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COLOURS OF
India

PRODUCED BY
Condé Nast
Traveller
PROMOTIONS

The kaleidoscopic pull of India is undeniable – there is nowhere in the world more visually tantalising. Entire cities shine in bold hues of pink and blue. Blink and you will miss the flutter of a neon sari on the back of a bike or the fierce, turquoise flash of a kingfisher. Go in search of the elusive tiger's stripes in the verdant jungles, view the multi-coloured temples of Tamil Nadu, and bask in the shadows of the inky Himalayas. Even the gleaming white marble of the mighty Taj Mahal holds visitors spellbound by the way it changes shades throughout the day – glowing red at dawn, shimmering silver in the moonlight.

However, colour here is not just surface. Its expression encompasses culture, tradition and faith. Red is not only associated with the Hindu Goddess Durga and fiery chillies, it is also synonymous with power and knowledge and is the predominant colour in the Hindu wedding ceremony. In Jaipur, history has it that the entire city was painted pink in welcome for the Prince of Wales in 1876. Visit Amritsar and you will find the most sacred of Sikh shrines – the Golden Temple, which stands glistening yellow in the heat. Blue also holds special religious significance and several Hindu gods are often depicted in various hues. Yet, since all colours ultimately merge, it is white that is the sign of purity.

Words Indra Tandan



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HOT PINK



TRAVELLER PROMOTION

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EVENING AT THE PARK, CALANGUTE GOA; THE LOTUS FLOWER, A SACRED SYMBOL IN INDIA; SET UP FOR A ROYAL GATHERING, MARWAR HALL, TAJ UMAID BHAWAN PALACE; PAINTED EFFIGIES AT CELEBRATIONS IN LADAKH; AERIAL VIEW, TAJ LAKE PALACE



housed in temporary bamboo temples before being immersed in the river. In Maharashtra it is the elephant headed god of wisdom that is celebrated at Ganesha Chaturthi. There too, large effigies are erected some several storeys high, and then immersed in the sea. On a more contemporary note Goa is well established for its New Year Eve celebrations so party the night away at **The Park Goa Calangute**, or relax at the luxurious **Leela Goa**



set in the sedate south. In Rajasthan, both Jodhpur Rajasthan International Folk Festival and The World Sufi Festival are well worth experiencing, see the magnificent **Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace** come to life as it plays host to many of the events. The Pushkar Camel Fair is similarly legendary for its colourful scenes at the auspicious full moon festival. In neighboring Gujarat enjoy the festivities



in Ladakh, experience it in true style with **Abercrombie & Kent**, staying at the **Ultimate Travelling Camp**, which is also present at the tribal Hornbill Festival in Nagaland. In Kerala Thrissur Puram, sees elephants decorated with gold ornaments and ceremonial umbrellas as they parade down to the Vadakkunnathan Temple. In West Bengal the potters are busy at work creating large life-sized idols for Durga Puja, which are



of Navratri, where people perform devotional songs and dances, which carry on throughout the night.

The Kumbh Mela is the most religious festival, considered the largest mass gathering on earth. It takes place every three years with the twelfth year being particularly auspicious, drawing crowds of up to 80 million pilgrims, saints and sadhus.



Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights is a sparkling affair that sets the whole country ablaze with fireworks, sweets and a million diyas (lamps) that are cast out on the various seas, lakes and rivers. For a sight to remember stay at the ethereal **Taj Lake Palace** and watch both the lake and sky set afire.

Uncover intriguing regional festivals, such as Hemis, the colourful Buddhist festival



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India
SAFFRON

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OBEROI RAJIVILAS, JAIPUR; A BALTI DISH; ONE OF THE MANY CHURCHES ON THE KERALA BACKWATERS; SPICES IN A LOCAL MARKET; STREET VENDOR WITH MASALA CHAI

then master Kerala classics with local chefs. Finish off your meal with one of the many sweet offerings – from the plump, pastel-hued mithai, to the syrupy coils of deep fried jalebis and gulab jamuns – the drunken, sugary doughballs. A kulfi ice cream, lightly flavoured with pistachio or mango, will soothe away the Indian heat.

Mumbai is considered the gourmet capital of India with its extraordinary array of luxury hotels, restaurants, food markets, street stalls and historic cafés. Watch the carnival unfold at dusk on 'Chowpatty' beach when locals take their evening stroll among the colourful vendors peddling bhel puri, pani puri, sizzling 'Mumbai sandwich' and pav bhaji. Head to Swati Snacks for a taste of street food or to famous hippie hang-out Leopold Café. For dinner, head to Trishna – a historic and intimate

fish curries and sweet mithai. Hyderabad, the most southern stronghold of the Mughal empire, is renowned for its fragrant biryanis, Goa, for spiced seafood and coconut curries. Both Kerala and Tamil Nadu offer distinctive cuisine, from tantalising vegetarian thalis and idlis, to delicious dosas and pungent, peppery Chettinad masalas.

Join one of **Cox & Kings'** culinary tours to Kerala and browse for spices in the markets

Saffron – auspicious, sacred and seductive. Famed the world over for its cuisine, India can entice visitors for its gastronomic journeys alone. Begin with the smouldering tandoors and slow-cooked, meaty delights of Rajasthan. Then travel to Lucknow, for its Awadhi cuisine – rich in mutton, paneer and robust spices. Head west to snack-obsessed Gujarat for vegetarian delights or to West Bengal for subtle bhakti-

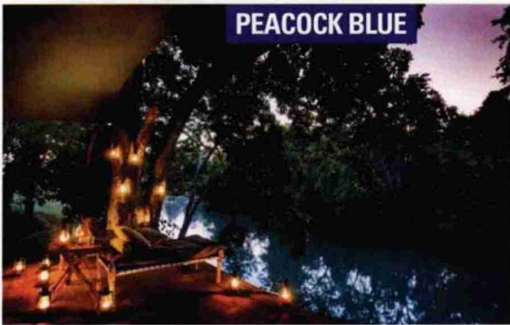
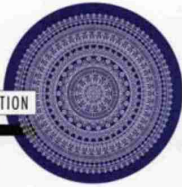
seafood restaurant or stop by fine-dining hot spot Indigo. Bukhara is considered one of India's best-known restaurants, situated at the **ITC Maurya Hotel** in New Delhi, the culinary institution is still providing its famous north-western style of tandoor after 35 years. Over at **The Oberoi Rajvillas**, Jaipur guests can try their hand at preparing traditionally Rajasthani dishes under the close supervision of world-class chefs. Spice up your life indeed.



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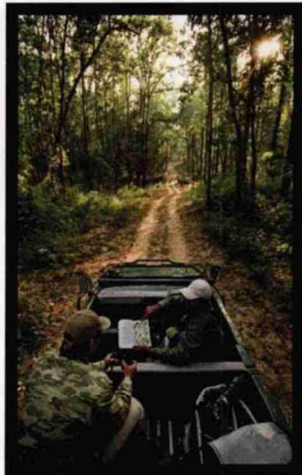


COLOURS OF **India** TRAVELLER PROMOTION



PEACOCK BLUE

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TENT DECK, GUEST ROOM, BANJAAR TOLA, THE RED-VENTED BULBUL IS NATIVE TO SOUTHERN ASIA; BANDHAVGARH SUITE, MAHUA KOTHI; THE RANTHAMBONE BAR LOUNGE, OBEROI VANYAVILAS; INTERPRETIVE SAFARI EXPERIENCE, BANJAAR TOLA; PEACOCK FEATHERS, THE PLUMAGE OF INDIA'S NATIONAL BIRD



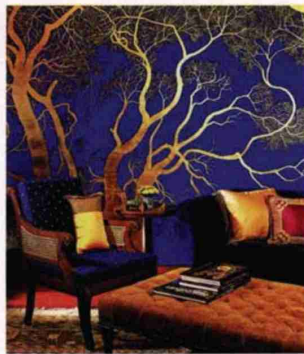
India's landscape is carpeted in thick, verdant jungle and forest. From the craggy foothills of the Himalayas to the rolling patchwork spice plantations and humid interiors of the south, the country is home to some of the world's most varied and vibrant species of wildlife. Go in search of the lofty, ghostlike snow leopards in Ladakh, the last remaining wild Asiatic lions of Gujarat or the elusive Bengal tiger. As you journey, hear the screech of the monkey and witness the iridescent blue beauty of India's national bird, the peacock. Create your very own jungle book and find the one-horned rhino at Kaziranga National Park, or herds of wandering elephants in the rainforests of the south. Both Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala and Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka, have impressive herds – along with the mighty Indian bison, leopard, wild boar and deer. There is also a stunning array of birdlife.

India is estimated to be home to around 70 per cent of the world's wild tigers and a population rise of 30 per cent was recently announced. Wildlife tourism is a vital tool in their conservation so it makes sense to travel with a TOFTigers (travel operators for tigers) member such as [greavesindia.com](http://www.greavesindia.com)

to help ensure that you are visiting the most sustainable lodges.

Corbett National Park will see **The Park Corbett** opening this autumn. It will be the first branded luxury hotel to open in the grounds, with a prime position and all-year access. In Rajasthan, you can visit the scenic Ranthambore National Park and stay at the boutique **Sher Bagh** with its delightful campfire-dining, or, escape the wild elements at the lavish **Oberoi Vanyavilas, Ranthambhore** with its luxurious, regal tents. Venture to the remote Pali region for the sumptuous **Jawai Leopard Camp**.

Travel into the heart of the jungle in Madhya Pradesh, where Taj Group has several luxury eco lodges including **Banjaar Tola** in Kanha, perched on the edge of the pretty Banjaar River, and **Mahua Kothi** in Bandhavgarh. You will also find the charming independent **Samode Safari** in Bandhavgarh. In Pench, you can even sleep in your very own 'star bed' at the new **Jamtara Wilderness Camp**. Heaven.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: INDOOR POOL, OBEROI NEW DELHI, PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, OBEROI NEW DELHI, RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE, NEW DELHI, CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE RELIEF, TAMIL NADU, AJANTA CAVES, MAHARASHTRA

Travel east to the mighty Ghats in Varanasi that skirt along the holy River Ganges and form part of the oldest living city in India. You will also find revered Buddhist temples and sites nearby. Stop en route and witness the eye-opening, exotic, 10th-century temples of Khajuraho, created by the Chandella kings (who were heavily influenced by the Tantric school of thought). Discover the remnants of the Raj with the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata and stay at the elegant **Oberoi Grand, Kolkata**.

Moving to central and east India, the rock-cut caves and shrines of Ajanta and Ellora are



the pride of Maharashtra dating from 200BC – 700AD. In Mumbai, see the imposing Gateway of India, or the impressive Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) a beating artery of this pulsating city. Head south and be inspired by the almost prehistoric, boulder-like landscape that is home to the ghost city of Hampi in Karnataka. Among the many UNESCO world heritage sites stand the psychedelic



hillforts of Mehrangarh, Chittorgarh, Amber, Ranthambore and Kumbhalgarh. However, only Jaisalmer Fort remains a living citadel, rising like a sandcastle out of the dusty dunes of the Thar Desert. Suján offers a glimpse of boutique-luxury both at **The Serai, Jaisalmer** and at the recently renovated **Suján Rajmahal Palace** – a riot of regal colour. Meanwhile **Taj Group** has an entire palace portfolio – now that really does offer the chance to live like a king.



While the natural world of this magical land is indeed awe-inspiring, it is the man-made monuments that truly draw in the crowds – none more so than the ethereal Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh. Having basked in its vast shadow, explore the faded grandeur of the once mighty Mughal empire at the nearby ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri. Travel on through the riches of Rajasthan and the great monuments of the royal Rajputs, including the intricate Hawa Mahal and the Jantar Mantar observatory in Jaipur, plus the enduring



temples of Tamil Nadu, built by the Chola empire during the 11th and 12th centuries. Head back north to New Delhi, home to myriad architectural styles including Edwin Lutyens' cool, ordered 1920's design, juxtaposed with ancient monuments such as the magnificent Humayun's Tomb – which can be seen when staying at **The Oberoi, New Delhi**. Tailor your historic tour with the specialists at **greavesindia.com** who have been creating bespoke tours for over 30 years.



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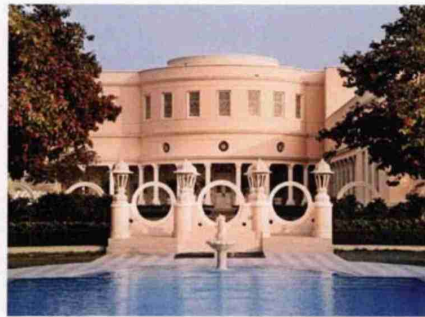
COLOURS OF TRAVELLER PROMOTION
India



CLOCKWISE FROM
 TOP LEFT: BEDROOM
 SUITE, AHILYA FORT;
 GUJARAT WILDLIFE;
 EXTERIOR, SUJAN
 RAJAMAHAL PALACE,
 JAIPUR; BEDROOM
 SUITE, SUJAN
 RAJAMAHAL PALACE,
 JAIPUR. CENTRE:
 STONE CHARIOT AT
 HAMPLI, KARNATAKA



remote beaches to explore such as the quiet fishing hamlet of Murud or the sedate village of Ganpatipule. Embrace the positive vibes emanating from Andhra Pradesh – home to one of the most-visited pilgrimage sites – Venkateswara Temple at Tirupati. Or, discover the 'Agra of the South', Bijapur in Karnataka



Seek adventure and head for the less visited states of Odisha, Gujarat or the remote, Robinson Crusoe-esque Andaman islands. Even in Rajasthan you can still shy away from the more touristy haunts and head for the unsung splendours of Bikaner or Bundi, staying in delightful palaces and forgotten forts along the way, such as the beautiful, ramshackle **Bhainsrorgarh Fort Hotel** and **Ramathra Fort**. The neighbouring states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are also ripe for adventure. Gujarat is home to the stark, treeless marshes and arid planes of Kutch, the 11th-century sun temple at Modhera and



with its superb Islamic architecture. Aside from the much-visited Jagannath Temple in Puri and the cultural pull of Konarak and Bhubaneswar, Odisha is home to some of the oldest tribal heritage. The colourful village of Pipli is well worth a visit alone, for unique appliqué parasols, fabric and clothing.



over 900 intricately carved marble temples that topple down the holy hill of Shatrunjaya. In Madhya Pradesh you can go beyond the wild jungles and discover the awe-inspiring city of Mandu, staying at the nearby Ahilya Fort which is perched majestically above the Narmada River.

The Konkan Coast of Maharashtra stretches from Mumbai to Goa and has some beautiful

High up in the distant reaches of the north east lie arguably some of the most beautiful parts of India. Hike through alpine meadows filled with rhododendrons on the Dzongri trek in Sikkim (close to the imposing Kanchenjunga mountain). Arunachal Pradesh is home to the Tawang monastery – the largest in India. Travel onboard the Assam Bengal Navigation cruise and discover the delights of the Brahmaputra River as it snakes through the patchwork tea plantations of Assam framed by the hazy blue mountains. In the Andaman Islands, opt for the warm welcome and laid-back vibe of tiny Neil Island – neighbour to the more touristy Havelock. Wherever you travel, there is no doubt that the colours of India will burn bright in your memory, leaving you wondering if your life thus far has been lived in black and white.



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LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Getting there

The two international airlines in India are **Air India** (airindia.com) and **Jet Airways** (jetairways.com). Both offer excellent international connections from the UK and have extensive domestic connectivity. Air India has recently increased its domestic baggage allowance to 25kg (for a limited period) – extremely helpful for all the last minute shopping.

British Airways and **Virgin Atlantic** also offer direct, non-stop flights to India.

India specialist operators

- **Abercrombie & Kent**
abercrombiekent.co.uk
- **Ampersand Travel**
ampersandtravel.com

• Cox & Kings

coxandkings.co.uk

• Greaves India

greavesindia.com

• Transindus

transindus.co.uk

Visas

Visas are required for travel to India. UK passport holders are now eligible for e-tourist visas on arrival. An e-visa can be obtained at indianvisaonline.gov.in

When to go

India has a diverse weather pattern that allows for travel throughout the year – with the help of some careful planning. The **monsoon** usually arrives in **late May** and carries on through to September. Generally the coolest months are December

through to February, with temperatures climbing in April and May, the wettest months being July and August. **October – March** is usually considered the best time to travel.

Latest openings

The first **St Regis** has now opened in the financial heart of Mumbai. Enjoying an excellent midtown location, you can easily access the historic heart of south Mumbai as well as reaching the fashionable suburbs of **Bandra** and **Juhu**.

Ahilya by the Sea is the latest opening in Goa and promises an idyllic villa experience with panoramic sea views from every room. Further south in Tamil Nadu you will find the welcome arrival of **Svatma, Thanjavur** –

a beautiful converted manor house. Taj Group sees a wave of new openings this season starting with **Taj Santacruz Mumbai, Vivanta by Taj Guwahati** and **The Gateway Hotel, Corbett National Park**.
tajhotels.com

The tourist mecca of Rajasthan continues to entice travellers with its wonderful array of boutique forts and heritage-inspired homestays. Recent openings include **Dev Shree** – an eight-bedroom haveli by the creators of Deogarh, and, west of Lake Pichola, the sophisticated **Bujera Fort**.

MAIN IMAGE:
SUN SETS OVER THE
COCONUT PALMS IN
THE EXOTIC BACK
WATERS OF KERALA

