

STAY AT  
AIRLINES  
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM  
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF  
LIFESTYLE  
SPOTTED BY SITA  
TOP CHEF RECOMMENDS  
DESTINATION INSIDER  
6 THINGS WE LIKED ABOUT  
FESTIVALS  
INSPIRATION LOCATOR  
TRADE SHOWS



# Art of Travel



## Punjabiyaat, Amritsar

# Stay At

Punjabiyaat, pronounced punjab-i-yat, means 'being Punjabi', 'essence of Punjab', or 'quintessential Punjabi'. Recently launched, Punjabiyaat is meant to be an expression of the inherent jest and effervescence of the state of Punjab in North India, its culture and large heartedness. Set amidst vast blooming green fields, crisscrossed by long canals, Punjabiyaat is located about an hour's drive from Amritsar, well connected by road and rail. But by the time you reach the farm you would think you were a million miles away in splendid isolation, out of sight of any roads or houses.

Punjabiyaat is the second property by 31 year old Ashish Bhatia who has over 5 years of international management consulting experience. It is a part of his ambitious project - Itmenaan Lodges- where he plans a series of small lodges all over the country. His philosophy - "Simple" is the new "Stylish"... "Unique" is the new "Luxury".

Punjabiyaat offers an opportunity to experience life on a live farm ensconced within the rustic smell of the country. Stylishly simple, four standalone cottages and a spacious lounge nestle in the gleaming expanse of farmland offering peaceful yet stimulating environment. Food is a serious matter in Punjabi culture and hence the food at the lodge is emblematic of how Punjab welcomes you with its bounty. Experience the tranquillity of countryside and farm life and walk along the sprawling acres of carefully nurtured crops. Gaze at the rural idylls as the shadows lengthen and a spectacular sunset follows and when night comes be mesmerised by the endless glittering stars in the sky. Truly, this is a magical place with a twist of unpretentious luxury.

Lazing around in your patio, terrace or lounge and watching acres of fields around you is a perfectly acceptable activity at Punjabiyaat. However for the more active ones, there are quite a few interesting options.

To [download the activity list](#) - [click here](#)







# Airlines

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## Boeing 787 Dreamliner lands in India

The much-awaited Boeing 787 Dreamliner, which is likely to be inducted by Air India in May, has landed in India after flying non-stop 14 hours from Seattle. The Dreamliner would help significantly reduce fuel consumption as it would provide both long distance capabilities with mid-size capacity.

The 787 was debuted at the civil aviation conference and exhibition, India Aviation 2012 in Hyderabad on March 14 for three days.

The world's most advanced commercial airplane displays the colours of the national flag carrier Air India.

According to sources, the first Dreamliner plane is likely to be inducted only in May after it gets operational and technical certifications from the US Federal Aviation Administration, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and other agencies. Air India has ordered a total of 27 of these aircraft.





## National Tourism Award

Our strategic approach in Corporate Responsibility is to integrate social and ecological issues in business processes and so coordinate to economic success in the long term.

The Company was recently awarded for its Corporate Responsibility Initiative with the 'The National Tourism Award' by Ministry of Tourism in the category of Responsible Tourism Project/Initiative for Empowerment of Women through Literacy India & Fair Trade.

Literacy India is a non-profit organisation, with the objective of empowering underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient. They focus on bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of underprivileged children by giving a different meaning to education. The Company supports Literacy India's noble cause and has tied up with them by giving them a project to help empower women.

Through this project, underprivileged women were given an opportunity to gain employment and develop their skill further to sustain their livelihood.

A Literacy India programme is included in one of our brochures which provides an opportunity for clients coming to India to visit Literacy India, interact with children and women at Literacy India and help change their lives.

Literacy India is a part of the Fair Trade Forum in India.

The company supports Literacy India's Fair Trade policy and also promotes fair trade based on the following four criteria's:

- 1) Respecting other cultures
- 2) Cultivating true partnerships with people in the host country
- 3) Travelling with due environmental care and concern
- 4) And ensuring that the local people also benefit from the tourist travel experience

The Company's other Corporate Responsibility initiatives include Child Protection, climate change, supply chain management and human rights in the tourism industry, at a global level.

# Responsible Tourism







## Tour Chauffeur

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A chauffeur is an integral part of every guest's journey in India and a chauffeur like Ranjit Singh Dhama ensures that the journey in itself is an unforgettable experience! Dhama comes with an experience of more than 30 years, out of which he has spent 13 years with us. “It is like my second home”, he says with a smile. “As a child, I was fascinated by cars and gradually driving became my passion. I will continue to be a chauffeur for as long as I can,” he adds.

While on a tour Dhama's day starts early. The car must be spotlessly clean, the amenities should be in place, the fuel should be sufficient and he should reach the venue well before time. He ensures that everything is in order before he reports for duty. Dhama spends the day driving his guests around town or from one city to another, telling them stories about the life of locals or simply answering their questions! “Most guests are curious to know about various things they witness on the way,” he explains. His day ends with dropping the clients back to their hotel and fixing the pickup time for the next day.

From receiving appreciation letters to recommendations, Dhama has got it all. So what is the must have quality of a good chauffeur? “The ability to understand your guest's expectations and adapting to it as quickly as possible is a must have quality in a chauffeur. After all, every guest is different,” he tells us. “And of course a genuine smile straight from the heart to break the ice.”

When asked to share some memorable moments, Dhama smiles. “Over the years there have been many.” He takes pride in telling us how a lot of his guests invited him to have dinner with them at top end hotels. “Some are keen to know about my life and my family while for others it is a gesture to express their appreciation maybe because they enjoyed my services.”

Dhama has had the opportunity to drive many cars such as the Toyota Camry, Skoda, Mercedes and BMW. “The Mercedes E Class has been my favourite,” he tells us. And his favourite destinations? Agra, Udaipur and Ranthambore are some of his favourite destinations. “I really enjoy it the most when guests return mesmerised by the beauty of the Taj Mahal.”

Now that he has been driving guests around during their holidays for years does he get time to have one of his own? “I try to take a break with my family during

# A Day in The Life Of Ranjit Singh



*Ranjit Singh Dhama with his daughter in London*

the summers in India.” And what would be his favourite destination to go on a holiday? “London,” Dhama smiles. “My elder daughter lives there and it is great to see the Indian community doing so well. I love those small black taxis on the streets of London and I am amazed by the traffic sense of the people on the road,” he tells us. And what does he have to say about the “traffic sense” in India to guests? “Don’t worry. Enjoy the ride. You are in safe hands.”



# Lifestyle



## Two Wheels Move the Soul

“Two wheels move the soul. There is no room for worry when I am riding the beast. I am happy, just simply happy. It has opened me up in many ways,” says Vijay Singh who owns Rajputana Customs, a Jaipur based outfit which specialises in custom-made motorcycles. Vijay Singh has been passionate about motorcycles since he was a toddler. His father gifted him a 50cc BSA Falcon and taught him to ride at the age of seven. Today Vijay’s passion has become his lifestyle. “Rajputana Customs is not business. It’s my way of having fun,” he smiles.

So how did it all start? “Not all who wander are lost. In my case I was just floating around and decided to build me a bike. At that point I didn’t think of Rajputana Customs. I just followed my heart. An Enfield engine, my hands and brains I made the ‘Original Gangster’ (350cc Royal Enfield engine, Springer fork suspension, Jockey Shifter and Internal throttle assembly)”. The response was overwhelming at the New Delhi Auto Expo 2010 and ever since, it’s been raining orders for Vijay and Rajputana Customs.

It’s perhaps Vijay’s personal involvement in every step of the creation of a motorcycle; right from the query stage of a prospect to the final delivery, which gives it a heart. “Most of the times people assemble the bike, but at Rajputana Customs we make every part, the frame, the handles, painting so on and so forth. It’s like baking the cake from scratch, importing only the tyres. We bake the cake and then decorate it too,” he tells us. And how much does it cost. “Anything between USD 1500 to USD 15,000. Depends on what a client wants.” So how does he decide the look and feel of a bike? “By the end of the day it is a reflection of the man who owns it. I simply try to understand the nature and taste of the person and build around it, naming the bike only after it is complete.”

And what would be some of his favourite assignments where he had lots of fun? “Lightfoot made for Bollywood star John Abraham was definitely lots of fun,” says Vijay. “It was 500cc Royal Enfield engine, girder front suspension, internal throttle assembly, hand engraving on all brass parts, hand wrapped and stitched leather for the seat, 2 exhaust guards, grips, footrests and battery box, Custom milled hub and spokes for the 21” front, Single side drum brakes to keep with the old school aesthetics and Leaf spring seat perfectly tempered to support 90Kgs (John’s weight)”



His other favorites are ‘Nandi’, Shiva’s bull and “Laado” meaning loved one. “Laado” is Vijay’s much loved. She is a restored and customized 1942 BSA M-20. This 70 year old 500cc WW-II Vintage was in a mess when he got her...

[Click here to continue reading](#)





## Marriage Posters in Madurai

Sita spotted this marriage poster in the temple town of Madurai in Tamilnadu. Madurai has a strong poster culture. Whether it's a family function or a public event, people of Madurai are never afraid of announcing it to the world. Marriages of friends and family have to be announced in the form of a huge banner with photos. Notice this poster carefully. It even has the educational qualification of the Bride and the Groom. While the Bride is a MCA (Master of Computer Application) the Groom is a BE (Bachelor in Engineering).

# Spotted By Sita





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## Meen Pollichathu at Shalimar Spice Garden, Thekaddy

Chef Pradeep Kumar of [Shalimar Spice Garden](#), Thekaddy highly recommends the Meen Pollichathu as a must try during your stay there. A local delicacy, Meen Pollichathu is fish coated with a spicy masala paste, then covered and cooked in a banana leaf to provide a special aroma. This dish is prepared with 200gms seer fish, marinated with shallots, Malabar tamarind, whole red chilli, turmeric powder, whole coriander and salt (all mixed in a blender) and then wrapped in a banana leaf and cooked on a Tava (a convex disc-shaped griddle), served with lemon rice and salads. The fish is not directly fried in oil. Hence, it is low on calories and healthy.

Recipe available on [request](#)

# Top Chef Recommends







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## There is more to Bangalore than being India's Silicon Valley

I recently had an interesting exchange on my Facebook page. I posted a question asking my friends to share what they thought were the most undersold destinations in India. For me it was [Chennai](#). [Kolkata](#) featured prominently so did [Bundi](#) in Rajasthan. We also talked about [Gujarat](#), [Northeast India](#), [Maharashtra](#) and [North Kerala](#). And we agreed that tour operators are perhaps not doing enough to promote newer destinations in India. While some of my friends cited the lack of infrastructure as the reason; some were of the view that it was lack of intent and knowledge. India being not an easy destination to sell compared to say a more staid Thailand or Maldives also came up for discussion offline over a cup of coffee in office. We plan to keep the conversation going.

During a recent trip to [Karnataka](#) I was supposed to head to [Mysore](#) directly from the Bangalore airport. But my colleague Soumya Ayappa wanted me to stay in Bangalore for a night. He promised to show me the other Bangalore that most travelers give a miss. “There is more to Bangalore than being India's Silicon Valley,” he told me when we headed for the older part of Bangalore. This part of the city was established in the year 1537 by Kempe Gowda; the founder of Bangalore and still retains its traditional business of garments and textiles, jewellery and pawn brokering. We began with a visit of the KR Market, locally known as the City Market. It is the first market of Bangalore and deals with fruits, vegetables and flowers. The highlight here is the section selling flowers. Very colourful and makes for great photo opportunities. From KR market we headed to the whole sale grain market at Tharagupet nearby and chatted with local merchants. Ayappa then took me to the Sri Sri Sringeri Shankar Mutt; an important pilgrimage centre of Bangalore where faithfuls come from far and wide in South India. From here we made our way to the 9th century Sri Gavi Gangadeshwara temple renovated by Kempa Gowda sometime in the 16th century. Another highlight of the morning was the famous Bull Temple with its huge statue of Nandi; the mythical Bull of the Hindu religion. We ended our tour at Gandhi Bazaar; a bustling market with filter coffee at Vidyarthi Bhavan; a landmark restaurant. It serves the best filter coffee in Bangalore. This half day tour is best done in the morning and you can walk it. Or you may want to do it part waking and part in your vehicle. It is a great introduction to the other Bangalore that quietly exists. Highly recommended for those of your clients who are curious to delve in Bangalore's many layers and

# Destination Insider



jettison all mundane notions of the city. Should you want to know more about the tour email us at - [info@sita.in](mailto:info@sita.in)

As a bonus here are some fantastic insider tips on Bangalore by our friend Aslam Gafoor. Gafoor is a Bangalore local and hospitality professional. He loves to explore new destinations, is an avid foodie and a wine aficionado - [click here](#).

Cheers

Kuntal Baruwa



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## The Westin Gurgaon

**The Westin Tuk Tuks:** When we walked into the driveway of the [Westin Gurgaon](#) we noticed these Tuk Tuks. In fact, it is the only hotel in Gurgaon at the moment to have its own fleet. They serve two purpose - make the nearby malls and metro station accessible to the guests and give them a chance to experience the local way of commuting without any hassle. Just to add, Westin is perhaps the only 5 star hotel, whose security will not stop guests coming in the ubiquitous yellow green tuk - tuk that ply on the streets of Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR).

**Design and Art Work:** Recognizable from a distance because of its avant-garde style, Westin is a modern eco-friendly building, designed to welcome natural light. Enter the lobby and the first thing that catches your eyes is the unusual chandelier. This piece of art is designed by [Nike Savvas](#) - a series of hand painted glass panes oriented in such a way to give an impression of various moods of Delhi and the NCR. The vivid reds, oranges and yellows are reminiscent of summer and allude to the beginning and end of the day. Select panels of the work are accentuated with hues of cool blue and flashes of green that suggest the Yamuna River and the Aravali range; the oldest mountain range in India.

**Drink at their Mix Lounge & Bar and help plant trees:** When we walked to the Mix Lounge and Bar on the first floor, we noticed this beautifully handcrafted wood bar. And it has a great story. Rescued from potential decay, this beautiful piece of African hardwood has travelled over sea and land, from the rainforests of the Congo to the hill stations of Kerala, before it came to Gurgaon. While enjoying this piece of beauty, don't forget to try out the three signature cocktails -the Lekker, Gemmer and Goud, and Koffie Kongo specially designed by their bartenders to celebrate this story. The bar donates 20% of their proceeds from the sale of these cocktails to planting trees. We ordered a round of Lekker and loved the subtle hint of rich wood smoke infused into the drinks.

**Aura Rooms and Interconnecting Rooms:** Named after the Greek Goddess of Breeze - the Aura Rooms at The Westin Gurgaon are dedicated to chic and modern single women travellers. Generous in size the Aura Rooms are conveniently located by the elevators on each floor for easy access. Their interconnecting rooms too have a nice twist to it. Instead of a door in between which connects both the rooms, they have a common

# 6 Things We Liked About



door in front of the rooms which can be shut from inside. This ensures that occupants of both the rooms enjoy their individual privacy. Perfect for a family travelling with young adults who want to stay adjacent to each other yet want their individual space.

**Kids Club:** Westin is the only hotel we have visited so far with a dedicated area for kids. The room is stocked with board games, books and DVDs. An ideal place to let the kids play safely under supervision while parents have a meal or enjoy a spa treatment.

**Welcome to Work:** How many of you land up at work to be welcomed by a brass band. Welcome to Work at Westin is a unique fun concept to engage their employees. Done twice every month; all departments of Westin; from Admin to Housekeeping to Business Development take turns in devising a fun way to welcome their employees to work. We loved the idea. Like they say happy employees make for happy customers.





# Festivals



## Thrissur Pooram, Thrissur (Kerala)

Travel with Sita to experience Thrissur Pooram, arguably the most famous festival of Kerala. The world renowned festival is a heady mixture of pomp and pageantry. Thousands of people from all walks of life gather at the Thekkinkadu grounds at Thrissur to celebrate the pooram (festival). The festival will be held on 01 May in the premises of the Vadakkumnatha temple, a classic example of Kerala's indigenous architecture. The festival highlights include a spectacular pageant of 30 caparisoned elephants and Kudamattom (a competition of brightly coloured and sequined parasols). Pancharimelam, Pandimelam and Panchavadyam, all traditional percussion ensembles of Kerala provide a supremely apt accompaniment to the visual treats. Dazzling fireworks light up the sky to provide a grand finale to the two days of classic entertainment.

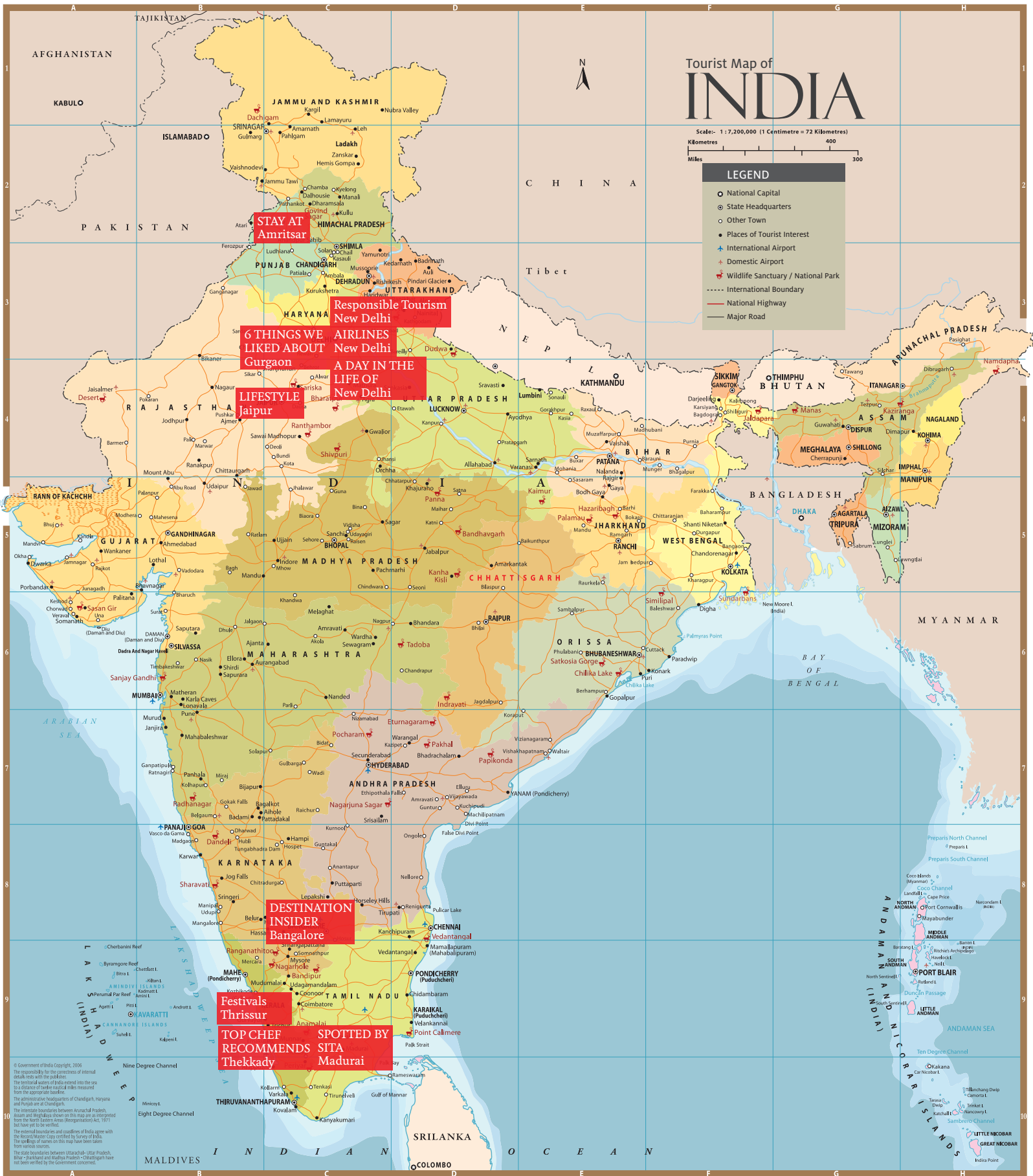
Stay at [Joy Palace Thrissur](#)

[Click here](#) for the itinerary

Most of the Festival dates are decided by Solar / Lunar calendars practiced in India, due to which the dates are subject to change.

You may plan some special departure based on these festivals. For any assistance please contact us.









Meet us at the  
Upcoming  
Trade Shows

If you wish to schedule a meeting, do e-mail us at  
[info@sita.in](mailto:info@sita.in)

Trade Shows	Booth No.	Whom to Meet
<b>Luxury Travel Mart</b> Moscow 20th March	Awaited	Deepak Sharma
<b>MITT</b> Moscow 21st -24th March	India Tourism Booth F 203	Deepak Sharma
<b>TUR</b> Gothenburg 22nd -25th March	India Tourism stand No A03:52	Vikram Trivedi
<b>Deluxe Travel Mart</b> Ukraine 27th March	Sita Desk	Dipak Deva & Deepak Sharma
<b>UITT</b> Kiev 28th -30th March	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma
<b>Mundo Libao with Abreu</b> Lisbon 31st March - 1st April	695	Ganesh Shankar, Sunil Dangwal & Nelson Cortez
<b>Great Indian Travel Bazaar</b> Jaipur 15th -17th April	Booth No 44 & 45	Neeraj Bhatt & Philip Thomas
<b>Deluxe Travel Mart</b> Almaty 24th April	Sita Desk	Deepak Sharma
<b>KITF</b> Almaty 25th -27th April	Trade Visitor	Deepak Sharma

# Trade Shows

