

I N D O A S I A
D **A** **R** I E S

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INDO ASIA TOURS
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Image courtesy: Dr. Maulik Vyas



Erica Minona

With no list to 'tick off' and a clear plan to travel 'plan-less' Erica Minona set foot in India to willingly get lost. Evading all the popular destinations, she struck gold in offbeat destinations like Uppada and Kuchipudi in Andhra Pradesh, Kasargod in Kerala and Kumta in Karnataka. In search of authentic stories of locals and a chance to be privy to their lives, she ensured that she spent ample time in one place.

This photograph was taken in the village of Uppada at Munni's home. The weaving colony of the village has been doing extremely well ever since the markets realised the worth of the distinct Uppada saris. The dingy homes of the village are flooded with bulbs so the entire family can be engaged in two-three processes of weaving. Munni and her two sisters assist their parents and have created a flourishing business in the last few years. A typical sari takes as long as 7-8 days, depending on the intricacy of the design. **Erica stayed in Uppada learning the tricks of the trade, even trying her hand at weaving on an old loom and then made her way along the coast to Visakhapatnam. This is one of her favourite pictures of Munni and her trade that made Erica appreciate the rich cultural heritage of India.**



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MUNNI BEHIND HER LOOM

Photo Location : Uppada Village, Andhra Pradesh



One of the communities at the Bastar Dushera

Most travellers look at October to December as the ideal time to travel in India, to counter the blazing months. Sure enough, this is the time to explore the plains with ease, but it also opens up the chance to see the magical mountains in all their glory. If you have the time, here are some of the most famous and exalted mountain hikes and treks that one can do.

Chadar, Zaskar

High on the list for adventure seekers, this trek entails walking for 4 days on the frozen Zaskar River in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. **As you walk in the lap of white gigantic mountains, unique patterns on ice, unfold before your eyes.** Celebrated as one of the most visually enchanting treks in India, this one needs high physical competence, so come prepared. Book in advance as limited footfall is encouraged in this trek. Seek guided tours for help in gauging the correct paths and comfortable camping facilities.

Chopta-Tungnath-Chandrashila, Uttarakhand

Only a 5 km trail from Chopta to Tungnath and then Chandrashila offers a jaw-droppingly beautiful vista of the mighty Himalayas – spread over 180 degrees, no less. The Tungnath temple is said to be at least 1000 years old and is a veritable spiritual hotspot for the Hindus. **But when you lay eyes on the view of the Himalayas from the Chandrashila peak, is when you realise what divinity means.**

Hampta Pass, Himachal Pradesh

Contrasting landscapes sprawl in front of you as you trek from Manali to Spiti. **One crosses pine and maple forests of Manali, and then goes past the grasslands of Jwara to the top of Hampta Pass - the scenery changes rapidly, throwing up unimaginable wonders.** The aqua



Hampta Pass. Image courtesy: Global Panorama

blue water of the Chandratul Lake is an added highlight. One can also camp on its banks.

Goechala, Sikkim

The trek may start on a soft note of flower-scented hills, but soon the scenery changes to dramatic craggy rockscapes, which look nothing less than daunting. **But if you are in the company of experts, this should be one of the most exciting additions to your trip to India.** The mountains showcase the best of their hues on this trek. Reserve some wonder when you set eyes on the turquoise blue Samiti Lake.

Tarsar Marsar, Jammu and Kashmir

This is a perfect time to set foot on the grassy meadows of Jammu and Kashmir, that soon turn to a large sheet of white. Sprawling spans of flowerbeds can turn into a snowy scape overnight. **Frozen waterfalls and streams, along with a promise of surreal scapes can be expected. In other words, this is otherworldly.**

CROSSING CULTURES

TOP MOUNTAIN SOJOURNS UNMISSABLE TREKS IN INDIA STORIES FROM THE SUB-CONTINENT



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THE PRIDE HOTEL

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Located amidst the elite business area of Satellite and the most exciting tourist and shopping destinations of S.G. Road, Hotel Pride is a world-class five-star luxury hotel right in the heart of the Ahmedabad city.. Highlights include:

- Charming aesthetics to transport you to a blissful state
- Cocooned in luxury
- A wholesome retreat: gym, spa and swimming pool
- A boutique ambience with minimalistic vibe and modern amenities
- Exemplary furnishings in the rooms
- High-end amenities to amplify the stay
- Inspiring trysts with Ahmedabad city
- Your dining needs met by culinary experts
- Exciting offers for elite guests



**TOP
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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Ahmedabad

Journey into the heart of India.

The lure of astronomical success in the form of infrastructure, culture and good governance of Ahmedabad and the other cities of Gujarat have always intrigued Supriya, but somehow the destination always evaded her. Finally, the beginning of 2015 offered a chance to explore some of the offbeat and well-known regions of the state. To say that she was impressed would be putting it mildly. **The state threw up a charming set of places to explore, one that amplified her stay and offered much more than what she had ever imagined.** Here are Supriya's top recommendations for Ahmedabad and other places in Gujarat.

Mahatma Gandhi Ashram



An essential to the list of things to do, the Satyagrah Ashram or the Sabarmati Ashram is located in Ahmedabad. **A commemoration to the great leader and the 'father of the nation', the museum and ashram gives an insight into the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi.** Visit the shop at the ashram to get souvenirs and even send out a limited edition post card to loved ones.

Beach at Mandvi



Flamingoes at Mandvi. Image courtesy: Koshy

A relatively unexplored beach on the west coast is a serene addition to the trip. Originally a fortified town, it now has remnants of the royal lineage, but is largely visited to unplug from the city life. The ruins of the fort make for a day visit. **Other than that, you can stay at the edge of the sea and enjoy the sound of the ocean.** The soothing shoreline only sees some action in the evenings, when locals come to the beach for a spectacular sunset.

Rann of Kutch



Wild Ass. Image courtesy: S. Thiru

A seasonal salt marsh, the Rann of Kutch is divided into two parts: Little Rann and the Great Rann. **A large bed of white sprawls in front of you, creating an ethereal aura.** Considered the largest salt desert in the world, it is worth your while to take a tour into the massive bed of arid white. The Little Rann of Kutch is also famous for a Wild Ass Sanctuary that spreads over 5000 sq km.

Jambur

A unique village off Sasan Gir is said to be inhabited by African American descendants. **The population**

of the village Jambur looks African in features but speak the local language immaculately. Local dances, a walk through the village and even a meal are the common interactions that travellers can look forward to.

The Adalaj Stepwell

The stepwells of India are largely found in the desert



Adalaj Stepwell. Image courtesy: Daniel Mennerich

states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. These were constructed by Kings and Lords as a water reservoir, as the natural resource was so sparse. **The Adalaj stepwell is one of the most magnificent structures off the city of Ahmedabad.** It was made in 1499. The octagonal shape and intricate carvings have it a functional as well as an aesthetics tinge.

TOP SPOT

FRAMED CROSSING CULTURES TOP SPOT NEWS & VIEWS IA SAYS

Sikkim's airport ready by end of 2016



In order to promote tourism in the Northeast region of India, Sikkim makes a foray into better connectivity. An airport in Pakyong, only 35km away from the capital city of

Gangtok, will be ready by December 2016. Better road connectivity is also on the cards for the region, in order to make travels safer and faster. The announcement was made at the 4th International Tourism Mart (ITM), a premier travel event, which was planned to bring focus on the northeastern states of India and West Bengal. With ample untapped travel opportunities in the region, this decision was imperative. Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation re-iterated in his speech that the region has great potential for tourism as it is rich in natural beauty, cultural heritage and is also the cleanest region of India. Pegged as being one of the most ideal tourist states, Sharma ended with a positive vision for Sikkim and the neighbouring states.

New Goa International Airport on the cards

The Centre has given a nod for the Rs 3,000 crore International airport project at the Mopa village of Goa. Given that the state is one of the most popular destinations for inbound travellers, this was much needed to handle the footfall. The greenfield airport, to be developed in four phases and will have annual passenger capacity of 13.1 million within 30 years, by 2045. In the first phase, the state government has proposed to develop one runway and three runway exits by 2020 to accommodate annual passenger capacity of 4.4 million. The estimated cost of the project in Phase I would be Rs 1,500 crore. The tenders for new airport at Mopa will be finalised by December 2015.

Chennai, the chosen destination for the 1st IHG resort in India



InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced the opening of InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort in India, the second luxury property after InterContinental Mumbai on Marine Drive. The group has chosen a location, 30 kms from the Chennai International Airport, in a picturesque spot overlooking the Bay of Bengal on East Coast Road. Shantha de Silva, Head of South West Asia, IHG, said, "The opening of InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort marks an important milestone in IHG's journey in India. Chennai is a city that boasts the perfect mix of diversity and culture with a glossy layer of cosmopolitan glamour. Whether a business trip, corporate retreat or a leisure break, our

newest property in Chennai will offer unrivalled facilities and access to many cultural and business opportunities of one of the country's biggest cities." The resort boasts of 105 rooms and facilities and amenities, including an outdoor swimming pool, a fully-equipped health club and a spa that offers beauty treatments and yoga. It is ideal for conferences, meetings, and special occasions such as weddings.

Taj welcomes November with a new property – Taj Santa Cruz, Mumbai

November 8, 2015 is the chosen date of opening for the 279-room Taj Santacruz, Mumbai. As one of the most important commercial and business districts with easy access to the airport, Santacruz, is the ideal location. The hotel offers inaugural special rates on Luxury Rooms, starting from Rs 8,500 (exclusive of taxes). Expect luxury in the form of three restaurants and a bar, including the Riviera style Mediterranean food at Rivea, Mumbai street food and global comfort food at Tiqri, the classic Golden Dragon and evening cocktails at the Tiqri Lounge.

Holiday Inn debuts in Bengaluru

InterContinental Hotels Group has opened Holiday Inn & Suites Bengaluru – the first Holiday Inn hotel in tech city of the nation. Located in Whitefield, the city's biggest commercial hub, the 122-room Holiday Inn & Suites Bengaluru also includes 19 suites and two apartments and caters to the growth of business and leisure travellers to the city. The hotel, earlier Alila Bengaluru, has received a number of awards for its design and contemporary style. "Over the last decade, Bengaluru has emerged as a popular cosmopolitan city in India. The combination of

business opportunities and the vibrant culture attracts both business and leisure travellers so we're delighted to have converted this property to the Holiday Inn brand and bring it under our portfolio of hotels. It's the perfect destination for us to expand our footprint in the southern Indian market. The opening of this hotel is in line with our strategic expansion plans to grow the Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express hotels across India. These brands make up more than 85 per cent of our development pipeline in the country," commented Shantha de Silva, Head of South West Asia, IHG.

2 lakh plus use eTV in the first 9 months

This year is a crucial year to map the effectiveness of electronic visas, a scheme rolled out by the freshly elected Govt. of India. During the period of January through September, 2015 a total of 2,01,705 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa. As compared to 19,290 during the same period last year, a growth of 945.6 per cent speaks volumes about the popularity of the programme. A clear indication of opening up India for travel, to more than 100 countries, these figures paint a welcome picture. The highest number of tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa was from the United States. During September 2015 a total of 31,729 tourists arrived on eTV as compared to 2,170 during September 2014 registering a growth of 1362.2 per cent. Visa for 113 countries as against coverage of earlier TVoA scheme for 12 countries has opened the gates for better economical ambience in the area of tourism and travel. The percentage shares of top 5 countries availing e-Tourist Visa facility during September 2015 were as follows. USA (18.71%), UK (9.24%), Australia (8.50%), Germany (7.22%) and China (6.36%). The e-Tourist Visa scheme was launched by the Government of India on November 27, 2014. At present e-Tourist Visa facility is available for citizens of 113 countries arriving at 16 airports in India.



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Indo Asia Tours is participating in the below mentioned upcoming trade fairs in 2015 & 2016. You can schedule an appointment at marketing@indoasiatours.com to meet us in person at these fairs :

- **USTOA Annual Conference & Marketplace, US: 03 -05 Dec 2015**
- **Reiselivsmessen, Oslo, Norway : 15 – 17 jan 2016**
- **Vakantibeurs, Utrecht, Holland : 13 – 17 jan 2016**
- **Travel Match, Oslo , Norway : 15 jan 2016**
- **Matka, Helsinki, Finland : 21 – 24 Jan 2016**

IA SAYS



Committed to offer unexplored and experiential travel for visitors to India, it is our endeavour to create exciting itineraries and open out regions that have remained elusive till now. One such region which is full of magnificent vistas, unique culture and a vast spread of adventure, culinary delights and amazing people is the North East region of India. **Relatively untreaded, this is a cluster of seven states that are sure to enthrall.** Indo Asia believes in thorough research and recce of the places that we want to take you to. In order to check the minutest of details, we did just that in the last few months to draw out a fantastic plan.

Amongst many other experiences that we promise you will love, the Loktak Lake in Manipur, Nagaland's Hornbill Festival, the Kaziranga National Park of Assam and the ancient Kamakhya Devi temple rank top on the plan. **The region is rich from all dimensions – whether it is stunning landscapes, tribal life and culture, delectable local food, gorgeous wildlife sanctuaries or the people.** For example, the Loktak Lake of Manipur is the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India. It is famous for the mass of floating vegetation over it. In fact a whole national park floats over this. It is called Keibul Lamjao and is well known for its population of deer. The fascinating eco system of the lake is something that one will find hard to forget. Another visual extravaganza is the Kaziranga National Park, one of India's five World Heritage environmental sites. This marshy plain beside the Brahmaputra was turned into a wildlife sanctuary in 1908. Known for its one-horned rhinos, the lush scape can be traversed on a cavalcade of elephants. Over 1500 rhinos graze the park. Wild elephants, buffalos, swamp deer, hog deer, sambar, wild boar, as well as one of the densest tiger populations in India can be found here. Apart from the magic of the forest, there lies the draw of tribal culture at the Nagaland Hornbill Festival. The weeklong cultural extravaganza is held every year in the first week of December, when 16 tribes of the state come together to showcase their art forms. For the spiritually inclined, the thousands of years old Kamakhya Temple is something that should not be missed.

These are just a handful of the heady experiences that await the intrepid traveller. North East India promises nothing less than exquisite sights and experiences and we at Indo Asia will ensure that you get to see them through well-planned itineraries.

Sudesh Behal

EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH!



Shailesh Verma | Dy General Manager

Associated with Indo Asia Tours for the past 10 years, Shailesh is responsible for Group Operations. One of the most level headed person, Shailesh tackles the trickiest of situations with his cool demeanour with much aplomb and never say die attitude. Shailesh loves to travel at every given opportunity.