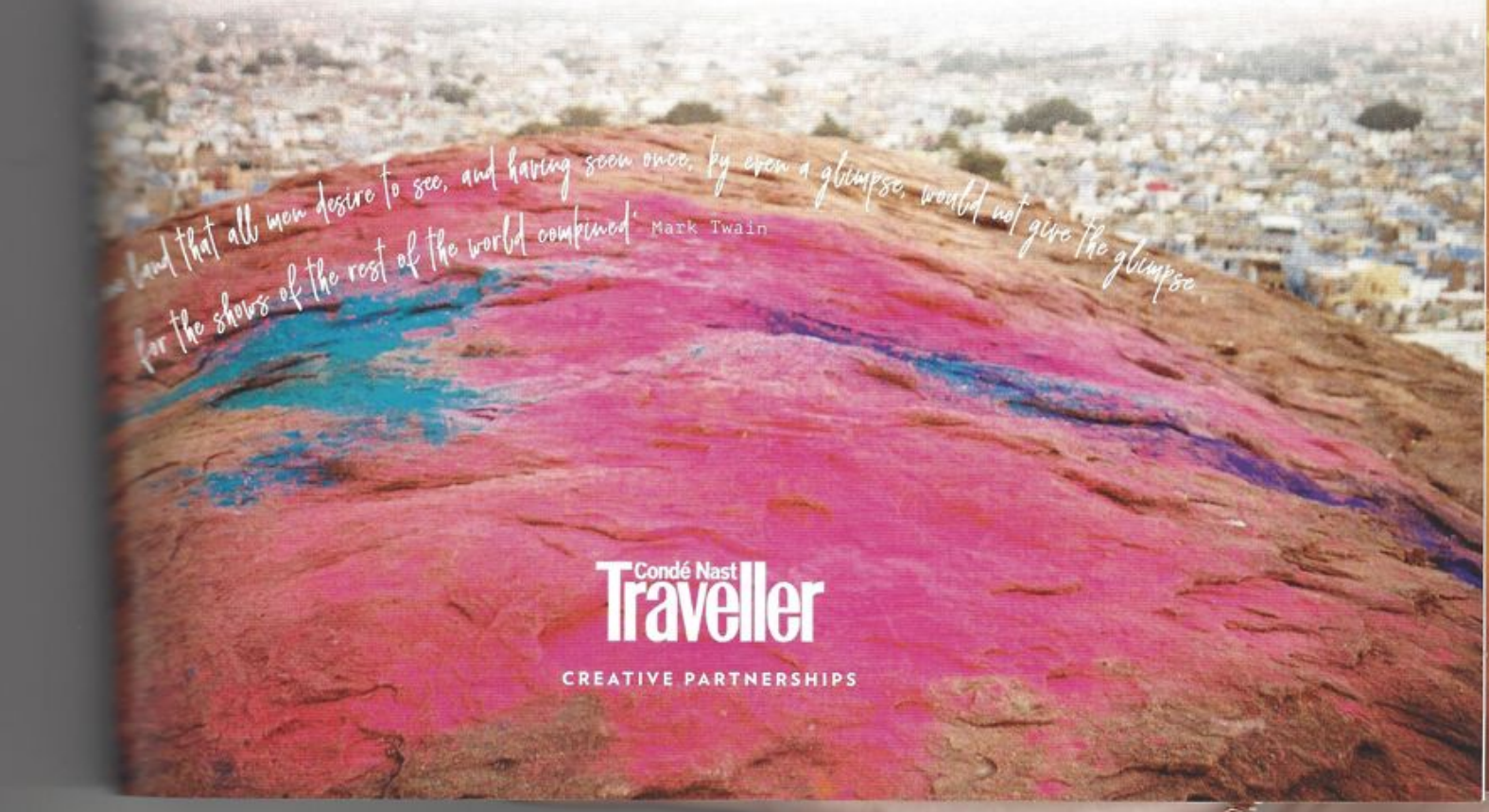
a love letter to india

Sacred hills and tombs, bustling streets and festivals rich in culture and heritage are all part of the country's fairytale charm

Where else on earth has such a dizzying jumble of kaleidoscopic colours and tantalising tastes? This is a country where magic, mayhem and myth collide daily. India is a sum of her parts: Mughal parapets, labyrinthine cities with a misty past, skylines climbing towards the future, pink skies at cow-dust hour, forgotten valleys and the very latest fusion cuisine. Even tea – the beloved chai – is considered the very elixir of life, delicately infused with cinnamon, spices and love. Temples are alive with gods; the cry of a monkey heralds a new dawn in the hot and humid jungle; a turbaned shepherd guides the way. This is a modern world with an ancient soul.



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colours of india

Be enchanted by the 'golden city' as well as blooming valleys and cobbled paths lined with traditional art and crafts

Rajasthan is a magical place, filled with vibrant hues at every turn. In the pink-hazed capital city of Jaipur, the gilded interiors of Relais & Châteaux Suján Rajmahal Palace have attracted everyone from Queen Elizabeth II to Jackie Kennedy, while the 'golden city' of Jaisalmer is a wonderland of honey-coloured palaces, temples and havelis.

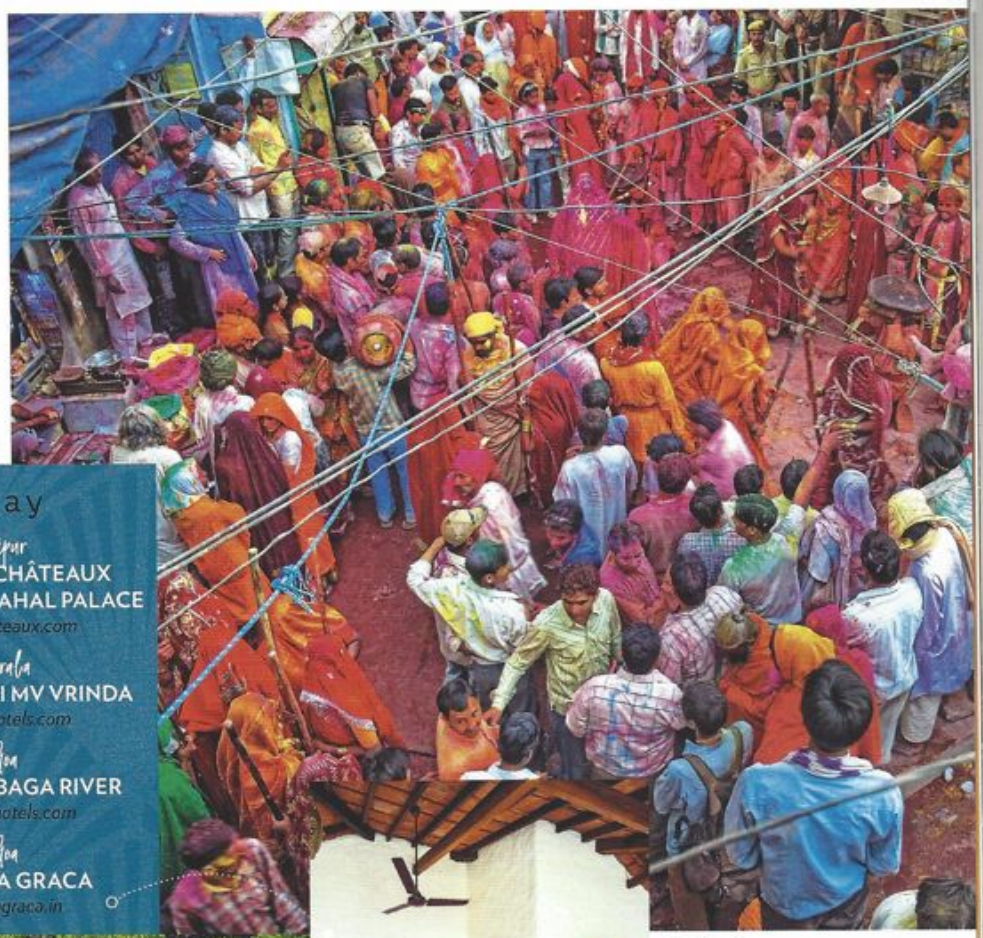
The best way to experience the greenest state of Kerala, meanwhile, is on board *The Oberoi MV Vrinda* – as you drift through the water framed by patchwork paddy fields and spice plantations, under a canopy of coconut plants. Be sure to visit the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, with its kaleidoscopic temple towns, as well as the pretty, pastel seaside town of Pondicherry.

In Gujarat, the pilgrim path will lead you to hundreds of intricately carved marble temples that glisten at dawn on the holy hill of Shatrunjaya. And, in Agra, the majestic Taj Mahal has an ethereal quality that never fails to impress – its domes gleam with the many reflections from the overhead sun – while the Golden Temple looms large in Amritsar and is mirrored in the healing waters below.

Colour is also ever-present in the array of plants and flowers that spill out across the mountain meadows. Sikkim, in the north-east, is home to around 5,000 different species of flora, not to mention hundreds of rare orchids and rhododendrons. For something truly spectacular, visit Gangtok in the summer for the International Flower Festival.







stay

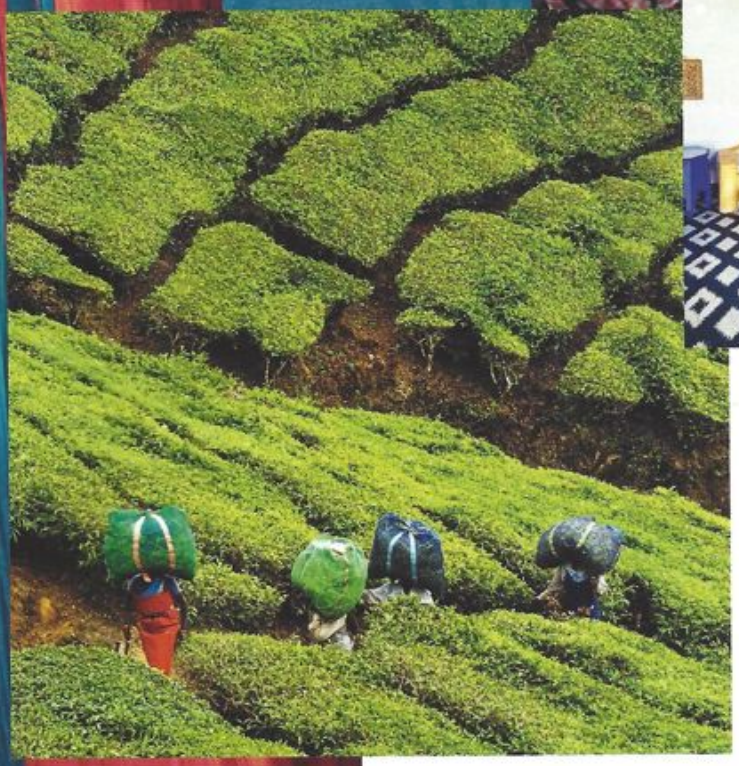
Jaipur
RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX SUJAN RAJMAHAL PALACE
relaischateaux.com

Kerala
THE OBEROI MV VRINDA
oberoihotels.com

Goa
THE PARK BAGA RIVER
theparkhotels.com

Goa
CASA DA GRACA
casadagraca.in





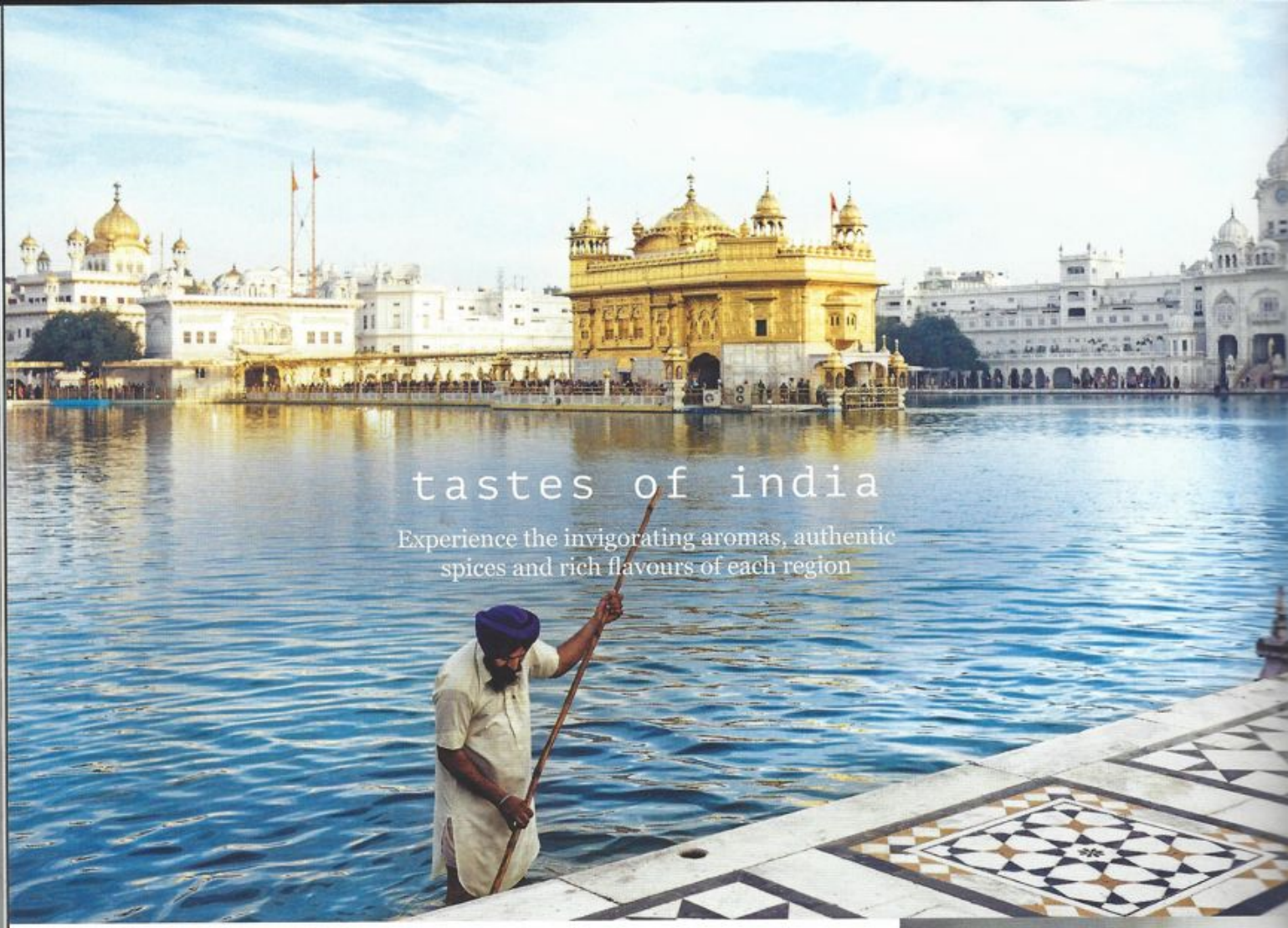
Clockwise from main: textiles dry in the open air; Hindus celebrate the festival of Holi; Casa da Graça; women carry hand-picked tea leaves; puppets in Udaipur

To mark the start of spring, the festival of Holi is an explosion of technicolour powders, thrown into the crowds to celebrate good over evil, while the carnival in Goa sees magnificent floats and costumes fill the streets. Stay at the stylish new party hotel, The Park Baga River, or check into the recently restored, four-bedroom oasis that is Casa da Graça – just a stone's throw from the whitewashed belfries of Old Goa.

India is a shopper's paradise, from the tribal art and textiles of Gujarat to the gems of Jaipur and pearls of Hyderabad. The markets of Udaipur are a must for miniature paintings and puppets, while Mumbai is renowned for its street stalls and high-rise malls. Contact Greaves Travel (greavesindia.co.uk) to arrange an unforgettable bespoke shopping tour.

Then, of course, there is the art. Discover the thriving scene at the annual India Art Fair in New Delhi, and don't miss the bohemian suburb of Hauz Khas, bursting with galleries and design studios.





tastes of india

Experience the invigorating aromas, authentic spices and rich flavours of each region

India is a gastronomic delight, with endless markets, home cooking, street stalls and fusion cuisine. It also has over 5,000 years of foreign influences, evident in its spices and exotic herbs, which gives it one of the strongest culinary footprints in the world.

You would do well to start at the historic trading port of Mumbai, to experience its fine dining, historic cafés and street food culture. Stay at The Oberoi Mumbai, where you can take an exclusive cooking class with the hotel's master chef, then visit nearby Swati Snacks to taste the street food. For decadent jalebis (coils of fried batter drowned in sugar), head for the neighbouring state of Gujarat, which is also renowned for its vegetarian snacks, bhel puri and jumble of sweetmeats. Bengal, meanwhile, has wonderful desserts and dishes with subtle yet fiery flavours. Stay and dine at The Park Kolkata, or the newly opened Penthouse.

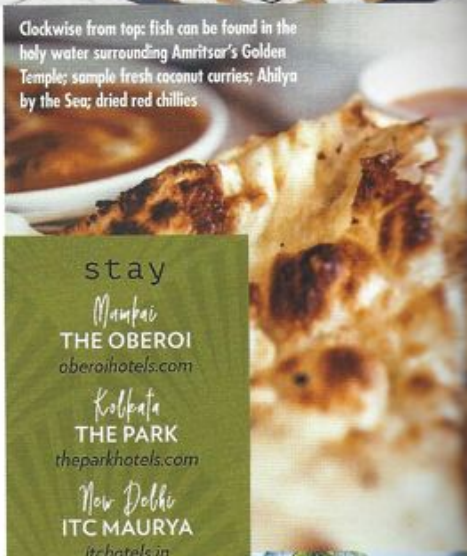
In the north, you can sample the meaty delights of Rajasthan, as well as the smoky tandooris of the Punjabis. And in the Indian capital, stay at the ITC Maurya, New Delhi, and dine at its award-winning restaurant Bukhara to sample the very best Frontier cuisine. Or visit Amritsar's sacred langar (Golden Temple), which feeds over 100,000 meals a day to visitors – you can taste the rich kebabs of Lucknow, similar to the Deccani cuisine of Hyderabad. It's also worth dining at the Falaknuma Palace, to try the succulent slow-cooked, saffron-spiced biryanis.

The delicate coconut curries of the Konkan Hindus – that mingle with the aromatic Portuguese meat dishes – give a nod to the rich history of Goa. For really authentic Goan cuisine, secure a table at The Leela, or try Ahilya by the Sea for fusion dishes.

Chettinad is home to unique fresh masalas and dried meats. Head south for the flavourful thalis and breakfasts of crisp dosas and steamed idlis, served with coconut chutney and spicy sambar.



'To understand this country, you need to understand curry'
Rick Stein



Clockwise from top: fish can be found in the holy water surrounding Amritsar's Golden Temple; sample fresh coconut curries; Ahilya by the Sea; dried red chillies

stay

Mumbai
THE OBEROI
oberoihotels.com

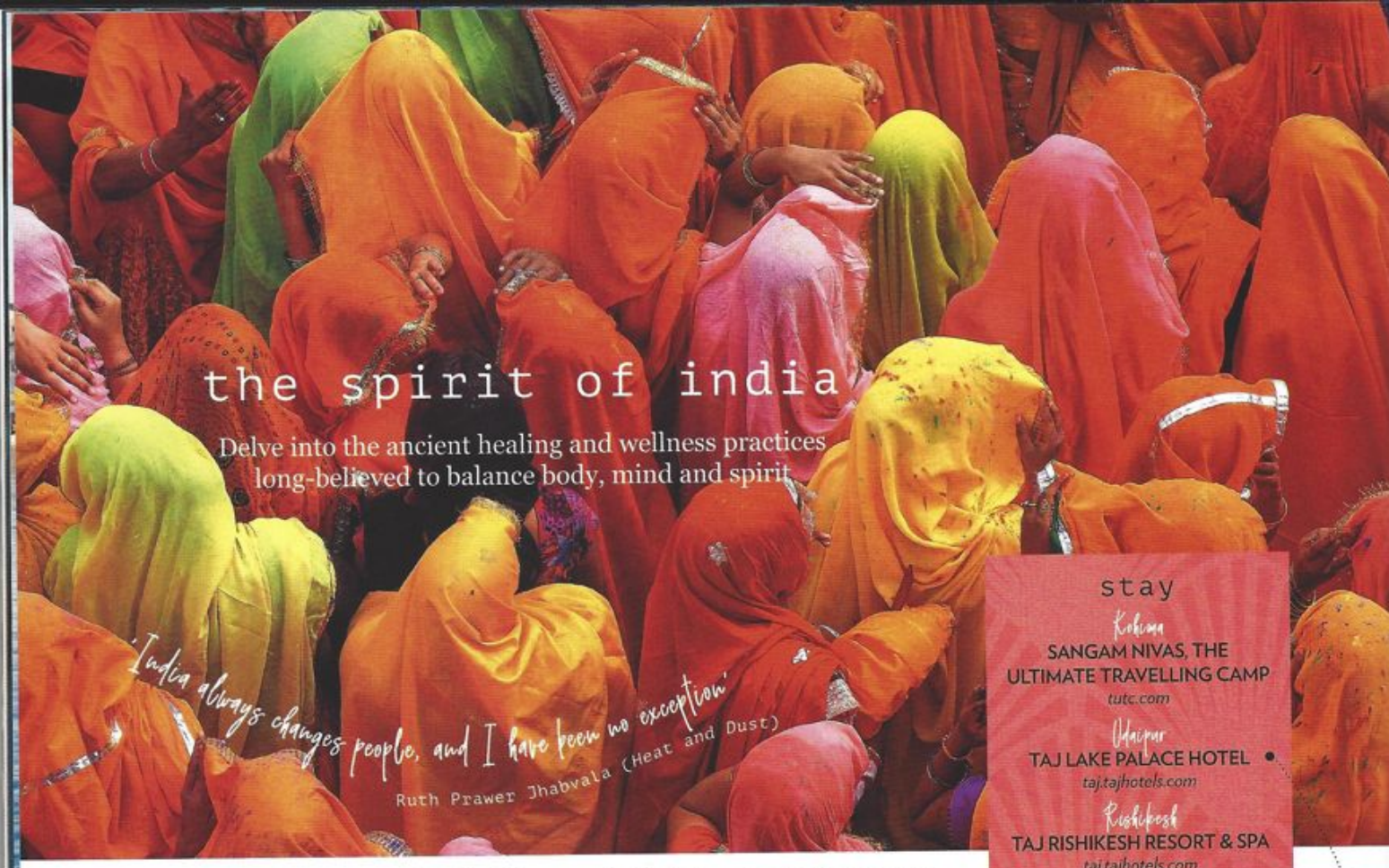
Kolkata
THE PARK
theparkhotels.com

New Delhi
ITC MAURYA
itchotels.in

Goa
THE LEELA
theleela.com

Goa
AHILYA BY THE SEA
ahilyabythesea.com





the spirit of india

Delve into the ancient healing and wellness practices long-believed to balance body, mind and spirit

'India always changes people, and I have been no exception'

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (Heat and Dust)

Celebration is synonymous with India. With a festival taking place nearly every other day, the country pulsates with sound, music and revelry. As the birthplace of yoga and four major religions, it's no wonder it hosts the world's largest festival: the UNESCO-listed Kumbh Mela, held every three years at one of four riverside locations around northern India, drawing tens of millions of Hindu pilgrims, sadhus and fortune-tellers. In 2019, it's the turn of the Allahabad Kumbh Mela – immerse yourself in the experience with a stay at Sangam Nivas, a one-of-a-kind nomadic camp that pitches ensuite luxury tents, along with holistic spa treatments, in the remotest corners of India.

India's other festivals give an insight into the country's history and beliefs. During Diwali, the carnival of lights celebrated in autumn, the crackle of fireworks and the glitter of prayer lamps signal a new beginning. One place to see in Diwali is the Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur, as the bright displays are reflected in the calm waters of the lake. To the east, in Kolkata, good conquers evil during the annual Durga Puja, in which statues of the gods are paraded around the city. To the west, in Mumbai, you can watch elephant idols set adrift into the Arabian Sea during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. Then there's mountainous Ladakh for the masked dances of the Buddhist festivity at the Hemis Monastery, and Nagaland, to the north, for the tribal Hornbill Festival across 10 days in late November to December.

The millennia-old practices of yoga and Ayurvedic medicine are integral to Indian culture. In the foothills of the Himalayas is the city of Rishikesh, which ups its game this year with the opening of the mountainside Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa and the incredible Roseate Ganges, where wellness centres will be essential to each. The award-winning Ananda nearby has excellent Ayurvedic treatments to invigorate the senses, while the Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa has everything from digital detoxes to Himalayan singing bowls. There are spa destinations all around the country: the ITC Grand Bharat near Delhi has the expansive Kaya Kalp, while CGH Earth offers authentic Ayurveda throughout its hotels in southern India – this season it unveils the naturopathy centre of Prakriti Shakti in Kerala.

No spiritual journey in India is complete without a pilgrimage to Varanasi. The city of life. The city of death. Reside amid the atmospheric grandeur of Brijrama Palace and wake to the dawn chorus of pilgrims on the ghats below.

stay

Kohima
SANGAM NIVAS, THE ULTIMATE TRAVELLING CAMP
tutc.com

Udaipur
TAJ LAKE PALACE HOTEL
taj.tajhotels.com

Rishikesh
TAJ RISHIKESH RESORT & SPA
taj.tajhotels.com

Rishikesh
ROSEATE GANGES
roseatehotels.com

Himalayas
ANANDA
anandaspa.com

Himalayas
THE OBEROI SUKHVILAS SPA
oberoihotels.com

Delhi
ITC GRAND BHARAT
itchotels.in

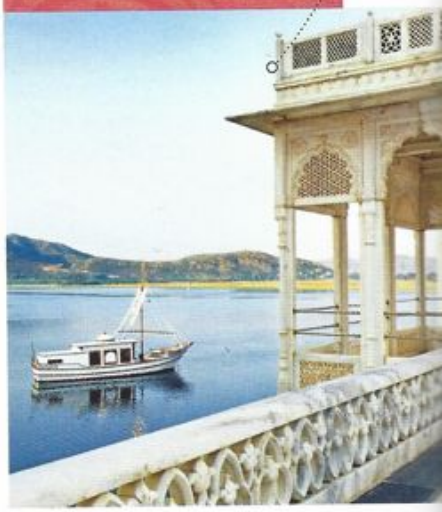
Kerala
PRAKRITI SHAKTI
prakritishakti.com

Varanasi
BRIJRAMA PALACE
brijrama.com





Clockwise from top: Hindus congregate for Holi; Taj Lake Palace; an Indian sadhu; Sangam Nivas



THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

For an authentic take on Southern India, Jarvis Journeys leads you down the road less travelled

South India is breathtakingly beautiful: whether you travel through Karnataka, Tamil Nadu or the more trodden path of Kerala, it is bursting with sights, sounds and colours in a living, breathing, sensory medley. Jarvis Journeys can take you behind the scenes on a captivating and enthralling trip to truly discover this amazing land, made even more enchanting by the heart-warming people you'll meet along the way.







Jarvis Journeys, based in the UK, specialises solely in South India. Set up by Vivienne Jarvis, a tea planter and racehorse-trainer's daughter who lived there for the first 22 years of her life, she now organises private, one-of-a-kind South Indian experiences. Vivienne is fluent in Tamil, and her passion, knowledge, contacts and attention to detail are unparalleled.

As well as enjoying the opulent palace hotels of Hyderabad, Mumbai or Bangalore, Jarvis Journeys also encourages you to get away from the big cities and discover their magical portfolio of small family-run homes and farm stays, heritage tea plantation bungalows, luxury eco lodges, beautiful houseboats, hidden beach retreats and historic boutique hotels. Travelling in your own private car with a driver, each itinerary is individual, from the spice plantations and golden sands of Kerala to the lesser-known but must-see state of Karnataka. Here, you can drive through fertile plains to local villages, explore the relaxed royal city of Mysore, spot wildlife on a jungle boat safari, watch farmers planting rice and making jaggery, experience life on ancestral coffee and pepper plantations, or visit the magnificent temple ruins of Hampi. Alternatively, cross into the stunning state of Tamil Nadu, home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the evocative Nilgiri Mountain steam railway and incredible shore temples, the French-Tamil mix of life in Pondicherry, and the beautiful green tea estates high in the peaceful mountain ranges.

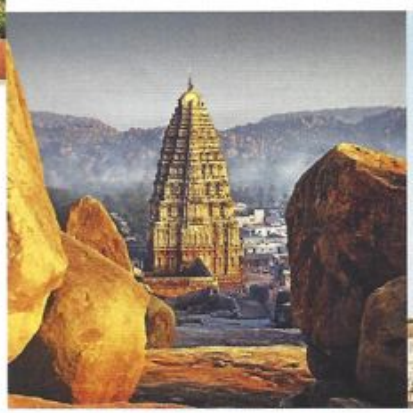
Knowledge, passion and people make every Jarvis Journey compelling. Be inspired by Vivienne and her life-long love affair with South India: it'll be a journey you'll never forget.

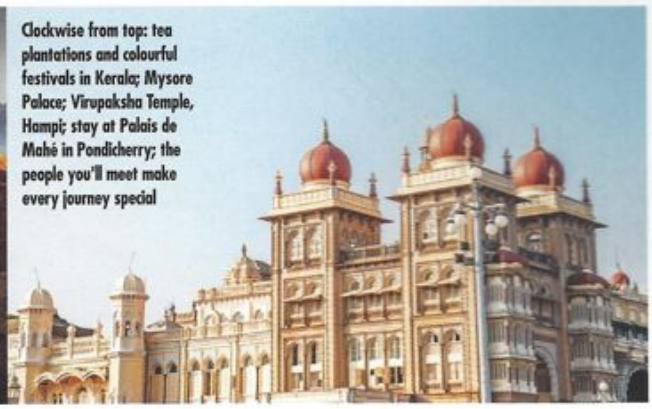
Further Information

Call 07968 752483, email vj@jarvisjourneys.com or visit jarvisjourneys.com

JARVIS JOURNEYS

South India England





Clockwise from top: tea plantations and colourful festivals in Kerala; Mysore Palace; Virupaksha Temple, Hampi; stay at Palais de Mahé in Pondicherry; the people you'll meet make every journey special

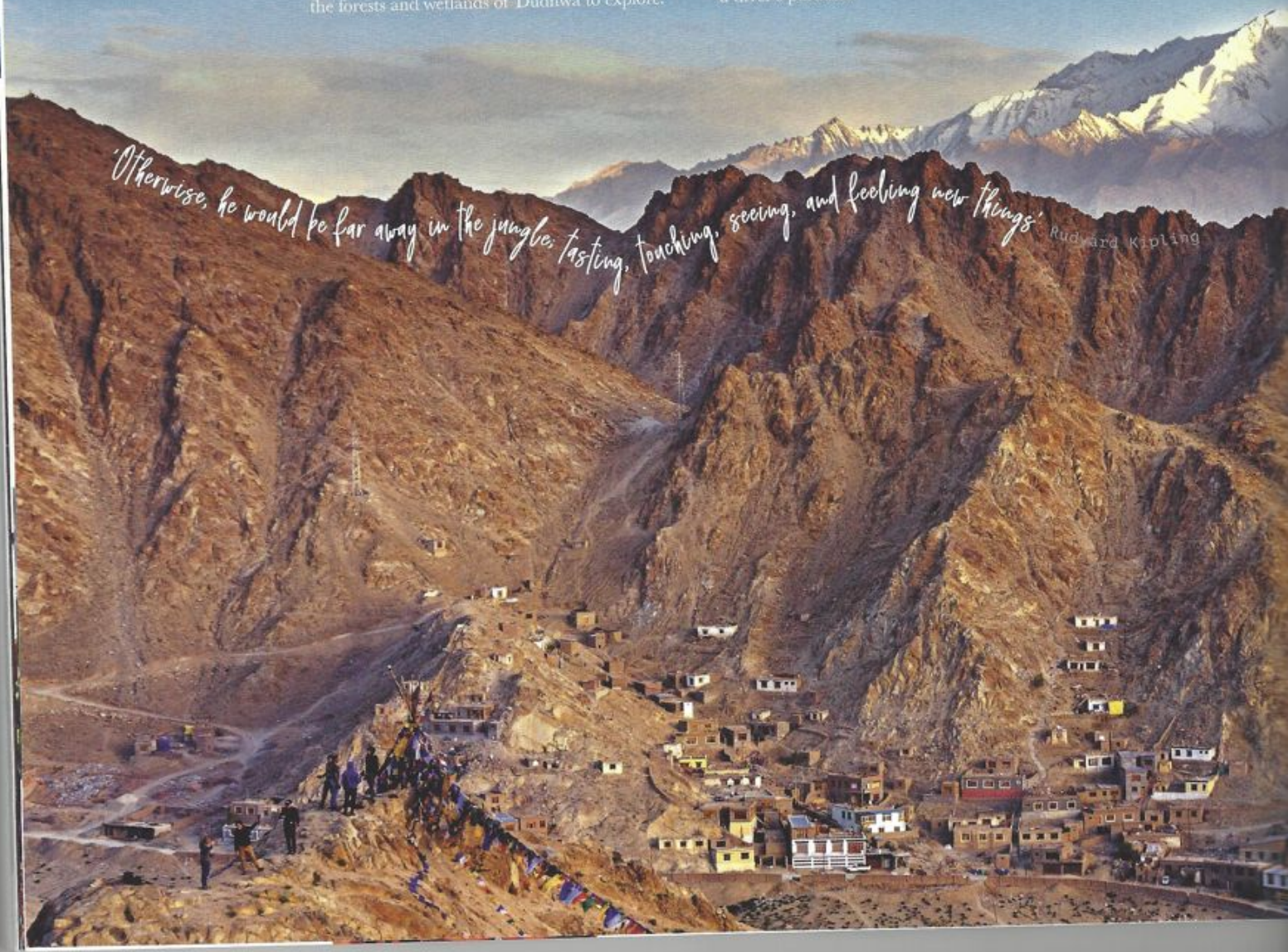
wild about india

Explore the beautiful wildlife and scenery within the national parks with stays at luxurious lodges and tree-top hideaways

India's wildlife ripples with colour and texture, across fur and feather, tooth and claw, leaf and sand grain. Its rich biodiversity and startlingly different eco-systems combine to create extraordinary terrains bursting with an abundance of nature. The landscape ranges from snow-capped mountain peaks and alpine meadows to verdant jungles, tropical rainforests and misty mangroves. There are forgotten islands and mile upon mile of rugged coastline; glacial torrents that tumble into fertile plains; marshland giving way to arid salt flats and desolate desert. India has a unique wildness all her own.

For a truly intrepid adventure, head to the lunar-like landscape of Ladakh, stay at Snow Leopard Lodge, and search the mountain shadows for the elusive snow leopard. In the south of the Himalayan foothills there are the forests and wetlands of Dudhwa to explore. Book in at the elegant Jaagir Lodge and go tracking for elephants, rhino and tigers. To the east, Kaziranga National Park is home to a significant portion of India's one-horned rhino population: stay in the park at the Diphlu River Lodge, or the traditional bungalows of nearby Wild Mahseer, itself a haven of biodiversity.

In the far reaches of West Bengal, set sail on a river cruise with Assam Bengal Navigation through the 2,585sq km of the Sundarbans, an almost impenetrable murky mangrove forest, the largest in the world and home to a population of almost amphibious tigers who have adapted to their watery habitat. Leave the mainland behind and head to the mysterious Andaman Islands. Stay at the Taj Exotica or the slick Jalakara on Havelock Island, exploring the rainforest-clad islets and the surrounding cerulean seas that are filled with marine life – a diver's paradise.



To the west, Gujarat has an extraordinarily diverse wilderness, from Sasan Gir National Park, the last remaining refuge of the Asiatic lion, to the salt plains and marshes of the Rann of Kutch, home to the Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary and a breeding ground for flamingos, pelicans, cranes, storks, as well as blue bulls and desert wolves.

Take the well-trodden path up to Rajasthan and discover the beautiful Ranthambore National Park in style. Opt to stay in a tented suite at Aman-i-Khas, or check in at the equally grand Sujān Sher Bagh with its legendary campfire dinners. Keep an eye out for sloth bears, spotted deer and tigers, before heading to the craggy, granite hills of the Pali region and the chic Jawai Leopard Camp – an oasis of migratory birds, where the big cats roam free.

For a true taste of the Asian jungle, head to the Indian heartland of Madhya Pradesh, around a third of which is still forested and provides a home for a diverse roll-call of wildlife. It's best to let the TOFTigers conservation charity guide you to the most sustainable lodges in the national parks of Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench and Panna, each of which has its own distinct appeal. From open savannahs to dense banyan tree forests, seek out the mighty tigers, along with sloth bears, blackbucks, leopards, spotted deer, wild gaurs, crocodiles and an abundance of unusual, bright-feathered birds. Choose from camps such as the Taj Safaris, Samode Safari Lodge or the eco-friendly Pugdundee Safaris, whether tree-top hideaway or riverside lodge. And at Jamtara in Pench National Park, you can sleep in the open air with its star bed experience: a netted four-poster on stilts in the countryside.

In the south, the arid plains of the Deccan Plateau are guarded by the undulating Eastern and Western Ghats, which give way to steamy hinterlands and rugged coast. Up in the Nilgiri range are the atmospheric hill stations of Ooty and Kodaikanal. And the Western Ghats are home to the coffee plantations and rainforests of Coorg. Here you can encounter flora and fauna, such as the lion-tailed macaque dancing through the treetops, whilst residing at the modern Taj Madikeri, or the charming Evolve Back. Head to Nagarhole National Park for its herds of wild pachyderms, flying squirrels and wild dogs.

Head further south still to Kerala, tattooed with waterways, canals and lagoons that crisscross through the hill stations, coconut groves and spice gardens. Speak with specialists at Jarvis Journeys (jarvisjourneys.com) and enjoy a slow, meandering river voyage on an authentic rice barge, before heading to one of Kerala's beach hotels such as Surya Samudra to the south or Neeleshwar Hermitage to the north.

stay

Ladakh
SNOW LEOPARD LODGE
snowleopardlodge.com

Dudhwa
JAAGIR LODGE
tutc.com

Kaziranga National Park
DIPHLU RIVER LODGE
diphluriverlodge.com

Kaziranga National Park
WILD MAHSEER
wildmahseer.com

West Bengal
ASSAM BENGAL NAVIGATION
assambengalnavigation.com

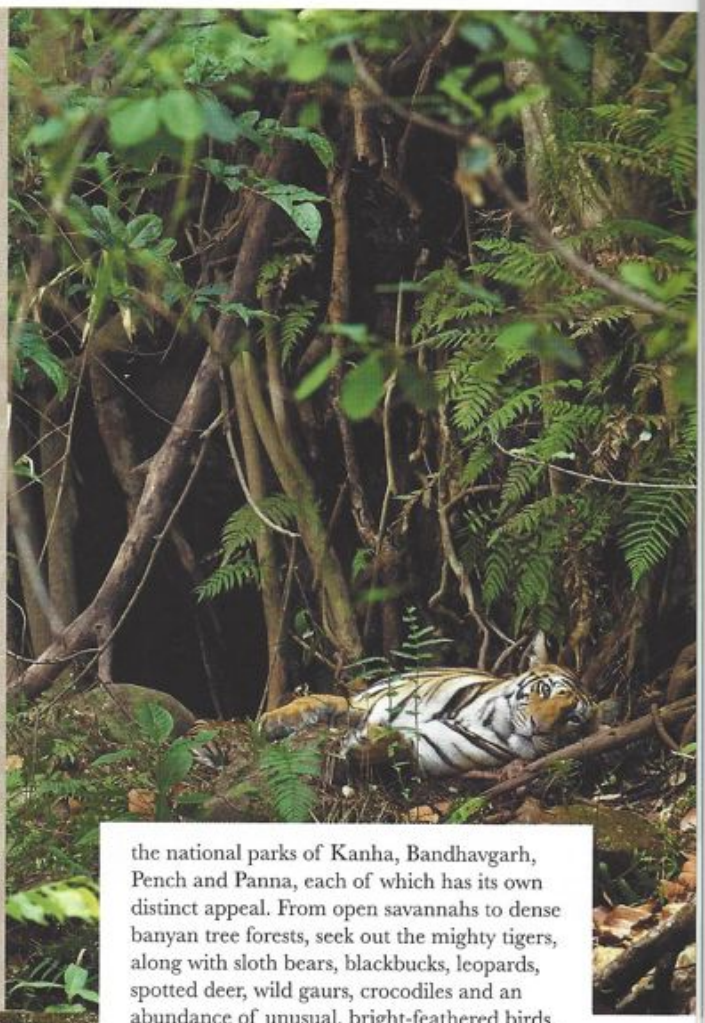
Andaman Islands
TAJ EXOTICA
taj.tajhotels.com

Havelock Island
JALAKARA
jalakara.info

Ranthambore National Park
AMAN-I-KHAS
aman.com

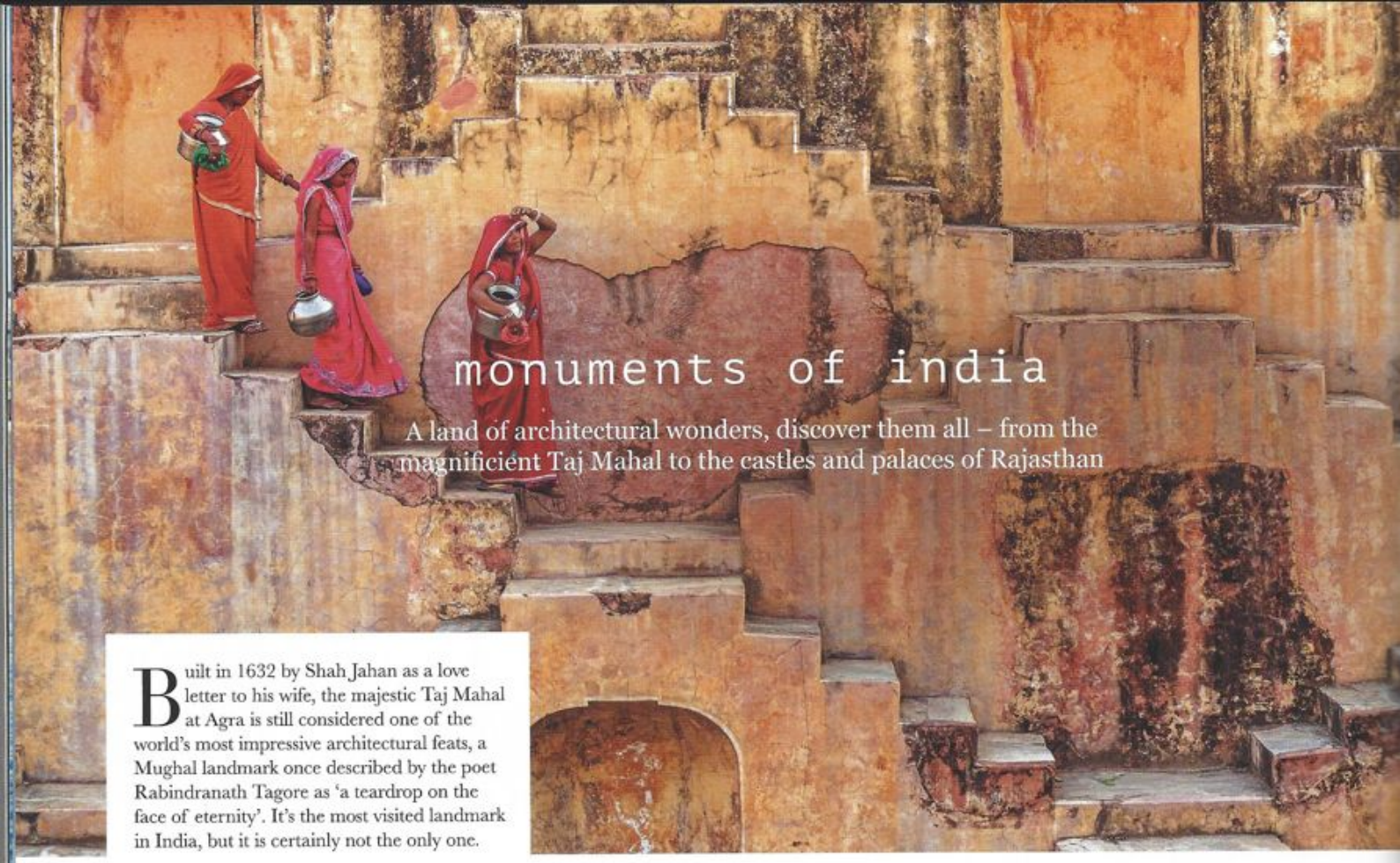
Ranthambore National Park
SUJAN SHER BAGH
sujanluxury.com

Pali region
JAWAI LEOPARD CAMP
sujanluxury.com





Clockwise from main: view of the Ladakh region; Bandhavgarh National Park; Sujan Sher Bagh; Taj Exotica



monuments of india

A land of architectural wonders, discover them all – from the magnificient Taj Mahal to the castles and palaces of Rajasthan

Built in 1632 by Shah Jahan as a love letter to his wife, the majestic Taj Mahal at Agra is still considered one of the world's most impressive architectural feats, a Mughal landmark once described by the poet Rabindranath Tagore as 'a teardrop on the face of eternity'. It's the most visited landmark in India, but it is certainly not the only one.

India's history is entwined with ancient civilisations and dynasties, invasions and migrations. It's a history that can be deciphered through its monuments and architecture, its forts and monasteries, carvings and wall paintings.

Begin with the remote Himalayas and a landscape punctuated by topple-down temples, monasteries in the foothills, rising up to the faded grandeur of the hill stations of the Raj. Stay at The Oberoi Cecil in Shimla, or the delightful Glenburn Tea Estate in Darjeeling. Arrive into Delhi and there are the Twenties designs of architect Edwin Lutyens to explore – a UNESCO World Heritage Site, juxtaposed by the ancient Red Fort and impressive mosque of Jama Masjid. Then unwind at the cool and contemporary Leela Palace hotel.

On to Rajasthan, with its castles, lake palaces, abandoned cities and mausoleums. The sprawling hill forts of Kumbhalgarh and Chittorgarh evoke a chivalrous past with their legends of warrior kings. In the capital, Jaipur, visit the imposing Amer Fort, its medieval stepwells carved out of the stone in ornate geometric patterns and once used for bathing. Journey on to Jodhpur and stay at the Art Deco Umaid Bhawan Palace, set amidst peacock-filled gardens, with views to the Mehrangarh Fort. Into Gujarat and there's the superb Indo-Islamic architecture of Ahmedabad to uncover, and the 11th-century Sun Temple at Modhera. In Madhya Pradesh, search out the grand palaces of Gwalior and the ghost town of Mandu, home to the finest Afghan architecture in India – including the 'royal palace', a Taj Mahal in miniature.

In Mumbai, the Indo-Saracenic architecture of the British Raj dominates the skyline. Stay at The Taj Mahal Palace, overlooking the grand Gateway of India. East of the city are the Ellora and Ajanta rock-hewn Buddhist cave monasteries, which date back to 200BC and are the pride of the Maharashtra region.





Clockwise from top: Amer Fort; Glenburn Tea Estate; the Taj Mahal

stay

Shimla
THE OBEROI CECIL
oberoihotels.com

Darjeeling
GLENBURN TEA ESTATE
gleburnteaestate.com

Delhi
LEELA PALACE
theleela.com

Jaipur
UMAID BHAWAN PALACE
taj.tajhotels.com

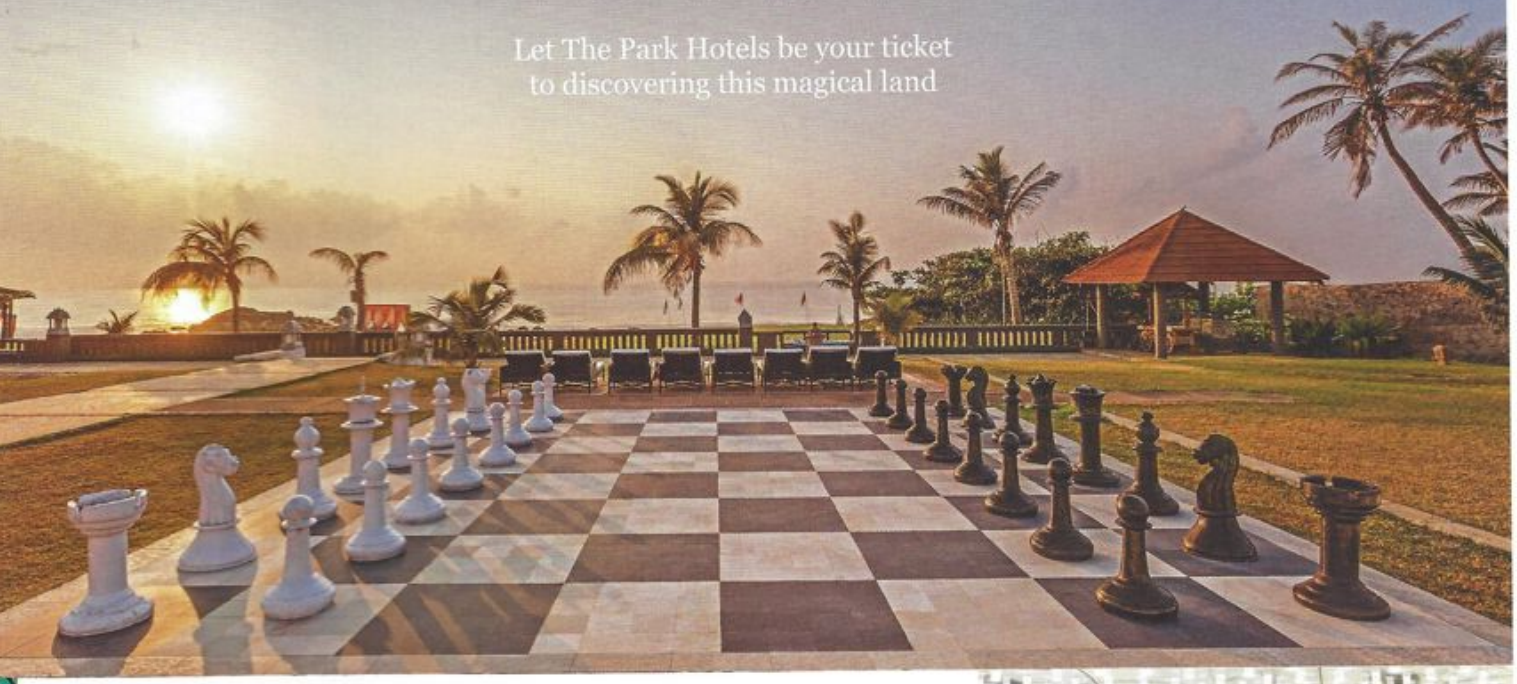
Mumbai
THE TAJ MAHAL PALACE
taj.tajhotels.com

'To other countries, I may go as a tourist, but to India, I come as a pilgrim' Martin Luther King Jr

Clockwise from this picture, The Park Visakhapatnam; the lobby at The Park Kolkata; Aqua at The Park New Delhi; Saltwater at The Park Baga River Goa; La Sultana suite at The Park Hyderabad

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

Let The Park Hotels be your ticket to discovering this magical land



Beguiling and bewildering in equal measure, India is a land of variety. Whether exploring striking cityscapes or golden beaches, the five-star hotels of The Park provide more than just a place to relax and recharge.

The group, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, introduced the boutique hotel concept to India. Situated in all the country's prime locations – Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Goa – its hotels feature cutting-edge eateries, bars and nightclubs.

There are also beachfront properties in dreamy settings, such as The Park Visakhapatnam. With six acres of pristine private beaches and verdant tropical gardens, it offers mesmerising views over the Bay of Bengal. The Park Baga River Goa is the group's first adults-only hotel and a boutique-style retreat, surrounded by coconut trees on one of the most picturesque areas of the Goan coast. Coming soon, The Park will open hotels in Indore, Chettinad and Mumbai.

Deftly weaving local history into the individual decor, each hotel is uniquely designed in partnership with renowned Indian and international artists and designers. One notable example is The Park Hyderabad, where the city's heritage of precious stone production is referenced in a breathtaking metal exterior, inspired by the facets of diamonds. The hotels' Aura spas, meanwhile, utilise local ingredients to offer a truly authentic Ayurvedic experience.

The Park Hotels' 'Anything But Ordinary' motto reflects the fascinating contradictions of India itself, an enticing meeting of vibrant culture and spiritual serenity. From classes with renowned local artists to culinary trails, sailing and yoga, a stay at The Park Hotels is a treat for mind, body and soul.

Further Information
Visit theparkhotels.com or call +1 800 102 7275









INDIA

Discover some of India's greatest treasures staying in ultimate luxury with Taj Hotels and Palaces.

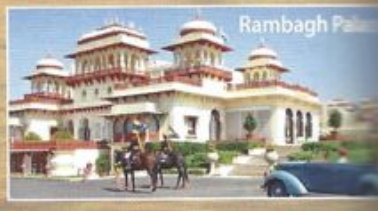
Visit the land of Empires and Maharajas with this 10 day Incredible Taj Palace Escapes tour. For 9 nights you'll sample some of India's finest hotels including the impressive Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi; The Rambagh Palace in Jaipur; Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur and last but by no means least the sensational Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur. Along the way you'll enjoy a boat ride at Lake Pichola, see the majestic Taj Mahal and enjoy a Jeep ride at the Amber Fort. Fly from a choice of 8 UK airports with award-winning Emirates Airlines and ask about cabin upgrades for the ultimate luxury adventure.

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Emirates

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