

THE
EXCELLENCE
PORTAL

APRIL/MAY 2026

THE EXCELLENCE PORTAL

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Your Gateway to Knowledge

A SPECIAL COLLECTION

Life, Leisure & Lifestyle

WHEN THE CLASSIC WEDS
THE CONTEMPORARY



TRAVEL: STYLISH RICKSHAW
TOUR OF CHANDNI CHOWK



SHOPPING:
WEDDING
SHOPPING
SPREES IN
DELHI

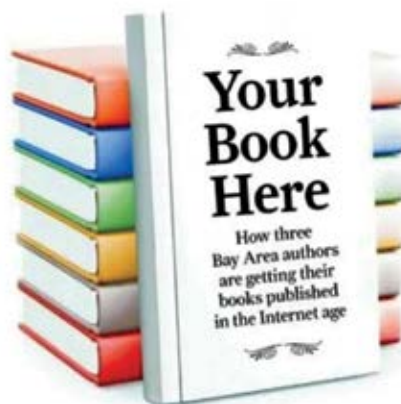
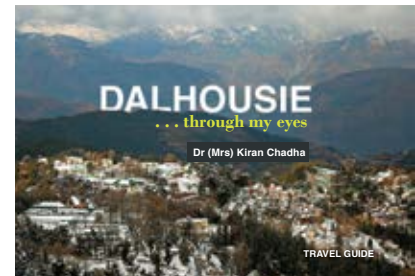
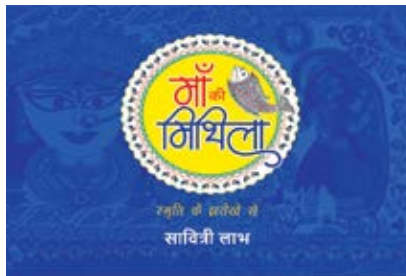
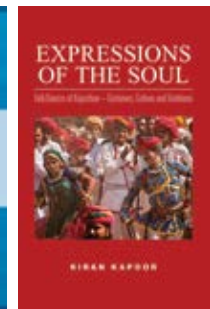
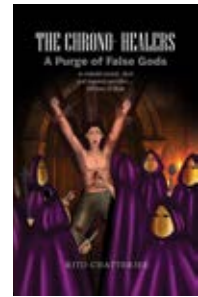
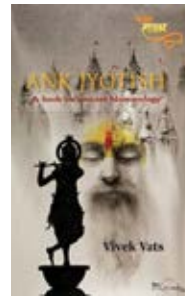


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From the Publisher's Desk

Dear Readers,

Some stories remain relevant long after they are first published. In this special collection, we revisit a selection of memorable features from previous editions of *The Excellence Portal*—covering wellness, fashion, travel, home, celebrations, and sustainable living.

From the timeless charm of tea and the vibrant lanes of Chandni Chowk to the wilderness of Ranthambore, inspiring lifestyle trends, destination weddings, and fitness, these stories continue to inform, inspire, and engage.

We hope this curated edition offers both enjoyment and fresh perspectives, while celebrating the diverse themes that have shaped *The Excellence Portal* over the years.

You can download the soft copy of earlier issues from the website: <http://www.authors-point.com>

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Raaj Verma

Author's Point, The Excellence Portal

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Inspirational Trends: *When the Classic Weds the Contemporary*

Here's a picture window to shed the light on inspiring interior design and decor ideas that work readily with the contemporary lifestyle.

Blend your personal style with the current trending inspirations of sustainability, the connect with nature and aesthetics that ooze personalization in your living spaces.

Keep sustainability front of mind in the layouts with a cocktail of colour, innovative materials and eye for detail to create that individual narrative for each room and the purpose it holds in the overall biophilic design of your home. Ramp up the greenery, the natural light and water features to underpin that connection with the natural world.

Light and airy interiors are perfect for bringing the outdoors indoors to underpin that nature-inspired vibe to your home. Think ecologically-friendly materials and lighting, appurtenances that maximise light and ventilation and hues of rich soils and leafy expanses that echo the advocacy of green living and sustainable, ethical lifestyle choices.

The innumerable tangible and intangible facets of defining your interior spaces serve as a showcase to propel your beliefs in conscious sustainable living.

Quiet Luxury

The charm of the classic design look returns but with signature contemporary



flourishes. High-quality authentic materials marry simple, mindfully curated design and decor. Get done with the Gothic, fussy and flowery details, but still embrace Victorian flourishes with cleaner lines. Tone down the ornate and ornamental a tad with a smart casual makeover pitching in with nuanced modern comforts with smart tech.

Declutter Chatter

Decluttering is the buzzword adapted to many lifestyle choices today. Warm minimalism is the way to go in 2024 and aligns well with the order of simplicity, functionality, comfort, and style. It's as classic as you can get in this living space which is your cozy, serene and stress-busting bolt hole from the world.

Going Natural—Wind in the Windows

Windows get to show their splendour as appurtenances in home décor in 2024. Bright and sunny interiors create

The innumerable tangible and intangible facets of defining your interior spaces serve as a showcase to propel your beliefs in conscious sustainable living

a charming cheery feel to the house. Generous picture windows, French windows and lots of skylights are perfect for spreading ample natural light, fresh air and cool breezes from the outdoors to the indoors.

Picture windows are available in many sizes and bring in massive amounts of light into interiors. Stationary, rectangular, non-opening, picture windows really brighten rooms and offer uninterrupted views. Place them in tall spaces where the glass is out of reach.

French windows also serve as doors, used both externally and internally for separating rooms. Go for ones created with a sustainable, high-performance engineered timber. Responsibly sourced

timber is one of the most sustainable and eco-friendly construction materials available for doors and windows. You can opt for this in place of non-renewable materials such as oil used in the production of uPVC. Timber windows have the lowest embodied carbon of any window material at just 85kg CO₂e, compared to uPVC windows at 110kg CO₂e and aluminium windows at 161kg CO₂e.

Leading Lights

Let smart tech find a voice in the lighting, the kitchen and bathroom fittings in a seamless blend of comfort and convenience of a modern home. Ditch recessed lighting for concealed lighting, faux imitation materials for authentic natural materials.

You can now loop into the technology which allows for the ability to change the intensity and colour of the light in a space. Even on a gloomy day you can programme the lights in the room to

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make it look naturally bright and cheery. Colour temperature, when it comes to enhancing interior LED lighting, is hot to trot. Light bulbs are now programmable, and you can warm them and change the colour temperature. While a tad

more expensive than traditional lighting you can control it all through an app.

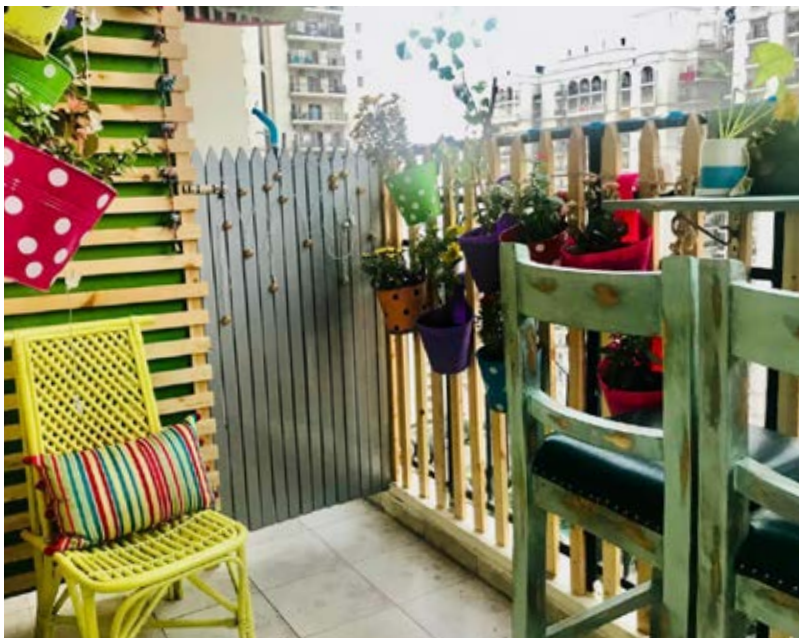
Colourama

Play with vibrant colours in place of greys and monotoes, to bring warmth, cheeriness, visual stimulation and character to your interiors. Browns are going amok in three different shades—dark brown, followed by shades of yellow and light brown. Go play with caramel colours too along with sepia, coral and persimmon. Brown is not only very warm and rich, it's great as a neutral to layer with other hues.

The New Material Mantra

Blingy furniture—think gold, new minerals fabrics, is trending with hotshot biggies in design in Italy. Catch a connection from the China-inspired metallic accents like gold leaf on a stone surface, or the Armani-inspired gilded accessories in a variety of gold finishes.





Cork is the newbie on the block for walls, floors and furniture. Light and spongy, durable and water-resistant, and naturally biodegradable, it's high on the sustainability barometer.

Furnishings and products are witnessing the development of more environmentally friendly materials in line with the new concerns about sustainability; for example, furniture created with recycled cardboard, furniture and lamps made from a material created out of recycled sawdust —and lots more.

Curves Are In

Chuck out the 80s steel and glass furniture fad. Soft and curvy is in now. Curvy sofas and armchairs are making their way to the outdoors— for indoors opt for the trending softer, squishy, curvaceous low armchairs and sofas— or, if that's getting too much, go for the classic straight ones which you can pair with curved coffee tables and side tables, to keep in tune with the times.

To The Finish

Walls need a voice now and it's being brought in with the textured look; the high gloss, lacquered look appears to be on its way out. Instead turn your gaze

on brushed or hand-applied finishes, 3-dimensional pattern wood finishes, geometric-textured patterns in stones.

Tile Style

Use tiles to dramatic effect in public spaces and utility areas. Think floor and wall spaces painting up canvases of pure delight in unexpected places. Your study...a child's room... even a hallway or a lonely stairway area.

Oh SOHO Nice

Working from home more and more? Think inspiration, functionality, convenience, and comfort. Go for ergonomic furniture, soundproofing, and some wall art to give the gaze a rest from the screen. Got a window without a view? Create a green space around it with tendrils from potted plants and cheery rug on the floor.

Balcony Makeover

Making optimum use of space in a high-rise apartment inspires moves on your balcony. Instead of dumping brooms and dusters and other household junk, jazz it up with some funky furniture (foldable) , fairy lights and statement lanterns, smart all-weather

rugs or beautiful hand-painted tiles, balcony wall planters with low maintenance greens like succulents or fragrant herbs, to create a cosy green arbour for the family to enjoy bed tea over the morning papers, read a book, or just chill with your pet.

Green Spaces

Vertical Gardens can ramp up the back-to-nature vibe even in a high-rise apartment. With some judicious planning it allows you to bring in the outdoors without impinging on the precious floor space.

Indoors, create green wall spaces with vertical plant panels. These go well in the living room and even the kitchen area. Hanging plants are great if you are really constrained for floor space, but really want to create a garden-like ambience to your apartment.

Distinct Expressions

Let your home be a statement of personal taste and great character. From art works to bespoke artisanal works, from handcrafted pieces to quirky personal memorabilia from travels and trips— let your home put the shine on your distinctness. ■



The Many Moods and Magic of Tea

Have you ever wondered what makes India run? Here is a hint— it is one of the oldest beverages in the world, a staple found in millions of kitchens around the world and in India and billions of cups of it are enjoyed every minute and guess what? It is the second most consumed beverage in the world after water.

You may have guessed it by now, it is tea, commonly known as Chai in India.

A brief history of the origins of tea

Did you know tea is one of the oldest beverages in the world? It was discovered in China around 5000 years ago by accident. According to Chinese legend,

while Emperor Shennong was resting under a tree, next to him there was a pot of water which was being boiled for him; a few leaves from the tree fell into the pot and so, when he drank the water, he was pleasantly surprised by its flavour; he also noted that the water had changed its colour. Little did he know that he had just invented the first cup of tea and the world's favourite beverage.

History of Indian tea

There are many versions of the origins of tea in India. The story which has been documented by Tea Board of India states that Robert Bruce, a botanist was sent to China to learn about tea, but it being a fiercely guarded secret, the only way out for him was to smuggle a few tea

seeds out; these were first planted in the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. The Chinese seeds were later sent to Darjeeling, Kangra and Sikkim.

History also has it the Singpho and the Khamti tribes in Assam were consuming tea since the 12th century. Commercial production of tea did not begin until the arrival of the British East India Company, which converted large tracts of land for planting tea.

The first tea estate was established in 1840 in Chabua in Upper Assam by The Assam Tea Company and it was the first to start commercial production of tea. By the 1850's the tea industry had expanded, consuming vast tracts of land for tea plantations.

Today, India is the largest producer of black tea in the world and the second



largest producer of tea after China.

Varieties of tea manufactured in India

There are several varieties of tea sourced from the tea growing regions of the country. However, there are four basic types of tea —White Tea, Oolong Tea, Black Tea and Green Tea. By now you will be utterly confused wondering if these are different types of tea bushes from which we get these teas. The answer is ‘No’! All varieties of tea are made from a single plant called the *Camellia sinensis*, the only difference between these teas is the manufacturing process.

How to choose the right tea

Traditionally tea is plucked by hand by



the labour. As it's a delicate process it is largely done by women, The process of oxidation starts the moment it is plucked from the tea bush. What matters most is the oxidation arrested or controlled which determines what kind of tea is manufactured.

White Tea is one of the several styles of tea; it is usually made from young tea leaves and is minimally processed and is dried under expert care. When you brew white tea, the liquor should be pale yellow and the taste is lighter than green and black tea. It also has the highest number of antioxidants which is attributed to the least oxidation.

Oolong Tea is yet another style of the; it is a semi oxidised tea and is between a black tea and green tea. It is produced through a process that includes withering the leaves under strong sunlight and allowing some oxidation

to occur before curling and twisting the leaf. This tea has a lot of flavour, which ranges from sweet and fruity to honey-like and woody aromas or even green at times; it is known for its complex aromas.

Black tea is the most popular tea; it is oxidised and has a different flavour depending up on the region where it is from. Assam teas are robust and have a nice malty flavour. Darjeeling black tea, depending upon the season, has delicate flavours. The most common type of black tea is the CTC (Cut Tear Curl) style and Orthodox tea which is whole leaf.

Green tea is by far one of the most popular teas; oxidation is arrested so that the leaf retains its original colour. The best way to evaluate whether the green tea is good is to check the brewed leaf; the colour of the brewed leaf should be green and similar to its natural state. The trick to identify a good green tea is that it should have no bitterness.

So, the next time you step out to buy tea from a specialty shop, do ask some questions on the region, season of harvest. If you are looking for an authentic tea experience you can buy tea from our online tea store www.teacupsfull.com if you have any questions on tea you can drop us an email at dpuri@teacupsfull.com and we will try and answer your queries. ■

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FASHION: *A Lifestyle Choice*

A silent language of communication, connectivity and individuality



Fashion pertains to the most popular style which is accepted by many people in a particular location at a specific period of time. It portrays our personality and is a form of non-verbal communication. Fashion is one of the most powerful tools for self-expression. It conveys the attitude, feelings, values, and the aesthetic with which attire is selected and says a lot about the wearer.

Style in the context of fashion is about the unique way in which an individual selects clothes, accessories, a hairstyle, and makeup to convey the

distinctive look.

Additionally, style also refers to the mode of a dress. The silhouettes of a dress, patterns, colour, texture and other details of a dress all convey the style of the dress. The selection of the attire will visually convey to the world, the wearers 'personal style'. It reflects the social class of a person. It evokes uniqueness. When we say she has a style, it refers to the technique which shows fashionable grace, elegance and beauty.

Lifestyle of a person, on the other hand, encompasses their entire way of life. It not only includes fashion but

also a person's or a group's interests, habits, values, behaviour and culture. In the broader sense, lifestyle is a person's chosen way of living that represents his viewpoint and manner of life; it reflects a person's daily routines, the society in which he/she lives and how they spend leisure time. It also suggests how they want people to see them. Their financial power is represented by their personal style and manner of living.

The marriage of fashion and lifestyle is very fascinating. Fashionistas, or devotees of fashion, elevate their class

through their outfits. Some look radiant and lovely in their sedate appearance while others express their vibrancy and glamour through more colourful and versatile apparel.

Through the powerful media of fashion, we can communicate our personality, tastes and mood. Our fashion choices will have a deep impact on how we think about ourselves, what impression we want others to have about us and consequently the way people interact with us.

Wearing bold vibrant colours indicates that the person is an extrovert and confident. On the other hand, a person in classic and traditional attire will be an introvert and will conform to the society in which he/she lives.

A creative person will also reflect creativity in the way he dresses. Great care and planning go into the choice of accessories, hairdo, makeup, colours, textures, what to wear and when to wear—to enhance that individual flair in their appearance. This distinguishes them from others, thereby satisfying their need of creativity through adornment.

This is how the two social tendencies—Individuality and Conformity, are reflected more prominently in attire. Some people have a strong desire to be exclusive and stand apart in a group. They are unique, daring, bold and distinct. They reject certain styles in fashion with which they cannot connect or which are not suited to their outlook of individuality. They prefer to ditch wearing the styles of garments, jewellery and hairdo just because everyone is wearing them. They may express their

personal style by wearing funky clothes and accessories or engage in



some kind of radical piercing—like encasing the eyebrows.

On the other hand, some people adhere to the norms or what the society expects them to do. They wear the clothing styles accepted by their family, group or community. They don't want to be an odd one out. They feel secure and have a sense of belonging to the society. Conformity gives a sense of identification. A regional dress can be a way to identify that the wearer belongs to a particular region, community or nationality. For example, wearing a saree in a foreign land can identify the wearer as an Indian.

Conformity also gives psychological shelter. One does not feel awkward as the individual conforms to the norms of dress and behaviour of a peer group or society. They do not fear rejection and acceptance is one of the important goals of their life.

Choosing clothing according to their personality also enhances their self-esteem. They will feel comfortable and happy. This positive self-image can genuinely enhance one's quality of life and will lead to new experiences, self-discovery and cherished moments.

riences, self-discovery and cherished moments.

'The Nouveau rich' or 'new rich' are those who have acquired wealth recently. They have a tendency to show off by conspicuous consumption and will spend a lot of money on branded clothing regardless of their quality or their use. They will wear more jewellery to attract attention of others. They will indulge in luxury fashion, expensive accessories or cars to gain status and reputation in society. This tendency is considered in poor taste and open to derogatory treatment. It shows that though they have become suddenly wealthy they don't have much class and little discernment on how to use that wealth to look appealing.

It can be said that fashion and lifestyle go hand in hand. They are influential domains of the society. However, there are no universal rules. Their interplay resonates individualism and lifetime choices which remains an integral part of human existence. ■

Dr Kiran Kapoor is an author of the book "Expressions Of The Soul, Folk Dances of Rajasthan- Costumes, Culture and Traditions"





Getting The Smarts About Security Systems For Your Home

By Ranees Sahaney

For those of us who spend our time at work and play amidst the mayhem of everyday life in urbania, at the end of the day we just want some peace and security in our homes, our bolt hole from the world. The growing rate of criminal activity in society, burglaries and intrusive strangers turning up uninvited at your doorstep, has opened up a wide range of stress-busting innovative and tech-savvy solutions in home security systems to match all kinds of budgets.

The old-style burglar alarm system and a feisty family dog, who'll scare the daylights out of a thief, are considered old hat for many who are now scouring the marketplace for reliable security systems to safeguard their home, family and belongings.

If you are one such individual you need to get your basic homework in place before venturing out in this rapidly evolving market to secure homes from different types of threats.

First of all, you will need to identify the kind of home security system that is best suited for your needs. This entails evaluating the areas (internal and external) that need to be secured in the property, the most vulnerable entry points etc. You also need to pay attention to the level of service you want from the security system.

The old-style burglar alarm system and a feisty family dog, who'll scare the daylights out of a thief, are considered old hat for many who are now scouring the marketplace for reliable security systems to safeguard their home, family and belongings

Also keep in mind the features and services that suit the size of the area to be covered, as well as the maintenance and reliability of the after-sales service of the security system.

Modern security systems provide a central base station and options for a combination of entryway sensors, motion sensors, surveillance cameras (CCTV), alarm systems, video doorbells, two-way audio, outdoor lighting, home automation devices such as smart locks and thermostats, all integrated with each other to detect and report any intrusion.

Installation Options

Wired system All the security devices are connected with each other and control panel through wires. Recommend wired connection because it's more robust and reliable than WI-FI connectivity.

Wireless system No wires are required for connection; operates on batteries. Easier to install than a wired system.

Control Panel It is the processing unit of the entire wired/wireless home

security system to which all the other security devices are connected to send and receive signals. To access the live feed you need an internet connection, either wired or via Wi-Fi.

Cameras (CCTV)

The best cameras provide HD image quality, mobile access with live-streaming, two-way voice, pan and tilt, etc. When it comes to good resolution and clarity now 2K cameras offer a resolution of 2560 x 1440 pixels and 4MP image sensors. 2K cameras, (higher than traditional 1080p which has a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels), are good for monitoring entrances, walkways, and small businesses. They can provide high-quality images with clear details from a distance; 4K cameras have a resolution of 3840 x 2160 pixels and 8MP image sensors. They offer sharper, clearer images than 2K cameras and are good for recognizing faces, identifying license plates, and monitoring large areas. However, 4K cameras are usually more expensive.



Placement of the cameras is also very important for better efficacy.

Video Doorbells

In place of a regular doorbell, invest in a video doorbell. Even the simplest has a small camera which can record video activity or catch still shots of the person at the door. Look for one which offers

mobile access, monitoring, and control via a mobile app.

Monitored system/ Self-controlled system

Self-Monitored – The security devices are handled by the home owner or deployed security personnel at the premises. It.

Professionally monitored – Monitoring services are also available from the security devices companies. The installed devices send a warning signal to their dedicated monitoring room and the police are informed or they take action themselves through trained professionals to handle the intruders.

Never ditch quality for a cheaper deal. For example, go for a good professional grade camera system with a very good resolution— after all, you want to be able to see what you're looking at clearly!

Proactive versus reactive

Self-monitored systems largely rely on text-based alerts winging away to your smartphone via push notifications. The key is to be proactive in safeguarding your home and family—opt for self-monitoring to ensure access to security system features through a user-friendly mobile app. Take control—Stop it before it happens! ■

Get The Most Bang For Your Buck With This Checklist



- Don't skimp on the price at the cost of quality— you get what you pay for— Go for professional grade stuff.
- Reputed service provider vs spending blindly on a well-known brand
- Uptick for a proactive system/self-monitored system
- Camera specs/ Camera resolution and clarity/ Night vision quality/storage space/weatherproof/
- Stationary or tilt camera
- In place of the old-style DVR - Digital Video -Recorder, NVR - Network video Recorder is the way to go now.
- Motion detection quality
- Security alarm volume
- Monitored system/ Self-controlled system
- Monitored system- Reputation for the reliability
- Hidden charges before installation- aim to work with a firm with transparent pricing structures
- Reliable after-sales services
- Short-term/ long-term contracts

Destination Weddings *Fairytale-Style*



Dream weddings are all about getting everything perfectly in place for that “Great Day”—a landmark signpost in the odyssey of your life. From courting to joining hands in holy matrimony around the sacred fire at the mandap, it’s an amazing journey in itself.

Be it an arranged marriage or the culmination of a long romance, we all want that perfect wedding to capture in our memory bank.

Lyrical romantic notions keep our spirits high, enveloping all our loved

ones in a cloud of shared happiness. Expectations go into frenzy mode as each detail of the wedding arrangements comes under a microscope. Friends and family are roped in to handle all the minutiae, while the happy couple wander around in a daze of dizzy delight awaiting that joyful day.

For billionaires to just ordinary folk—Rajasthan is a much-favoured destination for their wedding celebrations, regardless of their budget. The ‘land of kings’ offers a fantastic array of

geographic settings for this life-changing event for the bridal couple.

From rural forts, to lakeside luxury resorts, from fairytale palaces to elegant havelis, they not only hold the promise of unique experiences but also provide greater privacy and security.

Making things easier for all involved, a slew of destination hotels across Rajasthan have scripted a wonderful narrative for this grand occasion. From its enduring allure as one of the most romantic spots on earth the Indian



state of Rajasthan has been quietly honing its skills to take care of even the smallest detail for not only a wedding but all the other ceremonies and events associated with it.

Micromanagement is the key to a seamless wedding arrangement. From setting up a wedding procession led by caparisoned horses, camels, and a groom arriving on an elephant, to gourmet cuisine, and venues for the Haldi, Mehendi, and Sangeet ceremonies— it's par for the course. Pandits or priests, the decor, mehendiwallahs, makeup artists, and



hairdressers, DJs and bands, fireworks, even gifting — not even the smallest detail is left to chance, even in the most remote wedding venue.

The cost of the wedding is determined by the choice of the venue, ceremony type, thematic event, catering, decor, entertainment, and guest list. There are even package deals on offer.

Here's a quick reckoner for some of the finest settings for a destination

wedding in the erstwhile royal state of ancient Rajputana.

Udaipur

This royal city of fairytale palaces and tranquil lakes is regarded as one of the world's most romantic spots for a lavish wedding setting. Oftentimes as not known as the 'Venice of the East', Udaipur is home to the fabled pristine white water palace which has hosted numerous weddings and associated ceremonies down the decades. The Lake Palace, run as a super luxury resort by the Taj group is one the city's most iconic spots. It was actually built on Lake Pichola by a rebel prince as his private romantic getaway, to escape the displeasure of his father because of his hedonistic way. Even today the only way to get to the water palace is by boat.

Udaipur has a cluster of beautiful hotels and elegant palaces and havelis where the bridal couple can enjoy a fantastic experience of this special time in their lives. Udaipur serves as an excellent option to Jaipur, which also gets booked by tour groups in the winters, which coin-

From rural forts, to lakeside luxury resorts, from fairytale palaces to elegant havelis, they not only hold the promise of unique experiences but also provide greater privacy and security

cide with the wedding season.

Some other attractive wedding venues: Shiv Niwas Palace, Oberoi Udaivilas Hotel, The Leela Palace Udaipur, Udai Kothi, Amet Haveli, Deogarh Mahal Near Udaipur

Jaipur

The erstwhile capital of the Jaipur royals this is Rajasthan's leading tourist destination. It's also a hugely popular wedding destination. Hosting a wedding here also means guests can delve into many other aspects of the Pink City, apart from enjoying themselves in the wedding ceremonies.

Shopping, eating out and making quick forays to Amer and the Jhalana Leopard Sanctuary are amongst its many allurements.

Some attractive wedding venues: Ram Bagh Palace, Jai Mahal Palace, Chomu Palace Hotel, Samode Bagh, ITC Rajputana, Alila Fort

Jodhpur

The desert outpost of Jodhpur served as the ancient bastion of the Marwar kings. One of the most attractive venues for a wedding here is the Umaid Bhavan Palace Hotel. Built as a work-in-progress by the maharajah to give



employment and some relief to his harried subjects during a terrible famine, it is one of the world's largest living residences. One wing of the palace is run as a super luxury hotel by the Taj group. The other wing is the private residence of Maharaja Gaj Singh II and his family. There are parts of this beautiful hotel which you can explore, which includes a nice little private museum in the complex.

Jodhpur city is noted for its fabled Mehrangarh Fort. Guests can enjoy shopping, city sightseeing, ziplining and thrilling explorations of the sand dunes



on camel safaris.

Some great wedding venues: Umaid Bhawan Palace, Khimsar Fort and Dunes, Mihir Garh

Jaisalmer

This historic city, known for its fabled ‘Sona Kila’, or Golden Fort, is getting a lot of attention as a new wedding destination. It’s becoming a city of choice for bridal couples looking for an alternative to Jaipur and Udaipur to host the various ceremonies and events lined up around the wedding. Joining the ranks of A-list wedding destination options,

You can let your imagination run wild planning a memorable “Desert Wedding” with bells and all! This medieval bastion of the Bhati rulers has a host of exciting places to hold various events

Jaisalmer is quite unique in that its proximity to the Thar Desert offers another charming twist to this grand affair.

You can let your imagination run wild planning a memorable “Desert Wedding” with bells and all! This medieval bastion of the Bhati rulers has a host of exciting places to hold various events— think palaces and havelis, ancient stepwells and gardens or even lavish pavilions set up under the stars on the desert sands on cool nights

Some alluring wedding venues:

Thar Haveli, Suryagarh, Fort Rajwada, Gorbandh Palace ■

Ecotourism *to defy growing Carbon Footprint*

The growing concerns about climate change have pivoted the trajectory of tourism development worldwide. Tourism is responsible for roughly 8% of the world's carbon emissions. From plane flights and boat rides to souvenirs and lodging, various activities contribute to the burgeoning tourism carbon footprint.

It has also more vigorously put the spotlight on the growing menace of depletion or in more severe cases, extinction, of several species of flora and fauna due to various causes.

Ecotourism's concerns are nature based, focusing on ecologically sustainability and in which education and interpretation is a major constituent; it's also important that local people are benefited by the tourism activities.

The need to play a super-active role in the protection of and conservation of Nature and wildlife habitats is not just the job of governments today. All stakeholders involved in the travel and tourism industry including tour operators, visitors, NGOs and the local population have a very important contribution to make in this endeavour.

The eco-friendly world we leave behind for our children—and the enjoyment of travelling and exploring and discovering holiday destinations— is their right as well.





A Tryst with Some leading Eco-friendly Destinations in India

CORBETT NATIONAL PARK

Located in Uttarakhand it was the first wildlife reserve of India, to come under the international Project Tiger, with the aim to protect the Royal Bengal Tiger, whose numbers were diminishing rapidly, thanks to hunting and poaching and loss of habitat. Corbett National Park was one of the nine tiger reserves created at the launch of the Project Tiger in 1973. The park is home to over 50 species of mammals including the elephant, leopards, wild boar, sambar and Himalayan black bear. Over 110 species of trees and 51 species of shrubs can be found in Corbett in addition to a stunning array of insect life.

Apart from tiger and elephant spotting, one can also enjoy birdwatching and angling. Strict rules are in place for visitors to behave in a responsible manner while visiting the park. No littering, loud music, harassing animals, breaking flowers or uprooting plants from the forest— these are just basic givens for an eco-friendly safari. The number of safaris is monitored and only permitted along tourist designated routes, so as not to disturb the animals in this beautiful natural habitat.



KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

This superb wildlife habitat has played a pivotal role in the conservation of the endangered great Indian one-horned rhino which was nearing extinction. The remarkable turn-around has been recognised with the UNESCO tag. This is Assam's oldest



game park and can be found at Golaghat along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River in Nagaon district. You can enjoy some wonderful jeep safaris spotting other denizens such as another endangered species, the barasingha, hunted down mercilessly for its magnificent horns, back in the day till the government put a ban on hunting. Keep your eyes peeled for families of elephant and the dangerous Asiatic buffalo who have also made this beautiful game park their home.

Gir National Park and Wild Ass Sanctuary

Two Indian endangered animal species can be found in the protected environs of Gujarat's game parks. The Asiatic lion, which once had a home in many of the country's jungles, lost the battle to the hunters' guns. Now you can only see this magnificent 'king of the jungle' at Gir National Park, and only on a jeep safari

Just 150 km away from Ahmedabad in the Little Rann of Kutch lies the Wild Ass Sanctuary. This UNESCO-acclaimed site is also the



protected habitat of the last remaining population of the Indian Wild Ass, a critically endangered species. It's also the world's last population of the khur sub-species of the wild ass. One of the fastest Indian mammals, it can reach speeds of 70-80 kmph and even outrun a jeep!

Also, a popular birding site, the sanctuary is home to over 350 different species of birds, including the common crane, pelican and the lesser flamingo. On a visit here you will enjoy some unique experiences intermingling with some of the ethnic groups and local tribes who have made the unique region of the Rann their home. Discover the charms and cultural richness of the Kolis, Rabaris, Bajanias, Kutchis, Gujjars and the Bhavadas who live here.

GAHIRMATHA MARINE SANCTUARY

The state of Odisha offers many thrilling experiences for the eco-friendly tourist. One of the most unique encounters one may enjoy here is a boat ride to the nesting and breeding site of the unique Olive Ridley turtles. The Dangamal Conservation Project at the Bhitarkanika Sanctuary offers a window to the unique world of the saltwater crocodile.



Located in Kendrapara district in the state of Odisha, the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary has been playing a critical role in the conservation of the endangered Olive Ridley Turtle. Spread across 672 sq km, Gahirmatha is one of the world's most important and largest nesting and breeding sites for the Olive Ri-

dleys. Olive Ridleys travel for thousands of nautical miles across the Bay of Bengal to arrive at the seaboard of the Bhitarkanika Sanctuary, the entry point to the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

Strict vigilance by the forest department has ensured the protection of this site by monitoring the number of tourists who are permitted to travel by boat to witness this unique phenomenon. Visitors also get to travel through these waterways located in this estuarine deltaic region, which is served by the confluence of three rivers — the Brahmani, Baitarani and Dhamra. The site is famed for its amazing mangrove habitat which itself is rich in a unique range of marine life. A wonderful bonus for the eco-friendly traveller indeed!

Another bonus is the Bhitarkanika Sanctuary itself which is the subcontinent's biggest sanctuary space for the endangered saltwater crocodile.

PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE

Located in the lush and verdant environs of the Western Ghats, Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the country's oldest protected habitats. On offer are several eco-tourism activities at the game park— wonderful treks, boating, a Night Patrol trek with the forest guards and, for the more fit, the Tiger Trail Trek Package— which includes camping in the



forest for a night or two with armed guards. Also known as Thekkady the game park was declared both a Tiger Reserve and National Park by 1982.

By availing any of these community-based ecotourism programmes you will be directly helping in the empowerment of forest dependent communities which will in turn reduce their forest dependence and help in the conservation of the park and the tigers. You will also, thus be contributing in your personal way towards the conservation of Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Donate and promote these conservation efforts and initiatives

- To restore and save the habitat and Ecosystem and thereby protect the endangered wildlife
- To strengthen and disseminate conservation education awareness to a broader community
- To promote wildlife conservation-oriented research projects and to strengthen facilities for protection
- To support the livelihood of Forest Dependent Communities
- All donations are audited and accounted as part of the annual budgeting and will be put through in the annual reports and hence foolproof transparency shall be kept.



HEMIS NATIONAL PARK

If you are travelling to Ladakh, do plan a visit to the beautiful Hemis National Park renowned for its exceptional conservation programme for saving the endangered snow leopard. What makes your visit even more meaningful, as well as the local people, is staying at one of the homestays, which is an intrinsic part of helping support the local economy. This initiative has been designed to use tourism as a conservation tool for the preservation of snow leopards and their ecosystem. Himalayan Homestays champion tourism with a difference, proposing village-based experiences that uphold and share traditional ways of life in the high Himalayas. Established in picturesque villages across Ladakh and Zaskar, these homestays give you the opportunity to immerse yourself in an authentic, eco-friendly and socially responsible manner.

Only 5000-7000 snow leopards are left in the wild! You can help save the snow leopards by donating to specific projects. Your donation helps fund Snow Leopard Research and Conservation Projects. With your help, the work will continue to improve the livelihoods of people who share their mountain habitat with these magnificent cats.

MAWLYNNONG VILLAGE

Located in the misty highlands of Meghalaya, Mawlynnong Village in the East Khasi Hills has gained world fame as a prime example of how cleanliness is next to godliness. UNESCO has acclaimed Mawlynnong as Asia's cleanest village. The village is also renowned for its astounding living



root bridges. The Nohwet Living Root Bridge was formed by weaving the roots of the Ficus Elastica tree around a bamboo framework. The upkeep of this tradition has been a much-venerated activity with the local community down the ages. For the unaware living root bridges are an essential component of traditional Khasi traditional architecture as the village communities relied extensively upon them to navigate the steep valleys and mountains. There are several homestays in the village which serve as a base for exploring local culture and the gorgeous surrounds. Mawlynnong also enjoys 90% literacy and a local community that has a good understanding of how a high civic sense can promote cleanliness and keep you healthy.

The United Nations and World Tourism Organisation saw fit to declare the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. Ecotourism serves as a critical tool and springboard for the conservation of nature and sustainable development. Sustainable development of tourism is also critical for accruing benefits for the local community, socially, economically, and ecologically.

The Indian government has set in place rigorous guidelines to serve this cause, and the growing championing of responsible tourism is closely intertwined with the foreseeable future of this critical component of the tourism landscape.

As identified by the World Economic Forum: “leading hospitality players have embraced the environmental, social and governance (ESG) model and are committed to reducing their carbon footprint. They are also working toward reducing the impact of their buildings by retrofitting old ones and imposing stricter environmental rules on developers, architects, designers and engineers, using certifications such as LEED or BREEAM.

For almost 20 years, these companies have given guidance and regulations to their assets to develop a more sustainable approach to their operations, from renewable energy, energy efficiency and water conservation, to local employment and supporting cultural heritage. They have developed their own corporate responsibility measurement platforms and most hotel management companies have set up science-based targets (SBTi) for 2030.”

Holidaymakers are increasingly making informed choices to spend their leisure time in a more meaningful Earth-friendly way. There is a growing understanding of the need to conduct oneself in a responsible manner while travelling through ecologically-sensitive areas. Leading by example one can show others, not so like-minded, how to sensitize themselves to the importance and need for conservation of flora and fauna. It also means respecting the local community and its rootedness in preserving the natural environs around their village settlements.

You too can contribute in some small way with the knowledge that responsible tourism practices can drive the process of conservation to reduce ecological threats such as protecting wildlife and the forest.

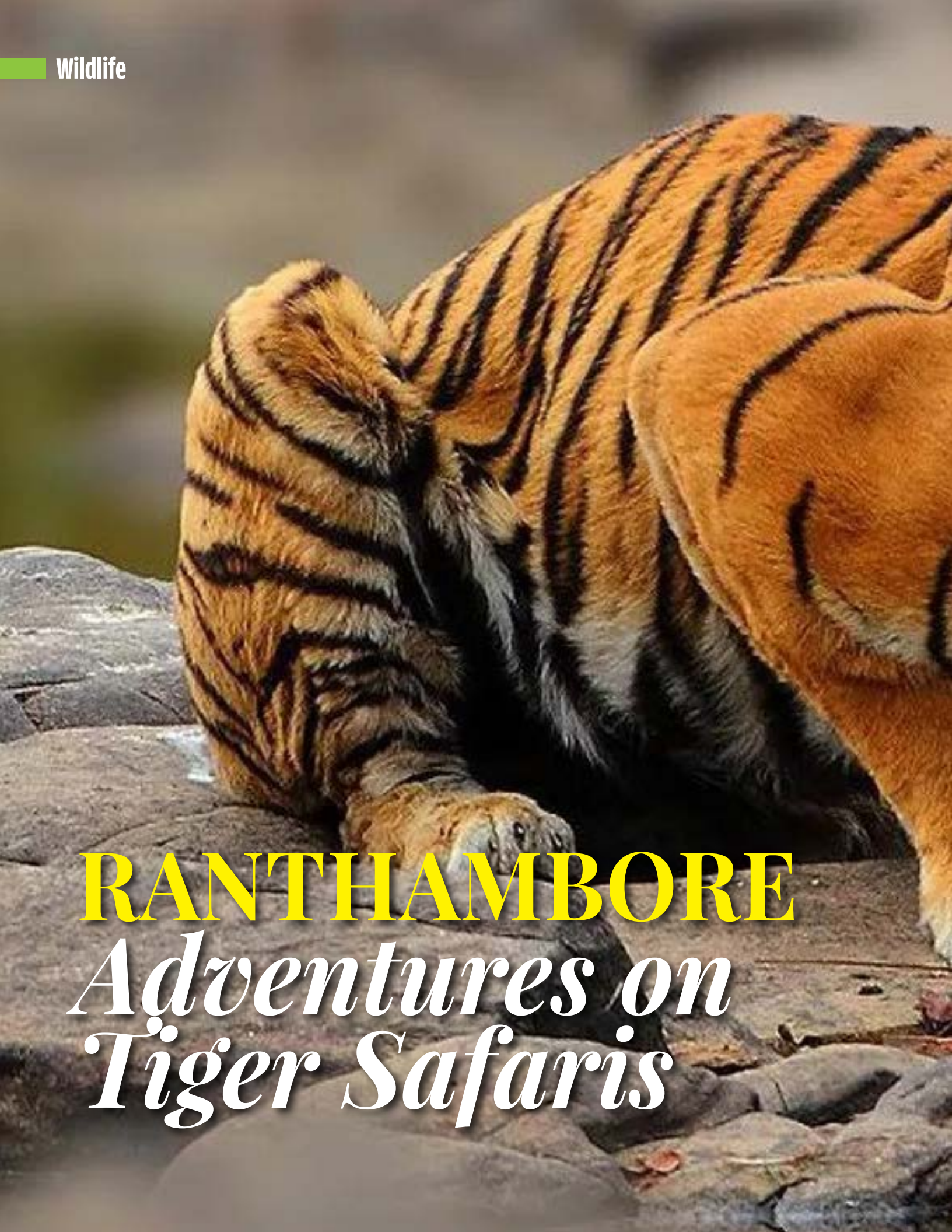
India has a significant geographical advantage owing to its rich natural & Eco-tourism resources: • 70 per cent of the Himalayas • 7,000 km of coastline • Among the one of the three countries in the world with both hot and cold deserts • Ranks 10th in total area under forest cover • Ranks 6th in terms of the number of recognized UNESCO Natural Heritage sites.

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Tourism

Top ten tips for eco-tourists

1. Visit destinations which have conservation value, such as protected areas, World Heritage sites or areas where nature and culture is a key attraction. Include in your trip visits and activities related to conservation projects. Or take this a step further and plan a “doing” holiday! Many organizations plan expeditions where you can spend time working on a local conservation project.
2. Travel light: limit the packaging you bring with you. This will become waste in your holiday destination.
3. Before you travel, learn as much as possible about your destination, about the natural assets, the local people and their culture and any environmental concerns (for example if there is a drought, if forest fires are a major threat ..). This should help to make your journey more enjoyable!
4. Use reputable local tour operators, preferably those who contribute to conservation themselves. Aim to follow any local codes, for example regarding behaviour or dress if visiting cultural or sacred natural sites.
5. Pick nature-friendly accommodation: ask hotels if they are truly eco, for example do they have an environmental policy? Have they implemented energy and water saving measures? Do they contribute to local conservation efforts and support local communities?
6. If you can, try to get to your destination by train or coach – you’ll see more of the country you’re travelling in as well as reducing your carbon emissions.
7. When you’re on holiday, choose wisely what you put on your plate. Choose locally sourced produce that’s in season and be aware that certain Endangered species may be on the menu without your knowledge - ask local conservation organizations for a list of what to look out for.
8. Many wild plants and animals are in great danger ... you can contribute to protecting them by avoiding buying souvenirs made from Endangered species (jewellery made from red coral and turtle carapace, shatoosh and many others). Be careful if you’re bringing plants or seeds back from your travels – check that they couldn’t become invasive species.
9. Wildlife watching can be an incredible experience... but don’t disturb wildlife, for your own safety and theirs!
10. Maintain a relationship with your new friends in the destination, become a member of local conservation organizations.

SOURCE: IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

A close-up photograph of a tiger resting on a dark, textured rock. The tiger's body is curved, showing its orange fur with dark brown stripes. Its head is tucked down, and its front paw is visible, resting on the rock. The background is blurred, showing a natural, outdoor setting.

Wildlife

RANTHAMBORE

Adventures on Tiger Safaris

A close-up photograph of a tiger with orange fur and black stripes, looking down towards a body of water. The tiger's face is the central focus, with its eyes and whiskers clearly visible. The background is blurred, showing some rocks and foliage.

*Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

The world's most loved and photographed tigress had made it her home. Machali, that brave and beautiful wild cat, refused to be intimidated by a 14-foot-long crocodile, he of the pearly teeth and jaws of death. For hours the deadly battle raged between the two—one of the wild world's most fearsome predators on water and land, and the other, the apex predator of the Indian jungles. Her mighty triumph over the croc has long passed into jungle legend.

For over a decade this ferocious tigress, with her high-octane personality, ruled Ranthambore National Park as queen. What gave her name was the unique fish-like mark on the left ear of her face. “Lady of the Lake,” or “Crocodile Killer” as she was also known, left for the heavenly hunting grounds on 18th August 2016. Machali’s death at age 20, made her the world’s oldest-surviving tigress in the wild. Did you know that the government had even launched a commemorative postal cover and stamp to honour Machali for her ecological and economical contributions.

It is jungle folklore such as Machali’s fascinating stories which make Ranthambore National Park, a huge draw for visitors from all over the world. Straddling

the junction of the Aravali and Vindhya hill ranges, Ranthambore National Park is one of India’s premier tiger-spotting destinations. Its unique geographic setting offers some of the most thrilling wildlife experiences you could hope for.

Ranthambhore has a rich and bio-diverse setting, supporting both the tiger and his natural prey in great numbers. Its lazy sprawl over 400 sq km, and if combined with the area of Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary area, is around 500 sq km. The jungles here once served as the private hunting preserve of the Maharajas of the princely state of Jaipur. With hunting officially long banned now you can only hunt the tigers and other wildlife denizens of the park by camera. Today thousands of wildlife enthusiasts from the world over

have immersed themselves in this glorious wilderness and returned home with their own unique stories and photographs.

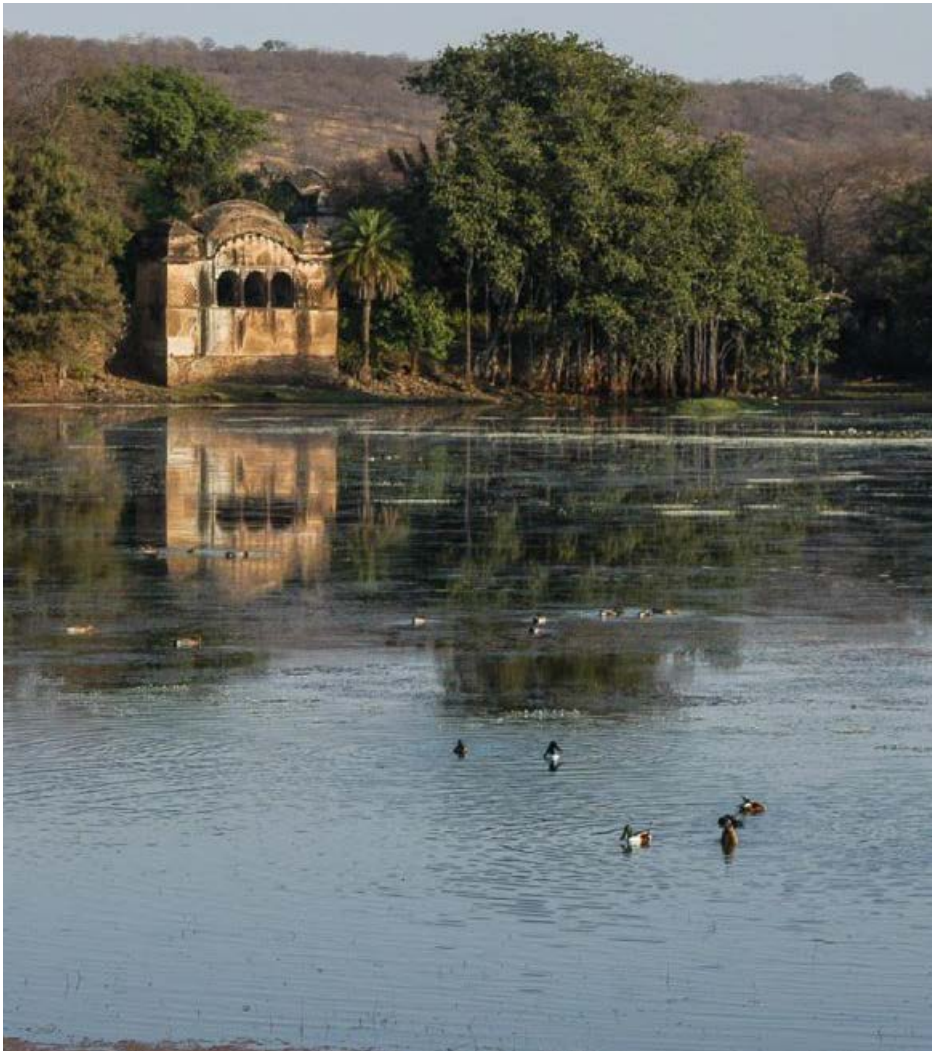
Kings and commoners, presidents and chieftains all have marvelled over the fabulous wealth of faunal and botanical splendour of this game park. Tiger sightings are the big lure, but Ranthambore is also a magnet for birding enthusiasts.

Scattered across the game park are ancient structures and water bodies which also draw the attention of the visitors. The Ranthambore Fort, dating to the 10th century, three lakes and an ancient temple punctuate the luxuriant verdure of the park.

Jogi Mahal, nestled by the **Padma Talao** in Zone 3 of Ranthambore National Park, once served as a hunting lodge for the Jaipur royals. It was transformed into a forest rest house many years ago and accommodated visitors like the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Bill Clinton, and Amitabh Bachchan, when they were touring the park. Another landmark site here is the massive banyan tree purportedly the second largest banyan tree in India. Padma Talao is also a great spot for birdwatching.

The **Ranthambore Fort**, located on the outskirts of the park, is a vivid reminder of a fierce battle fought between Raja Hameer Dev Chauhan and Delhi sultan Ala-ud-din Khilji in 1301. After a long siege, the defenders of Ranthambhore, ancient Ranastambhapura, suffered from a famine and defections of some of Hameer’s own generals. Raja Hameer (a direct descendant of Rajasthan’s legendary Prithviraj Chauhan) and his loyal forces fought to the death. The female contingent of his family collectively committed Jauhar (mass self-immolation) rather than be taken prisoner. Khilji ultimately took over the hill fort and left Ulugh Khan behind as its governor.

The fortress is awash with old palaces, royal court, temples, chhatris bazaars, and water bodies. Largely in ruins— the structures serve as an evocative reminder



of a Ranthambore that defied the growing greed of the Delhi sultanate to gobble up more territories in Rajasthan and neighbouring Gujarat.

Located within the precincts of Ranthambore Fort is the **Trinetra Ganesh Temple**, a huge attraction for local devotees. Dating back to the year 1299, it is believed to be one of Rajasthan's oldest temples. What's unique about it also is that enshrined here is a three-eyed Lord Ganesh, along with his entire family which includes his two wives Riddhi and Siddhi and two sons Shubh and Labh. It becomes a hive of activity during the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations.

Tiger Safaris

A 6-seater vehicle, open from all sides, a gypsy in Ranthambore is available for morning and evening safaris. There are 10 eco-tourism zones in Ranthambore, and a jeep safari is allowed in each of them.

Jeep Safari Bookings Being one of India's most popular tiger parks, safari bookings (available online on <https://fmdss.forest.rajasthan.gov.in/>) should be made well ahead.

Birding excursions

Ranthambore is a huge attraction for birding enthusiasts. Arrive here with binocs and bird book for a truly immersive experience. The **Padma Talao**, the lotus filled waterbody is an excellent spot for bird watching. **Malik Talao** may be small but it is an alluring spot for birdlife. Get your fill of waterfowl and keep your eyes peeled for sightings of **marsh crocodiles** who visit frequently.

Established in 1955 as the Sawai Madhopur Game Sanctuary by the government it was brought under Project Tiger in 1973 as one of India's top Tiger Reserves. By 1980 Ranthambore had also gained the status of a National Park. In 1991 it came to include the adjoining expanses of the **Sawai Man Singh and Keladevi sanctuaries**.



Other attractions

Dastkar Ranthambore

Find your way to a popular artisan hub in Swai Madhopur— this is Dastkar Ranthambore, where you can have a leisurely browse of local crafts. Do your bit for the economy of the local community. The

NGO has been pivotal in empowering local women by supporting traditional crafts like embroidery, block printing, and textiles.

Ranthambore School of Art

The Ranthambore School of Art, located on Ranthambore Road, is a treat for wildlife buffs. Marvel over the creations of local artists who have on display some superb paintings and artworks of tigers and other denizens of the forests at Ranthambore.

Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum of Natural History

Located 9km away from Swai Madhopur, Ramsinghpura village is home to the Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum of Natural History. Steep yourself in the astonishing wilderness heritage of the biodiversity of India's western region. On display are rare plants, animals, and geological specimens. The aim of the museum was to put the spotlight on the critical need to conserve the region's unique flora and fauna.

FACT FILE

Location Near the town of Swai Madhopur, at the juncture of the Aravalli and Vindhya range in SE Rajasthan **Attractions** Tigers, avifauna **Best time to visit** Oct-June **Timings** 7.00 -10.00 .am-

2.30-5.30 pm Safari Jeep and Canter **Getting there** Nearest airport is Jaipur (175km); Swai Madhopur is the nearest railhead 15km away. Resort pick-up **Accommodation** Private and tourist hotels **Website** www.rajasthanwildlife.in , www.projecttiger.nic.in

TIP Check current prices online



Wedding Shopping *Sprees in Delhi*

The line up of things to do for a wedding has everyone in the family in a tizzy...be it for the bride or the groom. While Delhi has long been a haven for trousseau shopping, for every conceivable need, it's always nice to have a handy guide to save us racking our already scrambled brains for the best places to source things. Why it's also helpful is that so many new places and shops have cropped up on this landscape, having a ready reckoner is a godsend to help us navigate our way...





Here goes...

CHANDNI CHOWK

You can't go wrong here because this historic traditional market is totally geared for all the hype of the wedding season. From lehengas to latkans to sherwanis, from pashmina shawls to turbans, from jewellery to wedding bangles it has it all.

You can also source wedding card printers and flowers sellers who can decorate everything from the mandap to the wedding buggy..

Gift boxes of mithai for the wedding can be picked up from the famous Chaina Ram Sindhi Halwai, and dry fruits from the nearby spice market Khari Baoli.

Revive yourself with the famous street food, be it hot jalebis from the Old Famous Jalebiwallah at Dariba, dahi bhalla from Natraj near Central Bank of India, or bedmi puri aloo from Shyam Sweets, and kulfi from Giani.

Best stores to explore: Om Prakash Jawahar Lal; Tek Chand Arjit Goel; Sudhir Bhai Saree Wale; Asiana Couture; Kamal Bhai Saree Sangam; Shrangar; Payal Keyal; Sunehree; Padmavati Jewellers; Panna Lal Roshan Lal Jewellers; Shri Balaji Mansaram Jewellers; Sharma Flowers; Suneja Card Designs; Classic Wedding Designer Cards (Chawri Bazar); RK Cards (Chawri Bazar)



KAROL BAGH

Another city space that's a saviour for the exhausted shopper. The line-up of traditional sareewallahs, jewellers, fancy undies and nightwear stores around Ajmal Khan Road, Arya Samaj Road, Padam Singh Road and the lanes around them will save you plenty of time. It's also got some super home stores, perfect for choosing gifts for the bride and groom and their families.

For a lunch break head to Roshan di Kulfi for its legendary channa-bhatura and its kulfi

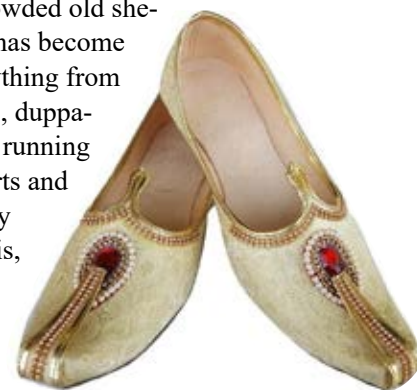
Some stores to explore: Anarkali; Meena Bazaar; Frontier Raas; Frontier Bazaar; Gujralsons (sherwanis); Diwan Saheb; Suneja Sons; Pindi Jewellers; Chottey Lal & Sons; Metro (shoes); Sethi Shoe Co.; Venus Steps; Srishti Khurana (wedding cards)

LAJPAT NAGAR BAZAAR

For South Delhiwallhas, reluctant to head out for the crowded old she-

har, Lajpat Nagar has become a godsend. It stocks everything from gorgeous sarees, lehengas, dupattas, embroidered blouses, running fabric for women and shirts and suit lengths for men, fancy shoes, embellished mojaris, sherwanis and safas.

Your tailor can run up some beautiful outfits





from the wealth of fancy fabrics on sale here. You can pick up jewellery, both real or the costume variety.

There are mehendi wallahs and chura wallahs selling traditional kaleeras; mukuts for the groom are available on rent as are lavish artificial gold jewellery sets for the ladies.

Some good stores to explore: Om Sons Bridal Store; Laljees - A Complete Wedding Store; Wedding Bells - Rent An Attire; Shakuntalam – 1; Vineet's Sarees; Shri Ram And Sons; Ramjisons - The Fabric Shop - Shop No.1; Stelatoes Shoe

GREATER KAILASH I M-BLOCK MARKET

This is another popular South Delhi hub for wedding needs. Glamorous sarees and lehengas, brocade borders, nightwear, jewellery (both real and costume), foreign cosmetics, fancy tops and trousers, juttis.... At some shops you can drive a hard bargain if you are in the mood to.

Some good stores to explore: L'affaire, Meena Bazaar; Hazoorilal and Sons Jewellers Pvt. Ltd; Multani Jewellers; Beli Ram; Babu Churi Wala

HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE MARKET AND SHAPUR JAAT

Awash with many trendy boutiques operated by leading designers both places are your go-to spots for stunning bridal outfits. Take your gold card with you!

Some good boutiques to explore: Ogaan; Bhumiika Grover; Sahiba Singh

RAJOURI GARDEN

Locals in West Delhi love it that Rajouri is a paradise for wedding shopping, saving them time for forays further afield, for all the little things one forgot to buy, in the rush of things, for the wedding ceremonies and events. The market offers an array of lovely bridal wear, male attire and clothing to suit all budgets.

Some good stores to explore: Shakuntlam Xclusif; Roop Vatika by Raj Arora; Flyrobe; Shabad Originals; Wedding Bells-Rent an Attire; Tanishq Jewellery; Muskan Jewellery; Forever- The Shoe Bazar; A&S (footwear)

Stylish Rickshaw Tour of Chandni Chowk



Ritu and Taruna, two enterprising young ladies, decided to quit the pursuit of their careers in the corporate world and share their love for Old Delhi with tourists. With some smart thinking they put their energies together to form When in India Tours, an all-women enterprise to present the extraordinary splendour of the history and heritage of Old Delhi through beautifully curated eco-friendly rickshaw tours.

While jumping into an ordinary rickshaw to explore the Old Quarter

has been an old city tradition, what you will really love is this deeply engaging, guided tour on eco-friendly rickshaws, manned by smart young drivers, who also tend to your basic comfort for the duration of the fun-filled ride.

This was the first tour company to start these Rickshaw Tours in India and have been operating since August 2011 under the name 'WII Tours ~ When in India Tours'.

The overriding inspiration behind the WII Tours has been the firm belief of Ritu and Taruna to showcase what is an

extremely important part of our heritage, culture and history, and the need to be introduced with immense pride to the people who visit India and want to learn about its rich values, religions and traditions.

Their passion for Delhi is reflected in these unique tours which help visitors discover the real Delhi beyond what you find in guide books. These eco-friendly tours are included among 'the top 50 unique trips of the world' by Outlook Traveller. Trip Advisor, with its following of over 50 million monthly visitors



worldwide, has also ranked them as one of the topmost tours in India.

What sets these rickshaws apart is that they are eco-friendly, safe, comfortable and knowledgeably conducted. Taking advantage of their excellent performance have been the likes of National and International dignitaries including the French Ambassador to India, American Ambassador, guests from international organizations like the UN, W.H.O., U.N.E.S.C.O., World Bank, U.N.D.P., Bill Gates Foundation, Microsoft, Google, U.N., Universities and Schools etc.

Truly different

As the tour is conducted on rickshaws, they can cover a wider area than a walking tour.

These tours of Old Delhi are organised on luxury Rickshaws which have been specially designed to provide comfort and ensure the safety of the guests. These Rickshaws are mechan-

ically very sound and built on double frames for strength and sturdiness. They have cushioned seats, seat belts, chillers with complimentary drinks, pedestals to step on and off, collapsible canopy for a better view of the surroundings, first aid box, bottle holders etc. They are sanitized before and after each tour.

While jumping into an ordinary rickshaw to explore the Old Quarter has been an old city tradition, what you will really love is this deeply engaging, guided tour on eco-friendly rickshaws, manned by smart young drivers

Taking off

When the guests gather together at the designated meeting point for the beginning of the tour a quick orientation is provided by the expert guide about the history of the seven cities of Delhi, Old Delhi, Emperors and dynasties, Mutiny of 1857, British Empire, India's independence, Red Fort, Indian religions etc. To visualize the beauty of the bygone days, the trained guide will give an accurate description of the sights, along with rare then-and-now photos and sketches.

Guests are provided wireless audio headsets which enable them to clearly listen to the live commentary given by the guide. Although the guests and guide will be on different rickshaws, these wireless headsets ensure that the guests are constantly in touch with the guide and do not miss out on any important and interesting information shared by the guide. These headsets also enhance safety in the crowded parts of the city.

All the staff is fully vaccinated. The passionate Guides act as ambassadors of Old Delhi. They are professionally qualified with excellent command over the English language and have diverse work. Their Rickshaw Drivers are well trained and well-groomed with uniforms and ID cards. Guests are free to interact with the guide and ask him any questions they have. At the end of the tour, the guide also coordinates with the drivers of the guests to safely hand them over.

To make the experience even more holistic, a book which has been specially drafted with the help of experts in the field of Indian history, is given to each guest.

Once you are seated comfortably and suitably belted up and equipped with your wireless headsets, the tour sets off on a ride of a lifetime through the narrow by-lanes, the vibrant bazaars lined with colorful shops. Many photo ops moments pop up amongst the glitter of shops selling wedding accessories,

brocades, bangles, jewelry, bridal outfits, turbans, crystal boxes etc.

You then travel through some quiet parts of the Old Quarter, winding your way through lanes leading to the residential areas to understand the culture, lifestyle and the living traditions of the old Delhi residents. Unmissable here are the architectural riches such as intricately carved stone facades, generous courtyards, lattice screens, ornate doors and windows of the Havelis which were built by wealthy merchants, nobles or members of the royal families. Some of these Havelis are still privately owned and used for residential purposes, others are being used commercially by local craftsmen and showrooms. You'll also get to see the men and women, dressed in traditional clothing going about their daily routines in these quiet spaces.

Old Delhi is a maze and there are many beautiful ancient temples mysteriously hidden in its different corners. You will get to visit some of these temples, some of which feature opulent entrances, minutely carved walls, pillars, ceil-

ings inlaid with gold, silver and glass. A highlight too are the beautifully adorned deities in these shrines. The guide will also talk to you about the rituals and practices followed by various religions. Included in the tour are the iconic Jama Masjid, Digamber Jain Temple along with Birds' Hospital and the historical Sis Ganj Gurudwara.

The tour of Khari Baoli, Asia's biggest wholesale spice market is pure delight for its atmospherics and vibrant ambience. As you soak in the aromas and sights of exotic spices and flowers you are provided with an overview of the Indian cuisines, spices, their therapeutic uses and cosmetic benefits.

Sampling the street food that Old Delhi is famed for worldwide is one of the best parts of this tour. From jalebis to samosas to pooris and kachoris... take that wonderful dive into Chandni Chowk's ancient culinary heritage.

The tour route is thoroughly planned and is a perfect potpourri of palaces, mansions, shrines and bazaars. Furthermore, the routes can be customized based on the interests of the guests. ■

Some Tour Options

Shah Jahan Tour (Group Tour): An extensive 3- hour group tour of Old Delhi which starts at 9:00 am every morning (except Sundays) and covers 20 main sites that includes palaces, mansions, elegant shrines and colorful bazaars.

Mumtaz Mahal Tour (Private Tour): A 3- hour private hour tour of Old Delhi which includes a mix of the attractions included in Shah Jahan Tour and some sites which are a part of our 'Hidden Gems Tour'.

Jahanara Tour (Private Tour): A great tour for people, who have limited time but would still like to get a feel of Old Delhi.

Food Tour (Private Tour): The tour of Old Delhi takes you inside some of those eateries which are popular among both the locals and the tourists.

Tour for Kids (Private): An activity-based tour for your whole family with a captivating route that can be customized based on your interests and the age group of the kids

Hidden Gems (Private): Some offbeat and awe-inspiring places which are hidden behind the hustle bustle and modern structures of Old Delhi

Spices & Scents Tour (Private): The tour takes you to the heart of the old city an Asia's largest Spice Market, called Khari Baoli; you also visit and some fascinating perfume shops

Shopping Tour (Private): Old Delhi has some of the grandest, oldest yet extremely cost effective traditional local markets in India.



Sustainable Ways to be Fit as a Fiddle for Trekking and Hiking

Backpacked for your next trek?

Here are a few things to keep in mind to have a stress-free adventure.

Strength and Stamina, Flexibility, Stretching and Breathing are the four pillars of a stress-free hike. Trekking grades hinge on components such as length, duration, altitude, type of trail, the gradient, and average hours of trekking on a single day.

Strength and Stamina

Legs, core and shoulders are the main body parts which require the most attention when you start building up your strength and stamina for a trek.

Your pre-trek prep should also include meditation/or any mindfulness practices to help calm your mind and ramp up your mental strength.

Being physically fit and mentally alert, by building leg strength (think-- thighs, glutes and knees), stepping up one's cardiovascular endurance, and strengthening your core (with planks and hip raises), is something even the most prolific trekker is adept at, to enjoy a comfortable and good trekking/hiking experience.

Flexibility

Flexibility refers to enjoying unrestricted movement of muscles and joints. It plays an important role while travelling and hiking as it helps to face challenging terrains with confidence and reduces the risk of injuries. It also provides better coordination and the correct posture which helps facilitate climbing for longer periods with less strain on the muscles and joints.

Focus on flexibility and breathing to make your steps along the trail much



smoother and less laborious. The advantages of flexibility include improved performance in physical activities, helping joints in full range of motion, reduction in risk of injury, increased flow of blood and ease of carrying out day to day activities.

Stretching

Did you know stretching before and after trekking is important? Stretching is essential for improving flexibility and mobility of the joints. Stretching before and after hiking can prevent muscle fatigue, soreness and tension. Stretching reduces muscle stiffness. These stretching exercises can be easily done at home.

Before beginning stretching, the body must be warmed up. The best stretching exercises include knees to chest stretch, hamstring floor stretch, spinal stretch, piriformis stretch and seated hip stretch.

Breathing

Similarly, breathing is also an essential

component of trekking and hiking. Practicing deep breathing as part of your daily routine improves your ability to cope with stress, anxiety and muscle tension.

Breathing helps to maintain one's pace and increases stamina while walking on varied terrains. It also helps in improving one's endurance to walk longer on the trail.

Staying Ahead

Even the most experienced trekkers go into the groove at least a month ahead before hitting the trail for a trekking adventure.

The key to trek training is all about discovering your own pace as a stepping stone to ramping up your fitness and strength from there.

And when you walk, while body strength training, do it with a backpack to get the feel of the real thing! The other important thing to keep in mind is to choose a grade of trek according to your current level of fitness— to really enjoy your adventure. ■

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