

INDO ASIA DARIES

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INDO ASIA TOURS

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Eric McEawn

Eric McEawn visited India in 2014 and claims to be addicted to the metros ever since, something that you don't hear too often from travellers across oceans. But he loves the chaos that comes with the city life in India. ***For Eric, the burgeoning businesses, India's changing urban scape and people wedged between the great technological change and their roots, are the most fascinating topics to discover. Of all the big cities, which he has visited, his heart is partial to the madness of Mumbai.*** Colaba, Chor Bazaar and the Parsi settlements are his favourite. He took this picture while sipping beer at the Leopold's Café in Colaba Causeway. Outside the buzz of conversations that hung in the café, there was a rare moment of stillness. Usually, the Causeway is packed with focused shoppers, bargaining with all their might. But in this picture, he managed to capture a vacuum they were lost in their worlds of discovery.



NUDGE THE STORYTELLER IN YOU TO SUBMIT A PHOTOGRAPH FROM YOUR TRAVELS AND WIN A TRIP TO EXPLORE THE MARVELS OF INDIA.

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COLABA CAUSEWAY, A HAVEN FOR SHOPPERS

Photo Location : Colaba Causeway, Mumbai



Wake up to the smell of coffee in Coorg

Ringling in the New Year in a faraway hidden secret might be a detour from what people usually do, but it is sure to appeal to travellers who would rather unwind than have a hectic schedule. Here are some suggestions to steer you clear of boisterous parties and over laden plans.

In a Coorg Plantation

What way to wake up on 1st January than peering through the haze of mist that hangs in the plantations of Coorg. ***Thick green bushes surround you and the clear air has a rejuvenating effect.*** Wake up and walk the unruly muddy trails of Coorg Plantations, while watching berry pickers go to work with their gunny bags propped behind them. Reconnecting with nature might be the best plan you ever made for New Years.

Surfing in Varkala

While the rest of India reels in shivering cold winters, the southern part of the country can take you into its warm fold – even the waters remain comfortable enough to swim. ***Add an action packed day to your time in Varkala to test the temperature of the Arabian Sea.*** The coastal town of Kerala is otherwise a sleepy backpacker destination, where the town is perched on a craggy cliff that overlooks the sea. On a New Year eve, this is bound to be a perfect ambience for offbeat travellers.

In the forests of Madhya Pradesh

The dense forest of Madhya Pradesh give you respite from hectic city schedules for New Year. ***Who knows, you might even end up spending the first day of the New Year with some sightings of tigers, black bears and deer, a population that traverses the***



Watch life along the coast of Karnataka

jungle of Deccan. Choose Satpura as your destination and give the popular haunts a miss.

Driving down the Karnataka Coast

A rendezvous with the Arabian Sea is also possible if you drive from Mangalore to Murudeshwar along the Karnataka Coast. ***Here, you can make pit stops at Mulki Surfing Ashram, Udipi's Krishna Temple and Lighthouse, the Maravanthe Beach and unassuming fishing villages along the way.*** The route is relatively untreaded and an excellent representation of India's countryside.

Haveli Haven of Jaipur

Though Jaipur is likely to be packed with tourists at this time of the year, you can hibernate in an old fashioned haveli of the royal city. ***Boutique hotels fashioned from these old bungalows is the ideal choice if you want to be pampered as well as stay ensconced in luxury.*** Take refuge in an old library or an in-house museum.

CROSSING CULTURES

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR OFFBEAT IDEAS TO STEP INTO 2016



A roar away from adventurous times



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Infused with whimsical touches of wildlife, *The Kipling Lodge epitomizes the jungles of India. The relaxing forest retreat gives you a chance to unwind the company of birdsong and crispy cool air from the mountains.* Add to that, a host of amenities and facilities, and Kipling promises a rejuvenating break.

- Charming aesthetics to transport you to the world of Rudyard Kipling
- A stone's throw away from the Ranthambore National Park
- Cocooned in the lap of nature
- A 'back to nature retreat' built for rejuvenation
- A boutique ambience with vintage furniture and modern amenities
- Exemplary furnishings in the rooms
- High-end amenities to amplify the stay
- Inspiring trysts with the jungle
- A swimming pool to unwind
- Your dining needs met by culinary experts



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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Ranthambore

Journey into the heart of India.

Rajasthan is one of the most explored states of India and unearthing something new is next to impossible for even a seasoned traveller. Having trudged and trundled for over 12 years as a solo traveller, Supriya was determined to dig up some new on her trip to the state this year. She scanned the busy streets of Jaipur, squinted at paintings and artifacts with a discerning eye in Jodhpur and decided to hop on a bike with a guide to relatively unknown places around Udaipur. **But it was Ranthambore that left her speechless. The jaw dropping beautiful scapes that unfolded are sure to stay in her memory forever.** It's not only the jungles, Ranthambore throws up surprises like the ones below.

Ranthambore Fort



Ranthambore Fort. Image courtesy: Davi1974d

An impregnable fort rises from the rocky outcrop above the forest at Ranthambore. The old walls of the fort stand testimony to the time of the Maharajas in this area. Now, the sprawling jungle below is the focus of the traveller. As you get closer, the structure looks even more inaccessible; rightly so, as it was built for protection. **Now weathered and crumbling, the fort still resonates only with former glory. The enormous gateways exude a sense of pride with a formidable vibe and are the most striking feature of the fort.** Visit here with the locals, who tend to take a 4WD upto the fort to visit a Ganesha Temple. The ancient Ganesha Temple is regarded one of the most religious spots of the area. The locals often flock here. If you are visiting the fort, do not miss the Ganesha temple inside. The local fervour is palpable here.

Ranthambore National Park

The most significant highlight and the very reason for someone to visit the town, is the verdant Ranthambore National Park. **Hemmed by rocky ridges of the**

Aravali mountain range, the park contains 1334 sq km of dense forest and a number of wildlife species. Specifically known for its population of tigers, the National Park is one of the most known wildlife destinations that travellers find themselves steering to. The easy access to Ranthambore from New Delhi makes it an ideal location to add on a Rajasthan itinerary. Stay close to the park and do ample safaris to catch a glimpse of its wild occupants. These jeep safaris veer you off the main road and into the dense shaded tree lined trails. The erstwhile hunting park of the Maharajas', this is one of the best-preserved



Chinkara. Image courtesy: Jon Connell

sanctuaries of India.

Dastkar Craft Centre

Dastkar, a non-profit organization, is rooted in the traditional culture of the villages and facilitates them to sell their excellent craft in all parts of the world. **The Dastkar Centre is something that travellers should explore for another dimension to their trip to Ranthambore. For many, it becomes only about the forest and nothing other than that.** The Dastkar Craft Centre infuses colour in your trip and

insight to your knowledge of the state. Here, you can meet the craftsmen and see magical creations upclose. You can also use this as a shopping pit stop to buy bags, saris, wall hangings, rugs clothes, stoles and more.



Image courtesy: Gopal Singhal

Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum of Natural History

The museum was inaugurated in 2014 to open a world of historic wonders to the travellers coming to the base town of Sawai Madhopur, from where the sanctuary can be accessed. It is located in Ramsinghpura, which is a village at a distance of 9 kms from Sawai Madhopur. **The museum is a window into the world of natural history of Rajasthan and specifically the area where the national park stands. This is spread over 7.2 acres of land and is aesthetically designed with local décor and nuances.** The diverse life on earth comes alive in this three-floor museum in the form of informative exhibits of flora, fauna, mineral wealth and the geology

TOP SPOT

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Le Meridian finds an address in Nagpur



Starwoods Hotels and Resorts step up the game by adding another hotel to their already impressive list of hotels in India. With Starwood

being the game changer as one of the leading Leisure and Hotel Company, its impact is due to be majorly felt in India. This time, it is the Le Meridian Hotel in the city of Nagpur. **This is the brand's tenth hotel on the Indian hospitality landscape. Geared up to cater to both global and Indian guests, the hotel offers unparalleled services, amenities and facilities.**

The 133 rooms are a stellar example of how a great experience should unfold for the traveller. An outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre and a well-equipped spa are the other highlights of the hotel. The property is also suitable for board meeting and large functions, give that it has excellent banquet facilities. Apart from these, exclusive dining options, Wi-Fi, business centre, excellent housekeeping and travel desk options will be available for the use of the guests.

2016 marks the entry of Conrad in Bengaluru



The IT city of India never has a dearth of footfalls where the business travelers are concerned. With its large span to new commercial hubs, there is always a need

for excellent services to the global traveller. **Conrad Hotels and Resorts, a part of the Hilton Group, makes a foray in the capital city of Karnataka by opening its first property in Bengaluru in 2016. This luxury facility will be located in the heart of the city, near the Ulsoor Lake, which is landmark that defines Bengaluru.** Besides, it is close to the key arterial road, M.G Road and the business hubs in the radius of 10km. This is the second hotel of the group, after making a presence in Pune. This is a tie up between the Starwood Hotels (Sheraton and Marriott) along with the Conrad Hotels and Resorts. Good mid range hotels with a professional outlook are a must for the city and this is sure to enhance the hospitality infrastructure of Bengaluru.

Pushkar Gets a Westin Imprint

With the growing popularity of Pushkar, as a leading festival destination in Rajasthan, the entry of Westin Hotel and Resorts is met with enthusiasm. The foray will mark Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide's seventh hotel in the country. The hotel is slated to open in 2016. The hotel is built at the base of the Aravali Range of mountains, with stunning views from all parts of the property. This is located close to the Pushkar Lake, the biggest highlight of the city. **The Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa is**



built over 11 acres and offers 98 contemporary guestrooms, including 80 luxuriously appointed suites. Of these, 20 suites will offer private pools. Additionally, the resort will focus on wellness with their signature Westin Heavenly® Bed and the

Westin Heavenly® Bath programmes designed to inspire balance and well-being. These spa features are bound to leave the guest rejuvenated. In his address to the media, Sudeep Jain, Vice President, Acquisitions & Development, South Asia, Starwood Hotels & Resorts assured that the brand will amplify the hospitality scape of Rajasthan, one of the leading states for tourism in India. He said, **"Rajasthan has emerged as one of India's most popular tourist destinations for both domestic and foreign tourists, which has primed the region for further development and increased the demand for accommodations designed with well-being in mind. We are confident that the Westin brand's entry into this market will enhance the hospitality landscape of this destination"**. The entry of a brand like Westin in Pushkar marks the fact that even the small cities of India are conscious of the need for professional services. These tourist destinations are an integral part of the economy and good hotels will only give a rise to more footfalls from travellers across the world.

Connected: Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi

AirAsia X has been making an impact in the Indian skies, especially with the new announcement of four weekly flights on the KL-Delhi route, which is one of the most



coveted directions for travellers. The company will relaunch flights to Delhi in the beginning of the year (February 2016), four years after it suspended its service on this route. The airline had earlier withdrawn from India in 2012, putting an end to its Delhi and

Mumbai routes due to high operating costs. The carrier now sees a vast opportunity in the topography again. **The Malaysian company has confirmed that it will start operating four weekly direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Delhi on February 3, 2016.** Flights will depart KLIA every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 1900 hours, arriving in Delhi at 2200 hours, a short time for the travellers to connect between the two countries. The flight out of Delhi will leave at 2315 hours, arriving back in KL at 0730 hours the next morning. The flight time is approximately five and a half hours. Like all other AirAsia X flights, this service will also be operated using a 377-seat Airbus A330-300 aircraft, offering flat-bed seats for the comfort of the business class travellers. Like many other economy flights in India, AirAsia marches along to cash on the growing consumer base of a young nation like India. The new flights also give an opportunity for travellers to span South East Asia more efficiently and quickly.

NEWS & VIEWS



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

- **Reiselivsmessen, Oslo, Norway :**
15 – 17 Jan 2016
- **Vakantibeurs, Utrecht, Holland :**
12 – 17 Jan 2016
- **FITUR, Madrid, Spain :**
20 - 24 Jan 2016
- **Matka, Helsinki, Finland :**
21 – 24 Jan 2016
- **Destination East , Kolkata : 31st Jan & 01st Feb 2016**

IA SAYS



Visit a destination during a local festival, and virtually everyone in the city or town will be in a celebratory mood. The same goes for India, a country, where it is hard to keep pace with the number of festivals. **We, at Indo Asia Tours, strive hard to bring you closest to the local culture during your travels and offer a peek into the most authentic aspects of life in the subcontinent.** One way of doing this is by showcasing some of the lesser-known festivals that will take you into their fold and cocoon you in the energy and celebrations.

This month, I want to bring your attention to a festival of colours, one that you might already be aware of. Holi has been eulogized in many photographs across the world. World famous lens men have covered different dimensions of this Indian festival, but few would be familiar with the unique tribal one celebrated in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh. **The Holi,**

as celebrated in this small town in the Deccan is tinged in a different colour. Holi in Jhabua comes with a tribal twist. Known as 'Bhagoriya Holi', the tribals of Jhabua participate in a 'Swayamvara' or a mass marriage ceremony, in which the youngsters choose their life partners. This is an age-old tradition in which the merriment knows no bounds – expect singing, dancing, eating, drinking and attending a wedding. The same Holi is also celebrated in Varanasi, where cannabis infused drink called bhaang is a chief ingredient of a fun day.

Another venue which demands attention from culture lovers is the Holi celebrated in a royal style at the Udaipur Palace. Patronized by royalty, the celebration takes place over two days – the first day is 'Holika Dahan', (the killing of Holika, an evil character in the legend that surrounds Holi). A sombre ceremony around a large bonfire is held on this day. The second day marks complete suffusion in colours. This is a harvest festival that marks the beginning of spring, bidding adieu to the cold winter months. Another additional element to the Udaipur festivities is the 'Nobti ki Swari', a special procession with the King and his ministers. This is a one of a kind ceremony that is exclusive to the Udaipur celebrations, even though Holi is celebrated in most northern states of the country.

I hope that you discover many such festivals with us in the coming year, so we can help you add new and innovative dimensions to your trip to the Indian subcontinent.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH!



Ritu Gupta | General Manager

Even though Ritu is at the helm of an important function at Indo Asia Tours as a General Manager, it doesn't stop her from enjoying music and spending time with her 7 year old son and husband - two essentials she doesn't relent on missing. Her ability of balancing work and home with equal passion is admirable.