

# TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

MAY 2026 - ₹400



VENTIVE  
HOSPITALITY LIMITED

PROMOTED BY

Blackstone



THE HOTEL COMPANY  
THAT DECIDED PROFIT  
AND PURPOSE WERE  
THE SAME BET

SEA ESCAPES - SURF  
BREAKS AND CORAL  
GARDENS

BEAUTY ROUTES OF  
SCENTS & BLOSSOMS

# SICIS O'CLOCK



*The greatest luxury is time*

Sicis Jewels Milan · Via della Spiga 9, Milan 20121 · [www.sicisjewels.com](http://www.sicisjewels.com) · [jewels@sicis.com](mailto:jewels@sicis.com)  
Sicis Jewels Paris · Rue François 1<sup>er</sup>, 41 · Paris 75008 · Ph: +33 0149528989



# WHERE CONNECTIONS UNLOCK POSSIBILITIES

BUSINESS EVENTS.  
MADE IN SINGAPORE.



**CHAIRMAN**  
 KEWAL GILL

**PUBLISHER/EDITOR**  
 KAMAL GILL

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
 ARJUN GILL

**SR. VICE PRESIDENT - SALES**  
 VAGISH MISHRA

**VICE PRESIDENT - SALES & ALLIANCES**  
 SAFAL SAALWAR

**MANAGER - SALES & OPERATIONS**  
 ABHISHEK MANDAL

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
 CHANDRUPAL DAS BORO

**SUB EDITOR**  
 JEET BHATTACHARYA

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
 M GOUTHAM

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
 YOGESH SHARMA

Today's Traveller is published/printed by Kamal Gill on behalf of M/s Gill India Concepts Pvt. Ltd. Registered Office : Z-33, 11nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi, 110016

Printed at: HT Media Limited, Plot Number 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida - 201306, UP.

For correspondence and advertising:  
 Z-33, 11nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi, 110016  
 Mobile : 9953701567, 9625846296  
 Email : publications@gillindia.com

All information in TODAY'S TRAVELLER is derived from sources, which we consider reliable. Information is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. The contents of this publication contain views of authors and are not the views of M/s Gill India Concepts Pvt. Ltd. (GICPL). Similarly, opinions/views expressed by any party in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared/do not necessarily reflect any opinion of GICPL. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is strictly prohibited. Material appearing in the publication cannot be reproduced in whole or in part without prior permission. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action. Editorial enquiries and enquiries concerning the reproduction of articles, advertising and circulation should be emailed at publications@gillindia.com. The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material nor is responsible for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw, amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code as well as the Advertisements Code of South Asia. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by the late publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.



# CON

## 06 **VENTIVE HOSPITALITY: THE HOTEL COMPANY THAT DECIDED PROFIT AND PURPOSE WERE THE SAME BET**

VENTIVE HOSPITALITY REDEFINES HOW LUXURY HOTELS CAN BUILD VALUE THROUGH PURPOSE, PERFORMANCE, AND LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

## 11 **RANJIT BATRA'S PEOPLE FIRST PLAYBOOK AT VENTIVE HOSPITALITY**

SOME LEADERS BUILD HOTELS. RANJIT BATRA BUILDS BELIEF WITHIN THEM. AT VENTIVE HOSPITALITY, HIS APPROACH SHOWS HOW PEOPLE-FIRST LEADERSHIP DRIVES REAL BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

## 16 **NEWEST TRAVEL BUZZ: BEAUTY ROUTES OF SCENTS & BLOSSOMS ACROSS THE GLOBE**

BEAUTY TRAVEL IS ALREADY IN GEAR AND MOVING FAST INTO LANDSCAPES OF SCENT, BLOOM AND EDIBLE RITUALS

## 22 **INSIDE INDIA'S GREAT BIOSPHERE LANDSCAPES**

THIS IS INDIA BEYOND POSTCARDS, ALIVE WITH TIDE AND LIVED LANDSCAPE STORIES

## 26 **SEA ESCAPES: SURF BREAKS AND CORAL GARDENS**

LUXURY FINDS NEW DEPTH IN SURFING THRILLS, DIVING ADRENALINE AND DEEP-SEA ADVENTURE

## 30 **LUXURY IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE**

SOME HOTELS ARE LUXURIOUS, BUT THESE HOTELS FEEL LIKE A TRIUMPH

## 36 **A HUNDRED RAINS: MONSOON MAGIC**

RAIN-SOAKED FORESTS, WATERFALLS AND STAYS THAT ONLY GET BETTER WHEN THE SKY TURNS DRAMATIC



# TENTS

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE | VOLUME 29 | No. 05 | MAY 2026

## 39 LUXURY HAS A TASTE FOR EXTREME TRAVEL

EXTREME ITINERARIES THAT OFFER ELEGANCE UNDER PRESSURE

## 42 LUXURY JOURNEYS LIT BY ANCESTRAL FIRE

ELDERS, LANDSCAPES, AND LIVING TRADITIONS ARE SHAPING LANGUAGE OF LUXURY TRAVEL

## 46 THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY DRIVES ON EARTH

SOME DRIVES ENTERTAIN. SOME RESHAPE THE MOOD

## 49 WHERE HISTORY MEETS ADVENTURE

INDIA'S HERITAGE LANDSCAPES COME ALIVE THROUGH CLIMBING, TREKKING AND MOVEMENT

## 52 THROUGH THE WILD HEART OF THE WESTERN GHATS

TREK AND EXPLORE THE WESTERN GHATS'S DRAMATIC MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

## 56 LUXURY SERVED THALI STYLE

INDIA'S VEGETARIAN THALIS SERVE WITH CULTURE, COLOUR AND SOUL.



VISIT US AT:

[WWW.TODAYSTRAVELLER.NET](http://WWW.TODAYSTRAVELLER.NET)

FOR MARKETING ENQUIRIES:

[PUBLICATIONS@TODAYSTRAVELLER.NET](mailto:PUBLICATIONS@TODAYSTRAVELLER.NET)

OR FOLLOW US



<https://facebook.com/TodaysTraveller>



[https://Instagram.com/TodaysTraveller\\_updates/](https://Instagram.com/TodaysTraveller_updates/)



<https://linkedin.com/company/TodaysTraveller/>

# VENTIVE HOSPITALITY: THE HOTEL COMPANY THAT DECIDED PROFIT AND PURPOSE WERE THE SAME BET

Ventive Hospitality shows how luxury hotels can build value through purpose, performance, and long-term resilience

TT BUREAU



In twelve months as a publicly listed company, Ventive Hospitality crossed ₹1,000 crore in EBITDA, reduced debt by nearly half, planted coral gardens in the Maldives, restored food security across eight island communities, and placed Pune's luxury dining on coveted award lists. It has been a year of scale, discipline, and conviction, shaped by one belief: profit and purpose can grow together.

In December 2024, when Ventive Hospitality rang the bell on the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange, the moment carried more weight than a market debut.

After years of quietly building one of India's most profitable hotel portfolios, spanning Maldivian lagoons and Pune's skyline restaurants, Ventive stepped into public view.

Revenue crossed ₹2,000 crore. EBITDA touched ₹1,012 crore. Net debt fell by nearly ₹1,400 crore. Behind the numbers sat a larger story of ownership, resilience, community, environmental responsibility, and the luxury hospitality platform Ventive has always intended to become.

### **GREAT HOTELS SHOULD NOT COST THE EARTH**

Luxury hospitality reveals its character long before the first guest arrives. The real choices are made in planning rooms, selecting locations, building supply chains, shaping employment practices, and deciding how deeply a hotel belongs to its surroundings.

Ventive Hospitality was built on the conviction that great hotels should not cost the earth, literally or figuratively. Across decades, the company has shaped a portfolio where luxury and accountability work in close conversation.

Backed by Panchshil Realty with 56% and Blackstone with 33%, Ventive rests on a clear premise: true luxury hospitality requires ownership, alongside management.

In a sector where many listed peers follow fee-driven operating models, Ventive takes hands-on positions in its assets. That gives it the full upside of repositioning, refurbishment, and revenue optimisation.

The Panchshil ecosystem gave Ventive a distinctive edge through hotels located within large mixed-use developments, business parks, retail precincts, and residential communities that generate organic demand.

JW Marriott Pune and The Ritz-Carlton Pune, therefore, operate as anchors of larger

destinations, drawing corporate travellers, banquet guests, and local diners with equal strength.

Ventive commands roughly 64% of Pune's luxury room inventory, giving it an unmatched ability to set rates in a city that has emerged as one of India's most dynamic GCC hubs.

Today, Ventive operates 13 hotels and 3 resorts across India, the Maldives, and counting. The portfolio has 2,199 keys, with 1,382 more in a committed pipeline.

Its brands read like a global luxury map: The Ritz Carlton, JW Marriott, Conrad, Anantara, Soho House, Hilton, Aloft, and Raaya by Atmosphere, its own Maldivian jewel. The difference lies in how these assets are owned, improved, operated, and connected with natural, human, and financial capital.

### **NOT A CYCLICAL HOTEL TRADE. A COMPOUNDING PLATFORM.**

FY25 proved the Ventive model at scale. Consolidated revenue reached ₹2,160 crore. EBITDA reached ₹1,012 crore. EBITDA margin held at 47%, the highest in India's listed hospitality sector, and among the strongest across global hospitality platforms.

Indian hospitality grew EBITDA by 31% year-on-year. International hospitality, led by the Maldives, grew by 38%. Combined hospitality EBITDA growth of 34% was the strongest in the industry.

Those numbers draw strength through operating leverage. Occupancy improved by 4 percentage points across the portfolio. Total Revenue Per Available Room, or TRevPAR, stood at ₹23,000, among the highest in the



*The Ritz-Carlton, Pune*

country. The annuity portfolio also gives the company a stabiliser across hospitality cycles.

Growth has moved through acquisitions and signings as well. In year one, Ventive acquired a 76% stake in Hilton Goa for ₹246 crore and signed seven new hotels across India and Sri Lanka in partnership with Marriott International.

The committed pipeline of 1,382 keys includes an AC by Marriott in Bengaluru, a Marriott in Varanasi, the first branded luxury hotel in India's spiritual capital, and a Ritz Carlton Reserve in Sri Lanka by ROFO.

No equity dilution is planned for operations. The longer-term target remains clear: 4,000 plus keys and ₹4,000 crore in EBITDA by FY30.

### **WHEN YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR ASSOCIATES, THEY TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING ELSE**

Ask Ranjit Batra what gives him the greatest pride in Ventive's first listed year, and the answer begins with people.

Across three decades in luxury hospitality, building, repositioning, and running some of India's most celebrated hotel assets, Batra has shaped a philosophy rooted in direct experience that the quality of a guest's stay reflects the quality of the workplace created for the people serving that guest.

In year one, Ventive acted on that belief. New salary benchmarks were implemented across the Marriott Hotels in Pune, signalling a deliberate investment in retention, morale, and service culture. In an industry where attrition often runs at 30 to 40% annually, trained and motivated associates directly influence service consistency, brand standards, and repeat guest loyalty that sustains premium ADR across cycles.

Ventive also strengthened its leadership bench. The appointment of Mayur Tiwari as Associate Vice President for Food & Beverage and Culinary brought 18 years of international experience, including The Ritz Carlton Pune, JW Marriott Singapore, Grand Hyatt Seoul, and JW Marriott Hanoi.

His mandate covers F&B strategy, concept development, and team mentorship across all properties. The appointment signals Ventive's intent to professionalise its culinary ambitions with the same rigour applied to financial performance.

Batra has also spoken about redesigning the owner-operator framework. He believes ESG metrics and human capital indicators, including attrition rates, training investment, and service quality scores, should sit inside performance-linked fee structures. The aim is alignment around financial outcomes, responsible ownership, and enduring hospitality platforms. Every associate becomes a direct participant in the guest experience.

### **PROSPERITY AND PURPOSE, COEXISTING SEAMLESSLY**

40 metres below the surface of the Indian Ocean, off the western coast of the South Ari Atoll in the Maldives, coral fragments are growing back into reefs. There are 14,455 of them, carefully collected, nurtured, and replanted by Ventive's teams and conservation partners. Coral may grow a centimetre a year. The process is slow, delicate, and deeply consequential.



JW Marriott Pune



Soho House Mumbai

At Raaya by Atmosphere, 693 kilowatts of solar infrastructure powers all 277 villas, reducing diesel dependence and cutting the carbon footprint by significant tonnes annually.

Across the portfolio, 70 to 80% of energy at flagship properties comes from renewable sources. Single-use plastics have been eliminated entirely. Biogas systems and community hydroponics together reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by more than 1,700 tonnes every year.

Conrad Maldives Rangali Island is one of only two PADI Eco Centres across the Maldives archipelago.

The community hydroponics programme at Conrad Maldives captures Ventive's approach with particular clarity. Launched in 2015 and significantly expanded in 2025, it introduced soil-free hydroponic farming systems across eight inhabited islands in the South Ari Atoll.

In April 2025, Conrad Maldives renovated and expanded the original garden at Dhigurah School. The upgraded site now has 346 vegetable slots and a modern fertigation system, producing fresh vegetables all year in an environment where arable land is almost non-existent, and food imports remain a constant vulnerability.

The resort's own on-site hydroponic garden produces over 1,200 kilograms of lettuce annually, along with

herbs, bananas, and aloe vera, used in guest dining and spa operations. The result is a supply chain with shorter movement, lower dependence, and deeper local relevance.

***"This isn't about checking boxes. It's about accountability. The planet is our greatest treasure, and protecting it is non-negotiable. Luxury and sustainability belong together."*** - Ranjit Batra, CEO, Ventive Hospitality

In India, that commitment takes another shape. The Ritz Carlton Pune and JW Marriott Pune jointly contributed ₹23.29 lakh to a home supporting and educating children affected by leprosy, as part of a structured Rising Star outreach programme. Ventive's sustainability practice therefore moves across carbon, coral, food security, education, and community support.

There is a strategic logic here as well as moral clarity. Ventive is building future resilient assets in climate-sensitive destinations. In the Maldives, the reef is the reason guests arrive.

Freshwater supply is limited. Neighbouring island communities provide workforce, supplies, and cultural depth. Their resilience supports the long-term viability of the assets themselves. Responsibility, in this model, becomes a condition for lasting profit.

## **SEVENTY PLUS FOOD AND BEVERAGE OFFERINGS. ONE PHILOSOPHY. FOOD IS THE STORY.**

In many hotel companies, food and beverage feeds resident guests, fills hours between check-in and checkout, and generates 20 to 25% of revenues when managed well. In Ventive's flagship India properties, F&B generates 40 to 50% of total revenues. That single statistic reveals the power of the model.

Ventive's restaurants have become destinations in their own right. Paasha, the pioneer of rooftop dining in India, sits on the 24th floor of JW Marriott Pune with North West Frontier cuisine and panoramic city views. Its stature is clear: Paasha was named among Marriott Bonvoy's Top 52 restaurants and bars across Asia Pacific.

Ukiyo at The Ritz Carlton Pune earned a place on India's Top 50 restaurants in 2024 for its modern Japanese precision. Four Ventive restaurants occupy four of Pune's top five TripAdvisor rankings. Ithaa Undersea Restaurant at Conrad Maldives, the world's first all-glass undersea restaurant, ranks in the top 1% of dining destinations globally and was named among 25 One of a Kind venues worldwide by TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice 2025.

Approximately 80% of footfall at Ventive's India restaurants comes through local residents and walk-in guests, rather than hotel occupants.

The restaurants have earned city loyalty. In the first quarter, even as seasonal patterns usually soften, India's F&B revenues matched the strong end-of-quarter performance.

At Anantara Maldives, the Around the World Michelin Star Guest Chef Series has welcomed celebrated culinary names, including Melvin Chou, Oli Marlow, Victor Liong, Arnaud Dunand Sauthier, Ricki Weston, and three Michelin-starred Chef Jungsik.

Conrad Maldives holds a Forbes 4 Star rating. Soho House Mumbai carries a Michelin Key. The Hospitality Horizon Epicurean Awards 2025 gave three stars each to Aasmana, Ukiyo, Paasha, and Alto Vino.

Behind these accolades sits a culture of culinary ambition. The Ventive Crown, its annual in-house culinary competition across properties, serves as a talent development platform and a statement of values. Chefs here are artists, mentors, and storytellers. Their work builds memory, repeat patronage, and identity across a growing portfolio.

## **EVERY SUNRISE PROMISES NOT ONLY BEAUTY, BUT BALANCE**

On a school island in the South Ari Atoll, children tend a hydroponic garden their grandparents could never have pictured.

Forty metres below the ocean nearby, coral grows back toward the light. On a rooftop in Pune, a restaurant that helped invent skyline dining in India fills again for Sunday brunch. In a Bengaluru tech park, a hotel conversion is taking shape for a new generation of travellers seeking design, soul, and sustainability in the same room.

In Sri Lanka, along a coastline of extraordinary beauty, a Ritz Carlton Reserve is being designed around ultra luxury hospitality, residences, wellness, and place.

Each of these stories carries the same signature. Ventive decided early that the way hotels are built matters as much as the hotels themselves. Communities become partners. A reef becomes a living system, a responsibility, and a reason for travel. A chef becomes a storyteller whose work may outlast any campaign.

*"Ventive is not merely a hotel operator; it is a disciplined, ownership-led, luxury hospitality platform with embedded resilience and a credible compounding path."* - Ranjit Batra, CEO, Ventive Hospitality

One year in, the blueprint has become the benchmark. And the coral, quietly, keeps growing.



# RANJIT BATRA'S PEOPLE FIRST PLAYBOOK AT VENTIVE HOSPITALITY

Some leaders build hotels. Ranjit Batra builds belief within them. At Ventive Hospitality, his approach shows how people-first leadership drives real business performance.

TT BUREAU

Ranjit Batra's leadership story begins not in a boardroom, but on the hotel floor, at ₹100 a day. Long before he became CEO of Ventive Hospitality, he understood the emotional weight of service: the long hours, missed festivals, tired smiles, and the quiet expectation that hospitality professionals must make everyone else feel important, even when few pause to ask how they are doing.

That early experience did not harden him. It sharpened his sense of fairness. At Ventive, Batra's people philosophy is shaped by memory and practice. He believes an associate who comes to him should, as far as possible, not return disappointed. The support may be personal, practical, or urgent: a child's admission, a family illness, or financial help.

The groundswell of goodwill that surrounds him grew most visibly during COVID, when leadership was tested beyond speeches and policy notes. Ventive stood by its people when uncertainty was at its peak. For Batra, that is the real measure of culture. People remember who stood beside them when the lights were low.

What makes Batra's approach compelling is that he does not separate empathy from performance. Ventive's strong EBITDA margin growth before and after listing, along with its revenue and cost performance, reflects the culture it has built.

Growth at Ventive follows the same disciplined thinking. The company remains brand agnostic, choosing partners according to market, asset and client need. Varanasi, Sri Lanka and AC by Marriott, the conversion of Aloft in Bangalore, are expected in FY 2027 - 2028, to add about 300 rooms. Another 1,100 rooms in the ROFO pipeline are expected by 2030.

Batra is equally clear about the future of hospitality. Lifestyle hotels, he believes, need more than striking interiors. They need character, energy, programming, wellness and stories that keep changing. Food and beverage will be central to that shift. In Ventive's flagship hotels, F&B contributes close to 50% excluding banquets, while in Pune, 80% of restaurant clients come from the city itself.

That may be the best summary of Batra's leadership: hotels that are profitable because people feel they belong; restaurants that thrive because cities adopt them; and a culture that understands service begins with dignity.



Ranjit Batra, CEO, Ventive Hospitality

# THE NEW FRAGRANCE CRUSHES OF 2026

A look at the latest perfumes making waves for all the right reasons

TT BUREAU

**M**ost new perfumes blur into one another after a point. A sweet opening, a familiar floral heart, a polished bottle, and not much else to hold on to. We highlight a few 2026 releases that feel especially polished, distinctive and easy to remember.

**PARFUMS DE MARLY ATHÉNAÏS**

Athénaïs is the most straightforwardly polished of the group. Neroli, bergamot and yuzu give it a bright opening, while orange blossom, jasmine sambac, tonka bean and vanilla bring softness and shape underneath. It feels smooth, composed and finished, with enough warmth to stand out without becoming heavy.

**LE LABO VIOLETTE 30**

Violette 30 takes a cooler route. Le Labo builds it around white violet, then keeps it crisp with white tea, cedarwood and a touch of guaiacwood. The result is green, lightly floral and controlled. It reads less as a romantic violet and more as something sharper and more modern.

**YSL LIBRE BERRY CRUSH**

Berry Crush is the most extrovert scent here. YSL keeps the Libre base of orange blossom and lavender, then pushes it in a fruitier direction with raspberry and creamy coconut. That gives it more colour and more sweetness than the others in this set, but it still feels slick rather than childish.

**MAISON MARGIELA REPLICA UP AT DAWN**

Up at Dawn is softer and more atmospheric. Maison Margiela frames it around rose absolute, pink pepper and moss, with a misty garden-at-daybreak mood. What works is the balance: the rose is clear, but the pepper and moss stop it from turning soft-focus or overly pretty.



Creed Wild Vetiver

**CREED WILD VETIVER**

Wild Vetiver closes on a greener, more tailored note. Creed centres it on timor berry, rose centifolia and vetiver, describing it as a woody floral with an English-garden edge. It feels crisp, dry and quietly expensive, which gives it the strongest sense of restraint in this line-up.

If 2026 is about choosing better rather than louder, these are the perfumes to pick. They feel clean, current and distinct.



Le Labo Violette 30



YSL Libre Berry Crush



Maison Margiela Replica Up at Dawn



Parfums de Marly Athénaïs

# NATURE AND ADVENTURE TRAVEL SPECIAL 2026



# Where Nature, Adventure and Experience Converge

Where Sri Lanka's wild landscapes unfold, Hilton Yala Resort and DoubleTree by Hilton Weerawila Rajawarna Resort offer distinct yet connected escapes—one immersed in safari-led discovery, the other in a thriving lakeside bird sanctuary, creating a rhythm of exploration.

DoubleTree  
Weerawila



Hilton  
FOR THE STAY™



Hilton Yala



# NEWEST TRAVEL BUZZ: BEAUTY ROUTES OF SCENTS & BLOSSOMS ACROSS THE GLOBE

Beauty travel is already in gear and moving fast into landscapes of scent, bloom, botanicals, thermal waters and edible rituals

KAMAL GILL

Beauty travel has acquired a new passport stamp. It is no longer limited to the polished environs of a spa suite but is an extension of the self. It has acquired a more expressive, more personal tone and is far more rooted in place. Travellers are following fragrance trails through flower-growing regions, bathing in mineral-rich thermals, seeking out old herbal traditions, wandering through wildflower belts and discovering how local food cultures shape beauty and wellness in ways that feel instinctive rather than prescribed.

What makes this shift so fascinating is that it aligns perfectly with the way travel itself is changing. We all want journeys of discovery. We want to find places that create a sense of awe, reveal a rarity of nature and feel more intimate. We want to return with more than selfies and reels. Here is where it all plays out... discovering a scent memory, a skin ritual, a food habit, a slower rhythm, a regional secret. In this sense, beauty has become one of the most compelling new ways to read a destination. It is

not merely about looking better. It is about feeling in tune with where you are.

And India, with its vast sensory inheritance, sits beautifully within this new travel story. India has always understood beauty as something layered through flowers, oils, herbs, food, weather and ritual. What is changing now is the way these traditions can be curated as part of a conscious travel route, one that feels all-new, luxurious and deeply rooted all at once.



Abbey of Sénanque. Image Courtesy: Hub JACQU, Pexels



Lavender Field. Image Courtesy: Halil İbrahim Özcan, Pexels



Image Courtesy: Tishya by The Leela

### MAPPING THE FRAGRANCE ROUTE

The first destination in the new beauty routes begins, quite naturally, with scent. Fragrance is one of the most intimate souvenirs of travel because it clings to memory with startling ease. Memories of a place can return years later through a single trace of jasmine, vetiver, rose, or orange blossom.

Grasse in southern France is celebrated as the grande dame of the world. It is a destination that converts perfume into pilgrimage. Here, fragrance is not an accessory but an entire cultural landscape shaped by flower fields, ateliers, old techniques and the drama of composition. Travellers can spend days moving through perfume houses, museums and gardens, learning that the journey of scent begins long before it arrives in a crystal bottle.

Here in India, there are fragrance routes that feel every bit as evocative, and in some ways more textured. Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh is the country's great attar town, where traditional distillation blends the lingering romance of earth, rose, kewra and oud. This is not a contemporary fragrance for retail. These notes are older, moodier and steeped in craft. In Tamil Nadu, Madurai's jasmine culture gives scent a softer, everyday poetry, while in Kashmir, saffron fields and rose notes create a different kind of floral richness. Together, these destinations reveal to the world how deeply India understands fragrance as atmosphere, devotion and wellness rather than just adornment.

### BOTANICAL BEAUTY, ROOTED IN PLACE

Some destinations feel as though they were designed to remind travellers that beauty begins in the plant world. Leaves, roots, petals, bark and seeds have moved from ingredient labels into the centre of the travel imagination, and rightly so. Botanical beauty is relevant today because it promises a researched, grounded and sensorial experience.

Martinique offers one version of this, lush and tropical, where gardens and flamboyant foliage create a sense of being wrapped in a living apothecary. Japan's Izu Oshima offers another, refined and ingredient-specific, built around the aroma of camellia oil and its use in skincare and daily life.

India's botanical routes are richer still because they rarely sit apart from culture. Kerala, of course, is one of the strongest beau-

ty geographies in the country, with coconut, hibiscus, aloe, vetiver, sandalwood and medicinal herbs appearing across oils, recipes and wellness treatments. In the Nilgiris, eucalyptus, tea, native blooms and mountain air create a cooler botanical travel story, less tropical, more aromatic and equally restorative. Uttarakhand, with its forests, herbs and high-altitude flora, offers a more rugged landscape, where plants have a tradition of healing and pilgrimage. These are destinations where beauty comes naturally. Here, it does not feel constructed. It feels gathered.



Image Courtesy: Tishya by The Leela

### WATERS THAT SOFTEN, STEAM AND RESTORE

No beauty route feels quite as elemental as one shaped by water. Thermal and mineral-rich bathing cultures are enjoying a fresh allure because they strip the ritual down to its most essential pleasures: immersion, heat, minerals, stillness and time.

Iceland has become the global poster child for this mood, with its steamy, surreal waters set against black lava and glistening sky. Austria's thermal regions bring a greener version, where warm pools and verdant countryside create a different rhythm of renewal. Italy adds romance to its beauty travel portfolio, folding thermal waters into landscapes of vineyards, cypress roads and romantic old stone villages.

India's thermal stories may not be globally branded, yet they hold their own fascination. Manikaran in Himachal Pradesh offers hot springs in a dramatic mountain setting, together with pilgrimage, geology and wellbeing in a way only India can. Vashisht, near Manali, offers another Himalayan thermal travel pause, where warm waters and crisp air make the immersion memorable. Bakreshwar in West Bengal carries an old-world energy, while the hot springs of Sikkim and Ladakh introduce beauty trails nestled in altitude, remoteness and magical landscapes. These travel destinations may not always come dressed in designer spa robes, but they offer something more tangible: beauty through immersion in a place that feels wonderfully ancient and alive.



Cold Water Therapy. Image Courtesy: Nick Bulanov, Pexels

### HERBAL WISDOM – NATURE’S CABINET

If beauty travel has a soul, it may well lie in ancient herbal traditions. This is where beauty travel goes beyond trend and into inheritance, into traditional systems of care that have stood the test of time and therefore feel all the more precious now.

Kerala naturally leads this route. Ayurveda is not reduced to an oil massage or a food preparation on a resort menu. It is a complete pathway of thinking – about how to balance body, digestion, rest and renewal. The monsoon makes the travel experience especially seductive. Rain drops on palm fronds, warm oil therapies, therapeutic medicinal herbs, smoky aromas and slow, delicious meals create a mood that is sensuous and deeply restorative.

Yet India’s herbal beauty map extends much further. In Uttarakhand, local herb traditions and mountain wellness increasingly attract travellers looking for nature’s best. In Coorg, pepper, coffee, wild honey and forest botanicals shape an earthy sense of wellbeing. In Rajasthan, rose water, henna, saffron and desert botanicals carry a royal beauty language of their own. Across the Northeast, too, plant knowledge continues to shape food, healing and daily ritual in ways that deserve far more attention in luxury travel conversations. India’s gift here is abundance, but also continuity. Herbal beauty is not being revived. In many places, it never truly left.

### CHASING BLOOM ACROSS LANDSCAPES

Few kinds of travel feel more joyous than planning a journey around flowers. Wildflower routes capture something important about the current mood in travel: a desire for seasonality, colour, emotional uplift and fleeting wonder.



Image Courtesy: Dries Buytaert

Western Australia stages one of the grandest floral spectacles on the planet, with wildflower trails that unfurl like a natural art installation across astonishing distances. South Africa’s Namaqualand offers another unforgettable bloom season, proving that even austere landscapes can erupt into brilliance.

India has its own extraordinary flower routes, though they are often discussed more as trekking or nature experiences than as beauty journeys. The Valley of Flowers in Uttarakhand is the obvious star, where alpine meadows bloom with a kind of fragile magnificence that feels surreal. Kaas Plateau in Maharashtra offers a very different floral mood, lower in altitude but equally enchanting during the monsoon months, when the plateau bursts into brief, vivid life. In Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, the rhododendron country creates a seasonal dream, especially for travellers who enjoy flower routes with mountain drama and cultural depth. These are journeys where beauty is not groomed or arranged. It arrives in its own time and asks only that one show up for it.

### EATING ON THE BEAUTY ROUTE

One of the most delicious developments in this travel space is the growing overlap between beauty, wellness and food. Na-



TISHYA  
by THE LEELA

# THOUGHTFULLY CRAFTED. CONSCIOUSLY CONTINUED.

Tishya by The Leela, now packaged in Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR) bottles.



  
**THE LEELA**  
PALACES HOTELS RESORTS

  
years

For reservations call: 1800 1031 444 | Email: [reservations@theleela.com](mailto:reservations@theleela.com) | [www.theleela.com](http://www.theleela.com) | @f @theleela

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts: Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, New Delhi, Udaipur, Bhartiya City Bengaluru, Delhi, Gandhinagar, Gurugram, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Ashtamudi, Coorg and Kovalam.



Scan to know more

ture-based diets, ingredient-led cuisine and fresh local produce are now part of the same conversation as glow, vitality and self-care. It makes perfect sense. Some of the most intriguing beauty rituals have always begun at the dinner table.

Japan's yuzu routes in Kochi show how a single ingredient can shape a whole sensory identity, appearing in groves, kitchens, baths and local products with astonishing freshness. Puglia in southern Italy does something similar through olive oil, spilling onto food, landscape and body ritual with warm Mediterranean ease.

India may be even more naturally suited to this edible beauty map. Kashmir offers saffron, walnuts, apricots and roses in a landscape that already feels perfumed. Coorg folds coffee, pepper, oranges and forest honey into a luxurious food culture. Kerala's beauty pantry reads like a wellness manifesto written by nature itself: coconut, curry leaves, banana flower, jackfruit, moringa, spices and medicinal infusions. In Himachal and Uttarakhand, orchard fruit, herbal teas and mountain honey create a simpler but no less compelling route. Even Goa enters the beauty route with coconut, kokum, cashew fruit and sea air, bringing a playful, sun-washed version of beauty through food. These destinations understand something important: radiance is sometimes cooked, brewed, infused and shared.

#### **TISHYA BY THE LEELA: SCENT WITH PURPOSE**

At The Leela Hotels and Resorts, this movement is expressed through Tishya by The Leela, a fragrance inspired by India's sacred lotus, Kumud, and the rare Neelakurinji bloom. The sensorial story extends to vegan, paraben-free, SLS-free bath



Ayurvedic Treatment. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism Website

amenities enriched with essential oils and floral extracts, presented in recyclable packaging. It also takes on a deeper purpose through Leela Ke Phool, where flowers used across its hotels are upcycled through Flowercycling technology in its partnership with Phool.co into charcoal-free incense sticks and cones infused with the Tishya by The Leela fragrance. The initiative reduces floral waste, avoids harmful toxins, and supports women entrepreneurs who craft these products, turning conscious luxury into something fragrant, responsible and deeply rooted in India's natural beauty.

#### **BEAUTY, BUT MAKE IT MINE**

What ties all these routes together is individuality. Beauty travel is compelling because it allows travellers to choose their own language of renewal. This is why new beauty routes offer an appeal that lies in depth, specificity and feeling. They invite travellers to move through the world with more attention, noticing how a place smells after rain, what grows there naturally, how its women have cared for skin and hair for generations, what oils are used, what flowers are offered, what ingredients people trust, what food nourishes both body and mood.

India, perhaps more than most destinations, is ready for this reframing. Its beauty routes are already here in attar towns, Ayurveda retreats, flower valleys, herb-rich hills, thermal springs, spice coasts and orchard belts. They only need to be read differently: not as scattered experiences, but as a beautiful new map of travel itself.

And that may be the future of beauty tourism. Not beauty as correction. Beauty as place, pleasure and self-expression. Beauty as something absorbed slowly, through water, weather, plants, fragrance, food and memory. Beauty, in other words, is to be absorbed as a journey.



Ayurvedic Medicine Preparation. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism Website







**JW MARRIOTT**

MUMBAI SAHAR

## JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar The Gateway to Forever

Celebrate your eternal love at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar—Mumbai's Gateway to eternal bliss. Pass through our gleaming arch into majestic ballrooms and hidden garden sanctuaries, where intuitive service and culinary artisans blend India's vibrant spices with global flair. Every moment here is a grand arrival into your happily ever after.

For further details: 022 6882 8888 | visit [www.jwmumbai.com](http://www.jwmumbai.com)  
Follow @JWSahar on    

*Go There With*

**MARRIOTT BONVOY**



# INSIDE INDIA'S GREAT BIOSPHERE LANDSCAPES



Valley of Flowers, Himachal Pradesh. Image Courtesy: Rethinking The Future

This is India beyond postcards, alive with tide, altitude, silence, species, and lived landscape stories

## TT BUREAU

In India's biosphere reserves, luxury sheds its usual wardrobe. In its place comes atmosphere, rarity, and a stronger sense of place. A guide who knows the forest by sound, not merely by map.

This country's biosphere reserves hold some of the country's most extraordinary ecological worlds, yet they also carry village life, sacred geography, coastlines, grazing routes, and old cultural memory within the same frame.

### WHAT SETS THESE LANDSCAPES APART

A biosphere reserve presents an entire living system. There is a protected core, where wildlife and habitat remain the priority, and surrounding zones that allow research, low-impact travel, and community life in careful balance. One can wake in tiger country, spend an afternoon with reef interpreters or estate hosts, then end the day in a village kitchen, a monastery courtyard, or a heritage stay with deep local character.

### NILGIRI

Nilgiri was India's first biosphere reserve, and it carries that stature with ease. Spread across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and

Kerala, it joins elephant habitat, shola forest, tea country, and highland calm in one sweeping landscape.

Kabini and Nagarhole give the reserve its wilder pulse. Water glints through woodland. Elephants move in slow authority. Big cat country keeps the air taut. Drive upward, and the mood alters. Tea gardens fold over the hills. Colonial era bungalows, planters' homes, and polished retreats offer fireplaces, long verandahs, and old hill station ease. One part safari, one part highland retreat, both deeply satisfying.

### SUNDARBANS

The Sundarbans offer a very different kind of beauty. This biosphere reserve in West Bengal covers about 9,630 square kilometres and forms part of the world's largest mangrove forest. Its setting in the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Meghna deltas gives it a mood unlike any inland reserve. Creeks, tidal channels, mudflats, and mangrove thickets shape the experience at every stage. The reserve supports the Royal Bengal Tiger, estuarine crocodile, Gangetic dolphin, and a wide range of raptors and wetland birdlife.

Boat travel defines the journey here, which makes the Sundarbans feel slower and more suspenseful than conventional safari country. Small cruises and riverside lodges suit the landscape best, especially for travellers who value rarity, silence, and a strong sense of place.

### **NANDA DEVI AND VALLEY OF FLOWERS**

The Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve introduces a more elevated and deeply evocative mood. It includes Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers National Park, both part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Lower reaches sit near 1,800 metres, while upper peaks rise beyond 7,800 metres around the Nanda Devi massif. The reserve protects snow leopard, Himalayan musk deer, blue sheep, and high altitude birdlife, though many travellers know it best for the Valley of Flowers, where summer bloom covers the meadows in primulas, anemones, and Himalayan orchids.

The experience here is rooted in walking. Routes usually begin near Govindghat and move through Ghangaria, giving the landscape a pilgrim-like rhythm. Refined stays around Joshimath and Auli provide warmth, views, and a welcome sense of ease before or after the harder days.

### **GULF OF MANNAR**

The Gulf of Mannar brings the biosphere idea into marine territory. Covering around 10,500 square kilometres in Tamil Nadu, it is India's largest biosphere reserve by area.

The reserve includes 21 islands, along with coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and mangroves, and supports more than 3,600 species. Dugongs, sea turtles, reef fish, and other marine life make it one of the country's most sensitive coastal ecosystems. Rameswaram and Mandapam serve as the main travel bases, with regulated boat rides and marine interpretation in selected zones.



*Purple Sunbird, Sundarbans East Wildlife Sanctuary. Image Courtesy: Touhid Biplob*

What gives the reserve real editorial appeal is its layered character. It also sits close to temple culture, coastal history, and the striking edge of Dhanushkodi. That combination of ecology and sacred geography can shape a very elegant journey, especially for travellers who prefer thoughtful coastal exploration over louder beach circuits.

### **SIMILIPAL**

Similipal, in Odisha, has a stronger forest presence and a more rugged identity. Covering roughly 4,374 square kilometres, it forms the core of the Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve. Sal forest dominates much of the landscape, though river valleys, grasslands, and major waterfalls such as Barehipani and Joranda give the reserve plenty of variation. Barehipani, with a drop of nearly 400 metres, ranks among India's tallest waterfalls.

It also shelters tiger, elephant, gaur, giant squirrel, four horned antelope, and rich birdlife. Similipal remains less commercial than many better known tiger landscapes, and that relative quiet is part of its strength.



*Royal Bengal Tiger, Sundarbans Wildlife Sanctuary. Image Courtesy: Soumyajit Nandy*



Chandra Lake, Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Image Courtesy: Gaurav Sharma, Pexels

Stays near Lulong and other gateway points tend toward comfort without excess, which fits the reserve well. For a luxury traveller, the attraction lies not in heavy polish but in space, lower visitor pressure, dramatic forest scenery, and the added dimension of local tribal culture.

### **PACHMARHI**

Pachmarhi offers one of the most balanced biosphere experiences in central India. Located in Madhya Pradesh, it includes Bori Sanctuary, Satpura National Park, and Pachmarhi Sanctuary. The landscape is marked by sandstone cliffs, forested slopes, waterfalls such as Bee Falls and Duchess Falls, caves, and prehistoric rock art.

Tiger, leopard, sloth bear, gaur, and a broad range of birdlife add wildlife depth, while Pachmarhi hill town itself brings an appealing heritage layer through old buildings, church spires, and a slower hill station tempo.

Walking trails, viewpoints, boat outings, and historical interest all sit comfortably within the same itinerary.

### **COLD DESERT**

The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in Himachal Pradesh takes the story into a far starker register. It covers high altitude trans Himalayan terrain in parts of Lahaul and Spiti, including areas such as Pin Valley National Park and Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary, and was entered into UNESCO's World Network in 2025.

Elevations begin around 3,300 metres and rise beyond 6,600 metres, creating an extreme environment of dry air, sparse vegetation, and dramatic mountain form. Yet the reserve holds remarkable life, including snow leopard, Himalayan ibex, blue sheep, golden eagle, and lammergeier. Villages such as Kibber and Langza now serve as bases for winter snow leopard journeys, one of the country's most sought-after wildlife experiences.

Comfort here is simpler than in woodland lodges or hill bungalows, yet that simplicity is part of the reserve's appeal. Warm rooms and reliable hospitality create a powerful sense of luxury.

### **A SMARTER KIND OF INDULGENCE**

Taken together, these reserves suggest that Indian luxury travel is moving in a more interesting direction. Privacy still matters. Design still matters. Excellent guiding matters even more. Yet the highest form of indulgence now lies in context.

In Nilgiri, it may be the meeting of safari drama and tea country grace. In the Sundarbans, it may be a tide line under a darkening sky. In Pachmarhi, it may be the pleasure of pace itself. These reserves offer a fuller encounter with landscape, culture, and the rhythms that still shape India's wild edges.



Snow Leopard, Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve. Image Courtesy: Triploger

# 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

# SEA ESCAPES: SURF BREAKS AND CORAL GARDENS

Across bright lagoons and darker shores, luxury finds new depth in surfing thrills, diving adrenaline and deep-sea adventure

TT BUREAU



**N**ot all water flatters in the same way. At times it glows, clear and silk-like, wrapping the day in ease. Elsewhere, it grows muscular, reef struck, wind-marked, or shadowed by black rock. That changeability is where the seduction lies. Surfing or diving in these calm channels, coral gardens, surf breaks, and deeper blue expanses all create different kinds of beauty, and different kinds of thrill. Luxury feels richer in settings like these. The real pleasure lies in the sequence, not in any single peak moment.

That same shifting energy runs through the destinations we have chosen here. They are united by sea and shore, yet none slips into sameness. Bright lagoons, reef force, dense greenery, and darker volcanic ground keep the mood in motion. Some stretches feel polished and hushed. Others feel remote, rougher, and alive with tension. That variation gives the journey its shape, allowing beauty, activity, and atmosphere the same measure of importance.

## GOA

Goa still carries the reputation of an easy beach holiday, though that summary undersells its variety quite poorly. Arambol and Palolem suit early surf sessions, especially for travellers who want water with energy yet not intimidation. Paddleboarding on calmer backwaters slows the body and sharpens the eye. Kayaking through mangrove-lined channels along the Mandovi and Zuari replaces open horizon with shade, bird calls, and a quieter kind of movement. Scuba near Grand Island and Suzy's Wreck adds another layer, where reef fish and submerged remains create a textured marine scene.

On land, Goa refuses any single identity. Spice plantations scented with pepper, cardamom, and nutmeg sit comfortably within the same day as polished villas, ocean-facing suites, and chef-led dining. It is a coast built for transitions. One can move easily between activity and idleness, between local flavour and

a more refined hospitality rhythm. Goa simply makes an active escape feel natural.

### **LITTLE ANDAMAN**

Then comes Little Andaman, and the tone alters immediately. Here, it is wilder, more isolated, less interpreted. In March 2026, the Surfing Federation of India announced the Little Andaman Pro 2026 at Butler Bay Beach, pushing the island further into the national surf conversation. Butler Bay matters because its reef break delivers longer rides and stronger technical conditions than many mainland beaches, which gives the destination a seriousness that is unmatched by other destinations.

Still, surf is only one strand of the appeal. Little Andaman holds waterfalls inside dense forest, emerging eco stays, and the romance of a place that still feels slightly beyond the polished mainstream. Scuba possibilities are also opening around relatively untouched coral systems, adding exploratory diving alongside the reef energy above water. The luxury here is in the rarity, atmosphere, and the thrill of arrival in a place that is yet to be fully explored.

### **THE MALDIVES**

After Little Andaman, the Maldives feels almost impossibly composed. Villas stand above luminous lagoons. House reefs sit steps away. Water dominates the eye at nearly every hour, and the whole destination seems arranged around marine immersion. Some islands specialise in surf access, others in diving, and many in both. Either way, the setting does a remarkable amount of work before any activity even begins.

Diving remains one of the great signatures here. Manta rays, whale sharks, reef passes, lagoon sites, and exceptional visibility create a marine world of rare richness. Yet it is the softer moments that keep the magic of the Maldives.

Paddleboarding at sunrise. Slow lagoon swims. Yoga on decks suspended over water. Recovery is built into the day through spas, quiet shade, and beautifully paced meals. Even the most active itinerary rarely feels frantic. The Maldives understands how movement and stillness can flatter each other.

### **BALI**

Bali arrives with a denser cultural texture and a more complex visual field. Surf breaks, diving sites, temple architecture, terraces, and ceremonial life all seem tightly woven together, which makes the island unusually rich for travellers who dislike one-note holidays.

Canggu offers forgiving waves and a recognisable surf culture. Tulamben and Amed bring wreck diving, where marine life and history occupy the same frame. Nusa Penida adds marine wildlife encounters and a stronger sense of the sea's scale.

However, there is much to Bali to be singularly defined by its waters alone. Rice terraces soothe the eye after bright surf beaches. Water temples and purification rituals shift the emotional temperature of a stay. Mount Batur walks add a land-based challenge with a different kind of reward.

Luxury here rests in cliff villas, jungle retreats, private pools, and food that feels welcoming and attentive. Bali works because it holds motion and pause with equal confidence.

### **HAWAII**

Hawaii carries myth before arrival. Names such as Pipeline, Waimea, and Sunset Beach have long escaped their geography and entered the broader language of surf culture. And yet, the islands would still matter deeply without that aura.

A stay here can include watching serious surf one day, learning on calmer breaks the next, diving or snorkelling with turtles and reef life, then hearing stories that place the ocean within a much older cultural understanding.



*Snorkeling in Maldives. Image Courtesy: Maahid Photos*

The Big Island expands the frame further. Night dives off Kona remain among the most memorable marine experiences anywhere. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park changes the scale of the conversation entirely. Lava tubes, calderas, black rock, and exposed terrain lend the land a raw authority that few destinations can match.

Luxury here often comes with cultural depth attached, through strong resorts, lei making, hula, and experiences guided by Native Hawaiian voices. Hawaii gets etched in one's memory because it goes beyond the surface beauty.



*Coral Reef, Ko Lipe, Thailand. Image Courtesy: Milos Prelevic, Unsplash*

There is more here than tanks and fins, though the diving remains central. Lac Bay brings windsurfing and kitesurfing under steady trade winds. Mangrove kayaking reveals a greener, softer side of the island.

Accommodations here lean toward smaller dive stays and sleek apartments with a quieter sense of luxury. Bonaire has no interest in performance. It offers clarity instead, and that restraint proves unexpectedly elegant.

What connects these destinations is not one sport, nor one style of luxury. It is a stronger, subtler design logic. Each place

offers a memorable natural setting, several ways of entering that setting, and enough comfort that active days never feel punishing.

Goa gives ease without dullness. Little Andaman adds wildness. The Maldives perfects marine polish. Bali layers depth and ritual over water. Hawaii fuses geology with legend. Bonaire lets freedom close the circuit. Their real richness lies in atmosphere, contrast, and the sense that the setting itself is always doing half the work.

## **BONAIRE**

Bonaire offers a very different spirit. Famous as a shore diving capital, it offers something many glossy destinations still fail at, that is freedom without disorder. More than sixty marked dive sites, easy reef entry, calm conditions at many points, and a strong marine protection ethic make the island feel honest. One can shape a day around the reef with very little friction, and that ease becomes a luxury in its own right.



*Little Andaman Pro 2026. Image Courtesy: Surfing Federation of India*

# 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.



# LUXURY IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

Some hotels are luxurious, but these hotels feel like a triumph.

JEET BHATTACHARYA



*The Suite with The Backdrop of Northern Light. Image Courtesy: The Mirror Suite*

**H**idden in faraway corners of the world, they are the kind of stays that turn arrival into its own reward and remoteness into pure glamour. The appeal lies not only in beautiful rooms or polished service, but in the delicious rarity of getting there at all.

Some stand in places so extreme, so remote, and so rarely reached that very few people will ever experience them in person. That is part of their allure. Desert vastness, icy horizons, mountain drama, wild coastlines, every setting brings its own mood and mystique. These are escapes with edge, where exclusivity comes naturally. They do not merely offer luxury. They make it feel daring, elevated, and gloriously hard-won.

## WHY THESE STAYS CAN BE LIFE-CHANGING FOR TRAVELLERS

Places like these have a way of turning solo travel into something far more intimate than an ordinary holiday. When the setting is remote, dramatic, and hard-won, every moment lands differently. The view feels sharper, the air feels cleaner, and arrival carries a quiet thrill that makes the entire experience feel deeply personal.

For adventure-seeking travellers, that shift can be quietly life-changing, in the best possible way. Distance builds confidence, rare access sharpens perspective, and the sheer beauty of these places gives the journey emotional weight. More than stylish stays, they become stories travellers carry home with them long after checkout, polished by memory and impossible to forget.



*Group of Icelandic Horses. Image Courtesy: The Mirror Suite*

## THE MIRROR SUITE, ICELAND

The Mirror Suite gives remoteness a very stylish glow. Tucked into a serene fjord in West Iceland, it feels wonderfully away from it all, yet getting there is far easier than the setting suggests.

The cabins are around 25 minutes from the Ring Road and under two hours from Reykjavík, with year-round winter service on the main road, so travellers get that rare off-grid feeling without the stress of an overly difficult journey. It is the sort of place that makes you feel deliciously far from the world, while still being comfortably within reach.

Once you arrive, the design does all the seducing. Just 50 metres from the ocean, the mirrored glass cabins reflect the coastline so beautifully that they seem to disappear into the landscape. Floor-to-ceiling windows open onto panoramic sea views, and each cabin comes with a private glass sauna and an all-season hot tub.

Add ocean sunsets, snowy winters, starry skies, winter Northern Lights, and the chance of spotting seals and birds, and the whole stay feels immersive, cinematic, and irresistibly chic. In the warmer months, you can also go riding on the iconic Icelandic horse, which adds another lovely layer to the escape.

## GO BELOW, WALES

Go Below in Wales is not the kind of stay you stumble into. Deep Sleep is tucked inside an abandoned Victorian slate mine beneath the mountains of Snowdonia, and getting there is part of the theatre. Guests begin at Tanygrisiau Base near Blaenau Ffestiniog, then take a 45-minute walk up into the hills before gearing up with a helmet, headtorch, harness, and Wellington boots.

After that, the route drops through old miners' stairways, decaying bridges, and scrambles, until you reach the camp 1,375 vertical feet below the surface. By then, ordinary life feels very far away indeed.

And that is exactly the thrill of it. Instead of polished lobbies and predictable check-ins, Deep Sleep offers four private twin-bed cabins and one grotto with a double bed, all with bedding provided, plus a complimentary expedition-style evening meal, hot drinks, and breakfast snacks the next morning. It is off-grid, dramatic, and deliciously unusual, the sort of experience that feels less like a night away and more like stepping into another world.

## CAPANNA MARGHERITA, ITALY

Capanna Margherita is not the sort of place you casually arrive at. Sitting on Punta Gnifetti in the Monte Rosa massif at 4,556 metres, it is described by its official site as the highest refuge in Europe, and everything about it feels thrillingly removed from ordinary travel.

Getting there is part of the story: the classic approach takes around four to five hours across the Lys Glacier from Capanna Gnifetti, or about five hours across the Grenz Glacier from Monte Rosa Hutte. Proper equipment and real alpine know-how are essential, and the refuge strongly recommends going with a mountain guide. By the time you arrive, the altitude alone has changed the mood.



Twin Bed Inside a Cave Room. Image Courtesy: Go Below, Wales

What makes it so fascinating is that this raw, high-altitude drama meets the comforts of a functioning refuge. Capanna Margherita can host 70 guests and offers a bar, restaurant, communal bathrooms, electric lighting, 220V power, internet access, and even a library.

It also houses a scientific research laboratory, which gives the stay an added layer of purpose and character. So while the setting is undeniably extreme, the experience is not only about hardship. It is about the rare privilege of being suspended above the everyday world.

## THE GRAND ALEUTIAN, ALASKA, USA

The Grand Aleutian is the sort of place that makes the world feel suddenly much larger. Set in Unalaska, roughly 800 miles southwest of Anchorage in the Aleutian Islands, it has that rare edge-of-the-map energy that travellers quietly dream about.

The surroundings do a lot of the storytelling: crystal waters, pristine mountains, and broad views of Margaret Bay, Ballyhoo Mountain, and Unalaska Bay create a landscape that feels rugged, cinematic, and gloriously far removed from the everyday.

What keeps it inviting is that the hotel balances all that wild geography with real ease. The Grand Aleutian has 103 guest rooms and suites, complimentary airport shuttle service, and several food and drink venues, including Margaret Bay Café, The Chart Room, Cape Cheerful Lounge, and Pyramid Coffee.



En route to The Underground Cave Hotel. Image Courtesy: Go Below, Wales

It also places guests within reach of the experiences that make Unalaska and Dutch Harbour so distinctive, including hiking, bird-watching, halibut and salmon fishing, beach strolls, and visits to historical and cultural sites. So the escape here is not about doing nothing. It is about being somewhere so dramatically different that even simple pleasures feel heightened.

**AMANGIRI, GLEN CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA OF UTAH, USA**

Amangiri is where remoteness becomes part of the seduction. Set in Canyon Point, Utah, it stretches across more than 900 acres of untouched red-rock country on the Colorado Plateau, with 34 modernist suites, an Aman Spa, and its now-iconic mesa-embracing pool dissolving into the desert around it. The architecture does not compete with the landscape. It yields to it, framing stone, light, and silence with a kind of disciplined elegance that feels entirely in tune with the terrain.

Getting there is not exactly effortless either, which only adds to the mystique: the nearest local airport in Page, Arizona, is still a 25-minute drive away, while arrivals through Las Vegas or Phoenix involve roughly 4.5 hours on the road. That sense of distance is precisely what gives the place its almost unreal serenity. By the time guests arrive, the world seems to have softened into stillness, with vast skies, shifting desert shadows, and a silence so complete it feels almost curated.

It also happens to be one of those rare retreats where the guest list has become part of the legend. Publicly reported visitors have included Hailey Bieber, Justin Bieber, Kylie Jenner, Beyoncé, and members of the Kardashian family, which says a great deal about its pull. Yet celebrity cachet is only part of the story. Amangiri's deeper allure lies in how completely it removes you from noise, speed, and clutter. Here, luxury is not about excess. It is about space, stillness, and the quiet thrill of feeling deliciously far away from everything.

**HAKONE TAKUMI NO YADO YOSHIMATSU, JAPAN**

HAKONE TAKUMI no YADO YOSHIMATSU is the kind of place that changes your pace the moment you arrive. Set on a hill by Lake Ashi in Hakone, this traditional ryokan brings a gentler, more graceful energy to the journey.



*A Glass of Chilled Beer in The Middle of Nowhere. Image Courtesy: The Grand Aleutian, Alaska, USA*



*The Grand Aleutian Aerial Shot. Image Courtesy: The Grand Aleutian, Alaska, USA*



*Amangiri, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area of Utah, USA*

It is only a four-minute walk from the lake, yet it feels tucked away enough to invite a proper exhale. The setting has that rare balance of accessibility and seclusion, where the world remains within reach, yet never intrudes.

Better still, it is easy to work into a wider Japan itinerary, with the trip taking about two hours from central Tokyo. Being in the Lake Ashi area also places guests in one of Hakone's most iconic landscapes for Mount Fuji views on clear days, which adds even more romance to the setting. The surrounding region, with its still water, cedar-lined roads, and misty mountain air, makes even a short stay feel softly cinematic.

What stays with you here is the quiet refinement of it all. Yoshimatsu offers shared open-air hot spring baths, private hot spring options for families, and some rooms with their own private onsen bath, making relaxation feel deeply personal.

The Japanese garden, with bamboo, a clear pond, and beautifully maintained greenery, adds another layer of calm, especially as the seasons shift.

Then there is the kaiseki ryori served in the room, a traditional multi-course Japanese meal prepared with seasonal ingredients and presented with extraordinary care. It feels restorative, intimate, and quietly luxurious, the sort of place that never insists on its beauty, yet leaves a lasting impression through its stillness and poise.



*Meditation Session. Image Courtesy: Amangiri Website*

## **HOTEL DJÚPAVÍK, ICELAND**

Hotel Djúpvavík has the kind of address that makes even seasoned travellers pause. Set in the tiny village of Djúpvavík on Iceland's Strandir coast in the Westfjords, it feels thrillingly off-grid in the chicest possible way. Getting there still means taking Road 643 through Árneshreppur, and public transport in the area is extremely limited, so most visitors arrive by car.

That effort becomes part of the mood. The Reykjavík Grapevine once described the approach as a potholed track edged by stark shoreline and snowy mountains, while the long-shuttered herring factory nearby gives the landscape a severe, cinematic magnetism that feels almost unreal. It is the sort of place where silence lands heavily, the scenery does the talking, and the remoteness becomes part of the luxury.

What makes the stay so compelling is that the welcome feels warm rather than austere. The hotel occupies a 1930s building originally constructed for women who worked at the herring factory, and today guests can expect breakfast and dinner in a wooden-beamed dining room, with free coffee, tea, cakes, and snacks available throughout the day.



Japanese Garden & Koi Pond. Image Courtesy: HAKONE TAKUMI no YADO YOSHIMATSU



Kaiseki Ryori. Image Courtesy: HAKONE TAKUMI no YADO YOSHIMATSU

Official hotel information also mentions additional accommodation options such as Álfasteinn Cottage and Lækjarkot, along with an à la carte restaurant and activities including factory tours, hiking, and handicraft experiences.

Its cinematic quality is not merely a feeling either. Djúpavík was used as a filming location in Justice League, in the scene where Bruce Wayne searches for Aquaman and Arthur Curry, played by Jason Momoa, rises out of the water before disappearing again into the elemental drama of sea and stone. That cameo in a major Hollywood film only adds to the village's

mystique. The setting already looks as though it belongs to another world; cinema merely confirmed what the landscape was doing all along.

It is that contrast, raw drama outside and character within, that makes Hotel Djúpavík feel so memorably special. Few hotels lean so confidently into isolation while still managing to feel intimate, storied, and quietly generous. In Djúpavík, the journey is part of the theatre, the setting is part of the stay, and the sense of discovery lingers long after checkout.



A Couple Getting Married in Djúpavík. Image Courtesy: Hotel Djúpavík



A Dramatic Cliffside View Along The Strandir Coast. Image Courtesy: Hotel Djúpavík

*Master of complications*

ROUND  
TRIPLE MYSTERY



Inspired by a vision of time as fluid and unbound, the Mystery collection has always challenged convention. From the first single-disc Mystery to the Double Mystery with hours and minutes.

**FRANCK MULLER**  
**GENEVE**



# A HUNDRED RAINS: MONSOON MAGIC

Rain-soaked forests, tea hills under clouds, thunderous waterfalls and stays that only get better when the sky turns dramatic

TT BUREAU

Some journeys need blue skies, polished sunlight and a perfect horizon. Monsoon travel in India works the other way. It rewards the right landscape, the right pace and the right mood. When the rains arrive, the country does not simply turn greener. It becomes softer, deeper, moodier and, in the right places, far more seductive.

That is what makes monsoon such a compelling travel season. It has its own rhythm, geography and pleasures. The rain touches Kerala first, climbs the Ghats, fills rivers, thickens forests and transforms familiar destinations into something richer and more atmospheric.

When it rains, the best things about a place come out: waterfalls at full force, tea slopes swallowed by mist, coffee country under heavy cloud, houseboats drifting through grey-green stillness, and wellness retreats that feel more at home here than any beach getaway.

## MOUNTAINS, MONSOON & TEA

The Western Ghats are where this story really comes to life. This belt looks great in the rain. The roads wind around hills that are soaked, and the edges of the forest disappear into the clouds. Every turn seems to bring a new shade of green.

The weather in Munnar goes well with the scenery. The air smells better and gets cooler, and the whole area becomes softer and quieter. This is not the big monsoon. It's the monsoon of porches, warm cups, wet stones, and hills that come and go, as if they are enjoying the show as much as you are.

That same mood is present in a different way in Darjeeling. The rain here falls on old tea estates, in the mountain air, and in a more traditional way of falling in love. The wood grows darker, the clouds move low over the hills, and the idea of a slow morning sounds tempting. These are places where the fun doesn't stop because of the monsoon.

## TORRENTS OF SKY AND EARTH

Then, of course, there is the louder, magical side of the season. Waterfalls in the monsoon are scenic events, and seeing them feels like you have reached heaven.

Athirappilly and Vazhachal in Kerala become full-scale spectacles when the rains are in command, all spray, roar and deep green surroundings. Jog Falls in Karnataka carries the same dramatic energy, with the landscape reorganised by sheer volume and force. And then there is Meghalaya, where the monsoon feels almost mythic.

The cliffs and clouds in Sohra, along with the rest of the plateau, make regular travel writing seem completely useless. Nohkalikai Falls, which falls through mist and stone, is one of those places where rain can be the main character.



Aerial View of Mumbai During Monsoon. Image Courtesy: Aman Uttam, Pexels



*Monsoon in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

Taste of travel is what makes monsoon travel cool right now. The season is great for travellers who know how to go with the flow: long lunches in plantation country, suites made for watching storms, misty verandahs, relaxing wellness stays, and plans that are flexible enough to let the weather set the mood.

The real luxury lies in atmosphere, ease and that delicious sense of being exactly where you should be while the rain transforms everything outside. Monsoon is not about rushing through a checklist. It is about sinking into the mood and letting the season do what it does best.

### **THE ALCHEMY OF RAIN**

That is also why Kerala's rainy-season wellness culture fits so naturally into this feature. In this part of India, monsoon has long been linked with restoration. Ayurveda, seasonal food and slow, inward travel all seem to make deeper sense when the world outside is washed clean and the days feel naturally quieter.

The sound of rain in the background, warm oils, medicinal kitchens, green courtyards, and tiled roofs all add to a kind of luxury that is less flashy and more memorable. The food can even change your mood. This time of year calls for things like pepper, ginger, hot tea, strong coffee, broths, and traditional foods that make you feel grounded instead of spoiled.

Maybe that's what makes travelling to India during the monsoon so great. It asks for a more advanced way to get away. Rain doesn't make every place better, but it does make some places unforgettable. The season doesn't stay in the background in Kerala's backwaters, Munnar and Darjeeling's tea hills, Coorg's coffee estates, Athirappilly and Jog's waterfalls, or Meghalaya's cloud country. It shapes the trip, makes the senses sharper, and stays in the memory much longer than a blue-sky break that is always the same.



*Munroe Island in Kerala. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism*

# LUXURY HAS A TASTE FOR EXTREME TRAVEL

Extreme itineraries that offer elegance under pressure, intimacy with danger, and access that few travellers will ever know

TT BUREAU

For a certain tier of traveller, luxury has moved beyond penthouses, superyachts, and safari camps with brass bathtubs. The new frontier lies elsewhere. It is colder, deeper, harsher, and actively hostile to human life. What draws this rarefied traveller is the dance of comfort against extremity. Here, precision, privacy, and engineering become as important as indulgence itself.

These journeys are not softened for easy consumption. They unfold in places where pressure can crush steel, altitude strips the body of strength, acid burns through stone, and heat makes survival a technical exercise. Yet that is precisely where modern expedition luxury now excels, because the appeal is now engineered and exclusive access.

Private submersibles descend to hadal depths with repeated mission certification. Everest teams offer 1:1 guide ratios, enhanced oxygen systems, and acclimatisation programmes. In Ethiopia's Danakil Depression, armed Afar escorts and medically planned exposure windows turn an unstable geothermal basin into a viable expedition. These places redefine indulgence when nature has no intention of being hospitable.

For a narrow circle of travellers, that balance holds far greater appeal than any familiar version of opulence.

## MT. EVEREST, NEPAL

Mt. Everest remains the most recognised name in extreme expedition travel, but the North Side is a different proposition from the crowded mythology of the South. Harder, colder, more austere, it appeals to those who want the mountain stripped of spectacle.

Above 8,000 metres begins the death zone, where atmospheric pressure drops so sharply that the body starts consuming itself even at rest. Muscle loss is not a side effect. It is part of the terrain. Add blue ice, rockfall, avalanche exposure, and temperatures that can plunge to appalling lows, and the mountain becomes a lesson in limits.

Mount Everest, Nepal. Image Courtesy: Evan Green

This is where premium expedition operators have reworked the climbing model. Signature programmes now include pre-acclimatisation in hypobaric chambers, private weather modelling, improved oxygen flow rates, personal Sherpa support, and tightly controlled guide ratios.

At Advanced Base Camp, luxury appears in welcome forms of climate-controlled domes, espresso machines, curated meals, reliable communications, and medical oversight that feels closer to a private field hospital than a temporary mountain camp.

The mission unfolds over several weeks. Kathmandu offers the first stage of conditioning and medical observation, followed by travel into Tibet and a series of rotation climbs that prepare the body for higher camps. Summit windows remain brutally narrow. Even with the finest support, success is never guaranteed.

Everest does not become safe. However, it becomes better managed, more intelligently supported, and less exposed to the chaos of volume traffic. For the right climber, that shift changes everything.

### **MARIANA TRENCH, WESTERN PACIFIC OCEAN**

At Challenger Deep, nearly 11 kilometres beneath the surface near the Mariana Islands, water pressure exceeds 1,000 atmospheres. Human beings do not belong here. Neither, frankly, do most machines. This is an environment capable of collapsing unprotected bodies instantly and crushing ordinary submersibles without ceremony.

Yet a tiny number of travellers now have access to this world through full-depth private descents managed by elite operators such as Triton and Caladan Oceanic. These companies have a fleet of highly specialised submersibles tested for repeated missions to the deepest points on Earth.

The experience begins well before the dive. Guam serves as the starting point, via private jet, followed by embarkation on an expedition mothership. Guests receive systems briefings, safety checks, and marine science orientation. Dive day brings a long descent through layers of diminishing light until only darkness and instrumentation remain.

On the seabed, silt plains stretch outward in stillness. Bioluminescent life gives way to sparse, strange forms such as giant xenophyophores. A manipulator arm may collect sediment or biological samples. Live sensor feeds track pressure, salinity, dissolved oxygen, and bathymetry in real time. The ascent ends with

debriefs, reviewed footage, and a dinner that feels unreal after standing at the deepest known point on the planet.

The cost, historically between \$750,000 and \$1.5 million per seat, buys far more than exclusivity. It buys engineering that has already survived where most systems cannot. That, here, is the only reassurance that matters.

### **DANAKIL DEPRESSION, ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia's Danakil Depression barely resembles Earth in any comfortable sense. It is one of the hottest inhabited regions in the world, sunk below sea level and shaped by tectonic divergence, toxic gases, and hydrothermal instability. At Dallol, acid pans glow in violent shades of yellow, green, and orange, while crusts conceal scalding fluids beneath surfaces that appear deceptively solid.

It is spectacular. It is unsafe.

Heatstroke can set in quickly. Gas inhalation is a serious threat. Security has long required armed escorts after deadly attacks in the region. Independent travel is not permitted. Which means luxury here is logistical, medical, and protective.

The strongest operators build the experience around convoy discipline and strict exposure management. Travel begins in Addis Ababa and moves through regional staging points before guests join armed Afar-led convoys into the depression. Camps are functional, not indulgent, though private departures can upgrade the experience with better bedding, linen dining tents, hot food service, espresso setups, and dedicated risk-management support.

Excursions are timed with care. Dawn is crucial, both for photography and for avoiding the worst heat. Gas masks, hydration protocols, and close medical monitoring are part of the package rather than extras. Visits often include the luminous acid fields



*Coral Reef in Southwest Papua, Indonesia. Image Courtesy: Andi saiful Sidik, Pexels*

of Dallol, the salt caravans of Karum, and the climb to Erta Ale, whose lava lake remains one of Africa's most compelling volcanic sights.

No polished fantasy survives long here. The landscape is too raw for that. Still, in a different register, it is unforgettable. Danakil offers a form of luxury grounded in preparedness and proximity, a chance to witness geological violence at close range while every essential variable is being managed for you.

### **THE AMAZON BASIN, SOUTH AMERICA**

The Amazon has always promised scale, mystery, and biological excess. What has changed is the manner in which elite travellers now enter it. Instead of rough camps and uncertain logistics that were used at the turn of the millennium, the basin can be approached aboard a new generation of luxury expedition vessels operating through Peru and Brazil.

That does not make the rainforest tame. The ecological intensity remains staggering. Mosquito-borne diseases, venomous snakes, Anacondas, Jaguars, Black Caimans, Electric Eels, dangerous flood cycles, and severe remoteness all continue to define the region. What the finest vessels do is create a controlled refuge within that unpredictability.

Properties such as &Beyond's Amazon Explorer, Delfin III, and Aria Amazon treat the river as both route and retreat. Suites are generous, often lined with large windows facing the forest. Interiors soften the mood with fine linens, polished baths, private verandas, and lounges designed for long, slow observation. Meals lean into Peruvian and Amazonian produce, often with a high-end culinary approach that would feel at home in Lima.

Days begin early. Skiffs head into blackwater channels and flooded forests while birdlife stirs. Giant Otters, River Dolphins, caimans, rare frogs, and hundreds of bird species animate the hours. Naturalists on board often hold specialist expertise, which raises the level of conversation beyond standard guiding. In the evenings, guests return to cocktails, spa treatments, and dining that feels almost improbable given the setting.

This gives a new perspective beyond the ordinary. The yacht allows the traveller to move through one of the most biologically complex regions on Earth without severing the sensory connection to it.

### **SALAR DE UYUNI, BOLIVIA**

Salar de Uyuni carries a very different kind of extremity. No violent drama, no obvious threat display, yet the landscape feels almost unreal in its scale and silence. At more than 3,600 metres above sea level, this vast Bolivian salt flat presents altitude, cold nights, fierce sun, and blinding white horizons that can unsettle the senses with quiet force.

Its appeal lies in contrast. One hour may bring stark, mineral emptiness under a hard blue sky. Another may bring shallow rainwater spread across the flats, turning the ground into a perfect mirror. Luxury enters through design instead of conquest. Salt block hotels, heated suites, curated drives across immense open ground, private sundowners, and candlelit dinners under a sky dense with stars give this severe setting an unexpected softness.

The experience is no less considered than any trench descent or summit push. Expert drivers, high altitude pacing, layered comfort, and carefully planned routes shape the journey.

Yet, the mood is entirely different. Salar de Uyuni awes and astounds with its vast, lucid, and quietly disorienting expanse. For the traveller drawn by rarity, scale, and immaculate stillness, it brings a new expression of luxury at the edge of the inhabitable world.

In the end, these adventures make the same argument in different languages. Luxury offers more than just insulation from the world. Sometimes it is about entering the world's harshest places with enough intelligence, design, and care that they become briefly, astonishingly accessible.

What remains afterwards is not merely the memory of comfort, but the thrill of having stood in landscapes that test the limits of human presence and still found beauty, order, and calm within them.



*Amazon Rain Forest. Image Courtesy: VANNGO Ng, Pexels*

# LUXURY JOURNEYS LIT BY ANCESTRAL FIRE



*Anangu Tribesman in Front of Uluru, Australia*

Elders, landscapes, and living traditions are shaping a richer, more thoughtful language of luxury travel

## TT BUREAU

Luxury has long sold distance. Distance away, outside routine, above noise, beyond the ordinary. Yet a new kind of high-end journey is changing that old fantasy. Across deserts, rainforests, mountain plateaus, and island worlds, the most compelling experiences now draw guests closer, closer into memory, culture, land, and the people who have guarded all three across centuries.

This is where contemporary luxury feels most alive. Indigenous culture-led journeys are reshaping the meaning of indulgence. Beauty still matters. Comfort still matters. Though now the true allure lies in depth, dignity, and connection, in travel that honours living heritage and giving something meaningful back at the same time. That is where luxury feels like privilege in its finest sense.

Luxury travellers increasingly seek immersion with emotional resonance and ethical clarity. Indigenous culture-led experiences answer that desire with unusual grace. Culture appears here as something alive, adaptive, and sovereign, carefully shared on community terms, with revenue often feeding guiding academies, conservation work, artisan collectives, and future-facing education. Travel, in this form, becomes a relationship.

We take a look at some of the most fascinating indigenous culture-led luxury travel experiences around the world.

### AUSTRALIA

Australia gives this movement one of its most stirring expressions. Under the immense desert sky, the Uluru rock in Northern Australia alters the emotional scale of the journey itself. Anangu (Aboriginal people of the Western Desert region in Australia) voices bring texture and intimacy that no design-led lodge, however refined, could ever replicate on its own. Bush Yarns sessions, songline walks, and desert storytelling experiences reveal a world in which Country carries law, ancestry, nourishment, humour, and instruction all at once.

Guests learn the uses of spinifex resin, hear of rock holes that sustained life across harsh terrain, and taste bush ingredients whose sharpness and fragrance carry the land in every bite. These flavours restore a food memory long pushed aside by colonial habits.

The finest Australian stays understand this balance. Luxury is present in dune side pavilions, polished timber, deep baths,

stellar wine, and generous service. Yet the emotional centre sits outside the suite. It sits around a fire, on a trail, or inside a conversation where landscape and culture cannot be split apart.

In the Kimberley region of Western Australia, that feeling deepens. Land return and Indigenous stewardship have reshaped the meaning of a high-end wilderness escape. A gorge cruise at dusk or a guided walk through ancestral terrain now carries a larger truth. Beauty here is inseparable, bound up with rights, care, and long memory.

## INDIA

India enters this conversation through Ladakh with a particularly haunting beauty. At high altitude, luxury strips away excess almost by force, leaving texture, silence, and human endurance against a severe and luminous landscape.

In the Aryan Valley, Brokpa communities bring ceremony, dress, and agricultural life into view with rare immediacy. Festivals pulse with mulberry wine, dance, grain, and ornament. Nearby, carefully curated camps and lodges soften the rough edges with solar-heated comforts, woven textiles, orchard meals, and superb mountain framing.

Still, the spell comes through people. Among Changpa pastoralists near Tso Moriri, another register appears. Dawn milking, pashmina herds, butter tea, sacred wetlands, and monasteries perched against stark ridgelines build a narrative of adaptation.

Travel here can support schools, women's cooperatives, and practical climate responses for fragile pastoral lives already under pressure. Few settings make the moral dimension of luxury feel so clear. A guest may arrive seeking remoteness and visual drama, then leave carrying harder questions about glaciers, craft, and survival on a changing plateau.



*Ori Tahiti Dance, Heiva i Tahiti Festival. Image Courtesy: e-TAHITI travel*

## COSTA RICA

Costa Rica offers another mood altogether, softer in light, richer in humidity, and steeped in rainforest knowledge. In the Talamanca region, Bribri traditions reveal a sensual world built around plants, ritual, and female spiritual authority. Canoes slip across mist-veiled rivers. Cacao ceremonies unfold with smoke, chant, and the deep bitter perfume of beans roasted over wood fire. Healers speak of herbs as living medicine embedded in oral lineage.

Sweat lodges scented with ginger, rue, and lemon grass draw body and mind inward. Rainforest lodges nearby may frame the canopy through glass and offer plunge pools suspended above green abundance, yet the real enchantment comes through local hands and inherited understanding.

Such journeys linger because they ask for attentiveness. A woven hat, a bowl of palmito soup, a lesson in cacao agroforestry, a dawn chorus rolling across wet leaves, each detail carries quiet authority. The rainforest, in its vastness and sheer beauty, no longer seems decorative. It becomes pharmacy, pantry, archive, and sacred geography in one seamless whole.



*Gene Tagaban, with his Raven Spirit costume, Anchorage, Alaska. Image Courtesy: Great West Tours*

## NORTH AMERICA

Across North America, Native owned and Native guided travel has taken on a revivalist energy that feels at once intimate and politically resonant. In Wyoming's Bighorn Basin, Shoshone country frames glamping camps near sacred landscapes, while Blackfeet country near Glacier and Diné and Hopi lands in Arizona, alongside Lakota, Tipi, Pueblo, and Cherokee homelands elsewhere, bring petroglyph walks, medicine wheel knowledge, weaving demonstrations, and nights under an almost unnerving spread of stars.

The aesthetic can be sumptuous, though the deeper pull lies in continuity. A meal of bison with juniper, cedar smoked salmon, or chokecherry-rich provisions echoes land use, survival, ceremony, and regional identity.

Even more moving is the way tourism revenue can feed a revival. Youth guide training, language work, cultural camps, and wildlife restoration all emerge as part of the same ecosystem. Bison returns under tribal management are emblems of sovereignty made visible on the land.

Visitors leave with a sharpened sense of history, resilience, and the legal as well as emotional stakes of Indigenous stewardship.

## THE PACIFIC

The Pacific adds yet another cadence. In New Zealand, Maori-inspired retreats shape wellness around release, balance,

and ecological belonging. Timber villas, river-fed pools, native botanicals, and beautifully restrained cuisine create an atmosphere of deep ease.

Hawaii, by contrast, moves with salt, chant, and navigation. Voyages on traditional canoes fold story, reef knowledge, music, and ceremony into the rhythm of sea and sunset.

These experiences are graceful, even seductive, though they never feel hollow when community benefit remains central. Language revival, marine care, and cultural continuity sit within the frame of pleasure rather than outside it.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF RICHNESS

What makes Indigenous luxury distinct is neither hardship dressed up as virtue, nor comfort sprinkled with token meaning. Its power lies in coherence. Food belongs with the landscape. The story belongs with the route. Design belongs with memory. Hospitality belongs with guardianship.

In an era exhausted by glossy sameness, that coherence feels rare. Souvenirs matter less than altered perception. One comes back with a finer ear for place and perhaps a little less appetite for anonymous opulence.

The finest journeys have always changed the traveller. These do something harder and more lasting. They ask for reverence, then reward it with intimacy, beauty, and a richer idea of what luxury can be.



Maori Rock Carvings, Lake Taupō, New Zealand. Image courtesy: Gaurav Kumar, Pexels



**BIANCHET ULTRAFINO MASERATI**

# THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY DRIVES ON EARTH

Some drives entertain. Some reshape the mood, and meaning of the journey.

TT BUREAU



A few road journeys still carry the force of expedition. They ask for stamina, planning, nerve, and patience. Each day can shift the traveller across climates, cultures, road surfaces, and altitudes, with the landscape changing mood at a pace no aircraft cabin can match.

For an avid and determined traveller, that difficulty is part of the seduction. Comfort here means a serious vehicle, a gifted driver, a lodge in the right wilderness, and long hours on a road that never feels ordinary. These roads still feel earned, and that alone makes them rare today. They ask for time, attention, and a willingness to let the route lead the experience.

These are not pretty drives, nor are they meant to be. They are routes built through mountain walls, along fjords, across tundra, beside glaciers, and over high passes that test the body as much as the machine. Some began as military projects. Others revived old trade corridors. All carry a story as well as a spectacle. The road itself becomes the destination, while every halt gains weight because arrival has been earned.

### **PATAGONIA IN MOTION**

Chile's Carretera Austral runs for roughly 1,240 km through Patagonia's Aysén region, linking fjords, temperate rainforest, hanging glaciers, ice-fed rivers, ferry crossings, and small settlements. Parts of the road remain gravel, which slows the journey and adds a sense of distance, especially in poor weather.

The region averages fewer than one person per square kilometre, so remoteness is not a mood here but a measurable reality. A night near Cerro Castillo, a private forest stay beside Río Baker, or a stop near Parque Patagonia can break the long stages without weakening the sense of wilderness. This marriage of rugged road and carefully placed comfort is the whole point.

### **THE HIGH ROADS OF ASIA**

The Pamir Highway is one of the most demanding routes in this group. It runs for well over 1,200 km, much of it above 3,000 metres, with passes above 4,000 metres. The allure is altitude, exposure, and the fact that it still functions as a serious overland route through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Fuel, repairs, and weather are part of the journey in a very real way, and so is the effect of elevation. Its Silk Road associations and Soviet era legacy add depth, but the lasting impression comes through the scale of the plateau and the stripped-back beauty of the terrain. It is a road that feels remote in every practical sense.

The Karakoram Highway has a different presence. It is paved, international, and still dramatic enough to feel improbable, climbing to 4,714 metres at Khunjerab Pass. Running between Pakistan and China, it crosses the mountain country of unusual scale, with some of its most striking stretches around Hunza Valley, where the road passes beneath glaciers and sheer rock faces beside the Hunza River. Hunza's restored forts and well-placed guesthouses bring a gauged comfort without weakening

the road's grandeur. This is the definition of a route that feels both monumental and unusually inhabitable for modern travellers.

### **THE ARCTIC PULL**

The Dalton Highway in Alaska spans over 414 miles, or about 666 km, and roughly three-quarters of it is still gravel. Built as a haul road for the Trans Alaska Pipeline, it crosses the Boreal forest, the Yukon River, the Arctic Circle region, and the tundra of the North Slope before reaching Deadhorse near the Arctic Ocean.

Independent driving can be demanding because of trucks, limited services, loose surfaces, and quickly changing conditions. Travelling here requires strong planning, capable support, and the privilege of entering such a spare landscape in relative comfort. Its appeal lies in scale, weather, and the sheer rarity of the route. Few drives in North America feel so stripped back and so final.

### **FIRE, ICE, AND A SOFTER EDGE**

Iceland's Ring Road is the most accessible route here in practical terms, yet it still earns its place on scale and elemental drama alone. The full circuit covers about 1,332 km, and around 98% is paved. Even then, storms, ice, single-lane bridges, and sudden weather changes ensure the drive never feels entirely effortless.

It also has the strongest tourism infrastructure in this set. Glacial lagoons, black sand beaches, lava fields, waterfalls, geothermal experiences, and design-led stays make it the most polished route on this list. It is easier than the others, certainly,



*Kocaeli, Türkiye. Image courtesy: Selenay Yıldırım, Pexels*



Leh, India. Image Courtesy: Julia Vols, Pexels

though never bland. The infrastructure may be strong, but the landscape still keeps the journey honest.

### VIETNAM'S CLIFFSIDE DRAMA

The Ha Giang Loop, especially the Ma Pi Leng Pass section, stands apart for the concentration of drama over a shorter stretch. The pass itself runs for around 20 km along a cliffside route nearly 2,000 metres above the Nho Que River. It feels narrower, more immediate, and more connected to village life than the larger highways in this feature.

Forming part of the Happiness Road, it was carved through difficult terrain by more than 1,300 young volunteers across 16

ethnic groups. That history gives the route a quiet gravity and makes it more than simply a scenic mountain drive. It also brings a human scale that some of the longer highways do not have.

### INDIA AT ALTITUDE

The Manali Leh highway, together with the newer roads extending across Ladakh and Zaskar, offers one of the clearest examples of a high Himalayan road journey. The main highway runs roughly 428 km, though some counts place it closer to 474 km, and it crosses a chain of major passes, including Tanglang La at more than 5,300 metres. It is open only during the warmer months and remains closely shaped by weather and road conditions.

What makes it so compelling is the speed of transition across greener valleys, high passes, cold desert stretches, and more isolated terrain farther into Ladakh and Zaskar. Few roads change character so quickly over a single journey.

### BEYOND SCENERY, BEYOND SPEED

What unites these routes is not danger alone. Plenty of roads are dangerous and remain forgettable. The finest among them carry atmosphere, layered history, and a sense of passage that deepens each arrival. They reward travellers who value the journey as a narrative instead of being just a transfer.

A lodge matters more after eight difficult hours. Dinner tastes better after a hard mountain crossing. Even the quiet at day's end feels more substantial after a road that has demanded something in return.

For travellers who love driving, that is the real promise of the last great road journey. It offers rare scenery, certainly, though scenery is only one part of the spell. What stays with the traveller is the changing road under the wheels, the awareness of distance, and the feeling of moving through landscapes that still resist ease. In an era of frictionless travel, that resistance can feel unexpectedly precious.



Manali Leh Highway. Image courtesy: Curlytales

# WHERE HISTORY MEETS ADVENTURE

India's heritage landscapes come alive through climbing, trekking and movement across stone, memory and terrain

TT BUREAU

History also sleeps in the landscape, in the rocks cut, moulded and stacked. Reaching some of them requires you to climb, trek, and scramble into the sites of history. We often box down places and destinations into a type, rarely exploring what lies beyond the obvious market pulls of a destination. This is a problem of imagination, and by not knowing what lies beyond, we remain far away from what all these places have to offer. People looking for adventure might dismiss places known for their historical significance, not knowing what the destination actually has to offer.

## HAMPI: BOULDERS, EMPIRE AND MEMORY

Hampi, the last capital of the Vijayanagar empire, is spread across hill ranges and open plains with over 1600 surviving remains, including forts, temples, gateways, mandapas, water structures, and pillared halls. Hampi is not a neat little heritage compound bound within walls; it is the past overflowing into the present through the many ruins spread across the granite hills.

It is this very terrain that gives Hampi its second identity, the granite hills and boulders spread across the geography of this ancient capital are very appealing to those drawn to movement, adventure and adrenaline. Hill climbs such as Matanga Hill deepen that feeling. The ascent is not especially technical, but it

returns the body to the landscape and reveals Hampi as it was always meant to be understood: not as a set of disconnected monuments, but as a broad sacred and imperial terrain.

Climbers document a huge spread of bouldering opportunities across the wider Hampi area with significant variety: slabs, faces, overhangs and technical movement, often in zones such as Virupapur Gaddi and Anegundi.

Hiking and climbing in Hampi makes you feel that this is how the city is meant to be understood, experienced like this, the temples, ruins, river, pavilions and boulder fields begin to read as one continuous world. It creates room for climbers, photographers, architecture lovers and slower cultural travellers alike, proving that heritage can be experienced not only through looking, but through movement.

## BADAMI: WHERE THE MOUNTAIN IS THE MONUMENT

Badami was a major Chalukya centre that rose to prominence between the 6th and 8th centuries. Badami's four cave temples, cut into the cliffs above Agastya Lake, are among the most important expressions of early Deccan rock-cut art. These caves are alive with sculpted façades, pillared halls and interiors that seem to emerge naturally from the rock itself. The lake, the cliffs, the temple fronts and the surrounding ridges belong to one visual idea, which is why the town reads so powerfully



Temples & Boulders of Hampi. Image Courtesy: Kirk Kittell, Flickr



*Badami Caves. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

even at first glance. Badami also belongs to the wider Aihole–Pattadakal–Badami architectural corridor, which makes it more than an isolated site.

The landscape of Badami is an invitation to explore the rocks, both sacred and mundane, whether it be through climbing the rocks or walking the caves. For most travellers, the adventure of Badami lies in the ascent itself: climbing to the caves, moving along the cliff edge, and looking back over the lake and temple landscape from above. Recent conversations on rock climbing see Badami developing a second identity in climbing circles, with its red sandstone walls now regarded as one of India's notable sport-climbing destinations. This dual identity is immediately identifiable, unlike Hampi Badami's attractions, which congregate in one area.

### **RAJMACHI: THE FORT YOU MUST EARN**

Rajmachi stands apart among the rest of the entries in the list as the one most clearly shaped by trekking, showing how the route to a place can be as much a part of the history as its adventure. Even though it is one of the more popular treks in the Sahyadris, its appeal goes well beyond the satisfaction of a scenic climb. Rajmachi is tied to the old Bor Ghat corridor, which once made this landscape strategically important. The twin forts of Shrivardhan and Manaranjan stand at the end of the trail, rising out of the terrain, reinforcing the strategic importance of the place. The trek is not an added activity around the fort. It is the way into understanding the fort itself, its placement, its atmosphere and the larger landscape that shaped its history.

Beyond the obvious fortifications, namely the twin forts of Shrivardhan and Manaranjan, that tower over the landscape, which are the major attractions of the trek, the region also boasts a wider cultural inheritance of Kondana caves, Buddhist rock cut heritage, and the beautiful greenery. Especially during the monsoon, when mist, waterfalls and saturated greens take over the Sahyadris, Rajmachi becomes almost cinematic.

While the trek is often described as being simple, since the fort trek is not a technical climb, this is not a trivial endeavour; weather, stamina and the route choice can greatly affect your



*Bouldering in Hampi. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

experience in climbing to this fort. In the monsoon, the trek is all mist, waterfalls, wet rock and saturated green slopes, giving the fort a cinematic, half-veiled presence. In the drier months, the route feels clearer and more open, and the plateau, ridgelines and fort walls begin to read with greater precision. Rajmachi is as adventurous as it is scenic and approachable, giving its visitors a comprehensive trekking and heritage experience.



*Kangra Fort. Image Courtesy: Incredible India*

### **KANGRA: THE FORT IN THE VALLEY OF TRAILS**

Kangra is one of the oldest and largest forts in the Himalayas, proving that history and adventure travel need not always arrive with steep stairways or exposed rock faces. Here, the appeal is quieter, broader and more atmospheric. Kangra Fort, built by the Katoch rulers and spread across rugged ground above the Banganga and Majhi rivers, is described as the largest fort in the Himalayas. Its bastions, gates, temples and defensive placement make clear that this was a stronghold shaped as much by topography as by masonry.

The approach to the fort is active without being severe, with a moderate-grade route of roughly 2.5 kilometres through bushes, boulders and narrow passages, which gives the visit a physical dimension without turning it into a punishing trek. You do not simply arrive here; you move toward it, and the valley slowly opens around you.

The wider district strengthens its position as a place for historical and adventure tourism. Kangra lies within an active mountain region of trekking routes, alpine meadows and high-altitude viewpoints, while Bir-Billing adds one of the world's best-known paragliding sites to the same district.

### **ADVENTURE-HISTORY TRAVEL IN INDIA**

The conception of adventure tourism in India is unique; the national strategy recognises physical activity, nature and cultural immersion as integral aspects of adventure tourism. The best history and adventure-led tourism understands this and reveals how and why these places exist as they do and how history and geography are inseparably connected to each other. The rock, stone, hills and rivers are not mere accessories to history but part of it. These destinations suggest a richer mode of travel, one where we experience the geography through which the history came to be.



*Lakshminarayan Temple Inside Kangra Fort. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

# THROUGH THE WILD HEART OF THE WESTERN GHATS

Trek and explore the Western Ghats, where rain, shola forests and biodiversity shape India's dramatic mountain wilderness

**M GOUTHAM**

**T**he Western Ghats, older than the Himalayas and among India's richest ecological regions, are alive with streams, butterflies, and unseen wildlife. Even in all its similarities, each trek in the Western Ghats is a world of its own, from rolling hills and misty grasslands to dense dark forests.

Exploring these layered natural worlds pulls you into a beauty defined by roaring waterfalls, mist and birdsong, revealing an entirely different world to what can be found in other regions in India, especially the Himalayas, which takes up a lot of our cultural imagination of what trekking is.

## CHEMBRA PEAK

Rising up to 2,100 metres, Chembra is one of the best-known trekking routes in Wayanad. With a trail of 3.5 kilometres, this is one of the more approachable treks in the mountain range, perhaps best known for the small heart-shaped lake, Hridaya Saras, at the end of the trek. Trekking beyond the lake is restricted due to wildlife activity. The Chembra trek works best as a moderate scenic mountain walk, steep enough in sections to raise the pulse, but much more approachable than the longer, more punishing treks elsewhere in this list.



*Brahmagiri Trek. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

Trekkers often drive up to the watchtower point from where the trek begins near the tea estates. The tea-laden slopes give way to open grass and ridges leading their way up to the Hridaya Saras Lake. On a clear day, the trek treats you to a generous view of Wayanad; even when the mists descend, the landscape feels dramatic to the end. The trail is generally open for trekkers from 7 AM to 5 PM.

While sightings are not guaranteed, this area is home to the Malabar whistling thrush, Malabar trogon, Malabar grey hornbill, paradise flycatcher, and other forest-edge birds. The present restriction beyond the lake is itself a reminder that this is not a domesticated hill but a wildlife-sensitive mountain zone. Chembra may be one of the more accessible treks here, but the wild is ever-close.

### **BRAHMAGIRI**

Rising to around 1608 metres, within the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, the Brahmagiri trek is through the evergreen forests and mist-heavy Valleys. Depending on your experience level, this trek could fall anywhere between a moderately long day and a more serious outing. The trek has a 10 km trail approach to the base of the peak before the final steep push. The trail, while associated with the is at Iruppu Falls, is not known for being photogenic, but for the immersive nature of the experience.

This trek follows Laxman Theertha River to its source and boasts an immersive trail with dense canopy that gradually opens into meadows and Shola Patches as the travellers move into the latter parts of the trek. The Sanctuary is home to elephants, tigers, leopards and wild boars and bird species like Malabar trogon, black bulbul, various types of hornbills, flycatchers, and thrushes.

### **KUDREMUKH**

Kudremukh is one of Karnataka's signature trekking landscapes and captures the romance of the Karnataka Ghats beautifully. With an average altitude of 1,893 metres and being associated with a National Park, Kudremukh is perfect for a proper mountain day of trekking and birdwatching. Trek is about 18-20 km round trip, usually starting near Mullodi and unfolding in stages of forests, steep middle sections, airy ridges and grasslands. This is a non-technical moderate to challenging trek by virtue of its length. You need stamina more than nerve. The climbs accumulate, the weather can turn, and even the easier stretches ask you to keep going.

Access to the trek is restricted for conservation purposes and requires advance bookings to undertake it, reflecting the fact that Kudremukh is first and foremost, a National Park. Kudremukh National Park hosts over 200 bird species, including the Malabar whistling thrush and great pied hornbill, and mammals such as leopard, gaur, sambar, wild dog, sloth bear and Malabar giant squirrel in the wider park landscape. While few trekkers will see many of these animals on a busy day route, the knowledge matters as it changes how the forest is experienced.



*Nilgiri Thar Lambs. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism*

### **MEESAPULIMALA**

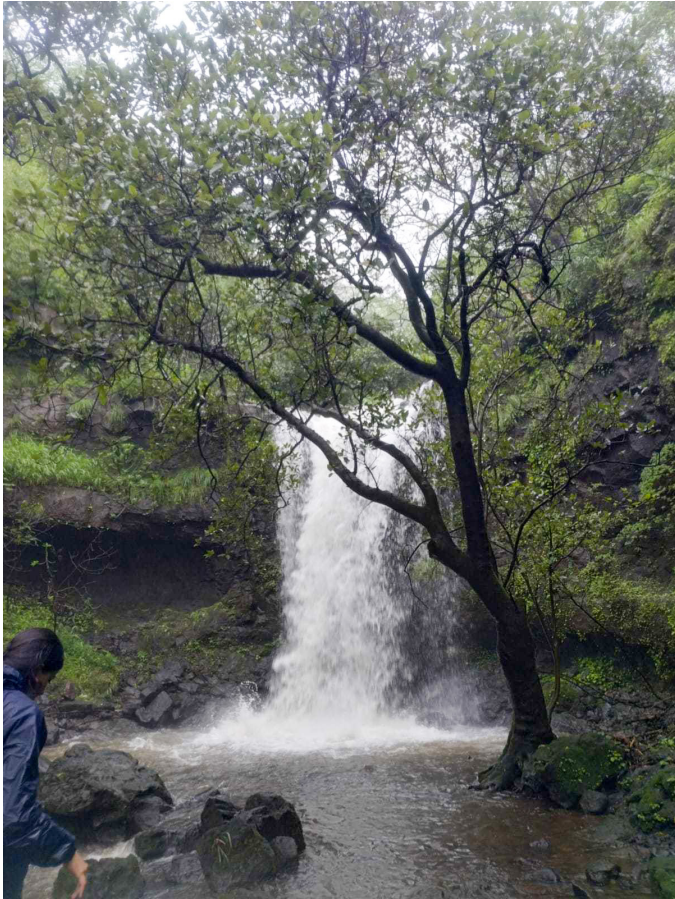
Meesapulimala belongs to the southern high ranges near Munnar and is one of the most evocative mountain walks in the Western Ghats. The trek to the second-highest peak in the Western Ghats is one filled with open grasslands, shola pockets, long skyline movements and cool air. A moderate trek of 15kms, Meesapulimala is also tied to the ecotourism spots near the area, with overnight options in the Rhodo Valley and other KFDC stays.

Meesapulimala is much less physically punishing than its reputation might suggest, even though the trail rolls up and down and repeats itself over many humps on the way to the summit. The trek, while still demanding fitness, is more beautiful than it is brutal. The trek summit rewards you with a view of a whole procession of hills and maybe even the clouds rolling under you for your efforts.

Its wildlife richness lies in the wider Munnar–Eravikulam high-range ecosystem. Eravikulam National Park holds the largest surviving population and highest density of the



*Kudremukh Trek. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*



*Waterfall in Andharban Jungle. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

Nilgiri tahr, and its avian pages list species such as the Nilgiri pipit, Nilgiri wood pigeon, Kerala laughingthrush, Nilgiri flycatcher, and black-and-orange flycatcher. Not all of these are guaranteed on the trek itself, but Meesapulimala passes through the same high-altitude ecological world. That gives the mountain a biological gravity that goes far beyond pretty views.



*Views From Kudremukh Trek. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

## **ANDHARBAN**

Andharban is very unique among treks; this trek through the 'Dark Forest' is the Descending Sahyadri trek, pushing through the dense overgrowth with views of waterfalls and valleys breaking through in intervals.

The trek is roughly 13 km long and usually takes about 4 to 5 hours, though that can vary depending on weather and trail conditions. In summer, it makes for a beautiful forest traverse, quieter and easier underfoot. In the monsoon, however, Andharban changes character completely. The trail becomes slick with mud and wet rock, streams swell, and every step demands greater care, turning the walk into a more challenging but deeply atmospheric experience.

The wider Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary landscape supports around 150 bird species and 72 butterfly species, filling the trek with possible sightings of butterflies, wet-forest birds, frogs, insect life and the sheer density of monsoon habitat. That is plenty. Andharban is a reminder that some of the best wildlife experiences in the Ghats are made of attentiveness rather than spectacle.

## **FOR THE TREKKERS**

For most trekkers, the most reliable season across this set remains post-monsoon into winter, when the hills stay green, but the trails are less treacherous. Monsoon, especially in places like Andharban, is visually magnificent but materially harder: slippery, leech-prone, and more sensitive to closures or access changes. That final point may be the most important of all. The Western Ghats are living mountains, not static products. Trail rules change, wildlife moves, weather interrupts, and forest departments adjust access for good reason. The best way to walk these hills is with respect for that fact and slowing down, paying attention, and letting the forest reveal itself on its own terms.



वन की बात

**KASEZ**



सत्यमेव जयते



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRIES

# KANDLA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE

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

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

## BENEFITS AVAILABLE/SALIENT FEATURES:

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

## COMPLETE EXEMPTION FROM :-

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

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

## CONTACT DETAILS

**DINESH SINGH, IOFS**

Add: Zonal Development Commissioner, Kandla Special Economic Zones, Gandhidham, Kutch, Gujarat, India. Pin -370230

Email: dc.kasez-gj@gov.in

Website: www.kasez.gov.in

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

# LUXURY SERVED - THALI STYLE

From royal kitchens to temple traditions, India's vegetarian thalis serve luxury with culture, colour and soul.

TT BUREAU



8kgs of Food, Bahubali Thali. Image Courtesy: rDamnthatsinteresting, Reddit

A vegetarian thali is more than just a meal; it is India served on a plate. Radiant with colours, aromas, and textures, this grand vegetarian spread marries abundance with artistry.

Each element, from golden dal to crisp papad, tangy pickles, and fragrant rice, is arranged with care to create a harmonious balance of nutrition and flavour.

Across India, the thali reflects not only what people eat but how they express hospitality and devotion. In its circular form

lies completeness, a symbol of generosity and celebration.

Served with both ritual and warmth, the thali transforms everyday dining into a feast of culture, where culinary tradition, regional diversity, and heartfelt service come together in one magnificent experience.

## THE PALACE HOTEL REVIVAL OF THE THALI

India's palace hotels have masterfully elevated the vegetarian thali from family staple to fine-dining spectacle.

At icons Palace hotels and luxe resorts across India, silver service unfolds with precision: attendants in traditional attire present platters on heirloom trays, surrounded by marble courtyards and flickering diyas.

Heirloom recipes from royal khans, such as saffron-infused dal baati churma or Gujarati valour muthiya, shine alongside ornate brass kansa ware and jewel-toned accompaniments.

These properties blend Mughal-era zardozi artistry in table linens with modern touches like sommelier-paired lassis. The result? A regal ritual that immerses guests in opulent nostalgia, where every bite whispers tales of maharajas.

### THE CEREMONY OF SERVING

The thali's serving ceremony captivates as living theatre, where attendants in crisp livery present silver salvers and hammered brass kumdis with balletic grace.

Katoris of silken dal, spiced kadhi, and jewel-hued sabzis encircle steaming rice or millet, arriving in choreographed waves; papads crackle into place, chutneys shimmer like temple lamps. In heritage settings, banana leaves unfurl as verdant platters, their faint perfume rising amid candlelit courtyards.

This sequential ritual heightens the occasion's grandeur: rosewater hand rinses precede the first bite, a conch's low hum or soft mantra signals commencement.

Shared refills and knowing glances weave communal magic, transforming the meal into an opulent affirmation of India's lavish hospitality, where every gesture whispers abundance and timeless ritual.

### BAHUBALI THALI: SPECTACLE ON A PLATE

The Bahubali Thali arrives as a culinary colossus, sprawling across a vast steel platter heaped with 30-54 dishes in explosive colour and scent. Towering katoris brim with velvety dal makhani, charred paneer tikka masala, and golden naan mountains, crowned by coiled jalebis and chaat spires.

From Ahmedabad's vibrant bazaars to Hyderabad's heritage kitchens, this oversized icon scales India's hospitality into legend, feeding four to six amid gasps of delight.

Its roots lie deep in celebratory traditions, where servers unveil the behemoth with theatrical flourish, steam curling like monsoon mist.

Visual drama fuels voracious sharing, every massive portion a nod to opulent feasting rituals. This modern indulgence transforms dining into an epic narrative, blending excess with soulful generosity for unforgettable tableside theatre.

In Delhi, the Baahubali thali feels less like a dish and more like theatre, landing on the table with the confidence of a headline act. It is built for shared laughter, raised phones, generous appetites and that unmistakable North Indian love for a meal that becomes an occasion.

### RAJASTHANI ROYAL THALI: DESERT OPULENCE

The Rajasthani Royal Thali celebrates desert abundance through banquet artistry, its gleaming brass platter centred on dal baati



Navratri Thali. Image Courtesy: The Leela Gandhinagar

churma: ghee-drenched wholewheat baatis, their smoky crust yielding to sweet-savoury churma crumbled like gold dust.

Gatte ki sabzi swirls gram flour dumplings in fiery yoghurt gravy, ker sangri marries wild beans and berries in tangy harmony, and panchmel dal fuses five lentils into spice-laced depth from royal Udaipur khans.

Luxury blooms through masterful craft and timeless history: hand-pounded masalas, slow-simmered gravies, and palace sweets like motichoor laddoo or badam halwa shimmer like Maharaja jewels.

From Jodhpur's fort kitchens to modern heritage hotels, bold flavours and rich traditions create profound indulgence. This thali reveals Rajasthan's vibrant soul, where desert ingenuity crafts opulence as eternal as the Thar itself.

This is the sort of thali that belongs in fort cities and heritage settings, which is why it feels so at home in celebrated dining experiences where the royal thali is served with all the colour and character of the region itself.



Praying Before Meal. Image Courtesy: Yankrukov, Pexels



*Dal-Bati Choorma. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons*

### GUJARATI KATHIAWADI THALI: BOLD AND BOUNTIFUL

The Gujarati Kathiawadi Thali radiates rustic splendour, its polished thali brimming with millet theplas, golden farsan like sev khamani and khandvi, and undhiyu's seasonal vegetables bathed in emerald green masala.

Spice-forward dals such as kokum-tanged toor, creamy Gujarati kadhi, and lilva kachori form the heart, complemented by house-churned chutneys, garlic pickles, and frothy buttermilk that balance each bold note.

Endless refills arrive in rhythmic clockwise turns, weaving textures from crisp jalebi coils to silken basundi. Born in Saurashtra's sun-kissed farmlands, this thali fuses fiery spices, fresh bounty, and warm hospitality into flavour harmony.

Across Gujarat, especially in Dwarka and Ahmedabad, Kathiawadi dining carries a warmth that is earthy, spirited and deeply regional. The flavours arrive bold and generous, turning

the table into a celebration of spice, hospitality and home-style abundance.

### MARWARI THALI: REFINED MERCHANT HERITAGE ON A PLATE

The Marwari Thali captures trading clans' refined legacy, its brass platter aglow with mirchi vada's spiced chilli embrace, ghee-glossed dal baati churma spheres, and ker sangri's tangy desert berry symphony.

Panchkuti sabzi artfully layers five vegetables, while papad kachori and bhujia sev deliver golden crunch, balanced by boondi laddoo's sweet jewels and ghevar's lacy honeycomb glow.

Pure ghee elevates pantry treasures like besan and millet into festive splendour, with inventive masalas weaving deep, comforting harmony. From Shekhawati havelis to Jodhpur's vibrant bazaars, clockwise refills and shared rituals build shared warmth.

This thali transforms vegetarian tradition into lavish storytelling, where merchant heritage crafts profound satisfaction, turning every radiant bite into a celebration of enduring richness and communal joy.

Jodhpur gives the Marwari thali a statelier rhythm. In palace-style hotel restaurants, the meal unfolds with quiet grandeur, where rich gravies, time-honoured recipes and regal settings come together with effortless elegance.

### SATVIK TEMPLE-STYLE THALIS: SACRED SIMPLICITY AS LUXURY

Satvik temple thalis embody spiritual purity as profound luxury, their steel trays graced with rock salt-kissed sabzis of crisp gourds, fragrant fenugreek, and vivid moringa leaves.

Free of onion, garlic, or roots, subtle cumin, coriander, and tulsi perfume millet khichdi, golden moong dal, and steamed rice with luminous clarity. Cooling coconut chutney and raw banana fries lend a delicate contrast.

Ancient Ayurvedic wisdom and temple rituals elevate this simplicity into transcendent indulgence, served in sacred kitchens from Tirupati to Puri with clockwise refills and whispered blessings.

Mindful harmony of seasonal bounty nourishes body and soul, turning each bite into a quiet revelation. These thalis prove restraint crafts deepest luxury: ethereal, restorative, and eternally radiant.

In Tirupati and Puri, sattvik food belongs to faith, ritual and restraint. In Delhi, restaurants such as Sattvik give the same tradition a refined city expression, presenting purity and balance with polish, calm and contemporary grace.



*A Satvik Thali Served on Banana Leaf. Image Courtesy: Saveurs Secretes, Pexels*



MEISSEN COUTURE

JOAILLERIE



*My little*  
**MYSTERY!**



MEISSEN® ITALIA, Via Monte Napoleone 3, Milano · [www.meissen.it](http://www.meissen.it) · Tel: +39 02 89 42 37 25



ATUL  
JEWELLERS

*Exclusive*  
Heritage  
Jewellery

*D9, Defence Colony,  
New Delhi 110024  
Ph. no. 011 - 47095522*