

FROM THE CEO'S DESK

STAY AT

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AMCHI CHUNDUI

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SPOTTED BY SITA

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Art of Travel



The Golden Temple

Dear Partners,

People travel to religious destinations for a variety of reasons ranging from a need to visit a place that has a special significance or just to experience the tranquility that the place derives from the certain “something” that’s in the rarefied air of such places. I have to confess, I belong to the latter group of travellers and really started my “journey” at Bethlehem some years ago and then was coerced by a friend to visit Tirupati about five years ago - an amazing experience that I’ve managed to repeat every year since. The annual visits have been a bit of surprise even to myself, because growing up in an army environment shaped my (rather practical!) views on religion, unlike those of the quintessential Indian - all religions to be respected and practiced in private, with pilgrimages hardly a part of the annual holiday calendar!

This year was a bit of a watershed for me in that sense - a trip to Tirupati, followed by a recent one to the Golden Temple. I had heard so much about the Golden Temple experience over the years that it had been on my “list”, but had never really got around to it. I finally made it to Amritsar last month where the trip started with a very convenient flight to the city and checked into the rather cosy and conveniently located Ista Hotel.

The Golden Temple lived up to all the things I’d heard about it and more - the tranquility, the cleanliness, the legends about the miraculous curative powers of the water and the equality practiced in the Sikh religion, is a truly mesmerising experience. The temple is probably the most organized religious place in India, not surprising, since they had apparently hired the services of one of the Big Four Consulting Firms to put some of their processes in place and what a great job they have done. ‘Kar Seva’ or the voluntary contribution of service by devotees is an amazing sight, people from all levels of society, rich or poor, volunteer to cook, clean and serve food at the temple. It is completely selfless. Eating the simple, delicious ‘langar’ (free food served to anyone who wants to partake of it, on an average it could be, a hundred thousand per day) was the highlight for me. It is also amazing how you don’t find any form of misery outside the temple.

No trip to Amritsar is complete without a visit to the Wagah border and the Jallianwala Bagh. The retreat ceremony at sunset on the Wagah border is absolutely beautiful. The Border Security Force on the Indian side and The Sutlej Rangers on the Pakistan side put up a well co-ordinated and spectacular showpiece, with passionate Indian’s and Pakistani’s adding their full-throated support to the entire drama! The Jallianwallah Bagh is a reasonably well maintained part of the pre-Independence history of India and is a must do for all those who visit the city. Of course, two wonderful days in Amritsar were rounded off by a wonderful Punjabi gourmet experience and great shopping that included local spices and the locally renowned embroidered fabric that the women in the family bought by the yards!

From The CEO's Desk



My only mistake was to venture there over the weekend, it is just too crowded. Regulars tell me Tuesday- Friday are better days to plan your trip to Amritsar....next time!

To view a photograph that I personally captured of the Golden Temple, please [click here](#).

Come Explore With Us.

Happy Reading.

Regards

Dipak Deva



On a Small Hill Top...

Stay At

Indravan, New Delhi

Indravan is a new boutique hotel that imbibes the finer nuances of India, its culture and seeks inspiration from different periods of Indian history. It is an artistic re-interpretation of Indian art and craft, daily life, warfare, trade, games and politics that have existed in the course of time. From the Early Civilization to Modern India, a multitude of inspirations are assimilated and re-contextualized into the different aspects of this concept boutique hotel. The boutique property has 24 guestrooms.

Chidambara Vilas, Chettinad

Sangam group of hotels launched their third property Chidambara Vilas at Chettinad. Chidambara Vilas, is located at Ramachandrapuram, Kadiapatti, about 4 kms off the historic fort of Thirumayam - an Archeological Survey of India monument in Pudukotai District. It is located at the midpoint of the famous Tanjore - Madurai - Trichy Circuit. The property offers 24 guest rooms, a restaurant, a demo kitchen, informal bar area, and a swimming pool. The hotel is situated at a distance of 75 km from Tanjore, 90 kms from Madurai and 80 kms from Trichy.

Dadhikar Fort, Alwar

Dadhikar Fort rests on a small hill top, in the midst of the Aravalli Hills, surrounded by a dense forest. The property has 11 rooms and suites. The fort is an astonishing blend of nature, graceful history of thousand years and the reflection of ancient Indian art and culture. One can enjoy meals on the terrace, while listening to live Rajasthani folk music and dance, with the village and Aravalli Hills as the magical backdrop. The journey to the fort is in itself an enchanting experience. (Please refer to the pictures on the right.)





Traditional Healer, Spiti

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“I wish I could visit Tibet before I die,” says Amchi Chundui. Chundui is an Amchi (traditional healer) from Spiti and tells us about a medical conference which was held in Tibet sometime in the 8th century, where traditional healers were invited from India, Nepal, China, Turkey, Iran and other parts of Central Asia to brainstorm and share their knowledge. The Amchi system is an off-shoot of Ayurveda and the knowledge is passed on to the eldest son by the father. Amchi means ‘the mother of all living beings.’ It comes as no surprise then that Amchis of Spiti never charge money from their patients. It is a compelling story of communal living.

Amchi Chundui’s day starts early at 05:30 hrs with a customary prayer to the Medicine Buddha, his family deity followed by a study of Buddhist religious texts dedicated to healing. The Amchi system is focused around Pulse Reading, Herbal Healing, Medicine Making and Tantrik Healing. “Pulse Reading is the easiest. But what’s really tough is the Medicine Making bit. It takes years to master it.” There are 471 medicinal plants in the Amchi system and each plant has its own time of year to be picked up, dried and stored. “June, July, August is the time for collecting and one has to be extremely careful that the bio-diversity is not harmed in any way what so ever,” says Chundui.

His patients start trickling in from about 07:30 hrs. “Early morning is the best time for Pulse Reading as both the Amchi and the patient is relaxed. This is crucial.” Cough and Cold is the most common problem, followed by stomach problems, headaches and kidney stones. “Sweet is Poison, Sour is Medicine,” says Chundui. Though he is quick to admit with a toothless grin that he is struggling to get rid of his “bad habit” of having many cups of milk tea with sugar during the day. Breakfast is around 09:30 hrs. But he continues attending to patients till about 12:30 hrs. When there are no patients to attend to, he works in the family’s agricultural fields or sets off to collect medicinal plants.

Amchi Chundui waits for his children to return from school and they all have lunch together at 13:30 hrs. He then spends his time making medicines till about 16:30 hrs. Sometimes family members of his patients join him. Always in a powdery form, as many as 16 ingredients go into making the cure for cough & cold and about 8 for stomach problems. We were shown two

A Day in The Life Of Amchi Chundui



very interesting variety of rocks used to cure stomach problems - a “male” and a “female” variety. “The male variety of the rock is used for female patients and the female variety for male patients.” At about 18:00 hrs, Chundui receives his family’s livestock, who would have returned after grazing in the pastures and goes on a round in the village to check if any of his patients need his urgent attention. Amchi Chundui does not charge his patients any fee and in return his patients offer help by working in his fields, contributing to his household chores or donating medicinal plants which may be expensive and not available locally. He calls it a day at around 21:00 hrs. “For me it’s the respect that counts. But for today’s generation money is more important,” says Chundui over dinner, when asked about his plans of passing on the family gift to the next generation.



Lifestyle

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Nostalgia

Nostalgia at 1911 Brasserie, Imperial Hotel, New Delhi is designed to create unforgettable retro evenings with a selection of some great all-time western delicacies. 1911 Brasserie is the all-day dining multi-cuisine restaurant. New Delhi completes 100 years of its existence as the much renowned capital of India, The Imperial pays its ode, taking guests back into the yester years that evoked grandeur, poise and style. The indulgent delicacies put together in the all new Nostalgia menu are chosen meticulously for guests to enjoy fine cuisine from the bygone era. A special table has been set up for couples in the wine cellar to kindle a romantic and a distinguished dining experience, accompanied by live jazz music.





Ashwathi Mess, Wayanad

Sita spotted this small thatched shack, while coasting down the steep approach road to the Kuruva Islands in Wayanad. It is easy to miss the little non-descript house, with a board declaring “Ashwathi Mess.” But on our return after our Kuruva adventure with a ravenous appetite, this is where we went. At the Ashwathi Mess, Umesh and Lizy welcomed us with a huge smile, a hearty greeting and escorted us to the benches and tables, now smooth, after being used for so long. And you begin to suspect this indeed is a special place. Their kitchen would have been humming since morning, once orders are received from resorts all over Wayanad. A plantain leaf plate materializes and starts getting adorned with a dozen delicacies in a specific order and finally the rice arrives to complete an elaborate Kerala ela-sadya (sadya means banquet in the local language). The rigours of the forest and river crossings at Kuruva are quickly forgotten whilst you surrender to the food. And Umesh or Lizy will be at hand with yet another helping, a word of encouragement or a helpful description of the bewildering array of dishes.

If you chat up with Umesh, you will wonder if you are being told a Bollywood pot-boiler. As the story goes, Umesh met Lizy twenty years back. Like a proper Bollywood movie, the Hindu boy and the Christian belle fell in love and decided to elope. What good is a script in a Bollywood movie without the cops? The families stayed true to the script by calling the police who promptly tracked down the intrepid couple. The scene moved to the local police station, where the lovers professed their undying love for each other (...and their proof of age, we presume), and the inspector finally decided to get the couple married.

But the story is only at the intermission stage. The second half finds the hero running a thriving watch repair shop in Coorg and the heroine wisely deciding to open a small chaaya-kadi (tea and snacks) shop on the Kuruva river bank. Over time the snacks evolved into a basic meal.

Enter the villain - technology! Umesh realized that the electronic age had finally reached the plantations of Coorg, with his skill as a watchmaker sidelined by a torrent of use and throw imports. He returned to join his wife and quickly discovered the extraordinary culinary skills hidden by all the clockworks. Seeing this, Ram, a friend of Sita, who escorts visitors to

Spotted By Sita



Kuruva, persuaded them to upgrade from chaaya-kadi-meals to full-course Kerala feasts, which is how we ended up having an amazing meal in this little shack called “Ashwathi Mess.”

As we said good bye we realised that the taste of the simple, hygienic home cooked food of Umesh and Lizy had lingered on. We weren't surprised at all, when we were told that people keep on returning to enjoy their undiluted hospitality with a smile which is definitely, a 5 Star from our side.



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





Kathakali with a Healthy Twist

Think Kerala and this iconic image of a Kathakali dancer immediately comes to everyone's mind. The extraordinary splendour of a performer in a brilliant costume and a mask like face-do, who brings to life Gods and Goddesses, Demons and Spirits, swirling around with amazing energy in a dark and sombre stage. Accomplished Kathakali dancers can move their eyeballs in 17 different ways, their eyebrows in 8 different ways and their eyelids in another eight. For the uninitiated, Kathakali is a dance form indigenous to Kerala, colourful and dramatic in content and character. Scenes from Indian epics and mythology are the themes for the dance.

But here is the interesting twist - each Mudra (ritual hand gesture) of Kathakali has a specific health benefit. And today I am going to talk about 10 such Mudras with terrific health benefits which Sarath Kumar, a Kathakali Maestro taught me during my recent trip to Cochin. "Eat light and you would need to wear a Mundu," Sarath had warned me. Just so you are aware Kathakali has over 1000 Mudras

There is lot to take away from this interactive session. Your clients will be taken through the nuances of this dance form by Sarath, where he will touch upon the concepts behind the Mudras (ritual hand gestures), Eye & Facial movements as well as the colorful costumes of Kathakali and its distinctive face painting. He will then invite your clients to try out the various Mudras (ritual hand gestures), Eye & Facial movements under his watchful eyes and teach them how to combine these various elements into graceful dance steps. Should your clients so desire they can even paint their faces with colours just like a real Kathakali dancer.

I leave you with some photographs of my amazing 2 hrs with Sarath. You can also download a Power Point Presentation of the 10 Mudras that I learnt from him. The health benefits are also mentioned in the presentation.

Try it out. They are very simple and can be done by anyone, anywhere; in the bus, in the car while waiting for the traffic-light to go green, on the train to work, while on the flight, office or at home.

Kathakali with a healthy twist - [Click here for the Photo Gallery](#)

Destination Insider



Mudras - The Ritual Gestures of Kathakali and its health benefits - [Click here to download the Power Point Presentation](#)

Cheers
Kuntal Baruwa



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



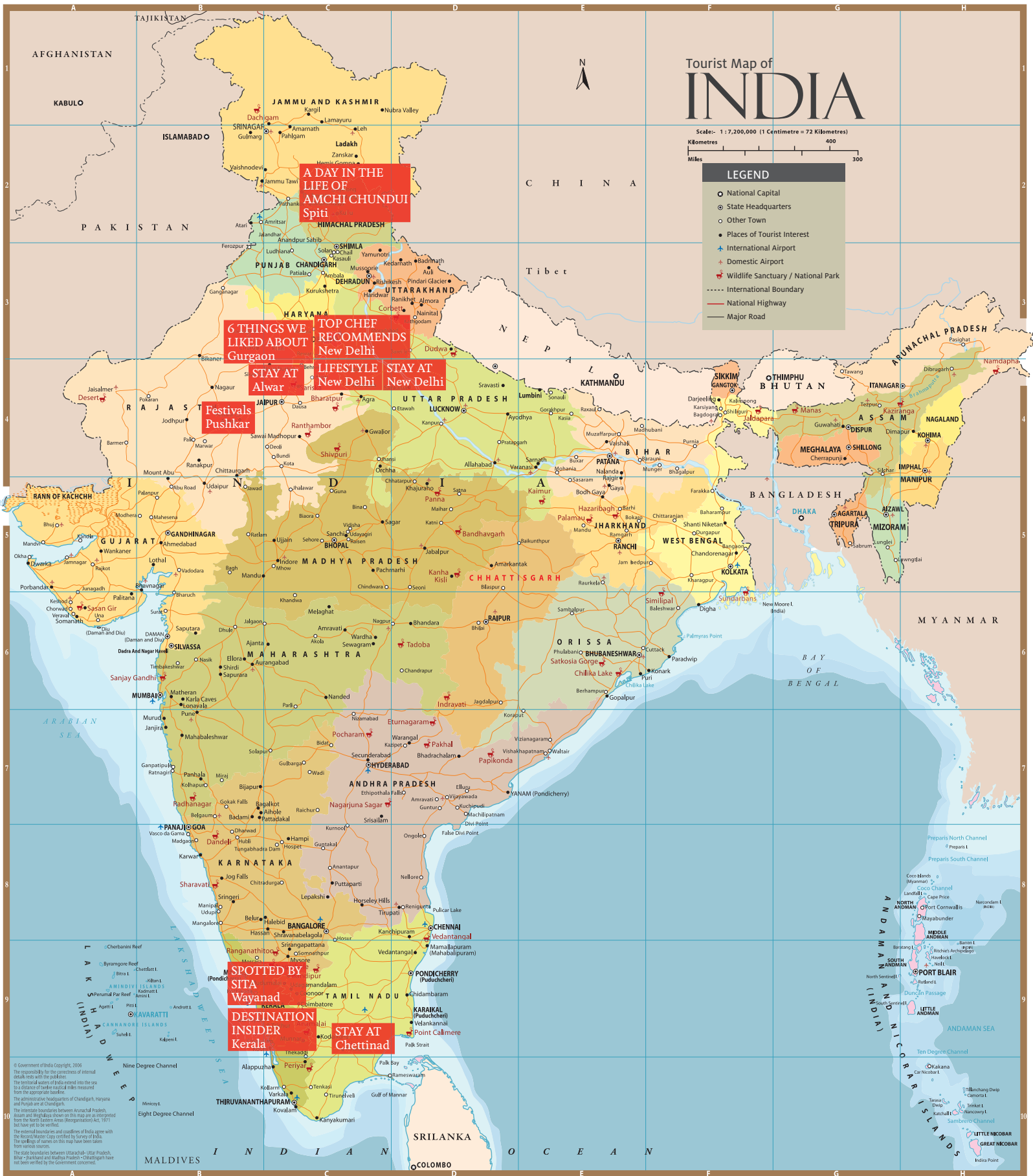
Pushkar Fair November 2- 10, 2011

Pushkar Fair is celebrated out of two unique events. One to celebrate the creation and offer homage to Lord Brahma, the creator in the Hindu Pantheon and the other being a commercial venture, the largest cattle/camel fair in the world. The Fair is a colourful display of Rajasthan's rural lifestyle, attires, performance art and handicrafts. The Cattle and Camel Fair at Pushkar is the largest one of its kind. Over 50,000 camels find their way to the Pushkar Fair to be traded off or display their best features, beauty and tricks.

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.





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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 international boundaries between Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep Islands are at Chagachil, Agam and Mayapada shown on this map are interpreted from the Survey of India's Survey of India.
The official boundaries of India are shown on this map have been taken from various sources.
The data boundaries between Lakshadweep - Lakshadweep, Lakshadweep and Lakshadweep have not been verified by the Government concerned.



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
Top Resa Paris 20th - 23rd September	India Tourism Booth No 20	Philip Thomas & Valerie Chalopet
OTDYKH Leisure Fair Moscow 21st - 24th September	3B1301	Ernest Dias & Deepak Sharma
CIS Road Show Moscow, Russia 22nd September	Sita Desk	Ernest Dias
CIS Road Show Kiev, Ukraine 26th September	Sita Desk	Ernest Dias
CIS Road Show Almaty, Kazakhstan 27th September	Sita Desk	Ernest Dias
Deluxe Travel Market Kiev 4th October	Awaited	Deepak Sharma
TTG Rimini 6th -8th October	Pavilion : A1 , Stand : 20-23, 34-37 Aisle: 1/2	Matteo Pennacchi & Philip Thomas
CIS Travel Mart St. Petersburg 12th -14th October	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma
ITB Asia Singapore 19th - 21st October	C 05	Prabhat Verma & Vikram Trivedi
Goa International Travel Mart Goa 21st to 23rd October	30	Ernest Dias

Trade Shows





Impression

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India was Marvellous

From: João Martins [mailto:jbmadvogado@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 25, 2011 4:48 PM
To: Santana, Antonio De Sa

Subject: Re: GREETINGS FROM GOA

Dear António,

Thank you so much for your e-mail and for your kindness. Our trip to India was marvellous and we will certainly come back - the next time for longer. Goa was the best part - we loved everything: the place, the food and specially the people! It will be the base for our future exploration of southern India.

As to the envelope, please advise as to what needs to be done. If any payment is required, please send me the EBAN and SWIFT code for the international transfer.

I take this opportunity to invite you to come to Portugal one of these days. Me and Patricia will be very happy to have you and to show you around Lisbon.

Kind regards,

Joao Barbado Martins

