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tourism one

March 2024

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Exciting Spring Escapes

**Beyond
the Brochures**

Exploring Dark Tourism in India and Beyond

**Beyond
the Shorelines**

A Dive into Deep-Sea Tourism

Spring is in the Air

Hope's spring is immortal in the human heart. Unfortunately, the spring we desperately wait for comes only once a year. We are talking about the blooming season, pleasant breeze and the most favourable climate. March and April are our favourite months as the winter chills have taken leave for the next year, and the sun is not so harsh yet on our skin. While the helium ball is gentle, why don't you travel to a few of the exciting spring destinations on the world map? Maybe our recommendations could help you select a perfect destination for you and your family.

For globetrotters, the latest travel trends, like dark and deep-sea tourism, are not new. Our staff writers have delved into depth to bring out everything related to the two interests developed by travellers worldwide.

What new territories have you explored during your recent trips? You may share your feedback with us at tourismone@praveg.com.

Happy Travelling!

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EXCITING SPRING ESCAPES

Discover Rejuvenating Destinations Near and Far

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Writer

With its vibrant blooms and gentle weather, spring beckons travelers with its irresistible charm. While March and April may mark the season of exams for many in India, it also presents a golden opportunity for singles, couples without children, and retired elders to embark on adventures unhindered by academic schedules or familial responsibilities. For those not under such obligations, spring offers the perfect window to explore domestic and international destinations as the world awakens from its winter slumber with renewed vigour and splendour.



DOMESTIC

Wayanad

Kerala

Nestled in the Western Ghats, Wayanad offers serene landscapes and rich biodiversity. Trekking trails lead to Chembra Peak for breathtaking views, while Pakshipathalam Bird Sanctuary showcases diverse flora and fauna. Spring brings pleasant weather and vibrant blooms, making it ideal for nature enthusiasts.

The first hill passenger railway started in 1881, Darjeeling

Darjeeling

West Bengal

Escape the summer heat with Darjeeling's cool mountain air and stunning rhododendron blooms. Take a memorable ride on the toy train amidst lush tea gardens. Spring in Darjeeling offers a refreshing retreat with clear skies and panoramic views of the snow-capped Kanchenjunga.



DOMESTIC

Shillong and Garo Hills Meghalaya

Spring transforms Shillong with cherry blossoms, creating a picturesque landscape. While spring is ideal, the pleasant weather makes it a year-round destination. Explore the beauty of Shillong and Garo Hills through various sightseeing options, ensuring a memorable vacation.



Karwani River, Garo Hills, Meghalaya

Valley of Flowers Uttarakhand

Experience the breathtaking beauty of the Valley of Flowers during spring. Marvel at the vibrant colours of thousands of blooming flowers, including rare flora like the Brahma kamal. Trekking opportunities abound, with trails leading to nearby destinations like Badrinath and Kedarnath.



DOMESTIC

Kashmir

Jammu Kashmir

Spring brings joy to Kashmir with lush greenery and blooming flowers. Explore the famous Mughal Gardens, adorned with colourful spring blooms. Experience the stunning contrast of snow-clad mountains in Sonamarg, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam. Kashmir offers a mesmerizing blend of natural beauty and cultural richness during spring.



Tulips, Srinagar Garden

Emerald Lake, Nilgiris (Ooty), Tamil Nadu

Coonoor

Tamil Nadu

Coonoor in the picturesque Nilgiri mountains of Tamil Nadu, transforms into a captivating spring destination for Indian travelers. Embraced by lush greenery and adorned with blooming flowers, Coonoor offers a beautiful retreat amidst nature's bounty. Perfectly positioned near Ooty, it presents an ideal opportunity for travelers to explore multiple destinations in a single trip. Wander through the enchanting tea gardens, immersing yourself in the tranquility of the surroundings. Don't forget to embark on the enchanting journey aboard the toy train, treating yourself to panoramic vistas of the breathtaking landscape.



DOMESTIC

Lakshadweep Islands

Lakshadweep Islands are often considered one of India's least visited yet most captivating destinations. With 36 islands, 12 atolls, and three reefs, this archipelago offers a wealth of natural beauty and tranquility. Despite its pristine allure, only 10 of these islands are inhabited. If you seek an offbeat holiday in a place far removed from the hustle and bustle of city life, Lakshadweep is the perfect escape during spring.

Mahabaleshwar Maharashtra

Amidst verdant valleys, Mahabaleshwar emerges as a captivating spring destination for Indian travelers. Once the favored summer capital of the Bombay province, this picturesque plateau boasts panoramic views of lush greenery. Renowned as the birthplace of the river Krishna and six others, it offers a blend of natural wonders and historical charm. Day excursions to Raigad, Pratapgad, Wai, the mesmerizing Lingmala waterfalls, and the serene Venna lake add to its allure. Accessible at 160 and 260 kilometers from Bombay and Pune respectively, Mahabaleshwar beckons as an idyllic spring getaway in India.

International

Lisbon

Portugal

As spring unfolds, Lisbon comes alive with colourful festivals and blossoming gardens. Experience the city's dynamic social scene, delectable cuisine, and historic charm. From exploring old palaces to lounging in rooftop bars, Lisbon offers endless delights at affordable prices, especially in April.



Sunrise at Lisbon

The Greek Theater of Taormina, Sicily

Sicily

Italy

Experience Sicily's Mediterranean allure with pleasant spring temperatures and blooming landscapes. Explore historic towns like Syracuse and Taormina, where narrow streets lead to Baroque cathedrals and ancient plazas. Take advantage of driving up Mount Etna for breathtaking views sans the tourist crowds.



Thailand

Discover Thailand's exotic beaches and vibrant culture during the spring shoulder season. Join the festive Songkran celebrations, where the country transforms into a giant water fight. Explore rejuvenating wellness retreats in Koh Samui or indulge in luxury experiences at upscale resorts like the Four Seasons.

Paradise Island, Koh Samui



Mauritius

Spring in Mauritius offers balmy weather, clear waters, and cultural festivities like the Holi Festival and the 50th Anniversary of Independence. Embrace the island's Hindu traditions and vibrant celebrations amidst stunning beaches and outdoor adventures.



Amalfi Coast, Atrani Village, Campania

Naples

Italy

Springtime in Naples beckons with mild weather, blooming flowers, and culinary delights. Immerse yourself in the city's authentic charm, from street art to family-run workshops. Wander through historic sites, savour traditional pizzas, and soak up the vibrant atmosphere along the seafront promenade, Lungomare. Visit in April for a pleasant experience before the summer heat sets in.



St. Thomas Island

Note: The list of destinations takes into account climate, natural beauty, cultural significance, tourist experience, and crowd levels. 📍

U.S. Virgin Islands

U.S. Virgin Islands are hidden gems for Indian travelers, who are looking for an unforgettable spring escape. Offering the allure of the Caribbean, these islands beckon with their pristine beauty and vibrant culture. Explore the three major islands—St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas—each boasting charming pastel buildings, crystalline harbors, and sun-kissed white-sand beaches. Immerse yourself in a tapestry of experiences, from discovering marine wonders at the Coral World Aquarium to witnessing sea turtle nesting grounds and exploring the remnants of 18th-century sugar mill ruins.

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Beyond the Shorelines

A Dive into Deep-Sea Tourism

By DUSHYANTH GOSWAMY, Staff Writer

Did you know that we have explored less than 5% of the ocean? The vast depths conceal countless wonders waiting to be discovered. Have you ever dreamed of gliding silently through a bioluminescent underwater galaxy? Or descending to the deepest oceanic trenches to witness landscapes sculpted by volcanic forces? If you crave an adventure transcending sunlit shores, deep-sea tourism invites you into a realm few have witnessed – the mysterious world beneath the waves.

Welcome to the emerging world of deep-sea tourism where cutting-edge technology and adventurous spirit converge to open access to the ocean's last great unknowns. In this immersive feature, we plunge into the captivating sites, thrilling experiences, and vital conservation missions that make undersea travel an awe-inspiring new frontier.

The call of the deep

Imagine gliding silently through an azure expanse, surrounded by kaleidoscopic marine life. Your submersible descends hundreds of meters, bathing you in the eerie glow of bioluminescent creatures. The seafloor spreads out before you a vast alien landscape dotted with towering coral forests, eerie shipwrecks, and chimneys gushing mineral-rich superheated fluid. Welcome to the extraordinary realm of deep-sea tourism.

The benefits beyond borders

Deep ocean tourism invites adventurous souls to transcend the boundaries of the familiar. Pioneers in this industry are making underwater frontiers more accessible through specialized vessels and equipment. As a deep sea tourist, you become part of an elite vanguard glimpsing species and phenomena few humans have witnessed first-hand.

Life in the inky depths displays staggering diversity. Travellers marvel at bizarre creatures that evolved for a world without sunlight – from the mesmerizing undulations of sea pens and crinoids to the cold, unblinking stares of fangtooth fish dwelling in near-freezing temperatures. Exploring chemosynthetic ecosystems clustered around hydrothermal vents reveals shrimp, tubeworms, and microbes obtaining energy from chemicals rather than photosynthesis - an entirely distinct mode of life.

Bioluminescence creates surreal, glowing environments that seem plucked from science fiction. Marine species like the atolla jellyfish and anglerfish produce their own light to attract prey or mates. Diving into places like Puerto Rico's Mosquito Bay provides the rare opportunity to be surrounded by millions of these glowing dinoflagellate microorganisms, creating a glittering watery galaxy.

Equally vital, deep ocean tourism cultivates awe and respect for the marine world. As visitors explore these vital habitats firsthand, they return with a profound appreciation for the undersea realm's wonders and motivation to protect them. Witnessing natural phenomena from shimmering bioluminescent bays to subaquatic landscapes sculpted by volcanic forces inspires both awe and introspection.



Jellyfish

The steep costs and risks

Yet transforming abyssal mysteries into destinations comes with steep challenges. The cost currently restricts deep sea tourism to high net-worth individuals, with single expeditions running into hundreds of thousands of dollars. Specialized equipment and vessels constitute significant investments for operators.

Safety risks present another key concern. Decompression sickness poses a serious medical hazard without proper precautions. Equipment failures at depth, vessel emergencies, and other dangers mean responsible operators must commit to the highest safety protocols. These extend from specialized training of passengers to stringent maintenance and contingency planning.



Sunken Stone Statue, Balinese Sea

Environmental stewardship

Strict oversight and self-regulation are needed to prevent deep-sea tourism from harming the very environments it aims to exhibit and appreciate. Environmental impacts that must be controlled include disturbing fragile seafloor habitats through improper interaction or equipment, improperly disposing of waste and discharges, and introducing non-native species via vessel hulls.

Responsible deep ocean tourism operators follow comprehensive guidelines to minimize ecological harm. This includes implementing policies around waste disposal, ballast water treatment, minimizing anchoring and contact with the seafloor, and adhering to protected area regulations. Environmental sustainability certification programs help guide best practices.

Globally, commercial trips already provide extraordinary access to renowned sites like the RMS Titanic wreckage at 3,800 meters' depth. At nearly 11,000 meters down, the Mariana Trench's "Challenger Deep" beckons brave travellers to glimpse the very bottom of our planetary abyss through tiny submersible windows. The iconic Great Blue Hole in Belize's Lighthouse Reef invites scuba divers and submarines to explore its 124-meter depths, revealing mesmerizing stalactites and shifting azure colours around the sinkhole's dark interior.

Beyond these highlights, future destinations capture the imagination. Developers dream of underwater hotels ensconced in clear acrylic spheres, offering 360-degree panoramic views of marine life gliding by. Submarine yachts may someday ply unexplored oceanic trenches. Even submerged "spaceports" serve as concept habitats where adventurers prepare for extra-terrestrial voyages. As technologies and visions evolve, boundless potential for undersea attractions emerges.



Exploring India's enchanting bioluminescent beaches

Shimmering with an ethereal glow after dark, India's bioluminescent beaches offer travellers a magical escape into nature's luminous wonderland. As phytoplankton, marine life, and even fungi illuminate the shores with their biological light, these resplendent havens beckon the adventurous to lose themselves in the surreal blue haze. Let's delve into some of the mesmerizing bioluminescent beaches across the country:



BANGARAM ISLAND, Lakshadweep

Why Visit: The remote Bangaram Island in India's pristine Lakshadweep archipelago reveals one of nature's most enchanting marvels after nightfall. As the sun dips below the horizon, the island's western beach transforms into a shimmering bioluminescent spectacle. With each crashing wave, the shoreline glows an ethereal blue-green, created by millions of microscopic dinoflagellates producing cool light through chemical reactions. Visitors can wade into the shallow waters and be surrounded by a glittering underwater galaxy with every step and splash. This rare phenomenon allows deep-sea tourists to experience the awe of bioluminescence without venturing into the ocean depths.

AHUPE VILLAGE, Maharashtra:

Why Visit: Nestled near the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Ahupe Village unveils its bioluminescent spectacle during the monsoon season. Rain-soaked forests come alive with the luminous glow of *Mycena* fungus, creating an ethereal ambience.

HAVELOCK ISLAND, Andaman Islands:

Why Visit: Experience nature's light show on the pristine shores of Havelock Island. Here, the azure waters are adorned with the glow of phytoplankton, offering a mesmerizing sight, especially on moonless nights.

Mattu-Padukere Beaches, Karnataka:

Why Visit: The beaches near Udupi, Karnataka, offer a radiant display of bioluminescence, courtesy of luminescent plankton inhabiting the coastal waters. Witness the shoreline adorned with glowing blue hues for a magical experience.

For those chasing the luminous phenomenon across India's shoreline, it's worth remembering that reported sightings likely represent but a fraction of the bioluminescent treasures awaiting discovery. Beyond renowned destinations, hidden coves may offer their own celestial displays for future explorers. So keep your eyes peeled and your sense of wonder primed during your seaside adventures - you never know what glow-in-the-dark surprises our complex coastline has in store!

Betalbatim Beach, Goa:

Why Visit: Betalbatim Beach invites visitors to witness the mystical glow of bioluminescence along its shores. Leisurely take a stroll along the beach after dark to witness this enchanting natural phenomenon.

Thiruvanmiyur Beach, Chennai:

Why Visit: Occasionally, Thiruvanmiyur Beach in Chennai showcases bioluminescence, offering a captivating sight for those fortunate enough to witness it. Keep an eye out for the right conditions to immerse yourself in this surreal experience.

Radhanagar Beach, Andaman and Nicobar Islands:

Why Visit: Situated in the Havelock Islands, Radhanagar Beach is renowned for its bioluminescent plankton, which casts a dreamy blue glow over the waters. Visit during moonless nights to witness nature's light show at its finest.

Catalysing conservation

Ultimately, deep sea tourism holds immense power to inspire awe, fascination, respect and commitment to protecting the ocean world. The shadows of the deep both thrill and humble. Innovations in undersea access open portals to the planet's final frontiers. For bold explorers seeking extraordinary encounters, deep ocean tourism quenches the thirst for discovery. Yet such experiences also cultivate a deeper appreciation for marine ecosystems' frailty and resilience.

As travellers pursue the wonder of the deep, this industry can serve as a catalyst for public advocacy and scientific awareness. Each returned tourist becomes an ambassador, motivated to share the ocean's marvels and mobilize collective action to safeguard these vital underwater oases.

If you yearn to grasp mysteries unlike any other and help reveal their splendour, deep-sea tourism beckons. Let your wonder transform into conservation commitment – take the plunge and you'll surface with new inspiration to protect what so few witness. Begin planning your aquatic dream voyage to push back the boundaries of human exploration.

Ultimately, deep sea tourism represents a profound shift in how we connect with our blue planet. No longer confined to the surface, these innovative experiences beckon us to take the plunge and engage directly with the wonders and fragility of the marine world. By unleashing a sense of childlike amazement at the undersea mysteries unveiled, deep ocean tourism kindles a sacred responsibility within us all to safeguard the ocean's splendours. As we pursue these extraordinary voyages, may the beauty we witness transform us into impassioned advocates for the seas. For, only by protecting these hidden realms can generations to come continue unveiling the ocean's timeless grandeur. 🌊



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HOLI

Hai!

A Kaleidoscope of Joy Across India

By DUSHYANTH GOSWAMY, Staff Writer

In the kaleidoscope of cultural festivities that dot the Indian calendar, few occasions match the vibrancy and exuberance of Holi. As the full moon ascends in the Hindu month of Phalguna, India awakens to a symphony of hues, heralding the arrival of spring. This ancient festival transcends religious boundaries, uniting people in a joyous celebration of life, love, and renewal. Through the lens of our photo essay, we embark on a visual journey across the heartlands of India, immersing ourselves in the kaleidoscopic tapestry of Holi celebrations that adorn the landscape from Mathura to Punjab.



Mathura

Mathura, the revered birthplace of Lord Krishna, becomes a pulsating hub of energy and festivity during Holi. The narrow streets surrounding the iconic Banke Bihari Temple teem with devotees, their faces adorned with vivid hues of red, yellow, and green. Here, the festival celebrates the divine love story of Radha and Krishna, traditionally depicted as showering each other with colours in a playful dance of devotion.



Colours of Spring

As the full moon bathes the land in its celestial glow during the Hindu month of Phalguna, India begins to brace itself for an exhilarating explosion of colours. The air is filled with anticipation, and the markets buzz with activity as preparations for the vibrant festival of Holi gather momentum.

Vrindavan

In the sacred town of Vrindavan, a unique and captivating tradition unfolds during Holi. Women, their faces beaming with joy and determination, playfully wield bamboo sticks, chasing after men in a colourful reenactment of Radha's playful anger towards her beloved Krishna. The air is filled with laughter and the vibrant hues of gulal, creating a mesmerizing spectacle that celebrates the divine love story.

Pushkar

The picturesque town of Pushkar transforms into a mesmerizing kaleidoscope of colours during Holi. Devotees flock to the holy Pushkar Lake, adorned in their finest attire and armed with vibrant powders and water balloons. As they take to the water in boats, the ghats lining the lake become a canvas for their vibrant celebrations. Colours are thrown into the air, creating a breathtaking display that reflects off the tranquil waters, painting the entire scene in a kaleidoscope of hues.



Varanasi

In the sacred city of Varanasi, the serene and spiritual atmosphere takes on a vibrant and joyous hue during Holi. The iconic ghats, usually a canvas of tranquillity, become a riot of colours as devotees gather to celebrate the triumph of good over evil. Vibrant powders are thrown into the air, creating a mesmerizing display that dances across the steps leading down to the revered Ganges River. It is a sight that encapsulates the essence of Holi – a celebration of life, renewal, and the unifying power of joy.


Source: Devlin Tolleson / Shutterstock.com

Anandpur Sahib (Punjab)

Beyond the traditional Hindu celebrations of Holi, the state of Punjab witnesses a unique and exhilarating festival called Holla Mohalla. In the historic town of Anandpur Sahib, the air reverberates with the thundering hooves of horses as Sikh warriors take to the field in a display of martial prowess and vibrant traditions. Men clad in colourful attire and turbans wield flags and swords, reenacting the valour of their ancestors while celebrating the eternal spirit of courage and unity.



Source: Siddharth Saha / Shutterstock.com



As the kaleidoscope of colours gradually settles, the essence of Holi lingers in the air, infusing the land with a renewed sense of joy and togetherness. In this moment of shared celebration, social barriers dissolve, and communities come together in a heartwarming embrace. The vibrant hues that once adorned faces and bodies now serve as a symbolic representation of the unity that transcends all boundaries. Holi is a festival that reminds us of the beauty of new beginnings, where the colours of life intertwine in a harmonious tapestry of happiness and hope.

Beyond the Spectrum

As the colours settle and the echoes of laughter fade into the twilight, the essence of Holi endures—a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of community. In the wake of revelry, a sense of unity prevails, transcending divisions of caste, creed, and class. Holi, with its riotous cascade of colours, serves as a poignant reminder of the universal yearning for joy, connection, and renewal. As we bid farewell to this effervescent festival, let us carry forward its message of harmony and inclusivity, weaving the vibrant hues of Holi into the fabric of our lives, and cherishing the bonds that unite us in a shared celebration of humanity. ■



Beyond the Brochures

Exploring Dark Tourism in India and Beyond

By DUSHYANTH GOSWAMY, Staff Writer



Monumental Sculpture on Top of Ruins



Bullet Marks at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab

Imagine standing amongst the bullet marks at Jallianwala Bagh, feeling the weight of history pressing down. Or contemplating the sombre silence of the Cellular Jail, haunted by echoes of struggle. This captures the essence of an emerging phenomenon in tourism – what is termed “dark tourism.” It sees travellers venture beyond typical sights to places associated with death, suffering, and the disturbing sides of humanity.

Beyond the Glitz and Glamour: What is Dark Tourism?

Forget sun-kissed beaches and bustling markets. Dark tourism delves into the darker chapters of human history. From battlefield ruins to disaster zones, and evocative memorials – these are not your typical tourist destinations, but for many travellers, they hold a magnetic allure as the sites offer a chance to confront uncomfortable truths and engage with sensitive topics revealing troubling histories, and also provide new perspectives on existence.

Think of visiting the ruins of Pompeii, exploring the haunting beauty of the abandoned ghost town of Bhangarh, or paying respects at the poignant memorials of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. The global stage hides even more dark tourism venues, from Holocaust camps to radioactive disaster sites. This mushrooming fascination presents opportunities as well as serious ethical questions for India's fast-expanding tourism industry. But what compels curiosity towards these bleak venues over cheerful tourist staples?

Why Are People Drawn to the Shadows?

Despite the seemingly grim themes, dark tourism enjoys rising popularity. Several factors contribute to this curious phenomenon:



Main entrance of Auschwitz II, Poland

- **Unveiling History's Scars:** Dark tourism serves as a powerful educational tool, offering firsthand insights into historical events and social issues. Witnessing the remnants of the Partition Museum in Amritsar or walking through the poignant corridors of the National Museum of Bangladesh Liberation War in Dhaka allows for deeper understanding and reflection. Similar insights emerge from sites like the Killing Fields in Cambodia or the District Six Museum in South Africa.
- **Morbid Curiosity:** The human fascination with the unknown and the macabre draws some visitors. Places like the ghost town of Bhangarh, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine or the Paris Catacombs provide us with an opportunity to confront mortality and contemplate our existence.
- **Uniqueness and Authenticity:** Experiencing the tangible reality of historical tragedies offers a sense of depth and authenticity often absent in conventional tourism. Standing amidst the poignant silence of the Taj Mahal's black marble cenotaph for Mumtaz Mahal or exploring the Cellular Jail at Port Blair allows for unique perspectives on loss, struggle, and the complexities of the past, similar to walking the Gettysburg Battlefield or Anne Frank's House in Amsterdam.
- **Social Media Influence:** Sharing compelling experiences online fuels curiosity and attracts others, sparking conversations and raising awareness about historical events and social issues, whether at memorials for the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, or high-profile sites like the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York or Berlin Holocaust Memorial in Germany.

A Spectrum of Shadows: Navigating Landscape of Dark Tourism

It's crucial to recognize that dark tourism isn't a monolithic concept. It exists on a spectrum:

- **Respectful and educational:** Sites like the National Holocaust Memorial in Israel or the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park offer insightful experiences that honour the victims and encourage reflection.
- **Exploitative and insensitive:** Sensationalized tours or disrespectful behaviour at sensitive sites can trivialize suffering and exploit tragedy for profit.



The interior of Gonjiam Psychiatric Hospital, South Korea



The ghost town, Pripyat in Chernobyl

Striking the Right Balance: Responsible Travel to the Dark Sites

Visiting places marked by tragedy and suffering demands mindful conduct from tourists. We all contribute to shaping the future of dark tourism. Here's how travellers can ensure responsible and respectful experiences:

- **Seek Understanding:** Thoroughly research the site's history and significance to appreciate its legacy. Approach with sensitivity, not just casual curiosity.
- **Embrace Local Contexts:** Respect local communities, dress modestly, and avoid intrusive behaviour. Remember, you're visiting a place of historical significance, not an amusement park.
- **Responsible Tour Operators:** Choose operators who emphasize education, respectful conduct, and community engagement rather than just profit.
- **Give Back:** Contribute to memorial site maintenance or educational funds to help preserve their mission.

Exploring the Global Landscape of Dark Tourism

While India offers a compelling array of dark tourism destinations, some of the world's most iconic sites of tragedy and suffering exist beyond our borders. By looking further afield, one can trace disturbing threads that tie humanity's darkest impulses across cultures and continents.



Bran Castle, Transylvania, Romania

- Aftermaths of Disaster**
 Venture into the ghostly ruins of Pompeii near Naples, frozen in time from the deadly eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Contemplate the aftermath of the world's worst nuclear accident at Ukraine's Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, its abandoned neighbourhoods and amusement park clinging to radiation-tinged memories.
- Echoes of Atrocity**
 Walk through the cold corridors of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, where over a million souls tragically perished under Nazi tyranny. Bear witness to the Killing Fields just outside Cambodia's Phnom Penh, an eerie graveyard where the Khmer Rouge committed unspeakable atrocities.
- Remembrance of the Departed**
 Pensive visitors find chilling echoes in the 9/11 Memorial and Museum's contemplative fountains as if the water itself remembers the tragedy. Discover the Parisian Catacombs lined with skulls and bones, once a sanctuary for the remains of six million forgotten souls.
- Ghosts of Oppression**
 Salem's Witch Museum in the USA chronicles the persecution of suspected sorcerers during Puritanical mass hysteria. Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia stands as a disturbing monument to archaic practices of lobotomies and patient isolation.
- Legends from the Crypt**
 Take an eerie twilight tour in Dracula's Castle perched within Romania's foreboding Carpathian Mountains. Walk in the footsteps of history's most infamous serial killer during London's chilling Jack the Ripper tour.

The Cellular Jail, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India



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TOURISM TIDINGS

Confusion Reigns as Indians Mistake Mauritius for Maldives, Sparking Comedy of Errors



Recent Tensions Lead to Misunderstanding Over Tropical Destinations

In the wake of escalating tensions between India and the Maldives, the Mauritius tourism board found itself in an unexpected predicament when Indian tourists reacted with anger due to a case of mistaken identity. The mix-up occurred as individuals confused Mauritius with the Maldives, leading to a series of amusing yet misguided reactions.

One disgruntled Indian expressed disapproval on X, stating, "Not interested if you disrespect us and our PM." This sentiment was echoed by another user who proclaimed, "We now found a better option in our country itself, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep."

Adding to the confusion, a call to "Boycott the Maldives" emerged from

another X handle in response to a post promoting "exciting adventures and experiences" in what was intended to be a tropical tourist destination.

Ironically, the comments were directed at a post promoting Mauritius, not the Maldives. The original post, shared by 'Mauritius Tourism (India),' enthusiastically invited Indian travelers to explore the island's offerings, stating, "Mauritius welcomes Indians to explore, discover, and Feel Our Island Energy in 2024! Tons of exciting adventures and experiences await you. Plan your holiday today!" Amidst the confusion, it became evident that many Indians had mistaken Mauritius—a nation with historically close ties to India—for the Maldives, which had recently made headlines due to its government's anti-India stance.

The situation took on a humorous tone as representatives from Mauritius Tourism attempted to clarify the distinction between the two destinations.

ATM 2024 to Spotlight India's Surging Outbound Tourism Market

Arabian Travel Market (ATM) gears up to showcase India's burgeoning outbound tourism market, projected to soar to \$143.5 billion by the end of the decade.

An insightful report by booking.com and McKinsey reveals that 70% of Indian travelers opt for nearby destinations, with a notable preference for the Middle East, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia. India stands as Dubai's primary source market, contributing 1.9 million visitors in the initial ten months of 2023,

while Saudi Arabia sets sights on attracting 7.5 million visitors by 2030. The sheer scale of India's outbound potential is underscored by statistics pre-pandemic, with Indians embarking on 26.9 million overseas trips in 2019. Projections indicate a potential surge to 50 million departures by 2030.

Danielle Curtis, exhibition director ME at Arabian Travel Market, emphasizes the driving force behind this boom: India's expanding middle class. With a forecasted increase from 37 million to

177 million households earning between \$10,000 and \$35,000 annually by 2030, coupled with rising affluent households, the momentum is undeniable. India's youthful demographic, with a median age of 28, further propels its status as one of the world's fastest-growing outbound markets.

Moreover, Indian travelers exhibit a willingness to splurge on international trips, with a significant portion open to spending up to \$7,000, according to Acko Insurance.

Tourism Set to Rebound to Pre-Pandemic Levels by 2024-25: Government Report

In a recent development, the Indian government announced its anticipation of domestic tourism returning to pre-pandemic levels by 2024-25, alongside a remarkable surge in foreign tourist arrivals, which have risen by approximately 435% over the past three years.

Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, G. Kishan Reddy, revealed in a written response to Rajya Sabha that foreign arrivals escalated from 1,527,000 in 2021 to an impressive 8,166,000 in 2023 (January to November), showcasing a consistent upward trend. This surge underscores the resilience and vitality of India's tourism sector despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic. Minister Reddy further emphasized the government's proactive measures to bolster this growth trajectory by promoting various niche tourism segments. These include sustainable tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, the Meetings,



Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, ecotourism, and medical and wellness tourism.

The government's commitment to the comprehensive development of iconic tourist centers, as highlighted by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the recent budget presentation, aligns with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047. This initiative aims to elevate India's global tourism

appeal and foster sustainable growth across the sector.

Industry experts have lauded these initiatives, particularly in the medical and wellness tourism sectors. Dr. Saroja Asthana, Director of Ivy Leaf, a corporate wellness destination, remarked on India's burgeoning wellness tourism industry, driven by its rich heritage in Ayurveda and Yoga, coupled with scenic landscapes.

India Retains Top Position as Key Source Market for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Tourism recently concluded its inaugural Business Networking event for 2024 in India, marking a significant milestone in fostering stronger ties between the two nations in the tourism sector. The events, held in Mumbai and Delhi from February 9 to February 20, 2024, served as platforms to celebrate Sri Lanka's resilient tourism industry and its exponential growth.

With over 300 participants, including travel agents, industry leaders, and media representatives, both gatherings aimed to strengthen bilateral relations and explore avenues for collaboration. A notable highlight was the substantial increase in Indian tourists visiting Sri Lanka, with arrivals more than doubling from 13,759 in January of the previous



year to 34,399 in January 2024.

The events showcased Sri Lanka's diverse attractions, from its picturesque landscapes to its rich cultural heritage, captivating attendees with promises of unforgettable experiences. Through innovative campaigns like "You'll Come Back for More," Sri Lanka enticed visitors to return, emphasizing its commitment to delivering exceptional hospitality.

Harin Fernando, the Honourable Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports, and Youth Affairs, expressed gratitude for India's unwavering support in Sri Lanka's tourism journey. He highlighted Sri

Lanka's remarkable transformation into a middle-income nation and its ambitious goal of attracting 2.5 million tourists in 2024. H. E. Kshenuka Senewiratne, The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in New Delhi, emphasized the platform's significance in enhancing cooperation between the two countries. She underscored the 103 per cent increase in tourist arrivals from India, reflecting the strength of historical ties and mutual collaboration across various sectors.

The events symbolize India's enduring commitment to Sri Lanka's socio-economic development, with both nations poised to deepen connectivity and cooperation across multiple domains, including tourism, trade, and education. ■

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