

# lonely planet

MAGAZINE  
INDIA

₹ 100  
December 2012

DON'T JUST TRAVEL, TRAVEL WELL

## 2.5 PLUS ROMANTIC IDEAS

### AMALFI

Drive classic cars, make *gelato* together (and annoy some nuns) on Italy's most charismatic coast

### SALZBURG

Music, food and culture – you'll love the way these *dirndl*-wearing folk live

### RAJASTHAN

Take a road-trip to the forgotten palaces: it's more romantic than you'd think

PLUS  
**5 EASY**  
WEEKEND TRIPS





## THE LONELY PLANET MAGAZINE INDIA PROMISE

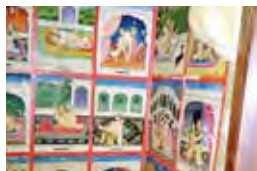
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### 3 THINGS I LEARNT THIS ISSUE



1. That Sex Ed in Rajasthan belongs in the closet. Quite literally (p120).
2. That limoncello changes colour according to the season it's made in (p100).
3. That Singaporean kitchens are clean because no one ever uses them – everyone just eats out! (p70)

PHOTOGRAPH: CORBIS



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This year, try romance with a dash of James Bond (or Bond villain) style

## So where would my role models go for romance?



**That poses a problem**, because my role models, in no real order, are James Bond, Hannibal Lecter and Batman.

And while adults shake their heads at this, I believe many men of my generation would agree – if you have to do something grown up like wining and dining, you might as well do it in a place where you can pretend you're actually making things explode.

First up is a James Bond special – **Italy's Amalfi coast**. The area around Sorrento, Amalfi Positano, and the island of Capri, seems made for Bond: you can burble past the cliffs in your Aston Martin (or rental Alfa Romeo, no problem), you can stalk villains or your paramour along steep, cobbled streets, leave a lazy wake in blue water on a boat ride to Capri, and end the day with limoncello on a beautiful terrace. And we've lined up great ideas for you, from **renting a classic car**, to walking the beautifully named **Path of the Gods**, to making your own gelato, to taking a boat out and feeling a bit of a god yourself.

Next up, for the man of, um, refined taste, Dr Lecter. For such a connoisseur of classical music and art, **Salzburg in Austria** would make for a perfect break, even if it isn't during concert season. The city is **historic and elegant**, with reminders everywhere that you're in the birthplace of Mozart, and stunning architecture and vistas all round. You can attend concerts at dinner, go to a bunch of fantastic museums, or just stroll along, soaking up the atmosphere, politely rubbing shoulders with people in *lederhosen* and *dirndls*. And while Dr Lecter might turn his nose up at *The Sound Of Music*, you don't have to – this is the hometown of the von Trapp family – and even the food here is good enough to make the good doctor take his teeth off his dining companion.

Oooh, Batman! In *The Dark Knight Rises*, he emerges from his prison just outside Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort, which leads us straight to ever-evocative Rajasthan. We haven't gone to Jodhpur, but the rather **unexplored bits of Rajasthan** that we're taking you to will warm the cockles of his rubber-clad heart. **Udaipur** will appeal perfectly to his Bruce Wayne avatar, all glamour and gorgeous (and romantic) views of palaces across the lake, but it's in places like **Dungarpur and Bundi** that he'll really come alive: **hills and twisted corridors** enough for a thousand ambushes, and a perfect, softly-lit ambience for when he and Catwoman feel like snuggling up. Plenty of tales too – and Batman definitely loves his mysterious origin stories, so I believe he'll like this place.

We have a whole list of other lovely ideas in this issue as well: **great hotels, activities and destinations** to spice up your love life – we're even on hand if you want to **rent an entire island**, so you can thank us later.

Yes, at some point, it'll be time to grow up, but until then, do enjoy this issue – and make good use of it! Trust me, you will thank us later, even if we don't make things explode.



Vardhan Kondvikar, Editor  
Follow me on Twitter: @vardhan\_lpmagin



### THIS MONTH'S COVER

Italy is quite brilliant at going from the sophisticated to the cosy, especially on the Amalfi coast, with its spectacular views, sun-lit terraces and warm, dreamy villas.

PHOTOGRAPH  
CORBIS



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To subscribe, **SMS LPSUB to 58888** or log on to **mags.timesgroup.com/lonely-planet.html**. For more information, turn to P182.



### 1 THE AMALFI COAST

"Speeding away from the quay, the vastness of the Tyrrhenian Sea and sky opens up ahead. It's not clear where one ends and the other begins," **P98**



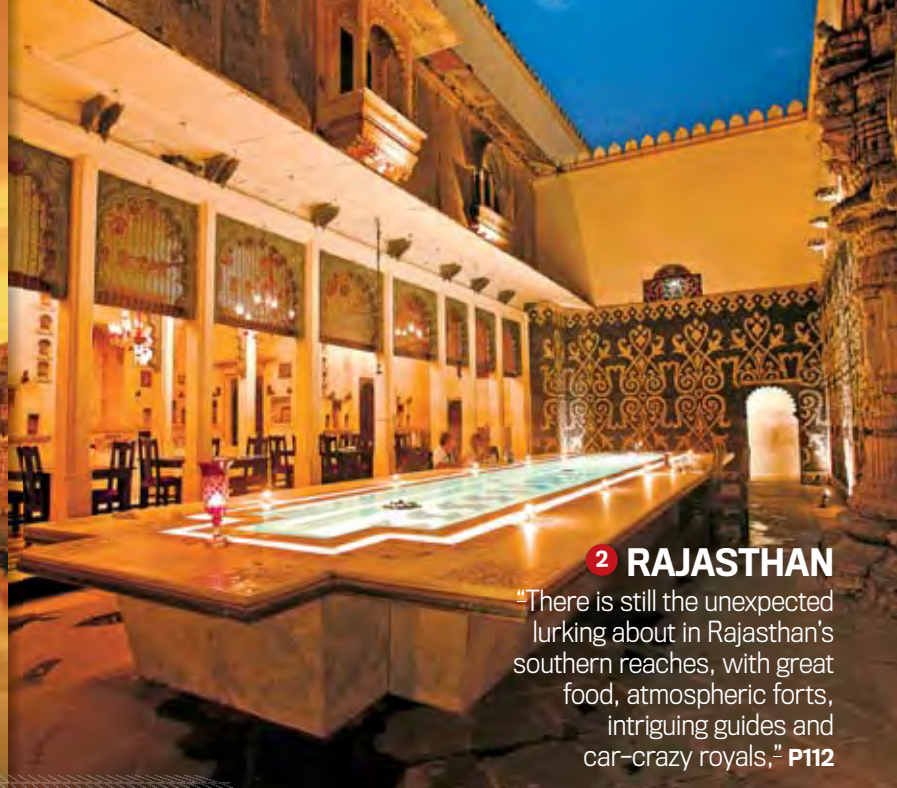
### 3 SALZBURG

"We love how food is eaten in Salzburg – lingered over, each morsel tasted and savoured, glass of wine at hand," **P130**



### ROMANTIC IDEAS

"Injecting romance into your relationship needn't be a difficult task; it can be as simple as taking a trip to an unexpected destination, learning a new skill together or just lolling about on an island," **P148**



### 2 RAJASTHAN

"There is still the unexpected lurking about in Rajasthan's southern reaches, with great food, atmospheric forts, intriguing guides and car-crazy royals," **P112**



## WHERE WE'VE BEEN THIS MONTH

Your guide to the destinations we've covered in this issue

### 5 EASY TRIPS

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### POSTCARDS

You've travelled the world and seen the sights. Here's a glimpse of what you've encountered on your travels, **P28**



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## Milan, Italy Then and now



“Milano Centrale Railway Station is one of the busiest in Europe. I really appreciate how the Italian Government has preserved the grand medieval architecture, which is amazing in its expanse and beauty. To keep pace with the bustle of modern life, new technology is deployed wherever possible. The introduction of an escalator inside the station is one such example. I found it to be a classic marriage of Gothic architecture and new technology, in a way that did not diminish the beauty or utility of either.”

📷 **Abhijit Bose** is from Mumbai and loves to travel, taking his camera with him wherever he goes.

## Jaisamler, Rajasthan Coupling



“On a trip to Rajasthan in February this year, I visited Jaisalmer Fort. Built in 1156AD, it is one of the largest in the world and has withstood the ravages of time. Unfortunately, today, the fate of the fort is uncertain due to sewage lines and illegal construction. This couple sat quietly in a corner at the entrance to the fort, away from tourists' curious cameras, minding their own business. The living fort is an intrinsic part of their lives.”

📷 **Aneesha Chhikara** lives in Delhi and works for an IT company.







## Gir, Gujarat Oh deery me



“ This shot was taken in the Gir Sanctuary, during an afternoon safari. Our guide had switched the engine off a good hundred metres away from the deer so as not to scare them off. I waited patiently for one of them to look up at me so I could get my shot. Then, sure enough, when I moved and a leaf rustled beneath my feet, one of them looked my way and I got the photograph I had been waiting for. ”

📷 **Pratik Kulkarni** is an avid traveller and is especially fond of train journeys.

## Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh Naturally religious



“ I was looking for an eco-friendly idol of Lord Ganesh for Ganesh Chaturthi,

wanting to immerse one that wouldn't harm the environment. I found one at Indira Park in Hyderabad. The idols were being prepared with clay, straw and other eco-friendly material, by trained artisans from Kolkata. The sunlight filtering through the blue tarpaulin roof with the pink background created a surreal effect and a mesmerising sight. ”

📷 **Rajesh Pamnani** is a Rotarian and an entrepreneur who has recently found the time to indulge his childhood passion of photography.





# COMPASS

NEW WINDOWS TO THE WORLD



The Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua, northern Italy, is visited by millions of pilgrims each year



## WORLD ON YOUR PLATE

A Christmasy treat, the gingerbread men are easy to make and yummy to eat, **p56**



## ON THE ROAD

Free things to see and do in Madrid; dinosaur fossils in Hyderabad, **p58**

## COUNTRY AT A GLANCE

Italy is Europe's iconic land of effortless style, easy living, insatiable passion and über-cool chic, where ancient glories harmoniously fuse with third-millennium sophistication, **p54**



# DEALS YOU CAN STEAL

## Singapore



The **Singapore Flyer** is offering a **Full Butler Sky Dining** experience, all within a comfy and

spacious capsule, atop Singapore's Giant Observation Wheel. All this is made even more special with a menu put together by world-renowned chef Eric Teo. Avail of the Full Butler Sky Dining experience under three packages – Celebrity Chef Menu package, Christmas Menu package and New Year Menu package. All the packages include a delicious four-course dinner as well as two flight rotations and exclusive check-in plus free entry to Journey of Dreams – a multimedia show (from ₹ 14,600).

**Cruise from Singapore**  
**Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd**, together with Singapore Airlines, SilkAir and Changi Airport, is offering **one night's free hotel stay** in **Singapore** for guests sailing from/ to Singapore. This offer is also available to guests who fly Singapore Airlines or SilkAir from India to Singapore between October 30, 2012, and March 31, 2013, and take a Royal Caribbean cruise on the Legend of the Seas from Singapore between October 31, 2012, to April 1, 2013! ([royalcaribbean.in](http://royalcaribbean.in))

## Rajasthan



**Ranbanka Palace**, a heritage hotel, recently announced **Polo Packages** for the upcoming polo season in Jodhpur. Guests will be able to attend special events, including polo matches and the iconic Mehrangarh Fort New Year procession. They can also enjoy signature spa therapies in the comfort of their rooms.

Special performances by *kaalbelia* dancers and private dinners on the many terraces and the lush gardens (which allow you to soak up views of Mehrangarh Fort and Umaid Bhawan Palace) make the deal a whole lot sweeter ([ranbankahotels.com](http://ranbankahotels.com); *two-night/ three-day package from ₹ 21,999, see website for inclusions*).

## Kerala



The five-star **Leela Kovalam**, offers three new **winter packages**. Lovebirds can choose the romance package, which includes a cake, a romantic dinner every night and breakfast in bed. The winter getaway package offers a refreshing drink on arrival and a fruit basket in your room. The exclusive indulgence package includes breakfast at The Café and lunch and dinner at an in-house restaurant of your choice (00-91-124-4425444).

## Mussoorie



**Karmavilas**, a heritage resort, is spread over 6.5 acres of pine and oak forest and offers breathtaking views of the Doon Valley. Indulge in activities like yoga and *pranic* healing therapies and treks to nearby spring water streams. And there's good news for **LPMI readers**. Karmavilas has announced a special deal for you: accommodation in the Royal Classic Room at ₹ 9,500 instead of the listed tariff of ₹ 11,000 and the Deluxe Room at ₹ 7,500 instead of ₹ 9,000 for two nights and three days ([karmavilas.com](http://karmavilas.com)).

## Maldivian Airlines introduces direct flights to India



A dream destination for newly-weds, the Maldives features on the must-visit list of many couples. The pretty islands just got more

accessible with the introduction of new routes from India. The national carrier of the Maldives, Maldivian Airlines now has direct flights from Mumbai and Chennai. The flights operate thrice a week – Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from Mumbai, and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from Chennai. The airlines will also add the 154-seat Airbus 320, which has 14 business class, 24 premium economy class and 114 economy class seats, to service these routes ([maldivian.aero](http://maldivian.aero)).



## Marina Bay Cruise Centre, Singapore

Flying is not the only way to reach Singapore now. With the opening of the new deep-sea terminal, you can literally cruise into this island state. The new Marina Bay Cruise Centre is expected to play home port to more than 70 cruise liners over the next year, including the Azamara Club Cruises, Celebrity Cruises, Costa Cruises, Cunard Line, Royal Caribbean International and Silversea.

Inspiration for the design of the new terminal has been drawn from the breaking

of waves on the shore, right from its angular shape and structure to the materials that have been used. The terminal's striking architecture makes it an ideal gateway for passengers arriving aboard a cruise liner into Singapore.

Thanks to its great location, the terminal is the perfect place from which visitors can dive right into the tourist trail and visit attractions such as the Gardens by the Bay and the Marina Bay Sands Resort ([www.mbccs.com.sg](http://www.mbccs.com.sg)).





MAX OUT THE CITY  
EATING OUT IN  
KOCHI



# 5 EASY TRIPS

YOU CAN DO NOW

Explore island fare in Singapore, spot birds at Mangalajodi, steep yourself in art in Fort Kochi, get cold in Mussoorie, and cuddle up in Chikmagalur







HARDCORE  
WILDLIFE  
BREAK

Northern pintails  
descend on  
Lake Chilika

## Mangalajodi, Orissa

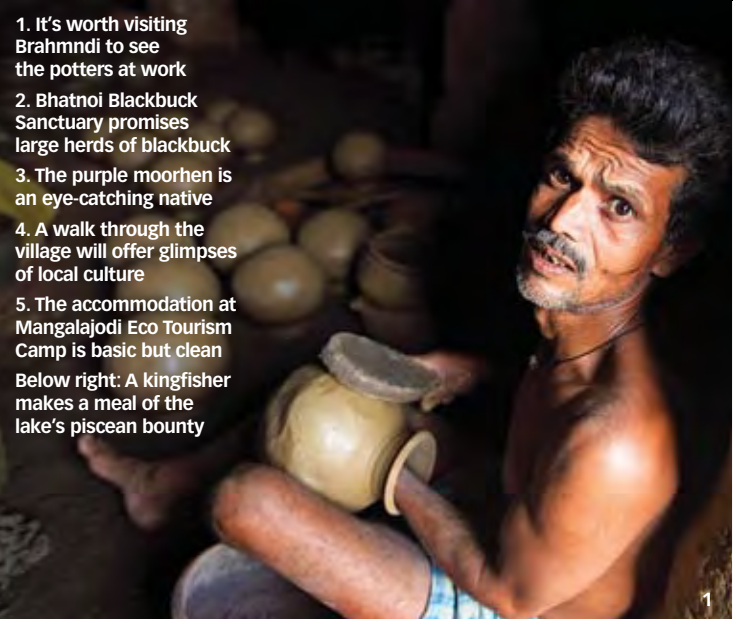
### SO MANY BIRDS AT HAND

When winter comes to Mangalajodi, even the cutest migratory birds bully other winged visitors for the best spots on the marshes. Not unusual when around 80,000 birds fly in from as far as Lake Baikal, the Caspian Sea and the Mongolian mountains to escape the harsh northern winters and colonise the waters of Lake Chilika, Asia's largest brackish water body. A sleepy fishing village, Mangalajodi's story is one of metamorphosis, transformed from an infamous

poaching ground around a decade ago, to a protected birding haven today. The very people who used to poison the birds for their meat fiercely guard them today, using their formidable knowledge of life on the wetlands to guide bird-watchers on indigenous canoes. In the cold months, the shallow waters of Lake Chilika host around 200 bird species. A naturalist once observed that the sun is nearly blocked out when the flocks take flight together. As you set out from the jetty, you'll see the

whiskered terns, perched on bamboo poles or diving into the water (*boat trip: 5.30am – 10am, 3pm – 5.30pm; boat trip for four: ₹ 600 with guide fee; binoculars hire: ₹ 25/ trip*). The purple moorhen, with its bright red cap, purplish-blue wings and lovely deep red eyes, is an adorable native, but the prize goes to the visitors – the ruddy sheldrake with its rusty orange plumage, the slender northern pintail, the black-winged stilt with its long legs, and the near-threatened black-tailed godwit with its pencil-like bill.

Your base for all this bird-watching will be the **Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp**, which is very basic, but the wealth of wildlife in the area will make it worth braving the simplicity. Because, besides the birds, there is other animal life worth keeping an eye out for – like the elusive fishing cat that lurks in the bushes near the shore. A two-hour drive via Khalikot takes you to the little-known **Bhatnoi Blackbuck Sanctuary** (120km), where you see large herds of blackbuck. Try getting



1. It's worth visiting Brahmda to see the potters at work
  2. Bhatnoi Blackbuck Sanctuary promises large herds of blackbuck
  3. The purple moorhen is an eye-catching native
  4. A walk through the village will offer glimpses of local culture
  5. The accommodation at Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp is basic but clean
- Below right: A kingfisher makes a meal of the lake's piscine bounty



### GREAT FROM

Bhubaneswar, Kolkata

### GREAT FOR

Bird- and blackbuck-watching

### GO NOW

While the migratory birds are flying in by the truckload.

closer and they will scatter, but with leaps so agile and graceful that it will seem more like a rhythmic dance than an effort to flee. The males with their stunning, ringed horns

and females with their light fawn coats are an absolute photographer's delight (*sightings are best between 7am and 9m; ₹ 200 guide fee*). Back at Mangalajodi, pack some snacks and tea and take the 3km nature trail from behind the camp site in the late afternoon (*₹ 100 guide fee*). The trail leads to a small cave in which you can hang your boots and watch the soothing evening hues reflected on Lake Chilika's waters from that height before you get back to lake-level for the night.

The next morning, take a walk down to the village for a glimpse into the life of the enterprising natives. The men craft light-weight yet sturdy fishing boats from locally procured wood, which are quite in demand in the villages around Lake Chilika, while the women make bamboo canoe roofs and baskets and fishing nets. **Brahmda**, 7km from Mangalajodi, is a potters' village, worth a visit to see the skilled workers mould a variety of products, from utensils and pots of different shapes and

sizes to toys (*7am – 11am; ₹ 100 entry, ₹ 100 guide fee*). Mangalajodi is unique because it is relatively undiscovered. That might be because the basic stay facilities attract only dedicated bird lovers and wildlife enthusiasts. If you're one of that band, get there while the place is still pristine and soak up the bounty of nature.

WORDS &  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
MAYANK SONI





## FACT SHEET

### GETTING THERE

**Closest metro:** Kolkata (507km)

**Closest city:** Bhubaneswar (74km) is a one-and-a-half hour drive away. Traffic tends to be heavier on weekends; start early for a smooth ride.

### Closest airport:

Bhubaneswar's **Biju Patnaik Airport** (76km) is well connected by the state highway to Mangalajodi. IndiGo, Jet Konnect, Air India and Jet Airways fly to Bhubaneswar from all major cities (return flights from ₹ 5,350). Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp organises transfers from the airport (₹ 1,500 one-way).

**Closest railhead:** Balagan (35km). Take the **12703**

**Falaknuma Express** (leaves Howrah Junction [HWH]

7.25am, reaches Balagan [BALU] 3.34am; ₹ 669 Third AC) and return by the **12704**

**Falaknuma Express** (leaves BALU 8.50am, reaches HWH 5.45pm; ₹ 669 Third AC).

Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp organises transfers from the station (₹ 500 auto, ₹ 800 AC Indica one-way).

### GETTING AROUND

Mangalajodi is small enough to walk around, but you will need to hire an auto to get to the jetty for the birding trip (₹ 200 for pick-up and drop). You will also need a vehicle (₹ 2,000/ 240km) to get to the blackbuck sanctuary. We used and liked the services of **Year Round Holidays** (00-91-9437305240/ 9861430996; yearroundholidaysindia.com, rashmi@yearroundholidaysindia.com; Plot 227/ 2445, Jagannath Vihar, Sisupalgarh, Bhubaneswar; ₹ 2,000/ day for an AC Indica).

## WHERE TO STAY

### Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp:

The accommodation is basic, but the rooms are clean (00-91-8895288955, 00-91-9861172605; mangalajodiecotourism.com,



Once a killing field, Lake Chilika is now a protected haven for local and migratory birds

Below: A black-winged stilt takes flight

mangalajodiecotourism@gmail.com; Mangalajodi; from ₹ 2,400 for two in a bamboo cottage, with all meals and a birding trip to the wetlands).

### WHAT TO EAT

The only place for meals in Mangalajodi is the camp itself. The kitchen serves fish caught freshly from Lake Chilika. Try the delicious *khainga* (mullet), tiger prawn and Chilika crab. The veg meals are also delicious. Also try the *til*-sprinkled *papads* and the sweet mango pickle (set meals: ₹ 60 veg, ₹ 80 fish, ₹ 100 non-veg, meal with crab and prawn ₹ 150).

### WHAT TO PACK

Sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, light woollens, a torch to handle the frequent power cuts at the camp, a birding reference book

### SHOPPING

The camp has a small souvenir shop at which you can buy T-shirts (₹ 250), caps (₹ 100), keychains (₹ 20) or a bamboo pen stand (₹ 50). There is also a table calendar (₹ 150)

and a bird book (₹ 300) to choose from.

### CLEAN LOO GUIDE

There are a lot of roadside *dhabas* en route, but they do not have clean loos, so it is better to freshen up at a restaurant in Bhubaneswar city before leaving for Mangalajodi.

### SAFETY

The guide will look after you on the boat ride. Although the village is safe, it is advisable to not wander alone after sunset.

### MEDICAL AID

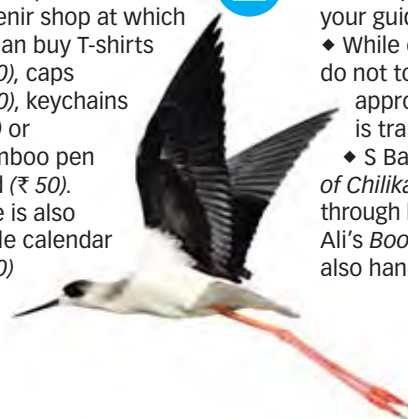
The camp has first-aid assistance and the nearest medical store is 5km away in Tangi. However, if you need the services of a well-equipped hospital, you will have to go to Bhubaneswar (**Apollo Hospital**: 00-91-674-6661016/ 6661066; apollohospitals.com; Old Sainik School Rd [Unit 15]).

### CHILD-FRIENDLINESS

Take children on the boat only if you are ready to hold on to them all the time – the boats are shaky and there is a chance of them falling into the water if you are not on your guard. Mangalajodi Eco Tourism Camp has a small recreational area with swings and slides.

### GOOD TO KNOW

- ♦ You get less bird-watching time on the evening ride as the sun sets early in winter (5pm), so it is better to opt for a morning excursion.
- ♦ Wear earthy browns and greens and switch off your mobile phone. Wearing perfume is a strict no-no. Do not try to get in and out of the boat on your own as it is quite wobbly. Ask your guide to give you a hand.
- ♦ While out bird-watching, do not touch the eggs or even approach the nests – it is traumatic for the birds.
- ♦ S Balachandran's *Bird Atlas of Chilika* is a good book to go through before the trip. Dr Salim Ali's *Book of Indian Birds* is also handy for reference.







TONY WHEELER

# The long and winding road

Tony Wheeler on finally doing a drive along the Karakoram Highway that was a long time coming



The Karakoram Highway is all sweeping valleys and sheer rock faces

Below: Running from Pakistan to China, the KKH is one of the world's great mountain roads

**“THE HIGHWAY WAS BUILT BETWEEN 1966 AND 1982, BUT CONTINUES TO NEED DANGEROUS MAINTENANCE”**

Just before Karimabad, we had another short landslide delay, but on the other side of the town, we encountered the end result of a far more serious landslide. A gigantic slide in 2010 blocked not just the road but also the entire valley, including the river. Six months on, a lake, 22km long, stretched back from this ‘instant dam’. It submerged that stretch of the KKH, along with three villages. So our next stretch up the KKH was by boat, and we’d no sooner arrived in Gulmit, almost at the end of the lake, than a message came through of *another* delay. This time it was the Chinese who had decided to shut the border – for the next 11 days! We raced on to Sust, just south of the border, in order to get across before this unannounced closure.

The final stretch to the old Silk Route centre of Kashgar may not have had the sheer drops and soaring valley sides that much of the road in Pakistan had featured, but it still had very impressive scenery. Sadly, the end of our trip was a bit of an anticlimax; much of Kashgar’s Silk Route charm has disappeared beneath Chinese development. The Uighur people once made up 90 per cent of the local populace, but Han Chinese immigration has reduced that to less than 50 per cent, and today, it’s the most sensitive region of China after Tibet.

**Tony Wheeler** founded Lonely Planet with his wife Maureen in 1973.

**T**HE Karakoram Highway (KKH) between Pakistan and China is one of the world’s great mountain routes, and it’s held a spot on my ‘must-do’ list for far too long. I’d been to Wagah earlier to see the border guards perform, but this time I was crossing to the other side. My wife Maureen met me in Islamabad, and, a day later, we were already agreeing that this was the most spectacular road we’d ever been on.

On our first day, we stopped for lunch in Abbottabad – perhaps during his stay there, Osama bin Laden sent for takeaways from the restaurant we ate at? North of Abbottabad, the valley steepens, the Indus River runs faster, and memorials remind us of the fearsome death

toll the road’s construction exacted on the road-builders, Pakistani and Chinese. The road was built between 1966 and 1982, but continues to need difficult and dangerous maintenance.

After Chilas, we turned off the KKH to follow the even steeper-sided Skardu Valley to Shigar and Skardu. We had only gone 40km before a landslide blocked our route and we had to retreat to Gilgit for the night. “So what’s the longest you’ve been held up by a landslide?” I asked Najam, our reassuringly calm driver. “Often for two or three days,” he replied, “but a flood once washed out a bridge, and when I tried to retreat, the next bridge was gone as well. I was stuck for 21 days.”

Shigar was worth the delay. We spent a night in the 17th-century Shigar Castle, now a museum and boutique hotel. We had another one-day delay; this time political, as protests blocked the road.

Back on the KKH, we went further north past Rakaposhi, which seemed to come down to a stone’s throw from the road. It’s noted for its beauty and its incredible north face, which soars in one unbroken 5,800m sweep to the summit. We’d already had great views of Nanga Parbat, the world’s ninth-highest mountain.

Karimabad is the high point of the Pakistani side of the KKH. Baltit Fort looks over the town, and we climbed the Hoper Glacier.





# Features

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P 148 COOL ROMANTIC IDEAS





# That lovin' feeling

There is still the unexpected lurking about in Rajasthan's southern reaches, with great food, atmospheric forts, intriguing guides and car-crazy royals – all best seen right after the monsoon leaves the land lush and verdant

WORDS ALISHA WADIA | PHOTOGRAPHS VAIBHAV MEHTA





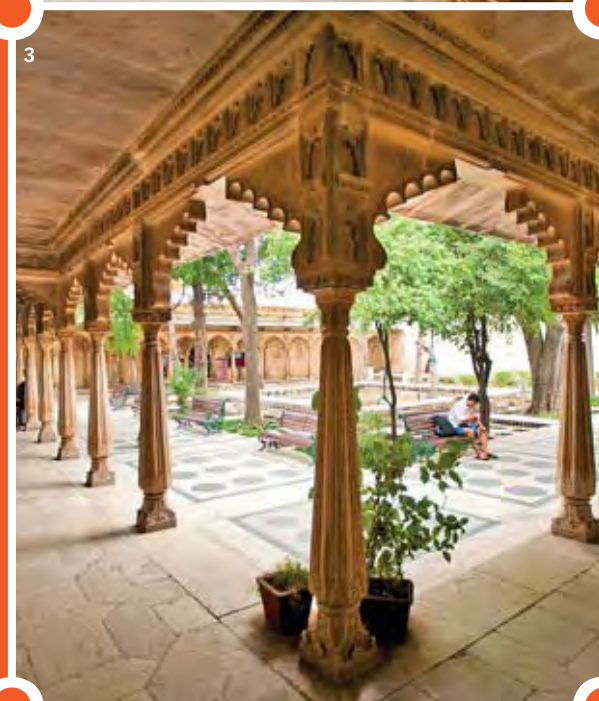
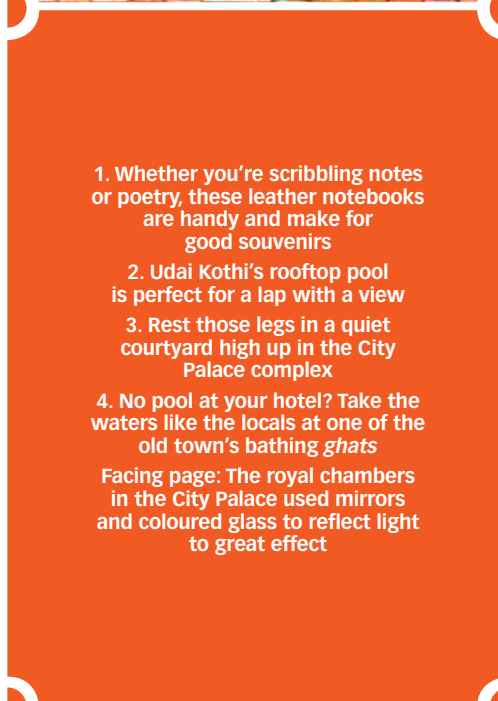
# Udaipur

There's no doubt about it, Udaipur in the rains is heart-stoppingly beautiful and very typically romantic. Who cares if you don't do anything but stroll the bylanes, or huddle up on one of the *ghats* after a drizzle and stare out at the ridiculously pretty palaces and quiet lakes, all coloured rose gold by the evening light. Oodeypore (as the British referred to it) could probably turn Captain Hook into a blubbering romantic. Even Octopussy would have fallen for Bond a lot quicker if she hadn't been so busy plotting to kill him.

Udaipur was the last capital of the Mewars, and the Mewars are about nothing if not pride. Even now, centuries later, the people are as passionate about their gorgeous land as their kings once were. The rains are always a boon, especially here, but Jyoti Jasol, who works at the City Palace Museum, is worried the rain won't always be around to save the land and the people. The Aravallis are fast disappearing under the onslaught of decades of mining, steadily putting this entire ecologically-sensitive region in grave danger. The government needs to start being more protective and create awareness or the lakes once made for the people here won't be filling up any more.

Udaipur's **City Palace** is huge, beautiful and absolutely dramatic, and thankfully, the crowds are thin this time of year. It's actually a mammoth complex of several palaces, all built in succession starting from the 16th century, when Maharana Udai Singh II escaped Akbar's final assault on Chittor. Today, it's partly occupied by the royal family, part heritage hotel and part museum. It's a crazy maze of corridors, with incredibly narrow doorways, all designed to confuse and slow down the enemy, so even if they did eventually find the king, their heads

would be spinning too much to think straight. Bending through one of the doorways as our guide regales us with superbly gruesome (and



1. Whether you're scribbling notes or poetry, these leather notebooks are handy and make for good souvenirs

2. Uda Koti's rooftop pool is perfect for a lap with a view

3. Rest those legs in a quiet courtyard high up in the City Palace complex

4. No pool at your hotel? Take the waters like the locals at one of the old town's bathing ghats

Facing page: The royal chambers in the City Palace used mirrors and coloured glass to reflect light to great effect

## ROMANTIC DESTINATIONS RAJASTHAN

probably apocryphal) stories of how enemy armies used camels mounted on elephants as battering rams to break through the city gates, I wonder how those tall and portly kings I see in the portraits ever fitted through.

We've only spent a morning at the City Palace, but I imagine you could easily spend a day here. A day to take in the glittering mosaics of the Mor Chowk (once the *Diwan-i-Khas*) the delicate *jali* work on the *zenana* screens, rooms upon rooms with latticed windows looking out over the lake, painstakingly carved marble columns, bold, colourful murals and stained glass decorating the walls. They might be getting old, but they're still pretty grand. Surrounded by the serene Lake Pichola, and with the majestic Aravallis standing guard all around, the setting couldn't be more cinematic.

It doesn't stop there though. The legendary **Lake Palace** sits pretty in the middle of Lake Pichola. And when the sun starts to cast a warm glow, head to **Lake Pichola** for a boat ride and dinner at **Jag Mandir**, Udaipur's other (and original) lake palace, owned by the royal family and open to non-residents, too.

**Sajjangarh**, the brooding, derelict monsoon palace, looks perfect in a downpour. Perched high on a hill, it's cloaked in grey clouds and shuffles in and out of view, right till you get to it. Originally planned to be 13 levels, only three were completed when Sajjan Singh, who built it as his pleasure palace, died suddenly. There's literally nothing to see inside, no people even. But when the skies clear out, the view, of the sun dipping low over the lakes and city below, and of cottony clouds tumbling over the nearby hills, takes your breath away.

The **Sahastra Baahu Temples**, by the more popular **Eklingji Temples**, is a sight for sore eyes, and a great place to tarry at for as long as you can manage. The relief carvings on the stone are stunning, and the artisans clearly had a sense of humour: in one of the erotica panels, a woman looks on, horrified, hands clapped over her mouth, at a couple doing the nasty. ►

## MORE TO DO

While there's a lot of history in Udaipur, there's quite a bit if you just want to take it easy, too. Sit down to a private high tea (4pm; ₹ 400 per person) at **Udai Bagh**, quiet and secluded. You could take evening walks in **Saheliyon ki Bari**, a pretty little garden with fountains and lotuses, made once upon a time for princesses and their ladies to have a little fun in. Clamber up the steps of the **Jagdish Mandir** – legend has it that if you rub the head of the deity that's placed outside the temple seven times, he makes your aches and pains go away. Screenings of *Octopussy* are a dime a dozen, but the most tacky and fun thing you can do is take the cable car that rumbles up to the **Karni Mata Temple**: the views are not bad at all.







Fuschlsee – as seen in *The Sound of Music* – is just an hour away from Salzburg, P166

# insider

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## **DESTINATION SOFA: BOOKS**

Time-travelling through Indian history and in search of monsters

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## **DESTINATION SOFA: MOVIES**

Salzburg is so much more than *The Sound of Music* locations

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## **YOU ASK US**

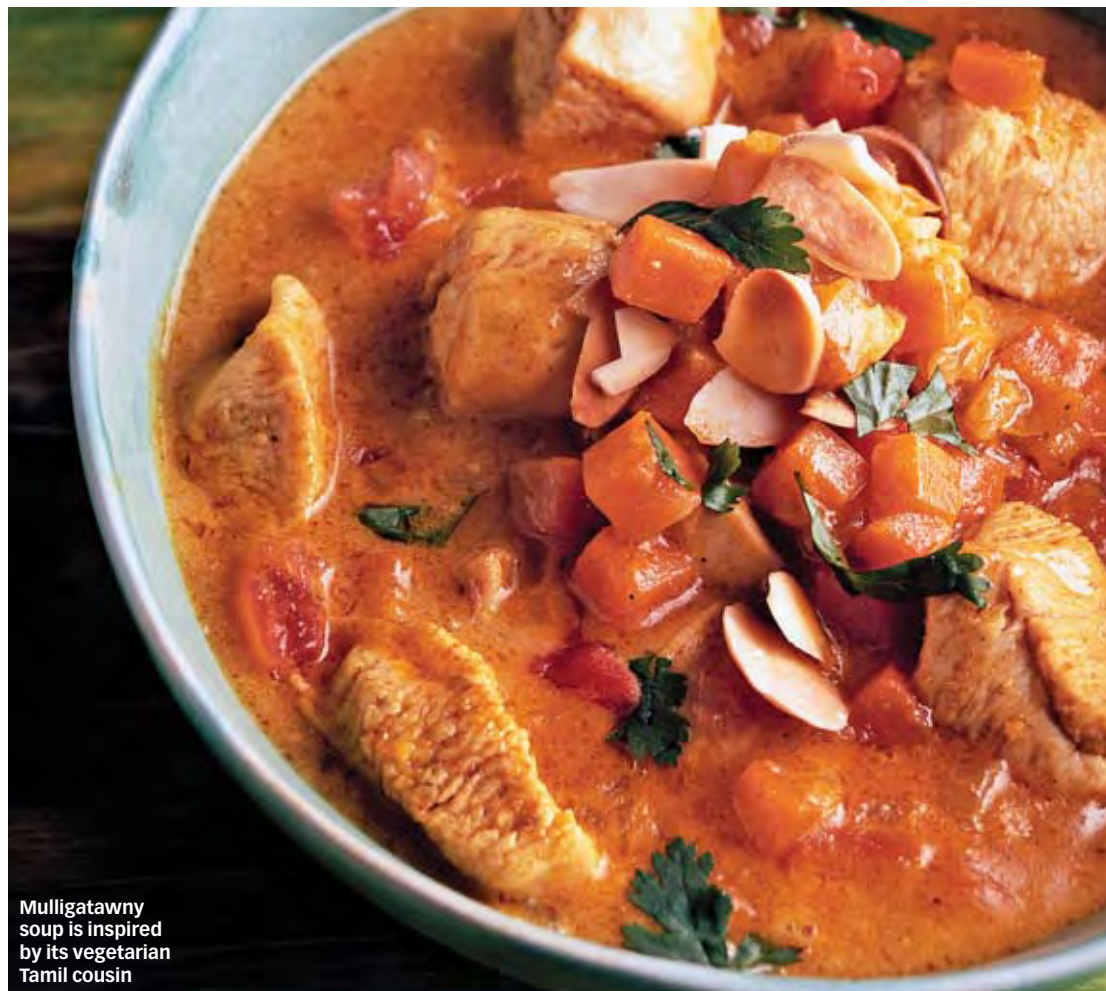
Travel advice you can use, from experts you know and trust



# destination sofa

Our round-up of the best travel books to read this month

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH



Mulligatawny soup is inspired by its vegetarian Tamil cousin



### Let's Go Time Travelling!

Subhadra Sen Gupta and Tapas Guha  
(₹ 199; Puffin)

This book could easily have been called 'Indian History for Dummies'. Written by Subhadra Sen Gupta and illustrated by Tapas Guha, the book takes you on a journey from pre-Aryan times to British India. The author has broadly outlined each era with admirable brevity and wit, and she and the illustrator have used their collective imagination to reconstruct a day in the life

of the common man in each era.

The book spouts pearls of wisdom, throwing forth several known and unknown facts. For instance, you may know that Aryan priests created a 'holy liquid' called *panchagavya* by mixing cow products like milk, curd, *ghee* and even urine and dung, but did you know that, from the 6th to the 10th century, Tamil royal families used to partake of Italian wines? Or that like Muammar Gaddafi, Emperor Ashoka, too, kept a battalion of female guards? Or that Mulligatawny soup, much loved by the British, and full of mutton and chicken, is actually based on a light Tamil vegetarian soup called *mulago tanni*, or pepper water?

The book touches upon several topics, including food, couture, weaponry, modes of transport, professions and religious and social beliefs of each era.

The short portraits reveal much, albeit succinctly. History can show us a lot if taught properly, and this book illustrates how. It makes you wish you had history books like this back in school.

It offers insights to the geography buff, too, and also to gourmards, taking them along on a journey of the sights, sounds and tastes of a bygone era and tracing the line of their significance to the present.

WORDS DEVESH SHARMA



### Scary Monsters and Super Creeps

Dom Joly  
(₹ 990; Simon & Schuster)

What do you need to be a monster-hunter? This is the question Dom Joly poses as he travels in search of famous cryptids from the Congo to Japan, reviewing grainy footage and interviewing monster-believers on the way. Bigfoot, the yeti and other A-listers feature in his search, but it's the less-known creatures that prove more interesting, such as Ogoopgo – a distant Canadian cousin of the Loch Ness monster. While an amiable-enough travel companion, Joly never really digs down to the bedrock of what it means to be a monster in the 21st century – the scientific odds of a creature surviving undetected in a world of CCTV and Google Earth.

WORDS OLIVER SMITH



More often than not, mythical creatures are one part reality, and nine parts imagination