.

Rosé also adapts effortlessly to different occasions, making it a go-to choice for spring picnics, outdoor gatherings, or quiet afternoons on a sunlit terrace.



Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc

PINOT GRIGIO: REFRESHING AND CROWD-PLEASING

Pinot Grigio, often underestimated for its simplicity, shines as a springtime gem. Its crisp, light body and subtle fruit flavours make it a delightful match for the season's blossoming vibrancy. While traditionally Italian, excellent expressions of Pinot Grigio can also be found in Oregon and Alsace.

The Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio, from Italy's Alto Adige region, is a classic example. Its clean minerality and notes of green apple, pear, and lemon make it a refreshing companion to lighter dishes such as spring vegetable risotto or lemon-herb chicken.

For those seeking a slightly richer experience, Alsatian Pinot Gris offers a fuller body and spicier undertones, pairing beautifully with roasted spring vegetables or creamy pasta dishes.



Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio



Whispering Angel Rosé by Château d'Esclans

BEAUJOLAIS: A LIGHT RED PERFECT FOR SPRING

As temperatures rise, heavier red wines can feel out of place, but Beaujolais offers the perfect compromise. Made from the Gamay grape, Beaujolais is light, fruity, and best served slightly chilled—qualities that align effortlessly with the carefree spirit of spring.

The Louis Jadot Beaujolais-Villages is a stellar representation of this style. With bright red fruit notes of cherry, raspberry, and strawberry, this wine is bursting with freshness and charm. Its vibrant acidity make it an excellent food-friendly red.

Pair Beaujolais with grilled salmon, roasted chicken, or even a fresh baguette with creamy Brie. Its versatility and light body also make it a great choice for outdoor gatherings and casual dinners.

RIESLING: THE PERFECT BALANCE OF SWEETNESS AND ACIDITY

Spring wines are often associated with crisp and refreshing profiles, and Riesling checks every box while offering

something extra with an exquisite balance of sweetness and acidity. Riesling's versatility shines through its ability to complement both sweet and savoury dishes, making it a favourite among sommeliers for spring pairings.

Germany's Dr. Loosen Riesling from the Mosel region exemplifies this varietal's excellence. With notes of green apple, peach, and honey, its vibrant profile pairs beautifully with light Asian dishes, fresh seafood, or even spiced desserts. Riesling stands out as an underrated gem, embodying the freshness and dynamic character of spring.

For a drier alternative, one could explore Australian Rieslings from Clare Valley, which typically feature bold citrus flavours and steely minerality, making them excellent companions for seasonal salads and tangy goat's cheese.

SPRING PAIRINGS AND WHY THEY MATTER

One of the joys of spring wines is their ability to elevate seasonal ingredients. Whether it's the delicate flavour of spring peas, the zestiness of lemon, or the earthy undertones of asparagus, the right wine can enhance these elements to perfection.

- **Sauvignon Blanc:** Balances the richness of creamy goat's cheese with its crisp acidity.
- **Rosé:** Complements the saltiness of prosciutto and the freshness of melon with its fruit-forward profile.
- **Pinot Grigio:** Mirrors the lightness of seafood and spring vegetables through its minerality.
- **Beaujolais:** Adds depth and balance to grilled dishes and subtly spiced fare.
- **Riesling:** Effortlessly ties together sweet and savoury flavours, making it an incredibly versatile pairing option.

Understanding these pairings can help you appreciate the full potential of spring wines, transforming simple meals into memorable dining experiences.

SELECTING THE RIGHT SPRING WINE FOR YOU

Choosing the perfect wine for spring doesn't have to be daunting. Start with the flavours you enjoy and consider the meals you'll be pairing them with. For casual picnics or brunches, opt for a crisp Sauvignon Blanc or a lively rosé. For more formal dinners or adventurous cooking, Beaujolais and Riesling offer complexity without overwhelming the dish.

The wine's origin is another important consideration. Each region imparts its own distinct character, from New Zealand's zesty Sauvignon Blancs to Germany's honeyed Rieslings. Exploring these regional nuances is part of the joy of discovering your perfect spring wine.

THE ESSENCE OF SPRING IN A GLASS

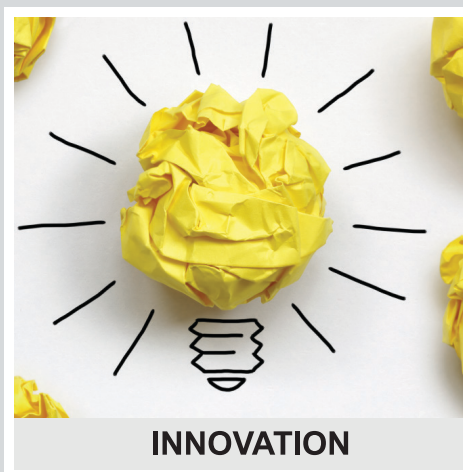
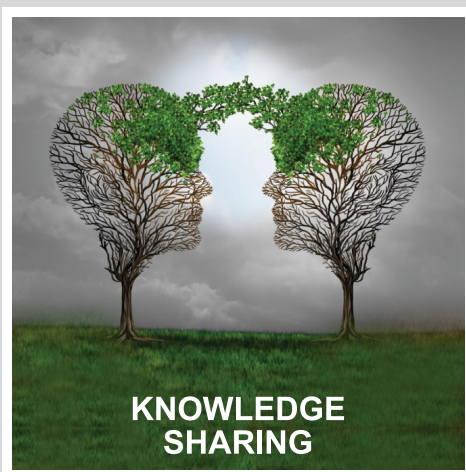
As the world awakens from winter, spring wines offer a chance to embrace the season's vitality and optimism. These five wines, Sauvignon Blanc, Rosé, Pinot Grigio, Beaujolais, and Riesling, capture the essence of spring with their freshness,



versatility, and vibrant character. Planning a garden party, a romantic evening, or indulging in a quiet moment of self-care becomes even more special with the right wine, transforming any occasion into a celebration of the season.

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FAST, FURIOUS, ELECTRIC: 2025'S MUST-SEE EVS

This year, electric mobility is in-trend. Here are the 5 luxury EVs to check out in 2025

CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO

The electric revolution is accelerating, and 2025 is poised to be a landmark year for cutting-edge EVs. From thrilling convertibles to rugged off-roaders, automakers are blending innovation, sustainability, and style like never before.

But that's not all! This year's spotlight is on electric mobility in the country as India takes bold strides toward eco-friendly, future-ready solutions, blending innovation with responsibility to create a better tomorrow.

So, what's creating all the buzz this year? Today's Traveller takes you on a front-row ride to some of the most eye-catching electric marvels for 2025. Buckle up—it's going to be an exciting journey!

MG CYBERSTER

MG unveiled the highly anticipated Cyberster at the 2025 edition of the Indian Auto Expo. The sleek, two-door electric convertible fuses the classic charm of the iconic 1960s MG B Roadster with modern innovation. The Cyberster's exterior is a classic old-school drop-top design with the long bonnet, compact cabin,

and short rear end. Its flowing silhouette with the dramatic scissor doors and striking LED headlamps shout sporty.

The Cyberster's cosy two-seat cabin is a showcase of advanced technology and thoughtful design. It features a tri-screen setup seamlessly integrating the infotainment system, digital instrument cluster, and passenger display, creating a futuristic and immersive driving experience. Additional highlights include a sleek vertical climate control display, a motorsport-inspired flat-bottomed steering wheel, heated memory seats for personalised comfort, and a premium 8-speaker Bose sound system that delivers exceptional audio quality.

Safety takes centre stage with an array of features, including multiple airbags, ABS, traction control, and an advanced ADAS suite. Technologies such as lane departure warning and autonomous emergency braking ensure peace of mind, blending performance with cutting-edge safety.

Under the "hood", the Cyberster gets a dual electric motor setup powered by a 77 kWh battery pack, pumping out 503 bhp of power and 725 Nm of torque. The convertible rockets from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.2 seconds, reaches a top speed of



MG Cyberster



MINI Countryman Electric

over 200 km/h and offers an impressive range of 580 km per charge on the CLTC cycle.

MG plans to retail the Cyberster through its exclusive MG Select channel, initially launching in 12 major cities with plans for expansion. With its perfect blend of heritage, innovation, and thrilling performance, the Cyberster is set to electrify the future of driving.

MINI COUNTRYMAN ELECTRIC

British automaker Mini showcased the 2025 Mini Countryman Electric at the event. The third-generation Countryman is available as an electric-only model as the brand commits to sustainable mobility. While MINI launched it in India back in July 2024, the 2025 Auto Expo was the first time it was showcased to the masses.

The new Mini Countryman reimagines the brand's iconic design with a sleek, minimalist touch. Its bold octagonal front grille exudes confidence, while the absence of chrome elements reflects a modern, eco-conscious ethos. Clean lines and purposeful styling complete its striking exterior. Inside, the cabin is crafted for comfort and functionality. Enhanced shoulder space and a 460-litre boot ensure practicality, while the centrepiece is a vibrant 9.4-inch OLED touchscreen seamlessly integrated into the dashboard. Operated by the intuitive Mini Intelligent Personal Assistant, it puts every control at your fingertips.

In terms of safety features, the new Countryman gets Level 2 advanced driver-assistance systems, offering semi-automated driving at speeds up to 60 km/h. Blending style, technology, and sustainability, the new Mini Countryman is built for the road ahead.



Kia EV9

The Countryman Electric is equipped with a 66.45 kWh battery pack, producing 201 bhp and 250 Nm of torque, allowing the vehicle to accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in 8.6 seconds and achieve a top speed of 170 km/h. With a WLTP-certified range of 462 km on a single charge, it is well-suited for both urban commutes and long-distance journeys.

Mini is offering an introductory price tag of Rs 54.90 lakh (ex-showroom) for the Countryman Electric.



Mercedes-Benz G-Class Electric

KIA EV9

Kia revealed the flagship EV9 at the 2025 Auto Expo, the brand's striking all-electric, three-row SUV flagship. The Kia EV9's exterior design combines boldness and sophistication, embodying the brand's 'Opposites United' philosophy. Its commanding stance is defined by the striking 'Digital Tiger Face' front fascia, featuring vertical headlights that exude an assertive presence. With sleek, sculpted lines and assertive geometric elements, the EV9 has a dynamic profile while a gently sloping roofline enhances its aerodynamic efficiency and dynamic appeal.

Moving inside, the Kia EV9's interior merges advanced technology with premium build quality. The centrepiece is a sleek dual 12.3-inch panoramic display for the infotainment system and digital instrument cluster. It also gets heated and ventilated captain's chairs that swivel 180 degrees on the second row. Additional options like SynTex seat trim in embossed or quilted patterns are available as well.

The Kia EV9 also comes packed with safety features like automatic emergency braking, blind-spot detection, and rear cross-traffic collision-avoidance assist coming standard.

The EV9 is offered with both rear-wheel and all-wheel-drive options. The rear-wheel variant, powered by a 76.1 kWh battery, delivers a range of 370 miles per charge, while the all-wheel-drive model features a 99.8 kWh battery, providing up to nearly 490 km of range. Fast-charging technology means the battery can charge from 10% to 80% in just 24 minutes.

Available in a single GT-Line AWD variant, the Kia EV9 is priced at Rs 1.30 crore (ex-showroom).

MERCEDES-BENZ G-CLASS ELECTRIC

Launched in January 2025, Mercedes-Benz's all-electric G580 marks a new era of the iconic G-Class. Staying true to its off-road roots, the G 580 retains its signature boxy silhouette, now enhanced with a modern Black Panel grille with an animated LED strip, signalling its electric identity. Aerodynamically optimized wheels and customizable rear design options add a sleek touch to its bold character, heralding the G-Class into the electric age.

Step inside, and you're greeted by a familiar but thoroughly modernised cabin. Dual 12.3-inch displays for the infotainment system and instrument cluster offer an intuitive and futuristic driving experience. The SUV features high-quality



materials and a tank-like build quality while the exclusive MANUFAKTUR program invites owners to customize their G 580 to their unique tastes, making every detail a personal expression of elegance.

True to its heritage, the G 580 is an off-road powerhouse. With an impressive 9.8-inch ground clearance and the ability to ford water depths of up to 33.5 inches, it can tackle the most challenging terrains. The innovative OFF-ROAD COCKPIT provides advanced navigation tools tailored for rugged adventures, ensuring every journey is as thrilling as it is seamless.

The G580 with EQ Technology is driven by a 116kWh battery that powers a quad-electric motor setup, one for each wheel. It pumps out 579 bhp and a mammoth 1164 Nm of peak torque, enabling the hefty SUV to launch from 0 to 100 km/h in just 4.7 seconds. Mercedes claims a WLTP range of 473 km on a single charge. 200 kW DC fast charging means the battery pack can charge from 10%-80% in just 32 minutes.

Mercedes has priced the G580 Electric at Rs 3 crore (ex-showroom).

PORSCHE TAYCAN

Porsche launched the refreshed Taycan 4S and the Taycan Turbo at the 2025 Auto Expo. The Taycan's exterior is an example of sporty minimalism done right with the sculpted bonnet, updated, sharper HD-Matrix LED headlights with detailed optics and a subtly tweaked bumper with new air intakes. At the rear, it gets sleeker LED tail lights and a bold

3D Porsche logo to create a modern, unmistakable signature. Distinctive aerodynamic enhancements aid in aero-efficiency as well as improving the visual appeal.

Inside, the Taycan is laden with tech that is wrapped in premium materials. Multiple screens cater to infotainment, climate control, and passenger entertainment, while ambient lighting and a futuristic head-up display elevate the driving experience. Features like four-zone climate control, ventilated seats, and 14-way adjustable front seats ensure unmatched comfort.

The Taycan's upgraded 2025 battery pack now delivers an impressive range of up to 678 km on a single charge. The Taycan 4S variant pumps out 510 bhp, jumping to 697 bhp for the Turbo model.

Prices for the 2025 Taycan start from Rs 1.89 crore (ex-showroom) for the 4S, going up to Rs 2.89 crore (ex-showroom) for the Turbo.

THE ROAD AHEAD: A GREENER HORIZON AWAITS

As 2025 starts, one thing is crystal clear: the future of mobility is here, and it's electric, autonomous, and sustainable. The 5 EVs above aren't just a showcase of cutting-edge technology, it's a testament to India's leadership in embracing green innovation and reimagining the automotive landscape.

Whether you're drawn to the sporty MG Cyberster, the rugged Mercedes G-Wagon Electric, or the sleek new Porsche Taycan, the EV landscape is more exciting than ever. The only question is: which one will you choose?

GO BIG - TRENDS IN TRAVEL IN INDIA IN 2025

Big trends in travel in 2025 are driven by tech upgrades, huge investments, and next-gen infrastructure

KAMAL GILL

The travel industry is gearing up for explosive growth this year—but not without a dose of caution. From MICE tourism (hello, business meets!) to leisure escapes and spiritual journeys, India's travel story is evolving across every segment. But unexpected challenges and surprises are reshaping the game. The numbers don't lie—this is your sneak peek into trends shaping 2025 and beyond. 2025 is calling, and it's anything but predictable.

To begin with, we take outlier trends that are showing up, but are still in a nascent stage and present themselves as more pronounced in 2025.

OUTLIER TRENDS

- Travel will dominate all leisure spending in 2025 and beyond.
- Domestic travel will slow down: High costs for flights and stays will pause its growth.
- Tier 2 & Tier 3 Cities will continue the tourism and travel momentum. Big-ticket growth will see these cities shining as top destinations, booming source markets, and fresh hospitality hubs with the most hotel openings.
- Workforce shake-up: Hybrid models and changing norms mean a manpower crunch for travel, aviation, and hospitality.
- Comfort over couture: Travellers will embrace chill vibes—casual outfits, cosy destinations, and relaxed hotels.
- Luxury in simplicity: Millennials seek peace in quiet retreats with family or solo.
- Culture shock, anyone? 70% of Indian travellers want something new, and 96% are excited to push their limits. The unfamiliar will be the new frontier.
- Travel meets tech: 70% of travellers will explore vacations via virtual reality. Metaverse wanderlust? Yes, it will be a thing now!



Adventure Begins At Check-In!



Sky-High Luxury: Traveling in Style

- Hotels rethink ownership: Big brands will go asset-light with franchising and management—and it will work like magic.
- Power of homegrown: The unorganized accommodation sector (a massive 60% of the market!) will come together under AI-driven powerhouses.
- Investor buzz: Hospitality will be officially a hot ticket for fund managers and investors with big returns on the horizon.

INDIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE BOOM!

India's travel game is levelling up! With 350 new airports, next-gen railways, and the Bharatmala road project, the country is connecting every corner like never before. Luxury trains like the iconic Palace on Wheels are wooing travellers, while enhanced connectivity is fueling a domestic travel boom set to hit 700 million passengers annually by 2030.

The aviation sector is soaring with airlines like Indigo and Air India expanding routes, making even the most remote destinations just a flight away. Hotels are going green with energy-efficient practices and eco-friendly initiatives, paving the way for conscious travellers to explore India responsibly.

Spoiler alert: High aviation and hotel costs in India are making international travel increasingly appealing. Luxury and mid-range accommodations in India are hiking prices, making foreign destinations more economical. Unless domestic travel becomes more cost-competitive, India risks losing tourism revenue to global markets.

DOMESTIC TOURISM'S EPIC COMEBACK

Local travel is stealing the spotlight. By 2024, India's domestic tourism is projected to reach a staggering ₹18.3 trillion,



Air India Staff

up 9.6% from last year. International visitor spending? Set to rise by 17%, hitting ₹2.85 trillion. In 2023, domestic spending soared 15% above pre-pandemic levels, totalling an impressive ₹14.64 trillion. With 2.5 billion domestic trips, local travellers are fuelling this massive comeback. India is expected to record around 3.5 billion trips by 2030, positioning it to become the world's fourth-largest domestic travel market by that year.

The bigger picture? Travel and tourism are expected to contribute ₹21.15 trillion to India's GDP in 2024—a true testament to its vibrant recovery.

Spoiler Alert: Soaring interest rates in India are creating ripples across the economy, influencing both markets and spending habits.

High borrowing costs are driving Indians to spend abroad, where competitive pricing and favourable exchange rates offer better value. Meanwhile, rising domestic costs are making local travel and shopping less appealing.

INDIA CALLING

The world is rediscovering India, albeit not with the speed with which it should! With 6.19 million foreign visitors in 2023—a 72% surge from 2022—India is on track to recovery. Thanks to the e-visa for 160+ countries, it's easier to experience the magic of India. Medical tourism raking in \$9 billion proves India is the go-to for high-quality, affordable healthcare.

Spoiler Alert: However, the recovery pace remains slow. India faces the challenge of scaling international campaigns and sustaining this momentum to fully revive its tourism potential.

INDIANS OUTBOUND - EXPLORING THE WORLD!

The travel bug has bitten India! In 2023, 27 million Indians packed their bags and explored international destinations, up from 23 million in 2022. Top picks? UAE, Thailand, and Singapore—all thanks to visa-on-arrival perks and seamless flight connectivity. Long haul? The United States has seen one of the fastest recoveries in the Indian outbound market with traffic in 2022 crossing 80 pc of the 2019 levels. South Africa welcomed 79,774 Indian travellers in 2023, marking an increase of 43% in visitors from India on a year-on-year basis. By 2030, India is set to be a top 5 global outbound market, with 35 million trips annually.

INDIA'S MICE GAME GETS STRONG

India is redefining the art of incentive and MICE travel! In 2023, the country hosted over 2,000 mega conferences and exhibitions, raking in an impressive \$5 billion in revenue. With Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Delhi NCR leading the way, these cities are now global hotspots for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions).

Corporate Incentive travel is making waves, contributing 65% to the MICE boom, as companies up their game with larger events and incentive trips. Ranked 28th globally by ICCA, India is on track to become a business events powerhouse, with growth projected at 8% annually through 2025.

INDIA'S LEISURE TRAVEL AND SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

Leisure tourism is redefining travel goals in India! In 2023, it brought in a massive \$210 billion, with hill stations, serene beaches, and heritage sites topping every traveller's list. For luxury seekers, it's all about exclusivity. With brands like Oberoi, Taj, and Leela, high-end travellers are splurging \$1,500+ per trip for curated, unforgettable stays.

Bring in the wellness boom —15% annual growth—and states like Kerala and Uttarakhand are becoming global healing escapes. And for the adrenaline junkies? Adventure tourism is booming at 12% annual growth, adding \$3 billion to the mix.

India's spiritual vibe stays unmatched! In 2023, destinations like Prayagraj, Varanasi, Rishikesh, and Tirupati drew millions, making spiritual tourism a \$30 billion powerhouse—20% of domestic travel and growing at 10% annually.

CHECK INTO THE FUTURE: INDIA'S HOSPITALITY SURGE

India's hospitality sector is levelling up like never before. In 2023, the country boasted 165,000 branded hotel rooms, and by 2027, that number will hit 200,000. With 94,000 more rooms by 2029, India is cementing its spot as a global hospitality giant.

Investments are flowing in too. In 2023, hotel investments skyrocketed to \$401 million—a 4x leap from the year before. A



Medical Tourism



Meetings in Bharat Mandapam



Taj Palace, New Delhi

fresh boost of over Rs 80 billion by Q4 2025 through IPOs is on the cards. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are the real stars, claiming 54% of new hotel signings as they attract tourists and investors alike. Tier 2 & Tier 3 cities are also stealing the spotlight with 40% occupancy growth in 2023, and places like Indore, Lucknow, and Coimbatore are the new hospitality hotspots.

Boutique getaways, chalets and villas to new-age products like Moxy and affordable lodging like Ginger and Sparks, are adding versatility to the Indian hospitality scene.

From a number perspective, IHCL is leading the charge with a ₹50 billion investment to double its portfolio to 700+ hotels by 2030. Hilton is on track to quadruple its presence, while Marriott is expanding to 42,000+ rooms across 50 cities by 2025, with 81 new hotels in the pipeline. Meanwhile, Radisson is doubling up to 150 hotels by 2025, and Wyndham is boosting its portfolio by 35% by 2025, focusing on affordable and mid-scale options.

Spoiler Alert: Challenges like high GST rates, pollution, and a 3M talent gap loom, but the opportunities are boundless.

NEXT-GEN TRAVEL: A GAME CHANGER

India's travel game is getting a major tech upgrade! AI is the star of this revolution, with adoption growing at a 12% annual rate by 2025. Think chatbots, smart booking engines, and personalized travel tips—no wonder 68% of Indian travellers prefer AI for planning their adventures. The AI in tourism market in India is projected to grow from \$2.95 billion in 2024 to \$13.38 billion by 2030, reflecting a CAGR of 28.7%

Enter Gen Z, the experience-first travellers shaping the future! In 2023, they made up 34% of online bookings, with 70% prioritizing experiences over things. From eco-resorts to adventure tourism, they're all about meaningful moments.

Spoiler Alert: Next-gen Indian travellers face challenges like affordability, balancing sustainability with over-tourism, managing rising travel costs, and navigating poor infrastructure in emerging destinations. They must also deal with digital decision fatigue, evolving travel regulations, and ensuring health and safety,



The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur

particularly for solo travellers. Adapting to these hurdles will be key to shaping meaningful and sustainable travel experiences.

INCREDIBLE INDIA 2025

India's tourism and hospitality sector is on the cusp of a massive transformation! Powered by big investments, infrastructure developments, better connectivity, and smart tech, the industry is gearing up to set new global benchmarks.

Despite the positive outlook, the sector faces challenges, including manpower shortages in hospitality and tourism, regulatory hurdles and environmental concerns. Addressing these issues is crucial to sustain growth and ensure the industry's long-term success.

MTM & LLTM 2025: POWERING THE FUTURE OF MICE

As 2025 sets the stage for a thriving travel industry, MTM and LLTM Delhi - MICE Travel Mart and Luxury & Leisure Travel Mart - stood out as the platform offering unparalleled opportunities in the field of business and propelling the MICE, luxury, and leisure travel sectors forward

TT BUREAU



The 27th edition of the MTM and LLTM Travel Exhibition unfolded on January 10, 2025, at the Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, setting the stage for a grand gathering of MICE travel leaders. This highly anticipated event brought together a diverse group of affluent travel purchasers, including corporate buyers, wedding planners, and event organisers, all seeking innovative solutions and partnerships.

The MTM and LLTM Corporate MICE exhibition provided a dynamic platform for networking, showcasing the latest trends in MICE, luxury, and leisure travel, and fostering meaningful business collaborations. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with industry experts, explore cutting-edge travel offerings, and strengthen relationships that drive growth in the ever-evolving travel sector.

With its carefully curated setting and high-profile participants, the Corporate MICE Travel Mart Luxury and Leisure Mart reaffirmed its status as a premier hub for connecting MICE decision-makers and innovators in the travel and events industry.

MORNING INAUGURAL SESSION

The morning session began with a warm welcome from Kamal Gill, the Executive Editor and Managing Director of

Gill India Group and Director of OptiMICE Events. She shared, "The MICE sector in India has shown remarkable growth over the years and continues to hold immense potential.

With the domestic market now valued at around INR 25,000 crore and growing at an annual rate of 8%, it's evident that the industry is thriving. On the international front, India's outbound MICE market is projected to reach an impressive US\$13.4 billion by 2031.

As we begin the year, it's the perfect time to come together, analyze emerging trends, and map out strategies to stay ahead in this dynamic space. The opportunities for collaboration and innovation in MICE are unparalleled, making MTM and LLTM a key player in India's MICE travel landscape."

Kamal Gill also expressed her gratitude to the distinguished Guests of Honour and Dignitaries present there. It included Sachin Joshi, Chairman, Viiking Ventures Pvt. Ltd.; Gagan Sharma, Country Manager India, Air Mauritius; Kean Bon Lim, Area Director, India, South Asia, Africa, Singapore Tourism Board; Nupur Chandra, Head MICE, TravelPlus and several other industry icons.

Gagan Sharma, Country Manager India, Air Mauritius shared, "Since the last two years, we have seen how MICE has

become a buzzword and how it holds very good potential for Mauritius. From an airline perspective, this represents an incredible opportunity to cater to the evolving needs of business and MICE travellers.

Ours is a pivotal role in supporting Mauritius as a global hub for MICE activities, while also boosting passenger traffic and enhancing brand loyalty among a lucrative segment of travellers."

Nupur Chandra, Head MICE, TravelPlus said, "It's a privilege to lead the MICE team at TravelPlus. Our journey spans a decade in hospitality through FabHotels, followed by over five incredible years in business travel. Combining these experiences, we ventured into the MICE sector last year, marking an exciting new chapter in our growth story."

Kean Bon Lim, Area Director for India, South Asia, and Africa at the Singapore Tourism Board, remarked, "As we step into 2025, I'd like to extend my heartfelt Happy New Year wishes to everyone here.

Being part of the MTM & LLTM by OptiMICE in the first 10 days of 2025 is a fantastic way to kick things off. We were delighted to be a part of this event last year, and we're equally excited to continue this journey with the upcoming Mumbai MTM and LLTM edition in May 2025."

REVERSE MARKETPLACE: THE POWERHOUSE OF MICE NETWORKING

MTM and LLTM unveiled their trademark Reverse Marketplace Duo, offering exhibitors the opportunity to hold one-on-one meetings with exclusive corporate buyers, ensuring seamless and efficient business interactions.

A highlight of MTM and LLTM over the years is this unique setup, where over 70 esteemed corporate VIP buyers sit across the table from exhibitors. This format allowed for exclusive face-to-face meetings, fostering meaningful connections and paving the way for future collaborations.

The event featured two premium Reverse Marketplace Sessions. The first session welcomed over 35 carefully selected corporate buyers from cities like Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore,





refreshing lunch, the second session brought in a fresh set of VIP buyers, providing sellers with additional chances to network and explore business possibilities. The day was filled with vibrant discussions as exhibitors connected with buyers from all over India, including the host city, to explore event proposals and forge future business deals.

RECOGNITION TO THE DESERVING

A key moment of the event was the MTM Star Award leading corporate companies were celebrated and applauded by an excited audience. This special ceremony honoured their outstanding contributions and achievements in the industry. The MTM and LLTM Star Awards honoured a prestigious line-up of corporate achievers and were well received.

GET LUCKY WITH THE LUCKY DIP: NIKHIL SHARMA ADDS STAR POWER TO THE SHOW

One of the most anticipated moments at MTM Delhi 2025 was the exciting Lucky Dip round, which added an extra layer of excitement to the event. Adding an unexpected thrill to the event was the surprise visit of a renowned hospitality leader, Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President of Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia. His presence created a buzz of excitement, underscoring the significance of leadership in the hospitality industry.

Sharma took time to engage personally with the Radisson team, sharing insights and encouraging their efforts, while also connecting with corporate buyers, offering them a glimpse

into Radisson's vision and innovative strategies. The highlight of his visit came when he was invited to preside over the grand lucky dip, a moment eagerly anticipated by the attendees.

The Lucky Dip offered an enticing array of rewards, including complimentary luxurious 5-star hotel stays, both within India and internationally. This engaging activity not only created a buzz among attendees but also highlighted the event's commitment to delivering memorable experiences.

WEDDING PLANNERS ADD A CREATIVE EDGE TO MICE

Wedding planners added a unique sparkle to MTM and LLTM, showcasing how their expertise seamlessly intertwines with the world of meetings and incentives—a true flip side of the same coin. Their presence highlighted the growing trend of blending corporate sophistication with personalized creativity, offering fresh perspectives on hosting destination weddings, team-building retreats, and celebratory incentive events.

Their inclusion emphasized the versatility of MICE, bridging the gap between formal corporate gatherings and emotionally resonant celebrations, underscoring the limitless possibilities for collaboration in the industry.

The day concluded on a high note with an elegant Networking Cocktails and Dinner, offering participants a relaxed yet dynamic setting to foster connections and engage in friendly, meaningful conversations. This closing event not only celebrated the day's achievements but also reaffirmed the importance of face-to-face interactions in driving the industry forward.





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THE SILK ROUTE: WHERE HISTORY MEETS TODAY

Stretching over an astonishing 6,500 kilometres, the Silk Route has been more than just a network of trade paths; it's a thread that weaves together the history, culture, and economies of ancient civilisations

TT BUREAU

The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page. First named by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877, the Silk Route connected the East to the West, carrying not just silk but also ideas, philosophies, and innovations. In today's world, it stands as a timeless symbol of connectivity and collaboration, with its echoes still felt in trade, cultural exchanges, and tourism.

THE SILK ROUTE'S LEGACY

The Silk Route originated in ancient China and extended through Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. It was not just about silk but also about the exchange of spices, gemstones, paper, and gunpowder. This historic trade path became a melting pot of cultures, with caravans carrying Buddhist monks, Persian poets, and Venetian merchants who spread knowledge and traditions. Beyond commerce, the Silk Route facilitated the spread of religions such as Buddhism,

Islam, and Christianity, shaping the cultural landscapes of many regions. Today, this ancient network is being revived through modern trade initiatives, most notably China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to modernise historic trade routes to foster economic growth and cross-border partnerships.

EXPLORING THE SILK ROUTE TODAY

Can we explore this legendary route today? The answer is yes, but not in its original form. Though political tensions, modern borders, and harsh terrains make it difficult to trace the exact path, advancements in infrastructure, guided expeditions, and well-preserved historical sites allow travellers to experience the essence of the Silk Route.

Visiting these ancient trade centres offers a chance to step into history and witness the legacy of civilisations. From Indian cities to Western hubs, travellers can explore what these trade points have evolved into today. So pack your bags and embark on this journey of revival and rejuvenation.



Curvy Roads of Sikkim, Part of The Silk Route



Shah-i-Zinda, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

contemporary life, with its ancient city wall offering panoramic views and cultural performances bringing the past to life.

SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN: A SILK ROAD JEWEL

Samarkand, often called the “Jewel of the Silk Road,” is a masterpiece of Central Asian history and culture. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is home to architectural wonders like Registan Square and Shah-i-Zinda, which display the grandeur of the Timurid Empire.

The city’s vibrant bazaars continue the tradition of trade, offering handmade carpets, ceramics, and exotic spices. Samarkand also boasts a rich history of paper-making, producing high-quality paper from mulberry bark. Walking through its historic streets, travellers experience a seamless blend of past and present.

INDIA AND THE SILK ROUTE: A BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Though not directly on the main Silk Route, India played a crucial role in its network through multiple land and sea routes. The Uttarapatha (Northern Route) connected India to Central Asia via Khyber Pass and Ladakh, while the Grand Trunk Road linked Afghanistan to India. The Maritime Silk Route connected Muziris (Kerala) and Bharuch (Gujarat) to Rome and China.

Important cities like Varanasi, Pataliputra, and Taxila served as hubs of trade and learning. India’s contributions to the Silk Route extended beyond goods to cultural and religious exchanges, making it a vital part of the global network.

LEH, INDIA: A CRUCIAL TRANSIT POINT

Leh, in Ladakh, was a key transit point connecting Tibet, China, Central Asia, and India. It facilitated trade in pashmina wool, silk, spices, salt, and precious stones. The region served as a crucial resting and trading hub for caravans travelling between Kashgar (China) and Srinagar (India).



Terracotta Warriors, Xi'an, China

XI'AN, CHINA: THE STARTING POINT

Xi'an, the ancient capital of 13 dynasties, marks the eastern beginning of the Silk Route. It is famous for the Terracotta Warriors, an awe-inspiring symbol of China’s imperial past. During the Tang Dynasty, Xi'an—then called Chang'an—was a thriving cosmopolitan hub, welcoming traders, scholars, and explorers from across Asia and Europe. The Big Wild Goose Pagoda stands as a testament to the city’s role in spreading Buddhism. Today, modern Xi'an blends history with

Leh's strategic position also contributed to Buddhist cultural exchanges, with monasteries like Hemis and Thiksey playing significant roles. Its rugged terrain and high-altitude passes, such as the Khardunga la & Karakoram Pass, made it a vital gateway in trans-Himalayan trade. Today, Leh still reflects its Silk Route legacy through its culture, architecture, and historic markets.

VARANASI, INDIA: THE SPIRITUAL HEART OF TRADE

Varanasi, a city synonymous with spirituality, was a key node on trade routes branching from the Silk Route. Located on the banks of the Ganges, it has been a centre for commerce, culture, and religion for centuries.

The city's historic markets, like Vishwanath Gali, still thrive with silk sarees, handcrafted jewellery, and artisanal goods. Varanasi's ghats and temples reflect its rich history, where trade and spirituality were deeply intertwined.

BUKHARA, UZBEKISTAN: A TRADE AND CULTURAL HUB

Bukhara, one of the most enchanting stops on the Silk Route, is a living museum of Islamic culture and medieval architecture. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it has over 140 preserved monuments, including the iconic Kalyan Minaret, which once guided Silk Route caravans. The Ark Fortress and Lyab-i-Hauz complex showcase Bukhara's architectural ingenuity. The city's bazaars still brim with fine textiles, silk embroidery, and handwoven carpets, preserving its Silk Route legacy.

ISTANBUL, TURKEY: THE EAST-MEETS-WEST CONNECTION

Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, was a major Silk Route city straddling Europe and Asia. It thrived as a trade, cultural, and political hub. The Grand Bazaar, one of the world's oldest and largest markets, captures its trading history, offering everything from handmade carpets to gold jewellery.

The Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace reflect Istanbul's Byzantine and Ottoman heritage. The Bosphorus Strait served as a maritime Silk Route, linking traders from distant lands.

VENICE, ITALY: WHERE THE JOURNEY ENDS

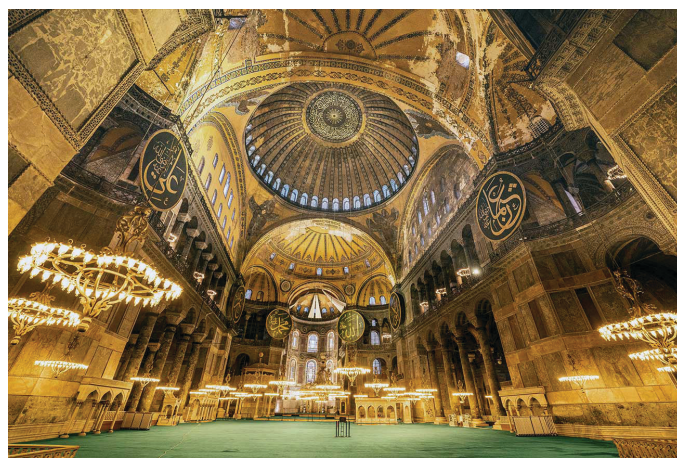
Venice, the western terminus of the Silk Route, became a major trading powerhouse during the Middle Ages. Its canal system and Gothic architecture reflect its historic wealth and influence.

Venetian merchants, most notably Marco Polo, played a pivotal role in fostering trade, bringing exotic goods such as silk, spices, and precious gems to Europe. He describes the magnificence of the eastern part of the Silk Route by saying, "I have not told the half of what I saw".

The Rialto Market, once the centre of trade, is still lively with stalls selling foods from around the world. Doge's Palace and St. Mark's Basilica showcase Venice's rich history in trade, while its art and architecture reflect Eastern influences. With gondolas floating through its canals, Venice remains a beautiful reminder of cultural exchange and the lasting legacy of the Silk Route.

THE SILK ROUTE'S CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Today, the Silk Route represents globalisation and connection. For travellers, it offers a journey through history, culture, and breathtaking landscapes. From Leh's monasteries to Samarkand's majestic structures and Istanbul's bustling bazaars, every stop along this route tells a unique story. By visiting these cities, we celebrate their historical significance and contribute to preserving their timeless cultural treasures.



Hagia Sophia Interior View



Boat Ride Across The Ganges, Varanasi, India



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.

FEAST LIKE A PARSI

In the heart of every Parsi home, the kitchen hums with stories—stories of love, legacy, and the magic of shared meals!

TT BUREAU

Parsi Cuisine

Parsi cuisine isn't just about food; it's a language of belonging, a way to keep traditions alive through every simmering pot and golden-brown crust. Each dish carries a legacy, passed down through generations, filling homes with aromas that evoke warmth and nostalgia. More than just meals, these culinary traditions bring people together, strengthening bonds and preserving a rich cultural heritage.

Navroz feasts are a celebration of flavours and tradition. Imagine tables filled with delicious Dhansak, fragrant Patra Ni Machhi wrapped in banana leaves, and creamy Lagan Nu Custard. These dishes are more than just food—they carry stories from the past, passed down through generations.

From rich stews to sweet desserts, Parsi cuisine connects the old with the new, keeping traditions alive while bringing families together. Every bite is a taste of history and a reminder of the love and care that goes into every meal.

DHANSAK: THE HEARTBEAT OF PARSI KITCHENS

Ask any Parsi about Dhansak, and their eyes will light up. This dish is the ultimate comfort food, a warm embrace on a plate. Sundays in Parsi households often revolve around Dhansak—slow-cooked mutton or chicken with lentils, vegetables, and a melody of spices like turmeric, cumin, and coriander. But what makes it truly special is the balance of flavours: tangy tamarind cuts through the richness, while pumpkin and



Chicken Dhansak

brinjal add a touch of sweetness and texture. And then there's the caramelised brown rice, with its golden hue and faint sweetness completes the ritual. Families argue over who makes it best, with some adding a sprinkle of sugar or a dash of ghee to get that perfect crunch.

It is served at gatherings, after prayers, and even during moments of grief, reminding everyone that food is as much about healing as it is about celebration.

PATRA NI MACHHI: A FESTIVE LOVE LETTER

If Dhansak is the soul of Parsi cuisine, Patra Ni Machhi is its jewel. Imagine unwrapping a banana leaf parcel at a wedding to find tender fish steeped in a bright green chutney of coconut, coriander, and lime. The first whiff is like a burst of monsoon freshness—herby, citrusy, and slightly spicy!

The magic lies in the details. Grandmothers will tell you the chutney must be ground by hand, never in a mixer, to keep the flavours alive. The banana leaves? They're not just wrapping—they're flavour conductors, infusing the fish with earthy sweetness as it steams. More than food, it is a symbol

of care for Parsis. Preparing it is an act of love, reserved for the most cherished occasions.

LAGAN NU CUSTARD: SWEETNESS THAT UNITES

No Parsi wedding is complete without Lagan Nu Custard. This dessert is where simplicity meets indulgence. Made with milk, eggs, and sugar, this dessert carries the warm flavours of cardamom and nutmeg, bringing a taste of home. The top bakes to a golden crust, while the inside remains soft and silky.

But here's the secret: every family has their twist. Some add a splash of rose water; others throw in a handful of raisins. Aunts will slyly compare versions at gatherings, each claiming theirs is the "authentic" one. What no one disputes, though, is its role in celebrations. It's the dessert that graces wedding feasts, birthdays, and Navroz spreads—a sweet reminder that joy tastes best when shared.

KOLMI NO PATIO: A COASTAL AFFAIR

Parsis and seafood are a match made in culinary heaven. Kolmi No Patio, a tangy prawn curry, is proof. This dish is a riot



Patra Ni Machhi



Lagan Nu Custard



Malido



Papeta Par Eedu

of flavours—sweet jaggery, sour vinegar, and fiery red chillies dance in a tomato-based gravy. It's bold, unapologetic, and utterly addictive.

In coastal towns like Mumbai and Navsari, Kolmi No Patio is a weekday hero. Working mothers whip it up in under 30 minutes, using whatever's fresh from the market. The trick? Let the prawns soak up the spices while the gravy thickens to a glossy finish. Paired with steamed rice or crusty bread, it's a meal that feels like a hug from the sea.

PAPETA PAR EEDU: BREAKFAST WITH A STORY

Mornings in Parsi homes often begin with the sizzle of potatoes hitting a hot pan. Papeta Par Eedu—eggs on potatoes—is the ultimate comfort breakfast. Leftover potatoes from last night's dinner are spiced with cumin, turmeric, and green chillies, then topped with eggs that cook until the edges crisp up. The eggs are left slightly runny or fully set, depending on preference, while a sprinkle of fresh coriander adds a final touch of flavour.



Kolmi No Patio

It's a dish born of thrift and creativity. "Why waste?" says every Parsi grandmother, turning humble ingredients into something magical. Kids grow up dipping toast into the runny yolks, while adults swear a cup of chai is the only worthy companion. Simple? Yes. Forgettable? Never.

MALIDO: THE SWEETNESS OF FAITH

Malido is more than a dessert, it's a prayer in edible form. Made during Navroz and religious ceremonies, this semolina-based sweet is rich with ghee, fragrant with cardamom, and studded with nuts. The process is meditative: slow-cooking the mixture until it turns golden, stirring constantly to avoid lumps, and savouring the warm aroma that fills the home.

In Parsi tradition, Malido is offered to the divine before being shared with family and friends. It's a symbol of gratitude, a way to say, "Thank you for the harvest, for health, for togetherness." Every spoonful carries the weight of blessings—and the promise of sweetness in life's journey, reminding us that faith, love, and tradition are best savoured together.

A TABLE FULL OF STORIES

It's the grandmother who measures spices with her heart, the uncle who insists on grilling the fish just so, and the cousins who sneak extra custard when no one's looking. These dishes are threads in a tapestry of memory, connecting generations across kitchens and continents.

As Navroz approaches, Parsi homes buzz with activity. Women gather to grind chutneys, men argue over the right way to caramelize rice, and children hover near the stove, stealing bites of Malido. It's chaos, but a beautiful and flavourful chaos that keeps their culture alive.

In a world that often feels divided, Parsi food is a gentle reminder: traditions endure when they're lived, loved, and ladled onto plates with care. So this new year, filled with a bundle of celebrations, whether you're Parsi or simply curious, take a seat at the table because there's always room for one more.



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