

# TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2025 - ₹50



**MAHAKUMBH 2025: A  
JOURNEY TOWARDS SANATAN**



# SICIS O'CLOCK



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Uttar Pradesh  
UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

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At the Mahakumbh 2025, tent cities are being set up at the banks of the Sangam and key areas like Parade Ground, Arail, and Jhansi.

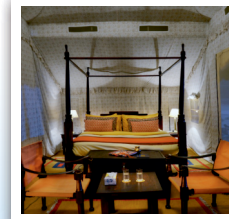
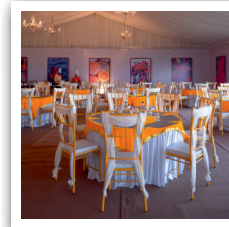
The tent city will offer sheer luxury with three categories of accommodation to choose from.

Villa, Maharaja, and Swiss Cottage-the three types of accommodation will offer unique amenities to suit various preferences of the travellers.

The site at Parade Ground will have 55 tents/Swiss cottages, while the site at Jhansi will spread over 2.5 acres and accommodate 200 luxury cottages, while a larger tent city at Arail will feature 2000 cottages across 25 acres, with deluxe, super deluxe, and luxury options.



Divine-Grand-Digital  
Mahakumbh 2025  
Prayagraj



## IMPORTANT DATES OF BATHING FESTIVAL

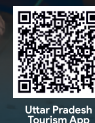
1. Poush Purnima - 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2025
2. Makar Sankranti - 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2025
3. Mauni Amavasya - 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2025
4. Basant Panchami - 03<sup>rd</sup> February, 2025
5. Magh Purnima - 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025
6. Shri Mahashivratri - 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2025



Mahakumbh  
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# MAHAKUMBH 2025: A JOURNEY TOWARDS SANATAN

At Prayagraj, the holy confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati cleanses the body while the Sanatan Dharma uplifts the soul

TT BUREAU



Triveni Sangam, Prayagraj

**A**lthough sacred Mahakumbh occurs every 12 years, this year it holds a special significance. The Mahakumbh 2025 marks completion of a cycle of 12 full Mahakumbhs thus completing 144 years.



## A CELEBRATION OF FAITH AND UNITY

The grand Mahakumbh 2025 began on January 13, 2025, at the sacred Sangam in Prayagraj, showcasing spirituality and India's rich cultural heritage. Rooted in Sanatan Dharma, the festival highlights unity, self-discovery, and the enduring legacy of faith. Running until February 26, 2025, it is set to welcome a staggering 40 crore visitors from around the globe.

The first Amrit Snan, held on January 14 (Makar Sankranti), saw 3.5 crore devotees take a sacred dip in the holy confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers, symbolising purification. Two more Amrit Snans on January 29 and February 3 further emphasise spiritual renewal.

Pilgrims coming from countries like Israel, Russia, and Peru and across the world reflect Mahakumbh's universal appeal. Mahakumbh embodies "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The world is one family), fostering unity, cultural exchange, and spiritual transcendence.

## UP GOVERNMENT'S MAHA-PAN FOR MAHAKUMBH 2025

The Uttar Pradesh government has made extensive preparations for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, which is expected to attract over 40 crore visitors.

- **Infrastructure Development:** The area is equipped with essential utilities, including water, sewage, and electrical lines. Additionally, 30 temporary pontoon bridges have been constructed to facilitate movement.
- **Transportation Enhancements:** Indian Railways has introduced sufficient special trains to manage the influx of visitors.
- **Healthcare Services:** A temporary hospital capable of handling up to 200 patients at a time has been set up to provide medical care during the festival. This facility is staffed with healthcare professionals to address any medical emergencies.
- **Sanitation Measures:** Approximately 10,000 sanitation workers have been deployed to maintain cleanliness throughout the event. Under the Swachh Kumbh initiative, around 150,000 toilets and urinals have been installed in the Mela area. A QR code-based monitoring system is being launched to track sanitation levels in toilets.





Hanuman Garhi, Ayodhya

- **Security Arrangements:** A robust security framework has been implemented, with 40,000 police officers and AI-equipped surveillance cameras ensuring the safety of attendees. This includes crowd management and real-time monitoring to prevent any untoward incidents.
- **Technological Integration:** The “Kumbh Sah’Al’yak” AI-powered chatbot has been introduced to assist pilgrims with information on the festival’s history, travel guidance, key attractions, and accommodation planning. This service is available in multiple Indian languages and can be accessed via WhatsApp, the Mahakumbh 2025 mobile app, and the official website.

### THE GRAND TENT CITY AT MAHAKUMBH

The Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (UPSTDC) has established a mega “tent city” at strategic locations including Arail Ghat, Parade Ground, and Jhansi, with 2,000 tents of various categories to accommodate the massive influx of pilgrims and travellers.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE AMRIT SNAN

- **Paush Purnima:** January 13, 2025
- **Makar Sankranti:** January 14, 2025
- **Mauni Amavasya:** January 29, 2025
- **Basant Panchami:** February 3, 2025
- **Maghi Purnima:** February 12, 2025
- **Maha Shivaratri:** February 26, 2025

### DISCOVER THE HIDDEN GEMS NEAR PRAYAGRAJ

Visitors to Prayagraj during Mahakumbh 2025 can explore nearby attractions that enrich the spiritual experience.

**Hanuman Temple:** Located near Allahabad Fort, this temple is famous for its awe-inspiring 20-foot-long reclining idol of Lord Hanuman. It also houses 108 sacred Shiva Lingas, making it a significant site for devotees seeking blessings.

**Narayan Ashram:** Situated along the serene Ganga banks, this ashram is adorned with intricate stone carvings, ideal for meditation.



Kashi Vishwanath Temple

**Mankameshwar Temple:** Revered for its self-manifested Shiv-linga, this temple holds a deep spiritual significance. Rituals during Mondays and Shivratri attract large crowds.

**Kalyani Devi Temple:** One of the Shakti Peeths, this ancient temple symbolises the unity of North and South Indian spiritual traditions. It is a key site during Navratri, where devotees gather for prayers.

**Shri Venkateshwara Swamy Temple:** Celebrating South Indian architectural grandeur, this temple hosts special rituals that draw visitors from across the region.

### UTTAR PRADESH: THE STATE OF SANATAN TRINITY

Uttar Pradesh consists of sacred spiritual hotspots which together form a mystic triangle. Explore the sacred triangle—Prayagraj for purity, Ayodhya for Lord Rama’s devotion, and Varanasi for Shiva’s blessings.

Prayagraj, the city where the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers meet, symbolises purity and salvation. Hosting Mahakumbh 2025, it draws millions seeking spiritual awakening.

Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama, reflects the ideals of dharma, devotion, and duty. The iconic Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir has become a global spiritual landmark, attracting pilgrims eager to connect with Rama’s legacy.

Varanasi, the city of Lord Shiva, is a timeless centre of spirituality. With the revered Kashi Vishwanath Temple and its promise of moksha (liberation), Varanasi’s ghats offer an unforgettable spiritual experience.

Together, these cities form a profound journey of purification, devotion, and liberation. As Mahakumbh 2025 brings the world to Prayagraj, this triangle continues to inspire faith and self-discovery.







Rath Yatra

# A SOUL-STIRRING JOURNEY TO MAHAKUMBH 2025 IN PRAYAGRAJ

From Curious Traveller to Transformed Soul: My Life-Changing Experience at Mahakumbh 2025

TT BUREAU



Born into a family that firmly believes in imbuing cultural values into their new generation, I have been brought up with great stories of famous epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. My parents also introduced me to the relevance of Mahakumbh which is another great spiritual festival observed along the banks of river Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati forming the Sangam at Prayagraj.

However, I never got a chance to witness the Mahakumbh before 2025, when I finally decided to experience the mega celebrations first-hand. A more concentrate search on this year's Mahakumbh Mela 2025, I discovered, that it's not just a spiritual bathing event; but it is a celebration that dates back thousands of years, embodying spirituality, mythology, and unity. The Mahakumbh 2025 is special as it marks the completion of a cycle of 12 full Mahakumbhs thus completing 144 years.



As I scrolled through articles on the meticulous preparations made for Mahakumbh 2025, I stumbled upon a link to a dedicated app for the festival. Downloading it immediately, I was thrilled to see its comprehensive features—everything from booking flights, trains, and taxis to detailed maps of the sprawling Mahakumbh area. For a first-time visitor like me, navigating such an enormous event seemed less daunting.

The Mahakumbh at Prayagraj began on January 13, 2025, and I decided to take a dip at the Sangam on January 14, the first Amrit Snan of three major bathing dates during the 45 days Mahakumbh.

Without wasting a moment, I booked a flight from Delhi to Prayagraj. The app also guided me to the UPSTDC portal, where I found accommodation options at the Kumbh Tent City. The variety of luxury tents surprised me they had a perfect blend of comfort and authenticity for a solo traveller like me.

On December 13, I finally set out on my journey. The flight was smooth, and before I knew it, I was in Prayagraj, a city drenched in the vibrant hues of Mahakumbh fervour. The atmosphere was electric, alive with energy and devotion. An article I had read earlier echoed in my mind—"If you want to see India at one place, come to Mahakumbh."

I checked in at the Tent city in Arail area and the sight of the tent city brought an instant feeling of delight. The serene and calm surrounding of the Tent city presented the perfect escape for late night meditation. The next day on January 14, I moved already towards the Sangam to take a dip in the holy waters. As I reached close to the bathing area around 4 am, a sea of seers from various Akhadas were rushing towards the Sangam. Bathing among the ascetics who have survived years of tough Anusthanas (rituals) for decades, I felt blessed. The cold water on my body felt like it has awakened a more conscious self and I started looking at my surroundings with a deeper gaze understanding the essence of the celebrations.

The next few days were nothing short of transformative as it came as an opportunity to explore the site and take a dip in the holy waters at the Triveni Sangam again and engage with spiritual leaders across Akhadas.

The Uttar Pradesh state government has put up a grand show for 45 days to make every corner of the Mahakumbh city spotless. After the snan, I moved ahead towards the Akhadas



Lord Hanuman Temple

#### MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE AMRIT SNAN

- Paush Purnima: January 13, 2025
- Makar Sankranti: January 14, 2025
- Mauni Amavasya: January 29, 2025
- Basant Panchami: February 3, 2025
- Maghi Purnima: February 12, 2025
- Maha Shivaratri: February 26, 2025

where I requested one of the Akhadas head's to help me delve deeper in the significance of the largest spiritual congregation.

It was amazing to witness how the Akhadas ardently follow the ancient Guru-Shishya (teacher-student) tradition and pass on the wisdom to the most eligible disciples. The seers I met were welcoming and generous, sharing words of wisdom that resonated deeply. It was like stepping back in time, experiencing India's living traditions in their purest form.

Among the many attractions, two stood out vividly. The helicopter ride over the Mahakumbh grounds offered a breath-taking aerial view of the vast Mahakumbh area, tent city and the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. Meanwhile, a serene yoga retreat I attended left me rejuvenated and at peace, balancing the spiritual and the physical. Every step that I walked on the serene banks of the Sangam, I was inching towards salvation from the worldly chaos and evolve as a human.

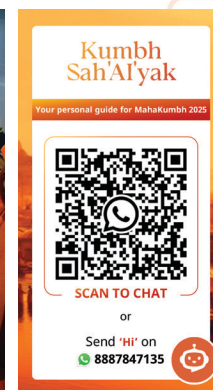
Traversing through the Mahakumbh city with the sole objective of understanding India's vast diversity, I realized that this journey was about more than just travel. It was an opportunity to witness the unity in diversity that defines Bharat. The Mahakumbh is not just a festival; it is a confluence of faith, tradition, and humanity.



Maharshi Bharadwaj Ashram



Sadhus at Mahakumbh

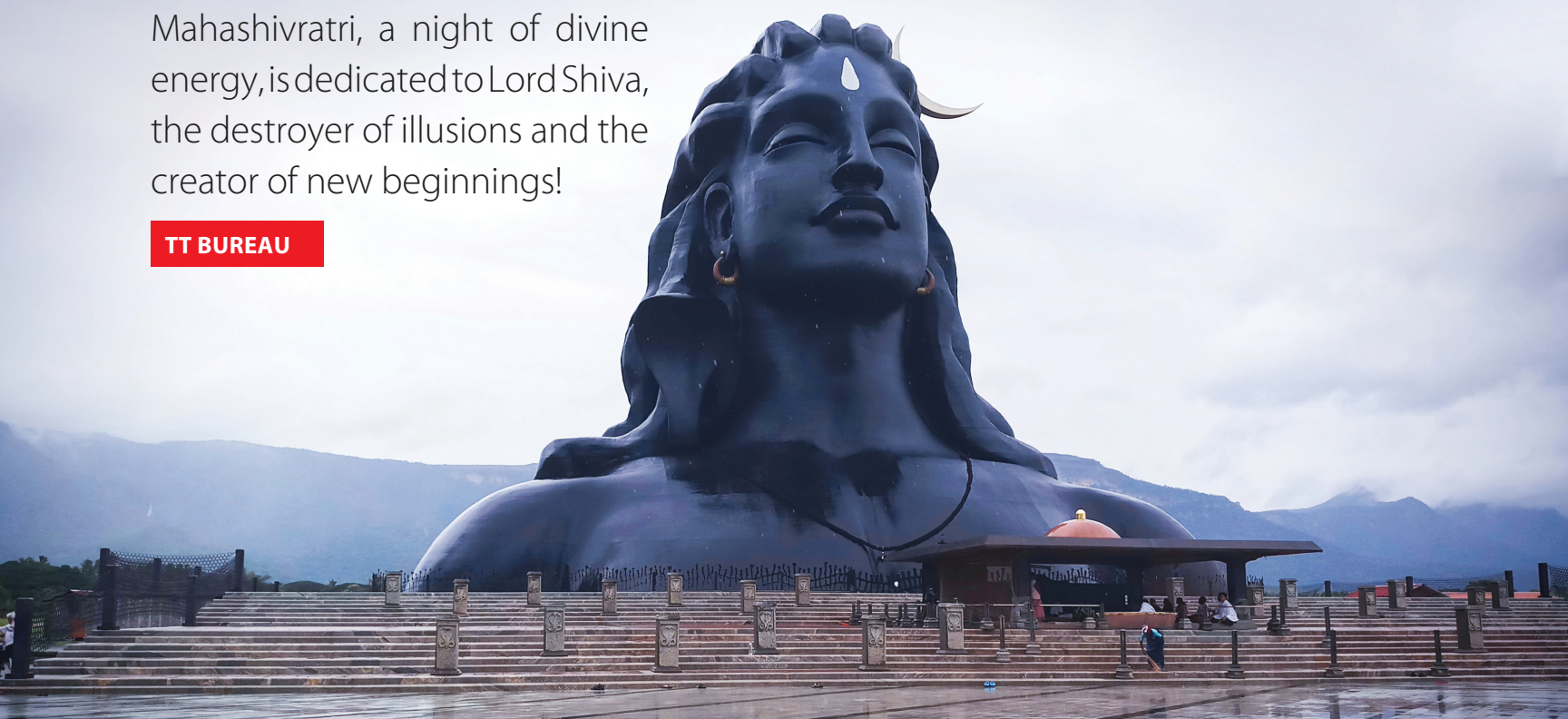




# MAHASHIVRATRI: A NIGHT OF INFINITE LIGHT

Mahashivratri, a night of divine energy, is dedicated to Lord Shiva, the destroyer of illusions and the creator of new beginnings!

TT BUREAU



*Adiyogi, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu*

The moment gets filled with trance as we celebrate the supreme power with a great sense of devotion. In 2025, Mahashivratri will be celebrated on February 26 uniting devotees across the world in reverence and spirituality. Observed with deep veneration, it honours Lord Shiva's immense power and seeks his blessings for inner peace, spiritual growth, and liberation. This sacred night serves as a reminder to pause, reflect, and connect with the divine, offering an opportunity to align with the universal energy that Shiva embodies.

## THE HISTORY BEHIND MAHASHIVRATRI

Mahashivratri is surrounded by rich legends that add to its spiritual significance. It is believed to mark the divine union of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, symbolising the merging of Purusha (mind) and Prakriti (nature).

While the festival also commemorates Shiva's selflessness during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan), when he consumed the deadly poison Halahala to save the universe. Another legend highlights Mahashivratri as the night when Shiva performed the Tandava, his cosmic dance that represents the cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction. Additionally,

many believe that on this sacred night, Shiva appeared as a fiery pillar of light, symbolising his infinite and boundless nature.

## CELEBRATIONS ACROSS INDIA

Mahashivratri is celebrated with unique traditions in various parts of India, reflecting the diversity of devotion to Lord Shiva.

### Adiyogi, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

The Isha Yoga Center celebrates Mahashivratri with grand cultural performances, meditation sessions, and spiritual discourses. The towering Adiyogi statue being the largest Shiva bust sculpture in the world is illuminated beautifully and becomes the centrepiece of the celebrations, drawing thousands.

### Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

As the spiritual capital of India, Varanasi hosts vibrant Mahashivratri celebrations at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Devotees offer bel patra, milk, and flowers to the Shiva Linga, and the city buzzes with processions, bhajans, and mesmerising chants of "Om Namah Shivaya". The Ganga Aarti adds to the spiritual fervour.



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*Somnath Temple, Gujarat*

### **Somnath, Gujarat**

The iconic Somnath Temple, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas, is renowned for its grand Mahashivratri celebrations. The highlight is a spectacular light and sound show on the temple's main dome, captivating devotees and visitors alike.

### **Mandi, Himachal Pradesh**

Known for its grand Shivaratri Fair, Mandi celebrates Mahashivratri at the historic Bhootnath Temple. Deities from nearby temples are paraded through the town in colourful processions, accompanied by music, dance, and rituals. The fair lasts for a week and attracts devotees from across the region.

### **Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh**

The Srikalahasteeswara Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva as the God of Air, is the focal point of Mahashivratri in this region. Devotees participate in night-long prayers, rituals, and abhishekams, seeking blessings and spiritual cleansing.

### **Sivasagar, Assam**

The Shiva Dol Temple in Sivasagar is the centre of Mahashivratri celebrations. Devotees light lamps, offer prayers, and participate in cultural events, making the festival both spiritual and festive.

### **Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh**

The UNESCO World Heritage temples of Khajuraho celebrate Mahashivratri with rituals and artistic performances. The Matangeshwar Temple sees special prayers, and the cultural events showcase India's rich heritage in music and dance.

### **RITUALS THAT MAKE IT SACRED**

Mahashivratri is celebrated with great faith, vibrant rituals, and unique traditions across India. Devotees observe a day-long fast, consuming only fruits and water to purify their body and mind. Shiva temples become hubs of worship, where offerings like milk, honey, bel patra (bilva leaves), and flowers are made to the Shiva Linga.



*Srikalahasteeswara Temple, Andhra Pradesh*



*Matangeshwar Temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh*

A highlight of the festival is the Shiva Baraat, a symbolic procession representing Lord Shiva's wedding escort. It features vibrant displays of people dressed as Shiva, his attendants, and mythical beings, creating a festive and joyous atmosphere.

Devotees also participate in the night vigil, staying awake, chanting Lord Shiva's name, and meditating, symbolising the victory of light over darkness. Additionally, temples and spiritual centres host cultural programs like music, dance, and meditation, further enhancing the spiritual and celebratory essence of Mahashivratri. These traditions inspire devotion, self-reflection, and community bonding.

From the grand processions in Varanasi to the serene rituals at Sivasagar, every celebration is a reminder of Shiva's infinite power and grace. May this Mahashivratri bring peace, prosperity, and spiritual growth to all! Om Namah Shivaya!





Divine-Grand-Digital  
Mahakumbh of Unity

# Sanatan Garv Mahakumbh Parv

## उत्तर प्रदेश दर्शन

### Mahakumbh 2025- Bathing Dates

13.01.2025	Monday	Paush Purnima
14.01.2025	Tuesday	Makar Sankranti - Amrit Snan
29.01.2025	Wednesday	Mauni Amavasya - Amrit Snan
03.02.2025	Monday	Basant Panchami - Amrit Snan
12.02.2025	Wednesday	Magh Purnima
26.02.2025	Wednesday	Shri Mahashivratri

**Uttar Pradesh Darshan Mandapam spans over an area of 2 lakh square feet :** Situated in sector-7, it showcases **12 tourism circuits** of Uttar Pradesh, featuring a 15,000-square-foot map highlighting important landmarks across the state. Special attractions include a **handicrafts market**, a **variety of cuisines** from different states, three stages for cultural programs, and selfie points. Additionally, a **digital exhibition pavilion** has been set up in Sector-1.

The details on the range of facilities at the Mahakumbh 2025 can be accessed through the website: [www.upstdc.co.in](http://www.upstdc.co.in)

Helpline Number  
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#### TENT CITY

Sector-25  
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per person



#### HERITAGE WALK

Starting point Sector-1  
**₹ 2,020**  
per person



#### PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR

starting at floating restaurant  
in Kidganj, Prayagraj  
**₹ 2,500**  
per person



#### YOGA, PRANAYAMA AND MEDITATION

Sector-1  
**₹ 5,000**  
per person



#### WATER AND ADVENTURE SPORTS

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near CMP Degree College  
and Sectors 1 and 25



#### DRONE SHOW

(2500) Sector-7  
January 24, 25, and 26  
**FREE**



#### MUSICAL WATER LASER SHOW

Kali Ghat near Boat Club  
along the Yamuna River  
Timings: Daily, 7 PM and 9 PM  
Duration: 45 minutes  
**FREE**

Tourist information centres have been set up at bus stands, railway station, and airport and at various sectors of the Mahakumbh city



Kumbh Mela  
Location



Kumbh  
Administration



Emergency  
Assistance



Hotel and  
Food



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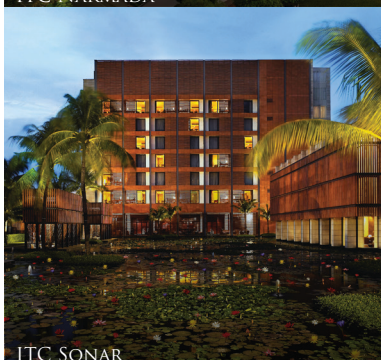
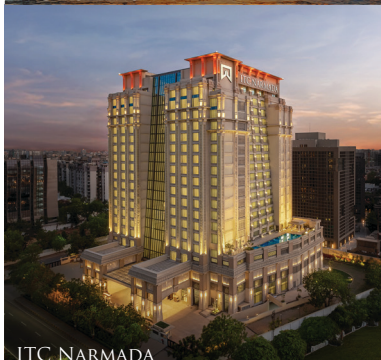
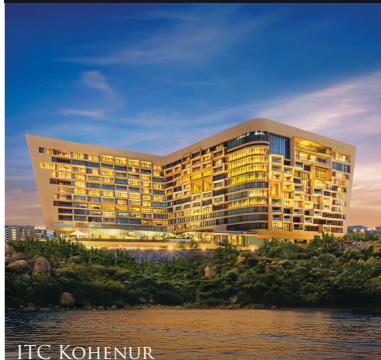


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\*Awarded by US Green Building Council as of November 2024.



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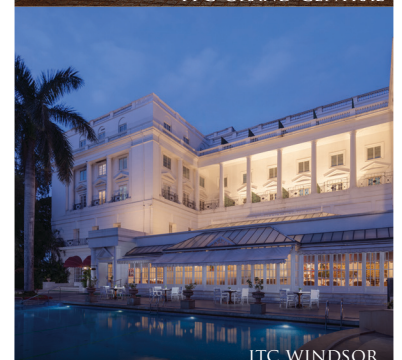
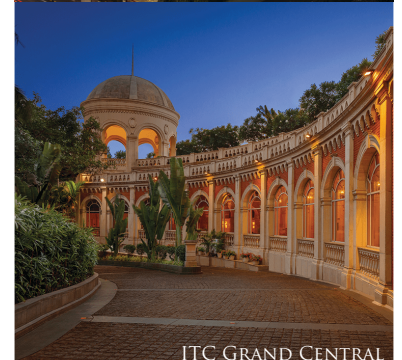


ITC Hotels is the first in India to be recognized with the 2024 U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership Award for Organizational Excellence. USGBC recognizes the leadership and commitment to creating a built environment that enhances health, equity, resilience, sustainability, and prosperity for all.

Responsible Luxury is ITC Hotels' guiding ethos. This philosophy has inspired innovative solutions that harmoniously combine world-class experiences with eco-friendly initiatives.

We are deeply honored to receive this award from USGBC, recognizing us for our significant contributions towards scaling green buildings.

We are grateful for the consistent efforts of our colleagues, partners, and patrons towards making Responsible Luxury a reality.







*Frederique Constant Highlife Chronograph Automatic*

# MUST-HAVE LUXURY TIMEPIECES OF 2025

The luxury watch industry in 2025 is brimming with innovation, here are the ones to watch out

## TT BUREAU

The luxury watch industry has been buzzing for 2025 with groundbreaking releases, capturing the attention of collectors and enthusiasts alike. Here are a few exquisite timepieces we at Today's Traveller are looking forward to.

### **FREDERIQUE CONSTANT HIGHLIFE CHRONOGRAPH AUTOMATICS**

Frederique Constant is marking 25 years of its Highlife collection with two new 41-millimetre Chronograph Automatics, merging tradition and innovation. The first is a non-limited edition featuring a rose gold-plated case with a midnight blue dial. This elegant model boasts snailed silver subdials, hand-polished hands, and alternating satin and polished finishes. It offers versatility with a choice of a rubber

strap or blue suede strap embossed with a crocodile pattern.

The second, limited to 1,888 pieces, has a polished steel case and opaline dial with green counters and a globe motif. It includes three interchangeable straps: green suede, brushed steel, and rubber, underscoring its sporty, adventurous appeal.

Both models are powered by the FC-391 calibre, offering a 60-hour power reserve, tricompass display, and sapphire crystal caseback with intricate Côtes de Genève decoration. With 10 ATM water resistance, these watches embody Frederique Constant's dedication to accessible Swiss luxury, appealing to collectors worldwide.

### **TAG HEUER MONACO SKELETON CHRONOGRAPH**

Tag Heuer's iconic Monaco gets a futuristic twist in 2025 with the introduction of a skeleton dial. The bold design exposes the intricate



# BWH HOTELS: LUXURY. TECH. SUSTAINABILITY.

BWH Hotels is blending personalised service, technology, sustainability, and unique brands to enhance guest satisfaction in India, says Atul Jain, Director & Chief Operating Officer, BWH Hotels India

## TT BUREAU

In an exclusive discussion with Today's Traveller Atul Jain, Director & Chief Operating Officer, BWH Hotels India, talks about the technological advancements, new measures for sustainability, and expansion into emerging markets.

BWH Hotels has adopted several targeted strategies to enhance guest satisfaction and drive business growth in India. These initiatives aim to create memorable experiences for guests while establishing a strong market presence. Atul Jain emphasised the importance of personalised service as a cornerstone of the brand's strategy. "We focus on training our staff to understand and anticipate the unique needs of each guest," he explained. "By ensuring that every stay is customised to their preferences, we not only enhance their experience but also build lasting loyalty."

Jain highlighted the broader impact of this approach, adding, "Personalized service encourages positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which are crucial in the hospitality industry. It's about creating connections and experiences that guests remember and share."

### TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

According to Atul Jain, investing in modern technology is a key strategy for BWH Hotels to streamline operations and enhance guest satisfaction. "The BW mobile app provides guests with greater convenience, reducing wait times and simplifying processes such as check-ins and service requests," Jain explained. He also highlighted the integration of data analytics, stating that it "enables the brand to gain insights into guest behaviour, allowing for tailored services and offerings that align with evolving preferences."

### EXPANDING IN EMERGING MARKETS

Jain emphasised strategic expansion in key locations. "By identifying emerging markets and launching new properties, we attract both domestic and international travellers," he explained. Marketing campaigns further highlight the brand's superior service.



Atul Jain, Chief Operating Officer (COO) for India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

### COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

"Sustainability is at the core of our strategy," noted Jain. Initiatives such as EV chargers, solar energy, waste reduction, and energy conservation appeal to eco-conscious travellers and position BWH Hotels as a responsible choice.

### DISTINCTIVE BRAND OFFERINGS

Jain praised Aiden by Best Western for offering "an upscale boutique experience with locally inspired designs," while SureStay provides "budget-conscious travellers with reliable service and comfort."

### VISION FOR THE FUTURE

"BWH Hotels aims to expand its footprint in India by introducing 18 diverse brands. We focus on high-quality products, partnerships, and innovation," said Jain. This strategy ensures sustainable growth and cements the brand's leadership in India's hospitality sector.

Through innovation, sustainability, and personalized service, BWH Hotels, led by Atul Jain, continues to redefine hospitality in India.



inner mechanics of the watch, blending retro inspiration with a high-tech aesthetic. The square case and automatic chronograph movement stay true to Monaco's signature look, while the sapphire crystal case back offers a captivating view of the movement.

The Monaco Skeleton blends heritage with modern innovation, making it a top choice for seasoned collectors and newcomers alike.

### AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK OFFSHORE "ICE BLUE"

Audemars Piguet is making waves in 2025 with the new Royal Oak Offshore "Ice Blue". This limited-edition masterpiece features a frosty ice-blue dial with the brand's iconic "Mega Tapisserie" pattern. The 42mm stainless steel case, paired with a ceramic bezel, underscores the watch's bold design language. Equipped with a precision chronograph function and meticulous attention to detail in making it, the "Ice Blue" delivers both functionality and style. Its frosty tones add a unique dimension to the Royal Oak Offshore collection, with the watch's ice-blue hue standing out in a sea of monochromatic timepieces, making it a conversation starter at every event.

### PATEK PHILIPPE AQUANAUT CHRONOGRAPH MOONPHASE

Patek Philippe expanded its iconic Aquanaut line in 2025 with the release of the stunning Chronograph Moonphase model. This new addition blends sportiness with an elegant complication, creating a timepiece that has quickly become an instant classic. Featuring a rose gold case with a matching folding clasp, the watch radiates sophistication while maintaining the casual charm of its integrated rubber strap, available in multiple colour options.

The highlight of the Aquanaut Chronograph Moonphase is its intricate moonphase indicator, which seamlessly complements its chronograph function, powered by a self-



*Patek Philippe Aquanaut Chronograph Moonphase*

winding movement for superior accuracy and performance. This design bridges the gap between sporty and formal, making it a highly versatile choice for collectors. With its refined details and balanced aesthetics, the Aquanaut Chronograph Moonphase stands out amongst Patek Philippe's already exquisite lineup.

### ROLEX OYSTER PERPETUAL "AURORA"

Rolex will be dazzling collectors in 2025 with the vibrant "Aurora" dials for the Oyster Perpetual, a design inspired by the captivating northern lights. These mesmerising gradient dials transition seamlessly through shades of green, blue, and purple, offering a fresh and sophisticated update to Rolex's classic aesthetic. Available in both 36mm and 41mm sizes, the "Aurora" features a robust stainless steel case that ensures durability and timeless appeal.

The Oyster Perpetual Aurora is also equipped with Chromalight luminescence, guaranteeing exceptional readability in low-light conditions. Its upgraded movement delivers enhanced precision and a longer power reserve. The watch's bold and vibrant design is aimed at a younger, style-conscious audience while still appealing to seasoned collectors.



*Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Offshore - Ice Blue*



*Tag Heuer Monaco Skeleton Chronograph*



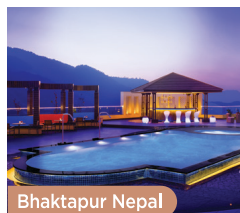
E X P E R I E N C E



## DIVERSE LOCATIONS FOR

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# ITC HOTELS: A GLOBAL EXEMPLAR IN SUSTAINABILITY

ITC Hotels, India's first USGBC Leadership Award winner, champions sustainability with LEED-certified properties, renewable energy, and eco-friendly innovations

## TT BUREAU

ITC Hotels has reaffirmed its position as a trailblazer in Sustainability by becoming **the first in India to receive the prestigious 2024 U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership Award for Organizational Excellence.**

This milestone highlights ITC Hotels' commitment to sustainability, a journey that began over three decades ago.

To date, 23 properties of the brand have received the coveted LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum Certification. ITC Hotels also, proudly sets the benchmark as the world's first hospitality chain with **12 LEED Zero Carbon Certified hotels and five LEED Zero Water Certified properties.**

At ITC Hotels, sustainability is not merely a goal—it's a way of life. Almost three decades ago the term 'Responsible Luxury' was adopted as ITC hotels' guiding philosophy. Two simple words, though rarely found together, have become the bedrock of belief and commitment for the brand.

Conscious to move a step closer to having a carbon-positive footprint, the brand is mindful of conserving energy and is committed to drawing energy from renewable resources. **More than 50% of electricity consumption** at its hotels is met through renewable resources such as off-site wind turbine generators, offsite solar farms etc. ITC Hotels **recycles/ reuses more than 99% of waste generated** through various means such as organic waste converters, bio-methanation plants, etc.

A conscientious effort was made to identify approx. 150 touchpoints in hotels where plastic items were used and to replace them with sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives. Through this initiative, ITC Hotels has mitigated the usage of single use plastics by approximately 2.5 lakh kg per year.



Leadership Award

**SunyaAqua:** This initiative brings the brand closer to reducing its carbon footprint as the water is purified and bottled in-house making it Zero Mile water and mitigating the usage of plastic water bottles. Additionally, ITC Hotels prioritizes sourcing its consumables locally. This not only ensures a reduced carbon footprint by saving on transportation miles, packaging, and fuel but also uplifts the local economy.

By redefining luxury to prioritize both comfort and sustainability, ITC Hotels is not just enhancing guest experiences but also leaving an indelible mark on the planet's future. This USGBC Leadership award for Organisational Excellence underscores the brand's unwavering commitment to sustainability and highlights its vital role in advancing the green building movement.

It is also a testament to the collective effort of ITC Hotels' team members, partners, and patrons who champion sustainability alongside unparalleled luxury. ITC Hotels remain dedicated to fostering experiences that are environmentally responsible and leading by example in climate action for a more sustainable future.



## Every stay is a new story

The epitome of a blissful retreat - Storii by ITC Hotels Devasom Resort & Spa, an architectural delight, is designed to restore the delicate balance between the mind, body and spirit. Immerse into the inherent harmony of this retreat, surrounded by lush flora, with natural light playing visually mesmerising games of hide and seek.

Unwind at this bespoke getaway with spa treatments, curated yoga and meditation sessions and reflective nature walks.

CLUB ITC



Scan to know more

Storii by ITC Hotels, Devasom Resort & Spa, Kolkata  
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# CHASING WINTER MAGIC



Skiing in Shimla

Experience the magic of winter in India's hill stations stunning landscapes, adventure activities, and vibrant culture

**KAMAL GILL**

**H**ill stations in India transform into magical retreats during winter, blending winter sports, natural beauty, colonial history, and cultural richness. Many of these towns, like Shimla and Ooty, were established by the British as summer escapes, reflecting colonial charm.

Winter brings unique attractions such as snow sports in Manali and Gulmarg, while botanical wonders like the rare Neelakurinji bloom in Munnar captivate nature enthusiasts. Each region offers distinct culinary delights—from Darjeeling's momos and Thukpa to Ooty's handmade chocolates and tea. Cultural landmarks, such as Tawang Monastery and Mussoorie's colonial heritage, provide enriching experiences.

Combining scenic landscapes, rich traditions, and adventure, India's hill stations offer a winter escape with snow-covered peaks, vibrant local festivals, and thrilling activities like skiing and trekking.

## THE CHARM OF SNOW AND WINTER SPORTS

For Indian travellers, the ultimate winter vacation question often is: "Is there snow?" Nothing says bucket-list-worthy like a snowy wonderland. Hill stations typically receive snow from

December to February, with some higher-altitude regions experiencing snowfall as early as November or extending into March.

**Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir:** With an average snowfall of 13-15 feet annually, Gulmarg's temperatures drop to -8°C to -10°C in peak winter.

**Manali and Shimla, Himachal Pradesh:** Moderate snowfall of 3-4 feet and temperatures ranging from -2°C to 5°C make these towns favourites for winter sports and scenic beauty.

**Auli, Uttarakhand:** Known for skiing, Auli receives 2-3 feet of snow, with temperatures between -4°C and 3°C.

**Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh:** Heavy snowfall of 5-6 feet and frigid temperatures from -10°C to 2°C create a surreal winter landscape.

Booking accommodations and activities in advance is essential, as these destinations buzz with travellers during the peak winter season.

## SHIMLA - QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS

Known as the Queen of Hill Stations, Shimla becomes a snowy retreat in winter. It's colonial charm and scenic beauty



captivate travellers, while bustling markets and cultural events add festive cheer. The Lakkar Bazaar is a haven for woodcraft enthusiasts, offering intricate souvenirs.

Winter activities include ice skating at the open-air rink, strolling along the Mall Road under twinkling lights, and trekking to Kufri for snow sports. Must-visit spots include Jakhoo Temple, Christ Church, and Kufri's winter wonderland.

Shimla's cuisine is perfect for winter comfort. Try Sidu, a steamed bread served with ghee or chutney, and Thukpa, a hearty noodle soup. Street food stalls offer roasted corn, momos, and steaming cups of chai to keep you cosy.

### MANALI - SNOW-COVERED VISTAS

Manali's charm is amplified in winter, with snow-covered vistas and serene valleys. Beyond snow adventures, serene villages like Naggar and ancient temples such as the Manu Temple offer cultural and spiritual experiences. Lush cedar forests provide a peaceful atmosphere, perfect for meditative walks, while vibrant handicraft markets offer locally made woollens and souvenirs.

Winter activities include skiing and snowboarding at Solang Valley, hot water baths at Vashisht, and exploring Old Manali's cozy cafes and shops. Must-visit spots include Solang Valley, Rohtang Pass, and Hadimba Temple.

Manali's food reflects Himachali roots and Tibetan influences. Relish dishes like Dhaam, a traditional Himachali thali, and Tibetan delicacies such as momos and butter tea. Old Manali's cafes serve everything from apple pie to locally sourced trout.

### GULMARG - MEADOW OF FLOWERS

The "Meadow of Flowers" transforms into a winter paradise during snowfall. Gulmarg is not just a skier's haven but also a hub of cultural and gastronomic delights. Local markets showcase traditional Pashmina shawls and handwoven carpets, while activities like sledding and snowball fights add family-friendly fun.

Enjoy gondola rides with panoramic views of snow-covered peaks, skiing on pristine slopes, and exploring the Gulmarg Biosphere Reserve. Must-visit spots include Khilanmarg and Apharwat Peak.

Gulmarg's cuisine highlights the rich flavours of Kashmiri food. Try Rogan Josh, Gushtaba, and Yakhni served with fragrant rice. Local bakeries offer Sheermal and Kulcha, best paired with traditional Kahwa.

### AULI - WINTER WONDERLAND FOR ADVENTURE SEEKERS

Auli is a winter wonderland for adventure seekers, offering well-maintained ski slopes for beginners and experts. Its panoramic views of peaks like Nanda Devi and Kamet, surrounded by oak and deodar forests, create a tranquil retreat. After a day of activities, savour local Garhwali dishes like Chainsoo and Jhangora.



*Gondola Ride in Gulmarg*



*Auli Artificial Lake*

Enjoy skiing lessons, cable car rides with breathtaking Himalayan views, and trekking to Gorson Bugyal. Must-visit places include Auli Artificial Lake, Nanda Devi Peak, and Joshimath temples.

Auli's cuisine is hearty and comforting. Signature dishes like Aloo ke Gutke, Jhangora Kheer, and Mandua roti with spicy chutneys provide a warm culinary experience.

### TAWANG - SNOWY LANDSCAPES AND OFFBEAT APPEAL

Tawang's snow-covered mountains and Buddhist heritage make it a peaceful winter retreat. The local Monpa tribe's Losar festival (Tibetan New Year) showcases the vibrant traditions of Arunachal Pradesh. Snowy landscapes, like those surrounding Nuranang Falls, add to Tawang's offbeat appeal.

Winter activities include trekking in snow-covered hills, exploring ancient monasteries adorned with prayer flags, and savouring local hot dishes like Thukpa. Must-visit spots include Shonga-tser Lake, Tawang Monastery, and Sela Pass.





Nuranang Falls

Tawang's cuisine offers Tibetan and Monpa flavours. Hot Thukpa, momos, Zan (millet porridge), butter tea, and fermented bamboo shoot dishes highlight the region's culinary richness.

### LADAKH - LAND OF HIGH PASSES

The "Land of High Passes" transforms into a serene snow-laden wonderland in winter. Stark, rugged mountains and frozen rivers offer unparalleled charm. Festivals like Dosmoche add vibrancy to the tranquil landscape. Traditional Pashmina shawls and jewellery make for unique souvenirs.

Winter activities include trekking on the frozen Zaskar River during the Chadar Trek, exploring snow-covered monasteries like Thiksey and Hemis, and enjoying snow biking and ice hockey. Must-visit spots include Pangong Lake, Magnetic Hill, and Shanti Stupa.

Ladakhi cuisine is hearty and flavorful. Enjoy specialities like Skyu (noodle soup), Chhutagi (dumpling soup), and Khambir (bread). Butter tea and Apricot Jam complete the experience.

### DARJEELING - MISTY TEA GARDENS AND MOUNTAINS

Darjeeling's misty tea gardens and panoramic mountain views create a serene winter escape. Tibetan prayer flags flutter against snowy peaks, while vibrant local bazaars like Chowk Bazaar offer handcrafted jewellery, woollens, and organic produce.



Ladakh

Winter activities include riding the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (Toy Train), watching sunrise views over Kanchenjunga from Tiger Hill, and sipping warm Darjeeling tea. Must-visit places include Batasia Loop and Peace Pagoda.

Darjeeling's food reflects its multicultural heritage. Thukpa and momos are staples, while Churpee (local cheese) is a unique snack. Pair these with world-famous Darjeeling tea for an authentic experience.





Boating in Naini Lake

### NAINITAL - LAKES AND SNOW-COVERED HILLS

Nainital's tranquil lakes and snow-covered hills make it a perfect winter retreat. Less crowded during winter, it offers serene views and vibrant local culture. The street food scene along Mall Road includes momos and bhutta (corn), while fairs and performances showcase Kumaoni traditions.

Winter activities include boating in Naini Lake, shopping for woollens at Mall Road, and exploring snow-covered Tiffin Top. Must-visit places include Naina Devi Temple, Snow View Point, and Bhimtal. Nainital's cuisine features flavorful Kumaoni dishes like Bhatt ki Churkani, Aloo ke Gutke, and Ras. Sweet treats like Bal Mithai and Singori are must-tries.

### MUSSOORIE - COLONIAL CHARM AND SNOWY LANDSCAPES

Mussoorie is a winter gem with colonial charm and snowy landscapes. Libraries, churches, and Landour Bazaar offer cosy indoor experiences. Jharipani Falls' tranquil beauty adds to its winter appeal. Winter activities include cable car rides to Gun Hill, walking along Camel's Back Road, and exploring Landour's bakeries. Must-visit spots include Kempty Falls, Lal Tibba, and Mussoorie Lake.

Mussoorie's cuisine blends Garhwali classics like Kafuli and Phaanu with colonial-inspired dishes. Try walnut cakes and fudge from Landour's bakeries or enjoy spicy Maggi and roasted bhutta from street stalls.

### MUNNAR - MISTY SPICE PLANTATIONS

While not a snowy destination, Munnar's misty plantations and cool climate create a magical winter experience. The spice plantations nearby offer cardamom, pepper, and vanilla. Winter is also prime for birdwatching, with vibrant migratory species.

Winter activities include exploring tea estates, trekking through Eravikulam National Park, and rare Neelakurinji blooms (once every 12 years). Must-visit spots include Mattupetty Dam, Top Station, and Anamudi Peak.

Munnar's cuisine highlights Kerala's flavours, with dishes like Kerala Sadya, appam with stew, and fish moilee. Don't miss cardamom tea or homemade chocolates.

### OOTY - TOY TRAIN AND COLONIAL BUNGALOWS

Ooty's cool winter weather offers a cosy escape in the Nilgiri Hills. Quaint colonial bungalows and homestays provide warm



Kerala Sadya

hospitality. The Nilgiri Mountain Railway becomes magical in winter, while chocolate factories and tribal markets offer unique treats.

Winter activities include toy train rides, botanical garden explorations, and trekking to Doddabetta Peak. Must-visit places include Ooty Lake, Rose Garden, and Tea Museum. Ooty's culinary offerings are inviting. Try steaming bowls of rasam, freshly baked breads, and spicy chicken curries. Handmade chocolates, eucalyptus honey, and Nilgiri tea are signature treats.

### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WINTER TRAVEL

Pack heavy winter clothing like insulated jackets, gloves, and thermal wear to withstand sub-zero temperatures. Ensure your vehicle is equipped with snow chains or 4-wheel drive for high-altitude areas like Gulmarg, Auli, and Tawang. Check weather forecasts and road conditions, especially after heavy snowfall.

India's hill stations offer an unparalleled winter experience, combining thrilling snow sports, tranquil escapes, and cultural richness. Pack your woollens, and let the hills work their magic!



Nilgiri Mountain Railway





Lobby

# REDEFINING HOSPITALITY WITH TECH-SAVVY STAYS

Bloom, a new generation of hotels built for intelligent travellers, has quickly become a big hit among young Indians who prefer a cleaner and simpler stay experience

TT BUREAU

**W**ith over 62 operational properties located across India's most popular business and leisure destinations, Bloom's cutting-edge product design and proprietary industry-leading in-stay tech have amassed a highly loyal following of next-gen travellers across the country.

## THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED STAYS FOR TRAVELLERS OF THE FUTURE

Each Bloom property is crafted to deliver a clean, crisp and connected contemporary stay perfectly suited to the evolving needs of the world's fastest-growing economy. Whether the purpose is business or leisure, Bloom's diverse product offering

through its sub-brands caters to every travel preference, from short trips in the city to extended stays near the beach, offering the same underlying world-class stay experience at each hotel. From Bloom Hotels to Bloom Boutique and their latest launch Bloom Hub, each sub-brand demonstrates Bloom's absolute commitment to designing products to meet the core needs of all their guests, every single time.

## BLOOM HOTELS: CITY ESCAPES FOR COMFORT AND EFFICIENCY

Strategically located in the heart of major Tier 1 cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi, Bloom Hotels provide the ideal safe haven for business travellers not wanting to break





the bank. From prime business districts to the most popular entertainment neighbourhoods, Bloom has a knack for being just where you need them.

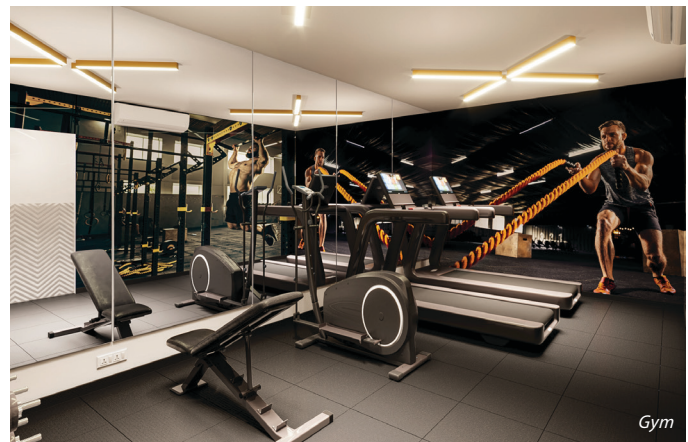
Each Bloom Hotel offers spaces created to create comfort and familiarity through clean and optimal design. Guest rooms come with signature Cloud Beds™ for an amazing sleep and rain showers with excellent water pressure so you start your day at your best, every stay.

### **BLOOM BOUTIQUE: LIVE LOCAL WITH UNIQUE STAY EXPERIENCES**

From a Haveli previously owned by the Maharana of Mewar in Udaipur to an old Waterfront Granary near Fort Kochi, Bloom Boutique properties are perfect for those with adventure and exploration at heart. All hotels in the portfolio are different in architecture and design but that's the inherent beauty, with no one stay experience the same you're sure to capture unique Instagram-able moments every stay. That said, you'll still find the clean and crisp underlying brand promises of cleanliness and comfort at each property.

### **BLOOM HUB: EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE**

If you want to experience the future of hospitality, look no further than Bloom Hub which takes business travel to the



next level, offering smart work spaces designed to foster productivity. Featuring conference halls, meeting rooms, meeting pods and coworking lounges you'll be equipped to take on any challenge the daily grind throws at you. And don't forget your running shoes as there's always a gym waiting to keep you on your toes and at your best.

Bloom Hub is ideal for both short-term and extended stays, travellers will find everything they need for an all-round awesome stay.

### **EXPANDING HORIZONS IN HOSPITALITY**

With each season, Bloom continues to expand, welcoming guests to exciting new destinations across India. Rooted in its mission to offer crisp, comfortable stays, Bloom sets itself apart in a crowded industry by consistently creating spaces that inspire, energise, and feel refreshingly personal. More than just a place to rest, Bloom is a place to connect, discover, and thrive offering every guest a stay that's super comfortable, hassle-free and highly practical.

You can find Bloom hotels in most leading locations across India including Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Pune, Gurugram, Hyderabad, Noida, Ahmedabad, Goa, Kochi, Jaipur, Udaipur, Amritsar, Jammu, Ranchi, Lonavala, Jalandhar and Katra to name a few.



Pool



# CHADAR TREK: A WALK ON THE FROZEN ZANSKAR RIVER

The Chadar Trek is a canvas painted in frost and silence, where every step over the frozen Zaskar River feels like tracing nature's most fragile artwork

TT BUREAU

It is one of the most exciting and unique adventures, not just in India but across the globe. The trek takes you across the frozen Zaskar River in Ladakh, offering breathtaking views and an experience like no other. This is not just about walking on ice but exploring the beauty of nature and pushing your limits in one of the coldest places on Earth.

## WHAT IS THE CHADAR TREK?

The word "Chadar" means "sheet," which describes the thick sheet of ice that forms on the Zaskar River during winter. From January to February, when temperatures drop as low as  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the river freezes and creates a natural path for trekkers. Walking on this icy surface, surrounded by tall mountains and snowy landscapes, feels like stepping into another world.

The trek starts at Chilling, a small village near Leh, and covers about 105 kilometres over 6 to 9 days. Each day, the ice changes—sometimes it's smooth and shiny, and other times it's rough and uneven, making the journey full of surprises.

## AN ADVENTURE LIKE NO OTHER

The Chadar Trek is challenging but rewarding. You'll walk for hours each day on slippery ice in freezing temperatures, testing your strength and patience. At night, you'll camp in caves or tents under the starry Himalayan sky, listening to the stillness of nature.

Despite the tough conditions, the trek is full of magical moments. You'll see frozen waterfalls, icy cliffs, and beautiful valleys that look like scenes from a movie. Each view is



Frozen Zaskar River



unique, and no two days on the trek are the same. It's an adventure that will stay with you forever.

### DETAILED ITINERARY FOR THE TREK

The Chadar Trek is an 8-day adventure across the frozen Zaskar River in Ladakh. A perfect balance of acclimatisation, safety, and exploration, this trek is one of the most unique experiences in the world.

#### Day 1: Arrival in Leh (11,500 ft)

Your journey begins in Leh, the capital of Ladakh. Upon arrival, check into your guesthouse and spend the day resting and acclimatising to the high altitude to prevent acute mountain sickness (AMS). Leh's thin air can be challenging, so avoid overexertion. If you're feeling up to it, explore the Leh Market, visit Shanti Stupa, or enjoy the serene views from Leh Palace. Early acclimatisation is key to a successful trek, so hydrate well and keep warm.

**Accommodation:** Guesthouse in Leh.

**Tip:** Stay hydrated, eat light meals, and avoid physical exertion.

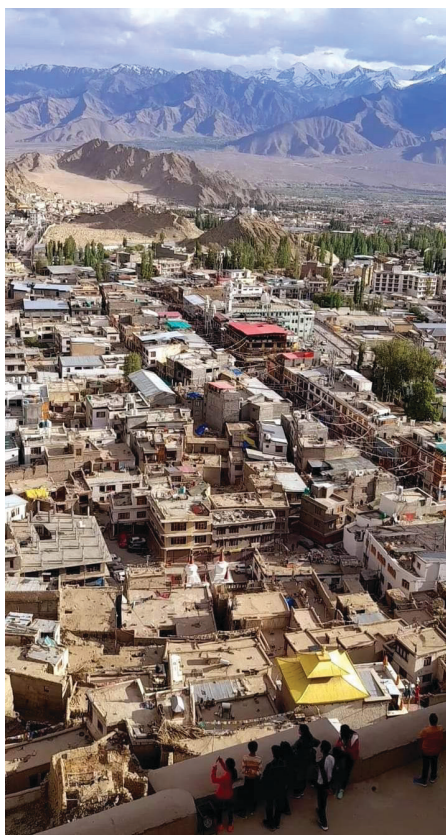
#### Day 2: Acclimatisation in Leh and Trek Preparation

Spend another day in Leh to adjust further to the high-altitude environment. This is also the day to ensure your gear is ready for the trek. Attend a mandatory briefing session conducted by the trek leaders, where you'll learn about the route, safety protocols, and what to expect on the ice.

Double-check your trekking equipment, including warm layers, insulated boots, crampons, gloves, and sleeping bags. Explore more of Leh at a leisurely pace, soaking in the vibrant culture and stunning Himalayan views.

**Activity:** Trek briefing, equipment check, and light exploration.

**Tip:** Enjoy hot fluids like butter tea or soup to stay warm.



Leh City Seen From The Roof of Leh Palace

#### Day 3: Drive to Chilling and Trek to Tilad Do (10,390 ft)

- Drive Duration: 3-4 hours (Leh to Chilling).
- Trek Distance: 2-3 km (Chilling to Tilad Do).

The day starts with a picturesque drive to Chilling, the starting point of the trek. En route, marvel at the confluence of the Indus and Zaskar Rivers and the rugged Himalayan landscapes. Once at Chilling, you'll begin your trek with a short 1-2 hour walk along the icy Zaskar River to Tilad Do, the first campsite. Experience your first-night camping by the frozen river, surrounded by pristine snow-clad peaks.

**Accommodation:** Tents at Tilad Do.

**Activity:** Scenic drive, short trek, and camping.

**Tip:** Practice walking on ice to familiarise yourself with the terrain.

#### Day 4: Trek from Tilad Do to Shingra Koma (10,550 ft)

- Trek Distance: 10 km (4-5 hours).

Start early to trek over the frozen Chadar, where the icy patterns and cracks create mesmerising textures. Walk through narrow gorges flanked by towering cliffs and marvel at the interplay of sunlight on the frozen river. The trek to Shingra Koma is relatively gentle, allowing you to adjust to the icy terrain.

**Accommodation:** Tents at Shingra Koma.

**Activity:** Trekking on the frozen Zaskar, camping, and storytelling by the bonfire.

**Tip:** Use crampons for better grip and keep your pace steady to avoid slipping.

#### Day 5: Shingra Koma to Tibb Cave (10,800 ft)

- Trek Distance: 14 km (6-7 hours).

This is a longer trekking day, offering dramatic views of the



Night Camping By The Frozen River



Chadar Trekking





*Nerak Falls, Chadar's Last Point*

frozen river and snow-covered cliffs. Along the way, you'll encounter frozen waterfalls and patches of crystal-clear ice. Reach Tibb Cave, a natural shelter nestled amidst the rugged landscape, where you'll set up camp.

**Accommodation:** Tents at Tibb Cave.

**Activity:** Explore the cave and enjoy the solitude of the wilderness.

**Tip:** Wear insulated gloves and keep warm to avoid frostbite.

#### **Day 6: Tibb Cave to Nerak Waterfall (11,150 ft)**

- Trek Distance: 12 km (6-7 hours).

The trek to Nerak Waterfall is the highlight of the journey. This spectacular frozen cascade is a natural marvel, with icicles shimmering in the sunlight. The route offers stunning vistas of snow-laden landscapes and ice sculptures. Camp near the waterfall, marking the furthest point of the trek.

**Accommodation:** Tents near Nerak.

**Activity:** Photography at Nerak Waterfall and camping.

**Tip:** Keep your camera batteries warm to avoid losing charge in the cold.

#### **Day 7: Return Trek to Tibb Cave**

- Trek Distance: 14 km (6-7 hours).

Retrace your steps along the frozen river to Tibb Cave. The familiarity of the route makes the return journey slightly easier, allowing you to relax and appreciate the scenery.

**Accommodation:** Tents at Tibb Cave.

**Activity:** Reflect on your experiences and share stories with fellow trekkers.

**Tip:** Monitor ice conditions as they may have changed since your first pass.

#### **Day 8: Trek to Shingra Koma and Drive to Leh**

- Trek Distance: 12 km (5-6 hours).
- Drive Duration: 3-4 hours (Shingra Koma to Leh).

Complete the final stretch of your trek to Shingra Koma, where a vehicle will be waiting to take you back to Leh. The scenic drive back is a moment to celebrate your achievement and relive the incredible memories of the trek.

**Accommodation:** Guesthouse in Leh.

**Activity:** Relaxation and celebration in Leh.

**Tip:** Treat yourself to a warm meal and rest after your adventure.

#### **PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT**

The Chadar Trek also teaches us about the effects of climate change. Rising temperatures have made the ice on the Zaskar River less stable in recent years, making the trek more unpredictable. It's a reminder of how important it is to protect nature.

Trekkers are encouraged to follow eco-friendly practices, like avoiding plastic, not leaving waste behind, and respecting the local culture. This helps preserve the beauty of the region for future adventurers.

#### **WHY THE CHADAR TREK IS SPECIAL**

The Chadar Trek is not just a trek—it's an unforgettable experience. Walking on a frozen river, surrounded by stunning winter landscapes, makes you feel closer to nature and yourself. It's a journey of adventure, discovery, and awe.

If you're someone who loves challenges and wants to experience something truly unique, the Chadar Trek is perfect for you. Pack your warmest clothes, prepare your mind and body, and get ready for an adventure that will stay in your heart forever.





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The Leela Palaces,  
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**Ashish Jakhanwala**  
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# VINTAGE INDIAN DHURRIES

Discover Artisan Villages and their craft and culture around the world showcasing heritage, creativity, and remarkable craftsmanship

TT BUREAU

A handwoven rug or a thin flat carpet is an example of an item of home furnishings that is referred to as a dhurrie in India. This word may also be spelt dhurri, durrie, durry, or dari. Dhurries are an integral part of Indian culture, known for their versatility, vibrant designs, and cultural significance. Each dhurrie carries a one-of-a-kind design, often inspired by the region of its origin, with multicoloured stripes being one of the most common patterns. Historically, weaving dhurries was a significant economic activity in rural India. Over time, it has evolved into a cherished tradition that not only supports livelihoods but also reflects India's artistic heritage and cultural richness.

## CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Weaving dhurries has been an essential economic and cultural activity in rural India for centuries. This tradition has been

passed down from generation to generation, bringing with it a rich decorative lexicon imbued with cultural meaning. Beyond being functional floor coverings, dhurries are seen as cultural artefacts that capture the artistic expressions of communities.

Patterns, colours, and designs are often inherited through families, serving not only as a medium of skill transfer but also as a traditional form of dowry. A dhurrie woven by a bride's family, for instance, may carry motifs that tell a story or symbolise blessings and prosperity for the new household.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS

Weaving dhurries is an ancient skill, believed to date back several centuries. Originally, dhurries were crafted not only in India but also in neighbouring regions, including Burma, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. These handwoven rugs were traditionally used as floor mats, bed coverings, wall hangings,



*Process of Weaving Dhurries*





*Material For Weaving Dhurries*

and even yoga or meditation mats. Their lightweight yet durable nature also made them popular as mattress covers. Over time, the use of dhurries has expanded, and they have become prized home furnishings across the globe.

The materials used to make dhurries contribute significantly to their versatility. Wool, silk, and cotton are among the most commonly used fibres, offering varying textures, warmth, and durability. Other materials like bamboo silk, banana leaf, cashmere, and alpaca have also been employed to create dhurries with unique properties. While some dhurries are soft and warm to the touch, others are smooth and cool, catering to different climates and preferences.

## WEAVING TRADITIONS

The art of weaving dhurries is deeply rooted in Indian tradition, with many rural communities relying on this craft as a source of income. Weaving techniques and designs vary across regions, showcasing the diversity of India's artistic heritage. Traditional dhurries often feature geometric patterns, stripes, and motifs inspired by local flora, fauna, and architecture. Some of the more intricate designs include representations of the Tree of Life, war emblems, birds, and flowers. The skill required to create complex patterns is immense, and some designs can take several days to complete.

The process of weaving dhurries typically involves the use of a loom. Different regions employ distinct weaving techniques. For instance, pit looms, where the weaver operates the loom with their feet, are commonly used in Rajasthan. Another popular technique is the panja weaving method, which involves a claw-like tool called a panja to thread the wefts of yarn tightly. Traditional colours such as fiery orange, indigo, crimson, and green were historically used, inspired by the vibrant attire of Indian communities. Today, modern palettes have expanded to include a broader range of colours to cater to contemporary tastes.

## REGIONAL SPECIALTIES

India's diverse cultural landscape is reflected in the regional variations of dhurries. Rajasthan, for example, is renowned for its pit loom dhurries, which feature bold patterns and bright



*Weaving A Combination Of Two Flower Patterns*



*Style of Weaving Dhurries*

colours. Haryana is famous for its Punja dhurries, which are crafted by women in villages as a form of recreation. These dhurries are versatile and often used as bedsheets or flooring. The dhurries of Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, are celebrated for their durability and vivid colours.

The state of Karnataka, particularly the Navalgund taluk, is another significant centre for dhurrie production. Known as jamkhana in the native Kannada language, Navalgund dhurries are recognised for their distinctive geometric patterns and vibrant colours. This region has even earned a geographical indication (GI) tag for its unique dhurrie-making tradition. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh contribute their unique styles to India's dhurrie heritage. In many states, dhurries are an essential part of a bride's dowry, symbolising cultural and familial ties.

## THE WEAVING PROCESS

Creating a dhurrie is a meticulous process that requires skill, precision, and patience. The journey begins with the selection of materials, which could range from cotton and wool to silk and other natural fibres. The threads are dyed in vibrant hues, often using traditional methods that employ natural dyes. The weaving itself is done on looms, with different regions employing distinct techniques.

For instance, pit looms involve the weaver sitting in a pit and using their feet to control the loom. The panja technique, named after the claw-like tool used, allows for intricate patterns and tight weaving. These techniques ensure that



each dhurrie is a work of art, with designs that can range from simple stripes to elaborate motifs inspired by local culture and nature. The time required to weave a dhurrie depends on its complexity, with some intricate designs taking several days to complete.

### MODERN ADAPTATIONS

While dhurries remain rooted in tradition, they have also evolved to suit modern lifestyles. Contemporary dhurries feature a wide range of patterns, colours, and materials, making them versatile enough to complement any home decor. They are available in various sizes, from small table covers to large floor coverings, and are suitable for diverse uses, including meditation mats and wall hangings. The lightweight nature of dhurries makes them easy to transport and maintain, further adding to their appeal.

In recent years, dhurries have gained international recognition as sustainable and eco-friendly home furnishings. Their low cost of maintenance and resistance to pests like silverfish make them an attractive alternative to conventional carpets. Cotton dhurries, in particular, are prized for their ability to keep homes cool in summer and warm in winter, making them suitable for all seasons.

### CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The tradition of weaving dhurries is not just an art form but also a vital economic activity for many rural communities in India. By preserving and promoting this craft, weavers ensure the survival of a rich cultural heritage while earning

a livelihood. Government initiatives and organizations like Rug Weave and Jaipur Rugs have played a significant role in supporting artisans and promoting dhurries on a global scale.

For many rural families, weaving dhurries is a way of life, passed down through generations. It promotes a sense of community and cultural pride while providing economic stability. The intricate patterns and vibrant colours of dhurries are a testament to the skill and creativity of Indian artisans, who continue to innovate while staying true to their roots.

### PRACTICAL USES

Dhurries are incredibly versatile and can be used in various ways depending on their size, design, and material. Small dhurries are often used as table covers for flower pots, telephone stands, or other decorative items. Medium-sized dhurries are popular as meditation mats, while larger ones are used as floor coverings at political or social events. Their portability and ease of maintenance make them ideal for a range of settings.

### WHERE TO BUY

Dhurries are produced across India, from Darjeeling to Gujarat and Chennai, with each region adding its unique touch of local colours and geometric designs. Renowned retailers like Rug Weave and Jaipur Rugs offer a wide range of dhurries, catering to traditional and modern tastes. Visitors to India can also explore local markets in Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka to find authentic, handcrafted dhurries that capture the essence of Indian artistry.

### CONCLUSION

The dhurrie is a symbol of India's cultural heritage, artistic ingenuity, and communal harmony. From its historical roots to its modern adaptations, the dhurrie remains a cherished tradition that continues to inspire and captivate. Whether you're looking for practical flooring or artwork that tells a story, a dhurrie is a timeless addition to any home. By embracing this ancient craft, we celebrate the rich tapestry of Indian culture and support the artisans who keep this tradition alive.



Weaving Dhurries

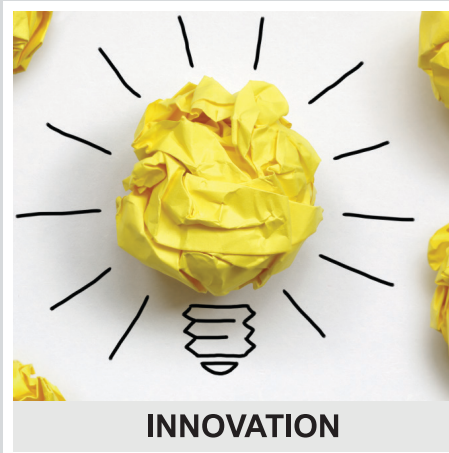
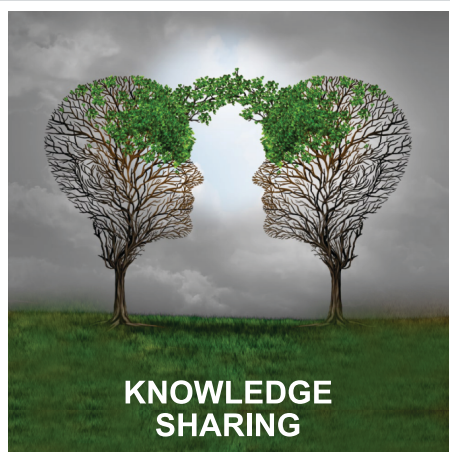


Dhurries Are Produced Across India



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# VILLAGES WHERE CRAFT TELLS A STORY

Discover Artisan Villages and their craft and culture around the world showcasing heritage, creativity, and remarkable craftsmanship

ATUL KISHORE

There is a famous saying: change your views, but hold your creed; Shed your leaves, yet keep your seed! The art and craft of a region is the fruit of its old-rooted culture which tells a million stories through its crafts silently! Every craft is a bridge between the past and the present, a testament to the resilience of traditions that evolve yet remain grounded in their origins. It's through these crafts that the soul of a culture is revealed.

Step into the lively world of artisan villages, where centuries-old traditions breathe life into unique crafts. From Jaipur's intricate block printing to Japan's Bizen pottery, explore these cultural treasures.

## BAGRU: THE HEART OF BLOCK PRINTING IN JAIPUR

Bagru, a small village near Jaipur, is famous for its beautiful block printing tradition, a craft practised for over 300 years.

This art is known for its simple yet stunning designs and eco-friendly techniques.

The process starts with artisans carving intricate patterns, inspired by nature, onto wooden blocks. These blocks are then dipped into natural plants, minerals, and clay dyes to create beautiful fabric prints. The colours most commonly used in Bagru printing are earthy tones like black, red, and indigo.

One of Bagru's unique techniques is Dabu printing, where artisans use mud paste to create patterns on the fabric. This paste acts as a barrier, allowing them to add layers of colour without blending, creating a rustic and elegant look.

Local workshops welcome visitors to watch the printing process and even try it themselves. The village's textiles are popular worldwide, blending traditional patterns with modern fashion. Bagru's block printing is a sustainable craft that keeps a centuries-old tradition alive and thriving in today's world.



Bagru - Beautiful Block Printing Tradition





*Kalamkari - A Traditional Art Form From Andhra Pradesh*

### **BIZEN WARE: THE SOUL OF JAPANESE POTTERY**

Bizen ware, a traditional Japanese pottery from Okayama Prefecture, is celebrated for its rustic beauty and natural elegance. The name “Bizen ware” derives from bizen-yaki, with “Bizen” referring to the ancient province where it originated and “yaki” meaning pottery.

The craft dates back to the 6th century CE and has roots tracing even further to the 5th century CE when Korean potters introduced unglazed earthenware to Japan. Renowned for its dark grey or reddish-brown tones, natural ash glaze, and organic markings from the wood-firing process, Bizen ware embodies a timeless and unique aesthetic. Its raw, unglazed finish, coupled with exceptional hardness achieved through high-temperature firing, highlights its natural, earthy charm.

Artisans craft Bizen ware using iron-rich clay sourced exclusively from the Bizen region. Each piece is meticulously hand-shaped or wheel-thrown before undergoing a two-week firing in wood-fueled kilns. The flames and ash interact with the clay to produce unpredictable textures and patterns, ensuring every creation is a masterpiece.

Imbe in Okayama, the heart of Bizen pottery, offers workshops, traditional kilns, and galleries, while the vibrant Bizen Pottery Festival celebrates this treasured art form annually.

### **KALAMKARI: ANDHRA PRADESH'S HAND-PAINTED MARVEL**

Kalamkari, a traditional art form from Andhra Pradesh, is a stunning example of India's rich textile heritage. The word “Kalamkari” comes from two Persian words: kalam (pen) and kari (work), meaning “pen work.” This intricate craft involves hand-painting or block-printing designs on fabric, using natural dyes.

This art form has two popular styles: Srikalahasti and Machilipatnam. The Srikalahasti style is entirely hand-drawn



*Bizen Ware - A Traditional Japanese Pottery From Okayama*

using a bamboo pen and depicts mythological stories, temple motifs, and nature-inspired designs. The Machilipatnam style, on the other hand, combines block printing with hand-painting for detailed patterns.

The process of making Kalamkari fabric is labour-intensive and eco-friendly. Artisans use natural dyes derived from plants, roots, and minerals, creating vibrant colours. The fabric undergoes several stages, including washing, drying, and meticulous handwork to ensure every piece is unique.

Kalamkari is widely used to create sarees, dupattas, home décor items, and modern fashion wear. Its timeless designs have gained global recognition, blending ancient art with contemporary style.





*Alebrijes Art*



*Zellij Tiles Workshop*

### ALEBRIJES: THE SPIRIT OF OAXACAN ARTISANSHIP

Oaxaca, Mexico, is a treasure trove of culture, history, and vibrant art, and one of its most fascinating attractions is the world of Alebrijes. These colourful, handcrafted wooden animals are more than just decorative pieces; they are rooted in Mexican folklore and represent fantastical creatures that symbolize dreams and imagination.

Alebrijes originated in the 1930s when artist Pedro Linares dreamed of bizarre, brightly coloured creatures after falling ill. His creations blended mythical and real animals, inspiring artisans across Mexico. In Oaxaca, these sculptures are crafted from copal wood, a soft yet sturdy material ideal for intricate carvings. Skilled artisans from villages like San Martín Tilcajete and Arrazola breathe life into the wood, meticulously carving and painting each piece with vibrant patterns and striking details.

Every Alebrije tells a story, with animals like jaguars, owls, and lizards often infused with cultural or personal symbolism. The process of creating them is labour-intensive, often taking weeks or months to complete, showcasing the dedication of Oaxacan artists.

### PATTACHITRA: ODISHA'S TIMELESS ART OF STORYTELLING

Pattachitra, one of India's oldest art forms, thrives in the heritage village of Raghurajpur, Odisha. This intricate style

of painting tells captivating stories of mythology, folklore, and everyday life through vibrant imagery and detailed craftsmanship.

The word "Pattachitra" translates to "painting on cloth" (Patta means cloth and Chitra means picture). Artists in Raghurajpur create these masterpieces on cloth or dried palm leaves, using natural dyes and a centuries-old process. Each painting is a labour of love, taking weeks to complete.

Pattachitra is deeply connected to Odisha's cultural and religious traditions, especially those of the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Themes often include tales from the Mahabharata, Ramayana, and episodes from Lord Jagannath's life.

The process involves preparing the canvas by coating cloth with a mix of chalk and gum, followed by meticulous hand-painting using fine brushes made from animal hair. Artisans use natural colours sourced from minerals and plants, ensuring the art remains eco-friendly.

### ZELIJ TILES: THE MESMERISING GEOMETRIC ART OF MOROCCO

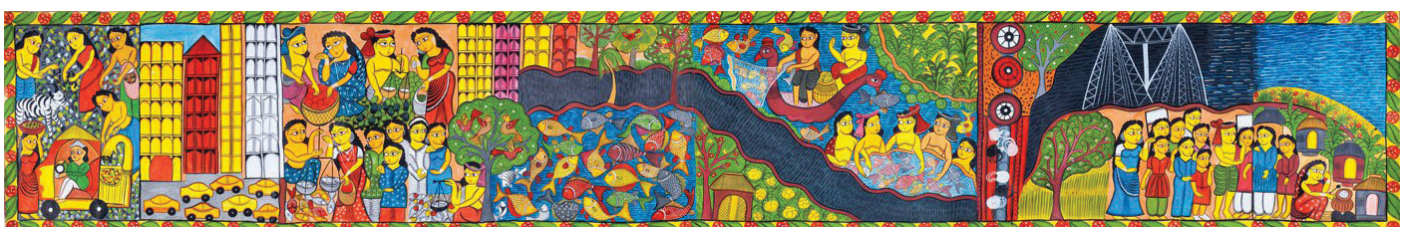
Zellij tiles are a stunning example of Morocco's Islamic art, celebrated for their intricate geometric patterns and vibrant colours. These hand-cut mosaic tiles have adorned palaces, mosques, and historical buildings for centuries, showcasing the rich heritage and craftsmanship of Moroccan artisans.

Zellij tiles are crafted from glazed terracotta and cut into precise shapes, such as stars, triangles, and polygons. Artisans arrange these shapes into mesmerizing patterns that reflect the principles of Islamic art—repetition, symmetry, and infinite design.

Creating Zellij tiles is an intricate process requiring exceptional skill and patience. The journey begins with clay, shaped and glazed into tiles before being hand-cut into specific shapes. These pieces are then arranged into stunning mosaics, often set into walls, floors, and fountains.

Palaces like the Bahia Palace in Marrakech and mosques such as the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca feature exquisite Zellij work, turning these spaces into visual masterpieces. Beyond their beauty, Zellij tiles also serve practical purposes, such as cooling buildings and protecting walls.

These timeless crafts are more than just art; they're windows into the soul of diverse cultures. Visiting these artisan villages brings you closer to centuries-old traditions, vibrant creativity, and stories etched in every piece. Celebrate the heritage, skill, and imagination that make each creation truly unforgettable.



*Pattachitra - One of India's Oldest Art Forms*





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

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

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

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

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4. GST on goods brought from Domestic Tariff Area to a SEZ unit.
5. GST on services provided to SEZ units consumed within SEZ

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### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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**Email:** dc.kasez-gj@gov.in

**Website:** www.kasez.gov.in

**Tel:** (02836)-252475 | **Mobile:** +91-9717055199



# THE RICH LEGACY OF INDIAN BRIDAL JEWELLERY



As we step into 2025, Indian bridal jewellery trends are evolving, seamlessly blending timeless traditions with contemporary aesthetics

**KAMAL GILL**

Indian weddings, renowned for their grandeur and rich traditions, have jewellery playing a pivotal role in symbolizing cultural heritage and personal expression. Today, bridal jewellery carries forward the legacy of antique designs while embracing modern sensibilities, offering brides unique opportunities to honour heritage while embracing their individuality.

## TEMPLE JEWELLERY

Temple jewellery, deeply rooted in Tamil Nadu's cultural and religious fabric, exemplifies South India's rich artistic heritage. Originally crafted to adorn deities during temple rituals and festivals, these ornate pieces symbolized divine beauty and prosperity. Their journey from temple halls to bridal trousseaus reflects the evolving role of jewellery in India. Beyond its religious connotations, temple jewellery now signifies auspiciousness, making it a cherished part of South Indian weddings.

Pairing temple jewellery with traditional silk sarees creates an iconic bridal look, often associated with South Indian ceremonies. Families frequently invest in bespoke pieces crafted for weddings and religious occasions, reinforcing the jewellery's symbolic importance. The vibrant craftsmanship of chokers, long necklaces, waist belts (oddiyanams), and earrings adorned with motifs like Lakshmi, elephants, and sacred bells evokes a timeless elegance that resonates across generations.

## THE REVIVAL OF TEMPLE JEWELLERY

Modern designers are breathing new life into temple jewellery by introducing lightweight constructions and versatile materials like gold-plated metals, allowing these

*Temple Jewellery*





Kundan Jewellery



Temple Jewellery

traditional designs to appeal to younger audiences. This innovative approach ensures the preservation of heritage while catering to contemporary lifestyles. Brides can now enjoy temple-inspired jewellery that feels fresh and wearable for multiple occasions, not just their wedding day.

The intricate process of crafting temple jewellery begins with designing motifs inspired by mythology and temple architecture. Artisans use traditional repoussé techniques to achieve bold, three-dimensional designs, ensuring that each piece is a masterpiece of skill and devotion. By embedding uncut diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, artisans add a touch of grandeur to the jewellery, creating heirlooms that are passed down through generations.

## KUNDAN JEWELLERY

Kundan jewellery, one of the oldest and most iconic forms of ornamentation in India, emerged during the Mughal era, reflecting the opulence of its time. The word "Kundan" refers to the pure, refined gold used to set gemstones, a hallmark of this art form. Rajasthan and Gujarat became centers for

Kundan craftsmanship, where artisans preserved and refined the technique.

Kundan jewellery's floral patterns and intricate designs resonate with Mughal aesthetics, combining symmetry and elegance. Brides often wear bold Kundan necklaces, elaborate earrings, and maang tikkas to complement traditional lehengas or sarees. The timeless appeal of Kundan jewellery has made it a key part of bridal trousseaus, with families passing down pieces as treasured heirlooms.

## THE ART OF KUNDAN JEWELLERY MAKING

Creating Kundan jewellery involves multiple layers of craftsmanship. Artisans begin with a gold or gold-plated base, shaping it to accommodate uncut gemstones. Thin strips of refined gold foil are used to secure the stones in place,



Kundan Jewellery



reflecting light to enhance their brilliance. This technique, called “Kundan Kari,” requires exceptional precision and expertise. On the reverse side, artisans often incorporate colourful Meenakari enamel work, ensuring the jewellery is as exquisite from the back as it is from the front.

Modern Kundan jewellery caters to evolving tastes by introducing lightweight designs that maintain the intricate detailing of traditional pieces. These innovations make Kundan suitable for casual and semi-formal occasions while retaining its grandeur. Additionally, the fusion of Kundan with pearls and beads has given rise to contemporary styles that appeal to younger generations.

### POLKI JEWELLERY

Polki jewellery, celebrated for its raw, uncut diamonds, reflects the grandeur of the Mughal era. Unlike the polished stones seen in contemporary designs, Polki diamonds retain their organic texture, lending a subtle brilliance that exudes old-world charm. Polki jewellery is often adorned with gemstones, pearls, and enamel work, creating pieces that blend understated elegance with intricate artistry.

The unpolished nature of Polki diamonds makes them a standout feature in bridal collections. Their versatility allows them to enhance traditional lehengas and sarees while complementing modern gowns. Brides who choose Polki jewellery often find themselves drawn to its timeless beauty, which seamlessly bridges tradition and contemporary style.

### CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF POLKI JEWELLERY

Polki jewellery carries immense cultural value and is often handed down as an heirloom. Its association with heritage makes it a favourite for weddings and festive occasions. While Polki shares similarities with Kundan and Jadau, it stands out for its use of authentic uncut diamonds, which elevate it to

the pinnacle of Indian jewellery craftsmanship. The process of creating Polki jewellery is painstaking, with each diamond carefully embedded into a gold base using the Jadau technique.

Lac resin is used to secure the stones, ensuring durability and precision. On the reverse side, Meenakari work adds a layer of artistry, making each piece a testament to India’s rich cultural legacy.

### POLKI VS. KUNDAN VS. JADAU

While Polki is made from uncut diamonds, Kundan jewellery uses glass stones instead of diamonds, making it a more affordable alternative. Jadau, on the other hand, refers to the intricate setting technique used in both Polki and Kundan jewellery, where stones are embedded into molten gold. Polki stands out for its use of authentic uncut diamonds, making it the most premium of the three.

### MEENAKARI JEWELLERY

Meenakari jewellery, known for its vibrant enamel work, is one of the most colourful and intricate forms of Indian ornamentation. Introduced to India by Persian artisans during the Mughal era, Meenakari flourished under the patronage of Rajasthan’s rulers. Today, it remains a cherished craft, blending vivid colours with delicate designs.

The crafting process of Meenakari jewellery begins with engraving designs onto a metal base, typically gold or silver. Coloured glass powders are applied to the grooves and then heated to form a lustrous enamel surface. This labour-intensive process results in jewellery pieces that are radiant and unique.

### STYLES AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Meenakari jewellery varies by region, with Jaipur, Bikaner, and Varanasi being prominent centres. Jaipur’s bold and vibrant



Polki Jewellery



Jadau Jewellery





Meenakari Jewellery



Pearl Jewellery

designs often feature floral motifs, while Bikaner is known for its reverse Meenakari, where the back of the jewellery is as detailed as the front. Banarasi Meenakari, by contrast, focuses on softer, pastel hues, offering a more subtle aesthetic.

Brides often incorporate Meenakari into their trousseaus to add a splash of colour to their ensemble. Paired with Polki or Kundan pieces, Meenakari sets create an opulent look that complements richly embroidered lehengas and sarees.

## PEARL JEWELLERY

Pearls have been part of India's jewellery tradition for over 4,000 years, symbolizing purity and sophistication. Hyderabad, known as the "City of Pearls," played a pivotal role in shaping this legacy under the patronage of the Nizams. Pearls were often paired with gold and gemstones to create elaborate necklaces, chokers, and earrings.

India's diverse jewellery traditions incorporate a variety of pearls, each with unique characteristics: Basra Pearls are imported from the Persian Gulf. These natural pearls are prized for their silky white lustre and rarity. Historically, Basra pearls were the most sought-after in India.

Freshwater Pearls are cultured pearls harvested from rivers and lakes. They are popular for their affordability and wide range of colours and shapes. South Sea Pearls are large, luxurious pearls known for their golden or silvery hues and are increasingly used in high-end Indian jewellery. Tahitian Pearls are often referred to as black pearls, and these add a modern, exotic flair to traditional design.

The Hyderabad Satlada, a seven-layered pearl necklace



Jadau Ring

accented with precious stones, remains an iconic design. While traditional pearl jewellery showcases classic elegance, modern styles incorporate sleek and minimalist designs, making pearls accessible to younger generations.

## JADAU JEWELLERY

Jadau jewellery, celebrated for its intricate designs and regal allure, has a history that dates back to the Mughal era. The word "Jadau" refers to the technique of embedding stones into gold using lac as an adhesive. This process results in jewellery that is both visually stunning and durable.

Popular styles of Jadau include Polki Jadau, featuring uncut diamonds, and Meenakari Jadau, showcasing vibrant enamel work on the reverse side. Pearl Jadau combines the elegance of pearls with the richness of gemstones, offering a delicate yet opulent aesthetic. Jadau jewellery is a cornerstone of bridal collections, symbolizing wealth, heritage, and timeless beauty.



# YOUR LUXE WEDDING FEAST!



*Wedding Decor*

Luxe wedding feasts are about turning that magic up a notch—where every dish is a showstopper and the flavours are as unforgettable as the celebration

## TT BUREAU

**R**eady to explore a world of gourmet delights and opulent spreads? Let's talk all things luxe! Imagine entering a grand Indian wedding feast, where the air is filled with tantalising aromas, and the sight of lavishly presented dishes immediately draws you in.

No longer just a meal, wedding feasts have evolved into multi-sensory experiences that merge culinary artistry with opulent presentation. Each bite is a celebration of tradition meeting modern luxury, where handcrafted sweets, aged wines, and signature cocktails come together to leave guests with a lasting impression.

### FLAVOURS THAT SPARK JOY AND DELIGHT

Indian wedding feasts have transcended beyond meals, becoming multisensory journeys that delight taste, texture, sight, and even sound. Picture rare spices, exotic ingredients, and jaw-dropping presentations—like flaming platters or

nitrogen-frozen desserts—transforming every bite into an unforgettable adventure. This isn't just about food; it's about indulging in a celebration that engages every sense as chefs perform live culinary magic.

Luxury plays a pivotal role in these experiences. Wedding planners collaborate with chefs to design menus that are not only delicious but also visually stunning. Traditional ingredients such as saffron and cardamom are elevated with international touches like truffles, foie gras, and edible gold leaf, infusing exclusivity into every dish.

Interactive food stations, a popular trend, allow guests to witness chefs flambé meats or prepare desserts with liquid nitrogen right before their eyes. Each course is meticulously plated, turning the dining experience into a work of art. These feasts not only satisfy appetites but also reflect the couple's heritage and their commitment to indulgence, creating memories that last a lifetime.





*Kobe Beef Kebabs*



*Iranian Pistachio Baklava*

### LUXURY DECOR AND AMBIANCE: FEAST LIKE ROYALTY

Indian weddings are synonymous with extravagance, and today's trends blend opulence with sustainability, creating visually stunning settings for wedding feasts. Imagine walking into a reception that mirrors the grandeur of a royal palace, with crystal chandeliers casting a warm glow, floral sculptures transforming spaces, and tables adorned with rich fabrics and elegant candlelight.

Every detail, from silk-upholstered chairs to gold-monogrammed napkins, is designed to exude sophistication. Some weddings feature tented pavilions styled like regal banquets, complete with velvet drapes and crystal-laden candelabras. These settings not only enhance the culinary experience but immerse guests in an atmosphere of pure luxury, where dining becomes an event in itself.

### FUSION FEASTS & THEMED DINING DELIGHTS

Personalised dining experiences are redefining wedding feasts. Couples are moving beyond traditional menus to embrace fusion and themed meals that reflect their unique styles. Themes like a Global Street Food Fiesta blend cultures, offering Indian chaat alongside Mexican tacos and Thai satay, creating vibrant setups perfect for mingling.

For those drawn to sustainability, the Farm-to-Table theme emphasises fresh, locally sourced ingredients, paired with rustic décor like wooden tables and lush greenery. Meanwhile, the Mughal Majesty theme transports guests to royal courts with dishes like biryanis and kebabs served amidst gold accents and traditional low seating. Each themed meal is a creative expression, allowing

couples to showcase their tastes while offering guests a sensory journey filled with flavours, visuals, and cultural connections.

### THEMATIC PRESENTATIONS: A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Themed presentations have revolutionised Indian wedding dining. Whether it's the Royal Rajasthani Palace theme, with antique-style silverware and regal dishes like dal baati churma, or the Vintage Garden theme, featuring rustic platters and edible flowers, every detail aligns with the overall aesthetic.

For modern tastes, the Black-Tie Minimalist theme focuses on sleek, geometric presentations with high-end dishes like truffle risotto served on minimalist white plates. Adding an interactive element, live stations for sushi rolling or molecular gastronomy counters captivate guests, transforming food into a performance.

From cascading chocolate fountains to smoky, nitrogen-infused creations, these dining experiences are designed to wow, leaving guests with memories that linger long after the event.

### THE ULTIMATE STATEMENT: TABLEWARE

In luxurious weddings, opulence extends to the table settings, where every detail reflects the grandeur of the occasion. Gemstone-studded spoons, silk-embroidered napkins, and gold-plated plates transport guests to a world of royalty.

Some families commission custom-made tableware, elevating the dining experience into a statement of status and luxury. For instance, at Isha Ambani's wedding, guests dined on gold-plated dishes and cutlery, a testament to the event's magnificence. These details create an unforgettable impression, turning every meal into an indulgent journey.



*Wedding Decor*



*Alfresco Wedding Seating*



## THE ART OF LUXURY: EXCLUSIVE, EXPENSIVE, AND RARE DISHES

Luxury wedding feasts often feature rare, expensive dishes that redefine indulgence. Imagine biryanis infused with Kashmiri saffron, Kobe beef kebabs, or caviar pani puri. Global flavours like lobster butter masala and foie gras-stuffed naan bring an international flair to the table.

Rare delicacies such as Iranian pistachio baklava and Moroccan saffron quail elevate the experience, while local favourites like Goan Prawn Curry are reimagined with premium ingredients. Every dish is a celebration of wealth and culture, turning the meal into a true statement of opulence.

## THE WEDDING SPECIALTIES: REGIONAL CUISINES

Regional cuisines remain the heart of Indian wedding feasts, showcasing the country's diverse culinary heritage. From Hyderabadi Dum Biryani to Rajasthani Laal Maas, each dish tells a story of tradition and culture.

Maharashtrian Puran Poli, Parsi Patra ni Machhi, and Sindhi Saag Gosht are transformed with luxurious ingredients like saffron and silver vark, adding an opulent twist. Prepared by chefs who honour age-old recipes, these dishes preserve authenticity while delivering a rich, modern dining experience.

## SPECIAL CHEFS FOR SPECIAL DISHES

Couples are elevating wedding feasts by bringing in Michelin-star chefs to curate gourmet menus. Culinary icons like Manish Mehrotra and Gaggan Anand blend traditional Indian flavours with contemporary techniques, crafting menus that reflect the couple's tastes.

Renowned chefs like Vineet Bhatia and Vikas Khanna bring a global influence, while seafood specialists like Atul Kochhar add sophistication to coastal dishes. By involving these culinary maestros, couples ensure their wedding feast is a masterpiece that leaves guests in awe.

## ARTISANAL COCKTAILS AND RARE WINES: SIPPING LUXURY

Drinks are now integral to luxury weddings, with artisanal cocktails and rare wines taking centre stage. Mixologists craft signature drinks infused with exotic ingredients like saffron gin or rose petal vodka, complementing the lavish menus.

Champagne towers featuring Dom Pérignon and curated wine bars serving rare vintages like Château Petrus elevate the celebration. Aged spirits like Macallan 30-year-old Scotch add a touch of extravagance, ensuring every toast feels special.

## TAILOR-MADE SWEET TEMPTATIONS

Wedding cakes have evolved into stunning centrepieces, often customised to reflect the couple's story. Multi-tiered cakes are adorned with intricate sugar flowers and crafted from luxurious ingredients like Belgian chocolate and Madagascan vanilla.



*Artisanal Cocktails and Wines*



*Hyderabadi Chicken Biryani*



*Luxury Multi-Tiered Cake*

Interactive desserts like cascading chocolate fountains and nitrogen-frozen treats add drama, creating a delightful end to the feast. These sweet creations are not just desserts—they're masterpieces that enhance the grandeur of the celebration.

## THE LUXE LEGACY OF INDIAN WEDDING FEASTS

Indian wedding feasts are no longer just meals—they are celebrations of culture, luxury, and artistry. From regional specialties to global flavours, and from thematic presentations to Michelin-starred creations, these feasts embody opulence and tradition.

Every dish, drink, and detail reflects the couple's story, creating memories that last a lifetime. By combining heritage with modern luxury, Indian wedding feasts continue to set new standards in culinary excellence and celebration.





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# LOVE STORIES, ONE WEDDING AT A TIME

Hey everyone! I'm Harshal Kothari, the creative force behind Rising Events, and trust me when I say, there's nothing as exhilarating as orchestrating a Big Fat Indian Wedding

TT BUREAU

Every Big Fat Indian Wedding begins with a deep dive into the couple's desires and the family's expectations. The first step is an intimate conversation with the couple and their families to understand their vision, preferences, and cultural values. Whether it's a traditional ceremony steeped in heritage or a modern celebration with contemporary elements, the key is to ensure that the wedding reflects the couple's personalities and respects the family's traditions.

## UNDERSTANDING DESIRES AND VISION

We focus on elements such as the significance of rituals, colour schemes, family traditions, and the emotional connections the couple has with certain cultural practices. This foundation allows us to create a wedding that is not just an event but an expression of the couple's love story and the family's legacy.

As Indian weddings are firmly believed to be a reunion of 2 families and not just 2 individuals we also tend to cater and



Image Courtesy: Rising Events





Image Courtesy: Rising Events

try to find a balance between both and in turn, try to make it the most memorable event for both.

### BRINGING CONCEPTS TO LIFE

Transforming a couple's vision into reality requires a blend of creativity, project management, and an understanding of cultural nuances. Our team comprises experts in design, logistics, and cultural customs, who work together to bring every element of the wedding to life.

Challenges are an inherent part of planning any grand celebration, and weddings are no exception. From finding the perfect vendors who can deliver on the couple's specific requests to managing last-minute changes due to unforeseen circumstances, each hurdle requires quick thinking and adaptability. At Rising Events, we tackle these challenges by maintaining clear and continuous communication with all stakeholders, ensuring flexibility and proactive problem-solving.

One memorable instance involved a couple who envisioned a fusion of a traditional South Indian wedding with modern minimalist décor. The challenge lay in seamlessly blending the vibrancy of South Indian traditions with the understated elegance of contemporary design. South Indian weddings are renowned for their rich rituals, bright colours, and elaborate elements, while minimalist design thrives on simplicity and subtlety.

To bring this vision to life, we incorporated traditional elements, such as lotus motifs and brass lamps, into a modern aesthetic characterised by muted colour palettes and clean, simple floral arrangements. The result was a venue that felt deeply rooted in South Indian heritage while exuding modern sophistication. The

rituals remained untouched, preserving their cultural significance, while the décor created an elegant, serene backdrop that perfectly complemented the couple's unique vision.

This experience highlighted the importance of innovation and attention to detail when overcoming challenges. By understanding the couple's priorities and working closely with our design and vendor teams, we delivered a wedding that was as harmonious as it was unforgettable.



Image Courtesy: Rising Events



## MOOD BOARDS

Mood boards are crucial in capturing the essence of a wedding. They serve as a visual representation of the couple's vision and guide the overall planning process. We start by gathering inspiration from the couple's favourite colours, textures, and styles, along with elements of their personalities and cultural backgrounds.

For a royal Rajasthani-themed wedding, we created a mood board that combined rich jewel tones, traditional Rajasthani motifs, and luxurious fabrics like silk and velvet. This mood board guided everything from the decor to the attire, ensuring a cohesive look that transported guests to a regal Rajasthani palace.

Another example is a beach wedding where the mood board included soft pastels, seashell motifs, and breezy fabrics to evoke the serenity of the seaside. This mood board influenced the choice of location, decor, and even the menu, which featured seafood delicacies.

So to conclude a lot of factors play an important role in exploring mood boards such as the venue whether its indoor or outdoor, the number of people, the layouts of the events, the time of the event, and how intimate or how grand the couple wants the venue.

## THEME WEDDINGS

Theme weddings are a canvas where creativity truly shines. They allow couples to infuse their unique personalities and dreams into

their special day, creating celebrations that are both distinctive and unforgettable. At Rising Events, we've had the privilege of orchestrating some truly remarkable themed weddings.

One of our most memorable events was a Bollywood-themed extravaganza, where every element radiated the glitz and glamour of classic Bollywood films. From vibrant colour schemes and glamorous decor to music that echoed chart-topping Bollywood hits, every detail was designed to make guests feel like stars on a cinematic red carpet. The attire, entertainment, and even the food carried the Bollywood charm, turning the wedding into a blockbuster celebration.

Another standout was a "Royal Vintage" wedding, where the couple aspired to recreate the elegance of a bygone era. We curated antique furniture, vintage cars, and sepia-toned decor to evoke a timeless charm. Period-appropriate floral arrangements and meticulously designed vintage-style attire added an authentic touch, creating a nostalgic ambience.

We've also explored unconventional themes inspired by nature and the cosmos, such as celestial and galaxy-themed weddings. These unique concepts featured starry decor, mystical lighting, and ethereal colour palettes.

Our approach is rooted in personalization—every theme is tailored to reflect the couple's journey, preferences, and dreams. Whether it's a fairy tale, cultural homage, or fantasy, we strive to make their wedding day a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, unforgettable for all.



*Image Courtesy: Rising Events*



## CURATING FOOD STYLES

Food is a central element of any Indian wedding, and curating a menu that complements the theme while satisfying diverse palates is an art. We work closely with chefs to design menus that not only meet the couple's preferences but also reflect the cultural significance of the dishes.

For a wedding with a Maharashtrian theme, we introduced traditional dishes like Puran Poli and Ukadiche Modak (sweet dumplings), served with a modern twist. The food was presented in a way that highlighted its cultural importance while also appealing to a modern palate.

In another wedding, we curated a global fusion menu that included Indian street food with a gourmet twist, such as pav bhaji bruschettas and butter chicken sliders. This innovative approach delighted the guests and added a unique culinary experience to the wedding.

We also firmly believe that it is important to give the wedding guests a good experience and not just serve food, hence we also try our best to curate different ways of presenting so it could differ right from decorating the serving station in an innovative way, to emotional catering to curating menus that are more personalized to the couple's and the family's choices.

## RECOMMENDED LOCATIONS

The location of a wedding can elevate the entire experience. We recommend picturesque locations that not only provide a stunning backdrop but also align with the couple's vision.

Udaipur, fondly known as the "City of Lakes," is a dream destination for a royal-themed wedding. With its magnificent palaces, serene lakes, and enchanting architecture, Udaipur provides a regal backdrop perfect for creating unforgettable memories. The city's iconic venues, such as the City Palace or the Taj Lake Palace, transport guests to a world of opulence and grandeur, ideal for a lavish celebration steeped in tradition.

For couples planning a beach wedding, Goa remains a top choice. Its sun-kissed beaches, coconut and palm trees, and luxurious resorts offer a vibrant yet relaxed setting, perfectly blending celebration with a vacation vibe.

Couples seeking a more intimate and serene atmosphere often turn to heritage properties in Rajasthan or Kerala. These locales, with their historical charm and breathtaking natural beauty, offer a magical experience. Whether it's a palace in Rajasthan or a riverside retreat in Kerala, these venues create timeless, picturesque weddings infused with culture and romance.

We basically try our best to select unique and more unexplored locations that fit the couple's and the family's requirements and in turn, make the event a success.

## THE INTRICATE DETAILS

What makes the Big Fat Indian Wedding truly grand and memorable are the intricate details—whether it's the handcrafted invitations, the personalized wedding favours,



Image Courtesy: Rising Events



Image Courtesy: Rising Events

or the live performances that reflect the couple's journey together. Every element is carefully curated to ensure that it resonates with the couple's story and leaves a lasting impression on the guests.

From choreographing a dance sequence that tells the couple's love story to designing personalized elements like monograms on the wedding attire, these details contribute to the uniqueness of each wedding. The result is a celebration that is not only visually stunning but also emotionally resonant, creating memories that last a lifetime.

The Big Fat Indian Wedding is more than just a celebration; it's a tapestry of love, tradition, and creativity woven together with meticulous attention to detail. From understanding the couple's desires to bringing their vision to life, every step is a journey toward creating an unforgettable experience that reflects the richness of Indian culture and the uniqueness of the couple's love story.



# AASHIRWAD TEMPLES FOR ULTIMATE BLESSINGS

Seek divine blessings at these Aashirwad temples to strengthen your bond and begin your journey together!

TT BUREAU



Ambaji Temple Banaskantha, Gujarat

Love is not just about finding someone to live with; it's about finding someone you can't live without. And what could be more powerful than blending that love with a touch of spirituality as you embark on the journey of marriage?

Here's a thought for you: What if the secret to a blissful marriage lies in seeking divine blessings right from the start? Beginning this new chapter of your life with a sacred journey or pilgrimage is a cherished tradition that many newlyweds embrace as their first act of devotion.

## THE ROLE OF ASHIRWAD TEMPLES

These temples hold a special place in the hearts of couples, revered not just for their religious significance but also for

their ability to bestow prosperity, happiness, and a love that endures through time. What makes Ashirwad temples truly exceptional are the captivating legends and mythological tales that envelop them, each narrating stories of divine love, steadfast devotion, and the enduring strength of commitment.

So, take that sacred step forward and let the powerful traditions of Ashirwad temples guide you. Experience how love, when intertwined with spirituality, becomes a force that shapes a lifetime of joy, deep connection, and unwavering togetherness.

## AMBAJI TEMPLE BANASKANTHA, GUJARAT

This sacred place, dedicated to Goddess Amba Mata, revered as the divine mother, represents ideals of abundance and happiness that couples seek as they begin their journey together. In today's



world, the legend of Goddess Amba Mata has taken on a new significance. She symbolises not only ancient traditions but also the empowering values of strength, compassion, and resilience that are essential in modern married life.

According to local lore, the goddess is believed to have manifested to protect her devotees from negative forces and to ensure the well-being and prosperity of their families. Her story speaks of a fierce yet nurturing spirit, perfectly reflecting the balance that every marriage aspires to—unity, love, and a shared commitment to building a strong family.

Recently, Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant paid their respects at this sacred site, invoking the blessings of Goddess Amba Mata for a prosperous and harmonious union.

Newly married couples who visit the temple often participate in a meaningful ritual, offering a “Chunri” (traditional red scarf) and a Coconut to the goddess. Through this ritual, they hope to receive Amba Mata’s protection, strength, and guidance, laying a solid foundation for a life filled with love, prosperity, and mutual respect.

#### **VAISHNO DEVI TEMPLE, JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

In India, tying the knot at sacred sites has become a cherished tradition, and the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu and Kashmir stands out as a powerful symbol of divine love and devotion. It’s a spiritual journey that embodies strength, courage, and grace, drawing inspiration from the legend of Mata Vaishno Devi’s unwavering faith in Lord Rama.

Celebrity couples like Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma have often turned to spiritual journeys to seek blessings for their married life, and one of the most meaningful destinations for this is the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu and Kashmir.

One of the most touching rituals at Vaishno Devi Temple for newly married couples is the “Mangal Sringar,” where they offer traditional bridal ornaments, sindoor (vermillion), and a red saree to the goddess. This act is believed to bless their union with prosperity, love, and the divine energy of Mata Vaishno Devi, who symbolises patience and commitment. For couples, this ritual is a way to invite the goddess’s blessings

into their marriage, reinforcing their bond with the promise of protection and guidance through life’s challenges.

#### **KAMAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE, KANCHIPURAM, TAMIL NADU**

The Kamakshi Amman Temple in Kanchipuram has attracted many celebrity couples who have sought divine blessings for their marriages. Among them are renowned actors and couples like Rajinikanth and Latha Rajinikanth, who have been known to visit the temple for its spiritual significance. Another notable couple is Ajith Kumar and Shalini Ajith, who paid their respects at the temple to seek blessings for their harmonious relationship.

Additionally, Surya and Jyothika, one of the most celebrated couples in the South Indian film industry, have also been seen visiting this sacred site, aligning their marital journey with the temple’s powerful aura of love and devotion. These celebrity visits highlight the Kamakshi Amman Temple’s importance as a destination where the divine energy of Goddess Kamakshi blesses couples with a life of unity and togetherness.



*Kamakshi Amman Temple, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu*



*Vaishno Devi Temple, Jammu and Kashmir*



Seeking the blessings of Goddess Kamakshi, couples hope to infuse their marriage with mutual respect, understanding, and unwavering dedication. One of the cherished traditions for newlyweds at this temple is the offering of the “Mangal Sutra” (sacred thread) to the goddess, symbolising their prayers for a long-lasting and harmonious relationship.

This act mirrors the divine love story of Kamakshi and Shiva, inviting the goddess’s grace into their lives. By participating in this sacred ritual, couples strengthen their marital journey, drawing inspiration from Kamakshi’s patience, grace, and the powerful connection she shared with Lord Shiva, promising a bond that only grows deeper with time.

### **BHANDIRVAN, MATHURA, UTTAR PRADESH**

Riteish Deshmukh and Genelia D’Souza are celebrated for their strong bond and devotion to each other. They visited Bhandirvan Temple in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, to seek blessings for a lifetime of happiness and harmony. This temple holds immense spiritual significance as the legendary place where the celestial union of Radha and Krishna was solemnised, with Lord Brahma himself presiding over their sacred marriage.

A symbolic ritual at this temple involves couples tying sacred threads around the ancient Vata Vriksha (Banyan tree), under which Radha and Krishna are believed to have exchanged their vows. This act symbolises the couple’s prayer for a strong, unbreakable bond that mirrors the eternal love of the divine duo.

Today, newlyweds flock to this temple to infuse their relationship with the same blessings of unity, compassion, and

everlasting love that Radha and Krishna shared. For couples starting their new journey together, it’s an act of aligning their love with divine energy, ensuring that their marriage is fortified with spiritual grace and a promise of a lasting bond.

### **TRIYUGI NARAYAN TEMPLE, UTTARAKHAND**

In the hills of Uttarakhand, the Triyugi Narayan Temple stands as a beacon of divine love and commitment, known as the very spot where Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati tied the knot in a celestial wedding.

Legend has it that the sacred fire from their union has been burning ever since, symbolising an eternal flame of love that continues to inspire couples to this day. This ever-glowing flame within the temple serves as a timeless reminder of the kind of enduring bond that every couple dreams of creating.

Following in the footsteps of this divine tradition, celebrity couples like Neha Kakkar and Rohanpreet Singh, along with Kapil Sharma and Ginni Chatrath, recently made their way to Triyugi Narayan Temple. These modern-day romantics chose this sacred site to seek the blessings of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, anchoring their own love stories in the same spiritual grace that blessed the eternal couple.

The tradition of seeking divine blessings at Aashirwad temples has taken on a renewed significance for newlyweds. Visiting these sacred sites goes beyond the rituals; it’s about grounding their love in a spiritual connection that promises a prosperous and harmonious married life. These temples serve as a place where couples can pause, reflect, and strengthen the bond of love and devotion they share, making their journey together even more special and meaningful.



*Triyugi Narayan Temple, Uttarakhand*





# *Traditional Wonders*

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# MAGH BIHU MAGIC: FROM PITHAS TO PORK BBQ

What sets Assamese dishes and cuisine apart is its unique approach to flavours—subtle yet robust, where natural ingredients take centre stage and cooking methods preserve their authenticity

TT BUREAU



**M**agh Bihu, Assam's harvest festival, is a delightful blend of tradition and gastronomy. As the granaries brim with fresh produce, the festivities come alive with an array of mouthwatering dishes like Til Pitha, Masor Tenga, Paro Mangxo, and more. These dishes, rooted in Assam's culture, transform Magh Bihu into a vibrant celebration of food, family, and gratitude.

Assam offers a diverse and vibrant culinary heritage that is as rich and varied as its landscapes. From lush tea gardens to sprawling river valleys, Assam's natural bounty is reflected in its food, which showcases unique ingredients and time-honoured cooking techniques. We are exploring a selection of local delicacies that are a must-try for anyone visiting Assam this Bihu season.

## BHOGALI JALPAN

Bhogali Jolpan is the heart of Magh Bihu celebrations, offering a delicious spread of traditional Assamese breakfast delicacies. It typically includes chira (flattened rice), doi (curd), and gur (jaggery), accompanied by a variety of pithas like til pitha and ghila pitha, along with sesame and coconut laddoos. This wholesome and flavorful combination symbolizes the abundance of the harvest season, with each ingredient sourced locally and prepared with love. Simple yet deeply satisfying, Bhogali Jolpan reflects Assam's rich culinary heritage and the joy of sharing meals with family and friends during this festive time.

## MASOR TENGA

Masor Tenga or Tangy Fish Curry is a must-have in any traditional Assamese Thali. Known for its light, tangy flavour,



*Bhogali Jalpan*



*Assamese Style Smoked Pork BBQ*





*Masor Tenga*

this refreshing dish is especially popular during the hot summer season. The curry gets its signature sourness from Elephant Apple or kokum and tomatoes, which, along with the subtle flavours of fried fish, create a satisfying taste.

Often enjoyed after a hearty meal, Masor Tenga is believed to aid digestion, making it a comforting finish to a lavish spread. Simple and quick to prepare, this curry pairs perfectly with steamed rice. Perfectly balanced, Masor Tenga is a delicious example of Assamese culinary tradition.

### **PARO MANGXO**

In Assamese cuisine, pigeon meat curry is a cherished traditional dish, typically cooked with tender pigeon meat, potatoes, onions, and a rich blend of spices like garlic, ginger, pepper, and chillies. The gravy has a balanced consistency—not too thick, yet not too runny—perfect for savouring with rice.

However, making it is a labour-intensive process since it involves meticulously cleaning and cutting the pigeons. Because of this intensive preparation, pigeon curry is reserved for special occasions, such as family gatherings or when children and grandchildren visit. It's also a go-to Assamese dish for comforting those under the weather, especially with colds or fevers.

### **KHORIKAT DIYA GAHORI MANGXO**

Khorikat Diya Gahori Mangxo is a traditional style of slow-cooked pork barbecue and is a particular highlight of Assam's rich culinary heritage and its love for smoky flavours. This dish is prepared with marinated pork grilled over an open flame using bamboo sticks. The unique cooking method and the subtle infusion of smoky bamboo essence make this dish a favourite among food enthusiasts.

The slow roasting over bamboo not only makes the pork tender and juicy but also gives it a deliciously smoky



*Rice With Pigeon Curry*



*Pani Xamuk*

aroma that can't be replicated with modern grills or ovens. As the pieces turn golden and crispy, the dish is ready to be savoured, often served during family gatherings or special celebrations like Magh Bihu.

### **PANI XAMUK**

In the culinary culture of Assam, Pani Hamuk or water snails is an exotic delicacy that celebrates the region's close relationship with nature and bold cooking traditions. For those familiar with Assamese dishes like silkworms and pigeon curry, Pani Hamuk offers another adventurous taste experience, one that has been part of Assam's food culture for generations.

The preparation of this dish involves freshwater snails, typically cooked with ingredients like potatoes and pumpkin, which add depth and balance to the flavours. What truly sets Pani Hamuk apart, though, is the eating experience itself. One sucks the meat directly from the snail shells, which preserves the essence of the flavours. While it may be seen as an unusual dish to outsiders, it is enjoyed in Assam for its earthy flavours and the tactile enjoyment it offers and is often served as a special treat for seasonal festivities.



### DUCK WITH BLACK SESAME SEEDS

Homestyle curries from Assam are renowned for their distinctive and bold flavours, often featuring unique, regional ingredients that make them stand out. One such is Til Diya Hanh Mangxo, a black sesame duck curry usually reserved for special occasions. In this Assamese dish, the star ingredient is til, or black sesame seeds, which bring a unique smoky, nutty depth to the flavour profile.

The preparation of this curry involves toasting black sesame seeds to release their oils and enhance their rich, earthy flavour. Once perfectly toasted, the seeds are ground into a fine powder, which is then used to coat tender pieces of duck, creating a hearty, robust dish with layers of smokiness and spice. The spices, along with the sesame, infuse the duck, making it juicy, tender, and deeply flavorful.

### POLU OR LETA

If you crave a bit of adventure in your diet, stir-fried Polu or Leta (silkworms) just might be the perfect dish to try. This exotic Assamese dish, often described as crunchy on the outside and soft and moist on the inside, is a celebrated cultural favourite all across the state. While the idea of eating silkworms may surprise some, in Assam, they're a prized delicacy.

This dish is made from the cocoons of silkworms after the silk has been extracted, allowing you to taste the insects themselves without any fibres involved. The silkworms are stir-fried with a blend of spices, creating a savoury, slightly spicy dish with a distinctive crunch that's as satisfying as it is surprising.

### GHILA PITHA

Ghila Pitha is particularly enjoyed during the Magh Bihu festival. Unlike other steamed pithas, Ghila Pitha is deep-fried, giving it a distinctive, crispy outer layer that contrasts beautifully with its soft, sweet interior.

Made from wheat flour, jaggery, and freshly grated coconut, the ingredients are combined to form a dough, shaped into small balls, and fried until golden. The result is a

crunchy exterior that gives way to a sweet, coconut-infused filling—a perfect blend of texture and flavour.

### JOHA SAULOR PAYOKH

In Assam, kheer is distinctively made with black rice, an indigenous variety that gives this dessert a unique, nutty flavour and striking purple hue. Black rice, once rare and reserved only for the wealthy, eventually became accessible to everyone, allowing this special dessert to become a household favourite. Joha Saulor Payokh is a symbolic Assamese dish often prepared during festivals like Magh bihu.

All the dishes are markedly different from others, and you may have to go to specific places to try them out. However, these are also a glimpse of the breadth and medley of Assamese culture.



*Joha Saulor Payokh*



*Leta*



*Ghila Pitha*



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