

STAY AT
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF
LIFESTYLE
SPOTTED BY SITA
TOP CHEF RECOMMENDS
DESTINATION INSIDER
6 THINGS WE LIKED ABOUT
STAFF TRAVEL
FESTIVALS
INSPIRATION LOCATOR
TRADE SHOWS





Stay At

Tanjore Hi, Tanjore



Tanjore Hi is a heritage boutique hotel located in the heart of the legendary city of Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu (South India) just 55 Kms from away from Trichy Airport and 400 km from Chennai. It is the perfect gateway to visit this very rich region. From Tanjore Hi you can visit Trichy, Kumbakoonam and Chettinad. The 14 rooms are all unique, elegantly designed in a contemporary style with high level of comfort. The hotel is committed to reduce the impact on the environment for which they use an Inverter technology Air conditioning.

The food served is a rich fusion of traditional Indian and Continental recipes made using fresh organic products from their farm, innovatively made to give you a memorable experience. The rooftop restaurant is the perfect place to relax and have a leisurely meal.





The Boat Man from Varanasi

Prakash wakes up at the crack of dawn and leaves for Dashaswamedh Ghat where his boat is anchored. Listening to the gentle sound of the water lapping against the shores, he gets his boat ready for our guests. The sounds of soul stirring hymns float across the water mingled with the incense filled in the air. “I watch Varanasi get up from its slumber and pray that the day goes well,” he tells us. Prakash has been living in Varanasi all his life and started helping his father, Motilal to row a boat, when he was just 10 years old. At around 05:30 hrs Prakash escorts our guests from the ghat to his boat. After making sure that everyone is comfortable, he starts the one hour boat journey south from Dasaswamedh Ghat to Harishchandra Ghat. “I love the morning boat ride. Watching the early morning sun rays shimmering across the Ganges fills me with an immense sense of peace. It’s a truly spiritual experience which mostly all guests enjoy,” he smiles.

What about the burning ghat where Hindus cremate their dead? How do our guests react? Prakash tells us that, while some guest’s request to linger on at the burning ghats, such as Harishchandra and Manikarnika a little longer; others want to go away quickly. “Varanasi is that one destination in India which offers a mind boggling combination of vitality of life and the finality of death. Perhaps this is what makes Varanasi unique. People either love it or hate it,” he tells us. Prakash gets back home at around 08:30 hrs. He has his food, finishes his daily chores and rests a while. Later in the day he meets his friends, mostly fellow boatmen and catches up with all the latest gossip by the banks of the Ganga over a cup of hot steaming chai (tea). Afternoon is the time to relax.

At around 1730 hrs he goes to the Sita office to enquire about future assignments and to get his boat slips encashed. Boat slips are like vouchers to be exchanged for money later. Its time now for Prakash to get ready for the evening Aarti at Dashaswamedh Ghat which starts at around 18:30 hrs and lasts for about an hour. “It’s a beautiful sight to watch these young men sway to chants, holding lamps in their hands, invoking India’s holiest river. Guests really love watching the ceremony from the boat,” Prakash tells us. And what is his most cherished memory as a boatman? He says that when he was young and was helping his dad row the boat, guests used to click his photo. “I found it really fascinating,” he adds. So any tips for our guests? “Well, in the morning as soon as we start the boat ride I have seen

A Day in The Life Of Prakash



many guests getting busy with their cameras immediately. Many of them miss out on the magical sunrise because they are so busy clicking pictures. Maybe they should relax a bit and soak in whatever is unfolding. There is enough time and enough photo opportunity,” Prakash tells us. He calls it a day at around 20:00 hrs as he has to wake up early in the morning. “I end my day with a prayer to God thanking him for a great and sometime not so great day and await eagerly for tomorrow,” he tells us.



Lifestyle



United Colours of Rajasthan

The spirit of colours in Rajasthan is deep seated and reflects in every aspect of its daily life; attire, ornaments, paintings, homes et all. If you know the colours of Rajasthan you will be able to identify communities and the social status of an individual. Most of the knowledge on colours in Rajasthan is handed down over generations and it has been rarely documented locally.

The colours that we see in Rajasthan are primarily divided into two categories Kachcha Rang which is temporary colour and, Pakka Rang which is permanent colour. Kachcha rang are worn by the married and unmarried, while the widows only where Pakka rang. Red, Parrot Green, Yellow and Saffron fall under temporary colour or Kachcha rang and Maroon, Brown Dark Blue, Dark Green and Grey are permanent or Pakka rang. Nevertheless, in Jodhpur Dark Blue and Purple, which are otherwise Pakka Rangs and only for widows are worn by the married women during the Diwali festival.

Did you know in Rajasthan there is a certain colour and design dedicated for every month or festival? The month of Chaitra in Rajasthan (March-April) is all about Orange and Golden. Basant Panchami or the season of harvesting (January and February) is welcomed with lemon yellow and light orange. In the month of Fagun (March), women wear red and white or magenta and white. Saawan or the Monsoon (July and August) is greeted with the colours of the rainbow, green being the dominating colour. Red is worn during the Teej Festival in the month of August when Rajasthani women fast and pray for the long life of their husbands.

The stories behind the turbans men wear in Rajasthan is equally fascinating. Known as Paag, Safa or Pagri the turban is a long scarf wrapped around the head. The style of turbans in Rajasthan changes with every 15 kms.

Know the turbans of Rajasthan and you will know the community the person belongs to and his social status. While the turbans of the Rajput community are made out of soft cotton known as malmal; communities such as the Rabaris wear red turbans made out of thick cotton. While Ochre is the colour of the mendicants of Rajasthan, the Bishnoi community; the original conservationist of India, wear white turbans. The indigenous Bhils and Garasias wear printed white



turbans. Turbans in Rajasthan also have other fascinating uses such as; it is used like a rope to take water out of a well, used for protection from the sun in the fields and tying cattle on halt.

Rajasthani men wear yellow turbans during Basant Panchami or the harvest festival (January and February). Between the month of February and March and Holi; the festival of colours, the Rajputs of Rajasthan wear turbans with the combination of red and white. In the month of July, they wear light pink. A green and pink striped or yellow and red striped turban is worn during the monsoon. Black tie and dyed turbans with red borders is ought to be worn at the time of Diwali; the festival of lights while Saffron turbans are worn just before Diwali. Light pink turbans are also worn in the month of October and at the time of Sharad Poornima or the full moon night.



We are a Sharing Society

India has the knack of being a “sharing” society. Cars here are usually made for 4 passengers, buses for about 60, trains for about a 1000. Yet it is common to see heavily laden vehicles everywhere in India. 10 in a 900 cc small car? No problem...100 in a bus meant for 60...no problem. Trains with rooftop traveler's since 1500 have already boarded comfortably... no problem.....sorry...had to duck.....no problem. Now if that isn't a positive outlook to life what is? Accidents do occur sometimes but more people die of choking on chicken legs than on Indian roads. Some newer highways are trying to keep out two wheel drive vehicles but that's proving hard to implement. We've all shared the same roads since the wheel was invented; cows, bulls, chicken, camels, sheep, elephants, camels again, goats, trucks, bicycles, cars, sedans, delivery vans, donkeys, 24 wheelers carrying unpronounceable parts of a hydroelectric dam's main control console and gleefully crawling on the fastest lane, rickshaws, pedestrians et al. As everyone does not go in the same direction, our reflexes are usually sharp and if nothing else works, we always have our horns to blow. Understanding the traffic sense on your India visit is a futile exercise. Just enjoy the ride, even with your eyes shut wide!! We are not always proud of what we do (or don't do) while we drive. But the one thing we can reassure you about is that we love to reach our destination safely as much as you do!!

Spotted By Sita



Photo shot by - Mr Dipak Deva, CEO Destination Management, India & South Asia



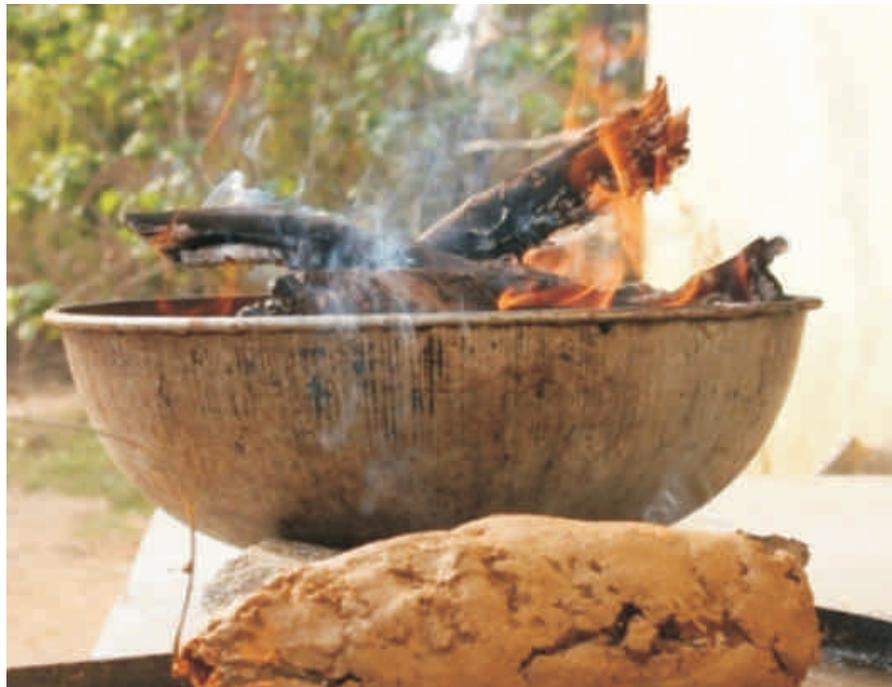
Clay Country Chicken

Ashish Ugal, Executive Chef, [Taj Safaris](#) recommends Khadd Desi Murg or Clay Country Chicken as a must try during your stay there. “ It is a very unusual way of cooking country chicken in which the chicken is marinated for 12 hours and then wrapped with wet clay and thrown inside the wooded fire to get roasted,” says Ugal.

“This tender, succulent mouth -watering chicken is a local delicacy which used to be cooked by the local tribes who staying in the jungle. The same recipe was recreated in the Safari's style. It is cooked in its own marination and juices, making it extremely flavourful and delicate and one of the most favourite and flavourful dish on the menu,” he adds.

Recipe available on [request](#)

Top Chef Recommends





Chapel of the Bent Cross, Mattancherry

I was walking around Mattancherry in Kochi last year sometime. (Cochin is officially Kochi now so you can start rewriting your itineraries) Matancherry is famous for its Jewish Synagogue and Dutch palace that everyone visits. I was exploring the possibilities of an Art Tour for a client. My guide Marcus was a former auto-rickshaw driver who now works with Sita and knew Mattancherry like the back of his hand.

We started with the studio of TA Nazar; a local Fresco Wall artist who specialises in wall paintings of images and figures from Hindu mythology. We had a fantastic time learning about his art in his studio at Matancherry. He can create magic with a spray gun and colours. For one of our incentive groups in Kochi last year, we chose a street wall approved by the local authorities and a project was developed where clients painted its different parts creating a unique consistent fresco. TA Nazar was available during the whole activity to give advice and to help with techniques with the help of a translator since he spoke only Malayalam; the local language. We then stopped by the studio of Abul Kalam Azad. If you stay at the Malabar House in Fort Kochi or drop in for a drink at its Divine Bar you will see some of his brilliant work on the walls. Abul's pioneering work breaks the shackles of classical photography and creates images which amalgamate the technical reproduction of photography with paintings and images dwelling between what he calls "reality, dream and the abstract". Marcus then took me to the studio of Victoria who is a painter, poet, social worker and philosophy post graduate. She specialises in the ruralscape of Kerala. Victoria's paintings are simple, emotive and effective. It talks much about the village life in Kerala, love and innocence of a bygone era. She is happy to take your clients to rural Kerala on painting holidays. We also stopped by the studio of Victoria's husband Boney Keyar next door who is a photographer and has been documenting Kochi for many years now. He has a collection of rare photographs of Fort Kochi, definitely worth a look.

As we walked around Matancherry, Marcus wanted me to see what he called "a ritual" that epitomises Matancherry as a great melting pot of diverse cultures where varied communities; Gujaratis, Tamils, Konkkanis, Kutchi Muslims, Pathans and many more congregated and called the area their home...[click here to continue reading](#)

Destination Insider





Dewalokam Farmstay Retreat



For those doing a combination of the hectic and dusty temple circuit of the Tamil Nadu and South Kerala with the backwaters et al, [Dewalokam Farmstay Retreat](#) is a perfect place to end your holiday and spend some relaxing time before flying home. Spend at least 2 days here relaxing in the abundant nature all around, enjoy the undiluted hospitality of your host Dr. AJ Jose and his wife Sinta. Both Jose and Sinta are professors of English Literature in a local college. Great value for money too.

We really liked the simplicity of the Dewalokam folks. Right from the owners to the staff everyone was polite, courteous and there was great deal of attention to detail. Nothing was made up and it came all naturally to them. The camphor burning in the raw coconut while the owners welcomed us was perfect and reminded us of how guests were welcomed in these parts of Kerala during the days of the yore.

Doing nothing in Dewalokam is totally acceptable. But should you want to indulge in some of their many activities ranging from yoga by the pool to plantation walks to angling to milking the cow in the farm; you can do it at your own pace, assisted by their eager staff. It is the flexibility that we really liked. A welcome change that most travellers will enjoy after their packed days elsewhere on their tour.

We liked the idea of Dewalokam maintaining an album which narrates the story of each and every staff member; all from nearby villages. Don't forget to say hello to this 80 year old lady who takes care of their entire plantation and stays all alone. Although she speaks only Malayalam; the local language, the glitter in her eyes and her smile is contagious and welcoming enough.

We liked their simple but beautiful Bamboo Raft. We were taken on a ride on the river Kaliyar with its lush greenery, which flows just 100 meters away from Dewalokam.

The highlight was of course a swim at the Kaliyar river. Dewalokam has a swimming pool in spite of which we have seen our guests really enjoying a swim in the river. A perfectly safe and enjoyable experience.

6 Things We Liked About





Staff Travel



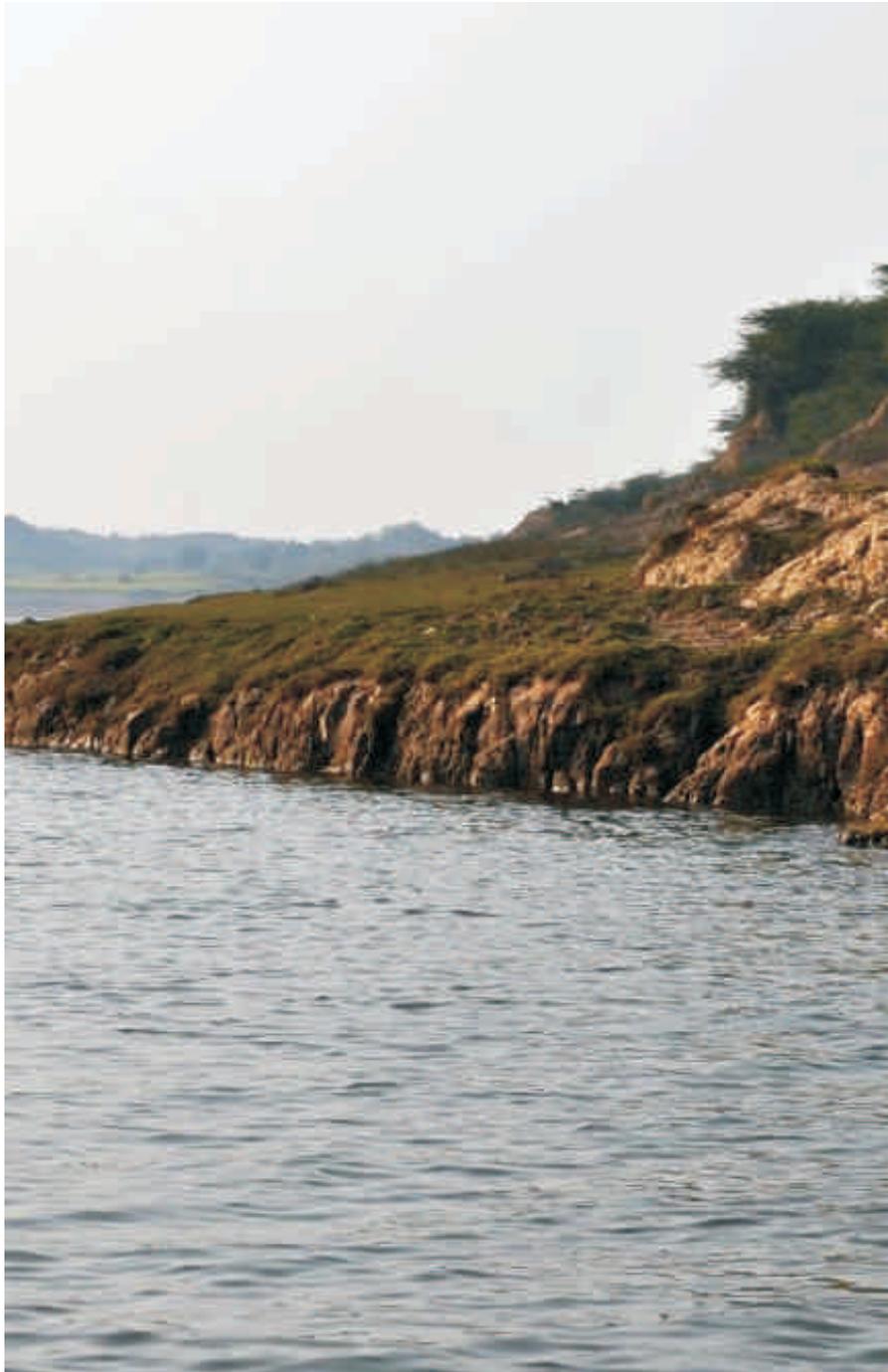
Chambal: A great place for Women Travellers

My four sisters and I recently stayed at this wonderful property called [Chambal Safari Lodge](#), which is an hour and half drive from Agra. We drove from Delhi and it took us 6 hrs to reach the Lodge. We were dead tired by the time we reached but as soon as we stepped into the lodge we were thrilled, the atmosphere, the scenic beauty, the abundant nature, it was amazing.

This 35 acre lodge is surrounded by farmland owned by the family who runs it. Ram Pratap; the owner himself came over to receive and greet us and guided us to our respective rooms. The cottages are done up well to give a homely feel. The lodge has only 12 rooms with the comfort of all modern amenities. The twin bedded ensuite rooms are comfortable, colourful, airy and spacious. It has large windows allowing fresh air and natural light into the rooms which has a sit-out/veranda opening onto the farms or the woodland. Adjacent to one of our rooms was a 100 year old tree and we were amazed to see hundreds of flying foxes hanging from it. However, they come out only at night and don't harm anyone.

After lunch on the first day, we went to visit Bateshwar Temple, 10 km away from Chambal safari lodge. It is an extension of 108 temples at the shores of Ganga River. On the way back, we indulged in ginger tea in an earthen pot, it was absolutely refreshing and not to be missed. Later in the evening we enjoyed a bonfire in the lodge followed by drinks and kebabs. While having dinner, we could hear jackals howling somewhere out in the woods.

The second day was even more exciting. We started at 8 am, drove down to 15 km to the banks of the Chambal River leaving our belongings behind in our vehicle. We crossed the river in a boat and went walking to the 800 year old Ater Fort. The walk was 3kms on each side. One may visit this magnificent ruined fort riding a Camel or on foot. On return we walked to the villages. One can still find a potter at his wheel making earthen ware kullars (cups), a cobbler using the simplest tools to fashion and repair the most interesting variety of leather items and shops selling goods from jaggery blocks to hand-woven quilts. [Click here to continue reading](#)





Festivals



Gangaur Festival, 25-26th March'12

Gangaur is one of the most important local festivals of Rajasthan. "Gan" is a synonym for Lord Shiva and "Gauri" or "Gaur" stands for Goddess Parvati, the heavenly consort of Lord Shiva. Gangaur celebrates the union of the two and is a symbol of conjugal and marital happiness. Gangaur is celebrated in the month of chaitra (March-April), the first month of the Hindu calendar. This month marks the end of winter and the onset of spring. This festival is celebrated by women, who worship clay idols of "Gan" and "Gauri" in their houses. These idols are worshiped by unmarried girls who seek the blessings of Gan and Gauri for a good husband, while the married women pray for the good health and long life of their husbands. On the eve of Gangaur festival, women decorate their palms and fingers with henna. The idols of Gan and Gauri are immersed in a pond on the last day of the festival. A traditional procession of Gangaur commences from the Zanani- Deodhi of the City Palace. The procession is headed by a colourful pageantry of elephants, old palanquins, chariots, bullock carts and performance folk artists. Celebrate the festival with us at the City Palace, Jaipur. Stay at the Royal Heritage Haveli, a tranquil haven of luxury and space.

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.



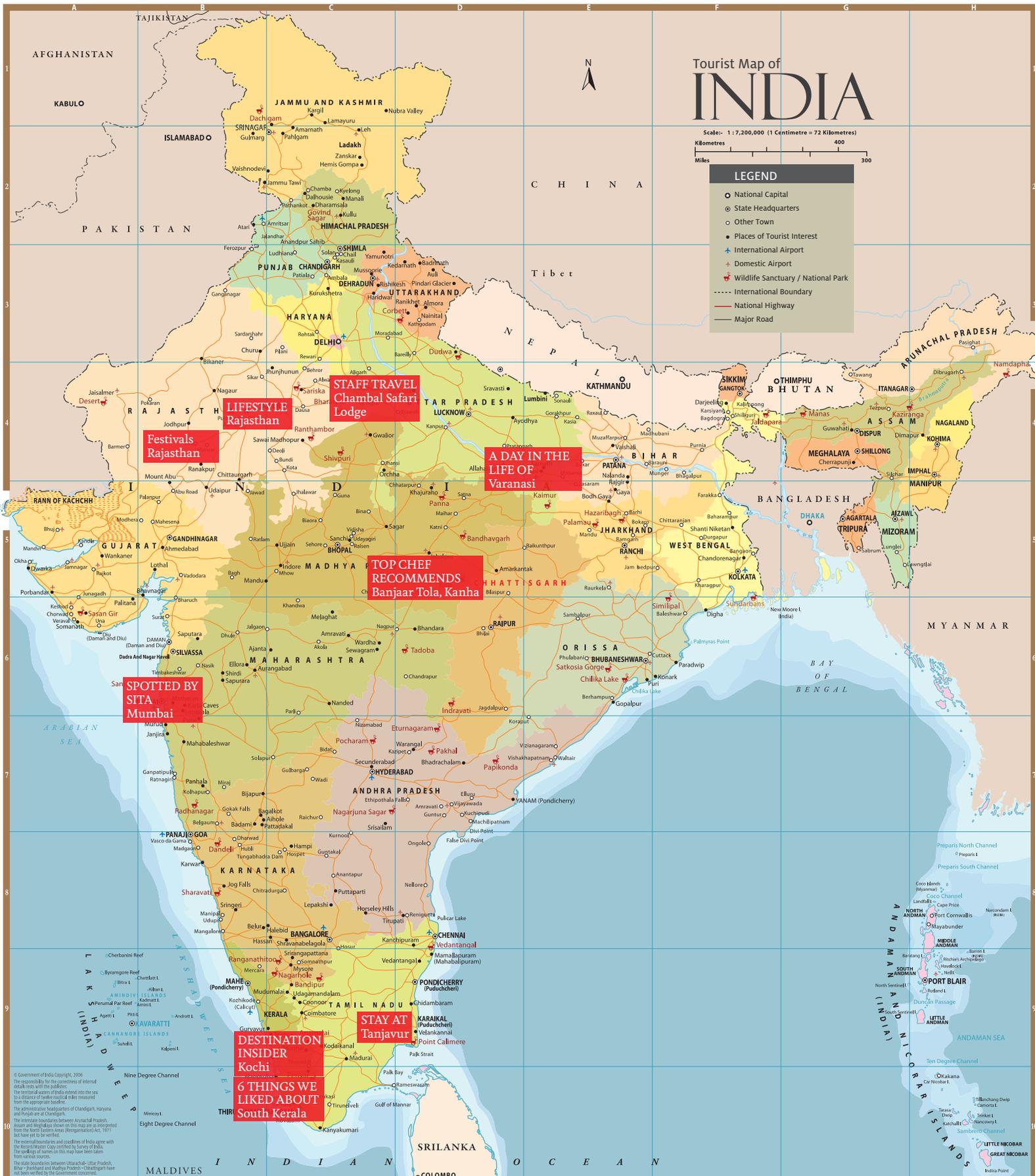


Tourist Map of INDIA

Scale: 1:7,200,000 (1 Centimetre = 72 Kilometres)
Kilometres 400
Miles 300

LEGEND

- National Capital
- State Headquarters
- Other Town
- Places of Tourist Interest
- ✈ International Airport
- ✈ Domestic Airport
- 🌳 Wildlife Sanctuary / National Park
- International Boundary
- National Highway
- Major Road



Festivals Rajasthan

LIFESTYLE Rajasthan

STAFF TRAVEL Chambal Safari Lodge

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF Varanasi

TOP CHEF RECOMMENDS Banjar Tola, Kanha

SPOTTED BY SITA Mumbai

DESTINATION INSIDER Kochi
6 THINGS WE LIKED ABOUT South Kerala

STAY AT Tanjavur

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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 Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya shown on this map are as interpreted from the Border Security Force (BSF) Operational Act, 1971 but have yet to be verified.
 The internal boundaries and coastline of India agree with the Revised Major Copy certified by Survey of India.
 The spelling of names on this map have been taken from various sources.
 The state boundaries between Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh have not been verified by the Government.



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
Vivattur Vilnius 2nd -4th March	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma
ITB Berlin 7th -11th March	Booth No 208, Hall No 5.2b	Philip Thomas
Kerala Tourism Road Show Madrid 13th March	Sita Desk	Zeeshan Khan
Kerala Tourism Road Show Milan 14th March	Sita Desk	Matteo Pennacchi
Kerala Tourism Road Show London 15th March	Sita Desk	Neeraj Bhatt
Luxury Travel Mart Moscow 20th March	Awaited	Deepak Sharma
MITT Moscow 21st -24th March	Awaited	Deepak Sharma
TUR Gothenburg 22nd -25th March	Awaited	Vikram Trivedi
Deluxe Travel Mart Ukraine 27th March	Sita Desk	Dipak Deva & Deepak Sharma
UITT Kiev 28th -30th March	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma
Mundo Libao with Abreu Lisbon 31st March - 1st April	Awaited	Ganesh Shankar, Sunil Dangwal & Nelson Cortez

Trade Shows



Great Indian Travel Bazaar Jaipur 15th -17th April	Booth No 44 & 45	Neeraj Bhatt & Philip Thomas
Deluxe Travel Mart Almaty 24th April	Sita Desk	Deepak Sharma
KITF Almaty 25th -27th April	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma