सत्यमेव जयते

NITI Aayog

divya BHARAT

A Window to the Soul of India

April 2026

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A Window to the Soul of India

सुमन के. बेरी
उपाध्यक्ष
SUMAN K. BERY
VICE CHAIRMAN
Phones : 23096677, 23096688
Fax : 23096699
E-mail : vch-niti@gov.in

सत्यमेव जयते

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

भारत सरकार
नीति आयोग, संसद मार्ग
नई दिल्ली - 110 001
Government of India
NATIONAL INSTITUTION FOR TRANSFORMING INDIA
NITI Aayog, Parliament Street,
New Delhi - 110 001

MESSAGE

Tourism in India has always been a sector of transformation, shaping livelihoods, strengthening cultural identity and positioning our nation on the global stage. As India advances toward the vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, tourism must be recognised not only as an economic driver but also as a force that shapes identity, fosters pride and connects communities across regions.

India's journey in tourism has been marked by campaigns that captured the imagination of the world. The *Incredible India 2.0* campaign showcased our diversity to international audiences, while *Dekho Apna Desh* encouraged citizens to rediscover their own heritage. Initiatives such as *Swadesh Darshan* have further strengthened domestic circuits and destinations, ensuring that tourism flows reach deeper into regions often overlooked. Together, these efforts have contributed to the steady rise in Tourist Arrivals, a clear signal of India's growing appeal as a destination of choice.

The *Divya Bharat* anthology prepared by NITI Aayog builds on this legacy. By presenting destinations in harmony with the seasons, it offers a structured view of India's tourism landscape, one that highlights both iconic landmarks and hidden treasures. Looking ahead, the future of Indian tourism lies in high-value and experiential journeys, immersive experiences that go beyond sightseeing to engage with festivals, crafts, cuisines and communities that go beyond sightseeing to create lasting connections.

This anthology is more than a guide; it is an invitation to explore India in its entirety. By aligning destinations with the rhythm of the seasons, it encourages travellers to look beyond familiar circuits, discover unexplored wonders and engage with experiences that strengthen bonds and deepen appreciation for our diversity.

I commend the Tourism and Culture and Communication Division of NITI Aayog for this initiative. I am sure this work will inspire both citizens and institutions to see tourism not only as an economic activity but as a force for identity, pride and progress, anchoring India's journey toward *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

(Suman Bery)

February, 2026
New Delhi

स्वच्छ भारत
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

बी. वी. आर. सुब्रह्मण्यम
B.V.R. Subrahmanyam
मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी
Chief Executive Officer

सत्यमेव जयते

भारत सरकार
नीति आयोग, संसद मार्ग
नई दिल्ली - 110 001
Government of India
National Institution for Transforming India
NITI Aayog, Parliament Street,
New Delhi - 110 001
Tel. : 23096576, 23096574
E-mail : ceo-niti@gov.in

FOREWORD

India, with its rich and ancient history and heritage and diverse wealth of resources in the form of varied geography and culture is fascinating for tourism. It brings together landscapes, traditions and communities, offering travellers a chance to experience the rhythm of the nation across seasons. For many regions, tourism is not only a source of pride but also a pathway to livelihoods and local development. As India moves forward on its journey of growth, tourism must be seen as a sector that strengthens cultural bonds while contributing to inclusive prosperity.

The *Divya Bharat* anthology prepared by NITI Aayog is a distinctive initiative that captures this spirit. By presenting destinations across all 36 States and Union Territories in a unique month-by-month format, this anthology highlights the seasonal offerings of India's tourism landscape. It also brings together iconic landmarks, heritage sites and cultural festivals, while also drawing attention to lesser-known treasures that deserve recognition. Beyond this, the anthology includes detailed state-wise chapters that provide comprehensive overviews of tourism offerings in each State and Union Territory, covering heritage attractions, pilgrimage sites, nature and adventure experiences, handicrafts, fairs and festivals, cuisine, and curated tourism circuits, making it both a seasonal guide and thematic compendium of India's diverse travel experiences.

This anthology is designed to encourage exploration that is both balanced and meaningful. By showcasing opportunities throughout the year, it helps distribute visitor flows more evenly and enables inclusive tourism-led growth. It also reflects the importance of sustainability, ensuring that tourism development is sensitive to local communities, cultural traditions and natural environments.

I congratulate the team at the Tourism and Culture Division under the leadership of Shri Yugal Joshi preparing *'Divya Bharat'*. This compendium will serve as a valuable resource for travellers, policy makers and stakeholders to create inspiring journeys that celebrate India's heritage and strengthen the role of tourism as a driver of economic growth.

February, 2026

[B.V.R. Subrahmanyam]

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एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

युगल जोशी
प्रोग्राम डायरेक्टर
Yugal Joshi
Programme Director
W&L Resources,
Drinking Water & Sanitation and
IT, Telecom, Tourism & Culture

सत्यमेव जयते

भारत सरकार
नीति आयोग, नीति भवन,
संसद मार्ग, नई दिल्ली–110 001
NATIONAL INSTITUTION FOR TRANSFORMING INDIA
NITI Aayog, Parliament Street,
New Delhi-110 001
Tel.: 23096815
E-mail: yugal.joshi@gov.in

PREFACE

India is a country where every season paints a different landscape, every month reveals a new shade of beauty and every corner holds a story waiting to be discovered. No other nation offers such astonishing variety within a single border: from the eternal snows of Ladakh to the coral atolls of Lakshadweep, from the living root bridges of Meghalaya to the silent dunes of the Thar and the mangrove labyrinths of the Sundarbans.

'Divya Bharat' is a year-long window to India's living soul. Each page opens a unique door, deserts breathe starlight, backwaters flash monsoon emeralds, mountains lift snowy veils, hidden valleys whisper their names and India calls you home. Across all 36 States and Union Territories, it pairs every destination with its perfect month, from Andaman's crystal seas in January to Rajasthan's starlit dunes in February, the Northeast's blooming valleys in March, Central India's summer tigers, Kerala's emerald monsoon and Ladakh's open roads, to winter's golden light across the plains.

Guiding the reader to the iconic treasures and the secret charms of each State/Union Territory, we quietly help tourism reach deeper. A homestay in Spiti, a boat ride in the Sundarbans, a meal shared with a family in Little Andaman, every rupee spent stays with the local communities. Young women and men in far-off villages become proud guides, hosts and storytellers. Fragile landscapes receive visitors gently, and popular sites find moments of calm. This anthology is therefore a small bridge between known wonders and hidden gems, between seasons and stories, between travellers and the people who call these places home.

My sincere thanks to the members and interns of the Tourism & Culture Division and Communication Division of NITI Aayog for their contribution, coordination and hard work at all stages of this anthology.

These pages are created to inspire everyone to explore more of India, more often and in seasons they may not have considered before. The objective of *'Divya Bharat'* is to lead people to places they never knew existed and bring them home with stories they will carry forever.

February, 2026

[Yugal Joshi]

INDIA

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This anthology is the result of a collective endeavour and the dedicated efforts of numerous contributors whose expertise shaped its content. Sincere gratitude is expressed to all members and interns of the Communication Division and Tourism & Culture Division of NITI Aayog who supported the anthology of diverse tourism content from across the country. Their dedication in gathering insights on tourist attractions, culture, cuisine, crafts, festivals and lesser-known experiences has enriched this anthology with depth and authenticity.

Deep appreciation is extended to the members of the Communication Division of NITI Aayog, Ms. Keerti Tiwari, Director; Ms. Sonia Sachdeva Sharma, Consultant; Ms. Subhashree Pati, Consultant; Shri Souvik Chongder, Young Professional; and interns for their conceptualisation, contribution, coordination and hard work at all stages of the anthology. Sincere gratitude is also extended to the members of the Tourism & Culture Division of NITI Aayog, Shri Amit Bhardwaj, Deputy Adviser; Shri Manavendra Jain, Consultant; Ms. Divya Nandini, Consultant; Ms. Priyadharshini Paramasivam, Young Professional; Shri Gautam Kapur, PPS and interns for their enthusiastic contributions to the creation and launch of this anthology. Gratitude is further extended to the Young Professionals of the State Support Mission of NITI Aayog. The Ministry of Tourism and State Tourism Departments are also thanked for their cooperation and support in the creation of state-wise chapters. Sincere thanks to Shri Ajay Negi and Shri Shivkumar Yadav from the NITI design and creative team, whose contributions have transformed the contents of this anthology into a cohesive and engaging, reader-friendly format.

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This collaborative effort stands as a testament to the shared vision of promoting India's vast and vibrant tourism landscape throughout the year.

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Monthly Calendar 4

(1) January 5
(2) February 7
(3) March 9
(4) April 11
(5) May 13
(6) June 15
(7) July 17
(8) August 19
(9) September 21
(10) October 23
(11) November 25
(12) December 27

States and UTs 30

(1) Andaman and Nicobar Islands 31
(2) Andhra Pradesh 39
(3) Arunachal Pradesh 53
(4) Assam 65
(5) Bihar 81
(6) Chandigarh 93
(7) Chhattisgarh 103
(8) Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu 117
(9) Delhi 129
(10) Goa 143
(11) Gujarat 157
(12) Haryana 167
(13) Himachal Pradesh 179
(14) Jammu and Kashmir 191
(15) Jharkhand 205
(16) Karnataka 217
(17) Kerala 229
(18) Ladakh 245
(19) Lakshadweep 257
(20) Madhya Pradesh 267
(21) Maharashtra 281
(22) Manipur 299
(23) Meghalaya 311
(24) Mizoram 325
(25) Nagaland 333
(26) Odisha 347
(27) Puducherry 363
(28) Punjab 375
(29) Rajasthan 385
(30) Sikkim 399
(31) Tamil Nadu 409
(32) Telangana 419
(33) Tripura 429
(34) Uttar Pradesh 437
(35) Uttarakhand 453
(36) West Bengal 463

INTRODUCTION

India's tourism landscape offers year-round experiences, where every month opens a window to new landscapes, living traditions and local flavours across its States and Union Territories. Conceived as a year-round companion, this anthology is a comprehensive repository that beautifully encapsulates the ever-unfolding journey of India, from iconic heritage landscapes to lesser-known attractions, festivals, crafts, cuisines and local stories.

How This Anthology Works-

Crafted to spark curiosity and enable smarter travel decisions, this anthology pairs a month-wise exploration map with state-wise tourism profiles, capturing India's celebrated attractions and its hidden gems across themes such as heritage, nature, pilgrimage, adventure, crafts, cuisine, festivals, circuits and seasonal experiences.

The first section is a Monthly Calendar, recommending best destinations in different states and outlining what to expect. Whether you're drawn to the monsoon-soaked beauty of the Western Ghats or the charm of the Himalayan winter landscapes, this section helps you align your travel plans with India's diverse seasonal offerings.

The second section includes State-wise chapters that provide deep dives into India's 28 states and 08 Union Territories, offering a comprehensive overview of the tourism offerings of each State/ UT, structured around key themes to guide immersive journeys.

- Places to Visit: Heritage Attractions such as centuries-old monuments, UNESCO sites, palaces, and forts; Pilgrimage Destinations featuring sacred sites for spiritual journeys across faiths; and Nature and Adventure encompassing pristine parks, forests, wildlife sanctuaries, biodiversity hotspots, and outdoor activities.
- Lesser-Known Attractions: Hidden gems for authentic, offbeat experiences beyond popular tourist trails.
- Handicraft and Textile Heritage: Artisan crafts like embroidery, pottery and traditional weaves at local markets.
- Fairs and Festivals: Vibrant celebrations capturing regional cultural rhythms.
- Cuisine and Culinary Heritage: Signature regional flavors, street foods, and delicacies.
- Best Time to Visit: Practical guidance on optimal seasons to experience each destination.
- Did You Know: Fascinating facts revealing unique regional stories and secrets.
- Popular Tourism Circuits: Curated routes connecting themed attractions.

Whether you are a domestic traveller seeking to reconnect with your homeland or an international visitor experiencing India for the first time, 'Divya Bharat' transforms planning into seamless discovery.

India awaits. Let this anthology guide you to experiences that will make you a part of India's unfolding tourism story.

Monthly Calendar

January

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in January
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Port Blair, Havelock, Neil Island	Scuba diving, snorkeling, dry season, beach festivals
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam, Araku Valley, Tirupati	Araku's cool weather, beaches, temple pilgrimage
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Ziro, Bomdila	Snow in Tawang, monasteries, winter treks, scenic valleys
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli, Guwahati	Best time for rhino safari, cultural fairs, Brahmaputra cruises
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir	Buddhist pilgrimage, heritage
Chandigarh	Rock Garden, Sukhna Lake, Rose Garden, Sector 17 Plaza	Unique sculptures, perfect winter stroll, early morning walks, boating, misty views
Chhattisgarh	Tirathgarh Waterfall, Bastar Region, Sirpur, Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary	Multi-tier beauty, tribal culture, forests, ancient buddhist & hindu temples, wildlife spotting
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Diu, Silvassa, Jampore Beach	Mild seaside weather, beach festivals, Portuguese forts
Delhi	New Delhi	Republic Day Parade, winter sightseeing, heritage walks
Goa	Panjim, Calangute, Old Goa, Palolem	Peak beach season, nightlife
Gujarat	Rann of Kutch, Ahmedabad, Gir	Rann Utsav, International Kite Festival, wildlife safaris
Haryana	Kurukshetra, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, Pinjore Gardens	Migratory bird watching, heritage sites, mild winter
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Kufri, Manali, Solang Valley	Snowfall, skiing, trekking, winter carnival
Jammu & Kashmir	Gulmarg, Srinagar, Pahalgam	Skiing, snow, gondola rides, frozen Dal Lake
Jharkhand	Hundru Falls, Dassam Falls, Netarhat, Parasnath Hill, Rajrappa	Scenic winter flow, sunrise & sunset points, wildlife spotting, jain pilgrimage
Karnataka	Hampi, Mysuru, Coorg	Heritage tours, palaces, coffee plantations
Kerala	Alleppey, Munnar, Thekkady, Kovalam	Backwaters, tea gardens, cultural fairs
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kavaratti, Bangaram	Scuba diving, snorkelling, island hopping
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Sanchi, Pench, Amarkantak	Wildlife safaris, heritage temples, mild climate
Maharashtra	Mumbai, Ajanta-Ellora, Mahabaleshwar	Winter treks, beaches, caves, hill stations
Manipur	Imphal, Loktak Lake, Keibul Lamjao NP	Floating lake beauty, Sangai Festival (season)
Meghalaya	Shillong, Cherrapunji, Dawki	Waterfalls, living root bridges, crystal-clear Dawki river
Mizoram	Aizawl, Reiek & Durtlang Hills, Vantawng Falls	Local culture, clear mountain views, short hikes, tall & beautiful even in winter, sunset & city views
Nagaland	Kohima, Dzukou Valley, Mokokchung, Mount Puliebadze, Khonoma	Tribal culture, cool weather, post-Hornbill Festival explorations, Snow, Tracking
Odisha	Puri, Konark, Bhubaneswar, Chilika	Puri Beach Festival, Konark Sun Temple, migratory birds
Puducherry	Auroville, Promenade Beach, Paradise Beach	French heritage walks, yoga retreats, mild coastal weather
Punjab	Amritsar, Patiala, Anandpur Sahib	Lohri festival, Golden Temple, forts & palaces
Rajasthan	Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur	Desert safaris, Jaipur Literature Festival, forts & palaces
Tamil Nadu	Chennai, Madurai, Mamallapuram, Ooty	Pongal festival, temples, cultural heritage
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal, Nagarjuna Sagar	Heritage forts, lakes, winter sightseeing
Tripura	Agartala, Neermahal, Unakoti	Ujjayanta Palace, local markets, Best time for lake palace visit, Rock-cut sculptures, pleasant trekking
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow, Prayagraj	Magh Mela, Taj Mahal, ghats & heritage
Uttarakhand	Nainital, Chopta, Mussoorie	Snow adventure, himalayan views, winter treks
West Bengal	Kolkata, Darjeeling, Sundarbans	Himalayan views, tea gardens, tiger spotting heritage sites, zoos

Jammu & Kashmir
Himachal Pradesh
Punjab
Uttarakhand
Chandigarh
Haryana
Uttar Pradesh
Assam
Rajasthan
Arunachal Pradesh
Bihar
Delhi
Nagaland
Meghalaya
Madhya Pradesh
Manipur
Mizoram
Tripura
Daman & Diu
Dadra & Nagar Haveli
West Bengal
Jharkhand
Gujarat
Chhattisgarh
Odisha
Maharashtra
Telangana
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Lakshadweep
Goa
Andhra Pradesh
Puducherry
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

February

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in February
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Port Blair, Havelock, Neil Island	Clear skies, water sports, island hopping
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam, Araku Valley, Tirupati	Pleasant coastal weather, coffee plantations, temple visits
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Ziro, Bomdila	Snow views, monasteries, Losar
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli, Guwahati	Prime rhino safari season, cultural heritage, Brahmaputra cruises
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir	Heritage and Buddhist pilgrimage in mild weather
Chandigarh	Rose Garden, Sukhna Lake, Rock Garden, Capitol Complex, Sector 17 Plaza	Full bloom, Clear mornings, boating & walks, pleasant exploration
Chhattisgarh	Bastar, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Sirpur, Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Dongargarh	Great views, ancient buddhist monasteries & temples, time for safaris, pleasant climb & views
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Diu, Silvassa, Jampore Beach	Beach festivals, forts, mild seaside climate
Delhi	New Delhi	Ideal for heritage walks, gardens in full bloom, Mughal Gardens open
Goa	Panjim, Calangute, Old Goa, Palolem	Goa Carnival, beach season, vibrant nightlife
Gujarat	Rann of Kutch, Gir, Ahmedabad	Rann Utsav, wildlife spotting, cultural fairs
Haryana	Kurukshetra, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, Pinjore Gardens	Migratory birds, heritage, Surajkund Crafts Mela
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Kufri, Manali, Dharamshala	Snow sports, treks, Buddhist monasteries, International Shivratri Fair
Jammu & Kashmir	Gulmarg, Srinagar, Pahalgam	Skiing, frozen lakes, snow landscapes
Jharkhand	Netarhat, Hundru Falls, Dassam Falls, Parasnath Hill, Rajrappa	Clear sunrise & sunset points, very scenic, wildlife spotting, pleasant weather for pilgrimage
Karnataka	Hampi, Mysuru, Coorg	Heritage, coffee estates, mild weather
Kerala	Alleppey, Munnar, Thekkady, Kovalam	Backwaters, tea gardens, houseboat stays
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kavaratti, Bangaram	Scuba diving, island hopping, clear lagoons
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Sanchi, Ujjain, Pench, Mandhata	Khajuraho Dance Festival, wildlife safaris, heritage tours
Maharashtra	Mumbai, Ajanta-Ellora, Mahabaleshwar	Cool Sahyadri treks, beaches, heritage caves
Manipur	Imphal, Loktak Lake, Keibul Lamjao NP	Cool weather, cultural tourism, floating lake beauty
Meghalaya	Shillong, Cherrapunji, Dawki	Clear skies, waterfalls, caves, Dawki river views
Mizoram	Vantawng Falls, Tam Dil Lake, Reiek & Hmuifang Hills	Ideal water flow, calm & scenic, meadows, viewpoints
Nagaland	Kohima, Dzukou Valley, Mokokchung, Doyang River, Poilwa, Peren	Tribal culture, pleasant winter climate, Sheep farms
Odisha	Puri, Konark, Bhubaneswar, Chilika	Dance Festival, migratory birds, temple tours
Puducherry	Auroville, Promenade Beach, Paradise Beach	Auroville Birthday, French heritage, yoga retreats
Punjab	Amritsar, Patiala, Anandpur Sahib	Cool weather, cultural tours, Golden Temple
Rajasthan	Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur	Desert Festival, forts, palaces, desert safaris
Tamil Nadu	Chennai, Madurai, Mamallapuram, Ooty	Temple festivals, hill retreats, cultural heritage
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal, Nagarjuna Sagar	Heritage forts, lakes, winter sightseeing
Tripura	Jampui Hills, Unakoti, Neermahal	Clear views, orange orchards, Comfortable exploration, Clear skies, reflections
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow, Prayagraj	Magh Mela continues, Taj Mahal, heritage
Uttarakhand	Auli, Chopta, Mussoorie, Dhanaulti, Munsiyari	Snow adventure, dreamy white views, cozy stays, raw Himalayan beauty
West Bengal	Kolkata, Darjeeling, Sundarbans	Tea gardens, himalayan views, tiger spotting, heritage sites, zoos

Jammu & Kashmir
Himachal Pradesh
Uttarakhand
Punjab
Chandigarh
Haryana
Rajasthan
Uttar Pradesh
Bihar
Delhi
Assam
Arunachal Pradesh
Nagaland
Meghalaya
Manipur
Mizoram
Tripura
Madhya Pradesh
Daman & Diu
Dadra & Nagar Haveli
Gujarat
Maharashtra
West Bengal
Jharkhand
Chhattisgarh
Odisha
Telangana
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Lakshadweep
Goa
Andhra Pradesh
Puducherry
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

March

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in March
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Havelock, Neil, Port Blair	Pleasant weather, water sports, dry season continues
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Ziro, Bomdila	Snow lingers, monasteries, scenic valleys
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli, Guwahati	Last month of good rhino spotting before monsoon sets in
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir	Spiritual circuits in spring weather, heritage walks
Chandigarh	Sukhna Lake, Rock Garden, Rose Garden, Capitol Complex, Sector 17 Plaza	Morning walks, boating, golden sunsets, Best time to explore without cold or heat, Late blooms + greenery, UNESCO site, clear views, Shopping, cafés, evening vibes
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Devka Beach, Jampore Beach	Sunset views, evening walks, calm waters, sea-facing fort
Delhi	New Delhi	Gardens in bloom, spring sightseeing, Holi celebrations
Goa	Panjim, Calangute, Old Goa	Pleasant beach weather, Shigmo festival (Goan Holi)
Gujarat	Gir NP, Rann of Kutch, Ahmedabad	End of Rann Utsav, wildlife safaris, cultural tours
Haryana	Kurukshetra, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary	Pleasant climate, birdwatching season ending
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala	End of snow season, spring blossoms, treks open
Jammu & Kashmir	Gulmarg, Srinagar, Pahalgam	Tulip gardens begin (late March), snow tourism
Jharkhand	Netarhat, Hundru Falls, Dassam Falls, Parasnath Hill, Rajrappa	Amazing viewpoints, last best month for wildlife sightings, pleasant weathe
Karnataka	Coorg, Hampi, Mysuru	Coffee blossoms, heritage tours, moderate
Kerala	Munnar, Thekkady, Alleppey, Kovalam	Backwaters, tea gardens, elephant festivals
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kavaratti, Bangaram	Diving, snorkelling, calm lagoons
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Mandhata, Ujjain	Wildlife safaris peak visibility, Khajuraho temples
Maharashtra	Ajanta-Ellora, Mahabaleshwar, Mumbai	Spring treks, caves, beaches, hill stations
Manipur	Loktak Lake, Imphal	Cool climate, cultural tourism
Meghalaya	Shillong, Cherrapunji, Dawki, Umiam Lake	Clear skies, waterfalls, caves
Mizoram	Hmuifang & Reiek Hills, Aizawl	Cultural & natural beauty, festival vibes, clear spring views
Nagaland	Kohima, Dzukou Valley, Mount Saramati	Pleasant trekking weather, tribal culture
Odisha	Puri, Konark, Chilika Lake	Jagannath temple, konark heritage, migratory birds (last month)
Puducherry	Auroville, Promenade, Paradise Beach	Spring coastal retreats, french heritage walks
Punjab	Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib	Hola Mohalla festival, forts, Golden Temple
Rajasthan	Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Jodhpur	Mild desert safaris, forts, Holi celebrations
Sikkim	Gangtok, Pelling, Tsomgo Lake, Yumthang Valley	Clear views, comfy sightseeing, snow still visible, early spring colors
Tamil Nadu	Madurai, Chennai, Ooty, Kodaikanal	Temple tours, hill retreats, pleasant climate
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal	Heritage forts, lakes, spring sightseeing
Tripura	Agartala, Jampui Hills, Pilak	Festivals, city sightseeing, Still pleasant mornings, Archaeological site
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Mathura, Agra, Prayagraj	Holi celebrations (Mathura-Vrindavan), Taj Mahal
Uttarakhand	Nainital, Mussoorie, Ranikhet, Almora, Kausani	Clear weather, boating, views, Green hills, waterfalls, Calm, Stunning Himalayan sunrise
West Bengal	Kolkata, Darjeeling, Shantiniketan	Basanta Utsav, tea gardens

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Maharashtra
Lakshadweep
Puducherry
Goa
Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

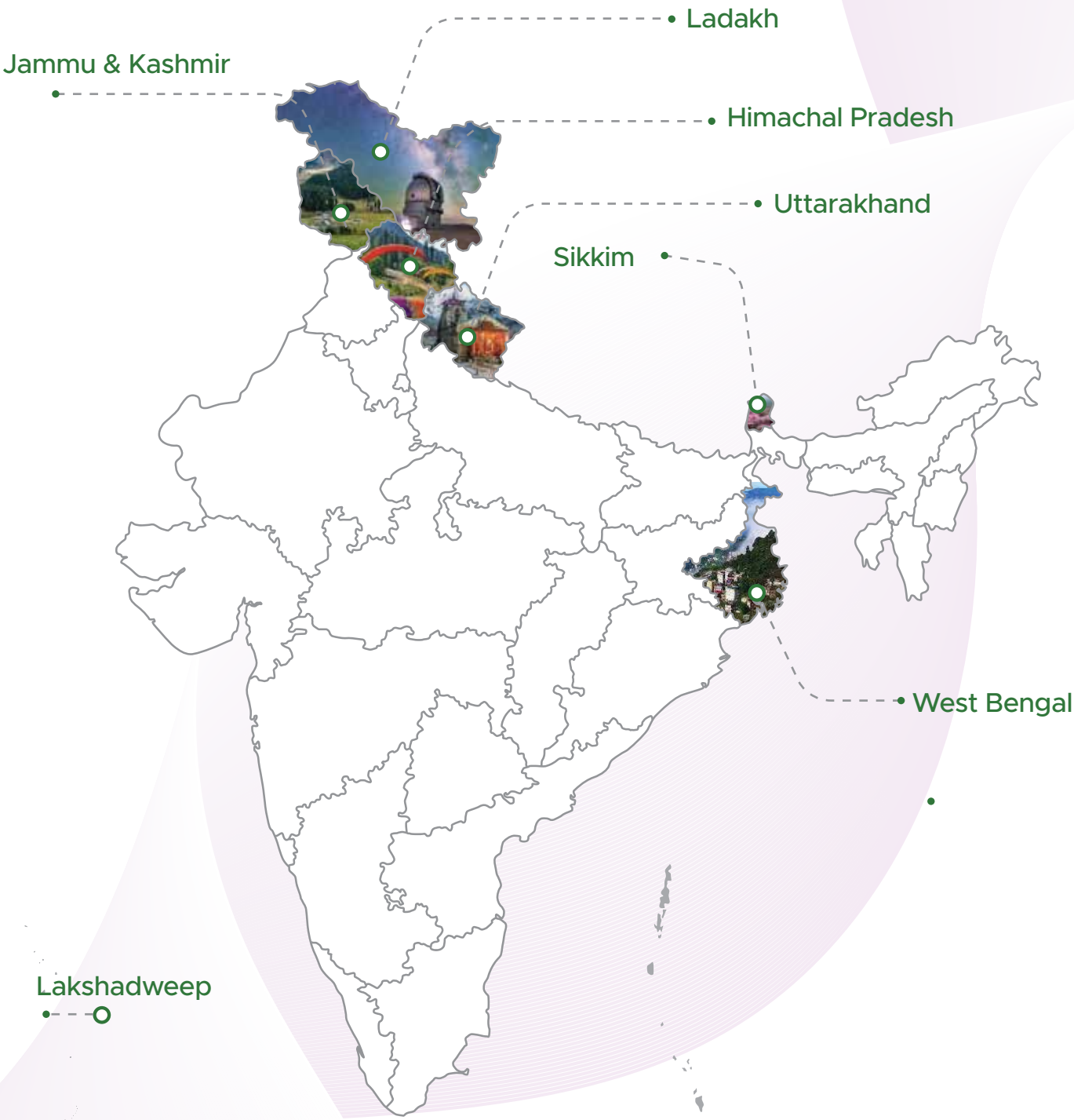
April

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in April
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Havelock, Neil, Port Blair	Calm seas, diving, island tours
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Ziro, Bomdila	Spring blossoms, monasteries, treks open
Assam	Guwahati, Majuli, Kaziranga (early April)	Rongali Bihu (mid-April), wildlife safaris until season ends
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Manali, Kinnaur, Dharamshala	Snow melts, trekking season starts, apple blossoms
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam	Asia's largest Tulip Festival (Srinagar), cool spring weather
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kavaratti, Bangaram	Calm seas, snorkelling, scuba diving
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Pachmarhi, Sanchi	Wildlife spotting at waterholes (peak visibility), heritage tours
Maharashtra	Mahabaleshwar, Matheran, Lonavala	Hill stations, waterfalls (early summer treks)
Meghalaya	Shillong, Cherrapunji, Dawki	Pleasant weather, waterfalls, caves
Nagaland	Dzukou Valley, Kohima, Khonsa	Valley blooms, pleasant treks
Odisha	Puri, Konark, Bhubaneswar	Chandan Yatra (Puri), temple heritage
Punjab	Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib	Baisakhi festival, Golden Temple, forts
Rajasthan	Mount Abu, Udaipur, Ranthambore	Only hill station (Mount Abu), tiger safaris
Sikkim	Yumthang Valley, Lachung & Lachen, Gangtok, Pelling & Tsomgo Lake	Spring flower bloom, stunning landscapes, best sightseeing weather, crystal-clear Kanchenjunga views, snow still visible, magical contrast
Tamil Nadu	Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yelagiri	Hill stations perfect escape from summer
Telangana	Hyderabad, Nagarjuna Sagar	Early April sightseeing, Nagarjuna Sagar dam in full flow
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Mathura, Agra	Religious tourism continues, moderate weather early April
Uttarakhand	Mussoorie, Nainital, Ranikhet, Almora, Kausani, Chopta, Auli	Lush green hills, waterfalls, pleasant evenings, quiet, mountain views, start of trekking season, snow melting, scenic cable car rides
West Bengal	Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars	Cool Himalayan retreats, tea gardens

Jammu & Kashmir
Himachal Pradesh
Punjab
Uttarakhand
Uttar Pradesh
Assam
Rajasthan
Arunachal Pradesh
Sikkim
Nagaland
Meghalaya
Madhya Pradesh
West Bengal
Odisha
Telangana
Maharashtra
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Lakshadweep
Tamil Nadu

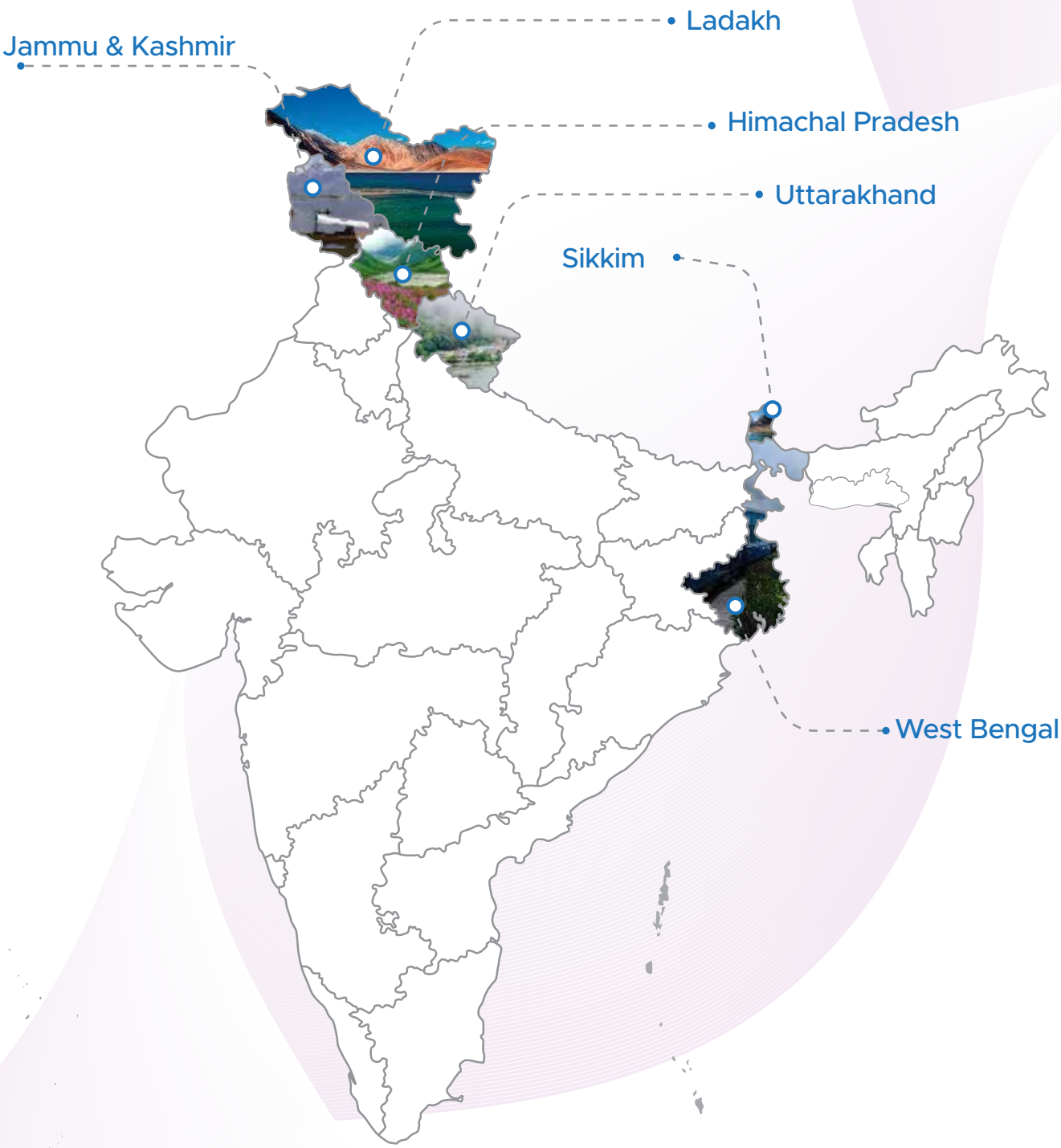
May

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in May
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Manali, Kinnaur, Spiti	Peak hill station escape, apple blossoms, treks open
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar, Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Pahalgam	Tulip gardens (early May), snow in higher altitudes
Ladakh	Drass, Suru Valley, Aryan Valley, Hanle, Leh	Cultural Festivals, Ladakh Astro Festival, Scenic Treks, Stargazing Retreat
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kadmat, Bangaram	Calm seas, snorkelling, scuba diving
Sikkim	Gangtok, Yumthang, Nathula, Pelling	Rhododendron blooms, snow, treks
Uttarakhand	Nainital, Rishikesh, Auli, Kedarnath/ Badrinath	Hill stations, Char Dham Yatra starts
West Bengal	Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars	Tea estates, Himalayan views


Ladakh
Jammu & Kashmir
Himachal Pradesh
Uttarakhand
Sikkim
West Bengal
Lakshadweep

June

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in June
Himachal Pradesh	Manali, Spiti, Kinnaur, Dharamshala	Summer treks, Spiti road trips
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar, Sonmarg, Pahalgam, Gulmarg	Full bloom, summer festivals
Ladakh	Leh, Nubra, Pangong (from late May/ June)	Roads open, biking & trekking season
Sikkim	Gangtok, Lachung, Yumthang, Nathula	Flower valleys, high passes open
Uttarakhand	Kedarnath, Badrinath, Auli, Valley of Flowers (late June)	Religious yatra + alpine meadows bloom
West Bengal	Darjeeling, Kalimpong	Summer Himalayan retreats


Jammu & Kashmir
Ladakh
Himachal Pradesh
Uttarakhand
Sikkim
West Bengal

July

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in July
Goa	Beaches, spice plantations, Dudhsagar Falls	Monsoon greenery, waterfalls
Ladakh	Leh, Nubra, Pangong Tso, Zanskar, Changthang, Sham Valley, Hemis, Phyang, Chuchot, Lamayuru, Zanskar, Alchi, Likir, Basgo, Shey, Thiksey, Stakna, Hunder, Turtuk, Sumoor, Panamik, Hemis, Hanle, Tso Kar, Chumathang, Chilling Tso, Puga Valley, Demchok, Markha Valley, Chushul, Mushkoo Valley, Drass, Mulbekh, Trespone	Absolute peak season — Biking, Trekking & Mountaineering, Hemis Festival, Sham Festival, Phyang Tsedup Festival, Nomadic Festival, Ladakh Polo Festival, Water Sports, Cultural Festivals, Wellness Retreat, Stargazing Retreat, Traditional Orientation Tours and Activities
Maharashtra	Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar, Igatpuri	Sahyadri forts & monsoon waterfalls
Odisha	Puri, Konark	Rath Yatra Festival
Tamil Nadu	Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud	Misty hill stations, monsoon escape

Ladakh
Odisha
Maharashtra
Goa
Tamil Nadu

August

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in August
Goa	Dudhsagar, spice plantations, monsoon beaches	Sao Joao monsoon festival, lush greenery
Ladakh	Leh, Pangong Tso, Nubra, Tso Moriri, Zanskar Sani, Takthok, Kargil, Drass, Sakti, Sangam Point, Nubra, Zanskar, Changthang, Sham Valley, Hemis, Phyang, Chuchot, Lamayuru, Zanskar, Alchi, Likir, Basgo, Shey, Thiksey, Stakna, Hunder, Turtuk, Sumoor, Panamik, Hemis, Hanle, Tso Kar, Chumathang, Chilling Tso, Puga Valley, Demchok, Markha Valley, Chushul, Mushkoo Valley, Mulbekh	Still peak season - all roads open, adventure tourism at its best, Takthok Tsechu Festival, Ladakh rPal-rGam Tuston celebration, Sani Nesjal Festival, Ladakh Aero Festival, River Rafting, Mountain Biking, Paragliding, Water Sports, Cultural Festivals, Wellness Retreat, Stargazing retreat
Maharashtra	Bhandardara, Lonavala, Matheran	Sahyadri forts, lush treks, monsoon magic
Rajasthan	Udaipur, Mount Abu	Lakes full, monsoon palace views, only “green Rajasthan” season
Tamil Nadu	Ooty, Kodaikanal	Misty monsoon hill stations

Ladakh
Rajasthan
Maharashtra
Goa
Tamil Nadu

September

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in September
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Jammu (Vaishno Devi)	Dal Lake shikaras, mughal gardens at their greenest, lush meadows, cable car views, glaciers & alpine views with good road access, comfortable pilgrimage weather
Kerala	Wayanad, Alleppey, Thekkady	Post-monsoon greenery + Ayurveda rejuvenation season
Ladakh	Leh, Nubra, Pangong Tso, Tso Moriri, Aryan Valley, Turtuk, Drass, Sham Valley	Clear skies, fewer crowds, best for photographers & bikers, Climate Cup Football Tournament, Ladakh Marathon, Aryan Festival, Buckwheat Festival, Balti Festival, Ladakh Festival
Maharashtra	Bhandardara, Lonavala, Matheran, Khandala	Cleaner beaches, calmer seas, perfect for peaceful stays
Rajasthan	Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur	Pleasant weather begins, festivals start
Tamil Nadu	Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Madurai, Mahabalipuram	Clearer skies, lush tea gardens, pleasant walks, waterfalls still active, quiet hill escape, great viewpoints, temple visits in comfortable weather, heritage sightseeing with fewer tourists

Ladakh
Jammu & Kashmir
Rajasthan
Maharashtra
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

October

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in October
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Havelock, Neil, Port Blair	Calm seas, diving & beach tourism starts
Andhra Pradesh	Araku Valley, Vizag, Tirupati	Pleasant weather, pilgrim & coastal tours
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Ziro, Bomdila	Crystal-clear skies, high-altitude treks
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli, Tezpur	Wildlife season begins, cultural festivals
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Vaishali	Pilgrimage season opens, Chhath prep
Chandigarh	Rock Garden, Sukhna Lake	Garden city in autumn bloom
Chhattisgarh	Chitrakote, Bastar	Bastar Dussehra, waterfalls post-monsoon
Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu	Diu Fort, beaches	Heritage, pleasant coastal weather
Delhi	Monuments, markets, cultural hubs	Perfect sightseeing weather
Gujarat	Gir, Somnath, Dwarka	Navratri festival, wildlife season
Haryana	Kurukshetra, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary	Autumn pilgrimages + birdwatching
Himachal Pradesh	Kullu, Manali, Shimla	Kullu Dussehra, apple season
Jammu & Kashmir	Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam	Chinar autumn colours, houseboats
Jharkhand	Netarhat, Betla, Deoghar	Cool weather, forest treks
Karnataka	Mysuru, Hampi, Coorg	Dasara festival, heritage circuits
Kerala	Munnar, Alleppey, Kochi	Green backwaters, Kathakali season
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Bangaram	Clear seas, scuba diving starts
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Orchha, Kanha	National parks reopen
Maharashtra	Ajanta, Ellora, Konkan	Heritage, clear post-monsoon scenery
Manipur	Loktak Lake, Imphal	Pleasant weather, Sangai Festival prep
Meghalaya	Shillong, Dawki, Nongriat	Clear skies, waterfalls
Mizoram	Aizawl, Vantawng Falls, Aizawl, Champhai	Mist-free valleys, Cultural tours, Anthurium festival, Cosmos blooming season
Nagaland	Kohima, Dzükou Valley, Mount Saramati, Kapamodzü Peak	Trekking & tribal circuits open
Odisha	Bhubaneswar, Konark, Chilika	Temple tours, migratory birds start
Puducherry	White Town, Auroville	French colonial charm, beach walks
Punjab	Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib	Crisp weather, Golden Temple tourism
Rajasthan	Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur	Desert tourism season begins
Sikkim	Gangtok, Pelling, Nathula	Clear skies, Kanchenjunga views
Tamil Nadu	Chennai, Kodaikanal, Madurai	Temple, hill tourism in full flow
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal	Heritage tourism, festivals
Tripura	Agartala, Udaipur, Sepahijala	Green landscapes, heritage palaces
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow	Diwali & Dev Deepawali season
West Bengal	Kolkata, Shantiniketan	Durga Puja grand celebrations

Jammu & Kashmir
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Bihar
Delhi
Nagaland
Madhya Pradesh
Manipur
Mizoram
Meghalaya
Tripura
Daman & Diu
Dadra & Nagar Haveli
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Jharkhand
Chhattisgarh
Gujarat
Odisha
Telangana
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Maharashtra
Puducherry
Lakshadweep
Andhra Pradesh
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

November

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in November
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Havelock, Neil, Radhanagar	Snorkeling, diving peak
Andhra Pradesh	Tirupati, Vizag, Araku	Pilgrimage & hill retreats
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Namdapha	Snow starts in higher reaches
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli	National parks in full swing
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Patna Sahib	Chhath Puja, pilgrimage peak
Chandigarh	Rose Garden, Sukhna Lake	Pleasant winter charm
Chhattisgarh	Bastar, Mainpat, Sirpur	Eco-tourism season
Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu	Beaches, forts	Winter tourist inflow
Delhi	Monuments, Trade Fair	Cultural, festive tourism
Goa	Beaches, Old Goa	Shigmo fest, early parties
Gujarat	Rann of Kutch, Gir	Rann Utsav begins, lion safari
Haryana	Sultanpur, Kurukshetra	Migratory birds, pilgrim tourism
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla, Dalhousie, Kinnaur	Snow dusting, apple valleys
Jammu & Kashmir	Gulmarg, Pahalgam	Ski season begins
Jharkhand	Betla, Netarhat	Winter treks & waterfalls
Karnataka	Hampi, Mysuru, Coorg	Heritage & nature peak
Kerala	Alleppey, Kochi, Thekkady	Kathakali, Ayurveda tourism
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Kavaratti	Pristine diving season
Madhya Pradesh	Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Orchha, Amarkantak	Wildlife safaris peak
Maharashtra	Ajanta, Ellora, Konkan	Heritage, coastal tours
Manipur	Loktak, Imphal	Sangai Festival
Meghalaya	Shillong, Cherrapunji	Cherry Blossom Festival, Literary festival, Wangala festival, Hills festival
Mizoram	Aizawl, Reiek, Sakawrhmuituai Tlang	Winter tourism begins
Nagaland	Kohima, Dzükou, Mount Saramati	Hornbill prep season, Cherry blossom
Odisha	Konark, Chilika	Konark Dance Festival, birds peak
Puducherry	White Town, Auroville	Colonial Christmas prep
Punjab	Amritsar, Patiala	Guru Nanak Jayanti
Rajasthan	Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Pushkar	Pushkar Camel Fair
Sikkim	Gangtok, Yumthang	Autumn landscapes
Tamil Nadu	Madurai, Rameswaram, Chennai	Festival tourism
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal	Heritage, IT corridor events
Tripura	Agartala, Jampui Hills	Orange festival, heritage tours
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Ayodhya, Agra	Dev Deepawali
Uttarakhand	Rishikesh, Haridwar	Yoga & pilgrimage
West Bengal	Kolkata, Sundarbans	Raas festival, tiger spotting

Jammu & Kashmir
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Odisha
Telangana
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
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Andhra Pradesh
Goa
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

December

State / UT	Places to Visit	Why Visit in December
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Havelock, Neil	Christmas on the beach, scuba diving
Andhra Pradesh	Vizag, Araku, Tirupati	Cool festive tourism
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Bomdila	Snowy monastery treks
Assam	Kaziranga, Majuli	Wildlife safaris
Bihar	Bodh Gaya, Nalanda	Pilgrimage + festivals
Chandigarh	Gardens, museums	Crisp winter outdoors
Chhattisgarh	Chitrakote, Sirpur	Winter eco-tourism
Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu	Diu, Silvassa	Beach carnivals
Delhi	Monuments, Christmas bazaars	Winter charm, cultural fests
Goa	Beaches, churches	Christmas, New Year parties, Sunburn festival
Gujarat	Rann of Kutch, Gir	Rann Utsav in full swing
Haryana	Kurukshetra, bird sanctuaries	Migratory birds, pilgrimage
Himachal Pradesh	Manali, Shimla, Dalhousie	Snow, Christmas charm
Jammu & Kashmir	Gulmarg, Sonmarg	Ski resorts, snow tourism
Jharkhand	Betla, Deoghar	Pilgrimage, winter forests
Karnataka	Coorg, Mysuru, Hampi	Heritage, coffee tourism
Kerala	Alleppey, Kochi, Munnar	Christmas backwaters, Tea Plantations
Lakshadweep	Agatti, Minicoy	Scuba diving + beach holidays
Madhya Pradesh	Khajuraho, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Pench	Heritage, tiger safaris
Maharashtra	Lonavala, Mumbai, Ajanta	Holiday season, forts
Manipur	Imphal, Loktak	Winter lakeside tourism
Meghalaya	Shillong, Dawki	Christmas, winter charm
Mizoram	Aizawl	Christmas cultural tourism
Nagaland	Kohima, Hornbill sites, Mount Saramati	Hornbill Festival (till early Dec)
Odisha	Konark, Puri, Chilika	Dance festival, migratory birds
Puducherry	White Town, Auroville	French colonial Christmas vibes
Punjab	Amritsar, Patiala	Crisp winter pilgrimages
Rajasthan	Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Jaipur	Desert safaris & winter fairs
Sikkim	Gangtok, Nathula, Pelling	Snowy Himalayan tourism
Tamil Nadu	Chennai, Puducherry, Madurai	Chennai Music Season
Telangana	Hyderabad, Warangal	Cool heritage season
Tripura	Agartala, Udaipur	Palace heritage & eco-tourism
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Agra, Mathura	Winter pilgrim tourism
Uttarakhand	Auli, Mussoorie, Nainital	Skiing & snow holidays
West Bengal	Darjeeling, Kolkata	Park Street Christmas + snow

Jammu & Kashmir
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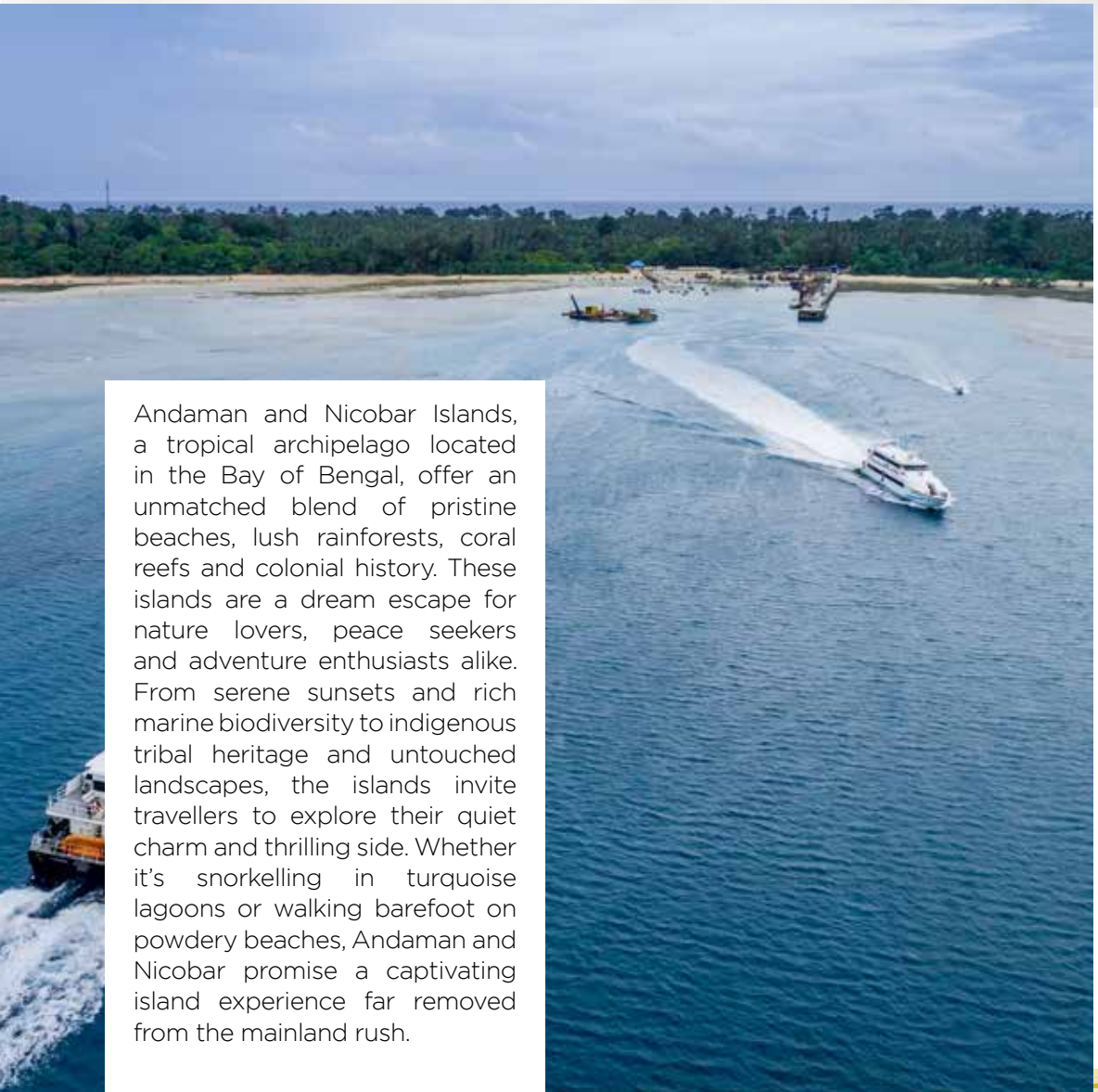
Bihar
Delhi
Nagaland
Meghalaya
Madhya Pradesh
Manipur
Mizoram
Tripura
Daman & Diu
Dadra & Nagar Haveli
West Bengal
Jharkhand
Gujarat
Chhattisgarh
Odisha
Telangana
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Maharashtra
Puducherry
Lakshadweep
Andhra Pradesh
Goa
Karnataka
Tamil Nadu
Kerala

States & UTs

Andaman & Nicobar

Tourism



Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a tropical archipelago located in the Bay of Bengal, offer an unmatched blend of pristine beaches, lush rainforests, coral reefs and colonial history. These islands are a dream escape for nature lovers, peace seekers and adventure enthusiasts alike. From serene sunsets and rich marine biodiversity to indigenous tribal heritage and untouched landscapes, the islands invite travellers to explore their quiet charm and thrilling side. Whether it's snorkelling in turquoise lagoons or walking barefoot on powdery beaches, Andaman and Nicobar promise a captivating island experience far removed from the mainland rush.

Best Places to Visit

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are best known for their scenic beaches, coral reefs and historic sites. These islands are a perfect mix of nature, adventure and cultural intrigue.

Nature Tourism

- **Radhanagar Beach (South Andaman):** Often listed among Asia's best beaches, this wide stretch of white sand and turquoise waters is a peaceful paradise surrounded by lush forests.

Key Activities: Pleasant for beach walks; good for swimming; ideal for sunset photography

- **Neil Island (Shaheed Dweep) (South Andaman):** A quieter alternative to Havelock, Neil Island is known for its coral reefs, secluded beaches and tropical biodiversity.

Key Activities: Ideal for glass-bottom boat rides; exploring coral reefs; relaxing on isolated shores

- **Mount Harriet National Park (South Andaman):** This forested national park offers hilly trails, panoramic viewpoints and rich birdlife.

Key Activities: Trekking to forest peaks; birdwatching; scenic photography

- **Limestone Caves, Baratang Island (North and Middle Andaman):** These dramatic natural caves are surrounded by dense mangrove creeks and are accessible only by boat.

Key Activities: Boat ride through mangroves; guided cave exploration; nature sightseeing

- **Wandoor Beach (South Andaman):** Located near Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park, this beach is known for calm shores and views of nearby islands.

Key Activities: Boating to nearby islands; swimming in calm waters; beach strolls

- **Chidiya Tapu (South Andaman):** Also called the 'Sunset Point', this forest-fringed beach is a great spot

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond the famous beaches and islands, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands hide several quiet, scenic corners ideal for offbeat exploration. These lesser-known destinations offer a blend of raw nature, tranquil villages and untouched coastlines that provide a peaceful, authentic island experience.

NORTH AND MIDDLE ANDAMAN

- **Rangat:** A tranquil coastal town with mangrove-lined boardwalks and eco-tourism spots that promote nature conservation and birdwatching.
- **Shyam Nagar:** Shyam Nagar is 155 KM away from Rangat surrounded by tropical forests and serene creeks, perfect for rural immersion and quiet stays.
- **Saddle Peak Foothills:** While Saddle Peak itself is known, the foothill zones offer peaceful trekking routes and jungle scenery that remain uncrowded and serene.

SOUTH ANDAMAN

- **Munda Pahad Cliff Trail:** Located near Chidiya Tapu, this forested cliff trail ends with sweeping sea views and offers a tranquil nature walk for hikers.
- **Wandoor Jetty Side Trails:** Off the main beach area, the jetty-side forest trails offer mangrove views and a chance to spot marine birds in silence.
- **Humfreygunj:** A quiet historical village with old war relics and a rustic coastal landscape that appeals to history lovers and off-grid travellers.

LITTLE ANDAMAN

- **Hut Bay:** A calm port village surrounded by coconut plantations and known for quiet beaches and rustic charm - ideal for travellers seeking isolation and local experiences.

» **Kalapathar Lagoon (Little Andaman):** Not to be confused with the South Andaman beach, this lagoon is a peaceful blue stretch with opportunities for kayaking and solitary relaxation.

NICOBAR ISLANDS

» **Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve (Buffer Zones):** While the core areas are protected and restricted, the buffer zones of this reserve provide glimpses of untouched rainforest biodiversity and unique island topography.

» **Mus Island (Campbell Bay Vicinity):** A rarely visited island offering remote seclusion and chances to understand indigenous Nicobarese settlement patterns under guided supervision.

for birdwatching and tranquil evenings.

Key Activities: Birdwatching at sunrise and dusk; peaceful walks; watching vibrant sunsets

» **Kalapathar Beach (South Andaman):** A picturesque beach with dramatic black rocks, white sand and turquoise water ideal for quiet reflection.

Key Activities: Leisurely beach walks; nature photography; sunrise viewing

» **Elephant Beach (Havelock Island):** One of the most visited beaches in the Andaman Archipelago, famous for its water activity. Once known for visits by elephants, it can be reached by boat or by trek at Havelock Island.

Key Activities: Leisurely beach walks; trek; nature photography

Adventure Tourism

» **North Bay Island (South Andaman):** A top destination for underwater adventures, North Bay is popular for its coral reef systems and water sports.

Key Activities: Snorkelling around coral reefs; sea walking with guides; scuba diving for beginners

» **Cinque Island (South Andaman):** This uninhabited island is famed for clear waters, rich coral gardens and stunning diving spots.

Key Activities: Scuba diving in coral-rich areas; snorkelling in lagoons; underwater photography

» **Jolly Buoy Island (South Andaman):** A no-plastic zone, Jolly Buoy is part of the Marine National Park and offers crystal-clear snorkelling opportunities.

Key Activities: Snorkelling in protected reefs; glass-bottom boat rides; coral viewing

» **Guitar Island (North and Middle Andaman):** A hidden gem shaped like a guitar, this

beach is ideal for peaceful kayaking and isolated camping.

Key Activities: Kayaking along shoreline; photography

» **Rutland Island (South Andaman):** A remote island with dense forests and marine diversity, great for adventurous trekking and diving.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking with local guides; reef diving; exploring offbeat trails

Heritage Tourism

» **Cellular Jail (Port Blair)**: A stark reminder of India's colonial past, the Cellular Jail served as the British penal colony for freedom fighters. Today it draws tourists with its poignant light-and-sound show and prison museum, providing a deep historical experience.

» **Viper Island (Port Blair):** Former site of the first British penal settlement before Cellular Jail, featuring remnants of gallows and prison cells-a haunting window into early colonial repression.

» **Chatham Saw Mill (Port Blair):** Asia's oldest and largest operational sawmill, established in 1883, showcasing colonial-era industrial heritage and forestry practices.

» **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island (Port Blair):** A historic naval colony dating to 1789, featuring colonial-era buildings now hosting a light-and-sound show and museum on Andaman history. Once the British administrative hub, now a haunting ruin overtaken by nature. Ruined churches, cottages and a governor's bungalow create an atmospheric heritage trail.

» **Japanese Bunkers (Port Blair):** Scattered World War II bunkers built by occupying forces, these silent structures near Corbyn's Cove offer a gritty glimpse into wartime history.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Sri Vetrimalai Murugan Temple (Port Blair)**: A popular Tamil-style temple honouring Lord Murugan. The annual Thaipusam draws devotional ceremonies and cultural vibrancy.

» **Naval Kali Temple (Port Blair):** Dedicated to Goddess Kali, this temple is revered by the Bengali community and comes alive during Kali Puja with music and ritual.

» **Sri Lakshmi Narayan Temple (Port Blair):** A tranquil shrine for Vishnu and Lakshmi; festival celebrations during Diwali and Janmashtami make it an appealing cultural pilgrimage.

» **Radha Krishna Temple (Port Blair):** A serene symbol of divine love, featuring peaceful bhajans and artwork depicting Krishna's life, drawing spiritual seekers.

Culture and Cuisines

The culture and cuisine of Andaman and Nicobar Islands reflect a vibrant blend of indigenous tribal roots, colonial history and settlers from across India. Tourists can witness a harmonious coexistence of various ethnic communities alongside traditional coastal life. The local cuisine, deeply influenced by South Indian, Bengali and island-style seafood, adds a flavourful dimension to the island experience.

Culture

» **Island Tourism Festival (Port Blair):** This 10-day cultural extravaganza showcases traditional music, dance performances, local crafts and food stalls. It offers tourists a vibrant introduction to the multicultural spirit of the islands.

» **Subhash Mela (Havelock Island):** Held in honour of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's arrival in the Andaman Islands, this mela features parades, cultural shows and exhibitions drawing both locals and visitors.

» **Beach Festival (Corbyn's Cove Beach):** A lively celebration of beach life with music, sand art competitions and water sports that attracts large tourist gatherings.

» **Nicobar Festival (Car Nicobar):** Celebrating Nicobarese tribal heritage, this festival showcases traditional canoe races, folk dances and local cuisine offering visitors a unique cultural insight.

» **Mela at Diglipur (Diglipur):** A regional fair featuring agricultural exhibitions, traditional games and community cultural events, giving travellers a taste of rural island life.

Cuisines

» **Fish Curry and Rice:** A staple dish across the islands featuring locally caught fish cooked in coconut-based gravy served with steamed rice; perfect for an authentic coastal meal.

» **Lobster and Crab Delicacies:** Freshly prepared seafood dishes often grilled or cooked in mild island spices; highly recommended at beachside eateries.

» **Prawn Balchao:** A Goan-influenced spicy prawn preparation that's tangy and well-loved among visitors who enjoy bold flavours.

» **Andamani Chicken Curry:** A regional take on chicken curry made with coconut milk and native herbs; ideal for those who prefer non-seafood options.

» **Banana Chips and Tapioca Snacks:** Popular island snacks made from local produce; widely available at local markets and great for travel munching.

» **Coconut Laddoos:** Traditional sweet made from grated coconut and jaggery; simple yet a flavourful way to end an island meal.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a blend of tribal artistry, natural materials and coastal aesthetics. Tourists can explore locally crafted items made from shell, coconut, cane and bamboo that reflect the islanders' resourceful and artistic lifestyle. These handicrafts are ideal souvenirs offering a glimpse into the traditional skills and creative expressions of the region.

» **Shell Crafts**: Beautifully crafted decorative items made from sea shells including jewellery, lamps and showpieces; these are the most popular souvenirs among tourists.

Key Areas: Port Blair; Neil Island; Havelock Island

» **Coconut Shell Products:** Locally carved coconut shells are used to make bowls, spoons, buttons and ornamental items; they highlight the eco-conscious craftsmanship of island artisans.

Key Areas: Rangat; Wandoor; Diglipur

» **Cane and Bamboo Furniture:** Handmade eco-friendly furniture and baskets crafted by local communities using traditional techniques passed down through generations.

Key Areas: Port Blair; Little Andaman; Baratang

» **Tribal Wooden Carvings:** Intricately carved wooden masks, figurines and totems often inspired by Nicobarese and other tribal myths; these carvings reflect the islands' cultural depth.

Key Areas: Car Nicobar; Campbell Bay; Great Nicobar

» **Jute and Coir Products:** Locally made bags, mats and wall hangings crafted from jute and coconut coir; valued for their rustic charm and utility.

Key Areas: Mayabunder; North Bay; Ferrargunj

» **Nicobari Mats:** Woven from pandanus leaves by the Nicobarese tribe, these mats are known for their texture, durability and cultural significance.

Key Areas: Car Nicobar; Kamorta; Teressa

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather; ideal for water sports, beach activities and birdwatching.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot but manageable; fewer crowds; good for budget travel and island hopping. Monsoon rains; rough seas; many ferry and water activities suspended.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Barren Island** is home to **India's only active volcano**, visible via cruise or sea plane, offering a rare and thrilling sightseeing experience.

» **Ross Island** (now **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island**) showcases **British colonial ruins** overgrown with roots and wildlife, making it a surreal, photogenic site.

» **Cellular Jail** in Port Blair once held prisoners in solitary confinement; today, its **light and sound show narrates stories from India's freedom movement**.

» **Jolly Buoy Island** is a strict **plastic-free zone**, requiring visitors to leave disposables behind, making it one of India's most **eco-friendly marine destinations**.

» **Nicobar Islands** are **not open to general tourism** and require **special permission**, helping protect the indigenous tribes and fragile ecosystem.

» **Andaman's coral reefs** are among the **richest in India**, accessible through glass-bottom boats - ideal even for those who do not swim.

» **Parrot Island**, near Baratang, sees thousands of **parrots return at sunset**, **creating a magical avian spectacle** that draws photographers and birdwatchers.

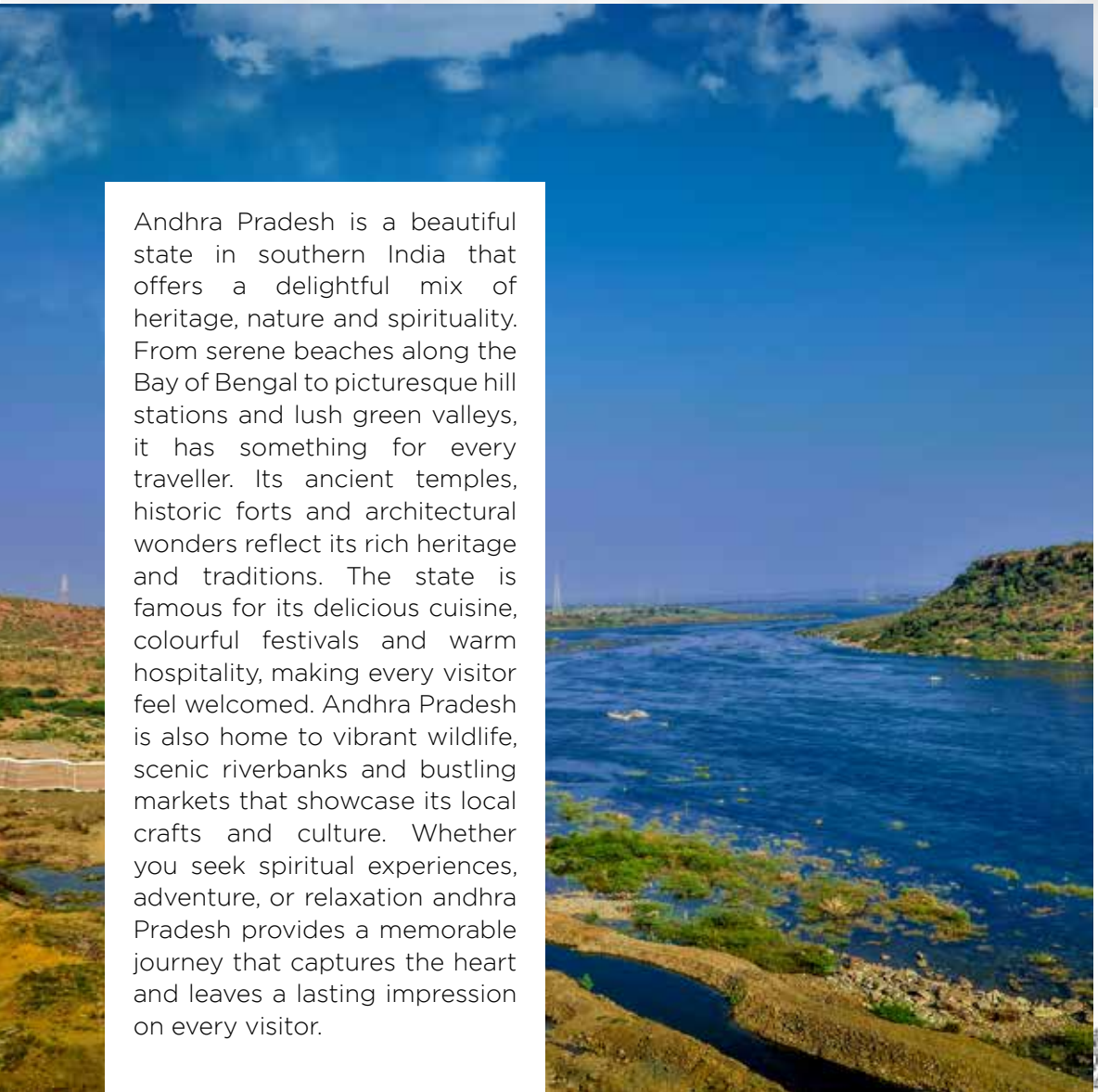
» The region is recognized as a **major biodiversity hotspot**, forming part of both the global network of 36 biodiversity hotspots and India's four national biodiversity hotspots. The Andaman Islands fall within the Indo-Burma global biodiversity hotspot, while the Nicobar Islands are part of the Sunda Land hotspot.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Andhra Pradesh

Tourism

Andhra Pradesh is a beautiful state in southern India that offers a delightful mix of heritage, nature and spirituality. From serene beaches along the Bay of Bengal to picturesque hill stations and lush green valleys, it has something for every traveller. Its ancient temples, historic forts and architectural wonders reflect its rich heritage and traditions. The state is famous for its delicious cuisine, colourful festivals and warm hospitality, making every visitor feel welcomed. Andhra Pradesh is also home to vibrant wildlife, scenic riverbanks and bustling markets that showcase its local crafts and culture. Whether you seek spiritual experiences, adventure, or relaxation andhra Pradesh provides a memorable journey that captures the heart and leaves a lasting impression on every visitor.



Best Places to Visit

Andhra Pradesh offers a diverse mix of beautiful beaches, serene hills, ancient temples and rich heritage sites, making it an ideal destination for every traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **Araku Valley (Alluri Sitarama Raju):** A serene hill station famous for mist-clad mountains and sprawling coffee plantations.

Key Activities: Nature Walks; Coffee Plantation Visits; Valley Viewpoints

» **Lambasingi (Alluri Sitarama Raju):** Known as the 'Kashmir of Andhra Pradesh,' it is a tranquil hill spot popular for misty landscapes and a cool climate.

Key Activities: Nature Walks; Birdwatching; Camping

» **Maredumilli Forest (Alluri Sitarama Raju):** A serene forest area rich in biodiversity and water streams.

Key Activities: Jungle Trails; Birdwatching; Nature Camping

» **Kothapalli Waterfalls (Visakhapatnam):** A beautiful waterfall deep within the forested Eastern Ghats.

Key Activities: Nature Viewing; Photography; Trekking

» **Rampa Waterfalls (East Godavari):** A picturesque cascade surrounded by dense greenery.

Key Activities: Trekking; Waterfall Viewing; Nature Trails

» **Papi Hills (Alluri Sitarama Raju):** Rolling hills and river landscapes ideal for serene escapes.

Key Activities: Boat Cruises; Nature Viewing; Birdwatching

Lesser-Known Attractions

The lesser-known places of Andhra Pradesh reveal its hidden heritage and serene natural beauty, offering a quieter, more authentic travel experience.

ANAKAPALLI

» **Sankaram:** Ancient Buddhist site with rock-cut stupas and relics.

» **Makavarapalem:** Peaceful area surrounded by hills and farms.

» **Bojjannakonda:** A serene hill site with Buddhist cave carvings.

PARVATHIPURAM MANYAM

» **Seethammapeta:** Quiet rural area with forested surroundings.

» **Kurupam:** Rich in tribal heritage and natural beauty.

» **Salur:** Peaceful area set amid hills and riverbanks.

ALLURI SITARAMA RAJU

» **Paderu:** Scenic tribal town surrounded by mist-clad hills.

» **Maredumilli:** A tranquil eco-spot with dense forests and waterfalls.

» **Gudem Kotha Veedhi:** A serene village deep within Eastern Ghats forests.

BAPATLA

» **Suryalanka Beach:** Calm, lesser-known beach ideal for relaxation.

» **Bapatla Bhavanarayana Swamy Temple:** An ancient shrine with heritage significance.

» **Kottapatnam Beach:** Peaceful coastal spot ideal for quiet walks.

ANANTAPUR

» **Penukonda:** Historic fort town with heritage ruins and architecture.

» **Puttaparthi:** Spiritual town with a serene atmosphere.

» **Thimmamma Marrimanu:** Home to one of the largest banyan trees in the world.

SRI SATHYA SAI

» **Kadiri:** Temple town famous for its heritage and spirituality.

- **Dharmavaram:** Renowned for handcrafted silk sarees and heritage sights.
- **Guttala Gopuram:** Ancient stone gateway with intricate carvings.

KURNOOL

- **Rollapadu Bird Sanctuary:** Quiet haven for endangered bird species.
- **Adoni Fort:** A historic fort perched atop rocky hills.
- **Konda Reddy Fort:** Heritage site in the heart of Kurnool town.

PALNADU

- **Karempudi:** Rural area rich in heritage and rustic charm.
- **Piduguralla:** Known for its lime industry and traditional heritage.
- **Macherla:** A historic town with ancient temples and relics.

SRI POTTI SRIRAMULU NELLORE

- **Udayagiri Fort:** An ancient hill fort with heritage ruins.
- **Venkatagiri:** A heritage town famous for its traditional handloom sarees.

VISAKHAPATNAM

- **Bheemili Beach:** Quiet coastal spot ideal for long walks.
- **Kailasagiri Hill Park:** Peaceful hilltop area with panoramic city and sea views.

GUNTUR

- **Kollipara:** Rural area rich in heritage and rustic charm.
- **Tenali:** Quiet town famous for its heritage buildings and agriculture.
- **Amaralingeswara Swamy Temple (Amaravathi):** Ancient heritage site steeped in spiritual significance.

- **Talakona Waterfalls (Tirupati):** The highest waterfall in Andhra Pradesh, located amid dense forests.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature Viewing; Waterfall Photography

- **Pulicat Lake (Nellore):** A picturesque salt-water lake rich in birdlife and aquatic habitats.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boating; Nature Trails

- **Sri Venkateswara National Park (Tirupati):** A rich biodiversity hotspot located in the Eastern Ghats.

Key Activities: Jungle Safaris; Birdwatching; Nature Trails

- **Horsley Hills (Annamayya):** A scenic hill range ideal for relaxation and nature exploration.

Key Activities: Nature Walks; Birdwatching; Viewpoint Visits

- **Kolleru Lake (Eluru):** A large freshwater lake and bird sanctuary ideal for bird lovers.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boating; Nature Photography

- **Nallamala Forest (Kurnool):** A dense forest range ideal for spotting wildlife and enjoying nature.

Key Activities: Jungle Safaris; Nature Trails; Birdwatching

- **Ethipothala Falls (Guntur):** A serene waterfall surrounded by lush forests.

Key Activities: Nature Viewing; Photography; Riverside Strolls

- **Hope Island (Kakinada):** A tranquil sand island rich in mangroves and aquatic life.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Beach Exploration

» **Coringa Mangroves (Kakinada):** Coringa Mangroves is part of the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary as per Google. This information may need to be verified since both mention the same activities as well.

Key Activities: Boat Safaris; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (Kakinada):** A mangrove-rich coastal forest area ideal for spotting diverse bird species and aquatic life.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boat Rides; Nature Viewing

» **Konaseema (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema):** A scenic river delta lined with palm groves and traditional villages.

Key Activities: Backwater Boating; Nature Viewing; Birdwatching

» **Anantagiri Hills (Visakhapatnam):** A serene hill range in the Eastern Ghats, rich in greenery and ideal for nature escapes.

Key Activities: Nature Walks; Birdwatching; Scenic Viewing

» **Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary (Visakhapatnam):** A tropical forest area rich in biodiversity and ideal for hiking.

Key Activities: Trekking; Birdwatching; Nature Trails

» **Borra Caves (Visakhapatnam):** Ancient limestone caves adorned with stalactites and stalagmites.

Key Activities: Cave Exploration; Nature Trails; Photography

» **Suryalanka Beach (Bapatla):** A serene and scenic beach ideal for relaxation and nature walks.

KRISHNA

» **Gudivada:** A heritage town famous for its festivals and traditional charm.

» **Nandigama:** A rural area with heritage temples and serene surroundings.

EAST GODAVARI

» **Pithapuram:** Holy town with heritage temples and tranquil surroundings.

» **Samarlakota:** A quiet heritage town rich in religious significance.

CHITTOOR

» **Nagari Hills:** Calm area ideal for nature walks and scenic landscapes.

» **Kalinga Venkateswara Temple (Narayanavanam):** Ancient temple site with beautiful carvings.

ELURU

» **Kolleru Lake:** Quiet lake ideal for bird watching and nature escapes.

» **Denduluru:** Small heritage town with ancient temples and rustic beauty.

VIZIANAGARAM

» **Gajapathinagaram:** Lesser-known heritage town rich in culture.

» **Parvathipuram Forest Areas:** Serene forests ideal for nature lovers and rustic exploration.

Key Activities: Beach Walks; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Konam Reservoir (Alluri Sitharama Raju):** A beautiful reservoir area surrounded by hills and greenery.

Key Activities: Boating; Nature Viewing; Birdwatching

» **Gandikota Gorge (Kadapa):** A scenic river canyon ideal for nature lovers and explorers.

Key Activities: Sightseeing; Nature Trails; Birdwatching

» **Orvakal Rock Garden (Kurnool):** A unique site with ancient rock formations and serene surroundings.

Key Activities: Nature Viewing; Photography; Rock Exploration

» **Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary (Guntur):** A haven for migratory and native birds located near Guntur.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Nature Trails; Photography

» **Kondapalli Reserve Forest (NTR):** A beautiful forest area rich in biodiversity and heritage.

Key Activities: Nature Trails; Birdwatching; Sightseeing

» **Kadiri Forest Range (Sri Sathya Sai):** A serene forest area ideal for wildlife spotting and nature escapes.

Key Activities: Jungle Trails; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Kurupam Forest Area (Parvathipuram Manyam):** A picturesque forest area with rich tribal heritage and greenery.

Key Activities: Nature Viewing; Birdwatching; Village Visits

» **Thatipudi Reservoir (Vizianagaram):** A serene lake surrounded by forested hills ideal for relaxation.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary (Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore):** A popular bird sanctuary for migratory species and serene landscapes.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Nature Trails; Photography

» **Cumbum Lake (Prakasam):** A picturesque lake surrounded by hills, ideal for nature lovers.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Belum Caves (Nandyal):** The second-longest cave system in India, famous for its stalactites and stalagmites.

Key Activities: Cave Exploration; Photography; Nature Viewing

Adventure Tourism

» **Rushikonda Beach (Visakhapatnam):** A beautiful coastal stretch ideal for water sports and relaxation.

Key Activities: Surfing; Jet Skiing; Beach Volleyball

» **Mahendra Hills (Visakhapatnam):** A serene hill area ideal for trekking and panoramic city views.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature Walks; Photography

» **Nithya Pooja Kona (Chittoor):** A picturesque site surrounded by hills, ideal for short treks and nature escapes.

Key Activities: Trekking; Birdwatching; Nature Viewing

» **Papikondalu Boat Cruise (Alluri Sitarama Raju):** A scenic boat journey through lush hills and river valleys.

Key Activities: Boating; Nature Viewing; Birdwatching

» **Nallamala Hills (Nandyal):** A sprawling forest range ideal for wildlife and adventure exploration.

Key Activities: Jungle Safaris; Trekking; Birdwatching

» **Horsley Hills (Annamayya):** A beautiful hill station ideal for hiking and enjoying misty landscapes.

Key Activities: Trekking; Rock Climbing; Camping

» **Dindi (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema):** A serene area with palm-lined waterways ideal for kayaking and boat rides.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Boating; Nature Viewing

» **Vijayawada (NTR):** A bustling city by the Krishna River ideal for heritage walks and water-based adventures.

Key Activities: River Boating; Nature Viewing; Rock Climbing

» **Erra Matti Dibbalu (Visakhapatnam):** A unique site of red sand dunes ideal for exploration and adventure sports.

Key Activities: Sand Trekking; ATV Rides; Nature Viewing; Photography

» **Gandikota (Kadapa):** A scenic river canyon ideal for adventure sports and exploration.

Key Activities: Rock Climbing; Rappelling; Nature Trails

» **Kothapatnam Beach (Prakasam):** A long, scenic beach ideal for surfing and coastal walks.

Key Activities: Surfing; Beach Walks; Boating

Heritage Tourism

» **Lepakshi Temple (Sri Sathya Sai):** A 16th-century Vijayanagara-era temple famous for its intricate carvings and hanging pillar.

» **Gandikota Fort (Kadapa):** An ancient fort perched above the Pennar River, offering spectacular canyon views.

» **Kondapalli Fort (NTR):** A historic hill fort built in the 14th century, known for its architecture and heritage.

» **Bavikonda Buddhist Site (Visakhapatnam):** An ancient Buddhist monastery site with ruins of stupas and relics.

» **Undavalli Caves (Guntur):** Rock-cut cave temples with intricate carvings dating back to the 4th – 5th centuries.

» **Chandragiri Fort (Tirupati):** A historic fort and palace associated with the Vijayanagara Empire.

» **Penukonda Fort (Sri Sathya Sai):** A historic fort that served as a summer capital of the Vijayanagara Empire.

» **Kondaveedu Fort (Guntur):** A hill fort offering panoramic views and rich historical ruins.

» **Simhachalam Temple (Visakhapatnam):** An ancient hilltop shrine dedicated to Narasimha, renowned for its heritage architecture.

» **Rajahmundry Havelis (East Godavari):** Grand heritage buildings reflecting the area's rich cultural and architectural legacy.

» **Moghalrajpuram Caves (NTR):** Rock-cut cave temples with ancient carvings and Jain heritage dating back to the 5th century.

» **Gooty Fort (Anantapur):** An impressive hill fort with numerous gates and a long heritage of dynastic rule.

» **Udayagiri Caves (Nellore):** Ancient rock-cut temples adorned with beautiful carvings and inscriptions.

» **Amravati Mahachaitya (Palnadu):** A significant Buddhist monument celebrated for its exquisite stone reliefs and heritage.

» **Bobbili Fort (Vizianagaram):** A historic fort with royal connections and deep cultural significance.

» **Srimukhalingam Temple (Srikakulam):** A heritage Shiva temple celebrated for its intricate Kalinga-style architecture.

» **Chandavaram Buddhist Site (Prakasam):** An ancient Buddhist site featuring a large stupa and relics of a bygone era.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Sri Kurmam Temple (Srikakulam):** A rare and sacred shrine dedicated to the Kurma (turtle) avatar of Lord Vishnu.

» **Simhachalam Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Temple (Visakhapatnam):** A revered hilltop temple dedicated to Lord Narasimha.

» **Appikonda Sri Someswara Swamy Temple (Visakhapatnam):** An ancient Shiva temple located by the seashore.

» **Annavaram Satyanarayana Swamy Temple (Kakinada):** A popular shrine of Lord Satyanarayana located on Ratnagiri Hill.

» **Ksheerarama Temple (West Godavari):** An ancient Shiva temple celebrated for its architectural beauty and religious significance.

» **Paritala Anjaneya Swamy Temple (NTR):** Home to one of the tallest Hanuman statues in the world.

» **Kanaka Durga Temple (NTR):** A sacred hilltop temple in Vijayawada dedicated to Goddess Kanaka Durga.

» **Jewett Memorial Baptist Church (Guntur):** A heritage church from the British era, cherished for its serene and historic atmosphere.

» **Chebrole Church (Guntur):** An old church with beautiful architecture and deep cultural significance.

» **Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple (Srisailam, Nandyal):** An iconic Jyotirlinga shrine with profound spiritual significance.

» **Mahanandi Temple (Nandyal):** An ancient Shiva temple surrounded by holy water tanks and serene landscapes.

» **Yaganti Temple (Nandyal):** A historic Shiva temple known for its growing Nandi statue and heritage significance.

» **Ahobilam Narasimha Swamy Temple (Nandyal):** A holy site with nine shrines dedicated to different forms of Lord Narasimha.

» **Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple (Tirupati):** The most revered hill shrine in Tirumala, visited by millions of devotees every year.

» **Sri Kalahasti Temple (Tirupati):** An ancient Shiva temple famous for its unique Vayu Linga and spiritual significance.

» **Kanipakam Varasiddhi Vinayaka Temple (Chittoor):** A famous Ganesha temple with a self-manifested idol.

» **Ramatheertham Sri Rama Temple (Vizianagaram):** An ancient hilltop temple dedicated to Lord Rama, surrounded by natural beauty.

» **Pedda Dargah (Kadapa):** A famous Sufi shrine visited for its spiritual significance and communal harmony.

» **Bara Shahid Dargah (Nellore):** A historic shrine of 12 martyrs, attracting visitors of all faiths for its heritage and spirituality.

Culture and Cuisines

Andhra Pradesh's culture and cuisine reflect its rich heritage, blending colourful festivals, traditional crafts and bold, flavourful dishes that captivate every visitor.

Culture

» **Tirupati Brahmotsavam (Tirupati):** An annual nine-day festival at the sacred hill temple of Tirumala, celebrated with colourful processions, devotional music, traditional rituals and the famous Garuda Vahana Seva, attracting millions of devotees and visitors from across the world.

» **Lepakshi Utsav (Sri Sathya Sai):** A heritage and cultural festival that brings alive the rich traditions, dance forms, music and craftsmanship of the historic town of Lepakshi, offering a beautiful glimpse into the state's heritage and architectural legacy.

» **Visakha Utsav (Visakhapatnam):** A lively annual festival by the beaches of Visakhapatnam that showcases the state's cultural vibrance, with music, dance, heritage crafts, coastal cuisine and entertainment for travellers of all interests.

» **Lumbini Festival (Guntur):** Held in Amaravati, this festival celebrates the deep Buddhist heritage of Andhra Pradesh, featuring traditional dance performances, spiritual discourses and exhibitions that highlight the state's ancient ties to Buddhism.

» **Rayalaseema Food and Dance Festival (Kurnool):** A colourful rural festival dedicated to the heritage of Rayalaseema, presenting traditional music and dance performances, rural crafts and delicious local cuisine that reflect the heart and culture of the region.

» **Konaseema Sankranti Sambaralu (Konaseema):** A festive gathering celebrated in the picturesque rural backdrop of the Konaseema delta, with traditional dances, music, heritage rituals and a unique glimpse into rural life and celebrations of Andhra Pradesh.

» **Flamingo Festival (Nellore):** A nature-centric festival celebrated at Pulicat Lake, highlighting the beauty and biodiversity of the area, especially the migratory flamingos, making it an ideal event for birdwatchers and nature lovers.

» **Deccan Handicrafts Mela (Vijayawada):** An annual craft and heritage fair that showcases traditional handlooms, handicrafts and culinary delights

from across the Deccan, allowing visitors to experience the richness of Andhra Pradesh's artisanal culture.

Cuisines

» **Pesarattu:** A crisp, savoury green gram dosa popular across the state, ideal for a wholesome traditional breakfast.

» **Gongura Pachadi:** A tangy chutney made from roselle leaves, best enjoyed with hot rice and ghee for an authentic Andhra experience.

» **Pulihora:** Fragrant tamarind rice tempered with mustard seeds and chilies, celebrated during festivals and special occasions.

» **Andhra Chicken Curry:** A fiery, aromatic chicken preparation with bold local spices, a favorite for lovers of traditional cuisine.

» **Chepala Pulusu:** A traditional fish stew in a tamarind-based sauce, celebrated for its rich coastal flavors.

» **Bobbatlu:** Soft, sweet flatbreads stuffed with jaggery and lentils, a festive favorite across Andhra Pradesh.

» **Gutti Vankaya:** Stuffed brinjals cooked with a blend of roasted spices, making it a signature vegetarian delight.

» **Ulavacharu:** A rich and creamy horse gram stew, cherished for its rustic taste and nutrition.

» **Ragi Sangati:** Millet-based balls served with spicy curries, offering a wholesome and traditional Andhra experience.

» **Pootharekulu:** Paper-thin rice starch sheets coated with sugar and ghee, a famous sweet from Atreyapuram.

» **Kaja:** Crispy, layered sweet soaked in sugar syrup, a traditional favorite across festivals and celebrations.

» **Ariselu:** Deep-fried rice flour and jaggery sweets, a festive treat capturing the essence of Andhra cuisine.

» **Andhra/Vijayawada Biryani:** Fragrant rice layered with marinated meat and bold Andhra-style masala, a must-try for every visitor.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Andhra Pradesh beautifully reflect its heritage, with intricate weaves and artisanal craftsmanship that capture the state's rich cultural traditions.

» **Kalamkari:** Exquisite hand-painted or block-printed textiles that depict mythological narratives and intricate patterns.

Key Areas: Srikalahasti: Tirupati; Pedana: Krishna

» **Mangalagiri Sarees:** Finely hand-woven cotton sarees with characteristic borders, cherished for their simplicity and comfort.

Key Areas: Mangalagiri; Guntur

» **Venkatagiri Sarees:** Elegant sarees woven with fine threads and adorned with intricate zari patterns.

Key Areas: Venkatagiri; Tirupati

» **Dharmavaram Sarees:** Rich silk sarees with bold motifs and gold borders, ideal for festive and wedding occasions.

Key Areas: Dharmavaram; Sri Sathya Sai

» **Uppada Jamdani:** Hand-loomed silk sarees celebrated for their delicate motifs and lightweight weaving.

Key Areas: Uppada; Kakinada

» **Etikoppaka Toys:** Colorful lacquered wooden toys and decorative items handcrafted with natural dyes.

Key Areas: Etikoppaka; Anakapalli

» **Kondapalli Toys:** Traditional wooden toys inspired by rural life and mythological themes.

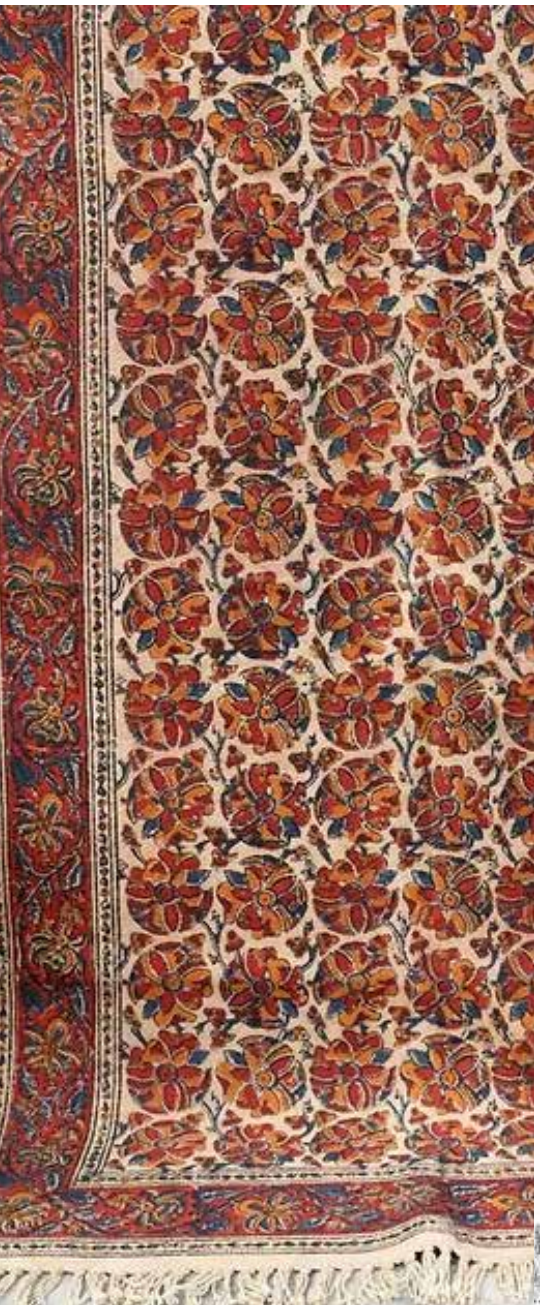
Key Areas: Kondapalli; NTR

» **Bobbin Lace:** Intricate handcrafted lace making celebrated for its precision and beauty.

Key Areas: Narsapur; West Godavari

» **Budithi Metal Craft:** Decorative metalware created from alloys, reflecting the heritage of rural Andhra craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Budithi; Srikakulam



Best Time to Visit

Peak Season

» **October to February** (Cool and pleasant, ideal for heritage tours, festivals and coastal exploration.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot and humid, making sightseeing and outdoor activities challenging. Monsoon rains, ideal for enjoying lush green landscapes and quieter travel.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Andhra Pradesh boasts one of **India's second largest brackish water loagoon - Pulicat Lake**.

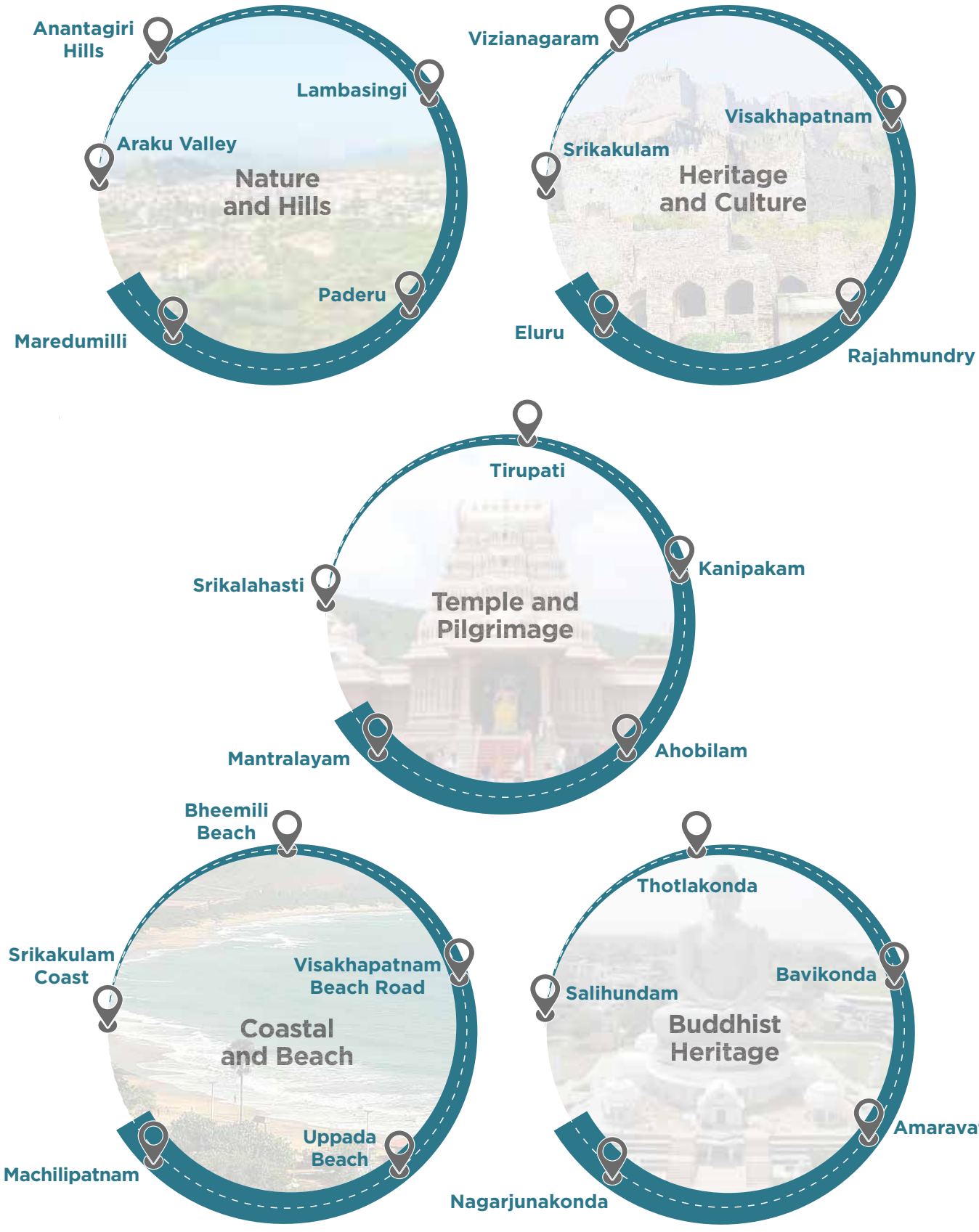
» Andhra Pradesh boasts one of **India's largest freshwater lakes - Pulicat Lake** - as well as one of its most remarkable landmarks. **Borra Caves**.

» Andhra Pradesh is India's seventh-largest state and is situated along its southeastern coastline. **Known for its rich cultural history and traditional dance forms like Kuchipudi and Vilasini Natyam**.

» Andhra Pradesh is home to the **Thimmamma Marrimanu**, **the world's largest banyan tree,** believed to be 550 years old. (2020, Guinness World Records)

» **Visakhapatnam** is home to one of the only natural harbors on the east coast of India, making it a vital port city **that blends commercial significance with its scenic coastal beauty.**

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Arunachal Pradesh

Tourism

Arunachal Pradesh, located in the north-eastern tip of India, is a land of breath-taking natural beauty, rich tribal culture and serene spirituality. Often called the 'Land of the Rising Sun', it is known for its snow-capped mountains, dense valleys and pristine rivers. The state offers unique experiences for nature lovers, adventure seekers and cultural enthusiasts. From peaceful monasteries to thrilling forest trails, the region promises unforgettable journeys. This state provides a perfect escape for travellers looking to explore the unexplored and connect with nature and tradition.

Best Places to Visit

Arunachal Pradesh, known for its scenic beauty and vibrant cultural heritage, offers a diverse range of destinations that reflect the state's natural charm and unique traditions.

Nature Tourism

» **Namdapha National Park & River (Changlang):** One of India's richest biodiversity hotspots nestled in dense tropical rainforests. A scenic river flowing through the Namdapha forests offers calm surroundings.

Key Activities: Wildlife safari; Birdwatching; Forest trekking; River trekking; Riverside camping

» **Mouling National Park (Upper Siang):** A scenic and remote sanctuary with undisturbed forests and rare Himalayan species.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Wildlife spotting; Nature photography

» **Itanagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Itanagar):** A protected area close to the city, home to barking deer, leopards and more.

Key Activities: Guided nature walks; Birdwatching; Eco Exploration

» **Ganga Lake / Gyakar Sinyi (Itanagar):** A serene lake surrounded by thick vegetation and rocky formations.

Key Activities: Boating; Lakeside walking; Photography

» **Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary (Anini):** Remote sanctuary with alpine forests and rich wildlife including snow leopards.

Key Activities: Wildlife viewing; Mountain photography; Forest exploration

» **Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (Bomdila):** A globally famous bird watching site rich in biodiversity and rare species.

Lesser-Known Attractions

The lesser-known areas of Arunachal Pradesh offer peaceful natural landscapes, rich tribal culture and unique experiences away from the usual tourist spots.

TAWANG

» **Lhou Village:** A peaceful village near the Bhutan border known for its apple orchards.

» **Lumla:** A quiet spot close to Bhutan, famous for the Tara Devi Temple.

WEST KAMENG

» **Shergaon:** A scenic village known for its Monpa culture and pine forests.

» **Rupa:** A tranquil town with lush hills and a traditional market.

EAST KAMENG

» **Seppa:** A remote town on the banks of Kameng River, surrounded by thick forests.

» **Pakke Kessang:** Known for its wildlife and access to Pakke Tiger Reserve.

LOWER SUBANSIRI

» **Hong Village:** Beyond the main Ziro, Hong is one of the largest Apatani villages with traditional homes.

» **Dutta Village:** A quiet place reflecting Apatani culture and rice farming.

UPPER SUBANSIRI

» **Nacho:** A far-off area near the Indo-China border with untouched beauty.

» **Limeking:** A remote village with scenic views and tribal settlements.

KURUNG KUMEY

» **Koloriang:** A lesser-visited district headquarter surrounded by hills and tribal culture.

» **Sangram:** A small hamlet offering raw landscapes and local traditions.

UPPER SIANG

» **Yingkiong:** Small villages like Gobuk offer peaceful riverside life.

» **Tuting:** Close to the China border, known for rafting and scenic remoteness.

LOWER DIBANG VALLEY

» **Roing (Mayudia Pass):** A high-altitude area near Roing with snowfall in winter and misty charm.

» **Dambuk:** Known for its orange orchards and winter Orange Festival.

ANJAW

» **Kibithu:** One of India's easternmost points, scenic and strategic.

» **Hawai:** A quiet town with views of Lohit River and tribal life.

CHANGLANG

» **Miao (Namdapha side villages):** Gateway to Namdapha with local culture and greenery.

» **Vijaynagar:** A remote area accessible by foot or air, deep in the forest.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Nature photography; Eco trails

» **Ringba- Roba Wildlife Sanctuary (Seppa):** A lesser-known forest reserve with rich flora and diverse fauna.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris; Forest hikes; Scenic camping

» **Kamala Wildlife Sanctuary (Daporijo):** Known for elephants, gibbons and elusive cats in semi-evergreen forests.

Key Activities: Guided safaris; Primate spotting; Nature walks

» **Ziro Valley (Ziro):** A peaceful valley of pine groves and rice fields, surrounded by hills.

Key Activities: Valley trekking; Landscape viewing; Cultural walks

» **Siang River (Pasighat):** It is the principal constituent river of the Brahmaputra, cutting through gorges and valleys, ideal for river sports.

Key Activities: Rafting; Fishing; River photography

» **Mechuka Valley (Mechuka):** A picturesque highland valley with grasslands, rivers and alpine charm.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Scenic exploration

» **Donyi-Polo Hill (west siang):** A peaceful hilltop viewpoint symbolising the state's spiritual traditions.

Key Activities: Sunrise hiking; Photography

» **Sela Pass (West Kameng):** A high-altitude mountain pass with snow-covered views and glacial lakes.

Key Activities: Scenic drive; Snow viewing; Mountain photography

» **Kameng Elephant Reserve (West/East Kameng):** A protected area covering varied altitudes with thriving elephant habitats.

Key Activities: Elephant tracking; Jungle safari; Wildlife observation

» **Sessa Orchid Sanctuary (West Kameng):** Known for its diverse orchid species and pristine forest environment.

Key Activities: Orchid watching; Nursery visits; Nature trekking

» **Bomdila Pass (West Kameng):** A scenic mountain pass offering panoramic views of the eastern Himalayas and surrounding valleys.

Key Activities: Hilltop viewing; Nature walks; Sunrise photography

» **Dirang Valley (West Kameng):** A scenic town en route to Tawang known for hot springs, rivers and pine-covered hills.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Village exploration; Photography

Adventure Tourism

» **Siang River Rafting (Pasighat–Daporijo):** Wild-grade rapids on the mighty Siang (Brahmaputra) make this a rafting hotspot.

Key Activities: White-water rafting; River kayaking; Fishing

» **Lohit River Expedition (Tezu–Walong):** Challenging downstream expedition through remote forested gorge.

Key Activities: White-water rafting; Angling; Wilderness camping

» **Namdapha Core Area Trek (Changlang):** Multi-day jungle trek into the core zone of a biodiversity wilderness.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Jungle camping; Birding trek

» **Seven Lakes Trek (Anini):** Expedition into alpine meadows and high-altitude lakes in Dibang Valley.

Key Activities: Mountain trekking; Tent camping; Alpine exploration

» **Anjaw Border Trek to Dong Village:** Remote trail to India's eastern tip - home of the first sunrise.

Key Activities: Trekking; Ridge camping; Border exploration

» **Glow Lake Trek (Lohit):** Secluded alpine lake trek in Lohit, perfect for camping and wilderness immersion.

Key Activities: Alpine trekking; Tent camping; Wilderness photography

» **Chumi Gyatse Waterfall Trek (Tawang):** Border-side trek to 108-tier waterfall in a dramatic Himalayan setting.

Key Activities: Trekking; Waterfall exploration; Photography

» **Mouling National Park Expedition (East Siang):** Rugged multi-day jungle trek with wildlife and river crossings.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; River hiking; Wildlife spotting

» **Tuting–Gelling High-Frontier Trek (Upper Siang):** Off-beat cliff-ridge and valley trail to Tibetan border pass.

Key Activities: Cliffside trekking; Ridge camping; Hard-core hiking

» **Mechuka Mountain Terrain Biking & Cycling (Mechuka Valley):** High-altitude valley rides and cycling routes gaining adventure - racing acclaim.

Key Activities: Mountain biking; Endurance racing; Scenic cycling

Heritage Tourism

» **Tawang Monastery (Tawang):** India's largest Buddhist monastery, known for its 17th-century architecture and vibrant monastic traditions.

» **Jaswant Garh War Memorial (Tawang):** A memorial honouring Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat of the 1962 war, surrounded by serene mountains.

» **Ita Fort (Itanagar):** A historical fort built of bricks, dating back to the 14th–15th century, giving Itanagar its name.

» **Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum (Itanagar):** A regional museum displaying tribal artefacts, traditional textiles and archaeological collections.

» **Bomdila Monastery (Bomdila):** A peaceful Tibetan-style monastery offering insight into Mahayana Buddhist culture.

» **World War II Cemetery (Changlang):** A war cemetery preserving the memory of soldiers who died during World War II.

» **Malinithan Temple Ruins (Likabali):** Ancient ruins

of a stone temple complex dedicated to Hindu deities, dating to the 13th century.

» **Bhismaknagar Ruins (Roing):** Remnants of a fortified city from the Chutia kingdom, featuring ramparts and brick foundations.

» **Parshuram Kund (Lohit):** A revered pilgrimage site associated with sage Parshuram, set on the banks of the Lohit River.

» **Thembang Ancient Village (West Kameng):** A fortified village with Monpa heritage, traditional architecture and oral history.

» **Dirang Dzong (Dirang):** A 19th-century fort made of stone and wood, reflecting Monpa defensive traditions.

» **Kalachakra Gompa (Kalachakra Village):** An ancient Buddhist monastery attracting spiritual seekers and offering panoramic views.

» **Tawang War Memorial:** The Tawang War Memorial commemorates the 1962 Sino-Indian War, honouring Indian soldiers who laid down their lives defending Arunachal Pradesh.

» **Khonsa Museum (Khonsa):** A museum highlighting the culture of the Nocte, Wancho and other eastern tribes.

» **Pangsau Pass (Changlang):** A historically significant mountain pass used during World War II, near the Indo-Myanmar border.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Urgelling Monastery (Tawang):** The birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama and a sacred site of Tibetan Buddhist history.

» **Taktsang Gompa (Tawang):** A cliffside monastery surrounded by mist, believed to be visited by Guru Padmasambhava.

» **Golden Pagoda (Namsai):** A Burmese-style Theravada Buddhist temple known for its spiritual atmosphere and cultural events.

» **Akashiganga Temple (West Siang):** A revered Shiva shrine believed to be linked to the legend of Sati and sacred water sources.

» **Meghna Cave Temple (Ziro):** A natural cave temple dedicated to Lord Lakulisha, offering a quiet spiritual retreat.

» **Gomsi Temple Site (East Siang):** An ancient site reflecting early Hindu presence through scattered relics and ruins.

» **Shivalinga at Kardo Hills (Lower Subansiri):** A towering natural rock formation considered sacred and worshipped as a Shiva Linga.

» **Empong Monastery (Namsai):** A small but culturally significant Monpa monastery with links to local oral traditions.

» **Sangti Valley Gompa (Sangti):** A seasonal monastery used by migratory Buddhist monks amidst serene valley views.

» **Kongmu Kham Vihara (Chongkham):** A peaceful Theravada Buddhist vihara known for prayer, meditation and monk training.

» **Dangoria Baba Mandir (East Siang):** A spiritual site frequently visited by both tribals and Hindus for local rituals.

» **Padum Pukhuri Sacred Pond (Lower Dibang Valley):** A holy pond surrounded by folklore, significant to the spiritual beliefs of the Mishmi tribe.

» **Gorsam Chorten (Zemithang):** A grand stupa resembling Nepal's Boudhanath, deeply revered by local Buddhists.

» **Namsai Buddha Vihar (Namsai):** A modern Buddhist temple complex with golden spires and teachings rooted in Theravada tradition.

» **Tuting Buddhist Monastery (Upper Siang):** A quiet monastery near the Siang River, important for the local Adi Buddhist practitioners.

» **Khenzimane (Zemithang):** The Holy Tree at Khenzimane, on the India–Tibet border, grew

from a stick blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Culture and Cuisines

Arunachal Pradesh offers a vibrant mix of tribal culture and unique cuisine, where age-old traditions, colourful festivals and local flavours like bamboo shoot and smoked meat reflect the state's rich heritage.

Culture

» **Si-Donyi Festival (Daporijo):** Celebrated by the Tagin tribe in January, this festival honours the Earth and Sun deities through rituals, traditional dances and prayers for communal harmony.

» **Mopin Festival (Aalo):** Held in April by the Galo tribe, this harvest festival features rice-flour rituals, folk dances and community feasting to bring prosperity and ward off evil.

» **Solung Festival (Pasighat):** Celebrated by the Adi tribe in September, it marks the agricultural cycle with folk dances like Ponung, local brew and animal offerings.

» **Sangken Festival (Namsai and Changlang):** Observed in mid-April by the Khamti and Singpho tribes, this water-splashing festival marks the Buddhist New Year and symbolises purification and goodwill.

» **Dree Festival (Ziro Valley):** A major Apatani celebration in July where prayers are offered for a good harvest, along with traditional dances, games and local rice beer.

» **Mechukha Adventure Festival (Mechukha):** Held in November, this vibrant event blends adventure sports like paragliding and mountain biking with local tribal performances and traditional cuisine.

Cuisines

» **Zan:** A traditional millet-based porridge often eaten with meat or vegetable stew by the Monpa tribe.

» **Pika Pila:** A spicy fermented bamboo shoot pickle made by the Apatani tribe using pork fat and chili.

» **Bamboo Shoot Curry:** A tangy and earthy dish made with fresh bamboo shoots and meat reflecting tribal flavours.

» **Lukter:** A simple yet flavourful dish of dried meat served with

chili flakes and fermented soybeans.

» **Apong:** A homemade rice beer traditionally brewed by many tribes served during festivals and ceremonies.

» **Ngatok:** A fish curry made with local herbs and wrapped in banana leaves then slow-cooked for rich flavour.

» **Thukpa:** A comforting noodle soup made with vegetables or meat widely enjoyed in the colder regions.

» **Wungwut Ngam:** A chicken dish prepared with rice powder and unique local spices, mainly from the Nocte tribe.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Arunachal Pradesh's textiles and handicrafts reflect the vibrant traditions of its many tribes, each known for unique patterns, natural dyes and intricate weaves. From handwoven shawls to bamboo and cane crafts, every piece tells a story of cultural identity and skilled artistry.

» **Monpa Woolen Weaving:** Warm woolen shawls and coats woven with bold patterns and natural dyes, made by the Monpa tribe.

Key Areas: Tawang; Bomdila; Dirang

» **Apatanis Bamboo and Cane Products:** Beautifully crafted baskets, trays and storage items made from bamboo and cane by the Apatani community.

Key Areas: Ziro; Hong; Dutta

» **Wancho Wood Carving:** Traditional wooden figures, masks and home items carved with tribal motifs by the Wancho tribe.

Key Areas: Longding; Pongchau; Wakka

» **Idu Mishmi Weaving:** Fine handwoven textiles with intricate geometric designs made using backstrap looms by Idu Mishmi women.

Key Areas: Roing; Anini; Dambuk

» **Thangka Painting:** Buddhist scroll paintings featuring deities and symbols, made using mineral colours and fine detailing.

Key Areas: Tawang; Bomdila; Dirang

» **Khamti Silk:** Elegant silk garments with delicate tribal patterns woven by the Khamti community using traditional looms.

Key Areas: Namsai; Chongkham; Wakro

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Pleasant weather, festivals, clear views.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Light rains begin, good for greenery). Heavy monsoon and landslides.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Arunachal Pradesh is the first Indian state to greet the sunrise each morning, earning it the title **'Land of the Rising Sun'.**

» Arunachal is home to more than **340-year-old Tawang Monastery which is India's largest monastery.**

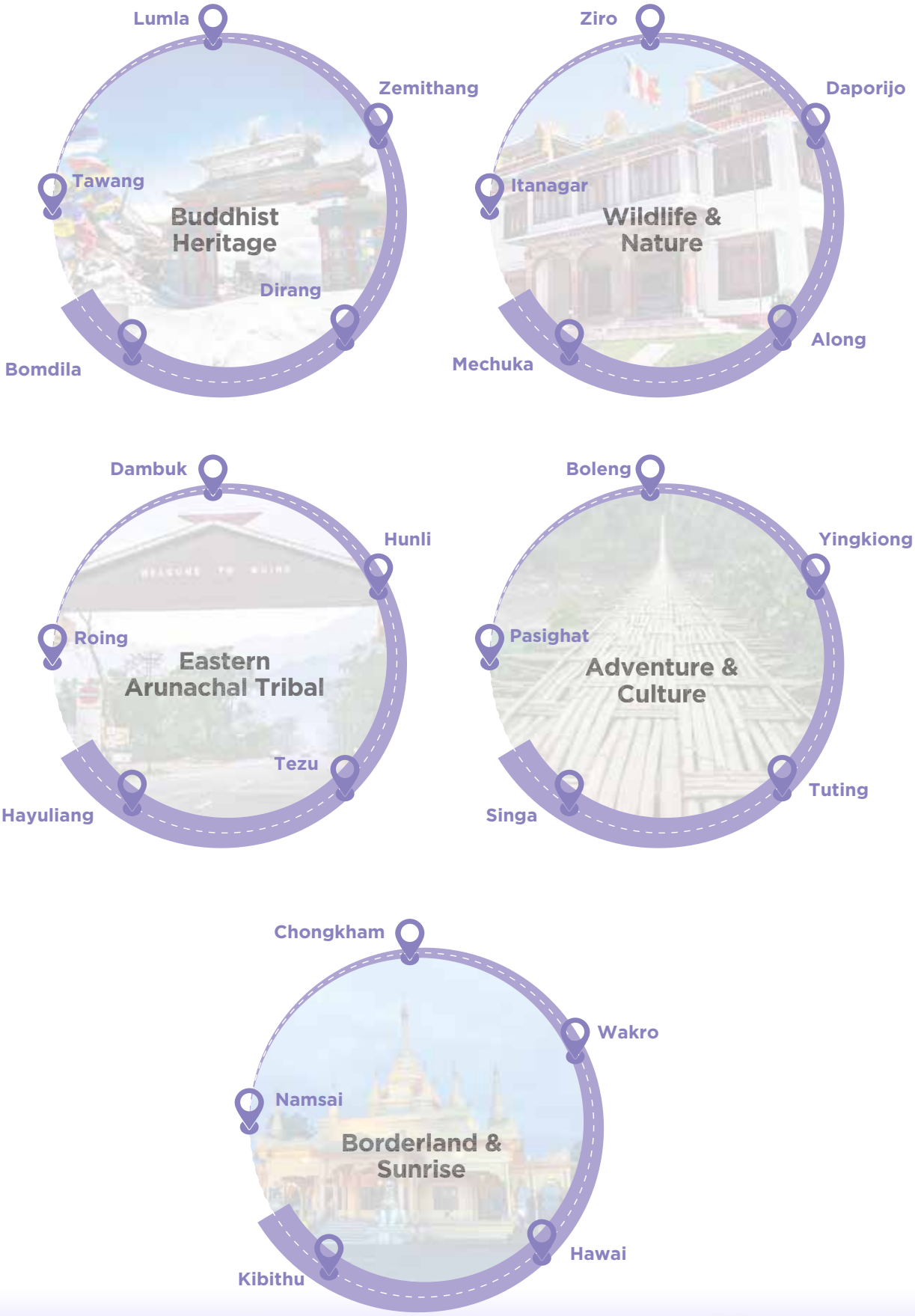
» The state has Dhola Sadiya Bridge (Bhupen Hazarika Setu), the **longest connecting river bridge that connects Assam with Arunachal.**

» The **Apatani women** are known for wearing distinctive **wooden nose plugs** (Yaping Hullo) along with **face tattoos** (Tippei)-a unique cultural identity found in Ziro Valley.

» With only 17 persons per square kilometre, Arunachal Pradesh has the **thinnest population density in India,** making it one of the least crowded regions in the country.

» Over **500 orchid varieties** flourish in Arunachal Pradesh, showcasing the state's rich floral diversity

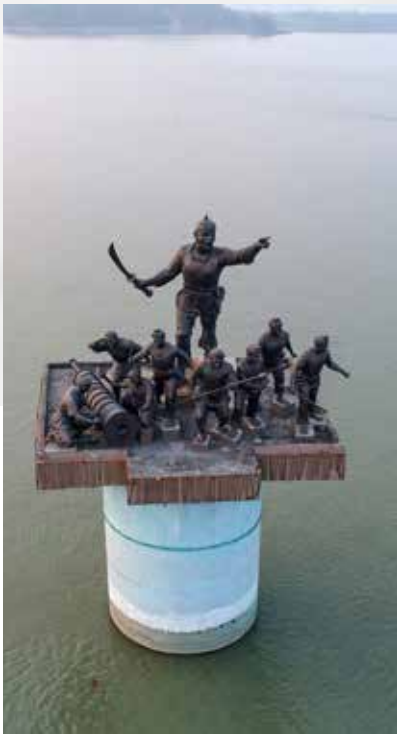
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



WAR MEMORIAL

Assam

Tourism



Assam is a land where mighty rivers carve ancient paths, where every tea-scented breeze carries folklore, and where vibrant cultures bloom amidst emerald-green landscapes. Cradled by the Brahmaputra and wrapped in velvet hills and wetlands, Assam is a coming together of timeless traditions, golden muga silk, and wild sanctuaries teeming with elephants and one-horned rhinos. From the rhythmic Bihu dance echoing across paddy fields to the spiritual calm of Majuli. Assam is a soulful blend of nature, culture, and heritage.

Best Places to Visit

Assam offers a captivating blend of lush natural beauty, vibrant cultural heritage, and sacred spiritual sites, making it an ideal destination for every kind of traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **Chandubi Lake (Kamrup Rural):** A natural lagoon formed by an 1897 earthquake at the Garo Hills' base.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Nature photography; Picnic by the lakeside

» **Bogibeel Bridge (Dibrugarh):** A rail-road bridge over the Brahmaputra, serving as a scenic entry to Assam's wild east.

Key Activities: Scenic drives and photography; Access point to nearby national parks and river cruises

» **Jeypore Rainforest (Dibrugarh–Tinsukia):** One of Assam's last rainforests, known for its orchids, rare fauna, and biodiversity.

Key Activities: Rainforest trekking; Butterfly and birdwatching; Nature interpretation walks

» **Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (Dibrugarh–Tinsukia):** A wetland park known for feral horses and the endangered white-winged wood duck.

Key Activities: River dolphin spotting on the Brahmaputra; Birdwatching; Jungle trails; Boat safaris

» **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (Morigaon):** A small yet dense park famed for its greater one-horned rhinos near Guwahati.

Key Activities: Jeep safaris; Rhino spotting; Guided nature walks; Birdwatching during winter

» **Jokai Botanical Garden (Dibrugarh):** A green reserve protecting medicinal plants and orchids in a forest setting.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Assam is known for its lush biodiversity, rich heritage, and spiritual traditions. Beyond its famed national parks, ancient temples, and riverine landscapes, the state is dotted with lesser-known destinations that offer equally enriching and immersive experiences.

KAMRUP METROPOLITAN

» **Deepor Beel:** A Ramsar-listed freshwater lake near Guwahati, rich in migratory birdlife and ideal for birdwatching and photography.

» **Chandubi Lake:** Secluded crater lake with boating, camping, tribal village visits, and scenic relaxation.

NAGAON

» **Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary:** A quiet sanctuary with grasslands and wetlands, home to Bengal Florican and various aquatic birds.

» **Paradise Lake / Neelapani:** A tranquil lake near Kathalguri village with folklore and a haunted legacy, perfect for quiet escapes.

» **Batadrava Than:** Birthplace of Srimanta Sankardev and the first Vaishnavite prayer hall, now a museum and sacred campus with holy ponds.

KOKRAJHAR

» **Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary:** A rare habitat protecting the endangered golden langur, along with scenic trekking trails.

DIMA HASAO

» **Panimur Waterfall:** Scenic waterfall on the Kopili River, surrounded by forests and rocky terrain; ideal for picnics and weekend getaways.

» **Jatinga:** Known for the mysterious bird phenomenon during September to November, this hill village is also a serene retreat for nature lovers.

» **Umrangso:** A scenic town known for its hydroelectric reservoir, forested hills, and tranquil landscapes near the Assam–Meghalaya border.

» **Maibang:** Once the capital of the Dimasa kingdom, known for the monolithic Ramchandi Temple and ancient royal relics.

BAKSA

» **Bogamati:** A riverside picnic spot on the Indo-Bhutan border with white sands and panoramic views of Bhutanese hills.

KOKRAJHAR

» **Saralpara:** A quiet valley near Bhutan featuring forest trails, a rivulet, and mountain vistas ideal for laid-back day trips.

» **Mahamaya Dham (Bogribari):** A revered Shakti Peetha shrine second only to Kamakhya in spiritual importance, attracting devotees year-round.

KAMRUP RURAL

» **Sualkuchi:** Known as the "Manchester of Assam," this heritage weaving village produces exquisite Muga and Pat silk on traditional handlooms.

MORIGAON

» **Mayong:** The "Land of Black Magic," rich in folk traditions, tantric lore, and rural mysticism with local museums and storytelling.

DIBRUGARH

» **Namphake:** A Tai-Phake tribal village with a serene Buddhist monastery and stilted wooden houses preserving ancient customs.

GOALPARA

» **Sri Surya Pahar:** A multi-faith archaeological hill site with relics of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, surrounded by forested terrain.

Key Activities: Botanical tours; Birdwatching; Educational eco-walks; Nature photography

» **Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary (Kamrup):** A forested sanctuary near Guwahati known for elephants, leopards, and hornbills.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris; Trekking; Wildlife observation; Adventure trails

» **Manas National Park (Baksa & Chirang):** A UNESCO-listed sanctuary at the Himalyan foothills known for rare and endemic species.

Key Activities: Elephant and jeep safaris; Birdwatching; River rafting on the Manas River; Wildlife photography

» **Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary (Jorhat):** India's only ape sanctuary, home to the Western Hoolock Gibbon and other primates.

Key Activities: Forest walks; Spotting gibbons and other primates; Eco-tour interpretation

» **Nameri National Park (Sonitpur):** A forested and riverine haven for tigers, elephants, and endangered birds.

Key Activities: River rafting on the Jia Bhoroli River; Jungle trekking with forest guides; Birdwatching and camping

» **Kakochang Waterfalls (Golaghat):** A scenic cascade near Kaziranga set amidst tea gardens and ancient ruins.

Key Activities: Trekking to the falls; Bathing in the natural pool; Photography of ruins of ancient Numaligarh

» **Haflong Lake (Dima Hasao):** A tranquil lake in Assam's only hill station, surrounded by tribal culture and lush hills.

Key Activities: Boating; Photography of lake and hillscapes; Leisure walks around the lake; Exploring nearby tribal villages

Adventure Tourism

- **Simhasana Hill & Dima Hasao Hills (Karbi Anglong & Dima Hasao):** These rugged highlands offer dramatic cliffs and untouched wilderness, making them top spots for serious rock climbing and mountaineering.

Key Activities: Rock climbing; Mountaineering expeditions; Nature photography; Camping

- **Elephant Rocks (Morigaon):** These natural stone formations are a favourite for rock climbers and boulderers of all levels.

Key Activities: Rock climbing; Bouldering; Picnicking; Local exploration

- **Guwahati Urban Rock-Climbing Spots (Kamrup Metropolitan):** From Japorigog's Rohini Bhuyan Rock Field to Bhubaneshwari and Dirgheshwari hills, Guwahati offers accessible climbing scenic charm.

Key Activities: Urban rock climbing; Sunset viewpoints; Visiting cultural shrines post-climb

- **Basistha to Garbhanga Trek (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A 17-km forest trail that starts at Basistha Ashram and winds through dense greenery to Garbhanga Reserve near Meghalaya.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Wildlife sightings; Nature walks; Photography

- **Kaziranga to Kukurakata Hills Trek (Golaghat/ Nagaon):** This easy hill trek offers stunning views over the Kaziranga landscape

Key Activities: Hill trekking; Birdwatching; Landscape photography

HOJAI

- **Rajabari Archaeological Site:** Group of 11th-century Shiva temples and relics set in ancient Dimasa kingdom ruins.

KARBI ANGLONG

- **Kakochang Waterfall:** Majestic waterfall near Kaziranga, set amidst lush tea gardens and perfect for hikes.
- **Garampani Wildlife Sanctuary:** Home to hot springs, hoolock gibbons, orchids, and cascading streams.

SIVASAGAR

- **Pani-Dihing Bird Sanctuary:** Wetland-grassland complex rich in migratory birds and biodiversity.

BISWANATH

- **Pabhoi Greens:** North-East's first organic seed farm offering eco-education, scenic beauty, and sustainable agriculture insights.

CHARAIDEO

- **Charaideo Maidams:** Ahom-era royal burial mounds resembling pyramids, surrounded by history.

» **Charanbeel Lake (Morigaon):** A peaceful lake near Guwahati, Charanbeel is a hub for water sports like kayaking and canoeing, and comes alive during festive boat races.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Canoeing; Boat racing (during festivals); Birdwatching

» **Jia Bhoroli River (Sonitpur):** With its fast-flowing rapids and scenic banks, this river is ideal for rafting, angling for Golden Mahseer, and riverside camping.

Key Activities: White-water rafting; Riverbank camping; Golden Mahseer angling

» **Manas and Kopili Rivers (Chirang & Dima Hasao):** These wild rivers offer advanced rafting challenges through jungle canyons and remote trails.

Key Activities: Advanced River rafting; Nature exploration; Riverside treks

» **Eco Camp, Nameri (Sonitpur):** Nestled at the forest edge, Eco Camp combines eco-friendly stays with guided treks, rafting, angling, and birdwatching in Nameri National Park. It is also famous for Jia Bharali river.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Rafting; Angling; Guided jungle treks; Camping in natural settings

Heritage Tourism

» **Rang Ghar (Sivasagar):** Asia's first amphitheatre built by the Ahoms, known for its unique construction and royal sports gatherings.

» **Talatal Ghar (Sivasagar):** The largest Ahom palace with hidden tunnels and now-visible upper floors revealing royal engineering.

» **Kareng Ghar (Sivasagar):** A fortified palace showcasing medieval Ahom military and residential architecture.

» **Charaideo Moidams (Charaideo):** A UNESCO site of the royal burial mounds of Ahom kings, symbolising Tai-Ahom afterlife beliefs.

» **Da-Parbatia Temple Ruins (Sonitpur):** Gupta-era ruins with some of Assam's oldest carved depictions of Ganga and Yamuna goddesses.

» **Madan Kamdev (Kamrup Rural):** A hilltop site of sensual 9th–10th century temple ruins with sculptures resembling Khajuraho.

» **Agnigarh Hill (Tezpur):** Mythological hill fortress of Princess Usha, now a landscaped park with sculptures and river views.

» **Suryapahar (Goalpara):** A rare archaeological site where Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain relics coexist in a forested setting.

» **Deoparbat (Golaghat):** Scenic hilltop ruins from the 8th–9th century, ideal for combining history with nature near Kaziranga.

» **Ambari Excavations (Kamrup):** Urban site revealing layered history from the 7th to 17th centuries, including trade ceramics.

» **Lachit Moidam (Jorhat):** Tomb of Assam's heroic general Lachit Borphukan, famed for defeating the Mughals in 1671.

» **Raja Moidam (Jorhat):** Final resting place of King Purandar Singha, reflecting Ahom royal burial traditions.

» **Purnananda Buragohain Moidam (Jorhat):** Tomb of a key Ahom minister near a tea research centre, blending heritage with Assam's tea legacy.

» **Garh Ali (Jorhat):** Former Ahom embankment turned market street, preserving traces of military history amid local life.

» **Poa Mecca (Kamrup Rural):** A 17th-century Islamic pilgrimage site believed to contain soil from Mecca, with stunning hilltop views.

» **Digboi Oil Refinery (Tinsukia):** Asia's first oil refinery, still operational since 1901, symbolising India's industrial and wartime heritage.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Hayagriva Madhava Temple (Kamrup Rural):** A sacred hilltop shrine blending Hindu and Buddhist styles, worshipped by both faiths.

» **Kamakhya Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** Located on the Nilachal Hills, this is one of India's major pilgrimage center dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya. The temple is also said to be the place where Goddess Sati's womb and genitals fell, marking it as one of the revered 51 Shakti Peeths. It holds a unique celebration honouring the goddess's menstruation every year, called the Ambubachi Mela.

» **Navagraha Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** Ancient temple atop Chitrasal Hill dedicated to nine celestial bodies, central to astrology.

» **Sukreswar Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A tranquil Shiva temple on the Brahmaputra's banks, ideal for spiritual rituals and riverside moments.

» **Ugratara Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A Shakti Peetha revered for its fierce goddess worship and tantric traditions.

» **Umananda Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A Shiva temple on Peacock Island in the Brahmaputra, accessible only by scenic ferry ride.

» **Mahaprabhu Jagannath Temple (Dibrugarh):** A Puri-style temple in Guwahati devoted to Lord Jagannath and his divine siblings.

» **Janardana Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A serene hilltop shrine that blends Hindu and Buddhist elements, dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

» **Purva Tirupati Balaji Temple (Kamrup Metropolitan):** A replica of Tirumala temple offering South Indian-style devotion in Assam.

» **Auniati Satra (Majuli):** A hub of Assamese Vaishnavite art and devotion, famed for chanting sessions and cultural exhibits.

» **Dakhinpat Satra (Majuli):** Celebrated for vibrant devotional performances, it anchors Majuli's spiritual calendar.

» **Garamur Satra (Majuli):** A cultural and historical centre preserving ancient manuscripts, sculptures, and Sattriya heritage.

» **Kamalabari Satra (Majuli):** A creative epicentre of dance, literature, and craft, with a global presence through Uttar Kamalabari.

» **Bengena-ati Satra (Majuli):** Home to relics of Ahom royalty and a sanctum of devotional music and performance.

» **Chamaguri Satra (Majuli):** Famous worldwide for its traditional Bhaona masks and theatrical performances.

» **Barpeta Satra (Barpeta):** Founded by Madhavadeva, known for its unique self-governed system and spiritual gatherings.

» **Sri Sri Ganakkushi Satra (Barpeta):** A key seat of Madhavadeva's legacy where he spent 18 years spreading Bhakti teachings.

» **Baradi Satra (Barpeta):** Another revered Madhavadeva institution focused on Vaishnavite education and spirituality.

» **Sundaridia Satra (Barpeta):** Sundaridia Satra is an important Vaishnavite monastery known for preserving Assamese culture, devotional practices, and the teachings of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement.

» **Jania Satra (Barpeta):** Founded by Narayan Das Thakur Ata, known for its devotional music and historic relevance.

» **Kanara Satra (Barpeta):** Located near Barpeta town, it continues Narayan Das Thakur Ata's monastic and seasonal traditions.

Culture and Cuisines

Assam captivates tourists with its rich tapestry of Bihu festivals, traditional dance and music, and flavourful cuisine featuring rice-based dishes, fish curries, bamboo shoot delicacies, and aromatic teas from its famed plantations.

Culture

» **Rongali Festival (Guwahati):** A vibrant urban carnival celebrating Assam's ethnic pride through music, dance, handlooms, and regional cuisine.

» **Raas Leela of Majuli (Majuli):** A spiritual theatre festival retelling Krishna's life through traditional Bhaona performances during Kartik Purnima.

» **Majuli Music Festival (Majuli):** A folk-fusion music and eco-cultural festival promoting art, food, and rural creativity in scenic Majuli.

» **Busu Dima Festival (Dima Hasao):** The Dimasa tribe's largest celebration of unity and identity, marked by traditional dance, rituals, and feasts.

» **Me-Dam-Me-Phi (Dibrugarh/ Tinsukia):** A Tai-Ahom festival of ancestral worship with chants and offerings, honouring dynastic roots and community ties.

» **Ali-Aye-Ligang (Dhemaji & Majuli):** Mising harvest festival featuring rice beer, fish feasts, and the iconic Gumraag dance to mark sowing season.

» **Shiva Festival (Sivasagar):** Maha Shivratri celebrations at the towering Shiva Dol, including devotional singing and temple rituals.

» **Ambubachi Mela (Guwahati):** A mystical fertility fair at Kamakhya Temple where tantric rituals and sadhus draw spiritual seekers.

» **Kamakhya Heritage Walk (Guwahati):** A guided experience exploring the myths, rituals, and architecture of the sacred Kamakhya Temple.

» **Borbheti Na-Loguwa Utsav (Jorhat):** A massive spiritual congregation at Malow field, rooted in centuries-old devotional traditions.

» **International Tourism Mart (Various):** A tourism expo promoting Northeast India's heritage circuits, crafts, and sustainable travel experiences.

» **Brahmaputra Carnival (Guwahati):** A 90-day riverside fest blending music, eco-tours, and river adventures along the Brahmaputra.

» **Ethnique Cultural Tourism Festival (Dibrugarh):** A tribal heritage festival featuring dances, crafts, and folklore by rural communities.

» **Bhogali Bihu / Magh Bihu (All Districts):** A post-harvest festival of feasting, bonfires, and traditional games celebrating rural abundance.

» **Jorhat Horse Race (Jorhat):** India's oldest running equestrian event dating to 1864, held at the historic Gymkhana Club.

» **Baokhungri Festival (Kokrajhar):** Bodoland's biggest cultural fest with tribal music, food, hikes, and sporting events at Baokhungri Hill.

» **Bohag Bihu / Rongali Bihu (All Districts):** Assam's most joyous New Year festival filled with Bihu dance, folk songs, and agricultural renewal.

» **Kati Bihu / Kangali Bihu (All Districts):** A solemn festival of hope marked by lamp-lighting in fields during agricultural scarcity.

Cuisines

» **Khar:** A signature Assamese dish made using raw papaya, pulses, or even fish cooked with alkali (filtered from sun-dried banana peel). It's light, cleansing, and typically eaten with rice to start a meal.

» **Masor Tenga:** A tangy fish curry made with tomatoes, lemon, or elephant apple (ou tenga), this refreshing dish is a summer staple and one of the most beloved in Assamese homes.

» **Duck Curry (Haah Jool):** It is a traditional Assamese dish, slow-cooked and prepared with ash gourd or sesame seeds in a rich, aromatic gravy with local spices and herbs, often reserved for special occasions and feasts, especially among Assamese upper-caste households.

» **Pitika:** Pitika is a traditional Assamese side dish, made with boiled potato, roasted eggplant, or fish, mixed with mustard oil, green chillies, and onions. It adds soulful simplicity to everyday meals, known for its simple yet flavorful taste.

» **Poita Bhat:** Fermented rice soaked overnight, typically eaten cold with mustard oil, salt, green chilli, and pickles. A traditional farmers' breakfast in the plains of Assam.

» **Aloo Bhaji with Joha Rice:** A comforting, mildly spiced potato curry paired with fragrant Joha rice - an indigenous short-grained aromatic rice.

» **Baanhgajor Lagot Kukura:** Chicken cooked with bamboo shoot, combining sourness with umami. A dish rooted in tribal kitchens and increasingly appreciated in Assamese restaurants.

» **Pani Hamuk (Water Snail Curry):** A tribal delicacy in Upper Assam, these river snails are cooked with pumpkin, mustard, and herbs. It requires skill to eat and is considered both adventurous and traditional.

» **Ou Khatta:** A sweet and sour chutney made from elephant apple and jaggery, often served as a palate cleanser in festive meals.

» **Til Pitha:** A crispy rice flour roll filled with black sesame seeds and jaggery, typically prepared during Magh Bihu. It's both a dessert and a snack rich in heritage.

» **Narikol Laru & Tilor Laru:** Festive coconut and sesame ladoos made during Bihu, offering a bite-sized taste of Assamese warmth and celebration.

» **Sunga Pitha:** Sticky rice batter mixed with coconut and jaggery, steamed inside a bamboo tube. An ingenious example of eco-friendly and flavour-rich Assamese cooking.

» **Silkworm Fry (Eri Polu):** A tribal protein delicacy made from silk-producing eri worms, stir-fried with spices. Popular in communities like the Bodos and Misings.

» **Koldil Bhaji:** A stir-fry made from banana flower, seasoned with minimal spices and mustard oil. It's a fibre-rich, earthy dish often eaten with rice.

» **Xoru Maas Bhuna:** A dry-fried tiny fish preparation using seasonal freshwater catch, spiced delicately and served as a crunchy side.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Assam's handicrafts and textiles reflect its deep artisanal heritage shaped by rivers, forests, and the ingenuity of its many indigenous communities. From silken weaves to bamboo artistry, the state's crafts blend functionality with intricate design, sustaining livelihoods and cultural pride.

» **Muga Silk Sarees:** Known as Assam's "Golden Fibre," Muga silk sarees are glossy, durable, and deeply symbolic of Assamese heritage.

Key Areas: Sualkuchi (Kamrup); Dhemaji; Lakhimpur

» **Eri Silk (Ahimsa Silk):** A warm, woolly silk produced without harming silkworms, ideal for shawls and winter wear.

Key Areas: Kokrajhar; Darrang; Dhemaji

» **Mekhela Chador Weaving:** The iconic two-piece Assamese drape, handwoven with traditional motifs in silk or cotton.

Key Areas: Sualkuchi (Kamrup); Samuguri (Nagaon); Nalbari

» **Assam Pat Silk:** A soft, creamy-white mulberry silk used in weddings and rituals for its elegance and purity.

Key Areas: Sualkuchi; Dhakuakhana (Lakhimpur)

» **Jaapi (Decorative Headgear):** Bamboo and cane sunhats turned ceremonial artefacts, now used in decor and dance.

Key Areas: Nalbari; Barpeta; Dhemaji

» **Tamul-paan Boxes (Bell Metal Craft):** Ornate bell metal betel nut boxes and ritual utensils found in ancestral homes.

Key Areas: Sarthebari (Barpeta); Hajo (Kamrup Rural)

» **Cane and Bamboo Craft:** Handwoven mats, baskets, and furniture made with ancient weaving traditions and forest resources.

Key Areas: Dima Hasao; Karbi Anglong; Nalbari

» **Handcrafted Wooden Masks (Mukha Stupa):** Painted wooden masks depicting mythic figures, used in Majuli's Bhaona theatre.

Key Areas: Chamaguri Satra (Majuli)

» **Terracotta and Pottery:** It is a traditional Assamese craft showcasing skillfully handmade clay artifacts, including pots, figurines, and decorative items, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage and artisanal traditions.

Key Areas: Goalpara; Dhubri; Majuli

» **Jewellery of the Bodos and Misings:** Beaded, brass, and silver ornaments inspired by nature and tribal spirituality.

Key Areas: Kokrajhar; Majuli; Dhemaji

» **Namsa & Shawls (Tribal Textiles):** Vibrant shawls woven on backstrap looms with bold tribal motifs and symbolic patterns.

Key Areas: Karbi Anglong; Dima Hasao; Baksa

» **Toys and Dolls from Paddy Husk and Cloth:** Eco-friendly folk toys handmade by rural women using natural materials.

Key Areas: Kamrup Rural; Barpeta

» **Bamboo Musical Instruments:** Traditional instruments like gogona, pepa, and xutuli used in Bihu and tribal rituals.

Key Areas: Nalbari; Darrang; Sivasagar

Best Time to Visit

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Winter season, chilly winds, comfortable weather.)

Non-Peak Season

» **July to September** (Hot and humid weather. Monsoon, heavy rainfall, cold evenings and dewy mornings.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Assam is the world's largest producer (95%) of Muga silk,** known for its natural golden sheen and incredible durability - traditionally reserved for royalty and heirlooms.

» **Majuli is the world's largest inhabited river island,** celebrated for its Neo-Vaishnavite monasteries, Bhaona performances, and vibrant mask-making tradition.

» **Kaziranga National Park holds the world's highest population of one-horned rhinoceroses,** making it a global conservation success.

» **Assam's Bihu festival is celebrated thrice a year** - Rongali, Kangali, and Bhogali - each aligned with the agricultural calendar and rich in rituals, food, and dance.

» **The Ahom dynasty ruled Assam for over 600 years** successfully resisted Mughal invasions multiple times., leaving behind iconic monuments like Rang Ghar and Talatal Ghar.

» **Sualkuchi is called the 'Manchester of the East'** for its silk weaving legacy, where entire communities create Muga, Pat, and Eri silk masterpieces.

» **Jatinga is known for a mysterious bird phenomenon,** where migratory birds inexplicably descend toward lights during foggy nights-puzzling scientists for decades.

» **Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati is one of India's oldest Shakti Peethas,** uniquely honouring the goddess's menstruation during the Ambubachi Mela.

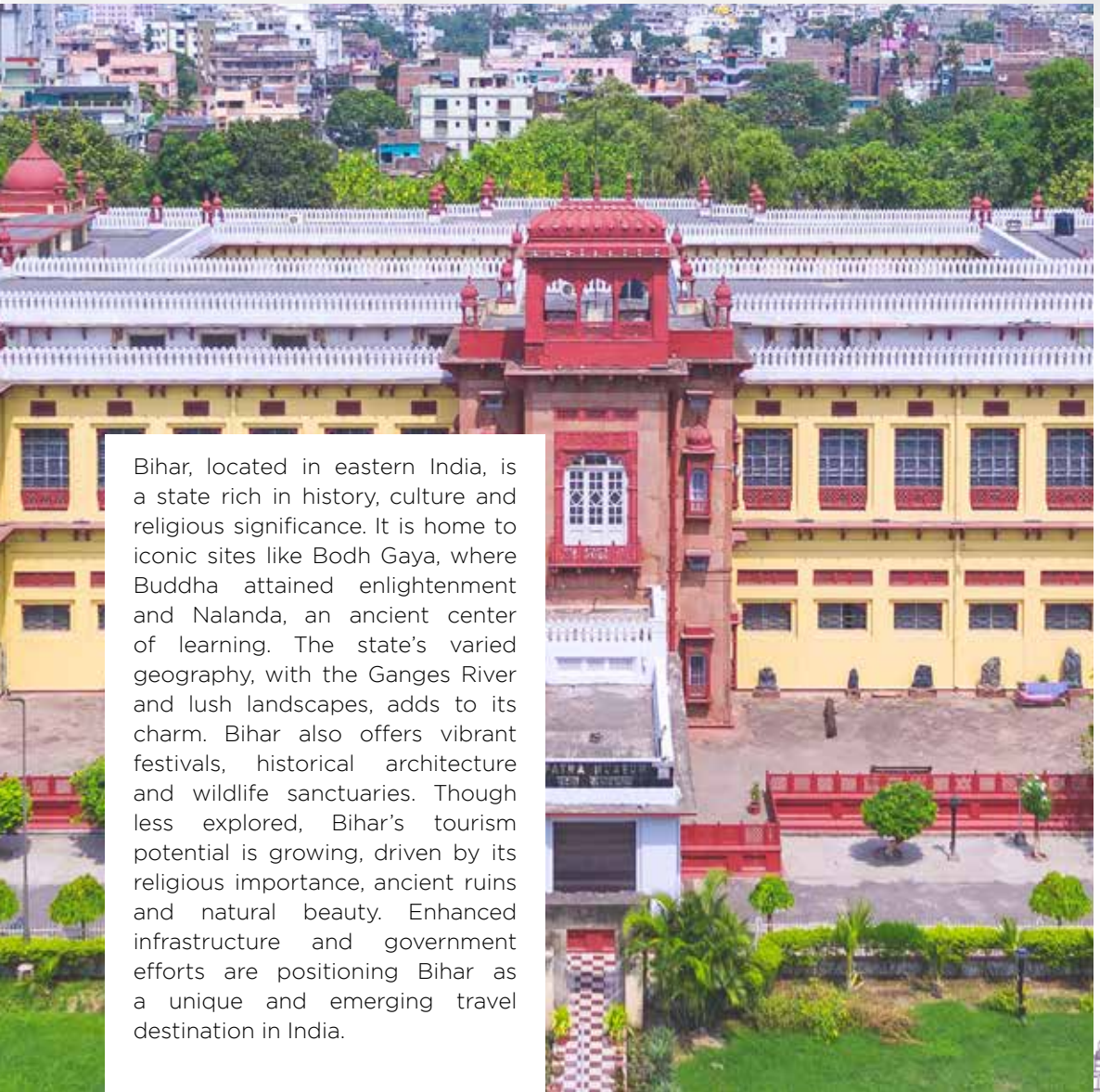
» **Assam produces some of the strongest and boldest black teas in the world,** with tea estates in Jorhat and Dibrugarh central to India's colonial trade legacy.

» **The Brahmaputra River, one of the widest in India,** can swell up to 10 km during monsoons and supports a rich ecosystem along its floodplains.

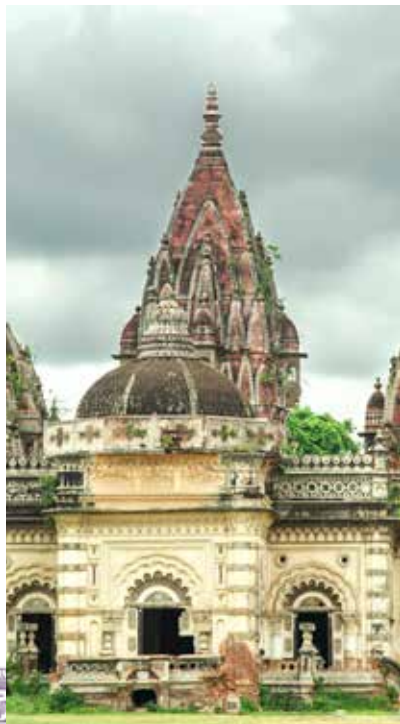
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Bihar

Tourism



Bihar, located in eastern India, is a state rich in history, culture and religious significance. It is home to iconic sites like Bodh Gaya, where Buddha attained enlightenment and Nalanda, an ancient center of learning. The state's varied geography, with the Ganges River and lush landscapes, adds to its charm. Bihar also offers vibrant festivals, historical architecture and wildlife sanctuaries. Though less explored, Bihar's tourism potential is growing, driven by its religious importance, ancient ruins and natural beauty. Enhanced infrastructure and government efforts are positioning Bihar as a unique and emerging travel destination in India.



Best Places to Visit

Bihar, with its rich tapestry of history, culture and tradition, is a state in eastern India that has much more to offer beyond its religious significance.

Nature Tourism

» **Valmiki National Park (West Champaran):** Located at the foothills of the Himalayas, Valmiki National Park is the only national park in Bihar. Rich in biodiversity, it is home to tigers, leopards and rare species of birds and butterflies. It's an ideal destination for wildlife and nature lovers.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; bird watching; nature walk; camping; photography

» **Barabar Caves and Hills (Jehanabad):** Surrounded by forested hills, the Barabar Caves are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India, located in a tranquil natural setting. The site offers a mix of heritage and serene nature experiences.

Key Activities: Rock exploration; trekking; nature photography; heritage tour

» **Kaimur Hills and Waterfalls (Kaimur):** Part of the Vindhya range, Kaimur Hills are rich in scenic beauty with waterfalls like Telhar and Tutla Bhawani, along with forested areas and hidden temples.

Key Activities: Hiking; waterfall sightseeing; picnicking; forest walk

» **Rajgir Nature Safari (Nalanda):** Set amidst scenic hills, Rajgir Nature Safari combines eco-tourism with adventure. Tourists can explore the natural landscape while enjoying a range of activities.

Key Activities: Ziplining; trekking; glass bridge walk; archery; rope course

» **Kanwar Lake Bird Sanctuary (Begusarai):** One of Asia's largest freshwater oxbow lakes, this sanctuary is a haven for migratory birds and a paradise for birdwatchers and nature photographers. Declared a Ramsar site in 2020.

Key Activities: Bird watching; boating; nature photography; eco-tourism

Lesser-Known Attractions

Bihar's lesser-known attractions - from ancient forts and serene Buddhist caves to vibrant folk art villages and spiritual lakes-offer tourists a rich blend of history, nature and cultural heritage beyond its famed pilgrimage sites.

PATNA

» **Kumhrar:** Archaeological site showcasing remnants of the ancient Mauryan capital, Pataliputra.

» **Agam Kuan:** A mysterious ancient well associated with Emperor Ashoka's legends.

» **Shri Badi Patan Devi Temple:** Also called Maa Patneshwari, is the oldest and one of the most sacred temples of Patna, Bihar. It is regarded as one of the 51 Siddha Shakta pithas in India.

» **Bihar Museum:** A modern, world-class museum showcasing Bihar's ancient history, art and culture. Spread across 13 acres, it blends tradition with contemporary design.

NALANDA

» **Pawapuri Jal Mandir:** A serene marble temple in a lotus-filled pond where Lord Mahavira was cremated.

» **Nalanda Museum:** Lesser visited yet rich in ancient artefacts from the Nalanda University excavations.

GAYA

» **Pretshila Hills:** Sacred site offering rituals for ancestors with panoramic views.

» **Dungeshwari Caves:** Peaceful Buddhist meditation caves where Buddha meditated before enlightenment.

AURANGABAD

» **Deo Sun Temple:** A historic temple complex dedicated to the Sun God, known for Chhath Puja celebrations.

» **Umga Hills:** Picturesque hillocks ideal for picnics and nature trails.

ROHTAS

» **Rohtasgarh Fort:** A massive medieval fort nestled on a hill, known for trekking and panoramic views.

BUXAR

» **Katkauli Ka Maidan:** Historical site of the Battle of Buxar offering insights into colonial-era warfare.

» **Brahmeshwar Nath Temple:** Ancient temple by the Ganges with local religious significance.

VAISHALI

» **World Peace Pagoda:** A tranquil Japanese-style stupa built by Buddhist monks.

» **Abhishek Pushkarini:** Sacred coronation tank of ancient Lichhavi rulers.

BHAGALPUR

» **Mandar Hill:** A spiritual site associated with the Samudra Manthan myth, offering hill treks and temples.

» **Khanqah-e-Shahbazia**: Sufi shrine known for its peaceful ambience and Islamic architecture.

MUNGER

» **Munger Fort:** Historic riverside fort known for its colonial-era structures and serenity.

» **Bihar School of Yoga:** World-renowned yoga institute attracting wellness tourists.

WEST CHAMPARAN

» **Triveni Sangam:** A confluence point of rivers with spiritual and scenic appeal.

EAST CHAMPARAN

» **Motihari Lake:** A scenic, less-frequented lake ideal for boating and birdwatching.

» **George Orwell's Birthplace:** Heritage home of the famous author, adding literary interest.

BEGUSARAI

» **Jaimangla Garh:** Fortified temple complex with local spiritual reverence.

» **Kakolat Waterfall (Nawada):** A scenic waterfall nestled amidst hills and forest, Kakolat is a popular picnic and nature retreat with local legends adding to its charm.

Key Activities: Swimming; waterfall sightseeing; picnicking

» **Telhar Kund (Kaimur):** A beautiful natural waterfall near the Rohtas plateau, Telhar Kund offers lush green surroundings and a serene environment for nature lovers.

Key Activities: Sightseeing; nature walk; photography

» **Gautam Buddha Wildlife Sanctuary (Gaya):** Located in the Gaya in Bihar and Hazaribagh and Chatra districts of Jharkhand, this sanctuary offers dense forests, hilly terrain and a variety of flora and fauna.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting; trekking; nature trail; bird watching

Adventure Tourism

» **Amawaman Lake (West Champaran):** A dedicated inland water-sports hub offering thrilling aquatic experiences.

Key Activities: Parasailing; jet-skiing; banana boat ride; kayaking; canoeing; zorbing; speed boating

» **Kayaking on the Ganges (Patna):** Adventure activities along the iconic Ganga with views of city ghats and historical riverbanks.

Key Activities: Kayaking; banana ride; speed boat; water surfing; river cruise

» **Paramotoring Zone (Patna – Gangajal Area):** A sky adventure zone offering views of the city from above.

Key Activities: Paramotoring; hot-air ballooning; zorbing; go-karting; paintball

» **River Rafting in Valmiki Nagar (West Champaran):** Adventurous rafting in the Gandak River near the Valmiki Tiger Reserve.

Key Activities: White-water rafting; kayaking; riverside camping

» **Hot-Air Ballooning (Patna):** Scenic aerial rides during sunrise or sunset with views over Patna and the Ganges.

Key Activities: Hot-air ballooning; aerial photography; skyline viewing

» **Rajgir Ropeway (Nalanda – Rajgir):** One of the oldest ropeways in India, taking tourists up to the Peace Pagoda.

Key Activities: Ropeway ride; aerial sightseeing; hilltop exploration

» **Rajgir Zoo Safari (Nalanda):** Adventure-style open vehicle safari across large forest zones.

Key Activities: Jeep safari; wildlife viewing; nature photography

» **Vishwa Shanti Stupa Trek (Rajgir, Nalanda):** A moderate hill trek through rocky terrains leading to a stunning Buddhist stupa.

Key Activities: Trekking; sunrise hike; heritage exploration

» **Karkat Waterfall & Crocodile Eco Park (Kaimur):** A dramatic natural waterfall with adjoining conservation park for gharials and crocodiles.

Key Activities: Trekking; eco-camping; wildlife spotting; waterfall sightseeing

Heritage Tourism

» **Mahabodhi Temple (Gaya):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Mahabodhi Temple is one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in the world.

ARARIA

» **Forbesganj Clock Tower:** A colonial relic with old-world charm.

» **Raniganj Vriksh Vatika:** A biodiversity park ideal for eco-tourism and picnics.

DARBHANGA

» **Darbhanga Raj:** A royal heritage fort surrounded by traditional Mithila style architecture.

» **Ahilya Asthan**: Religious site dedicated to Sita's mother with tranquil rural setting.

MADHUBANI

» **Kapileshwar Temple:** Ancient Shiva temple with traditional Mithila influence.

» **Mithila Art Village:** Local art hub where tourists can see and purchase authentic Madhubani paintings.

SAHARSA

» **Shiv Temple at Biratpur:** A serene temple complex amidst paddy fields.

» **Kosi River Ghats:** Ideal for sunset viewing and understanding the local riverine culture.

KATIHAR

» **Gogabil Lake, Manihari:** A serene freshwater wetland near Manihari, known for its rich biodiversity and migratory birds. It is a peaceful spot for nature lovers and bird watchers.

PURNIA

» **Maa Puran Devi Mandir:** An ancient and highly revered temple believed to be one of the Shakti Peeths. It attracts thousands of devotees, especially during Navratri.

It marks the spot where Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree and became the Buddha. The temple complex, with its serene atmosphere and intricate carvings, draws pilgrims and tourists from all over the world.

» **Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda):** Renowned as one of the world's oldest residential universities, Nalanda Mahavihara was a center of learning from the 5th to 12th centuries CE. The extensive ruins of monasteries, temples and lecture halls showcase the architectural and intellectual brilliance of ancient India, attracting history buffs and scholars alike.

» **Vikramshila University (Bhagalpur):** Founded in the 8th century by King Dharmapala, Vikramshila was an important center for Buddhist education, rivaling Nalanda. The university complex includes stupas, monasteries and a massive central structure that reflects Pala-period architecture, drawing those interested in ancient academic traditions.

» **Ruins of Pataliputra (Patna):** Pataliputra, the ancient capital of the Mauryan Empire, was a hub of political power and culture. Excavated remains at Kumhrar include wooden palisades, assembly halls and Mauryan-period structures that reveal the grandeur of one of ancient India's greatest cities.

» **Golghar (Patna):** Built in 1786 by the British after the Great Bengal Famine, Golghar was a massive grain storage facility. Its unique beehive-shaped structure and spiral staircase offer panoramic views of Patna and serve as a testament to colonial engineering and famine-relief strategies.

» **Sher Shah Suri Tomb (Sasaram, Rohtas):** This magnificent sandstone mausoleum was built in the mid-16th century for Sher Shah Suri, the founder of the Suri Empire and builder of the Grand Trunk Road. Set in the middle of an artificial lake, it is an excellent example of Indo-Islamic architecture and royal Mughal-era design.

» **Ancient Rajgir Fort and Cyclopean Wall (Nalanda):** Dating back to the time of the Magadh empire, the Cyclopean Wall is a 40-km-long ancient stone fortification that surrounded Rajgir. It reflects advanced military architecture and offers a rare glimpse into pre-Mauryan urban planning.

» **Kesaria Stupa (East Champaran):** Considered one of the tallest and largest Buddhist stupas in the world, Kesaria is believed to have been built by the Licchavi rulers and visited by the Buddha during his last journey. The stupa stands as a silent monument to the spread of Buddhism in India.

» **Ashokan Edicts (Lauria Nandangarh, West Champaran):** The site houses

one of the well-preserved Ashokan pillars inscribed with moral edicts of Emperor Ashoka. These edicts were part of Ashoka's effort to promote dharma (righteousness) across his empire, offering deep insight into Mauryan governance and Buddhist values.

» **Maner Sharif (Patna):** This Islamic heritage site houses the tombs of two famous Sufi saints - Makhdoom Yahya Maneri and Makhdoom Shah Daulat. Built during the Mughal period, the site is known for its intricate Mughal architecture and cultural harmony.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Janaki Mandir (Sitamarhi):** Dedicated to Goddess Sita, this is believed to be her birthplace. The temple attracts thousands of devotees annually, especially during festivals like Janki Navami and Vivah Panchami.

» **Mundeshwari Temple (Kaimur):** One of the oldest continuously worshipped Hindu temples, dedicated to Lord Shiva and Goddess Shakti. Its ancient architecture and religious rituals draw pilgrims year-round.

» **Bateshwar Nath Temple (Bhagalpur):** A prominent Shiva temple located in Bateshwar Hills, especially visited during the holy month of Shravan when devotees offer prayers and perform rituals.

» **Sita Kund (Sitamarhi):** Sacred hot springs linked to Goddess Sita's legend, where pilgrims take ritual baths, particularly during the Magh full moon festival.

» **Rajgir Hills (Nalanda):** A multi-faith pilgrimage site associated with Lord Buddha's teachings and Lord Mahavir's penance, featuring temples, stupas and sacred hot springs.

» **Sonepur Mela (Saran):** Asia's largest cattle fair held at the confluence of the Ganges and Gandak rivers, with religious significance centered around the nearby Hariharnath Temple.

» **Hariharnath Temple (Saran):** Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, this temple is a key pilgrimage site in the Mithila region, drawing devotees especially during annual festivals.

» **Baba Dham (Bhagalpur):** An important Shiva shrine located in the Vikramshila area, attracting devotees during major Hindu festivals for worship and blessings.

» **Kundeshwari Temple (Kaimur):** Dedicated to Goddess Durga, perched atop a hill offering panoramic views, this temple

is especially popular during Navratri celebrations.

» **Maner Sharif (Patna):** A revered Sufi pilgrimage site housing the tombs of saints Makhdoom Yahya Maneri and Makhdoom Shah Daulat, visited for spiritual solace and during Urs festival.

» **Sultanganj (Bhagalpur):** The origin point of the holy Shravani Mela pilgrimage where devotees collect Ganges water to offer at Baba Baidyanath Temple in Deoghar.

» **Vaishali:** A sacred site for Buddhists, where Lord Buddha gave his last sermon and for Jains as the birthplace of Lord Mahavira, making it a vital pilgrimage for both faiths.

» **Kesaria Stupa (East Champaran):** One of the tallest ancient Buddhist stupas, a key pilgrimage spot symbolising the spread of Buddhism across India.

Culture and Cuisines

Bihar's culture and cuisine offer tourists a flavourful journey through ancient traditions, vibrant festivals and hearty dishes like litti-chokha, reflecting its deep-rooted heritage and rural charm.

Culture

» **Prakash Parv (Patna):** It is celebrated on the auspicious occasion of Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj Jayanti. The day is observed in honor and remembrance of the great warrior, poet, philosopher and spiritual master. On this day, Sikhs all over the world send greetings to one another and vow to follow the path and teachings of Guruji.

» **Chhath Puja:** A unique and deeply spiritual festival dedicated to the Sun God, celebrated with rituals on riverbanks. It showcases Bihar's devotion, communal harmony and offers tourists a glimpse of age-old traditions.

» **Madhubani Festival:** Celebrates the famous folk art of Madhubani painting, featuring exhibitions, workshops and cultural performances that highlight the region's artistic heritage.

» **Rajgir Mahotsav (Nalanda District):** A cultural festival celebrating Bihar's rich history with classical dance, music and theatrical performances against the backdrop of ancient Rajgir hills.

» **Sama Chakeva (Mithila Region):** A traditional festival celebrating brother-sister relationships with folk songs and rituals, reflecting the local culture and community bonding.

Cuisines

» **Litti Chokha:** The iconic Bihari dish consisting of roasted wheat balls (litti) stuffed with spiced gram flour, served with mashed vegetables (chokha). It's a must-try for tourists wanting authentic local flavours.

» **Sattu Paratha:** Flatbread stuffed with roasted gram flour and spices, widely loved as a nutritious and tasty breakfast or snack.

» **Khaja:** A layered sweet pastry soaked in sugar syrup, famous in the towns of Silao and Rajgir, symbolising Bihar's rich sweet-making tradition.

» **Thekua:** A deep-fried wheat flour cookie flavoured with jaggery and cardamom, traditionally prepared during Chhath Puja and loved across the state.

» **Malpua:** Sweet pancakes soaked in sugar syrup, often enjoyed during festivals and celebrations.

» **Dal Pitha:** Steamed dumplings stuffed with spiced lentils, offering a unique taste of Bihar's comfort food.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Bihar's textiles and handicrafts-like Madhubani paintings, Bhagalpuri silk and Sikki grass crafts-entice tourists with their intricate artistry and deep cultural symbolism rooted in folk traditions.

» **Madhubani Painting:** A world-famous folk art form from the Mithila region, known for its vibrant colours and detailed patterns depicting mythology, festivals and nature. Painted on cloth, paper and walls, it's a favourite among tourists seeking cultural souvenirs.

Key Areas: Madhubani, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur

» **Bhagalpuri Silk (Tussar Silk):** Renowned for its fine texture and natural sheen, this silk is traditionally handwoven and widely used in sarees and dress materials. Bhagalpur is often referred to as the "Silk City of India."

Key Areas: Bhagalpur, Sultanganj

» **Manjusha Art:** A lesser-known traditional scroll painting style featuring religious and folklore themes, particularly stories of Behula and Bihula. The art uses distinct borders, bright colours and symbolic imagery.

Key Areas: Bhagalpur

» **Sikki Grass Craft:** Eco-friendly craft made from golden-coloured sikki grass, turned into baskets, toys and decorative items by skilled women artisans. Its lightweight and unique appearance make it a popular souvenir.

Key Areas: Madhubani, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur

» **Sujini Craft:** Atraditional embroidery craft of Bihar, mainly practiced by rural women. Using simple running stitches on layered cloth, Sujini narrates stories of daily life, folklore, and social messages through vibrant thread work

Key Areas: Patna, Bihar Sharif, Nalanda

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (pleasant weather ideal for sightseeing, festivals and heritage exploration)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot but manageable; good for budget travel and indoor attractions. heavy monsoon rains can disrupt travel and outdoor plans.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Established in the 5th century CE, **Nalanda University is the World's First University** that attracted scholars from across Asia -highlighting Bihar's status as an ancient global learning hub.

» It was under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya that **Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, making it one of the most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites worldwide.**

» Bihar is the **birthplace of both Buddhism and Jainism**, offering a rare spiritual convergence for global pilgrims.

» The **80-feet tall statue of Buddha in Bodh Gaya is among the tallest in India,** drawing thousands of visitors annually for spiritual and architectural marvel.

» **Vaishali was the capital of the world's first known republic,** centuries before democratic systems emerged elsewhere -making it a must-visit for history buffs.

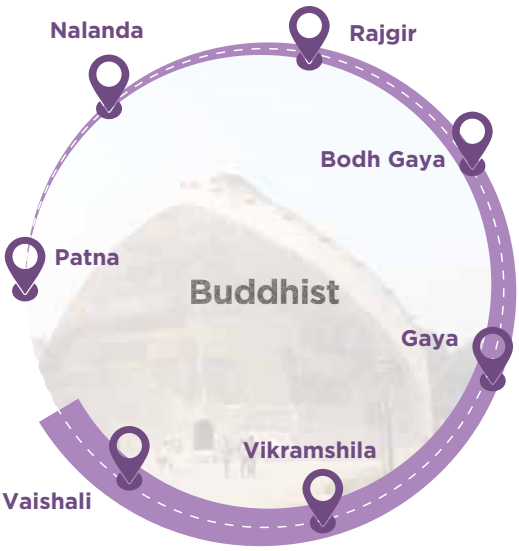
» Bihar's signature dish, **litti-chokha,** not only reflects rustic flavours but has become an **identity symbol at food festivals across India.**

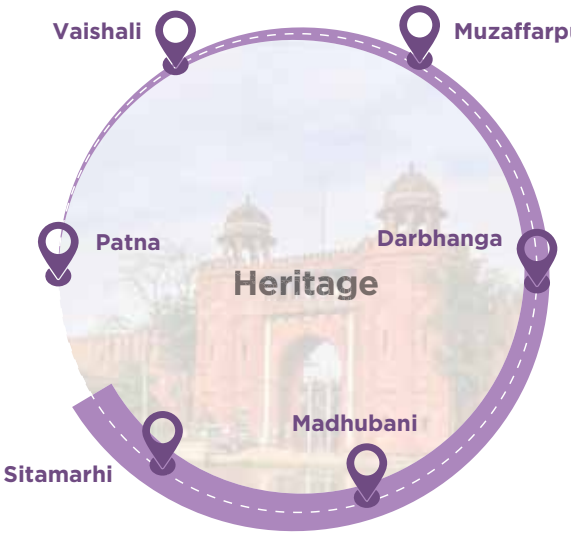
» Originating in the Mithila region, **Madhubani Paintings** were traditionally done on walls during festivals and are now **famous worldwide.**

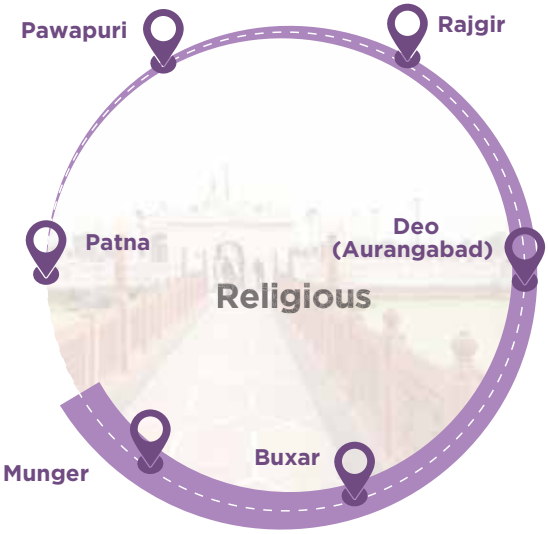
» The **Champaran Satyagraha** of 1917 in Bihar marked **Mahatma Gandhi's first Civil Disobedience Movement in India** - an iconic site in the freedom struggle.

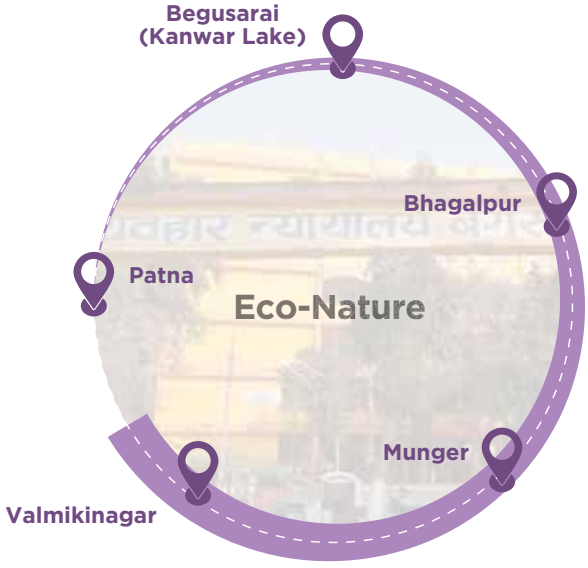
» **Jardalu mango,** grown only in Bihar, is GI-tagged and famous for its **natural perfume-like aroma**.

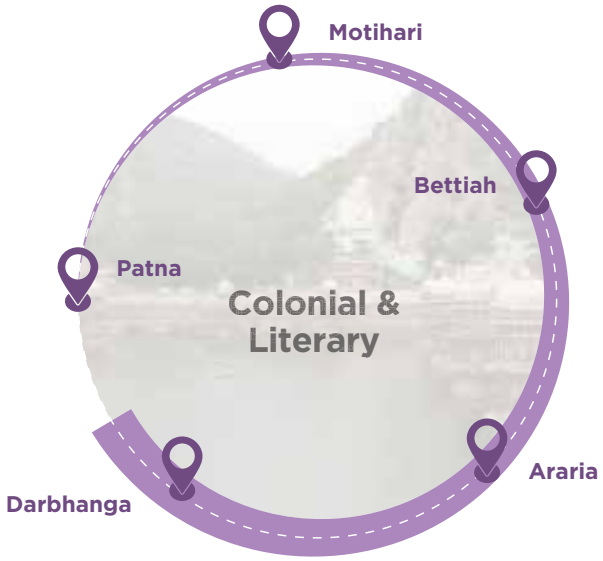
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS











Chandigarh

Tourism

Chandigarh, often called 'The City Beautiful,' is a well-planned and modern destination that serves as the capital of both Punjab and Haryana. Designed with precision and thought, it is celebrated for its clean streets, orderly layout and serene atmosphere. The city offers a harmonious blend of nature and urban living, making it ideal for visitors seeking relaxation and comfort. Its green spaces, open areas and inviting surroundings create a refreshing environment for families, friends and solo travellers alike. Its welcoming vibe, beautiful surroundings and organised structure leave a lasting impression, making every visit a memorable and enriching experience for all who arrive.

Best Places to Visit

Chandigarh is a beautifully planned city that welcomes visitors with serene gardens, iconic architecture, fascinating museums and vibrant markets worth exploring.

Nature Tourism

- **Sukhna Lake (Sector 1):** A serene rain-fed lake at the foothills of the Shivaliks, ideal for relaxation and water activities.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Lakeside walks; Nature photography

- **Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary (near Sector 1):** A 2,600 hectare protected forest area with rich biodiversity of flora and fauna.

Key Activities: Forest treks; Bird and animal spotting; Nature trail walks

- **Zakir Hussain Rose Garden (Sector 16):** Asia's largest rose garden with over 55000 plants of more than 800 rose varieties across 40.23 acres.

Key activities: Flower viewing; Photography; Leisure walks

- **Leisure Valley (Sector 1 - Sector 53):** An 8 km long green belt of connected gardens ideal for strolling and relaxation.

Key Activities: Jogging; Walking; Attending cultural festivals

- **Bougainvillea Garden (Sector 3):** A garden dedicated to bougainvillea, featuring arches and colourful floral displays.

Key Activities: Strolling; Nature photography; Enjoying floral beauty

- **Terraced Garden (Sector 33):** A garden with tiered flower beds and a musical fountain.

Lesser-Known Attractions

The lesser-known areas offer serene green spaces and hidden gems, allowing visitors to experience the city's quieter, more charming side beyond its popular sights.

- **Government Arts & Crafts Centre (Sector 10):** An under-explored venue showcasing traditional Indian handicrafts and artisanal work.
- **Musical Fountain Show (Sector 17):** A colourful water-and-light show in the heart of Sector 17 Market, held every evening and free for all.
- **Palika Bazaar (Sector 19):** An underground market offering affordable clothing, accessories and electronics in the heart of the city.
- **Floral Market Zone (Sector 34):** A low-key area near the Gurudwara renowned for affordable, fresh flowers frequently mentioned by residents.
- **Topiary Park (Sector 35):** A unique garden featuring animal-shaped topiaries and ornamental hedges, ideal for a quiet stroll.
- **Sanitary Garden / Kala Sagar (Sector 36):** A quirky open-air garden displaying innovative artworks made from recycled sanitary materials.
- **Garden of Palms (Sector 42):** A beautifully landscaped park featuring over 21 species of palm trees, ideal for photography and morning walks.
- **Valley of Animals (Sector 49):** An innovative garden featuring topiary animal shapes, making it a hidden gem for families and children.

Key Activities: Viewing seasonal flowers; Enjoying musical fountain shows; Relaxed walks

» **Japanese Garden (Sector 31):** A beautiful garden with pagodas, a Buddha statue and a serene waterbody.

Key Activities: Meditation; Nature walks; Enjoying Japanese-style landscaping

» **Garden of Fragrance (Sector 36):** A fragrant garden with aromatic plants like champa and motia.

Key Activities: Enjoying fragrant flowers; Leisure walks; Peaceful relaxation

» **Hibiscus Garden (Sector 36):** An 8-acre garden with over 40 varieties of hibiscus plants and colorful blooms.

Key Activities: Viewing exotic flowers; Photography; Peaceful strolls

» **Shanti Kunj (Sector 16):** A quiet meditation garden with a Buddha statue and serene landscaping.

Key Activities: Meditation; Quiet reflection; Enjoying greenery

» **Botanical Garden (Sarangpur):** A park dedicated to medicinal trees, rare plants and botanical conservation.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Educational tours; Studying diverse flora

» **Parrot Bird Sanctuary (Sector 21):** An urban bird sanctuary that is a haven for parrots and other species.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Nature walks; Photography

» **Butterfly Park (Sector 26):** A landscaped garden within Leisure Valley designed to attract butterflies.

Key Activities: Spotting butterflies; Nature photography; Peaceful walks

» **Chhatbir Zoo (Zirakpur, near Chandigarh):** The largest zoo in North-Western India with expansive habitats for animals and a walk-in aviary.

Key Activities: Lion and deer safari; Bird spotting; Viewing reptiles; Educational tours

Adventure Tourism

» **Chandigarh by Cycle:** Explore Chandigarh's iconic architecture and serene gardens at your own pace by cycle.

Key activities: Sightseeing; City Exploration

» **Chandigarh Golf Club (Sector 6):** An 18-hole golf course framed by the Shivalik hills, ideal for leisure and sport.

Key Activities: Golfing; Fairway walking; Light fitness workout

» **Amusement Zone at Sukhna (Sector 1):** A small entertainment area by the lake with activity spaces for families.

Key Activities: Trampoline jumping; Bumper car rides; Virtual-reality games

» **Leisure Valley Paths (Sector 1 - 53):** An 8 km long urban green belt ideal for jogging and fitness walks.

Key Activities: Jogging; Running; Fitness walking

Heritage Tourism

» **Capitol Complex (Sector 1):** A UNESCO World Heritage site designed by Le Corbusier, comprising the Secretariat, High Court, Assembly and monuments.

» **Open Hand Monument (Sector 1):** A 26 m high rotating sculpture symbolising peace and unity by Le Corbusier.

» **Government Museum & Art Gallery (Sector 10):** Premier museum showcasing Gandharan sculptures, Indian miniatures and partition-era art.

» **Le Corbusier Centre (Sector 19):** Former office of Le Corbusier now housing his plans, archives and Chandigarh's architectural legacy.

» **Gandhi Bhawan (Sector 14):** Architectural auditorium set within a water body dedicated to Gandhian studies, designed in modernist style.

» **Manimajra Fort (Sector 13):** A 360-year-old fort built by Ghareeb Das Dhillon, reflecting regional historical significance.

» **Rock Garden (Sector 1):** Created by Nek Chand, it's a heritage site celebrated globally for its unique sculpture and design.

» **International Dolls Museum (Sector 23):** Established in 1985, it showcases over 250-275 heritage dolls and puppets from 29 countries, along with a toy train and colorful cultural displays.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Mata Mansa Devi Temple (Panchkula, near Chandigarh):** An ancient Shakti Peeth dedicated to Goddess Mansa Devi, located in the Shivalik foothills.

» **ISKCON Temple (Sector 36):** A prominent Krishna temple known for its serene atmosphere and spiritual significance.

» **Nada Sahib Gurudwara (Panchkula, near Chandigarh):** A historic Sikh shrine on the Ghaggar River, associated with Guru Gobind Singh.

» **Gurudwara Sri Amb Sahib (Sector 44):** A sacred site named after its ancient mango tree, commemorating Guru Har Rai.

» **Shri Satyanarayan Mandir (Sector 22):** A popular Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Satyanarayan.

» **Shri Kali Mata Mandir (Sector 30):** A revered temple dedicated to Goddess Kali, attracting devotees year-round.

» **Shri Shiv Mandir (Sector 23):** A notable Shiva temple in the heart of Chandigarh, popular for its Mahashivratri celebrations.

» **Shri Jagannath Temple (Sector 31):** A sacred temple dedicated to Lord Jagannath, with festivals celebrated in traditional style.

Culture and Cuisines

Chandigarh's culture and cuisine reflect its unique blend of heritage and modernity, offering a rich mix of traditions, festivals and flavorful delights that capture the spirit of the city.

Culture

» **Rose Festival:** An annual flower show at Zakir Hussain Rose Garden, celebrated every February with colorful displays and cultural performances.

» **Chandigarh Carnival:** A three-day festival in Leisure Valley featuring music, dance and a parade that captures the city's festive spirit.

» **Chrysanthemum Show:** A popular flower exhibition in Sector 33 that showcases a wide variety of chrysanthemums in beautiful arrangements.

» **Plaza Carnival:** A weekly musical and cultural gathering in Sector 17 Plaza, featuring live performances and entertainment.

» **Chandigarh Heritage Festival:** An event that celebrates the city's architectural and cultural heritage through exhibitions, tours and seminars.

» **Teej Festival:** A traditional celebration at Rock Garden and Leisure Valley that marks the arrival of the monsoon with music, dance and festive rituals.

» **National Crafts Mela:** A showcase of India's diverse handicrafts, organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs in Chandigarh.

Cuisines

» **Amritsari Kulcha:** Stuffed, crisp tandoori flatbread with butter, best enjoyed with chole and onions.

» **Chole Bhature:** Fluffy deep-fried bread served with spicy chickpea curry and pickles.

» **Sarson Da Saag & Makki Di Roti:** Sarson ka saag and makki ki roti is a traditional Punjabi dish enjoyed especially in winter. It brings together the rich, earthy flavour of mustard greens with the warm comfort of cornmeal roti.

» **Rajma Chawal:** Comforting kidney beans in a rich gravy, paired with steamed rice.

» **Butter Chicken:** A creamy, savory chicken curry that's a Chandigarh favorite.

» **Lassi:** A refreshing yogurt-based drink, available in sweet or salted variations.

» **Stuffed Naan-Chana:** A signature street-side treat featuring crisp, tandoor-baked naan served with spiced channa and mint-tamarind chutney.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Chandigarh reflect its unique blend of heritage and modernity, showcasing traditional Punjabi craftsmanship through vibrant fabrics, intricate embroidery and handcrafted decor pieces.

» **Phulkari Embroidery:** Phulkari, meaning 'floral work,' is a traditional Punjabi embroidery technique and the most iconic textile craft associated with Chandigarh.

» **Woolen Textiles:** Chandigarh is known for its woollen garments, including shawls, stoles, sweaters and caps, crafted from locally sourced wool or blended fibres.

» **Block-Printed Suits:** Traditional attire featuring bold, handcrafted block patterns inspired by local designs.

» **Embroidered Shawls:** Woolen shawls adorned with delicate hand-stitched patterns and designs.

» **Wooden Toys and Miniatures:** Locally crafted toys inspired by rural Punjab and sold in city markets.

» **Handloom Textiles:** Regionally woven fabrics displayed at the Crafts Mela, reflecting Chandigarh's proximity to Punjab's weaving traditions.

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Post monsoon greenery, ideal for budget trips. Warm and humid, suitable for quieter spots.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» The name **Chandigarh** is derived from **Chandi Devi** (an incarnation of Goddess Parvati) and 'garh,' a word meaning fortress. This city **derives its name from this ancient Chandi Devi temple nearby**.

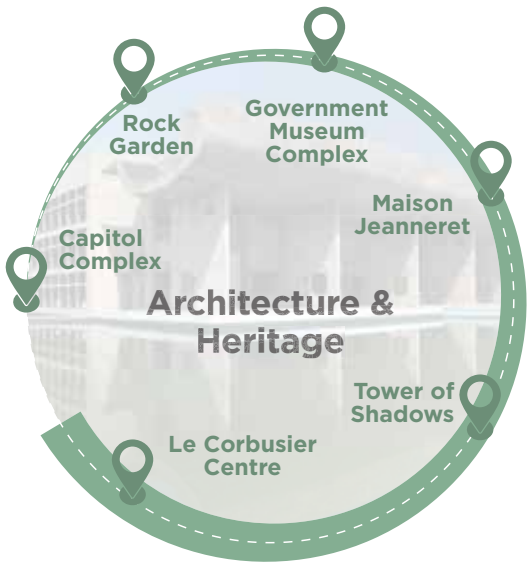
» The Capitol Complex, a **UNESCO World Heritage site**, is the epicentre of Chandigarh's administrative and political activities.

» Nek Chand, the visionary behind **Rock Garden, initiated its creation secretly in 1957** during his free time.

» The **Open Hand Monument**, a 26 m high rotating sculpture designed by Le Corbusier, is the **official emblem of Chandigarh**, representing peace and reconciliation.

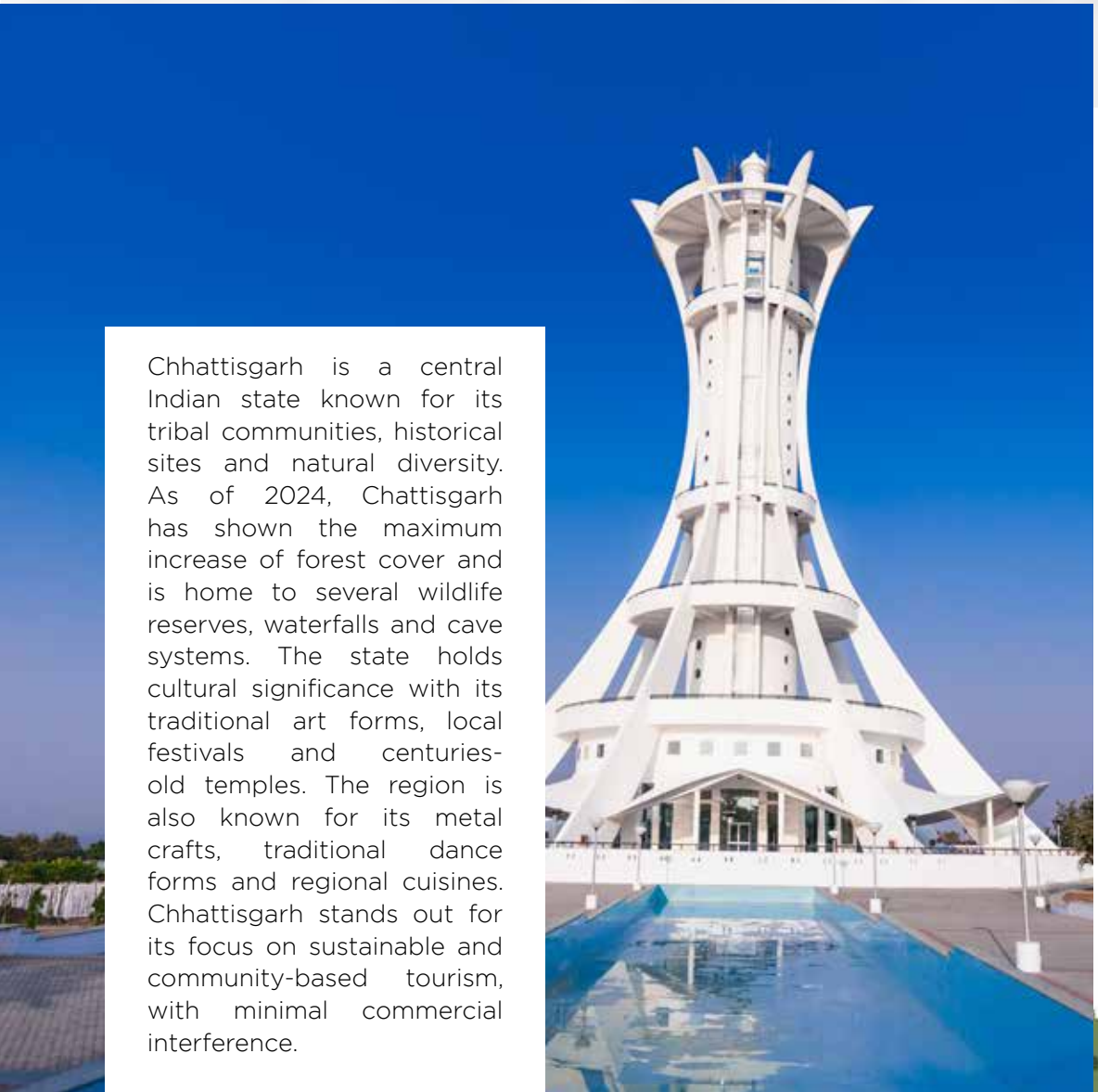
» **Leisure Valley** is the most popular tourist attraction also known as the **lungs of Chandigarh City.**

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Chhattisgarh

Tourism



Chhattisgarh is a central Indian state known for its tribal communities, historical sites and natural diversity. As of 2024, Chattisgarh has shown the maximum increase of forest cover and is home to several wildlife reserves, waterfalls and cave systems. The state holds cultural significance with its traditional art forms, local festivals and centuries-old temples. The region is also known for its metal crafts, traditional dance forms and regional cuisines. Chhattisgarh stands out for its focus on sustainable and community-based tourism, with minimal commercial interference.

Best Places to Visit

Chhattisgarh is an emerging tourism destination known for its scenic landscapes, historical sites and rich tribal heritage. From natural retreats to cultural landmarks, the state offers travellers a blend of authentic and offbeat experiences.

Nature Tourism

- **Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary (Mahasamund):** A well-preserved forest sanctuary known for its dense vegetation and population of leopards, wild boars and various deer species.

Key Activities: Jeep safari; Birdwatching; Forest walks

- **Kanger Valley National Park (Bastar):** A biodiversity-rich national park famous for its dense forests, rare species like the Bastar Hill Myna and limestone caves.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Cave exploration; Wildlife spotting

- **Indravati National Park (Bijapur):** A remote national park and tiger reserve with riverine ecosystems, grasslands and elusive wildlife like the Indian bison and wild dogs.

Key Activities: Wildlife safari; Nature photography; Birdwatching

- **Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary (Mungeli):** A scenic forested area that forms part of a tiger reserve, with Sal and bamboo forests and diverse animal life.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; Trekking; Birdwatching

- **Mainpat (Surguja):** A scenic hill station popularly known as the 'Shimla of Chhattisgarh', popular for Tibetan settlements and a cool climate.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Waterfall visits (Tiger Point, Fish Point); Exploring Tibetan monasteries; Visiting Jaljali (a bouncing land)

Lesser-Known Attractions

The lesser known areas of Chhattisgarh offer untouched natural beauty, ancient tribal cultures and offbeat experiences away from commercial tourism. They include unexplored caves, quiet waterfalls and heritage sites that reflect the state's deep cultural and ecological diversity.

BALODA BAZAR

- **Boria Baba Temple:** A sacred site surrounded by forest, locally revered for blessings.

BASTAR

- **Tirathgarh Caves:** Limestone caves near Tirathgarh Falls with intriguing rock formations and spiritual appeal.

BALOD

- **Khutaghat:** A peaceful dam surrounded by low hills, good for relaxation and boating.

DHAMTARI

- **Gangrel Dam (Mini Goa):** A scenic dam offering nature walks, sunsets and light boating.

GARIABAND

- **Chingra Pagaar Waterfall:** A small forest waterfall, ideal for monsoon visits and easy hikes.

JASHPUR

- **Badalkhol Wildlife Sanctuary:** A remote reserve rich in flora and tribal culture, suited for nature lovers.
- **Rani Dah Waterfall:** A beautiful seasonal waterfall deep in the forest, perfect for adventurous hikes.

KABIRDHAM

- **Daldali Mines Viewpoint:** An offbeat hill viewpoint near bauxite mines with panoramic views.

KORBA

- **Satrenga:** A quiet backwater destination of Chhattisgarh.
- **Chaiturgarh Fort:** A hill fort with cave temples and trekking trails, surrounded by a forest.

KORIYA

- **Ling-Darha Waterfall:** A hidden waterfall within a dense forest, less frequented by tourists but beautiful for nature lovers.

- **Gavar Ghat Waterfall:** A calm waterfall tucked among rocky hills, great for short treks and picnics.

KONDAGAON

- **Lukrapara Waterfall:** A hidden forest waterfall ideal for nature photography and solitude.
- **Kondagaon Handicraft Village:** A forest-fringe town famed for bell-metal Dhokra craft and tribal art.

NARAYANPUR

- **Narayanpur Forests:** Remote forests rich in tribal life and biodiversity, ideal for eco-tourism.

SURGUJA

- **Sonabai Sculpture House:** A local artist's home-turned-museum showcasing unique tribal clay art.

RAIPUR

- **Mandhar:** A calm site near the Shivnath River with small temples and ancient heritage.

SURAJPUR

- **Kudargarh:** A hilltop temple surrounded by nature, visited by locals during festivals.

SURGUJA

- **Udaipur:** An ancient town with ruins of temples and historical remains.

MUNGELI

- **Madku Dweep:** A small island in the Shivnath River dotted with 11th-century temples and ancient ponds.

MANENDRAGARH-CHIRMIRI-BHARATPUR

- **Bhainsa Darha:** A peaceful natural lake hidden in dense forests, ideal for spotting wildlife and birds.
- **Amritdhara Waterfall:** A scenic waterfall flowing through rocks, perfect for peaceful retreats.

MAHASAMUND

- **Tendumuda:** A forest-side village near Barnawapara, great for birding and rural life experiences.

- **Guru Ghasidas National Park (Koriya):** A lesser-known tiger reserve that serves as a corridor between Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh for wildlife movement.

Key Activities: Wildlife viewing; Nature trails; Forest camping

- **Chitrakote Waterfall (Bastar):** India's widest waterfall, this horseshoe-shaped fall on the Indravati River is especially stunning during monsoons.

Key Activities: Boating; Sightseeing; Nature photography

- **Tirathgarh Waterfall (Bastar):** A multi-level waterfall cascading through rocky cliffs inside Kanger Valley National Park, surrounded by dense forest.

Key Activities: Trekking; Forest walks; Photography

- **Satrenga (Korba):** A peaceful eco-tourism site by the Hasdeo River, surrounded by small hills, perfect for weekend relaxation.

Key Activities: Boating; Kayaking; Camping, Picnic

- **Ghatarani Waterfall (Raipur):** A popular seasonal waterfall with surrounding greenery, especially visited during and after the monsoon.

Key Activities: Short treks; Picnic; Photography

- **Jatmai Forest and Waterfall (Raipur):** A forested region with a small temple and waterfall, making it a popular day-trip destination from Raipur.

Key Activities: Forest walk; Waterfall visit; Spiritual retreat

- **Amrit Dhara Waterfall (Manendragarh):** A scenic waterfall that flows year-round through rocky terrain, offering a peaceful natural escape.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature viewing; Picnic

» **Charre-Marre Waterfall (Kanker):** A picturesque waterfall in a serene forested setting, ideal for nature lovers and quiet travellers.

Key Activities: Nature trekking; Camping; Photography

» **Mandawa Waterfall (Bastar):** A less-visited waterfall located deep in the forest, offering an undisturbed natural experience.

Key Activities: Hiking; Forest exploration; Picnics

» **Kotumsar Cave (Bastar):** A naturally formed limestone cave that extends deep underground, known for its unique rock formations.

Key Activities: Cave tours; Forest walks

» **Kailash Cave (Bastar):** Another limestone cave near Kotumsar, quieter and often explored along with treks through surrounding forests.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Nature photography

» **Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary (Kawardha):** A dense forest zone near the Bhoramdeo Temple, rich in biodiversity and ideal for jungle exploration.

Key Activities: Trekking; Wildlife spotting; Birdwatching

» **Rakasganda Waterfall (Surajpur):** A hidden waterfall in northern Chhattisgarh, where water flows over rocks surrounded by dense forests, offering a refreshing retreat and a peaceful spot for nature lovers and tourists.

Key Activities: River trekking; Swimming; Forest picnic

» **Sonbhadra Riverfront (Koriya):** A calm riverfront area surrounded by low forested hills and ideal for birdwatching and quiet walks.

Key Activities: Boating and riverside walks

» **Darima Hill (Surguja):** A quiet hilltop location with panoramic views, especially known for sunrise and peaceful forest surroundings.

Key Activities: Hiking; Meditation; Nature photography

» **Tiger Point Waterfall:** A tall waterfall cascading down cliffs, offering great views and a serene trek route.

Key Activities: Cliff trekking; Sightseeing; Photography

» **Sogra Waterfall (Jashpur):** A stepped waterfall hidden inside dense forest, popular with local nature trekkers.

Key Activities: Forest hiking; Picnic

» **Dipadih Hills (Balrampur):** An archaeological and natural site with ruins of old temples and forest surroundings.

Key Activities: Heritage trekking; Nature trails; Local exploration

» **Ramdhara Waterfall (Balrampur):** A seasonal waterfall tucked inside the forest, perfect for solitude and scenic beauty.

Key Activities: Short treks; Picnic; Nature photography

» **Hathipol Waterfall (Dhamtari):** A semi-circular shaped waterfall resembling an elephant's footprint, found in a tribal forest zone.

Key Activities: Nature walk; Waterfall bath

» **Gomarda Wildlife Sanctuary (Raigarh):** A forest sanctuary rich in birdlife and undisturbed terrain, good for peaceful wildlife observation.

Key Activities: Jungle treks; Birdwatching; Nature photography

» **Bango Dam (Korba):** A large dam built on the Hasdeo River, surrounded by hills and forests, ideal for trips.

Key Activities: Boating; Camping; Sightseeing

» **Chando Lake (Surguja):** A calm freshwater lake surrounded by forests, known for birdlife and scenic calm.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Lakeside walk; Boating

» **Rajeev Smriti Van (Raipur):** An urban forest park developed for eco-awareness with walking paths and native trees.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Environment education

Adventure Tourism

» **Mainpat Plateau (Surguja):** Known as 'Mini–Tibet,' this hill plateau at 1,085 m altitude offers cliff hiking, zorbing, rappelling and thrilling paragliding over rolling meadows.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Cliff trekking; Zorbing; Camping

» **Kanger Valley National Park (Bastar):** Dense forest with mapped trekking paths, cave visits including Kailash and Dandak, wildlife spotting and bamboo rafting.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Cave tours; Bamboo rafting; Wildlife spotting

» **Khutaghat Dam (Bilaspur):** Dam reservoir surrounded by forested hills, ideal for high-speed boating and mountain biking.

Key Activities: Speed boating; Cycling trails; Bird watching

Heritage Tourism

» **Sirpur Group of Monuments (Mahasamund):** Sirpur is home to a unique mix of 5th to 12th-century Buddhist viharas, Shiva-Vishnu temples, Jain shrines and a historic bathhouse. The site reflects early brick temple architecture and is ideal for heritage walks through well-preserved ruins.

» **Ratanpur Fort (Bilaspur):** Ratanpur Fort is a historic fort built by the Kalachuri dynasty, known for its historic gateways, temple complexes, enduring legacy as a former capital of the region and reflecting the rich heritage of Chhattisgarh.

» **Bhoramdeo Temple (Kabirdham):** Often referred to as the 'Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh,' this 11th-century Shiva temple is known for its intricate stone carvings, including erotic sculptures. Surrounded by forests and hills, the temple complex showcases Nagara-style architecture.

» **Kanker Palace (Kanker):** This colonial-era palace, once home to the royal family of Kanker, is now a heritage hotel offering a glimpse into aristocratic lifestyles. The architecture blends Indian and European styles and visitors can enjoy guided safaris and cultural experiences while staying in its restored rooms.

» **Bastar Palace (Bastar):** A historic residence of the Bastar royal family, this palace features European-style balconies, antique artifacts and access to tribal museums. It stands as a reminder of Bastar's princely past and is especially vibrant during festivals like Dussehra.

» **Arang Temples (Raipur):** Known for its blend of Jain and Hindu religious structures from the 9th to 11th centuries, Arang houses beautifully carved temples like the Bhand Dewal and Bagh Deval. These temples are significant for their artistic detail and historic relevance.

» **Dargah of Hazrat Baba Hafiz (Raipur):** A revered Sufi shrine in the heart of Raipur, visited by people of various faiths for blessings.

» **Laxman Temple (Sirpur):** This 8th-century brick temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu is one of the finest examples of early temple architecture in India. It features detailed carvings from the Ramayana and is situated within an archaeological park that preserves multiple excavated structures.

» **Malhar Archaeological Site (Bilaspur):** Once a prominent urban settlement from the 1st century BCE, Malhar offers remnants of planned streets, temples and intricate sculptures. The site includes ruins of temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu, giving insight into ancient urban planning.

» **Chaiturgarh Fort (Korba):** Also known as Lafagarh Fort, this 10th-century hilltop fort is located at over 3,000 feet above sea level. Enclosed by natural defenses, it includes a Mahishasur Mardini temple and several caves.

» **Palace Kawardha (Kawardha):** Constructed in the 1930s using Italian marble and stone, this royal palace is set against the Maikal hills and features manicured gardens and antique furnishings.

» **Chhattisgarh Mahakoshal Art Gallery (Raipur):** This octagonal-shaped building showcases regional tribal and folk art traditions through permanent and rotating exhibits.

» **Holy Cross Church (Ambikapur):** A beautiful church in Surguja region, serving as a major Christian centre in north Chhattisgarh.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Danteshwari Temple (Dantewada):** One of the 52 Shakti Peethas in India, this 14th-century temple is sacred to Goddess Danteshwari and central to Bastar's tribal faith.

» **Mahamaya Temple (Ratanpur):** A revered Shakti shrine built during the Kalachuri dynasty, dedicated to Goddess Mahamaya (Durga).

» **Rajiv Lochan Temple (Rajim):** An 8th-century temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, located at the confluence of three rivers, often called the 'Prayag of Chhattisgarh'.

» **Champaran (Raipur):** The birthplace of Saint Vallabhacharya, founder of the Pushtimarg sect, with temples dedicated to his teachings.

» **Luthra Sharif Dargah (Bilaspur):** A revered Sufi shrine dedicated to Hazrat Baba Sayyed Insan Ali Shah, attracting devotees of all faiths who seek blessings and believe that their wishes are fulfilled.

» **Shivrinarayan Temple (Janjgir-Champa):** Believed to be visited by Lord Rama during his exile, this temple marks an important stop on the Ram Van Gaman Path.

» **Bambleshwari Temple (Dongargarh):** Situated atop a hill, this temple of Goddess Bambleshwari is a major Navratri pilgrimage site.

» **Chandrahasini Devi Temple (Chandrapur):** A prominent riverside shrine dedicated to Goddess Chandrahasini, drawing large crowds during religious fairs.

» **Kaleshwarnath Temple (Pithampur):** An ancient Shiva temple on the banks of the Hasdeo River, known for grand Shivratri celebrations.

» **Sitamani (Bilaspur):** Associated with Sita's exile, this site has ancient caves and temples, revered by Ramayana followers.

» **Shabari Temple (Korba):** Dedicated to Shabari from the Ramayana, believed to be where she offered berries to Lord Rama.

» **Giraudhpuri (Baloda Bazar):** Sacred birthplace of Satnami sect founder Guru Ghasidas and a major pilgrimage spot for the Satnami community.

» **Jatmai Temple (Raipur):** A peaceful temple dedicated to Goddess Jatmai, set in a forest area and popular for picnics and religious visits.

» **Ghatarani Temple (Raipur):** Located near Jatmai, this waterfall-side temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga and sees large crowds during Navratri.

» **Barfani Dham (Rajnandgaon):** A popular hilltop shrine housing a large Shivling and idols of various deities, offering panoramic views.

» **Boudh Relics and Temples (Sirpur):** Home to ancient Buddhist monasteries and shrines, this site is spiritually significant for Buddhists and historians.

Culture and Cuisines

Chhattisgarh's culture is rooted in tribal traditions, folk music and vibrant festivals that showcase its close bond with nature and community. The cuisine is simple, mostly rice-based and made using locally available grains and forest produce.

Culture

» **Bastar Dussehra (Bastar)**: Celebrated over 75 days, this tribal-centered festival honours Goddess Danteshwari through traditional rituals, chariot processions and folk performances unique to Bastar.

» **Goncha Festival (Bastar):** Celebrated during Rath Yatra, this tribal festival features a playful tradition where people shoot mock bullets from wooden guns made of 'Tendu' wood. It reflects a unique blend of tribal devotion; fun and cultural pride tied to the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath.

» **Chitrakoot Mahotsav (Jagdalpur):** A two-day cultural festival near Chitrakoot Falls featuring folk music, dance, culinary experiences and adventure sports like trekking and rock climbing.

» **Rajim Kumbh Mela (Rajim):** A 15-day religious fair held at the confluence of three rivers, where pilgrims gather for sacred baths, spiritual discourses and cultural programmes.

» **Bhoramdev Mahotsav (Kawardha):** A cultural festival held near the Bhoramdeo Temple featuring folk dance, music and art in the historic 'Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh' setting.

» **Chakradhar Samaroh (Raigarh):** An annual classical music and dance festival held over Ganesh Chaturthi in memory of King Chakradhar Singh, drawing artistes and patrons nationwide.

» **Jal-Jagar Mahotsav (Gangrel):** A water-conservation themed festival at Gangrel Dam, featuring cultural events to raise awareness about sustainable water use.

» **Sirpur Mahotsav (Sirpur):** Sirpur Mahotsav is a vibrant three-day heritage cultural festival held in the historic town of Sirpur, celebrating its rich heritage through classical music, dance, art, and traditional performances. It brings together artists and visitors to experience the spiritual and cultural essence of Chhattisgarh.

» **Hareli Festival (Statewide):** An agrarian celebration before the monsoon, where farmers worship cows and tools, enjoy rural games and mark the start of the sowing season with community spirit, reflecting the deep rural culture of Chhattisgarh.

» **Pola Festival:** This cattle festival honours bullocks that play a vital role in agriculture. Farmers clean, decorate and worship their animals, then take them out in colourful processions with traditional music and festive joy.

Cuisines

» **Chana Samosa:** A popular street snack filled with spicy mashed chickpeas, giving a local twist to the classic samosa.

» **Faraa:** Steamed rice flour fingers, mildly spiced and often enjoyed as a healthy and traditional evening snack.

» **Bore Baasi:** A cooling summer meal of soaked cooked rice mixed with water and curd, traditionally eaten with raw onions or chutney.

» **Angakar Roti:** A thick, rustic flatbread made from rice flour, commonly eaten with chutneys or local vegetable curries.

» **Chusela:** Crispy rice flour rotis, shallow-fried and served hot with tangy chutneys or sabzi, mostly eaten during festive occasions.

» **Aamat:** A tribal-style spicy vegetable curry made using bamboo shoots and local forest herbs. It is known for its mildly tangy flavor and reflects the simple, nutritious food culture of the state.

» **Bafauri:** A steamed snack made from spiced gram flour, considered a healthier alternative to fried pakoras.

» **Dubki Kadhi:** A tangy yoghurt-based curry with soft gram flour dumplings, commonly served with rice.

» **Tilgur:** Sweet sesame and jaggery balls prepared during Makar Sankranti, offering both taste and warmth in winter.

» **Thethri and Khurma:** Crunchy, mildly spiced savoury and sweet snacks made during festivals, perfect for travel or gifting.

» **Mahua Ladoo:** A tribal sweet made from mahua flower extract and coarse flour, often eaten during local fairs and rituals.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Chhattisgarh's textiles and handicrafts reflect the deep-rooted traditions and tribal culture of the region, crafted with intricate skill and natural materials. These handcrafted items are known for their earthy charm, vibrant patterns and practical use in daily life.

» **Kosa Silk:** Woven from tussar cocoons, this silk is prized for its natural golden sheen and durability, especially in traditional sarees.

Key Areas: Bilaspur; Janjgir-Champa

» **Tussar Silk Weaving:** Handwoven silk with tribal motifs, used in shawls and stoles, known for its textured look and earthy tones.

Key Areas: Raigarh; Korba

» **Godna Print Textiles:** Fabrics printed with tribal tattoo-inspired geometric patterns using natural dyes and block-print techniques.

Key Areas: Surguja; Jashpur

» **Bastar Dhokra:** It is a traditional non–ferrous metal craft using the lost-wax casting technique, known for its intricate tribal designs made by the Bastar artisans.

Key Areas: Jagdalpur; Kondagaon; Narayanpur

» **Wrought Iron Craft:** Hand-forged decorative items like bells, wall hangings and tribal figures, traditionally made by blacksmith tribes.

Key Areas: Jagdalpur; Bastar

» **Bamboo and Cane Work:** Crafting of baskets, mats and home decor items using eco-friendly techniques passed through tribal generations.

Key Areas: Dhamtari; Kanker; Bastar, Narayanpur

» **Pithora Painting:** Ceremonial wall murals created by tribal communities to mark events like harvests and marriages.

Key Areas: Jashpur; Surguja

» **Tuma Craft:** Decorative items carved from dried bottle gourds, traditionally used as musical instruments or containers.

Key Areas: Bastar region

» **Pata Weaving:** Traditional handloom weaving using natural-dyed cotton to create striped or checked patterns, commonly worn by tribal women.

Key Areas: Tokapal; Nagarnar; Kondagaon

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to February** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing and nature trips.)

Non-Peak Season

» **March to September** (Great for wildlife spotting and indoor cultural experiences. Heavy monsoon rains, difficult forest and waterfall access.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Chhattisgarh has **36 historic forts,** including Ratanpur, Kanker, Dantewada and Raipur Fort, which lend the state its name - **'Chhattis' (36) and 'Garh' (forts).**

» Chhattisgarh is home to **Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, India's first university dedicated to music, dance, theatre and fine arts.**

» The **Chitrakote Waterfall in Bastar is often called the 'Niagara Falls of India'** due to its wide horseshoe shape and thundering flow during monsoon.

» Chhattisgarh is the **only state in India producing tin concentrate,** primarily from its Dantewada district.

» The **Bhoramdeo Temple,** known as the **'Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh',** features stunning erotic sculptures and predates the famous Khajuraho temples of Madhya Pradesh.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu

Tourism

Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, a unique union territory on India's western coast, offers a captivating blend of serene beaches, lush greenery and rich colonial heritage. Once Portuguese colonies, these regions are steeped in history, reflected in their impressive forts, churches and cultural traditions. The territory is a confluence of tribal and colonial cultures, eco tourism where vibrant festivals, traditional dances and local crafts thrive alongside Portuguese-influenced architecture and cuisine. With its tranquil landscapes, charming coastal towns and a distinct cultural identity, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu have emerged as peaceful yet intriguing destinations for tourists seeking heritage, nature and relaxation.

Best Places to Visit

Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu boast of a variety of scenic and cultural attractions that cater to all kinds of travellers. From the serene beaches of Diu like Nagoa and Ghoghla to the historic charm of Daman's Fort of Moti Daman and the beautiful churches, every corner tells a story.

Nature Tourism

» **Satmaliya Deer Park (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A peaceful wildlife park home to deer, peacocks and other native species.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting; birdwatching; eco-tourism

» **Lion Safari Wildlife Park (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A part of Vasona Wildlife Sanctuary offering a rare chance to see lions in a natural setting.

Key Activities: Safari rides; wildlife observation; nature study

» **Hirwa Van Garden (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A lush garden designed with waterfalls, lawns and colourful flora.

Key Activities: Picnicking; leisure walks; nature photography

» **Dudhni Lake (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A serene lake surrounded by hills, often called the 'Kashmir of the West'.

Key Activities: Boating; water sports; camping

» **Kauncha Village (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A tribal village nestled in the forests near Dudhni, offering rustic charm and natural beauty.

Key Activities: Tribal tourism; trekking; cultural immersion

» **Vanvihar Udyan (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A forest-themed garden offering a peaceful environment amid greenery.

Lesser-Known Attraction

Beyond the popular beaches and heritage sites, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu also offer a range of lesser-known attractions that provide a more intimate and offbeat travel experience. These hidden gems include serene riverfronts, tribal villages, peaceful gardens and ancient temples tucked away from the usual tourist trails.

DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI

» **Kauncha Village:** A peaceful tribal village surrounded by forested hills near Dudhni, offering cultural and natural immersion.

» **Tapovan Tourist Complex:** A scenic spot with gardens, temples and hilly backdrops ideal for quiet retreats.

» **Vanvihar Udyan:** A lesser-visited forest-themed garden perfect for leisurely nature walks.

» **Bindrabin Temple Riverside** - A serene riverside temple surrounded by greenery and calm waters.

DIU

» **Fudam Bird Sanctuary:** A quiet wetland area attracting migratory birds and ideal for peaceful observation.

» **Chakratirth Beach:** A small, peaceful beach with spiritual significance and scenic cliff views.

» **Simbor Beach:** A secluded and less-developed beach perfect for solitude seekers.

DAMAN

» **Jain Temple:** A beautifully carved marble temple with religious significance and tranquil surroundings.

» **Tower of Silence:** A rarely visited Zoroastrian heritage site symbolising Parsi customs and culture.

» **Moti Daman Jetty Garden:** A quiet garden near the river offering scenic views and fewer crowds.

Key Activities: Walking; birdwatching; photography

» **Bindrabin Temple and Riverfront (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A riverside temple surrounded by scenic beauty and calm waters.

Key Activities: Spiritual retreat; riverside relaxation; photography

» **Ghoghla Beach (Diu):** Ghoghla Beach is a serene and clean beach known for its golden sands, gentle waves and beautiful sunset views, ideal for relaxation and water activities.

Key Activities: Swimming; sunbathing; water sports

» **Jampore Beach (Daman):** A long, tranquil beach with black sand and a peaceful atmosphere.

Key Activities: Horse riding; beach games; relaxation

» **Devka Beach (Daman):** A rocky coastline ideal for scenic views and evening walks.

Key Activities: Camel rides; seaside walks; food stalls

» **Moti Daman Jetty Garden (Daman):** A well-maintained garden near the jetty with views of the Daman Ganga River.

Key Activities: Evening strolls; riverside photography; relaxation

» **Nakshatra Garden (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A unique astrological-themed garden linking plants to zodiac signs.

Key Activities: Botanical Walk; photography; zodiac-based plant insights

» **Hirwavan Garden (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A lush green public garden with fountains, children's play areas and open lawns.

Key Activities: Family outings; picnics; leisurely strolls

» **Himayvan Health Resort (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A wellness resort nestled in natural surroundings near the backwaters of Madhuban Dam.

Key Activities: Wellness therapy; Ayurveda; meditation; nature relaxation

» **Vanganga Lake Garden (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A Japanese-style landscaped lake garden with bridges and boating facilities.

Key Activities: Boating; photography; garden walks

Adventure Tourism

» **Dudhni Lake (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A scenic lake surrounded by hills, ideal for water-based adventures.

Key Activities: Jet skiing; kayaking; speed boating; camping

» **Khanvel (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A lush green destination offering eco and soft adventure experiences.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; cycling; nature camping

» **Tapovan Tourist Complex (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A recreation area near Vasona with hilly terrain and open spaces.

Key Activities: Hiking; nature trails; outdoor games

» **Aquaserene (Neertal) Tourist Complex (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A lakeside resort complex offering serene views and eco-friendly accommodations.

Key Activities: Boating, nature walks, lakeside relaxation.

» **Nagoa Beach (Diu):** A popular beach known for its crescent shape and adventure sports.

Key Activities: Parasailing; banana boat rides; jet skiing

» **Naida Caves (Diu):** Natural caves with winding passages offering a unique adventure experience.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; trekking; photography

» **Daman Ganga River Front (Daman):** A beautifully landscaped riverfront promenade along the Daman Ganga River.

Key Activities: Evening walks; cycling; picnicking; riverside views

Heritage Tourism

» **Fort of Moti Daman (Daman):** A massive 16th-century Portuguese fort featuring imposing stone walls, bastions and colonial buildings. It offers panoramic views of the Arabian Sea and insights into Daman's colonial past.

» **Fort of Nani Daman (Daman):** A smaller yet significant fort located opposite Moti Daman, showcasing remnants of Portuguese architecture. It houses churches and gardens within its walls, reflecting a quieter colonial legacy.

» **Bom Jesus Church (Daman):** Built in 1603, this historic Portuguese-era church reflects baroque Portuguese architecture with ornate interiors. It is admired for its elegant architecture, serene atmosphere and rich colonial heritage.

» **Our Lady of the Sea Church (Daman):** Located within Nani Daman Fort, this church is known for its simplicity and peaceful ambience. It serves as a spiritual retreat surrounded by historic fort walls.

» **St. Paul's Church (Diu):** Considered one of the best examples of baroque architecture in India, built by the Portuguese in 1601. The intricately carved wooden altar and serene setting make it a major attraction.

» **Diu Fort (Diu):** A massive sea-facing fort constructed by the Portuguese in 1535, offering a mix of history and ocean views. It houses lighthouses, cannons and jails that narrate tales of Diu's colonial rule.

» **Naida Caves (Diu):** These mysterious caves, formed by Portuguese quarrying, feature natural rock formations and maze-like paths, perfect blend of history and nature, ideal for exploration and photography.

» **Gangeshwar Mahadev Temple (Diu):** An ancient coastal temple where five Shiva lingas are continuously bathed by sea waves. The site holds mythological significance and provides a serene spiritual experience.

» **Church of Our Lady of Remedios (Diu):** A simple yet spiritually significant church located near Diu Fort, reflecting Portuguese influence. It offers a quiet environment for prayer and reflection away from the usual crowd.

» **Se Cathedral (Daman):** A 17th-century church reflecting Portuguese colonial elegance, known for its vast interiors and calm surroundings. It is one of the oldest and most prominent religious sites in Daman.

» **Dominican Monastery (Daman):** The picturesque ruins of a Portuguese monastery known for its historical importance and silent charm. Once a vibrant religious center, today it attracts heritage enthusiasts and photographers.

» **Tower of Silence – Zoroastrian Structure (Daman):** A rare and sacred site used by the Parsi community for traditional funeral rites. It represents the deep-rooted presence of Zoroastrian culture in the region.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Gangeshwar Mahadev Temple (Diu):** An ancient seaside temple where five Shiva lingas are naturally bathed by the waves of the Arabian Sea. It is believed to be associated with the Pandavas and offers a deeply spiritual coastal ambience.

» **St. Paul's Church (Diu):** A magnificent 17th-century church built in baroque style,

known for its richly carved woodwork and peaceful interior. It remains an active place of worship and a striking example of Portuguese religious architecture.

» **Church of Our Lady of Remedios (Diu):** A humble and sacred church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, located close to Diu Fort. It offers a tranquil and spiritual retreat for visitors and devotees alike.

» **Se Cathedral (Daman):** One of the oldest churches in Daman, featuring simple yet grand colonial design and a quiet spiritual setting. It reflects the deep-rooted Christian legacy left by the Portuguese.

» **Bom Jesus Church (Daman):** A beautifully preserved Roman Catholic church from the early 17th century with ornate interiors and calm surroundings. It is a popular site for mass and religious gatherings.

» **Our Lady of the Sea Church (Daman):** Nestled within the Nani Daman Fort, this peaceful church is known for its simplicity and serene atmosphere. It's a perfect spot for quiet prayer and reflection amidst historic surroundings.

» **Jain Temple (Daman):** A beautifully crafted marble temple with intricate carvings and spiritual significance to the Jain community. It provides a calm, meditative space and a glimpse into Jain religious heritage.

» **Bindrabin Temple (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A quiet riverside temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, surrounded by forest and natural beauty. It is a perfect spot for peaceful worship, picnics by the river and it has spiritual significance among the tribal communities of the region.

» **Swaminarayan Temple (Silvassa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A clean and well-maintained temple showcasing Swaminarayan faith and modern architectural elegance. Devotees and visitors are drawn to its disciplined serenity and devotional ambience.

» **Balaji Temple (Silvassa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A replica of the South Indian Tirupati Balaji Temple dedicated to Lord Venkateswara. It offers a cultural and spiritual experience with traditional design and rituals.

Culture and Cuisines

Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu offer a vibrant blend of tribal, Portuguese and coastal cultures reflected in their colourful festivals, traditional dances and a cuisine rich in seafood, coconut and spices.

Culture

» **Nariyal Poornima (Daman):** A A coastal festival celebrated by the fishing community to mark the beginning of the new fishing season.

» **Garba Festival/Navratri (All districts):** A vibrant nine-night celebration of dance and devotion dedicated to Goddess Durga, especially popular in Silvassa and Daman.

» **Tribal Festival (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A cultural fair showcasing tribal dance, music, handicrafts and traditional lifestyles.

» **Mahashivratri (Diu & Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A night-long observance of fasting and prayers at Shiva temples, especially Gangeshwar and Bindrabin.

» **Portuguese Day / Liberation Day (Daman & Diu):** Celebrated on December 19th, commemorating the liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961. Festivities include parades, cultural shows and flag hoisting.

Cuisines

» **Fish Curry (Daman & Diu):** A tangy and spicy coastal curry made with freshly caught fish and Goan-Portuguese spices.

» **Vindaloo (Daman & Diu):** A flavourful Portuguese-inspired meat curry known for its bold vinegar and garlic-based gravy.

» **Prawn Balchão (Daman & Diu):** A fiery Goan-style prawn pickle dish cooked in spicy tomato and vinegar masala.

» **Jetty Roll (Daman):** A local street food favourite, featuring spiced seafood or meat rolled in soft bread.

» **Ukad (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A traditional tribal steamed rice flour dish, served with spicy chutneys or curries.

» **Suran Bhaji (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A spicy yam preparation popular among tribal households for its earthy taste and nutritional value.

» **Sanna (Daman & Diu):** Soft, steamed rice cakes slightly sweetened, often paired with

spicy curries or enjoyed on their own.

» **Bebinca (Diu):** A layered Indo-Portuguese dessert made with coconut milk, flour, eggs and sugar, rich in flavour and tradition.

» **Kalya Vatana (Daman):** A dry spicy black pea preparation, often eaten with pav or puri, perfect for evening snacks.

» **Roasted Mahua Seeds (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** A tribal snack made from roasted seeds of the mahua tree, known for its nutritional and cultural value.

» **Rava/Suji Sheera (All districts):** A sweet semolina dish made with ghee, sugar and cardamom, served during festivals and pujas.

» **Taro Root Fry (Dadra & Nagar Haveli):** Crispy slices of taro root seasoned with turmeric and chilli, a rustic tribal delicacy.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu reflect the region's rich tribal heritage and colonial legacy, offering tourists a chance to explore intricate handwoven fabrics, bamboo crafts and traditional tribal artistry that narrate stories of culture and identity.

» **Handwoven Cotton Fabrics:** Locally woven by tribal communities, these simple yet durable fabrics are known for their earthy textures and natural dyes.

» **Bamboo and Cane Crafts:** Intricately crafted household items like baskets, mats and furniture made from sustainably harvested bamboo and cane.

» **Warli-Inspired Tribal Art:** Traditional wall and textile art using geometric patterns to depict village life, rituals and nature.

» **Shell and Sea-themed Souvenirs:** Decorative items made from shells, corals and driftwood, reflecting the coastal charm of Diu.

» **Embroidery Work:** Portuguese-influenced floral embroidery seen on linens, garments and church decor, crafted with fine detailing.

» **Terracotta Pottery:** Rustic clay items including pots, lamps and figurines, shaped by tribal artisans using traditional methods.

» **Wood Carving:** Handmade wooden toys, masks and panels showcasing tribal beliefs and craftsmanship passed down generations.

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing, beach activities, festivals and cultural experiences.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot and humid conditions can be uncomfortable, especially for beach visits and outdoor excursions. Lush greenery, but limit beach and outdoor adventure.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Daman and Diu were under **Portuguese rule for over 450 years** - even longer than Goa - until they became part of India in 1961.

» The region offers a **rare blend of tribal, Gujarati and Portuguese cultures** - seen in food, language, festivals and architecture.

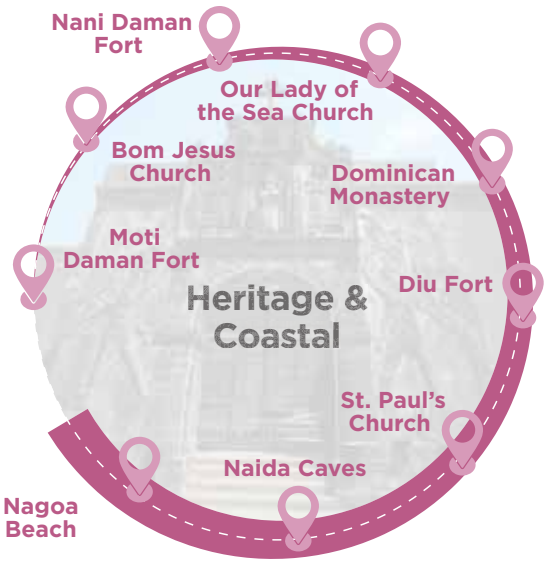
» **Diu has a small operational airport under UDAN.**

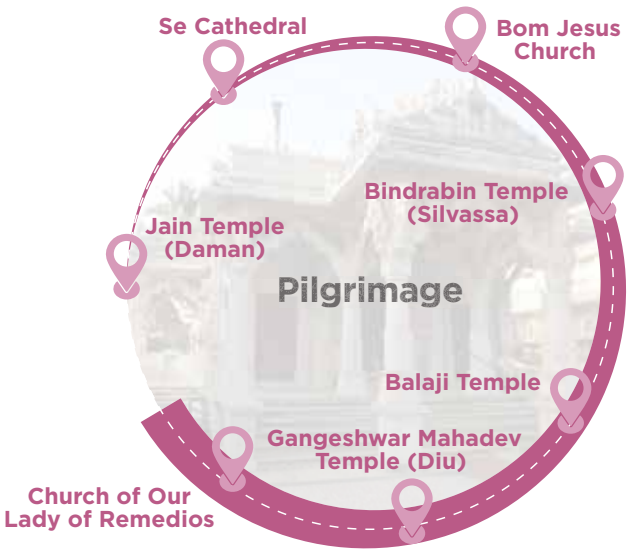
» The **Gangeshwar Mahadev Temple** in Diu features **five Shiva lingas** that are naturally washed by sea waves - a rare and mesmerising sight.

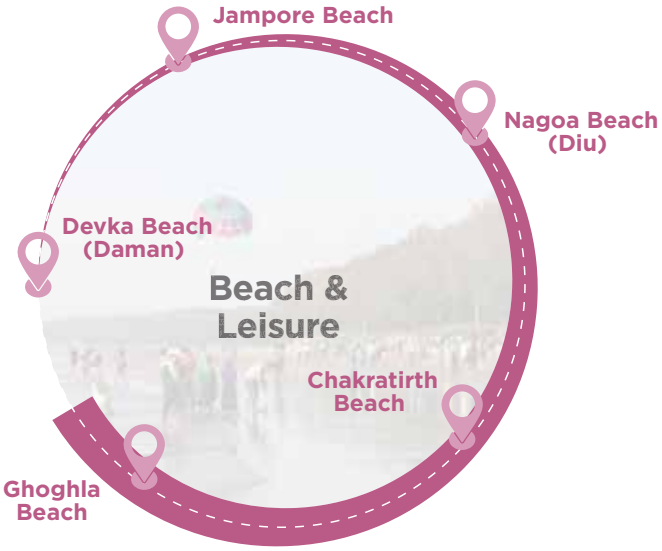
» Daman & Diu are popular getaways for tourists from nearby dry states like Gujarat, thanks to their **tax-free liquor policies.**

Diu's Naida Caves, locally believed to have **used for quarrying and passage by the Portuguese**, are now open for tourists to explore.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

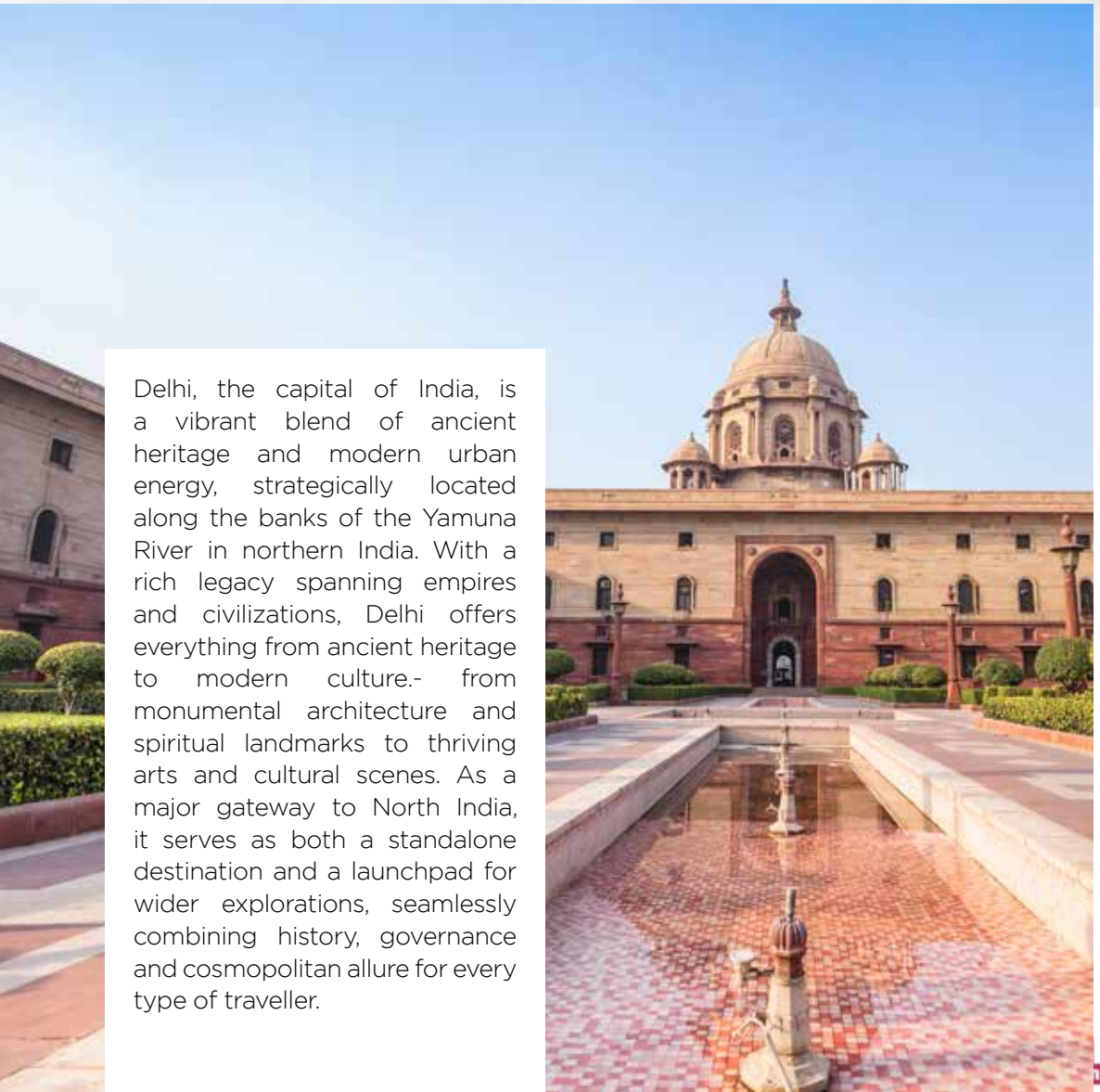






Delhi

Tourism



Delhi, the capital of India, is a vibrant blend of ancient heritage and modern urban energy, strategically located along the banks of the Yamuna River in northern India. With a rich legacy spanning empires and civilizations, Delhi offers everything from ancient heritage to modern culture.- from monumental architecture and spiritual landmarks to thriving arts and cultural scenes. As a major gateway to North India, it serves as both a standalone destination and a launchpad for wider explorations, seamlessly combining history, governance and cosmopolitan allure for every type of traveller.

Best Places to Visit

Delhi, the capital of India, offers a unique blend of history, culture and modern life. From ancient forts and grand temples to vibrant markets and lush gardens, the city has something for every traveller.

Nature Tourism

- **Amrit Udyan (New Delhi):** Formerly known as Mughal Garden; located in Rashtrapati Bhavan, Amrit Udyan is a beautifully landscaped garden open to the public in spring (February – March). It features Mughal-style layouts, fountains and vibrant floral displays.

Key Activities: Enjoy seasonal flower displays, serene walks and heritage garden architecture

- **Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary (South Delhi):** Situated on Delhi's southern ridge, this sanctuary protects native Aravalli wildlife and vegetation. It offers trekking paths, birdwatching opportunities and a Conservation Education Centre.

Key Activities: Trek through forest trails and spot birds and native wildlife

- **Aravalli Biodiversity Park (South West Delhi):** A restored forest near Vasant Vihar, preserving Delhi's native Aravalli ecosystem. It features walking trails, native flora and habitats for butterflies and birds.

Key Activities: Explore eco-trails and observe native flora, fauna and butterflies

- **Lodhi Garden (New Delhi):** Located in central Delhi, Lodhi Garden combines history with greenery. It houses tombs of Lodi dynasty rulers amid landscaped lawns and trees.

Key Activities: Walk among historical tombs, lush lawns and peaceful jogging tracks

- **Buddha Jayanti Park (New Delhi):** A serene park near Ridge Road, dedicated to Lord Buddha. It features manicured lawns, flowers and a large Buddha statue.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Apart from its famous landmarks, Delhi is home to several lesser-known yet charming attractions that offer peace, greenery and unique local experiences.

CENTRAL DELHI

- **Shankar's International Dolls Museum (Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg):** 6,500+ dolls from over 85 countries.
- **Museum of Illusions (Connaught Place):** Optical illusion museum popular for photos and youth visits.
- **Kamani Auditorium / Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts (Mandi House):** Premier venues for theatre, dance and musical productions.
- **Kartavya Path (formerly Rajpath):** Reimagined ceremonial boulevard hosting Republic Day parades.
- **Delhi Metro Museum (Patel Chowk Metro Station):** Compact Museum on Delhi Metro's development.
- **Bhuli Bhatiyari Ka Mahal:** Mysterious 14th-century hunting lodge nestled in the Delhi Ridge - perfect for heritage seekers and ghost-story lovers during daytime.
- **Feroz Shah Kotla Fort:** Built in 1354 by Sultan Feroz Shah Tughlaq, the fort houses the Ashokan Pillar relocated from Ambala and is now known both for its ruins and spiritual folklore.
- **Fatehpuri Masjid:** Built by Fatehpuri Begum, it's an important site of Islamic worship and an example of Mughal-era religious architecture.
- **Nizamuddin Dargah:** A major spiritual site for Muslims and Sufi followers. Known for its qawwalis, vibrant culture and spiritual energy.
- **Pracheen Hanuman Temple, (Near CP):** Ancient Mahabharata-era Hanuman temple with a continuously chanted mantra - featured in the Guinness Book of World Records.
- **Shaheedi Park:** A peaceful green space showcasing inspiring sculptures and memorials dedicated to India's freedom fighters.
- **National Science Centre (Near Pragati Maidan):** Interactive

science museum with robotics and physics demos.

» **Bharat Mandapam (Pragati Maidan):** India's G20 venue and largest convention centre.

» **Pragati Maidan (Mathura Road):** Hosts trade fairs, expos and global exhibitions.

NEW DELHI

» **Gandhi Smriti (Tees January Marg):** Site of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination; now a museum with immersive exhibits on his life and teachings.

» **Teen Murti Bhavan:** Former residence of Nehru, housing the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

» **Kali Bari Mandir (Mandir Marg):** A bengali-style temple dedicated to Goddess Kali; comes alive during Durga Puja.

» **Bikaner House:** Former princely estate now used as an art and culture venue with exhibitions and performances.

» **National Philatelic Museum:** A must-visit for stamp collectors and history enthusiasts.

» **Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya (Teen Murti Marg):** Museum dedicated to all Indian Prime Ministers.

» **National Museum (Janpath):** India's premier museum with ancient to modern exhibits.

» **National Gallery of Modern Art (India Gate Circle):** Art museum with works from 1850s to contemporary.

» **Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) (Janpath):** Hub for Indian arts, research and cultural events.

» **India Habitat Centre (Lodhi Road):** Cultural venue with exhibitions, talks, art events.

» **India International Centre (Max Mueller Marg):** Intellectual and cultural hub with lectures and performances.

OLD DELHI

» **Mirza Ghalib Haveli:** Historic home of India's iconic Urdu poet.

» **Chandni Chowk:** A market known for street food, textiles and traditional shopping.

» **Town Hall (Ghantaghar):** A colonial landmark that once served as the seat of municipal governance in Old Delhi.

» **Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib (Chandni Chowk):** This Gurudwara commemorates the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Key Activities: Relax in a tranquil green space ideal for meditation and photography

» **Deer Park (South Delhi , Hauzkhas):** Deer Park in Hauz Khas is a scenic retreat with animals and green spaces. It has enclosures for deer, peacocks and rabbits, plus walking trails and monuments.

Key Activities: Watch deer and peacocks while enjoying scenic lakeside walks and picnics

» **Sanjay Van (South Delhi):** Sanjay Van is a dense urban forest in South Delhi. It offers trails, ruins and rich biodiversity including peacocks and monkeys.

Key Activities: Trek through wooded paths and explore ruins and diverse birdlife

» **Sunder Nursery (Central Delhi):** Located next to Humayun's Tomb, Sunder Nursery is a heritage park that combines historical monuments with themed gardens, water bodies and a wide variety of plants.

Key Activities: Discover landscaped gardens, heritage monuments and weekend events

» **Zoological Garden (Central Delhi):** Located near Old Fort, Delhi Zoo is home to over 1300+ animals across various species. It offers natural enclosures for lions, elephants, birds and reptiles.

Key Activities: View a wide range of animals and birds in spacious natural habitats

» **Yamuna Biodiversity Park (North Delhi):** A green oasis spread over 457 acres, this park restores native vegetation and offers rich biodiversity with over 1,500 plant and animal species. It's ideal for nature education and peaceful getaways.

Key Activities: Nature walk; Bird watching; Ecological tours; Photography

» **Central Park, Connaught Place (New Delhi District):** Located in the heart of the city, this is a beautifully maintained circular garden offering open-air concerts, green lawns and fountains-surrounded by heritage buildings.

Key Activities: Relaxation; Light walks; Musical events; Cultural gatherings

» **Raj Ghat & Gandhi Smriti Gardens (Central Delhi):** Serene memorial gardens dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, surrounded by trees, landscaped paths and lotus ponds, offering a quiet place for reflection.

Key Activities: Reflective walk; History and nature appreciation; Floral photography

Adventure Tourism

» **Indian Mountaineering Foundation (South Delhi):** A paradise for climbing enthusiasts, IMF offers professional rock and wall climbing facilities.

Key Activities: Enjoy rock and wall climbing activities with professional training and safety gear

» **E-O-D Adventure Park (Mayur Vihar):** Located by the serene Sanjay Lake, this park offers zip-lining, treetop courses, boating, and cycling. It's ideal for families and school groups seeking outdoor fun in the city.

Key Activities: Engage in ziplining, boating, cycling, and treetop rope courses by Sanjay Lake.

» **Waste to Wonder Park (South East Delhi – Sarai Kale Khan):** A unique eco-park with replicas of the Seven Wonders made from industrial waste. Though not a conventional adventure park, it offers a mix of art, sustainability, and light recreational experience.

Key Activities: Eco walk; Themed exploration; Cycling (nearby track); Family leisure

Heritage Tourism

» **Humayun's Tomb (South East Delhi):** Built in 1570, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a stunning example of Mughal architecture and was the first garden-tomb in India.

» **Gauri Shankar Temple (Chandni Chowk):** This 800-year-old Shiva temple features a brown lingam and is believed to be built by a Maratha soldier. It is an important site for Shiva devotees and a spiritual landmark of Old Delhi.

» **Ancient Gates of the Old City of Shahjahanabad:** These historic Mughal-era gates stand as grand remnants of the walled city, reflecting the rich legacy of Shahjahanabad.

NORTH DELHI

» **Bijay Mandal (Jahanpanah):** Enigmatic ruin from Muhammad Bin Tughlaq's era; its complex, unfinished architecture offers an adventurous archaeological puzzle.

» **Majnu ka Tila:** Tibetan colony offering Buddhist monasteries, Tibetan cuisine and cultural shopping.

» **Coronation Park:** Site of the Delhi Durbars; includes colonial statues and open lawns.

» **Mutiny Memorial (now Ajitgarh):** British- era monument marking the 1857 uprising.

» **Roshnara Bagh Nursery:** A historic Mughal-era garden offering serene greenery and a tranquil escape from the city bustle.

NORTH-EAST DELHI

» **Nizamuddin Basti:** Historic Sufi quarter with narrow lanes, qawwali evenings at the dargah, Mirza Ghalib's haveli, traditional eateries and aromatic shops- vibrant cultural immersion.

» **Shahdara Haat:** A developing crafts and cultural bazaar similar to Dilli Haat.

NORTH-WEST DELHI

» **Japanese Park (Rohini):** Expansive public park with boating and walking trails, often missed by tourists.

SOUTH DELHI

» **Champa Gali (Saket):** Quaint alley of cafes, craft studios, bookstores & dim string lights- ideal for creative, intimate outings.

» **Garden of Five Senses:** A 20-acre sensory garden with Mughal-style layouts, herb zones, water features and sculptures - a peaceful cultural retreat.

» **Mehrauli Archaeological Park:** Fifty hectares of historical

layers - Tomb of Balban, Jamali Kamali, Rajon Ki Baoli -excellent for history-and-nature walks.

» **Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki Dargah:** One of the oldest Sufi shrines in Delhi.

» **Jamali Kamli Mosque & Tomb:** Elegant 16th-century mosque within Mehrauli Archaeological Park; often part of heritage walks.

» **Bhool Bhulaiya (Jamali Kamali complex):** Hidden maze-like tomb structure offering a mysterious appeal.

» **Ahinsa Sthal:** A tranquil Jain site with a giant statue of Lord Mahavira amid greenery.

» **Indian Mountaineering Foundation (Moti Bagh):** Rock climbing and adventure sports center in the heart of the city.

» **Triveni Kala Sangam:** Art complex for theatre, dance and visual arts; features a charming open-air café and regular events.

» **Zafar Mahal:** This 18th-century palace is historically significant as a symbol of the Mughal dynasty's final days.

» **Hauz Khas Complex:** Dating back to the 13th century, this complex was built by Alauddin Khilji and later renovated by Firoz Shah Tughlaq.

» **Jahaz Mahal:** Ship-shaped medieval palace near Hauz Khas lake, reflecting in water like a floating vessel - visually striking, off-beat attraction.

» **Delhi Garden of Medicinal Plants:** This garden hosts a variety of medicinal and aromatic plants with informative signages and educational trails.

» **Yogmaya Temple (Mehrauli):** Dedicated to Goddess Yogmaya, the sister of Lord Krishna, this ancient temple is believed to date back to the Mahabharata era and is one of the few surviving temples from pre-Islamic Delhi.

» **Hauz-i-Shamsi:** A sacred water reservoir built by Sultan Iltutmish, surrounded by heritage structures and calm natural beauty.

SOUTH-EAST DELHI

» **Tughlaqabad Fort:** Vast, ruined medieval fortress with imposing walls and panoramic views-ideal for adventurous wanderers and history enthusiasts.

» **Qutub Minar (South Delhi):** A 12th-century, 73-meter-high minaret made of red sandstone and marble, Qutub Minar is part of the Qutub Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

» **Red Fort (Old Delhi):** Commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1638, the Red Fort is a symbol of India's rich history and the site where the Prime Minister hoists the national flag on Independence Day.

» **Jama Masjid (Central Delhi):** One of the largest mosques in India, built by Shah Jahan in the 17th century. With a courtyard that can hold over 25,000 people, the mosque features red sandstone and marble construction.

» **Jantar Mantar (New Delhi):** Built in 1724 by Maharaja Jai Singh II, Jantar Mantar is an astronomical observatory that features giant instruments used for measuring time, tracking celestial bodies and predicting eclipses.

» **Lodhi Gardens Tomb (New Delhi):** Located in the serene Lodhi Garden, the tombs of the Lodi and Sayyid dynasties reflect Indo-Islamic architecture from the 15th and 16th centuries.

» **India Gate (New Delhi):** A 42-meter-high war memorial built in memory of Indian soldiers who died during World War I. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The eternal flame (Amar Jawan Jyoti) was added after the 1971 war, making it a patriotic and historical site.

» **Old Fort (Central Delhi):** Believed to be one of the oldest forts in Delhi, with roots traditionally linked to Indraprastha from Mahabharata period. Built by Sher Shah Suri & Humayun,

it includes massive gates, an archaeological museum and a lake offering boating facilities.

» **Safdarjung Tomb (South Delhi):** Built in 1754 for Nawab Safdarjung, this tomb represents the last phase of Mughal architecture.

» **Rashtrapati Bhawan (New Delhi):** The official residence of the President of India, this grand structure was built during British rule and combines Western and Indian architectural styles.

» **Agrasen ki Baoli (New Delhi):** A 60-meter-long and 15-meter-wide ancient stepwell in Connaught Place, believed by locals to date to Mahabharata era and later rebuilt during the 14th century.

» **Tughlaqabad Fort (South East Delhi):** Built in the 14th century by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, this massive stone fort once symbolised the strength of the Tughlaq dynasty.

» **Rajghat (Central Delhi):** A serene memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, located on the banks of the Yamuna River. It marks the spot of his cremation and is surrounded by lush gardens and inscriptions of his teachings.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Akshardham Temple (East Delhi):** Akshardham is a majestic Hindu temple complex known for its stunning architecture, intricate carvings, exhibitions on Indian culture and a captivating musical fountain show.

» **Birla Mandir (New Delhi):** A beautiful modern temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi, Birla Mandir

» **Sunder Nursery:** 90-acre heritage garden with Mughal monuments and curated plantings.

» **Kalkaji Temple:** Ancient Devi temple, particularly lively during Navratri.

» **Lotus Temple:** While popular, often underappreciated for its meditative space and architectural symbolism.

SOUTH-WEST DELHI

» **Dwarka Baoli:** A recently rediscovered 16th-century Lodi-era stepwell buried in Dwarka; a serene heritage spot.

» **Malai Mandir (RK Puram):** South Indian-style Murugan temple built atop a small hill; known for its calm and scenic setting.

» **Sulabh International Museum of Toilets:** Unique museum tracing the evolution of sanitation across Civilisations.

» **Gandhi Vanita Ashram:** Community center involved in women's welfare with historical connections to the freedom movement.

» **Rail Museum (Chanakyapuri):** Popular family destination with joy train rides and vintage engines.

» **Malai Mandir (RK Puram):** A prominent South Indian-style temple known for its elevated hilltop location and serene atmosphere.

» **Yashobhoomi (India International Convention & Expo Centre:** Located in Dwarka, it is India's largest convention and exhibition centre.

» **Bharat Vandana Park:** A developing self sustaining Urban Park located in Dwarka with sky bridges, water canals and rain water harvesting.

EAST DELHI

» **Sanjay Lake & Park:** A serene artificial lake of greenery in Trilokpuri-birdwatcher's delight with a popular fitness track.

WEST DELHI

» **Kaushal (Hastsal) Minar:** The "Mini Qutub Minar" hidden in Uttam Nagar; a 5-storey forgotten Mughal minaret waiting to be rediscovered.

» **Tibetan Market (Inderlok):** Small marketplace for Tibetan crafts, prayer items and woollens.

» **Bharat Darshan Park:** A unique park featuring stunning replicas of India's famous monuments made entirely from waste materials.

is renowned for its serene ambience and decorative carvings.

» **Chhatarpur Temple (South Delhi):** One of India's largest temple complexes, this shrine is dedicated to Goddess Katyayani and features a mix of North and South Indian architecture.

» **Digambar Jain Lal Mandir (Central Delhi):** This historic 17th century Jain temple, located near Red Fort, is known for its red sandstone structure and its unique bird hospital serving injured birds and animals.

» **Gurudwara Bangla Sahib (New Delhi):** A key Sikh shrine known for its golden dome and healing sarovar (holy water tank). The site welcomes everyone with its peaceful environment and free community kitchen (langar).

» **Gurudwara Rakab Ganj (New Delhi):** Built at the cremation site of Guru Tegh Bahadur, this peaceful Gurudwara near Parliament House is a significant Sikh landmark with historical and spiritual value.

» **Hanuman Mandir, Connaught Place (New Delhi District):** One of the five ancient temples believed to have existed during the Mahabharata era, this Hanuman temple is constantly buzzing with activity, especially on Tuesdays and Hanuman Jayanti, drawing devotees seeking blessings and protection from the mighty deity.

» **Hazrat Nizamuddin (South East Delhi):** A sacred Sufi shrine dedicated to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, known for its soulful qawwali evenings, spiritual ambience and historical significance.

» **ISKCON Temple (South Delhi):** This vibrant Krishna temple offers a spiritual experience with devotional music, Vedic exhibitions and a calm setting.

» **Lotus Temple (South Delhi):** Shaped like a blooming lotus, this Bahá'í House of Worship is open to people of all faiths.

» **Sacred Heart Cathedral Church (New Delhi):** A prominent Catholic church in Delhi with Italian-style architecture, peaceful interiors and vibrant celebrations during Christmas and Easter.

» **Shri Kalkaji Mandir (South Delhi):** An ancient and much-venerated temple dedicated to

the goddess Kali - traditionally believed to be millennia-old, though the present structure and documented renovations largely date to the 18th century onward.

» **Jhandewalan Hanuman Mandir (New Delhi):** This iconic temple features a towering 108-feet idol of Lord Hanuman, visible from afar and known for its unique structure where the idol appears to split open to reveal images of Ram and Sita.

Culture and Cuisines

Delhi's culture is a vibrant blend of traditions, languages and festivals, reflecting its diverse population and rich history. From colourful celebrations to classical music, art and street performances, the city is a cultural melting pot. Its cuisine is equally diverse - ranging from spicy street food to rich Mughlai dishes and traditional sweets - making Delhi a paradise for food lovers.

Culture

» **Ramlila and Dussehra Celebrations (across Delhi, especially Red Fort Grounds, Ramlila Maidan):** Delhi's elaborate Ramlilas - dramatic re-enactments of the Ramayana - are performed for 10 days and culminate in Dussehra with the burning of effigies of Ravana, Meghnad and Kumbhkaran. A cultural spectacle for tourists with costumes, folk music and large crowds.

» **India International Trade Fair:** A major annual trade and culture fair at Pragati Maidan with participation from various states and countries.

» **New Delhi World Book Fair:** Held at Pragati Maidan, this fair attracts publishers, readers and students, promoting a reading culture.

» **Republic Day Celebrations:** Republic Day Celebrations in Delhi are a grand patriotic display held every year on 26th January at Kartavya Path (formerly Rajpath), featuring a majestic parade, tableaux from different states, military displays, cultural performances and an air show, showcasing India's unity in diversity and military strength.

» **Delhi Auto Expo (Delhi-NCR):** Delhi Auto Expo is India's largest automobile exhibition showcasing the latest cars, bikes, electric vehicles and futuristic mobility technologies from global and Indian manufacturers.

» **Urs of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (Nizamuddin Dargah, New Delhi):** Held annually to mark the death anniversary of the 14th-century Sufi saint, this spiritual gathering includes qawwali nights, Sufi rituals and communal meals.

» **Basant Panchami Kite Festival (Old Delhi rooftops, India Gate lawns):** Celebrated to mark the arrival of spring, Delhi skies fill with colourful kites while traditional foods and folk songs add vibrance to the day.

» **Phool Walon Ki Sair (Mehrauli, South Delhi)**: A historic flower festival symbolising communal harmony, where floral fans are offered at both Yogmaya Temple and the dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki.

» **Durga Puja (CR Park, Kali Bari Mandir, New Delhi):** CR Park becomes mini-Kolkata with grand pandals, idol processions, dhunuchi dances and Bengali cuisine.

» **International Mango Festival (Dilli Haat or Talkatora Stadium):** An exhibition-cum-fair of over 500 mango varieties with tastings, contests and cultural performances.

» **Qutub Festival (Qutub Complex, South Delhi):** A 3-day cultural festival featuring classical music and dance performances against the backdrop of the illuminated Qutub Minar.

Cuisines

» **Chole Bhature:** A spicy chickpea curry served with deep-fried fluffy bread - a Delhi breakfast staple.

» **Butter Chicken:** Rich and creamy chicken cooked in a buttery tomato gravy - Delhi's iconic North Indian dish.

» **Paranthas of Paranthe Wali Gali (Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi):** Stuffed, deep-fried paranthas served with chutneys, curd and pickles. A must-try for heritage food lovers.

» **Kebabs & Rolls:** Mouth-watering tandoori kebabs and spicy rolls, especially from Jama Masjid area and Khan Market.

» **Rajma Chawal:** Comforting kidney bean curry served with rice - a North Indian household favorite.

» **Aloo Tikki & Chaat:** Crispy potato patties served with chutneys, yogurt and spices - found at every street corner.

» **Dilli ke Golgappe (Pani Puri):** Crispy puris filled with tangy water, mashed potatoes and chickpeas - a street food classic.

» **Kathi Rolls:** Stuffed wraps with spicy fillings, widely available in Delhi's markets and food joints.

» **Momos:** Tibetan-style dumplings, steamed or fried, often served with spicy chutney - especially popular in Majnu ka Tila and North Delhi.

» **Nihari:** A slow-cooked mutton stew, traditionally eaten for breakfast near Jama Masjid and Purani Dilli.

» **Jalebi with Rabri:** Crisp, coiled sweets paired with thickened milk, often served during weddings and festivals. A must-try dessert experience for tourists craving Delhi's sweet heritage.

» **Gajar ka Halwa:** A rich carrot-based dessert cooked with ghee, milk and dry fruits - winter specialty.

» **Rabri Falooda:** Thickened sweet milk served with vermicelli and rose syrup - a refreshing summer dessert.

» **Kulfi:** Traditional Indian ice cream often served on a stick or in matkas - try in Chandni Chowk.

» **Motichoor Ladoo:** Motichoor Ladoo is a popular Indian sweet made from boondis fried in ghee and bound with sugar syrup. Soft, rich and fragrant, it's often enjoyed during festivals, celebrations and auspicious occasions.

» **Rasgulla & Rasmalai:** Soft cottage cheese balls soaked in syrup or creamy milk - found in Bengali sweet shops.

» **Sohan Halwa:** A chewy, dense sweet made with flour, ghee and dry fruits - a traditional Old Delhi specialty.

» **Pinni:** Punjabi winter sweet made of desi ghee, wheat flour, jaggery and dry fruits - rich and energy-packed

» **Banta (Goli Soda):** A fizzy, lemon-flavored drink in a codd-neck bottle. A nostalgic refreshment for tourists wanting to try traditional Indian street beverages.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Delhi's textiles and handicrafts reflect a rich confluence of tradition and modernity, featuring zardozi embroidery, Meenakari jewellery, handloom fabrics and artisanal crafts from across India, showcased in vibrant local markets.

» **Tanjore & Madhubani Style Painted Wooden Frames:** Brightly coloured, mythological or folk-style paintings reproduced on wooden plaques and frames for home décor, curated by Delhi artisans and collectives.

Key Areas: Dastkar, Dilli Haat, Craft Museum Gift Shop

» **Khadi Products (Textiles, Skincare, Soaps):** Delhi plays a key role in promoting Khadi through handcrafted cotton garments, herbal cosmetics and wellness items rooted in Gandhian philosophy.

Key Areas: Khadi India (Connaught Place), Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan (Regal Building)

» **Puppets & Folk Toys:** Handmade puppets and traditional toys showcasing folk narratives and regional attire, often made with cloth, wood and papier-mâché.

Key Areas: Dilli Haat, Shankar's Doll Museum Shop, Craft Museum Shop (Pragati Maidan)

» **Ittar (Natural Perfumes):** Traditional perfumery using natural oils and floral essences, often bottled in ornate glass vials - a legacy of Delhi's Mughal-era fragrance culture.

Key Areas: Chandni Chowk (Gulab Singh Johrimal), Khari Baoli, Dilli Haat

» **Miniature Monuments & Handcrafted Souvenirs:** Replica models of Qutub Minar, Lotus Temple, India Gate and Red Fort are sold as pocket-sized souvenirs, often in wood, stone, or metal.

Key Areas: Central Cottage Industries Emporium (Janpath), Delhi Haat, Monuments' gift shops

» **Blue Pottery & Studio Ceramics:** Artisan-crafted ceramicware including blue pottery plates, mugs and décor items, often blending traditional and modern aesthetics.

Key Areas: Dilli Haat, Hauz Khas Village, Pottery Market (Andheria Mod)

» **Lac & Glass Bangles:** A colourful, traditional accessory found widely in Delhi markets, often crafted by local communities and worn during festivals and weddings.

Key Areas: Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Kamla Nagar

» **Meenakari & Kundan Jewellery:** Delhi is known for its intricate imitation and semi-precious stone jewellery in Meenakari and Kundan styles, popular as elegant and affordable souvenirs.

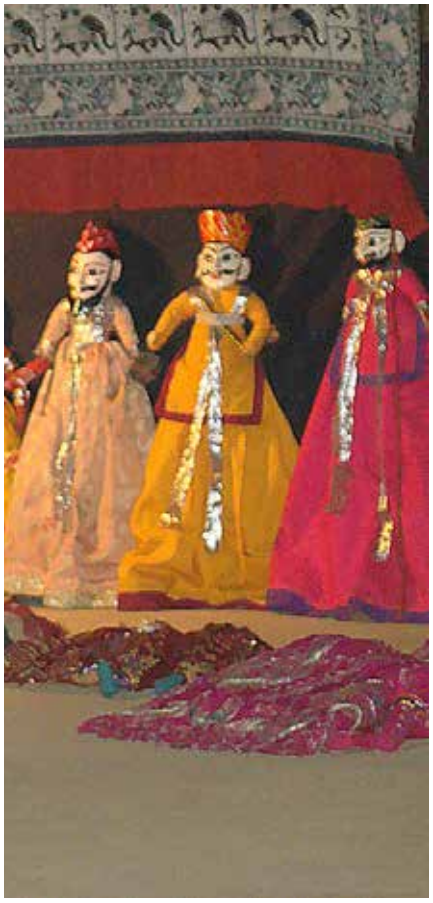
Key Areas: Dariba Kalan (Chandni Chowk), Janpath, GK M-Block Market

» **Block-Printed & Handloom Fabric:** While block printing originates from Rajasthan and Gujarat, Delhi's local artisans adapt and produce hand-block prints and natural-dyed cottons, perfect for kurtas, scarves and home décor.

Key Areas: Dilli Haat, Khadi Gramodyog Bhawan (Connaught Place), INA Market

» **Zardozi Embroidery:** A luxurious hand embroidery art using gold and silver threads, beads and sequins, traditionally used in bridal and ceremonial wear.

Key Areas: Chandni Chowk, Dilli Haat, Lajpat Nagar, Karol Bagh



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing and outdoor activities.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Extremely hot and dry, with temperatures often above 40°C. Monsoon brings greenery; fewer crowds and lower hotel prices.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Delhi is said to have been destroyed and rebuilt at least seven times throughout history,** making it one of the most continuously inhabited cities in the world, rich with layers of Mughal, Sultanate, British and modern influences - all visible in its architecture and street life.

» **The Lotus Temple** admired for its lotus-shaped architecture and serene ambiance, welcomes people of all faiths.

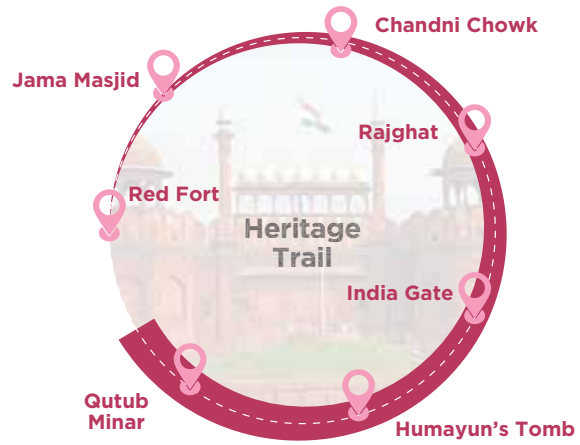
» **Delhi's Akshardham Temple holds a Guinness World Record.** It's recognised as the world's largest comprehensive Hindu temple complex, offering spiritual exhibitions, light shows and magnificent carvings.

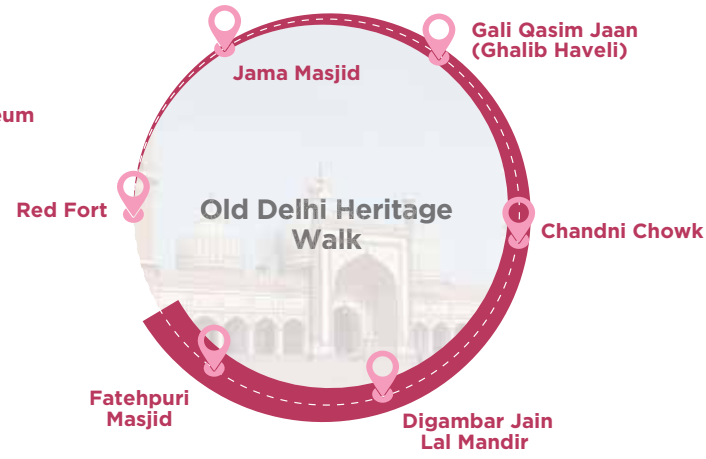
» **The Iron Pillar near Qutub Minar hasn't rusted in over 1600 years.** Made of 98% wrought iron, it's a scientific mystery and a metallurgical marvel.

» **Khari Baoli in Delhi is Asia's largest spice market.** Operating since the 17th century, it's a sensory overload with colours, aromas and trading traditions still alive today.

» **Indira Gandhi International Airport's Terminal 3 is among the largest in the world,** with art installations that reflect India's culture, making it a cultural preview for tourists arriving in the capital.

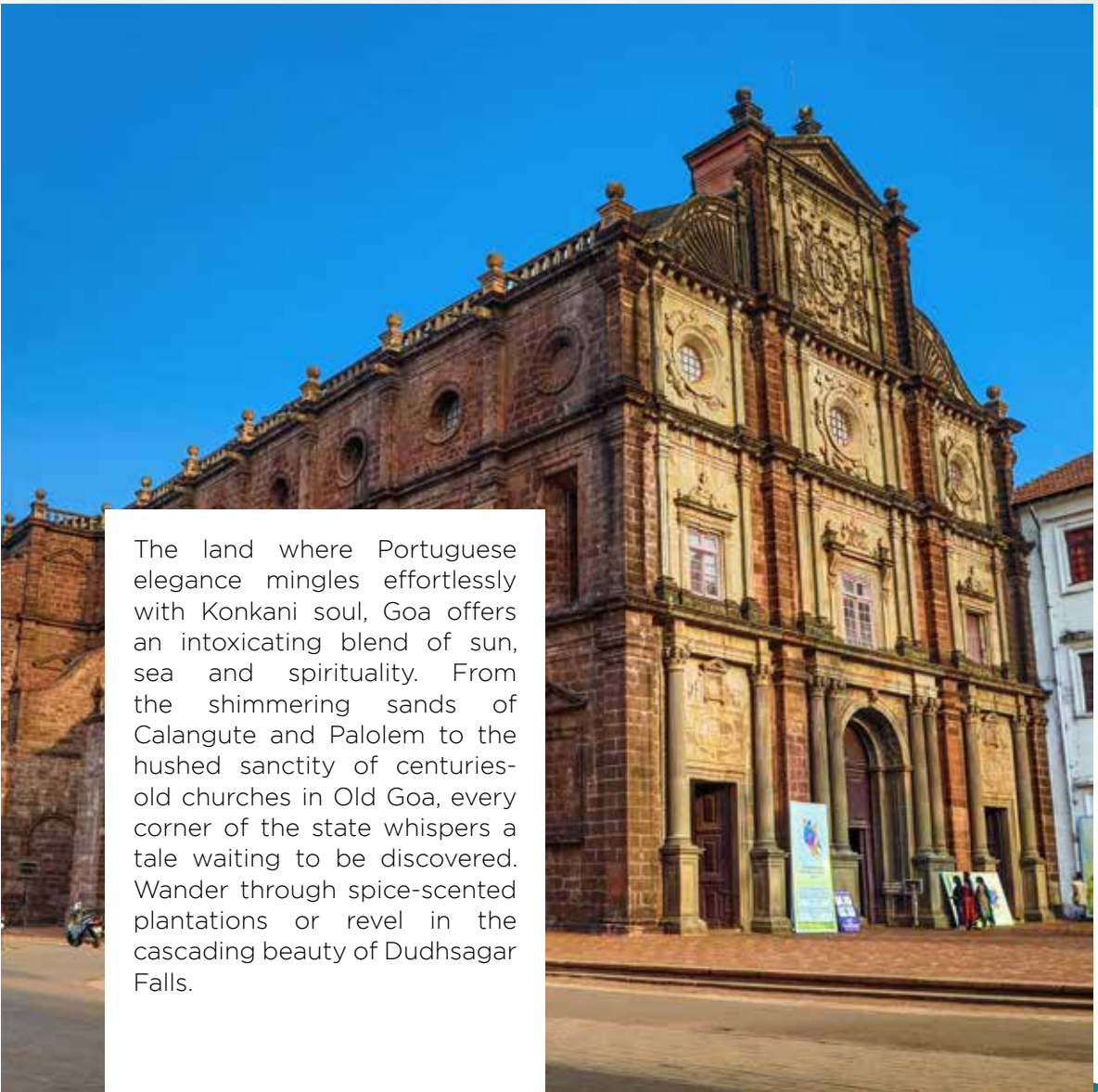
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS





Goa

Tourism



The land where Portuguese elegance mingles effortlessly with Konkani soul, Goa offers an intoxicating blend of sun, sea and spirituality. From the shimmering sands of Calangute and Palolem to the hushed sanctity of centuries-old churches in Old Goa, every corner of the state whispers a tale waiting to be discovered. Wander through spice-scented plantations or revel in the cascading beauty of Dudhsagar Falls.

Best Places to Visit

Goa provides a fascinating mix of serene natural landscapes, vibrant heritage sites and sacred pilgrimage destinations, making it an ideal spot for every type of traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **Mayem Lake (North Goa):** A tranquil freshwater lake in Bicholim perfect for day outings.

Key Activities: Boating, photography, bungee jumping, romantic picnics

» **Mollem National Park (South Goa):** A Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot and gateway to Dudhsagar Falls.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting, jeep safaris, trekking, butterfly watching

» **Vagator Beach (North Goa):** A scenic beach with red cliffs and vibrant energy near Chapora Fort.

Key Activities: Paragliding, sunset photography, nightlife

» **Calangute Beach (North Goa):** Goa's busiest beach offering golden sands and a buzzing atmosphere.

Key Activities: Parasailing, jet skiing, shopping, nightlife

» **Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary (North Goa):** Goa's smallest sanctuary, rich in flora and fauna, ideal for families.

Key Activities: Mini-zoo, botanical gardens, nature trails

» **Anjuna Beach (North Goa):** A bohemian beach with rocky shores, cafes and a bustling flea market.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Goa's charm extends beyond its famous churches and beaches - to secluded lakes, forgotten forts, quiet chapels and unexplored nature trails that showcase the state's hidden cultural and ecological richness.

NORTH GOA

» **Sinquerim Beach:** Offers calm waters, scenic fort views and opportunities for scuba diving.

» **Morjim Beach:** A quiet beach and turtle nesting site popular with Russian tourists.

» **Ashwem Beach:** A serene stretch lined with coconut palms, ideal for wellness retreats.

» **Mandrem Beach:** Known for tidal pools and birdwatching, perfect for a tranquil getaway.

» **Arambol Beach:** A bohemian beach with drum circles, cliffside paragliding and a sweet water lake.

» **Keri (Querim) Beach:** Remote and peaceful with cliff views near Tiracol Fort.

» **Dona Paula:** A scenic headland tied to romantic legends, offering panoramic views.

» **Carambolim Lake:** A birdwatcher's haven near Old Goa, especially during migratory season.

» **Batim Lake:** A serene freshwater lake surrounded by hills, ideal for early mornings.

» **Chorao Island:** A mangrove-rich island known for backwater canoe rides and birding.

» **Lamgao Caves:** Rock-cut Buddhist caves tucked in a lush, remote hillside.

» **St. Augustine Tower:** Towering ruins of a 16th-century church with a dramatic bell tower.

» **Church of Our Lady of the Mount:** A hilltop church offering panoramic views over Old Goa.

» **Arch of the Viceroys:** A ceremonial Portuguese arch dedicated to Vasco da Gama.

» **Pilar Monastery and Museum:** A quiet religious site featuring a cultural museum and hilltop views.

» **Solar Souto Maior:** A historic Portuguese manor offering glimpses of colonial life.

» **Adil Shah's Palace:** A former palace in Panaji that once housed Portuguese Viceroys.

» **Fontainhas Latin Quarter:** Heritage neighbourhood with

Portuguese-style houses and vibrant cafés.

- **Raj Bhavan:** The Governor's residence, showcasing colonial architecture and coastal heritage.
- **St. Alex Church:** A locally important church with twin towers and peaceful interiors.
- **St. Anne's Church:** A Baroque-style church celebrated for its vibrant feast and rich architecture.
- **Our Lady of the Rosary Church:** One of the oldest churches, simple yet spiritually resonant.
- **Shri Shantadurga Temple:** A prominent Goan temple symbolising peace and meditation.
- **Mangeshi Temple:** One of Goa's largest Shiva temples, with a striking seven-storey lamp tower.
- **Mahalaxmi Temple:** Dedicated to Goddess Mahalaxmi, important to Goan Hindu families.
- **Nageshi Temple:** An ancient Shiva temple with a sacred tank and deepstambha.
- **Ramnathi Temple:** A spiritual centre for Saraswat Brahmins amidst forested surroundings.
- **Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception:** An iconic whitewashed church in the heart of Panaji.
- **Church of St. Cajetan:** Modelled on St. Peter's Basilica, offering a peaceful spiritual space.
- **Safa Shahouri Masjid:** A historic 16th-century mosque with a stepped water tank.
- **Namazgah:** A hilltop Islamic prayer site with panoramic views, used during Eid.
- **Sikh Gurudwara:** Goa's main Gurudwara offering langar and prayer services.

SOUTH GOA

- **Benaulim Beach:** A calm and clean beach known for dolphin cruises and seafood.
- **Varca Beach:** An upscale and less-crowded beach ideal for peaceful family outings.
- **Cavelossim Beach:** Nestled between river and sea, known for white sands and local markets.
- **Mobor Beach:** A wide and active beach popular for watersports and adventure.
- **Majorda Beach:** A myth-linked beach associated with Lord Rama and Goan culinary traditions.
- **Agonda Beach:** A protected turtle nesting site offering solitude and starry nights.
- **Patnem Beach:** A quiet crescent

Key Activities: Flea market shopping, beach parties, sunset views

- **Baga Beach (North Goa):** A lively beach known for water sports and famous nightlife spots like Tito's.

Key Activities: Jet skiing, banana boat rides, clubbing at Tito's

- **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary (South Goa):** A serene forest sanctuary with towering trees and tranquil trails.

Key Activities: Nature walks, wildlife spotting, bird watching

- **Colva Beach (South Goa):** South Goa's oldest beach with a peaceful vibe and picturesque white sands.

Key Activities: Dolphin tours, beachside dining, morning strolls

- **Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (North Goa):** A protected forest area known for its tiger habitat and trekking routes.

Key Activities: Trekking, bird watching, photography

- **Palolem Beach (South Goa):** A palm-fringed crescent beach popular for relaxation and quiet adventures.

Key Activities: Canoeing, dolphin tours, yoga retreats

- **Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary (North Goa):** A mangrove habitat offering rich birdlife and canoeing opportunities.

Key Activities: Birdwatching, canoeing

- **Miramar Beach (North Goa):** A city beach with Mandovi River views, perfect for evening leisure.

Key Activities: Evening walks, children play area, jogging, scenic relaxation

» **Butterfly Beach (South Goa):** A secluded, cliff-lined beach only accessible by boat or trek.

Key Activities: Snorkelling, nature treks, photography

» **Chapora River & Backwaters (North Goa):** A quiet riverine retreat through mangroves ideal for water exploration.

Key Activities: Kayaking, bird watching, fishing, scenic cruises

Adventure Tourism

» **Grande Island (South Goa):** A marine hotspot near Vasco da Gama known for crystal-clear waters and rich sea life.

Key Activities: Scuba diving, snorkelling, dolphin sighting, fishing trips

» **Dudhsagar Falls Trek (South Goa):** forested trek to Goa's iconic multi-tiered falls inside Mollem National Park.

Key Activities: Forest trekking, waterfall swims, jeep safaris, photography

» **Mhadei River White-Water Rafting (Valpoi, North Goa):** Thrilling rafting experiences on Goa's wildest river during the monsoon.

Key Activities: River rafting, kayaking, nature sightseeing

» **Arambol Beach (North Goa):** A cliff-lined beach with a relaxed vibe, ideal for yoga, hikes and aerial adventure.

Key Activities: Paragliding, cliffside hiking, beach yoga retreats

» **Bhagwan Mahavir Sanctuary Jungle Trek (Mollem, South Goa):** Dense Forest treks through Goa's largest sanctuary in the Western Ghats.

beach known for yoga, wellness and relaxed vibes.

» **Galgibaga Beach:** Goa's least developed turtle beach, surrounded by untouched nature.

» **Bogmalo Beach:** A small beach close to the airport, also home to the Naval Aviation Museum.

» **Ambelim Lake:** A quiet natural reservoir with seasonal birdlife and peaceful surroundings.

» **Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary:** A lush, lesser-known forest home to rare species and the Bubble Lake.

» **Netravali Lake:** Locally called as budbudyachi or bubble lake is famous forbubbles naturally rising from the water.

» **Monte Hill Chapel:** A peaceful hilltop chapel visited during Good Friday pilgrimages.

» **Palácio do Deão:** An 18th-century Indo-Portuguese mansion restored for heritage dining and tours.

» **Menezes Braganza House:** A grand Goan mansion known for its antique furniture and private library.

» **Safai Mahal:** Ruins of a former Muslim royal residence, significant in Goa's pre-colonial history.

» **Cabo de Rama Fort:** A cliffside fort named after Lord Rama, offering dramatic ocean views.

» **Rachol Seminary and Church:** A historic seminary known for its library and colonial design.

» **Shri Damodar Temple:** A riverside temple revered by the Saraswat Brahmin community.

» **Shri Kamakshi Temple:** A hilltop Shakti shrine known for its calm atmosphere and annual festivals.

» **Shri Mahadev Temple:** A 12th-century forest temple built in basalt, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

» **Shri Chandreshwar Bhuthnath Temple:** A hilltop Shiva temple known for full moon rituals.

» **Jain Temple:** A modest but active Jain temple visited by devotees during key festivals.

» **Masjid-ul-Abrar:** A prominent mosque serving the local Muslim community with regular prayers.

» **Ruins of the Jewish Cemetery:** Historical burial ground with Hebrew-inscribed gravestones.

» **Tibetan Buddhist Monastery:** A quiet spiritual centre with Buddhist chants and meditation.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking, wildlife spotting, camping, photography

Heritage Tourism

» **Basilica of Bom Jesus (Old Goa, North Goa):** A Baroque UNESCO site housing the relics of St. Francis Xavier and colonial splendor.

» **Se Cathedral (Old Goa, North Goa):** One of the largest churches in Asia, noted for its Golden Belland majestic interiors serves as the cathedral of the Latin Church Archdiocese of Goa and Daman and a part of the World Heritage Site, Churches and convents of Goa.

» **Church of St. Francis of Assisi (Old Goa, North Goa):** Baroque interiors with a Tuscan exterior and a museum of colonial relics.

» **Fort Aguada (Candolim, North Goa):** A 17th-century Portuguese fort with a lighthouse and sweeping Arabian Sea views.

» **Chapora Fort (Vagator, North Goa):** A ruined fort made famous by Bollywood, offering panoramic sea views.

» **Reis Magos Fort (Verem, North Goa):** A restored 1551 fort now housing cultural exhibitions and local art.

» **Tiracol Fort (Keri, North Goa):** A clifftop heritage fort now functioning as a luxury hotel with a coastal church.

» **Fontainhas Latin Quarter (Panaji, North Goa):** Goa's colourful old Latin quarter with Portuguese houses, art and cafés.

» **Adil Shah's Palace (Panaji, North Goa):** A 16th-century royal residence turned cultural venue in colonial style.

» **Goa State Museum (Panaji, North Goa):** A museum chronicling Goan heritage via coins, crafts, sculptures and manuscripts.

» **Museum of Christian Art (Old Goa, North Goa):** Unique Indo-Portuguese Christian art exhibits within a historic convent.

» **Naval Aviation Museum (Bogmalo, South Goa):** India's only naval aviation museum showcasing aircraft and flying history.

» **Rachol Seminary and Church (Salcete, South Goa):** Goa's oldest seminary with theological heritage and rare manuscripts.

» **Cabo de Rama Fort (Canacona, South Goa):** A dramatic cliffside fort named after Lord Rama, blending Hindu and Portuguese legacies.

» **Arvalem Caves and Waterfall (Sanquelim, North Goa):** Ancient Buddhist caves paired with a lush seasonal waterfall.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Shanta Durga Temple (Kavale, North Goa):** A serene Indo-Portuguese style temple dedicated to Goddess Shanta Durga, symbolising harmony between Vishnu and Shiva.

» **Mangeshi Temple (Priol, North Goa):** Goa's grand Shiva temple with a distinctive lamp tower and pristine white architecture.

» **Mahalaxmi Temple (Bandivade, Ponda, North Goa):** Revered for its silver sanctum and vibrant festivals honouring the goddess of wealth and power.

» **Nageshi Temple (Bandora, North Goa):** An ancient Shiva shrine known for its sacred tank and traditional Goan temple style.

» **Ramnathi Temple (Bandivade, North Goa):** A spiritual retreat dedicated to Lord Ramnath with forested serenity and Saraswat Brahmin heritage.

» **Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception (Panaji, North Goa):** A postcard-perfect white church with grand stairways and peaceful ambience.

» **Church of St. Cajetan (Old Goa, North Goa):** A 17th-century church modelled on St. Peter's Basilica, known for its Corinthian elegance.

» **Safa Shahouri Masjid (Ponda, North Goa):** A 16th-century mosque with a large water tank, blending historic Islamic architecture and religious harmony.

» **Jama Masjid (Sanguem, South Goa):** A community mosque revered for its simple beauty and spiritual energy during Islamic festivals.

» **Namazgah (Bicholim, North Goa):** A scenic hilltop prayer hall used for special Eid prayers with panoramic views.

» **Tibetan Buddhist Monastery (Near Canacona, South Goa):** A tranquil monastic retreat offering insight into Tibetan spirituality and calm reflection.

» **Sikh Gurudwara (Betim, North Goa):** A community-focused place of Sikh worship, known for langar service and spiritual music.

» **Jain Temple (Cuncolim, South Goa):** A peaceful temple dedicated to Lord Mahavir, serving as a spiritual anchor for Goa's Jain community.

» **Ruins of the Jewish Cemetery (Cuncolim, South Goa):** A historic cemetery with Hebrew-inscribed gravestones, symbolising Goa's pluralistic past.

Culture and Cuisines

Goa's culture is a vibrant fusion of East and West, shaped by its Konkani roots and 450 years of Portuguese influence. The state's festivals brim with colour, music and community celebration, while its cuisine offers bold flavours of the coast - rich in spices, seafood and coconut.

Culture

» **Goa Carnival (Panaji/Margao/ Vasco/Mapusa – North & South Goa):** One of India's most vibrant pre-Lenten festivals, Goa Carnival features four days of floats, dancing troupes, music and street parades. Introduced during Portuguese rule, it blends Christian and folk traditions in a burst of colour.

» **Shigmo Festival (Statewide):** Goa's biggest spring festival for the Hindu community, Shigmo includes folk dances, mythological floats and temple processions. It reflects agrarian roots and is celebrated with fervour in both rural and urban areas.

» **Sunburn Festival (Vagator – North Goa):** Asia's premier electronic dance music festival, Sunburn brings international DJs and music lovers together on Goa's beaches for three days of electrifying performances and beachside revelry.

» **Christmas Celebrations (Statewide):** Goa turns magical in December with midnight masses, decorated homes and nativity scenes. Churches like the Basilica of Bom Jesus (North Goa) are illuminated for festive gatherings.

» **Sao Joao Festival (Siolim – North Goa):** Celebrated in June, this monsoon festival involves young men jumping into wells to honour St. John the Baptist. Floral headgear, music and revelry define this unique village celebration.

» **Bonderam Festival (Divar Island – North Goa):** A flag-throwing festival rooted in Portuguese-era land disputes, Bonderam is marked by colourful parades, floats and music on the scenic island of Divar. Held in the last week of August.

» **International Lusophone Festival (Panaji – North Goa):** Celebrating Goa's cultural ties with Portuguese-speaking countries, this event features music, cuisine and performances from Lusophone nations.

» **International Film Festival of India (Panaji – North Goa):** India's most prestigious film event, IFFI showcases cinema from around the globe. It attracts filmmakers, critics and cinephiles to Goa's capital every November.

» **Grape Escapade (Panaji – North Goa):** A wine and food festival organised by Goa Tourism, featuring tastings, gourmet cuisine, live music and grape stomping.

» **Food & Cultural Festival (Panaji – North Goa):** Celebrates Goa's culinary heritage and performing arts with local chefs, folk troupes and craftspeople showcasing their talent.

» **Spirit of Goa Festival (South Goa):** A celebration of Goa's indigenous brews like cashew feni and coconut toddy, along with music, food and handicraft

» **Vintage Car & Bike Festival (Panaji – North Goa):** A showcase of classic cars and motorbikes that parades through Goa's streets, attracting vintage enthusiasts and tourists alike.

» **Nomozo – No Motor Zone Day (Porvorim – North Goa):** A community initiative that converts streets into celebration zones with food stalls, music and children's games - promoting sustainable mobility.

» **Gudhi Padwa (Statewide):** Celebrated in March or April, this springtime festival marks the Maharashtrian New Year with decorative gudhis, rangoli patterns and festive foods like puran poli and shrikhand.

» **Heritage Festival (Panaji – North Goa):** Held in November, this vibrant festival pays tribute to Goa's living cultural heritage with folk dances, traditional music, local crafts and guided heritage walks through Panaji's historic precincts.

» **Feast of St. Francis Xavier (Old Goa – North Goa):** Celebrated in December, this is Goa's most significant Christian pilgrimage, drawing thousands to the Basilica of Bom Jesus to venerate the relics of the beloved saint.

» **Colva Fama (Colva – South Goa):** Taking place in October or November, this feast honours Infant Jesus with a grand religious procession of a wax effigy and draws large congregations to Colva Church.

» **Tripurari Purnima Boat Festival (Valpoi – North Goa):** Occurring in November, this unique riverbank festival features elaborately decorated boats, devotional singing and floating oil lamps on the Valpoi River under the full moon.

» **Yatra of Shri Shantadurga Kunkallikarin (Fatorpa – South Goa):** Celebrated in January or February, this temple yatra features vibrant processions and devotional activities in honour of Goddess Shantadurga at Fatorpa.

» **Chikhal Kalo (Marcel – North Goa):** This playful and sacred mud festival is held in July during the monsoon season, with villagers re-enacting Lord Krishna's childhood by wrestling and playing games in soaked fields.

» **Sangodd Festival (Riverside Villages – North Goa):** Celebrated in June, fisherfolk honour Saints Peter and Paul by decorating boats and sailing them in colourful river processions accompanied by music and prayers.

» **Dattatreya Jayanti (Temples across Goa):** Falling in December, this Hindu festival celebrates the birth of Lord Dattatreya with spiritual gatherings, storytelling and offerings at temples throughout the state.

» **Rainforest Challenge (Quepem–Sanguem belt – South Goa):** Held during the July monsoon, this is India's most extreme off-road motorsport event, where participants tackle muddy trails, river crossings and dense forests.

» **Ironman Triathlon (Panaji – North Goa):** Organised between October and November, this internationally recognised endurance race involves open-water swimming, long-distance cycling and a run through scenic Goan terrain.

» **Royal Enfield Rider Mania (Vagator – North Goa):** Taking place in November, this festival draws motorcycle enthusiasts from across India for drag races, custom builds, stunt shows and beach concerts.

» **India Bike Week (Arpora/ Vagator – North Goa):** Hosted in December, this is Asia's largest biker gathering featuring motor expos, live music, stunt arenas and biking culture showcases.

» **Mango Festival (Panaji – North Goa):** Celebrated in May, this summer event honours Goa's famous mango varieties such as Mancurad and Musarad, with tastings, contests and horticultural displays.

Cuisines

» **Goan Fish Curry Rice:** The soul of every Goan household, this tangy, spicy coconut-based curry made with mackerel or kingfish is best enjoyed with steamed rice and seasonal pickle.

» **Prawn Balchão:** A fiery, vinegary prawn pickle dish of Portuguese origin, often preserved in jars and eaten with poi (Goan bread).

» **Chicken Cafreal:** Introduced by African-Portuguese settlers, this green masala chicken preparation is marinated with coriander, chillies and spices, then grilled to perfection.

» **Xacuti:** A complex and aromatic curry made with roasted coconut, poppy seeds and spices - typically cooked with chicken, lamb, or mushrooms.

» **Sorpotel:** A Catholic delicacy made from pork and offal, simmered in vinegar and spice. It is a festive dish served with sannas (steamed rice cakes) during Christmas and Easter.

» **Bebinca:** Goa's iconic multi-layered dessert made from coconut milk, sugar, ghee and eggs (slow-cooked to golden perfection), especially popular during Christmas.

» **Doce and Dodol:** Traditional Goan sweets made with coconut, jaggery and rice flour - served during weddings, feasts and festive celebrations.

» **Rava-Fried Kingfish:** A beach favourite, kingfish fillets are coated with semolina and spices before being shallow-fried until crisp and golden.

» **Mussels Rawa Fry:** Crunchy and peppery mussels fried with semolina crust, served hot with lemon wedges and tangy chutneys.

» **Feni:** Goa's traditional spirit distilled from either cashew apple or coconut sap. Cashew feni, harvested in summer, is stronger, while coconut feni is more mellow and aromatic.

» **Urrak:** A seasonal summer drink made from the first distillation of cashew fruits. Often served with lime, soda and salt for a refreshing punch during hot months.

» **Poi and Pao:** Breads brought by the Portuguese, now a Goan staple. Poi is a whole wheat, slightly sour bun, while Pao is softer and ideal with curries.

» **Ros Omelette:** A popular Goan street snack - a fluffy omelette served with spicy coconut gravy (ros) and Goan bread.

» **Samarachi Kodi:** A dry prawn curry made with tamarind, chillies and coconut, cooked during the monsoons when fresh fish is scarce.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Goa's handicrafts reflect its vibrant coastal culture and artistic heritage, shaped by both local traditions and colonial influences. Using natural materials artisans create unique pieces that are both decorative and functional.

» **Coconut Shell Craft:** Decorative items like bowls, lamps and jewellery boxes are skillfully carved from coconut shells and polished with natural sheen.

Key Areas: Bicholim; Mapusa; Canacona

» **Sea Shell Art:** Mirrors, chandeliers and keepsakes are crafted from sea shells, reflecting Goa's coastal charm and marine inspiration.

Key Areas: Calangute; Anjuna; Colva

» **Terracotta and Clay Pottery:** Red clay is moulded into traditional lamps, pots and figurines, often adorned with folk motifs and used during festivals.

Key Areas: Bicholim; Pernem

» **Brassware:** Artisans produce oil lamps, bells and puja thalis using age-old metal-casting techniques. These items are commonly seen in local temples and homes.

Key Areas: Mapusa; Panaji

» **Bamboo and Cane Work:** Handmade baskets, mats, trays and furniture are crafted from bamboo and cane using eco-friendly processes.

Key Areas: Sattari; Valpoi

» **Azulejos Tiles:** Hand-painted ceramic tiles bearing floral, religious, or landscape designs - inspired by Portuguese azulejos - are used for home décor and signage.

Key Areas: Panaji; Old Goa

» **Kunbi Sarees:** Traditionally worn by Goa's Kunbi tribal women, these cotton sarees with red borders and checked patterns have seen a cultural revival.

Key Areas: Salcete; Quepem

» **Embroidered Mando Costumes:** Colourful shawls and garments used in traditional Goan dances like the mando, showcasing intricate needlework and folk aesthetics.

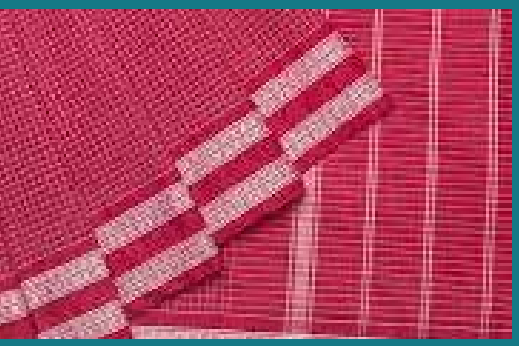
Key Areas: Ponda; Margao

» **Handmade Paper Craft:** Artisans produce eco-friendly paper products such as notebooks, lampshades and envelopes, often sold at craft fairs.

Key Areas: Sanquelim; Pilerne

» **Wood Carving:** Goa's churches and temples feature beautifully carved wooden altars, doors and antique furniture reflecting Portuguese and local influences.

Key Areas: Salcete; Tiswadi



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **November to March** (Clear blue skies, mild sunshine and a cool sea breeze. This period coincides with Goa's festive calendar, including Christmas, New Year's Eve, Carnival and music festivals like sunburn.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to October** (Hot, humid and often uncomfortable. Heavy rainfall, dramatic skies and mist-covered landscape, Sea is rough so water sports are largely suspended.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Goa is India's smallest state** - Covering around 1,429 sq miles but boasting **high level per-capita income** in the country.

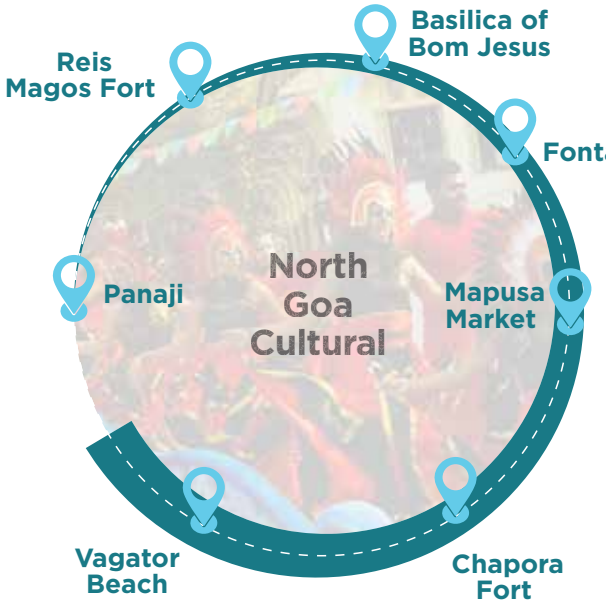
» **Over a third of Goa is lush forest,** including biodiversity-rich tracts of the Western Ghats, home to rare wildlife like sloth bears, slender lorises and giant squirrels.

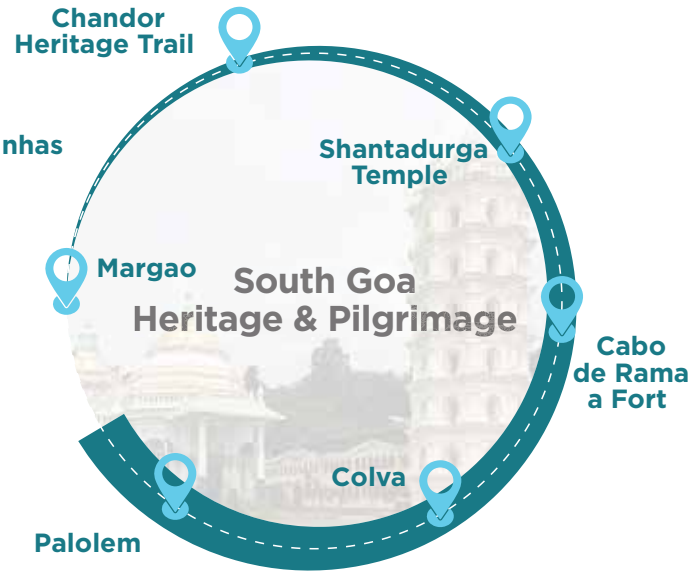
» **Goa hosts the non-decomposed body of St. Francis Xavier**, displayed in the 17th-century world heritage site of Basilica of Bom Jesus - an enduring marvel since the 16th century.

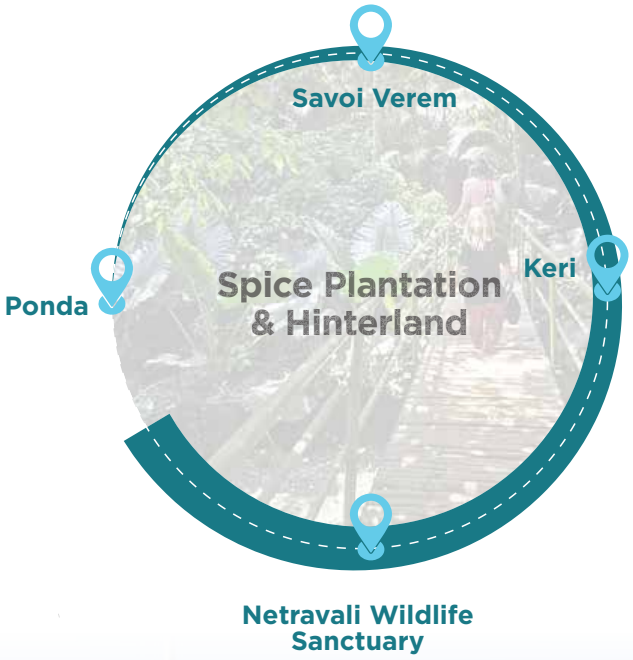
» **It's home to Asia's first printing press and medical school**, both established during Portuguese rule -printing press in Old Goa circa 1556 and medical college in Panaji in the 19th century.

» **Its beaches are crucial turtle sanctuaries**, especially for Olive Ridley sea turtles nesting on Morjim, Ashvem, Galgibaga and Agonda between October and March.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS







Gujarat

Tourism

Gujarat, located on the western coast of India, is a vibrant state where tradition meets modernity amidst striking landscapes. With its expansive salt deserts, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, historic temples, thriving handicrafts and the longest mainland coastline in India, Gujarat offers a diverse travel experience. From the majestic Gir lions to the architectural grandeur of stepwells and forts, every corner tells a story steeped in heritage and natural beauty. Rich festivals, spiritual landmarks and eco-tourism spots make Gujarat a perfect blend of culture, adventure and serenity, attracting travelers throughout the year.

Best Places to Visit

Gujarat is renowned for its heritage cities, spiritual sites and natural wonders. Popular destinations include the white sands of the Rann of Kutch, the sacred town of Dwarka and the architectural marvels of Ahmedabad. Tourists also flock to Gir National Park, Somnath Temple and the Statue of Unity for immersive cultural and scenic experiences.

Nature Tourism

» **Rann of Kutch (Kutch):** This vast white salt desert stretches to the horizon and transforms into a cultural spectacle during the Rann Utsav. It offers panoramic sunsetviews and a surreal landscape perfect for nature lovers. Beat experienced from November to February.

Key Activities: Watching moonlit salt flats; attending Rann Utsav; camel cart rides

» **Purna Wildlife Sanctuary (Dang):** A dense forest area known for rich flora and tribal settlements, this sanctuary is perfect for eco-tourism and quiet forest explorations.

Key Activities: Nature camping; jungle treks

» **Saputara (Dang):** Gujarat's hill station, Saputara is nestled in the Sahyadri range and features lush forests, waterfalls and lakes, offering a cool retreat for travellers.

Key Activities: Boating in Saputara Lake; visit Echo Point, Sunset Point, Governor Hill; walking through rose and step gardens; nature photography

» **Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (Ahmedabad):** A serene wetland attracting thousands of migratory birds, especially during winter, making it a haven for birdwatchers and nature photographers.

Key Activities: Birdwatching during early mornings; boat rides in the lake; wetland photography

» **Gir National Park (Junagadh):** The only natural habitat of Asiatic lions, Gir's dry deciduous forests are rich in wildlife diversity and safari experiences.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond the renowned temples and heritage sites, Gujarat is home to numerous offbeat destinations that offer history, scenic beauty and cultural intrigue without the crowds. These lesser-known spots provide peaceful alternatives to mainstream tourism, ideal for curious travellers seeking hidden gems. From quiet stepwells to tribal villages and salt flats, these places promise an enriching yet underexplored experience.

KUTCH

» **Kalo Dungar:** Also known as the Black Hill, this is the highest point in Kutch offering panoramic views of the Great Rann and the India-Pakistan border. Its magnetic hill illusion and hilltop Dattatreya temple add intrigue.

» **Nirona Village:** A craft-rich village where visitors can explore Rogan art, copper bell making and lacquer work by traditional artisans. The community-based workshops offer immersive cultural experiences.

» **Mandvi Beachfront Wind Farms:** A scenic stretch along the Arabian Sea lined with tall windmills that contrast beautifully with the coast, providing a quiet space for reflection and photography.

» **Madhapur Village:** Madhapar is famous as Asia's richest village due to massive bank deposits from its large NRI population working abroad. Madhapur changes the notions of rural living in India with impressive homes and excellent local infrastructure.

PANCHMAHAL

» **Kevada Masjid:** A hidden gem near Champaner, this mosque features ornate minarets and lotus-motif domes surrounded by gardens. It represents the artistic flourish of Indo-Islamic architecture.

» **Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary:** A peaceful forest area known for its green cover and tribal art (Pithora paintings). Though less visited than other parks, it offers a raw and tranquil wilderness experience.

DANG

» **Girmal Waterfall:** Nestled deep within the forested region of Dang, this seasonal waterfall is one of Gujarat's tallest and offers a secluded spot for monsoon travel.

» **Saputara Tribal Museum:** A modest museum showcasing the lifestyle, tools and crafts of the local Dang tribes. It provides cultural context to visitors exploring the Saputara hill region.

BOTAD

» **Hanuman Dham:** A peaceful temple complex surrounded by nature, attracting pilgrims and tourists alike for its calm ambience and open design.

BHAVNAGAR

» **Nishkalank Mahadev Temple:** A little-known spiritual site in Koliyak Beach accessible only during low tide. This temple stands in the sea and is believed to have been established by the Pandavas.

ARAVALLI

» **Polo Forest:** The remnants of a hidden city that once flourished under the Parihar dynasty. The site includes 15th-century Jain and Hindu temples nestled within thick forests and riverbanks.

» **Bhavaneshwari Temple Ruins:** Ancient temple ruins located in a remote area near Polo Forest, known for their serene surroundings and fragmented stone carvings.

VADODARA

» **Ajwa Reservoir Gardens:** A lesser-known landscaped garden with fountains near the Ajwa dam, built by the Gaekwad rulers to emulate Mysore's Brindavan Gardens.

» **Kayavarohan:** An ancient pilgrimage site believed to be the birthplace of Lakulisha, the 28th incarnation of Lord Shiva. The area has archaeological significance and quiet village charm.

BANASKANTHA

» **Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary:** A peaceful conservation zone home to sloth bears, leopards and hyenas. It is ideal for offbeat wildlife watchers and nature lovers.

» **Ambaji Gabbar Hill Cave Trail:** A spiritual trekking route behind Ambaji Temple leading to small caves and natural rock formations. The trail is quiet and rarely visited by tourists.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris; lion spotting; guided forest trails

» **Thol Lake (Mehsana):** A man-made freshwater lake surrounded by marshlands and tall grass, Thol is an important bird area ideal for tranquil nature visits.

Key Activities: Morning birdwatching; nature walks along the lake; peaceful picnics

» **Wilson Hills (Valsad):** A lesser-known hill station, offering misty views, cool climate and lush valleys that change hues with the seasons.

Key Activities: Scenic drives; valley viewpoint visits; light hiking

» **Marine National Park (Devbhumi Dwarka):** India's first marine park, this Gulf of Kutch reserve is home to coral reefs, mangroves and rare aquatic species.

Key Activities: Boat safaris to coral islands; exploring tide pools; spotting marine life

» **Statue of Unity:** World's tallest statue at 182 metres, built in honour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India. Located at Kevadia, it stands on Sadhu Bet overlooking the Narmada River and Sardar Sarovar Dam, with the Satpura–Vindhyachal hills as its backdrop.

Key Activities: Witness Light and Sound show; Tour of Valley of Flowers; Visit Sardar Sarovar Dam, Cactus Garden; Experience Jungle Safari, Dino Trail; White Water Rafting on Narmada River

» **Velavadar Blackbuck National Park:** Established in 1976, this 34 sq km park is home for over 1800 blackbucks, alongside blue bulls. wolves and birds such as wintering harriers from Siberia. There are over 120 species of birds that can be found in the park and around.

Key Activities: Guided trails early in the morning; blackbuck spotting; bird watching

Adventure Tourism

» **Paragliding at Pavagadh Hills (Panchmahal):** With elevated

take-off points and panoramic valley views, Pavagadh Hills offer seasonal paragliding opportunities ideal for thrill-seekers.

Key Activities: Tandem paragliding with instructors; aerial photography; gliding over temple peaks

» **Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (Narmada):** Though known for its biodiversity, this sanctuary also offers adventurous jungle trails and eco-tourism campsites.

Key Activities: Trekking through rugged terrain; night jungle stay; spotting wild flora and fauna

» **Timber Trail Zipline at Zar (Dahod):** A lesser-known forested destination, Zar village features an eco-tourism zipline built across dense timberlands.

Key Activities: Ziplining through forest canopies; forest hiking; eco-camp experience

» **Bakor Eco Campsite (Mahisagar):** Located near Kaleshwari temples, Bakor campsite is an emerging hotspot for soft adventure tourism.

Key Activities: Rock climbing on natural formations; rappelling on cliffs; forest camping

Heritage Tourism

» **Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (Panchmahal):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this park showcases a fusion of Hindu and Islamic architecture from the 8th to 14th centuries, set amid a dramatic hilltop landscape. The site includes stepwells, mosques, palaces and ancient temples.

» **Lakhpat Fort (Kutch):** A vast, fortified town at the edge of the Great Rann, Lakhpat once flourished as a trading post. The site now stands as a haunting relic with imposing walls, ancient tombs and spiritual connections.

» **Sun Temple, Modhera (Mehsana):** Built in the 11th century by King Bhima I, this temple dedicated to Surya features intricate carvings, a grand stepwell and architectural precision that aligns with the sun's movement.

» **Uparkot Fort (Junagadh):** A massive fortress dating back 2,300 years, Uparkot features Buddhist caves, ancient stepwells and ramparts that offer views of Girnar hills and the city of Junagadh.

» **Sarkhej Roza (Ahmedabad):** Often referred to as the "Acropolis of Ahmedabad", this architectural complex of tombs, palaces and a mosque exemplify Indo-Islamic design developed during the Gujarat Sultanate.

» **Vijay Vilas Palace (Kutch):** A stunning Indo-European style summer palace overlooking the Arabian Sea, once home to the Maharajas of Kutch. It is known for its intricate latticework and royal balconies.

» **Lakshmi Vilas Palace (Vadodara):** Built in 1890 by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, this grand Indo-Saracenic palace is the largest private residence in the world. Still home to Vadodara's royal family, it is renowned for its opulent interiors, fine artworks, and exceptional collection of arms and artefacts.

» **World Heritage City of Ahmedabad:** India's first UNESCO World Heritage City, inscribed in 2017, recognized for its historic walled city featuring a unique blend of Hindu, Islamic and Jain architectural styles. Key Monuments include the Jama Masjid, Sidi Saiyyed Mosque, Bhadra Fort and stepwells.

» **Dandi Kutir (Gandhinagar):** India's largest and only experiential museum dedicated entirely to the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Built in the shape of a conical structure, designed as a symbolic salt mound, commemorating Gandhiji's historic Dandi March of 1930.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Somnath Temple (Gir Somnath):** One of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, Somnath is a sacred pilgrimage site with a seaside backdrop. The temple has been rebuilt several times, standing today as a symbol of spiritual resilience.

» **Dwarkadhish Temple (Devbhumi Dwarka):** An important Char Dham pilgrimage site dedicated to Lord Krishna, this temple is believed to be over 2,000 years old and is located on the sacred Gomti creek.

» **Ambaji Temple (Banaskantha):** A revered Shakti Peetha, Ambaji Temple is dedicated to Goddess Amba and draws devotees from all over India during the annual Bhadra Purnima fair.

» **Shamlaji Temple (Aravalli):** Located on the banks of the Meshwo River, this temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu features beautiful white sandstone architecture and attracts pilgrims especially during the Kartik fair.

» **Palitana Temples (Bhavnagar):** Considered the most sacred pilgrimage site for Jains, the Shatrunjaya hills are dotted with more than 800 intricately carved marble temples.

» **Bala Hanuman Temple (Jamnagar):** Known for its continuous chanting of the "Ram Dhun" since 1964, this temple holds a Guinness World Record and is revered for its spiritual atmosphere.

» **Mahudi Jain Temple (Gandhinagar):** A unique Jain pilgrimage site where devotees offer sukhdi as prasad. It is dedicated to Ghantakarna Mahavir and is visited for both rituals and relief from fear or illness.

Culture and Cuisines

Gujarat's culture reflects a vibrant mix of folk traditions, tribal artistry, colourful festivals and centuries-old customs. The cuisine is equally diverse, ranging from savoury snacks to rich vegetarian thalis, often featuring local ingredients and sweet-spicy contrasts. Together, they provide tourists with an immersive cultural experience rooted in warmth, celebration and flavour.

Culture

» **Vautha Fair (Ahmedabad):** A rural livestock and cultural fair held at the confluence of seven rivers. It features cattle trading, folk arts and riverside camping, giving visitors a glimpse of rustic Gujarat.

» **Navratri Festival (Ahmedabad):** Gujarat's most iconic celebration, featuring nine nights of Garba dance, folk music and traditional attire. It attracts thousands of tourists seeking a vibrant cultural spectacle with deep spiritual roots.

» **Rann Utsav (Kutch):** A white desert festival that celebrates the cultural heritage of Kutch with folk dances, handicrafts, camel rides and moonlit desert stays. A once-in-a-lifetime tourism event held from November to February.

» **Tarnetar Fair (Surendranagar):** A tribal matchmaking festival rooted in legend, featuring traditional costumes, folk music and stalls. Its colourful atmosphere and cultural performances attract both locals and international visitors.

» **Bhavnath Mahadev Mela (Junagadh):** Held during Mahashivratri near the Girnar Hills, this fair features Naga sadhus, holy processions and local rituals, offering tourists a spiritual and mystic experience.

» **Modhera Dance Festival (Mehsana):** A classical dance celebration held at the Sun Temple of Modhera, where dancers perform under moonlight. The ancient temple backdrop creates a surreal cultural ambience.

Cuisines

» **Gujarati Thali:** A grand platter consisting of roti, rice, dal, kadhi, vegetables, pickles and sweets. It offers a complete taste of Gujarat's diverse flavours in one fulfilling meal.

» **Dhokla:** A light, steamed savoury cake made from fermented chickpea flour. Often eaten as a snack or breakfast, it is known for its spongy texture and tangy-sweet taste.

» **Thepla:** A spiced flatbread made using wheat flour and fenugreek leaves, usually served with pickle and yoghurt. It is a favourite travel snack due to its long shelf life.

» **Undhiyu:** A winter delicacy made by slow-cooking mixed vegetables and spices in earthen pots. It is traditionally associated with the Uttarayan festival.

» **Fafda-Jalebi:** A crispy chickpea flour snack paired with syrupy jalebi, often eaten during festivals or as a weekend treat. The contrast of sweet and salty is iconic in Gujarati cuisine.

» **Handvo:** A savoury vegetable cake made from fermented batter, often loaded with bottle gourd and tempered with mustard seeds. It is a healthy and filling option.

» **Khandvi:** Thin, rolled gram flour sheets seasoned with mustard and coconut. Known for its delicate texture and subtle taste, it is a staple in Gujarati households.

» **Shrikhand:** A creamy dessert made from strained curd and flavoured with cardamom or saffron. It is served chilled and often eaten with puris during festive meals.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Gujarat is a treasure trove of traditional textiles and handcrafted art, with vibrant techniques passed down through generations. From intricately embroidered fabrics to eco-friendly handicrafts made from wood, clay and metal, the state offers an exceptional blend of aesthetic charm and cultural legacy. Tourists can explore bustling craft villages and artisan workshops that showcase Gujarat's rich artistic heritage.

» **Bandhani:** A centuries-old tie-and-dye technique that produces vibrant patterns on fabrics using tiny knots. These colourful fabrics are used in dupattas, turbans and sarees, often worn during festivals and weddings.

Key areas: Jamnagar; Rajkot; Bhuj; Mandvi

» **Patola Silk:** A double ikat silk weave known for its intricate geometric designs and vibrant colours. Woven with precision, Patola sarees are considered a symbol of luxury and tradition.

Key areas: Patan

» **Ajrakh Block Printing:** A resist-dyeing technique using natural dyes and hand-carved wooden blocks to create symmetrical patterns. The process is elaborate and eco-friendly, rooted in ancient craftsmanship.

Key areas: Dhamadka; Ajrakhpur; Bhuj

» **Applique Work:** A vibrant textile art using different patches of fabric in various colours and patterns. Commonly seen on vibrant quilts, wall hangings and linen.

Key areas: Saurashtra; Banaskantha; Patan; Kutch

» **Kutch Embroidery:** Characterised by bright colours, mirror work and intricate thread patterns, this embroidery is commonly seen on garments, bags and wall hangings. Each stitch reflects the unique identity of its tribal origin.

Key areas: Bhuj; Hodka; Dhordo

» **Tangaliya Weaving:** A rare handloom art that involves weaving dots of contrasting thread into geometric patterns. Traditionally made by the Dangasia community, these shawls are both warm and visually striking.

Key areas: Surendranagar; Wadhwan

» **Rogan Art:** A unique painting technique using castor oil-based paint applied with a metal stylus on fabric. This delicate art form, once dying, is now preserved by a single family in India.

Key areas: Nirona (Kutch)

» **Terracotta Pottery:** Crafted from locally sourced clay, terracotta items include figurines, pots and decorative lamps, known for their earthy tones and rustic charm.

Key areas: Gundiyali; Than; Morbi

» **Wooden Lacquer Work:** Brightly coloured toys, utensils and home décor items created using a spinning process and coloured lacquer. These items are popular for their glossy finish and folk appeal.

Key areas: Sankheda; Vadodara

» **Zari Work:** Gold and silver threads are woven into fabrics to create ornate borders and motifs. Commonly seen on sarees and wedding attire, this art reflects regal elegance.

Key areas: Surat; Ahmedabad

» **Metal Bell Craft:** Handmade iron and copper bells created without welding, producing distinct melodious sounds. Originally used for cattle identification, these bells now serve as ethnic home décor.

Key areas: Nirona; Bhuj

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather; ideal for festivals, safaris & desert vistas.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot but manageable; fewer crowds; great for budget travel, Hottest time of the year, with temperatures frequently rising above 40° C.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Gir National Park** is the **only place in the world** outside Africa where **Asiatic lions** can be seen in the wild, making Gujarat a unique wildlife destination.

» The **Rani ki Vav** in Patan is a **UNESCO World Heritage** Site built as an inverted temple, known for its seven levels of intricate carvings and perfect water conservation design.

» **Champaner- Pavagadh Archaeological Park** is India's **only complete and untouched Islamic pre-Mughal city,** preserved with mosques, temples and fortifications amid scenic hills.

» The **White Rann of Kutch** transforms into a surreal salt desert under the full moon and becomes the site of the grand **Rann Utsav,** attracting thousands of international tourists each year.

» **Modhera Sun Temple** hosts an annual **dance festival** that illuminates the 11th-century monument with classical performances under the stars.

» Gujarat's **Indroda Dinosaur and Fossil Park** is often dubbed India's **Jurassic Park,** showcasing real fossilised dinosaur eggs and life-size replicas in Gandhinagar.

» The **Statue of Unity** near Kevadia is the **tallest statue in the world,** offering panoramic views, laser shows and riverfront activities for a complete tourism experience.

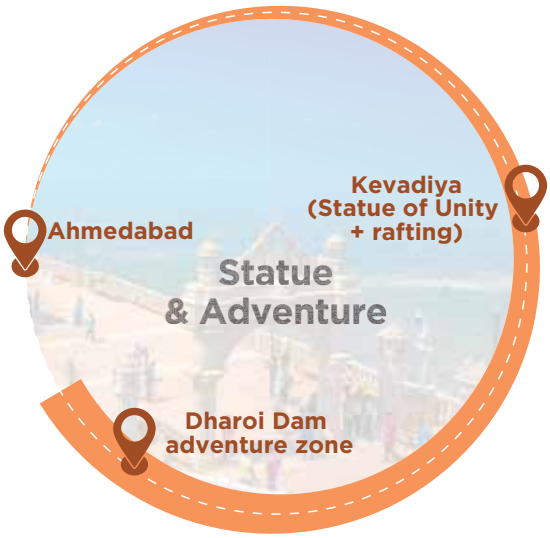
» **Lakhpat Fort** near the Indo-Pak border is **a ghost town** with ruins, Sufi shrines and panoramic desert views, offering historical depth with offbeat adventure.

» The ancient town of **Dholavira**, part of the **Harappan Civilisation**, is now a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, providing a fascinating glimpse into urban planning 4,500 years ago.

» **Narendra Modi Stadium** is the largest in India, in terms of seating capacity.

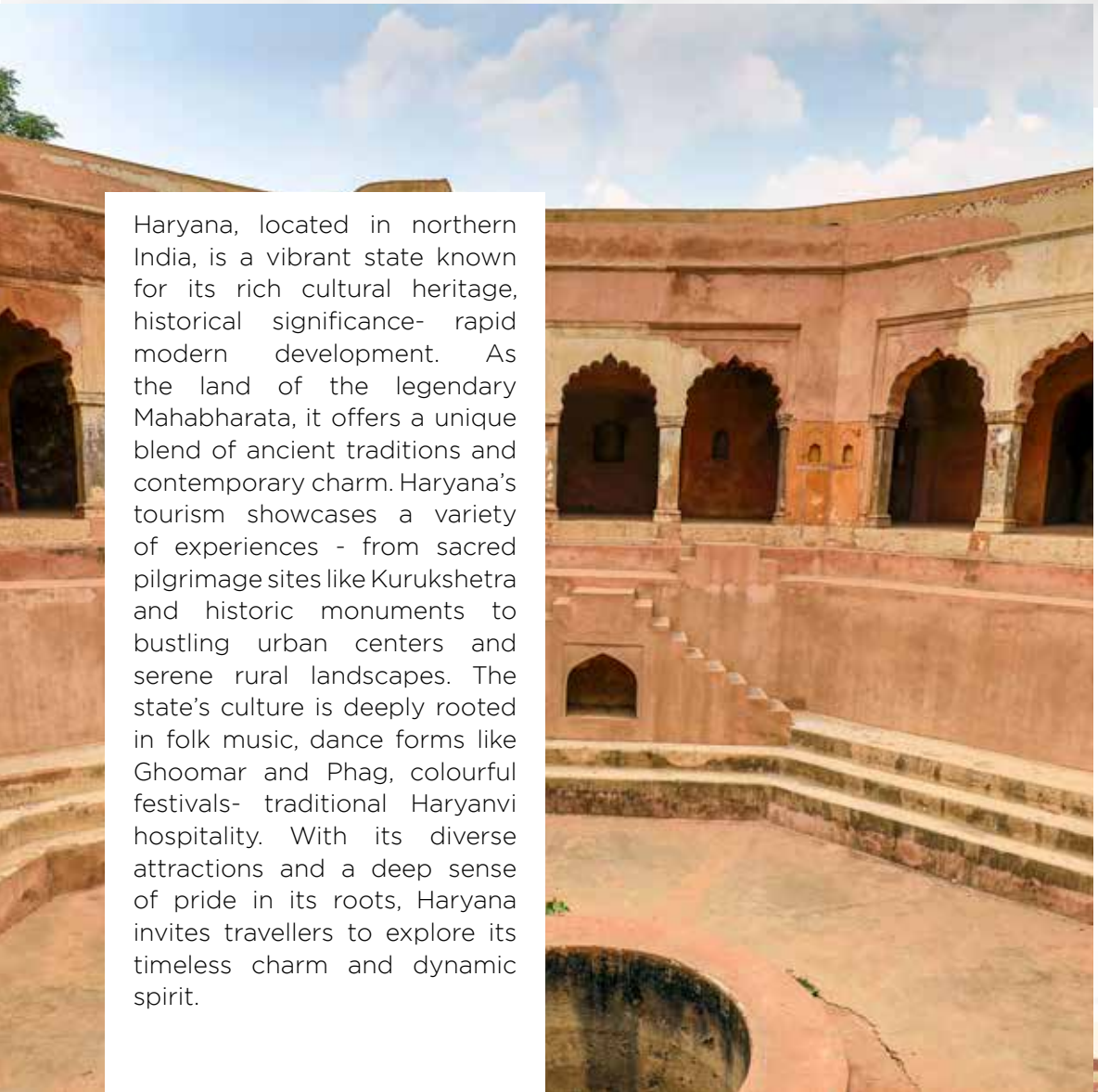
» **Porbandar** is famous primarily as the **birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi**, the Father of the Nation, earning it the "White City" nickname.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Haryana

Tourism



Haryana, located in northern India, is a vibrant state known for its rich cultural heritage, historical significance- rapid modern development. As the land of the legendary Mahabharata, it offers a unique blend of ancient traditions and contemporary charm. Haryana's tourism showcases a variety of experiences - from sacred pilgrimage sites like Kurukshetra and historic monuments to bustling urban centers and serene rural landscapes. The state's culture is deeply rooted in folk music, dance forms like Ghoomar and Phag, colourful festivals- traditional Haryanvi hospitality. With its diverse attractions and a deep sense of pride in its roots, Haryana invites travellers to explore its timeless charm and dynamic spirit.

Best Places to Visit

Haryana offers a wide range of tourist destinations that reflect its historical, cultural- natural richness. From the sacred city of Kurukshetra, where the epic Mahabharata was believed to be written, to the tranquil lakes of Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary and the heritage charm of Pinjore Gardens, the state has something for every traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **Sultanpur National Park (Gurugram):** A famous bird sanctuary and wetland ecosystem, especially known for migratory birds.

Key Activities: Bird watching, Nature photography, Walking on eco-trails, Visiting the interpretation center

» **Morni Hills (Panchkula):** The only hill station in Haryana, nestled in the Shivalik range with lush greenery and lakes.

Key Activities: Trekking and nature walks, Boating in Morni and Tikkar Tal lakes, Bird watching, Adventure activities like zip-lining and camping

» **Kalesar National Park (Yamunanagar):** A dense forest region in the Shivalik foothills rich in flora and fauna, including leopards and elephants.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris and guided nature walks, Wildlife photography, Bird watching

» **Bir Shikargah Wildlife Sanctuary (Panchkula):** A protected area with rich biodiversity, formerly used as a hunting ground by royal families.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting, Nature treks, Picnics and eco-tourism

» **Chhilchhila Wildlife Sanctuary (Kurukshetra):** A wetland sanctuary ideal for bird watching, especially during the migratory season.

Key Activities: Spotting waterfowl and migratory birds, Photography and nature trails

» **Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary (Jhajjar):** A Ramsar site and

Lesser-Known Attractions

Haryana is home not only to well-known historical and spiritual sites but also to several lesser-known attractions that offer unique glimpses into its rich cultural and natural heritage.

HISAR

» **Rakhigarhi:** One of the largest known sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation, revealing ancient urban life.

» **Lat Ki Masjid:** A mosque known for its unique iron pillar and Indo-Islamic carvings.

MAHENDRAGARH

» **Dhosi Hill:** A dormant volcano linked to Vedic sages and ancient Ayurvedic practices.

» **Jal Mahal, Narnaul:** A Mughal-style water palace with stunning symmetry and historical charm.

KAITHAL

» **Kapil Muni Tirth:** A spiritual site associated with ancient sage Kapil and his meditative practices.

» **Kaithal Fort:** An underrated historic fort with layers of medieval architectural influence.

KARNAL

» **Sita Mai Temple:** A rare temple dedicated to Sita, believed to mark her descent into the earth.

» **Karnal Cantonment Church Tower:** A British-era church ruin, now a peaceful heritage monument.

PANCHKULA

» **Tikkar Tal:** Twin lakes set amidst hills, ideal for peaceful nature retreats.

PANIPAT

» **Panipat Museum:** A quiet museum narrating the legendary battles of Panipat through exhibits.

BHIWANI

» **Mitathal:** An archaeological site offering insights into early Harappan settlement patterns.

one of the largest wetlands in Haryana, crucial for migratory birds.

Key Activities: Bird watching, Boating, Eco-trails and environmental education

» **Nahar Wildlife Sanctuary (Rewari):** A dense forest area that serves as a green haven for various wildlife species.

Key Activities: Forest trekking, Bird and wildlife watching, Eco-tourism exploration

» **Aravalli Biodiversity Park (Gurugram):** A restored green zone in the Aravalli hills promoting native flora and fauna conservation.

Key Activities: Walking, jogging- cycling trails, Nature interpretation programmes, Educational eco-tours

» **Yadavindra Gardens (Panchkula):** A historic Mughal-style terraced garden with scenic landscapes, fountains- pavilions.

Key Activities: Leisure walks and photography, Attending the Pinjore Heritage Festival, Picnic and light-and-sound shows

» **Adi Badri (Yamunanagar):** A sacred and eco-spiritual destination located at the foothills of the Shivalik Hills, believed to be the origin of the Saraswati River.

Key Activities: Visiting temples and the Saraswati Kund, Nature walks and spiritual treks, Exploring the nearby Adi Badri Forest Reserve

» **Chuharpur Herbal Park (Yamunanagar):** A government- established park aimed at conserving and promoting awareness of medicinal plants and herbs.

Key Activities: Guided tours of herbal plant sections, Educational visits on Ayurveda and traditional medicine, Nature trails through curated herbal gardens, Workshops on herbal remedies and plantation

Adventure Tourism

» **Damdama Lake (Gurugram):** A picturesque lake surrounded by the Aravalli Hills, ideal for a variety of outdoor and water-based adventures.

Key Activities: Rock climbing and valley crossing, Boating and kayaking, Hot air ballooning, Ziplining, commando net-trekking, Camping and bonfire nights

» **Thapli Nature Camp (Panchkula):** A forested eco-adventure zone located near Morni Hills, surrounded by wildlife and nature trails.

Key Activities: Zip Lining and rope courses, Nature camping with bonfires, Rock climbing and jungle trekking, Obstacle courses for team-building

» **Tau Devi Lal Park Adventure Zone (Gurugram):** A small-scale adventure facility integrated into a recreational park, ideal for families and kids.

Key Activities: Rope bridge, wall climbing, Ziplining and rope ladders, Children's adventure play area

Heritage Tourism

» **Kurukshetra (Kurukshetra):** The sacred land traditionally associated with the Mahabharata and the delivery of the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna.

» **Sheikh Chaheli's's Tomb (Kurukshetra):** A beautiful Mughal-era tomb complex dedicated to Sufi saint Sheikh Chaheli (also known as chilli or chehli), reflecting Persian architecture.

» **Pinjore Gardens (Panchkula):** A 17th-century Mughal Garden laid out in terraced lawns, fountains- palaces.

» **Firoz Shah Palace Complex (Hisar):** Built by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq in the 14th century, featuring palaces, a mosque- a stepwell.

» **Loharu Fort (Bhiwani):** A 19th-century Rajput-style fort with Mughal and colonial elements, once the residence of Nawabs.

» **Bhima Devi Temple Complex (Panchkula):** Archaeological remains of a 9th-century Hindu temple with erotic sculptures, located next to Pinjore Gardens.

» **Jal Mahal, Narnaul (Mahendragarh):** A 16th-century Mughal water palace located in the middle of a tank, showcasing Islamic and Rajput architecture.

» **Shah Quli Khan's Tomb (Narnaul):** A tomb built by Shah Quli Khan, an officer under Akbar, known for its Persian motifs and domed structure.

» **Ancient Site of Agroha (Hisar):** Believed to be the ancient capital of King Agrasena, with temple complexes and archaeological remains.

» **Dhosi Hill (Mahendragarh):** A dormant volcanic hill mentioned in the Mahabharata, considered a Vedic learning center and yogic site.

» **Mittathal Archaeological Site (Bhiwani):** Mittathal Archaeological Site is an important Harappan-era site showcasing ancient settlement remains and offering insight into early Indus Valley civilization in Haryana.

» **Rakhigarhi (Hisar):** One of the largest known sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation in the world, dating back to 2600 BCE. Excavations have revealed urban planning, burial systems- early artifacts.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Jyotisar (Kurukshetra):** Believed to be the site where Lord Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita.

» **Brahma Sarovar (Kurukshetra):** A sacred water tank associated with the creation of the universe by Lord Brahma.

» **Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra):** Believed to be the meeting point of seven sacred tributaries of river Saraswati.

» **Bhadrakali Temple (Kurukshetra):** One of the Shakti Peethas where the goddess's anklet is believed to have fallen.

» **Saraswati Tirth (Pehowa, Kurukshetra):** Sacred to Hindu rituals, especially for pind daan and shraddh.

» **Mansa Devi Temple (Panchkula):** A famous Shakti temple dedicated to Goddess Mansa Devi.

» **Kartikeya Temple (Pehowa, Kurukshetra):** Dedicated to Lord Kartikeya, the god of war- worshipped for valour.

» **Thanesar (Kurukshetra):** Thanesar is an ancient town of great historical and religious significance, closely associated with the Mahabharata and the holy city of Kurukshetra.

» **Kapil Muni Tirth (Kalayat, Kaithal):** Associated with Sage Kapil, this tirth is revered for meditation and spiritual learning.

» **Sita Mai Temple (Karnal):** Believed to be the site where Sita was swallowed by the earth.

» **Baba Mastnath Temple (Rohtak):** A significant spiritual center of the Nath sect, attracting thousands of devotees.

» **Dhosi Hill (Mahendragarh):** A Vedic heritage site where sages meditated, with links to Ayurveda and ancient sciences.

» **Adi Badri (Yamunanagar):** A sacred forest believed to be the origin of the Saraswati River and a spiritual center.

Culture and Cuisines

Haryana's culture reflects a vibrant rural heritage marked by traditional music, dance- colourful fairs, while its cuisine offers hearty delights like bajra roti, churma- lassi-drawing tourists seeking authentic north Indian experiences.

Culture

» **Surajkund Mela:** An internationally acclaimed craft fair celebrating folk art, culture- handlooms from across India.

» **Teej:** A monsoon festival where women celebrate with swings, songs- vibrant traditional attire.

» **Baisakhi:** A joyous harvest festival marking the Sikh New Year and celebrating the rabi crop harvest.

» **Lohri:** A winter harvest festival celebrated with bonfires, folk songs- traditional Punjabi sweets. It symbolises gratitude for a good harvest and the welcoming of longer, warmer days.

» **Gita Jayanti**: A spiritual festival in Kurukshetra commemorating the birth of the Bhagavad Gita.

» **Gugga Naumi:** A folk festival honouring Gogaji, a warrior-saint worshipped for protection from snakes.

» **Gangaur:** A festival where women worship Gauri for marital happiness and community well-being. They observe rituals, decorate idols and participate in colorful processions marking devotion and cultural pride.

» **Kartik Deepmala:** A festival of lights observed in temples and sarovars, especially in Kurukshetra.

» **Sannihit Sarovar Fair:** A religious gathering held on Amavasya days for holy dips and ancestral rituals.

» **Basant Panchami**: Celebrated with kite flying and worship of Goddess Saraswati for wisdom and learning. People wear yellow, fly kites and celebrate with joy as the season begins to bloom.

» **Mango Mela:** A vibrant annual summer festival in Pinjore celebrating the king of fruits with exhibitions, tastings-cultural events.

» **International Gita Mahotsav:** A grand spiritual and cultural festival in Kurukshetra commemorating the eternal message of the Bhagavad Gita through art, discourse-devotion.

Cuisines

» **Bajra Roti:** A hearty millet flatbread, often eaten with ghee or jaggery, especially in winters.

» **Churma:** A sweet dish made from crushed roti, ghee-jaggery, typically served with dal or kadhi.

» **Besan Masala Roti:** Spiced gram flour flatbread, packed with flavour and commonly eaten with curd or pickles.

» **Kachri ki Sabzi:** A tangy sabzi made from wild cucumbers, unique to the region's arid areas.

» **Bathua Raita:** A refreshing yogurt-based side dish blended with bathua leaves and mild spices.

» **Hara Dhania Cholia:** A seasonal green chickpea curry cooked with fresh coriander and mild masalas.

» **Sangri ki Sabzi:** A traditional dry curry made with dried beans (Kair-sangri), typical in arid Haryana-Rajasthan areas.

» **Methi Gajar:** A mildly spiced carrot and fenugreek leaves stir-fry, loved for its winter freshness.

» **Malpua:** A sweet pancake made with flour and sugar syrup, often relished during festivals.

» **Lassi:** A thick, creamy yogurt drink, served sweet or salty- often topped with butter or malai.

» **Ghee & White Butter:** Essential dairy staples in almost every Haryanvi meal, known for their richness.

» **Khichdi with Ghee and Buttermilk:** A simple yet nourishing rice-lentil dish served with ghee and chaas.

» **Bura Roti:** Roti topped with jaggery powder and ghee, a simple and loved dessert after meals.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Haryana's textiles and handicrafts reflect its rich cultural roots, blending traditional skills with everyday utility and artistic expression. From colourful Phulkari embroidery to handcrafted pottery and woven durries, each piece tells a story of the state's rural artistry and heritage.

» **Phulkari:** A traditional embroidery art featuring vibrant floral patterns, commonly done on shawls, dupattas- odhanis.

» **Handloom Durries:** Thick, flat-woven rugs made using cotton or jute, known for their geometric patterns and durability.

» **Cotton Fabric Weaving:** Locally produced cotton textiles used for daily wear garments, reflecting rural simplicity and comfort.

» **Khadi Weaving:** Hand-spun and hand-woven fabric promoting self-reliance, widely used in ethnic and traditional attire.

» **Woolen Shawls:** Warm shawls woven in northern Haryana, especially in winters, often featuring subtle patterns.

» **Tie & Dye (Bandhani):** Though less dominant, tie-dye techniques are occasionally practiced for making colourful turbans and fabric accents.

» **Silk Embroidery:** Intricate silk-thread embroidery used in festive garments, especially in wedding trousseau.

» **Pottery:** Traditional earthenware including painted pots, surahis- diyas crafted by skilled village artisans.

» **Wood Carving:** Intricate carvings on furniture, doors-windows showcasing folk motifs and craftsmanship.

» **Bone and Horn Craft:** Decorative items like combs, buttons- ornaments made from animal bone and horn.

» **Lac Bangles:** Colourful lacquer bangles handcrafted and worn especially during festivals and weddings.

» **Weaving of Moodhas (Stools):** Handmade cane and jute stools, popular for rural seating and décor.

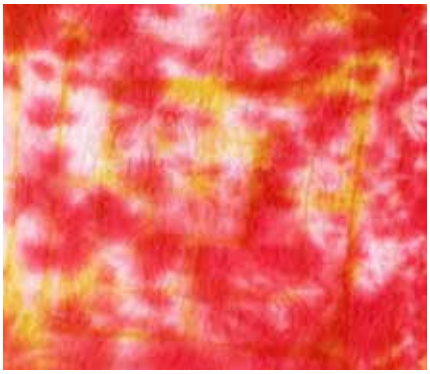
» **Leather Craft:** Utilitarian items like shoes, belts- bags crafted from tanned leather, often with local flair.

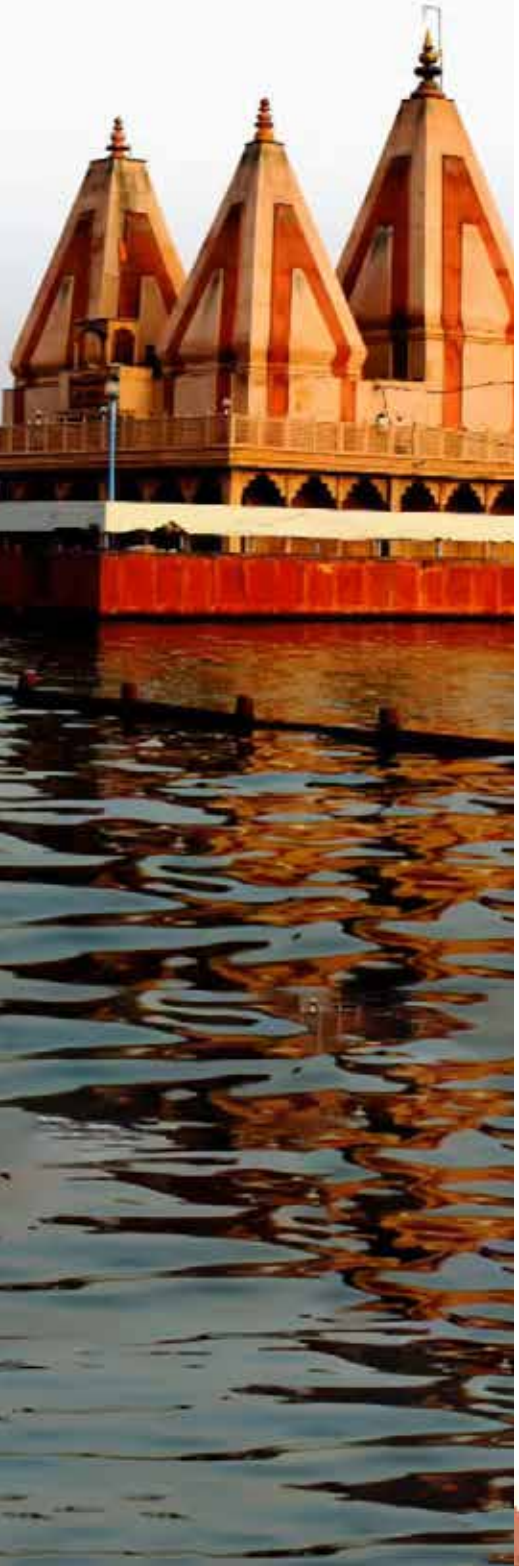
» **Hand Fans (Pankhas):** Woven fans made from palm leaves or cloth, often decorated with thread or mirror work.

» **Terracotta Figurines:** Clay models of animals, deities- folk scenes used for both rituals and home décor.

» **Embroidery on Home Linen:** Hand-stitched patterns on bed covers, pillowcases- curtains, reflecting rural aesthetics.

» **Metal Crafts:** Brass and copper utensils and decorative pieces engraved with traditional designs.





Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather; ideal for sightseeing, festivals, fairs- outdoor activities.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot and dry climate. Moderate rains and humidity, good time to explore natural attractions and enjoy indoor entertainment.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Land of the Bhagavad Gita:** Kurukshetra in Haryana is believed to be the battlefield where Lord Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita.

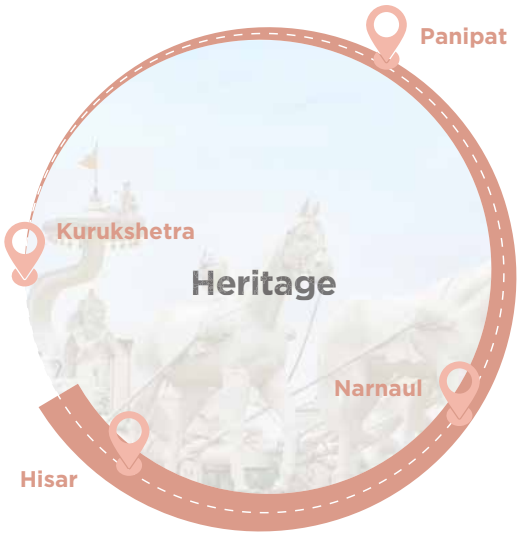
» **Sports Powerhouse:** Despite its small size, Haryana has produced a large number of Olympic and international athletes, especially in wrestling, boxing- hockey.

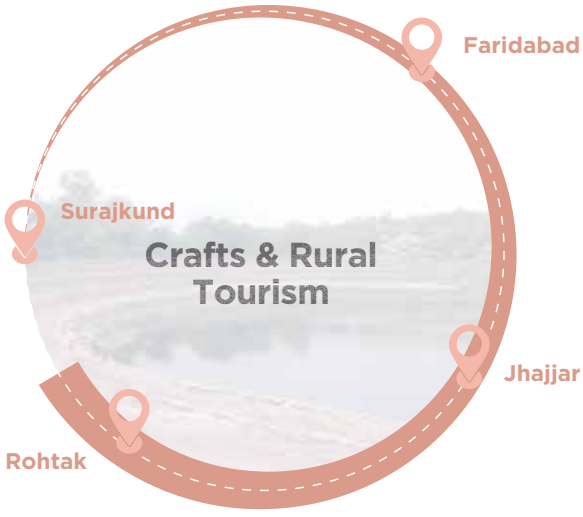
» **'Milk Bowl' of India:** Known for its high dairy production, Haryana has a strong tradition of consuming ghee, butter- lassi.

» **Host of the Surajkund Mela:** The Surajkund International Crafts Mela in Faridabad is one of the largest cultural fairs in the world.

» **Agricultural Leader:** It was a key player in India's Green Revolution and remains a major contributor of wheat and rice.

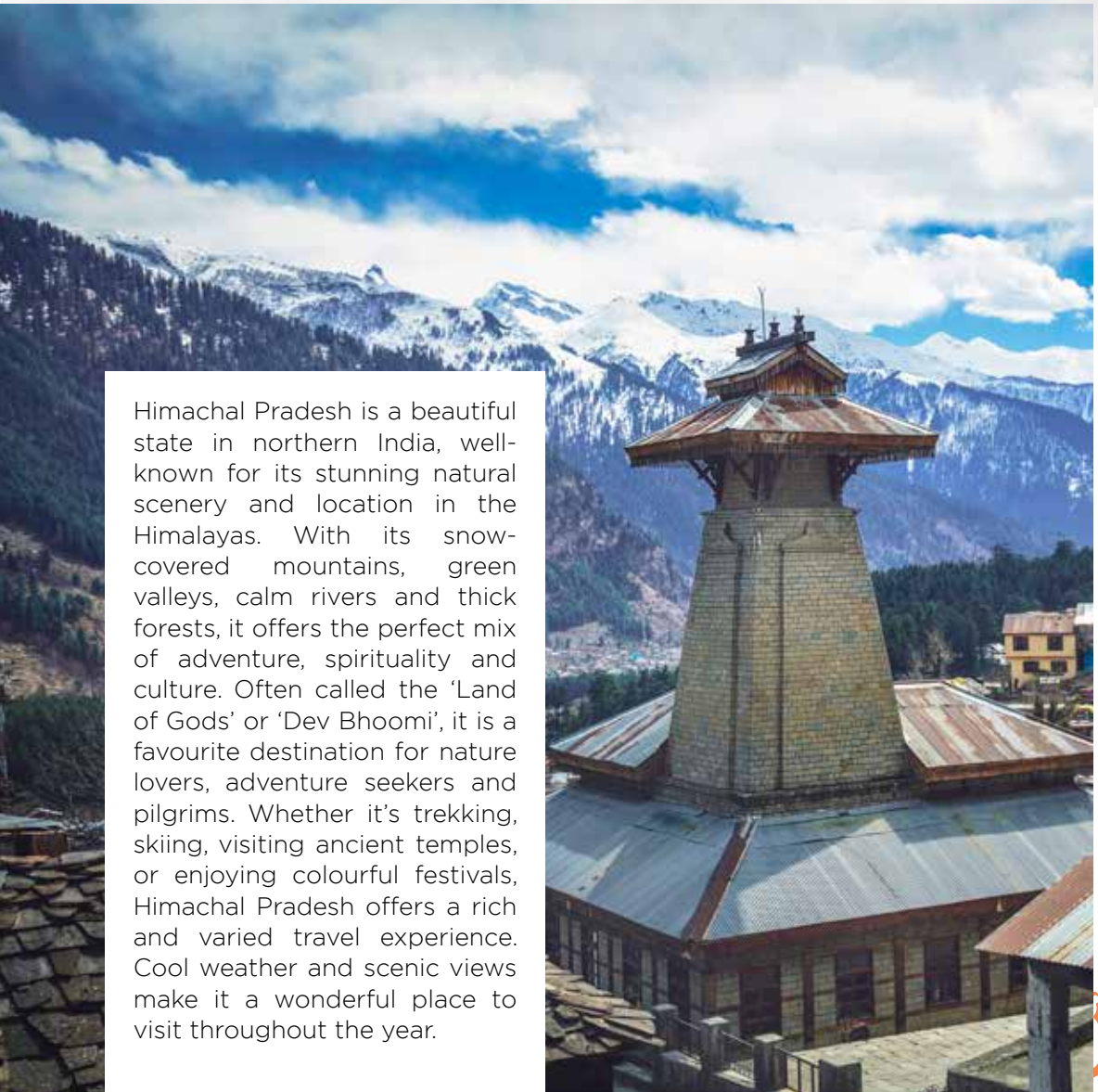
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS





Himachal Pradesh

Tourism



Himachal Pradesh is a beautiful state in northern India, well-known for its stunning natural scenery and location in the Himalayas. With its snow-covered mountains, green valleys, calm rivers and thick forests, it offers the perfect mix of adventure, spirituality and culture. Often called the 'Land of Gods' or 'Dev Bhoomi', it is a favourite destination for nature lovers, adventure seekers and pilgrims. Whether it's trekking, skiing, visiting ancient temples, or enjoying colourful festivals, Himachal Pradesh offers a rich and varied travel experience. Cool weather and scenic views make it a wonderful place to visit throughout the year.

Best Places to Visit

Himachal Pradesh offers a stunning mix of serene nature, rich heritage sites and sacred pilgrimage spots, making it a perfect destination for every kind of traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **The Ridge (Shimla):** Open space in the heart of Shimla with colonial charm, offering views of surrounding hills.

Key Activities: Leisurely walks; Street food; Visiting Christ Church and the State Library

» **Mall Road (Shimla):** Social hub of Shimla lined with cafes, boutiques, emporiums and restaurants.

Key Activities: Sunset views; Shopping for woollens, wooden crafts and local jewellery

» **Kalka–Shimla Toy Train (Shimla):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for scenic train ride offering breathtaking views of the hills.

Key Activities: Photography of tunnels, bridges and hill stations en route

» **Tirthan Valley (Kullu):** Best place for nature lovers with rivers, forests and waterfalls.

Key Activities: Trout fishing; Nature walks and bird watching; Waterfall visits and river rafting; Camping and bonfires

» **Parashar Lake (Mandi):** A beautiful high-altitude lake surrounded by thick forests and the majestic Dhaula Dhar range, with a floating island in its centre.

Key Activities: Trekking to the lake; Camping by the lakeside; Photography and bird watching; Visiting the ancient Prashar Temple

Lesser-Known Attractions

Himachal Pradesh is renowned for its diverse landscapes, rich culture & tranquil retreats. Beyond its popular destinations, the state boasts of numerous lesser-known attractions that offer unique experiences.

SHIMLA

» **Shoghi:** Quiet hill station known for camping and adventure.

» **Fagu:** A small village near Shimla, offering apple orchards and terraced fields.

» **Mashobra:** A serene town close to Shimla, known for its dense forests and tranquil environment.

KULLU

» **Jagatsukh:** Historic capital with ancient temples.

» **Jalori Pass:** High-altitude pass, trekking and panoramic views.

» **Inderkilla National Park:** Known for its diverse wildlife and a rich variety of medicinal plants.

» **Jibhi:** A peaceful village known for its natural beauty and traditional wooden houses.

» **Shoja:** A small village offering panoramic views of the Himalayas.

» **Sainj Valley:** A less-explored valley adjacent to the Great Himalayan National Park.

» **Jogini Waterfalls:** A serene and scenic cascade surrounded by lush pine forests and offering a peaceful trek with panoramic views of the Beas River and snow-capped peaks.

» **Serolsar Lake:** A high-altitude lake near Jalori Pass, known for its serene environment.

» **Bhrigu Lake Trek:** A high-altitude lake trek near Manali, known for its scenic beauty.

MANALI

» **Mountaineering Institute:** Premier training centre for mountaineering and skiing.

» **Manu Temple:** Dedicated to Sage Manu, believed to be the creator of mankind.

» **Vashisht Temple:** Famous for its hot water springs.

» **The Manali Gompa:** Tibetan-style monastery with murals and prayer wheels.

» **Nehru Kund:** Natural Spring named after Jawaharlal Nehru.

MANDI

» **Shikari Devi Temple:** Ancient temple atop a ridge in Janjehli Valley.

» **Budha Kedar:** Ancient shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva.

- **Barot Valley**: Ideal for eco-tourism, hiking, fishing.
- **Janjehli Valley:** Trekking, spiritual significance, serene environment.
- **Tattapani Hot Springs:** Natural springs believed to have medicinal properties.
- **Pandoh:** A town known for the Pandoh Dam on the Beas River.

KANGRA

- **War Memorial:** Honours Indian war heroes.
- **Palampur Tea Gardens:** Tea capital of north India.
- **Dharmshala Cricket Stadium:** One of the highest and most scenic stadiums in the world.
- **Indrahar Pass Trek:** A popular trekking route offering views of the Dhauladhar range.

CHAMBA

- **Pangi Valley:** A remote valley known for its rugged terrain and untouched beauty.

LAHAUL AND SPITI

- **Sissu:** A picturesque village in Lahaul, offering views of waterfalls and glaciers.
- **Jispa:** A small village along the Manali-Leh highway, serving as a stopover for travellers.
- **Keylong:** The administrative centre of Lahaul, known for its monasteries and scenic beauty.

KINNAUR

- **Chitkul:** Last inhabited village near Indo-Tibet border.
- **Nako Monastery:** Ancient Buddhist monastery with murals and religious texts.

SIRMAUR

- **Churdhar Peak:** Sacred peak with a statue of Lord Shiva and wildlife sanctuary.
- **Simbalbara National Park:** A wildlife sanctuary known for its diverse flora and fauna.

HAMIRPUR

- **Sujanpur Tira:** Ancient center for Pahari art and culture.

SOLAN

- **Parwanoo:** An industrial town known for its fruit-based products and proximity to Timber Trail.
- **Nalagarh:** Famous for its greenery and scenic views of the Shivalik Hills- being a historical princely state with a royal touch is known for Nalagarh Fort which is now a heritage hotel too.

- **Rewalsar Lake (Mandi):** A sacred lake revered by Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

Key Activities: Exploring Buddhist Monasteries; Sacred caves; Enjoy local cuisine

- **Great Himalayan National Park (Kullu):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its rich biodiversity, pristine forests, alpine meadows and snow-capped peaks.

Key Activities: Trekking and hiking through diverse landscapes; Wildlife spotting; Bird watching; camping in nature

- **McLeod Ganj (Kangra):** Scenic hill town near Dharamshala, famous for being the home of the Dalai Lama and a vibrant centre of Tibetan culture and Buddhism.

Key Activities: Trekking to Triund for panoramic mountain views; Exploring Bhagsu Waterfall and Bhagsunath Temple; Shopping for Tibetan handicrafts and souvenirs; Enjoying local Tibetan cuisine at cozy cafés; Attend meditation or yoga retreats.

- **Palampur (Kangra):** Known for its lush tea gardens, scenic landscapes and pleasant climate surrounded by pine forests and the Dhauladhar mountain rang. It is often referred to as 'Tea Capital of North India.'

Key Activities: Visiting tea estates, exploring monasteries and enjoying the natural beauty

- **Dalhousie (Chamba):** A charming hill station spread over five hills, offering a peaceful retreat and is perfect for nature walks and relaxation.

Key Activities: Visiting churches and enjoying panoramic views

- **Chandratal Lake (Lahaul and Spiti):** Known as 'Moon Lake,' a stunning high-altitude lake famous for its crescent shape and crystal-clear blue waters.

Key Activities: Camping; Stargazing and Photography

» **Kaza (Lahaul and Spiti):** Largest township and commercial hub of the Spiti Valley, serving as the key centre for trade, administration-tourism in the region.

Key Activities: Visiting ancient monasteries; Local markets and High-altitude treks

» **Komic Village (Lahaul and Spiti):** One of the highest motorable villages in the world, renowned for its ancient monastery and well-preserved traditional lifestyle.

Key Activities: Cultural immersion; Visiting the Tangyud Monastery and Enjoying the serene environment

» **Pin Valley National Park (Spiti):** Located in Spiti, this park is home to rare wildlife species like the snow leopard and Siberian ibex, surrounded by mountain beauty.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting and photography; Trekking across rugged terrain; Nature study and eco-tourism

» **Kalpa (Kinnaur):** Famous for its breathtaking panoramic views of the Kinnaur Kailash range. Known for its apple orchards and serene atmosphere.

Key Activities: Exploring apple orchards; Visiting temples and enjoying mountain vistas

» **Sangla (Kinnaur):** Known for its lush natural beauty and the flowing Baspa River. A popular destination for nature lovers offering traditional Himachali culture.

Key Activities: Camping, trout fishing and visiting Kamru Fort

» **Timber Trail (Solan):** Timber Trail is a popular hill attraction known for its scenic cable car ride offering breathtaking views of lush valleys and surrounding mountains.

Key Activities: Cable car rides and enjoying the scenic beauty

Adventure Tourism

» **Kufri (Shimla):** A small hill station, famous for its snowfall in winter and panoramic views of the Himalayas.

Key Activities: Skiing and tobogganing in winter; Yak rides and visiting Kufri Fun World (amusement park); Trek to Mahasu Peak

» **Narkanda (Shimla):** A serene hill town, known for its apple orchards, pine forests and snow-covered slopes.

Key Activities: Skiing and snowboarding; Trekking to Hatu Peak; Camping and nature walks

» **Kullu Valley (Kullu):** A popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, also known as White Water Rafting Hub.

Key Activities: River Rafting; Trekking; Paragliding

» **Parvati Valley (Kullu):** Stunning Himalayan valley known for its lush greenery, river views and peaceful villages.

Key Activities: Trekking, spiritual retreats, villages like Kasol, Tosh, Malana

» **Solang Valley (Kullu):** Famous for its lush green meadows and adventure sports.

Key Activities: Paragliding and zorbing; Skiing and snowboarding (in winters); Horse riding and ropeway rides; Trekking and nature photography

» **Rohtang Pass (Kullu):** Gateway to high-altitude adventures, offering activities to both beginners and seasoned adventurers.

Key Activities: Skiing & Snow boarding; Mountain Biking; Snow Scooters

» **Bir Billing (Kangra Valley):** Also known as the Paragliding Capital of India, gained international acclaim by hosting the 2015 Paragliding World Cup.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Trekking; Mountain Biking

» **Dharamshala (Kangra):** Offers a harmonious blend of Tibetan culture and adventure activities.

Key Activities: Trek to Triund for breathtaking views; Rock Climbing; Paragliding

» **Khajjiar (Chamba):** Often called the 'Mini Switzerland of India', Khajjiar is a lush green meadow surrounded by forests and hills.

Key Activities: Horse riding and nature walks; Paragliding and zorbing; Exploring Khajji Nag Temple; Picnics and photography

» **Spiti Valley (Lahaul-Spiti):** A high-altitude cold desert with stunning barren landscapes, ancient Buddhist monasteries and crystal-clear rivers. It offers a peaceful escape with rugged mountains, clear skies and rich Tibetan-influenced culture.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Visiting Monasteries; Mountain Biking; Photography of dramatic mountain vistas

Heritage Tourism

» **Gaiety Theatre (Shimla):** A colonial-era theatre that has hosted numerous cultural events over the years.

» **Rashtrapati Niwas (Shimla):** Known as the Viceregal Lodge, it's a historic building situated on Observatory Hill in Shimla.

» **Naggar Castle (Kullu):** Served as the seat of local rulers of the Kullu Valley, preserves valuable art and culture of the region.

» **Kangra Fort (Kangra):** One of the oldest and largest forts in India, perched on a hilltop overlooking the Kangra Valley.

» **Masroor Rock Cut Temple (Kangra):** A group of monolithic rock-cut temples located near Kangra, carved out of a single rock.

» **Baijnath Temple (Kangra):** Built in the Nagara style of architecture, this temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Vaidyanath. It is believed that Ravana worshipped Lord Shiva here and the temple's carvings depict its rich history.

» **Chamba Town and Temples (Chamba):** Known for its ancient temples like the Lakshmi Narayan Temple and Chamunda Devi Temple.

» **Tabo Monastery (Spiti Valley):** One of the oldest Buddhist monasteries in India, known for its ancient scriptures, a repository of Buddhist art and learning in the region.

» **Nahan (Sirmaur):** A picturesque town in Sirmaur district, known for its charming blend of historical sites and natural beauty.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Jakhu Temple (Shimla):** Dedicated to Lord Hanuman, Jakhu Temple is located atop Jakhu Hill, the highest point in Shimla. It also features a massive 108-ft Hanuman statue.

» **Bhimakali Temple (Sarahan, Shimla):** An ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Bhimakali, combining Hindu and Buddhist architectural styles, it is a vital spiritual centre in Himachal.

» **Bijli Mahadev (Kullu):** Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple is famous for its 60-foot-high staff that is believed to attract divine lightning. According to local legend, the Shiva lingam inside the temple shatters due to lightning every few years and is restored by temple priests using local butter and sattu.

» **Manikaran Sahib (Kullu Valley):** A spiritual town with religious shrines and natural hot springs nestled in the Kullu Valley, believed to have healing powers and the historic Gurudwara Manikaran Sahib.

» **Hadimba Devi Temple (Manali):** This temple is dedicated to Hidimba Devi, wife of Bhima from the Mahabharata.

» **Jwalamukhi Temple (Kangra):** Considered one of the 51 Shakti Peeths, this temple is famous for its eternal flame that emerges from the rock without any fuel. It is believed that the tongue of Goddess Sati fell here.

» **Chamunda Devi Temple (Kangra):** Dedicated to Goddess Chamunda, a fierce form of Durga, the temple is an important site for Shakti worshippers and local devotees.

» **Chaurasi Temple (Bharmour, Chamba):** This temple complex comprises 84 shrines, built around the 7th century, dedicated to various deities.

» **Kinnaur Kailash (Kinnaur):** It is a sacred mountain in Kinnaur, revered as the abode of Lord Shiva, attracting devotees and trekkers alike.

» **Naina Devi Temple (Bilaspur):** Considered one of the 51 Shakti Peeths. The eyes (naina) of Goddess Sati are believed to have fallen here. Devotees come to seek her blessings for insight, clarity and vision in life.

» **Chintpurni Temple (Una):** This temple is dedicated to Goddess Chintpurni and is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas. This temple is where the forehead or feet of Sati are believed to have fallen. The name Chintpurni means 'the remover of worries'.

» **Paonta Sahib (Sirmaur):** It is a sacred Sikh pilgrimage site located on the banks of the Yamuna River in Sirmaur that attracts devotees from across the country.

Culture and Cuisines

Himachal Pradesh's culture and cuisine reflect its vibrant traditions, hearty mountain flavours and festive celebrations rooted in centuries-old customs.

Culture

» **Kullu Dussehra (Kullu):** Kullu Dussehra is a renowned international festival held every October in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh. Starting on Vijaya Dashami, the celebrations last for seven days and attract over 4-5 lakh visitors from around the world. The state government has officially recognised Kullu Dussehra as an international festival. It is famous for its vibrant processions, where hundreds of local deities are brought together in a grand cultural gathering. The festival is one of the region's largest tourist attractions and a remarkable celebration of tradition and faith.

» **Hadimba Devi Fair (Manali):** This fair is held annually during Navratri. Dedicated to Hadimba Devi, the local deity, this festival highlights folk dances, fairs and religious rituals.

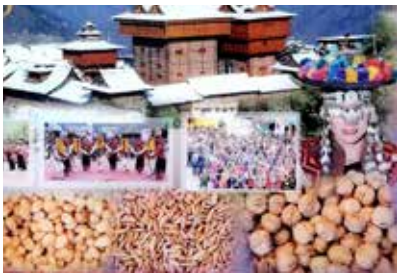
» **Mandi Shivratri (Mandi):** Mandi Shivratri is a well-known annual international fair held in February or March in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. This week-long event begins on the auspicious day of

Maha Shivratri. Due to its widespread popularity, it has been recognised as an international festival. The fair features numerous local deities participating in the celebrations, earning Mandi the title of the 'Varanasi of the Hills' for its profound spiritual and cultural significance.

» **Minjar Fair (Chamba):** Celebrated in July or August, the Minjar Fair is a week-long harvest festival marking the prosperity of the Chamba region. The fair features colourful processions, traditional music, dance performances and the offering of 'minjar' (golden silk tassels) to the Ravi River as a symbol of gratitude and hope for a good harvest.

» **Manimahesh Yatra (Chamba):** It's an annual pilgrimage to Manimahesh Lake, believed to be Lord Shiva's abode. It is held during August-September (Bhadrapada month) and attracts thousands of pilgrims and tourists.

» **Lavi Fair (Rampur Bushahr, Shimla):** Held every November in Rampur Bushahr, Shimla, the Lavi Fair is a centuries-old trade festival renowned for its lively markets selling wool, horses and handicrafts. It attracts traders and visitors from regions such as Tibet, Ladakh and Kashmir, serving as an important cultural and commercial event in the area.



» **Renuka Fair (Renuka Lake, Sirmaur):** Celebrates Goddess Renuka with rituals and cultural festivities. Boat rides on Renuka Lake, fairs with local artisans. Honours Renuka Mata, a revered goddess in Himachal. Annually during Navratri (September-October).

Cuisines

» **Himachali Dham:** A traditional festive meal served during special occasions, weddings and religious festivals. It is a vegetarian, multi-course meal that reflects the cultural richness and culinary heritage of the state prepared by botis (traditional Brahmin cooks). It is served on leaf plates (pattal) and eaten sitting on the floor.

» **Siddu:** A traditional Himachali steamed bread made from wheat flour, stuffed with a savoury filling of spiced lentils or mashed nuts. It is often paired with ghee or lentil soup.

» **Chha Gosht:** A spicy mutton dish from the Chamba region, cooked in a yogurt-based gravy with aromatic spices. Rich, tangy and flavourful, it is a popular festive dish.

» **Madra:** A creamy curry made with chickpeas or kidney beans and yogurt, seasoned with dry spices. Common in Chamba and Kangra, it is often served with rice.

» **Babru:** Similar to a stuffed kulcha, Babru is made with soaked black gram paste stuffed into dough and deep-fried. It's a favourite snack in Shimla.

» **Tudkiya Bhat:** A fragrant pulao made with rice, lentils, potatoes and spices.

» **Jhol:** A thin, spiced curry or gravy, often made with buttermilk or curd base.

» **Mittha:** A sweet rice dish garnished with dry fruits like raisins and cashews. Mildly sweet and served during special occasions.

» **Chamba Chukh:** It is a spicy, tangy chili preparation made using sun-dried red chillies, mustard oil- local spices, sometimes with added citrus. It's a highly valued side or accompaniment in Himachali dish, much like a pickle- reflects the region's culinary uniqueness and preservation methods.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Himachal Pradesh is rich in traditional crafts and textiles that reflect its vibrant culture, skilled artisanship and centuries-old heritage. These crafts are a major attraction for tourists interested in cultural tourism, providing a unique window into the lifestyle and traditions of the Himalayan people.

» **Woolen Textiles and Shawls:** Handwoven woollen shawls and carpets with geometric patterns in vibrant colours using local sheep wool.

Key Areas: Kullu; Chamba; Kangra; Lahaul-Spiti

» **Chamba Rumal:** Traditional embroidered handkerchief crafted with fine needlework depicting mythological scenes and floral designs.

Key Areas: Chamba

» **Pashmina and Wool Products:** High-quality pashmina wool and products, including shawls, mufflers and caps.

Key Areas: Lahaul and Spiti districts

» **Wood Carving:** Creation of beautifully crafted items like masks, furniture and decorative pieces often inspired by local mythology and nature.

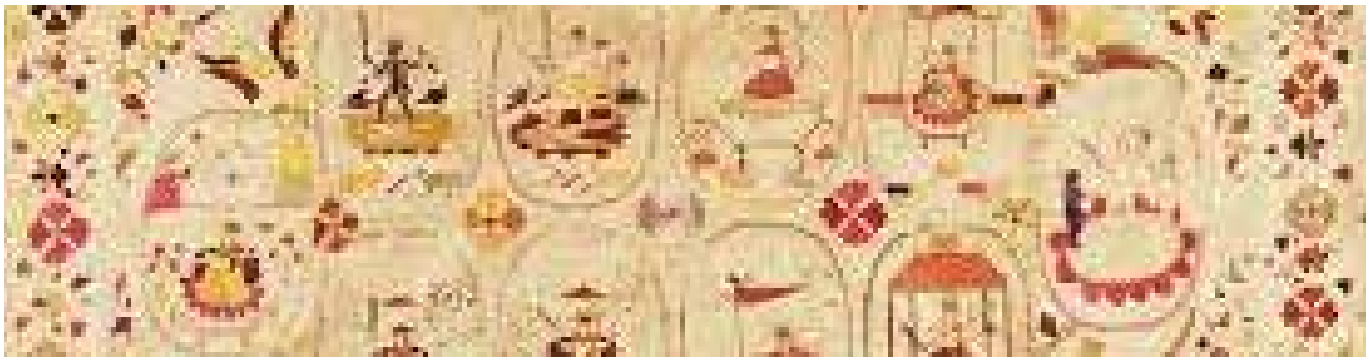
Key Areas: Kangra; Mandi; Kullu; Lakkar Bazaar, Shimla

» **Metal Crafts:** Known for its brass and copperware, including traditional utensils, religious idols and decorative items, all handcrafted by skilled artisans.

Key Areas: Kangra; Mandi; Kullu

» **Handcrafted Jewellery:** Traditional silver jewellery from Himachal, especially from tribal areas features unique designs.

Key Areas: Kinnaur (Reckong Peo, Kalpa); Himachal Pradesh State Handicrafts & Handloom Corporation (HIMCRAFT) outlets across major towns



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to June** (Snowfall and winter sports. Pleasant weather.)

Non-Peak Season

» **July to September** (Due to heavy rains, landslides in hilly terrain. Post-monsoon greenery and festivals.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Himachal Pradesh is one of the few places in India where over 200 local gods and goddesses, known as **Devi-Devta, are worshipped in different villages and valleys.** During festivals like **Kullu Dussehra and Mandi Shivratri,** many of **these deities come together in colourful processions,** creating a unique and lively celebration that reflects the state's rich and ancient traditions.

» The **traditional Nati dance** from Kullu holds a **Guinness World Record for being the largest folk dance in the world,** often performed by thousands of dancers during Kullu Dussehra.

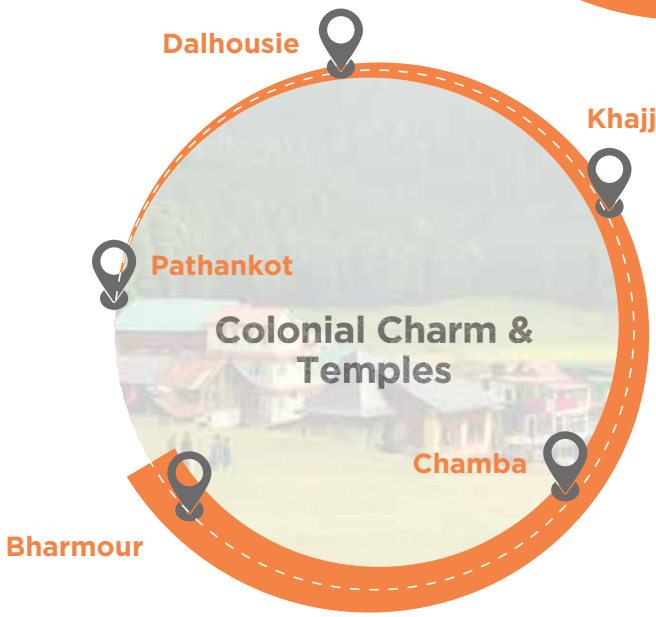
» **Mandi district** alone is home to around **81 ancient temples**, earning it the nickname '**Varanasi of the Hills**' due to its dense concentration of sacred sites.

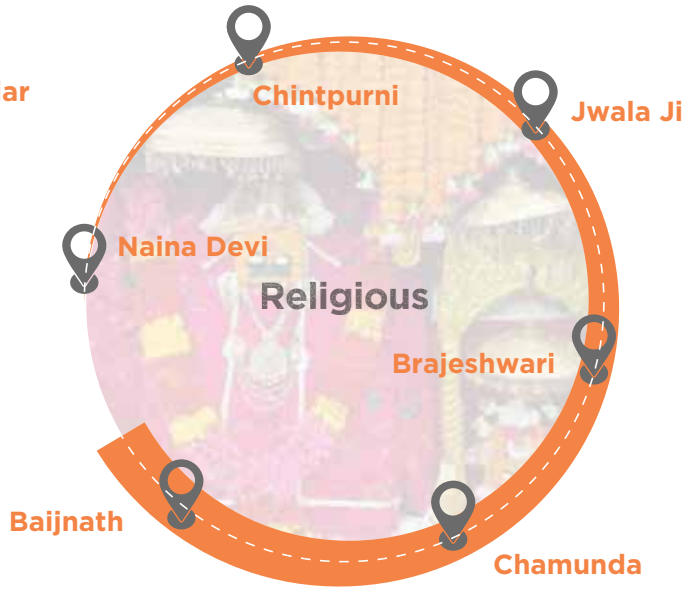
» Himachal is home to **Baralacha La**, **one of the world's highest motorable passes** at around 4,890 meters, connecting the Lahaul valley with Ladakh.

» Himachal Pradesh is a **major producer of India's apples**, with districts like Shimla, Kinnaur and Kullu known for their apple orchards and festivals.

» The town of **Khajjiar** is known as the '**Mini Switzerland of India**' due to its striking resemblance to the landscapes of Switzerland.

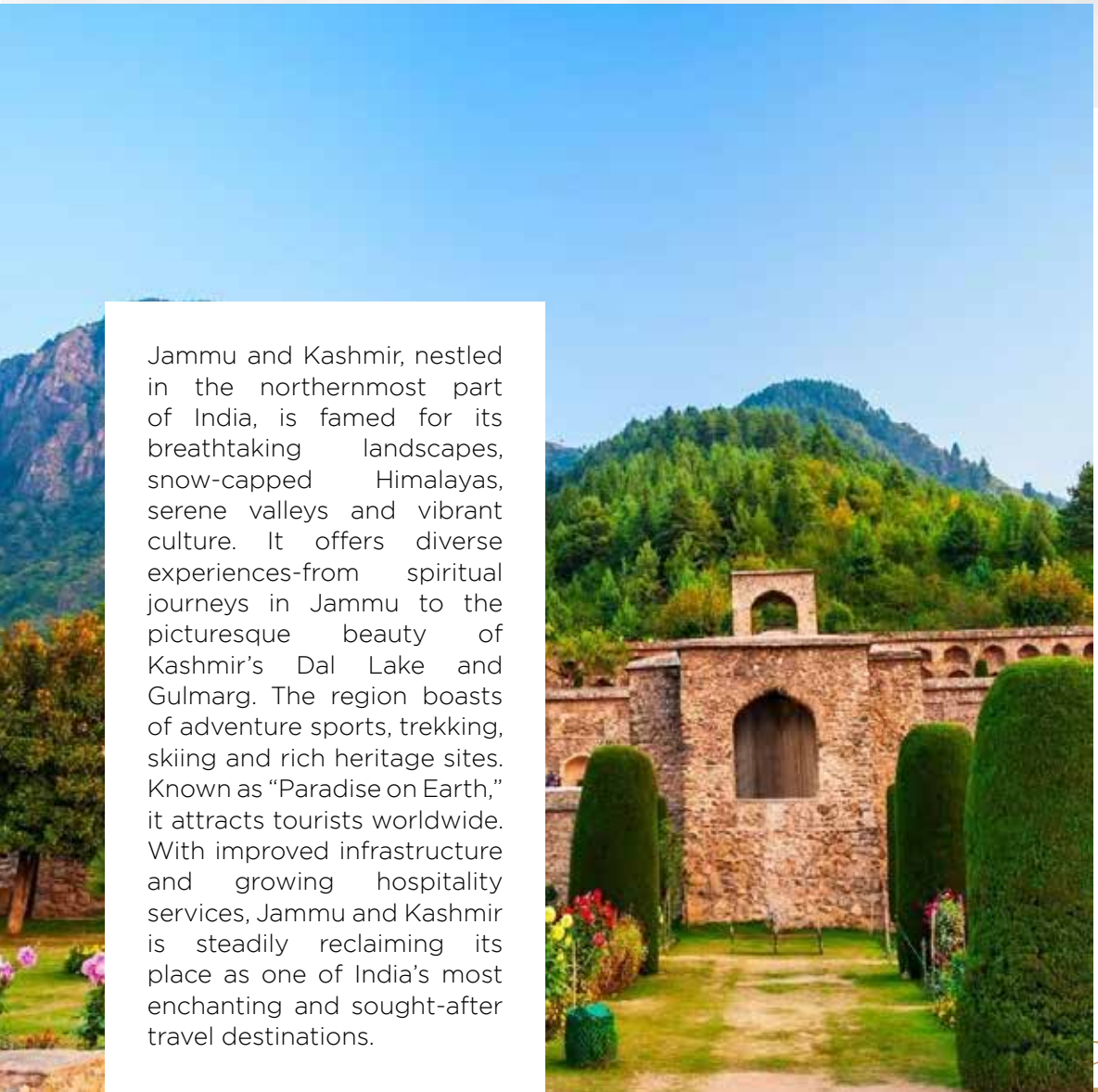
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS





Jammu & Kashmir

Tourism



Jammu and Kashmir, nestled in the northernmost part of India, is famed for its breathtaking landscapes, snow-capped Himalayas, serene valleys and vibrant culture. It offers diverse experiences-from spiritual journeys in Jammu to the picturesque beauty of Kashmir's Dal Lake and Gulmarg. The region boasts of adventure sports, trekking, skiing and rich heritage sites. Known as "Paradise on Earth," it attracts tourists worldwide. With improved infrastructure and growing hospitality services, Jammu and Kashmir is steadily reclaiming its place as one of India's most enchanting and sought-after travel destinations.

Best Places to Visit

Jammu & Kashmir, known as "Paradise on Earth," offers a perfect blend of natural beauty, spiritual sites and cultural heritage. From the scenic valleys of Gulmarg and Pahalgam to the sacred shrines of Vaishno Devi and Amarnath, it is a must-visit destination for every kind of traveller.

Nature Tourism

» **Gulmarg (Baramulla):** A stunning hill station known for its lush meadows and snow-covered slopes, Gulmarg is a year-round destination.

Key Activities: Skiing; Gondola ride; Snowboarding; Trekking

» **Dal Lake (Srinagar):** Dal Lake is the iconic heart of Srinagar, known for its houseboats, floating gardens and shikara rides. It reflects the snow-covered mountains and the vibrant lifestyle of Kashmir's waterscapes.

Key Activities: Shikara rides; houseboat stays; char chinar, floating market shopping; photography

» **Pahalgam (Anantnag):** Nestled along the Lidder River, Pahalgam is a peaceful retreat with dense forests and green valleys.

Key Activities: River rafting; Horse riding; Nature walks; Trekking

» **Sonamarg (Ganderbal):** Meaning "Meadow of Gold," Sonamarg offers majestic views of glaciers and alpine meadows.

Key Activities: Glacier trekking; Camping; Fishing; Scenic photography

» **Yusmarg (Budgam):** A lesser-explored gem, Yusmarg is a tranquil meadow surrounded by pine forests and snow peaks.

Key Activities: Nature trails; Horse riding; Picnicking; Photography

» **Betaab Valley (Anantnag):** Surrounded by lush greenery and streams, this valley gained fame from Bollywood films.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Jammu and Kashmir unveil tranquil valleys, ancient monasteries and serene lakes that offer a glimpse into the region's untouched natural and cultural beauty.

ANANTNAG

» **Chatpal:** A tranquil hamlet surrounded by deodar forests and wildflower meadows-perfect for a peaceful escape.

» **Daksum:** A lush valley with pine-clad slopes and the gurgling Bringhi River-ideal for camping and solitude seekers.

» **Sangam Meadow:** The scenic confluence of two Jhelum tributaries near Bijbehara, offering serene riverside views.

BUDGAM

» **Tosa Maidan:** An expansive alpine meadow of shimmering grasslands, once an artillery range, now a camping haven.

GANDERBAL

» **Naranag:** Ancient 8th century Shiva temple ruins by the Wangath River, set amidst Himalayan greenery.

» **Sherpathri:** A cluster of villages famous for willow wickerwork and Asia's largest Shallabugh wetland with birdlife.

KUPWARA

» **Karnah Valley:** A remote green wilderness with ancient forts, traditional villages and sweeping mountain vistas.

PULWAMA

» **Ladhoo Ancient Temple:** An 8th century square-turned-circular temple set in a natural spring-an archaeological wonder.

POONCH

» **Noori Chamb:** A majestic waterfall on the Mughal Road, said to be linked to Empress Nur Jahan's legend.

RAMBAN

» **Sanasar Meadows:** A quiet hill-town with twin lakes, paragliding, & trails to the ancient Shankh Pal temple.

BARAMULLA

» **Watlab (Sopore):** A plateau village with apple orchards, a Sufi shrine & panoramic Wular Lake views.

RAJOURI

» **Darhal Valley:** A bowl-shaped landscape rich in waterfalls, shrines, lakes and traditional woodcraft.

» **Budhal Valley:** A Pir Panjal foothill retreat with lakes, springs, trout fishing and meadows-an emerging eco-tourism spot.

» **Kotranka:** Serene riverside town on the Ans River, with eco-parks, shrines and willow-lined trails.

UDHAMPUR

» **Ramnagar:** A town with rivers, palaces, lakes and historic charm-once a former capital.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Picnic; Photography; Sightseeing

» **Dachigam National Park (Srinagar):** Known for housing the rare Hangul deer, this park offers a rich wildlife experience.

Key Activities: Wildlife watching; Nature trekking; Birdwatching

» **Patnitop (Udhampur):** A scenic hill station in the Shivalik range, known for its pine forests and panoramic views.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Trekking; Nature walks; Camping

» **Mansar Lake (Samba):** A sacred and picturesque lake surrounded by hills, ideal for leisure and pilgrim visits.

Key Activities: Boating; Nature photography; Birdwatching; Picnicking

» **Bhaderwah (Doda):** It is a valley with thick forests, rivers and meadows. It also has heritage sites like the Fort, hundered years old mosque and an ancient Vasuki Nag Temple.

Key Activities: Nature treks; Camping; Sightseeing; Adventure sports

» **Jai Valley (Doda):** A hidden gem with vast grasslands and crystal-clear streams.

Key Activities: Hiking; Picnicking; Horse riding; Trout fishing

» **Lolab Valley (Kupwara):** Scenic Himalayan valley with dense deodar and pine forests, fruit orchards and alpine meadows-perfect for serene escapes.

Key Activities: Nature trails; Bird-watching; Camping; Exploring caves

» **Doodhpathri (Budgam):** Situated within a bowl-shaped valley in the heart of the Pir Panjal Range, the name means "Valley of Milk". Known for its milky streams and flower-strewn meadows.

Key Activities: Trekking; Picnicking; Wildflower photography

» **Surinsar Lake (Samba):** A tranquil hill-lake amid forests, known for its bat-populated island and mythological lore.

Key Activities: Boating; Nature walking; Wildlife photography

» **Bangus Valley (Kupwara):** Often overlooked, this emerald valley features grassy meadows, streams and mountain views.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Wildlife spotting

» **Keran Valley (Kupwara):** Offbeat riverside valley on the Kishanganga-perfect for solitude seekers.

Key Activities: River-side walking; Photography; Camping

» **Nigeen Lake (Srinagar):** Nigeen Lake is a quieter, cleaner counterpart to Dal Lake, offering peaceful views and fewer crowds. It is bordered by willow trees and offers a more intimate experience with nature.

Key Activities: Houseboat stays; Shikara rides; birdwatching; kayaking

» **Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden (Srinagar):** Situated at the foothills of Zabarwan Range, the Tulip Garden is Asia's largest tulip garden. It blooms vibrantly in spring with over 60 varieties of tulips, attracting thousands of visitors.

Key Activities: Tulip viewing (March–April); photography; garden walks; cultural events

Adventure Tourism

» **Gurez Valley (Bandipora):** Gurez Valley is a remote frontier valley with high-altitude trails and raw Himalayan beauty. It is an emerging destination for nature treks and cultural expeditions.

Key Activities: Mountain trekking; trout fishing; village exploration; heritage hikes

» **Tarsar Marsar Lakes Trek (Anantnag):** This alpine trek takes you through meadows, pine forests and serene high-altitude lakes. The Tarsar and Marsar Lakes lie at over 13,000 ft, offering one of the most breathtaking camping experiences.

Key Activities: Multi-day trekking; alpine stargazing

» **Sinthan Top (Anantnag/ Kishtwar Border):** Sinthan Top is a mountain pass at around 12,500 ft, offering panoramic views of Kashmir and Chenab Valley.

Key Activities: Snow trekking; off-road biking; snow sliding; high-altitude driving

» **Aru Valley (Anantnag):** Aru Valley is a peaceful village 12 km from Pahalgam and a base for several major treks like the Kolahoi Glacier and Tarsar Marsar Lakes. Surrounded by pine forests and snow peaks, it's ideal for adventure lovers.

Key Activities: Trekking; horse riding; camping; skiing (in winter)

» **Kashmir Great Lakes Trek:** A 6-7 day adventure through the stunning blue-watered lakes of the Kashmir Valley. The trail, located in the Ganderbal District, passes through six pristine lakes each offering its own unique charm and natural beauty.

Key Activities: Trekking; camping; photography; trout fishing

» **Pir ki Gali (Mughal Road):** Pir Ki Gali is a scenic mountain pass that connects Poonch and Shopian districts. Surrounded by lush meadows and snow-capped peaks, it offers breathtaking views of the Pir Panjal Range.

Key Activities: Scenic drives, photography, trekking, heritage exploration, visiting Sufi shrines, nature walks and experiencing local culture.

Heritage Tourism

» **Amar Mahal Palace (Jammu):** Built in the late 19th century by Maharaja Amar Singh in European-style chateau design, this palace was the last royal residence of the Dogra dynasty and now houses an extensive collection of art, royal portraits and the famed golden throne.

» **Mubarak Mandi Palace (Jammu):** Spanning over a century in construction, this grand complex blends Rajasthani, Mughal, Baroque and European styles. It was the primary seat of Dogra rulers until 1925 and today hosts the Dogra Art Museum, showcasing royal artifacts and manuscripts.

» **Bahu Fort (Jammu):** A 3,000-year-old fortress originally built by Raja Bahu Lochan and renovated by Dogra kings. It overlooks the Tawi River and includes the Kali temple within its terraced garden grounds.

» **Akhnoor Fort (Akhnoor):** Located on the Chenab River, this 18th-century fort built by Raja Tegh Singh was erected partly to generate employment during famine and is built on ancient Harappan ruins, linking it directly to early Civilisation heritage.

» **Martand Sun Temple (Anantnag):** An 8th-century Hindu temple complex dedicated to the sun god, constructed by King Lalitaditya Muktapida. It showcases exquisite Kashmiri stone architecture and represents one of the region's most significant ancient Hindu shrines.

» **Parihaspora Ruins (Baramulla):** The remains of the 8th-century capital founded by Lalitaditya, featuring Buddhist monasteries and stupas. These ruins highlight a pre-Islamic, Buddhist-Hindu era in Kashmir's history.

» **Sher Garhi Palace (Srinagar):** Established in 1772 by Afghan governor Amir Khan Jawansher, this palace served as the administrative seat through Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rule. Architecturally Mughal-Dogra, it remains a cultural symbol despite damage.

» **Hari Parbat Fort (Srinagar):** Overlooking the city, this 18th-century fort built under Atta Muhammad Khan during Afghan rule features Mughal-style gates and is home to a revered shrine, blending political and spiritual histories.

» **Jamia Masjid (Srinagar):** Built in 1400 AD by Sultan Sikandar, this Indo-Saracenic mosque is a historic center of Islamic scholarship, featuring 378 wooden pillars and serene courtyard design.

» **Avanti Swami (Awantipora) Temple Ruins (Pulwama):** These 9th-century twin temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu were built by King Avantivarman and highlight the valley's rich Hindu-Sanskritic past before medieval shifts.

» **Shankaracharya Temple (Srinagar):** Perched on a hilltop overlooking Srinagar and Dal Lake, the Shankaracharya Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Built in the 9th century, it is an architectural and spiritual landmark with stunning panoramic views.

» **Mughal Gardens (Srinagar):** The trio of Nishat Bagh, Shalimar Bagh and Chashme Shahi represents the best of Mughal Garden design in Kashmir. Built during the Mughal era, these gardens showcase Persian landscaping with flowing water channels and terraced lawns.

» **Pari Mahal (Srinagar):** Pari Mahal, meaning "Palace of Fairies," is a 17th-century Mughal structure built on the Zabarwan Hills by Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. It served as a library and a learning center for subjects such as astrology and astronomy.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Vaishno Devi Temple (Reasi):** A sacred cave-shrine in the Trikuta Hills, dedicated to Goddess Vaishno Devi-one of the 108 Shakti Peethas-visited by millions annually as a pilgrimage of faith and fulfillment.

» **Amarnath Cave (Anantnag):** A revered Himalayan shrine at 3,888 m housing a naturally formed ice Shivling, the focal point of the annual Amarnath Yatra-a spiritually transformative trek for Shiva devotees.

» **Shiv Khori (Reasi):** A natural cave shrine with a self-manifested Shiva Lingam, believed to connect mythically to the Amarnath cave-an ecstatic subterranean pilgrimage destination.

» **Kheer Bhawani Temple (Ganderbal):** Situated beside a holy spring, this temple is devoted to Goddess Ragnya (an avatar of Parvati) and revered for the annual kheer offering and mela that draws Kashmiri Pandit pilgrims.

» **Charar-e-Sharief Shrine (Budgam):** A 15th-century Sufi mosque and tomb of

saint Nund Rishi, revered across religious communities as a symbol of mystical unity and spiritual healing.

» **Jwala Ji Temple (Pulwama):** Dedicated to the Kul Devi Jwala Ji, this sacred shrine hosts an annual fair blending Hindu-Muslim traditions, exemplifying Kashmiriyat and religious harmony.

» **Budha Amarnath Temple (Poonch):** Believed to be older than Amarnath, this Shiva temple on Pulsta stream is deeply venerated during Sawan Poornima as a pilgrimage site of ancient spiritual lore.

» **Shahdra Sharief Shrine (Rajouri):** A revered Muslim shrine visited daily by thousands of devotees of all faiths, dedicated to a saintly figure symbolising communal coexistence.

» **Nangali Sahib Gurudwara (Poonch):** Established by Sant Bhai Mela Singhji and visited by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819, this Sikh shrine is a holy pilgrimage site for devotees of Guru Nanak and Sikh heritage.

» **Hazratbal Mosque (Srinagar):** Located on the banks of Dal Lake, the Hazratbal Shrine is revered by Muslims as it houses the holy Moi-e-Muqqadas, the preserved sacred hair of the Prophet Muhammad.

» **Khanqah-e-Moula (Srinagar):** Situated on the banks of the Jhelum River in Srinagar, Khanqah-e-Moula is one of the oldest Muslim shrines in Kashmir, built in honour of the revered Sufi saint Mir Syed Ali Hamadani. Known for its exquisite wooden architecture, intricate carvings and spiritual ambience, the shrine attracts devotees and visitors interested in Kashmir's Islamic and cultural heritage.

» **Raghunath Temple (Jammu):** Dedicated to Lord Rama, Raghunath Temple is a large temple complex built in the 19th century by the Dogra rulers. It features intricate carvings and houses numerous shrines of Hindu deities.

» **Chhatti Padshahi Gurudwara:** Located in Rainawari, Srinagar, it is an important site for Sikh devotees who assemble here to offer prayers. The shrine is located on the southern gate of Hari Parbat Fort, i.e. Kathi Darwaza.

» **Machail Mata Temple (Kishtwar):** Situated in the Paddar Valley, Machail Mata Temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga and is known for the annual Machail Yatra.

» **Bawe Wali Mata Temple (Jammu):** Located within the historic Bahu Fort, the Bawe Wali Mata Temple is dedicated to Goddess Kali. It is a highly revered temple and an important Shakti Peeth for local devotees.

» **Makhdoom Sahib (Srinagar):** The shrine lies on the southern side of Hari Parbat and is admired by Muslims as well as Hindus. The mosque is quite close to the Hari Parbat Fort and is amongst the most sacred shrines in Kashmir.

Culture and Cuisines

The culture and cuisine of Jammu and Kashmir reflect a rich blend of traditions, artistry and hospitality shaped by centuries of diverse influences and timeless mountain heritage.

Culture

» **Amarnath Yatra:** A sacred annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath Cave in Kashmir, where devotees trek to the ice shivlinga. It draws thousands of pilgrims and showcases religious devotion and high-altitude endurance tourism.

» **Tulip Festival (Srinagar):** Held in April in Asia's largest Tulip Garden, this spring festival attracts tourists globally with vibrant tulip displays and Kashmiri handicrafts and performances.

» **Bahu Mela (Jammu):** A fair dedicated to Goddess Kali at Bahu Fort, drawing pilgrims and showcasing Dogra culture, local food and folk music. Devotees gather to offer prayers, enjoy traditional stalls and celebrate the region's cultural spirit.

» **Lohri and Baisakhi:** Celebrated especially in Jammu, these harvest festivals highlight community bonding, traditional dance (Bhangra, Gidda) and regional delicacies.

» **Shikara Festival (Srinagar):** Celebrates the beauty of Dal Lake's floating life -houseboats, shikaras, local music and cuisine-promoting sustainable tourism.

» **Zool Festival (Aishmuqam):** Also known as the Mashaal Festival, is an annual event held at the Aishmuqam shrine in Kashmir, celebrating the Urs (death anniversary) of the Sufi saint Hazrat Zain-ud-Din Wali.

» **Navroz:** Navroz marks the Persian New Year and the arrival of spring. It is a day of renewal, family gatherings and special prayers. People prepare traditional dishes, clean their homes and welcome the season with joy and hope.

Cuisines

» **Wazwan:** A grand multi-course feast in Kashmiri

Muslim tradition, consisting of 7 to 36 dishes, mostly meat-based. Rogan Josh, gushtaba and yakhni are iconic Kashmiri meat dishes, each showcasing rich flavours-from spicy lamb curry to creamy yogurt-based gravies-central to the traditional Wazwan feast.

» **Kashmiri Harissa:** Slow-cooked, flavourful mutton stew, traditionally eaten during the winter months. It's a cherished dish in Kashmir, known for its aromatic spices, especially saffron and a melt-in-your-mouth texture.

» **Haak Saag:** A simple, healthy green leafy vegetable preparation, popular in Kashmiri homes.

» **Rogan Josh:** A signature Kashmiri lamb curry made with aromatic spices and yogurt. It's a highlight of the Wazwan cuisine and a must-try for culinary tourists.

» **Gushtaba:** Meatballs cooked in creamy yogurt gravy, served at the end of a traditional Wazwan. Symbol of Kashmiri royal dining and hospitality.

» **Dum Aloo:** Baby potatoes cooked in spiced yogurt gravy-vegetarian favourite with saffron flavour, often served during festivals and weddings.

» **Modur Pulav:** Sweet Kashmiri rice made with dry fruits, saffron and ghee. Served on special occasions, showcasing the sweet-salty balance of local cuisine.

» **Noon Chai (Pink Tea):** Traditional salty tea made with baking soda and milk, often served with local breads. A cultural staple, especially during winters.

» **Kalari (Jammu):** A local cheese from Udhampur and Poonch, often shallow-fried-famous street food and unique culinary heritage of the Dogra region.

» **Patisa and Sund Panjiri:** Traditional sweets from Jammu offered during festivals and temple fairs-blending taste and religious significance.

» **Nadur Yakhni:** Lotus stem cooked in a yogurt curry, known for its unique texture and flavour.

» **Rajma with Rice:** A comforting dish, especially famous in the Jammu region.

» **Kahwa:** Traditional green tea infused with saffron, cardamom, cinnamon and almonds, perfect for cold weather.

» **Phirni:** A creamy rice-based dessert flavoured with saffron and cardamom, often served in earthen pots.

» **Kesar Halwa:** A saffron-infused sweet dish made with semolina or soaked lentils, often served on auspicious occasions.

» **Shufta:** A rich dry fruit dessert made with honey, saffron and spices, traditionally served in winters.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Jammu and Kashmir showcase exquisite craftsmanship, intricate designs and timeless artistry that reflect the region's cultural elegance and traditional mastery.

» **Pashmina Shawls:** Made from the fine wool of the Changthangi goat, these handwoven shawls are globally renowned for their softness, warmth and intricate embroidery. A luxury souvenir and symbol of Kashmiri craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Srinagar, Pulwama, Leh markets, Government emporiums

» **Kashmiri Carpets (Qaleen):** Hand-knotted silk and wool carpets with Persian-style patterns, rich in colour and artistry-each piece can take months to years to complete.

Key Areas: Srinagar, Anantnag, Budgam, Government Arts Emporium

» **Papier-Mâché Items:** Delicate decorative items made using paper pulp, painted with floral or Mughal motifs-perfect for gifting and home décor.

Key Areas: Downtown Srinagar, Zadibal, Hazratbal

» **Sozni Embroidery:** Intricate needlework on shawls and garments, often done with fine silk thread, representing Kashmiri elegance and artistry.

Key Areas: Srinagar, Anantnag, Handicraft outlets

» **Walnut Wood Carving:** Crafted from native walnut trees, this includes furniture, trays and decorative boxes-renowned for deep carving and lasting quality.

Key Areas: Srinagar (Downtown), Ganderbal, Kupwara

» **Basohli Paintings:** A distinct Pahari miniature painting style from Jammu, known for vivid colours and religious themes, often collected as fine art souvenirs.

Key Areas: Basohli town (Kathua district), Jammu city art stores

» **Chikri Woodcraft:** Crafts made from soft white wood native to the Rajouri–Poonch region, often turned into toys, tools and decorative items.

Key Areas: Rajouri, Poonch, Jammu emporiums

» **Copperware (Kandkari Work):** Handcrafted utensils and decorative pieces with floral and geometric engravings, traditionally used in Kashmiri households.

Key Areas: Zaina Kadal (Srinagar), Rainawari

» **Namdha:** Traditional felted wool rugs known for their vibrant embroidery and utility, Namdhas are a great souvenir representing the warmth and artistry of Kashmiri homes.

Key Areas: Srinagar; Budgam, Anantnag

» **Gabba:** Made from recycled woolen blankets, gabbas are hand-embroidered floor coverings that reflect the sustainable and creative spirit of local craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Srinagar; Baramulla & Anantnag

» **Basohli Pashmina:** Originating from the Basohli region of Jammu, this rare Pashmina blend is famous for its rich colours and intricate handwork, ideal for travellers seeking authentic and regal wraps.

Key Areas: Kathua; Jammu City

» **Kashmiri Embroidery (Kari work):** Known for needlework styles like Aari and Sozni, Kashmiri embroidery adorns shawls, kurtas and home decor, offering tourists a touch of intricate beauty and tradition.

Key Areas: Srinagar; Anantnag; Ganderbal; Budgam

» **Willow Wicker Work:** Made from locally cultivated willow twigs, this craft produces baskets, chairs and home items, blending utility with rustic charm-popular among visitors for their durability and natural appeal.

Key Areas: Ganderbal; Srinagar; Bandipora; Pulwama

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **January to June & September to October** (Pleasant weather, blooming gardens, ideal for sightseeing, trekking and pilgrimages.)

Non-Peak Season

» **November to December & July to August** (Snowfall turns the region into a winter wonderland-great for skiing, snowboarding and fewer tourist crowds. Heavy rainfall and risk of landslides in hilly areas.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» The **Amarnath Cave** houses a naturally formed **ice Shivling**, which waxes and wanes with the moon. It's one of the holiest shrines in Hinduism and attracts **over 4 lakh pilgrims annually** through high-altitude treks.

» **Asia's largest tulip garden** is located in **Srinagar-**the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden-which blooms with over **1.5 million tulips** every spring, attracting thousands of international tourists.

» The **Wazwan**, Kashmir's royal 36-dish feast, is so integral to the culture that it is considered a **symbol of hospitality and social status**, with entire weddings revolving around its preparation.

» **Mughal Emperor Jahangir** was so mesmerised by the beauty of Kashmir that he famously said: *"If there is a heaven on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here."* This quote is now engraved at **Shalimar Bagh**.

» **Pashmina wool**, one of the finest and most expensive wool varieties in the world, comes exclusively from the **Changthangi goat** found in Ladakh and parts of Kashmir.

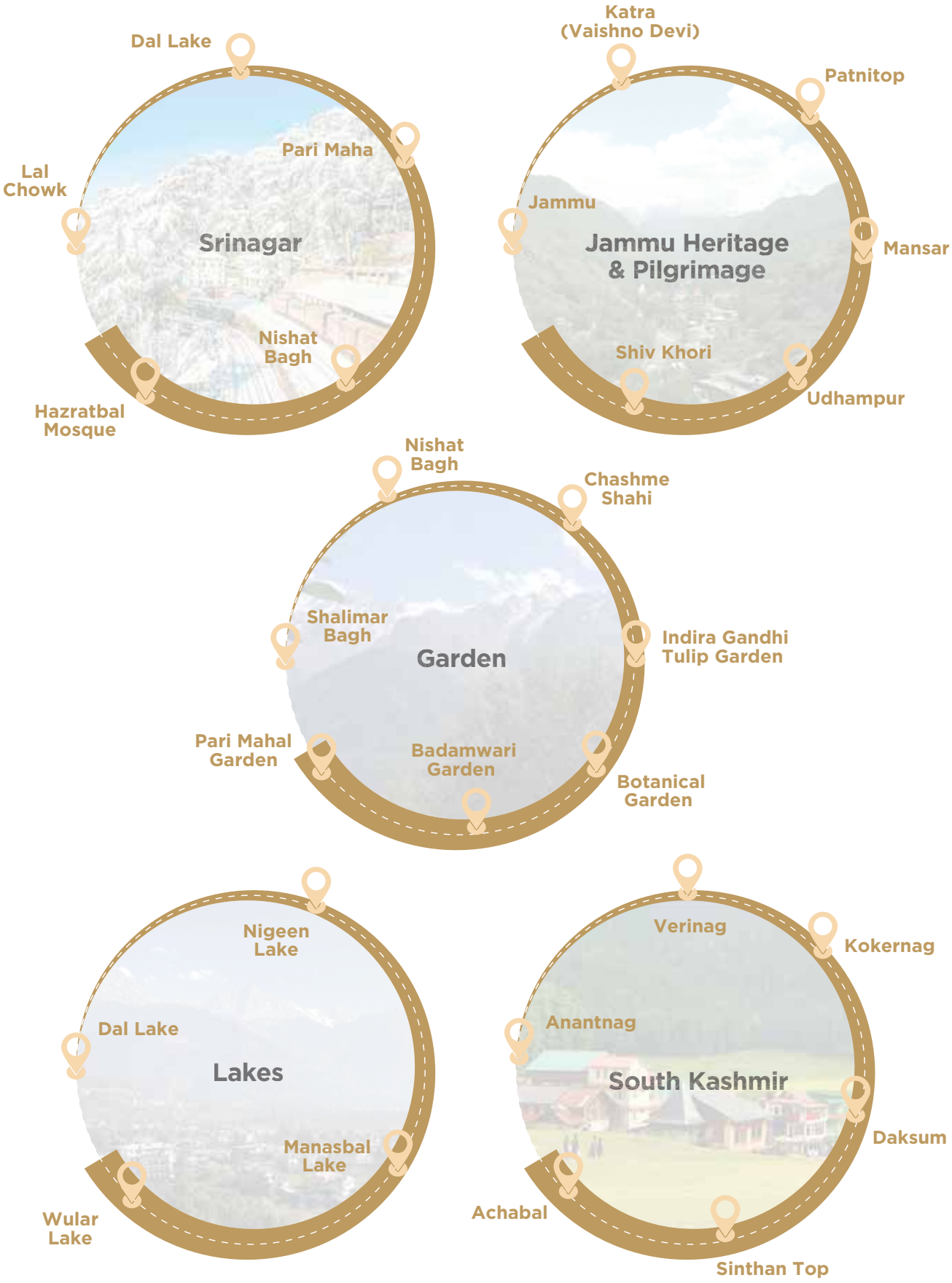
» The **Martand Sun Temple** in Anantnag, built in the 8th century, is one of the **oldest sun temples in India-**even older than Konark-and features Greco-Roman-style architecture.

» Jammu & Kashmir is the only place in India where you can stay in a **traditional wooden houseboat** on a lake.

» The region is home to a unique **floating vegetable market on Dal Lake**, one of the only such markets in India.

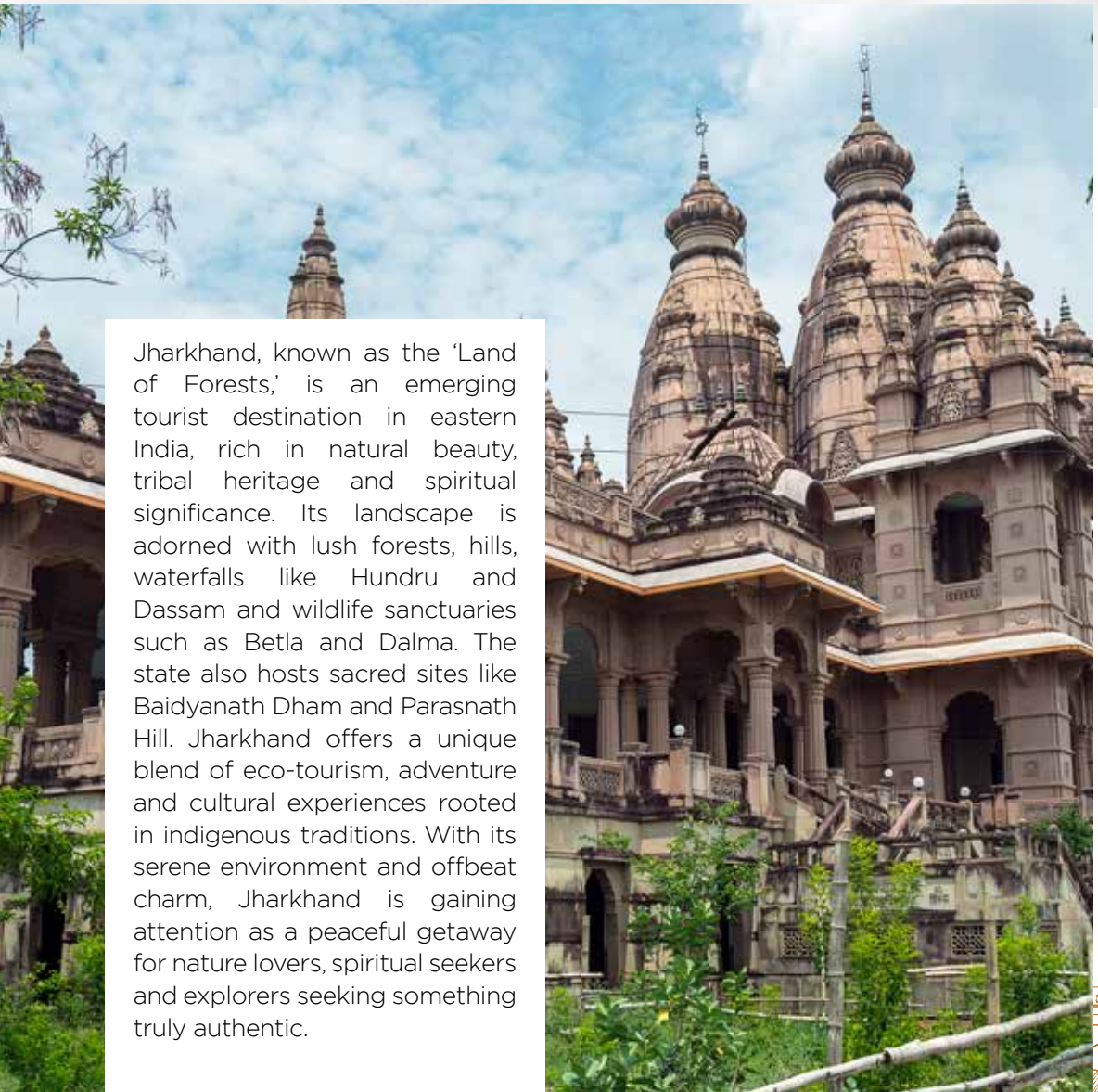
» The **Vaishno Devi** shrine in Jammu attracts 91 to 95 lakhs pilgrims each year, making it one of the **most visited religious sites in India.**

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Jharkhand

Tourism



Jharkhand, known as the 'Land of Forests,' is an emerging tourist destination in eastern India, rich in natural beauty, tribal heritage and spiritual significance. Its landscape is adorned with lush forests, hills, waterfalls like Hundru and Dassam and wildlife sanctuaries such as Betla and Dalma. The state also hosts sacred sites like Baidyanath Dham and Parasnath Hill. Jharkhand offers a unique blend of eco-tourism, adventure and cultural experiences rooted in indigenous traditions. With its serene environment and offbeat charm, Jharkhand is gaining attention as a peaceful getaway for nature lovers, spiritual seekers and explorers seeking something truly authentic.

Best Places to Visit

Jharkhand offers a mix of scenic hill stations, majestic waterfalls, sacred temples and wildlife reserves. From Netarhat's serene views to Parasnath Hills' spiritual aura, the state is a haven for nature lovers, adventurers and pilgrims alike.

Nature Tourism

» **Netarhat (Latehar):** Known as the "Queen of Chotanagpur," Netarhat is a picturesque hill station offering panoramic views, especially during sunrise and sunset. Surrounded by pine forests and valleys, it is ideal for nature lovers.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Sunset and sunrise viewing; Forest exploration

» **Hundru Falls (Ranchi) :** One of Jharkhand's highest waterfalls, Hundru Falls is formed by the Subarnarekha river cascading from a height, creating a scenic picnic and adventure spot.

Key Activities: Photography; Picnicking; Trekking around the falls

» **Betla National Park (Latehar):** A prominent wildlife sanctuary, part of Project Tiger, this park is rich in biodiversity and offers a lush forest setting for wildlife spotting.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; Wildlife photography; Birdwatching

» **Patratu Valley (Ramgarh):** A scenic valley surrounded by hills, lakes and lush greenery, Patratu is a perfect weekend getaway close to Ranchi.

Key Activities: Boating; Road trip drives; Landscape photography

» **Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary (East Singhbhum):** Located on the Dalma Hills near Jamshedpur, this sanctuary is home to elephants and a variety of other fauna.

Key Activities: Wildlife trekking; Nature trail; Birdwatching

Lesser Known Attractions

Beyond its famous sites, Jharkhand hides charming offbeat treasures like McCluskieganj's colonial charm, Saranda's vast sal forests and Maluti's terracotta temples. These lesser-explored spots promise unique cultural, natural and heritage experiences.

KHUNTI

» **Perwaghagh Falls:** A hidden waterfall on the Chata River, named "House of Pigeons," nestled in forested terrain-ideal for quiet picnics and short treks.

RANCHI

» **Itki Falls:** A serene 35 m waterfall set within rocky cliffs and greenery-perfect for offbeat nature retreats.

» **Hirni Falls:** Tucked away in dense forest, this untouched cascade is great for peaceful picnics and photography.

DUMKA

» **Maluti Temples:** A cluster of 72 terracotta temples from the 17th–19th century, with intricate mythological carvings - a unique cultural gem.

EAST SINGHBHUM (GHATSHILA)

» **Dharagiri Falls & Burudih Lake:** A tranquil waterfall and adjacent lake offering boating, hill walks and cultural immersion near Ghatshila.

GIRIDIH

» **Amadubi (Panijiya Rural Art Centre):** A tribal art village spotlighting Pathkar scroll paintings, bullock-cart tours, handicrafts and cultural performances.

PALAMU

» **Palamu Tiger Reserve (includes Betla Fort):** Dense forests and wildlife safaris combined with ruins of historic Betla Fort-great for history-loving nature enthusiasts.

WEST SINGHBHUM

» **Saranda Forest:** One of Asia's largest sal forests, teeming with elephants, leopards and tribal culture-great for wildlife safaris and eco-tourism.

HAZARIBAGH

» **Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary:** A dense forest reserve with deer, langurs, leopards and rich birdlife-excellent for safaris and nature exploration.

SIMDEGA

» **Arjun Doha & Bhanwar Pahar:** A lush forest spot and a rocky hill respectively, both offering inspirational landscapes and peaceful vibes for writers, trekkers and photographers.

GUMLA

» **McCluskieganj:** A quaint hill-town once settled by Anglo-Indians, famous for colonial bungalows, a scenic lake, churches and nostalgic old-world charm.

LATEHAR

» **Tattapani Hot Springs:** Natural sulphur-rich hot springs used for therapeutic baths-popular among locals and ideal for winter relaxation.

» **Jonha Falls (Ranchi):** Also known as Gautamdhara Falls, this is a serene waterfall ideal for nature and meditation lovers, with Buddhist connections.

Key Activities: Nature viewing; Trekking; Meditation

» **Lodh Falls (Latehar):** The highest waterfall in Jharkhand, located deep within the forest, offering an adventurous experience amidst pristine surroundings.

Key Activities: Hiking; Nature photography; Exploring nearby forest trail.

» **Panch Gagh Falls (Khunti):** Named after its five cascading streams, Panch Gagh is a scenic waterfall surrounded by forests. Its calm environment makes it a popular picnic and nature escape spot near Ranchi.

Key Activities: Picnicking; Nature walks; Water photography

» **Bhatinda Falls (Dhanbad):** Located near Dhanbad, this hidden gem flows through rugged rocks and thick greenery, forming a peaceful retreat ideal for weekend getaways.

Key Activities: Rock exploration; Photography; Relaxing in nature

» **Usri Falls (Giridih):** Beautiful three-tiered waterfall set amidst dense forest and granite rock formations, located 13 km from Giridih town.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature photography; Day outing

» **Maithon Dam (Dhanbad):** Built over the Barakar River, Maithon Dam is known for its vast reservoir, boating and South East Asia's first underground hydroelectric power station.

Key Activities: Boating; Dam visit; Reservoir sightseeing

» **Ghatshila & Burudih Lake (East Singhbhum):** A quiet town by the Subarnarekha River, Ghatshila is known for its natural charm, tribal

culture and Burudih Lake - perfect for boating and peaceful retreats.

Key Activities: Boating; Hill hiking (Phuldungri); Photography

» **Maluti Temples (Dumka):** A heritage site featuring around 70 ancient terracotta temples with intricate tribal and folk-style carvings, representing lost medieval architecture.

Key Activities: Heritage exploration; Photography; Cultural learning

» **Rajrappa Waterfall & Chhinnamasta Temple (Ramgarh):** This sacred site combines the power of nature and spirituality, with the Chhinnamasta Temple beside a confluence waterfall.

Key Activities: Pilgrimage; Scenic viewing; Ritual observation

Adventure Tourism

» **Khandoli Dam (Giridih):** A major water-sports destination surrounded by scenic hills, offering thrilling aquatic and aerial activities, ideal for adventure seekers and nature lovers.

Key Activities: Scuba diving; Rafting; Canoeing; Kayaking; Parasailing; Bird-watching

» **Parasnath & Satpahar Hills (Giridih):** Apart from being a spiritual destination, these hills offer high-altitude adventure sports with panoramic views and challenging terrains.

Key Activities: Trekking

» **Hot Air Ballooning (Ranchi and Giridih):** An emerging aerial adventure where visitors can float above hills, forests and valleys for a bird's-eye view of the state's natural beauty.

Key Activities: Hot air balloon ride; Aerial sightseeing

» **Waterfall Rope Courses (Ranchi and Khunti):** Adventure zones set up near waterfalls like Hundru, Jonha and Panch Gagh offer rope-based activities in natural surroundings.

Key Activities: Zip-lining; High-rope courses; Rock climbing; Bridge walks

» **Chandil Dam (Seraikela-Kharsawan):** A scenic water body offering both calm and high-speed water activities, surrounded by lush forests and hills.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Boating; Jet-skiing; Wildlife viewing

» **Patratu Dam & Valley (Ramgarh):** A favourite among bikers and campers, this destination is known for its winding roads, lakeside views and outdoor adventure options.

Key Activities: Boating; Biking; Trekking; Lakeside camping

Heritage Tourism

» **Navratangarh Fort (Gumla):** : Built in the 17th century by the Nagvanshi king Durjan Shah, this five-storeyed fort complex served as a royal residence and features defensive structures like moats, secret tunnels and a water-gate, showcasing medieval military architecture.

Key Activities: Heritage exploration; Architecture photography

» **Palamu Forts (Latehar):** These twin forts - Purana Qila and Naya Qila - were built by the Chero rulers in the 17th century and exhibit a blend of Rajput and Mughal architectural styles amidst forested surroundings.

Key Activities: Fort exploration; Historical study

» **Rajmahal (Sahibganj):** Once a Mughal capital under Raja Man Singh, this town contains relics like the Akbari Mosque, the Baradari Palace and Teliagarhi Fort, reflecting Bengal's Indo-Islamic architectural legacy.

Key Activities: Heritage walk; Monument viewing

» **Sanghi Dalan (Sahibganj):** Overlooking the Ganga River, this marble pavilion from the 16th century was built as a royal leisure retreat and features unique Mughal elements, including arches and domes.

Key Activities: Photography; Riverfront heritage tour

» **Bibhuti Bhavan (East Singhbhum):** The house where renowned Bengali author Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay lived and wrote iconic works like Pather Panchali, now preserved as a literary heritage site in Ghatshila.

Key Activities: Museum visit; Literary exploration

» **Bhadrakali Temple at Itkhori (Chatra):** A sacred site linked to both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, it features ancient sculptures from the Pala period, making it a rare example of religious and artistic fusion.

Key Activities: Pilgrimage; Heritage temple visit

» **Asura Archaeological Sites (Ranchi and Khunti):** These prehistoric megalithic remains and burial sites, associated with the Asura tribe, date back thousands of years and offer rare insights into early indigenous civilisations.

Key Activities: Archaeological study; Tribal heritage learning

» **Hazaribagh Rock Art & Isco Village (Hazaribagh):** Home to ancient cave paintings believed to be over 10,000 years old, this site reflects the region's pre-historic art and tribal cultural continuity.

Key Activities: Rock art viewing; Tribal culture exploration

» **Patan Fort (Latehar):** A little-known hilltop fort constructed

by the Chero kings, featuring defensive walls, watchtowers and historical ruins nestled in dense forest.

Key Activities: Fort trekking; History exploration

» **Bindudham (Barharwa, Sahibganj):** An ancient temple complex atop Binduwasni Hill, associated with Goddess Durga, known for its stone-carved deities and panoramic views of surrounding plains.

Key Activities: Pilgrimage; Heritage sightseeing

» **Noori Masjid (Hazaribagh):** An exquisite example of Mughal-era Islamic architecture, this mosque is known for its symmetry, arches and historical legacy dating back centuries.

Key Activities: Religious architecture visit; Photography

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Baidyanath Dham (Deoghar):** One of India's 12 Jyotirlingas and also a Shakti Peeth, this temple attracts millions of devotees, especially during the Shravan Mela when pilgrims walk barefoot for over 100 km carrying Ganga water.

» **Naulakha Temple (Deoghar):** A serene Radha-Krishna temple built in 1940 by Queen Charushila in memory of her son; known for its peaceful surroundings and spiritual ambience.

» **Parasnath / Shikharji (Giridih):** The holiest Jain pilgrimage site where 20 of the 24 Tirthankaras attained moksha; devotees undertake a sacred 27 km trek to reach the hilltop shrines.

» **Jagannath Temple (Ranchi):** Built in 1691 by the king of Barkagarh, this temple resembles the famous Jagannath Temple of Puri and hosts a grand Rath Yatra attracting thousands of devotees.

» **Pahari Mandir (Ranchi):** A prominent hilltop Shiva temple offering panoramic views of Ranchi, this sacred site is especially crowded during Mahashivratri and other Hindu festivals.

» **Harihar Dham (Giridih):** Known for housing one of the tallest Shiva lingams in India (over 65 feet high), it serves as a major pilgrimage centre during Shravan and Shivratri.

» **Rajrappa / Chhinnamasta Temple (Ramgarh):** A powerful Shakti Peeth dedicated to Goddess Chhinnamasta, located at the confluence of the Damodar

and Bhairavi rivers and visited heavily during Navratri.

» **Basukinath Dham (Dumka):** An ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, visited as a twin pilgrimage along with Baidyanath Dham, especially crowded during the holy month of Shravan.

» **Kalyaneshwari Temple (Dhanbad):** A historic temple near Maithon Dam dedicated to Goddess Kalyaneshwari, attracting large numbers of devotees seeking blessings for family well-being and protection.

» **Surya Temple (Bundu, Ranchi):** A beautifully designed chariot-shaped temple dedicated to the Sun God, popular for Chhath Puja and surrounded by peaceful landscapes and a sacred pond.

» **Bindudham Temple (Sahibganj):** Situated atop Binduwasni hill, this temple dedicated to Goddess Durga offers a spiritual experience during Navratri with views over the plains below.

» **Itkhori / Bhadrakali Temple (Chatra):** A sacred place for both Hindus and Buddhists, believed to be where Maa Bhadrakali appeared, with ancient stone carvings and Pala-era idols discovered in the region.

» **Kauleshwari Temple (Chatra):** Perched on Kolhua Hill, this ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Kauleshwari (a form of Kali/Sati) is both a Shakti Peeth and a peaceful hill shrine offering spiritual solitude.

» **Dhori Mata Tirthalaya (Bokaro):** A famous Roman Catholic pilgrimage site known as the Shrine of the Miraculous Mother of the Coal Mines, where thousands of devotees attend annual prayer services and processions.

» **Jharkhand Dham / Kulbonga Mahadev (Giridih):** A unique and ancient Shiva temple without a roof, widely respected for its spiritual energy and attracting large gatherings during Maha Shivratri.

» **Deori Mandir (Ranchi):** A historic Durga temple near Ranchi where both tribal priests (Pahans) and Brahmins conduct rituals, reflecting deep-rooted local faith and inclusive worship traditions.

Culture and Cuisines

Rich in tribal traditions, Jharkhand's festivals like Sarhul and Karma highlight deep ties with nature, dance and music. The regional cuisine delights with rustic flavours such as litti-chokha, dhuska, thekua and handia, offering an authentic taste of local life.

Culture

» **Sarhul Festival:** Celebrated by tribal communities (especially Oraon, Munda and Ho), this springtime festival honours nature and village deities with flower offerings, traditional dances and drumbeats -offering tourists a deep insight into Jharkhand's eco-centric tribal spirituality.

» **Karma Festival:** Observed by tribal groups across Jharkhand, it celebrates the Karma tree as a symbol of fertility and good fortune. Folk songs and dances are performed all night, making it a vibrant cultural experience for visitors.

» **Chatra Mela (Chatra District):** One of the oldest cattle and religious fairs in the region, held during Ram Navami. Tourists experience rural trade, tribal handicrafts and traditional wrestling.

» **Jawa Festival (Santhal Community):** Celebrated by women praying for the long life of children, this festival involves group singing, floral decorations and local rituals-offering a glimpse into Santhal matriarchal traditions.

» **Tusu Parab:** A post-harvest festival celebrated during Makar Sankranti, with tribal women making clay idols of Goddess Tusu and floating them in rivers, offering a rare spectacle of tribal devotion and song.

» **Kolhua Mela (Hunterganj, Chatra):** Held at Kauleshwari Hill, this fair attracts both Hindus and Buddhists and showcases religious harmony. Ideal for spiritual tourists and cultural researchers.

» **Bhagta Parab:** A traditional tribal festival marked by daring stunts and acrobatic pole dances as offerings to deities. A thrilling cultural event for adventurous visitors.

Cuisines

» **Thekua:** A deep-fried sweet made of wheat flour, jaggery and ghee-popular during Chhath Puja. Its rustic taste and cultural link make it a must-try during festive seasons.

» **Litti-Chokha:** Though also found in Bihar, Jharkhand's version is equally famous. Roasted wheat balls stuffed with spiced sattu, served with mashed vegetables-perfect for cultural food trails.

» **Dhuska:** A crispy deep-fried rice-lentil pancake served with spicy potato curry-commonly enjoyed during fairs and festivals, showcasing traditional tribal flavours.

» **Handia:** A traditional rice beer made by tribal communities through natural fermentation. Though alcoholic, it's a significant part of local rituals and community gatherings.

» **Chilka Roti**: A rice-flour-based flatbread similar to dosa, served with chutneys or meat curry. Often cooked during cultural functions and local weddings.

» **Pitha:** Rice dumplings filled with jaggery and coconut or lentils - served during festivals like Tusu and Karma. A sweet reflection of Jharkhand's culinary diversity.

» **Malpua:** A sweet pancake dipped in sugar syrup, made during Holi and other festive occasions - rich in taste and tradition.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Jharkhand's textiles and handicrafts showcase its rich tribal heritage through natural fibers, earthy colours and intricate handwork. These traditional crafts offer visitors an authentic cultural experience rooted in the region's indigenous way of life.

» **Sohrai & Khovar Art:** Tribal mural painting styles using natural colours, traditionally done by women on mud walls during harvest and marriage seasons. These symbolic artworks are now also found on canvas and pottery, making them unique souvenirs.

Key Areas: Hazaribagh, Isko Village, Urban Haat Ranchi

» **Dokra Art:** An ancient metal casting craft using the lost-wax technique to create rustic brass figurines, tribal deities, lamps and ornaments. Highly collectible for its aesthetic and traditional value.

Key Areas: Dumka, Dhanbad, Tribal Emporium Ranchi

» **Tussar Silk (Bhagalpuri/ Jharcraft Silk):** Jharkhand is a major producer of authentic tussar silk. The handwoven silk sarees and fabrics are valued for their coarse texture and natural sheen.

Key Areas: Chaibasa, Bhagaiya (Godda), Jharcraft Showrooms (Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Deoghar)

» **Bamboo & Cane Craft:** Tribal artisans craft utility and decorative items like baskets, trays, lampshades and furniture from bamboo and cane - eco-friendly and authentic to rural Jharkhand.

Key Areas: Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, Handicraft Hubs in Ranchi

» **Stone Carving:** Skilled tribal artisans carve statues of gods, animals and tribal motifs on sandstone and granite, often sold as decorative sculptures or garden pieces.

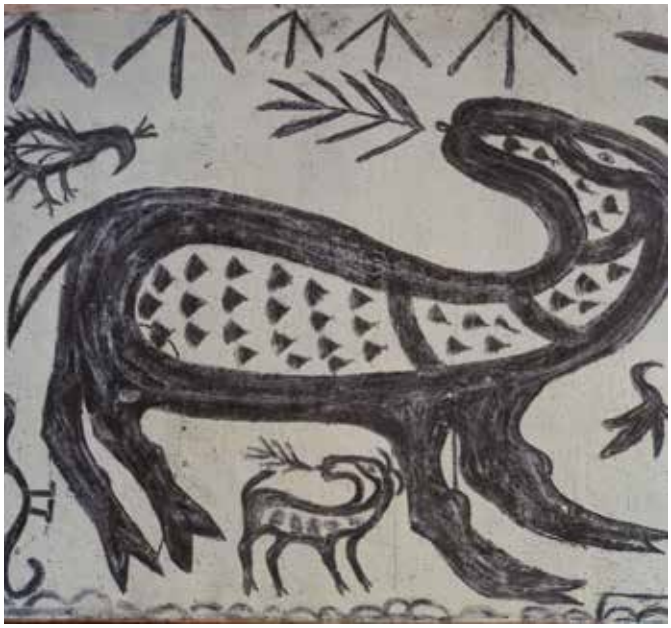
Key Areas: Gaya Road (Ranchi), Chotanagpur Artisans' Markets

» **Wood Craft:** Known for finely carved masks, traditional doors, stools and kitchen items - showcasing ethnic patterns and tribal mythology.

Key Areas: Seraikela, West Singhbhum, Local Handloom Centres

» **Lac Jewellery:** Brightly coloured jewellery made of resin from forest trees, crafted into bangles, earrings and hair accessories - popular among tribal women and now tourists.

Key Areas: Khunti, Torpa, Tribal Co-op Stores in Ranchi



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing, trekking and festivals.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Extremely hot and dry; not suitable for outdoor travel or exploration. Monsoon turns waterfalls and forests lush and scenic; great for nature lovers.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **The Baidyanath Dham temple is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas at Deoghar** and also a Shakti Peeth, making it a rare dual-religious site for both Shaivites and Shaktas.

» **The Parasnath Hills are sacred to Jains as 20 Tirthankaras attained moksha here.** It is the most important Jain pilgrimage site in India, drawing devotees from around the world for its 27 km spiritual trek.

» **Maluti village has over 70 terracotta temples but remains one of India's best-kept heritage secrets.** These temples date back to the 17th century and feature exquisite carvings of Hindu mythology, perfect for heritage tourism.

» **Ranchi** is one of the few Indian cities surrounded by more than two dozen waterfalls hence **known as the "City of Waterfalls".**

» **Tussar silk from Jharkhand is globally recognised** and was once exported to royal courts.

» **The tribal festival 'Sarhul' is an example of eco-centric celebration.** It showcases the bond between nature and indigenous culture-great for cultural tourism and documentary storytelling.

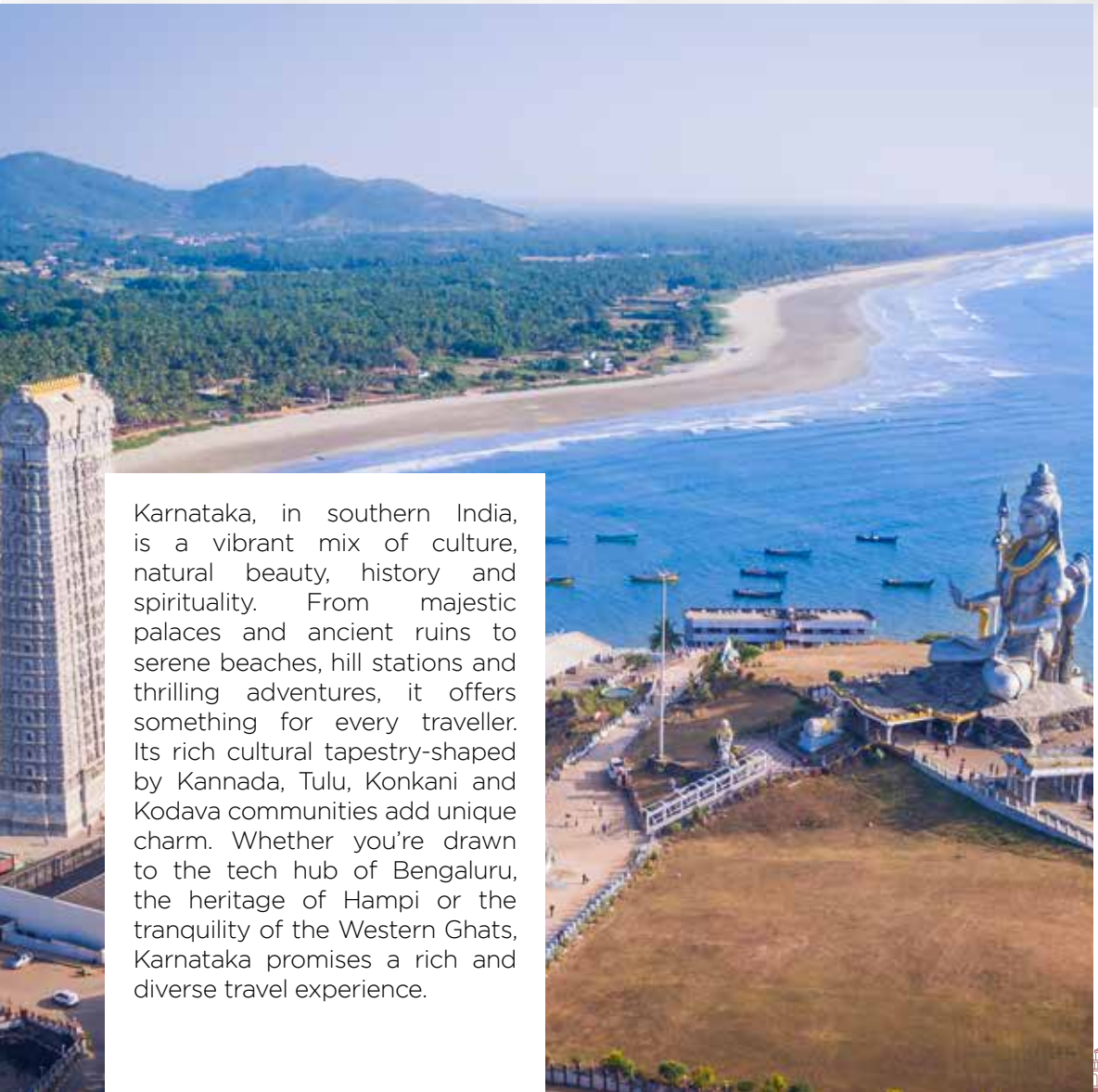
» **The Betla National Park was one of the first in India to become a Project Tiger reserve.** It offers jungle safaris, forest lodges and a glimpse of tigers, elephants and forts-perfect for wildlife and heritage lovers.

» **McCluskieganj, a sleepy colonial town in Jharkhand, is called 'Mini England'** and known for its British-era cottages, churches and cooler climate, it's ideal for offbeat tourism.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Karnataka

Tourism



Karnataka, in southern India, is a vibrant mix of culture, natural beauty, history and spirituality. From majestic palaces and ancient ruins to serene beaches, hill stations and thrilling adventures, it offers something for every traveller. Its rich cultural tapestry-shaped by Kannada, Tulu, Konkani and Kodava communities add unique charm. Whether you're drawn to the tech hub of Bengaluru, the heritage of Hampi or the tranquility of the Western Ghats, Karnataka promises a rich and diverse travel experience.

Best Places to Visit

Karnataka's major attractions include grand ancient temples, majestic forts, scenic hill stations, cascading waterfalls and rich wildlife sanctuaries, offering a diverse mix of heritage, nature and adventure experiences.

Nature Tourism

» **Coorg (Kodagu):** This hill station is filled with rolling coffee plantations and is perfect for trekking through aromatic groves.

Key Activities: Trekking along coffee trails; guided plantation tours; birdwatching in lush forests and nature photography

» **Talakaveri (Kodagu):** This sacred spot marks the origin of the Kaveri River and offers peaceful wooded treks.

Key Activities: Sightseeing; short treks around the spring and temple visit

» **Jog Falls (Shivamogga):** This waterfall offers moody grandeur during monsoon and is perfect for scenic walks beside rushing waters..

Key Activities: Sightseeing at the viewpoint; photography of cascading falls and gentle nature walks

» **Agumbe (Shivamogga):** This rainforest village delivers peaceful nature walks and memorable sunsets in the Western Ghats.

Key Activities: Hiking through rainforests; guided rainforest walks and sunset watching

» **Kabini (Mysuru):** This riverside haven allows you to enjoy a wildlife safari and boat ride down the scenic backwaters.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; boating on Kabini river; wildlife spotting and nature photography

» **Bandipur National Park (Chamarajanagar):** This forested area is an outstanding destination for safari excursions in tiger country.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Karnataka offers a wealth of lesser-known attractions that blend ancient heritage, natural beauty and cultural diversity, providing enriching experiences beyond its popular tourist circuits:

UTTARA KANNADA

» **Apsarakonda:** Secluded waterfall and beach with lagoon, temple ruins and quiet forest ambience.

» **Sathodi Falls:** Hidden cascade in lush greenery forming a pristine natural pool.

» **Mirjan Fort:** Serene riverside fort ruin draped in greenery beside Aghanashini River.

UDUPI

» **Varanga (Kere Basadi):** 12th century Jain lake-temple rising from serene waters.

» **St Mary's Islands:** Basalt column beach clusters ideal for geology lovers.

» **Haladi Hanging Bridge:** Tranquil backwater bridge amid paddy fields and palms.

SHIMOGA

» **Honnemaradu (Sharavathi Backwaters):** Reservoir-side haven for kayaking, birding, camping.

» **Varahi Backwaters:** Peaceful waterside retreat near Agumbe with stunning sunsets.

CHIKKABALLAPUR / KOLAR

» **Gudibande Fort:** 17th century hill fort with rainwater-harvesting and panoramic hilltop views.

» **Gummanayaka Fort:** Medieval hill-fort ruins with lake and erotic carvings.

MANDYA

» **Melukote & Dhanushkoti:** Hill-top Vaishnava temples and mythic water-spring born from Rama's arrow.

» **Kokkarebellur Bird Sanctuary:** Village ecosystem that hosts painted storks & spot-billed pelicans.

BELAGAVI

» **Sural Waterfalls:** Hidden forest cascade ideal for short treks and relaxation.

» **Gokak Falls:** Impressive 170ft waterfall with colonial-era bridge and scenic gorge.

HASSAN

» **Bucesvara Temple (Koravangala):** Triple-shrine Hoysala temple with carved stone décor.

» **Shettihalli Rosary Church:** Gothic-ruin church that submerges in reservoir waters during monsoon.

CHIKKAMAGALURU

» **Lakkavalli:** A small hamlet near Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, great for jungle walks.

KOPPAL

» **Anegundi:** Village older than Hampi with rock-art, temple ruins, spiritual ambience.

TUMAKURU

» **Madhugiri Fort:** Steep rocky fort from Vijayanagara era with panoramic hiking views.

BENGALURU VICINITY

» **Shivagange:** Trek-pilgrimage peak shaped like a shivalinga.

» **Karighatta Hill:** Black-hued hilltop temple with scenic loop trek.

KODAGU

» **Tadiandamol Peak:** Coorg's highest peak, offering serene trekking away from crowds.

CHAMARAJANAGAR

» **Gopalaswamy Betta:** A mist-covered hill with a historic hilltop temple.

BENGALURU URBAN

» **Nagavara Lake:** A city lake ideal for boating and scenic walks.

Key Activities: Jeep safari through tiger reserves; guided nature walks and wildlife photography

» **Chikmagalur(Chikkamagaluru):** This region invites visitors to tour coffee estates and capture mist-draped morning views.

Key Activities: Coffee estate tours; trekking in coffee country and nature photography

» **Kudremukha National Park (Chikkamagaluru):** Named after horse shaped mountain peak, it is famous for biodiverse trails and scenic landscapesthat are perfect for nature-filled hikes.

Key Activities: Trekking on mountain trails; guided nature walks and birdwatching

» **Hebbe Falls (Chikkamagaluru):** This hidden waterfall in the hills is ideal for a refreshing trek and natural dip.

Key Activities: Jeep ride through estates; trekking to the falls and swimming in the pool

» **Gokarna Beaches (Uttara Kannada):** These tranquil shores offer peaceful spots for evening yoga sessions.

Key Activities: Beach walks; yoga at sunrise; swimming and sunset watching

» **Dandeli (Uttara Kannada):** This adventure hotspot offers thrilling white-water rafting and kayaking amid dense forests.

Key Activities: River rafting; kayaking; jungle safari and ziplining through treetops

» **Yana Caves (Uttara Kannada):** These mysterious limestone formations are perfect for a day of hiking and exploration.

Key Activities: Hiking to rock formations; photography of unique caves and rock exploration

» **Shivanasamudra Falls (Mandya):** This scenic waterfall is great for short hikes around twin cascading streams.

Key Activities: Sightseeing at the twin falls; nature photography and short hikes

» **Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary (Mandya):** This sanctuary is a bird lover's paradise with boat tours for close wildlife encounters.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; boating among river islets and nature photography

» **Bheemeshwari (Mandya):** This riverside destination is ideal for camping; kayaking and fishing along the Cauvery.

Key Activities: Fishing in the Cauvery; river rafting; kayaking and camping by the riverbank

» **Sakleshpur (Hassan):** This region offers scenic plantation trails and camping amidst lush greenery.

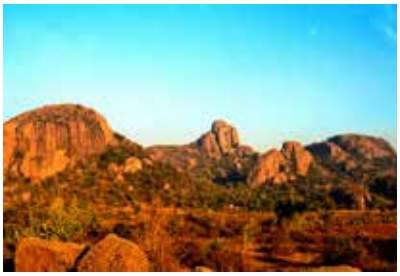
Key Activities: Plantation walks; trekking and camping under the stars

» **Maravanthe Beach (Udupi):** This beach uniquely curves between sea and river, creating a memorable coastal road trip stop.

Key Activities: Photography of the coastal stretch; swimming and stopping for scenic views

Adventure Tourism

» **Ramanagara (Ramanagara):** Popularly known as the shooting location of the film Sholay, Ramanagara offers rocky hills perfect for adventure sports. It's a hub for rock climbing and rappelling with panoramic views.



Key Activities: Rock climbing on granite hills; rappelling down cliff faces; trekking to hilltop shrines; camping under the stars

» **Savandurga (Ramanagara):** Home to one of Asia's largest monoliths, Savandurga is a striking destination for thrill-seekers and climbers. The rugged terrain is also ideal for overnight treks and forest exploration.

Key Activities: Intense rock climbing; trekking through scrub forests; night camping near the hills

» **Manchinbele Dam (Ramanagara):** Surrounded by hills and backwaters, this dam site offers exciting water-based adventure sports in a natural setting. It's a favourite for group outings and weekend retreats.

Key Activities: Kayaking on calm waters; rappelling down dam cliffs; ziplining over water stretches

» **Skandagiri (Chikkaballapur):** Known for its iconic night treks, Skandagiri offers mist-covered trails that lead to ancient hilltop ruins. The sunrise trek is especially popular with young trekkers.

Key Activities: Night trekking through forest trails; stargazing at the summit; watching sunrise from hilltop

» **Anthargange (Kolar):** This rocky hill area is famous for volcanic rock formations and natural caves. It provides a thrilling environment for cave exploration and trekking.

Key Activities: Cave exploration through narrow passages; boulder trekking on rocky terrain; rock climbing for beginners

» **Kunti Betta (Mandya):** A twin hill ideal for beginner trekkers and adventure enthusiasts, Kunti Betta offers scenic trails and tranquil views of the surrounding lakes and fields.

Key Activities: Night trekking for stargazers; sunrise photography; easy hill treks with local guides

» **Chitradurga Fort (Chitradurga):** This historic fort is also an adventure destination for those who enjoy climbing and exploring rugged terrain with a side of heritage.

Key Activities: Trekking along fort ramparts; climbing ancient stone structures; historical exploration on foot

» **Jogimatti (Chitradurga):** A forested hill region with rich biodiversity, Jogimatti is great for eco-adventurers looking to explore offbeat trails and birdlife.

Key Activities: Hiking through forest trails; birdwatching in natural habitat; nature photography

» **Makalidurga (Doddaballapura):** This granite hill with a fort ruin at the top offers a moderate trek and tranquil views, perfect for a weekend adventure.

Key Activities: Trekking up rocky slopes; overnight camping at the summit; photographing sunrise over hills

Heritage Tourism

» **Hampi (Ballari):** This UNESCO World Heritage site features the majestic ruins of the Vijayanagara Empire. Temples, palases and ancient markets offer a deep dive into South India's imperial past.

» **Badami (Bagalkot):** Renowned for its red sandstone rock-cut cave temples, Badami reflects the early Chalukya architectural style. Its ancient sculptures and fort ruins attract archaeology lovers.

» **Pattadakal (Bagalkot):** Pattadakal is a UNESCO World Heritage Site showcasing a fusion of North and South Indian temple styles. It was the royal coronation site for the Chalukyas.

» **Aihole (Bagalkot):** Known as the cradle of Indian temple architecture, Aihole has over a hundred shrines. It's a significant early medieval site representing various temple-building techniques.

» **Belur and Halebidu (Hassan):** These towns house exquisite examples of Hoysala architecture, including intricately carved temples. They reflect the grandeur of 12th-century temple artistry.

» **Bijapur (Vijayapura):** This city is famous for the monumental Gol Gumbaz and other Islamic-era structures. The architecture blends Deccan Sultanate elegance with Persian influence.

» **Srirangapatna (Mandya):** This historic town is steeped in the legacy of Tipu Sultan and the Wadiyar dynasty. It offers a blend of Islamic architecture and royal heritage.

» **Bidar (Bidar):** This fort-city is known for its Islamic monuments and traditional Bidriware craft. Tourists often visit for its medieval architecture and cultural richness.

» **Lakkundi (Gadag):** This village contains a remarkable cluster of temples and ancient stepwells. It is a lesser-known treasure for temple architecture enthusiasts.

» **Gulbarga Fort (Kalaburagi):** This fort blends Indo-Persian design in its mosques and royal tombs. It is a must-visit for those interested in Islamic and medieval military architecture.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Chamundeshwari Temple (Mysuru):** Perched atop Chamundi Hill this iconic temple is dedicated to Goddess Chamundeshwari and offers sweeping views of Mysuru city. It is one of the most visited temples in Karnataka especially during Dasara.

» **Murudeshwar Temple (Uttara Kannada):** Home to the world's second-tallest Shiva statue, this coastal temple is famous for its dramatic sea backdrop. Tourists visit for its spiritual ambience and panoramic ocean views.

» **Udupi Sri Krishna Temple (Udupi):** This temple is renowned for its unique Kanakana Kindi window and rich Madhwa tradition. Pilgrims and tourists flock here for its rituals and temple-style vegetarian cuisine.

» **Dharmasthala Temple (Dakshina Kannada):** Known for its blend of Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions, this temple is also famous for mass feeding rituals and social service. It draws lakhs of pilgrims annually.

» **Kukke Subramanya Temple (Dakshina Kannada):** Nestled in the Western Ghats, this temple dedicated to Lord Subramanya is popular among devotees seeking relief from serpent-related doshas.

» **Kollur Mookambika Temple (Udupi):** Located in a scenic forest setting this temple is dedicated to Goddess Mookambika and is especially popular among pilgrims from Karnataka and Kerala.

» **Sringeri Sharada Peetham (Chikkamagaluru):** Founded by Adi Shankaracharya this spiritual center is known for its tranquil riverside location and deep roots in Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

» **Kotilingeshwara Temple (Kolar):** A remarkable pilgrimage site featuring lakhs of Shiva lingas and housing one of the largest shiva lingam in the world, this temple attracts spiritual tourists for its scale and devotional significance.

Culture and Cuisines

Karnataka's culture is a rich blend of ancient traditions, classical music and dance (like Yakshagana), vibrant festivals and architectural heritage shaped by dynasties like the Chalukyas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagara. It reflects a harmonious mix of Dravidian and contemporary influences.

Culture

» **Dasara Festival (Mysuru):** Celebrated with royal grandeur, Mysuru Dasara is Karnataka's most iconic festival often called the "State Festival." The 10-day celebration features a magnificent procession with caparisoned elephants, folk performances and a royal durbar at the Mysore Palace. It marks the triumph of good over evil and celebrates Goddess Chamundeshwari.

» **Pattadakal Dance Festival (Bagalkot):** Held at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Pattadakal, this festival celebrates classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi performed against the backdrop of historic Chalukyan temples. The event is a cultural tribute to Karnataka's temple architecture and artistic legacy.

» **Kambala (Dakshina Kannada and Udupi):** A traditional rural sport of buffalo racing in muddy water-filled paddy fields, Kambala is held in the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. The races are

thrilling and highly competitive, often accompanied by music and community festivities.

» **Hampi Utsav (Ballari):** This vibrant cultural festival is held at the ancient ruins of Hampi celebrating the region's glorious Vijayanagara heritage. It features folk music, dance performances, puppet shows, fireworks and guided heritage walks.

» **Ugadi (Statewide):** Marking the Kannada New Year, Ugadi is celebrated with rituals, new clothes and a special dish called Bevu-Bella which symbolises life's bittersweet nature. Homes are decorated with mango leaves and colourful rangolis offering tourists a glimpse into local customs.

» **Makara Sankranti / Suggi Habba (Statewide):** A major harvest festival celebrated in January, it honours the sun's transition into Capricorn. People fly colourful kites, prepare sesame-jaggery sweets and exchange greetings. Known as Suggi Habba in rural Karnataka, this is a great time to witness local folk traditions.

» **Karaga (Bengaluru Urban and Rural):** One of Karnataka's oldest and most unique folk festivals, Karaga is dedicated to Goddess Draupadi. Celebrated predominantly by the Tigala community in Bengaluru and nearby villages, the highlight is a nighttime procession where the priest balances a sacred floral pyramid on his head drawing crowds and cultural curiosity.

Cuisines

» **Mysore Masala Dosa:** Golden, crispy dosa with a spicy red chutney twist - breakfast royalty in Karnataka!

» **Bisi Bele Bath:** A hearty mix of rice, lentils and spices- comfort food with a punch.

» **Ragi Mudde:** Nutritious finger millet balls served with spicy sambar-rustic and authentic.

» **Mangalore Buns:** Sweet, fluffy banana puris - perfect with coconut chutney or just on their own!

» **Udupi Sambar & Idli:** Classic South Indian combo made famous by the temple town of Udupi.

» **Kundapura Chicken Curry:** Fiery coastal chicken curry rich with coconut and spices- coastal Karnataka in a bowl.

» **Neer Dosa:** Thin, lacy rice crepes that melt in your mouth-often paired with seafood curries.

» **Kharabath:** A spicy twist on upma - masala-loaded semolina for a bold start to the day.

» **Mysore Pak:** Ghee-loaded sweet delight-melt-in-the-mouth magic from the royal kitchens.

» **Coorgi Pandi Curry (Pork Curry):** Rich, spicy and smoky-Kodava-style pork that's a carnivore's dream.

» **Chiroti:** Flaky, layered dessert sprinkled with powdered sugar and milk-festival in every bite.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Karnataka's textiles and handicrafts are known for their intricate silk weaving, vibrant natural dyes, detailed sandalwood carvings, traditional metalwork and rich embroidery that reflect the state's artistic legacy and cultural finesse.

» **Mysore Silk Sarees:** Renowned for their opulent zari work and royal finish, Mysore silk sarees are a must-buy souvenir for visitors exploring Karnataka's regal heritage and craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Mysuru; Bengaluru; Channapatna

» **Ilkal Sarees:** With their vibrant red borders and traditional patterns, Ilkal sarees offer a unique glimpse into North Karnataka's weaving culture and are popular buys during local fairs and festivals.

Key Areas: Ilkal; Bagalkot; Dharwad

» **Kasuti Embroidery:** This intricate, temple-inspired embroidery reflects Karnataka's folk artistry and is best experienced on traditional garments sold in craft bazaars and rural cooperatives.

Key Areas: Dharwad; Hubballi; Gadag

» **Channapatna Toys:** A visit to the "Toy Town" near Bengaluru, it is a colourful journey into eco-friendly wooden craftsmanship, where you can shop safe, hand-lathed toys made using natural dyes.

Key Areas: Channapatna; Ramanagara; Bengaluru

» **Bidriware:** Tourists flock to Bidar for its striking black metalware inlaid with silver, perfect as heritage collectibles or elegant souvenirs from Karnataka.

Key Areas: Bidar; Hyderabad-Karnataka region

» **Lambani Embroidery:** Explore GI tagged tribal culture through vibrant mirror-work textiles made by the Lambani community of Sandur-perfect for picking up ethnic bags, garments, or wall hangings.

Key Areas: Bellary; Sandur; Koppal

» **Ganjifa Cards (Mysore):** These hand-painted cards narrate mythological tales and are a rare collectible for art lovers visiting Mysore's traditional craft stores.

Key Areas: Mysuru; Chitradurga

» **Cauvery Pottery:** Crafted along the Cauvery river, this terracotta pottery

blends rustic charm with daily utility, making for earthy souvenirs from Karnataka's countryside.

Key Areas: Srirangapatna; Mandya; Mysuru

» **Brass & Copperware (Udupi):** Udupi's handcrafted temple utensils and lamps are a highlight for those exploring religious tourism and traditional South Indian metalwork.

Key Areas: Udupi; Mangaluru; Kundapura

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant and cool weather, ideal for sightseeing, wildlife safaris and hill station retreats.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Summer in most parts.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Karnataka has **five national parks** and over **25 wildlife sanctuaries**, including **Bandipur** and Nagarhole, which are part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

» The **Western Ghats**, which run through Karnataka, are one of the **world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity**.

» **Hampi**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was once the capital of the **Vijayanagara Empire**, one of the richest cities in the world during the 14th century.

» Karnataka is home to **the world's largest monolithic statue**-the 57-foot tall **Gommateshwara (Bahubali)** statue in Shravanabelagola.

» The **Mysore Palace** is one of the **most visited tourist attraction in India**.

» The **Mysuru Dasara** is a **10-day royal celebration** with an elephant procession and cultural performances, attracting thousands of tourists every year.

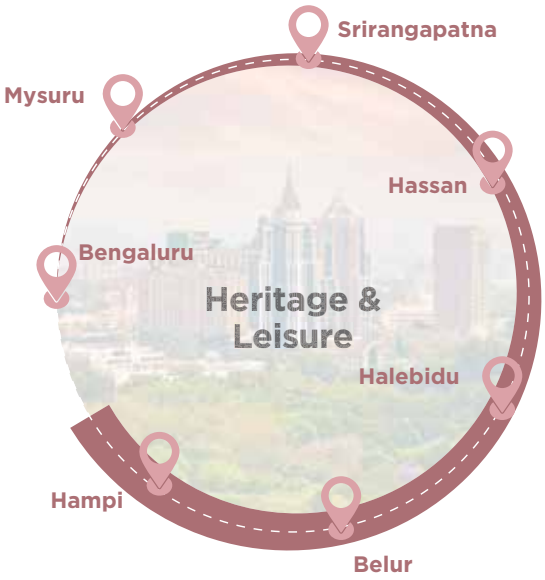
» The **Murudeshwar Temple** has the **second tallest Shiva statue in the world**, standing at 123 feet, overlooking the Arabian Sea.

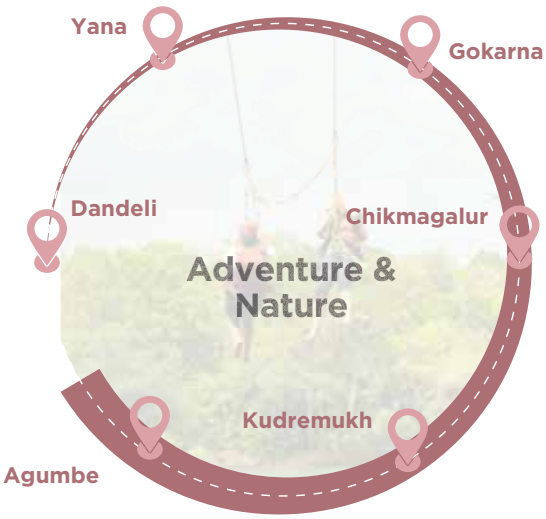
» Karnataka has the **highest number of protected monuments in India**, second only to Uttar Pradesh.

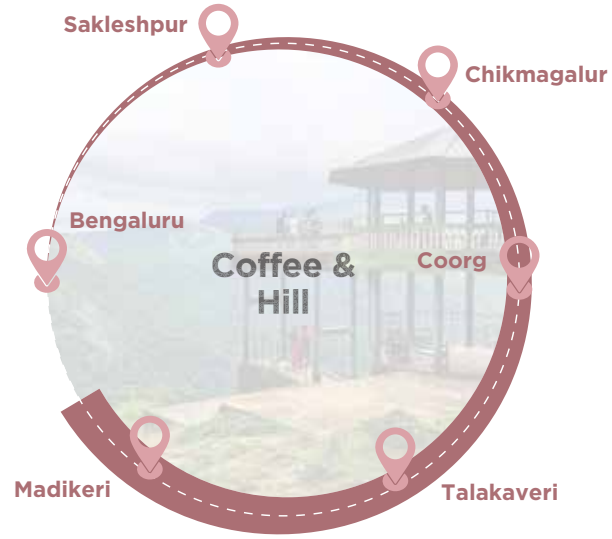
» **Bengaluru** was the **first city in Asia to install electric street lights-in 1905**.

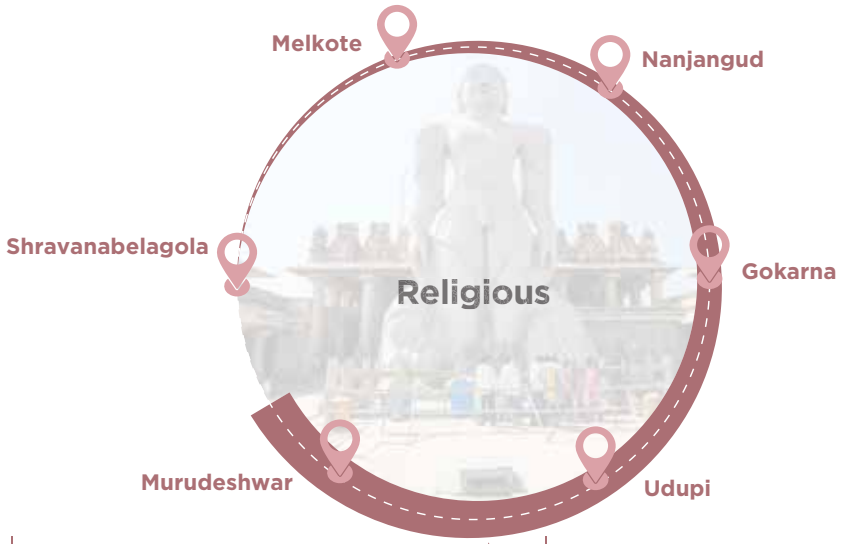
» **Bengaluru is called the "Silicon Valley of India**," housing hundreds of tech startups and hubs.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



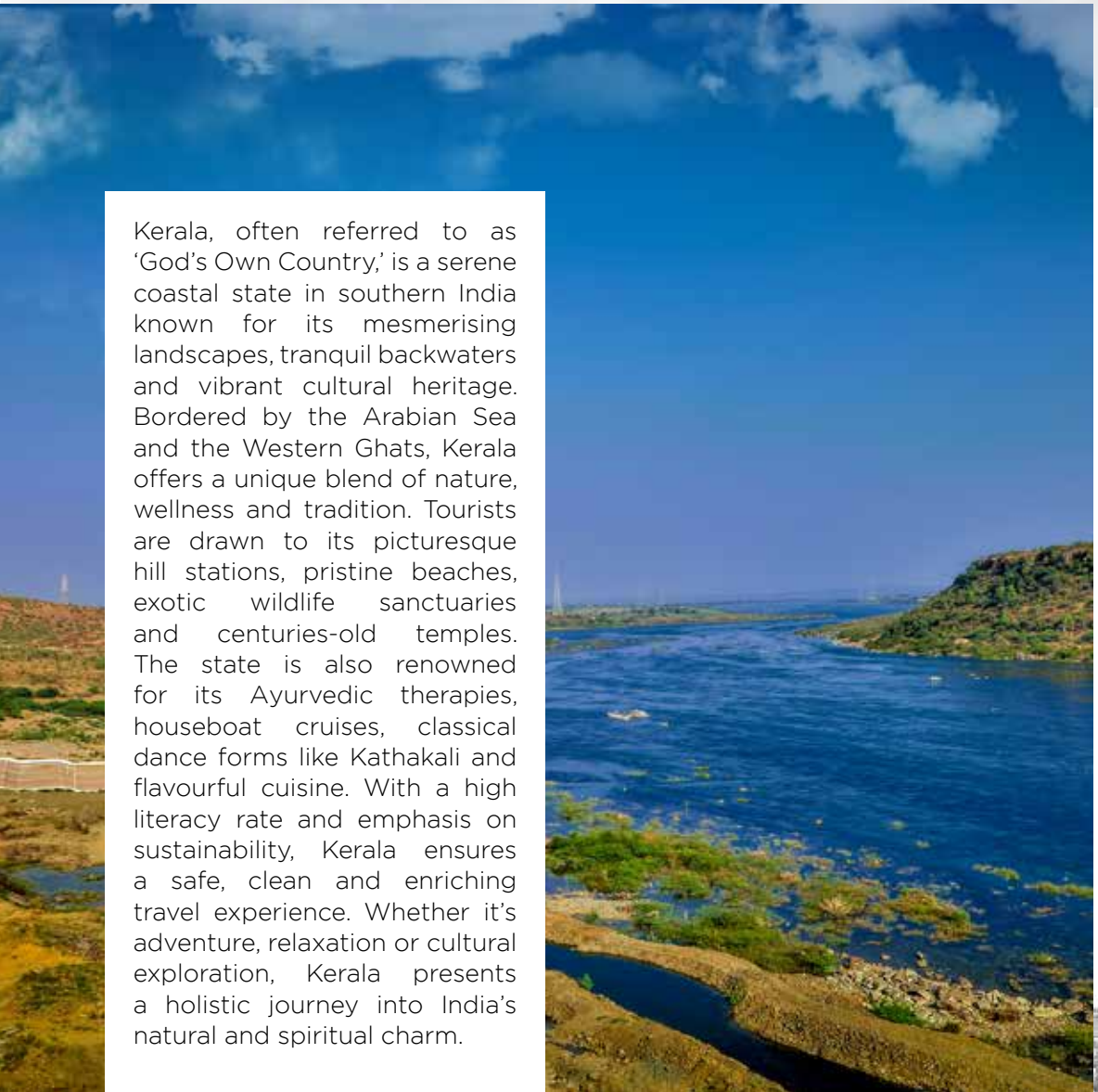






Kerala

Tourism



Kerala, often referred to as 'God's Own Country,' is a serene coastal state in southern India known for its mesmerising landscapes, tranquil backwaters and vibrant cultural heritage. Bordered by the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, Kerala offers a unique blend of nature, wellness and tradition. Tourists are drawn to its picturesque hill stations, pristine beaches, exotic wildlife sanctuaries and centuries-old temples. The state is also renowned for its Ayurvedic therapies, houseboat cruises, classical dance forms like Kathakali and flavourful cuisine. With a high literacy rate and emphasis on sustainability, Kerala ensures a safe, clean and enriching travel experience. Whether it's adventure, relaxation or cultural exploration, Kerala presents a holistic journey into India's natural and spiritual charm.

Best Places to Visit

Kerala, nestled between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, is a captivating blend of tranquil backwaters, verdant hills, vibrant traditions and timeless natural beauty, making it one of India's most sought-after travel destinations.

Nature Tourism

» **Munnar (Idukki):** A mist-covered hill station known for tea gardens, valleys and cool breezes.

Key Activities: Tea estate walks; Trekking; Nature photography

» **Periyar Tiger Reserve (Idukki): :** A famous tiger reserve surrounding the Periyar Lake in the Western Ghats.

Key Activities: Jungle patrol; Boat safari on Periyar lake; Birdwatching

» **Eravikulam National Park (Idukki):** Kerala's first national park, a protected highland area home to the endangered Nilgiri Tahr.

Key Activities: Wildlife viewing; Valley walk; Neelakurinji bloom viewing (seasonal)

» **Meesapulimala (Idukki):** The second-highest peak in Kerala offering panoramic views and misty trails.

Key Activities: Mountain trekking; Camping; Sunrise watching

» **Anamudi Shola National Park (Idukki):** A biodiversity-rich shola forest ideal for conservation treks.

Key Activities: Eco-trekking; Wildlife spotting; Photography

» **Wayanad (Wayanad):** A green haven of forests, waterfalls, caves and tribal communities.

Key Activities: Edakkal cave visit; Waterfall treks; Wildlife safari

Lesser-Known Attractions

Kerala's lesser-known destinations offer a peaceful and authentic experience, showcasing the state's natural beauty, cultural heritage and local traditions away from the usual tourist routes.

TRIVANDRUM

» **Ponmudi:** Mist-covered hill retreat with serene walking trails.

» **Vellayani Lake:** Quiet freshwater lake ideal for boating and birdwatching.

» **Varkala:** A scenic coastal town known for serene beaches and natural mineral springs.

» **Thiruvambadi Beach:** Quiet beach ideal for relaxation away from crowds.

KOLLAM

» **Munroe Island:** Backwater Island village known for canal cruises and traditional life.

» **Sasthamkotta Lake:** Kerala's largest freshwater lake, surrounded by greenery.

PATHANAMTHITTA

» **Aranmula:** Heritage village known for metal mirrors and snake boat races.

» **Charalkunnu:** Hilltop retreat offering valley views and peaceful sunsets.

ALAPPUZHA

» **Kakkathuruth Island:** Remote island also known as Islands of Crows, accessible only by traditional boats and is famous for birds and stunning sunsets.

ERNAKULAM

» **Paniyeli Poru:** Forest stream destination popular for short treks and riverside dips.

» **Kodanad:** Elephant care village near the Periyar River.

» **Kumbalangi:** Model eco-village with mangroves and crab farming experiences.

KOTTAYAM

» **Ilaveezhapoonchira:** Scenic valley surrounded by hills and perfect for sunrise views.

» **Illikkal Kallu:** Rocky hilltop offering panoramic views and trekking opportunities.

IDUKKI

» **Marayoor:** Sandalwood forest village with ancient dolmens.

» **Irukallummudi:** Hidden viewpoint offering cliffside views over valleys.

THRISSUR

» **Vilangan Kunnu:** Small hill with walking paths and scenic city views.

» **Chavakkad Beach:** Quiet beach where a river meets the sea.

PALAKKAD

» **Nelliyampathy:** Misty hill station with plantations and viewpoints.

» **Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary:** Kerala's only peacock sanctuary.

MALAPPURAM

» **Paloorkotta Waterfalls:** Forest waterfall with historical significance.

» **Kottakkal:** Renowned town for classical Ayurveda and heritage clinics.

KOZHIKODE

» **Anakkampoyil:** Hidden hill village with streams and forest trails.

» **Iringal Crafts Village:** Cultural village promoting traditional Kerala handicrafts.

WAYANAD

» **Thirunelli:** Ancient forest temple nestled in the Brahmagiri hills.

» **Kuruva Island:** Uninhabited river delta island rich in biodiversity.

KANNUR

» **Dharmadam Island:** Small tidal islet reachable on foot during low tide.

KASARAGOD

» **Valiyaparamba:** Offbeat backwater stretch with island scenery.

» **Nileshwaram:** Cultural hub with quiet houseboat cruises and temples.

» **Chembra Peak (Wayanad):** A popular trekking spot known for its heart-shaped lake.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Lake view hiking

» **Pookode Lake (Wayanad):** A freshwater lake set amidst forests and rolling hills.

Key Activities: Boating; Nature walks; Birdwatching

» **Silent Valley National Park (Palakkad):** A pristine rainforest sheltering rare species and river systems.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Guided nature walks; Birdwatching

» **Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (Palakkad):** A rich forest reserve nestled in the Western Ghats.

Key Activities: Jeep safari; Treehouse stay; Bamboo rafting

» **Nelliyampathy (Palakkad):** A hill retreat with tea estates, viewpoints and thick forests.

Key Activities: Plantation walks; Valley viewpoint visit; Forest drives

» **Malampuzha Gardens & Hills (Palakkad):** A scenic blend of dam, gardens and forested hills.

Key Activities: Cable car rides; Boating; Garden strolls

» **Ponmudi (Trivandrum):** A hill station known for its misty meadows and scenic trails.

Key Activities: Trail walking; Scenic drives; Butterfly watching

» **Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary (Trivandrum):** A protected forest zone around the Neyyar Dam.

Key Activities: Boat ride; Crocodile rehab visit; Safari

» **Agasthyakoodam (Trivandrum):** A sacred peak known for its rare herbs and biodiversity.

Key Activities: Seasonal trekking; Nature exploration; Birdwatching

» **Alleppey Backwaters (Alappuzha):** A tranquil network of canals, lagoons and traditional village life.

Key Activities: Houseboat cruise; Canoeing; Village walks

» **Pathiramanal Island (Alappuzha):** A small scenic island on Vembanad Lake teeming with birdlife.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Canoe rides; Photography

» **Kumarakom (Kottayam):** A peaceful backwater village with greenery and bird sanctuaries.

Key Activities: Houseboat ride; Birdwatching; Nature walks

» **Thenmala (Kollam):** India's first eco-tourism destination surrounded by forested hills.

Key Activities: Soft trekking; Rope bridge walk; Boating

» **Palaruvi Waterfalls (Kollam):** A milky stream waterfall cascading down rocky slopes.

Key Activities: Waterfall trek; Picnic; Forest bathing

» **Kakkayam (Kozhikode):** A reservoir region offering raw forest charm and rocky terrain.

Key Activities: Dam-side trekking; Wildlife spotting; Rock climbing

» **Thusharagiri (Kozhikode):** A hidden gem with a chain of waterfalls within thick rainforests.

Key Activities: Waterfall trekking; Forest walks; Photography

» **Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary (Thrissur):** A peaceful sanctuary with semi-evergreen forests and streams.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Short forest hikes

» **Ranipuram (Kasaragod):** A scenic hill station with grassy meadows and cool climate.

Key Activities: Grassland trekking; Butterfly watching; Nature camping

Adventure Tourism

» **Vagamon (Idukki):** A serene hill station that doubles as Kerala's paragliding hotspot.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Rock climbing; Trekking

» **Anchuruli Tunnel (Idukki):** A narrow, adventurous tunnel trail leading to a hidden reservoir.

Key Activities: Tunnel trekking; Reservoir photography; Exploration

» **Thoovanam Waterfalls (Idukki):** A remote waterfall within Chinnar Sanctuary accessible only by forest trek.

Key Activities: Trekking; Waterfall exploration; Wildlife sighting

» **Parunthumpara (Idukki):** A cliffside destination offering sweeping views and windy ridges.

Key Activities: Cliff hiking; Offbeat photography; Nature walks

» **Jatayu Earth's Center (Kollam):** A rock-themed adventure park built around a giant eagle sculpture.

Key Activities: Rock climbing; Zip-lining; Rappelling; Paintball zone

» **Varkala Cliff (Trivandrum):** A coastal cliff known for seaside thrills and scenic walks overlooking Arabian sea.

Key Activities: Parasailing; Surfing; Beach trekking

» **Kovalam Beach (Trivandrum):** A crescent-shaped beach famous for its strong waves and water sports.

Key Activities: Scuba diving; Surfing; Windsurfing

» **Poovar Estuary (Trivandrum):** A picturesque spot where backwaters meet the sea with water sports options.

Key Activities: Jet-skiing; Canoeing; Speed boat rides

» **Cherai Beach (Ernakulam):** A long sandy stretch near Kochi known for adventure-filled water activities.

Key Activities: Jet-skiing; Aqua parasailing; Kayaking

» **Marari Beach (Alappuzha):** A peaceful beach that also offers marine adventures.

Key Activities: Snorkelling; Scuba diving; Paddle boarding

» **Munambam Beach (Ernakulam):** A less crowded beach perfect for kite flying and sea exploration.

Key Activities: Kite surfing; Beach cycling; Fishing tours

» **Muzhappilangad Beach (Kannur):** India's longest drive-in beach, ideal for beach adventure lovers.

Key Activities: Beach driving; Paragliding (seasonal); Off-roading

» **Dharmadam Island (Kannur):** A secluded tidal island accessible during low tide for an adventurous walk.

Key Activities: Island trekking; Tide photography; Shell collecting

» **Wayanad Adventure Camp (Wayanad):** A forest-fringed camp by Karalad Lake offering high-adrenaline activities.

Key Activities: Zip-lining; Kayaking; Rock climbing

» **Mananthavady (Wayanad):** A gateway to offbeat forest treks and jeep safaris.

Key Activities: Forest jeep safari; Hill trekking; Cave exploration

» **Ariyankavu (Pathanamthitta):** A hilly region bordering Tamil Nadu, known for elephant trails and rugged terrain.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; River crossing; Elephant route exploration

» **Pandipathu (Trivandrum):** A remote hill area popular among hardcore trekkers and explorers.

Key Activities: Long-distance trekking; Wild camping; Hilltop viewing

» **Kumarakom Adventure Zone (Kottayam):** A less-known segment of Kumarakom that hosts inland water sports.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Row boating; Water cycling

» **Thattekad (Ernakulam):** Known for its bird sanctuary and a hub for outdoor adventure.

Key Activities: Mountain biking; River kayaking; Forest cycling

» **Ranipuram (Kasaragod):** A hilly escape near the Karnataka border offering quiet, rugged terrain.

Key Activities: Hill trekking; Forest camping; Nature photography

» **Nilambur (Malappuram):** A forest belt rich in teak plantations and adventurous trail routes.

Key Activities: Canopy walking; Forest trekking; Off-road drives

» **Vilangan Hills (Thrissur):** A scenic hillock ideal for beginner-level adventure seekers.

Key Activities: Hill climbing; Nature walking; Sunset photography

Heritage Tourism

» **Mattancherry Palace (Ernakulam):** A 16th-century Portuguese-built palace later renovated by the Dutch, known for Kerala murals and royal relics.

» **Jewish Synagogue / Paradesi Synagogue (Ernakulam):** India's oldest functioning synagogue (1568), noted for Chinese tiles and Belgian chandeliers.

» **Hill Palace (Ernakulam):** Kerala's largest archaeological museum and former royal residence of the Cochin Maharaja.

» **Fort Kochi (Ernakulam):** A historic European-influenced town with colonial architecture, Chinese fishing nets and old churches.

» **Thattekad (Ernakulam):** Though mainly known for its bird sanctuary, it also preserves colonial-era buildings and early forest research stations.

» **Padmanabhapuram Palace (Thuckalay, Tamil Nadu):** A 16th-century Travancore-era wooden palace located 64 kms from Thiruvananthapuram, celebrated for murals and rosewood interiors.

» **Kuthiramalika Palace (Trivandrum):** A 19th-century palace with carved wooden horses and traditional Kerala architecture.

» **Kanakakunnu Palace (Trivandrum):** A royal guest house turned cultural hub, surrounded by manicured heritage gardens.

» **Anchuthengu Fort (Trivandrum):** A 17th-century fort built by the British East India Company, with bastions and a colonial cemetery.

» **Sakthan Thampuran Palace (Thrissur):** A Dutch–Kerala architectural blend that served as a royal seat and now a museum.

» **Vadakkunnathan Temple (Thrissur):** An ancient Shiva temple famous for its murals, architecture and the Thrissur Pooram festival.

» **Palakkad Fort (Palakkad):** An 18th century fort built by Hyder Ali with thick laterite walls and strategic importance.

» **Varikasseri Mana (Palakkad):** A traditional Brahmin mansion showcasing Kerala's Nalukettu architecture, often used in films.

» **Bekal Fort (Kasaragod):** The largest sea-facing fort in Kerala, offering sweeping views and historical significance.

» **Thalassery Fort (Kannur):** An East India Company fort with laterite architecture and British colonial influence.

» **Thangassery Lighthouse (Kollam):** Built in 1902 by the British, this towering red-and-white lighthouse is a maritime heritage icon offering panoramic coastal views.

» **Edakkal Caves (Wayanad):** Prehistoric caves with petroglyphs dating back to 6000 BCE, accessible via a steep trek.

» **Krishnapuram Palace (Alappuzha):** A restored Travancore palace known for its mural 'Gajendra Moksham' and antiques.

» **Poonjar Palace (Kottayam):** A 600-year-old royal residence with wood carvings, antique collections and traditional architecture.

» **Kannan Devan Tea Museum (Idukki):** India's first tea museum in Munnar, chronicling the history of tea cultivation in Kerala.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **S.Padmanabhaswamy Temple (Trivandrum):** A grand 8th century temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, known for its Dravidian-Kerala architecture and legendary hidden treasures.

» **Attukal Bhagavathy Temple (Trivandrum):** Famous as the 'Sabarimala of Women,' this temple hosts the record-setting Pongala festival with millions of female devotees.

» **Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple (Pathanamthitta):** A sacred pilgrimage destination for Lord Ayyappa devotees, nestled deep in the Western Ghats.

» **Kottiyoor Temple (Kannur):** A revered Shakti shrine known as Dakshina Kashi, celebrated for its annual Vysakha Mahotsavam.

» **Guruvayur Temple (Thrissur):** One of the most important temples dedicated to Lord Krishna, often called the 'Dwarka of the South.'

» **Vadakkunnathan Temple (Thrissur):** A historic Shiva temple famous for its mural paintings and as the venue for the Thrissur Pooram festival.

» **Thrikkuratti Mahadeva Temple (Alappuzha):** An ancient riverside Shiva temple, one among the 108 Sivalayas, known for its traditional rituals.

» **Ambalapuzha Sree Krishna Temple (Alappuzha):** A temple dedicated to Lord Krishna, well known for its unique Palpayasam offering and murals.

» **Arthunkal St. Andrew's Basilica (Alappuzha):** A major Christian pilgrimage church dedicated to St. Sebastian, attracting thousands annually.

» **St. Thomas Church, Thumpoly (Alappuzha):** A Marian pilgrimage shrine from the 17th century, known for devotions to Mother Mary.

» **Ettumanoor Mahadeva Temple (Kottayam):** A prominent Shiva temple featuring traditional woodwork and the famed Ezhara Ponnana procession.

» **St. Alphonsa Shrine, Bharananganam (Kottayam):** The burial place of India's first canonized saint, St. Alphonsa, drawing pilgrims from across India.

» **St. George Cathedral (Kottayam):** A historic Syrian Christian cathedral and a spiritual center for the Syro-Malabar Catholic community.

» **Cheriyapally Church (Kottayam):** A 16th-century St. Mary's Church reflecting Syrian-Christian architecture and religious harmony.

» **Thangalpara Dargah (Kottayam):** A hilltop Islamic pilgrimage site dedicated to a revered Sufi saint, known for interfaith gatherings.

» **Thazhatangadi Juma Masjid (Kottayam):** One of the oldest mosques in India, built over 1000 years ago, renowned for its wooden architecture and spiritual legacy.

» **Cheraman Juma Masjid (Thrissur):** India's oldest mosque, believed to be built in 629 AD, representing Kerala's early Islamic heritage.

» **Kodungalloor Bhagavathy Temple (Thrissur):** A Shakti temple known for its fiery Bharani festival and deep-rooted folk traditions.

» **Malayattoor Church (Ernakulam):** A hilltop shrine dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle, popular for annual pilgrimages and processions.

» **Parassinikadavu Muthappan Temple (Kannur):** A unique temple where Theyyam rituals are performed, blending folk and Hindu traditions.

» **Thali Temple (Kozhikode):** A prominent 14th-century Shiva temple built during the Zamorin era, famed for its wood and laterite architecture.

» **Ananthapura Lake Temple (Kasaragod):** The only lake temple in Kerala, believed to be the original seat of Lord Padmanabha.

» **Malik Ibn Dinar Mosque (Kasaragod):** Among the first mosques in India, attributed to Malik Ibn Dinar, a companion of the Prophet.

» **Uliyannoor Sree Mahadeva Temple (Malappuram):** A historic Shiva temple set in a scenic riverside location, known for local legends.

Culture and Cuisines

Kerala's culture and cuisine reflect a rich blend of tradition and nature rooted in classical art forms, vibrant festivals, while offering a flavourful palette of coconut-infused dishes, spices and coastal delicacies shaped by centuries of trade and tradition.

Culture

» **Thrissur Pooram (Thrissur):** One of Kerala's grandest temple festivals held at Vadakkunnathan Temple, featuring majestic elephant processions, powerful percussion performances and a dazzling umbrella exchange ritual called Kudamattom, culminating in an epic firework display.

» **Onam (All Districts):** Kerala's most important harvest festival celebrated across the state in August - September, marked by floral decorations (Pookalam), traditional Onam Sadya meals, Vallam Kali (boat races) and vibrant folk performances like Thiruvathirakali and Pulikali.

» **Nehru Trophy Boat Race (Alappuzha):** Held on Punnamada Lake in August, this is the most prestigious snake boat race in Kerala, showcasing the spirit of teamwork, rhythm and community as long chundan vallams race to the cheers of thousands.

» **Aranmula Boat Race (Pathanamthitta):** A traditional snake boat procession held during the Onam season, known for its devotional nature, where rowers chant Vanchipattu and glide down the Pampa River in beautifully decorated boats carrying ceremonial offerings.

» **Cochin Carnival (Ernakulam):** A vibrant New Year celebration in Fort Kochi held in late December, blending colonial and local traditions through parades, street art, music, sports and the symbolic burning of a giant effigy called 'Papanhi' to welcome the new year.

» **Attukal Pongala (Trivandrum):** Recognised by the Guinness World Records, this unique women-led festival draws millions of devotees in February–March, who prepare sweet rice offerings in earthen pots on the streets for the goddess Attukal Bhagavathy.

» **Kodungallur Bharani (Thrissur):** A powerful Shakti festival held at the Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple in March–April, known for oracles in red attire, frenzied chants and rituals that reflect centuries-old folk and spiritual traditions.

» **Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani (Alappuzha):** Celebrated at the Chettikulangara Devi Temple, this festival features awe-inspiring Kettukazhcha, gigantic, decorated effigies carried in procession and ritual performances like Kuthiyottam by young boys in February - March.

» **Nishagandhi Dance Festival (Trivandrum):** A week-long classical dance and music festival held every January at Kanakakunnu Palace, bringing together acclaimed performers in Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Odissi and contemporary fusion styles.

» **Arattupuzha Pooram (Thrissur):** Known as one of the oldest Poorams in Kerala, this March - April festival gathers over 20 deities from neighboring temples, celebrated with large elephant parades and traditional percussion ensembles in a rural setting.

» **Njangattiri Aanayoottu (Palakkad):** A lesser-known

but culturally rich ritual at Njangattiri Bhagavathy Temple, where elephants are fed in a grand procession as part of an ancient tradition believed to bring blessings and prosperity. Devotees and visitors leave with a sense of fulfillment and joy, witnessing the happiness of the elephants on this special day.

Cuisines

» **Sadya:** A traditional vegetarian banquet served on a banana leaf featuring over 20 dishes like avial, olan and payasam.

» **Appam with Stew:** Soft, lacy rice pancakes paired with a fragrant coconut-milk stew made with vegetables, chicken or mutton.

» **Puttu and Kadala Curry:** Steamed rice-and-coconut cylinder accompanied by spicy black chickpea curry, a beloved breakfast staple.

» **Kerala Parotta:** Flaky, layered flatbread best enjoyed with rich curries like chicken or vegetable stew.

» **Thalassery Biryani:** Malabar-style biryani made with fragrant short-grain rice and aromatic spices for a subtle regional flavour.

» **Kerala Fish Curry (Matthi Curry):** Tangy and spicy coconut-based fish curry, often made with sardines or mackerel.

» **Karimeen Pollichathu:** Pearl-spot fish marinated in spices, wrapped in banana leaf and grilled to smoky perfection.

» **Kerala Prawn Curry (Chemmeen Theeyal):** Succulent prawns simmered in tangy coconut-tamarind gravy with bold spices.

» **Avial:** Mixed vegetables cooked in coconut and yogurt sauce, seasoned with coconut oil and curry leaves, an essential Sadya component.

» **Palada Payasam:** Creamy rice-flake pudding cooked in milk and jaggery, flavored with cardamom and nuts.

» **Unni Appam:** Sweet fritters made from rice flour, jaggery, banana and coconut making it a popular tea-time snack.

» **Pazham Pori (Ethakka Appam):** Slices of ripe banana coated in sweet batter and deep-fried until crisp.

» **Erissery:** Comforting stew of yam or pumpkin with lentils, coconut, cumin and mild spice, served during festive feasts.

» **Thattu Dosa:** Mini crispy dosas served hot with coconut chutney or curry, a beloved street-food version of the classic.

» **Ada Pradhaman:** A rich and traditional Kerala dessert made with rice ada, jaggery, coconut milk and ghee, often served during Onam and festive occasions.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Kerala's textiles and handicrafts embody its artistic legacy, blending traditional techniques with natural materials to create elegant, handcrafted products that reflect the state's cultural richness and skilled craftsmanship

» **Kasavu Sarees:** Elegant off-white sarees with golden borders, worn during festivals and special occasions.

Key Areas: Throughout Kerala

» **Mundu:** Traditional unstitched garment for men and women, known for its simplicity and cultural symbolism.

Key Areas: Throughout Kerala **Kasargod Sarees:** Bright cotton-silk sarees known for durability and vibrant colours.

Key Areas: Kasaragod

» **Chendamangalam Handloom:** Fine cotton fabrics with traditional borders, including set mundu and sarees.

Key areas: Ernakulam

» **Balaramapuram Handloom Fabrics:** Soft cotton textiles made on pit looms, known for purity and finesse.

Key Areas: Trivandrum

» **Aranmula Kannadi (Metal Mirror):** Polished metal mirrors made using a secret alloy technique, without glass.

Key Areas: Pathanamthitta

» **Coir Products:** Eco-friendly ropes, mats and carpets made from coconut fibre.

Key Areas: Alappuzha; Kollam; Kozhikode

» **Bell Metal & Brassware:** Traditional lamps, vessels and idols crafted using casting methods.

Key Areas: Alappuzha; Thrissur; Kannur

» **Screw Pine Craft:** Handwoven mats and decorative items made from screw pine leaves.

Key Areas: Alappuzha; Ernakulam; Palakkad

» **Coconut Shell Craft:** Decorative pieces made from polished coconut shells, often with brass inlay.

Key Areas: Trivandrum; Kozhikode

» **Horn Carving:** Miniature carvings using buffalo horn, known for detailed craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Trivandrum; Ernakulam

» **Lacquerware:** Glossy wooden items decorated with coloured lacquer and folk motifs.

Key Areas: Ernakulam

» **Sandalwood Carving:** Fragrant wood carvings used for idols, décor and religious art.

Key Areas: Trivandrum; Ernakulam; Thrissur; Kozhikode

» **Wood Carving & Kathakali Masks:** Decorative wooden art including expressive Kathakali masks and temple carvings.

Key Areas: Thrissur; Wayanad; Ernakulam

» **Bamboo & Cane Craft:** Crafted furniture and household items made from bamboo and cane.

Key Areas: Idukki; Ernakulam; Kollam; Kozhikode

» **Straw Picture Craft:** Folk pictorial art created using finely arranged natural straw.

Key Areas: Kollam; Kozhikode

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **July to March** (Pleasant weather, ideal for exploring backwaters, beaches and hill stations.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to June** (Monsoon and humidity, ideal for visiting serene landscapes. Heavy monsoon, enjoy Ayurvedic therapies and backwaters.)

DID YOU KNOW?

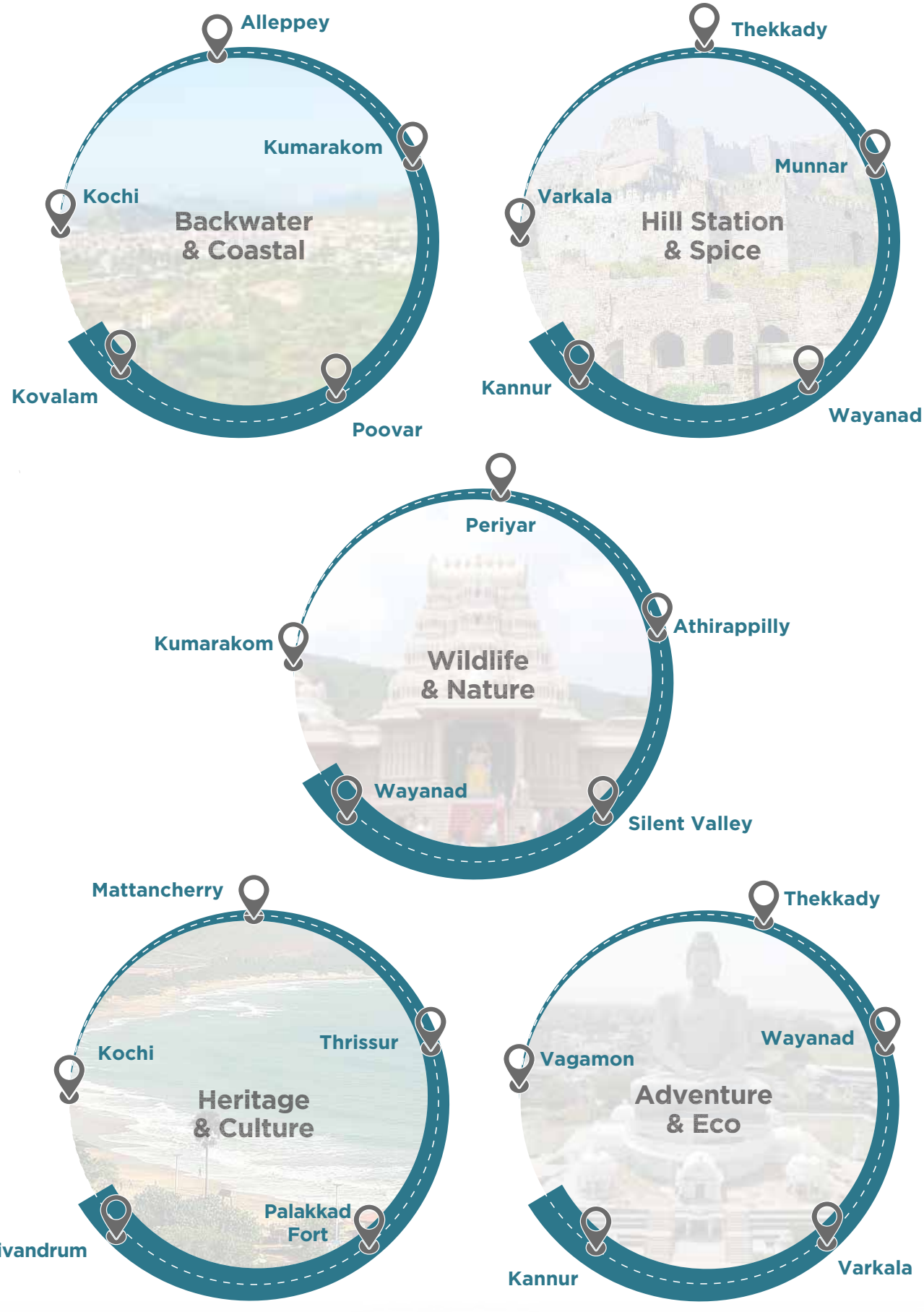
» Kerala is renowned for hosting the opulent **Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple**, known for its lavish embellishments of gold and precious stones, situated in the Pazhavangadi region of Thiruvananthapuram.

» Kerala is home to **world's pioneering Ayurvedic resort, Somatheeram,** a renowned attraction located in Chowara Beach on a scenic hillock in Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram.

» The state boasts the distinction of housing **India's first-ever church, mosque and synagogue**, showcasing its rich cultural diversity and historical significance.

» Kerala's enchanting **backwaters intricately weave through nearly half of the state's length,** add to its allure as a top tourist destination..

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Ladakh

Tourism

Ladakh, often called the "Land of High Passes," is a stunning destination nestled in the northernmost region of India. Known for its breathtaking landscapes, towering mountains and crystal-clear lakes like Pangong Tso and Tso Moriri, Ladakh has become a paradise for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. Activities such as trekking, river rafting, mountain biking and visits to ancient monasteries draw tourists from across the globe. The serene beauty of Nubra Valley, the stark yet majestic beauty of the cold desert and the dramatic terrain of Zanskar make Ladakh a must-visit for those seeking unique and offbeat travel experiences.

Best Places to Visit

Leh is a cultural and adventure hub of Ladakh, known for landmarks like Leh Palace, Shanti Stupa and ancient monasteries such as Hemis and Thiksey. It offers stunning views, rich heritage and easy access to sites like Khardung La Pass and Magnetic Hill.

Nature Tourism

» **Pangong Tso Lake (Leh):** A mesmerising lake stretching from India to China, known for its color-changing waters. Surrounded by barren mountains, it's a photographer's dream. Sunrise and sunset views are magical.

Key Activities: A high-altitude lake famous for its color-changing waters and dramatic mountain backdrop.

» **Tso Moriri Lake (Leh):** A tranquil high-altitude lake in the Changthang Plateau, ideal for birdwatching and peaceful reflection. The area is also a wetland reserve making it world's highest Ramsar Site. It's less touristy and deeply serene.

Key Activities: A serene freshwater lake surrounded by snow peaks and rich in birdlife.

» **Nubra Valley (Leh):** A cold desert valley known for sand dunes, Bactrian camels and lush villages. It's a green paradise amidst rugged terrain. The valley is connected to Leh by Khardungla (one of the highest motorable passes in the world).

Key Activities: A cold desert valley with sand dunes, Bactrian camels and the majestic Diskit Monastery.

» **Zanskar Valley (Kargil):** Remote and raw, Zanskar is a hidden gem ideal for nature lovers and trekkers. Majestic rivers, glaciers and untouched villages make it special. The Chadar Trek begins here in winter.

Key Activities: A remote, rugged valley ideal for trekking, river rafting and frozen river adventures.

» **Changthang Plateau (Leh):** Home to nomadic tribes and wild animals, this plateau is stark yet beautiful. Tso Moriri and Tso Kar lakes are located here. Its remote beauty is humbling.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond its famous sites, Leh is dotted with tranquil spots that showcase the region's rich culture and natural beauty. Wander through peaceful villages, serene riverbanks and vibrant local markets filled with traditional crafts.

LEH

» **Turtuk:** A Balti heritage village near the Pakistan border, known for apricot orchards and warm local hospitality in a picturesque valley.

» **Uleytokpo:** A serene Indus valley village ideal for camping, river rafting and as a base for nearby monasteries.

» **Takthok Monastery:** Unique cave-roofed Nyingma monastery near Sakti, known for its ancient Padmasambhava meditation cave.

» **Lingshed Monastery (Lingshet):** Remote Gelugpa monastery founded in the 1440s, surrounded by high-altitude hamlets.

KARGIL

» **Rangdum Village & Monastery:** Isolated Buddhist settlement in Suru Valley, offering serene ambiance and 16th-century heritage.

» **Stongdey Monastery (Zanskar valley):** Second-largest in Zanskar, perched above the village with grand temples and the annual Gustor festival.

» **Chiktan Castle:** 16th-century hilltop fort with intricate woodwork, offering panoramic valley views.

» **Dah & Hanu Villages:** Dard communities preserving ancient Aryan traditions, known for colorful houses and authentic culture.

CHANGTHANG REGION (LEH)

» **Tso Moriri Lake / Korzok Village:** High-altitude serene lake with nomadic settlements, birdlife and snow leopard chances.

» **Rumtse:** Gateway to Tso Moriri trek, featuring monastery ruins and rolling pasturelands.

» **Panamik:** Hot sulphur springs with medicinal reputation at Nubra's edge, close to Siachen buffer zone

Key Activities: A vast plateau home to nomads, Pashmina goats and stunning alpine lakes.

» **Hemis National Park (Leh):** India's largest high-altitude national park, home to snow leopards, blue sheep and Himalayan wolves. It's a biodiversity hotspot and trekking destination.

Key Activities: The best place in India to spot snow leopards and explore high-altitude biodiversity.

» **Tso Kar Lake (Leh):** Also called the "White Lake" due to its salt deposits, it is a birdwatcher's paradise. The area is home to Tibetan wild asses and black-necked cranes. Remote, windy and captivating.

Key Activities: A saltwater lake known for birdwatching, white shores and a peaceful landscape.

» **Drass Valley (Kargil):** One of the coldest inhabited places, Drass Valley offers alpine meadows and mountain views. It's the gateway to Ladakh from Kargil.

Key Activities: Known for its extreme cold, war memorials and panoramic views of icy peaks.

» **Suru Valley (Kargil):** Lush and fertile, this valley offers views of Nun Kun peaks and picturesque villages. A green oasis in Ladakh's arid terrain.

Key Activities: A green oasis with views of Nun-Kun peaks and charming traditional villages.

» **Shyok River Valley (Leh):** Flowing through Nubra, the Shyok River offers dramatic views and peaceful scenery. It meanders through deep gorges and sand plains.

Key Activities: A scenic valley with braided river paths and rugged mountain terrain.

» **Hanle (Leh):** A remote village with one of the world's highest astronomical observatories. The night skies are stunning and ideal for stargazing. It's also part of the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary.

Key Activities: A remote village famed for stargazing and India's highest astronomical observatory.

Adventure Tourism

» **Chadar Trek (Leh):** A legendary winter trek on the frozen Zanskar River, offering unmatched adventure and icy beauty. It tests endurance and rewards with surreal experiences.

Key Activities: Walk over the frozen Zanskar River during winter; one of the most thrilling winter treks in the world.

» **Khardung La Pass (Leh):** One of the highest motorable passes in the world, Khardung La is a biker's dream. It offers spectacular views and marks the gateway to Nubra Valley.

Key Activities: Ride or drive to one of the world's highest motorable passes; popular for biking and panoramic views.

» **Markha Valley Trek (Leh):** This moderate-to-challenging trek offers views of jagged peaks, monasteries and remote villages. It's ideal for those seeking a cultural and scenic experience.

Key Activities: A scenic multi-day trek through remote villages, rivers and Hemis National Park.

» **Zanskar River Rafting (Kargil):** The Zanskar River offers thrilling white-water rafting in stunning gorges. It's one of the most adventurous rafting routes in India. Best experienced in summer.

Key Activities: Experience white-water rafting through deep gorges and untouched mountain terrain.

» **Tso Moriri Trek (Leh):** Combining high-altitude trekking and lake views, this route is less crowded and very rewarding. It passes through nomadic settlements.

Key Activities: Trek to a pristine high-altitude lake surrounded by wildlife and nomadic camps.

» **Snow Leopard Trek (Leh):** Conducted in winter, this trek offers a chance to spot the elusive snow leopard in Hemis National Park. Ideal for wildlife lovers and photographers.

Key Activities: Spot the elusive snow leopard along with other Himalayan wildlife on guided winter treks.

» **Motorbike Tours (Leh):** Riding through Ladakh's rugged terrain, high passes and remote villages is the ultimate adventure. Bikers explore places like Pangong, Nubra and Tso Moriri.

Key Activities: Ride through dramatic landscapes and high passes including Khardung La, Chang La and Pangong.

» **Camel Safari in Nubra Valley (Leh):** Ride on double-humped Bactrian camels over cold desert dunes. The experience is surreal with mountains all around.

Key Activities: Enjoy rides on double-humped Bactrian camels across the sand dunes of Hunder.

» **Magnetic Hill (Leh):** An optical illusion makes vehicles appear to move uphill against gravity. A fun stop on the Srinagar-Leh highway.

Key Activities: Witness the optical illusion of vehicles appearing to move uphill without power.

Heritage Tourism

» **Leh Palace (Leh):** A 17th-century royal palace built by King Sengge Namgyal, served as the residence of the Namgail dynasty, featuring expansive halls and courtyard, ornate entrances and grand passageways that reflect its noble heritage. It offers panoramic views of Leh town and houses ancient artifacts and murals.

» **Alchi Monastery (Leh):** Dating back to the 11th century, Alchi Monastery is famed for its Indo-Tibetan art and wooden carvings. Unlike other hilltop monasteries, it is located on flat terrain near the Indus River.

» **Stok Palace (Leh):** The current residence of the royal family, Stok Palace features a museum with royal costumes, weapons and artifacts. The palace showcases traditional Ladakhi architecture and is surrounded by scenic beauty.

» **Shey Palace and Monastery (Leh):** Once the summer capital of Ladakh, Shey Palace contains a giant copper-gilt statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. The ruins still hold a quiet grandeur and historical importance.

» **Basgo Fort (Leh):** Perched dramatically on a cliff, Basgo Fort is known for its strategic location and ancient murals. It once played a vital role in Ladakh's defense and culture.

» **Tsemo Castle (Leh):** Towering over Leh, Tsemo Castle offers sweeping views of the town and surrounding mountains. It was built in the 15th century as a strategic watchtower and religious site.

» **Zorawar Fort (Leh):** Located in Leh, this fort honors General Zorawar Singh, known as the "Napoleon of India." It showcases military architecture and historical cannons.

» **Hall of Fame Museum (Leh):** This museum is dedicated to Indian soldiers who fought in Ladakh, especially during the Kargil War. Run by the Indian Army, it also displays Ladakhi culture and geography.

» **Old Town Leh (Leh):** Wander through narrow lanes of Leh's Old Town lined with centuries-old houses and traditional shops. The area reflects Tibetan and Central Asian influences.

» **Wanla Fort and Monastery (Leh):** An offbeat yet ancient site with unique medieval architecture, Wanla Fort also houses a small monastery. The area offers insight into early Buddhist settlements.

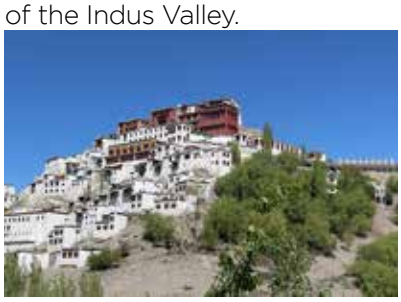
» **Kargil War Memorial:** The Kargil War Memorial honours India's fallen heroes, commemorating supreme sacrifice, courage, and victory in the 1999 Kargil war.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Hemis Monastery (Leh):** The largest and wealthiest monastery in Ladakh, Hemis is famous for its vibrant annual festival and masked dances. It

belongs to the Drukpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

» **Thiksey Monastery (Leh):** Located on a hilltop, Thiksey Monastery is known for its massive 49-ft Maitreya Buddha statue. It resembles the Potala Palace and offers serene views of the Indus Valley.



» **Diskit Monastery (Leh):** The oldest monastery in Nubra Valley, Diskit is famous for its 100-ft tall statue of Maitreya Buddha. Perched above the valley, it provides panoramic views and a spiritual atmosphere.

» **Spituk Monastery (Leh):** Just outside Leh, Spituk Monastery standout featuring the giant statue of Paldan Lhamo, revered by both Buddhists and Hindus and its annual Gustor Festival. It houses beautiful thangkas and ancient relics.

» **Likir Monastery (Leh):** This monastery houses a majestic golden statue of Buddha and rare manuscripts. Located 52 km from Leh, it belongs to the Gelugpa sect.

» **Phyang Monastery (Leh):** Less visited but historically significant, Phyang Monastery has vibrant murals and a large festival called Phyang Tsedup. Its remote setting offers peaceful meditation.

» **Rizong Monastery (Leh):** A strict monastic institution, Rizong Monastery is known for its discipline and spiritual focus. Located in a quiet valley, it's ideal for introspective visitors.

» **Lamayuru Monastery (Leh):** The Monastery is located in the region which is prominently known as the "Moonland of Ladakh," Lamayuru Monastery is one of Ladakh's oldest. Its unique setting amidst lunar-like landscapes is awe-inspiring.

» **Matho Monastery (Leh):** Unique for its annual oracle festival, Matho Monastery belongs to the Sakya school. The monks go into deep meditation and deliver spiritual messages during the festival.

» **Shanti Stupa (Leh):** Built by Japanese Buddhists, this white-domed stupa symbolizes world peace. Located atop a hill, it offers stunning sunset views over Leh. It's both a religious site and a peaceful retreat.

» **Gurudwara Pathar Sahib (Leh)**: A serene and spiritually significant Sikh shrine built at the spot where Guru Nanak Dev is believed to have meditated during his visit to Ladakh in the 16th century, attracting pilgrims and tourists for its peaceful aura and legend of the unyielding rock.

Culture and Cuisines

Ladakh's vibrant culture is reflected in its rich traditions, flavorful cuisine and lively festivals. The local food offers hearty dishes crafted from simple, high-altitude ingredients, blending Tibetan and Indian influences. Throughout the year, colorful festivals bring communities together with music, dance and spiritual rituals, celebrating Ladakh's unique heritage and warm hospitality

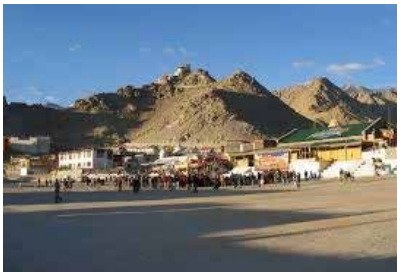
Culture

» **Hemis Festival**: Held at Hemis Monastery in June/July, it celebrates the birth of Guru Padmasambhava with masked dances, music and rituals. It's the most famous and grandest festival in Ladakh.

» **Losar (Ladakhi New Year)**: Celebrated in December or January, Losar marks the start of the Tibetan lunar year. Homes are cleaned, traditional dances are performed and religious rituals take place.

» **Sindhu Darshan Festival**: Held in June at Sindhu Ghat near Leh, this festival honors the Indus River as a symbol of communal harmony and national unity with cultural performances from all over India.

» **Ladakh Festival**: Organised in September by the Tourism Department, it showcases Ladakhi culture through traditional dance, music, polo and handicraft exhibitions in Leh and surrounding villages.



» **Yuru Kabgyat Festival**: Celebrated at Lamayuru Monastery in June/July, it features masked Cham dances symbolising good over evil.

» **Matho Nagrang Festival**: Held at Matho Monastery in February/March, it is famous for its oracles who predict the future after days of meditation. Colorful masked dances are performed to ward off evil spirits.

» **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra (via Ladakh route)**: Although traditionally approached from Uttarakhand, one lesser-used route to this sacred Tibetan peak is through Ladakh.

» **Amarnath Yatra (via Baltal, near Kargil)**: Though primarily associated with Jammu & Kashmir, the Baltal route near Kargil connects to Ladakh. It's a revered Hindu pilgrimage to the ice lingam of Lord Shiva.

» **Gurudwara Pathar Sahib Yatra**: Devotees visit this sacred Sikh shrine where Guru Nanak is believed to have meditated.

» **Buddhist Monastery Circuits**: Pilgrims follow a circuit covering major monasteries like Hemis, Thiksey, Diskit and Lamayuru.

Cuisines

» **Thukpa**: A comforting noodle soup made with vegetables or meat, spiced with local herbs. It's a staple dish in Ladakhi homes, especially during winters.

» **Momos**: Steamed or fried dumplings filled with meat or vegetables, served with spicy chili chutney. A favorite street and household food across Ladakh.

» **Skyu**: A traditional pasta stew made with hand-rolled wheat dough, root vegetables and sometimes meat. It's hearty and perfect for cold climates.

» **Chhutagi**: Literally meaning "water bread," this dish includes bow-tie-shaped dough cooked with vegetables or meat in a thick gravy.

» **Butter Tea (Gur Gur Chai)**: A salty tea made with yak butter, salt and tea leaves, whipped vigorously. It helps keep the body warm and hydrated in high altitudes.

» **Khambir**: A local fermented wheat bread with a thick crust, usually eaten with butter tea or curries. It's filling and nutritious.

» **Paba & Tangtur**: Paba is a barley-based dough dish, served with tangtur (buttermilk-based vegetable curry). It reflects traditional Ladakhi sustenance food.

» **Mokthuk**: A fusion of momos and thukpa-small dumplings in a flavorful soup. It's warming, filling and very popular in winter.

» **Tapu (Barley Cake)**: Made from roasted barley flour mixed with butter and sugar. It is an energy-rich snack eaten by locals during treks or rituals.

» **Yogurt and Dried Cheese (Chhurpi)**: Locally prepared dairy products often accompany meals. Chhurpi is hard and chewy, made from yak milk.

» **Kholak**: A traditional sweet made from roasted barley flour, sugar and butter. Served during festivals and family gatherings.

» **Zanskar Butter Sweet**: A rare treat made by mixing butter and sugar into a soft paste, served during winter and family feasts.

» **Dry Apricots**: Sun-dried apricots are a natural sweet snack, often gifted or served to guests. Ladakh is famous for its apricot orchards.

» **Sweet Rice (Das-Sil)**: A saffron and sugar-flavored rice dish often served during special occasions and monastic festivals.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Ladakh's textiles and handicrafts-like handwoven pashmina, woolen garments, thangka paintings and intricately carved wooden items-offer tourists a glimpse into the region's rich Tibetan-Buddhist heritage and high-altitude artisanal traditions.

» **Pashmina Wool:** World-renowned for its softness and warmth, Pashmina is woven from the undercoat of Changthangi goats found in Ladakh. Scarves and shawls made from this are prized souvenirs.

» **Woolen Garments (Lena):** Locally woven sheep wool is used to make warm robes, shawls and mittens essential for Ladakhi winters.

» **Yak Wool Products:** Heavier and coarser than Pashmina, yak wool is used for blankets and traditional wear like Gonchas (robes).

» **Goncha (Traditional Dress):** A thick robe worn by both men and women, tied with a sash, often made of wool and decorated for special occasions.

» **Hand-woven Rugs & Carpets:** Made using yak or sheep wool, these carpets often display traditional Tibetan or Ladakhi motifs.

» **Thangka Painting:** Intricate religious scroll paintings on cotton or silk, depicting deities, mandalas and Buddhist scenes. These are used in monasteries and homes for worship.

» **Wood Carving:** Used to decorate monastery pillars, prayer wheels and home altars, showcasing geometric and floral designs.

» **Wall Murals:** Found in monasteries, these vibrant paintings depict Buddhist cosmology and teachings, created by skilled artisans over generations.

» **Metalwork (Statue Crafting):** Artisans craft statues of Buddha and other deities from bronze or copper using the lost-wax technique.

» **Prayer Wheels:** Small hand-held or tabletop wheels filled with mantras, believed to purify karma when spun.

» **Choktse (Folding Tables):** Hand-painted wooden tables with bright floral or religious motifs, commonly

used in Ladakhi homes and monasteries.

» **Apricot Products:** Dried apricots, jams, oils and soaps made from locally grown apricots are popular and healthy souvenirs.

» **Jewellery (Turquoise & Coral):** Traditional Ladakhi jewelry made from silver, turquoise and coral stones, often worn in festivals and weddings.

» **Prayer Flags:** Colorful cloth flags printed with Buddhist prayers, used for spiritual protection and blessings.

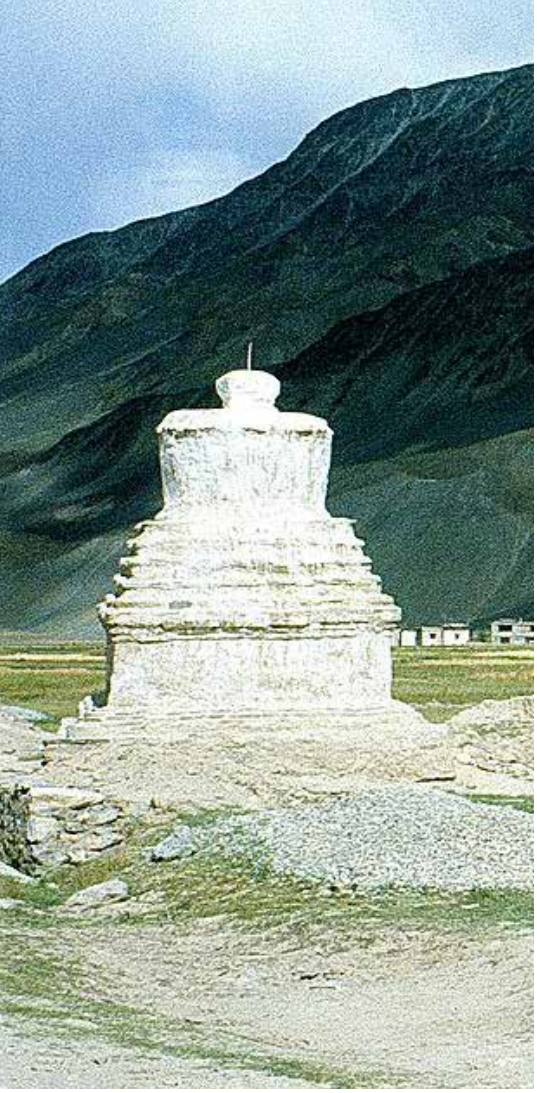
» **Spinning Prayer Beads (Mala):** Made of wood, bone, or semi-precious stones, malas are used for meditation and offered as gifts.

» **Woolen Socks & Gloves:** Hand-knitted from local wool, ideal for both practical use and gifting.

» **Brocade Items:** Richly woven fabric with religious or floral patterns, often used in ceremonial dresses or altar decorations.

» **Traditional Masks:** Used in Cham dances, these masks of deities and spirits are made from papier-mâché and hand painted.

» **Yak Bone Carvings:** Miniature sculptures and jewellery items carved from ethically sourced yak bone, reflecting local craftsmanship.



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **May to September** (Best weather, open roads, ideal for trekking, biking and sightseeing.)

Non-Peak Season

» **October to April** (Fewer crowds, chilly weather, some roads may be closed but Leh town and nearby spots are still accessible. Harsh winter with extreme cold, reaching temperatures as low as -30°C, along with blocked roads and limited transport.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Highest Motorable Road:** Ladakh is home to Umling La Pass, the highest motorable road in the world at 19,024 feet-higher than Khardung La! Driving here is an adrenaline-pumping experience.

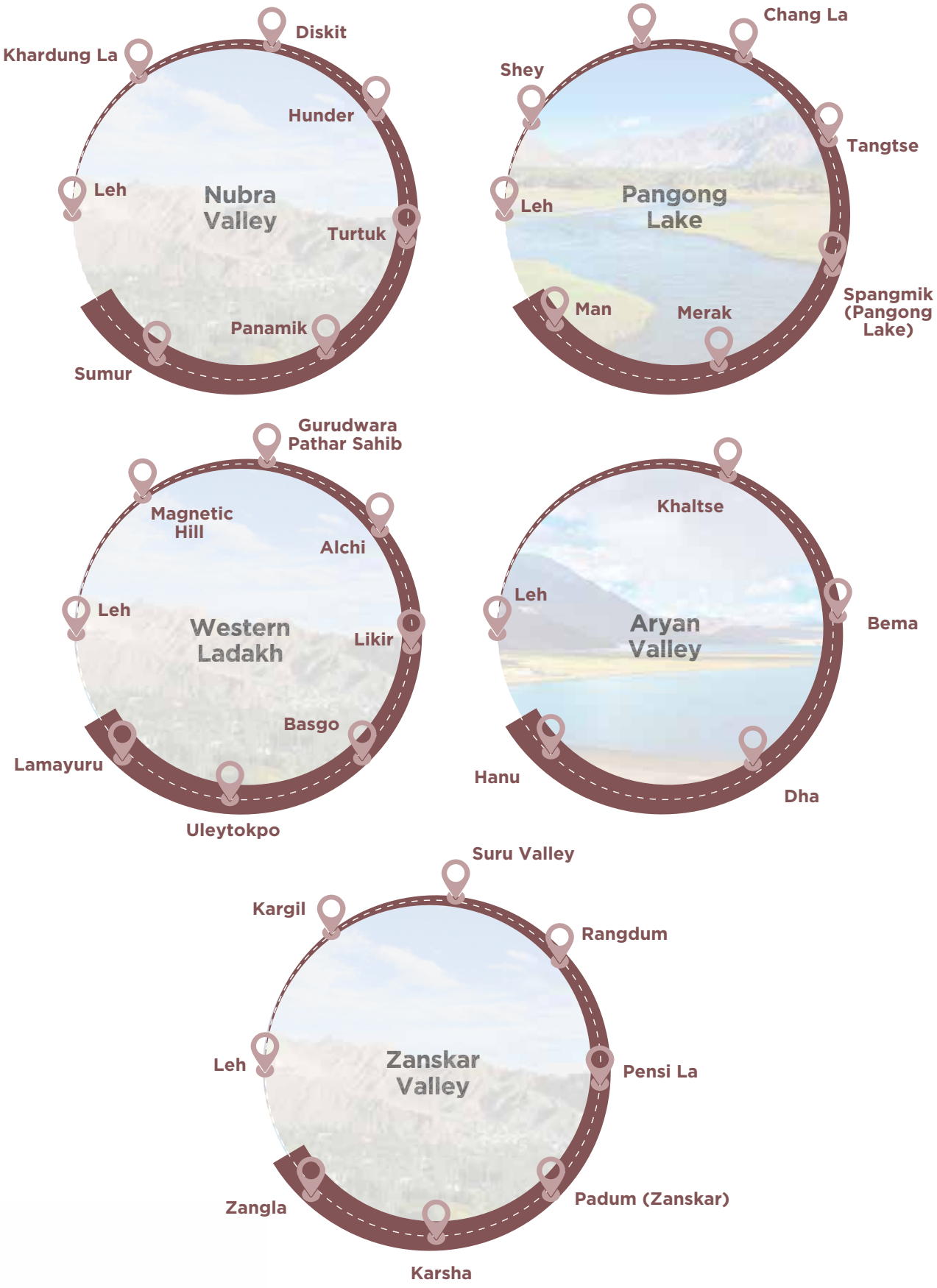
» **Double-Humped Camels:** The Bactrian camels in Nubra Valley are unique to Ladakh and originally came from Central Asia via the ancient Silk Route. You can ride them across sand dunes at 10,000 ft!

» **Gravity-Defying Magnetic Hill:** At this mysterious spot near Leh, vehicles appear to roll uphill on their own. It's an optical illusion, but still a must-visit curiosity.

» **Living Buddhism:** Ladakh is often called "Little Tibet" due to its rich Tibetan Buddhist culture. Ancient monasteries like Hemis, Alchi and Thiksey are spiritual and architectural wonders.

» **India's First Dark Sky Reserve:** Hanle Village in Ladakh has been declared India's first Dark Sky Reserve, making it a haven for stargazers and astrophotographers.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Lakshadweep

Tourism

Lakshadweep, a beautiful group of islands in the Arabian Sea, is a tropical paradise with clear turquoise waters, soft white beaches and tall palm trees. Its clean beaches and colorful coral reefs make it ideal for snorkeling, kayaking and diving. Islands like Agatti, Bangaram and Minicoy stand out for their natural beauty and calm surroundings. Lakshadweep also offers a glimpse into its unique culture and heritage. Its quiet, scenic beaches and rich marine life create a peaceful escape for those looking to relax and enjoy nature, far from the noise of city life. Lakshadweep travel is **permit-regulated**. Entry permits apply; regulations differ for Indian/ foreign visitors.

Best Places to Visit

Lakshadweep is a tropical paradise of palm-lined beaches, crystal-clear lagoons and colourful corals, offering a serene escape into nature.

Nature Tourism

» **Agatti Island (Agatti):** A serene island with a long palm-lined beach and rich marine life.

Key Activities: Beach walks; Nature photography; Snorkeling; Kayaking; Scuba diving

» **Bangaram Island (Bangaram):** A picturesque uninhabited island with soft sand and clear turquoise waters.

Key Activities: Beach relaxation; Lagoon exploration; Bird spotting; Diving; Kayaking; Windsurfing

» **Thinnakara Island (Thinnakara):** A small, teardrop-shaped island with palm-fringed beaches and tranquil surroundings.

Key Activities: Beach relaxation; Snorkeling; Sea kayaking

» **Parali Islands (Parali):** A group of tiny uninhabited islets surrounded by shallow, crystal-clear waters. Access to this island is restricted.

Key Activities: Nature exploration; Bird watching; Scenic walks

» **Kavaratti Island (Kavaratti):** The capital of Lakshadweep, featuring calm lagoons and colourful coral habitats.

Key Activities: Marine life observation; Jet skiing; Snorkeling; Scuba diving; Glass-bottom boat tours

» **Minicoy Island (Minicoy):** The southernmost island, known for its traditional culture, long beaches and rich vegetation.

Key Activities: Beach walks; Nature photography; Kayaking; Snorkeling; Scuba diving

Lesser-Known Attractions

The lesser-known areas of Lakshadweep, with their serene beaches, shallow lagoons and rich marine life, reflect the islands' untouched beauty and timeless charm.

AGATTI

» **Agatti Golden Jubilee Museum:** Small museum with traditional Lakshadweep artifacts.

KALPENI

» **Cheriyam Island Beach:** An off-beat islet lined with dense palm groves.

» **Tip Beach:** A quiet, palm-fringed shore with soft sand and clear turquoise waters.

KAVARATTI

» **Craft Museum:** A lesser-known area with traditional shell and coral crafts.

» **Marine Museum:** A small museum showcasing Lakshadweep's rich marine life and corals.

MINICOY

» **Viringili Island:** A tiny deserted islet once used for quarantine.

» **Kalpeni Island (Kalpeni):** A group of islets surrounded by shallow lagoons and natural sandbanks.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Windsurfing; Lagoon kayaking; Snorkeling; Reef walks

» **Kadmat Island (Kadmat):** A long, narrow island with serene beaches and dense palm groves.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Scuba diving; Snorkeling; Beach kayaking; Canoeing

» **Suheli Par (Suheli Par):** A remote, picturesque atoll with pristine beaches and tropical palm trees. Access to this island is restricted.

Key Activities: Beach exploration

» **Bitra Island (Bitra):** The smallest inhabited island, offering a serene tropical atmosphere and rich coastal habitats.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Bird watching

» **Chetlat Island (Chetlat):** An island with abundant greenery and a quiet, rustic charm.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Bird spotting; Beach relaxation

» **Kiltan Island (Kiltan):** A picturesque island with palm-lined beaches and shallow waters ideal for nature viewing.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Beach relaxation

Adventure Tourism

» **Pitti Bird Sanctuary (Pitti):** A protected area and a tiny, uninhabited islet rich in seabird nesting habitats and surrounded by a coral reef. Access to this island is restricted.

Key Activities: Birdwatching/ viewing from authorised boats

» **Byramgore Reef (Cheriyapani):** An isolated, natural atoll with rich birdlife and serene coastal beauty. Access to this island is restricted.

Key Activities: Diving; Snorkeling; Kayaking; Lagoon viewing

Heritage Tourism

» **Minicoy Lighthouse (Minicoy):** A historic British-era lighthouse offering panoramic island and ocean views.

» **Kavaratti Fisheries Museum (Kavaratti):** A museum displaying Lakshadweep's rich marine heritage and traditional shell crafts.

» **Kavaratti Traditional Craft Centre (Kavaratti):** An area preserving heritage crafts like coir making and mat weaving.

» **Agatti Heritage Fishing Docks (Agatti):** A site preserving the heritage fishing methods of the islanders.

» **Chetlat Old Landing Area (Chetlat):** A traditional harbor area used by fishermen for generations.

» **Minicoy Old Sea-trading Port (Minicoy):** A heritage site highlighting Minicoy's historic role in sea trade.

» **Amini Coir-making Village (Amini):** A heritage site where traditional coir making and mat weaving continue to this day.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Ujra Mosque (Kavaratti):** An ancient mosque famed for its beautiful wood carvings and sacred relic. It is well known for its Kerala-style sloping tiled roofs, absence of tall minarets, and architecture adapted to the region's heavy rainfall. Built in the 17th century, it is admired for the fine craftsmanship of its wooden carvings and traditional design.

» **Mohidden Mosque (Kavaratti):** A historic and sacred mosque with traditional Lakshadweep-style architecture. The mosque holds great religious importance for the local community. Its serene setting adds to the spiritual and cultural charm of the island.

» **Saint Ubaidullah Tomb (Androtт):** The tomb of the revered Saint Ubaidullah, a sacred site for locals.

Culture and Cuisines

Lakshadweep's culture and cuisine reflect its tropical, maritime heritage, with coconut-rich dishes and traditions shaped by sea, nature and island life.

Culture

» **Kolkali Dance:** Ritualistic group dance performed by men with sticks, central to celebrations and special occasions.

» **Lakshadweep Day (Kavaratti):** Celebrated on 1st November every year marked by cultural performances, traditional music and heritage exhibitions.

» **National Minicoy Fest (Minicoy):** Cultural showcases, dance performances and traditional festivities unique to Minicoy.

Cuisines

» **Mus Kavaab:** Char-grilled fish marinated with island spices, a coastal favourite.

» **Maas Riha:** A creamy tuna curry made with coconut and fragrant local spices.

» **Kilanji:** A soft, paper-thin rice crepe typically served with savoury or sweet fillings.

» **Batla Appam:** Fluffy rice and coconut pancakes enjoyed as a breakfast staple.

» **Bondibai:** A sweet rice and coconut porridge popular during festivals and celebrations.

» **Maas Kanji:** A savoury fish porridge slow-cooked with rice and aromatic spices.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Lakshadweep reflect the islands' deep bond with the sea, using coconut husks, palm leaves, shells and wood to create beautiful, functional pieces rooted in heritage and nature.

» **Coir Products**: Coir Products: Durable mats, ropes and decorative pieces handcrafted from coconut husk.
Key Areas: Agatti; Androth

» **Coconut Shell Handicrafts:** Polished bowls, spoons and ornaments made from coconut shells.
Key Areas: Kavaratti; Kalpeni; Chetlat

» **Palm Leaf Weaving:** Baskets, mats and storage containers woven from dried palm leaves.
Key Areas: Kavaratti; Amini

» **Lacquered Woodwork & Boat Miniatures:** Brightly painted wooden toys, decorative items and traditional boat replicas.
Key Areas: Minicoy

» **Seashell & Artefacts:** Jewellery and decorative pieces handcrafted from seashells and found in the islands.
Key Areas: Amini; Androth

» **Decorative inlay work using local materials (non-wildlife):** Imitation tortoise shell jewellery and utensil handles made using local materials.
Key Areas: Minicoy; Androth

LAKSHADWEEP

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to May** (Fair weather; better sea conditions.)

Non-Peak Season

» **Mid-May to mid-September** (Rough seas; boat operations may be restricted. Fair weather; better sea conditions.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Lakshadweep is India's **India's sole coral atoll archipelago,** a rare natural wonder formed by living corals.

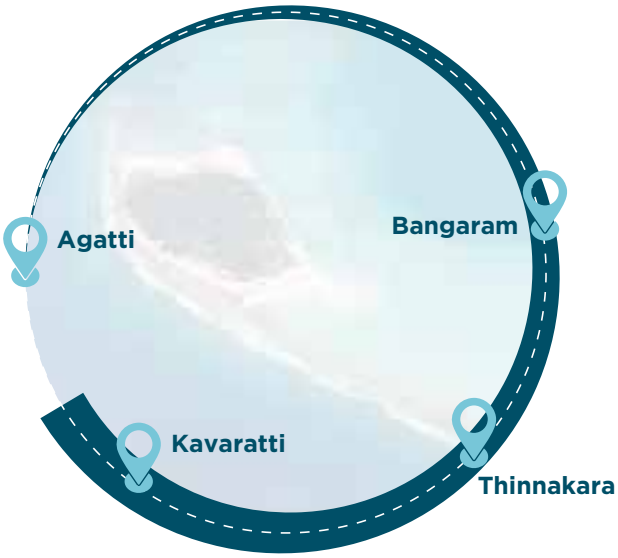
» Lakshadweep is a rich marine biodiversity hotspot, home to around **different species of fish, coral** and **seaweed**.

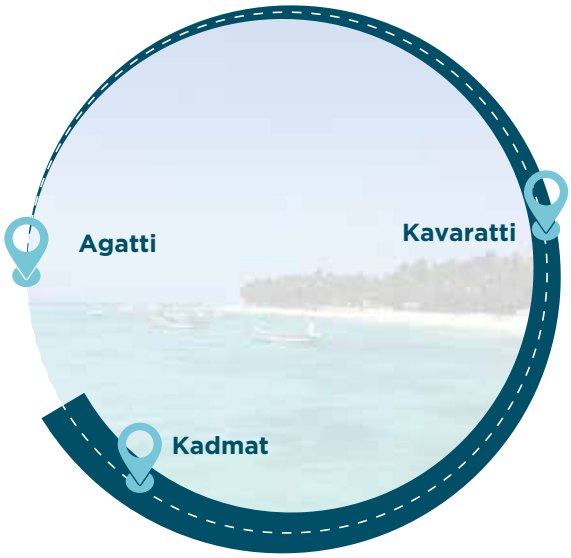
» Out of the 36 islands, about **11 are inhabited,** each contributing to the archipelago's unique culture and nature.

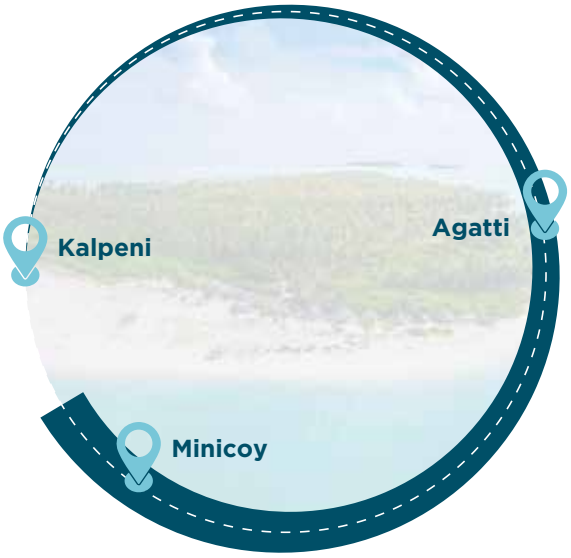
» With an area of 32 sq. km., Lakshadweep is actually the **smallest Union Territory** in India.

» While most people in Lakshadweep speak Jesri, a dialect of Malayalam, the people of **Minicoy Island** speak **Mahl**, which is the same language spoken in the Maldives.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS







Madhya Pradesh

Tourism

Madhya Pradesh, often called the 'Heart of India', offers diverse beauty and deep-rooted heritage. With its blend of ancient architecture, spiritual depth and natural splendour, the state captures the essence of India's rich past and vibrant culture. Home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites, the state features vast forest cover, rich wildlife and a range of traditional crafts and festivals. Its landscape includes plateaus, rivers and dense national parks, making it a destination that combines natural beauty with cultural depth.

Best Places to Visit

Madhya Pradesh, with its ancient temples, majestic forts, historic towns and wildlife-rich national parks, offers a unique glimpse into the state's rich cultural and natural heritage.

Nature Tourism

» **The Lakes (Bhopal):** Upper Lake (Bhojtal) and Lower Lake in Bhopal together form the Bhoj Wetland, a Ramsar Site - city's famous water bodies.

Key Activities: Boat rides on paddle, sail and motor boats; Sightseeing opportunities.

» **Van Vihar National Park (Bhopal):** Spread across 445 hectares by the Upper Lake, this park is a home to animals like tigers, lions, deer and over 200 bird species.

Key Activities: Nature walks and bird watching; Visit butterfly and snake parks; Go to nature interpretation centre

» **Panna National Park (Panna and Chhatarpur):** It is a jewel of wildlife tourism, renowned for its majestic tigers, lush teak forests and the breathtaking Ken River canyon.

Key Activities: Jeep safaris; Ken River experiences (as permitted); nearby Raneh Falls canyon / waterfalls; Birdwatching.

» **Raneh Falls (Chhatarpur):** A beautiful gorge where waterfalls cascade through multicoloured volcanic rock formations.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Canyon viewing; Photography and sightseeing.

» **Pench National Park (Seoni):** A dense forest that inspired 'The Jungle Book,'where wildlife thrives in green river valleys.

Key Activities: Wildlife drives; Nature trail walks; Spotting deer and leopards.

» **Marble Rocks (Bhedaghat):** White marble cliffs tower over the Narmada River, especially stunning at sunrise or sunset.

Lesser-Known Attractions

A curated list of locations across districts that may appeal to visitors seeking nature, heritage and local culture. Access and seasonality may vary; visitors should confirm routes and permissions locally.

ALIRAJPUR

» **Katthiwada Hills:** A tribal highland with cool weather and natural scenic beauty; tourism. The area is also known for the Nurjahan mango variety.

ANUPPUR

» **Patal Khoh:** A deep forest cave with mythological significance, often skipped by tourists.

ASHOKNAGAR

» **Shahbazpur Fort:** Ruins of a fort where barely any photographs exist online.

BALAGHAT

» **Dumar Pahar:** A local hiking secret amidst the hills bordering Maharashtra.

BARWANI

» **Madkole Mahadev Temple:** A centuries-old temple located deep within a tribal belt.

BETUL

» **Muktagiri (Betul):** A Digambar Jain tirth, with 52 temples; located about 102 km from Betul district HQ (as per district portal).

BHOPAL

» **Islamnagar (near Bhopal):** Built by Dost Mohammad Khan in 1716 (restored in 1736), with Chaman Mahal and Rani Mahal noted for Malwa-Mughal style detailing; MP Tourism notes it is about 14 km from Bhopal by road.

CHHATARPUR

» **Chandragiri Caves:** Undisturbed Jain caves hidden within dense woodlands.

» **Khaurahi Waterfall:** Remote and completely untouched, only accessible via a long hike.

CHHINDWARA

» **Patalkot:** A valley area in Chhindwara district; MP Tourism notes it is about 23 km from Tamia (seasonal access and routes should be confirmed locally).

DAMOH

» **Jarga Khera Caves:** Little-known prehistoric dwellings etched into rock hillsides.

» **Sankua Mahadev:** A temple cave surrounded by streams and dense vegetation.

DEWAS

» Tigariya Badshah: A hidden cave-shrine inside a rock cliff, known only to locals.

DINDORI

» **Rondiya Dham:** A hilly hermitage and secret forest trail known only during Shivratri fairs.

GUNA

» **Gopalpura Baori:** A stepwell with delicate architecture hidden behind farmland.

INDORE

» **Gulawat Lotus Valley:** It is around 30 km from Indore, recommended in Oct–Jan for lotus blooms and migratory birds natural surroundings.

KATNI

» **Pushpavati Nagri Bilhari Ruins:** About 15 km from Katni HQ, associated with 85 temples and 13 stepwells and references history around 945 AD

MANDLA

» **Jhiri Waterfall:** A seasonal gem with not a single signboard pointing the way.

MANDSAUR

» **Dhamnar Caves:** A rarely visited cluster of 51 rock-cut caves at Dhamnar, associated with Buddhist heritage.

» **Chaturbhujnath Nala (Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary):** Rock shelters noted for prehistoric paintings/ rock art within the sanctuary area.

MORENA

» **Bateshwar Temples (near Padavali, Morena):** A cluster of almost 200 sandstone shrines spread over about 25 acres, generally dated to the 8th-10th century and associated with Gurjara–Pratihara period.

NALKHEDA

» **Baglamukhi Temple:** A powerful tantrik site visited only by a niche group of sadhaks.

NARMADAPURAM

» **Pipariya Hills:** Uncharted trekking trails with plateaus and forest canopies.

Key Activities: Sunset boat cruises; Ropeway rides; Nature walks.

» **National Chambal Sanctuary (Morena):** A sprawling river sanctuary that protects gharials, freshwater dolphins and rare birds.

Key Activities: Boat safaris; Eco-walks, Riverbank photography.

» **Anhoni Hot Springs (Chhindwara):** Warm, sulphur-rich springs emerging from rocky forests-known for their healing properties.

Key Activities: Soaking in hot water; Relaxation amid nature; Birdwatching and photography

» **Dhuandhar Falls (Jabalpur):** About 10 m (~30 ft)waterfall on the Narmada, where mist rises like smoke over basalt cliffs.

Key Activities: Boat rides under the falls; Ride the hanging ropeway; Photography.

» **Patalpani Falls (Mhow):** A seasonal waterfall plunging from a wooded plateau from a height of 300 ft. (approximately); full and majestic during monsoon.

Key Activities: Short river trek; Waterfall viewing and picnics.

» **Bee Falls (Pachmarhi):** A scenic waterfall tucked in the Satpura hill forest, ideal for a cooling dip.

Key Activities: Nature trek to the falls; Swimming and riverside sightseeing

» **Jatashankar Cave (Pachmarhi):** A mystical cave with natural spring water and Shiva worship, hidden amongst mossy rocks.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Trekking; Spiritual soaking.

» **Satpura National Park (Pachmarhi):** A wilderness of rolling hills and river gorges, great for canoeing along the Denwa River.

Key Activities: Canoe safaris; Trekking through valleys; Overnight jungle camping.

» **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters {UNESCO Site} (Raisen):** Celebrated for prehistoric rock shelters and ancient paintings; explore the site and the surrounding forest trails with guides/local interpretation

Key Activities: Nature trekking around rock shelters; Exploring prehistoric cave art; Forest birdwatching

» **Sailani Island (Khandwa):** A scenic island in the middle of one of India's largest reservoirs, Sailani is accessible by boat and known for nature resorts and lake views.

Key Activities: Island stay; Nature boating; Birdwatching near water; Photography

» **Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary (Indore):** Spread over hilly terrain and covered with dry deciduous forest, it was once a royal hunting ground.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Cycling trails; Visiting watchtower; Nature photography

Adventure Tourism

» **Pachmarhi Hills (Pachmarhi):** Surrounded by the Satpura range, it offers thrilling experiences like trekking through forested trails, rock climbing on natural sandstone cliffs and discovering hidden waterfalls and ancient caves.

Key Activities: Trekking to Bee Falls, Duchess Falls & Handi Khoh; Rock climbing and rappelling on sandstone cliffs; Exploring Reechgarh Caves and Jatashankar Cave; Cycling through forest trails; Overnight camping in nature

» **Orchha:** Located on the banks of the Betwa River, this town lets one enjoy river rafting and kayaking past ancient palaces, temples and cenotaphs.

NARSINGHPUR

» **Salaiya Waterfall:** A little-known seasonal waterfall surrounded by thick green valleys.

PANNA

» **Ajaygarh Fort (Panna):** It is a historic fort located on the Vindhya hills, with details of access/climb and features within the fort area.

REWA

» **Bharkachha:** A hidden river gorge ideal for raw treks and untouched scenic beauty.

SAGAR

» **Khooni Talaiya:** A mystery lake with eerie legends, tucked inside old village boundaries.

SATNA

» **Simariya Ghat:** A lesser known, deeply spiritual ghat with minimal footfall.

SEHORE

» **Satkunda Mahadev:** A forgotten waterfall with a cave-temple known for monsoon treks.

» **Ginnorgarh Fort Ruins:** A desolate, haunting fort ruin amidst hills, barely accessible.

SHAHDOL

» **Bansagar Dam Backwaters:** Serene and isolated stretches of water, perfect for peaceful sunrises. Bansagar Dam (Shahdol): Bansagar Dam is on the Son River, constructed near Deolond village; it is a multipurpose project with irrigation and 435 MW hydro power generation .

SIDHI

» **Panpatha Plateau:** A highland region with tribal villages, valleys and endemic wildlife.

» **Ghunghuti Hills:** Offers panoramic views and peace, with barely a soul around.

SINGRAULI

» **Devdara Waterfall:** A magical yet uncrowded waterfall amid rugged terrain near the UP border.

TIKAMGARH

» **Lakha Banjara Lake (Sagar District):** A scenic lake with an old tribal tale, mostly used by locals for fishing.

» **Rahela:** A hidden Jain pilgrimage hillock deep inside Bundelkhand.

UMARIA

» **Kochri Dham:** A tribal pilgrimage grove nestled in Satpura foothills.

Key Activities: White-water rafting on Betwa River; Kayaking around cenotaphs; Riverside camping near nature; Heritage walks through palaces and temples

» **Kerwa Dam (Bhopal):** It offers an adrenaline rush with activities like zip lining across the dam waters and rope climbing through obstacle courses.

Key Activities: Ziplining across the reservoir; Rope climbing and rope bridge crossing; Rock climbing; Light trekking in surrounding forests

» **Choral Dam (Indore):** Surrounded by hills, it's ideal for jet skiing, banana boat rides and a peaceful picnic or overnight camping experience.

Key Activities: Jet skiing across the dam; Banana boat and bumper boat rides; Water scooter adventure; Hilltop camping and picnicking

» **Bedaghat (Jabalpur):** Famous for its marble rocks, Bhedaghat also offers a bit of thrill with ropeway rides over the mighty Dhuandhar Falls.

Key Activities: Boat ride between marble rocks; Cable car views and photography; Light rock trail climbing

» **Mandu (Dhar):** Mandu is known for its historic forts and romantic ruins, but it also offers outdoor adventures. One can cycle along the fort walls, go ziplining from hilltops, or hike to viewpoints that give breathtaking views of valleys.

Key Activities: Cycling along Mandu's heritage circuit; Ziplining from palace towers; Valley viewpoint trekking

» **Hanumantiya Tapu (Khandwa):** An island destination on the vast Indira Sagar Dam, Hanumantiya hosts the Jal Mahotsav water festival. It's a paradise for water sports lovers and adventure seekers looking for parasailing, hot air ballooning and island camping.

Key Activities: Parasailing over the reservoir; Jet skiing & speed boating; Banana boat rides; Hot air balloon ride; Island tent stay

» **Amarkantak (Anuppur):** Located at the meeting point of Vindhya and Satpura ranges, Amarkantak offers a spiritual yet thrilling experience with its forest treks, hilly terrain and waterfalls like Kapil Dhara and Dugdh Dhara.

Key Activities: Trekking to the origin of Narmada River; Hiking to Kapil Dhara waterfall; Exploring forest trails; Photography at Sonmuda viewpoint

» **Ginnorgarh Fort Trek (Sehore):** This hidden hill fort can only be reached through a dense forest trek. It's a thrilling adventure for history buffs and hikers, offering a combination of physical challenge and scenic beauty.

Key Activities: Forest trek to the fort; Exploring fort ruins; Scenic photography; Birdwatching en route

» **Kathotiya (Sehore near Bhopal):** A hidden eco-tourism gem near Bhopal, Kathotiya is known for rock climbing, rappelling and caving in ancient sandstone formations.

Key Activities: Rock climbing on sandstone cliffs; Rappelling and rope activities; Tribal village visit; Forest camping

» **Shikargah Jungle Trek (Vidisha):** An old royal hunting ground, this forest area is slowly opening for guided nature treks. With its dry deciduous forest, it's a quiet trail for those who enjoy off-the-map adventures.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Exploring ruins of old shikargahs; Photography

Heritage Tourism

» **Khajuraho Group of Monuments {UNESCO Site} (Chhatarpur):** Renowned for intricately carved Chandela-era temples built mainly between the 10th–11th centuries (c. 950–1050 CE). The site originally had 85 temples, of which about 20–25 survive today. These temples are known for their stunning sculptures depicting gods, goddesses and daily life.

» **Sanchi Stupa {UNESCO Site} (Raisen):** The Great Stupa at Sanchi, is one of the oldest stone structures in India, built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE. It represents early Buddhist art and architecture.

» **Gwalior Fort (Gwalior):** Perched on a hill, it is often called 'the Gibraltar of India' due to its strategic importance. With palaces, temples and water tanks inside, it reflects a rich mix of Hindu and Mughal influences.

» **Orchha Fort Complex (Orchha):** A historical town on the Betwa River, Orchha was founded in the 16th century and is known for its medieval architecture, Raja Mahal and Jehangir Mahal, Chaturbhuj Temple, chhatris (cenotaphs) and palace murals.

» **Bhojpur Shiva Temple (Bhopal outskirts):** Known as the 'Somnath of the East,' this unfinished temple houses one of the largest Shiva Lingams in India. Built by Raja Bhoj in the 11th century, it showcases early temple engineering consisting of a giant monolithic Shiva Lingam.

» **Maheshwar Fort and Ghats (Khargone):** Maheshwar, on the banks of the Narmada, was the capital of Queen Ahilyabai Holkar. The fort and temples here reflect Holkar-era architecture and spiritual heritage.

» **Dhar Fort (Dhar):** An ancient hill fort that once served as the capital of the Paramara dynasty, Dhar Fort showcases Indo-Islamic influences and offers panoramic views of the city.

» **Jahaz Mahal (Mandu):** Jahaz Mahal, meaning 'Ship Palace,' is a stunning architectural marvel built between two lakes in Mandu, making it look like a floating ship. Constructed during the reign of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din-Khilji in the 15th century, the palace was meant to house the royal harem.

» **Rajwada Palace (Indore):** Rajwada is a historic seven-story palace built by the Holkars of the Maratha Empire in the 18th century. It was the centre of Holkar power and remains a symbol of Indore's royal past.

» **Lal Bagh Palace (Indore):** It was built by the Holkar dynasty between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and reflects the affluence of Indore's royal past. Designed in European style, the palace has grand Italian marble columns, chandeliers, Persian carpets and Belgian glass windows.

» **Udayagiri Caves (Vidisha):** These are a group of rock-cut caves dating back to the early 5th century CE during the Gupta Empire. The most famous sculpture here is the huge image of Lord Vishnu in his Varaha (boar) avatar, rescuing the Earth.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga (Ujjain):** A powerful Shiva shrine with early morning ash ritual drawing thousands of devotees.

» **Omkareshwar Temple (Khandwa):** A holy Shiva temple on an island shaped like the sacred symbol 'Om,' with daily rituals.

» **Amarkantak (Anuppur):** A misty hill station and source of the Narmada River, dotted with temples and waterfalls.

» **Chitrakoot (Satna):** Revered as the place Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lived during exile, with many pilgrimage ghats.

» **Maheshwar (Khargone):** Riverside temples and forts made sacred by Queen Holkar's devotion, with peaceful ghats.

» **Maihar Sharda Temple (Satna):** A hilltop temple dedicated to Goddess Sharda, reached by a steep stairway with scenic views.

» **Kal Bhairav Temple (Ujjain):** Devoted to Kal Bhairav (a fierce form of Shiva), with beliefs around devotion and forgiveness.

» **Bawangaja (Barwani):** A mountain pilgrimage site with an 84-foot statue of Lord Adinath carved on a rocky cliff.

» **Shravan Tal Temple (Ujjain):** A calm lakeside shrine with rituals performed by devotees on boats and ghats.

» **Vidisha Bajramath Temple (Vidisha):** An 11th-century Jain temple famed for its stone carvings and spiritual quietness.

» **Hinglaj Mata Mandir (Jhabua):** Hinglaj Mata Temple (Chhindwara): A revered local Shakti shrine visited by devotees from the region.

» **Chintaman Ganesh Temple (Ujjain):** An important Ganesh shrine in Ujjain, visited by devotees seeking blessings and peace of mind.

» **Sironj Ganesh Temple (Sironj):** A local Ganesha shrine with a quiet town vibe and simple, heartfelt devotion.

» **Chaurasi Khamba Temple (Khajuraho):** A Jain shrine with 84 pillars and ancient stone carvings, less crowded than the main temples.

» **Taj-ul-Masjid (Bhopal):** It is the largest mosque in India, featuring impressive pink domes and minarets.

» **Lakshmi Narayan Temple (Bhopal):** Also known as Birla Temple, a prominent hilltop temple complex in Bhopal.

» **Khajrana Ganesh Temple (Indore):** This temple houses a grand idol of Ganesha made of a mixture of limestone, jaggery and mud and is believed to be highly powerful.

» **Chaturbujh Temple (Orchha):** Built in the 16th century by the Bundela rulers, this temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and stands out for its blend of temple, fort and palace architecture.

» **Ram Raja Temple (Orchha):** This is the only temple in India where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king in a palace, not as a god in a traditional temple.

Culture and Cuisines

Madhya Pradesh culture is a vibrant fusion of tribal traditions, classical heritage and spiritual diversity reflected in its festivals, music and crafts. Its cuisine features rich, spicy dishes influenced by both Rajput and Mughal styles.

Culture

» **Bhagoria Festival (Jhabua, Dhar, Alirajpur and Khargone):** Known as the "Festival of Love," it's unique in India for its community-sanctioned tradition where young men and women elope after choosing partners at the fair. Villagers gather in traditional attire, playing folk instruments like mandal and dhol and smearing colors. A major tribal haat and cultural fair held in the period leading up to Holi; dates vary each year

» **Tansen Samaroh (Gwalior):** This prestigious music festival is held annually in December (dates vary) at the tomb of Tansen, one of the "Navratnas" in Emperor Akbar's court and a founding figure of Hindustani classical music. Organised by the Madhya Pradesh Sanskriti Parishad, it features top vocalists and instrumentalists from across India.

» **Lokrang Festival (Bhopal):** Held annually around Republic Day (26 January), Lokrang is a premier event celebrating the cultural diversity of India, with a strong focus on Madhya Pradesh's folk and tribal heritage. The festival includes live dance and music performances, tribal storytelling, visual art exhibitions and craft fairs. Indigenous dance forms like Saila, Karma, Rai and Matki are regularly featured.

» **Malwa Utsav (Indore & Ujjain):** The festival includes folk music, dance, puppet shows, handicraft exhibitions, traditional Malwi cuisine and regional theatre. Special attention is given to art forms like gammat, terah taali and Bhavai. It's organised with the objective of promoting regional identity and tourism.

» **Khajuraho Dance Festival (Khajuraho, Chhatarpur):** Started in 1975, this internationally recognised dance festival is held every February at the Khajuraho temple complex. The event celebrates India's classical dance traditions such as Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Manipuri and Kuchipudi, performed against the backdrop of the iconic 10th-century temples.

» **Chhatar Mela (Datia):** Held during Navratri and Dussehra, this major religious event is centered around the Pitambara Peeth, a powerful tantric Shaktipeeth. Devotees from across North India come to participate in rituals, chantings and offerings to Baglamukhi Devi-a fierce form of Durga associated with victory and protection.

» **Madai Festival (Mandla, Dindori & Bastar border areas):** Madai is a moving religious procession held in honour of tribal deities like Dev and Shiv, where idols are taken from one village to another. It begins post-harvest and involves folk dances, animal sacrifices, ritual music and night-long celebrations.

Cuisines

» **Poha-Jalebi:** A light breakfast dish made of flattened rice (poha) tempered with mustard seeds, onions and turmeric, served with sweet jalebis on top - a perfect blend of sweet and savoury.

» **Dal Bafla:** A close cousin of Rajasthani dal baati, this dish has wheat dough balls (bafla) boiled and then baked or roasted, served with spicy dal and lots of ghee.

» **Bhutte ka Kees:** A unique spicy preparation made from grated corn cooked in milk, coconut, mustard seeds and green chilies.

» **Chakki ki Shaak:** Made using wheat dough washed under water to extract gluten, then steamed and cooked in spicy gravy.

» **Indori Namkeen:** A variety of spiced snacks like laung sev, khatta meetha mixture and charkha namkeen - available in almost every household.

» **Khopra Patties:** A unique stuffed snack where mashed potato balls are filled with a sweet-n-spicy coconut mixture and deep fried.

» **Mawa Bati:** A richer and heavier version of gulab jamun, filled with dry fruits and khoya, then soaked in sugar syrup.

» **Imarti:** A circular sweet similar to jalebi but made with urad dal, larger in size and richer in taste.

» **Bhopali Rizala:** A white chicken/mutton gravy rich in yogurt, cream and subtle spices - served during special occasions.

» **Tilkut and Gajak:** Sweet snacks made of sesame seeds and jaggery, traditional winter treats of northern MP.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Madhya Pradesh is known for its rich textiles and handicrafts, from the famous Chanderi and Maheshwari weaves to tribal crafts, metalwork and bamboo art. These traditions showcase the state's cultural heritage and attract visitors seeking authentic experiences of Central India.

» **Chanderi Silk & Cotton Sarees:** Lightweight sarees with fine zari work and

traditional motifs.

Key Areas: Chanderi (Ashoknagar District)

» **Batik Print:** Wax-resist dyeing technique creating vibrant floral and geometric designs on fabric.

Key Areas: Ujjain; Indore

» **Zari-Zardozi Embroidery:** Intricate hand embroidery using metallic threads on fabrics, once used by royalty.

Key Areas: Bhopal; Gwalior

» **Tribal Gond Painting:** Folk art by Gond tribes using fine dots and lines to depict nature and animals.

Key Areas: Mandla; Dindori; Bhopal

» **Dhokra Art:** Traditional tribal art using lost-wax casting to make figurines and decor items.

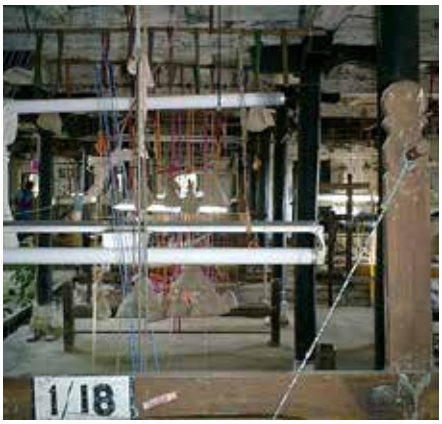
Key Areas: Betul; Chhindwara; Bastar-border areas

» **Maheshwari Sarees:** Elegant silk-cotton blend sarees with reversible borders and unique patterns.

Key Areas: Maheshwar (Khargone District)

» **Bagh Print:** Hand block printing using natural dyes like red and black, featuring traditional motifs.

Key Areas: Bagh (Dhar District)



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (pleasant weather for heritage circuits, wildlife safaris and city sightseeing)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Lush landscapes and waterfalls; occasional heavy rainfall may affect outdoor activities-check local advisories) . Hot in many regions; plan early mornings/ evenings and consider hill/forest destinations such as Pachmarhi)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Madhya Pradesh is home to the largest population of tigers in India. According to the All India Tiger Estimation 2022, the state has **785 tigers**, making it the **'Tiger State of India'**.

» Bhopal is known for being ruled by the Begums (1819–1926), for over a century."

» The city of **Ujjain** in Madhya Pradesh is one of the **four sites of the Kumbh Mela,** one of the largest religious gatherings on Earth. The Ujjain Kumbh, also known as **Simhastha**, takes place every 12 years.

» Madhya Pradesh has a large Scheduled Tribe population (over 20% as per Census 2011).

» In 1951, the **world's first white tiger, Mohan,** was discovered in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh, from Bandhavgarh.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Maharashtra

Tourism

Maharashtra presents a dynamic confluence of history, heritage and natural splendour. Stretching from the rugged Sahyadri hills to the sun-kissed Konkan coastline, the state offers a breathtaking blend of geography that caters to every kind of traveller. It offers a journey that stirs both spirit and senses. At its heart lies Mumbai, the city of dreams where colonial heritage meets cutting-edge glamour, where Bollywood dreams are born and the skyline never sleeps. As of 2025, "Maratha Military Landscapes of India" is a UNESCO World Heritage inscription comprising 12 forts, including Salher, Shivneri, Lohagad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg in Maharashtra.

Best Places to Visit

Maharashtra is a land of coastal charm, hill retreats, sacred shrines and historic marvels that blend natural beauty with cultural depth. From ancient forts perched on Sahyadri cliffs to serene temples and vibrant cities, each destination offers a unique glimpse into the state's rich heritage and diverse landscapes.

Nature Tourism

» **Alibaug Beach (Raigad):** A popular beach escape near Mumbai, with flat sands, Kolaba Fort views and water sports.

Key Activities: Banana boat rides; Parasailing; Jet skiing

» **Ganpatipule Beach (Ratnagiri):** A coastal destination known for the Ganpatipule Temple, which houses a traditionally regarded Swayambhu (self-manifested) Ganpati idol.

Key Activities: Beach walks; Visit Swayambhu Ganpati temple; Explore Prachin Konkan Museum

» **Tarkarli Beach (Sindhudurg):** One of Maharashtra's leading destinations for scuba diving and marine activities.

Key Activities: Scuba diving; Houseboat stays; Dolphin watching

» **Kashid Beach (Raigad):** A white-sand beach fringed with casuarinas, ideal for camping and fort visits.

Key Activities: Jet skiing; Banana boat rides; Explore Murud-Janjira Fort

» **Juhu Beach (Mumbai):** Mumbai's iconic beachfront, buzzing with street food, joggers and local culture.

Key Activities: Kite flying; Enjoy street food

» **Diveagar Beach (Raigad):** A serene coastal retreat with coconut groves and a nearby fishing village.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Maharashtra is dotted with hidden gems that offer equally rich experiences-minus the crowds. From tranquil hill stations and secluded beaches to forgotten forts and spiritual shrines tucked in forests,

RATNAGIRI

» **Velneshwar Beach:** A tranquil coastal stretch ideal for swimming and known for its serene Shiva temple.

» **Aare-Ware Beach:** Twin beaches near Ganpatipule known for their pristine natural beauty.

RAIGAD

» **Revdanda Beach:** A quiet retreat with Portuguese ruins and opportunities for beach camping.

» **Mandwa Beach:** Popular for water sports and its ferry connectivity to Mumbai.

» **Tungi:** Offbeat hill destination near Matheran with panoramic views.

» **Janjira Fort:** Unbreached sea fort built by the Siddis, famed for its circular bastions.

» **Revdanda Fort:** A partly buried Portuguese ruin at the mouth of the Kundalika River.

» **Sudhagad Fort:** Lesser-known fort with temples and scenic Sahyadri vistas.

» **Kothaligad Fort:** Chimney-like pinnacle structure, popular among heritage trekkers.

» **Shambhu Mahadev Mandir:** Forest Shiva shrine known for its serene setting.

» **Nagaon Beach:** Family-friendly beach with banana boat rides, jet skiing and beautiful sunsets.

PALGHAR

» **Kalamb Beach:** A secluded beach near Nalasopara, ideal for peaceful walks.

» **Kelva Fort:** Coastal fort surrounded by palm groves, once held by the Portuguese.

» **Arnala Fort:** Island fort originally built by the Portuguese, later seized by Marathas.

» **Vasai Fort:** Expansive ruins of Portuguese-era churches, watchtowers and homes.

PUNE

» **Malshej Ghat:** Scenic Mountain pass and a seasonal hotspot for migratory flamingos.

» **Bhimashankar:** A hill station with both spiritual importance and a wildlife sanctuary.

» **Rajmachi:** A quiet hill town known for its twin forts and popular monsoon treks.

» **Torna:** Historic hilltop fort popular among seasoned trekkers.

» **Purandar Fort:** Strategically significant Maratha fort with Mughal treaty history.

» **Shri Datta Mandir:** Dattatreya temple near Purandar Fort, frequented by trekkers.

SINDHUDURG

» **Amboli:** Lush hill station in the Sahyadris, famed for waterfalls and misty forests.

VYAGHRAGAD (SATARA)

» **Vasota Fort:** Remote Forest fort near Bhandardara, ideal for wilderness treks.

MUMBAI

» **Flora Fountain:** A 19th-century Indo- Saracenic landmark in Mumbai's Fort area.

» **David Sassoon Library:** One of the city's oldest colonial-era libraries with gothic charm.

» **Ballard Estate:** Neighbourhood of Edwardian-style buildings with wide avenues.

» **Old Secretariat Building:** A grand Greco-Roman colonial structure still in civic use.

Key Activities: Beach walks; Birdwatching; Visit Suvarna Ganesh temple

» **Harihareshwar Beach (Raigad):** A coastal town regarded locally as 'Dakshin Kashi', known for the Harihareshwar Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Key Activities: Temple visit; Sunrise photography; Scenic pradakshina walk

» **Velas Beach (Ratnagiri):** A conservation-focused beach known for the annual Olive Ridley Turtle Festival.

Key Activities: Turtle watching; Village homestays; Nature walks

» **Shrivardhan Beach (Raigad):** A calm beach rich in Maratha heritage, ideal for relaxed water activities.

Key Activities: Swimming; Jet skiing; Temple visits

» **Guhagar Beach (Ratnagiri):** A long, clean and quiet beach ideal for family picnics and temple visits.

Key Activities: Swimming; Visit Vyadeshwar temple; Sandcastle building

» **Harnai- Murud Beaches (Dapoli, Ratnagiri):** Twin beaches known for lively fish auctions and access to Suvarnadurg Fort.

Key Activities: Watch fish auctions; Dolphin watching; Seafood tasting

» **Bordi- Dahanu Beach (Palghar):** A vintage coastal area with chikoo orchards and Parsi heritage homes.

Key Activities: Orchard walks; Cycling; Try local fruit delicacies

» **Aksa Beach (Mumbai):** A peaceful suburban beach ideal for sunset strolls, not safe for swimming.

Key Activities: Sunset photography; Morning walks; Filming locations

» **Versova Beach (Mumbai):** Once polluted, now restored via citizen efforts-offering seafood and fishing scenes.

Key Activities: Seafood tasting; Watch fishing activity; Sunset viewing

» **Vengurla Beach (Sindhudurg):** A quiet, scenic beach near Goa, surrounded by ancient temples and forests.

Key Activities: Beachside relaxation; Coastal treks; Temple visits

» **Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (Chandrapur):** Maharashtra's largest tiger reserve, known for tigers, leopards and birdlife.

Key Activities: Jeep safaris; Wildlife photography; Nature trails

» **Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (Pune):** A sacred and biodiverse area home to the Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Spiritual retreats; Monsoon treks

» **Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary (Kolhapur):** A component of the UNESCO World Heritage property 'Western Ghats' (Sahyadri sub-cluster) famous for Indian bison and evergreen forests.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Birdwatching; Visit tranquil reservoirs

» **Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary (Satara):** A Sahyadri hill sanctuary around Koyna Dam, ideal for safaris and treks.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris; Trekking; Boating near Shivsagar Lake

» **Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary (Bhandara & Gondia):** A compact "green oasis" known for intimate safari experiences.

» **Watson's Hotel:** India's first cast-iron building and site of its first film screening.

» **Town Hall / Asiatic Society:** A Greek revival landmark housing rare books and manuscripts.

» **General Post Office:** Indo-Saracenic icon with a grand dome and ornate interiors.

» **Victoria Gardens / Rani Baug:** Botanical Garden and zoo with colonial-era structures.

» **Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum:** Mumbai's oldest museum showcasing decorative and historical arts.

» **Wilson College:** Gothic stone building by the sea, among India's oldest colleges.

NANDURBAR

» **Songadh Fort:** Small hill fort with tribal and military historical relevance.

BEED

» **Dharur Fort:** Well-preserved medieval fort with inscriptions and deep tanks.

SOLAPUR

» **Akluj Fort:** Restored Maratha fort turned museum with life-sized dioramas.

» **Vitthal-Rukmini Temple:** Coastal temple mirroring Pandharpur's spiritual traditions.

KOLHAPUR

» **Shri Revan Siddh Temple:** Hill shrine of Nath yogi, known for healing and solitude.

» **Kopeshwar Temple:** 12th-century Shiva temple with a rare circular sanctum.

» **Shri Gopal Krishna Mandir:** Popular Vaishnavite temple among merchant communities.

» **Bahubali Jain Tirth:** Peaceful Jain site with a tall Bahubali idol and meditation areas.

SATARA

» **Yamai Devi Temple:** Hilltop family deity temple offering panoramic views.

» **Peer Burhanuddin Dargah:** Sufi shrine atop Ajinkyatara Fort blending mysticism and heritage.

HINGOLI

» **Sant Namdev Sansthan:** Birthplace shrine of saint Namdev, visited by Hindus and Sikhs.

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

» **Sant Eknath Samadhi Mandir:** Shrine honouring poet-saint Eknath.

» **Ganj Golai:** A 19th-century radial market structure and local landmark.

» **Raj Rajeshwar Temple:** Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this ancient temple is renowned for its architectural beauty and spiritual significance.

» **Salasar Balaji Temple:** A modern temple attracting devotees from various regions, known for its serene ambiance.

NASHIK

» **Renuka Devi Temple:** Scenic hill temple associated with Hanuman's birth.

NANDED

» **Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Temple:** Rare temple dedicated to the saint Chaitanya.

JALNA

» **Peer Khwaja Dargah:** Modest yet vibrant Sufi shrine known for its annual Urs festival.

NAGPUR

» **Buddha Vihara**: Dragon Palace Temple: Modern Buddhist structure with Japanese architecture.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting; Quiet nature photography; Family safaris

» **Sanjay Gandhi National Park (Mumbai Suburban):** A rare urban forest home to leopards and ancient Kanheri Caves.

Key Activities: Visit Kanheri Caves; Toy train ride; Butterfly garden tours

» **Chandoli National Park (Sangli):** A Sahyadri park with waterfalls, valleys and the historic Prachitgad Fort.

Key Activities: Treks; Wildlife spotting; Explore historical sites

» **Mahabaleshwar (Satara):** The Queen of Sahyadris with strawberries, colonial charm and misty valleys.

Key Activities: Boating at Venna Lake; Trekking; Visit Mapro Garden

» **Panchgani (Satara):** A hill station with five surrounding hills, strawberry farms and artistic escapes.

Key Activities: Visit Table Land; Paragliding; Explore Devrai Art Village

» **Lonavala (Pune):** A monsoon favourite for its forts, misty trails and waterfalls.

Key Activities: Trekking to forts; Visit Bhushi Dam; Taste local chikki

» **Khandala (Pune):** A peaceful hill retreat ideal for caves, cliffs and lakeside relaxation.

Key Activities: Rock climbing; Visit Karla & Bhaja Caves; Explore Pawana Lake

» **Matheran (Raigad):** A vehicle-free hill station with panoramic viewpoints and a vintage toy train. Vehicles are prohibited within municipal limits (with limited exceptions),

supporting a low-pollution hill-station experience.

Key Activities: Horse riding; Visit Charlotte Lake; Enjoy panoramic viewpoints

» **Chikhaldara (Amravati):** Maharashtra's only coffee region, full of wildlife, waterfalls and Bhimkund folklore.

Key Activities: Safari in Melghat; Camp near Semadoh; Visit Bhimkund

» **Bhandardara (Ahilyanagar):** A monsoon gem with waterfalls, forts and lakes perfect for treks and stargazing.

Key Activities: Visit Umbrella & Randha Falls; Trek to Kalsubai; Starry night camping

» **Igatpuri (Nashik):** A spiritual and adventure hub with meditation centres and scenic treks.

Key Activities: Visit Vipassana Centre; Trek to Tringalwadi Fort; Waterfall visits

» **Malshej Ghat (Ahilyanagar/ Pune):** A monsoon hotspot with migrating flamingos, green cliffs and heritage forts.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Trek to Harishchandragad; Visit Pimpalgaon Joga Dam

Adventure Tourism

» **Aamby Valley (Pune):** A top-tier skydiving hub offering tandem jumps with panoramic Sahyadri mountain views.

Key Activities: Skydiving; Tandem jumps; Aerial sightseeing

» **Hatgad (Surgana):** A tranquil hilltop in the Satpura range known for paragliding and gliding sports.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Nature photography; Glider flying

» **Devgad Beach (Sindhudurg):** A coastal ziplining destination, combining sea views with beachside adventure.

LATUR

» **Udgir Fort:** A historic fort known for the Treaty of Udgir between the Marathas and the Nizam.

» **Ausa Fort:** A medieval fortification with bastions and moat, important in Maratha history.

» **Kharosa Caves:** Ancient rock-cut caves with Hindu and Jain sculptures.

AKOLA

» **Narnala Fort:** Also known as Shahnur Fort, this hill fortress is nestled in the Satpura Range and offers panoramic views, making it a favorite among trekkers and history enthusiasts

» **Balapur Fort:** Located at the confluence of the Man and Mhais rivers, this fort is a testament to Mughal architecture and strategic military planning.

» **Katepurna Wildlife Sanctuary:** A haven for biodiversity, this sanctuary is home to various species of flora and fauna, including the four-horned antelope and barking deer.

GADCHIROLI

» **Sironcha:** A town with historical significance, located on the banks of the Pranhita River.

» **Dhanora:** Known for its natural beauty and serene environment.

GONDIA

» **Navegaon National Park:** A nearby attraction offering rich biodiversity, ideal for wildlife enthusiasts.

DHARASHIV

» **Dharashiv Caves:** Ancient rock-cut caves believed to date back to the 5th century, showcasing Buddhist and Jain influences.

» **Naldurg Fort**: A massive fortification known for its unique architecture and historical importance.

Key Activities: Ziplining; Coastal trekking; Beach walks

» **Motha (Chikhaldara):** An offbeat aerial adventure spot in Amravati ideal for paramotoring and hill gliding.

Key Activities: Paramotoring; Hill photography; Paragliding

» **Kundalika River (Kolad, Raigad):** A monsoon favourite for white-water rafting along Grade II–III rapids in a green valley.

Key Activities: White water rafting; Riverside camping; Nature hikes

» **Kumbhe Waterfall (Raigad):** A seasonal cascade perfect for rappelling and monsoon treks through rugged forest terrain.

Key Activities: Waterfall rappelling; Monsoon trekking; Cliff climbing

» **Takmak Fort (Palghar):** A scenic hill fort offering moderate treks, birdwatching and panoramic fort ruins.

Key Activities: Trekking; Fort exploration; Birdwatching

» **Ulhas River (Karjat):** A gentle rafting spot perfect for beginners, with monsoon rides and jungle paddling.

Key Activities: River rafting; Scenic rides; Jungle paddling

» **Aladoh (Chikhaldara):** A zipline adventure through forest canopy trails offering thrill and nature immersion.

Key Activities: Ziplining; Forest canopy walks; Nature trails

» **Semadoh (Amravati):** A nature-rich spot near Melghat known for river crossings and ropeway valley adventures.

Key Activities: River crossing; Valley ropeway; Forest adventures

Heritage Tourism

» **Bibi-ka-Maqbara (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** The 'Taj of the Deccan', this Mughal-era mausoleum offers a serene blend of symmetry, history and gardens.

» **Deekshabhoomi (Nagpur):** A major Buddhist site where Dr. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism, symbolising social reform and peace.

» **Maharaja's New Palace (Kolhapur):** An Indo-Saracenic palace with a royal museum, still occupied by Kolhapur's royal family.

» **Mansar (Nagpur):** Archaeological remains from the Vakataka period offering insights into ancient temples and palaces.

» **Paithan (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** Ancient Satavahana city known for Paithani sarees and cultural sites near Jayakwadi Dam.

» **Sewagram (Wardha):** Gandhiji's ashram promoting self-reliance, peace and non-violence during the freedom struggle.

» **Swinging Towers, Farkande (Jalgaon):** Mysterious medieval towers that sway in sync, fascinating for physics and history lovers.

» **Ajanta Caves (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site (inscribed 1983) having Buddhist Caves with ancient murals and sculptures from 2nd century BCE.

» **Bhaja Caves (Pune):** Early Buddhist rock-cut caves in the Sahyadris with ancient viharas, stupas and carvings.

» **Elephanta Caves (Mumbai):** UNESCO inscribed in 1987 Island caves with massive rock-cut sculptures, including the iconic Trimurti, accessible by ferry.

» **Ellora Caves (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** UNESCO World Heritage Site (1983) cave complex of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain heritage, famed for Kailasa Temple.

» **Kanheri Caves (Mumbai):** Buddhist caves in Sanjay Gandhi National Park with ancient inscriptions and forest serenity.

» **Mahur (Nanded):** Sacred birthplace of Goddess Renuka, surrounded by forests and temples.

» **Pandavleni Caves (Nashik):** Pandavleni Caves are ancient rock-cut Buddhist caves dating back over 2,000 years, known for their intricate carvings, inscriptions and panoramic views of Nashik city.

» **Pitalkhora Caves (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** Remote Buddhist caves carved into basalt cliffs, rich in sculptures and forest views.

» **Raigad Fort (Raigad):** Capital of Shivaji Maharaj's empire, with a ropeway and sweeping Sahyadri views.

» **Sindhudurg Fort (Sindhudurg):** Island fort built by Shivaji with panoramic sea views and nearby water sports.

» **Daulatabad Fort (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** A massive hill fort with tricky pathways, briefly served as the capital of the Delhi Sultanate (under Muhammad bin Tughluq), historically associated with Devagiri/Daulatabad.

» **Shaniwar Wada (Pune):** Peshwa-era palace fort with legends, gardens and sound-and-light shows.

» **Lohagad Fort (Pune):** A monsoon trekker's favourite, known for its 'Vinchu Kata' rampart and fort views.

» **Rajmachi Fort (Pune):** A twin fort complex loved by monsoon trekkers for its panoramic vistas.

» **Naldurg Fort (Dharashiv):** Unique fort built into basalt, with moats, palaces and seasonal waterfalls.

» **Paranda Fort (Dharashiv):** Islamic-era fort with cannons, bastions and arched gateways of Deccan Sultanate.

» **Vijaydurg Fort (Sindhudurg):** The 'Gibraltar of the East'-a sea fort with docks and thick walls steeped in Maratha naval history.

» **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (Mumbai):** UNESCO-listed Gothic landmark and bustling train station with Indo-European design.

» **Bombay High Court (Mumbai):** 19th-century Neo-Gothic court still in operation, showcasing colonial legal architecture.

» **Rajabai Clock Tower (Mumbai):** Gothic-Venetian clock tower inside University of Mumbai, inspired by Big Ben.

» **Gateway of India (Mumbai):** A historic seafront arch built to mark King George V's visit, now a symbol of Mumbai.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Tuljapur (Dharashiv):** A prominent Shakti Peetha where devotees offer sarees and coconuts to Goddess Tulja Bhavani, especially during Navratri.

» **Mahur (Nanded):** Birthplace of Goddess Renuka, set amidst serene forests and caves, ideal for treks and temple visits.

» **Vani – Saptashrungi Temple (Nashik):** A hill shrine accessed via 500+ steps or ropeway, bustling with devotees during Navratri.

» **Shirdi (Ahilyanagar):** The global pilgrimage hub of Sai Baba, offering aartis, museum visits and spiritual darshan.

» **Shegaon (Buldhana):** Temple town dedicated to Gajanan Maharaj, offering meditation spaces and bhakt accommodations.

» **Pandharpur (Solapur):** Home to Lord Vitthal, where lakhs join the Ashadhi and Kartiki yatras for devotional darshan.

» **Jejuri (Pune):** A hilltop Khandoba shrine known for its turmeric-smeared rituals and panoramic views.

» **Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib (Nanded):** A sacred Sikh Takht marking Guru Gobind Singh's salvation, featuring daily kirtans and museum exhibits.

» **Jyotiba Temple (Kolhapur):** A popular pilgrimage site during Chaitra Yatra, known for palkhi processions and temple visits.

» **Kalaram Temple (Nashik):** Historic black-stone temple of Lord Rama, central to Dalit rights history and Ram Navami celebrations.

» **Ramtek / Khindsi (Nagpur):** Believed to be a spot visited by Lord Rama, Ramtek combines spiritual calm with lake boating nearby.

» **Pardeshwar Temple (Pune):** A peaceful Shiva temple featuring a unique mercury Shivling and meditative environment.

» **Morgaon (Pune):** The starting and end point of the Ashtavinayak Yatra, home to a swayambhu Ganesha and peacock sanctuaries.

» **Siddhatek (Ahilyanagar):** A riverside Ganesha temple believed to fulfill wishes, accessed via hill trek or boat.

» **Pali (Raigad):** Ganesha temple named after devotee Ballal, known for its peaceful setting and daily aartis.

» **Mahad (Raigad):** A village temple with a self-manifested Ganesha idol and a quiet, reflective atmosphere.

» **Theur (Pune):** Associated with Chintamani Ganesha, this temple is popular for Ganesh Chaturthi and tranquil courtyards.

» **Lenyadri (Pune):** A Ganesha temple set in ancient Buddhist caves, accessible via a 283-step climb.

» **Ozar (Nashik):** Home to Vighnahar Ganesha, this temple is known for rituals, golden domes and a scenic riverside location.

» **Ranjangaon (Pune):** The site of Mahaganapati's temple, linked to Shiva's battle with Tripurasura and known for its morning aartis.

» **Haji Ali Dargah (Mumbai):** A revered Indo-Islamic shrine on the sea, welcoming all faiths with its qawwalis and tomb visit.

» **Hazrat Baba Shah Musafir Dargah (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** A peaceful Sufi shrine known for Urs festivities and community feasts.

» **Khamgaon Dargah (Buldhana):** A popular Sufi site in Vidarbha that draws large crowds during its annual Urs.

» **Meena Dargah (Malegaon):** A significant dargah for Sunni and Bohra pilgrims, especially vibrant during Urs celebrations.

» **Trimbakeshwar (Nashik):** A Jyotirlinga temple near the Godavari's source, featuring a rare trinity lingam and sacred Kund.

» **Grishneshwar (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar):** The last of the 12 Jyotirlingas, known for morning rituals and proximity to Ellora.

» **Parli Vaijnath (Beed):** A sacred Jyotirlinga believed to have been built by the Pandavas, with spiritual healing appeal.

Culture and Cuisines

Maharashtra's culture is a rich mosaic shaped by Maratha heritage, tribal traditions and diverse regional identities- each adding unique customs, languages and festivals. Rooted in resilience and community spirit, the state's culture shines through its vibrant folk arts, grand celebrations and historic forts that echo tales of valour and devotion.

Culture

» **Champa Shashti (Jejuri, Pune)**: A six-day turmeric-splashed celebration in honour of Lord Khandoba, marked by rituals, processions and golden clouds of 'bhandara'.

» **Buddha Purnima & Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Day (Nagpur, Mumbai, Statewide)**: Celebrates Buddha's life and Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism with massive gatherings, prayers and reflection.

» **Gudi Padwa (All Districts)**: The Marathi New Year celebrated with symbolic 'gudi' flags, rangoli and festive food to mark prosperity and new beginnings.

» **Pandharpur Wari Yatra (Solapur)**: A 21-day spiritual pilgrimage ending at Vitthal Temple on Ashadhi Ekadashi, attracting lakhs of Varkaris.

» **Narali Purnima (Konkan Coast)**: Coastal festival where fishermen offer coconuts to the sea god Varuna for safety before resuming fishing post-monsoon.

» **Krishna Janmashtami / Dahi Handi (Mumbai & Urban Areas)**: Youths form human pyramids to break curd pots, re-enacting Krishna's mischief in a festive urban spectacle.

» **Bendur/Pola (Rural Maharashtra)**: Celebrates and decorates bullocks with processions and games to honour the farmer's most faithful companion.

» **Ganesh Chaturthi (Statewide)**: Maharashtra's biggest festival featuring clay Ganesha idols, daily aartis, festive feasts and massive immersion processions.

» **Kamala Bhavani Devi Navratri Yatra (Solapur)**: A devotional celebration with night-long music, rituals and illuminated temple premises during Navratri.

» **Taj Bagh Urus (Nagpur)**: A large-scale Sufi gathering with qawwalis and prayers at Hazrat Baba Tajuddin's dargah, uniting diverse faiths.

» **Nagobachi Yatra (Awas, Alibag)**: Coastal pilgrimage in honour of a snake deity, featuring folk customs, bell offerings and bullock cart journeys.

» **Bullock Cart Race Festival (Nagav, Sangli)**: A rural sport held between November–May, where colourfully adorned bullocks race through village tracks.

» **Kanakeshwar Yatra (Alibag)**: Thousands trek uphill to the Shiva temple on Tripurari Pournima, enjoying night fairs and rituals.

» **Kalidas Festival (Ramtek, Nagpur)**: Celebrates classical music, dance and theatre against the scenic backdrop of Ramtek, honouring poet Kalidas.

» **Chetak Festival (Sarangkheda, Nandurbar)**: A rural horse fair and cultural extravaganza featuring horse trading, traditional performances and crafts.

» **Ellora–Ajanta Dance Festival (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar)**: Classical performances under the stars near ancient caves, blending art with UNESCO heritage.

» **Siddheshwar Yatra (Solapur)**: A 15-day folk fair at Siddheshwar Temple involving symbolic bamboo marriages and community celebrations.

» **Rajmata Jijau Janmotsav (Sindkhed Raja, Buldhana)**: A historical tribute to Shivaji's mother with processions, storytelling and cultural events.

» **Upvan Sanskruti Arts Festival (Thane)**: Lakeside urban fest showcasing 300+ artists across music, dance, food and visual arts.

» **Christmas & Bandra Fair (Mumbai & Statewide)**: Christmas with Mass, food and festivities, plus Bandra's week-long fair with prayer, markets and fun.

» **Marbat Festival (Nagpur)**: Unique local festival with evil effigies paraded through streets and set ablaze to banish negativity.

» **Shivaji Jayanti (Statewide)**: Celebrated on Feb 19 with parades, reenactments, patriotic speeches and school events honouring Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

» **Bhim Jayanti (Statewide, esp. Nagpur & Mumbai)**: Commemorates Ambedkar's birth on April 14 with rallies, garlandings and cultural programmes.

» **Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (Mumbai)**: A February bonanza of arts, installations, dance, literature, theatre and heritage walks in South Mumbai.

» **Mumbai Urban Art Festival (Mumbai)**: It is a contemporary art celebration that transforms city spaces with murals, installations and creative public art. It showcases diverse artistic expressions while highlighting Mumbai's vibrant urban culture.

Cuisines

» **Pithla-Bhakri:** A rustic staple of rural Maharashtra, this dish combines gram flour curry (pithla) with flatbread (bhakri) made from jowar or bajra. Often served with raw onion and green chilies.

» **Misal Pav:** A spicy lentil-based curry (usal) topped with farsan, chopped onions and coriander, served with soft pav. It's especially popular as a breakfast or snack in Pune and Nashik.

» **Vada Pav:** Often dubbed the 'Indian burger,' it features a deep-fried potato patty inside a pav bun with garlic chutney. A street food icon across Mumbai.

» **Sabudana Khichdi:** A light, tapioca-based dish cooked with peanuts, chilies and potatoes. Common during fasting days but loved as a snack throughout the year.

» **Kolhapuri Tambda Rassa:** A fiery red mutton curry made with robust spices native to Kolhapur, paired with soft chapatis or rice.

» **Solkadhi:** A refreshing drink made from kokum and coconut milk, typically consumed along the Konkan coast as a digestive after meals.

» **Thalipeeth:** A multi-grain flatbread spiced with onions, chilies and cumin, often served with white butter or curd. Common in households across western Maharashtra.

» **Varhadi Chicken:** A traditional chicken curry from Vidarbha known for its dry, spicy masala and distinct smoky flavour.

» **Kharvas:** A delicate steamed pudding made from colostrum milk (the first milk post-calving), flavoured with cardamom and saffron. A rare but cherished dessert.

» **Puran Poli:** A sweet flatbread stuffed with lentils and jaggery, made especially during Holi and Gudi Padwa. Served warm with ghee.

» **Modak:** A steamed or fried dumpling filled with coconut and jaggery, offered to Lord Ganesha and enjoyed during Ganesh Chaturthi.

» **Ukadiche Modak:** Fluffy, steamed rice flour puris often served with spicy curries in coastal and Malvani cuisine.

» **Alu Vadi:** Colocasia leaves smeared with spiced gram flour paste, rolled, steamed and sliced - especially popular in Konkan households.

» **Bombil Fry:** Bombay duck fish, marinated in spices and shallow fried. A coastal delicacy savoured along the Konkan belt.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Maharashtra's textiles and handicrafts showcase its cultural diversity through vibrant Paithani sarees, intricate Warli paintings, Kolhapuri leatherwork and traditional bamboo and bidri crafts.

» **Paithani Sarees:** Regal handwoven silk sarees known for vibrant colours, peacock and floral motifs and rich zari borders; worn at weddings and festivals.

Key Areas: Paithan (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar); Yeola (Nashik)

- **Warli Painting:** Tribal art using white pigment on mud walls to depict human and natural forms in geometric style; now also seen on textiles and decor.

  Key Areas: Palghar; Dahanu (North Konkan)
- **Himroo Weaving:** Luxurious silk-cotton textile with Persian-inspired motifs, once made for Mughal royalty; used in shawls and upholstery.

  Key Areas: Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar
- **Mashru Weaving**: Glossy silk-cotton fabric created for communities avoiding pure silk, known for bold patterns and durability.

  Key Areas: Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar
- **Kolhapuri Chappals**: Handcrafted leather sandals with traditional braiding, made using indigenous tanning methods for lasting wear.

  Key Areas: Kolhapur; Ichalkaranji
- **Pinguli Chitrakathi Art**: Scroll paintings used in folk storytelling, depicting epics and local myths in bold, linear style.

  Key Areas: Pinguli (Sindhudurg)
- **Sawantwadi Lacquerware:** Brightly painted wooden toys and decorative items featuring floral and mythological themes.

  Key Areas: Sawantwadi (Sindhudurg)
- **Gond Art:** Tribal paintings of animals and spirits using intricate lines and dots in vivid colours, rooted in forest life.

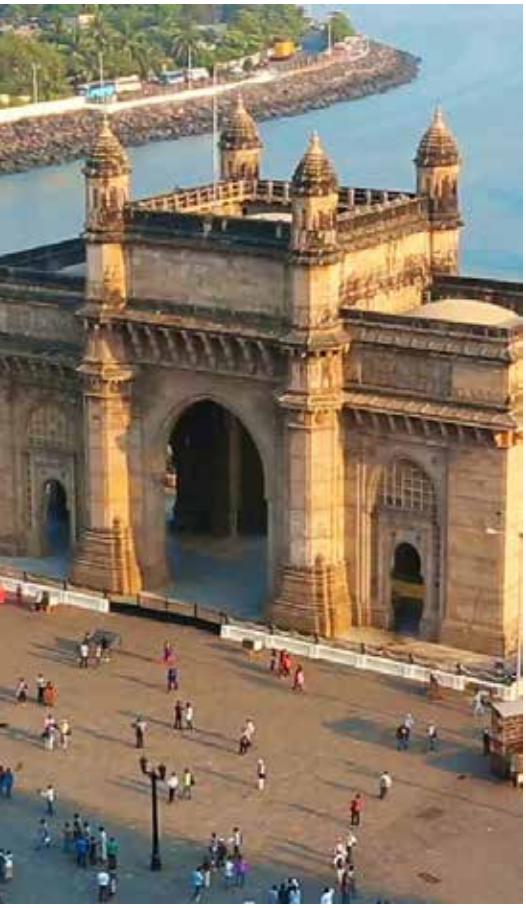
  Key Areas: Gadchiroli; Bhandara
- **Leather Puppetry (Chamadyache Bahulya):** Traditional shadow puppets made from tanned leather, once central to rural theatre.

  Key Areas: Solapur region
- **Bamboo & Cane Craft:** Handcrafted baskets, mats, furniture blending rural craftsmanship.

  Key Areas: Gadchiroli; Melghat (Amravati)
- **Copper & Brass Craft:** Ritual utensils, lamps and decor made using repoussé and lost-wax casting techniques.

  Key Areas: Nashik; Jalgaon; Pune; Marathwada
- **Bidri-style Metal Inlay:** Decorative metalware featuring silver inlay on blackened alloy, inspired by Bidar's iconic craft.

  Key Areas: Border regions of Latur and Dharashiv



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **July to April** (Pleasant and cooler weather across most of the state, ideal for city sightseeing, coastal trips, wildlife visits and heritage circuits.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to June** (High daytime temperatures and occasional heatwaves, especially in inland and urban areas; suitable mainly for early-morning or late-evening sightseeing and hill-station visits.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Mumbai came into British hands as dowry in 1661 and **grew from seven islands into India's financial capital.**

» **Ajanta Caves were the first Indian site to be inscribed by UNESCO in 1983,** known for their exquisite ancient Buddhist murals and sculptures.

» **Mumbai's local train system is often called the 'Lifeline of the City'.** It is among the world's busiest suburban rail systems.

» **The Lonar Crater Lake was formed by a meteor strike.** This rare saline-alkaline lake in Buldhana district is one of only four hyper-velocity impact craters in basaltic rock on Earth.

» **The 100-foot statue of Lord Bahubali at Kumbhoj is the tallest statue of a Jain Tirthankara** near Kolhapur is a revered pilgrimage spot with panoramic views.

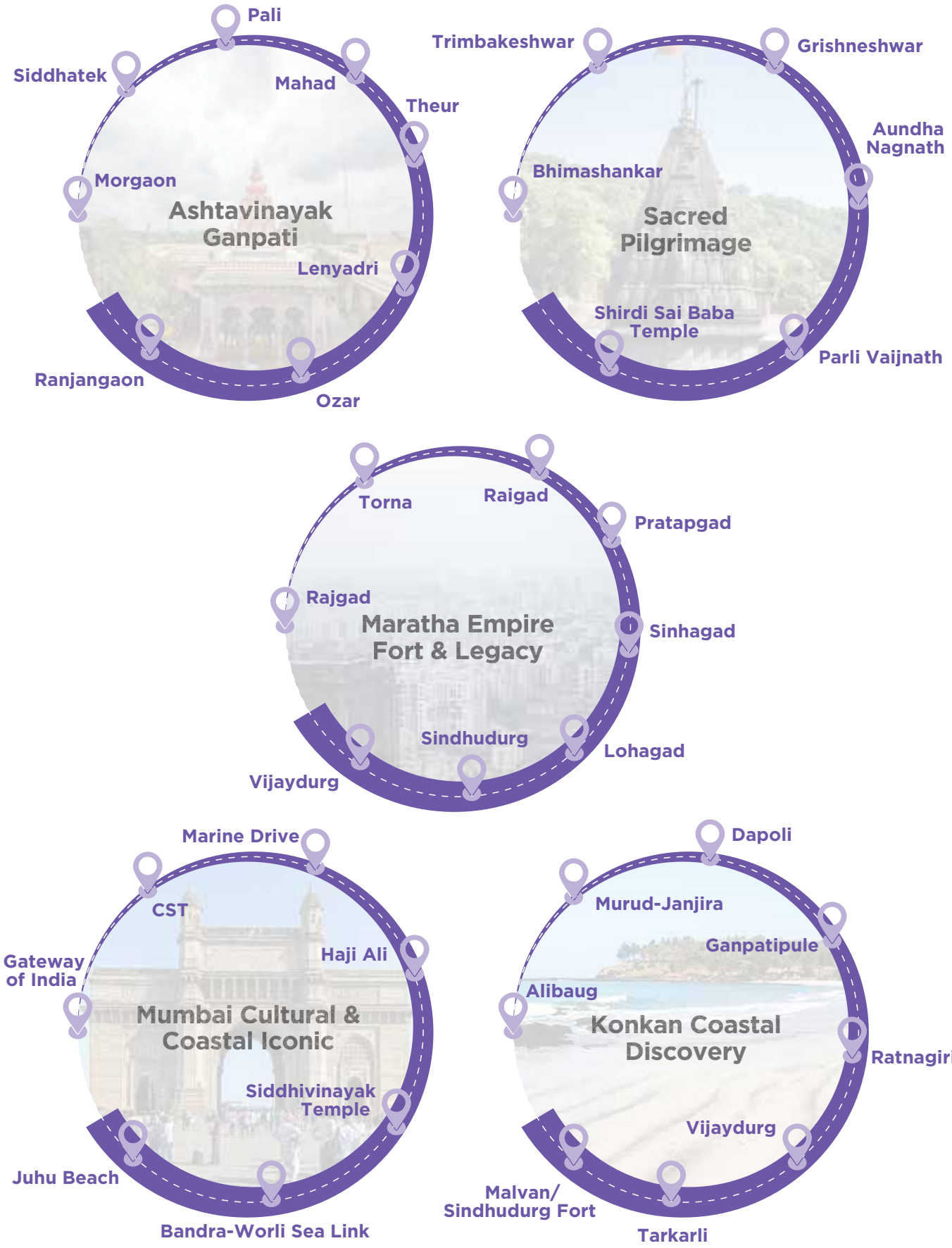
» **Pune is called the 'Oxford of the East'.** Known for its educational institutions, Pune attracts students and cultural tourists from around the world.

» **Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Mumbai are among the grandest in India.** The festival transforms the city into a vibrant carnival, drawing lakhs of tourists and devotees.

» **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus is a functional World Heritage Site.** This Gothic masterpiece is both a working railway station and a marvel of Indo-Victorian architecture.

» Nashik is widely known as the **"Wine Capital of India"** hosting about half of the country's vineyards and wineries, offering winery tours, tastings and vineyard stays for experiential tourism.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Manipur

Tourism

Manipur, located in the northeastern region of India, is a land of serene landscapes, rolling hills and rich cultural heritage. Often called the "Jewel of the East," the state is blessed with natural beauty ranging from the floating Loktak Lake to dense forests and misty mountains. It shares an international border with Myanmar, adding strategic and cultural significance to its tourism appeal. Manipur is home to the world's only floating national park-Keibul Lamjao-and is a biodiversity hotspot. The state's vibrant traditions, classical dance forms, handloom crafts and indigenous festivals offer a unique cultural experience. With its blend of eco-tourism, adventure activities and historical sites like Kangla Fort and INA Memorial, Manipur is emerging as a captivating destination for offbeat and immersive travel in India's northeast.

Best Places to Visit

Manipur, nestled in the northeastern hills of India, is known for its scenic landscapes, vibrant tribal culture and biodiversity. From the floating Loktak Lake to traditional dance and crafts, it offers a unique blend of nature and heritage for offbeat travellers.

Nature Tourism

» **Loktak Lake (Bishnupur):** Loktak Lake, the largest freshwater lake in North-East India, is renowned for its floating 'phumdis' (vegetation mats) and its critical ecological role for Manipur. Loktak is famous for its floating phumdis (islands) and scenic tranquility. It is a prime destination for eco-tourism and birdwatching.

Key Activities: Boating; Birdwatching; Nature photography

» **Keibul Lamjao National Park (Bishnupur):** The world's only floating national park, it is home to the endangered Sangai deer and is located on the southern part of Loktak Lake.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting; Nature walks; Photography

» **Dzukou Valley (Senapati):** Bordering Nagaland, this valley is known for its seasonal blooms, rolling hills and trekking trails, especially during the summer months.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Scenic viewing

» **Khayang Waterfall (Kamjong):** A scenic, lesser-known waterfall in Kamjong district, surrounded by dense forest and ideal for quiet nature experiences.

Key Activities: Nature photography; Hiking; Picnic

» **Barak Waterfalls (Tamenglong):** Located deep within Tamenglong's forests, the Barak River forms multiple cascading waterfalls that are untouched and serene.

Key Activities: Hiking; Nature exploration; Photography

» **Zeilad Lake (Tamenglong):** A picturesque lake surrounded by dense forests and home to a variety of birds, tortoises and fish.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Manipur's lesser-known attractions offer serene landscapes, ancient temples and vibrant local culture beyond the usual tourist trails. From peaceful villages and hidden waterfalls to unique heritage sites, the state reveals a quieter, more authentic charm.

BISHNUPUR

» **Pheidaipat:** A quaint village known for traditional farming and natural beauty, perfect for rural tranquility.

» **Bishnupur Temple Complex:** The 15th century Vishnu Temple built of peculiarly small bricks supposedly of Chinese influence during the reign of King Kiyamba is of a historical importance. Bishnupur is also famous for its chiseled stoneware.

» **Keibul Lamjao National Park:** While this is already famous, its inclusion in the district highlights its significance. It's the world's only floating national park and home to the endangered Sangai deer.

» **Bishnupur Handloom Village:** A hub for traditional Moirang Phee and Kanglei Phee silks. Tourists can visit to witness the weaving process and purchase handmade textiles.

CHURACHANDPUR

» **Tuibong Village:** Inhabited by the Zou tribe, this village offers a glimpse into indigenous customs and pristine natural beauty.

» **Rongmei Village:** A beautiful village offering insight into the lifestyle of the Rongmei tribe. Visitors can learn about traditional handicrafts, dances and rituals.

» **Churachandpur War Memorial:** A tribute to the soldiers of the Indian Army who fought in World War II, this memorial is not only of historical importance but also offers panoramic views of the surrounding hills.

IMPHAL EAST

» **Wakching Village:** A serene village near Imphal, surrounded by hills, famous for local agricultural practices and scenic beauty.

- **Sekta Archaeological Living Museum:** Located near Imphal, this museum displays artifacts from early Meitei history, such as burial mounds from the 14th century.
- **Ibudhou Pakhangba Temple:** A place of great religious significance for the Meitei community. It's dedicated to Lord Pakhangba, the indigenous Meitei deity.

IMPHAL WEST

- **Andro Village:** Known for its pottery-making traditions and its lifestyle based on Meitei customs andro Village is one of the best places for cultural tourism.
- **Shaheed Minar:** This memorial, located in Bir Tikendrajit Park, commemorates the sacrifices made by Manipuri martyrs during the British annexation in 1891.

CHURACHANDPUR

- **Aichin / Lamka Park (Churachandpur):** A community-managed recreational park and picnic area in Lamka town of Churachandpur district, popular with local families and visitors

THOUBAL

- **Langmeidong Village:** Known for lush greenery and traditional lifestyle, Langmeidong offers a tranquil retreat for those looking to immerse in rural life.
- **Khongjom War Memorial:** Located atop Kheba Hill, this site commemorates the bravery of Manipuri soldiers during the 1891 Anglo-Manipur War.
- **Thangjing Temple:** A sacred temple near Moirang, this site is crucial for the Lai Haraoba festival, which celebrates the gods of the Meitei religion.
- **Red Hill / India Peace Memorial:** A peaceful and

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boating; Fishing

- **Koubru Hill (Kangpokpi / Senapati):** A sacred mountain revered in Meitei tradition, lying along the boundary of Kangpokpi and Senapati districts. Its forested slopes and hilltop shrine make it an important pilgrimage and trekking destination.

Key Activities: Trekking; Pilgrimage walk; Forest exploration

- **Khangkhui Cave (Ukhrul):** A limestone cave known for its natural rock formations and historical legends, set amidst green surroundings.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Nature walk; Photography

- **Sadu Chiru (Leimaram) Waterfall (Bishnupur):** A scenic multi-tiered waterfall about 20 km from Imphal, located in the Sadu Chiru / Leimaram area at the foothills of Bishnupur district; a popular trekking and picnic spot.

Key Activities: Picnic; Hiking; Nature photography

- **Tharon Cave (Tamenglong):** An ancient limestone cave linked to the Hoabinhian culture, featuring natural rock formations and forested surroundings.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Forest walks; Heritage trail

- **Yangoupokpi-Lokchao Wildlife Sanctuary (Tengnoupal):** An Indo-Myanmar border sanctuary (formerly under Chandel district) notified as a key Important Bird Area and wildlife corridor.

Key Activities: Wildlife watching; Forest trekking; Birdwatching

Adventure Tourism

- **Shirui Hills (Ukhrul):** Famous for the rare Shirui Lily, this destination offers challenging treks across misty hills and panoramic views of the valley.

Key Activities: Hiking; Rock climbing; Waterfall trekking

- **Leimaram Waterfalls (Bishnupur):** A cascading three-tiered waterfall surrounded by forest, suitable for short treks and water-based adventure.

Key Activities: Hiking; Rock climbing; Waterfall trekking

- **Bunning Meadow (Noney):** A high-altitude grassland offering serene landscapes, ideal for offbeat trekking and wilderness camping away from urban areas.

Key Activities: Offbeat trekking; Camping; Wildlife trail

- **Kaihlam Wildlife Sanctuary (Churachandpur):** A rugged forest sanctuary rich in biodiversity, offering challenging jungle trails for eco-trekking and wildlife photography.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Wildlife photography; Eco-adventure

- **Senapati Hill Ranges:** Senapati unfolds as a highland retreat of adventure and calm, where treks to Kobru Peak and Mount Tempu meet misty forests, cascading Sadu Chiru Waterfalls and serene dams at Singda and Dolaithabi.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; nature walks; landscape photography; and cultural encounters

- **Zeilad Lake Trek Route (Tamenglong):** A forest trekking trail leading to Zeilad Lake, passing through tribal villages and rich bird habitats.

reflective site, located at Maibam Lokpaching, honouring the sacrifices made during WWII.

SENAPATI

- **Phuba Khuman Village:** A picturesque tribal village with unique customs and traditions, perfect for cultural immersion and nature exploration.
- **Khayang Waterfall:** A serene and relatively undiscovered waterfall amidst lush forest, perfect for nature photography and hikes.
- **Dzükou Valley:** Although slightly larger, this valley in Senapati offers a tranquil escape for trekkers, especially during the summer months when the valley is dotted with beautiful wildflowers.
- **Liyai Khullen Village:** A traditional tribal village nestled in the hills, where travellers can engage in cultural exchange and explore the surrounding nature trails.
- **Mao Gate:** A prominent border point, the Mao Gate is historically significant, located on the Indo-Myanmar border. It's a scenic location for photos and local interactions.

TAMENGLONG

- **Ngaloi Waterfall:** A hidden gem in the forest, this waterfall is a peaceful stop for trekkers and nature lovers looking to escape the crowds.
- **Zeilad Lake:** Surrounded by dense forests, Zeilad Lake is perfect for birdwatching and peaceful boat rides, offering a tranquil retreat from the busy world.
- **Bunning Meadow:** A lush green meadow at high altitude, Bunning Meadow is perfect for offbeat

trekkers and those looking for a wilderness camping experience.

» **Tharon Cave:** A limestone cave with unique formations and links to the ancient Hoabinhian culture. A perfect spot for history buffs and cave explorers.

UKHRUL

» **Phangrei Sunrise Point:** A local favourite offering stunning sunrise views over the hills and valleys of Ukhrul. It's less commercialised, making it a peaceful escape.

» **Khayang Peak:** A popular trekking destination offering scenic views of the surrounding hills and valleys. It's also a great spot for nature photography.

» **Shirui Hills:** Famous for the rare Shirui Lily, this hill is a trekking hotspot that offers panoramic views of Ukhrul and is perfect for outdoor adventurers.

» **Khangkhui Cave:** This limestone cave is famous for its legends and natural rock formations. A hidden gem for those interested in cave exploration and photography.

CHANDEL

» **Kharon Village:** A charming tribal village that preserves its traditional heritage and celebrates unique festivals, offering a deep cultural experience.

» **Sailam Village:** A serene village known for its rich culture and traditions, perfect for anyone looking to experience the local tribal lifestyle and customs.

» **Sangkai Hill:** A hilltop offering sweeping views of the surrounding valleys. It's an excellent spot for trekking and photography.

» **Chandel War Memorial:** This memorial commemorates the valour of soldiers during WWII and is an important historical and peaceful site for visitors.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Birdwatching; Rural exploration

» **Kachai Lemon Festival Trails (Ukhrul):** Held in the hilly Kachai region, the trails around the lemon orchards are explored during the annual festival season.

Key Activities: Trail walking; Orchard exploration; Festival-based adventure

» **Mount Iso (also known as Mount Esii / Tempu) (Senapati):** Generally regarded as the highest peak in Manipur, at around 2,994 m, located near Dzukou Valley on the Manipur–Nagaland border.

Key Activities: Mountain trekking; Camping; High-altitude hiking

» **Liyai Khullen (Senapati) :** A traditional tribal village nestled in hills, accessible through long nature trails, offering cultural immersion along with adventure.

Key Activities: Village trekking; Tribal exploration; Rural homestay

Heritage Tourism

» **Kangla Fort (Imphal West):** Nestled in the heart of Imphal, Kangla Fort served as the seat of Meitei kings from around 33 CE until the British annexation in 1891. Tourists can explore sacred temples, royal remnants, ancient gates and museums that showcase the spiritual and political heart of Manipur's heritage.

» **Shree Shree Govindajee Temple (Imphal East):** Built in 1846 and rebuilt in 1876, this twin-domed Vaishnavite temple near the former royal palace stands as a symbol of devotion to Lord Krishna, attracting visitors with its daily rituals, vibrant festivals and architectural grace rooted in Manipuri Vaishnavism.

» **Khongjom War Memorial (Thoubal):** Located atop Kheba Hill, this memorial Honours Major General Paona Brajabashi and his troops who fought bravely in the 1891 Anglo–Manipur War. Visitors are drawn to the towering statue and panoramic views

that narrate a legacy of resistance and sacrifice.

» **Imphal War Cemetery (Imphal East & West):** Two Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries commemorating over 1,600 soldiers who died during the Battle of Imphal in World War II. It offers a reflective space for history enthusiasts and war heritage travelers.

» **INA Headquarters Complex, Moirang (Bishnupur):** The site where the Indian National Army first hoisted the Tricolour on Indian soil on 14 April 1944; now preserved as a memorial complex and museum. Housing wartime artifacts and a grand statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, it's a powerful site for heritage tourism.

» **Red Hill / India Peace Memorial (Bishnupur):** Erected at Maibam Lokpaching, a major WWII battlefield, this site commemorates Japanese and Allied soldiers and promotes peace. Tourists are drawn by its historical displays and panoramic battlefield views that echo a global wartime legacy.

» **Sekta Archaeological Living Museum (Imphal East):** Situated around 17 km from Imphal, this protected site features excavated burial mounds from the 14th–15th centuries.

» **Manipur State Museum (Imphal West):** Located near Kangla, this museum offers an enriching experience with its collection of tribal costumes, traditional artifacts, royal relics and ancient manuscripts- providing an in-depth understanding of Manipur's diverse heritage.

» **Sanggai Yumpham (Imphal West):** Situated within the Kangla complex, this preserved royal residence reflects the architecture and regal lifestyle of the Ningthouja dynasty, allowing tourists to witness authentic palace culture in a restored heritage setting.

» **Marjing Polo Complex (Imphal East):** Overlooking the Imphal Valley from Heingang Hills, this complex celebrates Manipur's legacy as the birthplace of modern polo. The towering statue of deity Marjing and native Manipuri ponies make it a spiritual and sporting landmark.

» **Andro Village (Imphal East):** A heritage village showcasing Meitei customs andro features coiled pottery, bamboo-mud houses, sacred fire rituals and traditional rice wine brewing. Recognised as one of the winners in the 'Best Tourism Villages Competition 2024' (Heritage category) by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

» **Ima Keithel / Khwairamband Bazaar (Imphal West):** More than 500-year-old market run entirely by women, with around 5,000-6,000 women vendors. Recognised as one of the largest all-women markets in the world and an important centre of trade and social life in Imphal.

» **Shaheed Minar (Imphal West):** Located in Bir Tikendrajit Park, this towering structure commemorates the heroes who were martyred resisting British colonization in 1891, making it a solemn site that symbolises Manipur's early freedom movement.

» **Keibul Lamjao National Park (Bishnupur):** While globally known for its floating phumdis and Sangai deer, the park's deep cultural ties to the Manipuri identity make it both a natural and heritage destination The Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area, which includes Keibul Lamjao National Park, Loktak Lake and Pumlen Pat, has been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List.

» **Thangjing Temple (Bishnupur – Moirang):** Dedicated to the ancient deity Thangjing, this temple is central to the Lai Haraoba festival and is believed to be where Meitei dance traditions originated, offering tourists a blend of spirituality, myth and cultural legacy.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Shree Govindajee Temple (Imphal East):** This is the largest and most important Vaishnavite temple in Manipur. Dedicated to Lord Krishna and Radha, it holds immense religious significance for the Meitei Hindus and becomes a vibrant spiritual hub during major Hindu festivals like Janmashtami and Rath Yatra.

» **Sanamahi Temple (Imphal West):** Historic Sanamahi temple near Kangla in Imphal, regarded as one of the key shrines of Sanamahism.

» **Sanamahi Kiyong Temple (Imphal East):** Hilltop temple of Laiingthou Sanamahi on Nongmaiching hills, an important pilgrimage centre for followers of Sanamahism.

» **Kaina (Imphal East):** This site is revered as the place where King Bhagya Chandra had a divine vision of Lord Krishna, leading him to carve the idol of Govindajee. Set amidst scenic hills, the temple holds deep historical and spiritual importance for Vaishnavite followers in Manipur.

» **Bishnupur Temple (Bishnupur):** Built in the 15th century, this temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and gives the district its name. Made of bricks in a unique architectural style, it is one of the oldest Hindu temples in Manipur, attracting devotees and tourists with its serene spiritual ambience and historical significance.

» **Khongjom War Memorial (Thoubal):** Though primarily a historical site, this location also holds spiritual significance as it commemorates the bravery and sacrifice of Manipuri soldiers. Pilgrims often visit to pay homage, blending reverence for martyrs with cultural and spiritual reflection.

Culture and Cuisines

Manipur's culture is a colourful blend of traditional dance, music and festivals, while its cuisine is simple yet flavourful, highlighting fresh herbs, bamboo shoots and local fish.

Culture

» **Yaoshang Festival:** A five-day spring festival of the Meitei people, beginning on the full moon day of the month of Lamta (February-March); often described as Manipur's version of Holi, combining rituals, colours, sports and community events.

» **Lai Haraoba:** This ancient festival is dedicated to the traditional deities (Lai) of the Meitei community. Celebrated with rituals, dance and music, Lai Haraoba means "merry-making of the gods." It showcases Manipuri indigenous beliefs, rituals and performing arts.

» **Imoinu Iratpa:** A festival honouring Goddess Imoinu, the deity of wealth and prosperity, this day is celebrated with prayers and offerings in homes and temples. It highlights the deep connection Manipuris have with their household deities, making it an insightful cultural experience for visitors.

» **Lui-Ngai-Ni:** Manipur's harvest-cycle festival of beginnings, celebrated by Naga communities to mark the agricultural new year. Observed annually in February, it weaves ritual prayers, traditional dances, indigenous music and communal feasts into a vibrant expression of renewal, gratitude and cultural unity.

» **Chavang Kut:** Chavang Kut is Manipur's most celebrated Kuki festival, marking the end of the harvest season and the spirit of thanksgiving. Observed annually in November, it comes alive with traditional dances, folk music, indigenous attire and communal feasts.

» **Shumang Leela (Courtyard Theatre):** While not a festival per se, the traditional folk theatre called Shumang Leela is performed during various fairs and cultural events. It combines storytelling, social messages and humor, offering tourists a unique glimpse into Manipuri social life and values.

Cuisines

» **Eromba:** A signature Manipuri dish made from boiled vegetables mashed together with fermented fish (ngari) and local spices. It's a staple in Manipuri households and reflects the region's love for spicy, tangy flavours that connect tourists to authentic local tastes.

» **Singju:** A fresh and crunchy salad made with shredded seasonal vegetables, herbs and fermented fish or roasted chickpea powder. Singju is a popular appetizer or side dish that offers a burst of flavours and is a must-try for food enthusiasts exploring Manipuri cuisine.

» **Chamthong (E-ram):** A traditional Manipuri stew cooked with a variety of vegetables and sometimes meat, flavoured with ngari and herbs. It is a wholesome dish that provides insight into the simple yet flavourful culinary style of Manipur.

» **Paaknam (Manipuri Rice Cake):** A traditional rice cake often prepared during festivals and special occasions. It's made by steaming rice flour and can be served sweet or savoury, representing the importance of rice in Manipuri culture and cuisine.

» **Kangshoi:** A simple yet nutritious dish made by boiling vegetables with fish or meat and spices in water. Kangshoi reflects the minimalistic cooking approach of Manipur that preserves natural flavours and appeals to health-conscious travellers.

» **Manda Pitha:** A traditional Manipuri sweet dumpling filled with coconut, jaggery, or sesame seeds, usually prepared during festivals. This delicacy gives tourists a taste of the sweet side of Manipuri cuisine rooted in cultural celebrations.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Manipur's textiles showcase rich tribal motifs, handwoven fabrics and vibrant natural dyes. Skilled artisans craft elegant shawls, sarongs and bamboo handicrafts, reflecting deep cultural heritage.

» **Phanek:** Phanek is the traditional wraparound skirt worn by Manipuri women, known for its distinctive striped or checked patterns and vibrant colours. It symbolises cultural identity and is often handwoven using indigenous techniques. Tourists cherish Phanek as a meaningful souvenir representing Manipuri heritage.

Key Areas: Ima Keithel (Imphal Women's Market); Khwairamband Bazaar (Imphal)

» **Manipuri Silk (Loin Loom Weaving):** Manipur is famous for its exquisite silk textiles, especially the delicate Moirang Phee and Kanglei Phee silks. These silks are handwoven on loin looms, showcasing intricate designs inspired by nature and mythology, making them highly prized by tourists and collectors.

Key Areas: Khurai Market (Imphal); Thangal Bazar (Imphal)

» **Handwoven Shawls:** The tribal communities in Manipur create unique handwoven shawls with geometric and symbolic patterns. These shawls reflect the rich tribal traditions and are both wearable art and collector's items.

Key Areas: Ukhrul Market; Churachandpur Handloom Centers

» **Manipuri Cane and Bamboo Crafts:** Manipuri artisans produce finely crafted bamboo and cane items such as baskets, mats, furniture and decorative pieces. These eco-friendly crafts are appreciated by tourists for their sustainability and intricate workmanship.

Key Areas: Moirang (Bishnupur District); Wangoi (Imphal West)

» **Manipuri Traditional Masks:** Used in classical dance dramas like Ras Lila, these beautifully crafted wooden masks depict characters from Manipuri mythology. Tourists often purchase these masks as decorative art pieces symbolising Manipuri performing arts.

Key Areas: Imphal Craft Markets; Lai Haraoba Festival Fairs

» **Ras Leela Puppets:** These handcrafted puppets depict scenes and characters from the famous Manipuri Ras Leela dance drama. Made with colourful fabrics and intricate details, they are popular souvenirs for tourists interested in Manipuri performing arts and culture.

Key Areas: Imphal Handicraft Emporiums; Local Festivals and Fairs

» **Manipuri Bamboo Flutes (Pena):** A traditional carved bamboo musical instrument central to Manipuri folk music and dance.

» **Key Areas:** Ukhrul; Imphal Markets; Cultural Exhibitions

» **Hora:** A distinctive handwoven shawl of the Tangkhul Naga community, symbolising identity, honour and tradition. Crafted in earthy tones with bold geometric motifs, it is worn during festivals and ceremonies.

Key Areas: Hill districts of Ukhrul such as Hundung, Nungbi, Phungcham, Shirui, and Litan

» **Ruirum (Leirum Phee):** Manipur's ceremonial handwoven cotton textile, traditionally worn by Meitei women during weddings, festivals and sacred rites

Key areas: Clusters in Imphal East and West; Thoubal; Bishnupur; Kakching

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant, dry and cool weather makes this the ideal period for sightseeing, cultural experiences, outdoor activities and major festivals)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Warm to moderately hot conditions, but generally suitable for travel with fewer crowds. Characterised by heavy rainfall, with the possibility of landslides and travel delays in hill districts.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Manipur is home to **the only floating national park in the world** - the Keibul Lamjao National Park, located on Loktak Lake. This unique park is famous for the endangered Sangai deer.

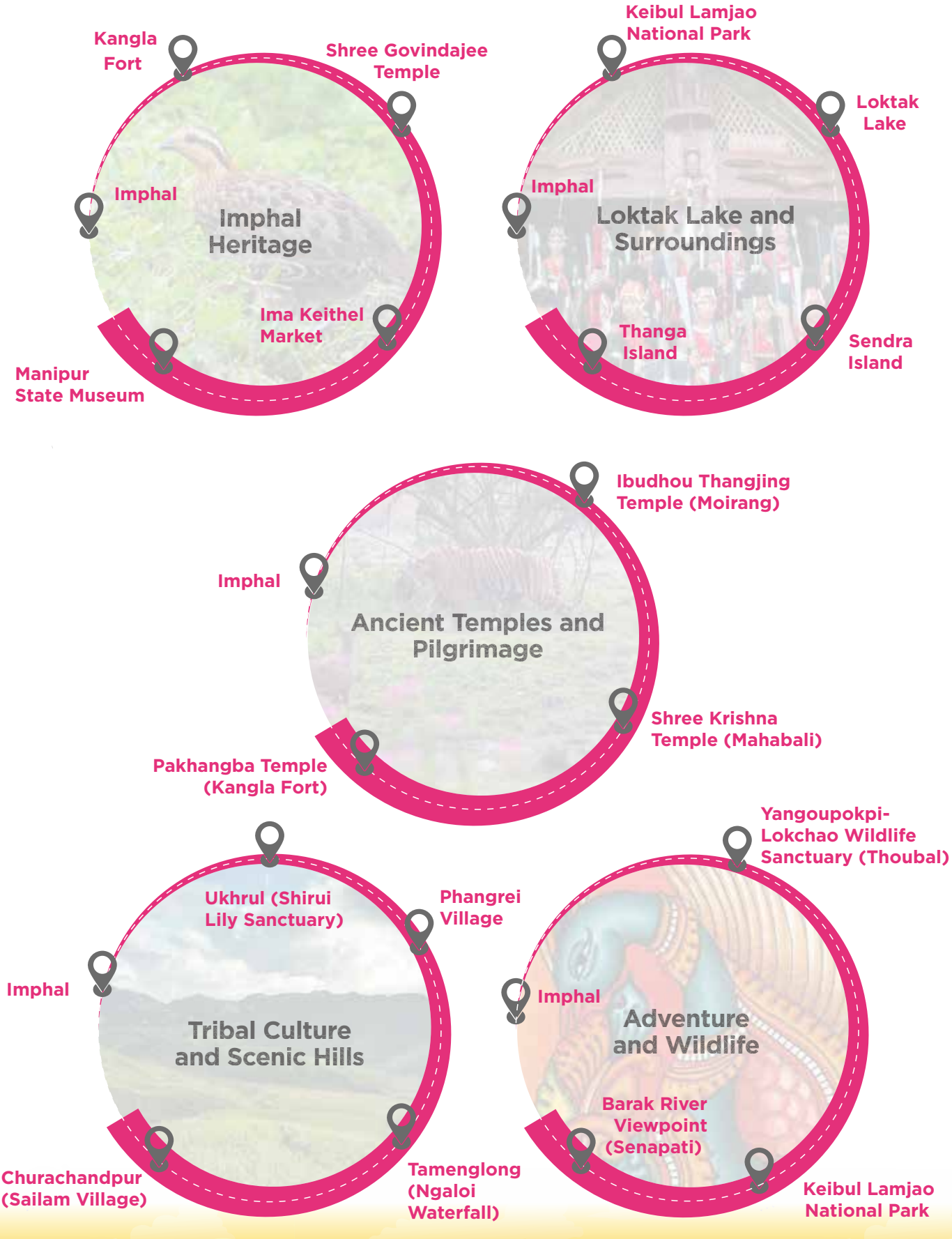
» Manipuri (Raas Leela) is one of the six major classical dance forms of India, recognised by Sangeet Natak Akademi and widely described alongside Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kathakali and Kuchipudi. The dance **narrates stories of Lord Krishna and is a major cultural attraction for tourists** interested in performing arts.

» Manipur was once an independent kingdom and only merged with India in 1949. It has a rich history of kings and warriors and the ancient **Kangla Fort in Imphal** still **stands as a symbol of this proud heritage, drawing history buffs and cultural tourists** alike.

» Sagol Kangjei, the traditional form of polo in Manipur, is recognised as the precursor of modern polo; international references (including Guinness 1991) and the Manipur Tourism Department acknowledge **Manipur as the place where the modern game traces its origins.**

» Manipur's traditional textiles, especially the handwoven silks like Moirang Phee and Kanglei Phee, are so intricate and beautiful that they have been **showcased internationally and are treasured as symbols of Manipuri identity and craftsmanship**.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Meghalaya

Tourism

Meghalaya, often called the 'Abode of Clouds,' is a beautiful state in Northeast India, known for its misty hills, lush green valleys and captivating natural beauty. Its picturesque landscapes, rolling hills and serene lakes attract travellers seeking a tranquil and refreshing escape. From the famous living root bridges of Cherrapunji and the mist-clad cliffs of Shillong to the crystal-clear waters of the Umngot River, Meghalaya offers a unique experience for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. Rich in culture and traditions, this state welcomes visitors with warm hospitality and a glimpse into its heritage. Perfect for those seeking a blend of scenic beauty, pleasant climate and memorable moments, Meghalaya is an ideal destination for every traveller.

Best Places to Visit

Meghalaya is home to serene hills, misty valleys and picturesque spots that invite travellers to experience its natural beauty, rich culture and peaceful charm.

Nature Tourism

» **Nohkalikai Falls (East Khasi Hills):** One of India's tallest plunge waterfalls (≈335 m / 1,115 ft), located near Sohra (Cherrapunji)

Key Activities: Trekking; Photography; Sightseeing

» **Nohsngithiang (Seven Sisters) Falls (East Khasi Hills):** A seven-segmented waterfall (locally called Nohsngithiang), plunging from the limestone cliffs near Mawsmai / Sohra.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Scenic viewing; Photography

» **Elephant Falls (East Khasi Hills):** A beautiful multi-tiered waterfall surrounded by dense greenery, ideal for adventure rappelling and nature exploration.

Key Activities: Picnic; Nature walks; Rappelling; Rock climbing; Photography

» **Nongriat Living Root Bridges (East Khasi Hills):** Ancient root bridges handcrafted by Khasi tribes deep in tropical forests.

Key Activities: Trekking; Cultural exploration; Photography

» **Mawphlang Sacred Forest (East Khasi Hills):** A community-protected sacred grove (Nongkrem / Mawphlang) preserving rare native flora, endemic medicinal plants and Khasi ritual practice; visits are by guided walk only.

Key Activities: Guided forest walks; Bird watching; Nature photography

» **Dainthlen Falls (East Khasi Hills):** A prominent plunge waterfall near Sohra (height often quoted around 80 m) associated with Khasi legend; visitors access via forest trails.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Meghalaya holds a treasure of lesser-known places, where quiet forests, hidden valleys and ancient villages invite travellers to experience its serene beauty and rich heritage far from the usual tourist trails.

EAST KHASI HILLS

» **Nohwet Village:** A serene village with a bamboo tree-house viewpoint and hidden streams near Mawlynnong.

» **Shella Village:** A rustic hamlet with an iron suspension bridge and panoramic valley views.

» **Sohbar Village:** A remote village featuring a unique semi-circular suspension bridge and quiet hillside trails.

WEST KHASI HILLS

» **Nongkhnum Island:** The largest river island in Meghalaya, located where the Kynshi River splits, offering picturesque landscapes.

RI-BHOI

» **Umden Village:** A tranquil eri-silk weaving village with forested walking trails.

EAST JAINTIA HILLS

» **Nongbareh Village & Caves:** A secluded village with Am-Theri caves and forested root-bridge pathways.

WEST JAINTIA HILLS

» **Ialong Park:** A sacred nature park located near Jowai, surrounded by traditional forests.

» **Phe Phe Falls:** A secluded waterfall nestled within dense forest, offering tranquility, pristine surroundings and a peaceful offbeat escape.

» **Kudeng-rim:** A hilltop settlement with living root bridges, natural pools and cave trails.

EAST GARO HILLS

» **Daribokgre:** An isolated Garo village in the Nokrek Biosphere Reserve preserving traditional culture.

NORTH GARO HILLS

» **Jolding Wari:** Located at Mongpangro, it is believed that

this magnificent lake was formed during the Great Earthquake of 12th June, 1897.

» **Ganna Ramram Lake:** A deep lake nestled on top of a hillock amidst the thick lush green forests and deep canopy of forest cover.

SOUTH GARO HILLS

» **Wari Chora Canyon:** A serene river gorge embraced by dense tropical forests, ideal for adventure and nature lovers.

» **Nengkong Village:** A remote hillside area surrounded by deep cave networks and traditional heritage.

» **Siju Forest Outskirts:** Lesser-explored fringes of the famous Siju cave area, rich in biodiversity.

WEST GARO HILLS

» **Sasatgre Village:** A remote bamboo-hut Garo settlement at the edge of the Nokrek Biosphere.

SOUTH WEST GARO HILLS

» **Siju Cave:** Located near the Simsang River in Siju village, this cave is a famous limestone cave.

» **Balpakram National Park:** Home to the rare Lesser Panda, the Indian bison, known for its medicinal herbs and scenic beauty.

EASTERN WEST KHASI HILLS

» **Mawphanlur:** A tranquil hilltop village dotted with shimmering lakes and nature trails.

» **Mawthadraishan Peak:** It's a scenic viewpoint offering panoramic views of the Khasi and Garo Hills.

SOUTH EAST KHASI HILLS

» **Tynrong Hot Spring:** A culturally significant warm spring celebrated for its heritage and traditional significance.

Key Activities: Viewing the scenic falls; Photography; Exploring the forest trails

» **Sohra / Cherrapunji and nearby Mawsynram (East Khasi Hills):** Sohra (Cherrapunji) and neighbouring Mawsynram are famed for extremely high rainfall, dramatic limestone cliffs, multiple waterfalls and living root-bridge country; visitors should check seasonal conditions before travel.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Cave exploration; Viewing mist-laden valleys

» **Shillong Nature Trails (East Khasi Hills):** Scenic hills and trails ideal for hiking and experiencing nature.

Key Activities: Trekking; Bird watching; Nature photography

» **Mawsmai Cave (East Khasi Hills):** A popular limestone cave adorned with stalactites and stalagmites.

Key Activities: Cave walks; Nature photography; Exploration

» **Siju Caves (South Garo Hills):** A principal limestone cave complex noted for stalactite/stalagmite formations and large bat colonies; boat entry is sometimes used depending on water levels.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Spelunking; Nature walks

» **Balpakram National Park (South Garo Hills):** A biodiversity-rich national park with significant wildlife including gaur (Indian bison), elephants and several rare/endemic species.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris; Bird watching; Nature walks

» **Nokrek Biosphere Reserve (West Garo Hills):** A biodiversity hotspot and protected reserve. Rare species have been reported from the region.

Key Activities: Nature trekking; Bird watching; Eco-tours

» **Tura Peak (West Garo Hills):** A panoramic viewpoint offering expansive views of surrounding hills and forests.

Key Activities: Hiking; Bird watching; Scenic viewing

» **Chandigre Rural Resort (West Garo Hills):** A serene resort surrounded by fruit orchards and lush greenery.

Key Activities: Nature strolls; Garden tours; Relaxation

» **Dawki-Shnongpdeng (West Jaintia Hills):** A crystal-clear river ideal for boating, kayaking and tranquil walks.

Key Activities: Snorkeling; Riverside walks; kayaking; zip-lining; cliff jumping; riverside camping and Star-gazing

» **Nartiang Monoliths (West Jaintia Hills):** A heritage site with ancient stone monuments surrounded by forests.

Key Activities: Heritage walks; Photography; Nature exploration

» **Siju Wildlife Sanctuary (South Garo Hills):** Rich in biodiversity, with bat-inhabited caves and tropical forests.

Key Activities: Bird watching; Nature walks; Wildlife viewing

» **Umden Village (Ri-Bhoi):** An eri-silk weaving village near Umsning/Umiam, known for heritage textile practices and guided forest walks

Key Activities: Silk weaving demonstration; Heritage walks; Camping

» **Krang Suri Falls (West Jaintia Hills / Krang Suri):** A turquoise-water cascade celebrated for its clear pools and lush greenery.

Key Activities: Swimming; Photography; Picnicking

» **Jadi Waterfalls (East Garo Hills):** A scenic cascade surrounded by dense forest, best visited post-monsoon.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Sightseeing; Photography

» **Rongdong Falls (Garo Hills, near Siju):** A tranquil waterfall amid forested landscapes, ideal for a peaceful escape.

Key Activities: Swimming; Nature walks; Photography

Adventure Tourism

» **Laitlum Canyon (East Khasi Hills):** A picturesque, steep canyon offering panoramic valley views and ideal for adventure activities.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Photography

» **Mawryngkhang Bamboo Trail (East Khasi Hills)**: A thrilling trail featuring bamboo bridges along cliff edges, ideal for adventure seekers.

Key Activities: Trekking; Bridge crossings; Nature walks

» **David Scott Trail (East Khasi Hills):** A historic trail cutting through forests and valleys, ideal for long-distance trekking.

Key Activities: Trekking; Heritage walks; Bird watching

» **Mawkdok Dympep Valley (East Khasi Hills):** A deep, mist-clad valley offering adrenaline-packed zip-line experiences.

Key Activities: Zip-lining; Aerial photography; Valley exploration

» **Wei Sawdong Falls (East Khasi Hills):** A three-tiered waterfall ideal for rappelling and challenging adventure climbs.

Key Activities: Rappelling; Nature photography; Stream crossings

» **Laitlum Rocks (East Khasi Hills):** Steep cliffs ideal for rock climbing and bouldering amid captivating natural surroundings.

Key Activities: Rock climbing; Bouldering; Nature exploration

» **Mawphlang Forest Trails (East Khasi Hills):** A network of forest trails ideal for mountain biking and cycling.

Key Activities: Mountain biking; Forest walks; Nature exploration

» **Krem Mawmluh Cave (East Khasi Hills):** An extensive limestone cave ideal for exploration and spelunking.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Spelunking

» **Krem Liat Prah (East Jaintia Hills):** Recognised as India's longest explored cave system, ideal for adventure and cave exploration.

Key Activities: Adventure caving; Exploration

» **Siju Caves (South Garo Hills):** A riverine cave ideal for adventure exploration and bat colony viewing.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Spelunking; Bat watching

» **Sohra Canyons (East Khasi Hills):** A series of deep river gorges ideal for river canyoning and swimming.

Key Activities: River canyoning; Gorge trekking; Adventure swimming

» **Umngot River (West Jaintia Hills):** A crystal-clear river ideal for kayaking and canoeing adventures.

Key Activities: Kayaking; River exploration; Boat rides

» **Shillong Peak (East Khasi Hills):** A scenic hill ideal for horseback rides with panoramic city views.

Key Activities: Horse riding; Scenic viewing; Nature walks

» **Umiam Lake (Ri-Bhoi):** A man-made reservoir and major water-sports hub for boating, kayaking, paddle-boats and other non-deep-water activities; regular water-sports operators offer rentals and guided rides.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Boating

» **Ranikor (South West Khasi Hills):** A picturesque spot ideal for angling and fishing in its clear river waters.

Key Activities: Angling; Fishing; Riverside relaxation

» **Chitmang-Chaiwat Forest (South Garo Hills):** A rich forest area ideal for glamping and immersive eco-adventures.

Key Activities: Glamping; Nature stays; Forest walks

» **Wari Chora Canyon (South Garo Hills):** A deep river canyon ideal for rafting and kayaking through narrow gorges.

Key Activities: Rafting; Kayaking; Gorge trekking

Heritage Tourism

» **Rangthylliang Root Bridge (East Khasi Hills):** The longest living root bridge, spanning over 50 m and exemplifying traditional Khasi craftsmanship.

» **David Scott Monument (East Khasi Hills):** A colonial-era obelisk in Cherrapunji commemorating British official David Scott.

» **Khasi Heritage Village (East Khasi Hills):** A cultural complex near Shillong showcasing traditional Khasi architecture and heritage.

» **Kongthong Village (East Khasi Hills):** Known as the 'Whistling Village,' it's a unique heritage site where residents communicate through whistled tunes.

» **Nartiang Monoliths (West Jaintia Hills):** A major megalithic complex with the

largest collection of monoliths in the Jaintia region.

» **Kiang Nangbah Monument (West Jaintia Hills):** A commemorative site in Jowai honouring Jaintia freedom fighter U Kiang Nongbah.

» **Megalithic Bridge on Um-Nyankanah River (West Jaintia Hills):** A historic stone-slab bridge from the Jaintia kingdom era, preserved by ASI.

» **Thadlaskein Lake (West Jaintia Hills):** A heritage lake created by legend, now a serene site rich in local folklore.

» **Mawphlang Sacred Forest (East Khasi Hills):** An ancient, sacred grove preserving heritage rituals and rare medicinal flora.

» **Umden Village (Ri-Bhoi):** An eri-silk weaving village near Umsning/Umiam, known for heritage textile practices and guided forest walks.

» **Chandigre Village (West Garo Hills):** A traditional Garo heritage village, offering a glimpse into rural life, indigenous culture and heritage practices of the Garo community.

» **Sasatgre Homestays (West Garo Hills):** Bamboo-crafted homestays near Nokrek that preserve traditional Garo heritage and architecture.

» **Baghmara Town Heritage (South Garo Hills):** A culturally rich town adjacent to Balpakram National Park, reflecting Garo traditions.

» **Thangkharang Park Viewing Deck (East Khasi Hills):** A heritage site offering panoramic views and showcasing the natural beauty and culture of the Khasi hills.

» **U Tirot Singh Memorial (West Khasi Hills):** A historic site in Mairang honouring the legendary Khasi warrior U Tirot Singh.

» **Mawjymbuin Cave Temple (East Khasi Hills):** A sacred cave shrine associated with local Deities and featuring natural formations (elephant-shaped stalagmites).

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **U Lum Sohpetbneng Sacred Peak (Ri-Bhoi):** A revered Khasi pilgrimage peak believed to be the bridge between Earth and the heavens.

» **Mahadev Khola Dham (East Khasi Hills):** A historic cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and central to Maha Shivratri celebrations.

» **Matri Mandir / Ramna Kalibari (East Khasi Hills):** A traditional temple devoted to Goddess Kali, notable for its architecture and festive customs.

» **Shillong Buddha Mandir (East Khasi Hills):** One of Shillong's earliest Buddhist temples, established in the 1930s.

» **Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians (East Khasi Hills):** A prominent Gothic-style cathedral and major Christian pilgrimage centre.

» **All Saints Cathedral (East Khasi Hills):** A colonial-era church known for its ornate woodwork and stained glass.

» **Nartiang Durga Temple (West Jaintia Hills):** A 600-year-old Shakti Peetha revered across the northeast.

» **Charantala Kali Temple (West Garo Hills):** A regional Hindu shrine included under the PRASAD scheme for pilgrimage development.

» **Hazrat Shah Kamal Baba Dargah (West Garo Hills):** A 700-year-old Islamic shrine known for its annual urs festival that draws devotees.

» **Jakrem Hot Spring (South West Khasi Hills / West Khasi Hills):** A natural sulphur hot spring developed as a small health resort, believed to have medicinal properties.

» **Mawphanlur (West Khasi Hills):** A tranquil hilltop village in the West Khasi Hills, known as the "land of lakes", where the surrounding landscape holds traditional significance for local communities.

Culture and Cuisines

Meghalaya's culture is a beautiful blend of tribal traditions, music and festivals, complemented by its distinctive cuisine that celebrates local ingredients, flavours and heritage.

Culture

» **Strawberry Festival (Ri-Bhoi):** An annual event in Umsning and surrounding areas that celebrates the strawberry harvest with fresh fruit stalls, rural tours and cultural performances.

» **Nongkrem Festival (East Khasi Hills):** A five-day thanksgiving dance and ritual festival in Smit, seeking blessings for peace and prosperity after the harvest.

» **Shad Suk Mynsiem – Dance of Joy (East Khasi Hills):** A springtime Khasi harvest festival near Shillong marked by traditional circle dances and vibrant attire.

» **Behdienkhlam Festival (West Jaintia Hills/East Jaintia Hills):** A dramatic Pnars festival of rituals, drums and processions aimed at driving away evil and ensuring a good harvest.

» **Shad Sukra (West Jaintia Hills):** A vibrant Jaintia pre-sowing festival featuring traditional dances, music and prayers for a fruitful cultivation season.

» **Wangala – The Hundred Drums Festival (West Garo Hills)**: A post-harvest thanksgiving festival with rhythmic drumming and dance performance by the Garo community.

» **Agalmaka Spring Festival (Garo Hills):** A Garo spring festival held on newly cleared fields, marking the beginning of the agricultural season.

» **Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival (East Khasi Hills):** A November festival in Shillong showcasing music, crafts and floral beauty during cherry blossom bloom.

» **Sogra Festival (Ri-Bhoi):** A Tiwa community spring festival marked by nighttime prayers and ceremonies led by the village priest (Loro).

Cuisines

» **Jadoh:** Fragrant red rice cooked with pork and traditional spices, offering a hearty and culturally rich meal.

» **Doh-Khlieh:** A zesty Khasi pork salad with onions, chillies and herbs, making it a refreshingly fiery treat.

» **Dohneiiong:** Succulent pork in a black-sesame gravy, delivering deep, nutty flavours

that define local festivals.

» **Tungrymbai:** Fermented soybean and pork sautéed with fragrant spices, a robust dish rooted in Khasi heritage.

» **Nakham Bitchi:** A rich, spicy sun-dried fish soup, served as a palate-awakening starter.

» **Pumaloi:** Steamed rice made from powdered rice, cherished across festivals and celebrations.

» **Pudoh:** A festive rice dish steamed with savoury pork, offering a soft and aromatic bite.

» **Minil Songa:** Garo-style sticky rice steamed in bamboo, celebrated for its nutty flavour and heritage significance.

» **Pukhlein:** Deep-fried rice and jaggery fritters, a popular snack during the Wangala festival.

» **Sakin Gata:** Steamed sweet rice cakes layered with sesame seeds, an enduring symbol of tradition and hospitality.

» **Kyat:** A traditional fermented rice beer, served in bamboo mugs as a warm gesture of Meghalayan hospitality.

» **Bamboo Shoots with Pork:** A savoury, smoky dish combining earthy bamboo shoots and tender pork, highlighting tribal culinary practices.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Meghalaya reflect its rich tribal heritage, featuring handwoven fabrics, bamboo and cane crafts, wood carvings and intricate designs that showcase the state's traditional craftsmanship.

» **Tlieng Cane Mats:** Extremely durable cane mats woven by Khasi artisans, lasting up to 30 years.

Key Areas: Sohra; Mawphlang; Mawsynram

» **Khasi Bamboo Baskets (Khoh & Thungis):** Intricately woven bamboo baskets used by the Khasi for daily chores.

Key Areas: Mawlai; Mawphlang; Jowai

» **Meghum Khoks:** Decorative Garo storage baskets, tightly woven for strength and beauty.

Key Areas: Tura; Rongram; Williamnagar

» **Khasi Bamboo Umbrellas (Kurup):** Lightweight bamboo-and-cane umbrellas featuring traditional weaves.

Key Areas: Sohra; Laitkynsew; Pynursla

» **Eri (Ryndia) Silk Textiles:** Hand-spun silk from Ri-Bhoi, valued for its durability, warmth and eco-friendly production.

Key Areas: Nongpoh; Umden; Umsning

» **Muga Silk Garments:** Golden-hued silk fabrics prized by Garo and Khasi communities for their natural sheen and long-lasting quality.

Key Areas: Nongpoh; Umden; Tura

» **Ryndia Check Shawls (Thohriaw Stem):** Traditional Ri-Bhoi shawls woven with natural dyes and distinctive tribal patterns.

Key Areas: Umden; Umsning; Nongpoh

» **Samserla Shawls:** Handspun cotton wraps in indigo and red, typical of Ri-Bhoi craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Nongpoh; Mawhati; Umsning

» **Chapang Wraps:** Eri silk wraps dyed with lac, turmeric and iron-ore pigments, reflecting tribal colour heritage.

Key Areas: Umden; Sohra; Mawphlang

» **Khasi Bamboo Combs & Pipes:** Hand-carved bamboo combs and traditional smoking pipes symbolising tribal utility and craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Shillong; Jowai; Nongpoh

» **Pineapple-Fibre Crafts:** Bags, mats and fishnets woven from resilient pineapple leaf fibre, a unique local craft.

Key Areas: Umsning; Umden; Tura

» **Poker-Burnt Bamboo Art:** Decorative bamboo pieces with Garo-style motifs created using traditional pokerwork techniques.

Key Areas: Tura; Rongram; Nongpoh

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Cool and pleasant; ideal for sightseeing and festivals.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Warm and humid; best for exploring cooler, higher-altitude spots. Monsoon rains; ideal for waterfalls and lush green landscapes.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Mawlynnong Village** (East Khasi Hills): Often described as **"Asia's cleanest village"** (recognised in various national and international articles since the early 2000s); the community follows strict cleanliness and waste-management practices promoted by local authorities and tourism boards.

» Meghalaya's indigenous communities - especially the **Khasi, Jaintia and Garo – belong to one of the world's largest matrilineal cultures** still existing today, where family lineage and many inheritance rights pass through the mother's line.

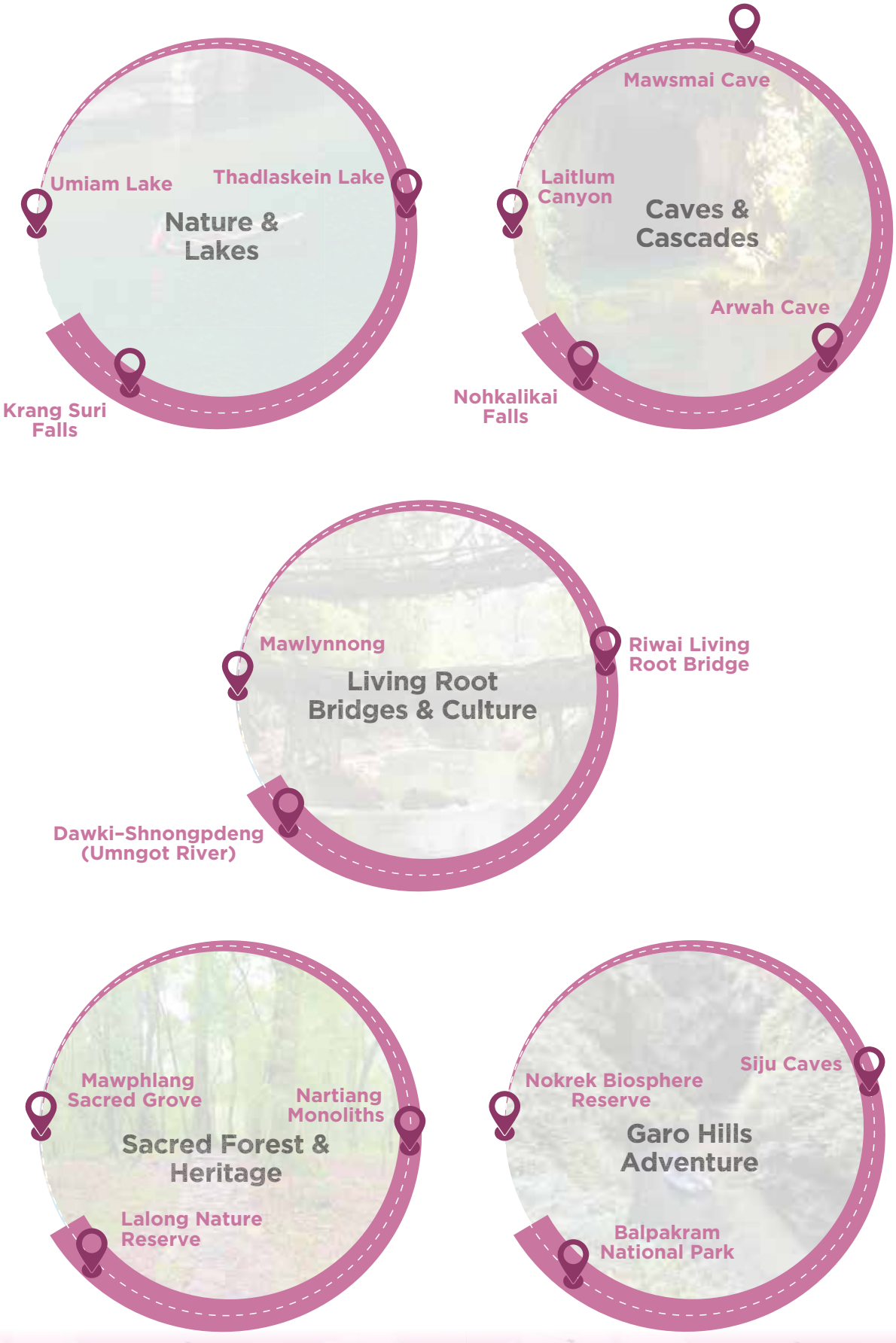
» **Mawsynram** is known to be **one of the wettest spots on Earth!**

» **Nohkalikai Falls is India's tallest plunge waterfall**.

» Meghalaya (from Sanskrit, meaning 'abode of clouds') became a full-fledged state in 1972, **formed from the former United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills** districts of Assam.

» Meghalaya's **longest living root bridge** is believed to be **175 feet** in length.

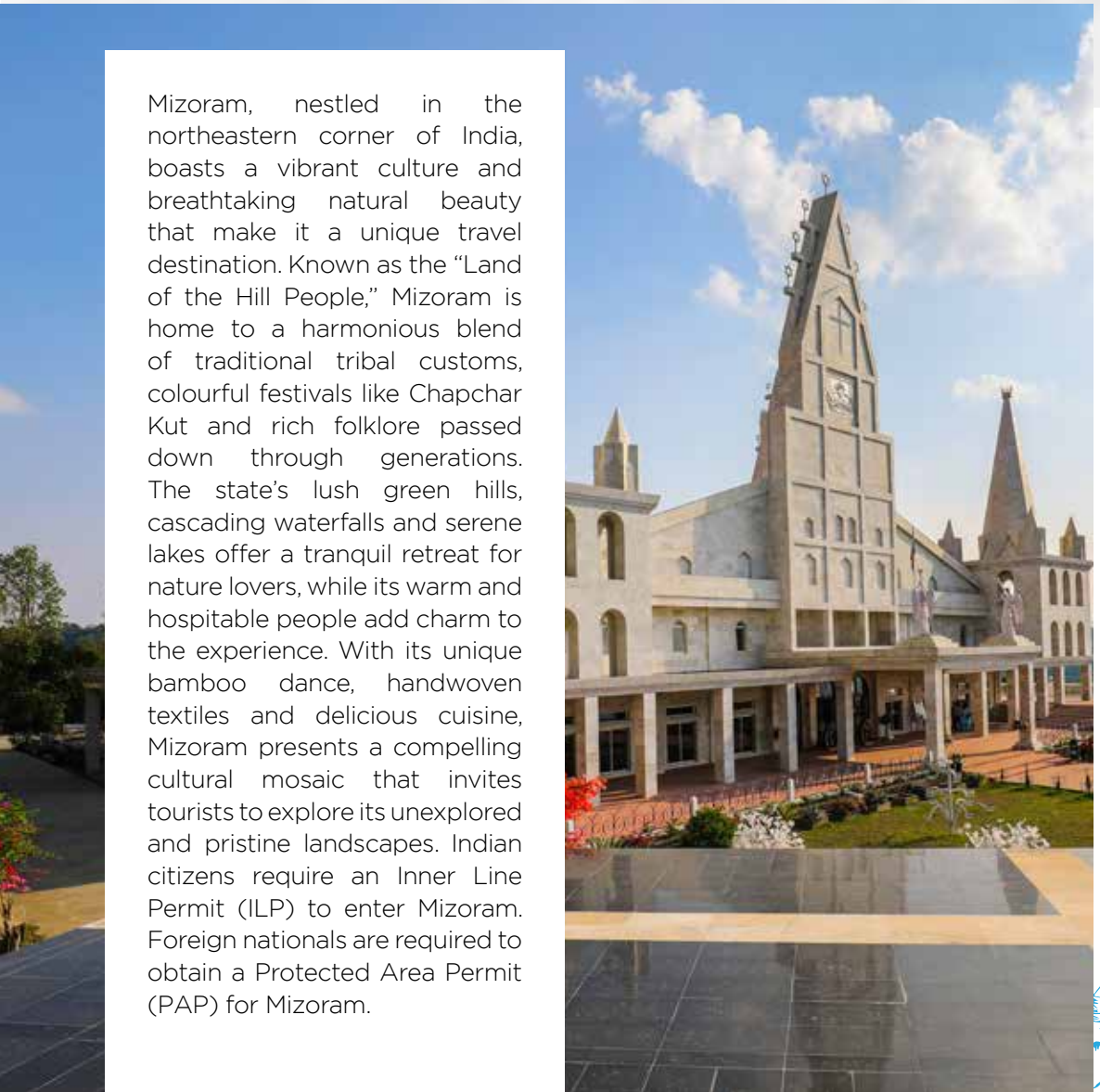
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Mizoram

Tourism

Mizoram, nestled in the northeastern corner of India, boasts a vibrant culture and breathtaking natural beauty that make it a unique travel destination. Known as the "Land of the Hill People," Mizoram is home to a harmonious blend of traditional tribal customs, colourful festivals like Chapchar Kut and rich folklore passed down through generations. The state's lush green hills, cascading waterfalls and serene lakes offer a tranquil retreat for nature lovers, while its warm and hospitable people add charm to the experience. With its unique bamboo dance, handwoven textiles and delicious cuisine, Mizoram presents a compelling cultural mosaic that invites tourists to explore its unexplored and pristine landscapes. Indian citizens require an Inner Line Permit (ILP) to enter Mizoram. Foreign nationals are required to obtain a Protected Area Permit (PAP) for Mizoram.

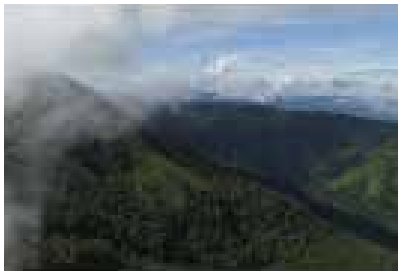


Best Places to Visit

Mizoram, nestled in the serene hills of Northeast India, offers a captivating blend of natural beauty, rich culture and warm hospitality. From the vibrant capital city of Aizawl and the scenic Reiek Tlang hills to the majestic Vantawng Falls, the mystical Rih Dil Lake near Champhai and the sacred heights of Phawngpui (Blue Mountain), the state is dotted with breathtaking destinations.

Nature Tourism

» **Phawngpui (Lawngtlai)**: Phawngpui (Blue Mountain) (Lawngtlai- Sangau): Mizoram's highest peak (2157 m) and a key trekking landscape within Phawngpui National Park



Key Activities: High-altitude trekking, birdwatching, nature photography and camping.

» **Vantawng Falls (Serchhip):** A spectacular two-tiered waterfall cascading down a dense forest valley, offering one of Mizoram's most scenic natural spots.

Key Activities: Sightseeing, nature photography, picnic and forest walks.

» **Tam Dil Lake (Saitual):** A scenic lake/wetland near Saitual, developed as a fisheries and tourism spot, surrounded by thick forest.

Key Activities: Boating, picnicking, forest walking and birdwatching.

» **Reiek Tlang (Mamit):** A picturesque hill offering breathtaking views of the surrounding valleys and a glimpse into traditional Mizo village life.

Key Activities: Trekking, rock climbing, exploring Reiek Heritage Village and cultural photography.

» **Dampa Tiger Reserve (Mamit):** A dense forest reserve and wildlife sanctuary that is home to tigers, leopards, gibbons and many endemic species.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris, nature trekking, birdwatching and eco-tourism.

» **Palak Dil/ Palâ Tipo (Siaha):** Mizoram's largest natural lake, near Phura (Mara ADC area),

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond its popular tourist spots, Mizoram hides a treasure trove of lesser-known attractions that offer a deeper, more intimate experience of the state's heritage and natural charm.

AIZAWL

» **Sibuta Lung:** An ancient stone memorial tied to a tragic Mizo folktale of betrayal and revenge.

» **Durtlang Hills Viewpoint:** A serene viewpoint above Aizawl city, perfect for watching sunrise and sunset.

» **Sailam Village:** Quiet eco-village near Hmuifang with birdwatching hotspots and community-led conservation

CHAMPHAI

» **Kawtchhuah Ropui (Vangchhia):** An ASI-protected megalithic site ("Great Entranceway") with carved menhirs and ancient graves.

» **Fiara Tui (near Vaphai/ Farkawn):** A legendary spring associated with Mizo folklore; located about 65 km from Champhai.

LUNGLEI

» **Lunglei Rock Bridge:** A natural rock formation resembling a bridge, offering panoramic views and local legends.

» **Milu Puk (Milu Cave):** Ancient human-skeleton-filled cave near Mamte that hints at a forgotten past tribe.

SAITUAL

» **Vanzau Village:** A scenic and remote village surrounded by misty hills and known for traditional bamboo houses.

» **Tamdil Lake:** One of Mizoram's most visited lakes; officially described as the state's second-largest lake and managed as a wetland reserve.

SERCHHIP

» **Baktawng Village:** Famous for being the residence of the late Ziona Chana, head of the world's largest family.

» **Chhingpuii Thlan:** A touching memorial dedicated to a tragic love story deeply rooted in Mizo folklore.

MAMIT

» **Vantawng Falls:** Quiet multi-tier waterfall set in verdant forest-ideal for solitude and reflection.

» **Tuisen Falls:** Accessible waterfall near Reiek, surrounded by thick woodland-great for quick treks.

» **Rengdil Lake:** Serene lake surrounded by filming-quality landscapes.

KOLASIB

» **Tlawng River Lake:** Seasonal wetland near Sairang that's ideal for kayaking and spotting migratory birds.

» **Serlui B Lake:** Scenic reservoir with boating, jet-skiing, picnicking and abundant birdlife.

SAIHA

» **Palak Dil:** Palak Lake (Palak Dil / Palâ Tipo) (Saiha): Mizoram's largest natural lake, near Phura (Mara ADC area), surrounded by rich forest biodiversity.

KHAWZAWL

» **Chawngtlai Village:** A scenic village known for its floral landscapes and local heritage spots.

» **Khawiva Viewpoint:** Natural stone bridge formation near Lunglei offering lush valley panoramas.

surrounded by rich forest biodiversity.

Key Activities: Boating, lakeside camping, birdwatching and peaceful nature walks.

» **Tuirihiau Falls (Serchhip):** A unique waterfall where one can go behind the cascading curtain of water for a rare perspective and refreshing experience.

Key Activities: Hiking, relaxation, landscape photography and exploring nature trails.

» **Hmuifang (Aizawl):** A scenic hilltop destination with vast meadows, cool climate and a popular site for cultural and nature-based tourism.

Key Activities: Trekking, camping, attending traditional festivals and nature photography.

Adventure Tourism

» **Reiek Tlang (Mamit):** An adventurous destination combining panoramic trekking trails with cultural exposure at the heritage village.

Key Activities: Hill trekking, rock climbing, cultural tours and overnight camping

» **Hmuifang Tlang (Aizawl):** A forest-covered hill range ideal for adventure activities with pristine natural trails and eco-camps.

Key Activities: Forest trekking, mountain biking, ziplining and nature camping.

» **Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary (Saitual):** A lesser-known sanctuary with rich wildlife and challenging trekking paths at one of Mizoram's highest altitudes.

Key Activities: Trekking, birdwatching, wildlife photography and forest exploration.

» **Durtlang Hills (Aizawl):** A series of hills near Aizawl providing an excellent hiking route with breathtaking views of the capital city.

Key Activities: Hill climbing, landscape photography, sunrise watching and nature treks.

» **Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary (Saitual):** A dense green escape for eco-tourism and adventure lovers looking for wildlife spotting and raw jungle treks.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking, birdwatching, wildlife tracking and forest camping.

» **Rih Dil Trek (Champhai):** Rih Dil (Rih Lake-Myanmar; accessed via Zokhawthar, Champhai): Visit depends on prevailing border regulations and required permits; the lake holds cultural significance in Mizo beliefs.

Key Activities: Trekking, cultural immersion, lake-side meditation and exploration.

Heritage Tourism

» **State Museum (Aizawl):** A well-curated museum showcasing Mizo history, tribal customs, traditional clothing and ancient artifacts.

» **Chhingpuii Thlan (Serchhip):** A heartfelt memorial to a legendary Mizo love story that symbolises romance, tragedy and cultural legacy.

» **Khuangchera Puk (Ailawng, near Reiek-Mamit district):** A cave associated with the folk hero Khuangchera and local oral tradition.

» **Zopui Hill & Old Fiara Tui (Champhai):** A mythical site believed to be the location of sacred springs and the home of ancient tribal legends.

» **Sibuta Lung (Aizawl):** A historic stone linked to a tale of power, betrayal and love in Mizo legend, standing as a cultural landmark.

» **Lamsial Puk (Champhai):** An ancient cave associated with tribal warfare and mysterious legends, deeply respected in Mizo folklore.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Solomon's Temple (Aizawl):** A stunning Christian worship center with a unique architectural style, offering spiritual solace and community worship.

» **Baptist Church of Mizoram HQ (Lunglei):** Headquarters of the Baptist Church, representing the religious heart of southern Mizoram.

» **Presbyterian Church at Mission Veng (Aizawl):** One of the oldest churches in the region, representing the origins of Christianity in Mizoram.

» **Dawrpui Presbyterian Church (Aizawl):** A prominent worship center with a large congregation and a history of community outreach.

» **Rih Dil (Champhai):** A sacred lake located across the Myanmar border, believed to be the soul's resting place in Mizo belief.

Culture and Cuisines

Mizoram offers a vibrant cultural experience with its colourful tribal dances, traditional bamboo crafts and warm hospitality, while its cuisine-featuring bamboo shoot dishes, smoked meats and rice-based meals-provides a unique taste of the region's rich ethnic heritage.

Culture

» **Chapchar Kut:** The most famous spring festival marking the end of jungle-clearing (jhum) with traditional dances, songs and feasts.

» **Mim Kut:** A post-harvest festival celebrated with prayers for a good crop and lively community gatherings.

» **Pawl Kut:** Another harvest festival marked by thanksgiving, feasting and folk performances.

» **Christmas and Easter:** Widely celebrated due to Christianity's strong influence, featuring church services and community events.

Cuisines

» **Bai:** A nutritious vegetable stew with fermented soybeans or pork, flavoured with local herbs.

» **Vawksa Rep:** Smoked pork, a delicacy enjoyed with rice and spicy chutneys.

» **Sawhchiar:** A rice dish cooked with meat and herbs, often served during festivals.

» **Chhangban:** Sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves and steamed, served as a snack or dessert.

» **Zu (Rice Beer):** A traditional fermented rice beer enjoyed during celebrations.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Mizoram's textiles and handicrafts captivate tourists with their intricate handwoven shawls, vibrant traditional motifs and finely crafted bamboo and cane products, reflecting the artistic spirit of Mizo culture.

» **Puan:** The traditional Mizo wrap-around skirt made from handwoven cotton or silk with geometric and floral patterns unique to different tribes.

» **Puanchei:** A more elaborate and ceremonial version of the puan, worn during festivals and important rituals.

» **Natural Dyes:** Many textiles use natural dyes extracted from plants, giving them earthy tones and eco-friendly appeal.

» **Bamboo and Cane Work:** Items like baskets, mats, trays and furniture made with intricate weaving techniques.

» **Wood Carving:** Decorative household items, traditional tools and sculptures carved with tribal motifs.

» **Pottery:** Handmade clay pots and utensils used in everyday life and rituals.

» **Jewellery:** Traditional ornaments made from beads, brass and other metals, worn during festivals and ceremonies.

» **Weaving:** Handwoven textiles and shawls that serve both practical and ceremonial purposes.

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather, clear skies and vibrant festivals.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Warm days with occasional rain, perfect for nature lovers and offbeat travellers seeking fewer crowds and lush scenery. Heavy rains may cause travel delays, slippery roads and landslides in hilly stretches.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **High Literacy Rate:** Mizoram has **one of the highest literacy rates in India,** often second only to Kerala, at around **91%.**

» **Home to the World's Largest Family:** The late Ziona Chana of Baktawng Village had the world's largest documented family.

» **The Bamboo State:** Major part of **Mizoram is covered with bamboo forests,** making it a major source of bamboo products in India.

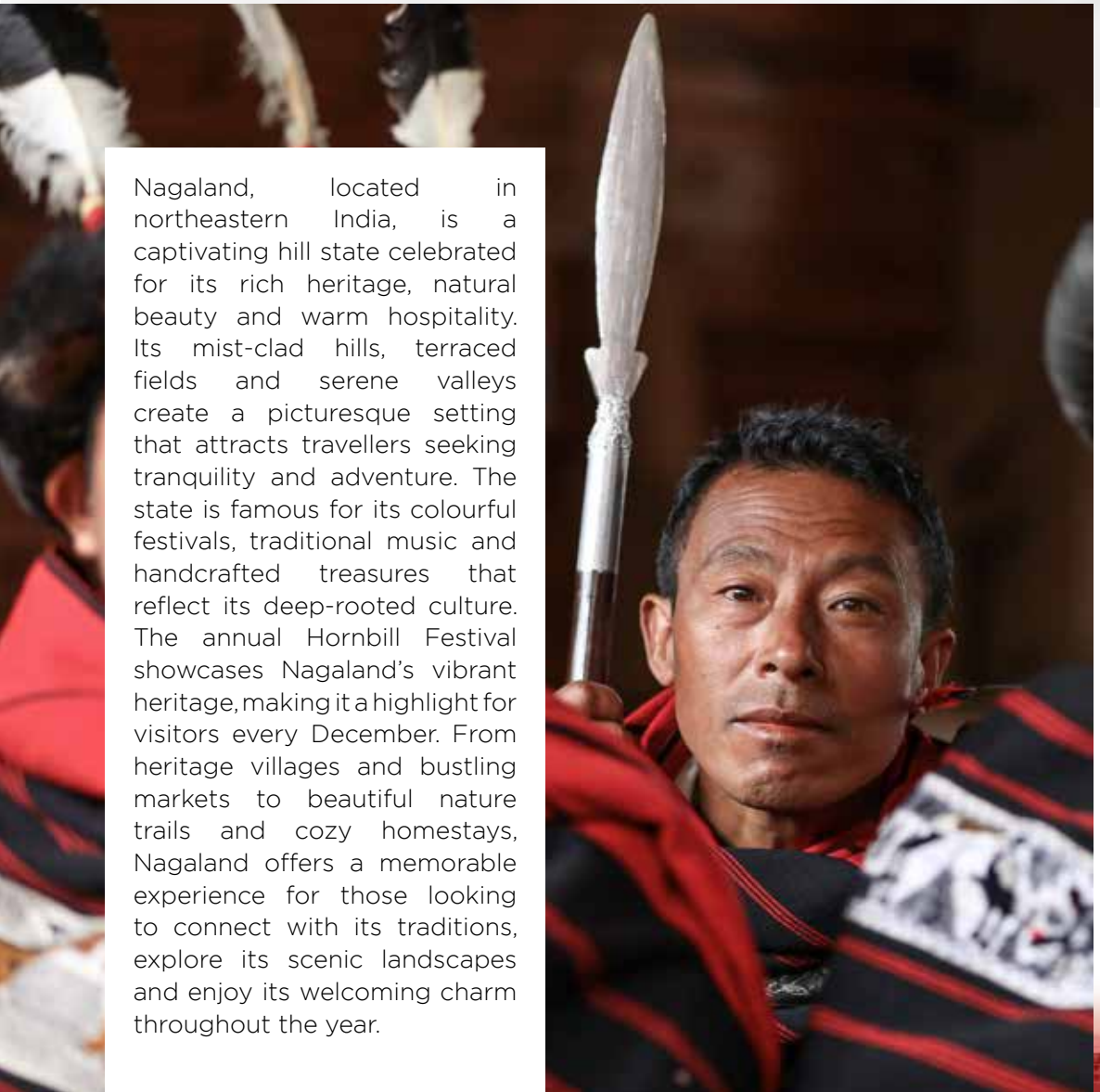
» **Blue Mountain (Phawngpui):** Mizoram's highest peak, **Phawngpui**, is believed to be the **abode of local spirits** and is a key site in Mizo mythology.

» **International Border:** Mizoram shares international borders with **Myanmar and Bangladesh,** making it a culturally rich and strategic border state.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Nagaland

Tourism



Nagaland, located in northeastern India, is a captivating hill state celebrated for its rich heritage, natural beauty and warm hospitality. Its mist-clad hills, terraced fields and serene valleys create a picturesque setting that attracts travellers seeking tranquility and adventure. The state is famous for its colourful festivals, traditional music and handcrafted treasures that reflect its deep-rooted culture. The annual Hornbill Festival showcases Nagaland's vibrant heritage, making it a highlight for visitors every December. From heritage villages and bustling markets to beautiful nature trails and cozy homestays, Nagaland offers a memorable experience for those looking to connect with its traditions, explore its scenic landscapes and enjoy its welcoming charm throughout the year.

Best Places to Visit

Nagaland offers a mix of picturesque hills, heritage villages, serene valleys and lively markets that capture its natural beauty and rich culture.

Nature Tourism

» **Dzukou Valley (Kohima):** A high-altitude meadow renowned for its seasonal wildflowers and mist-clad hills.

Key Activities: Trekking; Camping; Bird watching

» **Japfu Peak (Kohima):** The state's second-highest summit, famous for its giant rhododendron and panoramic views.

Key Activities: Summit trekking; Camping; Nature photography

» **Pulie Badze Sanctuary (Kohima):** A hilltop forest area rich in bird life and ideal for nature walks.

Key Activities: Bird watching; Nature walks; Viewpoint hiking

» **Khonoma Nature Conservation & Tragopan Sanctuary (Kohima):** India's first green village, a heaven for endangered species and wildlife.

Key Activities: Guided forest walks; Bird watching; Village interaction

» **Triple Falls (Dimapur):** A picturesque three-tiered waterfall surrounded by forests and ideal for relaxation.

Key Activities: Photography; Nature walks; Picnicking

» **Green Park (Dimapur):** A serene riverside garden ideal for tranquil escapes and bird watching.

Key Activities: Riverside walks; Bird watching; Family picnics

» **Nagaland Zoological Park (Chümoukedima):** The state's main wildlife park featuring hornbills, gibbons and tigers.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Lesser-known places in Nagaland reveal hidden gems of serene landscapes, rich heritage and untouched beauty, ideal for those seeking an authentic and tranquil travel experience.

KOHIMA

» **Tuophema Village:** A traditional Angami village with thatched houses and rich heritage.

» **Sendenyu Village:** A quiet hillside hamlet surrounded by forested hills.

DIMAPUR

» **Kachari Ruins:** Ancient stone pillars from the Dimasa-Kachari era.

CHÜMOUKEDIMA

» **Seithekema Village:** A serene Naga village with rustic charm and natural beauty.

WOKHA

» **Amur Falcon Roosting Site (Pangti):** A seasonal gathering point for migrating falcons.

» **Tehurang Valley:** A secluded valley with terraced fields and scenic hill views.

KIPHIRE

» **Mimi Village:** A remote village with traditional huts and beautiful surroundings.

» **Salomi Village:** A tiny hamlet with hidden natural beauty and serene landscapes.

PHEK

» **Meluri:** A quaint town surrounded by mountains, acting as a gateway to remote areas.

PEREN

» **Ntu Village:** A quiet rural area ideal for understanding traditional Zeliang Naga culture.

» **Nzauna Village:** A secluded village framed by mist-clad hills and forests.

» **Mt. Kisa:** Located at the southernmost end of Peren district, this mountain offers scenic views.

ZUNHEBOTO

» **Aizuto Village:** A picturesque Sumi Naga village with old-style traditional homes.

» **Aghunato Area:** An untouched area with lush greenery and small hamlets.

MOKOKCHUNG

» **Changki Village:** An ancient Ao village known for its heritage and rural beauty.

» **Ungma Village:** One of the oldest Ao Naga villages, rich in culture and folklore.

TUENSANG

» **Living Stones of Tuensang:** Ancient stone structures that tell of old tribal traditions.

» **Tsadang Monoliths:** A site of historic significance with mysterious stone carvings.

LONGLENG

» **Pongo Village:** A serene Phom Naga village surrounded by forests and mist.

» **Bhumnyu Village:** A remote village with rich traditions and captivating landscapes.

MON

» **Chui Village:** A secluded Konyak Naga village famous for its wood carvings and heritage.

» **Chenloisho Village:** An old settlement with strong traditional connections and unique architecture.

NIULAND

» **Nihoto Village:** A tranquil rural spot with open fields and a rustic atmosphere.

» **Hekishe Village:** A small village ideal for experiencing rural Naga life.

TSEMINYU

» **Phenshunyu Village:** A picturesque Rengma Naga village surrounded by green hills.

» **Kasha Village:** A quiet spot for experiencing traditional Rengma culture.

SHAMATOR

» **Langa Village:** An ancestral site dotted with heritage spots and rich folklore.

» **Yokau Village:** A secluded area with a serene setting and traditional homes.

Key Activities: Wildlife viewing; Educational tours; Guided walks

» **Mount Tiyi (Wokha):** A forested hill dotted with rhododendrons and offering beautiful valley views.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature walks; Bird watching

» **Doyang River Valley (Wokha):** A serene riverbank area ideal for nature lovers and quiet escapes.

Key Activities: Riverside walks; Fishing; Bird watching

» **Totsu Cliff Waterfall (Wokha):** A scenic cascade tucked within a forest ravine.

Key Activities: Waterfall viewing; Forest exploration; Nature photography

» **Wawade & Sukhayap Falls (Kiphire):** Seasonal waterfalls set deep within tranquil forest valleys.

Key Activities: Trekking; Photography; Forest walks

» **Saramati Peak (Kiphire):** Nagaland's highest mountain offering challenging treks and captivating summit views.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Camping; Summit photography

» **Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary (Kiphire):** A tropical forest area rich in rare bird species and diverse wildlife.

Key Activities: Bird watching; Nature walks; Jungle exploration

» **Glory Peak (Phek):** A scenic viewpoint ideal for sunrise views and expansive mountain landscapes.

Key Activities: Trekking; Sunrise viewing; Nature photography

» **Pfutsero & Mt Kapamodzu (Phek):** A picturesque hill area adorned with seasonal flowers and mist-clad surroundings.

Key Activities: Hiking; Nature walks; Photography

» **Shilloi Lake (Phek):** The state's largest natural lake surrounded by serene pine forests and hills.

Key Activities: Lakeside strolling; Bird watching; Family picnics

» **Benreu Village (Peren):** A highland area ideal for spotting orchids and experiencing rural landscapes.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Cultural tours; Orchid viewing

» **Mt. Paona (Peren):** This peak is a popular spot for tourists, offering panoramic views of the surrounding valley.

Key Activities: Trekking; Nature walks; Photography

» **Intangki National Park (Peren):** A tropical forest area teeming with hornbills, gibbons and diverse avifauna.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; Bird watching; Nature photography

» **Satoi Range (Zunheboto):** A forested range rich in rhododendrons and rare bird species.

Key Activities: Bird watching; Forest walks; Nature photography

» **Ghosu Bird Sanctuary (Zunheboto):** A serene haven for migratory and native bird species.

Key Activities: Bird watching; Nature walks; Forest exploration

» **Longkhum Village & Stone Bridge (Mokokchung):** A hilltop Ao Naga village with rhododendron forests and a legendary stone bridge.

Key Activities: Heritage trekking; Village interaction; Floral viewing

» **Mopungchuket Village (Mokokchung):** A well-preserved Ao Naga village steeped in heritage and nature trails.

Key Activities: Heritage walks; Cultural immersion; Nature trails

» **Langpangkong Range (Mokokchung):** A forested range dotted with hidden caves and panoramic hilltop views.

Key Activities: Trekking; Cave exploration; Nature photography

» **Noklak Village & Hillside (Noklak):** A remote tribal village with scenic hills and a rich cultural heritage.

Key Activities: Village trekking; Springs exploration; Cultural exchange

» **Dikhu River & Longtrok Village (Longleng):** A scenic river area ideal for fishing, boating and picturesque treks.

Key Activities: Fishing; Boating; Nature walks

» **Veda Peak (Mon):** The highest point in Mon, offering sweeping valley views and seasonal waterfalls.

Key Activities: Peak trekking; Summit photography; Nature walks

» **Longwa Village (Mon):** A unique border village spanning India and Myanmar, set amid misty hills.

Key Activities: Cultural exploration; Border photography; Village stays

» **Lavi Lake (Niuland):** A tranquil lake area ideal for relaxation and nature walks.

Key Activities: Angling; Leisure walks; Lakeside picnics

» **Sendenyu Community Biodiversity & Wildlife Reserve (Tseminyu):** A forest area rich in local flora and fauna, focusing on conservation.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Bird watching; Conservation learning

» **Shamator Forest & River Area (Shamator):** A serene forest and river area ideal for nature walks and bird watching.

Key Activities: Forest walks; Bird watching; Riverside relaxation

Adventure Tourism

» **Zakhama Hills (Kohima):** A challenging hill range ideal for treks and mountaineering.

Key Activities: Trekking; Rock climbing; Camping

» **Phesama–Kigwema Trek Route (Kohima):** A scenic trail for avid hikers through dense forests and hills.

Key Activities: Hiking; Birdwatching; Nature exploration

» **Ruzazho Forest Trails (Phek):** A remote forest area with challenging terrain ideal for seasoned trekkers.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Camping; Nature exploration

» **Phokhungri Hills (Phek):** A picturesque range of hills ideal for high-altitude trekking and exploration.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Camping; Rock climbing

» **Longkhum Hill Range (Mokokchung):** A beautiful and steep terrain ideal for hiking and adventure walks.

Key Activities: Hill hiking; Camping; Nature exploration

» **Langpangkong Caves (Mokokchung):** A historic site ideal for cave exploration and mild adventure treks.

Key Activities: Cave exploration; Trekking; Rock climbing

» **Saramati Peak (Kiphire):** The highest peak in Nagaland, ideal for challenging mountaineering and long treks.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Camping; Mountaineering

» **Fakim Forest Area (Kiphire):** A dense forest area ideal for wilderness adventure and nature treks.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Camping; Birdwatching

» **Ntangki Forest Reserve (Peren):** A tropical forest ideal for long forest treks and wildlife spotting.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Camping; Birdwatching

» **Benreu Peak (Peren):** A steep and challenging climb ideal for mountaineers and adventure seekers.

Key Activities: Peak climbing; Camping; High-altitude trekking

» **Pathso Peak (Noklak):** An isolated peak ideal for challenging treks and adventure camping.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Camping; Rock climbing

» **Shilloi Lake Trails (Phek):** A remote area ideal for long treks and adventure camping by the lake.

Key Activities: Lakeside trekking; Camping; Birdwatching

» **Yimkhiung Hills (Shamator):** A range of hills ideal for challenging treks and nature exploration.

Key Activities: Hill trekking; Camping; Birdwatching

» **Aboi–Mon Forest Route (Mon):** A challenging forest route ideal for adventure seekers and wilderness exploration.

Key Activities: Forest trekking; Camping; Birdwatching

» **Yangpi Forest and Hills (Tuensang):** A challenging terrain ideal for wilderness treks and nature escapes.

Key Activities: Jungle trekking; Camping; Nature exploration

» **Rengma Highlands (Tseminyu):** A remote area with steep slopes ideal for challenging treks and mountaineering.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Camping; Rock climbing

Heritage Tourism

» **Kisama Heritage Village (Kohima):** A living open-air museum featuring 'morungs' of all 17 Naga tribes and the venue for the Hornbill Festival.

» **Kohima War Cemetery (Kohima):** A solemn World War II memorial honouring the soldiers who defended Kohima during the Japanese invasion.

» **Nagaland State Museum (Kohima):** Showcases traditional Naga weapons, textiles, inscriptions and sculptures from across the state.

» **Tuophema Tourist Village (Kohima):** A recreated Angami tribal village offering traditional huts, cuisine and cultural experiences.

» **Khonoma Village (Kohima):** Asia's first 'Green Village,' famed for its historic resistance to British colonial rule.

» **Catholic Cathedral Church (Kohima):** A hilltop church blending European–Naga architectural styles, built during the British era.

» **Kachari Ruins (Dimapur):** 10th–13th century stone ruins of the ancient Kachari Kingdom, featuring unique mushroom-shaped pillars.

» **Dimapur Jain Temple (Dimapur):** The oldest Jain temple in Nagaland, built in 1947 and dedicated to Lord Mahavira.

» **Diezephe Craft Village (Dimapur area):** A centre

of bamboo, cane, woodcraft and handloom traditions supporting local artisans.

» **Chuchuyimlang Village (Mokokchung):** A large Ao Naga village famous for the Moatsu festival and ancient origin-stones.

» **Longkhum Village Monoliths (Mokokchung):** Hilltop monoliths carved with tribal motifs, reflecting Ao Naga ceremonial traditions.

» **Changtongya Stone Monoliths (Mokokchung):** Ancient carved monoliths marking rituals and lineage of the Ao Nagas.

» **Mon:** The cultural heart of the Konyak Nagas, known for facial tattoos, traditional festivals (like Aoleang) and headhunter history.

» **Peren Heritage Site – Benreu Village (Peren):** A traditional Zeliangrong tribal village on Mt Pauna, known for culture and biodiversity.

» **Ntangki National Park (Peren):** While primarily ecological, it also has tribal significance and showcases local Zeliangrong forest culture.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Kohima Cathedral (Kohima):** A beautiful cathedral and one of the largest in Northeast India, symbolising Nagaland's deep-rooted Christian heritage.

» **Mary Help of Christians Church (Kohima):** An iconic hilltop church serving as a spiritual landmark for the local Catholic community.

» **Phesama Baptist Church (Kohima):** An important church for the Angami Naga community, hosting regular spiritual and communal gatherings.

» **Dimapur Ao Baptist Church (Dimapur):** A significant place of worship for the Ao Naga tribe, central to their religious celebrations and traditions.

» **Zion Church (Dimapur):** One of the largest churches in Nagaland, serving as a spiritual and social hub for the local community.

» **Impur Mission Center (Mokokchung):** The oldest mission center of the Ao Baptist Church, representing the roots of Christianity in Nagaland.

» **Ungma Baptist Church (Mokokchung):** An important church for the Ao Naga tribe, symbolising their deep spiritual heritage.

» **Morung of Longwa Village (Mon):** A traditional Konyak Naga morung that showcases ancient spiritual and communal practices.

» **Aboi Mission Church (Mon):** A historic mission site central to the spiritual heritage of the Konyak Nagas.

» **Peren Baptist Church (Peren):** A key religious site for the Zeliang Naga tribe and an example of Nagaland's Baptist heritage.

» **Kiphire Baptist Church (Kiphire):** An important spiritual landmark serving the communities of Kiphire district.

» **Phek Baptist Church (Phek):** A central place of worship for the Chakhesang Naga people, reflecting their strong spiritual traditions.

» **Tuensang Baptist Church (Tuensang):** A historic church serving as a spiritual center for the Chang Naga community.

» **Shamator Baptist Church (Shamator):** A significant site for spiritual gatherings and prayer for the Yimkhiung Naga tribe.

» **Rengma Baptist Church (Tseminyu):** A historic church representing the strong Baptist traditions of the Rengma Naga tribe.

» **Sumi Baptist Church (Zünheboto):** A renowned church considered among the largest churches in Asia.

Culture and Cuisines

Nagaland's culture and cuisine reflect its rich tribal heritage, with colourful festivals, traditional music and dance and flavourful dishes made from local ingredients.

Culture

» **Hornbill Festival (Kohima):** An annual festival that brings

together Nagaland's tribes to showcase their rich heritage, colourful attire, music, dances and traditional crafts. Dubbed as the 'Festival of Festivals' this event provides a unique platform for visitors to witness not only the Naga cultural diversity converging at one venue but also the states of Northeast India as a means of cultural exchange, along with adventure, sports, art, handicraft, fashion, music and literature.

» **Aoling Festival (Mon):** A spring festival celebrated by the Konyak tribe to mark the new year, offering a glimpse into their traditions, rituals and warrior heritage.

» **Sekrenyi Festival (Kohima):** An Angami festival of purification and renewal, celebrated with sacred rituals, traditional songs and captivating dances.

» **Mongmong Festival (Kiphire):** The word 'Mongmong' meaning 'Togetherness Forever' is celebrated for 6 days from the 1st-6th of September every year. Each of these six days holds special significance for the Sangtam community, celebrated with rituals, feasting, singing and dances to honour nature's abundance.

» **Moatsu Festival (Mokokchung):** An Ao Naga festival marking the end of planting, celebrated with traditional songs, dances and communal feasting.

» **Tsungremong Festival (Mokokchung):** An Ao festival that thanks the gods for a fruitful harvest and strengthens communal ties through traditional rituals and celebrations. The festival is usually rounded off by a tug-of-war between men and women.

» **Yemshe Festival (Phek):** A Pochury tribe festival observed for peace and prosperity, featuring rituals, traditional music and dances that honour heritage and community.

» **Monyü Festival (Longleng):** A Phom Naga festival marking the end of winter and the beginning of summer, celebrated with rituals, traditional songs and feasting.

» **Thuwvu-Ni Festival (Peren):** A traditional Zeliang Naga festival held to mark a successful harvest, celebrated with communal rituals, singing and traditional dances.

Cuisines

» **Smoked Pork:** Tender pork smoked over a wood fire, a signature Naga dish with a deep, savoury flavour.

» **Bamboo Shoot Curry:** A tangy and aromatic stew made with

fermented bamboo shoots and local herbs.

» **Axone Pork:** Pork cooked with fermented soybeans (axone), offering a strong and distinctive flavour.

» **Anishi:** Fermented yam leaves pressed into cakes and used in a smoky, savoury stew.

» **Galho:** A traditional Naga rice porridge with vegetables, meat and herbs, ideal as comfort food.

» **Meat with Naga King Chili:** Meat roasted or boiled with the fiery Naga King Chili for a bold, spicy kick.

» **Dry Fish Chutney:** A spicy, smoky chutney made from dried fish and local chilies.

» **Fermented Fish Paste:** A pungent condiment that adds depth and richness to Naga meals.

» **Snail Meat Stir-fry:** Snails sautéed with local herbs and bamboo shoots, popular in rural areas.

» **Naga Pork with Anishi and Bamboo Shoot:** A classic stew combining smoked pork, fermented yam leaves and bamboo shoot.

» **Crab Chutney:** A savoury, spicy condiment made from roasted crabs and dried chilies.

» **Rice Beer (Zutho):** A traditional fermented rice drink enjoyed during festivals and communal celebrations.

» **Rosup:** A popular smoked meat and vegetable stew with bamboo shoots and local herbs.

» **Meat Salad (Axone Salad):** A savoury salad made with fermented soybeans, onions and smoked meat.

» **Hinkho Lota:** A unique stew of roasted meat and mustard leaves, capturing the bold flavours of Nagaland.

Textiles & Handicrafts

The textiles and handicrafts of Nagaland reflect its rich tribal heritage, featuring colourful hand-woven fabrics, intricate bamboo and cane products and traditional woodwork.

» **Naga Shawls:** Brightly woven shawls with bold patterns symbolising tribe and status.

Key Areas: Kohima; Tuensang; Mon

» **Naga Mekhela:** A traditional wrap-around skirt hand-woven by local artisans.

Key Areas: Mokokchung; Phek; Kohima

» **Naga Stoles:** Finely woven scarves in natural dyes and tribal motifs.

Key Areas: Dimapur; Zunheboto; Mokokchung

» **Bamboo Baskets (Naga Khu):** Strong, handcrafted bamboo baskets used for storage and decoration.

Key Areas: Wokha; Mon; Peren

» **Wood Carvings:** Traditional carvings depicting tribal myths, symbols and ancestors.

Key Areas: Mon; Tuensang; Longleng

» **Bamboo and Cane Furniture:** Durable, handcrafted chairs and tables inspired by tribal craftsmanship.

Key Areas: Dimapur; Chümoukedima; Niuland

» **Naga Beaded Jewellery:** Intricately designed necklaces and bracelets made from colourful beads.

Key Areas: Kohima; Phek; Kiphire

» **Traditional Naga Headgear:** Decorative headgear adorned with hornbill feathers and symbolic elements.

Key Areas: Mon; Wokha; Zunheboto

» **Hand-crafted Wooden Figurines:** Sculptures that depict tribal heritage, myths and warriors.

Key Areas: Peren; Longleng; Shamator

» **Cane Mats and Trays:** Hand-woven mats and trays made from durable cane.

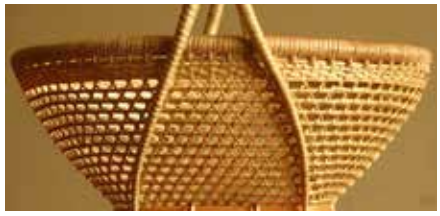
Key Areas: Niuland; Tuensang; Kiphire

» **Naga Ornaments (Brass and Beads):** Traditional brass ornaments adorned with tribal designs.

Key Areas: Kohima; Mon; Mokokchung

» **Konyak Woodwork and Masks:** Wooden masks and carvings inspired by Konyak heritage and rituals.

Key Areas: Mon; Longleng; Noklak



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (cool and pleasant, ideal for exploring landscapes, experience local festivals)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Hot and humid, Ideal for quieter travel and visiting green landscapes, monsoon rains.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Since the **year 2000,** the Government of Nagaland has been organising the renowned **Hornbill Festival** annually during the first week of December. This festival serves as a platform to foster inter-tribal relations and showcase the state's rich cultural heritage.

» Nagaland is famous for its role in the **Amur falcon migration,** where millions of these tiny raptors arrive every year from Siberia to roost in areas like Wokha, making it a bird-watching paradise.

» The Khonoma village is celebrated as **Asia's first "Green Village",** where traditional conservation practices and community efforts have preserved its forests and rich biodiversity, making it a unique eco-tourism destination.

» The **Dzükou Valley** is a beautiful trekking destination often called the **'Valley of Flowers of the East'** for its rolling hills and colourful seasonal blooms.

» Nagaland is home to **17 distinct tribes,** each with its own language, festivals and traditions, making it one of the most culturally diverse states in India.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Odisha

Tourism

Odisha, situated on the eastern coastline of India along the Bay of Bengal, is a state characterised by its rich cultural heritage, diverse natural ecosystems and profound spiritual significance. The state is home to a range of unique offerings, including serene coastal landscapes such as those in Puri, biodiverse forest regions like Simlipal and vibrant tribal communities with distinct cultural practices. Odisha is also renowned for its historical monuments, classical dance forms, traditional art and festivals of national and regional importance. The state's integration of traditional values with contemporary development makes it a compelling destination for cultural, ecological and spiritual engagement.

Best Places to Visit

Odisha, nestled along India's eastern coastline by the Bay of Bengal, is a captivating blend of ancient heritage, stunning natural beauty and vibrant cultural traditions. Renowned for its majestic temples, serene beaches, diverse wildlife and indigenous communities, the state offers a deeply enriching travel experience. Whether you're a spiritual seeker, nature enthusiast, history buff, or adventure lover, Odisha has something for everyone.

Nature Tourism

» **Chilika Lake:** It is Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, spannning Puri, Khordha and Ganjam districts and is a Ramsar site known for its rich biodiversity. It is a winter haven for migratory birds like flamingos and pelicans. Satapada, at the lake's southern end, offers a chance to spot the rare Irrawaddy dolphins.

Key Activities: Bird watching, dolphin boat rides, visits to Kalijai and Rajhans islands, cultural interactions with fishing communities and eco-education tours.

» **Simlipal National Park:** This UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is known for its dense sal *(Shorea robusta)* forests, waterfalls and rich wildlife, including Bengal tigers, elephants and Indian bison. It also hosts rare orchids and medicinal plants.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris (seasonal), nature treks, wildlife and birdwatching, eco-camping and cultural interactions with local tribal communities.

» **Deomali Hills (Koraput):** These are Odisha's highest peaks, rising to 1,672 meters in the Eastern Ghats, about 70 km from Koraput. The region offers dramatic landscapes, dense forests and rich biodiversity, ideal for nature and adventure lovers.

Key Activities: Trekking, rock climbing, nature walks, adventure camping, photography and cultural interactions with local tribal communities.

» **Daringbadi (Kandhamal):** Often referred to as the "Kashmir of Odisha," this hill station stands at 915 meters and is cherished for its cool climate, pine forests and vibrant coffee and turmeric plantations.

Key Activities: Plantation tours, forest treks, nature

Lesser-Known Attractions

Odisha offers a range of lesser-known experiences that go beyond the typical tourist circuit. From tranquil natural retreats and unexplored forests to ancient caves and vibrant tribal cultures, the state is filled with hidden gems.

ANUGUL

» **Deulajhari Hot Springs:** Natural hot springs with therapeutic benefits amidst dense forest.
» **Tikarpada Wildlife Sanctuary:** Habitat for endangered gharial and diverse riverine flora and fauna.
» **Derjang Reservoir Dam:** A tranquil water body surrounded by hills, ideal for day outings.
» **Malayagiri Hill:** A high-altitude trekking hill offering sweeping views.
» **Patrapada Waterfall:** A cascading fall with trekking potential and scenic backdrops.

BALANGIR

» **Harishankar Temple:** Scenic temple on Gandhamardan hills combining spirituality and nature.
» **Ranipur-Jharial:** Ancient site with 64-yogini temple and historic monuments.
» **Turekela Wildlife Sanctuary:** A rich forest zone home to elephants, leopards and bird species.
» **Gandhamardan Hills:** Mythologically significant hills known for medicinal plants and trekking trails.

BALASORE

» **Panchalingeswar Temple:** Hilltop temple housing five Shiva lingams with panoramic views.

BARGARH

» **Nrusinghanath Temple:** Important pilgrimage site at Gandhamardan foothills.
» **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary:** Popular for trekking and birdwatching.

BHADRAK

» **Bhadrakali Temple:** Ancient temple attracting year-round devotees.
» **Dhamra Port:** Historic port near Bhitarkanika mangroves.

BOUDH

» **Jagati:** Site of ancient Buddhist relics and stupas.

CUTTACK

» **Netaji Birthplace Museum:** Museum in ancestral home of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

DEOGARH

» **Pradhanpat Waterfall**: Picturesque waterfall ideal for picnics.
» **Kailash Palace:** Heritage royal residence with colonial architecture.

DHENKANAL

» **Kapilash Temple:** Hilltop temple offering spiritual peace and views.

- **Joranda Monastery:** Center of Mahima Dharma attracting spiritual seekers.
- **Saptasajya:** A sacred forested hill cluster with temples linked to the Pandavas.
- **Dandadhar Reservoir:** A peaceful dam site surrounded by forested hills, ideal for nature tourism.
- **Sapua Dam:** A snake-shaped dam known for its unique structure and picnic appeal.

GAJAPATI

- **Mahendragiri Hills:** Biodiverse hills linked to Pandava legends.
- **Jiranga Buddhist Monastery:** A peaceful Tibetan-style monastery known as "Mini-Tibet of Odisha".
- **Mahendragiri:** A hill of mythological importance offering panoramic views and ancient temple ruins.
- **Gandahati Waterfall:** A picturesque cascade amid forests, perfect for short treks and picnics.

GANJAM

- **Taptapani Hot Springs:** Sulfur-rich springs known for medicinal properties.
- **Rushikulya Beach:** Secluded beach famous for Olive Ridley turtle nesting.
- **Humuri Tampara:** A large freshwater lake ideal for boating and leisure activities.
- **Rushikulya River Mouth:** Famous nesting site for Olive Ridley turtles during breeding season.
- **Tara Tarini Temple:** A revered Shakti shrine on a hilltop with ropeway access and panoramic views.

JAGATSINGHPUR

- **Sarala Temple:** Shrine dedicated to goddess of wisdom and learning.

JAJPUR

- **Biraja Temple:** Ancient Shakti Peetha drawing pilgrims nationwide.

JHARSUGUDA

- **Koilighugar Waterfall:** Serene waterfall with submerged Shiva lingam.
- **Ramchandi Temple:** Revered riverside temple on Budhabalanga river bank.

KALAHANDI

- **Phurlijharan Waterfall:** Perennial waterfall in forested surroundings.
- **Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary:** Rich in wildlife and medicinal plants.

KANDHAMAL

- **Mukulingia Hill View Point:** Panoramic Forest and misty hill views.
- **Belghar Sanctuary:** Tribal area showcasing indigenous culture and wildlife.

KENDRAPARA

- **Laxmi Baraha Temple:** Ancient temple of religious importance.

KEONJHAR

- **Gonasika:** Scenic origin of Baitarani River.

trails, eco-stays and hands-on cultural experiences with tribal artisans and farmers.

- **Bhitarkanika National Park (Kendrapara):** Located in coastal Odisha, this mangrove and estuarine ecosystem is a Ramsar site renowned for its saltwater crocodiles, rich birdlife and proximity to Olive Ridley turtle nesting sites.

Key Activities: Boat safaris, crocodile spotting, birdwatching, environmental education tours and eco-lodge stays.

- **Satkosia Tiger Reserve (Angul):** This tiger reserve, declared in 2007, straddles the Mahanadi River gorge and covers the Eastern Ghats' diverse landscape. It combines the Satkosia Gorge and Baisipalli Sanctuaries over 960 sq. km.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris, boating, birdwatching and camping amidst nature - ideal for ecotourism enthusiasts.

- **Nandankanan Zoological Park (Bhubaneswar):** It is a one-of-a-kind zoo and botanical garden located near Kanjia Lake, famous for breeding both white and melanistic tigers. It doubles as a rescue center and conservation hotspot.

Key features: Safari rides, reptile parks, aviaries and conservation education programmes.

- **Hirakud Dam (Sambalpur):** This engineering marvel, built across the Mahanadi River, is one of the world's longest earthen dams. It offers a sweeping view of the reservoir and its scenic surroundings.

Key Activities: Boating, kayaking, jet skiing, birdwatching and enjoying scenic viewpoints near the adjacent wildlife sanctuary.

Coastal Attractions

Chandrabhaga Beach: It lies close to the iconic Sun Temple in Konark and is revered for its spiritual ambience. Particularly significant during the Chandrabhaga Mela, the beach draws pilgrims who take ritual sunrise dips in its waters.

Key Activities: Sunrise viewing, nature photography, tranquil beach walks and spiritual reflection among casuarina groves and sea breezes.

» **Puri Beach:** This vibrant beach, situated along the Bay of Bengal near the Jagannath Temple, offers a perfect blend of religious reverence and coastal charm. It is a favourite for pilgrims and tourists alike.

Key Activities: Enjoying sunrises, sampling street food, witnessing traditional fishing practices and admiring intricate sand art creations.

» **Gopalpur:** Once a bustling port town, it now serves as a quiet retreat in Ganjam district, known for its colonial-era remnants and peaceful shoreline. The iconic lighthouse adds to its coastal allure.

Key Activities: Leisurely beach walks, collecting seashells, birdwatching and interacting with local fishers to explore their traditional skills and culture.

» **Chandipur Beach (Balasore):** Known for its rare natural phenomenon, the sea here recedes nearly 5 km during low tide, revealing a vast seabed. This unique feature makes it a hotspot for eco-tourists and marine enthusiasts.

Key Activities: Walking on the exposed seabed, observing marine life and enjoying a distinct coastal ecosystem.

» **Paradip Port (Jagatsinghpur):** It stands as one of India's most prominent ports, functional since 1966, playing a crucial role in the nation's maritime trade. The site blends industrial utility with scenic coastal elements.

Key Activities: Touring port facilities, relaxing at Paradip Beach, visiting the local marine aquarium and climbing the lighthouse for panoramic views.

Heritage Tourism

» **Konark Sun Temple (Puri):** This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a masterpiece of 13th-century Kalinga architecture. Designed as a giant chariot dedicated to the Sun God, it features intricately carved wheels, horses and sculptures depicting mythological and cultural themes.

» **Sana Ghagara Waterfall:** Popular picnic spot amid dense forests.

KHORDHA

» **Atri Hot Springs:** Therapeutic sulphur springs in peaceful surroundings.

KORAPUT

» **Nandapur:** A town surrounded by forests and rivers.

» **Kolab Dam:** A major dam with garden surroundings and boating options, popular for picnics.

» **Jalaput:** A large dam site offering calm waters and scenic views across Odisha-Andhra border.

» **Machhakund (Duduma):** A majestic waterfall and hydro project site in a deep valley.

» **Raisil:** A green hilltop ideal for trekking and panoramic views of the Eastern Ghats.

» **Maliguda:** Known for being one of the highest broad-gauge railway tunnels in the Eastern Ghatsand surrounding scenic beauty (Koraput).

MAYURBHANJ

» **Lulung:** Gateway to Simlipal National Park, ideal for eco-tourism.

MALKANGIRI

» **Ammakunda:** Natural waterfall and picnic site in forest.

» **Satiguda Dam:** Quiet reservoir offering boating and views.

NABARANGPUR

» **Papadahandi:** Site with ancient temples and tribal culture.

» **Chandahandi:** Known for natural beauty and tribal traditions.

NAYAGARH

» **Kuanria Dam:** Picturesque spot for picnics and birdwatching.

» **Ladukeshwar Temple:** Ancient religious temple.

NUAPADA

» **Patalgangan:** Sacred perennial spring with legends.

» **Sunabeda:** Plateau rich in biodiversity and tribal culture.

RAYAGADA

» **Chatikona:** Scenic area known for tribal markets.

» **Majhighariani Temple:** Revered regional temple attracting devotees.

SAMBALPUR

» **Huma Leaning Temple:** It is India's only leaning Shiva temple, mysteriously tilted yet structurally stable on the banks of the Mahanadi River.

SONEPUR

» **Sureswari Temple:** Ancient temple at river confluence.

» **Kosaleswara Temple:** Architecturally significant spiritual site.

SUNDARGARH

» **Vedvyas Temple (Sundargarh):** Spiritual site locally believed to be sage Vedavyasa's ashram.

» **Kanakund:** A scenic riverside picnic and nature spot nestled in forested surroundings, locally known as grand canyon of Odisha.

» **Lingaraj Temple (Bhubaneswar):** An 11th-century temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, showcasing classic Odisha architecture with a towering spire and intricate carvings. It is an active worship site, especially during Shivratri. Visitors can explore the temple complex, join interpretive tours and learn about rituals and cultural traditions.

» **Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves (Bhubaneswar):** Dating to the 1st century BCE, these ancient rock-cut Jain caves feature Brahmi inscriptions and carvings related to Jain ascetics and royalty. The site offers guided heritage trails, insights into Jain history and cultural awareness programmes.

» **Barabati Fort (Cuttack):** A 14th-century Eastern Ganga dynasty fort near the Mahanadi and Kathajodi rivers, now a heritage site with ruins including an arched gateway. It hosts cultural events, exhibitions and heritage walks that highlight medieval Odisha's history.

» **Paika Rebellion Memorial (Khordha):** Commemorates the 1817 Paika Rebellion against British rule and honours warrior Buxi Jagabandhu. Features museums, light-and-sound shows and educational programmes focused on freedom movement heritage tourism.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Jagannath Temple (Puri):** A 12th-century temple dedicated to Lord Jagannath, it is a key pilgrimage site and part of the Char Dham Yatra. Famous for its unique rituals and the grand annual Rath Yatra festival, it attracts lakhs of devotees. Visitors can also explore the massive temple kitchen, nearby traditional crafts and local spiritual music.

» **Maa Tarini Temple (Ghatgaon, Keonjhar):** A revered Shakti shrine known for vibrant folk rituals and spiritual energy. Devotees often undertake foot pilgrimages, especially on Tuesdays and Sankranti days. The temple experience includes devotional songs, community feasts and traditional healing practices amidst a serene forest setting.

» **Maa Samaleswari Temple (Sambalpur):** Principal temple of western Odisha, dedicated to Maa Samaleswari. The Nuakhai festival, celebrating the first harvest, is the temple's highlight with rich rituals, folk music and local cuisine. Its location near Hirakud Dam blends cultural and eco-tourism experiences.

» **Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri (Buddhist Diamond Triangle):** An important Buddhist heritage cluster dating from 3rd century BCE to 12th century CE in Jajpur and Kendrapara districts. These sites feature stupas, monasteries, sculptures and relics, offering spiritual, historical and cultural tourism with guided tours, meditation retreats and scholarly programmes.

Culture and Cuisines

Odisha's culture is deeply rooted in classical dance, temple art and tribal traditions, while its cuisine offers a unique blend of subtle spices, featuring dishes like dalma, pakhala and a variety of temple sweets.

Culture

» **Ratha Yatra (Puri):** It is one of the globally renowned religious annual festivals celebrated in June–July where Lord Jagannath and his sibling's journey from the Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple. It symbolises divine grace and inclusivity, as the deities step out to give darshan to all devotees, including those usually not allowed inside the temple.

» **International Sand Art Festival (Puri):** Held every December at Chandrabhaga Beach, this festival features sand sculptures by artists from India and abroad on themes like women empowerment and environment.

» **Chhau Dance Festival (Mayurbhanj):** A vibrant martial-style dance festival in March–April depicting mythological tales, performed without masks, celebrating tribal heritage and UNESCO-recognised tradition.

» **Chandan Yatra (Puri):** A 42-day summer festival featuring ceremonial boat rides of Lord Jagannath and siblings, symbolising divine coolness and devotion.

» **Pana Sankranti:** Mid-April Odia New Year festival welcoming spring with ritual drink sharing, prayers and community gatherings.

» **Durga Puja (Cuttack):** Grand celebration known for silver and gold filigree decorations, cultural displays, rituals and processions.

» **Makar Mela:** Religious fair during Makar Sankranti at river confluences with holy dips, prayers to the Sun God, cultural programmes and crafts.

» **Danda Jatra (Kandhamal):** Tribal folk-dance festival in March–April, a ritual of penance and devotion to Goddess Kali and Lord Shiva.

» **Boita Bandana:** Kartika Purnima festival in October and November where miniature boats are floated to honour Odisha's ancient maritime trade.

» **Konark Dance Festival:** December event at Konark Sun Temple showcasing classical Indian dance forms by renowned artists.

» **Raja Festival:** Three-day monsoon celebration honouring Mother Earth's fertility and agricultural renewal.

» **Puri Beach Festival:** Winter cultural festival featuring folk music, dance, sand art, water sports and handicrafts along Puri's coastline.

» **Nuakhai:** Western Odisha harvest festival offering new rice crop to deities and sharing among families, symbolising gratitude and unity.

» **Bali Yatra (Cuttack):** Kartik Purnima fair commemorating Odisha's maritime trade, with rituals, crafts, food and cultural events.

» **Sital Sasthi:** Festival in Sambalpur celebrating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

» **Dhanu Yatra:** of the world's largest open-air theatrical festivals

Bargarh, reenacting Lord Krishna's childhood story.

» **Chaitra Parab (Koraput):** Tribal festival with rituals, performances and feasts celebrating community life in April.

» **Maghe Parab:** Harvest festival of Ho, Oraon, Kisan and Kol tribes featuring rituals to thank deities and pray for prosperity.

» **Kedu (Kandhamal):** Sacred Kutia Kandha tribal festival to appease the soil goddess, connected to agriculture.

» **Rajarani Music Festival (Bhubaneswar):** Annual classical music and dance event held in February at the historic Rajarani Temple.

» **Kalinga Mahotsav (Bhubaneswar):** Cultural festival celebrating ancient Kalinga's heritage through dance, music, crafts and cuisine.

» **Adivasi Mela (Bhubaneswar):** Annual tribal cultural and trade fair showcasing Odisha's diverse tribal communities.

» **EkamraUtsav(Bhubaneswar):** Festival celebrating Odisha's heritage with music, dance, food, crafts and heritage walks.

» **Taratarini Mela (Ganjam):** Major temple festival in March–April featuring prayers, offerings to moving idols and a unique hair-offering ritual.

Cuisines

» **Pakhala Bhata:** Traditional fermented rice dish, served cold with curd, fried veggies and fish, popular in summer for its cooling effect.

» **Khaja:** Crispy, layered sweet soaked in sugar syrup, offered as prasad at Jagannath Temple.

» **Chhena Poda:** Baked cottage cheese dessert with a rich flavour and caramelised crust. It is called the "Burnt Cheese Cake" of Odisha.

» **Dahi Vada-Aloo Dum:** Popular Cuttack Street food pairing soft dahi vadas with spicy potato curry, a morning favourite.

» **Rasabali:** Sweet from Kendrapara made of deep-fried cheese balls soaked in thick cardamom-flavoured milk, part of Jagannath Temple bhog.

» **Kora Khai:** Chewy, crunchy sweet made from puffed rice, coconut, jaggery and cardamom, commonly offered as temple prasad.

» **Chaula Bara:** Crispy fritters made from soaked rice and urad dal, spiced and deep-fried, served hot with chutney. It's a famous Sambalpuri snack.

» **Rasagolla:** Soft, sweet cheese balls with debated origin, a prized dessert in Jagannath Temple bhog.

» **Chaatu Rai:** Nutritious mushroom dish cooked in tangy mustard-tomato paste, made on special occasions.

» **Dalma:** Healthy Odia dish of roasted moong dal with mixed vegetables, cooked without onion or garlic, served with rice.

» **Kanika:** A mildly sweet, fragrant rice dish cooked with ghee, raisins and spices, often served with spicy curries during festivals and temple meals.

» **Macha Chhenchada:** A spicy, dry fish curry made with fish head, vegetables and aromatic spices - a rustic delicacy popular in Odia households.

» **Mudhi Mansa:** A crunchy-spicy combination of puffed rice (mudhi) and mutton curry, especially loved in western Odisha for its bold flavours.

» **Macha Patrapoda:** Fish marinated with spices and mustard, wrapped in banana leaves and roasted-offering a smoky, traditional flavour.

» **Chingudi Patrapoda:** Prawns cooked in mustard paste and roasted in banana leaves - a must-try coastal dish blending aroma and spice.

» **Chhena Jhili:** Soft cheese-based deep-fried sweets soaked in sugar syrup, especially famous from Nimapara (Puri).

» **Arisa Pitha:** A rice and jaggery-based deep-fried sweet pancake, usually made during weddings and festivals.

» **Malpua:** A syrup-soaked sweet pancake made from flour, banana and fennel, served as a dessert or prasad. It is often served with Rabri.

» **Chenna Gaja:** Firm sweets made from kneaded chhena (cottage cheese) and semolina, fried and soaked in light syrup. It's an iconic sweet from Cuttack, offering a chewy, rich texture.

» **Kakera Pitha:** Semolina-based fried dumplings with coconut-jaggery filling, a festival-time favourite.

» **Palua Ladu:** Sweet balls made from arrowroot flour, cardamom and ghee, often served during rituals and fasts.

» **Sara Papadi:** Crispy rice flakes made from puffed paddy, eaten dry or sweetened - a traditional temple snack.

» **Poda Pitha:** A slow-roasted rice cake with jaggery and coconut, famous during Raja festival and offered to Lord Jagannath. It is the most famous pitha in Odisha.

» **Manda Pitha:** Steamed rice dumplings filled with coconut and jaggery - usually made during Manabasa Gurubar and festivals.

» **Chhena Jalebi:** A cheesy twist on jalebi made from cottage cheese spirals soaked in sugar syrup-a rich, melt-in-mouth dessert.

» **Keera Gaja:** Deep-fried flaky sweet coated with sugar syrup, a crunchy treat often sold in local markets.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Odisha is renowned for its rich tradition of textiles and handicrafts, reflecting the state's cultural heritage, skilled craftsmanship and vibrant artistry.

» **Sambalpuri Ikat:** Renowned handwoven textile from western Odisha using the unique Bandha (tie-dye) technique, known for its intricate patterns and cultural motifs like shells and flowers.

Key Areas: Sambalpur, Bargarh, Sonepur; Boyanika & Utkalika outlets (Bhubaneswar,

Cuttack, Puri); Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar)

» **Bomkai (Sonepuri):** A fusion of ikat and embroidery from Ganjam and Sonepur, featuring tribal and mythological designs, popular for festive and bridal wear.

Key Areas: Bomkai; Sonepur; Ganjam; Odisha State Handloom Emporiums (Boyanika, Utkalika); ORMAS stalls at handicraft fairs

» **Kotpad Fabric:** Naturally dyed, eco-friendly textile from Koraput, woven by tribal artisans, typically in maroon and black for shawls and sarees.

Key Areas: Kotpad village (Koraput district); Tribal Museum (Bhubaneswar); SCST Emporium and Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar)

» **Berhampuri Silk:** Distinctive silk from Berhampur known for its Phoda Kumbha pattern, often used in temple rituals and bridal garments.

Key Areas: Berhampur; Ganjam District Handloom Cluster; Utkalika and Boyanika showrooms in Bhubaneswar and Puri

» **Tussar & Gopalpur Silk:** Rich-textured silks from Gopalpur and Jajpur, ideal for high-quality traditional outfits.

Key Areas: Gopalpur (Jajpur district), Bhagalpur-linked markets in Bhubaneswar; Boyanika showrooms and Ekamra Haat

» **Pattachitra (Puri, Raghurajpur):** Intricate scroll paintings on cloth or palm leaves, illustrating tales of Lord Jagannath, Ramayana and Mahabharata using bold lines and natural colours.

Key Areas: Raghurajpur Heritage Village (near Puri), Puri beachside markets; Odisha Crafts Museum & Handicraft Melas

» **Applique Work (Pipili):** Vibrant stitched fabric art featuring motifs like animals and deities, commonly seen during Rath Yatra in canopies, umbrellas and decor.

Key Areas: Pipili town (on Bhubaneswar–Puri road); Boyanika and Utkalika shops; Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar)

» **Stone Carving (Puri, Konark, Bhubaneswar):** Ancient craft of sculpting mythological figures on temples, showcasing Odisha's architectural legacy.

Key Areas: Artisan villages near Konark and Puri (e.g., Nayakapatna, Pathuria Sahi); Mukteshwar Temple vicinity; Odisha Crafts Museum

» **Dhokra Art (Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj):** Tribal metalwork made using the lost-wax method, creating rustic figurines and artifacts with cultural symbolism.

Key Areas: Kandalgaon & Chirikipada villages (Keonjhar); Mayurbhanj tribal markets; Tribal Museum & Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar)

» **Horn Work (Parlakhemundi):** Skilled craft of shaping ethically sources animal horns into ornaments and figures, unique to southern Odisha.

Key Areas: Parlakhemundi (Gajapati district); ORMAS exhibitions; limited stock in Utkalika stores (Bhubaneswar)

» **Silver Filigree (Cuttack):** Delicate silver wirework used in jewellery and decor, reflecting the fine artistry of Cuttack's craftsmen.

Key Areas: Mangalabag & Nayasarak areas (Cuttack city); National Award-winning artisan shops; Boyanika Silver Emporium (Cuttack, Bhubaneswar)

» **Maniabandha Saree (also called Maniabandha or Khandua Saree):** A traditional handwoven silk or cotton saree known for its ikat-style motifs, often featuring Odia scripts, elephants, or temple borders. These sarees are associated with Jagannath culture and are offered to Lord Jagannath in Puri.

Key Areas: Maniabandha village (Cuttack district), Boyanika showrooms (Bhubaneswar, Puri, Cuttack), Utkalika emporiums

» **Dongaria Kondh Textile:** Woven by the Dongaria Kondh tribe in Rayagada district, these shawls and garments feature geometric, colourful designs representing their environment and tribal culture. The textiles are part of their identity and attire during festivals.

Key Areas: Rayagada district tribal markets, SCST Handicrafts Emporium (Bhubaneswar), Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS) stalls

» **Habaspuri Handloom:** Originating from Kalahandi district, this textile features traditional motifs like flowers, animals and temple designs on coarse cotton and silk fabrics. It is one of the rare handlooms of Odisha, known for its durability and earthy aesthetics.

Key Areas: Habaspur village (Kalahandi), Boyanika and Utkalika outlets, Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar)

» **Saura Painting:** Tribal wall art made by the Saura tribe, featuring human figures in geometric forms depicting daily life and nature-symbolic and storytelling in style.

Key Areas: Rayagada, Gajapati districts; Ekamra

Haat (Bhubaneswar); Tribal Museum shops

» **Palm Leaf Painting (Tala Patra Chitra):** Intricate drawings etched on dried palm leaves using iron styluses, often illustrating stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Key Areas: Raghurajpur Heritage Village (Puri), Pipili, Odisha Crafts Museum (Bhubaneswar)

» **Papier Mâché:** Colourful masks, figurines and animals made from paper pulp, natural glue and clay, showcasing vibrant folk themes.

Key Areas: Puri, Nayagarh, Baripada; ORMAS stalls; Boyanika outlets

» **Terracotta & Pottery:** Traditional clay items like lamps, idols, pots and animal figures handcrafted and sun-dried or fired - used in homes and rituals.

Key Areas: Sonepur, Dhenkanal, Bhubaneswar Old Town, crafts fairs

» **Tribal Jewellery:** Handcrafted ornaments made from beads, shells, brass and bones, reflecting tribal aesthetics and cultural identity.

Key Areas: Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Nabarangpur; Tribal Museum (Bhubaneswar); Dilli Haat (Delhi for Odisha stalls)

» **Golden Grass & Cane Work:** Eco-friendly crafts made from dried golden grass and cane - baskets, mats, hats and decorative items, appreciated for their utility and elegance.

Key Areas: Kendrapara, Jajpur; Ekamra Haat (Bhubaneswar); ORMAS exhibitions

» **Sand Art:** Temporary sculptures made from sand, famously created on Puri Beach - often depicting deities, global themes, or social messages.

Key Areas: Puri Beach (live displays); souvenir replicas in Puri and crafts emporiums

» **Cow Dung Toys:** Eco-friendly traditional toys made by rural artisans using cow dung, clay and natural dyes-used in festivals and folk plays.

Key Areas: Keonjhar, Balangir, Sundargarh; Rural craft melas

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April & July** (Pleasant weather and major festivals.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to June & August to September** (Extremely hot and humid summer. Lush greenery and waterfalls post-monsoon.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Odisha has a **rich tribal culture with over 62 distinct tribes,** each with their own language, traditions and festivals.

» Odisha was formerly known as **Kalinga, a kingdom famous for the historic Kalinga War** fought by Emperor Ashoka, which led to his conversion to Buddhism.

» Long before Odissi became a classical dance form, **Mahari Dance** was performed by Devadasis (female temple dancers) in the Jagannath Temple. Though nearly extinct, this sacred dance was the original form of Odissi.

» **Odisha's Jagannath Temple kitchen is considered the largest in the world,** where food is cooked in earthen pots using firewood, **serving over 100,000 people** during festivals. The mahaprasad is cooked in a unique style, with seven clay pots stacked one on top of the other. The pot on top cooks the prasad first, due to the difference in heat distribution.

» The **annual Rath Yatra** in Puri is the only time of the year when Lord Jagannath and his siblings come out of the temple for public darshan, symbolising inclusivity for all, including non-Hindus.

» It is believed that Odisha had ancient **trade links** not just with Bali but also **Java, Sumatra and Sri Lanka**, as early as the 3rd century BCE. Sadhabas (Odia merchants) were key players in Indo-Southeast Asian maritime trade, long before the Cholas.

» **Prahallad Natak: Odisha's Folk Opera is a unique 200-year-old folk theatre** from Ganjam district uses a single actor to play multiple roles, dramatising the story of Prahallad and Hiranyakashipu with live music and continues to be performed in rural areas.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Puducherry

Tourism

Puducherry is a Union Territory comprising four regions- Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam-known for French-era heritage, promenades, spiritual centres and coastal landscapes. With its tree-lined boulevards, pastel-hued colonial buildings and tranquil seaside promenades, Puducherry offers a peaceful escape steeped in history and charm. Often referred to as the "French Riviera of the East," it attracts travellers seeking a mix of cultural exploration, wellness experiences and seaside relaxation.

Best Places to Visit

It offers a serene blend of coastal beauty, spiritual calm & charming colonial vibes. Its peaceful beaches, tranquil meditation spaces & vibrant café-lined streets create the perfect setting for relaxation & exploration.

Nature Tourism

» **Bharati Park (Puducherry):** A leafy urban park with colonial relics, historic mandapams and shaded walking paths.

Key Activities: Leisure walks; Picnics; Monument exploration

» **Promenade Beach (Puducherry):** A rocky beachfront ideal for walks along Goubert Avenue, offering sea breeze and sunrise views.

Key Activities: Sunrise viewing; Walking promenade; Street photography

» **Eden Beach (Chinna Veerampattinam, Puducherry):** A Blue Flag–certified beach known for cleanliness and visitor facilities.

Key Activities: Beach walks; Blue Flag certified eco-tourism; Birdwatching

» **Chunnambar Boat House (Nonankuppam, Puducherry):** A backwater hub offering water activities and houseboat rides amid lush surroundings.

Key Activities: Houseboat ride; Pedal boats; Speed boats; Backwater cruise

» **Paradise Beach (Chunnambar, Puducherry):** A secluded, ferry-accessible beach known for its pristine sands and tranquil vibe.

Key Activities: Ferry ride; Sunbathing; Beach games and relaxation

» **Ousteri Lake (Puducherry):** A protected freshwater lake and wetland habitat, home to migratory bird species and aquatic flora.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boating; Scenic photography

» **Jardin Botanique (Botanical Garden), Puducherry:** Historic garden with diverse plant collections; includes visitor attractions such as the toy train/aquarium.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Puducherry Union Territory, beyond its iconic French avenues and serene beaches, is dotted with hidden gems that offer rich spiritual, cultural and natural experiences away from the usual crowds.

IN & AROUND PUDUCHERRY

» **Auroville Botanical Gardens:** A conservation initiative featuring themed gardens, sustainable design and native flora that offers serenity to eco-conscious visitors.

» **Sadhna Community Forest:** A reforested patch on the outskirts of Auroville that reflects harmony between human care and nature.

» **Serenity Beach:** A peaceful beach with golden sand and early morning fishing boats that's ideal for a relaxed, non-touristy outing.

» **Ariyankuppam Village:** A sleepy riverside village housing the ancient Arikamedu excavation site, revealing Indo-Roman trade links.

KARAIKAL

» **Thirunallar Town:** Though known for its temple, the town's quiet streets and local eateries offer charm for cultural explorers.

» **Melakasakudy:** A traditional village surrounded by paddy fields and coconut groves, known for its slow-paced lifestyle.

MAHE

» **Puthalam:** A coastal hamlet with scenic backwaters and rustic fishing boats providing a glimpse into everyday life in Mahe.

» **St. George Fort Ruins:** Hidden remnants of a 17th-century French fort offering scenic views over the Mahe River and estuary.

YANAM

» **Savithri Nagar Backwaters:** A calm wetland region where small canals and mangroves support migratory birds and peaceful walks.

» **Kurasampeta Village:** A quiet inland farming village known for its sugarcane fields and traditional rural life.

Key Activities: Toy train rides; Explore plant species; Family outing

» **Karaikal Sandy Beach (Karaikal):** A sandy, family-friendly beach perfect for sunrise and recreational activities.

Key Activities: Beach walk; Water sports; Children's Park; local recreation

» **Mangrove Forest (Near Karaikal Beach, Karaikal):** A coastal mangrove habitat supporting biodiversity along the Arasalar river.

Key Activities: Nature walk; Eco-tourism; Birdwatching

» **Heritage Hillock (Mooppenkunnu, Mahe):** A landscaped natural hill offering panoramic views of Mahe, the sea and nearby islands.

Key Activities: Nature photography; Hilltop strolls; Scenic relaxation

» **Riverside Walkway (Mahe):** A serene riverside path along the Mahe River ideal for sunrise strolls and birdwatching.

Key Activities: Riverside walking; Sunrise or sunset viewing; Local interaction

» **Shivam Bath (Yanam):** A decorative riverfront entrance near the Godavari with elephant sculptures and fountains.

Key Activities: Riverfront entry point; Photo opportunities

Adventure Tourism

» **Veerampattinam and Arikanmedu Backwaters (Puducherry):** Paddle through serene backwaters lined with mangroves and teeming with birdlife, ideal for both relaxation and soft adventure.

Key Activities: Kayaking; Birdwatching; Exploring mangrove ecosystems

» **Adventure Parks and Trails (Near Puducherry):** Off-road/adventure activities (where permitted) are offered by private operators; subject to local permissions

Key Activities: Quad biking; Off-road adventure; Countryside exploration

» **Ousteri Lake Trails (Puducherry):** Stroll or hike through peaceful trails surrounding the lake, ideal for nature lovers and photographers.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Birdwatching; Lake photography

» **French Quarter and Coastal Routes (Puducherry):** Discover colonial streets, hidden alleys and coastal paths on eco-friendly guided cycling tours.

Key Activities: Cycling; Heritage and coastal exploration; Eco-friendly travel

Heritage Tourism

» **Raj Nivas (Puducherry):** The grand colonial residence of the Lieutenant Governor, located in Government Square.

Key Activities: Photo stop; Exterior viewing (restricted entry)

» **Legislative Assembly (Puducherry):** A colonial-era administrative building representing French governance in the region.

Key Activities: Exterior viewing; Walk around Government Square

» **French Consulate (Puducherry):** A functioning diplomatic mission in a historic French building; restricted entry.

Key Activities: Exterior viewing only (restricted entry)

» **French Institute (Puducherry):** A prominent colonial-era centre for Indo-French research and cultural activities.

Key Activities: Attend cultural events; Research (academic permission required)

» **Aayi Mandapam (Puducherry):** A Greco-Roman style heritage monument built in memory of a courtesan who donated her wealth for public good.

Key Activities: Heritage photography; Relax in the park

» **Puducherry Museum (Puducherry):** A colonial mansion housing artefacts from Roman trade and South Indian dynasties.

Key Activities: Explore archaeological exhibits; Cultural insight

» **Old Light House (Puducherry):** A 19th-century French-built lighthouse, now a preserved coastal heritage site.

Key Activities: Exterior viewing; Coastal photography

» **New Light House (Puducherry):** A newer operational lighthouse guiding ships along the Coromandel coast. It offers panoramic sea views and a glimpse into the region's maritime history..

Key Activities: Panoramic viewing; Coastal photography

» **Bharathidasan Museum (Puducherry):** The preserved residence of poet Bharathidasan, showcasing his life and literary contributions.

Key Activities: Literary exploration; Cultural heritage visit

» **Vysial Street (Puducherry):** Recipient of a UNESCO Asia-Pacific heritage award (Award of Merit, 2008) for conservation

Key Activities: Heritage Walk; Architectural photography

» **Ananda Rangapillai House (Puducherry):** An 18th-century structure that survived colonial battles; home of a key French courtier.

Key Activities: Heritage architecture appreciation; Cultural history

» **Lycée Français (Puducherry):** One of Asia's oldest French schools, symbolising Indo-French educational heritage.

Key Activities: Academic photography; Cultural landmark viewing (no public entry)

» **Alliance Française (Puducherry):** A cultural hub promoting the French language and arts, housed in a heritage colonial structure.

Key Activities: Attend cultural programmes; Explore the library; Language learning

» **Foyer du Soldat (Puducherry):** A colonial hall commemorating French-Indian soldiers, bearing Indo-French military heritage.

Key Activities: Exterior viewing; Photo stop

» **Arikamedu (Puducherry):** Excavated remains of a Roman trading port, offering rare Indo-Roman archaeological heritage.

Key Activities: Explore ancient ruins; Historical photography; Learn Indo-Roman trade history; mangrove boating

» **Gandhi Square (Puducherry):** A colonial-era public square with a statue of Mahatma Gandhi and civic significance.

Key Activities: Heritage photography; Evening strolls

» **Pondy Marina (Puducherry):** A recently developed waterfront recreation area along the Puducherry coast.

Key Activities: Street food; Family recreation; Cultural exhibits

» **Puducherry Art and Craft Village (Murungapakkam, Puducherry):** It showcases local pottery, textiles, and crafts through live demos, workshops, and sales amid terracotta sculptures.

» **Heritage Hillock (Mahe):** A landscaped colonial-era hilltop with panoramic views of Mahe's historic town and seascape.

Key Activities: Nature photography; Hilltop strolls; Scenic relaxation

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Puducherry):** A revered spiritual community founded by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, known for meditation and the Samadhi shrine.

Key Activities: Meditation; Visit Samadhi; Explore the bookstore

» **Manakula Vinayagar Temple (Puducherry):** A 300-year-old temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha.

Key Activities: Darshan; Receive blessings from the temple elephant

» **Sacred Heart Church (Puducherry):** A 100-year-old Gothic-style Catholic church with stunning stained-glass windows and a Latin cross layout.

Key Activities: Church visit; Attend mass; Admire architecture

» **Jamia Mosque / Khuthbha Palli (Puducherry):** An important historic mosque reflecting the town's plural religious heritage.

Key Activities: Religious visit; Architectural appreciation

» **Église Notre-Dame-des-Anges de (Puducherry):** A French-era church noted for its pastel exteriors and European architectural style.

Key Activities: Attend mass; Explore French ecclesiastical architecture

» **Sri Kokilambal Thirukameshwara Temple (Villianur, Puducherry):** A sacred Shiva temple known for its grand Brahmotsavam festival.

Key Activities: Temple visit; Festival experience during Brahmotsavam

» **Matrimandir (Auroville, near Puducherry):** A unique spiritual site for silent concentration, known for its golden sphere and inner meditation chamber. Entry is regulated; visitors must follow Auroville/Matrimandir visitor procedures (passes/permissions as applicable)

Key Activities: Silent concentration; Garden Walk (entry with prior permission only)

» **Saneeswaran Temple (Thirunallar, Karaikal):** A major Saturn temple attracting devotees from across India, especially during Shani Peyarchi.

Key Activities: Temple rituals; Participate in Shani Peyarchi festival

» **Karaikal Ammaiyar Temple (Karaikal):** A shrine dedicated to the Shaivite saint Punithavathi, one of the 63 revered Nayanmars.

Key Activities: Temple darshan; Spiritual pilgrimage

» **Masthan Syed Dawood Dargah (Karaikal):** A historic Sufi shrine celebrating the life of Saint Syed Dawood, known for the vibrant Kandoori festival.

Key Activities: Attend Kandoori festival; Spiritual visit

» **Our Lady of Angels Church (Karaikal):** A French-era Neo-Gothic church dating back to 1891, among the oldest in the region.

Key Activities: Church visit; Explore architectural legacy

» **St. Teresa's Shrine (Mahe):** A colonial Catholic shrine built in 1737, valued for its French religious architecture.

Key Activities: Attend October feast; Explore shrine history

» **Puthalam Temple (Mahe):** An ancient temple where the ritual dance/ Thirayattam is conducted every year in March.

Key Activities: Attend Annual Festival; Spiritual visit

Culture and Cuisines

Puducherry offers a unique cultural fusion of French and Tamil heritage, featuring serene architecture and a diverse cuisine that blends South Indian spices with French culinary flair.

Culture

» **Puducherry Beach Festival (Puducherry):** The Puducherry Beach Festival is a lively coastal celebration featuring local art, music, cuisine and beachside sports. Held along the iconic Beach Promenade, the event showcases traditional performances, contemporary music acts and community competitions, drawing large crowds of residents and tourists. It celebrates the city's artistic spirit, youthful energy and connection to the sea.

» **Mangani Festival (Karaikal):** Celebrated around June–July (Tamil month Aani; dates notified annually), known for the ritual mango-throwing tradition associated with Karaikal Ammaiyar.

» **International Yoga Festival (Puducherry):** A flagship wellness event hosted in Puducherry (dates announced annually by the Tourism Department), featuring yoga sessions, workshops and cultural programmes.

» **Villianur Car Festival (Villianur, Puducherry):** Held annually at the Sri Thirukameswarar Gokilambal Temple, this traditional car festival sees the temple chariot (ratham) pulled by thousands of devotees through the streets.

» **Veerampattinam Car Festival (Puducherry):** A vibrant temple chariot procession held in the coastal village of Veerampattinam near Puducherry, where a richly decorated temple car is pulled through the streets by devotees.

Cuisines

» **Kari Meen Varuval:** A crispy, spicy fried fish preparation made using pearl spot or pomfret, common in coastal Tamil homes.

» **Puducherry Chicken Curry:** A coconut milk-based chicken curry with South Indian spices and subtle French influences.

» **Creole Prawn Curry:** A tangy tomato-coconut prawn curry infused with cinnamon, cloves and coastal aromatics.

» **Baguette Sandwich with Indian Fillings:** French baguettes stuffed with curried potatoes, egg masala, or chutneys — a colonial street food fusion.

» **Kal Dosai:** Thick, soft rice pancakes served with chutney and sambar, popular for breakfast.

» **Pongal:** A ghee-rich rice and lentil porridge seasoned with pepper and cumin, eaten during festivals or breakfast.

» **French Pastries:** Puducherry bakeries offer croissants, tarts and éclairs with tropical twists like mango and coconut.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Puducherry's textiles and handicrafts beautifully fuse French flair with Tamil tradition, showcasing vibrant handloom fabrics, artisanal pottery and coastal-inspired creations.

» **Korai Grass Mats (Paya or Pai):** Eco-friendly handwoven mats made from korai (sedge) grass, known for their durability and use in traditional sleeping arrangements and rituals.

» **Handmade Paper Craft:** Auroville and Puducherry produce fine handmade paper using recycled cotton rags, embellished with petals, leaves and natural textures. Used in journals, cards and eco-packaging.

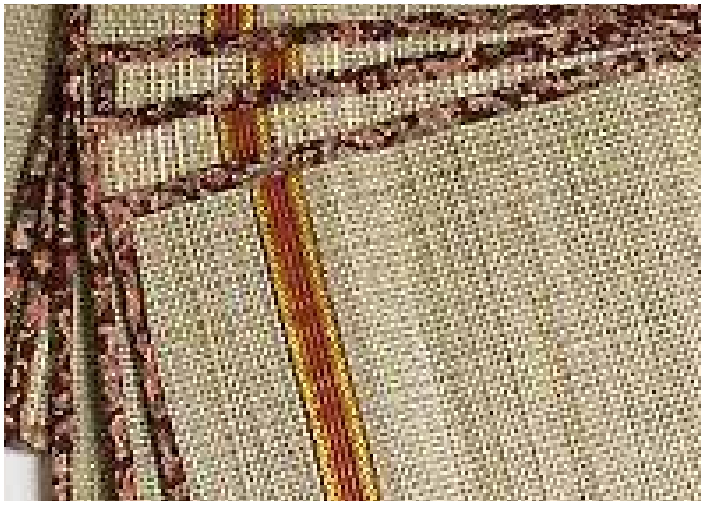
» **Terracotta and Clay Pottery:** Functional and decorative pottery made by local artisans using red clay, often adorned with simple geometric motifs or animal shapes.

» **Palm Leaf Crafts:** Weaving of baskets, trays and festive decorations using dried palm leaves, especially for temple offerings and seasonal rituals.

» **Wood Carving and Lacquerware:** Decorative woodwork for furniture and sculptures, often inspired by French, Tamil and tribal aesthetics. Lacquer finishing adds a bright sheen.

» **Embroidery and Crochet Work:** Lacework, crochet tablecloths and hand embroidery - a legacy of Anglo-Indian and French missionary influence, often seen in home linen and accessories.

» **Leather Craft:** Soft, durable leather goods like wallets, belts and sandals made in small workshops using traditional tanning and hand-stitching methods.



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather; ideal for sightseeing, beaches and festivals.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Warmer but manageable; great for budget travel and indoor wellness/ashram visits. Rainy and breezy; landscapes turn greener, but beach time and outdoor plans can be weather-dependent.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **A Slice of France in India:** Puducherry was a French colony until 1954 and its charming French Quarter still retains colonial villas, signage, cobblestone paths and café culture — offering a unique European vibe in India.

» **Bilingual Street Signs:** Many street names are displayed in both French and Tamil, reflecting its rich Franco-Tamil heritage and appealing to culturally curious tourists.

» **Home to Auroville – the 'City of Dawn':** Auroville is an experimental international township near Puducherry where people from over 50 countries live together in harmony, attracting spiritual seekers and eco-tourists worldwide.

» **Aurobindo Ashram – Centre for Peace and Yoga:** This globally renowned ashram offers spiritual retreats and meditation spaces that draw thousands of wellness travellers every year.

» **Scuba Diving Destination:** Scuba diving is available in Puducherry with marine-life/shipwreck exploration options.

» **Handmade Paper and Pottery Traditions:** The city is known for its handmade paper, incense and unique pottery — popular souvenirs for craft lovers and culture tourists.

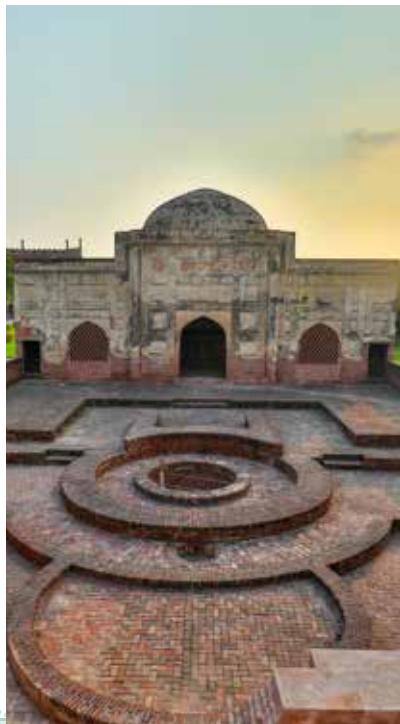
» An interesting fact about the people of Puducherry is that half the population in the region **hold dual citizenship** of both French and Indian.

» The Union Territory of Puducherry has a **richly cosmopolitan culture**. Puducherry people speak French and English, along with Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Punjab

Tourism



Punjab, in northwestern India, is known as the “Land of Five Rivers” and is celebrated for its fertile plains, vibrant culture and historical significance. Its geography includes lush fields, river landscapes and the Shivalik foothills, making it naturally scenic and agriculturally rich. The state is a blend of spirituality, heritage and rural charm. Key attractions include the Golden Temple, Jallianwala Bagh and the Wagah Border ceremony. Festivals like Baisakhi and Hola Mohalla highlight its lively traditions, while farm stays offer a taste of authentic Punjabi village life.

Best Places To Visit

Punjab, the "Land of Five Rivers," offers a rich blend of spiritual sites, historic forts, scenic wetlands and adventure spots, making it a diverse and culturally vibrant tourist destination.

Nature Tourism

» **Harike Wetland (Punjab):** Major wetland/bird sanctuary and Ramsar site, important for migratory birds in winter.

Key Activities: Birdwatching, boating and nature walks.

» **Kanjli Wetland (Kapurthala):** A calm, picturesque wetland and Ramsar site, ideal for birdwatching, boating and nature walks.

Key Activities: Birdwatching, boat rides and picnicking.

» **Ropar Wetland (Rupnagar):** A manmade wetland formed following construction of a barrage (1952) on the Sutlej; a Ramsar site supporting rich waterbird diversity.

Key Activities: Fishing, boating and nature photography

» **Siswan Community Reserve (S.A.S. Nagar/Mohali):** Forest area near the Shivalik foothills with Siswan Dam; promoted for eco-tourism/nature trails as per Punjab Forest Department.

Key Activities: Trekking, wildlife spotting and camping.

Adventure Tourism

» **Kikar Lodge (Rupnagar/ Ropar):** Private forest retreat in the Shivalik foothills (district portal describes it as India's first private forest reserve).

Key Activities: Jungle safaris, ATV rides, ziplining and horse riding.

» **Rakh Bagh (Ludhiana):** Public park known for family recreation.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond its famous landmarks, Punjab is home to several lesser-known gems that offer unique experiences away from the crowds. From serene wetlands and ancient forts to quiet gurudwaras and cultural villages, these hidden spots reflect the state's rich heritage and natural beauty, perfect for offbeat explorers.

AMRITSAR

» **Gurudwara Baba Atal Rai:** A nine-story shrine dedicated to Guru Hargobind's son, known for its spiritual significance and panoramic views.

» **Gurudwara Baba Bakala Sahib:** Associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur, where he meditated before becoming the ninth Sikh Guru.

» **Bhagwan Valmiki Tirath Sthal:** Ramayana-linked ashram said to be the birthplace of Luv-Kusha, with a museum and a sacred pond.

» **Khairuddin Masjid:** 19th-century mosque notable for its role in anti-British freedom movement and elegant architecture.

FATEHGARH SAHIB

» **Gurudwara Shahid Ganj (Fatehgarh Sahib):** Historic gurdwara commemorating Sikh martyrdom traditions.

» **Aam Khas Bagh:** A Mughal Garden complex originally built for royal leisure and public gatherings.

» **Sirhind:** Town with multiple shrines, tombs and Sikh-Muslim shared heritage.

» **Sanghol (Ucha Pind):** Archaeological Buddhist-era site with stupa ruins and artefacts in an on-site museum.

HOSHIARPUR

» **Takhni-Rehmapur Wildlife Sanctuary:** Forest sanctuary home to deer, sambar, birds- nature-lover's retreat.

NAWANSHAHR

» **Gurudwara Charan Kanwal Sahib (Machhiwara Sahib, Ludhiana):** Associated with Guru Gobind Singh Ji's stay in the Machhiwara area.

PATIALA

» **Gurudwara Sri Dukhniwaran Sahib:** Revered for healing powers, it is believed that devotees are freed from suffering after praying here.

LUDHIANA

» **Kila Raipur Rural Olympics:** Annual rural sports festival showcasing bullock-cart racing and feats of strength.

» **Neelon Canal:** A peaceful, lesser-known waterway ideal for scenic walks and local picnics.

JALANDHAR

» **Shiv Mandir Gur Mandi:** An ancient temple known for its unique blend of Hindu and Mughal architecture.

» **Phillaur Fort:** A colonial-era fort that now serves as a police training center, blending Sikh and European architecture.

BATHINDA

» **Bahia Fort:** Early 20th-century fortress now heritage hotel, set among desert-flanked gardens.

» **Maiser Khana Temple:** Durga-Jwala temple, 29 km from Bathinda, site of annual melas and communal harmony.

FAZILKA

» **Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary:** Blackbuck conservation reserve and Bishnoi community habitat, rich in wildlife spotting.

ROPAR (RUPNAGAR)

» **Bharatgarh Fort:** A quiet heritage fort offering homestay experiences and countryside ambience.

KAPURTHALA

» **KANJLI WETLAND:** Serene waterscape ideal for birdwatching and nature strolls.

SANGRUR

» **Sangrur Fort & Banasar Garden:** Historic fort complex with gardens and Sheesh Mahal for a slice of local heritage.

» **Malerkotla Town:** Harmonious Muslim-Sikh town with ancient mosques, shrines and communal festivals.

FARIDKOT

» **Raj Mahal & Gurdwara Tilla Baba Farid:** Tranquil palace and spiritual gurdwara off the tourist radar.

FEROZEPUR

» **Hari-ke-Pattan (Harike):** Mostly dominated by a wetland, it partly spans Ferozepur with bird sanctuaries.

Key Activities: Mini train rides, obstacle courses and kids' adventure activities.

Heritage Tourism

» **Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar):** A national memorial that marks the site of the tragic 1919 massacre where British troops opened fire on hundreds of innocent Indians. The bullet marks and Martyrs' Well stand as haunting reminders of India's struggle for freedom.

» **Gobindgarh Fort (Amritsar):** A historic military fort originally built by Gujar Singh and later reinforced by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It now hosts cultural exhibits, a museum, live performances and light & sound shows.

» **Maharaja Ranjit Singh Museum (Amritsar):** Housed in the Summer Palace of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Ram Bagh Garden. It displays artifacts, paintings and weapons belonging to the Sikh Empire.

» **Attari Border (Amritsar):** Famous for the daily Beating Retreat ceremony between Indian and Pakistani forces. The patriotic atmosphere, military drills and cheering crowds create a unique experience.

» **Qila Mubarak (Patiala):** Developed from an early 'Kachi Garhi'; the complex was built/expanded under the Patiala rulers, including Baba Ala Singh and later Maharajas.

» **Sheesh Mahal and Museum (Patiala):** Mirrorwork palace/art museum associated with the Patiala royal complex. Built by Maharaja Narinder Singh, it includes an art gallery and lake.

» **Bahadurgarh Fort (Patiala):** Major fort site listed among Patiala's key architectural heritage.

» **Maharaja Ranjit Singh War Museum (Ludhiana):** A modern war museum dedicated to the military history of Punjab. It features tanks, war memorabilia and galleries on Indo-Pak wars.

» **Phillaur Fort / Ranjit Singh Fort (Phillaur):** Originally a Mughal sarai, later fortified by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It has served as a military fort and now houses Punjab Police Academy.

» **Jagatjit Palace (Kapurthala):** Modelled after the Palace of Versailles, built by Maharaja Jagatjit Singh. Features French architecture, elaborate interiors and European chandeliers.

» **Moorish Mosque (Kapurthala):** Commissioned by Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, modelled on the Grand Mosque of Marrakesh. The mosque has stunning Moroccan design with Indian craftsmanship.

» **Bathinda Fort / Qila Mubarak (Bathinda):** Ancient fort traditionally associated with Razia Sultana in local history.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Golden Temple Sri Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar):** The holiest shrine of Sikhism, the Golden Temple is renowned for its stunning golden architecture and spiritual aura. The temple is surrounded by the sacred Amrit Sarovar, enhancing its serenity.

» **Durgiana Temple (Amritsar):** Often called the 'Silver Temple', it resembles the Golden Temple in structure but is dedicated to Goddess Durga. It also houses idols of Lakshmi, Narayan and other deities in Hindu mythology.

» **Akal Takht Sahib (Amritsar):** One of the five Takhts (seats of authority) in Sikhism, built by Guru Hargobind Ji. It stands within the Golden Temple complex and represents the temporal authority of Sikhs.

» **Damdama Sahib (Bathinda):** Another of the five Takhts, located in Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda. It was here that Guru Gobind Singh compiled the final version of the Guru Granth Sahib.

» **Anandpur Sahib (Rupnagar):** One of the most sacred Sikh towns, founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1665. It's the birthplace of the Khalsa, where Guru Gobind Singh initiated the order in 1699.

» **Keshgarh Sahib (Rupnagar):** Located in Anandpur Sahib, it is one of the five Takhts of Sikhism. This is the exact place where Guru Gobind Singh baptised the first five Khalsa.

» **Gurudwara Ber Sahib (Kapurthala):** Built at the site where Guru Nanak Dev Ji is said to have meditated under a Ber tree. It marks the place where he is believed to have attained enlightenment.

» **Gurudwara Fatehgarh Sahib (Fatehgarh Sahib):** Built in memory of Guru Gobind Singh's young sons, who were bricked alive by the Mughals. The shrine honors their supreme sacrifice for their faith.

» **Talwandi Sabo (Takht Sri Damdama Sahib) (Bathinda):** Known as 'Guru Ki Kashi', this is where Guru Gobind Singh stayed and taught Sikh scriptures. It's home to several historic Gurudwaras and the famous Takht Sri Damdama Sahib.

Culture and Cuisines

Punjab's culture is a vibrant blend of lively music, colorful festivals, traditional dances like Bhangra and Giddha and warm hospitality. Its cuisine is equally rich, known for hearty dishes like butter chicken, sarson da saag with makki di roti and sweet delights like jalebi and pinni, offering a true taste of Punjabi life.

Culture

» **Hola Mohalla (Anandpur Sahib):** A vibrant Sikh festival featuring martial arts displays, mock battles, poetry and kirtan, celebrated just after Holi. It showcases Sikh valor and culture.

» **Baisakhi:** Marks the Punjabi New Year and the harvest festival, also commemorates the formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Celebrated with processions, prayers and traditional dances.

» **Attari-Wagah Border Ceremony:** The Attari-Wagah Border Ceremony, also known as the Beating Retreat Ceremony, is a daily military practice held every evening before sunset by the border security forces of India (BSF) and Pakistan (Pak Rangers).

» **Maghi Mela (Muktsar):** Held to honor the martyrdom of the Forty Liberated Ones (Chali Mukte) who fought for Guru Gobind Singh.

» **Lohri:** A traditional winter festival celebrating the harvest of rabi crops with bonfires, folk songs and dances like Bhangra and Giddha.

» **Gurpurabs:** Festivals celebrating the birth anniversaries of Sikh Gurus, especially Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji, marked by prayers, kirtans and community kitchens (langar).

» **Kila Raipur Rural Olympics:** A unique rural sports festival near Ludhiana, showcasing traditional Punjabi sports and rural skills like bullock cart races, tug-of-war and wrestling.

» **Patiala Heritage Festival:** A cultural festival highlighting the rich heritage, art, music and crafts of Patiala with performances and exhibitions.

» **Teejan:** A women-centric festival celebrated in rural Punjab, marking the onset of the monsoon with singing, dancing and social gatherings.

» **Chhapar Mela:** A local fair in Chhapar village featuring folk music, food stalls and handicrafts, attracting nearby villagers and tourists.

» **Basanti Panchmi (Kite Festival):** Celebrated in February with vibrant kite flying competitions marking the arrival of spring.

Cuisines

» **Sarson da Saag & Makki di Roti:** Traditional winter combo of mustard greens and corn flatbread.

» **Amritsari Kulcha:** Stuffed tandoori flatbread served with chutney and chhole.

» **Dal Makhani:** Rich lentil dish slow-cooked with cream and butter.

» **Tandoori Chicken:** Yogurt-marinated chicken grilled in a tandoor oven.

» **Paneer Tikka:** Spiced, grilled cottage cheese cubes served as a starter.

» **Gajar ka Halwa:** Carrot pudding made with milk, sugar and ghee, garnished with nuts.

» **Phirni:** Creamy rice pudding flavored with cardamom and saffron, served chilled.

» **Pinni:** A dense, sweet wheat flour dessert often made with jaggery and ghee.

» **Jalebi:** Deep-fried spirals soaked in sugar syrup, crispy and sweet.

» **Gur Rewari:** Sweet made from jaggery and sesame seeds, crunchy and healthy.

» **Kheer:** Rice cooked in milk with sugar, nuts and cardamom.

» **Besan Ladoo:** Sweet balls made from gram flour, ghee and sugar.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Punjab's vibrant textiles and handicrafts-like Phulkari embroidery, Punjabi juttis and wooden inlay work-offer tourists a colorful glimpse into the state's rich cultural artistry and traditional craftsmanship.

» **Phulkari Embroidery:** A vibrant, floral hand-embroidered textile traditionally done on shawls and dupattas, symbolising Punjab's rich folk culture.

» **Juttis (Punjabi Mojaris):** Handcrafted leather footwear embellished with embroidery and mirror work, popular as ethnic wear.

» **Sikh Miniature Paintings:** Intricate paintings depicting Sikh history and folklore, often seen in museums and galleries.

» **Phulkari Dupattas and Shawls:** Highly sought-after as gifts and souvenirs for their intricate needlework and bright colors.

» **Patiala Salwar:** Traditional loose, pleated trousers known for comfort and style, often paired with embroidered kameez.

» **Brass and Copperware:** Handcrafted utensils, decorative items and traditional lamps made by skilled artisans.

» **Wood Carvings:** Delicate carvings on furniture and decorative pieces, especially from rural areas.

» **Woolen Woollies and Shawls:** Warm shawls and woollen scarves, especially from the northern parts of Punjab, crafted with local wool.

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing, festivals and outdoor activities.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Hotter days; plan outdoor sightseeing for early mornings/evenings and enjoy museums, heritage interiors and cafés in the afternoon. Monsoon brings lush greenery; suitable for nature lovers, though occasional rain may occur.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Amritsar hosts **one of the world's largest free community kitchens at Sri Harmandir Sahib,** serving tens of thousands daily, with higher volumes during major festivals.

» The **Attari border ceremony** draws large crowds and features coordinated ceremonial **drills by India and Pakistan.**

» **The city of Kapurthala** is nicknamed the "Paris of Punjab" due to its French-inspired architecture, reflecting the Nawab's European fascination with urban planning.

» **Patiala's famous turban (Pagri)** is one of the largest styles worn in India - symbolising pride, royalty and cultural identity.

» **Punjabi folk dances like Bhangra and Giddha** are globally recognised and performed at international events-representing the joyful spirit and rhythmic vitality of Punjab.

» **Jagatjit Palace in Kapurthala is inspired by the Palace of Versailles in France.**

» **Baisakhi,** Punjab's major festival, also marks the **founding of the Khalsa in 1699**.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Rajasthan

Tourism

Rajasthan, the largest state in India by area, lies in the northwestern part of the country and is known for its royal heritage, vibrant culture and striking landscapes. It is home to the vast Thar Desert and boasts magnificent forts, palaces and havelis that reflect the grandeur of Rajputana architecture. Rajasthan is famous for its colourful festivals, traditional folk music and dance, exquisite handicrafts and delicious cuisine. The state also has a strong spiritual side with ancient temples and religious sites. Wildlife sanctuaries like Ranthambore and Sariska offer glimpses of tigers and other native species. Despite its harsh climate, Rajasthan thrives on its deep-rooted traditions, hospitality and a proud historical legacy, making it a culturally rich and visually stunning destination in India.

Best Places to Visit

Rajasthan is a land of timeless charm, where golden deserts meet grand forts, palaces echo with history and vibrant traditions, folk music and colourful attire create an unforgettable cultural experience.

Nature Tourism

» **Mount Abu (Sirohi):** Rajasthan's only hill station, set amidst the Aravalli Hills, known for its cool climate, lush greenery and scenic viewpoints.

Key Activities: Boating at Nakki Lake; Trekking; Nature walks in Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary; Rock climbing

» **Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of India's finest bird sanctuaries, hosting thousands of migratory birds including Siberian cranes.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Cycling; Nature photography; Guided wildlife tours

» **Sariska Tiger Reserve (Alwar):** A forested reserve in the Aravallis, home to tigers, leopards and heritage ruins like Pandupol Temple and Kankwari Fort.

Key Activities: Wildlife safari; Nature trails; Fort visits; Birdwatching

» **Ranthambore National Park (Sawai Madhopur):** One of India's most famous tiger reserves, set against the backdrop of Ranthambore Fort and dotted with lakes and ruins.

Key Activities: Tiger safari; Wildlife photography; Birdwatching; Fort trekking

» **Desert National Park (Jaisalmer):** A unique ecosystem of sand dunes, fossils and rare desert wildlife like the Great Indian Bustard.

Key Activities: Desert safari; Fossil exploration; Birdwatching; Camel rides

Lesser-Known Attractions

Rajasthan's lesser-known attractions include quiet desert villages, hidden stepwells, ancient rock art sites, offbeat forts and remote tribal regions that reveal the state's deeper cultural layers and untamed natural beauty.

AJMER

» **Taragarh Fort:** Ancient hill fort with panoramic views, rugged hiking trails and historic ruins.

» **Adhai Din Ka Jhopra:** Amidst gardens, an Indo-Islamic architectural wonder with tranquil ambience.

» **Akbar's Palace & Museum:** Lesser-known Mughal-era residence-turned-museum showcasing regional heritage.

ALWAR

» **Siliserh Lake Palace:** Quaint lakeside retreat with boating and heritage-stay options.

» **Garbhaji Falls:** Monsoon waterfall nestled in Aravalli greenery-great for trekking and picnics.

» **Moosi Maharani Ki Chhatri:** Ornate lakeside cenotaph of royal lineage, serene and photogenic.

» **Tijara Fort-Palace:** 19th-century fortress converted into a heritage boutique hotel.

BANSWARA

» **Anand Sagar Lake:** Scenic artificial lake with royal chhatris and peacetime vibes.

» **Chacha Kota:** River-framed hill locale with a beach-like ambience at Mahi's bend.

BARAN

» **Shahabad Fort:** Hidden medieval fortress with moats and mysterious tunnels.

» **Baran Pockets (Jain Temples):** Quiet village with ancient temples set in rural landscapes.

BARMER

» **Kiradu Temples:** Solanki-era desert temples adorned with intricate stone carvings.

» **Siwana Fort & Juna Ruins:** Remote ruins offering rugged exploration in the desert.

» **Garh Temple & Chintamani Parasnath:** Ancient hill temples with Jain heritage.

» **Nakoda Jain Temple:** Serene pilgrimage center amidst desert backdrop.

BHARATPUR

» **Lohagarh Fort:** Well-preserved Jat-era stronghold with rich history.

» **Ganga Mandir, Deeg:** Elegant temple-palace with Mughal-style gardens and fountains.

» **Dungarpur-style Banke Bihari Temple:** Serene rural shrine with devotional flavour.

BHILWARA

» **Mandalgarh Fort:** Hilltop fort ideal for trekking and city panoramas.

» **Badnore Mahal:** Offbeat heritage palace with frescoed interiors.

» **Harni Mahadev Temple:** Quiet spiritual spots with botanical charm.

BIKANER

» **Gajner Palace Sanctuary:** Colonial-era lakeside retreat with wildlife.

» **Jasnath Temple (Katariyasar):** Rural shrine famed for firewalking rituals.

» **Bhandasar Temple & Rampuria Havelis:** Architectural gems in old Bikaner.

BUNDI

» **Stepwells (Raniji, Dabhai Kund):** Ornate baoris showcasing Bundi's water heritage.

» **Taragarh Fort & Sukh Mahal:** Hill fort and palace with frescoes, temples and views.

» **Bhimlat Falls:** Seasonal waterfall perfect for monsoon outings.

CHITTORGARH

» **Baroli Temple Complex:** 10th-Century Chambal-bank Pratihara temples.

» **Menal:** Mini-Khajuraho temple ruins with waterfall setting.

» **Gaj Laxmi Mandir:** Cliff-side temple complex in tranquil surroundings.

CHURU

» **Tal Chhapar Sanctuary:** Blackbuck-filled grasslands ideal for birding.

DAUSA

» **Abhaneri (Chand Baori & Harshat Mata Temple):** Iconic stepwell and ancient temple.

DHOLPUR

» **Machkund Temple & Lake:** Cliff-framed temple offering calm water vistas.

» **Tal Chhapar Blackbuck Sanctuary (Churu):** A lesser-known grassland sanctuary ideal for spotting blackbucks and migratory birds in a serene setting.

Key Activities: Wildlife viewing; Birdwatching; Photography

» **Bundi Hills and Waterfalls (Bundi):** A natural retreat with seasonal waterfalls like Bhimlat, surrounding hills and caves, ideal for monsoon tourism.

Key Activities: Waterfall visits; Hiking; Rock art exploration

» **Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary (Rajsamand):** Surrounding the majestic Kumbhalgarh Fort, this sanctuary is home to leopards, sloth bears and birds in rugged forest terrain.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; Birdwatching; Fort trekking

» **Banswara (Banswara):** Known as the "City of Hundred Islands," with rich greenery, lakes and tribal culture amidst hilly landscapes.

Key Activities: Boating in Mahi River; Nature walks; Tribal village tours

» **Jawai Leopard Hills (Pali):** A rising eco-tourism spot, known for leopard sightings among granite hills and harmonious coexistence with local communities.

Key Activities: Leopard safari; Village jeep tours; Birdwatching

Adventure Tourism

» **Jaisalmer:** Located in the heart of the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer offers a thrilling desert experience with golden sand dunes and cultural fusion.

Key Activities: Dune bashing; Camel safari; Quad biking; Parasailing; Desert camping

» **Pushkar (Ajmer):** A spiritual town with scenic desert surroundings, Pushkar is becoming a hub for soft adventure and thrill-seekers.

Key Activities: Hot air ballooning; Camel safari; ATV rides; Desert trekking

» **Udaipur:** Beyond its lakes and palaces, Udaipur offers adventure around the Aravalli hills and its many lakes.

Key Activities: Trekking; Cycling tours; Ziplining; Boating; Rope climbing (at nearby adventure parks)

» **Jodhpur:** Known as the Blue City, Jodhpur combines royal heritage with adventure in the desert and fort surroundings.

Key Activities: Flying fox zip lining at Mehrangarh Fort; Desert safari; Camel rides; Horse riding

» **Alwar:** A mix of natural beauty and history, Alwar offers thrilling activities in and around Sariska and nearby hills.

Key Activities: Jungle safari; Ziplining; Rock climbing; Fort exploration treks

» **Bikaner:** Ideal for desert adventure with less tourist crowd, offering a more raw and untouched dune experience.

Key Activities: Camel safari; Sand dune bashing; Jeep safari; Camping

» **Jawai (Pali):** An emerging hotspot for wildlife and eco-adventure, especially known for leopards living in open rocky hills.

Key Activities: Leopard safari; Hill trekking; Rural jeep safaris; Birdwatching

Heritage Tourism

» **Amber Fort (Jaipur):** A majestic hilltop fort built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh I, Amber Fort showcases Rajput-Mughal architecture with ornate halls, mirror work and scenic ramparts, offering a glimpse into Jaipur's royal past.

» **Bhainsrorgarh Wildlife Lodge:** Gateway for Chambal wildlife excursions.

DUNGARPUR

» **Badal Mahal & Deo Somnath Temple:** Hilltop royal structures by Gaib Sagar lake.

» **Galiakot Temple:** Quiet Jain pilgrimage amid tribal landscapes.

HANUMANGARH

» **Kalibangan Excavation Site:** Harappan ruins with ancient fire altars and village remains.

» **Nohar Stepwells:** Rustic heritage wells reflecting traditional architecture.

» **Gogaji temple** is a place of worship dedicated to Goga Ji, a folk deity revered by both Hindus and Muslims in parts of Rajasthan and Northern India

JAIPUR

» **Sambhar Salt Lake:** Vast salt bed perfect for winter birdwatching and flamingo spotting.

» **Nahargarh Sculpture Park:** Experimental modern art set within a fort.

» **Sambhar Heritage Circuit House:** Colonial-era architecture set in salt-lake surroundings.

JAISALMER

» **Lodhruva Ruins:** 10th-Century temple complex with desert archaeology.

» **Longewala:** Historic battlefield memorial from the 1971 war.

JALORE

» **Sundha Mata Temple:** 900-year-old hilltop shrine reached via ropeway.

» **Jalore Fort Ruins:** Rugged offbeat fortress with far-reaching views.

JHALAWAR

» **Kolvi Buddhist Caves:** Ancient rock-cut monasteries among woodland hills.

» **Jhalawar Garh Palace & Bhawani NatyaShala:** Historic palace and old auditorium.

JHUNJHUNU

» **Alsisar Mahal & Shekhawati Havelis:** Regal palaces with painted facades.

» **Mahansar Haveli:** Frescoed mansion with gold leaf artwork and heritage liquor.

» **Dundlod Fort:** Restored fortress with European-style interiors.

» **Stepwells** are traditional Indian architectural features, specifically subterranean water reservoirs, known locally as "baolis" or "bawdis," built to access water during arid seasons.

JODHPUR

» **Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park:** Arid flora restoration park near Mehrangarh.

» **Osian Temples:** 8th - 12th centuries Hindu-Jain desert temples.

» **Mandore Gardens:** Historic cenotaph gardens of Marwar rulers.

KARAULI

» **Timangarh Fort Ruins:** Expansive deserted fort with legend-filled stones.

» **Kailadevi & Madan Mohan Temples:** Offbeat rural shrines with local devotion.

KOTA

» **Garadia Mahadev Temple:** Cliff-top deity site with spectacular river views.

» **Chambal Gardens & Eco Lakes:** Green oasis beside wildlife streams.

NAGAUR

» **Khuri Village:** Desert hamlet known for sand-dune camping and folk nights.

» **Nagaur Fort & Cattle Fair:** Historic stronghold and vibrant rural fair tradition.

» **Khimsar Fort, Khinvsar:** Desert fort-turned-hotel with dunes nearby.

» **Ladnu & Jain Temples:** Hidden spiritual temples off tourist radar.

PALI

» **Jawai Leopard Hills:** Granite hills famed for leopard sightings and guided safaris.

» **Rawla Jojawar & Bangur Museum:** Palace heritage and local archaeology displays.

» **Parshuram Mahadev Temple:** Ancient cave-temple tucked in Aravalli foothills.

» **Ghanerao & Fort:** Hidden fort-hotel and Kumbhalgarh sanctuary gateway.

RAJSAMAND

» **Haldi Ghati:** Historic battlefield with museum at scenic gorge.

» **Mehrangarh Fort (Jodhpur):** Towering 400 feet above Jodhpur, this 15th-century fort built by Rao Jodha is one of India's largest, with well-preserved palaces, museums and panoramic views, narrating the glory of the Marwar dynasty.

» **Chittorgarh Fort (Chittorgarh):** Symbol of Rajput valour and sacrifice, this 7th-century fort was once the capital of Mewar and witnessed legendary sieges, including those involving Queen Padmini and Maharana Pratap, making it a powerful historical landmark.

» **Kumbhalgarh Fort (Rajsamand):** Built by Rana Kumbha in the 15th century, this fortress has the second-longest wall in the world and served as a safe haven during wars, including being the birthplace of Maharana Pratap, reflecting Mewar's resilience.

» **Jaisalmer Fort (Jaisalmer):** Also known as the "Golden Fort," this 12th-century marvel built by Rawal Jaisal is a living fort with shops and homes, representing the fusion of defense and desert trade routes at the edge of the Thar Desert.

» **City Palace (Udaipur):** Overlooking Lake Pichola, this 16th-century palace complex built by Maharana Udai Singh II is a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal styles, serving as the seat of Mewar royalty and now a vibrant museum.

» **Junagarh Fort (Bikaner):** Unlike many forts, Junagarh wasn't built on a hill but boasts a formidable defense with richly decorated palaces, constructed by Raja Rai Singh in the late 16th century during Akbar's reign, reflecting cultural exchange.

» **Hawa Mahal (Jaipur):** Built in 1799 by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh, this iconic five-story façade with 953 windows allowed

royal women to observe street life while maintaining purdah, representing Jaipur's architectural ingenuity.

» **Ranthambore Fort (Sawai Madhopur):** Located within Ranthambore National Park, this 10th-century fort played a strategic role in defending the region against Delhi Sultanate invasions and remains a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Hill Forts of Rajasthan.

» **Gagron Fort (Jhalawar):** Surrounded by water on three sides and forest on the fourth, Gagron is one of the few "Jal-Durgs" (water forts) and it witnessed battles involving the Malwa and Mughal rulers, now a peaceful UNESCO heritage site.

» **Bhangarh Fort (Alwar):** Known for its eerie legends and abandoned ruins, this 17th-century fort built by Raja Madho Singh is a mix of myth and history, attracting tourists with its mysterious charm and medieval architecture.

» **Bundi Palace (Bundi):** Famed for its stunning murals and less-commercialised appeal, this 17th-century palace built by Rao Raja Ratan Singh offers a rich glimpse into Hadoti architecture and royal lifestyle amidst the Aravalli backdrop.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Brahma Temple (Ajmer District – Pushkar):** One of the very few temples in the world dedicated to Lord Brahma, this sacred site in Pushkar holds immense importance for Hindus and is located beside the holy Pushkar Lake, where pilgrims perform rituals and take holy dips.

» **Ajmer Sharif Dargah (Ajmer):** The tomb of Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, this revered dargah draws millions of devotees from all religions who seek blessings and spiritual solace, making it a

SALUMBER

» **Jaisamand Lake & Marble Chhatris:** Vast Lake with opulent cenotaphs by tribal villages.

SAWAI MADHOPUR

» **Khandar Fort:** Medieval fort perched at Ranthambore's edge.

SIKAR

» **Harshnath Temple Ruins:** Hilltop shrine dating back to 11th century.

» **Shekhawati Havelis (Dundlod, Fatehpur):** Frescoed mansions off main circuit.

» **Devgarh Fort:** Remote forested fort perfect for exploration.

SIROHI

» **Vasantgarh Ruins:** Quiet old temple site with village ambience.

» **Ramgarh Hill Fort:** Offbeat trekking trail to a scenic fortress.

SRI GANGANAGAR

» **Gauri Shankar Temple & Fort Rajwada:** Historic temples and palace complex.

TONK

» **Sunehri Kothi:** Golden-mirror palace hidden in old Tonk lanes.

UDAIPUR

» **Ahar Cenotaphs:** Less-known royal memorials in Udaipur outskirts.

» **Shilpgram Crafts Village:** Folk-crafts hub with live artisans near safari routes.

symbol of communal harmony and faith.

» **Karni Mata Temple (Bikaner District – Deshnoke):** Famous as the "Rat Temple," this unique shrine honours Karni Mata, considered an incarnation of Goddess Durga, where thousands of sacred rats are believed to be her devotees and are treated with reverence.

» **Dilwara Jain Temples (Sirohi District – Mount Abu):** Renowned for their exquisite marble carvings, these 11th–13th century temples are sacred to the Jain community and dedicated to various Tirthankaras, offering both spiritual peace and architectural splendour.

» **Eklingji Temple (Udaipur):** Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Eklingji is the family deity of the Mewar rulers and a major Shaivite pilgrimage site known for its stunning architecture and spiritual aura, especially during Shivratri.

» **Govind Dev Ji Temple (Jaipur):** Located in the City Palace complex, this temple is dedicated to Lord Krishna and is one of the most important Vaishnavite shrines in Rajasthan, known for its daily aartis and festive celebrations.

» **Ranakpur Jain Temple (Pali):** This stunning marble temple dedicated to Tirthankara Adinath is a spiritual haven for Jains and a masterpiece of intricate architecture, symbolising purity and devotion amidst the Aravalli hills.

» **Mehandipur Balaji Temple (Dausa):** Dedicated to Lord Hanuman, this temple is believed to have divine powers to exorcise evil spirits, drawing devotees seeking spiritual healing and protection through intense rituals.

» **Shila Devi Temple (Jaipur District – Amber Fort):** Located within Amber Fort, this temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga in her Shila Devi form, brought from Jessore (Bangladesh) and worshipped by the Kachwaha rulers, especially during Navratri.

» **Parshuram Mahadev Temple (Rajsamand):** Built inside a cave in the Aravalli hills, this sacred site dedicated to Lord Shiva is linked to sage Parshuram, attracting pilgrims and trekkers alike for its divine and natural setting.

» **Khatu Shyamji Temple (Sikar):** Dedicated to Barbarik, believed to be an incarnation of Lord Krishna, this vibrant temple is a major pilgrimage site especially during the annual Phalgun Mela, drawing lakhs of devotees.

» **Tanot Mata Temple (Jaisalmer):** Located near the Indo-Pak border, this temple is revered by soldiers and civilians alike, believed to have miraculously protected the region from bombs during the 1965 and 1971 wars.

Culture and Cuisines

Rajasthan's culture is known for its royal heritage, colourful folk traditions, grand festivals and majestic art forms. Its cuisine is rich and spicy, featuring dishes like dal baati churma, gatte ki sabzi and laal maas, shaped by arid desert conditions.

Culture

» **Desert Festival (Jaisalmer):** Celebration of desert life and Rajasthani culture under the golden sands in the month of February every year where camel polo, turban tying, puppet shows and folk competitions are the main attractions.

» **Pushkar Camel Fair (Pushkar, Ajmer):** Held in October–November during Kartik Purnima, this iconic fair blends religious pilgrimage with a vibrant camel and livestock market, featuring camel races, rural games, local crafts and spiritual rituals at Pushkar Lake.

» **Gangaur Festival (Jaipur & Statewide):** Celebrated by women in the months of March–April to honour Goddess Gauri, symbolising marital bliss and prosperity. The festival features decorated idols, traditional processions, folk dances and women adorned in vibrant attire.

» **Teej Festival (Jaipur & across Rajasthan):** Monsoon festival observed in July–August, dedicated to Goddess Parvati, where women participate in swing rituals, mehndi ceremonies, traditional songs and festive processions.

» **Mewar Festival (Udaipur):** Held in March–April, this festival marks the arrival of spring and showcases the rich culture of Mewar through folk dances, decorated boats on Lake Pichola and vibrant local processions.

» **Kailadevi Yatra (Karauli):** A major religious pilgrimage in March–April (Chaitra Navratri), where lakhs of devotees undertake a barefoot journey to the Kailadevi Temple, marked by devotional songs, group chants and folk rituals.

» **Ramdevra Fair (Jaisalmer):** Held in August-September, this Yatra honours Baba Ramdevji, a folk deity revered by all communities, drawing pilgrims from across India. It features spiritual songs, decorated camps and communal harmony.

» **Nagaur Cattle Fair (Nagaur):** Organised in January–February, this is a traditional fair where thousands of cattle are traded, along with tug-of-

war competitions, folk music and bustling spice markets, reflecting the region's agrarian lifestyle.

» **Baneshwar Fair (Dungarpur):** Celebrated in February, this tribal fair is centered around Lord Shiva and sees a gathering of Bhils from nearby states. The fair is known for its tribal rituals, devotional songs and cultural performances.

» **Brij Holi (Bharatpur):** Held before Holi in March, this unique celebration in the Brij region of Bharatpur reenacts tales of Lord Krishna with raslila performances, colours and devotional fervour, attracting spiritual and cultural tourists.

» **Marwar Festival (Jodhpur):** Dedicated to Rajput heroes, this festival takes place in October and features folk music, camel tattoo shows, traditional sports and celebrations against the majestic backdrop of Mehrangarh Fort.

Cuisines

» **Dal Baati Churma:** A signature Rajasthani dish featuring baked wheat flour balls (baati), served with spiced lentils (dal) and a sweet crumble of wheat, ghee and jaggery (churma). Symbol of royal and warrior hospitality; traditionally cooked over wood fire by Rajput soldiers. A must-try for every visitor.

» **Laal Maas:** A fiery mutton curry made with mathania red chillies and yogurt. A royal dish from the kitchens of the Rajput warriors, it reflects Rajasthan's bold flavours and meat-loving heritage.

» **Gatte ki Sabzi:** Gram flour (besan) dumplings cooked in a tangy yogurt-based curry. A popular vegetarian delicacy, showcasing how locals creatively use pantry staples in the arid desert climate.

» **Ker Sangri:** A traditional Rajasthani dish made from dried ker berries and sangri beans, sautéed with spices and dried mango. A survival food turned delicacy, unique to Rajasthan's desert geography and now served in luxury hotels and traditional thalis.

» **Mohan Maas:** Mildly spiced meat dish cooked in milk, cream and aromatic spices. A royal Mughal-influenced preparation, highlighting the fusion of richness and subtlety in Rajasthani non-veg cuisine.

» **Bajre ki Roti with Lahsun Chutney:** Pearl millet flatbread served with a fiery garlic chutney. A staple of rural Rajasthan, it reflects the simplicity, nutrition and spice of desert life.

» **Rajasthani Kadhi:** Spiced yogurt-based curry, often served with pakoras and rice or roti. Unlike other Indian kadhi, Rajasthani kadhi is spicier and reflects the state's love for tangy, warming comfort food.

» **Pyaaz Kachori (Jodhpur & Jaipur):** Flaky deep-fried snack stuffed with spiced onion filling. A popular street food that offers tourists a delicious glimpse into Rajasthan's vibrant snack culture.

» **Mirchi Vada:** Large green chillies stuffed with potato masala, dipped in gram flour batter and deep-fried. Another spicy street delight from Jodhpur, perfect for thrill-seeking foodies.

» **Ghewar (Jaipur & across Rajasthan):** Disc-shaped honeycomb dessert made from flour, ghee and soaked in sugar syrup; often topped with malai. Traditionally associated with Teej and Raksha Bandhan, it's a festive delicacy known for its unique texture.

» **Mawa Kachori (Jodhpur):** Deep-fried kachori stuffed with sweetened khoya and dry fruits, dipped in sugar syrup. A dessert innovation that blends texture and richness-perfect for gifting and festive occasions.

» **Balushahi:** Crispy flour-based sweet dunked in sugar syrup. A royal sweet often offered at weddings and temple rituals.

» **Churma Ladoo:** Sweet balls made from wheat flour, jaggery, ghee and dry fruits. Often paired with dal baati and served during religious events and festivals.

» **Moong Dal Halwa:** Rich dessert made from yellow lentils, ghee, sugar and cardamom. A winter delicacy served at weddings and celebrations for its warmth and richness.

» **Masala Chhaach (Spiced Buttermilk):** Cooling drink made with yogurt, salt, cumin and coriander. A refreshing must-have in Rajasthan's heat, often served with meals for digestion.

» **Kesar Lassi (Jaipur, Udaipur):** Sweetened yogurt drink infused with saffron and dry fruits. A luxurious and cooling beverage symbolising royal hospitality.

Textile and Handicrafts

Rajasthan is renowned for its vibrant textiles like Bandhani, Leheriya and block prints, reflecting its rich artistic heritage. Its handicrafts include blue pottery, marble carvings and intricately designed puppets, showcasing the region's traditional craftsmanship and royal legacy.

» **Bandhani (Tie & Dye):** A traditional textile art involving intricate tying and dyeing of fabric in vibrant patterns.

Key Areas: Jaipur; Jodhpur; Udaipur; Sikar; Bhilwara

» **Block Printing:** Hand-carved wooden blocks are used to stamp colourful motifs onto fabrics.

Key Areas: Sanganer; Bagru; Barmer; Jodhpur; Jaipur

» **Blue Pottery:** A Persian-influenced craft known for its bright cobalt blue dye and glazed ceramic work.

Key Areas: Jaipur; Sanganer; Neota

» **Leheriya:** A textile pattern created through resist dyeing in diagonal wave-like stripes.

Key Areas: Jaipur; Udaipur; Jodhpur; Nathdwara

» **Zari & Zardozi Embroidery:** Intricate metallic thread embroidery traditionally used on royal garments and bridal wear.

Key Areas: Jaipur; Udaipur; Ajmer; Kota

» **Kota Doria:** A lightweight cotton and silk weave known for its transparency and checkered patterns.

Key Areas: Kota; Kaithun

» **Mojari (Rajasthani Footwear):** Handcrafted leather footwear often embroidered or embellished with traditional designs.

Key Areas: Jaipur; Jodhpur; Barmer; Bikaner

» **Meenakari:** A jewellery-making craft involving coloured enamel work on gold or silver.
Key Areas: Jaipur; Pratapgarh; Nathdwara

» **Lac Bangles:** Vibrant and glossy bangles made using resin (lac) and decorated with stones or mirrors.
Key Areas: Jaipur; Jodhpur; Bikaner; Udaipur

» **Pichwai & Phad Painting:** Traditional cloth- based paintings depicting mythological stories, often used as temple backdrops.
Key Areas: Nathdwara (Pichwai); Bhilwara (Phad); Shahpura

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **August to April** (Cooler, pleasant weather-ideal for forts, cities, desert experiences and outdoor sightseeing.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to July** (Hotter days; fewer crowds-better suited for early-morning sightseeing and hill escape at Mount Abu. Intermittent rains; landscapes turn greener in some regions-travel remains possible, but keep buffer time for weather-related disruptions.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Udaipur, often called the 'Venice of the East',** mesmerizes visitors with its lakes, palaces and romantic ambiance nestled in the Aravalli hills.

» **Pushkar** is home to the Brahma Temple and transforms into a vibrant cultural and spiritual hub during the annual Pushkar Fair. Rajasthan Tourism describes it as the **only existing temple dedicated to Lord Brahma.**

» **Kumbhalgarh Fort** wall stretches about 36 km and is often cited as the **second-longest continuous wall after the Great Wall of China.**

» The **Pushkar Camel Fair** is one of the **world's largest camel and livestock fairs,** blending pilgrimage with folk culture, rural games and handicraft markets.

» **Mount Abu, Rajasthan's only hill station,** offers cool weather, stunning viewpoints, Nakki Lake and the intricately carved Dilwara Jain Temples.

» Jaipur was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2019 **known for its pink sandstone architecture, royal heritage and vibrant bazaars**.

» **Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur** is among India's **largest forts and is a popular site for film shoots.**

» **Chand Baori** in Abhaneri is one of the **world's deepest and most intricately designed stepwells,** showcasing ancient water harvesting architecture.

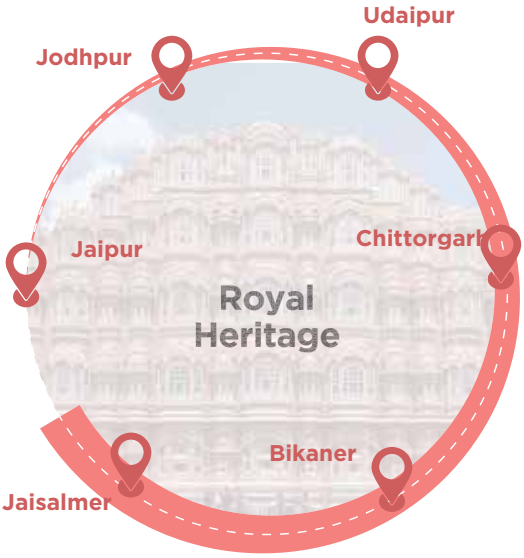
» The **Karni Mata Temple** in Bikaner is famous for its **thousands of freely roaming rats,** which are revered and protected as sacred.

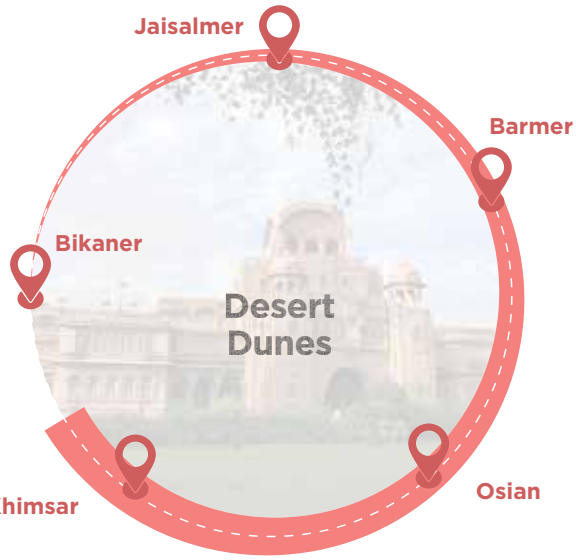
» The **Thar Desert offers one of Asia's best desert safari experiences,** complete with camel rides, sand dunes, folk dances and starlit camping.

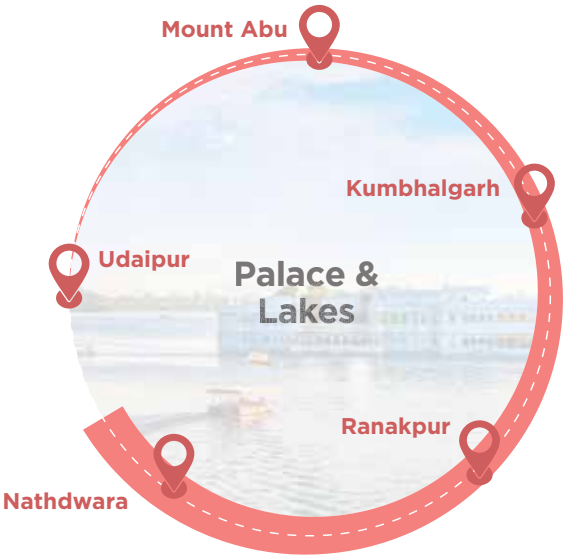
» A traditional **Jaipuri quilt (razai)** is remarkably lightweight-often weighing **less than 1 kg-yet it provides exceptional warmth** even in freezing winters, thanks to its fine cotton filling and expert hand-quilting.

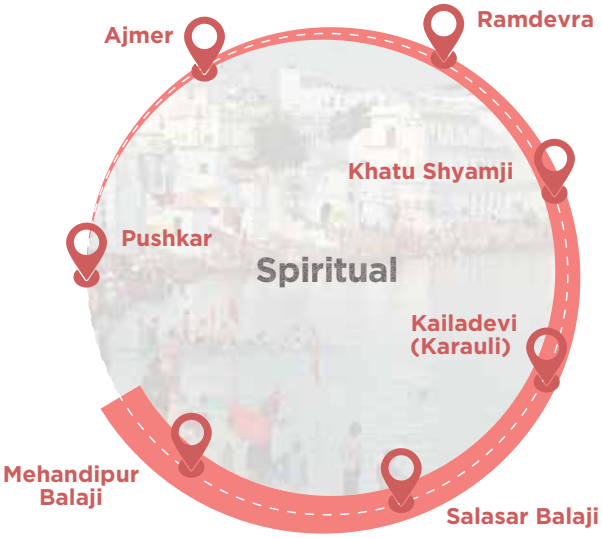
» Jaipur's iconic **Blue Pottery** is one of the rare forms of pottery in India that **uses no clay;** instead, it is crafted using a unique mix of quartz, glass and natural minerals, giving it a smooth finish and vibrant appeal.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS









Sikkim

Tourism

Sikkim is a land of towering peaks, winding mountain passes and deep spiritual calm. Though one of India's smallest states, it offers a rich blend of alpine beauty, Buddhist heritage and vibrant local cultures. From the snow-clad majesty of Mount Kanchenjunga to the fluttering prayer flags of centuries-old monasteries, Sikkim enchants every kind of traveller. The state is known for its clean towns, organic farming, peaceful communities and pristine lakes and forests. Whether you're trekking through rhododendron valleys, sipping butter tea in a monastery courtyard, or soaking in the views from a mountain pass, Sikkim is a place where nature and serenity meet at every turn.

Best Places to Visit

Sikkim is dotted with hill towns, holy lakes and hidden valleys that offer stunning views and soulful experiences. From spiritual centres to scenic escapes, each destination reveals a different shade of the Himalayas.

Nature Tourism

» **Borong (Namchi):** A peaceful village famed for its hot springs, pine forests and mountain views in the southern Himalayas.

Key Activities: Nature walks; Birdwatching; Visit Borong Hot Springs

» **Khangchendzonga National Park:** UNESCO World Heritage (Mixed) site (inscribed 2016), known for glaciers, forests and the Khangchendzonga (Kangchenjunga) landscape.

Key Activities: Trekking; Wildlife spotting; Explore Dzongri and Goechala trails

» **Khecheopalri Lake (West Sikkim):** A sacred, wish-fulfilling lake revered by Buddhists and Hindus for its serene natural beauty.

Key Activities: Nature meditation; Visit nearby monasteries; Birdwatching

» **Nathula Pass (East Sikkim):** A high-altitude border post on the historic Silk Route offering sweeping views of snow-covered terrain.

Key Activities: Drive along Silk Route; View Indo-China border post; Visit war memorial

» **Tashi View Point (Gangtok):** A scenic sunrise spot offering breathtaking views of the Kanchenjunga range and surrounding valleys.

Key Activities: Photography; Watch sunrise over Kanchenjunga; Visit nearby Ganesh Tok

» **Himalayan Zoological Park (Gangtok):** Sikkim's open-air zoo, home to red pandas, snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife.

Lesser-Known Attractions

Sikkim is a land of soaring peaks, sacred valleys and vibrant culture. While its iconic destinations draw many, the state also harbours lesser-known gems that offer serene, immersive and unique travel experiences.

GANGTOK

» **Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary & Tinjurey Trek:** A serene forest sanctuary near Gangtok offering birdwatching and panoramic Kanchenjunga views from Tinjurey.

NAMCHI

» **Tarey Bhir Cliff Walk:** A dramatic ridge-top walkway near Sadam village with sweeping views of the Himalayas and deep valleys.

» **Chalamthang Village:** An organic model village with orange orchards, forest trails and sustainable farm stay experiences.

» **Temi Tea Garden & Cherry Blossom Festival:** Sikkim's only tea estate, blooming with cherry blossoms and cultural festivities each November.

» **Ralang Monastery & Kagyed Festival:** A vibrant monastic centre hosting masked Cham dances and rituals before the New Year.

SORENG

» **Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary:** A springtime floral haven accessible via Hilley, known for rhododendron blooms and peaceful Kanchenjunga treks.

PAKYONG

» **Zuluk & Old Silk Route:** A high-altitude village along 32 hairpin bends with historic trade route charm, seasonal snow and wildflower vistas.

» **Rolep Riverside Hamlet:** A tranquil riverside village with waterfalls, angling and cultural diversity - perfect for slow travel.

MANGAN

» **Singhik & Jhandi Viewpoint:** A quiet spot offering some of the finest natural views of Mt. Kanchenjunga and the Teesta valley.

» **Dzongu Valley Homestays:** A secluded Lepcha region offering eco-homestays, spiritual quietude and immersive nature walks.

» **Green Lake Trek:** A remote alpine trek to Mt. Kanchenjunga's base via Zemu Glacier, known for sacred landscapes and solitude.

» **Tholung Monastery Trek:** A spiritual trail through Dzongu leading to a historic monastery housing rare Buddhist relic.

GYALSHING

» **Yuksom & Norbugang Throne:** The historic cradle of Sikkim's monarchy, home to spiritual sites, forest trails and Dubdi Monastery.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting; Leisure walks; Educational exhibit

» **Tsomgo Lake (Gangtok):** A glacial lake that transforms with the seasons-frozen in winter and blooming in summer.

Key Activities: Yak rides; Scenic photography; Enjoy seasonal snowfalls

» **Chungthang (Mangan):** A scenic riverside town rich in Buddhist lore and natural greenery, en route to North Sikkim.

Key Activities: Visit local monasteries; Scenic drive stopover; Explore local folklore

» **Gurudongmar Lake (Mangan):** One of the world's highest lakes, sacred to Buddhists and Sikhs, known for its surreal high-altitude setting.

Key Activities: Visit sacred lake; Photography; Experience high-altitude landscape

» **Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary (Mangan):** A springtime floral haven famed for blooming rhododendrons and alpine trekking.

Key Activities: Trekking during bloom season; Nature walks; Photography

» **Seven Sisters Waterfalls (Mangan):** A stunning multi-tiered waterfall along the highway, perfect for roadside sightseeing and picnics.

Key Activities: Scenic photography; Picnic stop; Roadside sightseeing

Adventure Tourism

» **Bakthang Falls (Gangtok):** A scenic waterfall turned ziplining hotspot, offering thrilling rides through forest canopies.

Key Activities: Ziplining; Nature Walk; Scenic photography

» **Tashi View Point Adventure Park (Gangtok):** A family-friendly aerial adventure zone with tree-top rope courses and zip treks.

Key Activities: Tree-top obstacle courses; High rope walks; Zip trek

» **Goechala Trek (Gyalshing):** Sikkim's iconic high-altitude trek with stunning views of Kanchenjunga and 14 other Himalayan peaks.

Key Activities: High-altitude trekking; Photography; Camping in alpine terrain

» **Frey Peak (West Sikkim):** A technical 5,830 m climb inside Kanchenjunga Park, ideal for experienced mountaineers.

Key Activities: Technical peak climbing; Glacier traverse; Mountain camping

» **Mount Jopuno (West Sikkim):** A challenging 5,603 m ascent visible from the Goechala trail, popular among serious climbers.

Key Activities: Mountaineering; Base camp camping; Scenic glacier viewing

» **Mount Brumkhangse (Mangan):** A remote and rugged peak accessed through Lachung Valley, perfect for solitary alpine trekking.

Key Activities: Isolated Mountain trek; Wildlife spotting; Peak ascent

» **Mount Thinchenkhang (West Sikkim):** A mountaineering peak offering dramatic views of lakes, snowfields and distant summits.

Key Activities: Mountaineering; Lake viewing; Ridge climbing

» **Dzongri Trek & Lake (Yuksom):** A panoramic trek through alpine meadows and forests, peaking at 4,200 m with breathtaking sunrise views.

Key Activities: Multi-day trek; Yak rides; Sunrise photography

Key Activities: Multi-day trek; Yak rides; Sunrise photography

» **Tsomgo Lake (East Sikkim):** A glacial adventure base where visitors can enjoy snow activities and yak rides in a stunning setting.

Key Activities: Yak rides; Snow activities; Scenic strolls

» **Bulbuley Dara (East Sikkim):** Sikkim's paragliding site offering valley glides and training above Reshithang village.

Key Activities: Paragliding; Aerial photography; Glide training

Heritage Tourism

» **Dubdi Monastery (Yuksom):** Sikkim's oldest monastery (1701), set in forested solitude, ideal for peaceful hikes and spiritual exploration.

» **Rabdentse Ruins (Gyalshing):** The mossy remains of Sikkim's former capital, offering panoramic views and rich historical ambience.

» **Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (Gangtok):** A cultural gem preserving Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts, relics and thangka art.

» **Baba Harbhajan Singh Memorial (Pakyong):** A temple honouring a legendary soldier-spirit, revered for guarding the Indo-China border.

» **Singhik Viewpoint (Mangan):** A serene spot offering unmatched views of Kanchenjunga and the Teesta Valley, perfect for photography and reflection.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Enchey Monastery (Gangtok):** Enchey Monastery (Gangtok): a historic Nyingma monastery, known for religious ceremonies and annual festivals.

» **Tashiding Monastery (Gyalshing):** Considered among Sikkim's holiest sites; devotees associate it with purification rituals. .

» **Pemayangtse Monastery (Gyalshing):** A major monastery known for murals and the intricate "Zangdok Palri" sculpture.

» **Do Drul Chorten (Gangtok):** A revered stupa encircled by 108 prayer wheels, known for its spiritual calm and prayer ceremonies.

» **Lingdum Monastery (Ranka):** A visually striking monastery known for its murals, golden spires and peaceful courtyards.

» **Phodong Monastery (Mangan):** A Kagyu sect monastery from the 18th century, noted for Cham dances and colourful murals.

» **Rinchenpong Monastery (Gyalshing):** The monastery in Sikkim, housing a rare Yab-Yum statue of Ati Buddha.

» **Siddheshwar Dham / Char Dham (Namchi):** A grand pilgrimage complex featuring Char Dham replicas and a giant Shiva statue.

» **Lachen Monastery (Mangan):** A peaceful hilltop Nyingma gompa offering spiritual calm and snowy mountain vistas.

» **Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre (Gangtok):** A major monastic centre in Sikkim, known for its architecture, rituals and Buddhist learning

» **Pal Zurmang Kagyud Monastery (Gangtok):** A serene centre of the Kagyud lineage offering spiritual retreats and rituals.

» **Shweta Tok (Gangtok):** A peaceful Ganesh temple atop a hill offering calm walks and views of Gangtok's skyline.

» **Hanuman Tok (Gangtok):** A tranquil temple run by the Indian Army, known for divine serenity and panoramic views.

» **Sa-Ngor Monastery (Gangtok):** A lesser-known Sakya monastery focused on discipline, meditation and deep Buddhist study.

Culture and Cuisines

Sikkim offers a vibrant blend of Buddhist heritage, colourful festivals and traditional dances, complemented by unique Himalayan cuisine featuring momos, thukpa, fermented foods and local millet-based dishes that delight cultural and culinary explorers alike.

Culture

» **Tendong Lho Rum Faat (Namchi):** Celebrated on 8th August, this Lepcha festival honours Tendong Hill with prayers, stories and rituals symbolising protection from a mythical flood.

» **Pang Lhabsol (Across Sikkim):** Held annually (typically Aug–Sep; dates vary as per traditional calendar), this unique Sikkimese festival pays homage to Mt. Khangchendzonga through Cham dances and warrior rituals promoting unity and spiritual guardianship.

» **Temi Tea Autumn Festival (Namchi):** A serene cultural retreat in November celebrating Sikkim's tea heritage and cherry blossoms

with music, cuisine and plantation walks.

» **Kagyed Dance Festival (Gangtok):** A December monastery festival where monks perform masked Cham dances to dispel evil and welcome New Year prosperity.

» **Namsoong Festival (Dzongu, Mangan):** A Lepcha New Year celebration in late December marked by ethnic food, games and rituals that reaffirm tribal unity.

» **Pelling Winter Tourism Festival (Gyalshing):** A scenic December fest with food stalls, cultural shows and crafts set against snow-capped Himalayan views.

» **Sonam Lochar (Across Sikkim):** The Tamang community's New Year celebration held in Jan–Feb, featuring traditional attire, prayers and festive feasting.

» **Bumchu Festival (Tashiding, Gyalshing):** Celebrated in Feb-Mar at Tashiding Monastery, monks open a sacred water vessel to forecast the year's fortune, drawing thousands of devotees.

Cuisines

» **Gundruk:** Fermented leafy greens (usually mustard or radish leaves) dried and used in soups or side dishes. A staple in rural Sikkimese homes, especially among the Nepali community.

» **Sinki:** Fermented radish taproot, prepared like gundruk but with a distinct flavour; often cooked into stews.

» **Phagshapa:** A Bhutia delicacy made from pork fat strips stewed with dried chilies and radish.

» **Sel Roti:** Though found in neighbouring regions too, this fermented rice bread is a ceremonial food in Sikkimese Nepali culture.

» **Kinema Curry:** Fermented soybean dish with a pungent aroma, eaten with rice and chilies. Very popular among Nepali-origin communities.

» **Chhurpi Soup:** Made using yak cheese (chhurpi), this warm broth is a mountain staple. Both soft and hard versions are used in different dishes.

» **Ningro with Chhurpi:** Fiddlehead fern stir-fried with local yak cheese – a truly Sikkimese forest-foraged dish.

» **Khapse:** Deep-fried twisted dough snacks, especially made during Losar (Tibetan New Year) by Bhutia and Lepcha families.

» **Bamboo Shoot Curry (Tama Curry:** Made with young bamboo shoots, potatoes and sometimes fermented soybean or pork - a classic Lepcha dish.

» **Thenthuk:** Though Tibetan in origin, the hand-pulled noodle soup has taken on a unique Sikkimese flavour in mountain kitchens.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Sikkim's handicrafts and textiles are a vibrant expression of its ethnic diversity, spiritual heritage and deep-rooted Himalayan traditions. From the intricate weaves of the Lepcha community to the vivid Buddhist Thangka paintings and finely carved wooden altars of its monasteries, every craft tells a story of skill passed down through generations.

» **Lepcha Weaving (Thara):** A textile tradition of the Lepcha community, using backstrap looms to create patterns for traditional garments like Dumpra and Dumdem. Designs often reflect natural elements and tribal motifs.

Key Areas: Dzongu; North Sikkim

» **Handwoven Woollen Carpets:** Traditionally woven by the Bhutias, these carpets feature vibrant hues and symbolic Tibetan-Buddhist motifs such as dragons and lotus flowers.

Key Areas: Tashiling Handicraft Centre (Gangtok); Namchi

» **Thangka Paintings:** Elaborate scroll paintings on cotton or silk, portraying deities, mandalas and Buddhist teachings.

Key Areas: Gangtok; Gyalshing

» **Wood Carving:** A rich tradition evident in monastery altars, wall panels and household furniture. Common motifs include dragons, clouds and auspicious Buddhist symbols.

Key Areas: Gangtok; Gyalshing

» **Traditional Chaam Masks:** Intricately handcrafted masks used in religious masked dances during Buddhist festivals like Pang Lhabsol and Kagyed. Made from wood or papier-mâché and painted in vivid colours.

Key Areas: Gangtok; Gyalshing

» **Bamboo and Cane Work:** Artisans create baskets, stools, mats and utility items from local bamboo and cane, combining strength with aesthetic appeal.

Key Areas: South Sikkim; rural craft clusters around Namchi

» **Lokta Handmade Paper Craft:** Made from the inner bark of the Lokta shrub, this traditional paper is used for manuscripts, eco-friendly stationery and decorative crafts.

Key Areas: Monastic communities around Gangtok; West Sikkim

Best Time to Visit

Peak Season

» **March to June** (Spring weather; rhododendron season in many areas- spring blooms; clear days for sightseeing and lower-elevation hikes)

» **October to mid December** (Clear skies; festivals; trekking-friendly, ideal for views, sightseeing and trekking-permits/road status permitting)

Non-Peak Season

» **August to September** (Rainfall and landslides possible; plan buffers.)

» **Late December to February** (Very cold; high-altitude road closures possible, especially toward North Sikkim.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Sikkim is India's first and only fully organic state,** (declared in 2016), with all its farmland certified organic, making it a haven for eco-conscious travelers.

» **The state boasts of over 100 monasteries,** earning it the nickname "Land of Monasteries," reflecting its deep-rooted Buddhist heritage.

» **Home to the world's third-highest peak, Kanchenjunga,** Sikkim offers breathtaking views and trekking opportunities around this sacred mountain.

» **Pakyong Airport, perched at 4,646 feet,** is one of India's highest airports and is renowned for its stunning architecture amidst the Himalayas.

» **The Chenrezig statue in Pelling stands at 137 feet,** accompanied by glass skywalk, offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

» **Sikkim is home to over 500 species of birds,** including the vibrant Blood Pheasant, the state's official bird, making it a paradise for birdwatchers.

» **Gurudongmar Lake, situated at 17,800 feet,** is one of the highest lakes in the world and holds spiritual significance for both Buddhists and Sikhs.

» **Sikkim shares its borders with three countries** - Nepal, Bhutan and China - making it a unique confluence of diverse cultures and traditions.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Tamil Nadu

Tourism

Tamil Nadu, located in the southernmost part of India, is a land of timeless culture, majestic temples, serene beaches and lush landscapes. It offers a diverse range of experiences for all kinds of travelers-from spiritual seekers and history lovers to nature enthusiasts and adventure enthusiasts.. With its vibrant Dravidian heritage, classical arts, unique cuisine and world-famous temple architecture, Tamil Nadu showcases a harmonious blend of tradition and natural beauty. Whether it's exploring the misty hills of the Nilgiris, wandering through centuries-old temple towns, or enjoying the coastal charm of places like Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu promises a travel experience that is both enriching and unforgettable.

Best Places to Visit

Tamil Nadu boasts majestic Dravidian-style temples, serene hill stations and vibrant coastal towns, offering a rich mix of heritage, nature and spirituality.

Nature Tourism

» **Ooty (The Nilgiris):** Often called the 'Queen of Hill Stations', Ooty is nestled in the Nilgiri Hills and known for its tea gardens, rolling hills and misty landscapes. This serene retreat is perfect for those looking to unwind in nature's lap.

Key Activities: Enjoy scenic toy train rides; visit botanical gardens; take leisurely walks around Ooty Lake

» **Mudumalai National Park (The Nilgiris):** One of Tamil Nadu's finest wildlife sanctuaries, this park is home to tigers, elephants and a rich variety of birds. It's part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and a hotspot for eco-tourism.

Key Activities: Experience wildlife safaris; birdwatching; forest photography

» **Kodaikanal (Dindigul):** Perched in the Palani Hills, Kodaikanal is famous for its cool climate, waterfalls and wooded slopes. It's a great destination for honeymooners and nature lovers.

Key Activities: Take boat rides on Kodaikanal Lake; trek to Pillar Rocks; explore Coaker's Walk and Rat Tail Falls, also known as Thalaiyar Falls.

» **Berijam Lake (Dindigul):** A hidden gem near Kodaikanal, this secluded lake is surrounded by shola forests and protected for its ecological importance.

Key Activities: Visit for quiet nature walks; forest trekking; photography of pristine landscapes

» **Yercaud (Salem):** A charming hill station located in the Shevaroy Hills, Yercaud is known for its orange groves, coffee plantations and pleasant weather.

Key Activities: Stroll through botanical gardens; enjoy boating at Yercaud Lake; explore pagoda viewpoints

Lesser-Known Attractions

Tamil Nadu's lesser-known attractions include serene heritage villages, ancient rock-cut temples, untouched beaches, lush waterfalls and vibrant folk art hubs that offer a deeper, offbeat glimpse into its cultural and natural richness.

CHENGALPATTU

» **Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary:** Wetland sanctuary teeming with migratory birds in winter season.

TIRUPATHUR (YELAGIRI HILLS)

» **Punganoor Lake:** Picturesque waterside retreat with boating and picnic options.

» **Yelagiri (Vellore):** A quiet hill station ideal for trekkers and nature lovers, Yelagiri offers panoramic views, adventure activities and a laid-back atmosphere

VILUPPURAM

» **Gingee Fort:** Hilltop fortress of legendary strength, with three-tiered citadels.

CUDDALORE

» **Chidambaram Backroads & Temples:** Quiet heritage temples and rural scenery just off the Nataraja Trail.

THANJAVUR

» **Thanjavur rural crafts:** Bronze idol craftsmanship and Tanjore painting studios.

PUDUKKOTTAI

» **Narthamalai Caves & Temples:** 9th-century rock-cut shrines with Chola-era sculpture.

SIVAGANGA

» **Chettinad Villages:** Athangudi & Kanadukathan: Tile-making units, palatial homes, vibrant cuisine.

» **Karaikudi Antique Markets:** Vintage furniture & crafts in a cultural heartland.

MADURAI

» **Yanaimalai (Elephant Hill):** Jain relics and ancient temple caves on a serene hill.

» **Mangulam Murugan Temple:** Ancient pilgrimage spot with traditional worship.

THENI

» **Kumbakkarai Falls:** Two-tier cascading waterfall with bathing pools, maintained since British era.

» **Suruli Falls:** Dual-stage cascade with medicinal spring and ancient caves.

THOOTHUKUDI / TIRUNELVELI

» **Agaya Gangai Falls (Kolli Hills, Namakkal):** Hidden waterfall amid dense forest.

» **Manjolai Hills:** Misty tea estates and sunrise viewpoints.

» **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve:** A lesser-explored biodiversity hotspot, this reserve is ideal for wildlife enthusiasts seeking offbeat safari experiences in Tamil Nadu's Western Ghats.

» **Ayyanar Falls:** Located near a forested temple, these pristine falls offer a peaceful natural escape and are popular among locals but relatively untouched by mass tourism.

COIMBATORE

» **Pollachi & Topslip:** Gateway to lush landscapes, wildlife safaris and tribal settlements.

» **Valparai:** A serene hill station tucked in the Anamalai ranges, Valparai is known for its tea estates, misty mountains and wildlife, perfect for a peaceful retreat away from mainstream crowds.

THE NILGIRIS (OOTY REGION)

» **Masinagudi:** Quiet village in forested Nilgiris with wildlife treks.

ERODE

» **Ariyar Falls & Streams:** Small cascading waterways prized by locals.

SALEM

» **K. Mettur Dam backwaters:** Serene riverside spots for nature photography.

NAMAKKAL

» **Namakkal Anjaneyar Temple:** Home to an 18-ft Hanuman idol with architectural and devotional appeal.

» **Meghamalai (Theni):** Also known as the "High Wavy Mountains", Meghamalai is an offbeat hill destination with tea estates, misty peaks and hidden waterfalls.

Key Activities: Walk through tea plantations; enjoy nature trails; visit cloud-covered viewpoints

» **Pichavaram Mangroves (Cuddalore):** The world's second-largest mangrove forest, this ecological marvel features interconnected waterways and rich birdlife.

Key Activities: Go on a boat ride through the mangroves; spot migratory birds; enjoy photography

» **Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary (Nagapattinam):** A coastal haven for flamingos and blackbucks, this sanctuary blends wetlands, sandy shores and forests.

Key Activities: Watch flamingos in the wetlands; visit the lighthouse; explore beach ecology

» **Courtallam (Tenkasi):** Known as the 'Spa of South India', Courtallam features a series of rejuvenating waterfalls and herbal springs set amidst the Western Ghats.

Key Activities: Bathe in therapeutic waterfalls; trek to Main Falls; enjoy monsoon tourism

Adventure Tourism

» **Hogenakkal Falls (Dharmapuri):** Nicknamed the 'Niagara of India', Hogenakkal is a waterfall adventure site that offers rugged natural beauty and thrilling coracle rides.

Key Activities: Take coracle boat rides near the falls; explore local fish markets; enjoy panoramic viewpoints

» **Thirumoorthy Hills (Tiruppur):** Nestled near a reservoir, these hills are ideal for peaceful treks and rock climbing.

Key Activities: Trek to the waterfalls; engage in mild rock climbing; enjoy a scenic lakeside picnic

» **Kotagiri (Nilgiris):** A quieter hill station than Ooty, Kotagiri offers untapped trails and open landscapes perfect for nature-based adventure.

Key Activities: Go hiking to Catherine Falls; enjoy nature photography; take long ridge walks

» **Kolli Hills (Namakkal):** Steep hairpin bends and forested paths make this a thrilling escape for bikers and trekkers.

Key Activities: Explore the Agaya Gangai waterfalls; hike jungle trails; go on a scenic mountain drive

» **Kalvarayan Hills (Kallakurichi):** An emerging destination for rustic adventures with tribal culture and forested trails.

Key Activities: Camp under the stars; go on guided treks; explore hidden waterfalls

Heritage Tourism

» **Mamallapuram (Chengalpattu):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mamallapuram is famed for its monolithic rock-cut temples and intricately carved stone reliefs, such as Arjuna's Penance. It offers an immersive blend of archaeology, coastal charm and architectural wonder that attracts history buffs worldwide.

» **Chidambaram (Cuddalore):** Home to the iconic Nataraja Temple, this ancient town reflects Tamil Nadu's classical art, Shaivism traditions and Chola architecture, making it a key cultural and heritage attraction for spiritual and architectural tourists.

» **Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Ariyalur):** Once the capital of the mighty Chola empire, this town house has the majestic Brihadeeswara Temple, an architectural marvel with UNESCO recognition, drawing heritage tourists and researchers alike.

» **Kolli Hills:** Eastern Ghats retreat with twisting roads, waterfalls, trekking & temple trails.

TIRUPPUR

» **Periya Puthur Pottery Village:** Traditional earthenware craft workshops.

KARUR

» **Temple Circuits Along Amaravathi River:** Lesser-known shrines away from main clusters.

NAGAPATTINAM

» **Kodikkarai Mangrove Forest:** Biodiverse coastal zone with rich birdlife.

» **Tharangambadi:** Also known as Tranquebar, this quaint Danish colonial town charms visitors with its 17th-century fort, coastal breeze and European architecture.

KANYAKUMARI

» **Thiruparappu Falls:** Picturesque waterfall close to ancient shrines.

» **Vattakottai Fort:** Sea-edge coastal fortress with panoramic views.

THANJAVUR REGION

» **Manora Fort:** An 8-storeyed tower built by the Marathas, this seaside fort offers a blend of royal legacy and coastal views, perfect for offbeat history tourism.

CUDDALORE

» **Pichavaram Mangrove Forest:** The world's second-largest mangrove forest offers a unique ecosystem explored best by boat, attracting nature lovers and eco-tourists.

DINDIGUL

» **Sirumalai:** A lesser-known hill retreat, Sirumalai is ideal for visitors seeking solitude, clean air and scenic drives through winding forest roads.

» **Vattakanal:** A tranquil hamlet near Kodaikanal with waterfalls and spice plantations.

» **Thanjavur (Thanjavur):** Renowned for the Brihadeeswara Temple and royal palaces, Thanjavur stands as the cultural heartland of Tamil Nadu, offering a rich dose of temple architecture, classical music and art forms.

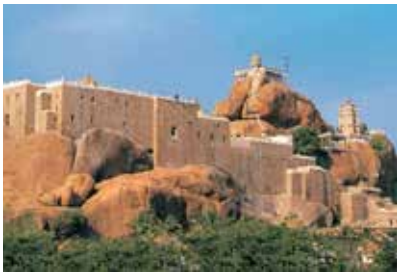
» **Darasuram (Thanjavur):** This UNESCO World Heritage Monument features the Airavatesvara Temple, noted for its detailed stone carvings and spiritual legacy, attracting tourists keen on South Indian temple architecture.

» **Kumbakonam (Thanjavur):** A temple town famed for its heritage streets, sculpted gopurams and spiritual significance, Kumbakonam is a must-visit for those interested in heritage tourism and Dravidian temple design.

» **Madurai (Madurai):** One of the oldest living cities in India, Madurai is famed for the Meenakshi Amman Temple and its vibrant heritage, offering visitors a blend of history, spirituality and local culture.

» **Chettinad (Sivaganga):** Known for its palatial mansions and unique architecture, Chettinad offers a peek into Tamil Nadu's merchant legacy, antique interiors and culinary heritage, ideal for cultural explorers.

» **Trichy (Tiruchirappalli):** Trichy is home to the majestic Rock Fort Temple and colonial-era churches, blending ancient temple traditions with modern urban character, appealing to heritage lovers and pilgrims alike.



Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Rameswaram (Ramanathapuram):** A prominent Char Dham pilgrimage site, Rameswaram is home to the Ramanathaswamy Temple and its colossal corridors. It holds immense religious significance for devotees of Lord Shiva and spiritual travelers.

» **Palani (Dindigul):** One of the six abodes of Lord Murugan, Palani is perched on a hill and reached by a scenic trek or ropeway. It's a key pilgrimage destination, especially during the Thai Poosam festival.

» **Srirangam (Tiruchirappalli):** Known for the Ranganathaswamy Temple, the island town of Srirangam is a major Vaishnavite pilgrimage site and a spiritual magnet for devotees across South India.

» **Kanchipuram (Kanchipuram):** Also known as the 'City of Thousand Temples', Kanchipuram is a sacred Hindu center known for its ancient temples and spiritual atmosphere, attracting pilgrims and temple tourists alike.

» **Thiruvannamalai (Tiruvannamalai):** Famous for the Arunachaleswarar Temple and the spiritual practice of Girivalam (circumambulation), this town is deeply connected with Saivism and spiritual seekers.

» **Nagore (Nagapattinam):** The Nagore Dargah is an important Islamic pilgrimage center visited by people of all faiths, reflecting Tamil Nadu's spiritual diversity and cultural inclusiveness.

» **Velankanni (Nagapattinam):** Known as the "Lourdes of the East", this Christian pilgrimage site draws thousands to the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health, especially during its annual feast.

» **Kanyakumari (Kanyakumari):** At the southern tip of India, Kanyakumari is revered for its Kumari Amman Temple and the convergence of the three seas, offering a spiritually charged coastal experience.

» **Tiruttani (Tiruvallur):** Another abode of Lord Murugan, Tiruttani is perched on a hill and revered by devotees across Tamil Nadu and beyond, adding to the spiritual circuits of the state.

Culture and Cuisines

Tamil Nadu's culture is a vibrant tapestry of classical arts, temple traditions, colourful festivals and rich Dravidian heritage. Its cuisine, deeply rooted in tradition, offers an aromatic spread of rice-based dishes, tangy curries and unique vegetarian and non-vegetarian delicacies served on banana leaves. Together, the state's cultural rituals and culinary experiences provide travelers an immersive journey into South India's timeless charm.

Culture

» **Pongal Festival state-wide:** Celebrated in the month of Mid-January, with traditional rituals, kolam designs and bull-taming sports like Jallikattu (multiple districts), this harvest festival offers tourists a deep dive into Tamil rural life and festive cheer.

» **Chithirai Festival (Madurai):** Held at the historic Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai, is a month-long celebration in the Tamil Month of Chithirai (April to May). This event includes grand processions and temple rituals, offering visitors a chance to witness Tamil Nadu's vibrant temple traditions.

» **Natyanjali Dance Festival (Chidambaram):** Hosted at the iconic Nataraja Temple, in the month of Masi (February to March). This festival draws classical dancers from across the country-perfect for cultural enthusiasts and art lovers.

» **Mahamaham Festival (Kumbakonam):** Often called the Kumbh Mela of the South, held in the month of Masi (February to March). This rare holy dip festival is a spiritual magnet for pilgrims and a unique cultural experience for tourists.

» **Tamil New Year (Puthandu):** Celebrated in April with feasts, decorations and traditional greetings, it offers tourists a warm, festive atmosphere and a taste of Tamil hospitality.

» **Cape Festival (Kanyakumari):** Set against the scenic southern tip of India, this three-day cultural fest, generally held in October. It includes classical music, dance and crafts-ideal for visitors seeking a coastal cultural retreat.

» **Tamil Nadu International Balloon Festival (Pollachi):** A visually stunning event is held annuallly in January, where tourists can enjoy colorful hot-air balloons set against rural backdrops-great for families and photo opportunities.

Cuisines

» **Idli-Sambar:** A must-try breakfast staple, these soft rice cakes with spicy lentil soup are served in almost every local eatery, making for a comforting culinary start.

» **Dosa Varieties:** From crispy masala dosas to soft oothappams, Tamil Nadu's dosa offerings are diverse and delicious-perfect for tourists exploring local tiffin stalls.

» **Chettinad Cuisine:** Known for its fiery, aromatic flavors, Chettinad chicken, pepper curries and seafood dishes are a paradise for spice-loving travelers.

» **Pongal (Dish):** A festive rice-lentil dish cooked with ghee and pepper-served sweet or savory during the Pongal festival and local celebrations.

» **Kothu Parotta:** A street food favorite made by shredding flaky parotta and mixing it with egg, meat and spices-often prepared with dramatic flair by roadside vendors.

» **Filter Coffee:** Tamil Nadu's iconic strong, frothy coffee served in metal tumblers is a daily ritual that tourists quickly fall in love with.

» **Banana Leaf Meals:** Traditional meals served on banana leaves include rice, curries, rasam, curd and sweet dishes-offering tourists an authentic and sustainable dining experience.

» **Jigarthanda:** A chilled dessert drink made with milk, almond gum and ice cream-especially refreshing for tourists

exploring the hot southern towns.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Tamil Nadu's textiles are known for their intricate weaving, rich silk traditions and vibrant natural dyes, while its handicrafts include detailed woodwork, stone carving and metal artistry that reflect centuries of cultural heritage and skilled craftsmanship.

» **Kanchipuram Silk Sarees:** Famous for their rich silk and golden zari work, these sarees are a must-buy souvenir for visitors exploring South India's royal textile heritage.

Key Areas: Kanchipuram; Chennai; Tiruvannamalai

» **Madurai Sungudi Sarees:** Known for their fine cotton fabric and intricate tie-dye patterns, these sarees reflect local traditions and are popular among ethnic wear enthusiasts.

Key Areas: Madurai; Dindigul; Theni

» **Coimbatore Cotton:** Soft, durable cotton fabrics from this region are ideal for hot climates and are widely sought by tourists for comfort and quality.

Key Areas: Coimbatore; Tiruppur; Erode

» **Thanjavur Dolls:** These bobble-head dolls, traditionally hand-painted, make charming keepsakes representing Tamil Nadu's folk artistry.

Key Areas: Thanjavur; Kumbakonam; Nagapattinam

» **Thanjavur Paintings:** Known for their rich gold leaf detailing and religious motifs, these iconic artworks are collector favorites and spiritual souvenirs.

Key Areas: Thanjavur; Chidambaram; Cuddalore

» **Stone Carvings:** Tourists can explore and purchase finely chiseled sculptures here, with motifs ranging from gods to mythical creatures.

Key Areas: Mamallapuram; Pudukkottai; Villupuram

» **Bronze Idols:** These handcrafted Chola-style bronze idols are revered for their spiritual significance and exquisite detail.

Key Areas: Swamimalai; Thanjavur; Ariyalur

» **Palm Leaf Weaving:** This eco-friendly craft produces mats, baskets and decorative items, often bought by visitors looking for sustainable souvenirs.

Key Areas: Tirunelveli; Tuticorin; Ramanathapuram

Best Time to Visit

Peak Season

» **July to April** (Pleasant temperatures-ideal for sightseeing, heritage circuits, beaches and temple visits.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to June** (Warmer in the plains, but a good time for hill stations such as Ooty, Kodaikanal and Yercaud; generally fewer crowds.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for rock-cut and structural monuments, including the Shore Temple.

» **Kodaikanal** is home to the rare **Kurinji flower, which blooms only once every 12 years, attracting nature lovers** from across the world.

» Tamil Nadu is known for its **dense network of historic temples,** many over a thousand years old and still active.

» **Ooty** houses the **UNESCO-listed Nilgiri Mountain Railway**, offering a scenic **toy train** experience through **tea gardens** and **misty hills**.

» The historic **Pamban Bridge (1914)** is India's first sea bridge; the **new Pamban Bridge** has been built as India's first **vertical-lift railway sea bridge** (inaugurated 6 April 2025).

» **Chidambaram's Nataraja Temple** is associated with **Akasha (space)** among the **Pancha Bhoota Sthalams.**

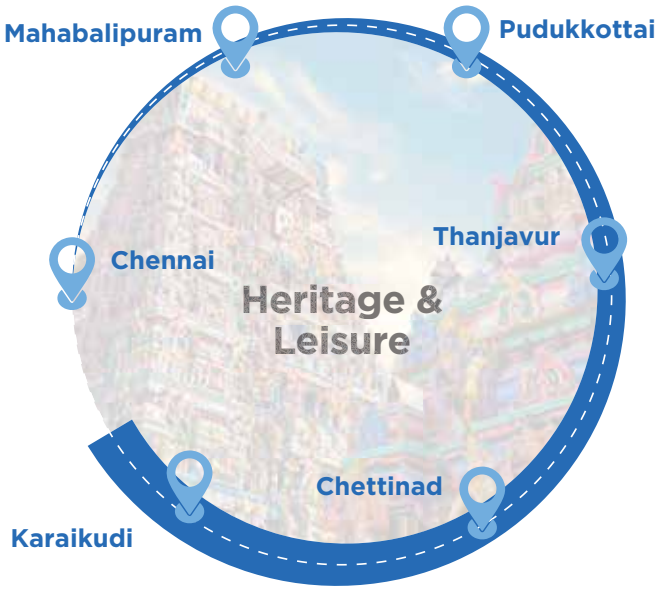
» The **Chettinad region** offers **heritage mansions** turned into luxury homestays, blending **antique architecture** with **local hospitality**.

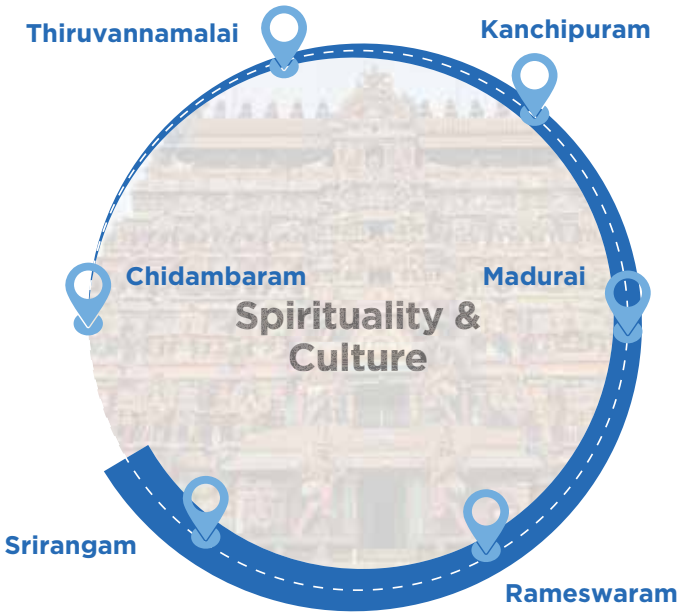
» **Thanjavur Palace** houses the **Saraswathi Mahal Library,** one of **Asia's oldest libraries** with **palm-leaf manuscripts** dating back centuries.

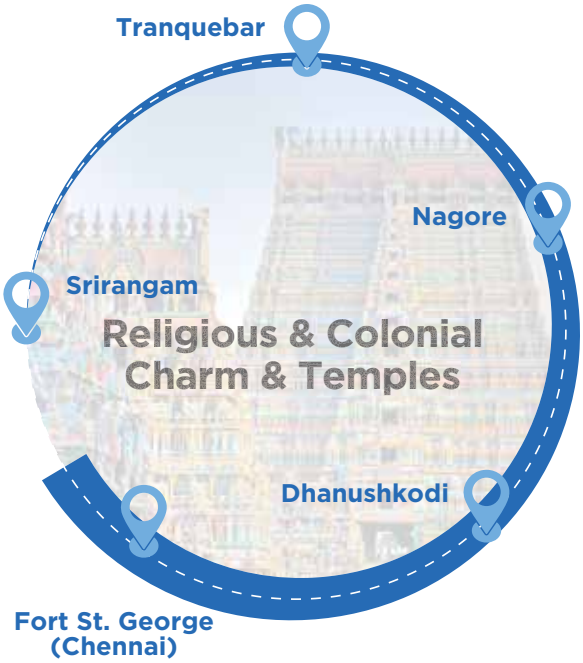
» The **temple town of Srirangam** is the **largest functioning Hindu temple complex** in the world, spread over **156 acres**.

» **Bharatnatyam** is one of the **oldest classical dances of India**, originated in Tamil Nadu and rooted in temple traditions.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS







Telangana

Tourism

Telangana, a young state in southern India, offers a compelling blend of history, culture and natural beauty. From the bustling heritage metropolis of Hyderabad to the tranquil lakes, hills and ancient temples scattered across the region, it appeals to every kind of traveller. Visitors can explore lush forests, wildlife sanctuaries, rushing waterfalls and serene backwaters, as well as experience thrilling adventure sports, rich historical monuments and spiritual pilgrimages. The state's vibrant festivals, distinctive cuisine and traditional crafts further enhance the travel experience. Telangana is a destination that balances modernity with tradition-an immersion into Deccan heritage, tribal culture and contemporary charm.

Best Places to Visit

Telangana's major attractions include majestic forts, intricate temple architecture, serene lakes, vibrant festivals and a rich blend of heritage and modern urban culture that reflects its historical depth and evolving identity.

Nature Tourism

» **Pakhal Lake (Warangal):** This man-made lake nestled in a wildlife sanctuary offers a peaceful retreat amid undulating forests and diverse wildlife.

Key Activities: Visitors can enjoy serene boat rides; birdwatching at dawn; jungle strolls along the lakeshore

» **Bogatha Waterfall (Mulugu):** Often called the "Telangana Niagara" this waterfall is surrounded by scenic rock formations and moist forests.

Key Activities: Trekking through the woodland trail; taking in panoramic waterfall views; photography Located in Mulugu district; visitors hike a short trail (no direct motorable access).

» **Laknavaram Lake (Mulugu):** This expansive lake is dotted with islands connected by hanging footbridges offering scenic charm.

Key Activities: Boat rides; pontoon cruises; staying in lakeside cottages A signature suspension bridge connects the lake's small islands and boating is managed by Telangana Tourism

» **Kuntala Waterfall (Adilabad):** Telangana's tallest waterfall cascading in duplex tiers in dense forest.

Key Activities: Hiking down the steps to the base; waterfall photography; nature walks

» **Ananthagiri Hills (Vikarabad):** Dense forest hills that are the birthplace of the Musi River and home to ancient caves and temples.

Key Activities: Trekking through forest trails; visiting cave temples; birdwatching

» **Mrugavani National Park (Ranga Reddy):** A compact

Lesser-Known Attractions

Telangana's lesser-known attractions feature hidden waterfalls, ancient cave temples, tribal art traditions, scenic forested hills and peaceful rural landscapes that offer a quiet yet culturally rich travel experience.

MEDAK

» **Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary:** A serene forest reserve ideal for nature walks, birdwatching and photography.

YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

» **Kolanupaka Jain Temple:** A 2,000-year-old temple featuring a 5-foot jade idol of Mahavira sacred to Jains.

» **Bhongir Fort Tunnel:** A hidden tunnel said to connect Bhongir Fort to Golconda sparking curiosity among explorers.

JOGULAMBA GADWAL

» **Alampur Jogulamba Temple:** One of the Shakti Peethas, it blends spiritual significance with architectural charm.

NIZAMABAD

» **Neelakanteshwar Temple:** Satavahana-era Shiva shrine with ancient stone architecture.

KAMAREDDY

» **Domakonda Fort:** A 17th-century fort with a beautiful palatial residence moat and temple complex.

MAHABUBNAGAR

» **Pillalamarri:** A 700 year old banyan tree sprawling over 3 acres surrounded by a heritage museum.

» **Koilkonda Fort:** A scenic hill fort with trekking paths and panoramic countryside views.

» **Khilla Ghanpur:** Hilltop fort with views of Ghanpur Lake-ideal for hiking .

MANCHERIAL

» **Gandhari Khilla:** An ancient hilltop fort nestled in dense forests ideal for hikers and history lovers.

ADILABAD

» **Gayatri Falls:** A secluded cascade near Tarnam Khurd, ideal for peaceful nature outings.

» **Kanakai (Kanakadurga) Falls:** Trio of waterfalls in Girnoor village, with lush rock formations and village temples.

KARIMNAGAR

» **Ramagiri Fort (Ramagiri Khilla):** Kakatiya hill fort with medicinal plants and sweeping Godavari views.

» **Kodurupaka (Moodu Jaamula):** Village shadowed early by hills-unique daylight experience.

NIZAMABAD

» **Dichpally Ramalayam:** 14th-c basalt temple famous for Khajuraho-like erotic carvings.

PEDDAPALLI

» **Dhulikatta Buddhist Stupa:** 2nd-century BC monastery with relics from Satavahana era.

» **Gautameshwara Temple Ruins, Manthani:** Creeper-laced 11th-c Hindu ruins along Godavari-ancient Vedic heritage.

SIDDIPET

» **Kondapaka (Patigadda mound):** Archaeological mound with Neolithic and Satavahana artefacts.

urban forest with diverse wildlife located near Hyderabad.

Key Activities: Guided nature walks; wildlife spotting; climbing the forest watchtower

Adventure Tourism

» **Bhongir Fort (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri):** A monolithic granite fortification offering steep climbs and rewarding views.

Key Activities: Trekking uphill; rock climbing; exploring ancient fort ruins

» **Hussain Sagar / Durgam Cheruvu Lakes (Hyderabad):** Popular urban lakes offering adrenaline-pumping aquatic sports.

Key Activities: Speed boating across the lake; parasailing high above; jet-ski rides

» **Bhongir / Shamirpet / Moula Ali Hills (Hyderabad):** Granite hills well known for rock climbing and bouldering.

Key Activities: Climbing natural rock faces; bouldering in open granite areas; midday hill hikes

» **Hussain Sagar Air Sports (Hyderabad):** It is an experimental aerial adventure zone.

Key Activities: Paragliding off urban hilltops; paramotoring; trying skydiving in a controlled environment

» **Eturnagaram / Kinnerasani / Kawal Tiger Reserves:** Remote tiger reserves set in rugged forest terrain.

Key Activities: Jeep safaris into deep forests; camping beside reserve trails; bird and wildlife spotting

» **Pandavula Gutta (Regonda, Jayashankar Bhupalpally):** Prehistoric rock-art site with cave shelters; also known for rock-climbing trails. .

Key Activities: Cave trekking; rock art exploration; guided historical walks

Heritage Tourism

» **Golconda Fort (Hyderabad):** A monumental granite fortress famed for its acoustics, royal halls and panoramic views.

» **Medak Fort & Cathedral (Medak):** Ruined fortress paired with a Gothic cathedral showcasing architectural splendor.

» **Thousand Pillar Temple (Hanamkonda):** Renowned for intricately carved pillars, star-shaped plan (Trikutalayam) and monolithic Nandi – a Kakatiya-era masterpiece.

» **Chilkur Balaji Temple (Rangareddy):** Known as the "Visa Temple," a pilgrimage site with centuries:old heritage.

» **Ramappa Temple (Mulugu):** A 13th century sandstone temple famed for intricate carvings and UNESCO World Heritage Site (inscribed in 2021).

» **Kota Gullu (Jayashankar Bhupalpally):** A set of early medieval temples with ornate stone sculpture.

» **Bhuvanagiri/Bhongir Fort (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri):** A monolithic hilltop fortress built in the 10th century.

» **Koilsagar Dam & Fort (Mahabubnagar):** Historic reservoir with nearby ruins offering cultural: historical interest.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Keesaragutta Temple (Medchal-Malkajgiri):** Ancient Shiva temple atop a hill with Krishna rock:cut caves.

» **Sita Ramachandraswamy Temple (Bhadrachalam):** Riversidest sacred site dedicated to Lord Rama.

» **Yadagirigutta Temple (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri):** A prominent hilltop temple dedicated to Lord Narasimha, attracting devotees especially on Vaikunta Ekadashi.

» **Basara Gnana Saraswati Temple (Nirmal District):** Renowned

temple of the goddess of learning, where students traditionally visit before exams.

» **Kondagattu Anjaneya Swamy Temple (Jagatial):** A historic Hanuman temple known for its festival celebrations.

Culture and Cuisines

Telangana's culture is a vibrant blend of Telugu and Deccani traditions, reflected in its folk arts, festivals and language. Its cuisine is known for bold, spicy flavours with rich meat dishes, tangy tamarind-based curries and hearty millet preparations.

Culture

» **Sammakka Saralamma Jatara (Mulugu):** One of the largest tribal festivals in Asia, held biennially, attracting millions of devotees and culture enthusiasts to witness tribal rituals, fairs and spiritual unity.

» **Nagoba Jatara (Adilabad):** A significant tribal fair of the Gond community, featuring traditional attire, customs and rituals-perfect for tourists interested in indigenous cultures.

» **Deccan Festival (Hyderabad):** A city-based festival that celebrates the region's art, culture, cuisine and heritage with qawwalis, mushairas, crafts and local food stalls.

» **Lumbini Festival (Nalgonda/ Hyderabad):** A Buddhist cultural fest that highlights Telangana's ancient Buddhist heritage through exhibitions, lectures and spiritual tours, attracting global heritage tourists.

» **Peerla Panduga (Hyderabad and Rural Telangana):** A multi-faith festival showcasing communal harmony with colourful processions and music-drawing in tourists for its cultural inclusivity.

Cuisines

» **Hyderabadi Biryani:** A globally loved dish of fragrant basmati rice, saffron, meat and spices, cooked in dum style.

» **Sarva Pindi:** A savoury pancake made from rice flour, peanuts and green chilies, often eaten as a snack or breakfast.

» **Kodi Kura:** A spicy chicken curry cooked Telangana style with poppy seeds, dry coconut and fiery spices.

» **Pachi Pulusu:** A tangy raw tamarind broth with onions and chilies, usually served cold and paired with rice.

» **Jonna Rotte:** Traditional jowar flatbread served with spicy curries or chutneys, especially in rural Telangana.

» **Khubani ka Meetha:** A dessert made from dried apricots stewed in sugar syrup, often served with cream or custard.

» **Double Ka Meetha:** A festive bread pudding made using fried bread slices soaked in saffron milk and garnished with dry fruits.

» **Hyderabadi Haleem:** A slow cooked stew of wheat, meat, lentils and spices, popular during Ramadan and festivals.

» **Mirchi Ka Salan:** A tangy and mildly spicy curry made of green chilies in a thick sesame coconut gravy, served as a biryani side.

Textiles and Handicrafts

Telangana's textiles and handicrafts are known for their intricate weaving techniques, vibrant natural dyes and traditional motifs, showcasing rich cultural artistry through handlooms, metalwork and detailed wood and stone carvings.

» **Pochampally Ikat Sarees:** Known globally for their intricate geometric dye patterns, these handwoven silk and cotton sarees are a UNESCO-recognised heritage - perfect for textile lovers and cultural explorers.

Key Areas: Pochampally, Bhongir, Choutuppal Pochampally village was named among UNWTO Best Tourism Villages (2021)

» **Gadwal Sarees:** Lightweight sarees with rich zari borders and contrasting pallus, these weaves reflect centuries-old craftsmanship and are a must-see for saree connoisseurs.

Key Areas: Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Alampur

» **Narayanpet Sarees:** Featuring simple checks and temple borders, these cotton-silk sarees are made using traditional looms-offering visitors a chance to witness live weaving demonstrations.

Key Areas: Narayanpet, Makthal, Kosgi

» **Cheriyal Scroll Paintings:** Vibrant narrative paintings on khadi cloth that depict folklore and epics, handcrafted using natural colours - ideal for art collectors and heritage tourists.

Key Areas: Cheriyal, Siddipet, Jangaon

» **Nirmal Toys & Paintings:** Hand-painted wooden toys and furniture with golden floral detailing and mythological themes make for unique souvenirs and cultural showcases.

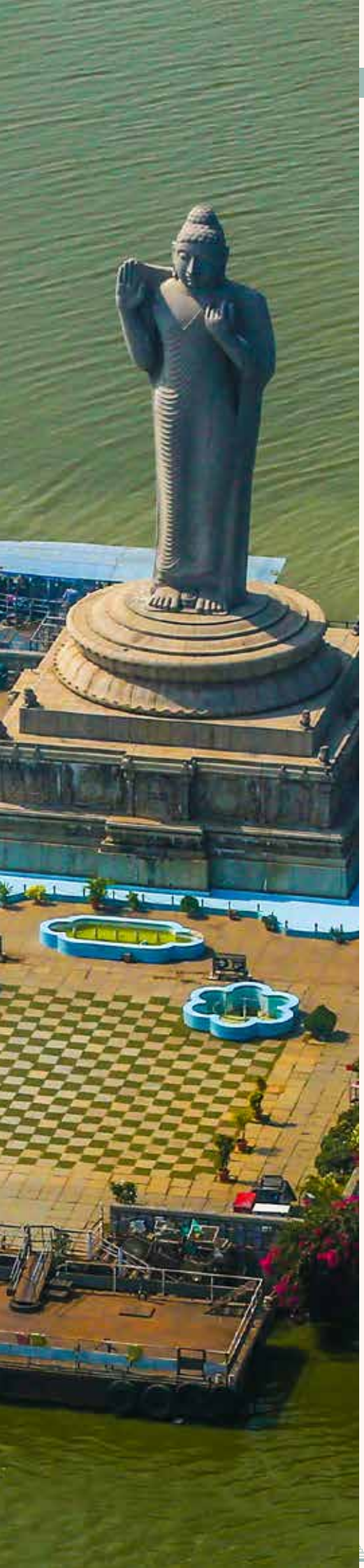
Key Areas: Nirmal, Khanapur, Bhainsa

» **Silver Filigree:** Delicate jewellery and artefacts created from twisted silver wire, showcasing Telangana's Mughal-influenced crafts-manship - drawing in those with a love for fine artistry.

Key Areas: Karimnagar, Warangal, Hyderabad

» **cc:** An ancient form of metal casting using the lost wax technique, producing rustic tribal figurines and decor-perfect for those interested in ethnic art forms.

Key Areas: Adilabad, Utnoor, Jainoor



Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Cool, comfortable weather makes this the best time for sightseeing, temple visits and festivals such as Bathukamma and Medaram Jatara. The state's lakes, forts and heritage sites are especially pleasant to explore.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Though daytime temperatures rise, this period suits travelers seeking quieter destinations and cultural experiences indoors. Monsoon showers transform Telangana's landscapes into lush greenery.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Hyderabad's Falaknuma Palace** is one of the **grandest palace hotels in India** and was once the **residence of the Nizam,** known for its rare jade collection and 101-seat dining table.

» **Kuntala Waterfalls is the tallest waterfall in Telangana,** tucked in the Kadem (Kadam) River in Adilabad.

» **Ramappa Temple**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the **only temple in India named after its sculptor,** reflecting the intricate Kakatiya craftsmanship.

» **Thousand Pillar Temple (Hanamkonda): Renowned for intricately carved pillars,** star-shaped plan (Trikutalayam) and monolithic Nandi – a Kakatiya-era masterpiece.

» **Nagarjuna Sagar** boasts of **one of the largest masonry dams in the world** and offers boat rides to an ancient Buddhist site on Nagarjunakonda Island.

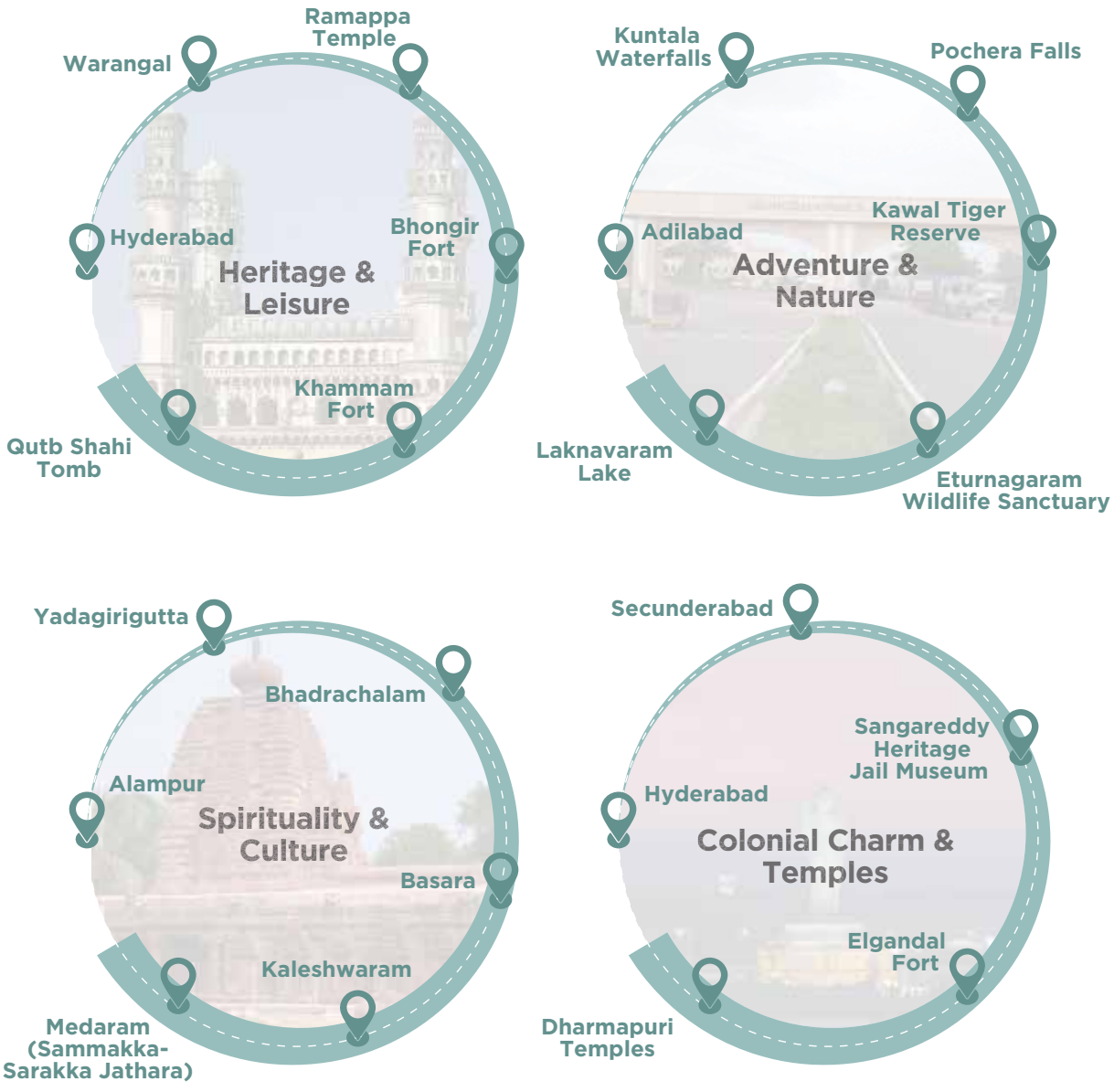
» **Medaram Jathara** is Asia's **largest tribal fair**, attracting over 10 million devotees, making it a unique spiritual and cultural gathering worth witnessing.

» **Bhongir Fort**, built atop a giant monolithic rock, offers panoramic views and is a **hidden gem for trekking and history buffs alike.**

» **Laknavaram Lake,** with its **floating bridge and tiny forested islands,** offers a tranquil boating experience. A signature suspension bridge connects the lake's small islands and boating is managed by Telangana Tourism.

» **Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary allows eco-tourists to spot migratory birds, leopards and antelopes,** all in a serene, offbeat location near the Pocharam reservoir.

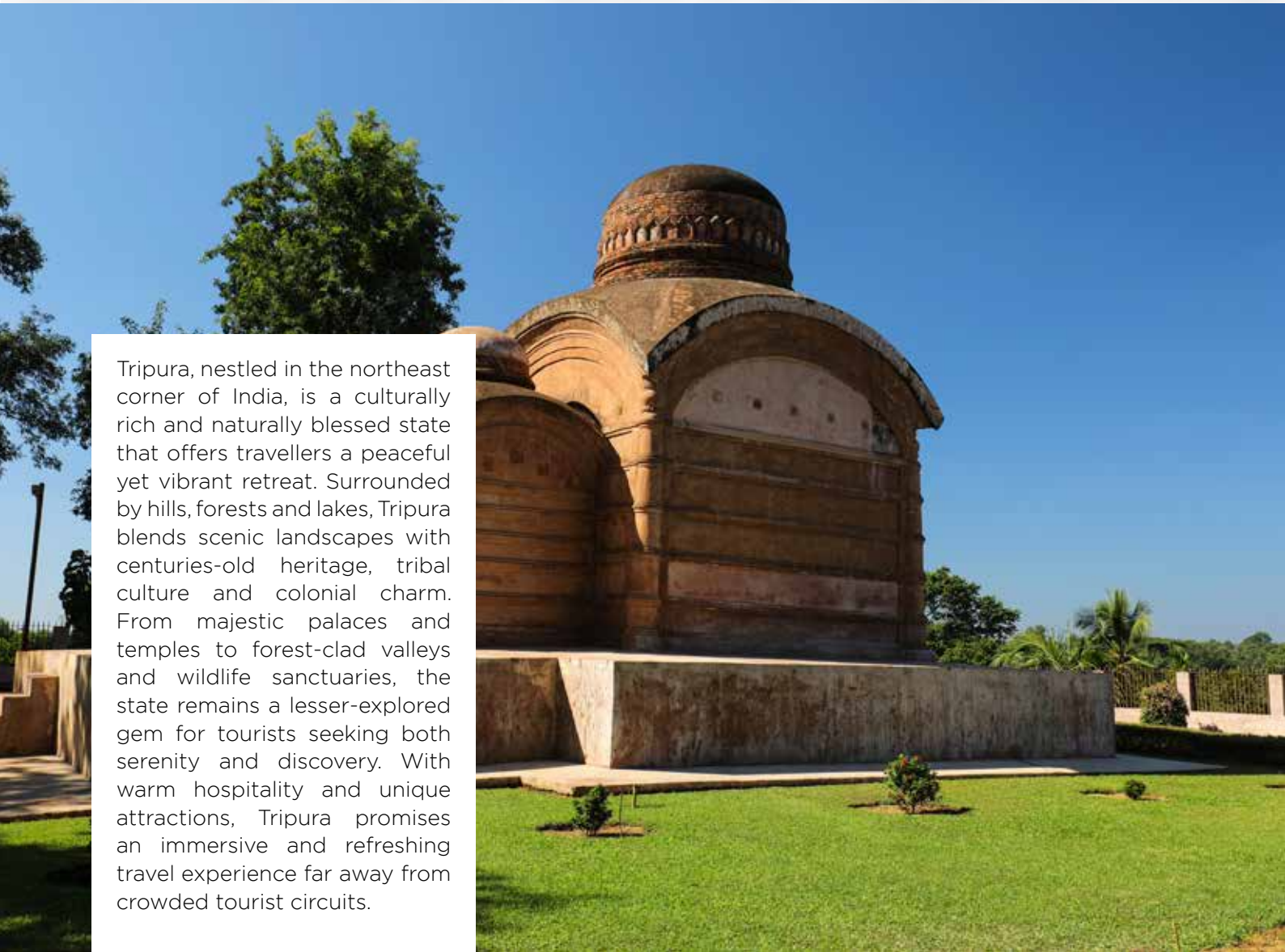
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



DO NOT TOUCH
EXHIBITS

Tripura

Tourism



Tripura, nestled in the northeast corner of India, is a culturally rich and naturally blessed state that offers travellers a peaceful yet vibrant retreat. Surrounded by hills, forests and lakes, Tripura blends scenic landscapes with centuries-old heritage, tribal culture and colonial charm. From majestic palaces and temples to forest-clad valleys and wildlife sanctuaries, the state remains a lesser-explored gem for tourists seeking both serenity and discovery. With warm hospitality and unique attractions, Tripura promises an immersive and refreshing travel experience far away from crowded tourist circuits.

Best Places to Visit

Tripura is home to exquisite sites known for its regal architecture, with its ancient rock-cut sculptures. Tourists can explore a blend of history, nature and tribal heritage across diverse destinations spread throughout the state.

Nature Tourism

» **Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary (West Tripura):** This lush sanctuary houses a botanical garden, boating lake and a variety of birds and primates including spectacled monkeys.

Key Activities: Good for birdwatching; boating in man-made lakes; forest trail walks

» **Kamaleshwari Kali Temple Surroundings (Dhalai):** Although religious in essence, the temple's setting near green hills and serene water bodies draws nature lovers.

Key Activities: Enjoying tranquil natural setting; riverside photography; peaceful strolls

» **Dumboor Lake (Dhalai):** A vast water body with 48 islands, this lake is surrounded by verdant hills and is the origin point of the Gomati River.

Key Activities: Boat rides to islets; nature photography; good for birdwatching

» **Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary (South Tripura):** Known for its bison population and green canopy, this sanctuary also shelters varied flora and fauna across its wetlands and forests.

Key Activities: Wildlife spotting from watchtowers; guided forest trails; wetland exploration

» **Rowa Wildlife Sanctuary (North Tripura):** A small yet rich sanctuary that can be easily explored in a day, ideal for spotting rare species of birds and plants.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; short forest walks; flora identification

Lesser-Known Attractions

Tripura holds many hidden gems beyond its well-known temples and palaces. From quiet eco-parks and ancient ruins to serene lakes and tribal settlements, these places offer unique opportunities for offbeat exploration. They are ideal for travelers looking to connect with Tripura's rustic charm and untouched landscapes.

WEST TRIPURA

» **Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary:** Home to a variety of birds, primates and botanical species. It also features boating facilities and an orchid garden, making it an ideal nature retreat away from crowds.

» **Kamalasagar Lake:** Located near the Indo-Bangladesh border, this calm lake is adjacent to a scenic hilltop temple and offers peaceful views. Local fairs are held here during festive times.

» **Heritage Park, Agartala:** First of its kind landscaped park in the Northeast, showcasing Tripura's tribal villages, forests and architecture within a single city space. It also features featuring miniature replicas of Tripura's monuments and lush walking paths.

SOUTH TRIPURA

» **Tepania Eco Park:** Nestled in Udaipur, this well-maintained eco-park offers a calm environment with bamboo cottages and forested walking trails, ideal for family picnics and nature photography.

» **Devtamura Hills:** These hills along the Gomati River hide ancient rock carvings of Hindu deities etched on vertical cliffs. Accessible only by boat, visiting this site is an adventurous historical journey.

NORTH TRIPURA

» **Jampui Hills Orchid Nursery:** Apart from its famous sunrise views, the hills also host a small orchid garden where unique regional flora can be seen and appreciated.

DHALAI

» **Kalapania Nature Park:** Surrounded by forest and small

hills, this eco-park in Kamalpur provides stunning views, footbridges and bamboo huts for peaceful nature experiences.

» **Raima Valley:** Often called the "Mother of Tribes," this valley near Longthorai offers scenic landscapes and cultural insight into the indigenous tribal life of Tripura.

UNAKOTI

» **Raghna Kali Temple Hilltop:** A calm religious site on a hill that also serves as a vantage point to see the surrounding greenery and distant hills in the Unakoti region.

» **Jampui Hills Orchid Nursery:** Apart from the famous sunrise views in Jampui, the hills also host a small orchid garden where unique regional flora can be seen and appreciated.

Adventure Tourism

» **Tepania Eco Park (South Tripura):** Located near Udaipur, this eco-park features tree-top houses and nature trails that appeal to thrill-seekers and families alike.

Key Activities: Treehouse visits; eco-camping; forest trekking

» **Baramura Eco Park (Khowai):** Nestled in the Baramura hill range, this eco park offers nature trails, tree-top views and serene hilltop picnic spots.

Key Activities: Hill trekking; canopy photography; adventure walks

» **Jampui Hills (North Tripura):** Known for its orange plantations and sunrise views, Jampui Hills are perfect for light trekking and scenic drives through cloud-kissed villages.

Key Activities: Sunrise trekking; scenic cycling; exploring local plantations

» **Unakoti Hill Sculptures (Unakoti):** Famous for its rock-cut carvings of deities, Unakoti doubles as a pilgrimage and adventure site set amid a jungle backdrop.

Key Activities: Rock trail climbing; heritage hiking; jungle exploration

Heritage Tourism

» **Ujjayanta Palace (West Tripura):** This majestic former royal residence in Agartala now functions as a museum showcasing Tripura's art, culture and tribal heritage. The white-domed structure with Mughal-style gardens is a historical gem.

» **Kunjaban Palace (West Tripura):** Once a summer retreat for the royal family, this peaceful estate is closely linked with poet Rabindranath Tagore's visits to Tripura. The palace is now the Governor's house with part of it open to the public.

» **Malancha Niwas (West Tripura):** A heritage house where Rabindranath Tagore stayed during his visit to Tripura. It reflects colonial architecture and holds cultural significance for literature enthusiasts.

» **Old Rajbari Ruins (South Tripura):** These remnants of Tripura's earlier capital near Udaipur offer a glimpse into the region's royal past, surrounded by lakes and traditional temples.

» **Pilak Archaeological Site (South Tripura):** Pilak features terracotta and stone sculptures from the 8th to 12th century influenced by Buddhist and Hindu traditions. The scattered ruins are a treasure for history lovers and archaeologists.

» **Bhubaneshwari Temple Complex (South Tripura):** Situated beside the Gomati River near Udaipur, this site was immortalised by Rabindranath Tagore in his literary works and showcases historical and architectural richness.

» **Unakoti Rock Carvings (Unakoti):** Dating back to the 7th to 9th century, these enormous rock-cut sculptures of deities are both an archaeological wonder and a heritage pilgrimage site.

» **Jampui Hill (North Tripura):** The hill is dotted with old rest houses and structures from colonial times that offer a sense of Tripura's past interactions with British rulers.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Tripura Sundari Temple (South Tripura):** One of the 51 Shakti Peethas, this black stone idol of Goddess Kali attracts thousands of pilgrims each year and sits beside the sacred Kalyan Sagar Lake.

» **Bhuvaneswari Temple (South Tripura):** Situated on the banks of the Gomati River, this temple is known for its serene ambience and its mention in Rabindranath Tagore's works.

» **Fourteen Goddess Temple (West Tripura):** Also known as Chaturdasha Devata Mandir, this temple is central to Tripuri tribal rituals and hosts the Kharchi Puja festival annually.

» **Laxminarayan Temple (West Tripura):** Located within the Ujjayanta Palace premises, this temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu features elegant architecture and peaceful surroundings.

» **Jagannath Temple (West Tripura):** Built in traditional Tripuri style with vibrant yellow and red hues, this temple in Agartala is devoted to Lord Jagannath and his siblings.

» **Udayan Buddha Vihar (Unakoti):** A tranquil shrine with a seated Buddha statue, this temple represents Tripura's Buddhist heritage and is visited for quiet reflection.

Culture and Cuisines

Tripura's vibrant culture reflects its tribal heritage, royal lineage and spiritual diversity. From colourful dance festivals and ancient tribal rituals to a flavourful cuisine rooted in simplicity and freshness, the state offers tourists a unique cultural immersion. Its food and festivals bring alive traditions passed down across generations.

Culture

» **Kharchi Puja (West Tripura):** Celebrated in Agartala, this week-long festival worships 14 deities with tribal and Hindu customs. It draws pilgrims and tourists with its lively processions, music and local fairs.

» **Garia Puja (All Districts):** A tribal harvest festival celebrated in April, featuring the bamboo dance, animal sacrifices and traditional music. It offers visitors a deep cultural insight into Tripura's tribal communities.

» **Durga Puja (West Tripura):** Although a pan-Indian festival, Durga Puja in Agartala is known for its large-scale celebrations, artistic pandals and strong Bengali cultural influence that tourists love to witness.

» **Orange and Tourism Festival (North Tripura)**: Held in Jampui Hills, this festival showcases the orange harvest, local cuisine and cultural programmes, promoting tourism and horticulture together.

» **Ashokastami Festival (South Tripura)**: Celebrated at the ancient Tripura Sundari Temple, this spiritual gathering features rituals, river bathing and folk performances, attracting both devotees and explorers.

Cuisines

» **Wahan Mosdeng**: A spicy pork dish blended with green chilies, onions and roasted spices often enjoyed during tribal feasts and special occasions.

» **Bangui Rice with Fish Stew**: A local variety of scented rice served with lightly spiced fish stew, making it a simple yet delicious everyday meal.

» **Gudok**: A semi-dry dish made with vegetables, bamboo shoots and *berma*, offering a smoky tangy taste that reflects tribal culinary traditions.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Tripura's traditional textiles and handicrafts reflect the skilled craftsmanship and rich cultural identity of its indigenous communities. From intricately woven tribal garments to eco-friendly bamboo crafts, these items make for meaningful souvenirs and cultural experiences for tourists. The artisans blend utility with artistic finesse passed down through generations.

» **Risa and Rignai**: Traditional handwoven garments worn by Tripuri women, known for their bold geometric patterns and vibrant colours. They are woven on backstrap looms and represent the pride and identity of Tripuri culture.

Key Areas: Agartala; Khumulwng; Jirania; Ambassa

» **Bamboo and Cane Furniture**: Light yet sturdy, these eco-friendly furniture pieces include chairs, tables and storage items made using traditional weaving techniques. Their earthy aesthetic appeals to tourists seeking sustainable décor.

Key Areas: Kumarghat; Teliamura; Udaipur; Melaghar

» **Handcrafted Bamboo Products**: From baskets and trays to hats and utility containers, bamboo crafts are intricately designed for daily and decorative use. These are crafted by tribal artisans using tools passed down over centuries.

Key Areas: Panisagar; Gandacherra; Sabroom

» **Wooden Toys and Masks**: Locally carved toys, masks and figurines made of lightweight wood depict tribal myths and folk characters, ideal as ethnic collectibles.

Key Areas: Agartala; Kailashahar; Belonia

» **Silk Weaving (Mulberry Silk)**: Tripura is known for producing fine mulberry silk, which is woven into elegant traditional attire and shawls by skilled weavers. The silk has a soft texture and natural sheen that appeals to textile lovers.

Key Areas: Dharmanagar; Khowai; Kamalpur

» **Tribal Jewellery**: Made from beads, bamboo slivers and natural seeds, tribal jewellery pieces are lightweight and artistic. They reflect cultural beliefs and are often worn during festivals and dances.

Key Areas: Amarpur; Longtharai Valley; Bishramganj

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to March** (Pleasant weather; ideal for sightseeing, cultural festivals and hill travel.)

Non-Peak Season

» **April to September** (Hot but manageable; fewer tourists; suitable for heritage tours and eco-parks. Heavy monsoon; risk of landslides in hilly areas; limited outdoor activities.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Unakoti** literally meaning "one less than a crore", **reflects a legend of nearly one crore ancient rock carvings at the site.** This has earned it the nickname **"Angkor Wat of the Northeast".**

» **Neermahal, a unique water palace in Eastern India,** built in the middle of Rudrasagar Lake. It lights up beautifully at night and hosts a traditional boat festival in August.

» **Tripura Sundari Temple is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas in India** and draws thousands of pilgrims every year. The temple's Kalyan Sagar lake is also home to hundreds of sacred turtles that are fed by devotees.

» **Jampui Hills is home to state's only large scale orange cultivation.** The Orange Festival held here attracts nature lovers and photographers.

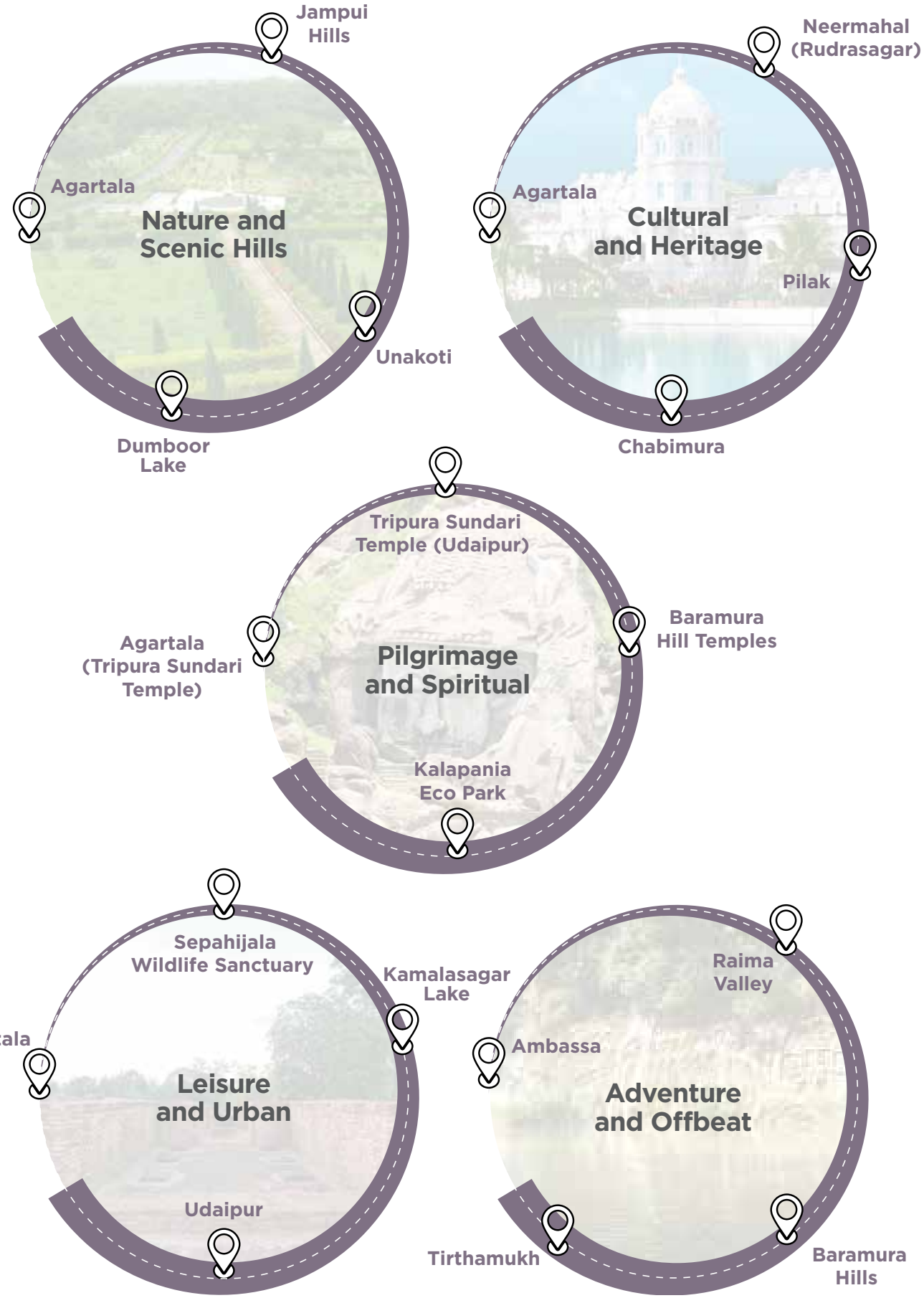
» **Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary** features a combination of a botanical garden, zoo and boating facilities **offering a diverse ecological experience not commonly found in one site.**

» **Ujjayanta Palace,** once the royal residence of the Manikya dynasty, is now the State Museum that **exhibits tribal artifacts and cultural heritage,** giving visitors a rare glimpse into Tripura's royal past.

» **Pilak in South Tripura reveals ancient Buddhist and Hindu archaeological remains** from the 8th to 12th centuries, marking it as a significant heritage site still underexplored by mainstream tourism.

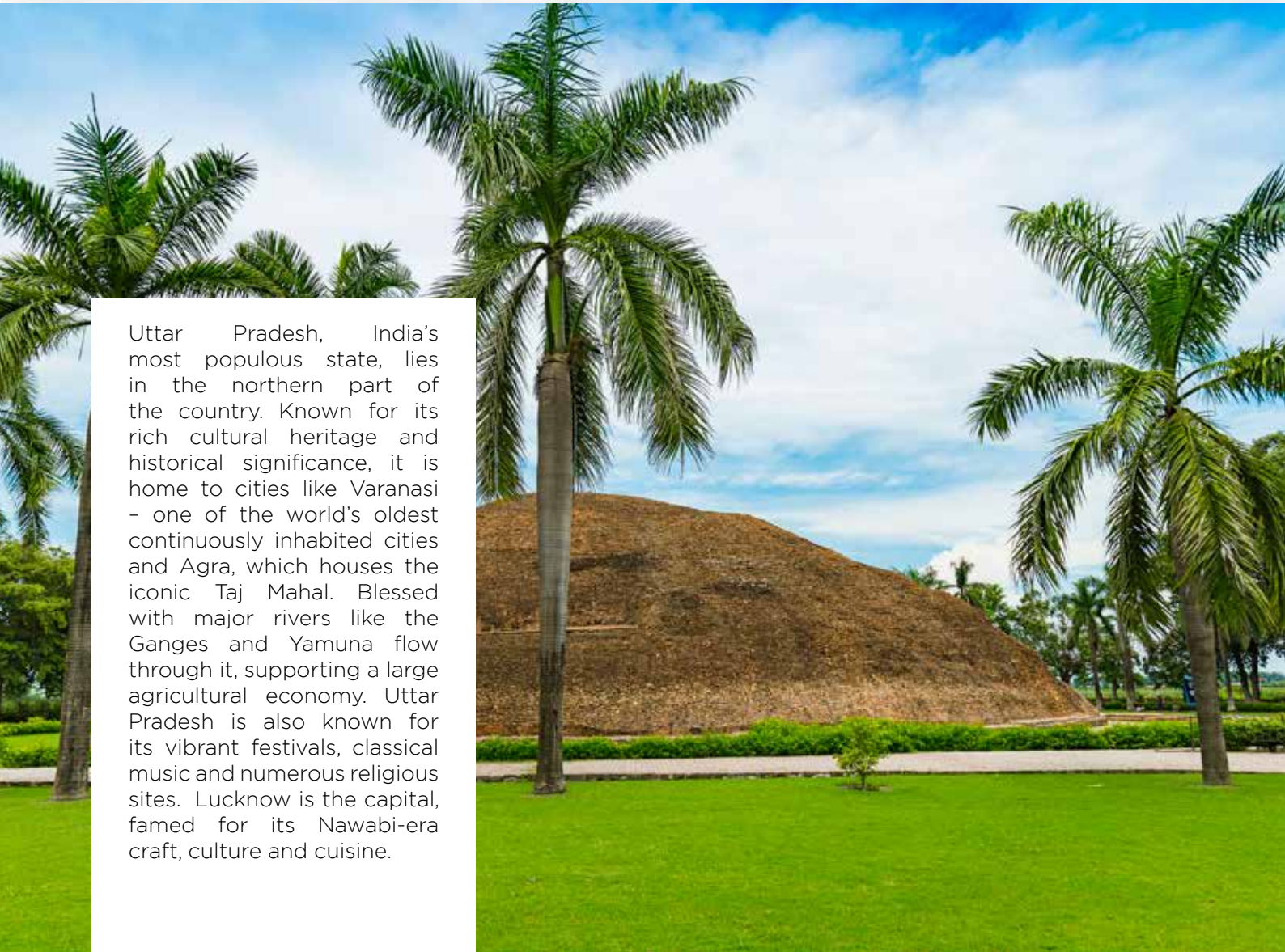
» **Tripura shares an 856 km international border with Bangladesh, one of the longest in India.** This gives tourists a unique opportunity to observe cross-border cultural influences in cuisine, language and architecture.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS



Uttar Pradesh

Tourism



Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, lies in the northern part of the country. Known for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, it is home to cities like Varanasi – one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities and Agra, which houses the iconic Taj Mahal. Blessed with major rivers like the Ganges and Yamuna flow through it, supporting a large agricultural economy. Uttar Pradesh is also known for its vibrant festivals, classical music and numerous religious sites. Lucknow is the capital, famed for its Nawabi-era craft, culture and cuisine.

Best Places to Visit

Uttar Pradesh is rich in history, culture and religious heritage. It is home to iconic landmarks like the Taj Mahal in Agra and the holy city of Varanasi. The state is centered around the fertile plains of the Ganges and its tributaries.

Nature Tourism

» **Dudhwa National Park (Lakhimpur Kheri):** A pristine wildlife sanctuary on the indo-nepal border, Dudhwa is part of the Terai ecosystem and houses rare species like the Bengal tiger, Swamp Deer and the one-horned Indian Rhinoceros.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris, bird watching, nature walks

» **Chandra Prabha Wildlife Sanctuary (Chandauli):** Nestled in the Vindhya range, this sanctuary features scenic waterfalls like Rajdari and Devdari and is rich in flora and fauna

Key Activities: Trekking, photography, wildlife viewing

» **Okhla Bird Sanctuary (Gautam Buddh Nagar/ Noida):** Located at the Okhla barrage on the Yamuna river, it attracts over 300 bird species, including many migratory birds in winters.

Key Activities: Bird watching, nature photography, boating

» **Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (Agra):** Also known as Keetham lake, this sanctuary is a haven for both resident and migratory birds; the calm lake adds to its serenity.

Key Activities: Bird watching, boat rides, nature trails

» **Kachhua Sanctuary (Varanasi):** Located along the Ganges, this unique river sanctuary protects soft-shell and hard-shell turtles, contributing to the river ecosystem's conservation.

Key Activities: Turtle spotting, river cruises, eco-awareness tours

» **Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary (Unnao):** A rich sanctuary with a serene lake, perfect for observing native and migratory birds (also known as Shahid Chandra Shekhar Azad bird sanctuary).

Lesser-Known Attractions

Beyond the famous sites, Uttar Pradesh offers serene river ghats, hidden heritage towns, ancient Buddhist locales and rural craft hubs that provide rich cultural experiences off the typical tourist circuit. Some of these lesser-known attractions include:

AYODHYA

» **Guptar Ghat:** A tranquil ghat in Ayodhya on the banks of the Sarayu, where Lord Rama is legendarily believed to have taken jal samadhi (water immersion at the end of his earthly life). It's ideal for pilgrims seeking a peaceful, reflective atmosphere away from the crowds.

VARANASI

» **Ramnagar Fort:** A historic 17th-century fort on the eastern bank of the Ganges, which was the seat of the Banaras Maharajas. It offers a glimpse into royal heritage and houses an eccentric museum with vintage cars, weapons and manuscripts related to the royal family and regional history. The fort is also known for hosting the annual Ramnagar Ramlila performances.

MATHURA

» **Kusum Sarovar:** A serene, architecturally beautiful sandstone tank (pond) near Govardhan, surrounded by ornate cenotaphs. Linked to the legends of Radha and Krishna (where Radha is said to have collected flowers for Krishna), it's perfect for peaceful visits away from Mathura's busier temples, especially at sunset.

PRAYAGRAJ

» **Allahabad Museum:** A national museum located in the lush Chandrashekhar Azad Park, which is often overlooked by tourists. It showcases a rich collection of artifacts – from prehistoric Central Asian pottery to Gupta-era sculptures, Buddhist terracotta, miniature paintings and memorabilia of the Nehru family. It offers insight into the region's cultural and historical heritage without the usual crowds.

KANPUR

» **Jhinjhak:** A small town offering a peaceful rural setting and a taste of local culture beyond the bustle of Kanpur city. Jhinjhak is known for its old temples and annual melas (fairs), giving visitors an authentic experience of village life and traditional practices in central Uttar Pradesh.

CHITRAKOOT

» **Gupt Godavari Caves:** A pair of natural caves in the hills about 18 km from the Chitrakoot town, associated with Lord Rama's stay during exile. The caves have flowing streams inside and rock formations, making them popular among adventure seekers and religious tourists alike – one cave has two natural throne-like rocks which local lore says were Rama and Lakshmana's seats.

GORAKHPUR

» **Arogya Mandir:** Established in 1940, Arogya Mandir is a Nature Cure Center set in a peaceful 4-acre campus, which has an almost ashram-like ambiance. Known for its unique architecture blending modern and traditional styles, it is believed by visitors to have healing and rejuvenating vibes. People come here for wellness therapies and it doubles as a lesser-known attraction for those interested in the history of naturopathy in India.

Key Activities: Bird watching, boating, picnicking

» **Mahoba Hills and Lakes (Mahoba):** Picturesque rocky hills and historic lakes like Rahila Sagar make this a lesser-known yet beautiful nature retreat.

Key Activities: Trekking, boating, heritage-nature photography

» **Vindhyachal Hills (Mirzapur):** A scenic and spiritually significant area with lush green hills, seasonal waterfalls and views of the Ganges river – blending natural beauty with pilgrimage sites.

Key Activities: Nature treks, river viewpoints, temple visits, photography

» **Sohagi Barwa Wildlife Sanctuary (Maharajganj):** Located near the Indo-Nepal border, this forested sanctuary is home to deer, leopards and numerous bird species. It offers a peaceful wilderness escape.

Key Activities: Jungle safaris, bird watching, nature walks

» **Parichha Dam (Jhansi):** Built on the Betwa river, this reservoir area is ideal for nature lovers and water-sport enthusiasts, offering calm waters and breezy weather.

Key Activities: Boating, fishing, picnicking

» **Chilkiya Riverbank (Pilibhit):** Part of the Pilibhit tiger reserve, this serene riverbank is surrounded by dense forests and is perfect for eco-tourism.

Key Activities: Riverside walks, jungle treks, bird and wildlife spotting

» **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (Bahraich):** A lesser-known but biodiverse sanctuary in the Terai Region, home to rare Gangetic Dolphins, as well as tigers and elephants.

Key Activities: Wildlife safaris, boat rides (for dolphin spotting), forest exploration

» **Bakhira Bird Sanctuary (Sant Kabir Nagar):** Eastern Uttar Pradesh's largest natural floodplain wetland, drawing migratory birds from Central Asia and Siberia.

Key Activities: Bird watching, boating, eco-tours

» **Belasagar Lake (Lalitpur):** A tranquil artificial lake surrounded by rocky terrain and low hills, offering a peaceful retreat especially at sunrise and sunset.

Key Activities: Boating, photography, sunset viewing

» **Lakshagrah Hill Caves (Barabanki):** Surrounded by forested hills, these ancient caves offer a mix of natural beauty and mythological intrigue (the name recalls the Mahabharata lore of the "Lakshagraha" or Lacquer house).

Key Activities: Hiking, cave exploration, nature photography

Adventure Tourism

» **Lakhaniya Dari Waterfalls (Mirzapur):** A rugged 150-meter cascade in rocky, forested terrain near Ahraura-– an adventurous trek leads to this breathtaking waterfall.

Key Activities: Trekking to the falls, rock scrambling, nature photography

» **Amangarh Tiger Reserve (Bijnor):** Once part of Corbett National Park, this reserve offers wilderness exploration with chances to spot tigers and elephants.

Key Activities: Jeep safaris, wildlife spotting, forest trekking

» **Kaimoor Wildlife Sanctuary (Mirzapur/Sonbhadra):** Set in the Kaimur Hills, this vast

FARRUKHABAD

» **Fatehgarh Fort:** A medieval fort (now in ruins) that reflects the region's military history. Situated in Fatehgarh near the Ganges, the fort was an important garrison town during colonial times. Today one can see remnants of its bastions and get scenic views of the surrounding countryside and the river. (The site is locally known but off the typical tourist radar.)

KUSHINAGAR

» **Ramabhar Stupa:** A quiet, less-crowded Buddhist site believed to be the cremation place of Lord Buddha. This large mound (stupa) set amid well-kept lawns is ideal for reflective visits and meditation. Nearby, a serene Buddha Museum and several international Buddhist temples make Kushinagar a peaceful spiritual hub.

MAHARAJGANJ

» **Sohagi Barwa Wildlife Sanctuary:** A beautiful, relatively offbeat wildlife sanctuary with diverse flora and fauna. Its lack of commercialization means visitors can enjoy bird-watching and nature in solitude. Small eco-huts and guided treks can be arranged, making it perfect for nature enthusiasts wanting to venture beyond Dudhwa/Pilibhit reserves.

sanctuary features mixed terrain (hills, forests, plateaus) and abundant wildlife for the adventurous traveler.

Key Activities: Jungle treks, wildlife watching, birding

» **Hot Air Ballooning over Agra:** A unique seasonal aerial experience floating above Agra's landscape (with stunning views of the Taj Mahal from the sky).

Key Activities: Hot air balloon rides, aerial photography

» **Kayaking & Canoeing on the Ganges (Varanasi):** Paddle through the holy Ganges in Varanasi, passing ancient ghats at dawn or dusk for a spiritual adventure.

Key Activities: Kayaking, canoeing, river exploration

» **Rock Climbing in the Vindhya Hills (Mirzapur):** The Vindhya Range offers rugged cliffs and boulders with routes suitable for climbers of various levels.

Key Activities: Rock climbing, bouldering, cliff abseiling

» **River Rafting near Ramnagar Fort (Varanasi region):** Controlled rafting zones along the Ganges- offer safe, guided rafting experiences not far from the historic Ramnagar Fort.

Key Activities: River rafting, guided water-sport adventures.

» **Chitrakoot Trek & Cave Exploration (Chitrakoot):** Hill-country trekking around Chitrakoot includes visiting caves like Gupt Godavari associated with Lord Rama's legends.

Key Activities: Hill trekking, cave exploration, rock hopping.

Heritage Tourism

» **Taj Mahal (Agra):** A sublime white marble mausoleum built by Emperor Shah Jahan between 1631 and 1648 as an expression of eternal love. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the pinnacle of Mughal architecture, drawing millions to admire its symmetrical gardens and intricate inlay artistry.

» **Fatehpur Sikri (Agra):** Emperor Akbar's grand planned capital (built ~1571–1585) around Salim Chishti's tomb. This well-preserved red-sandstone city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site showcasing an impressive ensemble of Indo-Islamic architecture.

» **Bara Imambara (Asafi Imambara, Lucknow):** Built by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784 to provide employment during a famine, it houses one of the world's largest vaulted halls with no supporting pillars and the famed Bhul-Bhulaiya maze. It stands as an iconic emblem of Awadhi architecture and grandeur.

» **Rumi Darwaza (Lucknow):** Also commissioned in 1784, this towering gateway – modeled after the Sublime Porte of Istanbul – marks the entrance to old Lucknow. Standing 60 feet tall, the Rumi Darwaza (Turkish Gate) symbolises the city's Nawabi heritage and was also a famine-relief project by Asaf-ud-Daula.

» **Prayagraj Heritage Walk (Allahabad):** Explore the confluence of spirituality and colonial history in Prayagraj. Key sites include the sacred Triveni Sangam, Akbar's Fort (built c.1583), Chandrashekhar Azad Park (where freedom fighter Azad made his last stand), the grand Indo-Saracenic façade of Muir Central College and the Mughal-era garden tombs at Khusro Bagh.

» **Hastinapur (Meerut):** A town steeped in Mahabharata legend, believed to be the capital of the Pandavas. Hastinapur today hosts ancient temples and is also a major Jain pilgrimage center with important Digambar and Shwetambar Jain temples.

» **Kalinjar Fort (Banda):** Perched atop the Vindhya Range, this formidable medieval fortress has roots dating back to the Gupta era. It withstood Mughal sieges (Sher Shah Suri died here in 1545) and offers panoramic views. Notable for its temples and sculptures carved into the hill rock, Kalinjar is a treasure for history enthusiasts.

» **Jain Temples of Deogarh (Lalitpur):** A serene cluster of 31 Jain temples dating from the 8th to 17th centuries, renowned for its ancient sculptures and architecture. Deogarh also has an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) museum on site, making it a quiet jewel of Bundelkhand's heritage.

» **Kuchesar Fort (Bulandshahr):** A restored mid-18th-century mud fort of the Jat rulers, now operating as a heritage hotel. Surrounded by mango groves and a moat, it offers immersive stays -that evoke colonial-era and royal lifestyles

» **Shravasti Ruins (Balrampur):** Once a key city in Buddha's time, the ASI-protected ruins of ancient Sravasti include Jetavana monastery remains, age-old stupas and relics that reflect the Buddha's legacy (he spent many rainy seasons here). It's a revered site for Buddhist pilgrims and history buffs alike.

» **Salkhan Fossil Park (Sonbhadra):** Spanning 25 hectares in the Kaimur hills, this unique site (on UNESCO's tentative list) preserves 1.4 billion-year-old stromatolite fossils – offering visitors a rare window into Earth's deep geological past.

» **Chunar Fort (Mirzapur):** Perched on a rocky cliff by the Ganges, this ancient fort dates back to at least the 11th century. It has seen rulers from Sher Shah and Mughal emperor Humayun to the British. Tour highlights include the Sonwa Mandap,

Sun Clock and Mughal era halls – blending deep antiquity with colonial touches.

» **Najibabad Fort (Bijnor):** Also known as Pathargarh or Sultana Daku's Qila, this stone-and-lime fort was built in 1755 by the Rohilla leader Nawab Najib-ud-Daulah. This ASI monument stands as a testament to 18th-century Mughal frontier architecture.

» **Barsana Jal Mahal (Mathura):** Overlooking a sacred kund (lake) in Barsana – the heartland of Radha-Krishna lore – this 18th-century Jal Mahal (water palace) is being restored and developed into a boutique heritage destination It reflects regional Braj architecture and will offer a tranquil cultural retreat.

» **Shukla Talab Haveli (Kanpur Dehat):** Once a historic lakeside retreat (with a royal bathing pond), this site is slated for transformation into a vibrant heritage spot featuring wellness centers, cultural programs and dining-facilities, all while preserving its old-world charm.

» **Kanak Bhawan Temple (Ayodhya):** Renowned for its ornate architecture, this palace-temple is associated with the legend of Kaikeyi gifting it to Sita. The current structure, built in the 19th century in a Bundeli style, is central to Ayodhya's Ramayana heritage and a must-visit for devotees and architecture lovers.

» **Deva Sharif (Barabanki):** A heritage bungalow at the famous Sufi shrine of Dewa Sharif (Haji Waris Ali Shah's dargah).

» **Hargaon Rahi (Sitapur):** Historic colonial-era heritage site refurbished under the Rahi heritage network, offering a glimpse into the region's past through its architecture. It is very famous for its Shiv Maidan.

» **Soron Rahi (Etah/Kasganj):** Situated near the banks of the Ghagra Ganges River, this lodging is being revived to spotlight medieval pilgrimage routes. It features regional design motifs and provides accommodation for those visiting Soron's holy sites.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Ayodhya:** Revered as the birthplace of Lord Rama, Ayodhya is home to the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and countless other shrines. The newly built Ram Mandir attracts millions of devotees. The city, steeped in the epic Ramayana, offers ghats on the Sarayu River and temples like Hanuman Garhi, making it one of India's foremost spiritual destinations.

» **Varanasi:** Often called the spiritual heart of India, Varanasi is famed for its

riverside ghats where pilgrims perform sacred rituals on the Ganges. The Kashi Vishwanath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva and the mesmerising Ganga Aarti every evening at Dashashwamedh Ghat are major attractions in one of the world's oldest holy cities.

» **Sarnath (Varanasi):** A crucial Buddhist pilgrimage site where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon. Sarnath features the towering Dhamek Stupa, ruins of ancient monasteries and the Ashokan pillar (Lion Capital of Ashoka) – all testifying to its significance as a center of Dharma.

» **Mathura:** The birthplace of Lord Krishna, Mathura's Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple marks the spot believed to be Shri Krishna's birthplace. The town's many temples and ghats along the Yamuna, especially during Janmashtami, draw pilgrims from around the world.

» **Vrindavan (Mathura):** The childhood playground of Krishna, Vrindavan is dotted with hundreds of temples dedicated to Radha and Krishna. Notable ones include Banke Bihari Temple and ISKCON Temple. The town comes alive during festivals like Holi and Radhashtami, offering an immersive devotional experience.

» **Prayagraj (Allahabad):** Home to the Triveni Sangam–the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati, Prayagraj hosts the Kumbh Mela (and annual Magh Mela) where millions gather for a holy dip, symbolising spiritual cleansing. It also has grand historic temples and the majestic Allahabad Fort overlooking the Sangam.

» **Bithoor (Kanpur):** A pilgrimage town on the Ganges linked to Lord Rama's exile. According to legend, Sita resided at the Valmiki Ashram here and gave birth to the twins Luv and Kush. The Valmiki Ashram temple and Brahmavart Ghat (where Brahma is said to have meditated) are key attractions.

» **Chitrakoot:** Spread across UP and MP, Chitrakoot is venerated as the forest where Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent 11 years of their exile. Pilgrims visit Ram Ghat on the Mandakini River, the Bharat Milap temple, Kamadgiri parikrama and the caves like Gupt Godavari, reliving scenes from the Ramayana.

» **Gorakhpur:** Known for the Gorakhnath Temple, seat of the Nath monastic order established by Guru Gorakhnath. This large temple complex is an important center for Nath yogis and devotees, especially during the annual Khichdi Mela. Gorakhpur also has the Gita Press adding to its spiritual significance.

» **Jasnathpur (Badaun):** Known for the Jasnath Sampradaya sect, attracting followers interested in its distinct devotional practices.

Culture and Cuisines

Uttar Pradesh's culture is a vibrant tapestry of festivals, classical arts and historical legacies, while its cuisine delights with rich Nawabi flavors, spicy street foods and traditional sweets. Below are some highlights.

Culture

» **Kumbh Mela (Prayagraj):** One of the largest religious gatherings on Earth, the Kumbh Mela takes place at the Triveni Sangam- in Prayagraj, where the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. Millions of pilgrims bathe at auspicious times to cleanse sins and attain salvation. This mass event, held in a 12-year cycle (with the Maha Kumbh every 12th year and Ardh Kumbh/ Magh Melas in between), draws tourists, photographers and spiritual seekers from across the globe.

» **Ram Navami Mela (Ayodhya):** Held in Ayodhya to celebrate Lord Rama's birth, this festival (around March/April) sees the city adorned with lights and flowers. Grand processions of Lord Rama's idol, continuous recitations of the Ramayana and rituals at major temples transform Ayodhya into a vibrant spiritual carnival. Devotees from all over India congregate, showcasing the enduring devotion and cultural richness of the town.

» **Krishna Janmashtami (Mathura–Vrindavan):** Celebrated with immense zeal in Lord Krishna's birthplace Mathura and his playground Vrindavan. Temples like Banke Bihari and Krishna Janmabhoomi host midnight celebrations of Krishna's birth, with devotees singing bhajans. The tradition of Dahi Handi (human pyramids breaking a pot of butter) and performances of Raas Lila (dance-dramas of Krishna's life) offer tourists a vibrant, participatory experience steeped in Vaishnavite tradition.

» **Ganga Dussehra (Varanasi):** This festival marks the descent of the holy Ganga from heaven to earth. In Varanasi, devotees take a dip in the Ganges and in the evenings, special Ganga Aarti ceremonies are performed on the ghats with ten lamps, creating an enchanting spectacle of lights and chants. It's a culturally rich experience for visitors as the entire riverfront glows with oil lamps and resonant hymns.

» **Ramlila Performances (Varanasi, Ramnagar, Lucknow):** Ramlila, the dramatic re-enactment of the Ramayana, is staged during the Navaratri period across many towns. The Ramnagar Ramlila (across the Ganges from Varanasi) is among the oldest and most elaborate, with the whole town turning into a vast stage for a month. Similarly, in Kanpur, Lucknow and other places, Ramlilas culminate on Dussehra with the burning of giant effigies of Ravana. It's a unique cultural event that draws spectators from around the world.

» **Taj Mahotsav (Agra):** A 10-day cultural fair held annually (usually in February) near the Taj Mahal, showcasing the rich arts, crafts, cuisine, music and dance of the region. Artisans set up stalls for handicrafts like marble work, zardozi and wood carvings. Folk musicians and dancers perform, giving

tourists a vibrant dose of local culture in the shadow of the Taj.

» **Magh Mela (Prayagraj):** An annual religious fair held every winter (Magh month) at the Sangam in Prayagraj. Pilgrims camp on the sandy riverbanks for a month of ritual bathing, religious discourses and devotions. It is essentially a mini-Kumbh Mela held every year, offering a slightly quieter yet spiritually charged atmosphere for visitors.

» **Bateshwar Fair (Bateshwar):** A large cattle and religious fair held on the banks of the Yamuna at Bateshwar, which has a series of 100+ Shiva temples along the river. Taking place around October-November, it combines a livestock trading fair with a religious gathering for Kartik Purnima. The fair gives a fascinating insight into rural culture and devotion, attracting both pilgrims and tourists.

» **Nauchandi Mela (Meerut):** A historic fair that has been held in Meerut since the 17th century to worship Goddess Chandi during Chaitha Navratri. It begins on the second Sunday after Holi. Nauchandi Mela features everything from handicraft stalls, rural cuisine, amusement rides, to qawwali and bhajan performances. Notably, a temple (Nauchandi Devi) and a dargah (Bale Miyan) share a common wall here.

Cuisines

» **Awadhi Biryani (Lucknow):** A fragrant, delicately spiced rice dish cooked dum style with marinated meat (often lamb) and aromatic spices. Lucknow's Awadhi biryani, with its subtle flavors and saffron hues, reflects the royal culinary heritage of the Nawabs of Awadh and is a must-try for visitors.

» **Tunday Ke Kebab (Lucknow):** Iconic melt-in-the-mouth minced meat kebabs, originally made by the one-armed chef Haji Murad Ali (hence Tunday). Blended with a secret mix of over 50 spices, these kebabs are so soft that they were said to be created for an elderly Nawab who had lost his teeth. Tunday kebabs are a quintessential Lucknow street food, served with ulte-tawe ka paratha (bread).

» **Galouti Kebab (Lucknow):** Another Lucknawi delicacy – patties of finely ground meat, tenderised with papaya and enriched with aromatic spices. Legend says they were designed for a toothless Nawab. They literally *galti* (melt) in your mouth, offering a burst of flavor; often served at famed eateries.

» **Petha (Agra):** A translucent, soft candy made from ash gourd (white pumpkin) boiled in sugar syrup. Agra Petha comes in many variants (like Kesar Petha infused with saffron, or Pan Petha flavored with betel essence). It is the signature sweet of Agra and tourists often take it home as a souvenir of their visit.

» **Bedmi Puri with Aloo Sabzi (Varanasi):** A popular breakfast in Varanasi and much of UP – deep-fried wheat pastries stuffed with spiced lentil paste (bedmi puris), served with a tangy, spicy potato curry. It embodies the robust street food culture of Varanasi and is often enjoyed on the streets or in local eateries on a lazy morning.

» **Balushahi (Varanasi):** A traditional North Indian sweet, Balushahi resembles a glazed doughnut but with a different texture – flaky and crisp outside, soft inside, soaked in sugar syrup. Often garnished with dried fruits, it's popular in Varanasi during festivals and weddings.

» **Malaiyo/Makhan Malai:** A seasonal winter delicacy unique to Varanasi – it is essentially sweetened milk froth collected by leaving churned milk overnight under the dew. Flavored with saffron, cardamom and pistachios, Malaiyo is ethereal and foamy, served in earthen cups in the morning hours – a must-try if visiting in winter.

» **Imarti (Mathura):** A bright orange, flower-shaped sweet made from urad dal batter, deep fried and soaked in sugar syrup (similar to jalebi but thicker and made in loops). Mathura's imarti is famous for its festive appeal, often served in fairs and religious events – crispy and syrupy, it delights those with a sweet tooth.

» **Thaggu Ke Laddu (Kanpur):** A famously coined "Thaggu" (rogue) sweet from Kanpur – it's essentially a besan (gram flour) laddu enriched with khoya (milk solids) and nuts.

» **Korma (Lucknow/Rampur):** A rich, creamy curry prepared with meat (or paneer/vegetables) braised in yogurt, ground nuts and fragrant spices. Uttar Pradesh's Mughlai heritage has perfected the korma – whether it's the cashew-laden white korma or the spicier red variant – making it a staple for those looking to savor royal flavours.

» **Nihari (Lucknow):** A slow-cooked, spiced meat stew (traditionally made with beef or lamb shank) that was once the breakfast of Mughal nobility. Lucknow's nihari, often paired with kulcha or naan, is redolent with aromatic spices and is cooked overnight to achieve its tender texture and rich flavor. Many old city eateries in Lucknow still serve nihari at dawn, preserving this culinary tradition.

» **Rabri (Varanasi & Lucknow):** A decadent dessert made by slow-cooking milk for hours until it thickens and layers of cream (malai) form, then sweetened with sugar and flavored with cardamom and saffron. Rabri is often served chilled in clay pots, sometimes with malpua or jalebi. Varanasi's street-side rabri (especially in Kachori Gali) is famous for its thick, grainy texture and rich taste.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Uttar Pradesh is renowned for its exquisite textiles and handicrafts, reflecting a rich artisanal heritage. From Lucknow's delicate embroidery to Varanasi's luxurious silks, the state's crafts are a testament to generations of skilled workmanship.

» **Chikankari Embroidery:** A delicate and intricate hand-embroidery style originating in Lucknow. Chikan work features floral and geometric patterns finely worked on lightweight fabrics like muslin, cotton, or chiffon. It was patronised by Mughal emperors and Nawabs for its elegance.

Key Areas: Lucknow and nearby rural areas (like Barabanki) are hubs for Chikankari artisans.

» **Zardozi and Metal Embroidery:** An opulent embroidery style using gold and silver threads (zardozi), often embellished with pearls, beads and stones. Zardozi flourished under the Mughals and is used to adorn bridal outfits, sarees and decorative textiles. Uttar Pradesh's artisans continue this legacy, blending it with modern designs.

Key Areas: Lucknow (for zardozi on textiles) and Varanasi (which also integrates zardozi in silk brocades).

» **Banarasi Silk Weaving:** World-famous handwoven silk sarees from Varanasi (Banaras) featuring intricate brocade designs with gold and silver zari. Banarasi sarees are prized heirlooms, often part of bridal trousseaus, known for their Mughal-inspired motifs (like floral kalga and bel and foliate patterns).

Key Areas: Varanasi is the epicenter; nearby areas like Mirzapur and Azamgarh also contribute with handloom clusters.

» **Brassware and Metal Craft:** Moradabad, known as the "Brass City," leads in production of brass artifacts – from engraved utensils and vases to modern décor pieces. Artisans craft traditional peetal (brass) items and also work with copper and bell metal to create lamps, figurines and utility objects. The detailed etching and enamel work on Moradabad brassware are especially renowned.

Key Areas: Moradabad for brass; other pockets include Varanasi (metal idols) and Lucknow (utility items).

» **Glassware and Lacquerware:** Firozabad in UP is famous for its glass industry, particularly for making beautiful glass bangles that are a staple of Indian adornment. Brightly colored lacquer is often applied on these glass bangles and other decorative items. Varanasi also produces lacquered wooden toys and miniature replicas of its temples and ghats.

Key Areas: Firozabad (for glass bangles, glass lamps, etc.), Varanasi (lacquer toys).

» **Terracotta and Pottery:** Uttar Pradesh has rich clay-craft traditions. Khurja (in Bulandshahr) produces glazed ceramic pottery – from tea sets to decorative tiles – in distinctive blue and other colors. Gorakhpur, on the other hand, is famous for its unglazed reddish terracotta figures (often of elephants, horses, etc.), a craft which has earned a Geographical Indication .These terracotta pieces are made with local clay and natural dyes, often depicting folk motifs.

Key Areas: Khurja (ceramics), Gorakhpur (GI-tagged terracotta) and Nizamabad in Azamgarh (black clay pottery).

» **Wood Carving:** The city of Saharanpur is synonymous with wood carving in India. Craftsmen here chisel exquisite jaali (lattice) patterns and floral designs into sheesham and teak wood to make furniture, decorative panels, jewelry boxes and even life-sized figurines. The fine craftsmanship has made Saharanpur wood furniture and handicrafts popular globally.

Key Areas: Saharanpur (for furniture, screens, decorative wood items), also Pilibhit and Lucknow have smaller woodcraft workshops.

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to April** (Pleasant, dry weather (≈10–25°C) makes this the ideal window for sightseeing, riverfront aartis, heritage walks and festivals (Diwali, Holi, Taj Mahotsav). Clear skies and comfortable days suit long itineraries across the plains.)

Non-Peak Season

» **May to September** (Intense heat (often 35–45°C); lighter crowds and value pricing. Plan dawn/dusk outings, keep activities short midday, focus on air-conditioned museums and indoor experiences and enjoy peak mango season. Frequent showers and high humidity; lush, waterfalls (e.g., Lakhaniya Dari), wetlands brim with birdlife.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» Uttar Pradesh is **home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites,** the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, among the most for any state in India.

» On October 31, 2025, UNESCO designated **Lucknow a Creative City of Gastronomy**, recognising its Awadhi culinary heritage- India's second gastronomy city after Hyderabad.

» The city of **Varanasi** is often cited as one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, earning it the title **"the spiritual capital of India."**

» Ayodhya, located in eastern Uttar Pradesh, is believed to be the **birthplace of Lord Rama**, especially after the recent construction of the grand Ram Mandir temple.

» Lucknow's famous **Chikankari embroidery** was so highly regarded that it **received royal patronage from the Mughal courts**.

» Uttar Pradesh hosts the **world's largest human gathering during the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj,** with over 100 million people attending in a single Maha Kumbh event cycle.

» The classical Indian dance form **Kathak originated in what is now Uttar Pradesh**. The word Kathak comes from katha, meaning story – and it began with itinerant bards narrating stories through dance in temple courtyards of UP. It later evolved and flourished in the courts of Lucknow (and Jaipur), gaining refinement and grace that we associate with Kathak today.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

Uttarakhand

Tourism

Uttarakhand, nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, is a pristine state known for its breathtaking landscapes, sacred pilgrimage sites and diverse flora and fauna. Often referred to as Dev Bhoomi or the Land of the Gods, Uttarakhand offers a seamless blend of spiritual experiences and nature's grandeur. From snow-capped peaks and serene lakes to vibrant local culture and wildlife sanctuaries, the state invites travellers to experience tranquility, adventure and spiritual solace in one journey. A visit to Uttarakhand promises rejuvenation, cultural richness and a connection to the untouched beauty of the mountains.

Best Places to Visit

Uttarakhand is dotted with popular destinations like Rishikesh for spiritual retreats, Nainital for scenic lakes and Mussoorie for hill station charm. Pilgrimage sites like Kedarnath and Badrinath attract spiritual seekers while Jim Corbett National Park draws wildlife enthusiasts. The state offers a perfect mix of nature, adventure and cultural heritage.

Nature Tourism

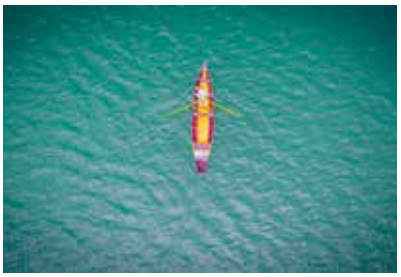
» **Jim Corbett National Park (Nainital):** India's oldest tiger reserve with diverse ecosystems ranging from grasslands to riverine belts and dense forests.

Key Activities: Thrilling jeep safaris; wildlife photography; birdwatching safaris

» **Nainital:** A picturesque hill town built around a pear-shaped lake surrounded by forested hills, Nainital is ideal for peaceful stays and boat rides.

Key Activities: Boating in the lake; pleasant lakeside walks; ideal for hill photography

» **Bhimtal (Nainital):** A quieter alternative to Nainital, Bhimtal features a larger lake with a small island in the middle and a serene environment.



Key Activities: Boating to the island aquarium; good for birdwatching; pleasant lakeside walks

» **Mukteshwar (Nainital):** Surrounded by fruit orchards and dense forests, Mukteshwar offers unobstructed views of the Himalayas and a peaceful escape.

Key Activities: Forest walks; sunrise viewing; ideal for nature stays

» **Valley of Flowers (Chamoli):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this alpine valley blooms with vibrant endemic flowers during the monsoon and offers a heavenly view.

Key Activities: Trekking through flower-filled trails; high-altitude photography; immersive nature walks

» **Kausani (Bageshwar):** A quiet hill station famous for

Lesser-Known Attractions

Though Uttarakhand is famous for its iconic temples and hill stations, there are numerous lesser-known destinations scattered across its valleys and ranges. These hidden gems offer offbeat experiences, serene landscapes and authentic encounters with local culture and nature. From secluded villages and pristine meadows to ancient forts and forest trails, these places are perfect for quiet exploration.

PAURI GARHWAL

» **Khirsu:** A peaceful hill station surrounded by oak and deodar forests, Khirsu offers panoramic views of snow-covered Himalayan peaks and is ideal for solitude in nature.

» **Doodhatoli:** Located deep in the forested ranges, Doodhatoli is a scenic ridge known for its meadows and the memorial of Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali, offering a soulful retreat for trekkers.

» **Tip n Top Viewpoint:** A quiet perch offering wide Himalayan views at sunrise and sunset.

» **St. Mary's Church:** A serene colonial-era church nestled among pine trees, offering peaceful ambience and a touch of history.

TEHRI GARHWAL

» **Sem Mukhem Temple:** Dedicated to Nag Raja (the Serpent King), this ancient temple is located amidst dense forest and holds cultural significance for the Garhwali people, yet remains off the typical tourist radar.

» **Ghansali:** A quiet town on the Bhilangna River, known for its terraced fields and riverside charm and as a base to lesser-explored religious spots in the region.

CHAMOLI

» **Gwaldam:** A sleepy town sitting between the Garhwal and Kumaon hills, dotted with apple orchards and pine forests, offering majestic views of Nanda Devi.

» **Urgam Valley:** A lush valley near Joshimath adorned with terraced fields, ancient temples and peaceful trails leading to quiet Himalayan hamlets.

RUDRAPRAYAG

» **Kartik Swami Temple Trek:** A remote and scenic trekking route leads to the hilltop Kartik Swami Temple, dedicated to Lord Kartikeya, offering stunning 360-degree views of snow peaks.

» **Basukedar:** A lesser-known temple town believed to have been visited by Lord Shiva after Kedarnath. Basukedar is spiritually significant and beautifully secluded.

ALMORA

» **Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (Interior Zones):** While Binsar is known for its viewpoints, its deeper forest paths and hidden rest houses offer a secluded experience amid rich Himalayan flora and fauna.

» **Katarmal Sun Temple:** An 800-year-old temple dedicated to the Sun God, this site is less frequented and known for its stunning hilltop setting and detailed stone carvings. (Note: Already listed under Heritage Tourism.)

PITHORAGARH

» **Didihat:** Nestled in the Kumaon hills, Didihat is a tranquil destination with panoramic views of the Panchachuli peaks and unexplored forest trails.

» **Askot Musk Deer Sanctuary (Peripheral Areas):** Though the sanctuary is known to wildlife watchers, its outer forest zones and rural pathways offer peaceful nature walks and birdwatching spots.

DEHRADUN

» **Mindrolling Monastery (Foothills):** A peaceful monastery complex with golden domes and expansive prayer halls, set away from the city bustle in Dehradun's foothills.

» **Barton Memorial Church:** A little-visited Gothic church featuring stained glass windows and quiet, reflective gardens.

NAINITAL

» **Sukha Tal Lake (Court Road):** A calm reservoir framed by forested hills in Nainital, perfect for quiet boating and birdwatching.

» **Snow View Observatory Trail:** A gentle forest walk leading to a vantage point with panoramic Himalayan vistas.

panoramic views of Himalayan peaks like Nanda Devi and a peaceful setting.

Key Activities: Sunrise photography; long nature walks; exploring tea gardens

» **Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (Almora):** A tranquil sanctuary known for oak forests and panoramic Himalayan views, home to rare birds and animals.

Key Activities: Birdwatching in dense forests; nature photography; peaceful forest treks

» **Chopta (Rudraprayag):** Often called the "Mini Switzerland of Uttarakhand," Chopta is a base for treks and offers lush meadows surrounded by deodar forests.

Key Activities: Trekking to Tungnath; camping in meadows; stargazing

» **Tehri Lake (Tehri Garhwal):** A sprawling man-made reservoir surrounded by hills, Tehri Lake is peaceful and scenic with rising popularity.

Key Activities: Boating on the lake; waterside relaxation; sunrise and sunset photography

» **Assan Barrage (Dehradun):** A calm wetland area at the confluence of the Yamuna and Assan rivers, known for migratory birds and peaceful views.

Key Activities: Birdwatching at sunrise; nature photography; peaceful strolls

» **Robber's Cave (Dehradun):** A 600-metre river cave carved within limestone hills-great for gentle rock-hopping and cooling creek baths.

Key Activities: Walking through cave pools; refreshing creek wading; nature photography

» **Malsi Deer Park (Dehradun):** A lush wildlife haven at the foothills of the Himalayas that features native deer species birds and leafy picnic spots.

Key Activities: Wildlife watching; peaceful family picnics; birdwatching

» **Lansdowne (Pauri Garhwal):** A quiet hill retreat with Colonial cottages, pine forests and lovely valley views-ideal for a tranquil escape.

Key Activities: Nature walks; scenic photography; enjoying crisp mountain air

Adventure Tourism

» **Auli (Chamoli):** One of India's best skiing destinations, Auli offers snow-covered slopes with views of Nanda Devi and a thrilling cable car experience.

Key Activities: Skiing on Himalayan slopes; snowboarding; cable car ride over the snow valley

» **Rishikesh (Dehradun):** Known globally for white-water rafting and yoga retreats, Rishikesh blends spirituality with thrilling river-based adventures.

Key Activities: White-water rafting on the Ganga; cliff jumping; camping by the riverside

» **Chakrata (Dehradun):** A quiet military cantonment town offering unexplored trails, waterfalls and caves with an offbeat vibe.

Key Activities: Trekking to Tiger Falls; exploring Budher caves; rappelling on rock faces

» **Nag Tibba Trek (Tehri Garhwal):** A beginner-friendly Himalayan trek through dense forests to a summit with snow-clad views

Key Activities: Trekking to Nag Tibba summit; overnight camping; mountain photography

» **Dhanaulti (Tehri Garhwal):** A peaceful hill station with adventure parks and forest trails, ideal for ziplining and nature hikes.

Key Activities: Ziplining over forested slopes; rope course activities; light forest trekking

» **Pindari Glacier Trek (Bageshwar):** A high-altitude trekking route in the Kumaon region leading to the majestic Pindari Glacier through rustic villages.

Key Activities: Glacier trekking; snow peak photography; camping in alpine terrain

» **Khatling Glacier Trek (Uttarkashi):** A challenging trek through remote routes surrounded by towering Himalayan ridges and pristine beauty.

Key Activities: Advanced high-altitude trekking; alpine camping; scenic photography

Heritage Tourism

» **Bageshwar Town (Bageshwar):** This historic town sits at the confluence of the Gomti and Saryu rivers and is dotted with

old temples and traditional Kumaoni architecture. It serves as a cultural hub in the Kumaon region.

» **Jageshwar Temple (Almora):** An ancient temple cluster nestled in deodar forests, these stone shrines date back to the 9th century and are dedicated to Lord Shiva. The intricate carvings and mystic aura attract cultural tourists.

» **Katarmal Sun Temple (Almora):** A 9th century temple dedicated to the Sun God, known for its unique architecture and scenic mountain backdrop. It is one of the few sun temples in India.

» **Chandpur Fort (Tehri Garhwal):** A medieval hilltop fort that offers panoramic views of the Himalayan ranges. Once used by the Chand rulers of Kumaon, its ruins retain a majestic charm for history lovers.

» **Tehri Dam (Tehri Garhwal):** While a modern marvel, the dam and the submerged old town hold historical and emotional significance. The nearby Tehri Lake attracts visitors with its vast expanse and scenic surroundings.

» **George Everest House (Mussoorie):** The former home of Sir George Everest, after whom Mount Everest is named, this colonial structure offers history and views of Doon Valley and snow peaks.

» **Lakhudiyar Caves (Almora):** These prehistoric rock shelters feature ancient carvings and paintings that give insight into early human settlements in the region.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Kedarnath Temple (Rudraprayag):** One of the twelve Jyotirlingas and a prominent Char Dham site, Kedarnath sits at 3,583 metres amidst snow-capped peaks and draws thousands of Shiva devotees annually.

» **Madmaheshwar Temple (Rudraprayag):** Part of the Panch Kedar circuit, this remote Shiva temple lies in a serene alpine valley and remains snowbound for half the year.

» **Badrinath Temple (Chamoli):** A key site in the Char Dham Yatra, Badrinath is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is surrounded by the Neelkanth peak, drawing pilgrims and nature lovers alike.

» **Hemkund Sahib (Chamoli):** A revered Sikh pilgrimage site nestled beside a glacial lake at over 4,000 metres. Hemkund

Sahib offers spiritual peace and high-altitude Himalayan beauty.

» **Yamunotri Temple (Uttarkashi):** Marking the source of the Yamuna River, this temple is the first stop in the Char Dham circuit, accessed via a steep mountain trail.

» **Gangotri Temple (Uttarkashi):** Located near the origin of the Ganga River, this temple is a vital part of the Char Dham circuit and a serene spot of reverence in the high Himalayas.

» **Neelkanth Mahadev Temple (Pauri Garhwal):** Surrounded by thick forests near Rishikesh, this temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is believed to be where he consumed the poison during the Samudra Manthan.

» **Har Ki Pauri (Haridwar):** Haridwar, one of the seven holiest Hindu cities, is where the Ganga enters the plains. One of the seven holiest Hindu cities, Haridwar is where the Ganga enters the plains. The Ganga Aarti at Har Ki Pauri, a sacred Ganga ghat where thousands gather daily for the breathtaking evening aarti and ritual dips. The Ganga Aarti at Har Ki Pauri - a sacred riverside ghat - draws thousands of devotees every evening for a breathtaking aarti ceremony and ritual bathing.

» **Mukteshwar Mahadev Mandir (Nainital):** Mukteshwar Mahadev Temple Bhimeshwar Mahadev Temple (Nainital): An ancient Shiva temple on the shore of Bhimtal Lake, it offers a peaceful spiritual atmosphere away from large pilgrim crowds.

» **Chitai Golu Devta Temple (Almora):** Dedicated to the local deity Golu Devta, this temple is famous for the thousands of bells tied by devotees seeking justice and blessings.

» **Dhari Devi Temple (Rudraprayag Pauri Garhwal):** Situated on the banks of the Alaknanda River, this temple is dedicated to Goddess Dhari, believed to be the guardian deity of Uttarakhand. The idol is unique as it is partially submerged and said to mysteriously change forms through the day, attracting spiritual seekers and folklore enthusiasts alike.

Culture and Cuisines

Uttarakhand's culture is deeply rooted in its hill traditions, folk music and reverence for nature, reflected in every festival and ritual. Its cuisine complements this heritage with simple yet flavourful mountain dishes made from local grains, lentils and wild herbs. Together they offer visitors a wholesome and authentic taste of Garhwali and Kumaoni life.

Culture

» **Kumbh Mela (Haridwar):** Held once every 12 years, this is one of the world's largest religious gatherings where millions of devotees take a holy dip in the Ganga at Har Ki Pauri. Marked by spiritual processions, rituals and an atmosphere of devotion, it draws pilgrims and visitors from across the globe.

» **Kauthig Festival (Dehradun):** A vibrant fair celebrating Garhwali and Kumaoni cultural identity. This festival features traditional music, local crafts, food stalls and folk dance performances, drawing both locals and tourists.

» **Nanda Devi Raj Jat Yatra (Chamoli):** Held once every 12 years, this grand pilgrimage and cultural procession travels through high Himalayan passes in honor of Goddess Nanda Devi. It is considered one of the most challenging and scenic spiritual treks in India.

» **Uttarayani Fair (Bageshwar):** Marking the harvest season, this fair combines spiritual rituals with trade and cultural festivities by the banks of the Saryu River, offering a colorful mix of faith and folklore.

» **Bikhauti Mela (Pithoragarh Almora):** Celebrated in April, this fair is dedicated to Goddess Durga and features traditional wrestling matches, folk theatre and stalls selling regional food and crafts.

» **Harela Festival (Almora):** Celebrated to mark the onset of the monsoon and the prosperity of crops, this eco-spiritual festival involves planting saplings, singing folk songs and performing local rituals to honor nature.

» **Magh Mela (Uttarkashi):** A spiritually significant fair held during Makar Sankranti, where devotees take a holy dip in the Bhagirathi River and participate in local religious and cultural activities.

Cuisines

» **Aloo Ke Gutke:** A popular Garhwali snack made from boiled potatoes tossed in local spices and mustard seeds, often served with poori and radish chutney.

» **Chainsoo:** A protein-rich dish prepared from roasted black gram (urad) flour, slow-cooked with ghee and garlic for a smoky, earthy flavor typical of Garhwal.

» **Kafuli:** A green curry made from spinach and fenugreek leaves, thickened with rice or wheat paste, known for its warmth and nutritional value in the cold climate.

» **Jhangora Kheer:** A sweet pudding made from barnyard millet (jhangora) cooked in milk and sugar, flavored with cardamom and dry fruits. It's a light and healthy dessert option.

» **Sisunak Saag:** A traditional Kumaoni dish made from stinging nettle leaves, boiled and mashed with spices and ghee. Prized for its unique taste and health benefits.

» **Gahat ke Paranthe:** Flatbreads stuffed with a paste of horse gram lentils and mild spices, served hot with ghee or chutney. A high-energy breakfast or meal.

Arsa and Bal Mithai: These are beloved sweet treats. Arsa are deep-fried rice flour and jaggery balls and Bal Mithai is a caramelised khoya (milk solid) fudge coated with sugar balls. Often bought as gifts, they reflect the state's rich sweet-making tradition.

» **Mandua (Ragi) Roti with Gahat:** Nutritious finger-millet flatbread served with a curry of horse gram lentils-an ideal choice for health-conscious visitors seeking traditional fare.

Textiles & Handicrafts

Uttarakhand's traditional textiles and handicrafts reflect the craftsmanship of its mountain communities, who use natural materials and age-old techniques. From handwoven woolens to intricate woodwork and copperware, these items represent the cultural essence of both Garhwal and Kumaon and make for authentic souvenirs.

» **Woolen Shawls and Pankhi:** Handwoven shawls made from sheep or goat wool, often dyed with natural colors, crafted with simple yet elegant patterns suited for the cold climate. Pankhi is a finely woven traditional woolen wrap used in the hills for warmth.

Key Areas: Almora, Chamoli, Pithoragarh

» **Aipan Art:** A ritualistic Kumaoni floor and wall art made with rice paste on a red ochre base, often seen during festivals and housewarmings. Its motifs depict religious symbols and this art is now adapted onto items like bags, bookmarks and home décor.

Key Areas: Almora, Nainital, Bageshwar

» **Ringaal (Bamboo) Craft:** Using Ringaal bamboo found on the Himalayan slopes, artisans create sturdy baskets, storage containers and furniture. These eco-friendly crafts are deeply integrated into rural life for utility and storage.

Key Areas: Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag

» **Copperware Utensils:** Traditional copper utensils-including water pots, plates and religious ritual items-are hand-hammered and believed to have health benefits. They are widely used during rituals and everyday cooking in the hills.

Key Areas: Almora, Pauri, Tehri

» **Wood Carvings:** Temples and heritage homes in Uttarakhand are adorned with intricate woodwork on doors and panels. Local artisans also create carved boxes, furniture and decorative pieces reflecting folk tales and deities.

Key Areas: Nainital, Pithoragarh, Dehradun

» **Thulma Blankets:** Thick, handwoven woolen blankets traditionally made by the Bhotiya tribes, known for their durability and warmth. Originally used in mountain homes, they are now sold as heritage textiles.

Key Areas: Chamoli, Pithoragarh, Uttarkashi

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **January to June & November to December** (Pleasant weather statewide; ideal for trekking, nature walks, pilgrimage and hill station, temple visits.)

Non-Peak Season

» **July to September** (Heavy monsoons with risk of landslides; many outdoor activities are restricted for safety.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Auli's Ropeway:** Auli is one of the few places in India that offers a full-fledged skiing resort experience, complete with a **cable car ride that is among the longest in Asia** (about 4 km long).

» **Valley of Flowers:** The Valley of Flowers, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site,** blooms with over 500 species of alpine flora. It attracts botanists and trekkers from around the world between July and September for its stunning floral spectacle.

» **Binsar's Birdlife:** Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary is home to over 200 bird species. Its **"Zero Point" offers one of the clearest panoramic views of the Himalayan peaks**, including Nanda Devi and Kedarnath.

» **Last Indian Village:** The town of Mana, near Badrinath, is known as the **last village of India** before the Tibet border. It offers visitors a unique cultural experience at over 3,100 m altitude.

» **Tehri Lake:** Created by the Tehri Dam **(India's tallest dam)**, Tehri Lake is one of the largest man-made reservoirs in India. It is fast emerging as a hub for water sports and leisure tourism in the region.

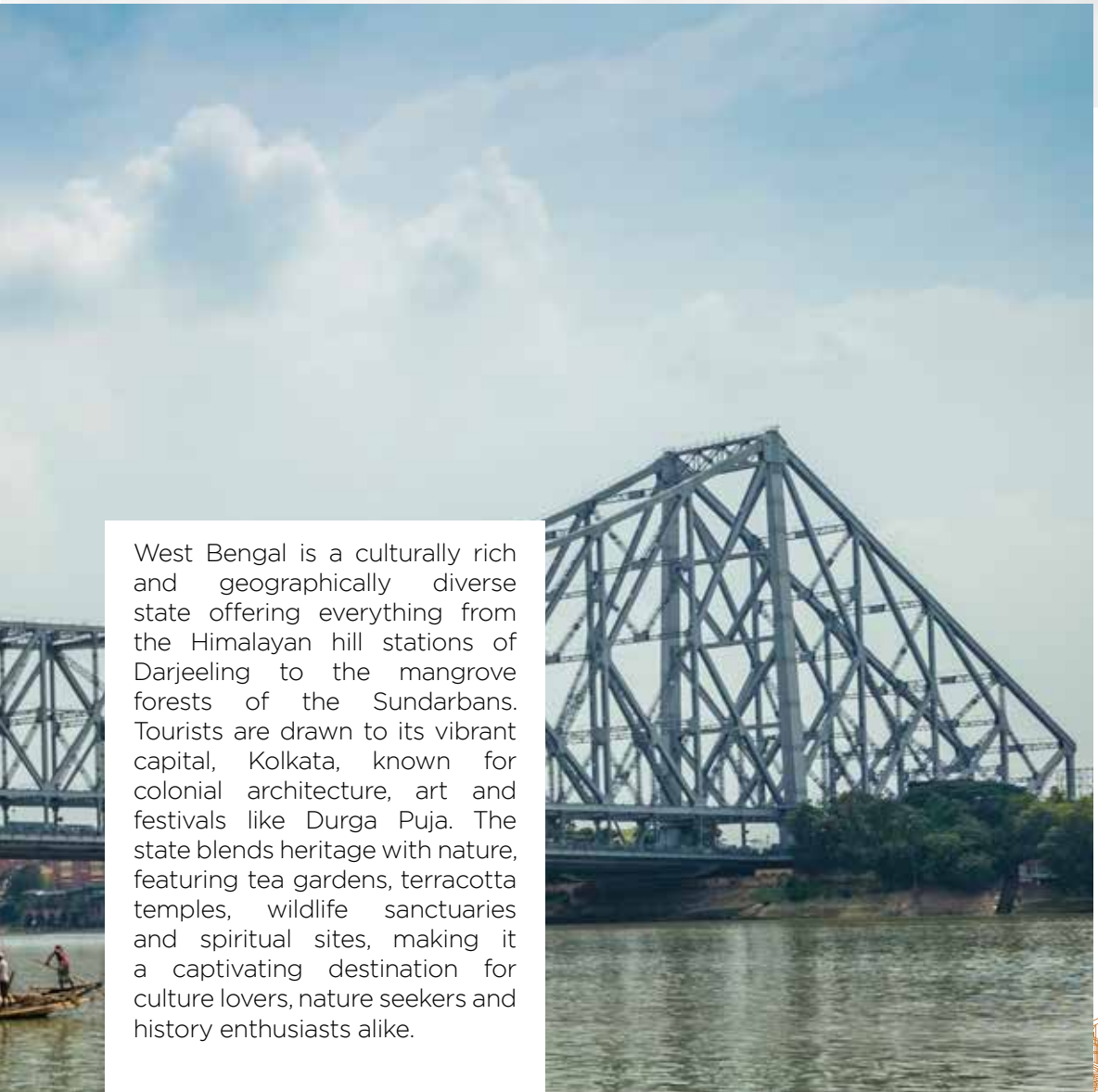
» **Hemkund Sahib:** Hemkund Sahib is the **highest gurudwara in the world**, perched at an altitude of over 15,000 feet. It draws both pilgrims and trekkers during the summer months for its spiritual serenity and natural beauty.

» **Corbett National Park:** Established in 1936 as Hailey National Park, Corbett was the **first national park in India**. It is renowned for its rich biodiversity, including the Bengal tiger and was the first park to come under Project Tiger for tiger conservation.

POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS

West Bengal

Tourism



West Bengal is a culturally rich and geographically diverse state offering everything from the Himalayan hill stations of Darjeeling to the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. Tourists are drawn to its vibrant capital, Kolkata, known for colonial architecture, art and festivals like Durga Puja. The state blends heritage with nature, featuring tea gardens, terracotta temples, wildlife sanctuaries and spiritual sites, making it a captivating destination for culture lovers, nature seekers and history enthusiasts alike.

Best Places to Visit

Tourism in West Bengal showcases a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, historical landmarks, vibrant festivals and scenic landscapes.

Nature Tourism

» **Sundarbans National Park (South 24 Parganas district):** A UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the southern part of West Bengal. It forms part of the larger Sundarbans , the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest, extending into Bangladesh; inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

Key Activities: Boat Safari; Bird Watching; Wildlife Viewing; Visiting Watchtowers; Local Village Tours; Nature Walks (in buffer zones); Photography

» **Henry's Island (South 24 Parganas):** Henry's Island is a tranquil and lesser-known beach destination located near Bakkhali in the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, India. It is part of the Sundarbans region and is known for its pristine beaches, lush mangrove forests and rich birdlife.

Key Activities: Nature Walks & Mangrove Exploration; Bird Watching; Crab Watching; Sunset Views; Boat Ride to Jambu Dwip; Visit to Bheris (Shallow Ponds)

Shantiniketan Tourism (Birbhum): A serene cultural haven founded by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and later enriched by Rabindranath Tagore, where visitors can immerse themselves in nature-integrated education, vibrant folk festivals, etc.

Key Activities: Poush Mela and Basanta Utsav; Visit Visva-Bharati University; Kala Bhavana; Rabindra Bhavan Museum; Sonajhuri Haat; and the peaceful Khoai landscapes

» **Dooars (Primarily Jalpaiguri & Alipurduar; northern Cooch Behar):** It is a beautiful region in northeastern India, located at the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in West Bengal and Assam. Known for its lush tea gardens, dense forests and rich wildlife, Dooars serves as a gateway to Bhutan.

Key Activities: Wildlife Safaris; Bird Watching; Visit Tea Gardens; River Rafting *(Seasonal)*; Nature Walks & Forest Treks; Cultural Tours;

Lesser-Known Attractions

West Bengal's lesser-known attractions include tranquil terracotta temples, lush mangrove trails, serene hill hamlets, vibrant tribal villages and colonial-era towns that offer a rich blend of nature, history and cultural depth beyond the usual tourist paths.

SOUTH 24 PARGANAS (SUNDARBANS REGION)

» **Mousuni Island:** A secluded island offering mangroves, tranquil beaches and rustic village life.

HOWRAH

» **Gadiara:** A serene riverside retreat at the confluence of three rivers near Kolkata.

HOOGHLY

» **Bansberia (Built 1679–82):** Part of the Hanseswari Temple Complex and Ananta Basudeba Temple blending Hindu architecture with tantric symbolism.

» **Sacred Heart Church:** A stunning example of French Gothic architecture, built in 1884, still active and beautifully maintained.

» **Serampore College:** Affiliated to University of Calcutta, established in 1818 by William Carey, it remains one of India's oldest educational institutions, promoting modern education and interfaith harmony.

JHARGRAM

» **Jhargram:** A culturally rich town surrounded by forests, tribal heritage and historic forts.

EAST BARDHAMAN

» **Rajbari Temple Complex:** Features beautifully ornamented temples like the Krishna Chandra Mandir, Lalji Mandir and Gopal Mandir, showcasing exquisite Bengal terracotta art.

ALIPURDUAR

» **Chilapata Forest:** A dense, biodiverse forest acting as an elephant corridor between Jaldapara and Buxa.

COOCH BEHAR

» **Rasik Bill Wetland:** A birdwatcher's paradise known for its rich biodiversity and migratory birds.

DARJEELING

» **Tinchuley:** A tranquil village surrounded by tea gardens and panoramic mountain views.

» **Lepchajagat:** A peaceful Lepcha village near Darjeeling with pine forests and Kanchenjunga views.

» **Kurseong:** The "Land of White Orchids," offering scenic tea gardens and colonial charm.

PURBA MEDINIPUR

» **Tajpur Beach:** A quiet beach getaway with unspoiled beauty between Mandarmani and Shankarpur.

PASCHIM MEDINIPUR

» **Pathra (Terracotta Temple Village):** A heritage village famed for its 200-year-old terracotta temples. It is called the Grand Canyon of Bengal.

MURSHIDABAD

» **Cossimbazar Rajbari:** A colonial-era mansion reflecting the legacy of prosperous silk traders.

PURULIA

» **Joychandi Pahar:** A picturesque hill popular for rock climbing and scenic views near Raghunathpur.

» **Garpanchkot:** A heritage site with ancient ruins nestled at the base of Panchkot Hill.

» **Banda Deul:** A well-preserved 11th-century Jain temple known for its intricate sandstone architecture.

Photography & Sightseeing; Camping & Bonfires

» **Rasik Beel Bird Sanctuary (Cooch Behar):** It is a serene wetland and birding haven nestled at the foothills of Sintura Hill.

Key Activities: Birdwatching; Boating; Wildlife Exploration; Deer Park; Crocodile Rehabilitation Centre; Nature Walks

» **Jaldapara National Park (Alipurduar):** A wildlife sanctuary located in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal, in the Dooars region. It is famous for its population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros, along with elephants, leopards, deer and bison.

Key Activities: Nice experiences for nature enthusiasts; Elephant Safaris; Jeep Safaris; Bird Watching; River Rafting; Trekking

» **Darjeeling:** It is a famous hill station in West Bengal, located in the Himalayas. Known as the "Queen of the Hills," it is renowned for its scenic beauty, pleasant climate, Darjeeling tea and views of Kanchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain.

Key Activities: Toy Train Ride; Tiger Hill Sunrise; Tea Garden Visits; Himalayan Mountaineering Institute & Zoo; Shopping at Mall Road; Trekking

» **Kalimpong:** A scenic hill station located in the Indian state of West Bengal, nestled in the eastern Himalayas. Known for its serene environment, panoramic views of the Teesta River and pleasant climate, Kalimpong sits at an altitude of around 1,250 meters (4,100 feet). Offers an exciting paragliding experience for adventure seekers.

Key Activities: Visit Monasteries; Enjoy Scenic Views; Explore Cactus & Orchid Nurseries; Visit Colonial-Era Buildings; Trek & Hike, Visit Science Centre; River Rafting in Teesta (seasonal); Bird Watching, Nature Walks; Tandem Paragliding Joyrides & Cross-Country Flights

Adventure Tourism

» **Mandarmani Beach Adventure (Purba Medinipur):** Known for its long, motorable stretch of sandy beach- one of the longest drivable beaches in India -Mandarmani offers a peaceful retreat away from the crowds.

Key Activities: Water Sports like Jet Skiing, Parasailing, Banana Boat Rides, Speed Boating, Kayaking; Land Adventures like ATV Rides, Sand Yachting Beach Biking; Nature & Sightseeing

» **Susunia Hills (Bankura):** A popular destination known for its scenic beauty, rich biodiversity and ancient archaeological significance.

Key Activities: Trekking & Hiking; Rock Climbing Camping; Nature Walks & Bird watching; Cultural Exploration; Waterfalls & Rivers; Local Crafts

» **Ajodhya Hills (Purulia):** Ajodhya Hills, located in the Purulia district of West Bengal, is a scenic extension of the Eastern Ghats known for its rugged terrain, tribal culture and mythological significance.

Key Activities: Trekking & Hiking; Rock Climbing & Rappelling; Birdwatching & Wildlife; Sightseeing & Photography

» **Sandakphu-Phalut Trek (Darjeeling):** A popular high-altitude trekking route in the eastern Himalayas, located on the border of West Bengal and Sikkim. Sandakphu, at about 3,636 meters, is the highest peak in West Bengal and Phalut is the second highest point on this trail.

Key Activities: Trekking and Hiking; Mountain Viewing; Photography; Bird Watching and Wildlife Spotting; Camping and Staying in Tea Houses

» **Teesta River (Darjeeling):** Flowing through the Indian states of Sikkim and West Bengal, it is a popular destination for seasonal white-water rafting (from Teesta Bazaar to Kalijhora). Known for its thrilling rapids and scenic beauty, the river offers an exciting adventure amid the stunning Himalayan landscape.

Key Activities: The Rafting Courses; Scenic Exploration

» **Jaldapara Elephant Safari (Alipurduar):** It is renowned for its rich biodiversity and is one of the best places in India to observe the Indian one-horned rhinoceros.

Key Activities: Wildlife Safari; Bird Watching; Nature Photography; Forest Exploration; Eco-Tourism Awareness

» **Lepchajagat–Tonglu Trek (Darjeeling):** A serene Himalayan trail ideal for nature lovers and trekkers, offering spectacular views of the Kanchenjunga range and rich biodiversity. Starting near Darjeeling, the route through dense forests and peaceful hamlets leads to Tonglu, a key stop on the famed Sandakphu Trek.

Key Activities: Trekking & Forest Trails; Birdwatching (Himalayan Monal); Sunrise Viewing (Tiger Hill/Sunrise Point); Photography & Nature Observation; Stay in Trekkers' Huts; Local Culture & Village Life

» **Neora Valley (Kalimpong):** A pristine and biologically rich forest known for its dense jungles and diverse wildlife.

Key Activities: Wildlife Spotting; Bird watching;

Flora Exploration; Trekking; Camping & Forest Healing; Village Hikes

Heritage Tourism

» **Victoria Memorial (Kolkata)**: A grand marble monument built in memory of Queen Victoria, symbolising British colonial heritage and architectural elegance.

» **Howrah Bridge (Kolkata):** An iconic cantilever bridge over the Hooghly River in Kolkata, renowned for its engineering marvel and cultural significance.

» **Indian Museum (Kolkata)**: The earliest and the largest multipurpose museum not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in the Asia-Pacific region of the world.

» **St. Paul's Cathedral (Kolkata)**: A historic Anglican cathedral known for its stunning Gothic Revival architecture and serene ambience.

» **Fort William (Kolkata):** A historic British-era fort located on the eastern banks of the Hooghly River, now serving as the headquarters of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army.

» **Writers' Building (Kolkata):** A historic red-brick colonial-era secretariat originally built in the late 18th century for the East India Company's clerks ("writers") and later served as the seat of the West Bengal government, symbolising both colonial administration and India's freedom struggle

» **Tagore House (Jora Sanko Thakur Bari) (Kolkata):** It is the 18th-century ancestral mansion in North Kolkata where Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was born, lived and now serves as the Rabindra Bharati Museum and university campus.

» **Nandan Film Centre - Academy of Fine Arts (Kolkata):** A government-sponsored cultural multiplex inaugurated by Satyajit Ray in 1985, serving as a premier venue for film screenings and the Kolkata International Film Festival.

» **Rabindra Sadan (Kolkata):** It is a cultural centre and theatre complex in South Kolkata, renowned for its grand auditorium that hosts Bengali theatre, music concerts and the annual Kolkata Film Festival and it was inaugurated in the 1960s as a tribute to Rabindranath Tagore.

» **Birla Planetarium (Kolkata):** It is one of India's major planetariums and a Kolkata landmark inaugurated in 1963, designed like a stupa, to offer immersive astronomical shows and educational exhibits.

» **Chandannagar French Colonial Heritage (Hooghly):** It is vividly expressed through its elegant pastel-hued bungalows, ornate churches, clock towers and riverside pavilions lining the Strand-a lasting legacy of its 275-year history as a French enclave.

» **Danish Tavern & Governor's House (Hooghly):** Restored colonial buildings that reflect 18th-century Danish architecture and administrative legacy.

» **St. Olav's Church (Hooghly):** A beautiful protestant church built by the Danes in 1806, showcasing European design and historic charm.

» **ISKCON Mayapur (Nadia)**: Headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a mega temple complex featuring the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, one of the largest of its kind in India.

» **108 Shiva Temples (East Bardhaman / Ambika Kalna, Purba Bardhaman district):** Built in two concentric circles, this iconic complex is a rare architectural marvel dedicated to Lord Shiva.

» **Dakhil Darwaza (Malda):** Also known as the "Salaami Darwaza," it is a majestic 15th-century red-brick gateway-over 21 m tall, flanked by towering corner turrets-that served as the grand northern entrance to the fortified Sultanate citadel of Gaur in medieval Bengal.

» **Firoz Minar (Malda):** A striking five-storeyed red-brick tower in medieval Gaur, was erected circa 1485–89 by Sultan Saifuddin Firuz Shah in Tughlaqi style as a monumental victory tower and minaret.

» **Qadam Rasul Mosque (Malda):** A 16th-century red-brick mosque - built by Sultan Nasrat Shah - renowned for housing a historic "footprint of the Prophet" relic and blending Tughlaqi architectural features in its domed sanctuary.

» **Ruins of Pandua (Malda):** The atmospheric remnants of Bengal's 14th–15th-century Sultanate capital - home to the monumental Adina Mosque, towering minars, palace foundations, mosques and mausoleums - offering a haunting insight into a lost imperial city.

» **Malda Museum (Malda):** Established in 1937 and located on Subhankar Bandh Road in English Bazar. It is the district's premier archaeological museum showcasing over a millennium's worth of regional artefacts-sculptures, coins, manuscripts, terracotta plaques-highlighting the rich history of the Pala, Sena, Gour and Pandua eras.

» **Gaur's Historic Monuments (Malda):** These are the evocative red-brick ruins of Bengal's medieval capital - from grand mosques and citadel gates to towering minars - that reflect its zenith during the Sultanate era and its slow decline after the Ganges shifted course.

» **Hazarduari Palace (Murshidabad):** Also known as the "Palace of a Thousand Doors," it is a grand 19th-century neoclassical palace built by Nawab Humayun Jah, now preserved as a museum by the Archaeological Survey of India .

» **Nizamat Imambara (Murshidabad):** The largest Imambara in India (per District Murshidabad portal) -originally built in 1740 by Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah, rebuilt in grand Indo-Islamic style by Nawab Mansur Ali Khan in 1847 and set opposite Hazarduari Palace along the Bhagirathi River.

» **Katra Mosque (Murshidabad):** It is an 18th-century red-brick complex built by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan around 1723–24, serving historically as a caravanserai, mosque, mausoleum and Muslim seminary, notable for its grand courtyard and towering minarets.

» **Motijheel (Pearl Lake) (Murshidabad):** A 350-acre horseshoe-shaped oxbow lake - once famed for pearl cultivation under the Nawabs -now beautifully landscaped into an eco-heritage park adorned with historical mosques, tombs and lush gardens as an Eco-Tourism Project by Govt. of West Bengal.

» **Wasif Manzil (New Palace) (Murshidabad):** A grand early 20th-century palace built by Nawab Wasif Ali Mirza in Murshidabad - designed in an elegant Indo-European style and situated within the Nizamat Fort Campus near Hazarduari Palace, now preserved as a museum by the Archaeological Survey of India.

» **Kathgola Palace and Gardens (Murshidabad):** A splendid 19th-century Indo-European estate - surrounded by rose-filled gardens and featuring grand Corinthian pillars, Jain temples and a museum preserving its rich merchant heritage.

» **Ras Manch (Bankura):** An iconic 17th-century brick pavilion in Bishnupur built in 1600 CE by Maharaja Hambir Malla Dev - is famed for its unique pyramidal superstructure and open-air galleries that once showcased idols during the annual Ras festival .

» **Jor Bangla Temple (Bankura):** Built in 1655, is a stunning example of Bengal's terracotta "pair-of-huts" (Jor Bangla) architecture - featuring elaborate carvings from Hindu epics and crowned by a central ratna tower .

» **Shyam Rai Temple (Bankura):** A striking 17th-century pancha-ratna terracotta temple, built in 1643 by Maharaja Raghunath Singha, renowned for its intricate mythological carvings and protected as an ASI monument.

» **Madan Mohan Temple (Bankura):** A 1694 AD ekaratna-style terracotta temple built by King Durjan Singha Dev, renowned for its exquisite sculpted panels depicting Krishna-lila, Dashavatara scenes and mythological lore .

» **Cooch Behar Palace (also called Victor Jubilee Palace) (Cooch Behar):** A grand 19th-century palace built in Italian Renaissance style by Maharaja Nripendra Narayan. It is inspired by European neo-classical architecture and showcases royal artifacts, portraits and history.

Pilgrimage Tourism

» **Kalighat Temple (Kolkata):** One of the most sacred Hindu temples dedicated to Goddess Kali, located in South Kolkata. It is considered a major Shakti Peetha, where the right toe of Goddess Sati is believed to have fallen.

» **Dakshineswar Kali Temple (Kolkata):** A famous Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Kali, situated on the eastern bank of the Hooghly River near Kolkata. Founded in 1855 by philanthropist Rani Rashmoni, it is one of the most revered spiritual centers in Bengal.

» **Belur Math (Howrah):** The headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. It serves as a prominent spiritual, cultural and philanthropic center inspired by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

» **Furfura Sharif (Hooghly):** A renowned Islamic pilgrimage center and Sufi shrine in West Bengal, famous for its rich spiritual heritage and religious harmony.

» **Bandel Church (Hooghly):** Bandel Church, also known as Basilica of the Holy Rosary, is one of the oldest Christian churches in West Bengal, established by the Portuguese in 1599.

» **Hanseswari Temple (Hooghly):** This Temple is also known as Hangseshwari Temple, is a prominent Hindu shrine dedicated to Goddess Hanseswari, a manifestation of Kali.

» **Tarakeswar Temple (Hooghly):** Dedicated to Lord Shiva in his form as Taraknath, it is a prominent Hindu shrine built in 1729 by Raja Bharamalla II of Bardhaman.. It is renowned for its spiritual significance and architectural beauty.

» **Tarapith (Birbhum)**: A renowned Hindu pilgrimage site famous for its temple dedicated to Goddess Tara, a fierce form of the Divine Mother and one of the 51 Shakti Peethas in India.

» **Kankalitala Temple (Birbhum):** This temple is one of the 51 revered Shakti Peethas in India, dedicated to Goddess Kali.

» **Chandi Mata Temple (Purulia)**: Situated at the summit, the temple is dedicated to Goddess Chandi. Visitors can reach the temple by ascending approximately 520 steps, which lead to a 360° view of the area. The temple's location atop the hill adds to its spiritual ambience, offering visitors a sense of peace and tranquility.

» **Jalpesh Temple (Jalpaiguri):** A prominent Hindu shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva, situated on the banks of the Jarda River in the Maynaguri area of Jalpaiguri District.

» **Mahakal Temple (Darjeeling):** The Mahakal Temple, established in 1782 by Lama Dorjey Rinzing, stands atop Observatory Hill, offering panoramic views of Mount Kanchenjunga and the town of Darjeeling.

Culture and Cuisines

West Bengal offers a rich cultural experience with grand festivals, folk music, traditional crafts and spiritual yatras. From UNESCO-listed Durga Puja to tribal fairs and heritage arts, the state is a vibrant destination for cultural tourism year-round.

Culture

» **Durga Puja (Statewide):** Durga Puja in Kolkata' was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021. Bengal's biggest festival with artistic pandals, idol processions and vibrant cultural experiences.

» **Kali Puja & Diwali (Statewide):** City-wide illumination and devotional fervour; Chandannagar and Barasat known for spectacular light displays.

» **Jagaddhatri Puja (Hooghly; Nadia):** Elegant idol worship with French - influenced lighting art in Chandannagar; draws large crowds for night-time views.

» **Ratha Yatra (Hooghly; Nadia):** Historic and vibrant chariot festival; Mayapur is a global spiritual destination (ISKCON HQ).

» **Ganga Sagar Mela (South 24 Parganas):** Massive Hindu pilgrimage at the Ganges' confluence with the sea; spiritual tourism highlight.

» **Tarakeswar Mela (Hooghly):** Popular Shiva pilgrimage with fairs, religious rituals and traditional markets.

» **Santiniketan Poush Mela (Birbhum):** Cultural fair founded by Tagore; features Baul music, tribal crafts and folk dances-ideal for rural and cultural tourism.

» **Sonajhuri Haat (Birbhum):** Open-air Saturday market near Khoai forest offering handicrafts, Baul music and local delicacies.

» **Bishnupur Mela (Bankura):** Celebrates terracotta temples and classical music traditions; perfect for heritage and craft tourism.

» **Kolkata International Book Fair (Kolkata):** India's largest and one of Asia's most attended literary fair; global participation attracts book lovers and cultural tourists.

» **Rash Mela (Hooghly; Cooch Behar):** Devotional fair with folk arts and puppetry; Cooch Behar's version showcases royal-era traditions.

» **Malda Mango Festival (Malda):** Agro-tourism event featuring Bengal's renowned mango varieties and rural flavors organised by the District Administration and WB Tourism during summer season.

» **Poush Parbon (Harvest Festival) (Birbhum; Purulia; Malda; Murshidabad):** Celebrated with folk music, pithas (rice cakes) and local fairs; great for immersive village experiences.

» **Basanti Puja (Midnapore; Bardhaman; Howrah):** Springtime Durga Puja; simpler rural celebrations preserving old Bengal traditions.

» **Shilp Mela (Craft Fairs) (Kolkata; Nadia; Birbhum; Bankura):** Showcases Bengal's rich handicrafts, textiles and handlooms-ideal for artisan and shopping tourism.

Cuisines

» **Shorshe Ilish:** Iconic Hilsa fish in mustard curry-a must-try monsoon delicacy that defines Bengal's love for fish and pungent mustard flavours.

» **Macher Jhol:** Traditional Bengali fish curry-a staple experience for seafood lovers exploring Bengal's everyday culinary soul.

» **Kosha Mangsho:** Spicy slow-cooked mutton curry-perfect for foodies seeking rich, festive flavours, especially in Kolkata households.

» **Bhuna Khichuri:** Aromatic rice-lentil dish-best enjoyed during rainy days or with Durga Puja bhog, often paired with fried eggplant and chutney.

» **Cholar Dal:** Sweet-spiced Bengal gram with coconut-served during festivals, usually paired with luchi (fried flatbread), making it a beloved ritual meal.

» **Shukto:** Bitter-sweet mixed vegetable curry-a traditional starter in Bengali meals, reflecting Ayurvedic balance and local vegetable diversity.

» **Alu Posto:** Potatoes in poppy seed paste - a comforting vegetarian classic, showcasing the simplicity and depth of Bengali home cooking.

» **Phuchka:** Bengal's version of golgappa-a street food sensation, found in every corner of Kolkata, offering spicy, tangy bursts of flavour.

» **Jhalmuri:** Spicy puffed rice snack-perfect for on-the-go munching, often served by local vendors at railway stations or riversides.

» **Bengali Biryani:** Mild, aromatic rice with meat and potatoes-influenced by Mughlai cuisine, a colonial-era legacy of Kolkata's Nawabi past.

» **Rasgulla (Rosogolla):** Soft cheese balls in syrup-Bengal's most famous sweet, symbolic of its dessert heritage.

» **Sandesh:** Chhena-based sweet-elegant and light, often served to guests or during festivals, with seasonal flavours like mango or jaggery.

» **Mishti Doi:** Sweet caramelised yogurt-a must-try dessert, especially chilled after a spicy Bengali meal.

» **Langcha, Pantua *(Bardhaman, Shaktigarh)*:** Deep-fried syrupy sweets-regional favourites often brought home by tourists as edible souvenirs.

» **Daab Sherbet:** Coconut water cooler-refreshing street drink, ideal for tropical afternoons in Bengal's summer heat.

» **Pithe-Puli:** Rice flour and jaggery sweets-traditional winter treats made during Makar Sankranti, offering a taste of Bengal's rural celebrations.

» **Nolen Gur Delicacies:** Sweets made with date palm jaggery-seasonal winter delights, drawing sweet lovers to Bengal between December and February.

Textiles & Handicrafts

West Bengal is renowned for its rich tradition of textiles and handicrafts, which reflect the state's cultural diversity, skilled craftsmanship and artistic heritage. The crafts are often linked to specific regions and communities, with many techniques passed down through generations.

» **Tant Sarees:** Lightweight cotton sarees with bold borders and vibrant colours.

Key Areas: Fulia (Nadia), Shantipur (Nadia), Phulia Haat, Kolkata (Gariahat & Dakshinapan)

» **Baluchari Sarees:** Silk sarees with mythological motifs woven into the pallu.

Key Areas: Bishnupur (Bankura), Kolkata (Govt emporiums)

» **Kantha Stitch:** Hand-embroidered quilts and sarees made with running stitches.

Key Areas: Birbhum, Bolpur-Santiniketan, Murshidabad, Kolkata craft stores

» **Dhakai Jamdani:** Jamdani sarees of Bengal; inspired by Dhaka's heritage craft; fine muslin sarees with floral motifs, of Mughal origin.

Key Areas: Nadia; Purba Bardhaman

» **Garad & Korial Sarees:** Silk sarees in red and white, traditionally worn during pujas.

Key Areas: Murshidabad, Kolkata sari markets

» **Terracotta Art:** Decorative figurines, plaques and temple-style pottery.

Key Areas: Bishnupur (Bankura), Kumartuli (Kolkata)

» **Dokra Metal Craft:** Tribal brassware made with lost-wax casting technique.

Key Areas: Bankura; Purulia; Birbhum; Bardhaman

» **Wood Carving and Masks:** Hand-carved wooden items and traditional folk masks.

Key Areas: Purulia (Chhau masks), Kushmandi (Dakshin Dinajpur)

» **Clay Dolls & Kumartuli Idols:** Handmade clay figurines and Durga idols.

Key Areas: Kumartuli (North Kolkata)

» **Patachitra (Scroll Painting):** Folk scroll art with songs narrating mythological stories; recognised as GI-tagged craft of Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal (2018).

Key Areas: Naya Village (Pingla, Paschim Medinipur)

Best Time to *Visit*

Peak Season

» **October to June** (Pleasant weather, ideal for sightseeing and attending festivals like Durga Puja; visit to hill stations like Darjeeling.)

Non-Peak Season

» **July to September** (Warm and humid in the plains, but good for visiting hill stations, monsoon season with heavy rainfall, flooding in plains and landslides in hilly areas.)

DID YOU KNOW?

» West Bengal is home to the **Sundarbans**, **the largest mangrove forest in the world** and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of the few places in the world where Royal Bengal Tigers are found in a mangrove habitat.

» The cultural capital, **Kolkata, was the first capital of British India** and is known for its colonial architecture, art galleries and the iconic Howrah Bridge.

» **The ancient terracotta temples of Bishnupur showcase exquisite craftsmanship** and are a major attraction for history and art lovers.

» The annual **Durga Puja** festival in West Bengal **is one of the largest cultural festivals in the world, attracting millions of tourists** with its elaborate decorations, rituals and celebrations.

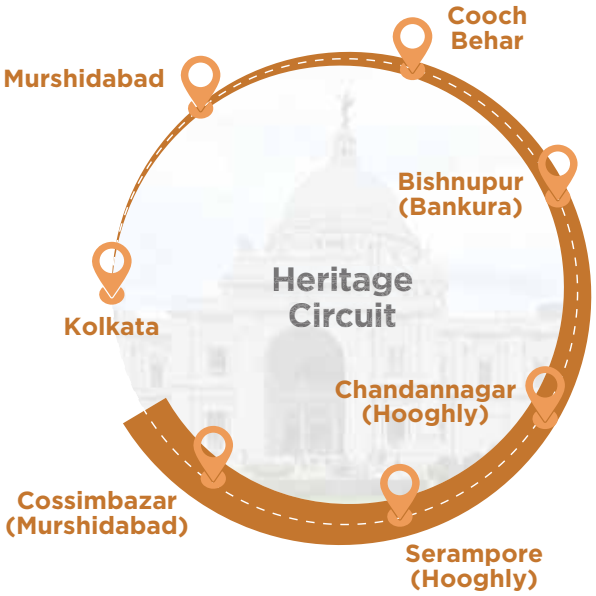
» The **Sunderbans Tiger Reserve** is the only place in the world where you can see the **Royal Bengal Tiger** in its natural mangrove habitat.

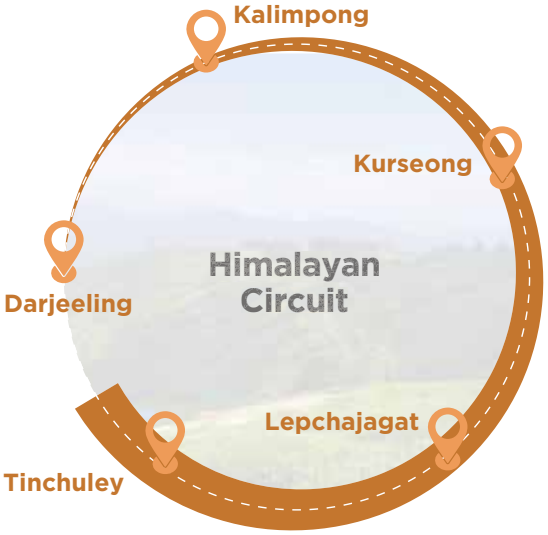
» **Shantiniketan,** founded by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, is a unique university **town promoting arts, music and literature, attracting visitors worldwide.**

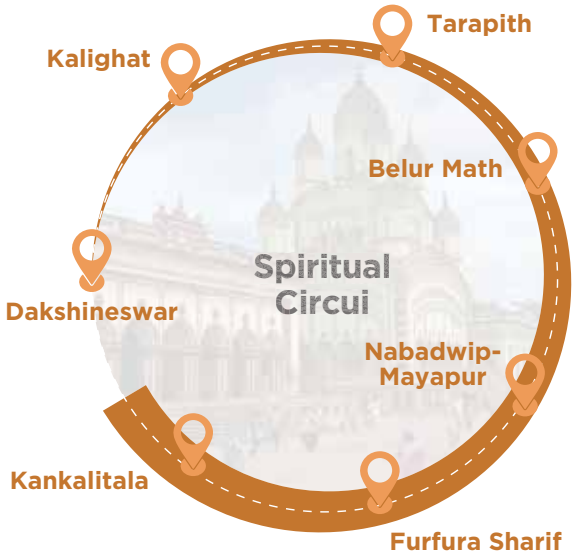
» West Bengal's **Kolkata Tram** system is the **oldest electric tram system in Asia** and offers a charming way to explore the city.

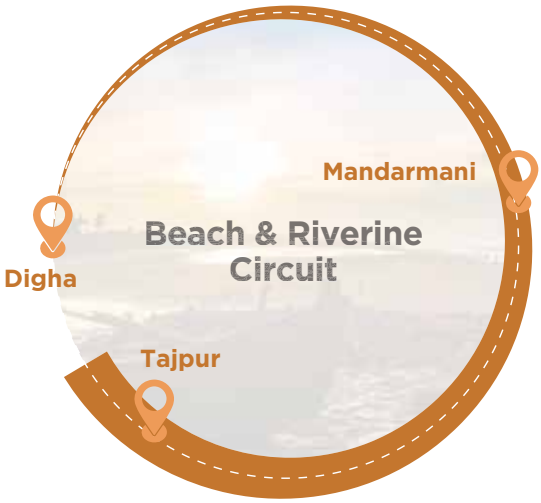
» The **Ganga Sagar Mela,** held at the confluence of the Ganges and the Bay of Bengal, is **one of the largest religious gatherings in India,** drawing pilgrims from across the country.

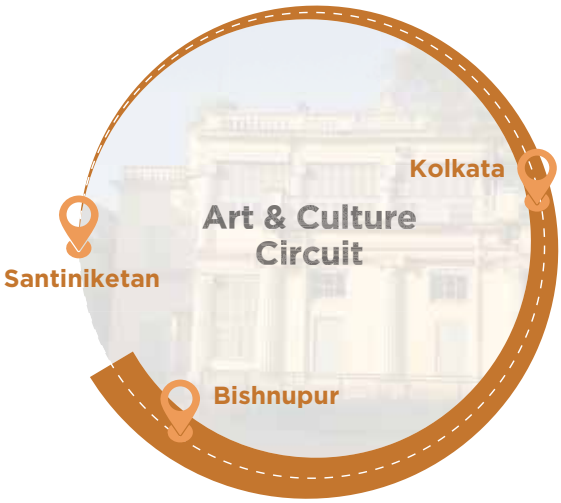
POPULAR TOURISM CIRCUITS











सत्यमेव जयते

NITI Aayog