

STAY AT

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

LIFESTYLE

SPOTTED BY SITA

TOP CHEF RECOMMENDS

DESTINATION INSIDER

6 THINGS WE LIKED ABOUT

FESTIVALS

INSPIRATION LOCATOR

TRADE SHOWS



Art of Travel



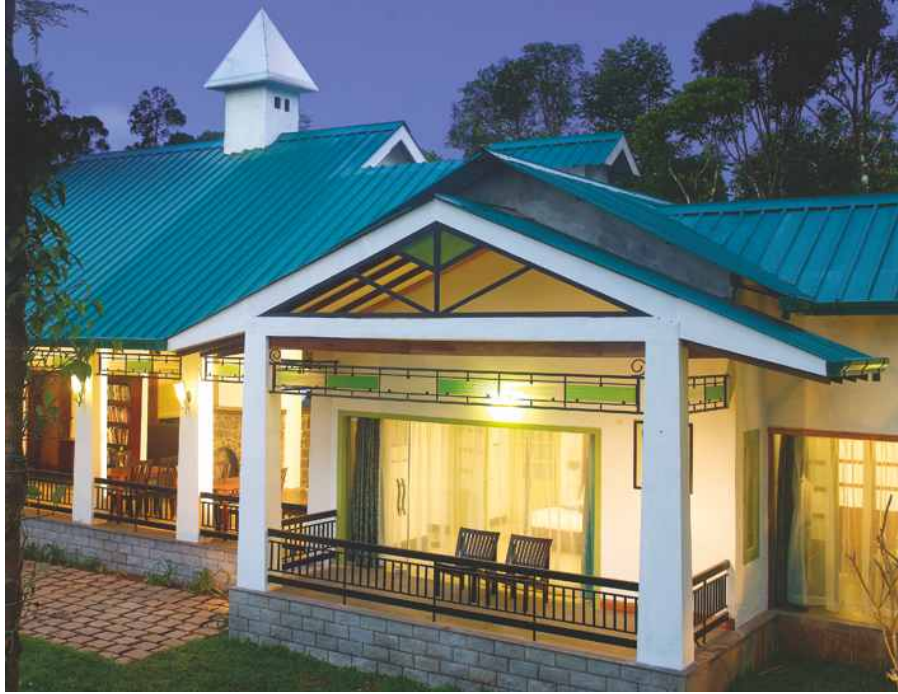
Aanavilasam



Aanavilasam is a plantation house spread across 7 acres of private estate, located just 8 kms from the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (Thekaddy). Owned by Salim Pushpanath, a celebrated photographer of Kerala, this cosy place has only 4 rooms. Surrounded by a Cardamom and Pepper plantation, the tastefully done up rooms exude the feel of a country house. The fireplace and the old fashioned book shelves in the main living room would remind you of a typical planter's life. The bathrooms are top notch and the evening sunset across the Western Ghats is simply stunning. Your hostess, Pirrko Paxton (more about Pirrko in our Day in a Life of section), is very welcoming, provides great advice and good humoured conversation.

Says Kuntal from our Destination Knowledge Centre, who recently stayed at Aanavilasam "I get wary when properties use the word Luxury because so far my experience has been either: its non-existent, mediocre or over the top. But thankfully Aanavilasam is an exception. It turned out to be a beautiful place to relax with all the comforts in complete privacy. It's ideal for FIT clients wanting to unwind after the hectic and dusty temple circuit of Tamilnadu. I stayed at one of their Pool Villas. Their Pool Villas come with a private plunge pool and has all the subtle touches of the artist, that its owner Salim is. I particularly liked the idea of the glass wall in front of its superbly comfortable bed overlooking the plunge pool. Perfect place to lie down to romance the canopies and to enjoy the quiet and calm. I thought it was also a brilliant idea to have a hostess. A place like Aanavilasam would fall flat on its face without one. Hostess Pirrko Paxton and I had an interesting conversation over dinner, starting with her impulsive decision to sell everything in the UK and move to India to the toughest clients she handled at Aanavilasam. Aanavilasam is not cheap, but when it comes to a small, cosy place to unwind which is subtly luxurious and private, it doesn't have any competition at the moment in Thekaddy. And when you check-out you get a cook book full of Aanavilasam recipes autographed by Salim, the Chef and Pirrko."

Stay At





The Singing Ape

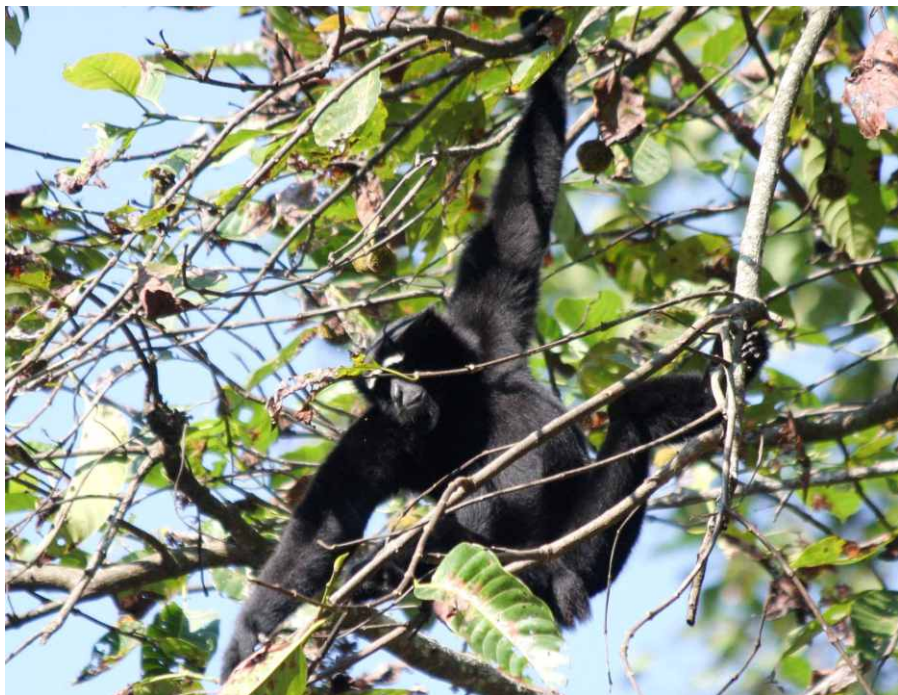
A Day in The Life Of Hoolock Gibbon

The Hoolock Gibbon is the only representative of the Ape family in India. Infact it is the only Ape in India. Hoolocks not only resemble human beings in various aspects but also share 95% of its genetic material with us. Hoolock Gibbons are unique, they have one male, one female type of social system, where one adult male pairs with an adult female and stays together for the rest of their lives. It is characterised by long forearms, no tail and white eyebrows. Hoolocks are the only primate, whose male and female breeds are distinct from each other. Adult males are black with white eyebrows that turn up at the end, while the adult female is tanned copper in colour with a whitish eyebrow band. Another special characteristic of the Hoolock Gibbon is their call, for which they are fondly called as the Singing Ape. An adult Hoolock Gibbon pair produces a loud and distinctive call (sound) in the form of a duet which is most interesting and can be heard from a distance of one mile. Both the male and female sit close together and break into vigorous swinging forms while performing this duet. Also Hoolocks spend the night on pre-selected trees only. No matter how far they venture during the day, they have to spend the night in one of these pre-selected trees known as "Lodging Trees."

A typical Hoolock Day Out, would begin with the adult female making her first movement after waking up at day break in one of the Lodging Trees. Others follow her as she then moves towards the nearest fruit tree. However, in winters the Gibbons would first like to bask in the sun for an hour and a half, instead of feeding themselves. After one or two bouts of feeding, they start moving and singing their duet. In summers the Gibbons engage in a long resting bout after the morning session to escape the mid-day temperature. In between 13:00 hrs to 15:00 hrs, they start feeding again, the last session for the day and once they have done that, the adult female leads the way to the Lodging Tree where they call it a day. An adult Hoolock Gibbon pair, on a given day can traverse an area of anything between 22 to 35 hectares.

The Singing Apes - [Click here to see the video](#)

Where to go Hoolock spotting in India: At the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam in Northeast India. There is no other place... [Click here to continue reading](#)





Lifestyle



Painted Houses of Hazaribagh

Rhythms of the Earth

The Hazaribagh district in northern Jharkhand is the homeland of Khovar (marriage art) and Sohrai (harvest art) mural painting traditions done exclusively by tribal women artists tracing its origin to the regions pre-historic rock art (10,000 B.C) in sandstone rock shelters in the hills. It is done twice a year and intrinsically connected with the repair of the mud house walls.

The Khovar art is done by first painting the walls of the mud houses with kali maati (black earth/clay) over which the Dudhi maati (white earth/clay) is applied with cloth swabs daubed in the colour and scratched off before it dries with a broken comb or the finger, thus revealing the dark black under paint with emerging art work. The Sohrai art is the colourful painted art by using chewed toothbrush twigs (datwan) using earth colours - lal maati (red earth/clay), pila maati (yellow earth/clay), kali maati and charak / white earth/clay, to illustrate line drawings or sometimes forms filled with these earth ochre. While the painting in the hills stylishly depicts animals and birds, those in valleys are about plants, aquatic life and birds.

The rock art of Jharkhand and the Khovar & Sohrai paintings were brought to light two decades ago by my father Bulu Imam. Paintings brought onto handmade paper were widely exhibited in over four dozen exhibitions in India and abroad (Australia, UK, USA, Canada, Europe - Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, etc.) with several documentary films, research and magazine articles to highlight this vulnerable and vanishing art tradition. Travellers have been visiting this region since then and word-to-mouth publicity has been the only means of exposing this lesser known jewel of India. To cater to travellers my family has launched Jharkhand's first Rural Tourist Village at Bhelwara in Eastern Hazaribagh, famous for hundreds of village homes painted with the Sohrai murals. It is also known for the festival Khutta Bandhan, where the village bulls are tied to a pole and taunted with a hide skin to create frenzy amongst drummer and colourful gathering of villagers.

Hazaribagh as the name denotes means Hazar = thousand, and bag = garden; or Hazar = thousand, and bagh = tiger. Therefore it refers to the Land of a thousand gardens or land of a thousand tigers. We chose to go with the later since one of India's first National Park happens to be 30 kms North of Hazaribagh town. Hazaribagh is also the home of the



hunting Manjhi Santals, the nomadic Birhor tribe and host of other tribal communities such as Oraons, Mundas- who make up for the diverse and colourful cultural heritage of Jharkhand. The region has also revealed early Palaeolithic habitation sites and stone tools continuing through the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic into Chalcolithic habitation sites (evidenced in Copper Jewellery) and Iron Age remains. The hinterland is dotted with numerous Ancient Megalithic Burial grounds, (1000 B.C) and Buddhist sites dated to 6th Century A.D. There are trekking trails which I have designed leading to the fourteen prehistoric rock art sites in the hills of the Chotanagpur plateau, through the beautiful countryside and each is a daylong adventure, worthy of a visit.

Justin Imam is a friend of Sita and his family has relentlessly worked to highlight the Khovar and Sohrai Art work of Jharkhand globally. For your clients who may be interested in experiencing this little known unspoilt gem of a destination in India, Justin and his family is happy to take them around personally.



Shri Meenakshi Temple

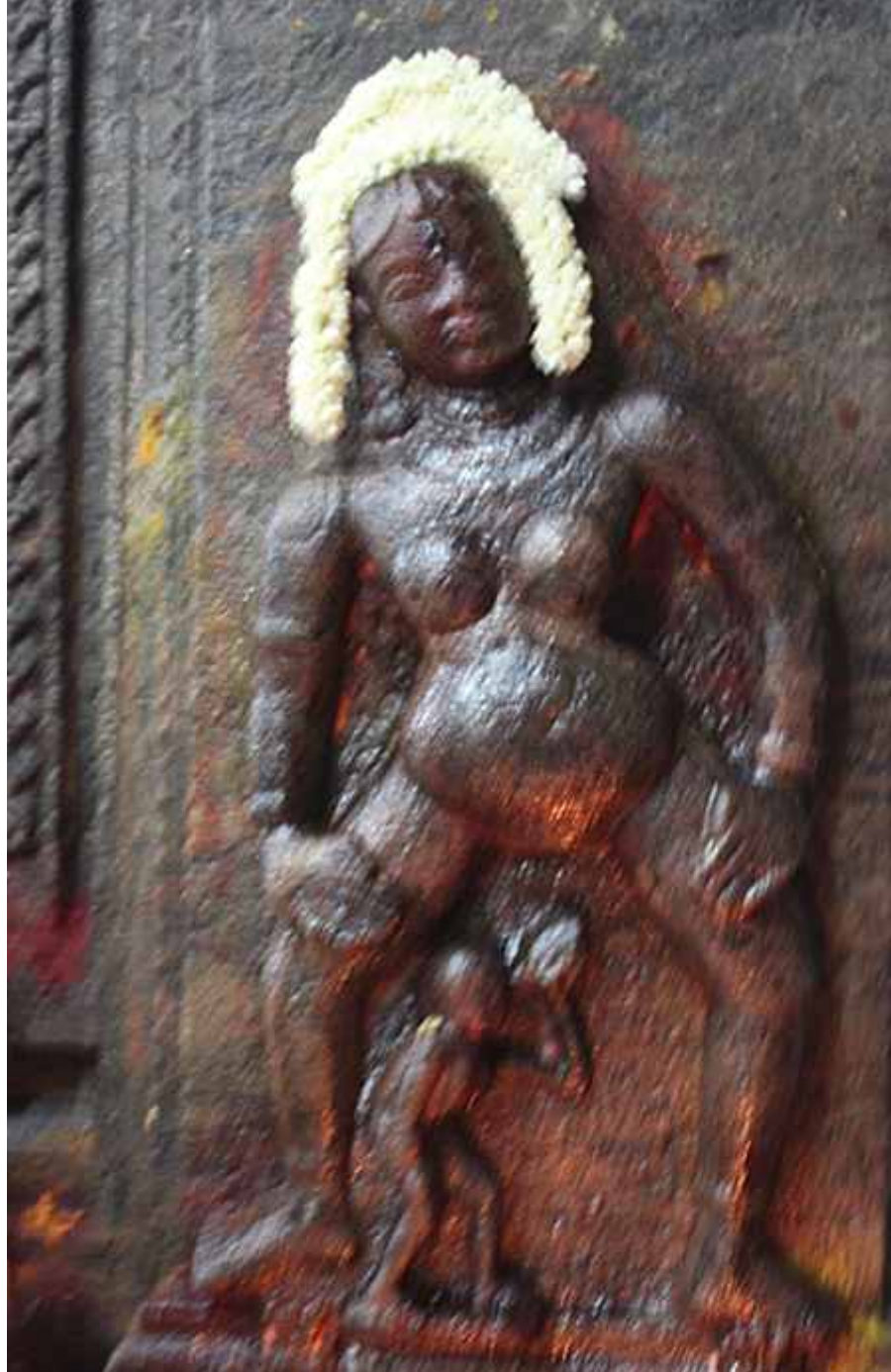


Sita spotted this statue at the Shri Meenakshi Temple in Madurai where pregnant women pour oil and apply butter and ghee (clarified butter) praying for a healthy pregnancy and safe delivery of the baby.

Also known as the Athens of the East, Madurai is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu with its recorded history dating back to 4th century BC. Planned in the shape of a lotus, modern Madurai is a burgeoning industrial centre, even though the vast stretches of lush paddy fields, dusty roads and crowded bazaars make it seem almost like an overgrown village. And everything in Madurai revolves around the Shri Meenakshi Temple built in the pre-Christian era. People pray here when they get engaged, return here with the first invitation card of their marriage, pray as a newly married couple, while expecting their child and return with the newborn. Some even get married here. With its ten towering gopurams (temple towers), Shri Meenakshi Temple is located within a high-walled enclosure, at the core of which are two sanctums for the presiding deities; Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareshwara.

Take a tour of Shri Meenakshi Temple with our friend in Madurai who is also an accomplished Indian classical danseur and discover many more such fascinating aspects of one of India's finest examples of temple architecture.

Spotted By Sita

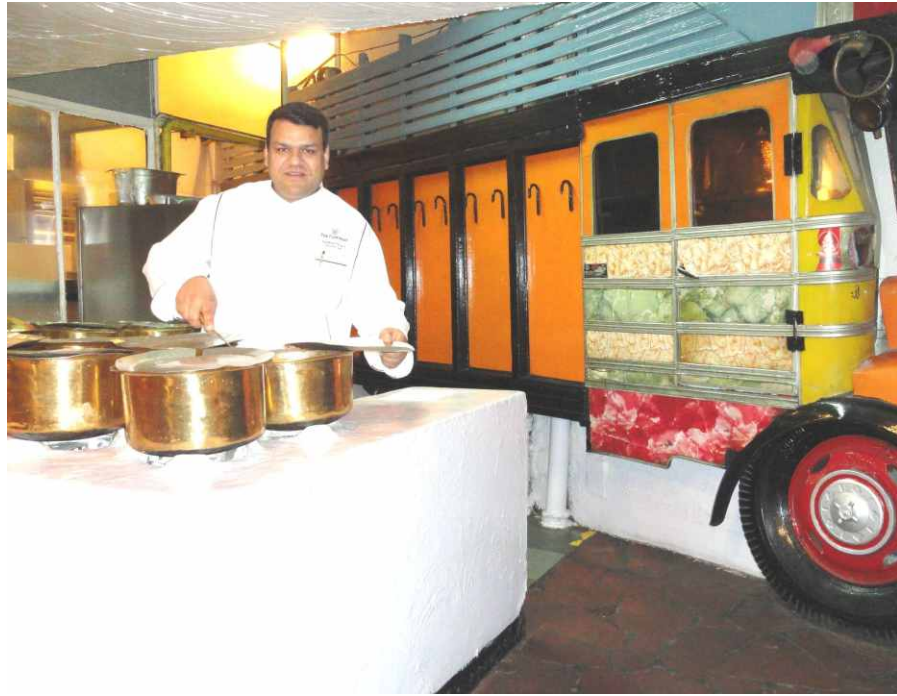




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Balti Meat

Executive Chef Neeraj Tyagi of the Claridges, New Delhi recommends the Balti Meat, the signature dish of their Dhaba Restaurant, as a must try during your stay here. It is red meat cooked in Indian style which arrives on your table in a mini brass bucket (balti) and pairs well with both Indian breads and rice. “Balti Meat has the most affluent composition of garlic, mace, nutmeg and bay leaf which are known for their medicinal values. The concoction of black pepper, cardamom and cinnamon also gives this dish an edge over other meat stews of the country,” says Neeraj. Balti Meat is priced at ₹ 995 + taxes.

Top Chef Recommends





My 7 Buddha Takeaways

Your soul has to be in complete slumber if you don't feel the positive vibrations of the Mahabodhi Temple in [Bodhi Gaya](#). It was here the Buddha attained enlightenment. But at the [Mahabodhi Temple](#) somehow you are totally honest with yourself. Like this middle aged lady complaining very seriously that it is so hot that her "make up will melt". Pat came the reply from one of the group members "so what you will still be the same person and our dear Bhoulai (wife of a brother)"

....And you are not judgmental at all here. I saw a monk picking up a dead leaf from the fig tree under which Buddha meditated and gained enlightenment. He looked at it with great devotion. Touched it. Contemplated. And dropped it. He let it go. A young woman from an Indian family picked up the same leaf. The entire family did what the Monk did. Looked at it with great devotion. Touched it. Contemplated. But didn't let it go. She closed her eyes, muttered something with great devotion and put the leaf in her purse. Was the Monk right? And the young woman wrong?. No. They were both correct. At the Mahabodhi Temple Buddha's Middle Path unfolds right in front of you.

But the Buddha didn't leave immediately after his enlightenment. The Buddha spent 7 weeks here meditating and contemplating at 7 different spots. The Buddha was planning, he was preparing to share his knowledge with the world. He was not in a haste. What makes the Buddha so very interesting is the fact that all his sermons are based on first-hand knowledge. And he was a great learner who quickly grasped life lessons. The hotel I am staying is named after the maiden Sujata who gave a bowl of rice pudding to the Buddha, weak and frail after years of severe austerities. The Buddha realised that severe austerities and harming the body in the process is not the way to enlightenment. And there dawned the idea of the Middle Path. "Neither my life of luxury in the palace -nor- my life as ascetic in the forest were ways to enlightenment," the Buddha later told his followers.

My Buddha takeaways from the 7 spots at the Mahabodhi Temple which can be applied to our daily lives :

What is fascinating about these 7 spots at Maha Bodhi Temple is what the Buddha did over 7 weeks before he left for Sarnath in Varanasi for his first sermon. Yes these 7 spots and what the Buddha did at each spot are notoriously saladed with allusions, hidden symbolism and legends and super human acts. But I had come

Destination Insider



prepared. Thanks to the chat I had with Sangay Wangchuk, a colleague of mine in Bhutan. Sangay simplified the utterly complex Himalayan Buddhism for me very patiently like the Buddha himself that day in his Thimphu office. And the take-aways from this 7 different spots at the end of my morning tour of the Maha Bodhi temple was amazing. I had remembered what Sangay had said that day. My guide talked about "demons" asking Buddha if he has any witness to his enlightenment and then he went to elaborate on Buddha's bhumisparsha-mudra (a hand gesture of the Buddha pointing towards the earth calling it to be his witness). I replied "could it be also that the Buddha is telling us through this hand gesture that one needs to remain aware of being rooted in the earth". My guide said "that's an interesting interpretation".

THE FIRST SPOT: We went to the Mucalinda Lake (The Abode of the Snake King). Here one can see a statue of the Buddha in meditation protected by the hood of a giant Cobra. The story goes that a severe thunder storm broke out while the Buddha was meditating and Mucalinda, the Snake King protected him from the elements until the great storm cleared. The Mucalinda Lake has also lot of fish. Visitors to the Mahabodhi Temple feeds rice flakes to these fishes. My Buddha takeaway: You can't consider yourself successful in life unless you have contributed towards the success of others.

THE SECOND SPOT: The most pious spot in the Mahabodhi Temple. The Mahabodhi (Fig) Tree. This is where the Buddha meditated and gained enlightenment. Here you are completely calm. You are totally relaxed. I saw people meditating, praying and there was this gentleman from Bangladesh who was with his family members doing rituals. He was to be ordained as a monk today evening. It was his big day and he was all smiles. I complimented him in Bengali and he asked me where I am from. There were atleast 100 Dalit (a group of people traditionally and still regarded in certain parts of India as untouchables) men and women pilgrims from Maharashtra in Western India listening to their tour leader in rapt attention. Reminiscent of the Father of the Indian constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's embracing Buddhism and his call for the conversion of Dalits to Buddhism. My Buddha takeaway: There are no shortcuts in life.

[Click here to read more](#)



The Oberoi Gurgaon

Light, Height & Space - Whether, it is the huge expanse of cobalt blue water, its high glass ceilings, the spacious rooms (undoubtedly the largest base category rooms in India's capital city and the National Capital Region combined, starting at 620 square feet) with Butlers trained by "The Guild of Professional English Butlers," who also service the Queen of England or the naturally lit private and public areas, the design philosophy of The Oberoi Gurgaon has left us totally impressed.

Chef Saneesh - We like the idea of Chef Saneesh being in charge of Amaranta, their Indian Sea Food restaurant, which promises the freshest catch of the day. Bay to the Plate in 8 hours. Chef Saneesh who comes from a family of Chefs was single-handedly responsible for the super success of the Samudra Restaurant at the Trident Chennai. We wish you luck Chef Saneesh with the Amaranta.

Live Counters at the Three Sixty One Restaurant - We liked the idea of seeing our meals prepared fresh, right in front of us at the live counters of their Three Sixty One Restaurant. From freshly baked breads at the Continental station to Tempura at the Japanese.

Asia's largest Green Wall - The Sales Team at The Oberoi Gurgaon loves to talk about the "drive through the forest" whilst you access the lobby area, but what we like more is their Green Wall, Asia's largest and their in-house water harvesting system, which ensures that The Oberoi Gurgaon does not have to buy water for 140 days to maintain the hotel's green cover.

Art at The Oberoi Gurgaon - The piece-de-résistance is definitely this brilliant installation art work at the entrance of the Piano Bar. A parody, we are told, on the Dabawallahs of Mumbai. We also like the black and white photographs of the various monuments of India by Tarun Chopra in the corridors.

24/7 - We thought it was a nice touch by The Oberoi Gurgaon to offer its clients the luxury of a 24/7 Spa. The only one in Delhi.

6 Things We Liked About



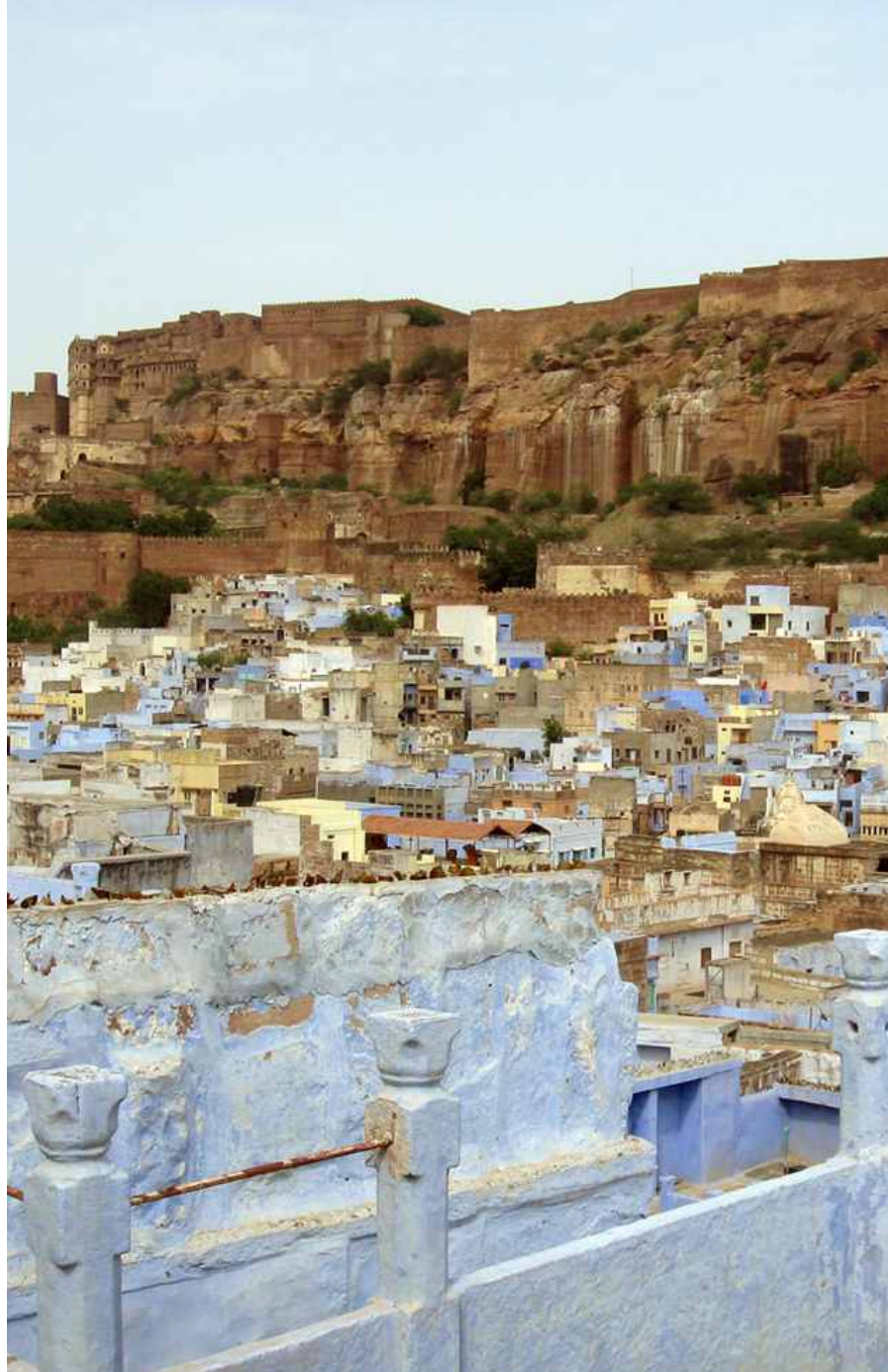


Festivals



Rajasthan International Folk Festival, Jodhpur 8th – 12th October, 2014

This annual festival celebrates the regional music and art in existence. It is open to all artists and folk musicians from India and abroad. About 150 artists from Rajasthan and beyond gather for four nights of under the brightest full moon, at the magnificent Mehrangarh Fort. Once the sun goes down, divine music fills every part of Mehrangarh captivating the audience. The festival coincides with the brightest full moon of the year in northern India, the Sharad Purnima. Interactive sessions with the artists are held during the day for visitors and students held with the walls of the fortress.





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The responsibility for the correctness of internal details rests with the publisher.
The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.
The administrative headquarters of Chandigarh, Haryana and Punjab are at Chandigarh.
The international boundaries between Andaman Islands, Lakshadweep and the mainland are as shown on this map as they are interpreted from the Survey of India's Survey of India.
The position of various islands in this map have been taken from various sources.
The international boundaries and coastlines of India agree with the Survey of India's Survey of India.
The position of various islands in this map have been taken from various sources.
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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
IATO Convention New Delhi 4th - 7th September	Trade Visitor	Harpreet Bhatia & Raghib Latif
FITA Mexico 4th - 7th September	Trade Visitor	Neeraj Bhatt
OTDYKH Leisure Fair Moscow 16th - 19th September	Booth No 3E5	Ernest Dias & Deepak Sharma
Kerala Travel Mart Cochin, India 18th - 20th September	Booth No A 32	Philip Thomas
Top Resa Paris 23rd - 26th September	India Tourism Stand No: H 15	Carole Gallo
UITM Kiev 1st - 3rd October	Sita Desk	Deepak Sharma
TTG Rimini 9th - 11th October	Awaited	Matteo Pennacchi
WTM London 3rd - 6th November	Hall No S8, Booth No IN200	Dipak Deva & Neeraj Bhatt
USTOA Scottsdale 5th - 7th December	Sita Desk	Neeraj Bhatt

Trade Shows

