

STAY AT

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SPOTTED BY SITA

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# Art of Travel



## Fratelli's Guest House, Akluj

Staying at Fratelli's Guest House is a novel experience considering that it was originally built only for owners and the principal wine-maker to stay and manage the affairs of the vineyards and winery.

The guesthouse has 4 large tastefully furnished rooms right adjacent to the state of the art winery building. Constructed in an ultra-modern glass and steel frame and finished completely in white, the exterior is undeniably eye catching. There is an ultra-modern common kitchen with a fridge stocked with complimentary Fratelli wines should you feel like having some. The guesthouse also has a common area and a lounge for you to put your feet up and relax. Your cook at the guesthouse prepares simple Indian and continental dishes according to your liking. The best part of staying so close to the vineyard is that you have the option to pick up bicycles, all-terrain vehicles or even their open-top jeep to head into the Vineyards whenever you want.

# Stay At







## Rickshaw-puller of Old Delhi

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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 it 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.

# A Day in The Life of 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



## Simple Living

For the indigenous Mahadeo Kolis of Maharashtra, good health starts with nutrition. All food is prepared over a traditional wood fire from organic ingredients grown locally. In fact the most accessible aspect of their culture is their food. The Mahadeo Kolis are renowned for the quality of rice they grow. Other important items in their diet include Bajra (millet) and Jowar (Sorghum). Naachni, a variety of red millet which is very rich in iron and other vitamins is used to make papads (popadoms) and rotis (breads). The brilliance of the cuisine of the Mahadeo Kolis is celebrating the seasonality of flavours. During monsoons, they cook the stems of a local creeper named Chai. Leafy vegetables growing wild such as Badedaa and Oorudo are also common during the rainy season. In winters, crabs and fish, from the nearby rivers get added to the menu. Fish such as Shingada, Chuchami, and Mure are cooked in spicy curries. Summer, on the other hand, is a season of fruits with Terun (a sweet fruit found in the jungles) being the pick of the lot. Finally, no meal is complete without a taste of the pickles that the Mahadeo Kolis are famous for.

My personal favorite is the meal that the Mahadeo Kolis cook during festivals. Locally it is called Puran Poli. The subtle sweetness of the Puran Poli (bread stuffed with dough made from a mixture of horse gram and jaggery) accompanied with ghee (clarified butter) and milk, the mouth watering spicy gravy (they call it Amti) made from the broth of the horse gram accompanied with locally grown rice, the crispy texture of roasted papads (popadoms) and the savoury onion fritters. This meal comes with a serious warning: once you begin, you can't stop eating. The best part of the cuisine of the Mahadeo Kolis, for me has been the company of the family, sharing their meal and their stories that live with you long after you have finished your meal.

About the Author: Inir Pinheiro is a friend of Sita and runs Grassroutes which works with the indigenous communities to create sustainable livelihoods through community based tourism and experiential learning programs. For more visit <http://grassroutes.co.in>



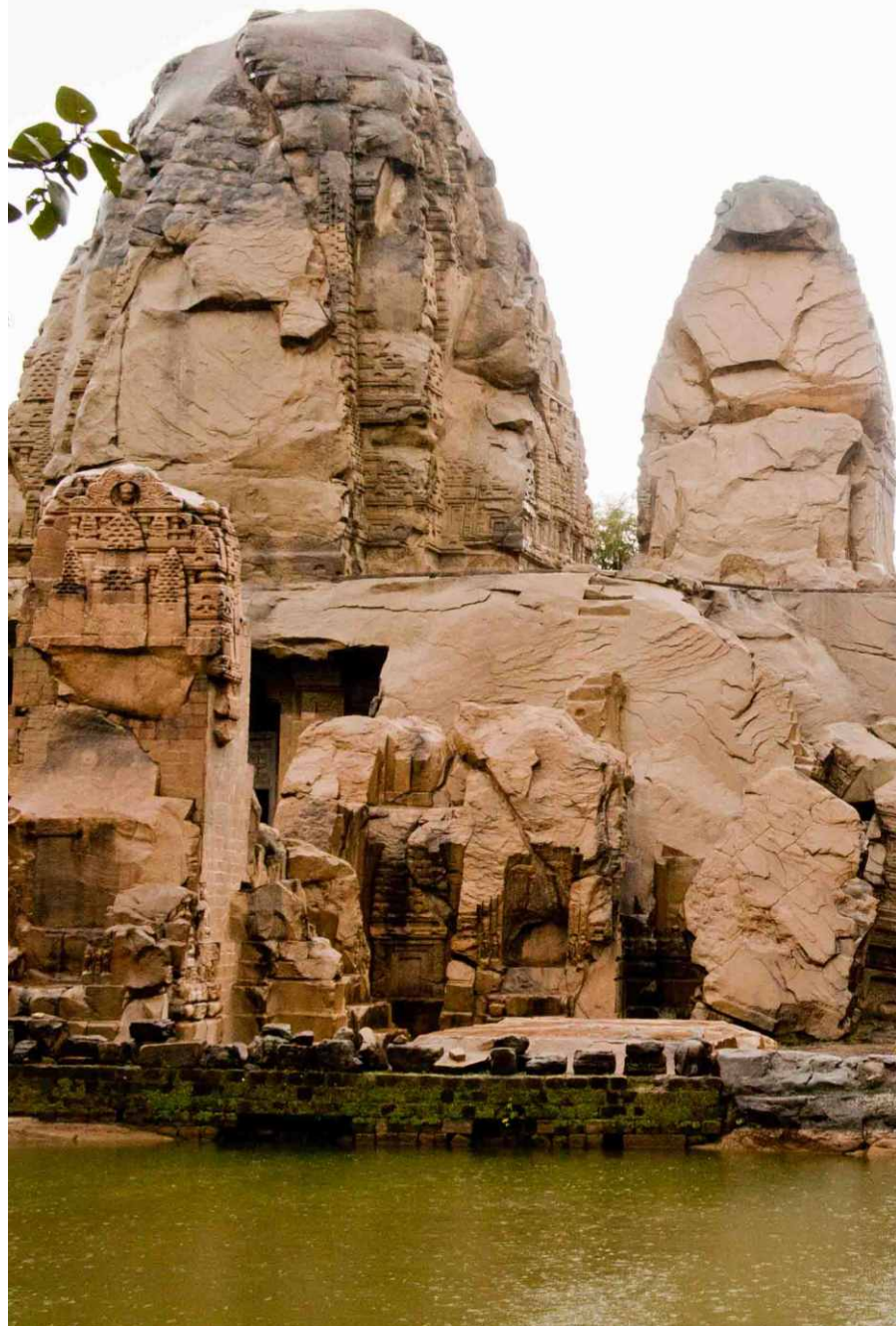




## Masroor Rock Temple Complex

The Masroor Rock Temple Complex called the Ellora of the Himalayas is located 90 minutes from [Judges Court](#), Pragpur. This quaint complex of monolithic temples carved out of a single rock, the only of its kind in Himachal Pradesh and the entire sub-Himalayas of North India was built in the 6th or 7th century. Only that much is known. Nothing more. Everything else is shrouded in mystery. Who built it? Nobody knows. There are no written records. Why in this location? Why nowhere else in Himachal Pradesh or other parts of the sub-Himalayas? Who were these people who made it? Nothing is known.

# Spotted By Sita





Ukadiche Modak



No these are not your ubiquitous momos. Instead this is a sweet dumpling called Modak made of steamed rice (flour) filled with a mixture of jaggery and coconut. Inderjeet Rathod from the Destination Knowledge Centre who was traveling through Konkan (roughly the region between Mumbai and Goa) had the opportunity to taste this special preparation while staying in an homestay in Ganpatipule and says this is a must have. Ganesh Chaturthi is synonymous with modak feasting since it is Ganesha's : the Elephant Headed God's favourite dish. " There is a special way to eat them - break a modak from the middle, pour a spoon of ghee (clarified butter) into it and then eat it " adds Inderjeet.

Here is a link to the recipe for you to make these tasty sweets at home - [click here](#)

# Top Chef Recommends







## Elephant Valley Eco Farm Hotel

Great alternative to Thekkady: [Elephant Valley Eco Farm Hotel](#), is only 3 and a half hours drive from the temple town of Madurai and is a great alternative to the much flogged Thekkady. It is ideal for your clients headed to Kerala after the hectic and dusty temple circuit of Tamilnadu. An interesting itinerary for your clients heading to Elephant Valley for a couple of nights after Madurai. From Elephant Valley, one can head to [Pollachi](#) which is another 3 hours and thirty minutes away. From here your clients can continue to Cochin by surface. It takes about 5 hrs. The backwaters of Kumarakom could be your clients' next destination. For those who want a beach at the end of their holiday, they may head to Marari which is not too far away.

**Good Old Farm Life:** This 20 room property, however, is not for everyone. Definitely not for those clients who are fixated on their creature comforts; wants room service, television/newspapers in their rooms and have the habit of randomly landing in the restaurant when hungry. Elephant Valley works perfectly for those who are looking for a peaceful and relaxed time. The tranquility of the place compensates for the lack of amenities. That said, you won't be roughing it out for sure. Their rooms are cosy, mattresses are extremely comfortable and there is hot and cold water. Do request for rooms close to the restaurant and the lounge.

**No Wastage of Food:** At the Elephant Valley you have to place your meal order in advance. They cook everything fresh and just about what is required as per the orders placed. We enjoyed our discussions with Chef Shankar after each meal on what we should order for the next one. Some may find this limiting; especially on a holiday. But we liked the idea, that it ensures no wastage of food at the end of the day. Very thoughtful.

**Pick your own vegetable for the next meal:** If placing your meal orders in advance sounds limiting to you, here's what we advice. Ask Chef Shankar to accompany you to their organic vegetable garden after your discussion about what to order for the next meal, pick your own vegetables and ask him to make it, just the way you want it. He will be more than happy to do that. We did exactly that and even joined him in the kitchen. It was great fun. Elephant Valley is not a place where you wait for interesting things to happen. Go make them happen.

# 6 Things We Liked About



**Art work of Jérôme Mesnager:** The work of Jérôme Mesnager, the father of Street Art in Paris, in a nondescript village of Tamilnadu in South India? You guessed it right. Elephant Valley has some cool artwork of [Jérôme Mesnager](#) to match the property's unique location of being situated in an elephant migration route, that is centuries old. We particularly liked the one where Mesnager's "Man in White"; considered a symbol of light, strength and peace dancing with an elephant.

**Nature Trek & the Rock Pools:** We completely agree with Elephant Valley when they say that they will never have a swimming pool ever in the property. The Gangavar River flows right inside the property and there are many water bodies located within walking distance which are perfectly safe to splash around. Our favourite spot is the beautiful waterfall which is an easy 15 minute walk from the property. Spend your morning there, with a book and ask Chef Shankar to serve you lunch there. One can also take a longer detour of 60 minutes with an in-house guide. It's a moderate trek. Our guide Prichay; a local villager was shy. But we kept on prodding him gently. Prichay shared wonderful stories on how locals are dependent on these forests for their daily needs and their traditional wisdom. He even showed us a poisonous fruit which the local community uses to ensure an easy catch by washing them in the river. It makes the fish and the crabs go temporarily blind.



# Festivals

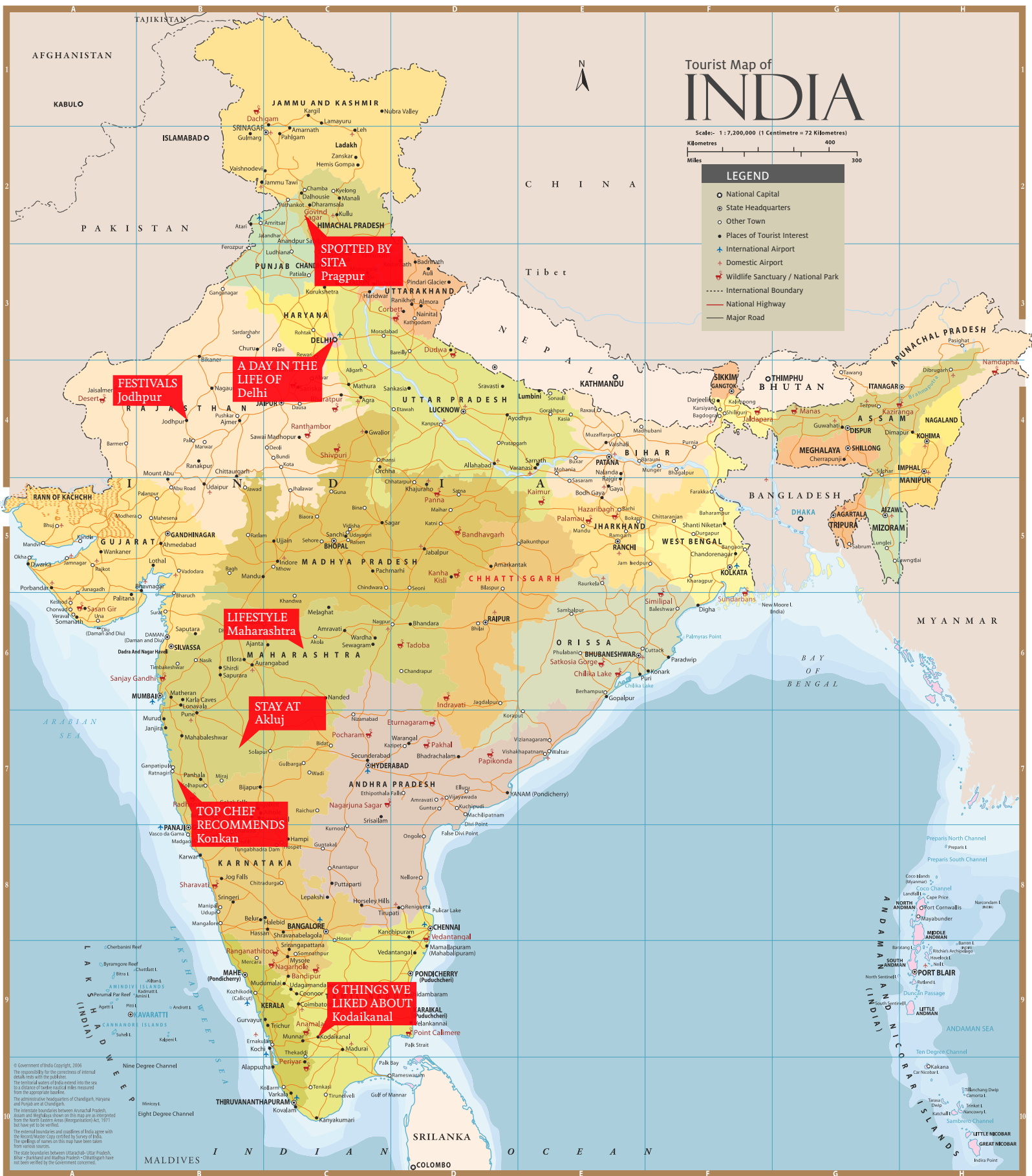
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## Flamenco And Gypsy Festival, Jodhpur 18th to 20th March, 2016

The Flamenco And Gypsy festival's main objective is to promote the link between the Rajasthani folk musicians and the legendary Flamenco and gypsy artists that live around the world. It is also an attempt to trace the routes that the nomadic gypsies of Rajasthan and Northern India took thousands of years ago, find artists with a gypsy background and bring them back to their ancestral roots. The 3 day gala event set against the majestic backdrop of Mehrangarh Fort highlights the rich heritage of Rajasthan and the importance of keeping folk music alive, as well as presenting a more contemporary view of desert music and dance.









Meet us at the  
Upcoming  
Trade Shows

If you wish to schedule a meeting, do e-mail us at  
[info@sita.in](mailto:info@sita.in)

| Trade Shows                                       | Booth No.                         | Whom to Meet                     |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>WTM</b><br>London<br>2 - 5 November            | Hall No S8,<br>Booth No.<br>IN200 | Dipak Deva &<br>Narendra Rathore |
| <b>ILTM</b><br>Cannes<br>30 November - 3 December | F 144                             | Denise Lanz &<br>Karan Varma     |
| <b>USTOA</b><br>Chicago<br>3 - 5 December         | Sita Desk                         | Neeraj Bhatt                     |

# Trade Shows

