

INDO ASIA DARIES

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INDO ASIA TOURS
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Shireen

Shireen from Israel has been a vagabond from the age of 20 years. She discovered the wonders of India on her maiden trip to the subcontinent. **Shireen traversed the country from one end of the other taking in the diversity of different regions.** Shireen recalls, “The idea of India sank in day by day. It was a thrilling experience to see how the locals were so in tune to their traditions.” The vibrant local life across the country left her in thrall.

Her favourite memory is spending a day with the tea-pickers of Nagaland’s sprawling tea estates. It was late October and a morning walk opened up a host of photo opportunities for her. **This is her favourite image from the trip, when two shy tea-picker girls turned away coyly when the camera was pointed at them. It made for a great moment, that their heads peeped just above a row of tea bushes.** On the other side of their heads was a burst of giggles – but Shireen was happy that this was something that the viewer couldn’t see. It was a secret that the girls and Shireen shared.

From the Seven Sisters of India, Shireen went through to the heart of the nation, Madhya Pradesh and made her final stop at Kerala. After spanning the length and the breadth of the country, Shireen felt that she had a spiritual connect with the country. Ever since, she has been returning every two years to discover new things.



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

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT](#)

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ON A TEA TRAIL

Photo Location : Nagaland



One of the communities at the Bastar Dushera

It is no surprise that India is a country of ancient cultures. Longstanding traditions are still celebrated and practiced in many parts of the country. Many faraway villages and forests are still inhabited with the tribal communities, making the social landscape an interesting mix of the ancient and new society – one that any traveller would love to explore. A great way to get inducted to the vibrant local life of India is through its festivals. Here are some of the festivals that one must not miss..

Bastar Dushera

A commemoration of Goddess Danteshwari, the Bastar Dushera is a 75-day festival that takes place in Chhattisgarh. **A riot of colours and ceremonies embedded in history, this is the place where the convergence of thousands of tribals with their own village deities can be seen.** As one of the most ancient enclaves of the region, Bastar boasts of antiquated rituals, traditions and style of living by close to 40 tribes here. Bastar is truly one of the last bastions of traditional lifestyles left in the country. The region exposes you to the striking world of witchcraft, local deities, their magical powers, dances, songs, tribal-centric crafts like bell metal work called dhokra and use of wrought iron, terracotta, sisal, cowrie shells, stones and paintings and tattooing – all of this can be seen during the Bastar Dushera.

Hornbill Festival

Kisama Heritage Village converts into a venue effervescent with excitement from 1st to 7th of December each year. **Culture clubs of all major tribes of Nagaland come to perform traditional dances and music recitals. The life of the villages is depicted in small areas designated to each tribe.** Travellers congregate to see tribal activities with weapons, specific dresses and food, music, dance and local cuisine for the whole day. Ofcourse, the highlight for many is the chance to taste the different variety of the local rice beer called Zutho.



Tribes at the Hornbill festival

Ram-Lila

An enactment of India's oldest epic, Ramayana, is held in the month of October, before the big festival of Dushera. **The month-long schedule of episodes from the epic keep large crowds engaged and in thrall.** The Ram Lila of Ramnagar (close to Varanasi), Allahabad and Delhi are the most famous. The set up is quite basic and most of the key cast consists of children dressed up to play the Gods and other people featured in the story.

Kila Raipur Rural Olympics

This is the Indian version of Olympics, which is held in the state of Punjab. **Apart from the adrenalin rush, there is little one can compare to with the world famous athletic meet.** The bullock cart race, daredevil stunts and acrobatics with traditional weapons are the key events. The event presents one of the most exciting photo opportunities for travellers.

CROSSING CULTURES

FESTIVALS: A TRYST WITH THE REAL INDIA

STORIES FROM THE SUB-CONTINENT

Holiday Inn, Kochi Escape to Luxury

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Expect well-appointed rooms with smart space with ergonomic chair, high-speed Internet connectivity, iPod docking station, tea & coffee maker & in-room safe amongst other high-end amenities. Highlights include:

- Multiple dining options: Masala Restaurant , Deli KC, Roma and Stadia
- Health Club to revitalize after a long day's sightseeing
- Lay cocooned with rejuvenating therapies at the indulgent spa
- Expansive infinity pool that looks out to the lush landscape
- Business needs resolved: A centre packed with facilities
- Superior, Deluxe & Suites with exemplary furnishings
- High-end amenities to amplify the stay in the rooms
- Inspiring day tours organised by the travel team



TOP SPOT





Crowne Plaza, Kochi

The most striking address in town.



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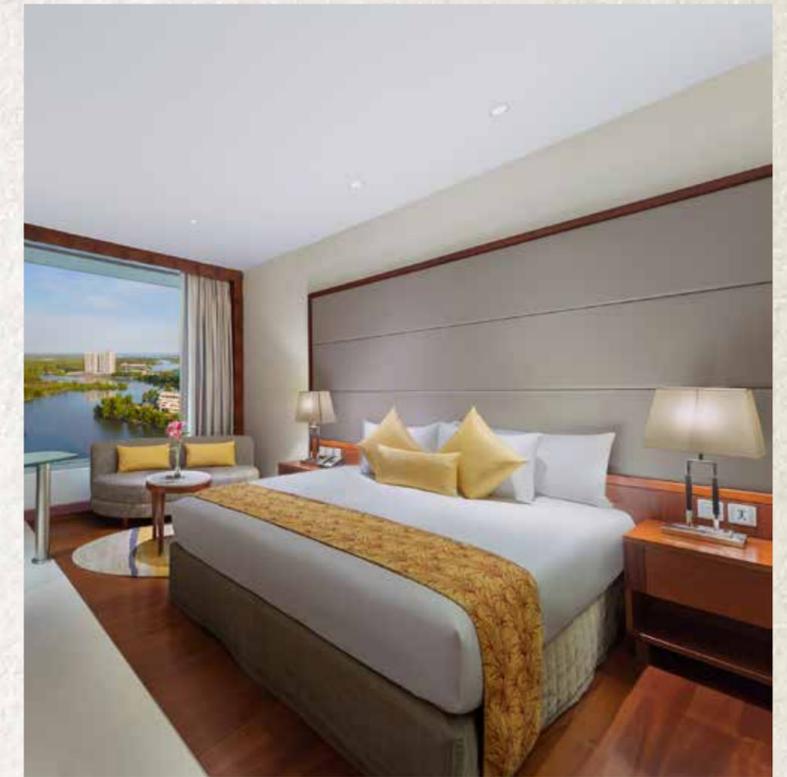
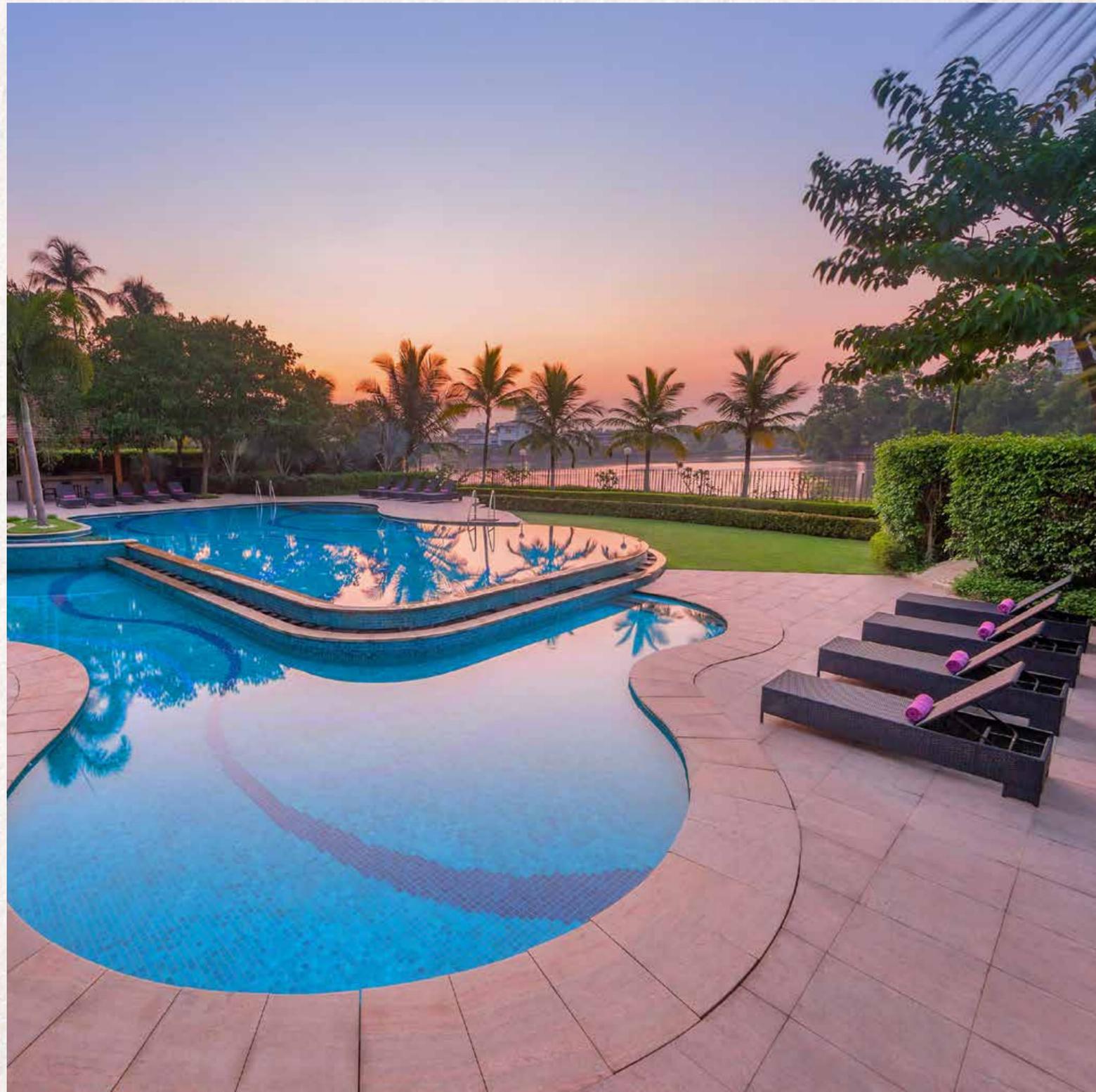
CROWNE PLAZA



InterContinental
Hotels Group

A panoramic view of the soothing backwaters makes for a perfect backdrop to the superior amenities and facilities of the business hotel. Crowne Plaza notches up the hospitality scape of the city with its superior ambience. Highlights include:

- 24 hours Health Club for whenever you want to hit the gym
- Indoor games and outdoor activities to keep you engaged
- Sohum spa and wellness sanctuary for a tryst with bliss
- A shimmering blue swimming pool to soothe your senses
- Contemporarily styled meeting and conference rooms to get your work done
- Extreme comfort in all the 284 rooms
- Mosaic, Aroma Lounge & Dell, Trilogi and ConneXions Bar are the dining options to unwind
- Well-facilitated and well-modernized banquet halls and conference halls



**TOP
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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in

Kochi

Journey into the heart of India.

If any state in India holds sway to one of the most interesting cultural fabrics of country, it is the southwestern strip of land next to the Arabian Sea – Kerala. **Impressions of a time when Arab and Jewish spice traders lived here between the 1st century AD till late 14th century AD can still be seen in the state. Despite a jumble of religions and cultures, there is a pleasant secular harmony within this region, which lives till date.** On one of Supriya’s many trips, she decided to ditch the well-known spots of Kerala and traverse her way to all the districts in search of the most authentic aspects of the state. From sampling traditional biryani in Kannur, to being invited by Theyyam artists to their camp in Bekal, rowing a slim boat in the water canals of Alleppey and watching an exclusive performance of Kalaripayatu by the sea-side, she was excited to be privy to the local life that evades travellers. Of all the places, it was Fort Kochi and places around that are firmly imbedded in her head. These are some of the few highlights from her trip .

Shri Chottanikkara Temple

A unique temple that is thronging with devotees, who come here to pray to the Goddess to heal loved ones with mental illness, this is something that should not be missed.

The Goddess Shakti is prayed to in three forms - Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Durga in different parts of the day. In the morning, the idol is dressed in white, signifying her role as Saraswathi, in the afternoon she is dressed in crimson as Lakshmi and adorns a blue dress in the evening, as Durga.



In Conversation with a kathakali artist

If you get time enough to stand in front of the idol before hurriedly being ushered out, you can see her holding the chakra, conch, abhaya mudra and a pose of giving with all four arms.

In Conversation with a Kathakali Artist

The Greenix Village is my favourite in-city destination in Fort Kochi to satiate my appetite for the vibrant art forms



Kodungallur Bhagvathy Temple

of Kerala. **Several performances of Kathakali, Theyyam and Kalaripayatu are shrunk to fit in one hour for hurried travellers – the show starts at 6pm.** But one can enter the complex and see the Kathakali artists getting ready from 5pm. It is at this time, that a long conversation with the artists is possible. Their love for the artform is palpable. Ofcourse, getting a picture of their make up is an additional perk.



Ferry to Vypin Island

Bhagavathy Kodungallur Temple

The Bharani festival, between March and April, is one of the main reasons to visit the temple, off Fort Kochi. It is started by the Royal family opening up an umbrella in front of the sanctum, a symbolic gesture to let all castes and creeds enter the sanctum. **Thousands of devotees dressing in red saris (even men) and dancing in a trance can be seen on this day.** Calling themselves Komarams, they visit here to perform a ritual called the Kavu Theendal. They hurl sticks and abuses at the Goddess, while running around the temple with sabers held high in the air. Watching them is a mesmerizing experience. Watching them is an overwhelming experience that gives a glimpse of local life.

Ferry Ride to Vypin Island

Propping my cycle up the ferry, along with the rush of scooters, cars, hand-pulled carts and bikes was not easy, but a novel experience. I was out with my mode of transportation for the day, on top a massive heaving mountain of metal, which was going to float without a ruffle across to the Island of Vypin from Fort Kochi. **After the bustle of school children, traders, businessmen and a handful of visitors settled into the cramped ferry, a soothing lull surrounded everyone.** Adding to that was a brilliant sunrise, filling in the sky with a golden glow. Since Kerala lies on the western edge of the country, this sunrise was an atypical experience. Try it.

TOP SPOT

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* image courtesy: Simply CVR, Pixabay

Shangri-La Expands to the Deccan



Luxury hotel Shangri-La Hotel has extended operations to the IT Capital of the country, Bangalore with a stunning 387-roomed hotel. Located at one of the

most prime addresses of the Garden City, the hotel overlooks the green cover of Cubbon Park, with a view of the Bangalore Palace in the distance. **There are comfortably appointed 397 rooms in the property, including 30 suites that range from 98 to 274 square metres, 3 Governor Suites and a palatial Shangri-La Suite.** These are spread over 19 storeys of the hotel. But it's the Grand Ballroom that one can't keep their eyes off. With a height of 9.5 metres, and covering 739 square metres, it is one of the largest meeting venues in the city. With multiple dining facilities and superior services, the hotel has notched up the hospitality quotient of the city. Shangri-La is only a 30-minute drive from the Kempegowda International Airport of Bangalore.

Starwood's Aloft Gears Up for 2016



Starwood's Aloft chain of hotels has been getting a lot of traction for the last few years in Chennai, Bangalore and Chandigarh. The boutique hotel is now gearing up for

the capital of the country, to offer its impeccable service and a host of facilities. The New Delhi Aloft will find its address close to the airport in Aerocity, making it easily accessible for those coming into the city. **The hotel is on a countdown till December 2016 when the 200 guest rooms, 1,335 square meters of meeting space along with high speed internet access and a number of facilities will be showcased to the travellers.** Following the successful format of the other locations Aloft will bring its facilities like spa, banquet arrangements, conference halls and multiple eating options to for travellers to Delhi.

Renaissance finds an address in Lucknow



Electronic visas have been Lucknow will be the chosen city for Renaissance Hotels as a first in North India. Well appointed 112 rooms, spread over 12 storeys will offer a bird's eye view of the city. Uttar Pradesh has been seeing a surge of travellers, who want to explore beyond the

Taj Mahal. Lucknow, the capital of the state, is the ideal location as it offers a vast sightseeing platter and access to key cities. **With exquisite options, comprising of both local Awadhi and International cuisine, in-house patisserie and a poolside bar on the 16th floor, the hotel has a robust line up of dining spaces.** Other leisure facilities include a well-equipped fitness centre, a yoga studio and a rooftop infinity pool and Jacuzzi. But it's the rooms, with superior amenities and facilities, which will make a perfect retreat.

"Renaissance Hotels is a global, lifestyle hospitality brand that seeks to inspire and provoke its guests to discover something new and different each and every time they visit," confirms Rajeev Menon, Chief Operating Officer – South East Asia & Pacific, Marriott International. There could not be a better location for the brand to start in the North of India.

All Set to Fly High: Helicopter Tourism in Mumbai



The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has joined hands with Girisons Airways to roll out Heli Tourism in Mumbai. As a commemoration to the World Tourism Day, short helicopters flights will operate from Juhu airport every Sunday for 15 minutes at the cost of Rs 3,939 excluding taxes for tourists. **A veritable way of seeing the brilliant skyline of the city**

and avoiding the traffic clogged roads, this comes as a breath of relief and innovation for travellers. The Managing Director, MTDC, Mr. Paraag Jain Nainuttia, suggested that this is a unique way for the travellers to get a glimpse of the expansive city of Mumbai. "The idea is to provide an enthralling experience to the tourists and boost potential tourism in state. Mumbai attracts a lot of foreign and domestic tourist and Heli – Tourism will definitely help in increasing the footfall," was the final word on the success of the new venture.

Varanasi opens the airport to Vistara flights



As part of the Heritage Arc, and the base for the Buddhist circuit, Varanasi is an important junction in Uttar Pradesh. Slow but steadily increasing its portfolio in India, Vistara has announced bookings for the latest destination –

Varanasi. The city is 12th on the list of many that Vistara has already started operations in. The Delhi-Varanasi-Delhi sector kicks off in October 2015. **The airlines recently achieved the benchmark of flying 500,000 customers across its network and hopes to extend its services to the vast diaspora of leisure, corporate and pilgrimage travellers.** The iconic city has been seeing a new surge of interest amongst travellers and Vistara's foray into providing great service on this sector.

NEWS&VIEWS





MEET US AT



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

- India Tourism B2b Meetings (Western Europe) : 20-28 Oct 2015
- Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart, Bhopal: 16-18 Oct
- SITE, Delhi: 23-25 Oct
- WTM, London: 2-5 Nov
- USTOA Annual Conference & Marketplace, US: 03 -05 Dec 2015

IA SAYS



Rajasthan—a name that resonates with sentiments of intrigue, awe and sheer allure. The state of Rajasthan has bloomed into a riveting destination that is both topographically stunning and culturally rewarding. **While many of you might be aware with most of its highlights, we want to now showcase the lesser known, but fantastic festivals of the state.** Incorporating these into your itinerary will enrich the experience.

Cattle fairs are a common feature on the calendars of Rajasthan. The Pushkar is one name that many of you might have heard before. It is the **Chandra Bhagha festival** that has truly held my curiosity in the last few years. The fair is organised at the confluence of two rivers in Jhalarpattan (East Rajasthan). A hectic two days involve trading of camels, cows, horses and other cattle. Traders arrive from long distances with their troupe to showcase and sell, or buy animals that can be used on farmlands or transportation. Another riot of colour explodes at **Kolayat festival** near Bikaner. Tribes from Rajasthan and adjoining states come to Bikaner to bathe on the 52 holy ghats (stepped edge of a river) of the Kolayat River. This is a brilliant photo opportunity.

Bhinmal is a small town well known for its mojdiies (camel hide shoes). Ironically, this is also the venue for an interesting cattle fair that brings traders to this town. Other than these, the **Kailadevi fair, Maillinath fair and Ramdevra fair** near Phalodi are some of the names that infuse a great cultural orientation to the lesser-known festivals and fairs of the state of Rajasthan. The local food, songs and dances combined with the splash of colour that the Rajasthani attires brings, make for an excellent addition to the itinerary.

We, at India Asia Tours work with locals at these isolated destinations to provide authentic insights into the vibrant lives of Rajasthani people. Our team is well versed with the terrain and has a special connect with the locals who are happy to invite our guests for a glimpse into their lives. The heartwarming connection is palpable, despite the language and cultural gap. We ensure that the travellers get to see the fairs with proximity, but also slip back into comfort in their exquisite retreats. Adding these fairs and festivals gives a perfect local flavour to the trip.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!



Sanjay Mehta | Tour Leader

Given our focus on offering the best local experiences to travellers who come to India, making them understand each nuance is important. Sanjay Mehta is our go-to person for ensuring that nothing is lost in translation for our German guests. One of the most reliable and fun tour leaders in North India, Sanjay has been a significant part of the Indo Asia team.