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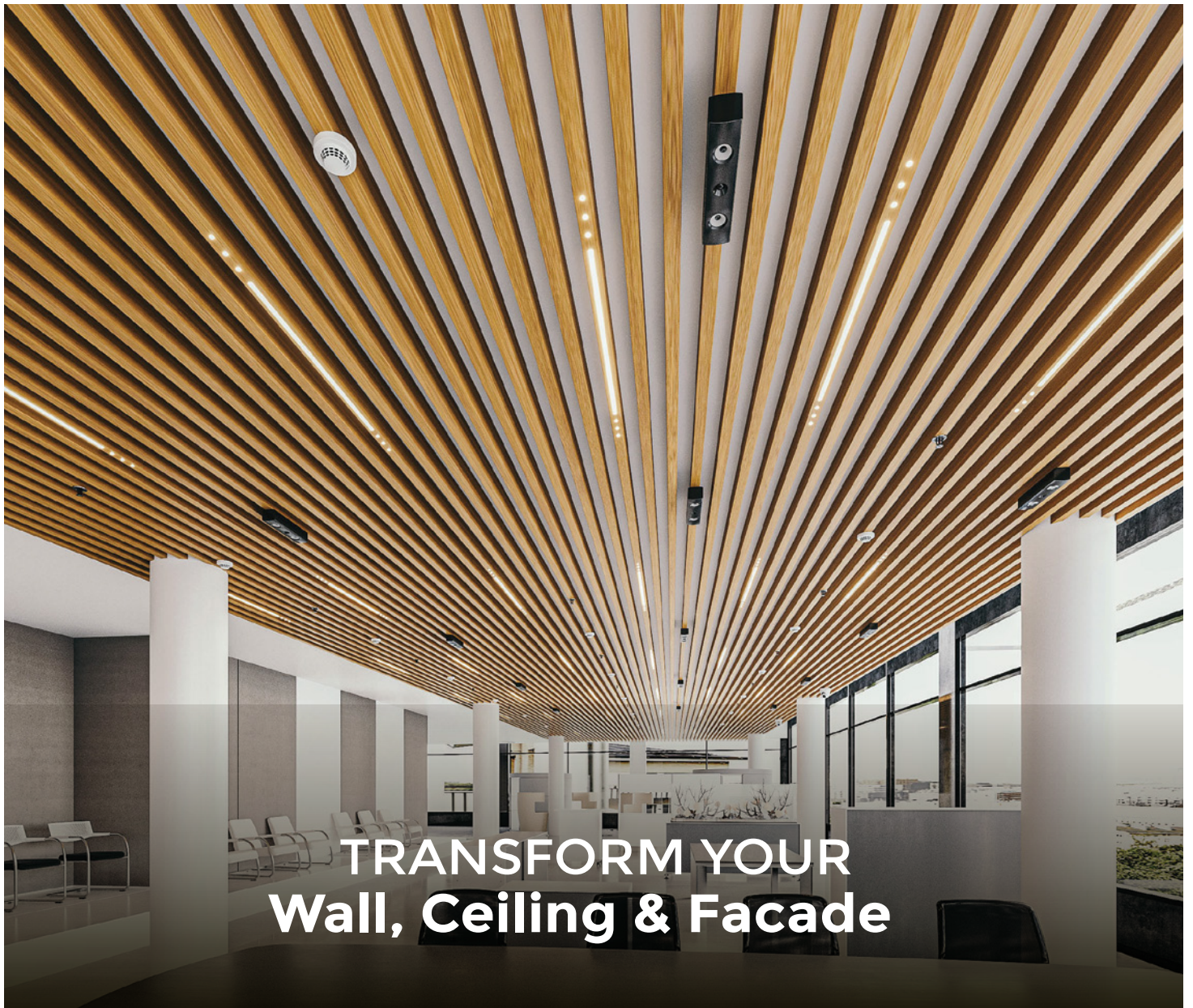
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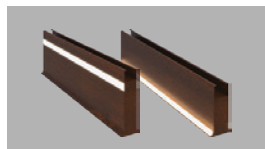
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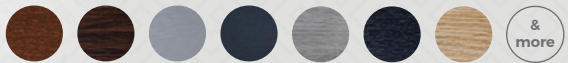
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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's the time of merriment and cheer, of gratitude and hope, of warm embraces and mugs of hot chocolate. As 2024 ends, it opens the doors to a fresh year—a year of unlocking limitless possibilities.

Our merger with Vistara has done just that—making accessible new destinations for you to explore. Our Cover Story highlights experiences in three such places. You can walk amidst lions in the wild in Mauritius' Casela Nature Parks or hike up to Jebel Hafit in Abu Dhabi, setting up a tent on the mountaintop, witnessing a clear sky with stars to make your desert holiday magical. If you're a coffee aficionado, come with us to see how Kopi Luwak, the world's costliest coffee, is processed in Bali.

In keeping with the spirit of the season, take a trip to Bath, as the town's neoclassical buildings come alive, bedecked with lights and Christmas cheer.

However, if you prefer a quiet getaway to reflect on the year gone by, a trek to the surreal Dachigam National Park in Kashmir, amid alpine lakes and elusive Himalayan animals, may just be what you seek. If adventure is your thrill, head to Muscat for a short, exciting break, where you can pack in sightseeing, a sunset dhow cruise, and some souvenir shopping at the souq.

As you choose where your wanderlust takes you, let us be the wind beneath your wings, as we now operate over 8,300 weekly flights, connecting over 100 domestic and international destinations. You dream it, we help you do it.

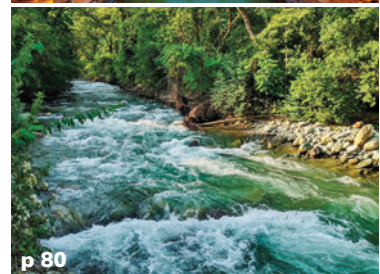
Let's come together to end 2024 by raising a toast #ToLimitlessPossibilities

Happy reading and Namaste!

— **Namaste.ai** Editorial Team



EDITOR'S PICK OF THE MONTH
A curated fusion of the finest events, travels, exquisite cuisine, and enriching experiences, presenting a snapshot of life's vibrant mosaic.



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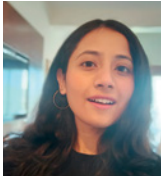
WHERE NEXT?

EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN

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@tejashee_kashyap

A cat lover with a passion for exploring the world's most beautiful corners, Tejashee is an independent lifestyle writer dividing her time between New Delhi and Guwahati. Always on a quest to uncover stories of culture and charm, she spends her days seeking out hidden gems.

↓ page 20



Mohit Joshi

A Travel and Destinations Expert at Skyscanner, he has a deep understanding of the travel landscape and a wealth of knowledge when it comes to travel hacks and tips to score a good deal. Outside of work, Mohit enjoys playing tennis, organising board game events, and capturing the essence of his journeys through photography.



Deepali Dhingra

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An independent journalist based out of New Delhi, she has several interests and writes about food, travel, culture, and films. Theatre is her first love and she tries to watch as many good plays as she can.

↓ page 38



Teja Lele

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She is an editor who writes on architecture, travel, food, and lifestyle. Teja trained as an architect, only to find that her love for words outweighed that for architectural drawings. She calls herself a wordsmith and loves to read, watch crime shows, and believes the best stories are found between the pages of a passport.



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A public relations professional who is currently an independent writer, Nagpur-based Chandreyi chronicles her travels across the Indian wilderness through the lens of conservation. A foodie at heart, she also authors stories on cuisine and culture. Her articles have been featured in numerous publications, in India and abroad.

↓ page 80



Tanayesh Talukdar

@Tanayesh

A photographer and travel blogger by passion, Tanayesh loves to document and write about heritage, history, family travel, and food. He has a penchant for preserving vanishing art forms that define Indian culture.

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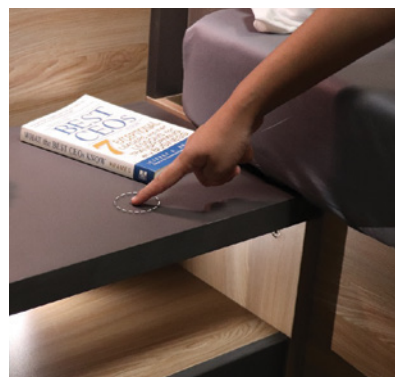
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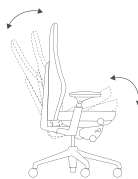
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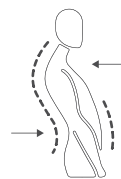
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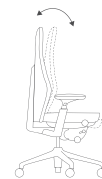
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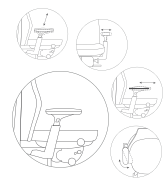
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TRULY INDIA

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An aerial view of the Uluwatu Temple bathed in early morning rays, in Bali, Indonesia
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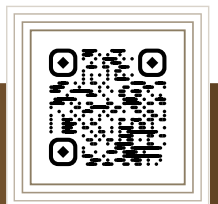
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EXPLORE THE UNEXPLORED

Extraordinary experiences
that inspire you to get out of your comfort
zone and push the boundaries of travel

THE TASTE TEST

Discover the unique flavour of Kopi Luwak, the world's costliest coffee, in Bali

words by
Tanayesh Talukdar



It's not every day that you get to witness how the world's most expensive coffee is produced. So, one morning, in Nusa Dua, Bali, I woke up more excited than usual because I was going to a farm to taste Kopi Luwak, an exclusive brew processed in the most intriguing way.

On the 40-minute drive to the farm, I asked our guide, Nyoman, how beans from the droppings of the Asian palm civet (*luwak*), became a gourmet treat. The story goes that in the 19th century, plantation workers in Indonesia— forbidden by Dutch colonists to pick beans for their own consumption— soon discovered that coffee beans were part of the digestive leftovers of the *luwak*. They started sorting the beans from the droppings, and roasting and brewing it for themselves. Soon, word spread among the Dutch plantation owners, who were surprised by its unique flavour and aroma. They started exporting it; since it couldn't be mass-produced, it became coveted and, naturally, expensive.

At the farm, I could smell the aroma in the air. As I entered, I saw a pair of big eyes looking at us. The civet is a nocturnal animal with a greyish-black coat and a tail resembling that of a cat. I was asked to sit on a bamboo chair and a lady brought us cups of coffee. She explained that the *luwak* coffee from Arabica beans is the most sought-after. Blown away by the aroma, I took a sip—a

little brown in colour, almost chocolatey. The enzymes in the civet's digestive tract reduce the acidity of the coffee, giving the brew a pale hue. Extremely smooth, it tasted a bit earthy, like a diluted chocolate shake.

The process goes like this: the digestive leftovers of the *luwak* are collected in the morning, cleaned and sun-dried. They have to be collected within 24 hours else the beans get fermented and can't be used. The remaining process of roasting is the same as other coffees.

Interestingly, no two coffee beans will have the same taste—this depends on what time of the night the civet ate the coffee berry, how long it was there in the digestive tract, how soon it was collected and processed, and most interesting, what the civet's mood was.

Mesmerised, I bought two packets of the world's most expensive coffee to add to my collection. Sometimes when I miss Indonesia, I brew a cup. The aroma is always a revelation, taking me back to that day when I tasted this special beverage.

GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Bali from Delhi.

FACING PAGE
Savouring a cup of the unique Kopi Luwak is one of Bali's most quintessential experiences

TOP TO BOTTOM
The roasting procedure yields a unique aroma and flavour; Asian palm civets are integral to the Kopi Luwak experience; Luwak coffee being brewed in a coffee machine.



BEST TIME TO VISIT

July to September is ideal for a trip to a coffee plantation. However, if you plan on visiting in December, you can still see how these beans are collected, sorted, and processed.

ROAR AND SOAR

Take in aerial views of an underwater waterfall and embark on a thrilling walk alongside majestic lions In Mauritius

words by **Rupali Dean**



TOP AND BOTTOM

The Le Morne monolith offers spectacular views of the underwater waterfall; Visitors can not just get close but actually walk with lions at Casela Nature Parks.

FACING PAGE

Top to bottom: The thrilling zipline at Casela Nature Parks; The Park also has a lion safari; Other adventure activities also abound at this destination.

Mauritius is a slice of paradise I find myself longing to revisit. This serene island nation, volcanic in origin, rests on a submarine plateau and boasts its very own time zone. In the south lies its most iconic landscape: Le Morne Brabant, a basalt monolith and UNESCO World Heritage Site that overlooks the mesmerising Underwater Waterfall. Contrary to its name, this

phenomenon is an optical illusion created by silt cascading over the ocean shelf. Though swimming in these waters is safe, getting close to the illusion is a task for the adventurous.

For the truly daring, a helicopter tour offers an exhilarating perspective. Flying over the clear turquoise waters, I could see the sand tumbling thousands of metres into the abyss. It's a natural rarity that I felt fortunate to have experienced.



BEST TIME TO VISIT

The ideal months to see the underwater waterfall are **September to December**, as low rainfall ensures perfect helicopter ride conditions. **Winter** is also most apt for an unforgettable walk with the lions.



GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Mauritius from Mumbai.



My adrenaline still high, the next day, I discovered the vibrant Casela Nature Parks, where the thrilling ‘Walk with Lions’ offers daily adventures. Our engaging guide emphasised the importance of following instructions and keeping our wooden sticks visible. As the gates swung open, the handlers brought forth the majestic big cats. I found myself beside two magnificent beasts—a hefty 150kg-male and a gentle 1-year-old lioness. As we

followed their leisurely pace, the guide reminded us to avoid squatting, making eye contact or stepping ahead. Over the next hour, we witnessed the lions’ agility as they leapt for treats and climbed trees, with moments to gently caress them and even hold their tails. The thrill peaked when they lay by a tree, allowing us to take photos next to their powerful jaws. The beaches are gorgeous, but I’m glad I discovered a totally new side to Mauritius.

A DRIVE TO REMEMBER

Take a trip to Jebel Hafit in the heart of the UAE
where desert sands meet a regal mountain

words by **Tejashee Kashyap**





Left and right: Getty Images; Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi

FACING PAGE

The road to the summit of Jebel Hafit mountain involves some thrilling twists and turns

THIS PAGE

Jebel Hafit offers three camping experiences (basic, fully-serviced, and glamping)



For the longest time, the Middle East had an urban view—ultra-modern skylines, colossal shopping malls, and vast, arid stretches. So, the idea of a road trip in the UAE, as suggested by my loved ones, didn't really spark images of adventure or cultural discovery, until I found myself heading out of Abu Dhabi towards Al Ain. That's when this perception began to change.

Our destination was the summit of Jebel Hafit mountain, the second-highest peak in the UAE. It is part of the Jebel Hafit Desert Park, a rugged haven for those seeking more than just sand and sun.

Whizzing fast on the as-smooth-as-butter E22 Abu Dhabi-Al Ain highway is a scenic delight. As we approached the hilly range, the landscape opened to an awe-inspiring sight, where golden dunes stretched like waves and, somewhere far

away, palm trees hinted at secret oases.

A little more than two hours later, after some thrilling twists and turns, we were at the summit. A surreal view of jagged mountain ridges and rocky trails from prehistoric times awaited us. There was a quietness that felt ancient and, in the pale morning light, the terrain was painted in muted shades of amber and sienna, giving off an almost ethereal glow.

Happen to be an adrenaline junkie? From biking to hiking trails, the desert park offers everything you need to get your adrenaline pumping. Navigate uneven routes that wind through rocky paths and dunes or take scenic walks. This is also a wildlife lover's paradise, with numerous spectacular birds and Arabian tahr to spot. For those wanting a slower pace, camel rides are a fun, leisurely way to soak in the surroundings. If you still



GETTING THERE
Air India flies non-stop to Abu Dhabi from Mumbai.



BEST TIME TO VISIT

The pleasant temperatures from **October to April** make it the perfect time for outdoor activities and sunset viewing.

cannot get enough of the great outdoors, overnight glamping under a star-studded sky is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Choose one of the park's bubble tents for an unfiltered view of the sky.

The park was declared the UAE's first World Heritage Site in 2011, due to the presence of archaeological remains from more than 8,000 years ago and 5,000-year-old tombs. Many of these revealed the importance of maritime trade across the Arabian Gulf in the past.

TOP AND BOTTOM
The Park offers a variety of outdoor activities, including camping, hiking, biking, and wildlife spotting; The Green Mubazzarah Park is a lush plain at the bottom of the mountain.

After spending a memorable day here, I realised that it's during the glorious sunset hour that the park looks its best. From the mountain top, the terrain was bathed in oranges, pinks, and purples. Within minutes, the magical spectacle faded into dusk—a fitting end to the day that was outlined in so many shades of adventure and fun.

THE PEOPLE

30 EXPERT SPEAK 38 INSPIRING INDIA



STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

Singer and songwriter Bryan Adams speaks to us ahead of his India tour

Adams will be performing in India for the sixth time

Q&A | Bryan Adams



"I ENJOY THE SIMPLE THINGS"

Rockstar Bryan Adams on all the things he enjoys about India—his favourite city, the dish he loves, and what draws him to the country

words by **Mignonne Dsouza**

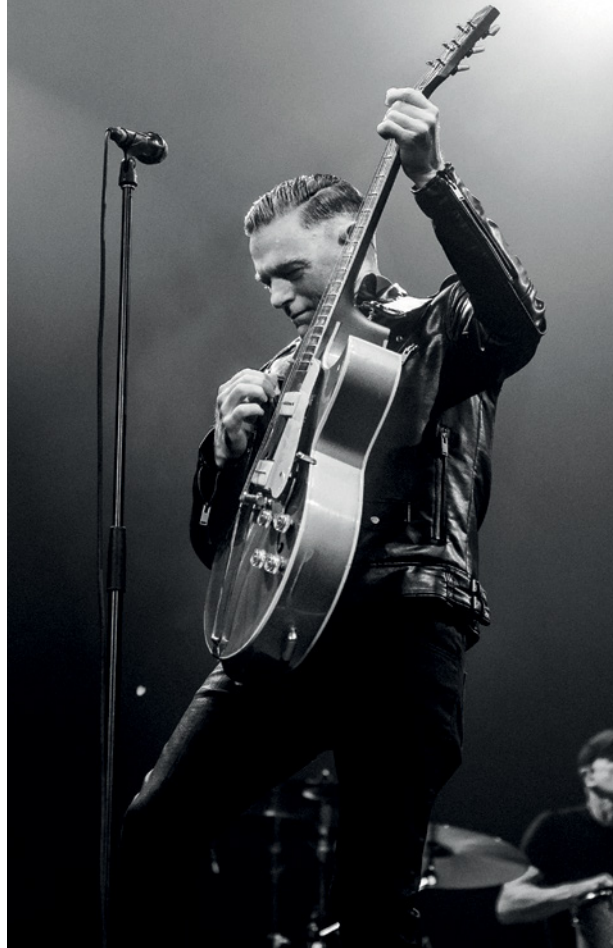
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YOU'VE BEEN VISITING INDIA FOR MANY YEARS. WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU NOTICED?

The concert scene has grown massively; the audience is more diverse and there's a greater passion for live music.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT VISITING INDIA?

The energy and warmth of the people here.

FAVOURITE CITY IN INDIA?

It's hard to choose, but I have a soft spot for Mumbai.

ANY INDIAN FOOD OR DRINK YOU'VE TRIED AND LOVED?

I love dal.

A DESTINATION WHERE YOU FIND PEACE (IN A SPIRITUAL CONTEXT)?

The mountains have always given me a sense of peace—whether in Canada or elsewhere. Being close to nature calms me.



THE [INDIAN] AUDIENCE IS MORE DIVERSE AND THERE'S A GREATER PASSION FOR LIVE MUSIC."

HOW DO YOU UNWIND?

I enjoy the simple things—playing music, spending time with loved ones, and getting outside for a walk.

PEOPLE FLOCK TO YOUR CONCERTS; ANY SPECIAL VENUE WHERE YOU GO TO LISTEN TO MUSIC?

I love visiting small, intimate venues. There's something about connecting with an audience in that space—it feels more personal.

'SO HAPPY IT HURTS' INDIA TOUR DATES FOR DECEMBER

8th: Aquatica, KOLKATA

10th: RBDSA, SHILLONG

12th: Backyard Sports Club, GURUGRAM

13th: Nesco, MUMBAI

14th: Terraform, BENGALURU

16th: GMR Arena, HYDERABAD

17th: Bambolim Athletic Stadium, GOA

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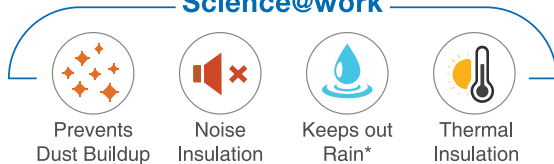
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Close your eyes and think of a perfect escape for your much-awaited winter vacation—a place where nature's beauty unfolds in every direction, the air is crisp, and every moment is wrapped in luxury and emotion. A place where the outside world fades into the background, leaving you with nothing but serenity and indulgence. It's at **ZANA Luxury Resorts**, where your dreams come to life at three of India's most iconic destinations—Jim Corbett, Udaipur, and Ranthambore.

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ZANA LAKE RESORT, UDAIPUR – *with Udaipur's best lake views*

Imagine waking up to the soft ripples of a shimmering lake, the golden hues of dawn reflecting off the waters. With the majestic mountains framing the backdrop, this resort offers a lakeside retreat that exudes both luxury and tranquility.



ZANA FOREST RESORT, RANTHAMBORE – *where luxury meets the wild*

Just a four-hour drive from the bustling heart of Delhi NCR, and a mere kilometre from Sawai Madhopur railway station, lies a gem—ZANA Forest Resort, Ranthambore. As you arrive at this sprawling six-acre sanctuary, you are welcomed by nature's untouched beauty.

The gentle rustling of leaves, the distant call of wildlife, and the rich scents of the forest invite you to step into a mesmerising world where the wild meets the exquisite.

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Provence's lavender fields are a huge draw for tourists

LOOK BEYOND

The search for community bonding is reshaping travel behaviour: shared experiences will dominate in 2025

words by Mohit Joshi

ARE YOU GAME?

For Gen Z, gaming isn't a hobby—it's a way to experience the world. Such iconic games as *Marvel's Spider-Man*, based in New York, USA, and *Assassin's Creed: Odyssey*, set in Athens, Greece, are inspiring 57 per cent of gamers to book trips inspired by virtual adventures.

Ready to swap your usual sightseeing itinerary for something unforgettable? Travel is transforming from classic landmarks into immersive and exclusive adventures. In 2025, travellers are seeking experiences they can share with others—from watching their favourite sport to gazing at the Milky Way. Whether you're an art connoisseur, a hardcore

gamer or simply have a green thumb, there's a place for you alongside like-minded individuals. Skyscanner's Travel Trends 2025 report brings you six key global trends that will play a role in shaping your next big holiday.

HORTICULTURE

Travellers are flocking to garden getaways to reconnect with nature. In India, 90 per cent of travellers say they can't

resist visiting beautiful gardens while on holiday. Floral tourism is blooming—think ethereal cherry blossoms in Shillong, vibrant tulip fields of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, and the fragrant lavender fields of Provence, France. Data shows a growing demand for trips timed to coincide with these floral events, as travellers chase serene landscapes to relax and rejuvenate—and get some picture-perfect moments.

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Phuket and Malé are popular wellness destinations; Travellers love to explore immersive museums; Sports tourism is on the rise.

ASTRO TOURISM

Whether it's chasing the Northern Lights or simply soaking in the beauty of a meteor shower, astro-adventures are becoming the ultimate way to escape city lights. Tromsø, Norway, is one of the emerging tourist spots to catch the charm of the aurora.

ART-VENTURE

No longer is art just something to be viewed—it's to be lived. In 2025, expect art to surround and engage you, and come to life. Nearly 79 per cent of Indian travellers are looking for immersive art explorations. Destinations like Tokyo's 'TeamLab Borderless' Digital Art Museum and art spots

in Seoul and London offer multisensory adventures that are redefining how we connect with art.

SPORTS MODE

The thrill of live sports is about to take over travel plans. Globally, tourists are swapping their couches for seats in stadiums and in India, 53 per cent are eager to dive into the electrifying atmosphere of live sports, both at home and abroad. Ahead of the recent Formula 1 matches, there was a significant surge in flight bookings for Abu Dhabi and Singapore. Whether it's cricket, football, F1, or other global tournaments, the rise of sports tourism is undeniable,

with nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of Indians planning to immerse themselves in the thrill of live games.

RESET GETAWAYS

Wellness travel is now more than just spas and yoga. Travellers are looking for new ways to recharge, boost resilience, and add years to their lives. In 2025, 70 per cent of tourists in India are seeking experiences that prioritise their health and well-being, making it the perfect time to embrace such holidays. Phuket (Thailand) and Malé (the Maldives) are some popular wellness destinations. Forget the old 'treat yourself' mindset—2025 is all about lasting self-care.

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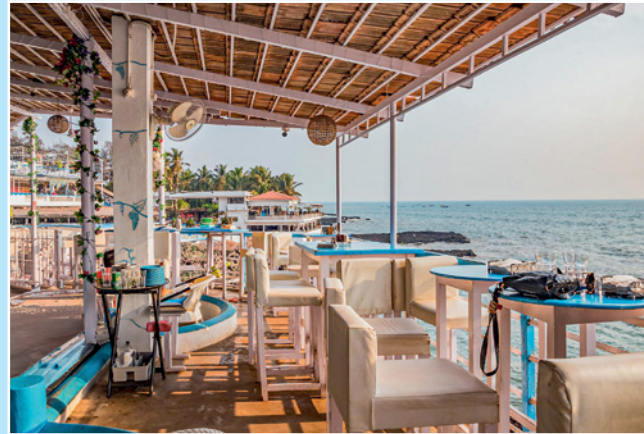


A RAINBOW OF SENSATIONAL OFFERINGS AT PURPLE MARTINI

Nestled in Goa's tropical landscape, Purple Martini serves up delicious cuisine and cocktails amid chilled-out afternoons, gorgeous sundowners, and star-studded nights



SAARTHAK GUPTA
CEO/Founder, Purple Martini



A beacon of culinary excellence, Purple Martini is a much-loved destination among locals, tourists, and celebrities. Founded by Saarthak Gupta, the restaurant began as a passion project and has since ascended to the pinnacle of Goa's dining scene. Purple Martini is not merely a dining experience, it is a symphony of flavours, an embodiment of luxury, and a testament to Saarthak's unwavering commitment to gastronomic innovation. With its stunning sunset views, eclectic menu, impeccable service, and an ambience that fuses sophistication with a relaxed Mykonos-style vibe, Purple Martini, a gem along the Anjuna coast, remains a place where unforgettable memories are crafted. Whether you're seeking culinary delight or a brush with stardom, this lively restobar offers an experience that transcends expectations, making it an enduring icon of Goa's culinary landscape.

DELICIOUS BLISS

Be transported into a world of relaxation and indulgence as soon as you walk in. The

bar features a wide selection of signature cocktails, including the famous Purple Martini, Stylish Turkey, Red Decor, and the Floral Whiskey Sour. The menu also boasts an impressive selection of wines, beers, and spirits from across the globe.

But it's not just the drinks that make Purple Martini a must-visit spot in Goa. The kitchen also offers a delectable cuisine selection that blends Indian and international flavours. From appetisers like Peri-Peri Chicken Skewers and Recheado Prawns to entrées like Banana Wrapped Snapper with fiery chillies and tamarind, the menu has something that tantalises every taste-bud.


Purple Martini's crown jewel, however, is its breathtaking sunset views. With its beachfront location, guests can enjoy a front-row seat to the spectacular hues of orange, pink, and purple that light up the sky during sunset—the perfect backdrop for a romantic dinner, a lively get-together with friends, or a relaxing evening alone. No wonder it's the top restobar in Goa.

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Saarthak Gupta, an alumnus of The Doon School and the University of Leeds, has been recognised as a leading entrepreneur in the hospitality industry. With his passion for hospitality, astute leadership, marketing prowess, and an eye for detail, he has transformed Purple Martini into one of the most popular restobars in Goa. His commitment to excellence has been recognised by various institutions, and he has received several prestigious awards for his contributions to the hospitality industry, as well as being named amongst the Times 50 Most Influential Personalities.

Purple Martini has won several accolades, including the Times Nightlife Award for the Best Sundowner Bar and The Most Popular Restaurant four years in a row. The restaurant has also been featured in various publications, including *Conde Nast Traveller*, *Vogue India*, and *The Economic Times*. And we expect many more under Saarthak's leadership in the coming years!

Disclaimer: Connectivity details are subject to change. Please visit airindia.com for the latest flight schedules.

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Ali Fazal at the world premiere of the film *Fast X* at the Colosseum in Rome, in 2023

CHAMPION OF CHANGE

Apart from an eclectic career, actor Ali Fazal helms several initiatives to empower women and craftsmen

words by **Deepali Dhingra**

YOUR FIRST PRODUCTION, *GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS*, IS AN INDO-FRENCH VENTURE THAT HAS AN ALMOST-ALL FEMALE CREW, WITH A FIRST-TIME FEMALE DIRECTOR AND A NEW FEMALE ACTOR. WHAT MADE YOU BACK IT?

The director and writer, Shuchi Talati, presented us with this gaze, which I have never seen. I think Indian cinema has rarely seen a young teenager and her problems with a female gaze. Things like your first love, your relationship with your parents, the rebellious streak that develops—it is a confusing time and I think Shuchi has dealt with it beautifully. We wanted to be very particular about the first film we produce, which is what brought us to *Girls Will be Girls*.

YOU HELD A WORKSHOP UNDER YOUR NEW VENTURE CALLED 'UNDERCURRENT LAB' FOR WOMEN GAFFERS. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EMPOWER WOMEN TO ENTER THIS FIELD?

One of our associates, Tanya Negi, came up with this brilliant idea because Shuchi wanted mostly an all-girl crew. We realised then that there were no women gaffers in India. We received a grant from the Berlinale Talents Footprints and trained the first 10 women gaffers in India. Two of the girls were from tribal areas; they are all employed today. One of them joined our set and the other showed up on my *Mirzapur* set. It was such a proud moment. We have now been commissioned for season two of the workshop. The idea is to empower and champion people and pay it forward.

YOU HAVE A CHIKANKARI BRAND CALLED EHAAB, WHICH PROMOTES KAARIGARS FROM LUCKNOW. TELL US ABOUT IT.

I wanted to give back to my city that I love a lot. I spent all my growing up years there and I have memories of visiting *kaarigars* in their villages. Found only in Lucknow, *chikankari* is so unique, with more than 300

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WE TRAINED THE FIRST 10 WOMEN GAFFERS IN INDIA. TWO WERE FROM TRIBAL AREAS; THEY ARE ALL EMPLOYED TODAY."



kinds of thread-work. Some of them have become extinct and my goal is to revive those as well and take this art form to the world.

YOUR BREAKTHROUGH IN INTERNATIONAL CINEMA HAPPENED WITH A CAMEO IN FURIOUS 7 AND THEN YOU DID BIGGER PROJECTS LIKE VICTORIA & ABDUL, DEATH ON THE NILE, AND KANDAHAR. HOW DID YOU GET THAT FIRST BREAK?

I suppose it was a bit of luck. A common friend of ours connected me to a casting agent named Purvi Lavingia, who was looking for a Middle Eastern person. I told her I'd love to try because I like working with accents. Incidentally, I was going to Mussoorie on holiday and shot the audition on my friend's phone. They liked it and by the end of that week, I was on a flight to Atlanta. But the real deal happened with *Victoria & Abdul*. A lot of Bollywood actors auditioned for the role. I wasn't called in but

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Ali Fazal on the set of *Kandahar* with Gerard Butler and other cast members; The first edition of the workshop for female gaffers; Eddie Izzard, Judi Dench, and Fazal at a party for the premiere of *Victoria & Abdul*; A still from the film *Girls Will be Girls*.

I contacted the casting director and asked if I could audition. Some five more rounds of auditions followed, and that's how it happened.

YOU'VE SIGNED A MOVIE, RULE BREAKERS, WITH PHOEBE WALLER BRIDGE. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

It's a film based on the Afghan Girls Robotics Team and about Roya Mahboob, who managed to put together this team during the Taliban rule. They ended up winning world championships. I play a pivotal role in the movie, as does Phoebe.

MIRZAPUR IS BEING TURNED INTO A MOVIE. DID YOU EVER THINK THERE WAS A CHANCE OF THAT HAPPENING?

I always thought it had potential. The script is getting ready now.

THE CHECKLIST

48 → EVENTS 56 → BOOKS 58 → GADGETS 62 → NOW TRENDING

Originating from France, macarons are now a much-loved global delicacy



TIME TO INDULGE

International confections for your festive platter this month



SWEET JOURNEYS

Set off on a decadent dessert trail to add an indulgent vibe to your festive celebrations

words by **Chef Tejasvi Chandela**



👉❤️ PANETTONE

Hofmann Patisserie in Barcelona has the best panettone ever. The one I tried was made with *mazapán*, brown glaze, and pine nuts. The award-winning bakery's dedication to tradition and quality elevates this Italian classic into an unforgettable treat. This is easily one of my favourite holiday indulgences.

Where to find in India: Sapa Bakery (Mysuru)

👆❤️ MACARONS

When in Paris, Pierre Hermé should definitely be on your must-visit list. Their macarons in flavours like rose, pistachio, and passion fruit are a delicate balance of texture and taste. Hermé's mastery lies in his ability to craft macarons that are not just sweet but boast intricate layers of flavours.

Where to find in India: Le15 (Mumbai); Miam (Delhi)

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👉❤️ **PASTEL DE NATAS**

On my recent trip to Sintra, Portugal, I got obsessed with *pastel de natas*. This custard tart, an iconic Portuguese dessert, with a flaky, buttery crust and rich, creamy filling, captured my heart. Freshly baked, with a caramelised top, each bite is pure perfection. It's now a decadence I can't stop thinking about.

Where to find in India: Padaria Prazeres (Panaji, Goa); Chef Rodwin Boulangerie & Pâtisserie Café (Margao, Goa)

DID YOU KNOW?

Rasgulla, an Indian cottage cheese ball soaked in syrup, shares roots with the Italian **ricotta cheesecake**.

👉❤️ **BEAN TO BAR CHOCOLATE**

The best I've ever had is from Dengo in Rio de Janeiro. Their chocolate is a revelation—crafted with Brazilian cacao, it's rich, smooth, and full of vibrant, natural flavours. Dengo's commitment to sustainable sourcing and artisanal methods mirrors my own approach at All Things, my 100 per cent bean-to-bar chocolate brand, making this a truly inspiring gourmet experience.

Where to find in India: All Things (online); Mason & Co (online)





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↑ ❤️ PAIN AU CHOCOLAT

Brunells in Barcelona serves a pain au chocolat that's nothing short of a revelation. The pastry is freshly baked, the layers are perfectly flaky, and the dark chocolate is a delightful contrast with the buttery dough. This bakery was founded in 1852 and recently won the 2024 award for the best croissant in Spain.

Where to find in India: Theobroma (across India); L'Opéra India (across Delhi NCR)

↓ ❤️ GELATO

Amorino's wide range of cold treat options are a delightful offering for both the palate and the eyes. This French chain's ingredients are carefully sourced and free of preservatives, artificial flavours, and flavour enhancers. The *gelati* are shaped into petals with a spatula and customers can choose as many different flavours as petals on the flower. There isn't anything to compare this with.

Where to find in India: Minus 30 (online)



Left: Getty Images; Right: facebook.com/AmorinoUSA

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YEAR-END FUN

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SET SAIL 2024 ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE

Sydney, Australia
26th December

On Boxing Day, 112 yachts will compete in the 79th edition of this contest. One of Australia's premier sporting fixtures, Race Villages in Sydney and Hobart will let guests in on all the excitement, by hosting events, talks, and race parties. The competition features yachts as small as 30-footers and as big as 100-footers, sailed by crews ranging from weekend club sailors to professionals from the America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race circuits.

rolexsydneyhobart.com

BOZEMAN ICE FESTIVAL

Montana, USA

11th-15th December

Hyalite Canyon plays host to a festival that offers hands-on instruction in waterfall ice climbing.

After a day of open-air adventure, the evening brings together programmes like demos of the latest gear, and talks by athletes and guides. There's also 'Reel Rock', a global platform for award-winning climbing films.

bozemanicefest.com



WORSHIP THE SUN STONEHENGE WINTER SOLSTICE

Salisbury, England
21st December

Commemorate the shortest day of the year (and, therefore, the longest night) at this ancient monument. The stones here were shaped and set up to

frame at least two important events in the solar cycle. Excavations at the site suggest that the winter solstice may have been more important than the summer solstice for the people who built and used Stonehenge. During this time, visitors are allowed near the stones and crowds celebrate with impromptu dance and music.

english-heritage.org.uk

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serendipityartsfestival.com



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christmas.orchardroad.org



KERALA LITERATURE FESTIVAL

📍 **Kozhikode, Kerala**

23rd-26th January 2025

Held on the beach, it will host over 500 authors and speakers.

keralaliteraturefestival.com



GET DAZZLED

AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL

📍 **Amsterdam, the Netherlands**

Till 19th January 2025

This year, 27 artworks created by 22 artists will shine their light on the theme *Rituals*. The event is also extra special as it coincides with the city's 750th anniversary celebrations. One can view the installations via 75-minute boat cruises or walks (the total route is around 6.5km). Visitors can start from the 'festival's heart' in the Hoftuin, named *Light Garden* this year, that will feature two light artworks. Lectures and musical performances will be organised every Friday in December.

🌐 amsterdamlightfestival.com



GO GREEN

ECHOES OF EARTH

📍 **Bengaluru**

7th-8th December

India's greenest music festival affirms its sustainability cred with a solar-powered stage and features an eclectic line-up, including guitarist and electronic music composer Dualist Inquiry and fusion band Many Roots Ensemble. Expect the entire area to be a non-plastic, no flex, and pet-friendly zone. Other highlights of the festival include interactive educational workshops, an exclusive brunch with artistes, and a flea market.

🌐 echoesofearth.com



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People around the world are eager to explore, reconnect, and rejuvenate and are also looking for transformative experiences that nurture the mind, body, and spirit.

Kshemavana, with its holistic approach to health, has become a premier destination for those seeking such experiences.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF WELLNESS AT KSHEMAVANA

At the core of Kshemavana's philosophy is a holistic model of well-being based on five pillars: Smrithi, Nidra, Urja, Aahar, and Dipan. Each pillar addresses a crucial aspect of wellness, providing a well-rounded framework for guests to achieve transformative healing.

Smrithi (Mind-Body Medicine): Combining

ancient meditation practices with modern psychological techniques, Kshemavana offers personalised therapies that enhance mental clarity and emotional balance. Mindfulness exercises and meditation sessions are integrated into the retreat to guide visitors toward inner peace.

Nidra (Sleep Medicine): Understanding the importance of quality sleep, Kshemavana uses sleep medicine approaches to help guests achieve restorative rest. Their unique sleep-focused therapies ensure that guests wake up feeling rejuvenated and energised.

Urja (Energy Medicine): Utilising energy healing techniques, Kshemavana promotes the flow of positive energy throughout the body. Through practices like yoga and other energy-based therapies, guests can replenish their vitality and strength.

Aahar (Nutrition Medicine): Kshemavana emphasises the idea that "you are what you eat" by offering personalised nutrition plans and health-conscious meals. This helps guests make mindful dietary choices that support overall well-being.

Dipan (Gut Health): Kshemavana also prioritises gut health, recognising its importance in overall wellness. It offers naturopathic therapies to maintain a healthy and balanced digestive system.

Dr. Narendra Shetty, the Chief Wellness Officer at Kshemavana, is key to the sanctuary's success. With his knowledge of holistic healing and commitment to blending traditional practices with modern science, Dr. Shetty has been instrumental in crafting the retreat's personalised wellness offerings, ensuring that each guest receives a transformative experience.

THE REVIVAL OF ANCIENT WISDOM

As people seek respite from urban life, Kshemavana serves as a tranquil haven. Its integration of yoga and naturopathy mirrors a global movement in which ancient healing methods are being revived. This return to traditional wisdom addresses humanity's innate desire to reconnect with nature, the self, and the healing powers within.

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4.5% FAT



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TOP FIVE READS

Author, scholar, and translator **Rana Safvi** reveals why these books are her favourites



GONE WITH THE WIND
(Margaret Mitchell)

I read it when I was 15 and cried through every page. Rhett Butler remains, to date, my favourite romantic hero.

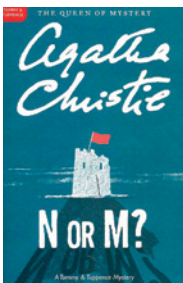
Simon & Schuster; ₹1,940



LITTLE WOMEN
(Louisa May Alcott)

Its appeal is universal, helping adolescents (as I was when I read it) navigate their identities.

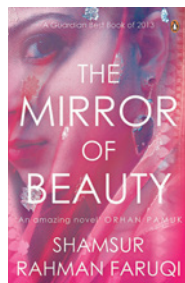
I identified with Jo.
BBC Books; ₹1,837



N OR M?
(Agatha Christie)

I love her trademark humour and the character dynamics.

HarperCollins Publishers
UK; ₹1,297



THE MIRROR OF BEAUTY
(Shamsur Rahman Faruqi)

This inspired me to write my own book.

Penguin Random House
UK; ₹621



UNCLE FRED IN THE SPRINGTIME
(PG Wodehouse)

The best depiction of British eccentricities.

W.W. Norton & Company;
₹1,159

NEW ON THE SHELF



CHER: THE MEMOIR
(Cher)

The music icon's amazing journey from being diagnosed with dyslexia to mega stardom.

HarperCollins Publishers;
₹3,375



FREE RIDE
(Noraly Schoenmaker)

An inspiring tale of a woman who embarked on an epic, transcontinental motorcycle ride, finding a new sense of purpose along the way.

Simon & Schuster; ₹2,530



FROM HERE TO THE GREAT UNKNOWN
(Lisa Marie Presley and Riley Keough)

Elvis Presley's daughter, Lisa, tells her story in this riveting memoir, completed by her daughter Riley.

Macmillan; ₹2,297



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SHAPING THE FUTURE

These innovative gadgets are leading the way in the world of tech

words by **Roobina Mongia**



📌 OURA RING 4

This device is the most advanced smart ring from the company so far. It has new Smart Sensing tech that adapts to your body, giving you real-time, accurate data. The design is sleek with recessed sensors, so it's easy to wear all day. This ring comes in multiple sizes with six colour options, so you can get the one that fits best. It lasts up to eight days on a single charge, and pairs with the new Oura app. With features like Automatic Activity Detection and Cycle Insights, it's a great tool for anyone wanting to keep track of their fitness.

Why buy: Comfortable fit, real-time data
US\$349 (starting price)

📌 META ORION

The company's new AR glasses, Orion, are bringing a whole new dimension to every day eyewear. They look like regular spectacles but are packed with futuristic augmented reality (AR) features, integrating contextual AI seamlessly into your real-world view. This device comes in a lightweight frame and can project digital content with a holographic display. You can make video calls, multitask or get help from AI without pulling out your phone. The lenses are clear so you can still make eye contact with people, and they're made to be worn daily.

Why buy: Stylish option, futuristic tech
In prototype stage



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➔ **MIGO ASCENDER**

This robot vacuum is revolutionising home cleaning with a bold new feature—it can ascend stairs, thanks to its advanced AI programming. With the ability to clean and mop every area of your house, the Ascender is an excellent option for multi-floor households. The powerful battery lasts long enough to cover the whole home without a recharge. It also comes with a sleek dock that stores and simultaneously charges the gadget.

Why buy: Multi-floor climbing device, ultra-strong suction power
Currently under production



➔ **AIRPODS PRO 2**

This iteration takes smart audio a notch higher with innovative Hearing Health features designed for accessibility. The cool, new additions include Loud Sound Reduction, a Hearing Test, and a Hearing Aid mode. These are all designed to help people with aural problems. The Loud Sound Reduction helps protect the user from loud noises. The Hearing Aid mode amplifies sounds if a person needs it, thereby acting more like a clinical aid. However, some of the features may not be available in all regions or languages.

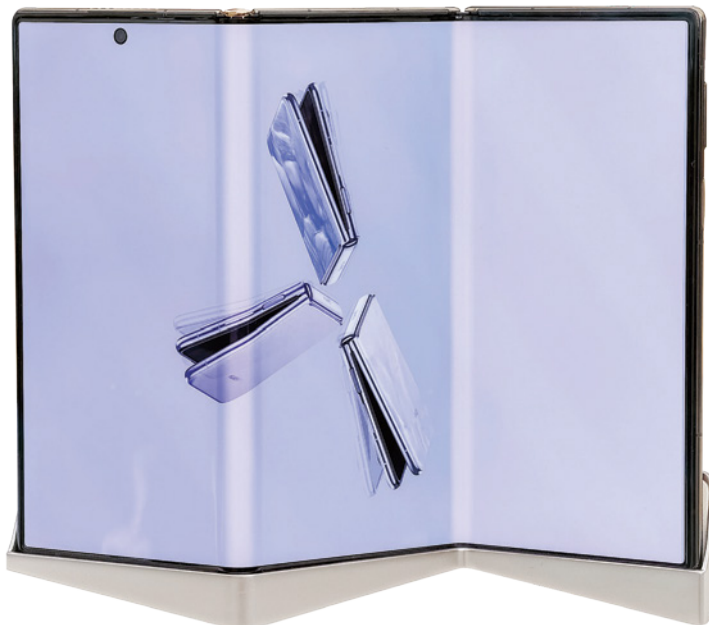
Why buy: Game-changer, improves speech clarity, cost-effective
US\$249



⬆️ ⬆️ **HUAWEI MATE XT**

Imagine flipping open your phone and suddenly having a full 10.2-inch tablet in your hands. The Huawei Mate XT has a two-screen mode plus a regular smartphone mode. You can get up to 1TB of storage and it has a four-lens camera that works no matter how the phone is folded. It also has a 5,600mAh battery, while remaining surprisingly thin—only 3.6mm when fully opened. This phone is pushing foldable tech to the next level.

Why buy: One-of-a-kind, big screen, large camera setup
US\$2,760.58 (starting price)



Apple AirPods Pro 2: Getty Images
Prices stated as is, at the time of going to press



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LIMITED-EDITION GIN

Why: Stranger & Sons has launched an exclusive FILTR Martini created in collaboration with Subko Coffee. **Where:** In Goa and Maharashtra (and soon to be made available in Bengaluru and Gurugram)



↑ GOA'S NEW DELI

Why: Experience casual dining along with the convenience of quick bites at O'Centro, a new deli offering a variety of freshly-brewed beverages, snacks, and sweet indulgences.

Where: Courtyard by Marriott Goa Colva **Recommended:** Veg and chicken puffs, Cafreal chicken sandwiches, bebinca, guava cheese

↓ L'ARÔME BY THE SEA FESTIVE MENU

Why: On Christmas Eve and 25th December, feast on chef Adrien Delcourt's signature dishes. **Where:** Phuket, Thailand

Recommended: Crab Tartelette with Crunchy Peanut, Poularde Albufera, Filet Mignon Rossini, a reimagined Yule Log





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the checklist now trending



1 ODE TO INDIA

Christmas gifting just got easier with The Body Shop's new collection featuring India-inspired ingredients. This first-of-its-kind range from the brand—Lotus, Hibiscus, Pomegranate, and Black Grape—is vegan, paraben-free, and dermatologically tested.

➔ MICHAEL KORS SUNGLASSES

Why: Burgundy acetate frames with sparkling stones and logo details make these a standout accessory. The styles are designed to suit everyone, offering a flattering, comfortable fit.

Find it at: Leading optical stores, Sunglass Hut, and LensCrafters



➔ KATE SPADE BAGS

Why: Add a dash of funk to your wardrobe this winter with bold prints and hues from the latest handbag collection of the New York designer. **Find it at:** Kate Spade stores and on Ajo



1 ALDO X JANHVI KAPOOR

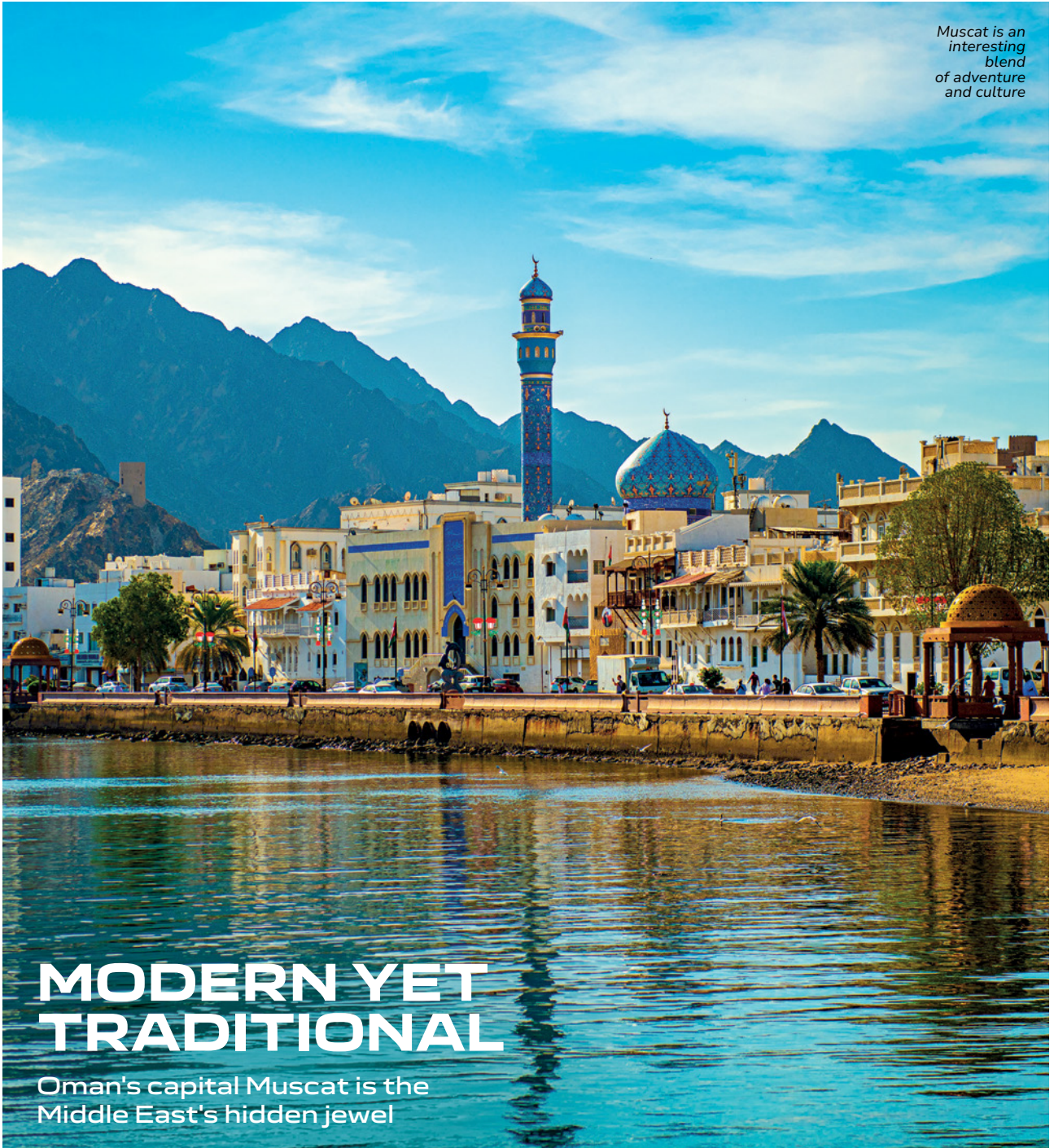
Why: Kitten heels and metallic tones define festive flair in this new collection for the party season, all infused with the ALDO Pillow Walk™ technology for extra comfort. There's also a range of blingy accessories. **Find it at:** All Aldo stores nationwide, and online

All images courtesy respective brands

THE PLACES

70 → BATH 80 → TRULY INDIA

Muscat is an interesting blend of adventure and culture



MODERN YET TRADITIONAL

Oman's capital Muscat is the Middle East's hidden jewel



The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is open to visitors every day, except Fridays

AN ARABIAN IDYLL

Find ancient charm and modern adventures in Muscat

words by **Vijaya Pratap**

🕒 08:00AM

Reverent moment

📍 Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

This modern architectural wonder's central dome is adorned with one of the world's largest chandeliers. The Persian carpet took about 27 months to make. Do notice the eye-catching details on the doors of this grand building.

🕒 9:30AM

Tour de force

📍 Royal Opera House Muscat

Built with locally-sourced limestone and stucco, it mirrors the grand style of modern Omani palaces, boasting decorative archways, scarlet and gold interiors, and a grand staircase. The displays of rare musical Instruments is fascinatingly educational. A guided tour is recommended.

🕒 11:00AM

Cultural musings

📍 The National Museum

Showcasing the area's rich maritime heritage, it offers 33 immersive digital experiences and galleries showcasing sailing craft, arms and armour, traditional outfits, and more. The discovery areas for kids feature interactive displays and games.

🕒 01:00PM

Aroma magic

📍 Amouage Perfume Factory

Take a guided tour to see how glamorous fragrances are processed from exotic ingredients like frankincense, roses, saffron, and spices. The perfume bottles, in striking shapes and colours, are a visual and olfactory treat. Interestingly, there's a huge frankincense tree on the premises.



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Featherlight Diamond Splendor



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

Dhow rides are a popular activity; Pick up souvenirs from Mutrah Souq; Omani lamb shuwa is a local speciality.




GETTING THERE



Air India flies non-stop to Muscat from Mumbai.

STYLISH STAYS

1/ Jumeirah Muscat Bay is a luxury resort with the sea, mountains, and the historic city at its doorstep.

2/ W Muscat, a five-star property, is located by the beachfront and features incredible restaurants, fashionable amenities, and a vibrant nightlife.

3/ Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz Carlton Hotel, is a former palace of the Sultan and offers beach, mountain, and garden views.

🕒 04:00PM Souvenirs galore

📍 Mutrah Souq

Stalls stocked with Omani silver jewellery, *khanjars* (daggers), and other local finds greet you here. Check out the date shops; there's a large variety. While you're browsing, the scents of perfume oils, fresh jasmine, and spices will transport you to times gone by.

🕒 05:00PM Sunset views

📍 Corniche and sunset dhow cruise

Take a walk along the harbour to see latticed buildings and mosques bathed in the evening sunlight. Roam through the same narrow alleys of the markets where merchants from India and China sold their goods centuries ago. Get aboard a traditional wooden dhow to soak up some stunning views—sipping *kahwa*, eating melt-in-the-mouth dates, while watching a golden sun slowly dip into the sea.

🕒 08:00PM Gourmet pause

📍 Rozna

Relax in the exotic ambience that resembles a castle. Seated under the majestic high ceiling, watch women make *rakhal* (flatbreads), smearing the dough on a pan and flipping them effortlessly. Enjoy them with dishes like Omani *shuwa* (barbeque) and *harees* (minced meat).

🕒 10:00PM Underwater sights

📍 Oman Aquarium

Ideal for family vacations, both kids and adults will enjoy this informative peek into the underwater world. With over 30,000 aquatic animals spread across 55 exhibits, visitors can get an up-close look at sharks, turtles, and sting rays as well as local coral. The penguin station is a must-visit too. Housed in the Mall of Muscat, it is open till 11pm and is a great location to pick up last-minute souvenirs.



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JOY TO THE WORLD

Bath's neoclassical architecture and historic structures truly come alive at Christmas, adorned with Yuletide spirit

words by Teja Lele



Left and right: Visit Bath, Getty Images

The city is dotted with Christmas trees, like this gigantic one in front of Bath Abbey

FACING PAGE
The Royal Crescent is a row of 30 heritage terraced houses

“I sincerely hope your Christmas... may abound in the gaieties which the season generally brings,” wrote Caroline Bingley to Jane Bennet in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. During that time, the early 1800s, the yuletide gaieties would have meant family gatherings, balls, dinner parties, and a range of parlour games.

The celebrations may have evolved in the 207 years that have passed since Austen penned her novel of manners but the Christmas spirit has endured. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Bath, located in the valley of the River Avon, about 180km from London. Named after its Roman-built baths, the golden-hued town is one of the most elegant areas in England.

I feel like I have stepped back in history on reaching the only city in the UK to have World Heritage Site

status; Bath is also the home of Netflix Regency-era drama *Bridgerton*. But I soon notice how the holiday season infuses a vibrant atmosphere. The buildings, gorgeous examples of Palladian architecture integrated with urban spaces, can be seen in a new light as illuminations take over during the month of December.

The best way to explore the ‘spa town’ is on foot. I sign up for a **Bridgerton-themed walking tour** and learn that architects John Wood the Elder and John Wood the Younger extended the town in Palladian style, using limestone from local quarries to create such iconic structures as the **Royal Crescent**, a sweeping arc of Georgian townhouses, and the **Circus**, one of the most fashionable addresses even now.

Twinkling lights create the most enchanting atmosphere across all eye-catching buildings, including the



Festive markets usually feature gourmet treats and handcrafted items from vendors in the city

Best time to visit

Bath is most picturesque in spring (**May–June**) and autumn (**September–October**). **December** sees a plethora of Christmas-themed activities.

Grade I-listed **Bath Assembly Rooms**, designed by John Wood the Younger in the 18th century. The elegant rooms are where ‘polite society’ flocked to meet people and enjoy balls, concerts, teas, and gambling. “Writers Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, as well as painter Thomas Gainsborough were among those who visited the Assembly Rooms,” my guide tells me. I am in exalted company, I think to myself, wondering how life would have been in Austen’s age—with time to savour every aspect and without the pressure

to immortalise every sight, every scene on the phone camera.

I take in the details—the ivy that’s wrested control over a building and the faux windows added to create a symmetrical façade. Most buildings are from the 18th century, built in the neoclassical style that dominated the Georgian era.

I soon find myself face to face with characters in period costume, welcoming me to the **Jane Austen Centre**, a small museum that beautifully chronicles the famous



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also houses the **Regency Tea Room**.

My explorations have made me peckish, so I head to the luxurious **The Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa**. Dainty sandwiches, pastries, cakes, and scones accompany the finest tea served in beautiful china, and reveal why Anna Russell, the Duchess of Bedford, introduced the quintessential British tradition of afternoon tea around 1840.

Sated, I walk to **Bath Abbey**, one of the finest and largest examples of Gothic architecture in the west of England. The stunning interior showcases stained-glass windows, columns of honey-gold stone, and stunning fan vaulting above the nave. The church comes alive during Christmas with many programmes: this year, catch the *Light of Stars* exhibition, *Carols in the Abbey*, Christmas choirs, and *Christmas Oratorio*.

The holiday also makes its presence felt at the **Roman Baths**. Constructed around 70AD, the grand bathing and socialising complex is where people flocked to worship the goddess Sulis Minerva and bathe in the waters of the natural thermal springs. Even today, 1,170,000l of spring water, reaching 46°C, fills the site each day. An interactive museum takes me back to those times, with a trail revealing the history of the Roman festival of Saturnalia. The shop here offers a range of lovely Christmas decorations along with sweet treats, alcohol, candles, jewellery, and other gift items.

When the temperature drops, the **pop-up bar** beside the Great Bath offers the perfect drink to warm up with: mulled wine or hot chocolate. Not to be missed is the chance to sample **mulsum**, a drink made by mixing wine and honey, served at the beginning of Roman meals alongside **gustus**, a course of appetisers. Think of it as the world's first cocktail.



TOP AND BOTTOM
The Jane Austen Centre celebrates the town's most famous resident; Holiday events at The Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa feature three-course meals, champagne, and mulled wine.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
 Guests can taste spa water at The Pump Room Restaurant; Many hotels offer afternoon tea; A Bath bun spread at Sally Lunn's Historic Eating House; The Bath Priory's food offerings focus on fresh produce.



At the **Pump Room**, named for the water pumped in from the hot springs, the Corinthian columns and spa fountain reveal the structure's antecedents as the heart of the Georgian social scene. This is where people came to 'take the waters'. Today, it houses **The Pump Room Restaurant**, which offers breakfast, lunch, and afternoon tea, along with a tasting of the water.

In recent years, Bath has become popular as a food and beverage destination. Original gourmet delights, like the Sally Lunn bun available at **Sally Lunn's Historic Eating House** and the **Bath bun** found at tearooms across the city, must be tried. Afternoon tea can be enjoyed at **The Roseate Villa Bath, The Bath Priory** or **Sweet Little Things**. For meals, apart from Michelin-starred restaurants **Olive Tree** and **Restaurant Hywel Jones**, there are gastropubs and cafés, breweries, gin distilleries, and vineyards nearby.

There are also more Christmas-focused activities to enjoy, like a traditional Christmas pantomime at **Theatre Royal Bath** (*Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs* this year) and an immersive experience at **No.1 Royal Crescent**, where you can see how

BEST STAYS IN BATH

The Bath Priory

This classic country house hotel offers a luxurious stay, with an award-winning restaurant and a Provence-inspired spa by L'Occitane.

The Bird

Colour meets comfort at this avian-themed boutique hotel. Snazzy bedrooms, bright artworks, a library, and a snack station make the hotel a vibrant accommodation option.

The Griffin Inn

This Georgian building that goes back 300 years, began life as a pub and now offers eight rooms full of character.

Vows for Eternity:

FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THE

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Finding a life partner was never meant to be a one-size-fits-all guessing game. In a world where love often feels commodified, Vows for Eternity offers a refreshing alternative: personalised matrimonial expertise that honours your individuality. Imagine a matchmaker that treats you like a real, wholesome individual, not just another profile in the database. Under the leadership of serial entrepreneur and founder CEO, Anuradha Gupta, the New York-based firm extends its bespoke services to London, Toronto, Delhi, and Mumbai, committed to finding partners who align with your core values and lifestyle.

At Vows for Eternity, the biggest breakthrough in the search happens with understanding who you are, being honest and intentional about you and your family's expectations. The team works closely with members, ensuring that both partners align in worldviews, values, and social compatibility. "Getting to know someone requires an authentic emotional and temporal investment, which can be overwhelming. That's where we come in," says Anuradha Gupta and her team. As the team put it, "We take the stress out of the search, allowing you to focus on building a genuine connection."

Vows for Eternity's intuitive methodology emphasises on arranging introductions instead of 'arranging' marriages. These interactions are quite similar to the nudge of a close friend or a well-wisher introducing two like-minded people. It creates a comfortable start for members to get to know each other authentically and on their terms. This ensures that members aren't just profiles on a screen but real, human connections willing to make things work "offline."

Serving high-profile clients across 65 countries, including corporate executives, business leaders, industrialists, and celebrities, their members include well-educated, well-travelled Indians and NRIs, aged between 22 and 65. The focus remains on quality, ensuring that members meet an uncompromising eligibility criteria.

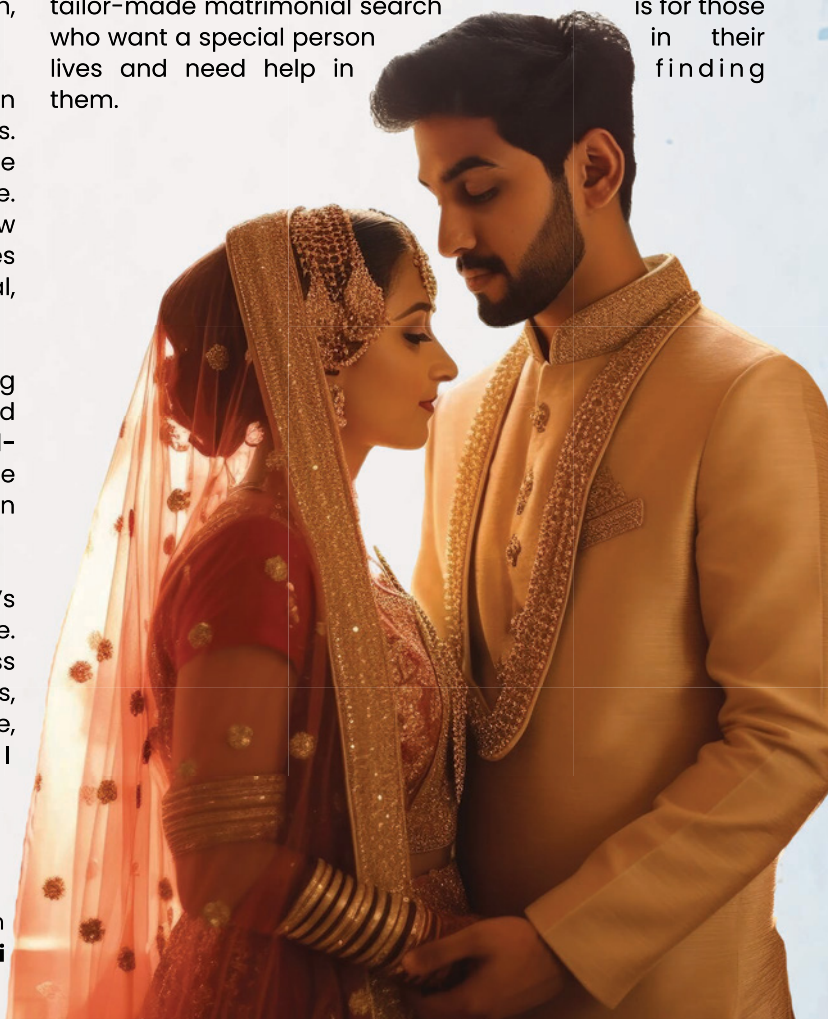
With a decade of matchmaking excellence, Anuradha's personal supervision guides the brand's signature service. Notably, the Private Club hosts industrialists, business figures, and celebrities. "With outstanding accomplishments, they turn to us for a partner who can stand by their side, complementing their stature, legacy, and mindset. Here, I

handhold our members, as a confidante and guide, putting in praxis my close observations around the complexities of human connections and love." Anuradha's involvement and in-depth interactions with each member are instrumental in determining the right fit.

Our process often inspires members to seek greater enrichment in all areas of their lives. To support this, we offer a Wellness Panel for our Private Club members, providing personal consultations with experts across various fields. It is matchmaking with a heart- rooted in integrity, honesty, and transparency.

Finding love is about discovering yourself, building chemistry, and experiencing the warmth of "coming home." You savour every moment of the journey, focusing not on the destination but on creating something holistic and undeniably compatible.

With the promise duly etched in its name, Vows for Eternity's tailor-made matrimonial search is for those who want a special person in their lives and need help in finding them.



vfe

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LEFT AND RIGHT
Bath on Ice offers visitors a skating rink as well as Glow Golf (night golf; till 5th January); Bath Abbey organises several evening programmes in December.

the rooms would have been decorated during Christmas in the late-18th century. An alternative celebration is available at **Mary Shelley’s House of Frankenstein**, where a character host takes you back to the 1800s, across three floors, in a 300-year-old townhouse.

The woodlands of **Westonbirt Arboretum** look picture perfect at this time, with sparkling lights and installations. Families will enjoy skating at **Bath on Ice** in **Royal Victoria Park** to the sound of festive tunes, joining crafting sessions at **Museum of East Asian Art** or No.1 Royal Crescent, and meeting Father Christmas at the **Santa grottos** at **Milsom Place, Avon Valley**, and the nearby **Cheddar Gorge**.

The holiday season also brings back the award-winning **Bath Christmas Market**, one of the best of its kind in the UK (open till 15th December).

The golden streets come alive with chalets that house more than 230 independent traders selling a variety of local, handmade products, including jewellery, accessories, homeware, food, and more—it’s impossible not to get into the festive spirit.

The **Pulteney Bridge**, designed by Robert Adam in 1769 to connect Bath with a ‘new town’ across the Avon, offers another perspective on the city. Even here, bonhomie, benevolence, goodwill, and affability take pride of place—in homes, cafés, and businesses. As Austen wrote in *Emma*: “This is quite the season indeed for friendly meetings. At Christmas everybody invites their friends about them...”

Bath is magical at any time of year, but nothing comes close to the memories created by the sights, sounds, and smells of Christmas.



GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to London Heathrow from Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru.

Left and right: Bath on Ice, Visit Bath






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ON THE WILD SIDE

Alpine serenity, untamed flora, and rare Himalayan animals make Dachigam National Park an alluring destination in Kashmir

words by **Chandreyi Bandyopadhyay**



Rare sighting of a Hangul, or Kashmir stag, a critically-endangered red deer subspecies



Top and bottom: Getty Images; Shutterstock

TOP AND BOTTOM
Dachigam National Park has several walking paths inside; Hiking in search of alpine lakes is a popular activity.

As the towering cedars seemed to engulf my thoughts in their ancient, gentle arms, I couldn't help but think, "All of Kashmir's mysticism becomes absolute here." At 6am, the valley still in slumber, Dachigam was unfolding its seasonal glory. The scent of moss and orchids lingered in the crisp air, while dappled sunlight wove dramatic silhouettes through towering chinars—a fleeting, cherished embrace of nature's poetry.

I've never been much of a trekker. So, when my wildlife-loving partner suggested exploring a national park near Srinagar (Dachigam), I hesitated. But his pitch was simple: walk through a pine forest, cross paths with wild animals, and keep going until we reach one of

Kashmir's gems—Marsar Lake. Intrigued, I gave in. Later, I learned from my host Yaser Shaw (owner of the Nadis boutique hotel) that Dachigam National Park, a 141sq km-Himalayan sanctuary, was named after the villages relocated to create this protected reserve (in Kashmiri, *Dah-chi-gam* means 10 villages).

The Park is home to some of Kashmir's most breathtaking alpine lakes. Reaching these secluded vistas, guarded by towering mountain ridges, requires trekking through valleys and streams. One passes grazing horses and fading village sounds, with snow-laden peaks inching closer. I was ready to take on the climb to Marsar Lake but reports of a rare flash flood dashed my hopes; the route was closed for a week. With the



destination out of reach, I strove to find something more profound on this trip.

I embarked on a quest for the evasive Hangul, or Kashmir stag, that drifts like a shadow through Dachigam's forests. Revered in folklore, the red deer is said to guard the heart of the valley, disappearing like morning fog at the hint of human presence. Featured on a 1982 Wildlife Week India postage stamp, the animal is critical to its ecosystem. Listed as critically endangered, their survival speaks a lot about Kashmir's delicate balance with nature. My determined

search for them, however, stayed fruitless.

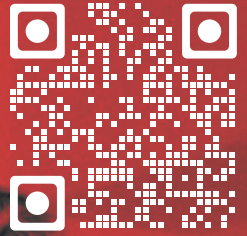
Shrugging off my disappointment, I decided to visit the Wildlife SOS bear rescue centre, deep within the park. The organisation's work is known to me so, seeing rescued black bears roaming freely was no surprise. Watching them, I felt a deep sense of admiration for the resilience these creatures possess, mirroring a strength I didn't know I was searching for. The quiet care of the Wildlife SOS team and their commitment to these animals, left me inspired, adding a depth



TOP AND BOTTOM

Marsar Lake is a stunning alpine lake located in the Pulwama district; The Nadis boutique hotel in Harwan village is in close proximity to the Park.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
A rescued black bear at the Dachigam Rescue Centre; A group of Kashmir grey langurs relaxing together; River valleys make great grazing grounds.



Top left: Mradul Pathak/ Wildlife SOS; Rest: Shutterstock

to my experience that transformed into limitless possibilities of exploration.

Dachigam's wilderness urged disconnection—from technology and urban life's relentless demands. Wandering through the moss-covered trails, surrounded by the whispers of the mountains, I felt both untethered yet grounded.

Those seemingly aimless walks held a purpose I only understood later; in surrendering my need for direction, I'd uncovered a sense of calm and clarity. My mind was free to drift like the clouds gliding over the valley.

With each step, I attuned to an inner rhythm, a slower cadence connecting me to

my thoughts and the essence of these journeys. As the mountains blushed under the setting sun, I realised the trek's gift was learning to exist and understand the wild's co-inhabitants. Once again, the Himalayas revealed that the most profound journeys are those that stir something quietly transformative within us.

GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Srinagar from Delhi.



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YOUR AIR INDIA



NEWS

We keep you abreast of our latest news and updates, so you never miss a beat

p 90 

ROUTES

We present our latest global connectivity, offering you unparalleled access worldwide

p 95 

PARTNERS

Through our codeshare and interline partnerships, we try to bring the world closer

p 98 



WORLD-CLASS AIRLINE WITH AN INDIAN HEART

In 2022, Air India launched its five-year transformation programme, Vihaan.AI, embarking on its journey to become a world-class airline with an Indian heart—the absolute best-in-class in customer service, technology, product, reliability, and hospitality.

TAXI



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TAKE-OFF



Phase 2: April 2023 – March 2024
Build for excellence

CLIMB



Phase 3: April 2024 – March 2027
Scale and grow

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Enablers

- Clear and open communication
- Powered by technology
- Values-driven cultural transformation

THE JOURNEY OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS

- Launched **new brand identities** of Air India and Air India Express, including the new livery



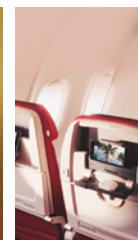
- Placed record-setting orders for **470 aircraft**. Now arriving at the rate of one new aircraft every six days

- Rolled out the **new Air India experience** aboard A350 flights: world-class cabin product along with new tableware, bedding, amenity kits by Ferragamo and TUMI



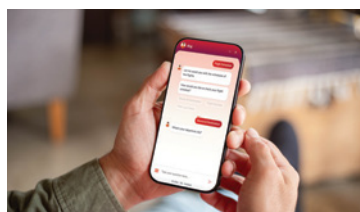
- Started adding new **A320neo** aircraft in three-class cabin configuration, including **Premium Economy**

- Combined the best of both Club Vistara and Flying Returns to introduce **Maharaja Club**, Air India's loyalty programme in a new avatar



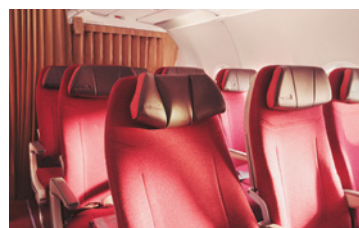
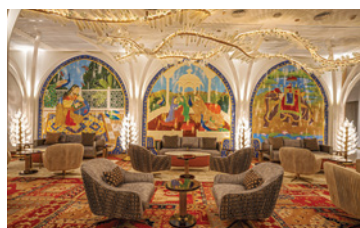
- Introduced **Vista**, a wireless inflight entertainment across legacy widebody fleet while such aircraft undergo a full interior refresh

- Unveiled refreshed website and mobile app including the industry's first **Generative AI chatbot, AI.g**



- **Augmented customer care** with five new contact centres globally, serving in nine Indian languages

- Opened a new, **exclusive lounge** at Terminal 2 Bengaluru International Airport, and redesign of the lounges at Delhi and New York JFK airports is underway



- Commenced **refit programme** for legacy aircraft; 3-4 aircraft per month will undergo retrofit with the full narrowbody fleet upgraded by 2025.

Air India successfully completed the merger with Vistara on 12th November 2024



FLY AHEAD OF TIME

Air India has introduced a new service, 'Fly Prior', to provide greater flexibility to guests flying within India. Travellers now have the option to take an alternative flight departing up to 12 hours before their originally booked flight, provided the departure of both flights is scheduled on the same date. This service is available exclusively at Air India's ticketing counters and check-in desks across India.

TO NEW HORIZONS

Air India Group has completed the operational integration and legal merger between Air India and Vistara, marking a significant milestone in its post-privatisation journey. This follows the merger of Air India Express and AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India) on 1st October 2024. The consolidation of the four airlines into one Group is part of the ongoing, five-year transformation programme, Vihaan.AI. The unified Air India Group now operates over 8,300 weekly flights, connecting over 100 domestic and international destinations.

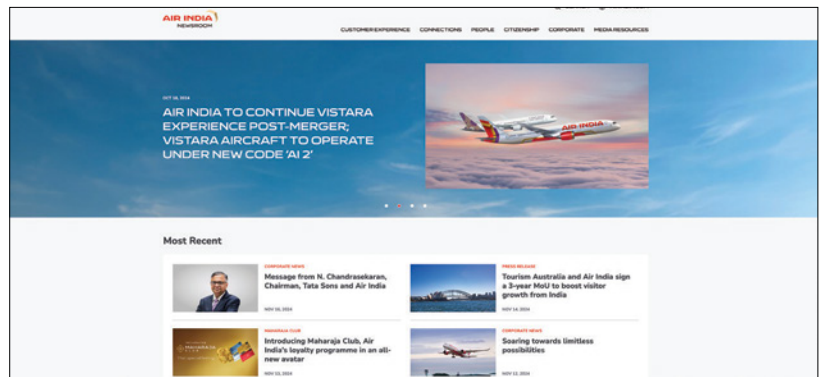


← LUXURY ABOARD

Air India has introduced its flagship A350-900 aircraft on its daily, non-stop flights between Delhi and New York's John F Kennedy International Airport (JFK). This will be followed by a five-times weekly A350 service from Delhi to Newark's Liberty International Airport (EWR), commencing 2nd January 2025. With these deployments, Air India introduces its all-new interiors, including private suites in Business Class and a Premium Economy cabin, new service ware, new bedding, and updated amenity kits to travellers visiting the New York region.

OUR JOURNEY, IN STORIES

Air India has launched the Air India Newsroom—a digital, one-stop hub to provide easy access to the latest news, stories, and resources about the airline. This central platform—www.airindia.com/newsroom—offers a curated collection of press releases, stories, fact sheets, images, videos, and more, allowing for a closer look at Air India's transformation journey to become a world-class airline with an Indian heart. With this launch, Air India reaffirms its commitment to transparency and engagement.



AUSTRALIA BOUND

Tourism Australia and Air India have signed a three-year marketing agreement to drive the positive trend in Indian visitor arrivals to Australia as Air India expands its presence in the market. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, Tourism Australia and Air India will explore opportunities to jointly undertake and implement marketing activities to showcase Australia's world-class appeal and drive future growth in visitation. Air India currently operates 17 weekly non-stop flights connecting India and Australia.

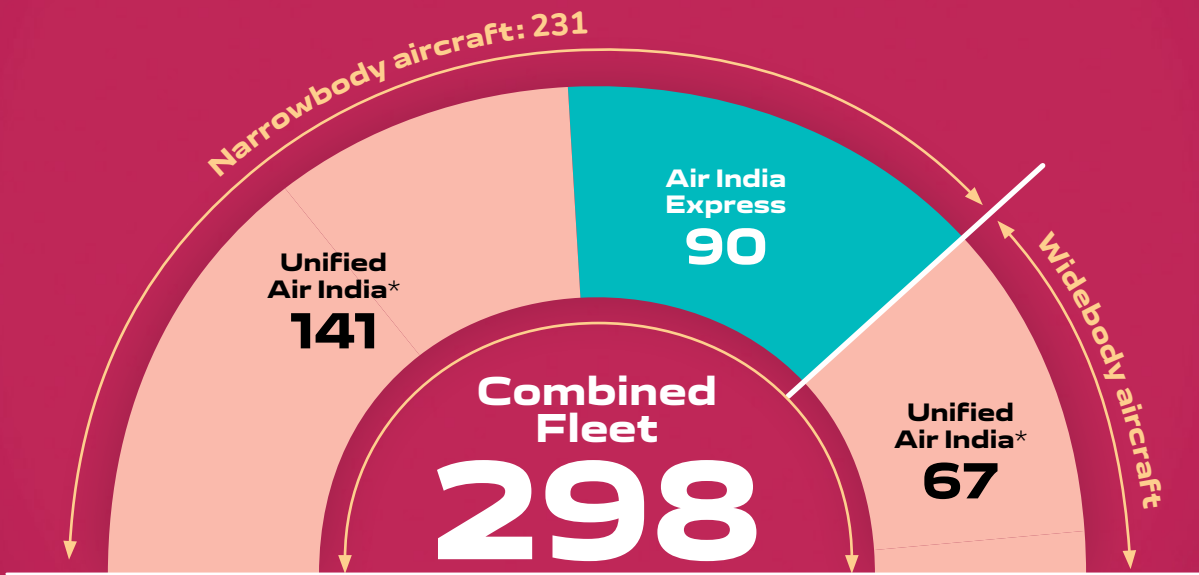
Soaring towards limitless possibilities

In our journey of becoming a world-class airline with an Indian heart, we mark an important milestone as Vistara merges into Air India. This comes on the back of the Air India Express and AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India) merger. With this, Air India Group has Air India as its full-service carrier and Air India Express as its low-cost carrier. This gives us the opportunity to serve you better with an enhanced fleet and wider network. A world of endless possibilities awaits you!

The combined scale and strength of Air India Group



Fleet



Air India Group is adding one new aircraft every six days

Routes



Unique combined routes

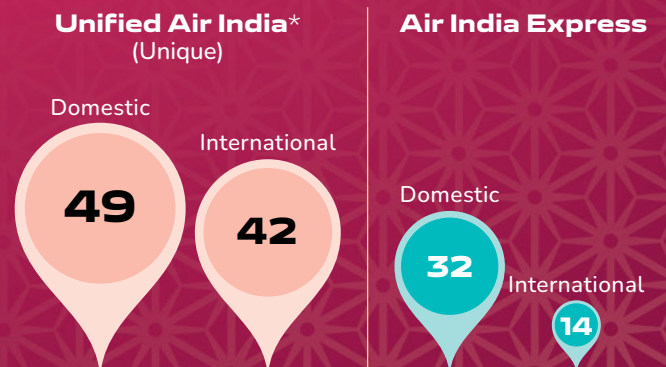
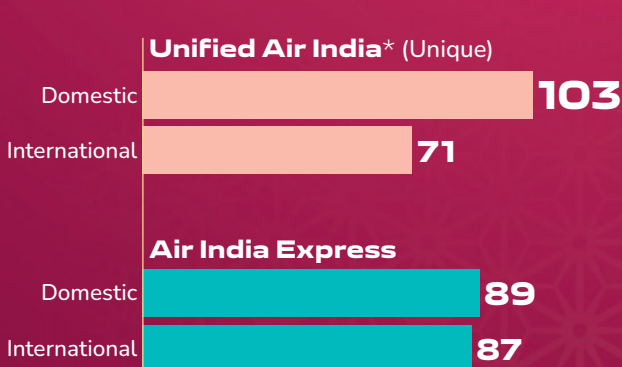
Category	Count
Domestic	160
Short-haul international	116
Long-haul International	36

Destinations



Unique combined stations

Category	Count
Domestic	55
International	48



* Unified Air India refers to the merged Air India and Vistara entity
Data as on 12th November 2024

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PROUD WINGS

A look at the aircraft in Air India's fleet*

Airbus A319



06

Boeing 777-300ER



19

Airbus A320ceo



07

Boeing 777-200LR



08

Airbus A320neo



101

Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner



07

Airbus A321ceo



13

Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner



27

Airbus A321neo



14

Airbus A350-900

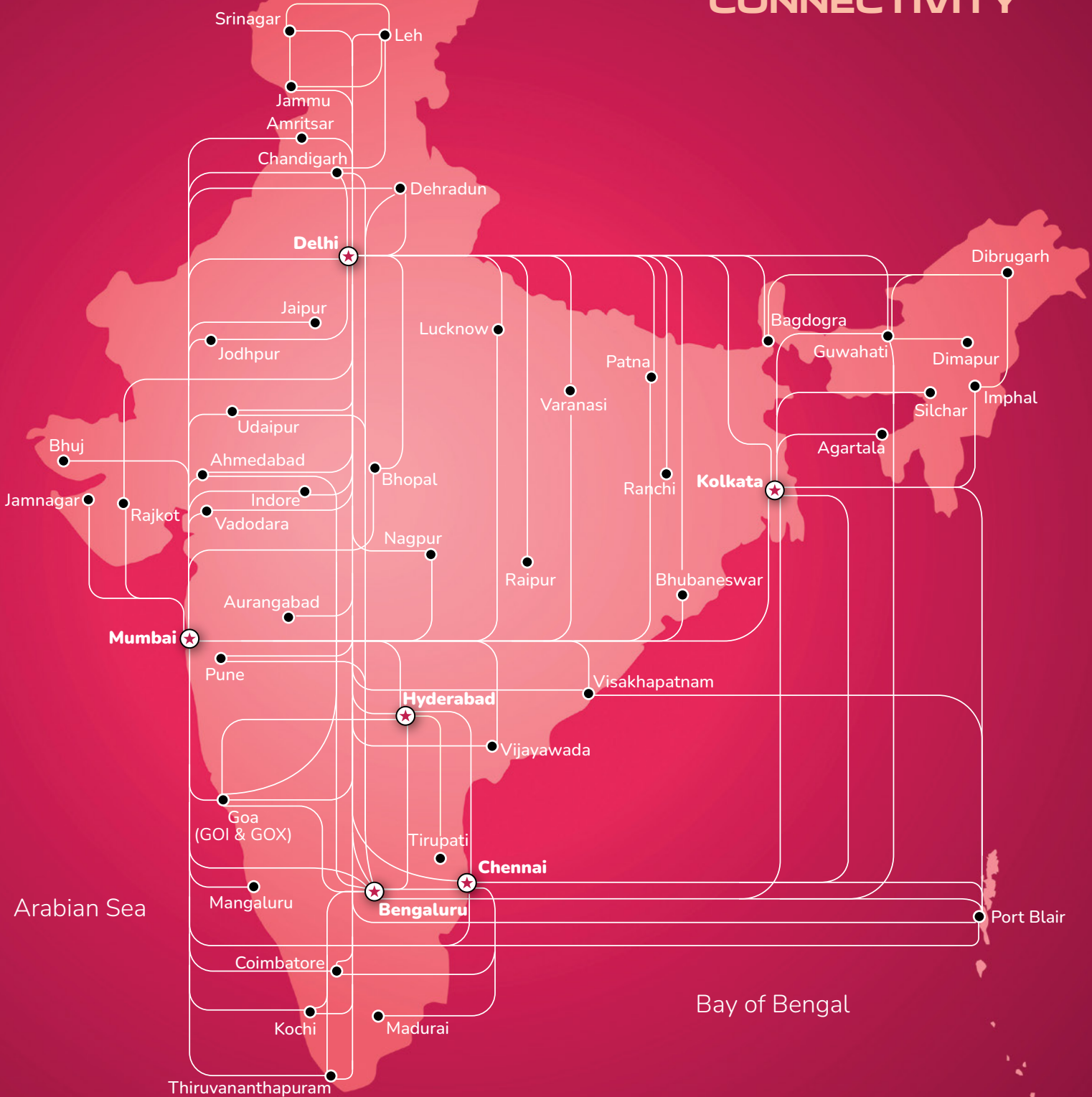
06

**FLEET
STRENGTH
208**



*Total number as on 18th November 2024;
This fleet count is exclusive of Air India Express
(Air India Group's low-cost carrier)

DOMESTIC CONNECTIVITY



Indian Ocean

Map not to scale. The depiction and use of routes and boundaries are for informative purposes only.

*Route map as on 18th November 2024



INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Air India flies non-stop to 42 destinations across five continents from multiple Indian cities (pinned on the map of India)

Europe



Amsterdam (AMS)	←-----→	DEL	
Copenhagen (CPH)	←-----→	DEL	
Frankfurt (FRA)	←-----→	DEL	BOM
Milan (MXP)	←-----→	DEL	
Paris (CDG)	←-----→	DEL	
Vienna (VIE)	←-----→	DEL	
Zurich (ZRH)	←-----→	DEL	

UK



Birmingham (BHX)	←-----→	DEL	ATQ		
<u>London</u>					
Heathrow (LHR)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	BLR	
Gatwick (LGW)	←-----→	ATQ	AMD	GOX	COK

North America



Chicago (ORD)	←-----→	DEL		
Newark (EWR)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	
New York (JFK)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	
San Francisco (SFO)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	BLR
Toronto (YYZ)	←-----→	DEL		
Vancouver (YVR)	←-----→	DEL		
Washington (IAD)	←-----→	DEL		

Middle East

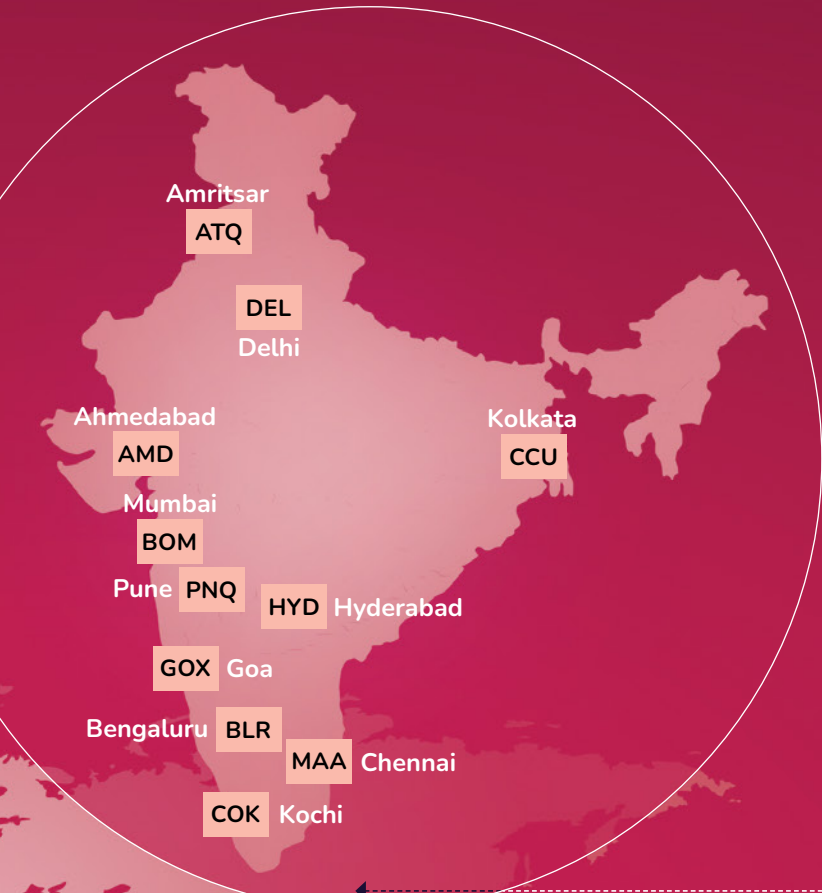


Abu Dhabi (AUH)	←-----→	BOM				
Dammam (DMM)	←-----→	BOM				
Doha (DOH)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	COK		
Dubai (DXB)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	COK	HYD	MAA
Jeddah (JED)	←-----→	DEL	BOM			
Muscat (MCT)	←-----→	BOM				
Riyadh (RUH)	←-----→	DEL	BOM			
Tel Aviv (TLV)	←-----→	DEL				

Map not to scale. The depiction and use of routes and boundaries are for informative purposes only.

Flights to Tel Aviv have been temporarily suspended

*Route map as on 18th November 2024



✈️ Far East

Hong Kong (HKG) ↔	DEL
Seoul (ICN) ↔	DEL
Tokyo (NRT) ↔	DEL

✈️ South East Asia

Bali (DPS) ↔	DEL
Bangkok (BKK) ↔	DEL BOM
Ho Chi Minh City (SGN) ↔	DEL
Kuala Lumpur (KUL) ↔	DEL
Phuket (HKT) ↔	DEL
Singapore (SIN) ↔	DEL BOM BLR MAA PNQ

Indian Subcontinent

Colombo (CMB) ↔	DEL BOM MAA
Dhaka (DAC) ↔	DEL BOM
Kathmandu (KTM) ↔	DEL
Malé (MLE) ↔	DEL BOM
Yangon (RGN) ↔	DEL

✈️ Africa

Mauritius (MRU) ↔	BOM
Nairobi (NBO) ↔	DEL

✈️ Australia

Melbourne (MEL) ↔	DEL BOM
Sydney (SYD) ↔	DEL

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Air Europa	Air France	Air Macau	Air Malta
Air New Zealand	Air Niugini	Air Seychelles	Air Tanzania
Alaska Airlines	American Airlines	Austrian Airlines	Azerbaijan Airlines
British Airways	Bangkok Airways	Biman Bangladesh Airlines	Brussels Airlines
Cathay Pacific	Caribbean Airlines	China Airlines	China Eastern Airlines
China Southern Airlines	Condor	Copa Airlines	Delta Air Lines
El Al	Emirates	Etihad Airways	Fiji Airways
Finnair	German Rail	Gulf Air	Hahn Air
Hainan Airlines	Hong Kong Airlines	Iberia	Icelandair
ITA Airways	Japan Airlines	JetBlue	Jetstar
JetStar Asia	Juneyao Airlines	Kam Air	Kenya Airways
KLM Royal Dutch Airlines	Korean Air	Kuwait Airways	Madagascar Airlines
Malaysia Airlines	MIAT Mongolian Airlines	Middle East Airlines	Myanmar Airways International
Nepal Airlines	Oman Air	Philippine Airlines	Qantas
Qatar Airways	Royal Air Maroc	Royal Brunei Airlines	Royal Jordanian
RwandAir	Saudia	Scandinavian Airlines	Shandong Airlines
Shanghai Airlines	Shenzhen Airlines	South African Airways	Thai Airways
Turkish Airlines	United Airlines	Uzbekistan Airways	Vietnam Airlines
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Codeshare and Interline partnerships as on 18th November 2024

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MISSION LIFE

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Mission LiFE is a global mass movement, launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, to inspire

people to protect and conserve the environment. Its purpose is to make people aware of the environment and motivate them to take steps to protect the environment.

AIR SEWA

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The Ministry of Civil Aviation has upgraded its AirSewa portal that allows users to submit and track grievances/complaints online and get information about air travel in India. For any further service-related information, you can login to airsewa.gov.in

DIGI YATRA

नागर विमानन मंत्रालय द्वारा 12 एयरपोर्ट्स—दिल्ली, बेंगलुरु, वाराणसी, पुणे, कोलकाता, विजयवाड़ा हैदराबाद, अहमदाबाद, मुंबई, जयपुर, लखनऊ और गुवाहाटी के लिए डिजी यात्रा की सुविधा का शुभारंभ किया गया है। डिजी यात्रा ऐप को डाउनलोड करके खुद को नामांकित करें और इन एयरपोर्ट्स पर निर्बाध और बाधा रहित यात्रा का अनुभव करें।

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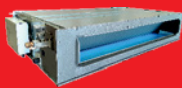
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A TRAVELLER'S TALE



RHYTHM DIVINE

Percussionist **Elli Miller Mabougou** revisits his Congolese roots

AN UNFORGETTABLE MEMORY

Two years ago, I went to visit my family in the Republic of the Congo and stayed for nearly a month. It was special as it was the first time I went there on my own and was not travelling for work or for any shows. So, I got to move around freely and really discover the country.

PRIZED TAKEAWAY

I learnt so much about the art of playing drums. I even brought back Ngoma drums from there [pictured above].

A FARE TO REMEMBER

Don't miss *fumbwa*, a delicacy of cassava leaves with peanut butter and eggplant. It can be had everywhere—from local shops to high-end restaurants. It's best paired with *fufu*, a starchy side dish made from cassava.

DO NOT MISS

The drive from Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire because the route is scenic, dotted with hills and the Mayombe forest.



— As told to **Shrabasti A Mallik**

Clockwise from top left: Shutterstock; Elli Miller Mabougou; Kevin Calixte; Shutterstock



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