

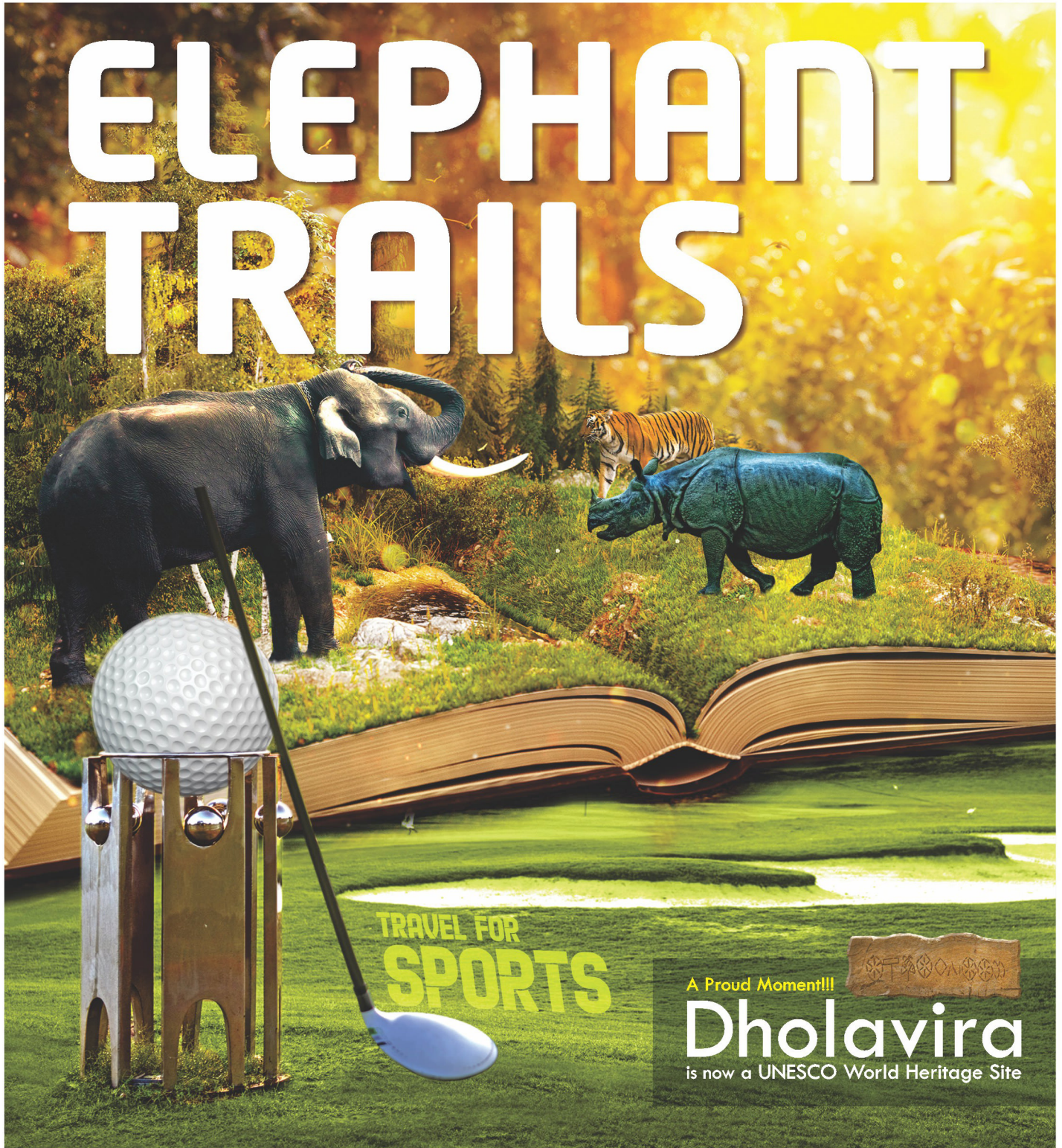
PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED | www.praveg.com
(Formerly known as PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS PVT. LTD.)

August 2021

Vol. : 6 | Issue : 12 | Pages : 56 | ₹ 200 RNI Regd. No. GUJENG/2015/70098

A high-end monthly magazine



ELEPHANT TRAILS

TRAVEL FOR
SPORTS

A Proud Moment!!!

Dholavira

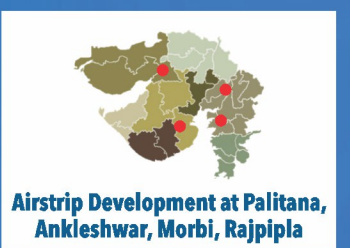
is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Flying Institute at Mehsana



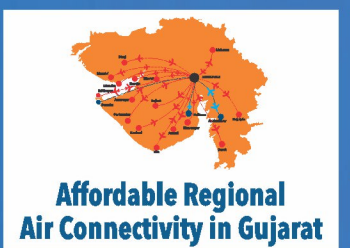
Airstrip Development at Palitana, Ankleshwar, Morbi, Rajpipla



State-of-the-art Refuelling Bowser



MRO Development



Affordable Regional Air Connectivity in Gujarat



Seaplane Services & Water Aerodrome

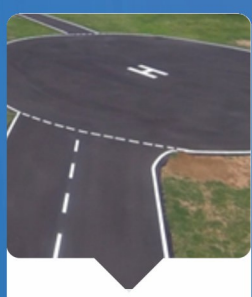
FUTURE PROJECTS



Air Ambulance



Aviation Park



Heliports Development



Air Cargo Complex



Aviation SEZ

THE 'GOLD' IS HERE!

With a ban on overseas tourists at Tokyo Olympics 2021, are you looking for alternate destinations to handle your sports craving? Well, we have got you covered. The land of magic, India has a prosperous sports culture. Enjoy the game of polo like a royal at Jaipur, Rajasthan. Or take a tour to scenic Shillong to try out the vibrant sport of archery. Explore the State of Gujarat with its majestic Laxmi Vilas Palace that offers regal golf course and Kalhaar Blues and Greens in Ahmedabad, famous for its unique challenges and aesthetics.

As we celebrate World Elephant Day, an international annual event on August 12, we take you to the best destinations in India to see the gigantic majestic creatures. Visit Nagorhole National Park to witness a hundred or more elephants in one stretch, drinking water, bathing in the river or eating the grasses - A scene a wildlife lover would not like to miss for anything. Read on!

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

August 2021



Praveg Communications Limited
(Formerly known as PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS PVT. LTD.)
102, Shanti Arcade, 132ft Ring Road,
Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380013.
Contact No.: 97129 84895
e: tourismone@praveg.com
www.praveg.com

Download an e-copy of Tourism One from
www.praveg.com

Editorial Team
Priyanka Desai

Design Team
Mahesh Patel
Yagnesh Bhavsar
Rakesh Bhavsar

DISCLAIMER: All information in Praveg's TOURISM ONE is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. All images are copyrighted by their respective owners unless otherwise stated. Opinions/Views expressed by third parties are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced, whether in part(s) or in whole, without prior permission.

Be a part of Praveg's Tourism One:

Share with us some enthusiastic inputs like photographs, essays or anything related to tourism.

Have some suggestions for us?

Go ahead and send us your ideas, valuable opinions or topics you would like to see more coverage on.

FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES, CONTACT:
tourismone@praveg.com



Contents

TRAVEL FOR SPORTS	pg 04
UTTARAKHAND: TO THE HEAVENS AND ABOVE...	pg 12
ELEPHANT TRAILS	pg 16
KRISHNA'S FOOTSTEPS	pg 36
TEMPLES IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY	pg 44
DHOLAVIRA, THE HARAPPAN-ERA CITY, IS NOW A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE	pg 52



TRAVEL FOR IT IS



Rambagh Palace, Jaipur



Camp, Dera Amer Elephant Safari

Source: Steve Cullroy/Shutterstock



Source: Kalhaar Blues & Greens/Shutterstock

Horses and sports have always excited audiences, and polo makes a great spectator sport. It is a fast game played on a large grass field up to 300 yards in length, and each polo team consists of four riders and their mounts. Players gallop at high speeds across the ground aiming to score by driving the ball into the opposing team's goal using their long-handled mallet. The player who hits the ball generally has the right of way, and other

players cannot cross the line of the ball in front of that player as that can be dangerous, but try to steal the ball from the opponent player while riding next to him. This makes for an exciting sport to play or watch.

The Rambagh Polo Club is one of the best places to watch the polo match in a grand setting. Maharaja Man Singh of Jaipur was an exceptionally good polo player with a 10-goal handicap. His team comprising players from Jaipur and Jodhpur won the World Cup in 1933.

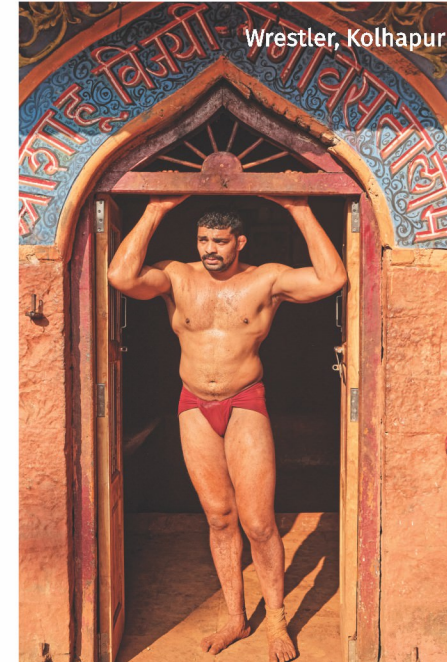
The polo season here is marked with pageantry. Important polo matches begin with much pomp and bands. You can attend a tournament or a special exhibition match. The Polo Bar at the Rambagh Palace is themed on polo with historical photographs and trophies on display.

There are other polo grounds too where you can catch a polo match or watch a practice session. If you are fond of horses, you can also combine a visit with a horse safari in Shekhawati.



Shillong Teer Maidan

Source: Umesh V G/Shutterstock



Wrestler, Kolhapur

Archery at Shillong

Archery or teer khel is now a vibrant sport in in Northeastern India. At Shillong, there are daily archery events, where the outcome is the subject of a highly popular betting game in Shillong, known as Thoh Tim or Teer or Siat Khnam. At tiny betting stalls all over the city, people lay their bets on how many

of the archers' arrows will stick in the target. Khasi Hills Archery Sports Institute is one of the best places to watch archery.

Shillong also has a naturally-beautiful golf course with a British-period clubhouse.

Watch the wrestling in Kolhapur

Kolhapur is a destination for watching traditional wrestling. You can watch wrestling, sparring and exercising at the Motibagh Talim Kendra. Watch the competitions at the Khasbag Maidan, a wrestling stadium built around 1912,

which has a seating arrangement for about 30,000 people around the Houd, the wrestling ring. The 46th Hind Kesari wrestling championship was held here to mark its centenary.



Kalhaar Blues & Greens, Ahmedabad

Golf in Gujarat

Gujarat has some fine golf courses for those who want to play golf.

At Ahmedabad, Kalhaar Blues & Greens is a world class championship 18 holes, 7425 yards, Par 72 layout, designed by 'Nicklaus Design', a company owned by the legendary golfer Jack Nicklaus. The golf course layout has unique challenges and aesthetics including sand, beach bunkers and 14 water bodies covering over 35 acres. The 'Island green' on Hole No. 7 is a unique feature of the golf course.

Another 18-hole golf course is at Kensville Golf & Country Club, which is about 40 minutes from the city. This golf course has the Jeev Milkha Singh Signature Hole. You can also play at Glade One, designed by Gary Player Design, a multi-award-winning firm that has completed more than 325 championship courses across five continents in over 35 countries.

Travel to Vadodara to play golf at the Lukshmi Vilas Palace, a golf course with a view of the grand palace.





Bengaluru Cubbon Park

Play badminton in Bengaluru

Bengaluru is a city that has many sports venues. One of the most popular games is Badminton, not surprisingly given the number of star badminton players the city has produced including Prakash Padukone. At Cubbon Park, you can see the sports culture of the city. There are many centres for badminton like Agon Sports, Star Badminton

Academy, Namma Shuttle, Smash & Sprint, PlayMania, Active Arena, Game Theory, Infinite Sports Arena, Sporthood Badminton Arena and SWYNG Badminton.

Bengaluru also has some of the best golf courses in India like Prestige and Eagleton, an active cycling scene, and multi-sports complexes.

Visit the stadium at Bhubaneswar

The Kalinga Stadium is a multi-purpose international stadium in Bhubaneswar, with athletics, soccer, field hockey, basketball, tennis, table tennis, basketball, volleyball, wall climbing and swimming facilities, an 8-lane synthetic athletics track, high performance centres, and India's first Olympic standard pink and blue water-based AstroTurf. This is one of the finest stadiums to watch a hockey or football match.



Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata

Experience the history of sports in Kolkata

Kolkata is a city with a long historical association with sports. As you drive along the Maidan, you can see people playing football or cricket, or riding horses. Eden Gardens is called the Mecca of Cricket, being the first officially built ground for the game of cricket in India. Don't miss the excitement of a football match at The Salt Lake Stadium, officially the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati

Krirangan, with a current capacity of 85,000. The Salt Lake Stadium is the main home ground of football clubs like Mohun Bagan FC, Shree Cement East Bengal FC and Mohammedan FC.

Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC), established in 1829, is the oldest outside England. You can also visit the Fanatic Sports Museum (FSM) dedicated to various types of sports at New Town, Kolkata.

Football in Goa

Goans have a passion for football, and you can see people playing on the beaches, roads, and playing fields. The game was introduced to Goa in 1883 by a British priest. Reverent Fr. William Robert Lyons, and the sport was part of the curriculum of Christian education. Football clubs like Churchill Brothers and Dempo Sports Club have fixtures on a regular basis. African and other foreign players also play for the football clubs. ■

Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI



UTTARAKHAND: TO THE HEAVENS AND ABOVE...

Trishul and Nanda Devi Peaks



The northern Indian state of Uttarakhand is famous for its many pilgrim destinations, where the devout go in search of God. If you are travelling so high up, surely you must be closer to heaven!

Two of us, on our bicycles, also went in search of something spiritual. But God isn't to be found in the hustle bustle of pilgrim centres, you have to look a little closer. The state motto is 'Athithi Devo Bhava', loosely translated to 'Where a guest is equivalent to God'. That is where

we found God, in the heart and spirit of the people. The warmth and affection showered by absolute strangers shake the foundations of our urban upbringing. We are so used to a transactional lifestyle in cities, where we do something, expecting something in return. This one-way traffic of help from the hill folk is disarming. We didn't know how to react, since we weren't in a position to repay any of their kindness.

This wasn't the first time that I was travelling in Uttarakhand. I have been

enjoying this Himalayan state for the last two decades. However, this time, a bicycle provided a perspective I never experienced before. Our route was a lovely circuit, which started and ended in Dehradun, the state capital. From there, the road climbed sharply to neighbouring Mussoorie, a picturesque hill station, replete with history from the British era and older. From there we headed to Kanatal, where we got caught in a raging blizzard. It was a proper whiteout, uncharacteristic for the month of February.

A Pine Forest



It is only later we realised how lucky we were. Firstly, to find accommodation as soon as the snow started. Secondly, to get stuck in that gorgeous village. And finally, because it hadn't snowed at all through the winter. The Himalayas truly blessed us with all its splendour.

What goes up must come down and following the laws of nature, we descended to Tehri Lake. A manmade dam and reservoir, which drowned out the Tehri village and displaced all its inhabitants. A contentious artificial

structure in those pristine and sensitive mountains.

The road rolled through the holy towns of Srinagar, Rudraprayag and Karnaprayag. After cycling for a day and a half along the river Ganges, we once again climbed a mountain range. This time to Kausani, to bask in the beauty of snow-capped Himalayan ranges. The white peaks so tantalizingly close, yet so far.

The ride was then through thick pine forests in the Kumaon region. Roads

mostly deserted, because it was still too cold for tourists to arrive. From the high-altitude pine forests, we descended all the way to the Ramganga river and the famous Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve. It was quite the experience to ride through dense vegetation of a forest reserve, known for its healthy population of tigers, leopards and elephants. We were both happy and disappointed to not spot anything wilder than overzealous school kids!



From the tiger reserve, we went back to the banks of the Ganges at Rishikesh. A town, which is a hotbed for religious tourism. It was also the last port of call before returning to Dehradun, from where the wheel had started turning. We often get the question, why cycle? Why not do the same ride on a motorcycle or in a car? Wouldn't it be more comfortable and faster?

Unwittingly, people answer the question they pose. Cars and motorcycles

are too fast and comfortable.

More often than not, we would see cars filled with tourists zipping past us, with most of their occupants asleep. The Himalayas trying its best to showcase its rugged beauty, but in vain. Similar is the case with motorcyclists, they are always in a tearing hurry.

On a cycle, you are travelling so slow, that you cannot miss any detail. You hear the sound of the river below, the small waterfall by the side of the road

and the twitter of the birds. On a bicycle, you aren't looking at the scenery, you become a part of it. The hills absorb you and you absorb the hills.

Cycling in the Himalayas is also a humbling experience. You realise that no matter how much humanity has progressed, we are still at the mercy of the fickle whims of mother nature. In an automobile, you are to a great extent shielded from the elements.



Cycling is raw, it takes us back to the roots of our hunter-gatherer existence.

Food and accommodation we got on the way was as basic as it gets. In one town, the 'room' was little more than a storeroom. This state is no gastronomic delight, but we were fortunate to try out some true local delicacies and sweets. From fish to fresh green leafy vegetables to something called bal mithai. Bal mithai is a dark brown sweet coated with white sugar balls.

Legend goes, that the British called it ball mithai, which eventually got watered down to bal mithai. Either ways, it was ridiculously sweet. Imagine a sugar bomb coated with even more sugar!

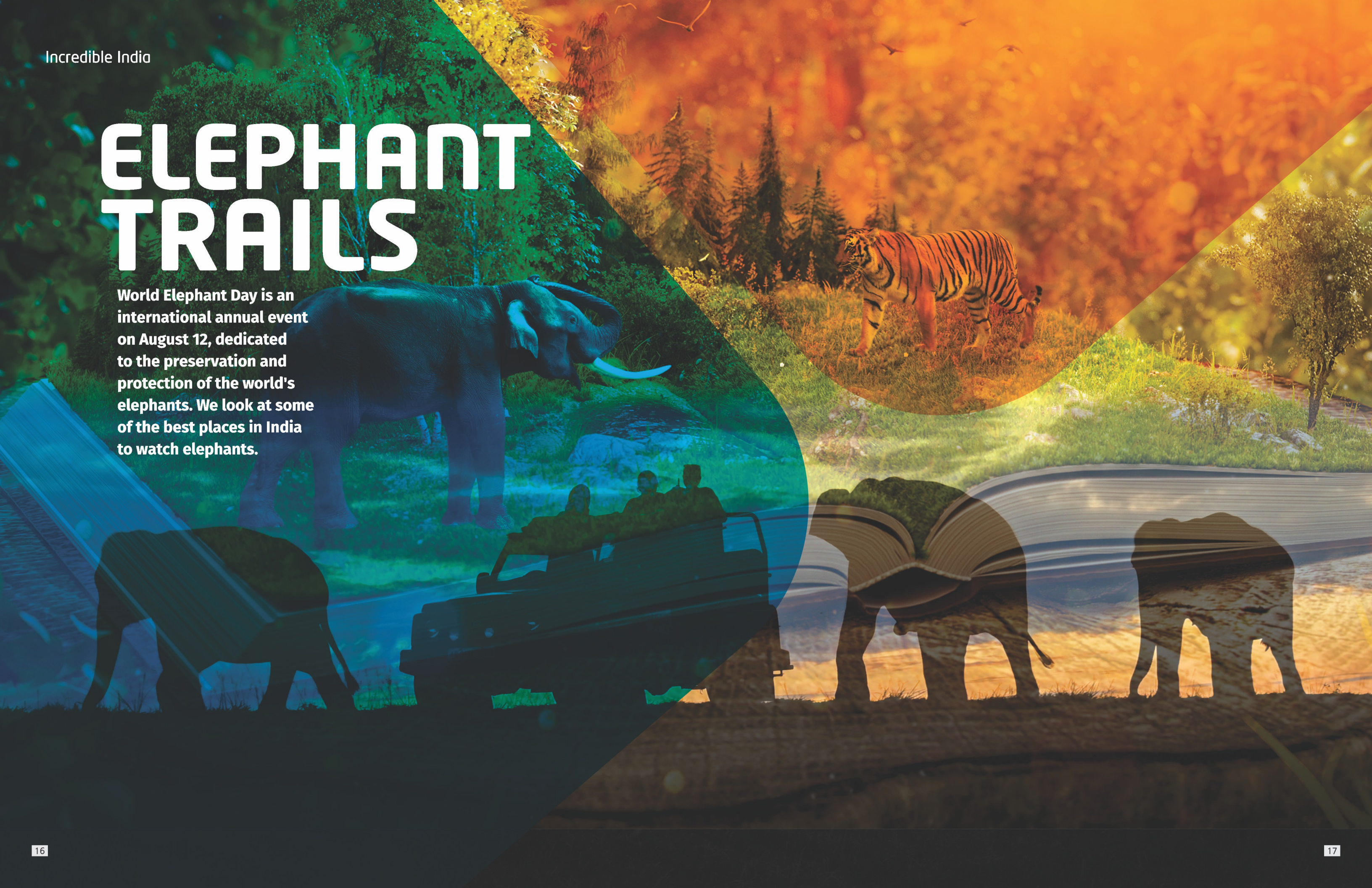
While the sweets were too sweet, the people were just right. Forever helpful, without at any point of time being nosy. On a bicycle, whether you choose it or not, you often find yourself at the mercy of strangers. And at such times our faith

in humanity was restored. The moral compass of most folks is pointed in the right direction.

After spending more than a fortnight in this beautiful land, we want to go back for some more. What we experienced only whetted our appetite. Next time, we hope to return in the summer and make our way to the higher regions, which are inaccessible during winter. Hopefully, the higher we get, the closer we will get to God! ■

ELEPHANT TRAILS

World Elephant Day is an international annual event on August 12, dedicated to the preservation and protection of the world's elephants. We look at some of the best places in India to watch elephants.



NAGARHOLE NATIONAL PARK



Boating, Kabini River



Nagarhole National Park

Karnataka is known for its large elephant populations, and among the many sanctuaries and national parks here that have elephant herds, the neighbouring reserves of Nagarhole and Bandipur National Parks are the best.

Drive to the Nagarhole National Park or Rajiv Gandhi Tiger Reserve, one of the

best wildlife reserves in India. The park is located in the foothills of the Western Ghats and covers 643 square kilometres, with the Kabini River and its reservoir separating it from neighbouring Bandipur National Park.

This is one of the most exciting places for viewing wild elephants in India. Boat safaris are available that take guests for a

trip down the river. Keep your binoculars handy to watch water birds that often perch on the stumps of trees submerged by the reservoir. From the boat, you can enjoy views of the deciduous forests that abound with wildlife. You can watch gaur or Indian bison, spotted deer, sambar and other wild mammals coming to drink water on the shores.



Crocodiles are often seen basking in the shallows. Presently, you come to sites, where you can see large herds of elephants feeding on the fresh shoots of grass on the shores of the river.

A hundred or more elephants can be seen in one stretch, drinking water, bathing in the river or eating the grasses. The boats take you close enough for photography. While on the boat safari, you could also get lucky with a tiger sighting.

The jeep safari also offers good elephant viewing. The guides help you identify many trees like the rosewood, teak, sandalwood, silver oak, crocodile bark, crepe myrtle, Indian kino tree, axlewood, kadam and silk cotton tree. The fig trees offer good viewing of hornbills and other birds. Barking deer, spotted deer and sambar are commonly seen during the drive.

There is a good chance of seeing elephants in the forests and by the

water bodies. Leopard, tiger, sloth bear and dhole or wild dog are among the large mammals you could see if luck favours you.

GETTING THERE:

**FROM
BENGALURU AIRPORT**

MUDUMALAI NATIONAL PARK



The Mudumalai National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, also a Tiger Reserve, lies on the northwestern side of the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu. The sanctuary lies on the Mysore-Ooty Highway, and sightings of elephant, deer and even sloth bear are possible on the highway. The reception centre for tourists is at Theppakadu on the

highway, and most of the good accommodations are at nearby Masinagudi.

The drive through the tropical moist forests offers good viewing of deer, wild boar, Indian bison and possibly giant squirrels. This is one of the best parks for elephants. You can hope to see huge tuckers during the drive. This park is

also excellent for birdwatching - plenty of flycatchers can be seen.

GETTING THERE:

FROM
COIMBATORE AIRPORT

RAJAJI NATIONAL PARK



Rajaji National Park is situated in the Sivalik hills and outer Himalayas of Dehradun, Haridwar and Pauri Garhwal districts. The tract is mainly hilly, with much of the wildlife seen in the valley. The River Ganga bisects the Park. The dense green jungles form important habitat for elephants and tigers at the northwestern limit of distribution for both elephants and tigers in India. The drive is best begun at

Chilla on the Haridwar-Rishikesh Road. During the drive, huge herds of chital or spotted deer, sometimes as many as 250 to a herd, sambar, barking deer and nilgai are often seen. You could also see hog deer, wild pigs and sloth bears. The rhesus macaque and the common langur are common, but you need luck to see a tiger or leopard. The leopard cat, jungle cat, civet and yellow-throated marten are smaller mammals. The higher

hills have black bear and goral. The park is deservedly famous for its elephant herds. You can often see one near the river.

GETTING THERE:
FROM
DEHRADUN AIRPORT

CORBETT NATIONAL PARK



India's first wildlife reserve, Corbett Tiger Reserve is situated in the hilly districts of Pauri Garhwal and Nainital in the northern state of Uttarakhand. This is one of the most famous Tiger Reserves in India and is extremely popular with tourists for its scenery and the wildlife. The park is located in the South Paatlidun division of the Himalaya, and ranges from 400 m to 1210 m. Upto 110 species of trees, 51

species of shrubs and over 33 species of bamboo and grass are found here. The Reserve is known for its almost pure stands of Sal *Shorea robusta* in the lower hilly ridges and flat valleys. The best places for elephant viewing are the chauras, areas of savanna grasslands with a variety of tall grasses such as *Themeda arundinacea*, *Vetiveria zizanioides*, *Cymbopogon jwarancusa* and *Desmostachya bipinnata*. The chauras of

Dhikala near the Ramganga River are delightful for watching herds of hog deer and other herbivores. Here, you can often see herds of elephant that can be very large in the summer months. They graze the grasses and head for the river for water.

GETTING THERE:
FROM DELHI AIRPORT

PALAMAU TIGER RESERVE



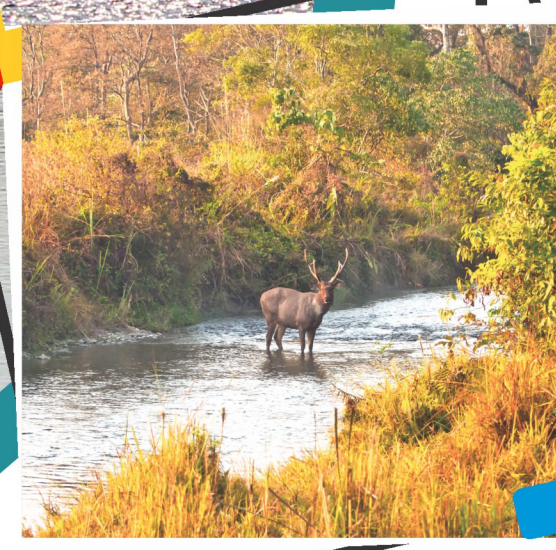
Palamau Tiger Reserve encompasses Betla National Park and Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary in Jharkhand. This reserve lies in the western part of the Chhotanagpur plateau. It was one of the first nine Tiger reserves launched in 1973 as part of

India's Project Tiger. The forests of Palamau are the catchment of the River North Koel. The Reserve has Sal forests in the lower slopes and dry deciduous forests in the upper slopes. Bamboo and scattered open grassy patches are common.

These patches can be excellent for viewing elephants.

GETTING THERE:
FROM RANCHI AIRPORT

THE BENGAL DUARS



Gorumara National Park

Mahanadi National Park, Garumara National Park and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary in the Duars of West Bengal comprise one of the prime elephant corridors. Large tracts of grasslands support populations of Indian one-horned rhino and elephant, and many rivers and rivulets

run through these parks. The best view is from the elephant's back. Take the elephant ride in the morning to get close viewing of rhino, wild elephant, sambar, hog deer and other wildlife. In the afternoon, you can spend time at a viewing tower, waiting for wildlife to come to drink water. Leopard sightings

are possible. On a clear day, these parks offer views of the snow-clad Himalaya.

GETTING THERE:
FROM
BAGDOGRA AIRPORT

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK



Kaziranga is a vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland and tropical forests in Assam. The park is criss-crossed by the Brahmaputra and other major rivers, and abounds in water bodies and oxbow lakes, called bheels. Kaziranga has more than 1500 rhinos (about two-thirds of the Asian population of rhino), more

than 1000 elephants, 86 tigers, more than 1000 wild buffaloes, and some of the largest herds of hog deer in India and barasinga in Assam. It is home to many endangered species of birds, reptiles and mammals. Start your morning with an elephant ride at Kohora in Central Kaziranga. The ride offers good viewing of rhino.

Lucky visitors may see the Bengal florican. The drive in the central range offers opportunities to see the mega-mammals like elephant, rhino, wild buffalo and even tiger. Barasingha and hog deer can be seen here. In the evening, drive in Western Kaziranga. The vast tracts of short-grass interspersed with oxbow lakes comprise



the optimum habitat for rhino. The drive from Baguri passes Monabeel, Bimoli and Kanchajuri route where you can see rhino, elephant and deer. The drive also goes through forest areas.

For birdwatching, visit Eastern Kaziranga entering from Agortoli Rangamatia, which is a bird watcher's paradise. At Sohola Bheel, you can see

fishing eagles, large flocks of Spot-billed pelicans, winter visiting ruddy shelduck and resident spotbill duck. Wagtails, larks and pipits can be seen flitting among the grasslands along the dry margins of the lake, while there are many waders at reedy shallow lakefront. You can also get good views of Adjutant Stork. Endangered birds can be seen in

Eastern Kaziranga. The drive goes along the river, where you can see turtles, and elephant or rhino could be spotted drinking water. ■

GETTING THERE:
FROM GUWAHATI, TEZPUR OR JORHAT AIRPORT



Krishna's Footsteps

From Vrindavan, where Lord Krishna is believed to have been born, to Prabhas Patan, where he is said to have disappeared, there are many places frequented by devotees of Lord Krishna. Typically, a Krishna pilgrimage begins at Mathura.

Mathura is not just the old city, which is sacred to Hindus, but includes the Civil Lines that was a colonial-period cantonment and residential area, industrial estates and modern developments. With the Delhi-Agra Highway running along the city, Mathura has become a major tourist spot with even American fast food restaurants near its entrance.

Enter by Holi Gate and walk past ornate temples with intricate arches and carvings to the riverfront, lined by temples and ghats. Here are shops that offer a variety of temple offerings and you can dress a Gopal (boyhood or infant Krishna) in one of the many outfits available here. See the remains of a fort built by Raja Man Singh of Jaipur and rebuilt by Akbar.

Heading through the network of lanes from Vishram Ghat, where Lord Krishna is said to have recuperated after killing Kansa, you reach the Radha Dhiraj Bazaar and visit the Dwarkadhish temple, which is one of Mathura's most



Vishram Ghat, Mathura

Source: saiko3p/Shutterstock



Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple, Mathura

Source: Parth Mahendra N/Shutterstock

visited temples. A short distance away is the shrine worshipped as Krishna's birthplace. It sits behind the impressive and controversial, red-sandstone Katra Masjid, a mosque built during Aurangzeb's rule at the site of the Kesava Deo Temple. Inside the nearby Bhagwat Bhawan or Gita Mandir are writings from Gita and murals of the life of Lord Krishna in serene marble interiors.

Nearby, the impressive stepped sandstone tank of Potara Kund is revered as the place, where baby Krishna's clothes were washed.

Close to the centre of Mathura in Dampier Park, the Archeological Museum has an outstanding collection of the famous Mathura Buddhist, Jain and Hindu sculptures, dating from the Kushan (first-third centuries AD) and Gupta periods (fourth-sixth centuries). The highlight is an intact standing Buddha in the Abhaya mudra (fearless hand gesture).

Vrindavan, Mathura



Source: shalender/Shutterstock

Govind Dev Ji Temple, Mathura



Source: sshio/Shutterstock

About 11km from Mathura, Vrindavan attracts several hundred thousand pilgrims, especially during Holi. Vrindavan holds several Widow Houses, for poor widows who congregate in the Mirabai Ashram twice a day to sing bhajans. We started by visiting Govinda Deva, an impressive 16th century temple erected by Raja Man Singh in 1590. The pilgrims gather at Banke Bihari, decorated with floral carvings. Banke Bihari Temple, Vrindavan is probably the most famous Krishna temple in India, where Krishna is believed to have spent his childhood. The temple features an idol of Krishna in a tribhanga posture, holding his murli or flute.

Vrindavan is also known for its modern temples. The Dravidian-style Shri Ranganatha, also known as Rangaji Temple, is reminiscent of South India, with a gilded shikhara and gold-plated column, with an electronic puppet show and a small museum. ISKCON's flamboyant temple complex is west of town and filled with murals and has a

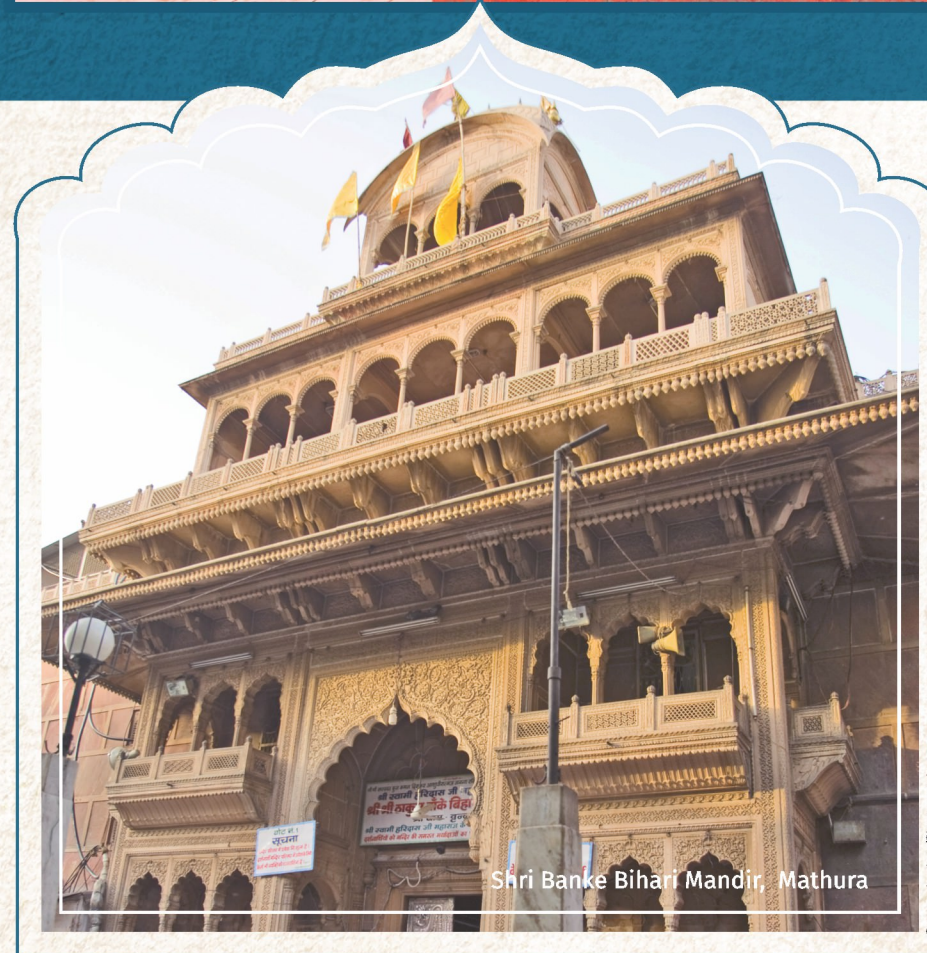


Rang ji Temple, Vrindavan

Source: bodom/Shutterstock

marble mausoleum in honour of the society's founder, Swami Prabhupada, who died in 1977. Here too, there is a Gita Mandir with the Bhagavad Gita inscriptions on a column.

From Vrindavan, travel to Rajasthan. The main place of pilgrimage here for Krishna devotees is Nathdwara. This city is famous for its temple of Krishna, which houses the deity of Shrinathji or infant Krishna. The 14th-century Krishna deity was originally worshiped at Mathura and was shifted in 1672 from Govardhan hill, near Mathura along holy river Yamuna after being retained at Agra for almost six months. Literally, Nathdwara means 'Gateway of the Lord'. According to legend, the chariot carrying the idol from Agra, where it was in danger of being destroyed by Aurangzeb to Mewar is said to have stopped at Nathdwara, because of which the priests decided to build the temple here under the rule and protection of the then Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar.



Shri Banke Bihari Mandir, Mathura

Source: bodom/Shutterstock



Dakor Temple



Gombi Ghat, Dakor

Shrinathji Temple is also known as 'Haveli of Shrinathji' and it is an important site for the followers of the Vallabhacharya Pushti Marg. Nathdwara is also famous for the devotional paintings called pichwai.

From Nathdwara, travel into Gujarat, and head for Dakor. According to devotees, Bodana, a great devotee of Lord Krishna, visited Dwarka with a tulsi plant twice a year. When Bodana grew too old to visit Dwarka, Lord Krishna, touched by his devotion, agreed to accompany him to Dakor. At midnight, as goes the legend, Lord Krishna broke open all the doors in the temple and rode with Bodana to Dakor. The neem tree under which they are believed to have rested is the focus of one of Gujarat's most famous bhajans. Since then, Dakor has been a popular place of pilgrimage as an abode of Lord Krishna. According to another story, Dnak Rishi, who received Lord Krishna and Bhima during their journey through Dakore requested the lord to stay in his hermitage.

This temple set around the historic Ranchhodraiji shrine is enclosed in walls with four gates, which house offices and storage areas around the outer perimeter of the temple. The temple on



Lord Krishna, Dakor

a plinth follows the mandapa-and-shrine style of the medieval temples of Gujarat. Lord Ranchhodrai is depicted as a four armed deity.

The temple faces the Gombi Tank, one of the largest village tanks in the Kheda district. The tank is of interest to herpetologists because of the many species of freshwater turtles that inhabit it.

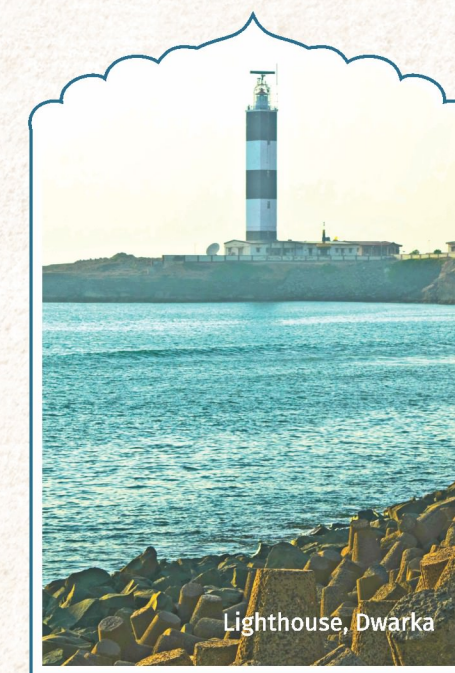
Dakor is a centre for many Vaishnava festivals like Holi, Amalaka Ekadashi, Janmashtami, Nand Mahotsav, Rathayatra and Dussera. Large processions are a feature of the festivities in this holy place. During the month of Kartik, the Anakoot or Chappan Bhog feast here is also well-attended.

From Dakor, travel to Dwarka. Legend has it that Lord Krishna founded a glittering new city called Dwarka on the seafront of Gujarat.

The townscape is dominated by the towering Dwarkadhish Temple, dating to the 16th century. It is said to occupy an ancient site and to have replaced an

older temple destroyed by invading Islamic armies. It is also called Jagat Mandir after its patron Raja Jagat Singh Rathore. Built of granite and sandstone, the temple is supported by more than 60 pillars. The temple rises to seven storeys with its spire visible from far away. Atop the spire, the flag carries symbols of the sun and the moon. Inside, there is a garbhagriha and an antarala (an antechamber). The main deity Dwarkadeesh is known as the Trivikrama form of Vishnu and is depicted with four arms. Pilgrims often take a bath at the Gombi Ghat before entering the temple. The ghat has a number of small shrines dedicated to Sea God, Saraswati and Lakshmi. Other notable temples in the ghat area include the Samudra Narayana or (Sangam Narayana shrine, which is at the confluence of the Gomti River with the sea, the Chakra Narayana temple, where there is a stone with an imprint of a chakra as a manifestation of Vishnu, and the Gomati temple, which has an idol of

the river goddess Gomati that is said to have been brought to earth by the sage Vasishtha). Gombi Talav is also widely visited by religious tourists. Dwarka



Lighthouse, Dwarka

Pitha is one of the four maths established by Adi Shankaracharya.

An architectural highlight to the east of Dwarka is the lavishly carved 12th century Rukmini Temple. Don't miss seeing the superbly carved arved naratharas (human figures) and carved gajatharas (elephants) depicted in panels at the base of the tower.

A modern landmark of Dwarka is the Lighthouse by the sea.

It is believed that the original Dwarka city was subsequently submerged under the sea. The Archaeological Survey of India has brought to light submerged settlements, a large stone-built jetty, and triangular stone anchors with three holes. The settlements are in the form of exterior and interior walls, and fort bastions. Coastal erosion was probably the cause of the destruction of what was an ancient port.

From Dwarka, travel to Somnath or Prabhas Patan, where Shiva, Shakti and Krishna are worshipped. The Somnath temple houses one of the most powerful



of the Jyotirlingams, Triveni Tirth is revered as a Shaktipith, and Bhalka Tirtha is the place where Lord Krishna is said to have left the earth for the heavenly abode, an act referred to as Shri Krishn Neejdham Prasthan Leela.

Travel to the Bhalka Tirtha, the Krishna temple dedicated to the place where Lord Krishna was hit by an arrow. In the Mahabharata, Gandhari, whose 100 children died in the Kurukshetra battle, cursed Krishna along with everyone else from the Yadu dynasty that they will perish after 36 years. Krishna himself knew and wanted this to happen as he felt that the Yadavas had become very haughty and arrogant (adharmi), so he ended Gandhari's speech by saying "tathastu" (so be it).

After 36 years passed, a fight broke out between the Yadavas, at a festival, who killed each other. His elder brother, Balarama, then gave up his body using Yoga. Krishna retired into the forest and started meditating under a tree. The hunter Jara mistook Krishna's partly



visible left foot for that of a deer, and shot an arrow, wounding him mortally. Krishna told Jara, "O Jara, you were Vali in your previous birth, killed by myself as Rama in Tretayuga. Here you have a chance to even it and since all acts in this world are done as desired by me, you need not worry about this". Then Krishna, with his physical body ascended back to his eternal abode. The site of his cremation, near a temple to Maha Kali, is called Dehotsarg.

A Krishna cenotaph stands at Triveni Sangam Tirth, the confluence of the Saraswati, Kapil and Hiran that stand for the three stages of life; birth, life and death, with the Arabian Sea.

Return to Ahmedabad and fly to Kochi from where you can drive to Guruvayoor, 'Dwarka of the South'. Inside the main sanctum of the temple, built in 1638 AD, the four-armed statue of Lord Krishna adorns the holy Tulsi (basil) garland and pearl necklace. The big tank in the temple is claimed to be the place, where the Lord Shiva family worshiped Vishnu. ■



Source: Haashit, Tivedi/Shutterstock

Source: Haashit, Tivedi/Shutterstock

Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI Pics by DINESH SHUKLA



Temples In God's Own Country

It is a ubiquitous sight in Kerala - the temples. Every city has it, most localities in the village have their own spiritual sanctuary. Against the backdrop of the swaying coconut palms, in a wide quadrangle, the temple stands proud in its unique architecture. Some families have their own private temple, where the family deity is worshipped. Humble in its design and structure, it yet has the power to draw men and women of all denominations, regardless of class and distinction.

Kerala temples are unique in many ways. The Kerala temples are built on the principle of vastupurush. The different portions of the temple represent different parts of the human body, which is considered the ultimate symbol of perfection. There are distinct portions of the temple that serve specific functions.



Architecture in a city is styled by its weather patterns. In a place like Kerala, where there is an abundance of rainfall, the terracotta-tiled roofs of the temples are sloping. They have long eaves extending over the edges to ward off the water from the heavy rains. In Kerala temples, superstructures are made of granite and laterite stones, combined with wooden elements. The outer walls of the temple are embellished with a lattice of wood and bronze, holding a large number of small lamps, covering the entire wall. On auspicious occasions, these are lit through the evening. The flickering flames on the entire surrounding wall glows spectacularly, imparting it a shimmering, ethereal beauty.



The holy steps in front of the sanctum sanctorum are called Sopanam. Many temples have stone idols of demons or guardsmen and women, on either side of the steps. These dwarapalaks are meant to protect the deity from evil influences.



The sanctum sanctorum of the Kerala temple is called the Sreekoovil. The idol of the patron God or Goddess is kept here. The Sreekoovil may be square, rectangular, elliptical or circular in shape. Most temples are on one level. In the concept of the vastupurush, the Sreekoovil represents the head of the body.



The namaskaramandapam is a four-pillared elevated platform in front of the sreekoovil. As the name suggests, it is the place where the priest makes his obeisance before entering the temple. This leads to the Chuttambalam, where the devotees make the mandatory walk around the Sreekoovil. The pillared beauty of these halls is iconic.



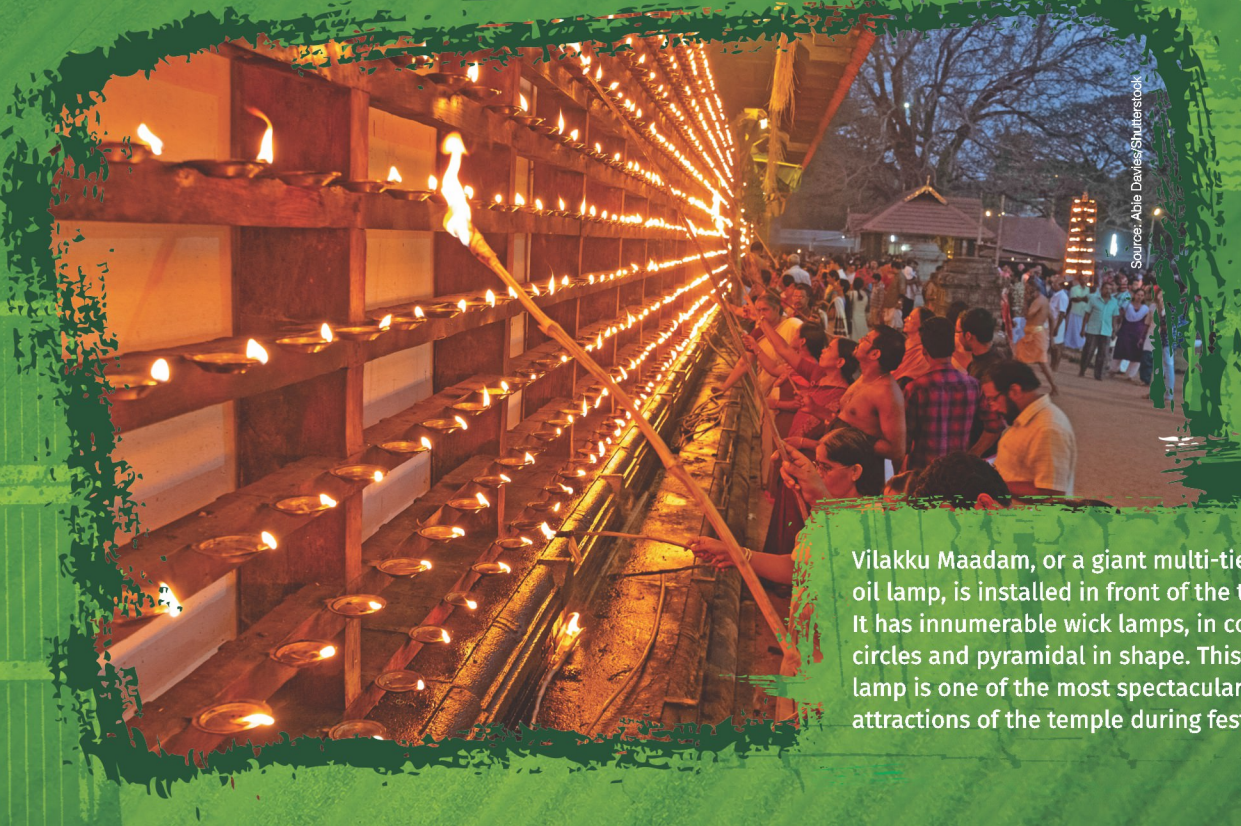
The location of the water body is an important part of the vastu structure of the Kerala temple. Only the priest of the temple for his ablutions uses the Ambalakulam - a temple pond, in accordance with the Vastu rules. In a few cases, a separate pond is dug for devotees to cleanse themselves before they enter the temple. Some temples have Manikinar or holy wells, which supply the water for the Abhishekam i.e. water for cleansing the idols.



The Gopuram is a large pyramidal tower built on the edge of the temple precinct. Many temples will have four Gopurams in East, West, South and North, representing the cardinal directions. The Gopuram at the entrance of the temple also represents the feet of the human body.



The temples of Kerala are the social epicenter of the community. The Koothambalam is the theater hall located in the precincts of the temple. In ancient and medieval periods, the temples were not only centers of worship but also centers of learning. Today, the precincts of the temple also serve as a cultural center, a site for the performances of traditional folk dances. From ancient times, the classical dance performances at the temple premises were a way of venerating the gods. These can be in the Kathakali, Koodiyattam or Mohiniattam styles and normally are based on the legends associated with the Indian gods and goddesses.



Vilakku Maadam, or a giant multi-tiered brass oil lamp, is installed in front of the temple. It has innumerable wick lamps, in concentric circles and pyramidal in shape. This imposing lamp is one of the most spectacular and visible attractions of the temple during festivals.



Pradakshina Vattam is small round carved stones embedded into the ground with only the top surface projecting out. These carved stones are placed around the temple and serve as guardian deities for the temple, by imparting positive energy to the temple. These stones are not to be trodden. While circumambulating the temple, the stones should be on the right side of a devotee, which means the parikrama is always done clockwise.



There are dress codes to enter the temple premises. Men sans shirt are allowed to enter the portals of the temple. Many temples forbid even belts. There are separate entrance queues for men and women. Only a few temples do not permit non-Hindus.



Dwaja or Kodimaram is a tall pillar, prominently placed, that bears the deity's vahana or mode of transport. Each deity has its own vahana and acts as a signature for its identification. One can identify the deity of a temple by identifying the type of vahana installed on the top of the pole. For example, a Shiva temple will have a Nandi on the apex of the pillar; a Vishnu temple will have a Garuda or an Eagle.

Temples have an aura of their own. No sooner you enter the precincts of a Keralite temple, than you feel the wafts from the numerous oil lit lamps and incense sticks. A priest would be holding brass lamps, chanting prayers for the benediction of the devotees. A clutch of people from the nearby houses would be standing at the threshold of Sreekovil, praying with imploring looks. Soon the prayers would come to an end and devotees would trudge home with hopes for a better tomorrow. Despite the passage of centuries, the design, the rituals and faith have remained unchanged. ■



A Proud Moment!!! Dholavira, the Harappan-era City, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Dholavira, an ancient harappan city in the Kutch district of Gujarat, becomes India's 40th and Gujarat's 4th to enter the coveted list of UNESCO World Heritage Site. After Champaner near Pavagadh, Rani ki Vav in Patan and the Historic City of Ahmedabad, Dholavira is the brand new addition to the list, bringing a proud moment for the State of Gujarat, and India as a nation. It is the 1st site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization in India identified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Dholavira was unearthed by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1967-68 and excavated only since 1990. Dating from the 3rd to mid 2nd millennium BCE, Dholavira - the ancient city is one of the most remarkable and well-preserved urban settlements in South Asia. The Harappan City's unique features like its sophisticated water management system

that is often considered as one of the world's earliest water conservation systems, extensive use of stone in construction, special burial structures and multi-layered defensive mechanism are making it one-of-its-kind.

The place is a must-visit for those interested in archeology, culture and history. ■

ANNOUNCING
rann utsav

1st November 2021 to
28th February 2022

**NATURE, HOSPITALITY AND HYGIENE
AT THEIR BEST THAN EVER**



Key Attractions

- Accommodation in Premium AC Tents / Rajwadi AC Bhunga
- Visit to wonderful "White Rann"
- Thrilling adventure park with outdoor fun - Para Motoring, ATV Rides, etc.
- Engaging indoor activities - Pool, Board Games, Reading Corner, etc.
- Shopping delight at Craft Village with Kutch's colorful handloom & handicraft
- Delectable Gujarati and Kutchi Cuisines
- Soul-stirring folk music of Kutch
- Covid 19 precautionary measures



FOR MORE INFORMATION
Call 74 40 40 40 40 | 97 12 93 62 33
www.WhiteRannResort.com

rann utsav
White Rann Resort
Dhordo, Kutch
Recognized as "The Deluxe Category Tents" by Ministry of Tourism

An Initiative of
Gujarat Tourism

Operated by
PRAVEG
Accelerating ideas

An Ideal Venue

- Luxurious Stay
- Conference
- Destination Wedding

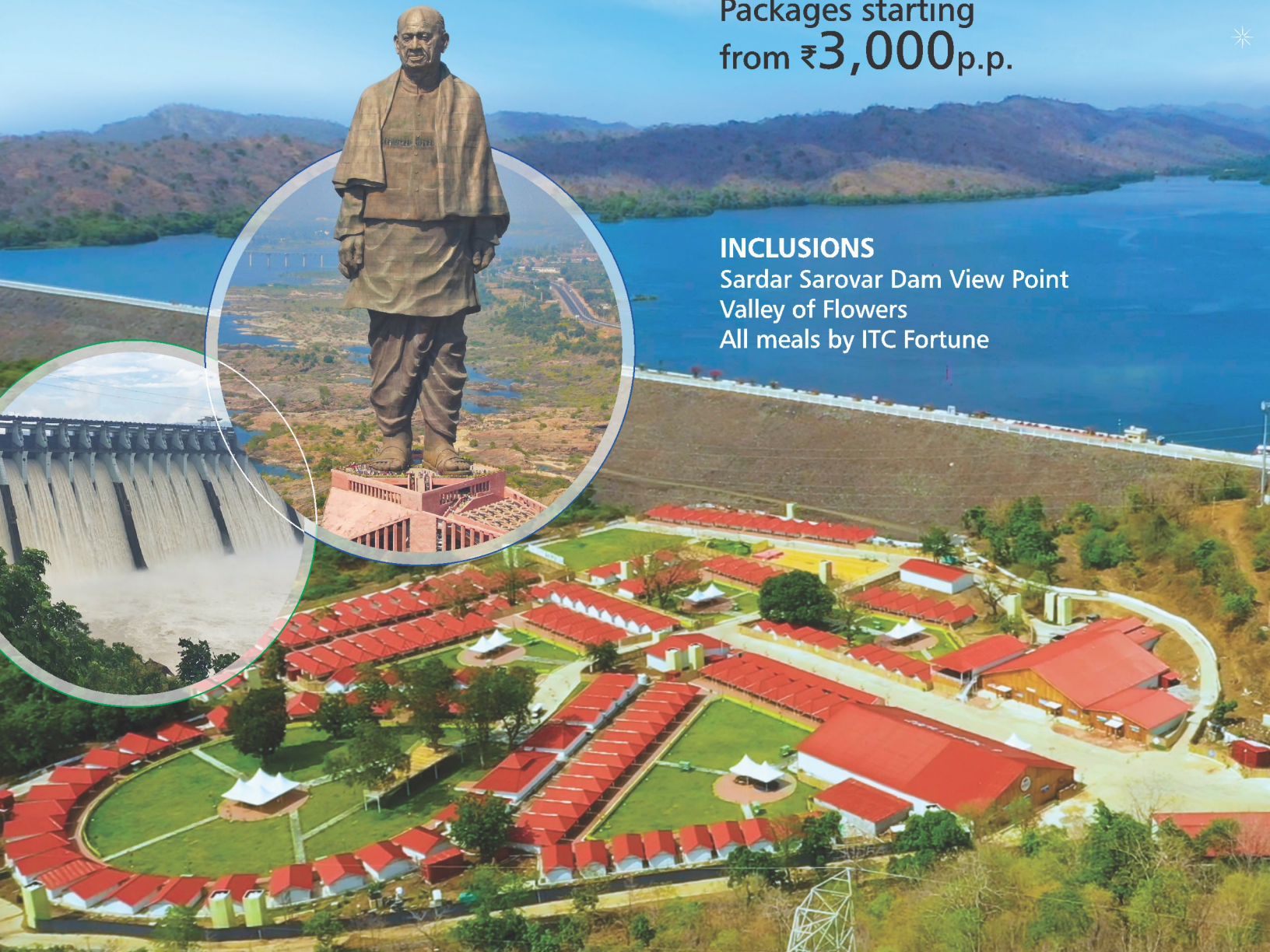
Safe and blissful journey
awaits you...

200
LUXURIOUS TENTS

Packages starting
from ₹3,000 p.p.

INCLUSIONS

Sardar Sarovar Dam View Point
Valley of Flowers
All meals by ITC Fortune



With enhanced hospitality and hygiene standards as per Government Norms



TENT CITY
NARMADA
THE LUXURIOUS NATURE RESORT



For Booking:
72 40 40 40 40
www.tentcitynarmada.com

For Trade Enquiry:
99 09 00 12 57
info@tentcitynarmada.com

RESORT: Dyke 3, Sardar Sarovar Dam Site, Kevadiya - 393151, Dist. Narmada, Gujarat, India

OPERATED BY

