





It was a moment of delight for Mark when he found personification of Gross National Happiness under one roof. It is a wondrous philosophy that guides the government of Bhutan that includes an index which measures the collective happiness and well-being of the population. When Mark asked these happy monks about their key to happiness, they replied: “Stop thinking Me, Me and Me, and strive to be benevolent”. Mark swears that he lives by those words till date.

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GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS PERSONIFIED!

Location: Thimphu, Bhutan



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THE GREAT HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

Travel is a carousel of new, exciting, unknown, unexplored and sometimes invigorating experiences. Falling in love with the scenery is one thing, but being in awe is something different and passionate. The calmness, the tranquillity, the enticing snow-capped mountains, and nothing but you and music of your heartbeats, this is a place where the mammoth mountains magnifies beauty of everything around you. It is the moment when you realise that you are liberated from the extra baggage of the chaotic world, pleasure and pain, and suddenly you are a step closer to self-realisation. The great Himalayan Kingdoms i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Tibet, and Sikkim promises a dramatic and amazing journey through the exciting adobe of beauty. Be it the Old Silk Route, The Horse Tea Trail, the Himalayas, or Buddhism, these places are different from each other but somehow connected and akin. Let's find out what bonds these magnificent kingdoms of the Himalayas.

Ladakh

The kingdom of Ladakh is not only adored for its ancient Tibetan monasteries but also for its natural beauty. The vistas of baked mountains with the snow-capped Himalayas will take your breath away! The high altitude sand dunes of the cold desert of Hunder and the surreal views of Lamayuru's moonland will baffle you with its beauty. It's the profound way of celebrating festivals in Ladakh that leaves an imprint on the heart. The colourful costumes, the hearty singing and dancing, the dramatic masks in the majestic monasteries with the Himalayas in the backdrop, will simply leave you bewitched. One of the best time to witness this magnificent spectacle is the Hemis Festival, held every year around June and July.

Sikkim

Sikkim is a unique blend of Buddhist, Hindu and pagan culture, which makes it culturally one of the most diverse states of India. The distinct yet familiar sights and the

traditions of Sikkim with its festivals will sweep you off your feet. Bordered by Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet, the strong beliefs, traditions and alluring monasteries make Sikkim a fascinating place to explore. The largest monastery in Sikkim and the seat of the Karmapa Lama – the third-largest monk in Tibetan Buddhism, Rumtek Monastery looks like the replica of the original Kagyu headquarters in Tibet. It is an ideal place to get lost in the beauty of Kanchenjunga peaks, the third highest mountain range in the world.

Tibet

A visit to Tibet is one of the most enchanting journeys you can take through the Himalayas. Amidst the stunning landscape, Tibet will mesmerise you with its magnificent monasteries rich with the aroma of butter tea, prayer halls of chanting monks and fluttering prayers flags. Home to several of the world's highest peaks, Tibet's faith in Buddhism will move you. Tibet is also about sharing a bottle of Lhasa Beer with the locals in a tea house, exploring the glittering lakes and turning the prayer wheels for positivity!

Nepal

With the vistas of world's highest mountain, golden temples, incredible monasteries, quaint villages, Nepal is Himalaya's most iconic spot. It is a trekker's paradise, but admiring the snow-clad peaks over a cup of tea after a trek is a different kind of mind-blowing experience. A mixture of Hindu and Tibetan Buddhism, a spiritual stroll around the centuries-old stupas and monasteries are a must. Namobuddha Monastery is regarded as one of the most sacred pilgrimages of Nepal and a must-visit to seek peace and blessings. This is a perfect opportunity for you to stay and share a meal with the monks. Get to know them and understand their way of life from a close quarter.



Taj Tashi, Thimphu

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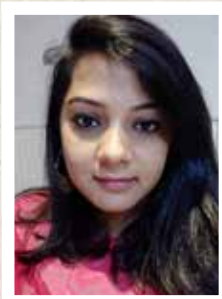
Taj Tashi reflects Bhutan's rich heritage and majestic architecture. It's a perfect blend of traditional Bhutanese design with contemporary elegance subtly brought to life by hand-painted details. Inspired by Bhutanese Dzong architectural style, the hotel is built on three themes - the "Dhungs," the "Double Dorjes" and "Clouds", and is crafted by artisans from the famed Zorig Chusum School of arts and crafts, some of who have worked on the decorative paintings in the Palaces of the Royal Family, and the Dzongs of Thimphu, Punakha and Trongsa.

Highlights include:

- The 66 elegant and classy rooms offers mesmerising view of the mountains and the alluring Thimpu Valley.
- Dine with a view at the Thongsels, an all-day dining restaurant with delicious food, subtle woodwork, fountains, prayer wheel and the Thangkas – Bhutanese tapestries.
- An affair with delectable traditional Bhutanese cuisine at Chig –Ja– Gye. Savour the local dishes such as the Ema Datshi and Doem.
- A signature Jiva Spa experience steeped in in the ancient Indian and Royal healing traditions for complete relaxation.
- Enjoy the Sammardana massage and the Orja Dayaka aromatherapy to the subtleties of Yoga.
- A heated swimming pool for complete relaxation with an inbuilt Jacuzzi.

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KANIKA CHOPRA
Footloose in Bhutan
Bhutan – The Last Shangri La

Happiness is a place, and it is Bhutan! It’s a country bestowed with nature’s bounty, with simple and happy people whose unhurried and laidback pace of life most city-dwellers will envy. Bhutan is an epitome of traditions. It is marked by strong religious and cultural bonds that find expression in the several vibrant festivals throughout the year. Beautiful traditional villages, untouched nature, snow-capped peaks, breathtaking trekking trails, majestic dzongs and monasteries, make Bhutan the Last Shangri La. Bhutan has numerous experiences that are worth your while! Adored for its “Gross National Happiness”, choosing some of the many wonderful encounters in Bhutan is difficult. But these essential experiences will leave you in awe and content with Bhutan!

Masked Affairs
Bhutan makes you believe in the words of Rabindranath Tagore: “You are invited to the festivals of this world, and your life is blessed”. The richness, vibrancy, expression of legendary legacy of Buddhist culture, masked dancers singing and dancing on the traditional tunes will bring your heart and soul together! Almost all the festivals in the country are dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava Rinpoche, and one of the most famous and well-known Bhutanese festivals is the Thimphu Tshechu, to honour him. He saved the life of the ailing King



by performing a series of ritualised dances. These dances are recreated during the vibrant Tshechu all over Bhutan.

Home Is Where Lip-smacking Food Is!
One of the most beautiful things about the culture of Bhutan is its simplicity. And it is mesmerizingly reflected in the cuisine of the country. As the saying goes “There is no greater love than the

love for food’, so let that love take you to a home away from home. Visit a homestay and spark a conversation while chopping chillies, cooking with the family and eating the delicious food by hand as per the Bhutanese traditions. It will be one of the most loved and treasured memories of your life! While you are exploring the lifestyle and culinary of Bhutan, don’t forget to try Ema Datshi, the traditional and national dish of Bhutan, made of chillies and cheese!

Museums, Monks and Monasteries
Monasteries are abundant in Bhutan! Exploring the dzongs, monasteries and temples are the best way to discover the culture of Bhutan. From Chimi Lhakhang temple of fertility in Punakha Valley to Taktsang Monastery in Paro and Kurjey Lhakhang Monastery of Bumthang Valley, a walk through the Buddhist trail with the monks will enthrall you. Other than the splendid architecture of the monasteries, the Bhutanese art in thangkas, wall paintings and statues will surprise you. If you are a history junkie, Tower of Trongsa Royal Heritage Museum should be on your list. The most sacred religious item is a copy of the Padma Kathang, a biography of Guru Rinpoche. Take your time and savour the fascinating history of Bhutan.

Hike and Trek All The Way!
The happiest paradise on the earth is waiting to be explored! Indulge in adventure and discover Bhutan’s beauty through trekking and hiking like never before. The trails will take you through picturesque mountains, valleys sprawled with colourful Rhododendron flowers when in full bloom and monasteries that will captivate your heart. Whether it’s a day hike or an adrenaline-

pumping trekking trip, the “Last Shangri La” has got you covered. Some of the breathtakingly beautiful treks are Jhomolhari Trek, Snowman Trek, and Punakha Winter Trek.

Nature’s Splendour
The pristine beauty of Bhutan gives you a zeal to explore something new every day! One of Bhutan’s ancient names was Menjong Yul, meaning ‘the land of Medicinal Herbs’ and it makes sense.



The spectacular biodiversity and wildlife of the country have been enticing travellers for a long time now. One of the tenth biodiversity hotspots, Bhutan has the largest proportion of land under protected areas through national parks. From the elusive snow leopard to Takin, the national animal of Bhutan, and the Red Panda, Bhutan will never cease to amaze you when it comes to flora and fauna. Don’t miss the Black-necked Crane Festival, celebrated at Gangtey Monastery by locals to celebrate the arrival of the crane birds in the summer.

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Kochi Emerged As The Top Trending Destination Globally: TripAdvisor



Tripadvisor has announced the winners of the 2020 Travellers' Choice Destination awards. The awards include two new

categories: Trending, recognizing traveller-loved destinations that are on the rise, having seen the biggest spikes in positive reviews and ratings over the last year, and Emerging - looking ahead to what's next — the destinations still ahead of the curve that smart travellers are already saving to their Trips on TripAdvisor, a great indicator of up and coming hotspots. "It's fantastic to see Indian destinations making their presence felt on the world map and given this achievement is based on feedback and growing interest from travellers, it becomes even more noteworthy! Everyone seeks inspiration from various quarters while planning their travel and the best trips often turn out to be inspired and guided by people similar to you who've been there before. I am confident the Travellers' Choice Destinations list will impel travellers across the globe to plan travel to some very fascinating places" said Nikhil Ganju, Country Manager, TripAdvisor India. Kochi has earned its bucket list status, seeing the biggest spike in top reviews, ratings and traveller interest on TripAdvisor over the last year.

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Tourism is integral to India's prospect of becoming a \$5 trillion economy: PM Modi



Inaugurating development projects worth over Rs 1,200 crore in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said

that his government is giving top priority to roads, highways, waterways and railways, especially in terms of infrastructure. Today when we talk about \$5 trillion economy in India, tourism is an integral part of it. Besides nature, heritage tourism has a strong role to play in achieving the goal. Also, along with Varanasi other holy sites are being developed using new technologies, he said. Developing major spots of faith and spirituality around the country, the government is working to make them accessible and convenient for pilgrims and tourists. For which, I have flagged off the Kashi-Mahakal Express to connect Varanasi with Onkareshwar and Mahakaleshwar," PM Modi further said.

Accor to open Hotels under Grand Mercure, Raffles, Ibis, Novotel brands in India

Mercure, Bengaluru, Raffles, Udaipur, Ibis Mumbai LBS Road and Novotel Mumbai International Airport, by the end of this year, says Jean- Michel Casse, Chief Operating Officer (COO) – India and South Asia, Accor. He further says, "We also have the Raffles Jaipur and Fairmont Mumbai Sahar in the pipeline".

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Announces "Namaste Orchha" A 3-Day Festival Celebrating The Cultural Landscape To Showcase Untapped Tourism Potential In MP



Adding to its ongoing initiatives to promote Madhya Pradesh as a leading tourism destination in the country, the State Tourism Board announced "Namaste Orchha", a new festival scheduled to be held from 6-8 March 2020, celebrating the cultural landscape of the state in the historic town of Orchha. The three-day extravaganza in this ancient and quaint town will feature diverse activities of music, dance, art, wellness, travel, nature, adventure, history and culture. These activities would be led by experts in their respective fields with participants comprising invited delegates. An immersive visual spectacle of Maha Aarti will be curated at the banks of river Betwa. The state has been listed among the Top 3 'Best Value Destination' of the world by Lonely Planet.

IndiGo to start flights from Pune to Chandigarh, Indore



Budget airline IndiGo will start flights from Pune to Chandigarh and Indore, according to a release. Services to Chandigarh would commence from March 15, while those on the Pune-

Indore route would begin from May 1. "The airline is the first to launch daily direct connections from Pune to Chandigarh and Indore after competitors withdrew their direct flights last year. The introduction of these flights will further bolster the airline's domestic connectivity," IndiGo said in a release on Monday.

Radisson Hotel Group Signs 17 Hotels In India In 2020



Radisson Hotel Group has celebrated the start of the new decade by announcing the signing of 17 new hotels in India. As the Group enters the third year of "Destination 2022", its global expansion and transformation strategy, these signings will boost the company's portfolio in South Asia to more than 150 hotels and 17,000 rooms, both in operation and under development. The hotels signed so far are: Radisson Blu Hotel Jaipur Malviya Nagar (opening 2025); Radisson Hotel Greater Noida (2021); Radisson Hotel Dehradun (2023); Radisson Hotel Agra (June 2019); Radisson Hotel Gurugram Sohna Road City Center (April 2019); Radisson Hotel Vadodara (2023); Radisson Hotel Bareilly (2021); Radisson Hotel Vaishno Devi (2022); Park Inn by Radisson Vaishno Devi (2022); Park Inn by Radisson Kashipur Resort (2022); Park Inn by Radisson Saputara (2022); Park Inn by Radisson Surat (2021); Park Inn by Radisson Jalandhar (2023) and Park Inn by Radisson Gwalior (2020).

IHCL To Open Vivanta Hotel In Dharamshala



Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has announced the signing of a Vivanta hotel in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. This hotel is a management contract with Dhauladhar Resorts. Suma Venkatesh, Executive Vice President - Real Estate & Development, IHCL said, "IHCL has been expanding its portfolio across the Himalayas. With the addition of this hotel, the company will offer its guests a choice of 13 hill station hotels and resorts in the Himalayas in India, Bhutan and Nepal. Vivanta Dharamshala will cater to both the leisure as well as the spiritual traveller. We are delighted to partner with Dhauladhar Resorts."

Vivanta Dharamshala, a 100-room hotel, is nestled amidst lush green forests, offering panoramic views of the Dhauladhar Mountains in the Himalayas. It is a short distance away from McLeodganj, famous the world over as the hub of Tibetan Buddhism and home to the Dalai Lama. The contemporary hotel will also have a multi-cuisine restaurant, a bar, recreational facilities such as an indoor pool and spa, meeting rooms and a banquet hall for social and business gatherings. It is a Greenfield project slated to open in 2023.

Meghalaya To Organise "The Meghalayan Age- 2020' Festival To Promote Tourism



In order to showcase the tourism potential of the state, Meghalaya Tourism has launched the maiden edition of the 'Meghalayan Age Fest, 2020' from 7-15 March 2020 at Shillong, Meghalaya. This is going to be a unique tourism festival by Meghalayan Tourism and E Factor that will showcase its natural and adventurous wares to the world for the very first time. "This festival will truly be incredible with the major attraction of the Hot Air Balloon Rides, Caving for the adrenaline junkies, and an experience of the unadulterated 'Meghalayan' way of life," a release by Meghalaya Tourism reads. Meghalaya- with its cotton clouds heaped just above your heads, carpets of green, rich valley floors and glistening forest glades - all enveloped in rolling mists over its dramatic cliffs, spectacular mountains and primeval natural heritage - offers a perfect runway to launch the 'thrill-seekers' and 'slow-life enthusiasts' collectively into their most 'utopian' fantasies.

Nepal awarded the OLTA as a Solo Travel Destination

Nepal was awarded the Outlook Traveller Awards (OLTA) as a Solo Travel Destination in the Readers' Survey Categories. Dr. Dhananjay Regmi, CEO of Nepal Tourism Board, received the award at his office from Mr. Peeush Srivastava, Vice President of International Division of Outlook Group, on Feb.



27, 2020. The OLTA is believed to be a benchmark of quality in the travel and tourism industry and felicitates the best of the best each year. With 13 categories, the awards take a 360° view of the tourism sector. For over a decade, Outlook Traveller has brought forth intriguing destinations and gripping narratives to entice readers to travel more and more. The OLTA are an extension of that aim, by bringing together the goodness of travel and hospitality, introducing new players, recognizing seasoned professionals and offering an unbiased platform that showcases the most exotic and offbeat destinations. Today, OLTA is a benchmark of success in the travel industry. Outlook Traveller is a widely circulated magazine in India and has readership of 12.48 lakhs per month as per the Indian Readership Survey 2020. The award ceremony took place on February 22, 2020, at Roseate House, Aerocity, New Delhi.

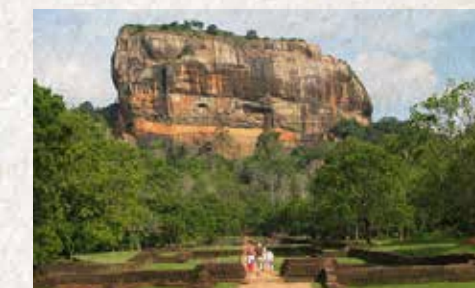
New museum to come up at Purana Qila in Delhi by April 2020



In a new collaborative effort, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Government of India are ready to establish another museum in Purana Qila aka the Old Fort in Delhi. The museum will display objects excavated throughout India that have been kept in the Central Antiquities Collection (CAC) at Purana Qila. According to the reports, the museum will be set up in April 2020 as announced by the Minister

of Tourism, Government of India. Reportedly, the reason behind opening a new museum is to exhibit antique items such as tools, terracotta, pottery, sculptures, beads of semi-precious stones, architectural fragments and other objects for research scholars, the masses and students. The museum will be made in the arched cells of Purana Qila. The Central Antiquity Collection Section is a place for safekeeping the antique items unearthed by the Archaeological Survey of India. These items belong to the Prehistoric period and even to the post-Independence time. Purana Qila is the oldest fort in Delhi dating back to the pre-Mauryan era. It has seen the rise and fall of empires over several centuries, and hence, a very important site from a historical perspective.

Sri Lanka's Sigiriya clinches top slot as winter getaway



The USA Today has ranked Sri Lanka as the top destination, among 20 countries, for winter travel. "Jetsetters looking for something off the beaten tourist path should consider Sri Lanka," USA Today said. "An overlooked gem, this exotic island in the Indian Ocean seduces everyone who steps foot with its stunning unspoiled wilderness, colorful history, and flavorful cuisine." Due to the proximity and a lack of crowds, it's possible to pack a lot into a trip to Sri Lanka, it added. Between December and February, it's not so much a cold snap as a long, extended freeze with a solid chance of precipitation.

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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:

- **ITB Berlin** – 04 – 08 Mar 2020, Berlin, Germany
- **GITB** – 19 – 21 April 2020, Jaipur, India

IA SAYS



Dear Partners,

There is no other destination like this land of pure and divine beauty, Bhutan is renowned to the world today as the Last Shangri-La. It was 1982 when I first went to the Kingdom of Bhutan, and I feel like to make that lifetime journey to this extraordinary country. Bhutan has been protected from the rest of the world by the mighty Himalayas which leaves the country untouched by western civilization. But there's a rapid increase in tourism because of its bewitching charm.

I have been visiting Bhutan ever since, but my recent visit left me surprised with these routes that are reopened to enter the kingdom and discover the unspoiled and unexplored eastern Bhutan. Nowhere in the Himalayas is the natural heritage more rich and diverse than in Bhutan. **Eastern Bhutan's destinations such as Samdrup Jongkhar, Trashigang, Mongar, Gelephu and Bumthang Valley will leave you stunned with its natural charm.**

The best part about travelling to some regions eastern Bhutan is that it is very cost effective than rest of the country. ***The 65\$ per day cost reduces due to no royalty fee, which is usually applied in the western region. Here's a useful tip: If you plan to explore the beautiful country for more than 9 days, from the 10th day onwards you just have to pay half of the royalty fee i.e. 32.5\$(depending on the number of travellers).***

The routes to these places are reopened to travellers now with amazing and comfortable hotels. There was a time when the entry and exit points to Bhutan were restricted, but due to increase in tourism, the routes from **Gelephu, home to Royal Manas National Park, and Samdrup Jongkhar, accessible from Guwhati, are now reopened. Central Bhutan's trekking routes are now accessible though jeeps and I would suggest you to take the offbeat trail and explore the trekking trails of eastern Bhutan. These routes are more scenic and let you explore the enchanting dzongs, the authentic tribes and breathtaking unexplored trekking routes of eastern Bhutan.**

You can take the **Gelephu** route to enter Bhutan from Bogaigoan in Assam and take the less-travelled road to Jakar passing through scenic Zhemgang and its majestic Wangdue Jong monastery. If you take the **Samdrup Jongkhar route from Guwahati in Assam, which is the most suggested and majestic route with highway**, it will take you through Trashigang and its scenic valley, Mongar and its enticing monasteries, to Trongsa through the mesmerising Bumthang Valley. You can also choose to take an internal flight from **Bumthang to Paro** and **Trashigang to Paro**.

Today, travelling to and within Bhutan has become much easier, and the country ranks amongst the top friendliest nation of the world. A journey to Bhutan is a journey of a lifetime to meet its friendly and happy people. It is a journey to visit nature at its best, and a journey to rediscover yourself.

Sunirmol Ghosh

EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH!



Rupinder Kaur | Senior Tour Executive

Rupinder's confidence has made her journey smooth! It's been 6 years since she has been part of the Indo Asia family and the travel industry. She believes that the thrill comes from the hard work and not the result. She dreams to take a world tour one day!