



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



“”

Arco iris, Goa

“You sell your start up. Move from a big city to Goa, restore a 200- year-old Portuguese Villa with 5 bedrooms and start hosting your friends that you were once associated with. How cool is that. And that’s the story of [Arco Iris](#), located in Curtorim, a quiet village in South Goa, about 7 kms from Margao and the affable family of Bennita (“Beni”), Ganesh (“Gani”) and their daughters Trusha and Trikaya (“T&T”), your hosts who reside on the premises,” says Kuntil from our Destination Knowledge Centre who stayed there. “The nearest beach is 12 kms away so Arco Iris is not for someone who wants to go to Goa for its beaches,” Kuntil adds.

Arco Iris is ideal for those of your clients who wants to live like a Goan and smell the Goan soil, take delight in the clucking of the hens, grunting of the pigs, the pealing of the church bells, the honking of the local baker’s cycle horn, a hearty afternoon siesta in a planter’s chair, indulge in village gossip in the local taverns and settled down for chats with village folks on wooden tables. Arco Iris, meaning “Rainbow” in Portuguese, is built on a sprawling, terraced, 1.5 acre property which overlooks a seasonal lake that supplements the water requirements of the surrounding paddy fields. It is located a kilometer away from the Zuari river where your clients can go for boat rides to experience a slice of Goa’s hinterland that quietly exists.

The house, with a built up area of around 7,000 sq. feet, comprises an entrada (foyer), sala (living room), dining room, five bedrooms with en suite bathrooms (four on the ground floor and one on the first floor), lounge, library, fully equipped modern kitchen, utility area, two store rooms and accommodation for the support staff. Three of the bedrooms open into private balconies. It also has a balcao (balcony) and gallery in front and a courtyard in the rear. “I love the Balcao of old Portuguese home which is being fast obliterated by the onslaught of the concrete jungle. It resembles a porch and function as an outdoor living space. It suited the social pattern during the days of the yore in Goa where persons of lower strata were entertained outside the house and placed on a seat or step as per their social standing. Great place to have your morning cuppa and catch the breeze while watching the world to go by,” says Kuntil.

Arco Iris built on a high plinth, with its imposing

Stay At



columns, high ceilings offers excellent year-round natural ventilation. The house, has been restored and renovated, true to its heritage and without compromising the modern day requirement for convenience and comfort. During the restoration process, all efforts have been made to preserve the original materials which have gone into the construction of the house by using them, at times, for alternate purposes. The end result is a house which reflects a judicious and tasteful blend of the modern and the traditional. The colours of the bedrooms have been picked keeping in mind the colours of the rainbow, and your clients can choose between the yellow, blue, green, violet, orange and indigo rooms.



Naturalist And Amphibian Expert

For David Raju, Senior Naturalist and Amphibian Expert at the [Forsyth's Lodge](#) at Satpura National Park in Central India, the nights are sometimes tiring and restless with alarm calls all around the Lodge. There is a female leopard that often patrols the edge of the village fields and sends the deers and the village dogs into a fit of anxiety. His day starts early at 05:00 hrs.

With the guests of Forsyth Lodge ready by 05:45 hrs and the breakfast baskets checked, he is ready to leave. It's a short 5 minute drive to the lake shore which is the entrance to the Satpura National Park. David tells us that at this time, before dawn there is always a chance to see the tiny and elusive rusty spotted cat or a jungle cat, hare, civet cat or porcupine. Or one can spot Malabar pied Hornbills flying to a banyan tree. Always in groups of two and fours a total of up to 25 hornbills can be seen on a good day. It's a wonderful sight as they swarm through the tree feeding on the small red figs that profusely cover the tree. A great way to start your morning at Satpura National Park, says David.

A boat ride takes David and his guests across the lake to Peeliya for a Walking Trail. Satpura is the only national park in India which allows you to explore the wilderness on foot. The Walking Trail at Peeliya is David's favourite. He loves this walk because it is a great area for wild dogs and sloth bear and he has also seen leopards once or twice on this walking trail. But - depending on the season - it can be full of Gaurs, Sambars and Nilgais. As the sun begins to warm up, butterflies appear on this trail - over a dozen species basking along the forest edge. David recalls a recent incident at Peeliya, where during one of the walking trails he found fresh tracks of a family of wild dogs, when suddenly the whole pack appeared. They were heading away in the unhurried lope, that is typical of wild dogs. At the first sight of the dogs everyone had dropped into a crouch because that is less threatening to wildlife than the tall biped silhouette of upright humans. His guests were over the moon, as they had never thought that they would ever see these formidable hunters while on foot.

After the early morning Walking Trail, David returns to the Forsyth's Lodge with his guests for a leisurely brunch, where they talk about the Satpura National Park. After brunch, whilst his guests rest or go for a swim in the pool at the lodge, David heads back to the Park to meet the Park Director to discuss or update

A Day in The Life Of David Raju



him about the latest happenings of the Project - "[Lost Amphibians of India](#)". David is one of the Expedition Leaders of this Project, which is a sheer adventure in field biology.

At about 15:00 hrs, David heads back to the Park once again with his guests. This time, they drive in jeeps. The first hour is spent driving slowly, with quite a few stops, along the lake edge for bird watching and taking photographs of Sambars and Gaur, feeding on the grass at the water's edge. As evening approaches its time to head back to the Forsyth's Lodge but not before checking on the water holes of the park. On a lucky day, David says, you are likely to see sloth bears and leopards.

After dinner, for those guests who are interested, he conducts a night walk around the premises of the Lodge before calling it a day by 22:30 hrs.



Lifestyle



All that Raj

"Isn't it strange to dine in silk stockings in such a place, to drink a bottle of hock and champagne every evening, to have delicious moccha coffee and receive Calcutta Journals, every morning?" wrote Frenchman Jacques Mont sometime in the early 19th century. He was in Shimla, then a settlement of no more than fifteen hamlets, as a guest of Captain Charles Pratt Kennedy, the British Political Agent. The Gurkhas of Nepal who brutalised the locals were defeated and driven out. Peace had returned. Shimla was declared the Summer Capital of colonial India and rose in prominence nearly half a century after Jacques Mont's visit, but Captain Kennedy was already living a life that would characterise the bubbling and decadent ways, the British Raj would escape to every summer, thereafter.

One of my guests from England was kind enough to share some old letters that her maternal grandfather had written from Shimla to his mother. "...Last night I went to a ball given by the German Consul who is the richest man in Simla and gives the best entertainments. The narrowness of the space rather prevented me from showing off my fine stride but I did not get very much bored which is generally the best I can say of a ball. Thursdays I am going to Viceroy's for a dance and I am afraid I shall get entrapped for several others..." he wrote.

There are various tales as to how the town drew its name. According to a legend, the town got its name from Shyamala, the dark Goddess of power, widely worshipped in these hills. The story of the Gerad Brothers is also talked about. They were on their way on an official survey, when they saw a fakir (ascetic) near Jakhoo Hills, the highest amongst the seven hills of Shimla. The fakir, who it seems could understand the language of the animals, provided drinking water to weary travellers. The thatched cottage he lived in, was named as Shyamala. It is also said that it was a British officer, who accidentally stumbled upon Shimla while moving his troops. On the way he stopped in a dense cedar forest that was full of hyenas and bears. He was so struck by its cooler clime, that he decided to pitch tents for the night. Later, when he returned to the plains, he recommended that army outposts be set up in that area, which was so much like England.

Shimla remained the summer capital for the British Raj from 1822 to 1947. The British brought here everything. They built here everything that was necessarily required to lead a comfortable life. They



constructed roads to Shimla and even got it connected to the plains through railways. They introduced the best of schools and brought medical facilities for the natives and the European population of the town. They introduced club culture to Shimla and built some of the most beautiful buildings. I think that there is no other shopping street in India that is more beautiful than the Mall Road of Shimla. The Tudor Style structures make it look like an old English Town. The Norman Gothic building of Gaiety theatre adds another jewel in Shimla's crown.

Here are two of my favourite walks in Shimla that I love to take my guests out on - [click here](#)



Spirit of the Ancestor

“Beyond its lush coconut groves, pretty paddy fields and the contagious smiles which we all see in travel brochures, love to talk about and sell, there lies another Kerala which is seldom seen. A primordial Kerala which comes alive at night, combining several thousand-year-old customs, traditions and rituals, where everyone, irrespective of caste and class come together to witness ordinary men transform to Gods in a cacophony of hypnotic chants and music, during a Theyyam,” says Kuntal Baruwa from our Destination Knowledge Centre who was in North Kerala recently.

Theyyam is a fascinating religious ritual, where an Oracle offers his body to the spirits -sometimes that of an ancestor, maybe a great forest hero of the yore or a serpent goddess - as a medium to communicate with the villagers, understand their problems, offer solutions and bless them.

We spotted this Oracle during a Theyyam in the countryside of North Kerala invoking the spirit of an ancestor of the host family and communicating with the family members. People wanting counsel approach the Oracle in a trance with their questions. Answers are given in whispers and sometimes in extensive outbursts.

Spotted By Sita





Tea at The Windamere Hotel

Baker Chef Bhagawati of [The Windamere Hotel](#) tells us that the Afternoon tea here is not to be missed during your stay in Darjeeling. Afternoon Tea at the Windamere Hotel is a world-renowned affair. The hotel is already known by many as a “truly authentic Colonial Hotel of India in the Himalayas.” Some say the “only one of its kind – not only in the Hills, but also in India.” The 'Sunday Times of London' called it: “one of the best Colonial Hotels in the World.” This authenticity also applies to their tea offering. Everything is home-baked and mouth wateringly fresh! They serve: scones, with cream and jam; finger sized sandwiches (water cress, cucumber, cheese and chutney, tuna...to name but a few); lemon drizzle cake; Victoria sponge cake; melt in your mouth shortbread biscuits; bath buns; bake well tarts and much more. All of this is accompanied by the 'champagne of beverages' - Darjeeling Tea! What is known as 'Darjeeling Tea' in the west, cannot hope to compare with the real thing - drunk on its own and from the top tea gardens in the Darjeeling Hills - it is pure and in the west could cost a small fortune to buy.

Afternoon Tea is served by their Windamere maid - dressed appropriately in old English tea maid attire. The actual “tea” is served in real silver pots, complete with a silver tray and silver accoutrements. For people who long for “the real, untarnished event” this is the place. Apparently, they have many outside guests who also enjoy their Afternoon Tea. They are invited to sit in the 'Bearparks Parlour' (named after Windamere's first housekeeper....this was her flat in the old days).

By the way - many people call tea served between 4 - 6 p.m as 'High Tea'. The English will tell you that 'High Tea' is mostly an Americanised name for 'Afternoon Tea' - the latter consisting of 'a low meal offering' such as scones, biscuits, cake, etc. 'High Tea' would refer to the old working classes in England who came home from work to such delicious food as 'Steak & Kidney Pie' and other hot meals (usually served around 6 p.m. and known simply as 'Tea').

Top Chef Recommends





Textiles of India

India has a diverse and rich textile tradition. The origin of Indian textiles can be traced to the Indus valley civilisation. The people of that civilisation used homespun cotton for weaving their garments. Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, have unearthed household items like needles made of bone and wooden spindles, suggesting that the people would spin cotton at home to make yarn and finally garments. Fragments of woven cotton have also been found at these sites. Right from the ancient times, the high quality of Indian Handloom products like Pashmina of Kashmir, Muga Silk of Assam, Muslin of Bengal, Kota Doria of Rajasthan, Phulkari of Punjab, Suti Sari of Orissa, Paithani of Maharashtra and Bandhani of Gujarat have been famous all over. These traditions have been kept alive due to the continuous efforts of generations of artist and craftsmen who weaved their dreams and visions into their weaves.

'Made In India' is a phrase that you see more and more these days as you travel around the world. India is a country where a lot of the traditional fabrics are still made by hand using simple tools. "In Phulia it is fascinating to see looms in almost every house and listen to the lulling sound of wooden shuttles catapulting between the threads. There are an amazing 70,000 looms in this village itself. Weavers here trace their lineage to the great Bengal handloom Sari weaving centre of Tangail near Dhaka (Bangladesh). They have evolved their own weaving style called 'Fulia Tangail'. The Fulia Tangail incorporates vibrant colours and large, intricate designs woven in double jacquard. These saris are also being woven in mulberry and tassari silk apart from cotton," says Soumya Mukherji from the Destination knowledge Centre, who did a textile specific itinerary in West Bengal.

Kuntal Baruwa from the Destination Knowledge Centre also experienced an interesting tour in Gujarat coming across exquisite works of arts, some of which is dying away as there is no one else to pass on the tradition to. With connectivity made easy now with direct flights from Delhi to Bhuj (with a shot stopover at Mumbai), Gujarat it is much closer than you think. Bhuj is a treasure trove for Textile enthusiasts where your clients, not only get to see some of the most unique forms of Textile Art but also wonderful stories such as the one of Tejsi Dhana and his migration after the earthquake of 2001 that devastated his home in Kuran- a remote village in the India-Pakistan Border.

Destination Insider



Tejsi who comes from a family of camel herders specialises in Kharad weaving, he uses sheep and camel wool to create wonderful accessories for camels.

Today the Handloom industry provides livelihood to over 43 lakh people in India. The level of artistry and intricacy achieved in the handloom fabrics is unparalleled and certain waves/designs are still beyond the scope of modern machines. This is not to say that West Bengal and Gujarat are the be-all and end-all when it comes to textiles of India. We have the Chanderi belt in Madhya Pradesh which occupies a special place because of its centuries old weaving specialty of producing finely textured fabrics of silk and cotton embellished with zari woven work and more specially because of its saris which have been patronised royally. We could even talk about Pochampally, Andhra Pradesh where we have close to 5000 weavers known for its unique Ikat designs for centuries. These weavers produce Ikat textiles with geometrical designs and have also recently started experimenting with all-Indian styles.

Many of these places can be easily included into your traditional itinerary with a small detour, when in India. Do get in touch with us the next time you have clients who are interested in textiles and weaves.



Arco Iris

6 Things We Liked About

1. The Hosts - Bennita ("Beni"), Ganesh ("Gani") and their daughters Trusha and Trikaya ("T&T"), are your hosts at [Arco Iris](#), who reside on the premises. Fenni and Scooty, the two dogs are the latest addition. "Gani and Beni are extremely warm people who would make you feel immediately at home. Not to mention their lovely daughters. In that sense, it is ideal for clients travelling with children too. They drove me around, visited their favourite restaurants and bars. They also took me to Romeos house, the local baker to see bread being made," says Kuntil. They also do Art Exhibitions of local Goan Artists once in a while and if there is a local festival happening in the village, the villagers are bound to visit Arco Iris as a part of the celebrations. "And ask Beni to teach you a few Konkani words. Speak a word or two of the local language and you have just unlocked the heart of a Goan," says Kuntil.

2. The Location - Arco Iris is quietly located in Curtorim village, 7 kms from Margao in South Goa set amongst verdant fields and wooded areas on a sloping 1.5 acres of land. The front edge of the property overlooks a seasonal lake which supplements the water requirements of the surrounding paddy fields. "Curtorim is a really pretty village with its lakes and water bodies. Very friendly people too, with whom the hosts enjoy a very good rapport. Gani took me to the local bar every evening, where we had a great time chatting with the locals. The crowds on the beach were miles away," says Kuntil.

3. The House - "Loved the way the owners have restored the 200 year old Portuguese home. Nothing jars. It is a perfect blend of the traditional and the modern. The traditional Portuguese vibe with all modern amenities. You should hear from the hosts themselves, how difficult the restoration work was, over a couple of beers. I remember the part where the labours disappeared for quite some time since there was a festival and it was a race against time since the Goa monsoon was just around the corner," says Kuntil. The house, with a built up area of around 7,000 sq. feet, comprises of an entrada (foyer), sala (living room), dining room, five bedrooms with en suite bathrooms (four on the ground floor and one on the first floor), lounge, library, fully equipped modern kitchen, utility area, two store rooms and accommodation for the support staff. Three of the bedrooms open into private balconies. It also has a balcao (balcony) and gallery in front and a courtyard in the rear.



4. The Rooms - Arco Iris is built on a high plinth, with its imposing columns, high ceilings and offers excellent year-round natural ventilation. The colours of the bedrooms have been picked keeping in mind the colours of the rainbow and your clients can choose between yellow, blue, green, violet, orange and indigo rooms. "The rooms at Arco iris are very comfortable, spacious, airy and I love how Beni has done up the rooms. They also have some of the softest towels in the bathrooms that I have come across," says Kuntil.

5. In and around - "Arco Iris is a perfect place not to do anything and perhaps see the grass grow. But there are many interesting places in and around the property," says Kuntil. One can cycle down to the Rachol Cemetery crossing the Curtorim and Maina lakes. It is one of the oldest seminary in Asia. Go for walks around the pretty village, enjoy its peaceful and unhurried lifestyle or on take a boat ride on the Zuari River which is just a kilometer away to experience the hinterland of Goa that quietly exists. "If it is a Sunday, go for mass in the village church. People are relaxed and in their best Sunday finery. Practice some of the Konkani that you have just learnt from Beni and see them smile. Perfect Moments that you will treasure for the rest of your life.

6. Birding - "I thought Birding was boring and not for me. But after the short birding trip, my first, which Gani organised with an Ornithologist close by to Arco Iris, changed my mind. I had a super time with the birding expert and loved his 'birding for dummies' approach which made it very interesting," says Kuntil. Curtorim with its lakes and water bodies is also known for its birdlife. "From dummies like me to serious birders Gani can organise short birding trips to multiple day trips for your clients. Dinesh Kumble, one of India's very well-known nature and wildlife photographer was also staying at the Arco Iris while I was there. I realised why he would disappear early morning to get that one shot of a particular species of bird found in Curtorim," says Kuntil.



Festivals

“”

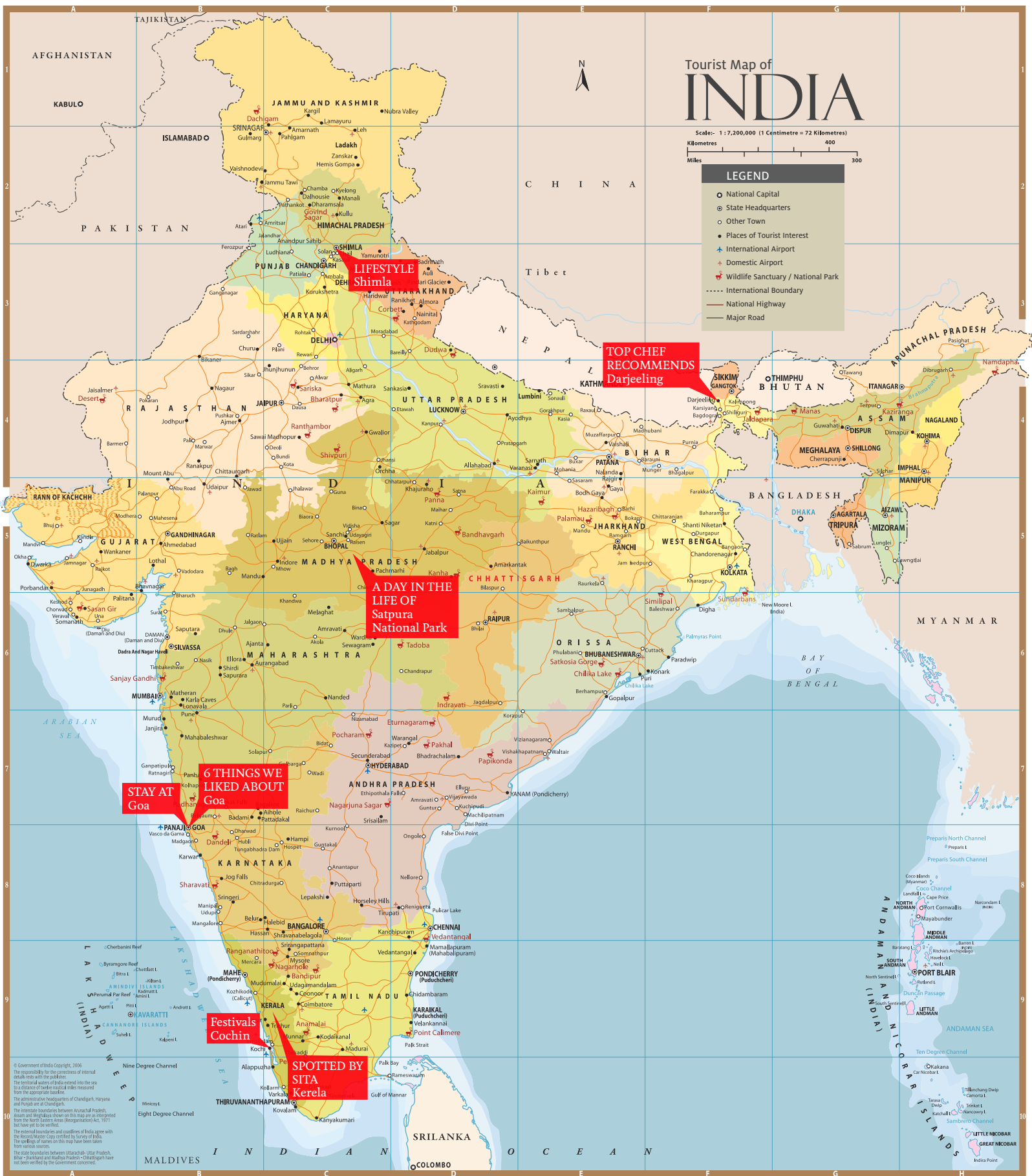
Cochin Carnival, Fort Cochin 31st Dec- 1st Jan, 2015

If there is one festival the whole of Cochin impatiently awaits every year, it is the Cochin Carnival. Held in the last week of December, Fort Kochi is festooned and tourists, not only from within the country, but also outside flock to this lovely port city to participate in the revelry. The beginning of the Cochin Carnival can be traced back to the Portuguese New Year revelry, held here during the colonial days. Gradually, it evolved to take the form of what is today popularly called the Cochin Carnival of Kerala. Preparations begin months in advance for hosting unique games, fairs and partying during the Carnival. The highlight of the Carnival is the massive procession on New Year's Day. The festivities and revelries continue till midnight of December 31st with fireworks and the carnival rally on 1st January, marking the grand finale.



Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

Photo Credit: Edward KP/Koder House





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 |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| WTM London 3rd - 6th November | Hall No S8, Booth No IN200 | Dipak Deva & Neeraj Bhatt |
| USTOA Boca Raton, Florida 5th - 7th December | Sita Desk | Neeraj Bhatt |

Trade Shows

