

INDO ASIA DIARIES

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INDO ASIA TOURS

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Sarah McKay

Of all the things in India that Sarah McKay found fascinating (and there were plenty), cattle fairs of Rajasthan trumped the list. Every major town and village seemed to have one on the calendar. **Camels, cow, buffaloes and goats trudge the length and breadth of the state to camp for days in the sandy deserts as customers make a beeline to scout the best. More than anything, all these fairs had an air of festivity, ideal for a photographer. Even though Sarah visited almost all the fairs, even the big Pushkar one, she particularly liked the lesser-known Pashuhatwada cattle fair off Jaipur.** It happens on all Saturdays and barely takes an hour to reach. But instead of dusty brown camels, be prepared to see only a sea of black – the buffaloes rule here.



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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A BUFFALO SELLER SCOUTS CUSTOMERS.

Photo Location : Pashuhatwada, Jaipur



A leopard in Bera

It is no wonder that Rajasthan is one of the most popular travel destinations of India. Its wildly romantic fortresses and palaces never fail to enthrall travellers and the entire state seems to be carpeted with monuments. Local cuisine, dances and music have an indelible affect on those who tread here. And while much has been written and explored about the state, all's far from being covered. In this edition, we unearth five experiences that few have heard about Rajasthan.

Baolis of Bundi – The Bundi fort and the city under its shadow is now a well-known tourist destination for those who like to avoid the busier towns. **The Bundi fort, along with the slim market lanes has got widely popular. But it is the baolis (step wells) of the town that offer a glimpse into the real Bundi.** While a couple of them are popular, it is those who are lodged in the middle of thickly populated residential areas that leave one wide-eyed.

Mahansar – The glory of Mahansar goes back to 1846, when the small town was known as 'sone-chaandi ki dukan' (shop of gold and silver). **This unassuming town has five havelis that are swathed in intricate gold leaf paintings like none other. Exquisite scenes from Ramayana and life of Lord Krishna are depicted with these paintings.** For those interested in art and local inspirations in architectural aesthetics, this is a great place to see walls adorned with meenakari work local motifs.

Kuchaman Fort – Propped high on a 1100 feet high cliff, the fort is a relic of the 19th century. **The frescos on the main fort walls are a thing of extraordinary beauty. The inlay work in gold, glass and semi-precious stones**



Rani ji ki baoli in Bundi town

inside the fort are astounding. In fact, parts of the fort have been used for a famous Bollywood movie. Parts of the fort include Sheesh Mahal, Jai Mahal and a section called The Sabah Prakash.

Bera – A wildlife enthusiasts dream come true, the Bera village is known for its harmonious ambience between humans and leopards. **Teeming with this wild species, you don't have to look too hard to find them – sunbathing on the rocks of low mountains that hold Bera in a protective embrace or lurking in the bushes at night.** The village also has some comfortable places to stay so you can get more sighting time.

Arna Jharna – Expect to learn more about the living culture of Rajasthan than the historical aspects in this unique museum, off Jodhpur. **It stands on acres of shrubby land with well-kept sections that offer a peak into unique traditions of the state.** One such section is the broom museum, which gives insight into which kind of brooms do people use in the state – this is largely dependent on the kind of trees that grow in a particular area.

CROSSING CULTURES

THE ELUSIVE DESERT LAND

EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED PARTS OF RAJASTHAN

Fort Chaniwa Luni Restored and Revered

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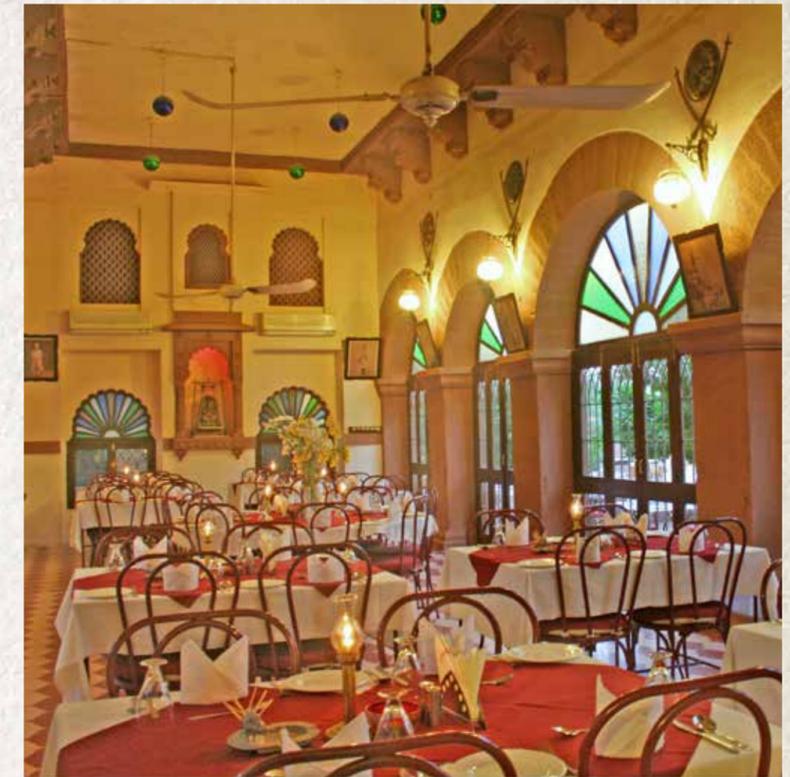


**FORT CHANWA
LUNI**

In 1894, Kaviraj Muraridanji, an administrator in the Kingdom of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II, received the little known hamlet of Chanwa as appreciation. An exquisite fortified haveli was built on the very same land and came to be known as the Fort Chanwa Luni. Today, this stands as a heritage hotel that embodies the regal legacy with aplomb.

Highlights include:

- *Regal essence is retained with local aesthetics*
- *Redefined 3 star luxury with infusion of superior amenities*
- *Just off Rajasthan's popular tourist spot, Jodhpur*
- *Royal vestiges reflect in all parts of the rooms*
- *Modern and traditional fuses together*
- *Personalized attention, feels nothing less than royalty*
- *Exquisite in-house dining options*
- *Swimming pool for complete relaxation*
- *Sightseeing trips organised for convenience*



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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Jodhpur

Enchanting beauty in the shadow of Mehrangarh Fort

When our editor, Supriya, went for a month long trip to Rajasthan, it is the memory of Jodhpur that she carried the strongest with her. And it was not just the mammoth Mehrangarh Fort that compelled her to keep the city in her mind, but on the contrary, the smaller, seemingly insignificant things are those that hung in her memory. **Jodhpur's timeless beauty lies its part shrubby-part pale brown topography that hoards millions of stories about valiant Kings, unrequited love and lost or won battles. It is a place where art and craft flourished, such that, even till date it is a large part of it makes for a compelling reason to visit here.** Another reason that draws travellers is the list of festivals and fairs that are plugged on the annual calendar. Supriya got a chance to see a few of them and is sure to be back to tick all of them from her list.

Donkey Fair, Luniawas

While cattle fairs are common in Rajasthan, the donkey fair of Luni leaves everyone curious. This festival is said to be on the calendar of Luni (just off Jodhpur) for over 500 years. Donkeys have been used in the state for carrying heavy loads and often come in use of traders or labour intensive contractors. This donkey only cattle fair is propped up in October-November and thousands travel to the bland topography to participate. For a photographer and a traveller, this is a dream.

Rajasthan International Folk Festival –

With Mick Jagger as one of the mentors of the festival, this platform brings world musicians to Mehrangarh fort, where they perform with the local musicians. The earthy setting of the stages and the 24 hours of musical immersion are hard to forget. The Indian ragas fuse seamlessly with Spanish guitars and percussions from across seas.

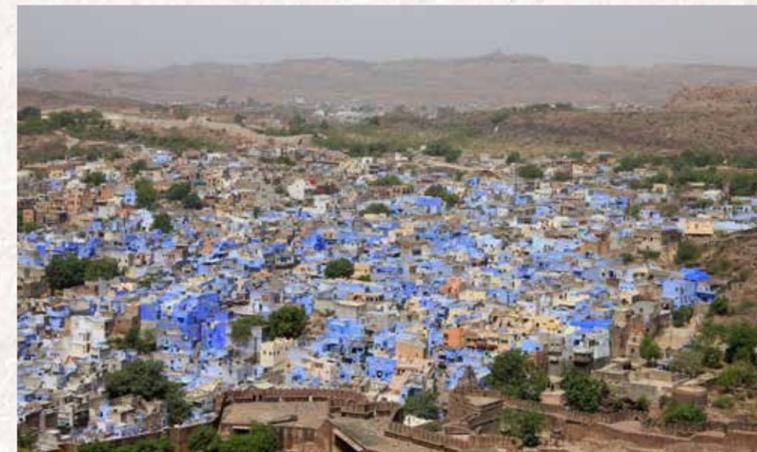


RIFF underway in Jodhpur

The raw voices of folks artists break through the early morning silence to set stage for the rest of the day.

Gangaur Festival –

One of the most vibrant festivals of Jodhpur, this is celebrated to commemorate Gauri, Lord Shiva's consort. Women find special importance during this festival that falls near March-April in the year. Thanking the heavens for a good harvest and marital fidelity are the themes of this festival.



Jodhpur Old city that comes alive during the festivals

Apart from the serious ceremonies, it is the 'dress-up' processions that fill the air with excitement. Women dress up as men, political leaders, actors or anyone as they please, before walking down the main market in a parade.

Jodhpur Kite Festival –

The year starts with painting the sky in splashes of colour with the kite festival on 14th January. This day marks the beginning of a good harvest season, and the festivity pans out in the form of a



The Jodhpur skies painted in different colours

celebratory battle of kites on almost every rooftop. The best way to see this is a visit to the old city and colonizing one of the local terraces and watching the sky.

Marwar Festival –

Reserve the end of September –October for one of the most popular festivals of Jodhpur. **This was earlier known as the Maand festival and has always been celebrated to commemorate the great Rajput Kings that ruled the region. Folk music, dance and art forms are performed even this day in their memory.**

TOP SPOT

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Unstoppable growth in footfalls with eTV



As many as 68,487 tourists arrived in July 2016 on e-Tourist Visa (eTV) as compared to 21,476 during the month of July 2015 commanding a growth of 218.9 per cent.

International tourists visiting India last year in 2015 has been surpassed in the first six months of the current calendar year 2016. During January- July 2016, a total of 5,40,396 tourist arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 1,47,690 during January-July 2015, registering a growth of 265.9 per cent. This high growth may be attributed to introduction of e-Tourist Visa for 150 countries as against the earlier coverage of 77 countries. UK, USA and France lead these numbers, followed by UAE, China, Spain, Australia, Germany, Canada and Netherland. New Delhi remains the busiest port of arrival amongst all the cities in India. Not a surprise, given that it is the capital of the country.

Boeing's staggering forecast for India



Airplane company, Boeing forecasts a whopping number for the planes that might be needed by India. The number stands at 1850

new planes that will cost around \$265 billion. Dinesh Keskar, senior VP, Asia Pacific and India Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes released the company's annual Current Market Outlook (CMO) for India in Mumbai, and said, "With the new aviation policy in place, we see even greater opportunities and remain confident in the market and the airlines in India. India continues to have a strong commercial aerospace market and the highest domestic traffic growth in the world." Single-aisle airplanes like the Next-Generation 737 and 737 MAX will continue to account for the largest share of new deliveries, with airlines in India needing approximately 1,560 airplanes. These new airplanes will continue to support the growth of low-cost carriers and replace older, less-efficient airplanes. The report also says that traffic growth in India remains the highest in the world at 8.6 per cent and that domestic passenger traffic increased 21 per cent from 2015. It also mentions that low-cost carriers account for more than 60 per cent of all flights in India.

Air India announces daily flights from Delhi to San Francisco



Air India, India's International carrier, has announced its plan to double its direct non-stop flights between Delhi and San Francisco (USA) from

three times a week to daily during the winters. According to a news report, a senior Air India official said, "This flight has clearly proved that it does not take years to develop a route. We are flying planes with average 88 per cent loads and are also meeting the total cost of the flight. We are going to make it a daily flight most likely from November." Air India, which launched this flight last December, is the only airline that flies direct on this route.

Hyatt aims for 27

As one of the most popular hospitality experts of the country, Hyatt sees a heartening scenario in India. The hotel chain plans to notch the number to 27 properties by the end of the year 2016. That's an addition of 3 more, as the chain stands at 24 right now. This is considered extremely rapid expansion. Harleen Mehta, Vice President, Sales Operations, South Asia – Hyatt Hotels Corporation says, "Currently we have a portfolio of 24 hotels in



India, representing five brands (Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Regency, Hyatt and Hyatt Place). A sixth brand (Andaz) will enter India in latter part of 2016 with the opening of the Andaz Delhi. By end of this financial year, we aim to have 27 properties in India. Apart from the aforementioned Andaz Delhi – the thirteenth Andaz hotel in the world."

Chennai chosen as the venue for the IATO convention



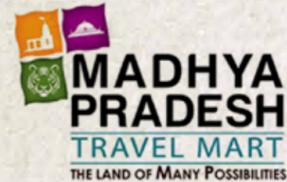
The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is all set to hold its 32nd annual convention from September 18-21, 2016, at ITC Grand

Chola in Chennai. Pronab Sarkar President, IATO, said, "We were planning to have our convention in Chennai for last couple of years as IATO never had its annual convention in Tamil Nadu earlier. However, this year, it is going to become a dream come true. From the very beginning, we focused to have our convention in Chennai only". He also mentioned, "the stupendous success of the pervious convention has raised the expectations of the members and sponsors. More than 1200 delegates are expected for 3-day event and the IATO convention is eagerly awaited by all. Members look for an enchanting destination. Here Chennai fits in very well as this will be first IATO Convention in Chennai"

NEWS & VIEWS



MEET US AT



Indo Asia Tours will have its presence in the below mentioned upcoming fairs in 2016. You can schedule an appointment at marketing@indoasiatours.com to meet us in person at these shows :

- Top Resa (Paris) 20 - 23 Sep, 2016
- MPTM (Bhopal) 14 - 16 Oct, 2016
- WTM (London) 07 - 09 Nov, 2016

IA SAYS



Dear Partners,

Festivals are an integral part of life in India. Every single day of the year has an association of celebration to commemorate a festival. Hindus follow the lunar calendar and all festival are celebrated according to this calendar. For Rajasthan, this is especially true. While the state calendar is studded with festivities round the year, the end of the year marks a celebratory period with a number of festivals. I have grown up in the state and experienced these festivities since my childhood. We (Indo Asia Tours) have been promoting these major festivals since the inception of the company. These festivals have been the highlights of cultural exposure to tourist from all part of the world.

My personal favourites from Rajasthan's are Pushkar Camel Fair, The Desert Festival of Jaisalmer, Jodhpur's Marwar Festival & RIFF (Rajasthan International Folk Festival), and the Gangaur Festival.

The silhouettes of camels and their turbaned owners against orange hues sky during sunset have become the iconic portraits of Pushkar's camel fair. The festival is a congregation of camel sellers and buyers, complemented with folk dance, folk music & folk songs and Rajasthani food. It is fortnight long festival, which culminates on the full moon (Karthik Poornima as per the Hindu calendar), in the month of November.

The yellow sandstone skyline and the sprawling Sam dunes of Jaisalmer come alive during the Desert Festival of Jaisalmer. A rainbow of colours dot the golden brown dunes, with dancers, musicians and local craftsmen. **This is the one time when travellers can see the different dimensions of Rajasthan's art forms in one place.**

The two-day festival of Marwar in Jodhpur infuses fun and cultural immersion. **The highlights include a polo match on camels and the art of making traditional tattoos as well. During the Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF), world musicians merge their sounds with local Rajasthani folk artists.**

Lastly, it's the vibrancy of Gangaur that makes a trip special. **It is a time for the ladies – both in the form of praying to Lord Shiva's consort, Gauri and large processions in all their finery to the banks of Lake Pichola.**

Gajendra Singh Panwar

Even though I highly recommend Rajasthan for first-time travellers, I especially urge travellers to add the state to their plan during the festivals.

EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH!



Nagendra Jeet Mathur | Asst. Manager

There is one region in India that Nagendra is truly passionate about – Rajasthan. Given his interest in the state, he is our 'go-to' person for new and unusual travel ideas from here. His eight-year journey with Indo Asia has resulted in his zeal for travel getting only stronger, something that complements his Operations role extremely well.