

May 2017

Sterling



A Sterling Holidays Magazine

WORLD

It's a wonderful world!

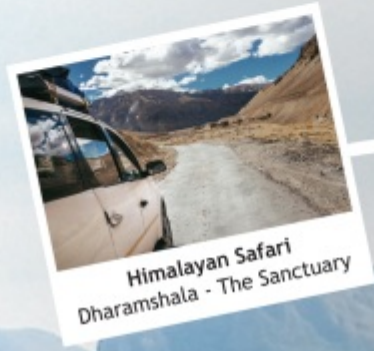


Wildlife Holidays
It's roaring...

Global Destination
Adventure
Art & Culture
Food & Drink
Photo Feature & more...

Hello Summer

Discover an experience,
enjoy every moment!



Himalayan Safari
Dharamshala - The Sanctuary



Paragliding
Mussoorie - Dancing Leaves



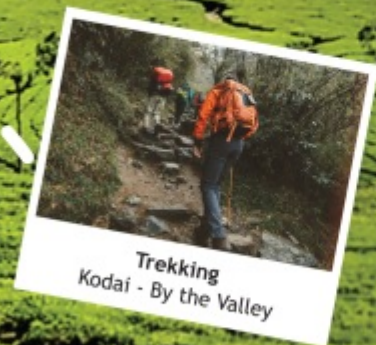
Hot Air Balloon
Lonavala - Under the Over



Scuba Diving
Goa - Club Estadia



River Rafting
Kufri - The White Ridge



Trekking
Kodai - By the Valley

“

Two roads diverged
in a wood and I took the one
less travelled by,
and that has made all the difference.

”

- Robert Frost

Namaste!

Greetings to you and your loved
ones. It's summer time and let's
look forward to a season of
holidays, fun and happiness!

Summer is the time to rejuvenate and unwind, the time to recharge your batteries, find inspiration and live life to the fullest. Whether you plan to vacation in the mountains or visit the magnificent jungle resorts, this is the season where you catch up on some much-needed rest and relaxation. From the midst of all the noise and pollution to an escape amongst lush greenery and fresh air, it is a place where all the trials of city life are put to rest.

The choice of holiday destinations has always followed a thematic trend but over the last year there's been a tectonic shift on a global scale. Wildlife tourism has taken the centre stage, travellers would rather holiday in a resort on the edge of Kanha; go tiger spotting in Corbett or watch the bird migration in Bandhavgarh.

The cover story in this issue highlights this shift in holiday destinations and trends that are defining the new age traveller. We examine the rise of wildlife tourism in India and explore the multitude of alternatives that are waiting for the

adventurer and explorer. There's a yearning for holidays that offer more than just guided day tours. Wildlife tourism appeases that sense of yearning, it brings with it a certain sense of surprise and excitement. For the new age traveller, it couldn't get any better.

Feel free to reach out to us if you need any other information or assistance. With so much happening this summer, we look forward to a season of happy vacationing with you. Come along, explore and discover - an exciting experience awaits you!

Happy Holidaying!


Ramesh Ramanathan
Managing Director

FROM THE MD'S DESK



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DESTINATION JUNGLE

The wild is enticing. The roar of the jungle is drawing people by the hordes. Breaking out the binoculars to search the finest species from the faunal realms and discovering new national parks are becoming the favourite pastime of the nation. A wildlife holiday is fast gaining a formidable reputation that no other holiday can match.

Hill stations are beautiful, beaches are cool and heritage zones are glorious. But yet the exotic and alluring wildlife is capturing the imagination of people like never before. Holidayers, vacationers, travellers - and everyone from students to corporates, families to kids, and honeymooners to adventure junkies are thronging to catch a glimpse of the wild. Jungles and wildlife as a destination is shaking up the holiday space and is emerging as the most favoured choice for anyone in search of an exciting getaway.



The land has something to do with it.

India has a rich and diverse wildlife, a land blessed with some of the most charismatic species in the world. From the one-horn rhinos to the royal Bengal tiger and the masquerading Asiatic lions and Elephants - there is so much to see and explore. India is home to 400 species of mammals, 1250 birds, 460 reptiles, 240 amphibians and 2550 fishes - among the highest species count for any country. Travellers are opening up to an astounding terrain dotted with over 120 national parks, 18 bio reserves and over 500 wildlife sanctuaries. Along with Africa, India is the planet's gatekeeper of the wild, making the country one of the hotspots for wildlife tourism in the world.

Wildlife tourism is on the rise.



The travellers are thronging in.

Visitors and tourists from all over India and the world are visiting the national parks. The famed Jim Corbett Park in Uttarakhand and exotic Ranthambore in Rajasthan have won international acclaim and are considered as one of the best wildlife destinations on the planet. The fascinating aspect is that travellers are not only lapping up the big parks. The wildlife sanctuaries dotting the cities have become a happy hunting ground for families and holiday makers. Whether it is the Bannerghatta park just outside of Bangalore or the Dudhwa national park near Lucknow, or Sanjay Gandhi park in Mumbai, people from all parts of the country are packing their bags, families and everything else to get to these wildlife destinations!



Take a short break into the wild.

The concrete jungle and a busy lifestyle also has a role to play. People in the cities and neighbouring towns have started taking shorter holidays. Weekend getaways to these wildlife destinations are within driving distance from the cities and are a perfect way to recharge the body and mind. In fact, during peak season, which is mostly during the summer vacations, it is very difficult to get bookings at these places as they're completely full. A 3 nights/4 days package to a wildlife reserve is the most popular among vacationers.



Experiential yet relaxing.

An encounter in the wild can be surreal and breathtaking. It is not an everyday occurrence to see an Indian bison, an animal of monstrous strength looking into your eye or spot an exotic bird settling down to roost. A wildlife holiday offers an experience that is unparalleled. It is a truly experiential holiday which delivers a heady mix of adventure, excitement and thrill. People are moving beyond holidays that include too much on their itinerary. They now prefer experiential holidays where one can relax.

"It's not only avid travellers, from student groups to young honeymooners and corporate executives - all are flocking to the wild."

"The wildlife is becoming the ultimate place to be - a mix of excitement, adventure, solitude, thrill and nature, which no other holiday destination can offer."





Luxury in the lap of wilderness!

An escape into the jungle has become incredibly luxurious, with resorts, hotels, eco-tourism villages, camp sites - all offering vacationers a multitude of options. Holidaying in the wild has never been easier and gives you the best of both worlds, where you can unwind in the lap of luxury without letting go the raw experience of the wild.



All follow the King of the Jungle!

The majestic tiger was missed. Apart from the occasional sightings on post cards and coffee table books, the real thing was never on. That's now changing. India's big cat population has risen from 1010 in 2010 to nearly 2500 in 2016 which is driving a booming wildlife industry. Wildlife lovers are thronging to the tiger reserves in the country, from the famed Jim Corbett in Uttarakhand to Ranthambore in Rajasthan. Visitors from all over India and not just the state are taking to these parks in a big way.

While budget holidays to tiger reserves are more common, vacationers are now also opening up to the idea of ultra-luxury holidays in the wild, and are looking at reserves like Ranthambore, Corbett and Bandhavgarh as vacation options. Reserves in Nagarhole, Wayanad and Madhumalai in the south have also become quite popular, with resorts around these reserves being completely booked during peak season, which is from October to June.

TRENDING IN THE WILD



WHAT	WHERE	WHEN
Elephant Safari	Kaziranga in Assam Periyar in Kerala	Open all year. Best Time: November to June
Tiger Spotting	Ranthambore in Rajasthan Corbett in Uttarakhand	Best Time: February to May
Bird Watching	Bandhavgarh and Kanha in Madhya Pradesh	Best Time: October to July
Rhino Tour	Kaziranga in Assam	Open all year. Best Time: November to June
Lion Safari	Gir in Gujarat	Best Time: February to May

More things to do: Jeep and night safaris, photography, trekking, nature trails



Explore the Unexplored

Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary

Tucked away in the lush vegetation of Western Ghats, and listed as a wildlife sanctuary in 2011, the area is famous for Barapede Caves, the only breeding area of Wroughton's free-tailed bat. The sanctuary is situated in Belgaum district of Karnataka.

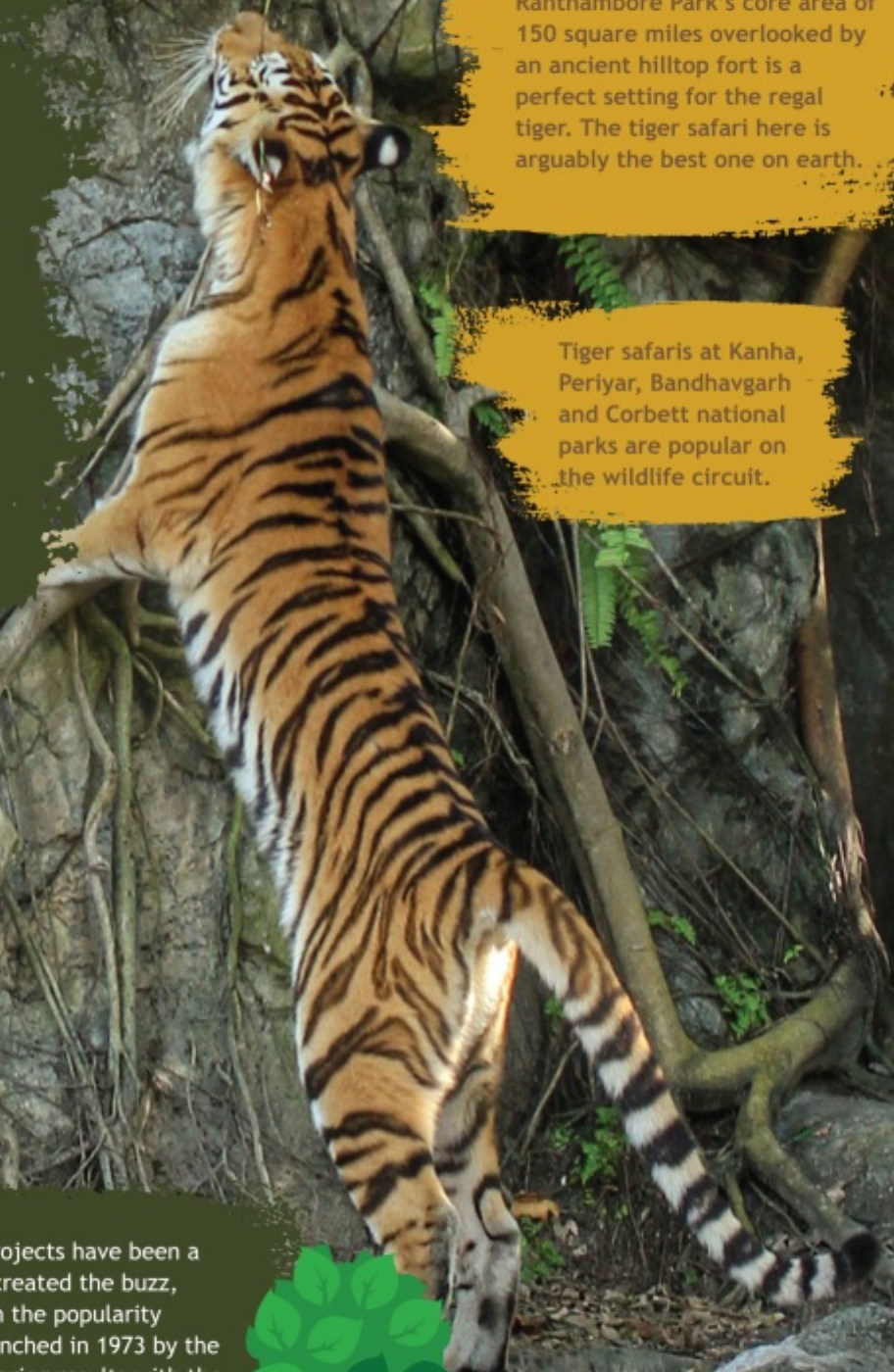
Gautala Autramghat Sanctuary

This reserved and protected forest area is situated about 60 km from Aurangabad city in Maharashtra. It is a good place to spot a large number of animals like jungle cat, barking deer, leopard cat, jackal, fox, wild boar and the Wanderoo and Chinkara.

India's flagship conservation projects have been a huge success and importantly created the buzz, and generated fanfare. High on the popularity charts, is the Project Tiger, launched in 1973 by the Government which has seen roaring results with the tiger count in India multiplying over the years.

Ranthambore Park's core area of 150 square miles overlooked by an ancient hilltop fort is a perfect setting for the regal tiger. The tiger safari here is arguably the best one on earth.

Tiger safaris at Kanha, Periyar, Bandhavgarh and Corbett national parks are popular on the wildlife circuit.



Las Islas Filipinas

Land of over 7000 islands, the Pearl of the Orient Seas, and the mysterious force that draws you back for more. What is it about the Philippines?



Ask a stranger how much they know about the country of Philippines and they'll tell you of the great malls they've heard of, or maybe even seen. Ask them to name a few places and they'll tell you how advanced the cities of Manila and Cebu have become. Ask them about their culture and they'll tell you that karaoke is their national sport.

cultures, untouched natural beauty, and more importantly, genuine kindness and generosity of its people. Named in 1543 after King Philip II of Spain, its official title is the Republic of the Philippines, and it spreads across 7,107 islands.

Some of the most beautiful hidden gems in the world can be found here. While each destination provides delicious treats for the senses, the journey is what makes it most memorable.

But, beyond the many stereotypes that make up the surface of this beautiful nation, lies a history rich in multiple

Sterling advantage



With Sterling Holidays Vacation Ownership Membership programmes, you can avail RCI affiliation which entitles you to exchange holidays in over 100 countries including Philippines.

For more details, get in touch with us at 1800 3000 2727*
*Monday to Saturday | 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM

So, what are the places in the Philippines that no one told you about?



Tarak Ridge in Mariveles, Bataan

A stunning blend of hills and the sea, Tarak Ridge is known for steep slopes, rocky terrains, sharp rocks, and breathtaking viewpoints.



The Secret Lagoon in El Nido, Palawan

Also known as the Miniloc Lagoon after the island, it is hidden behind walls of large rocks and is more than just tricky to find. With crystal blue water, this gorgeous spot is only accessible by squeezing oneself through small openings in the cliffs.

Sagada, Mountain Province

Famous for its hanging coffins, Sagada is bursting with sights for every kind of traveller. With caves to explore, waterfalls to bathe under, hills to climb, and views to behold, it is limitless in landscape feasts and scenic routes.



Puerto Princesa, Palawan Island

Puerto Princesa is a must-see for being the longest underground river in the world. It is also included in the new list of 7 Wonders of Nature.



Vulcan Point Island, San Nicolas, Batangas

It is an island found within Main Crater Lake, within Volcano Island, within Lake Taal, and within Luzon! This is also within the Philippines, within the Pacific Ocean!

How does one travel to these amazing hidden treasures?



Saying you island hopped is a fancy thing to say. It is also a difficult thing to do. Made up of thousands of tiny islands, there's more than one way to get around depending on your budget that can be categorized under 3 options. By land, water, and sky.

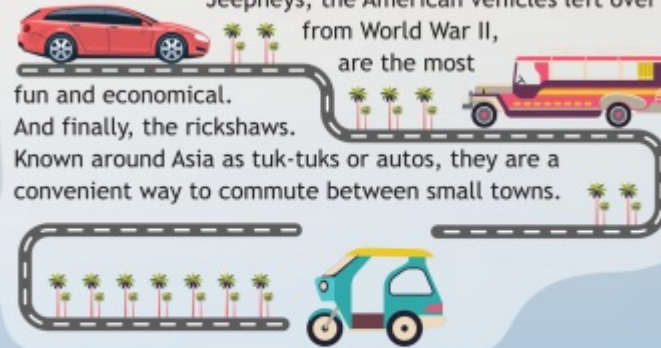
By Land

Trains are comfortable but irregular; so be prepared to wait a while.



Taxis are surprisingly cheap and a great option. Hitchhikers can rejoice over the cost-effectiveness of travelling by bus.

Jeepneys, the American vehicles left over from World War II, are the most fun and economical. And finally, the rickshaws. Known around Asia as tuk-tuks or autos, they are a convenient way to commute between small towns.



By Water

Traversing on water in the Philippines is inevitable. Boats are the most common and most economical mode of transport. These include Bancas, Ferryboats, and the SuperCat.



By Sky

Most often the cheapest way to get around the Philippines is by plane. This also gives you a chance to get a bird's eye view of the islands.



Summer festivals to immerse yourself in

Among the seemingly infinite sights to see, there are also a tonne of local festivals that need to be experienced first-hand.



Aliwan Festival

April 2017, Manila

An annual cultural event, it is commonly referred to as 'The Mother of All Fiestas' since its inception in 2003. Resorts nearby: Fontana Hot Spring Leisure Parks, Pampanga, Philippines. Tel: 63-45-599-5000

Pasalamat Festival

April 2017, Negros Occidental

Celebrating the great harvest, the Pasalamat Festival gathers both locals and tourists for its flashy costumes, masks, and traditions.

Resorts nearby: Casa Del Mar Golf Resort, Cebu, Philippines. Tel: 63-32-344-6181

Pahiyas Festival

May 2017, Lucban City, Quezon

One of the country's most flamboyant festivals, it celebrates the collective harvests to honour the patron saint of farmers, also known as San Isidro Labrador.

Resorts nearby: Fontana Hot Spring Leisure Parks, Pampanga, Philippines. Tel: 63-45-599-5000

While your options may seem endless, every destination has a 'Tito' or 'Tita', waiting to welcome you with a tall glass of cold halo-halo, and a plate of steamed hot rice with adobo, a nationwide favourite. While not particularly wealthy, the hospitality found in every home is incomparable to anywhere else you might have been, and its pros outweigh the limitation of luxury one might expect of a holiday. Once a visitor, always a 'Kabayan' (a common term used to address a fellow Filipino) and every bitter-sweet departure will leave you chanting, 'Mabuhay ang Pilipinas' which means, long live the Philippines.

India's 6 Most Inspiring Adventurers

Ever felt like you want the breeze of the Himalayas on your face while sitting in your corporate meeting? Have you longed for the warm white beaches of Tahiti, and felt the waves kiss your feet while preparing a boring PowerPoint presentation.

Most of us Indians prefer to play it safe, when it comes to choosing between career and "pointless passions which yield no money". It is almost a tradition, to seek a secure job and "settle down" before we wander into uncharted territory.

Don't get us wrong. Whether it is diving into the waters of Lakshadweep and splashing along the coral reefs or going on the dangerous 500 km road journey from Manali to Leh; we have the heart to do it.

Fun loving Indians exist as a species; however, very few even think of dedicating an entire lifetime to travel and adventure.

Here are 6 Indians who looked beyond white-collared jobs, refused to live a mediocre existence, charged-up their passion and reached for their dreams.



Bharadwaj Dayala

He is one of the first Indians to trot the globe solo on a motorcycle. Bharadwaj started his journey from Visakhapatnam in April 2006, covered 47,000kms and travelled across five continents. He toured 14 countries across Africa, Europe, America, Australia and Asia on his Indian-made Karizma motorcycle.

He finally arrived back home in October 2007. Bharadwaj says that he would experience fear, uncertainty and apprehension at times. However, his love for travel and quest to know about different cultures, kept him going. He usually prefers taking up outdoor jobs, just to keep himself prepped up and ready



to go. He is also a paraglider, rock climber and trekker. He was felicitated by Prince of Dubai Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in 2013, for his 'exceptional achievement' in worldwide travels and for his 'enduring commitment to promoting global goodwill, friendship and cultural understanding'.



Rutavi Mehta

Rutavi began her adventure as a 16-year-old. She went on a solo trip to Kolhapur, where she encountered a 70-year-old woman in traditional Marathi attire, riding a Rajdoot motorcycle. A short conversation ensued, where the lady told Rutavi that she is currently on a bike trip with her husband. Hearing this, Rutavi's passion for adventure got an instant boost in the arm. Since then, she has donned



many hats as hotelier, internet marketer and sales & marketing executive. However, her yearning for travel and adventure has remained consistent. She also became proficient in the two critical skills needed for adventure travel. She took up a course and learnt the intricacies of travel photography. And, thanks to a project at Royal Enfield, she also learned to ride a motorcycle. She has gradually evolved

as a biker and photographer. She also met Urvashi Patole in 2011 and became a member of 'The Bikerni', a platform for women who ride motorcycles or aspire to ride bikes. Rutavi has travelled solo to 1500 destinations so far. Rutavi now works with several tourism boards as an independent travel consultant. She also runs a travel blog Photokatha.in where she regularly blogs about her incredible journeys.

Dhillan Chandramowli

Dhillan is a Radio Jockey who was formerly with Worldspace satellite radio. He was looking for adventure, his ultimate passion. Upon a friend's suggestion, he decided to try rock climbing. A minor injury while trekking led him to train further, polish his climbing skills and become a more proficient climber. Dhillan now switches back and forth between his freelance job as a music specialist and rock climbing. After becoming a father in 2015, Dhillan has taken a unique stand on travel with kids. He observes that people raise a hue



and cry about taking their children for vacations. Dhillan prefers to take his child to exotic holidays and adventure trips. He makes it a point that his kids don't even remember, since when they have been out travelling. Dhillan encourages outdoor-friendly-parenting. He plans to make nature so appealing to kids that they develop an inner sense of responsibility towards its conservation. That is how he plans to tackle huge issues like global warming and climate change, by starting out at the grassroots level.



Jay Kannaiyan

Jay knew that there was an adventurer inside him waiting to break free. When this urge grew and became unbearable, he finally relented. Leaving his job in Chicago, Jay decided to venture around the globe in his Suzuki DR650. He sold his car as well as his house to stack up and set forth on this journey of a lifetime. Jay always feels more at home while on the road, rather than at home. It was during the 103,000 km adventure spanning 33 countries that he found



personal gratification. Jay deliberately planned the route through developing nations, to feel the touch of nature and experience life in the countryside. He could gain valuable insight by observing people's lifestyle. Jay realised that some things are universal among people, regardless of culture. Rural citizens were more open and welcomed him with outstretched arms. Even when they had no material things to offer, he could feel their warmth. However, in the developed

regions and cities, people are richer but not as open minded when it comes to sharing. They are too cautious and have a fear of strangers. The irony is that more and more people are moving to the cities. Jay runs a company called Jammin Global Adventures (JamminGlobal.com) in Delhi which offers motorcycle trips to the best parts of the world he has travelled. That is how Jay plans to share the pie and have his fellow countrymen grab a bite from his incredible travels.



Kavitha Kanaparthi

Kavitha likes to tread challenging terrain. It is by running in the midst of nature that she experiences a new high. Her passion for running started in her teens. However, a life-changing incident occurred while she was 15. She went out for a jog and was hit by a bus and broke multiple bones. When she

awoke from the coma, she never reconsidered her options, as many ordinary mortals would have. She went on to complete her studies in the USA. She is an electrical engineer as well as an interior designer. She started Globe Racers (GlobeRacers.com) in 2009,

as a way of giving back to the society. It is a group which identifies, coaches and promotes endurance athletes in the sport of cycling and running. It is a network of private and corporate sponsors, established to encourage athletes and endurance sport.



Sandeep Singh Sandhar

After his stint with brands like Fastrack, Samsung and Maruti, Sandeep found his true calling in the world of travel. He has journeyed across 26 states in India and scaled several peaks. It was a homestay trip to Ladakh

which changed the direction of his life. Sandeep found that his return flight just wouldn't take off for three straight days. It gave him time to contemplate and rise beyond the ordinary. It was like a blessing in disguise and led to

the formation of 'Road Less Travelled' (Rltgo.com). It began as a concept and took the shape of a fully-fledged organisation catering to tourists who love to embark on a fun-filled adventure.



The magnificent lives of these six Indians who dared to rise beyond mundane existence and carve a niche for themselves, inspire us to tread the unknown path and reach for our dreams.



A riot of colours

The exuberance of life can find expression through colours. Unravelling the canvas of Holi in its myriad hues, emotions and details is a journey of discovery which never ceases to amaze.

Place: Dindi – By the Godavari | **Photograph by:** Kunal Daswani

Kunal Daswani is one of India's leading photographers. He has a passion for creating powerful images both for art as well as commerce, as long as they tell a story.

GIVE IT YOUR
BEST SHOT.
GET FEATURED.

Whether you are a pro or a hobbyist or simply have a keen eye for a great pic, we welcome you to share your best holiday photographs with us. Selected photos will be featured in this magazine. Mail your entry, mentioning the subject line as "Sterling World Photo Feature" to sterlingworld@sterlingholidays.com

The Vanishing Art of Kathakalakshepam



As the sun goes down the bird-chirping grows louder; the crowd starts gathering in the heart of the city. They begin to multiply as the twilight disappears and reveals the glittery night sky. People are seated in the large open ground which faces the stage, talking animatedly in anticipation of the excitement. The scene comes alive in a few minutes. The leading performer arrives on stage wearing a dhoti. He breaks the silence of the night, with a cheerfully enchanting

voice as he begins narrating the tale. Musicians with percussion instruments join him in mesmerising the audience. This is Kathakalakshepam, a forgotten art form with a rich history and a stellar lineage of immaculate practitioners, which is unfortunately vanishing into oblivion. The primary purpose of Kathakalakshepam is to imbibe values like truth, devotion and righteousness in the minds of people. The storyline is usually adapted from the two great Indian Epics or Holy Puranas.

As the story unfolds, the audience gets spellbound. The chatter disappears as the artist takes control and his fellow musicians join the symphony. The crowd stays glued to its place; just like a troop of modern day movie-buffs watching an epic 3D movie in the multiplex. The above is a glimpse of how evenings of a bygone era brought people together as they learnt more about human values and their culture.



Kathakalakshepam: The Art and its Roots

So let's begin our journey into how it all started. Thanjavur Krishna Bhagavathar (1847-1903), is rightly called the father of Kathakalakshepam (also known as Harikatha). This art form reached its pinnacle during his time. The traditional 'Katha' format has the leading artist standing throughout the entire 5-hour-performance. The performer would wear ankle bells and enact the whole scene with perfect body language and expert voice modulation.

There are a host of famous personalities inspired by Thanjavur Krishna Bhagavathar, like Soolamangalam Soundarraja Bhagavathar, Embar Srirangachariar and Embar Vijayaraghavachariar. Many women performers also made a mark; the notable ones are C Saraswathi Bai and Banni Bai; the former being one of the first female Harikatha exponents. She broke the tradition where only Brahmin men were allowed to practise and propagate this art form.

The Divine Provincial Flavours

A Maratha Flavour

When the Maratha kings ruled Thanjavur, there were cultural exchanges, which paved the way for this art form to acquire the flavour of their 'Kirtans'. These kings were not just patrons, but also musicians and scholars who were well aware of the intricacies of this art form. These short and lively Marathi songs came as a breath of fresh air and were welcomed by audiences.



Kathakalakshepam in Andhra Pradesh

It originated in coastal Andhra in the 19th century and is prevalent even today. Haridasus go round the city during Dhanurmasam which precedes the Sankranti festival. Ajjada Adibhatla Narayana Dasu founded this Telugu Harikatha tradition. His Kavyas and Prabandhas have given it a unique flavour.



Sangeetha Upanyasam

As time progressed, a shorter version called Sangeetha Upanyasam came into being. It had more music and less story. This type of narration was a crowd-puller; TS Balakrishna Sastrigal was one of the prominent performers of this art form.



Ilakkiya Sorpozhipu

Sangeetha Upanyasam has a Tamil counterpart, called 'Ilakkiya Sorpozhipu' (literary form) or the 'Isai Sorpozhipu' (musical form). Thirumuruga Kripananda Variyar and Pulavar Keeran were among the famous practitioners of the latter.



Kathakalakshepam: The Past and Present

The essence of Kathakalakshepam is a far cry from that of the bygone era; it is more of discourse. In its heyday, it was enacted by the story tellers. Their facial expressions coupled with the voice modulation

had a magical effect. The whole story began to play in their listeners' imagination, as the hypnotic voice of the artist guided their minds to perceive the story in the way

it should be. The space between the audience and the storyteller seemed to be covered with an imaginary 3D screen where each one envisioned the story and the

characters came alive. Today's Harikatha is devoid of that magic; people also miss the musical element of the story.



Reviving Kathakalakshepam

Many organisations are doing their best to revive this art form. We hope that their quest to rekindle this unique tradition bears fruit and that the next generation gets a glimpse of its beauty.

Zahana



Peenal Jain
Founder, Zahana

Zahana started as a clothing line four years ago and gradually grew into a jewellery brand ensuring trendy and quality products. There is a versatile range available for all occasions. Peenal Jain, founder of Zahana says, "We strive to get products which are unique and easy on the pocket. We create our trends to stand out from anyone in the market". Understanding the constantly changing fashion scenario, Zahana supports the trend shift to artificial jewellery. The products are extremely affordable and one can have more than one design in the same kind of stone, colour and style. Catering to a strong client base comprising of young girls, the jewellery matches the Indian style of design which appeals to them. Boho is the most loved trend when it comes to carrying an all-day-long look. Vivid hues and tassels are also preferred. A mix and match of western outfits with Indian jewellery is evergreen.

Trendformers The Radiance of Success



Fashion

Bombay Bead



Sumita Acharya
Founder,
Bombay Bead

An accomplished painter and entrepreneur with extensive experience in apparel and footwear retail, Sumita Acharya, started Bombay Bead as an expression of her creativity. As with every remarkable designer, her scope of work is unique. "My designs range from glamorous to traditional and tribal fashion. The elements I use are beads, gemstones and metal parts. The ensemble goes well with business and casual attire". Sumita's design caters usually to successful women, "They are the ones who dare to dazzle the world with sparkling confidence. It's the kind of jewellery which blends with their sleek lifestyle". Among her popular creations, she says, "My necklaces are usually the best-sellers. The nose pins are also a timeless treasure and preferred by younger clients. The Buddha Pendant, Turkish design, and other globally inspired prototypes are also very much in vogue". When she is not working on her compositions, she says, "My wanderlust makes me an avid traveller and I love exotic destinations. I'm also a dance student, an ardent cook and a fitness enthusiast".

The Legendary Saga of Kanchipuram Idly



The idly has been the king of traditional South Indian cuisine for a long time now. Its origins are traced to the Hindu kings who ruled over the kingdoms of Indonesia. According to renowned food Anthropologist KT Achaya*, these kings with their chefs came to India between 800-1200 AD looking for brides. Interactions between these chefs and native Indians, over a period, led to the popularisation of idlis in India.

The City of Kanchipuram

Kanchipuram lies on the banks of the Vegavathi river. It was ruled by the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, the Vijayanagar Empire and the British. It is a city which is famous for its silk sarees. However, there is one more reason why it is popular, and that is the Kanchipuram idly.

Kanchipuram Idly and the Roots

The Kanchipuram idly's roots point to the Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple, which is also known as the 'Perumal Koil'. The Cholas originally built it in 1053 AD, and it was enhanced during the reign of the great kings Kulothunga Chola-I, as well as Vikrama Chola. Ever since the beginning, the

Kanchipuram idly has been prepared every morning as an offering to the deities. The idlis are made in a unique stone chamber. It is said to be a favourite food of the deities. Two idlis are offered to the Gods, while the devotees share one. This one usually disappears within 15-20 minutes.

The lucky ones who get to have a pinch of it, cannot stop singing its praises. Thanks to the popularity of these idlis, many hotels have tried their best to emulate them. However, the taste slightly varies for obvious reasons.



Lip-smacking Prasadam

There is also a prasadam stall in the temple, which has delicacies like Puliyocharai, Murukku and Sweet Pongal. However, the most favourite dish is the Kanchipuram idly. It is like a cake which you can cut into thin slices. In fact, even today - some diehard fans order this idly over the telephone.

Divine Ingredients: Let's make History!

For 10 Kanchipuram idlis

- Raw Rice 2 kg
- Urad dal 1 kg
- Methi 25 gm
- Pepper 100 gm
- Jeera 100 gm
- Dry ginger 100 gm
- Asafoetida & Curry leaves
- Ghee 800 gm
- Salt to taste

Nutritive Facts of Idly

Kanchipuram idly has a unique taste. It doesn't get spoilt for longer durations, and if kept refrigerated, will be edible even for a week. It can easily be packed and taken for picnics as a staple family food. Chutney and sambar goes well with it.



Various Types of Idly

As idlis have evolved, so has their variety and taste; the below list is just the tip of the iceberg!

- Regular idly
- Rava idly
- Ragi idly
- Mini idly
- Button idly
- Podi idly
- Thatte idly
- Poha idly
- Oats idly
- Chilli idly
- Idly fry
- Idly chaat
- Idly manchurian
- Carrot idly
- Beetroot idly
- Corn idly

3200 MILES



KASHMIR TO KANNIYAKUMARI The empowering journey of Anahita

A solo trip is one of the most liberating adventures you'll take as a traveller. However, few realize that travelling solo can be a highly enriching and empowering experience of life.



Cycling past challenges

Anahita had quite a few obstacles to surmount during her epic journey including pesky truck drivers and people trying to cross the line with her. She was quick to look for help. "I rang up the highway patrol and they came to my rescue within minutes. Inspectors also gave me their personal numbers to call them in case I faced any problems during the rest of my journey," she recalls.



"I had packed two cans of pepper spray, a tool kit, two bags of clothes, including riding gear and cycling shorts, energy bars and water, but fortunately, I did not have to use the pepper spray," she chuckles.

Anahita's Eureka Moment

On a sunny afternoon, Anahita was surfing through the debates and discussions about women's safety on the news, and that's when the

idea struck her. "Why don't I prove it with pedals and saddles?" and she decided to cycle across along the terrains of Kashmir to Kanniyakumari and raise awareness on women's safety in India.

64 DAYS



She cycled over diverse lands, all along shooting her documentary titled, "On two wheels: 3200 miles towards women's safety". To support the cause, she ran a campaign on Indiegogo and a Facebook page to disseminate information regarding the ride and its progress. Anahita says, "I am hoping that

when people see me cycling alone across the country, they will rethink about the stereotypes of women. If it inspires one family to send their girl child to school, or even to send them on a trip, I will believe my journey was a success". She believes that all women out there need to step out and do whatever they wish to. No road, no distance is too large

or too hard if one can dream about riding it. "True, there may be times that one may not be able to complete a distance or route they set out to, due to whatever reasons, but that shouldn't be a cause for demotivation, but be a learning experience and a chance to better yourself," she asserts.

Cycling for Women Safety!

Meet Anahita Sriprasad, a 21 year old avid traveller, who dared to embrace unfamiliarity to open the window of women empowerment. Anahita was constantly perturbed regarding the safety issues of women travelling alone in India. The subject of women safety was no more a topic of discussion for

her, rather a matter of grave obsession to prove that "travelling alone in India is fine". Her 2-month-4-day experience of cycling all alone from Leh to Kanniyakumari, makes it certain that the country is safe for women.

"Apart from a few punctures, it was pretty smooth sailing."

Sterling's Chef Extraordinaire

Tarun Dacha Corporate Chef, Sterling Holidays

The travellers who yearn for mind-blowing destinations, also crave for exotic cuisine. The old slogan, "Getting there is half the fun", still holds good. A journey from one great destination to another is incomplete without a stopover for sumptuous food. And once you reach the destination, the hankering grows exponentially, even if you are not a "foodie". We get up close and personal with the man who has helped set up some of the most exotic restaurants across the country and is currently the Corporate Chef at Sterling Holidays. Tarun Dacha is the mover and shaker, with a staggering 30-year "food and beverage" experience under his belt; he ensures that guests across Sterling resorts relish the unique taste of regional cuisine and have an unforgettable experience.

What inspired you to choose a career in "food and beverage"?

My initiation into the kitchen has been because of my parents and their love for good food. My career followed on those very lines. I graduated in hotel management in 1987 from IIM Delhi and joined as a kitchen management trainee at the Ashok Group of Hotels.

Tell us about your culinary journey.

I blossomed into a Sous Chef at Ashok. Working in one of the biggest hotels in the country was an experience unparalleled. My quest for journeying the globe made me opt for my next job as a Chef aboard a cruise liner. I travelled to some of the finest cities and islands of the world, and tasted some of the most tantalising cuisines. Journeying on, I got the opportunity to work with Chef Hans Lauer - Corporate Chef for Hilton Hotels & Resorts and later for the Disney World. Here I learnt about Tex-Mex food and outdoor catering.

What motivates you at work?

I have always loved travelling. It gives me the opportunity to understand various cuisines across the nation and the world at large. I have travelled to almost every city across the country. I see a huge variety and depth in our cooking and styling - so it fascinates me!

Have you catered to any celebrities?

I was the Chef at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, a popular venue preferred by the Indian Government for banquets and foreign dignitary meetings. I have catered to state heads and celebrities, right from Nelson Mandela, to Yasser Arafat and Zia-ul-Haq. Each and every guest who comes down and enjoys the food brings a smile of satisfaction to my face. Every guest is like a king to me.

Tell us about Sterling as a brand.

At Sterling, we want our guests to experience cuisine with a regional flavour. We strive to give them a wholesome experience. We assure the joy of discovery and help create an unforgettable experience. We are a brand that delivers the expected and amazes you with joy of the unexpected.

Curry leaves crusted snapper with red rice, beans and moilee cream

Curry leaf crusted fish

Red snapper fillet - 200 - 220 gms
White bread crumbs - 30 gms
Shredded curry leaves - 15 gms
Crushed black pepper - 3 gms
Lemon juice - 1 lemon
Lemon wedges - 1 no.
Oil for pan grilling - 15 ml
Salt - As required

Method

Wash and pat dry the fillet, and marinate it lightly with lemon juice and salt. Mix remaining ingredients and apply on the fish. Pan grill the fish and finish in the oven till it is done.

Moilee cream

Ginger - 50 gms
Garlic - 50 gms
Green chilli - 50 gms
Curry leaves - 20 gms
Fenugreek - 10 gms
Coconut oil - 100 ml
Turmeric powder - 1 tspn
Tomato - 1 no. (garnish)
Coconut milk - to be extracted thrice from 2 nos. of coconut

Method

- Heat the oil in pan and add fenugreek & sliced onion in it.
- Saute it and add curry leaves, green chillies, ginger and garlic.
- Saute it until brown, add turmeric powder.
- Now add the third milk extract of the coconut to it and cook till the consistency reduces slightly.
- Add the second milk extract of the coconut and cook.
- Finally, finish it with the first milk extract and check the seasoning.

Curried beans and red rice

Beans stringed and cut length wise - 40 gms
Turmeric - ½ tspn
Mustard seeds and cumin whole - ½ tspn
Dry red chilli - 2 nos.
Grated coconut - 1 tablespoon
Oil - 5-7 ml
Boiled red rice - 30 gms

Method

Blanch the beans in salted water and refresh. Heat oil, add cumin, mustard seeds and dry chilli. Let it crackle and add salt and turmeric, and lightly toss the beans with grated coconut.

Plating

Mould the portion of red rice in the centre of the pasta plate, top it with curried beans and pan grilled fish. Pour the moilee cream around and garnish it with curry leaves and dry chillies. Serve hot.



Manali

Mountains of the Moon

An altitude of 2050 mts, snow-capped Himalayan tops in the backdrop, and a simmering river - Manali is God's own creation of enchantment. The perfect summer getaway destination. There are several astounding things to do in Manali.



Paragliding in Solang

The Solang valley is 15 km from Manali, enroute to Rohtang Pass and the heart of adventure sports in this locale. There can't be anything superior to paraglide over the snow topped mountains in the midst of the mists - a definite adrenaline rush for adventure seekers! In winters, the valley offers abundant skiing options as well.

Have you ever dreamt of soaring through the sky or wondered what it's like to fly like a bird? Paragliding in Solang valley is the place.



Manikaran Hot Springs

Located at a distance of around 45 km from Kullu, the grand hot springs lie in the Parvati Valley. The temperature is sufficiently high to bubble rice and vegetables! While there are no minerals or Iron in the water, radioactivity is in charge of its brilliant recuperating properties. People from around the nation and abroad visit the springs to cure infirmities including joint pain and rheumatism.

The healing properties of the Manikaran Springs are well known all over the country.



Hampta Pass Trek

Exploring the unique landscape in Manali with the Hampta Pass Trek is like a dream-to-reality experience. A rich, distinct canvas with resplendent flora and fauna, the trail goes through a picturesque background of lush green forests, meadows, and also throws glimpses of barren lands. Known as the 'Road to Heaven', the Hampta Pass Trek is an amazing experience for the explorer in you.

Hampta Pass Trek is considered the easiest and convenient of all treks in Himachal Pradesh.



Naggar Castle

Crafted in stone and wood, this palace acted as the residence of Raja Sidh Singh of Kullu. It was established in AD 1460 in an impressive amalgamation of European and Himalayan architecture. For art lovers, Naggar Castle has unbelievable art pieces on display. Worth mentioning are the paintings of Nicholas Roerich - the famous Russian painter.

Located in Naggar Town, amidst breathtaking forested hills, the Naggar Castle is a magnificent historical edifice.



Sip coffee in a riverside cafe

The most enchanting thing about Manali is the gorgeous river Beas flowing in full glory. There are rocky patches enroute Manali from Kullu, where there are small cafes built on the river. Yes, you read it right. Cafes on the river with tables and chairs fixed on the rocks - the cafes are a perfect way to connect with nature. Perfect bliss!

You can dip your feet in the cold water while you read a book, with the gushing sound of the Beas, echoing in your ears.

Manali is India's Switzerland, especially for filmmakers. Numerous Hindi movies have been shot here. If you are at the right place at the right time, you might get lucky and get to witness a film shoot in the snow.



How do we reach Manali?



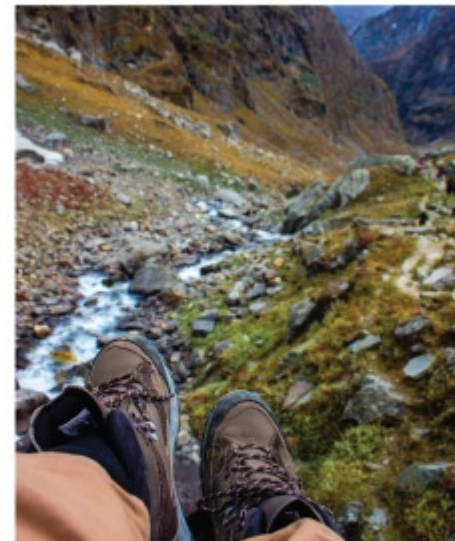
Nearest airport is Bhuntar, 50 km from Manali. You can catch a flight till Chandigarh and hire a taxi from Chandigarh to Manali.



Volvo and Himachal Tourism buses (overnight) ply to Manali on a regular basis.



Railway stations near to Manali are Chandigarh (350 km) and Ambala (360 km).



Explore the road less travelled, with Sterling's Manali: White Mist. Some of our network resorts close to Manali include:

- Dharamshala: The Sanctuary
- Kufri: The White Ridge
- Mussoorie: Dancing Leaves
- Nainital: Bhawanipur Greens

Tech & Travel



The Selfie Drone

Welcome to the new era of "Drone-selfies". You no longer need to extend your arm to hold the mobile or selfie-stick. All you need to do is, toss the drone into the air, smile and take pictures with your loved ones.

The selfie drone is a cool concept. It is usually a small foldable drone which hovers around you, has a compatible smartphone app, and snaps hi-resolution photos and 4K videos. You don't even need an ounce of technical knowledge to reap its rewards.

It's indeed a dream approach to have your tiny "spacecraft", which you can swing into space, have it hover above you, start clicking photos amidst a chosen backdrop and land on your palm when done. Here are some drone models whose reviews you may like to check out: DJI Mavic Pro, Parrot Bebop Drone 2, Yuneec Breeze 4K and JJRC H37 Elfie.

A Xtreme Mission

The team from India called Indus is among the five teams from across the world to compete for the Google Lunar X Prize, where contestants will try to land the first private spacecraft on the moon. The five teams going ahead on this mission are Spacell (Israel), Moon Express (US), Synergy Moon (A collaboration of people from over 15 countries), Hakuto (Japan) and Team Indus (India).

The Task

A team has to be the first to land the spacecraft before 31 Dec' 2017 and explore at least 500 metres of the lunar surface. Also, each team has to send photos and broadcast hi-definition videos from the moon surface.

The Grand Prize

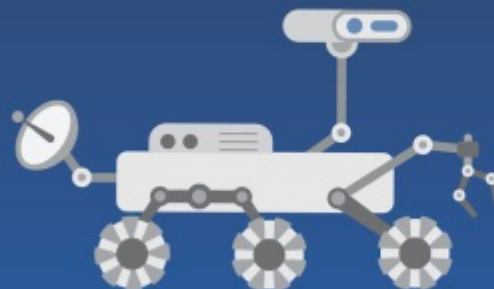
The first team to fulfil all the tasks gets the grand prize of \$20 million, while the runner-up gets \$5 million. Teams pulling off other individual tasks, like visiting an Apollo landing site will also get cash prizes.

About Team Indus

Team Indus is the only Indian team competing in this global competition. They will send the lunar lander on a PSLV rocket, a tried and tested rocket built by the Indian Space Research Organisation. The team has already won \$1 million as a Milestone Prize for their landing technology in 2016.

Team Indus has in turn received 3000 entries from 15 countries for its Lab2Moon competition. This contest qualifies the finalists to have their payloads on board its Moon Rover.

Team Indus' mission is all about the grand success of India as an emerging leader in space technology. It is about our young scientists and engineers and their quest to excel by making the most of the given resources. It is also a celebration of our new class of entrepreneurs who support this world-class mission, to deliver the best results based on home soil.






Presents...

Land of Incredible Monuments

Incredible India



 We are present here

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