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CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JULY 2025 - ₹50

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HONEYMOON
VILLAS**

**NIKHIL SHARMA'S
INNER JOURNEY**

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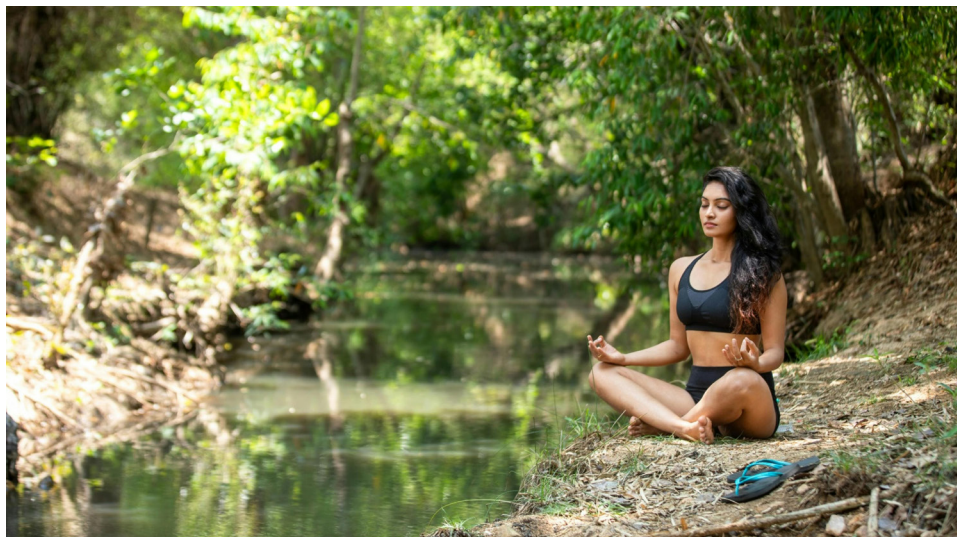
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INHALE, EXHALE, INDIA: LUXE WELLNESS REBORN 2025

India's ancient roots and modern retreats redefine wellness as a soulful, sensory journey toward balance.

TT BUREAU

The wellness renaissance in India has moved far beyond spa menus and yoga mats. In 2025, it stands as a full-bodied philosophy—rooted in ancient wisdom, enriched by natural rhythms, and fuelled by a growing collective need for balance and healing.

With the global wellness tourism market projected to touch USD 2.1 trillion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 12.5%, India's contribution is no longer modest. It's magnetic. What was once seen as a luxury has become a lifestyle. Whether it's digital detox in the mountains, Ayurvedic therapies by the sea, or food that heals as much as it nourishes, India is where wellness feels personal.

This is the story of India's wellness renaissance—and why it's resonating so deeply with the world.

DETOX REIMAGINED: LESS SCREENS, MORE STILLNESS

At leading retreats, wellness begins not with a welcome drink

but with the quiet surrender of your digital devices. Guests trade screen time for Digital Sabbaths, rediscovering the forgotten pleasures of handwritten thoughts, forest walks, and reflective journaling.

Instead of notifications, there's a Detox Notebook—an analog space to sketch dreams, scribble feelings, or list the smells of the morning air. It's wellness that starts not with food or fitness, but with the mind's uncluttering. And these quiet changes are translating into lasting transformations. In India, wellness isn't a break. It's a return.

VIBRATIONS THAT HEAL: THE RISE OF SOUND THERAPY

Long before singing bowls became an Instagram trend, India knew the healing power of sound. Today, Nada Yoga—the ancient practice of meditating on sound—has found a contemporary voice across Rishikesh, Auroville, and Goa.





Auroville, Tamil Nadu

Guests are immersed in sonic rituals using Tibetan bowls, tuning forks, and harmonic chants, allowing vibrations to ease trauma, regulate breathing, and balance energy centres. A new dimension to this is Sonic Smudging, where instead of sage or incense, vibrations are used to cleanse spaces and shift stagnant energy. It's not just you who's healing—your environment joins in.

THE SLOW LIVING REVIVAL: INDIA'S QUIETEST LUXURY

As the world hurries toward efficiency, India is quietly making a case for elegance in slowness. As the world accelerates in pursuit of productivity and instant gratification, a quieter counterculture emerges—one that embraces simplicity, presence, and purpose. In India, this slow living revival is more than a trend—it is a return to the essence of living well. Rooted in tradition and mindful of the moment, slow living is gaining new currency as a form of quiet luxury, appealing to those who seek more than curated itineraries and fleeting indulgences.

Across the tea estates of Assam and Darjeeling, life unfolds in long, unhurried cycles. Mornings begin with the rustle of leaves and end with conversations over home-brewed tea. Visitors are invited not to sightsee but to sit still, observe, and reconnect. In Kerala's backwaters and coastal lanes, the rhythm of the houseboat matches the lull of the tides. Here, ayurvedic treatments are unhurried, meals are savoured over hours, and even time seems to take a pause.

Up in the villages of Himachal Pradesh, silence speaks louder than notifications. Handloom work continues at its own pace, recipes are passed on in whispers, and spirituality is felt in the spaces between words. Places like Jibhi, Kalpa, and Tirthan Valley now attract seekers of soulful experiences over high-octane thrills. The mountain air heals, but so does the absence of hurry.

This slow revival is also reshaping hospitality. Boutique stays and eco-conscious retreats are prioritising **experiential depth over decorative grandeur**. Guests are encouraged to rise with

the sun, eat farm-fresh produce, walk barefoot through fields, and journal by the fire.

The wellness movement, too, finds strong allies in this philosophy. Yoga sessions last hours, not minutes. Detoxes focus on emotional clarity, not calorie counts. Therapies like Shirodhara and forest bathing align with the slow pulse of nature, not the quick fixes of urban spas.

Ultimately, India's take on slow living is **not about doing less—it's about doing consciously**. It is a reminder that luxury today is not about excess, but about access—to time, to silence, to oneself. And in a world increasingly defined by noise and haste, India's quietest corners offer the most resonant luxury of all: the space to simply be.



Green Tea Plantation in Munnar, Kerala. Image Courtesy: Ameer Mohamed

INDIA : MEDITATION CENTRE AT AUROVILLE - MATRIMANDIR - PONDICHERRY

In Auroville and Bhujodi, guests are spinning yarns on a charkha, learning the meditative pace of handloom weaving. It's not a workshop—it's a return to breath. Retreats encourage handwritten letters, tea brewed from foraged herbs, and days without alarms. The focus isn't productivity—it's presence. This is the new luxury: time, unstructured and meaningful.

AYURVEDA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: HERITAGE MEETS PRECISION

India's oldest wellness system—Ayurveda—has entered a new chapter. It is now scientifically structured, elegantly delivered, and individually tailored.

At many wellness centres, Ayurveda merges with vastu-led design, organic food, and ocean-side serenity. These wellness centres have transformed into institutions where diagnosis is rooted in tradition but aligned with modern medical benchmarks. In many centres Ayurvedic practitioners collaborate with Traditional Chinese Medicine doctors, physiotherapists, and emotional healers. With pre-arrival diagnostics and post-stay follow-ups, healing is no longer episodic. It's holistic and tracked.

VIPASSANA: SILENCE AS THE ULTIMATE HEALER

Long before wellness became a global industry, India offered its own radical antidote to chaos—silence. Vipassana, an ancient

meditation technique revived and taught by S.N. Goenka, is perhaps the subcontinent's most profound contribution to the modern search for mental clarity and emotional balance. In a world defined by distraction, Vipassana demands something rare: stillness, structure, and self-inquiry.

Across India, dedicated centres invite participants into ten-day silent retreats—immersions that involve no speech, no reading, no digital contact, and no eye contact. The method is simple yet transformative: observe the breath, scan the body, and watch the mind—without judgment, without reaction.

At Dhamma Giri in Igatpuri, Maharashtra, one of the world's largest Vipassana centres, the golden pagoda rises quietly above terraced gardens, offering space for hundreds to sit in stillness. Overlooking the Sahyadri hills, the centre has become a magnet for both spiritual seekers and exhausted professionals needing a complete reset.

In Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha himself attained enlightenment, Dhamma Bodhi sits on sacred ground. Here, the technique is taught in its purest form—a return to origin that feels deeply symbolic.

Urban centres like Dhamma Pattana in Mumbai and Dhamma Setu in Chennai make the practice accessible to city dwellers. Set amid minimalist architecture and tropical gardens, these retreats offer the same disciplined schedule and inner quiet, proving that profound stillness can exist even within reach of the everyday.



With over 90 centres nationwide, including those in Jaipur, Sikkim, Hyderabad, Himachal Pradesh, and Assam, Vipassana has quietly become one of India's most far-reaching mental wellness movements. Each centre offers standard ten-day courses, advanced sittings, and children's courses, all supported through voluntary donations.

Vipassana, unlike many contemporary wellness programs, is not stylised or commodified. There are no spa menus or scented oils. The accommodation is intentionally simple. Yet, what these retreats offer is priceless: the ability to observe, detach, and realign from within. This is a reorientation. A commitment not to escape the world—but to meet it with clarity.

CULINARY WELLNESS: FOOD THAT NOURISHES BEYOND THE PLATE

The wellness revival isn't limited to rituals or massages—it extends deep into the kitchen. Hotels and retreats across India are prioritising culinary wellness, transforming meals into medicinal experiences. Menus are now built around locally sourced, organic ingredients, with emphasis on plant-based, seasonal foods that align with Ayurvedic principles.

At many luxury retreats, meals are customised after consultation with an Ayurvedic expert. Dishes are dosha-specific, portions intuitive, and ingredients sourced from nearby farms—supporting not just the body, but also the local community.

But the movement doesn't stop at the dining table. Guests are invited to participate in cooking classes, fermentation workshops, and nutrition consultations, enabling them to carry the wisdom home. Wellness brands are also capitalising



Safari at Pench National Park

on this trend, offering herb-based juices, Ayurvedic teas, Shilajit resins, and satvic supplements designed to maintain inner balance. With wellness growing at an annual rate of nearly 12%, food is no longer about indulgence. It's about intelligence.

WILD WELLNESS: FORESTS, FIRES, AND WELLNESS SAFARIS

There's a growing appetite for wellness safaris—journeys where healing comes with treks, foraging, and bonfire circles. In Sikkim, Coorg, and Wayanad, guests hike to waterfalls, meditate under canopies, and dine under stars.



Halotherapy at Naad Wellness



Assam Tea Garden. Image Courtesy: Wikipedia

At Wellness resorts, a day may begin with sun salutations in a forest clearing, include a lunch harvested from the on-site garden, and end with a fire circle therapy—a tribal-inspired practice of sharing and emotional release around fire. These aren't curated experiences. They are immersions in elemental balance, making nature the therapist and the therapy.

SALT CAVES & SLEEP RITUALS: THE WELLNESS FRONTIERS

India's cities are catching up with global wellness fads in their own unique way. Salt caves, once popular in Eastern Europe, are now popping up in wellness centres in Gurugram, Bengaluru, and Mumbai. Known as halotherapy, these spaces use antibacterial salt crystals to improve respiratory health and induce a sense of calm. Often paired with guided meditation and breathwork, salt therapy is drawing urban professionals seeking quick, effective relief from stress and pollution.

Meanwhile, retreats are reinventing what it means to truly rest. Spread across several acres of serenity, these retreats offer nidra (sleep) rituals where guests are gently massaged and tucked into bed. From arogyam massages to halotherapy and sound resonance, every touchpoint is designed to nurture the nervous system and reset the body's rhythm.

INDIA'S WELLNESS LEADERSHIP: ANCIENT, AUTHENTIC, AND ASPIRATIONAL

As global icons like Oprah Winfrey, Kate Winslet, Uma Thurman, and Prince Charles seek India's healing offerings, the world is taking note. Once seen as a spiritual detour, India is

now becoming the destination for those seeking deep, data-backed, sensorially rich wellness.

The Ministry of AYUSH stands at the heart of this transformation. It promotes and integrates India's time-honoured systems—Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, and Naturopathy—into mainstream healthcare.

Ayush units take shape in hospitals, wellness departments expand across health services, and co-located facilities at primary health centres bring holistic care closer to communities. Research, education, and global partnerships drive the movement forward. With stronger policy push, cross-sector collaboration, and rising global demand, India leads the charge into a new era of integrative, authentic wellness.

The formation of the AYUSH ministry was a significant step, but more is needed. With better policy support, public-private collaboration, and global awareness, India is poised to lead the world into a more holistic era of wellness.

FINAL WORD - NOT A RETREAT, A REAWAKENING

India's wellness movement is not an escape from life. It is a return to its essence. In a country where healing grows on trees, hums in chants, steams in kitchens, and flows in rivers, wellness is not an offering—it is an atmosphere. One that breathes with you, guides you, and ultimately transforms you.

In 2025, the world isn't visiting India for its beaches or monuments. It's coming here for balance. And that might be the greatest journey of all.

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THE CALM WITHIN THE STORM: NIKHIL SHARMA'S INNER JOURNEY

Stillness isn't weakness—it's through Vipassana that Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director & COO, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, finds his fiercest clarity.

KAMAL GILL

He's a powerhouse in Indian hospitality—Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director and COO, South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group, moves through boardrooms and balance sheets with effortless command. But beyond the titles and high-stakes decisions lies a story far more grounded—and transformative.

What keeps a high-flyer like Sharma centred while navigating the relentless pace of the industry? Spoiler: It's not spreadsheets or strategy.

We caught up with Nikhil not to talk shop, but to explore something deeper—his quiet revolution through Vipassana meditation. In this conversation, he opens up about how silence, stillness, and self-inquiry have shaped him, not just as a leader, but as a father and a human in constant evolution.

SEEING CLEARLY: THE VIPASSANA WAY

Vipassana—meaning “to see things as they really are”—isn't just a meditation practice. It's a full-on reset for the soul. Rooted in ancient India and revived over 2,500 years ago by Gautama Buddha (yes, the enlightenment guy), it's one of the most timeless and transformative tools for inner clarity. The Buddha practiced it at 35, found profound peace, and spent the rest of his life sharing it, not as dogma, but as a path.

What makes Vipassana so compelling in our hyper-distracted, always-on world? It's universal, non-sectarian, and refreshingly no-frills. There are no mantras, no incense, no chanting. Just you, your breath, and a radical kind of presence. Practitioners scan their bodies with deep, neutral awareness—feeling sensations, letting go of attachments, and inching closer to mental stillness.

And yes, it's intense. Taught in silence over 10-day retreats around the globe (no phones, books, or talking—just 10 hours of meditation daily), it's a full detox for the mind.

“It's not religious,” Sharma notes, leaning in with the kind of clarity that only comes from lived experience. “Vipassana is spiritual. It doesn't care what you believe—it cares how deeply you're willing to look within.”



A JOURNEY BEGINS: DISCOVERING VIPASSANA

For Nikhil Sharma, the path to Vipassana didn't begin with a dramatic epiphany—it started with a whisper. Mentions here and there in conversations, passing references in professional circles. But it wasn't until he stumbled upon videos of Acharya S.N. Goenka—the modern torchbearer of the practice—that something clicked.

"I read about it, saw Goenka ji's talks online, and something resonated. His clarity, the simplicity of the teachings, it felt like truth, unembellished," he shares.

But Vipassana isn't something one stumbles into casually. Preparing for a 10-day silent retreat requires both logistical planning and mental readiness.

"I mentally prepared myself for six months," he says. "The first time I applied, the confirmation came too close to the date. I couldn't rearrange my business schedule. So I waited and reapplied during a known down period and made it."

What followed was an experience that tested every fibre of his being.

THE RETREAT: SILENCE, STILLNESS, AND SURRENDER

Held in a secluded centre, the Vipassana retreat begins with a powerful commitment—noble silence. No talking. No eye contact. No gestures. Nothing to pull you out of yourself.

Men and women are housed separately, and even within the same group, solitude is strictly observed. Each participant gets a bare-bones private room—a bed, a washroom, no frills. There's no staff tending to the comforts; you do everything yourself. Laundry, cleaning, and washing your own utensils. It's a far cry from the curated luxury of hotel life.



Golden Pagoda, Dhamma Setu, Vipassana Meditation Centre

"For hoteliers like us, used to a certain lifestyle, it's a major reset," Sharma says with a smile. "You eat a light vegetarian meal by 11:30 in the morning, and that's your last meal for the day. Evenings are just tea or lemon water."

Days begin in silence at 4:00 AM and roll into structured hours of meditation, all the way through to 9:00 PM. No phones, no books. Just structured stillness. Goenka's audio discourses provide the only form of guidance—equal parts philosophy, psychology, and gentle encouragement. On-site teachers are present for queries, but no conversation is allowed.

BY DAY 2, SHARMA HIT A WALL.

"I was physically and mentally broken," he admits. "I thought I could do it, but I wanted to leave. The mind starts playing games, making you believe something terrible is happening outside, that your family or work can't manage without you."

But somewhere between resistance and resolve, something shifted. "I told myself: one more day. And then another.



Walkway, Dhamma Setu, Vipassana Meditation Centre

Eventually, I finished the 10 days. And it changed me.”

What began as a mental challenge became a deep unlearning. A reset not just of routine, but of perspective.

CLEANING THE MIND LIKE A HOUSE

Talking about his Vipassana journey, Sharma drops a gem of an analogy: “It’s like moving into a dusty house. First, you clean the big debris. Then you clean again, and again, each time removing finer particles. Vipassana is like that. You clean your mind layer by layer. It’s not instant enlightenment. It’s a process.”

The early days, he admits, are brutal. But around Day 6 or 7, the internal chatter dials down, and the silence—once deafening—starts to feel like home. He shares, “You begin to observe thoughts without clinging to them. That in itself is freeing.”

Since his first experience, Sharma has completed three courses, two 10-day sessions and a shorter 4-day retreat reserved for returning practitioners. Each time, he finds something new.

LEADERSHIP WITH PATIENCE AND PRESENCE

For Sharma, the biggest shift Vipassana brought wasn’t in his schedule—it was in his leadership style. He says, “I’m far more patient now. When you’re leading large teams, it’s easy to lose your temper when things don’t align. But with meditation, you start recognising your own patterns. You reflect on your reactions.”

Has he gone soft? Not even close. He remarks, “Not at all. I’m still ambitious. I still want to grow, push boundaries. But now I pause. I listen. I act with more clarity.”

He believes that self-reflection is a leadership muscle too few cultivate. In a world that often glorifies hustle

over headspace, Sharma’s all for bringing introspection to leadership. He points out, “If you used to get angry for an hour a day, now you reflect and maybe it becomes 50 minutes, then 30. It’s about progress, not perfection.” Still sharp, still driven—just with a calmer edge.

Interestingly, Sharma doesn’t advocate for Vipassana to be institutionalised in companies. “I don’t want to impose it,” he says. “Each person’s path is their own. My wife finds her peace in early morning gym workouts. Others might find it in music or yoga.”

However, he strongly believes that leaders, especially at senior levels, must find a discipline that grounds them. He shares, “Whether it’s Vipassana or something else, you need a practice that allows you to be still, so your actions can be deliberate.”

IN SEARCH OF BETTERMENT

As we wrap up, Sharma smiles thoughtfully. “I don’t think I’m religious. But I’m a seeker,” he says. “Whether I’m visiting a mosque in Kashmir, a gurudwara in Punjab, or the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, I’m always searching for meaning, balance, purpose.”

And that search—rooted in reflection, not ritual—is what sets him apart. For someone leading a global hospitality powerhouse in one of the world’s fastest-growing markets, it’s this inner compass that keeps him anchored.

“In the end,” he says, “we’re all striving to be better. Vipassana helped me start that process from the inside out.”

In a world obsessed with speed, Sharma offers a different blueprint: where stillness meets strategy, and leadership isn’t only about driving results, but about knowing when to breathe, listen, and grow. This rare and intimate look into his journey reminds us that the strongest leaders are often the quietest seekers.



Garden View, Dhamma Setu, Vipassana Meditation Centre

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS: NOVOTEL HYDERABAD CONVENTION CENTRE & HICC

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Where maps follow desire, and every moment is custom-made.

TT BUREAU

Some travel experiences stand apart, tailored not by algorithms or glossy brochures but by the idiosyncrasies of those who dare to want more. The kind of experiences where Michelin-starred chefs serve dinner beside a volcano's lava glow, or where candlelight reveals the Sistine Chapel in serene solitude. These are not trends. They are statements of intent, one-of-a-kind moments shaped around the boldness of individual dreams.

This is the new pinnacle of travel. No itineraries recycled from influencer guides, no filtered sunsets for fleeting digital approval. Instead, the journey becomes a work of art, authored by the traveller, crafted by a discreet network of planners who view boundaries as starting points.

WHEN LUXURY BECOMES PERSONAL

Traditional five-star experiences remain exquisite. Panoramic penthouses, personal butlers, and overwater villas still hold their charm. But for those who have seen the world through its finest

suites, luxury now seeks a deeper layer—rooted in originality and emotional connection.

A couple might arrive at a Tuscan vineyard to find the gates closed to all others. Their day unfolds with a private vertical wine tasting, guided by the estate's vintner. A seasonal lunch appears beneath olive trees, prepared on-site by a chef whose restaurant holds three Michelin stars. As the couple walks through the vineyard, a string quartet plays their favourite composition—arranged specifically for this moment.

A family of art lovers visiting Florence may begin their day well before sunrise. An art historian greets them at the Accademia Gallery, unlocking the halls to reveal Michelangelo's David. The historian engages their daughter, an aspiring sculptor, in conversation about anatomy and light. Later, breakfast is served on a rooftop overlooking the Duomo, accompanied by a leather-bound sketchbook embossed with her initials. The memory is etched far deeper than any postcard could hope to capture.





Space Perspective's Spaceship Neptune

ACCESS BEYOND THE VELVET ROPE

The true privilege in today's travel is intimacy. Cultural treasures reveal themselves in quieter moments, far from the queues and flash photography.

At the Louvre, silence lingers in gilded corridors. The crowds have long departed. A specialist curator reveals untold stories behind Da Vinci's brushstrokes, far beyond textbook facts. A glass of champagne rests nearby, untouched, as the traveller stands alone before La Joconde, absorbing centuries of mystery in private reverie.

In Vatican City, access to the Sistine Chapel is granted not as a favour, but as an understanding. Beneath Michelangelo's soaring frescoes, candlelight casts gentle shadows. The sound of a single voice, a soprano, echoes through the sacred stillness. No distractions. No interpretation required. For some, the experience redefines reverence.

In Kyoto, ancestral traditions continue in machiyas, wooden townhouses that resist the rush of modernity. With the right introductions, a traveller may step through sliding doors and be welcomed into the world of a geisha family. Here, tea is not poured but offered with intention. Conversation is measured, movements studied. The encounter lingers in memory, quietly transformative and deeply respectful.

NATURE ELEVATED

The call of the wild remains strong, now met with comfort, care, and creative detail. Nature no longer serves as the backdrop. It becomes a host.

In the Patagonian Andes, a glacier sets the stage for an extraordinary meal. A helicopter lands in silence. Nearby, a temporary kitchen hums. A table, dressed in white linen and crystal, stands by a fire pit on untouched snow. The chef prepares freshly caught sea bass; rare wines are poured by a private sommelier.

Below a Norwegian fjord, a glass-domed submarine drifts through dark waters. Inside, plush seating faces the aurora borealis dancing above. Arctic caviar and chilled champagne enhance the spectacle, as bioluminescent plankton shimmer all around.

In the Amazon, floating private villas glide gently along the river. Interiors reflect rainforest elegance with bamboo floors and scent-infused air. A wildlife biologist points out macaws; meals feature ingredients foraged that morning. At dusk, elders arrive by canoe to offer blessings by lantern light—a quiet, sacred exchange.

ADVENTURE MEETS ELEGANCE

Adrenaline no longer equates to austerity. Thrill is now accompanied by orchestration, ensuring the heart races while the soul remains cradled.

In the Dolomites, wingsuit flyers train for days with Olympic-level coaches. Every movement is rehearsed, recorded, and refined. When the moment comes, the leap is not wild—it is artful. Cameras track the descent in cinematic detail. Upon landing, a champagne reception awaits near a still lake, framed by pine trees and the echo of applause.



Image Courtesy: Triton Submarines



Norwegian Fjord. Image Courtesy: Thomas Mørkeberg

A motorsport enthusiast might arrange for exclusive access to a Grand Prix circuit. The track is theirs for the day. A pit crew preps the vehicle; telemetry data is monitored in real-time. An ex-F1 champion joins in, offering race tips and a challenge. Later, a celebratory dinner is served in the VIP paddock lounge, where racing gear is exchanged for tailored blazers and vintage Bollinger flows without pause.

Those with an eye to the cosmos can embark on a spaceflight training weekend, hosted in a converted airbase. The itinerary includes G-force simulations, zero-gravity chambers, and molecular gastronomy meals designed to mirror space rations, albeit with foie gras and curated wine lists.

Stargazing takes place from the comfort of a heated observatory dome, where constellations are traced between courses.

THE VALUE OF THE UNLISTED

These experiences rarely appear in glossy brochures. They are not promoted through campaigns or filters. There are no confirmation emails or website booking portals.

Connections form the currency. Introductions are discreet. Details are sealed, shared over dinners in Gstaad or whispered through private member circles in London and New York. Those involved understand the weight of trust. Guest lists are confidential. NDAs are signed before itineraries take shape.

Photographs are optional and, when requested, captured by in-house photographers with a sensitivity to privacy. Albums arrive bound in leather, personalised with initials in gold foil. The only record, often, is the one that lives in the traveller's memory.

Private jets may land at airports that do not appear on maps. Hosts greet guests by name, offering pillows pre-selected to match their sleep patterns and libraries curated from their recent reads. There is no performance. Every element flows seamlessly.

WONDER IS THE ULTIMATE CURRENCY

The landscape of luxury travel continues to evolve. It has stepped beyond opulence and into the realm of emotional architecture—moments designed not for public consumption but for private joy.

Exclusivity now means being able to stand alone with history, culture, and nature—and feel something shift internally. It means silence where there would have been noise, surprise where there might have been service, and meaning that outlasts any itinerary.

The true souvenir is not an object, but an emotion—a sense of awe that travels home with you. One that returns again and again, long after the flight has landed. Because when the journey is shaped entirely around who you are and what you truly value, the experience becomes something rare. Something powerful.

Something that could never have belonged to anyone else.





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THE SUITE LIFE AT 40,000 FEET

Sliding doors, sleepwear, and silence: first class is the world's quietest luxury.

CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO



Business Class Lounge, Emirates

Airlines transform first class into personalised sanctuaries, complete with exclusive lounges, curated menus, and privacy. First-class air travel represents the highest level of commercial aviation, designed to offer discretion, comfort, and elevated service. Airlines have spent decades refining their premium cabins, from seat design to bespoke experiences, redefining what it means to fly in comfort.

Modern first-class cabins go far beyond extra space. Today's top-tier cabins feature enclosed suites with sliding doors, inflight showers, turndown service, private mini-bars, and gourmet dining prepared by internationally acclaimed chefs. Paired with exclusive access to elite lounges, personal concierge service, and streamlined ground logistics, these cabins offer more than convenience—they provide an entirely different standard of travel.

This guide explores the most exceptional first-class offerings from Emirates, Etihad Airways, Singapore Airlines, and other

elite carriers. It also looks at how these experiences extend beyond the aircraft door, transforming the entire journey into something polished, seamless, and calm.

EMIRATES FIRST CLASS: PRIVACY AND PRESTIGE

Emirates' First Class Suite on the Airbus A380 features floor-to-ceiling sliding doors, ambient lighting, leather seating, and wood finishes. Inspired by the interiors of the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, the suite is designed as a self-contained space where guests can work, rest, or dine in complete seclusion.

A distinctive feature is the onboard shower spa. Passengers can freshen up mid-flight in a private, marble-accented cabin with Bvlgari toiletries. Each suite also includes a personal mini-bar, a 32-inch HD screen, and Bowers & Wilkins headphones. The seat transforms into a fully flat bed, complemented by luxury bedding and aromatherapy. Dining is à la carte and available on demand, paired with Dom Pérignon and a wine list curated for altitude.

The A380 also includes a bar and lounge area. Emirates' 777 First Class offers similar privacy and control, minus the onboard spa or bar.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS: THE RESIDENCE AND APARTMENTS

Etihad's A380 houses The Residence—an exclusive three-room suite for two. It includes a private bedroom, lounge, ensuite bathroom with shower, and a dedicated butler. Dining is tailored to each guest's preferences, served in fine china, with premium beverages on offer.

The First Class Apartments are equally elegant, offering wide seats, separate beds, vanity units, and sliding doors. Guests may book time in a shared shower room and enjoy Giorgio Armani amenity kits. Interconnecting suites are available for companions travelling together.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES: SPACE AND SOPHISTICATION

Singapore Airlines' A380 Suites feature a large leather armchair, a separate full-sized bed, and sliding doors for privacy. Two adjoining suites can be combined into one for couples. The cabin is finished in neutral tones, soft lighting, and Lalique crystal accents.

Passengers can pre-order meals using the airline's "Book the Cook" service. The menu features dishes from celebrity chefs, and Krug or Dom Pérignon is served without limitation. Amenities include Bose headphones, high-thread-count sleepwear, and turn-down service.

QATAR AIRWAYS QSUITE: BUSINESS CLASS WITH FIRST CLASS FEATURES

While not technically first class, Qatar Airways' Qsuite is often cited as the best business class in the world—and for good reason. The fully enclosed suites, sliding doors, lie-flat beds, and the option to create a double bed for



Qatar Airways Qsuite

couples make it a first-class experience in all but name.

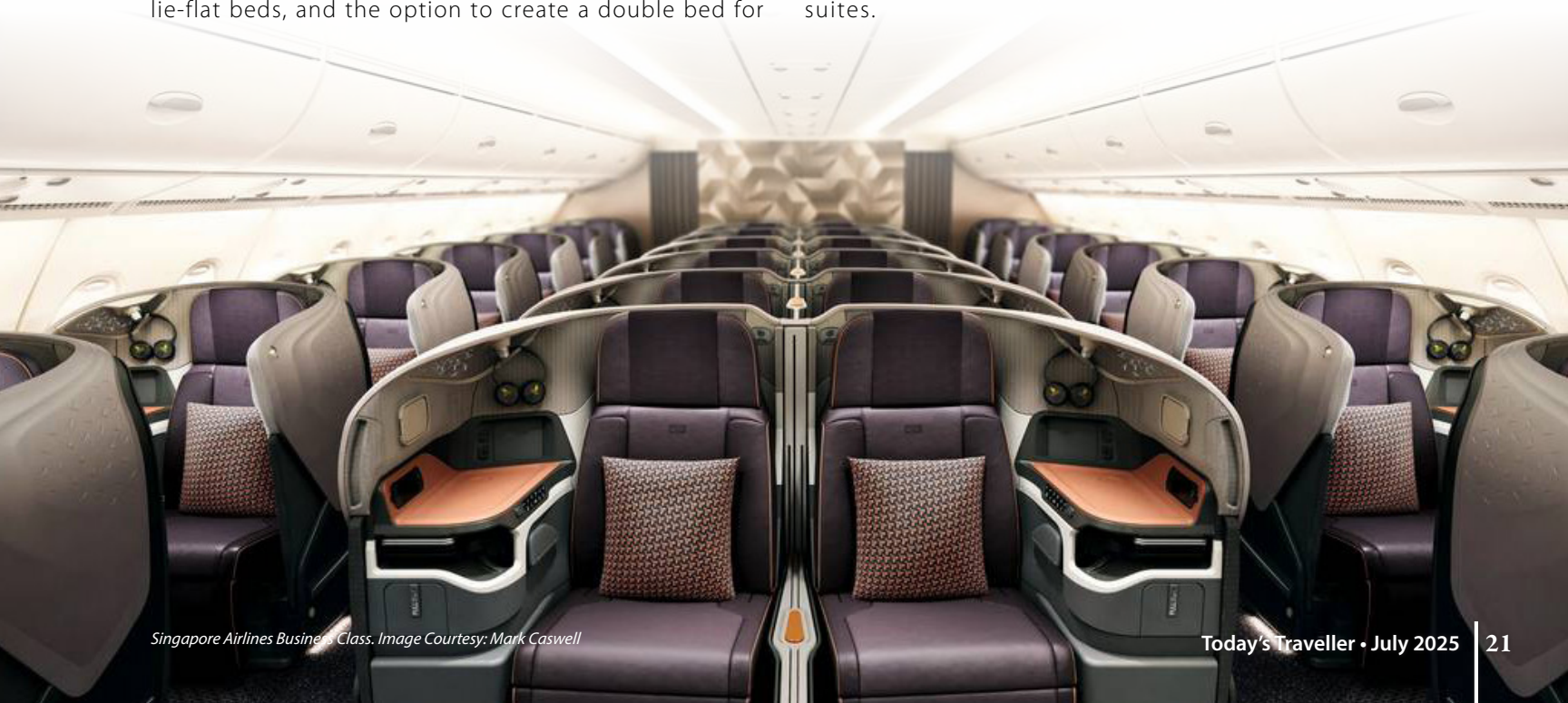
Qsuite passengers enjoy dine-on-demand menus, Krug champagne, and access to the luxurious Al Mourjan lounge in Doha. The service is attentive and personalised, with staff trained to anticipate every need.

ANA "THE SUITE": JAPANESE PRECISION AND MODERN COMFORT

All Nippon Airways (ANA) has reimagined first class on its Boeing 777-300ERs with "The Suite." These wide, private spaces feature sliding doors, a 43-inch 4K monitor (the largest in any first class cabin), and a seat that transforms into a spacious bed.

ANA's soft product is equally impressive, with Japanese-inspired fine dining, premium sake and champagne, and amenity kits by Globe-Trotter. The attention to detail extends to the smallest touches, from the oshibori (hot towel) service to the personalised greeting cards and pyjamas.

The ground experience in Tokyo includes access to ANA's exclusive lounges, where passengers can enjoy sushi bars, relaxation zones, and private shower suites.





Emirates First Class Suite



Lufthansa Lounge. Image Courtesy: Matthew Klint

OTHER PREMIUM OFFERINGS AROUND THE WORLD

Korean Air's Kosmo Suites offer privacy and comfort on the Boeing 777 and 787, with sliding doors and lie-flat seating. The design features traditional Korean elements, and meals include both local and global options.

Air France's La Première on the Boeing 777-300ER includes just four open suites with curtains, footrests for companion dining, and menus by Michelin-starred chefs. Lounge access at Paris Charles de Gaulle includes spa treatments and fine dining.

Lufthansa's First Class includes access to the First Class Terminal in Frankfurt, with nap rooms, fine dining, and direct boarding via limousine. Onboard, the cabin is serene, with wide seats that convert into beds and seasonal European cuisine.

Swiss International Air Lines offers a minimalist take on first class with a focus on discretion, privacy, and refined catering.

STARLUX Airlines, based in Taiwan, is emerging as a notable contender, offering a meticulously curated experience with Japanese and Taiwanese influences.

IN-FLIGHT DETAILS THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

The essence of first class lies in the smallest details. Emirates and Etihad offer inflight showers, carefully timed for mid-flight refreshment. Shower suites include heated floors, designer amenities, and spa lighting. Mini-bars in select suites keep sparkling water, juices, and snacks within easy reach, avoiding the need to call cabin crew.

Screens often span 32 to 43 inches with ultra-high definition and custom interfaces. High-fidelity headphones, such as Bowers & Wilkins, Bose, and Sony, ensure cinematic immersion. Skincare and fragrance kits are designed by luxury brands such as Lalique, Giorgio Armani, and Bvlgari, elevating even the nightly routine.

What truly sets first class apart are the little (and not-so-little) extras that make the journey unforgettable. Caviar with mother-of-pearl spoons, multi-course tastings, and fine wines served at proper altitude-adjusted temperatures distinguish these cabins from the rest of the aircraft.

THE GROUND EXPERIENCE

The first-class journey begins long before takeoff. Airlines have redefined the airport experience to match inflight luxury. Private terminals, valet check-in, expedited immigration, and personalised escorts transform departure and arrival into seamless affairs.

Lufthansa's First Class Terminal in Frankfurt includes everything from bathtubs to cigar lounges, all curated with German precision. Travellers are chauffeured across the tarmac in BMW 7 Series vehicles.

Air France's La Première Lounge in Paris is similarly decadent. A private entrance leads to a world of Clarins spa therapies, bespoke menus, and calm corners for pre-boarding tranquillity. Guests are driven directly to the aircraft in sleek sedans.

Singapore Airlines' "The Private Room" offers exquisite food, attentive waitstaff, and a serene atmosphere that filters out the chaos of a busy airport. Emirates' vast First Class Lounge in Dubai occupies an entire concourse, housing quiet zones, luxury boutiques, and an à la carte restaurant serving global cuisine at all hours.

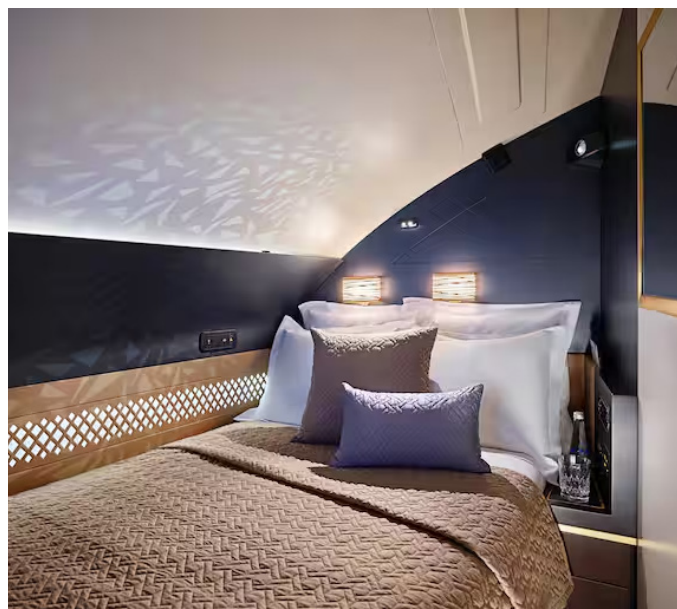


Image Courtesy: Etihad



वन की बात

KASEZ



सत्यमेव जयते



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 accories. 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:

- Exemption from various Central & State duties & taxes.
- Single window clearance concept.
- Proximity to two major ports, viz., Kandla Port & Mundra Port.
- Well connected to NH 8-A, Railway Station- 2km away.
- Un-interrupted Power Supply and water supply
- Round the clock security by Ex-servicemen.
- Installation of Software based LED streets lights
- Single point entry and exit
- 24x7 Customs clearance at doorstep

COMPLETE EXEMPTION FROM :-

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

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

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Qatar Airways Qsuite



Air France's La Premiere. Image Courtesy: Jenny Southan

THE FUTURE OF FIRST CLASS

As the world recovers from the disruptions of the early 2020s, airlines are once again investing in their premium products. Airbus has unveiled a new First Class Experience concept for the A350-1000, featuring "First Class Master Suites" with double beds, private lavatories, and lounge areas.

Sustainability is also becoming a focus, with airlines seeking to balance luxury with environmental responsibility. Expect to see more eco-friendly materials, locally sourced cuisine, and innovations that reduce the carbon footprint of first class travel.

ELEVATED TO EXCELLENCE

These first-class experiences stand apart through their

unwavering dedication to privacy, exclusivity, innovation, and flawless service. Emirates offers shower suites and onboard bars, Etihad provides the secluded three-room Residence, Singapore Airlines features generous double beds, and Air France delivers refined elegance through La Première—each presenting a distinct interpretation of airborne luxury.

The pursuit among airlines to deliver unmatched opulence continues to intensify. For those fortunate enough to access these cabins, the journey shifts into an event—an expression of hospitality, craftsmanship, and elevated design.

First class embodies a promise: for a few rare hours, travellers step into a realm defined by excellence in every detail.



Singapore Airlines A380 Suite. Image Courtesy: Skyrax

GREAT PENMANSHIP

While the art of penmanship is all but dead, this special edition pen by Mont Blanc is sure to revive it. Designed as a tribute to Jimi Hendrix, this pen gives out a distinctly retro vibe with its stylish black cover. The rollerball tip uses water-based ink that makes writing sharper, clearer and more vibrant.



HERITAGE MANSIONS OF CHETTINAD

I didn't expect to be so moved by the heritage mansions of Chettinad.

KAMAL GILL

It was in the warm rustle of the Tamil Nadu wind and the red-ochre streets of Kanadukathan that I first encountered the heart of Chettinad.

At first glance, this corner of the Sivaganga district may appear like any other sleepy southern village, but then the ornate facades begin to rise before you—some hidden behind rusting gates, others proudly restored. These are more than heritage buildings; they're storytellers of a great past.

THE LEGACY OF THE CHETTIARS

Chettinad, once the cradle of immense wealth and cosmopolitan vision, was built by the Nattukottai Chettiar community, merchant bankers who forged trade routes across Southeast Asia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As their fortunes flourished through trade in gems, spices, and finance from Burma to Malaysia and Singapore, they returned home with more than riches. They brought back materials—Italian marble, Belgian mirrors, Burmese teak—and married them to traditional Tamil architecture to create what are now known as Chettinad mansions.

These mansions, known locally as *periya veedu* or big houses, were not only a measure of status but a functional and cultural nucleus for families that spanned seventy to eighty people. Their scale was enormous, with over

fifty rooms often spread across more than an acre, built around three to four open courtyards. Designed to serve the social rhythm of the Chettiar life, they were the stage for weddings, births, festivals, and funerals. Every carved doorframe, every glinting chandelier, every cooling corridor spoke of ritual, refinement, and rootedness.

PAST PERFECT, PRESENT RESTORED

Walking through the entrance of Chettinadu Mansion in Kanadukathan, Tamil Nadu, I felt that distinct echo of grandeur. Built in 1902, the home has now been transformed into a heritage hotel.

Twelve rooms stand restored with antique furniture, while the airy courtyards remain cooled by lime-and-egg plaster walls that have defied heat for generations.

Nearby, Saratha Vilas in Karaikudi presents another side to Chettinad's revival—one shaped by foreign eyes, lovingly restored by French architects who fell under the region's spell. Here, Mediterranean design meets Tamil tradition in a quiet harmony, where the past greets the present with grace.

Another discovery was Chettinad Heritage in Nemathanpatti, a mansion over 120 years old. It has fourteen guest rooms and a kitchen where chefs work over open flames, grinding spices freshly under the same





Image Courtesy: Visalam by CGH Earth

roof where they once prepared feasts for dowries and ceremonies. Live kitchens demonstrate ancestral cooking methods, and the fragrance of tamarind, pepper, and fennel lingers in the air long after the meals are served.

The high ceilings held echoes of unspoken conversations. The windows, polished lovingly, framed the Chettinad light just as they would have a hundred years ago. The furniture, all period pieces, felt more like heirlooms than décor. Each chair, each bedpost, carved from solid Burma teak, stood gracefully, as if aware of its lineage. And then there were the floors—oh, those floors. They carried the unmistakable shimmer of Athangudi tiles, made entirely by hand, still echoing the careful labour of generations of artisans.

About ten kilometres from Visalam, in the village of Athangudi, I visited some of the very workshops where these tiles are still made today. Over a hundred small-scale factories continue the tradition, pouring colour, glass, and sand into intricate moulds with nothing but time and muscle memory guiding them. At Visalam, those same tiles are everywhere—not loud, not showy, just quietly magnificent.



Image Courtesy: Saratha Vilas

Beyond the more familiar names like Chettinadu Mansion, Chettinad Heritage in Nemathanpatti and Visalam, I found myself stumbling upon other jewels—less talked about, perhaps, but no less grand in their bearing. There was the VVR Mansion in Kanadukathan, its red-sandstone façade glowing in the late afternoon light, and the famed 1000 Windows Mansion in Karaikudi, or Aayiram Jannal Veedu as the locals call it, a house that seems to breathe with every breeze that slips through its countless panes.

Both Kanadukathan's Chettinad Palace and the Athangudi Palace stood like quiet guardians of a world that once knew no compromise in beauty. I walked their long corridors, tracing the faded grandeur still clinging to the walls.



Image Courtesy: Athangudi Palace



Murruku. Image Courtesy: Tamil Nadu Tourism



Mutton Chukka. Image Courtesy: Tamil Nadu Tourism

Each of these homes, preserved or lovingly brought back to life in parts, carried the unmistakable imprint of Chettiar ambition and artistry. To walk through their pillared halls and tiled corridors was to witness a community's legacy built not only in stone and wood but in vision, pride, and detail that has outlasted time itself.

LIVING IN A CHETTINAD MANSION

Living in a Chettinad mansion, even as a guest, is not just about luxury; it's about immersion. In the mornings, I walked the red-soiled village lanes, sometimes in the company of bullock carts.

Afternoons were spent visiting artisan homes where women wove Kandanghi saris in silence, the clatter of the loom weaving history into silk and cotton. I watched the intricate making of Athangudi tiles—each hand-poured, sun-dried, and painted in traditional floral and geometric patterns. These tiles, made from local sand and cement, are unique to the region, and their glossy finish now graces the floors of both grand hotels and quiet ancestral homes.

Everywhere I turned, there were whispers of the past. Some mansions had secret vaults, like Athangudi

Periyaveedu, where iron doors, imported from England and bearing the British royal insignia, once guarded family fortunes. Visalam, another elegant property, was built as a dowry gift for a daughter who died before she could use it. These homes are layered with emotional histories, some locked away behind iron-barred gates, others polished back into life.

WEATHERED WALLS, UNFADING GRACE

Today, only a tenth of the original 10,000 to 15,000 mansions remain intact, and fewer still operate as heritage resorts in Chettinad or as museums—perhaps under a hundred in total. The vast majority are decaying, caught in legal disputes or simply too expensive to maintain. About 30 per cent are believed to have been completely destroyed, while 60 per cent still stand, albeit in fragile conditions. Restoration is an expensive affair, and the government's efforts are limited. Chettinad's revival has been slow, driven by private families and passionate individuals rather than sweeping institutional support.

Rajasthan, by contrast, has embraced the heritage hotel concept on a larger scale, with iconic conversions like



Chettinad Palace, Chennai. Image Courtesy: Tamil Nadu Tourism

the Taj Lake Palace and Neemrana Fort Palace backed by significant state and commercial involvement. Chettinad's efforts remain more intimate, community-driven, and deeply rooted in the storytelling of place.

A MEAL, A MEMORY, A RITUAL

Meals here are their own kind of ritual. At Chettinad Heritage, I sat down to a thali served on a banana leaf. There was the fiery Milagu Kozhi Varuval, or pepper chicken, slow-cooked with coconut and fennel. The mutton chukka, crisp and spice-laden, paired perfectly with flaky parotta. I tasted nandu masala, a crab curry fragrant with star anise and kalpasi, the elusive black stone flower.

There were also vegetarian dishes like ennai kathirikai—brinjal in a thick tamarind gravy—and the unusual banana flower curry called vazhaipoo kuzhambu. Kuzhi paniyaram, those delicate, crispy dumplings made from fermented rice and lentils, reminded me of Tamil Nadu's deep-rooted culinary ingenuity. No meal was complete without paal payasam, a slow-cooked rice pudding infused with cardamom and jaggery.

In the quieter corners of Chettinad life, I discovered simple, timeless treats that told their own stories. At a village gathering, someone handed me a freshly fried murukku, its intricate coils crunching with a satisfying snap, spiced with cumin and black sesame seeds.

One evening, as the shadows stretched long across the village lanes, I was handed a small, fragrant bundle wrapped carefully in a banana leaf. Inside was kavanarisi, the black rice sweet that Chettinad holds close to its heart. Sticky, rich, and shimmering with jaggery and coconut milk, each bite tasted like a memory—earthy, slow-cooked, and impossibly tender.

Paniyarams, too, appeared everywhere—golden, crisp on the outside, airy within—sometimes sweet, sometimes savoury, always made with the kind of care that only tradition teaches.

One afternoon, sitting in the courtyard of a centuries-old mansion, I was offered adhirasam, a deep-fried sweet made



Kuzhi Paniyaram. Image Courtesy: Tamil Nadu Tourism



The Chettinad Heritage, Tamil Nadu

from jaggery and rice flour, its syrupy centre and smoky fragrance reminding me how closely food and festivity are tied here.

At Sapadu Shala, the traditional communal dining halls, I experienced another side of Chettinad hospitality—rows of people seated cross-legged, banana leaves unfurled like little green stages, as servers moved with swift grace, ladling out endless portions of rice, kootu, kuzhambu, and crisp appalams.

A VILLAGE THAT CRAFTS ITS SOUL

The rhythm of life in Chettinad continues through the experiences curated for travellers. Some mornings began with a cycling tour through sleepy villages, followed by tea in a tiled courtyard. Other days included hands-on tile-making or wandering through antique shops along Muneeswaran Koil Street, where brass lamps, carved wood panels, and faded ledgers whispered of bygone prosperity.

I even watched palmyra basket weaving and marvelled at how much craftsmanship survives in the daily lives of the villagers.

WHERE HERITAGE HANGS IN THE AIR

Chettinad's charm lies not in perfection but in patina. These aren't museum-set showpieces—they're living, breathing structures where you feel history in the creak of a door or the dust motes dancing in a shaft of morning light. Staying here is not about retreating from the world; it's about entering a world that still remembers how to celebrate identity, lineage, and art in the everyday.

DREAMIEST HONEYMOON VILLAS: WHISPERS OF ROMANCE

Rainforest-fringed escapes, regal sanctuaries, and everything in between. India's most evocative honeymoon villas await.

TT BUREAU

It is a special kind of silence that follows a wedding. Not the absence of noise, but a quiet shift—a pause that settles in the air before two people begin their lives together. It is in this in-between, this gentle unfolding, that India's dreamiest honeymoon villas await—hidden sanctuaries where love can linger, unhurried and untouched.

For many couples, this moment calls not for confetti or crowds but for something more intimate: a place far from the world, where time slows and love speaks louder than words. India, with its tapestry of landscapes and traditions, offers exactly that.

From rainforest-fringed retreats to palatial sanctuaries, here begins a journey through India's most evocative honeymoon villas, each promising not just luxury, but the kind of privacy and intimacy that only a true escape can offer.

THE WHISPERING WATERS OF KUMARAKOM

Where the Vembanad Lake stretches wide and endless, the Taj Kumarakom Lake Resort cradles love in its gentlest form—a restored 19th-century colonial bungalow set amidst 15 acres of lush gardens and waterways, where time moves

not in hours but in ripples across water. Villas and cottages hide among gardens of hibiscus and jasmine, their terracotta roofs and whitewashed walls blending into the hush of swaying palms and monsoon breezes.

Couples drift barefoot through their private courtyards, where plunge pools shimmer under the filtered light of ancient trees. The Luxury Villas with Private Plunge Pools offer cocooned havens of romance; the Premium Cottages sit beside lotus-filled lagoons, and the Heritage Rooms whisper of another era with antique wooden furniture, high ceilings, and large verandas that open onto gardens heavy with the scent of rain.

Days here stretch and soften. Couples wake to the lilting song of purple herons and the golden spill of dawn over Vembanad Lake. Breakfasts appear under open skies on private verandahs. Afternoons linger in the Jiva Spa, where ancient Ayurvedic therapies weave healing spells with local herbs and warm oils. A boat ride on a handcrafted shikara glides silently into the backwaters, framed by green paddy fields and coconut palms that lean into their own reflections.





Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa

Evenings unfold slowly, tenderly. Candlelit dinners are served beside the lake at the open-air Curries restaurant, where Kerala's rich culinary traditions—fragrant fish moilee, tangy mango curries, and slow-cooked meats—become part of the love story. Private spa treatments, sunset cruises, and garden walks by oil lamp light stitch every moment in intimacy. Here, time flows, the waters sing, the earth listens, and love, like the lake, becomes endless.

REGAL REVERIES AT THE OBEROI UDAIVILAS

Beyond the sweep of Rajasthan's desert sands, where Lake Pichola shimmers like a secret kept by the gods, rises The Oberoi Udaivilas—a palace where time moves not by hours but by heartbeats. Lotus ponds cradle the courtyards, domes wear hand-painted frescos like crowns, and walls whisper tales of a regal past stitched into every stone.

Couples wake to mornings brushed with gold, in rooms where sunlight pours across intricately carved screens and painted arches. Some suites open directly onto semi-private pools that curve softly past pillared verandas; others offer gardens heavy with jasmine, or views where the lake catches the City Palace in its glassy embrace. Luxury suites offer a private pool and your own hidden haven to unwind together, while an intimate courtyard, perfect for al fresco dinners, invites slow, candlelit evenings made to remember.

The Kohinoor Suite reigns as a world within a world—gilded interiors, private pools, and verandahs where the horizon blurs into something almost divine.

The days here are a slow unfolding of wonder. Breakfasts appear on sun-dappled terraces by the water's edge. Afternoon hours drift away in private spa rituals, where ancient ayurvedic secrets weave their magic. As the sun dips, couples glide across the lake in a private boat, the City Palace glowing like a mirage, the water beneath them catching every sigh of the fading day.

Personal butlers, invisible yet attentive, orchestrate moments stitched in romance—rose-petal baths floating



Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa

under the stars, candlelit dinners hidden within perfumed gardens, and private Kathak dance performances where every movement tells a story of longing and love.

STARLIT GLAMOUR AT PLANET HOLLYWOOD CHALET, GOA

Along the quiet edges of South Goa's Uttorda Beach, where golden sands stretch endlessly and the breeze carries a whisper of salt and sound, Planet Hollywood Beach Resort redefines cinematic romance. But beyond its glitz, tucked discreetly within the lush premises, lie private chalets crafted not for crowds, but for connection.

Here, opulence takes a breezy, tropical turn. The Beachside Sea View Chalet is your personal front-row seat to the Arabian Sea—designed with private sit-out decks that frame uninterrupted ocean vistas, where sunsets become a ceremony and the lull of waves, a constant companion.

Step onto your private lawn, where sunbeds beckon you to do nothing at all but bask, dream, and be. As twilight falls, dine under a canopy of stars on your patio surrounded by palms, or let the resort arrange a rose-petalled, candlelit garden dinner that feels plucked from a dream. For evenings when only the sea will do, the beachfront restaurant offers world-class cuisine with your feet in the sand and the sky aglow above.



The Oberoi Udaivilas, Rajasthan



The Oberoi Udaivilas, Rajasthan

Inside, the chalet is spacious and modern, with dramatic lighting, contemporary design, and luxe touches that lean into Hollywood glamour without ever feeling cold. Slide open the glass doors, and you step directly into your private deck framed by a stunning ocean view, only steps away. The interiors are plush—mirrors, mood lighting, velvet textures—but the space still feels playful, sun-drenched, and utterly inviting.

By day, walk hand-in-hand down to the beach for a picnic by the waves. Come evening, retreat for a candlelit dinner soundtracked by the hush of the Arabian Sea and just the faintest echo of a love song playing in the distance. It's a place for indulgent honeymooners who want equal parts privacy and glam—a villa where every evening feels like a movie premiere, made just for two.

BALINESE TRANQUILLITY AT BAALE RESORT VILLA, GOA

Not far from the buzz of North Goa's beaches, yet tucked away in a serene pocket of Arpora, lies a villa resort that could fool you into thinking you've landed in Ubud. Baale Resort Goa is an exquisite translation of Balinese design into Indian soil—a place where the lines blur between architecture and nature, where koi ponds greet you before people do, and where time feels suspended beneath pitched roofs and bamboo groves.

Each villa is a standalone oasis, set within lush gardens and ringed by frangipani trees. Rich wooden interiors, soft lighting, and open-plan layouts make the space feel both cosy and expansive. Outside, a private pool awaits—a curving turquoise haven just steps from your bedroom, framed by tropical foliage and sun loungers that invite lazy, lingering afternoons.

It's a villa made for lingering in moments, in stillness, in each other's gaze. Mornings begin with breakfast in your garden pavilion or for something truly surreal, a floating tray of delicacies drifting across your private pool—equal parts indulgence and impossibly Instagrammable.

Couples' spa rituals can be arranged without leaving your room, and the staff, attentive but invisible, understand the language of romance. If you choose to venture out, it's just a short ride to Goa's most iconic beaches and night markets. But most couples don't. They stay in, soaking in the silence, wrapped in each other and the warm scent of sandalwood and sea breeze.

MAJESTY IN THE MIDLANDS AT ITC GRAND BHARAT

Set against the timeless sweep of the Aravalli Hills, just a short drive from Delhi, ITC Grand Bharat promises a romance so rare, it feels almost whispered into existence. With its Indo-Saracenic arches, gilded domes, and Mughal gardens fragrant with jasmine and rose, it's more than a retreat—it's an unfolding royal love story meant for two.

For honeymooners seeking the grandest chapter, the Presidential Villa offers a world unto itself. Sprawled across 545 square metres, it comes with two stately bedrooms, a living and dining pavilion, a private sun-dappled pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, and the attentive service of a personal butler and chef. Every marble hallway and silken drapery feels dipped in old-world grace, while the villa's quiet opulence turns every moment into an intimate celebration.



Coco Shambhala, Maharashtra

Yet for those who believe love blooms brightest under open skies, the Deluxe Suite with its private rooftop gazebo spins a different kind of magic. Here, candlelit dinners unfold under hand-painted ceilings, and sunrise casts a golden glow across private terraces framed by the distant hills. Spacious, serene, and draped in elegance, the suite is a secret garden in the sky.

Days wander past in a slow, luxurious haze—teeing off together on the private championship golf course, surrendering to the healing touch of Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa, or simply losing track of time in the palace’s golden glow. As evening falls and the domes shimmer against the inky sky, even the most seasoned romantics will find themselves quietly making new promises—dreams built not in haste, but in wonder.

ELEVATED ESCAPES AT COCO SHAMBHALA

If romance means waking up in a treehouse embraced by dense forest and the soft symphony of the Arabian Sea, Coco Shambhala in Sindhudurg is a dream spun into life. Perched



Coco Shambhala, Maharashtra

on a secluded hillside overlooking the sea, the villas are crafted from laterite stone, timber, and khair wood, designed to float gently between the lush canopy and the turquoise beyond. Open-air living spaces invite the breeze to dance through, infinity pools melt into the horizon, and every corner pays homage to the wild poetry of the Konkan coast.

Couples find themselves wrapped in barefoot luxury—spacious villas with sweeping sea views, open-plan living pavilions that blur the boundary between indoors and out, and rooftop decks that catch the stars like whispered promises. Each villa comes with a personal butler, a bespoke bar, and a kitchen helmed by chefs who weave the local catch and garden harvests into exquisite feasts.

Here, intimacy wears the scent of salt and earth. Private beach picnics unfold beneath ancient mangroves. Seafood feasts flicker under the golden glow of oil lamps, with nothing but the hush of the tide to mark the passing of time. Rooftop decks turn into private observatories where couples can lie side by side, counting constellations stitched into a velvet sky.



Baale Resort Villa, Goa

SERENITY REWRITTEN AT THE ZURI KUMARAKOM, KERALA RESORT & SPA

Along the storied shores of Vembanad Lake, another world opens quietly into view. The Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala Resort & Spa unfolds across 18 acres of lush gardens and lotus-filled lagoons. Here, love slows its pace, settling into an unspoken rhythm shaped by water, sky, and silence.

This five-star retreat offers 72 rooms and villas, each a haven of comfort and privacy. The Presidential Pool Villas invite couples into sun-dappled courtyards with private plunge pools and garden patios. The Deluxe Rooms and Cottages mirror that intimacy, many with views of quiet lagoons or the lake's shimmering horizon.

Mornings begin softly here. The hush of the lake drifts through curtained windows as breakfasts arrive quietly on your veranda, or in the warmth of their all-day café. The culinary offerings pay homage to Kerala's bold spices while embracing global palettes like fresh seafood grilled over open flames, Malabar-style delicacies, and decadent desserts under starlit skies. At the lakefront bar, a chilled drink whispers across the evening's warmth; at the Cigar Lounge, time lingers, smoky and mellow.



The Zuri Kumarakom, Kerala

But the true heart of The Zuri is the Maya Spa that is often called one of the country's finest. Rooted in Ayurveda and global wellness traditions, it offers couple's rituals, yoga, and a Meditation Island where silence feels sacred. The spa, fitness centre, and yoga studio shape a retreat for both body and soul.

For those drawn to quiet adventures, The Zuri offers private boat rides, ecotours, and strolls around koi ponds leading toward a private jetty. Nearby bird sanctuaries and temples await, though many couples stay within, wrapped in the resort's slow, gentle magic.

With discreet service, thoughtful design, and nature all around, The Zuri Kumarakom offers a pause, a promise, a place where two souls settle into the stillness that comes after the vows, when everything tender begins.

THE FINAL WHISPER

India's most romantic villas are living poems, written in wood and stone, in water and wind. Each offers a different kind of retreat—be it jungle, desert, lake, or coast—but all carry the same promise: of space, of silence, and of shared wonder.



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EYE TO EYE WITH THE TIGER

As dawn broke over the rugged landscape of Rajasthan, I found myself on the threshold of an adventure I had long anticipated.

KAMAL GILL

The morning air was crisp as I boarded the open jeep for our Ranthambore forest safari. Our guide, a seasoned naturalist, briefed us on the day's itinerary and the code of conduct within the park.

Nestled between the Banas and Chambal rivers, the Ranthambore National Park is a sanctuary - a tapestry of history and wilderness, where ancient ruins stand sentinel over thriving ecosystems.

As we ventured deeper, Ranthambore unfolded like a wild, untamed canvas, a mix of golden grasslands, dense forests, and rugged ridges stretching into the horizon. Towering Dhok trees ruled the landscape, their twisted branches standing strong against the elements, while banyans, bamboo groves, and bursts of Flame of the Forest added layers of colour and mystery.

The Aravalli and Vindhya ranges meet here, shaping rolling hills and plateaus that felt like they belonged in a forgotten legend. And then, the lakes—Padam Talao, Rajbagh Talao, and Malik Talao—each a shimmering oasis where the wild came to drink, play, and survive.

The park's flora is as diverse as it is stunning, with over 300 species of trees, each playing a part in this raw, vibrant ecosystem. The towering trees, hidden groves, and flowering canopies create a haven for life—especially for its to over 270 species of bird life.

As our jeep navigated the rugged trails of our Ranthambore safari, we encountered a plethora of wildlife. Herds of Chital (spotted deer) grazed peacefully, their dappled coats blending seamlessly with the sun-dappled forest floor. The larger Sambar deer, with their coarse, dark brown fur and imposing antlers, observed us curiously.

A family of Wild Boars scurried across the path, and in the distance, the elusive Indian Gazelle, or Chinkara, could be seen nibbling on sparse vegetation. Our guide pointed out fresh tracks of a Sloth Bear, though the reclusive creature remained hidden from our view.

LEGENDS OF THE STRIPED ROYALS

Ranthambore's fame is intertwined with its legendary tigresses, each contributing to the park's rich narrative. Foremost among them is Machali, often referred to as the "Queen Mother of Tigers" or the "Lady of the Lakes." Born in 1997, Machali was renowned for her hunting prowess, notably her fearless battle with a 14-foot mugger crocodile, a feat that earned her the moniker "Crocodile Killer."

As we rumbled along the dusty tracks of our Ranthambore safari, our jeep driver, shared, "Everyone knows about



Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

Machali," he said, gripping the wheel with ease. "But do you know about the other queens of this jungle?"

Before I could answer, our naturalist and guide, leaned forward, adjusting his binoculars. "Ranthambore isn't just a park," he said with a grin. "It's a kingdom. And trust me, the tigresses are the real rulers here... Sundari (T-17), Krishna (T-19), Arrowhead (T-84), Noor (T-39), Sultana (T-107), among others."

The jeep stopped for a moment. The jungle felt alive, the weight of its history pressing down on us. The jeep driver said softly, "Their stories don't end. They just pass from one queen to the next."

And just as he finished speaking, a low rumbling growl echoed through the trees.

THE ELUSIVE STRIPES: A MEMORABLE TIGER SIGHTING

The jungle had gone eerily still. The low growl rolled through the trees, sending a shiver down my spine. It wasn't the distant kind—it was close, primal, almost like the jungle itself was breathing.

The air tightened around us. No one spoke. Even the rustling leaves seemed to pause, as if waiting. Each creak of the forest floor, every whisper of movement in the underbrush, sent our





Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

hearts racing. We sat, gripping the edges of our seats, pulses pounding with anticipation. The wait stretched on, minutes feeling like hours, until — a shrill cry.

First, the Langurs, their frantic alarm calls ringing through the treetops, bouncing from branch to branch. Then, a deep, guttural warning from a Sambar deer nearby. This was it.

"It's a male tiger. He has killed a deer this morning. He's close." Our driver whispered, his voice barely audible over the pounding silence. He barely touched the jeep's accelerator as we crept forward, following the urgent calls of the jungle's sentinels. The path was narrow near a steep hillside, flanked by thick jungle bush and dense shrubs, their tangled branches reaching out like grasping fingers.

The air was thick with the scent of damp earth and crushed leaves, the heavy undergrowth pressing in on both sides. Towering trees arched overhead, their dense canopy filtering the golden light into shifting patterns on the forest floor. The occasional rustle within the tangled thicket sent a thrill down my spine—something was moving, hidden but watchful.

It was difficult to see. Vines twisted around fallen trunks, and thick ferns clung to the cracks in the stone, nature's relentless grip reclaiming everything in sight.

And then—he appeared. From the shadows of the dense undergrowth, the tiger stepped straight towards where we were parked. He was breathtaking. His coat, a radiant tapestry of yellow and black, shimmered as the sunlight kissed his muscular frame.

The tiger walked through a clearing, and our jeep



Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

reversed to keep up with him. He ignored us as his powerful shoulders rolled effortlessly. And yet, despite his strength, there was an elegance to his movements, a silent, effortless authority that made the world shrink around him.

His head angled as he scratched his face with his paw, passed a towering tree, and then he stopped. His head lifted, piercing amber eyes locking onto ours.



Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

I FORGOT TO BREATHE.

The tiger's gaze wasn't hostile, nor was it indifferent. It was something else entirely, something that made my heart thud against my ribs. It was an acknowledgement. He saw us, he knew we were there, and for that one fleeting moment, it felt like he had allowed us into his world. The sounds of the jungle faded. Time itself slowed, stretching into eternity.

And just as quickly as he had appeared, he turned—graceful, deliberate, untamed. With a final flick of his striped tail, he melted back into the shadows, the jungle swallowing him whole.

We exhaled in unison. No words were spoken. There was nothing to say, nothing that could capture what we had just witnessed. A moment that etched itself into my soul, forever carrying the whisper of the wild..

SUNSET SERENADE

The jeep's engine purred softly back to life as it reversed from the bushes, bringing me back to reality and the forest around me. The day was drawing to a close as we made our way to Padam Talao to witness the sunset. The sky transformed into a canvas of gold and crimson, the sun casting its final rays over the tranquil waters. The silhouette of the Jogi Mahal stood in solemn grandeur by the lake, its red sandstone walls reflecting the fading sunlight.

A group of egrets took flight across the lake, their white feathers momentarily ablaze with the fiery hues of the setting sun. The air was thick with the scent of damp

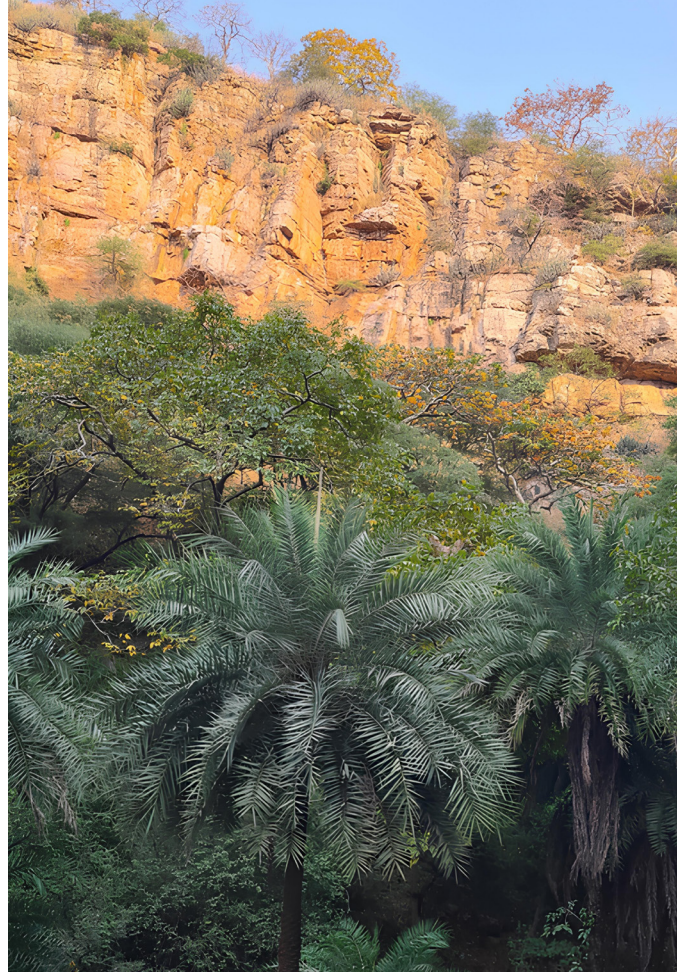


Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

earth and wild jasmine, mingling with the distant call of a jungle nightjar. The sense of peace was profound.

Ranthambore had delivered more than just a tiger sighting; it had offered a glimpse into a world where nature, history, and legend intertwined seamlessly. It was a reminder that these forests, these creatures, and these stories must be safeguarded for future generations.



Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill



Image Courtesy: Kamal Gill

ACROSS CONTINENTS, IN SEARCH OF STILLNESS

Wellness travel redefines healing, combining sacred practices, local wisdom, and nature's power into life-changing escapes.

TT BUREAU



Wellness travel is undergoing a renaissance. What was once seen as a brief retreat to a luxury spa has transformed into a global movement of immersive healing.

Around the world, diverse cultures are returning to the wisdom of their roots, reviving ancient therapies, sacred rituals, and nature-based practices that address far more than physical fatigue.

Healing is now a journey—one that unfolds across misty mountains, tropical waters, forest temples, and coastal sanctuaries. It is no longer about indulgence but about rediscovery, realignment, and resilience. The modern wellness traveller seeks experiences that connect mind, body, and soul in ways that are culturally rooted and deeply personal.

THE POWER OF PLACE IN HEALING

In every corner of the world, wellness traditions shaped by local wisdom and ecological rhythm offer something deeply restorative. The serenity of the Himalayas in India, the volcanic hills of Bali, or the granite shores of the Seychelles each holds a key to transformation.

In a world running on speed and burnout, these journeys promise stillness and clarity. They provide not only therapies but also philosophies—a sense of how to live in harmony with oneself and the natural world.

LADAKH, INDIA: TIBETAN WISDOM IN HIGH ALTITUDES

India has long been a pilgrimage for wellness seekers. In Ladakh, the high-altitude silence is punctuated by the chants of Buddhist monks. Here, Sowa-Rigpa, the Tibetan system of medicine, is practised with reverence by Amchi healers. Using rare Himalayan herbs and an intuitive understanding of bodily harmony, these physicians design personalised regimens that address the individual as a whole.

Meditation sessions within cliffside monasteries and yoga in open meadows deepen the experience, while shamanic fire rituals and treks to sacred rivers tie the physical body to the spiritual terrain. The air, thin and pure, encourages deep introspection and heightened awareness. For many visitors, Ladakh is a place not only of healing but of profound spiritual awakening. Even something as simple as drinking yak butter tea in the crisp morning air becomes a sacred act of presence.

UTTARAKHAND, INDIA: FOREST RITUALS AND RIVER STILLNESS

Further south in Uttarakhand, the air changes again—scented with pine and touched by the holy flow of the Ganges. Rishikesh and Haridwar buzz quietly with spiritual energy. Ashrams offer immersive yoga and Vedanta studies, while forest trails become therapy through the Japanese-rooted practice of Shinrin-yoku,

or forest bathing. The scent of cedar, the rustle of leaves, and the shimmer of light through the trees become silent healers. Panchakarma treatments cleanse and balance, following age-old Ayurvedic principles. Dawn meditations by the riverbanks complete a healing cycle that feels both eternal and deeply personal.

Many who come to Uttarakhand describe a sensation of being held by the landscape, as if the Himalayas themselves are participating in the healing. Visitors can also take part in fire rituals and community aartis, which evoke a deep sense of belonging and emotional release.

BIHAR, INDIA: WHERE THE BUDDHA FOUND ENLIGHTENMENT

In the eastern expanse of India, Bihar's Bodhi Gaya is not simply a historical site; it is a living testament to the path of enlightenment. The teachings of the Buddha echo within its monasteries. Wellness seekers here take part in ten-day silent Vipassana retreats, observing the mind and its patterns until clarity emerges. The silence is both intense and liberating, allowing buried emotions to surface and dissolve.

Pilgrimages to Rajgir and Nalanda bring history and healing together, while guided mindfulness sessions under the Bodhi

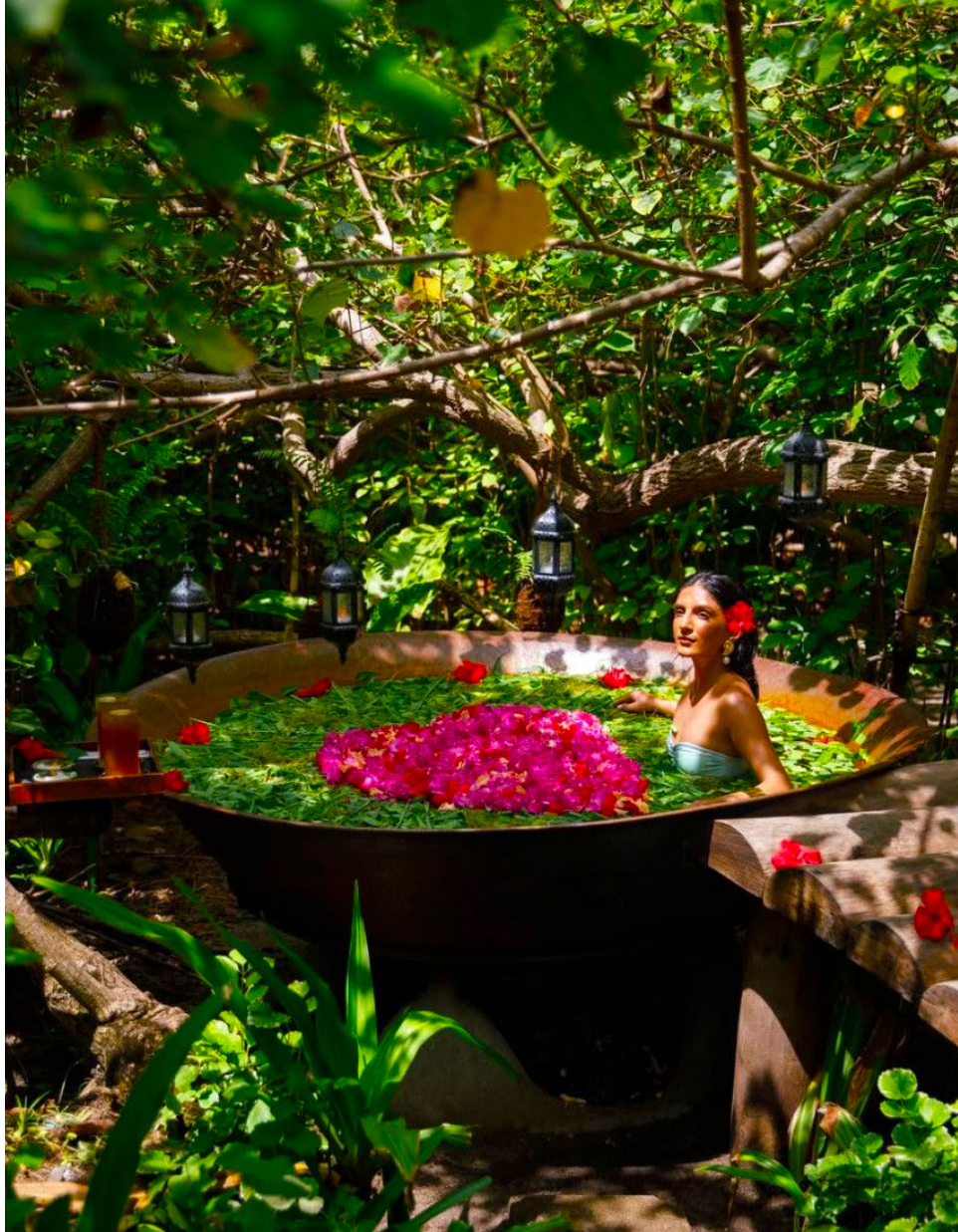


Image Courtesy: Villa Park, Maldives

Tree offer calm not through distraction, but through conscious presence. Many find that the insights gained here extend far beyond the retreat, influencing their thoughts and actions long after they leave. As one practitioner put it, “It’s not silence you hear—it’s yourself.”

SIKKIM, INDIA: EASTERN TRANQUILLITY AND HERBAL HEALING

Sikkim, tucked between Nepal and Bhutan, brings yet another form of serenity. Surrounded by orchid-draped hills and terraced fields, the region balances nature with spirituality. Sowa-Rigpa flourishes here as well, with herbal treatments tailored to each constitution. These therapies are often accompanied by chanting, intention-setting, and warm hospitality from local practitioners.

Mountain treks double as meditative walks, and traditional hot stone baths relieve not only muscular strain but also emotional fatigue. Monastery retreats here offer a unique kind of silence—one shaped by the chanting of lamas and the rustle of prayer flags. The community approach to wellness, where healing is integrated into everyday life, makes Sikkim’s offerings quietly powerful. Even everyday interactions with local villagers—sharing a meal or herbal tea—are steeped in generosity and grace.

KERALA, INDIA: THE CRADLE OF AYURVEDA

Kerala, on India’s southwestern coast, pulses with the rhythm of Ayurveda. The verdant landscape lends itself to healing.

Panchakarma remains the foundation of care, but the experience extends far beyond the treatment room. Daily rituals include oil massages, steam therapies, and personalised herbal tonics. Backwater houseboats turn into floating sanctuaries for contemplation. The martial art of Kalaripayattu, taught in open courtyards, merges discipline with mindfulness, serving as a dynamic form of movement meditation.

For the adventurous, bee venom therapy is finding ground in experimental circles, reflecting Kerala’s openness to blending tradition with frontier science. Here, ancient wisdom lives on through practice, not preservation. Culinary wellness also thrives—many retreats offer sattvic cuisine with local organic produce, spices like turmeric and ashwagandha, and healing broths known for their restorative effects.

THAILAND: TEMPLES, THERAPIES AND THAI MASSAGE

Beyond India, the wellness map expands widely. In Thailand, wellness is woven into the cultural fabric. Thai massage, with its blend of assisted stretching and acupressure, is both energising and grounding. Practitioners often learn their craft in temples, where healing is considered a spiritual act. Forest monasteries offer mindfulness and Metta (loving-kindness) meditation led by monks, while herbal compress therapies soothe the senses.

Detox retreats featuring raw food diets and juice cleansing are equally popular, allowing travellers to reset body and mind. The sacred spaces of Chiang Mai and the coastal calm of Koh Samui both offer unique yet deeply Thai approaches to well-being. Cooking classes, Thai herbal steam baths, and





LAUREATO 42 MM

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Yoga At Six Senses Fort Barwara

mindfulness walks through rice paddies all form part of a fuller, more immersive healing itinerary.

BALI, INDONESIA: SPIRIT, SOUND AND SACRED WATERS

Indonesia, and Bali in particular, has become synonymous with soulful healing. The island's traditions honour the body as much as the spirit. Balinese massage is firm yet rhythmic, harmonising internal energies and clearing energetic blockages. Water purification rituals at sacred springs offer emotional cleansing, while sound healing with gongs and bowls works on deeper vibrational levels.

Many practitioners combine traditional techniques with modern sensibilities, creating a bridge between ancient spirituality and contemporary needs. In Ubud, yoga studios set amidst rice fields attract seekers from every continent, each looking for alignment in movement and breath. Community is strong here—many wellness experiences include group circles, cacao ceremonies, or healing dances. Spiritual coaching, astrology sessions, and chakra work are often part of the holistic offerings.

SEYCHELLES: ISLAND STILLNESS AND OCEAN ENERGY

In the Seychelles, nature is the healer. Walks through lush, endemic forests and secluded beaches become meditative practices. The chirping of rare birds, the gentle surf, and the scent of frangipani work in quiet harmony.

Local herbal remedies, passed down through generations, are used in teas, ointments, and wraps.

Ocean therapy—where the sound of waves and the touch of water combine—replaces structured sessions. Yoga atop granite boulders, facing an endless sea, offers both physical release and elemental connection. The intimacy with nature is profound, and travellers often report a complete shift in their emotional landscape after spending time immersed in the islands' raw beauty. Traditional healers known as "herboristes" share knowledge passed down through oral tradition, creating bespoke remedies for everything from digestion to stress.

MALDIVES: WELLNESS OVER WATER

The Maldives, known for its overwater luxury, has refined

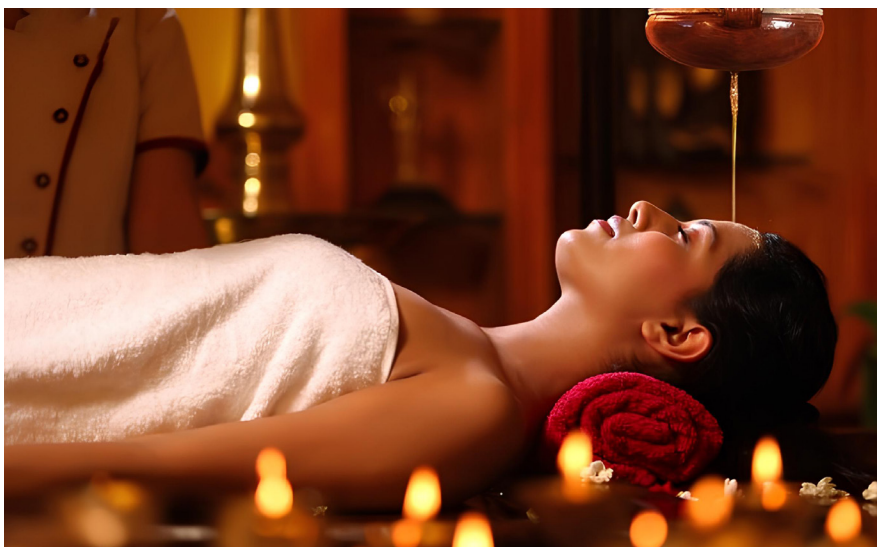


Image Courtesy: Nimba Nature Cure

wellness into an oceanic art form. Treatments here take place in villas suspended above coral reefs, where marine minerals and saltwater are central to thalassotherapy sessions. Mindful snorkelling and floating meditation over reefs replace traditional settings. Sunset yoga on deck platforms provides a gentle, poetic close to the day, synchronised with the horizon.

Some resorts now offer Ayurvedic consultations, sleep therapy programmes, and underwater sound healing. The immersive silence of the ocean, interrupted only by the occasional splash of fish, is the ultimate balm for overstimulated minds. Moonlight rituals and stargazing meditations add a cosmic dimension to the wellness offering, reminding guests of their place in a greater natural order.

SWITZERLAND: ALPINE PRECISION AND PURITY

Switzerland offers a very different but equally powerful wellness experience. Here, precision meets nature. Alpine forest walks are scientifically designed for cognitive calm. Cryotherapy and hydrotherapy clinics combine clinical efficiency with natural resources, offering results-driven rejuvenation. Mountain yoga with sweeping vistas builds clarity through stillness. Nutrition is tailored through DNA analysis and advanced diagnostics, making health deeply personal and remarkably effective.

Swiss wellness culture values prevention and performance, and guests are often surprised at how these cutting-edge technologies coexist with deeply restorative natural therapies such as thermal springs and herb-infused steam rooms nestled in mountain lodges. Wellness here is not loud—it is structured, seamless, and profoundly effective.



Hydrotherapy Session

THE UNIVERSAL PULSE OF HEALING

Each of these destinations presents a unique pathway into wellness. What unites them is their ability to reconnect the traveller with the essence of life. They draw on their native wisdom—be it Ayurveda, Buddhism, forest lore, or high-altitude air—to create moments of pause in an otherwise hurried world. Wellness travel, then, is not simply about going somewhere new, it is about returning to what is essential.

The rituals, the landscapes, and the teachings are catalysts, but the true healing happens in the space they create for you to breathe, to feel, and to become whole again. As this movement grows, so too does the awareness that healing is not a luxury, but a need as ancient as the earth itself. Across cultures, across continents, wellness continues to unfold—a timeless journey inward, inspired by the world around us and carried forward by those who seek to live not faster, but fuller.



Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat, Varanasi

BODY WISDOM: MASSAGE STYLES THAT TRULY WORK

Discover the right massage style to relax, heal, energise or enhance your physical performance.

TT BUREAU



Thai Massage. Image Courtesy: Diana Light

Modern life comes with its own set of aches, long hours at a desk, stressful commutes, minimal movement, and endless digital fatigue. Our bodies carry the weight of this routine in the form of tight shoulders, stiff hips and sore backs. Massage therapy has long been celebrated as a powerful antidote to this modern malaise. But with so many styles on offer, Swedish, deep tissue, Thai, shiatsu, sports, hot stone, trigger point, Ayurvedic, and beyond, how do you figure out what's best for your needs?

Understanding how each style works and what it can address allows you to make informed decisions. The following guide explores seven massage styles that are trusted worldwide for their ability to deliver real results.

SWEDISH MASSAGE: RELIEF FROM EVERYDAY STRESS

Swedish massage is known for its relaxing, rhythmic strokes. This Western classic has been a favourite for over two centuries. It was developed through the work of Per Henrik Ling and later systematised by Johan Georg Mezger in the 1800s, blending

anatomy with therapeutic movement.

A typical Swedish massage involves a sequence of techniques: effleurage (long, gliding strokes), petrissage (kneading), friction (deep circular movements), tapotement (rhythmic tapping), and vibration. Together, they stimulate blood flow, ease superficial tension, and bring the nervous system into a deeply restful state.

A typical session lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. The setting is peaceful, usually with soft lighting, relaxing music and essential oils. Your body will be modestly covered, and only the area being massaged is exposed.

Those recovering from recent injuries, fractures or suffering from medical issues such as severe osteoporosis or deep vein thrombosis should seek medical guidance before beginning any massage regimen.

Cost Range: India: ₹1,800 to ₹3,500

International: \$70 to \$120 (US), £60 to £100 (UK)

DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE: TARGETING PERSISTENT MUSCLE PAIN

Deep tissue massage is designed to work on the deeper layers of muscle and connective tissue. It involves slow strokes and firm pressure to address chronic pain, tension or injury. This method evolved from both Swedish massage and clinical physiotherapy techniques.

It is especially effective for athletes, individuals recovering from injuries, or those with repetitive strain issues such as back pain or poor posture. By increasing circulation and breaking down scar tissue, deep tissue massage can restore movement and flexibility.



Swedish Massage Therapy

Sessions typically start with a conversation about the areas that need attention. After warming up the muscles with lighter strokes, the therapist applies stronger pressure using their thumbs, forearms or elbows. While some discomfort may occur during the massage, it should never cause actual pain. Always communicate with the therapist during the session.

Expect a little soreness afterwards. Always drink plenty of water before and after your session to aid recovery.

Cost Range: India: ₹2,500 to ₹4,500

International: \$80 to \$130 (US), £60 to £100 (UK)

THAI MASSAGE: MOVEMENT-BASED BODYWORK

Thai massage stands apart due to its active and physical nature. Often called “lazy yoga,” it blends assisted stretching, acupressure and joint mobilisation. It is performed on a padded mat, and clients remain fully clothed in loose-fitting attire.



Thai Massage



Hot Stone Massage

The roots of Thai massage go back over two thousand years, with origins in Ayurvedic and Chinese healing practices. Jivaka Kumar Baccha, a physician in ancient India, is often credited with founding the practice. In Thailand, the system developed further to include a focus on energy lines called Sen lines.

Therapists use their hands, knees, feet and elbows to apply pressure and stretch your body. Two primary regional variations exist: Northern Thai massage, which is slower and more meditative, and Southern Thai massage, which is more energising and rhythmic.

Another common method included in Thai massage is joint mobilisation. This involves slow, controlled motions to increase mobility and release tension in joints. It improves flexibility, supports better posture and can aid in physical performance over time.

Sessions can last from 60 minutes to two hours. Many find this style both invigorating and calming. It is suitable for people seeking an increased range of motion or recovery from physical stiffness. Those with joint issues, cardiovascular disease or recent surgeries should speak with a medical professional before starting.

Cost Range: India: ₹2,000 to ₹4,000

International: \$90 to \$170 (US), £70 to £120 (UK)

SPORTS MASSAGE: FUNCTIONAL RECOVERY FOR ACTIVE BODIES

Sports massage is tailored for physically active individuals, athletes, dancers or people with physically demanding jobs. It can be preventive, therapeutic or restorative, depending on the client's needs. The techniques draw heavily from both Swedish and deep tissue massage.

Jack Meagher, an American therapist, is credited with formalising modern sports massage during the 20th century. His techniques linked sports performance and therapeutic touch.

Sessions are customised to match training schedules and physical goals. Before an event, this massage helps warm up muscles. Afterwards, it helps reduce soreness and muscle fatigue. It can also be used between events to maintain muscular balance and prevent injury.

While effective for athletes, this massage also benefits people who sit for long hours, carry heavy loads or perform repetitive motions. A conversation with the therapist beforehand will guide the session's focus.

Cost Range: India: ₹2,500 to ₹5,000

International: \$75 to \$125 (US), £50 to £100 (UK)

HOT STONE MASSAGE: RESTORING CALM WITH HEATED THERAPY

Hot stone massage uses smooth, heated stones to deliver warmth and relaxation. The stones, usually basalt, are placed along the spine, shoulders, palms or feet, and are also used to perform massage strokes.

Ancient cultures, including Native American and Hawaiian traditions, used heated stones for healing. In modern times, Mary Nelson revived this therapy in the 1990s through a method called LaStone Therapy.



Deep Tissue Massage. Image Courtesy: Alan Caishan

A BIT OF SPARKLE

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



HAPPY RABBIT TIE BY HERMES

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



Ayurvedic Massage. Image Courtesy: Amila Tennakoon

The warmth of the stones penetrates deeply, allowing the therapist to work on muscles with less pressure. This is ideal for individuals with sensitivity to intense touch. The heat increases circulation, relaxes muscle fibres and reduces stress.

Sessions last 60 to 90 minutes. It is important to inform your therapist if the stones feel too warm. People with neuropathy, cardiovascular conditions or skin sensitivities should consult a doctor before booking.

Cost Range: India: ₹3,000 to ₹5,500

International: \$85 to \$130 (US), £55 to £120 (UK)

TRIGGER POINT MASSAGE: RELEASING TENSION AT THE SOURCE

Trigger point massage focuses on specific muscle knots that can cause discomfort in unrelated areas, creating what is called referred pain. For example, headaches or jaw pain may be linked to tightness in the upper back and neck.

The therapy was developed by Dr Janet Travell and Dr David Simons, who identified patterns of referred pain and created maps of common trigger points. During the session, the therapist applies steady pressure to each trigger point, holding it for 30 to 90 seconds until it softens.

It's not a full-body experience but a targeted session that's ideal for chronic conditions, repetitive strain injuries, or muscle imbalances. After applying pressure, therapists use light strokes to flush the area and encourage circulation.

Communication is essential, as these sessions can be intense. However, they should not cause pain beyond temporary soreness. People taking blood thinners or recovering from surgery should seek medical advice beforehand.

Cost Range: India: ₹2,000 to ₹4,000

International: \$85 to \$140 (US), £75 to £120 (UK)

AYURVEDIC MASSAGE: HOLISTIC CARE FOR BODY AND MIND

Ayurvedic massage is far more than a physical experience; it's an ancient Indian ritual that balances your doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) through personalised therapies. It stems from texts like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, forming part of Ayurveda's holistic healing system.

The most commonly practised Ayurvedic massage is Abhyanga, a full-body oil massage using warm, herbal oils

tailored to your dosha. Other styles include Shirodhara (stream of oil on the forehead), Udvartana (herbal powder massage), and Pinda Sweda (herbal poultice massage). Each is designed to detoxify, energise, or calm, depending on your constitution.

Sessions begin with a dosha assessment and may incorporate marma point stimulation, in rhythm with your body's natural flow. The oils, strokes, and temperature are all adjusted to support healing on a deep level.

Ayurvedic massage is ideal for mental clarity, lymphatic drainage, joint stiffness, and hormonal balance. It's best done as part of a larger treatment plan, such as Panchakarma, or seasonally, under the guidance of a practitioner.

Cost Range: India: ₹1,500 to ₹5,000 (per session); Panchakarma: ₹25,000 to ₹70,000

International: \$70 to \$120 (US), £60 to £110 (UK)

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR MASSAGE

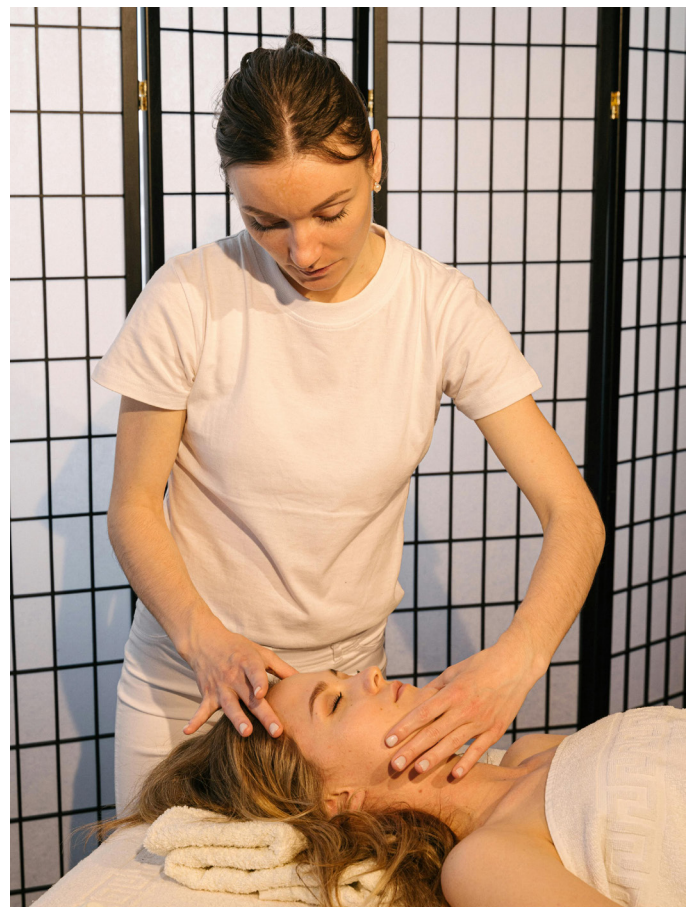
Let your therapist know your pressure preference, pain points and any medical history that may affect the massage.

Hydration is important before and after the session. Water supports the recovery, reduces muscle soreness and helps keep muscles supple.

Massage isn't a one-time miracle; it's a cumulative practice. Regular sessions, especially when tailored to your body's evolving needs, can bring long-term results: improved posture, deeper sleep, increased energy, and reduced pain.

Massage isn't an indulgence. It's self-care.

Let your body lead. It already knows what you need.



Face Massage. Image Courtesy: Antoni Shkraba Studio



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SACRED STEPS, SILENT PEAKS

India's sacred journeys challenge the body, calm the mind, and awaken the spirit through nature.

TT BUREAU

India's geography is embroidered with faith. Mountains aren't mere elevations—they're legends. Rivers aren't water—they're deities in motion. Spiritual travel here isn't a holiday. It's a recalibration of body, mind, and spirit. Across forests, plains, deserts, and high passes, seekers have long walked, chanted, fasted, and meditated on trails where mythology meets terrain and belief meets endurance.

This piece walks you through some of India's most extraordinary spiritual treks—routes that blend mythology, wilderness, hardship, and the occasional burst of divine hospitality.

PANCH KEDAR, UTTARAKHAND

In the Garhwal Himalayas, five Shiva temples form the legendary Panch Kedar—Kedarnath, Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhyamaheshwar, and Kalpeshwar. Each one marks a spot where part of Shiva's body appeared after he vanished into the earth in his bull form, dodging the guilt-ridden Pandavas.



Om Parvat. Image Courtesy: Exotic Miles

The trail runs across nearly 100 kilometres of steep paths, rhododendron forests, and ancient Garhwali villages. The temples themselves are a mix of stone-and-wood architecture and pure spiritual grit. Tungnath, perched at over 3,600 metres, is the highest Shiva temple on Earth. At Rudranath, nestled in a cloud-kissed meadow, time bends just enough to let the divine whisper through.



Kedarnath Temple



Adi Kailash. Image Courtesy: eUttaranchal

ADI KAILASH (CHHOTA KAILASH) AND OM PARVAT, UTTARAKHAND

Equally soul-stirring, though less travelled, is the Adi Kailash and Om Parvat route in Kumaon. Adi Kailash is revered as one of Shiva's earliest abodes, while Om Parvat stuns pilgrims with a perfect, naturally-formed ॐ symbol in snow across its dark rock face.

The trek takes you through remote villages like Gunji and Kuti, home to the Rang tribe, where butter tea and ancient songs await the spiritually curious. The view of Adi Kailash, layered in mist and flanked by prayer flags, is hauntingly beautiful. Pilgrims speak of a silence so dense it presses gently on your skin.

NANDA DEVI EAST BASE CAMP, UTTARAKHAND

The Nanda Devi East Base Camp trek leads you towards India's second-highest peak, seen not just as a mountain but as a living goddess. Nanda Devi is the fierce yet nurturing guardian deity of Uttarakhand, revered as a daughter of the land and protector of its people.

Starting at Munsiyari, the trail meanders through hamlets with slate-roofed houses, yak herders wrapped in woollens, and terraced fields overlooked by towering ridges. Martoli, a once-thriving trade town, now echoes with hymns sung beside yak-dung fires. Local lore speaks of Nanda Devi's blessings and warnings, and many villagers still offer her grain before each harvest.

By the time you reach the base camp near Pachu Glacier, Nanda Devi and her companion peak Nanda Kot loom above like ancient sentinels. The sense of presence is immense. You don't speak here—you listen.

HEMKUND SAHIB, UTTARAKHAND

At 4,632 metres, Hemkund Sahib in Uttarakhand holds the

title of the world's highest Gurudwara. The crystal-clear glacial lake beside it mirrors the sky so vividly that even sceptics find themselves stilled.

Guru Gobind Singh is believed to have meditated here in a previous incarnation. Today, the trek to Hemkund begins at Govindghat, proceeds to the village of Ghangaria, and then climbs sharply to the shrine.

What stands out is not just the altitude or the breathtaking scenery, but the unwavering spirit of seva. Langars feed you steaming dal and roti. Volunteers sweep the trail, carry the elderly, and offer glucose biscuits with more sincerity than most city cafes offer lattes. A dip in the icy lake is part tradition, part test of courage. You'll emerge breathless, wide-eyed, and oddly awake.

Not far from this path lies the Valley of Flowers—a riot of alpine blooms spread across a vast glacial basin. Though technically separate, the two journeys are often paired by those seeking a balance between natural splendour and spiritual reflection.



Nanda Devi East Base Camp



Prashar Lake

GAUMUKH-TAPOVAN, UTTARAKHAND

The Gaumukh–Tapovan trek follows the trail of the sacred Ganges to its glacial birthplace. The river begins here—not in a spring, but as an icy trickle sliding out of the Gaumukh (Cow's Mouth) glacier. Its spiritual significance is unmatched: the Ganga is considered the soul-cleanser, the purifier, the cosmic nurturer.

The trek starts at Gangotri and winds through rocky landscapes, pine forests, and meadows filled with the sound of the river's earliest murmurs. Shivling Peak towers above the Tapovan meadows like a silent yogi. Many trekkers pause here for meditation—some find clarity, others find peace, and a few find much-needed cell reception.

SHORTER WALKS, LASTING IMPACT

Vaishno Devi, a 13-kilometre pilgrimage in Jammu, takes you to the shrine of the Mother Goddess. It's accessible, bustling, and continues day and night. Pilgrims chant fervently while ascending; descending, they sing louder.

Amarnath, also in Jammu, is for the spiritually adventurous. A cave at 3,800 metres houses a naturally formed ice Shiva lingam. Snow, fatigue, and faith walk hand in hand here.

Prashar Lake, in Himachal Pradesh, is more subdued. With a floating island and a 13th-century temple dedicated to Sage Parashar, it feels like a pocket of magic tucked into the hills. The sunsets here aren't dramatic—they're meditative.

Monastic Ladakh offers a different pace. Trekking between

gompas such as Hemis, Thiksey, and Lamayuru reveals not only Buddhist teachings but high-altitude silence so profound it feels sculpted.

OTHER NOTABLE SPIRITUAL TREKS ACROSS INDIA

Spirituality in India is not a geographical monopoly. Down south and east, the air hums with devotion.

In **Hampi**, Karnataka, the ruins of the Vijayanagara Empire play host to temples where gods still reside in crumbling stone sanctuaries. The energy is raw, almost feral, yet filled with reverence.

Puri, in Odisha, pulses with chants to Lord Jagannath. The sea breeze mingles with incense smoke during the Rath Yatra, as chariots roll over sand and time.

Bodh Gaya, in Bihar, is the navel of the Buddhist world. The Bodhi tree stands serene as monks circumambulate in measured silence, reminding us that stillness too can be a pilgrimage.

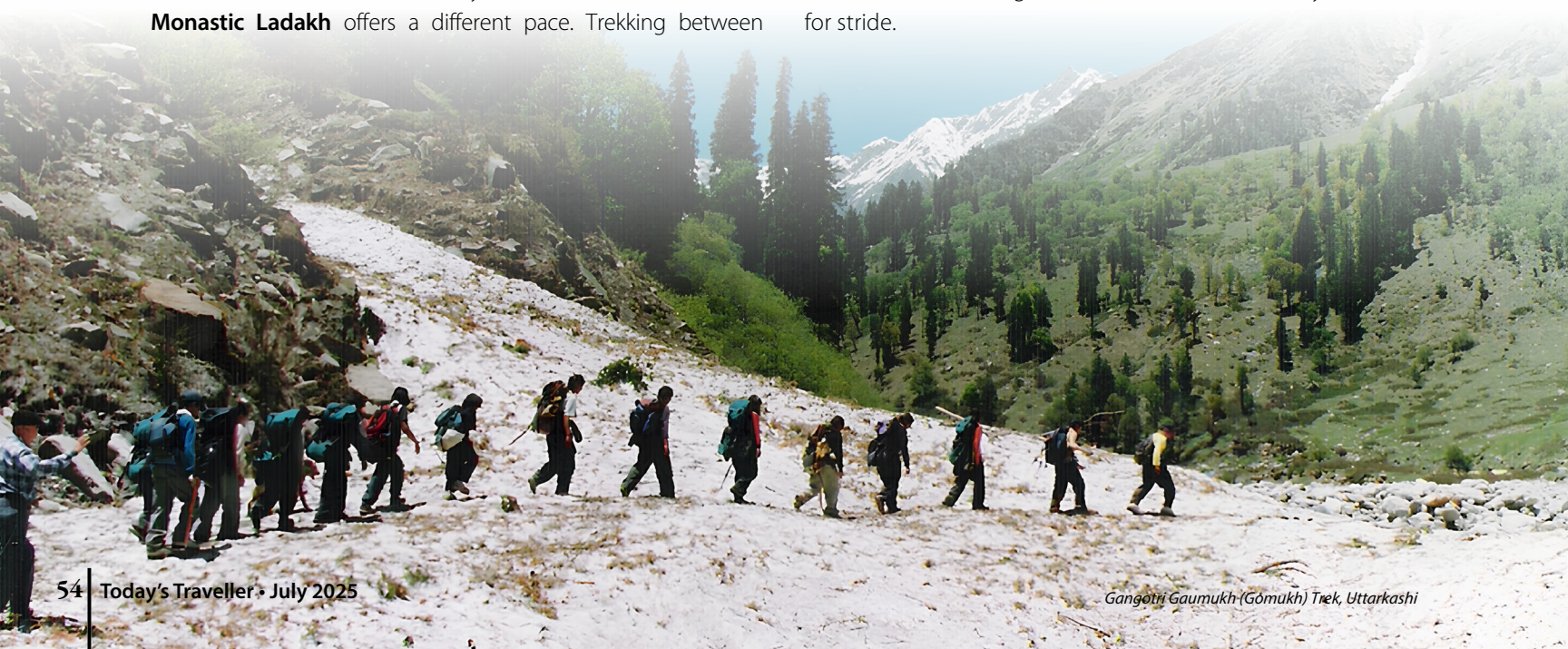
PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Best Time to Go:** May to October for most Himalayan treks. Winter for southern sites.
- **Fitness:** Not everyone needs to be a marathoner, but a few stair climbs in advance help.
- **What to Pack:** Warm layers, sturdy boots, a reusable bottle, basic medicines, and an open mind.
- **Mind Your Manners:** Dress modestly, speak softly, and don't interrupt a sadhu deep in thought.

THE REAL SUMMIT LIES WITHIN

Spiritual trekking in India isn't about finding something new—it's about shedding what you no longer need. The mountains don't offer answers; they offer echoes. The trails don't promise transformation, but they gently insist you pay attention.

Whether you seek Shiva's footprints in the snow, Nanda Devi's gaze from a glacier, or the silence beneath a Bodhi tree, these sacred journeys give you one certainty: you'll return altered. Perhaps humbler. Perhaps lighter. But certainly more aware that something vast and sacred walks with you, stride for stride.





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THE GREAT INDIAN MANGO TRAIL



A juicy journey through India's mango belt, blending culture, cuisine, heritage, and seasonal summer magic.

Mango Bappa Doi. Image Courtesy: Shivesh Bhatia

If there's one fruit that rules over the Indian heart and kitchen, it's the mango. Come summer, the country turns into a mango wonderland. Markets brim with golden and green treasures, families gather for aamras feasts, children climb trees in sticky triumph, and poets find new metaphors for love. Mango season isn't just a harvest — it's a celebration, a memory, and a national tradition.

India is home to more than 1,000 mango varieties, each with its own fan following, folklore, and flavour. From Maharashtra's aristocratic Alphonso to Bengal's honeyed Himsagar, mangoes are a gateway into India's rich cultural and regional identity. This is your invitation to follow the mango trail, a delicious journey from bazaars and orchards to festivals and family kitchens.

SYMBOLISM IN EVERY SLICE

The mango's place in Indian culture stretches back centuries. In Hindu households, mango leaves are strung above doorways during weddings and pujas to welcome prosperity. Mangoes are offered to gods in rituals, embodying abundance and devotion. Mythology, too, is ripe with mango references. Ganesha won a sacred mango by symbolically circling his parents; Buddha meditated beneath a mango tree.

In textiles, the paisley pattern borrows the mango's curvaceous form. In poetry and song, mango blossoms signal spring's arrival, romance, and renewal. Proverbs celebrate their value, like the Hindi saying "Aam ke aam, gutliyon ke daam," alluding to unexpected gains. Even in Bengali, "Aamra" means both "we" and "mangoes", sweet semantics for a fruit that unites.

MAHARASHTRA'S GOLDEN TREASURE

On the sun-drenched Konkan coast, Alphonso mangoes — affectionately known as Hapus — are treated with reverence. Ratnagiri and Devgad are famed for producing the finest GI-tagged Alphonsons, often considered the world's most flavourful mangoes. During peak season, entire markets are perfumed with their heady aroma. The real magic, though, is at home, where aamras is devoured with puris in a ritual that feels sacred.

Mango shrikhand, modaks, and even barfis make regular appearances in Maharashtrian households. The Alphonso once played a soft-diplomacy role — shipped to British royalty as gifts, sweetening conversations even before Independence.

UTTAR PRADESH'S NAWABI LEGACY

In the orchards of Malihabad and Kakori, the Dussehri mango reigns supreme. With roots stretching back to a 200-year-old mother tree in a Nawab's garden,

this variety comes with a side of history. The Nawabs of Awadh famously hosted mango tasting parties and poetry evenings under mango canopies.

Today, Lucknow hosts the vibrant Mango Mahotsav, a festival of cultural performances, competitions, and tastings. In older times, daughters were gifted mango saplings as part of their wedding dowry — a thoughtful gesture to ensure the bride always had fruit, shade, and sweetness in her new home.

KESAR: SAFFRON-SWEET FROM GUJARAT

In the hilly regions of Junagadh and Gir, the Kesar mango — named for its saffron-coloured pulp — makes a dramatic entrance each May. Its unique fragrance and bright hue have earned it both a GI tag and a permanent place in Gujarati cuisine. At the Talala Mango Festival, farmers proudly present their finest fruit in spirited competitions.

Kesar stars in aamras, kadhi, shrikhand, and even savoury curries. The love affair is such that no dish is safe from a Kesar makeover. And down in Tamil Nadu's Kongu belt, mango wood is valued for grilling meats, infusing them with a faint, sweet smokiness.

SOUTH INDIA'S SUMMER BLISS

Karnataka offers Banganapalli and Raspuri mangoes — the former firm and fibreless, the latter juicy and tangy. Markets in Chikkaballapur and Ramanagara turn golden in season. In kitchens, mango rasayana and sheera are summer mainstays, while in tribal pockets, dried mango seeds are roasted and ground into a caffeine-free brew — an ancient alternative that now feels avant-garde.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana prize the Banganapalle and the elusive Himayat (or Imam Pasand), the latter known for its delicate aroma and melt-in-the-mouth texture. Hyderabad's Mozamjahi Market bursts with these treasures during May and June. In Telangana, raw mango becomes avakaya pickle — fiery, complex, unforgettable. In some Andhra villages, mango kernel powder was once used in pre-wedding bridal baths, believed to enhance the glow of brides-to-be.

EASTERN INDIA'S FRAGRANT ICONS

West Bengal's mango belt — particularly Malda and Murshidabad — is known for the Langra and the Himsagar. The Langra, with its greenish skin and piquant taste, and the Himsagar, often dubbed the "champagne of mangoes," both inspire culinary creativity. Mangoes here find their way into aam sandesh, mishti doi, and luscious chutneys.





Mango Pickle. Image Courtesy: Neha Mathur

What makes Bengal unique is how mangoes are celebrated in song. Aamra Sangeet — folk songs passed down through generations — serenade the fruit, weaving themes of love and longing into orchard ballads. In neighbouring Bihar, the fragrant Jardalu mango from Bhagalpur features in pickles, festive desserts, and traditions like using mango leaf decoctions in postnatal care.

RAJASTHAN'S SURPRISING ORCHARDS

Despite its desert terrain, Rajasthan produces hardy mangoes like Amrapali, Mallika, and Dasher. Here, mangoes are often dried into aam papad or spiced into tongue-tingling pickles. Trees offer shade in village squares, and mango leaves decorate wedding mandaps, while their wood is used in sacred rituals.

In a quirky historical footnote, farmers in 19th-century Lucknow once protested unfair mango taxes by abandoning baskets of ripe fruit along the roadside — a fruity rebellion that, ironically, helped popularise the very variety they were taxed on.

A FEAST FOR ALL SENSES

Mango festivals dot the Indian summer calendar. Delhi's International Mango Festival displays over 500 varieties, offering tastings, demos, and mango-eating contests. Lucknow's Mango Mahotsav leans into its poetic past, while cities like Bangalore and Chandigarh host Mango Melas where farmers bring their prized harvests straight to the people.

For the immersive experience, farm stays in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh,

and Andhra Pradesh offer mango lovers a chance to pick their own fruit, enjoy hands-on cooking sessions, and sleep under mango-laden skies.

BEYOND THE FRUIT

Mangoes have long inspired Indian artists, poets, and weavers. Their silhouette appears in temple carvings, textiles, and contemporary digital art. Today, they're turning up in places you'd least expect — infused into beers, minted as NFTs, and sold in nitrogen-packed designer boxes to luxury buyers across the globe.

Economically, mangoes sustain millions of farmers and contribute significantly to India's agri-exports. Yet challenges loom. Climate change — with its erratic rains and rising temperatures — threatens delicate varieties. Scientists are now preserving mango DNA, cataloguing heirloom varieties, and guiding growers toward climate-resilient practices.

WHEN TO TRAVEL

The best time to chase mangoes varies by region but broadly falls between April and July. Arrive early at the markets for the freshest picks, speak with seasoned vendors for under-the-table specials, and explore every stage of ripeness — from raw and tart to syrupy and sun-kissed.

FINAL SLICE

A mango trail across India is a love letter to culture, community, and cuisine. Every orchard hums with heritage. Every sticky bite tells a story. It's not just a food trail — it's a sensory journey across one of the world's most mango-mad nations. So loosen your belt and follow the scent. This is India at its most delicious.



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