

INDO ASIA DARIES

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INDO ASIA TOURS

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Image courtesy: Kevin Thomas



Eric McEawn

Trevor Nicholas' 2013 Asian journey was punctuated with several frightful occasions of 'Delhi Belly' in India, language challenge in China and getting swindled off his wallet in Thailand. Exhausted, thrilled and sometimes at his wit' end, he was looking for some non-fuss time, and decided to stay on a few extra days in Sri Lanka. ***Nothing could have been more soothing than watching a herd of elephants splash around indulgently at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage.*** This picture summed up his trip as he watched the herd chaotically enter the river area through a slim lane, but soon fall into a calming rhythm when left to themselves. Sitting at the edge of the river, sipping Ceylon tea, he finally felt at peace.



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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OUT FOR THE AFTERNOON SWIM

Photo Location : Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage, Sri Lanka



The lesser known Red Taj of Agra

For many travellers, the Taj Mahal is the epitome of beauty and pinnacle of sightseeing interests in India. While this may be expected – the structure is that jaw droppingly beautiful, but for the offbeat traveller, Agra holds many more secrets. Usually, travellers tend to spend only a day in the city. We suggest you allocate two days to get under the skin..

Roman Catholic Cemetery

Also known as the ‘Red Taj’, the erstwhile 16th century Armenian cemetery (now a Roman Catholic one) houses a marvelous structure in red, inspired by the Taj Mahal. Though much smaller, it is reminiscent of Taj Mahal’s glory. It was built by Col John William Hessian who died in 1803 A.D, while serving the Mughals. Roam the cemetery to see more 16th and 17th century tombstones, many of them with Persian inscriptions.

Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary & Keetham

Unplug from the history filled sightseeing and head out to Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and Keetham Lake just outside Agra (26km) towards Mathura. Drive along a babul (Acacia) flanked path to reach the Keetham Lake. Winters are a brilliant time to see the migratory birds. Even though it is difficult to spot wild animals here, one is never too far away from the call of a peacock.

Cafe Sheroes Hangout

An easygoing vibe, quirky pictures on walls, designer clothes, open mic nights and ‘pay what you feel’ policy sums up what Sheroes is almost about. It has one more winning aspect that will ensure that it’s your top choice to hang out after a long day’s sightseeing. ***The café is run by and for victims of five victims of acid***



Cafe Sheroes Hangout in the city centre

attack. The idea was propagated by Chhanv foundation in order for people and the victims to ease into a socially amiable situation. With many of the victims interacting with the guests, the boundaries of awkwardness have almost been wiped out – go see for yourself.

Ram Bagh

Agra’s oldest garden, this was established by Babur in 1528. It lies in the middle of a bustling market like an oasis. One should not miss the park if you are on the grand Mughal trail, despite tribes of monkeys scouring the area for food. Mornings at the manicured ancient lawns are dotted with health nuts.

Sikandra

Oddly, Emperor Akbar started the construction of his own mausoleum while he was still alive. ***Situated 10km northwest of Agra, the red sandstone and marble structure rises towards the sky in the middle of a verdant green garden, where black bucks loiter with abandon.*** This is the soothing ambience of Sikandra. Don’t miss it.

CROSSING CULTURES

Punnamada Resort, Allappuzha Tranquility Redefined

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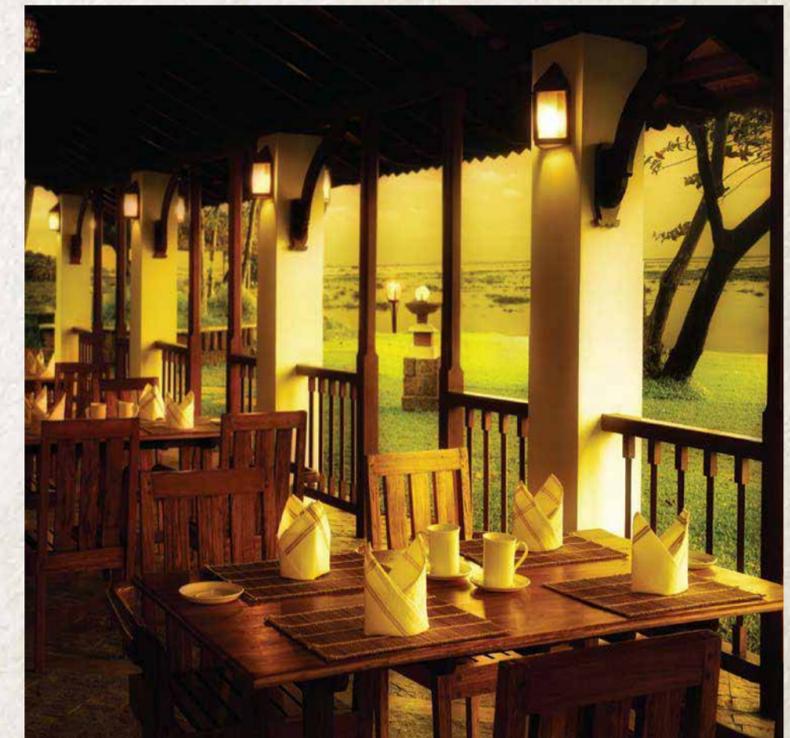
INDO ASIA TOURS



At the edge of the shimmering Punnamada Lake, the namesake resort offers an unmatched serene ambience. **Earthy cottages, authentic local cuisine and a promise of rejuvenation at the Ayurveda & Yoga centre make for the unparalleled experience.**

Highlights include:

- Lake view villas with charming aesthetics
- Sound of soft waves of the Punnamada Lake makes a soothing backdrop
- Ensconded in a spirited green
- Holds the promise of rejuvenation and revitalisation
- A decided Kerala heritage ambience
- High-end houseboats available to book
- Superior amenities to amplify the stay
- Authentic and rich Kerala flavours to try
- Swimming pool and other activities
- Strongly eco inclined



**TOP
SPOT**

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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Alleppey

Journey into the heart of India.

Supriya's first tryst with Alleppey was way back in 2009, when the excitement of the snake boat race gripped her. The second Saturday of August is the designated day of the historical boat race held in the racetracks of the otherwise calm backwaters. That trip was assigned only to participate in the local fervour at the sidelines, but over the next few years she scanned the coastal town with the alacrity of an enthusiastic and inquisitive traveller, unfolding several highlights. Her pick for the most interesting aspects of Alleppey are below:

Backwaters Cruise



House boats line the Punnamada region in Alleppey

The existence of over 1000 houseboats in Alleppey alone bears testimony to the popularity of the cruise experience in its slim canals. Have your fill of gliding in the placid waters in the comfort of a houseboat. **Besides all the comforts close at hand, it's the ultimate form of relaxation. An overnight stay (22 hours cruise) is the most optimum way to enjoy the home cooked meals, striking waterway topography, lavish bedrooms and promising Kerala hospitality.**

RKK Memorial Museum

A large sprawl of artefacts, murals and paintings from all over the world unfolds at the spic and span personal museum. Expect to see porcelain from China, a 1948 Buick, carved sculptures from Africa and an impressive collection of curios from Belgium, South America, Japan, Italy Turkey and more. **The RKK Museum is a meticulously displayed private collection of Mrs. Betty, wife of deceased local coir magnet, Revi Karuna Karan.** Her worldwide acquisitions consist of

the largest private collection of ivory and Swarovski in the world.

Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple

One of the most revered temples of Kerala, the Sri Krishna temple lies only 14km south of Alleppey in a small town called Ambalappuzha. **Visit at dawn for a calming spiritual experience, within the high walled temple built inside a generously spread compound.** A Kalyani (water pond) and the temple elephant welcome you as you enter. Saunter around the beautiful lamp lined walls of the sanctum and see people weighing the amount of offerings on a scale. Non Hindus are allowed outside the sanctum.



The Shri Krishna Temple at Ambalappuzha

Pathiramanal

Translated to 'midnight sands' this verdant island in the middle of the Vembanad Lake is only accessible by boat. **Migratory birds are said to be partial to this location, give its lush green surroundings.** There is no other infrastructure here besides a 2km path that skirts the island. The 1.5-hour ride by a motorboat to

the island through the Vembanad Lake is fascinating. The lake is dotted with cormorants and fishermen setting up nets.

Nehru Snake Boat Race



The Shri Krishna Temple at Ambalappuzha

The Snake Boat races of Kerala are a marvelous display of sinew and strength on the calm backwaters of the region. **The annual 'Vallam Kalli' or boat race is organized in the canals of the region. The one held in Alleppey is known as the Nehru Snake Boat Race and is held on the second Saturday of August each year.** Historically, it is believed that the Kings of the surrounding areas could only fight in the region on these vehicles to maneuver through the canals. Even 400 years later, the tradition continues in a battle of vigour. The 100-seater narrow boats are about 100 feet long with oarsmen sitting astride and 6-7 team members to steer. The team also consists of 2-3 people who clap and sing rhythmically to encourage the rowers and maintain the tempo.

TOP SPOT

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Leela marks its presence with a third address in NCR



Ambience Group's five-star deluxe hotel in East Delhi has been rechristened to The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi. This is the

third address for Leela hotels in the NCR. The sprawling 480-room property offers one of the largest conference and event space in India. Rajiv Kaul, President, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts said, "The addition of The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel Delhi to our portfolio further consolidates our presence in the Delhi-NCR region and underscores our asset light growth strategy. The hotel is designed to offer a seamless experience for large conferences, weddings, exhibitions, product launches to guests from here and overseas. As India emerges as a significant destination for world-class banqueting, conventions and events, this property shall further assist in making Delhi a preferred upscale MICE destination." The hotel offers 70,000 square feet of multi-purpose meeting and banqueting space, including a pillar-less ballroom with pre-function area in excess of 30,000 square feet, with the capacity to host more than 6000 guests reception style and 2500 seated theatre-style. The hotel lies in close vicinity of the atmospheric Old Delhi, as well as the business hubs, making it convenient for both leisure and business travellers

2016 – The year of the 6th Taj hotel in the Garden City



Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces will be opening Taj Bangalore, the latest addition to the group's already robust portfolio. This will be

the sixth Taj group hotel in the Garden City. Access to the Kempegowda International Airport will be easy for the 154-room property, as it will be built only a short distance from there. "Bangalore is the epicenter of India's entrepreneurial wave and an emerging centre for international conclaves and conferences. As the city continues to grow and thrive, we are excited to add to the momentum by welcoming the newest Taj hotel to the city. Taj Bangalore reflects the city's unique urban identity and will extend to its guests the unmistakable Taj warmth and elegance." These words of Prabhat Verma, Senior Vice President-Operations-South, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, sums up the sophisticated luxury that one can expect from the brand.

Fly over J&K's top exotic locales



The state of Jammu & Kashmir has started a helicopter service at INR 10,000 to-and-fro to resorts of Pahalgam and Gulmarg from the Srinagar Airport. Usually this ride can take more than 2 hours. The service will be available to boost the golf, conference and adventure tourism in

the state. "We want to allure guests to experience the thrill of helicopter ride over destinations like Pahalgam, Sonamarg and Gulmarg. It will also promote heli-skiing, adventure tourism, golfing, and incentive and conference tourism. As a tourist destination, J&K offers the best to the tourist in the country. Be it pilgrimage, golfing, heritage, shopping cuisine and destinations, we are looking to improve our infrastructure in the next 2-3 years and we will soon be the best destination as far as infrastructure is concerned. There are international 5 star chains like Hyatt, ITC, Radisson tying up with local resorts to improve high-end tourism. Hopefully, 2016 should be a good year for us as we will be focusing and promoting adventure tourism, golfing, pilgrim tourism in Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and we aim to receive good number of tourists in the coming season," said Farooq A. Shah, Secretary Tourism/ Managing Director, Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC).

New code share leads Jet Airways to have a base in Amsterdam



As a result of a new codeshare with Delta Air Lines and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Jet Airways will be flying daily from Mumbai and New Delhi to Amsterdam starting March end. Jet will now treat Amsterdam as its new hub in Europe, abandoning Brussels, which was previously the base. Customers travelling from Europe and the United States via Amsterdam to India and beyond would now get a new convenient option. Jet Airways will place its code on flights between Amsterdam and 11 destinations in the United States and Canada operated by Delta and KLM. These include, New York-

JFK, Newark, Chicago, Washington D.C., Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and Edmonton. Jet Airways will also codeshare on KLM-operated flights to 30 European destinations beyond Amsterdam including Madrid, Zurich and Milan. KLM's service between Amsterdam and New Delhi also forms part of this agreement. On the other hand, Delta and KLM customers flying from Europe and the United States to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport will be able to connect onto Jet Airways' new daily flights to New Delhi and Mumbai. Onward destinations that include Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kochi and Goa.

Lucknow gets a roaring connection to Singapore



Direct flights from Singapore to Lucknow make a foray this year. The inaugural flight already landed in early December. Tigerair, the airlines behind this, has pegged Lucknow as the sixth city in India which is connected to the eastern shores at Changi Airport. Tigerair will operate three weekly flights to the city. The airlines is eager to service the Indian travellers in North India and in turn creating better accessibility for Singapore travellers to touch India through Uttar Pradesh. "With our inaugural fare, we wish to provide the opportunity to travellers not only from UP but also other neighbouring districts to visit Singapore, experience the warmth of our services and explore the Tigerair network further. India has strong ties with Singapore and we are committed to increasing connectivity between India and Singapore," was the message by Teh Yik Chuan, Sales & Marketing Director, Tigerair. A special return fare of INR 10,999 (with conditions) is available for purchase for travel between 12th January 2016 to-14th April 2016.

NEWS&VIEWS



MEET US AT



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 :

- Destination East , Kolkata : 31st Jan & 01st Feb 2016
- Uttar Pradesh travel Mart, Agra : 21 – 23 Feb 2016

IA SAYS



As we bid adieu to the last year on an extremely content note, we are excited about 2016, that is sure to hold the promise of innovative travel solutions and taking first steps towards unfolding new stories and experiences. **May this year bring greater achievements and new heights for our partners, and that we continue this collaborative journey of creating experiences that inspire travellers around the world.**

Our big story this year will be travelling through the subcontinent by road, including neighbouring countries like Bangladesh. **The stunning country is wedged between the North Eastern states of India (also known as the Seven Sisters) and it is only natural that we do**

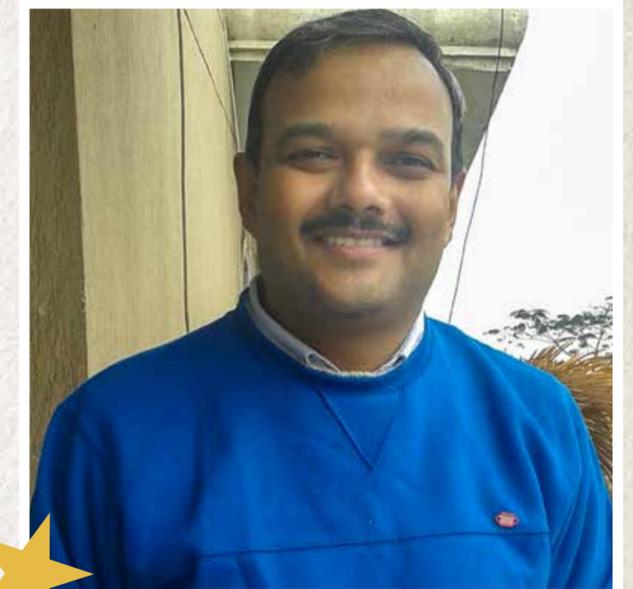
not omit the beauty of this across the border destination. A new land transit treaty between the four SAARC countries - India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal - allows easy movement of vehicular traffic from one country to another. This landmark agreement brings poses a new dimension of opening borders to travellers. The decision has been welcomed with much zeal as the neighbouring nations will be convenient to access and easily combinable with the North Eastern states of India. **Bangladesh holds sway in the realm of natural beauty with its 700 plus rivers. The serpentine capillaries on the map show you how lush this small nation can be.** A riverine journey to witness local life along the water and the rich biodiversity are the highlights of Bangladesh. It becomes our muse for this year as we set out to discover the rural vibe of this wonderland and build creative itineraries to encounter the most unexpected but gorgeous places in the country.

We, at Indo Asia Tours, have always been inclined towards keeping our travel footprint minimal. Looking at natural disasters that have struck in the last decade, it is only imperative that we take this seriously and do our bit of preserving natural environment. This goes for living cultures and history as well. **Not only have we worked closely with Government bodies for green initiatives, but we also keep an eye on infusing eco-conscious and sustainable travel solutions in all our itineraries.** This starts right at the office. We have pledged to make Indo Asia Tours paperless over the next few years. You will notice this as the year proceeds.

Let us begin the New Year with a fresh dash of wanderlust and bring the best of the subcontinent to travellers. After all, it is the year of new discoveries and adding a brand new dimension to travelling in the subcontinent. May the year be a prosperous one with a resolve to together create sustainable and exclusive travel solutions that will wow the traveller.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!



Amit Gupta | General Manager

It's been a decade since Amit Gupta has been part of the Indo-Asia family. The role of General Manager, Tours could not be more fitting for him, as not only is he passionate about travelling himself, but also understands the business of travel very well. His love for long drives and reading about inspiring people keeps him refreshed and always ready to take on new and challenging roles.