

PRAVEG'S

October 2023

# tourism one

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Unveiling the best

# Navratri Destinations

Where to Celebrate the Festival of Nine Nights

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International Destinations to Illuminate  
**YOUR DIWALI**



# Where life is a celebration...

India is a land of festivities. Every season here is celebrated with great fervor. It is aptly the best time to experience the local culture and traditions of a region. Among popular festivals, Navratri is one such festival where people celebrate it in diversity. From Gujarat to West Bengal, every state has its own unique way to honor the divine feminine energy and to invoke the blessings of the Goddess Durga.

Planning for Diwali in advance? Though Diwali is celebrated with family, how about taking a vacation with the dear ones this time? Let's explore the festival with a difference in the lands far, far away by taking advantage of advance planning and ticket bookings. We have narrowed down on a list of destinations for you.

As October 31st is observed as the National Unity Day to regard the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, we suggest you take a tour of places associated with the iron man of India to pay tribute to the veteran freedom fighter.

Read on!



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# Unveiling the Best Navratri Destinations

Where to Celebrate the Festival of Nine Nights

By PRIYANKA DESAI, Staff Reporter

**N**avratri, a Hindu festival celebrated with immense zeal and enthusiasm, spans nine nights of vibrant festivities dedicated to the Goddess Durga. While this festival is widely observed throughout India, some destinations stand out for their unique Navratri celebrations. If you're looking for an unforgettable Navratri experience, here are some remarkable destinations to consider:



# Gujarat

## The Epicenter of Garba

**N**avratni is celebrated with unparalleled fervor in the vibrant state of Gujarat, making it the ultimate destination for an authentic and joyous Navratni celebration. Every nook and corners of the cities like Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Surat is renowned for its lively and energetic Garba performance. Besides popularly organized garbas, these cities are famous for its sheri garba, where garba enthusiasts perform garba in residential societies and garbi that is usually performed by men.

Markets come alive with shops and stalls selling traditional jewelry, clothing and handicrafts. Ahmedabad's Law Garden, Lal Darwaja, Rani no Hazi, Vadodara's Mandvi, Mangal Bazaar, Nava Bazaar and Surat's Sahara Darwaja, Old Bombay Market and Universal Textile Market are best places for shopping during this time.





# Kolkata, West Bengal

## The City of Durga Puja

Kolkata transforms into a mesmerizing spectacle during Navratri, celebrating Durga Puja with unmatched fervor. The city's streets are adorned with artistic pandals featuring elaborately crafted idols of the Goddess Durga. The atmosphere is electric with cultural performances, traditional rituals, and food fairs.



Source: Shutterstock.com



Source: Durga Navratri Mitra / Shutterstock.com

Durga Puja Pandal



# Mysore, Karnataka

## Dasara Extravaganza

**N**avratri in Mysore is celebrated as Dasara, marked by a grand procession showcasing the rich culture and heritage of Karnataka. The Mysore Palace, illuminated with thousands of lights, is a sight to behold. Enjoy classical music concerts, dance performances, and the lively Mysore Dasara exhibition.

Mysore Palace

Mysore Dasara festivities



# Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

## Dussehra Delight

In Kullu Valley, Navratri is celebrated as Dussehra with a week-long fair. The valley comes alive with colorful processions featuring deities from nearby temples on beautifully decorated chariots. Explore the local culture and shop for traditional handicrafts at the fair.



Street Procession



Kullu Dussehra



# Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

## Ram Leela Splendor

Varanasi is renowned for its elaborate Ram Leela performances during Navratri. These plays narrate the epic story of Lord Rama and are staged with great enthusiasm. It's a cultural extravaganza that showcases the city's artistic talent.



Source: bodom / Shutterstock.com

Ram Leela

Dashaswamedh Ghat

Source: Roop\_Dey / Shutterstock.com



# Jaipur, Rajasthan

## Royal Traditions

**N**avratri in Jaipur offers a chance to immerse yourself in Rajasthani culture. Enjoy traditional folk dances, music, and explore the majestic forts and palaces that dot the Pink City. The city's markets are perfect for shopping for traditional attire and jewelry.



Folk Dance



Albert Hall



# Delhi

## Dandiya Nights and Divine Serenity

The capital city hosts numerous Dandiya nights and cultural events during Navratri. For a more serene experience, visit the Akshardham Temple, beautifully illuminated during this time, and immerse yourself in its spiritual ambiance.



These destinations offer a diverse range of Navratri experiences, from high-energy dance celebrations to tranquil spiritual retreats, ensuring there's something for every traveler seeking to embrace the festive spirit of Navratri. 🌟

Akshardham Temple



# International Destinations to Illuminate Your DIWALI

By PRIYANKA DESAI, Staff Reporter

Diwali, the festival of lights, is a time for joy, celebration, and togetherness. While traditionally celebrated with fervor in India, there's no reason why you can't take the opportunity to travel abroad and experience Diwali in a new and exciting way. This year, consider exploring international destinations that offer unique Diwali celebrations, cultural experiences, and breathtaking sights. Here are some international destinations to consider for a memorable Diwali getaway.



# MAURITIUS

## Diwali by the Beach

**M**auritius, known for its stunning beaches and rich Indian heritage, offers a unique Diwali experience. Walk or drive through the villages and towns to see the beautifully decorated houses, and don't miss the spectacular fireworks displays that light up the night sky.



Port Louis



Trou aux Biches





# SINGAPORE

Diwali on Little India Street

Serangoon Road



Street Market

Singapore's Little India district comes alive during Diwali with vibrant street decorations, traditional Indian music, and delicious Indian cuisine. The area is beautifully adorned with colorful lights and garlands, making it a perfect spot to celebrate Diwali.



# FIJI

## Diwali in the Pacific



*The Fan Dance (Meke), Yasawa Islands*

Fiji is home to a significant Indian population, and Diwali is celebrated with great enthusiasm here. Experience the warm Fijian hospitality and join in the festivities, including lighting of diyas (oil lamps) and colorful rangoli designs.



# NEPAL

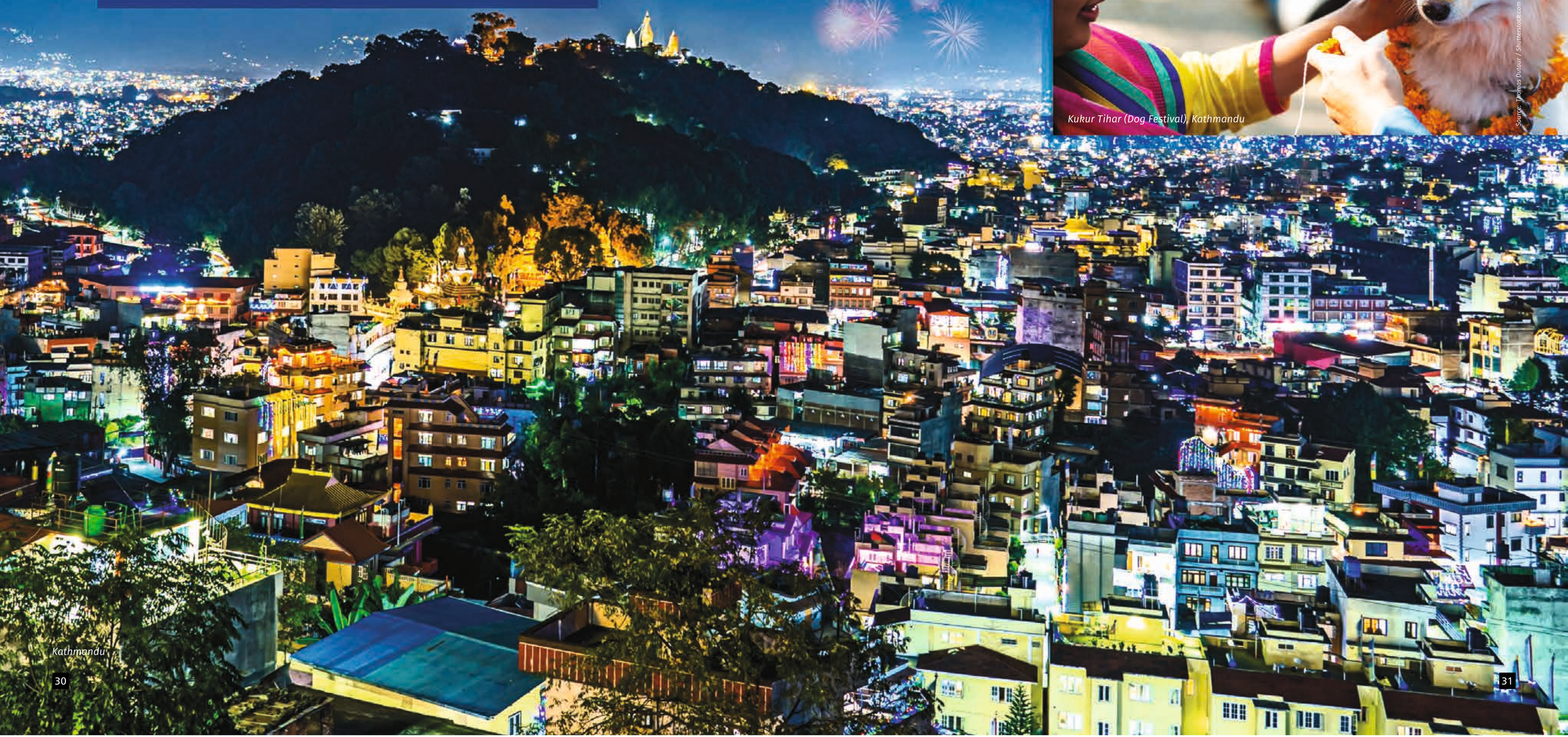
## Festival of Lights – Tihar Festival

Nepal celebrates its own version of Diwali; Tihar Festival, also known as the 'Festival of Lights'. Explore the unique traditions like worshiping dogs, cows, and crows, and witness the magical display of oil lamps and candles throughout the streets.



Kukur Tihar (Dog Festival), Kathmandu

Source: Thomas Duour / Shutterstock.com







# MALAYSIA

## Diwali in Kuala Lumpur

**M**alaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, boasts a diverse cultural scene, and Diwali is celebrated grandly here. Visit the Batu Caves, which are adorned with thousands of colorful lights and become a focal point of celebration during Diwali.

Source: chitravels.com / Shutterstock.com

Firework over Kuala Lumpur city, Malaysia skyline



Batu Caves



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

## Caribbean Diwali

Experience a fusion of Indian and Caribbean culture in Trinidad and Tobago during Diwali. The celebrations include mesmerizing performances of traditional Indian dances, local delicacies, and beautifully decorated homes.



Pigeon Point



# THAILAND

## Diwali in Bangkok

The Indian community in Bangkok celebrates Diwali with great enthusiasm. Visit the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, also known as Wat Khaek, to witness the vibrant decorations and join in the festivities.



Sri Maha Mariamman Temple





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UNITED KINGDOM

Diwali in London

MAYOR OF LONDON

LEBARA

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INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS TO ILLUMINATE YOUR DIWALI

Diwali Celebration, Leicester Square

Diwali Celebration, Trafalgar Square

London's Diwali celebrations, centered around Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square, are a multicultural extravaganza. Enjoy traditional Indian dances, delicious street food, and the lighting of thousands of lamps.



# AUSTRALIA

## Diwali Down Under

Cities like Sydney and Melbourne have vibrant Diwali celebrations. Enjoy the Diwali Parade, cultural performances, and a variety of Indian cuisine in these Australian cities.



Melbourne



Opera House, Sydney



# DUBAI, UAE

## Diwali in the Desert

**D**ubai's Diwali celebrations offer a luxurious twist with grand fireworks displays, special Diwali-themed events at malls, and the iconic Burj Khalifa lighting up for the occasion.

*Before planning your Diwali getaway, be sure to check visa requirements for your chosen destination. Regardless of where you choose to celebrate Diwali, the essence of the festival - light, love, and togetherness - remains the same. Embrace the opportunity to explore new cultures, create lasting memories, and illuminate your Diwali in an international setting. 🌟*

Dubai Mall



# Luxury spas

## in India

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Reporter

Beautiful inside, gorgeous outside. That is the mantra of Indian spa resorts and independent spa centres. Check this list of luxury spas that help you achieve real beauty & harmony between mind and body.

*From 'Beauty is only skin deep' to 'Beauty is soul deep' - the spa industry in India has made phenomenal growth after its introduction in the mid-90s. Once accessible only to the upper class of India, spa services are now made available to the middle and upper middle class of the nation. This article explores why spa treatments become popular among the Indian middle class and the four categories into which the industry is divided. Also, check the curated list of spa resorts & destinations in India.*





**P**ost-pandemic, a new disorder has begun to trouble the human mind, for which psychology has a term: Overthinking. This mental situation not only pushes people into a state of worry but also prevents them from taking any action. Consequently, they face more troubles as they cannot achieve their goals in their personal and professional lives. Worldwide, millions of people are suffering from depression & anxiety. This is where spa treatments can bring a noticeable change in mental health.

Shut yourself to the external noise and connect with your inner self. Spa treatments allow you to find peace with the self, which is continuously mired in worldly worries & challenges. When you are on holiday, choose a destination that offers all-inclusive spa services for you and your family.

The spa industry in India began to flourish in the first decade of the millennium; earlier, spa services were not accessible to the Indian middle class and upper middle class as they were scared of sticker shock.

Though the spa industry is categorised broadly into four categories In India, the popular services are resort spa and day spa. The resort spas take care of their resident guests and the day spa works like a beauty salon, where customers can walk in or book a session to get treated. Another two categories are destination spas and medical spas, which entertain their customers for a longer period of time, say a week or more than a week. People who are suffering from a major skin problem or health issues opt for medical spas or destination spas, where they spend a few days or until they are treated well.



## Ananda In The Himalayas

**A**yurveda, Yoga, Mindfulness, and Healthy Cuisine - four pillars of Ananda destination spa centre in the Himalayas. Ananda offers a broad range of wellness packages for its customers. The award-winning hospitality brand gives you six therapeutic options: rejuvenation and immunity, mental & spiritual health, detox and cleansing, weight management & fitness, hormonal balance, and chronic ailments.

Touted as a holistic wellness retreat in Uttarakhand, Ananda is a blissful affair to stay on a spa vacation in the Himalayas. When life's unbearable challenges disturb the balance of mind, body, and spirit, a tranquil haven like this works as magic to bring harmony to life. Apart from its physical massages, Ananda Spa Resort ensures emotional healing & spiritual awakening.

The healthy cuisine of Ananda dates back to 5,000 years old Ayurveda traditions, which help you cleanse and detoxify your body and mind. Under the guidance of expert doctors & dieticians, the resort serves healthy food made of authentic ingredients.

Book your spa treatment: +91 80-69750000

<https://www.anandaspa.com>





## Dune Eco Village and Resort, Puducherry

Spread across 35 acres of land, Dune Eco Village spa resort in Puducherry is a Lost Paradise, where you can perfectly balance your body, mind and spirit. The eco-friendly beach resort provides a one-stop solution for all your needs like spa treatment, stay, nature living, and complete healing. Every morning, either take a long walk in nature or participate in yoga sessions. Next, you can take a refreshing bath in the outdoor pool. Healthy and Ayurvedic meals detox your body and give you complete rejuvenation from the inside.

The spa resort specialises in warm water therapies like Watsu (Shiatsu in water), WoGa (Yoga in water), Aqua wellness, and Aqua Reflexo in its unique Magic Water facility. The healing centre has 10 treatment rooms, a large yoga hall, an Ayurvedic pharmacy, a medicinal laboratory, a solar-heated chlorine-free swimming pool, a multi-gym and a beauty treatment centre.

Book your spa treatment: +91 9487810300 / +91 9159550341

<https://dunewellnessgroup.com/dune-eco-village-spa/>

## Raas Devigarh, Delwara

Raas Devigarh has adopted a four-pronged approach to wellness: Yoga, Meditation, Ayurveda, and Natural Treatments. Comprehensive, personalized, and curated services from Raas ensure the best results; expert professionals at the resort rely on ancient wisdom and sacred knowledge to provide the best treatments, which further bring holistic goodness into life.

To offer excellent spa services, Raas has collaborated with Ma Earth Botanicals, which handcrafts skincare products by using pure aromatherapy oils. Raas sets itself apart from other spa resorts by using products that do not have artificial ingredients, chemical preservatives, synthetic additives, artificial fragrances, SLES, parabens or sulphates.

Book your spa treatment: +91 - 8239926000

<https://www.raashotels.com/devigarh/wellness/spa/>





## Wildflower Hall, Shimla

In the summer capital of British India, experience the Romance of Wildflower Hall. After trekking, mountain biking, and heritage walks in Shimla, here is your long rejuvenation session of three hours. Yes, your body needs a lot more than you think. At the end of your Himalayan vacation, don't miss to visit Wildflower Hall, Shimla by Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. Upon arrival, the resort offers you three options for relaxation: Spa, Yoga, and Sanctuary Experience. You can choose any one option to relax & rejuvenate.

The resort staff welcomes you in a traditional way with a foot cleansing ceremony; for this, they use special khadau chappal. A three-hour massage session is enough for you to destress your nerves. With aromatic attar oils in kasa bowls, the masseur gives relaxing massages, pressing your body's meridian lines and relieving tense muscles.

Book your spa treatment: +91 177-2648585

<https://www.oberoihotels.com/hotels-in-shimla-wfh/experiences/romance-of-wildflower-hall/>



## Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa

Khyber Himalayan Resort is a slice of heaven in the heavenly state - Jammu & Kashmir. Nestled at an altitude of 8,825 feet, India's only boutique luxury ski resort offers an incredible experience to relax, rejuvenate and refresh. For your complete health & wellness, Khyber provides three solutions: Spa, Gym, and Pool.

Managed by L'OCCITANE, Khyber's Mediterranean-themed spa is available for in-house guests only. While you are receiving spa treatments, you may feast your eyes on the most beautiful scenes of the state. If a spa is not your cup of tea, you can relax by India's most photographed pool, which boasts unbeatable views. This all-season swimming pool is temperature controlled, hence, you can take a plunge without having to worry about winter chills. There is a special pool for kids, a steam and sauna enclosure and a jacuzzi.

For fitness lovers, the resort has a state-of-the-art gym, which overlooks a picturesque forest that inspires you to work out, even when you are on holiday.

Book your spa treatment: +91 - 1954350666

<https://www.khyberhotels.com/wellness>





## The Imperial, Delhi

If you are in India, you must visit the Taj Mahal and the Imperial. So does claim the promoters of The Imperial, the first hotel in Delhi. Inaugurated in 1936, the first hotel in Delhi takes you back to the 19th-century imperial era of India. For the wellness of guests, the hotel offers Spa, Ayurveda, Yoga, Pool, Fitness and other treatments.

The Imperial Spa derives its therapies and treatments from the traditional principles of Indian Ayurveda. Based on the philosophies of the fifth Ved, i.e. Ayurved, Imperial Spa prepared its essential oils by using botanical herbs & extracts.

To provide personalized solutions, the Spa uses oils suitable for different skin types. Nargis, Oudh, Mandarin, and Black Pepper are some of the most favourite oils voted by its regular customers.

Book your spa treatment: 011-23341234 | 011-41501234

<https://theimperialindia.com/>

## Tattva Spa

Known for its holistic wellness services, Tattva spa is arguably one of the largest spa chains in India with its presence in more than 70 spa centres in India. Tattva has joined hands with leading national and international hospitality brands to provide its top-notch services to middle-level and high-end customers.

Tattva pampers you with massages, beauty elixirs, salon services, and spa treatments. However, the brand is famous for its day spa services which include Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, Abhyanga, jet lag therapy and head massage.

Book your spa treatment: +91 - 9999120413

<https://tattvaspa.com/>





## SwaSwara

A spa centre close to the Indian Ocean is no less than a heaven for wounded souls. SwaSwara is a holistic healing centre near Om Beach, Gokarna in Karnataka. The centre runs three wellness programmes: SWA Wellbeing Programme, the Ayurveda Rejuvenation Programme, and the Ayurveda Detox & Panchkarma Programme.

Therapies and treatments given at SwaSwara yield multiple results like weight loss, de-stress, revitalization and others. Experts, who believe in external as well as internal wellness, prepare cuisines that detox the body from the inside. Thus, guests feel complete rejuvenation after going through a comprehensive treatment.

Book your spa treatment: +44 (0) 20 7843 3597

<https://www.healingholidays.com/accommodation/india/swaswara>

## Praveda Spa

Praveda Nature Spa believes in the fulfilment & nourishment of life because a weak mind and body can never achieve ultimate bliss. To attain this state of blissfulness, a mandatory ritual & regimen begin at Praveda. Powered by Amaira, Praveda is a pearl studded into the exotic beach resort of Praveg at Diu. The spa menu at Praveda includes four treatments: Body, Premium, Sense Pampering, and Therapeutic Massages. Each one works miraculously on physical as well as mental well-being.

Swedish de-stress massage involves deep tissue massage to relieve your stress; Praveda Signature treatment includes special detox and body nourishing butter wraps to moisturise and hydrate the skin; face revitalization relaxes your face and neck muscles. Masseurs use customised products to prevent any skin allergy; Kati Basti therapy removes pain, stiffness and inflammation in the lower back. Masseurs use warm and herbalised oils to energise back muscles. Finally, Abhyangam is a full-body Ayurvedic treatment that helps reduce stiffness and spasms in muscles; the therapy cures fatigue and rough skin texture.

Book your spa treatment: +91-9090690902

<https://www.pravegbeachresortdiu.com/>



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# Kerala sets a record in domestic tourist arrivals in 1st half of 2023; marks 20.1% increase

Thiruvananthapuram, September 11: Setting a new record in domestic tourist footfall, Kerala attracted 1,06,83,643 visitors from within the country in the first six months of this calendar year as compared to 88,95,593 in the corresponding period last year, clocking a robust 20.1 per cent increase, Tourism Minister Shri P.A. Mohamed Riyas informed the State Assembly today. The state also registered a surge in the number of domestic tourist arrivals compared to the pre-Covid period, Shri Riyas said. The statistics revealed a significant increase of 17.87 lakh domestic tourists in the first half of 2023 compared to the previous year. The number of foreign tourists in the first half of 2023 was pegged at 2,87,730 as compared to 1,05,960 during the corresponding period a year earlier - an increase of 1,81,770 and a healthy 171.55 per cent growth. There had also been a steady increase in revenue generated by the state's tourism sector from 2020 to 2022. Analysing the figures, Tourism Secretary Shri Biju K said the surge in domestic tourist footfalls is a clear indication that 2023 will definitely be a record-breaking year for Kerala Tourism.



Tourism Director Shri P B Nooh said this steady uptrend in tourist arrivals also vouched the increased acceptance of new products and initiatives that the state had launched to woo visitors. Meanwhile, the statistics compiled by the Tourism Department showed that

Ernakulam topped the list of districts in domestic tourist arrivals with a figure of 22,16,250 followed by Idukki (18,01,502), Thiruvananthapuram (17,21,264), Thrissur (11,67,788), Wayanad (8,71,664), and Kozhikode (6,74,237).

Source: Kerala Tourism

# Visakhapatnam Port's International Cruise Terminal inaugurated

September 04 - International Cruise Terminal at Visakhapatnam Port inaugurated today in the presence of Minister of Tourism (State), Shri Shripad Naik , Minister of Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Shri Sarbananda

Sonowal ,VPA chairperson Dr. M. Angamuthu, IAS along with several other distinguished dignitaries. The International Cruise Terminal, now open for operations, will serve as a pivotal gateway for both domestic and international cruise tourism

along the eastern coast of India. This world-class facility promises to offer a transformative experience to tourists while fostering economic growth and benefiting local communities.

(Source: PIB Delhi)

# Ministry of Tourism launches a wedding tourism campaign to unlock the potential of India's huge wedding industry



August 19 - Building upon the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's "Developing Tourism in Mission Mode," Ministry of Tourism unveiled an ambitious campaign aimed at showcasing India as a premier wedding destination on the global stage. This campaign seeks to explore avenues of great potential, for scaling tourism in India to new heights. The campaign seeks to expand India's wedding

industry, by enticing couples from around the world to embark on a remarkable journey to celebrate their special day in India. Launching the special campaign, Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Culture, Tourism and DoNER, says, "Today marks the beginning of a remarkable journey. A mission to position India as the epitome of wedding destinations worldwide. With the launch of this campaign, I invite

couples from around the world to explore the enchanting dream wedding destinations across our incredible nation." Highlighting the campaign approach, the minister further adds, "Our 360-degree approach will ensure that every moment, from the first "hello" to the final "I do," is a testament to India's warm embrace and rich heritage."

(Source: PIB)

# Tagore's Santiniketan makes it to UNESCO World Heritage List

September - West Bengal's popular town Santiniketan, where Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore established Visva Bharati University over a century ago, has now made it to the

UNESCO World Heritage List. According to the report, the decision was taken in the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in Saudi Arabia. As UNESCO's social media post reads, "New

inscription on the @UNESCO #WorldHeritage List: Santiniketan, #India. Congratualtions!"



Thal Bird Sanctuary



**MADHU MENON**

A Traveler | An Environmentalist | A Change Maker

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Reporter



Jogini Waterfall HP



Valparai, Anaimalai Hills, Tamil Nadu

Snow Peaks Near Manali

*A traveller, an environmentalist, a change maker and the winner of “Ambassador for Peace” by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), an NGO in special consultative status with the United Nations.*

# I believe in God, but only I spell it NATURE

A young man brimming with energy and an unwavering enthusiasm for safeguarding nature once encountered a signboard that announced the construction of a hotel. This hotel was slated to be built in a horticulture park, right across from Ellis Bridge Gymkhana in Ahmedabad. In his early twenties, he resolved to take action. Rallying together like-minded individuals, he organized protests against the hotel's construction. Through relentless campaigning, the group ultimately achieved victory. This passionate individual is none other than Madhu Menon - a traveller, a nature enthusiast, a dedicated environmentalist, and a catalyst for change. Madhu's roots trace back to Thrissur, Kerala, where he spent his childhood surrounded by the wonders of nature. It was in this nurturing environment that he developed a

profound sense of responsibility and love for Mother Nature. Madhu Menon, the Managing Trustee of ANALA – Ahmedabad Nature Lovers’ Association and the co-founder of ANALA Outdoors Private Limited, serves as an inspiration to people of all ages, including children, to contribute to nature's well-being in any way possible. In a conversation with Tourism One, Madhu recounts his journey from being a nature lover to becoming a dedicated environmentalist. He shares insights into his collaborations with organizations such as ISRO, NID, and EMRC, along with the pivotal moment when he decided to commit himself entirely to the cause of environmental protection. He sheds light on the genesis of ANALA, the transformative impact of trekking on his life, and the inception of ANALA Outdoors Private Limited.

## 1 A naturalist, an environment educator, a documentary maker, and a social activist. You don so many hats in your life.

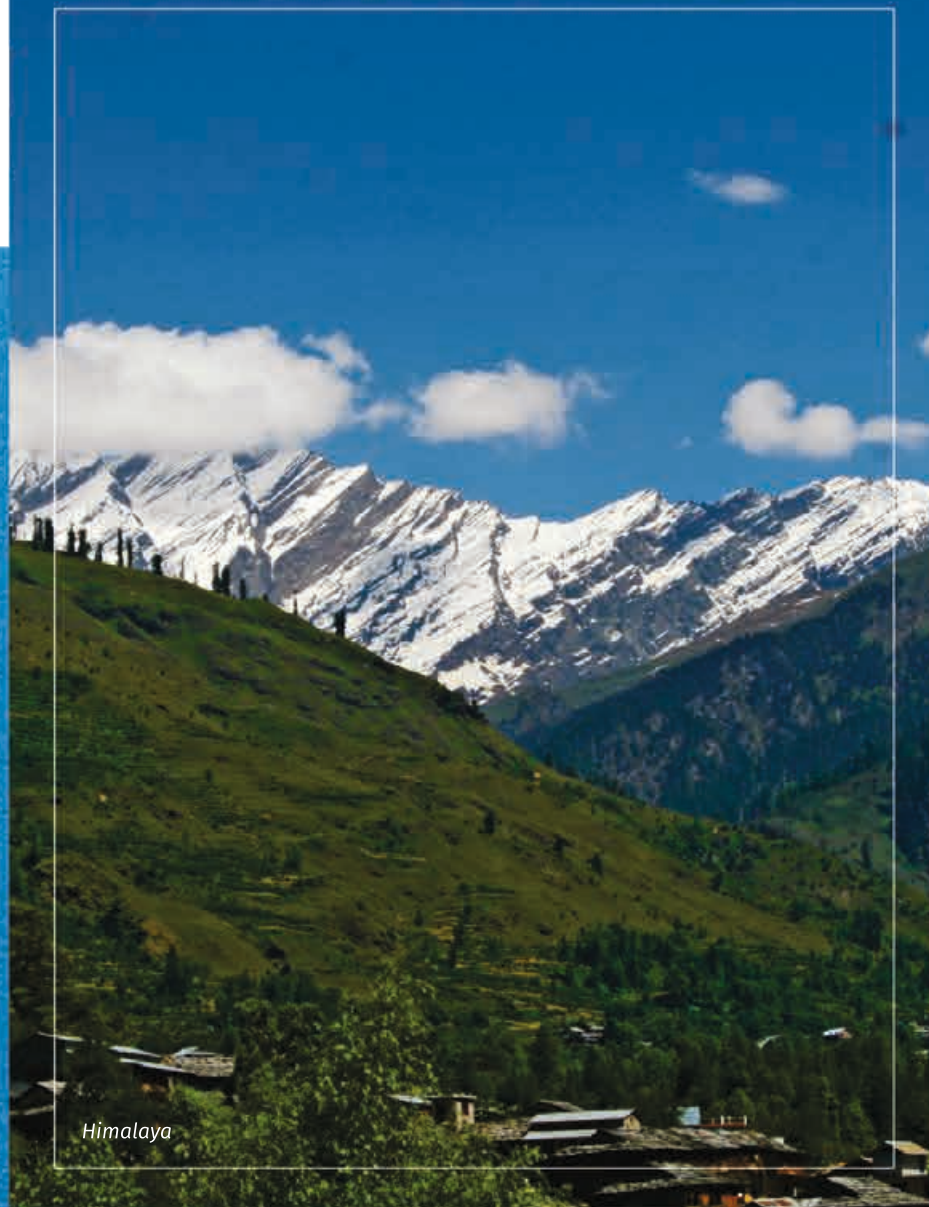
I became a naturalist, a student of nature, because of my childhood experiences and explorations. I was born in a remote village but had the privilege of wonderful natural surroundings. But when I shifted to a mega urban space like Ahmedabad, I felt the loss of paradise. Maybe that triggered the urge to take up the environment as a subject and look for the wonders of nature around. After gaining a Master’s Degree in Development Communication, I had the privilege to work with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the National Institute of Design (NID), and the Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMRC). While working with these institutions, I came in touch with a number of professional film directors, editors, scriptwriters, and cinematographers. I could utilise this association to polish my skills in filmmaking and gain the confidence to take up documentary filmmaking as a profession.

After graduating in Science from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, I took up the popularisation of science as an activity with the help of a group of scientists from ISRO. They introduced me to Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, a voluntary organization spearheading awareness of the environment and science. They were using street plays with a lot of improvisation of folk forms as a powerful medium to reach out to the general public. Incidentally, at this juncture, the Bhopal tragedy happened which, led to the death of thousands of people. This was a trigger for me and a few of my friends to take up environmentalism as an active engagement.

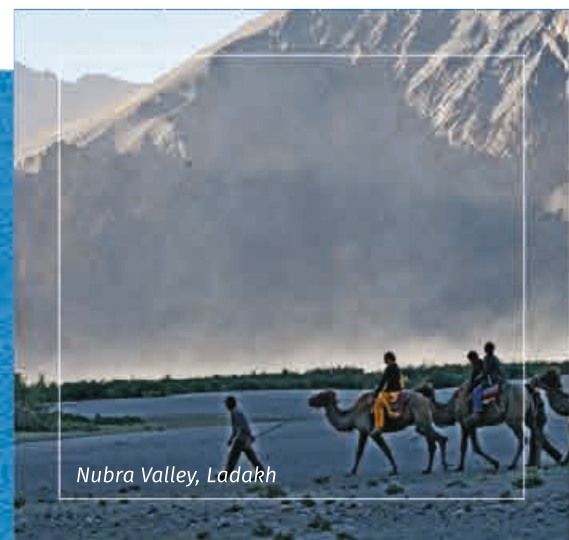
## 2 What was the reaction of your family when you left your job?

Like the aspirations of any family, my elders also wanted me to become a doctor, but I refused. Then, they tried to convince me to become a veterinary doctor as if they were encouraging my love for animals. But I refused again. Then, the only right thing for a service-oriented family was a government job. Appearing for common

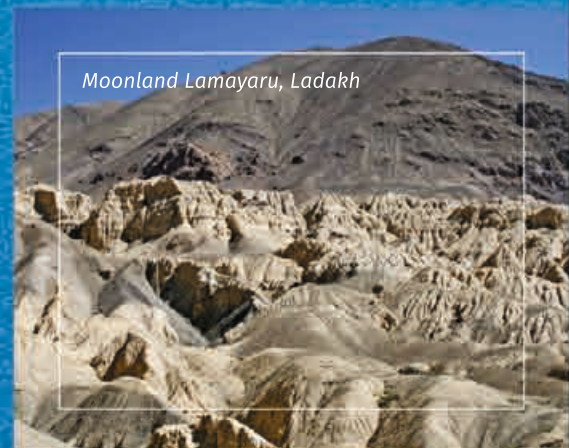




Himalaya



Nubra Valley, Ladakh



Moonland Lamayuru, Ladakh



Lamayuru Monastery



Kochi, Kerala

tests for banks, insurance companies, and government organisations was fun in the beginning. I had a choice of job offerings from the bank, an insurance company, and The Directorate of Auditor General and I chose New India Assurance Co. However, I joined the company with the baggage of my experience of working with an international organization World Wide Fund (WWF-India, today's World Wide Fund for Nature – India). The job with WWF was an exciting one, and there were a lot of liberties. A typical 9 to 5 job was a suffocating one, and I quit the insurance job after 15 months. The best thing that happened during these 15 months was the friendships I could develop with a number of people, irrespective of the hierarchy of the company, and even today, I cherish the same.

Quitting the lucrative government job was a shock to my family, though most of the elders were liberal in their thoughts. They saw a rebel in me; they felt a young one gone crazy. I was almost treated as one who lost my sanity.

But today, most of my nephews and nieces consider me as the one to consult for counselling, motivation, and guidance. That is the difference made by the time.

**3 How many places have you visited in India and abroad? What are your favourite domestic and international destinations?**

I am fortunate to travel to almost all the corners of the diverse country that is India. I have not just visited but tried to understand the culture, diversity, and plurality of most of the states and union territories. The only places that were missed from my journeys are Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Odisha. I keep going to some of my favourite places like Himachal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim, and Kerala. Mountains, Valleys, Deserts, and Islands attract me again and again. I keep travelling to the Little and Greater Ranns of Gujarat, the Aravalli mountains of Rajasthan, and Islands of Lakshadweep, and the Gulf of Kachchh.

I have also travelled to the USA, Canada, Poland, and all the emirates of UAE. I travelled extensively in the USA

and Canada and found both very monotonous. UAE has everything that can be created with money and imagination. What I missed was the cultural and geographical diversity in these countries, especially when compared to our country. Polish people are very friendly like us, and they have a special love and respect for Indians.

**4 You have won many awards from different national and international organizations. Tell us about your work in the field of environment & conservation of nature.**

Awards are appreciation of your work by others; for the receiver, it is always an inspiration to continue on the same path. My concept of conservation education is rooted in the belief that there is only one Earth that supports and sustains all forms of life. Life flourishes on this planet because of the five elements – air, water, soil, sunlight (fire), and space. Our ancestors addressed them as “Panch Maha Tatva or Bhoota” – Vayu, Jal, Prithvi, Agni and Aakash. Science identified them as five mega elements of nature. Interestingly, it is the combination of

these elements that allows life to be sustained here. Any harm to any one of these elements can create havoc, and that is what we are facing now in the form of air pollution, water pollution, and soil pollution. We humans bring in global warming and the resultant climate change. It is interesting to note that humans – the Homo sapiens are the only species that creates pollution, but it affects the entire life-supporting systems – rivers, mountains, valleys, and oceans.

As a young student, I heard about climate change in the early '80s and was not really bothered because the effect of climate change was expected after 25-30 years. But when it became a reality, I was bothered and wanted to make some change in the attitude and behaviours of the people towards nature, and I chose the young as my target.

I thought the best way was to introduce the young to the wonders of nature, the interdependence that exists on this planet, and the joy of living with natural elements. And the idea clicked, and Anala, the organization I am associated

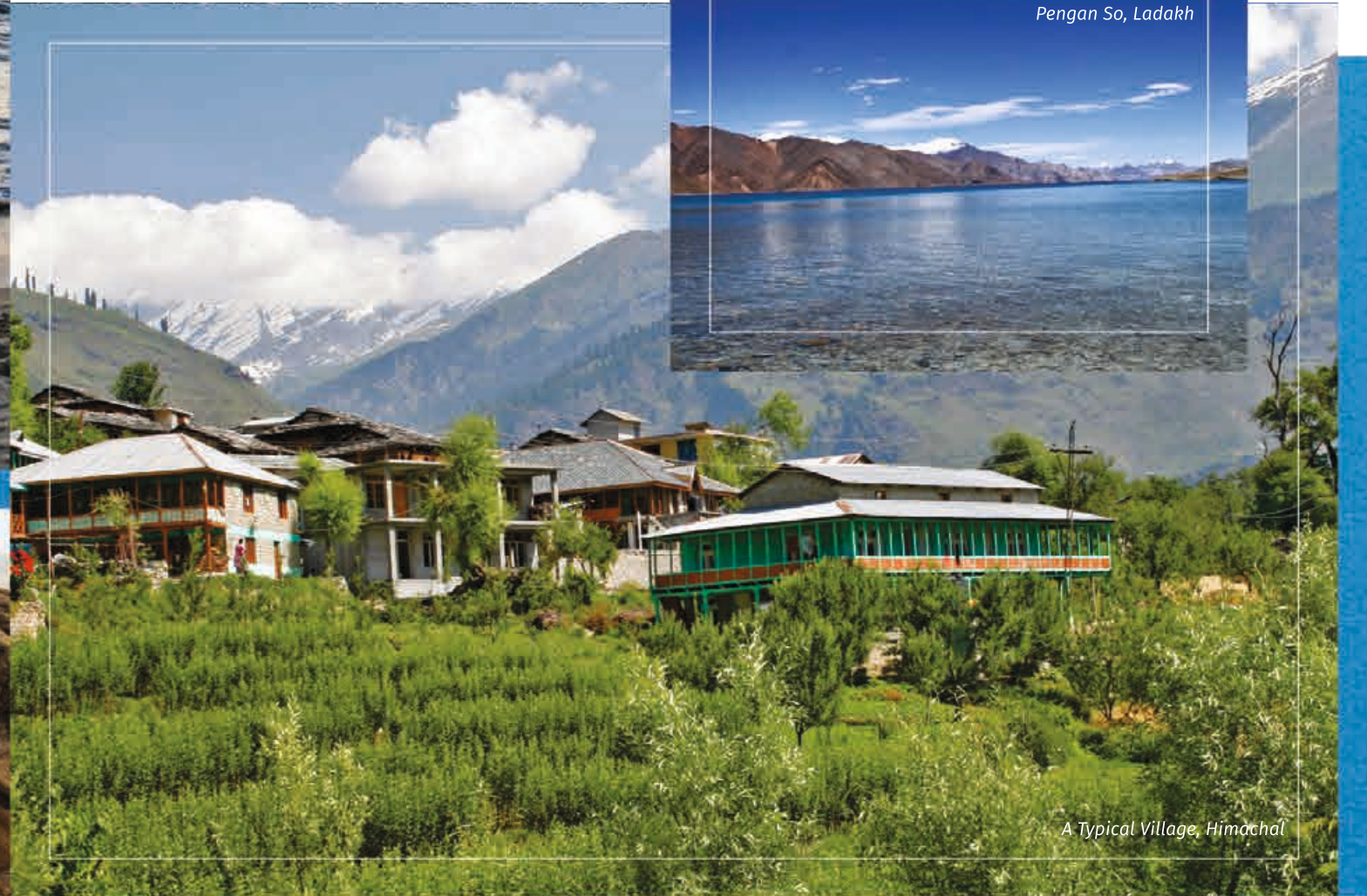




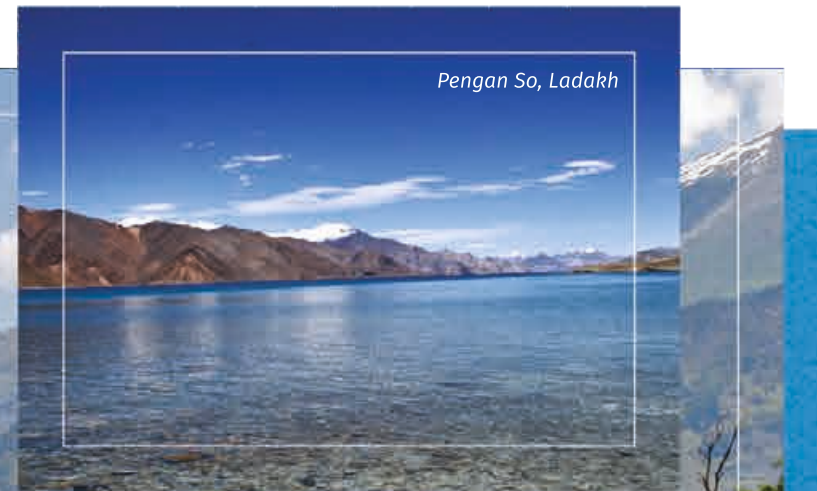
River Beas, Manali



Fossils, Dholavira, Greater Rann of Kachchh



A Typical Village, Himachal



Pengan So, Ladakh

with, could make a difference with the support of a committed team of volunteers. Today, we engage around 15,000 young Indians per year in environment and Nature conservation education through our outdoors-based innovative education programmes, most of them being experiential learning ideas.

##### 5 Tell us about Anala Outdoors.

Ahmedabad Nature Lovers' Association (ANALA) was started as an informal group of nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts in 1985. We used to cycle from Ahmedabad to Gandhinagar on weekends and help nurture the trees of the then-upcoming Indroda Nature Park by watering them. We also used to walk on the bank of the Sabarmati from Ahmedabad to reach Indroda. This was the time we got introduced to the hobby of trekking, along with bird-watching and tree identification.

These activities attracted a lot of youngsters and became regular events. We discovered new places for trekking in remote areas, like Bakor in Panchmahal, Hindolghadh in

Rajkot, Jassore in Banaskanta, and Polo in Sabarkanta. Today, trekking is one of the most common adventure activities among youth, and the higher mountains in the Himalayas are the most sought-after destinations. Meanwhile, Anala Outdoors has also become a household name for nature and adventure camps, especially for the youngsters of age group 10 to 20 years old.

##### 6 What are the best places for trekking in India? Elaborate with your own experiences, benefits & lures of that place.

**India** is blessed with four major mountain ranges: Aravali, the oldest mountain range in the world; Himalaya, the youngest and mightiest; Western Ghats known for its richest bio-diversity; and Satpura, for its spiritual vistas.

**Manali** in the Kullu Valley of Himachal Pradesh is the most popular among trekking groups. It is known among backpackers and also those who are in search of easily approachable trekking routes. Situated on the bank of River Beas, Manali has all the elements that attract

adventure lovers: mountains, snow-clad peaks, and valleys like Solang for paragliding. Beas River offers a good length of route for river rafting. For us, the Bhriagu Lake situated at the height of 14500 feet, is the highlight of our Himalayan Exposure Camp at Manali.

**Tirthan** is relatively a new destination for trekking enthusiasts and offers a variety of trekking routes. Situated in the western part of Himachal Pradesh, Tirthan is known for its serenity and calm. River Tirthan from which the place got its name winds through the narrow valleys and creates picturesque landscapes. It is also known as the gateway to the Great Himalayan National Park, famous for its diverse flora and fauna.

##### 7 A few tips and words of advice for young trekkers in India.

If you ask me, trekking is the least adventurous because it is the safest. Having said that, trekking can also be dangerous if you cross the limits. If you wish to take trekking as a hobby or as an adventure, the first thing

you need is to develop an attitude to test your abilities, your passion and your love for exploration. Frankly, it is not important to have a strong physique. The basic requirement is to have an urge to go beyond your comforts, go beyond your fears, and go beyond your physical abilities. Indians are blessed with the diverse terrains that offer mind-boggling experiences of trekking, and exploring the geographical features of our great country.

##### 8. How do you plan to bring change in society through Development Communication?

As we all know, change is a continuous process, and it is the only constant. How one can accelerate the process using communication skills is important. After experimenting with documentaries that depicted issues of development for many years, I shifted to a more effective medium of interpersonal communication. Through Anala, my team and I have been trying to create an environment-conscious society and target the youth. <sup>10</sup>



# Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Five Destinations

You must visit to pay tribute to the iron man of india

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Reporter

**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the towering figures of the Indian Independence Movement. He is frequently remembered for his colossal contribution to integrating approximately 565 princely states into the Republic of India. However, Sardar has more credentials to his name than the integration of princely states. As we are celebrating his 148th birth anniversary this month, here is a list of historic places that are inextricably linked to Sardar's resume as a national hero.**

October 31, 2023, is the birth anniversary of the Iron Man of India - Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Touted as a strong political lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar had passed rigorous tests to prove his mettle. Before getting his name slotted in the good books of Gandhi, Sardar had successfully led movements in Kheda, Borsad, and Bardoli, where he mobilized peasants against British rule to

register non-violent protests of civil disobedience. The success of Bardoli Satyagrah grabbed the attention of all Indians, and Sardar became a hero in the hearts of Gujarati.

This article lists five important places connected with Sardar Patel. You may like to visit the places to pay your respects and celebrate his birth anniversary.

## Statue of Unity: A Tourist Attraction of International Repute

**T**he Statue of Unity (SOU) is a tribute paid by the Government of India to Sardar Patel on behalf of millions of Indians. The tallest monument in the world is not only a tourist place for global travellers but it also symbolizes victory of unity and democracy over imperial powers. The campus of SOU covers an extensive scenic location facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam. This statue stands on the isle of Sadhu-Bet in River Narmada, at Ekta Nagar, District Narmada in the Indian State of Gujarat, with the majestic Vindhyaachal and Satpuda Mountain Ranges in the backdrop.

As a leading tourist destination, visitors can explore the nearby attractions like the Cactus Garden, Butterfly Garden, Sardar Sarovar Dam, Jungle Safari, Narmada Maha Aarti, Khalvani & Zarvani eco-tourism, river rafting, boat riding and more.



## Bardoli: Farmers' Agitation Against British Government

**B**ardoli is a town and a municipality in the Surat Metropolitan Region; the town is approximately 35 km east of Surat. Bardoli is known for its Bardoli Satyagrah, a farmers' agitation led by Sardar Patel against the steep tax hike imposed by the then-British government. Bardoli is a historical town, which came to the limelight in 1899 when the British government began to set up railway tracks from Surat to Bhusawal as a relief project during the great Indian famine. The town is associated with an ancient city named Kedareshwar; Mindhola River was once known as Mandakini during ancient times. The city was destroyed by a flood in the Mandakini River. Following this flood, villagers were forced to relocate to a hilly region near Baladevi temple. Legend has it that Baladevi became Bardoli with the passage of time.

Surat is the nearest destination for tourists, who can explore historical monuments at Heritage Square; there are seven significant attractions of Heritage Square: Surat Castle, Andrews Library, J. J. Training College, Old Museum Building, Anglican Church, Kasturba Garden, and Victoria Garden.



## Nadiad: Birthplace

**A**part from being the birthplace of Sardar Patel, Nadiad is a land of scholars who enriched Gujarati literature with their brilliant literary creations. The city was the cultural and literary capital of Gujarat during the 19th century as scholars were actively involved in gaining knowledge and understanding of Indian and British culture.

Santram Mandir is located in the centre of the town; the temple is known for its charity work. This old temple is visited by people on the day of a full moon. Marida Darwaja and Amdavadi Darwaja are also nearby.



## Karamsad: Family Home

**K**aramsad is known as the city where Vallabhbhai Patel, along with his elder brother Vithalbhai Patel, spent his childhood and formative years of his life. For a century, Karamsad has been a bastion of the Patidar community. One of the major economic activities in this region is tobacco cultivation. This cash crop has enriched and empowered the Patidar community.

There is little historical evidence about the origin of Karamsad. However, it is assumed that the town was mostly dominated by the Koli community during the era of King Kumarpal (1155 AD).

In the modern history of Gujarat, Karamsad came to the fore as Sardar Patel received his early education in the town. The town has paid a fitting tribute to our Iron Man by building the Sardar Patel Memorial. Today, Karamsad is the hometown of a large & growing number of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who generously contribute to the development of the Charotar region, and are also instrumental in creating & financing a lot of institutes.

Travelling in the bylanes, visitors are constantly reminded of the peculiar tobacco smell that pervades, almost like that of empty cigarette packs.



## Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial: Shahibaug Ahmedabad

**S**ardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial was established in 1980 in Ahmedabad. The urban authorities converted Moti Shahi Mahal, built by Mughal emperor Shahejahan between 1618 and 1622, into a museum and exhibition centre dedicated to Sardar Patel.

The central hall of this memorial boasts portraits of Sardar Patel, his family, friends and colleagues in the Indian freedom movement. Apart from photographs, there are relics of Patel's life, personal possessions, accounts and political cartoons from newspapers of the time.

Though the memorial is named after Sardar Patel, the edifice dedicates enough space to Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore - two architects of modern India. Gandhi's life and work are on display in the room connected through the Sardar Sarovar hall. This room is filled with portraits, pictures, quotes, busts, statues and books of Gandhiji. Rabindranath Tagore had once enjoyed the hospitality of this palace in 1878; Tagore had written his only ghost story 'The Hungry Stones' and his first song in this palace. <sup>10</sup>



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