

PRAVEG'S

JANUARY 2026 | ₹ 200

tourism one

A Trusted Friend for Travellers

Winter Homecomings

Great Migration of Gujarati Diaspora


Photography
Destinations
in India

SEVEN SISTERS OF INDIA

The most compelling frontier for
Responsible Growth

The Northeast of India is no longer a distant horizon — it is a rising promise. From the living root bridges of Meghalaya to the serene valleys of Arunachal Pradesh and the wildlife landscapes of Assam, the region offers authenticity that today's traveller deeply seeks.

With improved connectivity and progressive government initiatives focused on sustainable circuits and community-led tourism, the Seven Sisters are emerging as India's most compelling frontier for responsible growth. For the hospitality sector, this presents extraordinary opportunity: boutique eco-resorts, experiential stays, curated cultural journeys, and high-value destination circuits designed with sensitivity to nature and local communities.

At Praveg Limited, we see the Northeast not merely as a destination, but as a partnership, where development walks hand in hand with preservation. The future of Indian tourism lies in regions that celebrate culture, protect ecology, and create livelihoods. The Northeast stands ready, and so must we: with vision, respect, and commitment. 

Dr. Vishnukumar Patel
Chairman – PRAVEG LIMITED

When Winter Moves India

India does not enter the New Year quietly. It steps forward with colour, appetite, memory, and motion. January is not a beginning in the Western sense of resolutions and reinvention. In India, it is continuation — of harvest cycles, migratory rhythms, family returns, and festival skies. Rooftops fill before diaries do. Temples awaken before boardrooms. Airports resemble reunion halls rather than transit spaces.

This issue of Tourism One is stitched around that movement.

In Festive Beginnings, we explore how the first months of the year transform the country into a living theatre. From Uttarayan terraces in Gujarat to Pongal courtyards in Tamil Nadu, from Republic Day pageantry in New Delhi to Vasant Panchami's mustard fields, January and February reveal a simple truth: in India, festivals are catalysts of travel. Where there is celebration, there is mobility. Where there is mobility, there is tourism.

Not all journeys, however, are made by road or rail.

In When Winter Brings Visitors Home, we follow a migration older than history. Thousands of birds descend upon Indian wetlands from Siberia, Central Asia, and the Arctic, turning salt deserts and lagoons into seasonal homelands. Their arrival mirrors something deeply human. Just as overseas Indians return when weddings begin and the air softens, these winged travellers return when survival demands warmth. Winter, it seems, is India's most generous season.

Then there is the act of framing.

In Photography Destinations in India, we move from sky to lens. Winter light changes the country. The Himalayas sharpen. The Rann turns contemplative in white silence. Coastal horizons soften into gold. Grasslands glow. India does not pose in winter; it reveals itself.

Movement, however, feels incomplete without memory.

In Winter Homecomings, we observe an emotional migration. Airports fill with Indians returning not merely for ceremonies or investments, but for belonging. Uttarayan becomes non-negotiable. Lohri becomes intergenerational storytelling. Temple visits become continuity. Winter is not just peak tourist season; it is peak sentiment season.

And winter in India is incomplete without taste.

The recipes in this issue are seasonal anchors. Jalebi spirals like kites against January skies. Lasaniya Fedra, Tuvor Totha, and Undhiyu remind us that winter is understood through warmth — of spice, shared plates, and kitchens that gather generations. Food, like travel, carries memory.

A quiet pattern connects these stories. Winter moves India inward and outward at once. Birds arrive. Families reunite. Photographers chase softer light. Pilgrims travel through sacred nights. Rooftops fill.

It is the season when India comes back to itself.


Tourism is often measured in distances covered and rooms booked. But perhaps it is also seasonal belonging — the annual decision to return home for a kite festival, the instinct that guides a bird across continents, the craving for a winter dish no substitute can replace.

As we step into 2026, the question may not be where we will travel, but how we will return — to places, to rituals, to one another, and to ourselves.

Because in this country, journeys rarely move in straight lines.

They spiral. They migrate. They simmer.

And when people move, stories begin.

Read on! 

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WINTER HOMECOMINGS

WHY NRIs RETURN TO INDIA AND WHERE THEY TRAVEL

By JAYESH PUROHIT

WHEN WINTER BECOMES A HOMECOMING

Every winter, India changes in ways that are subtle yet profound. Airports grow busier. Wedding venues are booked months in advance. Luxury resorts report peak occupancy. Jewellery showrooms glow brighter. And family homes, which have waited all year, finally fill with laughter.

Winter is not merely a tourist season. It is India's season of return.

From November to February, Non-Resident Indians arrive in large numbers from across the world. Some come for weddings. Some for festivals. Some for ageing parents. And some simply to breathe the winter air of a country they never truly left.

The timing is perfect. While snowstorms freeze cities in North America and grey skies dominate Europe, India offers pleasant sunshine. North India becomes comfortably cool. Rajasthan turns golden. Gujarat becomes festive. Kerala remains mild and welcoming. It is the most travel-friendly period across the subcontinent.

For India's hospitality industry, winter is also the NRI season. A powerful driver of destination weddings, luxury stays, domestic tourism, and retail spending.



THE GREAT SEASONAL MIGRATION OF THE GUJARATI DIASPORA

Among winter festivals, one celebration creates a migration of its own — Uttarayan, known across India as Makar Sankranti. But in Gujarat, it is not merely a harvest marker. It is an emotion that refuses to stay overseas.

Every January 14th, terraces across Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, and Vadodara transform into vibrant skies of colour. Kites rise before sunrise. Loudspeakers echo with music. Undhiyu simmers in kitchens. Jalebi plates circulate endlessly. The day stretches from dawn until the final kite disappears into dusk.

For Gujaratis living abroad — whether in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, or East Africa — Uttarayan is non-negotiable. Many plan annual leave months in advance. Business meetings are rescheduled. School calendars are negotiated. Because Uttarayan is not celebrated in living rooms overseas; it belongs to open terraces, crowded pols, and winter sunlight that feels distinctly Gujarati.

Within India too, the pull is powerful. Gujaratis working in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, or Hyderabad return home specifically for this festival. Flights into Ahmedabad report noticeable spikes. Family homes fill up. Kite markets experience frenzied buying. It is, in many ways, Gujarat's unofficial homecoming season.

For NRI families, Uttarayan becomes generational storytelling in motion. Children who have grown up abroad learn how to hold the firki, how to shout “Kai Po Che,” how to watch the sky not through screens but through sunlight. Identity is not explained; it is flown.

If winter is India's season of return, then Uttarayan is Gujarat's skyward declaration that no matter where its people travel, they always find their way back — at least once a year, when the kites call them home.

ROOFTOPS TURN INTO CELEBRATION GROUNDS



For Gujaratis, Uttarayan is not a festival that arrives quietly. Preparations begin days in advance. Kite markets in Ahmedabad, Surat, and Rajkot turn into vibrant bazaars where families shop for colourful kites, spools of manja, and decorative firakis. Vendors work through the night as buyers debate kite shapes, colours, and cutting strength.

Shopping extends beyond kites. Many families buy new clothes for the two days of celebration. Sunglasses, caps, hoodies, and comfortable winter wear become essential rooftop accessories, protecting revellers from hours under the winter sun.

Food forms the second heartbeat of the festival. Kitchens prepare the season's beloved combination of undhiyu and jalebi, while plates of chikki, sesame sweets, and sugarcane circulate endlessly among friends and neighbours.

Across old city pols and modern apartment blocks, rooftops transform into social arenas. Some families even rent terraces for the festival weekend, turning kite flying into an energetic celebration of community, competition, and pure joy.

THE REGIONS THAT EXPORT DREAMS AND IMPORT EMOTIONS



Certain Indian states have historically produced large diaspora communities. Winter becomes their reunion season.

Punjab sees families reunite in villages and cities alike. Weddings dominate the calendar. Agricultural roots meet global exposure.

Gujarat witnesses a steady flow of returning entrepreneurs and business families.

Kerala's global diaspora returns not just for family but also for spiritual and cultural anchors.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana maintain strong US-based tech connections.

Tamil Nadu balances temple traditions with global diaspora networks.

The reasons extend beyond tourism. Weddings. Property investments. Religious obligations. Inheritance matters. Extended family networks. India remains a lived connection, not just a passport origin.

THE GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF INDIAN DIASPORA

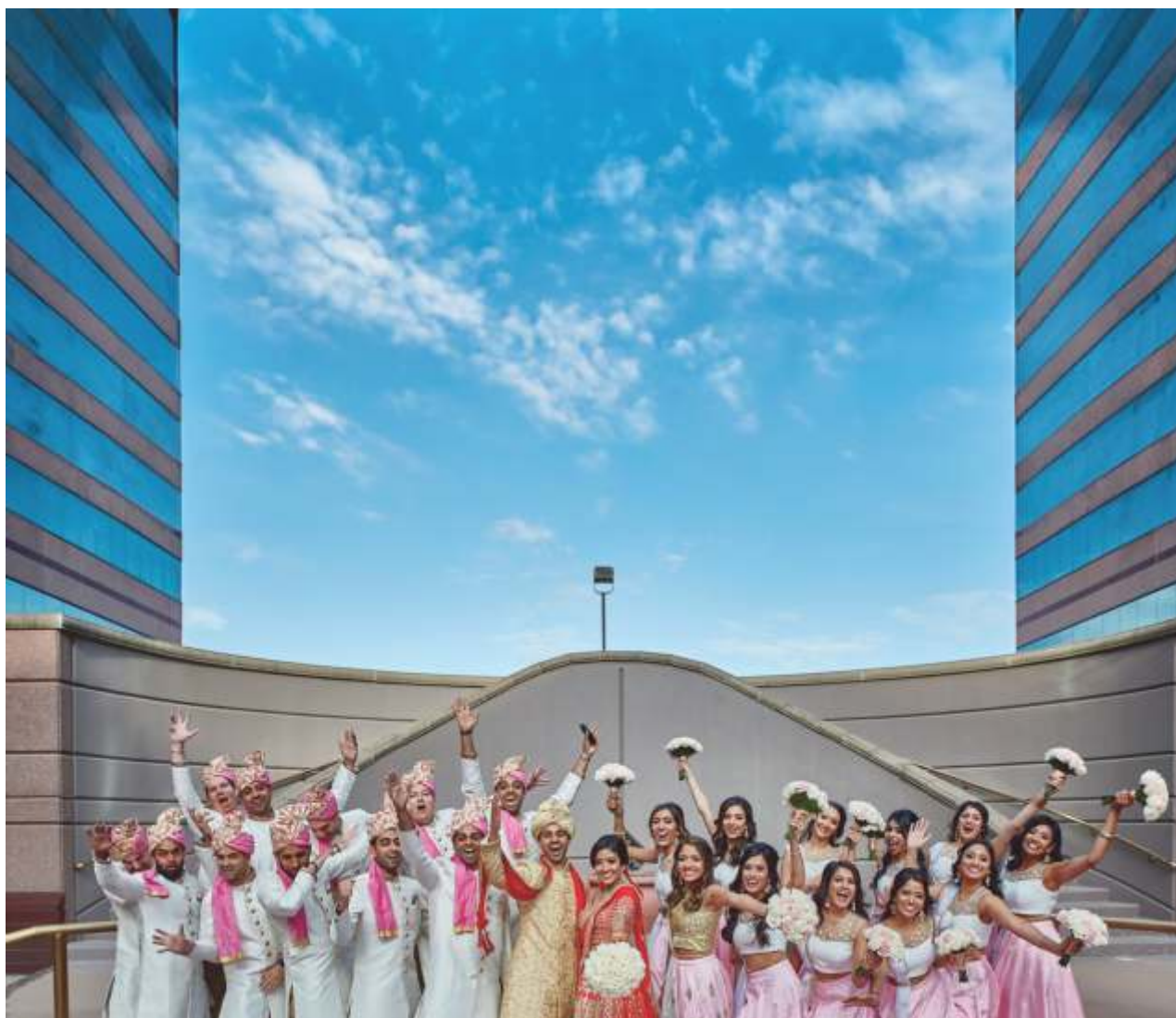
India's diaspora is one of the largest in the world. Yet certain countries contribute significantly to winter travel flows. The United States remains home to the largest NRI population. From Silicon Valley professionals to medical practitioners and entrepreneurs, many schedule extended winter visits.

The United Kingdom continues to maintain strong generational ties with Punjab, Gujarat, and other states. Canada, especially cities like Toronto and Vancouver, sees a steady outbound winter movement toward India. The UAE and Gulf nations contribute a different pattern - shorter but more frequent visits due to geographic proximity.

And increasingly, Australia is emerging as a strong contributor to winter travel home. Travel duration often reflects geography. Visitors from the US, Canada, and the UK typically stay three to six weeks. Gulf-based NRIs may visit for one to two weeks but return multiple times a year.



WHY EVERYTHING ALIGNS BETWEEN NOVEMBER AND FEBRUARY



WHEN INDIA DRESSES IN GOLD

Between November and February, India's wedding calendar is at its busiest. Auspicious dates fill quickly.

Destination weddings in Rajasthan — especially in cities like Udaipur and Jaipur — see grand celebrations blending royal heritage with modern luxury. Goa attracts beach ceremonies. Gujarat hosts large community weddings.

Winter weather allows open-air functions, palace courtyards, beachfront pheras, and elaborate décor without climatic anxiety. The hospitality industry experiences its annual surge.

THE CALENDAR TURNS EMOTIONAL



SUNLIGHT WITHOUT SEVERITY

Pleasant temperatures across North, West, and Central India make sightseeing ideal. The desert is not harsh. The plains are not scorching. Even wildlife safaris become comfortable experiences.

A SEASON STITCHED WITH CELEBRATION



- Lohri brings warmth to Punjabi households.
- Makar Sankranti and Pongal mark harvest celebrations across regions.
- Christmas and New Year align conveniently with global holiday calendars.
- Republic Day adds patriotic symbolism.
- Maha Shivratri invites spiritual travel.

For NRIs, festivals become emotional reconnection rituals — moments when children born abroad witness traditions first-hand.

BEYOND THE ANCESTRAL HOME THE SECOND JOURNEY BEGINS



Gorgeous View of Amer Fort and Palace, Jaipur

Pleasant temperatures across North, West, and Central India make sightseeing ideal. The desert is not harsh. The plains are not scorching. Even wildlife safaris become comfortable experiences.

PALACES, POLS, AND THE PULL OF THE PAST



Lake Palace

Rajasthan remains a favourite. Udaipur's lakes, Jaipur's forts, Jodhpur's blue lanes, and the wilderness of Jawai offer nostalgia wrapped in grandeur.

Gujarat sees visits to Ahmedabad, the Statue of Unity, and Somnath.

Lakshadweep attracts those seeking exclusive island serenity away from crowded global beaches.

JOURNEYS OF FAITH, MEMORY, AND CONTINUITY



The Golden Temple, Punjab

Many journeys are spiritual. The Golden Temple in Amritsar becomes a homecoming site for the Punjabi diaspora. Varanasi offers continuity across centuries. Rishikesh invites reflection. Tirupati draws families seeking blessings across generations. Shirdi and other temple towns see steady NRI footfall.

RECLAIMING RELAXATION, THE INDIAN WAY



Tourist Houseboat in Kerala Backwaters

Rajasthan remains a favourite. Udaipur's lakes, Jaipur's forts, Jodhpur's blue lanes, and the wilderness of Jawai offer nostalgia wrapped in grandeur.

Gujarat sees visits to Ahmedabad, the Statue of Unity, and Somnath.

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INTO THE WILD, INTO THE ROOTS



Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan

Ranthambore's tiger safaris. Gir's Asiatic lions. Jim Corbett's forest landscapes. Winter enhances visibility and comfort, making wildlife tourism highly attractive.

MEMORY SERVED ON A PLATE



Winter travel is incomplete without food.

NRIs begin with comfort. Home-style meals. Recipes preserved by mothers and grandmothers. Street food indulgence that may be avoided abroad.

Then comes celebration. Premium vegetarian wedding spreads. Multi-cuisine luxury buffets. Fine-dining reinterpretations of regional cuisine.

Punjabi families relish elaborate feasts. Gujarati NRIs seek traditional thali experiences. South Indian visitors cherish temple prasadam and banana-leaf meals.

Food is memory served warm.



MORE THAN CELEBRATION, A CULTURAL REHEARSAL OF BELONGING



- Lohri in Punjab.
- Uttarayan in Gujarat.
- Pongal in Tamil Nadu.
- Christmas and New Year across metros.
- Maha Shivratri in temple towns.

For diaspora families, festivals are not events — they are bridges. They allow children to see cousins, fly kites on terraces, dance around bonfires, visit temples at dawn. These experiences shape identity more deeply than textbooks ever can.

THE BILLION-RUPEE HOMECOMING



- Winter homecomings are emotionally driven, but their economic impact is substantial.
- Average stays range from two to six weeks, depending on country of residence.
- Spending typically includes:
 - Wedding expenses
 - Jewellery purchases
 - Apparel and gifting
 - Domestic air travel
 - Luxury hospitality stays
- Property maintenance and investment
- The ripple effect benefits aviation, hotels, destination wedding planners, retail brands, jewellery houses, and local artisans.
- Luxury resorts report peak occupancies. Palace hotels host multi-day wedding celebrations. Boutique properties see extended family bookings. Domestic airlines add capacity.
- NRIs are not casual tourists. They are high-value seasonal travellers.

SENTIMENT MEETS INVESTMENT



Beyond numbers lies something deeper.

Returning NRIs often bring children who have never lived in India. They show them ancestral homes. Village schools. Temples where their grandparents prayed. Family fields.

Identity becomes experiential. Belonging becomes visible.

Many explore buying second homes. Some invest in real estate. Others plan retirement possibilities. Winter travel quietly becomes investment tourism.

India, in these months, is not merely a destination. It is an inheritance being revisited.

WHEN THE WORLD COMES BACK TO INDIA

Winter in India is a convergence — weddings, weather, and nostalgia aligning perfectly.

NRIs arrive as sons and daughters, as brides and grooms, as parents introducing roots to children. They travel, celebrate, invest, and reconnect.

They are not just visitors. They are seasonal ambassadors of Indian tourism — carrying India abroad all year, and bringing the world back home each winter. 🇮🇳



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Photography Destinations in India

By JAYESH PUROHIT

A Visual Journey Through Landscapes, Culture, and Wilderness
India is not a country you merely visit; it is a country you frame.

From snow-clad peaks in the north to sunburnt deserts in the west, from riverine plains to restless coastlines, from ancient temple corridors to silent grasslands—India is a living gallery. Every region shifts its colour palette with the season. Every dawn tells a different story. For a photographer, this land is not just diverse; it is inexhaustible.

Landscape photographers find drama in mountains and deserts. Wildlife enthusiasts chase patience through forests

and grasslands. Street photographers lose themselves in bazaars and ghats. Spiritual seekers discover light in rituals and riverbanks. And somewhere between these frames, a traveller becomes a storyteller.

With thoughtfully located properties across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and coastal destinations, Praveg resorts serve as strategic bases for photographers who wish to explore beyond the obvious and return to comfort after a day of chasing light.



Young Taking Photos in Munnar, Kerala

Mountains & Meadows

Himalayan Frames



Beautiful landscape with Himalayan mountains

The Himalayas do not pose.
They reveal themselves slowly.

In Kashmir, morning mist floats over silent lakes and pine forests. In Himachal Pradesh, alpine meadows bloom under dramatic skies. In Uttarakhand, temples sit quietly against mountain silhouettes. Snow peaks shift from silver to gold within minutes during sunrise and sunset.

For photographers, timing is everything here. April to June offers lush greens and clear views. October to February brings snow and crisp contrasts. A tripod is essential. Wide-angle lenses capture scale; telephoto lenses compress mountain layers beautifully.

Desert Dramatic Landscapes

Gujarat & Rajasthan



Road to Heaven, Kutch

If mountains are poetry,
deserts are philosophy.

The Rann of Kutch is a surreal white canvas stretching endlessly under a dramatic sky. At sunrise, the salt desert blushes in soft pink. At sunset, silhouettes of camels and travellers carve minimalistic compositions. The Little Rann of Kutch offers textured earth, wild asses, and vast horizons. For those who seek history within landscapes, Dholavira presents the ancient geometry of the Indus Valley Civilization—where ruins meet desert winds.

Photographers can stay at PRAVEG White Rann Resort, which offers direct access to the salt marsh spectacle. Praveg Resort Dholavira places you close to archaeological wonder. Meanwhile, Praveg Caves Jawai opens doors to rugged granite hills and raw terrain where leopards roam free.

Coastlines and Blue Horizons

Seascape Stories



Praveg Beach Resort, Daman

Where the land meets the sea,
the light becomes fluid

India's coastlines—east and west—offer some of the most dynamic golden hours. Waves reshape compositions every second. Clouds create moving canvases. At Chakratirth Beach, near Praveg Beach Resort Diu, photographers can capture dramatic sea views and sweeping skies. Nagoa Beach offers elegant curves of shoreline, while Ghoghla Beach creates powerful silhouette opportunities at dusk. Further north, Praveg Beach Resort Daman provides access to Jampore Beach, where lighthouse frames and reflective sands elevate compositions. At Praveg Rezort Silvassa, river views allow tranquil waterside storytelling.

For seascape photography, use slower shutter speeds to create silky water effects. Carry lens cloths—salt spray is relentless. And always respect the sea.

Cultural & Historical Photography

Sacred Frames



Ayodhya

India's heritage is not
frozen in time; it breathes.

In Ayodhya, rituals unfold along riverbanks. Staying at Tent City Ayodhya - Brahmakund allows photographers to capture early morning prayers, saffron robes against blue dawns, and reflections in sacred waters.

At Tent City Narmada, near the towering Statue of Unity, photographers can explore river life, tribal culture, and architectural scale. Wildlife and grassland enthusiasts will appreciate PRAVEG Safari Velavadar, located near the blackbuck sanctuary—where golden grasslands glow at sunset.

Street photography in ancient cities demands sensitivity. Ask before photographing individuals. Capture emotions, not intrusion. India rewards patience with authenticity.

Wildlife Photography

Patience in Motion



Jawai, Rajasthan

Wildlife photography is not about speed;
it is about stillness

India's national parks shelter tigers, elephants, rhinos, and leopards. Early morning safaris offer softer light and active wildlife behaviour. Telephoto lenses (300mm and above) are essential. Silence is mandatory.

While Praveg properties are not located inside major tiger reserves, photographers can design circuits—exploring parks and returning to comfortable bases like Jawai or Velavadar for extended landscape and wildlife sessions.

Nature does not guarantee sightings. But it always guarantees humility.

Praveg Resorts

Your Creative Base



Praveg Resort, Kachigam

A good photograph requires the right light.
A good journey requires the right base.

Praveg resorts are strategically positioned to offer scenic access, cultural immersion, and curated local experiences. Whether it is sunset at the White Rann, riverfront mornings in Ayodhya, coastal winds in Diu, rugged hills in Jawai, or grasslands in Velavadar—each location offers photographers proximity to their subject and comfort after long exploration days.

Here, photography extends beyond landscapes. It becomes conversation—with locals, with nature, with history.

Travel Photography Tips



Photographer climbing on the top of the mountain to take a picture at sunset

Plan your golden hours. The first and last light of the day transforms ordinary scenes into extraordinary frames.

Travel light but smart:

Wide-angle lens for landscapes.

Prime lens for portraits.

Telephoto for wildlife.

Sturdy tripod.

Extra batteries and memory cards.

Respect local customs. Avoid disturbing wildlife. Seek stories—not just symmetry. Sometimes the best photograph is the one you do not take.

Conclusion India, An Endless Frame



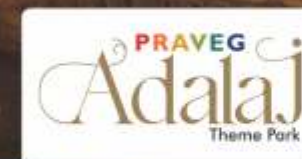
Praveg Atoll's, Lakshadweep

India is not a single photograph. It is a portfolio that keeps expanding.

Every journey adds a new texture. Every region reshapes perspective. Photography here is not merely about destinations—it is about movement, curiosity, and light. With thoughtfully located Praveg resorts serving as your base, you do not just capture images—you collect stories. And long after the shutter closes, those stories continue to unfold. Because in India, the frame is never complete. 10

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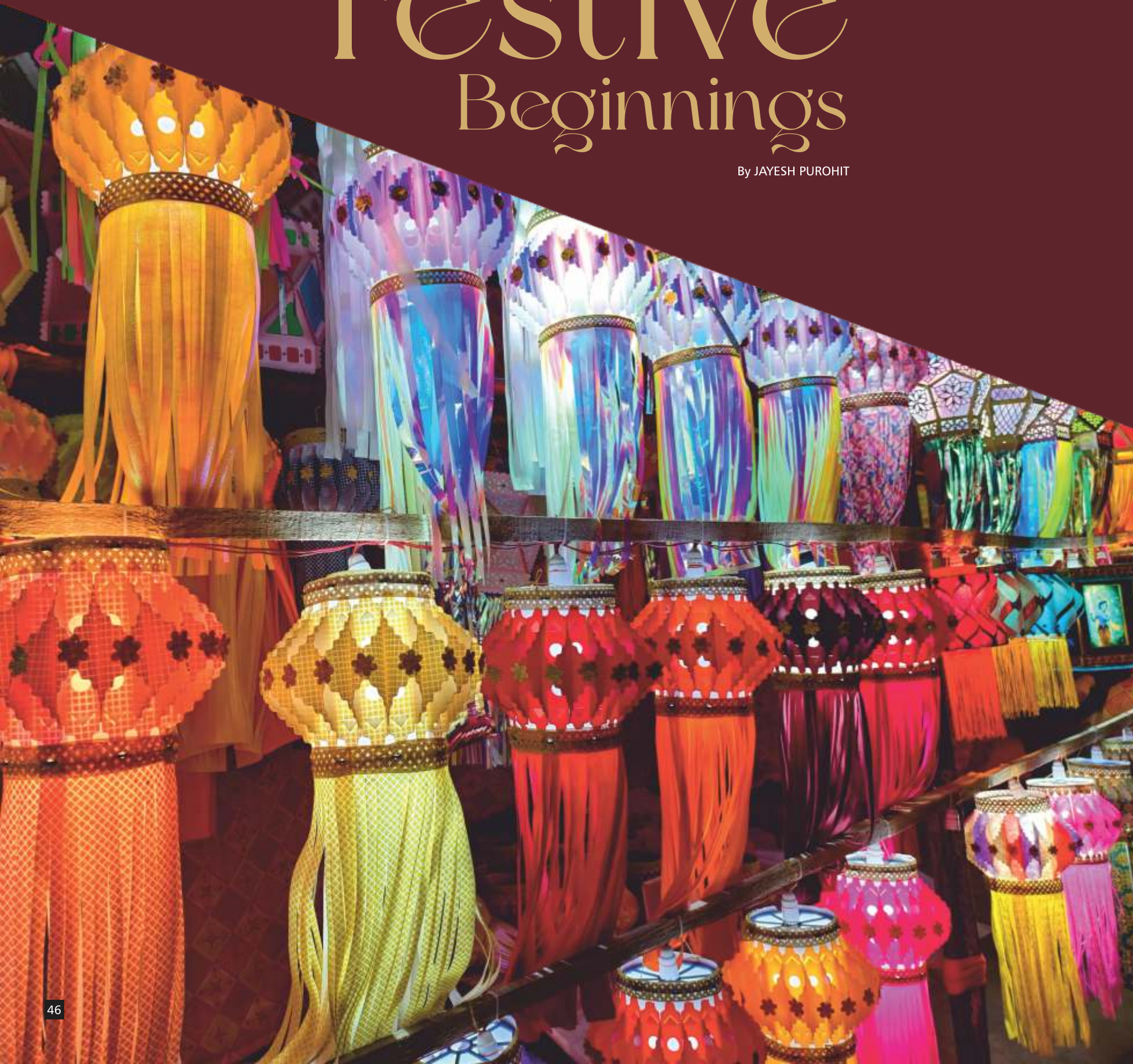
Festive Beginnings

By JAYESH PUROHIT

WHERE INDIA TRAVELS IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE NEW YEAR

India does not step into the New Year quietly. It enters with drums, kites, harvest fires, temple bells, and rooftop laughter. January and February are not merely calendar markers; they are seasonal transitions charged with emotion — gratitude for harvest, devotion to faith, celebration of nationhood, and even the tender assertion of romance.

For travellers, these months are not off-season pauses. They are invitations. In India, festivals are rarely confined to homes or temples; they spill onto streets, ghats, terraces, beaches, and city boulevards. They transform destinations into living theatres of culture. And where there is celebration, there is movement. Where there is movement, there is travel.



January

Harvest, Heritage & National Pride

Makar Sankranti

(Uttarayan)

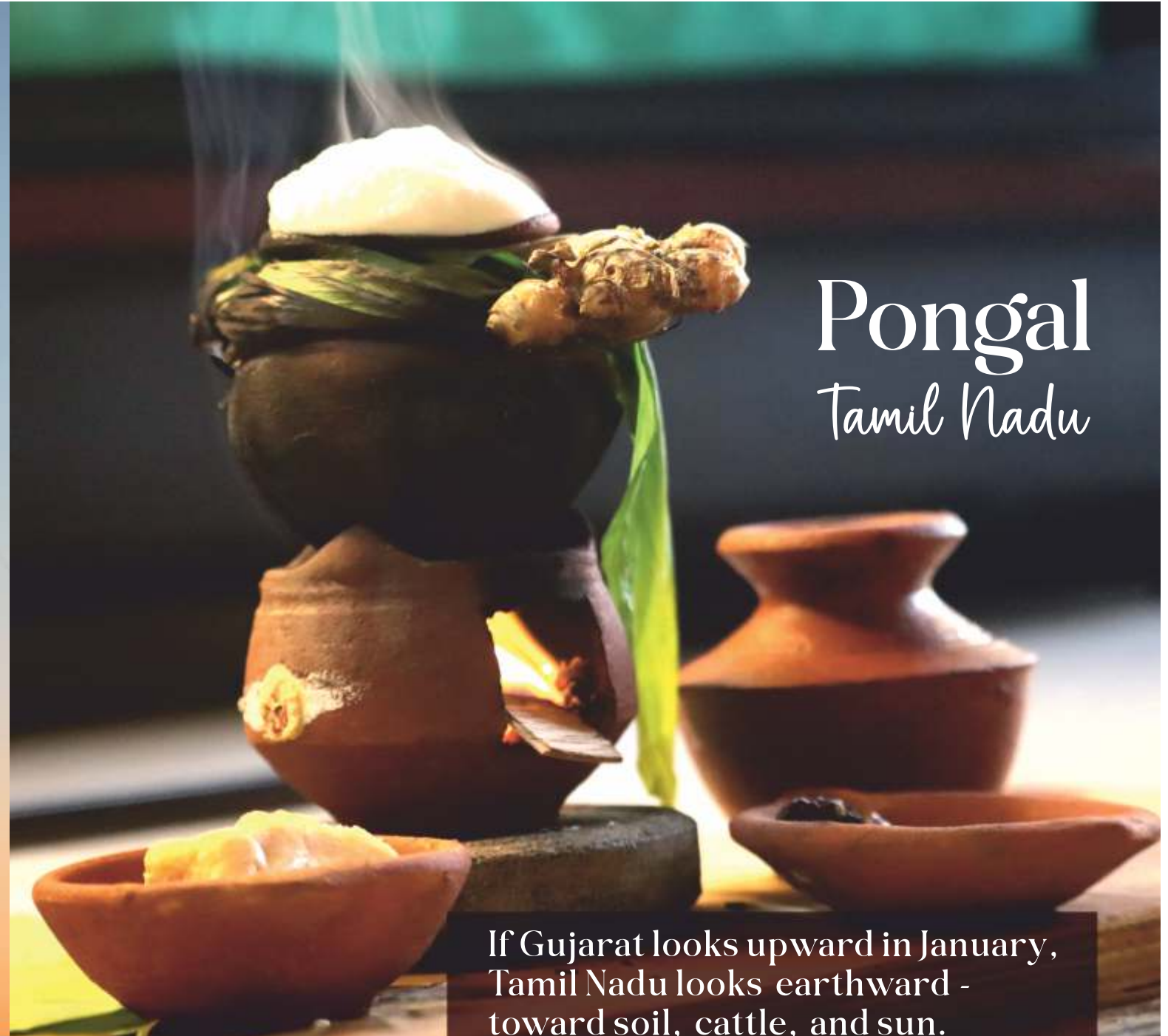
Gujarat



In Gujarat, January skies are not empty. They are claimed.

On Makar Sankranti — locally known as Uttarayan — rooftops in Ahmedabad and across the state turn into festive arenas. The International Kite Festival attracts participants and spectators from across India and abroad. But beyond the organised spectacle lies something more intimate: families on terraces, shouting friendly challenges, cutting rival kites mid-air, sharing undhiyu and jalebi under a winter sun.

For travellers, this is not passive sightseeing. It is participatory culture. Tourists book heritage stays in the old city, wake up to the call of “Kai Po Che,” and spend entire days immersed in rooftop revelry. The festival boosts urban tourism, culinary experiences, and heritage walks — proving how a traditional harvest celebration can elevate a city into a seasonal travel hotspot.



Pongal

Tamil Nadu

If Gujarat looks upward in January, Tamil Nadu looks earthward - toward soil, cattle, and sun.

Pongal is gratitude in ritual form. In villages, freshly harvested rice is boiled in decorated clay pots until it overflows — a symbolic prayer for abundance. Homes are adorned with intricate kolams. In certain districts, Jallikattu adds an intense cultural dimension.

For the traveller seeking authenticity, Pongal offers rural immersion. Temple towns, agrarian landscapes, and traditional homes become living classrooms of South Indian heritage. Travel during Pongal is not about luxury alone; it is about experience — witnessing agrarian rhythms that have sustained communities for centuries. Rural tourism circuits, temple trails, and cultural homestays all find renewed interest during this harvest festival.

Republic Day

New Delhi & Beyond



January culminates not in harvest, but in nationhood.

On 26th January, New Delhi becomes the ceremonial heart of India. The Republic Day Parade along Kartavya Path showcases military precision, cultural tableaux from states, and the diversity that defines the republic. The Beating Retreat ceremony adds a graceful conclusion to the celebrations.

For travellers, this is patriotic tourism at its peak. Hotels in the capital witness high demand. Visitors combine parade attendance with explorations of monuments, museums, and heritage districts. The festival also inspires domestic travel as citizens explore state capitals and regional celebrations. Republic Day reminds us that travel can be an act of belonging — a way of seeing the nation beyond one's own city.

February

Romance, Spirituality & Cultural Energy

Vasant Panchami



Vasant Panchami marks the transition from winter to spring and honours Goddess Saraswati — the deity of knowledge, music, and arts. Across North and East India, devotees dress in yellow, temples resonate with prayer, and educational institutions organise ceremonies.

For travellers, Vasant Panchami is visual poetry. Photographers chase mustard fields in Punjab and Haryana. Cultural enthusiasts visit Kolkata for Saraswati Puja celebrations that blend devotion with youthful vibrancy. Seasonal tourism thrives as landscapes shift colour, offering a gentle yet profound reason to explore northern plains and eastern cities.

February softens the air. The mustard fields bloom yellow. Spring whispers its arrival.

Valentine's Day

Urban India & Destination Retreats

January culminates not in harvest, but in nationhood.

While tradition dominates early January, mid-February introduces a more contemporary celebration — one that urban India has embraced with enthusiasm.

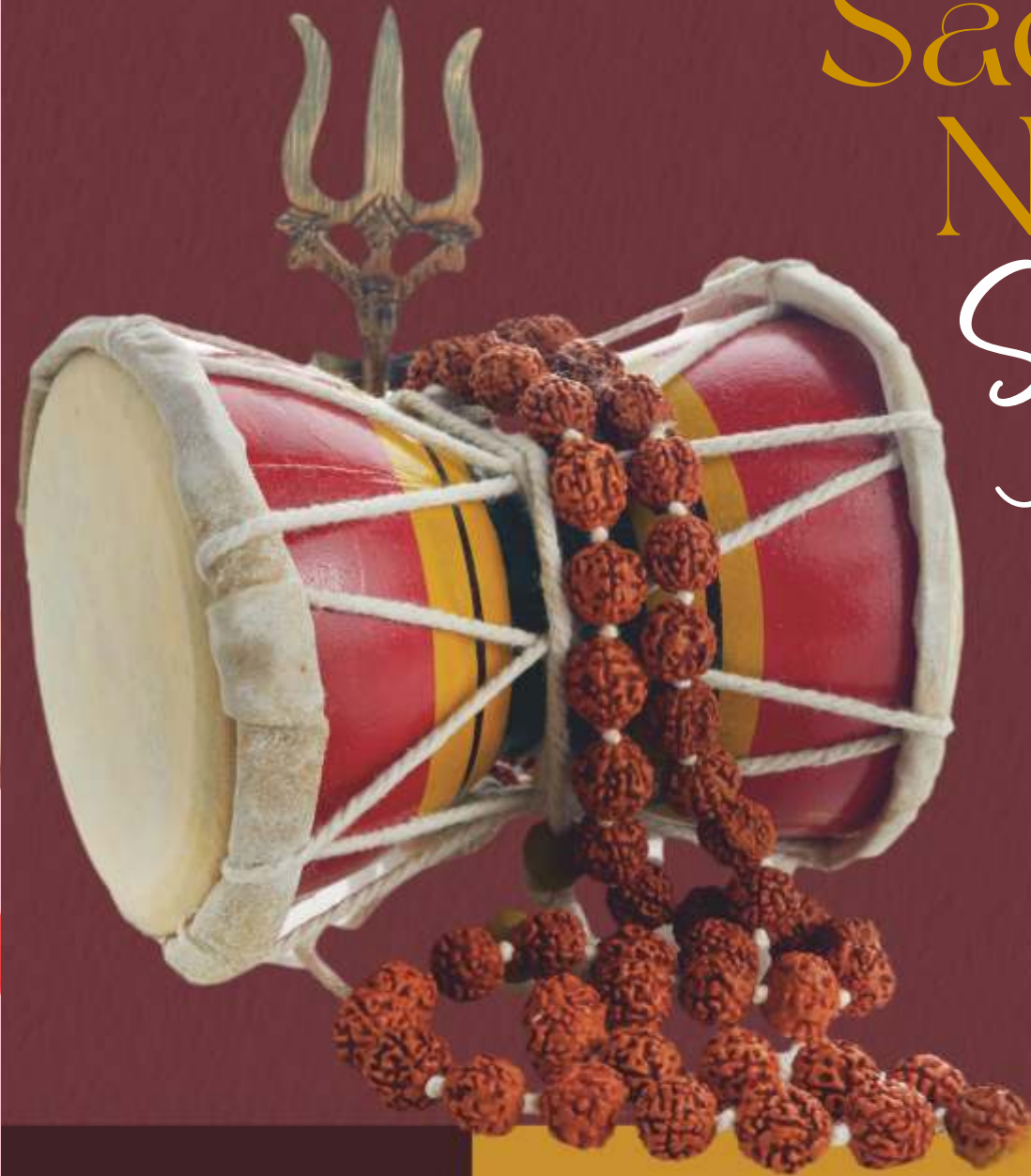
Valentine's Day has evolved into a significant travel trigger. Couples seek weekend escapes to beaches, hill stations, desert retreats, and luxury resorts. Hospitality brands curate romantic packages: candlelight dinners, spa indulgences, curated experiences under starlit skies.

What was once a single-day celebration has become a tourism driver. Short-haul domestic travel spikes. Bookings increase in leisure destinations. Experiences matter more than gifts. Valentine's Day reflects the growing appetite for experiential travel — where emotion shapes itinerary.



Sacred Night

Sacred Journeys

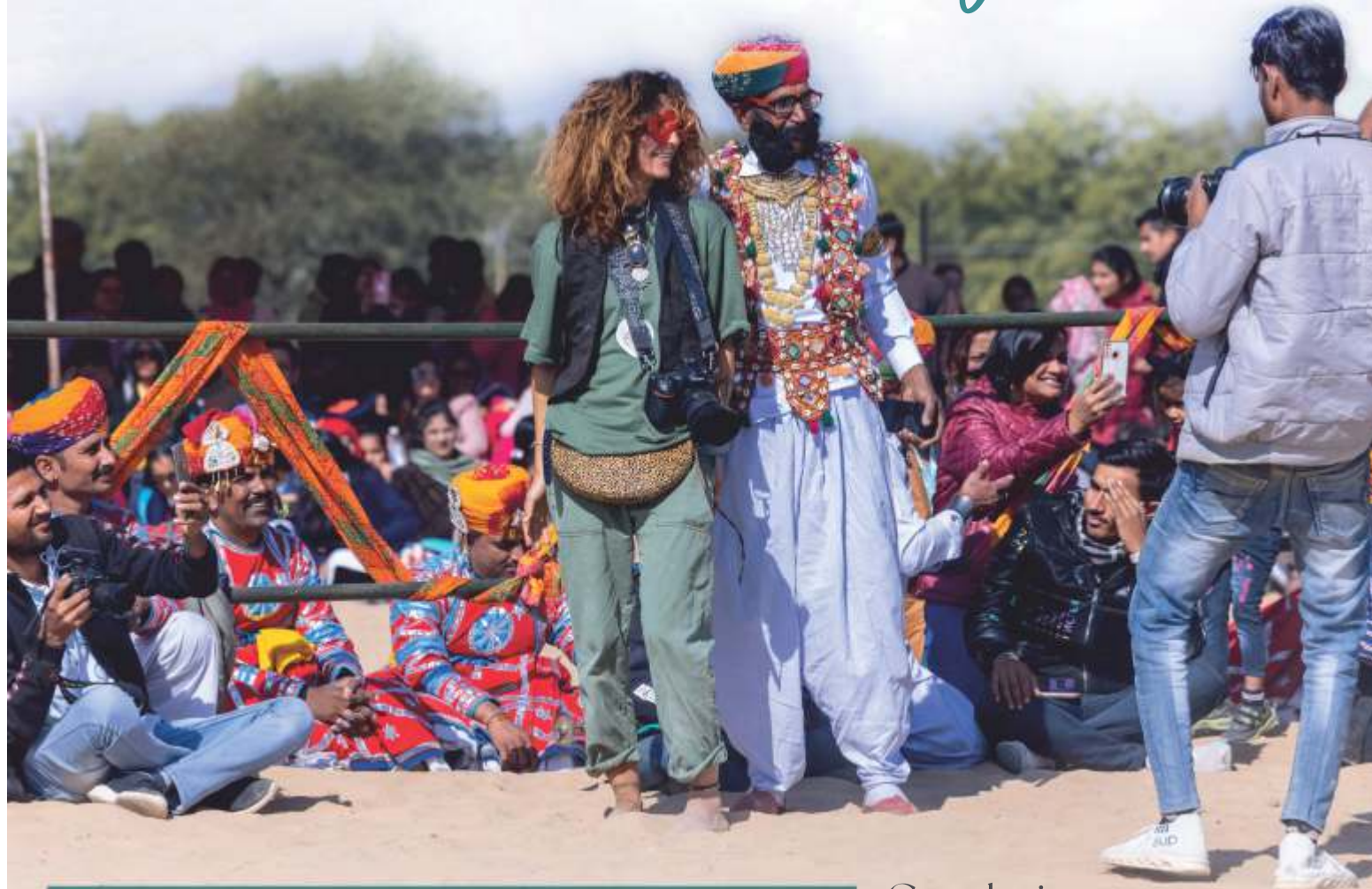


As February deepens, spirituality takes centre stage.

Maha Shivratri, the great night of Lord Shiva, draws devotees to temples across India. In Varanasi, the ghats remain awake. In Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar temple, the fervour is intense. Somnath witnesses waves of pilgrims seeking blessing and reflection.

Pilgrimage tourism surges during this period. Spiritual circuits — Jyotirlinga trails, riverfront cities, temple towns — see heightened activity. Travel during Maha Shivratri is less about leisure and more about devotion, yet it fuels local economies, hospitality sectors, and cultural exchange. It demonstrates how faith and movement are intertwined in the Indian travel narrative.

Festivals as Tourism Catalysts



The first two months of the year reveal a pattern. Festivals are not isolated cultural events; they are catalysts of mobility.

Short festive weekends encourage quick getaways. Harvest celebrations revive rural circuits. National pride draws travellers to the capital. Spring invites photography tourism. Romance stimulates resort bookings. Devotion energises pilgrimage routes.

Hospitality brands increasingly curate festival-specific packages - rooftop kite-viewing stays in Ahmedabad, Pongal-themed rural retreats, Republic Day heritage tours in Delhi, romantic February escapes, and spiritual travel itineraries during Maha Shivratri. Social media amplifies these movements, transforming local celebrations into national travel aspirations. In this evolving ecosystem, destinations are no longer static. They become seasonal experiences. Timing shapes tourism just as much as geography.

Conclusion

January and February quietly set the rhythm for India's travel calendar. From harvest rooftops to temple bells, from mustard fields to candlelit beaches, these months remind us that celebration in India is geographical. It reshapes cities, animates villages, and fills hotel lobbies.

In India, festivals do not stay confined to rituals - they move people. And when people move, journeys begin.

The New Year, therefore, is not simply a turn of the page. It is an invitation to travel with the country - through gratitude, pride, romance, and devotion - discovering that every festival is, in essence, a destination. ¹⁰

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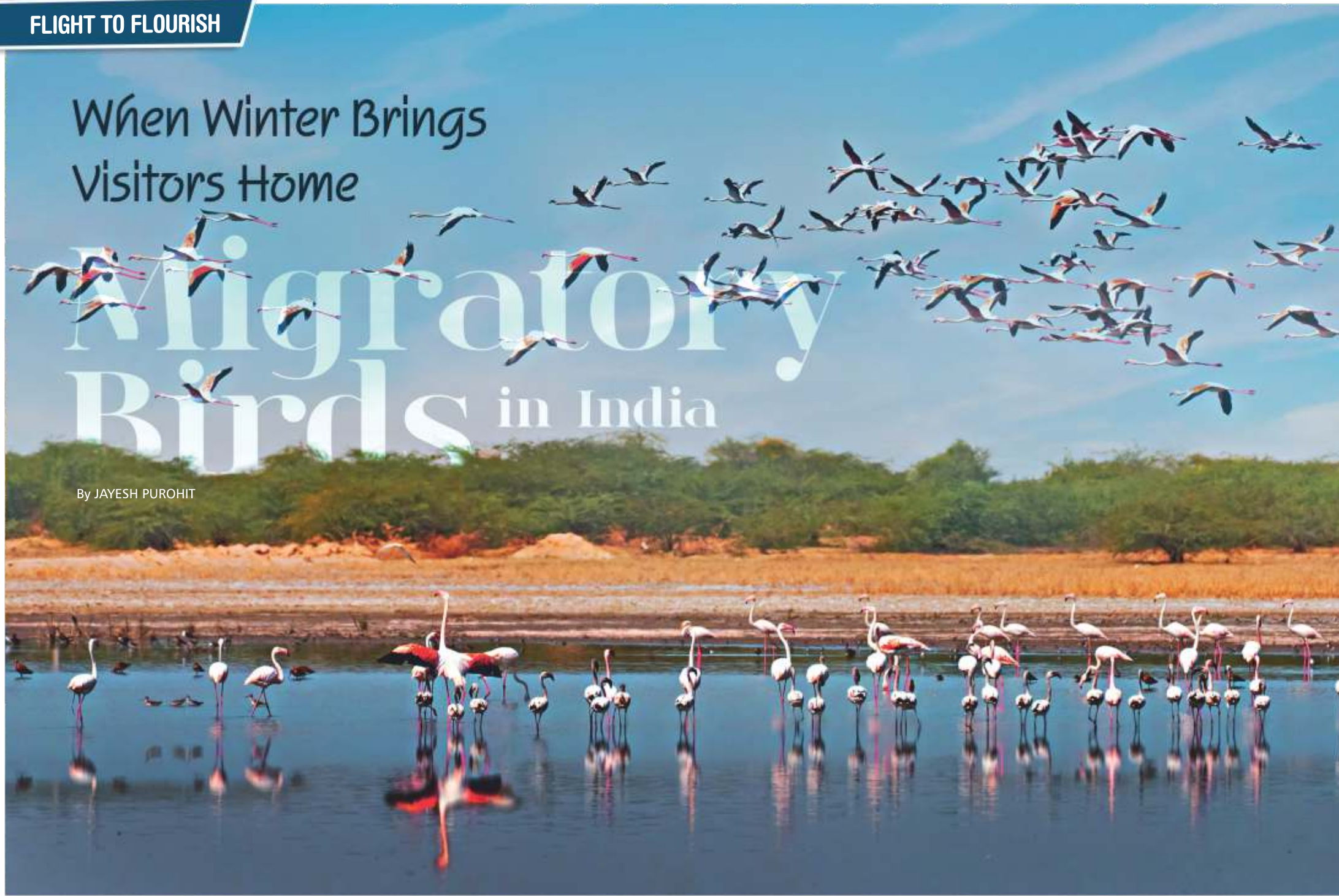
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When Winter Brings
Visitors Home

Migratory Birds in India

By JAYESH PUROHIT

Flamingos in Rann of Kutch, Gujarat

Every winter, migratory birds travel thousands of kilometres from colder regions to India, making the country a seasonal refuge rich in food, warmth, and diverse habitats. Their arrival transforms wetlands, grasslands, and coastal landscapes into extraordinary birdwatching destinations for travellers. As temporary citizens of Indian winters, these birds highlight both the beauty of migration and the importance of conservation and responsible tourism.

Every winter, India witnesses a quiet homecoming.

Airports fill with returning non-resident Indians carrying stories, gifts, and memories gathered abroad, arriving not merely for holidays but for warmth, familiarity, and belonging. At the same time, far above the flight paths of commercial aircraft, another migration unfolds – older, instinctive, and astonishingly precise. Thousands of winged travellers descend upon the subcontinent after journeys that span continents and climates, guided not by visas or itineraries but by seasons written into their biology.

Like NRIs who return to reconnect with roots, migratory birds arrive in India seeking refuge from harsh winters elsewhere. From the frozen wetlands of Siberia and the windswept plains of Central Asia to the Arctic's endless summer territories, these birds travel thousands of kilometres to reach a land that offers survival and abundance. For a few months each year, India transforms into a seasonal homeland – a winter address shared by travellers of feather and flight.



Bird's-Eye View of Siberian Vasyugan Swamp



Burnt trees near swampy wetlands after a forest fire in Western Siberia



Wilderness and steppe landscape in Issyk-Kul Lake Region, Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia)

WHY INDIA? THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE JOURNEY



The Gobi Desert Located in Southern Mongolia



Beautiful view of the snow-covered tundra Winter Arctic landscape

Migration is not an escape but a strategy perfected by evolution. As winter tightens its grip across northern latitudes, lakes freeze, insects disappear, and food chains collapse. Birds that breed in Siberia, Mongolia, the Arctic, and parts of Europe move southward in search of landscapes where life continues uninterrupted.

India offers precisely what they need: moderate temperatures, thriving wetlands, grasslands rich with insects, shallow waters filled with aquatic plants and fish, and diverse ecosystems that remain productive through winter. Contrary to popular belief, most migratory birds do not come here to breed. Their nesting and reproduction occur in colder regions during summer, where long daylight hours support rapid growth of chicks. India serves instead as a sanctuary for feeding, rest, and survival — a place to regain strength before the long journey home.

FAMOUS MIGRATORY BIRDS THAT VISIT INDIA



Among the most legendary visitors is the Siberian Crane, once a graceful winter resident of Rajasthan's Keoladeo National Park. Travelling from Siberia, it depended on India's wetlands for feeding between November and February. Today, its presence has become heartbreakingly rare, a reminder of how fragile migratory routes can be.

Siberian Cranes



Close-up of the bar-headed goose

Equally remarkable is the Bar-headed Goose, a species celebrated for one of nature's greatest feats of endurance. Flying over the Himalayas at extreme altitudes, these birds arrive from Central Asia and Tibet to settle across wetlands in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. From October to March, they feed peacefully in lakes and reservoirs, embodying resilience shaped by migration.



GREATER FLAMINGO

WHITE RANN RESORT

The elegant Greater Flamingo paints entire landscapes pink during winter. Originating from parts of Europe, Africa, and West Asia, flamingos gather in large numbers in Gujarat's Rann of Kutch and along coastal mudflats such as Sewri in Mumbai. The shallow saline ecosystems provide abundant algae and crustaceans, and in parts of Kutch, flamingos even establish breeding colonies, turning remote salt deserts into vibrant nurseries of life.



BIRDWATCHING DESTINATIONS

THAT BRING TRAVELLERS CLOSER TO MIGRATION

Flamingos, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur

India's migratory bird landscape is remarkably diverse, offering experiences that appeal equally to seasoned ornithologists and curious travellers. Keoladeo National Park remains one of the world's finest managed bird sanctuaries, where winter mornings unfold with mist rising above wetlands alive with bird calls. Chilika Lake in Odisha, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, attracts vast congregations of migratory ducks and waders, turning boat rides into immersive wildlife encounters.

From Mongolia and Central Asia arrive the delicate Demoiselle Cranes, known locally as Kurjan. Their congregation at Khichan in Rajasthan has transformed a small desert village into an international birdwatching pilgrimage. Between September and March, thousands gather in a spectacle that merges conservation, community participation, and tourism.



Demoiselle Cranes overwintering in Rajasthan - India

In western India, the White Rann of Kutch emerges as one of the most dramatic winter habitats. Flamingos, pelicans, and cranes transform the stark salt desert into a living canvas, especially during sunrise and sunset when reflections blur the boundary between sky and earth. Nearby Dholavira, better known for its Harappan heritage, quietly hosts migratory birds around its reservoirs, offering travellers a rare combination of archaeology and ecology.



Greater Flamingo at Rann of Kutch



Northern Pintail in Chilika Lake, India



Velavadar, considered as world's largest roosting site for harriers

Further south in Gujarat, Velavadar Blackbuck National Park becomes internationally significant each winter as thousands of harriers gather in one of the world's largest communal roosts. Watching these raptors descend together at dusk is an experience that blends spectacle with scientific wonder.



A Male Northern Pintail in Odisha, India

Meanwhile, wetlands across eastern India welcome elegant visitors like the Northern Pintail, migrating from Arctic and northern European regions. Lakes such as Chilika and Pulicat become seasonal feeding grounds where these ducks glide across calm waters, completing one of the most visible chapters of India's winter wildlife story.

In Rajasthan, the waters of Jawai attract migratory waterbirds alongside its famous leopard landscape, allowing travellers to witness a rare coexistence of avian and wildlife tourism. Even island ecosystems such as Lakshadweep, though not major migration hubs, host seasonal seabirds whose presence enriches the marine biodiversity experience.

Many of these destinations are complemented by thoughtfully located hospitality experiences, allowing travellers to stay close to nature while exploring migration landscapes responsibly — an evolving intersection of conservation and tourism.



A flock of bar headed geese at Jawai in Rajasthan



Flamingos with Red Wings

THE TIMELINE OF MIGRATION

Migration follows a rhythm older than civilisation itself. The first arrivals begin appearing between late September and November, signalling the transition of seasons. December and January mark the peak months, when wetlands and grasslands across India host their greatest avian diversity. As February progresses and daylight increases in northern breeding regions, an invisible signal calls the birds back. By April, skies gradually empty as flocks begin their return journeys toward summer habitats thousands of kilometres away.

THE ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

Migratory birds are far more than seasonal attractions; they are indicators of ecological balance. Their arrival reflects the health of wetlands and grasslands, ecosystems that sustain both wildlife and human communities. By feeding on insects, they naturally regulate pest populations, while their movement across regions contributes to seed dispersal and ecological connectivity. Across Indian folklore and poetry, birds have long symbolised freedom, change, and spiritual journeys, reinforcing their cultural significance alongside ecological value.



CHALLENGES ALONG THE FLYWAY

Despite their resilience, migratory birds face increasing threats. Shrinking wetlands, climate change, pollution, and illegal hunting disrupt ancient migration routes. Changes in rainfall patterns alter feeding grounds, while urban expansion reduces safe resting habitats. Responsible tourism therefore becomes essential. When travellers choose eco-sensitive experiences, respect habitats, and support conservation-driven destinations, tourism itself becomes a protective force rather than a disturbance.

Group of People Collecting Trash

TEMPORARY CITIZENS OF THE INDIAN WINTER

As winter draws to a close, the visitors depart almost unnoticed. One morning the skies feel quieter, the wetlands less crowded, and the great gatherings slowly dissolve. Like overseas Indians returning to lives abroad after festive reunions, migratory birds carry memories of two worlds — breeding grounds in distant lands and winter refuge in India.

They leave without ceremony, guided once again by instinct and season, promising through their absence what travellers already know: when winter returns, the sky will come home again. 🌅

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Undhiyu

Gujarati Mixed Vegetable Curry

By JAYESH PUROHIT

Undhiyu is a traditional Gujarati winter speciality made with seasonal vegetables and methi muthiya. It is commonly prepared during festivals like Uttarayan and Diwali, and for family gatherings. The dish is known for its rich flavour and use of fresh winter produce such as surti papdi and tuvar lilva.



Ingredients for Methi Muthiya

- 1 cup besan (gram flour)
- 1½ cups chopped fenugreek (methi) leaves
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- A pinch of baking soda
- 1½ tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp lemon juice
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp oil (plus oil for frying)

For Masala

- ¼ cup grated coconut
- ⅓ cup roasted peanut powder
- ½ tsp sesame seeds
- ¼ cup chopped coriander leaves
- ½ tsp green chilli-ginger-garlic paste
- 1 tsp sugar
- ½ tsp lemon juice
- Salt to taste

For Curry

- 3-4 small brinjals
- 6-7 baby potatoes
- ½ cup surti papdi
- ½ cup valor papdi
- ½ cup tuvar lilva
- ½ cup yam or sweet potato (optional)
- ½ cup green peas
- A pinch of hing (optional)
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp cumin-coriander powder
- ⅓ tsp turmeric powder
- ¼ tsp garam masala (optional)
- Salt to taste
- ½ cup oil
- 1-1½ cups water

Method

1. Prepare Muthiya

Mix all muthiya ingredients in a bowl and knead into a soft dough using little water.

Shape into small oval dumplings.

Deep-fry on medium heat until light golden and crisp. Keep aside.

2. Prepare Masala

Mix all masala ingredients in a bowl.

Taste and adjust seasoning. The flavour should be mildly sweet, spicy, and tangy.

3. Prepare Vegetables

Peel potatoes and trim brinjals.

Make a cross-cut on top without splitting fully.

Stuff with prepared masala.

4. Cook Undhiyu

Heat oil in a pressure cooker. Add hing.

Add papdi, tuvar lilva, peas, yam, and salt. Sauté for 2-3 minutes.

Add red chilli, turmeric, cumin-coriander, and garam masala.

Place stuffed brinjals and potatoes on top.

Add water and place fried muthiya over the vegetables.

Close the lid and cook for 3 whistles.

Let pressure release naturally.

Serving (Optional)

Gently mix without breaking the vegetables.

Garnish with coriander leaves.

Serve hot with poori and shrikhand for a traditional Gujarati meal.

Recipes by www.foodviva.com

Jalebi

India's Beloved Street-Side Sweet

By JAYESH PUROHIT

Few aromas capture the spirit of an Indian bazaar like freshly fried jalebis sizzling in ghee. Crisp on the outside and syrupy within, jalebi is a festive favourite across the country. From wedding breakfasts to winter mornings paired with fafda or warm milk, this bright spiral sweet is deeply woven into India's food culture.



Introduction

For Jalebi Batter

- 1 cup maida (all-purpose flour)
- 2 tbsp cornflour
- ⅛ tsp turmeric or natural food colour
- ½ cup curd (yogurt)
- ½ cup water (adjust as needed)
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Ghee or oil for frying

For Sugar Syrup

- 1 cup sugar
- ½-¾ cup water
- 1 pinch saffron (optional)
- ¼ tsp cardamom powder
- 1 tsp lemon juice

Method

1. Prepare Sugar Syrup

Heat sugar and water in a pan.

Cook until it reaches a one-string consistency.

Add lemon juice, saffron, and cardamom.

Keep the syrup warm (not hot).

2. Make the Batter

Mix maida, cornflour, and turmeric.

Add curd and water to make a smooth, flowing batter.

Whisk for 4-5 minutes for lightness.

Stir in lemon juice and baking soda just before frying.

3. Fry Jalebis

Heat ghee or oil in a kadhai on medium heat.

Pour batter into a squeeze bottle or piping bag.

Pipe spirals directly into hot oil.

Fry until golden and crisp.

4. Soak in Syrup

Transfer hot jalebis straight into warm sugar syrup.

Soak for 2-3 minutes.

Remove and serve immediately.

Enjoy jalebis hot on their own, or pair them with rabri, milk, or the classic Gujarati combination of fafda and jalebi.

Recipes by www.indianhealthyrecipes.com

Tuver Totha

A Rustic dhaba-style Indulgence Recreated at Home

By JAYESH PUROHIT

Winter in Gujarat brings with it a quiet craving, something rustic, fiery, and unapologetically desi. Tuver Totha is one such seasonal indulgence. Made with fresh green Tuver and generous green garlic, this dish is usually relished at roadside dhabas, where it arrives steaming, bold, and comforting.

But a dhaba is not a necessity. With the right balance of spice and patience, Tuver Totha can be recreated at home, with the same depth, the same warmth, and the same winter soul.

Ingredients for boiling green Tuver

- 2-3 cup water
- salt to taste
- pinch of baking soda
- pinch of sugar
- 200 gm or 1+1/4 cup green Tuver

For green garlic chutney

- 6-7 tbsp oil
- 75 gm or 1 cup chopped green garlic
- 6-7 chopped spicy green chilli
- 2 inch chopped ginger
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup coriander leaves
- 1 tbsp lemon juice



For Tuver gravy

- Boiled green Tuver - pigeon peas
- 3-4 spicy green chilli
- 1 inch ginger
- 6-8 garlic cloves
- 2 big size onion pieces
- 2 big size tomato pieces
- 4 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tbsp white sesame seeds
- 4 cloves
- 2 cinnamon
- 1 star anise
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 dry red chilli
- Pinch of hing
- 1/2 cup chopped green garlic
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion

Salt to taste

- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri red chilli powder
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp jaggery
- 1 cup hot water to adjust consistency
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Some coriander leaves

Method

Begin by grinding green chillies, ginger, and garlic into a coarse paste without adding water. In a heavy pan, heat oil and temper cumin, fennel, sesame seeds, cloves, cinnamon, star anise, bay leaf, dry red chillies, and a pinch of hing. Add the prepared paste and sauté until aromatic. Grind onions into a smooth paste, add to the pan, and cook until lightly golden. Stir in chopped green garlic and sauté briefly. Blend tomatoes into a puree, add with salt, and cook until the oil separates.

Meanwhile, boil green Tuver in water with salt, a pinch of baking soda, and a little sugar for about 7 minutes, until just soft and easy to mash. Drain and keep aside. Once the gravy thickens, add turmeric, Kashmiri red chilli powder, coriander powder, and jaggery. Mix well, add a little water if required, and cook the

masala until integrated. Stir in chopped green onion.

Add the boiled Tuver to the gravy and mix gently. Pour in hot water to adjust consistency, cover, and let it simmer on low flame for 5-7 minutes so the flavours merge. Finish with lemon juice and fresh coriander leaves. The Tuver-based gravy should be robust, slightly tangy, and richly spiced.

For the green garlic chutney, heat oil with a pinch of asafoetida (hing) and sauté green garlic until fragrant. Add chopped green chillies, ginger, salt, and coriander powder. Pour in a little water and add fresh coriander leaves. Switch off the flame and finish with lemon juice. The chutney should be sharp, green, and mildly fiery — the perfect companion to the hearty tuver gravy.

Recipes by www.nehascookbook.com

Lasaniya Fedra (Garlic Cloves)

A hearty Gujarati winter delicacy

By JAYESH PUROHIT

A winter favourite in Gujarati homes, Lasaniya Fedra celebrates the warmth of whole garlic bulbs. Garlic is known to boost immunity, aid digestion, and help keep the body warm in cold weather. Robust, rustic and comforting, this sabji turns a humble ingredient into a seasonal delicacy.

Introduction

For Jalebi Batter

- 1/2 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1/4 tablespoon asafoetida
- 1 tablespoon Kashmiri chilli powder
- 1 tablespoon coriander powder

Salt to taste

- 1/2 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 1/2 tablespoon garam masala
- 2 tablespoons ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tablespoons chopped green chillies
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1/2 cup oil
- 2 cups tomato puree
- 4 whole garlic bulbs
- 1/2 cup chevda
- 1 cup water
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish



Pro Tip

Apart from garlic bulb, you can use garlic cloves to prepare this sabji. However, this will take a little longer for you to remove flaky skin of each clove.

Method

Remove the outer flaky skin from the garlic bulbs and soak them in cold water for 5 minutes. Pour water into a steamer or cooker, place a perforated plate above the water, and arrange the bulbs on it. Sprinkle a little salt and turmeric over them, cover, and steam on a medium flame for 8-10 minutes until slightly tender.

Heat oil in a wok or pan. Reduce the flame and add mustard and cumin seeds; let them crackle. Add asafoetida and ginger-garlic paste, and sauté briefly. Stir in green chillies and onions; cook until the onions turn golden. Add tomato puree and simmer well. Mix in salt, chilli powder, coriander powder, turmeric and garam masala, and cook on a low flame for about 7 minutes.

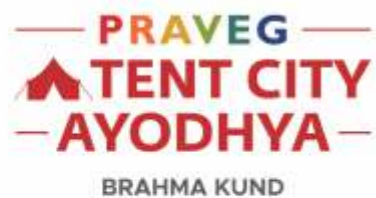
Add water to loosen the gravy and bring it to a gentle boil. Stir in lightly crushed chevda, then add the steamed garlic bulbs. Simmer for 8-10 minutes so the flavours blend. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and serve hot. 🍴

Recipes by www.indianhealthyrecipes.com



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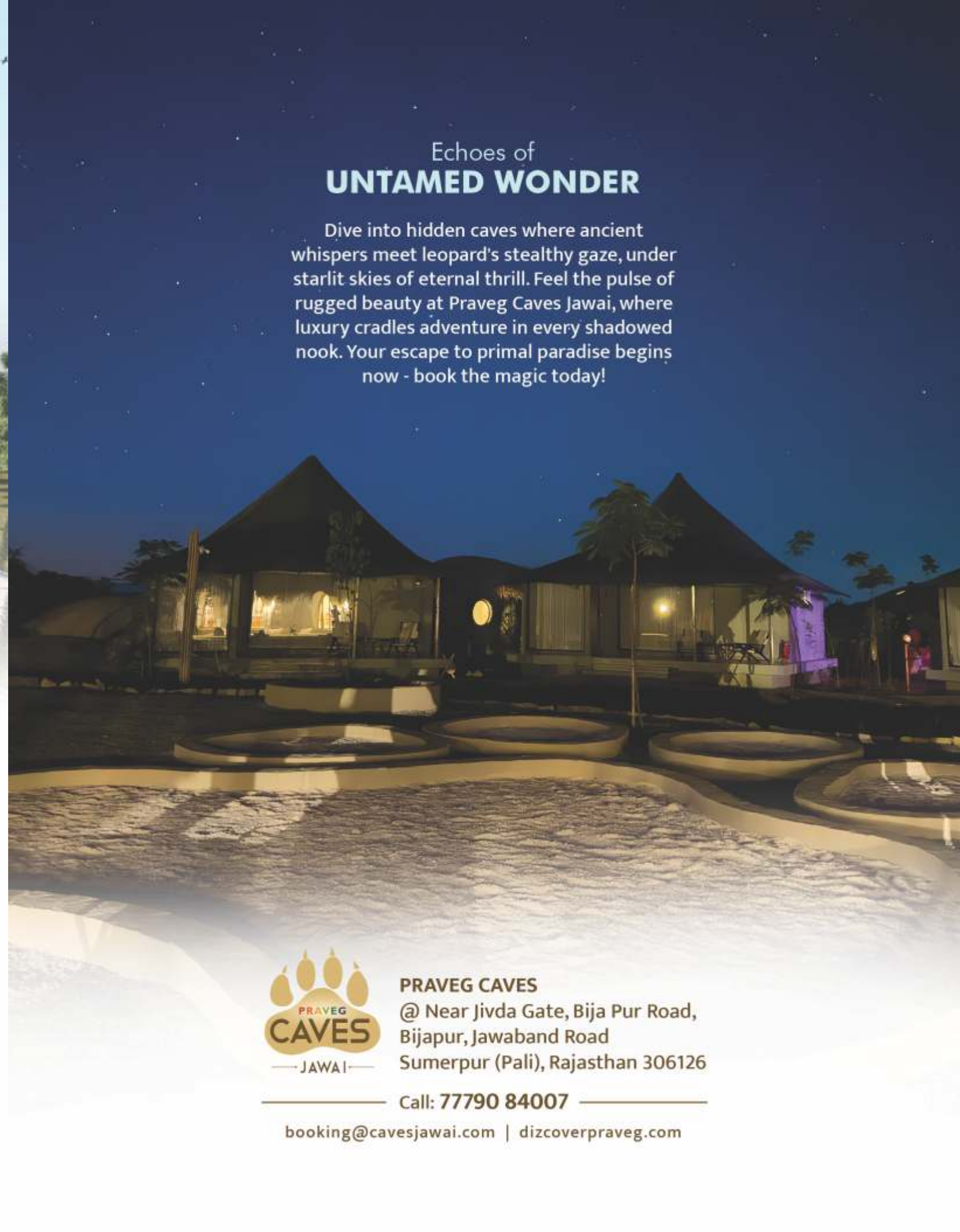
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