

INDO ASIA DARIES

Issue 04 | July 2015



INDO ASIA TOURS
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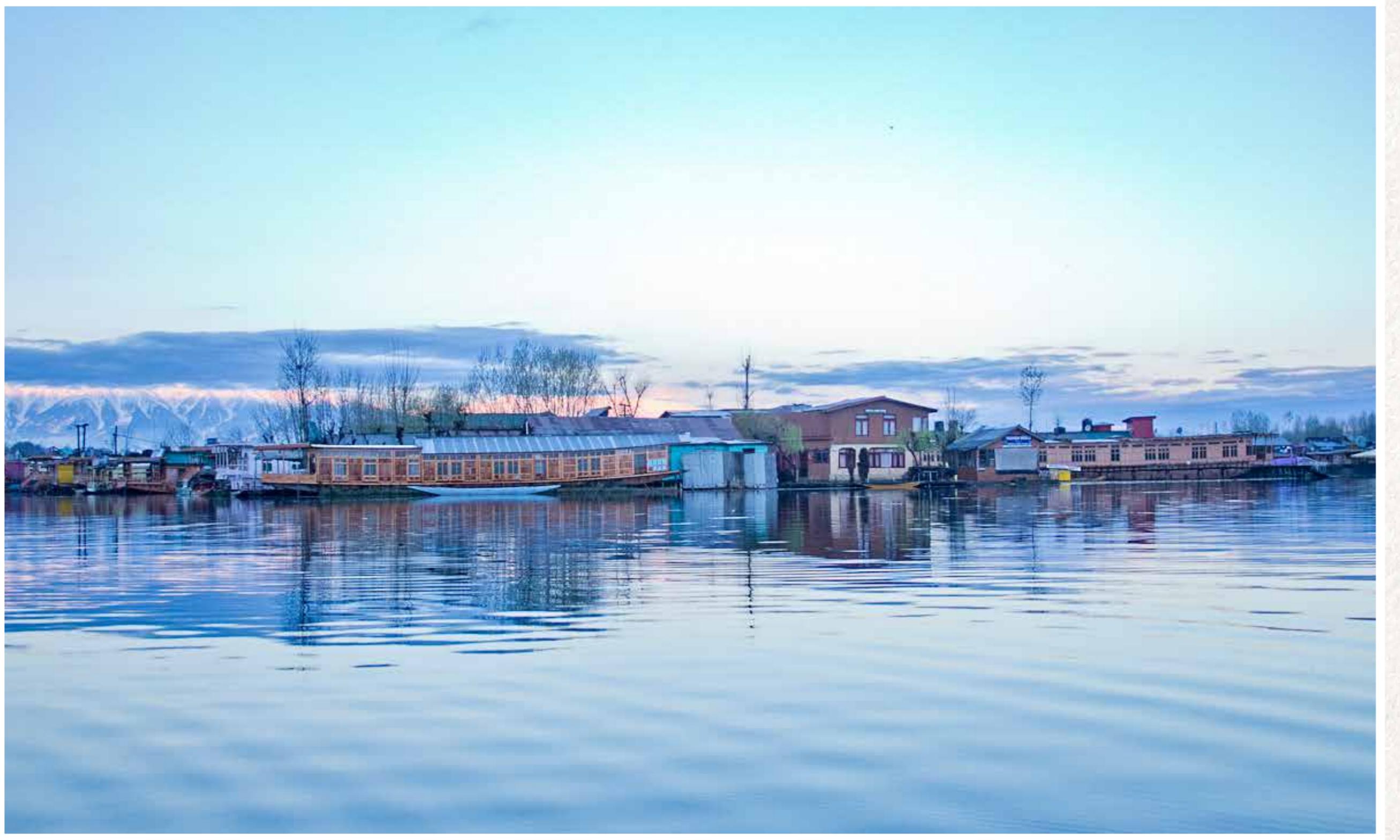
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DWELLINGS IN THE DAL LAKE

Photo Location : Dal Lake, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir

Helen Johnson

Based in Amsterdam, Helen Johnson fell in love with India instantly. It is a love affair that has lasted for eight years – in the form of trekking in the lower Himalayas, staying in tranquil ashrams in isolated hills, bumming on the golden sands of Goa, watching local festivals, marveling at the fairytale like forts and palaces and wading through the sea of people in Mumbai's railway stations. A graphic designer and photography enthusiast, she thinks of her travels in India as a Karmic connect.

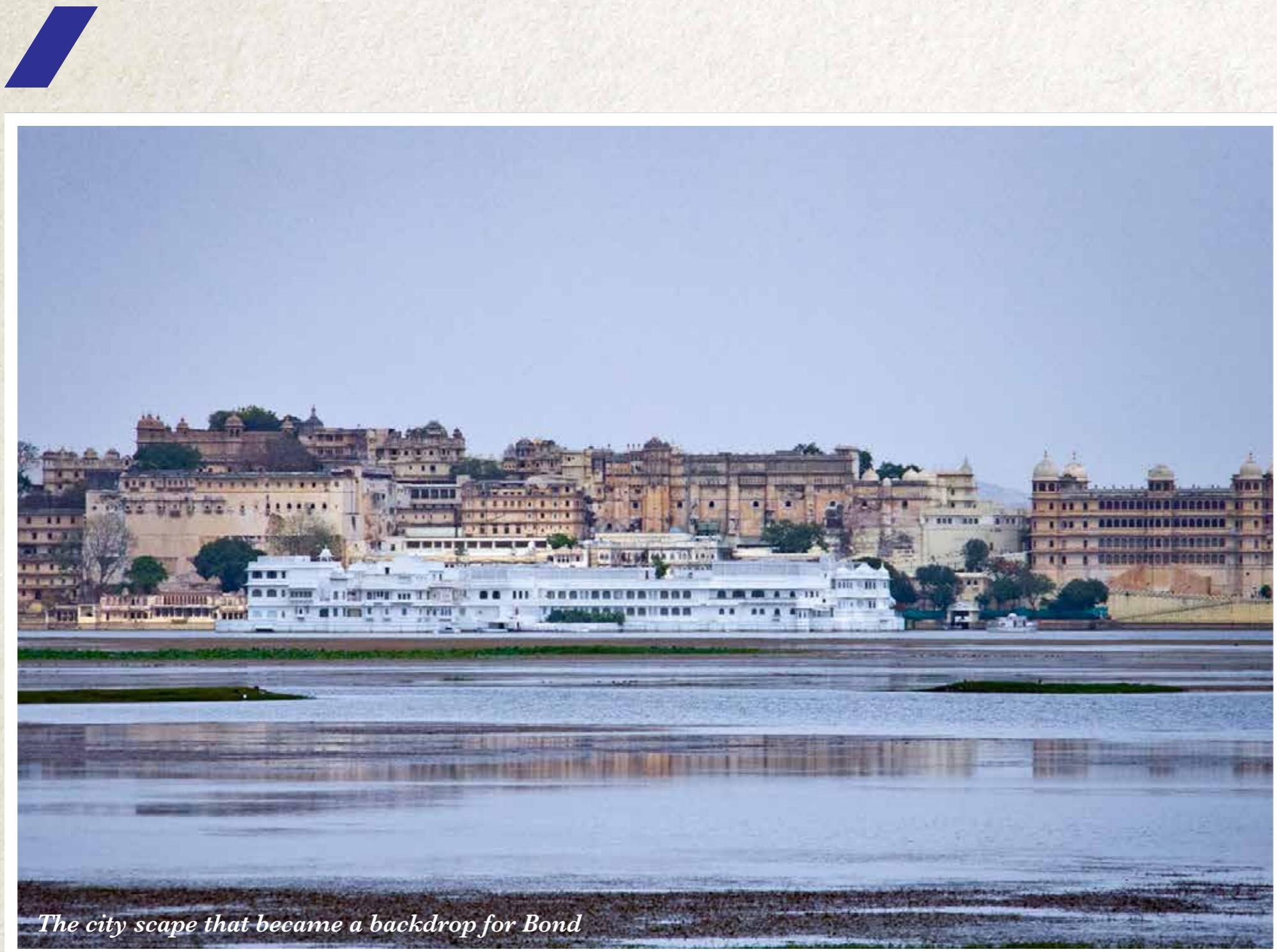
Her subjects range from smiling unsuspecting faces, dramatic festivals or just simple motions of daily life. ***She feels that almost every aspect of India is inspiring for a photography enthusiast and a traveller. Each rendezvous with a stranger here is laden with the narrative of the culture of the place.***

This picture was taken at dawn at the Dal Lake. The calmness is contagious. It lulls you into peace—especially when the sun's rays first light up the sky for the shikaras to start stirring with action.



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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The city scape that became a backdrop for Bond

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HOLLYWOOD HOTSPOTS

The best movie locations in Rajasthan

STORIES FROM THE SUB-CONTINENT

Given the tapestry of bright colours, sandstone architectural wonders and the hypnotic draw of the dunes of Rajasthan, it is no wonder that the destination is one of the top choices for Hollywood directors when they need an Indian infusion or a backdrop. Rajasthan is one of the most popular destinations for movie buffs, as you are likely to spot several locations, which would look familiar from a blockbuster. Talking of 'Crossing Cultures', we take you to some of the most stunning backdrops that have provided context and a locational reference for a movie – or perhaps just brilliant scenery for a memorable shot.

Octopussy in Udaipur – Udaipur's rise as a top travel destination in the state can be attributed to the 1983 James Bond hit, Octopussy.

So much so that frayed prints of the movie still do rounds in the cafes near the Lake Pichola. The movie showcases the city's Monsoon Palace, Jag Mandir, Lake Palace, Gangaur Ghat and parts of Shiv Niwas Palace. The tuk-tuk chase scene is the most popular, as the then Indian tennis star Vijay Amritraj, who played the tuk-tuk driver, fends the villains with a tennis racket and the audience on the streets moves their heads left to right as if watching a tennis match. The star struck city of lakes has countless anecdotes that are used by the guides.

Dark Knight Rises in Jodhpur - The Batman trilogy closed with a bang in 2012, with Christopher Nolan's tribute to the DC Comics superhero, in the movie The Dark Knight Rises. It was the summer of 2011, when the star cast of the movie arrived in Jodhpur. The Mehrangarh Fort, rising 400 feet above the city, was the perfect venue to shoot some of the most striking scenes from the movie. ***The Mehrangarh Fort can be identified in one signature prison shot, which sees actor Christian Bale in the role***



The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

of Batman, touching down in an isolated expanse. To see the exact spot, one can go on a zipline tour of the fort or walk through the Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park. The shooting spot lies between the 4th and 5th landing of the zip line tour and the instructors are quick to point out the exact place. A customary picture is on the cards for many.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel in Khempur

- The pale yellow weathered walls and windows of Ravla Khempur (home of a village chieftain) are due for a makeover. After all, months of a big Hollywood blockbuster can impale a structure that was built in 1628 A.D. Khemraj Dadhivadia's home was the chief shooting location of Hollywood film, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel in 2010-11 and then again in 2013-14 for the sequel. The travel fraternity is often excited to walk on the hallowed ***halls of the hotel where stars like Judi Dench, Richard Gere and Maggie Smith have walked.*** Even though the hotel opened up to visitors in 1994, and has been used as a backdrop to several movies (including German, Der Indische Ring). Khempur lies on the outskirts of Udaipur.

Bikaner - The classic essence of Rajasthan



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MAHARAJA RAI SINGHJI TRUST
JUNAGARH, BIKANER

FUNDED BY HIS HIGHNESS LALJI MAMJIJI RAJAWAL SINGHJI
RAJAWAL OF BIKANER ON THE 1ST DAY OF OCTOBER ONE
THREE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY EIGHT
TO GIVE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES
AND COLLECT MONUMENTS AND PRESERVE MONUMENTS AND
ARCHIVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADVANCEMENT OF
EDUCATION AND TO MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE NATIONAL
AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AND
ARTS CRAFT IN INDIA AND ABROAD
TO GIVE SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS
IN INDIA AND OVERSEAS
TO PROVIDE FACILITIES AND HELP OF PHYSICAL TRAINING
AND SPORTS OF ALL KINDS RELATING SHOOTING SPORTS
AND ORGANISE SPORTS MEETINGS
TO ORGANISE BRAHMINIC DANCE AND OTHER
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
TO GIVE AD TO SUCH INSTITUTIONS AS PROMOTE NATIONAL
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL TRAINING
TO ESTABLISH AND REGULATE LIBRARIES AND TO GIVE AD TO THEM
TO PRESENT TO ALL GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND TO SET UP INDIAN
LIBRARIES IN INDIA AND ABROAD AS ARE CONSIDERED BY THE
TRUSTEES PERTINENT
TO ACCEPT DONATIONS OF SETTLEMENTS AND ENDOWMENTS OF
BOOKS WORTHABLE AND PUBLISHABLE PROPERTY FOR ALL OR
ANY IN THE ABOVE SAID FIELD FROM SUCH OTHER DONATIONS
AS THE TRUSTEE MAY CONSIDER APPROPRIATE
FOR THE ART OF INK AND PAPER SERVICES IN FUTURE THE TRUSTEE
AND THE TRUSTEE OF ANY PUBLIC WORK TRANSFERS AND
DONATES ANY WORTHABLE PROPERTY TO THIS TRUST, THE SAME MAY BE ACCEPTED SUBJECT TO
THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SUCH FRANCHISES WHICH

जूनागढ़ दुर्ग

इसका नाम जूनागढ़ दुर्ग है। यह एक ऐसी दुर्ग है जिसका निर्माण बिकानेर के राजा राय सिंह जी ने करवाया था। इसका निर्माण 1888 में खत्म हो गया था। इसका निर्माण विश्वास करने वालों के लिए एक अद्भुत वास्तु है। इसकी विशेषताएँ इसके विविध दर्शनीय वास्तुओं, अद्भुत शिल्पों और उत्तम वास्तुकलाओं के लिए हैं। इसकी विशेषताएँ इसके विविध दर्शनीय वास्तुओं, अद्भुत शिल्पों और उत्तम वास्तुकलाओं के लिए हैं।

INDO ASIA TOURS



SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Bikaner

Journey into the heart of India.

Supriya heard many stories about Bikaner from her mother, who grew up here as a young girl. The narrow streets of the Old City, tales of the temple mice and the grand Laxmi Niwas Palace were always part of the many incidents that were part of the family's life here. On her travels through Rajasthan, this was a definite stop - to create memories like her mother and possibly try and relive a life close to the sandy dunes that engulf the sun behind them in the evenings. The orange glow in the sky and the strains of folk music from the camps was a memory that will be forever etched in her mind.



One of the rooms inside Junagarh Fort

Bikaner at first, might seem like the mirror image of neighbouring destinations like Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Jaipur to first time travellers to Rajasthan, but look closer and you will be able to unearth a whole new world of culture, sights and food. Not much treaded in the Rajasthan circuit, those who wend their ways to the city are left nothing short of mesmerized. That is exactly what happened to our Indo Asia Tours writer, Supriya, on her first visit to the city. There are a few things that struck her as ones that would be forever etched in her memory.

Old City

The best way to be pulled into an authentic vibe of the city is to head to its oldest part. Like the rest of Rajasthan's major towns, a 7km-long, 18th-century wall with five majestic entrance gates also encircles Bikaner's Old City. Of these, the main entrance is a triple-arched one called Kothe Gate. Despite the swelling traffic, the sea of people and their businesses crammed in the narrow lanes of the Old City, there is an atmospheric medieval feel to the city – one that is best explored on foot. Bright textiles, weathered silverware and jewellery and paintings peep from every shop. It is difficult not to get drawn to the

splash of colours.

Forts and Palaces

Even if one has trundled up a gazillion forts and palaces in Rajasthan, there is always room for one more. Not so much for the sandstone architecture, beautiful gardens and the intricately carved awnings, but more for the legends around the first owners and builders of these fairytale like structures. Bikaner is no different. The Junagarh Fort and the Laxmi Niwas Palace are reminiscent of the grandiose living style of the past Maharanas of Rajasthan.

Think of vast tracts of barren land in the late 15th century was called 'Jangaldesh' (forested land), that was made into a vibrant city. It was a mighty task taken up by Rao Bika, who established the city in 1488 A.D. Prince Bika had acquired the skill from his valiant father, Rao Jodha—the founder of Jodhpur. He moved out of Jodhpur and set out on an ambitious and adventurous military adventure, to set up this new city. Rao Bika laid the foundation of Bikaner in 1488 AD, and first constructed a small fortress in Rati Ghati. Today this site is situated at the southwest end of the old walled city near Laxminath Ji temple. The royal family of Bikaner lived there for many years till a new fort called Chintamani was constructed by Raja Rai Singhji, the sixth ruler of Bikaner, from 1571 to 1612 AD. This is now known as Junagarh. The un-missable fort rises from the desert, reveling in its imperial charm. A walk through the halls and galleries of the fort gives an insight into the illustrious lives of the Rajasthan royalty and a unique architectural style.

Laxmi Niwas Palace is the other ethereal structure in Bikaner that is bound to leave one awe-struck. The sandstone palace may be the former residential palace built by Maharajah Ganga Singh, but it was designed by the British architect, Col Samuel Swinton Jacob in the year 1902. It is said that the palace was commissioned by the

ruler to ensure employment to the townspeople of the Kingdom. Its Indo-Saracenic architecture is elaborate and fascinating. Now a luxury heritage hotel, it commands a few hours of your time to sit in the restaurant for a drink and admire the sheer magnitude and scale of work put in the palace.

In the company of furry friends

They peep at you from every nook and cranny of the marble temple. Almost 20,000 of them roam the cool temple floor, eating from mud bowls. 20,000 might be too big a company in a temple, but you won't be jostled at all as these are the in-house rats. Even though you might be surrounded by them, the word 'rodents' is not what might come in your mind on visiting the famous Karni Mata Temple. Keep your eyes peeled to see a white one rat scurrying amongst thousands of brown ones to ensure good luck. This unique temple is one that might have made Bikaner famous on the tourist sector, but should not be missed on any account. The legends of the temple dates back to the 1400s, but the current structure is just over 100 years old. It is said that Karni Mata promised that all male storytellers of the Charan caste, that they would be reincarnated as rats in her temple. When they die as rats, they are once more reincarnated as members of the Depavats family, Karni Mata's descendants. Now who wouldn't want that? One thing is for sure. After this trip, you will be ripped off your fear of rodents forever.

Bikaneri Bhujia

A trip to Bikaner cannot be completed without the delicious crunchy bhujia (fried snack) that the city is famous for. Not only is the snack a household dish, it has also become an important cottage industry for the city. You can walk down the old city and pick up a packet but be warned that this will accompany you only a few hours— it's that delicious.

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The name Ganga Risala has an illustrious history to it. It is the name given to the corps, which was founded by Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner after the British government of India accepted his offer to raise a force of 500 soldiers. The camel troop, though merged with others from the state, have a fine record of service and still march in the parade on Republic Day of India each year.

At Ganga Risala Desert Safari, it is a step back in history to explore the dunes on these swaying ships of the desert. The rustic charm combined with luxurious Swiss tents is hard to resist.

- Luxury Swiss tents in the middle of the desert
- Luxurious interiors converge with rustic air
- Exquisite dining with local flavours
- Memorable folk song and dance performances
- Sheer indulgence in the heart of Bikaner's dunes
- Fitness ensured in the mini golf course
- Camel back safaris reminiscent of olden days
- Day long excursions to a black buck sanctuary
- Kolayat – a village at the edge of the River

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Holiday Inn makes a foray in Chandigarh



Inter Continental Hotels Group (IHG) has opened its first Holiday Inn in Chandigarh Panchkula. It is the tenth Holiday Inn hotel in India. Located on the Kalka Shimla Highway, the hotel provides easy access to a number of tourist attractions as well as commercial hubs, making it a great choice for both business and leisure travellers.

The 127-room hotel is set at the foot of the Morni Hills, an area well-known for its views of the Himalayas, and next to the Panchkula Golf Course. The hotel has easy access to tourist attractions such as Sukhna Lake, Rock Garden, Cactus Garden and Sector 17 market which is ideal for shopping and dining. For guests travelling for business, the hotel is located near the business districts of IT Park, Mohali, Baddi and Zirakpur. Chandigarh Airport and Railway Station are both within a short drive from the hotel.

With eight meeting rooms and event spaces, the property is a great choice for business meetings as well as large scale events, for up to 500 people. A well-equipped fitness centre, spa and an outdoor swimming pool completes the experience for guests.

A brand new identity for West Bengal



revealed its re-branding, which talks of the state as 'the sweetest part of India'. It now brings other destinations in its folds, moving away from the usual suspects like Kolkata and Darjeeling. The new avtaar of West Bengal was thought of and created by top ad agency, Ogilvy & Mather. The new logo embodies the fresh thinking of the state where tourism is concerned. The logo will be seen in all new collaterals from now. Director of Tourism, West Bengal, Umapada Chatterjee, said, "We are now trying to catch up with the leading tourism states in the country. We have everything the tourists want to experience, but we could not market them well." Hopefully, a new brand identity and image will drive travel enthusiasts to explore the state.

'Visit Kerala' 2015 launched

Union Minister of State (MoS) for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and MoS for Civil Aviation, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, was at the helm of the 'Visit Kerala'



2015-16 launch, an all-year tourism campaign focusing on a lifetime experience to travellers coming to the state. Kerala has raised the bar high and set ultimate standards to market its

natural beauty, cultural splendor, culinary traditions and hospitality. This campaign is bound to boost the interest of travellers even more. In his address, Dr. Sharma promised central assistance to the state to raise the profile of the state as a top tourist destination on the world map. He said, "Kerala needs to be promoted across the world. The state has a lot of potential. It has beautiful nature, backwater, cleanliness, security and everything that is required in a state to promote tourism." This has ushered a massive positive effect on the industry. There was focus on women empowerment as well, through their participation in the growth of tourism.

Goa to welcome eTV arrivals from the second list of 31 nations

The Goa International airport is all set to welcome e-Tourist Visa (eTV) arrivals from the second list of 31 countries, which were enlisted for the new facility by the Centre. Given that the state is in the middle of the monsoon season, this will prove to be a big boost. The first list included 45 countries and now stands at 76 countries with the latest inclusion of 31 more. The Centre plans to extend this to 150 by next year. Travellers from countries like Argentina, Armenia, Aruba, Belgium, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Malta, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, St Lucia, St



Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Sweden, Tanzania, East Timor, Turks and Caicos Islands, the UK, Uruguay and Venezuela are eligible for eTV scheme under the new visa policy. The airport at Dabolim is bound to see a massive surge and has already made adequate arrangements for catering to tourists, availing of ETV facility. The number of arrivals has already crossed 16,875 as of 8th June. Given that recession has marred the number of inbound tourists, this is welcome news for hotels and all ancillary businesses related to tourism.

eTV for Sweden soon: Pranab Mukherjee

India's journey into expanding its tourist base now spreads its wings to Sweden. The country will soon be extended the e-Tourist Visa facility. This news came from the presidential quarters when President Pranab Mukherjee said as he invited the Nordic country to be a part of government's flagship programmes like the 'Make in India' initiative. Addressing a seminar on "India and Sweden: Co-creating a brighter future", Mukherjee said, "If India and Sweden pooled their innovative energies to address the challenges that India faces, the solutions that they come up with may benefit not just the two countries but the whole world." Sweden will feature in the list of countries to be soon granted the e-Tourist visa facility, which will contribute enormously to the footfall of Swedish nationals coming to explore the concept of 'Incredible India'.

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GEBEKO EXPERIENCE

Indo Asia Tours successfully closed a unique event, 'GeBeCo Experience', for our German partner of 27 years and counting. ***The 'India' showcase event invited over 100 travel agents from Germany to taste a slice of the vast Indian offering over customized preconvention tours for intimate groups to different parts of the state.*** After an exciting trip the groups converged in the city of Jaipur. Here workshops and discussions culminated into solution oriented ways forward. We are pleased to know that 'Incredible India' and its gem, the state of Rajasthan, certainly left an indelible mark in the minds of our future ambassadors. The 'GeBeCo Experience' also gave the Indo Asia Tours Tour relevant insights on what the tour operators and their clients need – a two way dialogue is what we always believe in. The event was a resounding success and we look forward to such interactions with all our key partners.



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MEET US AT



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

- **BIRD FAIR, U.K. : 21-23 Aug 2015**
- **Top Resa, Paris : 29 Sep -02 Oct 2015**
- **PATA, Bangalore : 06-08 Sep 2015**
- **SITE, Delhi : 23-25 Oct 2015**
- **Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart, Bhopal : 16-18 Oct 2015**

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The Indo Asia Tours journey started, keeping in on the fundamental tenets of running a successful tour – comfort and authentic experiences for the travellers.

Our past experience as tour leaders in the industry affirmed two basic factors that are important ingredients to ensure a memorable holiday in India - a comfortable transportation to cover long distances (sometimes 10- 12 days) and a well-verses guide with local insights. Let me take you through a short spin on what makes the travel experience with us special, safe and comfortable.

We pay great heed to basic things that constitute travelling. Of this, the most important is daily transportation that keeps one on the road for hours. To ensure that this is comfortable, we have a fleet of made to order buses with top of the line technology. Think comfortable push back seats, a clear public address system, anti braking system, ample leg space and overhead luggage compartments that result in a smooth ride. Apart from the engineering excellence, these buses are built to have a designated space soft drinks for long drives, spare parts, extra tyres and large fuel tanks to ensure a hassle free ride on cross-country journeys. Preventive maintenance and regular checks ensure that there are minimal breakdowns. Functional fire extinguishers on board. Every bus is fitted with a first aid box and oxygen cylinders and all our drivers are trained by Red Cross to deliver basic help.

We can take great pride in our drivers, who are reliable, sincere and very calm. They understand the needs of our clients well and sincerely put efforts to fulfill them. An Indo Asia Tours bus is not ordinary. It is the epitome of comfort, reliability and safety.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!



Shrawan Kumar | Tour Consultant

With Shrawan's love for travel, proficiency in German and enthusiasm to share the culture of the country with our guests, he has been a valuable asset of Indo Asia Tours since 1994. We can count on him to go the extra mile and shine as an example for others!