

INDO ASIA DIARIES

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INDO ASIA TOURS
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Prasad (offering) for Mahakaleshwar, Ujjain, one of the avatars of Shiva. Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga is one of the twelve Jyotirlingams, shrines said to be the most sacred abodes of Shiva. On Maha Shivaratri, a huge fair is held on the temple grounds. The temple is revered by all Hindus and considered a must pilgrimage for devout Hindus. The temple is one of the oldest places of worship in central India.

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APPEASING THE GODS

Photo Location : Mahakaleshwar, Ujjain



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The Great Stupa at Sanchi, Sanchi

CROSSING CULTURES

GET CLOSER TO INDIA'S HEART

A land filled with wonder — that’s probably the best way to describe Madhya Pradesh. Located right in the middle of the country, the state not only boasts of UNESCO World Heritage sites but also of how beautiful it is at every step of the way. Not to forget, it has been the subject of various fiction and non-fiction books, including Rudyard Kipling’s masterpiece, The Jungle Book, and Philip Meadow Taylor’s Confessions of a Thug. So, naturally, one has to take a closer look at the land of Mowgli and see what’s in store.

Sanchi

India is a land of yogis and monks and is often found to be synonymous with meditation and spirituality. And, Sanchi is a town known for exactly that. The serene complex of Sanchi houses Buddhist stupas, which are among the oldest in the country. Adorned with intricate carvings made with delicate artistry, these stupas were built during the reign of the famous Emperor Ashoka who helped spread Buddhism. The Great Stupa in the complex has been branded as a heritage site by UNESCO and it is tremendously easy to be mesmerized by its architecture and scale.

Bhimbetka

Piecing together one’s ancestry is very important, especially when it is reminiscent of our humble beginnings. The oldest caves of India, the 700-odd Bhimbetka rock shelters go back 30,000 years. The cave paintings here remind you of the ones found in Australia, France, and Africa. Especially interesting is the painting of a bison, which is visible only when the sun is in a particular position!

Khajuraho

Ancient Indian temples are known for their delicate and detailed sculptures, along with the vast amount of symbolism. Perhaps, that is why the Khajuraho Group of Monuments has gained such popularity. The complex is famous for its erotic sculptures even though these constitute about 10% of the total sculptures. The workmanship seen in the temples—exterior and interior—is simply awe-inspiring, which is why UNESCO

chose it as a heritage site. Named after date palm trees, Khajuraho leaves one spellbound and transports you to another era.

National Parks

The lush forest cover in Madhya Pradesh is home to a variety of flora and fauna. So, it is natural for the state to house various national parks. A treat for wildlife enthusiasts, these parks lets you observe wildlife in its untamed form. The royal Bengal tiger, the national animal of India, is a common theme in these parks. Bandhavgarh National Park holds the accolade of housing the highest density of these tigers in the world. Formerly the hunting grounds of the kings that reigned here, the park is touted as the place where white tigers originated from. On the other hand, Kanha National Park holds the position of being the largest national park in the state and the first Indian tiger reserve with an official mascot—Bhoorsingh the Barasingha. But that’s not all. The park is also known for being Asia’s best-administered national park and has received credit for saving barasingha (swamp deer) from extinction. Apart from the majestic tiger and barasingha, one can spot leopards, sloth bears, and the Indian wild dogs in the park. Add to the fact that National Geographic’s documentary, Land of the Tigers, was shot in this park, Kanha is a must-visit site. When it comes to documentaries, the other big national park, Pench, doesn’t stay behind. Boasting of being the setting for BBC’s Tiger: Spy in the Jungle, the park situated near the River Pench also offers rafting and boat rides. Though Mowgli doesn’t reside in these parks, cousins of Sher Khan and Baloo are sure to be found here.

Gwalior

A heritage destination in the state, Gwalior is known for a gamut of temples and monuments. From a magnificent fort to temples that provide an insight into the region’s architecture, Gwalior has it all. The city also contains a cenotaph dedicated to Rani Lakshmi Bai, a freedom fighting queen who laid down her life in the country’s struggle for independence.



Footloose in Bhopal

Bhopal is a perfect amalgamation of the old and the new. The wide roads of New Bhopal complement the narrow gullies of the old town. Dotted with Mughal architecture, predating the British Raj, Bhopal was ruled by begums who commissioned beautiful gardens and monuments. The city known for its various lakes also has the tag of being one of the cleanest and greenest cities in India.

Bhopal is a fascinating tourist destination because of its quaint charm juxtaposed with fast-paced urban life. Additionally, the city’s location makes it a perfect transit point to enjoy the amazing locales Madhya Pradesh has to offer. Here are some places in and around Bhopal that should be a part of every itinerary.

Taj ul Masajid

The largest mosque in India, and one of the largest in Asia, Taj ul Masajid’s architecture is not only inspiring but breathtaking. The ‘crown among mosques’ houses an eastern gate that was renovated after drawing inspiration from Syrian mosques.

Mandu

The fortress township of Mandu is known for its Afghan architecture. Jahaz Mahal is its most popular attraction and is an architectural marvel. Built with water conservation in mind, given the high temperatures in the area, the palace interweaves Islamic architecture



Mandu

with water structures that kept the erstwhile rulers cool during the summers. Mandu not only boasts of housing the biggest fort in India but also houses the structure—the mausoleum of Hoshang Shah— which allegedly inspired the blueprint of the Taj Mahal!

Upper and Lower Lakes



Bhopal Lake

Bhojtal, or Upper Lake, is one of the most popular lakes of Bhopal and doubles as a drinking water source for the city. According to folklore, the lake was built by King Bhoj who is credited with founding the city. The lake offers a myriad of activities, including kayaking, canoeing, water-skiing and parasailing, and is a great option for unwinding from a long and tiring day of sightseeing. The Lower Lake, on the other hand, was built in 1794 by merging a number of wells. The lakes are a treat for birdwatchers as white stork, blacknecked storks, barheaded goose, sarus cranes and spoonbills have been spotted in the area.

Van Vihar National Park

National park might be a misnomer for Van Vihar National Park as it is more of a zoo instead. Housing animals such as tiger, lion, leopard, crocodile, red fox, wild dog, jackal,

wolf, etc., the park is a popular tourist spot in Bhopal. The best way to explore the park is not through a jeep safari but on a bicycle, taking in the fresh air and greenery the park is replete with. It lies next to the Upper Lake, which makes it an ideal spot for a picnic or just enjoying the sun setting over the horizon.

Ujjain

Dubbed as India’s Greenwich, Ujjain has the first longitude meridian passing through it. But that’s not the only thing its known for. The Kumbh Mela, the largest religious fair in the world, is held in this temple city every 12 years. The Mela finds a mention in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity compiled by UNESCO. The city is also home to one of the most sacred shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva, Mahakaleshwar



Ujjain Temple

Jyotirlinga. It comes as no surprise that the city houses temples from several eras. Ujjain provides an insight into the oldest existing religion in the world—Hinduism. Whether to strengthen spirituality or to be awestruck by the architecture of the temples or the vastness of the Kumbh Mela, Ujjain is a perfect destination to experience India and its rich history.

TOP
SPOT

80-key Sarovar Premiere Jaipur opens doors



Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Sarovar Premiere Jaipur. The upscale full-service hotel features 80 rooms and suites, with modern

interiors, stylish furnishings, and spacious event and banquet space. The hotel also adds ease to those travelling to the city by being conveniently located close to the airport, railway station, Vidhan Sabha and famous tourist attractions. The hotel was launched by Sarovar Hotels Managing Director Ajay Bakaya and R S Sharma & Co (Delhi) Executive Director Sandeep Sharma. "This new hotel is a fantastic addition to our growing portfolio in Rajasthan," said Bakaya. "Jaipur is one of the most significant destinations in India for leisure as well as business travel, and this is our fourth hotel in the city after Sarovar Portico Jaipur, Nirwana Homotel Jaipur and Park Inn Jaipur. Sarovar Premiere Jaipur's superior features, state-of-the-art amenities, and incredible location will make it a top destination here." Located at Lal Kothi on Tonk Road, the hotel is ideal for corporate as well as leisure travellers.

Foreigners can now visit protected areas in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur



The Ministry of Home Affairs has relaxed the Protected Area Permit (PAP) for foreigners visiting Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, except for

those from Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. The PAP will be valid for five years. These areas constitute some of the most pristine locations of the country, which had been out of bounds without a special permit. The six-decade-old PAP regime from these areas was relaxed from April 1. Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, all areas falling between the inner line and the international border of some states were declared as protected areas. These areas include Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim, besides parts of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. Some parts of Sikkim also fall under the protected area regime. It is believed that the government might lift PAP from other areas too. The guidelines in place did not allow a foreign national to visit a protected or restricted area unless the government was satisfied that there were extraordinary reasons to justify their visit. Foreigners, except citizens of Bhutan, have to get a special permit if they want to stay in a protected or restricted area. In cases of the citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals of Pakistani origin, no permit can be issued without the prior approval of the Union Home Ministry.

IHG expands presence in Kolkata with Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6



InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced a partnership with SDB Developers to build a second Holiday Inn hotel in Kolkata.

As part of the agreement, the 110-room Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6 will have 90 rooms operational by the end of 2018, with 20 additional rooms expected by 2020. Sprawling across 12 acres of land in Uluberia, a city under the Kolkata Metropolitan Area, Holiday Inn Resort Kolkata NH6 is strategically located to offer excellent connectivity to central Kolkata. Well-suited to cater to leisure, business and MICE guests, the resort will be an hour's drive from the City Centre and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport.

Qatar Airways to apply for launching an airline in India



Qatar Airways will soon move an application to launch a full-service airline in India for domestic operations, according to its chief

Akbar Al Baker. He said the proposed airline would be fully financed by Qatar's sovereign fund and will have Indians heading the board. Baker, who has been Qatar Airways' Group Chief Executive for over two

decades, was recently elected as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). "We will move the application soon. I don't know by when because it (the process) takes time," he said on the sidelines of an IATA Annual General Meeting. Noting that the process is on track, he said the proposed carrier in India would be a full-service one and the investment would be done from the sovereign fund of Qatar's official investment arm.

Vistara receives 21st aircraft, now eligible for international operations



Vistara has received its 21st aircraft, an Airbus A320neo powered by CFM engines. Now the airline is eligible for international operations.

The new aircraft will be deployed to further strengthen the airline's domestic network. Leslie Thng, CEO, Vistara, said, "There's great excitement amongst all of us at Vistara, as we prepare ourselves for taking the next leap in our journey to fly international. The arrival of our 21st aircraft makes this phase even more special. It enables us to strengthen our network further, which gives us the opportunity to offer more choices in terms of frequencies to our ever-growing base of loyal customers." Vistara's A320neo aircraft comes in its unique cabin configuration of 158 seats (8 Business Class, 24 Premium Economy and 126 Economy Class) as well as other industry-first features, for which the airline calls it #NotJustAnotherNeo.

NEWS & VIEWS



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Indo Asia Tours will be participating in the below mentioned upcoming Travel events. You can schedule an appointment at marketing@indoasiatours.com to meet us in person at the show:

- **Stockholm Travel Show**
05th September 2018 – Stockholm
06th September 2018 - Helsinki
- **India Travel Mart, Delhi, India:** 16 / 18 September 2018.
- **ILTM North America, Riviera Maya, Mexico:** 24 – 27 September 2018.
- **IGTM, Ljubljana, Slovenia:** 15th – 18th October 2018.

IA SAYS



India is a land of folklore and mythos and much like most places in India, Bhopal, too, has its ample share of mythology to validate its claim of being an ancient city. According to folklore, Bhopal was founded in the 11th century by the Parmara king Bhoj. But more interestingly, modern Bhopal was allegedly established by Dost Mohammad Khan, a Pashtun soldier in the Mughal army. After the decline of the Mughals, Khan started providing mercenary services to local chieftains in Central India. In 1709, he took the lease of Berasia estate and later annexed several territories to establish state of Bhopal.

Bhopal turned into a princely state after it signed a treaty with the British in 1818. Between 1819 and 1926, it was ruled by four women—begums—which was unique those

days. These begums gave the city its waterworks, railways, postal system, and a municipality. Post-Independence, the then ruler of Bhopal wanted to remain an independent entity. After a lot of agitation, Bhopal was merged with the Indian confederation in 1949.

Bhopal is a beautiful city with large, natural and manmade lakes surrounding it. It is a great centre of higher learning and houses some key institutions of national importance. In the city, one cannot miss a visit to the National Museum of Mankind and the State Archaeological Museum, which has a rich collection of artefacts from the Golden Age of Indian art to modern times.

Not very far from Bhopal, Sanchi is a jewel from the post-Buddha era (3rd century BC). It houses one of the most beautiful Buddhist stupa, with beautifully carved gateways that have stories of Buddha carved in by artisans from Vidisha. It is said that Emperor Ashoka, who spread Buddhism and transformed it into a global religion, was married to the princess of Vidisha. Hence, the artisans from Vidisha carved the gateways. There are other Buddhist excavation sites not very far from Sanchi that are very rewarding. Also the pre-historic caves at Bhimbhetka paint a picture of the erstwhile Paleolithic era while the beautiful ruins of the Shiva temple in Bhojpur lets one see the architectural sketches around the rock faces, and a ramp that was used to transport large, heavy stones and sculptures to the top of the temple. Looking at the temple, it's not strange to feel as if the workers and artisans are on a break and they would come back to resume work on the hundreds of unfinished stone pieces scattered around the complex.

Bhopal is also a haven for foodies. Mughlai food is the authentic cuisine related to Bhopal. Jehan Numa Palace and Noor-Us-Sabah Palace serve these authentic dishes. Another interesting restaurant is the Shaan e Bhopal Rail, which serves food inside a few old coaches of the Indian Railways converted into a fine dining experience.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!



Sandeep Sahu | Executive - Djoser

IA loves its employees and it's necessary to appreciate them as and when they deserve it. Thus, IA has chosen Sandeep Sahu as the employee of the month. He is an integral part of the team and is extremely sincere about his work. His best quality is that he is strictly punctual—be it for meeting deadlines or reaching work. In his four-year-long journey at IA, Sandeep has proven to be a very valuable member of the team who not only appreciates his work but is also enthusiastic for making improvements.