



Caribbean

India



India
Sri Lanka
Costa Rica
Peter Island
Mexico
Maldives
Tenerife
The Alps



Tracie Ruffell



Welcome...

Welcome to the latest issue of our regular travel magazine where we hope to entice you with a varied selection of worldwide holiday ideas and destinations. So, why not treat yourself, partner, family or a group of friends to a well-earned break.

There are few areas of the world that offer the dazzling variety of geography and culture as can be found throughout the Indian Subcontinent. This issue's special feature highlights some of the more popular holiday options both in India and Sri Lanka reflecting the increasing popularity of both countries and the marvellous choice of luxury accommodation on offer from grandiose palaces to intimate, owner-run boutique retreats. With this region it is important to plan carefully, so we hope that our selection of focus pieces gets the ball rolling in the right direction.

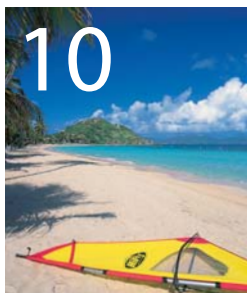
We also have an excellent selection of articles for winter breaks to the Caribbean and Central America. For those

looking to plan a special trip with fascinating nature and great activities for all the family be sure to read our Costa Rica feature, whilst those in search of a proper luxury "all-inclusive" beach holiday should put Velas Resorts of Mexico on their wish list.

Closer to home we are delighted to update you with some great new innovations at the Ritz-Carlton, Abama, which has soared in popularity, having become one of Europe's favourite year-round sunshine retreats. For those with eyes on the mountains we also identify some of the Europe's most iconic alpine resorts and their leading hotels.

Whether you are looking for a beach getaway, a city break, an adventure or just news on some of the world's finest hotels and resorts we are sure this issue will inspire you, so sit back, have a read, then give us a call to discuss your travel plans.

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www.exemplartravel.com

A classic combination of style, service and location at Estoril's premier residence



A testament to understated 1930's elegance, Palácio Estoril Hotel, Golf & Spa is located in the heart of Estoril near Lisbon, increasingly known as the Portuguese Riviera. Surrounded by manicured gardens with magnificent sea views, this sophisticated retreat offers elegant accommodation together with refined dining. During the winter and early spring why not plan a weekend or a longer break perhaps to enjoy some rounds on the hotel's famous 18-hole golf course. Alternatively, the Banyan Tree Spa at the Estoril Wellness Centre offers a range of asian-inspired treatments and courses including the indulgent signature Banyan Tree Spa treatment.

Expect a warm and friendly welcome and attentive but unobtrusive service from the minute you enter Palácio Estoril. From its impressive façade to its traditionally styled interiors, this grown up establishment reflects an era renowned for style and courteous hospitality. Don't forget to order a Dry Martini cocktail at the "Spies" Bar ...shaken, of course!

Hotel Camiral is the ideal resort for short breaks to Girona and Barcelona




Just 15 minutes' drive from the medieval city of Girona (the airport is just 5 minutes away), close to some of the world's best restaurants and within an hour's drive of Barcelona, the recently opened Hotel Camiral, located in the heart of Spain's top golf complex, PGA Catalunya Resort, will satisfy the discerning needs of many types of traveller. The modern-style building has been beautifully decorated by internationally acclaimed Lázaro Rosa-Violán who has created a progressive design statement so totally in tune with the cutting-edge new Catalan style.

The surrounding facilities are impressive, and no doubt keen golfers will be immediately drawn to the area. However, the hotel's own facilities will also appeal to families with one of the most child-friendly pools, a kids-club as well as a programme of experiences aimed at families. www.pgacatalunya.com/hotel

Sina brings new sparkle to a Relais & Châteaux favourite near Bordeaux



At the crossroads between Cognac and Bordeaux wine regions and mere minutes from the motorway exit at Mirambeau you will discover one of France's finest chateau hotels. This 2-star Michelin temple to fine cuisine is reflected by membership to Relais & Châteaux and guests will be impressed by the gastronomy of chef Maxime Deschamps. Château de Mirambeau is a sparkling hotel that both welcomes an indulgent stopover when travelling through France and is the perfect base for an extended stay in the region, whether fine wine-hunting, savouring rare vintage cognacs or just exploring the striking countryside and world heritage city of Bordeaux itself. The recent refurbishments and new partnership with Sina Hotels have also given the hotel a polish with upgraded facilities to reflect its deluxe 5-star category.



The Canny Traveller

Handy hints

when travelling in India

- 1. Left handshake - No No!**
Eat with your right hand only. In India, as right across Asia, the left hand is for wiping your bottom, cleaning your feet and other unsavoury functions (you also put on and take off your shoes with your left hand), while the right hand is for eating, shaking hands and so on.
- 2. Visiting holy places**
Religion is taken very seriously in India; it's important always to show due respect to religious buildings, shrines, images, and people at prayer. When entering a temple or mosque, remove your shoes and leave them at the door (socks are acceptable and protect your feet from burning-hot stone ground).
- 3. Don't overdo your sightseeing**
By far the most common complaint reported by first-time visitors to India is fatigue – simply trying to do too much in too little time. India is vast, colourful and addictive, but have realistic expectations about how much you can see.
- 3. Watch what you eat**
A dodgy stomach is pretty common for first-timers in India. That doesn't mean you should rule out street food, but try to stick to peeled fresh fruit and foods that have been either boiled or fried. Stay on the bottled water and avoid salads or ice.



New Horizons at The Ritz-Carlton, Abama

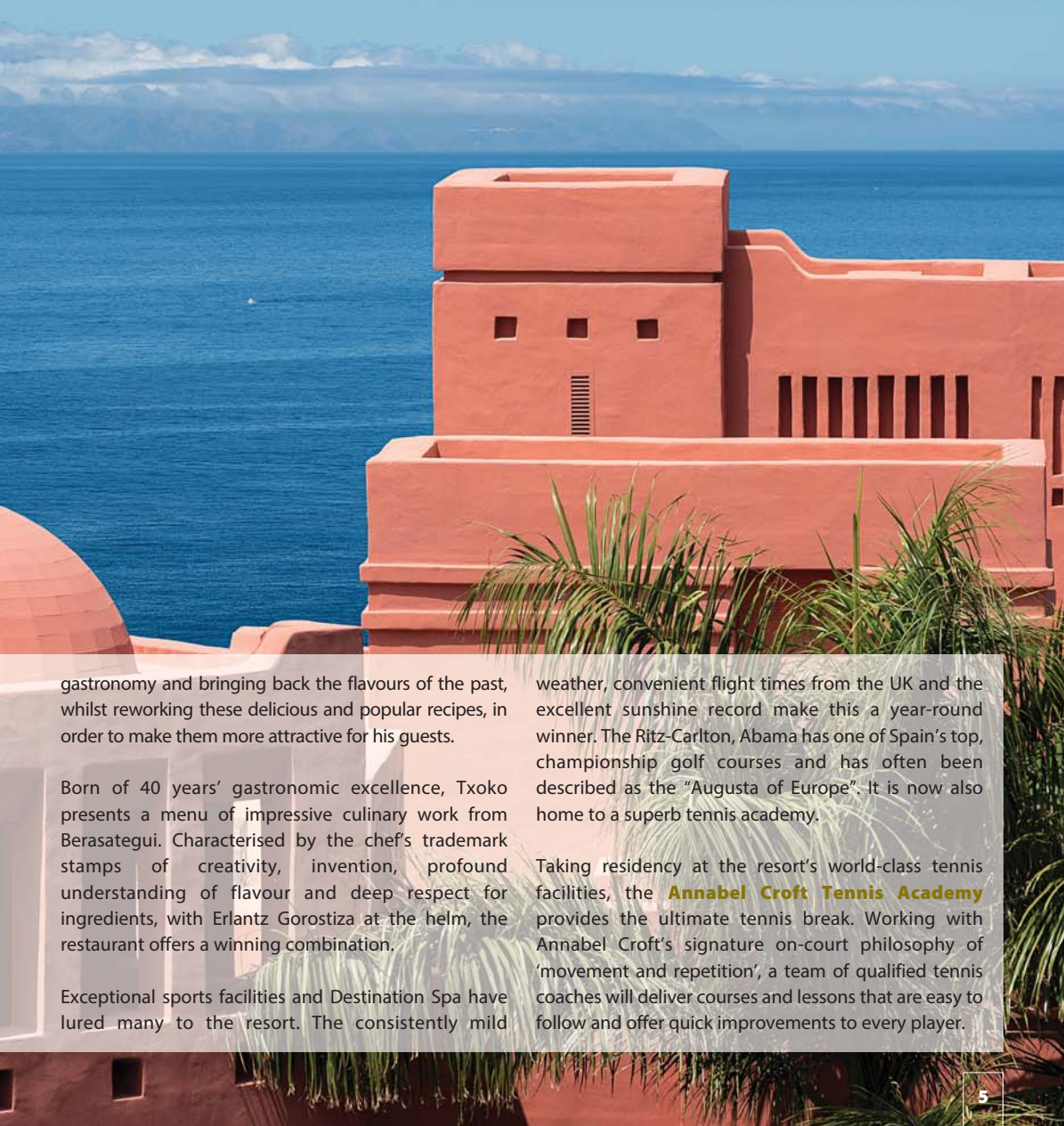
Wonderful Innovations as Tenerife's premier resort just gets better and better...

The Ritz-Carlton, Abama is a spectacular resort with a reputation for the very finest leisure facilities, sumptuous accommodation and mouth-watering cuisine, all tucked away in a privileged location on the sunny island of Tenerife. Indeed, it would be fair to say that it belongs to a very select club of the world's top, year-round luxury resorts, a position that is rigorously maintained, not the least by constantly seeking to improve and add to this award-winning environment.

Gastronomy has always played an important role in the success of The Ritz-Carlton, Abama, which offers 10 separate dining venues including the Michelin-starred Japanese fusion restaurant, **Abama Kabuki**, which has

relocated to a chic new location at the Club House. The larger premises, divided into 4 zones, includes a brand new sushi bar, Kabuki cocktails, expanded menus and a private Kabuki Space where chef Daniel Franco crafts sushi into personalised works of culinary art. The result is as impeccably delectable as it is visually stunning, creating an elevated sensory experience for guests.

For admirers of the renowned Basque chef Martín Berasategui, whose signature restaurant, **M.B** was awarded its second Michelin star in 2014, the news for 2016 has just got better with the opening of a new concept restaurant from the maestro. **Txoko** sees Berasategui return to the origins of traditional Spanish



gastronomy and bringing back the flavours of the past, whilst reworking these delicious and popular recipes, in order to make them more attractive for his guests.

Born of 40 years' gastronomic excellence, Txoko presents a menu of impressive culinary work from Berasategui. Characterised by the chef's trademark stamps of creativity, invention, profound understanding of flavour and deep respect for ingredients, with Erlantz Gorostiza at the helm, the restaurant offers a winning combination.

Exceptional sports facilities and Destination Spa have lured many to the resort. The consistently mild

weather, convenient flight times from the UK and the excellent sunshine record make this a year-round winner. The Ritz-Carlton, Abama has one of Spain's top, championship golf courses and has often been described as the "Augusta of Europe". It is now also home to a superb tennis academy.

Taking residency at the resort's world-class tennis facilities, the **Annabel Croft Tennis Academy** provides the ultimate tennis break. Working with Annabel Croft's signature on-court philosophy of 'movement and repetition', a team of qualified tennis coaches will deliver courses and lessons that are easy to follow and offer quick improvements to every player.



Mont Cervin Palace, Zermatt

Alpine Classics

Celebrated hotels of Europe's most chic mountain resorts

The Alps offer tantalising opportunities to enjoy winter sports as well as a cooling retreat from the excessive heat of a European summer. As a result they are also home to some of the world's most famous mountain resorts. St. Moritz, for instance has hosted two Winter Olympics, whilst Cortina D'Ampezzo, in the shadow of the impossibly beautiful Dolomites has been the "place to be seen" for generations in the footsteps of nobility, James Bond and even a certain bumbling French detective...

Everyone of the featured hotels offers the ultimate retreat amidst some of the most iconic alpine landscapes. Imagine waking up to sunrise over the Matterhorn or the rosie finale of the pink-tinged mountains of the Arlberg. This is the magic of the Alps, clear crisp days with clean, fresh air and giant spaces to invigorate the body and inspire the mind.

Mont Cervin Palace, Zermatt, Switzerland

An institution for 160 years. No cars, just tranquillity, clean air and idyllic mountains, all concentrated in the smallest of spaces. And rising above it all is the Matterhorn.

Badrutt's Palace Hotel, St. Moritz, Switzerland

St. Moritz is the jewel of the Alps, a summer haven and a winter playground drawing the rich and beautiful to the refined elegance that is the timeless Badrutt's Palace.

The Chedi Andermatt, Andermatt, Switzerland

Alps meet Asia in sublime 5 star refinement with open fireplaces and wood panelling. The Japanese Restaurant features a tempura and sushi bar.

Turner's Alpenhof, Zurs-Am-Alberg, Austria

Family-run to perfection. Foodies will delight in a gastronomical extravaganza – the seven-course half board menu is regarded as one of the finest in the chic Arlberg.

Cristallo Hotel Spa & Golf, Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy

Dating back to the beginning of the 19th century, the 5 star deluxe Hotel Cristallo is one of the most luxurious hotels in the Alps and a famous Cortina landmark.

Hotel Le K2, Courchevel, France

Like a prestigious hamlet, this luxury hotel village stretches along the Cospillot slope, offering guests an incomparable panorama of the valley and mountain massifs.

Gstaad Palace, Gstaad, Switzerland

Set on a hill overlooking the beautiful town of Gstaad with breathtaking views of the majestic Swiss Alps. The hotel features a spa and health club spread over 19,375 ft².



All the featured hotels are proud members of **THE LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD®**



Badrutt's Palace Hotel, St. Moritz



The Chedi Andermatt



Thurner's Alpenhof,
Zurs-am-Arlberg



Cristallo Hotel Spa & Golf,
Cortina D'Ampezzo



Hotel Le K2, Courchevel



Gstaad Palace, Gstaad



A Taste of Mexico

Savouring the all-inclusive delights of **Velas Resorts** on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts

You will be happy to discover that Velas Resorts in Mexico have perfected the concept of luxury "All-inclusive" holidays. Put away your preconceptions of disappointing food and beverage allowances and get prepared to embrace a world of gastronomic delights and extraordinary lifestyle choices.

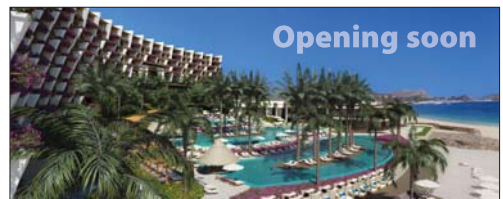
From family fun that caters for all ages to sophisticated, adult indulgence there is a sun-drenched Velas Resorts that will tick all the right boxes. In addition, you have the magical choice of staying on the Caribbean coast or heading westwards to the Pacific.

Situated just five minutes from Playa del Carmen, on Mexico's stunning Caribbean coast, **Grand Velas Riviera Maya** stretches behind a glorious white-sand beach,

encircled by eighty-acres of tropical jungle. The resort's diverse luxury accommodations include Ocean View Family Suites, situated around the central infinity-edge swimming pool, Oceanfront Suites (for guests aged 16 years old and upwards), featuring private plunge pools and the family friendly Zen Grand Suites with over 1,100 square feet of living space, hot tubs and private terraces with jungle views. Each area has its own facilities with gym, bars and restaurants spread around the complex. Dining at Grand Velas Riviera Maya is a culinary experience that will take you to award-winning gourmet restaurants comparable to the best in the world.

The consistent warm temperatures and spectacular beaches to be found around Puerto Vallarta on the Pacific coast of Mexico have drawn sun-lovers for





Grand Velas Los Cabos Baja Peninsula, West Coast Mexico

Located between Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, the \$150 million beachfront property will offer guests the next generation of all-inclusive amenities and facilities with dramatic ocean views and unique spaces infusing every area of the resort. All 304 ocean view suites are over 1,180 sq. ft. with private terraces and personal plunge pools while duplex wellness suites have designated wellness amenities and insuite juice bars.

The resort also features 5 gourmet restaurants; 19,375 sq. ft. Spa with 20 treatment rooms and hydrotherapy; three pools, including one adults-only; and pool and beach concierges are available.



generations and is the location of the all-suite **Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit**. Once again this comprehensive luxury resort will appeal especially to families with a multitude of engaging activities and treats to keep all amused.

However, if you yearn for a more refined, grown-up environment then be sure to consider **Casa Velas**, an "Adults-Only" boutique hotel. Hidden away on the Marina Vallarta Golf Course, the all-inclusive hotel in Puerto Vallarta is a private oasis. Once inside the gates of this exclusive estate, it's hard to believe you are just minutes from the airport or the El Malecon boardwalk in the centre of buzzing Puerto Vallarta.

Dining is a highlight of Casa Velas with a choice of Emiliano Restaurant, the private Ocean Club for enjoying the famous Mexican Pacific sunsets in all their glory, and the three speciality restaurants of the nearby Five Diamond-rated sister resort, **Velas Vallarta**.



A Little Bit of Everything

...and a lot of nothing at **Peter Island Resort & Spa**

If you have been having thoughts about where to go to recharge your batteries, give the body a dose of much needed vitamin D and most importantly, live easy, sleep soundly and boast to your peers that there is an idyllic corner of the Caribbean that understands your need for the perfect break then I think we should all be heading for Peter Island Resort & Spa in the dreamy British Virgin Islands!

Getting to your Caribbean bolthole can sometimes have an irksome twist but let us dispel your travelling concerns - getting to the British Virgin Islands has never been easier - there is a regular, through-ticketed flight with BA to Antigua and then onwards to Beef Island, so that you can arrive in time for dinner at Peter Island on the same day you leave the UK! On your return you can leave Peter Island after one last lunch in paradise to fly to Antigua to connect with the BA non-stop flight to London.

But enough of the rigours of international travel, what about the island itself! Without labouring the point the first observation is that Peter Island is the quintessential luxury private island resort with beautifully decorated rooms and villas suitable for all ages offering incredible

snorkelling in the ever warm waters, terrain that suits hiking and mountain biking, all the non-motorised watersports you can think of, a fully kitted gym, tennis and even a prestige yacht available for 1/2, full day, sunset and overnight cruises. For the more committed the island also boasts a 10,000²ft spa and the opportunity to scuba dive with a former Navy Seal or SBS diver and video photographer that used to work with Jacques Cousteau. Zut alors...

However, what you will surely remember most about the island resort are the incredibly friendly staff. For example Jean Kelly, who has one of those memories that allows her to recognise a returning guest who may not have been to the resort in 20 years and, on sight, recognises them as long lost friends. Perhaps one of Jean's most endearing characteristics is that she knows when guests are leaving and will get up early to bake them some cookies to eat on the way home. Also, the destination is completely safe - no hawkers looking to sell you wooden carvings! Finally, you will surely rave about the incredible food created by Todd Howard, the dashing young Executive Chef or the amazing cocktails created by Captain, the head barman.





Jungles & Forests

Natural adventures for all the family in Costa Rica with Tauck.

Active volcanoes, misty cloud forests, inland rivers, coffee plantations, tropical gardens and the mysterious jungle – all on an eco-rich Costa Rica travel adventure!

Life is pretty colourful here, where even butterflies like the electric-blue morpho make visitors gape in awe. More than 850 different species of birds make their homes here, from emerald-green parrots, scarlet macaws and bright-billed "flying banana" toucans to purple-throated hummingbirds, orange-bellied trogons, and red and green plumed quetzals.

Green turtles and iguanas, red-eyed frogs and white-faced monkeys are also a big draw too, as you'll find out when you explore tropical rainforests and jungles on a rafting trip and a nature hike during overnight stays in

riverfront lodges.

One of Tauck's most popular trips immerses you in the eco-tourism experience, featuring custom-made on-tour film vignettes and when the opportunity arises, the use of field equipment.

Want to get the ultimate hands-on Costa Rica holiday experience? Soar on a zip-line adventure through the rainforest, learn all about living along a jungle river, take a pineapple tour, and see – as well as taste – how the cacao fruit is transformed into chocolate. And the best part – share it all with your family on Tauck's Costa Rica: Jungles & Rainforests Tour, just one of an amazing collection of EARTH JOURNEYS.





Costa Rica: Jungles & Forests Includes:

Gratuities to Tauck Director, drivers & local guides are included
On-tour film vignettes custom-made for Tauck by natural history experts

Field equipment may include GoPro cameras and camera traps

Zip line adventure for extraordinary views of Arenal Volcano and the lush rainforest canopy

Jungle river-rafting adventure with an expert wildlife guide

Private home visit with a local farm family who have lived along the river for generations

Guided pineapple tour includes tastings of field-fresh pineapples and pineapple treats

Hands-on demonstration in making chocolate

Exploration of Tortuguero National Park by boat and land with expert naturalists includes a canal cruise

Airport transfers upon arrival and departure as noted

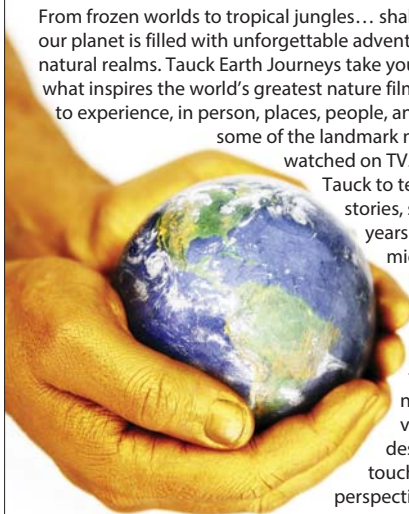
20 meals (7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners); gratuities to local guides and drivers, admission fees, taxes, portorage and service charges

EARTH JOURNEYS

created by Tauck

From frozen worlds to tropical jungles... shallow seas to African plains... our planet is filled with unforgettable adventures in the most magical natural realms. Tauck Earth Journeys take you on a journey to discover what inspires the world's greatest nature filmmakers – a backstage pass to experience, in person, places, people, animals and stories relating to some of the landmark natural history series we have watched on TV. They have collaborated with

Tauck to tell nature's most incredible stories, some that are millions of years in the making... or a microcosmic look at a day in a life. Earth Journeys bring you enhanced content, including hands-on use of field equipment to see how these filmmakers reveal nature's secrets, bespoke videos created for each destination, and educational touches. All to bring you a fresh perspective on our planet.





Absolute Relaxation

A Blissful Escape to the Indian Ocean at **Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort**

Having opened in August 2015, Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort on Konotta Island in the middle of the Gaafu Dhalu atoll is a spectacular addition to the Indian Ocean's desert island pearls.

With the largest average villa sizes in the Maldives, Outrigger boasts 53 villas – all of which have their own private pools. Guests have the option of 21 Beach Villas with pool, 7 Two-Bedroom Beach Villas with pool, 21 Overwater Villas with pool, 3 Lagoon Pool Villas with pool and the sumptuous Grand Konotta Villa (600 sqm).

The resort is ideal for couples looking for elite, secluded romance. From an Ocean Pool Villa, guests can enjoy direct access to the pristine waters of the lagoon. Each villa features king size bed, oversized bathrooms and outdoor wooden deck with private 5.2m infinity pool. Villa dining, private boat excursions, the Navasana Spa and romantic dining on the beach, create the perfect ambience for a blissful interlude. It would also offer the perfect place to chill out for a week or two after a tour of neighbouring India or Sri Lanka.



INDIA

& SRI LANKA

AN EXQUISITE COLLECTION

Exploring the extraordinary diversity of the Indian Subcontinent

Where else on our planet can you discover such a rich geographic and cultural mix as across the Indian Subcontinent. From the roof of the world of the mighty Himalayas to the silky sands of Sri Lanka's beautiful beaches travellers of many persuasions will be enthralled by the diverse and unforgettable experiences that await them.

For some the lure will be motivated by the need to relax and recharge in some of the world's best wellness retreats and destination spas, whilst others will want to be awed by the cultural adventures of touring Rajasthan. Stay in historic palaces, ride sumptuous trains, cruise in style through the backwaters of Kerala, trek in the foothills of the Himalayas, search for the elusive Bengal tiger or camp under the stars in the Thar desert - anything is possible for all ages ...the only limit is your imagination!

The Indian Subcontinent has witnessed incredible economic growth over the last few decades, and this is mirrored in an explosion of its tourism infrastructure. The European traveller may feel assaulted by the sheer choice of accommodations and as is often the case, confused as to the real quality on offer. For this reason this special feature has been compiled in close collaboration with the Exquisite Travel Club, an Australia-based specialist resource company, whose founders, Naveen & Amrita, have personally visited over 2,000 properties across India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal - view www.exquisitetravel.club

The result of their investigations is a collection in the region of 200 hotels, camps and resorts that fit their 4 key criteria of having passionate management, giving a true reflection of their locality, delivering unique cultural experiences and, as is most appreciated in the protection of the environment, a sensitivity towards the local ecology and upliftment of the local economy.

Wellness & Ayurveda



Ayurveda is the medical side of yoga. It's India's traditional natural healing system, which has been practiced for over 5,000 years.

Ayurvedic resorts have become popular destinations for relaxation and rejuvenation in India, while ayurvedic hospitals cater for people seeking ayurvedic treatment for more serious health problems.

Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

Ananda in the Himalayas, Near Rishikesh, Northern India



Follow in critically acclaimed explorer, Levison Wood's Himalayan footsteps, and experience stunning scenery and serenity at Ananda in the Himalayas. This destination spa retreat offers a selection of rewarding adventure pursuits, in addition to wellness experiences using Ayurveda, meditation and yoga. Trek across the snow-capped Himalayan Ranges, tame the white-water rapids of the Ganges, and observe incredible wildlife in the Rajaji National Park.

Perfectly placed in the grounds of the Maharaja's Palace Estate, and offering views of the mystic River Ganges and down to the holy city of Rishikesh, Ananda in the Himalayas offers a majestic stay in one of the world's most picture perfect locations.

A Journey of Self-Discovery

Shreyas Yoga Retreat, Bangalore, Southern India

Shreyas Yoga Retreat, Bangalore is one of the best Yoga retreats in the world. This very special Yoga retreat offers a sanctuary for the body and mind, very, very far from the stresses of daily life. Situated in Karnataka near Bangalore Shreyas offers a serene and life-changing experience from the moment you arrive. The experienced and utterly charming staff have mastered the art of exceptional service, incorporating Yoga principles into their daily philosophy. Guests can do as much or as little Yoga as they like and beginners needn't worry as private as well as group lessons are on offer every day.

Guests at Shreyas are cocooned with massages, wholesome organic food and social activities in the community. The spa offers a fantastic choice of treatments to help release the last of those aches and pains and relaxed guests can unwind in the gardens and out by the large outdoor pool.

Yoga is the perfect way to reach a balance between body, mind and spirit and whatever level of experience, guests will learn to gain the benefits of this age-old practice at this luxury Yoga retreat. The whole experience is aided by the tranquillity of the surroundings, with just 3 cottage suites, 8 tents and 1 five-person cottage on 25-acres of landscaped gardens. The traditional buildings sit beautifully in this coconut grove, while modern interiors and luxuries invite guests to truly relax and this chic retreat has gone to great lengths to stay eco-friendly.



A Splendid Heritage at "Hidden" Orchha

Amar Mahal, Orchha, Madhya Pradesh

Orchha, literally meaning 'Hidden' is an ancient medieval town which was founded in 16th century by the Bundela Rajput chieftain, Rudra Pratap. This stretch of land along the River Betwa in Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh was an ideal site for the king's capital and today is one of the less visited treats offering the savvy traveller an impressive collection of palaces, forts, cenotaphs (chatras) and temples of intricate architectural beauty lining the riverbank and within the medieval city.

Easily added to any Rajasthan itinerary, or as a handy stopover to Khajuraho, and in easy striking distance of Delhi it is also home to one of India's most impressive "Heritage" hotels. Built in the traditional style echoing the domes of Orchha's temples and palaces Amar Mahal is set amongst beautifully manicured gardens. Dripping in regal history, this privately owned heritage hotel overlooks the Betwa river and the cenotaphs of Orchha. Rooms are spacious and beautifully designed; decked with traditional art works and antique furnishings. With its fine dining options and relaxing pool, this heritage hotel offers an ideal blend of luxury and culture.



God's Own Country

Discovering the southern state of Kerala with CGH Earth

Seemingly endless narrow channels meander into large coastal lagoons from the lush interior of Kerala. It is a bountiful land, full of colour, tradition and fine cuisine and has aptly earned this most southern state the accolade of "God's own country".

You could just head to Kerala for its excellent beach resorts, but the stunning diversity warrants further exploration including the historic port city of Cochin with its varied colonial legacy - the Arabs, British, Chinese, Dutch and Portuguese all impacted the history and development of Cochin.

Of course, the extensive network (1,500km) of canals, rivers and lakes that skirt the entire coastline of the province offer extensive opportunities to embark on cruises, but those seeking a more regenerative experience will appreciate that Kerala is renowned for Ayurvedic treatment. We are delighted to feature below some of the varied properties of CGH Earth, who have an impressive portfolio of resorts throughout the region as well as neighbouring Pondichery and Tamil Nadu.



Brunton Boatyard Cochin

Moored on a historic stretch of Cochin's famed harbour, the Brunton Boatyard Hotel is a tribute to another age. Resurrected from the remains of a Victorian shipbuilding yard, it gives the modern traveller a unique opportunity to dwell amidst the shadow-plays of 19th century history. Designed and built in the style and principle of the early Dutch and Portuguese architecture of Fort Cochin it is hard to believe that the Brunton is a new building since it resembles the old colonial buildings of Cochin.



Spice Coast Cruises Kumarakom

Spice Coast Cruises sails in the enchanting backwaters of Kottayam. It opens up a journey through the heartland of Kerala in a traditional houseboat - the Kettuvallam. Whilst offering luxurious accommodation of either one or two bedrooms only natural and local materials are used for the interiors - coir matted decks and canopies made of split bamboo and palm fronds. This simplicity is reflected even in the meals, prepared by the boatman and served on board. There are no noisy diesel generators on board a Spice Boat. Electric power is courtesy of the solar panels affixed to the roof. The soft putting you hear is the sound of the outboard motor running on vegetable oil which is a safer alternative fuel.



Kalari Rasayana Kenad Kalari Kovilakom Kollengode

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian science of healing, finds its purest expression in the tranquil hill country surroundings of Kalari Kovilakom or on the restful lakeside at Kalari Rasayana. Both resorts offer the ideal environment for treatment in elegant accommodation. Totally binding, yet liberating. Extremely demanding, yet fulfilling. All in an out-of-this world ambience that is not disturbed by the telephone or the television. Backed by a head-on-shoulders-feet-on-ground policy that does not permit wine, tobacco and shoes. It is total surrender to the healing power of Ayurveda.



Regal Rajasthan

Exploring India's heartland in style staying at the Taj Palaces



Undoubtedly the most popular circuit for first time visitors to Northern India is known as the "Golden Triangle", beginning in bustling New Delhi with a visit to Agra (Taj Mahal) before heading westwards into the country's largest state. Rajasthan, steeped in 5,000 years of history, is the nation's heartland, flanked by the mighty Thar Desert and shrouded by the ancient Aravalli mountain range. Rich in colour and tradition the traveller will be captivated by a welcoming people with very modern ambitions living in ancient cities with historic forts, splendid temples and grand old palaces evoking the magnificence of the golden age of the Maharajas.

Agra (in nearby Uttar Pradesh)

Be inspired by the greatest love story ever told. Agra is home to the Taj Mahal, the most beautiful building in the world - and a tale of undying love. Uncover mysteries at Fatehpur Sikri, a dream city built from warm sandstone, then witness the majesty of the Mughal rule at Agra Fort.

Jaipur

While known as the Pink City, Jaipur should be famous for a broader palette of colour. A shining example of Indian vibrancy, with palaces and forts rising out from the organised chaos of modern life. Discover the rich history of the Rajasthan capital - just try not to get

lost in the bustle. The town itself is a stunning example of an old regal city; expect dawdling camels, knowledgeable rickshaw drivers and an elephant or two returning from duty at the Amber Fort.

Jodhpur

From top to bottom, Jodhpur is a wonder. Below the old city is a wash of blue within which you can find markets of every colour selling just about everything - haggle with intent or escape to the serenity of the surrounding desert by jeep or camel.

Udaipur

Settings don't come any more romantic than Udaipur. The city borders many shimmering lakes including Lake Pichola, nestled among the lush hills of the Aravallis. Discover 500 years of history exploring palaces, temples and havelis as they jostle together on streets winding like rivers through the old city.

Rambagh Palace

Jaipur



Set amid 47 acres of lush manicured gardens, the prestigious Rambagh Palace is an institution in the pink city of Jaipur. Built in 1835, originally as a hunting lodge before being converted at the turn of the century into a palace, Rambagh was once the residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur.

It was made into India's first palace hotel in the 50's and to this day remains one of the most opulent hotels in the country. The 78 palatial rooms are grand and utilise rich fabrics with silk drapes and furnishings reminiscent of the days of the Maharaja.

Umaid Bhawan Palace

Jodhpur



While exploring the ancient city of Jodhpur opt to stay at the impressive residence of the remaining Jodhpur royal family. Although you won't find the Maharaja himself taking your booking and escorting you to your room, they do still reside in the palace. A wing of the palace has been taken over by Taj and turned into an elegant 64-room hotel.

The palace, in its tawny and gold hues sits high above the desert city of Jodhpur, its decor is opulent and regal yet contemporary. It boasts 26 acres of well manicured gardens, a zodiac pool, a butler for each room and an array of vintage cars to chauffeur guests around the stunning old city.



Taj Lake Palace

Udaipur



As the early morning mist clears on Lake Pichola, a white marble palace emerges - as if floating - with the backdrop of the ancient Aravalli Mountains that sit at the edge of the lake. This is the Taj Lake Palace, a former summer residence for the Maharaja of Udaipur.

Restored to its pristine glory, this spectacular palace became world renowned when the James Bond film 'Octopussy' was filmed at it. It was the secluded lair of the film's eponymous Bond Girl. This heritage hotel has 66 luxurious rooms and 17 grand suites. Its location on an island in the midst of a lake affords every room breathtaking views of the neighbouring City Palace, Aravalli Hills, Machla Magra Hills and Jag Mandir.

A Walk on the Wild Side

On safari with Taj Safaris



India is home to over 120 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries offering opportunities to view a diverse variety of native wildlife with the majestic Bengal tiger the undisputed show stopper! A safari extension can be easily incorporated into a Rajasthan tour.

Taj Safaris invites you to experience the unparalleled beauty of the jungles of the Indian subcontinent. Enjoy twice-daily jungle drives, conducted in the comfort of an open 4x4 safari vehicle, direct from Taj's unique and luxurious safari lodges - Mahua Kothi in Bandavgarh National Park and Baghvan in Pench National Park, Banjaar Tola in Kanha National Park and Pashan Garh in Panna National Park.

Aman Rajasthan

Utter opulence in Mughal inspired rural retreats

For those that appreciate the exclusivity and sophisticated ambience that is synonymous with all Aman properties worldwide then the lure of their Rajasthan collection will prove irresistible.



Amanbagh

Alwar (2 hours from Jaipur)

Located in the foothills of the Aravalli Mountains amidst a spectacular setting, Amanbagh is a verdant oasis of mature palm, fruit and eucalyptus trees lying within a walled compound once the staging area for royal hunts. The resort style evokes the palatial elegance of the Moghul era and features domed cupolas and private courtyards. The resort is very much a modern day 'Mughal Palace', conceived in the present, but paying homage to the architecture and design of India's golden age and showcases the rural splendour and strong cultural heritage of the region. The resort provides a tranquil base from which to explore the rich heritage of Rajasthan and a unique opportunity to experience the tradition and culture of this colourful state.



Aman-i-Khás

Ranthambore National Park

Surrounded by the starkly beautiful Aravalli Hills, the Aman-i-Khás is a wilderness camp located north of Jaipur in a rugged forest in Ranthambore National Park, a sanctuary for India's exotic wildlife and one of the finest places to see wild tigers in their natural habitat. Guests of Aman-i-Khás can also explore the region's ancient forts and colourful rural villages nearby.



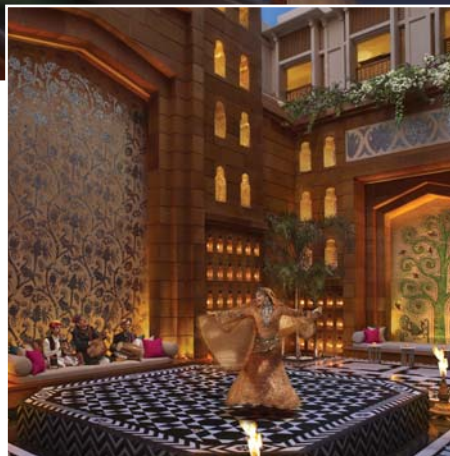


A Jewel by the Lake

The Leela Palace Udaipur on the banks of Lake Pichola

For centuries, visitors have marvelled at the royal splendour of Udaipur's magnificent palaces and forts. The Leela Palace Udaipur is a jewel on the banks of the majestic Lake Pichola offering stunning views of the lake, City Palace and the Aravalli mountains. The hotel exemplifies Rajasthani palace architecture and evokes the grandeur of Udaipur's rich and royal heritage.

The elegant and contemporary interiors of the rooms and suites at The Leela Palace Udaipur are embellished with traditional elements of Rajasthani design and artistry. All 80 guestrooms offer spectacular views of sunrise and sunset over Lake Pichola, the heritage city and the Aravalli mountains.



The Leela Palace Udaipur offers the best in world cuisine. The Chef showcases culinary excellence with innovative preparations infused with fresh ingredients. Sheesh Mahal, the lakeside restaurant with panoramic views of the city offers Indian cuisine from the royal kitchens of India in a romantic setting for al fresco dining under the star studded skies.



ESPA at The Leela Palace Udaipur is a tented spa experience embracing rejuvenation and relaxation. Situated in a tranquil setting besides a guava orchard, with a 150 year old Shiv Temple and Haveli on site, the spa has luxury tents that includes a yoga and meditation tent as well as therapy suites with private pools. Highly qualified therapists offer a comprehensive range of body treatments and massages with natural products.



Boutique Sri Lanka

Reflecting the growing popularity of this magical destination

This beautiful tropical island has something for everyone - palm-fringed golden beaches, cool hill stations, tea plantations, lush rainforest, wildlife, ancient cities, Buddhist temples and colourful festivals. The cooking is good and spicy, the cost of living is relatively low, and the Sri Lankan people are friendly and generous. Due to its compact size it is possible to tour the country in a matter of just a couple of weeks mixing culture with both wildlife and relaxing beach time, and even though the country is now becoming ever more popular it is still remarkably unspoilt.



Certainly, recent years have seen something of a controlled and sympathetic development of its tourism best characterised by the emergence of a fascinating collection of boutique hotels, many owner-run by impassioned Sri Lankans as well as inspired ex-pats, who came, who saw and just fell in love with a beautiful and stress-busting environment. People like George Cooper of Kahanda Kanda, who was so smitten by the romance of his property that he has progressively developed his holiday hideaway into a sophisticated hillside retreat ideal for adults. In contrast, his great friend, Henrietta Cottam, holds court (as manageress) together with her dachshund Nigella ('Jelly') and a dedicated team at the endearingly family friendly 8-bedroom Why House. Each is ideally located for exploring nearby Galle and the region's sandy beaches, but they are a good reflection of how boutique Sri Lankan hotels and villas are catering for the wide demands of a discerning but varied clientele.

Timeless Grandeur

Galle Face Hotel, Colombo



©Martin Sasse/laif.

Sri Lanka's iconic landmark, the Galle Face Hotel, is situated in the heart of Colombo, along the seafront and facing the famous Galle Face Green.

One of the oldest hotels east of the Suez, the Galle Face Hotel embraces its rich history and legendary traditions, utilizing them to create engaging, immersive experiences that resonate with old and new generations of travellers alike.

No visit to Sri Lanka is complete without staying at this majestic hotel, built in 1864 and recently restored back to its former glory.

Family Treats

Why House, Unawatuna (Near Galle)



An idyllic inland location near Galle's sultry coastline allows Why House to offer its guests the best of both worlds; a tranquil setting amidst rural rice fields and easy access to picture-postcard beaches, a mere five-minutes' drive away.

Why House has a total of nine well-equipped rooms. The seven spacious and luxurious suites are spread across two separate buildings whilst two cottagey cabanas overlook the paddy fields. Set in lush gardens, facilities include an open-sided dining pavilion, an elegant lounge and a jade-green swimming pool.

Heaven on Earth

Aditya, Devenigoda (Near Galle)



Standing on the unrivalled golden sand beach at Devenigoda, it's easy to imagine the name means 'Divine Place of the Gods'.

Sun worshippers will understand why. This small, boutique-style hotel is in the perfect situation for swimming in warm waters, stretching out for complete relaxation beneath the Sri Lankan sun, and enjoying the seclusion of a setting that is far from the playground of Hikkaduwa and the noisy bustle of Galle. Other facilities include a swimming pool and a spa that offers a range of treatments including Ayurveda.

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EC2M 3XD

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ABTA No. L8569

