

VOL. 4 2019

INDOTHAI

LIFESTYLE

TRAVEL | WELLNESS | RELIGION | CULTURE

129 THB

PHIMAI
TRAVEL

THAI
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FROM THE FOUNDER'S DESK

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrificing and most of all loving what you are doing."

– Pele –

It is not easy to build a bridge. Lots of hard work, efforts and respect lead the way to celebrate success across the bridge. The Indo Thai News team is now attaining the dominant status of connecting millions of hearts with enriching content. Engraved with tradition and history, we intend to carve continuous changes with a desire to grow and lay a strong foundation. Enormous admiration and appreciation have strengthened our resolve to move forward more resolutely towards achieving our mission. Our articles endeavour to draw parallel lines between the shared festivities, celebrations and culture.

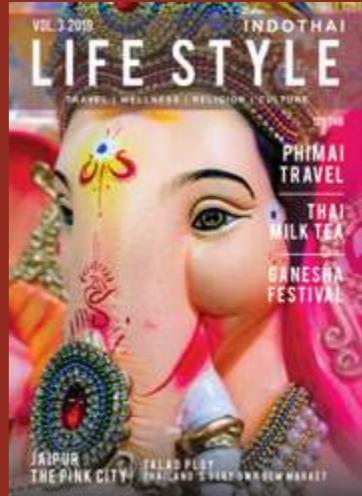
Rear View: Indo Thai Relations

India and Thailand share a well-rooted history of cultural and social interactions. The Thai architecture and literature reflect Hindu elements prominently. It is evaluated that more than 3 lakh people of Indian origin reside in Thailand. The growing warmth between countries is evident in regular economic and political exchange.

4th Edition: Enduring Links

Several socio-cultural habits and festivals of Thai and Indian people are similar. Our 4th edition depicts the celebration of age-old saga across the borders. The victory of truth and faith above evil forces motivating the current generation to understand the rich culture. Untapped potential still exists, which remains to be harnessed. Indo Thai news holds an avowed intent to enhance the intensity and expand the scope and domain of evolving comprehensive partnership with its content.

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Publication
Lifestyle

Year
2019

Edition
Vol. 4

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THE JOURNEY SO FAR



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INDIA'S 73RD INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

RADHIKA BHASIN

India glorified its 73rd Independence day on 15th August 2019. After over 200 years of British rule, India was set free on 15th August 1947. It was decades of fight, lakhs of martyrs, a century of foreign rule and last but not the least a line of division which set India free.

The current generation might be unaware of the significance this day hold for one and all citizens of the country. Its mark the golden era of freedom from foreign rule. A tribute to every martyr who sacrificed their lives so we could have a better future. Each state, each member of the country celebrates this day, bearing the pride of being a part of the largest democracy of the world.

Celebrations In India

The Prime Minister of the country unfolds the flag at Red Fort. The event is preceded by marchpast and other events from the students of the schools, jawans of the Indian Air Force, Navy Force, Defence Force and the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister address a speech to the citizens of the country, and the entire sky is filled with the pride of hoisting the tricolour flag. This is followed by hoisting of the flag and other programmes in schools, colleges, government offices, assemblies etc.

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on this auspicious day, congratulated the citizens and addressed the future vision. On more technical terms, presented an insight into the future programmes and crucial steps which the government will take for the betterment of the people of the country. He even took a moment to pay tribute to the army and law enforcement officers of the nation.



Celebrations In Thailand

The best part about Indian Independence day celebration besides the fact that it is an emotional yet proud moment for the country is that many countries across the world share this day of joy with India. Thailand is one of them. There are certain areas in Thailand which are full of Indians. And the relations between India and Thailand is such that the joy of Indian Independence Day can be significantly seen in Thailand as well.

From the embassy to the inner corners of the country, you can feel the essence of joy on this very day. There even are flag hoisting programme in some areas of Thailand. This makes Thailand special for Indians and gives them even more homely feeling.

Global Love And Respect

Both countries share universal respect for their cultural heritage and history, bringing borders closer. From the market to the Sikh Gurudwara, the feel of the Independence day and essence of patriotism can be felt among the Indians residing in Thailand.

Thailand hosted an event where the citizens of India could celebrate their Independence Day. The programme included the flag hoisting ceremony held at Embassy of India, Bangkok, followed by a grand Reception and stage shows inspired by Indian culture. Such occasions allow citizens of a country to celebrate their freedom. More than anything, it makes them feel welcomed and accepted in a foreign country with immense love and respect.

GANESHA FESTIVAL

— IN THAILAND —

DEVAL ASHOK HARIA

Though Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist nation, the Kingdom's sculptures and temples are prevalent witnesses to Hindu deities. These Hindu numbers are regularly respected by Thai Buddhists, although these deities generally have a distinct title in Thai than Hinduism. Ganesh (Ganesha), the elephant-headed god generally known to as Phikanet in Thai, is one of the most commonly seen and readily recognizable.

Facts About Lord Ganesha

Ganesh is regarded as the removal of barriers, and it is prevalent for Thai Buddhists too. When beginning a new enterprise or embarking on new beginnings, it's considered good luck to worship Lord Ganesha. Before tests, praying to Ganesh at a shrine is also familiar with college pupils. Recognized for his passion for fine arts, Ganesh is believed to foster creativity and is famous among artists.



Ganesha Worshippers In Thailand

For the same purpose, the logo of Thailand's Department of Fine Arts includes a picture of the elephant-headed god. Other characteristics connected with Ganesh in Thailand are achievement, achievement, wisdom, and prosperity, so it is not strange that worshippers are so familiar with this Hindu deity.

Thailand is home to a variety of Ganesh temples and sculptures. One of the most popular is in the Ratchaprasong shopping district of Bangkok. The shrine of Ganesh is located in front of the Isetan store on Ratchadamri Road in Central World. Elephant designs, new marigold garlands, sweets, bananas, and sugar cane are popular offers.

Understanding Ganesha Festival

Hindus around the globe celebrate Ganesh's birthday with the point generally dropping based on the lunar calendar in August or September. In Thailand, two of the most significant places attracting tourist are Bangkok's Shiva Temple and in Nakhon Nayok's Utthayan Ganesh Temple. The Thai Buddhists also carry role in the festivities with Hindus.



Nakhon Nayok

Nakhon Nayok is a place that many visitors have probably done for granted. Nakhon Nayok is located just 106 kilometres from Bangkok and has many sights that can be frequented during day journeys. As a result, day-trippers or those having a short stopover on the manner to other resorts typically visit Nakhon Nayok. Nakhon Nayok, however, offers pleasant scenic scenery, including waterfalls and museums, famous historic sights, a range of gentle adventure operations, and a variety of delightful foods. Nakhon Nayok's southern portion is situated in the mountain hills of Dong Phaya Yen, a region enclosed by Khao Yai National Park. Its largest summit, Yod Khao Kiew, is 1,292 meters above sea level. By comparison, a rather flat surface created by the Maenam Nakhon Nayok, a river famous with white water rafting lovers, is the main component of the province.





non-Hindu supporters follow an Indian God. The temple of Shiva-Ramindra, the temple of Utthayan Ganesh-Nakhon Nayok and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) meet with excitement Ganesh Utsav in Thailand. Local participation is getting larger every year, "states Susheel Saraff, VHP's chairman, Thailand. Seven years earlier, VHP started honouring Ganesh Chaturthi-visarjan in Bangkok with approval from the Thai government." Their only site conditions were for the deities to be eco-friendly. We are importing tiny idols from India and flying experienced artist to create larger ones revealed an insider.



Global Celebrations

It was Bangkok's 11th Ganesha feast. The Ganesha Chaturthi Festival is commonly observed in India and Nepal by Hindu inhabitants including Trinidad, Suriname, Fiji, Mauritius, the United States, and European countries. One of the best-known and most important deities in the Hindu pantheon is the Ganesha, also established as Ganapati, Vinayaka, Pillaiyar, and Binayak. On September 2, Ganesha Chaturthi festivities begin around the globe, but the time may differ according to the country and local custom.



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VIMAYAPURA PHIMAI

– A Trail Down Unknown Thailand. –

ANITA BOSE



For visitors to Thailand, the names of places like Bangkok, Phuket or Pattaya are quite well-known for their entertainment values, but not the other places of the country. For travellers who want to savour the taste of tradition and culture of a place without restricting themselves to natural beauties may consider selecting some other sites of Thailand too, while visiting the country.

Encounter With Phimai City

Today I desire to share my knowledge about – Phimai city, situated on the northeast boundary (“Nakhon Ratchasima” as they call it). A town favoured by the Khmer dynasty kings who ruled Cambodia or the old country of Kamboja. Phimai city is located almost 321 km away from Bangkok. There are various ways to reach this place. This city is full of beautiful constructions built-in line with Angkor Wat of Kamboja. Though Mahayana Buddhism followers founded the town, the main attraction of this city lies in the Hindu constructions. Spread over the pillars and lintels of the Phimai palace are stories of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other stories. Lord Shiva used to be worshipped in this city more than a thousand years ago, and the city was full with innumerable Shiva Lingas and idols of gods and goddesses of Hinduism. For people who would love to enjoy the Sam Desh at 4 hours distance from Bangkok, Phimai is a city of wonders.



How To Reach

Phimai is easily accessible by train, bus, private taxi as well as air. It takes approximately 4 hours to reach by car. The road condition is excellent, and there is no shortage of good food and drinks and resting places on the way. However, it saves lots of time if someone reaches Phimai by the air route. Alternately one can go by van and return by flight that also saves quality time. On the day of visiting Phimai, one can add a few other places of tourist attractions as well, viz. Relics of ancient temples, sanatorium etc.

Facts About Phimai Journey

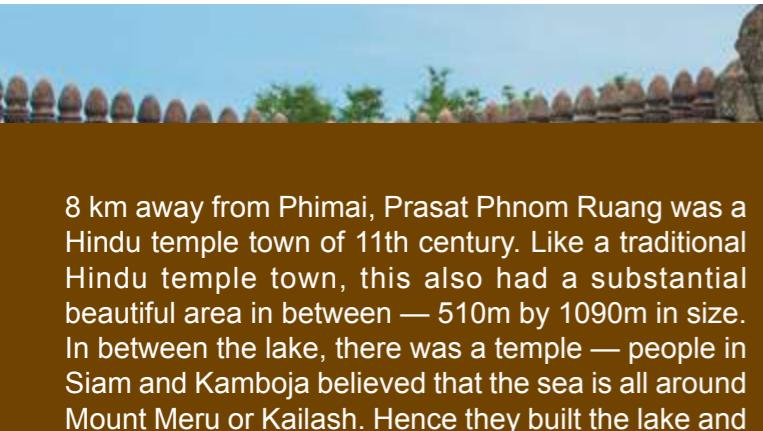
Before we start our Phimai journey, it is imperative to know who founded this city and how was the world then. Bheema Pura or Phimai was at the confluence of an ancient highway which had joined two countries. A wide spacious road passed through Nagar Rajaseema or Nakhon Ratchasima and goes to the famous city of Angkorbhat. The powerful Khmer emperors of Kamboja had built this road with one end of the way being Angkorbhat, and the other end is Phimai. It's a classy, cultured city which was an important trading hub as well. In the old stone edicts, there is another name mentioned for Phimay-Bheemayapura or City of Bheema as per translation. It is quite remarkable to see a city named after the second Pandava at this north-eastern tip of Thailand. It is even more surprising to see the vast lintels mentioning the story of

Mahabharata, which is still well-preserved and maintained. The city of Phimai was rectangular with a wall and ditch at the boundaries, and the highway was a comprehensive cultural link route. On the sides of the highway, the emperors built temples, inns,

veterinary clinics and dispensaries. Kuti Rishi or Rishi-Kuthi named old sanatorium remains. The Phimai city was built during the time of Jayavarman I. The Kamboja ruler, who was a Hindu by religion, and many Hindu temples and architectures built by him make this place of significant value. The city was further developed, and beautification was done during the time of Jayaraman VII between the 10th century and 12th century.

It is said that it was during the time of Jayaraman VII, the city became a hub of Mahayana Buddhism. More than 102 dispensaries were built on the side of the highway. However, Jay Barman VII was tolerant of other religions as well as inspired by Buddhism.

Prasat Phnom ruang used to be the place of worship of Mahadeva. This colossal temple was built in line with the famous Angkorbhat temples. It has 15 entrances from east to west built in such way that the first rays of the sun reach the deity and the shrine as it happens in temples of India as well.



8 km away from Phimai, Prasat Phnom Ruang was a Hindu temple town of 11th century. Like a traditional Hindu temple town, this also had a substantial beautiful area in between — 510m by 1090m in size. In between the lake, there was a temple — people in Siam and Kamboja believed that the sea is all around Mount Meru or Kailash. Hence they built the lake and the temple symbolizing their belief.

A uniqueness of Phimai is a considerable snake building a bridge or Naga Setu as they call it. Popular belief says Naga Raja Vasuki, or Muchlinda as he is referred in Thailand, is protecting the palaces and the temples. Hence, to reach a temple, one has to cross the massive bridge of Muchalinda.

Towards the left side of the entrance to the temple, there is a well-constructed relic which remains, which the eminent historians believe to be the library at one point of time. Like in Shambhala and Kamboja, in many ancient temples, which were converted to Buddhist temples, similar libraries are seen. In the main shrine, it was Shiva who used to be the worshipped deity who had been replaced by Lord Buddha in these temples. The outer body of the temple has the inscriptions of Ramayana and Mahabharata as in India.



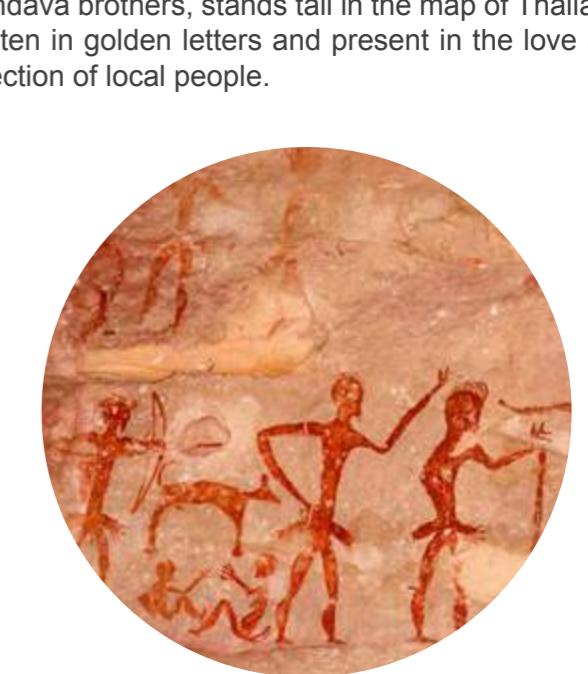
More surprises await inside the National Museum than the mere beauty of the temples and palaces of Phimai. The museum is full of 10th-century sculptures and statues of Mahishasura Mardini Durga, Shiva and Parvati on the back of Nandi. It also holds Ashvamedha ritual of Yudhishtira and many other Gods and Goddesses — not to be missed at all!

Many scholars think that the palace and temples made of laterite stones were the victory pillars of the Kamboja kings. A replica of an old mansion is seen on the road between Bangkok and Phimai which used to be the chest of the kings. Before any significant ritual, the king used to use

that palace for getting ready and to arrange the homage he intended to carry for the ceremonies. The experts have found many square pillars there, and they have identified that these palaces had many rooms with the ceilings made of wood. These palaces were probably used to store religious books.



There is a temple named "He Brahma" at the palace from where 7 Shiva Lingams were rescued in 1954. It is assumed that this place was an education centre. For building all these palaces and temples, the stones came from Shikhiu district beside the Nakhon Ratchasima High Road, where very carefully, a vast space has been conserved till date. Stone was cut from here and was carried to build temples, hospitals, rest-houses etc. 17 inns and rest-houses were made for the travellers by the benevolent rulers. On that road, there is another Cambodian town Muang Khorokpura, a place which has high phonetic resemblance with Gorakhpur of India. That place has a large hospital built by King Jay Barman VII and has been preserved and restored well till date and is famous by the name Oat-Prang-Muang Kaoname. Experienced guides explain the history of this place candidly, and some of the walls of the hospitals remain. There used to be two vast lakes that used to supply water to the hospital and the local villagers used to render their service to the hospital. Phimai is laden with a rich archaeological and historical heritage. People who are interested in ancient prehistoric cave paintings of "Tham Khyao Chan Nogam" also have their treat near the Shikhiu district. It makes you go through a creepy reminiscence of past. The Tham Khyao Chan Nogam caves are 58km away from Nakhon Ratchasima town. Nearly 4000 years back, people used organic red colour and drew many pictures of hunting for future generations to cherish. Having dinner at a local Shikhiu restaurant, one can come back to Bangkok in





TALAD PLOY AND THE SPARKLY

— TOWN OF CHANTHABURI —



RADHIKA BHASIN

Sitting on my dresser on a Sunday afternoon, as I was clearing out my cabinet, one of my antique brooches fell into my lap. Its a beautiful Topaz surrounded with a strand of small rubies, a gift from a dear friend on my eighteenth birthday. Looking at the jewellery, I was thrown back to a memory from a couple of years ago when I visited the ancient town of Chanthaburi in Thailand. Along with a friend we stumbled upon the town situated in the Eastern part of Thailand on the banks of the Chanthaburi River. We arrived in comfy joggers and sneaker and left decked with sapphires and aquamarines.

GEMS LIKE M&MS

South-East Asia, more particularly Thailand, is known as the hub of gemstones. The town of Chanthaburi has since time immemorial, buried treasures in itself. The city has an old-world charm and has a very chill vibe running through it during the week. However, during weekends, the streets are transformed, tables are set up, and Talad Ploy turns into the gem market that its best known for. Buyers, sellers and dealers from all over the place visit the array of gemstones at the market. Wear your sun-glasses because you're going to be blinded with all that sparkle from the piles of rubies, tourmalines and most favoured of them all - the sapphires. The colours, the shine and the variety of gems available in the market are truly splendid. The stones are available in various shapes and sizes, so be sure you know what you're looking for because it's easy to get carried away. As we went about browsing through the market, my friend very aptly chimed "The gems here are available like we have M&Ms available".

THE CARAT LANE

The atmosphere of the market place is vibrant, with the sellers busy setting up the merchandise. The buyers were appraising the stones with their magnifying glasses and tweezers and the dealers trying to close business orders over the phone. It said that in the year 2012, Talad Ploy exported gemstones worth 650 million dollars and the majority of the gems were the much-loved Sapphires, the stone that the market is most known for. The workshops for



cutting, polishing and treating the gemstones are all located in Chanthaburi itself, and they've been in business since the 15th century. What caught my eye was that the gems here are more often sold in larger quantities basitthe colour and the size of the stones and the usual perl-carat rate is uncommon, except for tourists like us.

Going further down the market in the by-lanes, we noticed that there were several treating centres where the esoteric art of heat treating and glass-filling of the sapphires to enhance the clarity and sheen of the stone were being carried out. These centres do not have any signboards however most of the locals and the buyers are well aware of these centres which are also known as "burners".

TIPS FOR TALAD PLOY

From my experience, here are three tips to make most of your trip to Talad Ploy -

BARGAIN IS THE WORD

Much like in any other market, its all about the power of bargaining here too. Now one usually doesn't tend to bargain when buying gemstones, but its the norm here, so don't hesitate to haggle after you've made your selection for the day.

MIND OVER MATTER

With the abundance of choices all over the market, it is easy to get carried away and indulges more than you intend. Like me, if you lack self-restraint - indulge in something unique and distinctive to the area rather than going for the conventional bigger sized stones.

GET THE BLUES

If there is one thing that Talad Ploy is known for, it's the Sapphires. If you do plan to splurge, pick a Sapphire, for yourself or as a souvenir for a friend. The smaller stones are also available at very reasonable prices which make for great souvenirs to take back home.

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THAI MILK TEA

(Best places to try)

AASTHA BAGGA

Where there is Tea, there is hope. Tea is a beloved beverage across the world. However, Thai people were unknown to Tea before the nineteenth century. It was first introduced by King Rama IV and King Rama V. Later the Britishers came to Thailand and brought with them their Tea which we know as English tea. Only the rich and affluent could afford Tea. When the masters were served brewed Tea, the leftover was used by servants to prepare their Tea. Since the leftover leaves were devoid of flavour and colour, the servants started adding orange colour and flavour to the Tea to make their Tea. This gave Thailand People across cultures love the Thai Milk tea, which is now a traditional drink not only in Thailand but in adjoining countries too.

Know Your Tea

Thai milk tea can be served either cold or hot. Today it is made of black tea that is strongly brewed. Spices like star anise and cardamom can be added to enhance flavours. Some people also add tamarind for colour in Thai tea. It can be sweetened with sugar or condensed milk. Thai food is predominantly over-spiced. The sweetness of the Tea balances it.



Best Places To Try Thai Tea

The best place to try these teas at the local homes, but do not worry if you do not have access to domestic homes, you definitely can try out Thai Tea in local setting prepared by local people and served with love. Plunge on to these places to try some refreshing and avant-garde Thai milk tea.



Cha Tra Mue

This is a café chain you will find across Thailand though the best one is at Terminal 21. The meaning of the name is "Number One Brand", and indeed it is the best one. It is serving the people for seven decades and has a variety of teas to offer.



Erawan Tea Room

Thai Tea is incomplete without Thai cuisine. To enjoy it in a picture-perfect setting, Erawan Tea Room in Bangkok Mall is the best choice.

Audrey Café des Fleurs

If you wish to enjoy your Thai milk tea in a cosy and romantic setting, Audrey Café Des Fleurs in the Maha Nakhon is the one for you. Besides Thai Milk tea, the place is famous for its desserts. Bangkok Mall is the best choice.

Double Dogs Tea Room

The place is as impressive as its name. Located at the Yaowarat Road, this cute little café is known for its high-quality Tea.



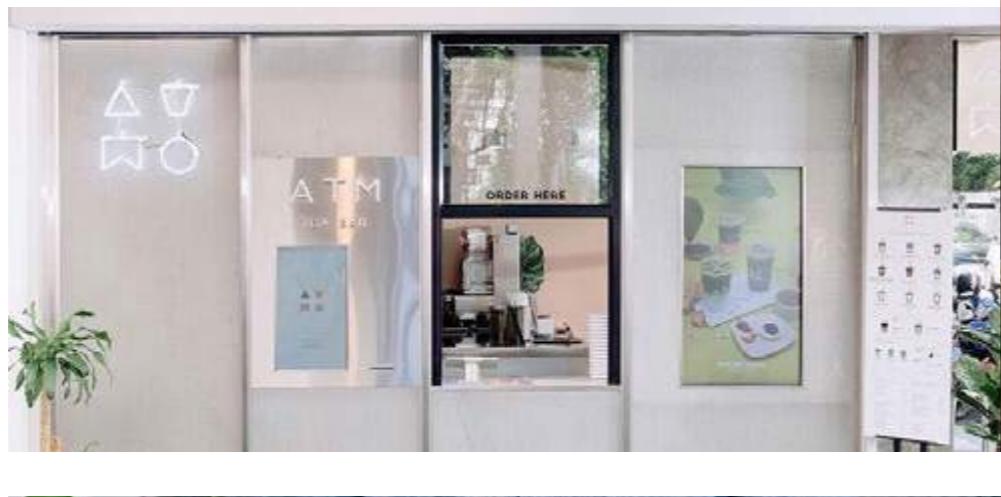
Al Majlis

Not everyone likes sipping Tea in indoor seating. If you are one of those, Al Majlis is the answer to all your tea appetite. The bean bags and colourful pillows make the place vibrant and lively. It is situated at Krung Thep Maha Nakhon.



ATM tea Bar

Krung Thep Maha Nakhon is famous among locals and travels for ATM tea Bar that serves one of the most amazing Thai Milk Tea.



Jasmin's Café

One of the iconic Tea makers in Pattaya is the Jasmin Café that is frequented by the young and the old alike. Tea is prevalent in most of the country. Milkshakes are steadily gaining popularity too.



Seven Suns

For the best quality tea, Seven Sun is the winnable place in Bangkok. Located at COMMONS Thonglorsoi, Watthana it is famous for its Milk Tea.

Tea Village

They believe that Tea is the drink of God. Their Thai milk tea is infused with numerous herbs. If you try their tea ones, you are bound to go back to it again and again. They also offer Tea from other countries. Thai Tea is a work of art. The orange colour looks incredibly delectable and existing. Not only is the Thai Tea appealing, but it also has health benefits. Thai Tea is known to enhance weight loss by boosting the metabolism as it contains caffeine and antioxidants. You cannot buy happiness, but you can buy Thai milk tea, and it's the same thing.

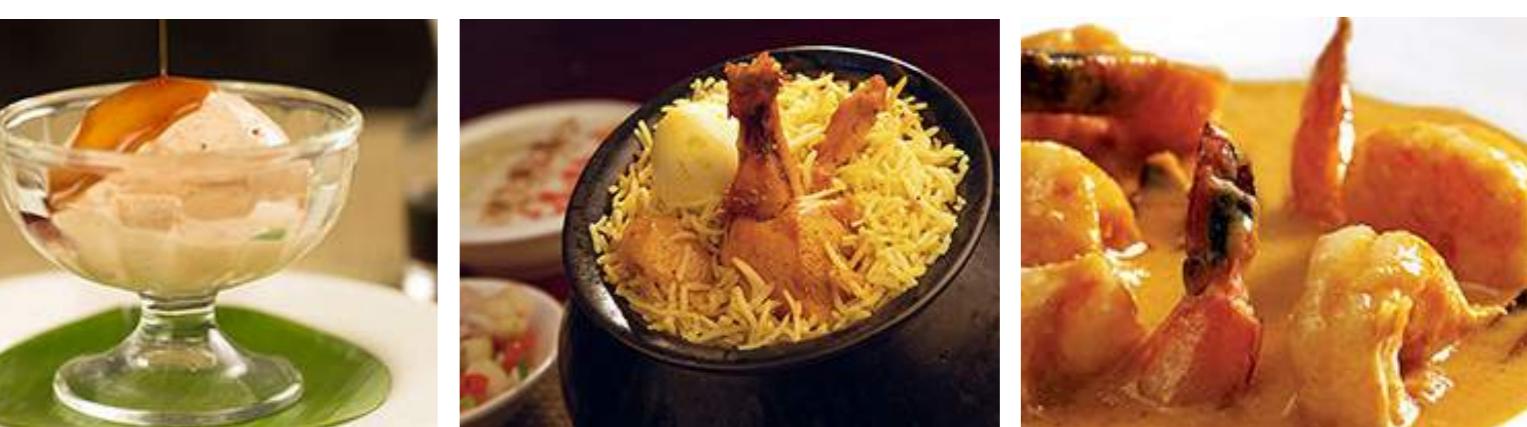


TOP 5 RESTAURANTS IN WEST BENGAL

RADHIKA BHASIN



The 'Foodtopian' city, otherwise known as Kolkata, implies business with regards to great nourishment. A tasty plate of chaat or an earthen bhan of steaming chai can work up soul-mixing discussions to social discourses. While local people still grasp the well established, current plans with a whiff of sentimentality, one can likewise discover cooking styles roused by Chinese migrants and the British Raj in this City of Joy. If you wish to encounter the way of life, get new plans, or primarily investigate enticing chomps from the area – you need not look somewhere else. Imaginative sustenance bloggers will give you the correct thought with their knowledge into the spots you need to visit. These wizards-with-a-pen have been upsetting the Kolkata nourishment scene with their artistic depictions and out-of-the-crate views.



Oh Calcutta

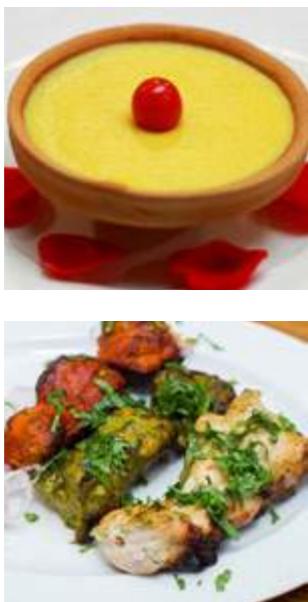
Carefully designed with a high-end food atmosphere, Oh! Calcutta is an excellent spot to begin your Bengali culinary voyage as it serves the pillars of conventional Bengali food. Menu top choices incorporate the smoked boneless hilsa and smoked bhakti, which is marinated with mustard glue and green chillies at that point enveloped by banana leaf and steamed. Completion off your feast with a portion of Kolkata's acclaimed desserts, including mishti doi, a conventional Bengali improved yoghurt. On the other hand, attempt the home-made date palm jaggery frozen yoghurt, which Oh! Calcutta benefactors rave about for its superb flavour.



Kewpie's Kitchen

With a vibe like that of a customary Bengali home, Kewpie's Kitchen is a genuine family issue headed by culinary specialist Rakhi Purnima Dasgupta. It tries to get ready bona fide home-prepared Bengali nourishment in a varied, loosened up feasting condition. Utilizing plans go down from Rakhi's cook mother Meenakshi Dasgupta, Kewpie's Kitchen serves customary Bengali food incorporating the thali platter with a blend of little dishes served in earthenware pots. Even though the administration can be uneven, Kewpie's Kitchen stays an incredible eatery to encounter credible Bengali sustenance and culture.





Arsalan's Restaurant

Situated in the Kolkata's informal feasting locale, Arsalan Restaurant has separated itself for its credible Mughlai food. This kind of cooking is gotten from Persian-affected sustenance served in the supreme kitchens of the Mughal Empire. Kolkatans come to Arsalan — or request Arsalan for huge get-togethers — for its biryanis. For some local people, Arsalan is considered to serve the best biryanis in Kolkata with varieties, for example, lamb biryani, Hyderabadi biryani, chicken biryani and the sky is the limit from there. Other menu top choices incorporate Arsalan's chicken chaap and its numerous kabab alternatives.



6 Ballygunge Place

This place certainly has an oomph!! Factor to the ambience and fancy cuisine. It's one of the top places in Kolkata to go for a chomp of legitimate Bengali cooking. Housed in a 100-year-old home enlivened with pictures of old Kolkata, 6 Ballygunge Place gives the ideal spot to a multi-course Bengali supper. Features on the menu incorporate the kasha mangsho, a traditional Bengali hot lamb curry dish just as the daab chingri, which are prawns cooked in mustard (a most loved among Bengalis) and cooked inside an emptied coconut.



Nahoum and Sons

In mid-2013, the decreasing Jewish people group of Kolkata, and numerous non-Jewish Kolkatans grieved the death of David Elias Nahoum, the long-term proprietor of Nahoum and Sons confectionary shop. A long-standing Kolkata symbol, the bread kitchen was first settled by Nahoum Israel in 1902, an Iraqi-Jew who moved from Baghdad. Presently, just a bunch of Jewish individuals — an expected 25 — remain. However, their impact has as yet appeared in the city's not many Jewish pastry shops, none more adored than Nahoum and Son's confectionery. The Jewish preparing convention is carried on by Isaac, the sibling of David Nahoum. Visitors to the city's New Market region can discover piles of brownies and rum balls also a productive determination of cakes, rolls, baked goods and loaves of bread straight from the broiler.



The Verdict

These days, there has been a gigantic increment in nourishment bloggers around the globe and Kolkata has not been a long ways behind. Kolkata is known to be the place that is known for nourishment, where you can get incredibly tasty desserts and bites. There are various nourishment organizations all around the city which give you heavenly pleasures to eat and enjoy.



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TRAVEL TIPS

– When Exploring Thailand –

AASTHA BAGGA

The Kingdom of Thailand, is the most voguish beach destination, for travellers of all age groups across the globe. It is a southeast Asian country, which was earlier famous by the name of Siam. Every year millions of people come to Thailand to experience the rich Buddhist culture, for a gastronomical experience or sometimes merely for aesthetic beauty the Country imbibes in.

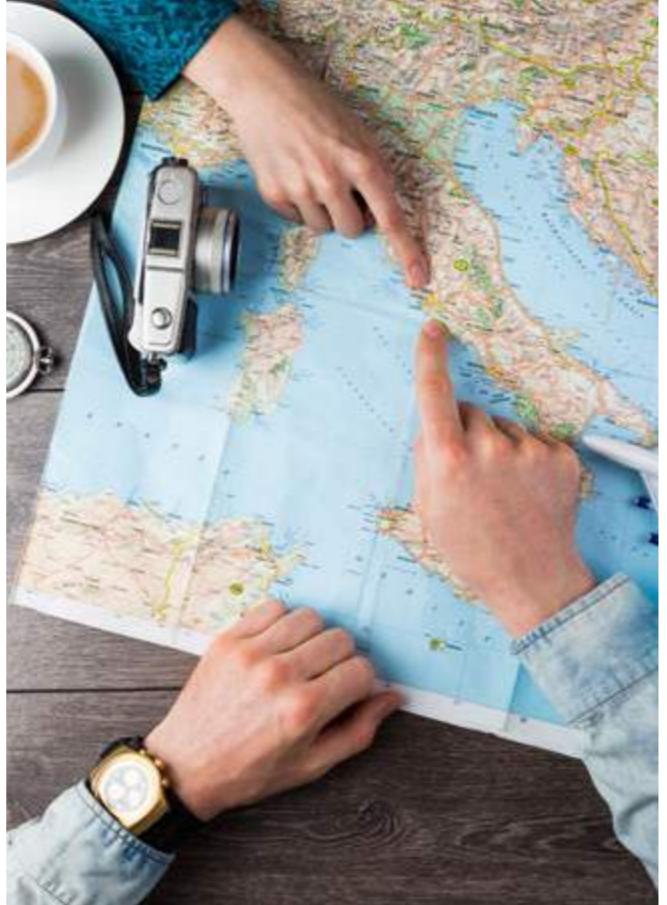
Thailand Travel Guide

If Thailand makes it to your bucket list, here are some handy tips that will surely help you out of the debacles of travelling plans and make your Thailand holiday, pleasurable and memorable.



Visa

First things first. Check your passport, and it's an expiry date. Ensure that it's valid for at least thirty days. Thailand has a different policy for every Country. Nationals of many countries are allowed, Tourist Visa on arrival in Thailand provided they meet the laid down requirements. So, check what your needs for a Visa to Thailand are.



Packing for Thailand

The official currency of Thailand is Baht. Do carry enough money so that you can enjoy Thailand at its best. Always check the weather forecast for Thailand for your stay and pack accordingly. Do bring your swimsuit/trunk, a quick-dry towel, and a sarong/scarf. Who loves unhealthy tan? Sunscreen is your best friend in Thailand. A comfortable pair of shoes and a slip-on is a must for this travel destination. Be a smart traveller and carry a universal converter along, as it will ensure that all your electric gadgets are fully charged. Ensure that you are taking some essential medications, appropriate for any emergency. Also, check how much luggage you are allowed in your flight. Go by the rule, to travel happily. You must travel light.



Tickets and Accommodation

Book your air tickets and accommodation well in advance. There are endless options for staying in Thailand. If you are on a budget and you can try rental apartments or rooms. These are also helpful for travellers who plan to stay for a long duration. They are safe and economical. If adventure is your breath, go camping. In case you want to splurge, there is no shortage of hotels where you can have your private pool or even book a villa all to yourself. Do not forget to gather some necessary information and reviews about your accommodation. Also, plan the places you wish to travel to Thailand. You can get a land package with a tourist guide or go on your own to explore the beautiful Country.



Food options

Thai food? Where can you find Thai food in the world, if not in Thailand? The best way to taste the cuisine of Thailand is through its street food. It is a delight to see your food prepared fresh with the expert hands and smiling faces. There are multiple upscale restaurants where you can taste cuisines other than Thailand. Just in case your palate is not made for spicy food, here is a word of caution for you. Also, while seafood is found in abundance, vegetarians will have a little tough time. But what's a holiday without a bit of adventure. All significant hotels serve vegetarian food. Also, you will not regret it if you take a tour of the local food market and pick some fresh fruits for yourself.



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KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI

— BIRTH OF LORD KRISHNA —

APURVA KULKARNI

A SLICE OF THE SAGA

India – the land of diversity, culture and colours. If there is one thing that is as vivid and colourful as the culture of India, it is Indian mythology. So, let's get started with the legendary story from Indian Mythology, the story of the birth of Krishna. Much like several sagas, our story began on a dark and stormy night centuries ago. The weather turned stormy in the quaint town of Mathura, located in the state of Uttar Pradesh. In a cold prison cell at the stroke of the midnight hour, to parents Devaki and Vasudeva, a baby boy was born. The baby was named Krishna by his loving parents; however, the little child's life was in danger because of his uncle – King Kansa. King Kansa, who imprisoned Krishna's parents, was after the life of Krishna. Hence, Devaki and Vasudeva decided to give away baby Krishna to be raised by foster parents. Vasudeva, Krishna's father in the stormy night, secretly waded through the river Yamuna with baby Krishna perched on his head in a jute basket. He made his way across to the town called Gokul. He left the baby in the care of foster parents – Nanda and Yashoda who raised him as their own.

Mischiefous Yet Most Loved Child Of Gokul

Krishna grew up in Gokul as an unruly child, and his pranks and antics made him famous in the town. His many pranks orchestrated around stealing white-butter from the neighbourhood houses earned him the name "Makhan Chor" (the butter thief). It is for these pranks to steal the white-butter that the Hindus in India celebrate the birth of Krishna through the ritual called "Dahi-Handi" (pot of yoghurt). The celebration begins with a pot of yoghurt hung high above on a rope, and several young boys called "Govinda's" climb one on top of the other to form a human pyramid to reach the pot. The boys are cheered on by the onlookers and sometimes sprayed with water to make their climb more difficult. This ritual is celebrated religiously in the western and central parts of India each year with much enthusiasm during Krishna Janmasthami. Rains often add the element of surprise to the festivities, however "Dahi-Handi" is played with even more rigour if the rains start pouring down. If you plan to visit the celebrations, get in early and carry a rain poncho to avoid getting drenched since most of the festivities are held on the streets or in the open air.



SKITS AND KITES

Much like other festivals of India, each festival is celebrated differently in different parts of India. While "Dahi-Handi" is played in the central parts of India, i.e. Maharashtra and some parts of Gujarat, in the northern parts of India – a skit called "Raas-Lila" is performed that depicts the life of Krishna through various stages. In Gujarat and parts of Jammu, hundreds of kites are flown from rooftops, and kite-flying contests are held as part of the festivities. So, if you happen to be in Jammu during this time of the year, be sure to buy a colourful kite from the local vendors and

indulge in some kite-flying contests. Further down south, several celebratory rituals after a day of fasting are held to celebrate the birth of Krishna.

With his affable nature, childhood pranks and his wise ideology during the battle of Mahabharat, Krishna is one of the most favoured deities amongst the Hindus. The Bhagavat Gita, the holy doctrine of the Hindu religion, speaks volumes of Krishna's words of wisdom spoken during the battle of Mahabharat. In some of the celebrations, excerpts from these scriptures are readout for the younger ones to teach them about Indian mythology. The festival typically falls during September when the monsoons in the northern parts of India have retreated. If you befall to be touring India during this period, be sure to check out the celebrations in the different sections. A visit to Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna is worth a visit during this time of the year. The entire city is lit up, and the festive vibe runs through the city streets.



INCREDIBLY UNIQUE AND CHEAP THINGS TO DO IN BANGKOK (THAILAND)

SNEHA TIWARI

Travelling to a foreign country is undoubtedly one of the most therapeutic pleasures. However, the anxiety of what comes next is something we all fear at the bottom of the heart. Every city has its hidden jewels and treasure, which are a must watch to experience the authentic flavour. Bangkok(Thailand) is one destination to top on every enthusiast travel list. The affordable city has a lot to offer to range from trendiest fashion, aromatic spa sessions, exotic locations and a lot more... If you are heading for a few days stopover to the fantastic city, we can help you make the most of it.

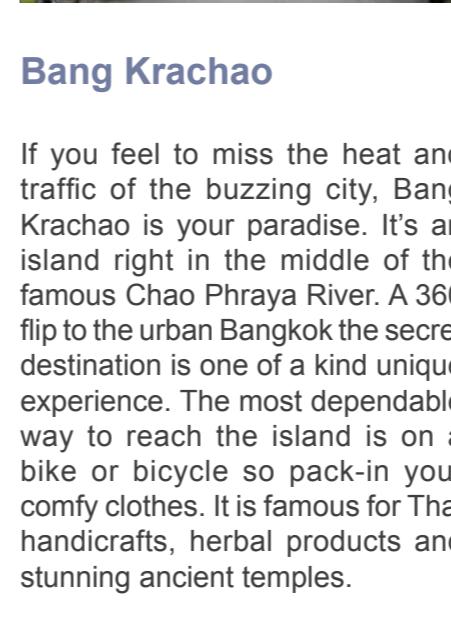
Optimized Guide For An Enjoyable Trip To Bangkok

The breathtaking city innovatively presents fine Thai cuisine. The town is convenient to travel even for as it is well connected to other cities and countries through various means of transport. Like many other capitals, the city never goes to sleep. Adventure sports, new spring collection, cheap electrical products, mesmerizing locations it all congregate in the one city.



Bang Krachao

If you feel to miss the heat and traffic of the buzzing city, Bang Krachao is your paradise. It's an island right in the middle of the famous Chao Phraya River. A 360 flip to the urban Bangkok the secret destination is one of a kind unique experience. The most dependable way to reach the island is on a bike or bicycle so pack-in your comfy clothes. It is famous for Thai handicrafts, herbal products and stunning ancient temples.



Flow House: Go Surfing!!

Elevate your trip to a different level with a race along the waves. The most refreshing way to fulfil your desire for an adrenaline rush. Laugh yourself off or learn the skill of balancing on static waves and some impressive surf moves.



Commons Market: Global Cuisine

Thai food is mouthwatering and delicious. However, if you find yourself tired of having fried rice and curry, numerous restaurants are offering Argentinian steaks to french cuisine. Explore street food and local eateries to experience the authentic taste. Commons market is a one-stop for food lovers with hygienic open-spaced outlets offering multiple cuisines.



Chatuchak Weekend Market

Of course, Shopping is the inevitable part of your trip to Bangkok. While various tourist markets offer clothes and products at a higher price. Chatuchak is a weekend market for all tastes and pockets. Lots of cool stuff, trendy clothes, accessories, furniture, handicrafts etc. all at affordable prices. The insanely huge market is open on Saturdays and Sundays, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. Early morning hours are best to avoid the rush and experience peaceful Shopping.



Unique Things To Do In Bangkok

While travelling to a foreign country, you can't waste time on discovering unique and cheap things to do in Bangkok. Go beyond the usual and experience the incredible beauty and culture of the country. Thailand is a lot more than souvenir markets and ancient temples. Follow our tips for unique and cheap things to do in Bangkok, and we assure you that you will leave with a desire to come back.



Hotels

Let's assume you have booked your flights to Bangkok. It's best to book your tickets 3 months in advance to grab the best deals and discounts on airfare. The next thing you need is a well-located hotel. The city is famous for fancy hotels and incredible online discounts. Pre Book your stay to get the room with a jaw-dropping view and edgy style. Among the incredibly unique and cheap things to do in Bangkok the insides of the hotel is literally a must experience. Where else can you have your gourmet food and cocktails with the view of cosmopolitan Skyliner, flawless decoration and elegant room services?



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G8 26	Bangkok	Mumbai	20:55	23:30	Non-Stop	DAILY
G8 25	Mumbai	Bangkok	13:45	19:45	Non-Stop	DAILY

THE INCREDIBLE INDIAN POETRY

RADHIKA BHASIN



The Incredible Indian Poetry Verses or poetry to a significant number of us is a marriage among idea and some momentous marvels. A strategy to process our feelings through express language and discourse. National Poetry Month is a festival of various voices and the enhancing knowledge of imagination. This specific month is likewise an impetus for some journalists to give their inventiveness a chance to be sustained and to make more workmanship. Numerous artists over the world utilize this committed time to subscribe to the speciality of composing verse through prompts accessible to them on the first NaPoWriMo page or different mediums.

1. Sameen Broker

His sonnet on day 28 of the #NaPoWrimo challenge was about November and the many aromas of the period. He looks over that “In the NaPoWriMo setting, I feel that a lyric is rarely wrapped up. Before I have allowed a ballad to settle and stew with the goal that I can filter it, the time has come to compose another sonnet. My greatest test is proceeding onward from a ballad too rapidly.”

2. Meghna Prakash

A little piece from Meghna's various ballads on her Instagram @plebwrites, she discusses different subjects from grasping romantic love to emotional wellness. She told scroll, “Notwithstanding NaPo WriMo. I don't deliberately plunk down to compose verse. Motivation strikes in the most surprising spaces, and I capitulate to the inclination. In any case, each time it's Poetry Month, I have a recharged drive to train myself regularly to write. I genuinely love the vitality in April. Everybody is perusing verse, talking about one another's sonnets, studying, supporting and giving prompts.



II.

3. Tishani Doshi

Destined to Welsh and Gujarati guardians in Tamil Nadu, Tishani Doshi is an artist. A renowned author whose first book of verse, Countries of the Body (2006), won a Forward Prize for Best First Collection, according to the Poetry Foundation. Having since distributed six books of verse and fiction, Doshi's honours are bounty. The beneficiary of an Eric Gregory Award for Poetry and champ of the All-India Poetry Competition, she even spoke to the nation at “a notable get-together of world artists for Poetry Parnassus at the Southbank Center, London,” as her site states.

Her verse covers a scope of topics and subjects, extending from movement, love and aching to find and changing your character crosswise over fringes, self-brightening, all tinged with her very own involvement with the equivalent.



IV.



V.

4. Poem Mondal

Portrayed suitably as a “weaver of glorious words”, Sonnet Mondal's achievements with regards to his idyllic works and portrayal of Indian authors and artists on a worldwide scale are extraordinary.

The ‘youthful poet of India’ makes entire universes with his words, with apparently essential words that trigger distinctive symbolism. From his humanistic methodology, his lyrics address thoughts of affection and misfortune, expectation and yearning, fluttering between the over a wide period wonderfully and quickly. His words ring like delicate chimes in your ears as your mind ventures somewhere else with each line you read.

Conclusion – We are encompassed by verse – in the inflexion and musicality of everyday routine – yet we dread it; are scared by it even. However, we take shelter in verse to verbalize the dynamic or just to stop and reflect, to discover importance and reason. In any case, if you are not focusing, it escapes you rapidly, for ‘lyrics resemble rainbows’.

5. Meena Kandasamy

Talking at the Jaipur Literature Festival, Meena Kandasamy communicated that the “point of her verse is to send a social message.” As a lady, belonging to the Dalit community, her work is extraordinary. She lent her voice to issues, for example, station mistreatment, separation, and sexual orientation relations. Her ground-breaking verse makes waves that are both celebrated, just as addressed by numerous individuals in our man-centric culture.

The Chennai-based artist, essayist, and interpreter had her first book Touch distributed in 2006 and has won prizes taking all things together India verse rivalries.



III.

Her work has been distributed in different abstract diaries and productions, for example, the Kavya Bharati, Muse India, and the Quarterly Literary Review.

EVERYDAY MANTRA IN A MODERN SOCIETY

.....

DEVAL ASHOK HARIA



We teach to practice the craft of mindful residing in everyday lives in the Plum Village society. My teacher, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, (Thay), took a lot of traditional methods and gave them a fresh spin. One instance of this is the exercise of mantra. They are easy sentences in any language that can be read. Thay suggests, "The Six Mantras are six phrases that embody caring expression and let individuals know you see it, comprehend it, and worry for it. We call these phrases' mantras' in Buddhism. They are a sort of magic formula. You can take about a miracle when you pronounce them because forth with happiness becomes accessible.



The first two mantras can be used at any moment with just about anyone, created to deepen interpersonal relationships. To discover what's most normal for you, you can alter the sentences. However, the most important part is to become aware of the presence of the other person and how valuable it is to live together. Also, we never know when we are going to see our loved ones last, and these phrases help us come back to what's important here and now.

There are many time-honoured traditional mantras of meditation out there which are highly helpful in meditation. "Om" is one of the simplest and most common of all. However, I like to use more contemporary mantras in my exercise. I discover reciting a mantra in English (which my brain can understand) enables me more obviously and efficiently to grasp my desire.

"Where I am right now is exactly where I need to be."

"I have a purpose in this life."

"I surround myself by those who make me better."

"I am a magnet for joy, love, and abundance."

"Money flows easily and effortlessly to me."

"I am enough."

"Every day in every way, I'm getting better and better."

"I change my thoughts; I change my world."

"I am at peace with what is, what was, and what will be. I forgive you. I forgive me."

"I am open to the abundance of the universe."

Over the years, I have discovered that it is even possible to use these mantras externally towards oneself. I teach myself these sentences when I feel stuck, embarrassed, and alone to imagine that I can offer myself the consolation, compassion, and affection I normally have.

When there is stress, war, and overall pain, the fifth and fourth mantras are to be used. In these moments, it's so easy to freeze up and don't understand what to tell or burst in rage to create things worse. Recalling that everyone is doing their utmost to be pleased (although some pleasure policies are tragically misguided), we can know that disputes arise from pain.

When a buddy experiences grief, these sentences emphasize that the most significant item we can give is our existence, not our guidance or dread. When there is a war, these sentences remind us that we are much more probable to discover a solution when we emerge from the purpose of relieving pain for all engaged. And even if we cannot discover an instant solution, we can feel at ease with ourselves, realizing that we have done our utmost and have remained loyal to our dignity.

The third mantra may appear to be a careless affirmation, and the reality is that it can be used in this way. You tell it and pray that without staring inward, something will alter, it has no authority. Many times I have dropped prey to this. But when done as an invite to search for the sacred in the profane and note that there is awareness here and now, this mantra can become a portal to liberty. If you already have happiness, then experience it! Enjoy it! If there is a pain, note that there are always terms for happiness as well. If there is no pain or happiness, wonder if you can find a little well-being straight now.

This mantra should be used when somebody praises or blames it. So the declaration is easy, and it's really difficult to exercise. This comparison somehow helps me giggle, and it's become my favourite mantra. Practice care may be important, but it doesn't have to be severe!

There is supposed to be some reality in it when commanded, and yet we must note that we also have a lot of faults. Then when questioned, in what has been said, it is essential to search for the reality and note that we also have excellent characteristics. This mantra places vital procedures on any spiritual path at the core of compassion and humility.

Sometimes I was convinced the critique I got was incorrect, and this motto assisted me to relax my hold on having to be correct. At other moments, I was sure the critique I got was completely accurate, and the mantra assisted me in thinking that I am more than my faults. The same thing occurred to be commended. Then I began applying this mantra to my own ideas. This took me a lot closer to the exercise. This little sentence can lead us home to a center route if we ever too far into pride or shame.

Whether you're practicing a traditional mantra or not, professionals of all faiths and none at all can use these mantras. They are easy reminders of how we and ourselves can be active with each other. They are also intended to be improvised to play with and like jazz. Find the phrases that make you feel the most genuine. The "I understand you're suffering, and that's why I'm here for you" phrase might transform into "you're looking green. Would you like to speak?" The phrases are not almost as essential as the heart's sensation.

What sentences in your regular lives will carry the Dharma back for you? Can you exercise saying them to yourself in order to reinforce them? Let it be fun; attempt it.



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ANITA BOSE



Vacation Mode On - Himalayas

For someone who is staying in Bangkok or Thailand, for them enjoying the snow-laden peaks and the vastness of Himalayas is not as much easily accessible as it is to travel across and reach out some of the best beaches across the globe. Hills have always been my personal favourite, and if it is the snowy Himalayas, the joy multiplies. Between the lush green and the heights of the pine, fern, deodar and amidst the world of rhododendron under the blue sky is the place where happiness overflows. Himalaya is the king of mountains, the land of Shiva, the birthplace of Uma, the house of Parvati, the dwelling of saints and sages, the place of heavenly abode and the shrine of philosophy and meditation.



Beauty Of India

This eccentric Darjeeling trip was unique in many ways. Not going by the conventional way, this tour was not confined to the town of Darjeeling only but to step in new places at this land of beauty. We intended to see the rough tracks of Darjeeling differently. Henceforth from the airport, we took a different route- a road that took us through dense forests, many villages and finally to the lusty beauty of Chamong Chiabari down the road that leads to Mirikh and Sukia Pokhri. If there is no hindrance or obstacle in the street, one can reach Chamong in less than three hours. Not much is mentioned about Chamong Chiabari Mountain Retreat in the map of West Bengal. However, by google map, this place is adjoining to the Sukia locality at an altitude of 2258 meters, i.e. nearly 7000 feet.

The resort is inhabited on the lower level of Sukia hence the elevation is on lesser adjacent. The temperature of the place ranges from one degree to fourteen degrees. The local dialect in Nepalese- however Hindi, Bengali, English and Nepalese are also common languages in this area. With the Singalia and Sandakfu at a distance, this world-famous tea-producing centre started its operation in 1871. Chamong is a small township 17km southwest of Darjeeling. The word "Chamong" comes from the name of a bird which the Lepchas call "chamoo". During the sunny months, the garden wakes up with the loud chirp of these birds. In the surrounding areas of Chiabari, there are quite a few other gardens as well, some of them are the famous Turchum and Shiok tea gardens. Chamong Chiabari belongs to the legendary Lohia group which owns 18

tea gardens in a total of which five are in Assam, and the remaining 13 are in West Bengal. Clad with nature, the beauties of these tea gardens are beyond descriptions- of which Tumsong and Meribong are exceptionally beautiful. In this travel, our experience of Tumsong was also outstanding.



Amidst the natural beauty of Chamong Chiabari, right at the centre is the 140 years old wooden bungalows of the British owners, extremely well decorated and furnished with all types of modern amenities. All the tiredness vanishes while sitting at the lawns of these bungalows. Though the snowcapped picks are not visible from here, the high hills all around, the dense forests, intoxicating serenity of the tea gardens, wandering clouds and the touch of chilly clean breeze fills the mind and body with pristine happiness.

The beauty of Chamong in the night is of a different magnitude. Total tranquillity, the sudden chirp of a night bird, continuous humming of crickets and in the midst of that the bonfire organized by the hotel authorities. Cultural performances by local people are also arranged if the hotel manager is given a prior request. The dinner served is sumptuous and enjoyable.

The resort cottages have been built on the steps of the garden at various levels surrounded by tall pine trees with the blue sky as the background. The sunrise, as well as sunset, is picturesque from Chamong. The

landscape is so spread that it is visible from the dining hall as well. In the darkness of night and with a cool breeze flowing, the stars up above in the sky look magical if one stands on the road outside the resort. The beauty in the dawn is of a different type. While sipping over the famous tea of the estate and enjoying the early hours of the day, the sound of the temple bell rolls into the ears. If one goes a little uphill from the resort, there is an ancient temple. Sourcing the temple bell, I reached the temple. A small temple of Lord Shiva, with a small idol of Hanuman Ji, the monkey god beside; the priest was chanting the prayer with few ingredients for puja. There was a small viewpoint adjoining the temple. One would love to sit at the adjoining benches and enjoy the nature and the landscape.

Right below the temple, numerous Tea gardens spread across in steps. With the siren in the morning, the daily works at the gardens have started. The hilly people at the gardens convey an innocent smile on their face and are much more hardy than the people of plain land; age is never a factor to them. The main work of



the tea gardens- plucking of the leaf is not carried out in December. Tea processing and factory visits are carried out in this month. Down below the garden flows the Rongbong river and small forest, which is the dwelling of different types of birds. Ones who are interested in trekking or bird-watching and ornithology climb down right up to the bank of the river.

Our time was limited, and we were yet to see the Kanchenjunga and the snow-capped mountains. We had our breakfast finished quickly besides 8:30 am, we started our journey towards our next destination Tumling, a small village on the way to Sandakfu at a higher altitude than Chamong. Tumling is actually in Nepal, but there is no border demarcation there. The place has two hotels, and the driver informed that one hotel is in India and the other one is in Nepal. From Chamong we started towards Manebhanjan and Tumling is 13km from there. The road to reach Tumling is quite steep and the only way vehicle to reach there used to be few Land rovers which were used during the wars in 1940. These days powerful new Bolero and other four-wheel vehicles are used to reach the

village. The car stopped at the Mane bhajan market at India Nepal border. One can buy some necessary items and disembarked the excess luggage that we were carrying at a shop nearby and collected a coupon so that we can collect it back while returning. From here government permit is needed to proceed further for Tungling, Tonglu, Sandakfu –all famous for being trekker's paradise. By trekking, it takes three to four days to reach Sandakfu and Falut – though nowadays one can reach there by the vehicle as well. However, Sandakfu was not in our itinerary this time as the place was under a cold wave.

Gradually we started ascending upwards. The road is narrow and steep but quite well maintained with the pine, birch and rhododendrons standing by the way like a wall. Sometimes only grasslands beside us and in the distance we could see the prayer flags. The car took a turn and crossed a small village like Chitre, Meghma. Light snowfall started in the meantime which the local people call "Ola"- to us it looked like shreds of cotton. Crossing these heavenly beautiful roads, we reached Tonglu- a place higher than Tumling in altitude – at the height of 10,130 ft. The entire area was covered with snow- "frosting" as they call it in the western world.

Singalia mountain range is one of the highest mountain ranges and is very well visible from this place, but we were not lucky enough due to the weather condition. However, we felt as if we were in the world of Narnia with frosted road and village huts in front of us. From Tonglu the road descended and took us to Tumling. Reaching Tumling, the car stopped in front of some shops. Tumling is at the height of 9600 ft and was first heard of in the 17th century. In front of us was nothing except the snow-clad white Himalaya. The view reminded of Musiari. (Uttarakhand). The picks in front are known as "Sleeping Buddha of Bengal" as the shape has a resemblance with it. The local folklore talks about Kumbhakarna also. The Singalia and Kanchenjunga ranges stand in between India, Nepal, Tibet and Sikkim with formidable Kanchenjunga with an altitude of 28,169 ft being the third highest mountain in the world. Sixteen peaks are seen from here if the sky is clear- staring with Kumbhakarna, then Kanchenjunga, then Shimbho followed by Kokgong, Ramong, Fre, Kabru, Kabru Forebead, Goche and Pan dim stands among other picks. The arrangement of the mountains is such as if someone is resting in turn back posture. Climbing a little above Tumling, there is a small prayer room or Chaitya from where the sound of prayer floats around in the air. The chill in the weather has frozen the base of the candles as well. The view from the prayer room is magnanimous as the entire area is visible from there- even the road that goes upwards towards Sandakfu and Falut. Someone who has some time can as well spend a couple of nights at Tumling- it would be a lifetime experience if the sky is clear. The driver was anxious

for returning back as the roads become slippery, thus dangerous after continuous snowfall. On our way to Tumling, we expressed our desire to see the monastery at Chitre. Hence we were taken there. Trekkers to Sandakfu halt at this small village for some refreshment. Located next to the road after a sharp bend, this village is famous for its monastery which is popularly known as Chitre monastery only. The place has an old chaitya full of prayer flags with a beautiful painting of Lord Buddha inside and eight small chaityas at a little distance. The site has a beautiful view of the landscape and the mountain range. Regarding Chitre, this monastery was built by a Tibetan monk named Nakamura, who later on became famous as Nagthang Tsampa. He had travelled to many places through Yoga and is known to have cured the king of Burma who was suffering from a critical disease. On his way of returning, he settled down at the nearby Gorkhey village and built this monastery at Chitre. Leaving the monastery and Chitre behind, we started for Tumsong Tea Estate, the place for our next night halt. On the way to Tumsong, we touched upon Ghum and proceeded towards the hill opposite to the town of Darjeeling.



Distance from Tumling to Tumsong is 78 km, and it takes nearly 3 hours to reach. Down the Manebhanjan- Sukapokhri road, crossing the Lepcha Ghat one reaches Tumsong Tea Estate and Retreat, a sister concern of Chamong with the Lohias as the owner. This estate, spread over 200 acres started its operation in 1867 under J.A. Wernicke, a German. Now the area is 114 hectare, and approximately 500 people work at this beautiful estate which is at the height of 5500 feet. This stunning retreat is made of wood and is almost 160 years old. The hotel authority is courteous, and all the tiredness of the lousy road disappears, seeing the lush green lawn in front. The added attraction is the view of Kanchenjunga from the room, balcony, lawn and everywhere. This heritage building is well maintained, and the food is of a high standard. Along with a drawing room and a small library, there is provision for various indoor games as well. Furthermore, it was quite a feeling basking against fire sitting beside the fireplace. The day we reached, there were rain and storm and could not get a view of Kanchenjunga. We went to bed with a disappointment of missing the view coming all the way because of bad weather. However, we were in the hope that after the rain next morning we should get a clear sky. I woke up in the morning at five and saw on my mobile phone. The temperature was ranging between 5 and 6 degrees. I was peeping through the window restlessly to see if it was dawn outside when suddenly the darkness started fading out and saw in front against the blue sky Kanchenjunga is standing magnificently yet silently wearing a white crown. Hurriedly I woke up others, got into woollen clothes and rushed to the lawn outside. Cloudless sky, tranquillity prevailing and a thin layer of ice over the flowers and grasses in the garden, stood in front of us the Kanchenjunga like an emperor. Fingers were almost in a frozen state yet could not resist me from clicking pictures. Manager of the garden who stays adjacent to the main bungalow checked from a special thermometer kept inside a box in the lawn and informed the previous night. The temperature had dropped to three degrees Celsius. Tea is served little late, and the hotel authorities have not started the provision of making own tea at the room.

However, the surrounding was filled with the exotic smell of tea from the garden factory. The aroma of tea mixed with the scent of nature created in a toxic atmosphere. To enjoy it further, we walked towards the world of the tea workers- in their residential block. We saw young kids well clad, neat and clean, carrying bag and walking towards the gate. Probably there was a function that day for which a vehicle was waiting for them outside the main entrance. These young kids were tireless, not bothered about the weight they were carrying. We also noticed that at this hour of morning itself, almost all had taken a shower and fresh. From inside the small hut, the sweet smell of incense sticks was mixing in the air. The girls were with a small dot of sandal in their forehead as the "bindi". The people there are poor, yet neat and clean. We came back to the resort, and the waiter served us tea on the balcony. Sipping the best quality tea of the garden with Kanchenjunga, Kumbhakarna and other picks standing in front of us with clear blue sky in their background, and smelling the aroma of tea in the air- it was a different feeling in totality. Lawn and the surrounding area infested with beautiful trees.

People visit the area to see various species of birds. The cordial manager of the resort extends his service for picnics as well. The stay at the retreat of the garden not only satiates the mind but serves something even more. The local people said the name Tumsong came from the name of the local deity Tamasha Devi. They said that there used to be a temple of the Goddess right at the centre of the garden. Under the supervision of the manager, the workers demonstrate the process of how tea leaves are picked and how tea is made from tea leaves to the visitors. Tumsong is an ideal place to give the mind and physique relaxation for a couple of days.

Our vacation was about to end, and before we leave the hills, we have to visit the evergreen Darjeeling. To reach Darjeeling from Tumsong, one must go via Ghum keeping Batasia Loop beside. Ghum is one of the highest points of Darjeeling with an altitude of 7407 feet above sea level and is famous for the station



and the toy train. The experience of viewing Kanchenjunga and other mountains from this place in the winter morning amidst cold breeze amidst the snow-clad fern leaves is fantastic. We crossed Ghum and reached towards Batasiya Loop. On our way, we passed the famous Ija Dwelling Monastery or Ghum Monastery and was established by famous Mongolian astrologist Lama Sherab Gyajama. This monastery of the Goluk pa or "yellow cap" clan has a beautiful 15 feet tall Maitreya Buddha idol inside in sitting posture looking at the devotees. The walls of the temples have the highest quality pictures and paintings of gods and goddesses and lamas. Unfortunately, no information booklet on the monastery is available. From Batasiya Loop one gets a view of the entire range of Kanchenjunga; nowadays one can buy tickets to see the field through the telescope. The most beautiful place there is the War Memorial. The contribution of the Gorkhas in the Indian army is undeniable. We tend to forget the contribution of those unsung heroes who maintain peace and defends the motherland so that we can stay in peace and enjoy our vacations. War Memorial has the names of many such martyrs of the Indian army who has given their life to protect the motherland. With bowed heads, we paid homage to them and their families who selflessly still are securing the peace for the nation. From Batasia Loop, we took the famous Hill Cart Road, crossed Ghum and entered our known Darjeeling. In the sunbathed morning, we finally reached our known Mall Road. From the vast windows of the modern Viceroy hotel, one gets a comprehensive view of the place. Darjeeling has remained the same, only the population and the number of shops have increased manifold. Sitting at the decked balcony of the Viceroy Hotel, the roseate snowcapped Kanchenjunga reminded us in the hours of dusk before disappearing for the day—"do come back again".

We left early morning next day to see the world-famous sunrise from Tiger Hill. Tiger Hill is the highest point of Darjeeling, is at the height of 8482ft and 11 km away from Darjeeling, a little before Ghum. For ones who enjoy the snow-laden Himalayas, October to December is the ideal time to visit the place while March- April is the perfect time for the flower lovers. Typically taxi fare to Tiger Hill is between 1000/- to 1200/-. In the last two occasions I was not lucky enough to witness the sunrise due to bad weather condition, hence was apprehensive this time. In the early hours of dawn, the town is olded in darkness. And amidst the night, a trail of proceeded towards Tiger Hill. Many vehicles had stopped midway due to the soft snows on the road- however our driver stealthily climbed up to a formidable height. Construction work for an observatory is on near the main viewpoint. From 5 in the morning, the colour of the eastern sky started changing, announcing the end of darkness and arrival of the sun god. The beauty of the sky at that time is such serene and heavenly that it cannot be expressed



in words with peach black transforming to midnight blue with sprays of light red, pink and yellow. On my right was the sunrise with divine beauty, and on my left, the Himalaya gradually unveiling the shredding of the gown of darkness and getting visible slowly. The seven rays of Sun spread their wings over Kanchenjunga and other snow-capped mountains beside her and brought in changes of colours- first a sky blue, then shades of pink and then vermilion red. On the other side, the sun, dressed in red armour, crossed the moments of dawn and was on his chariot up above the head by 6:20 am. In that moment of joy and bliss, I heard someone beside me said "Sawai na kha". I was taken aback understanding the Thai language up there on Tiger Hill- the language of the people from the place I was coming from. Got introduced to the lady and came to know she has also travelled from Bangkok. The people around were flooded with joy and were carrying memories of the sunrise in mind as well as in the cameras. On our way down, we saw a temple of the Goddess. Little below was a Buddhist monastery. And while climbing down didn't leave any opportunity of a glimpse of mighty Kanchenjunga whenever was getting a chance. In the course of the day, saw Peace Monastery, Mountaineering Museum, Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoo, Happy Valley Tea Estate, etc. The old Oxford

book shop at the Mall still treasures lots of old and valuable books. The Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Cultural Centre has become one of the prime tourist attraction in the last five years. Eminent social worker, Sister Nivedita who was an Irish teacher, author, social activist, school founder and disciple of Swami Vivekananda went to Darjeeling on the invitation of world-famous scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose and her Lady Abala Bose. She had spent the last few months of her life at their Lebong Kart Road residence, 4km away from Darjeeling. Ramakrishna Mission is a well-known organization in the whole world. This centre of theirs is dedicated to education, medical assistance and service of ordinary people. The most beautiful part is the location-I felt that Kanchenjunga has a better view from this place preferably anywhere inside the Darjeeling city. From the room where Sister Nivedita lived to the room where the authority is planning to build a museum, even the resting hall- all the places provide a panoramic view of the Himalayas. No tour operator suggests this place as a place of interest though. I felt the peace of mind one gets in sitting in the main shrine of the building and watching the Himalaya merely is unparalleled. This trip of Darjeeling was a trip of fulfilment. On the way back, I prayed to Himalaya repeatedly to come back to this place yet again.



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DEVI DURGA BECKONS AGAIN

.....
APARNA SHARMA

It's that time of the year again when India is in a total festive mood. The country just said bye to Lord Ganesha and it's already time to welcome Durga Maa. A few weeks after Durga Puja gets over, it will be time for Diwali. All these festivals celebrate the victory of good over evil. Each festival rejoices with greater depth and vigour in certain parts of India. The streets of Mumbai become incredibly festive during Ganesh Chaturti. Chaat puja brings a wave of celebration in North India. However, Durga puja is an integral part of most of the states in India. Kolkata being the origin looks beautiful and festive during this time.

Facts About Goddess Durga

In Hinduism, maa Durga is depicted and worshipped as a goddess with supreme powers. She is usually described as sitting on a lion which adds an interesting perspective to her superior strength. She is exquisitely beautiful with wide-open eyes. Maa Durga holds power to abolish the evil force. The great goddess who is believed by Hindus as the mother of all mortal beings with extraordinary divine powers. Maa Durga is popularly known Mahishasura Mardini because she was the only power to demolish Mahishasura.



Celebrations In India

Goddess worship has been an integral part of Indian culture. Durga puja is a celebration of good winning over evil. According to Hindu mythology, Mahishasur was the leader of the devil clan creating problems for the gods and their king. They, in turn, sought divine help of maa Durga who came on her lion with her weapons and killed the demon. Durga Puja is held during Mahalaya, also known as the first phase of the crescent moon in Ashwinpaksh. On this day, the devotees get up early and pray to the goddess Durga. After the celebration of Mahalaya comes Mahashasti. Mahashasti is followed by Mahasaptami, Mahaasthami, Mahanavami and finishes with Vijaydashmi which is the last day of Durga puja.

Kolkata - The Origin Of Durga Puja Tradition

There are lots of pandals across Kolkata which are organised by the local religious communities. The festivities come out in full form inside these pandals, and you can see people wearing colourful clothes and chanting mantras. A fantastic display of lights and the rhythmic beating of the drums are a huge part of the celebration process. On Vijayadashami, the tenth day of the festival, the idol of the goddess is immersed in a river or pond. This marks the end of this elaborately celebrated festival. Nine days of festivity seem to pass by quickly during Durga Puja. Besides saying farewell to Goddess Durga, there is also another tradition of Sindoor Khela. Married women will apply "sindoor" or vermillion to goddess Durga before smearing it on each 'other's faces. Such an unusual way to end the celebration!

I am excited to visit Kolkata during puja time, I have never been in the city during Durga puja, but it has



been on my bucket list. I have heard so many stories about how the town becomes exceptionally chaotic and crazy. There are going to be endless traffic jams. However, I have a sound belief that I will enjoy walking down the lanes of the city of Kolkata, and it's every nook and corner, particularly during Durga puja. I am excited to experience the pulse of the city.

I am looking forward to hearing the sound of drums, I believe one not only understands it, but you can feel it. You get goosebumps when the dhakis first begin to play their beat.

My friend was described that the city reverberates with the echo of conch shells, and you can truly witness the "City of Joy" come out in her most excellent glory. I am told that the best way to understand this festival is to get hands-on experience in Kolkata, so I am looking forward to my trip.



Worship Female Power

Although festivals are amazing, I sincerely hope that every idol is eco-friendly. Polluting the rivers and other water bodies is not an excellent way to celebrate any festival. I also wonder why we celebrate women power during festivals and treat them differently at different times. It is so hypocritical to worship Devi Durga and treat women disrespectfully or treat them as weaklings. We ask Maa Durga for protection, but girls are often judged on different parameters. Many still treat girl child as a burden but Hinduism teaches us to respect the masculine and feminine energy equally. After all, Durga puja is the celebration of life and joy of living in the form of divine feminine power.

About The Author:
Aparna Sharma is an Indian expat living in Bangkok. She is the mother of two girls who has her travel blog. She writes on arts, culture, travel, fashion and lifestyle. Her blog is www.stylishtrolley.com. Her Instagram handle is @stylishtrolley.

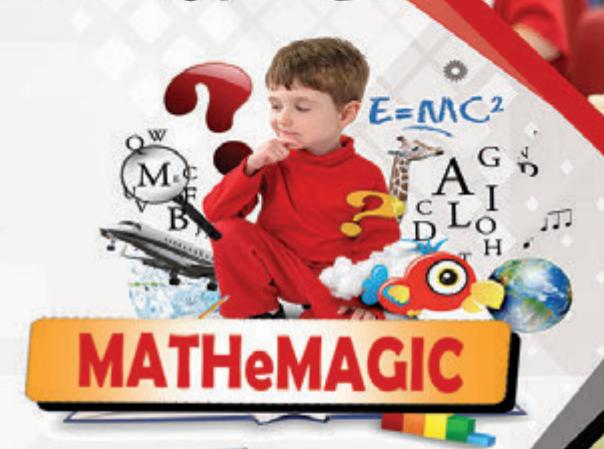


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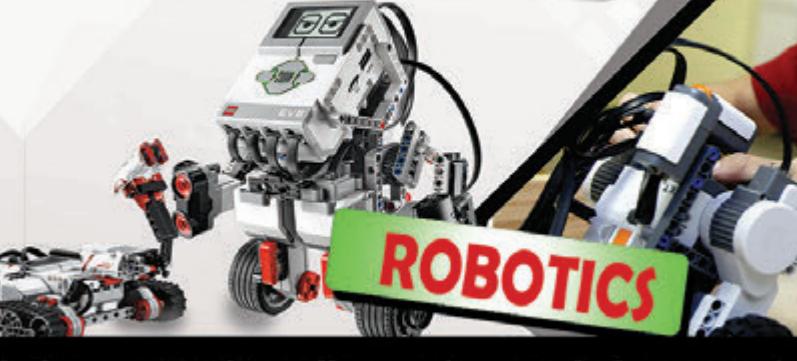
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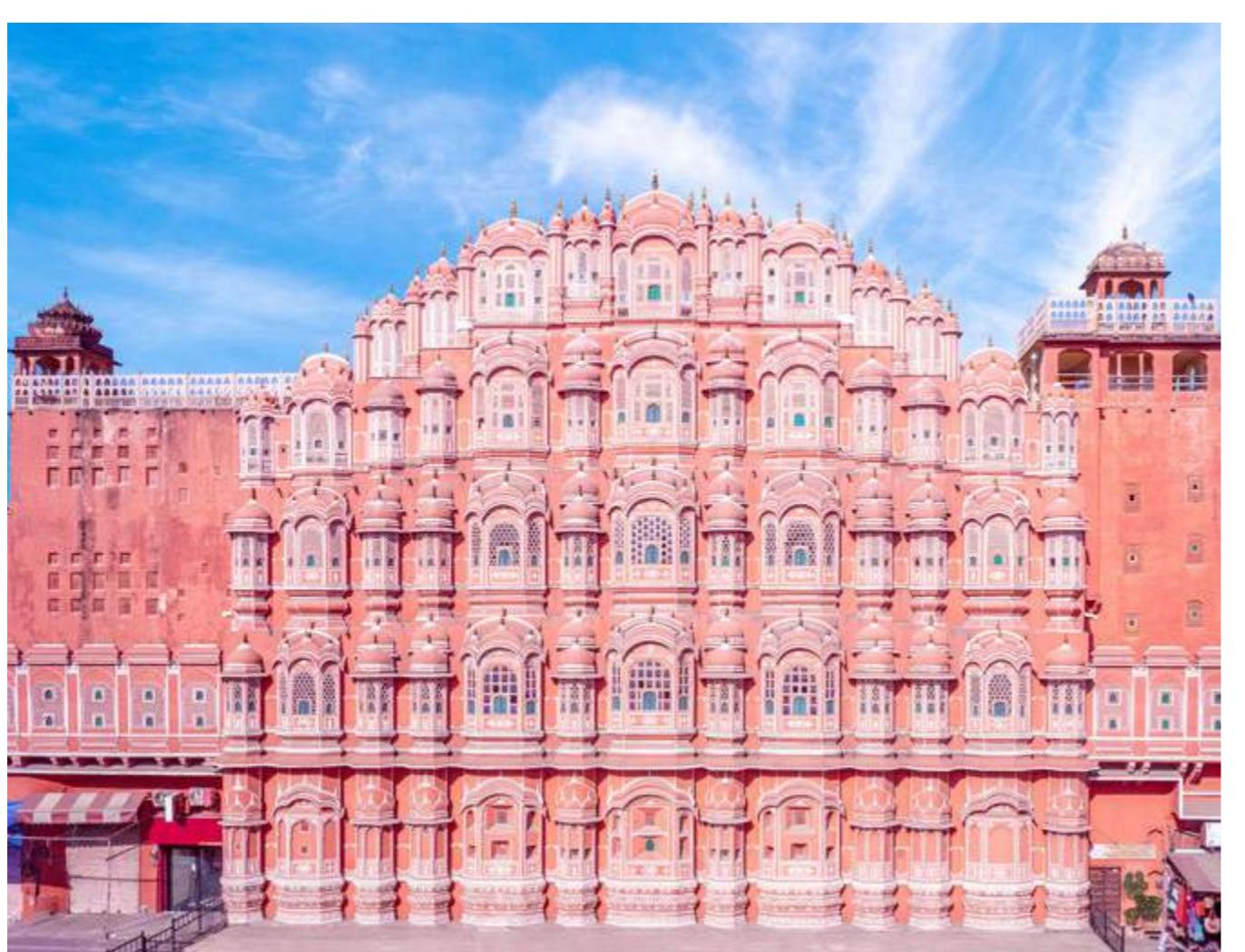


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JAIPUR THE PINK CITY

SHILPITA ROY

The historical city of Jaipur stands out as one of the most spectacular and culturally vibrant destinations in India. Dazzling in the hues of its noble and magnificent past the town has a unique tale in itself.

Besides being the capital of Rajasthan, an Indian state Jaipur is also known as the "Paris of India" or the "Pink City". Founded sometime in November in 1727 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, Jaipur today is the land of alluring archetypal architecture, palaces, colourful bazaars, lakes, ancient temples, forts, delicious Rajasthani food, and much more. And not to forget the terracotta "pink" colour that the whole city's buildings are painted in, which makes for a beautiful sight!



The History of Jaipur

Founded by a Kachawaha Rajput, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in November 1727, Jaipur has a diversified past with multiple kings ruling the city. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II ruled Jaipur till 1744 and even moved his capital from Amer to Jaipur. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II is also responsible for making Jaipur the first planned city of India. The ever increasing population and scarcity of water made him refer to several architecture books. Initiate talks with numerous architects to develop a city plan that could accommodate all the people. Help solve the water crisis too, and also take care of the security aspect since attacks from Northern India was quite rife back then. Built on the principles of Shilpa Shastra and astronomy by the famous architect from Bengal Vidhyadhar Bhattacharya, Jaipur was divided into nine blocks. Two blocks included the palaces and state buildings, and the remaining seven blocks were for the public. Sturdy walls and gates surrounded the city. Since then to now, Jaipur has seen many rulers but has still been one of the most magnificent cities of India.

Why Is Jaipur Known As the Pink City?

Indeed, the big question and the answer is due to the terracotta pink paint adorning the building walls in a significant part of the city. But why are all the buildings painted in pink? The reason dates back to the ancient years (sometime around 1876-77) when Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh was in power and had passed an order to paint the city in pink. He intended to impress Prince Albert, who was in India for an official tour. Pink was considered the colour of hospitality and hence, this decision. The then Maharaja also constructed a concert hall and named it Prince Albert Hall Museum. But the strategy that was adopted to impress Prince Albert was later passed as law when the queen fell in love with the terracotta pink colour. He realized that the colour could withstand all seasons and also made the city look beautiful.

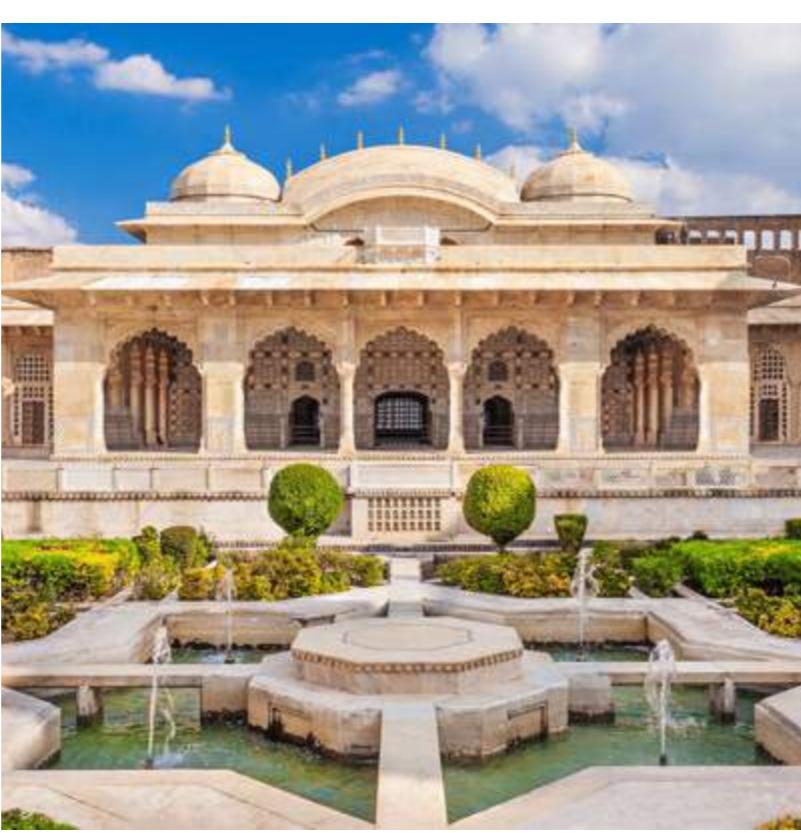
Things To Do in Jaipur

With so many lovely attractions – starting from forts, palaces, museums to colourful markets, restaurants. One can't find a dull day in this fantastic city that oozes brilliance and royalty. Places To Visit: Jaipur is beset by magnificent forts, temples, and palaces. And visiting them is an experience that you should not miss.



Hawa Mahal

– Hawa Mahal or the palace of winds is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city. The mahal is open for common public from 9.00 Am To 4.30 pm to have the breathtaking view of the city arch.



Amber Fort

– A World Heritage Site situated atop a hilltop, you must visit this beautiful fort made from marble and sandstone. Occupying a vast area, the Amber Fort consists of four courtyards, halls, palaces, and gardens. Amber by night- the light and sound show that takes place in the evening is a must-watch. When the fort lights up like a thousand stars and along with it comes alive its history. The fort is open from 9:00, and the light and sound show starts at 7 pm and ends at 9 pm.



Birla Mandir

One of the famous temples and tourist destinations in Jaipur. At the base of Moti Dungri hill, the temple is devoted to Goddess Laxmi and Lord Vishnu. It is made entirely in white marble and has stunning architecture. The itinerant hours are from 8 am to 12 pm and 4 pm to 8 pm.



Sisodia Rani Garden

– It is known as the symbol of eternal love. This beautifully manicured garden was built in 1727 to commemorate the love shared between Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh and Rani Sisodia Jai Singh.

City Palace

– The City Palace beautifully combines Rajasthani and Mughal architecture. It is famous for its exquisite peacock gates that's one of its kind. It also has a museum within its premises that showcases ancient royal costumes, weapons, and myriad other things. It is open for visitors from 9:30 am to 5 pm for visitors.



Food and Shopping

Some of the famous shopping arcades to buy traditional Rajasthani clothes, jewellery, Mojri shoes, etc. are – Johari Bazaar and Bapu Bazaar. Both these markets are open from 9 am to 8 pm and have all that you need to buy from Jaipur. Tripolia Bazaar is ideal to purchase Rajasthani lac (wax) and jewellery items. They also have a good collection of bandhani and patchwork clothes. And for pottery items, brass items, wooden handicrafts, Mirza Ismail Road is where you need to go.

Jaipur is a foodie's paradise. There are many yummy dishes like laal maas, dal bati churma, ghevar, kachoris, phenis, bejad roti, misri roti, chaugani ke laddu, etc. that you must try. Visit restaurants like Natraj, Spice Court, 1135 AD to eat authentic Rajasthani dishes. For sweet treats, visit Rawat Mishtan Bhandar. And for lip-smacking street food, visit MI Road, Raja Park, Fashion Street, and Bapu Bazaar.



Visit Jaipur- Experience Rich Culture And Royalness

The city of palaces and forts, gardens and temples, spectacular architecture, and scintillating views – is sure to leave you spellbound. This royal city is the place to be the queen or king. Turn your fantasies into reality experience the royalness you always wanted to and live your life vintage style, even if it is for just a few days.



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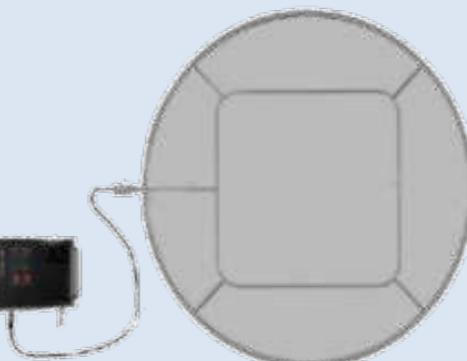
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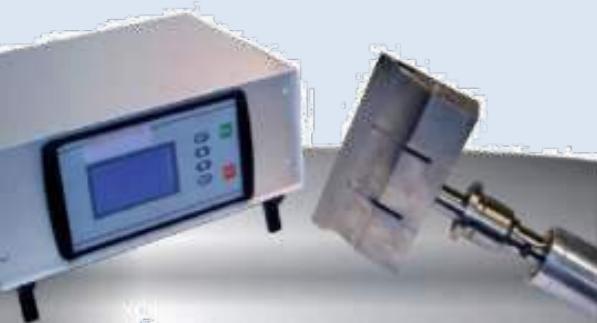
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FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT INDIAN CULTURE

VAISHALI SHUKLA

India is famous worldwide for its food, diversity and culture. At every 50-100 kilometre distance, you will find the change of culture and language in India. This rich diversity of culture of India is what separates it from the rest of the world. Travelling north to south you will find an assortment of flora and fauna; defining the change in geography.

Talking about monuments and heritage, Taj Mahal is a name that needs no introduction worldwide. But it is captivating that besides this epitome of love, India has 31 other UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It includes hill forts of Rajasthan, mountain railways of Shimla and Darjeeling giving the breathtakingly alluring view of the hills, the Western Ghats of the southwest and many other sites of Bengal, Maharashtra etc.



Let's have a glimpse at some of the interesting and fascinating facts of India's diverse culture:

The cuisine of India:

Sweets of Bengal, Tea of hills, Snacks of Gujarat, Thali of Rajasthan, Rasam of South India to apples of Kashmir, you will find a wide range of food across the country. From sweet to spicy, sweet to sour, your taste buds will have the opportunity to experience all of it. From street food to the menu of a five-star restaurant, everywhere you will get a variety of cuisines. From veg to non-veg, you will have all the possible ranges and tastes in India.



Being guest in India is a blessing:

Throughout the country, people treat guests as God. Besides serving you with homemade food, you will be honoured and treated as a celebrity in every single Indian family.



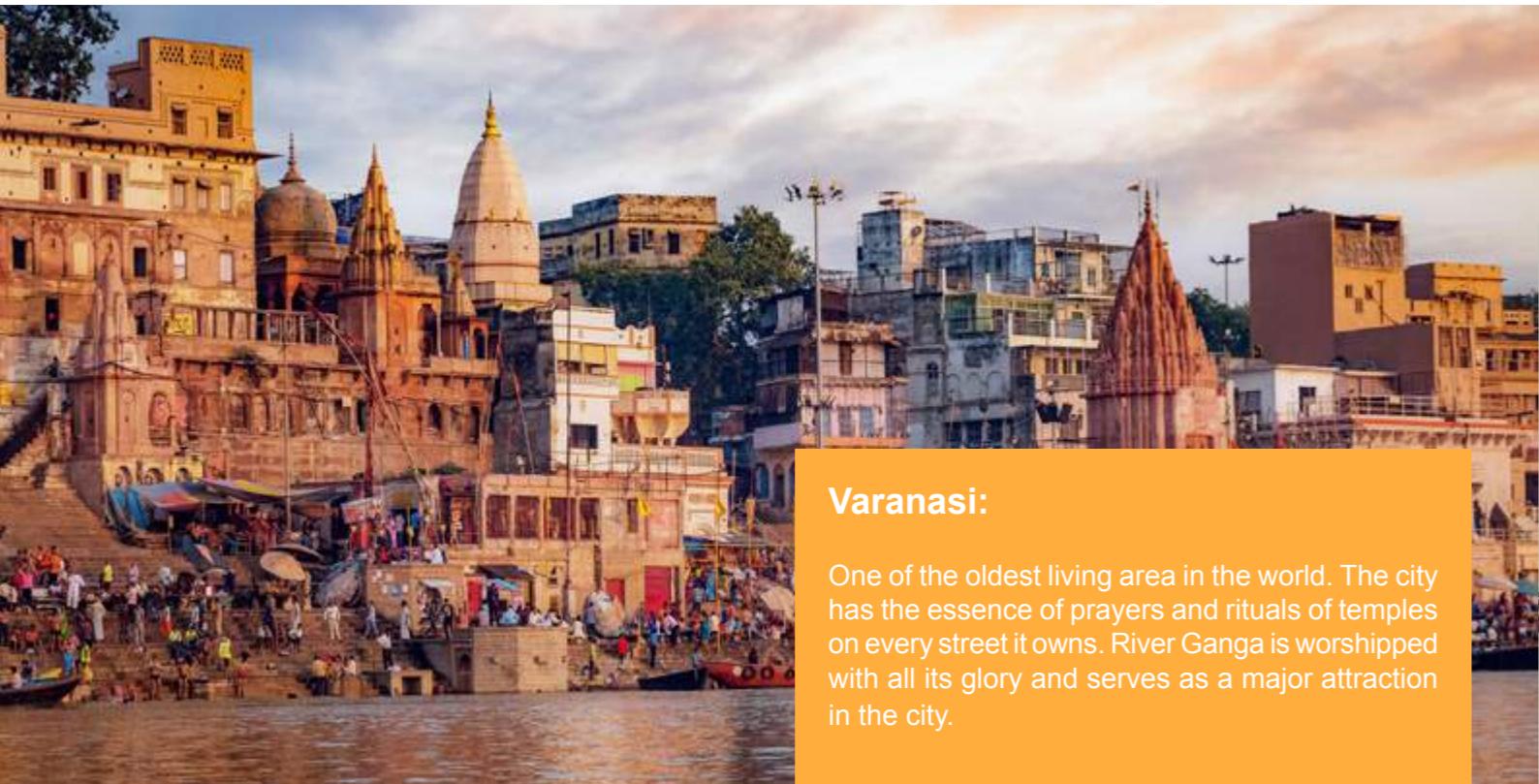
Dance: Forms of culture:

With the change of language and culture, dance forms also change in India. Almost every state has its traditional dance form. The best part is that in India dance forms are not only the expression of feelings of heart but it also a medium to promote, propagate and present the prevalent culture and beliefs of that society.



Golden Temple:

It's a well-known fact worldwide that Gurudwaras langer feed many people every day. The Golden Temple of Ludhiana, Punjab feeds approximately a thousand people per day without any discrimination of caste, gender, race etc. Another amazing fact about the golden temple is that the entire temple intensified with gold and No robbery takes place there.



Varanasi:

One of the oldest living area in the world. The city has the essence of prayers and rituals of temples on every street it owns. River Ganga is worshipped with all its glory and serves as a major attraction in the city.



Dal Lake, Srinagar, Floating post office:

Dal lake in Srinagar, Kashmir, embraces a floating post office. You can't find any country owning another of this kind.



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Clothing:

You will find a range of clothing throughout the country. From the western to the pure Indian attires like sarees, ghagra choli, chikankari work of Lucknow, bandhej work of Rajasthan are a few to be named.

The diversity of India is abundant, which makes it almost impossible to describe in an article. You must travel the country and breathe its essence to understand the culture and diversity which it owes.



THE JOURNEY SO FAR





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