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Six Unforgettable

TRAIN

Journeys
in India

Dreamy
Destinations
in INDIA for
Valentine's
Day

Chill in the Air Spice on the Plate Touch of Romance

The New Year arrives with a crisp chill in the air, a dash of spice on the plate, and just the right touch of romance. Winter is hands down the best season for travel—and no, that's not just another cliché! Every year, the season brings a fresh perspective, and this time, Tourism One is all set to whisk you away to dreamy destinations in India, perfect for couples in love. But wait till you see the surprise entry on our list—Rishikesh! Because nothing says romance like riding the rapids of the Ganges together.

Speaking of journeys, we've got something special lined up for National Tourism Day, celebrated on January 25th. Our curated list of train journeys in India isn't just about getting from point A to point B—it's about soaking in breathtaking landscapes, sharing endless conversations, and creating beautiful memories along the way. Whether it's a short scenic ride or a long adventure, these trips promise more than just travel; they offer the perfect opportunity to reconnect with your loved ones.

Now, let's talk about festivities! Uttarayan or Makar Sankranti is one of India's most vibrant celebrations, and we've got a delightful guide on how different regions take to the skies with their colourful kites. And while you're busy enjoying the sunny side of life, why not treat yourself to a warm plate of Undhiyu? This traditional Gujarati delicacy is a winter staple, especially during Uttarayan. If your last attempt at making it didn't quite hit the mark, don't worry—we've got you covered with tips to perfect it this season.

Before you flip to the next page, here's something close to our hearts. World Braille Day reminds us of the need to go beyond just remembering Louis Braille. In this issue, we bring you a thoughtful list of gifts for visually impaired individuals—because celebrating inclusivity means taking real, meaningful steps.

So, as you turn the pages of this edition, we hope you find inspiration to travel, taste, celebrate, and spread joy. Wishing you a fantastic start to the year—full of adventures, flavours, and heartwarming moments! ■



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Six Unforgettable Train Journeys in India

January 25th marks National Tourism Day, a celebration of India's rich cultural and geographical diversity. And the best way to experience the country is through train travel. Train rides are more than just transport. They offer a way to connect with many stories along the way, whether it's through interacting with other travelers or taking time to reflect. And then of course there are the stunning landscapes to enjoy as you head towards your destination. The best part is that train travel is much more sustainable and eco-friendly than flying. So, the next time you want to explore India, why not hop on one of the iconic train journeys described in this article.

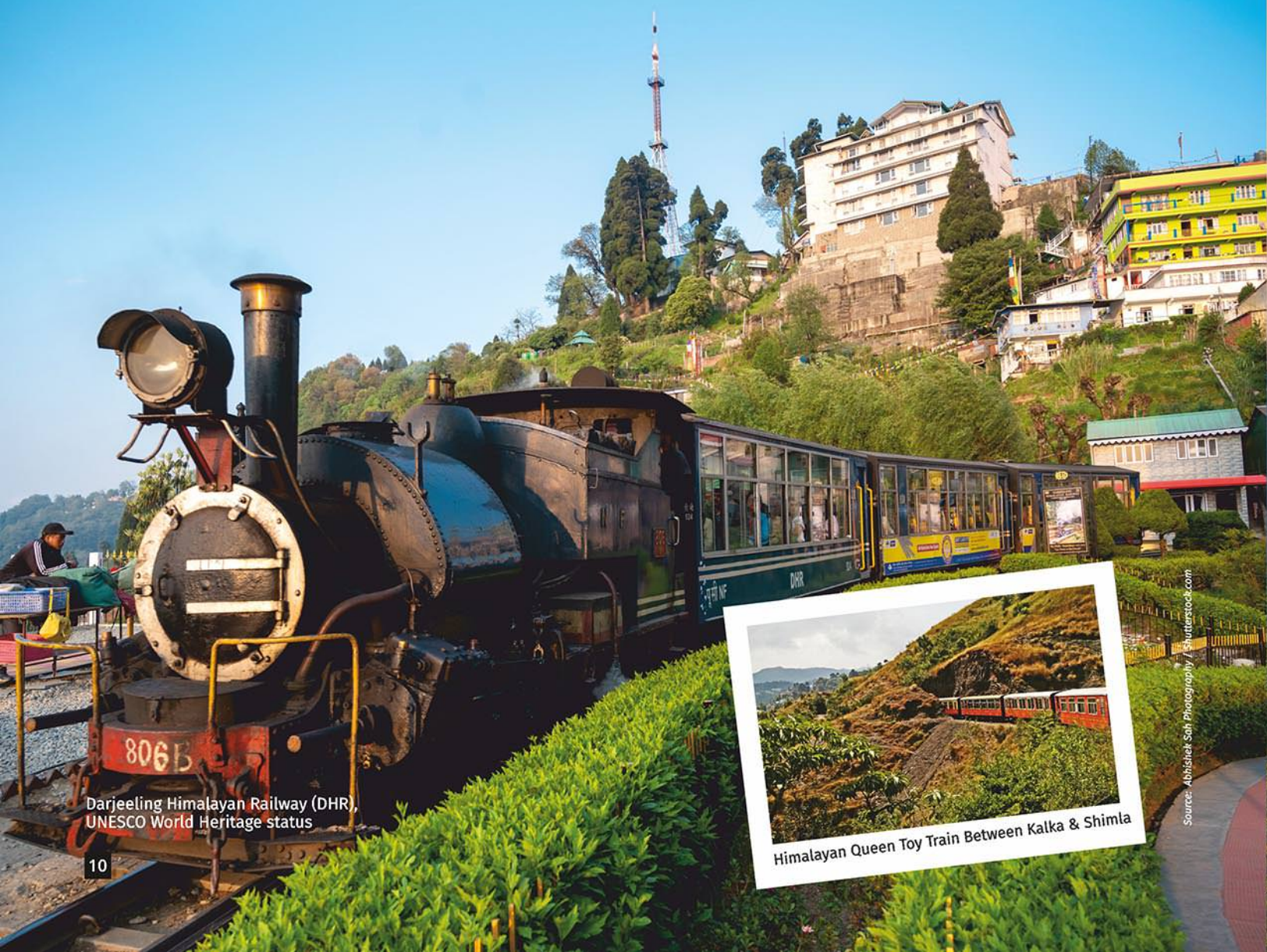
The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

Route: New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling.

Fondly known as the Toy Train, this is one of India's most iconic train journeys with UNESCO World Heritage status. It's a charming narrow-gauge marvel built in the late 19th century, showcasing exceptional engineering amidst breathtaking landscapes.

As the train chugs along its 88-kilometer route, you'll be treated to stunning views of tea gardens, dense forests, and quaint mountain villages. The highlight, however, is the majestic Kanchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak, which looms in the background. The journey also features fascinating loops and zigzags, like the famous Batasia Loop near Darjeeling, which provides panoramic vistas of the Himalayas.

You'll love the old-world charm of the steam engines, vintage carriages, and leisurely pace that captures the romance of traveling in a bygone era. This train has become a cultural icon, often referred to in stories, poetry, and of course, Bollywood films!



Himalayan Queen Toy Train Between Kalka & Shimla

The Nilgiri Mountain Railway

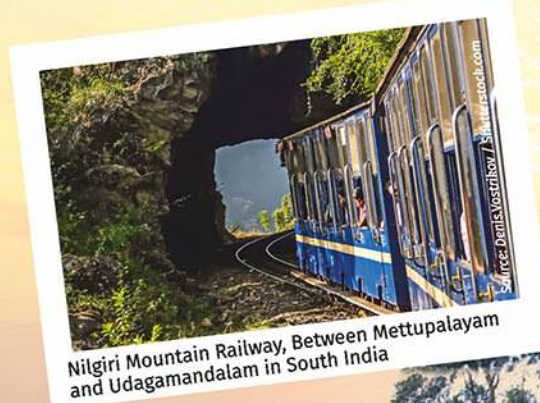
Route: Mettupalayam to Ooty

Here's another Indian train journey boasting UNESCO World Heritage status. Running from Mettupalayam to the hill station of Ooty in Tamil Nadu, this narrow-gauge railway spans 46 kilometers through the enchanting Nilgiri Hills, also known as the Blue Mountains.

Built in 1908, this railway features a unique rack-and-pinion system to navigate its steep inclines. The journey takes you through lush tea gardens, dense forests, and mist-covered valleys, offering breathtaking views at every turn. Charming stations like Coonoor add to the allure, making the journey as delightful as the destination.

The highlight of the experience is the leisurely pace of the train, powered by vintage steam locomotives that evoke a sense of nostalgia. As the train meanders through tunnels, across viaducts, and over bridges, you can enjoy the views of cascading waterfalls and wildlife unique to the region.

A serene escape into nature and history, this enchanting journey is a must for anyone seeking beauty, tranquility, and a touch of old-world magic.



Nilgiri Mountain Railway, Between Mettupalayam and Udagamandalam in South India



Nilgiri Mountain Railway, Mettupalayam to Ooty, Tamil Nadu

The Palace on Wheels

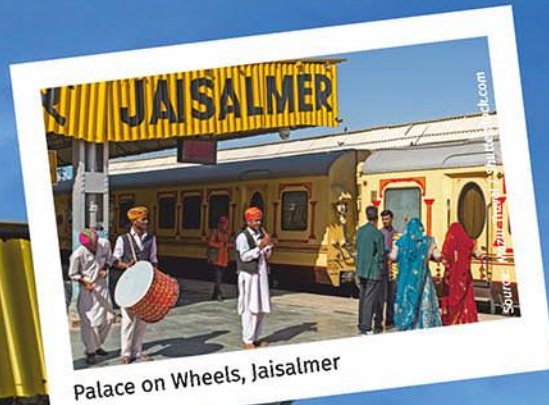
Route: Delhi to Rajasthan and back

The Palace on Wheels is a regal train journey that epitomizes luxury and heritage, offering travelers a chance to experience India like royalty. Launched in 1982, this iconic train recreates the opulence of the carriages once used by Indian princes, complete with lavish interiors, gourmet dining, and impeccable service.

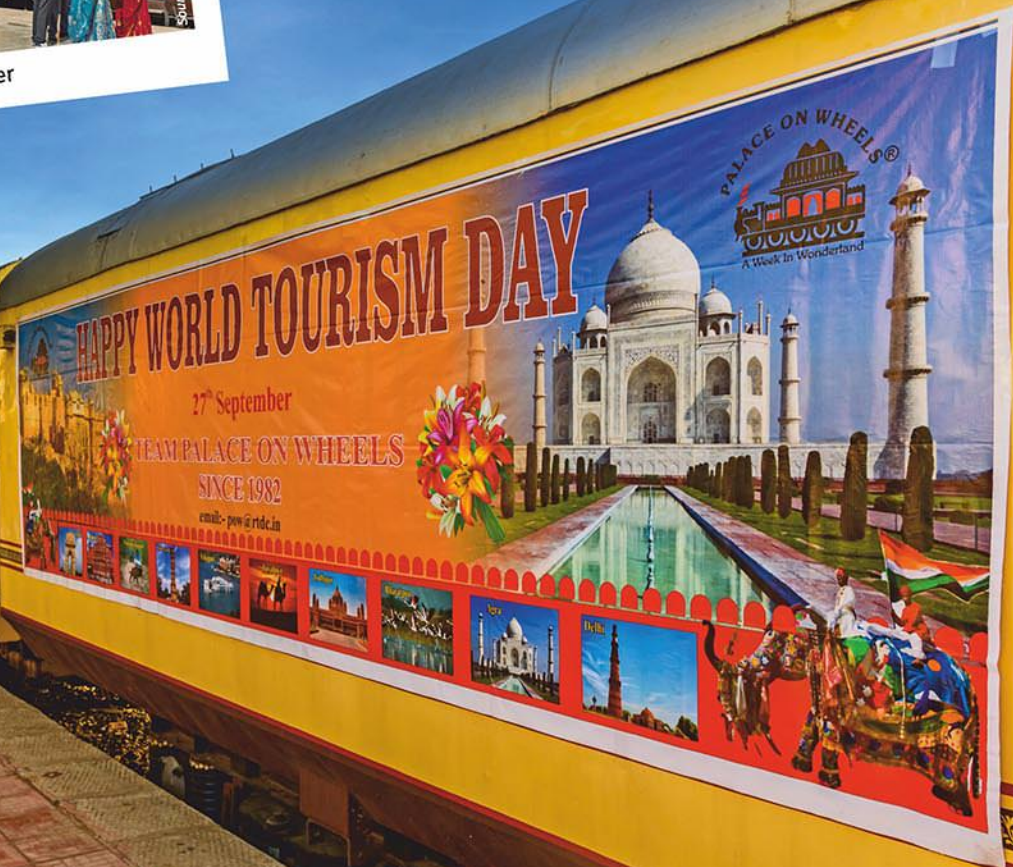
The journey covers Rajasthan's most enchanting destinations, including Jaipur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer, and Jodhpur, as well as the majestic Ranthambore National Park and the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra. Each stop reveals a treasure trove of history, from grand palaces and imposing forts to vibrant bazaars and timeless cultural traditions.

On board the Palace on Wheels, you'll be pampered with luxurious cabins, fine dining restaurants, and a lounge bar, ensuring a seamless blend of comfort and elegance. The train's décor, inspired by Rajasthan's royal heritage, enhances the experience of traveling through one of India's most culturally rich states.

The Palace on Wheels is a journey through India's royal past, where every moment is steeped in grandeur. For those seeking an unforgettable exploration of India's heritage and hospitality, this iconic train journey offers an experience like no other.



Palace on Wheels, Jaisalmer



Palace on Wheels, Jaisalmer

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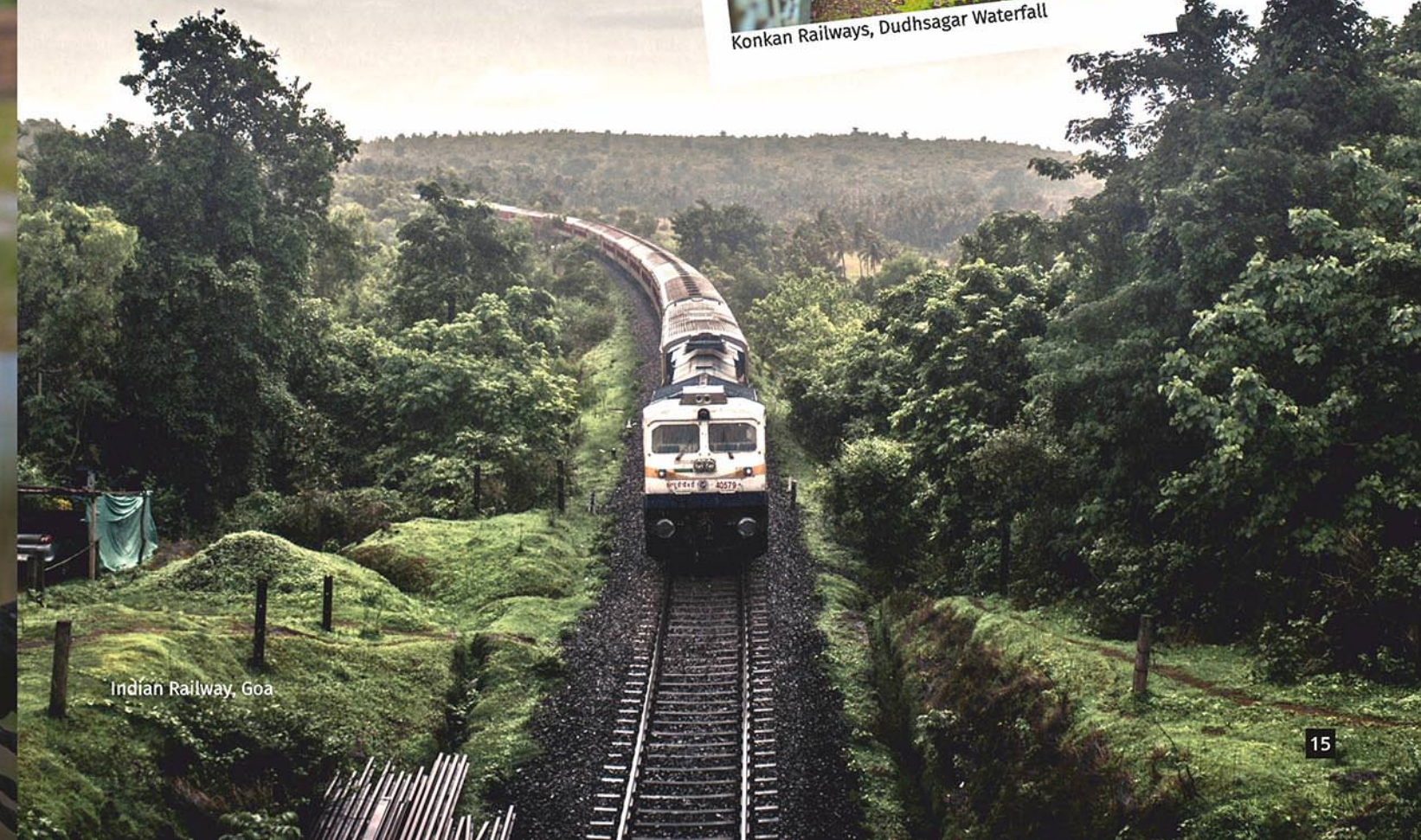
The Konkan Railway

Route: Mumbai to Goa (or Mangalore)

Connecting Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka, the Konkan Railway is an engineering marvel traversing 740 kilometers of breathtaking landscapes, including lush green hills, sparkling rivers, and the serene Arabian Sea.

It features over 2,000 bridges and 90 tunnels, including the Karbude Tunnel, one of the longest in India. While many trains take this route, two special trains worth taking are the Mandovi Express and Konkankanya Express which connect Mumbai to Goa.

Get ready to be mesmerized by the picturesque surroundings: misty mountains, swaying coconut palms, and quaint villages dotting the landscape. The train ride is especially magical during the monsoon season when waterfalls cascade down hillsides and the region transforms into a lush paradise.



The Kashmir Valley Railway

Route: Banihal to Baramulla

The Kashmir Valley is renowned for its stunning landscapes and you can enjoy them with a journey on the train from Banihal to Baramulla. This railway line offers a 137-kilometer journey through some of the most picturesque regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Nestled amidst the towering Himalayas, the route is a marvel of modern engineering, featuring over 700 bridges and nearly 100 tunnels, including the famous Pir Panjal Tunnel, the longest in India. As the train winds through snow-covered mountains, lush meadows, and pristine rivers, passengers are treated to awe-inspiring views that change with the seasons.

Winter journeys are particularly magical, as the valley transforms into a snow-laden wonderland, while spring and summer reveal vibrant fields of tulips, mustard flowers, and verdant greenery. The journey also offers glimpses of Kashmiri life, with traditional villages and orchards dotting the route.

For travelers seeking to experience the unparalleled beauty of Kashmir, this is a journey that truly encapsulates the essence of "Paradise on Earth," making it an unforgettable experience for sure.



Red Train, Kashmir

1

Railway Station, Banihal, Jammu

The Vivek Express

Route: Dibrugarh (Assam) to Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu)

The Vivek Express holds a special place among India's iconic train journeys because it's the longest rail route in the country. Spanning 4,273 kilometers from Dibrugarh in Assam to Kanyakumari at the southernmost tip of India, this epic journey traverses the entire length of the nation, connecting its diverse cultures, landscapes, and communities.

The journey takes approximately 82 hours and passes through eight states, offering passengers a unique opportunity to witness India's incredible geographical diversity. From the lush tea gardens of Assam and the fertile Gangetic plains to the arid Deccan Plateau and the coastal vistas of Tamil Nadu, the Vivek Express showcases the varied beauty of the subcontinent.

Named after Swami Vivekananda to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary, the train also symbolizes unity in diversity, connecting regions with distinct languages, cuisines, and traditions. Onboard, you'll get to experience the charm of long-distance travel, meeting people from all walks of life and enjoying local flavors at different stops. It's sure to leave you with memories you'll cherish for a lifetime!



Celebrate **National Tourism Day** *Via Train Travel!*

So, are you ready to take the scenic route and experience the best train journeys that India has to offer? It's a great way to travel sustainably and experience the natural untamed beauty of the country.

Moreover, traveling by train invites you to slow down, connect with fellow travelers, and rediscover India's landscapes and traditions. Step aboard and let the rhythm of the rails guide you through the magic of this incredible nation—an adventure waiting to unfold. 🚂

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Ingredients

For the Muthiyas (Fenugreek Dumplings):

- 1 cup gram flour (besan)
- 1¼ cups fenugreek leaves (methi), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon red chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder
- A pinch of baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon lemon juice
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon oil (plus extra for deep frying)

For the Masala Paste

- ¼ cup grated coconut (fresh or dry)
- ⅓ cup roasted peanut powder
- ½ tablespoon sesame seeds
- ¼ cup finely chopped coriander leaves
- ½ tablespoon green chili-ginger-garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- Salt, to taste

For the Vegetable Mix

- 3-4 small brinjals (eggplants), slit crosswise
- 6-7 baby potatoes, peeled
- ½ cup surti papdi (flat green beans), strings removed
- ½ cup valor papdi (broad beans), strings removed
- ½ cup tuvar lilva (fresh pigeon peas) or green peas
- ½ cup sweet potato or yam, cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 1 raw banana, cut into chunks

For Tempering

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon carom seeds (ajwain)
- A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- 1 teaspoon red chili powder
- ½ teaspoon cumin-coriander powder
- ⅓ teaspoon turmeric powder

Instructions

Prepare the Muthiyas

- In a bowl, combine gram flour, chopped fenugreek leaves, red chili powder, turmeric powder, baking soda, sugar, lemon juice, salt, and 1 tablespoon oil.
- Mix well, adding water as needed to form a soft dough.
- Shape the dough into small oval dumplings.
- Deep fry the dumplings until golden brown. Drain on paper towels and set aside.

Prepare the Masala Paste

- In a bowl, mix grated coconut, roasted peanut powder, sesame seeds, chopped coriander leaves, green chili-ginger-garlic paste, sugar, lemon juice, and salt.
- Combine to form a coarse paste.

Stuff the Vegetables

- Gently stuff the masala paste into the slit brinjals and between the layers of the surti papdi and valor papdi.

Cook the Undhiyu

- In a large thick-bottomed pan, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat.
- Add carom seeds and asafoetida; let them sizzle.
- Add the remaining masala paste and sauté for a minute.
- Add red chili powder, cumin-coriander powder, and turmeric powder; mix well.
- Add all the vegetables, including the stuffed ones, and gently mix to coat them with the masala.
- Add a little water to prevent sticking, cover the pan, and cook on low heat for about 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender.
- Add the fried muthiyas, mix gently, cover, and cook for an additional 10 minutes.

Serve

- Once cooked, garnish with freshly chopped coriander leaves.
- Serve hot with puris or rotis.

This recipe is adapted from Foodviva's Gujarati Undhiyu Recipe. ■



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A close-up photograph of a person's hands resting on an open book with Braille text. The person is wearing a light-colored, checkered shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with natural light. The overall mood is calm and focused.

The BEST GIFTS For Visually Impaired People

Celebrate
WORLD
Braille
DAY
by Gifting Thoughtful
and Practical Presents

Every year, January 4 is celebrated as World Braille Day, honouring the revolutionary contribution of Louis Braille, whose writing system transformed the lives of blind and visually impaired individuals.

To commemorate his birthday, why not celebrate this day by giving thoughtful gifts to blind or partially blind people? Here's a curated list of six unique and practical gifts that not only bring joy but also enhance their daily lives - a meaningful gesture for travel enthusiasts and beyond.

Check out some of the best gifts you can give to your friends who need them to make their routine comfortable.

MCP Healthcare Folding Blind Cane Reflective Red Folding Walking Stick for Vision Impaired and Blind People

A Thoughtful Companion for the Visually Impaired: Adjustable Folding Cane

This adjustable folding cane is a practical and thoughtful gift designed specifically for the needs of blind or partially blind individuals. Its lightweight, foldable design ensures effortless portability and easy storage, making it an ideal travel companion. The reflective red finish enhances visibility in low-light conditions, adding a layer of safety for the user. Built with durable, high-quality materials, this cane offers long-lasting support.

Features like adjustable height and a safety wrist strap make it both convenient and secure. The contrasting white and red reflective finish not only aids the user but also alerts those around them for added safety. A perfect blend of functionality and thoughtful design, this cane is a meaningful gift for ensuring independence and confidence in daily mobility.



Price: ₹ 399

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/BOCSKGK17/>

AUTO BOTIX Third Eye Glass for the Blind Person with Vibration Motor and Buzzer

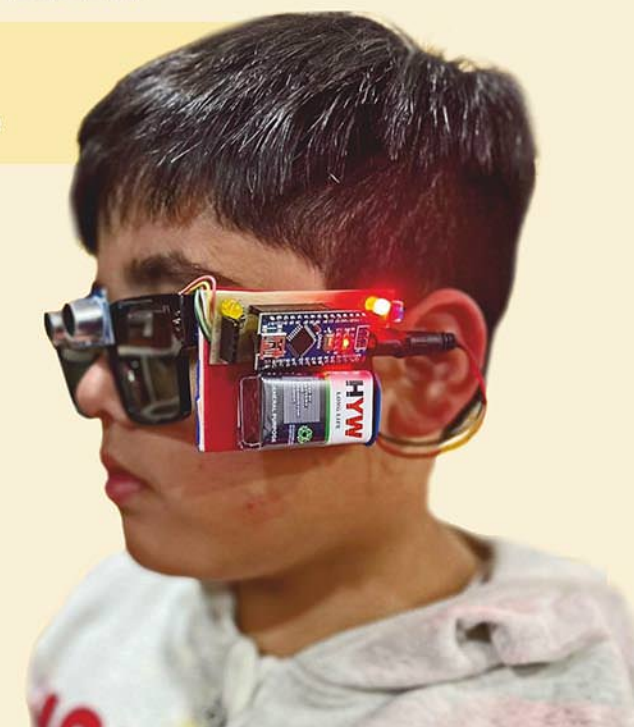
A Thoughtful Companion for the Visually Impaired: Adjustable Folding Cane

Empower your loved ones with these innovative Project Glasses, a life-changing assistive device for the visually impaired. Powered by advanced Arduino nanotechnology, these glasses combine an ultrasonic sensor, vibration motor, and buzzer to detect obstacles in real-time, providing a safer and more confident navigation experience.

The ultrasonic sensor ensures precise distance measurement, while the discreet vibration motor gently alerts the user of potential hazards. The built-in buzzer provides clear, audible cues for enhanced awareness, offering a comprehensive sensory experience. Compact, lightweight, and easy to use, these glasses redefine accessibility, promoting independence and inclusivity for blind or partially blind individuals.

Price: ₹ 1650

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0DCTQJL9G/>



MCP Healthcare Foldable Walking Stick with LED Alarm Light and Name Card

A Versatile and Reliable Walking Stick for the Visually Impaired

This foldable and adjustable walking stick is a practical gift that combines convenience, safety, and personalisation—perfect for blind or partially blind individuals. Its collapsible design makes it easy to store and carry for everyday use or while travelling. The adjustable guide length, crafted with durable aluminium alloy, ensures a comfortable fit for users of varying heights, providing reliable stability and support.

Safety is a priority, with a built-in LED alarm light enhancing visibility during nighttime walks or in dimly lit areas, making the user easily noticeable to others. Adding a touch of personalisation, the included name card holder allows for easy identification. Thoughtfully designed to blend functionality with practicality, this walking stick is a meaningful gift for enhancing independence and mobility.



Price: ₹ 999

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0D2DFXKVB/>

RUNCAR Atomic American English Talking Watch

Talking Watch: A Thoughtful Gift for the Visually Impaired

This Talking Watch is an exceptional gift for seniors and visually impaired individuals, offering both functionality and elegance. With a loud and clear English voice, it announces the time, day, date, or alarm time in a pleasant American accent, ensuring effortless timekeeping.

The watch automatically adjusts for daylight savings and synchronises with radio signals every night, ensuring precise timekeeping without any manual effort. With its easy-to-use interface, a simple button press provides clear audio updates, making it an ideal accessory for those with low vision or needing quick access to time.

Designed for comfort and convenience, its elastic band ensures a secure fit for most adult wrist sizes. In contrast, its stylish design makes it a practical yet elegant accessory. Whether for seniors, emergency workers, or anyone with visual impairments, this talking watch is a meaningful and functional gift.

Price: ₹ 533

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0D9865Q65/>



Tactile Impression Speed Cube with Braille Markings - Puzzle for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons

Fun and Learning at Your Fingertips

Experience the joy of solving puzzles with the Tactile Impression Speed Cube, thoughtfully designed for blind and visually impaired individuals. Featuring Braille markings and textured surfaces on each square, this cube enables easy identification through touch, making it a genuinely inclusive gift.

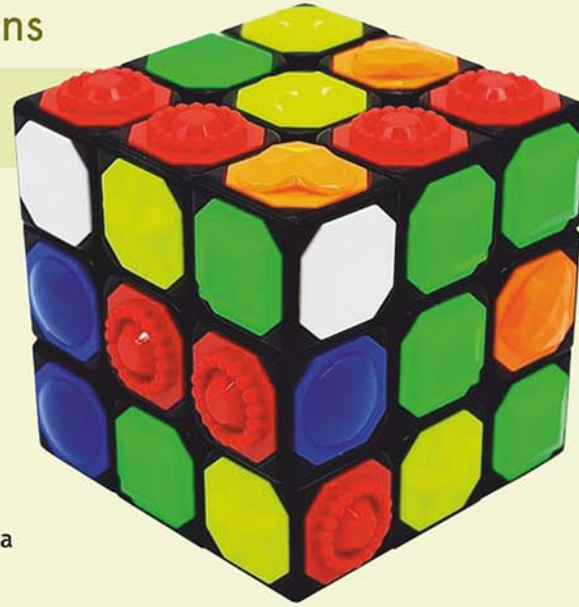
Crafted with high-quality materials, this durable puzzle cube is built to withstand daily use. Its smooth-turning mechanism ensures a seamless solving experience, adding to the fun. Beyond entertainment, it also enhances cognitive abilities like problem-solving, memory, and spatial awareness, making it an excellent educational tool.

Compact and lightweight, the cube is perfect for home, school, or travelling. It's a meaningful gift for birthdays, holidays, or any special occasion. It offers a blend of challenge, learning, and enjoyment for visually impaired friends or family.

Gift the Tactile Impression Speed Cube and bring smiles to those who love engaging and thoughtful activities.

Price: ₹ 1,299

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0D22P89FG/>



304 Pieces Bump Dots for Visually Impaired

Tactile Bump Dots: A Handy Aid for the Visually Impaired

Enhance accessibility and independence with this pack of 304 Tactile Bump Dots, thoughtfully designed to support individuals with low vision or blindness. These dots are versatile enough to meet diverse needs and are featured in various shapes, sizes, and colours—round, hemispheric, embedded, and jelly buttons.

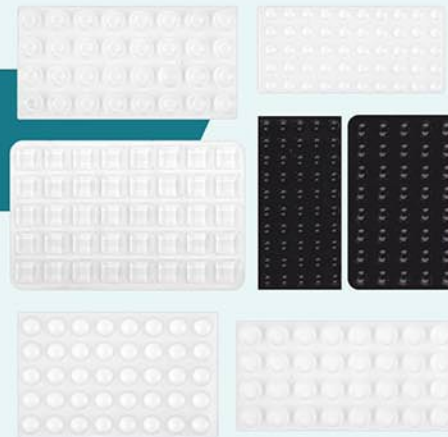
These bump dots act as practical aids, helping users identify essential controls like remote buttons, phone keypads, computer keyboards, switches, and more. The self-adhesive backing makes them easy to apply to any surface, offering convenience for the elderly, visually impaired, or blind individuals.

Crafted from durable and reliable moulded polyurethane, these tactile markers are gentle on the hands and built to last. Ideal for both home and office use, they make daily tasks simpler and more efficient.

This pack is a thoughtful and practical gift for those with visual impairments, ensuring greater independence and ease of navigation in everyday life.

Price: ₹ 2,698

<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0D13RL2M9/>



Disclaimer: The gifts listed here are selected from the Amazon India website. The products were available on the Amazon India website when the article was written. The price of products may vary from time to time. Tourism One or its editorial staff are not responsible for any change in the price. 📄



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Spread across four enchanting islands, this resort offers a unique escape for travellers, event planners, and corporate gatherings.

Whether you seek a tranquil retreat, a grand wedding venue, or a space for vibrant festivities, this island paradise has it all.



**PRAVEG
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Soaring High

A Guide to
Kite-Flying Festivities
Across India

Sky transforms into a canvas

On January 14th and 15th of every year, the skies across many parts of the country come alive with colorful kites and lanterns. It's a time of the season shifting gradually from winter to spring, and according to Vedic astrology, the sun shifts from the zodiac sign of Sagittarius into the sign of Capricorn. Many Indian cultures regard this period as auspicious, a time of positivity and fresh starts. Kite flying is a symbolic representation of this sentiment, marking winter's end and the promise of the colors of spring. Let's take a closer look at the different kite-flying festivities across the nation that bring people together and turn the sky into a canvas to behold.



Street Hawker Selling Kites, Ahmedabad

Source: CamBuff / Shutterstock.com

Uttarayan in Gujarat

- When: January 14
- Where: Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Surat.

Gujarat is perhaps the best place to be on Uttarayan! The festival not only marks the change in seasons but also attracts people from all over the world to the International Kite Festival in Ahmedabad. Here you can see intricate kites of all shapes and sizes—dragons, animals, and even cultural symbols—adorn the skies, showcasing global artistry and creativity.

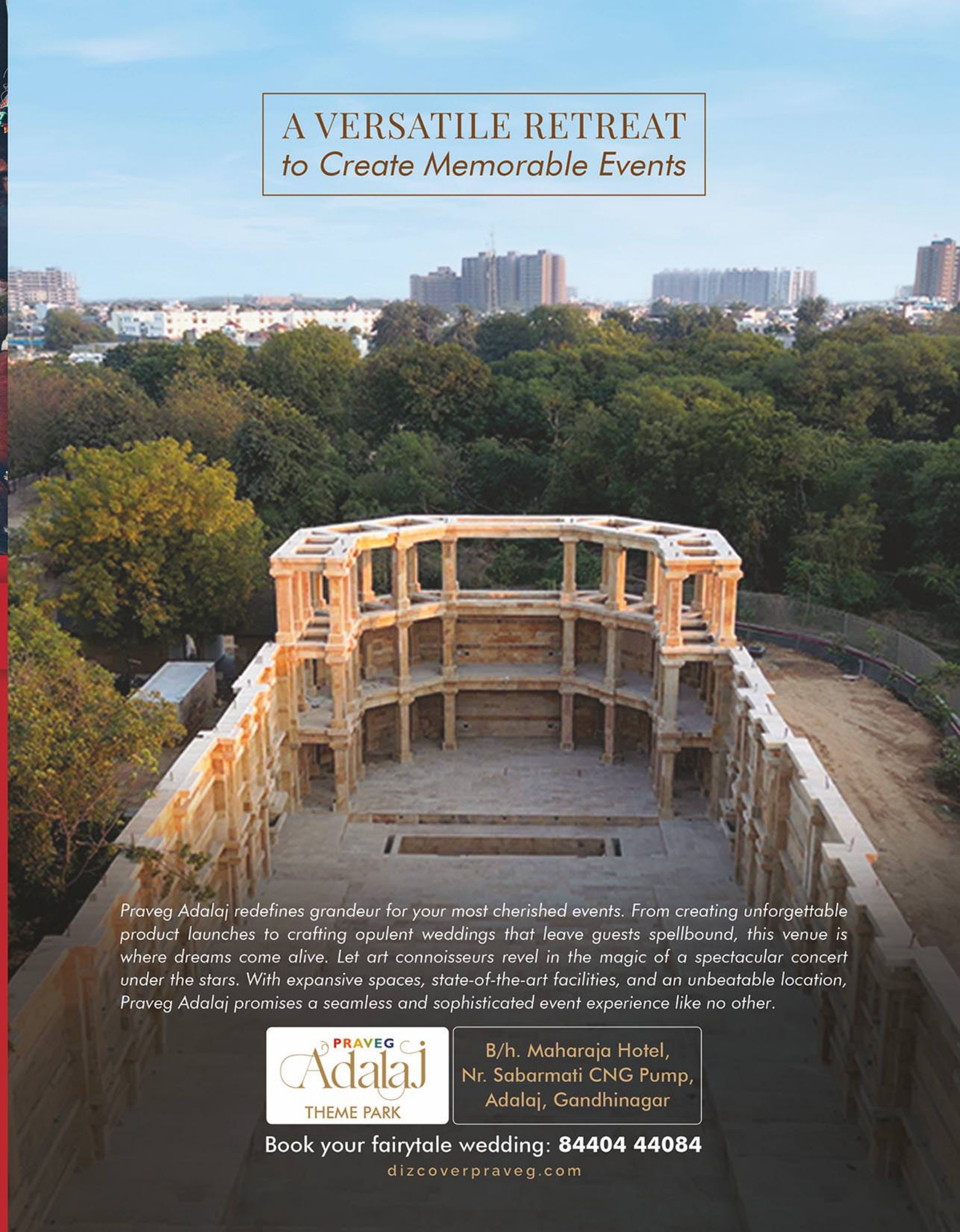
As colorful kites dominate the sky, the streets and terraces come alive with festive cheer, especially in the “old city” areas where kite flying is a very competitive sport! Families and friends gather on rooftops, engaging in spirited kite battles, sharing laughter, and shouting “Kai Po Che!” when a rival kite is downed. The aroma of traditional delicacies fills the air. The most popular of these is undhiyu, a hearty mixed vegetable dish, and chikki, a sweet made of jaggery and nuts.

The festival's energy spills into the streets, with music, dance, and food stalls enhancing the carnival-like atmosphere. Uttarayan is not just about kites—it's a celebration of Gujarat's vibrant culture, where tradition meets global influences, and the joy of community is shared under the open sky.



Uttarayan: Gujarat's Sky-High Celebration of Culture and Festivity

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Lohri, Gurgaon

Lohri in Punjab

- When: January 13.
- Where: Across Punjab, especially Amritsar and Ludhiana.

Lohri is the harvest festival of Punjab observed on January 13th. It signifies the end of winter and the onset of longer days. While the festival is traditionally associated with bonfires, music, and dance, kite flying has become an integral part of Lohri festivities, adding a colorful

dimension to the celebrations.

On Lohri morning, the skies of Punjab are dotted with vibrant kites of various shapes and hues. Families and friends gather on rooftops, engaging in friendly kite-flying duels, adding excitement to the day. The colorful spectacle symbolizes freedom and joy, reflecting the festive spirit of the harvest season.

As evening falls, the focus shifts to the bonfire, the heart of Lohri celebrations. People gather around it, tossing offerings of sesame seeds, jaggery, and peanuts into the flames as a gesture of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. The air resonates with the energetic beats of dhol, while traditional dances like bhangra and giddha bring communities together in jubilant performances.

Lohri beautifully blends cultural traditions, with kite flying adding a playful touch to a festival that celebrates life, nature, and togetherness.



Peanuts Til Chikki



Sankranti in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

- When: Jan 14
- Where: Hyderabad and nearby regions.

Sankranti is a four-day celebration in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana – a vibrant blend of rituals, community gatherings, and cultural traditions.

The festival begins with Bhogi, where old household items are burned in bonfires symbolizing the end of negativity and the arrival of new beginnings. On the second day, colorful rangoli designs called muggulu decorate courtyards, and the skies come alive with kites. Kite flying is a favorite activity during Sankranti, with people of all ages participating in friendly duels, adding joy and excitement to the festivities.

The third day, Kanuma, is dedicated to cattle, acknowledging their role in farming. Farmers adorn their livestock with colorful decorations and feed them special treats. Lastly, Mukkanuma, the fourth day, focuses on feasting and communal harmony, often involving family gatherings and sharing festive meals.

Traditional delicacies like garelu (lentil fritters), and ariselu (jaggery rice cakes) are central to the celebrations, symbolizing the season's abundance.



Jaggery Recipes, Til Ladoo, Peanut Chikki, Til Chikki, Rajgira Laddu



Sakkarai Pongal

Pongal in Tamil Nadu

- When: Pongal (January 14–17).
- Where: Chennai and rural Tamil Nadu.

Pongal is another four-day celebration of prosperity, gratitude, and nature's bounty. It marks the beginning of the Tamil month Thai, symbolizing a fresh start and abundance.

On the second day, Thai Pongal, families prepare the traditional food of Pongal, a sweet rice dish made with freshly harvested rice, jaggery, and milk, cooked outdoors in decorated clay pots. The ritual involves offering the dish to the sun god as a way of expressing gratitude for a plentiful harvest.

The third day, Mattu Pongal, celebrates cattle. Cows and oxen are adorned with colorful garlands, painted horns, and bells, and they are honored with special treats. Finally, the fourth day, Kaanum Pongal, focuses on family reunions and community gatherings, where people enjoy festive meals and exchange gifts.



Flower Rangoli Pongal Festival

Join the Festivities

Whether it's the grandeur of Uttarayan in Gujarat, the spirited celebration of Lohri in Punjab, or the vibrant energy of Sankranti and Pongal, each kite-flying celebration offers something unique.

These festivals are more than just events; they are an invitation to immerse yourself in the colors, energy, and spirit of Indian traditions. The soaring kites, lively music, and festive delicacies create memories that linger long after the day is over.

So, let the skies call you, and experience the magic of a kite festival, where hope and freedom take flight with every fluttering kite. As Anais Nin once wrote, "Throw your dreams into the sky like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back—a new life, a new friend, a new love, or a new country." ■

Kites in the Sky, Basant Panchami

Basant Panchami, North India

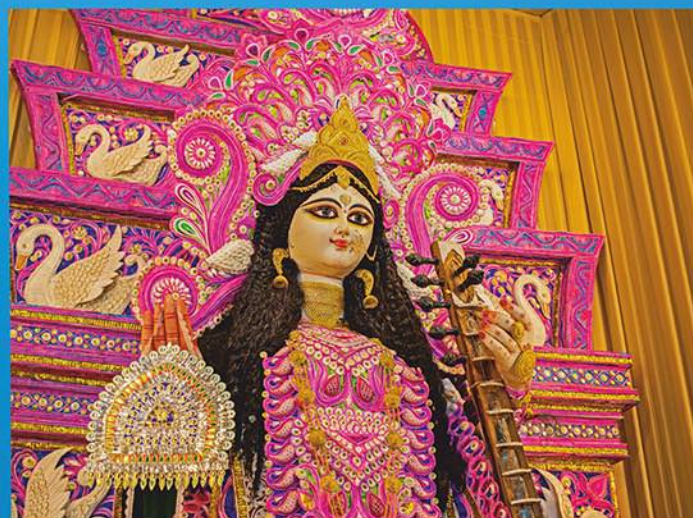
- **When:** January-February (varies by the Hindu calendar).
- **Where:** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan.

Basant Panchami is celebrated across India to mark the arrival of spring and is dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and arts. Observed on the fifth day of the Hindu month of Magha (January-February), the festival is a vibrant blend of cultural, spiritual, and seasonal celebrations.

In northern India, particularly Punjab and Haryana, Basant Panchami is synonymous with kite flying. The sky becomes a vivid tapestry of colorful kites as families and friends gather on rooftops for spirited competitions, heralding the onset of warmer days. The festival also signifies prosperity and joy, with the mustard fields blooming in golden yellow—a color symbolizing energy and vibrancy, reflected in the attire and decorations of the day.

Devotees worship Saraswati by wearing yellow, preparing special offerings, and decorating her idols with marigold flowers. Of course, a festival isn't complete without food. So traditional dishes like kesar halwa (saffron-infused semolina) and khichdi are prepared, adding to the festive spirit. Basant

Panchami beautifully weaves together the themes of renewal, knowledge, and celebration, welcoming the season of growth and prosperity with devotion and joy.





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Dreamy Destinations in India for *Valentine's Day*

Serene backwaters to majestic palaces

Valentine's Day is the perfect occasion to celebrate love and connection, and what better way to do it than by escaping to some of India's most romantic destinations? From serene lakes to majestic mountains, India offers a variety of enchanting locations that are ideal for couples. Here are 10 dreamy destinations that promise unforgettable experiences this Valentine's Day. Whether you seek adventure, tranquility, or cultural richness, these spots will create lasting memories and deepen your bond with your partner.

Udaipur Rajasthan

Known as the "City of Lakes," Udaipur is a quintessential romantic getaway that captivates couples with its stunning architecture and serene waters. Imagine enjoying a candlelit dinner at a rooftop restaurant, where you can savour delectable Rajasthani cuisine while gazing at the shimmering Lake Pichola and the illuminated City Palace. A magical evening boat ride on the lake allows you to soak in the breathtaking sunset, casting a warm glow over the city. With its rich history and romantic ambiance, Udaipur is an ideal destination for couples looking to create lasting memories together.

Things to Do:

- Enjoy a candlelit dinner at restaurants like Ambrai or Jagat Niwas.
- Take a sunset boat ride on Lake Pichola.
- Visit the City Palace and Jag Mandir.
- Explore the Saheliyon-ki-Bari gardens.
- Attend a cultural performance at Bagore Ki Haveli.

The Lake Palace

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Alleppey Kerala

Often referred to as the "Venice of the East," Alleppey is famous for its tranquil backwaters, making it a perfect romantic escape. Couples can indulge in a unique experience by staying on a houseboat, drifting through serene waters surrounded by lush greenery and picturesque villages. Enjoy a romantic picnic on a secluded beach or along the banks of the backwaters, where you can relish local delicacies while taking in the stunning views. As the sun sets, embark on a sunset cruise, where the vibrant colours of the sky reflect on the water, creating an intimate atmosphere that's simply unforgettable.



Things to Do:

- Stay overnight in a traditional houseboat.
- Go for a guided canoe ride through narrow canals.
- Visit local villages to experience traditional Kerala life.
- Enjoy fresh seafood at local eateries.
- Relax on Vypin Island or Marari Beach.

Backwaters, Kerala

Manali Himachal Pradesh

Nestled in the Himalayas, Manali is perfect for couples seeking adventure and romance amidst breathtaking landscapes. The snow-covered mountains provide an idyllic backdrop for candlelit dinners in luxury resorts that offer panoramic views of the snow-capped peaks. For those who enjoy outdoor activities, skiing or snowboarding together can be an exhilarating experience. After a day filled with adventure, unwind by exploring local markets for unique handicrafts or simply enjoy each other's company in this charming hill station known for its natural beauty and cozy ambiance.

Things to Do:

- Go skiing or snowboarding at Solang Valley.
- Take a romantic stroll along the Manalsu River.
- Visit Hadimba Temple surrounded by cedar forests.
- Explore local markets for woollens and handicrafts.
- Enjoy paragliding for an adrenaline rush.

Source: Amis.kg / Shutterstock.com

Srinagar Jammu & Kashmir

Srinagar offers a magical setting with its picturesque landscapes and rich culture, making it an enchanting destination for couples. A Shikara ride on Dal Lake is an absolute must; gliding over calm waters surrounded by stunning gardens and majestic mountains creates an intimate experience like no other. Staying in houseboats adds a unique touch to your getaway, allowing you to wake up to breathtaking views right outside your window. As night falls, take some time to stargaze on clear nights; the serene environment enhances the romance, making every moment spent together truly special.

Things to Do:

- Take a Shikara ride on Dal Lake at sunrise or sunset.
- Stay in a traditional houseboat on Dal Lake.
- Visit Mughal Gardens like Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh.
- Explore local markets for Pashmina shawls and handicrafts.
- Enjoy traditional Kashmiri cuisine at local restaurants.



Tulip Garden

Goa

Goa is renowned for its beautiful beaches and vibrant nightlife, making it an ideal destination for couples looking for both relaxation and excitement. Picture yourself on a sunset cruise along the Mandovi River, sipping cocktails while enjoying live music as the sun dips below the horizon. For those who prefer tranquillity, private beach dinners under starlit skies create an intimate setting perfect for deep conversations and shared dreams. Additionally, luxurious beach resorts offer spa treatments designed for couples—ensuring that your time together is both rejuvenating and romantic amidst Goa's laid-back charm.



Things to Do:

- Go on a sunset cruise on Mandovi River with live music.
- Enjoy beachside dinners at popular spots like Fisherman's Wharf or Gunpowder.
- Relax with couples' spa treatments at luxury resorts.
- Engage in water sports like parasailing or jet-skiing together.
- Explore vibrant flea markets like Anjuna Flea Market for souvenirs.

Agra

Uttar Pradesh

Home to the iconic Taj Mahal, Agra is synonymous with love and romance. Couples can enjoy leisurely romantic walks in the lush gardens surrounding this architectural marvel, especially during sunrise or sunset when the Taj Mahal glows in soft hues of pink and orange. Beyond the Taj Mahal, exploring historical sites like Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri adds depth to your visit, allowing you to appreciate India's rich heritage together. End your day with a delightful dinner at one of Agra's fine restaurants that offer stunning views of the Taj Mahal—an experience that will linger in your hearts long after you leave.

Things to Do:

- Visit the Taj Mahal early in the morning for fewer crowds.
- Explore Agra Fort and its impressive architecture.
- Take a day trip to Fatehpur Sikri, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Enjoy dining at restaurants like The Sky Deck or Peshawri with Taj views.
- Capture stunning photographs at Mehtab Bagh during sunset.



Mussoorie Uttarakhand

Known as the "Queen of Hills," Mussoorie is perfect for couples seeking tranquility amid breathtaking mountain scenery. Scenic hikes to viewpoints like Gun Hill or Kempty Falls provide opportunities for adventure while allowing you to share awe-inspiring moments together surrounded by nature's beauty. Cosy dinners at hillside restaurants offer panoramic views that enhance your dining experience as you savour local delicacies under twinkling stars. The charming atmosphere of Mussoorie encourages leisurely strolls through its quaint streets—creating an idyllic setting for romance.

Things to Do:

- Take a cable car ride up Gun Hill for panoramic views of Mussoorie.
- Hike to Kempty Falls or visit Jharipani Falls for scenic beauty.
- Stroll along Mall Road exploring shops and cafes together.
- Enjoy dinner at places like The Tavern or Kalsang Friends Corner.
- Visit Camel's Back Road for peaceful walks amidst nature.

Munnar Kerala

Munnar's lush tea plantations make it a serene escape for couples seeking tranquillity amidst nature's beauty. Strolling through verdant tea gardens provides not only breathtaking views but also an opportunity to connect with each other away from daily distractions. Enjoy cosy evenings by a fireplace in charming hill resorts where you can share stories and laughter while sipping hot tea made from locally sourced leaves. Exploring nearby waterfalls and scenic viewpoints together allows you to create shared memories against Munnar's stunning backdrop—a perfect blend of adventure and relaxation.

Things to Do:

- Visit tea plantations like Kolukkumalai Tea Estate for panoramic views.
- Explore Eravikulam National Park for wildlife spotting and trekking.
- Take photos at Attukal Waterfalls or Lakkam Waterfalls.
- Enjoy guided nature walks through tea gardens with local guides.
- Sample fresh tea at local tea shops.

Rishikesh Uttarakhand

For adventurous couples looking for both thrill and spirituality, Rishikesh offers an ideal blend of experiences that cater to all interests. Engage in exhilarating river rafting on the Ganges—an adrenaline-pumping activity that strengthens bonds through shared excitement and teamwork. As evening falls, participate in mesmerizing Ganga Aarti ceremonies along the riverbank; this spiritual experience creates a serene atmosphere filled with devotion and beauty that enhances your connection with each other. Additionally, yoga retreats provide opportunities for relaxation and rejuvenation—making Rishikesh not just an adventure hub but also a place for deeper introspection together.

Things to Do:

- Go white-water rafting on the Ganges River (grades I-IV).
- Attend Ganga Aarti ceremonies at Triveni Ghat during sunset.
- Participate in yoga classes or meditation sessions together.
- Explore nearby waterfalls like Neer Garh Waterfall for hiking adventures.
- Visit Laxman Jhula and Ram Jhula bridges for scenic walks.

River Rafting, Ganges

Rajasthan Jaipur

The Pink City offers a blend of history and romance that makes it an enchanting destination for couples. Experience the thrill of hot air balloon rides over Jaipur's majestic forts and palaces—an unforgettable way to view this vibrant city from above while creating lasting memories together. Exploring historical sites like Amer Fort and Nahargarh Fort allows couples to immerse themselves in Rajasthan's rich heritage while enjoying each other's company amidst stunning architecture. End your day with a royal dining experience at one of Jaipur's heritage hotels, where exquisite cuisine meets regal ambiance.

Things to Do:

- Go hot air ballooning over Jaipur for breathtaking aerial views.
- Visit Amer Fort and enjoy an elephant ride up to its entrance.
- Explore Nahargarh Fort during sunset for stunning city views.
- Dine at Samode Haveli or Chokhi Dhani for traditional Rajasthani cuisine.
- Shop for handicrafts at Johari Bazaar or Bapu Bazaar.

Conclusion: These destinations not only provide stunning backdrops but also unique experiences that can deepen your bond with your partner this Valentine's Day. Whether it's a quiet retreat or an adventurous getaway, India has something special to offer every couple looking to celebrate their love. 📍

Amer Fort

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