

21

Hidden

GEMS OF INDIA

21 *Hidden* GEMS OF INDIA

WTM Special Edition

— *Published by* —



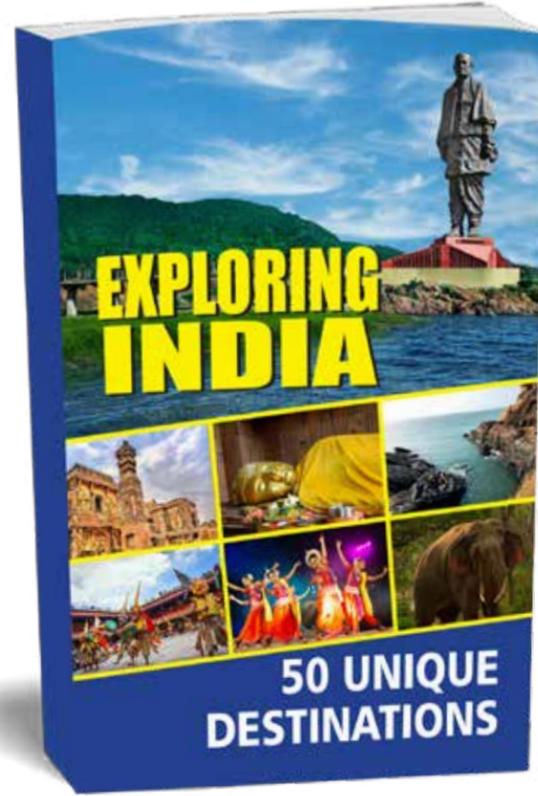
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सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that Ministry of Tourism and Business of Travel Trade (BOTT), in collaboration with Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) are bringing out a special book – “Exploring India through 50 unique destinations” to coincide with the India Tourism Mart (ITM 2019).

India is a nation blessed with picturesque tourist destinations dotted throughout the country. Our tourism sector holds immense potential to boost employment and make a sizeable contribution to the growth of our economy. I renew my appeal to every citizen to make an effort to visit at least 15 destinations within our country by 2022, when we will celebrate 75 years of freedom.

The book will provide an exhaustive list of unique tourist destinations. Visiting various places with children will help them learn from first-hand experience and impart practical lessons in learning about the various states and the diverse cultures of our country.

May the book succeed in inspiring citizens to read it and travel to various destinations. The print and digital versions of the book will make it easier for the people to read the book anywhere and any time.

Best wishes for successful publication of the book.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi

भाद्रपद 28, शक संवत् 1941

19th September, 2019

Shri Rai Umraopati Ray

Publisher, BOTT India

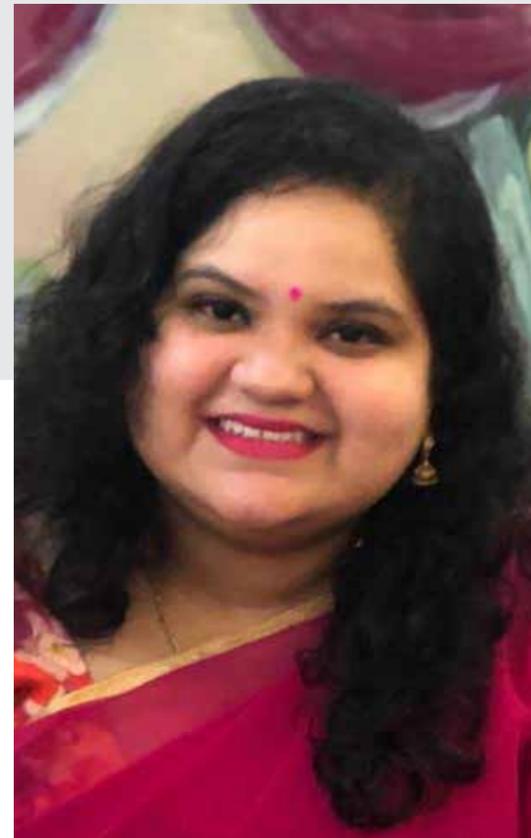
C-16, Lower Ground Floor, LSC

Paschimi Marg, Vasant Vihar

New Delhi-110057



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Priyanka Saxena Ray

Editor's Note

Drawing inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of India's 73rd Independence Day, Business of Travel Trade (BOTT) India took it upon itself to contribute to the task. Taking a step in this direction, we took out our first Book titled "Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations", which was launched at the India Tourism Mart (ITM) in New Delhi. Brought out in partnership with one of the leading travel trade associations of India, the book enjoyed widespread circulation in international as well as Indian circles and was much appreciated by one and all,

After the immense success of our book "Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations", we at BOTT India were delighted to receive a message from the honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, appreciating our efforts of bringing out a publication that talks about the lesser known places in India that have immense tourism potential.

Taking another step in the similar direction, BOTT India has come out with a briefer international version of "Exploring India through 50 Unique Destinations" for WTM 2019 titled "21 Hidden Gems of India", which will be launched at London. With the sole aim of highlighting the relatively lesser explored touristy hubs of India, the book covers a wide expanse of Indian states, bringing out details of not just what is unique in that destination but also nuggets on connectivity and official website of the respective state tourism departments.

We hope you will enjoy reading the book and we look forward to your valuable feedback and inputs on the same.

You can write to us at priyanka@bottindia.com.

PUBLISHER
Rai Umraopati Ray

DESIGNER
Ashok Kumar

PICTURE COURTESY
Shutterstock.com

EDITOR
Priyanka Saxena Ray

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Arushi Bajaj

SUB EDITOR
Meghna Rai

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Akshardham Temple

W

hen one thinks of visiting popular touristy places in Delhi, names of Red Fort, Qutub Minar, India Gate come to fore – for their obvious legacy of culture, history and beauty. However, there is another monument in Delhi NCR, which is most definitely worth a visit – The Akshardham Temple. Visit it not for its religious heritage but for its sheer beauty, magnitude, grandeur and experience.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple, which is the second of its kind in India, after Ahmedabad, witnesses good amount of tourist traffic, yet leaving scope for much more. It comprises 200 sculptured stone figures of India's sages, monks, Acharyas and divine incarnations. It also consists of 234 ornately carved pillars, 9 ornate domes, Gajendra Pith and 20,000 statues of divine figures of India.

A garden in the shape of a Lotus, which is surrounded by stones carrying famous quotes of Shakespeare, Martin Luther, Swami Vivekananda and more, is a breath-taking sight, especially if photographed from the top. With the firm believe that good and positive energy can enter the complex from all or any side, the Akshardham Temple has 10 Gates, which represents the 10 directions according to Vedic literature.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Delhi NCR holds world-records for many of its intriguing facets, such as the 'Yagnapurush Kund', which is the largest yagna kund in the world. It comprises 108 small shrines and 2870 steps leading to the kund. The 'Parikrama' surrounding the temple is spread in the form of a beautiful garland and on a nice breezy day, one would immensely enjoy walking the path.

The Garden of India or Bharat Upavan, which are the green lawns of the temple are decorated with bronze statues of the popular personalities of India and not divine beings. The real life heroes, whom we all can relate to. A musical fountain show depicting the circle of life is an added attraction to the place.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Indira Gandhi International
Airport, Delhi

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: New Delhi
Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family and
friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.delhitourism.gov.in

Andaman Islands

Barren Island

Barren Island, located in the Andaman Sea at a distance of around 135km from Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, is the only active volcano in India. It is one those beautiful and rare spots, which you may not be able to step on, stay or touch, but just watching its splendor from afar will leave you with memories that will last a lifetime. This 354-m-high island is the emergent summit of a volcano that rises from a depth of about 2250 m.

Barren Island, as the name suggests, is a small, uninhabited 3-km wide island, which roughly contains a 2-km wide caldera along with walls as high as 250-350 m. The morphology of a fresh pyroclastic cone that was constructed in the center of the caldera has varied during the course of historical eruptions. Lava flows fill much of the caldera floor and have reached the sea along the western coast during eruptions in the 19th century and more recently in 1991 and 1995. The volcanic eruptions keep taking place at regular intervals.

The black bedrock of the island lends the sand on the beach a deep purple-black hue that contrasts beautifully with the vibrant blue of the ocean and underwater vibrant marine life, giving an instant appeal to the picture it puts up. While the existence of this volcano is not a hidden fact and is infact common knowledge since centuries before, because of limited research and other restrictions, the island continues to remain an unexplored mystery.

For those who wish to see it, there are a number of ferries and boats that can take you around to visit the island. However, due to the unpredictability of the volcanic eruptions, visitors are not permitted to land on the shores and have to sustain with a view from the sea, which is equally memorable and breathtaking.

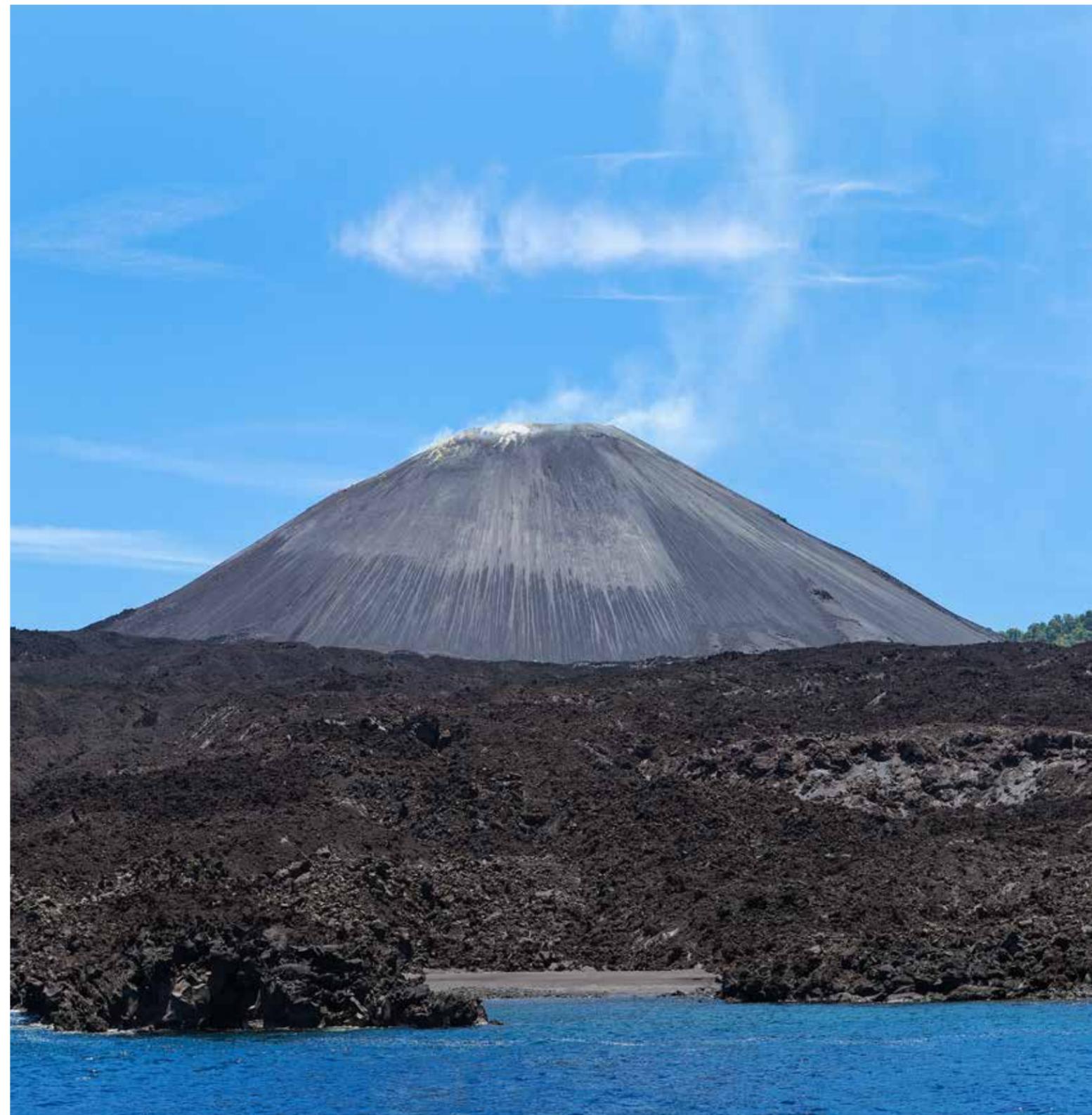
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Port Blair Veer Savarkar
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: None

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
November-February

IDEAL FOR:
Nature and adventure
lovers, family vacation

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.andamantourism.gov.in





Chitrakote Falls

F

only called as the Niagara Falls of India, the Chitrakote Falls is a gift from nature and a spectacular sight to one's eyes. Waterfalls are anyway a delight to watch and as one gazes at them in awe, you realise the power and glory of nature, which can be witnessed through these gushing streams of water in high speed and momentum from a great height. One of the widest waterfalls in India, it is located 38 km from Jagdalpur and is accessible only by road.

Flowing from 95ft above with intense force, the falls are a treat for eyes and senses. Located in Jagdalpur of Bastar district on Indravati River, Chitrakoot Falls attracts thousands of tourists throughout the year. With wild swirling eddies and a roar that can be heard for miles, these falls have an untamed character that evokes equal amounts of fear and awe. The large amount of silt in the Indravati River during the monsoon makes the water quite muddy and swimming is out of the question. The Falls are surrounded by a surfeit of resorts, camping sites, picnic spots, yoga and meditation centres.

Not only waterfall, Chitrakote is also popular due to the Hindu legendary Lord Ram. There are many Hindu spiritual temples and pilgrimage places. And also various Hindu festivals like, Makar Sankranti, Ramnaamvi and Somvati Amavasya are celebrated here with a complete spiritual system.

The state of Chhattisgarh is blessed with some amazing eco-tourism destinations and the Chitrakote Falls is one of them. It is an ideal place for picnics, getaway and stunning panoramic views, which offers plenty of opportunity to click good pictures. One can spend some time in isolation away from the commotion of the cities for detoxification amidst nature.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Raipur Airport or
Visakhapatnam Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jagdalpur
Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family,
Couples, Adventure
Enthusiasts

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.tourism.cg.gov.in

Rajasthan

Dausa

D

ausa district, situated on NH 11 enroute from Jaipur to Agra, is spread over an area of 3400 sq km and lies at 333m above the Sea Level. Dausa is primarily known for its fertile soil that allows almost any type of crop to grow in it. The region, surrounded by Alwar, Karauli, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Bharatpur and Jaipur with the Northern Aravali ranges safeguarding the climate from the Thar Desert, was the first-ever headquarter of the former Kachhawaha Dynasty.

With much historical and archaeological significance attached to it, Dausa offers the ideal rural experience for a tourist who wishes to get a taste of authentic village experience in Rajasthan. The Sawa and Ban Ganga are the two rivers that run through the district and there are around 36 Dams that have been built around these rivers to store the river water. The region also has many micro servicing units related to agricultural equipment and submersible pump.

The people of Dausa are a culturally enriched lot who love to celebrate numerous festivals throughout the year with much vigour and enthusiasm. There are many places to visit in the Dausa district, such as Kalakho, Bhangarh, Bhandarej, Harshata Mata Temple, Chand Baoli and Fort Madhogarh. Each monument or place of tourist interest has a story to narrate and is visually extremely appealing to the travellers visiting the region.

Though Dausa has a long way to go in terms of beefing up its infrastructure, especially in areas of health and education, the region, with its easy going set of people, is ideal for a day visit for tourists who wish to see the rural life of Rajasthan and get a taste of culture tourism. Meeting and chatting with the local people and visiting the touristy attractions of the place will give you an insight into how every little town of Rajasthan is bubbling with a historical legacy, which deserves a mention.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Sanganer Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Dausa Railway
Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in





Dholavira



India is a land that houses some of the oldest civilisations of the world, thus to witness some of those is an extremely fascinating experience. Dholavira, some 250 km from Bhuj in Gujarat is home to the remarkable excavations of the Indus Valley Civilisation. This historical site will enthral you as any other scenic destination would, especially if you happen to have a love for history.

The excavations, which happened some 4500 years ago, even today hold the charm to invite numerous tourists who swarm the place to take a trip down history and witness evidence of what they have only read in the books. Locally called Kotada timba, the site is the second largest Harappan site in India and fifth largest in Indian sub-continent. Amongst the Harappan sites discovered so far, Dholavira is the only place that marks the presence of Harappan culture from 2900 BC to 1500 BC.

One of unique features of Dholavira is that unlike other Harappan cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, the city is built almost exclusively of stones instead of bricks. Another striking feature of the ancient city was its sustainable use of water resources. The wisely planned and constructed network of reservoirs and water channels allowing the successful harvest of rainwater and diversion of rivulets, exemplifies the ingenuity of the Harappan people inhabiting the city.

For the locals, Dholavira is an ideal weekend destination, which is not too far from the Rann of Kutch and the government too is now developing the site into a major tourist destination. For those looking for an additional attraction other than history, there is also the option of visiting the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary while in the rustic land of Dholavira.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhuj Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Dholavira
Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.gujarattourism.com

Karnataka

Gokarna

G

f a peaceful beach holiday is what you are looking for, away from the bustling crowds and cacophony of city populous, Gokarna – the ancient temple town located in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka is the ideal destination for you. Often rated as the favourite beach destination by many enthused travellers, the peaceful town of Gokarna, which means 'Cow's Ear in Sanskrit, is a perfect hideaway, nestled at a safe distance from the maddening city.

The town of Gokarna lies between the rivers Gangavali and Agnashini and is situated along the Karwar coast by the Arabian Sea. Gokarna also finds mention in the Shrimad Bhagawat Purana. This temple town is also called the Kashi of the South and has been attracting numerous pilgrims for hundreds of years. Gokarna is also an important centre of Sanskrit learning and houses Bhandikeri Math and Toggu Math. Many Hindus perform the last rites of their loved ones here.

Given its pristine beaches and mythological significance, this trend has divided Gokarna into two parts, one that is for the religious devotees who come to seek blessings of Shiva, and the other of the carefree tourist looking for some peace and quiet in nature's lap. Owing to its growing popularity, several hotels and restaurants have come up in Gokarna. Most accommodation is in thatched bamboo huts along the town's several stretches of blissful coast. The temple town is now an emerging beach destination that offers something to different types of tourists with its natural beauty and its history seeped in mythology.

So if a beach holiday has been on your mind for some time but you have been postponing it because of crowded spaces, high-priced resorts and bustling shorelines, visit Gokarna to enjoy an ideal beach vacation. Though it is getting popular among the beach lovers, the town somewhere still falls in the category of lesser known holiday spots in India.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Dabolim Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Ankola Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.karnatakaturism.org





Gopalpur

Securing an important place in the history, the tiny town of Gopalpur with its sea port was the bustling centre of trade and commerce in the Colonial Era. Located in the southern coastline of Odisha just 15 km from the city of Behrampur, Gopalpur is an ideal beach destination for a relaxing holiday and for those looking to spend some quality time with their loved ones.

The sea port today is largely in ruins but the beaches are truly a sight to behold. The beaches of Gopalpur are considered to be one of India's most beautiful beaches largely due to its remoteness, its peace and its offbeat crowd. The beaches are sparkling gold which along with the azure water of the Bay of Bengal provide a perfect place to relax and immerse yourself in nature. Besides the beach, the food is also pretty great in the town with many outlets offering a plethora of options.

Gopalpur was the place where the first ever modern hotel was built in Odisha and probably the first ever beach resort of the country. The Palm Beach Resort was built in 1914 by an Italian gentleman by the name of Signor Maglioni to cater to the merchants and businessmen. The hotel was bought by the Oberoi group of hotels in 1948 in what was the group's first venture into the hospitality business. Currently the hotel is owned by the Mayfair Group of Hotels.

Since the beach here is east-facing, it offers spectacular views of the Sunset and the Sunrise – whatever you prefer. Silver Filigree or Tarakasi as it is locally known in Orissa is one of the finest and most exquisite craft works. While Cuttack is the main centre of Silver Filigree work in Orissa, smaller shops in Gopalpur also sell Silver Filigree souvenirs to carry back home. For the sea food lovers, a walk along the fish market early in the morning will prove to be pure delight.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhubaneswar Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Behrampur
Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and Family

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.odishatourism.gov.in

Manipur

Imphal Valley

Though Imphal, as the capital of Manipur is a bustling town surrounded with beauty, its best kept secret is the serene Imphal Valley, which is a treasure trove of natural bounty. The Imphal Valley is a rejuvenating retreat far away from the mad complexities and deafening cacophony of the urban settlement and is extremely engrossing. Such is its lure that people from far and wide frequent the place in search of solitude, magnificence and peace.

The Imphal Valley is spread across an area of 1843 sq km and accounts to one-tenth of the area of Manipur. The Valley also accounts for 70 per cent of the population in the state. Some of the rivers that flow down to the Valley are Imphal River, Khuga, Iril, Thoubal and Sekmai. There are numerous lakes, swampy areas and marshes in the Valley but the most famous of the lakes in the area is the Loktak Lake, which is also known as the 'Floating Lake'.

The Loktak Lake is known to be the largest freshwater lake in north-east India. It is a major tourist attraction in the region and people from all age groups visit the spot in large numbers only to leave back with lifetime memories. Besides this, one can also indulge in an excursion to the Palace of Kangla. The Kingdom of Manipur in the bygone days had its royal seat in the Palace of Kangla, which even today is a visual delight as it is surrounded by an artificial lake and houses many historical and religious places inside it.

Manipur is one of the most culturally rich regions in the North East, an example of which is the way fairs and festivals are celebrated in the state. A variety of festivals are celebrated amidst the riot of colours in Imphal, such as, the Leela Festival, Lai Haraoba, the Ratha Jathra, Ningol Chakouba Festival and Cheiraoba Festival.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bir Tikendrajit International
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Dimapur Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

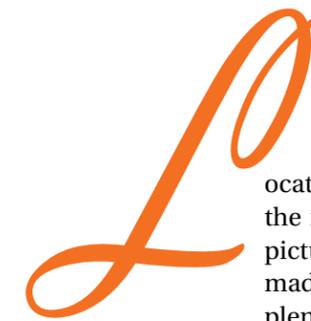
IDEAL FOR:
Family, Couples, Adventure
Enthusiasts

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.manipur-tourism.gov.in





Kanatal



located at a high altitude in the suburban area of Mussoorie on the main Chamba – Mussoorie road, Kanatal is a serene and picturesque hilly town that offers solace and peace from the maddening rush of the city. With picture perfect sceneries and plenty of greens, this quaint town has much to offer in terms of recreation and adventure to the discerning traveller visiting the region.

Popularly served as a weekend getaway for the local populous, Kanatal is a picture perfect hub that boasts of heavenly scenery, luxuriant vegetation, and bountiful adventure activities. If you are looking for a holiday with solemn peace but wouldn't really mind a bit of fun as well, take a trip to Kanatal – away from the urban hassles. Besides stunning natural beauty, there are a number of interesting things to do in Kanatal as well.

The destination also offers plenty of adventure opportunities and is often chosen as a favourite spot for campers. You can take a walk through the Kodia Jungle, which is a dense forest area located at a distance of around one kilometre away from Kanatal. You can spot a few wild animals by taking a ride through the jungle in a jeep, and you can also see Tehri Dam and many natural springs that are quite prevalent in the region.

Not just summers, Kanatal is also best enjoyed during the winter months as it experiences good amount of snow – making it a destination perfect for celebrating a White Christmas or a Snowy New Year. There are many places that you can visit during your trip to Kanatal and the Surkanda Devi Temple is the most popular religious destination, situated at a distance of around 10 km from Kanatal. Thus, be it for adventure, religious or just a getaway into the quiet and beautiful place – Kanatal can be your perfect getaway to spend some quality time with your loved ones.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jolly Grant Airport,
Dehradun

NEAREST RAILWAY:
STATION: Dehradun
Railway Station, Rishikesh
Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Weekend getaway with
friends and family

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Uttar Pradesh

Kushinagar

Buddhism is a path of practice and spiritual development leading to insight into the true nature of reality. For people who follow Buddhism as a way of life, Kushinagar, near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, is the holy place where Lord Buddha attained his salvation or the Mahaparnirvana. It is one of the must-visit destinations for people practicing Buddhism and is also a popular tourist site.

From Buddhist followers to the Indian devotees, this is one of the major pilgrimage destinations in Uttar Pradesh. Referred to as Kushinara in ancient period, the city is a storehouse of architectural marvels. Archaeological excavations have unearthed a number of temples and Stupas which belonged to medieval India. Kushinara was earlier part of the Malla kingdom and its popularity spread all over because of Lord Buddha.

Another major tourist attraction in Kushinagar is the Nirvana Temple. It was near this temple that Lord Buddha passed away and thus it houses a tall statue of Lord Buddha. The Mathakaut Temple in Kushinagar is also one of the important tourist places in Uttar Pradesh. It is in this place, the archaeologists discovered a black stone image of Lord Buddha which was called the 'Bhumi Sparsha Mudra'. The last sermon of Lord Buddha was delivered over here.

The Watt Thai Temple, which is a Japanese temple, is one of the most visited temples in Kushinagar. Along with it, the Chinese temple with Oriental design and décor also attracts plenty of tourists. Every year, on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, there is a month's long fair in Kushinagar, where one can buy a variety of artefacts and souvenirs to take back home. Although this shrine is related to Mahatma Buddha, the surrounding area is Hindu dominated, which is why during fair time, many people from around the place participate with complete reverence and perform puja and worship in various temples.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Gorakhpur

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Ramkola & Gorakhpur
Railway station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.uptourism.gov.in





Lachung



A small mountain village located at a distance of about 120 km from Gangtok, Lachung is a quaint hub brimming with scenic beauty and natural splendour. From an adventure enthusiast to a honeymoon couple, there is something in store for everyone visiting this destination. Once in Lachung, you will immediately fall in love with this small pretty town that has much to hold a tourist captive for numerous days.

A breath taking Himalayan village, nestled in the lap of North Sikkim, Lachung is an epitome of scenic beauty peppered with tall dark mountains, gushing waterfalls, striking fruit orchards and meandering glacial rivers. You can be a vacationer, a honeymooning couple, a nature lover, a photography geek or an adventure aficionado, Lachung will hold you captive with its beauty and send you back with memories that will last a lifetime.

Travellers who are up for some adventure in Lachung, would be spoiled for choice in this town, thanks to its numerous offerings. The 'Zero Point' also known as 'Yumesamdong' is a popular trekking destination that leaves every adventure junkie with some thrilling and breath-taking vistas of nature. For true adventure lovers, 'Mt. Katao' sits as a must visit place and which is sure to leave them enthralled with never-ending fun of snow-boarding, skiing and snow-tubing. However, prior permission from the Indian Army is a must for visiting Mt. Katao.

Lachung, meaning 'Small Pass' houses the beautiful Lachung Monastery (or gompa), which is decked with wonderful wall murals and also several ancient statues. The monastery holds religious dance on 28th and 29th day of the 10th Buddhist month (December). When in Lachung, one must also visit the Carpet Weaving Centre where you can see the local ladies weaving exquisite woollen carpets. The Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary is also a place of tourist interest in the region.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Gangtok, Bagdogra airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: New Jalpaiguri

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.sikkimtourism.gov.in

Jharkhand

Netarhat

If one were to closely see and examine the tourism treasures that are in bounty here, one would realise that the tourism potential of the state of Jharkhand remains highly unexplored. From hills to forests to falls and dams; from mines to temples to caves and springs, the region has it all – in plenty and flourishing in its natural habitat. One such hidden jewel is the quaint town of Netarhat, which is even touted as the ‘Queen of Chhota Nagpur’.

Encircled by low hills, forests and hilly springs, Netarhat nestles like a secret refuge in the heart of Jharkhand. Once home to several tribes, the hills caught fancy of the British rulers who converted it into a hill station and also gave it its popular title - ‘Queen of Chhota Nagpur’. However, with time, the hill station has moved far beyond its colonial days and in today’s time is known for its natural beauty and a public residential school, which was opened in 1954.

Tales ranging from birth of Hanuman to that of unrequited love will colour your visit to naturally beautiful Netarhat, which is also a popular weekend getaway from Ranchi, the state capital, about 150 km away by road. Reaching Netarhat from the plains is part of the fun. The rolling hills are covered with sal, palash and mahuwa trees. The steep hill road (‘ghat’ road) cuts through the forests, runs past some sharp bends, finally flattening into a plateau on which perches Netarhat at a height of 1,250 metres, amidst cypress and pine trees. Upon reaching, a huge gate welcomes you to the town.

The hills surrounding Netarhat are dotted with hilly springs and waterfalls. The Upper Ghagri waterfalls is located at a distance of about 6 km from Netarhat while the lower Ghagri is at another 4 km away from here. The area has many orchards growing pears (nashpati). To reach both the waterfalls, you will have to leave the car behind and walk through the forest, which is also an adventurous walk full of beauty amidst abundant natural flora and fauna.

Besides the waterfalls, while in Netarhat, one can also visit the popular Sunrise Point to enjoy spectacular views of the rising Sun and take a tour of the famous Betla National Park, which is home to many wild animals.

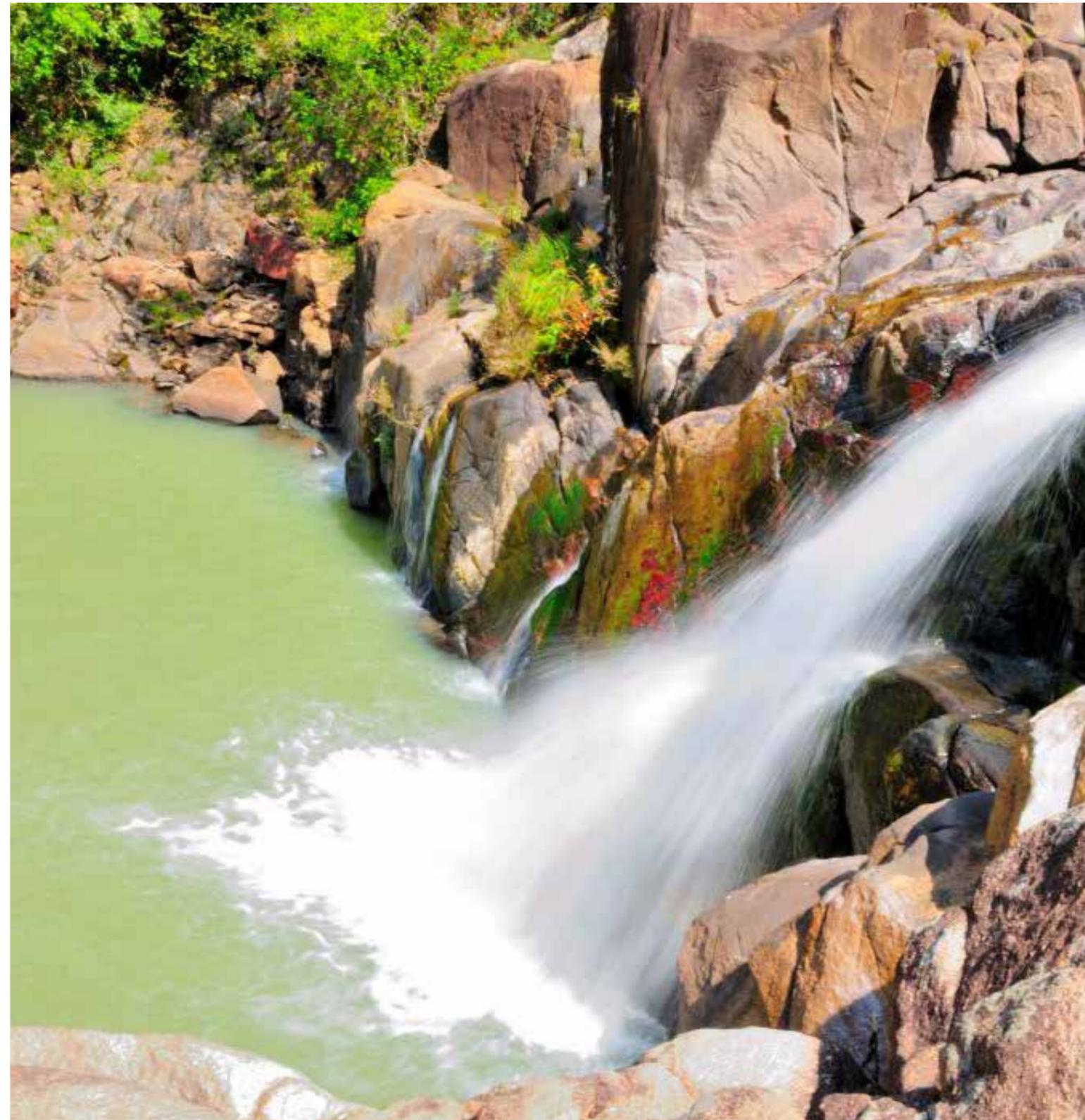
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Ranchi Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Ranchi Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family and nature
lovers

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jharkhandtourism.gov.in





Nubra Valley



One of the pristine and unexploited destinations from the Northern India, Nubra Valley is a gift from the heaven above. Though it is a remote area but it was never segregated and the destination enjoys a good tourist footfall. The place catches a lot of enthusiasm from trekkers. Nubra Valley has a lot to offer to tourists from around the world and one will never go insatiated from here.

Nubra Valley is a high height desert land in Ladakh with a lack of vegetation except for river banks. Known as the Orchard of Ladakh, Nubra Valley, is an absolute paradise for an avid nature admirer. It offers breath taking scenery, with green oasis villages surrounded by thrillingly stark scree slopes, and harsh arid mountains, strongly reminiscent of Pakistan's Northern Areas. There are sand dunes, monasteries, and a ruined palace and – at Turtuk and Bogdang – a whole different culture (Balti) to discover.

It is not just scenic natural beauty of Nubra that attracts tourists. The valley is predominantly Buddhist and boasts of several centres of Buddhist learning. Ensa, Samstemling, Diskit and Hunder monastery are famous Buddhist monasteries. The Nubra Valley is often also regarded as the Orchard of Ladakh, which is a major trade Centre for horticultural crops, Pashmina wool and woollen textiles. Moreover, it's famous for producing fruits such as walnuts, apples, almonds, apricots, and staple crops like barley, wheat, etc.

Surrounded by the Himalayas, summers are pleasant and winters are harsh in the Nubra Valley. Overall Ladakh experiences extremely cold climate throughout the year. During winters, the entire valley looks like the scene of the moon and in summer loaded with greenery. The best time to visit is in the hotter summer months from June to August, when one can relish the chilling Himalayan Mountains.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Leh Kushok Bakula
Rinpoche Airport

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:**
Jammu Tawi Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
April to June and
September to October

IDEAL FOR:
Friends and solo travellers

**OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:**
www.jktourism.jk.gov.in

Madhya Pradesh

Panchmarhi

The state of Madhya Pradesh is most popular for its temples, caves and wildlife. While there is no dearth of touristy options in the area, every region has a best-kept secret, tucked away from the cacophony of everyday life and offering the perfect solace, which is much-needed in today's hectic life. Panchmarhi, by virtue of being Madhya Pradesh's only hill station, is the state's best offering for those who are looking to spend some quality time with nature.

A large plateau surrounded by lofty hills of the Satpura range, Panchmarhi, standing at an altitude of 1067 m is a land full of greens and deep ravines, which makes an unconquerable combination for any nature lover. A land that is home to more than 65 water falls, each more beautiful than the other, Panchmarhi has plenty to offer to the adventurous youth, who are not happy just gazing at the beauty and want to try their hand at some sports and fun activities also.

The town of Pachmarhi has an interesting connection with history. Legend has it that the year that Rani of Jhansi and her Maratha soldiers declared Mutiny, a rather ordinary English officer who had a way with words, was sent to the dense Satpura jungles to quell a rebellion. After walking for 17 miles, Captain Forsyth of the Bengal Lancers found himself 2000 feet above the sea and a saucer-shaped plateau spread out before him and this is how Panchmarhi was discovered.

Recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the vegetation of Panchmarhi has changed over the years paving way for denser forests and greener banks. The destination is famous for its ancient caves, monuments, waterfalls, natural beauty, forest and the flora and fauna. Some of the must-see places include Handi Khoh, Jata Shankar Cave, Pandava Caves, Apsara Vihar, Bee Falls, Duchess Falls and more. An ideal sunset is best enjoyed in Panchmarhi.

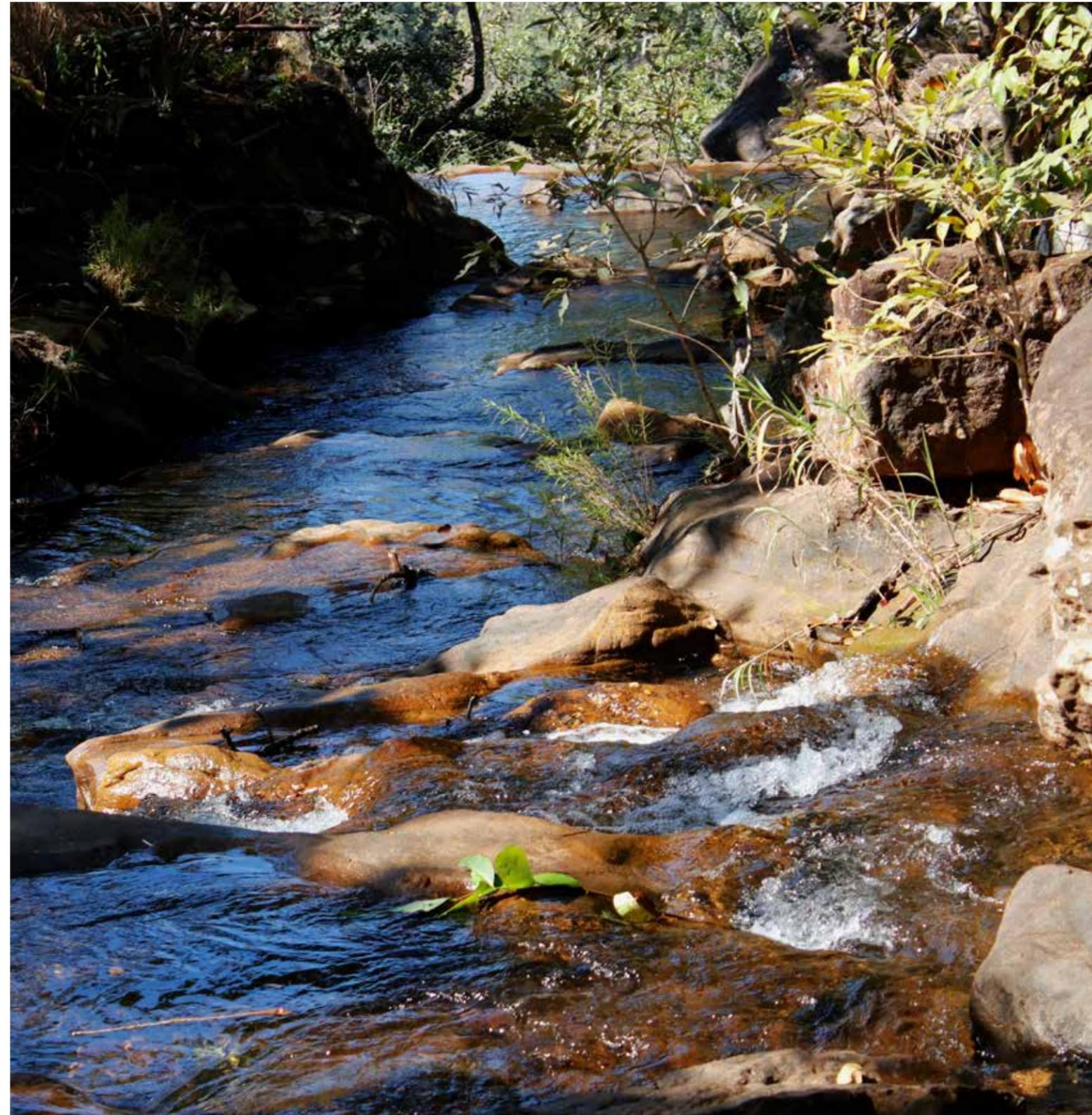
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Bhopal Airport and
Jabalpur Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Pipariya and
Bhopal Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.mptourism.com



Kerala

Ponmudi

*T*here is plenty to see in God's own country. From hill stations to temples, beaches and more, the state is flushed with natural bounty, offering a traveller plenty of options to choose from. So if you want to experience a holiday, where the greens are a shade greener, air a degree cleaner and environs extremely soothing, without the hustle bustle of thronging tourists, visit Ponmudi, a quaint hill station in Kerala.

Situated at a distance of 60 km from the capital Trivandrum, Ponmudi is located at an altitude of 600 m above the sea level and is often regarded as the 'Golden Peak' of the South. For all adventure seekers, the destination has much to offer in the form of adventure sports such as trekking, rock climbing, mountaineering, etc. Tourists here can go on long leisurely walks along the meandering roads that wind up the hill. This beautiful hill station offers breath taking scenic views and is also home to many natural springs that helps keep the valley lush green.

The hill station of Ponmudi houses lush and full tea gardens that make it a picture perfect location. The view from the cottages and resorts up the hill at Ponmudi is breath taking and it feels as though time has left this place untouched. The quaint place is also an ideal picnic spot least haunted by tourists and therefore the most peaceful of all Kerala hill stations. Embellished with rapids flowing over the road, and misty peaks thronged by an exotic vegetation, the hill station of Ponmudi is a hikers and trekkers paradise. Ponmudi offers to soothe your work worn mind and body to rejuvenation. One can hike through the slopes of tea gardens to watch the pickers at work or just fascinatingly observe fish in the emerald waters of the Kallar River to make the most of the Ponmudi hill station.

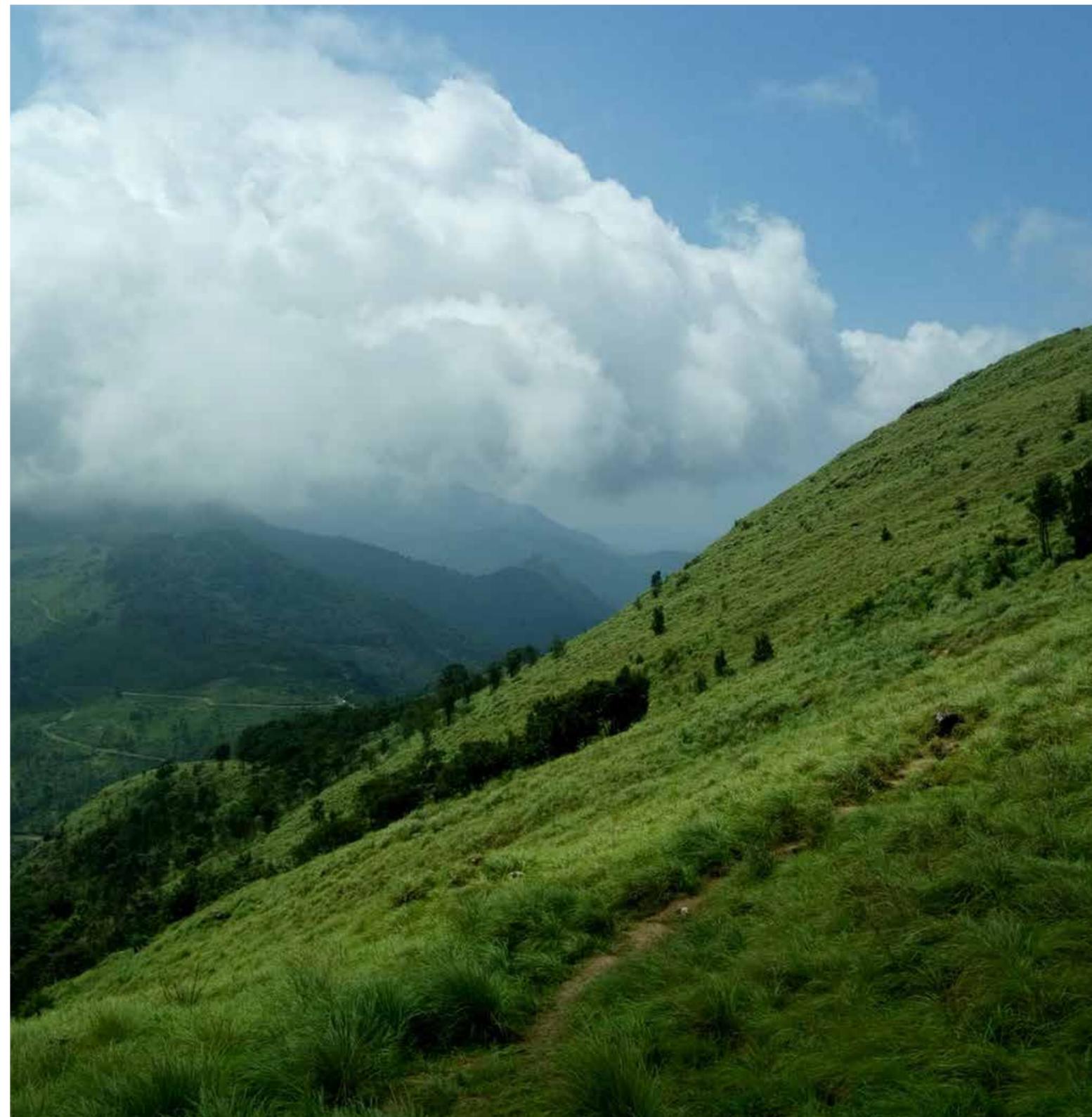
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Thiruvananthapuram
International Airport

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:**
Thiruvananthapuram
Central Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, trips with
friends, couple vacation

**OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:**
www.keralatourism.gov.in



Punjab

Sadda Pind

Amritsar



A culture of multi-hued heritage of ancient civilisations, full of high spiritedness and compassion, with its diversity reflected in its fine poetry, spirituality, artistry, cuisine, traditions and over-the-top festivity in heart-warming dance genres like *giddha*, *bhangra*, *jhumar*, *sammi*, Punjab, earlier known as *Sapt Sindhava* is a land of celebration, gaiety, merriment, revelry and jubilation.

It may take a lifetime to soak in the beauty, culture, tradition, euphoria and high spirits (literally) of Punjab but for *Sadda Pind*, an exquisite Punjabi living museum which offers an exceptional opportunity to experience rich authentic culture, colours and flavours of Punjab's traditional village at one place. Nestled in the divine city of Amritsar and not very far from, Golden Temple, *Sadda Pind* has recreated a typical Punjabi village in all its glory with great attention to detail. Spread over 12 acres and marked by Punjab's vibrance and tradition, it showcases the lifestyle in a pre-Independence Punjabi village.

As in a Pind (village) of earlier times, it is amusing to see the real brick-and-stone houses of the *sarpanch*, *zamindar*, *nambardar*, *sunar*, *kumhar*, *lohar*, *kissan*, and *tangewala*. They have been decorated with authentic rustic interiors featuring the life of a rural artisan. Interestingly, the whole village including the guest rooms have been adorned with antique objects, motifs which have been thoroughly sourced from interiors of Punjab to reflect the rusticity of a traditional village.

Its *baraat ghar* and the village haveli are the places to witness the soulful musical culture of Punjab where folk songs and dances are performed all day. The display of folk dances like *bhangra*, *jhumar*, *kikli*, *gidda*, and musical instruments like *nagara*, *gagar* and *tumba* represent the endless energy of Punjab. From blacksmiths, potters, weavers and host of artisans displaying their work and products like *juttis*, clay toys, *phulkaris*, *durries*, *parandis*, hand-made shawls, and agricultural implements, *Sadda Pind* is in true sense a celebration of Punjabi culture. Not to forget, *Sadda Pind* also offers special culinary experience with authentic Punjabi food like *Makki Di Roti*, *Sarson da Saag*, *Kadhi Chawal*, *Rajma Chawal*, *Amritsari naan & chole*, *lassi*, traditional thali and much more.

There are so many traditional activities and experiences for the guests to enjoy including kids that everyone feels engrossed and immersed in an era gone by. It is precisely the reason that so many heads of countries have visited this cultural milieu including our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Mauritius President Ameenah Gurib.



NEAREST AIRPOT:
Sri Guru Ram Das Jee
International Airport, Amritsar

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:
Amritsar Junction

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the Year

ACCOMMODATION:
20 Spacious Guest Rooms

IDEAL FOR:
Family & Couple Vacations

OFFICIAL WEBSITE:
<https://www.saddapind.co.in>

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
<http://punjabtourism.gov.in>





Shekhawati



When we think of Rajasthan, images of culturally rich cities, lavish palaces, havelis, royal houses, heritage museums immediately come to our mind. This is because the region is blessed with abundant tradition, which has for years been attracting visitors who come to see the place and get a taste of royalty. Shekhawati, though small in size compared to its other counterparts, also does not disappoint a tourist who has come in search of majestic offerings and opulence seeped with history.

The sprawling old havelis of Shekhawati are an architectural marvel that were built between the late 18th and early 20th centuries by local Marwari merchants, who had migrated to the port cities of Mumbai and Kolkata to seek their fortunes. With a touch of British influence and urban inspiration, their homes, over the years, grew increasingly grand, reflecting their newfound wealth and social status. These havelis like the Bhagtonki haveli, Anadilpoddar haveli, Khedwal Bhawan and others are one of the main attractions in the region today. These mural paintings are an expression of the artisanship of yesteryear Rajasthani people.

Nawalgarh, a small town in Shekhawati region is known as 'the land of Havelis'. The charming place features two grand havelis – Morarka Haveli and Podar Haveli, which have been transformed into museums and are definitely must a visit. Besides, this, you can see the Sethani Ka Johara, which is one of the finest reservoirs that holds water from one monsoon to the next and fascinates several animals, birds and Nilgais. Kanhaiyalal Bagla Haveli is also a popular attraction.

Sikar, which is home to a plethora of outstanding temples and havelis like Bansidhar Rathi Haveli, Ram Chokhani Haveli, Kedia Haveli, Sangneria Haveli, Mirijamal Kyala Haveli, the Jeen Mata Temple and Radha Murli Manohar Temple are popular attractions in the region. When in Shekhawati, you must not forget to visit the Ratnagarh Fort. This 18th century fort boasts of many monuments, striking gateway and a clock tower.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Jaipur International Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jaipur Railway
station

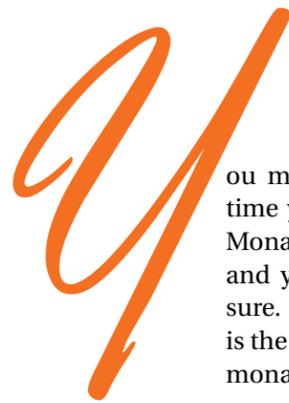
BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year
barring peak summer months

IDEAL FOR: Family
vacation, couple vacation,
trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:
www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Himachal Pradesh

Spiti Valley



You may have seen it in movies and held your breath every time you did for such is the effect of its spell-binding beauty. Monasteries, landscapes, culture, there is so much in the region and you would want to extend your stay in the region from sure. Spiti Valley, at an altitude of 12,500 feet above Sea Level, is the most important centre of Buddhism in Himachal and the monasteries here are a favourite with the Dalai Lama himself.

Spiti is bordered by Ladakh in the north, Tibet to the east, Kinnaur to the south east, and the Kullu Valley to the south. The term Spiti means 'The Middle Land', as it separates India from Tibet. Scantly populated, Spiti is a haven for adventure lovers as there is so much they can indulge in while staying here. There are a number of trekking trails that tourists can choose from and almost all of them start from Kaza (Spiti's capital from where you make your base camp) to various peaks from where you can get panoramic views of the Himalayan Mountains.

Besides trekking, another beautiful adventure is the Chandra Taal, which is located at an altitude of 4300 m and offers picture-perfect setting for photographers and nature lovers alike. This crescent shape lake, located near Kunzum is one of the best places to visit in Spiti valley in the summers. The colour of the lake keeps changing from blue, green to reddish and orange throughout the day and this phenomenon along with clear views of the place due to June weather, make the scene even more magical and panoramic.

One of the must-see places in Spiti Valley is the Ki Monastery, which is situated next to the Spiti River and could not have been set on a more beautiful location. A thousand year old Tabo gompa is perched on an amazing elevation of 3050 metres and looks like a honeycomb on a hillside. The historic Trilokinath Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is also worth a visit.



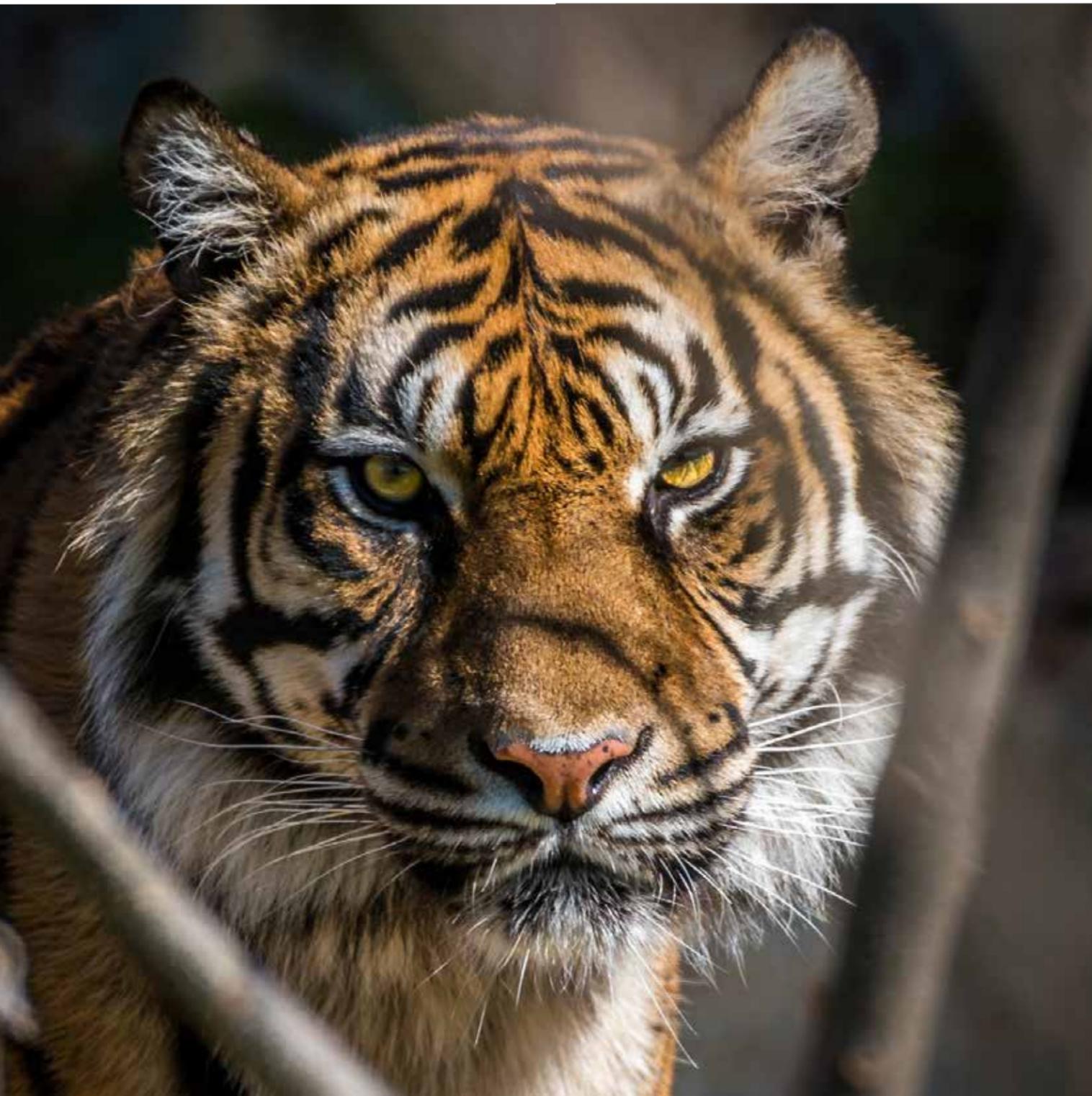
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Kullu Airport and Chandigarh Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Joginder Nagar Railway Station, and Shimla Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year except peak winters

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple vacation, trips with friends

WEBSITE:
www.himachaltourism.gov.in



Sundarbans

The Indian Sundarbans, covering the south-westernmost part of the delta, constitutes over 60 per cent of the country's total mangrove forest area and includes 90 per cent of the Indian mangrove species. This active delta region is among the largest in the world, measuring about 40,000 sq km. They are one of the largest such forests in the world (140,000 ha), situated on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers on the Bay of Bengal. It is adjacent to the border of India's Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987.

The Sundarbans is the biggest delta, back water and tidal phenomenon of the region and thus provides diverse habitats for several hundreds of aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species. The property is of sufficient size to adequately represent its considerably high floral and faunal diversity with all key values included within the boundaries. The site includes the entire landscape of mangrove habitats with an adequate surrounding area of aquatic (both marine and freshwater) and terrestrial habitats, which is essential for the long term conservation of the Sundarbans and its rich and distinct biodiversity.

The area is best known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile, leopard cats, ridley sea turtle, wild boar, jungle cat, fox, flying fox, fishing cats, chital, pangolin and the Indian python. The Sundarbans is home to the Sunderbans National Park, which is a tiger and biosphere reserve located in the Sunderbans delta in the state of West Bengal (India). The Sunderbans is named after the Sundari trees which are found in bulk in this area. The park was established as a national park in 1984.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Netaji Subhash Chandra
Bose International Airport,
Kolkata

**NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION:** Sealdah Railway
Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
October to May

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

**OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM
WEBSITE:**
<https://www.wbtourismgov.in>

Tamil Nadu

Thanjavur

Thanjavur, is one of the most revered temple sites in the region of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is one of the most important and most visited historical sites in India today. Thanjavur is also listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. With a hazy past, historical legacy and mesmerising beauty, the town has today turned into a busy and hectic modern hub.

This ancient temple destination has been a cultural centre for more than a millennium. The place is one of the most popular tourist centres in Tamil Nadu and attracts a large number of visitors from all over the world. From magnificent temples and buildings to cultural and artistic venues, there are no dearth of options to visit in the place and a visitor here is truly spoilt for choice.

No write up on Thanjavur would be complete without the mention of the Brahadeeswara Temple, which is one of the most important landmarks in Thanjavur. The 11th century structure is one of the foremost examples of the Chola architecture and was constructed using some of the most advanced architectural techniques of the time. Mahashivratri is one festival that is celebrated with a lot of pomp and zeal here.

A perfect souvenir to carry back home are the extremely creative and attractive Tanjore dolls and Tanjore paintings, which are the perfect examples that best define the cultural importance and relevance of art and architecture down south. Dating back to many centuries, the painting styles of Tanjore played an important role in influencing the later Indian art forms and movements.

The royal preserves in the city of Tanjore inhibits one of the oldest churches in the region, the Schwartz Church in Thanjavur. The church boasts of a unique heritage since it was constructed without the influence of imperial administration. The church is noteworthy for its architectural style and features sculptures by famous Italian sculptor, John Flaxman.

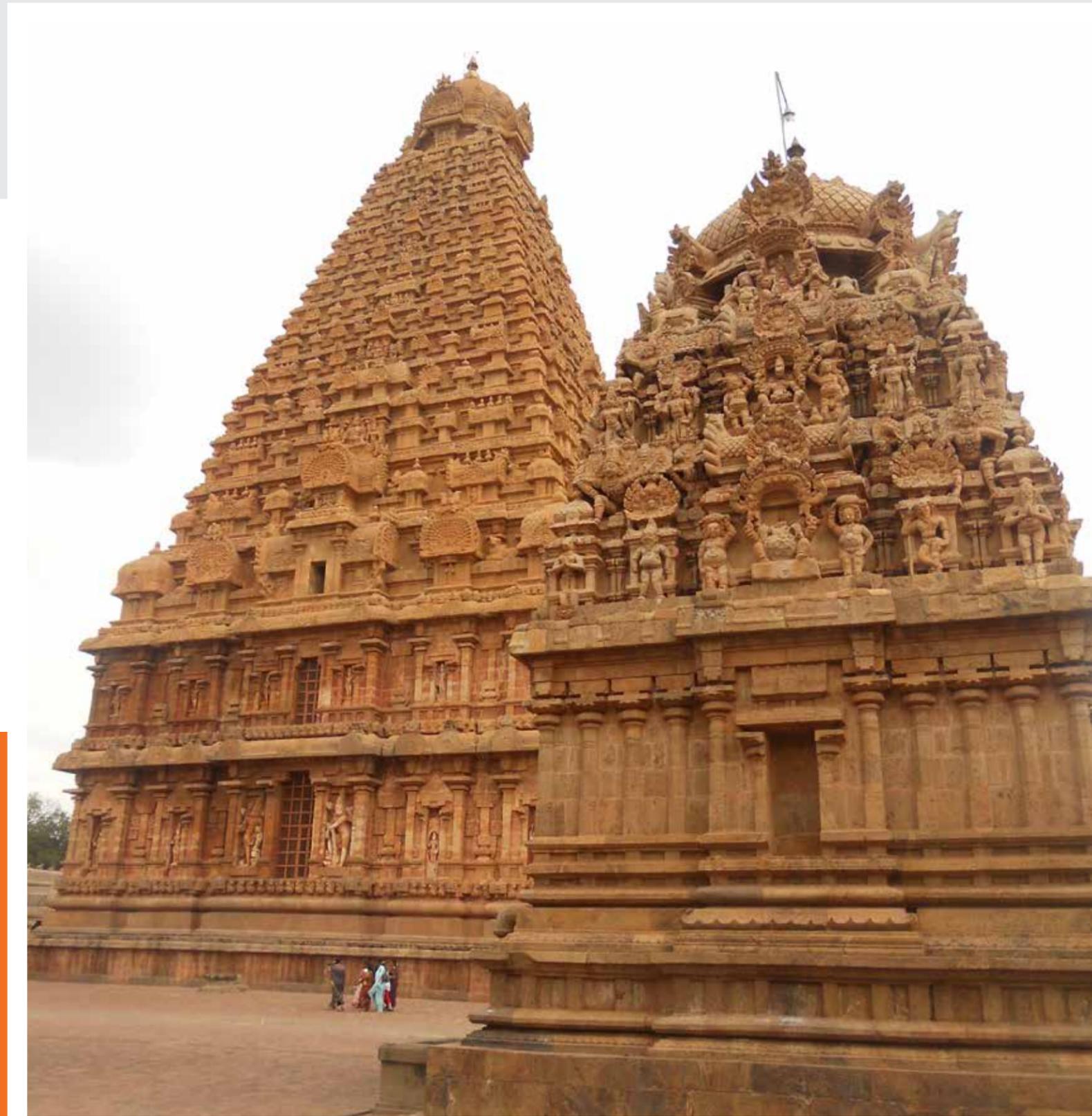
NEAREST AIRPORT:
Tiruchirappalli International
Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Trichy Junction

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.tamilnadutourism.org





Ziro Valley



Ziro Valley, situated in the lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, rests at a distance of around 115 Km from the state capital Itanagar and lies at about 1500 m above the sea level. Tucked amidst the mountainscape of Arunachal Pradesh, the tranquillity here will leave one completely at peace and is often treated as the perfect place to meditate or spend some time with Mother Nature. Innumerable nature admirers and avid photographers travel here from far to soak in the serenity of its natural splendour.

One of the major Apatani village is Hong vilalge. Houses in these villages are made of bamboo. Each house has a huge stove in the middle; they sleep just near it to keep themselves warm. To visit these villages one should take a local guide along as he would be able to better explain the culture, traditions and lifestyle of the people living in these areas. Since Paddy cum fish cultivation is also a popular activity here, people who have interest in them can treat it as an added attraction in Ziro.

The hidden gem of Arunachal Pradesh – Ziro Valley is also known for the vibrant and multi coloured clothes. If you ever get a chance to shop here, it will definitely add value to your wardrobe. Peace seekers won't go disappointed from here as calmness of the destination makes it a peace lovers' paradise. Enclosed by lush green forests and hills, Ziro valley is a picturesque eastern Himalayan town that offers stunning landscape to behold.

Besides vibrant garments, Ziro is also famous for bamboo items such as bamboo baskets, Apatani handlooms and locally made handicraft items. Also worth buying in Ziro are colourful rugs, scarves and jackets. It is home to the Apa Tani Tribe, Pine Hills and rice fields.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Kushok Bakula
Rimpochee Airport in Leh

NEAREST RAILWAY
STATION: Jammu Tawi
Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
April to October

IDEAL FOR:
Family vacation, couple
vacation, trips with friends

OFFICIAL STATE
TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jktourism.jk.gov.in



Patratu

Jharkhand



VIKASH NAG

A

bout 40 kilometres from Ranchi, the state capital of Jharkhand, Patratu is quietly nestled between lush forests and winding roads at an elevation of 405 meters. Known for its Patratu Dam, which was constructed under the planning of the legendary Indian engineer, Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, this picturesque valley town, full of unexplored untrodden trails is a must-visit for any adventure and nature lover.

Along with exploring the beauty of its forests and lush greenery, Patratu Dam is a sight to watch in all its glory. It supplies water to Ramgarh cantonment area and act as the main reservoir of Patratu Thermal Power Plant (PTPS). The Nalkari River on which it proudly stands is major tourist destination. Bird watchers and nature lovers can enjoy calm and peaceful boats rides for hours. It is said that one can see flying fishes during sunrise by sitting at the coast of the Dam.

NEAREST AIRPORT:
Ranchi Airport

NEAREST RAILWAY STATION: Ranchi Railway Station

BEST TIME TO VISIT:
Throughout the year

IDEAL FOR: Family Vacations & Nature Lovers

OFFICIAL STATE TOURISM WEBSITE:
www.jharkhandtourism.gov.in



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Incredible India



Khachho Gujarati

The sand is exactly as white as shown in this picture.
The ocean of white sand stands out stark and pristine in its
colourlessness, interrupted only by passing herds of camels.
On moonlit nights, the desert reveals another colour.
Something that can hardly be described in words.

Which colour of Kutch will catch your eye?
Maybe one that I couldn't find!

Amitabh Bachchan

Amitabh Bachchan



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