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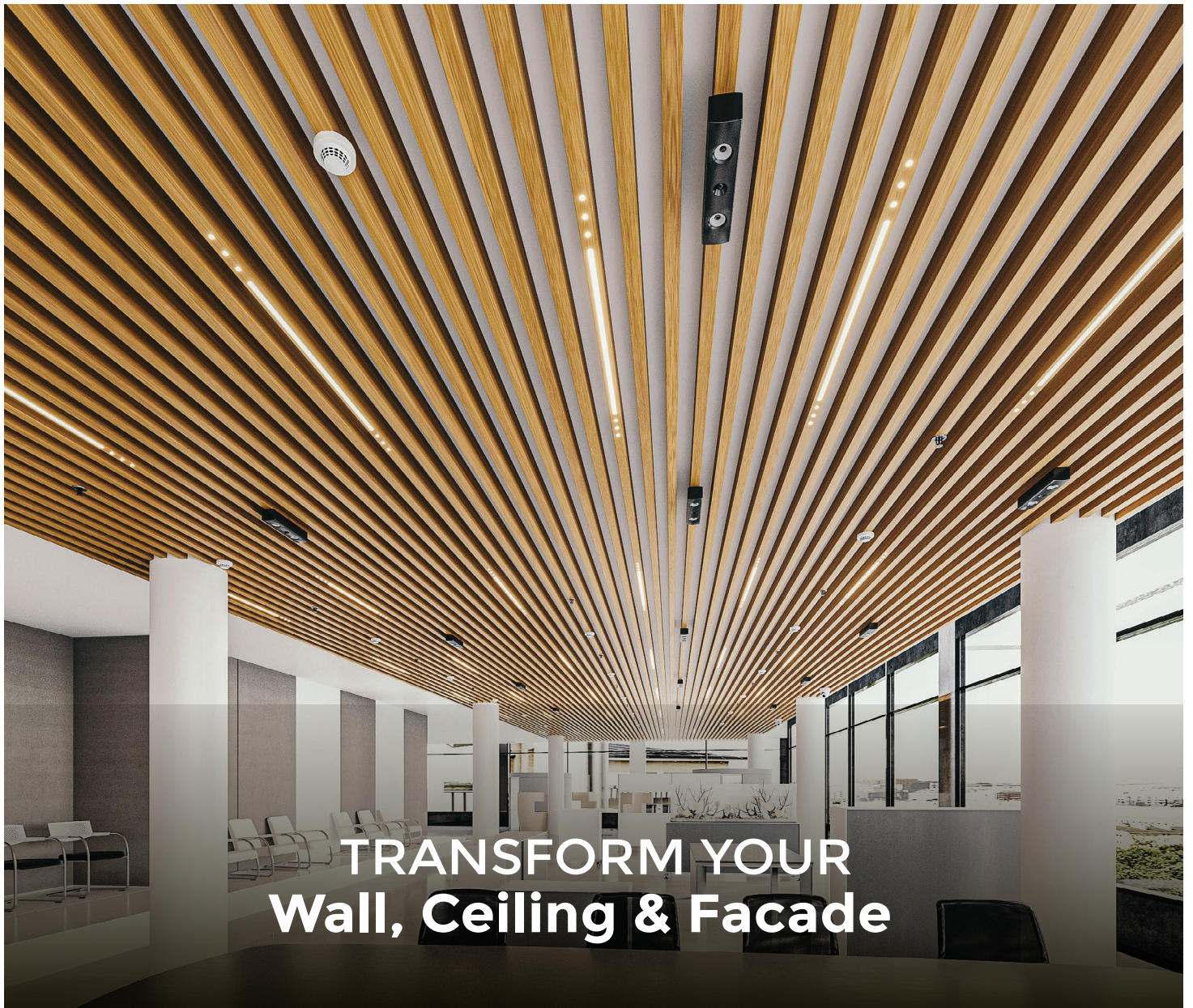
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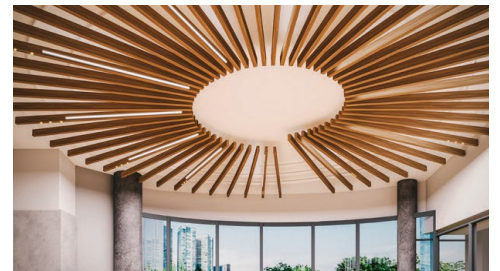
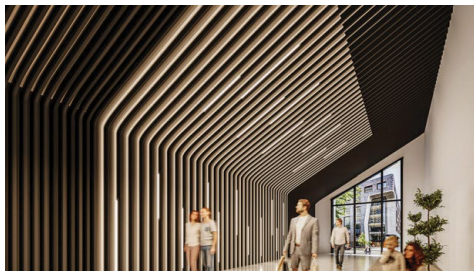
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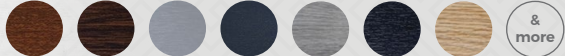
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CEO'S MESSAGE



Namaste, and welcome aboard! January 2025 marks the third anniversary of Air India's return to the Tata Group, and the mid-way point of our five-year Vihaan.AI transformation programme aiming to create a world-class, global carrier with an Indian heart.

Air India's transformation covers every aspect of our business, and involves significant upgradation of systems, processes, infrastructure, equipment, and people. While the journey still has a way to go, some significant milestones have been achieved.

More than 9,000 new Air Indians have come aboard and, together with their colleagues, have undergone completely redesigned service training programmes at Air India's newly-opened training facility in Gurugram which, at 800,000 square feet, is South Asia's largest.

More than 100 new aircraft have been deployed, including India's first Airbus A350 aircraft now flying from Delhi to London and New York. These are part of the one-third of our twin-aisle fleet that now sport modernised interiors and entertainment systems, with the remainder of the fleet progressively undergoing similar upgradation over the next two years. Interior refit of the single-aisle fleet, serving domestic and

short-haul international destinations, is already well underway, and will be complete by mid-2025.

The merger of the four Tata airlines into one full-service airline, Air India, and one low-cost carrier, Air India Express, was completed in late 2024, and the erstwhile Vistara aircraft are now deployed on metro-to-metro domestic routes and to key international destinations such as Frankfurt and Singapore to ensure a consistently high-quality experience.

These mergers and new aircraft deliveries have taken our Group fleet to 300 aircraft, allowing us to now expand our reach to over 100 destinations in India and around the world. Air India's global coverage will further increase in the years ahead, not least because of the recent addition of 100 aircraft to our orderbook, augmenting the earlier commitment for 470 made in 2023. These new aircraft will be supported by a brand-new 12-bay maintenance facility and maintenance training school in Bengaluru, a new 34-aircraft flight school in Amravati, and the aforementioned training academy in Gurugram, underscoring our commitment to strengthening India's aviation ecosystem, not just our airline.

Multiple customer-facing initiatives have been deployed, including upgraded inflight catering, new amenities, and the rollout of streaming entertainment on all aircraft. Our frequent flyer programme, renamed Maharaja Club, has been completely revamped and now serves over 10 million members, while our industry-first generative AI chatbot *AI.g* has garnered global awards. A new lounge for travellers in premium classes has opened at Bengaluru and will soon be followed by another in Delhi during 2025, and in other key cities in time to come.

Air India has covered a lot of ground in the period since privatisation; we acknowledge there's much more to be done. All 30,000 Air Indians are fully committed to improving the quality and consistency of our services, in all areas, so that Air India becomes the world-class airline we all want it to be.

Thank you for your patience and continued trust as we pursue this transformative journey, and thank you for choosing to fly with us today.

Campbell Wilson
CEO and MD, Air India



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EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING OFFICE

Burda Media India Private Limited
Ambience Mall, 7th Floor (AWfis), Gate No - 04, Ambience Island, NH-8, Gurugram – 122002, Haryana

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Chief Executive Officer BJÖRN RETTIG

Burda International Holding GmbH
LEGAL ADDRESS Hubert Burda Platz 1, 77652 Offenburg, Germany
POSTAGE ADDRESS Arabellastrasse 23, D-81925 Munich, Germany

For editorial queries, write to editorial.airindia@burdaluxury.com
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A new year comes with the promise of prospects. It brims with plans—for some it's exploring new locales, for others it is revisiting familiar places through a new lens. Most of all, a new year heralds hope—and that makes everything brighter.

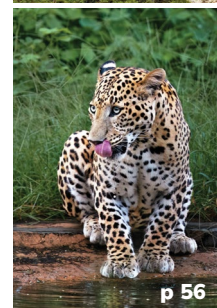
On this note, let's ponder on some emerging trends as travellers push the envelope when it comes to traversing new paths. In our Cover Story, we highlight some of them—a Quiet-cation in the Tirthan Valley to connect to nature's music; Set-jetting to locations like Paris and Lake Como, where some of OTT's most popular shows have been recently shot; Destination Dupes like Galway and Perth that offer you an authentic experience of their respective countries, instead of bigger cities.

In India, we take you to a little-known gem, the Jhalana Leopard Reserve in Jaipur, where the possibilities of sightings are high. For a short trip, try Kochi, replete with culture and cuisine. We also feature Vienna, decked in celebration as it marks the birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Music has the power to heal, and that's what Padma Vibhushan Zubin Mehta talks to us about. We are also joined by actor Nandita Das who delves into her Odia legacy, showcasing its cuisine. We unveil Frame by Frame—where a photographer's lens does the talking. This time, Air India's crew recreates iconic cinematic moments in the Big Apple, as Air India deploys its flagship A350 aircraft on the Delhi-New York (JFK) and Delhi-Newark (EWR) routes. A 'New Air India Experience' beckons! Here's to experiencing the new!

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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CONTRIBUTORS



Shivya Nath

📍 @shivya

An award-winning traveller and storyteller, Shivya is a passionate advocate for slow, solo, and sustainable travel. She lived out of two bags for seven years and teaches aspiring creators how to get paid to travel the world with purpose. Connect with her on her travel blog, *The Shooting Star*.

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Nivedita Jayaram Pawar

📍 @justnivedita

A Mumbai-based senior journalist, Nivedita turned to freelance writing in 2013 after spending nearly two decades as an editor for various newspapers and magazines. She contributes stories related to design, travel, and lifestyle.

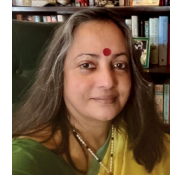


Riddhi Doshi

📍 @riddhi_doshi_anand

An independent journalist and blogger at *ivorystation.com*, Riddhi is based out of Mumbai and writes about travel, art, culture, climate change, and anything that she finds interesting. She is also a pet parent and textile lover.

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Reshmi Dasgupta

📍 @reshmirdg

Reshmi is a pioneer of lifestyle journalism in India and has been writing on culture, history, travel, food, and wine for 30 years. Currently, she has a weekly column in *The Economic Times* and contributes regularly to *The Times of India*, *FirstPost*, and *News18*, to name a few.

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*Air India cabin crew strikes a
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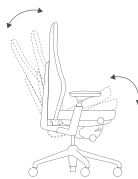
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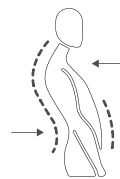
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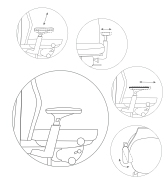
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EXPERIENCE THE NEW

As travellers push the frontiers of how they explore the world, new patterns are coming forward, paving the way for you to expand your travel horizons in 2025

#1

QUIET-CATIONS

Some holidays have the power to inspire creativity and fire up your imagination as you tune into nature's music and drown out man-made noise

words by **Shivya Nath**





FACING PAGE

Hiking in the vast wilderness of the Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh

TOP TO BOTTOM

Tirthan Valley in winter; Journaling by the Tirthan river; Some of the rural female guides of the Great Himalayan National Park.

The last rays of sunlight streaked the sky pink and orange. As the sun sank behind the towering mountains, I returned my gaze to the roaring Tirthan river. Sitting by myself on a large rock on its banks, I closed my eyes for a few minutes. The sound of the flowing water and distant chirping of birds filled my ears. The earthy aroma of the outdoors filled my nostrils. I felt the smooth rock below my palms, shaped by centuries of wind and water. Opening my mouth and inhaling, I tasted the air on my tongue, refreshing like rain on a warm day. When I opened my eyes again, the world felt like a different place, one that I had just experienced with all my senses instead of just my eyes. In the vast wilderness of India's Great Himalayan National

Park—in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district—I had hoped to catch a break from the constant noise in my life: digital devices, traffic, people, and my restless mind. But as I sat there, it struck me that I didn't necessarily need silence. I needed the quietening of artificial noise, so I could feel the world around me more deeply.

Growing up as an introvert in a world that wouldn't stop talking, I found my refuge in writing. That led me to a career in travel writing and digital storytelling, and opportunities to spend time in some of the world's farthest, remotest, quietest places. It also redefined how I understood the concept of 'quiet'. Quietude, to me, isn't devoid of sound. It is filled with the music of the natural world that I either forget to notice or drown out with man-made sounds. It enables mental silence,



LEFT AND RIGHT
Mentally prepping for the hike at Tirthan Eagle Nest homestay; Foraging wild lungdu (fiddlehead fern) on the trek.



my rock in solitude, the contrasting realities of the scenic Great Himalayan National Park and the communities that live on its fringes sparked an idea: the voices of these women and initiatives that help them build climate resilience through tourism need to reach a wider audience. That gave birth to my first series of short documentary films titled *Routes of Resilience*.

Time and again, I've found that quietude nourishes my creativity, builds mental stamina, and reminds me of my purpose. Sadly, many of us reject it, filling our excursions into the outdoors with loud music or unnecessary banter. Perhaps the idea of silence feels daunting when our lives are filled with mental, physical, and digital noise. In 2025, why don't you take a 'quiet-cation'—while supporting a local community—and embrace the mental silence. You might be surprised by the new paths it compels you to walk on.

QUIETEST TIME TO VISIT

Winter is the calmest but also the coldest. **Spring** and **autumn** are not as busy as summer but also not as quiet as the cold season.

so I can filter the clutter in my mind and reach my innermost thoughts. As stars slowly filled the darkening canvas above, I heard my calm heartbeat. Thoughts ebbed and flowed, following the rhythm of the river. I recalled the six kilometres I had trekked, huffing up hills, walking across rickety bridges, crossing stunning oak and walnut forests, foraging for wild vegetables like *lungdu* (fiddlehead fern, that we'd cook at our camp later), and drinking water from mountain streams. I thought of the conversations en route with my unlikely trekking guides, porters, and chefs—

comprising the region's first collective of rural female guides. These women hail from mountain families and, with the support of community tourism organisation, Himalayan Ecotourism, are literally blazing new trails. They're the first in their families not just to work outside their homes but also to work in a profession dominated by men. We talked about the anticipation of winter snow and the impact of erratic weather patterns on agriculture. I gathered that climate change impacts are showing up even in remote, self-sustainable Himalayan communities. Sitting on



GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Chandigarh from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Leh.



Succession was shot at Lake Como, prompting fans to visit



Visiting the sets or real-life locations, where your favourite film or show was shot, is a buzzing travel trend

words by **Shrabasti Anindita Mallik**

Late last year, my St. Helier-based friend (a soul I've known since we exchanged crayons in kindergarten) bundled her whole family for a trip to Bath, the UK. Her agenda—to learn about the history of the city and to see the eponymous Roman Baths. But barely within a few hours of arrival, she called, somewhat bewildered at the fact that her 62-year-old mother had booked a walking *Bridgerton* (a popular Netflix series) tour. She elaborated, in explicit detail, how her mother's eyes glistened like an excited child's on a

school field trip as the group made its way through some of the show's key filming locations—Lady Danbury's mansion (the Holburne Museum), the Featherington abode (No. 1 Royal Crescent), the Modiste dress shop, and Siena's dwelling, amongst others. "Seems like mum just gave into a New Age trend," she said, laughing. She wasn't wrong.

Set-jetting, as the trend of visiting film or TV show sets or locations is termed, has gripped the travel fraternity—and how! From a Parisian holiday to explore the locations of *Emily in Paris* (in the

city and the countryside) to noir adventures in Ireland where the second season of *Wednesday* was shot—travellers are truly living their moment in the spotlight; metaphorically of course. Come February and with the release of the third season of *The White Lotus*, its shoot locations—Bangkok, Phuket, and Ko Samui (Thailand)—will also make it to the top of travel itineraries. Between its 3rd and 4th (final) season, American satirical comedy-drama *Succession* inspired travellers to set off to its actual filming spots like NYC and California (USA),

Lake Como and Tuscany (Italy), and Kjerag (Norway).

All these destinations will make for great vacations in 2025. It will allow you to experience the joys of family time, retrace the steps of your favourite characters, and fuse the reel and real worlds in your memories, forever.



GETTING THERE

Fly with Air India, and its Codeshare and Interline partners to the destinations mentioned here.



#3

ROSY RETROSPECTION

Going back to visit places you have cherished memories of, is like experiencing the old—but in a new way

words by Mignonne Dsouza

Taking your kids to the beach or hill station you visited as a child can rekindle memories

Ever been alone on Calangute beach? In the 1980s, when my family and I stayed at the state tourism board hotel on this famous stretch of Goa, we would spend lazy mornings splashing in the waves and then head to breakfast at Souza Lobo—the iconic restaurant was a small hotel at that time. In those halcyon days, Goa was relatively undiscovered, except by a few foreign

tourists. We would arrive during school vacations and touch down first in Assagao, the home of my grandmother, then a sleepy village where there were literally more mango trees than people.

These days, Goa is overrun by ritzy restaurants and bars but though the landscape has changed tremendously, what hasn't changed is the unique vibe—one that my daughter has come to love as much as I do.

Just like our family, other travellers also love to relive their childhood, and nostalgia tourism is a trend that's likely to grow in 2025. Introducing your kids to the experiences you cherished at their age is a great feeling, allowing you to reflect on your younger days and give them a peek into your life when you were a kid. Whether it's visiting iconic attractions like the Victoria Memorial (and eating *puchka* on

the road across), enjoying the views from Shimla's Ridge or going back to hill stations like Panchgani or valleys like Dehradun to revisit your old school with classmates—these trips allow us to escape to a more peaceful, innocent time, when the world was filled with possibilities and every moment was meant to be cherished. They also make for marvellous memories, which form an immutable bond across generations.



GETTING THERE

Air India flies non-stop to Goa (Dabolim) from Delhi, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, and Mopa from Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad.



#4

SPORTS AND MUSIC EXCURSIONS

Attending a live event makes for a fabulous holiday; one that travellers are latching on to

words by **Shrabasti Anindita Mallik**



Fans who could not get tickets in their own city, made plans to travel for Coldplay's concert

Sports has always had a way of bringing people together. But imagine if you and a group of like-minded friends or family took this a notch higher by going to witness a sporting event live and then made a holiday out of it. This trend—Sports Excursions—is set to get bigger in 2025 as sports aficionados make this a reality. It could be a Grand Slam; the 9th Asian Winter Games Harbin 2025,

China (February 2025) or the World Athletics Championships Tokyo 2025, Japan (September 2025).

A live experience offers a magical once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bond with your tribe and feel part of a community that shares similar interests. The second trend that's similar is Music Excursions, fuelled by 'Swifties' who travelled to different countries to attend Taylor Swift's *The Eras Tour*. Reflecting this trend has been Coldplay's world tour,

where fans who didn't get tickets in their own cities, booked concerts in other parts of the world.

For those who want to plan ahead, Metallica kicks off the *M72 World Tour* from April to June 2025 in USA and Canada. Ed Sheeran will tour Bhutan, India, China, the Middle East, and Europe (January to September 2025). Katy Perry will tour Mexico, Australia, Canada, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and across Europe, between April and October 2024. Green Day

will take their *Saviors Tour* to South Africa, the UAE, across Southeast Asia and Europe, Japan, Australia, Mexico, and Brazil (January to September 2025). It's time to gather your tribe and book!



GETTING THERE

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Galway gives visitors a more intimate flavour of Ireland

#5 DESTINATION DUPES

Smaller, less busy destinations that offer a lot of the same experiences as big cities, are coming up as great alternatives

words by Mignonne Dsouza

GETTING THERE

Fly to Dublin with Air India's Interline Partner, British Airways.

It's always better to get as close to the true flavour of a country to experience its true essence. In that spirit, choosing a small city instead of a bustling metropolis appears to be a smart choice, one that many visitors seem keen to exercise. You can avoid large crowds during peak season, find intimate stays, deep dive into the cuisine, have meaningful conversations

with residents, and absorb the local culture.

For instance, instead of the Irish capital of Dublin, Galway (about 200km from Dublin) can serve as a better introduction to the Emerald Isle. In a similar vein, Perth, on the western coast of Australia, can offer visitors a more authentic version of life Down Under, as compared to the touristy Gold Coast.

Smaller towns can also be more economical, as

more and more popular cities like Venice, Bali, and Barcelona have taken to levying a 'tourist tax'. Also, the hotels in such locales offer better value, there are shorter queues for local attractions, and a chance to discover restaurants that are authentic, use fresh, seasonal produce, and give you an actual flavour of local cuisine.

So, for your next holiday, go off the beaten track. It could be a memorable experience.

THE PEOPLE

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Das is as passionate about her ancestral cuisine as her films and advocacy work

A CULINARY SOJOURN

Discover the regional flavours and seasonal specialities of Odia fare with Nandita Das

Nandita Das' Odia lineage comes from her father, noted artist Jatin Das



AN ODE TO HER ROOTS

Actor and filmmaker Nandita Das on how the food of Odisha stands out for its simplicity

words by **Shrabasti Anindita Mallik**

Jaipur, 2018—I saw Nandita Das for the first time, amidst a sea of people at a literary event. I listened with rapt attention as she spoke, with unbridled passion, about her latest directorial venture, *Manto*.

Cut to November 2024, I see her again in Delhi; talking about a whole other subject—food. There is, however, no mistaking that same passionate tone in her voice. “Many people think I am Bengali because of my surname but I am part Gujarati and part Odia—and a complete foodie,” she says with a smile, introducing me to Odia cuisine.

As we savour soul-filling bites of *chakuli pitha* (rice-based pancakes) and *dalma* (traditional lentil stew) with a mouthful of crunchy *badi chura* (mashed sun-dried lentil dumplings), Das points out how the cuisine stands out for its simplicity and emphasis on seasonal ingredients. “It has its own ingredients and a unique way of cooking them,” she explains, adding, “For instance, *badis*, which are present in

other cultures, are eaten with *saag* [spinach] or as a side. Pounding it with raw mustard, garlic, onion, and green chillies makes for a wonderful accompaniment. Odia cuisine is about showcasing the natural flavours of the ingredients without overpowering them with excessive spices or elaborate techniques. I like that it’s a cuisine that is both healthy and flavourful, reflecting a deep connection to the land and its seasons.”

Growing up in Delhi, Das’ fondest memories of relishing traditional flavours date back to summer holidays when her father, Padma Bhushan awardee artist Jatin Das, would take her to his hometown in Baripada, located in Odisha’s Mayurbhanj district. “My memories of visiting my grandmother are vivid. I remember how she would just throw vegetables like *aloo* [potato], *parwal* [pointed gourd], and *baingan* [aubergine] into the *chulah* [earthen stove]. Once grilled, raw mustard oil, onion, garlic, and green chillies were crushed and added, enveloped in wood-fired



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MY FESTIVE FARE

"In the summer, when I would visit Odisha, it was always during the Ratha Yatra. The temple *bhog* is delicious. Even their simple *khichdi* and vegetables used to be, and still are, so flavourful. And there are several varieties of *pithas*; *arisa pitha* (sweet pancakes) being one of them. I brought back some when I went home recently."



... aroma. She had a way of making even the simplest dishes taste extraordinary," reminisces Das.

I ask about her favourite dish. "Too many," she exclaims, and then says, "I would say the staple *pakhalo* [fermented rice]. The other dish I like—because it is my father's recipe—is *dahi baingan*, fried eggplant with yoghurt and seasoning."

Making our way through delicious *besara maachha* (river sole with mustard), *dahi kukuda* (spring chicken with yoghurt), and more, we reach one of Odisha's most unique desserts—*chhena podo* (baked cottage cheese).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Nandita Das recently curated an Odia pop-up in Chor Bizarre, Delhi; Pakhalo, served with an assortment of sides, is a summer favourite; The state is also known for its pitha variants; Besara maachha; Chhena podo is a quintessential Odia treat.

"This has a caramelised crust and a rich, moist texture that is delightful," she beams with pride, not forgetting to mention that her son Vihaan, too, loves Odia cuisine.

The best places to try such delicacies, says Das, are still Odia homes. "Maybe because the cuisine hasn't really been marketed, it also hasn't got corrupted." As we wrap up, here's hoping the flavours and aromas of this cuisine soon venture out of the state's boundaries to reach gastronomes worldwide.



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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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"MUSIC CAN SOOTHE AND HEAL WOUNDS"

The legendary conductor on the role of music in world peace and his passion for Mumbai, history books, and cricket

words by **Nivedita Jayaram Pawar**



Zubin Mehta is the Conductor Emeritus of the Los Angeles Philharmonic

HOW CAN ONE CAPTIVATE THE YOUNGER AUDIENCE AND CULTIVATE A LOVE FOR CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THEM?

All orchestras have children's concerts that are used to cultivate a new generation of classical music enthusiasts. These events aim to create an enjoyable experience, encouraging children to return and, potentially, become lifelong patrons of classical music. To achieve this, specialist conductors employ creative strategies to captivate young minds and foster a love for this genre of music.

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST CONCERT IN MUMBAI WITH THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC?

How can I forget that? It was in 1967 and it took three hours to drive from the Taj Mahal Palace, Colaba, to Shanmukhananda Hall in central Mumbai. It was Diwali night and the loud bursting of crackers outside could be heard in the concert hall, even though we were playing in a special acoustic shell. The musicians were startled by the noise (laughs).



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LEFT AND RIGHT
Mehta with Pandit Ravi Shankar in New York, 1981; The maestro at his Brentwood, California, home.

IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, WHAT POSSIBILITY DOES MUSIC OFFER FOR SOLACE AND CONNECTION?

People don't understand how powerful music can be. We have played in war-torn areas and people have turned up in huge numbers. In 2013, we went with the Bavarian State Orchestra to Kashmir where everyone sat together and watched the concert without fear. It's one of those concerts that I can never forget. In 1994, I performed at Sarajevo. I also played in Israel to a full house. So, don't underestimate the power of music. It can bring people together. It can soothe and heal wounds.

YOU HAVE CONDUCTED SOME OF THE MOST RENOWNED OPERAS AND ORCHESTRAS OF THE WORLD. DO YOU HAVE ANY UNFULFILLED AMBITIONS?

I have never conducted German composer Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, which is strange as I have



SEEING THE HUGE ICEBERGS AND THE CUTE PENGUINS IN ANTARCTICA WAS AMAZING."

led opera houses for years. But given my age, I wonder if I'll ever get around to it.

WHAT DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN IN INDIA?

I look forward to meeting my friends and eating lots of Parsi food, especially cutlets. I visit my old home in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai, and meet my childhood friends,

including Cipla (Non-Executive) Chairman, Dr YK Hamied. Growing up, we would meet every evening and on weekends to play cricket.

ANY UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL MOMENTS THAT YOU RECALL?

Oh, yes! My wife plans all our trips and she has taken me to some very unusual places. Our trip to Antarctica was one of the most memorable. Seeing the huge icebergs and the cute penguins jumping was amazing; also the birds—the albatrosses on the islands. I wish I could go back. We also went to Rwanda to see the gorillas. Going on the Amarnath Yatra in Kashmir with our children was also an incredible experience.

WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PASSIONS APART FROM MUSIC?

I love reading history books and have a huge collection of them. I also stay abreast of the political affairs of many countries.

THE CHECKLIST

44 ↻ EVENTS 48 ↻ BOOKS 50 ↻ NOW TRENDING

Seeking inspiration from unusual sources, cocktails are now clearly a notch above



NO ORDINARY TIPPLE

These innovative cocktails pay homage to ingredients, people, and places

TAJ SKY VIEW HOTEL AND RESIDENCES THE WORLD'S FIRST AND CHENNAI'S FINEST



TAJ SKY VIEW HOTEL & RESIDENCES—REDEFINING LUXURY LIVING IN CHENNAI

Taj Sky View Hotel & Residences, the world's first and Chennai's most exclusive Taj branded residences, is set to revolutionise urban living on Nelson Manickam Road. Developed by AMPA Group in collaboration with Taj, the iconic brand synonymous with excellence in hospitality, Taj has been globally recognised as the World's Strongest Hotel Brand 2024 and India's Strongest Brand 2024 by Brand Finance. With a legacy of over 120 years, Taj stands as a beacon for discerning travellers and connoisseurs of fine living. This landmark development, featuring 123 ultra-luxury branded residences, 36 boutique offices, and a 253-room hotel, epitomises the perfect blend of timeless elegance and contemporary innovation.

At its heart lies the 75,000 sq. ft. Sky View Club, poised to become Chennai's largest and most prestigious luxury residential club. With its unmatched amenities and world-class experiences, this property is more than a residence—it's a statement of distinction, comfort, and splendour.

NELSON MANICKAM ROAD: THE NEW ADDRESS OF DISTINCTION

Located on one of Chennai's most sought-after avenues, Nelson Manickam Road is poised to redefine urban living. As a vital hub connecting the city's premier business districts, top schools, retail landmarks, and healthcare institutions, this location offers unmatched convenience. A home here isn't just a residence; it's a gateway to the best that Chennai has to offer—an address that elevates your lifestyle.

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Imagine working in an environment where every detail is crafted to inspire success. With spectacular views, thoughtfully designed spaces, and bespoke amenities, the boutique offices at Taj Sky View represent more than a workplace—they embody a vision for excellence. Complemented by a world-class business centre, this space is designed to inspire entrepreneurs and professionals.



HOSPITALITY AT ITS FINEST

Guests can enjoy four signature restaurants and rooftop dining with beautiful views that heighten their culinary experience. The Niu & Nau salon and J Wellness Circle are crafted for holistic mind, body, and soul rejuvenation.

A COMMITMENT TO SECURITY AND ENDURANCE

At Taj Sky View, every home is a fortress of safety and sophistication. Built to last for decades, these residences adhere to the most stringent international construction standards. Intelligent, discreet security systems ensure peace of mind, while a dedicated professional team guarantees seamless day-to-day living. This is a sanctuary where families can live with ease, carefree, and a sense of togetherness.



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Rooted in a vision of giving back to nature, Taj Sky View exemplifies green luxury through its pre-certified IGBC Gold-rated status. This sustainable development combines eco-conscious design with cutting-edge engineering to create a living experience that is both future-ready and environmentally inspired. Here, your home becomes part of a greener tomorrow, harmonising sustainability with indulgence.

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FLAVOUR SALUTE

Discover cocktails imbued with the essence of regional ingredients, while also paying tribute to their communities

words by Raul Dias

→ 🍸 SERANGOON SMITH

Bringing together the essence of Singapore's Tamil community-dominated Serangoon Road and the many goldsmith shops that dot Chennai's bustling T Nagar shopping district, is this martini cocktail. Boasting a distinctive aroma that's both woody and floral, this libation is the sum of its lemongrass-infused gin and young coconut pulp. Adding that extra special Southeast Asian taste profile is an infusion of *gula melaka*, an earthy-flavoured Singaporean and Malaysian palm jaggery.

Where to try: Pandan Club, Chennai

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↑ 🍷 **CUTTING CHAI**

A spiked version of *tapri chai*, one of Mumbai's favourite street-side milky teas, this cocktail has sweet yet bitter flavours from its blend of an in-house tea cordial, citrus, sweet vermouth, Aperol, and dark rum. Served for two in typical *Bambaiyya*-style, small *cutting chai* glasses held in a wire mesh holder, this cocktail is imbued with nostalgia in every sip.

Where to try: SodaBottleOpenerWala, Bengaluru

↓ 🍷 **THAT'S FERMENTED**

Riding the still-active fermentation wave that's been sweeping the country for a while is this drink that's a tribute to north India. Here, inspiration takes the form of a tart, fermented gooseberry *murabba* (preserve), raw turmeric root, and roasted capsicum purée that meld with Haku Japanese craft vodka to make a deliciously-warming cocktail that aptly references Delhi's winter.

Where to try: Khi Khi, New Delhi



↓ 🍷 **HIGH NOTE FOR HEMEN**

With its main ingredient—the very unusual ash gourd pulp—paying homage to sitars (generally made from a type of gourd called *tumba*) sold at Hemen & Co, a quaint little music shop tucked in one corner of Kolkata's Rashbehari Avenue, this cocktail is an inspired one. Its supporting ingredients—Absolut vodka, berries, and sparkling wine—elevate it further, making it the perfect ode to the shop that has been making world-class musical instruments since around 1947.

Where to try: AMPM, Kolkata





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↑ 🇮🇳 **SOBO SNOB**

With its roots deeply moored in the offerings of the famous Haji Ali Juice Centre located in south Mumbai, this cocktail gets its name from the 'snob' moniker notoriously bestowed upon south Mumbaikars or 'SoBo-ites'. Inspired by the juice centre's most popular dessert of custard apple with fresh cream, this drink has a unique clarified custard apple emulsion as its base; this is blended with Absolut vodka and sent off the bar counter with a wooden spoon topped with custard apple foam.

Where to try: Permit & Co, Mumbai

↓ 🇮🇳 **AGUADA BREEZE**

Carrying cultural and regional significance, this cocktail is a brilliant three-part Goan tribute to mixology. It encapsulates the essence of Goa through its thoughtfully-chosen local ingredients. These take the form of Cazulo cashew *feni* and a syrup made from the indigenous *kokum* fruit, and end with a garnish of Aldona chillies that are known for their moderate heat and unique flavour profile.

Where to try: SFX Lounge Bar at Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa





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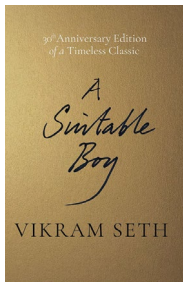
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TOP FIVE READS

Author and screenwriter **Anuja Chauhan** reveals why these books are her favourites



A SUITABLE BOY
(Vikram Seth)

I enjoy it for the sheer historical sweep and for how specifically desi it is while simultaneously also being utterly universal.

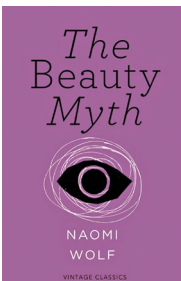
Speaking Tiger; ₹2,999



FIVE LITTLE PIGS
(Agatha Christie)

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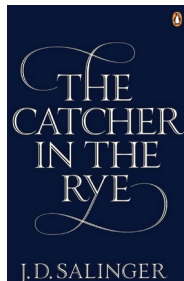
HarperCollins India; ₹299



THE BEAUTY MYTH
(Naomi Wolf)

This book totally changed my life and how I perceive the subject of beauty.

Vintage Classics; ₹240



THE CATCHER IN THE RYE
(JD Salinger)

I love its relatable teenage voice.

Penguin Random House; ₹1,341

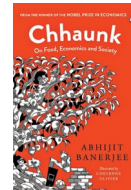


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The Nobel Laureate uses food to talk about economics, society, and India.

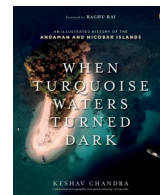
Juggernaut; ₹567



THE HOUSE OF CROSS
(James Patterson)

The latest in the author's bestselling Alex Cross series, it follows the FBI detective on a thrilling chase as he goes after a serial killer.

Hachette Book Group; ₹2,542



WHEN TURQUOISE WATERS TURNED DARK
(Keshav Chandra)

An illustrated history of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it is a tribute to their rich history and cultural heritage.

Penguin India; ₹2,599

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Where: BKC, Mumbai

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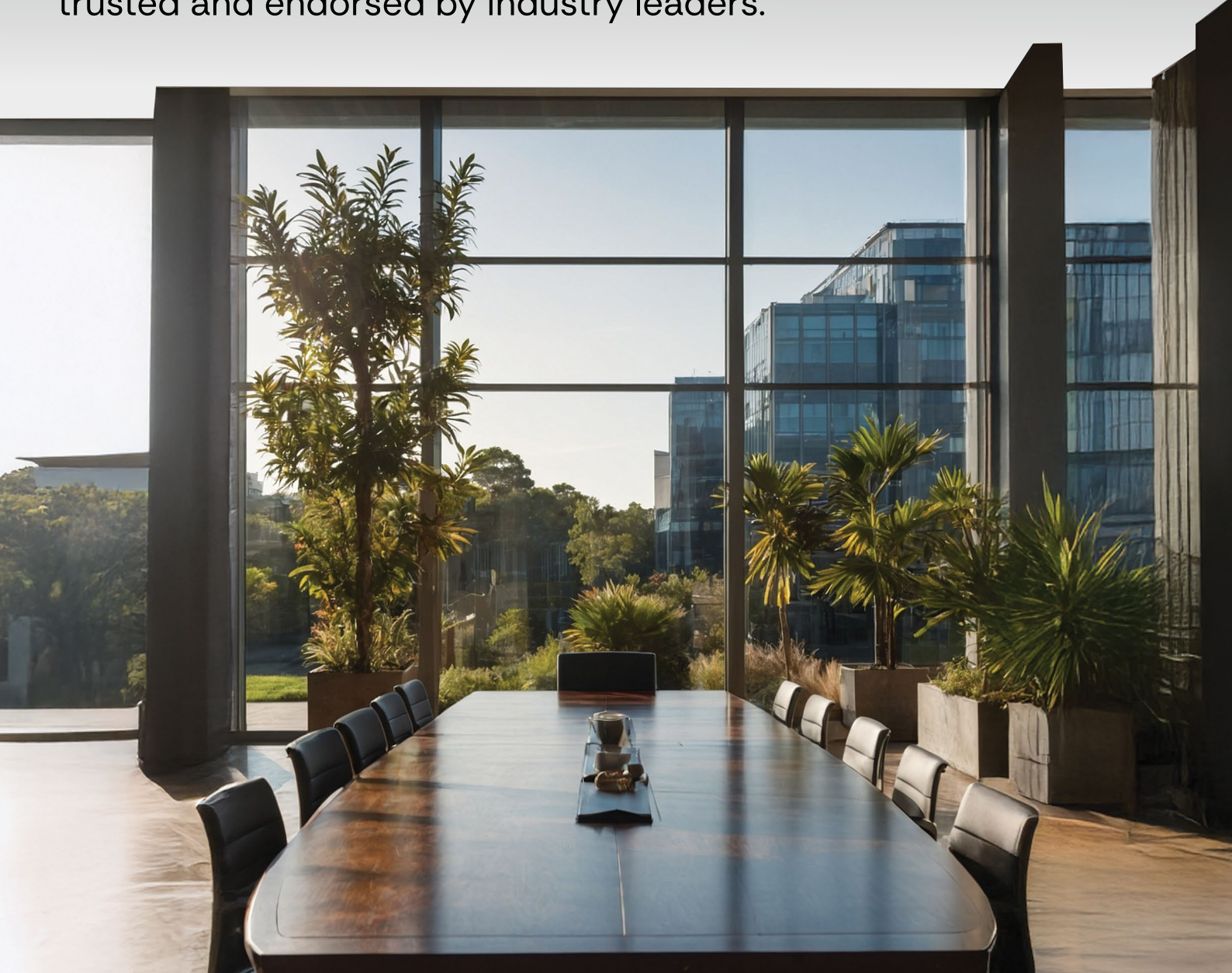
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↑ LIMITED-EDITION EDGE BY TITAN

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↑ MANGA-INSPIRED G-SHOCK WATCHES

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← STAR LEGACY BY MONTBLANC

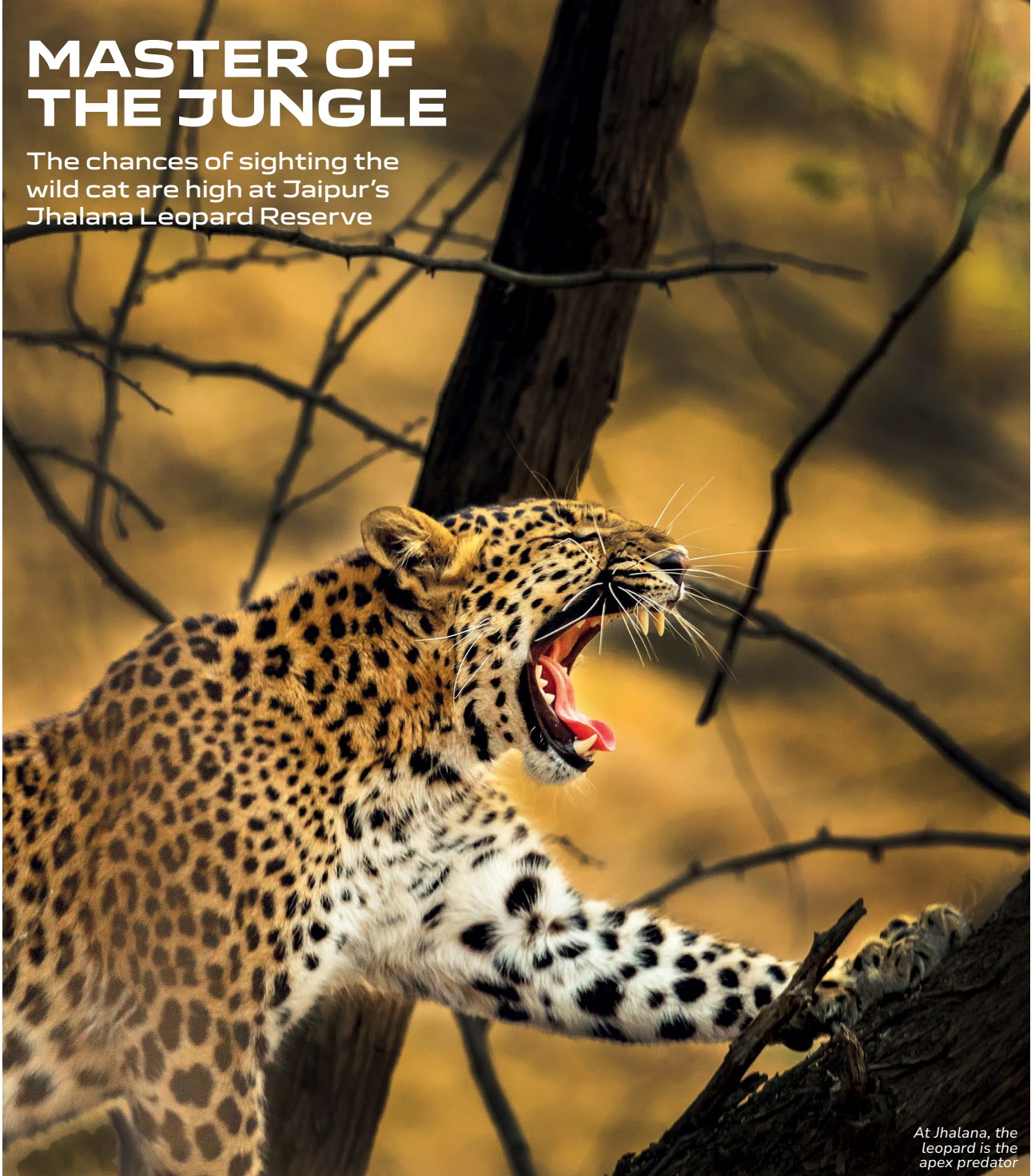
To support the work of the non-profit L'Association Européenne contre les Leucodystrophies (ELA), Montblanc has unveiled the Star Legacy Nicolas Rieussec Chronograph 43mm. The dial references the horse racing event intrinsic to the brand's heritage.

THE PLACES

66 ➔ VIENNA 76 ➔ ON THE CLOCK 80 ➔ FRAME BY FRAME

MASTER OF THE JUNGLE

The chances of sighting the wild cat are high at Jaipur's Jhalana Leopard Reserve



At Jhalana, the leopard is the apex predator



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CHASING THE ELUSIVE CAT

Jaipur's hidden gem, Jhalana Leopard Reserve, turned out to be much more than just spotting the reticent leopard—it was about forging bonds and creating new memories

words by **Geetika Sasan Bhandari**



The leopard is a nocturnal animal that prefers to remain in the shadows of the jungle

A gaggle of 24 cacophonous women, together for a school reunion, do not make particularly good guests for a safari. But here we are, in Jaipur, and one of the outings that's been planned is a trip to the Jhalana Leopard Reserve, India's first leopard reserve—surprisingly located within city limits. Our permits checked, we clamber into the jeeps, clad in camouflage colours, and suitably chastised to lower the noise levels.

Spread across around 20sq km, Jhalana only became a reserve in 2017. Prior to that, our guide Ganesh Prajapat from World of Wilders tells me, it was a protected area and private vehicles could drive into Jhalana for a minor fee. This inevitably led to loud music and littering, and was, therefore, stopped, post which it was declared a reserve. Did Jhalana always have a high concentration of leopards? Perhaps. But it was probably after the last tiger was shot in 1948 that the leopards started to thrive and became somewhat more visible. There are currently 35-40 of them (including cubs) spread across its three zones and the chances of sighting are high. Buoyed by this information, we set off, the jeeps dividing themselves between the zones to prevent overcrowding.

Jhalana is a dry, deciduous forest, overtaken by juliflora, which was initially planted so the villagers could get access to firewood but which rapidly spread, prohibiting the growth of most other flora and fauna. There are rocky hills, a dense scrub forest, and grasslands, but hopefully 24 pairs of eyes will be able to sight a leopard during the two-and-a-half-hour safari. After all, there are bragging rights to be had.

Our jeep first entered Zone 2. We manage to spot some interesting birds straight off—the Bay-backed shrike, also called the 'goggle' bird locally because it really looks like it has on a pair of sunnies; the jungle babblers who stick together in packs of seven; the pond heron with its distinguishable beak;



Unlike its male counterpart, the female nilgai is not blue

the Greater coucal, with the disproportionately long tail; and a huge number of peacocks and peahens. Ten minutes into the safari, one of the jeeps in our group catches up with us, telling us we just narrowly missed seeing one of the female leopards, Flora. She has descended from the hills and crossed over to the grasslands. Was she going in search of prey to feed her three cubs, born in October, or for a drink to one of the 15 man-made water bodies? We'd never know. The disappointment is real, and our driver Kuldeep Singh, one of the most experienced drivers at Jhalana, decides to turn around and go back to the entrance to retrace the route. Unfortunately, we have missed her.

Leopards are shy, nocturnal creatures, our guide says, and they ascend the rocks in the day to stay away from the other animals, only coming down towards the evening for water or a kill. He assures us that while there are no guarantees, the chances of sightings increase as the day draws to a close.

Holding on to that hope, we try to enthusiastically find pleasure in seeing the *nilgais* and the monkeys. We witness a peacock with its entire plumage fanned out, its body in full vibration, trying to attract a peahen.

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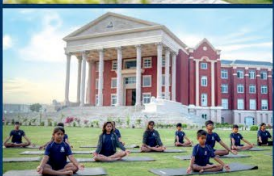
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TOP AND BOTTOM

The Bay-backed shrike is called the 'goggle' bird for good reason; Jhalana is a deciduous forest with grasslands and a rocky terrain.

We move into Zone 3 but here too, the leopard eludes us. Jaipur-based photographer Chinmaya Saxena, whom I catch up with later, is in another jeep, and tells me that there is a big difference in leopards existing at a place and actually being sighted. When I ask him if Rajasthan is India's leopard country (with Jawai, Nahargarh, Amargarh, and Narlai also reporting sightings), he tells me they can be seen here because

they are at the top of the food chain—there is no fear. In wildlife sanctuaries where the mighty tiger holds court, the leopard prefers to remain in the shadows.

Just then, one of the jeeps receives information that a female leopard can be seen on top of a rocky mountain in Zone 1. All jeeps hurriedly make their way, the excitement palpable. She's there alright but almost invisible to the naked eye. The head looks like a minute



Top: World of Wilders; Bottom: Shutterstock



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LEFT AND RIGHT
Peacocks and peahens form a major part of the leopard's diet; The Greater coucal is distinguishable due to its long tail.



speck, until you look through the binoculars or a powerful professional camera lens. I see her through the latter but the minute I turn away from the camera, I see nothing. It's a sighting—and in the event that we don't see any other wild cats, it will be used to make the rest who backed out feel utterly jealous—but truth be told, it's not one worth writing home about.

We drive back towards the grasslands and our driver parks near a watering hole adjacent to a watch tower where sightings are more common. Patience and luck are the two things

you need to spot an animal in the wild, he says. As he switches off the engine, we slump into silence and reflection, the jungle taking over us. It's hard to not fall under the mesmerising spell of the woods, and just an hour is also enough to wash away the city's jarring sounds. We're quiet and still, listening to the birds, muttering prayers under our breath, and just then, the driver signals for us to look. And there he is. Rana, one of the boldest leopards of Jhalana—because he's been seeing the jeeps since birth—just casually walks

STAYS NEAR JHALANA

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Hyatt Place Jaipur

This stylish property offers sunset views of the Pink City from its rooftop bar and lounge.

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LEFT AND RIGHT
Rana is one of the 'bold' leopards who is used to tourist jeeps and is, therefore, more likely to be sighted; Spotted deer also call Jhalana home.

past across the water body about 100m from us, and moves towards the bushes, only his tail visible. Not a word escapes anyone's lips. We're almost in a trance. But Kuldeep isn't. He knows what route Rana will take and he's already driving us there.

Sure enough, he's bang on. Rana crosses the dirt track into the grasslands; by now, the news has been relayed and at least three other jeeps have caught up.

GOOD TO KNOW

The safaris are in two shifts:
7:00am and 3:15pm
(till 31st January);
book directly on
obms-tourist.rajasthan.gov.in



We are in front, stationary, with two jeeps behind us. In a second, Rana appears, walking right between our vehicles. He stops, stares at us, the eye contact sending a shiver down my spine, before proceeding to walk back towards the bushes. The next five to seven minutes are what make the entire safari worthwhile, as Rana, the son of 11-year-old Bahadur, the oldest leopard in Jhalana, puts on a grand show. He first sprays, marking his territory, then leads the way regally as all jeeps scramble to follow at a safe distance. He goes left into the bushes then emerges onto the track, then crosses over and comes out again. By now, the entire group is in a frenzy. People stand in excitement, are constantly reprimanded, and the jeeps jostle for space so all the guests can get a look. Forget the flex—genuine camaraderie takes over as everyone wants the others to get a glimpse of what

they have witnessed. We are truly reunited as we share this collective experience, and now when we meet again, we will have forged a new memory to add to our childhood ones. Rana has clearly won us over.

As we sit around a bonfire that night, I cannot help but think about how the mighty jungle has to do nothing to put you in your place, to remind you how insignificant you are in the larger scheme of things. It's just there, graciously standing tall, providing a home to so many creatures, and keeping the world together even as we do everything to pull it apart.

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Lying between the foothills of the Alps and the Carpathians, the city is dominated by the spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral

FACING PAGE
The Vienna State Opera also hosts formal balls



WALTZ THROUGH VIENNA

The Austrian capital is a rich treasure trove of cultural and gourmet delights

words by **Reshmi Dasgupta**



When Rabindranath Tagore visited Vienna in 1921 and 1926, he apparently took a long and winding route. The Nobel Laureate was believed to have travelled by train and reportedly took along several dozen pieces of baggage, besides an entourage of family and friends. Indians travel much lighter these days, of course.

On his first visit, it seems Tagore saw Richard Wagner's music drama *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Vienna State Opera, dined with the Austrian President, delivered his *The Religion of the Forest* lecture at the University of Vienna, and read from his writings at a concert hall, donating the proceeds to help the children of the city as Austria was still reeling after World War I. On his second visit, he composed a song, *Akashey tor temni acchey chhuti*, besides meeting the father of

Left and right: Österreich Werbung/Julius Silver; Österreich Werbung/Andreas Tischler



The Schönbrunn Palace, a fine example of Baroque architecture, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and exploring the city.

Many Indians visiting Austria today may be inspired to compose a lyrical line or two as well, given its sheer variety of scenic and architectural beauty, not to mention cultural and culinary attractions. It's the land of lakes and the Alps, Mozart and Beethoven, *The Sound of Music* and *Where Eagles Dare*, dancing Lipizzaner horses and Gustav Klimt, Red Bull and Swarovski, Wiener Schnitzel and Sachertorte. The country was also the location for films like *Tiger Zinda Hai* and *Where Harry Met Sejal*.

Best time to visit

Between **April and October**, but **January** has its own charm—no crowds at popular attractions, outdoor ice skating, and easy access to the city's famous cafés, minus the tourist rush. Plus, Russian and French artist Marc Chagall's exhibition will be on all of January and the Paul Gauguin exhibition will be on till 19th January.

For a first-time visitor—the shopping and dining hub of **Stephansplatz**, dominated by the grand 12th century **St. Stephen's Cathedral**, and the nearby grand **Vienna State Opera** should be starting points, to get the city's vibe. **Hotel Sacher Vienna** is a must-visit, as its long line of tourists

waiting for a taste of its iconic, chocolatey Sachertorte indicates. Hint: opt for a cocktail at the hotel's chic **Blaue Bar** to skip the queue as the famous cake is available there too.

If staying at one of the historic hotels along the **Kärntner Strasse** and **Ringstrasse** (as Tagore is said to have), most of the city's many legendary sights can be covered on foot, via a guided walking tour. These include the **Maria-Theresien-Platz**, the **Parliament** building, **Burgtheater**, the **Austrian National Library**, and more. The Habsburg heritage on display at the **Hofburg** and **Schönbrunn** palaces bedazzle as much as the treasures in the **Kunsthistorisches Museum** and the huge repository of artefacts, all in the same area.

Though a little further away, the **Upper Belvedere Palace** is unmissable as it boasts the largest collection of paintings of the artist whose presence

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CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT
The Kunsthistorisches Museum houses numerous works of noted European artists; The Hotel Sacher Vienna claims to have the original recipe for the Sachertorte; The iconic cake was first served at a state banquet in 1832.



BEST STAYS IN VIENNA

Hotel Sacher Vienna

This 152-room stay is the home of the Sachertorte, the cake now synonymous with Austria. Since it opened in 1876, it has been favoured by presidents and popstars.

Grand Hotel Wien

From this lovely old-world property, most of the city's sights are within walking distance.

Hotel Bristol

Now part of the Marriott group, this Art Deco gem is located at a prime address.

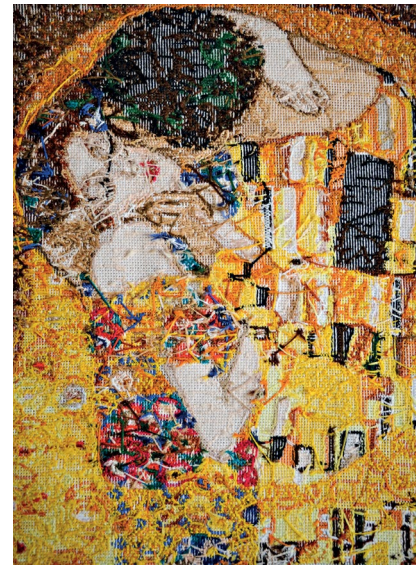




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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
The Hofburg should be on every visitor's list; Gustav Klimt's The Kiss; Vienna is famous for its wine, among other things.

is felt all over Vienna—Gustav Klimt—besides Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh, among others. Klimt's *The Kiss* has a *Mona Lisa*-like fan following and finds its way into all touristy memorabilia—from chocolates and mugs to cushion covers. Buying tickets online, beforehand, for this museum, is highly recommended.

Once the palaces and museums are done, explore Vienna's other delights. Start with **Wiener Schnitzel** (cutlets)



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MOZART WEEK

A host of celebrations to mark the birthday of this great composer will be held in Salzburg (his birthplace) from 23rd January to 2nd February. Expect a series of concerts, talks, guided tours, and a street dance performance. Salzburg is a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Vienna.



TOP AND BOTTOM

A show titled *Serenata Mexicana* will be held at Mozartplatz (Salzburg) as part of Mozart Week; Ice skating in front of the Vienna Town Hall.

or **Käsespätzle** (Austrian cheese noodles), accompanied by a glass of **Gruner Veltliner** and **Apfelstrudel** for dessert. Or try a sausage from one of Vienna's famous *würstelstands* like Bitzinger, perhaps? Alternatively, a walk down the **Naschmarkt** with its 120 shops selling everything from clothes and incense to vegetables, fruits and food from around the world may be what you fancy.

For music aficionados, many concert venues organise programmes featuring some of the best works of Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss, and others. If the weather's good, have a Viennese coffee, saunter around **Prater** park, and take a ride on the *Riesenrad* (Giant Ferris Wheel). Also visit a *heuriger* or wine tavern at one of Vienna's several vineyards. Buy a delicate Augarten Wein porcelain bauble or, better still, pick up a *schneekugel* or snow globe, which was invented in Vienna.

In 1932, another famous Indian visited Austria: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose spent time in Vienna, and his half-Austrian daughter, Anita, was born here. Maybe he walked down the same boulevards and lingered in the Prater. That is certainly a thought to ponder as you take in a city that has always had something to interest and captivate every kind of visitor.



GETTING THERE

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The Chinese fishing nets, an iconic sight of Fort Kochi, can be best viewed from the Vasco da Gama Square

OLD-WORLD CHARM

Kochi is a picture-perfect mix of art, heritage, and cuisine

words by Riddhi Doshi

🕒 07:00AM

Early start

📍 Vasco da Gama Square

Fishing with Chinese nets is the legacy of an old trade practice along the spice route that spanned India, Arabia, China, Greece, and Rome—of which, Kochi was an important port. Seeing fishermen work their nets in Fort Kochi is a great way to start the day.

🕒 8:30AM

Hearty meal

📍 Kashi Art Café

Tucked away in a quiet lane of Fort Kochi, this is a great place for breakfast. It serves French toast, cold coffee, burgers, sandwiches, and more. The walls are adorned with paintings by young artists. For a more traditional repast, Dudu's Sumathi Cafe offers delicious dosas and *bondas* (a kind of fritter).

🕒 10:00AM

Special rendezvous

📍 Mattancherry Dutch Palace

Built around 1545, the palace was gifted by the Portuguese to the then king of Kochi. It is closed on Fridays to visitors. Across the road are the old spice warehouses, where one can buy fresh pepper, vanilla pods, and more. They make for great souvenirs.

🕒 12:00PM

Lunch by the sea

📍 Armoury Cafe

This sea-facing eatery is housed in Brunton Boatyard, a former shipyard from colonial times that is now a luxury hotel. Savour traditional Kerala dishes, including *appam*, vegetable stew and fish, and meat delicacies while watching the Indian Navy and cargo ships sail by in the shimmering waters.

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CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

One can watch a Kathakali performance at Great KV Kathakali Center on most evenings; The quaint streets of Fort Kochi are filled with shops and art galleries; Spices are a popular souvenir to pick up from here.



STYLISH STAYS

- 1/ The Postcard Mandalay Hall** is located in historic Jew Town, next to the synagogue. This boutique property is an ideal gateway to the area. Every room has commissioned art representing Kochi's culture and history.
- 2/ Brunton Boatyard** ensures top-notch luxury. This historic hotel by the sea is a great option for lovers of history, design, great food, and gorgeous views.
- 3/ Malabar House** is a Relais & Châteaux member hotel, with 17 rooms and suites. Do not miss their Ayurvedic spa.

🕒 02:00PM
Antique halt
📍 Jew Town

Walk through the cobbled lanes to admire the unique architecture and shop for a variety of souvenirs, including furniture, jewellery, and trinkets. One can also see how perfumes are made at IRS Natural Incense and Perfume Oils, and create a customised fragrance to take home.

🕒 05:00PM
Oil's well
📍 Keraleshwar lane

Kerala is known for its bountiful supply of coconuts. Here, at Bhats Enterprise, a family-run cold pressed mill, witness how coconut oil is pressed with the help of old, wooden machines, and also buy the purest form of this nourishing oil. A few streets away is VJ Prabhu, which is known for its fine, cotton saris, especially the traditional white-and-gold *kasavu* as well as Kanjeevaram silks.

🕒 06:00PM
Relax and glow
📍 The Sacred Lotus

A day in Kochi would be incomplete without an authentic Ayurvedic massage. The Sacred Lotus retreat is known for some of the best massages in the neighbourhood. After a short consultation with an Ayurveda practitioner, choose an appropriate treatment to experience pure bliss.

🕒 08:30PM
A dance treat
📍 Great KV Kathakali Center

Head to this noted performing arts centre to watch a Kathakali dance performance, a mesmerising display of emotive expressions and vibrant storytelling. One can also catch a staging of *kalaripayattu*, the traditional martial arts form of Kerala, depending on their schedule. If luck favours, one can also catch a glimpse of the various Kathakali performers putting on their elaborate make-up.



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NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Air India cabin crew recreates classic moments from popular culture in the Big Apple

In celebration of the recent launch of Air India's A350 services to and from New York, a few of the airline's cabin crew went on a cinematic journey in search of some of the city's landmarks featured in globally-popular movies, and to recreate some iconic New York moments.

Here's how Air India's cabin crew, donning their new uniforms, strolled through the bustling city, expressing their excitement and pride for the 'New Air India Experience' arriving in New York, with our A350 flights now operating daily from Delhi to New York (JFK), and Newark (EWR) from 2nd January 2025.





RECREATING LUNCH ATOP A SKYSCRAPER ▲

Reliving a piece of history, Air India cabin crew recreated one of the most influential photographs of all time, the iconic Lunch Atop a Skyscraper (facing page) from 1932. This captured ironworkers taking a casual lunch break on a beam during the construction of the Rockefeller Center.

▼ THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (AKA THE MET)

The grand staircase that leads up to the museum's entrance is a striking architectural feature, where numerous TV shows and films have been shot. The MET steps were a regular backdrop for popular drama series *Gossip Girl* and featured in the heist movie *Ocean's 8*. When Harry Met Sally's funny 'pecan pie' sequence, in which Harry and Sally are in a museum and talk about "too much pepper on paprikash", was also filmed here.







◀ **GAPSTOW BRIDGE, CENTRAL PARK**

The serene beauty and lush greenery around the picturesque Gapstow Bridge in Central Park has made the bridge a popular choice among filmmakers across generations. This is where Kevin McCallister first encounters the 'pigeon lady' in Home Alone 2: Lost in New York and it is also where the 'Runway Jungle' photo shoot takes place in The Devil Wears Prada.



▲ **TIMES SQUARE**

The Air India crew strolled along the busy sidewalks under the bright neon lights of Times Square, as the highly-popular tourist attraction has featured in numerous Bollywood and Hollywood movies. Whether it is the subliminal imagery in Tom Cruise's Vanilla Sky that shows him running alone through Times Square, the flash mob scene in Friends with Benefits, or Preity Zinta's happy dance in the Bollywood film Kal Ho Naa Ho, Times Square dazzles anywhere one sees it, on the silver screen and in real life.



GETTING THERE

Now fly the 'New Air India Experience' aboard our flagship A350 between Delhi and New York (JFK) and Newark (EWR).

THE PIERRE, A TAJ HOTEL

The iconic scene from Scent of a Woman, in which Frank (Al Pacino) and Donna (Gabrielle Anwar) did the tango, was filmed at The Pierre, providing the perfect backdrop for the passionate dance and making it one of the most memorable moments in the film.

THE NEW YORK TAXIS

The iconic yellow cabs or taxis in New York have become a staple in countless movies set in the city. They often serve as more than just transportation, symbolising the hustle and bustle of urban life and even playing active roles in plots. Whether it's a quick cameo or a central element, New York taxis are a cinematic icon.



YOUR AIR INDIA



NEWS

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

p 88 ↑

ROUTES

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

p 97 ↑

PARTNERS

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

p 100 ↑



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



Phase 1: Sept 2022 – March 2023
Fix the basics

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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Commercially efficient and growing

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



- Topped its previous landmark order to purchase **470** aircraft with an additional order of **100** aircraft from Airbus, taking the total count to **570**

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



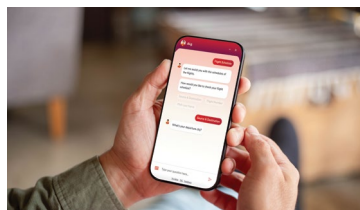
- Started adding new **A320neo** aircraft in three-class cabin configuration, including **Premium Economy**

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



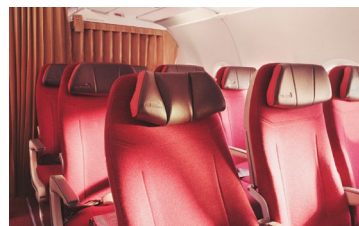
- Launched **Vista Stream** on narrowbody and legacy widebody fleet, enabling customers to access digital entertainment on their devices

- 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 an **exclusive lounge** at Terminal 2 Bengaluru International Airport; 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 has added 100 Airbus aircraft to its expanding fleet



100 MORE AIRCRAFT

Air India has placed an order to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft, comprising 10 widebody A350 and 90 narrowbody A320 Family aircraft, including A321neo. These 100 new aircraft are in addition to the firm orders of 470 aircraft that Air India had placed with Airbus and Boeing in 2023. The latest order takes the total number of aircraft that Air India has ordered to 570, reiterating its commitment to building a modern airline that India can be proud of.



GIVING WINGS TO DREAMS

Air India has placed an order for 34 trainer aircraft as it prepares to start training of cadet pilots at South Asia's largest Flying Training Organisation (FTO) coming up in Amravati, Maharashtra. This reaffirms the airline's commitment towards strengthening the aviation ecosystem and cultivating a strong talent pool of pilots.



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↓ YOUR SCREEN, OUR CONTENT



Air India has extended its wireless inflight entertainment service, Vista Stream, to its narrowbody fleet. Vista Stream, which debuted in August 2024, has already been introduced across Air India's widebody fleet (excluding the newly-inducted Boeing 777 and Airbus 350 aircraft). It will be accessible across international and domestic networks.

AIR INDIA WINS A RED DOT AWARD

Air India has won global recognition for its generative Artificial Intelligence-driven booking feature which, once rolled out, will greatly enhance the reservation experience. Air India's innovative concept recently won the Red Dot award, one of the most prestigious recognitions for design concepts by the global design community, in Singapore. This concept is now showcased in the city's Red Dot Design Museum.



OPTIMISATION OF ROUTES

Following the integration of Vistara in November 2024, Air India optimised its domestic route network, prioritising deployment of its best narrowbody cabin products on five key metro-to-metro routes, from 1st December 2024. All* flights between the following metro cities are being operated with the erstwhile Vistara A320-series aircraft, offering Business, Premium Economy, and Economy Class: Delhi and Mumbai; Delhi and Bengaluru; Delhi and Hyderabad; Mumbai and Bengaluru; and Mumbai and Hyderabad.



BENEFITS GALORE FOR STUDENTS

Air India has launched discounted fares and additional benefits for students across its domestic and international route network applicable for all three cabins. These benefits provide students up to 10 per cent discount on base fares on all flights, 10kg extra baggage allowance, and the option of a one-time free date change upon booking on Air India's direct channels.

**Air India will continue to operate one widebody flight each between Delhi and Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad using its Boeing 777 or Airbus A350 aircraft, which will have 'AI'-prefixed three-digit flight numbers.*



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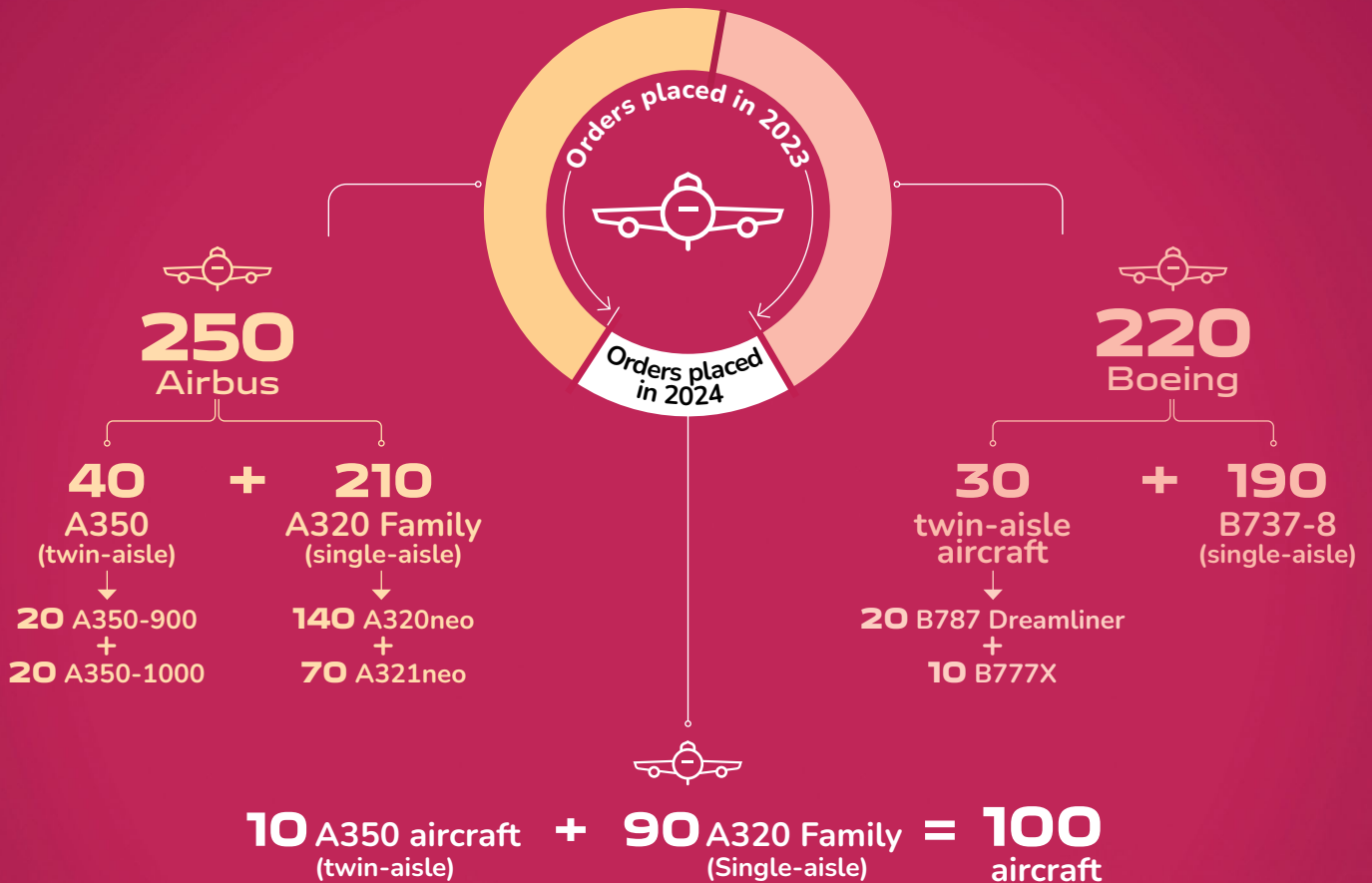


Rajouri Garden, Vikaspuri,
Ambience Mall, Gurgaon

Decoding Air India's Aircraft Orders

Total aircraft orders placed

570



Aircraft deliveries since September 2023

6 A350-900 | 35 B737-8 (single-aisle)

Outstanding deliveries: 529 aircraft





Language

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PROUD WINGS

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

Airbus A319

 **06**

Airbus A320ceo

 **07**

Airbus A320neo

 **98**

Airbus A321ceo

 **13**

Airbus A321neo

 **14**

Boeing 777-300ER

 **19**

Boeing 777-200LR

 **08**

**Boeing 787-9
Dreamliner**

 **07**

**Boeing 787-8
Dreamliner**

 **27**

**FLEET
STRENGTH
205**

Airbus A350-900

06

*Total number as on 12th December 2024;
This fleet count is exclusive of Air India Express
(Air India Group's low-cost carrier)



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56 DAILY

DEL ⇄ BLR
36 DAILY

DEL ⇄ HYD
24 DAILY

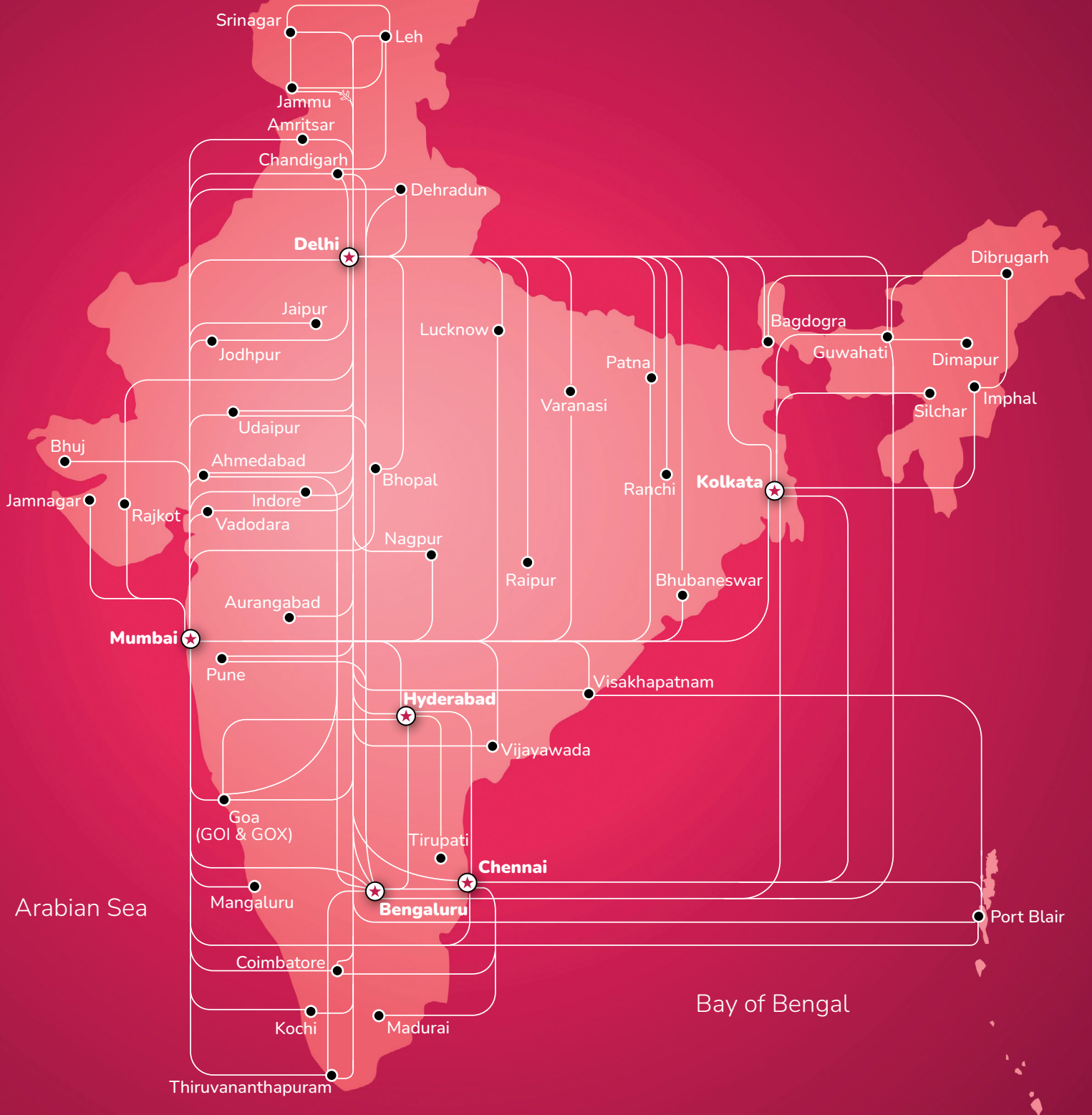
BOM ⇄ BLR
22 DAILY

BOM ⇄ HYD
18 DAILY



*Subject to further progressive network calibration and operational constraints.
*Air India will continue to operate certain widebody flights between Delhi and Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad using its Boeing 777, 787 or Airbus A350 aircraft, which will have 'AI'-prefixed three-digit flight numbers.

DOMESTIC CONNECTIVITY



✂ Air India operates Jammu to Delhi flights on Sundays and does not operate Delhi to Jammu flights.

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

*Route map as on 16th December 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

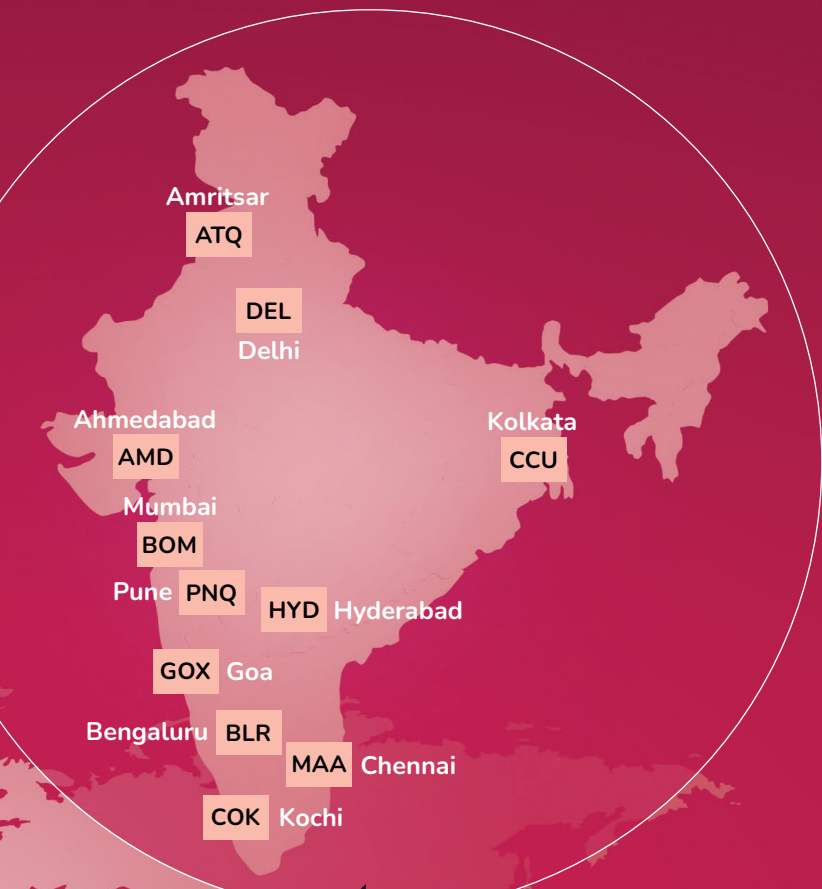


Abu Dhabi (AUH)	←-----→	BOM				
Dammam (DMM)	←-----→	BOM				
Doha (DOH)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	COK		
Dubai (DXB)	←-----→	DEL	BOM	COK	HYD	MAA
Jeddah (JED)	←-----→	DEL	BOM			
Muscat (MCT)	←-----→	BOM				
Riyadh (RUH)	←-----→	DEL	BOM			
Tel Aviv (TLV)	←-----→	DEL				

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 16th December 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
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Codeshare and Interline partnerships as on 16th December 2024

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भारतीय आदिवासी स्वतंत्रता सेनानी, श्री बिरसा मुंडा की 150वीं जयंती के अवसर पर, हम उनके साहस और राष्ट्र के प्रति सेवा के लिए उनका सम्मान करते हैं।

On the 150th birth anniversary of the iconic tribal freedom fighter from India, Shri Birsa Munda, we express our respect for his unwavering courage and service to the nation.

MISSION LIFE

मिशन लाइफ़, जिसे प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी द्वारा शुरू किया गया है, पर्यावरण की सुरक्षा और संरक्षण के लिए लोगों को प्रेरित करने वाला एक वैश्विक जन आंदोलन है। इसका मकसद लोगों को पर्यावरण के प्रति जागरूक करना और उन्हें पर्यावरण की रक्षा के लिए कदम उठाने के लिए प्रेरित करना है।

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 SEVA

नागर विमानन मंत्रालय ने अपने एयर-सेवा पोर्टल को अपग्रेड किया है जो उपयोगकर्ताओं को ऑनलाइन शिकायतें जमा करने, ट्रैक करने और भारत में हवाई यात्रा के बारे में जानकारी प्राप्त करने की अनुमति देता है। सेवा सम्बंधी किसी और जानकारी के लिए, आप airsewa.gov.in पर लॉगिन कर सकते हैं।

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has upgraded its AirSeva 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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A TRAVELLER'S TALE



NORDIC JOY

Chef **Ranveer Brar** on savouring the sights and cuisine of Finland



UNDER THE ARCTIC SKY

My recent trip to Finland with my wife, Pallavi, was magical, because I've always wanted to experience the Lappish way of life in the world's happiest country. In Rovaniemi, we stayed at the Arctic TreeHouse Hotel in a cosy cottage with a private sauna.

BRILLIANT BITES

The cuisine in Rovaniemi was a revelation, especially the desserts made of local berries at Rakas Restaurant & Bar. I went mushroom picking on a guided foraging trip, and took to reindeer meat, relishing it in soups, steaks, and tartare at Sky Kitchen & View. Dining at Gustav Kitchen & Bar was unbeatable—eclectic small plates and a great vibe.

TALES TO REMEMBER

Meeting the huskies at the Bearhill Husky Kennel was pure joy. We also went on a sleigh ride and visited Santa Claus's Village.

DO NOT MISS

The sustainability-driven restaurant Nolla in Helsinki, and the National Library of Finland, which the Finns built to engage in community activities, including making music.

— As told to **Shilpi Madan**

Clockwise from top left: Getty Images; Ranveer Brar; Visit Finland; Shutterstock; Gustav Kitchen & Bar

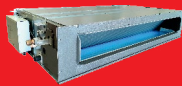
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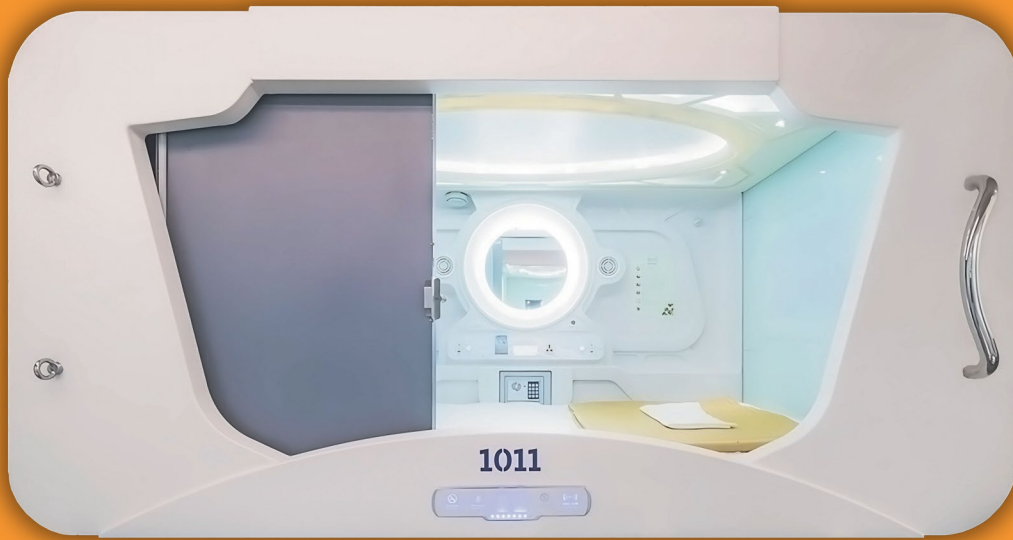
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