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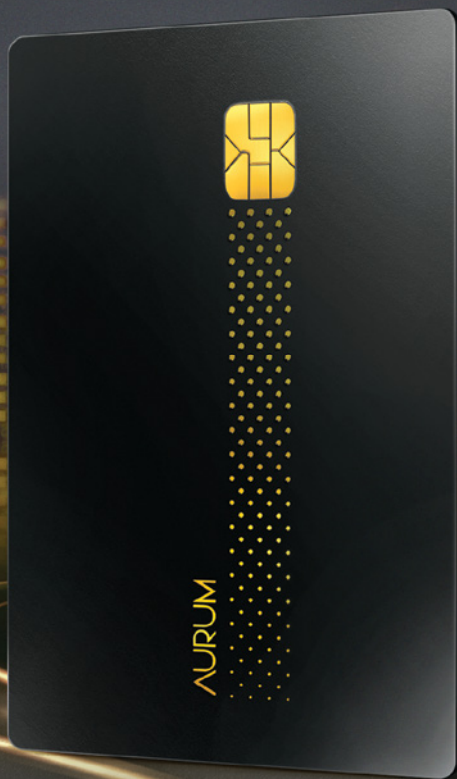
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The Heritage
Issue

GATEWAY TO THE PAST

Around the world on a historical trail

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Burda Media India Private Limited
Ambience Mall, 7th Floor (AWfis), Gate No - 04, Ambience Island, NH-8, Gurugram – 122002, Haryana

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POSTAGE ADDRESS Arabellastrasse 23, D-81925 Munich, Germany

For editorial queries, write to editorial.airindia@burdaluxury.com
For advertisement queries, write to adsales.airindia@burdaluxury.com

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www.airindia.com

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CONTRIBUTORS



Joanna Lobo

Joanna is an independent journalist and an aspiring author based in Mumbai. A freelance writer for five years, she has been penning stories on travel, luxury, lifestyle, food and its ties to communities, and women who are breaking norms. She co-runs But First, Food, a food-based publication, and publishes a newsletter called It's All Write. Follow her on [@thatdoggonelady](#)



Nawab Kazim Ali Khan

The scion of Rampur's royal family, Muhammad Kazim Ali Khan is a connoisseur of Indian art and craft, and a patron of India's royal heritage. An architect, a fashion curator, and an aspiring pilot, he is also an avid traveller. Khan has been accorded the Order of the Griffon (Mecklenburg) honour. Follow him on Instagram [@navaid786](#)



Samai Singh

With many years of experience in the travel and lifestyle publishing sector, Samai has worked with India's leading magazines. She is currently a freelance writer, editor, columnist, and artist, and has edited a book called *Meet Me Where the Sky Touches the Sea*. She is equally passionate about the written word and art. Follow her on Instagram [@artescapebysamai](#)

INSPIRING VOICES

Our contributing authors give you a glimpse into the world beyond, through their unique lens and perspective



Riaan Jacob George

Working out of Mumbai and Sri Lanka, Riaan is a journalist and digital content creator. His authored pieces on luxury trends, automobiles, watches, fashion, and technology are published in some of the leading publications across Asia. This aviation buff has also been the editor of several leading luxury magazines. Follow his journey on Instagram [@riaangeorge](#)



Dr Vanita Srivastava

An alumna of IIT Kanpur, Srivastava has been a journalist for over 25 years, writing extensively on travel, food, culture, spirituality, science, and health. A doctorate in Chemistry, she is an experimental chef, who took up painting and music at the age of 50. She also engages in regular social work and practices mindful meditation. Follow her on Instagram [@vanita.srivastava](#)



Satarupa Paul

Based in New Delhi, Satarupa is a journalist with over 15 years of experience. Currently a freelance author and photographer, she covers travel, gastronomy, wellness, heritage, and sustainability. Her writing has appeared in BBC, Travel+Leisure India & South Asia, and Conde Nast Traveller India, among others. Follow her on [@satty_writes](#)



Vijaya Pratap

Hyderabad-based Vijaya is a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker, who specialises in the study of art, culture, and wildlife. Although she enjoys travelling and writing about her adventures, her major area of focus is the performing arts of India as she is trained in classical dance and music. Catch up with her on Instagram [@vijayapratap1](#)



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Homage to Heritage

Namaste!

As we reflect on the success of the recent G20 Summit in India, we are filled with pride for our country's rich heritage and celebrate the dedicated organisers and volunteers who made the event a triumph. The theme, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', draws from the ancient wisdom of the *Maha Upanishad*, reminding us to stay grounded in our roots as we move forward.

This Heritage Issue is all about that—it celebrates our collective roots and the cultural richness of India and nations around the world. We invite you to explore historical narratives both within India and beyond. Within these pages, you'll find stories that transcend time and place. Each article is a window into a world where heritage and culture are not just remembered but also lived.

We explore the heritage circuit of Madhya Pradesh and curate a list of India's finest heritage walks. Journey with us to Philadelphia, the birthplace of American independence, and to Oxford City, where history is a constant companion. Discover the magnificence of Vienna and the essence of India's heritage—beyond the Taj—in Agra.

But this issue is more than just travel. We present to you historically-significant restaurants, iconic heritage fashion pieces, and global events to ignite your sense of adventure. Join us on this journey of discovery, as we soar to new heights while staying rooted in our heritage.

We are inspired by the rich heritage and spirit of excellence of JRD's Air India, as we strive to build a world-class airline with an Indian heart... Don't miss the opportunity to catch glimpses of our rich history as we walk down memory lane, and take a look at our progress on this transformation journey in the section on Vihaan.AI.

Happy Reading. Bon Voyage!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunil', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Sunil Suresh Editor-in-Chief

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Living Legacies

Discover Madhya Pradesh's
treasures on this heritage circuit

Getty Images

The Great Stupa at
Sanchi was originally
commissioned by
Emperor Ashoka in
the 3rd century BCE

the itinerary / madhya pradesh



Heritage Hues

Explore the Bhopal-Bhimbetka-Sanchi heritage circuit, one of Madhya Pradesh's many, for a glimpse of the past

/by **DR VANITA SRIVASTAVA**

10 / october 2023



1

✈️ GETTING THERE

Air India flies to Bhopal from Delhi and Mumbai

1. The Sanchi Stupa was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1989 2. The dome is surrounded by a railing and four gateways; each has intricate carvings and sculptures depicting stories from Lord Buddha's life.

2



As I drove out from Bhopal to Bhimbetka, the fresh air caressing my cheeks, I was excited to explore the cave paintings that provide evidence of early human habitation.

The 46 km ride through the **Vindhyan Range** was bereft of traffic, but do watch out for stray cattle. A quick stop at the Highway Treat for breakfast, and I was on my way.

"Be careful," warned my guide, as we navigated the slippery path that merges with the rock formations. Standing tall amidst a trail of trees silhouetted against the clear sky, the caves looked magical.

Legend has it that the Pandavas stayed in these caves, and the name 'Bhimbetka' came from *Bhimbaithaka*, or the seat of Bhima, one of the

brothers. The archeological site is the oldest known rock art in India, and has cave paintings spanning the Paleolithic and Medieval ages, depicting everyday life—hunting, dancing, horses, etc. I was specifically enamoured with Rock Shelter 3, about 39m long and called the 'auditorium'. Enveloped by custard apple and tamarind trees, it has several cupules depressions on stones, said to be man's earliest expression of creativity.

There are 243 rock shelters, of which only 15 are open for tourists. Wheelchair facilities are available as are audio-visual guides. The site is open all days; the best time to visit is between July and March.

BLISSFUL BUDDHA

The two-hour ride to Sanchi got me there just in time for lunch at The



*The Bhimbetka
Rock Shelters
were designated a
UNESCO World
Heritage Site in 2003*

Gateway Retreat at Sanchi. The highlight of my meal was the rose-flavoured ice cream, with nuts and the fragrant cardamom.

I made my way to the **Sanchi Stupa**, situated atop a hill, in the evening via a serpentine road. Surrounded by manicured gardens and lofty mountain ranges, the site is open on all days from sunrise to sunset, and tickets have to be bought at the counter next to the museum. A solitary eatery serves tea, coffee, and light snacks.

A huge hemispherical egg-shaped dome, 16.46m high and 36.8m in diameter, the Stupa is a testimony to

the spiritual and artistic prowess of its builders, and can be accessed via four gateways, which carry depictions from the Jataka legends and scenes from the life of Lord Buddha.

A three-tiered stone umbrella on top of the dome represent the Three Jewels of Buddhism. On one of the gates, two square posts are crowned by *yakshas*, pot-bellied dwarfs

Stupa 1 was constructed by Mauryan Emperor Asoka, and if you want to know more about the King's life, you can attend the 30-minute Sound and Light show (in Hindi and English), near the Stupa

(₹100 per person). A 15-minute laser show at the **Jambudweep Park** throws light, quite literally, on the Buddha's life.

I looked at the sculpted gates one last time, glowing beautifully in the setting sun, on my way out. The next morning, perhaps inspired by the visit, I sat beside one of the Buddha statues in my hotel, and meditated for 20 minutes. Later, I visited **Udaygiri**

INSIDER'S TIP



Sikander Malik
Cultural Curator

"The textile tradition of Bhopal is famous, and one must buy the needlework *zari zardozi* from here."



1. The Tribal Museum displays arts and crafts showcasing aspects of life of the tribes of MP 2. A seller displays Chanderi sarees 3. The Kaddu Ka Raita (pumpkin yoghurt) is a specialty.



the labyrinth lanes of **Chowk Bazaar**, which exuded a rustic charm and is pedestrian-friendly (no four-wheelers allowed). I bought the famed Bhopali *batua* (small purse with intricate embroidery), and discovered a gem during dinner at **Agrawal Puri Bhandar**—the *kaddu* (pumpkin) raita! As night descended, I walked to **Jumerati**, where pushcarts were selling street food, and then crossed the **Jama Masjid**, built by Qudsia Begum, the city's first female ruler.

Caves, 10km from Sanchi and bought souvenirs at the Stupa museum.

ROYAL REFLECTIONS

Back in Bhopal, I visited the **Tribal Museum**, where one can witness the living heritage of seven major tribes of MP. **The State Museum** is another attraction, with 17 galleries on various themes.

Then, I walked through

I also visited the 300-year-old **Qadimi Royal Hammam**, apparently the only functional one in India, and **Gauhar Mahal**, a palace built in 1821 by Qudsia Begum. Sunrise in **Jehan Numa Palace Hotel** was gorgeous. In the evening, I picked up some world-famous Chanderi sarees—a valuable keepsake and a piece of living heritage. ✨

FLAVOURS TO FAVOUR

A trip to Bhopal would be incomplete without sampling these signature dishes

ACHARI GOSHT

Much of the Bhopali food tradition consists of meat dishes. A case in point is this lamb dish, slow-cooked with onion, yoghurt and pickled spices. It is best paired with the *khameeri* roti (fermented bread). Try it at Jehan Numa Palace Hotel, Shamla Hills.

MAWA JALEBI

Crisp on the outside and soft on the inside, this streetside delicacy brings together the best of *mawa* (reduced milk solids) and jalebi. Best teamed with *rabdi*. You can carry it as well (can be refrigerated for 15 days). Try it at Raju Tea Stall in Fatehgarh, from 5am till midnight.

MURGH REZALA

A signature dish of Bhopal, this recipe calls for the chicken to be slow cooked in a light yoghurt and cashew paste. The simple flavour bears testimony to the cook's prowess. Ideally paired with a no-fuss Tandoori roti, that lets you soak up the gravy. Try it at Filfora on Sultania Road.

DAL BAFLA

Similar to the dal *baati*, the *bafla* is a ball made of wholewheat, that's first boiled and then baked, and served with a dal that's cooked with a mixture of spices. The dal is tempered with ghee, garlic, and red chilli powder. Try this at Taj Lakefront, Bhopal on Link Road.



Oxford City Chronicles

History and literary inspiration abound in this university town

/by JOANNA LOBO

GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to London from Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, Ahmedabad, and Amritsar. Oxford is a bus ride away from London.

Fun Fact

The University Museum of Natural History has the most complete specimens of the extinct dodo, including the bird's skull and bones.

09:00am

Drink some coffee

THE GRAND CAFÉ

According to Samuel Pepys's diaries, **The Grand Café** is located on the site of England's first coffee house, offering one of the finest cups of coffee in the UK. Sit in the opulent confines of this marble-pillared café, and enjoy the all-day high tea with sandwiches, scones, and cakes.

10:00am

Smell the roses

OXFORD BOTANIC GARDEN

Walk down **High Street**, home to different colleges, till you reach Magdalen College by the River Cherwell, where people go punting. Here lies the **Oxford Botanic Garden**, the oldest in the UK. Look for the garden's oldest tree, admire the rare collection of the euphorbia plant, or just stop and smell the roses at the fragrant **Rose Garden** outside.

11:00am

Take a tour

OXFORD CITY TOUR

You can cover all the highlights in two hours, including the **Bodleian Library**, the **Divinity School** (featured in the Harry Potter movies), the **Bridge of Sighs** (resembling the Venetian one), the Narnia door that inspired C.S. Lewis' characters, plus **Christ Church College** where *Alice in Wonderland* was birthed. Lewis Carroll first narrated the tale to the Dean's daughters here, in 1862.

1:00pm

Get a bird's-eye view

CITY VIEWPOINTS

Oxford is called the City of Dreaming Spires, and the best way to admire these peaks is from a height. You get a great view of the **Radcliffe Camera** after climbing 127 stairs to **St. Mary's**

Church tower. Nearby is **Carfax Tower**, one of the tallest buildings in Oxford.

2:30pm

Shop and dine

COVERED MARKET

The **Covered Market** is a fascinating place selling everything from Oxford sausages to handmade soap. It's also a great, affordable lunch place: try **Donburi Inn** for Asian fare, or have homemade Lebanese at **Rozana**. End with a treat from the legendary **Ben's Cookies**.

4:30pm

Listen to stories

THE STORY MUSEUM

Oxford is home to stunning museums but **The Story Museum** is unique—it celebrates storytelling. There's a mysterious forest, and an enchanted library; rediscover your favourite characters or catch a live performance.

6:00pm

Read a book

NORRINGTON ROOM

Deep in the bowels of the century-old **Blackwell's Bookshop** is **The Norrington Room**, which holds the Guinness Record for the single largest room in the world selling books. Give your feet some rest, and sit down to read.

7:30pm

Toast some history

OLD PUBS

Start at the oldest pub, **The Bear**, and observe their collection of over 4,500 club ties over a pint. The 14th century **Turf Tavern** is famous for serving celebrities like Bill Clinton. End your day at **The Crown**, a favourite local haunt of William Shakespeare and his actors, who would stop by here on their way to Stratford-upon-Avon. 🍷



2.

1. The historic Christ Church Cathedral watches over the city
2. The Covered Market officially opened on November 1, 1774, and is still going strong.



✈ GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Newark from Delhi. Philadelphia is a one-and-a-half-hour's drive away

The Philadelphia Museum of Art (foreground) has several ongoing exhibitions and is the cultural heart of the city



Steeped In History

The nerve centre of American history and patriotism, the charming city of Philadelphia is now a cradle of art, culture, and cuisine

/by **SATARUPA PAUL**

The first thing that struck me as my cab made its way through the historic town centre of Philadelphia was the juxtaposition of old and new, classic and modern, historic and futuristic. Magnificent European-style buildings from the days of yore stood proudly alongside sky-scraping glass and concrete giants. Historical landmarks vied for attention with newer attractions. Family-run restaurants and glitzy fine-dining establishments dotted the street sides. This was a city I was going to effortlessly fall in love with!

Often referred to as the 'Cradle of Liberty', Philadelphia, or Philly as it's lovingly called, played a



1

2



pivotal role in the American Revolution and the shaping of the United States of America. The Declaration of Independence was signed here in 1776 and the US Constitution drafted here in 1787. It was a hub for influential figures like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and George Washington, who shaped the nation's founding principles. Philadelphia also served as the temporary capital of the US from 1790 to 1800 and was a significant centre for the abolitionist movement (to end slavery). Today, the city's rich past and history shines through its famous heritage landmarks, even as new institutions come up and flourish alongside.

A LESSON IN HISTORY

The best way to immerse in the heritage of Philadelphia is through a tour of

the **Historic District**, aboard the iconic trolleys of Philadelphia Trolley Works or a double decker from Big Bus Tours. My first port of call was the **Independence Hall**, the epicentre of America's journey to independence, where both the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution were crafted. Nearby, the Liberty Bell stands as an enduring symbol of American freedom, with its legendary crack that is believed to have developed due to continual use. At the newly-built **Museum of the American Revolution**, I learnt about the country's struggle for independence through the exhibits.

On another day, I strolled through the charming **Elfreth's Alley**, the oldest continually inhabited residential street in America, exuding colonial charm. At the

historic prison turned museum of **Eastern State Penitentiary**, the imposing Gothic architecture and abandoned cellblocks offered an eerie yet fascinating insight into early incarceration methods, including solitary confinement that was first introduced here. In keeping with Philly traditions, I tossed good luck pennies at Benjamin Franklin's grave, took photos with the Insta-popular LOVE sculpture, and raced up the famous Rocky Steps of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, which featured in the Sylvester Stallone-starrer *Rocky III* to symbolise determination and triumph.

AN ARTY AFFAIR

On a more relaxed afternoon, I found myself marvelling at the neoclassical façade and stunning interiors of the **Philadelphia Museum of**



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1. The 'Welcome Back, Philly' ground mural was created by artist Felix St. Fort, and is at Eakins Oval

2. The Liberty Bell is an enduring symbol of American freedom

3. Reading Terminal Market is an enclosed public market that originally opened in 1893; it's full of food stalls selling fresh produce, and ready-to-eat food.

Art, before losing myself in its vast collection of European masterpieces, American art and South Asian artefacts spanning 4,000 years of art history. Housing Dr Albert C. Barnes' distinctive art collection, featuring post-impressionist and early modern masterpieces, the **Barnes Foundation** with its tranquil 'Gallery in a Garden' design offered a dynamic art experience. Located inside a mall, the year-round art show of **Wonderspaces** took me by sweet surprise with 16 contemporary, interactive, and conversation-provoking art installations.

For a street art lover like me, the best experience was offered by a guided walk with the Mural Arts Philadelphia for a sneak-peek of the 4,000 plus eye-catching murals that adorn the walls of the city.

FOODIE PARADISE

One cannot leave this city without devouring its most popular dishes, including the Philly cheesesteak, Philadelphia cream cheese, and soft pretzels with mustard. My favourite Philly cheesesteak joint turned out to be the 76-year-old family-run **Campo's Deli** in Old City. With over 70

stalls offering regional delicacies and global cuisines, the beloved food market **Reading Terminal Market** was a veritable feast. At **McGillin's Olde Ale House**, the oldest operating tavern in Philadelphia, I met the jolly owner and his family while downing local beers. Lunch at **Moshulu**, the world's only restaurant on a tall ship, came with sweeping views of the Delaware river, while the sophisticated atmosphere of **Assembly**, the rooftop bar overlooking the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, was the best way to wind down after a long day with a few cocktails. 🍷

the itinerary / offbeat



✈ GETTING THERE

Air India flies to Delhi from all major cities. Agra is around five hours' drive from Delhi airport.

The Tomb of I'timād-ud-Daulah is India's first tomb built entirely in white marble

Beyond The Taj

Is it possible to create an Agra itinerary without its most famous monument? Read on to find out

/by **RIAN JACOB GEORGE**

“Is there an Agra beyond the Taj?” I sheepishly ask local experience curator Tahir Ahmed

Qureshi, as we walk across the sprawling courtyard of the **Jama Masjid**. Few know that Agra, too, has a magnificent Jama Masjid, built by Emperor Shah Jahan’s daughter Jahanara Begum. Situated just opposite the Agra Fort, this massive architectural masterpiece in red and white stone, featuring bulbous domes, cavernous prayer halls, and large fountain ponds, attracts very few tourists.

INSIDER’S TIP



Anahita Dhondy
Chef and Author

“Chimman Lal Puri Wale in old Agra dates back to 1840 and still serves the best streetside *poori sabzi* in Agra.”

Walks, along with Kaleem Ahmed Qureshi and Neha Chaturvedi, with a mission to showcase Agra’s many facets in an immersive and experiential fashion. A case in point: we find ourselves digging into a *dastarkhān*—a traditional meal eaten by local families for centuries, an experience no restaurant or luxury hotel can replicate. A host of flavourful meats, kebabs, stewed vegetables, and biryani, spread before us on a mat. This, for me, is Mughlai cuisine, in its purest form, eaten in the home of a true Agra local.

I spend the afternoon strolling through the old parts. Few people associate Agra with temples, but I discover the magnificent **Mankameshwar Temple** complex, surrounded by shops selling flowers and sweetmeats. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is one of the most ancient temples in this city of Mughals.

THE CRAFT TRAIL

It is said that descendants of the original marble artists who worked on Taj Mahal still thrive in workshops in old Agra. While there are many conflicting theories on this, I make my way to a certain Irfan Bhai’s workshop. His family has continued the iconic inlay work that the city is famed for, since the Mughal era. Here, Irfan Bhai walks me through the highly painstaking process of polishing, cutting, and finishing the marble, before inlaying it with a myriad of precious and semi-precious stones. “What better way to immerse oneself in the Agra spirit than to visit the workshop of these world famous *pietra dura* artisans,” he tells me. A couple of minutes later, the Friday call to prayer is heard and the workshop empties itself of its employees, within



1. Motifs are traced by marble artisans for the intricate inlay work 2. Agra Heritage Walks is a group of young entrepreneurs that creates immersive experiences in old Agra 3. The vast sprawl of the Jama Masjid courtyard 4. Zardozi artisans keep the embroidery form alive.




microseconds, leaving me all alone to admire the art.

An hour later, and a short rickshaw ride away, I find myself in the home of Rizvana and Raazna, whose families have been practising zardozi for generations. This intricate embroidery, with gold thread and embellishments, originated in Persia but was popularised during Mughal times. “The zardozi you see on haute couture lehengas across the country, find their humble origins in these workshops; it’s keeping the art form alive”, Rizvana says, as she demonstrates her craft.

BY THE YAMUNA

The next day, I meet Bhanu Pratap Singh Dhakar, a local content creator whose platform Agra Aur Hum, tells stories of ‘The Humans of Agra’. He leads me to the deserted lawns of **Mehtab Bagh**, a *charbagh* across the Yamuna, north of the Taj Mahal complex. “Not many people know of the existence of Mehtab Bagh. It was earmarked by Emperor Shah Jahan for its geometrically-perfect view of his construction. Today, it is seeing a genuine restoration effort by the government,” he tells me.

An evening stroll here is highly recommended, for this garden was much loved by Shah Jahan. Just before sunset, we make a final pit stop at the ‘baby Taj’ or the ‘jewel box’—the **Tomb of I’timād-ud-Daulah** situated along the Yamuna. It predates the Taj Mahal and its white marble structure symbolises the shift of

Mughal architectural aesthetics from red stone to white marble. This monument was commissioned by Emperor Jahangir’s wife, Nur Jahan, for her father. Here, the famed inlay work is visible outside, but another lesser-known Mughal art form—wall paintings—vividly adorns the interiors. 

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6 Trails To Traverse

Heritage walks are the best way to discover a city's hidden treasures—on foot

/by **SAMAI SINGH**

INSIDER'S TIP



Sachin Bansal

Chief Explorer & Founder,
India City Walks

"In Bhopal's Chatori Gali, seek out the special *varki* samosa and wash it down with the salty Sulaimani chai."

1/ MUMBAI

Director Basu Chatterjee's cinema used **Mumbai** as a backdrop for complex human relationships and personal connections that form amidst urban chaos. Eshan Sharma of Karwaan Heritage leads you on the unique Basu Da's Mumbai heritage walk as you explore the architecture where classic movies like *Rajnigandha*, *Chhoti Si Baat*, and *Baton Baton Mein* were shot. karwaanheritage.in







2/ BHOPAL

Step back in time to a world of ornate havelis, witness the grandeur of the 18th-19th-century **Taj-ul-Masjid** and explore the vibrant **Chowk Bazaar** as you embark on the Old Bhopal Heritage Walk by India City Walks. Explore Bhopal's rich Mughal and Nawabi architecture; enjoy the authentic flavours of kebabs and biryanis when you pause for a breather. indiacitywalks.com



3/ VADODARA

Explore the exceptional artist's talent at the **Maharaja Fatesingh Museum** with Raja Ravi Varma—A Prince with a Paintbrush walk. The artist's oleographs and paintings, a fusion of European and Indian mythological themes, take centre stage as this walk explores Varma's indelible mark on art. karwaanheritage.in

4/ KOLKATA

Tathagata Neogi of Immersive Trails unravels chilling, true stories of the Kolkata's Victorian period in the Murder and Mayhem Walk. Following high profile murders of Rose Brown (1868) and Leah Judah (1858), and a series of heists and murders by Troilokya and Kali Babu, the walk visits crime scenes like **Lalbazar** and the back alleys of **Burrabazar**. immersivetrails.com

Good To Know

Heritage walks are suitable for most age groups. The only requirements are to wear sensible footwear, carry a hat or umbrella, and, most importantly, reach the venue 15 minutes before departure.





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40%

of all tourism across the world comes from cultural and historical travel. The global heritage tourism market is seeing increased interest.

SOURCE: UNWTO

5/ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Walking Company's Royal Tea at **Taj Falaknuma Palace** is a decadent experience. Enjoy nibbling on English and local snacks while sipping on Champagne at Celeste. Then, explore the palace's library, marvel at the opulent ballroom, and the 101-seater dining table, while being regaled with stories of the erstwhile Nizams. *thwc.in*

6/ DEHRADUN

One of Doon's oldest colonies, **Dalanwala** is dotted with bungalows dating back to the early 1900s. Their architecture offers a glimpse into a bygone era. Lokesh Ohri of *Been There Doon That* delves into the colony's rich colonial past, on the Dalanwala Heritage Walk. *beentheredoonthat.org* 🍷



Top to bottom: Tajhotels; The Shumshere

A full-page photograph of the interior of the Jesuit Church in Vienna. The image captures the grandeur of the Baroque architecture, featuring a high, ornate dome with intricate frescoes and a ceiling of blue and gold. The nave is lined with tall, fluted columns in shades of pink and gold, supporting a series of arches. The altar at the far end is highly decorated with a large, colorful fresco and a red canopy. The pews in the foreground are dark wood with ornate carvings.

the DESTINATION

Located on Doktor-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz, the Jesuitenkirche, or the Jesuit Church, is a stellar example of 18th century Baroque architecture

A Vienna Serenade

An imperial past, a legacy of music, grand palaces—charm personified

the destination / vienna

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timeless elegance and rich
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architecture, museums, historic
cafés—and its music

/by VIJAYA PRATAP

GETTING THERE 
*Air India flies non-stop
to Vienna from Delhi*

This page: The stunning architectural landscape of the city comes alive as it plays host to luxury brands and tourists
Opposite page: You can't think of Austria and not think of The Sound of Music; a cello player pays homage to the country's music tradition, outside Boutique Cartier Wien





The Kunsthistorisches Museum sits in a palatial building and houses artworks from seven millennia

INSIDER'S TIP



Tom Bachinger
Licensed Tour Guide

"The parks are the best way to get some fresh air between seeing the museums. My favourite is Volksgarten: it's home to 400 varieties of roses—a spectacular sight in spring."

The overwhelming grandeur of Vienna amazes me as I drive to **Hotel Gilbert** in the **Museum Quarter**. An hour later I stroll in the **Maria-Theresien-Platz**: cast in bronze, the formidable figure of Empress Maria Theresa still commands all that is around her and beyond. Two magnificent buildings stand regally on either side, **Kunsthistorisches** (Museum of Art History) and the **Natural History Museum Vienna**; a handful of fountains and beautifully sculpted marble

statues dot the green landscape. Basking in the warm evening sunshine, I admire the splendid environs, waiting to discover more.

The next morning, Tom, my guide, and I walk on the most beautiful **Ringstrasse Boulevard**, a masterpiece in terms of urban planning, that took 50 years to build. Starting with the Parliament, passing many imposing structures like the **Austrian National Library (Heldenplatz)**, and through the 5.3km walk along Ringstrasse, Tom speaks of Vienna's history, art, people, culture, and

heritage, all of which make the city admirable. As a bonus, he waits patiently as I click tonnes of pictures.

Walking down **Kohlmarkt**, a magnificent green dome comes into view followed by the majestic curved façade of **The Hofburg** (Imperial Palace), one of the biggest integrated palace complexes in the

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6

1. Dedicated to St. Karl Borromäus, the Karlskirche is considered a fine example of Baroque architecture 2. Vienna is a haven for biking and walking 3. A beautiful garden in the Schönbrunn Palace 4. The grand Belvedere Palace 5. Vienna is dotted with ornamental fountains such as the Danubius Fountain, outside the Albertina Museum 6. You can't stop looking at the Albertina Museum's staircase.



4



3



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Keeping old-world charm alive, Vienna still has horse-drawn carriages for visitors to soak in the city's allure

world that housed the private apartments and stunning staterooms of the Habsburg royal family, that ruled for more than seven centuries. Now, it accommodates offices, museums, and the Spanish Riding School. This is the palace where Maria Theresa lived and ruled, where her 16 children were born and raised. In the **Sisi Museum**, there are more than 300 exhibits including Empress Elisabeth's (aka Sisi) dresses, jewellery, stationery, art equipment, the harp from her childhood, etc. With exquisitely-carved marble



AI SNAPS

WHAT: Sacher-Torte
WHERE: Hotel Sacher,
Philharmoniker Str. 4,
1010 Wien
+43 1 514560

Take a screenshot of our recommendations to keep your exploration on track

statues, each telling a story, and horse carriages plying in the historical palace complex, it looks like a scene from a period film.

It might be a good idea to get the Vienna City Card, which gets you discounts in museums and tourist attractions, plus a 20 per cent discount on room rates in participating hotels and restaurants, and a 24-hour Hop-On Hop-Off bus ticket.

Walking along **Graben**, admiring some of the old buildings and their unique architecture, we walk past the iconic Plague Column and enter **St. Stephen's Cathedral**, where I find

the interiors and the organ music quite captivating. **St. Charles Church**, with its mighty green dome, is another important sacred building and a symbol of Vienna. Passing by the **Albertina Museum**, I am struck by the beauty of **Danubius Fountain**.



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St. Stephen's Cathedral is considered the most important religious building in Vienna; its multicoloured tile roof is one of the city's most recognisable symbols

5 MUST-VISIT CAFÉS

AIDA

Coffee with a dash of history. One of the city's oldest coffee houses, it offers great views from the first floor. Stephansplatz 1010 Wien, Singerstraße 1; aida.at

CAFÉ BELLARIA

One of Vienna's oldest traditional cafés, in a new guise. Offers all-day dining. Bellariastraße 6, 1010 Wien; cafebellaria.at

CAFÉ BRÄUNERHOFF

The favourite café of literary greats. Hop over for Viennese delights and a large selection of newspapers. Right behind the Hofburg; Stallburggasse 2, 1010 Wien; +43 1 5123893

CAFÉ CENTRAL

Founded in 1867, the traditional café was a hotspot for philosophers and writers, including Sigmund Freud. Has a fabulous in-house patisserie. At the corner of Herrengasse and Strauchgasse; cafecentral.wien

CAFÉ DANIEL MOSER

A trendy bar on the site of Vienna's first-ever coffee house, with a lineage that dates back to 1685. Rotenturmstraße 14, 1010 Wien; danielmoser.at

To Get Around: Take the U-Bahn (subway), the Schnellbahn or S-Bahn (local train), the Straßenbahn (tram) or ride the Autobus (bus).

Fun Fact

Snow globes, Erwin Perzy's accidental creation, originated in Vienna. A magical world in miniature, my favourite one has snow quietly falling onto St. Stephen's Cathedral and the Giant Ferris Wheel. The largest selection can be seen (and bought) at the Snow Globe Museum.

Lunch is at the classy **Café Museum** that opened in 1899 and became a meeting place for Viennese artists. Later, Tom gives me a tour of the spectacular **Vienna State Opera**. At the edge of the old town is **Urania**, a public educational institute in art nouveau style. That evening, we walk through **Spittelberg** to explore creative art, and dine at **TIAN Bistro**. All vegetarian and vegan dishes use resources from root to leaf (sourced from local organic farms). Viennese practise mindful eating as well as meaningful living!

The next day, Tom takes me to **Schönbrunn Palace**, where more grandeur awaits: well-preserved objects from different parts of the world; theme-based royal quarters, stunning gardens and gorgeous sculptures. In the **Upper Belvedere Palace**, the reflection pond mirroring the façade is a show-stopper! That evening, at the 'Strauss and Mozart-Dinner Concert' at **Kursalon Hübner**, my heart waltzes and pirouettes to the celebrated music. Vienna takes a bow with majestic grace! 🍷



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380

nozzles run along the Banpo Grand
Bridge (the world's longest bridge
fountain) and spray water into River Han

Lead image: Unsplash; When in Seoul: visitseoul.net;
Did You Know: Getty Images; Rest: Unsplash

THREE ROYAL PALACES TO EXPLORE



GYEONGBOKGUNG PALACE

The largest of the city's Five Grand Palaces, it was the main palace of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910). You can view artefacts and period costumes on display plus see the re-enactment of palace rituals.



CHANGDEOKGUNG PALACE

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it was built as a secondary palace in 1405. Explore the imposing gate Donhwamun, the main palace building Injeongjeon, and the Secret Garden Huwon—a natural delight.



DEOKSUGUNG PALACE

It served as the imperial seat for the Korean Empire, and is one of Seoul's only palaces that can be visited in the evening to witness its lit-up buildings. Deoksugung boasts Korean and western-style neoclassical structures.

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
WHEN IN SEOUL

Walk down the lanes of Bukchon Hanok Village, dotted with preserved *hanoks* (traditional Korean houses)



Much like The Great Wall, Seoul has The Hanyangdoseong or the Seoul City Wall. It's 18.6km in length and follows the ridges of Seoul's main mountains—Bugaksan, Naksan, Namsan and Inwangsan. The most scenic sights lie along its northern half, and can be viewed in less than an hour.

FUN FACTS

Koreans use metal chopsticks instead of bamboo or wooden ones. Know why? According to lore, silver chopsticks were used by the nobility to warn them (silver would change colour on coming into contact with poison). Now, chopsticks are made of steel or *bangjja*, a Korean bronze alloy. 



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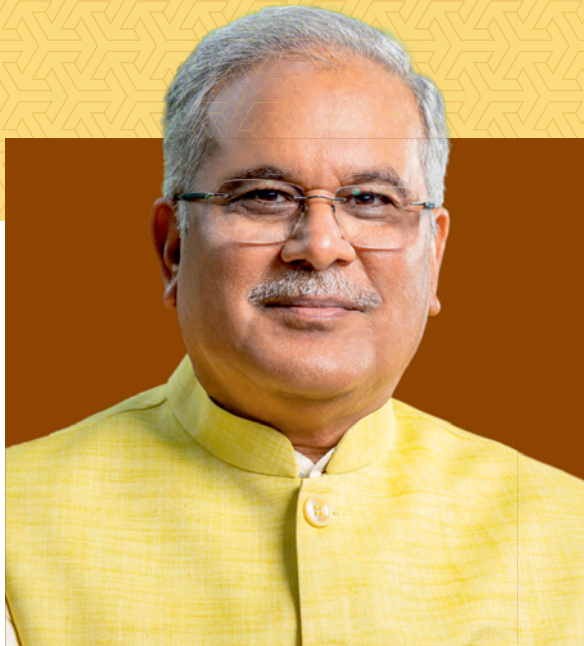
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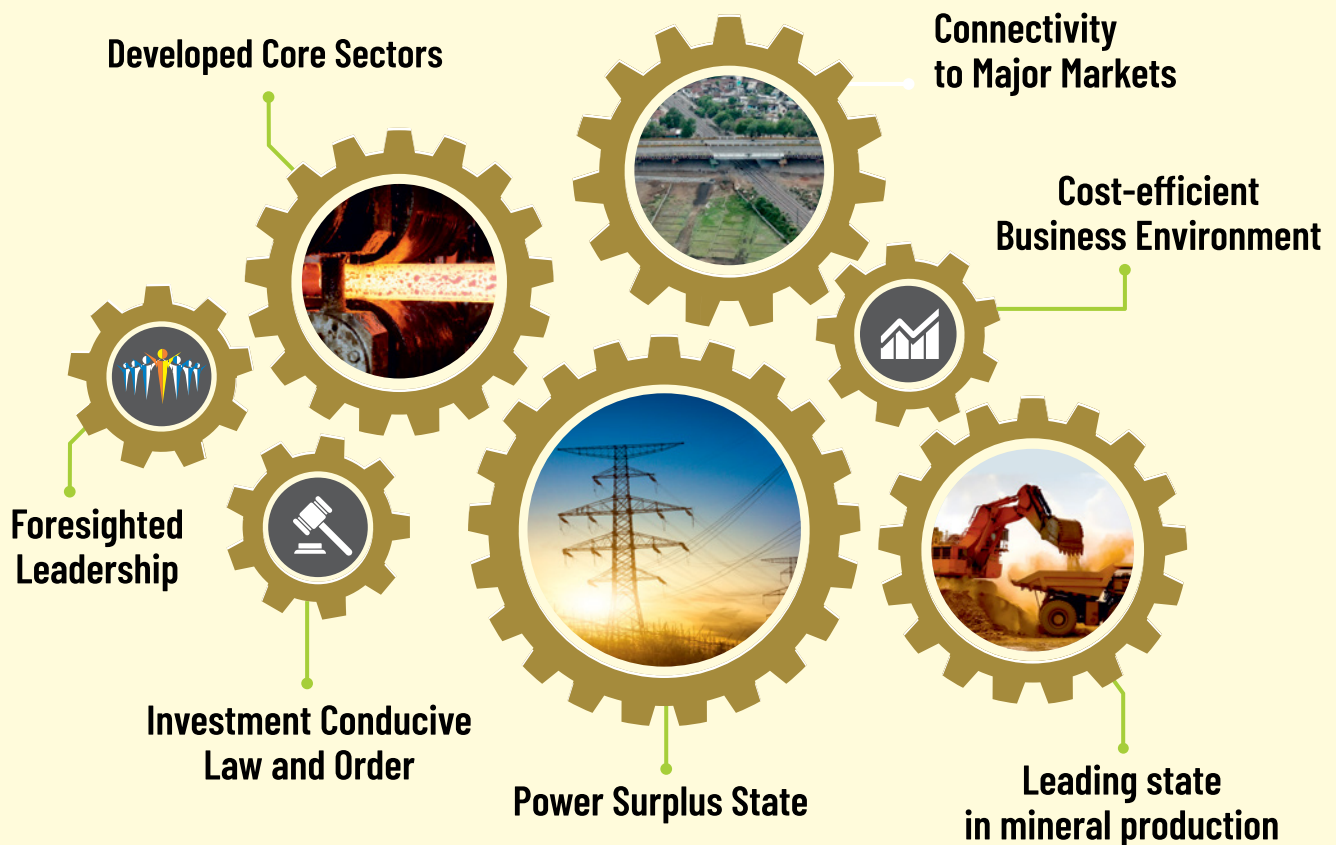
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GUCCI MARMONT LEATHER BELT

The ubiquitous double-G logo, designed by Aldo Gucci, has left a legacy that continues to grow. Created in 1964, the Gucci belt, a symbol of opulence and prestige, has graced the waists of celebrities and fashion luminaries through the decades. It stands unwavering as the ultimate touch of luxury to elevate any ensemble.

13.9%

of the global luxury market's revenue will be generated via online sales in 2023.*

SOURCE: statista.com



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BURBERRY TRENCH

Crafted by founder Thomas Burberry a century ago, this enduring masterpiece symbolises British fashion, culture, and history. Originally patented as the Tielocken Coat in 1912, it's fabricated from gabardine, a fabric that he conceived in 1879. Today, the timeless and instantly-recognisable Trench marries tradition and modernity while upholding its iconic legacy.



CARTIER LOVE BRACELET

Crafted by Italian-American jewellery designer Aldo Cipullo in 1969, in the New York workshops of this French luxury jewellery house, the Love de Cartier Bracelet redefines jewellery's purpose beyond status and wealth. This oval-shaped unisex gold piece, with its distinctive tiny screws, symbolises lasting love and commitment—although its first sketch was crafted after a break-up! 💔

CHANEL CLASSIC 2.55 FLAP BAG

In February 1955 (thus the 2.55 moniker), Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel birthed a legend: the 2.55 Flap. This iconic handbag liberated women's fashion with its pioneering shoulder strap, boasting two signature hallmarks—diamond-stitched quilting and a rich burgundy lining. Today, the 2.55 Flap remains an eternal masterpiece in the realm of Chanel's renowned repertoire of handbags.





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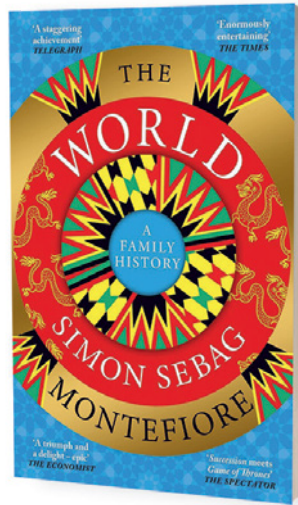
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now reading...



Tales of Yore

Author, entrepreneur, and motivational speaker **Durjoy Datta** gives us a sneak peek into what he's reading right now

The book I'm reading at the moment is titled *The World: A Family History* by Simon Sebag Montefiore.

I have read two books—*Jerusalem* and *The Romanovs*—by the same author and I found both these books wildly entertaining. Any history book runs the risk of being just a random collection of events, dates, wars and coups, but the author, like in his earlier books, manages to make it read like a dramatic soap opera, replete with unthinkable twists, gore, violence and delicious back-stabbing.

This time the challenge is steeper because the book considers the world a family. It starts off its history say 5,000 years ago and covers everything you can think of: from the Ziggurats and the Pharaohs to

the Mauryans and the Ottomans. . . you get the drift.

The curated stories are not just a mere recounting of events, but are tales filled with emotions, intrigues, and palpable tensions. You don't just read the events; you live them.

It's a wild, ambitious sweep and the writer gets it right. The aim of the book, I believe, was not to educate but entertain. It picks out the most dramatic sequences in history, mounts them, and paints a visually striking picture of it all. The end result? A history book that resonates with readers on a deeply emotional level, making past events feel immediate and alive. One can't help but be immersed in the vivid world Montefiore presents, marvelling at the intricacies and craziness of our shared human story. 📖

The World: A Family History

Author: **Simon Sebag Montefiore**; Publisher: **Hachette India**

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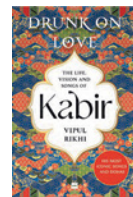


HOLLY

(Stephen King)

Holly Gibney returns to unravel the truth behind multiple disappearances in a Midwestern town. Facing sly adversaries, she deploys her skills as a detective, navigating personal challenges to unearth a dark secret.

Hachette; ₹999



DRUNK ON LOVE

(Vipul Rikhi)

Encapsulating the life of Saint Kabir, it delves into his extensively quoted and translated poetry, and thoroughly explores his vision, including essential concepts like *Jheeni*, *Raam*, and *Guru*. HarperCollins Publishers India; ₹499



TIGER SEASON

(Gargi Rawat)

A health reporter stumbles into a tiger conservation campaign with a fallen Bollywood star. Amidst controversy and attraction, she navigates the conservation world. An offbeat romcom. Penguin Random House India; ₹299

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Friday Night Plan

Netflix

This is a coming-of-age comedy about two squabbling brothers who hatch a plan to attend a party while their mother is away on a business trip. A film on brotherhood, it stars Juhi Chawla and Babil Khan among others, and is produced by Farhan Akhtar.



Bambai Meri Jaan

Amazon Prime Video

A crime thriller with the underlying good-versus-evil theme, it is set in the '60s and '70s in Bombay, when the city was riddled with guns, mobs, and crime. This 10-episode drama features Kay Kay Menon in the lead as an honest police officer.



India's Mega Festivals

Disney+Hotstar

In this show, celebrity chefs Gary Mehigan and Pablo Naranjo traverse the length and breadth of India to soak in the grandeur of its biggest festivals like Holi, Durga Puja, and Onam among others, and dig into its celebratory and elaborate culinary fare.



The Fall of the House of Usher

Netflix

Based on Edgar Allan Poe's works, this series (streaming 12th Oct onwards) revolves around the Usher siblings who have built a dynasty to secure their family fortune, and how they confront the mysterious deaths of their heirs.

SHOWS THAT BROKE BARRIERS



Tu Tu Main Main

YouTube

This 1994 DD Metro sitcom is about the love-hate relationship between a stubborn mother-in-law and a feisty daughter-in-law. Peppered with hilarious bickering, it stars Reema Lagoo, and Supriya Pilgaonkar.



Will & Grace

Jio Cinema

This Emmy award-winning sitcom portrayed one of television's first gay characters. It follows best friends Will (a corporate lawyer) and Grace (an interior decorator), as they navigate the highs and lows of life in New York.



Zabaan Sambhalke

Amazon Prime Video

With veteran actor Pankaj Kapoor in the lead, this iconic and hilarious Doordarshan show drew inspiration from Mind Your Language; it's about a group of students from all around the world taking Hindi lessons. 🏹



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Jamia Millia Islamia,
former Lt. Governor of Delhi
and scholar of Urdu poet Ghalib;
ASIA, SGT University



Prof. Rajat M. Nag

Former MD
Asian Development Bank;
ASIA, SGT University



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Get A Head Start

Add some colour to your autumn break with these lively events around the world

1/ALBUQUERQUE INTERNATIONAL BALLOON FIESTA

Albuquerque, New Mexico

7th – 15th October

From drone light shows and remote-controlled balloon launches—to majestic balloon exhibitions to majestic balloon launches—this fiesta also features chainsaw carving exhibitions, fireworks, a car show, and mass ascensions. The highlight is the Special Shape Rodeo with balloons shaped as cartoons and characters like Tweety Bird, the Little Prince, even Elvis Presley! At **Balloon Fiesta Park**. balloonfiesta.com

2/ NATIONAL GASTRONOMY FESTIVAL

Santarém, Portugal

21st October – 1st November

The 41st edition of this culinary extravaganza will be held at the **Casa do Campino**, and will feature some of the country's well-known chefs and restaurants serving their signature dishes such as *pastel de nata* (egg custard tart pastry) and *arroz de marisco* (rice and seafood). Plus, wine workshops, performances, and tasting sessions. To sample the fare, head to Stables 1 and 4. festivalnacionaldegastronomia.pt



Filmekimi // Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta // National Gastronomy Festival

1. The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta sees the ascension of balloons of various shapes and sizes
2. Chefs and restaurants whip up the best of Portuguese fare at the National Gastronomy Festival 3. A still from The Zone of Interest (it picked up three awards at Cannes), which will be screened at Filmekimi.



Clockwise from top: Shutterstock, Facebook/Festival Nacional de Gastronomia-Santarém, imdb

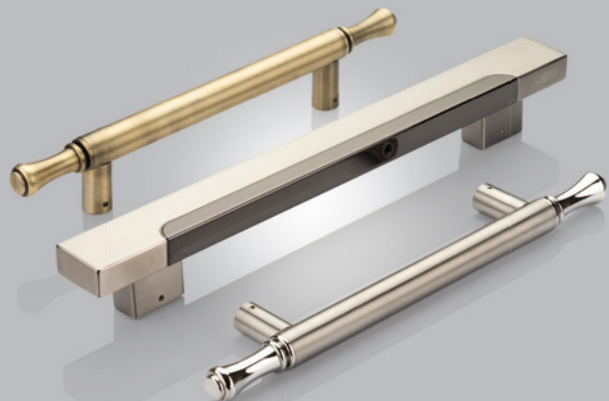


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3/ FILMEKIMI

Istanbul, Turkey

13th – 22nd October

This annual event screens the latest award-winning movies from the Berlin, Cannes, Venice, and Toronto film festivals. The line-up includes Finnish master Aki Kaurismäki's *Fallen Leaves*, German director Ilker Çatak's 2024 Oscar-nominated film *The Teachers' Lounge*, and British filmmaker Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest*. Catch them at **Beyoğlu Atlas**, and **Cinebonus Maçka G-Mall** movie theatres, among others. filmekimi.iksv.org

4/ NEW YORK COMEDY FESTIVAL

New York, USA

3rd – 12th November

Expanding its duration from a seven-day event to a 10-day one this year, the New York Comedy Festival will feature a massive repertoire of over 200 comedians and more than 100 shows. The venues are spread across five boroughs in NYC, including **Carnegie Hall** and **Madison Square Garden**. Some of the biggest names include Conan O'Brien, Jeff Ross, and Daniel Sloss. nycomedyfestival.com

5/ MYSURU DASARA

Mysuru, India

15th – 24th October

The 10-day Mysuru Dasara commences on the first night of Navratri and concludes on Vijayadashami. Cultural programmes are held every evening in front of the illuminated **Mysore Palace**, **Jaganmohan Palace**, and **Kalamandir**. The festival comes to an end with the Jamboo Savari, a procession of caparisoned elephants from the royal palace to Banni Mantapa. mysuredasara.gov.in

6/ FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Berlin, Germany

6th – 15th October

During this annual event, the facades of Berlin's iconic landmarks become a canvas for dazzling light and video projections; streets, squares, and neighbourhoods are all brilliantly illuminated. Some of the spectacular light art installations are at the **Bebelplatz**, and historic buildings like **Brandenburger Tor**, **Berliner Dom**, and **Schloss Charlottenburg**. Book licensed tours from visitBerlin.de. festival-of-lights.de



1]

1. Folk dance is an integral part of the Mysuru Dasara celebrations 2. Jordan Peele and Keegan-Michael Key at a previous edition of New York Comedy Festival 3. The Berliner Dom is beautifully lit during the Festival of Lights.



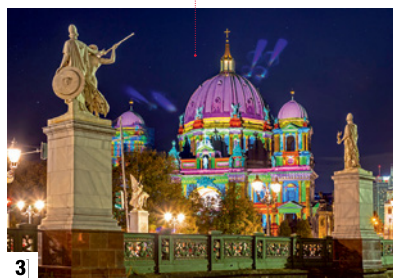
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Shobhabazar, Kolkata, WB

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Festival of Lights // Mysuru Dasara // New York Comedy Festival



3]



2]



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Starry Success

Designer-to-the-stars **Rocky S** has carved a unique identity for his brand, which has completed 25 years in the fashion industry

/by **SAYANTI HALDER**

You've had a great show at the London Fashion Week (LFW) last month, after Milan earlier in 2023.

How do the sensibilities differ when designing for India and shows abroad?

It always entails a delicate balancing act of sensibilities and aesthetics. In India, my designs exude the vibrancy of traditional textiles, intricate embroidery, and a celebration of our rich cultural heritage, that resonates with our diverse audiences. On the international stage, I infuse a global perspective, incorporating contemporary silhouettes and a broader colour palette while upholding the essence of





1



2

STAYING
RELEVANT IS
ABOUT STAYING
TRUE TO YOUR
UNIQUE DESIGN
IDENTITY WHILE
INTERPRETING IT
FOR EACH NEW
GENERATION

Indian craftsmanship. This blend allows my creations to act as a bridge between tradition and modernity, appealing to both Indian and international sensibilities.

What was the idea behind your LFW collection, *Damned Soul - An Eruption*?

It is inspired by the desire for mental serenity amidst the relentless pursuit of success in today's world. It embodies a fusion of avant-

garde and timeless designs in ivory, black, burgundy, grey, and gold, symbolising the human experience of inner turmoil. It showcases a blend of contemporary style and exquisite craftsmanship, featuring elements like sequin embroidery, metallic fabric textures, signature Baroque print and innovative techniques such as patchwork embroidery and boning to create exaggerated shoulders. The elements are inspired by the Baroque art movement.

How do you strike a balance between tradition and modernity in your designs?

Personally, it allows me to honour our cultural heritage

1. Rocky S's latest show at the London Fashion Week is inspired by the desire for mental serenity 2. Holidaying in Mykonos, Greece.



1. With show-stopper Manushi Chhillar; Rocky S showcased Damned Soul - An Eruption at the London Fashion Week 2023

2. Mood boards help keep his vision clear
3. Rocky S is known for meticulous detailing and a flawless finish.



while staying in tune with the contemporary world. I blend textiles, embroidery techniques, and motifs into modern silhouettes and designs. This fusion not only preserves our heritage but also ensures its relevance. It's a way of embracing our roots and presenting a resonant perspective on the global fashion stage.

In an ever-evolving industry, how do you stay relevant after 25 years?

It is tough and requires a relentless commitment to innovation, adaptability, and a deep understanding

of your audience. It means embracing new technologies, and sustainable practices, and constantly pushing creative boundaries. But most importantly, it's about staying true to your unique design identity while interpreting it for each new generation of fashion enthusiasts.

A destination that has significantly influenced your design aesthetic.

Florence and Versailles, in Italy and France, respectively.

Has there been a time when travelling helped

you discover a new culture or tradition that influenced your work?

My travels through Italy and France were profound sources of inspiration for my designs, drawing from their rich Baroque art and cultures. The intricate details, lavish textiles, and dramatic play of light and shadow in Baroque architecture and paintings in Italy, infused my designs with opulence and elegance. France's historical connection to Baroque aesthetics, particularly during Louis XIV's reign,

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The designer expands his global reach by showcasing Baroque magic at the Milan Fashion Week 2023 with his Midnight Bloom collection

inspired structured silhouettes and elaborate embellishments in my collections.

How do you find creative inspiration after a demanding fashion show?

Nature provides solace, while art galleries offer visual stimuli; travel exposes me to new cultures, while extensive research broadens my horizons. Collaborations ignite fresh perspectives, mood boards keep my vision clear, and mindful reflection taps into inner creativity. Experimentation with materials and techniques leads to exciting breakthroughs, and revisiting fashion history inspires new interpretations. Social interaction with fellow designers and fashion enthusiasts sparks innovative ideas. This multifaceted approach rekindles my creativity. 🍷

RAPID FIRE

A creative individual you would have wanted to collaborate with?

Karl Lagerfeld

Your guilty pleasure?

Chocolates

Your favourite fashion city?

London

If you could time travel to one fashion era in history?

16th century Europe

A fashion trend that will be big in 2024?

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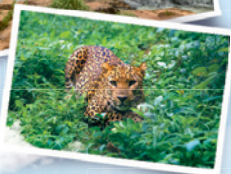


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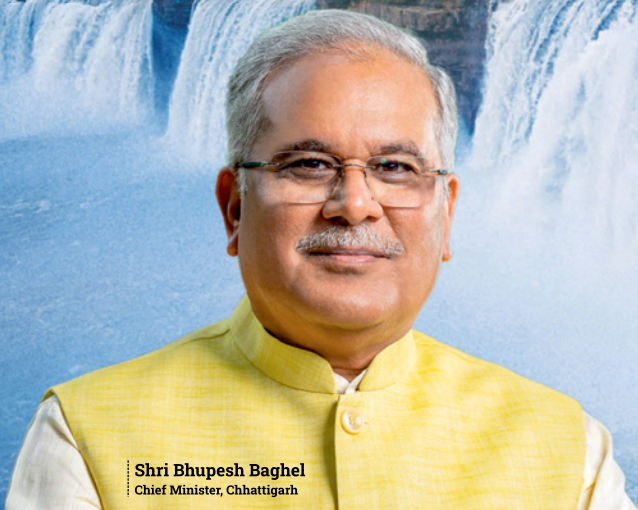


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S-12522/9



La Tour d'Argent is the epitome of French grandeur

Flavours Of Yesteryears

Embark on a captivating culinary journey at these five globally-revered heritage dining spots—each of them not only offers exceptional gastronomy but also holds profound historical and cultural importance

/by **SAYANTI HALDER**

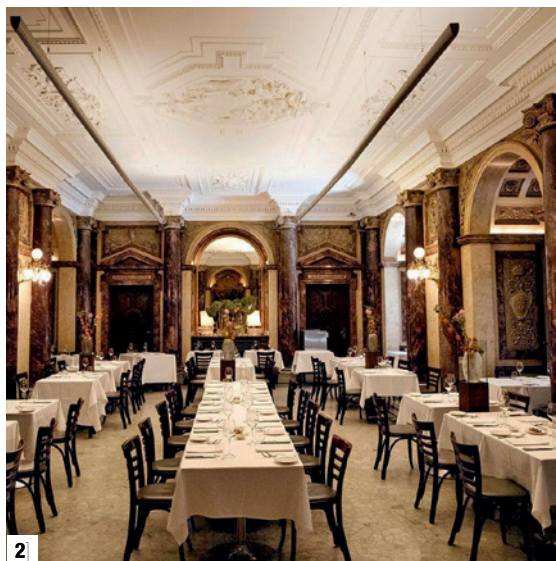
LA TOUR D'ARGENT, PARIS, FRANCE

Serving upscale French cuisine, La Tour d'Argent (translates to The Silver Tower) is a historic restaurant in Paris's 5th arrondissement. Spread across five floors, it was built from a stone that shone silver in the light, giving it its name. In 1582, La Tour d'Argent opened as an inn and soon became a favoured dining spot for kings and princes owing to its safety and aristocracy. The tower is located on the banks of the River Seine, at 15 **Quai de la Tournelle**, near **Louvre Museum**.

RULES, LONDON, ENGLAND

Founded in 1798, Rules is London's oldest continuously operating restaurant, boasting a rich history. Favoured by British monarchs and the nobility, its legacy spans nine reigns—it is only slightly younger than the USA! Rules has received visits from Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells, and Harrison Ford. The restaurant's royal connections and traditional British fare make it a historic dining destination; its menu lays emphasis on classic English game cookery, along with an offering of oysters, pies and puddings. Rules embodies a cherished culinary experience.

1. Drenched in opulence, Rules exudes royalty 2. Vestibül brings together art, royalty, and a love story 3. A Brasileira boasts a rich history 4. Wierzynek Restaurant draws illustrious guests thanks to its hearty Polish feasts.



WIERZYNEK RESTAURANT, KRAKOW, POLAND

When wealthy merchant Mikołaj Wierzynek hosted a sumptuous feast for the monarchs of Europe on behalf of the Polish King Casimir the Great, in 1364, it started a tradition. Even today, the restaurant has maintained its medieval style of feasts, and its 14th-century royal heritage and classic Polish cuisine draws several illustrious guests. The restaurant has become something of an **Old Town** landmark.

A BRASILEIRA, LISBON, PORTUGAL

Lisbon's oldest and most renowned café, A Brasileira opened its doors on 19th November, 1905, in **Chiado**. Founded by a Portuguese emigrant, this enduring establishment has witnessed numerous eras, political shifts, and pivotal moments in Portugal's history. It has retained its unique character, preserving the memories of countless artists and anonymous patrons over a century. A Brasileira has been offering coffee produced from some of the world's most-awarded coffee beans.

VESTIBÜL, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

This upmarket restaurant is housed in the historic **Burgtheater**, a neo-baroque style theatre dating back to 1888. Its 'imperial' rooms were exclusively reserved for Emperor Francis Joseph I and Empress Elisabeth (Sisi) when they attended performances at the **K.K. Hofburgtheater**. You can see the imperial family's coat of arms and the royal couple's initials, while sampling the classic Wiener schnitzel. 🍷



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Vimal Jhajharia and Vikas Jhajharia (MBA from Australia) have delivered many lectures, conducted workshops, seminars and have widely travelled and provided consultancy on major projects already in operation without any changes or modifications. They are currently providing consultancy in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, South Africa, UAE, and South America, among others.

Both of them have been felicitated several times for their outstanding knowledge on Vastu & have also won several awards of national and international repute.



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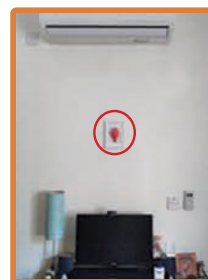
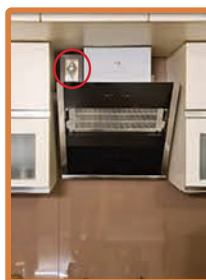
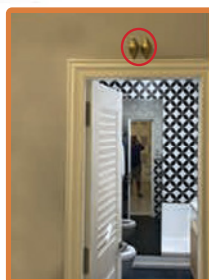
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Vimal Jhajharia along with his son Vikas Jhajharia



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Yes, we do a lot of Vastu correction for builders and developers and also individuals whose properties have been stuck for a long time and which are not getting sold because of some or the other Vastu defect. Vouching for success is Satish from Bangalore who was trying to

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Live Like A Maharaja

The newly-opened, luxurious Maharaja Suite at the Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience

/by **NAWAB KAZIM ALI KHAN**

A busy city life can often stress you out, leaving not much time to travel out of Delhi, so I thought of a more meaningful way to relax. I could think of no better place than the Taj Mahal Hotel, as it has been a part of me since my teens; my association with it goes back to December 1979. The hotel has been an institution for me and I carry so many memories of it.

I heard about the hotel's recently-opened, luxurious Maharaja Suite from several friends and I could not think of a more appropriate place to stay. I was escorted by a most warm and efficient hotel

staff to the suite. As I walked out of the elevator onto the second floor, I could see a distinct red door at a distance. I walked straight to it almost as though a magnetic energy was pulling me.

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

Walking into the Suite felt as though I was walking into my first Air India flight in 1981, the 747 aircraft called Chandragupt Maurya. I could feel the same positive energy from every corner displaying elements of India's diverse culture; from the walls and drapes to the minute detailing in every piece of furniture in the Hall (lounge), the Chamber (bedroom), the Study, and

the bathrooms. The use of the magnetic red tone helped to highlight every element, however small. The beautiful wallpapers bore an Indian touch with animal motifs and colourful designs. Used in just the right quantity, it acted as a refreshing highlight, lifting the space. The Maharaja Suite means truly living like a Maharaja, in what is a perfect blend of royalty

1. The magnetic red tone used in the doors and the ceilings lifts The Living Room **2.** The Chamber, the resplendent master bedroom of the Maharaja Suite.







1

and modernism. My stay was nothing short of a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

A TOUCH OF NOSTALGIA

In the expansive Suite, what caught my eye instantly was the Study, with some elements related to the late Mr. JRD Tata's life, adorning the indigo shelves, such as miniature Air India model planes and an original Air India poster. And who can forget the iconic Maharaja: his touch was evident everywhere; dashes of red paying tributes to the Air India legacy, a nod to nostalgia with retro plane-like switches, a chest crafted like vintage luggage, and a model of the little Maharaja mascot highlighting the foyer corner, and so on. The Suite has been designed by Bobby Mukherji and Associates.

CULINARY CURATIONS

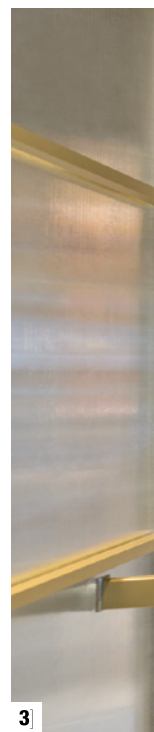
A delicious late afternoon lunch at The Chambers

with a view of the Delhi skyline was a delightful experience. Cuisine comes courtesy of Albergo, a global kitchen dedicated solely to members and guests of The Chambers. The menu is comprehensive and caters well to all palates. The Crab on Toast is an exceptional blend of flaky, fresh crab and rich, butter smooth pate. It was also impossible to ignore the Grilled Sea Bass accompanied by a divine Admiral Sauce. Both dishes come highly recommended. Hats off to the chef.

But back to nostalgia: two of my all-time favourite restaurants for over 40 years, The House of Ming and Machan, continued to impress me, be it the unique delicacies or the interiors, that have been improvised over time. Being at the Hotel brought back several memories. A day's stay helped me realise how many years had gone by. 🍷



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3



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5



4

1. A nostalgic Air India poster with the iconic Maharaja adorns the wall in the Study 2. The study area's ambience exudes sophistication while paying homage to the late Mr. JRD Tata 3. The curved marble tub with stately brass fittings is perfect for a regal experience 4. The interplay of gold and rust in the various elements of the Powder Room make it stand out 5. The fringed lampshade, wallpaper with Indian motifs, and perfectly polished brass faucets add a royal touch to the bathroom 6. The thoughtful service of the staff elevates the Maharaja experience.





Soda bicarbonate gives Noon chai the pink tinge

The Brew That Binds

No drink is as ubiquitous to India as tea. Here are four concoctions of the beloved beverage from different parts of the country

/by **GEETIKA SASAN BHANDARI**

NOON CHAI

The next time you're in Kashmir, try Noon chai or Sheer chai. True to its name—*noon* means 'salt' in some regional languages—this pink tea has a dash of salt, apparently added to prevent dehydration, a common occurrence in high-altitude areas. The secret ingredient in this tea is soda bicarbonate; when it comes into contact with the tannins in the tea leaves, it produces the distinctive pink hue. Also prevents heartburn and bloating (inevitable when you eat delicious Kashmiri fare)! Available literally everywhere.

DARJEELING TEA

Hand-picked and hand-processed, Darjeeling tea spells innate luxury. A light golden brew, it is flavourful and aromatic with hints of fruits and flowers. Darjeeling tea is known by the names of the gardens that produce it, and at the top stands Badamtam's first flush and Makaibari's Silver Tips Imperial Oolong Tea. The right way to enjoy this tea is to just let the leaves steep in hot water, sans milk or sugar. A great place to savour it is **Glenary's** in **Darjeeling**, with an English breakfast.

IRANI CHAI

Legend has it that travellers from Persia came to Mumbai and brought their culinary traditions with them. They eventually fanned out to Hyderabad and Pune where the Irani café culture still stands strong. Brewed with black tea, milk, sugar and *khoya* or *mawa*, the milky Irani chai is best enjoyed with Osmania biscuits in cafés scattered around the **Charminar in Hyderabad**. In **Pune**, try the **Irani Café**. Some versions add cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger as well.

SULAIMANI MALABAR CHAI

In Arabic, Sulaiman translates to 'man of peace', and it is said that Prophet Muhammad used to have a beverage called *ghava* made with dates and black pepper. It got popular among the Arabs, who tweaked the recipe, and brought it to India. Brewed to a golden colour, this aromatic tea is infused with cardamom, pepper, cloves, and spearmint, and works as a digestive post a rich meal. Try it at **Malabar Café** in **SG Palya, Bengaluru**, with Malabari banana fritters for an authentic experience. 🍵

Desert Carnival

Head to India's sole white desert at Kutch, Gujarat, for an array of immersive experiences



1, 2 & 4: Pratik Bharti 3 & 5: Pannusa.net



1. A beautifully decorated camel amidst the sand dunes during Rann Utsav; 2. Camel safaris form an essential part of the festival 3. A view of the tent city at Dhordo, in Kutch 4. An installation of a tree with lights at Dhordo 5. A truck installation at the festival.



What began as a modest three-day festival, has burgeoned into a grand 100-day celebration in **Dhordo**, a village near the **Rann of Kutch**—a salt marsh—ensconced in the **Thar** desert. Every year, a brand-new tent city emerges, replete with meticulously built temporary infrastructure. The upcoming edition is scheduled to run from 10th November 2023 to 25th February 2024.

Attracting more than 8,000 tourists from across the globe, this vibrant annual carnival, organised by Gujarat Tourism, resonates with the harmonious rhythms of music, dance, culture, adventure, and art. It brings together local artisans and folk artistes in a collective effort to revive the rich cultural tapestry of the state. During full moon nights in winter, the white sands take on an enchanting allure as a profusion of colours, designs, and installations set against the arid landscape creates a mosaic of exquisite beauty.

Within this jubilant atmosphere, traditional craft stalls, food vendors, golf carts, thrilling ATV rides, camel safaris, and cultural programmes abound. Guests can immerse themselves in stargazing while those seeking tranquility can attend meditation and yoga sessions. To sightsee, you can visit **Bhuj, Kutch, Mandvi, Dholavira, Narayan Sarovar**, and **Lakhpat**. For online bookings, visit rannutsav.net. Online entry permits for the White Rann at Dhordo are at rannpermit.gujarat.gov.in. 🏹

🏹 GETTING THERE

Air India flies to Rajkot from Delhi, and Mumbai. Kutch is around six hours' drive from Rajkot airport.

the ai lounge / escape

Footprints On The Sand

Make the most of long weekends by driving out of Mumbai's concrete jungle and discovering some of Maharashtra's best-kept secrets—its off-the-radar beaches

/by **SHRABASTI MALLIK**

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1

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**Around 189km from
Mumbai**

Touted as one of the cleanest and safest beaches in the Konkan region, Diveagar is an ideal spot for picnics and fun activities like making sand sculptures, playing catch, and of course playing with the beach fave, the frisbee. You can also try horse riding or ride an ATV. On one end of the beach is a sanctuary for migratory seagulls, and on the other, a fishing settlement. If you are lucky, you might spot a starfish or a cast of crabs. Stay back at any of the several hotels and return to Mumbai the following day.

2

SHRIVARDHAN BEACH

Around 190km from Mumbai

En-route to this beach from Mumbai, take a detour to **Tamhini Ghat**, a picturesque mountain passage (it would add a few hours, but it is worth a visit). The beach is family-friendly; children can play beach games, ride horse-drawn carts and dig into delicious street food. Eateries here serve authentic Malvani cuisine. Do not forget to try *ukadiche modak*, a specialty here. Accommodation options include hotels, resorts, and homestays.

When There:

If you are at Shrivardhan beach, you may also visit the nearby Harihareshwar and Kondivali beaches located about 20km and 12km away, respectively.



3

MURUD-JANJIIRA BEACH

Around 157km from Mumbai

Located south of Mumbai, an estimated four-hour drive will take you to **Murud beach**. It comes to life after sunset when vendors gather to sell a plethora of street food along with coconut water and soft drinks. Try the popular pomfret thali at nearby eateries. There are a few accommodation options available, including an MTDC resort. You can also avail a ferry from the **Gateway of India** to **Mandwa**, and from there, take a taxi to the beach. 🚗

YOUR AI



JRD TATA
Commemorating the 91st
anniversary of the aviation
legend's first flight

80

AI NEWS
We keep you abreast of our latest
news and exciting updates, so you
never miss a beat

84

AI CONNECT
We present our latest global
connectivity, offering you
unparalleled access worldwide

85



SHOOT FOR THE SKY: The Beginning Of A New Era

15th September 2023 marked the end of the first year of Air India's five-year transformation journey. In September 2022, Air India had announced its five-year transformation plan, Vihaan.AI. Vihaan in Sanskrit means 'dawn of a new era' and this transformation is truly the dawn of a new era for Air India and for Indian aviation. Vihaan.AI outlines a roadmap to transform Air India into a 'World-Class Global Airline with an Indian Heart,' after its return to the Tata Group in January 2022.

The Vihaan.AI transformation roadmap is built around five key pillars: 1) Global loyal customer base 2) Robust and clockwork operations 3) Industry best talent 4) Industry captain on future agendas, and 5) Commercially efficient and growing business. The journey is spread across three phases—Taxi, Take-off, and Climb. The Taxi phase, which concluded in March 2023, focussed on fixing the basics and setting up a platform for growth. The Take-off phase kicked off in April 2023, and is focussed on building for excellence as Air India builds tools, processes, systems, and capabilities to support its growth and scale. The Climb phase (starts April 2024) will focus on reaching the heights of aviation and taking on a leadership position.

WE ARE TOTALLY COMMITTED
TO MAKING AIR INDIA THE
WORLD-CLASS AIRLINE IT
DESERVES TO BE... AREAS
WHERE WE WANT TO
BE ABSOLUTELY BEST-IN-
CLASS: CUSTOMER SERVICE,
TECHNOLOGY, FLEET,
NETWORK AND HOSPITALITY

— N Chandrasekaran
Chairman, Tata Sons

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

- Placed record-setting orders for 470 aircraft worth \$70bn
- Added 10 aircraft to the fleet; aircraft from the new order will join the fleet by year-end
- Committed \$400mn to refurbish interiors of 40 wide-body aircraft from early 2024
- Restored inflight entertainment screens: 99 per cent in First and Business Class, and nearly 90 per cent in Economy, across the fleet
- Invested \$200mn to revamp IT infrastructure for customer satisfaction
- Assigned \$200mn towards aviation training, to train 50,000+ professionals and have upwards of 19 simulators
- Welcomed over 6,200 new staff: 4000+ cabin and close to 700 cockpit crew
- Added 13 new international and six domestic routes
- Unveiled a new brand identity
- Received CCI's approval for a merger with Vistara
- Launched the Jeppesen suite for navigation solutions ✈

OUR 2027 ASPIRATIONS



SCALE

To grow
fleet size 3X
and expand
global
network



MARKET SHARE*

Capture >30% of
the domestic and
international market



BRAND IDENTITY

Identify as global
airline with an Indian
heart, driven by
technology



INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

Most technologically
advanced, socially
responsible, and
innovative airline



EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Become India's most
preferred employer
in the travel industry

*Group airlines combined share



Transformation Agenda

Phase 1: March 2023

Phase 2: April 2023 – March 2024

Phase 3: April 2024 – March 2027



TRANSFORMATION PILLARS

PEOPLE AND DIGITAL AS DIFFERENTIATORS



Global loyal customer base

Create a world-class brand identity known for superior product and exceptional customer experience



Robust and clockwork operations

Build safe, trusted, and reliable operations in order to achieve excellence



Industry best talent

Design industry-best employee proposition and foster a meritocratic culture



Industry captain on future agendas

Be an industry role model for technology, sustainability and innovation



Commercially efficient and growing

Expand network footprint and grow revenue with strong emphasis on profitability

ENABLERS



Clear and open communication



Powered by technology



Values driven cultural transformation



1

King Of The Sky

October 2023 marks the 91st anniversary of JRD Tata's inaugural flight

A single-engine Puss Moth aircraft took off from Karachi with a payload of mail for then Bombay, on 15th October 1932, with Bharat Ratna Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoi Tata in the pilot's seat—a watershed moment in Indian aviation. The country's first flight took off, paving the way for the creation of India's first airline, Tata Airlines (now Air India). On being asked about his life's greatest experience, JRD had said, "The flying experience has dominated... No other can equal the excitement of the first solo flight." 🇮🇳

1. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the first flight from Karachi to then Bombay
2. One of the two De Havilland Puss Moth aircraft that JRD bought from London
3. JRD was known to fly an aircraft himself, every few days
4. For him, Air India was an embodiment of Indian hospitality, which reflected (and still does) in the inflight services
5. At 24, he became the first Indian to get a commercial pilot's license from the Royal Aero Club of Indian and Burma.



5



2



4



3

Proud Wings

A look at the range of aircraft in our fleet*



13
aircraft

A321

Length: 44.50m



27
aircraft

A320neo

Length: 37.57m



09
aircraft

A320

Length: 37.57m



14
aircraft

A319

Length: 33.84m

— OUR NEWEST MEMBER —



04
aircraft

A321neo

Length: 44.51m



14
aircraft

B777-300ER

Length: 73.9m



08
aircraft

B777-200LR

Length: 63.70 m



27
aircraft

B787-8

Length: 56.72m

*Total fleet number as on 19th September, 2023



Down Memory Lane

Delve into Air India's vintage posters that creatively announced new routes; these timeless artworks captured the spirit of the new destinations

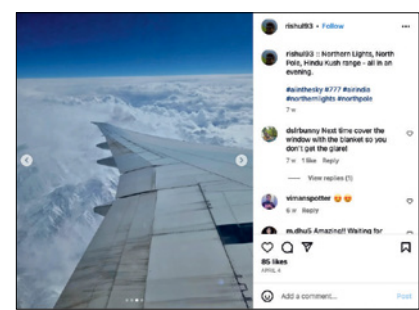
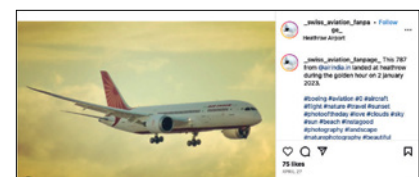




CLICK, SHARE, AND SPREAD JOY

We love it when you share your love for Air India with us

We cannot tell you how much joy and happiness your travel pictures bring us, and for that, we are ever so grateful. Please keep sharing and tagging **#AIFans** and **#AllInTheSky**, and allow us to become a part of your travel experience as you embark on new journeys and capture the wonders of flying with us. Thank you! 🇮🇳





1. Air India's self-baggage drop and kiosks for self check-in will eliminate the need to queue up 2. Air India's partnership with Bangkok Airways will offer seamless connections to 10 Southeast Asian destinations 3. Air Indians putting Project Abhinandan into action.

Taking It Up A Notch

As a part of its transformation journey, Air India is introducing services to make the guest experience seamless, convenient, and faster

INTRODUCING HASSLE-FREE SELF-SERVICES

Air India has become the first Indian carrier to introduce an integrated self-baggage drop and kiosks for self check-in service, for all domestic and select international flights at Delhi's Terminal 3 airport. These seamless digital processes will allow Air India flyers to customise their seating preference (depending on availability), update their Frequent Flyer number, print baggage tags along with boarding passes, and drop off their luggage without queueing up at check-in counters.

While the service is available for all domestic flights and only Australia-bound international flights at the moment, Air India plans to extend this to more flights departing to other countries and intends to introduce it at other Indian and international airports too.

ELEVATING THE AIRPORT EXPERIENCE

Air India has rolled out Project Abhinandan to provide a personalised and hassle-free on-ground experience for its guests at airports. Over 100 specially-trained

Service Assurance Officers have been deployed at 16 Indian airports, who will offer on-ground assistance across touchpoints to Air India guests wherever they require it—at check-in area or lounges, near the boarding gates, during transit, or at the arrival hall. They will sense passenger concerns and proactively engage with guests—regardless of the cabin class they are booked in—to provide support, and address problems and unforeseen issues like missed flights, delayed baggage delivery, and misconnections at airports, among others.

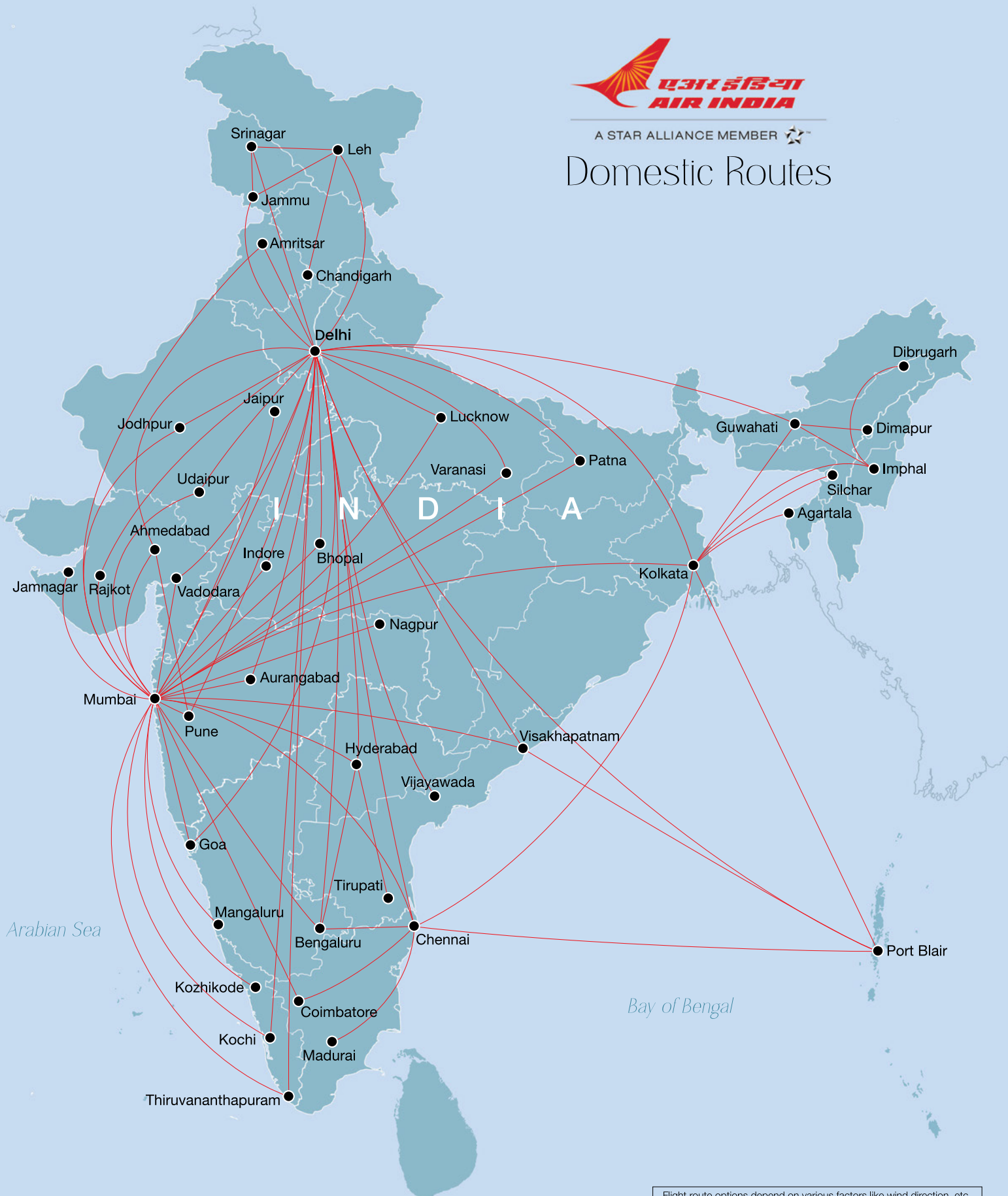
COLLABORATING FOR SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY

Air India has signed an interline partnership with Bangkok Airways, which will enable the former's guests to avail convenient connections to 10 destinations across Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia on Bangkok Airways' network via Air India's Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Singapore gateways. Some of the privileges that Air India flyers will have access to include Inter Airline Through Check-In (IATCI) implementation, wherein guests get their boarding passes for the entire travel at the first point of departure, and have their baggage checked-in through to their final destinations. In addition to that, all guests taking connecting flights on Bangkok Airways can also access the airline's Boutique Lounges and Courtesy Corners at available airports. ✈



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Domestic Routes



Flight route options depend on various factors like wind direction, etc.
Map not to scale. The depiction and use of routes and boundaries are
for informative purposes only.

Indian Ocean

your ai / ai connect



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

International Routes



Wander And Savour

Fresh off the success of *Bambai Meri Jaan*, actor **Avinash Tiwary** shares his road trips and culinary discoveries



Best travel tip you've learned?

I once met a motorcyclist who had ridden around the world. His only regret was that he was too focussed on the milestones and forgot to appreciate the ride. So, focus on the journey, not the milestones.

What's your favourite travel destination?

Always somewhere with mountains... Kashmir because I feel a strong connection to it, and Bhutan because it appears untapped, unexplored, which excites the explorer within me.

The weirdest/most exotic food you've tried?

I'd say octopus, and also rabbit meat I had in Malta... one of the softest meats I've ever had.

Your most memorable road trip?

I must mention two. One is a drive along the Konkan coast to Goa, a four-day trip from Mumbai to Goa by ferries with the most stunning sights and sunsets along the Konkan coastline. The second adventure is an impromptu drive from Delhi to Himachal.

A song that you listen to on repeat when travelling?

Ahista from *Laila Majnu* when in the mountains; recently, *Dhundhala* by Yashraj and Talwiinder.

Is there one place you keep returning to?

Kashmir feels almost like home, and it keeps calling me back... I think it's a past-life love. I also love London with its laid-back vibe, busy streets, parks, and walks.

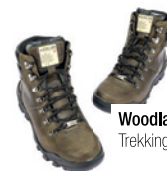
Your travel mantra?

Travel light! You don't need more baggage than what you carry in your head. Passport, phone, credit card... the rest is manageable. ✨

MY TRAVEL MUST-HAVES



A Book for solo trips



Woodland Trekking Shoes



A Puffer Jacket



ISDIN Sunscreen



Mokobara Backpack



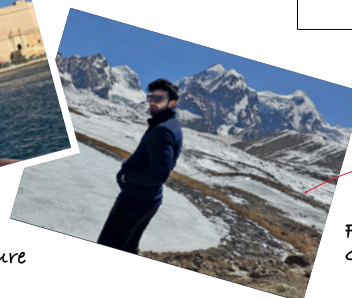
Finding peace in Bhutan



Admiring nature in Kashmir



Basking in Malta's sunshine



Feeling blessed at Gurudongmar Lake



Your first-class ticket to enrollment growth

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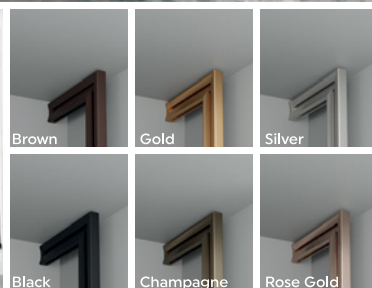
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