

Condé Nast Traveller

DECEMBER 2016 £4.30

THE ISLANDS ISSUE

MORE THAN 82 AMAZING BEACHES FROM FIJI TO MOZAMBIQUE

SEYCHELLES ROUND-UP

THE COMPLETE ISLAND-HOPPING FIX

MAKING WAVES
THE MALDIVES' MOST
EXCITING HOTEL
OPENING IN 10 YEARS

SRI LANKA'S
BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

WINTER SUNSHINE

FEEL THE HEAT IN INDONESIA,
HAWAII, THE CARIBBEAN,
NEW ZEALAND & THAILAND

✦ THE SMARTEST PRIVATE
ISLANDS IN THE WORLD

IT'S HOT. IT'S CLOSE. YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHERE



i THE REGIONS OF ndia



Unscroll the maps of the subcontinent and go in search of the perfect passage to India. Here, each region is home to a multitude of sights and sounds, cultures, religions, flora and fauna and every contour known to earth

Begin in the **NORTH** and explore the legacy of the Mughal Emperors: forts and palaces, mosques and marble mausoleums, citadels rising out of the desert sands, or, venture high up into the heady Himalayas and the lunar landscapes of Ladakh.

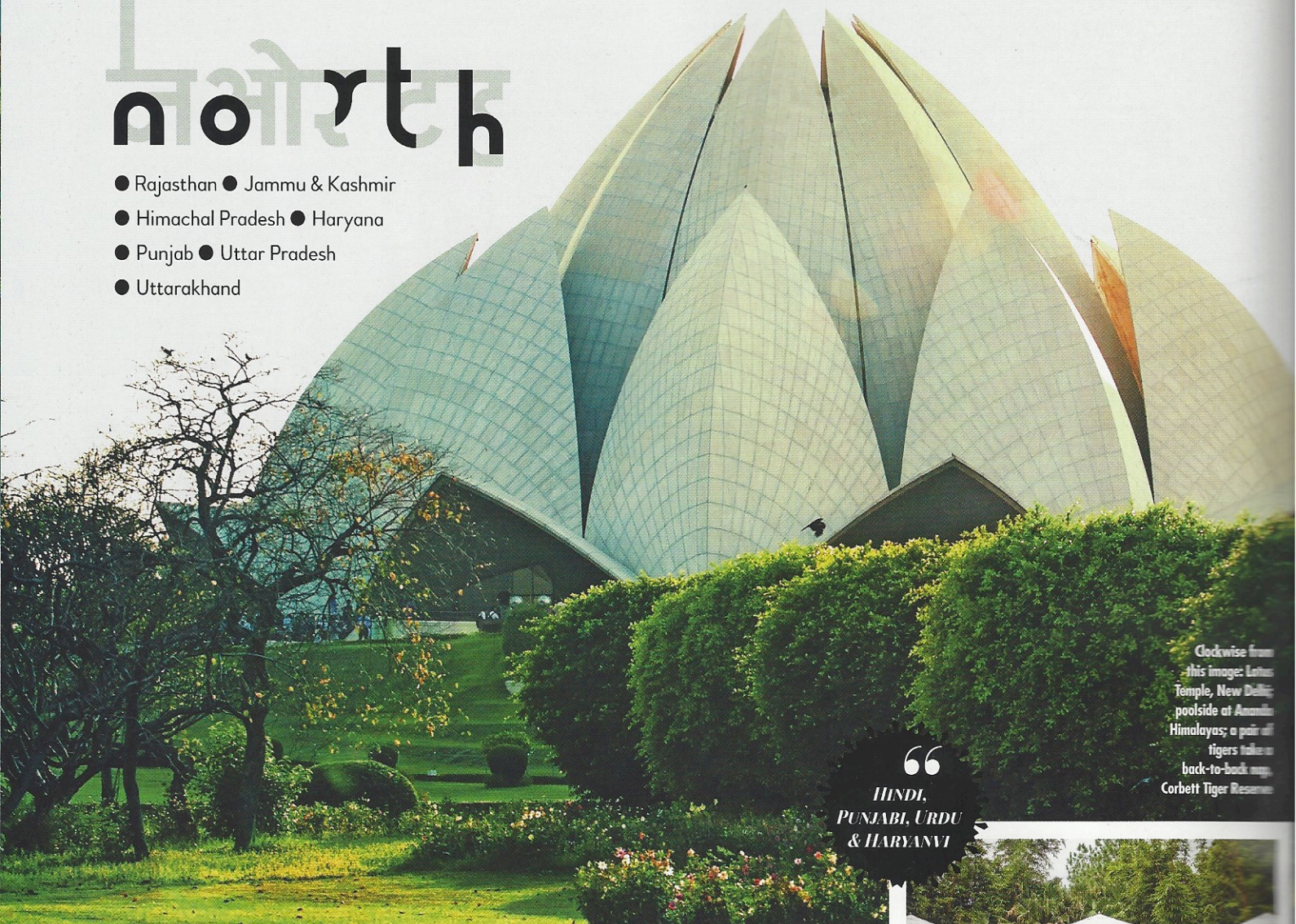
Go **WEST** and arrive like the colonials at the Gateway of India in the man-made city of Mumbai. Gujarat, the westernmost state of India, is peppered with sacred sites, the last remaining habitat of the Asiatic lion and the world's largest salt desert.

At the very **NORTH-EASTERN** tip, you will find the Seven Sister States, home to the water-coloured, misty tea plantations of Assam, the ancient tribes of Nagaland and the magnolia-clad mountainsides of Sikkim. Head **SOUTH** and while away your days under a thatched canopy of a traditional houseboat as you gently navigate the criss-cross waterways of Kerala. Discover the rugged coastlines or love, eat and pray your way across the temple towns of Tamil Nadu.

Follow our guide and uncover the true lay of this ancient land. **WORDS: INDIRA TANDAN**

उत्तर

- Rajasthan ● Jammu & Kashmir
- Himachal Pradesh ● Haryana
- Punjab ● Uttar Pradesh
- Uttarakhand



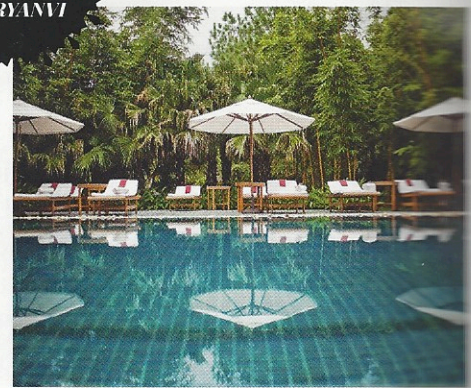
Clockwise from this image: Lotus Temple, New Delhi; poolside at Ananda Himalayas; a pair of tigers take a back-to-back nap, Corbett Tiger Reserve

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HINDI,
PUNJABI, URDU
& HARYANVI



The north of India offers some of the most extraordinary diversity, from lofty Himalayan peaks, to the scorched desert plains of Rajasthan below. Enter 'Paradise on Earth', immortalised by the Sufi poet Amir Khusro, and visit Ladakh, the rugged mountain land of the Buddhists.

Stay at The Ultimate Travelling Camp, Diskit, the latest luxe outpost in the Nubra Valley, truly at the edge of the world. For a gentler trek head to Himachal Pradesh, dense with fragrant pine forest, rhododendrons and apple orchards. Experience the summer capital of the Raj by staying at The Oberoi Cecil, Shimla or see the sweeping forest vistas from the grand Wildflower Hall. Next year sees the Taj Hotels' opening just outside Shimla.



This season Punjab is firmly on the map with the opening of Vivanta by Taj in Amritsar, home of the legendary Golden Temple. Meanwhile, state capital and modernist masterpiece Chandigarh will see The Oberoi Sukhvilas open in the beautiful Siswan Forest Range.

Uttarakhand is the birthplace of the godly Ganges, many an ashram, and hallowed pilgrimage sites. Spend time at the peaceful Ananda spa, and nourish your mind, body and soul, or wander the holy holiday towns of Rishikesh and Haridwar. Corbett Tiger Reserve is only six hours from Delhi and has recently seen the openings of The Gateway Resort Corbett on the banks of the River Kosi, along with hotly anticipated Park Hotel.

The historic capital of New Delhi offers a visually harmonious view of India's extraordinary past, through its diverse architecture, monuments, bazaars and gardens. Stay at The Imperial for a taste of art deco-ence or at The Taj Mahal Hotel located in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi. Leave the sprawling city behind and find an oasis of calm at The ITC Grand Bharat, a sprawling spa-retreat with first-class golf courses.

The neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh is home to some of the most mythical cities in India - Agra with the dreamlike Taj Mahal, the world's greatest monument to love, the ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri, Lucknow, Buddha's Sarnath and the holiest of cities - Varanasi.

Clockwise from this image:
ITC Maurya, New Delhi;
the pool courtyard at ITC
Grand Bharat, Gurgaon;
Kaya Kalp – The Royal
Spa, ITC Mughal, Agra

high CULTURE

Travel to India with ITC Hotels and experience warm hospitality, authenticity and grandeur, with an emphasis on responsible luxury



ITC Hotels, in association with The Luxury Collection, offers 11 unique properties across India, each inspired by the history and culture of the region in which they are located. These are opulent residences with roots: every hotel celebrates India through its warm hospitality, architecture and cuisine while upholding the highest standards of sustainability.

The Golden Triangle

Begin amid the intoxicating sights, sounds and smells of New Delhi before retreating to ITC Maurya. Its instantly recognisable stupa design pays tribute to the Mauryan dynasty, plus it's home to Bukhara and Dum Pukht, two of the country's most sought-after restaurants. Next stop Agra and the Taj Mahal, where ITC Mughal offers a regal welcome. Winner of the Aga Khan Award for its representation of Mughal architecture, this is a retreat in the truest sense of the

word. A must-visit on any Rajasthani journey is the 'pink city' of Jaipur, home to palaces, forts and bazaars. Here, ITC Rajputana, designed to echo the region's havelis, embraces the spirit of royal Rajasthan. To complete the Golden Triangle with ITC Hotels, check into ITC Grand Bharat back in New Delhi, India's first all-suite luxury retreat. In an idyllic spot, it offers luxury, creative cuisine, a vast spa and a 27-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course.

Southern splendour

Beyond the Golden Triangle, ITC Hotels brings other parts of India alive. In southern India, ITC Grand Chola is a landmark in Chennai from which you can stroll Marina Beach, soak up the sights and sounds of the city before retreating for rejuvenation at the spa. Travel on to Bangalore and check-in at either ITC Gardenia (inspired by the city's flourishing gardens) or

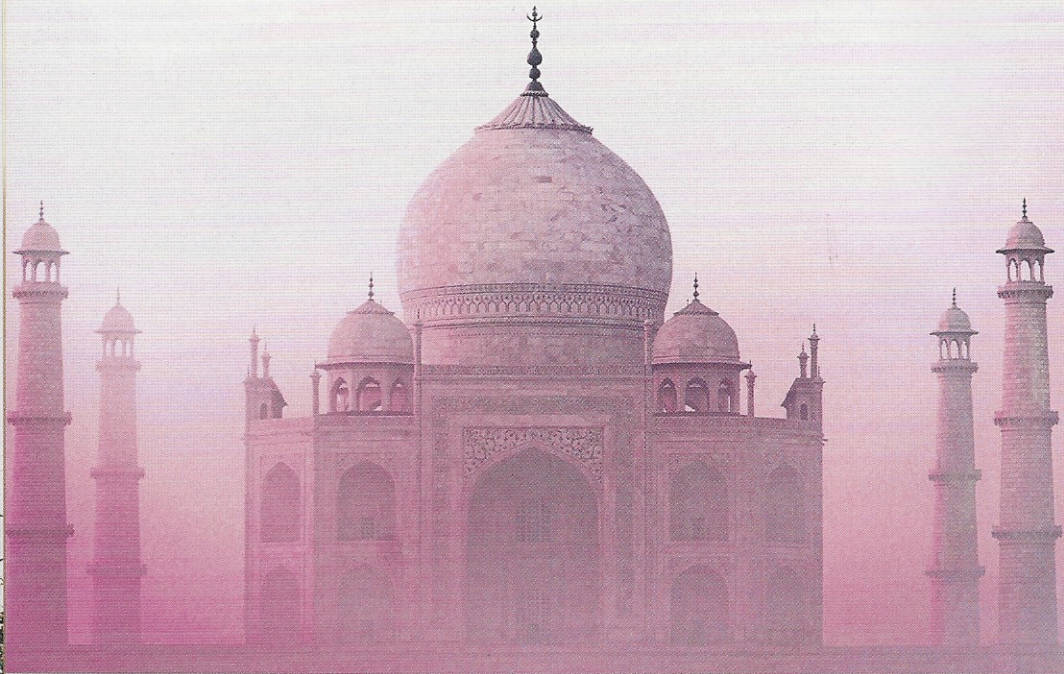
aristocratic ITC Windsor. Sign off your southern sojourn in Hyderabad with a stay at ITC Kakatiya overlooking Hussain Sagar Lake.

Bright lights, big cities

For those heading to either Mumbai or Kolkata, ITC Hotels has properties in both. There's the vintage ITC Maratha or super-stylish ITC Grand Central for anyone Mumbai-bound and Kolkata is home to ITC Sonar, India's first business resort, nestled amid a million trees.

For further information or to book visit itc-hotels.in/luxurysojourns



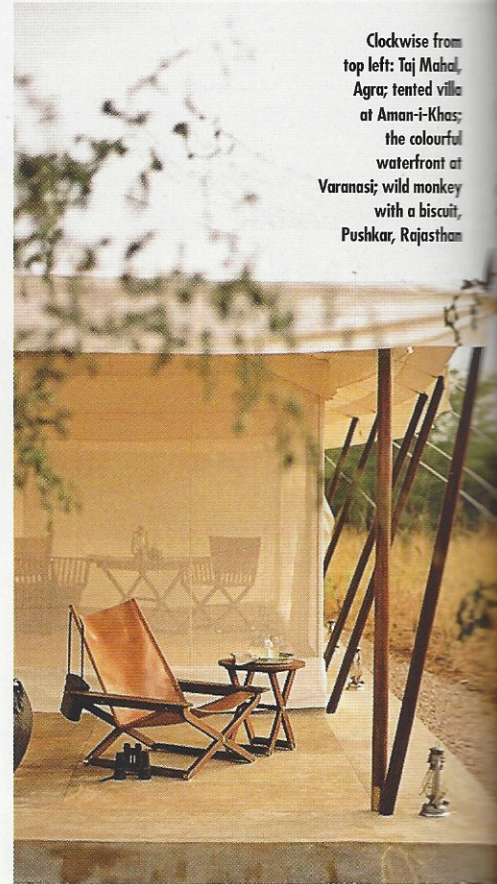


However, it is still the magical land of Rajasthan that continues to draw the masses; invaders, storytellers, romantics, artists and adventurers alike...

Vibrant landscapes of desert plains, wild forest and the craggy Aravalli Hills give way to imposing forts, finely carved temples, pleasure gardens and floating palaces. Go in search of the elusive tiger in the wilds of Ranthambore staying at the stylish Aman-i-Khas, or The Oberoi, Vanyavilas with its embroidered tents and roll-top baths. On to the flamboyant, rose-tinted state capital of Jaipur, and live like a king at the opulent Suján Rajmahal Palace or enjoy the bustle of the old city from Samode Haveli, with its fine frescos and pretty courtyards. En route to Jodhpur take a detour to the magnificent Ranvas, a miniature hotel housed within the magnificent ramparts of the mighty Ahichhatragarh Fort, home to the ethereal World Sufi Spirit Festival.

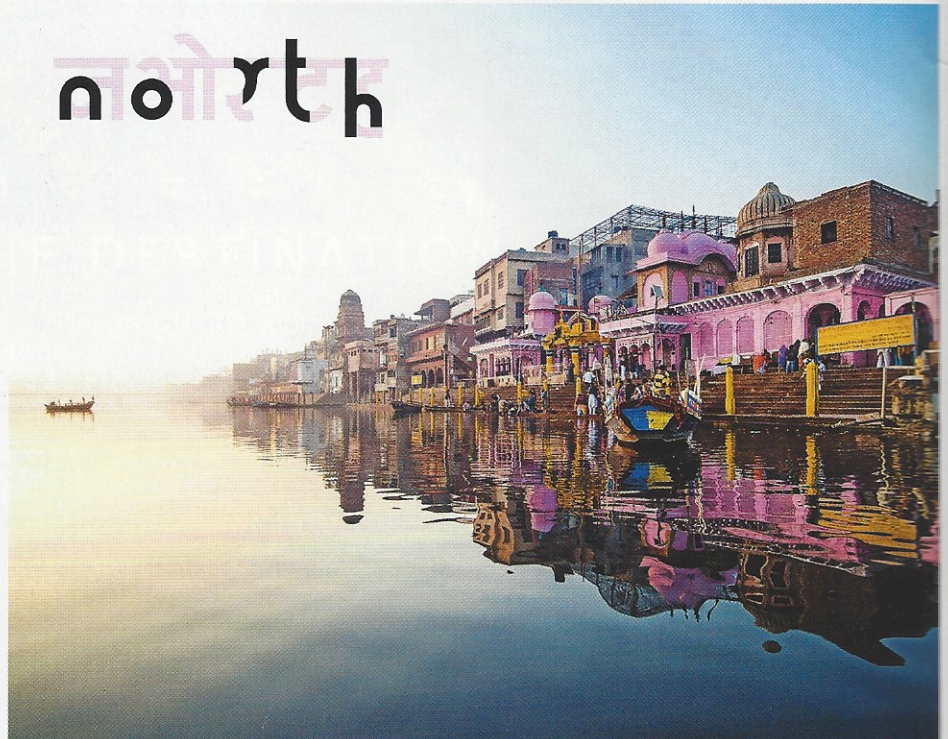
Onwards to regal Jodhpur and its imposing Mehrangarh Fort, standing guard over the city of blue – stay at The Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace – one of the last great palaces of India to be built. Relish the labyrinthine old city, with a stay at the luxurious RAAS hotel. Venture into the remote Thar Desert and visit the golden citadel of Jaisalmer, residing at the

sumptuously tented Serai. Escape the heat and dust with a visit to the new Dev Shree, an idyllic homestay on the edge of the pretty village of Deogarh, en route to Udaipur, city of the lakes. Bujera Fort, situated just outside of Udaipur offers an electric mix of an English country house and maharajah's mansion. At the epicentre is, of course, the impossibly romantic Taj Lake Palace, however the lakeside offers tranquil resorts such as The Oberoi, Udaivilas with its meandering moated pools, or The Leela Palace with its vast ESPA retreat. Contact specialist Greaves Travel to help navigate the ideal journey for you.



Clockwise from top left: Taj Mahal, Agra; tented villa at Aman-i-Khas; the colourful waterfront at Varanasi; wild monkey with a biscuit, Pushkar, Rajasthan

नभोरटह



east

- West Bengal ● Odisha
- Jharkhand ● Bihar ● Chattisgarh
- Seven Sister States (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim)



BENGALI, HINDI,
BHOJPURI
& ORIYA



Disregard the undeserving repetition of Kolkata and be instantly rewarded with one of the most sophisticated cities in India. Home of Tagore, one of India's greatest poets, the city has a strong artistic heart. The masterpiece of the British Raj, this city is a tropical haven punctuated with whitewashed Victorian buildings. The new ITC Hotel will be among the tallest buildings of Kolkata and the trusted hands of Glenburn will see the opening of The Penthouse, the city's first boutique hotel. Venture outside Kolkata, to Rajbari Bawali, a lovingly restored neoclassical palace.

Pioneer the east along the mighty Hugli, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. The Assam Bengal Navigation cruises take you to the remotest corners uncovering islands, untouched jungle, tea towns, temples, and lesser-known old colonial settlements along the way. Cross the single sliver of West Bengal that takes you into the frontier lands of the Seven Sister States.

Clockwise from this image: tea plantation in Darjeeling; horned Rhino in Kaziranga National Park; yellow taxis in Kolkata; tea crates, Assam



East India – one of the last frontiers that has much to reward the intrepid traveller – reaches from the Himalayan heights down to the Bay of Bengal, via the wild mangroves and swamps of the Sundarbans.

Take a cruise and you may be lucky enough to spy a flash of the tiger's stripe as it plows through the dense watery undergrowth.

Drink in the tea-scented countryside aboard the 'toy train', that gently loops through the terraced tea plantations to the Victorian resort of Darjeeling. Step back in time at the impossibly charming Glenburn Tea Estate, which boasts bedroom views of the spellbinding Kanchenjunga.

Vast ethnic diversity has continued to fracture these fragile lands that border Tibet, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. However, here you will find the world's most ancient forests, tribal culture and mountains blanketed in rainbow-hued flora. Go walking in the alpine forest of Sikkim or travel to Nagaland to see the Hornbill Festival with a stay at the TUTC. In Assam, go in pursuit of the one-horned rhino in Kaziranga National Park while staying at the charming Diphlu River Lodge.

Bihar and Jharkhand dominate the eastern Ganges basin, and are replete with spiritual sites, for this is the birthplace of Buddhism and home to the Jain site of Parasnath Hill. Head to the monument-strewn beaches of Odisha, and Puri – home to the vast Jagannath temple.

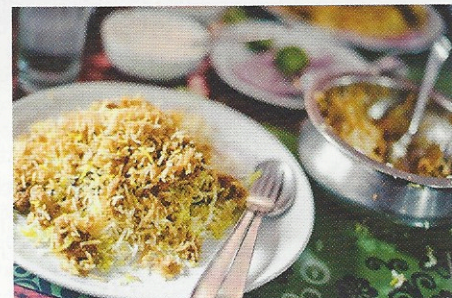
सभोउट्टह

- Kerala ● Tamil Nadu ● Karnataka
- Andhra Pradesh ● Telangana

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TAMIL, KANADA,
TELUGU &
MALAYALAM



Clockwise from this image: Virupaksha Temple, Hampi, Karnataka; Hyderabad's famous dish: biryani



The south – a peninsula where the arid plains of the Deccan Plateau are guarded by the undulating Eastern and Western Ghats – then gives way to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. An abundance of rugged shoreline, temple towns, ancient relics, palm-fringed backwaters, aromatic spice gardens and steamy hinterlands are where you will find a gentler pace of life. Andhra Pradesh (and Telangana) is the land of the Nizams. Begin with the atmospheric

city of Hyderabad and stay at the ethereal Taj Falaknuma – one of the world's most ornate palace hotels. Discover the mosques, mausoleums and medieval forts of the erstwhile royals before heading to the kitsch coastal town of Visakhapatnam for a seaside stay at the vibrant Park Hotel.

Karnataka is a cradle of stone architecture, fabled cities and empires of old. Uncover the magical ruins and relics of Hassan, Belur and Halebid, and do take time for Hampi, the legendary Vijayanagara capital.

This summer saw the opening of the new Orange County hotel which celebrates the pomp and pageantry of these former dynasties. Fly into the garden state of Bangalore and enjoy the cooler climes at the sumptuous Leela Hotel before heading to the flower

सोडुफ

Clockwise from
main image: ITC Grand
Chola, Chennai;
Keralan fish
backwater, Kerala;
aerial view
of Bangalore

markets of Mysuru (Mysore) and beyond to the verdant forests of Nagahole where the wild elephants roam. Go deeper into the deciduous rain forests of the Western Ghats staying at glass-fronted Vivanta by Taj, Madikeri. End with the hippie beach-haunt of Gokarna staying at the simple yet serene yoga resort, Swaswara.

Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provide the transition where the Hindi-speaking north gives way to the distinctive southern states of Kerala and the Dravidian heartland of Tamil Nadu. Ancient pilgrimage routes map out vibrant temple towns where the garish gods and goddesses dance across the gopurams (towers) that soar above the tropical canopies.

Start with Chennai, the gentle seaside capital, and stay at The ITC Grand Chola with its award-winning cuisine.

Or enjoy the luxury Leela Hotel with its panoramic sea views. Escape the heat up in the Nilgiris at the quaint hill stations of Ooty and Kodaikanal, or take a sojourn at the once French colony of Pondicherry, a delightful mélange of Indian and French culture. Stay at the elegant CGH Earth Palais de Mahe or the delectable La villa. A visit to Chettinad provides another distinctive flavour with its opulent mansions and spicy cuisine. This year saw the opening of Svatma, a restored, traditional, century-old family mansion and the first luxury offering in Tanjavur.

The sultry Western Ghats rise in the east, and a multitude of rivers, canals and waterways crisscross through the hill stations, coconut groves and spice gardens down to the hungry Arabian sea. This is God's own country, Kerala. Watch the fishing boats go by at the Brunton Boartyard, or dine at the eclectic Malabar House, in the historic state capital Fort Cochin – a heady mix of Keralan, Portuguese, British and Jewish culture. Travel to the rustic retreat of Shalimar Spice Garden in Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary before heading to the spice plantations of Munnar and the Windermere Estate. Discover the backwaters aboard the luxury Oberoi MV Vrinda for a taste of decadence as you watch the world go by.

The abundance of beaches provides endless Ayurvedic spas and beach resorts – from the northern tip with its virgin backwaters and the dreamy Neeleshwar Hermitage – to the wide expanse of Marari Beach and the southern beaches of Thirumullavaram and Kovalam. Stay at Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra, and watch the sun sink slowly into the ocean.



west



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GUJARATI
HINDI, MARATHI
& KONKANI



Clockwise from
this image: The
Khajuraho Group of
Monuments, Madhya
Pradesh; Ahilya by the
Sea, Goa; four-poster
at Siolim House

one of the Taj luxury safari lodges, the pretty Jamtara Camp, or the stylish villas at Samode Safari. To the south of the state, the cities of Indore and Bhopal give way to the romantic ghost town of Mandu and the majestic Ahilya Fort.

Maharashtra is home to the lesser-known Tadoba National Park and the world-famous Ajanta and Ellora Caves. Take time for Mumbai, the immense, maximum city. High-rises keep climbing, dense labyrinths of market stalls tumble forth before great gothic mansions, and every street throngs with life in this great gateway to India. Discover the impressive Victorian, Art Deco and Indo-Saracenic architecture by staying at the iconic Taj Mahal Palace and Towers. Venture to the slick suburbs of Bandra and Juhu for the very latest in world-class cuisine and cutting-edge design with a stay at Trident Bandra Kula.

Follow the Konkan Coast to Goa, famed for its endless expanse of beaches and carefree Portuguese soul. Baroque churches punctuate the dense forest canopy telling of a proud colonial history. Choose from one of the tasteful beach resorts of the south such as The Alila or The Leela, or head north to the mansions-turned-boutique-hotels such as Siolim House, Ahilya by the Sea and the grand Aashyana. For complete seclusion, head north to the forested beaches of Fort Tiracol.



Bounded by the scorching Thar Desert and cooled by the Arabian Sea, west India is rich in natural resources, golden beaches, mist-shrouded jungles, and home to the bright lights, big city commercial capital Mumbai.

It is the birthplace of Gandhi, and many a dream.

Step off the well-trodden tourist trails of Rajasthan and Mumbai and discover Gujarat. Next year will see the opening of the lavish ITC Ahmedabad, where one can search out the stepwells, remarkable mosques and mouth-watering street food. Beyond, you will find

Gir Forest National Park, the last remaining home of the Asiatic lion; the impressive Solanki-era sun temple, and the blinding white Palitana temples glinting high up in the Shatrunjaya Hills.

The arid salt plains and marshes of Kutch are home to some extraordinary wildlife and tribal villages that still produce exquisite textiles – explore from the quaint and elegant Bhuj House.

Hear the call of the wild from the landlocked jungles of Madhya Pradesh. Adventure through Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Pench and Panna national parks, home to one of the highest densities of India's natural wildlife. Reside at