

FROM THE CEO'S DESK
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
IMPRESSIONS



Art of Travel



“”

Beauty is an Experience

Dear Partners,

Beauty is an experience, one which is best witnessed and enjoyed during the festival season in India. It is beautiful, the market places are illuminated, there are endless gift items on display, the market places are abuzz at all times of the day and of course my favourite, the Indian dessert options, you can never tire of them, they range from different sizes and shapes to colours and flavours, it is completely sinful !! And I happily invite you to experience this beauty.

While I am on the subject of food here is an interesting concept which I came across, followed by a theme restaurant, Dialogue in the Dark, a twenty year old global chain which is present in Hyderabad, India as well. Visitors are blind folded and are led by blind waiters to their seating area, are served food by them, while the customers eat without seeing what they usually see. An interesting role reversal, a true taste of darkness.

I wish you and your families a Happy Diwali.

Come Explore With Us.

Happy Reading.

Regards

Dipak Deva

From The CEO's Desk





The Itmenaan Estate

Stay At

At Peace with Self

Itmenaan Estate in Kumaon, is the first from the series of small, intimate lodges that are planned to be launched under “Itmenaan Lodges” brand. Itmenaan can variously be defined to mean ‘relaxation’, ‘at ease’ or ‘at peace’. Itmenaan Estate is set in a 10 acre farm in Kumaon Himalayas in a serene rural setting. It comprises of terraced fields, fruit orchards, forested patches and to top it all a private natural spring. The estate offers stunning views of snow capped Himalayas and lush valleys.

For accommodation, a 100 year old Kumaoni house on the estate has been restored to a high standard of comfort and luxury. There are three tastefully decorated bedrooms each with an en- suite bathroom. The architecture is local with elegant slate, wood and mud roofs and walls constructed with local stone using “dry stack” technique without any cementing material. The mud plastering on the walls in the room provides that much needed insulation against the cold during the wintry nights of the Himalayas. The linen and mattresses in the room and the fittings in the bathrooms are of very high quality to ensure a comfortable stay. Each bedroom can be hired individually or one can book the entire house.

The food is an excellent mix of continental and Indian fare. It is hard to believe that one could savour some of the finest home baked cookies, breads and cakes in such a remote location. Each meal can be had on a different location on the estate.

The staff members on the property are from the local villages and have been trained in the ways of modern hospitality. Some of the villagers who helped in the renovation of the house have now become full time staff members. Many of the staff members on the estate are trained in first aid delivery. The estate has two stretchers and access to transport to be able to respond to any medical emergency in time. The nearest hospital is approximately an one hour’s drive away.





Seasoned Off-Roaders

“We believe that the true essence of a holiday lies in the journey, not just the destination.” This is the principle behind [Overlander India](#). Uday Bhan Singh and Ajit Rana are co-founders of Overlander India, a 4x4 self-drive, off-roading company that takes you for an off-road adventure of a lifetime across various regions of India. Overlander India provides the jeep, the fuel, the route, the stay, the food, and the experience; and all the customers (called Overlanders) have to do, is to drive to their heart's content. Overlanders get to drive and experience a unique side of India that is rarely seen - the rural, pure, simple, village life. “In our first season, we have started with the desert area of western Rajasthan, but by next year we plan to cover Ladakh, the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, and the coffee & tea growing area of Karnataka”, says Uday.

For these car enthusiasts, their day starts after an early breakfast when they pick up the Overlanders from their hotel and transport them to a location outside the city where the jeeps are parked. Then begins the exciting off-road journey. And by journey they mean traversing across the countryside through dirt tracks, camel cart tracks and even riverbeds. You don't have to be an experienced off-road driver as both Uday and Ajit are seasoned off roaders who will show you the techniques of this form of driving.

By afternoon the Overlanders stop for a picnic lunch at a scenic spot. This spot could be nestled in the sand dunes of Jaisalmer or overlooking a small lake in the vicinity of Jodhpur. After a lazy picnic lunch, they get back in the jeeps and once again traverse the “road less travelled.” Road travel is minimized to an absolute minimum, which is ideal for foreigners who get uncomfortable on our highways.

In the afternoon, Ajit and Uday take the Overlanders to visit the actual homes of members of different communities that inhabit this region. These are villages or Dhanis, that are completely off the beaten path and give the Overlanders an authentic rural feel of India that exists in harmony with nature. This terrain is also a photographer's paradise as there are numerous species of migratory birds and wildlife like the black buck, chinkara and blue bull.

By evening, they arrive at the campsite, in time to enjoy a sundowner, watching the sun fade over the dunes. For night halts, luxury Swiss tents are provided, complete

A Day in The Life Of Ajit & Uday



with an inviting bed and modern bathrooms. The setting of these campsites are magical in their solitude and remoteness. Alternatively, family-run Heritage Hotels that are steeped in history and romance welcome the Overlanders with traditional Rajput hospitality.

As the evening's activities unfold around a campfire, the tantalizing aroma of a delicious barbeque beckons them. Melodious tunes fill the night and the rhythmic beat of the “dhol” accompanies the folk dancers from the neighbouring villages. The Overlanders are invited to participate in most activities including entertainment, cooking and prepping the vehicle for the next day's drive. This is however completely voluntary for the guests, as there is of course the option of having this taken care of by the staff.

With this, a day ends for Uday and Ajit as they prepare themselves for the next day. “After all tomorrow is another day...”



Lifestyle



Photography – The New Golf

A fellow photographer friend made this statement the other day. He also stacked up several reasons for his argument. And, it set me thinking.

As a communication professional with 27 years in that business, I couldn't help remembering the time when we were selling golf for travel, golf residences, golf sponsorships, golf surrogates for regulated categories, golf memorabilia; and were hearing of how business deals are being closed on the golf courses. I myself have closed a few deals there; albeit, not while playing. For most brands, golf was a shortcut to 'premium' or 'ultra-luxe' positioning. And for golfers, traveling to and playing in different courses, was almost an obsession.

Golf was associated with senior corporate management, industrialists, politicians, diplomats, expats, and bureaucrats, high net-worth individuals (HNIs) with high disposable income, young professionals, special interest travelers, business / leisure travelers, lifestyle media and even, wannabes. This advertiser's and travel industry's love for 'anything-golf' came about some 15 years back. And stayed. And, as communicators, while we continued to use golf as a platform, it was slowly degenerating into being a sorry crutch. Even travel industry was looking around for a refresh.

And then this friend made this statement.

As a travel photographer now, when I start to weigh the merits of this statement, I see certain uncanny similarities between golf and photography; and I find that the platform has major potential – both, for advertisers as well as the travel trade.

Let's take a look.

Both, golf and photography require PPP (Patience, Perseverance and Passion). Both require dedication and focus. Both are stress busters. They stimulate our right brain or our creative side. Senior corporate management, industrialists and high net-worth individuals favour both. Both feature on the list of indulgences of well travelled / well educated achievers. Both are perceived to be Ultra-luxe, fashionable, trendy and in. Both feature in the 'Special Interest Travel' and 'Luxury Travel' segments. They require a reasonable to high investment in initial equipment. And they both require a high investment in regular upgrades of equipment.



Wait... that's not all... Here's more that's common to photography and golf - natural beauty, wellness, happiness, tranquility, serenity, luxury, travel, fun, entertainment and creativity.

With all this going for photography, as of now, not many brands or travel companies have got on to this bandwagon; but let's face it, photography is catching up fast.

Travel industry, currently looking for differentiation, will do well by turning to photography for this much needed differentiation. They could do so by looking at offering better holiday/travel experience to their clientele with a promise of better photographs of their travel (either, by sending with them, a photographer or a photography educator who helps them capture their vacation better). After all, which traveler wouldn't want to capture and share their vacation pictures proudly, provided they manage to shoot them well.

Time has come for the corporate and travel sun to start shining on 'photography' - the new golf. After all, unlike golf, photographs have the power to transport us back in time into the moment they were captured; or in other words, they are like a time machine!

Ajay Sood (a.k.a. Travelure) is an accomplished communication professional, a noted travel photographer and writer, a photography-educator, and a photo-tour leader. His travel work may be seen on www.facebook.com/travelure



Gandhi in Cartoons

“Gandhi in Cartoons” - a compilation of 112 cartoons drawn by famous cartoonists, both foreign and Indian, during Mahatma Gandhi's lifetime was spotted by Sita during a visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad.

Published in 1970, this book is an easy and very effective medium for understanding the evolution of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to the Mahatma, father of the Indian nation and the impact he made on history and the human race. The Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad was at the heart of India's struggle for freedom. It was from here in 1930, Gandhi set out on a journey of 240 miles on foot to coastal Gujarat. The idea was to defy the ban on making salt by making his own. Thus with a pinch of salt, the most basic need of the poorest of the poor, Gandhi rocked the British Empire to become the Mahatma, who galvanised an entire nation.

Spotted By Sita



GANDHI IN CARTOONS

गांधी व्यंग्यचित्र संग्रह



Melon Carpaccio with Iberico Ham

Chef D.N Sharma of the Orient Express, Taj Palace New Delhi recommends the Melon Carpaccio with Iberico Ham, Mint and Birds Eye Chilli Jam Jelly, as a must try during your stay there.

“We recommend this dish as a starter to guests dining at the Orient Express,” says Sharma, “because it is an excellent combination of sweet melon and salty Iberico ham that balances the taste. The Iberico ham is one of the best Spanish hams in the world, which has an excellent flavour, texture and taste. We serve it with mint and birds eye chilli jam jelly which is very refreshing.”

Orient Express at the Taj Palace New Delhi, is an award-winning restaurant - rated as one of the fifty finest hotel restaurants in the world. With its plush interiors that are resplendent of a bygone era of Lords and Ladies, Royalties and Duchesses of Agatha Christie's 'Murder on the Orient Express' and an interesting interlude with James Bond, the Orient Express is an exciting and exhilarating restaurant to dine in a quaint old fashioned grandeur. The overall ambience is understated; but sophisticated and classy. The restaurant menu is inspired by the cuisine of all the countries through which the Orient Express passes. With an extravagant menu selection, extensive wine & cigar list and impeccable service, the Orient Express is still, even after three decades, the favourite place of connoisseurs and food critics.

The average cheque for dinner at the Orient Express is ₹ 4500.

Top Chef Recommends





Young India

After his hugely successful 1559 AD, Udaipur's coolest Restaurant Bistro Lounge, 25-year-old Arjun Shaktawat of Udaipur has now started Upre, Udaipur's most romantic Rooftop Bar and Restaurant.

Arjun has studied in the prestigious Les Roches International School of Hotel Management, Switzerland and has worked with Aspen Meadows Resort which specialises in unique meetings experiences for business travelers in Aspen, one of the most popular ski destinations in the world. When Arjun returned to Udaipur in 2009 he politely refused to join his father's business and decided to carve out a niche for himself. He took a 100-year-old dilapidated Haveli on lease from the present Maharana of Udaipur and lovingly restored it. The result being 1559 AD; a perfect blend of old and new. The name 1559 AD came naturally to Arjun. 1559 was the historical year when Udaipur was founded by Maharana Udai Singh.

When I met Arjun 2 years back in Udaipur, he was telling me that his dream was to build cool dining addresses in Udaipur. He wanted Udaipur's history and old world hospitality to merge seamlessly with the lighter, delicate and fresh ideas that he carried with him from his stint in the US. It's good to see that this young entrepreneur who is quite unlike your typical poster boy of Rajasthan; the former Royal with his handlebar moustache, sporting diamond-studded earrings, has lost none of his enthusiasm and hunger to succeed.

You must have already read in the 'Stay At' section about 31-year-old Ashish Bhatia's Itmenaan Estate in the Kumaon hills, an overnight journey from Delhi. It is his first from his ambitious project - Itmenaan Lodges - where he plans a series of small lodges all over the country. His philosophy - "Simple" is the new "Stylish"... "Unique" is the new "Luxury". Ashish is an alumnus of a top B school from India and has over 5 years of international management consulting experience.

Itmenaan Estate is a 10-acre estate with vegetable fields, fruit orchards, forested patches and a natural spring. A 100-year-old renovated and refurbished Kumaoni house amidst the estate has 3 bedrooms which can be hired individually or as an entire unit. Ashish was telling me that while building Itmenaan Estate he wanted to create something which is small, intimate and rooted in local culture with great food and discreet

Destination Insider



service. Yet without compromising on the creature comforts but doing away with all the unnecessary gadgetry. Itmenaan Estate is ideal for someone interested... [read more](#)



The House of MG, Ahmedabad

Every Room has a Story: Every room of the House of MG, Ahmedabad's only Art Deco hotel has a story. The room we stayed was the maternity room of the Mangaldas Family. The House of MG is the erstwhile residence of Mangaldas Girdhardas (MG), Ahmedabad's textile tycoon and philanthropist, who was instrumental, amongst others, in convincing Mahatma Gandhi to start the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad. Although the feel is decidedly old fashioned, the facilities of the House of MG are not, with all amenities and comforts of contemporary living.

Order a Replica: Furnished with antique furniture, each room of the House of MG is a surprise. In case you like the four poster bed, the mirror frame or the corner table in your room and desire to have one of these elegant pieces back home, just let the front desk know. The House of MG is happy to make a fine replica and even ship it home as long as you are happy to pay the cost.

The Lotus Pool: The Lotus Pool of the House of MG is the first 'swim and dine' restaurant of its kind. It is inspired by a Pichhwai painting. Pichwai is a school of painting which portrays the life and times of Lord Krishna, the supreme head God of the Hindu religion, the school exists only in the town of Nathdwara near Udaipur in Rajasthan. The entire ceiling above the Lotus Pool is covered by a digitally created Lotus fresco and the same pattern is repeated in the glass mosaic tiled floor of the pool. The uniquely designed pool is raised 15" above the ground to allow easy interaction between the swimmer and person standing outside. Its ledge serves as a seat. There is an extensive choice of Indian and International snacks on the menu.

Audio Tour: We thought the Audio Tour of the House of MG is a cool way to experience the vibrant lanes of the walled city of Ahmedabad. It is real, it is unfiltered and the content is original. A heady sonic mix of history and folklores, laced with interviews of locals; famous residents, Bollywood movie sound bytes and music, we went walking in the walled city with a MP3 player and headphones plugged to the ears, listening to a voice which took us through an immaculately timed journey that lasted for about 2 hrs. Get to know from locals and famous residents the history behind 15th century Indo-Islamic gems such as the Sidi Saiyad Mosque, the Bhadra Fort, Teen Darwaja and the Juma Masjid to the more recent Harkunvar Sethani's five

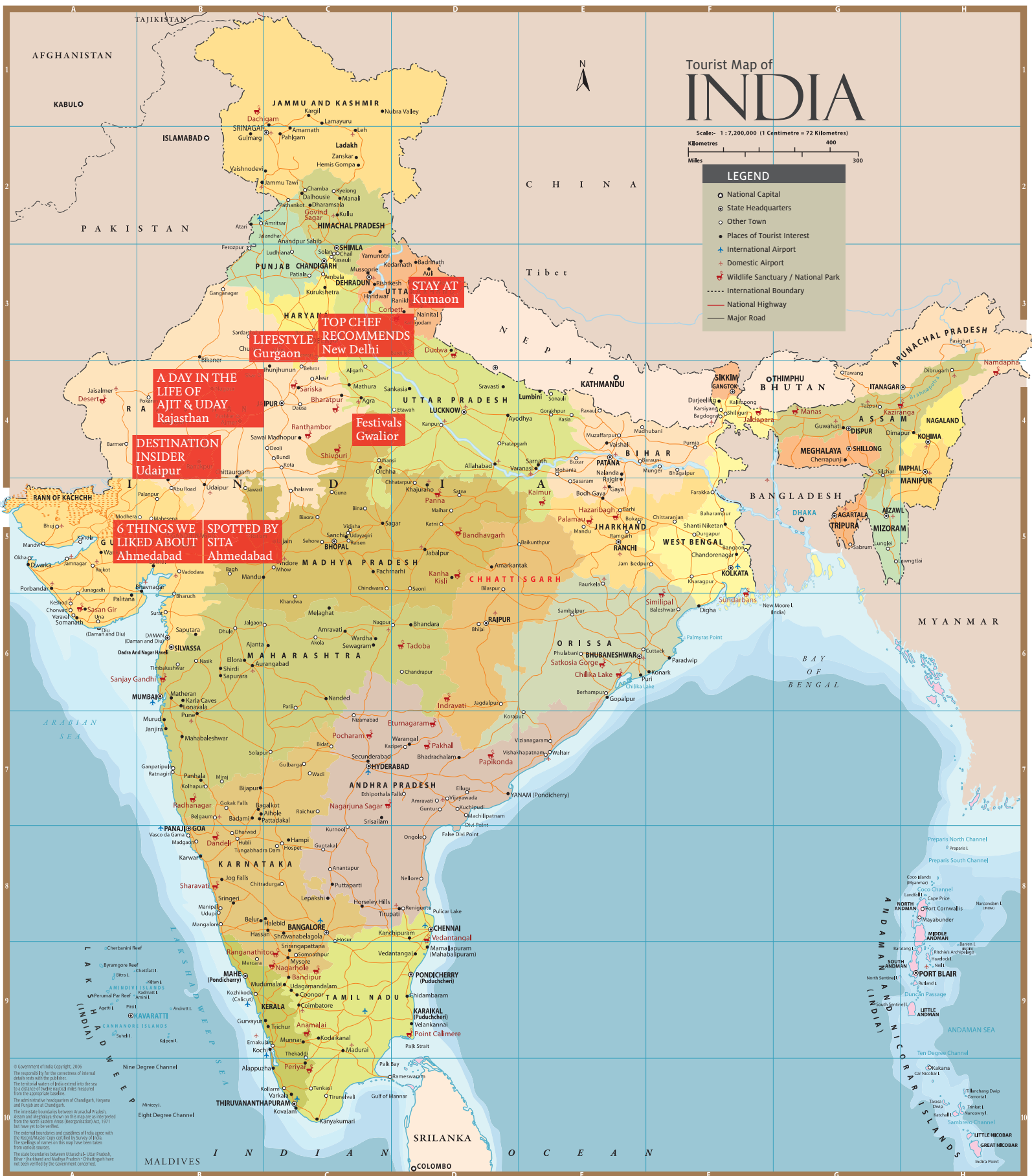
6 Things We Liked About



storied wooden Haveli and the Old Stock Exchange. Stop by the tranquil Jain temples inside the lanes and keep an eye out for two colourful bird-feeders. A completely immersive and unique experience, which we highly recommend.

Mangaldas-ni-Haveli: Our favourite place in Ahmedabad. Mangaldas-ni-Haveli is a 200 year old three-storey wooden structure in the heart of Old Ahmedabad. The Haveli was bought by the Mangaldas family in 2006 and has since been restored and reopened as a café and a craft centre. Built almost entirely from Burma Teak, it is an amazing example of old city architecture. We enjoyed our time on its terrace café which has fantastic views of the old city skyline and serves Gujarati cuisine, traditional and international snacks, along with fresh juices and homemade ice-creams. The House of MG offers a free shuttle service to this Haveli where one can enjoy dinner.

Slice of History and Good Food: Dinner at Agashiye, meaning Terrace, at the House of MG is an outstanding experience. It has played host to Mahatma Gandhi. The best way to describe the food and its ambience: a typical Gujarati home tastefully made contemporary. We loved the house specialty, nariyal adu limbu- tender coconut milk flavoured with ginger and a dash of lime. The meal at the Agashiye is a pleasant deviant from the routine one served at the more popular Visala. Best part being the experience is discreet and you don't have over extended waiters, hovering around you trying to aapo (meaning give in Gujarati) you this or aapo you that like they do in Visala. The lady finger stuffed with paneer (cottage cheese), panchvati, a combination of five vegetables, padya bhaat (rice wrapped in leaves) and the apple jalebis (indian dessert), a closely guarded family secret, is definitely 5 star from our side.





Festivals



Tansen Music Festival, Gwalior 9th - 12th Dec'11

Madhya Pradesh occupies a special position in the history of Indian music. The Gwalior gharana is amongst the most prominent arbiters of the classical style. Raja Mansingh's patronage of Dhrupad singers is well known. A pillar of Hindustani classical music, the great Tansen, one of the 'nine jewels' of Akbar's court, lies buried in Gwalior. The memorial to this great musician has a pristine simplicity, and is built in the early Mughal architectural style. More than a monument, the Tansen Tomb is a part of Gwalior's living cultural heritage. It is the venue of the annual Indian classical festival held here in the month of December. Renowned classical singers of the land regale audiences through mesmerizing night-long sessions of the much-loved classical ragas.

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
Goa International Travel Mart Goa 21st - 23rd October	8	Ernest Dias
WTM London 7th - 10th November	As100	Dipak Deva

Trade Shows





Greatly Appreciated

From: chris henricus
Sent: Tuesday, October 04, 2011 4:37 AM
To: Andre Rasquinha
Cc: Khare, Anupam; Rusty Rasquinho

Subject: Thank You
Importance: High

Andre/Anupam:

Back at work after a truly marvellous trip to India. From the meet and greet at the various airports, to the hotel check-ins, the tours and land travel, it was perfectly organized and I could not fault a thing. Your handling at this end and Sita's arrangements at the Indian-end were efficient and professional and made for a hassle-free and most enjoyable experience of Incredible India. Thank you Andre and Anupam, for all your efforts, which made the holiday a wonderful experience, and it was greatly appreciated.

I can't wait to go back!

Best wishes.

Chris

Impression

