

A TATA SIA JV

# vistara®

THE INFLIGHT MAGAZINE

AIRVISTARA.COM

MARCH-APRIL 2021

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 2

## *The Clan Issue*

### **ONE FOR THE TEAM**

Surreal Family  
Destinations that  
Pack a Punch

### **ALONG THE SHORE**

Old Bonds & New  
Experiences in  
The Maldives

**AUTHENTIC JUNGLE ENCOUNTERS IN KANHA | CULTURE TRAILS IN GUWAHATI**



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1

and your clan can travel safely, be it for business or leisure. We have also boosted our international connectivity through special flights to Frankfurt, Sharjah and the Maldives. As the world slowly opens up, we will offer more international options to

WITH THE YEAR THAT'S GONE BY the way it did, it's time to reclaim travel with your 'clan' in 2021, to take the breaks and vacations that were shelved in 2020. Adventurous. Impromptu. Memorable—many new experiences await you, and there's no better way to celebrate the bonds you share than exploring a new place and trying novel things together with your tribe!

Our specially curated 'Clan Issue' offers a deep dive into ideas and locations for your next big vacation with the clan—be it your family, your friends, your colleagues, or your furry mates. From picturesque beaches in the Maldives to the serene villages on the outskirts of Guwahati; from the jungles of Kanha National Park to the coral reefs of Zanzibar, we have uncovered the entire gamut of destinations that will help you make lifelong memories... and inspire you to create your own unique itineraries.

At Vistara, we continuously endeavour to give you an unparalleled experience, and that includes connecting you with your loved ones in a seamless way. We have been running charter flights across the country and abroad to Singapore, Dubai, Hong Kong and Moscow, among others, so that you



2



3

**1**  
The Maldives is a destination for everyone—families, friends, and your own delightful company. Vistara flies direct from Mumbai to Malé

**2**  
Guwahati, and beyond, is a medley of superb riverside views, bustling wildlife and a simpler life. Vistara flies direct from Delhi to Guwahati

**3**  
Have fun with your clan and create unforgettable memories at theme parks like the Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore

you and your loved ones to embark on new journeys.

As India's only five-star airline, enhancing every aspect of your journey always takes centre-stage, and the newly launched, state-of-the-art, 3D inflight map app on our Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner is a testament to that. Vistara is the world's first airline to offer this immersive experience.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we welcome you and your clan as you #FlyTheNewFeeling. ✨

# C O N T E N T S

MARCH-APRIL 2021



Unique destinations to delight the entire family

Mithila Palkar on family, films and travel faves

Genius travel gear for pets



**20**

**Vogue**

Dress the part, or twin without missing a beat

**26**

**Rise**

Vistara augments its cargo operations and does its bit to fight the pandemic

**28**

**Strike**

A primer on IPL 2021 and the players to watch out for

**40**

**Cover Story**

The Maldives is perfect for any form of vacation

**46**

**Expand**

Destinations to ensure your next family (or friend) vacation is one to remember

**64**

**Community**

Artisan-led Sirohi is looking to change the face of luxe-sustainable lifestyle

**14**

**Retail Therapy**

Expert tips on how to travel with pets, and items that'll make it fun for them and you

**16**

**The Celeb Diary**

Actress **Mithila Palkar** takes us through her top family, work and travel memories

**ON THE COVER** Soak in dreamy sunsets with your clan in the Maldives (pictured here): Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Emboodhu Finolhu)



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# C O N T E N T S

## VISTA

**08** Picturesque destinations that'll enthral the clan

## #TRENDING

### **12** The Round-Up

Events and meets for just about everyone... solo or together

### **18** Social Feed

What our patrons say about the Vistara experience

### **22** Smart Travel

Here are some apps that will make travelling with your group easier and a lot more fun

### **23** Bookmark

These books will give you sparks of inspiration and pure joy

### **24** Binge Watch

Super picks from Vistara World, our inflight entertainment service

## SUITCASE

### **32** Conscious

Coaching the next generation to become responsible travellers

### **34** Food Trail

Savour the plates of Indore

## ESCAPE

### **50** Beat

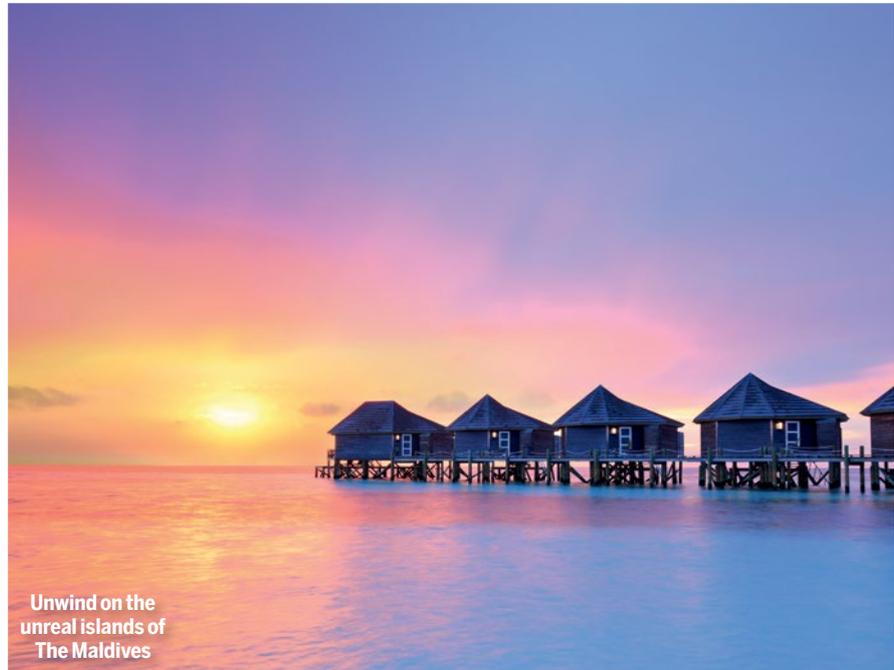
Kanha is an amazing place to rekindle the bonds of friendship

### **54** Soul

Experience the culturally-rich villages around Guwahati

### **58** Canvas

Coming face-to-face with animal clans in their homes



## 36

### Thrills

We list the world's most diverse theme parks and resorts for wholesome family fun



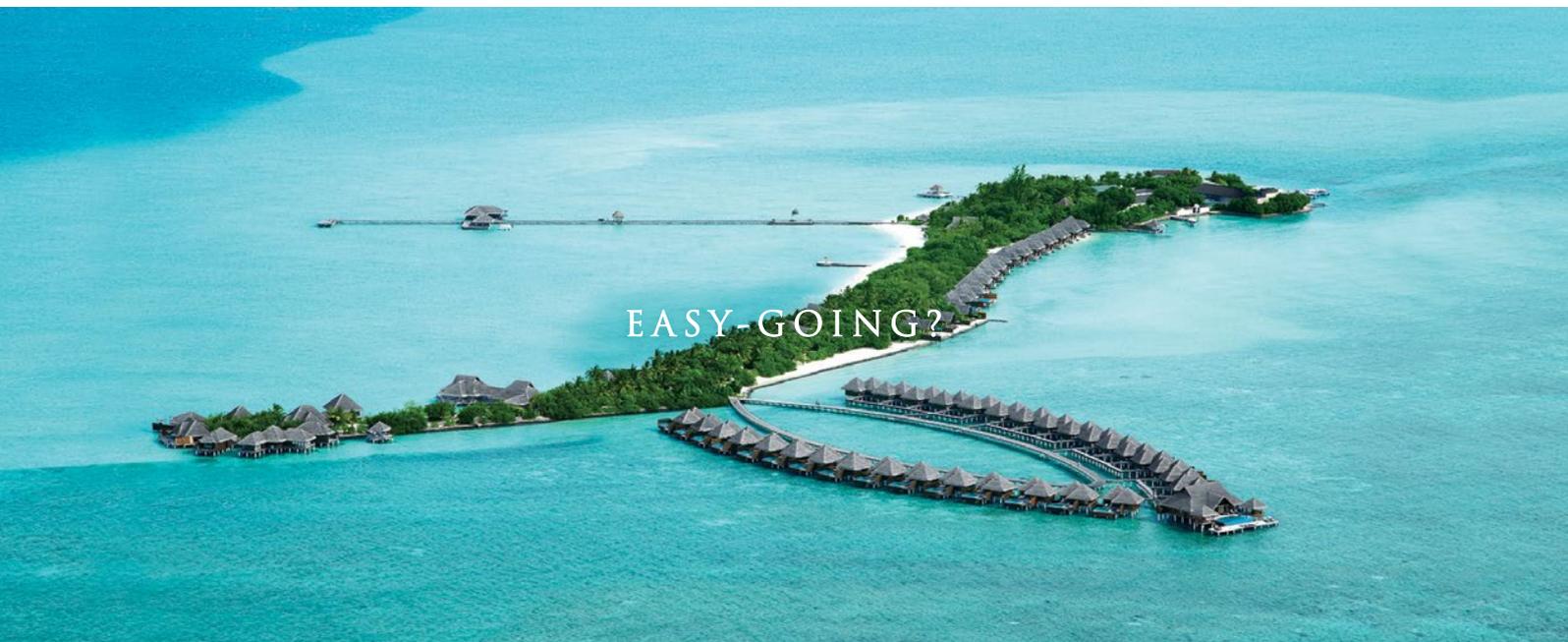
## 66

### The Last Word

Singer-songwriter **Neeti Mohan** gives the lowdown on why travelling with siblings is the best



OUTGOING?



EASY-GOING?

## WHICH MALDIVES GETS YOU GOING?

If you are thirsting for thrills and adventure, stay with us at Taj Coral Reef Resort and Spa. A divers' dream, this sparkling yet sophisticated resort has its own reef and shipwreck to explore.

If calm is what you seek, float into the serene, pristine Taj Exotica Resort and Spa. Anchored in Three Coconut Isle, it is considered by many to be the jewel of Maldives.

  
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MALDIVES

  
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A true renaissance man, Anand is the co-founder of the award-winning Image Foundry Studios and president of the Creative Services Support Group. He's had stints in sports law, PR and design, and writes for the world's best magazines.



## GEETIKA SASAN BHANDARI

A lifestyle writer and editor for more than two decades, Geetika spends most of her time writing for publications and digital media, and working on her brand new parenting blog, 'Let's Raise Good Kids'—that's when she's not travelling.



## MUNEESH TARSEM

A famous photographer and filmmaker, Muneesh studied at the New York Film Academy, and has shot many magazine covers and campaigns. He is also a producer of digital content, which he feels has changed the premise of storytelling.



## CHETAN NARULA

A sports journalist and broadcaster, Chetan has covered more than 240 international matches across the globe, and has authored two books on cricket and Formula One. He enjoys travelling and believes it is a medium to explore cultures.



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# VISTA

PERSPECTIVES ON AWE-INSPIRING LANDSCAPES

## Oman

Between mountains and gravelly desert, Oman offers many breathtaking vistas that symbolise 'oasis'. The wadis, in particular, offer excellent trekking opportunities, as well as a chance to take a dip in the rivers and pools. Jebel Shams and Jabal Akhdar, two prominent peaks, are great for family getaways, with a mix of adventure and relaxation.



*"Oman is a gateway to some of the most exotic landscapes. The grand valleys, bustling souks and the lip-smacking seafood will definitely make it to my memoirs."*

**VARUN BAHL**  
*Acclaimed Designer*



VISTA PICTURE PERFECT

# Gulmarg

One of the most prominent hill-stations in the country and a principal draw of Jammu & Kashmir, Gulmarg isn't just a winter wonderland, it is the pride of the Pir Panjal Range. It offers incredible skiing and sublime views among fir and pine forests. A must-do is a ride in the Gulmarg Gondola, one of the highest ropeways in the world. The views, as you've guessed, will blow every member of your group away.



*"Kashmir has always been on my mind, especially for a vacation with my mother. It is beautiful, the people are so warm and welcoming. Gulmarg, in particular, was a snowy paradise, and skiing there was a great experience. I'd say everyone should definitely visit Kashmir as it's one of the most breathtaking places I have ever seen!"*

**HANSIKA MOTWANI**  
Actor & Entrepreneur



# #TRENDING

YOUR WORLD THIS MONTH



26-27  
MARCH

## ANAHEIM, UNITED STATES WonderCon @Home

The annual convention for all things comics and sci-fi is back, but it's looking a little different this year. Bringing the fun to you wherever you are, the event will be virtual, and comic aficionados from all over the world can join in! The best part? You and your children can dress up in your chosen avatar and inspire creativity. To keep track of the event and sessions, visit [comic-con.org/wca](http://comic-con.org/wca)

### #Networking

Join in for some candid discussions with comic creators and fans, science fiction and fantasy authors, film and television directors, producers, writers and creators at the WonderCon



TILL 4  
APRIL

## SINGAPORE Otah & Friends

Ready for a game of hide-and-seek? This one in Singapore comes with vibrant rooms and hidden clues, all going with the mission of finding the otter before the clock runs out! It's perfect for both friends and families, and you can book your tickets beforehand on [otahandfriends.com](http://otahandfriends.com)



8-10  
APRIL

## LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND Grand National Day

A beloved tradition, The Grand National is a much-anticipated horse racing event that boasts a global audience. Pause for just over eight minutes to witness 40 riders compete to win the grand prize. For details on tickets and the live telecast, visit [thejockeyclub.co.uk](http://thejockeyclub.co.uk)



**GLOBAL**

**World Summit AI Americas**

Is your child interested in the rich world of artificial intelligence? Well, this virtual summit includes some of the biggest names pioneering artificial intelligence and Big Tech, and is the perfect platform for them to learn more. Sign-up to be a part of some path-breaking discussions around data science and business communities. For more details, head over to [americas.worldsummit.ai](https://americas.worldsummit.ai)

**MULTI-LOCATION**

**The Chef & The Dish**

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ONGOING**

With a range of cuisines from around the world, these online classes feature live video in a private or group setting. The chefs, from places as diverse as Peru and Turkey, patiently guide you to gastronomic wonder. You can even gift these classes. Get more information or sign up on [thechefandthedish.com](https://thechefandthedish.com)



**THE NETHERLANDS**

**National Museum Week**

**19-25  
APRIL**

In one week, participating museums across Holland host special sessions and tours making it an enriching experience no matter which part of the region you're in. Some museums even have special collections for children, engaging them and making learning enjoyable. To know more, head straight to [holland.com/global/tourism/activities/events/national-museum-week-1.htm](https://holland.com/global/tourism/activities/events/national-museum-week-1.htm)



**1-21  
MARCH**

**LONDON, ENGLAND**

**WOW Women of the World**

International Women's Day is on 8 March, but this virtual programme has slated invigorating talks and workshops through the month. Featuring speakers like Avni Doshi, Arundhati Roy, Kimberlé Crenshaw and many more, a different sphere is explored every day from songwriting to artificial intelligence, and these pioneering women offer a perspective that can help mould young minds for the better. Check out the full line-up at [thewowfoundation.com/festival/wow-uk-2021](https://thewowfoundation.com/festival/wow-uk-2021)



**INDIA**

**International Yoga Festival**

**7-13  
MARCH**

The festival usually draws thousands of attendees, but this year it's taking a virtual shape. The essence, however, remains the same: Unite people through the power of yoga. Tune in for talks from experienced practitioners, and leave a little more centred. Register for the entire week on [internationalyogafestival.org](https://internationalyogafestival.org)

**IT'S A PLAY DATE**



Add some fun to your day with these five retro board games. Yes, families and friends are all welcome to play

**CHUTES AND LADDERS**

If you have children and they are preschoolers, play this game to build their logic and improve counting skills.

**BATTLESHIP CLASSIC**

Training kids to strategise and be patient, Battleship is actually fun for the whole family. Though you might dive headfirst into nostalgia!

**TSURO**

An ice-breaker for game night, this is a tile-laying game. Players have to place their tiles and build the path to victory.

**JENGA CLASSIC**

Build a tower brick by brick, taking turns to remove blocks from the base until the whole structure topples.

**MONOPOLY ULTIMATE BANKING**

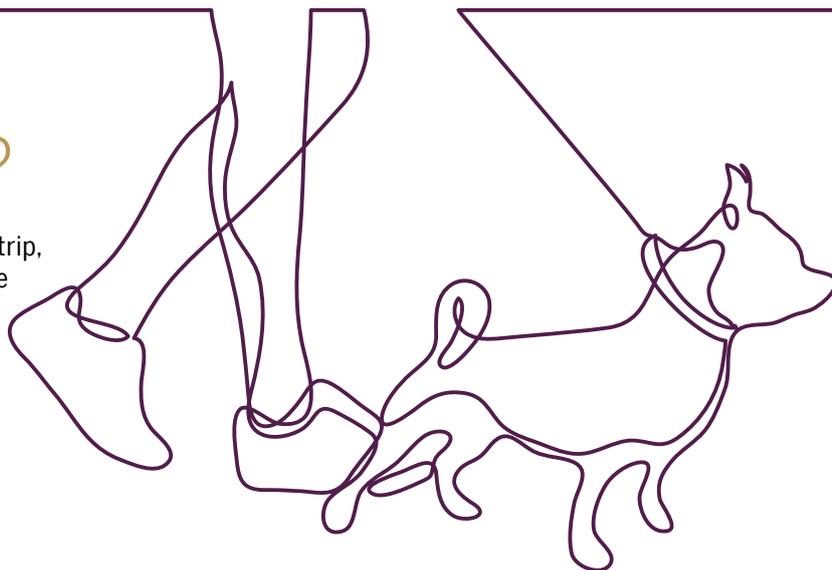
And last, Monopoly—the game of trade and scheming has been a family favourite for generations.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Image courtesy of Oran & Friends; Daniel Knighton/Getty Images; image courtesy of World Summit AI Ltd.; Semen Kazmin/Shutterstock; Maria Nikitrova/Shutterstock; Courtesy of Avni Doshi/Instagram/photo by Sharon Haridas; Serhiy Simonov/Shutterstock; S-F/Shutterstock; Pat Scala/Getty Images

# WHO'S A GOOD BOY?

If your furry friend is joining you on a trip, here are some great tips as well as the essentials you should carry.

by GAYATRI MOODLIAR



TRAVELLING WITH A PET IS ONE OF life's greatest pleasures. They get to stretch their legs, discover new scents and, let's face it, have fun. With all the pros, however, there are a few things you need to be mindful of.

**1.** You know your pet better than anyone: How does she or he react to new people and surroundings? If they tend to shy away, respect their temperament and—as hard as it is—let them stay at home. Find someone you and your pet trust, and get them to pet-sit for you.

**2.** Confirm if the place you're staying at is pet-friendly. Most hotels are accommodating, but it's best to check.

**3.** Schedule frequent stops when exploring a destination by car, so that your dog can stretch her or his legs.

**4.** Try and keep their eating schedule the same as what it was at home. It puts

them at ease, and helps avoid stomach issues. Carry their usual kibble as well.

**5.** Keep your paperwork ready. Some places need to see updated vaccination reports or health certificates, so make sure you've done your due diligence.

All set? Now, here are some handy goods to help ease the journey...

## PET-FRIENDLY GEAR

**Tracker** If your dog likes to wander and if you're camping or exploring, this is essential. It can be clipped onto the collar, and will notify you if your pet strays too far. **Whistle (1)** and **Wagr** are two good options.

**Dinnerware** Giving your pet her meal on time is

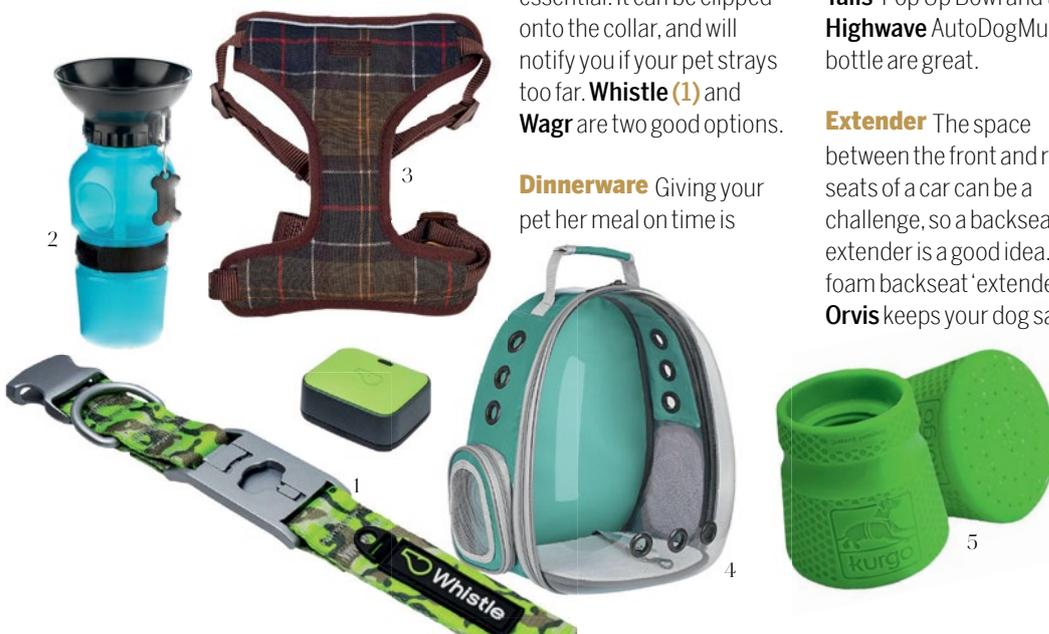
good, and there are a variety of great collapsible bowls that can help. **Heads Up For Tails' Pop Up Bowl** and the **Highway AutoDogMug (2)** bottle are great.

**Extender** The space between the front and rear seats of a car can be a challenge, so a backseat extender is a good idea. The foam backseat 'extender' by **Orvis** keeps your dog safe

and creates extra room. Also consider a harness like this **Tartan number from Barbour (3)**, which buckles into the car's seat belt slot.

**Backpack** Going on a trek? Carry a bag that carries them, just in case. **Lollimeow's Cat Bubble Backpack (4)**, **Coodia's Legs Out Front Carrier**, or **Kurgo's Dog Backpack** are all good.

**Grooming** Pet-friendly wipes are good, but **Kurgo's Mud Dog Travel Shower (5)** converts a bottle into a mini shower and is super cool.





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# IN HER SHOES

Award-winning actor **Mithila Palkar** talks about travelling with family, the power of honest content and her dream of playing an assassin.

by GAYATRI MOODLIAR



**The year 2020 taught us to be grateful for the bonds that we have. What was your biggest learning?**

I think a general lesson was patience. None of us knew when things would open up, but we're learning and trying to work through it. For me, the most precious thing was that I got to spend time with my grandparents. I know that I will never get so much time at a stretch to just stay at home and be with them, to play cards and chat.

**Your performance in *Tribhanga* is being praised. What was it like on set?**

It was fantastic! I have known all of them; I have known *of* all of them. They're phenomenal. I went into this shoot feeling extremely intimidated because I'm a '90s kid, I've grown up watching Kajol. But she doesn't make you feel like that at all. She has the most infectious laugh, and she's very welcoming. I think if I had to sum it up, it was a riot.

**The movie focusses on how relationships in families can take on many forms. How did you get into the mindset of that role?**

It was a challenging role, which is why I was very excited to play her. A lot of unlearning had to be done, but the one common thread that bound us—Masha [Mithila's character in *Tribhanga*] and me—was the fact that we have the privilege to make our



own decisions, however different they may be. I say it's a privilege because not everybody is able to make those choices. Also, it helped me learn that kindness and empathy are two of the most important virtues. You understand the phrase "walk a day in my shoes, and you'll know what my life really is". As actors, we live that quote.

**How do you detach from such characters once you're done shooting?**

For me, when the camera's on, I am on as a character. Once it's off, I'm off. I can't overanalyse and brood, unless there's a special scene and that mindspace is required. But that's not my method. I feel if I'm as spontaneous as I can be, I am more faithful to the character than if I overthink.





**Makes sense. Every country has a different McDonald's menu, too, so you do get a new experience each time.**

I think so! Earlier, I didn't experiment with food, and it's only in the last couple of years I've realised that travel is so much more enriching when you try new food. It's a peek into so many traditions and cultures. And it just suddenly opened up so much more for me. That made me love travelling 100x more. Even within India, I'm always looking forward to going to other states, because the food is so different.

**Your go-to place for food in India?**

Oh, Kerala!

**Do you prefer solo travel, a family vacation or travelling with friends?**

I love travelling with my friends. We haven't taken a family vacation in a while, because my sister is in the US. It's easier to plan it individually and set out. I've been visiting places where I have people. So even though I start solo, I always get people to join me. I've not travelled solo since I love talking so much. But I'm happy to go with someone and make new friends along the way.

**If you did have to plan a solo trip, what's the destination in mind?**

The first place, solo or not, is Europe. I've been to London, but I've not experienced the entirety of Europe for what it is.

**What do you love about taking a trip with loved ones and family?**

Just being able to set out and spend time together, without other engagements. It's become so much harder now. When you're in one place that's not your workplace, you get the right kind of quality time.

**We agree. Now, finally, what's the one role you really want to experiment with?**

I want to play an assassin. I've been wanting to play one for a while. 🌀

backstage. A lot of my learning came from observing the way people work. Theatre teaches you life skills, and no matter how successful you are, I feel these roots keep you grounded. It also taught me that theatre is a raw medium of entertainment; once you're on, it is what it is. Onstage, your quieter moments are much louder; on camera, your quieter moments can be with yourself and the camera will still catch you.

**Speaking of roots, what's your earliest family holiday memory?**

One of our first trips was to London and, yes, to all the touristy places. I barely remember this trip because I was probably four or five. My dad made sure that every summer, we travelled to some interesting place. He loves to go to new places, and that has trickled down to the next generation; both my sister and I love to travel.

**So, your best family vacation was...?**

I think that would still be it. Because it's the first vacation that I remember! The funniest thing happened during the trip: My sister and I have a seven-year age gap, and she loves to read up and study the place. I was a toddler and I couldn't have cared less about history then. At lunchtime, my dad would ask us where we wanted to eat. To my sister's disapproval, my answer would always be McDonald's. She would tell me, "Can't we explore food?" I would say no because, McDonald's Happy Meals!



**You're being recognised for your OTT work, like the Filmfare Award you recently won for *Little Things*.**

More than a personal win—even more than as an actor—I feel like the real win was the fact that a platform like Filmfare acknowledged our presence and validated the work we do. I feel, above all, content won. Now, it's all about the stories we tell, it is not about the story of a specific hero or heroine, but instead, about the people.

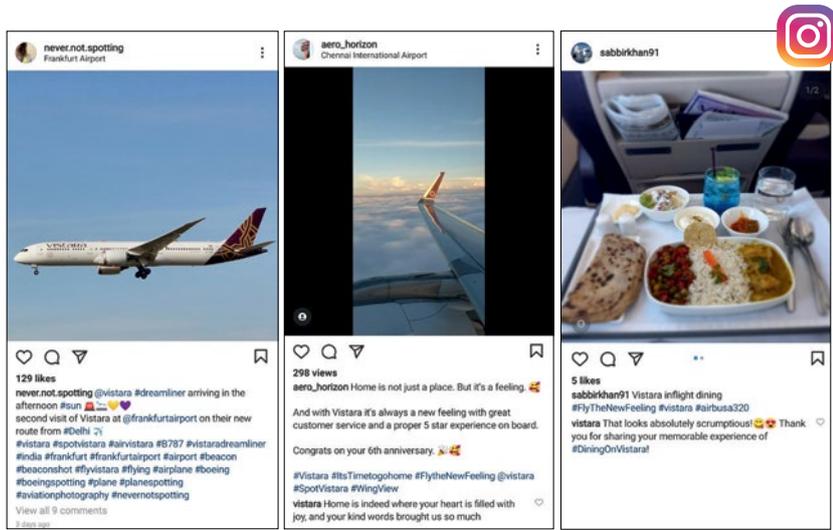
**You've been dabbling in theatre since childhood. How did it help your craft?**

It helped me get the epiphany that stage is where I get my happiness. I started

#TRENDING SOCIAL FEED

# WHAT'S UP ON SOCIAL?

Tune into all the Vistara chatter on social media.



@never.not.spotting

@aero\_horizon

@sabbirkhan91



## TWEET ON POINT



@Aey\_Sid



@Lovely Asha



@Ovilia Fernandes



@Airport\_FRA



@prathampy

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### GET SOCIAL WITH US

Tag us on social media, add #vistara and you could stand a chance to be featured in the Vistara inflight magazine



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#TRENDING VOGUE

# SPRING STEPS

Bold colours, whimsical prints and a whole lot of joy—let the season come through in your wardrobe.



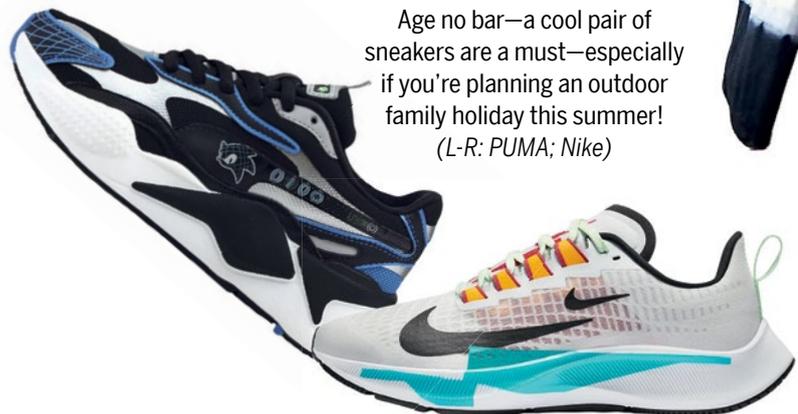
## THE MORE THE MERRIER

Colour blocking is an easy way to score points in the currently trending department. (L-R: LOTA; Bottega Veneta)



## JUST FOR KICKS

Age no bar—a cool pair of sneakers are a must—especially if you're planning an outdoor family holiday this summer! (L-R: PUMA; Nike)



## TWINNING

If you and your friends are planning a girls' trip after a while, make it a little more fun with a matching wardrobe. (L-R: Free People; Label Ritu Kumar)



## PLAY THE DAY AWAY

Fashion is a way to experiment and it's never too early to start. Encouraging your children to choose their own clothes is a great way to boost their creativity. (Mini Boden)





**ON MUTE**

Sure, pink in the spring isn't anything new, but the faded hue makes it stand out.  
(L-R: Isabel Marant; HUEMN)



**HANG LOOSE**

This season, keep your jeans on the wider side and embrace the freedom it offers.  
(L-R: Bershka; Zara Kids; Christopher Kane)



**EARN YOUR STRIPES**

Consider them earned already and opt for stripes in any and every direction! It's an easy way to give the illusion of height or width, and it makes any look fun.  
(From top: Missoni; LOTA; Paul Smith)



**SEASTHE DAY**

A beach vacation in the works? We're fans of swimsuits and trunks that offer both functionality and style.  
(L-R: Marks & Spencer; Peony Swimwear; Monday Swimwear)



# HUDDLE UP

Organising a trip with your family or friends? Let these apps do the grunt work.

## STAGE I: PLAN IT OUT

### Doodle

When are you hitting the road? Your group needs to sync calendars. Doodle allows you to see everyone's availability, mark out your own free dates, and makes the process collaborative via a handy voting system that can be used to confirm tentative dates.

*For iOS and Android*

### Wanderlog

When travelling in a group, you have to accommodate a variety of sensibilities, which means a lot of advance planning. This app lets the group suggest places to add to your itinerary, and offers expert guidance. It works with Google Maps too, laying out routes and stops.

*For iOS and Android*

## STAGE II: HIT THE ROAD

### Triplt

Handling reservations, tickets, etc. by oneself is hard, so it's best to share the burden. With this app, simply forward all confirmation emails from vendors to a Triplt ID, and get your very own shareable master itinerary soon after. It gets updated as you firm up your plans.

*For iOS and Android*

### Zenly

It's vital to stay aware of where every member of the group is, so you can find each other should anyone stray too far. This app makes it possible to share your location with a private group, gamifies it with fun emoticons and lets you know if someone's battery is running low.

*For iOS and Android*

### Pinsteps

In the spirit of group travel, why not make your trip a collaborative one? Pinsteps lets you explore the routes and places visited by other travellers at the destination you're visiting, taking away the hassle of research. Should you discover something new, share your route, too.

*For iOS and Android*

## STAGE III: EASE POST-VACATION BLUES

### Dropbox

Ready to start reliving the memories of that trip? Steer clear of group chats and opt for a picture sharing app with cloud storage like Dropbox. Each traveller can upload the photos they've taken to a shared folder, allowing everyone access in a clean, seamless manner.

*For iOS and Android*

### Tricount

The last thing you want to do at the end of a holiday is spend hours figuring out who owes whom how much money. Instead, check out this app that lets anyone in the group add expenses throughout the holiday, and calculates the final tab for everyone at the end of it.

*For iOS and Android*



# THE HAPPINESS PARADOX

Some of life's best-kept secrets can be explored in these books.

by AMEESHA RAIZADA

## KAIZEN

*by Sarah Harvey*

This book not only captivates readers with its wisdom, but also with colourful illustrations adorning each chapter. Focussing on positive change and patience, this is the perfect read for those looking to improve their problem-solving abilities and, at the same time, get motivated. As it helps map out phased goals and improve aspects of life, the Japanese philosophy of *Kaizen* is popular among sportspeople and entrepreneurs.



## LAGOM

*by Linnea Dunne*

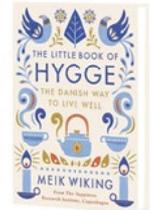
There's no doubt that Scandinavians are ahead of the world when it comes to employing ancient life philosophies in their day-to-day lives. The title of this book, *Lagom*, loosely translates to 'not too little, not too much, just right'. It emphasises the difference between needs, wants and desires. A liberating concept, *Lagom* is concerned with minimal living, nurturing a sense of common good and improving work-life balance.



## THE LITTLE BOOK OF HYGGE

*by Meik Wiking*

There's a reason why Denmark is renowned across the world for propagating and cultivating happiness, and it has everything to do with *Hygge*. Gradually inviting warmth and comfort into your life, *Hygge* is more of a feeling than a philosophy. Reading this book will fill you with contentment and a sense of gratitude. It also features alluring photographs, recipes and ideas for a new way of life.



## EVERYDAY UBUNTU

*by Nompumelelo Mungi Ngomane*

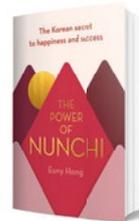
An ancient African philosophy, *Ubuntu* is all about living well, together. Keeping human bonds above everything else, it reaffirms the belief: I am only because you are. By overcoming societal divisions, we can become stronger as a community and pave the way for a better world. The 14 beautifully-illustrated lessons will stay with you well beyond the last page.



## THE POWER OF NUNCHI

*by Euny Hong*

Translating to eye measure, or the power of the eye, *Nunchi* is all about gauging other people's thoughts and feelings to build stronger bonds. Born about 5,000 years ago, the Koreans have always used this secret to steer clear of slings and arrows. Learning to read a room will not only help us escape difficult situations, but also make us more understanding and sensitive towards other people.



## SISU

*by Joanna Nylund*

Simply meaning 'go', *Sisu* is often related to stoic determination, resilience and bravery in dealing with adversity. Read this book if you want to find your focus and enhance your conflict-resolution ability. With lessons for young parents, *Sisu* will help you raise children who are kind to others, resilient to failures and stronger in the face of challenges. The key to this Finnish philosophy lies in integrity and humility.



## MUSIC FOR THE CLAN

A selection of acts that will make for an immersive family and/or friend vacation playlist.



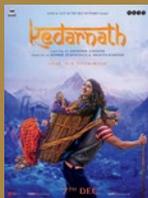
### B.B. KING

In *His Best – The Electric B.B. King*, you will be greeted with sway-worthy tunes and powerful vocals, fit for a late-night chat session.



### BEN HOWARD

*Every Kingdom – Ben Howard* is like taking a walk through magical surroundings with your family.



### KEDARNATH

Composer Amit Trivedi produced a record for *Kedarnath* that works to tell the love story on its own, while offering a meditative quality.



© 2021 20th Century Studios

## AN ENDURING LEGACY

Families can come together in different ways—*Mrs. Doubtfire* is a pioneering movie that showed how.

WHILE A SINGULAR COMEDIC performance by the late Robin Williams is what most people gravitate to in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, the film actually goes far beyond that—though his female housekeeper persona will forever be etched in our minds. The film navigates the tricky but relatable terrain of a family tackling a divorce, and issues such as custody arrangements make more than one appearance,

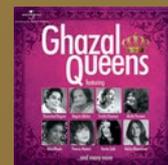
prompting our lead to take on his character in order to remain close to his children.

But, the movie does so in a way that feels like a warm embrace for all age groups who watch it, and perhaps going through something similar. It shows that families can thrive in many different forms, but at the end of the day, they are all supported by bonds one must work to strengthen. It's a classic.



### STEVEN WILSON

Do you need an album that you can't help but move to with your friends? Well, we're sure *To the Bone* will have you rocking in your seat.

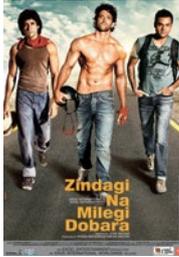


### GHAZAL QUEENS

Experts at crafting stories, tune into the likes of Shamshad Begum, Penaz Masani and Begum Akhtar for a soulful evening with the grandparents.

## WE ARE FAMILY!

Some things are written in stone, like the way your family—chosen and otherwise—will always show up.



**ZINDAGI NA MILEGI DOBARA**  
Friends are your chosen family, and nothing exemplifies that like this movie. It will take you on the road trip of a lifetime and inspire you to live in the present.



© 2021 20th Century Studios

**THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI**  
Mildred Hayes goes to war against her local police force, believing they're inept to solve her daughter's murder.



© 2021 WBCE

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY**  
While the movie taught us to stretch our imagination—and that a love for chocolate isn't a bad thing—nurturing lifelong bonds remains its crux.

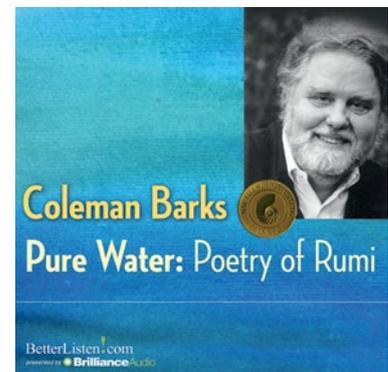
## HEAR THE PAGES RUSTLE

Plug your earphones in and tune the world out with the help of the immersive *Pure Water: Poetry of Rumi*.

THERE'S A REASON YOU FIND RUMI'S words, penned in the 13th century, percolating through the channels of social media, appearing on accounts as a pick-me-up. His strings of thoughts teach us the power and beauty of poetry—how to visualise our feelings

and seek solace in the fact that we are not alone in these fears and doubts.

This audiobook places his guidance against a mellow orchestral background, upping the ante of the ambience and allowing you to take a moment to dream.



### HAIM

This sister trio merges R&B, pop and rock to create something you've never heard before, and something your cool, older siblings can appreciate as well.



### PANDIT HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA

Music has the power to calm, soothe and reduce feelings of anxiety—it's backed by research, and *In A Mellow Mood* proves it. Tune in at dusk for a relaxed holiday.



### REX ORANGE COUNTY

Pay attention to the lyrics in *Pony*, as this young singer-songwriter captures moments, feelings and stories of growing up rather perfectly.

You can also stream these movies, series and songs onboard on Vistara World using your personal devices!

RISE

# FLYING HIGHER

How Vistara has augmented its cargo operations over the last few months and played its part in fighting the pandemic.

## Giving wings to our cargo operations

Amid COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions in 2020, there was a faint silver lining that Vistara was nimble to identify and act upon—our cargo operations. With a suspension of air travel in India for two months, followed by muted demand for passenger travel, the Vistara team was quick to pivot and focus on the demands of the new normal.

## Mission Lifeline Udan

Back in April 2020, Vistara rapidly stepped up its cargo operations in support of the Government of India's 'Mission Lifeline Udan' initiative. Vistara deployed its newly inducted Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft to carry relief material, medical supplies and essential commercial goods to and from various parts of India. This was not an easy task given that we were in the middle of a nationwide lockdown. From seeking necessary permissions from authorities to facilitating the cargo consignments on time despite local travel restrictions and safety concerns, the team defied all odds to carry approximately 220 tonnes of cargo, of which 25 tonnes was free of cost, comprising relief material and medical equipment.

## Cargo on seats

Vistara conventionally uses the belly space in its passenger aircraft to



30,000 tonnes of cargo across India and beyond to London, Dhaka, etc.

## Transportation of COVID-19 vaccine

As the country embarked on the crucial exercise of distributing vaccines, Vistara was prepared to support the government in whatever way it could. Mr. Vinod Kannan, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara, states, "The COVID-19 vaccine distribution in India is going to be a one-of-its-kind exercise, and we're committed to play our part in it. We have been actively supporting the authorities to the best of our abilities in their efforts to curb the pandemic and will continue to do so." So far, Vistara has distributed approximately 4,25,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Given the nature of the commodity, Vistara also ensures an expedited delivery after the arrival of the cargo.

Cargo operations have helped in bringing in revenue at a time when passenger air travel was restricted. There were a lot of learnings with respect to scope and demand for cargo, which will hold Vistara in good stead for the months ahead, as it ramps up its cargo operations. ⚙️

carry cargo. However, in July 2020, it managed to secure the necessary permissions to carry cargo on seats onboard its Airbus A320neo aircraft. Between July and August 2020, it carried approximately 73 tonnes of cargo, thereby utilising its spare aircraft and bolstering revenue.

## From essentials to electronic goods

Over the last few months, the nature of cargo goods has diversified to include everything from dry fruits and spices to garments, and from automobile parts to valuables. For valuables, delivering the goods on time with minimal risk of loss and theft is of paramount importance. From April 2020 till date, 64,000+ cargo flights have taken to air carrying about

# SUITCASE

YOUR GO-TO GUIDE FOR OFFBEAT ITINERARIES

## Lord's Cricket Stadium, England

Home to the game itself, Lord's in London has hosted historic cricket matches for two centuries. The pleasant St John's Wood surroundings are an added plus, and on the morning of the summer's first test match, you can feel the energy through the stadium.

## WITNESS THE GRANDEUR



## Galle International Stadium, Sri Lanka

The ground was built in 1876 as a racecourse. Today, it is favoured by spin-bowlers and the pitch has witnessed several iconic moments over the years, such as Shane Watson's 500th test wicket. The Indian Ocean flanks this stadium on two sides.

## Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia

Also known simply as 'The G,' this is one of the largest cricket grounds in the world. A cultural icon with 160 years of cricket, the G has played host to countless high-profile events, including the 1956 Olympics and concerts by The Rolling Stones and Madonna.

## OF THE GAME AT THESE ICONIC PITCHES

## Newlands Cricket Ground, South Africa

This Cape Town stadium has gained a reputation for being one of the most beautiful places to watch cricket. The action is accompanied by the distinctive sight of the Devil's Peak and Table Mountains, meaning it's a treat for the eyes in all directions.

## THE THEME PARK ROLLER-COASTER FACE-OFF



*Formula Rossa, Ferrari World, YAS Island, Abu Dhabi*



*Battlestar Galactica, Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore*

### IS GETTING THERE EASY?

\*Vistara flies direct from Delhi to Dubai

\*\*Vistara flies direct from Delhi to Singapore

### WHY IS IT UNIQUE?

This is the world's fastest roller-coaster

The world's tallest duelling roller-coasters

### IS IT REALLY, REALLY SCARY?

It gives you the rush of 4.8Gs, but it's fun

The dramatic drop and lift is very thrilling

### IF NOT THIS, THEN...?

The Fiorano GT Challenge Race

The Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure

### HOW OFTEN CAN I RIDE?

Once, or more if you have the nerves

Once each, on the Human and Cylon circuits

\*Vistara is flying to Dubai as part of the travel bubble agreement between India and the UAE. Refer to [www.airvistara.com](http://www.airvistara.com) to fully understand all guidelines before making your bookings.

\*\*Currently, Vistara does not fly to Singapore since scheduled international operations still stand suspended.

# FEVER PITCH

The Indian Premier League returns home for its 14th season, and here's a primer of where and whom to watch out for.

by CHETAN NARULA

AFTER A SHORT STINT IN FOREIGN land, the Indian Premier League will be back home on Indian soil in 2021. The BCCI has confirmed their plans to go ahead with the tournament after successfully hosting domestic and international cricket (against England), a test run for the marquee T20 event.

The 2021 IPL auctions, held in February, have paved the way for the league to begin in the second week of April—a fortnight's gap from team India's last international assignment. The finals are expected to be played in late May or early June. With fans returning to stadiums for India versus England, there is a real possibility of the IPL being opened up for spectators as well.

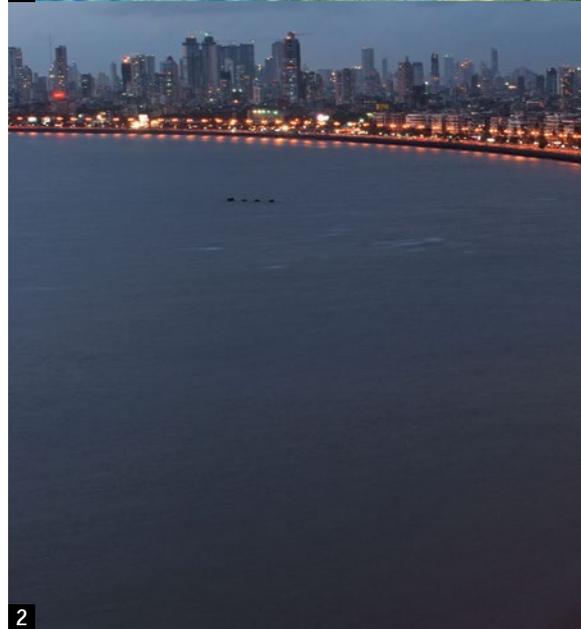
The BCCI's plan to host the 60-game tournament is two-fold. If COVID cases continue to dwindle, along with the frantic vaccination drive, the IPL will return to its eight host cities as usual. The other plan is to create a bio-bubble comparable to the one in UAE. In 2020, the tournament was played across

Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, with the teams travelling via road, thus cutting down the need for air-travel and risk to the players and other personnel involved.

For this purpose, four venues in Mumbai—the Wankhede, the Brabourne Stadium, the DY Patil Stadium, and the Reliance Cricket Stadium—along with the MCA Stadium in Pune, have been earmarked. The newly-built world-class stadium at Ahmedabad will play host to the IPL Finals' week.

While hosting IPL in this part of India will certainly bring home advantage to five-time champions, Mumbai Indians, fans flocking back to the grounds is sure to boost the morale of all cricketers participating. From Virat Kohli to David Warner, Jasprit Bumrah to Pat Cummins, MS Dhoni to Ben Stokes, all of them enjoy favour and fervour with Indian cricket fans. There won't be any particular favourites, as has certainly turned out to be the case time and again when it comes to the IPL.

The season will lay down an



THIS SPREAD

1. Close to Wankhede Stadium, the Gateway of India stands tall and proud against the iconic Taj Mahal hotel;
2. Marine Drive—lined with eateries—needs no introduction, because the 'Queen's Necklace' twinkles as brightly as ever;
3. The Wankhede, home to some of India's most memorable triumphs, is nestled between buildings;
4. No visit to Mumbai is complete without a stop at Horniman Circle, with its expansive garden and historical buildings, including the Elphinstone Building



# WATCH OUT FOR THEM

Players who are  
game changers



**Suresh Raina**

With more than 4,500 runs for Chennai Super Kings since 2008, he is arguably the most influential batsman in IPL history. He missed the 2020 season but will once again feature for the yellow brigade as CSK look to regain their winning ways.



**Glenn Maxwell**

The Big Show is a perennial T20 superstar. The year 2020 was a low-performing season for him, but his status remains unmatched. Australia, too, would want him to have a good run in the IPL, as he is crucial to their T20 World Cup plans later this year.



**Devdutt Padikkal**

One of last season's breakout stars, and a key reason why Royal Challengers Bangalore progressed to the knockouts. Through his freestyle hitting, he has already gained fandom. Nobody wants him to be a one-hit wonder, and there's hope for an encore.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Smarita/Shutterstock; Parikh Mahendra V/Shutterstock; Danny Ye/Shutterstock; courtesy of Royal Challengers Bangalore; Joe Allison/Getty Images; Stu Forster/Getty Images; Mishore/Shutterstock

## SUITCASE STRIKE



**THIS PAGE**  
Ahmedabad's Motera Stadium is the largest cricket stadium in the world, and quite a sight with its livery

important marker for a few stars. Will Dhoni bounce back from the humbling last season and take Chennai Super Kings to the summit once again? Is this likely to be his swansong ambition? Will Kohli be able to finally lift the IPL trophy

and break his duck with Royal Challengers Bangalore? Or, will Rohit Sharma make it six trophies for the Mumbai Indians, who will be gunning for a hat-trick of triumphs?

A majority of the games will be played at the Wankhede Stadium.

Among the venues selected, it is best placed for visiting fans in terms of connectivity and historical value. India won the 2011 ODI World Cup on this ground after a gap of 28 years. They also boast of one of the best fan groups in India, the North Stand Gang. You can find them hollering at—you guessed it—the North stand of the ground.

Of course, the Marine Drive is just a stone's throw away. If you ever watch a game at this majestic stadium, make it a point to take a stroll by the Arabian Sea and soak in the warmth of the city. 🌞



### Ishan Kishan

Mumbai Indians are the IPL's Galacticos. They have an array of stars, but this keeper-batsman held his own. But for the pandemic, it would have been a breakthrough year for him in international cricket. Six months later, he now gets a second chance.



### Shubman Gill

New kid on the block, but has already attained star status through his performances in Australia, and been heralded as the future of Indian cricket. A breakout IPL season for Kolkata Knight Riders will see Gill cement his spot across all formats for the Men in Blue.



### Shakib al Hasan

The Bangladesh superstar is an all-rounder and a consistent performer for his country. Shakib was ranked No. 1 among the all-rounders by the ICC, thanks to his performance. A top pick, his all-round skills are vital in the T20 arena.



### Arjun Tendulkar

That surname casts a long shadow, but young Arjun has forayed into this sport on merit. The bowling all-rounder has already played his first senior matches for Mumbai, and his journey will be keenly watched by Indian cricket aficionados.

# INDIAN STAR TORTOISE

Slow-moving and benign, the Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans* gets its name from its star-like patterns and high domed shell. It is found in forests, shrublands and grasslands of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Indian Star Tortoise is a herbivore, and when found in abundance, they act as dispersal agents for various plants via consumption of seeds and fruit, thus playing a vital role in the ecosystem.

#DYK like all tortoise species, the Indian Star Tortoise also has a long life span ranging from 35- 80 years in the wild. The female of the species is larger in size than the males.

The Indian Star Tortoise is protected under Schedule IV of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 that prohibits its collection, trade and other forms of exploitation. Any violation of the Act can lead to imprisonment, a fine or both. Its international trade is also restricted under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

## STARS OF ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE



The Indian Star Tortoise is reported to be the most trafficked tortoise species in the world owing to its attractive shell pattern and ease of handling. Demand for these illegal pets, both in India and across the borders, is one of the major drivers of poaching, smuggling and illegal trade of Indian Star Tortoises.

TRAFFIC's study for the period 2009-2019 had found at least 1,11,310 tortoises and freshwater turtles in the illegal wildlife trade in India, of which Indian Star Tortoises accounted for 49% of the total animals seized. Live tortoises are poached from the forest and smuggled to illegal pet trade markets both in India as well as in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Western Countries, North America and the Far East.

The combined effect of habitat loss, consumption as food and demand in exotic pet trade makes the future of Indian Star Tortoises unclear in the wild.

## YOU CAN HELP!

**DO NOT BUY OR KEEP INDIAN STAR TORTOISES AS PETS;**  
**SUPPORT** initiatives that help protect wildlife. **CONTRIBUTE!** Scan the QR code to know more.



# In the Know

Inspire your kids to nurture and appreciate the world around them.

by GEETIKA SASAN BHANDARI



**WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, 2020** has left us some invaluable lessons, and one of them is this: The planet is in peril and if we don't alter our approach to include awareness and compassion, we won't be able to enjoy it for much longer. Not only do we need to change ourselves, we also need to inculcate this consciousness in the next generation of global travellers—our children. Here's how.

## **1. ENVIRONMENT**

Most children are well aware of climate change but may not know what role they can play in helping reverse the damage.

Start by explaining how their day-to-day choices affect the environment, the importance of the three Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), what causes air pollution, and so on. You may choose public transport over a private vehicle at some destination or encourage walking. It's a great way to discover a new place and takes care of the day's exercise as well! And most importantly, they must respect the place by not littering.

## **2. PEOPLE/CUSTOMS/CULTURES**

All over the world, people look different, dress different, and follow varied customs and traditions. It's imperative that you

## **THIS SPREAD**

**1.** An eco-conscious choice, cycling together is a great way to discover a new place; **2.** As much as possible, shop from local retailers to help the community thrive; **3.** Teach your children that while customs may differ, human connections are priceless



1

chat with your kids about how they must respect these differences. Tell them a little about the place you're planning to visit and give them visual references. Explain what is acceptable and what isn't. So no staring, no giggling if a name sounds funny, no pointing, and definitely no negative references, especially in public. However, this shouldn't stop them from asking you something if they have doubts. Children are curious beings and beg to be intellectually satiated. Also encourage them to wish people, remember their manners, be kind, and talk to people to understand what makes us all unique.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Zia Saleel/Getty Images; Elena Ermakova/Shutterstock; Chris Minihane/Getty Images



2

### 3. SUSTAINABILITY

At hotels, pay heed to the instructions about conserving water. Your kids should know that each time they mindlessly throw a towel for a wash, it consumes a highly precious resource. While researching properties, make kids part of the process and let them read what the hotel is doing to protect the ecology around it. At restaurants, remember to teach your children to take only as much as they can eat, while explaining how wasting food impacts the community.

### 4. SUPPORT LOCAL

Be it shopping or food, try out restaurants run by locals. If kids protest, tell them they can get mass-produced fast food anywhere but they won't get a chance to try this cuisine again. Shop local brands so children understand the dependency between tourism and the economy and why it's important to support local enterprises. They can also support causes: For example, if there's a beach clean-up nearby, sign them up. 🌱



3



# INDORE IN 8 Dishes

When you travel to the heart of India, treat your tastebuds to Indori flavours.

by AAKRITI JASWANT

A STREET FOOD LOVER'S PARADISE, Indore's culinary scene is deeply influenced by the Malwa culture. This ancient town and now a bustling large city in Madhya Pradesh never fails to impress lovers of art, food and history. It offers a unique blend of preparations for snack-time dishes, and something is bound to delight your palate. Head to Sarafa Bazaar to satisfy your late-night cravings, or organise a hangout at Chappan Dukan, where you'll be overwhelmed with choices. Read on to discover some of the most famous dishes this vibrant city has to offer, and where you can try them.

## POHA-JALEBI

You cannot imagine Indore without this dish. This popular street food is the go-to breakfast for locals. The genius combination of sugar-coated *jalebis* with savory *poha* is like a burst of flavours in your mouth!

### BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT

**Prashant Restaurant** 5/1 M.G. Road

## ALOO PATTIES

Many north Indian cities serve *aloo* patties as a snack, but Indore's *khopra* patties come with a dash of coconut and dry fruits added to the potato mixture, and served with tamarind and green chutney. Sweet and spicy!





**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT**

**Vijay Chaat House** 75/5, 56 Dukan Street, Bada Sarafa Bazaar,

**DAHI BADA**

These melt-in-the-mouth lentil fritters are dunked in creamy yoghurt, and then topped with a special spice mix. The best part is the way Joshiji prepares this dish—the *dahi badas*, quite literally, fly.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Joshi Dahi Bada House** 24, Bada Sarafa, Sarafa Bazar

**BHUTTE KA KEES**

In this dish, corn is grated and then a spicy mixture of ginger, green chillies and cumin seeds is added to it, along with some milk. The creamy, paste-like consistency is the hallmark of this delicious snack.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Jain Garadu** Sarafa Chaupati, Bada Sarafa Bazaar

**BANJO**

In reality, this is a clever idea to ‘Indianise’ the American hot dog. A *banjo* is basically a round sandwich with distinctly Indian flavours, a spicy potato patty and green chutney.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Johnny Hot Dog** Shop 49-51, Arcade Silver 56/1, New Palasia

**GARADU**

Easy to make, this snack is made by cutting *garadu* (yam) into bite-sized chunks and then deep-frying them. The pieces are topped off with *jiralu*, which is a special masala mix, salt, lemon and coriander.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Jain Garadu** Sarafa Chaupati, Bada Sarafa Bazaar

**DAL BAFLA**

Madhya Pradesh serves its own version of Rajasthan’s *dal bati churma*. The difference is that the *bafla*, or the baked dough ball, is deliciously soft and is served with the hearty *malwa* or *panchmel dal*. Do give this unique delicacy a try when you visit Madhya Pradesh; you won’t regret it.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Apna Sweets** Wing 1A, Silicon City, Tulsi Parisar Phase-1, Silver Shelter



**GHAMANDI LASSI**

*Ghamandi* translates to egotistical and, therefore, this curd-based drink’s name is amusing and curious. Creamy and extremely refreshing, you can chug down this *lassi* to beat the summer heat.

**BEST PLACE TO TRY IT AT**

**Ghamandi Lassi** 47,48,49 Sarwate Bus Stand 🌀



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Saiko37/Shutterstock; vm2002/Shutterstock; Brent Hojaeder/Shutterstock; image bug/Shutterstock; StockImageFactory.com/Shutterstock; Puneet92/andam/Shutterstock

# The Big Fat Family Holiday

Handpicked for your next family vacation, these resorts double the fun with amusement parks.

by AMEESHA RAIZADA

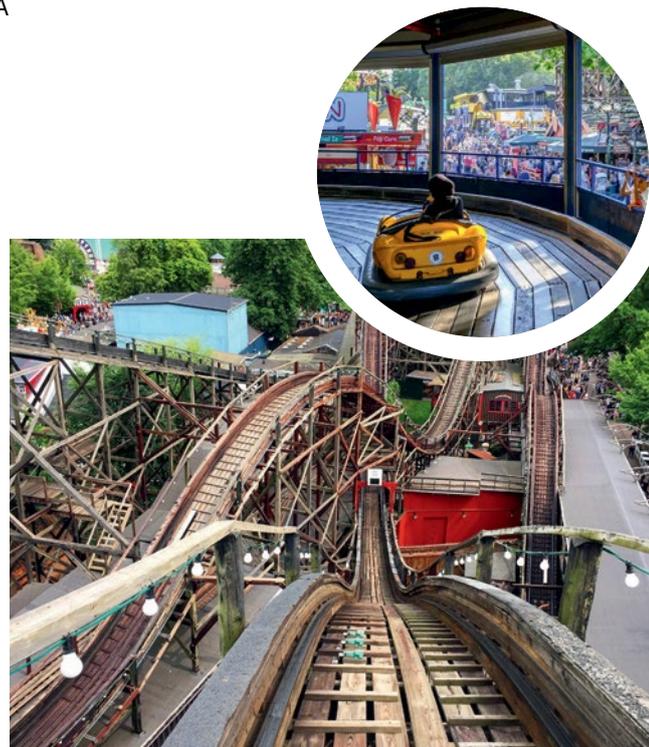


## COCONUT BAY BEACH RESORT & SPA

*St. Lucia*

Located on a brilliant beach—with crystal clear waters, pristine sand and palm trees swaying lazily—this resort in the Caribbean Sea is perfect for a family getaway. The resort is divided into two parts: ‘Splash’ for families and ‘Harmony’ for adults. So, you can choose a spa session, or hit the waterslides and splash around with your kids. A short distance away, the Gros Piton and Petit Piton mountains offer some climbing and rewarding views, or you can snorkel at Pigeon Island. Don’t forget to visit the La Soufrière sulphur springs, which is also the world’s only drive-in volcano.

*cbayresort.com*



## DYREHAVSBAKKEN

*Klampenborg, Denmark*

Surrounded by lush woodlands on all sides, Bakken or ‘The Hill’, is the world’s oldest amusement park. An ideal summertime escape, you’ll be overwhelmed by the sheer number of rides here, which includes an 82-year-old wooden roller-coaster. The shooting stalls and gaming arcades add to the fun, making it apt for all ages. Skipping happily through aisles lined with colourful wooden structures, Danish kitchens, ice-cream stalls and much more, you and your loved ones can shop and eat to your heart’s content. Don’t forget to meet Pjerrot—Bakken’s white-faced clown mascot.

*bakken.dk*



## HOTEL XCARET MEXICO

### *Playa del Carmen, Mexico*

This impressive property will appeal to families, couples and solo travellers alike. You get free access to some great amusement and adventure parks, including the Xcaret eco-park. Here, you can swim in underground rivers or venture into the jungle and observe local fauna up close. This could be a great learning experience for children to understand the importance of conservation. Take the teaching a step



further by touring ancient Mayan sites nearby, which are like a journey into the past. In the evening, head to the Gran Tlachco to see the Xcaret México Espectacular—a musical tribute to Mexican culture. [xcaret.com](http://xcaret.com)

## RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

### *Sentosa Gateway, Singapore*

An expansive resort for the entire family, this has everything from an aquatic wonderland to Universal Studios' movie-themed zones. The S.E.A. Aquarium is home to over 1,00,000 marine animals, including leopard sharks, manta rays and giant Pacific octopuses. At the Marine Life Park, you can spend the afternoon

on a boat ride, snorkel or navigate an aquatic maze, all the while creating unforgettable memories. But you must mark a day on your itinerary for a silver-screen adventure, because you'll be thrilled to meet beloved comic characters like the Minions, Shrek and Elmo. Fancy a bit of adrenaline pumping? Try the iconic Battlestar Galactica roller-coaster. [rwsentosa.com](http://rwsentosa.com)



## DELLA ADVENTURE PARK

### *Lonavala, Maharashtra, India*

One of the biggest extreme adventure parks in India, Della is the go-to spot for families looking for an exciting weekend getaway. With over 50 sports and rides to choose from—flying fox, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) rides, rocket ejectors, sky cycling, paintball, swoop swing, and many more—you have plenty of options to get that rush. Book one of the Presidential Suites for a luxe twist, but if your group is large, choose the Enclave Villa. The five restaurants on site, in settings that range from casual to spectacular, offer good culinary experiences. [dellaadventure.com](http://dellaadventure.com)





## YAS ISLAND

Abu Dhabi, UAE

When travelling with family, it's important to weigh in on everyone's preferences. You may be looking for a laidback vacation, while the younger lot wants adventure. But, worry not, YAS Island has it all. You can indulge in luxury at the W Abu Dhabi, or book a suite at The Viceroy, a stunning property that overlooks

the Arabian Gulf. Care for some goosebumps? Take a seat on Formula Rossa, the fastest roller-coaster on the planet at Ferrari World. If that's not enough, head to CLYMB, which offers indoor skydiving and climbing. The good thing about this complex is its combination of rides, performances and indulgent luxury—there's always something to do. [yasisland.ae](http://yasisland.ae)



## DISNEY'S ART OF ANIMATION RESORT

Orlando, Florida, USA

Are your children Disney lovers? This resort will be their dream come true with its storybook landscapes, story-themed family suites and character experiences. The best part? Your pooch is also welcome at this resort! You can take the gondola and ascend to the Epcot and Hollywood Studios, while enjoying a bird's-eye view of the city. During the day, spend a couple of hours wading through the massive resort pool, or head to the water park's slides and rides. For dining, make your way to the Landscape of Flavors and try delectable American favourites. A must-try? Sign up for the Starlight Safari and witness the wilderness come to life, rumbling through an exotic landscape. [disneyworld.disney.go.com](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com) 🌟

# ESCAPE

CHRONICLES OF IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

## THE UNDERWATER WONDERS

These are the best snorkelling and diving sites in The Maldives.



### Bathala Island, Ari Atoll

With a stunning variety of marine life, the snorkelling experience here will leave you awestruck.



### Baa Atoll

An excellent location to spot manta rays and hawksbill sea turtles.



### Addu Atoll

With dolphins, calm waters and surreal reefs, this is a spot like no other.



### Whale Shark Point, Ari Atoll

Swim with the whale sharks that populate these waters.





THE  
*Island Life*  
IS FOR  
*Everyone*

Have you also tagged the Maldives as a honeymoon destination? Read on to discover the treasures it holds for families and friends looking to reconnect.

by ANAND KAPOOR



mbridy/Getty Images

## ESCAPE COVER STORY

WHAT 2020 TAUGHT ME WAS HOW precious our memories are. Curfews and quarantines meant that all we had were memories of bygone experiences. Lockdowns meant you either fell in love with your family again, or were driven up a wall. Regardless, an escape was crucial—to create new memories and to reinforce the newfound love, or to reignite it.

Thus, our destination choices broadly fell into three categories: the city, the mountains or the beach.

For me, unlike my family, the value of sitting on a beach baking in the sun to get a tan wasn't all that apparent. Why would anyone want to do that? But, clearly out-voted, the beach we selected.

The Maldives was chosen—a strange choice because, to me, it was more of a honeymoon destination, not a location for families. After all, I thought, how would you entertain teenage kids for days on a deserted island. And, I have to say, I suspect the Maldives was chosen so I wouldn't be able to subject the family to endless rounds of art galleries and museums.

The Maldives sits on the equator and is made up of around 1,190 coral islands and, before I visited, I couldn't think of anything worse than being stranded on a spit of sand. But I was given the luxury of choosing our resort, so I chose two contrasting properties. One, on the islands of Kunfunadhoo and Medhufaru, and the other, on the island of Randheli.

The key thing for any city-lover visiting an island is to learn to let go. And this becomes clear the moment you arrive at Kunfunadhoo—they ask you to leave your shoes at the jetty and continue barefoot. There is something truly liberating and poignant about walking barefoot on the sand. And leaving transient footprints behind that only remain in your memory.

The resorts in the Maldives link closely to nature and are designed to holistically and sensitively pare back any distractions, allowing you to focus on your family. A simple bike ride becomes an adventure and reignites childhood wonder—it's easy to slip into Johann David Wyss' *Swiss Family Robinson* mode—especially with the ingenuity of the architecture. Sitting as a family under the stars and watching a film turns magical and really brings home the saying, “travelling in the company of those we love, is a home in motion.”

There's also a certain irony in sitting under the galaxies and having a full-blown observatory at your disposal. While the telescope brings you closer, there is something truly awe-inspiring about seeing the Milky Way with your naked eye, scattered so clearly above you. This image remains imprinted in my mind to this day.

Arriving at the island of Randheli is slightly nerve-racking. On first sight, it seems too luxurious to be on a remote island, but it unfolds around you slowly. Almost like a perfume enveloping your mind.



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2

1. With its diverse marine life, the Maldives offers a truly unique snorkelling experience;

2. A cocktail on the beach is a great way to leave the city far, far behind;

3. Maldivian sunsets are picturesque beyond belief...



3

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Denis Moskvinov/Shutterstock; image courtesy of Hurawalhi Island Resort; image courtesy of Taj Exotica Resort & Spa; lotus\_studio/Shutterstock; S. Borisov/Shutterstock; Canan Images/Getty Images; NadyaEugene/Shutterstock

## TRAVEL GUIDE

The best of the Maldives for families and friends, alike



### Luxe Stay

Taj Exotica Resort & Spa in Emboodhu Finolhu is stunning and tranquil.



### Brilliant Sunset

The southern Laamu Atoll offers a million colours as the sun goes down.



### Big Adventure

Go diving in Banana Reef, North Malé Atolls—it offers a bit of everything.



### Culinary Experience

Undersea dining at the 5.8 restaurant, at the Hurawalhi Island Resort.



4

Every resort in the Maldives has its own character. The Cheval Blanc Randheli by French luxury giant LVMH, for instance, is like a living art gallery. Since many of our fondest memories are traipsing around museums in London, New York and Rome, we can't forget the pop art French Bulldog framed by antique pottery in the middle of the Maldives.

No matter which island you pick, short- to medium-distance trips by private boat will bring you to an experience of a lifetime. Equipped with a special blue LED-filtered light and yellow-filtered mask, you can go snorkelling at night, *avec la famille*. Marine life magically illuminates, darting back and forth, merely fingertips away. Truly a memory even blasé teens can't forget.

Sure, the Maldives is often seen as an intimate getaway, but it is an attractive destination for groups of friends looking to reconnect. During our stay and at one of the mixers the resorts hold, we met a group of ladies who had chosen the Maldives

because it was safe. Their time away allowed them to bond in a way other destinations didn't. The fact that it was only a two-hour flight from Mumbai made it the perfect girls' getaway. They excitedly exclaimed how they got spas together, went on fishing expeditions and spent nights on the beach with a bonfire and wine.

With the onset of COVID-19, properties in the Maldives run a strict entry policy and many insist that you are tested before, during and on departing their properties. These resorts actively encourage small groups and family units to create memories. This presence of small units ensures that a bond built on sun-kissed aquamarine memories becomes a family story.

In fact, leaving the Maldives was like leaving a dear friend—bittersweet. It is an experience that changes you forever and creates memories for a lifetime... because sometimes you don't know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory. 🌀



5

4. With such beauty and so many things to do, the Maldives is a great spot for a family vacation;  
5. Dining on the water—or under the sea—will leave you with everlasting memories

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It's time to go off the beaten track for your next family (or friends like family) trip and truly enjoy that refreshing break you've been yearning for.

by GEETIKA SASAN BHANDARI

# One for the



NOTHING ABOUT THIS YEAR, OR EVEN this time, is regular. So, why should your holiday be? Instead of done and dusted suggestions, I hope my travel guide will inspire you to plan something truly different with your loved ones. These trips will appeal to people of all ages, and will create memories for a lifetime.

## #1 Bask in the wilderness of Masai Mara, Kenya

It was 9:30 am. We had just set off for our safari, and within minutes, spotted a cheetah, its gaze on a sole antelope in the distance. Our guide switched off the engine, and we sat quietly, with bated breath, as it crossed over right in front of us and then picked up pace to attack. But just before it could reach, the antelope sensed the imminent danger and bounded away. While witnessing a kill would have given us bragging points,

the experience was nevertheless etched in our memories forever. In our two days, we also spotted a leopard who had dragged its kill up a tree to evade other predators, a pride of 17 lions, and more giraffes, elephants, zebras, ostriches, hyenas, gazelles, impalas, and wildebeests than we could count. Our days were devoted to safaris and the evenings would end with Masai tribesmen enthralling us with stories about their culture and rituals. The highlight—our all-day safari to the Mara river, where two groups of hippos got into a fight, baring their frighteningly huge teeth! Animals apart, just the stillness and expanse of the golden savannahs made the trip unforgettable.

## #2 Snorkel with dolphins in Zanzibar, Tanzania

The Indian Ocean looked straight out of a Pantone colour card and no



# Memory Books

photograph could do it justice! But even more magical than the ocean was the experience of getting onto a speedboat early morning from Nungwi beach to go to Mnemba Atoll to snorkel and discovering that we had a pod of bottlenose dolphins for company! We watched the sun setting while on a dhow, enjoyed a luxurious meal at Z hotel's al fresco restaurant Saruche and said hello to an almost 200-year-old giant turtle in Prison Island. If you have time, take a walking trip around Stone Town for some history. Also, Freddy Mercury was born here—his house is now a museum that you can visit.

### #3 Take an overnight cruise at Halong Bay, Vietnam

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Halong Bay (a three-hour drive from Hanoi), is an unreal experience. We spent the night in an old-style

wooden luxury cruise boat docked in the middle of the bay, surrounded by unique, green limestone islands whose dense forest cover made the water appear emerald. We went canoeing—great fun even for kids—and during the nightly squid fishing, my elder daughter caught one and it promptly released its famous black ink. The chef taught us how to roll the perfect Vietnamese spring roll too. We visited Hang Sung Sot, one of the largest caves, with clever lighting to highlight the massive stalactites and stalagmites. Our nights were spent on the deck mesmerised by the natural beauty surrounding us.

### #4 Parasail in Bali, Indonesia

As we were lifted off the boat, soaring like seagulls, taking in the tranquil blue of the vast ocean beneath, time went into slow-mo. The initial thrill was replaced by a quietude—a

THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
As tourists watch on, African elephants make their way across the savannah;  
Halong Bay, where green islands dot the sea;  
Dolphins for company in Zanzibar;  
Bali's beaches, viewed from the air as you parasail;  
For children, snorkelling is an unforgettable experience

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Sergey Novikov/Shutterstock, Nguyen Quang Ngoc Tomkin/Shutterstock, Kjersti Joergensen/Shutterstock, Sita Gupta/Shutterstock, Artem Avetsyan/Shutterstock

## ESCAPE EXPAND

*These trips will appeal to people of all ages, and will create memories for a lifetime.*



relaxing silence powerful enough to make even a five-year-old speechless. We took a glass-bottomed boat to Turtle Island, to see not just tiny baby turtles but larger, rather heavy ones, a super scary and humongous python, and several exotic birds and animals. A memorable dinner was had on Jimbaran beach, crowded with tables stretching far and wide, it was eerie to not be able to see the ocean but to just hear its mighty roar every other minute. The kids enjoyed picking their dinner from large tanks filled with catfish, prawns, lobsters, kingfish, and the like.

### **#5 Experience the simple life on Inle Lake, Myanmar**

It was an eye-opener to see that even today there are communities that live on a lake, boats being their only mode of transportation and link to the world. All houses on Inle, Myanmar's second largest natural lake (22-km long) were on stilts, and all the 17-odd villages were small-scale industries—we saw a lady spin silk from lotus flowers to later be crafted into scarves. When we felt hungry, we directed our boatsman to stop at the

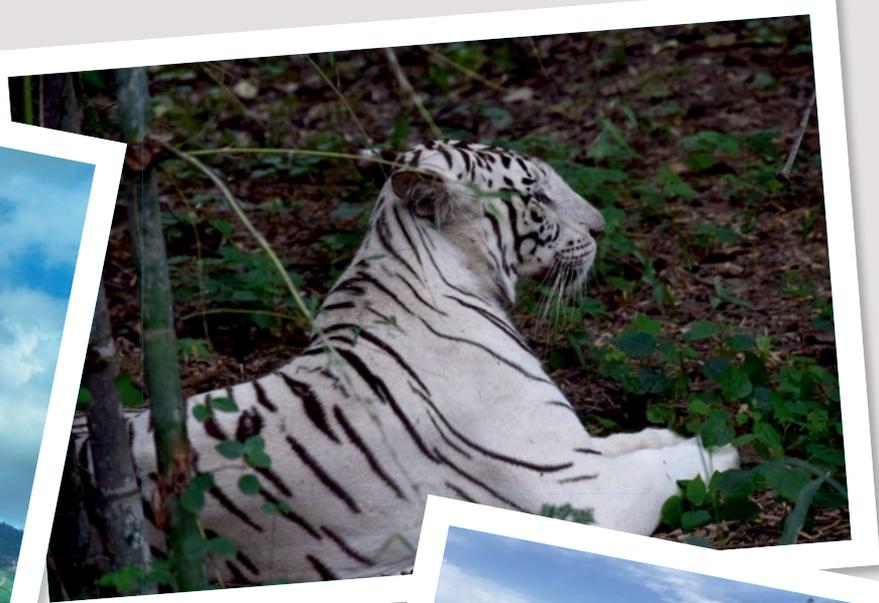
next restaurant—also on stilts—and had one of the most flavourful meals, with watercress and fresh seafood. We visited Inn Thein, home to 16th century pagodas, some in ruin and others well preserved. The ride itself was marvellous; the lake bifurcated into a stream taking us through muddy swamps, meandering through the villages of the unsuspecting Intha folk, and making us go over stones and trees while we screamed in glee!

### **#6 Soak in vintage luxury on a tea garden in Dooars, West Bengal**

It was a treat to go to the roots of the daily cuppa we take for granted and live in a tea garden resort with nothing but sprawling tea bushes for miles around. Living in a bungalow with liveried staff was the stuff dreams are made of, and we got a peek into what life was like for tea planters in a bygone era. We went for long walks, our lungs soaking in the oxygen, and took a trip to the Gorumara National Park (less famous than Kaziranga but with its own population of the fast-declining one-horned rhino), had a picnic on the Diana river and saw the

THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE  
Entire villages thrive on Inle Lake, channelling the knowledge of on-water living for generations; The tea estates of Dooars are like a carpet of green;  
The rare white tiger is a major attraction of Bannerghatta Biological Park;  
Landour is idyllic and serene, great for a relaxed family holiday;  
A family of Intha fishermen end their day on the water;  
Plucking tea leaves is a delicate art and needs a deft hand

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Javaran/Shutterstock; Titas Sengupta/Shutterstock; Sayandeep Banerjee/Shutterstock; Sunami Pargamkar; Sasni Tpechar/Shutterstock; Somnath Mahataz/Shutterstock



mighty Teesta river in its full glory. A trip to Darjeeling was magical—the mist literally kissed our car windows as we wound our way from Kurseong. We couldn't hop on to the Toy Train (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), but it's an experience worth pencilling into your itinerary.

### **#7 Revel in nature at Landour, Uttarakhand**

It's hard to believe that the bustling and often chaotic hill-station of Mussoorie is just a stone's throw away. Landour, a cantonment town named after a Welsh village, in comparison, was utterly serene, untouched and beautiful. With a clear view of the Himalayas all around, our only agenda was to take long walks on pine-lined paths, making pit stops at famous nooks like Maggi Point. Dinner at Rokeby Manor was a gorgeous experience; our al fresco table gave us a clear view of the Doon valley, twinkling like a million stars below us. We spent the evening listening to stories about haunted properties close by, the crisp air lending just the adequate air of mystery. For a rejuvenating holiday

with friends that doesn't require too much planning and travel, Landour is perfect.

### **#8 Spot the white tiger in Bannerghatta, Bengaluru**

While the metro city has its woes—traffic sitting right on top of that list—Bengaluru offers a lot of fun-filled family activities that you've probably never experienced. The Bannerghatta Biological Park was one such attraction—we took the safari and saw lions, tigers, and even the white tiger (now made famous thanks to the film) in a large, controlled natural habitat. That done, we went on to have one of our most memorable meals, at the three-decade-old Nagarjuna, where we tried native Andhra cuisine on plantain leaves (the mutton roast and the prawn pepper fry still linger in our tastebuds and our memories). One day, we made for the closest MTR (Mavalli Tiffin Room), eager to try the mouth-watering local fare that runs out by 10:30 am. We also drove to Wonderla Amusement Park, outside the city, with some of the best maintained land and water rides we've seen. ⚙️



ESCAPE BEAT

# WITH FRIENDS, OLD & NEW

A trip into the jungle is one of the best ways to reinforce old bonds and make some new ones, while exploring the thrilling elements of the dense landscape.

by JAPLEEN KAUR

A BEVY OF DEER RAN IN A SYNCHRONISED manner about 100 metres from our jeep. The five of us and our guide held our breath and sat up straight, waiting in anticipation. In a matter of seconds, they all disappeared, and a rather ferocious-looking animal entered the scene. Now, I know what image is brewing in your mind but hold that thought. The wild dog was on his daily hunt, and we caught him in action. Trust me, not all dogs are cute!

Nestled in the heart of our country—a site that doesn't take a lot for you to leave your heart here—Kanha National Park is the largest tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh. The lush green landscape, the pleasant chill in the air, the occasional mating calls of the many birds and mammal sightings will ensure your jaw makes a home there, too. And what made this experience one to remember was the fact that I was with four of my closest friends on this trip.





## ESCAPE BEAT

This was the quintessential girl gang that ditched the sun and sand of Goa to venture into the jungles. A flight to Jabalpur and a cab ride to Kanha later, we were at our resort. The single-point agenda? A rendezvous with nature.

Surprisingly, all of us would wake up at the crack of dawn without any external intervention! But the hot cups of coffee amidst gigantic wild trees definitely helped. Morning safaris start at around 6:15 am, depending on the season. Definitely carry a jacket or a shawl as the temperature drops at this hour until the sun starts to shine brightly. Comfortable shoes, cargo pants, a hat, loads of sunscreen and some cool shades should be your go-to attire when on a safari. Even though you never get down from the jeep barring the time you stop to feast on some snacks, it's advisable to wear clothes that'll help you run for your life if and when a tiger attacks. Hmm, it doesn't hurt to have an imagination!

Every safari trip starts with an orientation session that prepares you for the kind of visuals you'll witness as you take on this wild journey.

The 7:00 am breeze is something that I'd like to experience every couple of weeks just to rejuvenate, and escape the mind-numbing reality of urban living. As the camouflage-coloured jeep entered the core zone from the Mukki gate, the group automatically turned silent. The magnificence of the situation that we were in, required no words, but instead demanded complete and undivided attention. Soon, we made multiple tiny halts to spot parakeets



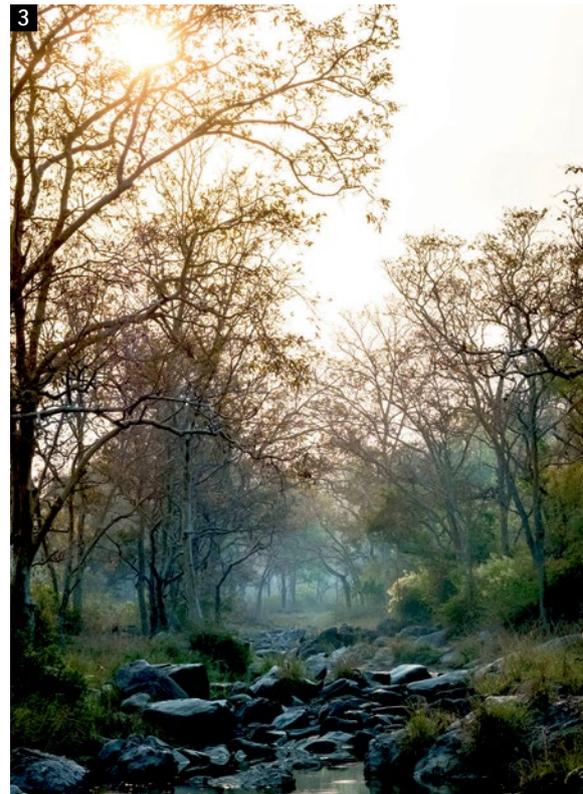
### THIS SPREAD

1. A gawk-worthy sighting of the tiger is a moment you and your friends will cherish forever;
2. The kingfisher darts in and out of sight like a bullet;
3. At sunrise, Kanha presents a fairytale-like setting;
4. The iconic *barasingha*;
5. Wild dogs, often mistaken for jackals, are also serious hunters;
6. *Langurs* are prolific, curious residents of Kanha



playing gleefully, woodpeckers hard at work, and even a white-breasted kingfisher that looked every bit royal. While I describe this with utmost grace, here's something you should know—I have a serious bird phobia and had my nails dug into my friend Deepti's arm for most of the safari. Jokes apart, find a friend who sits through this torture willingly.

Over the next couple of days, we saw a plethora of *langurs*, wild dogs and pigs, a couple of jackals and even a sloth bear. But we weren't





4

lucky enough to meet the tiger or the *barasingha* (swamp deer), the famous duo of the jungle. While it's impossible not to spot them at least once, we'd made it quite attainable.

On our last evening safari attempt though, we were determined to kidnap Lady Luck if needed. Santosh, our guide, took us to an isolated area deep inside the zone, assuring us that there were calls of the tiger echoing in the jungle. We sat there, hearing his stories of tigers preying, drinking water from the Banjar River and protecting their cubs. If I had to take back a moment from this trip, this would be it. Everyone engrossed in stories, listening to each word attentively, phones kept aside and creating a memory to be narrated later.

About an hour later, we saw Link 7, aka Chhota Munna, making its way towards us. The beautiful tiger made our hearts skip a beat. It walked past us after the longest five minutes of our lives, and we finally breathed a sigh of relief. We trailed behind Linku, as the forest officials call him, before turning back. Once he was out of our sight, we squealed and cried tears of joy. If satisfaction had a face, we would have been its poster child right there and then!

We decided to go back for the *barasingha* but mostly to interact with Sal trees, converse with the Sambar deer, watch the grasslands put up a show and to rekindle our friendship and the one we have with the forest. If you haven't already, go to Kanha to not only befriend the elements of nature, but to also experience priceless moments together with your friends. 🌿



5



6

## STAY HERE These camp resorts will enhance your Kanha experience



**Banjaar Tola (Taj Safari)**  
Along the river, the lodge has luxury tents and excellent local cuisine.



**Camp Dev Vilas**  
Near Mukki, this has fantastic wildlife views and comfy cottages.



**Tuli Tiger Resort**  
A rustic and beautiful space, Tuli offers a great safari adventure.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Henk Bogaard/Shutterstock; Photoech2/Shutterstock; Nina Sandsrom/Shutterstock; image courtesy of Tuli Tiger Resort; image courtesy of Camp Dev Vilas; image courtesy of Taj Safari; Ian William Homada/Shutterstock; Yogesh Plankar/Shutterstock; Torsten Pursche/Shutterstock

# The Enchanted Land

Captivating landscapes, distinct wildlife, weaving traditions, exquisite silks, you name it... just outside Guwahati, unique offerings will immerse you in their charm.

by SATARUPA PAUL

T

HE DAY BEGINS EARLY IN THESE parts. It's barely 8:00 am, and the sun and the city have already been up and about for several hours. We sit at a riverside eatery, ravenously attacking piping hot plates of *luchi* (*puri*) and *ghugni* (*chole*), washing it all down with steaming cups of Assam tea, and pausing only to admire the mighty Brahmaputra flowing by. The river is a sight to behold. Its expanse is seemingly as vast as the sea with fast and furious water currents, even as its opposite bank is discernible only by a faint outline of undulating low hills along the far horizon.

Much has been written about the intoxicating beauty of northeast India, and Assam is no exception.

We had sampled a slice of it in Guwahati—the unofficial state capital, the largest city in the region and the gateway to the northeast. At its crux, it's like any other burgeoning metropolis, but beyond the inevitable development, the city is a total charmer—a lovely landscape of rolling hills, dense forests and one of the world's largest rivers flowing through. It has beautiful riverside promenades lined by quaint cafés, temples and museums displaying age-old heritage and culture. Plus, warm welcoming people, delicious local cuisine, and an inherent laid-back way of life.

Beyond the bustle of the city, Assam's allure becomes even more pronounced. It's to unearth this





unique appeal that we find ourselves at that riverside pit stop one early morning, polishing off the delicious breakfast before hitting the road for the village of Mayong.

Just about an hour's drive from Guwahati, Mayong was once infamous for being a centre for black magic. Its residents traditionally practised sorcery and magic, and tales about men disappearing into thin air or being turned into animals are quite prevalent in the area. The village was feared, and outsiders, including locals from other parts of Assam and even Guwahati, kept their distance.

Lately though, Mayong has reinvented itself as a friendly, eco-conscious wildlife hotspot—largely

thanks to the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary on whose periphery it lies. The village itself is spotlessly clean and absolutely mesmerising—narrow lanes wind through lush fields of paddy and mustard, coconut and areca palm trees sway hypnotically, fishermen cast their nets in twinkling ponds, and smiling faces poke out to wave at you from cute Assam-style houses with sloping roofs and timbered frames. One might be tempted to believe that it wasn't magic after all, but the captivating beauty of the place that had enchanted those unsuspecting souls in the past.

Once we can pry ourselves away from Mayong, we drive the last few

**THIS SPREAD**  
The Brahmaputra, whether viewed from Guwahati or Mayong (above) presents an incredible sight, and you begin to understand how rivers have the power to carve landscapes

THIS SPREAD

1. Indian-cormorants flock in Pobitora, alert like arrows in a quiver;
2. Just outside Mayong, you'll spot the rhino, often taxiing local birds around the grassy landscape;
3. The women celebrate in their typical indigenous *mekhela chadors*;
4. Sualkuchi, whether for its looms or its stunning vistas (such as this) is definitely worth a visit;
5. A traditional silk-weaving machine is an interesting contraption, especially as reels of thread obediently flow through it;
6. Spools of thread set these Sualkuchi silk weaving machines apart. The process of creating the masterpieces is long and painstaking. The locals, however, have dedicated themselves to keeping this art alive



kilometres to Pobitora. It may be one of the smaller wildlife sanctuaries in a state known for its world-famous National Parks such as Kaziranga and Manas, but Pobitora holds one of the largest populations of one-horned rhinos in Assam. Which explains why you can practically spot one every few kilometres here, lazily grazing or happily mud-bathing.

Alongside rhinos, wild water buffaloes and wild boars are the most easily spotted. But it's the birds that make Pobitora a hot favourite amongst wildlife enthusiasts. Over 375 avian species call the wildlife sanctuary home, and come winter, an average of 20,000 migratory birds across 50 or so species fly over 22,000 km from Siberia and North America to their winter playground of Pobitora. Understandably, we return to Guwahati, having exhausted our cameras to full capacity.

On a different day, yet another

smooth hour-long drive from the city brings us across the Brahmaputra to its northern banks. Here lies one of the largest weaving villages in the world—Sualkuchi—renowned for its centuries-old tradition of producing indigenous Assam silk on traditional handlooms. In 2018, the weavers secured a trademark that now clearly distinguishes Sualkuchi silk. Apart from the exquisite craftsmanship, what truly makes the silk produced here unique is that it is *ahimsa* or peace silk and uses a humane technique. The silkworm pupa is allowed to mature, so this method also encourages sustainability.

Sualkuchi is famous for producing three types of silks—the white *pat*, the warm *eri*, and the off-white/golden *muga* that is the only item from the state to have the Geographical Indication (GI) registration, a status it has enjoyed since 2007. The fabric adorned by erstwhile royals, *muga* is

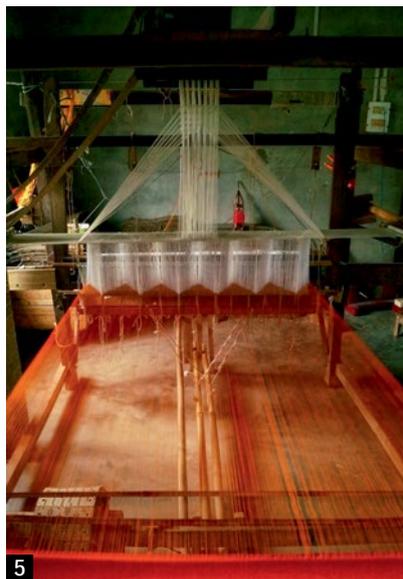


sturdy and has a natural golden sheen. Almost every household in Sualkuchi owns and works on a traditional hand-operated throw-shuttle loom, locally called *taatxaal*. Watching the weavers spin their magic as delicate silk threads are woven into yards of luxurious fabric, is a fascinating experience.

Some of the fabric will eventually be crafted into silk saris or the indigenous *mekhela chador*. Most of them are easily identifiable because they are adorned with colourful motifs that take inspiration from life—geometric flowers, peacocks, lions, household pots, jewellery, and even the famous one-horned rhino.

You can buy fabric or readymade garments from the weavers or from the many shops and cooperatives in town. Needless to say, we return from this trip with our wallets a lot lighter, our shopping bags a lot heavier, and our hearts a whole lot happier. ⚙️

*Beyond the bustle of Guwahati, Assam's allure becomes even more pronounced with lush fields, twinkling ponds and smiling faces.*



# BETTER TOGETHER

The clan concept resonates with all living things, and these congregations can be sights to behold. Here are a few of nature's iconic creatures... in the warmth of their tribe.

Curated by MUNEESH TARSEM



**1** As the shining sun turns the grasslands golden, these lion cubs take a breather as they learn essential survival skills from their mother. Botswana's Savuti region is one of the best places to view these magnificent animals.

**Best time to visit** July–September

**2** Red pandas are very elusive and prefer to spend their time in quiet, dense forests. The Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim is a great place to get a glimpse of this tiny furball.

**Best time to visit** March–May or October–February

**3** Humpback whales have a strong sense of community, and mothers and calves are inseparable. Get a glimpse of these mighty beings as they soar past you in the waters near Reykjavik, Iceland.

**Best time to visit** May–August



**2**

**3**







6

**4** A herd of llamas is a social, active cacophonous group, and these resilient animals are known to be important to the Inca and other Altiplano cultures. For a closer look at the absolutely adorable llamas, Peru's Sacred Valley in Cusco is the place. Another good option? Bolivia.

**Best time to visit** April–October

**5** Almost everyone loves dolphins, and for good reason! They are cute, they are fun and they are very intelligent. Dolphins are also loyal, and seeing a pod of dolphins frolic in the ocean is bound to cheer you up. If you're ready to be surrounded by wild dolphins, a trip to The Azores in Portugal is exactly what you need.

**Best time to visit** June–August

**6** The Indian rhinoceros is famously solitary, so spotting mothers and calves is quite difficult. But, if you do manage to see them, you're in for a treat—baby rhinos can be quite playful. To see this staple of mythology and folklore, Kaziranga and Manas national parks in Assam are great locations.

**Best time to visit** November–April



7



8

**7** Kangaroos are native to Australia, and generally very amiable to each other in their troops. And who hasn't heard of joeys in their mother's pouches? If you want to spot one while lounging on the beach (it'll probably be doing the same!), you should bookmark Western Australia's Lucky Bay in Cape Le Grand National Park.

**Best time to visit** April–May or September–November

**8** The gentle Indian elephant is found throughout the country and, while everyone has seen one, spotting a wild herd will blow you away. The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala is a quiet alternative to the bigger national parks.

**Best time to visit** October–February

**9** Loggerhead turtles live in the open sea, and normally come ashore only to lay eggs. While the coastline of Galle in Sri Lanka has many hatcheries, the Kosgoda Turtle Conservation and Research Centre is a wonderful place to see them.

**Best time to visit** November–May





## CRAFT YOUR DESTINY

Sirohi is an artisan-led brand that helps women create luxe-sustainable lifestyle products using their skill sets, while providing a forum for them to dream big.

by PALLAVI SINGH

TO DREAM AND TO DO. WHEN THESE two actions combine, magic can happen. Mumtaz is a 17-year-old woman and mother from Budhina Khurd, a village in Uttar Pradesh. She can weave bags and stool-tops, and her goal is to be famous for her work. She even dreams of being featured in a magazine one day (well, she's almost there). Motivating her—and many others like her—to be her own boss and enabling her to showcase her skill is the lifework of Sirohi. Set up with the objective of creating a brand that puts artisans first, Sirohi focusses on design and craft to create an exclusive range of luxe-sustainable home décor products that are functional and also serve a higher purpose.

Launched by the Skilled Samaritan

Foundation (SSF), the story took shape in the year 2012 when the foundation, with its successful solar-lighting project, put Sirohi—a charming village nestled in the Aravalli Range—in the spotlight. “This was where our inspiration was born and this is where our journey began,” says Gauri Gopal, Founder and Director, SSF. Having worked in London, Tokyo, Lima and Geneva, Gauri came back to India to action her belief that India's future lies in the hands of its women. “Through Sirohi, we aim to propagate sustainable living, as well as prove that an artisan-empowered brand can enter and flourish in the luxury and premium space,” she says.

By upcycling plastic and textile waste to create their products, Sirohi





has managed to keep up with the sustainable revolution. “Our vision is to help create a world in which women from marginalised communities, or those who do not have a formal education, have increased access to tech-based design support and online/offline markets, and can then use their craft to bring about a tangible change in their lives. We aim to help women who never imagined a life beyond household chores to dream big and be bold,” says Gauri.

Today, Sirohi supports over 200 women who work with the non-profit organisation, to become financially independent and, in turn, help uplift their communities. With an all-women crew that includes Neeti Gopal, Shagun Swarup and artisan cluster heads Gauhar, Shahiba and Zehra, the organisation makes optimal use of social media platforms and digital technology to ensure the maximum connect and reach for the brand. In fact, Sirohi introduced live weaving sessions as a fun, interactive and insightful way of escaping the boredom of the lockdown. “We did this through virtual sessions with our artisans where they spoke about their journey of #wastetowow, being self-reliant, and learning weaving skills that had been passed down through generations in their communities,” says Gauri.

Sirohi added a feather to its cap

through a successful association with Lakmé Fashion Week and partnerships with well-known international brands like Uniqlo and Innisfree. In India, Sirohi has expanded its presence to retail and online stores, with listings in over 20 digital marketplaces such as Jaypore, LBB, Once Upon A Trunk and so on. Internationally, the brand is present in the US, London, Singapore and Australia, among others.

As much as it has achieved, Gauri believes that Sirohi still has a long way to go and there are a number of initiatives on the horizon. 🌱

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## THE LAST WORD



## INTO MY WORLD

Acclaimed singer and songwriter, **Neeti Mohan** tells us about her most memorable travel experiences and why she loves travelling with her sisters.

### What kind of traveller are you?

I like exploring on foot, stopping wherever I feel like and speaking to locals. It doesn't matter if the place is a tourist hotspot or not, I'm simply interested in sensing its vibe.

### Give us a peek into the travelling tales of the Mohan sisters.

When you have a gang of sisters like mine, you know you are also travel-mates. We plan trips keeping in mind everyone's preferences. For example, I am not into adventure sports, but I might be doing photography or simply lying down on the grass and listening to music while Mukti goes bungee jumping.

### Of the many trips you've taken, which one's been your favourite?

Just before the lockdown, I went on a family trip to Australia with my sisters Shakti and Mukti, and my husband, Nihar. We had to return early as air travel was shutting down all over the world, but it still ended up



being one of my favourite trips. We saw the India–Australia Women's Twenty20 International Cricket match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, visited the Gold Coast, held a koala bear in our arms for the first time and even went for a hot air balloon ride.

### Do you like collecting souvenirs?

Yes—mugs and fridge magnets.

### Your greatest source of inspiration?

I think it's life. Constantly inspiring, constantly challenging, and always giving you fresh roles. Like now, I am embarking on the journey to be a mother.

### Any advice for emerging independent artists?

Train to be extremely passionate about your art. Know the right skills, learn about the profession and follow some great work by both local and international artists. Observe how they perform, write their songs and, most importantly, always be hungry to learn.

### Three things that you always carry with you on a trip?

Music, my credit card and sunglasses.

### No trip is fun without some good music. That said, what does Neeti Mohan's travel playlist look like?

I agree. Whenever I discover a nice song, I add it to my travel list, especially songs about nature, travel and 'freeing' yourself. My list includes Coldplay and Maroon 5 tracks and Rahman sir's songs, such as *Phir Se Ud Chala*. 🌻

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