

# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS (INDIA) LIMITED | [www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)

April 2023

Year : 8 | Issue : 8 (Continue Issue : 78) | Pages : 56 | ₹ 200

*A high-end monthly magazine*

RNI Regd. No. GUJENG/2015/70098

## ROLLER COASTER IN THE ADRIATIC

Nocturnal Adventures in  
Gourmet Delights

**LIFE IN TREETOPS**

**CHILD-FRIENDLY GUJARAT**



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April 2023

## DELICIOUSLY HOT!

**T**he best part about travelling is that it gives us the chance to explore different cultures around the world. Food tourism is at an all time high these days, and everyone is making video blogs about it. So, it is only natural that you would want to go on a food trip, and there are tons of foods to explore.

Night Markets are one of the best places in Taipei to try local Taiwanese food. Besides gourmet delight, the bustling stalls, arcades, and neon lights make the exploration all the more exciting. So let's relish the Taiwanese delicacies and chat with the vendors about food culture and exotic ingredients.

If spending summer in India is the plan, staycation at Wayanad's tree house resort is a great way to spend some quality time amid nature. Wayanad is a naturally blessed place with bubbling rivers, lush greens, an abundantly rich and varied wildlife and sounds of nature that can be nothing but therapeutic.

Read on!

Source: thirawatana phaisajitana / shutterstock.com

Taiwan





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Lakkidi, Wayanad





# Hungarian Treasures

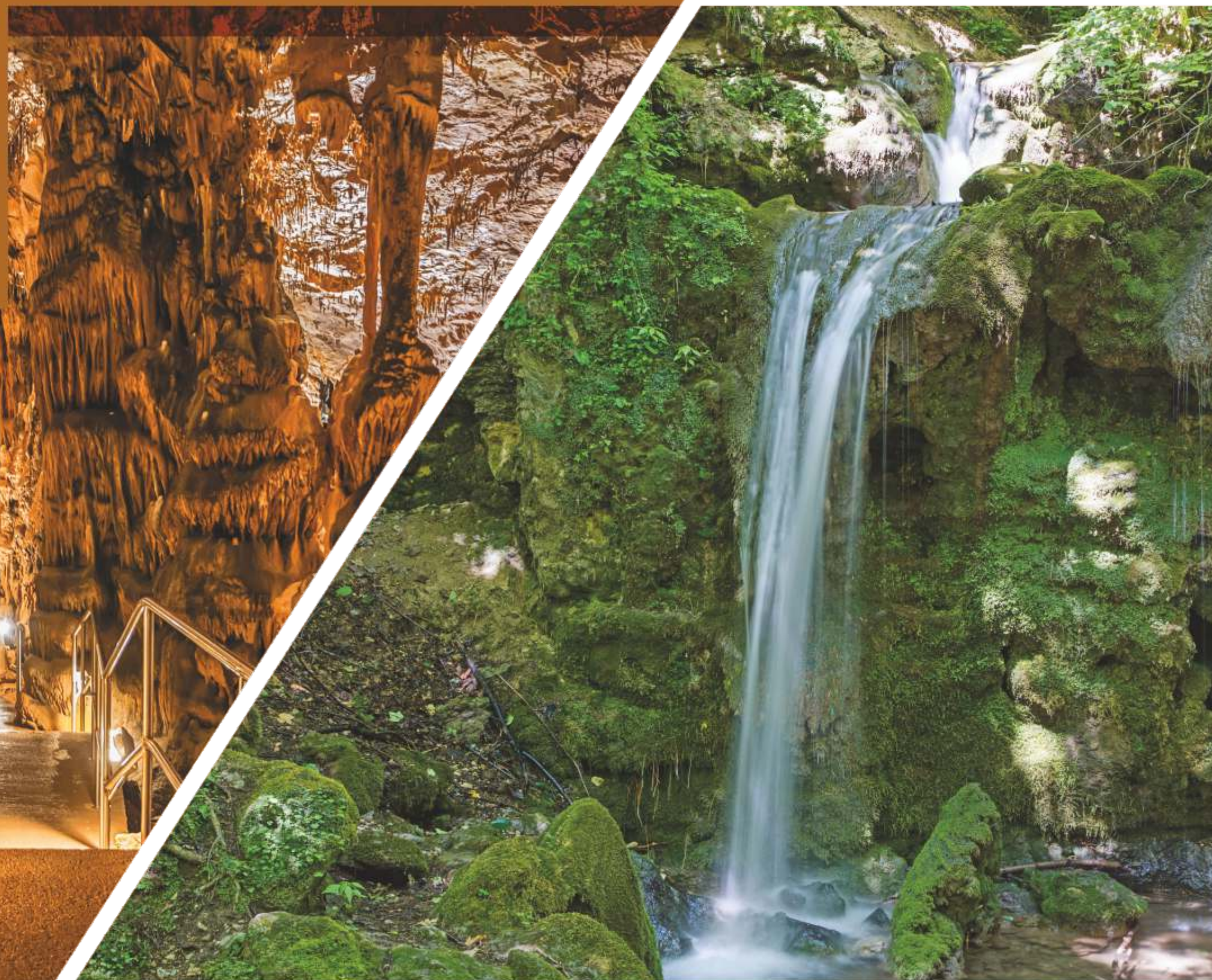
Budapest, Hungary



Hungary has several sites that meet the demanding criteria to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The sites must be of 'outstanding universal value' and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. The standard of 'outstanding universal value' means that the cultural and/or natural significance is "so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for

present and future generations of all humanity."

The caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995. It sits on the north-eastern border of Hungary with Slovakia and is in both countries. The site is made up of over 1,000 different caves of which 273 are in Hungary. It covers an area of about 564 square kilometres which is slightly more than the T3 New Delhi Airport Terminal.



Baradle Cave, Aggtelek National Park

Slovak Karst





Pecs

Source: Pécold / Shutterstock.com



Paleochristian Tombs, Pecs



The longest cave in Hungary extends to 25 kilometres. As per geological data, the cave has been in existence for about two million years. Over aeons, the water of the streams abraded and dissolved the soluble calcium deposits creating the cavities and caverns. The dripping water from the roof of the cavities so formed, contain soluble calcium salts. When the water evaporated, pillars of stalactites and stalagmites of varying shapes and sizes were formed. There is an eerie feeling as one walks through these huge caverns with giant size stalactites and stalagmites. The visitors to these caverns have let their imagination run and given them fancy names like Dragonhead, Columned Chamber, Banquet Hall,

The Room of Lace, The Great Chamber etc. Apparently, one of the stalactites reminded somebody of his or her in-laws. It is called Mother-in-Law's Tongue!

One of the caverns, called The Concert Hall, has excellent acoustics properties, so much so that popular music concerts are held there. The range of music includes classical and pop music.

Moving on from one subterranean region to another that has the tag of UNESCO World Heritage, is the Christian Necropolis of Pécs, about 200 km from Budapest. The necropolis, a large cemetery, belonging to an ancient city, was built in the 4th century in the town of Sopianae (now Pécs). It was once a part of the Roman Empire. The

necropolis has underground burial chambers and has a memorial chapel above ground to mark the site. These two-storey structures served as burial sites for the nobility and as well as for burial ceremonies.

There are two burial chambers. The first one is called Peter & Paul Tomb, so called because the murals in the underground chamber depict murals of these two apostles. The chamber has lavish paintings of biblical scenes. The second chamber is called the Wine Pitcher because the walls are depicted with the paintings of wine pitchers. These chambers were discovered in the 18th century.



The Roman settlement on which the town of Pécs was built was founded in the early 2nd century AD. In subsequent years, this town would grow to become a significant centre of Christianity, which explains the biblical scenes in the chambers.

In ancient Rome till about 2nd century AD, the dead were cremated. Cremation of the dead was the most common burial rite. The deceased would be taken to Rome's necropolis (city of the dead) and be placed upon a burning pyre. The ashes and remaining bone fragments were interned in a funerary urn. It was only after the 2nd century that burial became the preferred method of funeral rites. The deceased was placed inside a sarcophagus, which was often richly decorated.

Moving further away from the murky world of caves and the dead, we come to the pleasant world of spirits and intoxicants. The demand for the ambrosial

intoxicant has been perennial in any form. The 18th century Austrian composer Joseph Haydn, famous for his elegant and witty compositions, received payments in the form of wine. The "nectar" coming from the grapes of this particular wine is mentioned in the national anthem of Hungary. The wine in question is Tokaj, pronounced, toe-kay, the price of which is in excess of Rs 1 Lakh for a 750 ml bottle.

The Tokaj Wine Region was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2002. It is in the north-eastern part of Hungary. It covers 27 different settlements that reflect the region's living tradition and the culture of wine production. The town of Tokaj has come to represent production of wine in this region. The area covers 5,400 hectares of planted vines, and hundreds of small wineries.

Tokaj is about a 2.5-hour drive from Budapest. It is also an important Jewish heritage area. Jewish traders played a vital role in the production, sale and transportation of wine from Tokaj, contributing enormously to its

international recognition across the centuries. Synagogues in Tokaj have been restored, and several wineries are located inside the old homes of Jewish wine merchants.

Grapes have been grown and cultivated in the region since 1561 to make the Tokaj wines. The vineyards, villages and small towns reflect the distinct viticulture tradition of the region. The Roman Emperor Charles VI, in 1737, owing to the importance of this wine region earmarked it as a protected area. The site is also notable for its historic networks of deep wine cellars.

The area, however, owes its fame to a special strand of fungus (a multicellular organism that cannot make its own food) called botrytis. It is this fungus that transforms the overripe grapes into small, shrivelled raisin-like berries with concentrated sugars and flavours. The fungus grows only when weather conditions are perfect. It is the happy combination of the region's terroir that has given this wine its outstanding flavour. 🍷



Tokaji Aszu, Budapest



Tokaj Wine Region



Velka Trna, Tokaj Wine Region, Slovakia



# LIFE IN TREETOPS

A lonesome cry of a bird perched high on a tree pierced the impending dawn breaking over the rainforest where I was staying. From my vantage, I could see a green canopy of wooded hills stretched undulating before me. I was standing on the balcony of a tree house in one of the resorts in the hill district of Wayanad in Kerala.

Wayanad district is on the northeast edge of Kerala. It forms the southern end of the Deccan Plateau, where the altitude of the hills ranged from 700 to 2100 meters. It is the highest point in Wayanad district. The district is blessed with rich water resources.

The Wayanad district has the largest tribal population in Kerala. They, unlike in other parts of Kerala, have a patrilineal system of transference of rights, property, and wealth inherited from father to sons. They dwell in forests and still hunt for their food. Animals abound in this region. There are elephants, bears, barking deer, tigers, leopards, and wild dogs.

The quiet dawn was a far cry from the raucous welcome I received from the croaking frogs when I reached the resort late in the evening. It was the beginning of the mating season and the amphibians were going about their

business in full swing. I had left Mysore late in the afternoon and had reached Kalpetta, the main town in the Wayanad district. The dusk had already set in. Kalpetta is surrounded by densely wooded hills. Like all hill towns in Kerala, Kalpetta is a busy town with narrow roads where the trundling buses threaten to run you down. Cyclists rush past you, deftly avoiding a head on collision. It is always mealtime here. As I walked down the streets of Kalpetta, I was assailed by delicious smells of Kerala food - fish fry, chicken curry, and bowls of steaming rice and of course the Kerala Parottas were on display.

Hill Resort, Kerala



Asian Elephant, Wayanad Jungle



A 45-minute drive from this town brought me to this resort. Though it was only 6 o'clock, it had considerably darkened and through the dense foliage of trees, I could see brightly lit tree houses at various levels from the ground. Against the dark silhouette of the mountains, the brightly lit cabins looked friendly and cosy. The pathways were lit with lights that shone directly on the cemented path. My 'house' was a good five minutes' walk from the reception office. The roughly cemented winding pathway led me up the hill.

My house was about 8-10 metres above the ground on a huge Jackfruit tree. A short flight of wooden steps led me to the room. It was a one room apartment with an attached restroom and a balcony that ran the length of the room. The wooden apartment was sparsely, but tastefully furnished.

From my balcony, it was all inky darkness all round. It was 7:30 in the evening and the forest was plunged into darkness. Between the dense foliage, I could discern lights of the other apartments in the resort. Above the cacophony of the frogs that were doing

their best to outdo their competing mates to capture the hearts of their lady love, I could hear the gurgling of a stream far down the hill. It was too dark to go exploring.

The dining hall was a common area propped up on stilts. It was a sprawling hall dexterously constructed with bamboo, burnished teak wood and tiles. With dimly lit lights all round, the effect was immensely pleasing to the eye. The buffet meal that was spread out for our delectation was a quintessential Kerala meal. There were appams and stews, string hoppers and coconut chutney, parotta with chicken fry and of course the ubiquitous dosa with sambar. Fish curry cooked in freshly extracted coconut milk, is a delight to have, far different from the traditional fish curry.

Next morning the cry of the birds enticed me to go exploring the area. I walked downhill towards the source of the sound of the stream. Tufts of mists still clung to the trees. Spent with the night long promotion of their virility, the frogs had quietened down, only to be replaced by the more pleasant-sounding calls of the birds.



Elevated House



The sun had not yet penetrated the dark depths of the forest. It was a rivulet that noisily swept over moth fringed craggy rocks. I stepped into the cool waters. The big fishes darted away at my approach. The small silvered coloured fishes were bolder and fearlessly nibbled on my feet and legs.

A long hanging bridge was suspended across the rivulet. Standing under the dense canopy of leaves and branches, I had a clear view of the river bed. I could see myriad fishes in perpetual motion in search of food. It was a good experience walking on that swaying bridge.

If frogs are there, then snakes cannot be far behind. Whereas most animals would avoid eating frogs because of the juice they secrete on their body when danger looms, the snakes find it irresistibly juicy! As I walked along the cemented path, lying directly across was the skin of the snake. It was about a metre and a half long. On the rough surface of the path, it had managed to get rid of its skin. The process is called moulting. It brought home the fact this was snake country and I had to tread carefully. Several species of snakes are found here, both poisonous and non-poisonous.

While in Wayanad, there are several interesting places to see. The Edakkal Caves or rather rock shelter, are one of

the oldest human settlements discovered in India. Edakkal means a boulder in between. It is a boulder that has got wedged between two bigger ones. Reportedly, they date back to 6000 years BC.

The Kabini River, a tributary of Kaveri or Cauvery River, originates at Wayanad. Varambetta mosque is one of the oldest Muslim mosques of Wayanad dating back to the 18th century. The mosque has no restrictions for entry. People of all religions can pass through its portals. Wayanad also has the only Lava-Kusha temple in Kerala. It is the only known temple to have the deities of Lava and Kusha, children of Rama and Sita. The temple was also built sometime in the 18th century.

Living in a treehouse in Kerala was a wonderful experience. Its architectural designs conformed to a classical Kerala house. The materials used are autochthonous such as bamboo, coir, and palm leaves. I spent most of my time sitting on the balcony reading a book. When I pause in my reading and look out, I see a vast expanse of treetops, in various shades of green. Birds flit by. Dragonflies, defying science, hover immobile in the air, before darting away. A kaleidoscope of butterflies silently flutters by. I am left alone again in silence. I return to my reading. 📖



Edakkal Caves

Words by VIJAY KURUP



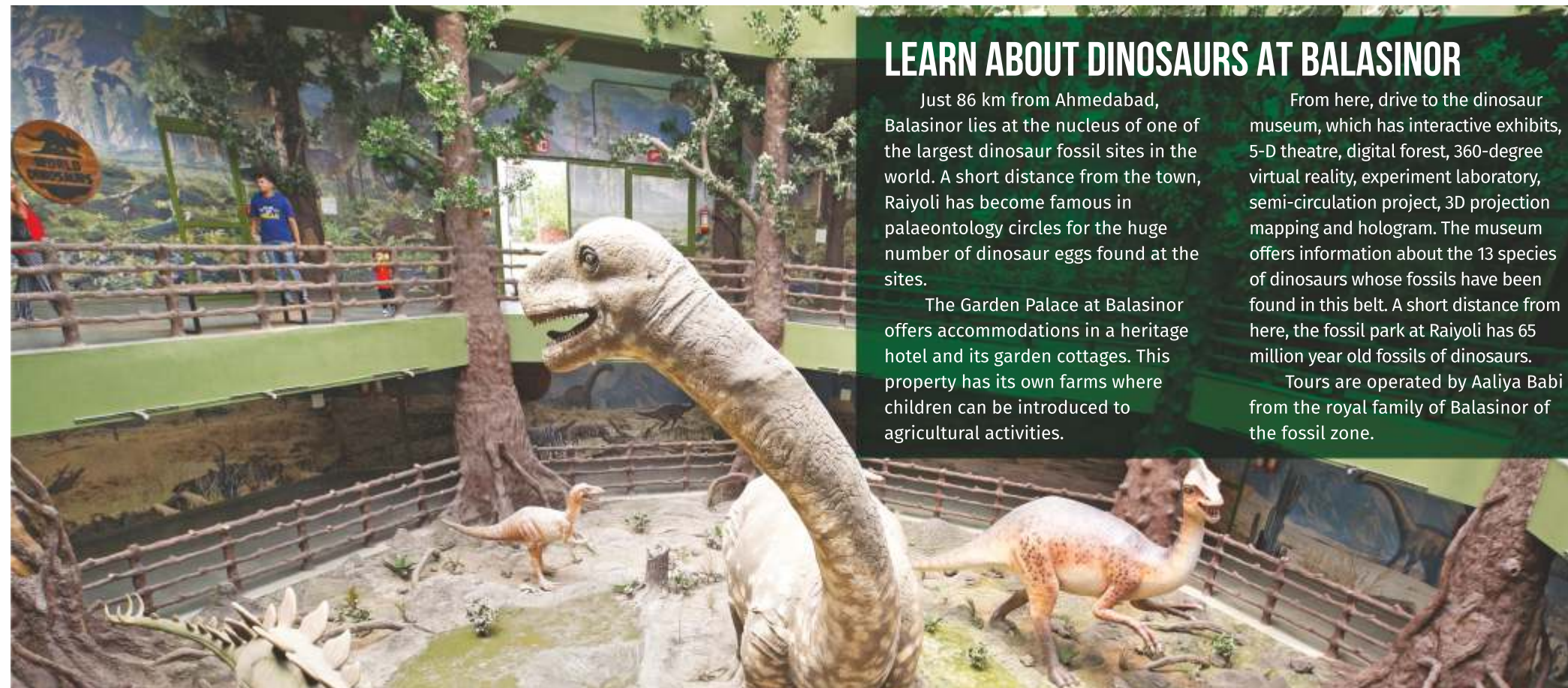
Edakkal Caves





# CHILD-FRIENDLY GUJARAT

From beaches to museums, Gujarat has many enjoyable and educational destinations for families with children.



## LEARN ABOUT DINOSAURS AT BALASINOR

Just 86 km from Ahmedabad, Balasinor lies at the nucleus of one of the largest dinosaur fossil sites in the world. A short distance from the town, Raiyoli has become famous in palaeontology circles for the huge number of dinosaur eggs found at the sites.

The Garden Palace at Balasinor offers accommodations in a heritage hotel and its garden cottages. This property has its own farms where children can be introduced to agricultural activities.

From here, drive to the dinosaur museum, which has interactive exhibits, 5-D theatre, digital forest, 360-degree virtual reality, experiment laboratory, semi-circulation project, 3D projection mapping and hologram. The museum offers information about the 13 species of dinosaurs whose fossils have been found in this belt. A short distance from here, the fossil park at Raiyoli has 65 million year old fossils of dinosaurs.

Tours are operated by Aaliya Babi from the royal family of Balasinor of the fossil zone.

## ENJOY THE SANDS AT MANDVI BEACH

Mandvi in Kutch is a coastal town fringed by some fine beaches. Visit the Vijay Vilas Palace, a grand royal palace with princely memorabilia and a superb view from its terrace over the grounds towards the sea. The palace grounds run along a sandy beach. The sands here are soft and ideal for walking, and

from here you can wade and paddle in shallow waters. Children will enjoy making sand castles and playing on the sanded beach. There are resorts and camps facing the beaches for accommodations and food.

Visit the town with its historical buildings and handicraft market. You can watch ocean-worthy dhows and

boats being built on the river and flamingos at the creeks. You can see Batik at the Vivekanand Gramodyog Society in Mandvi, bandhani work at nearby villages, and the rare art of Mashru weaving at Mau.

Don't miss trying the famous dabeli and masala cone of Mandvi, and a thali at Zorba - the Buddha Restaurant.



## STAY AT A RESORT IN KANDLA

A short drive from Kandla Airport brings you to large resorts that offer wide-ranging facilities for children. The 17.5 acres Holiday Village Resort is one of the best. As you enter the resort, you come to the sprawling lawns around which the cottages are built. Each of the cottages blends traditional architectural elements with modern and deluxe amenities. Near the cottages is the water park, which has water play areas, water slides, water coasters and children's pools. This resort also has an indoor kid's zone with toys, slides, playing equipment and caretakers to keep children engaged. For children who like sports, there is a swimming pool and various sports at the club. The restaurant team is also happy to customise dishes for the needs of children.







Bet Dwarka

## TAKE A COASTAL HOLIDAY AT DWARKA

Dwarka is largely known as a holy place with its sacred temple but it also offers many attractions for families with children.

As you head for Dwarka, you come to Okha Madhi near which is a long and beautiful sandy beach. Along this beach is a Turtle Hatchery. The western coast of Kathiawad is an important breeding zone for endangered green sea turtles. The green sea turtles are among the largest of marine turtles with a gleaming olive carapace, unique in being herbivorous. They lay eggs on the beaches, and the hatchlings have a perilous journey to the sea when they can fall prey to gulls and other birds, crabs, stray dogs and other predators. Eggs in potentially dangerous areas for the hatchlings are collected and kept in the hatchery. Children will enjoy seeing

the baby turtles and knowing more about them. In the town of Dwarka, the temple's shikaras and domes loom up over the surroundings. Just behind the temple is a pretty beach and marshes where you could see pelicans and other birds.

From Dwarka, travel north towards Shivrappur Beach. You can see the 12th century Rukmini Temple with its rich carvings on the way. Shivrappur is one of India's Blue Flag Beaches. Drop your shoes to walk on the sand and wade in the shallow waters. There are many water sports operated on the beach like parasailing, jet-skiing and boating. For teenagers, scuba diving can be one of the top attractions.

Continue from Shivrappur to the minor port of Okha. From here, you can get a boat for an offshore sea safari. The boat takes you to areas frequented by dolphins. You are likely to see a few

leaping and playing in the waters. The boat can stop at Bet Dwarka for those who want to visit the island's beach, the Gurdvara and the temples.

Return to Okha and then travel to the beautiful Positra beach. Time your visit for the low-tide so that you can wade in the water and see the stunning coral reefs and array of marine life.

Returning back to Dwarka, visit Charakhla salt pans, where you are likely to see thousands of birds like pelicans, flamingoes, storks, spoonbills and ibises.

Dwarka has many good resorts and hotels like Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham Dwarka, which has activity areas and swimming pool for children, Fern Sattva, Lemon Tree Premier, Goverdhan Greens, Lords Eco-Inn, etc.

## AN ENJOYABLE AND EDUCATIONAL DAY IN AHMEDABAD

The sun rises in the east and one of the best sunrise views can be enjoyed at the Kankaria Lake in East Ahmedabad. The lakefront is entered

by a magnificent gateway designed to represent the architecture of the Gujarat Sultanate, and there are well-planned parking areas. Walk along the promenade to enjoy views of the lake which was created in the 15th century. The 34-sided lake has an island garden in the centre and the Nagina Wadi Gardens. You can watch herons and other birds at the lake.

The lakefront has been rejuvenated with a pedestrian-only recreational area. Take a morning toy train ride on the Atal Express, a toy train. Proceed from here to see the gardens and fountains. A little further away is the tethered balloon – get into the basket and go up in the balloon for a superb panoramic view of the city. Nearby, you

can hire a Segway – a two-wheel balancing vehicle, for a ride around the lake. A number of aquatic activities and boating can be enjoyed at the lake.

Leave the promenade and visit Kid's City, which is like a miniature scaled down world for children, where they learn through realistic role-play at micro-versions of a fire station, a post office, a police station and other utilities.

From the lakefront, you can access the Kamala Nehru Hill Garden Zoological Park is one of the most visited zoos in India. The zoo was started in the 1950s by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation with the late Reuben David as its first superintendent. The zoo became

famous for the interest David took in each of the animals, its breeding record of lesser flamingo, water monitor and various endangered species, and its record of maintaining albino specimens of many mammals and birds. There is a good collection of big cats, herbivores, monkeys, birds and reptiles. Don't miss seeing the Nicobar pigeons.

Near the zoo is the Balvatika, a children's park with a maze of mirrors and other attractions. There is also an informative Natural History Museum with dioramas featuring stuffed animals and birds in their natural habitat. The Butterfly Park is a garden that has been landscaped to create a habitat for butterflies – walk around the park to see butterflies feeding on various flowers.

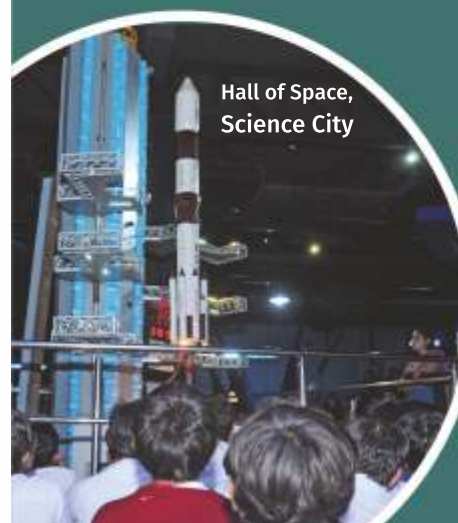
From Kankaria, travel to the Shreyas Campus, which has two

museums exhibiting toys, dolls and handicrafts.

Proceed to the Gujarat Science City, a unique science theme park. It has IMAX 3D Theatre, Planet Earth Pavilion, a Hall of Space, an Energy Education Park, an Electrodome with lots of information about electricity and its uses, a Life Science Park and Hall of Science with interactive exhibits. Take a thrill ride in the simulator and see a show on the Science City LED Screen.

A highlight of the theme park is the aquarium, which is among India's largest. You can see a huge variety of fish and other marine life from different parts of the world. Children will love to watch the penguins swimming in the pool.

At night, you can see the musical fountains.



IMAX, Science City



## TAKE A NATURE AND CULTURE BREAK IN BHAVNAGAR

Situated along the eastern coast of the Kathiawad peninsula, well-known as Saurashtra, Bhavnagar has attractive parks that are good for nature lovers.

This city was founded in 1723 AD as the seat of power of the Gohil Rajput rulers of the area, and saw much development between the 1860s and 1940s. The legacy of this period includes a number of impressive buildings like the Takhtsinhji Hospital, the High Court, Sir Alfred School and the Barton Library that can be seen when driving around the city. Those interested in architecture, must visit the Takhtsinhji Hospital, which was built between 1879 and 1883. This hospital building was designed by Sir William Emerson, whose works include Kolkata's Victoria Memorial, Allahabad's Muir College and Mumbai's Crawford Market. From here, you can continue to the Takhteshwar temple, raised on a hill in the south of town, which is a

popular place for a view over the city to the coast. Travel northeast to the Barton Museum which occupies a crescent-shaped building set facing a circle with a clock tower in the centre. The museum has a collection of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu statues, mediaeval bronzes, Harappan terracotta, farming implements and folk crafts. Upstairs, Gandhi Smriti Museum exhibits old sepia photos and Mahatma Gandhi's memorabilia. The top floor of the crescent-shaped 1890s museum building has a collection of handicrafts from all over India. Shops selling khadi and handmade products are located in the adjacent buildings. In the heart of the city, the attractive Ganga Jalia temple, a fountain-fed water body, markets and the former palace called Darbargadh are worth visiting.

The university area has some historical college buildings erected by the Maharajas of Bhavnagar who were patrons of education. The Samaldas Arts College was the first institution of higher learning in Saurashtra during the

1880s. A plaque states that Mahatma Gandhi went to college in Bhavnagar.

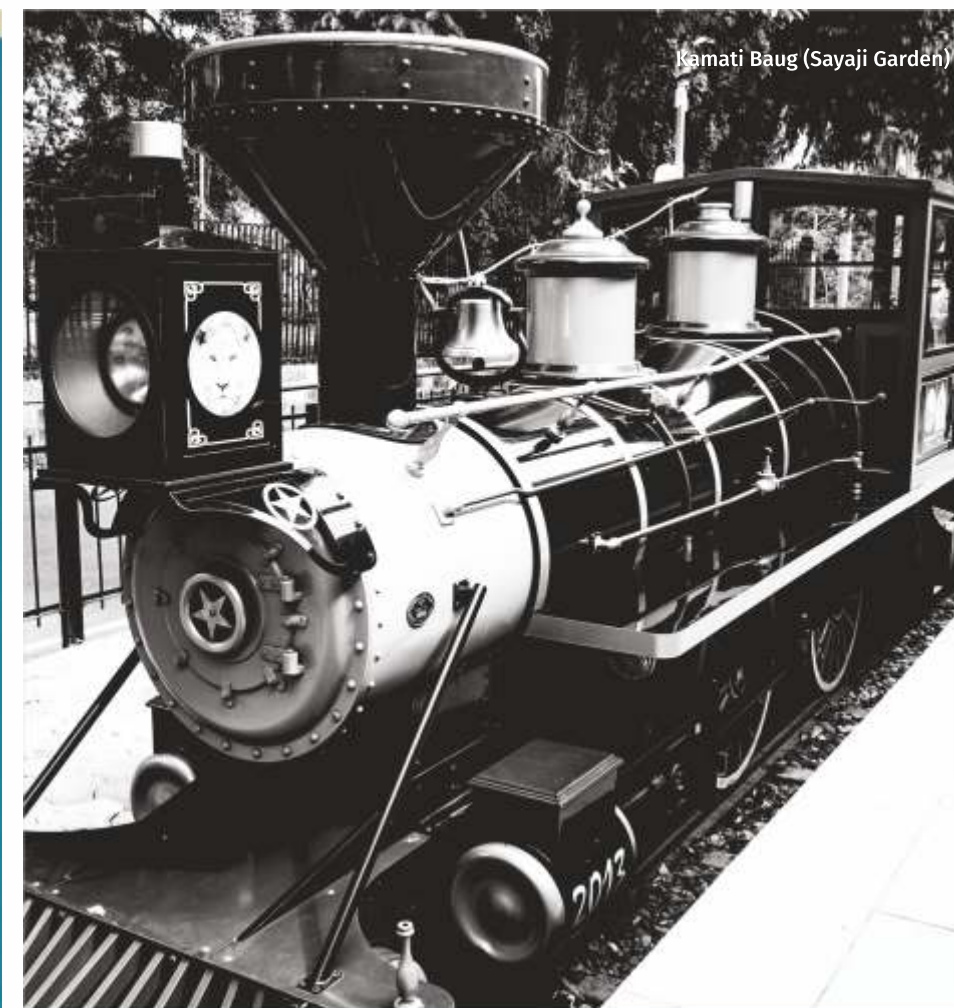
In the early morning or in the evening, don't miss a walk at Victoria Park. The permissible walking trail passes woodland, scrub and a lake, and offers views of low hills. A variety of birds, small mammals and reptiles can be seen along the walking trail. Nearby, Bhor Talao or Gaurishankar Lake was built as a water storage resource for Bhavnagar. Walk along the embankments to spot wbbater birds.

From Bhavnagar, it is a drive of about an hour to Adhelui from where you can turn off the highway for Velavadar National Park. The drive off the highway to the park's entrance passes a river and flooded fields – stay alert on this road for sightings of wolf, jackal and other mammals that come to drink water, as also birdlife like sarus crane that frequents the fields. Presently, you come to the entrance of the national park. The park is relatively small, spanning about 34 sq km, but there is much to be seen on the drivable dirt tracks that run past Savannah-type grasslands, thorny scrub and wetlands. On the way, there are a couple of watch towers that offer good views over the grasslands. From the track

or the watchtower, you can see large herds of Indian antelope called blackbuck, usually in groups of about 50 each. The male blackbuck has a striking blackish brown and white colour and beautiful spiraling horns, which make it one of the most elegant antelopes in the world. The does and immature males are yellowish fawn in colour.

February-March is usually the peak rutting time for blackbuck - you may see the males strutting around with its head facing upwards so that its horns lie along its back. The males set up territory and defend their harem from rivals. The grasslands abound in birds like larks, shrikes, drongos, wheatears, quails, francolins and there are chances of seeing cranes in winter. The Stolikza's bush chat is one of the globally threatened birds that can be seen in the park. Eagles, hawks and falcons hunt in the grasslands. You can see flocks of sand grouse coming to the rivers and water ponds in the park, usually about mid-morning.

As evening approaches, there are chances of seeing carnivores like the Indian wolf, striped hyena and jungle cat.



Kamati Baug (Sayaji Garden)

## VISIT THE PARKS AND MUSEUMS OF VADODARA

Vadodara or Baroda has been Gujarat's Art and Culture Capital from the late-1800s when Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda patronised art in the city. Take your children to the 19th century City Museum with Tamil paintings, Tibetan-Buddhist art, Mughal-period miniature paintings and manuscripts, oil paintings from Europe, plaster images of classical works meant as role models for aspiring artists, tribal art and a portrait gallery. There are other museums in the park that exhibit details about nutrition and the sciences. The museum complex is located in the Kamati Baug which is a large park with a zoo and a vintage toy train that once belonged to the Maharaja of Baroda.

A short drive from the park, the Lukshmi Vilas Palace has vast collections of princely memorabilia. You can also see Chinese and Japanese art, Ravi Varma's portraits and European paintings at the Maharaja Fatehsinhrao Museum in the magnificent Lakshmi Vilas Palace complex. While in the city, check up on information about art exhibitions at the art galleries like Sarjan, Kalanidhi and Lenxus.

Proceed to Ajwa lake and Nimeta, famous for its gardens, and then to the World Heritage Site of Champaner-Pavagadh. Here, you can see many historical monuments.

Children will enjoy the ropeway ride to the Pavagadh hilltop.



Velavadar National Park





## WATCH WILDLIFE AT GIR

Summer is a good time to visit the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary. During these hot months, lion and leopard sightings at water holes are frequent.

This 1412 sq km wildlife reserve comprises deciduous forests, semi-evergreen and evergreen riverine flora, thorn-scrub jungle, grasslands and rocky areas with seven rivers flowing through it. Driving in an open vehicle in the hill tracts of this wildlife sanctuary, with its deciduous forests, grasslands and scrub, is a pleasant and often exciting experience as alarm calls and pugmarks indicate that a big cat is on the prowl. Other than the lion, Gir is also one of the best places in India for leopard sightings especially in parts of the park where there are

large langur populations. Gir is also an important habitat of chousingha, the world's only four horned antelope, but this diminutive mammal is not easy to spot among the vegetation. Keep a watch among the trees for the birdlife too – magnificent eagles and attractive birds like the paradise flycatcher, golden oriole, hoopoe, blue jay roller, flame back woodpecker and painted francolin are often seen during the drive. The most scenic place in the reserve is the Kamleshwar reservoir, where you can get excellent crocodile sightings.

Children will enjoy the wildlife zone at Devaliya, where you get close views of lions. ■

## VISIT THE PARKS OF STATUE OF UNITY

Well-known as the site for the world's largest statue, SOU is also a great destination to enjoy with your children.

The Jungle Safari covers 375 acres at seven different levels ranging from an altitude or elevation of 29 metres to 180 metres on the right bank of the Narmada River near the Statue of Unity. The park is a home to more than 186 species of fauna,

covering various biomes of Africa, Australia, Asia and America. The safari route goes through an open-air zoo where mammals can be seen in landscapes similar to their natural habitats. The Fly High Aviary is a walk-through enclosure, where you can get close to a variety of birds. The Cactus Garden has a variety of cacti and succulents from different lands.

You can stay at the Tent City Narmada.





# Nocturnal Adventures in Gourmet Delights





**B**right Chinese lanterns strung across the street greet you at the entrance of the Raohe Street Night Market. It is more than half a kilometre in length and very popular with tourists. There are over 400 restaurants, including Michelin rated establishments. Some of the delicacies available are deep-fried potato spiral, Tofu pudding, beef noodles, oyster vermicelli, stinky tofu, etc.

The unpalatable name notwithstanding, Stinky Tofu is immensely popular among the Taiwanese. It is also popular in China and Indonesia. It is a Chinese form of fermented tofu that has a strong smell and is usually

sold at roadside stalls rather than in restaurants. Traditionally the dish is made by soaking the tofu in brine, vegetables, shrimp, and with a few other ingredients. The fermented tofu is then deep fried and served with chili sauce.

You can also shop for souvenirs, cheap electronics, clothing, and other accessories. And if you are excruciatingly uncertain about your future, do not worry; there are fortune-tellers with parrots that will tell you exactly what the future holds for you - a game plan very similar to the ones that you see in India.



Stinky Tofu, Raohe Street Night Market



Raohe Street Night Market



Shilin Night Market in Taipei is Taiwan's most famous and one of the largest night markets in Taiwan. It has been in operation since 1909. Smelly Tofu is a specialty of this market. The shops turn into alleys and lanes, where one can discover exotic foods unique to this market.

Huaxi Night Market began in 1951 and is especially popular among the tourists. It is in Taipei city. It is a long

corridor lined on both sides with stalls. The corridor, brightly lit with lanterns, is wide enough for people to sit and enjoy their meals. It is also known as Snake Alley Night Market. In this market you can enjoy the Chinese herbal cuisine, cooked with snakes.

Traditional Chinese medicine is predicated on the belief that snakes have important restorative and

invigorative properties. It increases virility for the young and takes care of rheumatism for the aged. The snake dish is common in many countries in southeast Asia. It is definitely not a place for people with ophidiophobia - people who suffer from irrational fear of snakes. I do not suffer from this phobia, but I would definitely, give it a wide berth.



Fluffy Souffle Pancake



Huaxi Night Market



Shilin Night Market



Source: Liangye Taiwan Photo Shutterstock.com

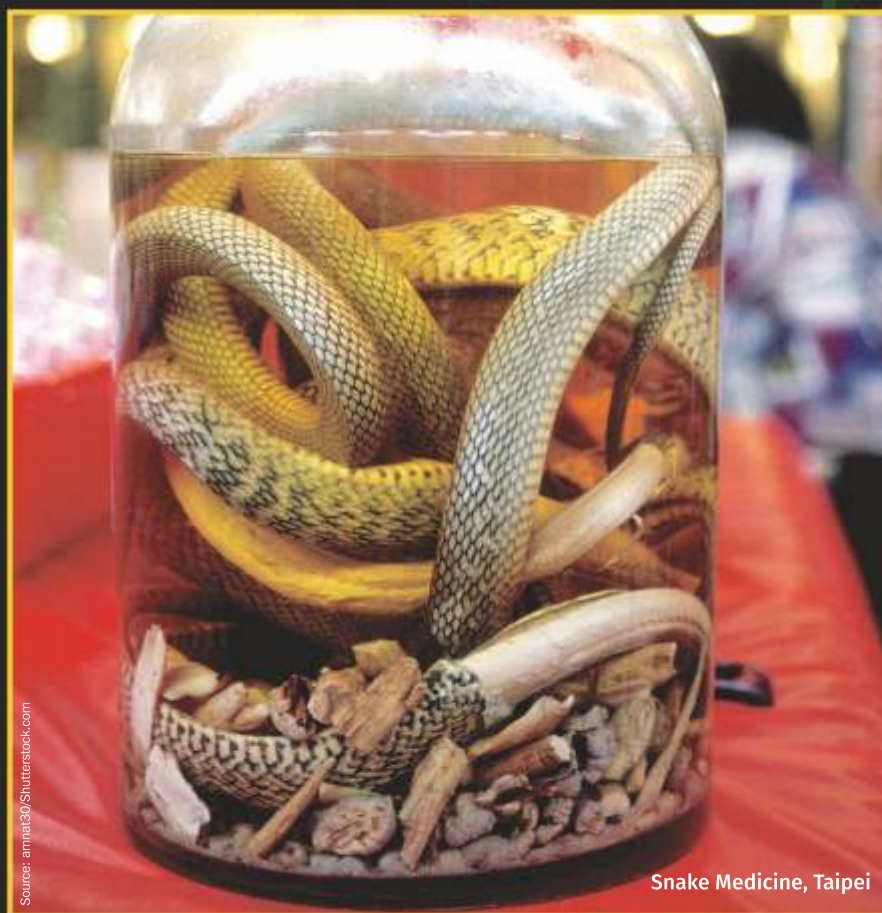


But having set the record straight about fears and likes and dislikes, a bacchanal would be tempted to make a sly visit to this place. One of the intriguing items on sale is a drink called the snake wine.

How is snake wine made? Before proceeding further, let me warn you that it is not meant for the queasy. An entire live snake is dropped into a jar of rice wine or any other alcohol for several months. The ethanol in the alcohol acts as a catalyst to break down the venom into a harmless fluid. Alternatively, the head of the reptile is cut off and the spurting blood is poured into a glass and mixed with alcohol. Believe it or

not, macabre it may look or sound, but the snake wine is a popular drink in Taiwan.

Coming to more palatable items, pork ribs stewed in traditional Chinese medicine, is a dish that is a runaway winner. Authentic Chinese medicinal food dishes are prepared according to traditional recipes and techniques based on ancient ideas about how the human body operates. Chinese herbal medicines in cuisines date back to 200 BC and are compiled in an ancient book called, The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine. The text gives advice on what to eat for different health conditions.



Snake Medicine, Taipei

Source: annat30/shutterstock.com



Snake Wine



The fundamentals of traditional Chinese medicine in cuisine are based on the esoteric concept of qi. How qi and body fluids balance each other. Qi in Chinese philosophy is the force that makes up and binds together all things in the universe. It is paradoxically both everything and nothing. Qi and the body fluids should balance each other, else there would be disease or sickness. It is arcane and difficult to comprehend. Suffice to say that when these medicines are used in the dishes, the results are a deliciously mouth-watering product.

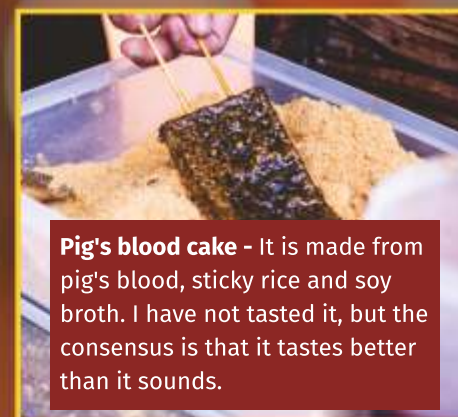
For liquid refreshment, there are various types of Bubble tea. Bubble tea is a relatively recent invention. It was Invented in the 1980s. It is also

known as Black Pearl Tea or Boba Tea. It is tea that has little balls suspended in it that could be anything from tapioca to fruit jelly. Immensely popular in the night markets, the concoction has now spread to other nations.

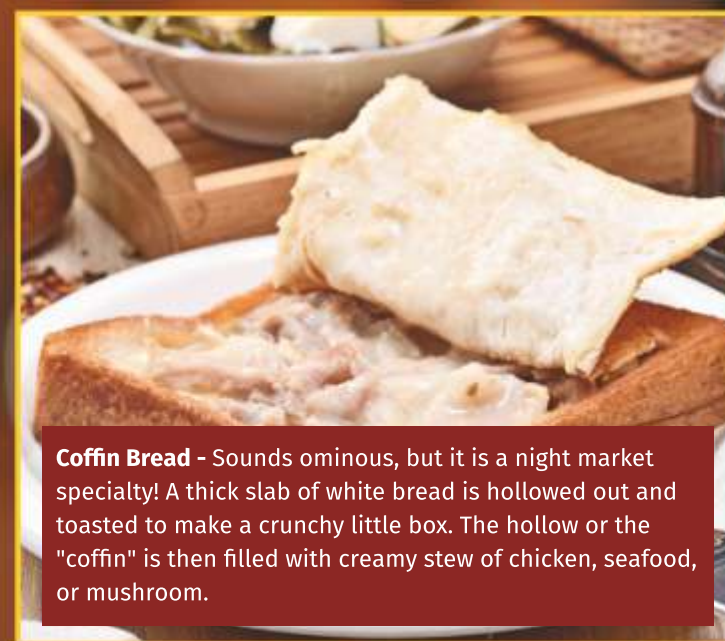
There is no better place in Taiwan than the night markets sprawled across the island to enjoy its appetizing treasures. Delving into these places is a serendipitous adventure in culinary exploration. It is also a place to meet the local populace. The people are warm and hospitable. In March 2019, Taiwan was listed as the happiest place in East Asia. Going by the culinary delights on the table, it is not surprising!



**Drunken Chicken** - Chicken dishes infused with Shaoxing wine (rice wine).

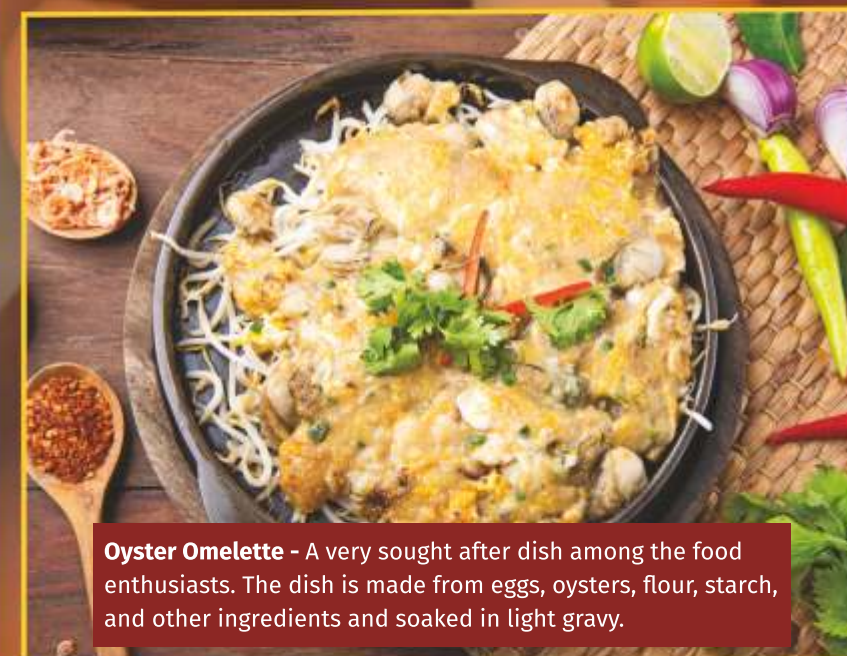


**Pig's blood cake** - It is made from pig's blood, sticky rice and soy broth. I have not tasted it, but the consensus is that it tastes better than it sounds.



**Coffin Bread** - Sounds ominous, but it is a night market specialty! A thick slab of white bread is hollowed out and toasted to make a crunchy little box. The hollow or the "coffin" is then filled with creamy stew of chicken, seafood, or mushroom.

Some of the dishes that the night markets offer has very intriguing names. Here is a list:



**Oyster Omelette** - A very sought after dish among the food enthusiasts. The dish is made from eggs, oysters, flour, starch, and other ingredients and soaked in light gravy.



**Iron Eggs** - They are chicken, pigeon, or quail eggs that have been repeatedly stewed in a tea, soy sauce, and spice, before being air-dried. The process shrinks the eggs, turns them a dark brown colour. 🍳



# ROLLER COASTER IN THE ADRIATIC



Dubrovnik, Southern Croatia





Dubrovnik Old Town

Croatia has had a tumultuous past. It wrenched independence for itself only in the late 20th century. But the price was heavy and casualties innumerable. Today the nation is well set on the road to recovery, and the country has been ranked as the 25 most popular tourist destinations. Numerous islands dot the Adriatic Sea. It is a country where mediaeval towns with cobbled streets still exist. Croatia is a quaint mixture of the new and old; of beautiful exotic islands and of wild and untamed natural parks.

With over 1200 islands both large and small, this archipelago of islands, offers enormous opportunities for exploring the secluded beaches and coves and witnessing spectacular Adriatic sunsets.

Abutting the Adriatic Sea, Croatia has one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline anywhere in the Mediterranean. There are islands where the super-rich come to get their tan. One such island is called Hvar (pronounced “h-w-aar”, but locals call it simply “fa-ar” or “fooor”). It's a small island, about 297 km in area. At its widest point, it is just 10 km wide. Most of the island is just about 2-3 km wide. It is one of the most active party spots in Croatia. It has the reputation as one of the swankiest destinations in the Adriatic region. As you move away from the centre of the town, much of the island is deserted. There are wide expanses of pine forests and lavender fields.





Hvar Town

Knight games

Hvar Island was of critical importance to the Venetian Empire. It was the lynchpin of the Venetian empire. Between the 13th and 15th centuries, Venice built an empire that stretched from the Adriatic coast to islands in the eastern Mediterranean. This huge area had to be safeguarded. The power centre was at Hvar Island that held the Venetian empire together.

On the highest point of the hill is the fortress Fortica Spanjola, built in the 16th century. But the foundations of the fort go back to the first millennium BC. The fort has a panoramic view of the sea. Blobs of island densely forested can be seen floating on the brilliant blue water of the Adriatic Sea. The fort was destroyed several times and rebuilt. Ancient canons are still positioned at certain vantage points.

Rab is another island that is also

immensely popular. It has a calm rustic vibe. Its mediaeval styled buildings with terracotta roofs provide a beautiful contrast to the lively blue Adriatic Sea. The island holds the largest summer fair in Croatia called the Rabska Fjera. The festival began in 1364 to honour King Louis the Great who freed them from the Venetian rule, as well as St. Christopher, patron saint of the town of Rab who supposedly saved the town from destruction. The festival lasts for 3 days. There are craft workers and artisan shops. You can learn about the preparation of traditional dishes using ingredients like tuna, fritters, and cheese. The marquee events of the festival are The Knights Games, which are held on 27th of July and 15th August every year.





Split

Split is the second-largest town in Croatia. It is a quintessential Mediterranean city with noisy streets, bustling cafes, seafront promenades and habited by easy-going friendly people. It is a beach town with a variety of beaches along its shores.

The main attraction in this town is the historical Palace of Diocletian, a cultural UNESCO World Heritage Site. The palace is an example of one of the most complete Roman architectures in the world. The fort is one of the best-preserved Roman amphitheatres outside of Italy. It was built for Roman Emperor Diocletian who lived in Split around the third century AD. The palace covers half of Split's Old Town. Diocletian rose from the army ranks to become the emperor. He introduced many reforms. He appointed men who

were empowered with specialised administrative work. This was the beginning of the bureaucracy and technocracy that was eventually adopted by modern society.

Though the palace was built as a retirement residence of Diocletian, it resembles a large fortress. About half of it was for Diocletian's personal use, and the rest housed the military garrison. When he fell seriously ill, he was the only Roman Emperor to have voluntarily abdicated the throne. The palace complex is a sprawling maze of 7 acres of beautifully preserved ancient ruins. Today, visitors to Split can stroll through these ruins. There are several cafes, shops and hotels constructed within the palace walls.





Source: Ilija Asic / Shutterstock.com

Nikola Tesla Birth House and Memorial Center

Islands of the Kornati Archipelago National Park

Many parts of the palace have undergone extensive restoration. The sprawling fort with its alleyways, houses for the soldiers, and the colonnaded courts gives you a very fair idea of the lives of the Romans in the centuries gone by.

There are several natural parks to explore that are uninhabited. Remains of human settlements and habitation can be found on some of the islands with some evidence dating back to the Neolithic Age. Craggy peaks, crevices, caves, and chasms abound in these parks. There are delightful walking trails. Scattered around the park are the ruins and remains of old houses and lodges that have long succumbed to the elements.

Podoštra is a village in Croatia. It is the birthplace of Nikola Tesla, one of the greatest inventors of all time. There is a museum that has been dedicated to him. Born in 1856, he rose from humble

beginnings to become a scientist and an inventor whose inventions were at least a hundred years ahead of his time. The museum depicts his idyllic country upbringing and his science-oriented adult life. It has a multimedia centre with hands-on science exhibits. The museum has surprisingly become one of the must see items among the tourists.

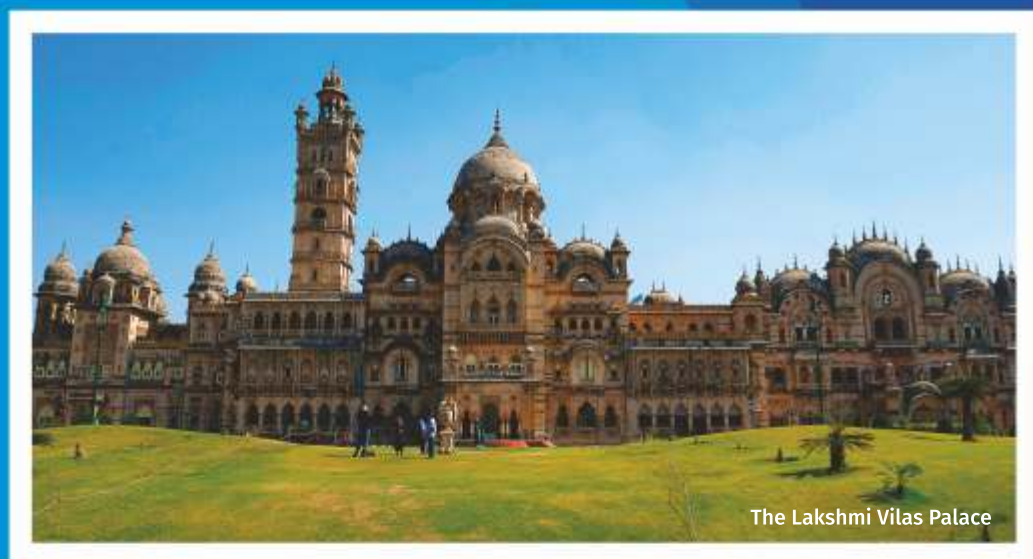
The best time to visit Croatia is during the summer months, which is from June to September. The weather is balmy and the conditions are ideal for boating and swimming in the blue waters around the islands. Most of the people who come to Croatia go island hopping. Most of the islands have mediaeval structures that transports you, albeit briefly, to a different era. To experience what we have not experienced before, isn't that the raison d'etre for most of our travels? 🇭🇷





# MICE ON THE RISE IN GUJARAT

Being one of the most industrialised states in India, Gujarat is where many conventions, conferences, seminars, exhibitions and workshops are held. A look at some of the best locations for meetings, conferences and conventions in Gujarat.



The Lakshmi Vilas Palace

## THE PALACE VENUE OF VADODARA

One of the largest and grandest palaces in India, the Lakshmi Vilas Palace presents an impressive façade with fine carvings and mosaics. The palace is set in hundreds of acres of grounds, with a golf course, gardens and pieces of European sculpture. One of the finest venues for corporate events, the Durbar Hall lawns have a backdrop of the rear façade of the palace with the gilded mosaic painting that is a piece-de-residence of the

Lukshmi Vilas. The lawn can host 1000 people at a time. A historical building has been converted into LVP Banquet with ballrooms, meeting rooms and banquet halls, elegantly appointed to match with the late-1800s and early-1900s architecture of the palace. For alfresco events, the Sunset Terrace offers a great view of the palace and the golf course. The Sunken Garden in front of the palace façade is a beautiful venue for events.

The Gaekwad Baroda Golf Club is another excellent venue for events. The poolside lawns of the club can be a great venue for outdoor events with the backdrop of the Motibaug Palace.

The palace is unique in having the golf course within its grounds. This is an added attraction for those who want to combine their conferences and other events with a game of golf or sports at Moti Bagh Stadium and the club.



Mahatma Mandir

## THE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION VENUES AT GANDHINAGAR

The capital of Gujarat, Gandhinagar is fast-emerging as a hub for conventions in India. The city's most exciting development is Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre. Spanning over 34 acres, the venue has everything you need for large-scale events. The building, erected using green technologies, has a total seating capacity of about 15,000 people in its air-conditioned halls and 6,000 in its theatre-style hall. In addition to this, Mahatma Mandir has four seminar rooms, three exhibition centres, seven conference halls, and modern meeting and conference rooms. Other facilities include a large foyer equipped with ATMs, Travel Desk, Food Court, Photo Gallery, etc.

While attending events, delegates

can walk across a suspension bridge that leads to the mound-shaped Dandi Kutir, where a museum of Mahatma Gandhi commemorates his Salt Satyagraha that broke the back of the British Raj in India.

For large exhibitions, Gandhinagar's Helipad Exhibition Centre has a parking facility for 10,000 cars, 25000 square metres of open spaces, and an administrative block.

Near the Mahatma Mandir, the luxurious Leela Gandhinagar is an ideal location to host a residential conference with luxe rooms, a pretty tea lounge, two restaurants, spa facilities, and various services.

On the outskirts of Gandhinagar, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) is an emerging finance technology

hub. GIFT is a smart city with India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), Domestic Finance Centre (DFC), Multi-services SEZ, Social and Civic Infrastructure Zone, a Residential Zone and a Transit Zone. In this financial and technology city, GIFT City Club and Business Centre is an attractive resort-like complex with a wide-range of sports facilities, restaurants, an infinity pool and deluxe rooms. The property has a ballroom, a conference room, 13519 sq ft amphitheatre and a large lawn for events. Grand Mercure GIFT City is a star-rated hotel with Gujarati crafts and motifs adding to the appeal. It has banquets and meeting rooms, and upstairs is a beautiful infinity swimming pool and a regional food specialty restaurant.



## CLUBS IN AHMEDABAD

They say many business deals happen at a golf course, and Ahmedabad has a good choice of golf clubs. 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 'Island green' on Hole No. 7 is a unique feature of the golf course. Close to Sanand, which is an

emerging industrial area with multinationals, Gulmohar Greens Golf & Country Club has a nine-hole golf course, swimming pool, sports area, deluxe rooms and other facilities

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, is a multi-award-

winning firm that has completed more than 325 championship courses across five continents in over 35 countries.

The Belvedere Golf & Country Club is another outstanding venue with a golf course, a sprawling 70,000 sq.Ft. green lawn with a seating capacity of upto 2000 people, a live discotheque with adjoining 5500 sq.Ft. lawn, an indoor banquet hall, and meeting rooms.



Kalhaar Blues & Greens Club



Courtyard by Marriott

## BANQUETS IN AHMEDABAD'S SG ROAD

The Sarkhej Gandhinagar Highway is now Ahmedabad's ritzy and happening SG Road, bustling with malls, hotels, posh residential areas and restaurants. TGB Banquets, The Grand Bhagwati is one of the best-known landmarks on this road, with a sizable parking area beside this event-oriented hotel. The Grand Ballroom here is a pillar-less 10,000 square feet space that can accommodate 1500 guests at a time, and there are many banquet halls

and meeting rooms. The hotel has become popular among car companies for new model launches as the car can be driven up directly to the ballroom stage. As TGB Banquets is one of the top catering companies in Gujarat, the hotel ensures quality and efficient food and beverage service.

Karnavati Club, Rajpath Club and YMCA are three clubs on this road that have good-sized banquet venues.

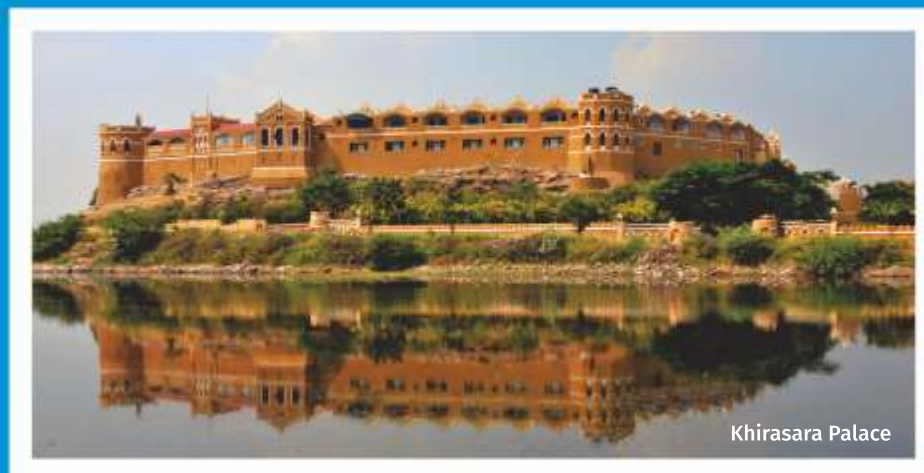
Another impressive venue is the

Grand 07 Suites and Convention near the Sardar Patel Ring Road, which offers multiple banquet venues with its adjacent Grand 07 Hotel and Club 07.

If you prefer to book your meeting at a 5-star hotel, there are many on and off this highway like Novotel Ahmedabad, Crowne Plaza City Centre, Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad, Courtyard SBR, Renaissance, Taj Skyline, Vivanta by Taj and DoubleTree by Hilton.



## A PALATIAL VENUE AT RAJKOT



Khirasara Palace

As you drive out of Rajkot on the road to Khirasara, you can see the walls of Heritage Khirasara Palace looming up over a hilltop. The drive to the heritage hotel ascends the hill and leads past a water body before you come to the property's entrance. Situated about 150 feet above Khirasara village, Heritage Khirasara

Palace offers panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Once inside the property, you are greeted by pleasant courtyards with fountains, lawns and gardens. The courtyards are beautifully lit up at night giving the property an enchanting atmosphere. The heritage hotel has 24 suites, which are elaborately decorated

and appropriately furnished.

This property is ideal for conferences with the Deewan and Darbar Banquet halls, a Conference Hall, and two large party lawns. Covering an area of 6500 square feet, the Darbar hall at Heritage Khirasara Palace is an ideal venue for weddings, parties, corporate conferences and other events. The carpeted pillar-less hall has the capacity to accommodate 2000 guests and there is also a good-sized pre-function area. The hall has audio-visual equipment for presentations.

The sprawling grounds of Heritage Khirasara Palace have lawns, gardens and walkways. The lawn is ideal for all kinds of events, with the capacity to accommodate 3500 guests. Together, Urvashi and Vaishali Lawns are spread over 22000 square feet. The poolside can be used for small parties and functions of up to 100 persons.

## A SPA RESORT AT ANAND

Madhubhan Resort & Spa is one of Gujarat's most luxurious spa resorts, which offers an ultra-luxe holiday with a variety of rejuvenating therapies from traditional ayurvedic treatments, Thai massages and Swedish massages to contemporary services like oxygen, ozone and hydro-therapies.

Entered by a driveway through lush green gardens, Madhubhan has international - style rooms, an ethnically designed area with cobbled pathways, columns and murals that connect to the central Gujarat region, a meandering pool that is probably Gujarat's longest resort swimming pool, restaurant, wellness bar, the signature salon and a 10,000 sq ft spa area



Madhubhan Resort & Spa

segregated from the comings and goings in the resort by landscaped gardens and goldfish ponds.

This is an ideal venue for those who want to treat their delegates to spa

treatments together with the conferences. The large sprawling lawn is ideal for large events, and the resort also has conference rooms with a capacity of 350.

## TENT CITY NARMADA



Tent City Narmada, Ekta Nagar

Statue of Unity by the Narmada has fast become Gujarat's top tourist attraction. Located at this destination, Tent City Narmada offers 200 luxurious tented stay, delicious regional, national and international cuisines, and conference facilities with 3 well-equipped halls to facilitate upto 1000 delegates.

The Conference Halls are ideal for organising corporate events, including Conferences, Meetings, Get-togethers, Training Workshops, Incentive-based Employee Vacations, etc with seating for C-Type Board Meetings, Round Table Meetings, Theatre Type Seating and U Shape Seating. The largest conference hall

measures 1500 sq. ft, making it comfortable for 1000 delegates.

The Tent City Narmada has a proven track record of hosting high-profile national events attended by VVIP guests like Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble President, State Heads, top government officials, etc. ■



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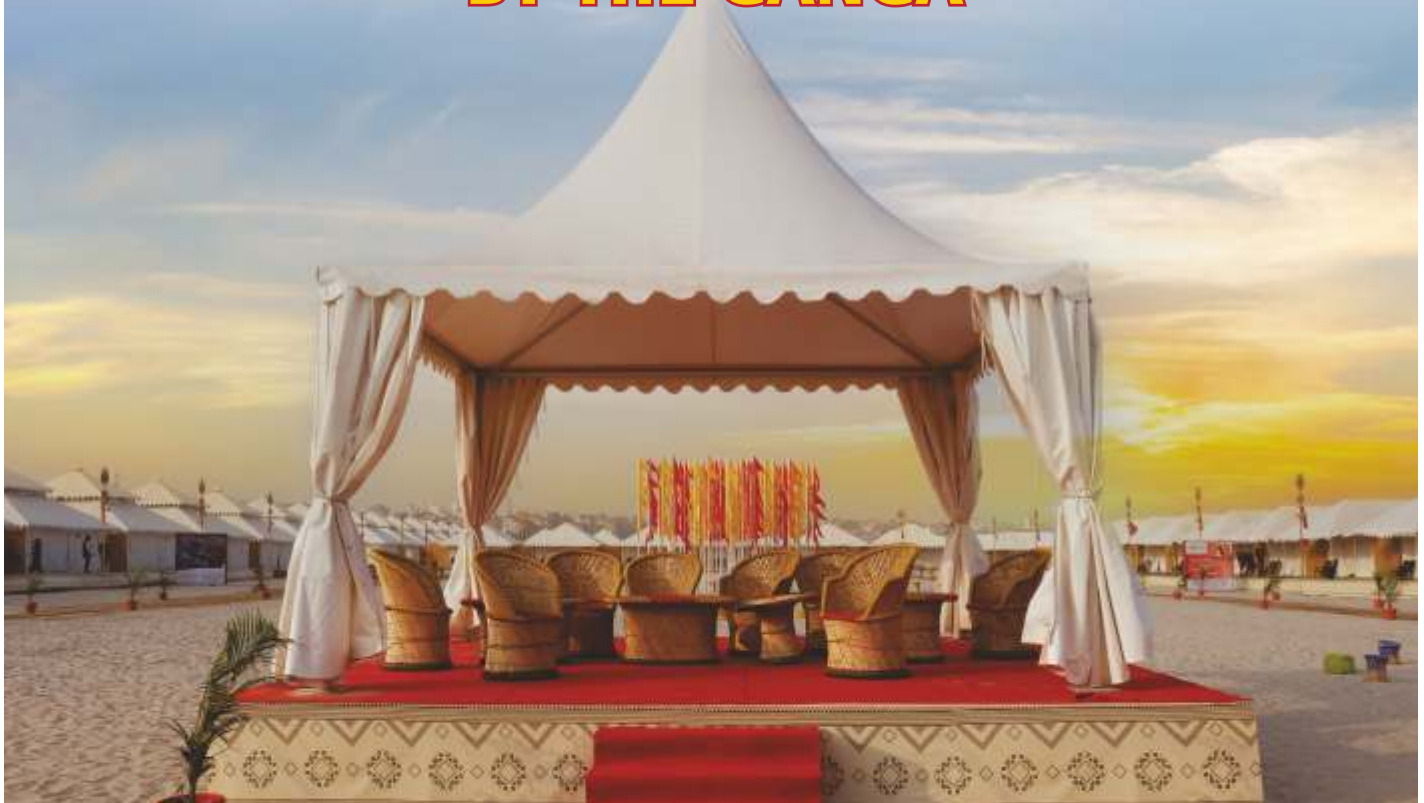
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