

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2026 - ₹50



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**PATU
KESWANI**
MILESTONES & MEMORIES

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CON

06 **PATU KESWANI: MILESTONES & MEMORIES**

HOW AN ACCIDENTAL HOTELIER
BUILT A BRAND DEFINED BY
PRECISION AND PURPOSE

14 **BLUE THERAPY**

UNDERWATER SILENCE, AND THE
MENTAL RESET WE WANT IN JANUARY

20 **INDIA AT EASE**

INDIA'S LANDSCAPES AND
TRADITIONS OFFER RESTORATIVE
BREAKS

24 **THE NEW MAP OF WELLBEING**

LUXURY WELLNESS MEANS MORE
QUIET

28 **QUIET IS THE NEW CURRENCY**

THE FUTURE OF ULTRA-LUXURY
LIES IN HOW GENTLY A PLACE LETS
MODERN LIFE SLOW DOWN

32 **THE COMFORT FIRST LUXURY TRAVEL WARDROBE**

A NEUTRAL PALETTE AND
BREATHABLE FABRIC STORY,
GLOBAL TO INDIAN

36 **FREEFALL ESCAPES**

SKYDIVING TURNS
DESTINATIONS INTO LIVING
POSTCARDS

42 **THE DAY THE UNIVERSE BROKE ITS OWN BOUNDARIES**

HOW DISTANT GALAXIES
RESHAPED OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF THE
UNIVERSE

46 **WHY CERTAIN RAGAS SUIT CERTAIN HOURS**

RAGAS AND THEIR PLACE
BETWEEN TICKING CLOCKS AND
RAIN-SOAKED SEASONS



TENTS

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE | VOLUME 29 | No. 01 | JANUARY 2026

50 THE CHANGING INDIAN KITCHEN

INDIA'S KITCHEN SHIFTS TOWARDS SPEED AND SHARED TASTES

56 INDIA'S MODERN WELLNESS PLATE

WHEN FOOD FEELS ALIVE TO ITS SEASON, TRAVEL FEELS EASIER IN THE BODY



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PATU KESWANI: MILESTONES & MEMORIES

How an accidental hotelier built a brand defined by precision and purpose, with design as discipline, data as direction, and dignity at its core

KAMAL GILL



A Young Patu Keswani Studying

Some founders build companies. Then some founders build cultures. Patu Keswani belongs firmly to the second kind. His story does not begin in hospitality, and it never pretends it was destiny. It begins with the inheritance of something rarer than capital: an awareness of what life looks like when opportunity is present, and when it is not.

"I don't think I was meant for hospitality," he says candidly. "A lot of things in my life happened by chance."

Keswani's journey unfolds as a sequence of pivots that only make sense in reverse. Engineering, architecture, consulting, a corporate ladder inside the Tatas, an early plan to retire, and then a mid-market hotel brand that would go on to scale across India. Each stage appears accidental. Together, they look almost engineered.

A CHILDHOOD SHAPED BY TWO OPPOSITE MAPS OF INDIA

Keswani was born in February 1959, the youngest of three children. His father's early life was marked by extreme poverty in what was then undivided India, a childhood defined by loss, responsibility, and scholarships that kept education alive. The story is not shared for sentiment. It is shared as an explanation for the moral grammar Keswani grew up with: an instinctive

discomfort with inequality, and a deep respect for people who work hard in silence.

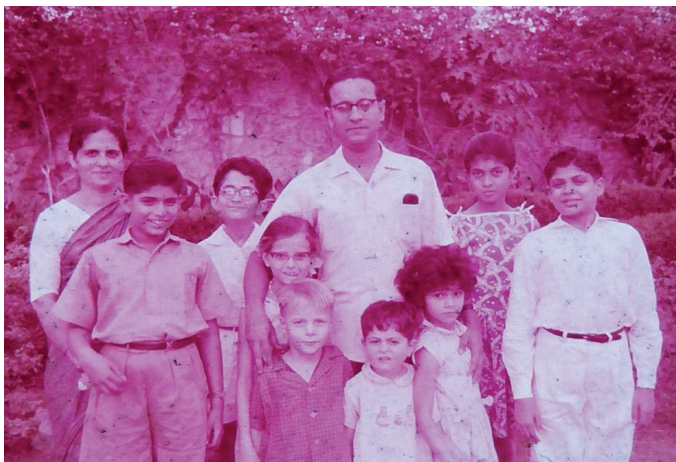
His mother's background carried a different kind of strength. A doctor who served in the Indian Army, raised with confidence and independence, she represented possibility at a time when most women were not granted it. Keswani recalls how she took early retirement to care for him, a decision that stayed with him as a mixture of gratitude and guilt. Years later, a chance encounter with one of her batch mates, now a senior officer, brought the sacrifice into focus. "She told me, half joking, half wistfully, 'If it wasn't for you, I might have become a general too,'" he recalls. "That stayed with me."

Between these two influences, Keswani grew up acutely aware of inequality. The result was a worldview that never let him forget how unevenly life distributes starting points. "You and I are fortunate," he says. "We were born in families where opportunity existed. That alone changes everything." It is a thought that returns often in his reflections, anchoring both his personal choices and the culture he would later build.



Patu Keswani's Parents





Patu Keswani (Front Row, Center) With His Father's Family

ACCIDENTAL FOUNDATIONS: HOW DETOURS SHAPED A PHILOSOPHY OF WORK

Patu Keswani often laughs when people assume he trained for a career in hospitality. "I had absolutely no intention of being in hotels," he says candidly. "It wasn't even on my list," he adds. His academic path, as he explains, ran in an entirely different direction: Computer Science and Electrical Engineering at IIT Delhi, followed by an MBA at IIM Calcutta. Somewhere along the way, almost incidentally, he took architecture as a minor. At the time, it barely registered as consequential. "I didn't think it would matter," he says. "It just seemed intellectually interesting," he adds.

It was only years later that the significance of that exposure became clear. "Architecture teaches you how to think about space," he says. "But more importantly, it teaches you how to think about utilisation." That lesson, he notes, sits at the core of hospitality. "In hotels, utilisation is everything," he adds. "You can build something that looks premium, but if it doesn't work operationally, people suffer." The insight reflects the way his thinking consistently bridges design intent with operational reality, an approach that would quietly shape the Lemon Tree philosophy.

Keswani is equally open about how little of his early life



Patu Keswani at the First Hotel Site

unfolded according to plan. Even moments that appeared decisive at the time arrived through circumstance rather than strategy. He recalls securing admission to a foreign university, a move that felt like the obvious next step, only for illness to intervene. He could not travel. "At that moment, it felt like a setback," he says. "I was quite disappointed," he admits. With time, however, the meaning of that interruption shifted. "Later, I realised it anchored me in India."

That experience became an early marker of a pattern he would recognise repeatedly in his journey. "What looks like a detour often turns out to be the main road." Perspective, he reflects, only arrives later. "You only see that in hindsight," he says.

LEADERSHIP LESSON THAT BEGAN IN THE BASEMENT

Patu Keswani entered corporate life through the Tata Administrative Service, drawn by what he describes as "purpose and nation-building." His path eventually took him into the hotel business, despite having no background in it.

When he was posted to a senior role at a flagship hotel, he was advised to do something counterintuitive. "I was told, 'For three months, behave like an intern. Ask questions. Don't pretend you know anything,'" he says.

It is here that his story starts to resemble a leadership case study. He took the advice literally. He worked in housekeeping, stewarding, room service, and laundry. He stood for nine hours a day. "At the end of the day, you are exhausted," he says. "The blood rushes to your feet. The work is repetitive. Guests don't even see you."



Patu Keswani at Taj Air Caterers in 1987



TAS Session



Lemon Tree Hotel, Udyog Vihar, Gurugram

One moment stayed with him. "A batch mate from business school stayed at the hotel," he says. "I decided to be his bellboy. I carried his bag, rode the elevator with him. He didn't recognise me at all. Not once." He pauses. "That's when you understand how invisible this work can feel."

The lesson is foundational. "Hotels cost hundreds of crores to build," he says. "But returns come from people doing some of the toughest, most thankless jobs. And then we expect them to smile and deliver service from the heart." He adds quietly, "That only works if dignity exists inside the organisation first."

It was during these years that Patu Keswani formed a strong view of leadership. He speaks candidly about what he saw in certain styles of power: patronage over merit, loyalty demanded rather than earned, promotion based on closeness rather than competence. He says he learned two things at once. What to do, and what not to do.

Both would later become the invisible blueprint behind Lemon Tree.

LEMON TREE: THE MID-MARKET GAP, BUILT WITH RATIOS AND HEART

By his late thirties, Keswani wanted financial freedom. He had moved into consulting, earned well, and even toyed with the idea of early retirement. "For a while, I thought I was done," he says. "I thought I had cracked the formula," he adds. Then practicality intervened. Children, education, inflation, time. "You realise you need something that grows," he says. "Money that stands still actually moves backwards," he adds. What he was looking for, he realised, was an inflation hedge.

The decision to build a hotel came almost matter-of-factly. India, Keswani observed, had an abundance of luxury hotels but very little in the organised mid-market space with consistent standards. He explains the opportunity through a simple analogy. "If business class seats are always full," he

says, "there is clearly demand sitting below." "The same logic applies everywhere," he adds. If five-star hotels were thriving, demand for three- and four-star experiences was clearly being left underserved.

The timing was perfect, even if it didn't appear so at the time.

Keswani built a 49-room hotel in Udyog Vihar using principles he had developed earlier while analysing why different hotels performed differently. He had once broken the hotel business into hundreds of datapoints: corridor illumination, air-conditioning load per square foot, electricity consumption, housekeeping productivity, staffing ratios. "I literally looked at everything," he says. "How much light does



Corridor Lighting, Lemon Tree Hotel



Goa June 2007 Offsite

a corridor need. How many rooms can one housekeeper realistically service?" he adds. He compared top performers across multiple properties, captured the best practices, and turned them into a design-and-operations logic.

This first hotel was built exactly on those ratios. It worked.

His model was sharply Indian in its understanding of guest behaviour. "Land and construction are expensive. Labour is comparatively affordable. Indian guests expect service, even at lower price points," he shares. So he offered full service at roughly half the cost of a five-star, with a smaller, more basic room, and one uncompromising rule: never dilute location quality.

The brand that followed, Lemon Tree, became a direct translation of Keswani's worldview into hospitality—smart design guided by ratios, operational discipline rooted in data, and a deep respect for the people delivering the experience.

FROM MOMENTUM TO MARKET: HOW GROWTH MADE THE IPO INEVITABLE

Keswani is candid that an IPO was never part of his original plan. "I never thought we would go public. When we started, it was just an idea and a dream," he says. In those early years, ambition was anchored firmly in execution. "The first hotel was built on time, in budget, in quality. The second hotel was built the same way, and it made a lot of money." What followed was a pace of expansion that even surprised him. "Then came the third hotel in Pune, the fourth in Goa, and by 2006, we had five operating hotels."

Looking back, Keswani admits the scale arrived faster than expected. "I myself couldn't believe how quickly people were growing," he recalls. "It was very difficult in those days to

build hotels and to have money to build them. But we were making so much money that we could do it."

That performance soon drew the attention of global capital. "Then Warburg Pincus, one of the largest private equity firms in the world, came and said, 'Your company is worth eight hundred crores.' I was shocked." Their terms were direct. "They said, 'We want twenty-five per cent,' so they put in another two hundred and seventy crores." Keswani's response was instinctive. "They gave me the money, and I put it straight into more hotels." Kotak Funds and Shinsei Bank followed soon after investing a hundred and fifty crores.

By this stage, Lemon Tree's positioning was sharply defined. "We had three brands — Lemon Tree, Lemon Tree Premier, which was four-star, and Red Fox, which was two-star. We were targeting everyone except luxury and guest houses." The real shift in perspective, however, came in 2012 with an unexpected outreach. "I got this random mail from APG — a Dutch pension fund I had never heard of. I said, 'Who are these people?' He laughs at the memory. "Pure serendipity!"

With long-term global institutional capital on board, responsibility took on a different meaning. "Once serious capital comes in, you have to think responsibly. Funds have a life cycle. Pension funds have to exit. Liquidity cannot be emotional." The logic, he says, became unavoidable. "These are long-term investors, but even long-term capital needs a clear way out. The only sensible way to do that is through a listing."

Yet Keswani was determined that ownership would not remain concentrated at the top. "I told my people, take shares. When the hotels make money, on dividends, you make some

income for the rest of your life.” He acted decisively. “I actually gave shares to about eight hundred people. About eight per cent of the company. Today, that’s worth about eleven hundred crores.” The outcome remains deeply personal. “A lot of them made enough money to buy houses. Some people had twenty crores in the bank. Even today, there are such people.”

Structurally, the IPO thinking was equally deliberate. “Globally, look at Marriott or Hilton. They don’t own hotels. They manage, they brand, they distribute.” What began as a requirement evolved into a strategy. “What started as a necessity became a core competence.”

The listing, he clarifies, will be for the asset-owning company. “We list, we dilute over time, we keep raising capital, and we keep building.” For Keswani, the purpose of going public is unambiguous. “An IPO is not a destination. It’s a tool—to give liquidity, to reward belief, and to make sure the company outlives the founder.”

BUILDING PEOPLE INTO THE SYSTEM: INCLUSION BY DESIGN, NOT CHARITY

If Lemon Tree’s growth story is about capital and scale, its most distinctive legacy is about people.

Keswani describes an early decision that became a turning point: hiring two deaf employees for stewarding roles. He expected it to be a small gesture of gratitude to life and its many rewarding moments. What followed surprised him. One employee’s mother came to meet him. She explained how employment had transformed her son’s life. “That moment changed how I thought,” Keswani says. “It stopped being theoretical,” he adds.

He made a choice that would define Lemon Tree’s identity: inclusion, yes, but never as charity. “Charity is not sustainable,” he says. “It makes people dependent. Systems, however, are sustainable.” Roles had to be designed so that the disability was irrelevant. Teams would be trained to communicate. Systems would be built to make capability visible. “You don’t do favours,” he says. “You redesign work,” he adds.

From there, Lemon Tree expanded hiring across categories: speech and hearing impaired employees, acid

attack survivors in useful roles, people with Down Syndrome or Autism in repetitive roles where they often excelled, and later, individuals who were educationally deprived but could be trained into functional competence. The organisation became, in his words, a skilling institute as much as a hotel company. People joined on minimum wages, learned, and then moved into better-paying jobs across the industry. Lemon Tree became a pipeline for talent that the rest of the market had been ignoring.

In a sector obsessed with guest-facing polish, this was an unusually structural approach to social responsibility. Not a CSR campaign. A workforce design philosophy.

THE NEXT CHAPTER: STEPPING BACK, THINKING FORWARD

Today, Keswani speaks like someone who has outgrown the thrill of scale. “I get bored with largeness,” he says. “Size is not a challenge anymore,” he admits.

He is more interested in building the next layer. Fresh leadership has been brought in to run the core businesses while he moves toward technology, systems, and future strategy.

He talks about separating the hard asset business and the soft brand business, recognising that globally, hotel brands often thrive as asset-light operators while ownership sits with institutions. He speaks of building technology capabilities for distribution, revenue management, and AI-driven sales intelligence, initially for internal use and eventually as a



Down Syndrome & Speech And Hearing Impaired, F&B Service and Housekeeping



Orthopaedic Handicap, Front Desk



Intellectual And Developmental Disability, F&B Service

service for the wider hotel market. "The next frontiers are all digital," he says.

He also points to a larger shift he sees coming in India: the dominance of unbranded hotels, particularly in the mid and lower segments. For him, the next opportunity lies in consolidation, better distribution, and brand-led trust in a fragmented market.

And yet, for all the business architecture, his emotional compass returns to the same place it began: what will he do with personal wealth, beyond the company?

"I have made wealth," he says. "That, for me, means responsibility." He names three priorities with clarity: girl-child education, women's employment, and opportunity-deprived Indians. "These are the gaps that matter," he says.

The language is not performative. It is almost clinical. This is where inequity begins, and this is where he wants to intervene. He pauses, then adds, almost as a footnote, "I don't think I am special. A lot worked in my favour. The least I can do is make sure it works for others, too."

THE FOUNDER WHO NEVER TRIED TO SOUND LIKE ONE

Keswani's story is compelling because it refuses glamour. He does not present himself as a genius. He insists on luck, timing, and accidental competencies. But beneath that humility is something more deliberate: a mind that turns experience into systems, and systems into outcomes.

He learned hospitality by doing the hardest work first. He built a hotel company by reading the market accurately and respecting how Indians travel. He scaled by trusting people and rewarding risk. And he created a culture where inclusion was not a headline, but an operating principle.

That is what makes Patu Keswani's milestones matter. Not the size of the company alone, but the kind of company it became.



Neelendra Singh, MD & CEO, Kapil Sharma, Executive Director & CFO, Vishvapreet Singh Cheema, President, Lemon Tree Hotels

THE WELLNESS SPECIAL



WELLNESS

WHEN WELLNESS MEETS BLUE THERAPY

Blue therapy, underwater silence, and the mental reset we want in January

TT BUREAU



There is a reason the ocean feels like a psychological “mute” button. The Global Wellness Institute puts the wider wellness economy at \$6.8 trillion in 2024, signalling a world that is actively budgeting for calm, not merely chasing it. Wellness tourism itself has returned as a significant travel force, with expenditures reaching \$894 billion in 2024.

Within that surge sits a quieter sub-trend that luxury travellers understand instinctively: water does more than entertain you, it restores you.

Today’s “always on” pace fuels anxiety, low mood, memory strain, and emotional exhaustion, while people living with neurological conditions or disabilities often face added physical and mental barriers. Prolonged stress does not stay confined to the mind; it affects the cardiovascular, immune, digestive, nervous, and musculoskeletal systems, while lowering serotonin and dopamine, making stress feel like a full-body burden rather than a passing state.

Wallace J. Nichols, who articulated the modern “Blue Mind” concept, notes that time spent near or in water is psychologically restorative, reflecting practices long embedded in older cultures. The language around it has caught up with wellness experts. “Blue Mind” has become shorthand for the restorative state people report near, in, on, and under water, with Wallace J. Nichols’ Blue Mind research hub tracking academic work in this space. Even mainstream lifestyle titles now reference “Blue Mind Theory” as a recognised framing for why water environments can feel calming and mentally clarifying.

“Blue Mind” has become shorthand for the restorative state people report near, in, on, and under water, and research in this space links immersion with lower stress markers and a gentler shift in the balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. In plain terms, water helps the body switch out of alarm mode. Studies highlighted in this conversation include bathing practices associated with reduced cortisol, brief hot showers linked with lower anxiety, and hydrotherapy used to ease psychological stress alongside physical symptoms in chronic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

INDIA’S BLUE MIND, BEFORE IT HAD A NAME

This is where water bridges ancient wisdom and modern science. Neuroscientists increasingly study nature’s calming influence on the brain, with natural bodies of water emerging as especially powerful.

Modern neuroscience is increasingly documenting what older civilisations already lived by: natural water environments can calm the brain and steady the body. The language around this is now familiar. In the Indian ethos, water was treated as a living force, a purifier, a life-giver, and a daily technology of wellbeing. Its reverence can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilisation and the integration of water into built space through Vastu, stepwells, tanks, ghats, and temple ponds that



Image Courtesy: MySaunaWorld

shaped the rhythm of life. Baths and immersion were not framed as indulgence, but as reset, easing tension, cooling strain, and restoring internal steadiness.

The tradition also had a spiritual grammar that amplified the psychological effect. Rivers were worshipped as maternal presences and female deities, Ganga and Yamuna most visibly, and pollution was not only an ecological failure but a moral rupture. Philosophically, texts like the Kathopaniṣad connect water with mūla-prakṛti, the primal source that remains even after dissolution, reinforcing water as more than matter, it is memory, origin, and renewal.

If you want to see India’s “blue therapy” at scale, look at the Kumbh Mela. Held in a twelve-year cycle and recognised by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it gathers millions at Hardwar, Prayagraj at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati, Trimbak-Nashik on the Godavari, and Ujjain on the Shipra.



Image Courtesy: Fika Photo, Pexels



Image Courtesy: Anete Lusina, Pexels

Pilgrims enter the water for purification, rejuvenation, and inner reset. In modern terms, it resembles mass participation in a Blue Mind state. In India's older language, it is something deeper: water as wellness, water as ritual technology, and water as a doorway back to balance.

WHAT "BLUE THERAPY" LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

In luxury travel, the experience is moving beyond spa menus and into the water itself, blending three elements:

Water immersion: Water immersion slows the nervous system through buoyancy, rhythm, and reduced sensory load.

Underwater silence: The ocean filters the world's sharp edges into a low hum. For many, that sensory reduction is the point. It feels like rest that is not performative.

Breath as ritual, not a workout: Done properly, breathwork here is simple: long exhales, slow pacing, and calm intervals. In water, breath becomes a metronome. The body follows.

Ocean mindfulness: A reef forces present-tense thinking: buoyancy, movement, light, distance. You cannot scroll your way through a dive.

Safety note: Breathwork practices that involve extended breath holds should be guided by professionals.

WHY TRAVELLERS ARE CHOOSING THE OCEAN OVER CROWDED HOLIDAY SPOTS

Luxury has always been about access. In 2026, access increasingly means access to quiet.

Diving fits this moment because it offers a rare combination: high skill, low noise, and an experience that cannot be replicated by a lobby playlist. It is also a market that is expanding fast. One widely cited industry forecast estimates the global diving tourism market at about USD 4.55 billion in 2023, projecting it could reach USD 8.83 billion by 2030.

Training infrastructure is massive and global, which helps explain why the "learn to dive" impulse keeps showing up in luxury itineraries. PADI reports 30 million+ certifications issued since 1967, alongside 6,600 dive centres and resorts and 128,000 PADI professionals worldwide. That scale matters: it makes diving feel both aspirational and logistically achievable.

WHERE LUXURY TRAVELLERS WILL DIVE IN 2026

The Maldives | The "reef-and-retreat" classic

This is still the benchmark for villa privacy plus high-impact marine life. COMO Maalifushi, for instance, positions diving as a core experience, highlighting extensive local dive options in the surrounding waters.

Why the Appeal: luxury buyers want short transfers, strong service, and experiences that deliver fast emotional payoff.

Fiji | Soft adventure, serious serenity

Fiji's draw is that it feels gentle even when it is world-class: warm water, vibrant reefs, and an unhurried rhythm that pairs naturally with wellness.

Why the Appeal: It suits travellers who want ocean immersion without the social theatre.

Indonesia (Bali and beyond) | Water-led wellness with spiritual texture

Bali remains the wellness capital for travellers who want nature, ritual, and structured programmes. COMO Shambhala Estate leans into hydrotherapy and spring-fed water experiences, including its Vitality Pool and hydrotherapy focus.

Why the Appeal: Add nearby dive routes, and Indonesia becomes a rare trip that can do inner work and underwater wonder.

Italy | The cultured flex: Baiae's underwater archaeology

The Underwater Archaeological Park of Baia lets divers move through submerged Roman remains, and the official park regulations underline controlled, guided access designed to protect the site.

Why the Appeal: It is not only a dive, it is a story you can tell at dinner without sounding like everyone else.

The Red Sea (Egypt and Saudi) | Visibility, reefs, and a renaissance

The Red Sea remains a heavyweight for dramatic reef scenes and clear-water diving.

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Image Courtesy: Cottonbro Studio, Pexels

Why the Appeal: It offers a sharper, more grown-up alternative to overfamiliar tropical circuits.

Australia | The Great Barrier Reef and Ningaloo for scale and species

Australia is about epic nature and marine encounters that feel genuinely “big”.

Why the Appeal: Luxury travellers are increasingly choosing destinations that justify the flight with once-in-a-decade biodiversity.

Sri Lanka | Compact, soulful, and newly compelling

Sri Lanka can combine coastal downtime with a strong cultural interior, making it ideal for travellers who want a complete reset, not only a beach week.

Why the Appeal: It suits the traveller who wants variety without frantic multi-country hopping.

India's Andamans | Close-to-home ocean awe

For Indian luxury travellers, the Andamans offer a clean, elemental escape with real underwater beauty and a sense of distance without international logistics.

Why the Appeal: It is the “quiet flex” destination for people who want nature, not nightlife.

Dubai | The controlled underwater world: Deep Dive Dubai

For travellers who want the underwater headspace without open-ocean unpredictability, Deep Dive Dubai is a category of its own. It is 60.02m deep and recognised by Guinness

World Records as the deepest swimming pool for diving. The venue positions itself as accessible even for non-certified divers (within controlled depth limits), which lowers the barrier for first-timers.

Why the Appeal: It turns “learn to dive” into an ultra-safe, design-led city break add-on.

WHY THE OCEAN IS CHANGING WHAT “PREMIUM” MEANS

In 2026, sustainability cannot sit in a brochure sidebar. Ocean-facing luxury is being judged on what it protects. That is partly because travellers are more informed, and partly because the economics of wellness now reward places that can prove long-term value. With wellness tourism spending at **\$894 billion in 2024**, resorts have a commercial incentive to build programmes that create repeat visits through genuine restoration, not gimmicks.

Boutique scale and lower-density design are increasingly central to ocean-led wellness, with smaller footprints reducing noise, environmental pressure, and the subtle fatigue that comes with feelings cared for. Marine stewardship, when it is operational, deepens this effect with conservation becoming tangible as guest behaviour is gently shaped through guided snorkelling, limited group sizes, reef-safe protocols, water immersion and meaningful partnerships with local marine teams.

Alongside this, water-based therapies that calm the nervous system are re-entering the luxury mainstream. The larger point is simple: water-based wellness restores quietly, working with the body.



Image Courtesy: Deep Dive Dubai



A PLACE FOR NURTURING GROWTH

To meet the evolving needs of today's wellness traveler, the Healing Sanctuary at The Farm offers a curated suite of core programs designed around the most common guest motivations: detoxification, weight management, mental well-being, and rejuvenation/self-care. These foundational retreats provide structured, results-oriented experiences delivered through a seamless integration of medical diagnostics, therapeutic treatments, movement, nutrition, and holistic care.

For guests with specific health concerns or multifaceted goals, our wellness retreat also provides its Signature Path — a fully personalized program. This bespoke journey is crafted by our Multidisciplinary Team based on each guest's preferred stay duration, wellness intensity, primary goal, and medical considerations, ensuring deeply individualized results.

To complement these offerings, the Healing Sanctuary introduces three specialized Upgrade Packs — Sleep Enhancement, Pain Management, and Immune Boosting — which can be added to any core or personalized program, or booked independently by leisure guests seeking targeted support.

Every detail of your journey here is designed to help you evolve, reconnect, and thrive. Nestled in the lush mountains of Lipa, Batangas, The Farm at San Benito is more than a destination: it is a living, breathing sanctuary of calm, transformation, and growth. Here, nature's vibrant energy, integrative wellness medical expertise, and heartfelt Filipino care come together in harmony.



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INDIA AT EASE: WHERE THE COUNTRY TEACHES YOU HOW TO SLOW DOWN

India's landscapes and traditions naturally slow you down, offering restorative breaks through rhythm, simplicity, and quiet

TT BUREAU

Wellness in India rarely announces itself. It shows up quietly, in the way a hill town wakes early and eats warm, in the way a coastline insists on an afternoon pause, in the way a forest day begins before sunrise and ends long before the news cycle. For a growing number of Indian travellers, that is the appeal. The most restorative journeys are no longer the ones branded as "retreats", but the ones where place and routine do the work.

Globally, wellness has shifted into something more daily and personal, less occasional and performative. Within India, those shifts land naturally because the country has long held living systems of wellbeing.

THE NEW INDIAN WELLNESS TRAVELLER

This domestic reset is not driven by dramatic reinvention. It is shaped by fatigue. Too many screens, too much noise,

too much planning, too little sleep. The new wellness traveller is not chasing a perfect version of health. They are craving relief and rest.

That is why the preference is increasingly for a 3–5 day break that feels longer than it is. These travellers choose texture over treatment. A sunrise walk that begins without a tracker. Breakfast at a steady hour. A late morning that is allowed to drift. A stay that makes reading feel normal again. Early nights that arrive naturally because the day is complete earlier.

HILL CALM: BREATH, LIGHT, AND GENTLE MOVEMENT

The hills have always had their own tempo, and they do not bend for city urgency. Air turns cooler, breathing deepens without instruction, and daylight feels cleaner. Hill wellness is not about intensity. It is about gentle movement that becomes part of the day without needing motivation.

You walk because the landscape invites it.



You pause because the view holds you there. Days become pleasingly simple: short trails to viewpoints, village paths that rise and fall in a manageable way, unhurried tea in the afternoon, and evenings that make sleep feel earned rather than chased. The hills reduce decision fatigue. When the structure of a day is obvious, the mind stops negotiating with itself.

Places for hill calm: Tirthan Valley, Shoja, and the quieter Kullu-Manali edges in Himachal Pradesh for river valleys and pine silence; Landour and calmer Mussoorie belts in Uttarakhand for old promenades and slow light; Mukteshwar and Binsar in Kumaon for forests and wide views; Coorg in Karnataka for plantation trails and green repetition; Coonoor and Kotagiri in the Nilgiris for tea country and verandah mornings; gentler Sikkim circuits such as Pelling and Yuksom when you want mountain presence without crowd energy.

COASTAL EASE: TIDES, AND UNHURRIED EATING

Coastal India carries a softer logic even when it is busy. Many coastal communities begin early, work hard, and then loosen into the afternoon. Heat shapes behaviour in practical ways. Meals get lighter. Water becomes essential. And the sea builds a timetable the body understands quickly: walk when the sand is cool, rest when the sun is high, step out again when the light drops.

Coastal wellness is sensory and calming. The horizon reduces mental clutter. The repetition of waves offers dependable steadiness. In quieter beach belts, evenings stretch in a low-lit way, built around conversation rather than screens.

Backwaters add another layer of ease. Even restless travellers



Ooty. Image Courtesy: Jayasoorya KS, Pexels

find themselves eating more slowly near a lake, sitting longer, sleeping earlier, and waking with less resistance. The body begins to follow tide logic: move when the day opens, soften as it closes.

Places for coastal ease: South Goa's quieter belts beyond the party strip; Gokarna and gentler coastal Karnataka; Konkan stretches such as Tarkarli, Vengurla, Ganpatipule, and Malvan for seafood markets and slow afternoons; Kerala's backwaters around Kumarakom and Lake Vembanad for water-led days; Mararikulam and calmer beach pockets near Alappuzha; Odisha's Chandrabhaga and less crowded parts of the Puri-Konark belt in quieter seasons.



Orchha Fort. Image Courtesy: Nikhil Kumar Pal, Pexels



Mindfulness Among The Mountains. Image Courtesy: Chirayu Vyas, Pexels

FOREST RESET: SILENCE THAT REPAIRS

Forests are India's most underplayed wellness environments, perhaps because they refuse spectacle. Their gift is immediate and invisible: reduced sensory input, cleaner air, and the kind of quiet that makes your shoulders drop without negotiation. Forest time pulls you away from constant stimulation and returns you to attention.

A forest day also has natural limits. You wake early because the landscape is alive early. You return on time because the light changes and the day naturally closes. Screen habits weaken because the outside world finally feels richer than the inside one. Wildlife regions, even in buffer zones and gentler lodges, support deeper rest precisely because they structure your focus. You cannot scroll through a dawn drive. You sit, you watch, you wait.

The mind starts noticing smaller things again: birdsong, leaf movement, the smell of damp earth, the way quiet can feel full rather than empty. Food tends to become simpler and more routine-driven. Sleep arrives earlier because the body has moved with daylight, not against it.

Places for forest reset: Kabini and Nagarhole in Karnataka for river edges and birdlife; Wayanad in Kerala for rain-fed green and slower stays; Satpura in Madhya Pradesh for a more intimate forest feel; Pench and Kanha for classic Central India wilderness rhythms; calmer Corbett zones in Uttarakhand in the right season for river forests; Nilgiri Biosphere landscapes that allow gentle immersion and unforced walking.

HERITAGE RHYTHM: FAITH AND GENTLE ROUTINE

Heritage towns offer a different kind of wellness: structure. Bells, prayer calls, aarti timings, market hours, temple food, and evening closures. Routine is built into the architecture of daily life. For travellers exhausted by self-designed productivity, that can feel like relief.

In older towns, the day is shaped by collective habits rather

than private chaos. Movement becomes gentle exercise without being labelled as such: temple corridors, ghat walks, fort climbs taken slowly, pilgrim circuits that turn into meditative loops. Even the sensory world is organised. Courtyards filter light. Thick walls soften sound. Meals arrive with timing, not constant negotiation.

Places for heritage rhythm: Chettinad in Tamil Nadu for courtyard life and measured meals; Madurai for early temple hours and ritual timing; Maheshwar and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh for riverfront stillness and low-key heritage pace; Bundi in Rajasthan for a fort town mood without constant crowd theatre; Chittorgarh's quieter surrounds for space and history; older quarters of Hyderabad or Chandor in Goa for lived heritage that still follows daily rhythms.

INDIA'S MOST MODERN LUXURY IS TIME

Slow travel is often framed globally as a trend with new names and new packaging. In India, it feels less like a trend and more like a return. The country does not need to invent wellness as a product. It has always offered it as a way of life, embedded in landscape, food, faith, and timing.

The traveller arrives thinking they need a plan. Then the hills, the coast, the forests, and the old towns do something subtle. They teach the body how to take its time again. And once that lesson lands, the definition of a good holiday changes. It stops being about how much got done and becomes about how well one came back.



Kullu. Image Courtesy: Nans K, Pexels



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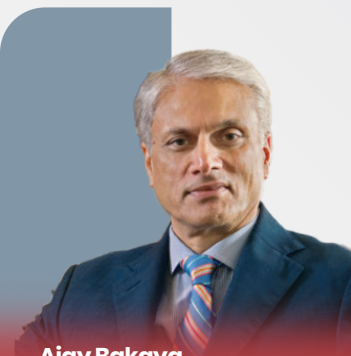
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Managing Director
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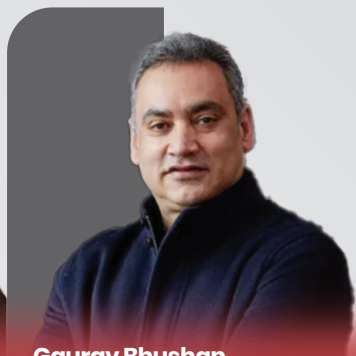
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Sound Healing in Jaisalmer's Dunes. Image Courtesy: Wealth & Elegance

THE NEW MAP OF WELLBEING

Luxury wellness means fewer decisions, more quiet, and places that do the healing

CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO

Wellness travel feels different now because the body gets the message first. A change in air and light can ease you into better sleep, and the pace of a place starts to shape your own. You walk more because streets, trails, and waterfronts invite it, and you eat more calmly because the food culture leans towards balance rather than spectacle. The shift is subtle, but it shows up in the small things: steadier mornings, less scrolling, hunger that feels simpler.

The appetite for that kind of reset has become a global phenomenon. The Global Wellness Institute values the wellness economy at \$6.3 trillion in 2023, projected to reach \$9 trillion by 2028. Wellness tourism is forecast to cross \$1 trillion in 2024 and rise towards \$1.4 trillion by 2027, matching what travellers are chasing: deeper sleep, steadier moods, and habits that feel sustainable rather than strict.

This is the logic behind the “wellness capital”, a destination where wellbeing is woven into daily life rather than sold as an add-on. Mineral water becomes a ritual you repeat, architecture protects quiet, and local rhythms leave space for early nights and long mornings. Luxury, in these places, reads as something practical: fewer decisions to make, fewer demands on your attention, and more time spent feeling rested enough to be fully present. In a true wellness capital, the easiest thing you do is stop trying so hard.

MOUNTAINS THAT STEADY YOU

Alpine towns show well-being shaped by landscape. Crisp air changes the way you breathe, cooler temperatures make early evenings feel natural, and trails and promenades draw you outdoors. India offers a similar steadying mountain rhythm in the Garhwal Himalaya, Dharamshala, and Manali's valleys: crisp

mornings, easy walks, and early dinners. Repetition becomes medicine, and the same short walk can feel newly restoring each day.

The best alpine hotels understand the psychology of rest. Luxury sits in materials and space: timber and stone, soft light, pools facing ridgelines, saunas. Days turn beautifully simple: unhurried breakfast, a walk that can stay gentle or become ambitious, warmth afterwards in water or heat, an early dinner, and sleep arriving early.

For Indian travellers, alpine destinations often deliver immediate relief. Climate contrast can be dramatic after dense, warm cities, and the mind quietens simply because the surroundings do. These places reduce planning fatigue, so you conserve energy for recovery.

WATER THAT SHAPES CITIES

Thermal cultures restore through ritual because they make bathing feel ordinary. You do not book wellbeing as an event; you step into a tradition shaped over time, and the body responds to consistency.

For hot-spring rituals, Manikaran and Tattapani in Himachal keep the soak, walk, rest loop beautifully simple.

Europe's classic spa towns were built around this idea: UNESCO's Great Spa Towns of Europe recognise eleven towns across seven countries, developed around mineral springs and a spa culture that shaped architecture and social rhythm between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The legacy still shows up in the way these towns feel, with gardens and promenades designed for slow time.

Budapest brings a different energy, where thermal life feels exuberantly urban. It is often summarised as having 123 hot springs and boreholes feeding its baths, and you can step back into cafés and river walks afterwards.

Thermal destinations suit travellers who feel overdrawn. Ritual reduces decision-making, and a simple loop repeats itself: soak, walk, eat slowly, rest, return to water. By day three, calm starts to feel familiar.



Finnish Sauna. Image Courtesy: HUUM Sauna Heaters, Pexels



Wellness Yoga Group. Image Courtesy: Anandas in The Himalayas

HEAT, HUSH, AND MANNERS

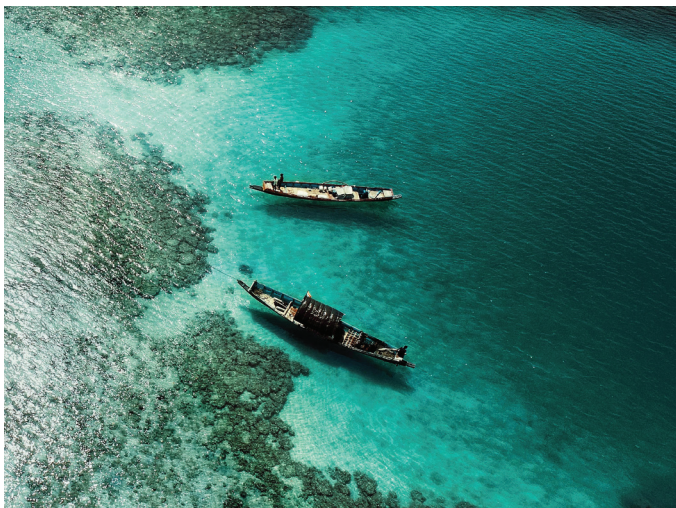
In the Nordics, wellbeing reads as upkeep rather than indulgence. Finland's sauna culture is recognised by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, described as a social practice connected with inner peace and community. Rest belongs to daily life here, and silence carries a kind of permission.

The sauna rhythm is spare and effective: heat, then cool air or cold water, then rest, repeated without drama. Lakes and forests amplify the effect, adding light, wind, and silence.

Japan offers another form of calm, held together by consideration. Onsen bathing comes with etiquette, and Japan's tourism guidance emphasises washing thoroughly before entering and following house rules so the experience stays clean and respectful.



Traditional Japanese Onsen. Image Courtesy: 家豪陳, Pexels



South Andaman. Image Courtesy: Sanat Anghan, Pexels

Add the forest, and Japan becomes even more persuasive. Shinrin-yoku, commonly translated as forest bathing, was coined in 1982, rooted in Japan's framing of time in nature as a restorative practice. It asks for little, yet delivers a lot: slow walking, sensory attention, and silence that feels full rather than empty.

SEA AIR AND VAST SKIES

Some wellness capitals work through contrast, and Iceland sits on that list. The Blue Lagoon describes its waters as geothermal seawater enriched with silica, algae, and minerals. Warm mineral water against cold air becomes an instruction to soften, and the most satisfying Icelandic trips favour rhythm over conquest: soak, short hike, long meal, early sleep.

Islands restore through their own cadence. Light anchors the body clock, salt air changes appetite and energy, and movement happens barefoot and unforced. The best island wellness stays build luxury around space. Kerala's coast and Lakshadweep echo island wellness: salt air, long swims, unhurried nights, and days that end before you feel overused.

Desert sanctuaries bring a different medicine: vastness. Clean horizons quiet the mind, early starts and early nights feel

sensible, and afternoons belong to shade, hydration, and rest. Jaisalmer's dunes deliver the desert's vastness and silence.

Recovery also thrives in communal form. South Korea's Jjimjilbang tradition combines bathing with heated rooms and shared lounging spaces where people linger for hours, nap, and reset together.

LONGEVITY, AND INDIAN TRAVELLERS

Longevity travel has become its own luxury lane, combining hospitality with structured health programmes. Spain has gained visibility in this space through centres such as SHA, positioned around integrative, longevity-led programmes, while Switzerland carries a longer heritage through institutions such as Clinique La Prairie, tracing its origins to 1931. This style of stay appeals to travellers who want fewer choices and clearer direction: assessments, structure, and a plan.

In India, Ananda in the Himalayas in Uttarakhand approaches longevity through preventive Ayurveda, yoga and sleep science. Atmantan Wellness Centre in Maharashtra focuses on diagnostics-led nutrition and movement programmes designed to extend healthspan.

Longevity narratives also circulate through the popular idea of "Blue Zones", often linked with everyday habits such as walking, community, and plant-forward eating. The concept has faced scrutiny over data quality and interpretation, a reminder to handle wellness storytelling with care. The enduring lesson remains practical: well-being is built through ordinary routines repeated over time.

Global capitals deliver conditions more than concepts. Cleaner air and climate contrast, systems that reduce friction, food cultures that support lightness without austerity, and rituals that remove decision fatigue all matter, but time matters most. Five nights can improve sleep, ten can shift baseline mood, and the finest destinations offer a persuasive gift: a rhythm that feels so good it follows you home.



Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing). Image Courtesy: Linh Tran, Pexels

HOMAGE TO EPIC WARRIORS MINUTE REPEATER

– Alexander the Great



The 18K 2N yellow gold dial is engraved by hand, its *taille-douce* lines recalling the spears of Alexander's army.

A softly blurred enamel scene brings Alexander and Bucephalus to life on the battlefield.

The 18K white gold case and buckle carry the distinctive Macedonian pattern of spear notches

QUIET IS THE NEW CURRENCY

The future of ultra luxury is measured through how gently a place allows modern lives to slow down

TT BUREAU



Image Courtesy: Drif Riadh, Unsplash

Luxury has always served as a quiet record of its era. It absorbs the pressures, ambitions, and unspoken needs shaping everyday life, then responds through material expression and experience. In earlier years, luxury promised abundance as reassurance. Space grew larger, itineraries fuller, choices multiplied. These signals aligned well with a world where travel felt rare and time felt generous.

That world has changed. Life today is dense with movement, information, and expectation. Decisions arrive constantly, and visibility has become routine rather than exceptional. Among seasoned travellers who navigate this intensity daily, luxury is no longer measured through accumulation, but via relief.

This shift has not announced itself loudly. It has emerged quietly through changing preferences. Guests linger longer yet do less. Private spaces matter more than public ones. Silence, darkness, and privacy carry greater emotional weight than spectacle. Travel has become less about escape and more about recalibration.

Restorative luxury reflects this moment precisely. It recognises that the most valuable offering now is space and the quiet moments. The true marker of refinement lies in how gently an environment allows the mind and body to settle without instruction or performance.

WHEN ABUNDANCE FEELS HEAVY

For decades, luxury hospitality relied on visible signals of value. Grand architecture, extensive menus, layered programming,

and carefully choreographed activity conveyed privilege and success. These elements reassured guests that nothing was lacking. In a slower world, such abundance felt indulgent.

Today, the same signals can carry weight. For travellers whose lives already involve constant navigation of complexity, abundance may feel demanding rather than comforting. Full schedules resemble professional calendars. Excessive choice invites decision fatigue. Visual drama competes for attention that is already stretched thin.

Changes became visible through everyday patterns inside high-end hotels. Stays extended while activity levels softened, leading shared areas toward quieter rhythms and giving private rooms greater importance. Guests spent longer periods resting indoors, paying closer attention to conditions that supported focus and comfort. Unplanned interruption disrupted concentration. Satisfaction began aligning closely with stable sleep quality, reliable privacy, and an overall sense of continuity across the stay.

Restorative luxury addresses this shift through measured restraint. Refinement and attentive service remain central, with excess detail receding. Options are shaped carefully, allowing the environment an even rhythm that avoids competing demands. Engagement exists without pressure, creating a setting that supports ease throughout the day. In this context, luxury feels lighter and more functional. The experience delivers value through consistency, discretion, and dependable calm.

REST WITHOUT INSTRUCTION

Restorative luxury is often confused with wellness travel, though the two function differently. Wellness experiences rely on structure. Programmes guide behaviour. Treatments intervene. Progress is monitored and improvement becomes visible. Restorative luxury operates without instruction.

Within this environment, recovery takes shape through setting and structure. Guests encounter no prescribed path or stated objective. Balance develops through stable conditions that support physical ease and mental steadiness across the day. Design, service, and atmosphere work quietly in combination, removing the need for instruction or explanation.

Sleep holds a central position within this experience. It exists as an expected standard rather than a highlighted feature. Rooms reflect careful attention toward sound control, temperature stability, and lighting balance. Darkness during night hours remains intact, supporting consistent rest. Morning light enters gradually, allowing physical rhythms space for adjustment without pressure.

Privacy carries equal importance. It extends beyond restricted access and becomes a functional part of comfort. Reduced visual contact supports free movement without awareness of observation. Interactions remain limited, deliberate, and efficient. Staff presence stays consistent without becoming intrusive, maintaining continuity across the stay.

This approach lowers alertness without effort. Guests remain at ease without self-monitoring. Rest occurs naturally, supported by an environment that maintains calm through reliability, discretion, and restraint.



Image Courtesy: Ekaterina Bolovtsova, Pexels

DESIGN THAT SOFTENS SENSES

Design holds a central position within restorative luxury, with effectiveness shaped through restraint and control. Sound receives careful attention as a functional element. Quiet is achieved through considered spatial planning, advanced insulation, and mechanical systems calibrated for low ambient presence. Silence feels deliberate and stable, contributing consistency across shared and private areas.

Lighting follows physiological patterns linked with daily rhythm. Evening spaces rely on softer illumination with controlled intensity. Glare is limited through placement and



Image Courtesy: Engin Akyurt, Unsplash



Image Courtesy: Jack Redgate, Pexels

diffusion. Night hours remain protected through sustained darkness. Morning light enters gradually, supporting adjustment without disruption. These decisions assist natural sleep cycles, particularly relevant for travellers operating under sustained schedules and frequent geographic movement.

Spatial planning supports this approach through moderated density. Reduced room numbers and increased spacing lower sensory demand. Limited visual movement supports mental settling and sustained focus. Layouts guide guests inward, reducing the need for constant interaction across public areas.

Natural elements reinforce this balance through material choice and spatial integration. Surfaces favour texture and weight over decoration. Water introduces steady rhythm without stimulation. Shade, proportion, and uninterrupted



Image Courtesy: Cottonbro Studio, Pexels

outlooks provide visual stability. These settings maintain calm without seeking attention.

SERVICE THAT EASES THOUGHT

Service within restorative luxury follows the same principles shaping its spaces. Choice is handled with care, recognising that excess can weigh heavily on attention. Menus are shaped with clarity and focus. Experiences remain available without expectation. Time feels less segmented, allowing guests freedom within the day without pressure or direction.

Staff approach interaction with discipline and awareness. Observation guides response, keeping communication concise and purposeful. Privacy is maintained through consistency rather than ceremony. Interruptions become rare, preserving continuity across the stay. Care is expressed through restraint, allowing guests space without withdrawal of attentiveness.

This operational approach reflects a broader reality of modern life. Mental fatigue influences behaviour more strongly than indulgence. Relief arrives through simplification and removal of unnecessary demand. Comfort becomes linked with ease rather than accumulation.

Privacy carries particular weight for affluent travellers navigating highly visible lives. It offers distance from exposure and expectation. In an environment shaped by constant documentation and performance, privacy allows a return to an unguarded state. Estate-style retreats, private villas, low-density resorts, and inward-facing heritage properties support this need through layout and flow, creating psychological comfort without explanation.

Travellers drawn toward restorative settings often extend stays and return with regularity. Loyalty develops through reliability, discretion, and familiarity rather than novelty. Hospitality brands aligned with this shift place greater emphasis on continuity and trust, allowing relationships to deepen over time.

The wider wellness economy reinforces this direction, though restorative luxury maintains distinction through moderation. Recovery cannot feel imposed or transactional. It functions best when integrated quietly, without overt structure or commercial emphasis.

When seasoned travellers recall meaningful stays, patterns emerge clearly. They describe consistent sleep, unhurried mornings, and days shaped by steadiness rather than schedule. These recollections reflect an evolved understanding of luxury grounded in restoration rather than display.

Journeys that support rest without effort and presence without obligation hold enduring appeal.

Within this permission, modern luxury settles into its most lasting form. Its impact remains understated, carried through comfort that endures beyond departure, defined by ease, balance, and a sustained sense of being fully restored.

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.





Ivory Applique and Beadwork Flared Jacket. Image Courtesy: Chandrima

THE COMFORT FIRST LUXURY TRAVEL WARDROBE

A neutral palette and breathable fabric story, global to Indian, delivers depth, drape, and ease together

TT BUREAU

Travel strips style back to its truth. When you are moving through unfamiliar weather, long drives, early starts, late dinners, and rooms that swing between heat and aggressive air-conditioning, clothes either support you or become another problem to manage. Anything stiff, fussy, or attention-seeking starts to feel like work. You do not want to spend a trip adjusting seams, battling creases, or second-guessing what to wear. You want to feel good, look composed, and get on with the day.

That is why understated luxury has become the new travel uniform. It is not a trend built for photographs, but a wardrobe logic built for real motion. Clean silhouettes, soft structure, breathable fabric, and calm colour stories that repeat well across cities and coastlines.

In this form, fashion becomes wellness: fewer irritations, fewer decisions, and steadiness you can pack.

WHY QUIET LUXURY WORKS IN TRANSIT

Trips already contain enough decisions: routes, reservations, time zones, menus, meetings. When clothes are fussy, restrictive, or high maintenance, they add friction where you least need it. A pared-back wardrobe removes that work and turns dressing into something close to automatic.

This is also why "investment dressing" now reads like wellness. Buying fewer, better pieces reduces wardrobe regret and makes packing simpler. Psychology research links repeated decision-making to depleted mental energy and poorer choices, which is why a repeatable travel uniform can feel like relief rather than limitation.

In practical terms, the refined travel uniform rests on three pillars. It looks polished while staying comfortable. It breathes across climates, especially the whiplash of tropical heat and aggressive air conditioning. And it repeats gracefully, so you are not reinventing yourself every morning under hotel lighting.

GLOBAL MINIMALISM AND THE SENSORY SHIFT

European minimalism has always been an exercise in editing. It is not the absence of style, it is restraint that reads intentional. For travellers, that restraint clears visual noise and reduces the small irritations that build into fatigue.

Tonal neutrals, sand, ink, soft grey, create visual calm without feeling bland. They photograph well without demanding attention, and they make repetition look like consistency rather than compromise.

The other half is tailoring that breathes. This new wave of low-key luxury has moved away from armour towards soft structure: unlined blazers, trousers with clean drape, shirts that hold shape without stiffness. These pieces are built for movement and long sitting. They look expensive because the cut is right, not because the fabric is loud.

Then comes the sensory shift. Fabric handfeel has become the real flex: how it sits on skin, how it responds to heat and moisture, how it behaves after eight hours, not eight minutes. Textile research treats comfort as a mix of thermal and sensorial properties, including air permeability and moisture transfer. In plain terms, breathable fibres tend to feel less sticky, less irritating, and less exhausting over long days.

INDIA'S QUIET LUXURY ADVANTAGE

India has been practising the traveller's version of understated elegance for generations, without needing the label. The craft ecosystem evolved through climate and daily comfort. Natural fibres, breathable weaves, intelligent layering, these are lived design, which is why Indian textiles so often feel right on the road.

Khadi is the clearest example. Defined as hand spun and hand woven cloth, traditionally in cotton, silk, or wool, it is prized for airflow and comfort in heat. In contemporary silhouettes, khadi becomes crisp shirts, relaxed trousers, cords, and unlined jackets that look expensive because they are cut cleanly. On the move, it earns its place through behaviour: less cling, less overheating, less irritation.

Chanderi brings lightness that reads expensive. Its signature is feather-light layering and a subtle sheen that looks elegant without effort. Chanderi sarees are also a registered Geographical Indication in India, which matters when provenance matters. For travel, the appeal is temperature intelligence. A Chanderi layer works across heat outdoors and cold interiors without adding bulk, and it packs beautifully.

Jamdani offers a subdued texture that can be read as tonal and clean from afar, then reveals intricate motifs up close, a tradition recognised by UNESCO. India also has GI-registered



Tweed Outfit. Image Courtesy: Sara Kazemi, Pexels

Jamdani traditions, including Jamdani Sarees of West Bengal. For the traveller, this is detail without noise: visual interest that does not overstimulate.

THE UNIFORM SYSTEM

The secret is not shopping, it is systems. Think in modules that work together: a shared palette, a balance of structure and softness, and one craft element per look. When every piece has a job, packing becomes easier and getting dressed becomes almost automatic.



Mystical jungle Mojari. Image Courtesy: NeedleDust



Image Courtesy: Fashion Jackson

Build your base around breathable essentials that feel calm on bare skin, then add structure in light layers. A soft-tailoring jacket over khadi trousers, or a Chanderi layer over a clean dress, moves easily between airports, lobbies, and dinners. Accessories should be minimal and tactile, like a fine chain, soft leather, or a single scarf that you actually use.

If you need a template, begin with an airport to check in look: an unlined jacket, a breathable shirt or knit tank, and clean trousers that do not pinch when you sit for hours. Shift it into a



Elsa Hosk. Image Courtesy: Helsastudio



Handwoven Jamdani Scarf. Image Courtesy: Tree of Life

city walk to dinner combination by keeping the base neutral and adding one craft layer, a Chanderi longline piece or a Jamdani scarf that reads quiet until you look closely. This is where the wellness logic becomes tangible. Softer waistbands and less constriction support comfort after flights and rich meals, tonal palettes keep stimulation low, and a scarf that doubles as a light blanket quietly improves the odds of a decent nap.

Every piece should pass four travel checks. It should feel calm on the skin, let you move without overheating, sit comfortably for hours without digging or pulling, and allow a nap without feeling trapped. If it fails any one of these, it is not travel luxury.

Quality hides in details most people never photograph. Look for clean seam finishing and stitching that lies flat, especially around underarms and waistbands. Check stress points and buttons. Notice lining choices, breathable or partial lining often performs better than stiff, shiny layers that trap heat. Fit matters more than hype because fit is comfort engineering; a correct shoulder line and the right sleeve length reduce fidgeting all day.

If you care about authenticity in Indian craft, provenance markers help. GI-registrations exist for heritage textiles, including Chanderi Sarees and Jamdani Sarees of West Bengal, and the Handloom Mark scheme was created to help consumers identify genuine handwoven products.

THE LUXURY OF EASE

If a travel wardrobe is doing its job, you barely notice it. There is no tugging at seams, no second thoughts in front of a suitcase, no outfit that needs managing between breakfast plans and an evening reservation. Everything works quietly, and the day stays yours.

Seen this way, refined dressing becomes practical self-care. Breathable fibres, movement-friendly shapes, and repeatable pairings keep the body comfortable and the mind uncluttered. That is what today's luxury traveller seeks most: a sense of steadiness that lasts across changing places and long days.



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FREEFALL ESCAPES

Skydiving turns destinations into living postcards, where coastlines, peaks, and deserts rush up

TT BUREAU



Parachutists. Image Courtesy: Pexels

There is no gentle build-up in skydiving, no slow immersion. One moment you are watching the world sit neatly in the aircraft window, the next you are stepping into it. For a few breathless seconds, fear and exhilaration run in parallel, and distance becomes something your body understands rather than your eyes. It is not sightseeing in the traditional sense. It is presence, distilled.

What draws travellers back is not only the freefall. It is the way each place tells a different story once gravity is briefly set aside. The jump becomes part of the journey rather than its headline.

WHY SKYDIVING NOW FEELS LIKE A TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

At its core, skydiving is about surrender. Once the door opens, control shifts from planning to presence, which is precisely what

many modern travellers crave in a world of constant notifications and half-attention. Skydiving cannot be multitasked or half-felt. It demands full awareness and often rewards it with a strange, clean clarity.

With that in mind, here are seven destinations where the view is not a backdrop, but part of the emotion.

DUBAI, UAE

Dubai does scale like few other places, and skydiving here mirrors that ambition. The headline experience is the jump over Palm Jumeirah, where the geometry of engineered land meets the fluid blues of the Arabian Gulf. It is a rare visual contrast: an icon built by design, floating in an environment shaped by nature.

What makes Dubai especially appealing for first-timers is how calm the process feels. Operations are famously precise,

briefings are crisp, and the tone is reassuring without losing excitement. Once airborne, the city skyline rises with distinct silhouettes, while the desert sits quietly beyond it, like a reminder of what came before the towers.

In freefall, visibility stretches for miles. Under the canopy, the scene slows into something almost cinematic: sea, palm, city, desert, all in one sweep. If you want your first jump to feel iconic and beautifully controlled, Dubai delivers.

INTERLAKEN, SWITZERLAND

Interlaken shifts the mood completely. Here, skydiving feels less like a spectacle and more like an immersion in nature. Set between Lake Thun and Lake Brienz, framed by Alpine peaks that seem carved rather than formed, the region has long carried a reputation for adventure sports. Skydiving simply feels like a natural extension of that culture.

The sense of altitude is heightened by the landscape itself. Valleys and ridgelines sharpen your perception of depth, and the contrast between silence and speed becomes especially pronounced once you exit the aircraft. The scenery is not merely pretty; it is commanding, almost theatrical.

Season matters here. Summer offers luminous greens and long daylight, while winter turns the terrain into a stark, high-contrast canvas of snow and stone. Interlaken suits travellers who want the jump to feel like a conversation with the mountains rather than a performance for the camera.

AAMBY VALLEY, INDIA

For Indian travellers, Aamby Valley offers a powerful advantage: the thrill without the long-haul flight. Set within the Western Ghats near Lonavala, the jump unfolds above rolling hills, reservoirs, winding roads, and deep green valleys that feel expansive rather than overwhelming. The landscape reads as textured and familiar, yet the aerial perspective makes it feel newly revealed.

Accessibility is a major part of the appeal. Its proximity to Mumbai and Pune makes it a short-break adventure that still feels transformative. The experience is typically structured, with clear briefings and controlled conditions that help first-timers settle their nerves before the door opens.

Under canopy, the descent becomes unhurried and scenic, the Ghats spreading out in layers as if the land is exhaling beneath you. India also has other parachuting and training hubs, including around Mysuru, but Aamby Valley remains a standout for travellers who want a dramatic landscape, straightforward logistics, and an experience that feels both big and attainable.

QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

Queenstown has earned its adventure-capital status through credibility, not hype. Skydiving here is woven into the local tourism culture, supported by experienced operators and a town that understands risk, reward, and routine with equal comfort.

The geography is the main event: Lake Wakatipu curving



Skydive Franz Josef & Fox Glacier. Image Courtesy: New Zealand.com

through the landscape, mountain ranges shifting colour as light changes, and wide-open space that seems designed for freefall. With multiple altitude options, Queenstown also attracts those who want longer freefall time, not only a “tick-box” jump.

What distinguishes the experience is how spacious it feels. The descent gives your mind a second to register what is happening rather than racing through it.

After landing, Queenstown’s café culture, lakeside walks, and easy social energy make it the kind of place where the jump becomes one chapter in a larger adventure itinerary, not the only story you tell.

HAWAII, USA

Skydiving in Hawaii blends exhilaration with ease. The islands offer tropical beauty, diverse terrain, and a coastline that looks almost impossibly crisp from altitude. Jumping above the Pacific creates a sense of infinity, where sky and ocean appear to merge into one continuous colour.

Oahu’s North Shore is especially well known for its drop zones. From the aircraft, the coastline unfolds in clean lines: reefs, beaches, surf breaks, and inland greenery. In freefall, the



Man Jumping off a Plane. Image Courtesy: Yu Ma, Pexels



Tandem Skydiving in Queenstown. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

deep blues dominate, punctuated by pale sand and the white scratch of waves.

The experience tends to feel celebratory rather than confrontational. The canopy ride often stretches long enough to absorb the scenery properly, and the rest of the day can slip seamlessly into beach time, slow dinners, and island exploration. Hawaii suits travellers who want their adrenaline paired with softness: a jump that sits naturally inside a holiday, not apart from it.

MYSURU, INDIA

Skydiving in Mysuru represents an important chapter in India's evolving adventure travel landscape. Located over open plains shaped by history and agriculture, the experience here feels grounded and expansive.

The region has been used for parachuting and training activities for years, benefiting from favourable weather and wide-open spaces. For Indian travellers, Mysuru offers the opportunity to experience skydiving without leaving the country, making the sport more accessible and culturally familiar.

From the air, the landscape reveals patterns of farmland, settlements, and natural boundaries that speak to centuries of habitation. The view lacks the dramatic extremes of mountains or oceans, but it carries a quiet beauty rooted in continuity and scale.

FOX GLACIER, NEW ZEALAND

Fox Glacier is one of the most visually intense skydiving environments on the planet. Here, ice meets rainforest, rivers braid through valleys, and the coastline sits close enough to remind you that this landscape is always in motion.

Weather windows matter, because conditions can shift quickly. When timing aligns, the view is extraordinary: glaciers textured with crevasses and flow lines, dense forest unfurling into waterways, and the sea waiting at the edge like a final punctuation mark.

The emotional tone is different here. Fox Glacier feels raw and indifferent to you, which is exactly why it stays with people. It does not feel curated. It feels earned. This is the jump for travellers drawn to wilderness and intensity, where awe comes with a faint, humbling edge.



Incredible Rush, Freefall Through The Skies of Dubai. Image Courtesy: Pinterest

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THE DAY THE UNIVERSE BROKE ITS OWN BOUNDARIES

How mistaken ideas, bold measurements, and distant galaxies reshaped our understanding of the universe

JEET BHATTACHARYA

For most of human history, the night sky has felt like the world's oldest ceiling mural, close enough to claim and calm enough to trust. Step outside anywhere on Earth and it performs the same quiet trick: a scatter of light, a soft sense of order, the feeling that the universe is keeping its distance.

The Milky Way, in particular, has always looked less like a scientific fact and more like a destination. A pale, luminous river poured across the dark, part myth, part map, part midnight mood. Long before anyone spoke in numbers and distances, we spoke in wonder. We gave the sky stories. We made it familiar.

And then there were the oddities: faint smudges that did not behave like stars, little blurs that seemed to sit there, unbothered by our need to name them neatly. They were easy to dismiss, the sort of thing you notice only when you linger, when your eyes adjust, when you stop rushing the night.

That is the hinge, really. The moment the sky stops being a backdrop and starts becoming a place. Because once you have seen those hazy patches properly, once you have stood somewhere truly dark and realised the heavens have

textures, layers, secrets, the universe does not feel contained any longer.

It feels like it is calling you to look again.

THE AGE OF ISLAND NEBULAE

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, stronger telescopes began revealing faint, fuzzy patches that did not behave like stars. These objects did not twinkle, they did not drift like nearby bodies, and they stayed stubbornly unresolved.

"Nebula" became a broad label for anything cloudy. Some nebulae clearly belonged to the Milky Way, glowing gas clouds where stars are born. Others looked different. A few hinted at a spiral structure. Some appeared as smooth, oval smudges of light, raising the suspicion that not every mystery lived inside our galaxy.

By the late eighteenth century, a bold suggestion circulated: perhaps these were "island universes", stellar systems beyond the Milky Way, each packed with countless stars and separated by unimaginable distance. Most astronomers resisted. There was no reliable way to measure such distances, and without proof, the safer assumption held



Thar Desert, Rajasthan. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Vera C. Rubin Observatory, Chile. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

that nebulae were gas clouds or unresolved star clusters within the Milky Way. Still, the phrase island nebulae lingered, a name that carried doubt.

THE MILKY WAY AS THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, star counts and early mapping made the Milky Way seem vast, a flattened system large enough to contain everything telescopes could see. Measuring distance was brutally difficult. Even the nearest stars showed only tiny shifts against the background sky. Beyond that, depth vanished and scale became guesswork. In many models, the Sun sat close to the galaxy's centre.

Within this framework, the stubborn nebulae could be absorbed as local features: gas clouds, star-forming regions, or star clusters too distant to resolve. The idea that the Milky Way might be one system among many felt unnecessary. Yet the confidence rested on fragile assumptions. The galaxy's size had been overestimated, its structure imperfectly understood, and its centre misidentified.

THE GREAT DEBATE OF 1920

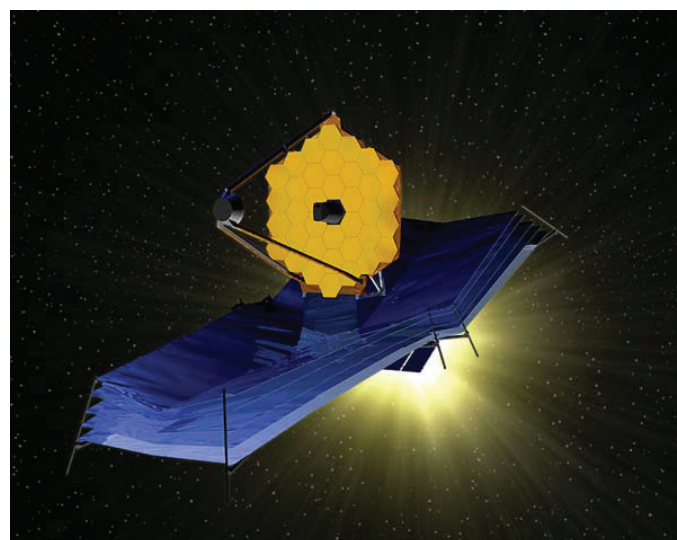
That unease became public in April 1920 at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The Great Debate asked a single explosive question: were spiral nebulae inside the Milky Way, or were they separate stellar systems far beyond it?

One side argued for an immense Milky Way that could

swallow every known nebula. Spiral forms, they said, were nearby objects, perhaps young solar systems or rotating gas clouds. Bright novae seen in spirals were cited as support, because their apparent brilliance suggested closeness.

The opposing view proposed a smaller Milky Way and a larger universe. Spiral nebulae, this side argued, were comparable in scale to our own galaxy. The case leaned on indirect evidence, patterns in distribution, and the growing suspicion that the Milky Way's dimensions had been inflated.

The debate ended without a verdict. There was still no reliable way to measure such enormous distances. But the message was unmistakable: astronomy needed measurement, not argument.



James Webb Space Telescope at L2 Orbit. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Sombrero Galaxy. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

EDWIN HUBBLE AND THE MEASUREMENT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

The measurement arrived at Mount Wilson Observatory in California. Edwin Hubble, using the Hooker Telescope, then the most powerful optical telescope in the world, took a practical approach. He searched for individual stars inside spiral nebulae.

His key targets were Cepheid variable stars. Their predictable brightening and dimming allows astronomers to infer true luminosity and calculate distance. When Hubble identified Cepheids in several spiral nebulae, including the Andromeda nebula, the numbers landed with force. The distances were far beyond the outer limits of the Milky Way. These objects were not local clouds or minor structures. They were vast stellar systems in their own right.

The implication was unavoidable. The Milky Way was not the universe. It was one galaxy among many.

THE DEATH OF ISLAND NEBULAE AND THE BIRTH OF GALAXIES

Once those distances were established, “island nebulae” collapsed as a category. It had been a placeholder, admitting uncertainty without resolving it. Now the uncertainty had coordinates.

The word galaxy moved to the centre of astronomy. Derived from the Greek word for milk, it had once referred only to the Milky Way. After Hubble, it became a universal category. Some astronomers resisted the scale shift, but the evidence was repeatable, and further observations confirmed galaxies at even greater distances.

Astronomy changed gear. It moved beyond mapping one stellar system and towards understanding how galaxies form, evolve, and interact. The universe began to resemble an open landscape.

A UNIVERSE THAT SUDDENLY MULTIPLIED

Confirming galaxies beyond the Milky Way altered humanity’s sense of scale. If the Milky Way were one galaxy, then every spiral or elliptical object implied another immense system of stars. The universe did not simply grow. It multiplied.



Andromeda Galaxy Captured by Hubble's Deep Field Camera. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



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40-inch telescope at Vainu Bappu Observatory. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

The Milky Way lost its status as a centre. The Sun became one star among billions in one galaxy among many. There was no single centre, only a viewpoint.

Wherever astronomers looked deeply enough, galaxies appeared in abundance, then groups and clusters, then structures spanning unimaginable distances. The question shifted: not what nebulae were, but how galaxies form, gather, and reshape one another across time, for aeons.

INDIA'S DARK-SKY DETOURS

For a traveller, this science has a simple payoff: the night sky becomes a destination. India still has pockets where darkness holds, and where the Milky Way feels startlingly present.

Hanle, Ladakh, is the country's most celebrated address for stargazing. The altitude, dry air, and remoteness make nights feel razor-clear. The region is also associated with serious astronomy, which has helped build a wider culture of sky watching.

Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh, brings high-altitude cold-desert skies that look almost freshly washed. Villages and hamlets such as Langza and Kibber are often favoured for clear, wide night views, especially when you step away from harsh artificial lighting.

Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, offers an entirely different theatre. The flat salt desert gives you an uninterrupted dome of sky, and on a good night, constellations seem to sit closer to the horizon than usual.

Jaisalmer and the Thar Desert, Rajasthan, a pair stargazing with old-world romance. If you avoid overly lit camps and seek quieter dunes, the desert night can feel immense and hushed, with stars bright enough to make you slow down.

The Andaman Islands can be unexpectedly rewarding. On quieter islands and less-lit stretches of coast, the sky often appears cleaner than in mainland cities, with sea air and open horizons adding to the experience.

FAMOUS OBSERVATORIES IN INDIA

If you want to connect your night-sky travel with places where India studies the cosmos, these observatories are worth knowing.

Indian Astronomical Observatory, Hanle (Ladakh)

A high-altitude facility, strongly associated with some of India's most important optical observations.

Devasthal Observatory (near Nainital, Uttarakhand)

Home to a major optical telescope and an important modern site for Indian astronomical research.

Vainu Bappu Observatory, Kavalur (Tamil Nadu)

A historic name in Indian optical astronomy, known for long-running observations and instrumentation.

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (Tamil Nadu)

A legacy solar observatory with a long history of studying the Sun.

Udaipur Solar Observatory (Rajasthan)

Known for solar observations, with a distinctive setting that supports stable viewing conditions.

Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope, near Pune (Maharashtra)

One of India's landmark facilities for radio astronomy at metre wavelengths.

Ooty Radio Telescope (Tamil Nadu)

A well-known radio facility in the Nilgiris is adding a different "listening" dimension to how we study the universe.

CLOSING REFLECTION: THE SKY THAT CHANGED ITS MEANING

The night sky did not change when galaxies were discovered. The stars stayed where they were, and the faint smudges still hovered at the edge of vision. What changed was interpretation. The familiar canopy stopped feeling like a ceiling and began to feel like a doorway.

For Today's Traveller readers, the takeaway is simple. Some journeys are not about distance on a map, but distance in perception. The universe is still overhead, steady and silent. But once you know those hazy patches are galaxies, and once you stand somewhere dark enough to see the Milky Way properly, the sky carries a new kind of meaning.



Hubble Space Telescope. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



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Rishab Rikhiram Sharma Playing Sitar. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

SOUND AND SELF-CARE: WHY CERTAIN RAGAS SUIT CERTAIN HOURS

Ragas and their place between ticking clocks, sunlit hours and rain-soaked seasons

TT BUREAU

In both Hindustani and Carnatic traditions, many ragas are traditionally linked to particular times of day, and some are also associated with seasons. The basic idea is easy for any listener: each raga carries a specific emotional colour, and that colour is believed to feel most “right” when it matches the atmosphere around it. As daylight shifts and as rain or cold arrives, the texture of life changes. In many lineages, classical music responds to these shifts.

Think of it as a “raga clock and calendar”. It is not a strict rulebook that every musician follows identically. It is a cultural habit that influences how artists learn, practise, and plan concerts. It helps explain why early-morning temple music feels different from an evening recital, why monsoon programmes highlight rain ragas, and why late-night slots often carry heavier emotional depth.

WHAT ARE RAGAS

A raga is often described as a mood, but it is more precise than a mood. It is a framework with preferences: which notes are used, how each of them are drawn out, emphasised and flows with each other, and which short phrases feel characteristic. Those choices shape the listener’s experience, so a raga can suggest devotion, romance, yearning, calm, or gravity without needing a story.

When musicians say a raga “works” at a certain time, they mean that its emotional character seems to fit the feel of that hour or season. In Hindustani music, time associations are often discussed using traditional day segments (commonly called *prahars*). The naming and strictness vary, and real concerts adapt to practical factors, but the idea remains influential. Carnatic music is often described as less rigid about

the hour, yet it places strong emphasis on *rasa* (emotional essence) and on choosing music that suits the occasion, the setting, and the audience.

A CLOCK FOR THE DAY

The easiest way to understand time theory is through the day's emotional curve. Early morning often feels quiet and inward. Late morning is brighter and more organised. Afternoon can turn reflective as fatigue builds. Dusk brings release. Night invites stillness. These associations were strengthened by repeated listening over generations.

Dawn and early morning are widely linked with calm awakening and devotion. Hindustani discussions often cite Bhairav and Ahir Bhairav here. In Carnatic practice, Bhoopalam is frequently suggested for a similar early-hour mood. The music typically opens slowly, allowing the listener to settle.

Late morning is commonly associated with clarity and uplift. Bilawal and Alhaiya Bilawal are familiar Hindustani examples for this window, while Shankarabharanam is often referenced in Carnatic conversations as bright and expansive. These ragas are often described as open and confident, matching the steadier alertness many people recognise earlier in the day.

Afternoon associations tend to lean inward. Hindustani time theory often mentions Multani and Jaunpuri for later hours, when the mind becomes more reflective. The aim is not sadness; it is a quieter, more thoughtful shade.

Dusk and early evening are strongly linked with emotional release and a luminous kind of yearning. Yaman and Bihag are among the best-known Hindustani examples for twilight and early night. Kalyani is often cited as a Carnatic counterpart in its spacious, emotionally open feeling. This is also why evening is a popular concert time: audiences are ready for music that expands after the day's routines.

Night and late night are often described as deeper and more absorbing. In Hindustani tradition, Malkauns and Chandrakauns are commonly placed in the late-night window, while Darbari Kanada is frequently associated with midnight gravity and depth. Because Carnatic time-mapping is less uniformly applied, late-night choices can vary more by setting and concert culture.

A CALENDAR FOR THE YEAR

Time in Indian classical thought can also mean the year. Many musicians and writers describe seasonal links, sometimes called *ritu-samaya*. India's traditional calendar speaks of six seasons: Vasant (spring), Grishma (summer), Varsha (monsoon), Sharad (autumn), Hemant (pre-winter), and Shishir (winter). Seasonal ragas follow the same logic as the daily clock: a raga may feel more vivid when it aligns with the season's emotional "weather".

Spring is linked with freshness and lift. Hindustani traditions often mention Basant and Bahar here, with Hindol



T M Krishna. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

also frequently discussed as spring-linked. Carnatic references include Vasanta and Hindolam. Summer carries heat and restlessness, and some traditions cite Deepak and members of the Sarang family, though mapping is not uniform across schools.

Monsoon is the most widely recognised seasonal association, especially in North Indian classical culture. The Malhar and Megh families are repeatedly linked with rain and cloud imagery, and monsoon-themed concerts often highlight them. In Carnatic programming, ragas such as Megharanjani and Malahari are sometimes used in rain-themed contexts. Even for a new listener, the logic is clear: when rain arrives, music with fluid turns and playful movement feels naturally aligned.



Female Tanpuras. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Partho Sarathy Playing Sarod. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

Autumn is often described as clearer and steadier, with a calmer brightness. Ragas such as Desh are frequently invoked in this atmosphere, and some lineages connect the season with a gentle glow that suits post-monsoon skies and harvest rhythms. Pre-winter and winter are often talked about in terms of crispness and hush, and many listeners find that slower, deeper ragas feel more at home when the air turns quiet and cool.

HOW TRADITION MADE THE CLOCK

The most important point is that these links are not automatic laws. They are the product of culture and tradition. Time theory grew inside particular settings: temple routines, courtly mehfil, guru–shishya training, and concert customs where musicians and audiences repeatedly heard certain ragas at certain hours, until those pairings felt natural. Hindustani

gharanas and Carnatic paramparas carried these preferences forward through repertoire and teaching. Different schools might have different interpretations of ragas and might categorise them differently from each other.

Temples offered structured musical contexts, with morning and evening rituals shaping what is sung and when. Courtly patronage influenced private performance schedules. Festivals still reinforce these habits by programming seasons and hours in recognisable ways. Even today, concert timing often echoes older logic: evenings are common, and late-night slots are often given to ragas with deeper emotional gravity.

REINTERPRETING TIME FOR MODERN LIFE

The link between raags and specific hours, while often spoken about as if it is intrinsic, almost instinctive, it is better understood as a cultural achievement shaped over centuries. That matters even more now, because the meaning of “morning”, “evening”, and “night” has changed in modern life.

If society experiences time differently, listening culture will too. Early mornings might no longer be quiet and introspective but hectic. Electric light, shift work, late dining, screen time, and round-the-clock travel have blurred the old boundaries that once shaped daily rhythm. Recent surveys have found that some people enjoy certain ragas far away from their prescribed times. Perhaps calling for a deeper introspection on what all of this means for us and how we relate to our cultural inheritances.



Indian Musical Instruments. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

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THE CHANGING INDIAN KITCHEN

India's kitchen shifts towards speed and shared tastes, while fragile regional food memories endure silently

M GOUTHAM



Pressure Cooker Pulav. Image Courtesy: Milton Das, Pexels

The Indian kitchen is changing quietly and steadily, taken up by the changing world, much like its people. The change goes beyond what simmers on the stove; it is also about who has the time to cook, how long they can stand there, and which recipes survive long enough to be remembered at all. Seeping in slowly, it shows up in shorter cooking times, in borrowed recipes, in half-remembered techniques, and in the growing distance between what is eaten daily and what is remembered fondly.

Across India, time pressure, migration, and modern life are reshaping what appears on the plate. From high-rise apartments in Bengaluru and Gurugram to forest-fringe hamlets in the Nilgiris and the Deccan, cooking is being simplified, shared, outsourced, and sometimes quietly set aside.

This raises difficult questions that we need to face and address. Is India slowly losing its food heritage? Or is it preserving parts of it in new ways, forgetting others, and reimagining many more to fit a time-starved age?

A CHANGED INDIAN KITCHEN

A contemporary urban kitchen is often filled with industrial pickles, ready-made batters, leftovers from the day before, and takeouts that can be traced from dhabas to restaurants. More and more people resort to readymade rotis, meal prep and hundreds of jugaad that keep the house fed. A far cry from the freshly cooked meals and slow-cooked delicacies that perhaps they themselves grew up on.

While it is true that most people in India do live in rural areas, more and more people are moving into cities, just as the hustle and bustle of the urban is seeping into the villages. This has now turned into something that cannot be ignored or sidelined as only being a 'city thing'.

The torrent of the times is pushing us into outsourcing every bit and piece of regional culture, washing us clean of our own inherited heritage; podis, special batters, unique pickles and masalas from the various corners of the vastness we call India, all slipping slowly between our fingers.

Beneath what we broadly call "regional Indian food" lies another, often unseen layer: tribal cuisines and the rural

cuisines that are deeply rooted in the land. These traditions often rely on seasonal foraged greens, wild tubers, small millets, smoked meats, insect-based chutneys, and intricate ferments: surviving largely through oral memory and lived practice, they rarely appear on restaurant menus or glossy cookbooks, yet they hold deep ecological and cultural knowledge.

They are also the most fragile, destabilising quickly when forest access shrinks, wage labour rises, or younger generations migrate away. Adding to these complications is the fact that many ingredients used in these cuisines are hard to find and may even be endemic to the region they come from.

TIME, CONVENIENCE, AND THE NEW EVERYDAY PLATE

Time is now the most powerful ingredient in the modern Indian kitchen. Urbanisation, long commutes, dual-income households, and the decline of joint families have squeezed daily cooking into tight windows, pushing the everyday plate towards speed.

Weekday meals grow simpler, quicker, and more predictable. One-pot dishes replace elaborate thalis. Khichdi, pulao, dal-chawal, and quick vegetable stir-fries shoulder the responsibility of nourishment through the week. Cooking becomes functional rather than expressive. Complexity is postponed for Sunday afternoons, religious festivals, or family gatherings.

Rural kitchens still follow a steadier rhythm, with home cooking anchored by coarse grains, fresh vegetables, and dairy. Even so, packaged snacks, instant noodles, and bottled drinks have entered the scene as wage labour leaves less time for soaking, sprouting, fermenting, sun-drying, or pounding grains.

For tribal and non-market cuisines, the squeeze is



Bamboo Rice. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Home Cooked Indian Meal. Image Courtesy: Suvaiba, Pexels

harsher. Their foodways rely on collective foraging, seasonal gathering, slow smoking, and long ferments, practices that rarely fit into thirty or forty minutes, practices that become less and less feasible with migration.

When the choice is between hours toiling over food and a quick trip to the shop, time and infrastructure quietly decide what endures. Convenience does not merely simplify recipes. It decides which foods survive at all.

MIGRATION AND THE PAN-INDIAN KITCHEN

If time reshapes the kitchen from within, migration reshapes it from outside. Internal migration for work, education, marriage, and displacement has created shared urban kitchens where multiple food traditions meet daily.



Khichdi. Image Courtesy: Rajat Sarki, Unsplash



Black Rice. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

In a Bengaluru flat, a Tamil professional may share space with a Manipuri designer and a Gujarati analyst. In Hyderabad, a Telugu household might rent rooms to students from Odisha, Bihar, or the North-East. In these homes, the stove becomes a site of negotiation, between mustard oil and curry leaves, coconut oil and ghee, dried fish and paneer. Everyday staples travel easily. Thepla becomes a desk snack in IT offices. Idli finds their way into North Indian canteens. Tribal rice dishes adapt to pressure cookers and induction stoves.

Food travels less through restaurants than through tiffins, hostels, messes, and rented flats. These informal kitchens often experiment well ahead of formal “fusion” dining. Going beyond the narrow walls of authenticity, what

gets cooked here and carried back home holds the story of migration: shared groceries, borrowed recipes, improvised masalas, and the quiet intimacy of cohabitation. Each dish is a portable memory.

WHAT GETS LOST AND WHAT STAYS INVISIBLE

Even though food migrates through home kitchens and shared apartments, it becomes most visible in markets, restaurants, and delivery apps, and that visibility reshapes it.

Menus often flatten India’s diversity into a small set of familiar dishes, leaving out everyday greens, steamed tubers, fermented sides, tribal porridges, and many regional staples. To sell well on a screen, complexity is simplified, and distinct food cultures are reduced to neat labels. Still, exposure matters: a pop-up tasting or an online recipe can spark curiosity and carry flavours back home.

The result is a split between public food culture and private food memory. Public food is what gets marketed and photographed. Private food is what lingers quietly, cooked rarely, held by elders, or tied to a ritual. Without deliberate care, what stays invisible is easier to lose.

In the end, what gets lost is always that food item that couldn’t be passed on, the one from our childhoods that could not be made in a metropolitan flat, something beyond the scope of the improvisations that the supermarket



Pakhla Pasara. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

OLFACTORY SENSATION

One of the most expensive perfumes in history, Bulgari's limited edition Opera Prima has notes of orange blossom, florals, lemon and musk. But it is the bottle that is a collector's item. Showcasing fine Italian craftsmanship, it is finished in gold leaf and studded with diamonds.



AN ICON IN A BOTTLE

When it was first introduced in the year 1921, it sent shockwaves through the world of perfumery. Initially reserved for the 100 most valuable customers of Chanel, the perfume went on to become one of the most iconic smells of the 20th century. Prepared by French perfumer Ernest Beaux, this perfume has notes of rose, jasmine and synthetic aldehydes. Perfect for evening wear, this is one iconic smell that is hard to be forgotten.





Kappa. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

could provide. The answer is simple, the food that will be remembered are the ones that was passed down to you and the ones that you decide to pass on.

PRESERVING FOOD IN A TIME-STARVED AGE

Against this backdrop, a quieter movement is unfolding. In the face of cultural erosion, people are turning back to food journaling and recording family recipes. Families are becoming archives. Elders are filmed while cooking. Recipes move through voice notes, PDFs, and shared folders.

Food journaling has emerged as a form of cultural memory. People photograph meals to remember and brag. The rare cultural indulgences reserved for festivals, where you walk down memory lane to cook and eat what you grew up on. Over time, these images and choices reveal patterns: what disappears first, what survives only on holidays, what refuses to vanish even as it gets pushed to the crannies of daily life.

Cookbooks are changing, too. New regional and community volumes document micro-cuisines with care, offering context, history, and adaptations for modern kitchens. Digital archives rescue handwritten manuscripts and fragile pamphlets before they are lost. Tribal food documentation, often led by communities themselves, records ingredients and techniques alongside conversations about land, access, and survival.

Authenticity shifts meaning here is no longer about rigid replication. It is about remembering where a dish came from, even when it is cooked differently.

THE FUTURE INDIAN PLATE

It is happening in front of our eyes. Soaking and grinding are being replaced by ready-made batters, fermentation is being outsourced to factories, and pickling is becoming a purchase rather than a process. The kitchen adapts, but something subtle is lost with each shortcut, each readymade batter, pickle and each packaged masala we forget to make at home.



Veg Thali. Image Courtesy: Ryshy S, Pexels

Indian food today operates on two layers. One is the fast, everyday plate, simple, hybrid, and shaped by time and convenience. The other is a consciously preserved archive of regional and community food stored in journals, videos, cookbooks, and memory that only surfaces on occasions and special moments.

The future will not be a return to an imagined past, nor a slide into uniform fast food. It will be an ongoing negotiation between speed and memory. Between what fits into a weekday evening and what a family or community refuses to let go of.

As long as those foods are named, recorded, shared, and occasionally tasted, the wild greens, the slow ferments, the millet porridges, the Indian plate, however changed, will continue to carry echoes of the forests, fields, coasts, and kitchens that shaped it.



Ada/Ela Ada. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

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.



INDIA'S PLATE: THE MODERN WELLNESS MAP

When food feels alive to its season,
travel feels easier in the body

TT BUREAU

Wellness has quietly changed its address. It no longer lives only in spa menus and sunrise rituals. It lives at the most dependable constant of any journey: the table. Not as an add on and not as a moral exercise, but as the daily force that shapes how travel feels in the body and the mind.

Meals repeat across time zones, climates, broken sleep cycles, long drives, and unfamiliar routines. What a traveller eats influences energy, digestion, mood, and emotional steadiness with a consistency no other wellness intervention can match.

International tourism bodies have positioned gastronomy as a driver of destination identity, describing food as a bridge between visitors and local heritage. Food travel research groups likewise note that culinary reputation influences destination choice for a large share of leisure travellers, and that food and drink take a meaningful slice of travel budgets. The emotional reason is simpler: travellers want wellbeing without performance, and meals deliver it quietly.

India sits naturally at the heart of this shift. Its regional cuisines were never designed around restriction or guilt. They evolved through geography, climate, labour, and memory, refined without the language of detox. Luxury hospitality in India is increasingly treating this inherited intelligence as premium craft rather than nostalgia: local produce handled with clarity, fermentation respected as technique, slow cooking elevated as finesse, and chefs speaking of food as cultural wisdom rather than calorie arithmetic.

WHY THE TABLE WINS

Travel destabilises routine by design. Flights compress sleep. Heat alters appetite. Altitude changes digestion. City noise keeps the mind alert. In such conditions, rigid wellness plans rarely survive. Food-led wellbeing succeeds because it asks for

Image Courtesy: Engin Akyurt, Pexels



Image Courtesy: VD Photography, Unsplash

no compliance. It works through rhythm, and rhythm is what travel disrupts first.

A well-structured, regionally coherent meal anchors the day. Hunger becomes measured rather than urgent. Energy steadies. Snacking fades. Contemporary health reporting increasingly discusses gut health and its links with immune function and mental wellbeing, while also cautioning against simplistic claims. The traveller does not need certainty to notice the difference between meals that fight the body and meals that settle it.

Food also carries emotional weight. The aroma of a simmering dal, the tang of a fermented accompaniment, or the comfort of a warm broth after travel fatigue sends a signal of safety. Luxury travel once equated wellness with restraint. Food-led wellness replaces that stance with something more human: nourishment that feels generous, and pleasure that does not demand permission.

INDIA AS A LIVING MAP OF BALANCE

Indian cuisine resists a single wellness narrative because it was never singular. It is a library of regional systems, each responding intelligently to climate and daily life.

Coastal cuisines evolved around humidity and heat, leaning on rice, seafood, coconut, souring agents, and brief cooking. Arid regions refined grain and legume cookery, measured use of ghee, and preservation techniques. Mountain foodways leaned on dairy, grains, greens, and warming soups suited to altitude.

Across these landscapes, food solved practical problems: managing heat, supporting digestion, sustaining energy, and creating comfort. This is why Indian meals often feel complete without excess. A traditional plate balances grains, pulses, vegetables, a sour element, a fermented accent, and a restrained sweet finish. Modern wellness language calls this balance. Indian kitchens call it lunch.

Seasonality strengthens the system. Climate dictates what grows and how it should be cooked. Summer leans towards cooling textures and hydration. Winter welcomes warmth and slow cooking. Monsoon often shifts appetite towards gentler, cooked foods. UN tourism narratives consistently frame gastronomy as a defining asset for destination branding



Image Courtesy: Sumeet B, Unsplash

and sustainable tourism. The traveller does not need policy language. The traveller simply wants food that tastes like the place, in its own season.

CRAFT, TIME, AND THE LUXURY OF DIGESTION

Fermentation and slow cooking, often marketed today as trends, have always been ordinary techniques in Indian kitchens. Their elevation in luxury settings is not about novelty. It is about craft.

Scientific research has explored fermented foods and their relationship with microbiome diversity and immune markers. A frequently cited Stanford study published in *Cell* reported increased microbiome diversity and changes in inflammatory markers during a fermented food intervention. These findings do not promise universal solutions, but they help explain why fermentation now sits at the intersection of inherited knowledge and modern curiosity.

Hotels that ferment well are practising discipline, not chasing headlines. Done properly, fermentation brings depth without heaviness and brightness without excess. A fermented side lifts a rich dish. A house set curd can change breakfast. Completeness reduces the desire for overeating, and that is where the wellness shows up without needing to be announced.



Image Courtesy: Jaspinder Singh, Unsplash



Image Courtesy: Taryn Elliott, Pexels

Slow cooking operates in a similar register. Long-simmered lentils, sealed pot gravies, patient broths, and gently cooked vegetables deliver satisfaction through depth rather than density. Time becomes an ingredient. A dish that carries patience communicates calm and encourages slower eating.

LUXURY, REWRITTEN THROUGH FOOD

Food-centred travel has matured beyond restaurant lists. Many travellers now choose destinations based on food philosophy: the daily logic shaping how locals eat, rather than the loudest dining room in town. Research from food travel organisations continues to highlight the influence of culinary reputation on destination choice and the significant share of travel budgets devoted to food and drink.

India's advantage lies in coherence. Kerala's coconut-based stews and fermented batters suit rain-soaked climates. Rajasthan's grains and slow gravies reveal desert resilience refined into pleasure. Himalayan cuisines offer warming soups and dairy for the altitude. The plate becomes a guide, and wellness emerges through that coherence.

Luxury hospitality has responded by taking provenance seriously. Ingredient integrity now signals taste. Local sourcing improves freshness. Freshness sharpens flavour. Flavour clarity supports satisfaction. Satisfaction prevents excess. The chain is practical, not moral.

India's heritage grains reinforce this logic. International Year of Millets material highlights millets as climate-resilient and nutritionally relevant whole grains, and the Indian government communication has underlined India's position as a major millet producer. In luxury travel, that translates into a new sophistication: heritage grains used with restraint, placed into meals that feel natural.

The role of the chef has evolved accordingly. The most credible chefs interpret place: soil, season, fermentation time, spice logic, and why a dish exists. That storytelling restores trust in eating, and trust changes how food is experienced.

Food-led wellness also travels home. Travellers return with habits that fit ordinary life: seasonal meals, simpler warm breakfasts, fermented sides, and slower eating. A perfect rasam or a patient dal stays vivid, and that memory quietly reshapes the next day's choices.

Luxury, in this new frame, has grown quieter. Excess signals insecurity. Precision signals care. A great meal leaves the guest clear, comfortable, and ready for rest.

Eat well, and travel does not merely become richer. It becomes easier.



Image Courtesy: Jess Loiterton, Pexels



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