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*Neighbourhood*  
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*A piece  
of a different  
**WORLD**  
right here*

**10** foreign neighbourhoods across India  
*A tour of the World right in India*  
European settlements in Bengal

African



Armenian



Danish



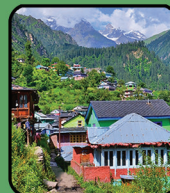
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## READER'S PAGE



### Touriosity Travelmag July 2021 Issue

Dear Reader,

If you would like to share your memorable experiences with us, please feel free to contact us with your write ups, articles, anecdotes, photos and others. Good pictures will be acknowledged and published in the Reader's Click section. For the Travel Humour section, you can send us any travel related funny photos or sketches.

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The Latin Quarters in Goa

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*The views and opinions expressed in the articles are solely those of the writers and contributors. Touriosity Travelmag is not responsible for any personal views expressed by the authors or contributors.*



*In this pandemic era, world travel is largely restricted. To provide a glimpse of the world to those who are missing international travel, we thought of this unique issue. Many places in India have been under various colonial powers in the past. Colonialists have left behind their impressions in the form of neighbourhoods and Old Quarters in these destinations. Some foreign neighbourhoods have also come up in different corners as a result of settlements of refugees as well as traders across centuries. In this issue we bring to our readers 14 such destinations that have the air and feel of a foreign land and the good news is that you don't even need a visa to travel here.*





Travel is restricted due to the pandemic. International travel is especially difficult at the moment. To give our readers some respite under these circumstances we came up with the idea of this unique issue. Flipping through the pages one can have an idea about how to see the world in India itself.

There are various foreign settlements scattered across the length and breadth of India. Some of these are remnants of foreign colonies of the past, some have resulted from settlement of refugees or traders. Each such foreign settlement not only has an interesting history behind, the fact that these pockets within India maintain a whole different culture, food habits, languages and lifestyle and have architectural influence of another part of the world is quite astonishing. These settlements have a lot to offer and are definitely worth a visit. In this issue, we have compiled 10 mini foreign settlements across India that deserve a place in every travel enthusiast's bucket list. Also there is an article that provides glimpses of five erstwhile colonies of five different European powers in Bengal that are ideal for a day trip from Kolkata. The individual articles included in this issue provide ample information regarding the history of the specific settlement. As for the history of colonisation of India, here's a brief summary just for a quick brush up.

With a view to trading in various commodities like spices, silk, indigo etc. various European trading companies started venturing into India as early as the 15th century. They began setting up their trading bases and soon assumed colonial powers over various regions in India. Some regions also saw multiple colonialists in close succession. In the 15th century, Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India and direct European trade links with India were re-established (recent findings suggest that sea-borne trade existed between India and ancient Rome more than a millennia before that). The Portuguese had established their first trading centre at Quilon (Kollam) in 1502. Their colonial reign started in 1505 and lasted till 1961 and geographically their colony in India spanned across the Malabar Coast of Kerala to Goa, Daman and Diu. Interestingly parts of Maharashtra, including parts of present Mumbai were also under the Portuguese rule but went away from them to the British as part of dowry during the marriage of Princess Catherine of Portugal to Charles II of England. Closely following the Portuguese came the Dutch. Their Indian base could not be extended much and Sri Lanka (erstwhile Ceylon) continued to be their main trading base. However, Dutch colonies remained in many pockets throughout India until they were overthrown or bought by the British.

With the disintegration of the Mughal Empire and weakening of the Marathas in the 18th century, the Europeans gradually assumed colonial powers. Of all the colonial powers in India, the French and the British emerged as the two most prominent ones, with the latter overshadowing the former in the long run mainly in terms of the territory under their control.

Also interestingly, there used to be a Croatian trading post in India that dealt in Indian spices and textiles. They established their colony in São Braz in Goa in 1530, barely 20 years after the Portuguese conquest of Goa. Soon a Croatian settlement came up here and trading was being continued successfully until clashes broke out with the Portuguese. This, coupled with unstable conditions in Croatia and a major earthquake in Dubrovnik in 1667, resulted in an end to the Croatian colony.

In order to challenge the seemingly monopolistic control of the Portuguese traders across Asia, towards the end of the 16th century, the British and the Dutch focused on forming joint-stock companies to pool wealth to finance the voyages. Thus the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company were formed in 1600 and 1602 respectively. Their object was to carry on trade in spice in Asian countries and they competed with each other in that area. The result was that while the British succeeded in gaining control over India, the Dutch spread their authority in Indonesia. From Surat, to Madras, and finally to Calcutta, the focus of the British East India company gradually shifted. The path was laden with wars, betrayals, competition, truce, rebellion, politics and much more. But all these, in the end only led to strengthening of the power and control of the British over India.

The first establishment of a trading post by the French was in Pondicherry in 1674. More French settlements came up in pockets across Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha during the next few decades. The French enclaves were integrated with India after its independence in the year 1954. The Danish colony in parts of Southern India, the Nicobar Islands and Bengal lasted for over two centuries but they were more focused on trade and less on military expansion. Its territories were ultimately sold to the British. The Austrians also briefly colonized the Nicobar Islands after the Danish left and made less significant attempts to colonize parts of Bengal too.

We hope that our readers will find this issue interesting and helpful. Send us your feedback at [ttmag.english@gmail.com](mailto:ttmag.english@gmail.com). Take care and be safe!

*Rupanjana De*

Rupanjana De



## AN APPEAL TO TOURISTS

The responsible traveller knows how to make the best use of resources, in what ways to help bring sustainability in tourism, when to travel and when not to travel. We are one and a half year through to the pandemic and the world is not fit for unrestrained travel yet. One has to be patient and make the best use of the time now. Let us wait. LET'S BE RESPONSIBLE TOURISTS.



## GUIDE TO THE MAG

To make your reading through TOURIOSITY TRAVELMAG better, here's presenting a quick glance at the various sections and features in the magazine.



### DESTINATION

It introduces the readers to various destinations in India with an emphasis on at least one destination from each region. It provides an in-depth information on the locations. In addition, there is also handy tourist information to help our readers plan ahead of trips.



### AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

A travelling artist makes it to faraway lands and brings memories in the form of impressive water colour paintings. This section is a visual treat and interesting to read at the same time.



### FEATURE

Here we bring to our readers an article based on the theme of the issue not necessarily focusing on travelling or travel information.



### MEMOIRS OF A BACKPACKER

A new adventure every time in an entirely new place across the globe by a solo female backpacker. We follow the locals she meets, the unusual things she comes across, the surprises she gets and the problems she faces in her journeys with a backpack across the world.



### TRAVELOGUE

In this section we bring travel experiences of one of our readers from popular places around the world.



### GLOBETROTTER'S DIARY

This section explores the world of a globetrotter, whose passion is to travel, travel and travel more. It brings to readers unique facts and information from remote corners of the world.



### COUNTRYSIDE / CITYSCAPE

Here we introduce a new country / city each time. We bring to our readers facts and photos of people, culture, locales, tourist places, food and traditions of a country / city. Our aim is to take our readers on a magical journey of an unseen land.



### PHOTO TRAVELOGUE

Here we bring to our readers a travelogue in photos.



### PHOTO FEATURE

In photo feature, we cover the theme of a particular issue in photographs from one of our readers.



### SNAPSHOT

This section is an ideal one for quick browsing. It provides interesting information from across the globe with a focus on the theme of the issue.



### AT A GLANCE

A quick look at a destination. Here, we bring to our readers locations from the lesser beaten paths in otherwise popular touristy regions.



### POINT OF VIEW

Here we bring to our readers useful articles with offbeat content. The idea is to give you the stimulus for thinking. It covers important issues that are in some way connected to travel and tourism.



### ADVENTURE

We present here stories of unique adventures undertaken by our readers in some part of the world with a focus on the issue theme.



### MOUNTAINEERING / TREKKING

This section focuses solely on trekking and mountaineering adventures across the world.

## CONTENTS



### Portuguese quarter in Goa

Apart from all the known attractions of Goa like beaches, architecture, food, culture, walking trails, casinos and nightlife, there's another one that is often ignored by the regular visitors. The Latin Quarters of Goa are replete with beautiful architectural memoirs of the Portuguese era in the state. This article by Sharvani Chandvale takes readers on a virtual tour of the same.

### Armenians of Kolkata

A little known fact about Kolkata is the existence of an Armenian settlement here. The Armenians arrived in the city before the British did and built the city's first church and Christian cemetery. This article by Rangan Datta throws more light on all the Armenian attractions in Kolkata and in the rest of Bengal.



### Mini China in Kolkata

Unlike many unknown settlements across India, Chinatown of Kolkata enjoys much popularity for a number of reasons - the food, the festivals and the temples. The city has a sizeable population of Chinese people who have maintained their food, lifestyle and culture here. This is an informative article on Kolkata's Mini China by Rangan Datta.

### African Tribe of Gujarat

The Siddi tribe in India is of African origin. They are descendants of the African slaves who were brought to India initially by the Arab traders and sold to the Nawabs or later by the colonisers between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. They settled along the Western Ghats which resulted in mini settlements in Gujarat and Karnataka. This article digs deeper into their lifestyle, culture and customs.





## French quarter of Pondicherry

The French Quarter or the Yellow Town of Pondicherry is a window to the colonial era of this south Indian Union Territory. This article details all the attractions that are not to be missed here.



## 38 Israel Himachal Pradesh

photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata



## Israeli village in Himachal

This is a settlement different from all others as it consists of tourists who came to India in search of peace and serenity and decided to stay back. This Israeli village near Dharmashala is definitely a unique one.

## Denmark's footprint in TN

Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu is one of the few reminders of Danish colonial times in India. In this article we take our readers on a tour across this quaint village that is a beautiful reminder of the Danes in India.



## Other articles

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## DESTINATIONS IN THIS ISSUE







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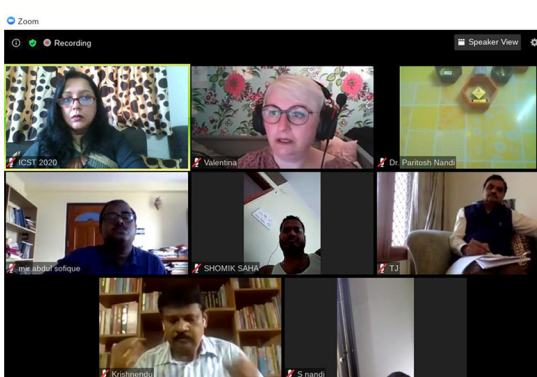
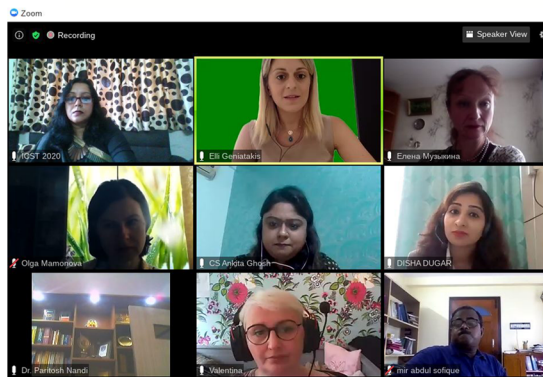
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(400-4000 Words)

### Groups

Group A for age 9 to 13 yrs  
&  
Group B for age 14 to 17 yrs

### Genre

Fantasy, Science Fiction,  
Non-fiction, Historical fiction,  
Horror/Thriller

### Timeline

*Submission by:*  
15th May, 2021

*Declaration of Winners by:*  
30th June, 2021

*Awarding of Certificates by:*  
31st July, 2021

*Anthology Publication by:*  
15th September, 2021

*Distribution of Publication to  
Winners by:*  
15th October, 2021

## PRIZE

- Authors of the top 10 winning stories will be **featured** on our website along with their photos;
- Top 10 winning stories will be published in an **Anthology**, an annual publication of Curiosity Kids.
- Each winner will be **given a copy** of the Anthology and the same will also be available for access at Amazon both in paperback and kindle version.
- The top 25 entries will be given a **Certificate of Appreciation**.
- The school will be given a **trophy** where two or more of its students feature in Top 10 across both groups.

<https://www.penandinkpublishers.com/curiosity-writing-award>

## Curiosity Short Story Writing Contest 2021



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# Latin Quarters

## - a slice of Europe in Goa

Article by Sharvani Chandvale; Photos by Sharvani Chandvale, Soul Travelling & Rupanjana De



There's something about experiencing history first-hand by walking right through it - the rustic, dainty houses, the residents willingly spilling stories of a different time and winding lanes that take you straight through wonderland. Wouldn't that be fun? There is a magical sense of wonder that fills us up as we walk through the Latin Quarters, all kinds of questions flooding our heads as the colours hold us in awe of this wonderful spread. A slice of Europe in Goa, the Latin Quarters have many secrets to tell. It is like walking into a world of colours!

When you enter Panjim city from the road that goes along the bus stand, ask for the Panjim post office. It's the easiest landmark to





find. Once you get there, take the road that goes straight in on its right. You'll be welcomed by brightly coloured houses and if you do, you're there. Now all you have to do is follow your heart and explore, let the winding roads take you to undiscovered corners and instagram-worthy pictures! If you want to take it a step ahead and make the houses talk, you'll have to get in touch with us at Soul Travelling. Our ambassadors have mastered the art of conversing with pretty Goan houses.

Not to sound shallow, but the Latin Quarters are Instagram worthy!

Speaking of pretty, you'll notice that the colours of the houses stand apart from the rest of the city. It is a very fascinating mystery. Why are they so bright and

pretty? It's simple. Goans wanted their homes to be colourful and those were the only colours they had back then. The churches were white and identifiable and the houses were colourful. The reds came

1. A street sign of a Portuguese Bakery. The streets in the Latin Quarters mostly have Portuguese names;
2. A colourful house in the Latin Quarters;
3. Another colourful house with an artistic nameplate;
4. A peek into one of Fontainhas' hidden cafes! (pic Geetesh);
5. It's not just the houses that are draped in colours! (pic Meenakshi);
6. A chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Nativity and a century-old well in front of it;
- 7,9. A walk in the colourful Fontainhas area;
8. Colourful houses of Fontainhas;
10. A closer look at the display section of a famous bakery in the Latin Quarters.

There is a magical sense of wonder that fills us up as we walk through the Latin Quarters, all kinds of questions flooding our heads as the colours hold us in awe of this wonderful spread. A slice of Europe in Goa, the Latin Quarters have many secrets to tell.





There's something about experiencing history first-hand by walking right through it - the rustic, dainty houses, the residents willingly spilling stories of a different time and winding lanes that take you straight through wonderland.



from laterite, the yellows from burning lime, the blues from indigo and the greens from mixing blue and yellow. The process obviously must have been way more complicated than I make it seem and honestly, it looks like it was worth it. The Quarters looked worthy of representing the Portuguese's newfound capital!

And it's not just the houses that are draped in colours!

The only reason the Portuguese had to find a new capital was a horrific plague. People were dying and they had to move to survive. So they did, from Velha Goa to Panjim. The magnitude of the population that was moving required construction of new domiciles. They started with the Fontainhas area and eventually spread. What's interesting to know is that the Latin Quarters were established by a Goan expatriate Antonio Joao de Sequeira who converted his coconut plantation for this. Hence Panjim became Nova Goa and pretty houses sprung in the Latin Quarters. We suggest you look out for balcaos, sacadas and finials that are some of the most aesthetic bits about these Goan homes.

#### A peek into Fontainhas' hidden cafes

Apart from simply staring at the houses for hours, there are plenty of other things you can do in the Latin Quarters. You can indulge in delicious Goan snacks at Morango's or at Confeitaria Rua de 31 Janeiro. Try out rissois, croquettes, bebinca, doce, dodol, pinagr, baath and Goan samosas. These are some of our absolute favourites that we have to







...all you have to do is follow your heart and explore, let the winding roads take you to undiscovered corners and insta-gram-worthy pictures!



have in our Secret Food Trails! Apart from that the Latin Quarters has some really cool bars. Joseph Bar and Antonio's are our go-to hangouts, the former opens as early as 11 am! If you still keep wandering around, you'll come across pretty wall art, historical structures and even temples worth taking a second look at. Morning would be the best time to go so you can catch a good Goan breakfast at Anita's Tea House and some amazing coffee at Bombay Roasters. And if you stay until lunch, Viva Panjim will dish out some scrumptious Goan meals that you'll come back for again and again. Indeed some foods deserve all of your time and attention!

The Latin Quarters are very close to our hearts for they hold a very important piece of Goa's history. Also, they are so very pretty! If you ever feel like indulging in a thorough exploration of the

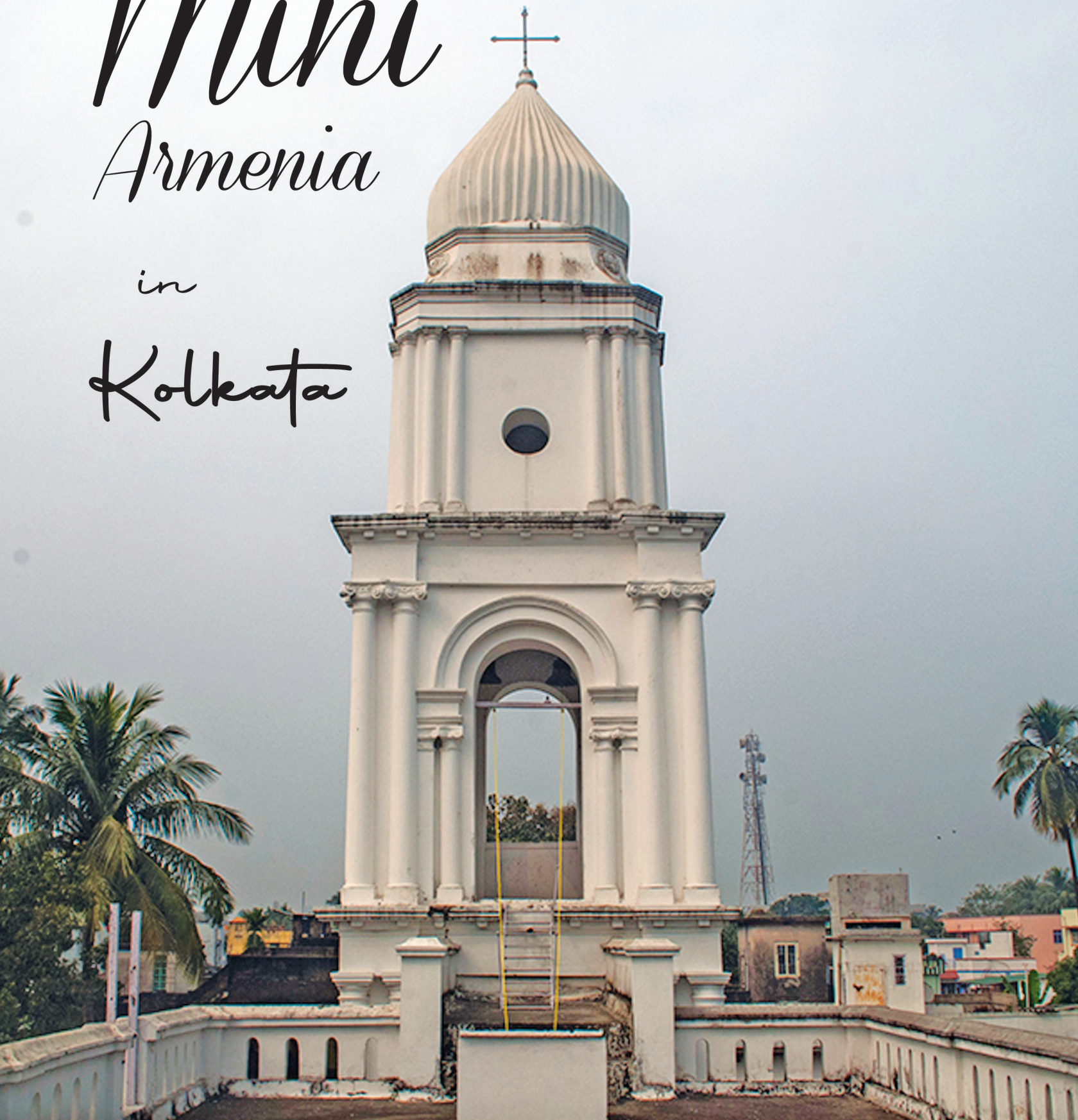
Latin Quarters, Panjim or the many hidden food locations in there, do hit us up! We have some very fun trails to get the best out of them, and we'll be coming with more once Goa opens up again!

The question is, are you ready?

1. A collection of traditional tiled nameplates from the Latin Quarters. These blue and white Azulejo nameplates are a heritage left behind by the Portuguese;
2. Traditionnal door and decor of a house in Fontainhas;
- 3,4. Statues of cockerel, soldiers or lions often flank the entryways or are perched on the gateposts of houses in the Latin Quarters. The shell windows are also very beautiful;
5. A glimpse of the interiors of an old Portuguese bakery in Fontainhas;
6. San Sebastian Chapel from 1818;
7. Unique tables at Confeitaria 31 de Janeiro Cafe with beautiful illustrations are not to be missed;
8. Colourful graffiti in Fontainhas.



# Mini Armenia in Kolkata



Article & photos by Rangan Datta, Kolkata





1. The Armenian Church in Chinsurah;
2. The Armenian Church of Kolkata;
3. Another view of Armenian Church of Chinsurah;
4. A plaque in memory of over one million Armenian lives lost during the Armenian Genocide;
5. The oldest tombstone in the Armenian Cemetery dating back to 1630.

Every year on the 6th of January, the Armenian Church, in central Kolkata holds the Christmas mass. Yes you have read it right, 'Christmas on 6th January'! It is the Armenian Christmas. The Armenian Orthodox Church celebrates the birth of Christ on January 6 (also known as Old Christmas). According to historic records, Christians worldwide celebrated Christ's birth on January 6, till the fourth century. Several Orthodox churches still follow the old custom and so does the Armenian Church of Kolkata.

Although only a handful of Armenians are left in the city but the Armenians have a long history dating far beyond the days of Job Charnock, the person who was once considered to be the founder of the city of Kolkata. The Armenian Church of Calcutta (Kolkata), officially known as the Holy Church of Nazareth, was built in 1707, making it the oldest Christian church in Kolkata.

The present building of the Church, however, came up in 1724 and the compound houses a graveyard which predates the church. In the graveyard one of the tombstones relates to an Armenian lady named Rezabeebeh. The epitaph mentions the year of her death as 1630, making it the oldest Christian grave in the city. In the graveyard several eminent Arme-

nians including Arathoon Stephen, the real estate tycoon, have also been laid to rest.

The church also comes in with a clock tower which was added in 1734. The interiors are well laid out and decorated with chandeliers. A beautiful vintage painting of Last Supper hangs above the altar. The walls contain several marble plaques.

Apart from the Holy Church of Nazareth there are two other Armenian churches in the city - the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Park Circus and St. Gregory, the Illuminator Church in Park Circus. Both these churches are small places of worship and the Armenian community keeps them active by rotating their services.

Former Dutch colony of Chinsurah located 50 km north of Kolkata also has an Armenian Church. It is known as St. John, the Baptist Church. The church dates back to 1695 and is only opened on the second Sunday after the Armenian Christmas. The Kolkata-based Armenians make a pilgrimage to Chinsura on this day.

The Armenian College located in Mirza Ghalib Street dates back to 1821. Although called a college it is actually a school following ICSE and ISC curriculum. It attracts Armenian students from all over the world.





# *Little China* *in* **KOLKATA**



*Article and Photos by  
Rangan Datta, Kolkata*





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5

*In the late 18th century a Chinese tea trader by the name of Tong Achew landed on the banks of the Hooghly River, somewhere near the present day Budge Budge, never to return to his country again. The then Governor General Warren Hasting granted land to Achew to set up a sugarcane plantation and sugar factory. According to the records of the British East India Company "Achew was granted 650 bighas of land about 6 miles south of Budge – Budge for an annual rent of Rs 45".*

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After acquiring the land Achew set up a sugarcane plantation along with a sugar mill. He brought in a band of Chinese workers to work in his plantation and factory thus forming the first Chinese settlement in India. But Achew died soon after and his sugar factory was abandoned. His workers left the place for the city of Calcutta, where their descendents still continue to live.

This place came to be known as Achipur after Tong Achew. Sadly today apart from a Chinese

1. Lion dance on the occasion of the Chinese New Year;
2. Chinese New Year celebration at Achew's grave at Achipur;
3. A Chinese man from Kolkata offers prayers at the Achipur Chinese Temple;
4. China Gate at the entry of the new China-town in Tangra;
5. Dragon down the streets of Kolkata during the Chinese New Year celebration by the Chinese people of the city.





Temple and Achew's horse shoe-shaped grave Achipur has no Chinese connection. But once every year, on the Sunday after Chinese New Year, the sleepy hamlet of Achipur comes alive with the beating of Chinese drums. Possible every Chinese of Calcutta makes a pilgrimage to Achipur to pay tribute to the man, who started the first Chinese settlement in India more than 240 years ago.

Although Achipur no longer has any Chinese community but Kolkata has its share of Chinese population. The present Chinese population of Kolkata is about 2000, a number which sharply dwindled after the Indo Chinese war of 1962. The Chinese population in Kolkata is divided into two Chinatowns – the Teriti Bazar in central Kolkata and Tangra on the eastern part of the city.

Teriti Bazar (also spelled as Territy, Territi, Tirreti, Tiretta. Tiretti and Terreti) is the old China Town and houses several Chinese temples located in the lanes and by-lanes of central Kolkata. They are extremely difficult to spot but these temples are an oasis of peace and are a striking contrast with the chaotic environment that surrounds them. Although termed as church these are mostly dedicated to Taoist gods and goddesses.

The most sought after attraction of Kolkata's old Chinatown is the Chinese breakfast. Although it operates throughout the week but on Sundays it attracts a large crowd.

Of all the Chinese Churches (temples) located in Kolkata, there are six that need special mention. These are basically temples dedicated to the Taoist Gods and goddesses.

Located on the Indian Exchange Place (Extension) and at the corner of the Kolkata Improvement Trust the Sea IP Church is the most ac-

cessible Chinese Temple of Tiretta Bazar. It is also the only one located on the main road. Located just off this place and dwarfed by the towering Kolkata Telephone Kendra the beautiful two storied building once housed the Toong On Church. The Gee Hing Church is at the entry of Blackburn Lane from the India Exchange Place Extension. This church houses a framed painting of Kwan Kun, the Chinese God of the Sea. The Sea Voi Leong Futh Church is to be found in Blackburn Lane. Built in 1908, it is the smallest but most elegant among the Chinese churches in the city. The Choong-hee Dong Thien Haue Church is located at the crossing of Damzen and Blackburn Lanes. Finally, Nam Soon Church is the oldest of the six Chinese churches in the city. It is also the most spacious one of them all and contains a large courtyard. However, located at the end of Damzen Lane it is quite difficult to spot.





While most of the city dwellers are aware of the many Chinese restaurants lining the street in the Tangra area, many do not know about the breakfast options at the Tiretti Bazar. Located in the Chhatawala Gully just beside Poddar Court near Lal Bazaar police headquarters, the morning silence here breaks around five and it comes alive from six to eight in the morning. This place can simply satiate your craving for those hot Chinese delicacies like juicy Chicken Momos, Pork Momos, Shu Mei, Sausages, Prawn wafers and the list goes on. Saucy dimsums and steaming momos are always the most sought after items here. Spring rolls, hot soup and pork sausages are not far behind. Pau, the ball shaped over sized dumpling, which comes with all sorts of pork, chicken and fish fillings is definitely on the must have list. Make sure you are an early visitor to this age-old Chinese food hub, which mostly winds up its servings by 8 am.

On Sunday early in the mornings when the sun is yet to come out, if you visit this market you will see that the stoves are already fired up. The morning silence is broken by the sound of the knife hitting the chopping plate.

Night owls crawl out of their late night parties and call centre night shifts to rejuvenate themselves with bowls of delicious hot fish ball soups from the road side vendors. Hungry souls huddle around makeshift stall, jostling with each other to grab the day's first meal.

The food in Tireta Bazaar is cooked in a homely style following the authentic Chinese recipe and are served with great warmth. The place has a laid back attitude, with elderly Chinese reading the Chinese

newspaper and sipping on cups of green tea and women talking about the latest gossip in Chinatown.

On the other hand Tangra, the new and the more popular of the two Chinatowns of Kolkata, is dotted with fancy Chinese restaurant, some of them quite up-market. Sadly most of the foods have been modified to suit the local taste buds though. The Chinese Kali Temple is another attraction of the place.

Although large chunks of Kolkata's Chinese population have already left the city but the handful who have remained here till date consider the city as their home. They continue with their Chinese traditional lifestyle. Every year they celebrate Chinese festivals like the Chinese New Year, the

Moon Festival, the Hungry Ghost Festival and many more with almost the same pomp and splendour as in Chinese towns.

Across the page:

1. A Chinese man in Kolkata offers prayers at the Leon Futh Chinese Temple in Kolkata;
2. A game of Mojong in progress in Gee Hing, a Chinese temple cum social club in Kolkata;
3. Lion dance during the Chinese New Year in Kolkata;
4. Another glimpse of a lion dance during Chinese New Year celebration;

Above:

Glimpses of the early morning Chinese breakfast market at the Old Chinatown in Kolkata's Tiretti Bazaar.





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Photo credit : Taj Group of Hotels

## a piece of Africa in Gujarat

Can you imagine this, an African settlement in India?

Although quite unbelievable, this little known fact is true. The Siddis are an Indian tribe of African origin and they mainly inhabit the regions of Gujarat, Karnataka and Hyderabad in India, and parts of Pakistan. They are mostly the descendants of the people of Bantu tribe of Africa. While some of them are known to have come as merchants or sailors, most of the Siddis are descendants of indentured servants and

slaves who were brought to India by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Arab traders between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. However, having lived in India for generations, most of them are now not aware of their own historical origin. A majority of them follow Islam, but there are Siddis who are also Hindus or Christians by faith.

Hundreds of years ago, long before African slaves were transported to America, Brazil and the Caribbean, the Siddis were sold as slaves to the Indian Princely states by the Europeans. The first documented record of the Siddis in India dates back to 1100 A.D. when the Siddis first settled along the Western Ghats. By the thirteenth century, a substantial number of Siddis were being bought by the Nawabs and the Sultans of India to serve as their soldiers and slaves. The major intrusions took place between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The Portuguese were primarily responsible for bringing these people to Goa as slaves, where they were mainly used as domestic help.

To escape slavery, the Siddis gradually formed communities and fled to the forests around Gujarat. The village of Jambur, located deep inside the Gir forest of Gujarat, is a major Siddi settlement. At present these tribal groups are mainly concentrated in Gujarat, with an estimated population of twenty to thirty thousand people. Smaller groups are settled in the adjoining states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The Siddis settled in Karnataka can be found in the districts of Dharwad and Belgaum, scattered in villages and remote interior forests, which are not easily accessible. Apart from India, Siddi settlements are also to be found in some provinces of neighbouring Pakistan.

It cannot be said that many Indians know about the Siddi tribe. They are biologically a distinctive community belonging to the African clan. However, being settled in India for many generations, they have completely merged themselves with everything that is Indian, and they are now our very own fellow countrymen. They are completely Indianized today. While speaking, they follow local Indian dialects, and also practise local customs and





*They are mostly the descendants of the people of Bantu tribe of Africa. While some of them are known to have come as merchants or sailors, most of the Siddis are descendants of indentured servants and slaves who were brought to India by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Arab traders between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. However, having lived in India for generations, most of them are now not aware of their own historical origin.*

religions, including Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. They have also adopted the local dressing style and women mostly wear salwar kameez and sarees, with married women covering their heads with pallus. They have also names like the local people, and when you come across names like Jawedbhai Ibrahim or Hirabehn Basurim, you may now know that these are the names of people of the local Siddi community. However, since the members of this community do not marry outside their ethnic group, they have managed to preserve their original African physical attributes.

The Siddis are physically very strong with a high level of stamina. They also possess the typical African physical characteristics like curly hair and dark complexions. They are very popular and well liked for their honesty, hard work and tolerance. They also seem to possess remarkable abilities to deal with any adverse natural phenomenon. Their amiable attitude while dealing with any outsider has also been widely appreciated.

Since they were physically well built and strong, many of them were engaged to serve as soldiers. In fact, a substantial

number of them were brought from Africa to serve in the armies of the Nawabs and the Sultans, from whom they eventually adopted the Muslim faith.

Majority of Siddi people are muslims. A traditionally backward tribe, the long prevalent rigid caste system of India has also proved to be a major hindrance in the efforts of this tribal community to come into the core of the Indian society. However, gradually with time, the Siddis have been able to assimilate themselves into the mainstream India.

The tribal community also seems to be caught in a trap between two societies. They appear to be neither able to comprehend the various aspects of Indian society, nor able to retain some unique traits of African culture. Nevertheless, the African connection of these tribes is reflected through their dance and musical performances, which can also be said to be the only link to their historical past, which otherwise have been lost in time.

The songs that the Siddis sing have a touch of Swahili which is widely spoken in many parts of Africa. Many of the musical instruments used by the Siddis during their

performances are distinctively similar to the ones which are traditionally used in Africa. A case in point is the Musindo, a large cylindrical drum placed around the player's neck. There are other musical instruments also reflecting the African heritage of the Siddis. Some of the vocals which accompany the music are also in African languages. The Siddis, in course of time have made a name for themselves in the cultural scenario of India with their unique folk dance, the Siddi Dhamaal. Witnessing a musical performance of the Siddhi tribe can be a real worthwhile experience. It is possible to do so during a trip to Gujarat.

#### How to Reach

**By Air:** To reach Gir the nearby airports are Rajkot (160 km) and Diu (110 km). The nearest International Airport is Ahmedabad (368 km).

Photos:

*The photos mainly depict the cultural connection of the Siddi Tribe with Africa which is reflected through their dances, music, language, make-up and expressions.*





Photo credit : Taj Group of Hotels

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**By Train:** Nearest Railway stations are Sasan, Junagadh (60 km), Rajkot (160 km) and Bhavnagar (238 km). These stations are well connected with important cities and towns across India. From these places one can travel by road to Gir or Jambur.

**By Road:** The road distances of major cities and towns from Gir are Ahmedabad - 408 km (7-hour drive), Rajkot - 160 km (3.5-hour drive), Junagadh - 60 km (1.25-hour drive), Keshod - 45 km (1-hour drive), Veraval - 40 km (1-hour drive) and Diu - 110 km (2-hour drive). From all these places there are buses and taxis to Gir.

#### Where to stay

For those who wish to observe closely the various facets of the lives of these tribal people, straightaway heading to the Gir Forest area in Gujarat is the best option. There are a host of stay options in Gir, ranging from budget to luxury ones. The Sinh Sadan Forest Lodge and Gir Lodge located within the forest are run by the Government Forest department. In these lodges, there are basic amenities. There are also private lodges available. The Jungle Resort (also called Hotel Anil farmhouse) is located in a private mango orchard on the banks of the Hiran River and provides good amenities for a comfortable stay. On the request of guests the resort authorities arrange for a number of activities including trips to the Siddi tribal villages located on the vicinity of the Gir forests. (Contact Nos. 02877-285590, 0987-900-1098, 0942-699-5315 and 0971-413-6200). In fact, there is no dearth of accommodation for visitors to the Gir forest to cater to the needs of the discerning traveller and to suit all kinds of budgets.





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*Photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata*

# Pondicherry's French Connection

The Union Territory of Pondicherry is geographically bounded by Tamil Nadu on all sides except the coastal part which lies on the shore of the Bay of Bengal. The French had a colonial base in many places in India, but Pondicherry was the largest town under its control. The town had been divided into two distinct quarters, a French one and the other for the Indians, more precisely, the Tamil populace.

The arrival of the French colonists in India predates the period of British colonization of India. The French East India Company set up a trading post in Pondicherry in 1674. It continued to be so until 1954 when it was finally annexed to India. Pondicherry still retains a great French influence in life, culture, architecture, food, language, sports and many other aspects as well. So if you want to savour the taste of France in India itself, head straight to Pondicherry.

## The French Quarter

The most prominent part of the city's French

legacy, however, is the French Quarter with narrow tree-lined streets and mustard-coloured houses, some with interesting graffiti. Many would like to call this part, a Mini France. The French Quarters are adorned with beautiful hued villas with characteristic French windows and balconies overlooking the street. This place is a paradise for photographers as well as for social media influencers as it provides ample scopes for memorable photos. The quarter provides a beautiful window to the past.

Most of the streets near the beach and the French Quarters have French names. However outside of the French Quarters, the rest of Pondicherry breathes and feels entirely like any other South Indian city.

Pondicherry has many cafés and bakeries dating from the French era. One of them is the Le café, an old café located by the beach. While the beaches close down early, shopping boutique and cafés remain open late into the night. When in Pondicherry, it

is important to try French cuisine. There are many restaurants in Pondicherry that maintain a French ambience and serve authentic French food.

## Other Attractions

Pondicherry is definitely one of the most stunning destinations in all of South India. Among its greatest attractions, apart from the French Quarter are the city's beaches, churches, Aurobindo Ashram and the parks. The beaches of Pondicherry are very clean which reflects the attitude of the local administration.

## Rock Beach & Gandhi Statue Promenade

This iconic beach stretches 1 km in length and is almost a landmark of Pondicherry. The attractions nearby the beach are the French War Memorial, the Promenade and the statue of Mahatma Gandhi right in the middle of the promenade. The four meters high bronze statue is placed in a beautiful





1-3. Glimpses of colourful villas from the beautiful French Quarter of Pondicherry;  
4. Immaculate Conception Cathedral;  
5. Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus;  
6. The very old St. Andrew's Church;  
7. The French War Memorial.

white structure surrounded by 8 granite pillars. The exquisitely carved monolithic pillars were relocated here from the nearby Gingee Fort long back in 1866. The statue was placed much later in 1965. The place is venue for many cultural and musical activities throughout the year. The French War memorial and the French Consulate are also 'must visit' places. These are the best places to learn about the colonial history of Pondicherry. The Beach road is also popular meeting spot for the locals as well as visitors, especially after sunset. The light breeze has a soothing effect on jaded travelers. The place is also known for its sunset views.

#### Dupleix Park

The Promenade finally ends at the cozy Dupleix Park on the Goubert Avenue. This is a very small children's park overlooking

the sea. Apart from park benches and rides for children, it also has the statue of Joseph Francois Dupleix in the centre. A contemporary of Robert Clive, he was the French Governor of Pondicherry from 1742 to 1754, but predated the position of Governor General by at least 3 years. As a matter of fact, Robert Clive was made the First British Governor General of Bengal Presidency in 1757. The latter was instrumental in restricting the expansion of French colony and as a result the French colony in India remained confined to only a few pockets.

#### Paradise Beach

Also known as Plage Paradiso, this secluded beach is located 8 km from Pondicherry at the Chunnambar backwaters. It is a photographer's paradise and is especially known for its sunrise views. The only way to reach

this isolated beach is by a speed boat or ferry that takes about half an hour to reach there. The beach is known for occasional strong tides making it dangerous to go deeper into the sea. There are beach shacks and shades for visitors to relax.

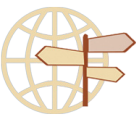
#### Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

The French name for this church is Basilique du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus de Pondichéry. It has a Gothic revival architectural style. The 28 windows of this church are decorated with beautiful stained glass paintings depicting the life of Jesus Christ. The construction of the present church was started in 1902 and completed in 1907.

#### Our Lady of Angels Church

The French name for this fourth oldest





1. The famous Rocky Beach of Pondicherry;
2. Creative graffiti on a wall in Pondicherry;
- 3-4. Interesting Graffiti in the French Quarters.



church of Pondicherry is Église Notre Dame des Agnes. It was built in 1855 in a Greco Roman architectural style under the orders of Napoleon III. It offers mass in three languages, being English, French and Tamil.

#### St. Andrew's Church

This is one of the oldest churches of Pondicherry and was built in 1745.

#### Immaculate Conception Cathedral

Cathédrale de l'immaculée-Conception de Pondichéry is the mother church for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Pondicherry. The construction of the original church here was started in 1699 and completed in 1791. Current building is the fourth one at the site.

#### Aurobindo Ashram

This ashram was founded in 1926 by Rishi Aurobindo with the help of his spiritual collaborator, a French lady called Mirra Alfassa who, in course of time, came to be better known as 'The Mother'. Gradually it developed into a famous spiritual community attracting visitors from the world over. Today the ashram is spread across a few buildings

where devotees live and work. The bodies of Sri Aurobinda and the Mother have been laid to rest here. It is an extremely peaceful place and is located in the White Town, or the Indian Quarters of Pondicherry.

#### Auroville

Auroville or the 'City of Dawn' is a mini township about 8 km from Pondicherry. People from all over the world come here to pay homage to them and also in search of the elusive peace. The iconic Matrimandir sits right at the centre of Auroville. It is a 'must visit' place. One can also take a walk around the township looking at beautiful and sustainable buildings. There are buses from Pondicherry to Auroville.

The township was founded in 1968 by The Mother with an idea of having a futuristic city for the peaceful co-existence of people of from all walks of life, castes, creeds, religions and nationalities. Auroville was designed by architect Roger Anger. It is said that during the inauguration ceremony goodwill ambassadors from 124 countries put the soil brought from their respective countries in a lotus-shaped urn here. The soil was mixed to symbolize oneness of the universe. Today the township is home to

about 2,800 people who have come from different countries and settled here. They live in harmony and practice the religion of humanity. Surrounding the Matrimandir is a beautifully manicured garden. This urn is placed at the centre of an Amphitheater in the gardens of the Matrimandir. Those visiting Auroville may also pay a visit to the tranquil beach nearby.

#### How to reach:

Pondicherry is a 3-hours' drive from Chennai and there are regular buses between the two cities. The city also has a railhead and is connected with some places in Tamil Nadu.

#### Moving around:

The best way to explore Pondicherry is on a bicycle. There are many bicycle tour offered by local tour companies. It is also possible to rent a bicycle for a day to explore the city on one's own.

#### Where to stay:

There are hotels catering to various budgets and ranges. It is also possible to book a home stay in the centre of the town to make the most of a trip here.



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## An unusual Afghan Settlement in Delhi's Lajpat Nagar

*Photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata*

As unbelievable as it may sound, Delhi has its own Mini Afghanistan. Right in the heart of the country's capital city, across two narrow lanes in the famous Lajpat Nagar area, a settlement of Afghan people have come up since 1979. The Afghan refugees residing in this area have quite well blended with the local populace while at the same time also ensuring that they maintain their own culture, attires, language and food habits.

The Afghan colony of Lajpat Nagar is home to about 15,000 Afghan refugees. In 1979 when the then Soviet Union invaded their country, Afghanistan, many Afghans escaped their motherland in search of tem-

porary peace and safety in different parts of the world. They intended to return when their country was peaceful again. That did not happen immediately. Some of the refugees who fled Afghanistan made their way to India. In course of time, India became a second home to them. Today many of these people have started their own food stalls or restaurants in the area making it a great place to taste Afghan delicacies.

While there are no architectural attractions here to marvel at, for foodies visiting Delhi, a trip to this Afghan settlement in Lajpat Nagar is highly rewarding. Some of the restaurants of this area are quite good

(although may not fit in the definition of 'up-market') ones and plate delectable Afghan delicacies along with local dishes. The prices are moderate but taste and quality is maintained at the highest level. The following is a list of Afghan food items to try and restaurants to visit for a memorable culinary trip to Delhi's little Afghanistan.

### **Afghani Kebabs**

The fact that Afghans love meat should not come as a surprise. The restaurants in the Afghan colony in Lajpat Nagar area dish out a variety of delectable Afghani kebabs that are a must try.





### Afghani breads

Afghani breads are unique. The 'Rhot' is a sweetbread that is preferred for breakfast. Then there are 'Rotis' like the thick Khimeeri Roti that is preferred with gravies during more elaborate meals like lunch or dinner. In this Afghan colony in Lajpat Nagar, these breads are available in plenty with the roadside vendors. Bolani is another type of Afghani bread that comes with a filling inside, much

like our Aloo Parantha. It comes with a variety of fillings like veggies, potato, spinach, onions and chillies.

### Afghan Jalebi

Made rather popular by a peppy Bollywood item number, the Afghan Jalebi is almost the same as the Indian version, but bigger and naturally more expensive. Known as 'Jilipi' in Afghanistan, these are filled with khoya and soaked in a thick sugary syrup. It is definitely worth trying.

### Afghan Burger

Don't go by the name, it is not a regular burger. The Afghan Burger is more like a wrap and is very big in size. The burger comes with various fillings inside, like French fries, shredded chicken, eggs, salads and sauces, all wrapped inside the thick Afghani flatbread.

### Afghan restaurants

Afghan Darbar, Mazaar, Chopaan Kebab, Kabul Delhi, Afghan Delhi, Azimi and Nooshe Joon are some of the most popular restaurants in Lajpat Nagar dishing out Afghan delicacies. Standard rates in these restaurants range between Rs. 800 to Rs. 1500 for two persons. Afghani breads like khameeri rotis, naans, bolani (stuffed flatbreads), varieties of kebabs including the famous Chopaan kebab, Kabuli Pulao, Kofta Chalo, Afghani salad, different types of Qormas, koftas and authentic Afghan desserts are among the items that are

*Across the page:*

*An Afghan man selling Afghani Naans in a roadside stall in Lajpat Nagar;*

*Above:*

*Various Afghan restaurants and other shops in the Lajpat Nagar area of Delhi.*





The Afghan colony of Lajpat Nagar is home to about 15,000 Afghan refugees. In 1979 when the then Soviet Union invaded their country, Afghanistan, many Afghans escaped their motherland in search of temporary peace and safety in different parts of the world. They intended to return when their country was peaceful again... Some of the refugees who fled Afghanistan made their way to India. In course of time, India became a second home to them.

served in these restaurants.

#### Afghan Darbar

Situated in a dimly lit lane of Lajpat Nagar near the main market, Afghan Darbar is one of the most iconic Afghani restaurants owned and run by the Afghans of Delhi. In the menu are some delectable authentic Afghan dishes like Qorma Kofta or Kofta Chalo. Qorma Kofta is a dish of luscious meat balls in a thick spicy gravy and the same is served with two Khameeri rotis here. The dish is enough for 1.5 persons if not for 2. The Kofta chalo is a rice dish whose main ingredients are brinjal, carrots and tender lamb pieces. This again is good for two people. Apart from the authentic and delicious food, the Afghani touch and hospitality inside the restaurant makes it unique and memorable. The typical Afghan/Turkish type decor of the restaurant adds to the gourmet experience.

The area is also home to many other shops and stores that remind one of being in a mini Afghanistan. There are Afghan general stores, pharmacies and so on. Many local Afghan women have also started catering services and deliver good Afghani food at doorstep.

Photos:

A few Afghan restaurants in Lajpat Nagar,  
Afghan Naan and Afghan Burger.





# A slice of Iran in BIHAR

During the reign of the Safavid Empire in Persia (present day Iran), which ruled over the region from 1501 to 1736 AD, the cities of the then Persia thrived. Back then India was under the Mughal Empire which shared its border with the Safavid Empire. Since the relations between the two empires were good there were trading relations between the two. There were people in the Mughal Empire who spoke Farsi, so trading was also quite easy. An army's power was indicated to a large extent by the strength of its cavalry. Iranian horses, being of well built, were in huge demand. Irani traders would regularly come to India from there to sell their horses at occasional fairs and festivals, and to the landlords and local kings.

Shiraz was the capital of the Safavid Empire of Persia and a major trading hub then. It is believed that around 500 years ago, travellers from the then prosperous city of Shiraz came to India to sell horses. However, once done with their work they never went back. The reason is not known with certainty. However, it is believed that the Khagra Mela which was started by the Nawab of Khagra, Mohammad Fakruddin, was an important reason. During those days and for a long time thereafter, the Khagra Mela was the biggest fair of the region and trading horses at the fair was a profitable business for the Iranians. They were able to earn a handsome amount of money from the fair.

Back then the Iranians used to lead a nomadic life moving around from place to place in caravans

and setting up their tents temporarily at various places. The tents were very much part of their culture back then. They would live in small areas called 'bastis' and keep selling their horses during fairs and festivals. One such basti came up in the Motibagh Karbala area of Kishanganj, Bihar. It is often referred to as the Little Iran in India. In course of time the tents gave way to bamboo huts which in turn were replaced for small concrete buildings much later. At present the strength of the Iranian population in Motibagh Karbala is about a thousand.

The Iranis of Motibagh Karbala speak in Farsi language amongst themselves (however all the Iranians can speak fluent Hindi also), eat Persian food and wear traditional Iranian clothes. The diet of the Irani people is dominated by meat. Some of their important dishes are Halwa Puri, Degh pulao, Halim and Dal Ghost. Their food is generally very spicy.

The culture handed down by their ancestors is also strictly maintained by the Iranis. Marriage can take place strictly within the community only, with the exception that the men can take wives from outside communities. If a girl marries outside the community, she is ex-communicated.

While the Iranis traditionally traded only in horses today they also sell locks and keys, knives, glass frames, sunglasses and precious stones. Some of the men folk still lead the nomadic lifestyle going from one place to another for their business while the womenfolk stay behind to raise the children and look after the home and family. Since the men have to mingle more with the outside society they also wear more neutral clothes while out on business.

The Iranis have a Chief of the community. It is usually a hereditarily transferred position. The Chief settles disputes among the people of the community. While the voices of women are heard, they have a position much lower than that of the men. However, there is one noticeable difference in the culture of this community with the present day Iranians. There is no purdah system for girls in this Indian Irani community and girls can move freely. This is based on the system that was in vogue in Iran during the rule of the Safavid Dynasty when the ancestors of these people had migrated.

The Iranians of Motibagh Karbala have much difficulty in making both ends meet. The earnings from business only helps them live hand to mouth. Yet they live peacefully in the community and celebrate all the festivals and feasts together.

The Irani community of Bihar prefers to live in isolation in their small world and not socialize with the outside world. Today they have all Indian citizenship documents like the Aadhar card, the voter ID etc. and by nationality they consider themselves as Indians. However each person in the community expresses a strong desire to visit Shiraz, the land of their ancestors in Iran some day.





**Aries**  
(21 March – 19 April)

You are stronger and more self-sufficient. You are likely taking more creative risks this month in an effort to pursue dreams that suit your deepest needs.

Places to visit: Krabi is a lively resort town on the Andaman coast in southern Thailand. This very old settlement, now overtaken by tourism, has been shaped by limestone karsts jutting out of the dense mangrove forest and surrounded by vast sandy beaches.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands - Known for their picturesque beauty with pristine beaches, azure waters and verdant forests, Andaman & Nicobar island remains unexplored. These islands have that enigmatic charm to them that lures thousands of tourists every year.

Favorable Dates: Aug 4, 7, 13, 16, 22, 25, 3

Favorable Colors: Yellow & Grey

You are likely to expand your career pursuits and business connections. Opportunities on the career front can come seemingly out of the blue. You enjoy an increasing feeling of hope and optimism. Love is pleasurable and exciting at once.

Places to visit: Great Barrier Reef - This 2,300-km-long complex ecosystem in Australia comprises more than 3,000 individual reef systems, coral cays, and hundreds of islands, big and small, with sparkling white sandy beaches.

Hampi - Ruins of this ancient city with its number of strikingly beautiful monuments, temples and palaces still tell you the tales of grandeur and magnificence of the Vijayanagara rulers.

Favorable Dates: Aug 2, 8, 11, 17, 20, 26

Favorable Colors: Red & White



**Taurus**  
(20 April – 20 May)



**Gemini**  
(21 May – 20 June)

You will be busy with all sorts of everyday activities, deeply involved in your work and routines. Charity, giving anonymously, volunteering, and helping others without expectation of reward will be most satisfying now. It's also time to balance your life with some down time.

Places to visit: Garden of the Gods, Colorado, USA - Hundreds of immense red sandstone spires, bridges, and other precariously balanced rock formations are intersected by 15 miles of well-managed trails.

Meghalaya - With its lush terraced slopes, gushing waterfalls, mystic caves, dense forests and sparkling lakes and rivers; Meghalaya is an ideal for trekkers, cavers and nature enthusiasts.

Favorable Dates: Aug 2, 7, 11, 16, 20, 25

Favorable Colors: Red & Grey

You can embark on a new path in your career, and you're excited about the opportunities you're presented with along the way. You can come up with new goals for you to achieve, and have the opportunity to succeed quickly.

Places to visit: Geiranger Fjord, Norway - In the land of hundreds of magnificent fjords, Geiranger is considered Norway's most beautiful: A spectacular creation by glaciers.

Sikkim - With its enchanting snow-capped mountains, quaint little villages, pristine lakes and vibrant Buddhist monasteries, Sikkim is one of the best destinations in India to spend a peaceful and laid back holiday amidst extreme tranquillity and solitude.

Favorable Dates: Aug 3, 10, 12, 19, 21, 28

Favorable Colors: Yellow & Blue



**Cancer**  
(21 June – 22 July)



**Leo**  
(23 July – 22 August)

You're more practical and hard-working, and you believe in your abilities. This is a month in which you are more likely to establish, or solidify, a significant partnership; or you could be enhancing an existing relationship.

Places to visit: Fiordland National Park, New Zealand - Huge granite mountains are dotted with emerald lakes, dense rainforests, and animals that do not exist anywhere else.

Sunderbans - These forests are also home to unlimited species of other wild animals, reptiles and birds. Evoking a mysterious fervour, Sunderbans has always lured adventure buffs, nature lovers and bird watchers from across the globe.

Favorable Dates: Aug 7, 10, 16, 19, 25, 28

Favorable Colors: Red & Yellow

You can see an increase in your sense of safety and security, as well as your confidence and self-esteem. You could begin a new money-making venture, and it's something you pursue for some time.

Places to visit: Bora Bora, French Polynesia - It is one of the most beautiful islands in the world, where luxury resorts compete with lavish nature to fulfill your every wish.

Aurangabad - Mostly famed for its stunning Buddhist cave paintings of Ajanta & Ellora, a world heritage site, Aurangabad is visited by many national and international tourists throughout the year for many other reasons too.

Favorable Dates: Aug 3, 4, 12, 13, 21, 22

Favorable Colors: Green & Blue



**Virgo**  
(23 August – 22 Sept)



**Manish Kumar Arora** is a renowned KP Astrologer, Numerologist, Tarot Reader and Vastu Consultant. He will be with Touriosity Travelmag to bring to our readers monthly predictions based on zodiac signs with special emphasis on travel predictions. Our readers can plan their tours accordingly. He can be reached at [manish@manishastrologer.com](mailto:manish@manishastrologer.com)



You may feel like you're stifled in your career, or that something is holding you back from pursuing or achieving your goals. You may not see as many opportunities for you to pursue your goals, get further in your career, or succeed as you've seen in the past.

Places to visit: Blue Lagoon, Iceland - The Blue Lagoon is a rare geothermal spa in Iceland located between Reykjavik and Keflavik International Airport in the heart of a lava field on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

Rann of Kutch - With its astounding natural beauty, the world's one of the greatest salt desert is swarmed by an endless number of tourists every year.

Favorable Dates: Aug 5, 8, 14, 17, 23, 26

Favorable Colors: Purple & White

You can learn new things, keep a packed social calendar, and have lots of new ideas that you want to share. You feel sensual and want to engage your senses and experience life through your senses. You respond to physical stimuli, and connect with the world around you.

Places to visit: Ireland - From castle hotels to boisterous pubs and the greenest countrysides your eyes will ever behold, Ireland is a feast for the senses.

Jaisalmer - An exotic city set amidst endless stretches of golden Thar Desert, Jaisalmer spells a magnetic pull at travellers sitting in different corners of the world.

Favorable Dates: Aug 6, 7, 15, 17, 24, 25

Favorable Colors: Blue & Yellow



You can focus more on your finances, and to work at having more income during this period. You can come across as more calm, stubborn, and earthy. You can be more sensual and indulgent, especially when you're emotional.

Places to visit: Jackson Hole - This Wyoming city has mountain views and ski resorts, with the added benefit of proximity to Grand Teton National Park.

Varanasi - Bustling with enchanting ancient temples and holy Ghats crowded with people performing various rituals and prayers, Varanasi makes for an ultimate spiritual holiday destination in India.

Favorable Dates: Aug 2, 5, 11, 14, 20, 23

Favorable Colors: Purple & White

You can keep going on in your life lugging it all around, and you can't keep avoiding the issues that you keep hidden away from your conscious mind. If single, you could meet someone through your career or through theirs. If attached, you can be more traditional with your love tokens, but also less affectionate.

Places to visit: Portugal - Small but mighty, Spain's neighbor has a distinct culture, cuisine, and language. In the summer, head to the western village of Comporta.

Agra - Home to the eternal symbol of love, the iconic 'Taj Mahal', Agra finds one of the top most places on the world heritage map.

Favorable Dates: Aug 3, 7, 12, 17, 21, 25

Favorable Colors: Yellow & Red



You keep lists of everything you want to get done, and you pride yourself in checking everything off. You enjoy succeeding at the goals you set for yourself. The more you succeed in life, the better you feel about yourself. You enjoy setting goals for yourself, but need a little push to get going with them.

Places to visit: Netherlands - Go to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other crannies of this gorgeous country for the incredible museums, unparalleled coffee, and stunning countrysides.

Delhi - Delhi with its cosmopolitan and contemporary with its sprawling boulevards, high-end malls, shopping complexes and luxury hotels & restaurants is worth visiting.

Favorable Dates: Aug 5, 8, 14, 17, 23, 26

Favorable Colors: Blue & Red

You pursue your goals with enthusiasm and zeal, and you're desperate to achieve something. You can be more intimate with your loved ones, but also too clingy at times. If single, you're drawn to people who seem intense and deep, and who exude power and authority.

Places to visit: Morocco - The home of Casablanca is a treasure trove of spice markets, surrealist landscapes, jaw-dropping mosques, and world-class surfing.

Leh / Ladakh - The land of majestic snow-capped mountains, serene alpine glacial lakes, enchanting valleys and ancient colourful Buddhist monasteries, Leh-Ladakh is one of the 'must-visit' destinations in India.

Favorable Dates: Aug 2, 3, 11, 12, 20, 21

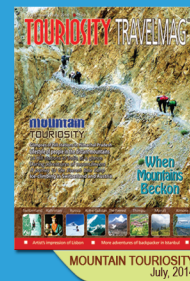
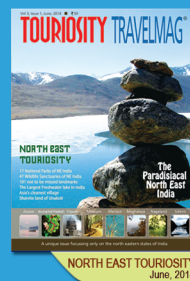
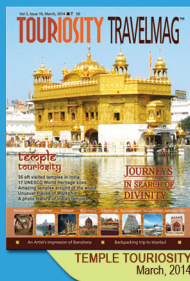
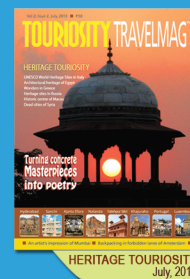
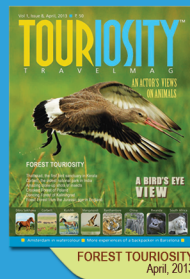
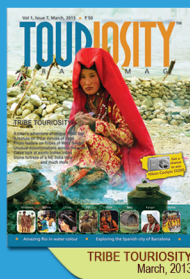
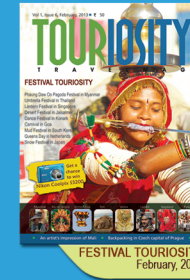
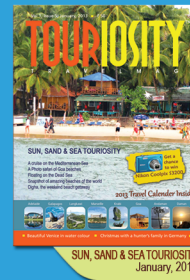
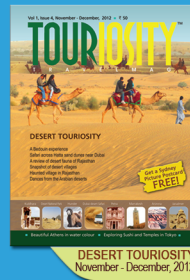
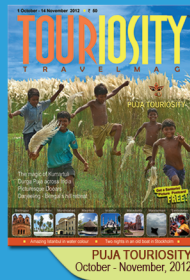
Favorable Colors: Purple & Green





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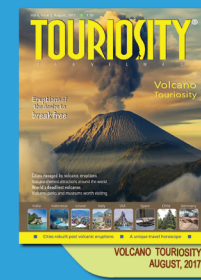
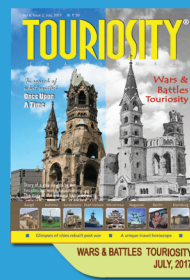
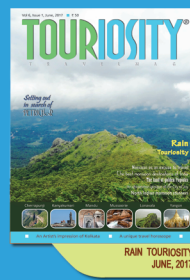
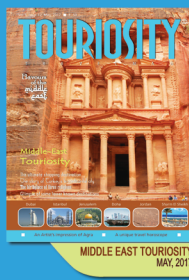
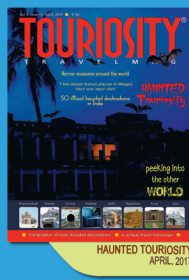
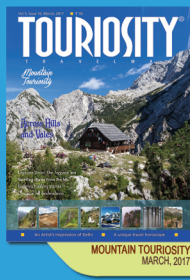
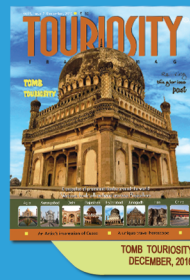
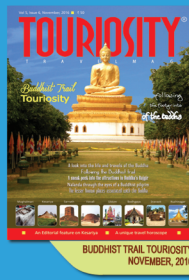
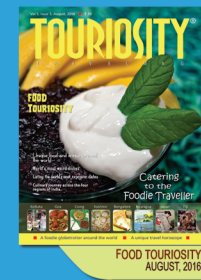
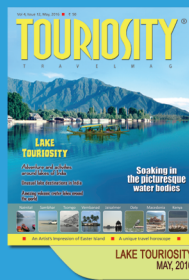
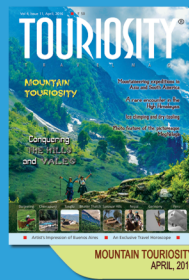
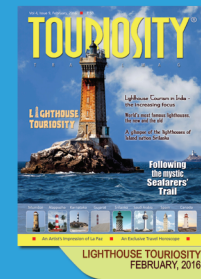
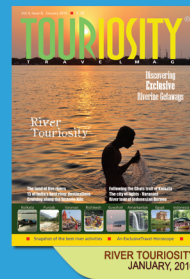
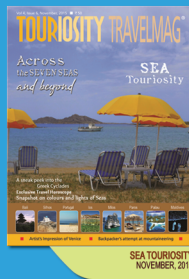
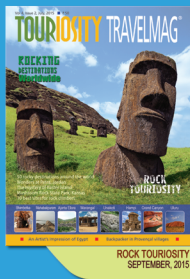
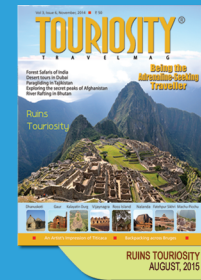
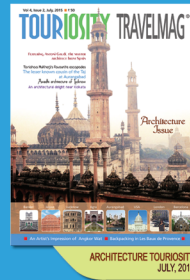
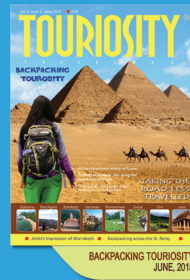
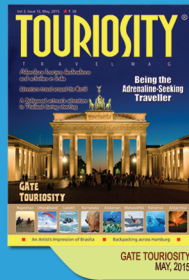




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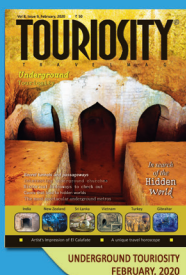
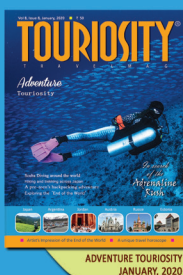
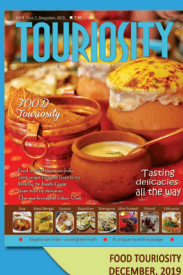
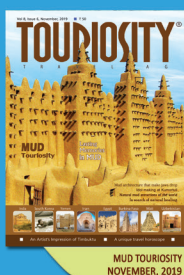
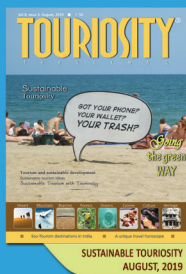
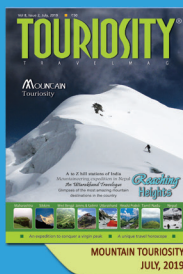
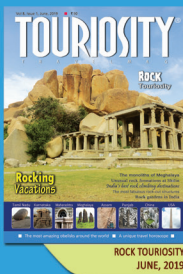
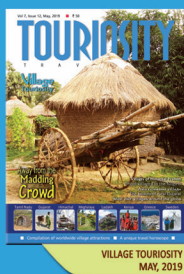
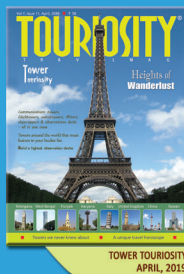
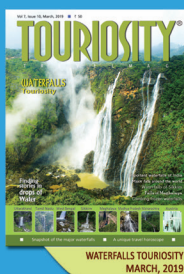
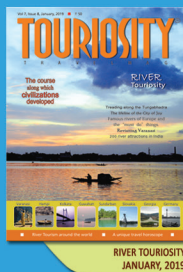
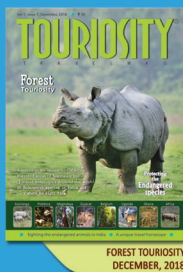
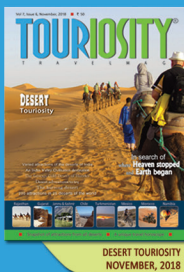
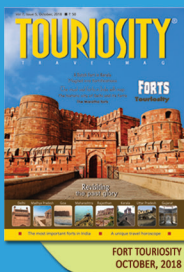
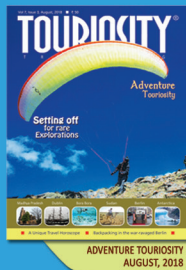
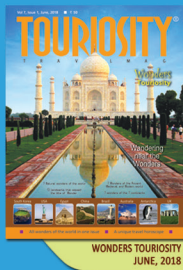
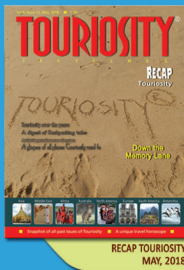
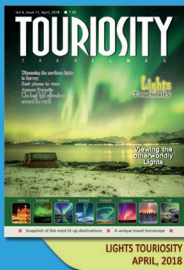
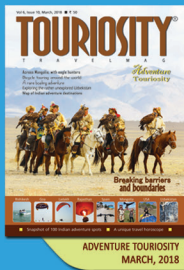
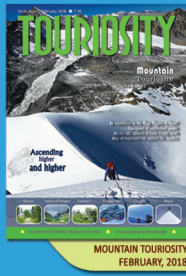
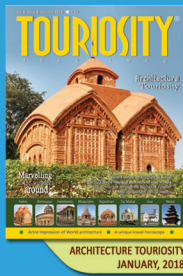
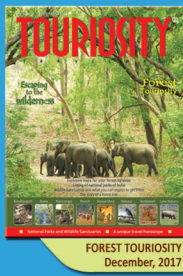
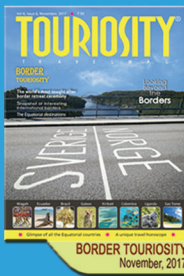
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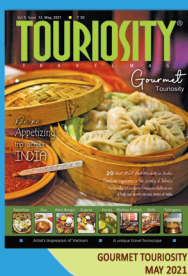
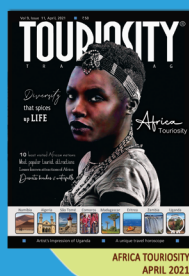
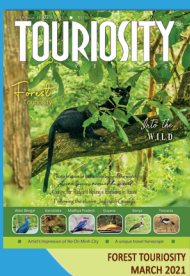
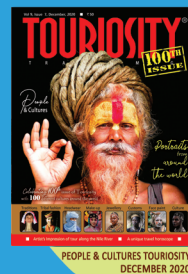
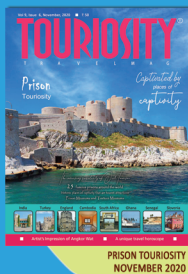
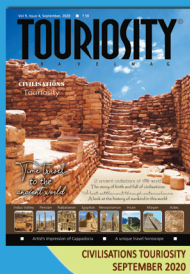
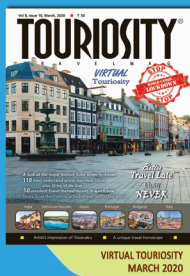


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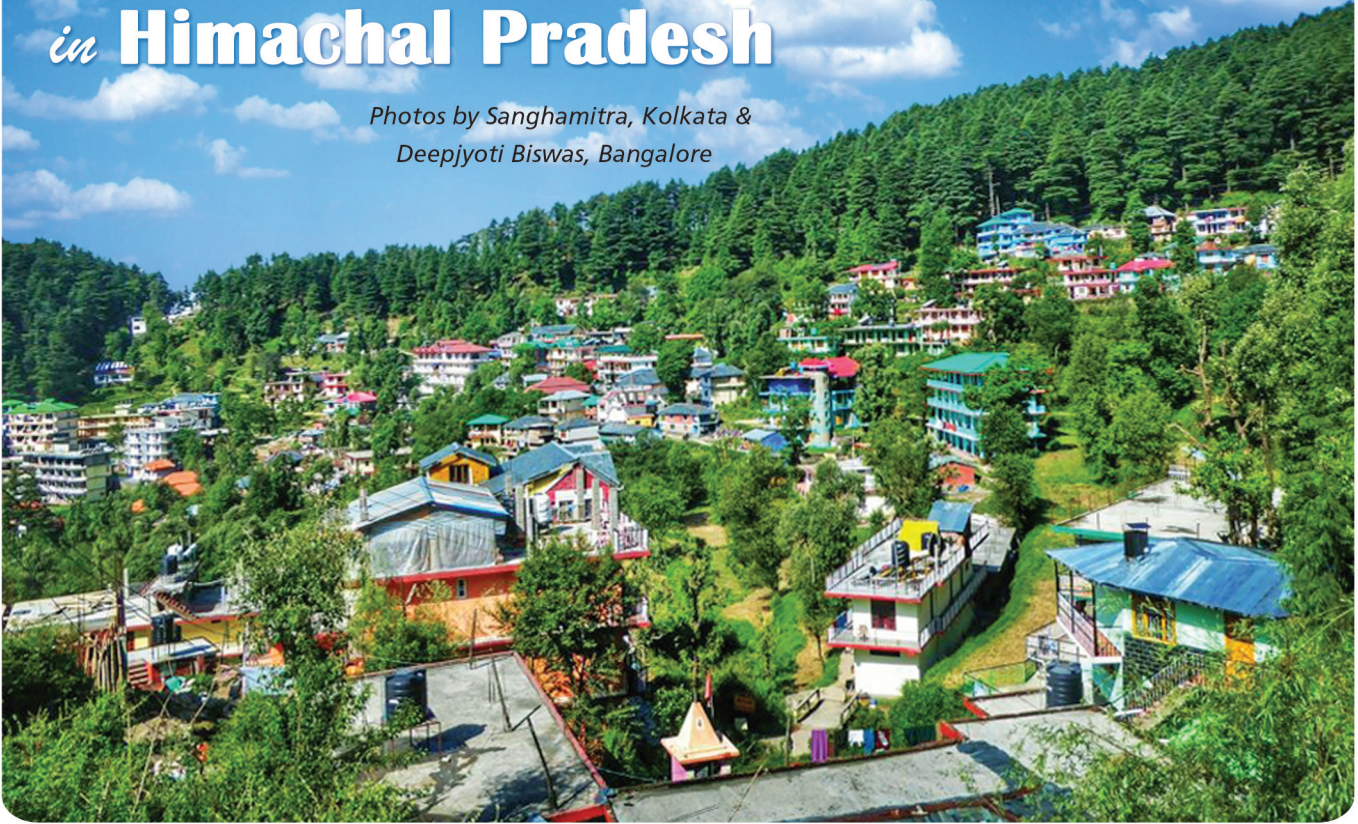
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# Mini Israel in Himachal Pradesh

*Photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata &  
Deepjyoti Biswas, Bangalore*



This is the story of how a tiny hamlet on the foothills of the Himalayas became an abode of the Israeli people. This foreign settlement is different from all others that we have covered in this issue in that the foreign populace here does not consist of colonizers or refugees nor people who came here in search of work or political asylum. Rather the settlers here are tourists, who came here in search of peace and serenity and liked the place so much that they decided to stay back.

To know a little more about how this came to happen, we need to dig deeper into the history a bit.

Before Dharamkot became a mini Israel, it was inhabited mainly by the people of the Gaddi tribe of Himachal Pradesh, which is basically the shepherd community of the state. Situated at an elevation of about 10,100 feet on the crest of a hill, and nestled in the dense foliage of the Himalayas, Dharamkot was then far away from the most treaded upon places in the valley.

The village first caught the attention of the Israeli tourists in the 1990s and they started coming to stay here in greater numbers. Heavily tattooed and pierced bodies, punk style and open clothing resulted in a huge cultural shock to the Gaddi people. But they

gradually accepted this and foreigners became a part of their life. Soon tourism bloomed and the local residents started acknowledging the fact that tourism in this village did not flourish as a result of government initiatives, but solely due to the efforts of the Israeli people.

Today, tourism thrives in Dharamkot. Most of the houses in the village have converted themselves into homestays and rooms are rented out to tourists. The local economy is dependent entirely on tourism.

Dharamkot is famous for its dimly lit restaurants and pocket-friendly homestays where the locals welcome tourists from all over the world for a memorable stay. The serenity that prevails here and the sheer beauty of the place attract people. Today it is often referred to as mini Israel of India, thanks to the rising number of Israeli tourists coming to this village. Interestingly, it is the only village in this state to have a Jewish community center, the Chabad house. Many homestays have made way for star-rated hotels and up-market accommodations. Many top hotel brands are also queuing up to have their own properties here soon.

Drastic developments in communication and unrestrained usage





*Dharamkot is famous for its dimly lit restaurants and pocket-friendly homestays where the locals welcome tourists from all over the world for a memorable stay. The serenity that prevails here and the sheer beauty of the place attract people. But today it is known as mini Israel of India*



of social media have taken off the veil of the unknown from most of the tiny Himalayan paradises in the country. Thankfully, there are still a few hamlets that are capable of stirring our cravings for walking through the unknown. Dharamkot was one such place. To a large extent, it still is even today despite the large number of tourists coming here.

Dharamkot is rightly called the second home of Israeli tourists in India. To make them feel at home most restaurants and eateries here serve Israeli food also. Some such notable items are Falafel, Shakshuka, Hummus and Pita bread. The Jewish New Year, Rosh-Hashana, is celebrated here with much pomp and gaiety every year. Even the street signs come with Hebrew versions of street names.

Dharamkot is located only 3 kilometers away from McLeodganj in the Kangra Val-

ley of Himachal Pradesh. It is a place from where one can have magnificent views of the entire Kangra Valley below and the snow-covered Dhauladhar Range of mountains. So for those who are looking for some peace and serenity, away from the din and bustle and crowds of the nearby Dharmashala and McLeodganj, Dharamkot is the best refuge.

There is a Vipassana Meditation Centre in Dharamkot that offers 10-day meditation courses. It is called the Dhamma Shikara. There is also a centre for study and practice of Buddhism called the Tushita Meditation Centre.

The serenity of the location of Dharamkot adds to its charm as a yoga and meditation centre. This was the reason it became popular with foreign travellers, especially those from Israel. Naturally they came to this part of the world looking for a place

for peace and serenity.

### Attractions

Dharamkot is a great place to take part in yoga and meditation. It is also the perfect base for treks to many places including Triund, Illaqua and Indrahar Pass. Kasol, a destination famous with backpackers, is only an overnight's journey away from Dharamkot. There is a waterfall in a nearby village and one can trek there too.

Dharamkot can also be the perfect base for those who want to see around in McLeodganj and Dharmashala. The nearby villages of Bhagsu and Naadi are pristine and also great places to take a walk in.

### Activities

For tourists in Dharamkot many villagers offer several day courses on activities like





singing, painting, cooking, massage, yoga, reiki and so on.

#### Location

Dharamkot is located in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, 3 km from McLeodganj and 6.5 km from Dharamshala.

#### How to Reach

**By Air:** The nearest airport is the Kangra Gaggal Airport at Dharamshala and it is connected with Delhi, Jaipur and Kanpur.

**By Train:** One can also take a train from Delhi to Pathankot. From Pathankot, Dharamkot is a 2.5 hrs' taxi ride away. If one wants a more economical option, there are also buses from Pathankot to McLeodganj which takes double that time but costs much lesser. From McLeodganj to Dharamkot, one can just walk, or take an autorickshaw.

**By Bus:** Another option is to take an overnight bus from Delhi to McLeodganj and then continuing to Dharamkot on foot or

autorickshaw.

#### Where to stay

There are accommodations for all types of budget in Dharamkot. The homestays are the most economical and the star-rated hotels are the most expensive. There are also guest houses and smaller hotels in the medium range. But due to the rush of tourists today, it is important to book in advance.

#### What to eat

Because of the foreign residents of Dharamkot and the frequent foreign visitors, the food served in most restaurants and cafés are either Israeli, Continental, Italian or Tibetan. The Indian food is not great here, so it is best to try foreign food at Dharamkot. Trek and Dine Café is the most popular restaurant here. But there are many others.

**Best time to visit:** It is from September to June as weather is pleasant. Rainy season must be avoided as the area is prone to landslides during the rainy season.





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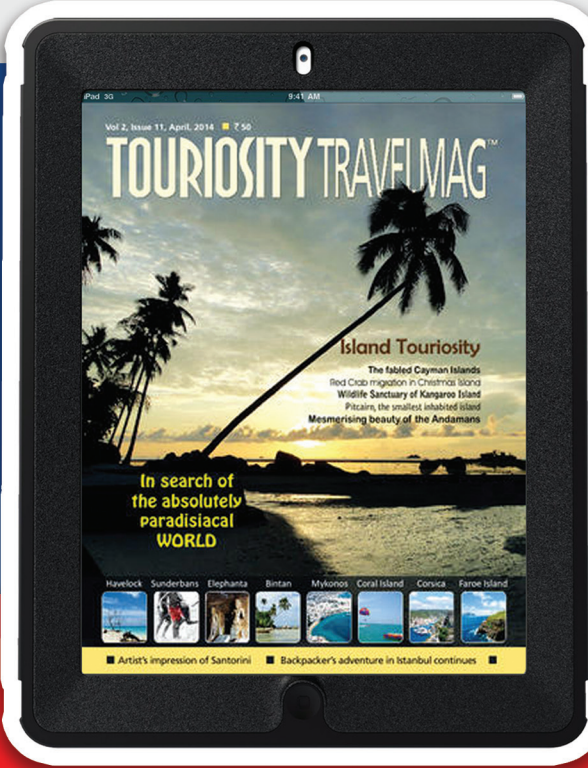
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## Little TIBET

### in Himachal Pradesh

*Photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata*

McLeodganj, a small suburb of Dharamsala, is often called 'Little Lhasa' of India. It has a large population of Tibetans and is also home to the Tibetan government in exile in India. It is the place which the Tibetan spiritual guru, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has called home since 1959. In that year the Dalai Lama had fled to India after a failed uprising of the Tibetans against the Communist Party of China. The Indian Government offered him shelter in Dharamshala. By the next year, the Tibetan government in exile came up in McLeodganj.

McLeodganj is a small Tibetan habitat full of vigour and life. It is a Himalayan hill station quite out of the ordinary. McLeodganj is renowned internationally and located amidst absolutely stunning natural surroundings. This charming hill station is popular with tourists from all over the world.

During the British colonial times this place was much loved by the British, many of whom preferred to spend the summer months here to escape from the grueling heat of the Indian plains. In 1862,

Lord Elgin, the then Viceroy of India, was totally enamoured by the absolute natural exquisiteness of this place, which, he said, reminded him of his home country Scotland. In fact, it is said that Lord Elgin was so much impressed by McLeodganj that he sent a proposal to the then British administration to make it the summer capital of British India, which, however, due to some reason, was not considered at that point of time.

Even though the British did not make McLeodganj their summer capital, the place continued to serve as a health resort and a holiday retreat for the Britishers as long as they ruled India. After India gained independence in August 1947, McLeodganj remained a quaint little hill resort popular with only a few discerning tourists. However all that changed dramatically in 1959 when the Government of India took the decision to grant political asylum to Tenzin Gyatsho, the 14th Dalai Lama, and subsequently allowed him to make McLeodganj his official headquarters.

With the Dalai Lama, came thousands of

Tibetan refugees who settled down and made McLeodganj their home. The exiled Tibetans built numerous religious, cultural and educational institutions in the vicinity of McLeodganj which facilitated the preservation of their cultural traditions so much so that the only glimpses of Tibet that people can have today, are, in effect, available only in McLeodganj. The activities of the Tibetans also gave a tremendous boost to the trade, commerce and tourism in the region.

McLeodganj is sometimes referred to as 'Upper Dharamshala'. The most striking feature of this quaint hill station is that it seems to buzz with colour and life all throughout the year, and that could be the reason why it is much sought after by the tourists from all over the world.

#### Location

McLeodganj is situated 526 km northwest of New Delhi. It is a suburb of Dharamshala in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, at an altitude of 2,082 metres (6,831 feet) above sea level.





#### Attractions in and around McLeodganj

**Namgyal Monastery** – This monastery is the personal monastery of the 14th Dalai Lama and is located in McLeodganj. The temple complex is also called Namgyal Tantric college. Founded in the 16th century and named after the Tibetan female deity Namgyalma, the monastery has always been housed in the Potala Palace in Lhasa. After the Tibetan Government in exile was formed in India, the monastery was constructed in McLeodganj.

**Gyuto Monastery** – This monastery is dedicated to Tantric meditation and education on Tantric Buddhism. Originally founded in Tibet in the 15th century, it was built by the Tibetans of India in Dharamshala later. The monastery is located at a beautiful place surrounded by snow-clad mountains.

**Namgyalma Stupa** – Situated in the heart of McLeodganj, this is a beautiful stupa that was built in memory of all the Tibetans who died during the freedom struggle of Tibet. It is said to contain the remains of the Buddha and the Tibetan Buddhists consider it a sacred place.

**Tibetan Museum** – The Tibetan museum is housed in a monastery in McLeodganj near the main temple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It displays pictures of Tibet and its people and traces the history of the land.

**Bhagsu Falls** – Situated 2 km away from McLeodganj, this is a small, yet beautiful waterfall. The waterfall is considered sacred by the devotees of the nearby Bhagsunath temple. A visit to this place is invigorating, and the visitors can soak in the serenity and calmness of the Himalayan foothills of the region.



1. Prayer wheels at the Dalai Lama Temple in Dharmashala;
2. The Gyuto Buddhist Monastery near Dharmashala;
3. A view of McLeodganj;
4. Namgyalma Stupa, a Buddhist Memorial dedicated to those who lost their lives during the freedom struggle for Tibet;
5. A mountainous view of the Kangra Valley;
6. Buddhist prayer flags in Dharmashala.





**Dal Lake** – Accessible by a 2 km walk westwards from McLeodganj, the Dal Lake (named after the Dal Lake of Srinagar) is much acclaimed for its picturesque surroundings. It is believed that by taking a holy dip in this lake, one is able to free oneself from all miseries, and will also receive Lord Shiva's blessings. A temple close by is dedicated to the Sage Durvasa.

**Kareri Lake** – It is a high altitude fresh-water lake located near McLeodganj. This lake is fed by the molten snow from the mountains of the Dhauladhar Mountain Range during summer. It is a great place from trekking and photography.

**Hanuman-Ka-Tibba** – Also known as the 'White Mountain', this peak, located at an altitude of 5,639 feet above the sea level, provides magnificent views of the nearby Dhauladhar and Pir Panjal ranges.

**Triund** – Accessible by a 9 km trek from McLeodganj, Triund is the name of a peak in the Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. The location provides absolutely splendid views of the surrounding mountainous regions, including the Moon peak - Indrahar Pass. The absolutely clean and unpolluted mountain air and the scenic surroundings invigorates many a jaded city dweller.

**Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts** – Set up by the Tibetan Government in exile, the main objective of this institute is to preserve the entertainment culture of the Tibetans. Songs, dances, martial arts etc are among the performing arts that are studied and performed here.

Apart from the attractions mentioned above, there are interesting churches, forts, rock-cut temples and other attractions within a short driving distance of McLeodganj.

### Places to stay in McLeodganj

For the discerning traveller, the Glenmoor Cottages could be an excellent option. Situated at an altitude of 6,300 feet above sea level, 1 km away from McLeodganj. The cottages nestle amidst captivating forest surroundings of cedar, oak and rhododendron on the scenic and charming Dhauladhar ranges of the Himalayas. There are many other hotels in McLeodganj for all types of budget preferences. Visitors preferring to stay away from crowd may put up in Dharamkot.

1. A Tibetan Museum inside a monastery in McLeodganj;
2. Statue of the Buddha inside the Namgyal Monastery;
3. There are many restaurants serving Tibetan food in Dharmashala and McLeodganj;
4. There are other shops also giving visitors the feel of being in Tibet.



# European BENGAL

Many seem to believe that the British were the only colonists in India. They weren't, although they were the predominant ones and ruled over the country for more than 200 years. A look at the history tells us that there were other European powers that came to India as well. Consequently, their colonies were set up in various parts of India. Various cities and towns in Bengal were also made the base for their trade, making these places a home away from home for them. Interestingly, today we find the relics of five different European colonialists in the state. Apart from Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta), the first capital of British India which is replete with the footprints of the British, there are four other colonial towns in Bengal are just a day trip from Kolkata. So in these times of restricted travel if you want to sample a slice of Europe, you can do that right here in Bengal.

Various European powers have ruled over parts of Bengal for nearly 350 years. They used the Hooghly River as the main source of navigation and set up their trading posts mostly along the river. As their trade flourished, they started building storehouses, followed by fortified settlements, churches and cemeteries. Soon the Indian traders joined them in trade and started growing their own business. They started using their newly earned fortune in building European-style palatial mansions.

The Portuguese were the first to arrive in Bengal and they anchored their ships only about a hundred years after Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India in 1498. They were followed by the Dutch, then the Danes, followed by the French, and finally the British. Interestingly, the Habsburg Dynasty of Austria had colonized the Andaman and Nicobar islands briefly in the 18th century after the Danes left and it is said that they also made attempts to set up their base in Bengal, but remnants of their settlement have been lost in course of time and there are no relics that would remind us of their brief presence in the state at some point in history. There is no denying that foreign powers have contributed greatly to shaping the culture and history of Bengal.

The relics left behind by the colonists in Bengal are



*Photos by Rangan Datta, Kolkata*

generally in the form of churches, cemeteries, tombstones, clock towers, gates, town halls and other private and government buildings. These towns are dotted with monuments and structures that provide a glimpse of mini Europe in Bengal. Most of these are in good shape, and hence worth a visit.

## **Bandel (Portuguese Colony)**

Bandel is located 55 km to the north of Kolkata on the other side of Hooghly River. The Portuguese started their trading post at Bandel without taking any permission from the Mughal Emperor. As their settlement grew, they felt the need to have a place of worship. So they built a church in 1599 and dedicated it to Nossa Senhora do Rosario or Our Lady of the Rosary. This became the oldest church in Bengal and came to be known as the Bandel Church. It is also among the oldest in the Indian subcontinent. The Portuguese also built a Fort and a church which were reduced to dust during the Mughal attack. Once the British arrived in Bengal, the Portuguese were overthrown. Bandel Church remains as a testimony to the bygone era of Portuguese Bengal. There are many legends associated with this church. However the church and its clock tower have been renovated many times and nothing much remains of its original structure.





### Chinsurah (Dutch Colony)

Chinsurah (locally called Chuchura), located 65 km from Kolkata, was a Dutch colony from 1615 to 1825. They set up a trading post here to deal in muslin, salt, spices and opium. Then it was considered to be the most beautiful town of Bengal. In 1825, the British offered the Dutch the island of Sumatra in exchange for Chinsurah. They accepted the deal and thus Chinsurah went under the British. At present the town presents an interesting blend of Dutch, British and Indian architecture.

Chinsurah once had several churches and temples with tall spires. There was the mighty Fort Gustava on the bank of the river. When the British took charge, they demolished this important Dutch remnant and utilized the building materials for constructing their own buildings. The canons pointing out toward the Hooghly River are the only reminders of the fallen Dutch Fort.

The clock tower constructed by the British in 1914 in honour of the British Emperor Edward VII is the main attraction of Chinsurah. It has two medallions of Edward VII and two plaques provide a brief history of the structure. There is also a ruined Dutch Villa. The District Court building located close by served as an army barrack. Its corridor has the distinction of being the longest in India. A little further is a Dutch colonial garden house which was once the abode of the Dutch Governor of



The Portuguese were the first to arrive in Bengal... They were followed by the Dutch, then the Danes, followed by the French, and finally the British. Interestingly, the Habsburg Dynasty of Austria had colonized the Andaman and Nicobar islands briefly in the 18th century after the Danes left and it is said that they also made attempts to set up their base in Bengal, but remnants of their settlement have been lost in course of time and there are no relics that would remind us of their brief presence in the state at some point in history.

Chinsurah. The original buildings here (called Welgeleegen) were replaced by new buildings by the British. However there is a plaque with inscription that reads 'Dutch East India Company, 1687'.

The famous Sandeshwar Temple complex houses two brass drums that were gifts from the Dutch Governor. Every year on the last day of Bengali New Year these drums are taken out for public display. Another important relic of the Dutch here is the Dutch Cemetery. There is also the architecturally beautiful grave of Susana Annamaria along the G T Road. Legend has it that this Dutch lady married seven times, and each time murdered her husband. This story was the inspiration behind Ruskin Bond's story 'Susanna's Seven Husbands', which again inspired the Bollywood movie 'Saat Khoon Maaf' starring Priyanka Chopra in the role of Susan.

### Serampore (Danish Colony)

32 km north of Kolkata, the first port on the opposite bank of River Hooghly is the town of Serampore. It pre-dates urban Kolkata and was founded as a trading outpost by Danish Asiatic Company in 1755. Serampore continued to be a Danish colony till 1845 when it was sold to the British East India Company. The Danish had named it Fredericksnagore in honour of King Frederick V of Denmark. There are many relics that have been maintained as reminders of the town's colonial past. Most prominent among them are the Serampore College, the Danish cemeteries, Baptist Mission Church and Henry Martin's





Pagoda. One also finds in Serampore the residence of William Carrey, which has now been converted into a museum that exhibits old printing presses.

Under the initiative of three Danish missionaries William Carrey, Marshman and Willaim Ward the construction of the college was completed in 1821 making it the oldest degree college in all of Asia. The building is a grand one. Carrey was also instrumental in establishing the Serampore Mission Press in 1800 where the first Bengali version of the Bible, the Ramayana and Mahabharata were published. The extremely busy Press also introduced two newspapers, Friends of India in English and Samachar Darpan in Bengali.

Another important attraction is the St. Olav's Church. Built in 1805, it has a long slender spire and is approached by a long flight of stairs. There is a small triangular park in front that houses 15 Danish cannons accumulated from their original positions in various locations of Serampore. The erstwhile grand residence of the Danish Governor crowned with the monogram of the Danish king is located near the church.

### Chandernagore (French Colony)

50 km from Kolkata is Chandernagore, a French colony for 273 years from 1678 to 1951. Unlike the Portuguese, Dutch and Danes, the French colonists continued to co-exist with the British. The town still has a unique French feel to it and is replete with French colonial architecture. In the old town, one comes across bakeries selling croissants and French baguettes. One may also chance upon elderly Bengali people conversing in French over a cup of tea.

The largest concentration of colonial buildings is on the Strand area along the Hooghly River. The Strand has a beautiful pavilion that consists of slender columns with decorative stucco works and floral designs. Chandannagar Court is housed in the once luxurious building of Thistle Hotel (also called Hotel de Paris). There were two gates on the northern and southern ends of the town, of which the southern gate still exists. It contains the slogan of the French Revolution 'Liberte, Egalite & Fraternite'. Other important colonial structures are the Sacred Heart Church with twin towers. There are beautiful stained glass windows and colourful relief panels inside.

The former mansion of the French commander Dupleix has been converted into a museum that exhibits some rare French artifacts. The French Cemetery contains more than 150 tombs. It is the resting place of many including Dupleix. Chandannagore also has many famous temples and is also well known for the annual Jagadhatri Puja.

### Calcutta (British India's first capital)

From 1772 to 1911, Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta) was the capital of British India. The initiatives towards the entry of British East India Company in the country had begun much earlier though and the first event in this regard is identified with the arrival of Job Churnock in Calcutta in 1686 as an Administrator. Because of being the base of the colonialists for such a long period of 139 years, Kolkata is home to hundreds of examples of colonial architecture. Arguably, of all the cities in India, Kolkata has a lion's share of colonial buildings and structures. Some notable ones include the Calcutta High Court, the Indian Museum, the GPO, Hogg Market, St. Paul's Cathedral, Victoria Memorial, Town Hall, Raj Bhavan, the Writers' Building, Metcalfe Hall, Belvedere Estate, a host of churches, other commercial buildings and so on.

### How to reach

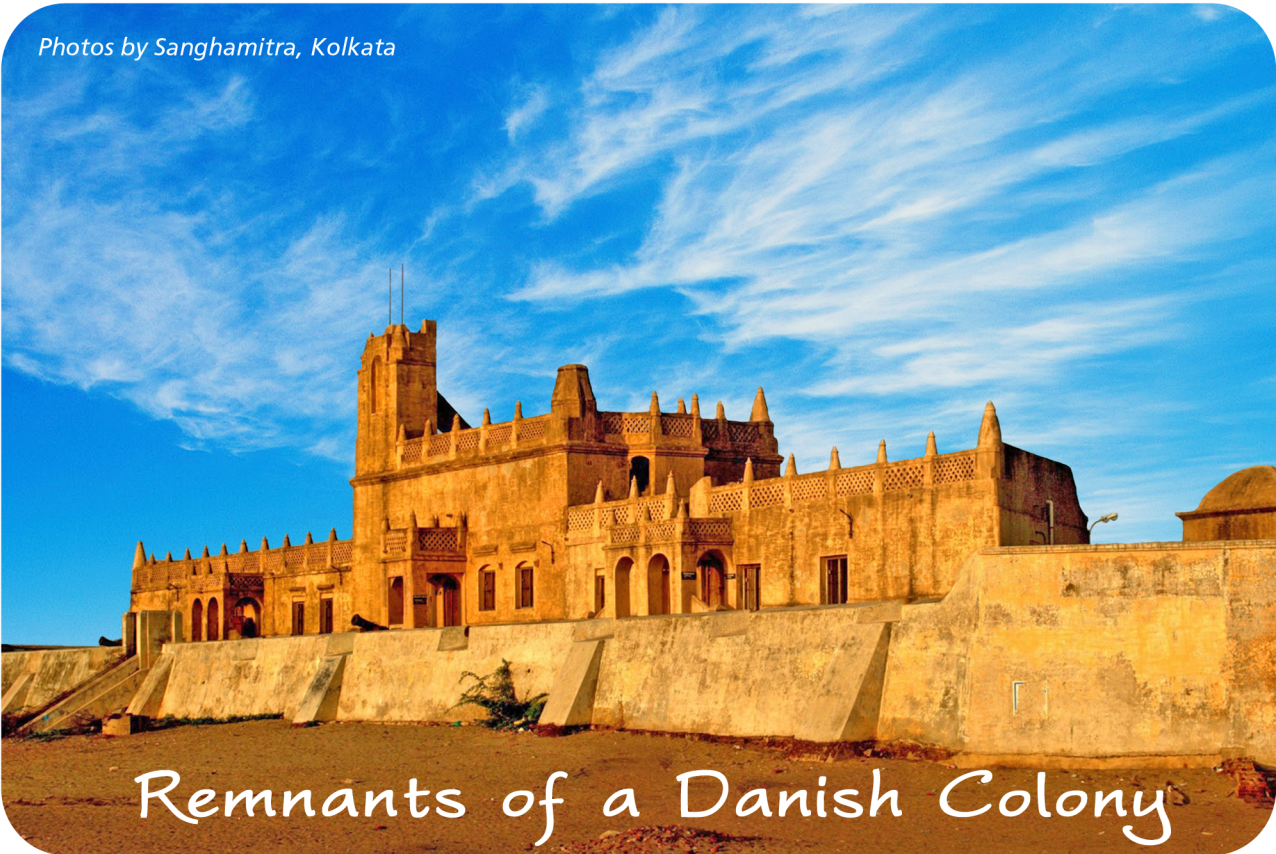
Bandel, Chinsurah, Chandannagar and Srerampore are all approachable from Kolkata by rail and road. A day trip is the most ideal one for each of these places.

- 
- Title page: Tomb of Susanna Anna Maria in Chinsurah;*  
 2. Serampore College;  
 3. Nossa Senhora do Rosario Church or the Bandel Church;  
 4. Clock Tower of Chinsurah;  
 5. The Sacred Heart Church of Chandannagore;  
 6. Residence of French General Dupleix, now converted into a museum;  
 7. Mission cemetery, Serampore.





Photos by Sanghamitra, Kolkata



## Remnants of a Danish Colony

### in TRANQUEBAR, TN

If you want to experience a rustic Danish colony of yore, head straight to Tranquebar. It is a quaint little fishing village just three hours away from Pondicherry. Up until the 17th century, this village was known as Tharangambadi (meaning 'land of the singing waves'), the colonists started calling it Tranquebar. It is located in the Mayiladuthurai district of Tamil Nadu, 15 km from Karaikal, 15 km from the Chola town of Pumpuhar and 120 km from Pondicherry.

In 1618 a Danish Admiral by the name of Ove Giedde came to Tharangambadi and fell in love with the place. He acquired trading rights for spices from the Maharaja of Tanjore and thus trading posts were first set up here. The village was soon christened Tranquebar to make the pronunciation more convenient to their European tongues. A mighty fort called, Fort Dansborg, was built by the seaside. Two centuries and a quarter later it was taken over by the British East India Company when maintaining overseas colonies became difficult for the Danish. But remains of the Danish architecture and glimpses of history remained. Today Tranquebar is the best window to the

Scandinavian world that is located right here in India.

One gets the first glimpses of Tranquebar's Danish history right at the time of entering the town. There is an old Town Gate built in a Danish architectural style and with a royal Danish symbol inscribed therein.

The main streets of Tranquebar are the King's street, the Queen's street and the Admiral's Street. Each of them tell a story of the days when this village was under the Danish colonialists. As you go further, the Danish fort and the old Danish homes takes your breath away. You feel like being in Denmark.

The German Lutheran missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, came to Tranquebar in the early 1700s. He started learning Tamil and soon mastered over the language. He translated the Bible to Tamil. He became an important figure here. Today a golden statue of him, holding the Bible in hand, towers over the crossing of the King Street and Queen Street.

Today the majestic Fort Dansborg stands

silently near the beautiful shores of Tranquebar, overlooking the sea. The fort is considered to be the second largest Danish fort in the world after the Kronborg Fort in Helsingør, Denmark. Dansborg is protected by huge stone walls and mounted canons. Once it was the residence of the Governor of Tranquebar. Today it has been converted into a museum that exhibits a diverse range of items like whale skeletons, fossils and ancient coins. It has become a very popular tourist spot. It is surrounded by food vendors and ice-cream stalls.

#### Other Attractions

Apart from the Dansborg Fort and the Old Town Gate, there are many other things to see in Tranquebar. The most prominent colonial buildings in Tranquebar are the Rehling's House and the Van Theylingen's House. India's first Protestant church, the Zion church, is also in Tranquebar. Another popular church, the New Jerusalem Church, is located on the King Street. It was built by the German Lutheran missionaries in 1718. The golden statue of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg is also a beautiful thing to wit-





ness. One can also sit by the river and enjoy the view. The beach of the forgotten colonial town is another attraction here. One can have a sight of fishermen going about their activities here. Fishing boats are a common sight on the beaches. There is also an old Danish cemetery at the Kavalamettu Street, parallel to the King's Street.

An unfortunate thing about Tranquebar is that the Tsunami of 2004 had hit it hard and a tenth of the population was lost at that time. However, over the past two decades the city populace have recovered from the tragedy and got back to reclaiming their lives. The village gets very less tourists but tourism is developing. The colonial buildings are being restored through initiatives of a Danish Foundation.

#### What to eat

Being a seaside village, the seafood platters at Tranquebar are delicious.

#### How to reach

**By train:** One can take a train from Chennai to nearest stations Nagapattinam or Chidambaram.

**By flight:** The nearest airport is at Thiruchirapal-

li, about four hours away from the village. There are daily flights from Chennai to Trichy.

#### Where to stay

There are many hotels, bungalows on the beach and other accommodations in Tranquebar for all kinds of budget.

#### Best time to visit

The ideal time is between August and March when weather is good and temperature is cool.

Tranquebar is indeed an offbeat destination, yet it has everything from forts, churches, museums, temples, beaches and colonial buildings to offer to travellers. This village is a regal remnant of Danish exploits around the world.

1. View of the mighty Dansborg Fort from the beach side;
2. The New Jerusalem Church;
3. Another view of the fort;
4. The town gate of Tranquebar;
- 5, 7. Inside the Dansborg Fort;
6. The statue of German Lutheran missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg;
8. Tranquebar Maritime museum;
9. Tranquebar beach and fishing boats.



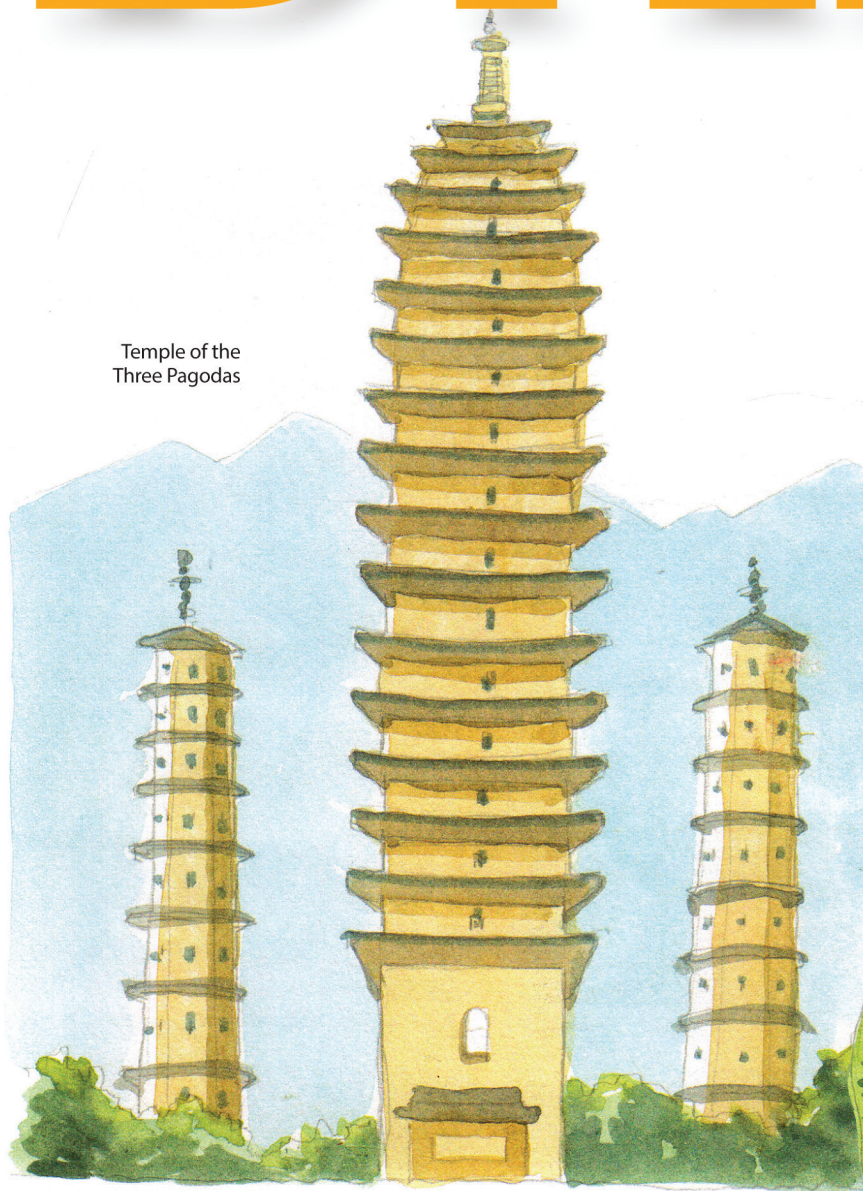
# DALI

## TRAVEL JOURNAL

This is the journal of the trip I did to Dali (China). It doesn't intend to be a complete guide of the place, but an extract of my personal impressions in this unique place.

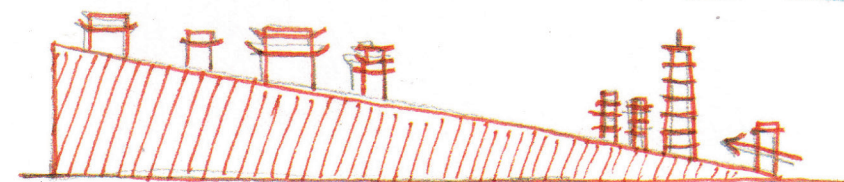
Text & illustrations:  
Joaquín Dorao

Temple of the  
Three Pagodas



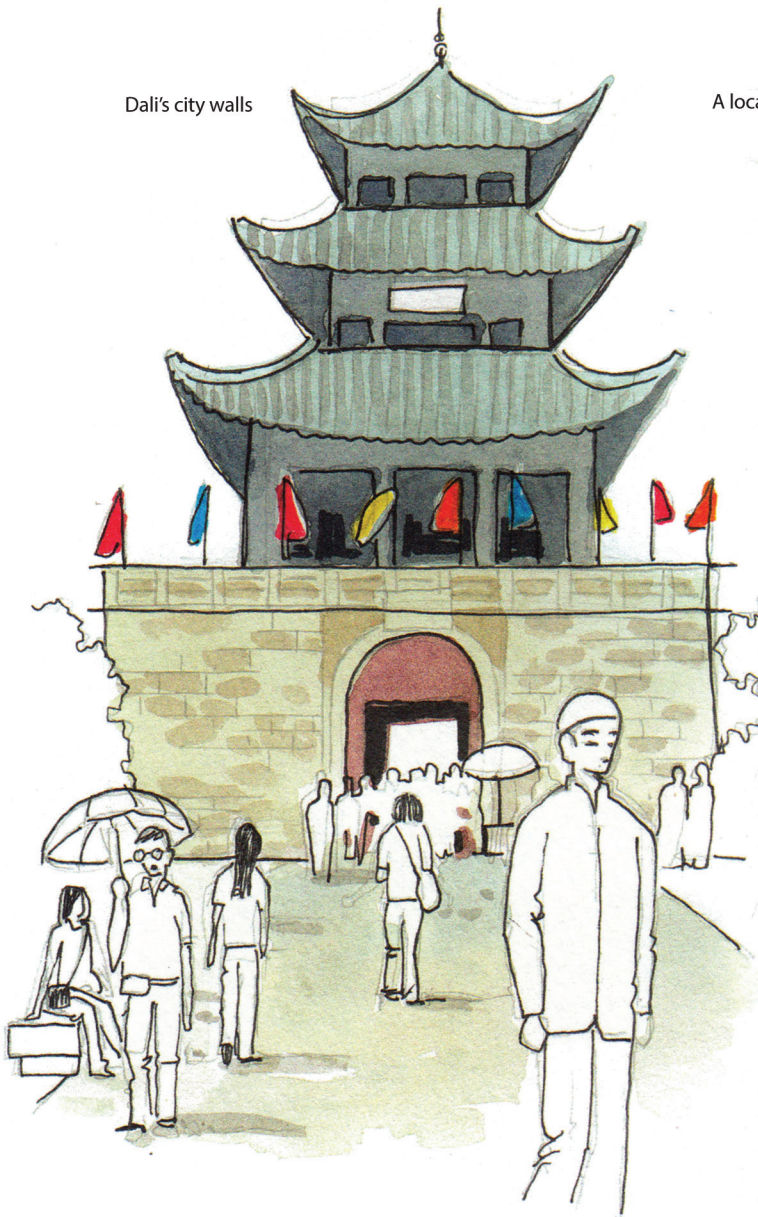
The ancient city of Dali (there is a modern huge Dali 8 km away) is a walled enclosure of about forty thousand inhabitants, charming but very touristy, which only a few years ago was a sanctuary of hippies and backpackers. There is very little left at this time, largely because nowadays Chinese tourists far outweigh foreigners.

Lotus flower





Dali's city walls



A local beer



But still there are accommodations from that hippie era, such as the Jim's Tibetan House, where I had reserved a room to sleep that night.

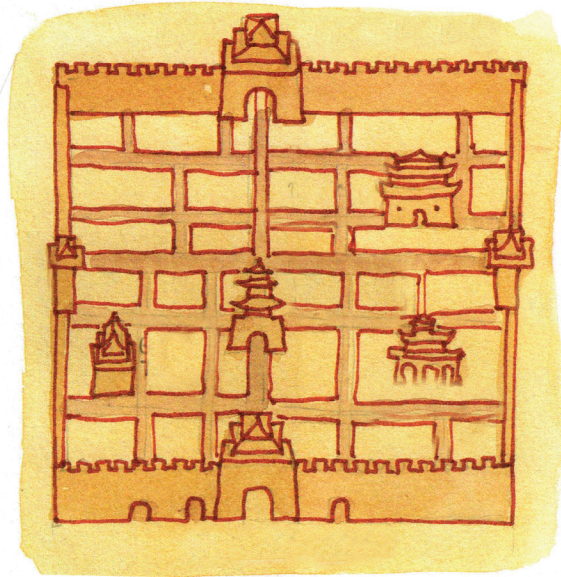
On the first day after dinner I walked around the center that has been turned into a pedestrian zone. There are streets crowded with shops, restaurants and cocktail bars for tourists. I note with satisfaction that, despite the hundreds of visitors, Dali retains a special charm and has corners that justify the visit to this city.

The next day I booked a ticket to the Temple of the Three Pagodas, located at the outskirts of Dali, a few kilometers away. I found it cheaper to buy

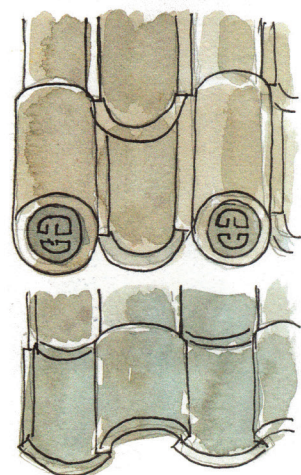
it in an agency rather than in the temple itself, because

the agency has a special price.

The Temple is an immense complex of temples dating back to 840 BC, built at the time of the Kingdom of Nanzhao and Kingdom of Dali to expel dragons that ravaged the region as per legend. Today the view of the three pagodas with the mountains in the background is almost a symbol of Dali. In addition to the three pagodas, whose interior is not open to the public, there are a large number of temples of different sizes and beautiful gardens. The com-

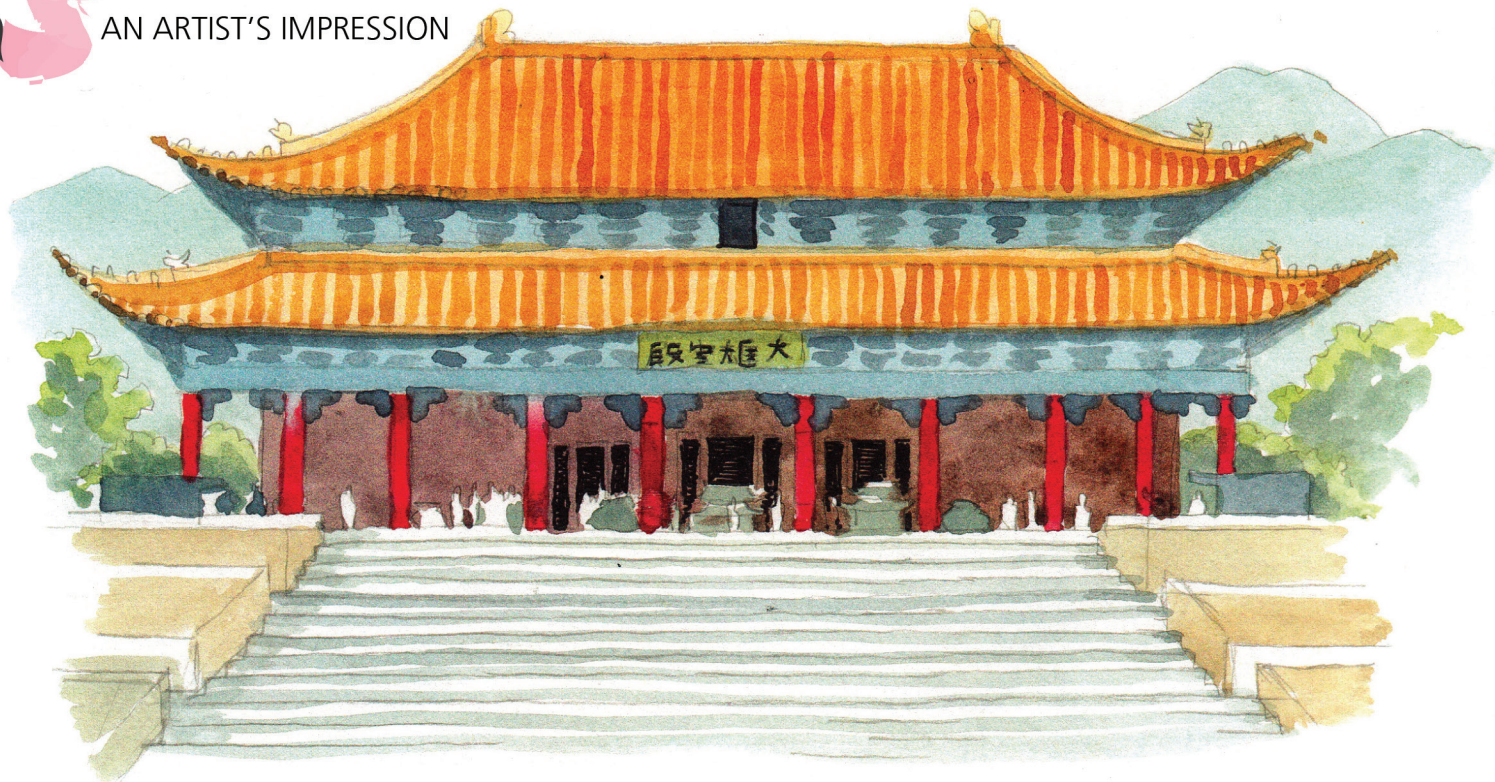


The Old City



Local roof tiles





The main temple

plex occupies the side of a hill and the entrance is at the bottom, near the lake, so it is best to take a small minibus that takes you to the top of the hill, 1 km in distance, which allows you to visit the place on a walk downhill.

The first thing I saw during the tour was the Great Majestic Hall, a huge pavilion that houses several golden statues of Buddha, bodhisattvas and other

common figures in Buddhist temples. At the entrance, even in the outer zone, there are offering altars: the devotees buy incense sticks, candles or other objects to offer in some places near the temple. Inside the hall a very colorful Buddhist ceremony was being celebrated, monks in saffron robes played huge percussion instruments while singing monotonous harmonic songs and prayers. Visitors were not allowed to enter and we had to limit ourselves to seeing the ceremony from outside. I stood at one end of the barrier to draw the ceremony and after a while one of



Offerings





A buddhist ceremony



The Chinese money is really nice

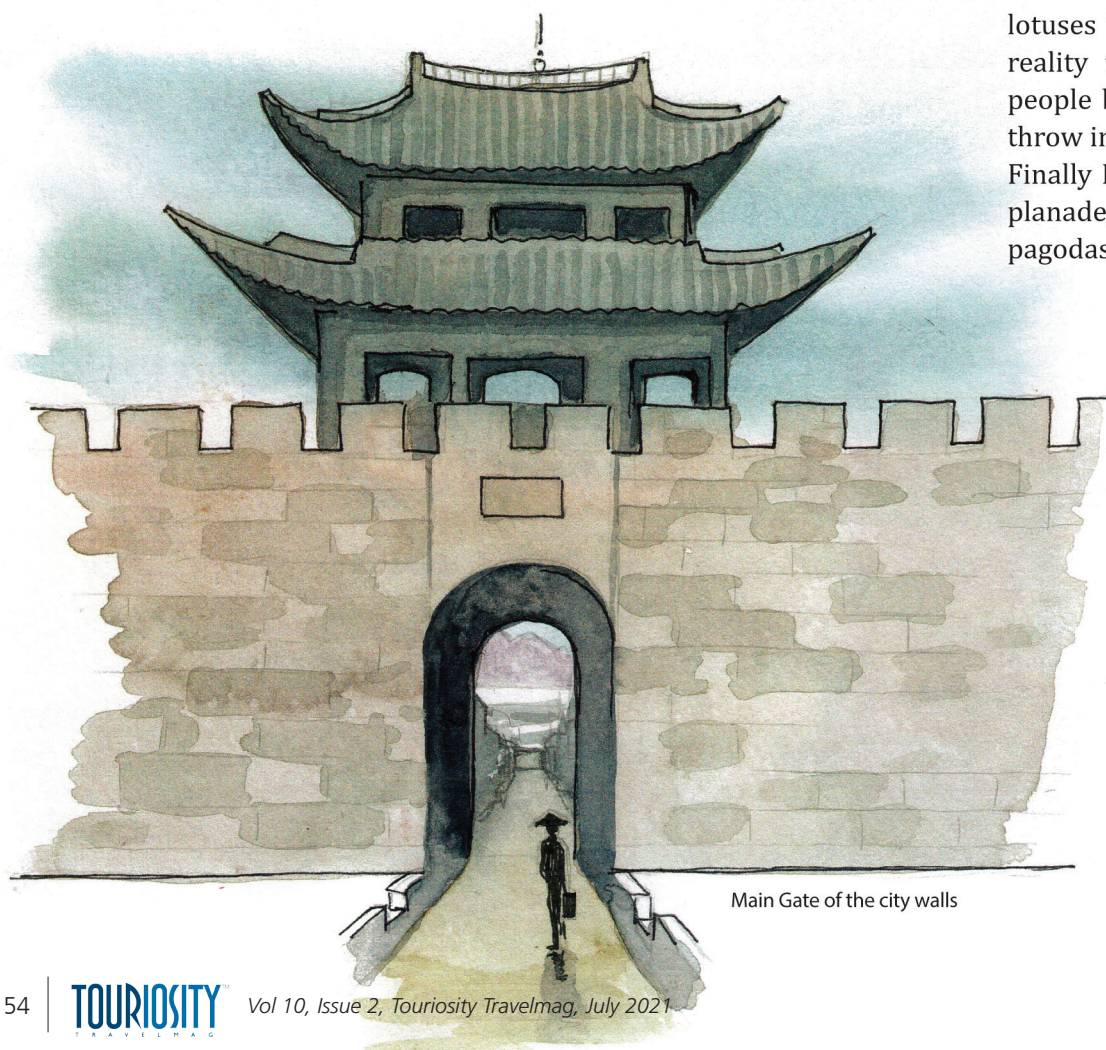


Stone lion

the monks approached to watch what I was doing. He told another and they then invited me to go inside and sit in a corner so I could draw more comfortably. The cordial welcome and hospitality did

not end here, because at the end of the ceremony everyone came to look at the drawings, they smiled at me and invited me to tea.

In the enclosure there are also ponds with goldfish and lotus flowers, but when approaching one of them I discovered that the lotuses were made of plastic. In reality these are offerings that people buy in nearby stores and throw into the water as a prayer. Finally I arrived at the lower esplanade, where the three main pagodas are. The central one,



Main Gate of the city walls



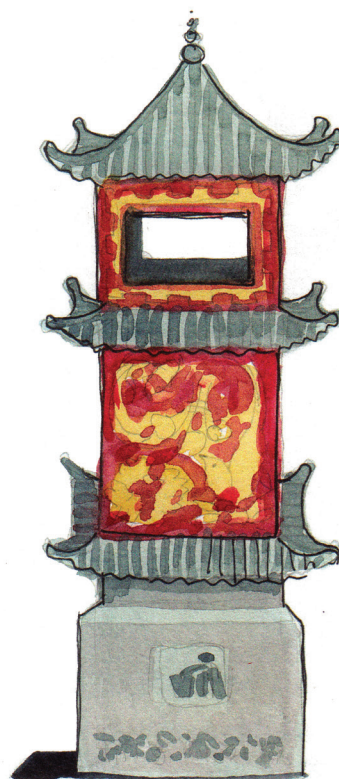


When it stopped raining I took a rickshaw to go back to Dali. It was late and past lunchtime; I took a few dumplings at a street stall and returned to the hotel to rest for a while. Shortly afterwards I went for a walk around the imposing city walls which were 6 km-long, 7.5 meters-high and 6 meters-wide. I sat down for dinner in a stall that offered a wide variety of skewers. It's very practical. Since language is a barrier, in this type of restaurant you only have to go to the counter where all the skewers are dis-

Then I tried to connect to the internet at a local cybercafe. On the way to the hotel I stopped at a reflex therapy center. Throughout the day I had seen several places that offered various massages and acupuncture treatments, so I treated myself to a pleasant session to say good bye to this charming Chinese city.

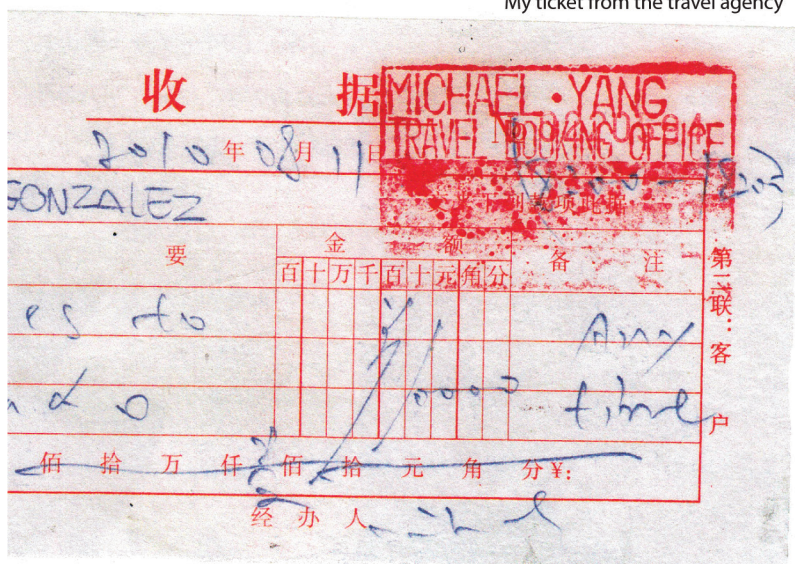
An artist's impression of the shipwreck of the Mary Celeste. The ship is shown tilted to its starboard side, partially submerged in the ocean. The hull is a light brown color, and the deck is visible with several figures standing on it. A large, dark, irregular shape representing the ship's cargo or debris is visible on the deck. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue. The text "AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION" is written in a stylized, handwritten font across the middle of the image. The text "A temple ledge" is written in a simple, sans-serif font at the bottom left of the image.

### A temple ledge



### Street litter

My ticket from the travel agency



The Main Pagoda on a cigarettes box







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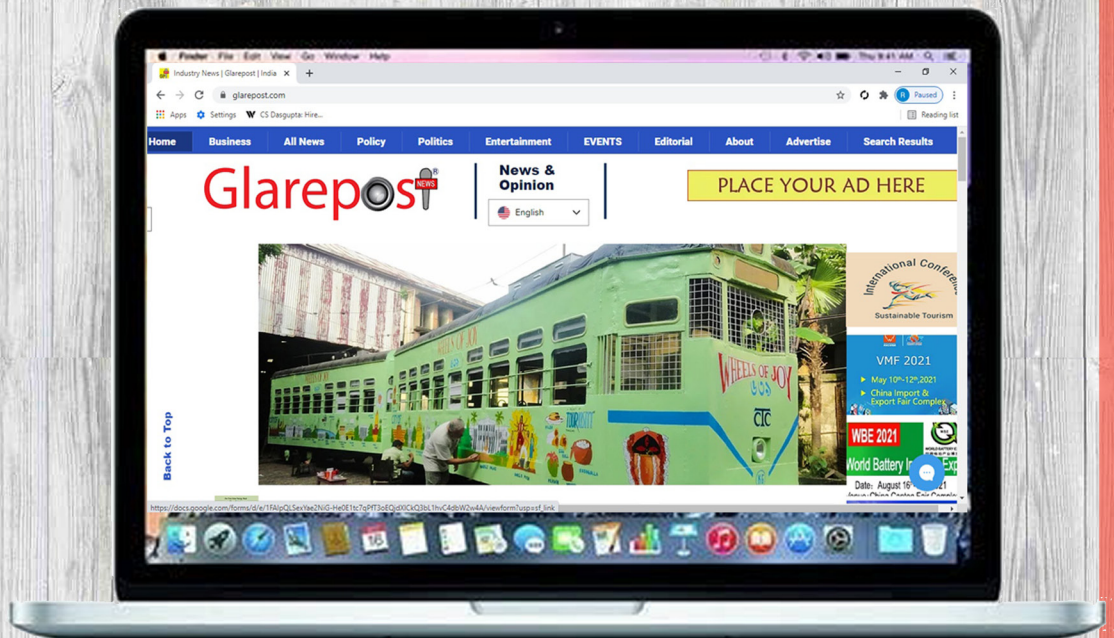
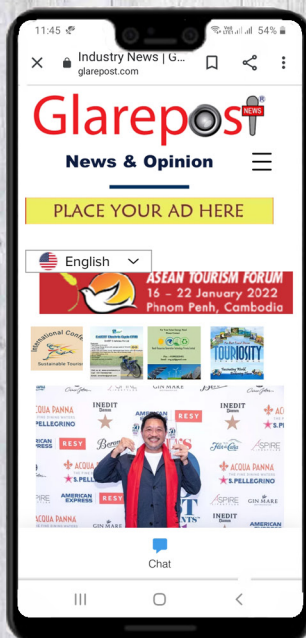
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