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EDITOR'S NOTE

Seven Magic Mountains is a desert art installation by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, in Las Vegas, USA.

The best design often goes unnoticed. Seamlessly woven into an experience, it quietly elevates how we move through the world without us even realising it.

Our Cover Story section leads with designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee, who writes: "India offers the world an understanding of continuity: design that responds to life, respects what exists, and allows it to evolve." In Spain, we explore two relatively unknown landmarks by architect Antoni Gaudí that showcase how his vision aligns with today's architectural values of sustainability, contextual design, and craftsmanship. Art historian and conservationist Tasneem Zakaria Mehta picks out cultural spots and heritage sites in India worth visiting. To view design in a modern context, we look at how Indian food is being plated creatively without compromising its essence. Effective design can also tie together a brand's narrative and communicate its values, and our new cabin interiors in the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aim to do just that—enhance the guest experience while expressing our intrinsic warmth and hospitality.

The theme flows into our other sections: the Bauhaus architecture movement that shaped Chicago and Berlin's hidden courtyards that have morphed into cultural hot spots but still reveal the city's history.

Travel is no longer about ticking off bucket lists; it is about seeing places with a different lens, about forging connections, about understanding cultures and values, and Air India has always aimed to connect the world with the country's culture, creativity, and contemporary spirit. In the first of many, we hosted a performance by sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma at London's venerated Royal Albert Hall.

It is a small step towards building bonds through art and culture. Because we are not an airline that simply carries people—we carry ideas.

Happy Reading!

– **Namaste.ai** Editorial Team

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A noted art historian and conservationist takes you around her favourite centres of design and culture across India

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Sculpture by artist Lorenzo Quinn depicting giant hands emerging from the Grand Canal in Venice

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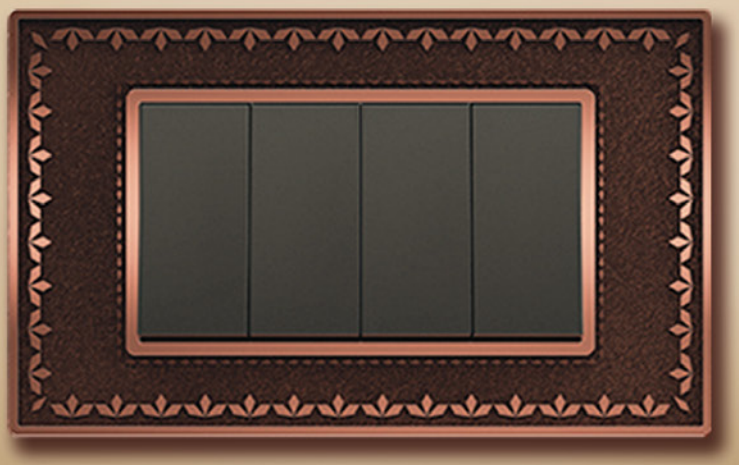
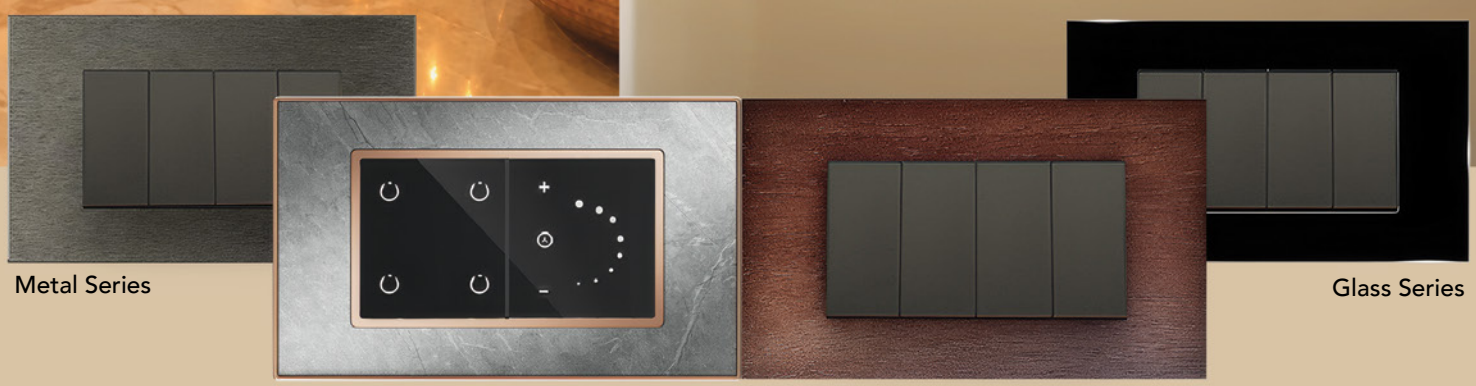


Ethnic Series



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Founder of India's leading luxury design house, Sabyasachi, which was established in 1999. A pioneer of Indian luxury, he champions heritage, craftsmanship, and artisan livelihoods while redefining fashion as a lifestyle. He speaks about India's contribution to the world of design. **page 14**

Tasneem Zakaria Mehta
@tzmehta

As a former vice-chairman of INTACH, Tasneem has been one of the pioneers of the heritage restoration movement in the country, including the UNESCO award-winning restoration of the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, where she now serves as Managing Trustee and Director. She shares details about her favourite design hubs and heritage sites across the country. **page 20**

Jane Foster

A British freelance travel writer based in Dalmatia, Jane is the Croatia and Montenegro expert for The Telegraph (the UK) Travel pages. She has written several guides, including the Bradt Dalmatian Coast handbook. She takes us on a whirlwind tour of Dubrovnik, Croatia. **page 42**

Roshni Bajaj Sanghvi
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A graduate of the erstwhile French Culinary Institute in NYC, Roshni lives in Mumbai and has been writing on food, travel, and design since 2005. She is crazy about obscure ingredients and always knows where to go back for seconds. She explores the intersection of culinary creativity and design. **page 24**

Lydia Swinscoe
@lydiaswinscoe

Based in Colombo, she is a travel writer and journalist contributing to global titles, including The Sunday Times, Condé Nast Traveller, BBC Travel, and more. Having been based in Sri Lanka for close to three years, Lydia delights in the arts, culinary, wildlife, and architectural scenes of the tropical island, often exploring solo and by public transport. She traces the architectural legacy of Minnette de Silva in Colombo, Sri Lanka. **page 86**

All images courtesy respective authors

MIND

Shifting Perspectives

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Getty Images

AN EXTRAORDINARY INHERITANCE

While Indian design is inherently intelligent, it now needs the confidence to own the entire narrative

words by
Sabyasachi Mukherjee

The author sees himself as someone who ties the past with the present

Sabyasachi Mukherjee

The designer's Delhi store displays clothes, jewellery and accessories in a setting that champions art and craft

> Cultural confidence allows you to welcome an influence, work with it and produce something that could only have come from you.

A civilisation reveals itself in the way it makes ordinary life beautiful. In India, design has long inhabited the everyday: the embroidery on a border, a brass vessel shaped to fit the hand, a courtyard arranged around light, the considered abundance of a meal. These things carry knowledge acquired through use and refined across generations. As we travel, we encounter other ways of living and begin to understand our own more clearly. For me, the most interesting question in design is what from our past we choose to carry forward, and how we give it a meaningful place in contemporary life.

Indian design begins with an understanding of how people live. A *jaali* filters light and allows air to circulate while preserving privacy. A sari adapts to different bodies through drape. A thali balances colour, texture, flavour and proportion. Seasonality shapes both the meal and our anticipation of it. Beauty grows from the relationship between material, environment and purpose.

India offers the world an understanding of continuity: design that responds to life, respects what exists, and allows it to evolve. Our task is to apply that knowledge to contemporary needs, making objects and places worth

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
India's design knowledge is apparent, for example, in a courtyard that allows light to filter through; A brass vessel whose shape lets the hand cup it just right; Thalis that are made for abundance.

FACING PAGE
The Mysore Palace is a grand showcase of architecture and craftsmanship

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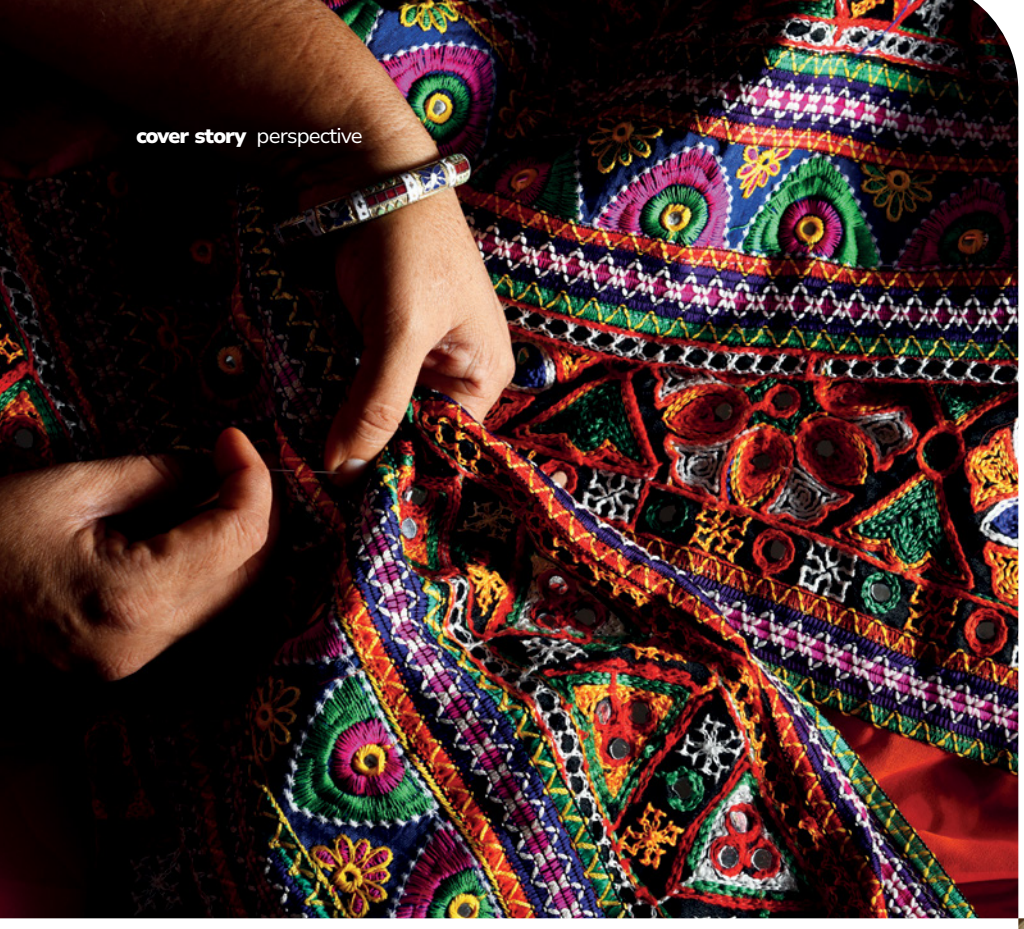
using, caring for, and carrying forward. Preservation depends on continued relevance so I see myself as a ferryman between past and present.

I often say that India is a first-world civilisation. We possess an extraordinary inheritance of weaving, embroidery, metalwork, carving, architecture, and ornamentation. This knowledge exists in hands, households, and workshops as much as it does in museums. Yet for generations, much of our contribution to global design has remained behind the scenes. We have made exceptional things while others have owned the label and the narrative. I believe the next chapter of Indian design is authorship: the confidence to create a complete point of view and take responsibility for how the world encounters it.

This is why the handmade matters so deeply to me. An experienced artisan makes decisions throughout the process: adjusting a stitch, responding to a stone, judging the tension of a thread. The hand carries the mind. In a world organised around speed and repeatability this attention will be the ultimate luxury. Value comes from the totality of our decisions and the integrity of their execution. Time and material alone does not make an object exceptional. What matters is the knowledge applied during that time, and critically, if the beholder recognises its consequence in the finished piece.

Preserving material knowledge requires a viable economy. An artisan



> The breadth of Indian design intelligence remains insufficiently explored. The world recognises our ornament more readily than it appreciates our understanding of structure, comfort, adaptability and restraint.

should be able to build a secure and dignified life through their skill. For a younger generation to enter a craft, to engage with creation, there must be a future in it. This gives designers and businesses a substantial responsibility. We must create products people want to use, invest in quality, and find markets that can sustain the work. Scale requires thought: training, reliable production, and careful stewardship of skills. Technology can support these systems but never replace them. Human intelligence must remain central to the creation of things which matter most.

Craftsmanship becomes desirable through design. A beautiful technique needs proportion, relevance, and a clear purpose. The global customer should be able to encounter a garment or a jewel as something that belongs in their life. Its provenance then deepens their appreciation. Cultural significance and contemporary usefulness can strengthen one another.

Our visual language has travelled because India itself has always been shaped by movement. Trade, migration, and patronage brought materials and ideas into proximity, allowing them to acquire new meanings. Chinese porcelain beside a Bengali painting or European furniture beneath an Indian textile feels entirely natural to me. I grew up in Calcutta, a city that absorbed the world and made it its own. That capacity for exchange remains one of our greatest strengths. Cultural confidence allows you to welcome an influence, work with it, and produce something that could only have come from you.

TOP AND BOTTOM
The author feels India has a rich inheritance of knowledge in weaving and embroidery, among other crafts.

The breadth of Indian design intelligence remains insufficiently explored. The world recognises our ornament more readily than it appreciates our understanding of structure, comfort, adaptability, and restraint. There are generations of knowledge beneath an embellished surface. Our future will depend on giving this knowledge new applications and making its authors visible. I see an increasingly confident design language emerging, one capable of addressing contemporary life while remaining comfortable with its inheritance.

Modernity requires judgement about what is necessary and what deserves to endure. For culture to remain relevant, it must be dynamic. Our inheritance gives us the foundation to imagine what comes next. Our creations will bear witness to what we value most.

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HOT ON THE *Trail*

Art historian, curator, and conservationist **Tasneem Zakaria Mehta** picks her favourite cultural spots and heritage sites across the country

Left: DakshinaChitra Museum; Right: Aga Khan Trust for Culture India

LEFT AND RIGHT
The reception area of the quaint and peaceful DakshinaChitra Museum in Muttukadu, Tamil Nadu; Informative displays at the Humayun Tomb World Heritage Site Museum in New Delhi.

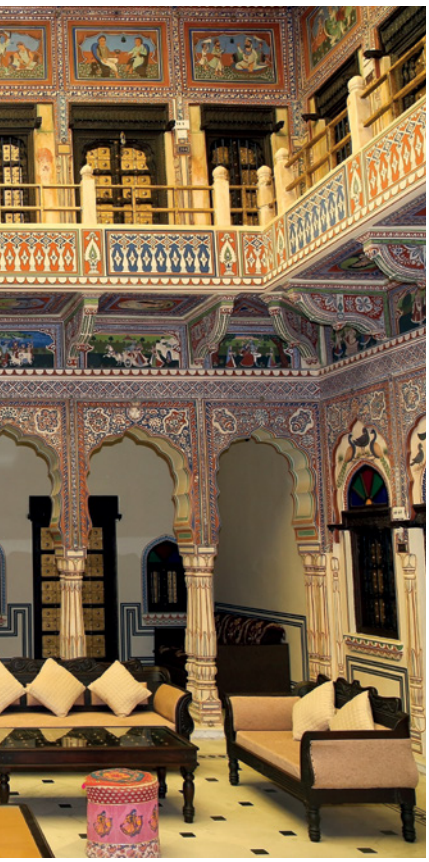
Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad (Gujarat)
One of my favourite museums, this houses an unparalleled collection of textiles from India gathered together with great care by its co-founder Gira Sarabhai. Founded in 1949 and set within the Sarabhai Foundation's Shahibaug estate, its galleries hold historical and contemporary textiles alongside sculpture, miniatures, and manuscripts, rendering it indispensable to understanding India's material and craft traditions.

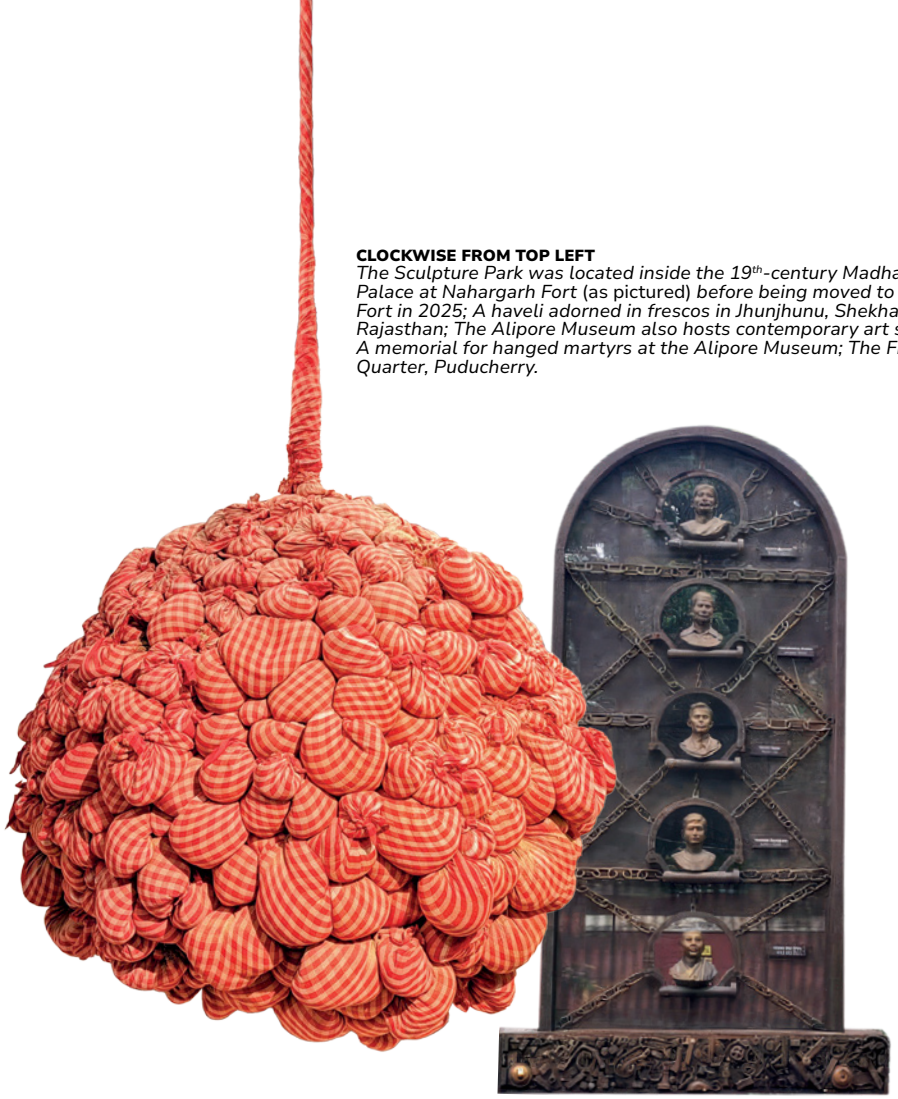
Alipore Museum, Kolkata (West Bengal)
The compelling transformation of the former Alipore Central Jail into a museum and memorial is a wonderful act of place-making, turning a site once associated with colonial imprisonment into a living repository of shared memory. The preserved cells, exhibitions on India's freedom struggle, and contemporary art shows offer visitors a chance to reflect on India's freedom movement, while showing how a tricky historic site can be given novel and noble purpose for the community.

DakshinaChitra Museum, Muttukadu (Tamil Nadu)
You are transported to another world at this site, which showcases the great craft and building traditions of South India. Set in a large open space, the museum evokes the world of the Chettiars. Its courtyards, Athangudi tiles, stained glass, and teak columns illuminate a distinctive architectural culture shaped by trade, migration, ritual, and luxury.

Fort Kochi (Kerala)
As an urban milieu, this neighbourhood is a cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures, design sensibilities, histories, gastronomy, and anecdotes. Host to the internationally-acclaimed Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Fort Kochi's fabric becomes a foil to showcase artists from around the world. Charming galleries and ateliers interspersed through the area frequently

Memorial: Rupak Chowdhuri; Rest: Shutterstock





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
The Sculpture Park was located inside the 19th-century Madhavendra Palace at Nahargarh Fort (as pictured) *before being moved to Jaigarh Fort in 2025; A haveli adorned in frescos in Jhunjhunu, Shekhawati, Rajasthan; The Alipore Museum also hosts contemporary art shows; A memorial for hanged martyrs at the Alipore Museum; The French Quarter, Puducherry.*

organise exhibitions and workshops, positioning contemporary artistic expression in novel and witty ways.

The Sculpture Park at Jaigarh Fort (Rajasthan)
This is an ingenious curatorial initiative by the late artist-turned-gallerist Peter Nagy, who brought together Indian and international artists to respond to the Fort's historic interiors. It stands as a bastion for invigorating interest in contemporary art in India. The spatiality of the fort intrinsically affords chance encounters with the sculptures and the latent meanings they provoke.

Humayun Tomb World Heritage Site Museum, New Delhi
My favourite monument in the Capital is the Tomb but its Site Museum is an exemplary example of thoughtful design that brings ecology, landscape, and public life into a harmonious composition. Channelling the vision of the late Aga Khan, the museum marries a reflective past with a considered future, allowing not only the built form but also its legacy to emerge from the site with a sense of deep regard.

The French Quarter, Puducherry
Flanked by mustard and ochre villas, boulevards and avenues, and elegant churches and quaint cafés, this heritage precinct—that is a palimpsest of the region's colonial history with the ad hoc, slow, and soupy spirit of coastal India—enthuses its visitors to walk through as *flâneurs*.

Painted havelis in Shekhawati (Rajasthan)
In the towns of Nawalgarh, Mandawa, and Fatehpur, merchant havelis form an open-air museum of painted architecture. Frescoes of gods, courtly scenes, transport, and commerce sprawl over courtyards and walls, offering a glimpse into how 19th-century merchant families used colour, craftsmanship, and storytelling to depict who they were and what they aspired to.

Mahmudabad House, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)
This elegant 19th-century home, a wing of Kaiserbagh Palace, evokes the city's bygone era of grace and refinement. Built by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Awadh, in the early 1850s, it features verdant lawns, kitchen gardens, and towering trees. Aab-O-Namak, meaning 'water and salt' in Persian, offers curated dining for groups of six or more, showcasing Lucknow's rich culinary heritage. Visiting chefs occasionally host pop-ups, while musical recitals add to the experience.

A mead sorbet sitting beneath a heap of shaved ice with flavours of spiced tomatoes and strawberries at Farmlore (the dish was curated for World Bee Day—20th May—hence the presentation)

When Plating Makes Perfect

As Indian cuisine attracts greater international attention, its most notable development may well be a distinct approach to presenting a dish

words by **Roshni Bajaj Sanghvi**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
'Nathai' Braised Snails with a potato and lentil gravy at Farmlore; Masale Bhaat with Achaar and Chutney, on Masque's menu; Oxtail and Marrow Uttapam at The Bombay Canteen.

A plate of food can be gorgeous without telling you very much about itself. It can be technically immaculate, artfully composed, and yet reveal little about its cuisine or the chef who conceived it. For Hussain Shahzad, Executive Chef at Hunger Inc, the distinction comes down to intent. "A beautiful plate, in itself, can be quite generic," he says. "For a plate to truly express the identity of a restaurant, I think it needs to be personal."

For decades, Indian food in fine-dining restaurants was often made to conform to a visual vocabulary borrowed from the West. We got a trifecta of protein, sauce, and carbs, while restraint, symmetry, and negative space signalled sophistication. Today, chefs are drawing on the logic of their own cuisines, the way Indians eat, and the stories they want their food to tell. There is no single new Indian aesthetic emerging. What is changing is chefs increasingly finding they can develop their own grammar, syntax, and design language, uniquely tied to their creativity and cuisine.

For Himanshu Saini, Executive Chef of Dubai's Trèsind and Trèsind Studio, the starting point is that Indian food already has a grammar. Think of the arrangement of a thali or the sequence of a *sadya*: each has its own logic, shaped by relationships between flavours, textures, and temperatures. "If the plate separates ingredients that need to be eaten together, we may have created a photograph at the expense of the dish," he says.

At Trèsind Studio, Saini's interpretation of *sadya* departs from the traditional spread on a banana leaf. Its components come together in a carefully composed dish, assembled tableside. The appearance may be unfamiliar, but the relationships between flavours remain. "For someone who knows a *sadya*, recognition can arrive through taste and memory rather than appearance," he says. The point is not to reproduce a familiar image, but to preserve flavour, and what makes the food recognisable in the first place.

That distinction between appearance

All images courtesy respective brands

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT *(the two white dishes) Squash (top) and Ladyfish beautifully plated at Masque; Chef Shahzad's savoury-sweet* laddoo, mawa khaja, *and* bebinca*; Chef Shahzad; Chettinad Prawns at Bombay Canteen.*

FACING PAGE *(top and bottom) Beet popsicle with nasturtium cloud at Farmlore; The Onam* sadya *at Trèsind Studio.*

> Refinement does not require perfection. Plating must reflect a restaurant's personality and how its guests eat, whether sharing a generous dish or exploring an individual plate.
>
> HUSSAIN SHAHZAD
> The Bombay Canteen, O Pedro, Papa's

and experience also animates Head Chef Varun Totlani's work at Mumbai's Masque. Totlani thinks of Indian cooking as abundant, even when its presentation is spare. "Our food is maximalistic," he says, referring to its layers of flavour and texture. A kebab, chutney, and roti might look simple on the plate, but the combination offers considerably more than the sum of its parts.

For Totlani, the composition follows the dish rather than a fixed idea of what fine dining should look like. Sometimes an ingredient deserves to be front and centre; sometimes an idea or inspiration drives the presentation. The plate need not declare its sophistication through elaborate decoration. Nor does minimalism necessarily mean that the food is restrained. Its complexity sometimes reveals itself only once the diner begins to eat, as with his Sea buckthorn *pani puri* on Masque's 10th-anniversary menu.

At Rannaghor by Sienna in Kolkata, Co-head Chef Koyel Roy Nandy looks at plating through the social and cultural history of Bengali food. She notes that recipes shift from household to household; geography creates microregional differences; and generations of communities have shaped what shows up on the table. "Sometimes we just carry the story, memory, and technique," she says of the thought behind the tasting menu.

Her *matha-pata* course, for example, reimagines *macher matha die tok*, a preparation of fish head with a sour chutney, as a fish-head terrine. The technique changes the presentation and makes the ingredient more approachable in a fine-dining setting, without severing its culinary roots. Even the crockery carries a sense of place: handmade at Sienna's pottery studio in Santiniketan, it connects the plate's material to the food served on it. Asked what distinguishes contemporary Indian plating, Nandy offers one word: simplicity.

Storytelling, meanwhile, takes a more expansive form at Farmlore, on the outskirts of Bengaluru. Co-founder and Head Chef Johnson Ebenezer resists being confined to a single visual signature. His plates also draw on people, regional cultures, festivals, art, and personal memories. "I do not want to be typecast into a particular domain of plating," he says.

One example is Farmlore's

All images courtesy respective brands

CHEFS WEIGH IN

Varun Totlani
Masque, Paradox
Minimalism on the plate need not necessarily mean minimalism in flavour. Indian cooking can deliver abundance through the combination of ingredients, spices, textures, and aromas.

Himanshu Saini
Trèsind Studio, Trèsind
A well-composed plate can lead diners to the perfect bite. A plate loses purpose if it separates elements that belong together.

Koyel Roy Nandy
Rannaghor by Sienna
Bengali food carries the imprint of geography, social structures, communities, and memory. Contemporary technique can change a dish's form without erasing its history.

Johnson Ebenezer
Farmlore
Every element must have a reason to be there. Storytelling can introduce surprise and playfulness, but the narrative must arise naturally rather than being imposed on the food.

gem-like gummy bears, served towards the end of the tasting menu. They began as part of a themed evening inspired by the film *Ted*. The course made diners smile, so Ebenezer kept it. He likes to introduce moments of playfulness into a meal that can last two to two-and-a-half hours. The gummy bears might seem an unlikely ending to a fine-dining menu, but their purpose is clear. "When the story is not forced, it is not a gimmick," he says.

For Shahzad, too, the question is what the food demands, rather than how closely it conforms to an ideal of visual perfection. The various kitchens he helms demonstrate how widely the answer can vary. At The Bombay Canteen, plating is "nostalgic, playful, exploratory, and generous"; at the Goan-Portuguese-inspired O Pedro, "vibrant, relaxed, and inviting"; at Papa's, "experiential, precise, and personal".

The differences reflect not just the restaurants' identities but how people eat in them. Shared plates at The Bombay Canteen must allow everyone at the table to experience a dish in its entirety. At the intimate chef's counter at Papa's, individual portions allow greater experimentation with asymmetry and space. Shahzad's experience at New York's Eleven Madison Park taught him precision and discipline, but he came to see that refinement need not mean placing every element just so. "Indian cooking has its own beautiful chaos," he says. "There is colour, texture, movement, and a certain generosity in the way the ingredients come together."

That generosity is visible in the crimson oil of an O Pedro prawn *balchão*, which runs towards the edge of the plate, and in the garlic oil accompanying Chettinad prawns at The Bombay Canteen. Rather than cleaning up Indian cuisine's comforting ease and natural irregularity, Shahzad allows the food's intrinsic character to remain visible. These are plates that express our cuisine through its inbuilt movement and bold abundance. We are not a cuisine that needs careful, precious arrangement.

There is no single look that defines Indian fine dining. The approaches are different, but there is a conviction: the plate should be shaped by an interpretation of Indian food, its context, and the experience chefs want to create, not by a borrowed cliché of fancy or sophisticated food. The most significant development may not be the arrival of a recognisable Indian style. It may be the confidence for our chefs to make room for many.

VISIONS IN STONE

Antoni Gaudí designed the Episcopal Palace in Astorga as a Neo-Gothic modernist building

FACING PAGE
Also referred to as the Palace of Gaudí, the Episcopal Palace brings together forms typical of a stately mansion, a castle, and a temple

Getty Images

Beyond Barcelona, two buildings reveal how Antoni Gaudí anticipated architectural priorities of sustainability, craftsmanship, context, and materials

words by
Vijaya Pratap

Most travellers associate Antoni Gaudí with Barcelona. Few realise that some of his most experimental ideas unfolded in the Spanish cities of León and Astorga, where a textile merchants' building became a Gothic fantasy and a bishop's palace took the form of a modernist castle.

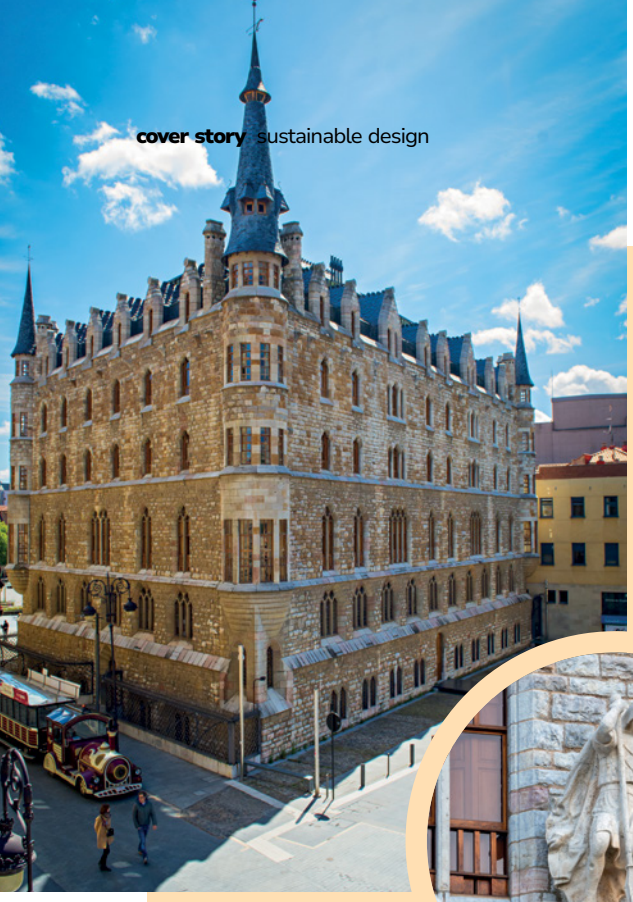
Beyond the Barcelona icon

Gaudí is usually imagined through the skyline of Barcelona—soaring forms, organic curves, and exuberant ornamentation. Yet some of his most revealing ideas emerged away from Catalonia. Around 1886, he travelled to Astorga and then to León in 1891 to create two very different buildings: the Episcopal Palace and the Casa Botines, respectively.

Standing before them, I found myself looking beyond their medieval silhouettes. Beneath the drama lies an architecture strikingly attuned to ideas that dominate design conversations today: climate responsiveness, contextual design, efficient use of materials, flexible spaces, and skilled craftsmanship.

Reading the landscape

Casa Botines, completed in 1893, was commissioned as a commercial-residential building. Gaudí could not simply transplant his Barcelona vocabulary to León. The city had



Gaudí Year 2026 commemorates his 100th death anniversary and invites the world to rediscover his masterpieces. Expect exhibitions, cultural activities, and unique experiences in the places that marked his life and work, with Catalonia as the epicentre.

LEFT TO RIGHT
Casa Botines' angular towers give it the appearance of a fairy-tale castle; A statue of St. George and a dragon over the entrance of the building; A statue of Antoni Gaudí in León.

long, cold winters, rain, and snow, and the site itself presented an unusual challenge: unstable, reclaimed ground in the former floodplain of the Bernesga river.

His response was practical. Rather than forcing the building into a preconceived formula, he studied the ground and adapted the foundations. The massive-looking limestone façades conceal a comparatively light structural system, while slender columns and Catalan vaults created open interiors.

This sensitivity extended to the climate. Steep slate roofs helped shed snow and rain; proportioned windows modulated light and heat; turrets and courtyards brought in daylight and air. The basement was illuminated and ventilated through moats.

What appears at first to be a fairy-tale fortress was therefore also an exercise in environmental intelligence.

Architecture that belongs

Gaudí also understood that architecture gains meaning when it speaks the language of its surroundings. Casa Botines borrowed elements from León's medieval architectural character yet transformed them into something distinctly his own. Its turrets, stone walls, and ironwork acknowledge the city's historic identity without becoming a mere imitation of the past.

At the Episcopal Palace in Astorga, commissioned around 1886, he responded to the place yet again. Gothic references, local building traditions, and the austere character of northern Spain became part of the vocabulary, while his distinctive geometry and sculptural imagination remained unmistakable.

The human hand

Perhaps the most contemporary lesson lies in Gaudí's treatment of materials. Stone, slate, iron, timber, and brick were not simply finishes applied to a structure. He worked with specialist craftsmen, combining inherited skills with his own designs.

There is something refreshing about encountering architecture in which engineering, beauty, utility, and workmanship are not separate concerns.

More than a century later, these two marvels stand as reminders that truly contextual architecture does not merely occupy a place. It listens to the space—and then gives that place a new identity.

At the end I could only marvel at Gaudí's genius—a visionary who seemed to build not for his own age but for a future that was yet to arrive.

GETTING THERE

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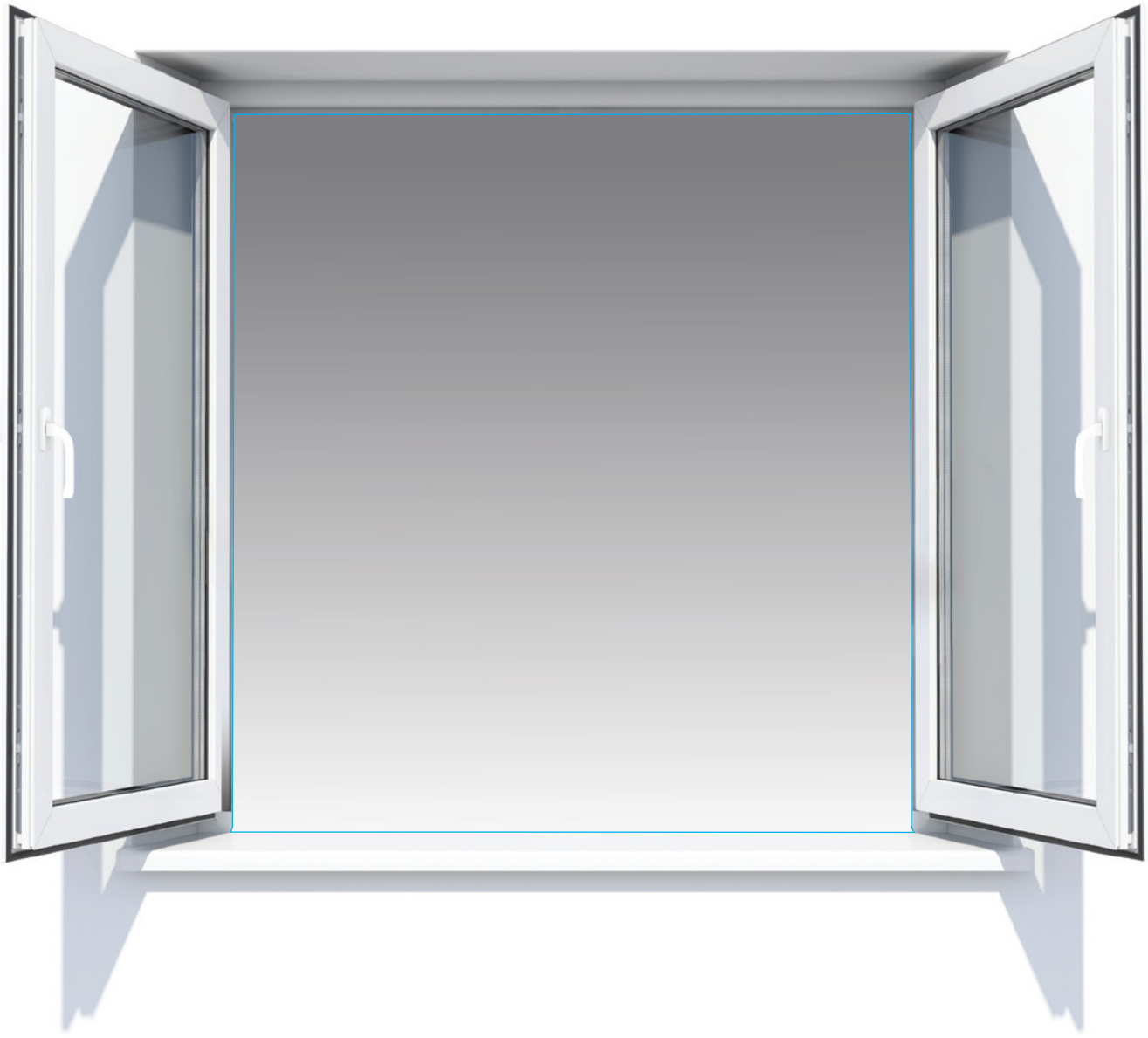

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PURPLE MARTINI: WHERE GOA TURNS EVERY SUNSET INTO A CELEBRATION

Perched above the Arabian Sea in Anjuna, Purple Martini has become synonymous with the quintessential Goan sundowner—where panoramic ocean views, cocktails, music, food and celebration come together.

SAARTHAK GUPTA
CEO/Founder, Purple Martini

There are places you visit in Goa, and then there are places that become part of your memory—like Purple Martini. Perched above the Arabian Sea in Anjuna, it has become synonymous with the quintessential Goan sundowner—where panoramic ocean views, cocktails, music, food and an unmistakable sense of celebration come together. The afternoon begins on a more relaxed note, with long lunches, sea views, and cocktails. As golden hour approaches, the energy builds. Music gets louder, the crowd gets livelier, and the venue moves seamlessly from a laid-back seaside lounge into one of North Goa's most energetic nightlife destinations.

SIPS AND BITES

The menu brings together a broad selection of Continental, North Indian, Asian, Regional and other International-inspired offerings, making it equally suited to a leisurely afternoon meal, a pre-party dinner or a late-night bite. The bar has built its identity around creative cocktails designed to complement the setting—from refreshing Goan-inspired serves to more contemporary combinations.

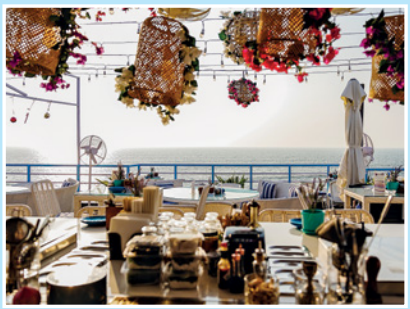
And there lies Purple Martini's enduring appeal: guests do not need to choose between a great meal, a spectacular sunset, and a great night out. They get all!

FOR GOA'S SWISH SET

Purple Martini attracts an eclectic, aspirational crowd, and has become a favourite among celebrities, cricketers, influencers, entrepreneurs, travellers, and Goa's social set. Its celebrity appeal is part of a larger phenomenon. Purple Martini has cultivated a brand that feels aspirational without losing the relaxed spirit that people come to Goa for. It is glamorous, but still distinctly Goan; sophisticated, but never overly formal.

THE FOUNDER'S STORY

What began as a passion venture in Goa for entrepreneur Saarthak Gupta has grown into one of the state's most recognisable hospitality brands. Saarthak built Purple Martini around a simple but powerful idea: create an experience rather than simply a restaurant. His approach has been focused on the intersection of hospitality, entertainment, branding, and experience. That vision has earned Saarthak and Purple Martini recognition from some of the most prominent names in the hospitality and lifestyle industry, including the Travel + Leisure Dining Awards and Times Food & Nightlife Awards, as well as Saarthak's inclusion among the Times 50 Most Influential Personalities.



Among the brand's notable accolades are Sundowner Bar of the Year, Restaurant of the Year, and Nightlife Venue of the Year, while Saarthak has also been bestowed with the prestigious Restaurateur of the Year honour. Purple Martini has additionally been recognised as one of Goa's leading dining and nightlife destinations.

For Saarthak, however, the achievement is bigger than an awards list. It is the longevity of the brand and its ability to remain relevant in one of India's most competitive hospitality markets.

Disclaimer: Connectivity details are subject to change. Please visit *airindia.com* for the latest flight schedules.
@purplemartinigoa; For reservations, call or WhatsApp: +91 8793242210

CONNECTIVITY
Air India offers flights to Goa from Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Amritsar.

CHECKLIST

Everything worth checking out

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GET THE PICTURE

The 2026 edition of Art Mumbai is set to bring together collectors, aficionados, and those looking for a cultural day out

words by **Mignonne Dsouza**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
One of the Art Mumbai booths from 2025; The Mahalaxmi Racecourse venue lends the event a unique flavour; Both collectors and art enthusiasts attend the show.

The fourth edition of this modern and contemporary art fair returns to Mumbai in November this year. Here are five things to watch out for:

The exhibitors
Ninety-four Indian and international galleries will be showing at the event, exhibiting both established modern masters and emerging artists.

Curated 'Sculpture Park'
Themed *Material and Memory*, this will bring together sculptural works across a range of materials and artistic practices. From clay and terracotta to stone, wood, metal, fabric, and found materials, the sculptures explore how objects and forms can hold traces of time, place, and experience.

The 'Speaker Series'
This examines developments across the art ecosystem, from the growth of institutions and public art to creative collaboration, women artists, and emerging technologies. Additionally, the event's Cultural Ambassador Karan Johar will anchor a panel titled 'The Fame Game', to explore fame, fandom, and the shifting rules of celebrity in the digital age.

Cultural programming
Expect talks, performances, and musical presentations on all days.

Special Showcase
The fair will also feature expanded presentations by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) and the Saffronart Foundation.

Mahalaxmi Racecourse; 12th-15th November
artmumbai.com

Art Mumbai

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WHEN THE HILLS SING

A celebration of Himalayan culture, craft, and cuisine, brings mountain communities and their stories to Delhi

words by **Shrabasti Anindita Mallik**

TOP TO BOTTOM
Meghalaya's Living Root Bridge was represented as an installation in 2025; Helmets were turned into canvases blending stories of road safety, regional craft, and ecology; Monks from Namgyal Monastery creating a sand mandala.

For those who find their souls in the mountains, the Himalayas have a way of calling them back. This December, Journeying Across the Himalayas, a multidisciplinary festival, brings a little of that magic to the Capital, celebrating the region's rich cultural and natural heritage.

The third edition, themed *Becoming*, explores the transformations shaping the Himalayas, from shifting landscapes and changing climates to migration, innovation, and evolving livelihoods. Through exhibitions, installations, music, dance, theatre, workshops, culinary experiences, and conversations, the festival brings together Himalayan communities, artists, craftspeople, and storytellers.

Beyond familiar vistas, the Himalayas reveal a world of indigenous knowledge, intricate craftsmanship, distinctive foodways, and stories passed down through generations. The festival invites visitors to discover this living heritage through the people who preserve it, while reflecting on the challenges facing fragile mountain ecosystems.

More than a celebration of Himalayan culture, this festival reminds us that the mountains are not merely destinations to explore, but living landscapes that deserve our care, consciousness, and respect.

Travancore Palace (Shrimant Madhav Rao Scindia Marg, Copernicus Marg), New Delhi; 3rd-9th December

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Dubrovnik served as the main filming location for King's Landing in the TV series Game of Thrones *(2011-2019), beginning with the second season*

OLD TOWN, NEW VIBE

Medieval fortifications, refined Dalmatian cuisine, and sublime Adriatic views await visitors in Croatia's seaside city of Dubrovnik

words by **Jane Foster**

08:00AM
Morning coffee
Gradska Kavana
Arsenal Restaurant

Drinking coffee overlooking the Stradun (the main thoroughfare in the pedestrian-only Old Town) is a local ritual. The finest spot is the Gradska Kavana front terrace, even as you jog your memory to pinpoint locations featured in *Game of Thrones* (GoT).

09:00AM
A brisk walk
The city walls

Take a guided walk (or a GoT-inspired one) around the sturdy medieval city walls that enclose the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Old City. Dating back to the 13th century, they were reinforced with towers, bastions, and bulwarks till the 17th century. The ramparts give you spectacular views of the terracotta rooftops and the stunning Adriatic Sea.

11:00AM
History lesson
Rector's Palace

As the seat of power of the Dubrovnik Republic, it is one of the coast's most historic buildings. During his one-month mandate, the Rector of Dubrovnik resided in this Gothic palace (with Renaissance and Baroque elements). It now houses the Cultural-historic Department of the Dubrovnik Museum.

12:30PM
A light lunch
Barba

For an informal midday meal, head to this family-run eatery, on a steep flight of stone steps off the Stradun. Specialising in tasty, fish-based street food, Barba is much-loved by locals and visitors alike for its octopus burgers, served with spicy mayonnaise, lettuce, and tomato. They also do prawn tempura and hand-cut potato chips.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT
Cable cars go to the peak of Mount Srđ; Proto is the city's oldest fish restaurant; A fish preparation at Proto; The Stradun is the main thoroughfare in Old Town.

STYLISH STAYS

1/ Hilton Imperial Dubrovnik: Standing right outside the Old Town, opposite Pile Gate, this offers elegance and comfort. (Closed for a few days in January)

2/ Hotel Porto: Located near the Gruž port, this boutique property stays open all year, offering rooms, suites, and family rooms.

3/ Villa Argentina: This stylish hotel (reopened recently after a soulful transformation) is set in terraced gardens with views of the Old Town.

GETTING THERE

Fly to Dubrovnik via Rome with Air India's Codeshare Partner, Croatia Airlines.

02:00PM
Culture halt
Museum of Modern Art

Dubrovnik is renowned for its historic attractions, but it also boasts a lively modern art scene. Housed in a 1930s villa, this museum displays paintings, sculptures, and video installations, inspired by Dalmatia's landscapes and seascapes, and the city itself.

04:00PM
Sunset views
Mount Srđ

For glorious sweeping views of the entire city and the surrounding sea and islands, ride the cable car to the peak of Mount Srđ. Come in the afternoon to watch the sky turn orange, pink, and purple as the sun sets into the Adriatic, while enjoying a cold drink and a snack at the Panorama Restaurant & Bar. You might even catch a live show nearby.

06:00PM
Souvenir shopping
KAWA

Returning to town, you might want to shop for gifts. Immediately outside the Ploče Gate, this is a concept store stocking works by Croatian designers and artisans—ceramics, jewellery, T-shirts, and tote bags, along with *rakija* (a liquor prepared from distilled grapes).

08:00PM
Romantic dinner
Proto Fish Restaurant

Touted as the city's oldest fish restaurant, this is widely regarded as the best place to eat fresh Adriatic seafood. Offering a contemporary take on traditional Dalmatian specialities, favourites include gnocchi with shrimp tartar and sea bream *gratinee* with black olive pate. And for vegetarians, pasta with mushrooms and truffles.

Proto restaurant and fish dish: Proto restaurant; Rest: Getty Images

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TIME TO MOVE

The cultural calendar gets into high gear, with festivals, art events, and more

CALL TIME

META FESTIVAL 2026

Mumbai, Maharashtra

12th-14th November

Watch *The Old Man and the Sea – Kathakali of the Morrow*, *Nihsango Ishwar*, *The Departed Dawn*, and *Swang: Jas Ki Tas* at the NCPA's Experimental Theatre, covering an array of Indian languages alongside non-verbal storytelling.

ncpamumbai.com

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BRIGHT LIGHTS

FIREWORKS & DRONE FESTIVAL

London, UK

7th-8th November

Alexandra Palace celebrates Bonfire Night weekend with a DJ set from Eats Everything, London's largest German Bier Festival, funfair rides, a jungle kids' rave, and a karaoke singalong along with ice skating and more.

alexandrapalace.com

Top and bottom: Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards; Getty Images

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VIBRANT DISPLAY

PUSHKAR FAIR

Pushkar, Rajasthan

17th-24th November

This annual camel and livestock fair is one of the world's largest, and also a popular tourist attraction, featuring many events and activities unique to Rajasthani culture.

tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

GLOW UP

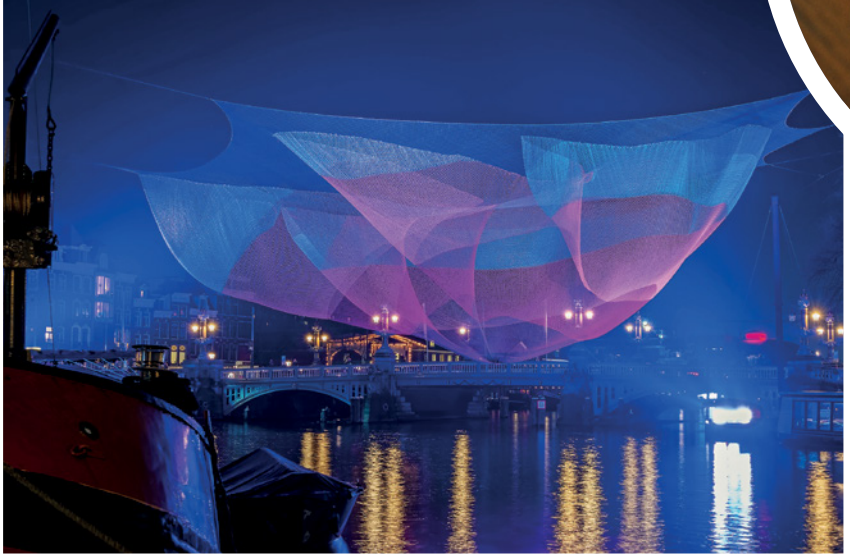
AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

26th November-17th January 2027

This free event gives visitors the opportunity to explore the city's canals as they become the stage for eclectic installations.

amsterdamlightfestival.com



CULTURE HIGH

AMLAAN

Mumbai, Maharashtra

Till 15th November

Artist Jayasri Burman showcases her first jewellery collection, *Amlaan*, developed over nearly a decade, alongside *Mukti*, a new exhibition of paintings at Snowball Studios. *snowballstudios.com*

Clockwise from top left: Getty Images; Jayasri Burman; Shutterstock

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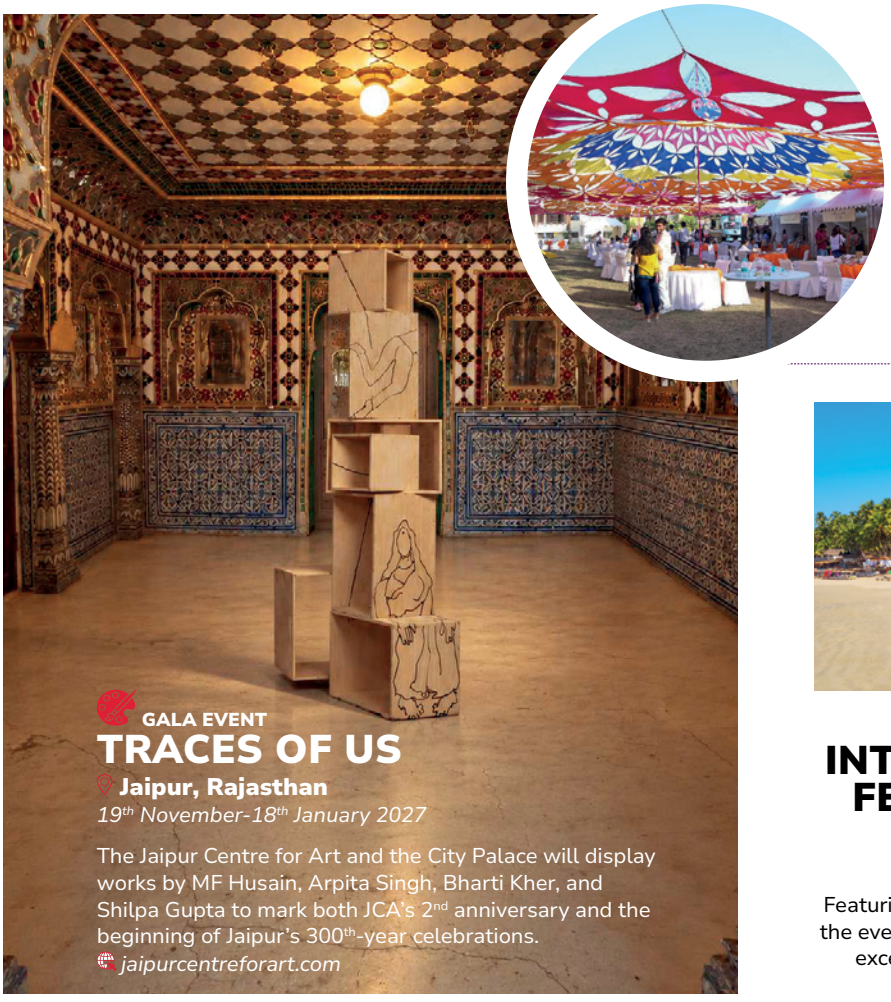

GALA EVENT

TRACES OF US

Jaipur, Rajasthan

19th November-18th January 2027

The Jaipur Centre for Art and the City Palace will display works by MF Husain, Arpita Singh, Bharti Kher, and Shilpa Gupta to mark both JCA's 2nd anniversary and the beginning of Jaipur's 300th-year celebrations. *jaipurcentreforart.com*

BOOKMARK THIS

DEHRADUN LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Dehradun, Uttarakhand

27th-29th November

Speakers include Shabana Azmi, Kapil Dev, Imtiaz Ali, and others. *dehradunliteraturefestival.com*

CINEMATIC SPECTACLE

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Panaji, Goa

20th-28th November

Featuring the theme, *Stories Without Borders*, the event is set to be a celebration of cinematic excellence, cultural diversity, and global storytelling. *iffigoa.org*

ON THE RADAR

SHILLONG CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Shillong, Meghalaya

20th-21st November

Grammy-nominated artist Khalid, rapper Swae Lee, and other artistes will perform. *shillongcherryblossom.com*

WHISPERINGS FROM TRANSCENDING MEADOWS

Patna, Bihar

27th November-7th December

This solo exhibition by artist GR Iranna is being presented at the Bihar Museum. *biharmuseum.org*

AURA INDIA TOUR

Ahmedabad, Gujarat

21st November

Diljit Dosanjh will also perform in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Lucknow, and Chandigarh. *bookmyshow.com*

Clockwise from top left: DAG Collection; Dehradun Literature Festival; Shutterstock; Getty Images; Gallery Espace; Instagram.com/ thegr8khalid

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8 dishes TO TRY IN PRAGUE

The Czech Republic's capital serves up both centuries-old culinary traditions and contemporary flavours

words by **Ketki Gadre**

TRDELNÍK

Nothing announces your arrival in the city quite like the sight of a *trdelník* slowly spinning over burning charcoal. Also known as chimney cake, *trdelník* has become synonymous with Prague, though its origins likely lie in Transylvania, before the pastry spread through Hungary and Slovakia to Czechia. Follow the aroma of freshly-baked dough and cinnamon sugar, and you will soon find the treat with its bronzed exterior. My advice: go for the simple, hot, and fresh ones with cinnamon dust and walnuts.
Where to try it: Sweet Dreams, Celetna 26

SVÍČKOVÁ NA SMETANĚ

Translated as 'marinated beef sirloin in cream sauce', this is considered the national dish of Czechia. It looks like an unlikely combination: slices of braised beef in a silky vegetable cream sauce, flanked by bread dumplings, cranberry sauce, whipped cream, and a lemon wedge. Yet somehow, it all works. The sauce is made with slow-cooked carrots, celeriac, and parsley root blended into a gravy that balances sweetness, richness, and tang in every bite.
Where to try it: U Fleků, Křemencova 11

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SMAŽENÝ SÝR

If there is one Czech comfort food that proves simplicity can be deeply satisfying, it is *smažený sýr*, or fried cheese. At first glance, it is a slab of Edam or Gouda cheese, breaded and fried until golden. But cut into it, and the crisp crust gives way to a molten centre that spills onto the plate. Served with tartar sauce and French fries, it is the sort of meal that appeals to all. Locals even tuck it between slices of bread for an improvised sandwich.
Where to try it: Café Louvre, Narodni 22, Prague 1

PEČENÁ KACHNA

A Czech classic, this roast duck dish is soul food at its finest, often enjoyed at festive gatherings or leisurely weekend lunches. Slow-roasted, until the skin turns beautifully crisp and the meat falls effortlessly off the bone, it is traditionally served with potatoes, fluffy bread dumplings, and braised red cabbage, whose gentle sweetness balances the richness of the duck. It is the kind of meal best enjoyed over good conversation and a perfectly-poured Czech lager.
Where to try it: Restaurant U Kroka, Vratislavova 28, Prague 2

KOLÁČE

These are the kind of pastries that make bakery windows impossible to walk past. These round sweet treats take their name from *kolo*, the Czech word for 'wheel', and have long been part of local baking traditions. Made from soft yeast dough enriched with milk, eggs, and sugar, they are stuffed with fillings like plum jam, poppy seeds, sweet cheese or seasonal fruit.
Where to try it: Pekárna Kabát, Národní 63/26, Nové Město

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GULÁŠ

Born in Hungary but adapted to local tastes across Czechia, *guláš*, or beef goulash, has become a staple of pubs, restaurants, and family tables. This hearty main course is a rich, slow-cooked stew bathed in a thick onion-based sauce fragrant with paprika, garlic, and spices. The first spoonful reveals why it is a favourite: deep, soothing flavours designed for long winters and an even longer conversations over beer. It is served with slices of pillowy bread dumplings that eagerly soak up every drop of sauce and is sometimes topped with raw onions for a bit of crunch.
Where to try it: Pilsner Urquell Original Restaurant inside Malostranská Beseda, Malostranské náměstí 21, Malá Strana

OBLOŽENÉ CHLEBÍČKY

If Czech cuisine had a version of edible art, it would be this. Also known as open-faced sandwiches, they are the perfect candidate for a light lunch or a quick snack. Typically served as small bites, these sandwiches use slices of special white bread (known as *veka*) that are slathered with potato salad, cream cheese or mayonnaise and adorned with cold thin slices of ham, salami, and other toppings. Vegetarian options include avocado, cheese, and fresh produce.
Where to try it: Bistro Sisters, Dlouhá 39

FAZOLOVÁ POLÉVKA

Find comfort in this bean soup that is slow-cooked with root vegetables, potatoes, and fragrant marjoram. It is thick enough to feel like a meal rather than a starter. While some versions arrive with slices of smoky sausage or ham, others let the creamy white beans do all the talking. Order it on a chilly afternoon, grab a chunk of crusty bread, and dunk it straight into the bowl to warm you from the inside out.
Where to try it: Bredovský Dvůr, Politických vězňů 935/13, Nové Město

GETTING THERE

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Hidden in **PLAIN SIGHT**

Berlin's secret courtyards now boast a thriving art and design scene

words by **Kalpana Sunder**

Kalpana Sunder

The Heckmann-Höfe, located in Berlin-Mitte, is a historic courtyard complex

I step through an unassuming archway in Berlin, Germany, and find myself in a different world—a quiet sun-dappled courtyard strung with ivy, lined with cosy cafés, and dotted with small galleries where the city's creative pulse beats softly.

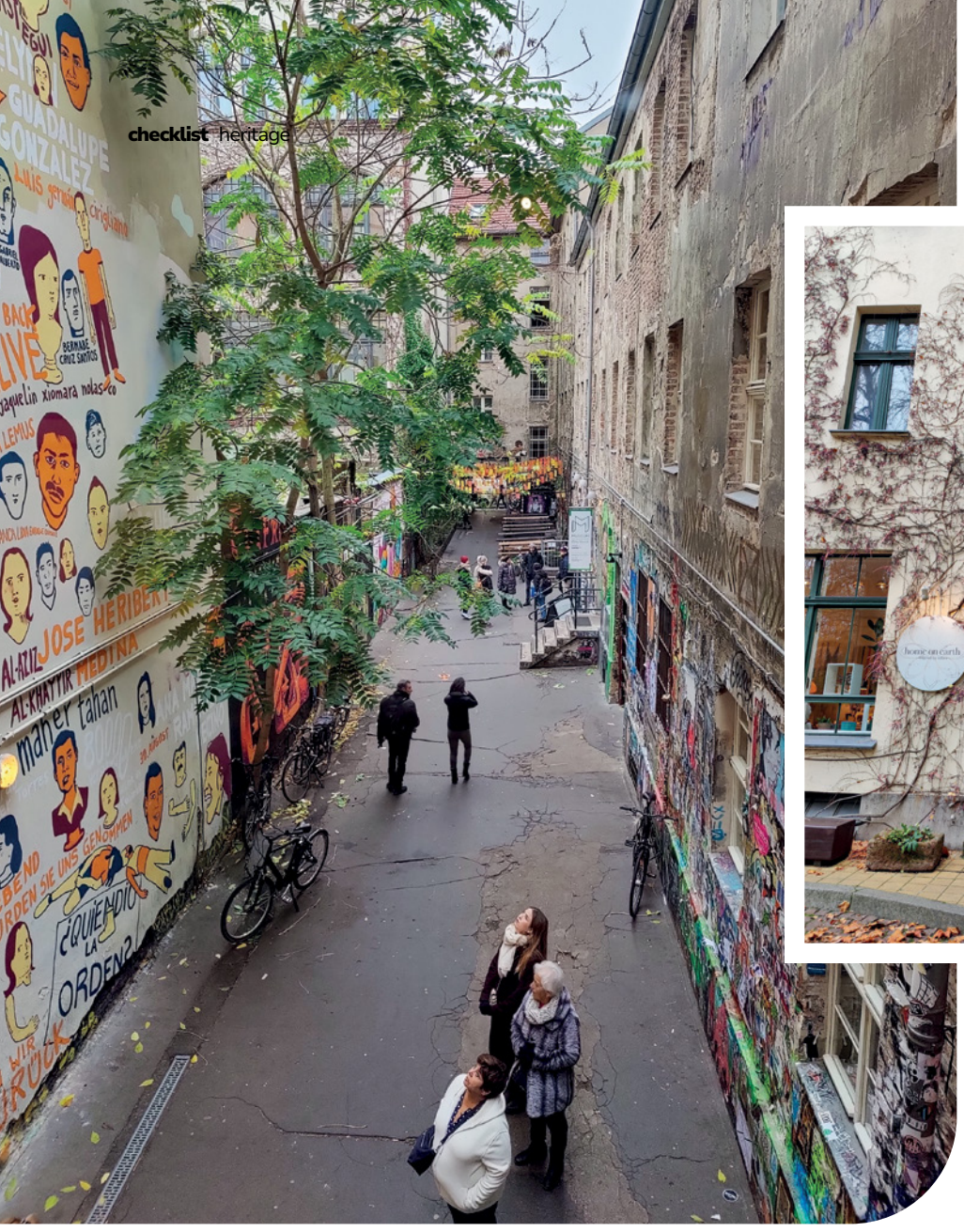
Beyond the German capital's wide boulevards, museums, and monuments, lies another quieter city—one that unfolds behind archways and down narrow passageways. My local guide explains, "Berlin's Höfe (courtyards) are secret urban sanctuaries that reveal the city's layered history—from 19th-century crowded tenement life to today's stylish art-and-design scene."

These courtyards, tucked behind façades in neighbourhoods like Mitte and Kreuzberg, and Prenzlauer Berg district, function as quiet, self-contained worlds that run parallel to the city outside. The neighbourhood where most of these courtyards are located is called 'Scheunenviertel', literally 'barn quarter'. Once I start noticing them, it is hard to stop looking for the next doorway or hidden passage. They once functioned as stables, factories, workshops, and laundries. Today they host stylish cafés, galleries, small design studios, bookstores, artisan shops, and community gardens along with much sought-after residential apartments.

Beyond the obvious

How did these courtyards originate? The hidden interiors were not meant to be decorative and were actually a response to Berlin's rapid growth in the 19th century, when the population surged and the city had to build fast. "The result was dense tenement blocks or rental barracks, called Mietskasernen, situated behind grander street-facing buildings that could accommodate as many as 2,000 people," my guide elaborates.

Eventually, architects began to rethink these crowded spaces, carving out back courtyards called *hinterhöfs* to bring in air and light. Buildings then began to be arranged around a series of interconnected courtyards. After German reunification in 1990, most were abandoned or painted over with street art. Gradually, they were renovated into mixed-use spaces and what began



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Haus Schwarzenberg is accessed through a narrow, graffiti-covered alleyway; A boutique in the Hackesche Höfe courtyard; Mehringhof, in Kreuzberg, is a rear courtyard in Berlin that boasts a theatre, a workshop, bookshop, and more.

as necessity has, over time, become one of Berlin's quiet luxuries.

Today, many of these buildings and courtyards have taken on new lives. They feel intimate, almost insulated, and are places where the city slows down.

Into the maze

One of the most striking ones that I visit is Hackesche Höfe in Berlin Mitte, built in the early 1900s. Tucked behind an ornamental façade, a sequence of eight interconnected courtyards opens out, connected by narrow passages. It is the largest ensemble of its kind in Germany and represents the city's layered and complex history. Step through the entrance

Clockwise from top left: Kalpana Sunder; Kalpana Sunder; Shutterstock

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An evening scene at the famous Hackescher Markt with street cafés and restaurants

on Rosenthaler Straße and you arrive in the first courtyard, where patterned Art Nouveau-style ceramic tiles and curved lines set the tone. There is a cinema tucked in here, alongside a cabaret stage deeper inside. I roam around, looking at traces of the past that are still visible in tiled façades, Bauhaus-influenced stairwells, brickwork and stucco, decorative cornices, and wrought-iron details.

Next, I explore gritty Haus Schwarzenberg (near the popular Hackescher Markt), which is often referred to as Berlin's rebellious courtyard. Here, the walls are covered in street art and graffiti, there are strings and flags fluttering above my head, and the art is constantly changing—a testament to the city's underground art scene.

During World War II, this building housed Otto Weidt's workshop. Weidt employed mostly blind and deaf Jewish workers, claiming they were essential for war production, but his real intention was protecting them. Today there is a museum showcasing his history and work.

Unhurried exploration

Another delightful courtyard that I explore is the Heckmann-Höfe, a quieter, almost secretive, stretch that links Auguststraße and Oranienburger Straße with three interconnected courtyards. The beautiful Auguststraße is known for its artistic vibe, with galleries and boutiques. I revive with a coffee in the middle of a picturesque cobblestone courtyard with rose bushes and a fountain. It opens unexpectedly into a cluster of small shops selling handicrafts and jewellery, and restaurants, including a Russian café and an Italian eatery, around a tiny play area, with a sudden view of the golden dome of the Neue Synagoge catching the light.

To walk through Berlin's courtyards is to understand the city from the inside out. They are practical and romantic; born of overcrowding yet offering surprising beauty. Hidden in plain sight, they remind you that Berlin is not just a city to be seen on the surface, but to be explored and delved into layer by layer.

MUST VISITS

Hackesche Höfe (Berlin-Mitte)
Eight interconnected courtyards featuring cultural venues, cafés, restaurants, shops, apartments, and more.

Haus Schwarzenberg (Berlin-Mitte)
A graffiti-splashed courtyard celebrating Berlin's alternative spirit with indie art spaces and bars.

Heckmann-Höfe (Oranienburger Straße)
A leafy surprise linking two bustling streets, dotted with cafés and cool boutiques.

Sophienhöfe (Sophienstraße)
Tranquil courtyards that whisper of 19th-century bourgeois life amid cobblestones and climbing roses.

Hinterhöfe (Kreuzberg)
A hub of creative studios and local workshops.

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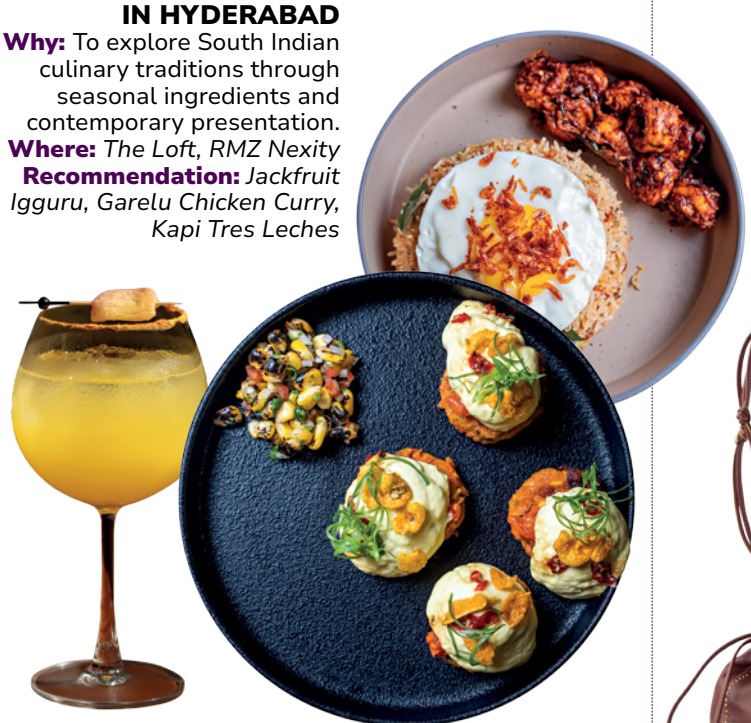
GLOW WITH THE FLOW

Give celebrations a little more attitude with RAD LVNG's latest edit of sculptural candle holders, statement candles, scented gift sets, and a lotus-shaped *urli*, bringing fragrance, colour, and contemporary flair to festive spaces, thoughtful gifting, and intimate gatherings.

HOSA OPENS IN HYDERABAD

Why: To explore South Indian culinary traditions through seasonal ingredients and contemporary presentation.
Where: *The Loft, RMZ Nexity*
Recommendation: *Jackfruit Igguru, Garelu Chicken Curry, Kapi Tres Leches*



CRAFTED TO GO

Give your wardrobe a little sparkle with Fizzy Goblet's *Gehna* collection. Hand-embroidered Kolhapuri chappals, sandals, shoulder bags, and totes pair genuine leather with statement detailing for a playful spin on traditional festive wear.

All images courtesy respective brands

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DETAILS, DARLING

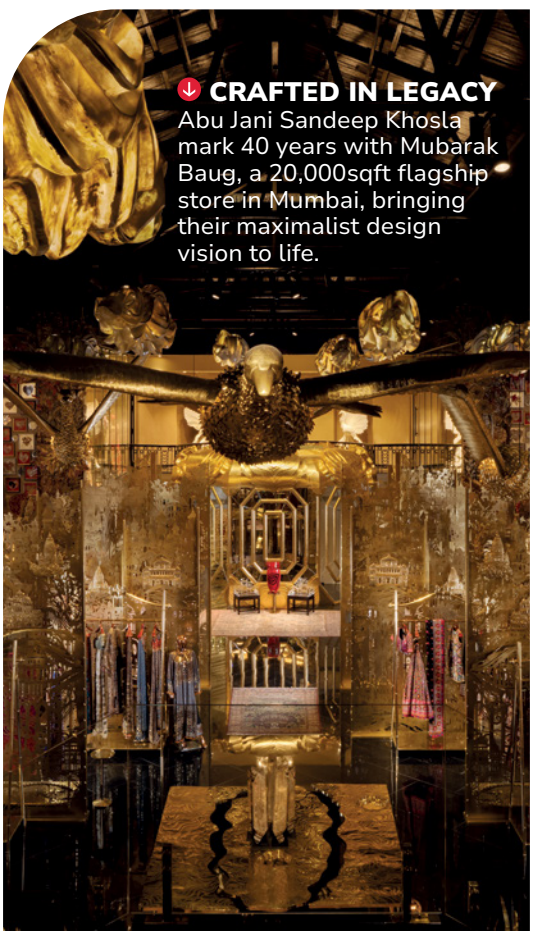
Rohit Gandhi and Rahul Khanna have unveiled *Astral Meadow*, their AW26 couture collection for modern brides and grooms. Sculpted velvet, fluid organza, and tulle silhouettes are elevated with crystals, beads, and intricate Kalki Gardena embroidery.

PUNCHLINE OPENS DOORS IN MUMBAI

Why: For punch bowls, clever cocktails, and convivial drinking.
Where: *Bandra West*
Recommendation: (Cocktails) *Funk You, Ghee-nius,* (nibbles) *Barbet's Flock Fried Chicken, Smoked Olives,* and *Brussels N' Pineapple*

A MOMENT IN TIME

Baume & Mercier's *Clifton* collection gets an update with two limited-edition timepieces featuring ice blue guilloché dials. The duo, powered by Baumatic movement, comes in 39mm Automatic Date and 40mm Automatic Perpetual Calendar versions.



CRAFTED IN LEGACY

Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla mark 40 years with Mubarak Baug, a 20,000sqft flagship store in Mumbai, bringing their maximalist design vision to life.

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INTERPRETING EUROPEAN SPLENDOUR, THE INDIAN WAY

***Aparna Kaushik** translates timeless elegance into modern calm, crafting a home of balance and understated refinement.*

Designed to reimagine the grandeur of a French château, the Oaklane Villa, spread across 17,800 sq. ft. on the busy fringes of Delhi, prioritises timelessness above all other architectural features. Right from the entrance, one is greeted by a tiled mansard roof sitting atop an astutely symmetrical façade and its quiet, tranquil reflection. This preludes an introduction to the soft opulence of the Corinthian pilasters and the palatially proportioned spaces, from the boulevard to the interior foyer.

Strategically articulated to respond to Delhi's erratic climate, the design is cohesively fluid in its planning and looks inwards as much as it opens itself up to the vistas of the surrounding trees.

TRUE OPULENCE LIES IN PRECISION

For a family that enjoys travelling as much as the residents of Oaklane Villa do, the design narrative had to be tailored to accommodate their multigenerational needs as well as their pleasures. Thus, French vernacular heritage: an inspiration that stayed with them long after their travels, alongside the collectibles they brought back; served as the guiding framework for the development of the spatial grammar. This was further refined through planning strategies such as a master plan of the habitable spaces that seamlessly absorbs recreational and formal pockets into its flow. Travel, as a theme, presented the challenge of accommodating diverse tastes and inclinations.

A fitting solution was devised to honour this individuality while weaving together the

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"Design is inherent in everything. I design to accentuate the natural qualities of a space; amplifying its particular beauty through seamless functionality and unique form."

—Aparna Kaushik

various functions through a cohesive material palette. Strongly guided by the visual principles of Neo-Classicism, the materiality, textures, wall-ceiling-floor treatments, and overall aesthetic palette were driven by a contextual interpretation of French grandeur through localised design principles.

POETRY IN PROPORTION

The spaces flow with quiet grace, featuring marble flooring throughout the principal areas, warm wooden panelling, and artisanal details, including hand-blown glass fixtures and champagne gold leafing. The villa embodies sophisticated living through elaborate walk-in wardrobes, an expansive bar and lounge for entertaining, and a private spa and salon. The estate's outdoor amenities include a swimming pool with a cabana, a sweeping stone-paved driveway, a covered pergola, and extensively landscaped grounds designed for privacy and tranquillity. Special attention was devoted to carving out secluded outdoor spaces while maintaining visual connections between the interiors and the landscape.

Completed over 22 months, Oaklane Villa represents a collaborative design process that balanced the residents' vision of European-inspired splendour with the demands of practical luxury living.

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CHASING BAUHAUS IN CHICAGO

This pivotal architecture movement has shaped the city's skyline, giving it a real identity

words by **Shalbha Sarda**

Chicago has been a hub for architectural movements, including the Bauhaus, that have shaped its landscape

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VIEW DESIGNS

A river cruise is one of the best ways to take in the city's stunning skyline

Shalbha Sarda

There are not many cities in the world that evoke as much curiosity about modern architecture as Chicago, a city where some of the world's tallest buildings once stood. Although the city no longer holds that distinction, it is still a place where some of the tallest skyscrapers—built elsewhere in the world—are designed (like the Jeddah Tower in Saudi Arabia).

Somehow, that fact made perfect sense when Alice, my guide on the city's First Lady river cruise, began tracing the city skyline from the boat, opening with a quote from architectural historian Vincent Scully: "Architecture is a continuing dialogue between generations, creating an environment that develops across time." Over 90 minutes, Alice traced the movements that shaped Chicago's skyline: Beaux-Arts, Art Deco, Modernism, Structural Expressionism, and Postmodernism. Yet, as an architect, my mind kept returning to another prominent movement, one embedded in almost every steel-and-glass tower rising along the river: the Bauhaus.

A fresh start

Born in Germany, Bauhaus was a design movement that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. Led by architect Walter Gropius, it embraced the philosophy 'form should follow function', a maxim famously stated by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. It was around that time that buildings began to strip away ornamentation and reveal the honesty of their materials. "Skin and bones design," Donna, my guide on the Chicago Architecture Center's Modernism: Reviving the Loop walking tour, called it.

Although Gropius influenced modern architecture around the world, it was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Bauhaus's final director, who helped define Chicago's skyline with steel-and-glass towers, set among Neo-Gothic, Renaissance, and Art Deco structures, each marking a different moment in the city's architectural language. The buildings carried such lightness and transparency that their exteriors almost became interiors. Perhaps this idea is why Chicago's skyline is known worldwide.

The Illinois Institute of Technology (Mies' early work) was quiet as I walked past its train-like dormitories, the glass-and-steel Crown Hall, and the brick chapel that students call the 'God Box'. It was difficult to connect these buildings with the monumental skyline visible from the 103rd-floor glass ledge of the Willis Tower, which I visited later.

But Donna made the connection as she held a picture of Crown Hall. She pointed towards the 2017-built Apple Store, a curved glass pavilion with curved corners and an almost

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LEFT AND RIGHT
Federal Plaza with Alexander Calder's Flamingo *sculpture; Picasso's untitled abstract in Daley Plaza.*

STYLISH STAYS

The Langham, Chicago: This Bauhaus hotel, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, offers great views over Lake Michigan.

Le Méridien Essex Chicago: Offering easy access to many of Chicago's major attractions, this is a good choice.

The Gwen, Chicago: Located just steps from Michigan Avenue, this property features an iconic Art Deco-infused façade.

weightless appearance. It sits close to the Neo-Gothic Tribune Tower, for which Gropius had submitted a radical Bauhaus proposal in the 1922 Tribune Tower competition. His design was rejected, but nearly a century later, Bauhaus found a way back onto the very same street where it once could not.

Space to dream

As our group walked through the Loop, Donna pointed out the Langham Hotel (formerly the IBM Building), the Federal

Left and right: Shalbha Sarda; Getty Images

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TOP AND BOTTOM
Chicago's Apple Store; The Obama Presidential Center Tower.

Center, and other examples of Mies' later work. I began seeing a pattern. His buildings looked as if they had been drawn on graph paper. At the Federal Center, granite paving stones, lighting, windows, and exposed steel I-beams followed a strict grid. But Mies also believed modern cities needed space to breathe. His idea of continuous indoor-outdoor flow created plazas between skyscrapers, bringing light and life into the spaces surrounding the buildings he and his contemporaries designed. Today, these civic plazas have become stages for some of Chicago's most recognisable public art: Alexander Calder's bright red *Flamingo* in Federal Plaza and Picasso's untitled abstract sculpture in Daley Plaza.

It was the same week when the most anticipated addition to Chicago's skyline had just opened: the Obama Presidential Center. Although the Presidential Center is not Bauhausian in its design, its John Lewis Plaza evoked the openness of the Miesian plazas I had encountered earlier in the city.

At the Art Institute of Chicago, amid centuries of artistic expression, I found another thread of the Bauhaus story in László Moholy-Nagy's Nuclear I, CH (1945). Moholy-Nagy, a former Bauhaus professor and founder of the New Bauhaus in Chicago, depicts a translucent sphere hovering above a monochrome, rectilinear grid reminiscent of a map of Chicago's city blocks. It marked the beginning of my journey to trace how Bauhaus transcended architecture to enter the realm of art.

Five great places to eat

- **Lou Malnati's:** Chicago's iconic deep-dish pizza.
- **Bar Goa:** Modern Indian cuisine with beach-themed cocktails.
- **Harry Caray's:** American steakhouse (multiple locations).
- **Pizzeria Portofino:** A riverside Italian restaurant.
- **LÝRA:** Contemporary Greek cuisine in a stylish setting.

GETTING THERE

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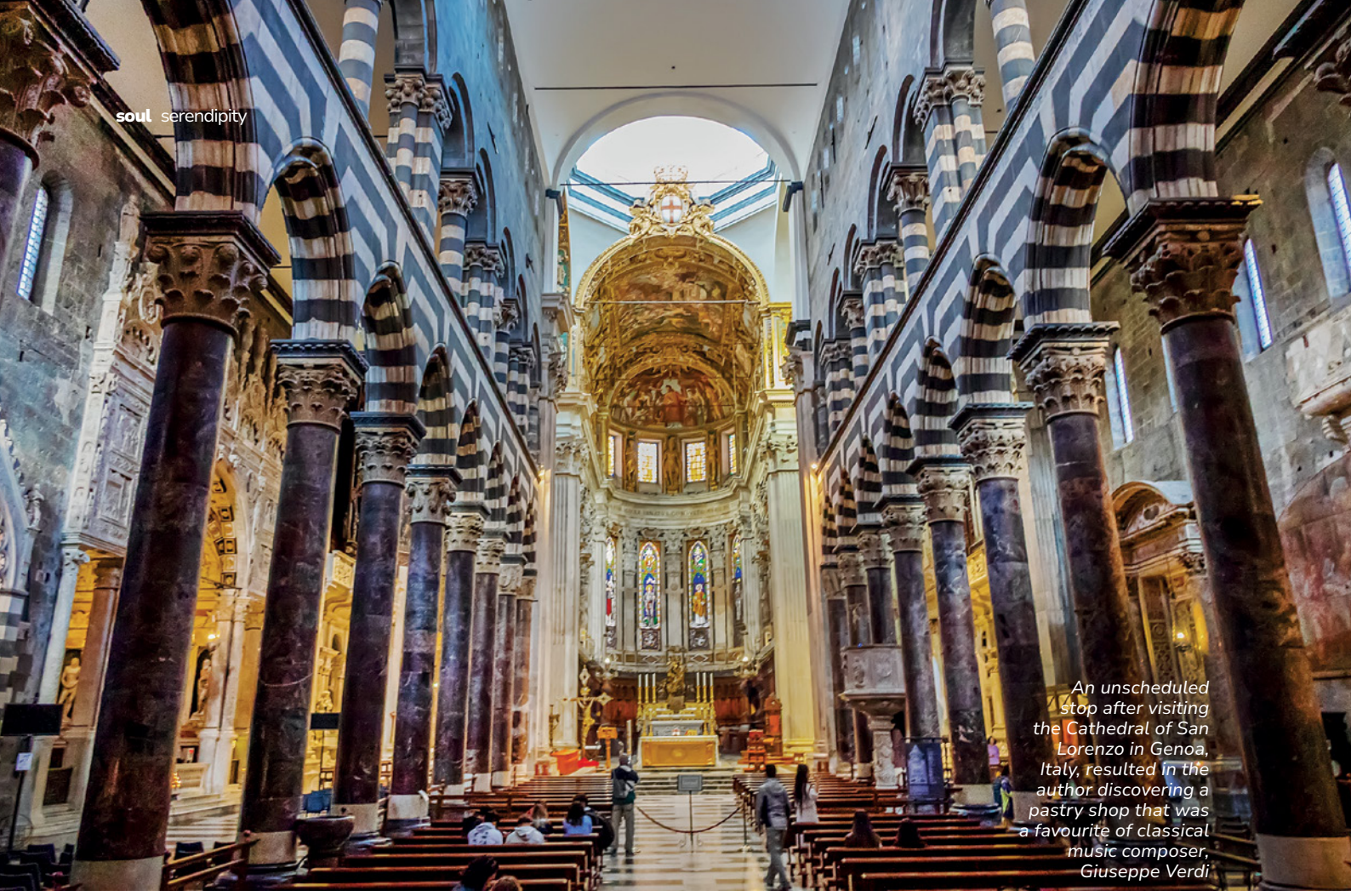

An unscheduled stop after visiting the Cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa, Italy, resulted in the author discovering a pastry shop that was a favourite of classical music composer, Giuseppe Verdi

HEAD OUT WITHOUT A PLAN

What happens when you throw away that travel to-do list? The answer may surprise you

words by **Priya Pathiyan**

Picture this. I am traipsing around touristy Montmartre in Paris, France, the art district that has had a rich history for centuries, doing regular touristy things—buying a beret, posing for photographs, pausing to listen to the famous accordion player with the cat.

But, of all the tempting eateries lining the cobblestoned lanes of Place du Tertre, the one I decide to dine at turns out to be La Mère Catherine, which, I discover, is said to be the world's first ever bistro. History on my plate? Yes, please.

Or this. After visiting the Cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa, Italy, to see the Sacro Catino (a vase said to be a relic from the Last Supper), I stopped at Pasticceria Klainguti for a breather and a bite, only to find that this little Belle Époque-style pastry shop, opened by four Swiss brothers in 1828, was a favourite of classical music composer Giuseppe Verdi. Next, I spy his handwritten letter thanking them for their Falstaff Brioche as I am ending my meal on that same sweet note.

Such coincidences keep occurring during my travels. Friends believe it is the universe blessing me. I say that while that may be true, it also stems from my decision to embrace travel in a way many of us have forgotten today.

Why do we travel?

Is it to explore new places? Sample a new culture? Savour unusual flavours? Check off yet another destination?

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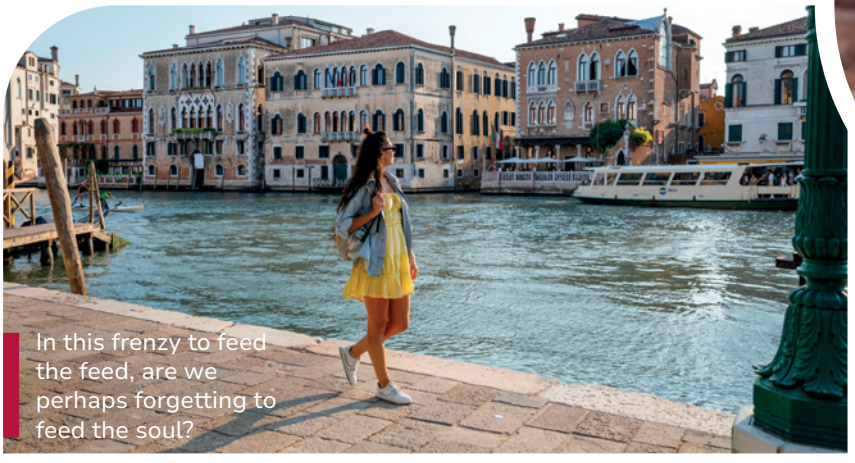

In this frenzy to feed the feed, are we perhaps forgetting to feed the soul?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Musée Carnavalet highlights Parisian history; The Bellini cocktail was invented in Venice; On your next holiday, set aside unplanned time.

Shutterstock

Or win bragging rights to an exotic experience? Somehow, we are consumed these days by the concept of 'doing' a destination and clicking hundreds of pictures, videos, and reels to document it on social media. But in this frenzy to feed the feed, are we perhaps forgetting to feed the soul?

To be able to enjoy the act of exploration for itself rather than as content to be created, crunched, edited, and regurgitated ad nauseam is a rare event right now. But is this truly the travel we yearn for? Should we not instead yearn for the kind of escape that allows us the expansiveness of a blank canvas for us to paint our memories on?

Wait for it...

Planning and researching every detail to such an extent that we do not encounter anything we do not want to, may result in us eliminating the element of a 'good surprise'. I have had many instances of stumbling onto delightful experiences when I let go of my carefully-calibrated plans. Like ordering a Bellini in Venice only to realise that it was created there. Stumbling upon the amazing Musée Carnavalet, the oldest municipal museum in Paris, founded in 1880. Listening to *Sun is Shining* by Axwell x Ingrosso (two of the three musicians from the original Swedish House Mafia) on loop while going about my day in Gothenburg, Sweden. And then hearing it on the air from the Ullevi stadium because the artistes were performing live there that evening.

Make serendipity work for you

Completely unplanned, freewheeling vacations are not just for the ultra-rich traveller or backpacker. You can do it too. My strategy is to spend a day or two seeing sights that are important to me. And then to leave as much time as is feasible to soak in the destination, explore neighbourhoods, stop where I want to, eat what I like, and let the universe do its thing. You can do it too–it might prove just as rewarding.

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TOP AND BOTTOM
Minnette de Silva's unique style of incorporating the landscape into the architecture is evident in the Kandyan Cultural Centre in Kandy, Sri Lanka; Karunaratne House was one of her first projects.

TRACING FORGOTTEN LINES

The first Sri Lankan woman to be trained as an architect, Minnette de Silva's works are worth seeking out in Colombo

words by **Lydia Swinscoe**

Little over two years ago, on my first full day in Colombo, I almost could not escape the name of the late, legendary architect Geoffrey Bawa. As ingrained in the country's psyche as the bakery tuk-tuks signalling their arrival with Beethoven's *Für Elise* and the daily sound of shiny black crows cawing, Bawa, it seemed, was everywhere.

Even on my travels across the country—from the tea-swathed Highlands to the sun-kissed coast—he revealed himself further. Pleasing coffee table books with Bawa's name scrawled across them could not be missed in boutique hotel bedrooms and stalwart bookstores, while homestay hosts gushed over the godfather of Tropical Modernism as though he were a long-lost friend. I, too, quickly became enamoured with the idol architect. It only took a stroll around a handful of his standout designs—from captivating Number 11 in Colombo to Bentota's magical Lunuganga—to realise why he was a 'biophilic' genius and a true Sri Lankan icon.

Yet, he is not the only genius in this architectural sphere that deserves as much fanfare. Having been based in Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo, for close to two years, I love nothing more than taking long, meandering evening strolls when the heat of the day begins to diminish. And it was during one of these daily walks, while I was admiring a building on Gregory's Road, that I came to know Minnette de Silva. A name not

Top and bottom: JanManu; Suravi

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De Silva with (from left) *Pablo Picasso, Jo Davidson, and Mulk Raj Anand, at the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace conference, in Poland, 1948*

uttered quite as much as Bawa's, and with far fewer books bearing it, I could not help but wonder why, as I looked up at the impressive, nature-embracing structure known as Senanayake Flats.

A pioneering career

Built in 1954, without the felling of any of the trees on the plot, Senanayake Flats is just one of a few remaining structures in Colombo designed by the Kandy-born, little-lauded architect. Navigating a world dominated by men, much of her work, design philosophy, and ideas remain unstudied, a wildly unfair scenario given she was the first Sri Lankan woman to be trained as an architect and the first Asian woman to be elected an associate at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Inspired by the craftsmen and dancers she had known during her childhood, the pioneering architect often used Kandyan decorative themes and local materials throughout her unique style of architecture that weaves existing landscapes into the design. Utilising modernist techniques, she went one step further, modifying them for tropical climates, arguably making her a forerunner of what is now known as Tropical Modernism. And, according to Shanti Jayewardene's book *Geoffrey Manning Bawa – Decolonising Architecture*, many of his impressive designs include nods to techniques that de Silva had experimented with as much as 10 years prior.

Fellow Sri Lankan architect, Shayari de Silva, agrees: "Minnette tested out very early ideas that continue to influence generations of architects in Sri Lanka, particularly with those grappling with how to build on this island".

After a stint studying at the Architectural Academy in Bombay and the Architectural Association in London, de Silva returned to Sri Lanka and embarked on an incredible series of designs, the first of which, Karunaratne House, still stands in her hometown, Kandy. Sadly, though, most of her 40 buildings, including the Ceylon Match Factory and the Coomaraswamy Twin Houses, have been demolished, with just Senanayake Flats and Pieris House remaining in Sri Lanka's capital.

What remains today

Aside from my return visits to Senanayake Flats, where I stand in awe of the curving façade, occasionally sneaking into the structure to photograph its curled staircases open to the expanse of sky above, I frequently walk by Pieris House in the Colombo 3 district of town, almost as though taking a pilgrimage in her honour.

Hidden at the back of a curved lane, with a series of main rooms supported on structural supports known as *pilotis*, the buildings seem to float above a tangle of lush vegetation, showcasing the indoor-outdoor blend that has been so popularised by Bawa. But for me, the most wonderful part is the free-standing curved staircase, an aesthetically pleasing swirl that captures the imagination. Unfortunately, since the building is a private home, it is not possible to witness the house from within the grounds, but its majesty is not lost, even by a peek from the roadside.

Minnette de Silva may not have had nearly enough recognition as she deserves, but today, she still has the quiet, enduring power to stir something in curious visitors to Colombo.

> Navigating a world dominated by men, much of her work, design philosophy, and ideas remain unstudied, a wildly unfair scenario given she was the first Sri Lankan woman to be trained as an architect

STYLISH STAYS

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Number 11
Architecture buffs will adore Geoffrey Bawa's Number 11, a white sanctuary where he lived and worked. There are only two rooms, so book early.

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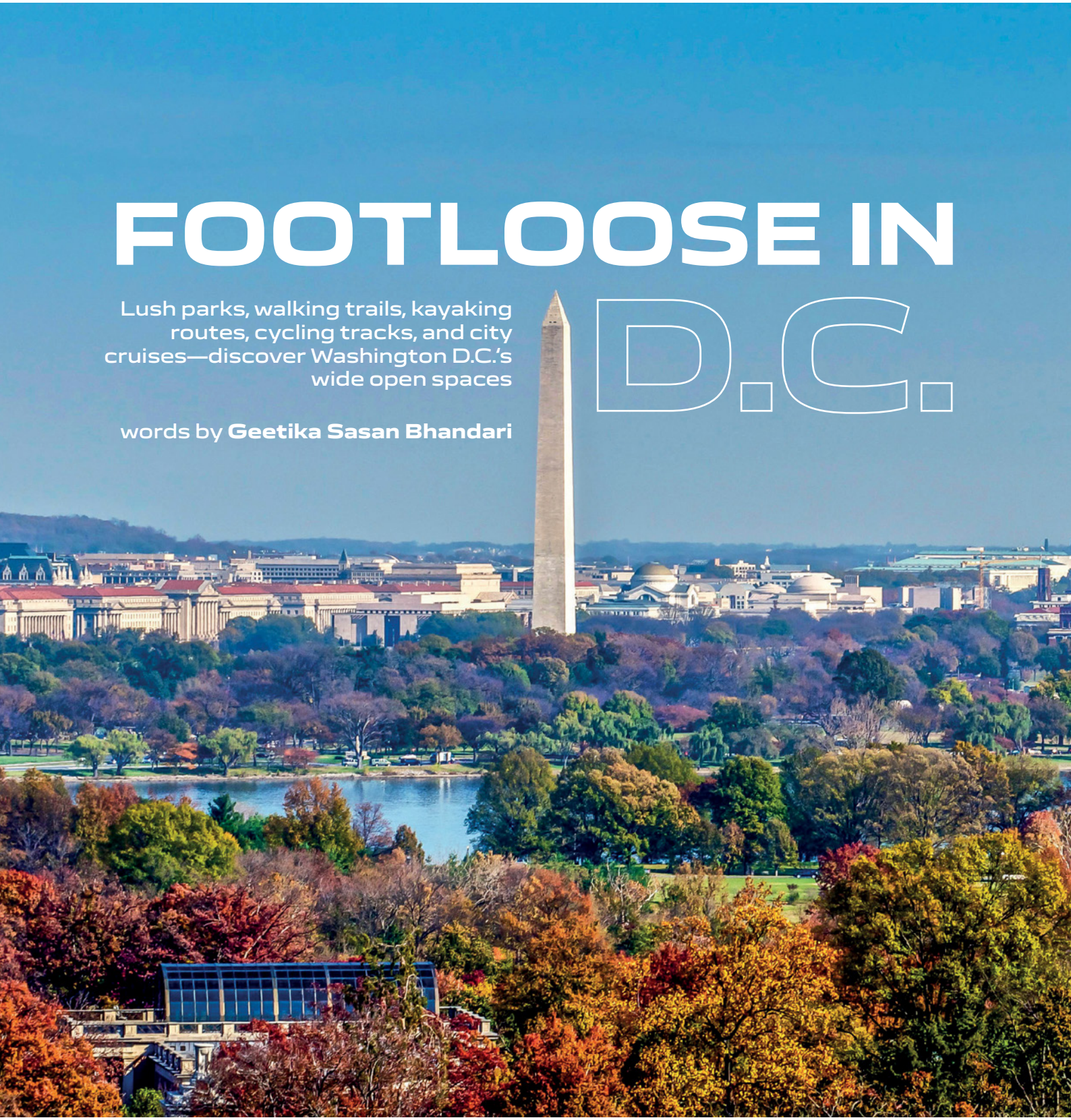
FOOTLOOSE IN D.C.

Lush parks, walking trails, kayaking routes, cycling tracks, and city cruises—discover Washington D.C.'s wide open spaces

words by **Geetika Sasan Bhandari**



LEFT AND RIGHT
November will see the city decked in bright Fall foliage; Georgetown is a paradise for nature lovers.

Left and right: Shutterstock; Geetika Sagar Bhandari

The first time I visited Washington D.C., I was fascinated to see the suits calmly astride electric scooters, their laptops sitting smugly in crossbodies, as they effortlessly navigated their way on main streets. Knowing I would never have the guts to do this on a busy Indian road, I secretly admired and envied them, hoping to try this at some point in life.

Seven years later, I found myself back in the city—older, bolder, and ready to tick this off my list. In fact, the highlight of the last trip was the visits to the various museums that the city is known for. So, this time, taking a cue from the electric scooter, I decided to explore the outdoors. Undoubtedly, D.C. has some of the world's best museums, but to spend your entire time indoors is a disservice.

Out and about

Because it serves as the USA's capital, Washington D.C. houses several federal government offices,

LEFT AND RIGHT
Murals in the U Street neighbourhood are a reminder of the city's musical heritage; Cycling is a great way to see the sights and get around.

most of which are painfully dull with identical façades; but not many people know that D.C. also boasts nearly 700 public parks and green spaces, making it a delightful city to get a green fix.

So, instead of hailing cabs, I decided to walk. The city is pretty easy to navigate, and with unbelievably low AQIs and canvas-worthy blue skies, it really motivates you to get those steps in. On Day 1, after being completely awed by the International Spy Museum, we took the Orange Line (on the metro) from the L'Enfant Plaza Station to the Metro Center Station. A 10-minute walk got us to the historic Old Ebbitt Grill (Washington's oldest saloon, established in 1856). A delightful lunch of perfectly done boneless rib-eye that sat on a bed of broccoli, finished with herb butter, was enough to prompt us to walk off the calories. We started from 15th St, NW, and landed up at President's Park, bang in front of The White House. The entire stretch between The White House and the Washington Monument is green with paved sidewalks to walk, cycle, skate, and what have you. And to the left and right of the Washington Monument—starting from The Capitol at one end to the Lincoln Memorial at the other—lie grounds where people sit, play, and just enjoy the outdoors. The National Mall (with most of the big museums) is also part of this area, making it super simple to visit the museums with just an easy walk separating them. It is a stretch I did at least twice during my stay.

History on the go

The next day had me excited because we were going on a walk with Briana Thomas, historian, author, and journalist, to explore D.C.'s music, culture, and Black entertainment legacy in the U Street neighbourhood. The city was home to jazz icons like Duke Ellington and Shirley Horn, and it was only fitting that we started our walk at the 1910-opened Howard Theatre, considered the nation's oldest devoted specifically to African-American performing arts. Walking ahead, we saw many murals decorating façades, paying homage to the neighbourhood's musical legacy. Thomas told us how her grandmother used to take her to these sites and now she is taking others. We got an insight into how urbanisation impacted the neighbourhood, which, unfortunately, now has just about three Black-owned businesses, down from over 300. I cannot help but think of this conundrum as so many cities struggle to retain their heritage in the wake of rapid urban development.

We walked past landmarks like the True Reformer Building and the Industrial Bank, and wound up at Eatopia Eatery, an Ethiopian fine-dine run by Surafel Gizachew, aka DJ Phatsu. He wanted to elevate Ethiopian fare but maintain authenticity and was designing a nine-course menu with his mother. My favourite was the *doro wot*—a classic, slow-cooked chicken legs stew infused with onions, Berbere spice, and fragrant *Niter Kibbeh* (clarified butter).

STYLISH STAYS

AC Hotel Washington DC Capitol Hill Navy Yard:
Nationals Park and the Yards Park are within walking distance.

Hyatt House Washington DC / The Wharf:
Stunning Potomac River views; easy access to over 20 eateries.

The Hay-Adams:
This iconic 1920s stay overlooks the White House and has hosted notable figures.

Left and right: Geetika Sasan Bhandari; Shutterstock

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* Upcoming

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TOP AND BOTTOM
The U.S. National Arboretum honours each US state with a tree native to it, planted here; The author finally gathered the courage to cycle in the city.

Navigating the river
The meal definitely called for a workout and ours was anything but monotonous. Divided into pairs, we set off kayaking from the Recreation Pier at The Wharf. Having done it twice earlier, I quite enjoyed the activity, especially because it allows you to go as slow or fast as you want. But some in the group were new to it so we stuck to the Washington Channel—a calm offshoot of the Potomac River—and at one point we just stopped using our oars and admired the park in front of us. Once refreshed, we headed out to Navy Yard's Capitol Riverfront neighbourhood, and settled at District Winery—a restaurant and bar housed in a winery—watching the sun go down on the Anacostia river.

Green, green grass
The next day was entirely dedicated to the lungs as we spent half a day at the 451-acre U.S. National Arboretum, known for its expansive themed gardens and collections, including the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, the azalea gardens, the National Grove of State Trees, and the iconic National Capitol Columns. There are trees representing different US states and besides some walking tracks, there was nothing around—just silence. At some point, I just sat down on the road to breathe in the fresh air. The evening was also spent walking, this time at The Wharf for the DC JazzFest. We got coffee and ice cream from stalls lined up amidst smaller stages for performances. Later, we made our way to Moonraker, the 14th-floor Japanese-inspired rooftop bar atop the Pendry Washington DC - The Wharf, offering stunning night views of the Potomac.

Not your everyday commute
The next day, we were on a city cruise—

STEP UP THE PACE: ACTIVITIES TO TRY

Go kayaking
Enjoy a leisurely afternoon and give your arms a solid workout with a kayaking adventure on the Potomac River. *capital.adventuresunbound.com/the-wharf-boathouse*

Walk amidst huge trees
Admission to the U.S. National Arboretum is free (including to the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum). Check for closures on federal holidays. *usna.usda.gov*

Take a day cruise
Cruise along the Potomac River as you make your way to Georgetown; enjoy the breeze and learn some history via the audio tour. *cityexperiences.com*

Cycle in the city
Rent an e-bike and see the city's pretty sights as you pedal away. *veoride.com*

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ON THE BOARDWALK

The Wharf is a waterfront neighbourhood with hotels, top-notch restaurants, festivals, live events, and 17 acres of parks and open spaces. You can go for a riverfront stroll, take a water taxi or try kayaking or paddleboarding in the Washington Channel. View upcoming events at *wharfdc.com*

LEFT AND RIGHT
Sunset, as viewed from the Potomac River; Chimney cake with ice cream is a popular on-the-go dessert.

aboard Lady Josephine—on the same river, to Georgetown. The day was spent exploring the quaint yet stylish area on foot, and after a superb wood-fired pita sandwich at YELLOW, a Levantine café, we set off to explore the place. I found myself at Dumbarton Oaks Park, making friends with a pair of St. Bernards. The houses nearby were straight out of picture postcards, with neatly-trimmed hedges, and bunches of bright, seasonal flowers. I found myself walking around aimlessly in Book Hill—a historic neighbourhood centred on Wisconsin Avenue from O Street to Reservoir Road—peppered with antique stores, art galleries, and cafés, all wrapped up in European charm. I meandered in quiet contemplation, wondering if I could live in a suburb that can be explored in one afternoon. I landed at Georgetown Cupcake, a flagship bakery with an entry fronted by a long, orderly queue, and spotted the riverfront cycling tracks, remembering my promise to myself.

I finally got my chance on the very last day. But first, the Big Bus Tours, a hop-on, hop-off service that I found truly interesting. The round trip has 18 stops, and I saw the Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial (the most visited site in D.C., with over 7 million visitors each year), the Korean War Veterans Memorial with 19 steel statues stationed in the greens, the Arlington National Cemetery, its dignified silence almost unsettling, and, of course, The White House. We finally got off at the United States Capitol and as we walked towards the Washington Monument, I finally mustered the guts to ask someone how to sign up for the parked electric scooters. He looked at me, a little worried, and asked if I had practised. “Not since I was 9,” I said, and he sagely advised me to try the e-bike instead. Swallowing my pride, I made my way to the Lime bikes, but they felt too light to control. I finally decided the Veo e-bike was best. At first I fumbled, trepidation setting in as there were lots of walkers and young children, but then as I caught some speed, embarrassment was replaced by exhilaration. Throwing caution to the winds, I started cycling towards the street, away from the pedestrian-only area. Since this is a place where traffic rules are mostly obeyed, I was easily able to cycle across three major crossings. Satiated, I finally gave up the bike at a designated spot. I wore a satisfied expression all day.

It is strange how the highlight was not something I saw or ate or bought—it is that I conquered my embarrassment and fear and cycled on the busy roads, just like a local. It is a memory that makes me smile, every single time.

GETTING THERE

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SCAN HERE FOR STORE LOCATIONS

Bringing the A GAME to BEAUTY

Emphasising clean formulations and holistic concepts, Ayurveda is reshaping modern beauty

words by **Garima Verma**

If the past decade was about K-beauty (the skincare and cosmetics phenomenon originating from South Korea) emerging as a global phenomenon, the spotlight is now turning to A-beauty, inspired by Ayurveda's centuries-old skincare and wellness traditions. A rising consumer preference for natural, holistic skin and healthcare remedies is resulting in Indian customers rediscovering Ayurveda, even as the rest of the world becomes aware of its reputation.

The global Ayurveda market is projected to grow from US$24.83 billion in 2026 to US$106.75 billion by 2034. As per a Fortune Business Insights report, that is a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20 per cent. Growing interest in the sector is reflected in Estée Lauder's agreement to acquire the remaining 51 per cent stake in luxury Ayurvedic brand Forest Essentials.

"For years, beauty was product-heavy and intervention-led. Now, people are rediscovering the intelligence of rituals that their grandmothers practised instinctively. Oiling the body and scalp, using *ubtan*, ghee, and herbs, and practising traditional bathing rituals, are becoming a part of our lifestyle again," says spiritualist and ancestral wellness entrepreneur, Anoopamaa Mukherjee Lohana. "What feels new and in today, is actually a generations-deep idea: beauty is an outcome of balance."

Following in nature's footsteps

The discovery of Ayurveda in a future-forward world is increasingly being fuelled by the desire of customers to move away from products with a complex chemistry to those favouring a simplicity of ingredients. "Ayurveda emphasises nutrition, sleep, and seasonal modifications as the foundations of well-being. Beauty was not about following just one routine all year round; it was about

Clockwise from top left: Getty Images; Shutterstock; Shutterstock

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responding to what the body and environment needed in that moment," says Dr Anuradha Mathad, Associate Vice President, Wellness, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts. She adds, "The classical concept of Ritucharya encouraged changing rituals with the six seasons—cooling jasmine, lotus, sandalwood, and pearls in summer, and nourishing sesame oil, saffron, and rich herbal preparations in winter."

Also, such legacy ingredients and formulations as *kumkumadi*, castor, rose, saffron, turmeric, neem, and others have returned to beauty conversations.

Ghee is also being celebrated across beauty products. "Ayurveda has long used fats and oils not just for moisturisation, but as an integral part of formulations," says Shruti Sharma, founder, Siddhayu, a modern wellness brand from the century-old house of Baidyanath. Their personal care and cosmetics range features A2 ghee, made from the milk of indigenous Indian breeds.

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Hair mask: Aloe vera, coconut oil or a honey hair mask before a wash adds shine.

Go beyond the borders

Indian Ayurvedic beauty products are also increasingly finding takers beyond the country. "There is a much greater curiosity today about our ingredients, rituals, wellness traditions, and the depth of Ayurveda," says Samrath Bedi, Executive Director, Forest Essentials. She adds, "But younger consumers' approach to Ayurveda is very different. They are far more aware of the ingredients. They research products, want efficacy, and are more than willing to experiment with new textures and formats. At the same time, they are increasingly interested in where ingredients come from and the authenticity behind what they are buying."

Sharma explains that different generations are driven by different considerations. "The older generation of consumers are trust-and-formulation-led; millennials are benefit-led, seeking solutions for wellness, skin, and hair; while Gen Z is ingredient-led."

The next chapter

While Ayurvedic formulations naturally fit into today's clean beauty trends, this comes with complexities too. As Bedi explains, it would no longer be enough for a product to simply boast Ayurvedic ingredients or have an Ayurvedic story. "Consumers will expect an experience that can stand alongside the best beauty products anywhere in the world. The brands that endure will be those that genuinely understand the formulations, ingredients, and processes behind it," she signs off.

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Consider the daily reality. A parent managing blood pressure for years. A young couple stretching a salary through a child's recurring illness. For them, a lower bill isn't a statistic. It's the difference between completing a course of treatment and cutting corners to save a few rupees. Affordability keeps people on their treatment.

But health isn't only about treating illness. More of us are thinking about prevention, skincare, personal care, and the everyday habits that keep us well. For too long, wellness felt like something admired from a distance, on a shelf priced for someone else. DavaIndia is changing that, with a range of premium wellness products that more people can actually reach.

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Small savings add up. For a family, they mean one less worry. For a community, they mean more people getting the care they need, when they need it. And across a country as large and varied as ours, that adds up to something far bigger than a pharmacy bill.

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YOUR AIR INDIA

The Air India cabin crew inside the first made-for-Air India Boeing 787-9

FLEET
Take a look at our aircraft range that flies you across the world
p 114

ROUTES
We present our latest global connectivity, offering you unparalleled access worldwide
p 115

PARTNERS
Through our Codeshare and Interline partnerships, we try to bring the world closer
p 124

Business Cabin suites are designed as a private sanctuary, featuring a sliding privacy door, a full-flat bed, and generous personal storage

DESIGNED WITH INTENT

Onboard the made-for-Air India Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, every moment is an experience that blends emotional inheritance with a contemporary design philosophy

When reimagining Air India's cabin interiors, the conversation was never just about seat specifications or colour palettes. It was about defining what an Indian airline should feel like for a global traveller. What emotions should it evoke? What story should it tell? How should it support someone winding down after a long day of meetings? In an age when travellers can compare seat pitch, screen sizes, and cabin features across airlines with a few taps, the harder thing to measure is how a space makes them feel. The comfort of settling into a Business Class seat. The sense of calm that comes with closing the privacy door. The small, thoughtful details that transform a flight from a transaction into an experience.

This was never simply about refreshing a brand. It was about renewing a legacy. Millions of Indians share a personal connection with Air India, which is why while conceptualising the aircraft cabin interiors, the design responsibility focussed on honouring that emotional inheritance while making it feel contemporary, aspirational, and unmistakably Indian.

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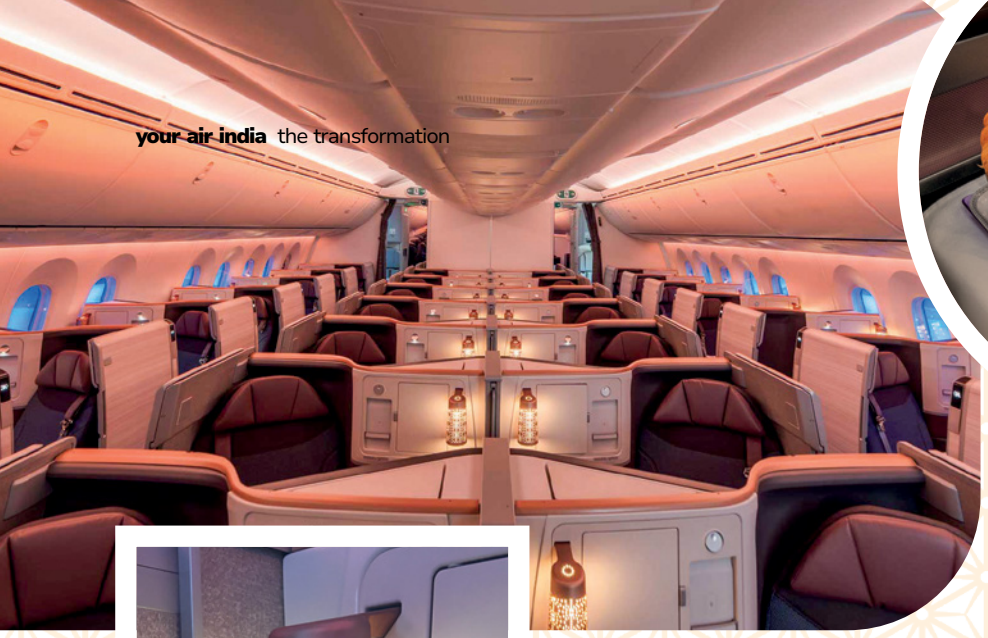

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
The unique cabin mood lighting; Menus have both Indian and global influences; The Vista motif; A jharokha *lamp onboard.*

Colours and signage
The use of deep reds and maroons onboard is intentional, serving as an extension of the Air India brand rather than mere ornamentation. Chosen for their richness and warmth, these colours reflect a confident, contemporary interpretation of Indian hospitality. Signature elements such as the Vista motif and the *jharokha*-inspired design are woven thoughtfully throughout the cabin, creating layers of familiarity and helping shape a cohesive visual language across the journey. Even the smallest details contribute to the narrative, like the customised lavatory signage featuring a lady in a sari, offering a subtle yet meaningful celebration of Indian culture.

Improved cabin ambience
Every cabin is designed to ensure that even the most functional touchpoints carry a sense of craftsmanship and care. In the Business Cabin, the suite is conceived as a private sanctuary in the sky, featuring a sliding privacy door, a full-flat bed, generous personal storage, and a layout that intuitively supports natural passenger behaviour. Thoughtfully positioned details such as the vanity mirror and conveniently placed charging points remove friction from the journey, while soft touch materials at every passenger touchpoint add warmth and tactility, elevating everyday interactions into moments of quiet luxury.

This design philosophy extends seamlessly across Premium Economy and Economy, ensuring a consistent emotional experience regardless of cabin class. The same carefully selected fabrics, tactile finishes, and soft touch surfaces create an atmosphere that is both premium and welcoming, delivering a sense of comfort and familiarity that feels almost home-like.

Wellness-inspired mood lighting
On board the Boeing 787-9 aircraft, Air India has introduced a unique mood lighting system which draws inspiration from the ancient concept of chakras—viewed in traditional philosophy as vital energy centres in the human body that support physical, mental, and emotional balance. The mood lighting offers 10 custom scenes designed to align with passengers' circadian rhythms and aid melatonin regulation, enhancing well-being on long-haul flights. By supporting natural sleep cycles, easing time-zone transitions, and helping reduce jet lag, the lighting becomes an active wellness tool rather than just an ambient feature, enhancing the overall long-haul travel experience.

Beyond the physical environment, however, the deepest emotional connection comes from what these aircraft represent. The line-fit Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner embody Air India's promise of a contemporary world-class experience rooted in the warmth, hospitality, and cultural richness of India.

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*LASI Wave 1, 2017–18 (partial and complete tooth loss). Implant figures: Rajan Dental, Oct 2026. Treatment depends on clinical assessment.

FINE DINING AT 35,000 FEET

Get ready to experience the new elevated dining service now being served on long-haul flights

The new service in select long-haul and ultra long-haul flights features a restaurant-style multi-course fine dining service in Business Class

Air India recently announced the introduction of an elevated multi-course fine dining service for guests in Business Class on select long-haul and ultra long-haul routes. This is currently being offered on flights between India and the United Kingdom (Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham), and will progressively expand across Air India's Airbus A350, Boeing 787-9, and Boeing 777-300 aircraft.

The new dining format allows Business Class customers to enjoy their meal at a more leisurely pace. Moving away from a traditional tray presentation, it introduces linen-clad tables, individually-plated courses, and dedicated tableware. In addition, guests can enjoy attentive, personalised service designed to create a seamless and immersive culinary journey.

The tableware has also been specially designed to elevate Air India's Vista Verve service. It includes dedicated plates for appetisers, main course, snacks, dessert, cheese, a signature glass, and a specially-designed espresso cup. At the heart of the collection is the Martaban, inspired by traditional jars found in Indian homes. The Martaban-shaped cruet set serves as a distinctive Air India signature, blending cultural nostalgia with contemporary elegance, and brings an authentic touch of Indian hospitality to the table.

Rajesh Dogra, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Air India, says: "At Air India, we are continually reimagining every aspect of the customer experience. The introduction of our fine dining-style, course-by-course meal service in Business Class is another step in our broader Air India transformation journey, creating a globally benchmarked premium travel experience while remaining rooted in the warmth and authenticity of Indian hospitality."

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Air India recently presented Rishab Rikhiram Sharma's concert at London's historic Royal Albert Hall as part of its commitment to taking India's rich cultural heritage to the global stage

TAKING INDIA TO THE WORLD

Air India champions contemporary Indian culture on the global stage at London's Royal Albert Hall

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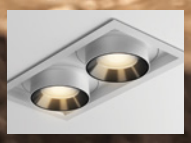

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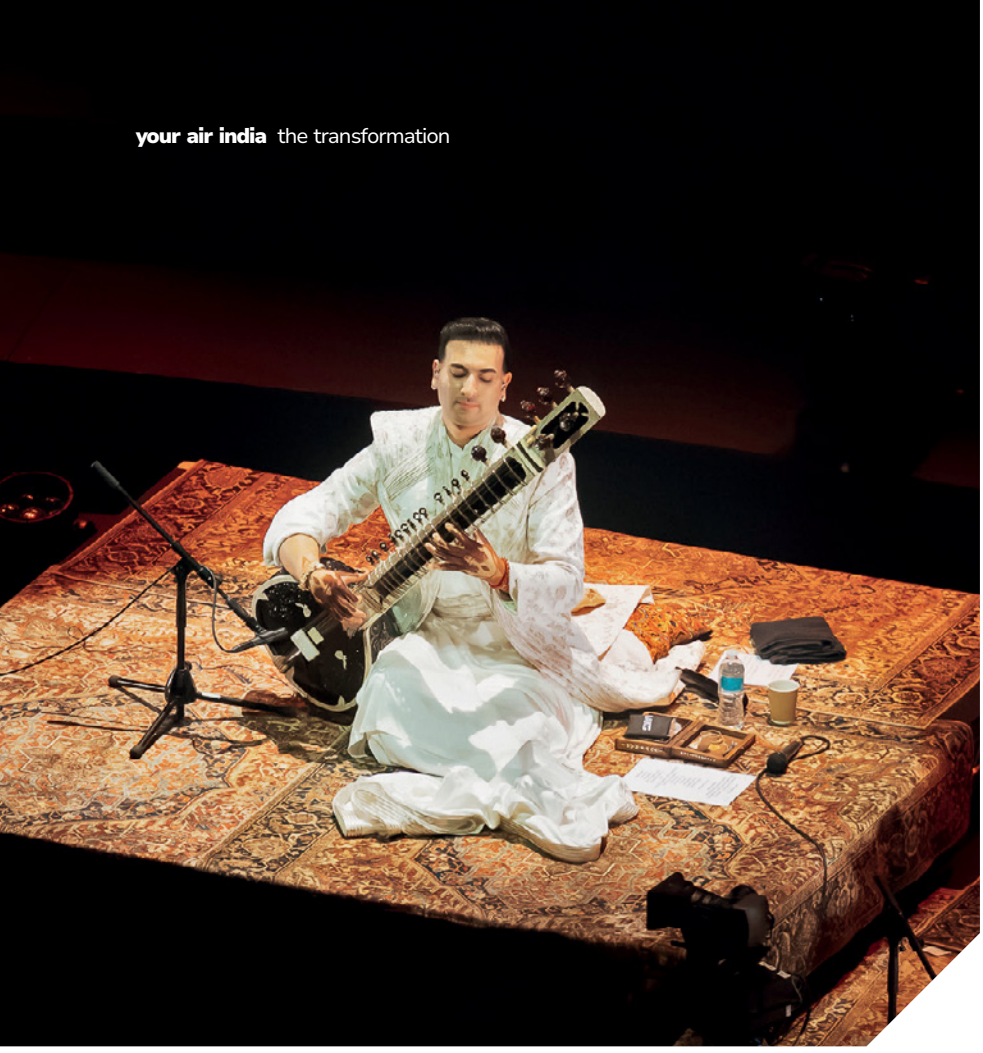

LEFT AND RIGHT
Rishab Rikhiram Sharma performing at Royal Albert Hall in London; The concert experience included curated brand activations.

For Air India, connecting the world with India extends beyond destinations. As a global airline with an Indian heart, it champions the country's rich cultural heritage and contemporary creativity, bringing its many artistic expressions to audiences across borders. This vision recently took centre stage at London's iconic Royal Albert Hall, where Air India presented renowned sitar virtuoso Rishab Rikhiram Sharma's acclaimed *Sitar for Mental Health* concert.

An Indian heart, a global outlook

Through this partnership, Air India celebrated India's rich musical heritage, bringing a contemporary expression of its cultural identity to one of the world's most historic stages.

As the airline transforms into a world-class global carrier, its Indian identity remains central to its vision, shaping how it connects people, places and cultures. By supporting Indian artists on internationally renowned platforms, Air India is extending its role beyond connecting destinations to fostering a deeper appreciation of the country's creative voices and evolving cultural landscape. This reflects the airline's commitment to sharing India's stories with the world while remaining rooted in the warmth and cultural richness that define its identity.

Beyond the performance

As title sponsor, Air India created a distinctive presence throughout the concert experience through interactive brand activations, customer engagement zones, exclusive hospitality opportunities, and special experiences for Maharaja Club Platinum members.

The association forms part of Air India's broader commitment to supporting cultural initiatives in the UK and bringing authentic Indian experiences to international audiences. Its cultural partnerships, including its association with the prestigious Darbar Festival, reflect an ongoing effort to celebrate India's artistic traditions while building meaningful connections with communities abroad. As Air India continues its transformation, such initiatives reinforce its ambition to be more than a carrier connecting destinations: a global ambassador for India, carrying the country's culture, creativity, and contemporary spirit to the world.

SCAN TO KNOW MORE

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BY NIRMAL SALVI

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OUR WINGS

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

Airbus A319
03

Airbus A320neo
86

Airbus A320ceo
04

Airbus A321ceo
07

Airbus A321neo
10

Boeing 777-300ER
19

Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner
10

Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner
26

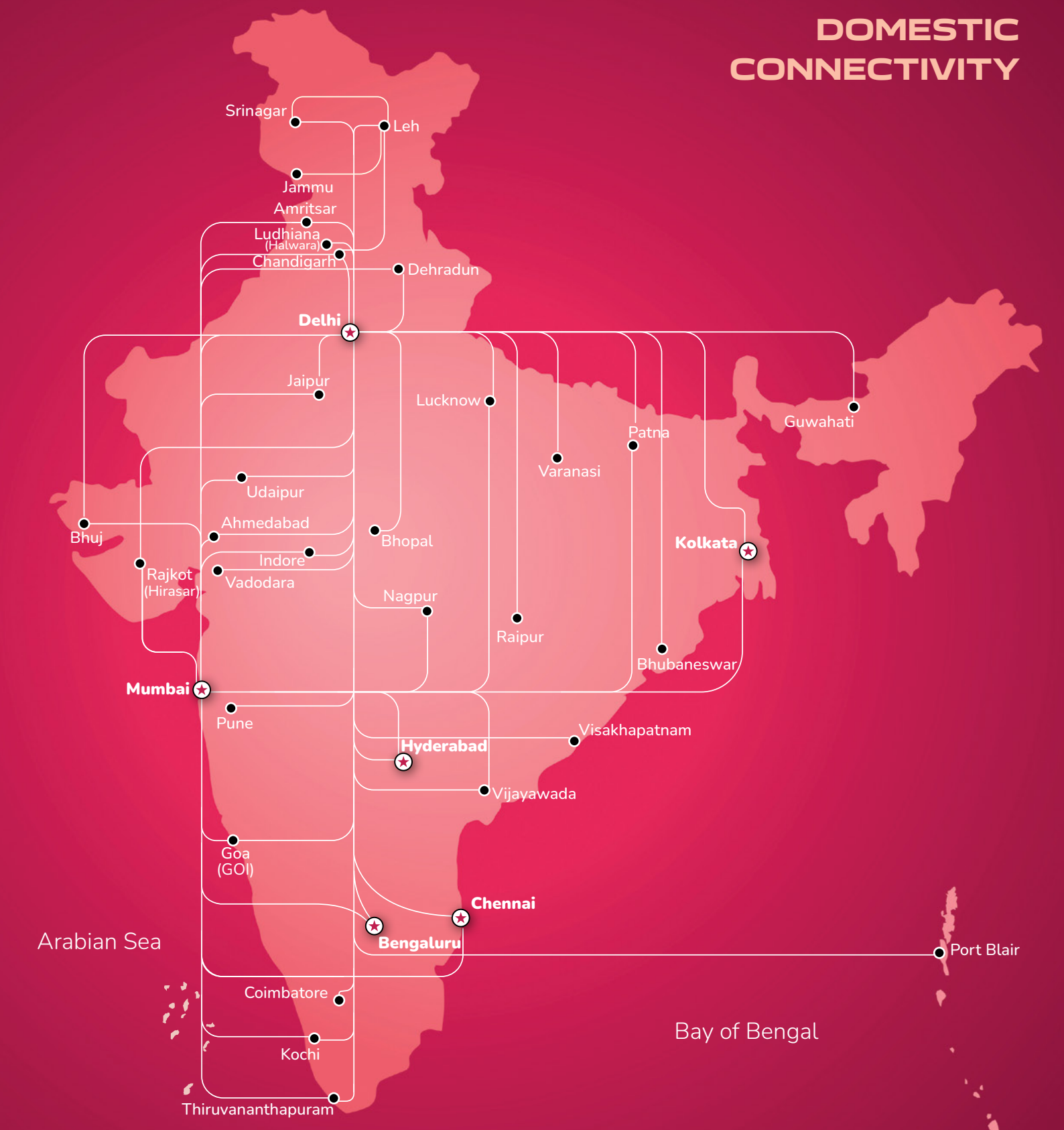
Airbus A350-900
06

FLEET STRENGTH
171

*Total number as on 21st October 2026;
This fleet count is exclusive of Air India Express
(Air India Group's low-cost carrier)

AIR INDIA

DOMESTIC CONNECTIVITY



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

This route map pertains only to destinations served by Air India

Route map as on 13th October 2026

AIR INDIA

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Air India flies direct to 38 destinations across five continents from multiple Indian cities (pinned on the map of India)

Europe

Amsterdam (AMS)	DEL	
Frankfurt (FRA)	DEL	BOM
Milan (MXP)	DEL	
Paris (CDG)	DEL	
Rome (FCO)	DEL	
Zurich (ZRH)	DEL	

UK

Birmingham (BHX)	ATQ		
London			
Gatwick (LGW)	AMD		
Heathrow (LHR)	DEL	BOM	BLR

North America

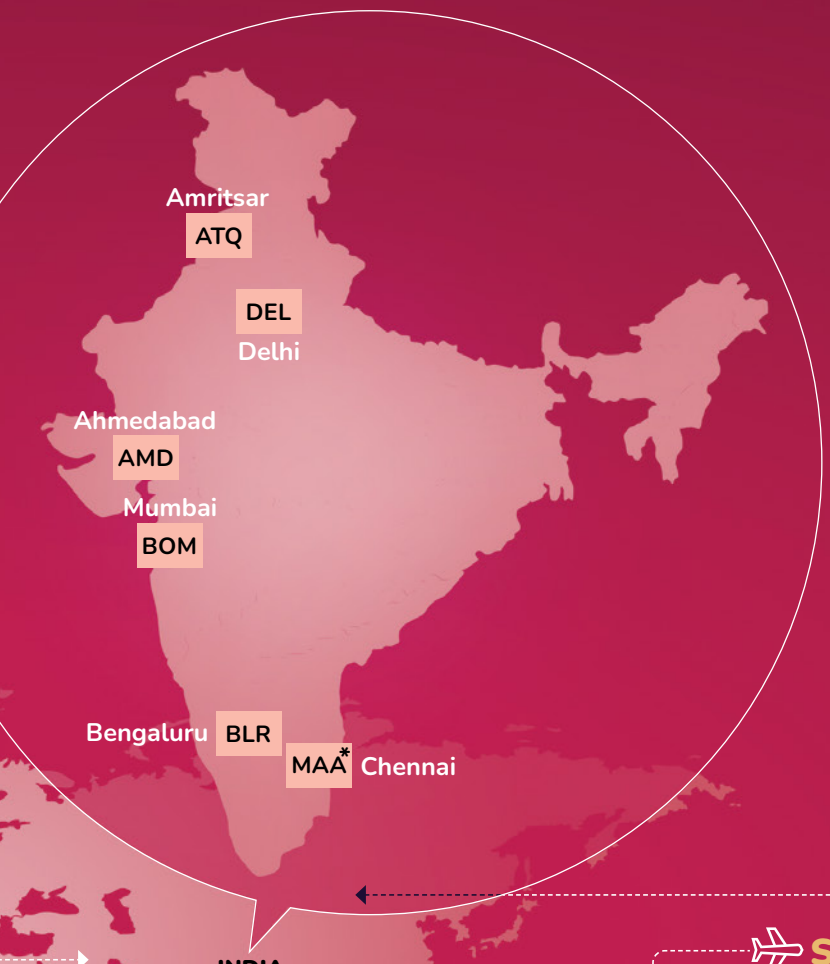
Newark (EWR)	DEL	BOM
New York (JFK)	DEL	BOM
San Francisco (SFO)	DEL	
Toronto (YYZ)	DEL	
Vancouver (YVR)	DEL	

Middle East

Dammam (DMM)	BOM	
Doha (DOH)	DEL	BOM
Dubai (DXB)	DEL	BOM
Jeddah (JED)	DEL	BOM
Riyadh (RUH)	BOM	

Connect beyond Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru to over 50 Indian destinations with Air India and Air India Express. Please turn to page 119 to see domestic route connectivity via Air India Express.

Map not to scale. The depiction and use of routes and boundaries are for informative purposes only
This route map pertains only to destinations served by Air India
Route map as on 23rd October 2026
*Currently under temporary suspension



Far East

Hong Kong (HKG)	DEL
Seoul (ICN)	DEL
Shanghai (PVG)	DEL
Tokyo (HND)	DEL BOM

South East Asia

Bali (DPS)	DEL
Bangkok (BKK)	DEL BOM
Hanoi (HAN)	DEL
Ho Chi Minh City (SGN)	DEL
Kuala Lumpur (KUL)	DEL
Manila (MNL)	DEL
Phuket (HKT)	DEL
Singapore (SIN)	DEL BOM MAA*
Yangon (RGN)	DEL

Australia

Melbourne (MEL)	DEL
Sydney (SYD)	DEL

Indian Subcontinent

Colombo (CMB)	DEL BOM
Dhaka (DAC)	DEL BOM
Kathmandu (KTM)	DEL
Malé (MLE)	DEL

Africa

Mauritius (MRU)	BOM

ABOARD AIX

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

Boeing 737 MAX 8

53

Boeing 737-800 NG

24

Airbus A320neo

20

FLEET STRENGTH
110

Airbus A320ceo

09

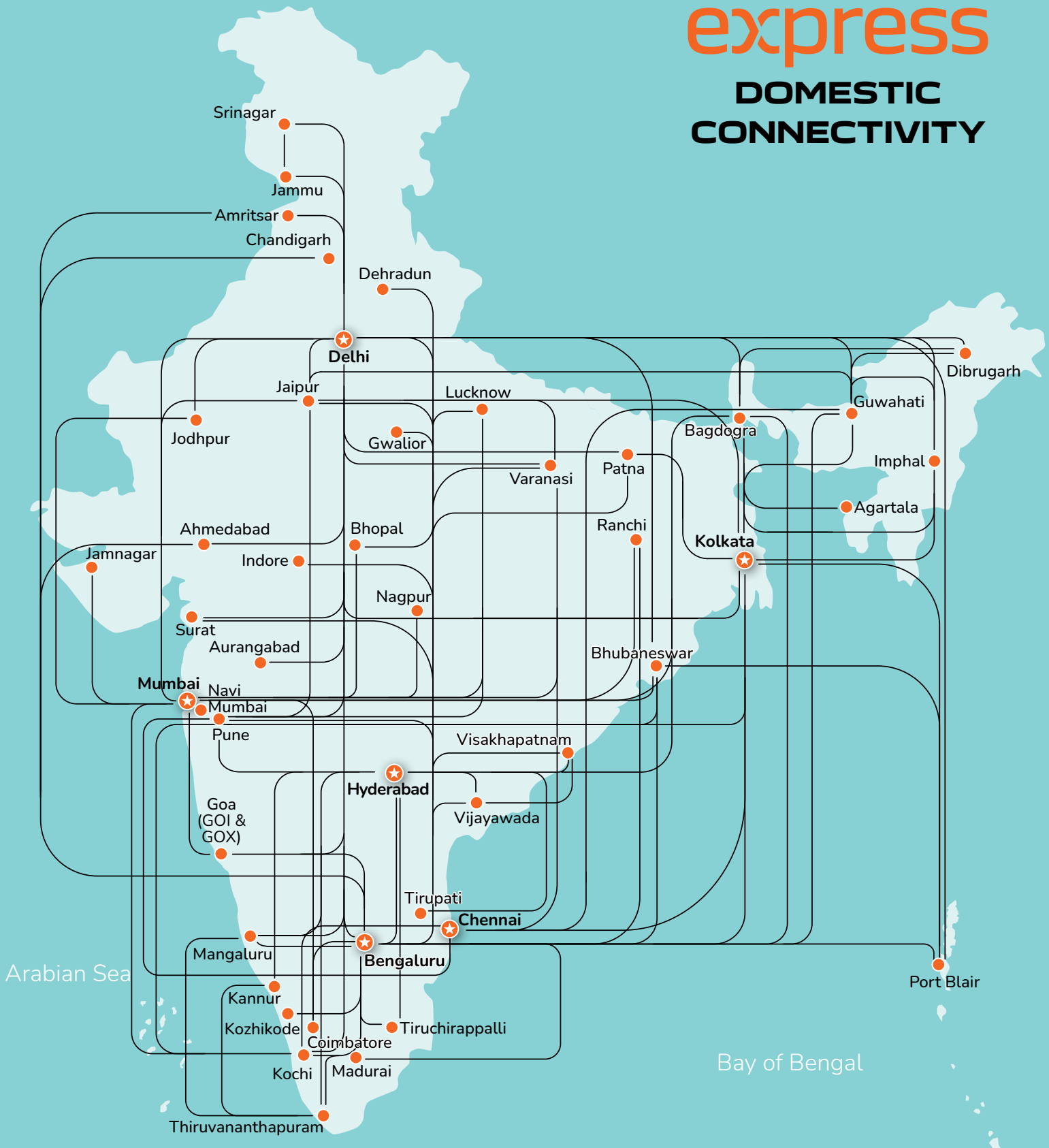
Airbus A321neo

04

*Total number as on 15th October 2026

AIR INDIA express

DOMESTIC CONNECTIVITY



Air India Express is a Tata Enterprise and a subsidiary of Air India, operating over 500 daily flights, connecting 48 domestic and 17 international airports, with a fleet of over 100 aircraft.

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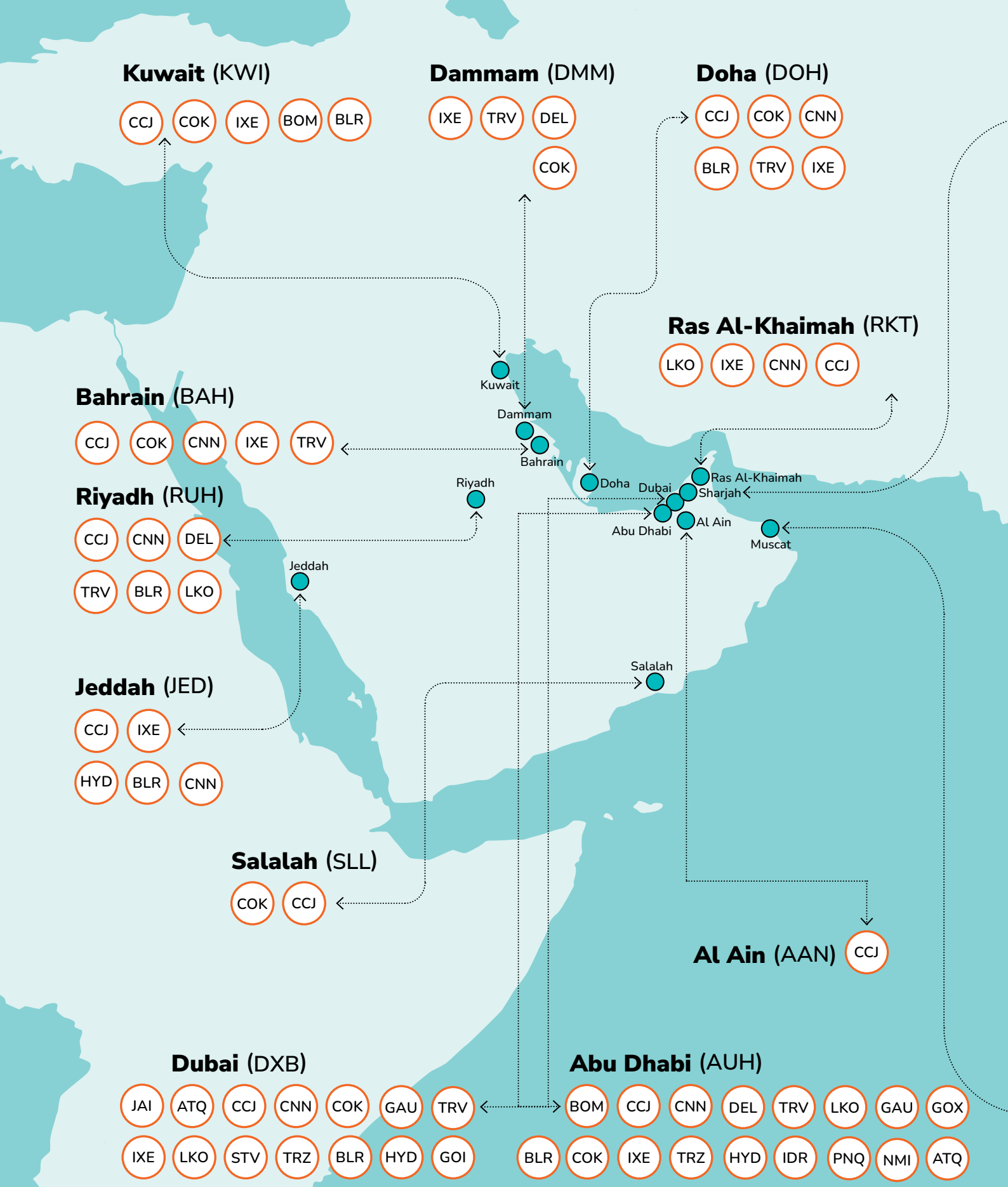
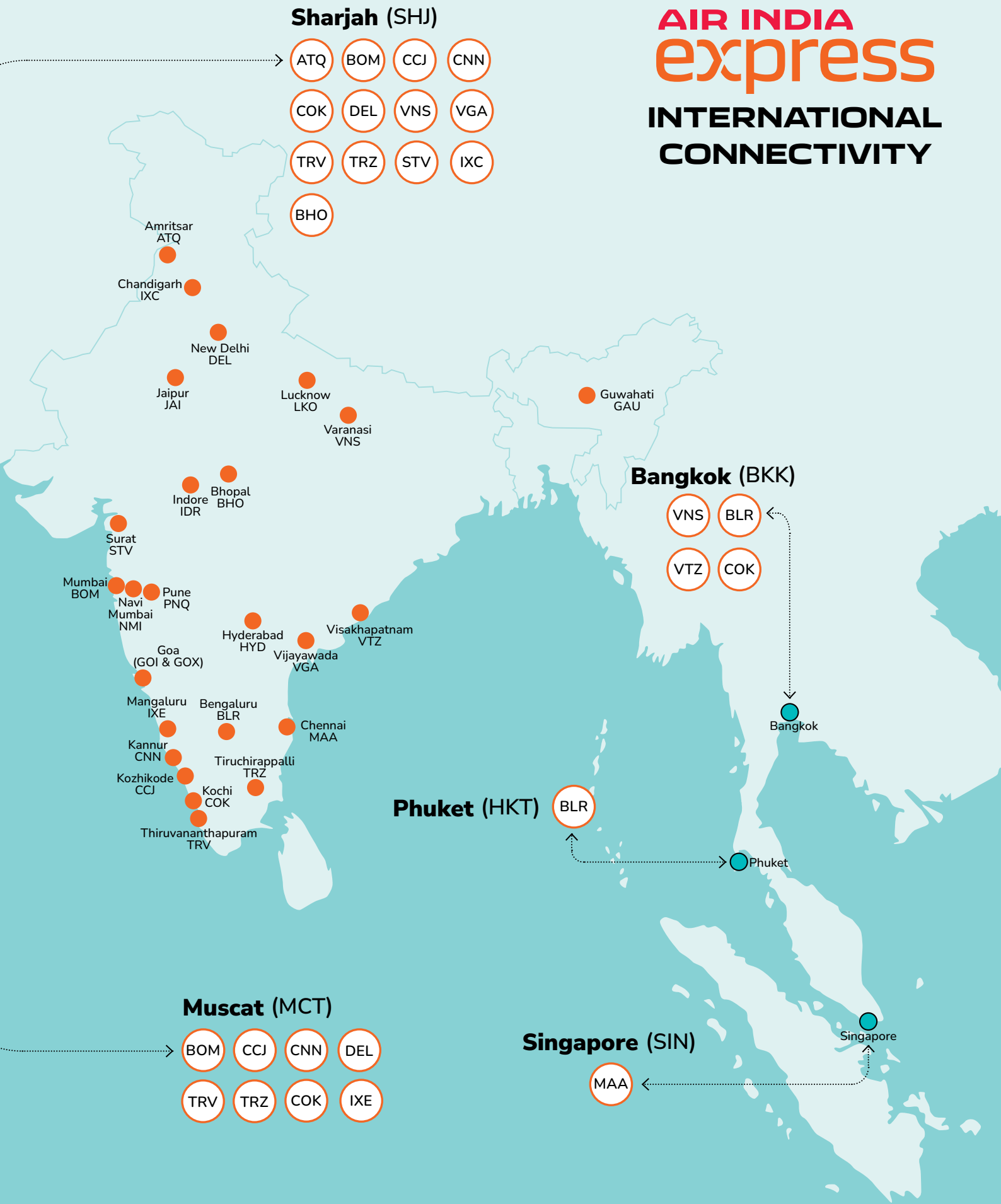
Route map as on 9th October 2026



Map not drawn to scale. The depiction and use of routes and boundaries are for informative purposes only
Air India Express International Network as on 23rd October 2026

AIR INDIA express

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY



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Map not to scale; For representation purposes only

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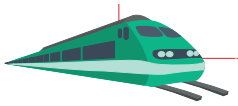

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ABOUT THE DESTINATION:

Walk along this street and it is the houses that will stop you in your tracks. Stained-glass windows, grand façades, ornate balconies, and turrets line the street, with hardly two homes looking alike. Built at the turn of the 20th century, these mansions were meant to impress—and their architects had fun doing it. Art Nouveau sits beside Neo-Gothic, Neoclassical meets Renaissance Revival. The result? A street that feels like an open-air museum.

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A TRAVELLER'S TALE

INDULGENT PAUSE

Fashion designer Suneet Varma found culture and calm on his Bali vacation

MY LOCAL EXPERIENCE

The Bali trip I took a few months ago was a wonderful mix of tropical relaxation, fashion inspiration, shopping, and exploration of the island's vibrant lifestyle. I stayed at a stunning resort about 10 minutes from the city centre, where I had a private villa to myself. I like a slow vacation where I can have some downtime for both relaxation and self-indulgence.

AN UNFORGETTABLE MEMORY

I usually like to explore plenty of traditional and flea markets to find inspiration for my work. So, I took a day trip to the Kumbasari Art Market and Pasar Badung market for textiles, ornaments, belts, and ethnic costume accessories. I found some very beautiful pieces, which will eventually turn up on my inspiration mood board.

A FARE TO REMEMBER

I did not explore the very famous Bali nightlife. Instead, I had a wonderful afternoon at Potato Head Beach Club, enjoying music, drinks, and the beachside atmosphere. The seafood platter was exceptional, as was the hospitality.

I RECOMMEND

I stayed near Seminyak Beach, an exciting base for exploring Bali's famous beach-club culture, enjoying the ocean, and experiencing its lively nightlife. Beyond being a holiday destination, Bali offered an opportunity to discover new ideas, experience a different culture, and find inspiration that could eventually translate into my fashion and design work.

—*As told to* ***Veenu Singh***

Beach: Getty Images; Suneet Varma: Self; Rest: Shutterstock

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