

# INDIAN SUBCONTINENT



THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE







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The fifth in our range of destination brochures - covering India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan - is one that I have been eagerly anticipating. You see, it's where we started organising holidays some forty years ago.

Although our range is now truly global, we still have a special affinity for the Indian Subcontinent. For its sights, for its sounds, its colours and its peoples, a melting pot of magic that after all these years continues to cast an enduring spell.

The Subcontinent may be so much more travel friendly than it once was, but seasoned hands are still needed to guide you through its complexities and occasional frustrations. Suffice to say we've had plenty of practice!

So take advantage of the experience, expertise and knowledge we have gained over all these years and let the Subcontinent cast its own unique spell over you. As a certain Evelyn (Dame Judi Dench) reflects in *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, "Can there be anywhere else in the world that is such an assault on the senses?"

With best wishes,



NICK VAN GRUISEN



# INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

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*“Can there be anywhere else in the world  
that is such an assault on the senses?”*

EVELYN (DAME JUDI DENCH)  
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel





# WHY I LOVE INDIA

BY CHRIS CALDICOTT



Since travelling to some of the more remote parts of the world as Photographer-in-Residence to the Royal Geographical Society, Chris Caldicott has continued his globetrotting lifestyle as a freelance photographer, writer and lecturer specialising in food and travel. He has had several books published and visited 108 countries to date in search of the perfect meal. As a journalist, he is a regular contributor to publications such as The Sunday Times, Vanity Fair, Condé Nast Traveller, Harper's Bazaar, House & Garden, Tatler and the Telegraph.

On my first trip to India (40 years ago!), I extended my ticket home so often that the airline office eventually told me to 'come back when your love affair with India is over'. Some eighty trips later it's far from over, and India continues to deliver experiences as captivating and memorable as the first time I saw the Taj Mahal in moonlight.

There has never been a better time to go. Cities are now buzzing with contemporary cool boutique hotels, restaurants, galleries and shops, which perfectly complement the extraordinary kaleidoscope of timeless, otherworldly experiences on offer everywhere - from the deserts of Rajasthan and misty forests of Madhya Pradesh to the mountain passes of the Tibetan plateau, steamy jungles of Kerala and tropical beaches of the Andaman Islands.

I will never forget the thrill of spotting a Royal Bengal tiger on a dawn elephant safari, joining thousands of camel riding Rajput nomads and friendly pilgrims for a full moon dip in the sacred Pushkar oasis, watching ancestral dance dramas performed by swirling masked monks in a remote Himalayan Buddhist monastery, exploring the evocative ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire on the Deccan Plateau by bicycle, or seeing a million butter lamps light up Varanasi's medieval bathing ghats along the Ganges in celebration of Diwali.

Many a long, hot and dusty journey has been rewarded by a night spent in an absurdly romantic and opulent Maharaja's palace, a luxury rice barge on palm fringed backwaters, the antique mansion of a Pondicherry spice merchant or a colonial era tea plantation bungalow in a Himalayan hill station.

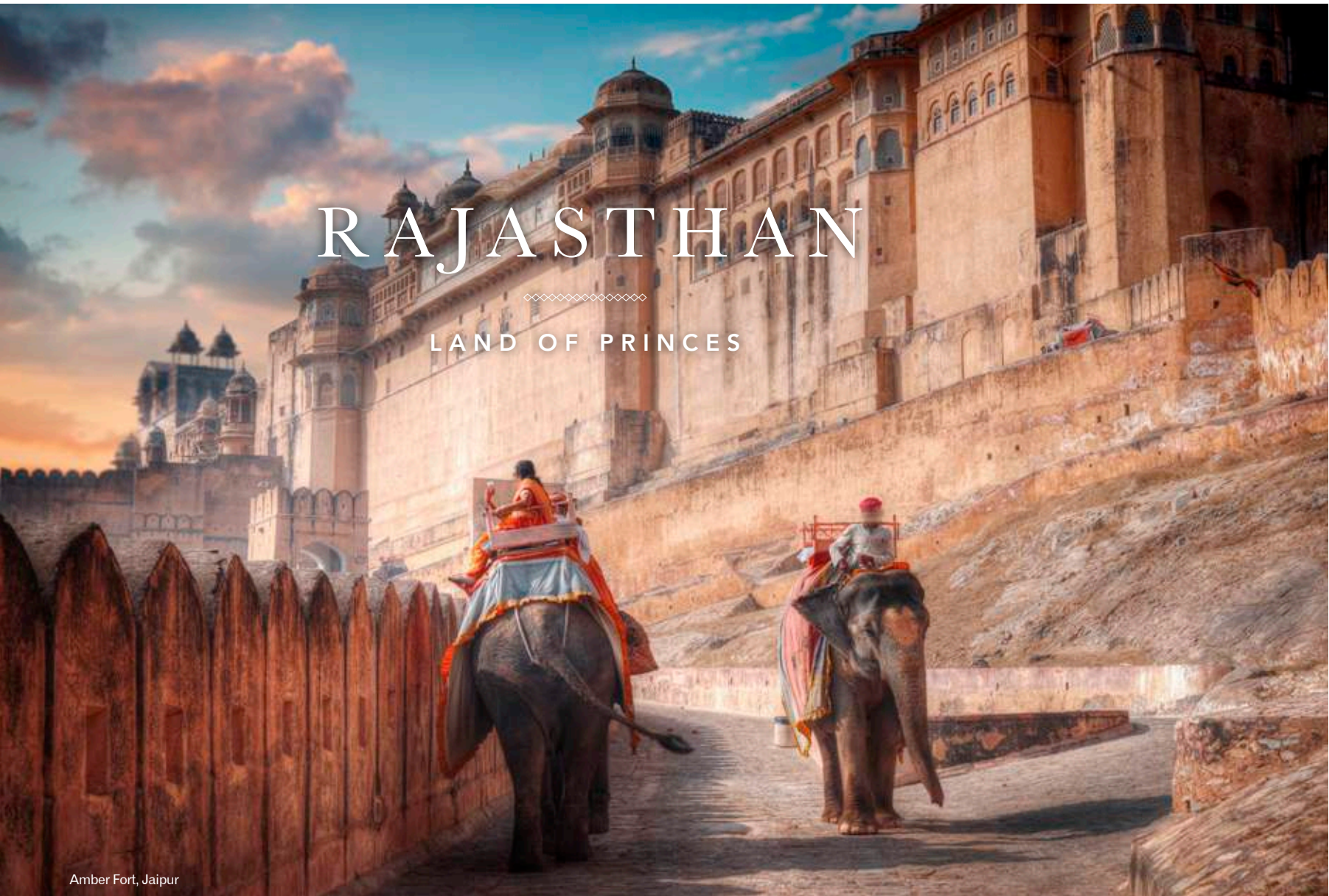
And then there's the food - an endless rolling feast of flavours; the succulent seafood coconut curries of Goa, exquisite biryanis in the pearl souks of Hyderabad, afternoon tiffin at Kolkata's Tollygunge Club and robust vegetarian thalis beside the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

So much to love. Yet more than anything it is the people of India, with their infectious sense of humour and kind welcome, that seduce me into returning so often.





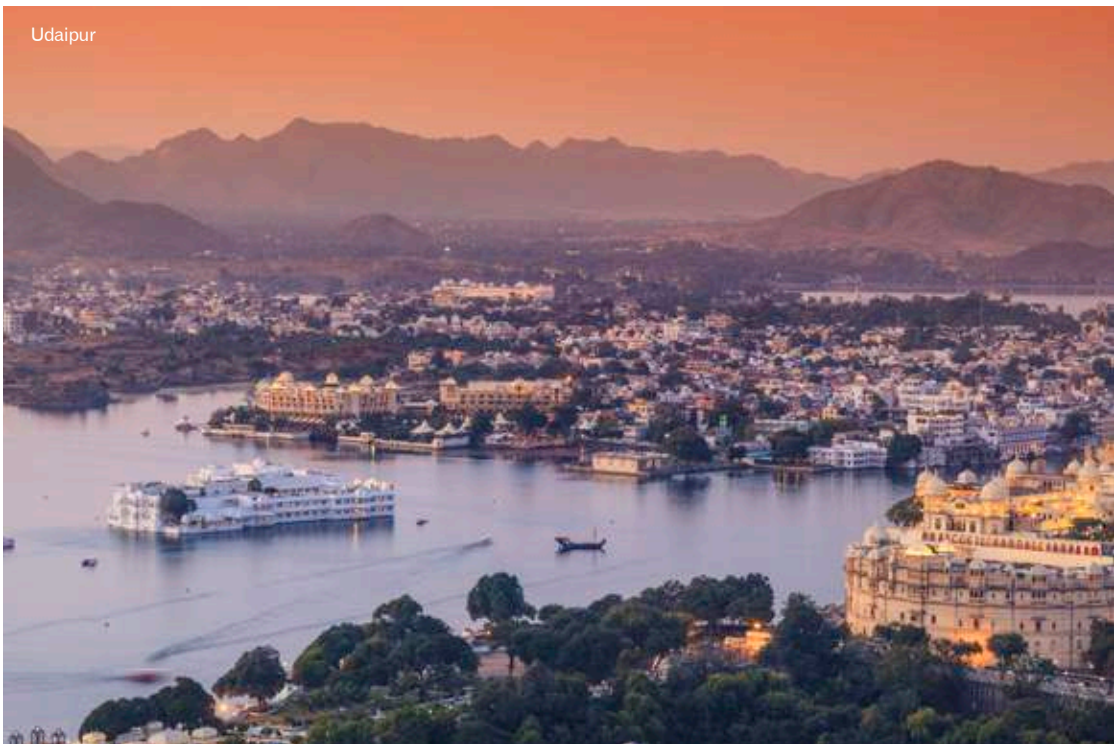




# RAJASTHAN

LAND OF PRINCES

Amber Fort, Jaipur



Udaipur

Rajputana, the 'Land of Princes', home to one of India's fiercest and most creative warrior classes. Its great kingdoms may be long gone, but fairy tale palaces, concealed treasures and massive forts remain as a glorious legacy.

Rajasthan is the perfect 'India for beginners'. Hotels, some the opulent private homes of once ruling maharajas, are among the country's finest. Myriad stellar attractions need little or no introduction. And colours are incredible - brilliant yellow, tangerine, scarlet and pale rose, shot with gold and silver thread and worn by bejewelled women going about their daily chores, a brass pot of water or faggots of firewood on their heads.

Delhi is the gateway to this pageant of colour and enchantment. City of cities, graveyard of at least eight empires and home to scores of listed architectural monuments. The most recent imperialists, of course, were the British, builders of New Delhi's grand boulevards and massive pink sandstone structures. But Old Delhi also beckons with its bustling aorta, Chandni Chowk, and imposing Red Fort, the largest and last of the great Moghul bastions.

'Henceforth', wrote Edward Lear, 'let the world be divided in two, those who have seen the Taj Mahal and those who have not.' It took 20,000 craftsmen 22 years to build it, and all because of an emperor's love for his wife. Although Agra's most famous of Indian monuments is in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, it's well worth the diversion!

To the south of Delhi lies Jaipur, walled, turreted rose-pink capital of Rajasthan and enthralling, with a main street more akin to an extended lease of medieval history than a 21st century thoroughfare. Essential visits here include the Moon Palace, Royal Observatory and Amber Fort, where your final approach can be made on the back of an elephant.

Out to the west and on the very edge of the Great Thar Desert, Jodhpur appears to simply grow out of the sands. The 'blue city' is dominated by the 15th century Mehrangarh Fort, a majestic and intricately decorated red sandstone palace that is now a museum housing palanquins, howdahs, royal cradles and miniature paintings.

Drive south from Jodhpur to Udaipur and you can stop off at Kumbalgarh, another massive and equally impressive 15th century fort in the ancient kingdom of Mewar. Widely regarded as India's most romantic city, Udaipur is a symphony of white marble palaces, sparkling blue lakes and verdant hills. It is an oasis of colour in an otherwise stark and arid region, and a fitting end to any journey through Rajasthan.

There is of course so much more to the 'Land of Princes'. Away from the main cities, you'll discover ancient rural traditions that have changed little with the passage of time, exquisite heritage hotels and desert camps, and architectural splendours such as Nagaur Fort, whose colossal walls shield a prehistoric complex of palaces, temples, fountains, pleasure gardens and open terraces that date back to the ancient Moghul era.

## THE RAJASTHAN EXPERIENCE 15 DAYS



### INCLUDES

- 2 nights at The Claridges, New Delhi
- 1 night at ITC Mughal, Agra
- 2 nights at Samode Haveli, Jaipur
- 2 nights at Chhatra Sagar, Nimaaj
- 2 nights at Raas, Jodhpur
- 2 nights at Rawla Narlai, Narlai
- 2 nights at Hotel Fateh Garh, Udaipur

### PRICES FROM

£4,315 per person (Includes flights)

### WHEN TO GO

Monsoon season is from Jul - Sep, with marked heat and humidity in the months preceding it, so best from Oct - Apr

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC





# JOURNEYS THROUGH CENTRAL INDIA

## TEMPLES AND TIGERS

*"The inspiration for Kipling's Jungle Books, Kanha's riverine forests and grasslands are the perfect habitat for tiger."*

Journey through the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh and you will discover another India. One with forgotten riverside towns, colossal Jain temples, prehistoric rock art and great swathes of forested 'tiger country'.

### TEMPLES

Your first few days are likely to follow a more trodden path from Delhi to Agra and the Taj Mahal, before heading off-piste by train into the heart of Madhya Pradesh to explore the mighty fortress palaces of ancient Gwalior and the 10th century sandstone temples at Khajuraho. These remarkable edifices have somehow withstood the ravages of weather and their exquisitely erotic carvings represent the finest expression of Indian medieval art.

Delve deeper and you will discover sleepy Orchha, an abandoned river island town of gardens, pavilions and temples, and the

charming city of Bhopal where 3rd century Buddhist stupas, prehistoric cave rock art and India's largest mosque, the Taj-ul-Masjid, will vie for your attention.

Make time too for Maheshwar on the banks of the sacred Narmada River. You can stay here in an 18th century fort and visit Mandu, a marvel of early Islamic architecture that was once populated solely by 14,000 beautiful women. Therein, as they say, lies a story - but the same could be said of all Madhya Pradesh's hidden treasures.



Khajuraho



Gwalior Fort

### TIGERS

If tigers not temples are more your thing, then Madhya Pradesh boasts four of India's finest reserves that are dedicated to the protection of the world's largest and most magnificent of cats.

**Bandhavgarh** falls within one of India's last remaining areas of natural forest and supports a high density of tiger as well as many of India's rarer species. Daytime sightings from open-topped jeeps are virtually guaranteed here. The inspiration for Kipling's Jungle Books, **Kanha's** riverine forests and grasslands are not only beautiful but also the perfect habitat for the tiger.

The tropical forests of **Pench** support both tiger and leopard, while **Satpura** is a hidden gem in the highlands with a unique ecosystem, prolific fauna and flora, and a programme of bush walks through the dense jungle.

And for avid birdwatchers, a side trip to **Bharatpur** can be easily included. Vast numbers of storks, spoonbills, pintails and cormorants roost beside the lakes of this wetland preserve near Agra in a quite stunning spectacle of colour and sound.



### THE CENTRAL INDIA EXPERIENCE 16 DAYS

#### INCLUDES

2 nights at The Claridges, New Delhi  
1 night at ITC Mughal, Agra  
2 nights at Taj Usha Kiran Palace, Gwalior  
2 nights at Sarai at Toria, Khajuraho  
1 night at Amar Mahal, Orchha  
3 nights at Jehan Numa Palace, Bhopal  
3 nights at Ahilya Fort, Maheshwar

#### PRICES FROM

£4,995 per person (Includes flights)

### THE INDIA WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE 16 DAYS

#### INCLUDES

1 night at The Claridges, New Delhi  
2 nights at Sarai at Toria, Khajuraho  
2 nights at Tree House Hideaway, Bandavgarh  
3 nights at Singinawa Jungle Lodge, Khana  
2 nights at Jamtara Wilderness Camp, Pench  
3 nights at Forsyth's Lodge, Satpura

#### PRICES FROM

£4,770 per person (Includes flights)

#### WHEN TO GO

Monsoon season is from Jul - Sep, with marked heat and humidity in the months preceding it, so best from Oct - Apr.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
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# THE WESTERN HIMALAYA

HEAD FOR THE HILLS...

Leh Monastery, Ladakh

The British Raj escaped here in the summer months. Its holy cities attract Hindu pilgrims in their thousands. And exiled Tibetan Buddhists have made it their home. Extending from the enchanting alpine beauty of Garhwal north to the barren lands of Ladakh, India's western Himalaya has magnetic and fascinating appeal.

## HILL STATIONS

Strategic and important places of refuge from the high heat of an Indian summer, especially for the British Raj who were responsible for creating around 50 hill stations across the country. The most iconic and best loved of these are to be found in the foothills of the Himalaya.

Shimla, for example, summer capital of the British Raj, home to the Viceroy of India, and ideally approached by 'toy train' on the narrow-gauge railway from Kalka across 864 bridges and through 103 tunnels; Dharamshala, in the upper reaches of the beautiful Kangra Valley and famously home to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government in exile; and Rishikesh, one of India's seven holy cities, renowned centre of yoga and meditation for pilgrims of all denominations, and gateway to the upper Ganges.

## LADAKH

The Buddhist kingdom of Ladakh, the 'Little Tibet' of high Asia, lies beyond the Greater Himalayan Range in the rain shadow of the mountains. Here, amidst haunting but jaw-droppingly beautiful landscapes where the Indus River is young, the Ladakhi people preserve a unique way of life, and there is a timeless quality to their traditional Tibetan dress, villages of mud-brick houses bedecked with prayer flags, and ancient Lamaist monasteries built high on sheer rock faces.

Daily flights connect Delhi with the regional capital of Leh, but give yourself time (if you have it) to acclimatise and drive from Manali in the Kulu Valley, a spectacular 3-day journey across the Himalayan Divide through the arid wilderness of Spiti and Zaskar.

## KASHMIR

Its strategic location on the borders with Pakistan has seen Kashmir beset by decades of political unrest, but houseboats continue to ply their trade on the serene waters of Srinagar's Dal Lake, the famous Mughal gardens of Shalimar and Nishat are still magnificent, and the gentle alpine beauty of it all will never fade.

Things can at times be volatile, so all the more reason to travel with a company with the necessary know-how and experience.

## TREKKING

With so much attention focused on Nepal, the Indian Himalaya remain largely undiscovered and wonderfully unspoilt. Specially so in Ladakh. Here, you can trek across high passes into the wildly beautiful landscapes of the Markha Valley, or hike from one beautifully renovated village house to another with **Shakti Himalaya**.

Shakti also run a similar village walk in the remote hills of Kumaon to the north of Nainital, as well as the stunning four-bedroom **360° Leti** lodge for a one of a kind mountain experience high in the Himalaya.

## WHEN TO GO

Best from Oct - Apr, but cold in the hills Dec - Jan

Ladakh escapes the rains but has a harsher, high altitude climate, so is best from Jun - Sep



Nagin Lake, Srinagar



Thiksey Monastery, Ladakh

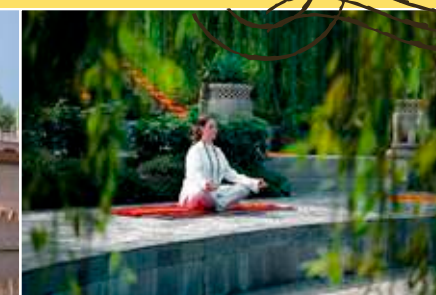
## MORE TO SEE



**The Ultimate Travelling Camp, Ladakh**  
TUTC open two of their luxury mobile camps for the Ladakh summer - one in the shadow of Thiksey's hilltop monastery, the other at Diskit village in the remote Nubra Valley. Glamping at its Himalayan best!



**Sukoon Houseboat**  
Sukoon translates from the Sufi dialect as peace, wisdom and contentment, and you will find all three on this elegant Kashmiri houseboat moored amidst flowering lotus and water lilies on the edge of Srinagar's Dal Lake.



**Ananda in the Himalayas**  
India's first destination spa and arguably still its finest. Just outside Rishikesh in a magical mountain setting, it's the perfect place to recharge batteries and rejuvenate body and mind with an all-inclusive wellness programme.





# TEA TRAILS OF THE EAST

KOLKATA, ASSAM AND DARJEELING

India's east remains refreshingly unexplored, a world of once grand colonial hill stations, emerald green tea estates and remote national parks fed by the snows of the high Himalaya and the mighty Brahmaputra River.

All eastern journeys begin in Kolkata, where the faded majesty of the Raj is still very much in evidence at the Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral and High Court, and double decker buses continue to share the city's teeming streets with hand-drawn rickshaws and bullock carts. Make time too for Mother Teresa's house, the Potter's Village, Kolkata's famous flower markets and the Botanical Gardens, considered by many to be India's finest.

In marked contrast to this urban intensity, the remote state of Assam is languid, verdant and enchantingly rural. Cleaving its way through the heart of the region is the Brahmaputra, and an unhurried cruise along this mighty thoroughfare will introduce you to the hidden treasures lining the river's banks. Best of the boats is **MV Mahabaahu**, a new shallow draught vessel with 23 stylish cabins and suites, swimming pool, spa and onboard team of dedicated guides.

The Brahmaputra also feeds the Kaziranga National Park, 430 square kilometres of wild tropical forest, towering elephant grass and floodplain that supports 70% of the world's Indian one-horned rhinos as well as elephant, tiger, black bear, bison and infinite birdlife. Indeed, so prolific are the rhinos that you might even see them grazing on the banks from the comfort of your riverside lodge.

Time for a tea break? Then head for the hills and the colonial charms of the **Glenburn Tea Estate**. Up here, in the cooler air of the Himalaya, you can explore much-loved Darjeeling and Kalimpong, hike through sub-tropical forests and fish for trout on the Rungeet River, before a well-earned cuppa of Glenburn's finest on the shaded veranda of your historic plantation bungalow.



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata



Kaziranga National Park

## THE EAST INDIA EXPERIENCE 16 DAYS



### INCLUDES

- 3 nights at The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata
- 4 night Brahmaputra cruise aboard MV Mahabaahu
- 2 nights at Diphlu River Lodge, Kaziranga
- 1 night at Vivanta by Taj, Guwahati
- 3 nights at Glenburn Tea Estate, Darjeeling

### PRICES FROM

£4,730 per person  
Includes flights

### WHEN TO GO

Best from Oct - Apr, but hot on the plains  
Oct and Apr, cold in the hills Dec - Jan

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
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## MORE TO SEE



### Sikkim

Sandwiched between Nepal to the west and Bhutan to the east, this tiny Himalayan kingdom beneath the snows of Kanchenjunga is a treasure house of flora and fauna, rhododendron forest, Tibetan monasteries and glorious, far-reaching mountain views.



### Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

Step back in time to the days when the British Raj would head for the hills to escape the summer heat and board the historic toy train for the slow but breathtaking climb up to Darjeeling. Similar toy trains also serve Shimla in the western Himalaya and Ooty in the Nilgiri Hills down south.



### Finding Nagaland - Kohima Camp

The Ultimate Travel Camp's luxury 'pop-up' opens for just two weeks in early December to coincide with the Hornbill Festival in remote Nagaland on the border with Myanmar. It's a rare chance to explore India's final frontier and join the Naga tribes in a colourful extravaganza like no other.





THE SOUTHERN INDIA  
EXPERIENCE  
21 DAYS

**INDIA**

Bangalore  
Mysore  
Nagarhole  
Sultan's Battery  
Fort Cochin  
Munnar  
Kottayam  
Chennai  
Covelong  
Pondicherry  
Tanjore  
Madurai  
BAY OF BENGAL  
SRI LANKA  
ARABIAN SEA

**INCLUDES**

2 nights at Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Mysore  
2 nights at The Serai Kabini, Nagarhole  
2 nights at Tranquil Resort, Sultan's Battery  
2 nights at Old Harbour Hotel, Fort Cochin  
1 night on private houseboat, Alleppey  
2 nights at Philipkutty's Farm, Kottayam  
1 night at Paradisa Plantation Retreat, Thekkady  
2 nights at The Gateway Hotel Pasumalai, Madurai  
2 nights at Svatma, Tanjore  
1 night at Maison Perumal, Pondicherry  
2 nights at Vivanta by Taj Fisherman's Cove, Covelong

**PRICES FROM**

£4,480 per person Includes flights

**WHEN TO GO**

More tropical than the north, so best from Nov - Mar

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

**Munnar**

Much loved by the British Raj, this delightful hill station at 1,600 metres above sea level is surrounded by the emerald-green tea plantations and magnificent mountain scenery of Kerala's Western Ghats.

**The Lotus**

Explore the undiscovered backwaters of northern Kerala in private aboard this wonderful houseboat. The Lotus has just two bedrooms and a dedicated crew to tend to your every need. Nirvana!

**Neeleshwar Hermitage**

A gem of a resort set in a secluded palm grove beside the Arabian Sea in northern Kerala. With authentic Ayurveda treatments, huge infinity pool and deliciously healthy cuisine, the accent here is on total relaxation and wellbeing.

India's south straddles three different states - Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It's altogether less frenetic, a world of garden cities, gentle backwaters, magnificent temples, exotic wildlife and golden beaches.

Fly directly from London to Bangalore and you can head straight to Mysore, taking in the impressive island fortress of Srirangapatna on the way. A second day here will give you time to explore the city's very impressive Amber Vilas before driving on to Nagarhole National Park, home to elephant, leopard, striped hyena, sloth bear, wild dog and an abundance of birdlife.

Heading across the Western Ghats to Cochin, stop for a night or two at a plantation resort near Sultan's Battery. The air is cool, the scenery delightful and the coffee delicious! Spread across several islands and promontories, Cochin (or Kochi) is an intriguing blend of Dutch and Portuguese heritage, quaint old streets, European churches and iconic, cantilevered Chinese fishing nets that line its northern shores.

South of Cochin is the market town of Alleppey. Here, you can board a converted rice barge for an overnight cruise through the

Kerala backwaters, their banks lined with paddy fields, temples, churches, more fishing nets and tiny waterside settlements, and experience life on a privately-owned, working farm island.

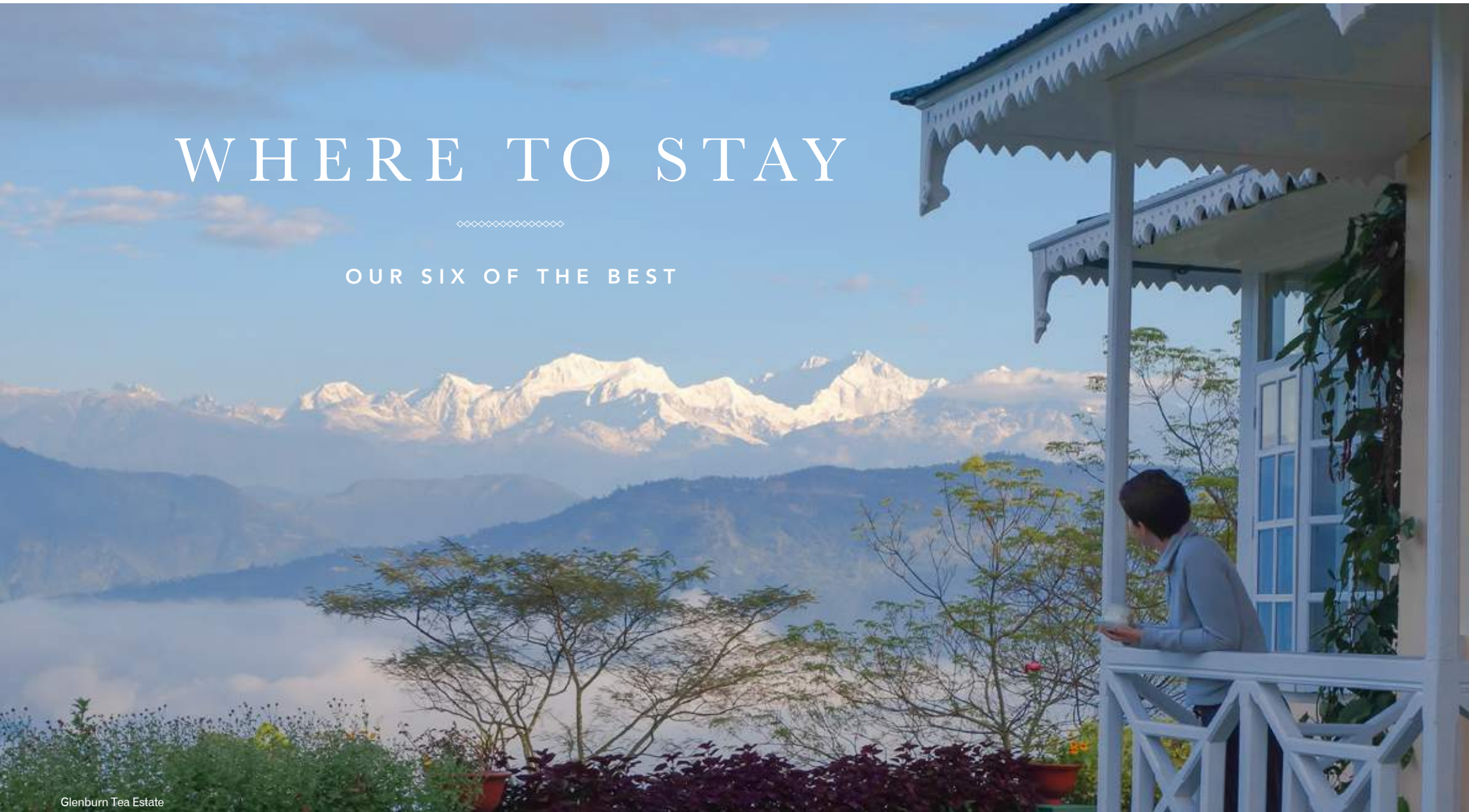
India is narrow enough this far south for you to drive inland through the spice plantations of the Cardamom Hills to the extraordinary temple complexes at Madurai, Trichy and Tanjore, then on across to the east coast. You might now be thinking of Covelong's palm-lined beaches and warm seas, but make time as well for the charming colonial city of Pondicherry with its distinct European feel, seaside promenades and fine restaurants.

That may all sound a little frenetic, but the reality is very different. This other India, south of the Krishna River, moves to a slower, more relaxed beat, and all our itineraries are designed accordingly in keeping with the gentler pace of the south.

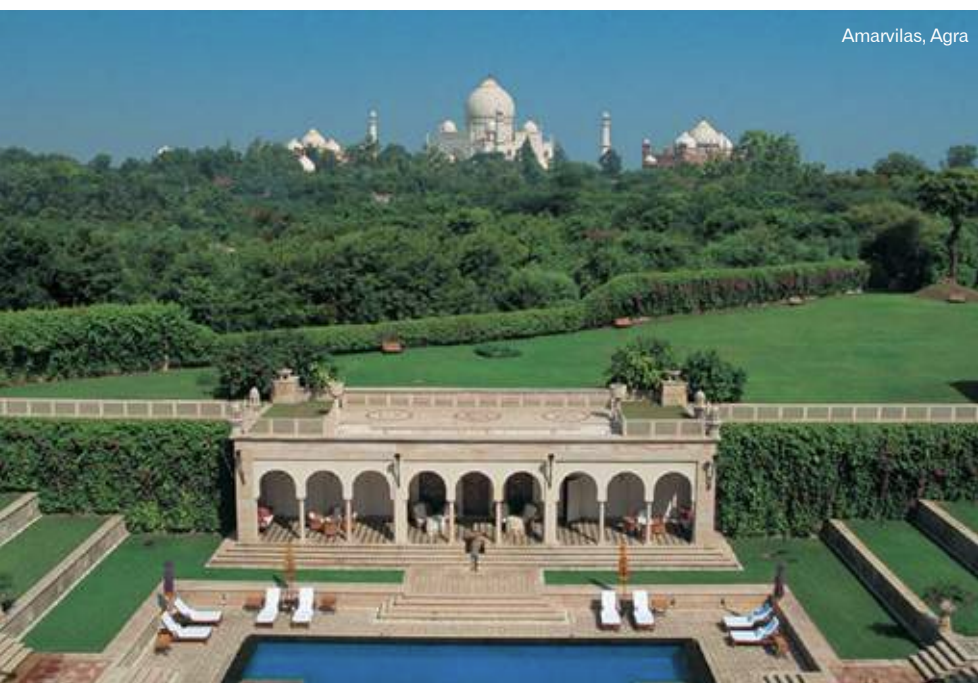


# WHERE TO STAY

OUR SIX OF THE BEST



Glenburn Tea Estate



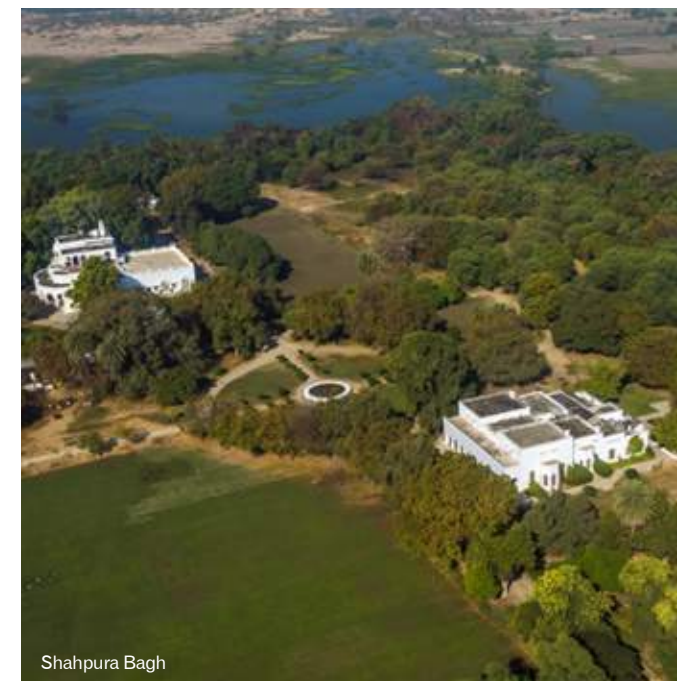
Amarvilas, Agra



Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra



Taj Falaknuma Palace



Shahpura Bagh



Jawai Leopard Camp

## 1 AMARVILAS, AGRA

The Oberoi group's flagship and a Mughal inspired creation of marble and stone with breathtaking views of the Taj Mahal. Many of the beautifully appointed rooms have private terraces for that reason, and spa, pool and restaurant facilities are out of this world.

## 2 JAWAI LEOPARD CAMP, ARAVALLI HILLS

A sophisticated collection of just nine designer tents in the heart of Rajasthan's untrammelled wilderness, roughly equidistant between Jodhpur and Udaipur. Combine early morning game drives through the hills with excursions to Kumbulgarh Fort and the temples of Ranakpur.

## 3 GLENBURN TEA ESTATE, DARJEELING

Take a stroll back into India's colonial past at this historic tea plantation on the evergreen slopes of the eastern Himalaya. Hiking and fishing during the day, home-grown tea (of course!) on the veranda and exceptional Indian cuisine when you return.

## 4 TAJ FALAKNUMA PALACE, HYDERABAD

Its library is styled on the one in Windsor Castle. Otherwise, this splendid palace hotel's grand colonnades, crystal chandeliers, marbled staircases, sumptuous suites, world-class restaurants and elevated setting are a reflection of India's glorious yesteryear.

## 5 NIRAAMAYA RETREATS SURYA SAMUDRA, KOVALAM

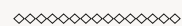
An enchanting cliffside retreat above the Arabian Sea that combines privacy and panoramic sea views with an award-winning Ayurvedic spa and some of the freshest seafood curries you'll ever taste. You can even accompany the chefs to the dock to select the fish.

## 6 SHAHPURA BAGH, RURAL RAJASTHAN

Once a summer palace but now a family-run boutique hotel of just nine elegant suites, set on a secluded 45-acre wetland estate. Expect handmade kilims, antique portraits, Kashmiri carpets, silk jacquard furniture, shaded verandas and patios with pet peacocks.



# ABCHAPRI RETREATS



THREE TIMELESS RETREATS, THREE EXCEPTIONAL LOCATIONS,  
THREE UNIQUELY CURATED EXPERIENCES...



## NEELESHWAR HERMITAGE, NORTHERN KERALA

Set in twelve, secluded, palm garden acres beside the Arabian Sea, Neeleshwar is one of India's hidden gems. There are just eighteen, thatched, individual cottages, modelled on fishermen's huts but fashioned by master craftsmen, and each with high ceilings, teak floors and private courtyard garden. A large infinity pool directly overlooks a glorious expanse of unspoilt sand and two award-winning restaurants, named after local goddesses, serve an array of heavenly dishes.

It's the perfect spot to unwind with a little yoga, some ayurvedic pampering and lots of healthy eating - after all, 'good food makes a good life,' as Neeleshwar will be keen to impress upon you.

## THE LOTUS, MALABAR BACKWATERS

Kerala is defined by its backwaters, a labyrinth of rivers, canals and lagoons that are the lifeblood of the state. The best, if not the only, way to explore this enchanting water world is by boat.

But the Lotus is not just any old boat. Converted from one of the traditional rice barges that are such a feature of the backwaters, this beautiful vessel comes with two brightly decorated bedrooms, private decks for soaking up the sun, and an on-board chef to tend to your every culinary whim.

*The Lotus can be booked exclusively by parties of up to four persons for a one or two-night cruise on the unspoilt Malabar backwaters of northern Kerala.*

## SUKOON HOUSEBOAT, SRINAGAR

Moored on the mirror-calm waters of Dal Lake, which reflect the surrounding peaks of the Pir Panjal, Sukoon delivers in spades on its Sufi meaning of peace, wisdom and contentment. She also defines the elegance and nostalgia of a quintessential Kashmiri houseboat.

Five sumptuous bedrooms boast deep mattresses, crisp cotton sheets, bathtubs and rainforest showers. Intricately carved wood panelling, ornate chandeliers and colonial style furniture decorate the spacious interior of the boat. And up top, there's a stunning sun terrace for soaking up the sights and sounds of the lake that sets it apart from the rest.



# BEST OF THE REST



MORE TO SEE & DO IN INDIA

Gadisar Lake, Jaisalmer



## JAISALMER

The 12th century fort of Jaisalmer rises like a jewel from the sands of the Great Thar Desert. Hidden behind its massive walls, buttressed by 99 bastions, are narrow twisting lanes, brightly decorated shops, magnificent havelis and intricate Jain Temples carved from the same honey coloured sandstone as the fort.

Far out to the west, some 200 miles from Jodhpur, Jaisalmer may have a hard commercial edge to it, but the Golden City is still enchanting and strikingly beautiful.

**Stay at The Serai or Suryagarh**

## RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

India's most celebrated wildlife reserve and 400 square miles of the most perfect tiger habitat. Once a hunting ground for maharajas, its jungle scrub and rocky ridges are dotted with ancient temples, mosques and burial tombs. At its centre is the imposing 10th century Ranthambore Fort.

The reserve is sanctuary to a huge diversity of game, including tigers of course, and you'll head out early morning and late afternoon to catch them as they come down to the lakes to drink. Sunsets here are also among India's most impressive.

**Stay at Aman-i-Khás or The Oberoi Vanyavilas**



GOLDEN TEMPLE, AMRITSAR

Holiest of holies for India's Sikhs and a mesmerising blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles that appears to float at the end of a long causeway. The tank that surrounds the gleaming central shrine is the spiritual focus and pilgrims come from across the world to bathe in its sacred waters.

The streets in the immediate vicinity of the temple are now pedestrianised, which has greatly enhanced the experience, and the city has just opened a Partition Museum 70 years on from that watershed in India's recent history.

Stay at Taj Swarna or Windsong

LUCKNOW AND VARANASI

Combine the grand colonial monuments of Lucknow with India's holiest city and you will bring such landmark events as the Indian Mutiny and the birth of Buddhism vividly to life.

Uttar Pradesh's capital may exude a tired grandiosity, but it's a welcoming, hospitable city with wide boulevards, garden parks and acclaimed cuisine. There is nothing tired about Varanasi though. The burial ghats and shrines lining the banks of the Ganges here are India at its most evocative, and watching the sun rise over this most sacred of pilgrimage sites from a boat on the river is a near-mystical experience.

Stay at Vivanta by Taj Lucknow and Brijrama Palace (on the banks of the Ganges) in Varanasi

WELLNESS

Even before the Beatles embarked on their famous pilgrimage to Rishikesh back in 1969, India has always attracted those in search of spiritual growth and life-changing experiences. But in recent years, 'wellness travel' has become a worldwide phenomenon and India is at the very heart of it.

Yoga, meditation, ayurveda and holistic healing are just some of the experiences sought by wellness travellers, and they are all too easy to find with spa retreats and health resorts rapidly on the increase throughout the Subcontinent.

Stay at Vana near Dehradun, Ananda in the Himalayas near Rishikesh, or SwaSwara on Om Beach



Golden Temple, Amritsar



Hampi



Maharajah's Express

THE DECCAN PLATEAU

This vast plateau covers much of central India and conceals some of its most remarkable treasures. Journey across the Deccan and you discover such gems as the Baroque style temples of Belur and Halebid, the fabulous walled stronghold of Bijapur, and the vibrant Old City of Hyderabad.

But the greatest of its treasures is Hampi. The ruins of the Vijayanagar capital lie scattered amidst an unearthly landscape of giant boulders on the banks of the Tungabhadra River and have captivated travellers for centuries.

Stay at The Ultimate Travelling Camp of Kishkinda

RAILWAY JOURNEYS

Trains are an essential part of Indian life. The network reaches every corner of the country, however remote, and carries millions of passengers every day. Although not without its challenges, a train journey is easily included in any India itinerary and will immerse you fully into the glorious freneticism of local life.

A day or overnight journey on a standard train will suffice for most, but for those who like the idea of covering a lot of ground in a short space of time without having to unpack, there are week-long departures on such luxury services as the Palace on Wheels, Maharajah's Express and Golden Chariot.

Palace on Wheels and Maharajah's Express for Rajasthan; Golden Chariot for the South

THE BEACH

The shores of the Arabian Sea on India's south-west coast are blessed by warm sunshine, golden beaches, secluded palm groves and an enviable choice of beach resorts, enchanting backwater retreats and wellness havens.

Far out to the east in the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Islands offer the ultimate in barefoot luxury. You'll need time and a little patience to get there, but your reward will be mile upon mile of deserted beach, azure seas and boutique resorts where you really are asked to remove your shoes.

Stay at The Leela Goa, Marari Beach Resort near Alleppey, or Taj Exotica in the Andaman Islands



Ananda in the Himalayas



Varanasi



Andaman Islands



# KISHKINDA



## GLAMPING IN HAMPI WITH THE ULTIMATE TRAVELLING CAMP



## THE ULTIMATE TRAVELLING CAMP

TUTC has also introduced glamping to Ladakh, the 'Little Tibet' of high Asia in the rain shadow of the Indian Himalaya.



### CHAMBA CAMP, THIKSEY

Luxury under canvas reaches quite another level at this magical camp in the shadow of Thiksey's hilltop monastery. Spacious bedrooms, private bathrooms and verandas blend colonial charm with wonderful views of Ladakh's haunting mountain landscapes.

Open from May to October, it's the perfect base for hiking, rafting the River Indus and exploring the treasures of this spectacular Buddhist kingdom.



### CHAMBA CAMP, DISKIT

The road north from Leh takes you across the Khardung La, at 18,500 feet the highest motorable pass on the planet, into the fabled Nubra Valley. Nubra once lay on the old caravan route through the Karakoram to Kashgar and remains a stunningly isolated world of jagged peaks, sand dunes and medieval Buddhist monasteries housing wonderful examples of Tibetan art.

TUTC set up their camp every summer in the village of Diskit at the heart of the valley.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi, set amidst the vastness of the Deccan Plateau, is one of India's most spectacular archaeological treasures. Magnificent palaces, temples, watchtowers and urban ruins, built in distinctive Dravidian style, line the banks of the Tungabhadra River and are a glorious legacy of the mighty 14th century Vijayanagar Empire.

Within walking distance of all Hampi's main attractions, Kishkinda Camp is the perfect roost. Ten, colonial, safari-themed tents, four-poster beds, leather bound trunks, hand crafted décor and the services of a personal butler rekindle a golden age of travel, and award-winning chefs create the finest, home grown Deccan dishes. This is not camping, but glamping at its most luxurious!

Beyond Hampi, you can also hike, bike and birdwatch in the surrounding farmlands, and explore the Chalukya strongholds of Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal.

### SOME KEY FACTS:

- Trains, planes and roads connect Hampi with Hyderabad and Bengaluru, so Kishkinda can be easily included in any South India journey.
- Kishkinda offers three to five night programmes designed to showcase the timeless magic of Hampi.
- Resident naturalists can take you birding on the Tungabhadra's backwaters and to nearby Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary.
- Meals, soft drinks, personalised butler service and most excursions are automatically included in the cost of your stay.



Hampi



*"... after a giddy round of sights,  
there are palm fringed beaches  
basking in glorious sunshine."*

# SRI LANKA

## JEWEL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

Sri Lanka, a tropical teardrop at the foot of India, is the most beguiling of all Indian Ocean islands. Just a shade smaller than Ireland, with a population of 21 million people who are born with an amazing capacity to smile, it's a seemingly endless conveyor belt of delightful travel experiences.

**S**cratch the veneer of colonialism and you'll tap into a rich seam of ancient temples and archaeological sites. Scenery shifts by the hour, from thickets of jungle where leopards stalk, elephants roam and Harrison Ford bushwhacked as Indiana Jones, to banana and rubber plantations, paddy fields trundled by water buffalo and a cool hill country blanketed in tea. And after a giddy round of sights, there are palm fringed beaches basking in glorious sunshine.

The island is small and the roads good enough to travel around with your own vehicle and driver guide, although narrow gauge railways and seaplanes do offer an exciting alternative. But however and wherever you go, you'll be met by an 'ayubowan' as endearing as it is genuine.

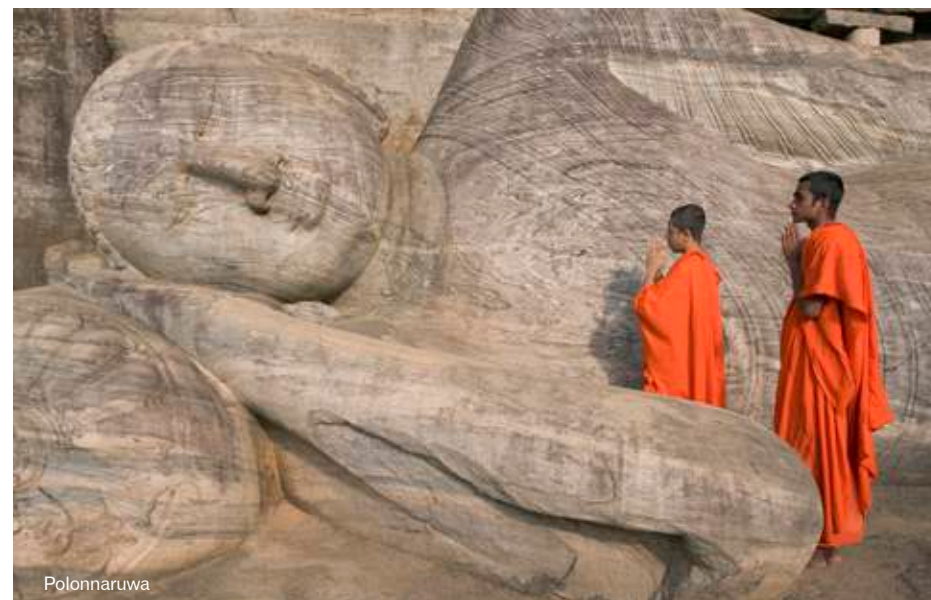


# ULTIMATE SRI LANKA

THE VERY BEST OF THE  
TEAR DROP ISLAND

Sigiriya

Think of ancient Buddhist sites and lovely lakeside towns, of mist-shrouded hills and sun-drenched Indian Ocean beaches. Now throw an intoxicating blend of gems, spices, tea and dazzling smiles into the mix. You'll soon understand why there is so much to love about Sri Lanka.



Polonnaruwa

## COLOMBO

All Sri Lankan holidays begin and end in Colombo. The capital may not boast any of the big tourist draws, but it is still an intriguing hotchpotch of old and new, with museums, galleries and good shopping, as well as sunset strolls along the seafront Galle Face Green, a timeless *passeggiata*.

## ANCIENT SITES

Inland from Colombo is the country's 'Golden Triangle' of historic sites. The first is the 650-foot high rock fortress of Sigiriya, an Ayers Rock of the northern hemisphere that dominates the flat scrub for miles around. Once topped by King Kasyapa's 5th century retreat, those brave enough to tackle the vertiginous stairway will discover ancient cave paintings of bare-breasted, bejewelled maidens and Asia's oldest surviving garden on the flat summit plateau.

The second is Anuradhapura, the carcass of a 5th century BC city famed for its immense stupas and sacred Bo tree (supposedly the oldest in the world); the third, the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa with its upright and recumbent Buddhas carved from single slabs of granite.

## KANDY AND THE HILL COUNTRY

To the south along the spine of the country are the impressive cave temples of Dambulla and timeless Kandy, its centrepiece a hauntingly-still lake whose promenade is a slow parade of sari'd ladies under parasols, saffron-robed monks and smartly uniformed schoolchildren. The city is also a spiritual hub, its Temple of the Tooth housing one of Buddha's molars inside a nest of gold caskets, and home to the wonderful Peradeniya Botanic Gardens.

Wend your way yet further south, preferably by train up into the cooler climes of the hill country, and you can stay in an authentic plantation bungalow and learn how PG tips were born. Here too is Nuwara Eliya, or 'Little England', with its red bricked post office, golf course and colonial cobwebs.

## THE COAST

The golden beaches that run for miles along Sri Lanka's south coast have irresistible appeal, and there are several first-class resorts where you can recharge batteries at the end of the holiday. None more so than **Cape Weligama** with its Relais & Chateaux comforts, individual villas and wonderful Indian Ocean panoramas. If you want to avoid the long drive out of the hills and the lure of gem shopping on the way, then fly from tea country reservoir to coastal lagoon by seaplane.

Just 30 minutes away and well worth the trip is historic Galle, its massive ramparts guarding a charming colonial legacy of narrow streets and squares that are now filled with boutique shops and busy restaurants.

In the summer months, when the south-west monsoon hits, it's best to head for the fabulous beaches of the east coast.

## WILDLIFE

Make time too for the island's wildlife. The leopard is king of the jungle here, but stay at an exclusive tented camp in either Wilpattu or Yala and you can also scour the bush for elephant, buffalo, sloth bear and scores of exotic birds in open-topped jeeps with dedicated tracker guides.

Whale and dolphin watching is also the new big thing in Sri Lanka. So nutritious are the coastal waters that they are non-migratory, and various species of both can be seen in incredible numbers at virtually any time of the year.

## THE SRI LANKA EXPERIENCE 15 DAYS



### INCLUDES

1 night at The Wallawwa, Colombo  
2 nights at Leopard Trails, Willpattu  
3 nights at Ulagalla, Anuradhapura  
2 nights at The Kandy House, Kandy  
2 nights at Tea Trails, Hatton  
3 nights at Cape Weligama, Galle

### PRICES FROM

£5,975 per person (Includes flights)

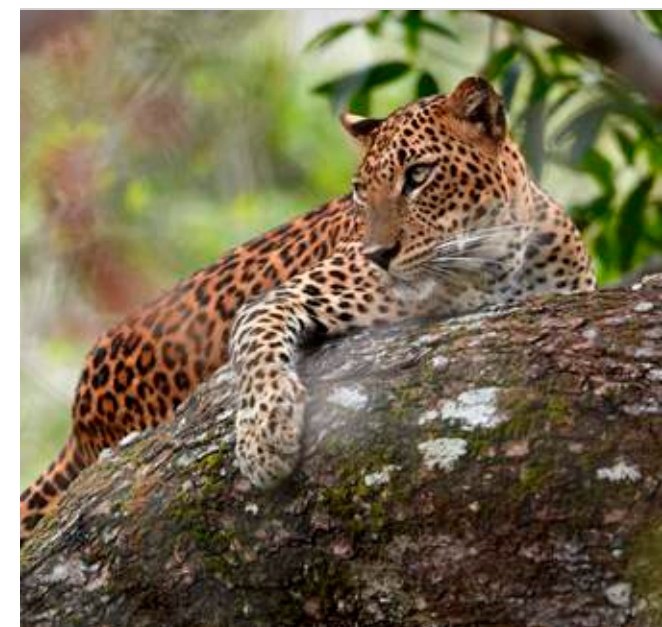
£6,575\* per person (Includes flights)

\* with seaplane transfer from tea country to coast

### WHEN TO GO

Best from Dec - Apr when the central plateau, hill country and south coast are driest

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC





# WHERE TO STAY

OUR SIX OF THE BEST



## 1 JETWING VIL UYANA, SIGIRIYA

Close to the famous rock fortress of Sigiriya and with an all-pervading 'back to nature' theme, this peaceful retreat accommodates its guests in individual thatched roof villas surrounded by paddy fields, wetlands, forests, lakes and wildlife. The perfect base for Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle.

## 2 THE KANDY HOUSE

Built by the last Chief Minister of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1804, this 200-year-old manor house in Kandy's leafy outskirts has been elegantly restored as a seductive boutique hotel. Each of the nine, romantic and individually designed rooms is named after an indigenous butterfly.

## 3 TEA TRAILS, HATTON

A Relais & Chateaux property scattered around beautiful Castlereagh Reservoir in the heart of Sri Lanka's tea country. With just five distinct planters' bungalows, period furniture and visits to working plantations, the Tea Trails experience feels both traditional and timeless.

## 4 ADITYA, GALLE

Named after the Hindu sun god, Aditya offers a rewarding sense of space, suites with private plunge pools, cookery classes, yoga, flexible dining and a gorgeously secluded stretch of Indian Ocean beach on the southern tip of the island between Hikkaduwa and Galle.

## 5 AMANWELLA, TANGALLE

Immaculately manicured, state of the art, cutting edge and contemporary...indeed, everything you'd expect from an 'Amanresort'. Set in a mature, beachside coconut grove just outside the fishing village of Tangalle, it's just the indulgent treat you need at the end of your holiday.

## 6 GAL OYA LODGE, GAL OYA

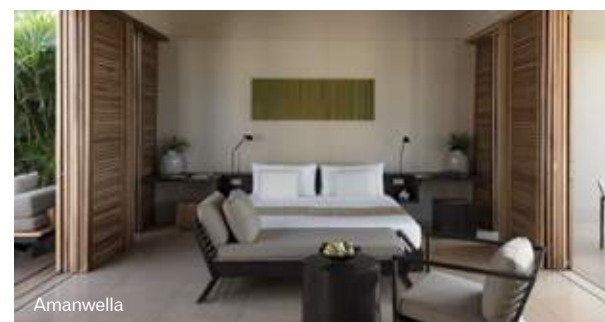
It may be a long, slow drive east from Kandy, but this remote national park deserves better recognition. It boasts the country's largest lake, swimming elephants and a comfortable eco-lodge with nine spacious bungalows, wonderful jungle and mountain views, and a dedicated conservation focus.



Jetwing Vil Uyana



Tea Trails



Amanwella



Gal Oya



Aditya



The Kandy House



# CEYLON TEA TRAILS

THE WORLD'S FIRST TEA  
BUNGALOW RESORT

A quintet of characterful planters' residences standing at a cool 1,250 metres above sea level in the heart of the hill country, Tea Trails will transport you back to the days of the Raj but at the same time give you a fresh perspective on Sri Lanka's timeless landscapes.

Period furnishings, timbered ceilings, claw foot baths and gourmet cuisine are everything you'd expect from the island's first Relais & Chateaux property, as are the colonial comforts and sweeping views of mountain, lake and evergreen tea plantation. Built at the turn of the 20th century, each of the bungalows has its own distinctive style and place, but all have a manager, chef, butler, houseboys and from four to six rooms.

Aside from simply admiring the splendid views, with a cup of the finest close to hand, there's tennis, croquet, swimming in spring-fed outdoor pools and dining in the garden, as well as demonstrations on how to make a perfect brew.

## SOME KEY FACTS:

- You can arrive either by road, by narrow gauge railway or by seaplane.
- Stay at Norwood or Tientsin for hill and valley views; Castlereagh, Dunkeld or Summerville for lake views
- Hiking, birdwatching, mountain biking and white-water rafting are all on the menu here.
- Meals, soft drinks, select wines, beers and spirits, and laundry are automatically included in the cost of your stay.



## TEA, SEA & SAFARI

Tea Trails, Cape Weligama and Wild Coast Tented Lodge - Resplendent Ceylon's 'tea, sea & safari' trio of wonderfully distinctive properties are the only Relais & Chateaux members on the island.



### CAPE WELIGAMA, GALLE

A few miles to the east of Galle Fort, Cape Weligama has become one of Sri Lanka's most sought-after addresses. Inhabiting twelve, manicured, clifftop acres on Sri Lanka's south coast are just 39 suites and standalone villas designed by architect Lek Bunnag with spectacular ocean views.

Lunch on freshly caught fish, cooked and curried to your taste, enjoy an organic spice rub at the spa, or simply lap up the endless panoramas of sand and sea from the crescent-shaped infinity pool.



### WILD COAST TENTED LODGE, YALA

Ocean meets jungle at this stunning tented lodge on the edge of the Yala National Park. Shaped as a leopard's paw print in homage to Yala's most famous resident, with soaring bamboo structures framing a bar and restaurant, the camp has 28 air-conditioned, state-of-the-art 'tents' fashioned to mirror the boulders scattered across the sands.

4WD vehicles and resident guides are on hand here to take you into the quieter reaches of the park for an exceptional wilderness and wildlife experience.



# THE MALDIVES

DEFINING 'BAREFOOT LUXURY'

"...350 by 50 metres of tropical palm and white sand beach gently lapped by crystal clear lagoon water."



Mirihi



Olhuveli



Anantara Kihavah



Milhaidoo



Constance Moofushi



One&amp;Only Reethi Rah

Idyllic, sun drenched and easy-going. Some 1,200 islands in total, neatly corralled within a score of pear-shaped atolls 400 miles south of the Indian Subcontinent, but fewer than 100 with hotels and many so small that you can walk around them in a matter of minutes.

All may offer the last word in private island escapism, but each is different. Here, briefly, is our 'six of the best' to help you decide.

## 1 MILHAIDOO - BEST ALL ROUNDER

Set within the Unesco protected Baa Atoll, Milhaidoo has something for everyone - private pool villas on land or sea, a choice of three restaurants, cookery classes, open air yoga pavilions, 5-star PADI dive centre and all the usual non-motorised water sports.

## 2 ANANTARA KHAVAH - BEST FOR FAMILIES

'Sunshine butlers', and gorgeous spa for mum, underwater wine cellar for dad, endless recreation and babysitting services for the kids. Signature features include a stunning fibre-optic-lit pool inches from the surf and overwater 'Sea.Fire.Salt.Sky' dining cube.

## 3 CONSTANCE MOOFUSHI - BEST FOR HONEYMOONERS

Has everything you'd want from a honeymoon. A choice of romantic beach and overwater villas, golden beaches, great food, generous all-inclusive rates and a resident DJ with all the right tunes if you want to party and dance the night away.

## 4 ONE&ONLY REETHI RAH - BEST FOR LUXURY

Spoil yourself rotten with twelve beaches and eight different dining options, as well as some of the largest and most secluded villas in the Maldives. There's also a sun spa, *National Geographic* dive centre and artists' studio. Reethi Rah has serious wow factor!

## 5 MIRIHI - BEST FOR SNORKELLING

One of the best house reefs in the Maldives and picture postcard perfect - 350 by 50 metres of tropical palm and white sand beach gently lapped by crystal clear lagoon water. It's also very laid back with sand floors in the restaurant and bar, no televisions and no pool.

## 6 OLUVELI - BEST FOR VALUE

Powder-puff sand, turquoise seas, beach and overwater villas, several restaurants, unlimited sports, sauna, gymnasium and spa - Olhuveli has it all, but this 4-star resort in the South Male Atoll is also all-inclusive and offers fantastic value.



# NEPAL

THRONE ROOM OF  
THE MOUNTAIN GODS

*“To visit this ancient kingdom and  
to trek among these great mountains  
is every traveller’s dream.”*

Nepal is the most beautiful of all Himalayan countries. Along its northern borders are massed the world’s highest peaks, while to the south sub-tropical jungles teem with wildlife. To visit this ancient kingdom and to trek among these great mountains is every traveller’s dream.

The charm of Nepal is that it is largely without roads. Access to its interior is by ancient trails and only on foot can one discover the true heartbeat and personality of the country. These paths link isolated village communities where life and customs have changed little over the centuries. Old wooden ploughs still work the terraced fields of rice and barley which climb the steep hillsides. Where land is not cultivated, forests of oak, pine and rhododendron come alive with colour during the Spring, and the annual monsoon rains nourish a multitude of plants and flowers.

But Nepal is not just a trekking paradise. All journeys begin and end in Kathmandu, richly blessed with artistic heritage and a fascinating city to explore. Rivers, born of the great lakes on the Tibetan Plateau and plunging south through the mountains, offer a wonderful way to explore the ‘middle hills’ of the country. And at just 450 feet above sea level, the forests and grasslands straddling Nepal’s southern border with India are sanctuary to Royal Bengal tiger and Indian one-horned rhinoceros.

Nepal may only stretch as little as 50 miles from south to north, but it is said that if you flattened out the contours with a giant rolling pin you’d end up with a landmass as wide as Australia. Within the dizzy contours of this giant staircase, you’ll discover peoples, languages and customs every bit as diverse as the country’s extraordinary topography.



TREKKING, RIVER RUNNING  
AND GAME VIEWING

Nestled in the cradle of the world's highest mountains, the kingdom of Nepal is one of the world's great adventure playgrounds.

## Ama Dablam



100 or so miles to the west of Kathmandu is the lakeside town of Pokhara, basking in the magnificent glow of the Annapurna and the start point for many of Nepal's best-loved treks. While we can of course organise adventures of any duration and difficulty, you do not have to be a hard-core hiker to enjoy the spectacular mountain vistas and there are some wonderful walks in the foothills that stay below the 10,000-foot contour. And if life under canvas doesn't appeal, you can always

The boats bring you to the edge of Royal Chitwan National Park and an altogether different world. Here, on the country's southern borders with India, you can stay in traditional Tharu longhouses and search the park's tropical forests for tiger, Indian rhino, sloth bear, gaur, fish-eating gharial crocodile and some 350 species of birdlife, before flying back up to Kathmandu for a final night or two.

A map of Nepal with its geographical context. The main map shows Nepal's borders with India to the south and east, and Tibet to the north. Key locations are marked: Kathmandu (the capital, highlighted in a dark circle), Pokhara (highlighted in a dark circle), Lumbini (highlighted in a dark circle), Chitwan, Annapurna, and Everest. The word 'NEPAL' is written in large, bold, black letters across the center. 'TIBET' is written to the north, and 'INDIA' is written to the south. An inset map in the top right corner shows the Indian subcontinent, with Nepal highlighted in a dark blue color to show its location relative to the rest of the region.

Avoid the rains and travel Oct - May.  
Trekking is best Oct - Nov and Feb - Apr

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC



Out to the west and far removed from the chaos of Kathmandu, this exclusive lodge on the periphery of Bardia National Park is gateway to Nepal's largest and best-preserved jungle wilderness.



# WHERE TO STAY

OUR SIX OF THE BEST

Kongde Lodge, Solu Khumbu (Yeti Mountain Home)

Mala Lodge, Tomijong (Ker & Downey)

## 1 DWARIKA'S HOTEL, KATHMANDU

More museum than hotel, this symphony of architecture recalls the temples, courtyards, sunken fountains and intricately carved windows of a 15th century palace complex. But that doesn't mean you'll miss out on 21st century comforts and some of the finest food in the country.

## 2 SHIVAPURI HEIGHTS COTTAGE, KATHMANDU

A delightful home from home on the secluded, rural edge of Shivapuri National Park with wonderful views across the Kathmandu Valley to the mountains beyond and a south facing terrace as a sun trap. Ideal for a small private group looking for an authentic dose of Nepali hospitality.

## 3 DWARIKA'S RESORT, DHULIKHEL

Dwarika's hilltop retreat on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley with views that stretch for miles towards the eastern Himalaya of Nepal. Drawing on ancient Himalayan learning, it's a place for reflection and for exploring 'the connection between mind, body and earth'.

## 4 TIGER MOUNTAIN POKHARA LODGE, POKHARA

An oasis of calm and seclusion high above the Pokhara Valley with just 14 individual stone cottages, terraced gardens and stunning views of the mountains. The perfect spot to recover from the rigours of a trek or for some gentle exploration of the picturesque hill villages in its vicinity.

## 5 KER & DOWNEY, ANNAPURNA FOOTHILLS

If you prefer a warm bed and a hot shower to a sleeping bag and the confines of a small tent, then look no further than a Ker & Downey trek. With seven picturesque lodges in key locations, you can now hike the Himalaya without worrying about the rigours of life under canvas.

## 6 YETI MOUNTAIN HOME, SOLU KHUMBU

'Everest in comfort' is no longer an oxymoron. YMH's six trekking lodges may be monastic in style but boast such essential luxuries as electric blankets and are spaced a short day's walk apart to ensure that acclimatisation to the thin mountain air of the Everest region is gradual.



Dwarika's Resort



Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge



Shivapuri Heights

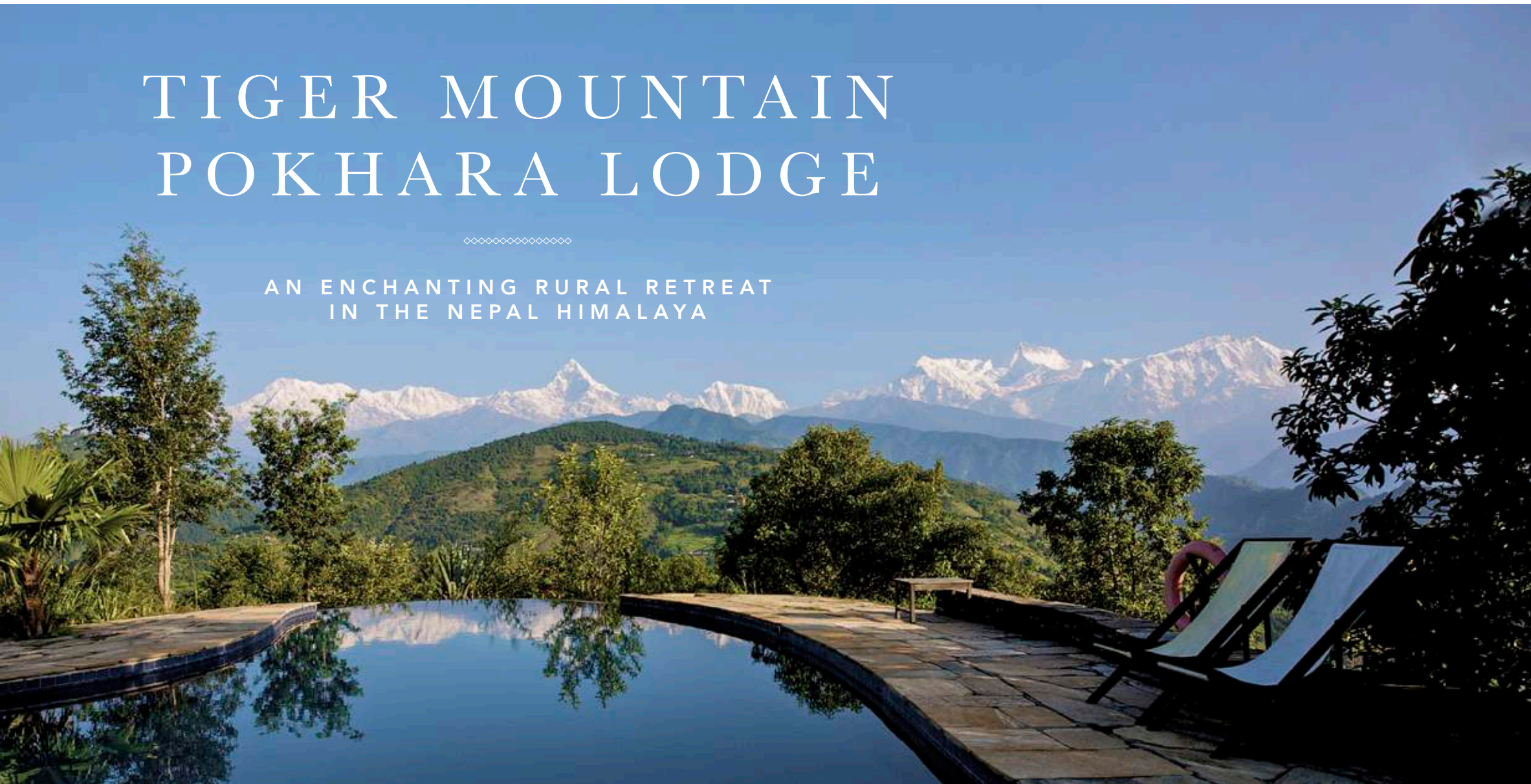


Dwarika's Hotel



# TIGER MOUNTAIN POKHARA LODGE

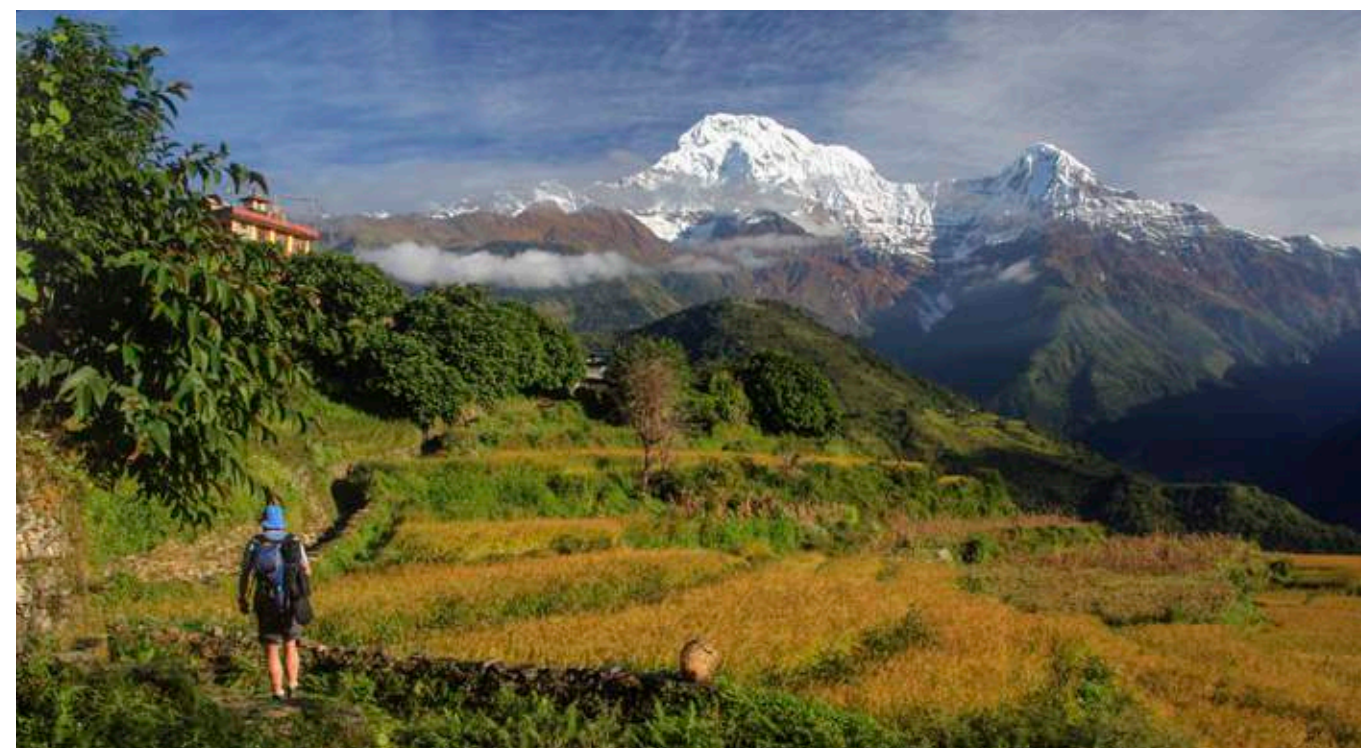
AN ENCHANTING RURAL RETREAT  
IN THE NEPAL HIMALAYA



Straddling a narrow ridge high above the Pokhara Valley, with panoramic views of the glittering Annapurna Himal, this secluded and luxurious lodge continues to be the standard bearer of Nepali hospitality.

Each of the 14 stone cottages, built to resemble a traditional Nepali village, features handcrafted wood furniture, original artworks and private veranda with breathtaking views of the Himalaya. In the main lodge, you'll find a bar, log fire, dining room and candlelit terrace, while a garden pool looks directly out at the mountains.

The setting is typically Nepalese and enchantingly rural, and there can be no better place to recover from the rigours of a Himalayan trek than this. But those who wish to explore beyond the lodge can choose from a menu of forest, village and birding walks escorted by resident local guides, excursions to the lakeside town of Pokhara and even piloted para-gliding or microlight flights. To be airborne with the Himalaya as backdrop is some thrill!



## SOME KEY FACTS:

- The lodge is just a 45-minute drive from the airport at Pokhara.
- Ranked 'among the very best in Nepal' by both The Telegraph and Condé Nast Traveller.
- Member of 'Pack for a Purpose', an initiative that encourages visitors to make a lasting impact on the welfare of local communities, and the only hotel in the country to achieve GSTC Gold Standard independent sustainability audit.
- Ayurvedic and shiatsu massage therapies are available, as are yoga and meditation classes.
- You can browse through a unique collection of Himalayan mountaineering literature in Colonel Jimmy's Library.
- The kitchen uses fresh local ingredients and organic home grown produce for its excellent selection of Nepali and western dishes. Subject to numbers, cookery demonstrations are also available.
- Has its own helipad for scenic mountain flights and charters to Mustang and Annapurna Base Camp.



# BHUTAN

LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

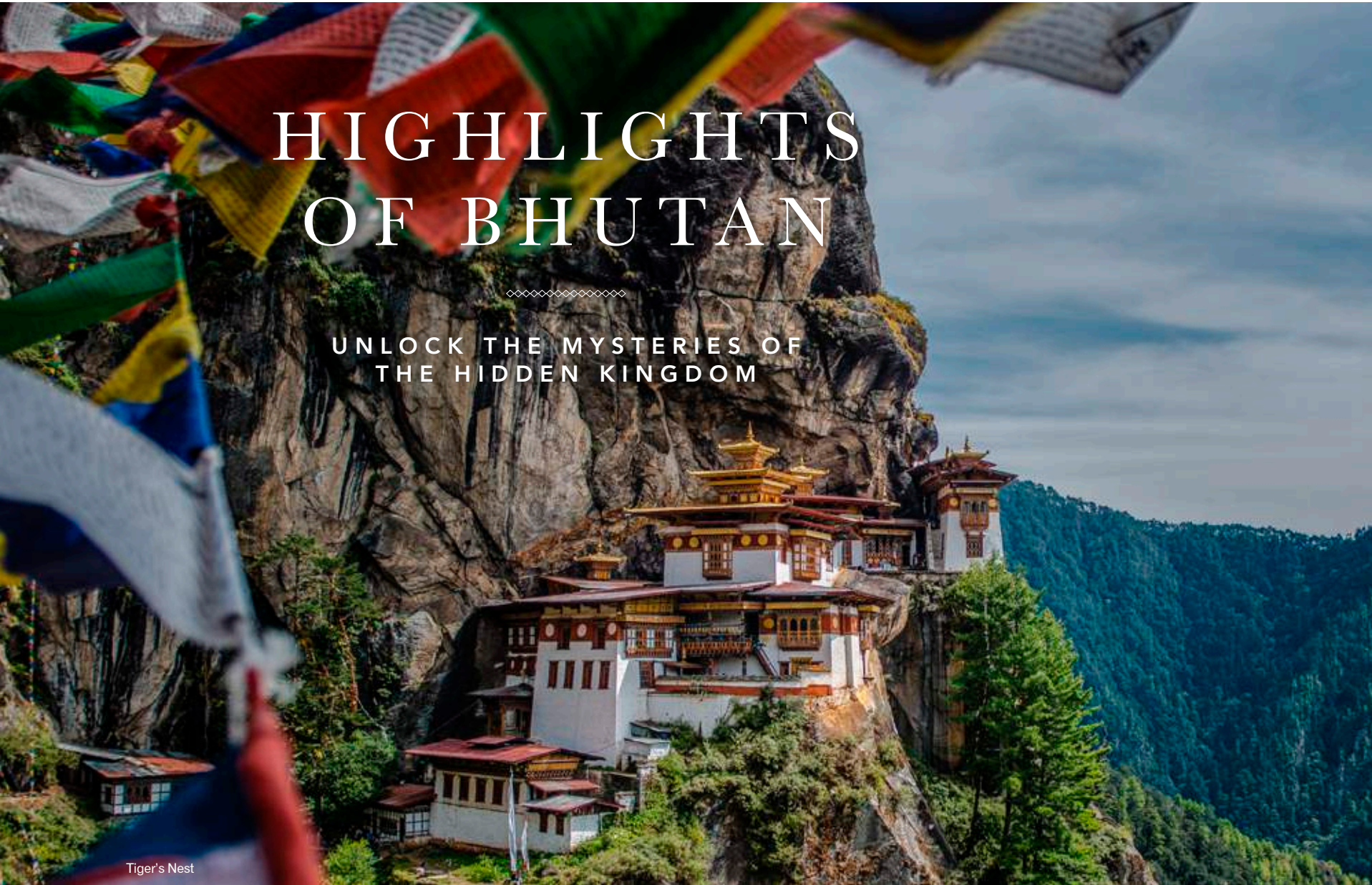
*“...ancient legends and colourful festivals echo the unwavering Buddhist beliefs of its people.”*

Bhutan. Land of the Thunder Dragon. Most mysterious and unknown of all Himalayan kingdoms. Hidden in isolation behind the high peaks of the Himalaya and for centuries forbidden to foreigners. Welcome to a world where Gross National Happiness officially outweighs Gross National Product.

An enlightened philosophy perhaps that has helped preserve the country's timeless traditions and ancestral way of life. The present hereditary monarchy continues to restrict the number of tourists crossing the country's borders and policies are designed to protect the heritage of this profoundly traditional and religious society.

Bhutan is a truly remarkable and wonderful place. Sacred mountains, often unnamed and unclimbed, soar above tropical forests and richly cultivated valleys. Spectacular cliffside monasteries, ancient legends and colourful festivals echo the unwavering Buddhist beliefs of its people. It was Queen Mother Sangay Choden who described her country best, as 'a natural environment of beauty, peace and tranquillity, where cultural and spiritual values have been allowed to grow and flourish'.





# HIGHLIGHTS OF BHUTAN

UNLOCK THE MYSTERIES OF THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

Tiger's Nest



Gangtey

## THE BHUTAN EXPERIENCE 16 DAYS



### INCLUDES

2 nights at Summit Hotel, Kathmandu  
2 nights at Zhiwa Ling Heritage, Paro  
2 night at Dhensa Punakha  
1 night at Yangkhil Resort, Trongsa  
2 nights at Jakar Village Lodge, Bumthang  
2 nights at Gangtey Lodge, Phobjika Valley  
2 nights at Druk Hotel, Thimphu

### PRICES FROM

£5,175 per person (Includes flights)

### WHEN TO GO

Avoid the rains and travel Oct - May. Winter nights will be cold and snow can block road passes Dec - Feb so best Mar - May and Oct - Nov

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Sacred valleys and mighty fortress 'dzongs', cliffside monasteries and soaring Himalayan peaks, dense forests of rhododendron and archer monks...prepare to be astounded by the mysteries of this astonishing country.

All Bhutan adventures begin with the flight to Paro, a spectacular fly past that brings you within touching distance of the world's highest peaks including Everest, Makalu and Kangchenjunga. Try if you can to secure a window seat on the left-hand side of the plane for the flight in (or on the right-hand side for the flight out!).

The Paro Valley is home to some 150 monasteries, but it is the legendary Tiger's Nest that garners all the attention. A seemingly impregnable fortress clinging to sheer granite cliffs high above the valley, be ready for a steep but safe climb to reach this shining jewel in Bhutan's crown.

The road east from Paro through the 'central valleys' takes you across the 3,000m Dochu La Pass to Punakha, a verdant valley of fruit plantations, traditional farmhouses and rice paddies. Punakha's imposing 17th century Dzong is home to

1,000 monks, but make time as well for the 15th century fertility temple dedicated to the 'Divine Madman' Drukpa Kuenley.

Continue east via Trongsa through forests of bamboo and oak and you'll eventually reach the sacred valleys of Bumthang. Here, in the country's spiritual heart where strange legends abound, you can explore ancient palaces and temples, visit cheese making and distillery cottage industries, and enjoy a rare insight into a way of life that for centuries has been shielded from the gaze of the outside world.

You can choose to fly back from Bumthang to Paro if you wish on Druk Air's newly introduced domestic service. Better though to retrace your steps by road, stopping off first at Gangtey in the remote Phobjika Valley and finally at Thimphu with its spotlessly clean fruit & veg market and post office that does a roaring trade in personalised stamps for those cards home.

## MORE TO SEE & DO



### Trekking

From gentle valley hikes around Bumthang and Gangtey to longer and more challenging expeditions north into the high mountains, the Bhutan Himalaya offer some of the finest wilderness trekking in the world.



### Druk Air

Bhutan's national carrier flies from Paro to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Kathmandu, Bangkok and Singapore, so there are any number of multi-destination combinations possible.



### Black-necked cranes

The wild and beautiful Phobjika Valley is the winter refuge for endangered black-necked cranes, who fly in from the Tibetan Plateau late October and stay until February. A festival is held every year in November at Gangtey Monastery to celebrate their arrival.



### Festivals

Unique, colourful and exciting, no one does religious festivals, or 'tsechus' as they are known locally, like Bhutan. There is at least one every month, so plan your trip accordingly. It's an extraordinary and unforgettable experience.



# WHERE TO STAY

OUR SIX OF THE BEST

Uma by COMO



Six Senses, Punakha



Amankora



Dhensa

## 1 AMANKORA

With five stunning lodges in each of Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Gangtey and Bumthang, you can now travel the length and breadth of the country 'Aman style'. All have been created and designed with Bhutan's rich cultural heritage and stunning topography faithfully in mind.

## 2 UMA BY COMO

The renowned hotel and resort group COMO also has properties in two of Bhutan's key locations - Uma Paro and Uma Punakha. Both are an intimate boutique blend of traditional Bhutanese charm and contemporary décor, and both boast a signature COMO Shambhala Spa.

## 3 SIX SENSES

Six Senses will join the party in early 2018 with the opening of five luxury lodges across the country. Mirroring Aman, these will be located in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Gangtey and Bumthang. Long gone are the days when visitors might have been deterred by a dearth of good accommodation!

## 4 TAJ TASHI, THIMPHU

In the heart of town and a spectacular addition to its skyline. Built in the imposing style of a monastery dzong, but combining every modern comfort with warm hospitality, Taj Tashi is at once a stylish retreat and the perfect base for exploring Bhutan's charming capital.

## 5 DHENSA, PUNAKHA

Enjoy superb views from one of the 24 spacious suites at this understated but very charming boutique hotel at the heart of the Punakha Valley. Close to the valley's main attractions and a more affordable alternative to the Aman and Uma hotels.

## 6 GANGTEY LODGE (by Eastern Safaris), PHOBJIKA VALLEY

A beautifully designed, boutique mountain lodge with wonderfully elevated views from floor to ceiling windows across the Phobjika Valley. Cosy fireplaces, leather sofas and slipper baths will be your reward after a day spent exploring the valley's remote and stunning confines.



Taj Tashi



Gangtey Lodge

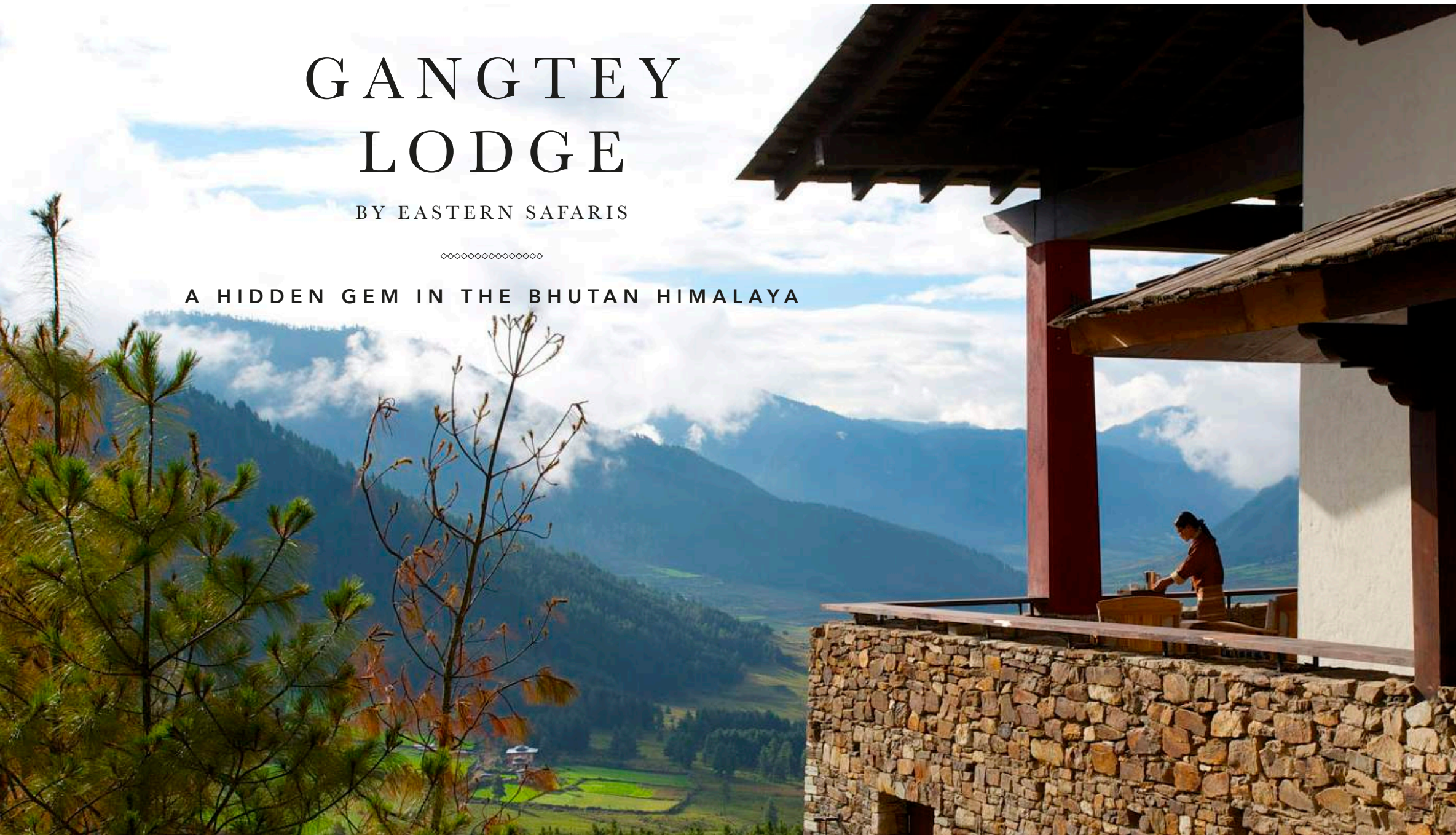


# GANGTEY LODGE

BY EASTERN SAFARIS



A HIDDEN GEM IN THE BHUTAN HIMALAYA



With drop-dead gorgeous views from its elevated perch above the Phobjika Valley, this gem of a retreat is a haven of sublime Himalayan serenity. Designed by Mary Lou Thomson, Gangtey Lodge gained its architectural inspiration from traditional Bhutanese farmhouses, with stone floors, exposed brickwork and dark wooden beams giving it a wonderfully natural and authentic feel.

Each of the twelve beautifully decorated rooms has its own fireplace, communal areas feature floor to ceiling windows, plush sofas and rich fabrics, and there's a wonderfully spacious dining area where guests can share experiences.

Hours can be spent watching white clouds roll across the 'roof of the world', but there is much besides to see and do - the colourful 17th century Gangtey Gumpa, rare black-necked cranes

who migrate here from Tibet for the winter, hikes up to cliffside temples, and excursions to remote mountain villages where life continues as it has done for centuries.

Little surprise then that the lodge has won high praise from the media: plaudits include Tatler's '101 Best Hotels in the World in 2014' and Condé Nast Traveller's 'Top 25 Best Hotels in Asia'. They are thoroughly deserved!



## SOME KEY FACTS:

- Gangtey Lodge can be easily included in any road trip through the central valleys of Bhutan.
- Rooms have designer furniture, deep leather sofas and slipper baths with valley views.
- Visit in September for the Gangtey Tshechu or in November for the Black-Necked Crane Festival which annually celebrates the arrival of these endangered birds.
- The wildly beautiful Phobjika Valley is a photographic paradise.



# MEET THE TEAM

AND SHARE THEIR  
'ULTIMATE EXPERIENCES'



AYESHA CRONIN

“Break bread with Sikh pilgrims in the communal hall of the Golden Temple, Amritsar's holiest of holies. An intensely spiritual experience that, whisper it quietly, moved me more than my first sight of the Taj Mahal. It was also very clean and very orderly - a rarity in the country of my birth!”



HOLLY BRIGHTWELL

“See Bhutan from a different dimension and raft the fast flowing water of the Punakha River in the safe hands of Druk Rafting Service. The Phu Chu or male arm is supposed to have larger rapids than the Mo Chu or female arm of the river, but both are beautifully secluded and scenic.”



DAN MILLS

“Relive the days of the British Raj and ride the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway's toy train to the junction town of Ghoom. Maybe not the most comfortable of journeys, but it's full of colour, history and sentiment. And the views of the western Himalaya on a clear day are wonderful.”



NEIL DUNHAM

“Combine the thrill of a hot air balloon flight with spectacular sunrise panoramas across the rolling hills that shape the interior of Sri Lanka. I was a virgin balloonist, so the flight was an experience in its own right and definitely earned me the celebratory glass of bubbles on landing!”

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