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EUROPEAN

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THE ROYAL PALACES IN INDIA

RAM NAVAMI
CELEBRATION OUTSIDE INDIA



Springing Beauty and Summery Discomfort

April is the cruellest month, said T.S. Eliot in one of his most famous poems, 'The Waste Land'. Yet, amidst Eliot's contemplations on the meaninglessness of life, this month heralds the peak of spring, bringing both beauty and discomfort.

As the sizzling sun begins its relentless assault, Indians seek refuge from its harsh rays. In our March 2024 issue, we explored some of the most enchanting spring destinations, but as April unfolds, our attention turns to providing solace for those yearning to escape the heat. Our article "Euro Escapades" unveils a trove of hidden European gems, offering spirited Indian travellers respite from the sweltering Indian summer.

If your tight purse strings don't allow you to fly to Europe, you may like to ramble through India's forest heartlands to keep the sun at arm's length. A list of Indian states with the most extensive forest cover can give you vicarious pleasure, and you may want to visit the destinations listed in the article.

The world celebrates Lord Ram's birthday on the 17th of this month. With his divine aura and magnanimous actions, Lord Ram is worshipped worldwide. You will be surprised to know the countries celebrating Ram Navmi, and the list obviously does not include India.

Lastly, Tourism One captures a noticeable trend in the Indian hospitality industry: Heritage Hotels. Once singing the saga of bravery, romance, and enduring charm, the majestic palaces and castles were converted into hotels post-independence. This royal makeover warmly welcomes domestic and international guests only to create unique and memorable experiences.

Have you ever experienced royal hospitality? If so, please share your memories with us at tourismone@praveg.com.

Happy Travelling!

Night scene in Carouge, Geneva, Switzerland

Source: Mihai-Bogdan Lazar / Shutterstock.com

Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh

CONTENTS

06	EURO ESCAPADES: INTRODUCING THE HIDDEN GEMS OF EUROPE FOR THE SPIRITED INDIAN TRAVELLER
40	BE THE GUEST AT THE ROYAL PALACES IN INDIA
48	A VERDANT JOURNEY: THROUGH INDIA'S FOREST HEARTLANDS
70	RAM NAVAMI CELEBRATION OUTSIDE INDIA
74	TOURISM TIDINGS



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Introducing the Hidden Gems of Europe for the Spirited Indian Traveller

By DUSHYANTH GOSWAMY, Staff Writer

Now that you are already here, drop all and join me in this flight of imagination. Do you see yourself strolling through the cobblestone streets somewhere in Europe? Perfect. Welcome to Ljubljana – Slovenia's enchanting capital. Admire the marvels of the baroque architecture and continue walking down the winding alleys lined with vibrant cafés until the aroma of freshly baked burek (a savoury pastry) wafting through the air captivates your feet. Exercise willing suspension of disbelief and you will be transported to a world that's nothing like any of the bustling metropolises of Europe that you may know through the sheer power of advertising and cinema.

Envision stepping into an enchanted realm where Europe's lesser-known marvels await to enrapture you with their captivating charms. From the artistic heartbeats echoing through Leipzig's edgy studios to the tantalizing aromas wafting through Malaga's authentic tapas bars, these hidden havens beckon you to peel back the veil and experience the continent's soul.

While cities like Paris, Rome, and Barcelona cast an undeniable spell, venturing off the well-trodden tourist trail promises an immersive journey far more captivating than any cinematic tale. From Leipzig's vibrant street canvases to the culinary serenade of Malaga, these hidden jewels beckon you to escape the metropolitan crowds and connect with the very soul of Europe.

Leipzig Germany

An Avant-Garde Awakening

If Berlin is the established capital of underground cool, then Leipzig is its spirited younger sibling - an anarchic hub where creativity knows no bounds. Imagine a place where warehouse parties rage amid Soviet-era towers, and the very streets seem alive with provocative artists pushing artistic expression into bold new frontiers. This is Leipzig, extending an open invitation for culturally curious souls to immerse themselves in its avant-garde realm.

As you wander the post-industrial labyrinthine Spinnerei complex, you'll be enveloped by Leipzig's underground creative vortex. Prepare to have perceptions challenged by provocative installations, daring exhibits and murals adorning these warehouse-turned-art sanctuaries. Visionaries like Claudia Biehne sculpt organic forms stoking the imagination.

“ Leipzig's street art is a sensory symphony. Each corner unveils murals and installations that challenge the very boundaries of what art can be. It's raw, edgy, and utterly spellbinding. ”

~ Insha Sharma, a 27-year-old traveller from Mumbai



Source: Oleg Senkov / Shutterstock.com

City of Leipzig

QUICK FACTS

Language	: Germany
Currency	: Euro (€)
Visa (Schengen)	: Yes
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 1 hr 30 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Low-Medium
Best Time to Visit	: Spring (fewer crowds), December (Christmas markets)

At dusk, as the indigo veil of nightfall descends, Leipzig undergoes an electrifying metamorphosis as its legendary artistic underworld awakens. The underground club scene has attained mythic status – a realm where driving beats coalesce with provocative live art and anarchic performance spectacles. From anarchic techno raves to dynamic indie gigs, these nocturnal rhythms will utterly enthrall even the world-weariest souls with their authentically gritty, uninhibited energy. Leipzig’s pulsating creative energy catalyses an atmosphere of unrestrained revelry and audacious self-expression. Here, amid the thrum of bass and the swirl of bodies in motion, a unique form of audacious self-expression is born. It’s an environment where the conventional is challenged, and the boundaries of artistic expression are redefined. In Leipzig, the night is not just a time for rest. It’s when the city truly comes alive, revealing its heart through the rhythm of its underground.

“ Leipzig’s nightlife scene was an absolute revelation. It felt like we had stumbled upon a secret world, where creativity and self-expression reigned supreme. And the best part? Everyone was so welcoming and inclusive, making it a truly unforgettable experience. ”

~ Advithi Thyagarajan, a 29-year-old Contract Negotiator from Mumbai

IF YOU LIKE BERLIN YOU SHOULD VISIT LEIPZIG BECAUSE IT’S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF BERLIN AFTER THE WALL FELL.

WHAT TO DO

- Explore Spinnerei for art immersion.
- Discover photography at Haus der Fotografie in Halle 14.
- Shop at Claudia Biehne's.
- Experience Leipzig’s club scene at Distillery and Institut für Zukunft (IfZ).
- Attend a concert at the Gewandhaus Orchestra, one of Germany's oldest and most prestigious orchestras.



Cityscape of Historical Downtown, Leipzig

Malaga

Spain

An Epicurean Opus

If Barcelona basks in the glow of international renown, Malaga is Andalusia's hidden gem waiting to be discovered by the Epicurians. The sun-drenched birthplace of Pablo Picasso invites you to savour an edible symphony, where a vibrant culinary scene is infused with the rich Moorish heritage that permeates the city's very soul.

From savouring tapas crafted with a centuries-old flair at iconic bodega bars like El Rincón del Cervecerero to indulging in the ocean's freshest bounty amid Malaga's lively markets – this coastal jewel composes an irresistible overture of flavours designed to enchant even the most discerning palates.

“Malaga is a revelation for anyone who loves the art of culinary storytelling. Each tapas bite here is a vivid chapter inked by centuries of Moorish and Spanish history. From the kaleidoscope of flavours at the mercados to the antigua bodega bars where tapas traditions have been passed down through generations – Malaga welcomes you to get deliciously lost in its edible anthology.”

~ Zara Khanna, 31, Food Blogger from Chennai

Panoramic Cityscape, Malaga, Spain

QUICK FACTS

Language	: Spanish
Currency	: Euro (€)
Visa (Schengen)	: Yes
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 2 hr 45 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Medium
Best Time to Visit	: Spring/Fall (pleasant weather), avoid the peak summer heat

For those who get deliciously lost in Malaga's labyrinth of flavours, an edible anthology of Andalusian soul awaits, ready to be savoured one exquisite chapter at a time. However, Malaga's seductive charms extend far beyond its celebrated gastronomy. This sun-kissed city is an artist's reverie, where creativity permeates every crevice like a well-aged vintage. From the Roman amphitheatre to the contemporary CAC Malaga, the city is an ever-evolving masterpiece awaiting your interpretation. Linger in the trendy SOHO district, where innovative artists have transformed abandoned spaces into avant-garde galleries and bohemian haunts. Or lose yourself in the Moorish soul of La Alcazaba's iconic Gibralfaro etched atop the old city's ancient fortifications. For those seeking an idyllic fusion of historic splendour and modern artistic verve, Malaga extends an irresistible invitation to open your senses to its eternal muse.

“As a student of history, Malaga was a feast for all my senses. The vibrant tapas culture isn't just about the food - it's a living tradition intertwined with centuries of Moorish and Spanish heritage. From the batik-tiled patios to the tantalizing aromas of spices and seafood wafting through the market stalls, I felt transported through a multi-sensory timewarp of Andalusia's glorious past.”

~ Bharti Mehta, 26, a History Scholar from Mumbai

IF YOU LIKE BARCELONA YOU SHOULD VISIT MALAGA BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF BARCELONA AFTER THE WALL FELL.

WHAT TO DO

- Enjoy tapas at El Rincón del Cervecerero.
- Explore markets near Calle Larios.
- Taste local cured ham (Jamón Ibérico) and Manchego cheese.
- Relax on a beach day at Playa La Malagueta, the city's main beach.
- Explore the Malaga Picasso Museum dedicated to the works of Pablo Picasso, who spent his childhood in Malaga.



Malagueta Beach, Malaga

Aarhus Denmark

A Design Mecca Awakens

If Copenhagen is the standard-bearer of Danish cool, then Aarhus is its hipster vanguard. As Denmark's second-largest city, Aarhus extends a siren's call to design aficionados, beckoning them to immerse themselves in its cutting-edge, avant-garde design world led by the city's forward-thinking design ethos. The audacious Iceberg complex, with its jagged crystalline spires, is an unmistakable beacon guiding you into this city's bold architectural future.

Here, the Aros Art Museum and Public Art Walk weave a tapestry of contemporary masterpieces and urban exploration, inviting you to get delightfully lost in art's transcendent realm.

“Aarhus stole my heart with its artistic vibe! The Iceberg apartments were pure brilliance, echoing the city's innovative spirit. Exploring the Museum and the AROS Public Art Walk was like wandering through a modern art paradise. Aarhus is a haven for the culturally inclined to soak in its avant-garde charm.”

~ Riya, 29, Interior Designer, Bangalore



Aarhus Cityscape, Denmark

QUICK FACTS

Language	: Danish
Currency	: Euro (€)
Visa (Schengen)	: Yes
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 1 hr 40 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Medium-High
Best Time to Visit	: May-September (warmest weather), December (Christmas markets)

Aarhus is a magnetic vortex drawing for creatives, visionaries and design enthusiasts from across the globe. The city seems to vibrate with an infectious energy – a seamless interplay of cutting-edge architectural wonders, immersive art installations, and a pervasive design-forward ethos. From the museums to the galleries to the chic minimalist enclaves, Aarhus is a grand experiment in aesthetic transcendence.

From the striking minimalism of the Moesgaard Museum to the mind-bending genius of Olafur Eliasson's Your Rainbow Panorama, Aarhus delivers a multi-sensory experience that awakens the soul's deepest creative reservoirs. For those seeking an awakening of their deepest creative impulses and an expansive redefinition of what's possible, few places spark more innovative brilliance than this imaginative Danish pearl fearlessly pushing artistic boundaries.

“As an architect, Aarhus felt like a living dream – a playground where iconic design and boundless creativity converge. The bold geometries, innovative use of materials, and seamless integration of art and architecture throughout this city are utterly inspiring. Aarhus dares you to reimagine what's possible in a built environment.”

~ Nithya Ramachandran,
38, Architect from Hyderabad

IF YOU LIKE COPENHAGEN YOU SHOULD VISIT AARHUS, DENMARK BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF COPENHAGEN AFTER THE WALL FELL

WHAT TO DO

- Marvel at Iceberg apartments.
- Visit ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum and ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum Sculpture Collection (ARoS Public Art Walk).
- Dine at Frederikshøj for innovative flavours.
- Explore by light rail or bicycle.
- Take a boat tour of the Aarhus harbour to see the city from a different perspective.
- Visit Den Gamle By (The Old Town), an open-air museum showcasing Danish buildings from the 16th to 19th centuries.



Food Market close to Art museum, Aros, AARHUS, DENMARK

Bern Switzerland

An Alpine Fairytale Untold

If Zurich is the sophisticated emerald of Swiss urbanity, then Bern is its enchanting hidden gem - an alpine fairy tale waiting to be uncovered. Bern offers a more intimate Swiss experience. This medieval city casts a spellbinding aura, where cobblestone paths eternally echo with the romantic whispers of old-world charm. Here, the air is filled with the scent of 200 varieties of roses at the Rosengarten, and the streets whisper tales of history.

As you wander the UNESCO-listed quarters of Bern's Old Town, an ethereal spell transcends - time itself seems frozen amid storybook scenes of Renaissance fountains and stately sandstone edifices adorned in whimsical frescoes. Bern is the epitome of the Swiss good life. It's a city where nature's artistry and human creativity meet, especially at the Zentrum Paul Klee museum, dedicated to the legendary artist's work.



Panoramic view over the city of Bern, Switzerland

QUICK FACTS

Language	: Danish
Currency	: Euro (€)
Visa (Schengen)	: Yes
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 1 hr 40 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Medium-High
Best Time to Visit	: May-September (warmest weather), December (Christmas markets)

The iconic Zytglogge astronomical clock tower emerges as a stately overture to Bern's storied past. But it's the meandering River Aare that crafts the most sublime overture, its turquoise jade waters carving a liquid jewelled embrace around the old city's antiquated splendour. Just beyond the Altstadt's rustic embrace, an acropolis of scenic grandeur unfurls – emerald lush spaces cradled by the majestic perpetual-snow-capped peaks of the Bernese Alps.

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“ Bern captivated me. One moment I was tracing intricate Renaissance fresco details adorning fountain facades, the next I was treated to panoramic alpine views straight out of a storybook – all just steps from buzzing modern art galleries and chic cafes. The highlight of my visit was stumbling upon a quaint little textile shop in the Old Town, where the fusion of traditional Swiss patterns and contemporary designs sparked a whirlwind of inspiration for my next collection. ”

~ Anamika Rao, 33, Textile Designer from New Delhi

IF YOU LIKE ZURICH YOU SHOULD VISIT BERN, SWITZERLAND BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF ZURICH AFTER THE WALL FELL.

WHAT TO DO

- Hike to Rosengarten for panoramic views.
- Appreciate Paul Klee's works at Zentrum Paul Klee.
- Explore the Parliament Buildings (Bundeshaus) with its impressive dome.
- See the bears at Bern Bear Park, a unique wildlife park located right in the city centre.



Kramgasse street in Bern, Switzerland

Parma Italy

A Symphony of Taste and Tradition

If Rome is the grand theatre of Italian history, then Parma is its intimate stage, where every act is a personal encounter with Italy's soul. This hidden gem, nestled in the Emilia-Romagna region, is a sanctuary for those who have fallen under Rome's spell but crave a more intimate, unhurried immersion in Italy's soul.

Parma's pièce de résistance (most outstanding or notable feature) is its unparalleled culinary heritage as the birthplace of prosciutto di Parma and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. As a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, Parma invites you to a feast for the senses, offering a culinary repertoire that rivals the grandeur of Rome's monuments with its subtlety and finesse. From savouring locally cured prosciutto so delicate it melts on your tongue to pairing robust Parmigiano with a full-bodied Lambrusco, Parma's every street corner whispers tales of gastronomic excellence.

“ Before my journey to Parma, I believed my acquaintance with Italy - forged in the grandeur of Rome - was comprehensive. Yet, it was within Parma's embrace that I found a profound connection to the Italian essence. This city, with its exquisite culinary delights, its warm populace, and its rich tapestry of art, revealed itself as a hidden epilogue to a tome I presumed complete. As a voyager from India, my quests have always been for narratives ensconced in the streets I traverse. Parma offered not merely sustenance for the body but a profound nourishment for the soul. ”

~ Nawal Kishor Sharma, a 45-year-old, Literary Scholar and Culinary Enthusiast from Lucknow

Panoramic aerial view of Torrechiara Castle, Parma, Italy

QUICK FACTS

Language	: Italian
Currency	: Euro (€)
Visa (Schengen)	: Yes
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 2 hrs
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Medium-High
Best Time to Visit	: Spring/Fall (comfortable weather for exploring), December (festive atmosphere)

Beyond its culinary prowess, Parma's medieval monuments stand as testaments to a storied past, inviting travellers to stroll through time in a more personal setting. While Rome dazzles with archaeological marvels like the Colosseum and Pantheon, Parma's charms lie in its remarkably preserved medieval treasures. The rust-hued Cattedrale di Parma, a stunning Romanesque cathedral, anchors the city with its quintessential Italian piazza.

The city's historical narrative is not shouted from the rooftops like in Rome but shared in hushed tones as if it were a secret meant only for you. So for those seeking an authentic embrace of Italy's soul, where the cadence of daily life remains delightfully unhurried, let Parma seduce you with its medieval splendours, living gastronomy and a wholly immersive expedition into the warm heart of Italian culture.

“Parma seduced me with its layers of history and culture that blanket the city like a rich, beautifully-woven tapestry. From the frescoed interiors of the Parma Cathedral to the Farnese Theatre and Pilotta Palace, I was enveloped in an artistic and architectural wonderland at every turn. Yet it's Parma's intimate, charming piazzas, free of crowds, where the true romantic spirit of this enchanting city comes alive.”

~ Kanika Gupta, 33, Art Historian from Baroda

IF YOU LIKE ROME YOU SHOULD VISIT PARMA, ITALY BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF ROME AFTER THE WALL FELL.

WHAT TO DO

- Indulge at F.I.S.H.
- Sample salami at the market.
- Enjoy local Lambrusco wine and creamy fior di latte gelato at Cremeria Emilia.
- Explore Parma Cathedral (Duomo di Parma) and its baptistry.
- Take a cooking class to learn how to make traditional Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.
- Visit the Giuseppe Verdi Theatre, a historic opera house known for its excellent acoustics.



Source: Denis Vostrikov / Shutterstock.com

Parma City Centre, Italy

Geneva

Switzerland

Timeless Grandeur, Cosmopolitan Flair

If Paris is the sophisticated icon of urban romance, then Geneva is its enchanting alpine companion – a cosmopolitan fairy tale waiting to be uncovered. For those captivated by Paris' legendary allure but seeking a more intimate embrace of history and culture, Geneva extends an enchanting overture. This Swiss city, nestled along the shores of Lake Geneva, seamlessly blends timeless grandeur with a cosmopolitan spirit, inviting you to bask in its harmonious symphony of antiquity and modernity.

Much like Paris, Geneva's Old Town weaves a medieval spell with its winding cobblestone paths and historic edifices whisking you back through the centuries. The towering Gothic façade of St. Pierre's Cathedral extends an enticing invitation to architecture aficionados to bask in its storied glory.

“ Geneva's architectural narrative is a captivating tapestry woven through the centuries. From the medieval charm of its Old Town to the elegant Renaissance palaces, each edifice whispers tales of the city's rich heritage. It's a living, breathing museum that invites you to lose yourself in its atmospheric embrace. ”

~ Aditya Sharma, a 28-year-old
Architecture Enthusiast from Pune

Leman lake, Geneva, Switzerland

QUICK FACTS

Language	: French
Currency	: Swiss Franc (CHF)
Visa (Schengen)	: No
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 1 hr 30 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: High
Best Time to Visit	: June-August (peak summer season), December (Christmas markets)

Yet, Geneva's architectural rhapsody reaches beyond its medieval marvels, showcasing a tapestry of architectural styles that span the Renaissance, Baroque, and beyond. Complementing this timeless grandeur is Geneva's embrace of cosmopolitan flair, where a harmonious melting pot of international flavours awaits. From the meticulously choreographed omakase at Sachi, where exquisite Japanese cuisine is elevated to an art form, to the cosy Café du Soleil, where you can indulge in traditional Swiss fondue while absorbing Lake Geneva's ethereal vistas, this city promises a culinary journey that will enchant even the most discerning palate.

So, if you find yourself enchanted by Paris' legendary charm but seek a more intimate embrace of history and culture, let Geneva serenade you with its harmonious blend of timeless grandeur and cosmopolitan flair, where ancient cobblestones whisper stories of the past, and contemporary flavours beckon you to indulge in the present.

“Geneva's dining scene is a true revelation. Every meal is a celebration of flavours, with each bite transporting you to a different corner of the world. It's a city that truly embraces its cosmopolitan spirit with open arms.”

- Ravinder Randhawa, a 30-year-old foodie from Delhi

IF YOU LIKE PARIS YOU SHOULD VISIT GENEVA, BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF PARIS AFTER THE WALL FELL.

WHAT TO DO

- Explore Geneva's Old Town (Vieille Ville).
- Climb St. Pierre Cathedral.
- Learn at the International Reformation Museum.
- Indulge in omakase at Sachi or traditional cheese fondue at Café du Soleil.
- Visit the CERN laboratory, the world's largest particle physics laboratory.
- Take a day trip to nearby Montreux, a charming town on the shores of Lake Geneva.



Vineyards in Lavaux, Switzerland

Manchester

England

A City of Firsts and Cultural Renaissance

If London is the illustrious capital that never sleeps, Manchester is the trailblazing heart of innovation and culture, pulsating with the rhythm of progress. For those who have revelled in London's endless panorama but yearned for a fresh narrative, Manchester extends an invitation to experience the vanguard of England's history and culture.

While London seduces with its historic pomp and circumstance, Manchester's allure lies in its trailblazing legacy as a city of firsts. Manchester is a city where history is not just remembered; it's made. From spawning the Industrial Revolution to pioneering the suffragette movement and nurturing musical revolutions like Madchester, this city's very cobblestones pulse with a fierce independent energy. The neo-gothic splendour of the John Rylands Library and the modernist marvel of the Imperial War Museum North create a captivating juxtaposition of old and new.



Salford Quays , Manchester, UK

QUICK FACTS

Language	: English (??)
Currency	: British Pound (£)
Visa (Schengen)	: Not
Required Popular Activities	: Discover musical heritage, lively city atmosphere
Approx. Flight Time (London)	: 1 hr 15 min
Cost (Daily Avg.)	: Medium
Best Time to Visit	: Spring/Fall (pleasant weather), December (festive markets)

Yet Manchester's crowning glory lies in its thriving arts and culture scene, rivalling London's renowned offerings. From the cutting-edge programming at HOME to eclectic music festivals like Parklife and a buzzing street art trail, this city is a creative tour de force. The newly rejuvenated Ancoats area pulses with trendsetting restaurants, craft breweries, and indie boutiques, making it a hipster's paradise.

This city's fierce individuality, thriving arts scene, and fearless spirit of reinvention create an exhilarating call you won't be able to ignore. It's a city that invites you to be part of its story, a hidden gem that shines as brightly as London, with its own unique light.

“ Manchester is like a rough-cut diamond – gritty and unconventional on the surface, but teeming with dazzling cultural gems beneath. Its spirit is utterly infectious and proudly defiant of conformity. Manchester is not just a city to visit; it's a city to live and breathe.”

~ Suchita Joshi, a 33-year-old artist from Bengaluru

IF YOU LIKE BERLIN LONDON YOU SHOULD VISIT MANCHESTER, ENGLAND BECAUSE IT'S A HUB FOR YOUNG ARTISTS WITH WAREHOUSE PARTIES AND SOVIET TOWERS, REMINISCENT OF LONDON AFTER THE WALL FELL.

- WHAT TO DO
- Visit Factory Manchester instead of Aviva Studios.
 - Experience the City of Floating Sounds.
 - Catch the Dark Noon theatrical show.
 - Catch a football (soccer) match at one of Manchester's famous stadiums, Old Trafford (Manchester United) or Etihad Stadium (Manchester City).
 - Explore the Northern Quarter, a trendy area known for its independent shops, cafes, and bars.



Exchange Square, Civic Square, Manchester, England, UK

Evening lights in the Åboulevarden in Aarhus, Denmark.

A Final Note

As we draw the curtains on our enchanting voyage through Europe's hidden gems, let the tapestry of memories woven by Leipzig's underground art scene, Malaga's aromatic tapas bars, and Ljubljana's timeless streets linger in your mind. These destinations are just a glimpse of the countless jewels adorning the continent, each shimmering with authenticity and awaiting discovery by the spirited traveller.

In a world brimming with possibilities, these cities stand as beacons of creativity, culture, and culinary excellence. Whether you find yourself wandering the cobblestone

on Europe's Less-Told Narratives

streets of Bern, savouring the flavours of Parma, or immersing yourself in the eclectic ambience of Manchester, each destination offers a glimpse into the soul of Europe. So, spirited traveller, the question remains: which adventure will you choose next?

Indeed, Europe's allure transcends its iconic capitals; it resides in the pulsating hearts of its hidden havens. It thrives in the gritty alleyways where street artists conjure spellbinding murals and in the transformation of abandoned factories into avant-garde art sanctuaries. From the centuries-old tapas bars exuding fragrant aromas to

cosmopolitan dining rooms where flavours from exotic lands converge, Europe's essence permeates every corner.

The most extraordinary journeys are those that challenge us to embrace the unknown, to be transformed by experiences that defy the ordinary. So let the discoveries unveiled in these pages serve as a portal, a gateway to crafting your own epic European odyssey and in doing so, ignite the spark of inspiration in fellow adventurers to seek out the magic lying just beyond the beaten path. For within these hidden gems, the renaissance of wonder awaits those bold enough to seek it. ■

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Be the Guest at the Royal Palaces in India

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Writer

Royal Treatment & Palatial Pampering

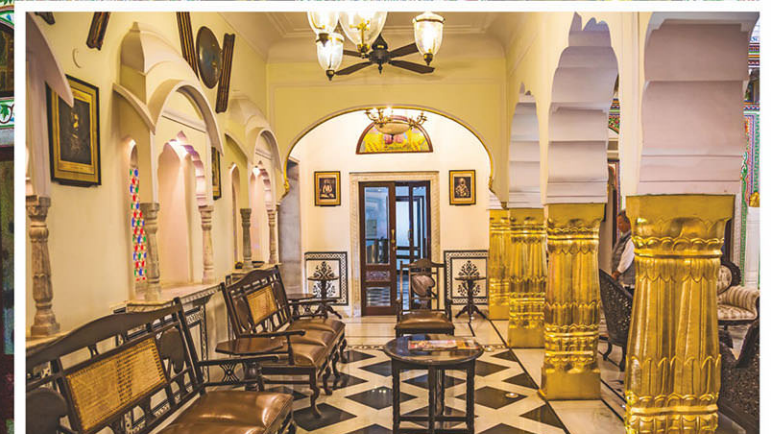
Heritage hotels
bring a paradigm shift in
India's tourism landscape

When Dr Karan Singh, Indian politician and son of Hari Singh, the last ruling king of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, gave over his Srinagar palace to the Oberoi Group to run it as a hotel, little did he know that India would witness an ever-growing trend of heritage hotels. With more than 200 heritage hotels now, India offers royal

treatment to her international and domestic travellers, who enjoy their holidays in the palaces owned by Blue Blood. This novel experience of living in stately homes of kings and queens of bygone eras gives guests goosebumps. With spectacular locations, royal services, delicious food, and cultural immersion, people readily accepted this trend.



Jai Mahal Palace, Jaipur





Hospitality brands like Taj and Oberoi Group have converted royal palaces, castles, and forts into plush hotels and resorts to treat guests like Indian Maharajas and their consorts. This trend has gained momentum in different states of India. Gujarat must stay ahead of the curve to grab the attention of tourists with historical palaces and forts converted into hotels and resorts.

Although converting old palaces into hotels proved lucrative, other reasons (beyond money) are associated with this shift. India was a political archipelago of more than 500 princely states of diverse sizes (regarding geography and political clout). Not all could afford to run and maintain their royal edifices post-independence, especially when the government zipped up their privy purses. Giving away their palaces to hotel groups was a way to make/mint quick money.

Among other significant reasons behind the success of heritage hotels are preservation of heritage, tourism

promotion, revenue generation, job creation, unique experience, and promotion of cultural tourism.

It is universally accepted that royal families would never like to shun their age-old traditions. Any king or queen cannot imagine seeing their plush palaces dismantled before their eyes. A better option is to convert them into a hotel or resort and create a win-win situation. This is the best solution to preserve the tradition they have been following for centuries. Moreover, families are not supposed to leave their royal house when they give it away. Those with business acumen can run this business independently without signing contracts with hospitality brands.

India's cultural diversity has always attracted foreigners. Stories of Indian art, literature, social harmony, cultural richness, and the unique lifestyle of Indian royal families have been long circulated in the world by European historians, writers, and travellers. This created a feeling of awe among





many tourists who began to visit India after her political freedom in 1947. This was the biggest opportunity for Indian hoteliers to give them a royal welcome in eminent palaces, castles, and forts. The government's tourism policy also hugely supported hospitality players in converting royal structures into hotels and resorts.

Minor royalties found maintaining their properties challenging but never wanted to sell them. Instead, they preferred to give them away to hospitality groups to use their palaces as hotels. This allowed them to generate revenue by using their royal kitchens, rooms, gardens, and other amenities to attract tourists.

Tourism has always been a leader in creating jobs. Since heritage hospitality attracts domestic and international tourists to explore unknown regions, it creates employment for local communities involving artisans and hotel staff.

It's always a unique experience to spend a few days in the royal mansion,

where rooms are more extensive, walls and ceilings are decorated with masterpieces, and the staff make you feel like a king or queen. As long as you stay in such a splendid palace, live life king-size.

Last but not least, heritage hospitality is one of the best ways to promote cultural tourism in India. Different monarchies followed different cultures, and tourists can experience these close-ups of India's rich traditions, including unique food, attire, and way of life.

Hospitality is an ever-evolving industry worldwide. To keep pace with global trends and shifts, royal families in India and Gujarat joined the bandwagon and the business picked up momentum. Now, there is no looking back, as the government of Gujarat announced the state's first Heritage Tourism Policy, allowing historical monuments, palaces, and forts constructed before 1950 to be converted into hotels, heritage museums, heritage banquet halls and restaurants. 🏰



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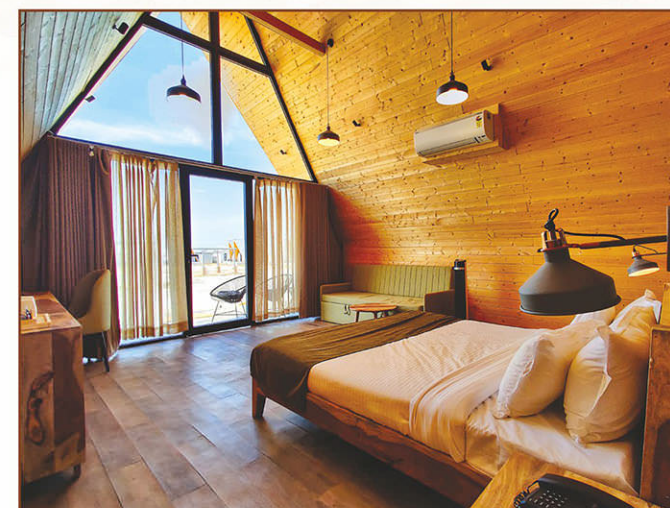
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A VERDANT JOURNEY through India's Forest Heartlands

INDIA'S 11 STATES WITH THE LARGEST FOREST COVER

By DUSHYANTH GOSWAMY, Staff Writer

India is a land of continental proportions, stretching from the soaring Himalayas to the sun-drenched coasts. Within this vast expanse lies one of the nation's most precious resources – its forests. Indian forests are a kaleidoscope of natural wonders and cultural narratives woven over millennia. Let us embark on a visual odyssey through ten Indian states that collectively form the backbone of India's forest cover, each a unique tapestry woven with ancient trees, diverse ecosystems, and the stories of communities inextricably linked to these verdant realms.



GREAT INDIAN RHINO in its Habitat

THE EMERALD GIANTS

MADHYA PRADESH

TIGER TERRITORY

A REALM OF SAL FORESTS & GHOSTLY TREES

We begin our journey through the verdant heart of India, Madhya Pradesh – a state that reigns supreme with a staggering 77,493 square kilometres of forest area, larger than many countries. These vast, emerald expanses are the domain of the magnificent Bengal tiger, earning Madhya Pradesh the apt epithet, "Land of the Tigers."

From the dry deciduous teak forests of Sagar to the moist sal woodlands of Amarkantak, this state hosts an incredible range of habitats, each with its unique tapestry of flora and fauna. The sal forests, in particular, are renowned for their productivity, yielding some of the world's finest timber.

Amidst these lush canopies, an air of mystery pervades, courtesy of the elusive Ghost Tree. This enigmatic species, with its pale bark and twisted branches, adds an ethereal charm to the vibrant ecosystem. Madhya Pradesh's forests are a true treasure trove, a Living Museum that chronicles the rich biodiversity of the Indian subcontinent.

FUN FACTS

Kanha National Park, in Madhya Pradesh, is famous for its Barasingha deer, with majestic antlers that can reach up to 11 points!

The Sal forests of Madhya Pradesh are among the most productive in the world for quality timber.

The state has over 11,000 species of plants, including the rare Ghost Tree.

Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh

THE EMERALD GIANTS

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

UNTAMED EDEN

WHERE BIODIVERSITY THRIVES IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, Arunachal Pradesh stands as a verdant haven, its untamed forests forming part of a global biodiversity hotspot teeming with unique ecosystems. With a staggering 83,743 square kilometres cloaked in lush greenery, this northeastern state boasts a wilderness that blankets the mountains, valleys, and rivers in an untrammelled tapestry of nature's bounty.

Here, the eastern fringes of the Himalayas converge with the rain forests of Southeast Asia, creating a biodiverse paradise that spans mighty conifer forests, subtropical jungles, and deep gorges harbouring rich indigenous knowledge systems. The Namdapha National Park, the largest protected area in the region, serves as a sanctuary for countless species, safeguarding the intricate web of life that thrives within its boundaries.

From the towering conifers that cloak the mountain slopes to the vibrant orchids that adorn the forest floors, Arunachal Pradesh's wilderness beckons explorers and nature enthusiasts alike. Each step into this untamed realm promises to unveil new wonders, from the elusive clouded leopard slinking through the undergrowth to the melodious calls of the Satyr Tragopan echoing through the misty valleys. Truly, this is a land where nature reigns supreme, a living museum that chronicles the rich biodiversity of the eastern Himalayas.

QUICK FACTS

With over 82% forest cover, it has the highest forest area ratio of any Indian state.

Its forests are part of the Eastern Himalayan global biodiversity hotspot.

The Namdapha National Park is the largest protected area in the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots.

THE EMERALD GIANTS

CHHATTISGARH

KANGER VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

TRIBAL SANCTUARY

WHERE COMMUNITIES AND BUTTERFLIES THRIVE

As we journey inwards, the dense jungles of Chhattisgarh unfurl before us, revealing a verdant expanse of 59,772 square kilometres that shelters both incredible biodiversity and ancient tribal communities. These indigenous peoples, like the Baiga, Gond, and Abhuj, have lived in harmony with the forest for centuries, their lives and livelihoods flowing in rhythm with the ebb and flow of nature's cycles.

Within the sylvan landscapes of Chhattisgarh, the Bastar forests stand as a testament to this rich cultural connection, home to tribes such as the Abujhmaria, Pahari Korwa, and Hill Maria. Over 44% of the state's population depends on these forests for their livelihood, be it for food, fuel, shelter, or spirituality. Adding to the beauty of these verdant realms are the dazzling displays of over 200 butterfly species that flutter through the Kanger Ghati National Park, their vibrant wings painting the air with a kaleidoscope of colours.

From the ancient tribal cultures that have woven their lives into the very fabric of the forests to the myriad species that call these lush realms home, this is a land where nature and humanity coexist in a delicate, yet enduring, harmony – a harmony that invites us to pause, appreciate, and ultimately, safeguard for generations to come.

QUICK FACTS

- The Bastar forests are home to tribes like the Abujhmaria, Pahari Korwa and Hill Maria.
- Over 44% of the state's population depends directly on forests for sustenance.
- Kanger Ghati National Park has over 200 species of butterflies.

PERCENTAGE CHAMPIONS

MIZORAM

BAMBOO PARADISE

THE BASKET WEAVER OF INDIA WITH A RODENT SURPRISE

While the sheer expanse of India's forests of the emerald giants is undoubtedly impressive, some states have taken the lead in ensuring a high percentage of their land remains under a sylvan canopy. In the northeastern hills, Mizoram stands as a verdant bastion, with an astounding 84.53% of its land cloaked in lush greenery.

As one wanders through Mizoram's hills and valleys, the air is filled with the scent of bamboo and the gentle whisper of leaves rustling in the breeze. Aptly nicknamed the "bamboo basket" of India, Mizoram lives up to its name, with bamboo forming a significant portion of its forest cover. This natural resource is not just a source of livelihood for skilled craftspeople but also holds an interesting ecological story.

Mizoram's forests, however, are more than just bamboo groves. Within the state's boundaries lies the Dampa Tiger Reserve, a verdant sanctuary that shelters a diverse array of wildlife, including majestic elephants, elusive tigers, the rare golden langur, and over 200 species of birds, each with its own melodious call adding to the symphony of the forest.

Mizoram's commitment to conservation is not merely a matter of statistics but rather a reflection of the deep-rooted traditions of its indigenous communities. For generations, these peoples have revered and sustainably utilized the forest's resources, from food to medicine, weaving their lives into the very fabric of the natural world around them. It is a land where nature holds sway, where the rhythms of the forest dictate the cadence of life.

QUICK FACTS With bamboo forming a third of its forest cover, it is the true "bamboo basket" of India.

The Palak bamboo flowering triggered a worldwide rodent crisis in 2008.

Its Dampa Tiger Reserve has elephants, tigers, golden langurs and over 200 bird species.

Aizawl, Mizoram

PERCENTAGE CHAMPIONS

MEGHALAYA

QUICK FACTS

With bamboo forming a third of its forest cover, it is the true "bamboo basket" of India.

The Palak bamboo flowering triggered a worldwide rodent crisis in 2008.

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COMMUNITY FORESTS AND LIVING BRIDGES

A CELEBRATION OF NATURE'S INGENUITY

Nestled in the northeastern hills, Meghalaya stands as another lush defender, with an impressive 80% of its land cloaked in lush forest cover. However, this state is more than just a statistical marvel – it is a living example of the harmony between humanity and nature.

Meghalaya is one of the few states in India that empowers its indigenous communities to manage their forests, fostering a deep connection with the natural world and promoting sustainable practices that have been passed down through generations. This unique approach has given rise to a tapestry of wonders that are woven into the very fabric of Meghalaya's forests.

One such marvel is the living root bridges, a testament to human ingenuity and our ability to work in harmony with nature. These natural suspended pathways, constructed from the living roots of rubber trees, are a truly awe-inspiring sight, spanning gorges and streams with an organic grace that defies the conventions of traditional construction.

As one wanders through Meghalaya's forests, the air is thick with the heady scent of orchids, for this state boasts the highest recorded number of orchid species in India, with over 300 varieties adding their vivid hues to the vibrant tapestry of the woodlands. From the delicate blooms of the Lady's Slipper to the exotic patterns of the Dendrobium, these floral gems are a sight to behold, drawing visitors from around the world to marvel at their beauty.

As one explores the winding trails and hidden glades of Meghalaya, it becomes apparent that this is a land where nature and humanity have forged a delicate, yet enduring, harmony. This harmony serves as a beacon of hope for preserving our planet's precious ecological treasures.

PERCENTAGE CHAMPIONS

NAGALAND

VILLAGE FORESTS
AND SOARING FALCONS

A CULTURE STEEPED IN SUSTAINABILITY

Nagaland – another state in the arms of northeastern hills, stands as a shining example of the deep-rooted cultural connection that indigenous communities share with the natural world. With an impressive 75.33% of its land cloaked in luxuriant forest cover.

In Nagaland, the forests are more than mere environmental assets – they are repositories of indigenous knowledge systems that have been passed down through generations, weaving a rich tapestry of traditions and practices that are inextricably linked to the rhythms of nature. This reverence for the natural world is reflected in the exquisite handicrafts crafted by skilled artisans, who deftly transform bamboo, cane, and wood into intricate works of art, each piece a celebration of the symbiotic relationship between humankind and the forest.

Nagaland's communities have taken a commendable step towards sustainable forest management by preserving vast stretches as Village Forests, a decision that not only safeguards these fertile realms but also empowers local populations to be the custodians of their natural heritage. This grassroots approach to conservation has yielded remarkable results, with the forests of Nagaland serving as a crucial stopover on the Amur falcon's incredible migration journey – the longest migration route undertaken by any raptor species.

Here, the whispers of the wind carry the echoes of generations past, reminding us that the preservation of these natural wonders is not merely an environmental imperative, but a sacred duty that honours the traditions and wisdom of those who came before us.

As we journey through these verdant realms, we are reminded that the path to a sustainable future lies not in dominance over the environment, but in forging a symbiotic partnership with it – a partnership that has been the guiding principle of Nagaland's indigenous communities for centuries.



QUICK FACTS

- Communities have preserved vast stretches as Village Forests by following sustainable use.
- Its forests inspired handicrafts like bamboo baskets, cane furniture and wood carvings.
- The Amur falcon's longest migration route passes through Nagaland's forests.

PRESSURES V/S PROTECTION

ODISHA

COASTLINE GUARDIAN

MANGROVES SHIELD COMMUNITIES AND RARE SPECIES

Odisha's natural tapestry unfurls in a symphony of wonders, its 51,700 square kilometres displaying nature's artistry in all its splendour. From the lush sal forests that stretch as far as the eye can see to the mangrove guardians that shield the coast, this eastern state offers a kaleidoscope of natural marvels.

The coastal forests of Odisha play a vital role as a natural shield, protecting communities from the fury of cyclones and tidal waves. These resilient mangrove ecosystems are home to the formidable saltwater crocodile and a variety of other exotic species that have adapted to thrive in this unique habitat. Bhitarkanika National Park stands out as a jewel in Odisha's crown, boasting a mangrove wonderland teeming with life.

Inland, Similipal National Park represents one of the last remaining fragments of the vast Chhotanagpur plateau forests, a green territory that once blanketed the entire region. Here, ancient trees tower overhead, their branches forming a canopy that filters the sunlight, creating a dappled forest floor where a rich tapestry of flora and fauna thrives.

While Odisha's natural wonders are a sight to behold, the state's efforts to restore and regenerate its forests are equally inspiring. From cracking down on timber mafias to promoting sustainable livelihoods for local communities, Odisha has intensified its efforts to protect these verdant realms. However, much more is needed through coordinated landscape-level initiatives that transcend state boundaries and bring together diverse stakeholders in a unified effort to safeguard India's natural heritage.

Across the nation, states like Odisha are leading the charge, recognising the vital role that forests play in sustaining life, mitigating climate change, and preserving the rich cultural tapestry woven by indigenous communities over millennia.

QUICK FACTS

Its coastal mangroves act as a bioshield, protecting communities from cyclones and tidal waves.

Bhitarkanika is home to the salt-water crocodile and other exotic mangrove species.

Similipal is one of the few remaining chunks of the vast Chhotanagpur plateau forests.

PRESSURES V/S PROTECTION

MAHARASHTRA

QUICK FACTS

The Western Ghats has been labelled one of the "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity in the world.

Forests like Melghat were inspirations for Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book stories.

Maharashtra has over 3,000 unique varieties of mangoes growing in its forests.

Sahyadri Range, Western Ghat, Matheran, Maharashtra

WESTERN GHATS JEWEL

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT AND INSPIRATION FOR THE JUNGLE BOOK

Stretching across the western expanse of India, Maharashtra's forests stand as a green tapestry, woven with the threads of biodiversity and cultural heritage. Spanning 61,593 square kilometres, these terrains encompass the iconic Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has captured the imaginations of explorers, naturalists, and literary luminaries alike.

It was within the mist-shrouded folds of these ancient hills that Rudyard Kipling found inspiration for his legendary Jungle Book stories, his pen breathing life into the vibrant tapestry of creatures that call this region home. As one traverses the winding trails that snake through the Western Ghats, nature's magnificence unfolds with each twist and turn, revealing a panorama of verdant slopes, cascading waterfalls, and a kaleidoscope of flora and fauna that have thrived in this sanctuary for ages.

Yet, Maharashtra's forests are not merely a haven for wildlife – they are a living demonstration of the state's rich cultural heritage and agricultural prowess. Amidst the towering trees and lush undergrowth, one can find an incredible variety of over 3,000 unique mango cultivars, each bearing evidence of the horticultural expertise and ingenuity of Maharashtra's people.

Yet, these emerald ecologies face mounting pressures from a myriad of forces – deforestation for agriculture, mining, and development, unsustainable forestry practices, forest fires, and the ever-looming impacts of climate change. In the face of these challenges, Maharashtra has emerged as a champion of community-based conservation, pioneering joint forest management initiatives that empower local populations to become custodians of their natural heritage.

Through these grassroots efforts, Maharashtra's forests are not merely preserved but revitalized, their resilience strengthened by the collective commitment of a people who understand that the preservation of these ecological treasures is not merely an environmental imperative but a sacred duty – a duty to safeguard the rich tapestry of life that has flourished within these ancient woodlands for generations beyond count.

PRESSURES V/S PROTECTION

ANDHRA PRADESH & TELANGANA

QUICK FACTS

Is a pioneer in launching ambitious efforts like the "Re-Green AP" mission.

Its forests near Sriharikota host the rocket launch station of ISRO.

The Red Sanders is a rare endemic tree species found only in this region.

kondaviti kota, Andhra pradeśh

REFORESTATION CHAMPION

LAUNCHING GREEN INITIATIVES AND HOME TO ROCKETS

While Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were once a unified state, the intricacies of their shared forest cover during that period remain shrouded in the mists of time. Historical data and forest surveys, typically conducted at the state level, may not have captured the nuances of their combined verdant expanse. Yet, as these states forge their individual paths, they offer a glimpse into the collective power of environmental stewardship.

In Andhra Pradesh, the "Re-Green AP" mission has emerged as a driving force, an ambitious initiative that showcases the state's unwavering commitment to environmental restoration. Through this pioneering endeavour, Andhra Pradesh is not merely adding to its green expanse but actively working to improve the ecological balance, nurturing a harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world.

According to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021, Andhra Pradesh stands out as the state with the most significant increase in forest cover, adding an impressive 647 square kilometres to its emerald tapestry. Telangana, too, has made a remarkable contribution, with a growth of 632 square kilometres in its verdant realms over the past two years.

Interestingly, amidst the lush forests near Sriharikota, one finds a juxtaposition of nature and technology – the rocket launch station of ISRO, a testament to India's prowess in space exploration, nestled within the embrace of these ancient woodlands. It is a striking reminder that progress and environmental stewardship need not be mutually exclusive, but rather can coexist in a symbiotic relationship that enriches both realms.

The states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana shine as symbols of unity and collaboration in the battle against deforestation. As these states continue to chart their individual courses, the potential for future collaboration looms on the horizon, for they share the Eastern Ghats mountain range – a vital ecological zone that transcends political boundaries. By joining forces in the conservation efforts within this shared ecosystem, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana can create a larger, more robust protected area, a sanctuary where biodiversity can thrive and the delicate balance of nature can be preserved for generations to come. ■

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Ram Navami Celebration Outside India

By JAYESH PUROHIT, Staff Writer


India witnessed a cultural renaissance with the consecration of Lord Ram's idol at Ayodhya temple. The entire nation has experienced a religious euphoria as devotees of Lord Ram wholeheartedly welcome the seventh Avatar of Lord Vishnu. Since India is majorly populated by the Hindu community, such celebrations and special occasions like the inauguration of Ram Mandir are common sights during the year. However, given the global appeal of Lord Ram and the popularity of Ramayan - the first poetry in world literature - the Hindu god enjoys a huge fan following outside India.

Apart from Hindus, other communities also celebrate and worship Lord Ram, especially on Ram Navami. This year, Ram Navami - the birth date of Lord Ram - falls on April 17, 2024 Wed.

Ram Navami is not confined to India; it is celebrated in regions worldwide where significant Hindu communities reside. Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka embrace this auspicious occasion with unique religious ceremonies and vibrant events.

In Nepal, Ram Navami is called Ram Nawami and is observed on the ninth day of the Chaitra month. Recognized as a public holiday, the festival witnesses a nationwide closure of numerous businesses and schools. The focal point of the celebration revolves around special puja ceremonies conducted at temples, accompanied by colourful parades and processions in select cities.

In Bangladesh, Ram Navami, also known as Ramsararat, occurs on the first day of the Baishakh month. Though not a public holiday, many Hindus engage in devout observances either at temples or in the sanctity of their homes. Community festivities, with feasts, musical performances, and traditional dances, also grace certain regions.

Sri Lanka honours Ram Navami as Vaikunda Ekadasi, marking it on the eleventh day of the Margazhi month as per the Tamil calendar. This day heralds the commencement of the ten-day Margazhi Utsavam festival. During this joyous period, devotees throng temples to offer prayers to Lord Vishnu and his avatars, including Ram. Vaikunda Ekadasi night is particularly significant, featuring special pujas where devotees engage in nocturnal vigils, offering fervent prayers throughout the night. 



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TOURISM TIDINGS

Indian entrepreneurs invited by Bhutanese PM to explore opportunities in tourism

Bhutan's Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay, seeks to enhance economic ties with India by inviting Indian entrepreneurs to invest in Bhutan's tourism sector. During his recent visit to India, Tobgay emphasized the strong bilateral relations and the potential for collaboration, especially in tourism.

At an event in New Delhi, Tobgay encouraged Indian businesses to consider ventures in hospitality industry of Bhutan, known for its natural beauty. He highlighted the ease of travel for



Source: Bhaven Jani / Shutterstock.com

Bhutanese PM invites Indian entrepreneurs to invest in tourism

Indian tourists, who only need a permit costing around INR 1200 to enter Bhutan.

Tobgay discussed plans for improved infrastructure to attract 150,000 Indian tourists in 2024, including a new railway connecting Assam to Bhutan and enhanced air connectivity between the two countries. His visit to India reinforced the close ties and mutual warmth shared between the nations.

(Source: Outlook Traveller)

Growing Interest in Sustainable Tourism Among Indian Travelers



A recent survey by Agoda highlights a rising trend in sustainable travel among Indian tourists, with 87% prioritizing sustainability in their travel plans. The survey, which spanned ten Asian

markets, reveals that nearly 80% of respondents are eager to embrace eco-friendly travel practices. However, 22% still overlook sustainability considerations. Japan ranks lowest at 45%.

Financial incentives, such as discounts and eco-packages, are significant in motivating travellers towards sustainable choices, with 45% of respondents citing this as a key factor. Notably, supporting local communities and conservation projects emerged as top priorities for Indian travellers, aligning with sentiments across Asia.

India's sustainable tourism market, valued at \$26.01 million in 2022, is projected to reach \$151.88 million by 2032, showcasing a compound annual growth rate of 19.3%. As the tourism industry aims for substantial revenue growth, adopting sustainable practices becomes crucial to mitigate environmental impact and enhance India's appeal as a responsible travel destination.

(Source: Business Standard)

Bilateral disputes cause a decline in the number of Indian tourists in Maldives

Lakshadweep emerges as new travel hub for Indians

The 33% decline in Indian tourists visiting the Maldives amid a diplomatic row has reshaped the tourism world in the region. Once the top source market for Maldives tourism, India ranks sixth, with over 200,000 annual visitors from 2021 to 2023.

The strained relations between the two nations escalated when President Mohamed Muizzu, known for his pro-China stance, demanded the withdrawal of Indian troops, leading to a significant drop in Indian tourist arrivals. Meanwhile, China has emerged as the top market with over 54,000 arrivals, reflecting the deepening ties between China and the Maldives.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Lakshadweep has sparked a wave of tourism development initiatives in India's smallest territory. Emphasizing sustainable tourism, Shri Modi supports



Prime Minister Modi on the beach in Lakshadweep during a recent visit.

Source: ANI / Courtesy of Ministry of Tourism

plans to develop luxury resorts, beaches, and a new airport on Minicoy Island to boost tourism and surveillance capabilities.

The government-led initiative aims to balance tourism growth with minimal

environmental impact. To this end, it has partnered with Praveg Limited, a renowned and eco-responsible luxury resort developer, to introduce luxury accommodations and tented resorts.

(Source: Times of India)

Kashmir's Innovative 'Formula' to Boost Tourism

Kashmir recently hosted its first Formula-4 car racing event along the scenic Dal Lake, drawing admiration from Prime Minister Modi. The event showcased sleek racing cars speeding along Boulevard Road against the backdrop of Zabarwan Hills, symbolizing Kashmir's modernity and progress. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri, hailed the event as a sign of the region's advancement, with expectations that such initiatives will elevate Kashmir's profile, attract tourists, and stimulate the local economy.

Director of Tourism Kashmir, Raja Yaqoob, highlighted the area's growing appeal as an adventure tourism destination, with plans to introduce



more adrenaline-fueled activities. The success of this inaugural event sets a precedent for Kashmir's ability to host impactful events that contribute to social and economic progress, showcasing the region's potential as a hub for adventure and tourism. Deputy

Director of Tourism Deeba Khalid emphasized the event's historic significance in drawing global attention to Kashmir and enhancing its tourism prospects, marking a significant moment for the Valley's sporting site. (Source: Outlook Traveller)

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