

I N D O A S I A
D **A** **R** **I** **E** **S**

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INDO ASIA TOURS

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IA SAYS



Julie Kale

Julie Kale visited Kerala and Tamil Nadu last year, only to find herself wanting to come back for over 2 months, the time she spent in her last trip. "There is just so much to do," she said. Julie found that a small village in the Chettinad region of Tamil Nadu took her by surprise, as she didn't expect much. The 18th century mansions of businessmen, ancient temples, the spicy food and the wonderful hand-woven cotton saris made an indelible mark on her trip. Even though the mammoth Chola temples of Thanjavur commanded much respect, she secretly pegged Chettinad as her favourite part of the trip. Julie got the chance to stay in one such mansion. *When she was leaving to go back, this is the last shot that she took of the place.*



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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AN 18TH CENTURY MANSION IN THE TOWN

Photo Location : Chettinad, Tamil Nadu



In the day, the tribes showcase their art forms at the Hornbill Festival.

Pic courtesy, Vikram Kakati

The different musical accents of the vast country of India are showcased best in the festivals. The winter months hold a promise of some of the most colourful events of the year, in all parts of the country. We've handpicked our five favourites that you should consider adding in the itineraries. These are a window into the cultural world of the region and expose the traveller to the different musical backgrounds of the cities.

Thyagaraja Aradhana, Thanjavur: Celebrated over five days, this Carnatic music festival honours the saint and composer Thyagaraja. This low-key music festival is celebrated in Thiruvaiyaru, 13km north of Thanjavur. ***What is great to see is that Indian classical music stalwarts from across the world come here to perform for the entire city. The entry is free, giving an opportunity to everyone to come and see the performances.***

Rajasthan Kabir Yatra, Rajasthan: In commemoration of the great saint Kabir, a small troupe of singers take a six day journey across the state to go back in time when the 15th century north Indian mystic poet as well as other Bhakti and Sufi poets held sway. ***This is a musical tribute to Kabir in different villages of Bikaner, where singers take the power of Bhakti, Sufi music and poetry to places recently affected by communal violence.*** The purpose of the festival is to contribute to peace and harmony in our inner and outer worlds.

Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Festival, Pune: One of ***the biggest and most popular classical music festivals in India, this festival has been on the calendar since 1953. Classical music enthusiasts have this on their schedule for months.*** Soul rending performances by some of the greatest musicians can be expected here.



Bombay Jayashri in concert in Chennai

It also commemorates Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, one of the biggest names of classical music in India. The festival is held in Pune.

Madras Music Season, Chennai: Six weeks of musical celebrations are held with daily concerts in Chennai every December-January. ***This is the season when a number of large and small kutcheris (Carnatic music concerts) are held in the city.*** Old timers, stalwarts and new singers get a chance to showcase their talent in front of thousands and the city is flush with performances. This is a great time to get oriented into the world of classical music. The bookings to the concerts have to be done well in advance.

Hornbill Festival, Kohima: A musical treat of a different kind awaits you at the annual tribal festival in Kohima, Nagaland. Seven days of December are dedicated to getting oriented with all the tribes of the state and their dance and music. At night, the vibe changes to rock music, when the festival hosts one the best of rock musicians from the country.

CROSSING CULTURES

A CANVAS OF CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZAS
INDIAN MUSIC FESTIVALS THAT SHOULD NOT BE MISSED

Svatma, Thanjavur History Revisited

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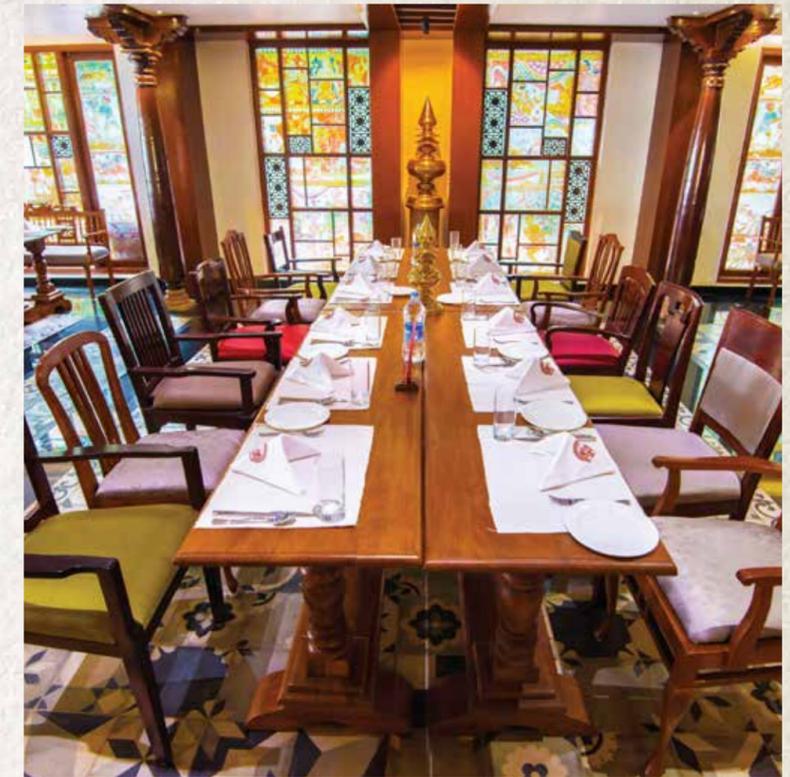
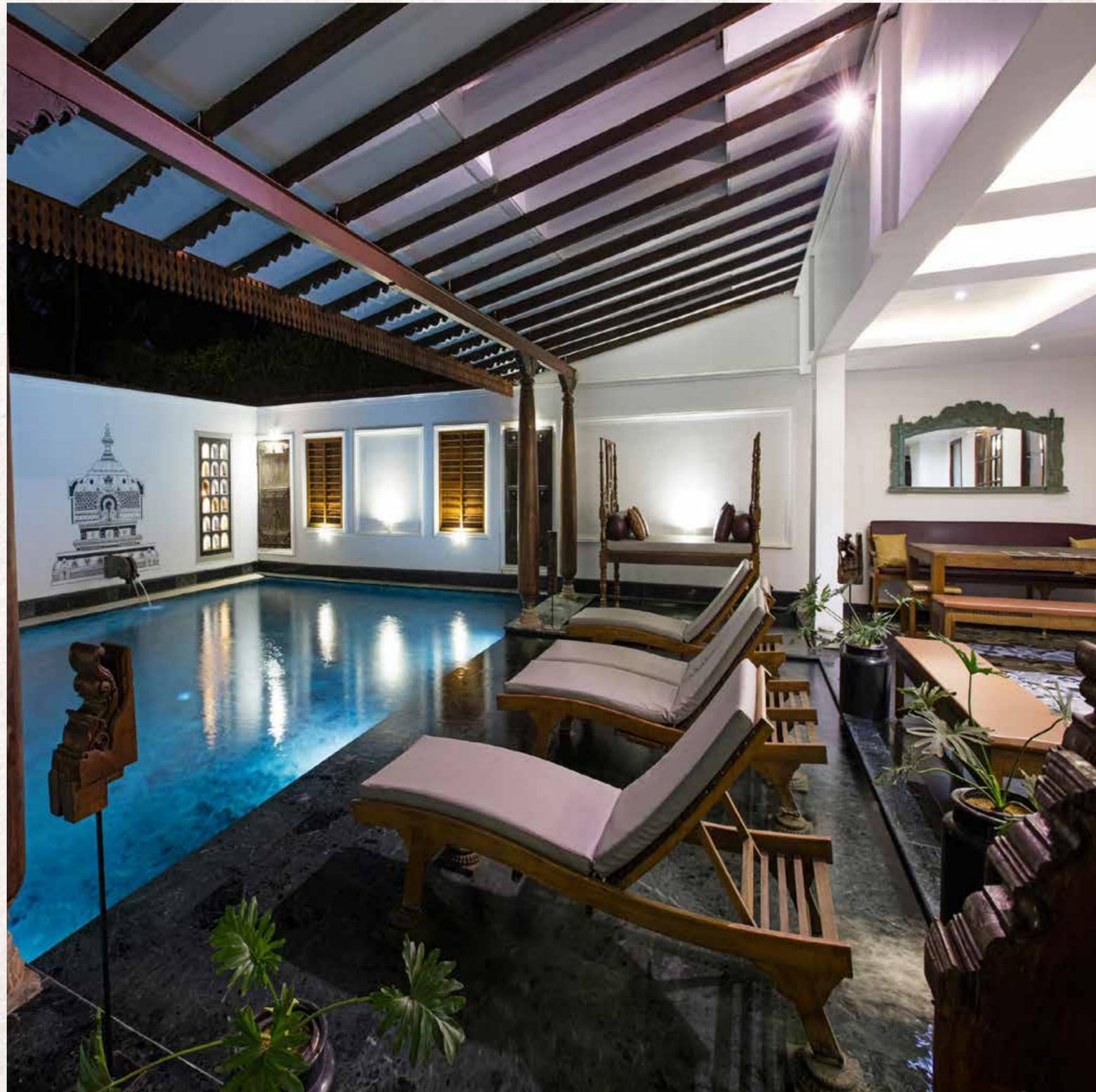
SVATMA

TANJAVUR

Get hypnotized by the charm of Tamil Nadu's various hues. Be it the art, culture, music, architecture or culinary heritage. Svatma offers eight unique experiences to the guests encompassing the different aspects of the culture of the state. This includes Veda chanting, Bharatnatyam performances, chamber concerts, handloom weaving, Tanjavur paintings, restoration and temple architecture, bronze casting and culinary insights.

Highlights include:

- *Heritage essence is retained with local aesthetics*
- *Lovingly restored 30 luxury heritage rooms*
- *Live in the company of Chola bronzes and soul enriching ambience*
- *Traditional home styled vegetarian cooking is the highlight*
- *Palaharam is a joyful affair of coffee and tiffin in the veranda*
- *Arogyam the Gym and a Yoga centre guide you to a world of fitness*
- *Soukyam, the luxury spa offers a number of rejuvenating treatments*
- *Swimming pool with a Jacuzzi is great for weary travellers*



TOP SPOT

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SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Thanjavur The keeper of Tamil Culture

Tamil Nadu has always been the bastion of secrets of ancient temples and a veritable keeper of cultural nuances of the state. Our editor, Supriya, has always loved the state for its myriad experiences but she hasn't visited Thanjavur for a long time. Needless to say, her first visit there left her enthralled. **The timeless temples and the traditional cuisine were the highlight for her.** For this edition of the Indo Asia Diary, she handpicked some more experiences that are worth a traveller's while.

Royal Palace



The enchanting façade of the Royal Palace

Thanjavur's royal palace is a potpourri of art and artefacts, housed in seven different sections. It is a maze-like complex that was constructed by the Nayaks who took over Thanjavur in 1535. Later a local Maratha dynasty that ruled from 1676 to 1855, made some changes. Of the entire palace, the Saraswati Mahal Library Museum and the Art Gallery are the highlights. The museum is a rich

repository of the history of the region. Keep at least half a day to trawl through the entire palace.

Brihadishwara Temple

The World Heritage–Rajaraja I, also known as the 'king of kings', built listed Brihadishwara Temple between 1003 and 1010. Later, Thanjavur's Nayak and British regimes put up the fortifications. The temple is known for its grand architecture and sheer size – a true representation of the Chola aesthetics. Come here two times (morning and evening) to catch the play of light on the temple – cool mornings and the hot reds and oranges in the evening. It is the entrance of the temple that stays etched in the memory for long.

Shopping for saris and Tanjore (Thanjavur) paintings

The two things that should be on your souvenir-shopping list are the hand-woven saris and the

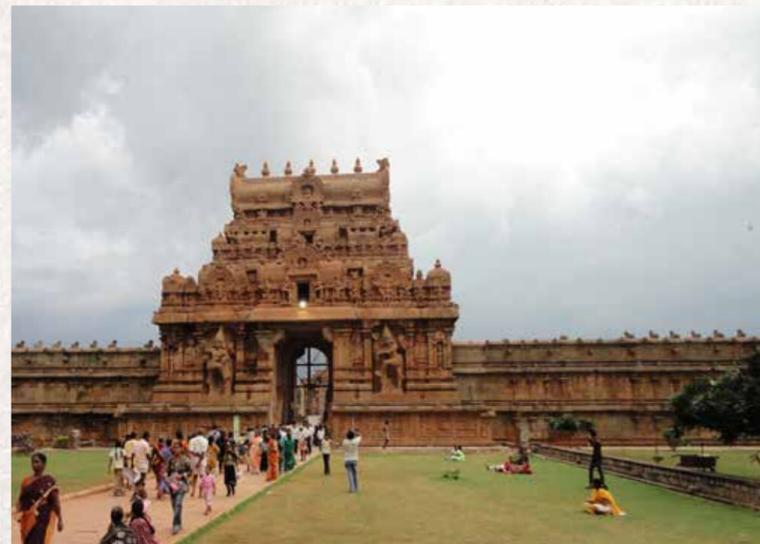
classic Tanjore paintings of the city. Apart from this, throw a glance on the Thalaiyatti **Bomma**, a **head-bobbing doll**. You can also buy bronze items at the local market. Different sizes allow you to remain within a budget. Kandiya Heritage, Chola Art Gallery and Poompuhar are the three places that one should hit for shopping. Amongst these three, you will be able to find everything that you need.

Eat at Sahana

The vegetarian classic food of Tamil Nadu is something that one should not miss in Thanjavur. This is your chance to eat the famous thaali, which has a variety of dishes in small portions. **The sheer variety of vegetables and pulses, along with a dollop of rice and topped up with buttermilk works wonders for the stomach and the soul.** Tamil food is meant to be extremely rich and wholesome with a wide variety of grains and food types.

Thyagaraja Aradhana

The five-day music festival, held 13km away from the main city is a brilliant chance to see the country's (and world's) best Carnatic music maestros come and perform for everyone. **The vibe of the festival is unique as it is free and available for anyone to see. It is heartwarming to witness the love of music amongst all kinds of people, who congregate to hear these musicians. The festival is a commemoration to the works of famous Tamil saint and poet, Thyagaraja.**



Brihadishwara Temple, Thanjavur



A traditional Tanjore painting

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27 for Hyatt by end of 2016

World renowned hotel, Hyatt is ready to have a total of 27 properties in India by the end of

this year., Vice President, Sales Operations, South Asia – Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Harleen Mehta addressed the media and said, “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.” This is great news for luxury travellers as they get one more option in the key cities of India.

Port Blair-Kolkata-Chennai connection more robust with Indigo



India based airline brand IndiGo has introduced new daily non-stop flights to Port Blair from Kolkata and Chennai from September 28 and September 30, 2016,

respectively. Port Blair will also be connected to Delhi (via Kolkata) and Hyderabad (via Chennai) for better connectivity. The airline will also launch additional frequencies with daily non-stop flight between Delhi & Kolkata, Delhi & Chennai and Hyderabad & Varanasi sectors. These sectors have great need and this is being fulfilled by the airline. President IndiGo, Aditya Ghosh said, “We are extremely pleased about adding Port Blair as our 41st destination. It is going to be an important part of our destination network, catering to the needs of both business as well as leisure travellers, looking to embrace the deep blue waters. In addition, IndiGo will connect holy city of Varanasi with Hyderabad with daily non-stop service. Clearly, these are exciting times for the aviation industry and for us, as we are now in the 11th year of operation. We thank our flyers for their unflinching support in these past 10 years and we will continue to provide them an on time, hassle free and affordable flying experience.”

Skies open up between India and Greece



India and Greece have signed an open skies agreement which will allow airlines from India to operate unlimited number of flights to Greece while Greek carriers have been

granted unlimited traffic rights to six Indian metro cities which are Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai. This means that the Indian traveller and the Greek traveller can now look forward to easy access to either countries. Right now the connection is poor as there are no direct flights. Rajiv Nayan Choubey, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, said “Greece has become the first country to have an open sky agreement with India under the new policy,” India had entered into an open skies agreement with the US and Britain earlier. The open skies with Britain covers airports excluding London Heathrow.

Gateway resort opens doors on Pushkar-Ajmer bypass

Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces has opened doors of its latest property in Rajasthan — The Gateway Resort Pushkar Bypass Ajmer. The hotel has 81 rooms and suites and is built in the Rajasthani aesthetics with a royal touch. It is ideal for leisure



and business travellers both. “Ajmer and Pushkar are two secret jewels in the beautiful state of Rajasthan; they are cities with a rich history stretching back to the Rajputs, Mughals and Marathas and which blends Hindu and Sufi tradition. The 81 rooms and suites at the resort are inspired by this heritage and offer guests the best of Rajasthan whether here for leisure, business or to celebrate special occasions in a stunning destination.” said Nagendra Hada, General Manager, The Gateway Resort Pushkar Bypass Ajmer.

Kaziranga to be open for 8 months in the year

Wildlife enthusiasts can rejoice as the Government of Assam, Tourism Department has declared to open the Kaziranga National Park from the first



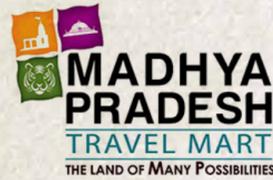
week of October this year till middle of May 2017. Earlier, it was from November 1 to April 30 every year. The BJP-led government is taking

steps to keep the Park open for the tourists for eight months instead of the normal six months with an aim to increase tourist inflow to UNESCO’s world heritage site, which suffered due to the recent floods. The recent floods in the state as massively affected the tourism and this is likely to boost.

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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 :

- MPTM (Bhopal) 14 - 16 Oct, 2016
- WTM (London) 07 - 09 Nov, 2016
- IGTM (Mallorca, Spain) 14-17 Nov, 2016

IA SAYS



Dear Partners,

It was the unique art of making bronze statues in Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district that stayed as one of the most enduring memories of the town in my mind. How the artist sourced the fine mud from anthills and padded the wax moulds with it, then meticulously filled this mould with the blend of five metals that makes bronze, before tossing this in the kiln to create an elegant statue, just like the bronze that has been made here for the last 1000 years. **All of these steps are etched deep in my memory of Thanjavur.**

In the same town, I was surprised to the navgraha (nine planets) temples celebrated with individual shrines and not a small cluster on a platform, as one usually sees in Hindu temples. What a treat it was to someone who loves the heritage and spiritual tangents of this vast country.

Thanjavur, has since, been the place that reminds me of everything that India stands for. Great culinary heritage, an agrarian subcontinent (Thanjavur is known as the rice bowl of the south), ancient temples and a daily life that is intensely woven art forms like dance, music and paintings. Thanjavur embodies just that with the great Chola temples, a blend of architecture in its heritage buildings with the influence of the Marathas, it's iconic Tanjore paintings and a musical strain that binds the entire region.

I strongly urge travellers to visit the region to get immersed in its glory. This deserves at least a few days for you to feel the thrum of the region. After all, it is in very few places that one feels the timeless beauty of India.

Gajendra Singh Panwar

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!



Ms. Annlyn Angelo | Asst. Manager

Annlyn has been an integral part of the Indo-Asia family for the last 10 years, with a special interest in the South Indian operations, a region she personally likes a lot. We can always count on Annlyn to come up with the best ideas for the south and take on any challenges effortlessly. It's no wonder that she is an asset to the company