

# TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2025 - ₹50

**GLOBAL STYLE  
CAPITAL**

**MIDNIGHT FEASTS**

**WINTER RETREATS**

**FESTIVE BEATS: COLOURS & CULTURE**

A vibrant photograph of a young man and woman in traditional Indian attire, likely during a festival. The woman, on the left, is wearing a black and yellow sari with a colorful border and a large, ornate silver necklace. She is holding a yellow and blue decorated stick. The man, on the right, is wearing a red and black kurta with a colorful, patterned vest and a red headband. He is also holding a decorated stick. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is filled with colorful garlands (mala) in shades of yellow, orange, and green.



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# FROM LAMPS TO LANTERNS

A luminous journey through India's grand season of celebrations

TT BUREAU



Mamallapuram Dance Festival. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

India's festive calendar between October and January is a spectacular chain of celebrations that lights up the nation. As the rains withdraw and autumn paints the skies gold, the air begins to hum with expectation. Streets bloom with fairy lights, marigolds, and colourful fabrics. The evenings fill with the sounds of drums, temple bells, and folk music echoing through alleys and courtyards.

Every region adds its own flavour to this vibrant season. Markets brim with sweets and decorations, while small food stalls serve steaming pakoras, samosas, and fragrant cups of chai to crowds drifting between temples and fairs. The atmosphere feels charged, yet deeply harmonious, as faith, art, and joy blend seamlessly.

## VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL – THE GRAND CURTAIN RAISER

### Dussehra – 2 October 2025

Dussehra marks one of India's most profound celebrations of moral triumph — the victory of good over evil. Rooted in the great epics, it commemorates Lord Rama's conquest over the demon king Ravana in the Ramayana, and Goddess Durga's victory over the buffalo demon Mahishasura in the Devi Mahatmya. The festival stands as a timeless reminder of righteousness, discipline, and the ultimate power of virtue.

Across the country, the day unfolds in spectacular diversity. In North India, Ram Leela performances are staged in open grounds, retelling the life of Lord Rama through elaborate dialogue, music, and drama. The highlight arrives at dusk when colossal effigies of Ravana, Meghnath, and Kumbhakarna are set ablaze, lighting up the skies over Delhi and many other cities. Crowds cheer as fireworks burst, symbolising the destruction of darkness and deceit.

In Karnataka, Mysuru Dasara transforms the royal city into a ten-day celebration of culture and splendour. The grand procession led by decorated elephants carrying the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari is a sight of royal magnificence. In West Bengal, Dussehra aligns with Vijaya Dashami, marking the emotional finale of Durga Puja, as idols of the Goddess are immersed in water amid chants and song.

Beyond myth and ritual, Dussehra signals the beginning of India's festive wave. It sets the rhythm for the months ahead, when faith, music, and celebration fill the country's heart with renewed energy and collective joy.

## UNDER THE MOONLIGHT – LOVE AND DEVOTION

### Karwa Chauth – 10 October 2025

Karwa Chauth is among the most cherished festivals of North India, celebrating love, faith, and devotion between married couples. Observed on the fourth day after the full moon in the month of Kartik, it holds deep cultural and emotional significance for Hindu women who fast from



Idol of Kali Ma. Image Courtesy: Sonika Agarwal, Pexels



sunrise to moonrise for the well-being and longevity of their husbands. The festival embodies both ancient tradition and contemporary sentiment, connecting generations of women through shared rituals and faith.

The day begins before dawn with the sargi, a pre-dawn meal prepared by the mother-in-law for her daughter-in-law. Women dress in festive attire, often in shades of red and gold, symbolising prosperity and marital bliss. The fast continues throughout the day without food or water, as participants engage in prayer, adorn their hands with intricate mehndi designs, and gather in circles to listen to the Karwa Chauth Katha, a traditional story of devotion and sacrifice.

## THE SEASON OF LIGHTS – INDIA'S BRIGHTEST FESTIVAL

### Kali Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Diwali – 20 October 2025

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is India's most widely celebrated and anticipated festival. It symbolises the triumph of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Falling on 20 October 2025, the festival unites people across regions, religions, and traditions in a shared spirit of joy, renewal, and gratitude.

As dusk settles, homes glow with the gentle radiance of diyas and fairy lights, while intricate rangolis made of coloured powders or flower petals adorn doorsteps. Families clean and decorate their homes, believing that the Goddess Lakshmi, the deity of wealth and prosperity, visits those who maintain purity and harmony. The Lakshmi-



*Image Courtesy: Lara Jameson, Pexels*

Ganesha puja forms the heart of the evening, with prayers seeking prosperity and wisdom for the year ahead. The fragrance of incense and ghee lamps fills the air as mantras echo softly through homes and temples.

Across India, Diwali takes on unique regional forms. In West Bengal, it coincides with Kali Puja, where devotees worship the fierce yet compassionate Goddess Kali, lighting lamps and offering sweets. In South India, Naraka Chaturdashi marks Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura, with families performing oil baths and lighting lamps at dawn. In Gujarat, Diwali marks the end of the financial year, and new account books are opened with rituals invoking prosperity.

## BONDS OF SIBLINGS – SWEET CONNECTIONS

### Bhai Dooj – 23 October 2025

Bhai Dooj, celebrated on 23 October 2025, is a festival that honours the loving bond between brothers and sisters. It



*Women Doing Puja During Karwa Chauth. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*





Image Courtesy: Monojit Dutta, Pexels

falls two days after Diwali and carries the warmth of familial affection, marking a gentle and heartfelt conclusion to the festive week. Rooted in mythology and tradition, the festival echoes the timeless theme of protection, respect, and care between siblings.

The origins of Bhai Dooj are traced to the legend of Yamraj, the god of death, and his sister Yamuna. It is said that when Yamraj visited her, she welcomed him with sweets, a tilak, and a meal prepared with affection. Touched by her devotion, he granted that any brother who receives a similar welcome from his sister on this day would enjoy long life and prosperity. The ritual, still performed today, begins with sisters applying a red tilak on their brothers' foreheads, performing an aarti, and praying for their well-being. In return, brothers present gifts or money as a token of gratitude and promise to protect their sisters.

## SPIRITUAL LIGHT – GURU NANAK JAYANTI

**Guru Nanak Jayanti – 5 November 2025**

Guru Nanak Jayanti, celebrated on 5 November 2025, marks the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the



Gurdwara Saheb at Ameerpet, Hyderabad. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Decorative Plate with Diyas. Image Courtesy: Yankrukov, Pexels

founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. It is one of the most sacred festivals in the Sikh calendar and a day devoted to reflection, equality, and service. Guru Nanak's teachings of compassion, humility, and universal brotherhood continue to guide millions across the world.

Celebrations begin days in advance with Akhand Path, a continuous 48-hour recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib in gurdwaras. On the morning of the festival, Prabhat Pheris—devotional processions singing hymns, move through neighbourhoods, filling the air with spiritual music. Gurdwaras across India, especially the Golden Temple in Amritsar, shimmer with lights and decorations. The community spirit shines through langars, open kitchens where volunteers serve free meals to people of all faiths.

## DANCE UNDER THE STARS – TAMIL NADU'S STAGE

**Mamallapuram Dance Festival – December 2025 to January 2026**

The Mamallapuram Dance Festival, held annually against the backdrop of Tamil Nadu's ancient shore temples, celebrates India's classical dance heritage. Scheduled between December 2025 and January 2026, it transforms the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mamallapuram into a grand open-air theatre.

Graceful forms such as Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Odissi, and Mohiniyattam take centre stage, with the rhythmic sound of ankle bells blending with the whisper of sea waves.

## ART FOR THE WORLD – KERALA'S CREATIVE CANVAS

**Kochi-Muziris Biennale – December 2025 to January 2026**

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale, held from December 2025 to January 2026, is India's largest contemporary art festival and a global platform for creative expression. Hosted across Fort Kochi's historic venues, the Biennale





*Dussehra at Jakhu Temple, Shimla. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

transforms the city into a living gallery, where colonial warehouses, sea-facing courtyards, and old spice markets turn into spaces of artistic dialogue.

The festival showcases installations, paintings, performances, films, and sound art by leading and emerging artists from around the world. It reflects on issues of identity, migration, environment, and heritage through the language of modern art.

## SEASON OF GIVING – CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

### Christmas – 25 December 2025

Christmas, celebrated on 25 December 2025, brings warmth and cheer to communities across India. While deeply rooted in Christian faith, it is embraced by people of all religions as a season of joy and togetherness.

Goa glows with lanterns, star-shaped lights, and midnight masses in centuries-old churches. In Kerala, churches host special choirs, and streets are filled with carols and laughter. Metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru celebrate with decorated malls, festive markets, and charity drives.

## HARVEST OF HAPPINESS – NEW YEAR FESTIVALS

### Makar Sankranti – 14 January 2026

### Pongal – 16 January 2026

As winter recedes, India welcomes the first festivals of the new year with gratitude to nature. Makar Sankranti, celebrated on 14 January 2026, marks the sun's transition into Capricorn. It symbolises new beginnings and the end of the long winter nights. Across Gujarat and Maharashtra, the skies fill with colourful kites, and homes celebrate with sesame and jaggery sweets that signify warmth



*Illustration of Bhai Dooj*

and unity. In Punjab, the night before Makar Sankranti is observed as Lohri, with bonfires, folk songs, and dance, celebrating the harvest of sugarcane.

In Tamil Nadu, Pongal, celebrated on 16 January 2026, is a four-day thanksgiving festival dedicated to the Sun God. Families gather to cook Pongal, a sweet dish of newly harvested rice and milk that overflows as a symbol of prosperity. Villages come alive with traditional games, bull-taming events, and rituals honouring cattle for their role in agriculture.

## MONTHS OF TOGETHERNESS

Between October 2025 and January 2026, India journeys through its most radiant and meaningful season. These months unite people in celebration, faith, and community spirit. The rhythm of festivals reflects the diversity of India's landscapes and beliefs, where every ritual becomes a bridge between the past and the present.



*Decorated Christmas Tree. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



# SEASONS OF SPICE, BOWLS OF JOY

India's festival food trails are epic journeys through ritual, culture, landscape, and memory.

TT BUREAU



*Woman Making Pongal. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

A festival food trail is never about the plate alone. Meals are ritual, landscape, ecology, and the accumulation of memory. Every region's ingredient tells a tale about earth, trade, social hierarchy, and the values communities choose to preserve. The cooking and sharing of festival meals from the sifting of rice for Pongal, the elaborate order of Sadya, to the generosity of Eid and the fireside magic of Bihu keep alive a sense of time's sacredness. These meals evolve with migration, grow with economic shifts, and adapt to environmental changes, yet their heart remains unchanged.

## PONGAL: OVERFLOW AND EARTH'S BOUNTY

In Tamil Nadu, the Pongal festival marks the rhythm of life itself. Each January, as the sharp sun rises, villages and cities take to rooftops and courtyards to celebrate abundance. The overflowing of the Pongal pot, newly harvested rice, golden jaggery, creamy lentils, and milk bubbling over, is a prayer to Surya, the Sun God, and to the hidden powers of soil, rain, and cattle.

"Pongal" means "to boil over," symbolising prosperity and welcoming more blessings than the vessel can hold. Sakkarai Pongal, the sweet version, and Ven Pongal, the savoury one, are cooked outdoors, surrounded by family and neighbours. Once offered to deities, the dishes are shared among people and even animals. Surya Pongal honours the Sun, while Maatu Pongal thanks the cattle, who are bathed, painted, garlanded, and fed pongal with bananas and honey.

The final day, Kaanum Pongal, celebrates kinship. Families gather by rivers and parks, laying out food for birds and passersby, an act of generosity symbolising the spirit of hospitality. Traditional accompaniments such as puliyodharai (tamarind rice), crunchy murukku, and curd rice embody Tamil Nadu's agrarian soul.

Festival favourites include Ven Pongal, a creamy rice and moong dal blend spiced with pepper, cumin, and ghee; Sakkarai Pongal, simmered with jaggery and cardamom; Payasam, a milky pudding with saffron and nuts; Medu Vada, crisp rings of urad dal batter; Puliyodharai, tamarind-spiced rice with peanuts and sesame; and Curd Rice.



## ONAM: KERALA'S GREEN BANQUET

If Pongal salutes the sun, Onam in Kerala is a pageant of the earth. It honours the mythical King Mahabali, whose reign symbolised peace and prosperity. Onam's signature feast, the Onam Sadya, is more than a meal; it is Kerala's spirit served on a banana leaf.

Celebrated at the end of the monsoon, Onam marks the relief that follows hardship. For ten days, homes are cleaned, pookalams (flower carpets) brighten thresholds, and festivities fill every corner. On Thiruvonam, families gather for the Sadya, a vegetarian symphony where every dish has a place and purpose.

Avial, a medley of vegetables with coconut and yoghurt; olan, ash gourd and cowpeas in coconut milk; thoran, beans or greens sautéed with grated coconut; and sambar made with tubers and gourds, all celebrate local produce. Pickles of mango, lemon, or ginger preserve the warmth of Kerala's sun, while buttermilk at the end cools and aids digestion.

Payasam, the sweet dish, could be made with lush Kerala bananas, jaggery, jackfruit, rice, dal and more; cooked in a milk or coconut milk base. Some payasams are made using rice and jaggery as the main ingredients without using milk at all! The serving of buttermilk at the end is a digestive aid.

Malayalis across the world recreate the Sadya to stay rooted to home. Restaurants curate elaborate feasts blending nostalgia and innovation, while in Kerala, temples and homes prepare it the traditional way; on banana leaves, served in sequence, eaten with fingers, and concluded with heartfelt contentment.

## EID: GENEROSITY, MEMORY, AND BLESSING

Across India, Eid is the festival of reunion and gratitude. At dawn, Idgahs and mosques echo with prayer, and homes open wide for guests, neighbours, and strangers alike.

Food anchors Eid's message of sharing. The day begins with sheer khurma, a luxurious vermicelli pudding simmered in milk, saffron, and dates. In Hyderabad and



*Pitha. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



*Pathiri. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism*

Lucknow, the biryani reigns supreme, fragrant with basmati rice, mutton, and rosewater. In Kerala, soft pathiris (rice pancakes) pair with stew rich in coconut milk. In Bengal, nalli nihari offers depth and comfort.

Eid-ul-Adha deepens the ethos of generosity through qurbani, the ritual sharing of sacrificial meat with family, friends, and the less fortunate. Every platter tells a story of lineage and exchange: Mughlai kebabs spiced with history, Haleem slow-cooked for hours, and Shahi Tukda layered with nostalgia and cream. Across homes, elders pass down recipes, grandmother's sewain, fritters, rosewater sherbets, keeping heritage alive through taste and texture.

Eid's beauty lies in its diversity: each region, each kitchen, interprets devotion through flavour. From fragrant biryanis in Hyderabad to Kerala's coconut-laced delicacies, the festival unites hearts through the language of food.



*Iftar Feast. Image Courtesy: Murtada-Mustafa, Pexels*





*Sadya. Image Courtesy: Saveurssecretes, Pexels*

### BIHU: ASSAM'S FIRESIDE FEAST

In Assam, Bihu ties people to the land, river, and rhythm of seasons. Three Bihus: Bohag (spring), Magh (harvest), and Kaati (sowing), define the agrarian calendar, but Magh Bihu, the harvest festival, is the grandest celebration of food and flame.

As dusk falls, villages gather around the meji structures set ablaze to mark the end of the harvest. People roast sunga pitha (rice cakes steamed in bamboo), til pitha (sesame-jaggery rolls), coconut laru, and fish caught fresh from the river. The night glows with warmth and laughter as folk songs rise with the sparks.

Bihu's flavours come straight from the earth. Joha rice, aromatic and slender, forms the base of many dishes. Leafy greens known as xoru xaak are stir-fried with garlic and mustard seeds; masoor tenga, a tangy fish curry using tomatoes or elephant apple, brings



*Bihu Delicacies. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

brightness; and pork with bamboo shoot, slow-cooked with green chilli and mustard oil, adds a rustic heartiness.

Food gifts, pitha, laru, and jaggery, are exchanged between families, neighbours, and teachers, affirming ties of respect and community. The act of burning meji is both thanksgiving and renewal, offering warmth to ancestors and a wish for a fertile year ahead.

Bihu, unlike most urban festivals, remains beautifully anchored in the countryside. Each dish, each flame, each bite is an offering to land,

lineage, and life itself.

### THE SPIRIT THAT BINDS

Across regions and religions, India's festival tables reflect a shared philosophy: that food is more than sustenance. It is storytelling, faith, and identity served together. Pongal's overflow, Onam's harmony, Eid's generosity, and Bihu's fireside unity all celebrate abundance without excess, tradition without rigidity.

Every feast invites reflection on gratitude toward land, labour, and lineage. Whether rice bubbling over a clay pot in Tamil Nadu, coconut milk simmering in Kerala, vermicelli sweetening in Hyderabad, or sesame pithas roasting in Assam, the message is the same: food connects, heals, and endures.

Through spice and smoke, festival meals remind India of its deepest truth: prosperity lies not in how much we keep but in how much we share.



*Ada Pradhanam Payasam. Image Courtesy: Kerala tourism*



# CARTIER

The panther, the symbolic animal of Cartier, made its first appearance in the Maison's collections in 1914. Louis Cartier was the first to tame the mythic animal.





# WHISPERS OF WELLNESS

Winter spa luxury in 2025 blends science, design, and ritual to create intelligent, personalised warmth.

TT BUREAU

As winter deepens, transformations are unfolding in the world's most luxurious spas. The wellness sanctuaries of 2025 are no longer content with comfort alone; they are merging technology, neuroscience, design, and ritual into sophisticated experiences that has turned seasonal stillness into an art form.

Here's how the year's most talked-about trends are redefining winter wellness with science, sensory design, and indulgent care.

## MICROCLIMATE CAPSULES: COCOONS OF CALM

Luxury wellness has entered the age of the microclimate capsule, personalised pods that envelop the body in fragrant warmth and absolute stillness. Unlike conventional saunas, these chambers precisely regulate heat, humidity, and oxygen to suit each guest. The celebrated Iyashi Dôme, a Japanese infrared capsule, exemplifies this transformation. It warms the body through far-infrared energy while keeping the head outside, promoting deep comfort without dehydration or breathlessness.

Infrared wavelengths penetrate up to four centimetres beneath the skin, enhancing circulation, stimulating collagen, and activating the lymphatic system. The process encourages detoxification and cellular repair, helping to balance metabolism and improve sleep by boosting melatonin levels.

Guests frequently report reduced muscle fatigue, better recovery after travel, and a sense of calm. Because every dome can mimic the gentle heat of sunlight, it serves as an intelligent antidote to winter lethargy. In sustainability-driven spas, these capsules are also energy-efficient, warming the body rather than the room; proof that indulgence can coexist with ecological awareness.

## SENSORY WINTER IMMERSION ENVIRONMENTS

Walk into a leading spa this year, and you may find yourself stepping through a softly lit corridor scented with pine and echoing with the faint sound of crackling fire. This is multisensory design in motion, an emerging discipline that choreographs light, sound, scent, and temperature to recreate the sensory poetry of winter itself.



Image Courtesy: Anthony shkraba, Pexels

Think snow-mist rooms that replicate alpine vapour, aurora-inspired projections that ripple across frosted glass, and heated floors that respond to the rhythm of your movement. Research on multisensory entrainment reveals that the simultaneous stimulation of multiple senses helps the brain achieve synchronised low-frequency states associated with calm and emotional stability. Pine and cedar aromas activate the parasympathetic nervous system, while blue-white light alleviates seasonal fatigue by regulating serotonin.

The result is not merely relaxation but restoration; a choreography of science and emotion that transforms architecture into a therapy of its own.

### RITUALS OF RENEWAL

In 2025, luxury spas are reviving the lost language of ritual. Across Europe, Japan, and the Himalayas, guests are invited to participate in solstice ceremonies, candle-lit sound baths, and herbal tea meditations that symbolically mark the turning of seasons. These practices, inspired by ancient fire festivals and renewal rites, merge spirituality with evidence-based wellness.

Seasonal rituals help regulate the body's internal clock, restoring harmony between mood and daylight rhythms. When paired with aromatherapy and contrast bathing, alternating between snow rooms and saunas, they boost circulation, immunity, and emotional resilience. In an era defined by digital acceleration, such ceremonies offer a rare constancy: the reassurance that time still flows in patterns, not chaos.

### AI PERSONALISATION: PRECISION WELLNESS

The era of the generic spa menu is gracefully ending. Artificial intelligence has become the invisible therapist, using heart-rate variability, skin analytics, and hydration sensors to craft bespoke treatments that evolve with the body's needs.



*Image Courtesy: Julee Juu, Unsplash*

By mapping an individual's microclimate and circadian rhythm, AI fine-tunes each element, the wavelength of light, serum intensity, or massage temperature, ensuring the body receives exactly what it requires at that moment. The benefits are tangible: improved skin hydration, faster recovery, deeper sleep, and emotional balance.

For travellers worn by jet lag or long winter nights, this precision feels profoundly personal. It is wellness that listens; a marriage of data and intuition that embodies the highest form of luxury.

### REFINED COLD THERAPY

Cold therapy, once defined by the shock and bravado of ice baths, has evolved into a study in elegance. The trend in 2025



*Image Courtesy: Cloris Ying, Unsplash*





Image Courtesy: Anthony Shkraba, Pexels

is towards controlled cooling, snow rooms releasing delicate flakes, mist tunnels diffusing sub-zero air, and “frost bridges” connecting glowing lounges with crisp outdoor terraces.

Research supports the subtlety. Even mild cold exposure activates brown adipose tissue, which burns calories to maintain core warmth and releases norepinephrine, improving alertness and mood. When alternated with heat treatments, it strengthens vascular elasticity and reduces inflammation.

Guests now experience the same euphoric after-glow as a plunge pool, without the shock. The aesthetic of falling snow under golden light adds theatrical beauty, turning biology into art.

#### **MED-WELLNESS: MEDICINE MEETS MINDFULNESS**

Luxury spas are increasingly blending medical innovation with sensory comfort. This new discipline, dubbed “med-wellness”, integrates red-light therapy, peptide infusions, exosome facials, and hormonal rebalancing into serene, non-clinical settings.

Red and near-infrared light activate mitochondria, boosting energy and accelerating tissue repair, promote growth factors that enhance skin elasticity, while micronutrient IVs combat fatigue and low immunity during the darker months.

Guests leave not only feeling restored but visibly transformed: skin firmer, circulation stronger, and energy levels renewed. The philosophy is shifting, luxury is no longer excess, but longevity made tangible.

#### **BIOPHILIC MINIMALISM: DESIGN THAT BREATHES**

Design is the silent healer in today’s spas. Natural stone, warm timber, moss walls, and diffused lighting work together to create interiors that breathe. Biophilic design, which draws on humanity’s instinctive bond with nature, reduces stress and heart rate while enhancing mental clarity. The contrast between cold views and warm interiors heightens that quiet awe of being safe within the elements.

This aesthetic also speaks to sustainability. Locally sourced materials and passive heating design reduce carbon footprints without sacrificing elegance. The result is luxury distilled into calm clarity, where less truly becomes more.

#### **VIRTUAL AND HYBRID WELLNESS**

Technology’s most surprising new role in wellness is its gentleness. The latest generation of virtual experiences aims not to distract but to deepen sensory presence. Pioneering studies demonstrate that airflow and temperature cues can mimic the sensation of warm water immersion without a single drop of liquid.

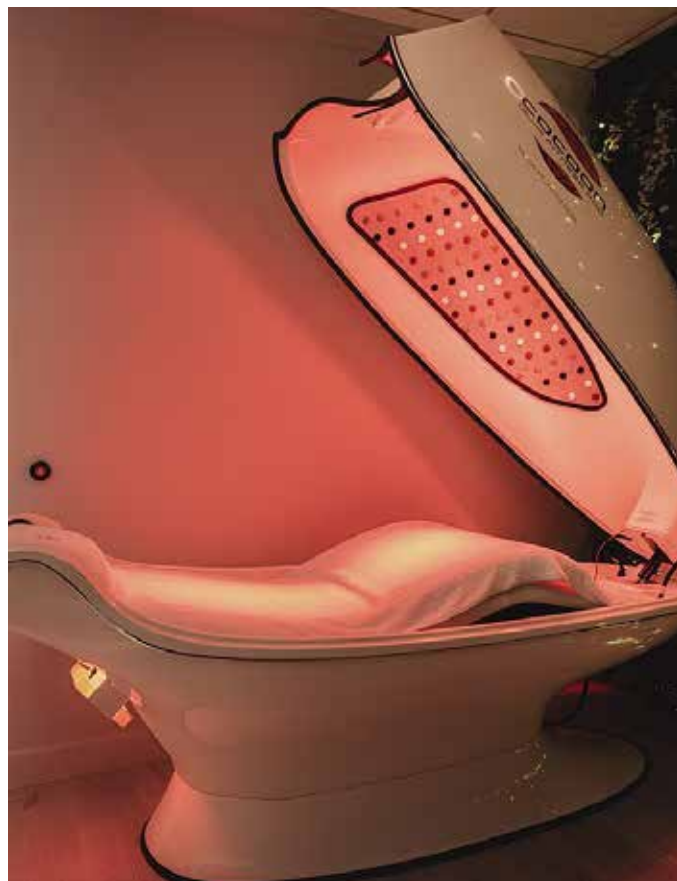
Luxury spas are experimenting with similar techniques: VR headsets transporting guests into Nordic forests, combined with real scents of pine and subtle changes in ambient temperature, or meditations beneath projections of the northern lights.

This innovation harnesses neuroplasticity, the brain’s ability to integrate multiple sensory inputs into a single, believable reality. By gently stimulating certain areas of the brain, virtual cues trigger genuine relaxation and lower blood pressure. These immersive therapies are also ecologically sound, significantly reducing water and energy use while delivering authentic physiological calm.

For travellers in tropical or temperate climates, virtual winter wellness offers the quiet contemplation of snow and solitude without the chill, a mindful meeting of imagination and technology.

#### **THE NEW DEFINITION OF WINTER WELLNESS**

Taken together, these eight trends illustrate a shift in luxury from excess to intention. In 2025, the finest spas understand that warmth is not simply temperature; it’s care calibrated by science and design. Guests seek refuge that restores circadian rhythm, skin health, circulation, and emotional equilibrium.



Infrared Capsule. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

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FRANCK MULLER  
GENEVE



# GLOBAL STYLE CAPITALS

Where the world shops, dreams, and defines luxury.

## TT BUREAU

Fashion is more than fabric and form. It is culture, art, and self-expression woven together. Across continents, four cities define this spirit of creation and reinvention. Milan, Paris, New York and Dubai stand as beacons of beauty and ambition, each shaping global style in its own extraordinary way.

### MILAN: THE FASHION CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Milan sits at the heart of fashion's grand design. The city has built its reputation on craftsmanship, precision, and quiet sophistication. It is where elegance is not performed but lived. Milanese style speaks through details — the cut of a jacket, the texture of leather, the grace of a silhouette.

The story of Milan's rise begins in its tradition of tailoring and textiles. After the war years, as Italy rebuilt, Milan became the centre of creativity and production. Local designers brought new life to Italian fashion, crafting garments that celebrated both simplicity and luxury.

At the centre of this universe is the Quadrilatero della Moda, the Fashion Quadrilateral, formed by Via Montenapoleone, Via della Spiga, Via Manzoni, and Corso Venezia. Walking these streets feels like entering a private conversation between style and architecture. Every boutique window is a statement of artistry. Inside, the service is personal, refined, and deeply rooted in Italian hospitality.

Beyond these polished streets, neighbourhoods like Brera and Navigli reveal a more artistic side of Milan. Here, concept stores and vintage shops bring modern creativity to life. The fashion experience extends into design museums such as Armani/Silos and Fondazione Prada, which show how art and clothing evolve together.

To shop in Milan is to understand that luxury is not about showmanship. It is about mastery, subtlety, and timelessness.



Image Courtesy: Mathias Reding, Pexels

### PARIS: THE ETERNAL CAPITAL OF COUTURE

If Milan is fashion's discipline, Paris is its soul. The French capital has long been the cradle of haute couture and the stage where elegance becomes emotion. Here, fashion exists not as a display of wealth but as a philosophy of living beautifully.

The city's heritage is steeped in artistry. From the ateliers of Chanel and Dior to the salons of Hermès and Givenchy, Paris perfected the idea of fashion as art. The Golden Triangle, formed by Avenue Montaigne, Avenue George V, and Rue François 1er, remains a sanctuary for luxury. Stepping into one of its boutiques



Dubai Festival City Mall From The Marina. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons





*Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II Shopping Mall In Milan. Image Courtesy: Tuur Tisseghem, Pexels*

feels like entering a world where every stitch tells a story.

Yet Paris's fashion pulse beats beyond its iconic maisons. In Le Marais and Saint-Germain-des-Prés, independent designers and vintage curators reinvent French chic. These neighbourhoods embody effortless style — an understated confidence that never tries too hard. Even the city's cafés are part of its fashion language. To sit by the window of a Parisian café, watching people stroll past in perfectly tailored coats, is to witness a live lesson in elegance.

Paris also leads the conversation on sustainability and craftsmanship. Emerging designers blend innovation with heritage, proving that luxury can evolve responsibly. Whether buying a silk scarf, a bespoke suit, or a signature perfume, every purchase in Paris carries a sense of history and artistry.

In Paris, fashion is not worn for attention but for self-expression. It is poetry in motion, whispered through design and worn with quiet pride.

### **NEW YORK: WHERE FASHION MEETS THE STREET**

New York is a city that never stops changing, and its fashion reflects that constant movement. It is the birthplace of ready-to-wear, the land of streetwear, and the global symbol of style without boundaries. In New York, creativity belongs to everyone.

Fifth Avenue remains the city's grand boulevard of glamour. Lined with the world's most prestigious brands, it celebrates luxury with theatrical flair. Stores like Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue define classic sophistication, while independent designers nearby reimagine what modern luxury means.

Yet New York's true magic lies in its diversity. Walk a few blocks from Fifth Avenue and you enter SoHo, where cobblestone streets host concept boutiques and art-driven fashion houses. The Meatpacking District radiates avant-garde energy, while Brooklyn neighbourhoods like Williamsburg showcase sustainable design and vintage revival. Here, individuality is the ultimate accessory.

The city's influence reaches beyond shopping. New York Fashion Week remains one of the most dynamic events in the world, known for its inclusivity and creative freedom. The runways mirror the streets — bold, expressive, and fearless.

To experience fashion in New York is to embrace contrast. A Wall Street executive and a graffiti artist can stand side by side, each dressed with conviction. Both belong. Both represent the city's heartbeat.

New York teaches that fashion is not about perfection but about personality. It celebrates authenticity in a world that often prizes imitation. Every outfit tells a story of ambition, resilience, and originality.



*Outside Dubai Mall. Image Courtesy: Kadir Avşar, Pexels*





*Notes on Fashion exhibit at the Met, New York. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

## DUBAI: THE NEW FRONTIER OF LUXURY

Rising between desert dunes and shimmering skyscrapers, Dubai has redefined global luxury. It is a city that dreams in silk and gold, where fashion is both heritage and spectacle. In a few decades, Dubai has evolved into one of the world's most influential style destinations.

The Dubai Mall and the Mall of the Emirates are the crown jewels of this modern fashion empire. Their vast halls are filled with designer houses, bespoke ateliers, and immersive experiences. Fashion Avenue at the Dubai Mall alone feels like a city within a city, where marble corridors and perfumed air create an atmosphere of refined opulence.

But Dubai's fashion story goes beyond its malls. The Dubai Design District, or D3, is home to creative pioneers

shaping the region's identity. Here, Arab designers reinterpret tradition with contemporary sophistication, crafting garments that celebrate modesty and modernity in equal measure. The result is a fusion of cultures that speaks to the city's cosmopolitan spirit.

Perfume and jewellery hold special importance in Dubai's fashion heritage. The scent of oud and rose lingers in the air, and gold glitters in every souk. The Gold Souk in Deira remains a living museum of craftsmanship, where each piece of jewellery is designed with passion and precision.

Fashion in Dubai is not limited to what one wears. It extends into lifestyle, hospitality, and architecture. Every restaurant, hotel, and art space feels designed for visual pleasure. The city's annual fashion events bring together global designers and influencers, positioning Dubai as the creative heart of the Middle East.

To explore Dubai's fashion world is to witness ambition translated into beauty. It is a city that believes in possibility, and its elegance reflects its unstoppable vision.

## THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE OF STYLE

Together, Milan, Paris, New York, and Dubai form a map of the modern fashion world. Milan gives structure, Paris gives soul, New York gives energy, and Dubai gives imagination. Each city speaks its own dialect of design, yet all share a common purpose — to turn creativity into identity..



*La Tour Eiffel vue de Saint-Jacques, Paris. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

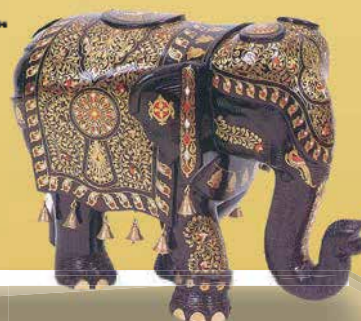




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# INSIDE THE WORLD OF THE RAREST CARS



*Rolls-Royce La Rose Noire Droptail. Image Courtesy: Rolls Royce*

A journey through engineering brilliance and bespoke design, celebrating the rarest and most opulent cars ever built.

**CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO**

In the rarefied sphere of automotive excellence, beauty and precision find their highest expression in machines built for legacy rather than distance. Created for collectors, visionaries, and connoisseurs, these machines are the ultimate celebration of design and engineering mastery.

The most expensive cars transform movement into art, their forms sculpted by artisans who understand that true perfection exists only in detail. Every vehicle is a composition of power, elegance, and individuality, where price becomes a testament to creative brilliance rather than a measure of wealth.

## **ROLLS-ROYCE LA ROSE NOIRE DROPTAIL**

At the summit of this glittering hierarchy stands the Rolls-Royce La Rose Noire Droptail, valued at an unprecedented \$30 million. It is not a car in the traditional sense but an artistic creation sculpted through patience, precision, and imagination. Only four will ever exist, each the result of nearly three years of handcrafting by the world's most skilled artisans at Goodwood.

Inspired by the elusive Black Baccara rose, a flower admired for its velvety petals and deep, mysterious hue, the Droptail captures romance and rarity in every detail. The interior design features a mosaic of 1,603 individually

shaped Black Sycamore veneer pieces arranged into a pattern resembling falling petals. Every triangle has been hand-cut, polished, and placed to create an effect that feels alive under shifting light.

The craftsmanship inside speaks to an obsessive devotion to perfection. Each section of leather has been hand-dyed, stretched, and stitched to microscopic precision. The dashboard glimmers with 24-karat gold accents and rare gemstone inlays, creating an atmosphere that feels more like a fine jewellery salon than a cockpit. Even the wheels have been designed to echo the curvature of the rose's petals, each one machined from solid aluminium and polished until mirror-like.

Underneath the elegance beats the heart of a 6.75-litre twin-turbocharged V12 engine capable of producing 563 horsepower and 847 Nm of torque. Acceleration from 0 to 60 mph takes only 4.8 seconds, yet figures are almost irrelevant here. The Droptail was not built for speed alone. It was designed for those who see automobiles as expressions of identity and art, who understand that perfection is measured not in time, but in timelessness.

## **ROLLS-ROYCE BOAT TAIL**

A close companion in magnificence, the Rolls-Royce Boat Tail represents the pinnacle of bespoke design. Priced at

\$28 million, this limited edition of three vehicles embodies the spirit of 1930s J-Class yachts, where elegance and adventure met under polished mahogany decks.

Each Boat Tail is created around its owner's personal story, merging automotive craftsmanship with a lifestyle philosophy that celebrates leisure, artistry, and refinement. The most remarkable feature is the rear deck, which conceals a "hosting suite" unlike anything seen in the automotive world. With the touch of a button, the rear panels open like butterfly wings to reveal a champagne cooler, crystal flutes, silver cutlery, and handcrafted cocktail tables. A parasol automatically unfolds, providing shade for an impromptu picnic in perfect style.

Inside, teak wood and leather echo the craftsmanship of classic yacht interiors. Every switch and control has been hand-milled from solid aluminium. The clock on the dashboard is a bespoke timepiece designed by Bovet, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars and removable for personal wear.

The Boat Tail's twin-turbocharged 6.75-litre V12 engine delivers 563 horsepower, gliding forward with effortless serenity. Yet its real allure lies not in performance but in the intimacy of its details. Every inch of the car, from the brushed metal trim to the diamond-polished wood veneers, speaks of a deeper connection between man, material, and meaning. The Boat Tail transforms the act of driving into a ceremony of elegance, where craftsmanship becomes a form of expression.

### BUGATTI LA VOITURE NOIRE

Bugatti's La Voiture Noire is a dark, commanding vision of power and beauty. Valued at \$18.7 million, it stands as both an homage to history and a testament to modern



*Bugatti La Voiture Noire. Image Courtesy: Bugatti*

innovation. Its name, meaning "The Black Car," is a tribute to the lost Type 57 SC Atlantic once owned by Jean Bugatti, which vanished during the Second World War and became one of the greatest mysteries in automotive lore.

The modern La Voiture Noire takes that myth and translates it into sculpted carbon fibre perfection. The body, made entirely by hand, gleams in an impossibly deep "Black Carbon Glossy" finish that absorbs and refracts light with liquid-like precision. Each curve and vent serves both aesthetic and aerodynamic purpose, creating an impression of power held in elegant restraint.

At its core lies Bugatti's monumental 8.0-litre quad-turbo W16 engine, producing 1,500 horsepower and 1,600 Nm of torque. Power is delivered through six hand-crafted exhaust pipes, each meticulously polished. The car accelerates with ferocity, but its purpose is far grander than speed. Every detail, from the 25 milled LEDs in each headlamp to the Havana Brown leather interior stitched by traditional French craftsmen, reflects Bugatti's obsession with harmony between engineering and art.



*Rolls-Royce Boat Tail. Image Courtesy: Rolls Royce*





*Pagani Zonda HP Barchetta. Image Courtesy: Pagani*

Inside, mechanical dials, analogue switches, and rich leather evoke Bugatti's pre-war racing heritage while integrating modern aerodynamic controls. The cabin carries an air of restrained opulence, where luxury does not shout but whispers its presence through material perfection. Bugatti has created more than a vehicle here; it has built a legend reborn.

#### **PAGANI ZONDA HP BARCHETTA**

In the Pagani Zonda HP Barchetta, every bolt and curve is a celebration of human artistry. Priced at \$17 million and limited to three cars, it is one of the most personal

projects of its creator, Horacio Pagani. Built to mark his 60th birthday and to honour the legacy of the Zonda, the HP Barchetta fuses Italian romance with aerospace precision.

The open-top design eliminates the windshield entirely, leaving driver and passenger exposed to the symphony of its naturally aspirated 7.3-litre Mercedes-AMG V12 engine. The engine produces 800 horsepower and roars through titanium exhausts that sing in perfect mechanical harmony. The sensation of wind, sound, and vibration creates an experience that feels elemental and pure, where every sense is alive.

Distinctive rear wheel covers reference the aerodynamic styling of Group C race cars, a nod to motorsport heritage. The wheels carry asymmetric colours, with gold on one side and blue on the other, representing Horacio Pagani's philosophy that beauty lies in contrast and imperfection.

The chassis combines carbon fibre and titanium, materials that make the car featherlight yet immensely strong. Each panel is hand-laid, sanded, and polished to a satin sheen. Inside, aluminium switches and leather seats showcase the intricacy of Italian craftsmanship. Every Zonda HP Barchetta requires over 4,000 hours of human labour, a testament to Pagani's belief that the soul of a car resides in the hands that build it.

The result is a machine that transcends categories. It is neither sports car nor sculpture, but both, balanced in perfect proportion between mechanical genius and artistic emotion.

#### **SP AUTOMOTIVE CHAOS**

The SP Automotive Chaos, priced at \$14.4 million, heralds the dawn of a new era in automotive engineering.



*Pagani Zonda HP Barchetta. Image Courtesy: Pagani*

Designed in Greece, it is the world's first "ultracar", created using radical manufacturing methods that challenge everything known about car production.

The Chaos is largely 3D-printed using aerospace-grade titanium and magnesium, combined with carbon composites. This technique allows every component to be optimised for strength, lightness, and aerodynamic efficiency. The chassis is made of Zylon, a material five times stronger than steel and twice as strong as Kevlar, typically used in bulletproof armour and spacecraft.

Its twin-turbo 4.0-litre V10 engine generates 3,065 horsepower and 1,984 Nm of torque, capable of achieving 0–100 km/h in a staggering 1.8 seconds. Performance aside, the engineering is extraordinary. Carbon-graphene brakes dissipate heat flawlessly, while active underbody flaps function as air brakes. Even the steering wheel can be 3D-printed to the exact shape of an owner's hands using laser-scanned measurements.

The Chaos represents the future of bespoke craftsmanship, where digital precision meets human imagination. Production is limited to fewer than 20 units a year, each built according to the owner's specific requests. This car is not only a symbol of progress but also of philosophy. It embodies the idea that perfection will never be static; it evolves with the tools of its time.

#### **BEYOND PRICE: THE ESSENCE OF PERFECTION**

These machines transcend the meaning of transportation.



*3D Printed Magnesium Wheels & Brakes. Image Courtesy: SP Automotive*

Each represents a different language of beauty, built by those who refuse compromise. Rolls-Royce creates poetry in craftsmanship, Bugatti builds power as an art form, Pagani sculpts emotion in carbon, and SP Automotive envisions the future through invention.

Every stitch, bolt, and surface carries the fingerprint of human devotion. For the fortunate few who acquire them, ownership is not simply a transaction but an inheritance of artistry. These cars are testaments to human imagination and discipline, proving that when technology and passion unite, even steel and carbon can acquire a soul.

They are, in every sense, the apex of automotive excellence.



*SP Automotive Chaos. Image Courtesy: SP Automotive*



# BEATS BEYOND BORDERS

India's new-age music festivals are redefining sound, community, and creative freedom.

M GOUTHAM



Ziro Music Festival. Image Courtesy: Ministry of Tourism India

India's music map has transformed dramatically in the past decade. What began as a handful of niche gatherings has evolved into a thriving circuit of world-class festivals that celebrate experimentation and individuality. Today's festival culture embraces indie, electronic, jazz, hip-hop, folk, and fusion—uniting audiences who crave authenticity as much as rhythm.

These festivals represent the best of that creative surge. Each fuses sound with setting, transforming familiar landscapes into immersive experiences that capture the imagination of a new generation of listeners.

## NH7 WEEKENDER

Few events capture India's artistic pulse quite like NH7 Weekender, a multi-city celebration often described as "The Happiest Music Festival." Since its inception in 2010, the festival, organised by Nodwin Gaming, has become the heartbeat of the independent music movement.

Every winter, fields in Pune and Meghalaya burst into life as thousands gather beneath open skies for a riot of sound and colour. Multiple stages host simultaneous performances that move fluidly between genres: indie pop gives way to hip-hop, funk blends into rock, and folk duos share the bill with global electronic stars.

Each edition promises a powerhouse lineup, blending global names with homegrown stars. Over the years, NH7 Weekender has hosted acts as diverse as The Lumineers, Megadeth, Mark Ronson, and Flying Lotus, alongside Indian legends like A. R.

Rahman, Divine, Nucleya, and Prateek Kuhad. The result is a festival that celebrates musical diversity and offers something new for every listener.

The NH7 experience isn't limited to music; comedy acts, interactive workshops, and a lively bazaar make it a complete cultural celebration. True to its mission of discovery, NH7 Weekender is also a launchpad for emerging artists, often spotlighting talent from India's Northeast and independent scenes.

## ZIRO FESTIVAL OF MUSIC

In the serene Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, music doesn't compete with nature; it becomes part of it. Founded in 2012 by Bobby Hano and Anup Kutty, the Ziro Festival of Music is a four-day ode to sustainability and sound.

Each September, the Apatani tribe welcomes travellers into their world of paddy fields and pine-covered slopes. Bamboo stages rise from the earth, powered by solar energy and framed by the blue ridges of the Himalayas. Performers arrive from across India and the world: indie bands, folk collectives, and experimental ensembles share a space that feels timeless.

Days melt into evenings as music flows seamlessly between sets. There are no barriers or backstage divides—artists and audiences camp side by side, trading stories over bonfires and cups of local rice wine. Between performances, travellers wander through craft markets and food stalls run by the villagers, deepening the connection between culture and community.

Ziro's true rhythm lies in its authenticity. It's not driven by glamour or commercial hype but by the collective hum of shared experience. The valley itself seems to sing—each performance amplifying the rustle of the fields and the whisper of mountain wind.

### MAHINDRA BLUES FESTIVAL

Every February, the streets of Bandra West resonate with the sound of guitars and the promise of nostalgia as the Mahindra Blues Festival transforms Mehboob Studios into an intimate arena of emotion. Established in 2011, it has become Asia's largest celebration of blues.

Since its inception in 2011, the festival has attracted some of the world's finest blues artists, creating a vibrant and thriving blues community in the region, offering a rare opportunity to experience the genre's legends and rising stars in an intimate setting.

The festival boasts an impressive international lineup, having hosted icons like Buddy Guy, John Mayall, Charlie Musselwhite, and Joss Stone. Alongside these global stars, the Mahindra Blues Festival actively supports Indian blues talent through its Mahindra Blues Band Hunt, providing a platform for emerging bands to showcase their skills and gain recognition.

The venue itself adds to the charm. Mehboob Studios, with its vintage film heritage, is transformed into a blues haven. The result is an experience that feels steeped in nostalgia yet alive with the energy of a world-class live show.

### JAZZ INDIA CIRCUIT

The Jazz India Circuit (JIC) is a travelling celebration of jazz and



*Audience at NH7 Weekender. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

experimental music. Spread across Delhi, Goa, and Bengaluru, it's a roving festival that turns each city into a playground of syncopated rhythm and inventive collaboration.

Dedicated to reviving and promoting jazz, the festival brings together an impressive lineup of both Indian and international artists, making it a true melting pot of musical talent and innovation. Its programming is known for its experimental edge, featuring not just performances but also collaborative projects, interactive workshops, and lively jam sessions.

Workshops and late-night jam sessions extend the experience beyond the stage, transforming audiences into participants. The open-air venues, urban galleries, and waterfront lawns give the performances an unhurried intimacy, where every note seems to dissolve into conversation.

In JIC's world, music is fluid, democratic, and borderless. It's less about performance and more about communion—between artist and listener, culture and curiosity.



*Sun Burn Festival Stage. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*





Camp Zingaro Site at Bacardi NH7 Weekender. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

## SUNBURN FESTIVAL

When December arrives, Goa's Vagator Beach ignites with sound. Sunburn, Asia's largest electronic dance music (EDM) festival, is a phenomenon that blurs the line between concert and carnival. The beachfront morphs into a pulsating dreamscape—towering stages, pyrotechnics that kiss the sea breeze, and an ocean of revellers moving as one under the neon glow. The festival's line-ups read like an international hall of fame: Martin Garrix, Afrojack, Hardwell, Armin van Buuren, DJ Snake, and KSHMR have all commanded its decks. Yet amid the spectacle, Sunburn's success lies in how it creates belonging.

By day, travellers stretch out on the sand, attend yoga workshops, or explore digital art installations scattered through the festival grounds. As dusk falls, the bassline becomes the heartbeat of the coast, fireworks sync with rhythm, and thousands of hands rise in unison. The experience is part pilgrimage, part sensory overload—a fusion of freedom, fantasy, and friendship.

Sunburn captures India's cosmopolitan confidence; it is an embrace of global culture expressed in its own exuberant dialect of light and sound.



Ziro music festival. Image Courtesy: Ministry of Tourism, India

## CONTROL ALT DELETE

While most festivals dazzle with sponsorships and production scale, Control ALT Delete (CAD) thrives on raw authenticity. Created in 2011 by Nikhil Udupa and Himanshu Vaswani, it is India's first crowdfunded music festival—a radical experiment where the audience funds the art.

This is an event beyond corporate logos or ticket barriers. Attendees pay what they can, sometimes as little as a rupee, and the proceeds go directly to the performing artists. Envisioned as a crowdfunded initiative, CAD runs entirely on a "Pay What You Want" model, making it one of the most inclusive, accessible and community driven festivals in the country. The result is a space where creativity breathes; a truly democratic festival for music.

Over the course of more than a decade, CAD has given a stage to over 150 artists, many of whom went on to become the faces of Indian hip-hop, including Divine, Emiway, and MC Stan. The line-up stretches from metal to electronica, indie pop to jazz fusion, each performance infused with a do-it-yourself intensity.



Echoes of Earth. Image Courtesy: echoesofearth.com



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.

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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

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

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





*Echoes of Earth. Image Courtesy: echoesofearth.com*

The festival is as much about its DIY spirit as it is about the music. Multi-genre stages, jam sessions under the stars, art installations, and on-site camping all contribute to its reputation as a gathering that feels like a music community coming together. Its editions in Mumbai and Goa have become hubs for independent culture, with each event doubling as a discovery ground for the next big sound in Indian music.

### ECHOES OF EARTH

Echoes of Earthn, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, stages a festival where art, music, and environmental consciousness move in harmony. Founded by Roshan Netalkar in 2016, it remains India's first fully eco-conscious music event and one of the most visually imaginative.

Every edition adopts a theme, Symphony of Seasons, Circle of Life, Resonance of the Wild, inspiring everything from stage design to installations. Bamboo, discarded wood, and recycled metal are transformed into sculptures that tower beside the performance arenas. The result feels like walking through a futuristic forest built by artists.

The line-ups traverse continents. Acts such as FKJ, Acid Pauli, Glass Beams, Tinariwen, Satori, and Parra for Cuva share the stage with Indian innovators like Prateek Kuhad, Blot, Kutle Khan, and Mohini Dey. Genres shift from ambient electronica to desert blues to jazz fusion, unified by the festival's underlying ethos: celebrate creativity, respect the planet.

Beyond the music, Echoes curates eco-workshops, wellness corners, and a buzzing flea market that spotlights sustainable fashion and crafts. The crowd—artists, professionals, families—comes as much for inspiration as entertainment. As dusk falls and the lights reflect off the art installations, the entire landscape hums with the idea that the future of festivals can be both conscious and electric.

### PLUGGED INTO TOMORROW

With younger audiences leading the charge, in these music festivals, tradition meets technology, and global trends meet local expression.

Each event reflects a distinct mood yet contributes to one larger movement, the democratisation of sound. They connect city dwellers with valleys, beaches with metropolises, and artists with audiences who crave authenticity over spectacle.

In their lights, India's cultural landscape glows brighter. They pulse like living experiments in art and sound, places where cultures remix, voices collide, and music speaks a universal tongue. They remind us that music, in all its forms, remains the purest expression of who we are and what we aspire to become.



*The Beautiful Beats of Jazz. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



# STUNNINGLY SPORTY

Travellers, sports enthusiasts, and adventure-seekers pay close attention! Carl F. Bucherer Manero Central Counter is a sporty chronograph in manly shades of green and black with just the right hint of glamour. With a hybrid rubber strap, domed sapphire crystal and stainless steel casing, this limited-edition timepiece is going to take your breath away.



# 24 HOURS IN KOLKATA

Ferries, food, heritage, and mishti—Kolkata in a day.

TT BUREAU

Time slows in Kolkata. Step into its faded grandeur and the city gently unfolds. Yellow Ambassador taxis weave through crowded lanes, trams hum past colonial facades, and tea stalls brim with endless chatter. The Indo-Victorian mansions, their paint peeling and balconies drooping with vines, seem to hold time still. Even amid chaos, Kolkata urges you to pause and breathe.

Called the City of Joy, this is a place of warmth, art, and rhythm. Music, theatre, and literature spill into daily life, and during Durga Puja, the city turns into a living festival. Kolkata is also a mosaic of cultures — Chinese, Anglo-Indian, Armenian, Marwari, and Bihari — each leaving a mark on its food and traditions. One day cannot capture it all, but twenty-four hours is enough to feel its heartbeat.

## MORNING AT PRINSEP GHAT

Begin your morning at Prinsep Ghat, where tranquillity meets heritage. Built in memory of scholar James Prinsep, this white Palladian monument stands elegantly by the Hooghly River. Arrive at dawn for a ferry ride and watch the sunrise over the Vidyasagar Setu and Howrah Bridge. Across the river, colonial buildings glow in soft light as Howrah slowly wakes.

Walk further to Mullick Ghat Flower Market, one of Asia's largest, where heaps of marigolds, roses, and lotuses fill the air with colour and scent. Florists call out prices, porters move in rhythm, and the morning air smells of jasmine and rain. Watching Kolkata awaken by the river is an experience no other city offers.

## A CHINESE BREAKFAST AT TIRETTA BAZAAR

By early morning, head to Tiretta Bazaar, Asia's oldest Chinatown. Around six o'clock, bamboo steamers lift to reveal bao, dumplings stuffed with pork and chives, sticky rice rolls, and fried wontons. The food is simple, affordable, and steeped in tradition.

The Chinese community's story in Kolkata began in 1778 with Tong Atchew, a merchant who set up a sugarcane plantation near Budge Budge. Later, Hakka immigrants settled here, bringing their flavours and craftsmanship. Their morning market remains one of Kolkata's most unique experiences — humble, aromatic, and unforgettable.

## HERITAGE WALK: NORTH KOLKATA

Next, wander through North Kolkata, where the city's past lives on. Narrow lanes reveal red-brick schools, moss-covered courtyards, and the grand "bonedi bari" mansions of Bengal's old aristocracy. Corinthian columns and pastel arches stand beside fading wooden balconies. Some buildings have been restored into cafés, while others crumble quietly, their beauty softened by time.

Here, architecture tells stories of wealth and culture intertwined. Hand-pulled rickshaws glide by, incense wafts from shrines, and elderly men gather under banyan trees for unhurried gossip. This is Kolkata's living museum — a city that preserves its past even as it evolves.

## LITERARY HAVEN AT COLLEGE STREET

After your walk, head to College Street, Asia's largest second-





Temple in Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Rohit Sharma, Pexels

hand book market. Stalls overflow with novels, textbooks, and rare editions. Students, professors, and collectors browse shoulder to shoulder, flipping through pages that smell of ink and nostalgia.

At its heart lies the Indian Coffee House, where poets and revolutionaries once debated over endless cups of frothy coffee. The marble tables and high ceilings remain unchanged, still buzzing with conversation. To sip coffee here is to join a century-old tradition that shaped Bengal's cultural and intellectual soul.

Lunch the Local Way at a Pice Hotel

By noon, hunger calls for a true local meal. Stop at a Pice hotel, such as the Swadhin Bharat Hindu Hotel near College Street. These eateries, named after the old "pice" coin, once fed students and workers home-style food at modest prices.

Inside, wooden benches and banana-leaf plates set the tone. Rice, dal, fried vegetables, and fish curry form the staple menu, served quickly and with warmth. Founded in 1927, this simple establishment still captures the city's essence — humble, hearty, and communal.

### AFTERNOON AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL

After lunch, walk to the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata's marble masterpiece set amid 64 acres of gardens. Built between 1906 and 1921 to honour Queen Victoria, it fuses Mughal, Renaissance, and classical styles. Architect William Emerson used Makrana marble, the same stone as the Taj Mahal, giving it a glow that shifts with the light.

Inside are galleries filled with paintings, manuscripts, sculptures, and portraits that document India's colonial era. Outside, manicured lawns and fountains provide calm respite. As evening sunlight washes over its domes, the monument glows softly, like poetry carved in stone.

### EVENING INDULGENCE: STREET FOOD WALKS

As the day fades, Kolkata's street food scene bursts to life.



Park Street, Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

Start with kathi rolls along Park Street, where parathas filled with spicy chicken, mutton, or egg sizzle on tawas and are served hot with chutney and lemon. Next, try the famous phuchkas, tiny crispy shells filled with spiced potatoes and tangy tamarind water — fiery, messy, and addictive.

Round off with telebhaja, golden fritters of potato, brinjal, or paneer that pair perfectly with evening tea. Each bite tells a story of the city's inventiveness and love for flavour. On every corner, vendors and diners form a rhythm that defines Kolkata evenings — lively, generous, and full of laughter.

### DINNER AT ARSALAN

No visit to Kolkata is complete without tasting the legendary biryani at Arsalan. Established in the 1960s, it has become synonymous with the city's signature style of biryani that



Howrah Bridge, Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Shiva Soumi, Pexels





*St Paul's Cathedral, Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

traces its roots to Lucknow's Awadhi cuisine. The Kolkata version is lighter, with a subtle sweetness and the addition of potatoes, which have become a defining touch.

Each plate at Arsalan carries a perfect balance of aromatic basmati rice, tender mutton or chicken, saffron, and kewra essence. The flavours are rich yet delicate, served with boiled eggs, cucumber raita, and salad. Whether you visit the bustling Park Street outlet or one of its many branches, the experience is unforgettable. The biryani here tells a story of migration, adaptation, and culinary pride that defines Kolkata itself.

#### **SWEET ENDINGS: ICONIC BENGALI MISHTI**

A day in Kolkata must end with mishti, its most beloved offering. Step into sweet shops like K.C. Das, Balaram Mullick & Radharaman Mullick, or Bhogolia, and you will find a world of sugary artistry. Rosogolla, the soft syrupy cheese balls, are the



*Eco Park, Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

pride of Bengal. Sandesh, made from chenna and flavoured with saffron or rose, melts gently on the tongue. Mishti doi, a cool, sweetened yoghurt, refreshes after a hearty meal.

Depending on the season, you may find langcha or patishapta, coconut-filled crepes dipped in syrup. These confections are made with care, using recipes handed down over generations. For Kolkatans, sweets are not mere desserts; they are a language of affection, celebration, and continuity.

#### **THE SOUL OF A CITY**

In twenty-four hours, you will have seen the colonial heart of the city, its vibrant food scene, and its artistic soul. Kolkata lives in its conversations, its old buildings, its poetry, and above all, in its warmth. As night falls and the tram bells fade into the distance, you realise that in this city, time does not rush forward. It lingers, gently asking you to stay a little longer.



*The Iconic Eden Gardens, Kolkata. Image Courtesy: Noor Zaman, Pexels*



# WHY? TO GET A STEP AHEAD OF DISEASE.

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Chalta Bagan Durga Puja. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

# DURGA PUJA 2025

Faith, Art and Togetherness: Kolkata's Grand Open-Air Festival

**JEET BHATTACHARYA**

**D**urga Puja 2025 will once again fill Bengal with devotion, artistry, and joy. As monsoon clouds clear, the sight of kaash phool and the beat of dhaaks signal the Goddess's arrival. Recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, the festival unites faith and creativity, transforming cities into radiant celebrations of light, music, and community spirit.

## THE MYTHOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM

Durga Puja celebrates the triumph of good over evil, rooted in the legend of Goddess Durga and Mahishasura. When the buffalo demon conquered the heavens, the gods united their powers to create Durga, the radiant warrior goddess. Armed with divine weapons and riding her lion, she battled Mahishasura for nine days before defeating him, restoring harmony to the universe. The story remains the soul of the festival, symbolising courage, righteousness, and the divine power within every being.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF DURGA'S IMAGE

Every element of Durga's image holds deep symbolism. Her ten

arms represent protection from all directions and the uniting of divine powers. Each weapon embodies a virtue: the sword for knowledge, the bow and arrow for focus, the trident for the power to destroy evil, and the conch shell for the sacred sound of creation. The lion she rides symbolises courage and determination, while the demon Mahishasura beneath her feet stands for arrogance and ignorance, forces that must be overcome for balance and harmony to prevail.

## THE SPIRITUAL RHYTHM OF THE DAYS

Durga Puja unfolds over five sacred days, each rich with symbolism and devotion. It begins with Shashthi, when the Goddess is invoked through Bodhon, marking her descent to the mortal world. On Saptami, the Kola Bou Snan takes place — a banana plant is bathed, adorned as a bride, and placed beside Ganesha, embodying fertility and prosperity.

Ashtami, the holiest day, brims with reverence as devotees offer Pushpanjali and perform Sandhi Puja at the divine juncture believed to mark Durga's triumph over Mahishasura. Navami honours the Goddess in her most powerful form, with prayers





*Dhunuchi Dance, Durga Puja Celebration. Image Courtesy: Sudipto Chakrabarty, Pexels*

for strength and protection.

The festival concludes on Dashami, when women celebrate Sindoor Khela, applying vermillion to the Goddess and each other before the idols are immersed amid chants of “Asche Bochor Abar Hobe” — a heartfelt promise that she will return next year, blending the joy of devotion with the bittersweet ache of farewell.

### THE PUJA CALENDAR FOR 2025

Mahalaya on 21 September 2025 ends Shraddha Paksha and begins Devi Paksha, as Durga’s eyes are painted in Kumartuli and Mahishasura Mardini fills the dawn. Maha Panchami on 27 September marks the city’s awakening, leading to Shashthi on 28 September when the Bodhon ritual welcomes the Goddess. Saptami on 29 September begins with Kola Bou Snan and vibrant celebrations, followed by Ashtami on 30 September with Pushpanjali, Kumari Puja, and Sandhi Puja. Navami on 1 October honours Maha Durga with Ayudha Puja, and Vijaya Dashami on 2 October ends with Sindoor Khela and the chant, “Asche Bochor Abar Hobe” — she will return next year.

### PREPARATIONS AND BUZZ BEFORE PUJA

Durga Puja’s magic begins in Kumartuli, North Kolkata, where artisans shape idols from straw and river clay. The sacred Chokkhu Daan on Mahalaya — when the Goddess’s eyes are painted — marks the moment faith meets artistry.

Across the city, pandals rise as breathtaking works of imagination, inspired by myth, history, and modern art. Many now embrace sustainability, using clay idols, natural dyes, solar lights, and recyclable décor for a greener celebration.

As the festival approaches, Kolkata bursts into life with dhaak beats, rehearsals, and food stalls serving kathi rolls, phuchkas, and sweets. The city pulses with excitement, uniting everyone in the shared joy of devotion and celebration.



*Devotees Immersing Maa Durga Near Howrah Bridge. Image Courtesy: Arvo Dutta, Pexels*

### DURGA PUJA 2025: FAITH AND A GREENER FUTURE

Iconic pandals like Sreebhumi Sporting Club will recreate the Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in New Jersey, while Ekdalia Evergreen pays tribute to Tamil Nadu’s Arunachaleswarar Temple. Santosh Mitra Square takes a patriotic route with “Operation Sindoor,” and Belgachia Sarbojanin explores philosophy through its theme “Existence.”

Across the city, artistry meets technology with LED mapping, projection visuals, and futuristic designs featuring metallic and cosmic motifs. Sustainability also takes the spotlight, with idols made of natural clay, recycled décor, and zero-waste initiatives. Inclusivity is being prioritised through ramps, Braille displays, and accessible spaces, while select pandals experiment with AR and VR, turning devotion into a truly immersive experience.

### THE RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Durga Puja is a spiritual journey woven through ancient rituals. It begins with Bodhon on Shashthi, when the Goddess is invoked and welcomed to her earthly home. On Saptami, the Kola Bou Snan sees a banana plant bathed and dressed in a red-bordered saree beside Ganesha, symbolising prosperity.



*Statue of Goddess Durga, Hindu Deity. Image Courtesy: Yogesh Nerkhede, Pexels*





Portrayal of Durga Puja in Bengal Through Painting. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

Pushpanjali follows on Saptami and Ashtami, as devotees offer flowers in devotion, leading to the festival's peak, Sandhi Puja, when 108 lamps are lit and dhaaks resound, marking Durga's victory over Mahishasura.

On Dashami, women celebrate Sindoor Khela, sharing vermilion in joy before the idols are carried for Visarjan, the farewell immersion marked by song, dance, and the hopeful chant, "Asche Bochor Abar Hobe."

### THE FOOD SCENE

Bhog, the sacred offering, remains the heart of the festival — steaming khichuri, spiced labra, and creamy payesh served to devotees in communal feasts that blur all divides. The simplicity of the meal, cooked in wood-fired cauldrons, carries the warmth of devotion and nostalgia.

Once evening falls, Kolkata's streets come alive with food

stalls and aromas, phuchkas bursting with tang, sizzling kathi rolls, crisp chops, and fragrant biryani with eggs and potatoes. Eating amid the laughter and chaos is part of Pujo's magic.

Adding a modern twist, new-age cafés and pop-ups offer fusion treats like khichuri arancini, phuchka shots, and payesh parfaits. These inventive menus bring tradition and trend together, reflecting the evolving spirit of Durga Puja.

### TOURISM, ECONOMY, AND GLOBAL ATTENTION

Durga Puja today is more than a festival; it is an economic and cultural powerhouse. The celebrations generate over ₹32,000 crore, about 2.5 percent of West Bengal's GDP, driving employment for thousands of artisans, designers, and performers.

Tourism peaks as millions travel to Kolkata and beyond, boosting hotels, restaurants, and retail. UNESCO's heritage recognition has also drawn global visitors, including the Bengali diaspora, who come to witness the grandeur.

The festival's media presence is immense, with televised coverage, documentaries, and a flood of social media content that showcase Bengal's creativity to the world.

### THE HEARTBEAT OF A CITY, THE SPIRIT OF A PEOPLE

Durga Puja is a celebration of unity, creativity, and devotion that transcends religion and class. For five vibrant days, millions join in worship, art, music, and food, transforming cities into living galleries of culture. Blending tradition with innovation, it sustains livelihoods while inspiring creativity. As 2025 approaches, the focus is on greener, more inclusive celebrations — a promise that when the chant "Asche Bochor Abar Hobe" rings out, it carries both faith and the hope of a sustainable future.



Baguiati Rail Pukur United Club Durga Puja. Image Courtesy: Media Connect!



## LAUREATO 42 MM

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







# GRACE IN MOTION

India's diverse dance heritage unites rhythm, devotion, and storytelling, celebrating centuries of culture, faith, and artistic expression.

## TT BUREAU

India's dance heritage is a living tapestry of rhythm, faith, and storytelling. Every region moves to its own beat, reflecting centuries of inherited tradition, mythology, and cultural nuance. Though this list is but a drop in the vast landscape of Indian ethnic dances, these classical and folk forms continue to embody the soul of India.

### **BHARATANATYAM: RHYTHM OF DEVOTION**

Bharatanatyam, one of India's oldest and most revered dance forms, traces its origins to the temples of Tamil Nadu. Deeply rooted in devotion, it evolved from the ancient ritual dance known as Sadir, once performed by devadasis as offerings to the gods. Over centuries, the dance absorbed philosophy and technique from the Natya Shastra, the ancient Sanskrit text on performing arts.

Each movement, hand gesture, and facial expression, known as mudras and abhinaya, is symbolic, forming a vocabulary that narrates spiritual stories and human emotions. The dancer's arched stance, known as aramandi, precision in rhythm, and geometric clarity make Bharatanatyam both meditative and intense. During the Chola dynasty, temple patronage allowed the form to flourish, and sculptural depictions of dancers on temple walls mirror the poses performed even today.

The music follows the Carnatic classical style, blending melodic ragas with intricate tala cycles. Dancers perform in traditional silk costumes with pleated fans, temple jewellery, and the red alta dye highlighting expressive feet and hands. Under British colonial rule, Bharatanatyam declined as temple dancing was stigmatised, yet revivalists like Rukmini Devi Arundale, Balasaraswati, and E. Krishna Iyer restored its dignity in the 20th century. Today, Bharatanatyam has become a global art form, transcending religious boundaries to express both spirituality and contemporary ideas with equal intensity.

### **KATHAK: SPIN, STAMP & NARRATIVE**

Kathak, the storytelling dance of northern India, emerged in the temple courtyards of Uttar Pradesh. Its name derives from katha, meaning story, and kathakar, the storyteller. In its earliest form, Kathak was a devotional art performed by wandering bards who travelled from village to village, narrating tales of Krishna, Rama, and other deities through expressive movement and song.

During the Mughal era, Kathak found a new stage in royal courts, evolving with Persian influences. The result was a

synthesis of Hindu and Islamic aesthetics that refined gesture, costume, and rhythm. The Mughal courts added grace and sensuality, while retaining the dance's narrative base. The footwork, known as tatkar, is lightning-fast and in perfect sync with the tabla and pakhawaj. The dancer's ankle bells, or ghungroos, act as instruments themselves, marking rhythm through intricate patterns.

Costumes reflect both temple and courtly origins: women often wear flowing anarkalis or lehengas, while men don angarkhas and churidars. The dance includes expressive storytelling (abhinaya), rhythmic compositions (toda and tukra), and improvisations that allow the performer to converse with the musicians. Today, Kathak has three main gharanas, Lucknow, Jaipur, and Banaras, each emphasising different aspects of storytelling, rhythm, or footwork. It continues to evolve through artists like Birju Maharaj, Kumudini Lakhia, and Aditi Mangaldas, who have expanded its vocabulary for contemporary audiences without losing its classical soul.



Manipuri Dancer. Image Courtesy: Kosygin Leishangthem, Pexels





Krishna Vesham in Kathakali. Image Courtesy: Pranjal Mulane, Pexels

### KATHAKALI: PAINTED FACES AND EPIC NARRATIVES

In Kerala, the grand spectacle of Kathakali captures the essence of theatre, dance, and devotion. Emerging in the 17th century, it evolved from temple dramas such as Krishnanattam and Koodiyattam, blending myth, music, and martial art-inspired movements. Its elaborate costumes, towering headgear, and vividly painted faces transform performers into gods, demons, and legendary heroes.

Green denotes noble characters, red symbolises aggression, and black signifies evil. The performer's training begins young, focusing on physical strength, flexibility, and control of facial muscles. A Kathakali artist can convey hundreds of emotions through eye movements and subtle facial shifts. The music, set to the sopana style of Kerala, combines the resonant beats of the chenda and maddalam drums with vocalists narrating Sanskrit and Malayalam verses.

Performances often last through the night, unfolding stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The setting, lit by traditional oil lamps, creates a sacred atmosphere where myth and reality merge. Today, Kathakali is taught in institutions like Kerala Kalamandalam and has become a cultural symbol of Kerala's identity. Its fusion of physical endurance, dramatic storytelling, and spiritual expression continues to mesmerise audiences worldwide.

### CHERAW: BAMBOO BEATS AND NIMBLE FEET

Cheraw, Mizoram's traditional bamboo dance, stands apart as an embodiment of community rhythm and joy. Often called the "bamboo dance," it involves pairs of performers striking bamboo poles on the ground while dancers step in and out in perfect harmony. Any misstep can trap the foot, making precision vital.

It is believed to date back centuries, perhaps as a ritual for safe childbirth or as a funeral rite to honour the souls of the departed. Over time, Cheraw transformed into a celebratory dance performed during harvest festivals and state occasions. Women wear bright puanchei skirts, colourful shawls, and silver ornaments, while the men handling the bamboo provide the beat with synchronised strikes.

The rhythm intensifies as drums and gongs join in, creating a trance-like pulse. Beyond its visual appeal, Cheraw symbolises the spirit of cooperation and timing within Mizo culture. Today, it is showcased at cultural festivals and Republic Day parades, representing the unity of India's tribal and folk traditions.

### MANIPURI: RAAS OF QUIET DEVOTION

Manipuri, hailing from the serene hills of Manipur, is a lyrical dance that celebrates divine love. Rooted in Vaishnavism, its central theme revolves around the Raas Leela, where Lord Krishna dances with Radha and the gopis. Unlike the dramatic postures of other classical dances, Manipuri flows with gentle restraint, embodying grace and humility.

Female dancers wear the distinctive potloi, a stiff cylindrical skirt decorated with mirrors and embroidery, while male dancers, portraying Krishna, wear yellow dhotis and turbans. The choreography emphasises smooth circular movements, delicate footwork, and seamless coordination between dance and music. Instruments such as the pung (drum), kartal (cymbals), and bamboo flute accompany the performance, adding spiritual serenity.

Manipuri has both classical and folk roots, with variations like Thang-Ta (martial dance) and Lai Haraoba, which celebrate local deities. Its quiet devotion and soft energy make it one of India's most spiritual dance traditions, expressing the idea that movement itself can be a form of prayer.

### ODISSI: TRIBHANGI AND TEMPLE LORE

Odissi, the classical dance of Odisha, is often described as sculpture brought to life. Its origins lie in the temple rituals of Puri and Konark, where maharis performed devotional dances before the deity Jagannath. Ancient inscriptions and carvings on temple walls preserve poses identical to those still seen on stage today.

Odissi is distinguished by the tribhangi posture that divides the body into three bends: neck, torso, and hip, creating sinuous, wave-like movements. The dance's repertoire includes pure dance (nritta), expressive dance (nritya), and dramatic storytelling (natya). The music blends classical Odissi ragas with rhythmic mardala drumming and soft vocal melodies.

The costume, usually in red, orange, or green silk, is paired with silver jewellery and a crescent-shaped mukut headpiece made of white flowers. In the mid-20th century, gurus such as Kelucharan Mohapatra, Pankaj Charan Das, and Sanjukta Panigrahi revived Odissi from near obscurity, restoring its stature as one of India's major classical forms.

#### **KUCHIPUDI: DRAMA, DANCE, AND A BRASS PLATE**

Kuchipudi, born in Andhra Pradesh, merges the expressive language of theatre with the precision of classical dance. It began in the village of Kuchipudi, where male Brahmin troupes performed Bhagavata Mela Natakam, enacting religious tales through music, dialogue, and dance. In modern times, it evolved into a solo and group performance tradition open to all.

The dance is known for its graceful transitions, swift footwork, and theatrical storytelling. A signature element is the Tarangam, in which the dancer balances on a brass plate while performing intricate rhythms, symbolising spiritual balance. Kuchipudi also includes dialogue, adding drama rarely seen in other classical styles.

#### **MOHINIYATTAM: LASYA IN GOLD AND WHITE**

Mohiniyattam, the dance of enchantment from Kerala, glows with feminine grace. The word combines "Mohini," the divine enchantress, and "attam," meaning dance. Traditionally performed by women, it thrived under royal patronage in Travancore.

The dance captures the essence of lasya, the gentle, emotive

aspect of classical dance. Its circular movements, soft gestures, and subtle facial expressions create an air of quiet devotion. The costume, an ivory-white sari with a gold border, symbolises purity and serenity, complemented by jasmine flowers and temple jewellery. The music, based on the sopana style, provides a slow, melodic rhythm that enhances its meditative aura.

Unlike the grandeur of Kathakali, Mohiniyattam whispers spirituality through elegance. Its repertoire includes cholketu (invocation), padam (expressive storytelling), and tillana (rhythmic conclusion). Revived by artists like Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, it now stands as a symbol of Kerala's cultural grace.

#### **SATTRIYA: MONASTERY RHYTHMS OF FAITH**

Sattriya, the classical dance of Assam, completes the sacred circle of Indian dance traditions. Conceived in the 15th century by saint-scholar Srimanta Sankardeva, it was initially performed by monks within Vaishnavite monasteries called sattras. The performances formed part of Ankiya Naat, devotional plays narrating Krishna's life.

The dance combines spiritual storytelling with technical precision. Movements are disciplined, symmetrical, and rooted in bhakti rasa, the emotion of devotion. Costumes vary by gender and role: men wear white dhoti and chadar, while women don bright silk mekhela chadors adorned with Assamese motifs. Instruments like the khol drum, taal cymbals, and bansuri flute accompany the performance, creating a rhythmic atmosphere that uplifts the spirit.



*Odissi Dance. Image Courtesy: SuGuna Photos, Pexels*



# BEYOND THE BANKS: TALES OF RIVERS

North India's rivers are more than waterways, they are sacred lifelines.

**TT BUREAU**

Rivers have long been the lifeblood of North India. Fed by Himalayan glaciers and threading through fertile plains, they nourish fields, seed cities, shape civilisations, and inspire faith. For centuries, they have carried more than water: they have conveyed stories, sanctity, and identity.

In this landscape, the Ganga River, Yamuna River, and the mythic Saraswati River are not mere geographical features. They are sacred pathways woven into ritual, literature, and memory. Their legends grant them personality and purpose; their banks become places where life cycles are marked, vows are made, and endings find release.

## THE SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF THE NORTH

### The Ganga River

The Ganga River rises at Gaumukh in Uttarakhand, where the Bhagirathi River bursts from a glacier. Pilgrims trek to that icy source, then trace the river as it gathers breadth and meaning through Uttarkashi, Tehri, and Haridwar before sweeping across the plains past Prayagraj and Varanasi.

Myth frames every bend. The penance of King Bhagiratha brought the Ganga River down from the heavens; Lord Shiva calmed her force by catching the torrent in his matted hair before releasing it gently over the earth. The result is not a river alone but a goddess whose waters purify and redeem. A dip at Har Ki Pauri, a dawn boat on Varanasi's ghats, or the immersion of ashes at Manikarnika is charged with the promise of spiritual release.

### The Yamuna River

The Yamuna River emerges at Yamunotri in the Garhwal Himalaya and winds past some of North India's most storied cities. Myth remembers her as the daughter of Surya and sister of Yama; a dip in the Yamuna River is said to free a devotee from the fear of death.

Yet her most intimate identity remains tied to Krishna's childhood. Along the ghats of Mathura and Vrindavan, the Yamuna River is remembered as the stage for divine play: Krishna subduing the serpent Kaliya in her depths and the moonlit dance with the gopis by her shimmering banks. These narratives recast the Yamuna River as both compassionate guardian and playful companion, a goddess of grace and deliverance.

For travellers, the river offers a spectrum of experiences. In Braj, aartis are smaller than those on the Ganga River but emotionally immediate, accompanied by bhajans and storytelling that draw visitors into the living fabric of local faith.

### The Saraswati River

Unlike the Ganga River and the Yamuna River, the Saraswati River does not flow in sight, yet its influence spans literature, ritual, and identity. Vedic hymns praise a mighty river that nourished early civilisation; later tradition holds that the Saraswati River went underground and still meets the Ganga River and Yamuna River at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj.

Pilgrims bathe at the confluence with the conviction that





*Ram Jhula Bridge at Rishikesh. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

three rivers mingle there, one of them unseen, multiplying the sanctity of the act. The Saraswati River is also the goddess of learning, music, and arts, so the river's idea expands further: knowledge as a current, creativity as flow.

Kurukshetra in Haryana anchors journeys linked to her memory. Sites such as Saraswati Kund keep faith alive in a waterway that belongs as much to culture and intellect as to geography, inviting travellers to blend archaeology, folklore, and spiritual inquiry within a single itinerary.

### **The Indus River (Sindhu River)**

Rising near Lake Mansarovar, the Indus River enters India through Ladakh, chiselling a turquoise path between stark mountains before coursing west. The Rigveda praises the Sindhu River with awe, and the subcontinent's very name echoes its flow.

Myth and hymn grant the Indus River cosmic significance: a force of vitality, continuity, and abundance. In Ladakh today, monasteries like Thiksey and Hemis overlook the valley; rafting on the Indus River offers both adrenaline and perspective as gorges open into broad, luminous valleys.

Festivals and local rites honour a waterway that remains both legend and lifeline in a rugged, high-altitude land.

### **TRIBUTARIES WITH TALES**

North India's river map is incomplete without its tributaries, each with distinct stories and landscapes. The Ghaghara River, known as the Karnali River in Nepal, enters Uttar Pradesh with Himalayan clarity and is cherished in local lore as a channel of fertility and calm.

The Gandak River carries associations with both Hindu and Buddhist traditions; its fast current mirrors the vitality of monastic travels and saintly journeys recorded in regional memory. The Betwa River, remembered in folklore for loyalty

and sacrifice, glides past the cenotaphs and temples of Orchha, creating one of the most evocative riverfront skylines in central India.

The Chambal River, once feared in ancient lore as cursed and long avoided for ritual use, is perhaps the most striking paradox: its old reputation preserved the ecosystem so well that today the National Chambal Sanctuary shelters gharials, freshwater dolphins, turtles, and migratory birds, making it a model of riverine conservation.

In the mountains, the Beas River and Sutlej River add chapters of livelihood and legend, their valleys drawing anglers, hikers, and families seeking crisp air and pine-lined bends.

### **ADVENTURE AND ECO-TOURISM**

River tourism across the north has matured into a twin pursuit of thrill and stewardship. The Ganga River near Rishikesh remains the headline act for white-water rafting, with runs suitable for first-timers and confident paddlers alike. Kayaking,



*Indus River in Ladakh. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*





body-surfing, and cliff-jumps add variety, while riverside camps design low-impact stays that foreground waste management and minimal disturbance to riparian zones.

In Himachal Pradesh, the Beas River and Sutlej River promise good angling for mahseer, airy camps, and dawn birding along quiet bends. The Chambal River's guided boat safaris demonstrate how conservation and tourism can reinforce one another. Naturalists interpret sandbanks, explain gharial nesting habits, and guide travellers through sightings without crowding wildlife.

The lesson is simple but powerful: adventure experiences can be run with restraint and care, enhancing livelihoods while protecting the very assets that attract visitors. In this sense, the north's river corridors become open-air classrooms in sustainable practice.

## SPIRITUAL AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

### The Ganga River's Cities of Faith

Haridwar, Rishikesh, and Varanasi form a triad where ritual texture is at its richest. Evening aarti on the Ganga River, with synchronised lamps and conch shells, draws both devotees and curious travellers. Dawn boats offer a theatre

of daily life: bathers, priests, wrestlers on the akhadas, and students reciting lessons on steps warmed by first light. Cremation ghats like Manikarnika and Harishchandra confront impermanence, yet the Ganga River's flow softens the encounter into a meditation on continuity and release.

### The Yamuna River and Krishna Bhakti

In Mathura and Vrindavan, the Yamuna River is inseparable from Krishna's childhood. Janmashtami and Holi transform riverfronts into living stages—music, colour, and dance carrying echoes of stories older than the ghats themselves. The Yamuna River Aarti, intimate and song-forward, draws visitors into Braj's devotional culture.

### The Saraswati River at the Sangam

Prayagraj's Triveni Sangam, where the Ganga River and Yamuna River meet with the invisible Saraswati River, is one of Hinduism's most potent symbols. Belief in a third, unseen current grants the site a hushed aura, making a ritual bath feel like union with both seen and unseen holiness.

### The Kumbh Mela

Held in rotation at Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, and Nashik, the Kumbh Mela is the world's largest congregation. Every twelve years the Maha Kumbh Mela takes place in Prayagraj, the confluence transforms into a city of tents and a choreography of faith. The Mela encapsulates the rivers' unifying role: cleansing, community, and continuity, enacted at scale along the Ganga River and Yamuna River, with the unseen Saraswati River sanctifying belief.

## CULTURE AND HERITAGE ALONG THE WATER

### The Ghats

Varanasi's riverfront—more than eighty ghats—functions as both stage and sanctuary along the Ganga River. Dashashwamedh holds grand aartis; Manikarnika bears witness to cremations; Assi is a zone for yoga and quieter



Kumbh Mela. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Yamuna River, Agra. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

mornings. Haridwar's Har Ki Pauri plays a similar role further upstream on the Ganga River. These stepped embankments are living museums where devotion, commerce, music, study, and street food mingle.

### Architecture Framed by Water

The Yamuna River shaped Mughal architecture. Gardens and pavilions drew air and reflection from the water; palaces and mausoleums oriented façades toward its flow. The Taj Mahal, deliberate in siting and proportion, uses the Yamuna River as mirror and metaphor. Elsewhere, the Betwa River's passage past Orchha's fort complex shows how medieval rulers integrated riverine landscapes into defence, ceremony, and civic life.

### Festivals and Folk Traditions

Chhath Puja, centred on riverbanks in Bihar and eastern

Uttar Pradesh, is an austere, luminous rite dedicated to the Sun and observed along rivers such as the Ganga River and Ghaghara River. In Braj, Holi beside the Yamuna River becomes participatory theatre tied to Krishna's legends. Mela grounds near Prayagraj and other confluences incubate folk music, dance, and craft.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT

River tourism sustains livelihoods along the Ganga River, Yamuna River, and tributaries. In Varanasi, thousands earn from dawn cruises, flower garlands, music, rituals, and markets. Luxury cruises on the Ganga River stitch together smaller towns, directing visitor spending toward local cuisine and craft.

Festivals such as Chhath Puja and the Kumbh Mela act as public classrooms for folk art and oral heritage. Storytelling tours about Bhagiratha's penance, Krishna's play, or the Saraswati River's hidden course keep traditions alive.




Ganga Ghat, Varanasi. Image Courtesy: Monojit Dutta, Pexels



# EXQUISITE WINTER RETREATS ACROSS THE WORLD

Experience alpine glamour, Arctic lights, and Middle Eastern opulence with these curated winter journeys.

TT BUREAU



Winter transforms the world's most sophisticated destinations into stages where luxury meets adventure, culture, and natural wonder. For the discerning traveller who has explored the world's great resorts and cities, winter 2025 offers fresh opportunities for discovery. Across the crystalline Alps, beneath auroras sweeping through Scandinavia, and in the golden desert sanctuaries of the Middle East, the season promises journeys where travel becomes art.

True luxury is measured by sheer exclusivity. It is dining within snow-draped medieval walls, watching the Northern Lights through a glass-roofed igloo, or listening to Bedouin legends beneath a sky filled with stars. These are moments that linger far beyond the season itself.

## EUROPE: ALPINE GRANDEUR AND CULTURAL RICHES

Europe in winter is an elegant tableau of sparkling peaks and snowbound villages, where culture and adventure entwine. The Alps are not only about skiing but about immersing in gastronomy, design, and centuries of tradition.

## Switzerland

Switzerland remains winter's epicentre of indulgence. Zermatt, car-free and framed by the Matterhorn, feels timeless. Chalet Zermatt Peak, one of the country's most exclusive residences, features five suites, a spa with hammam, and an indoor-outdoor Jacuzzi where snowflakes fall silently as guests soak. Beyond its alpine beauty, Zermatt also tempts with its culinary culture, including mountain restaurants accessible only by cable car, where fondue and champagne are served beside roaring log fires.

St. Moritz, the birthplace of winter tourism, continues to radiate glamour. Its "champagne climate" delivers more than 300 days of sunshine, perfect for sipping vintage Cristal on the terrace of Badrutt's Palace after skiing Corviglia. December galas, frozen-lake polo, and White Turf horse races fill its social calendar. Verbier brings a cosmopolitan edge, its 400 kilometres of pistes and lively après-ski scene anchored by Sir Richard Branson's Lodge. The property blends the intimacy of a private club with Michelin-trained chefs and curated experiences such as heli-skiing, sunrise snowshoeing, and tastings in a vaulted wine cellar.



# 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.







Castle Bran, Transylvania. Image Courtesy: Julia Volk, Pexels

## French Alps

The French Alps present their own style of elegance, with Les Trois Vallées at the centre. Courchevel 1850 is the most glamorous of its villages, where boutiques by Chanel, Hermès, and Louis Vuitton line snowy streets. L'Apogée Courchevel, built on an Olympic ski jump site, offers ski-in/ski-out luxury and suites with balconies overlooking pristine slopes.

Cheval Blanc Courchevel provides intimacy with only 36 rooms, a three-Michelin-starred restaurant, and a Guerlain spa tailored for high-altitude skin care. Val d'Isère adds drama with Le Refuge de Solaise, Europe's highest accommodation, where dawn breaks above clouds and evenings end in a cinema perched at 2,551 metres.

## Austria

Austria's resorts embody quiet sophistication rooted in imperial charm. Lech and Zürs remain the preferred playground of royals, offering impeccable slopes and a discreet atmosphere. Hotel Arlberg combines tradition with contemporary flair, boasting Austria's largest spa at 5,000 square metres and exclusive helicopter arrivals for its celebrated Piste to Plate dining.

Kitzbühel offers medieval romance with ski culture. Lantern-

lit cobblestones create a storybook setting, while the legendary Hahnenkamm downhill race draws crowds each January. Das Kitzbühel Lodge brings together suites with fireplaces, balcony views, and sommeliers guiding guests through Tyrolean wines beside glowing fires.

## Italy's Dolomite Splendour

The Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage marvel, glow crimson at dusk. Forestis Dolomites above Brixen offers minimalist suites with terraces that seem to hover above valleys, and menus crafted with foraged mountain ingredients.

Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti merges sustainability with indulgence. Its vast spa and Michelin-starred restaurant Grial highlight biodiversity in both cuisine and treatments. Guests spend their days skiing Madonna di Campiglio or exploring snow-covered forests before returning for elemental wellness rituals.

## Hidden Gems and Cultural Encounters

Beyond the main Alpine hubs lie retreats where history and intimacy prevail. In Scotland, Inverlochy Castle pairs 19th-century grandeur with menus designed by Michel Roux Jr. Glenapp Castle extends the experience with Highland games, falconry, and whisky tastings in atmospheric cellars.

Romania's Bethlen Estates reimagine Saxon manors as elegant residences. Sleigh rides, fortified church tours, and private dinners with local chefs immerse guests in a distinctive cultural heritage.

## Luxury by Rail

Europe's trains transform travel into theatre. The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express offers seasonal journeys between Paris and Venice, with Art Deco carriages, polished wood, and candlelit dining. The Glacier Express between St. Moritz and Zermatt crosses 291 bridges and 91 tunnels, its Excellence Class providing panoramic windows, wine-paired menus, and concierge narration.

## SCANDINAVIA: NORTHERN LIGHTS AND ARCTIC LUXURY

Scandinavia provides winter experiences defined by silence, remoteness, and architectural daring. Here, the aurora borealis paints the sky in luminous ribbons, creating landscapes that feel otherworldly.

## Finnish Lapland

Finnish Lapland has become the world's foremost Northern Lights destination. Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort pioneered the glass igloo, with thermal domes that remain clear even in extreme cold. Its newer Kelo-Glass Igloos blend log-cabin warmth with glass-roof bedrooms, fireplaces, and private saunas.

Levin Igloo continues the theme with transparent domes offering heated floors and king-sized beds. Husky safaris, reindeer sleigh rides, and ice-fishing excursions end with meals prepared over open flames, ensuring every moment feels authentic and immersive.





Winter Holiday Destination, Kitzbühel, Austria. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

### Swedish Lapland

Swedish Lapland redefines Arctic stays through cutting-edge architecture. Treehotel suspends striking structures among forests, including the reflective Mirrorcube and the playful UFO. Arctic Bath, a floating circular spa on the Lule River, freezes into the ice each winter, offering plunges followed by Nordic cuisine beside roaring fires.

The ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi, rebuilt each year, is a gallery of ice artistry where guests sleep on reindeer hides in sculpted suites before waking to steaming lingonberry juice.

### Norway

Norway's Lyngen Alps promise remoteness and spectacle. Lyngen Lodge offers panoramic views across fjords lit by the aurora, while Aurora Fjord Cabins capture reflections of the lights shimmering on the water.

Hurtigruten's winter coastal voyages enhance the experience with aurora guarantees, and Alta's Sorrisniva Igloo Hotel adds ice-carved suites, snowmobiling, and cultural encounters with the Sami.

### Scandinavian Capitals

Scandinavian cities sparkle during winter. Stockholm's Grand Hôtel overlooks the harbour and the festive streets of Gamla Stan. Oslo's The Thief mixes art, design, and fjord views, while also providing access to ski trails in Nordmarka forest. Copenhagen deserves a mention as well, with Tivoli Gardens turning into a wonderland of lights, mulled wine, and gourmet dining that blends Danish tradition with contemporary flair.

### MIDDLE EAST: DESERT OPULENCE AND CULTURE

For travellers who prefer warmth over snow, the Middle East offers golden dunes and desert palaces where modernity meets tradition.

### United Arab Emirates

The UAE sets the stage for opulent desert living. Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara rises like a mirage in the Empty Quarter, offering villas with private pools, camel treks at dawn, and starlit dining. Al Maha, within Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, adds eco-luxury with tented villas, falconry, and wildlife drives. The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Wadi Desert expands the experience with equestrian pursuits, desert spas, and guided astronomy sessions.

### Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia combines natural grandeur with modern refinement. Our Habitas AlUla, set among sandstone cliffs, offers concerts beneath the stars and tours of UNESCO-listed Hegra. Six Senses Southern Dunes highlights Nabataean architecture, featuring villas with pools, meditation domes, and frankincense-inspired rituals.



Saint Moritz Lake, Switzerland. Image Courtesy: Brian Zosky, Pexels





*Northern lights. Image Courtesy: Pixabay, Pexels*

### **Oman, Qatar, and Beyond**

Oman's Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar crowns the Green Mountain at 2,000 metres, offering canyon-edge infinity pools, dramatic excursions, and stargazing on Princess Diana's viewing platform. The Chedi Muscat, with its beachfront setting and acclaimed dining, brings serenity to the capital.

Qatar's Four Seasons Doha pairs cultural city tours with desert safaris, while Bahrain's Four Seasons Bahrain Bay, located on a private island, ensures privacy and exclusivity. These resorts are increasingly blending wellness retreats with cultural immersion, creating experiences where sunrise yoga, guided history walks, and curated dining programmes sit side by side.

### **UNIQUE EXPERIENCES FOR THE WELL-TRAVELLED**

Winter travel also means immersion in stories and traditions. In Scotland, castle tours end with whisky tastings under candlelight. In Transylvania, restored Saxon manors host intimate dinners with local chefs. Germany and Austria's Christmas markets glow brightest after hours, with chandeliers lighting stalls and mulled wine flowing freely.

Scandinavia extends adventure through reindeer herding, snowmobiling, and ice-sculpting. In the Middle East, hot-air balloon rides at sunrise, Bedouin storytelling, and archaeological site tours bring culture and history into vivid focus.

### **PLANNING YOUR EXTRAORDINARY WINTER ESCAPE**

Exclusivity requires foresight. Chalets in Zermatt, Courchevel, and St. Moritz are booked six to twelve months ahead,

particularly over festive weeks. Glass igloos in Lapland demand similar planning. In the Middle East, December through March brings mild days between 24 and 28°C, perfect for pairing desert retreats with urban escapes. Many resorts now offer extended-stay packages that combine wellness, cuisine, and cultural immersion.

Winter 2025 invites travellers to rediscover the world's iconic destinations in a season of snow, light, and desert stars. Watching auroras ripple across frozen skies, dining in candlelit castles, journeying through Europe on storied trains, or finding silence in desert canyons all deliver experiences that transcend luxury. They are connections with place, with culture, and with the rare moments that turn journeys into lifelong memories.



*Muscat Coastal Cityscape. Image Courtesy: Smitesh Parekh, Pexels*



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# MIDNIGHT FEASTS: INDIA'S CULINARY SECRETS

After dusk, India serves intimacy and intrigue, plating centuries of flavour beneath a velvet night sky.

TT BUREAU



*Tandoori Chicken & Porks. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

When dusk slides across India's landscapes, another life begins. Flavours deepen, air cools, and familiar streets turn theatrical under strings of light. Old Delhi's lanes, Ahmedabad's squares, Kolkata's wintry avenues, and Varanasi's ghats reveal personalities that feel distinct at night. These hours are not merely about eating. Plates and bowls become vessels of memory and kinship, and hospitality shows its most generous instinct.

India's night food culture draws strength from faith, season, and habit. Ramadan nights in Hyderabad pulse with smoke and song. Kolkata's winter announces itself with nolen gur sweets. Goa's Christmas Eve moves between solemnity and feasting. Streets turn into dining rooms lit by coals and kettles. This is no afterthought. It is a parallel world that welcomes night owls, pilgrims, shift workers, and travellers with equal warmth.

## HYDERABAD: SEHRI STREETS AND THE ART OF STAYING AWAKE

Ramadan transforms Hyderabad into a long open-air kitchen. After iftar, griddles sing and kettles murmur until dawn. Sehri, the pre-dawn meal, sets the tone. Errakunta Road stays bright until four in the morning, sending out platters of mandi where every grain holds spice and stock. Upparpally Road hums with biryani, kebabs, haleem, and trays of phirni cooling under the glow of tube lights. Purani Haveli serves a faithful spread like khichdi katha, kheema, and gurma fry, robust enough to sustain the day yet never heavy. The air is thick with cardamom, smoke, and the metallic hiss of tawa fat, and even the silence between orders feels companionable.

Families come after evening prayers, friends ride in on motorbikes, and office-goers on night shifts stop by for sustenance before heading back to work. Pavilion Drive-In's budget sehri set became a city-wide talking point because





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





*Rava Onion Masala Dosa. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

it widened the circle, not because it diluted heritage. In those hours, the city feels like one big table. Dawn arrives reluctantly, and even as the first azaan calls, the lanes still hum softly, reluctant to let go of the night's warmth.

### GOA: MIDNIGHT MASS AND KITCHEN LIGHTS

Goa's Christmas belongs to church and kitchen alike. The Missa de Gallo fills historic churches with candlelight and carols before worshippers spill into courtyards where tables wait. Bebinca arrives in glossy layers, neureos are crisp with coconut and jaggery, sannas cushion the heat of vindaloo and sorpotel, and Christmas cake carries recipes guarded for generations. Kitchens smell of nutmeg and brandy, music spills from verandahs, and stars hang above doorways in paper and bamboo.

The season refuses to end with the date as Epiphany brings dances and gatherings that keep the light alive, and villages continue to host tiatrs and carol competitions through January. Travellers join easily. Beaches glow with bonfires, grills send up fragrant smoke, and strangers are welcomed without ceremony into homes. The most memorable moments are quiet ones: a grandmother pressing a slice of bebinca into your hand, a choir's harmony drifting across the square, or a neighbour arriving with feni for a toast under the stars.

### KOLKATA: A CITY WRAPPED IN WINTER SWEETS

Winter gives Kolkata a different skin. Air sharpens, appetite turns towards warmth. The season begins when tappers fix earthen pots to date palms at night. By dawn, the sap has become nolen gur after patient reduction over wood fires, its amber fragrance announcing winter's arrival. Sweet shops lean into the season with notun gurer roshogolla, baked sandesh, and creamy payesh.

Queues form in the chill, tea stalls keep kettles singing, and conversations warm the night. Modern cafés find new ways to play with tradition, cheesecakes and milkshakes echo the jaggery's flavour while honouring its essence. In Kolkata, night shortens the day yet feels generous, because joy refuses to shrink.



*Chicken Hyderabad Biryani. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



*Pooran Poli & Rass Poori. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

### MUMBAI: NEVER ASLEEP, NEVER HUNGRY

Mumbai's midnight culture wears the city's temperament openly: restless and hopeful. Juhu Beach makes a rite of pav bhaji eaten beside the sea. Mohammed Ali Road turns into a corridor of grills where kebabs perfume the air, while Colaba's Bademiya rolls seekh kebabs into the small hours. Haji Ali Juice Centre offers falooda that cools spice-heated palates.

What makes Mumbai remarkable is its openness: streets stay lit, prices stay democratic, and night feels safe enough for everyone to claim a stool and a plate. There are plush lounges for those who want crystal and linen, but Mumbai's true spirit lives where kitchen and street blend into one seamless space.

### DELHI: GRANDEUR AND GRIT

Delhi's late-night eating carries the echo of courtly kitchens and the invention of bazaars. Chandni Chowk's paratha alley remains a magnet, where deep-fried breads stuffed with potato, paneer, or cauliflower meet tangy pickles and chutneys. Benches groan, and the alley's clamour turns a meal into theatre.

New neighbourhoods have created their own night maps. Moolchand's parathas never lose favour, while Amar Colony and Greater Kailash thrive with momo stalls and butter chicken



Deena Chat Bhandar in Varanasi. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Street Food Hawker. Image Courtesy: Anirudh, Unsplash



Street Food Market. Image Courtesy: Anirudh, Unsplash

counters that feed the city until it finally falls quiet. Delivery apps have reshaped the ritual too; a student can stage a biryani picnic on a hostel floor at two in the morning, or a night shift can close with kulfi before dawn. Delhi offers both noise and stillness for those who stay awake.

### BANGALORE: A COSMOPOLITAN PALETTE

Bangalore's nights reveal a city that can balance idlis and tacos in the same breath. Food trucks turn Basavanagudi's junctions into small festivals where crisp dosas release steam, idlis drink in ghee, and Maggi hisses with onions and chillies. Students and engineers rub shoulders with musicians and travellers. Global accents now share the table — tacos from the SWAT Truck, comfort plates at The Great Indian Bhukkad, dessert bars like Lavonne or Mäki Patisserie offering citrus-bright doughnuts beside miso caramel ice cream. Bangalore proves that night can carry elegance and playfulness with ease.



Butter Chicken. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

### PUNE: KEPT AWAKE BY STUDENTS

Pune's night food culture feels the most democratic in western India, kept alive by its student population. Nal Stop near Karve Road enjoys legendary status, a khaugalli where poha, upma, sabudana khichdi, peri-peri idlis, and egg bhurji appear within a few steps of each other. Someone revises notes while friends debate cricket and playlists.

Mastani outlets offer thick milkshakes with heritage pride, while Jashn's kebabs and biryani keep queues happy at three in the morning. As new neighbourhoods grow, the pattern repeats: a stall opens, a queue forms, and another chapter is added to the city's memory.

### REGIONAL GEMS

Varanasi's culinary clock aligns with devotion. Before the first aarti, Kachori Gali serves hot, crisp kachori-sabzi with spiced urad dal and runny potato curry. Chennai, once an early sleeper, now allows shawarma, biryani, and thalis well past midnight, while airport cafés serve around the clock.

Jaipur lends its desert warmth to the night with pyaaz kachori, dal baati churma, and gelato parlours that add a playful patisserie note. Ahmedabad's Manek Chowk deserves special mention — a vegetable market by day, bullion hub by afternoon, and vegetarian food paradise by night. Pav bhaji, chocolate sandwiches, and kulfi stand side by side under bright lights, turning the square into a stage for appetite and invention.

Community is the thread that ties all of this together. Ramadan turns Hyderabad's streets into shared courtyards.

Goa's Christmas carries worshippers into homes without pause.

Kolkata's tea queues encourage strangers to talk. Inclusivity matters as much — prices stay accessible, queues flatten hierarchies, and the pleasure of balancing a plate in one hand is shared equally. These traditions are anchored by season and belief, yet they adapt to modern life, with



food trucks, delivery platforms, and global accents expanding the menu. Refinement now has its hour: Bangalore's plated desserts and Mumbai's quiet late-night kitchens show that night can hold elegance without losing its street soul.

For travellers, a few gentle rules heighten the experience. Arrive with curiosity, ask what the stallholder recommends, and share plates to taste widely. Carry small cash, follow the rhythm of the street, and return plates with care. Tip with sincerity, linger without blocking the queue, and let the music or quiet settle around you.

If you want a premium experience, choose a late-night dessert bar in Bangalore, or begin with pav bhaji in Mumbai before slipping into a lounge for something sparkling. In Delhi, start with a paratha and stroll slowly through the lanes so that history can speak between bites.

India's midnight feasts carry a promise that daylight rarely does. They show that appetite can erase distance, that streets can double as living rooms, and that faith and season still matter in a country moving at speed.

A sehri in Hyderabad can teach stamina and generosity. A Christmas table in Goa holds centuries in its spread. A winter sweet in Kolkata turns cold into a festival. A plate in Mumbai at midnight feels like membership in a club that admits anyone who shows up with hunger and good humour.

For the traveller, these hours become a quiet education. Vendors remember faces after one visit. Strangers share benches and plates. Darkness heightens flavour and compresses distance. India may grow and globalise, new kitchens may rise, and delivery fleets may redraw the map, yet the centre holds. The essence lives in the willingness to feed one another at odd hours, to stretch hospitality across faith and language, and to let the city show its second face. Step out after midnight, trust the hiss of pans, accept the plate offered, and trade a smile with the stranger at your elbow. The night will do the rest.



*Street Vendor in Chandni Chowk. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



*Srinagar Street Vendor with Traditional Snacks. Image Courtesy: Saglain Ashraf, Pexels*



*Bengali Thali. Image Courtesy: Incredible India*





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