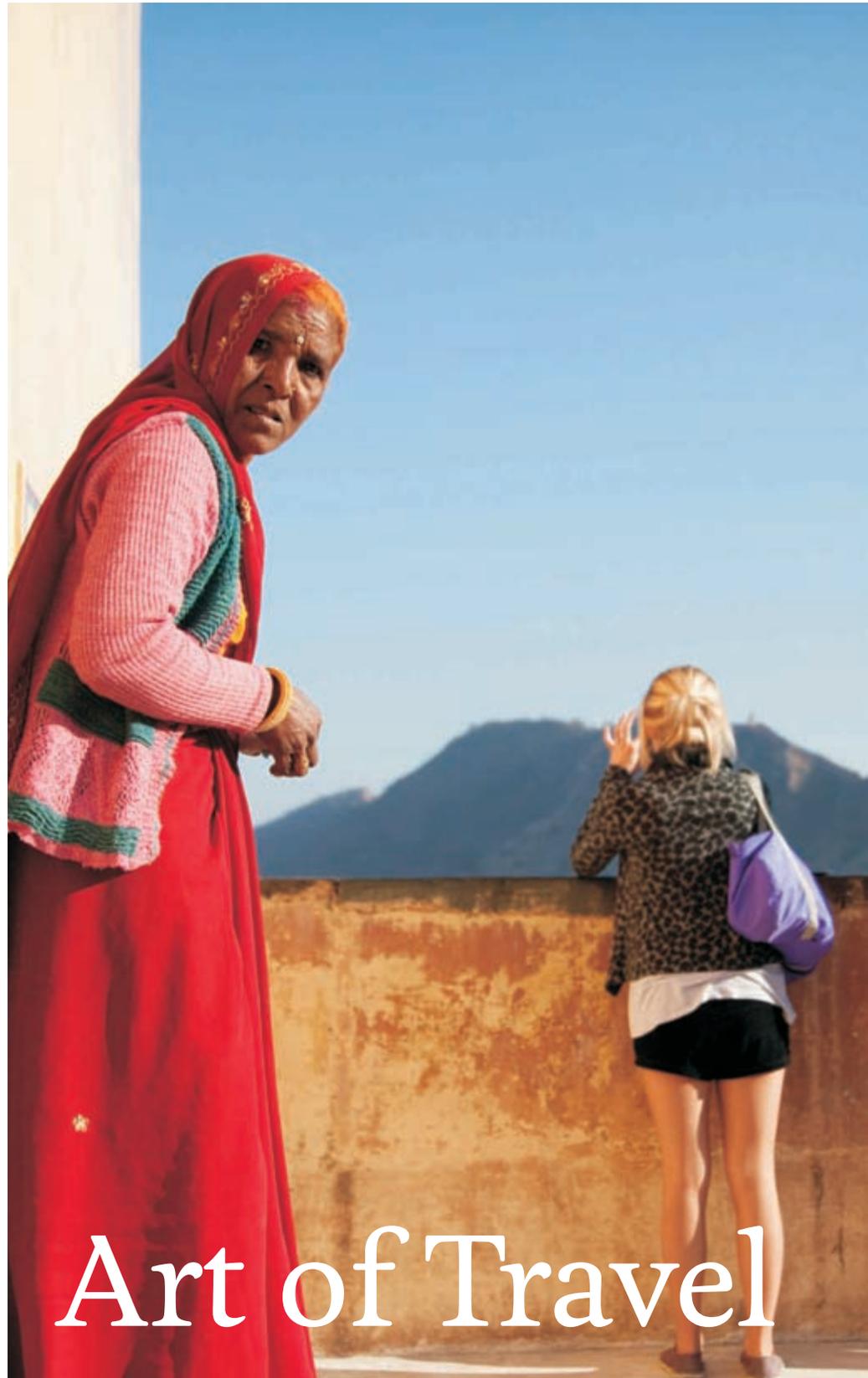


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Stay At

Kaziranga Golf Resort



[Kaziranga Golf Resort](#), near Jorhat in Assam is set amidst a lush tea estate and is perhaps the only 18-hole- golf course in India which has a train line running parallel to it. Stay in the newly constructed golf cottages; 8 in number which are next-door to the Club House which once housed the Manager of the Tea estate during the British Raj. The Kaziranga Golf Resort comes complete with a spa, swimming pool and a pro shop where one can hire equipment on advance notice. For those looking for old world charm; chose the Banyan Grove; a colonial Tea Bungalow which is a 15 minute drive from the Kaziranga Golf Resort. Banyan Grove has seven rooms located in a compound spread over 2 hectares. All rooms have fireplaces to keep you warm. Kaziranga Golf Resort is a perfect place to combine a game of golf with wildlife. The Kaziranga National Park; known worldwide for its one-horned Rhino is an hour and half drive away from here.

Kuntil from our Destination Knowledge Centre recommends that you go Gibbon spotting from the Kaziranga Golf Resort. The Hoolock Gibbon is the only representative of the Ape family in India and is fondly called the Singing Ape for its distinctive call. - [click here](#)





Rickshaw-puller of Old Delhi



A Day in The Life Of Aagam

Aagam is a happy man these days. “At first they laughed at me. But today, everyone wants to be in my shoes as they think that I am doing something really cool.”

Aagam works part time with [When in India Tours](#) - a company which has started Rickshaw rides in Old Delhi. When in India - has five customized rickshaws and when you ride a rickshaw you are able to hear the narration of the guide through audio aids. Just a year back Aagam, who is from Bihar, would have never thought his life would take such a turn for the better. “I came to Delhi in 1999 in search of work when our grocery shop in the railway premises was dismantled by the authorities. My uncle has a watch shop in Chandni Chowk. But I couldn’t handle his bad temper and didn’t like working for him,” says Aagam. His friend who is a rickshaw-puller and works in a garment market in Old Delhi introduced Aagam to Shashi who owns 200 rickshaws. “I decided enough was enough, quit my job at my uncle’s shop and became a rickshaw-puller.” “Pulling loads is hard work, but at least I’m free and I don’t have to listen to anyone. And Shashi is very nice and takes good care of us.” It was Shashi who introduced Aagam to, When in India Tours. While taking us around he proudly says “look at my rickshaw, it’s beautifully painted, has comfortable seats and even has a seat belt. I can also offer my guest water and cold drinks if they get thirsty along the ride. I never thought that a rickshaw could be so cool.”

Ritu Kalra and Taruna Nagpal are the brains behind these rickshaw tours of Old Delhi. While Ritu served as the financial head in some of the top corporate houses of India, Taruna is an MBA from University of Notre Dame and has worked in a top healthcare organisation in the United States of America. They left their comfortable jobs to start -When in India and lead these tours themselves. “I love to work with Ritu and Taruna ma’am,” Aagam tells us. “These tours are not just about making an extra buck. But it’s the respect, dignity and an opportunity to meet people from all over the world. They tip me handsomely too. What more can I ask for?”

“I usually wake up at 0700 hrs and reach Digambar Jain Temple which is opposite the Red Fort, the starting point of all the tours. We start by 0830hrs and its lasts for nearly three hours,” he tells us. So what does he do after the tour? “Old Delhi is laid back. The shops here open only by 1100 hrs. So after doing the morning tour I’m free to continue my work at the garment market. I am back home by 2200 hrs” says Aagam.



When asked about his favourite place in Old Delhi Aagam says, he likes Kinari Bazaar area and the Naugarana. While Kinari Bazaar in Old Delhi is the place where locals go for trousseau shopping, Naugarana is a row of nine traditional Jain houses with beautiful frescos. “It’s very peaceful here and the people are very nice,” Aagam tells us. We agree when he took us there for a brief stop over during the tour. So what does he think of the Delhi government who sometimes talk of banning rickshaws from the streets of Old Delhi. “It will be sad. Rickshaws don’t pollute and so many people will lose their livelihood. It shouldn’t happen”

As he drops us at the Ajmeri Gate, the ending point of the rickshaw tour and we bid him adieu, Aagam tells us that he wants to see more of New Delhi. “I have only been to India gate till now. Maybe I will take my family out when they visit me.” We hope that you do so Aagam and have lots of fun.



Lifestyle



Monsoon in Wayanad

By the end of summer, the trees of Wayanad in North Kerala shed their foliage and sprout new leaves and anxiously await the onset of rain. Intermittent showers start in May and build up into monsoon by mid-June and the lush Wayanad landscape bursts to life. The skies turn from shades of sparkling blue to ominous slate-grey in the course of a few hours. Streams that spring up on every mountain slope, turn into roaring demons and spectacular waterfalls while the placid central Wayanad rivers morph into frothing brown torrents. The rampart of mountains around Wayanad transforms into an amphitheatre where cloud and mist and the occasional sun beam throw into sharp relief the forested crags and clefts. The best spots to watch the show are the oft visited Lakkidi pass or the little known but more spectacular Palchuram pass or the charming road that leads off to Chooralimala.

For sheer fun and novelty, nothing can beat the unique pastime of mud football during monsoon in Wayanad. Take a muddy paddy field, throw in a bunch of soccer crazed youth and a host of supporters on a lazy afternoon - and an exciting new sport is born. Mud football is as exciting for the participant as it is entertaining for the audience. Mud football tournaments are crowd pullers. The players wallow in shin deep mud, where every step takes enormous effort. They chase a soggy, heavy ball made even more so by the sticky mud. It is complete chaos and complete fun - for instance a powerful kick can land the attacker butt deep in mud and spray mud into the face of the defenders while the ball reluctantly hops all of six inches in any which direction. Participating in one of these is an experience that you will recount and chuckle about for a long time.

For the agrarian population of Wayanad, monsoon is the time to wrest with the earth and produce a large part of food to last the year. The traditional ways persist in the tribal lands of North Wayanad, where cattle harnessed to wooden ploughs are still preferred to more modern implements. Sowing and planting by the tribes are still ritualized, accompanied by age-old dances and songs. Soon the fields of mud brown turn into fields of emerald that stretch as far as the eye can see turn even the most taciturn into poets.

The rains also bring changes in the cuisine in Wayanad....[click here to read more](#)





Hidden Shrines along the Tungabhadra

During a Coracle ride on the river Tungabhadra in Hampi, Karnataka, Sita spotted many hidden shrines along its banks. A Coracle Ride in Hampi is a fantastic way to get cosy with its unique landscape. Domingos Paes, the Portuguese traveler who visited Hampi during the sixteenth century described the coracles as circular shaped, made of bamboo split wickerwork, covered the outside with leather and spins during the sail. They are exactly as it is today, as they were four centuries back, except probably the leather has been replaced by PVC sheets.

Spotted By Sita





Top Chef Recommends



Tea-Smoked Chicken Breast

Sanjay Sharma; the estate manager of [Glenburn Tea Estate](#), has a great passion for food and often creates new recipes for the kitchen at Glenburn.

Sanjay's Tea-smoked chicken breast with tempura tea leaves and pickled radish is a favourite with all our guests visiting Glenburn. Sanjay has created this recipe, keeping in mind the tea tradition of Glenburn, using the estate's favourite seasonal tea - the Autumn Crescendo.

The chicken breast is smoked slowly using the dry tea leaves for about an hour until the smoked tea aroma infuses right through. The breast is then finished on a hot skillet leaving the skin a crispy golden brown, before it is sliced and plated. It is served with a tea jus, which is prepared using the liquor of the same Autumnal tea leaves that were used to smoke the chicken. It is delicately spiced with star anise, peppercorns, ginger, honey and dried whole red chillies.

If you are lucky enough to make this dish whilst near a tea field, you can use the fresh green tea leaves straight off the bush to make the lightly battered crispy tempura tea leaves or this can be substituted with baby spinach leaves. The dish is completed with a chilled white radish pickle on the side that has been marinated overnight in a bath of white vinegar infused with schezwan pepper, star anise, chopped green chillies, ginger, salt and sugar.

Recipe available on [request](#)





From God's Own Country

As I continue to travel in Kerala I can't help but admire the fact that economic prosperity is not limited to big cities and certain sections of the society. My visit to Fort Cochin's "members only" Dhobi Khana (open-air laundry) was a fantastic insight into how a menial profession is transformed into an organised commercial venture, where they strictly follow a "no alcohol during work" policy and functions like a corporate. Social benefits included. Then I met Babu, the boatman in Kuttanad in the backwaters. Everybody knows Boatman Babu in Kuttanad - from a grand ma to a child. He claims that he has been rowing one of those boats since he was 14. Babu is 50 now. His son works for a super market in Dubai and his daughter is a nurse in Europe. So he is happily retired, works only when he wants to and whiles away his time being "happy-go-toddy" in the toddy bars of Kuttanad. And in market of [Tellichery](#) in North Kerala, I realised that whilst we cry hoarse over inflation and increasing food prices elsewhere in India, Tapioca - a rich source of Carbohydrates (for Rs 10 a kilogram) and Sardines - a rich source of Iron and Protein (for Rs 15 a kilogram) makes for a balanced healthy diet of the common Keralite which combined with the Kerala government's minimum daily wage guarantee of Rs 400-500, the poorest of the poor has been taken care of in God's own country.

Flip side of the coin would be employers complaining about the shortage of labour (read cheap labour) and how "lazy", "demanding" & "troublesome" the local labourers are. I was also told about immigrants from neighbouring Tamilnadu who were ready to work "much harder for much lesser". History repeats itself. When the British tea planters failed to manage the "expensive", "lazy", "troublesome" and "demanding" local workers in the tea gardens of Assam, they imported their workforce from Orissa, Bengal, Jharkhand (then Bihar) and Andhra Pradesh who were ready to work "much harder for much lesser". Today this "imported" workforce; exploited and kept illiterate for 200 years form what we call the "tea tribes of Assam". Their votes control nearly 30% of the total seats in Assam and their political and social aspirations is now haunting the present day tea planters and the government of the day in all its compounded manifestations. It will be interesting to see the impact this immigrant workforce will eventually have on Kerala's politics...[click here to continue reading](#)

Destination Insider



Happy-go-toddy with Boatman Babu



Shanti Home

6 Things We Liked About

The Story of India: When we entered [Shanti Home](#) it reminded us of the article written by our colleague Harpreet Bhatia for the Art of Travel annual launched at ITB Berlin this year. Harpreet wrote “...every small element in the hotel, every corner of your room should invite questions about India or its traditions. This will lead to interesting conversations and that’s what creates bonds to remember ...” Harpreet you will love Shanti Home, for it tells the story of India like no other. This suburban oasis in West Delhi with its stylish interiors, has an eclectic collection of artifacts collected by its owners from all over India. Not to mention that each room of Shanti Home is based on a theme and named after a particular destination of India. A perfect place to retreat after your encounter with India’s raging capital city and keep the conversation about Delhi and India going whilst sipping your Kingfisher beer in their rooftop restaurant or one of their lounges.

Public Space: When we entered Shanti Home, we were also skeptical given our experience with most hotels in residential areas of Delhi. The lack of public space. Once inside, guests have no option but to remain confined to their rooms. But we were pleasantly surprised that that each floor of Shanti Home; barring the third floor, has a spacious lounge where one can relax or interact with other guests. With names like Ganesha and Krishna, each lounge has its own charm and is decorated with antiques, curious and art work from across the country. There is also a movie lounge called Patachitra which has a selection of Bollywood movies. Patachitra is a fabulous art form that portrays the folk tales of the inhabitants of Orissa in eastern India.

Amenities; real ones: We liked the idea of Shanti Home offering free internet access, where guests can browse, upload their photos to Facebook and blogs etc, check-in online or print their boarding passes in its business centre. There is also a laptop in one of their lounges offering free internet access. And what’s more- if your guests have Delhi as their entry and exit points and staying at Shanti Home; they are happy to provide a cell phone with a SIM card for no extra cost which guests can carry along during their holiday. Guests are only required to top it up with credits as per their requirement (and return it while on their way out).

Go Local: We liked the idea that with Shanti Home “local sightseeing” is indeed local. For those of your guests who may be interested, Shanti Home organises



cycle rickshaw trips to a potter’s village nearby. Matkas (earthen water containers used for storing water) made by the potters here, are popular not only locally but is increasingly become a substitute for refrigerators in Australia’s countryside. On a Wednesday night, your guests can go for a stroll (accompanied by a hotel staff) in the Budh Bazaar (Wednesday Market) where locals come to buy vegetables and fruits at wholesale rates.

Custom Tailoring: Shanti Home offers custom tailoring to its guests where delivery is made within 24 hrs. All one needs to do is select the fabric and the design from the catalogue. They store your guest’s measurements in their database should there be future requirements or occasions. Shanti Home is even happy to ship it to your doorstep. We thought it was a nice touch and a great value add-on.

Food, Cooking Class: Lantern; its rooftop restaurant is fantastic and we are sold on its 5 course tandoor menu. We plan to return for a round of drinks and kebabs soon. What we also like is their cooking class. We have done cooking classes elsewhere. But what makes the one at Shanti Home different and interesting, is the Chef lending a patient ear and customising it as per the guest’s interests. Interested in Kebabs, Curries? no problem. Want it to be gluten free, you are allergic to nuts, tomato seeds or you are a vegan... sure....nothing is too much trouble for the staff here.



Festivals



Hemis Festival, 29th-30th June 12

The courtyard of Hemis Gompa - the biggest Buddhist monastery in Ladakh, is the stage for the famous 'Hemis' festival that celebrates the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava. The colourful two day pageant falls on the 10th day (Tse-Chu) of the Tibetan lunar month. The local people are seen dressed up in their finest traditional dress for the occasion.

Spectacular masked dances and sacred plays by Lamas called 'chhams' are performed around the central flagpole, to the accompaniment of cymbals, drums and long horns. Masks worn by the Monks represent various guardian divinities. Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism is believed to have fought with demons for the safety of the locals. The Monks wear colourful long brocade gowns set off by quaint headgears. The dances end with the ritual destruction of a sacrificial offering of a human figure made of dough.

Most of the Festival dates are decided by Solar / Lunar calendars practiced in India, due to which the dates are subject to change.

You may plan some special departure based on these festivals. For any assistance please contact us.





Meet us at the
Upcoming
Trade Shows

If you wish to schedule a meeting, do e-mail us at
info@sita.in

Trade Shows	Booth No.	Whom to Meet
Deluxe Travel Mart Almaty 24th April	Sita Desk	Deepak Sharma
KITF Almaty 25th -27th April	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma
Top Resa Paris 18th -21st September	Awaited	Philip Thomas & Valerie Chalopet
OTDYKH Leisure Fair Moscow 19th -22nd September	Awaited	Ernest Dias & Deepak Sharma
FITA Mexico 20th -23rd September	Trade Visitor	Neeraj Bhatt
Kerala Travel Mart Cochin 27th -30th September	India Tourism Booth D04-37	Neeraj Bhatt & Philip Thomas

Trade Shows

