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Six Underrated Indian Destinations

WORLD TOURISM DAY



WORLD TOURISM & OTHER TRAVEL STORIES

Welcome to the September issue of Tourism One, where we celebrate India's diversity, beauty, and cultural richness. As we gear up for World Tourism Day this month, our spotlight shines on lesser-known marvels nationwide, offering a fresh perspective for those seeking something off the beaten path.

In our lead article, Six Underrated Indian Destinations, we take you beyond the popular tourist circuits into hidden gems that promise unique experiences. From serene coastal towns to enchanting hill stations, these destinations will inspire your next adventure.

India's pristine landscapes are often overlooked, and our feature, Explore The Pristine Beauty of India's Cleanest Destinations, is a tribute to places that have maintained their natural beauty and set benchmarks for cleanliness and sustainability.

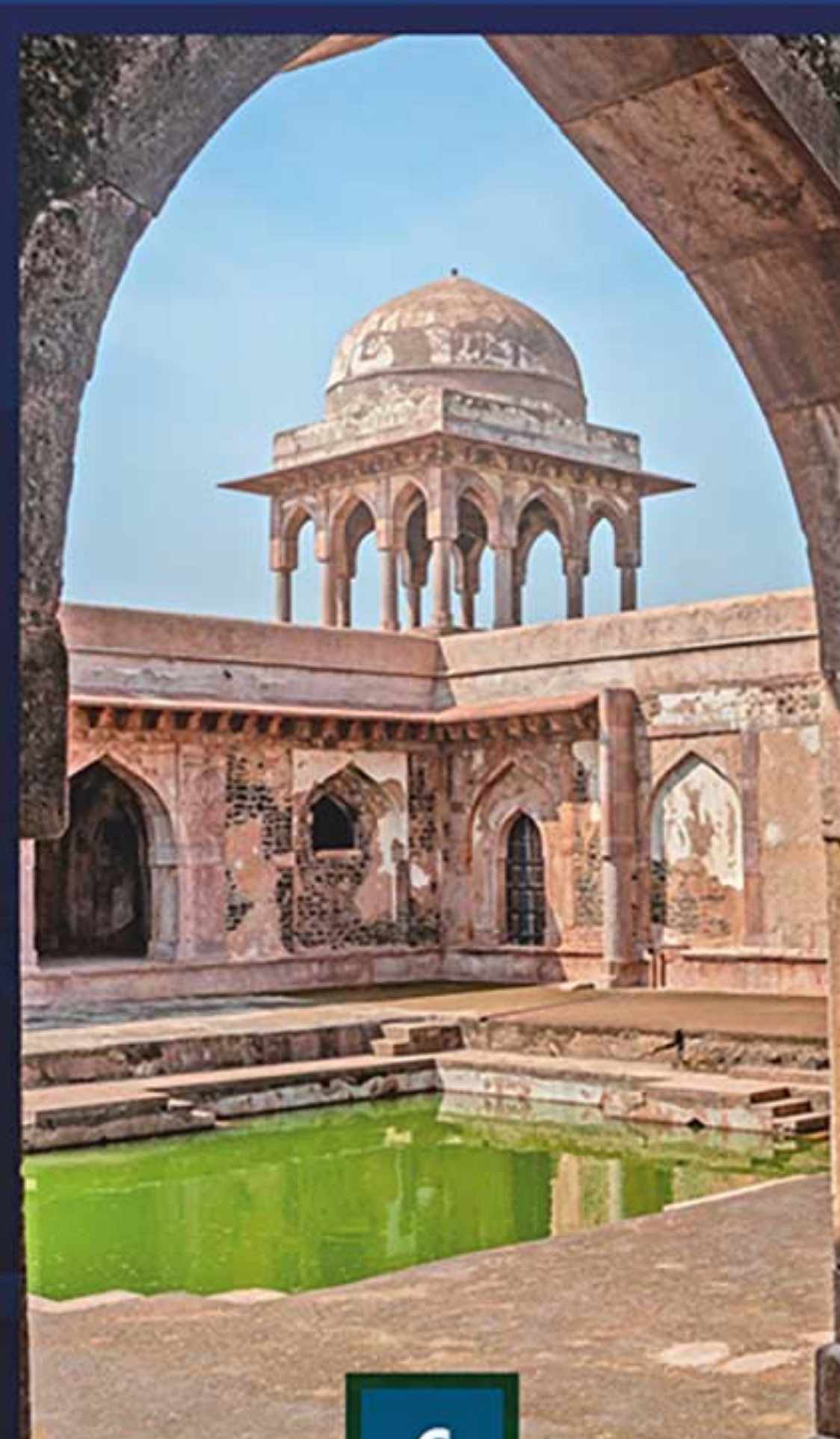
Culture and tradition are the heart of travel, and in Unbelievable and Fascinating Indian Customs and Traditions, we unravel some of India's most intriguing cultural practices. These customs offer travellers a deeper connection to the land's heritage.

India's legacy of architectural and engineering brilliance is highlighted in Engineering Marvels of India, a journey through the awe-inspiring creations that showcase the country's innovation and technical prowess.

Finally, our Himalaya Divas Photostory captures the majestic beauty of the Himalayas in an immersive visual experience, paying homage to the splendour of one of the world's most breathtaking mountain ranges.

We hope this issue fuels your wanderlust and opens doors to new discoveries. Happy reading and happy travelling! ■

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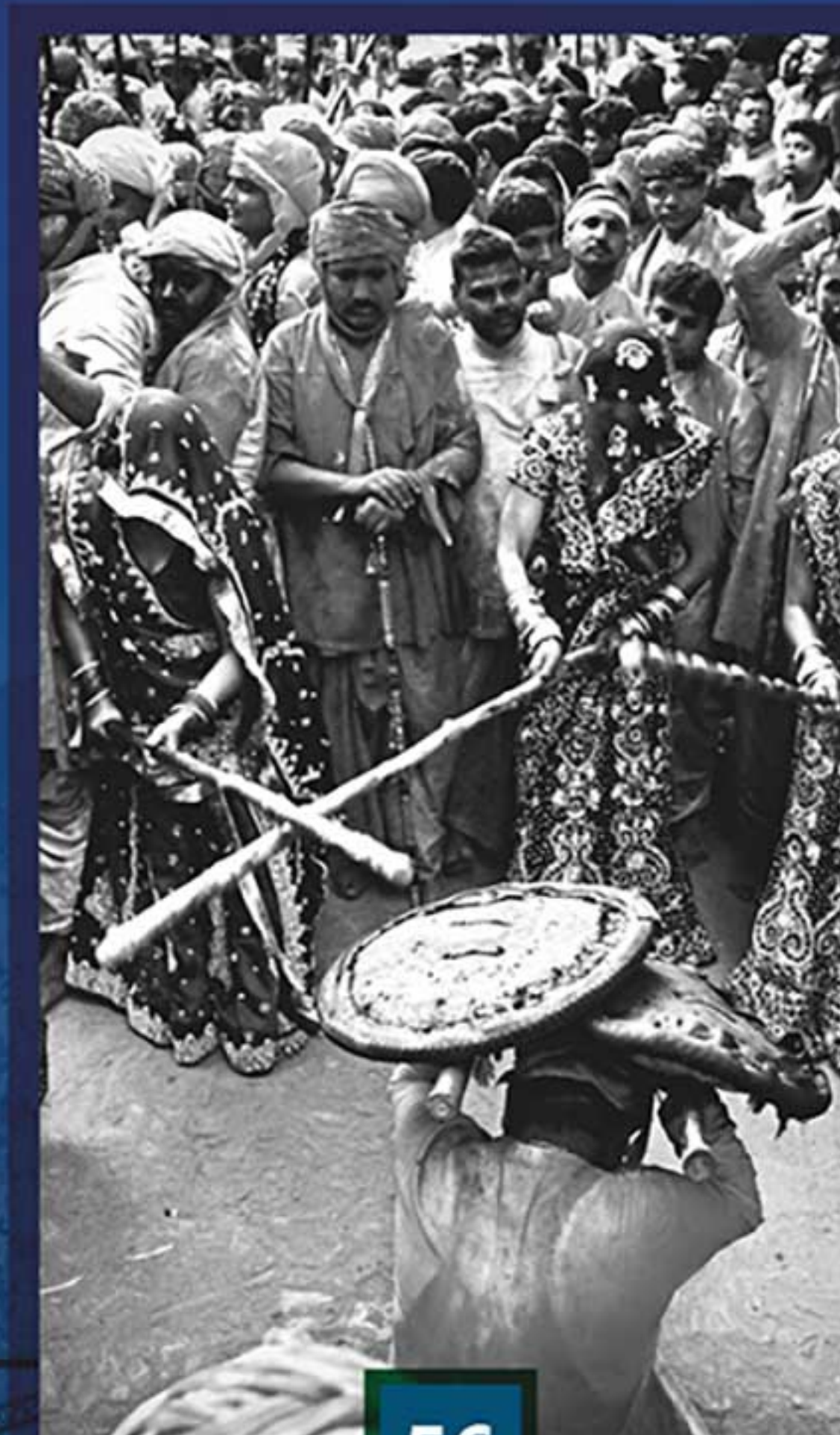
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**EMBRACING
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Six Underrated Indian Destinations to Add to Your Bucket List this **WORLD TOURISM DAY**

By MEHAK SIDDIQUI

Established by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 1980, World Tourism Day is dedicated to fostering awareness about the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political, and economic value worldwide. This year, why not use it as an excuse to explore some hidden gems that India has to offer? While popular destinations like Jaipur, Goa, and Kerala often steal the spotlight, the country is brimming with lesser-known treasures waiting to be discovered. These underrated destinations not only offer unique experiences but also provide a chance to connect more deeply with India's diverse cultural and natural landscapes. I've picked six of my favorite ones that appeal to different types of travelers. So go ahead and pick the one that best suits your personality, or better still, explore them all!

MANDU

Madhya Pradesh for the romantic souls



Nestled in the heart of Madhya Pradesh and often overshadowed by more popular tourist destinations, Mandu is a treasure trove of historic Indo-Islamic architecture. But what really adds to this ancient city's charm is the romantic tale of Rani Roopmati and Baz Bahadur. Legend has it that Baz Bahadur first heard Roopmati singing by the banks of the Narmada River and was instantly captivated by her voice and beauty.

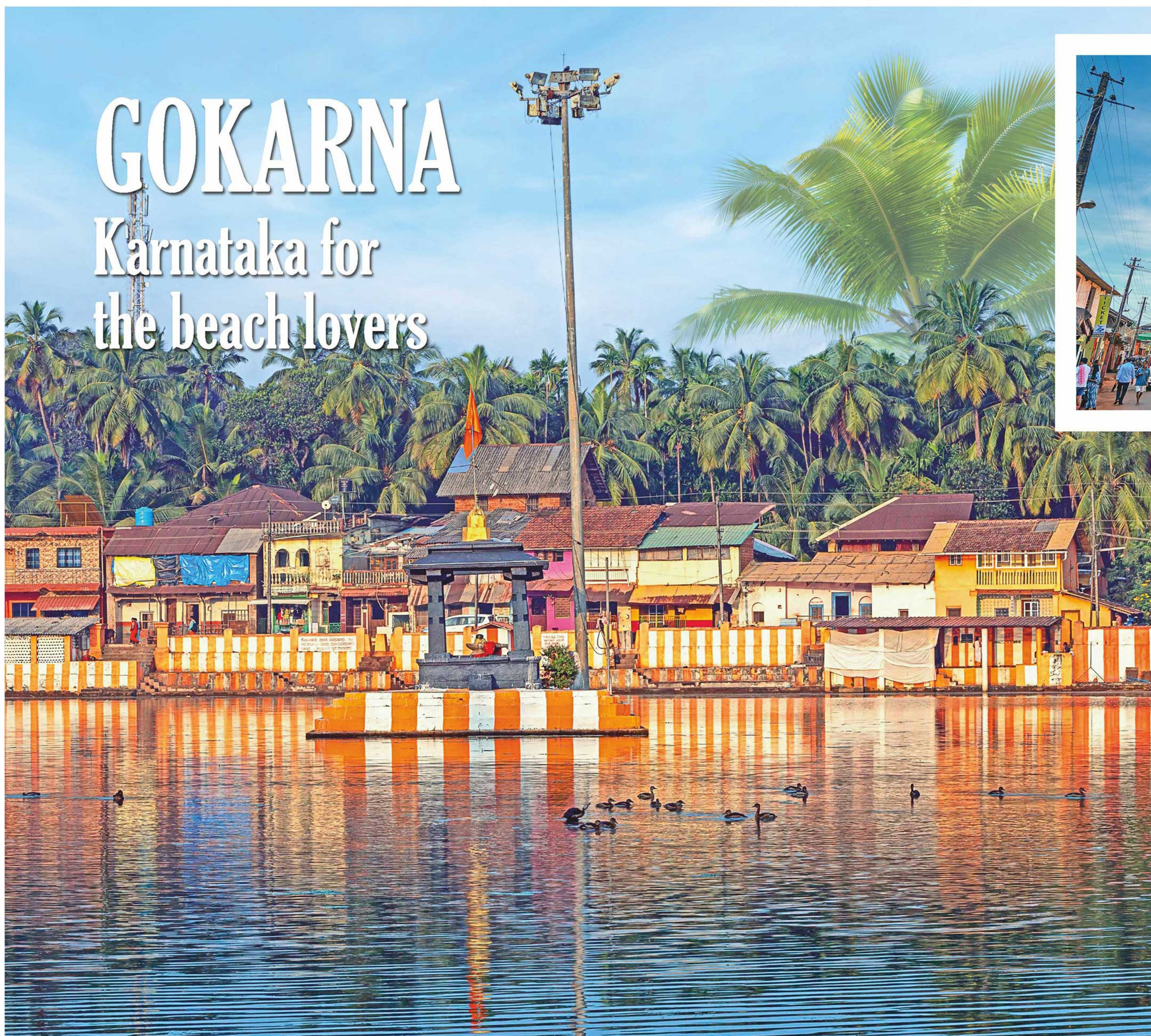
Their resulting love story was marked by devotion and mutual respect, but it was also doomed from the start due to the political tensions of the time. Baz Bahadur's forces were no match for the mighty Mughal army, and he was defeated when Akbar conquered Mandu. Faced with the impending capture, Rani Roopmati chose to end her life rather than fall into the hands of the conquerors. She consumed poison, dying for her love and her principles. Baz Bahadur fled, but his life was never the same without her. This poignant love story filled with passion and tragedy is deeply intertwined with the city's history, making Mandu an ideal destination for romantic souls. The serene ambiance, combined with the poignant echoes of a bygone era, creates a perfect setting for couples seeking a blend of history, architecture, and romance.

Baz Bahadur's love for Rani Roopmati moved him to build a palace for her, overlooking the river she adored. This monument of romance – Rani Roopmati's Pavilion – still stands today, perched on the edge of a cliff, providing panoramic views of the Narmada River, which served as a source of inspiration for Rani Roopmati's poetic verses. It's the perfect spot for a romantic photo shoot with your special someone.

You can also explore Baz Bahadur's Palace, which is another highlight that reflects the region's rich cultural heritage. And the most iconic of Mandu's structures is the Jahaz Mahal, a stunning palace that appears to float between two artificial lakes, offering a unique spectacle of ancient engineering and beauty.

GOKARNA

Karnataka for the beach lovers



Unlike the crowded beaches of Goa, the serene beach town of Gokarna boasts shores that are relatively untouched, providing a peaceful retreat for those looking to unwind by the sea. Om Beach, named for its distinctive shape resembling the sacred 'Om' symbol, is one of Gokarna's most iconic spots. Its crescent-shaped coastline, flanked by rocky outcrops, offers stunning views and a serene atmosphere. Kudle Beach, another hidden treasure, is a long stretch of golden sand bordered by gentle waves, perfect for leisurely walks and watching the sunset.

Beyond its beaches, Gokarna is steeped in spiritual heritage, with the Mahabaleshwar Temple at its heart. This ancient temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, draws pilgrims from across the country, adding a deeply spiritual dimension to the town. The temple's Dravidian architecture and the town's sacred vibe make Gokarna a perfect destination for those seeking both spiritual solace and coastal charm, offering a unique experience that blends relaxation with reverence.



SPITI VALLEY

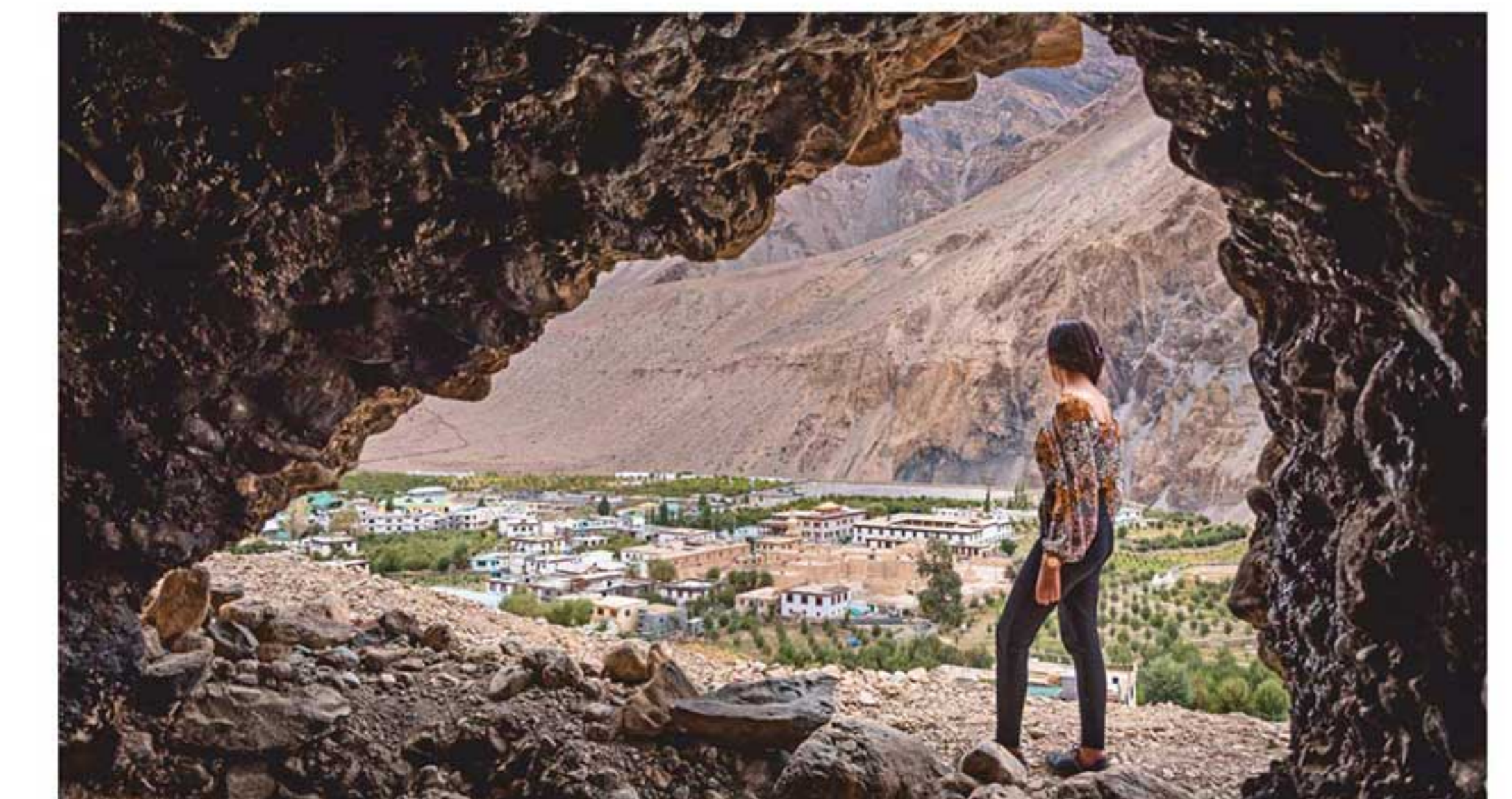
Himachal Pradesh for the adventure seekers



Spiti Valley, tucked away up north in Himachal Pradesh, is a hidden paradise for adventure seekers craving an off-the-beaten-path experience. This remote, high-altitude desert valley, often overshadowed by its more famous neighbor, Ladakh, offers rugged landscapes, ancient monasteries, and a unique cultural experience that is unlike any other.

Surrounded by the towering Himalayas, Spiti is a haven for trekkers and thrill-seekers. The Pin Parvati and Parang La treks challenge even the most seasoned hikers, meandering through breathtakingly stark terrains and remote villages. Spiti's winding roads, including the treacherous Kaza-Kunzum-La pass, provide an adrenaline rush for motorcyclists and road trip enthusiasts.

Beyond its physical challenges, Spiti Valley offers the chance to immerse oneself in the tranquil beauty of ancient monasteries like Key Monastery and Tabo Monastery, some of the oldest in the world. The valley's pristine rivers, clear skies, and sparsely populated villages offer a sense of isolation and peace, making it an ideal destination for those seeking both adventure and solitude in one of India's most stunning, yet lesser-known, regions.



MAJULI

Assam for the nature lovers



Majuli, the world's largest river island, nestled in the Brahmaputra River in Assam, is a remarkable yet underrated destination for nature lovers. Its unique status as a river island gives it a distinct charm, offering a serene escape surrounded by the tranquil waters of the Brahmaputra. The island's ever-changing landscape, shaped by the river's flow, is a testament to the dynamic interplay between nature and human life.

Majuli is a haven for biodiversity, home to a rich variety of flora and fauna. The island's wetlands and forests are crucial habitats for numerous bird species, making it a paradise for birdwatchers. The local communities are deeply committed to preserving this fragile environment, with ongoing efforts to combat the effects of erosion and maintain the island's ecological balance.

In addition to its natural beauty, Majuli is a cultural hub, renowned for its Vaishnavite monasteries, known as Satras. These spiritual centers, established by the 16th-century saint Srimanta Sankardeva, are the heart of Majuli's cultural life. The island's vibrant festivals, particularly Rasleela, attract visitors with their colorful performances and deep spiritual significance. Majuli's blend of natural splendor, rich biodiversity, and cultural heritage makes it a must-visit destination for those seeking an authentic and peaceful experience.



HAMPI

Karnataka for the history buffs



Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Karnataka, is a must-visit for history buffs, offering a captivating journey into the past of the Vijayanagara Empire, one of India's most powerful and prosperous empires during the 14th to 16th centuries. This ancient city, once the capital of the empire, is now a vast open-air museum of ruins, temples, and stone structures, each telling a story of a bygone era.

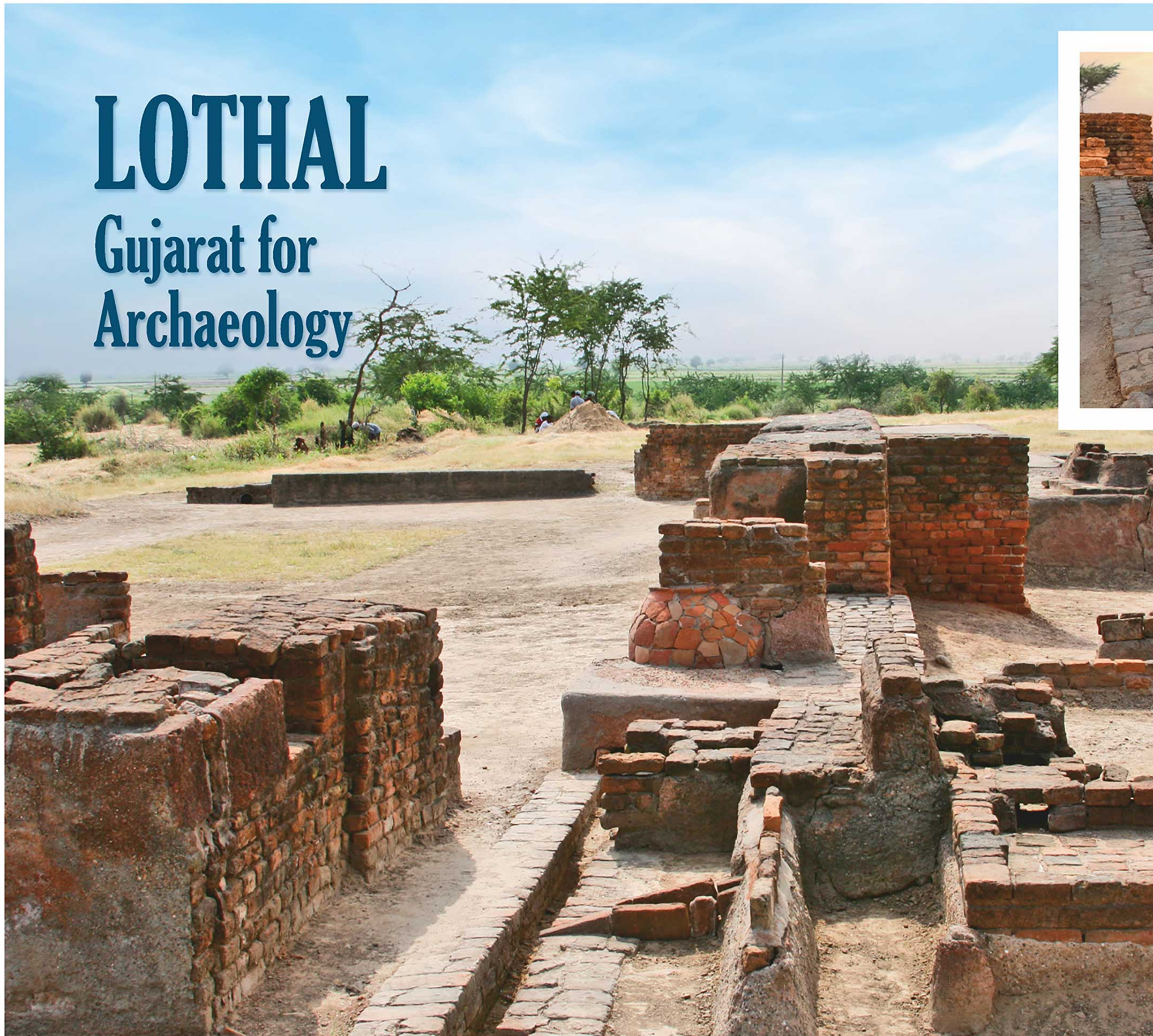
The iconic Virupaksha Temple, still active as a place of worship, is a testament to Hampi's spiritual significance and architectural brilliance. Equally awe-inspiring is the Vittala Temple, renowned for its stone chariot and musical pillars that produce melodious sounds when tapped. These magnificent structures showcase the advanced craftsmanship and artistic sensibilities of the Vijayanagara period.


Beyond the well-known sites, Hampi is surrounded by lesser-explored gems like Aneundi, an ancient village believed to be older than Hampi itself, offering more insights into the region's rich history. Nearby, the Daroji Bear Sanctuary provides a unique opportunity to witness sloth bears in their natural habitat, adding a touch of wildlife exploration to the historical experience. Hampi's combination of stunning ruins, lesser-known spots, and natural beauty makes it an underrated destination that should be on every history lover's itinerary.



LOTHAL

Gujarat for Archaeology



A aficionados Lothal is one of India's most significant archaeological sites, yet it remains an understated destination compared to other historical landmarks. Located in Gujarat, Lothal was once a thriving port city around 4,500 years ago, making it a vital centre for trade and maritime activities. Despite its historical importance, Lothal doesn't often top travel itineraries, overshadowed by more popular destinations like Rajasthan's forts or Kerala's backwaters. This gives Lothal an air of exclusivity, perfect for travellers seeking off-the-beaten-path historical treasures. So put on your explorers' shoes and head to Lothal to step back into time. This ancient city of the Indus Valley civilisation has also been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and awaits recognition. 



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EXPLORE THE PRISTINE BEAUTY OF INDIA'S CLEANEST DESTINATIONS

By UMANG SHARMA, Staff Writer

With World Ozone Day and World Environment Day approaching, now is the ideal time to discover India's eco-friendly and vibrant destinations. These places prioritize sustainability, offering a chance for you to embrace a healthier lifestyle while contributing to a cleaner Earth. Delve into the top cities recognized for their cleanliness in the Swachh Survekshan survey and uncover the breathtaking cleanest beaches that have earned the prestigious Blue Flag status. Let's celebrate these environmental events and seek inspiration to foster a sustainable world for the generations to come.

CLEANEST CITIES IN INDIA

The Swachh Survekshan survey is a key part of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Its goal is to assess and improve sanitation and public health in India. This survey is important for recognizing and evaluating destinations for their efforts. The following cities have achieved high rankings due to their ongoing promise to hygiene.

INDORE MADHYA PRADESH

Indore has set a remarkable standard in urban cleanliness, becoming a model for other cities across India. The government has implemented a comprehensive waste elimination strategy that includes a robust door-to-door collection system, ensuring that waste is segregated at the source. Public awareness campaigns have played a pivotal role in changing the mindset of residents, encouraging them to participate actively in tidiness drives. The commitment to neatness is evident in its well-maintained parks and community areas, making it a clean and pleasant place to live and visit.

Attractions: Rajwada Palace, Lalbagh Palace, and local markets like Sarafa Bazaar.



SURAT GUJARAT

Surat has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past few years, evolving from a city grappling with waste disposal issues to one of the cleanest cities in India. The administration has prioritized effective waste segregation and disposal, implementing innovative solutions such as waste-to-energy plants that convert garbage into usable energy. Surat's citizens are actively engaged in cleanliness initiatives, and the local government regularly conducts sanitation drives to maintain high standards. It is known for its vibrant textile industry and bustling markets, which are kept impeccably clean.

Attractions: Surat Castle, Sarthana Nature Park, and the textile market.



NAVI MUMBAI MAHARASHTRA

Navi Mumbai stands out as a planned city that has successfully integrated urban development with environmental sustainability. Its infrastructure supports efficient waste reduction, including advanced recycling facilities and composting units that minimize landfill waste. With a focus on green spaces, Navi Mumbai boasts numerous parks and gardens, providing residents with ample opportunities for outdoor activities and promoting a healthier lifestyle. The government encourages public participation, which has fostered a sense of community responsibility among citizens.

Attractions: Belapur Fort, Kharghar Hills, and the Central Park.



VISAKHAPATNAM ANDHRA PRADESH

Visakhapatnam, often referred to as Vizag, is renowned for its breathtaking beaches, lush greenery, and commitment to sustainability. The city has successfully implemented waste segregation and composting programs, leading to a significant reduction in littering and improved garbage management. The local authorities have prioritized improving air quality by promoting the use of public transport and green vehicles. Visakhapatnam's combination of natural beauty and eco-friendly initiatives makes it a standout destination for environmentally conscious travelers.

Attractions: Ramakrishna Beach, Kailasagiri Hill Park, and the INS Kursura Submarine Museum.



BHOPAL MADHYA PRADESH

Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and sanitation. It has made significant strides in improving its practices through awareness campaigns and effective waste removal systems. Initiatives such as the installation of public toilets and regular cleanliness drives have contributed to Bhopal's high hygienic ranking. Its numerous lakes and parks are well-maintained, offering residents a serene environment to enjoy outdoor activities.

Attractions: Upper Lake, Taj-ul-Masajid, and the Bharat Bhavan.



VIJAYAWADA ANDHRA PRADESH

Vijayawada city has achieved a remarkable 5-star Garbage Free Rating and a Water+ tag, reflecting its commitment to sanitation and sustainable practices. Vijayawada boasts an impressive 99% in door-to-door waste collection in public toilets. The government has focused on beautifying canals and ensuring scientific waste processing. People's support and community engagement have been crucial in maintaining these standards. It has received Open Defecation Free (ODF) certifications, emphasizing its comprehensive garbage management efforts.

Attractions: Kanaka Durga Temple, Undavalli Caves, and the Krishna River.



NEW DELHI DELHI

New Delhi, the capital of India, is recognized for its significant improvements in sanitation. It has implemented various initiatives aimed at enhancing hygiene, including extensive garbage management programs and awareness campaigns. Residents' involvement in cleanliness drives has fostered a culture of responsibility and pride in maintaining their surroundings. New Delhi is focusing on improving air quality through promoting green transportation.

Attractions: India Gate, Qutub Minar, and Humayun's Tomb.



MYSORE KARNATAKA

Mysore, often referred to as the cultural capital of Karnataka, is renowned for its heritage. It has effectively implemented waste segregation and composting initiatives, which have significantly improved its sanitation standards. Mysore's government actively engages with citizens through various campaigns and community participation. Its lush gardens and well-maintained parks provide residents with green spaces that encourage outdoor activities and a healthier lifestyle.

Attractions: Mysore Palace, Chamundi Hill, and Brindavan Gardens.



CHANDIGARH UNION TERRITORY

Chandigarh, renowned for its impeccable urban planning and an unwavering promise to cleanliness, is famous for its meticulously manicured parks, lush gardens, and inviting public spaces, all of which play a pivotal role in fostering a pristine and salubrious environment. The administration here has put in place robust waste disposal practices, such as source segregation and frequent campaigns, ensuring that it remains immaculate. The residents actively engage in upholding this standard of sanitation, displaying a remarkable sense of community solidarity.

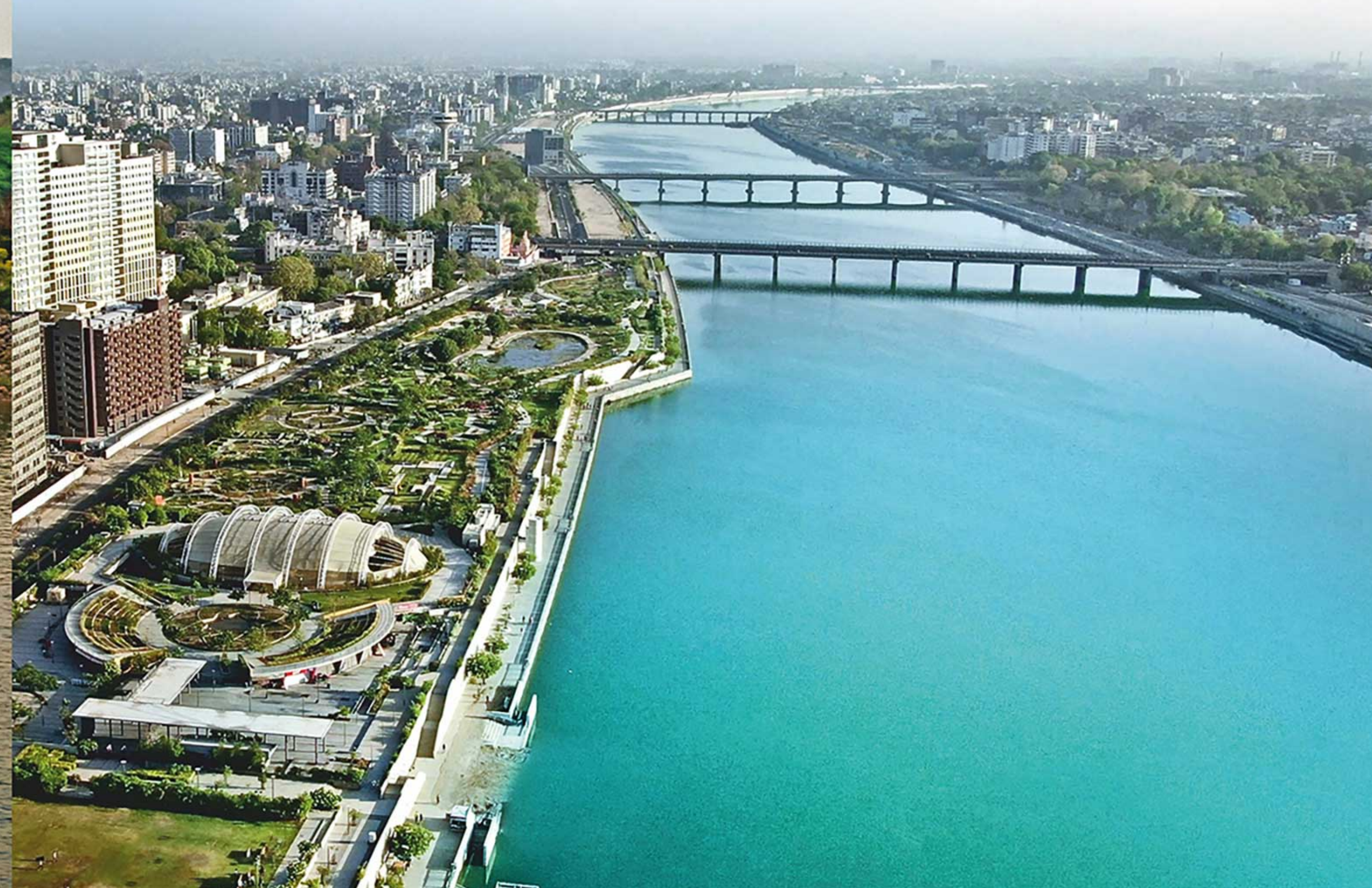
Attractions: Rock Garden, Sukhna Lake, and the Capitol Complex.



AHMEDABAD GUJARAT

Ahmedabad, known for its vibrant culture and historical significance, has made significant progress in sanitation over the years. The administration has implemented various initiatives aimed at improving hygiene, including extensive waste treatment programs and awareness campaigns. Ahmedabad's residents actively participate in drives, fostering a tradition of responsibility and pride in maintaining their surroundings. Its rich heritage is complemented by well-maintained public spaces, making it an attractive for tourists.

Attractions: Sabarmati Ashram, Kankaria Lake, and the Adalaj Stepwell.



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CLEANEST BEACHES IN INDIA

India is famous for its vibrant cities as well as its beautiful beaches, some of which have received the prestigious Blue Flag status. This internationally recognized certification demonstrates that these beaches meet strict standards for cleanliness and environmental management. Let's explore them.

EDEN BEACH PUDUCHERRY

Flaunting spotless surroundings with sparkling white sand, Eden Beach in Chinna Veerampattinam is the first in Puducherry to gain the Blue Flag certification. It is located between Paradise Beach and Veerampattinam Beach, offering a panoramic view of the Chunnambar River backwaters and coconut plantations. It features an 800-meter-long safe swimming zone, washrooms, sit-outs, umbrella huts, a children's play area, and an open gym. It is a popular spot for bird watching, with migratory birds visiting from October to March.

Attractions:

Sit-out umbrella huts, watchtower, amphitheatre, scuba diving, and backwaters.



Source: Man Sharma / Shutterstock.com

KOVALAM BEACH TAMIL NADU

Kovalam Beach is famous for its picturesque coastline and vibrant atmosphere. It is a hub for tourists and a model of environmental sustainability. The authorities have implemented effective waste management systems and regularly conduct clean-up drives to maintain its pristine condition. Vacationers can indulge in various activities such as surfing, sunbathing, and enjoying the cuisine, all while appreciating the natural charm of the area.

Attractions:

Water sports, surfing, and scenic beauty.



GOLDEN BEACH ODISHA

Golden Beach is a stunning stretch of coastline situated along the Bay of Bengal in the beautiful state of Odisha. It is a serene haven characterized by its glistening sands and the mesmerizing azure waters of the ocean. It is renowned for its unparalleled attractiveness, offering tourists breathtaking sunrises and captivating sunsets that create an enchanting ambiance. Moreover, it is famous for hosting the annual Puri Beach Festival, a vibrant event that showcases remarkable sand art displays and an array of delightful seafood stalls, adding to the overall appeal of this pristine destination.

Attractions:

Puri Beach Festival, sand art displays, and seafood stalls.

KAPPAD BEACH KERALA

Kappad Beach in Kozhikode, also known as Calicut, holds great historical significance as the landing site of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in the year 1498, which marked the beginning of the European era of Indian history. It is famous for being historically important and offers breathtaking green landscapes. The tranquil atmosphere and serene surroundings provide travel enthusiasts with a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The sky above the location undergoes mesmerizing scenic changes that appear as if they are coming from a magician's swaying wand, adding to the enchanting allure of the place.

Attractions:

Historical significance, scenic beauty, and tranquil atmosphere.

SHIVRAJPUR BEACH GUJARAT

Shivrajpur Beach, located near Dwarka, is celebrated for its clean and serene environment. It has been awarded the Blue Flag certification for its sanitation and sustainable tourism practices. The location features clear waters, golden sands, and well-maintained facilities for families and nature lovers. can enjoy swimming, games, and exploring the nearby marine life, all while experiencing the rich landscapes of a hygienic and well-preserved beach.

Attractions:

Puri Beach Festival, sand art displays, and seafood stalls.



KASARGOD BEACH KARNATAKA

Kasargod Beach, located on the stunning Malabar Coast of Kerala, boasts pristine, sun-kissed shores and breathtaking panoramic views that a picturesque escape. This unpretentious paradise has admirably preserved its natural beauty, avoiding commercialization and establishing itself for travellers who are environmentally conscious and seeking a peaceful and eco-friendly retreat. With its tranquil atmosphere and sustainability, it provides a serene haven for those looking to reconnect with nature and unwind in a responsible manner.

Attractions: Eco-tourism and serene environment.



GHOGHLA BEACH DIU

Ghoghla Beach is known for its tranquil ambiance and amazing surroundings. As one of the largest beaches in Diu, it offers a perfect escape for those looking to relax by the sea. The government has implemented measures to keep it clean and environmentally friendly, ensuring that visitors can enjoy its beauty without the distractions of litter or pollution. With opportunities for water sports, sunbathing, and enjoying seafood, this destination is a must-visit for eco-conscious travellers.

Attractions:

Golden sands, clear water, and adventure sports.



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RUSHIKONDA BEACH ANDHRA PRADESH

Rushikonda Beach is a paradise for nature lovers. Its golden sand and tidy waves attract tourists from all over the world for water sports like swimming, skiing, and surfing. It is a stunning destination located on the shore of the Bay of Bengal in Vishakhapatnam, in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. APTDC, which is in charge of this natural beauty, has done a great job in the upkeep of the it and ensured that this attraction remains unspoiled. Therefore, it is thus rightly named the 'Jewel of the East Coast,' owing to its essential and intact charm.

Attractions:

Water sports, golden sand, and natural beauty.



RADHANAGAR BEACH ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Radhanagar Beach, located on Havelock Island, is renowned for its stunning natural beauty and pristine environment. Recognized as one of the best beaches in Asia, it offers crystal-clear waters and soft white sands, making it a perfect spot for relaxation and water sports. It is meticulously maintained, with strict regulations in place to preserve and ecological balance. people can enjoy swimming, sunbathing, and exploring the surrounding lush forests, all while being assured of a clean and safe location.

Attractions:

Relaxation spots, beautiful scenery, and beach amenities.



MINICOY THUNDI LAKSHADWEEP

Minicoy Thundi Beach is a hidden gem in the Lakshadweep archipelago, known for its stunning beauty and pristine waters. It is surrounded by lush coconut palms and offers a serene environment for relaxation and exploration. Recognized for its cleanliness, this place adheres to strict environmental regulations that protect its natural resources. Tourists can indulge in snorkelling, swimming, and sunbathing, all while enjoying the unspoiled elegance of this idyllic beach.

Attractions:

Powdery white sands, turquoise waters, and water sports.



PADUBIDRI BEACH KARNATAKA

Padubidri Beach, situated in the Udupi district of Karnataka, is a picturesque coastal haven embraced by the Arabian Sea. Although it currently does not hold the prestigious Blue Flag certification, it is highly regarded for its commendable efforts in environmental preservation. The tranquil ambience and breathtaking natural beauty provide an ideal setting to unwind and rejuvenate. From engaging in water sports to embarking on leisurely strolls along the shore, guests can immerse themselves in a range of delightful activities. Additionally, the proximity of this location to various other attractions makes it a compelling destination for travellers exploring the captivating coastline.

Attractions:

Scenic sunsets and adventure rides.



KADMAT BEACH LAKSHADWEEP

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Attractions:

Pristine sands, coral reefs, and water sports.

CONCLUSION

As we approach Ozone Day and Environment Day, recognizing and promoting clean destinations in India is crucial. Cities like Indore and Chandigarh exemplify the efforts being made toward health and setting benchmarks for others to follow. The commitment to maintaining hygienic surroundings is essential for the well-being of citizens and the sustainability of the planet. By choosing to visit or live in these locations, individuals contribute to a cleaner, healthier future for all. As we celebrate these achievements, let us remember the importance of our collective responsibility in preserving our environment for the coming generations. ■

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UNBELIEVABLE AND FASCINATING INDIAN CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

By UMANG SHARMA, Staff Writer

India boasts a rich and intricate cultural tapestry adorned with a colourful array of customs and traditions that may seem fascinatingly unique to outsiders. These deeply rooted practices, intertwined with historical significance and belief systems, not only reflect the remarkable diversity and complexity of Indian society but also serve as a testament to the enduring heritage of the nation. Let's embark on a journey to explore some of the most extraordinary rituals that are observed throughout this culturally vibrant and diverse country.



Source: Anella Srinivas Ramalingaswamy / Shutterstock.com



AGHORIS THE CANNIBALISTIC SECT

One of the most famous groups in India is the Aghoris, a sect of Hindu ascetics who follow Lord Shiva. Living near cremation grounds, they engage in practices that include the consumption of human flesh. Aghoris believe that everything in nature is sacred and can be consumed, leading them to perform rituals that involve meditating on corpses and using human bones as utensils. This extreme form of spirituality is shocking yet highlights the vast spectrum of beliefs within Hinduism.

BABY TOSSING A LEAP OF FAITH

The baby tossing ritual, practiced in some parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, is a tradition that occurs in December. During this ceremony, fathers ascend the temple stairs or walls with their infants in hand or tied behind their backs. Upon reaching the top, the newborns are passed to men standing there. They swing them back and forth before dropping them from a height of 10-15 meters. On the ground, a group awaits the falling babies with blankets. When they land, they bounce once and are swiftly picked up and returned to their mothers.



VENI DAAN A HAIR-RAISING RITUAL

In Hindu tradition, couples in Allahabad and Maharashtra partake in a unique custom during their wedding. Beyond committing to spend one lifetime together, they vow to share seven lifetimes. This profound promise is solidified through Veni Daan, celebrated at the Triveni Sangam in Allahabad. At this event, all ceremonies are re-enacted. The wife, adorned in traditional attire, gathers her hair in a single braid. After the ceremony, she sits on her husband's lap as he cuts a lock of hair from her braid, offering it to the river. This is done with a belief to safeguard the family's prosperity and joy.



DHINGA GAVAR THE FESTIVAL OF WOMEN

Dhing Gavar, an exclusive event in Jodhpur, is an extension of the renowned Rajasthani Gangaur festival. This vibrant celebration unfolds post-sunset at only 11 locations throughout the city. Featuring adorned statues of this day (also known as Parvati, Shiva's consort) embellished with traditional attire and gold ornaments, the festivities include offerings of cannabis and dry fruits to the deity. On this captivating evening, women don unconventional ensembles, ranging from priests to dacoits or politicians, and parade the streets wielding long sticks. Coming into contact with one of these sticks is believed to bring prosperity to a man's married life, and unmarried men seek out these females to improve their marriage prospects.



AADI FESTIVAL COCONUT CRACKING

In the time of British rule, an amazing incident occurred involving a temple and the making of a train track. This holy site was constructed with 187 stones shaped like coconuts collected from a nearby river. When the railway was being built, the temple was nearly destroyed. However, the determined villagers managed to protect it. The officials from Britain challenged them to break all 187 stones using their heads; if they tried to do so, the track would not be developed. Despite the challenges, the group of people accomplished this. Today, during this day, hundreds of worshipers gather near the place of worship to see the religious leaders breaking coconuts with their foreheads. This custom has been continued by medical experts.

CATTLE TRAMPLING A UNIQUE BLESSING

On the day after Diwali, known as Ekadashi, the ancient cities of Ujjain and Bhopal come alive with vibrant festivities. One of the most enchanting rituals that take place during this time involves villagers adorning their cattle with intricate henna designs and colorful paints as a symbol of love and reverence. Following this, the livestock are gently guided to walk over mats spread out on the ground while the people joyfully chant their heartfelt wishes and aspirations. They strongly believe that this centuries-old tradition carries the power to usher in prosperity for their village and bring their deepest desires to fruition.



THIMITHI WALKING ON FIRE

The Thimithi festival, celebrated in Tamil Nadu, pays homage to Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas. Legend has it that after the Mahabharata war (which was mainly fought by the Pandavas to avenge the insult the Kauravas had heaped on Draupadi), Draupadi walked through fire and emerged unscathed on the other side, thus proving her purity despite having 5 husbands. The event involves men walking over a bed of burning coals, symbolizing their steadfastness and devotion. The walkers are not allowed to run across but have to take each step slowly. Although challenging, this ritual is observed in various countries including Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia, and Mauritius.



MADE SNANA ROLLING IN LEFTOVERS

In several regions of South India, it is customary for temples to serve food or prasada on large, traditional plantain leaves. The meal is typically enjoyed while sitting cross-legged on the floor, creating a communal and intimate dining experience. In some areas, there is an unusual tradition called Made Snana, where after the meal, devotees lay on the ground and roll over the plantain leaves still containing the remnants of the food. This practice is believed to have various health benefits and is thought to promote the overall well-being of the participants, both physically and spiritually.



BURIED IN SAND A CONTROVERSIAL HEALING

In Karnataka, a peculiar tradition takes place during a solar eclipse. Children with physical disabilities and handicaps are subjected to a bizarre ritual in which they are buried in the sand up to their necks for an extended period, often lasting from an hour to six hours. It begins before sunrise, with deep pits dug out in the sand to accommodate the children fully. The children are then carefully placed inside the pits and left there until the eclipse has passed, with the belief that this "treatment" will miraculously cure them of all their ailments and disabilities.

LATH MAAR HOLI A COLOURFUL CLASH

During Lath Mar Holi, which is a unique traditional part of the Holi celebrations, festivities take place in Barsana, a town near Mathura that is associated with Radha, the beloved of Lord Krishna. According to legend, Krishna used to playfully visit Radha's village, only to be playfully chased away by the village women with sticks. As part of this colourful tradition, men from Nandgaon now visit Barsana on Holi, where the women joyfully and playfully beat them with sticks. While there are no restrictions, injuries can occur, with some men even suffering serious head injuries. In recent times, men taking part in the festival have started using shields to protect themselves.



Conclusion

These bizarre traditions reflect the rich tapestry of Indian culture, showcasing the diverse beliefs and practices that exist within its society. While some customs may seem extreme or incomprehensible to outsiders, they hold significant meaning for those who practice them. Understanding these traditions offers a glimpse into the complexities of Indian spirituality and community life, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage in shaping identity.

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TOP 10 MODERN ENGINEERING MARVELS IN INDIA

By MEHAK SIDDIQUI

From impressive bridges to massive transportation links, India's infrastructure game is strong, thanks to some shining engineering talent that the country boasts. As we observe National Engineers' Day on September 15, let's look at some of the greatest modern engineering marvels that showcase our nation's technological prowess and innovative spirit.

Embracing India's promising path for sustained growth and progress

Bandra-Worli Sea Link Bridge, Maharashtra

Bandra-Worli Sea Link

One of India's most iconic modern engineering feats, this 5.6 km-long cable-stayed bridge seamlessly connects the bustling suburbs of Bandra and Worli in Mumbai. It significantly reduces travel time between the two points, offering commuters a quicker and more scenic route across the Arabian Sea. What makes this bridge an engineering wonder is its ability to withstand the harsh marine environment, which is a testament to the meticulous planning and innovative design that went into its construction. The structure features a series of pre-stressed concrete-steel viaducts that ensure durability and add to the bridge's aesthetic appeal. A symbol of modern India's engineering excellence, the Bandra-Worli Sea Link stands as a striking blend of functionality and beauty, connecting the city's past with its future.



Konkan Railway

You haven't truly traveled in India if you haven't experienced the scenic route of the grand Konkan Railway. Stretching along the scenic western coast of India, it is a remarkable engineering marvel that transformed one of the most challenging terrains into a vital transport corridor. Spanning 740 km, this railway line connects Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka, carving through the rugged mountains of the Western Ghats, dense forests, and numerous rivers. What sets the Konkan Railway apart is the sheer scale of engineering feats required to overcome the natural obstacles in its path. The project involved constructing 92 tunnels and over 2,000 bridges, including the iconic Panvalnadi Bridge, one of Asia's tallest viaducts. Engineers had to innovate solutions to deal with unpredictable monsoon rains, landslides, and complex geology. The successful completion of the Konkan Railway in 1998 stands as a testament to India's engineering prowess, enabling faster, safer travel through one of the country's most beautiful and challenging regions.



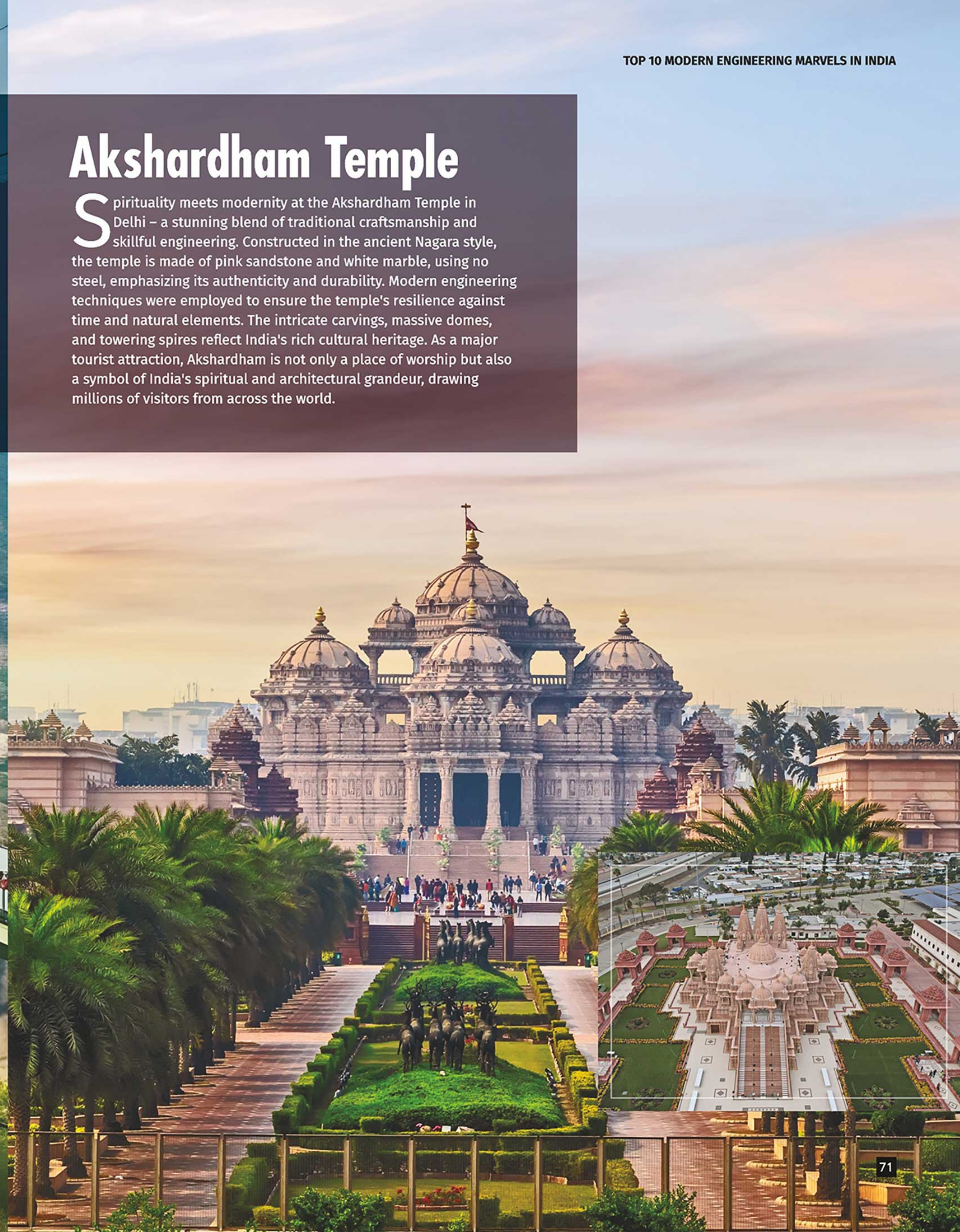
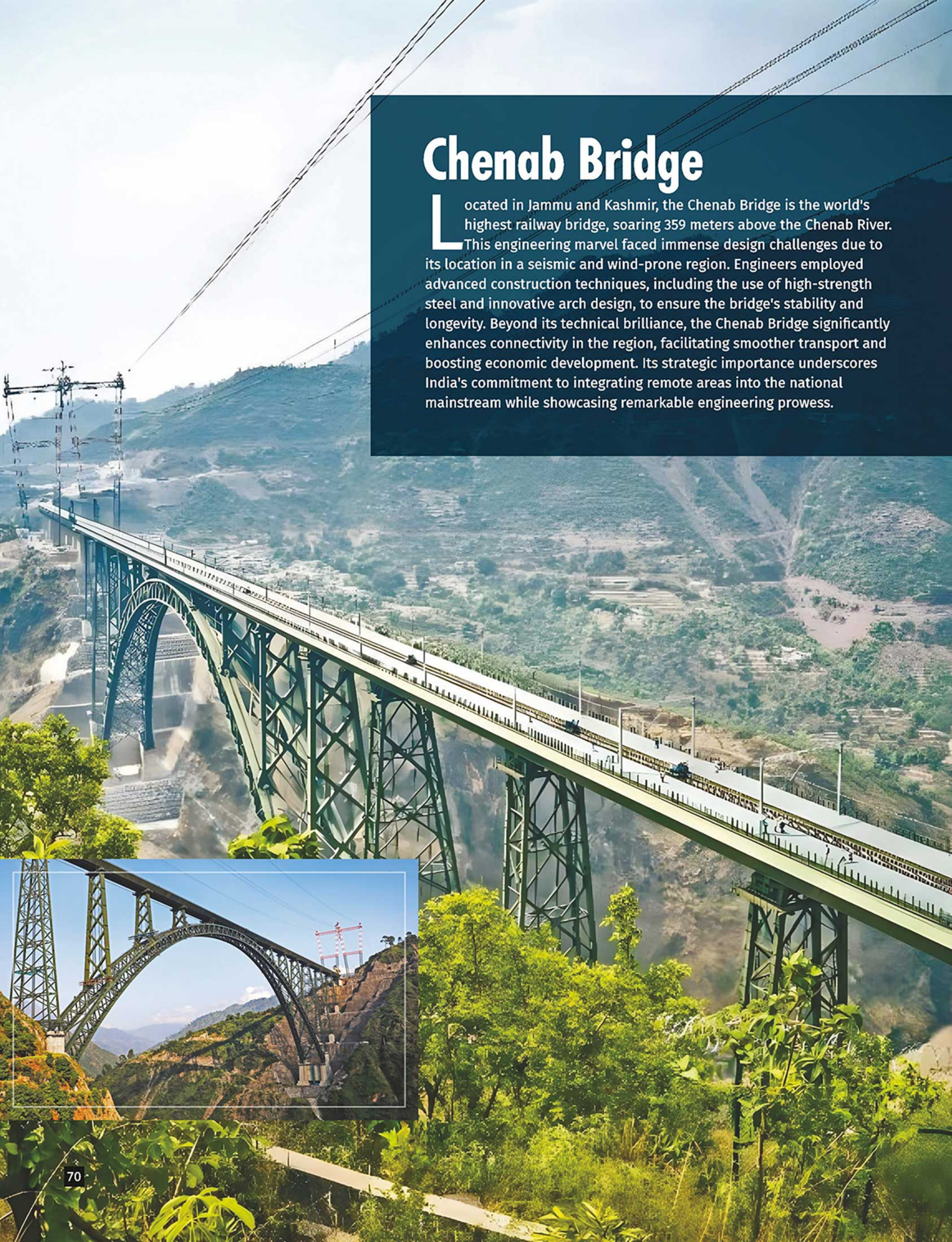
The Railway Bridge at Dudhsagar Waterfalls

Chenab Bridge

Located in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chenab Bridge is the world's highest railway bridge, soaring 359 meters above the Chenab River. This engineering marvel faced immense design challenges due to its location in a seismic and wind-prone region. Engineers employed advanced construction techniques, including the use of high-strength steel and innovative arch design, to ensure the bridge's stability and longevity. Beyond its technical brilliance, the Chenab Bridge significantly enhances connectivity in the region, facilitating smoother transport and boosting economic development. Its strategic importance underscores India's commitment to integrating remote areas into the national mainstream while showcasing remarkable engineering prowess.

Akshardham Temple

Spirituality meets modernity at the Akshardham Temple in Delhi – a stunning blend of traditional craftsmanship and skillful engineering. Constructed in the ancient Nagara style, the temple is made of pink sandstone and white marble, using no steel, emphasizing its authenticity and durability. Modern engineering techniques were employed to ensure the temple's resilience against time and natural elements. The intricate carvings, massive domes, and towering spires reflect India's rich cultural heritage. As a major tourist attraction, Akshardham is not only a place of worship but also a symbol of India's spiritual and architectural grandeur, drawing millions of visitors from across the world.



Howrah Bridge

The most iconic landmark of Kolkata is a masterpiece of engineering that dates back to 1943. This cantilever bridge, spanning the Hooghly River, was an extraordinary feat at the time, constructed without the use of nuts and bolts, relying instead on riveting techniques. The bridge's robust design has withstood the test of time, enduring heavy traffic and harsh weather conditions. As a vital part of Kolkata's transportation network, it connects the city to Howrah and handles over 100,000 vehicles and countless pedestrians daily. Beyond its functional role, the Howrah Bridge holds immense historical value, symbolizing the city's resilience and engineering excellence.

Sardar Sarovar Dam

This one is a stellar infrastructure project that has had a massive impact on citizens' lives. The Sardar Sarovar Dam, located on the Narmada River in Gujarat is a critical component of the Narmada Valley Development Project. It was designed to address the region's water scarcity by providing irrigation, drinking water, and hydroelectric power to millions. The dam's construction involved cutting-edge engineering techniques to manage the enormous water pressure and ensure seismic stability. Its vast canal network, the largest in the world, distributes water across four states, namely Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, transforming arid regions into fertile land and boosting agricultural productivity. A marvel for sure!

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

Here's another water-management project that deserves applause. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project in Telangana is one of the largest and most complex irrigation schemes in the world, showcasing India's engineering ingenuity. It's been designed to divert water from the Godavari River to address the acute water scarcity in surrounding drought-prone regions. The scale of the project is staggering, involving the construction of multiple massive pump houses, reservoirs, and an intricate network of tunnels to lift water to higher elevations—sometimes as high as 618 meters. This ensures a continuous supply of water for agriculture and drinking purposes across vast areas. The project's advanced engineering techniques, including the world's largest underground pump house at the Ramadugu pump station, highlight the sheer complexity and ambition of this undertaking. By transforming barren lands into fertile fields and securing water resources for millions, the Kaleshwaram Project stands as a monumental achievement in modern irrigation engineering.

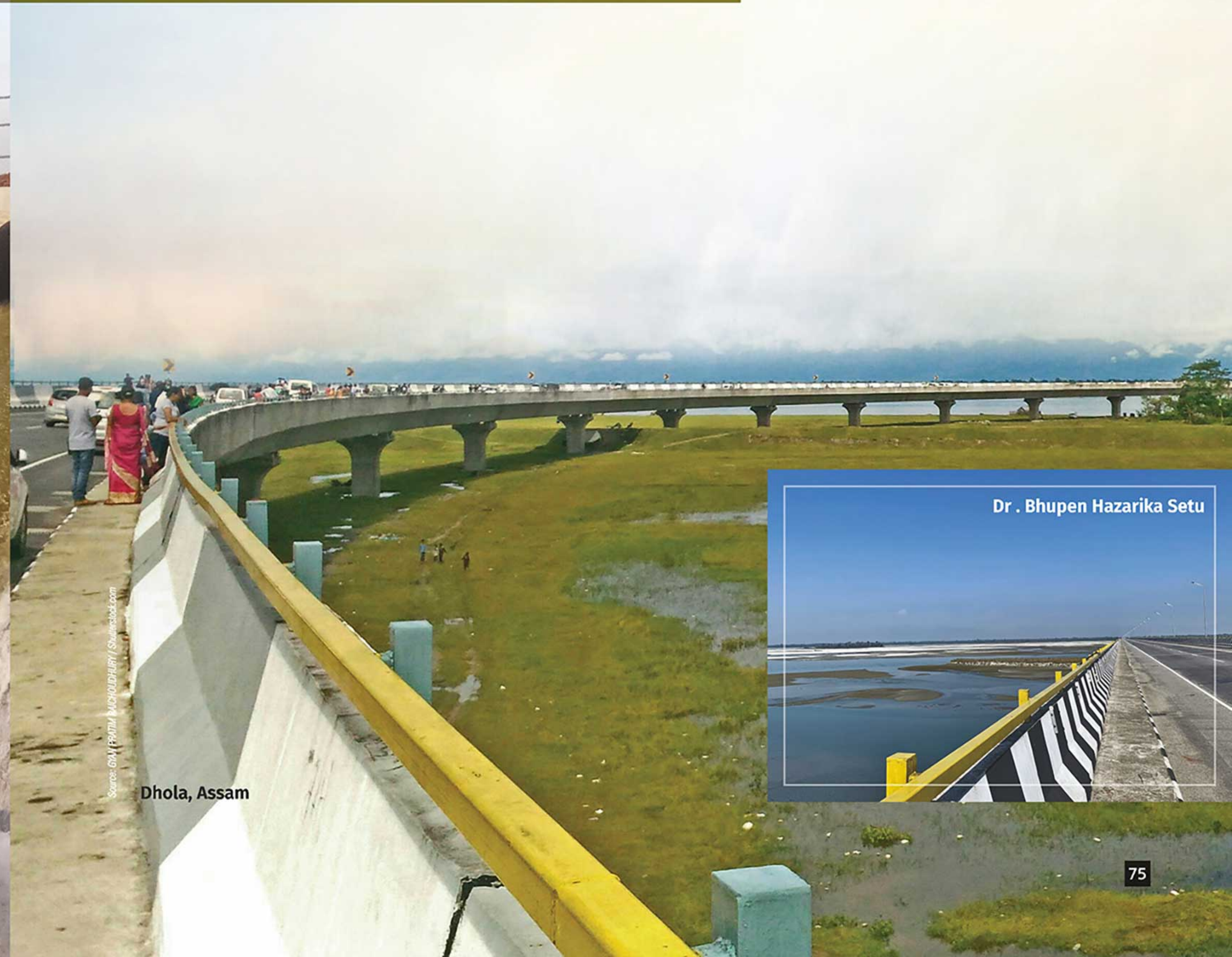


Kaleshwaram Project Medigadda Barriage

Kaleshwaram Drip Irrigation Project

Dhola-Sadiya Bridge

Say hello to the longest bridge in India, stretching 9.15 km across the Brahmaputra River. It's known as the Dhola-Sadiya Bridge or the Bhupen Hazarika Setu. This engineering marvel was designed to withstand the region's seismic activity and frequent flooding, posing significant construction challenges. The bridge features a robust design with a combination of steel and concrete girders, ensuring durability and resilience. By connecting Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the bridge has dramatically improved connectivity in the northeastern region, reducing travel time and fostering economic development. It also holds strategic importance, enhancing access to remote areas and boosting trade and tourism in the region.



Dhola, Assam



Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Setu

Atal Tunnel

The Atal Tunnel, beneath the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh, stretches 9.02 kilometers, making it one of the longest highway tunnels in the world! Constructed using advanced techniques, including controlled blasting and tunnel boring machines, it overcomes significant geographical challenges such as high altitude and harsh weather. This tunnel dramatically improves accessibility to remote areas of the Lahaul-Spiti Valley, reducing travel time and fostering regional development. Its construction exemplifies innovative engineering and provides crucial connectivity, even during heavy snowfall, underscoring its role in enhancing economic growth and accessibility in this rugged terrain.





Delhi Metro

This last mention on the list might surprise you, but it's India's first modern mass rapid transit system and deserves recognition for how it has revolutionized public transportation. The metro's extensive network, innovative construction techniques, and integration with urban planning set a benchmark for urban transport. At the same time, its advanced signaling and automated systems ensure efficient, safe operations, while eco-friendly initiatives, including solar power usage, highlight its commitment to sustainability. By reducing traffic congestion and pollution, the Delhi Metro not only enhances daily commutes but also serves as a model of sustainable development and modern infrastructure in rapidly growing cities, not just in India, but across the world.



To wrap up, these ten engineering marvels are worth celebrating, as are all the people who have contributed to making them a reality. These projects highlight India's ability to tackle complex challenges and set new standards in engineering excellence. As we look to the future, these marvels inspire continued innovation and reflect a commitment to progress that will hopefully drive India's growth and development in the years to come. 🇮🇳



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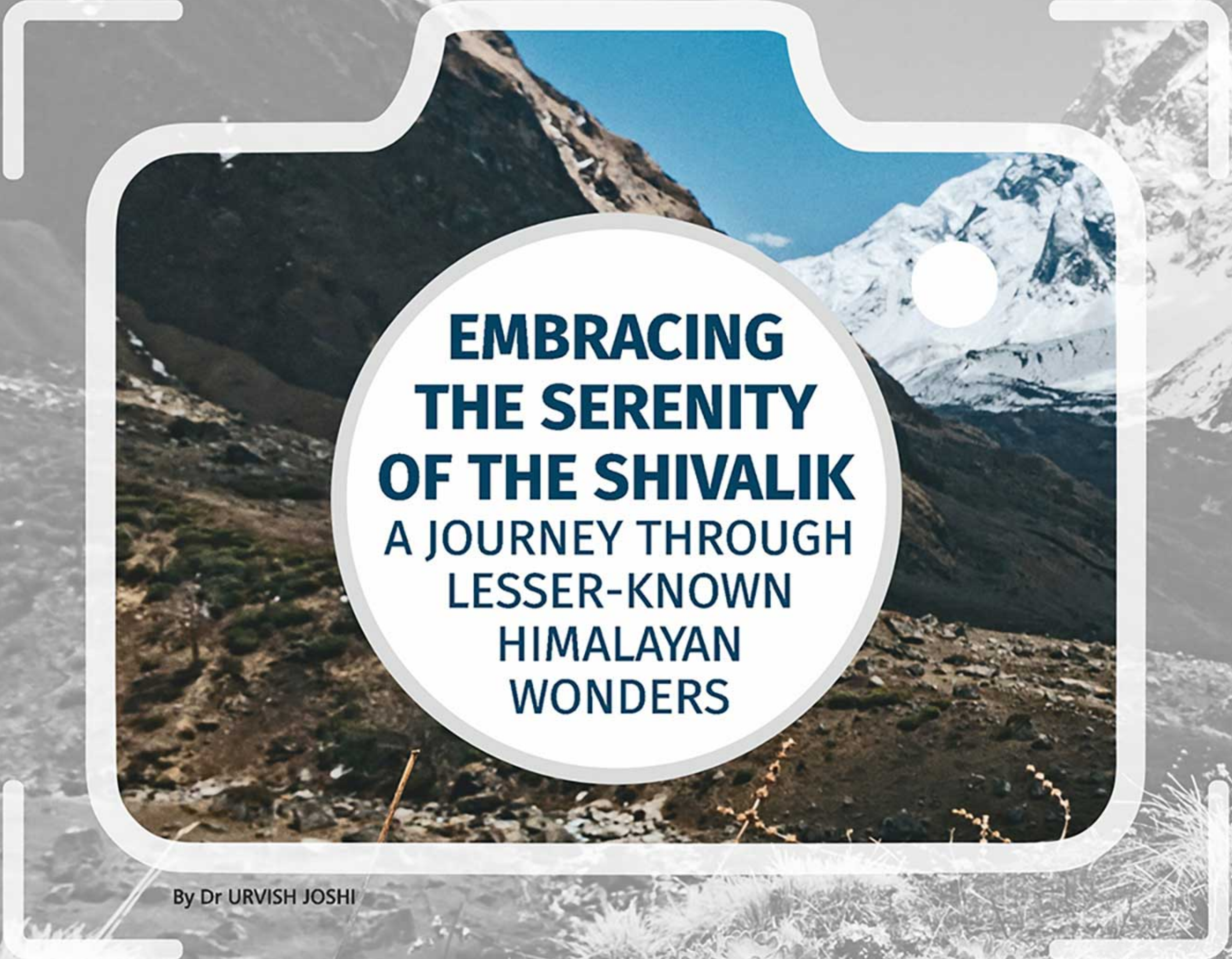
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EMBRACING THE SERENITY OF THE SHIVALIK

A JOURNEY THROUGH LESSER-KNOWN HIMALAYAN WONDERS

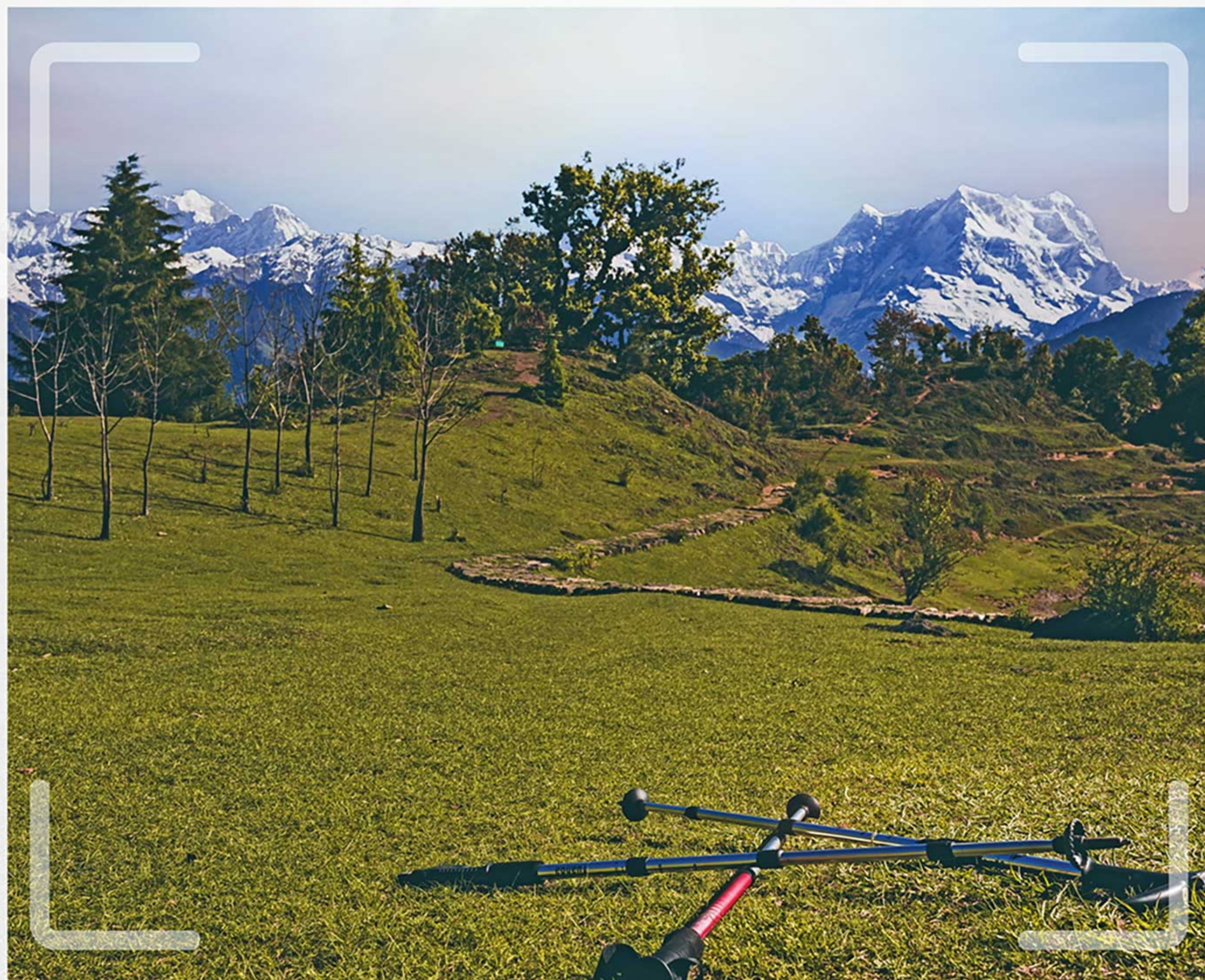
By Dr URVISH JOSHI



On the Way to Maninda Taal (Har ki Doon Trek)

Allures of Deoria Tal and Tungnath: Trekking Paradise

Tucked away in the Himalayan lower and middle Shivalik ranges is a wealth of adventures waiting to be discovered. Travellers looking for something different from the usual path can find tranquility in this area's natural splendour, which spans from the immaculate trails of Deoria Tal and Tungnath to the tranquil hill stations like Kanatal. This post takes you on a tour of some of the most alluring and lesser-known locations in the Himalayas, highlighting the stunning scenery and the significance of protecting these hallowed areas.



DEORIA TAL AND TUNGNATH

Two of the most alluring locations in the Shivalik range are Deoria Tal and Tungnath, which provide the ideal fusion of spirituality and adventure. Beginners can complete the relatively straightforward hike to Deoria Tal, which rewards you with breathtaking views of the Chaukhamba peak reflected in the serene lake. Singing birds and rustling leaves create a soothing natural symphony as you walk through deep oak and rhododendron forests.

Conversely, the journey to Tungnath leads to the world's highest Shiva temple. The walk is moderate, but this historic temple has a strong spiritual aura. Every step you take towards the summit brings you nearer to the divine as you ascend and take in the expansive views of the Garhwal Himalayas. The journey serves as a reminder of the close relationship between spirituality and nature in the Himalayas, and the temple is a monument to the area's rich cultural legacy.



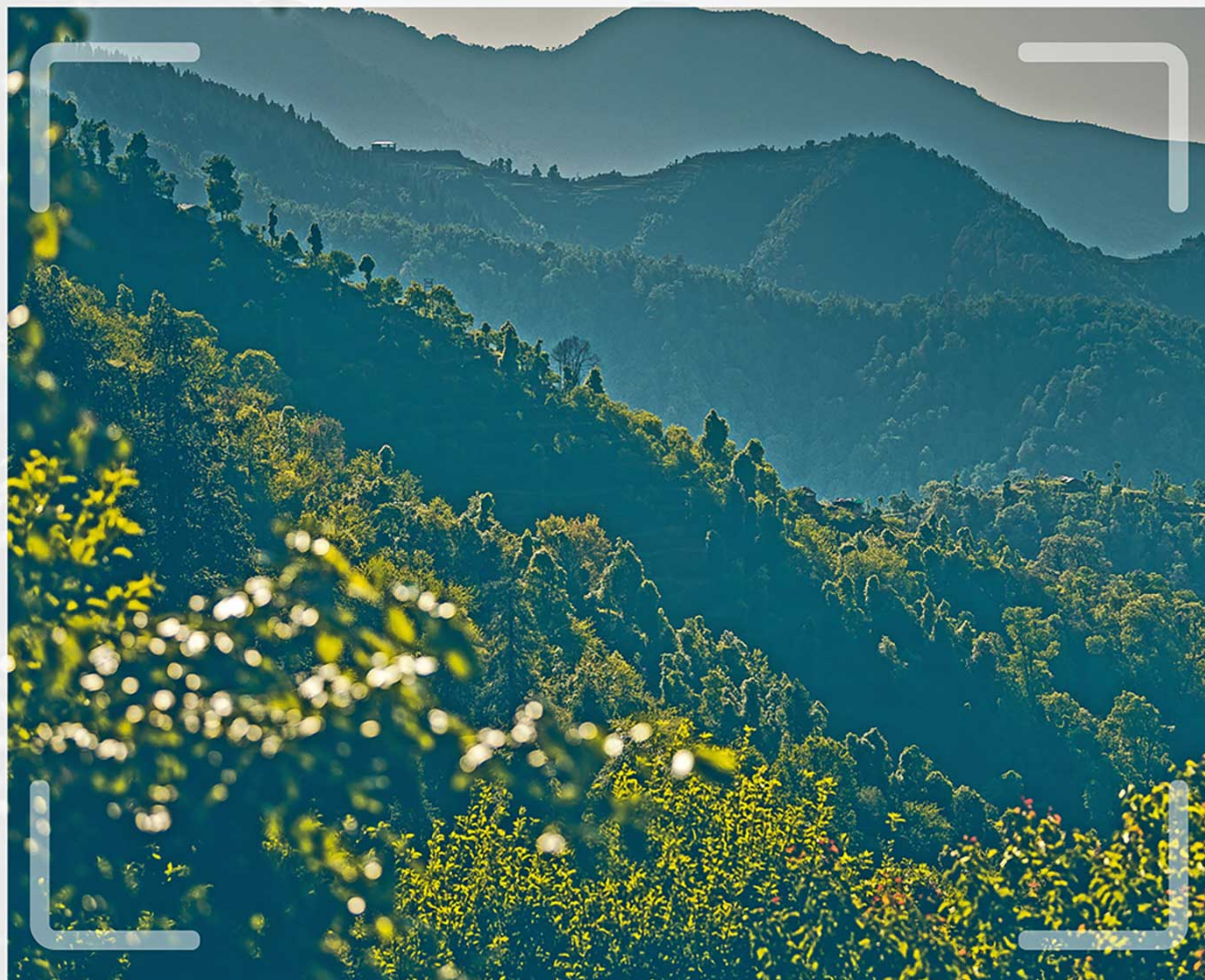
HAR KI DOON: VALLEY OF GODS

Har Ki Doon is a hidden jewel in the Garhwal Himalayas, also known as the Valley of Gods. This cradle-shaped valley provides a window into the unspoiled splendour of the Himalayas, encircled by snow-capped peaks and verdant forests. You pass through historic towns on the way to Har Ki Doon, where it looks like time has stood still. The purity that persists in these isolated areas is brought to memory by the innocence, cheerful smiles, and uncomplicated

lifestyle of the rural children.

The valley is a heaven for nature lovers and birdwatchers and a safe retreat for hikers. Vibrant blooms line the trail, and the aroma of pine and wildflowers fills the clear mountain air. Har Ki Doon is a spiritual experience as you camp beneath the starry sky, surrounded by the quiet of the mountains, with a sense of calm and higher vibrations permeating the atmosphere.

CHEERFUL AND INNOCENT SMILE OF LOCAL KIDS

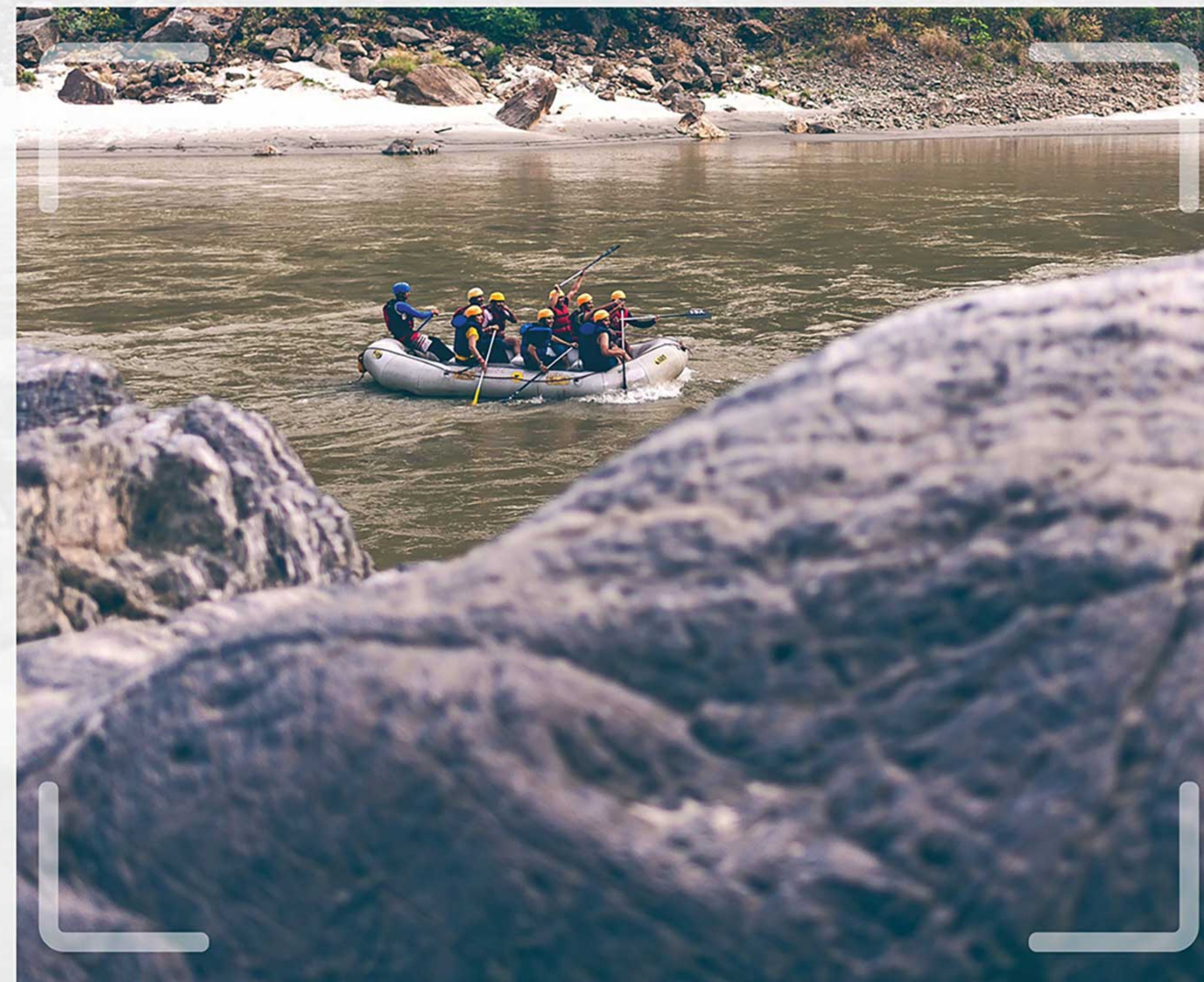


KANATAL: THE CALM HILL INTERCHANGE

deal for those looking for a more sedate getaway, Kanatal is a charming hill station that hasn't seen much tourism. Situated 8,500 feet above sea level, Kanatal provides sweeping views of the snow-covered Himalayas, bright skies, and a tranquil setting ideal for relaxation. Simple things like the blue mountains in the distance, the way clouds move, and the soft wind that wafts the aroma of pine forests are what make Kanatal so

beautiful.

Kanatal serves as a starting point for several stunning hikes, such as the one to the mythological Surkanda Devi Temple, which provides a fantastic perspective of the surrounding peaks. The hill station is renowned for its apple orchards, and taking a stroll through them is a delightful experience because of the crisp mountain air and the sight of apple trees in blossoms.



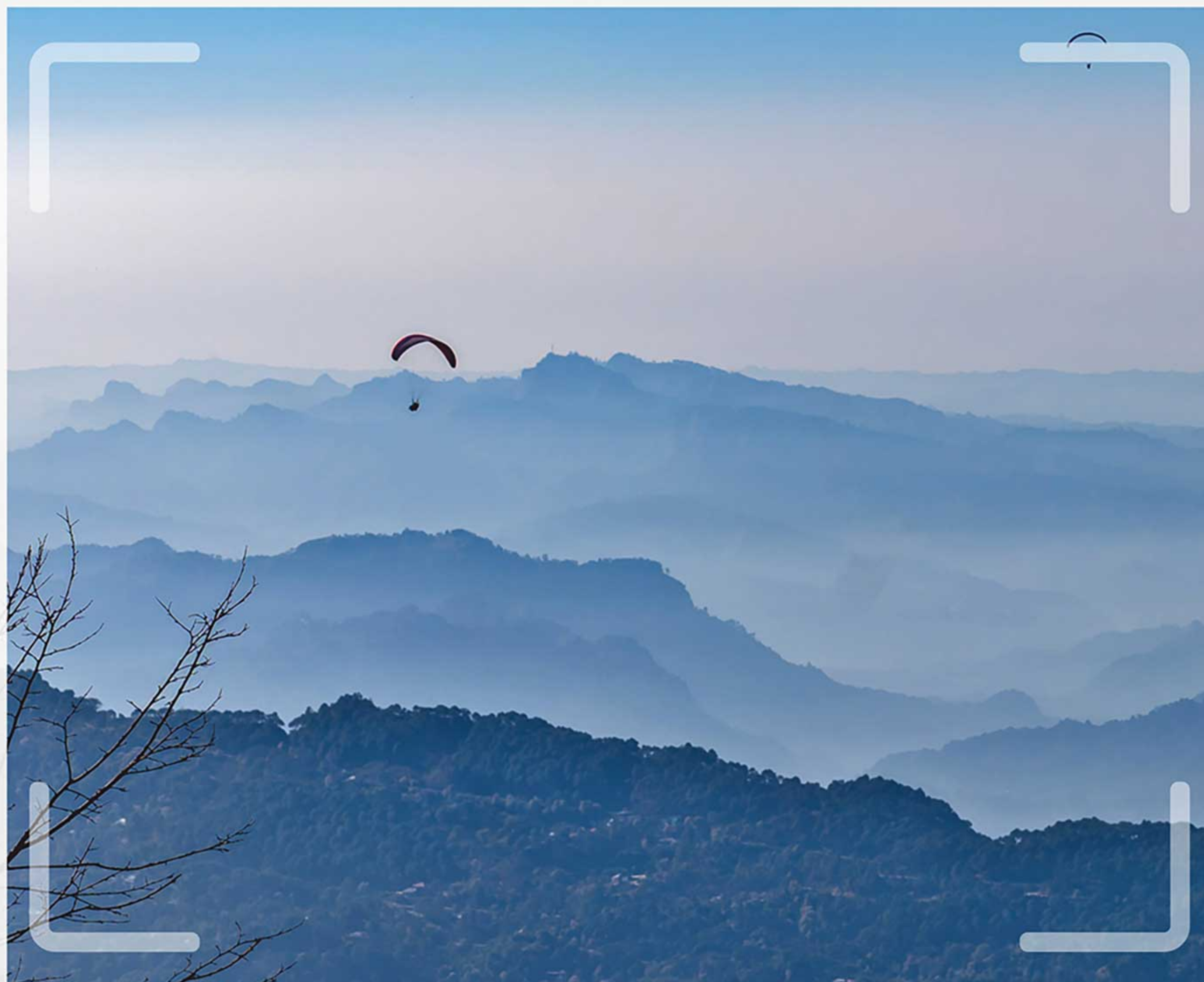
HARIDWAR AND RISHIKESH

A trip to India's most well-known spiritual towns, Haridwar and Rishikesh, would not be complete without a stop there. These cities, which are in the Himalayan foothills, are not only centres of religion but also provide a remarkable fusion of adventure and spirituality.

The Ganges River flows out of the highlands into Haridwar, where temples line the ghats. You may connect to the spiritual soul of the place through the mesmerising experience of the nightly Ganga Aarti, a tradition of offering prayers to the river. You can sense the spirit that has brought pilgrims to this town for

ages as the chants fill the air and the diyas (lamps) float on the river.

Rishikesh, dubbed the Yoga Capital of the World, is conveniently located near Haridwar. There are several ashrams in the town where you can practise yoga and meditation and discover inner peace in undisturbed settings. Rishikesh is a haven for thrill-seekers with activities like bungee jumping, river rafting on the Ganges, and hiking in the nearby hills. It is a must-visit location for those looking for a complete Himalayan experience because it offers a mix of spiritual retreats and heart-pounding activities.



BIR: REACHING THE SUMMIT OF THE HIMALAYAS

Bir is the place to go if you're looking for a thrill; it's India's paragliding hub providing an adrenaline rush when you glide over the Himalayas. The view of the small villages, green valleys, and bluish mountains from above is breathtaking. There is nothing like feeling free and connected to the natural world as you soar through the skies.

Beyond its reputation as a paragliding

destination, Bir provides a tranquil setting for anyone interested in learning about Tibetan culture. Numerous monasteries can be found in the area, and a tour of these serene havens offers insight into the rich cultural history of the Tibetan population. The peaceful mood of this Himalayan village is created by the vibrant prayer flags waving in the breeze, the sound of monks chanting, and the aroma of incense.

Traveler Responsibilities: Preserving the Himalayas

We must remember our obligations as tourists as we enjoy the splendour of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are a sacred area that requires protection; they are more than just a travel attraction. Responsible tourism, ethical trekking, and environmental conservation are not just catchphrases; they are vital measures that guarantee these magnificent areas stay undisturbed for coming generations.

Littering is one of the main hazards to the Himalayas. It is depressing to see trash in the communities and on the paths. Being aware of what we do and leaving no trace behind are essential aspects of being a traveller. Simple actions like recycling all waste, eliminating single-use plastics, and carrying reusable bottles can positively impact our environment.

A crucial facet of responsible tourism is providing aid to nearby communities. The Himalayan ecology includes the homestay owners, local guides, and rural children you encounter on hikes. You can support these communities and help maintain their way of life by staying in homestays, hiring local guides, and purchasing goods created in the area.

Higher Energies of the Himalayas

The Himalayas are more than just mountains; they are a haven of spiritual retreat, a wellspring of inspiration, and a display of the splendour of the natural world. The Himalayas provide an experience that is both humbling and inspiring, whether you are trekking through the lush forests of Deoria Tal, taking in the quiet of Kanatal, or seeking solitude in the spiritual villages of Haridwar and Rishikesh.

On this 'Himalaya Day,' let us pledge to safeguard these hallowed places, practise responsible travel, and bring only memories. Everyone can sense the higher vibrations of the Himalayas, but it is our responsibility to keep them unspoiled and unadulterated. 🌿

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