

# STORIES

A journey is not about the places you visit,  
but the stories you bring home to share



**CREATIVE  
TRAVEL**  
a family story since 1977



## OUR VISION

“To truly be the best at creating memorable and authentic travel experiences in the regions we cover”

## OUR MISSION

The foundations of our companies are based on being creative, innovative and dependable in all we do for our partners across the world. We are proud of our historical, cultural and social heritage and we work to showcase these in the most engaging and honest way we can. We aim to continuously exceed our guests expectations and ensure they return home as ambassadors of our region.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### Trust & Integrity

We must conduct our business fairly, with honesty, integrity and transparency in everything we do.

### Curiosity

We will always have an open mind to learn, to experiment and to embrace new ideas.

### Accountability

We will be responsible in our actions to our guests, our partners, our employees and our community.

### Customer

Our focus, thoughts and actions will always have the best interests of our customers first.

### Intentionally Unconventional

We foster an environment where speaking one's mind is allowed and innovation rewarded.

### Togetherness

We will always work collectively as a family, the happiness of which is paramount to our success.

# WELCOME TO A CREATIVE WORLD

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Many years ago, as we grew as a company, we came to a realisation that our love lay not in booking hotels or tours, but in showcasing engaging and unique experiences across the countries we cover. We realised that our lands have many hidden corners, many one-of-a-kind moments, many mysteries and many tales.

We are a family owned business, but professionally managed. We have corporate systems that are guided by our core family values. We came to realise that we do not wish to be the biggest company in India. We never aimed to be the richest nor the most powerful. We just wish to be the best at what we do.

Our Vision is “To truly be the best at creating memorable and authentic travel experiences in the regions we cover”. Our systems and policies give our professionals the freedom to deliver excellence. Our Core Values are of Trust & Integrity; Curiosity; Accountability; Customer Focussed; Intentionally Unconventional and Togetherness.

We will always have an open mind to learn, to experiment and to embrace new ideas. We foster an environment where speaking one's mind is allowed and innovation rewarded. We will always work collectively as a family, the happiness of which is paramount to our success.

We are a family legacy of two generations that has showcased this part of the world for 40 years now. We have grown to become a prominent, respected and independent Destination Management Company, offering the finest of cultural experiences, personal immersions and natural wonders all over India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Tibet & the Maldives.

Our role is to create stories for our guests; stories of love, of excitement, of wonder. We, at Creative Travel are proud of our history, its legacy and excited about our future.

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# OUR STORY

It's all about family

When we started to write this chapter, it turned out to be a lot harder than we expected. Our father wasn't driven by the desire to run a business, but rather a passion to show the world the best India had to offer. Ours is a story of a vision, of a passion that went against all conventional norms. Ours is a very personal story.

In the early 1960's, our father, Ram Kohli, was hired straight out of college by the then largest travel company in India. Impressed by his dedication, his company sent him to Germany to open the first ever office of an Indian travel company in Europe. A young bachelor, he adapted well to a new world. Ram married our mother Deepak in 1968 and soon Rajeev came along. But his company had greater plans and it was off to New York to repeat what he had done in Europe. Not only was Ram tremendously successful in building India as a major brand across the Americas, but also added one more member to the Kohli family in, Rohit.

In 1976, he felt the tug of home. He impulsively quit his job and moved

the family back to India that year. To a country that was deeply mired in socialist ideology and a backward economy. We never really got around to asking him why he made the move back home when others from the developing world were trying to immigrate to the West. He was just driven in ways few others were. It takes a different kind of man to uproot his family from a comfortable life to start from the scratch in a new world.

In 1977, out of a garage at home, Creative Travel was founded. With nothing in hand, Ram spent months of the year traveling the world to create a following of partners & friends, many who still work with us today. We still remember the times when we would not hear from him for weeks and his coming home meant the arrival of great presents and many hugs. The travel industry was very different before emails or cell phones.

One thing that our parents held dear was the value of education and we were both given the best opportunities they could afford. In 1994 we joined the company after gaining world experiences and have never looked back since then.

Left: Ram Kohli, circa early 1960s

Why we tell you this is because Creative Travel is not just a business. It is a family. A family of the Kohlis, a family of our team members, a family of our partners across the world.

We are so very proud to be part of a family legacy of two generations that has showcased this part of the world for close to four decades. We have grown to become a prominent, respected and independent Destination Management Company offering the finest of cultural experiences, personal immersions and natural wonders all over India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Tibet & the Maldives.

We are a company with great influence in the region, with strong industry linkages and unquestionable credibility. Our reputation allows us priority and access at hotels, venues and with other providers and our region. We use our reputation and goodwill to ensure the very best for our partners like you.

We understand the difference between being cheap and offering value. Price is important, but more important is consistency in services and ensuring your guest comes back to you for their next trip. Our team has a strong attention to detail and a desire to question the conventional. They understand the need to be different in what we offer, in the importance of speed in their responses and in being vibrant in their thoughts.

We would give credit for our success to over 150 team members across our system who strive to deliver a flawless, world class destination experience. We recognise that we are only as good as the people that work for us and therefore invest heavily in product training and skill development, the results of which are reflected in the way we treat our partners and in the high levels of guest satisfaction we achieve. At Creative, we have the perfect blend of a professional environment with the governing values of a family run company. The people who work for us are truly amongst the best in the industry.



Every organisation needs a soul, a mission, a foundation. To us, business is about building relationships. Our partners are our family, not numbers. Our travellers are guests, not clients. We do not want to be the largest company in India, just the best. We hold close to our hearts, the values of integrity, of partnership, of quality and of trust - trust of our employees, of our partners, of our travellers. To us, working in this industry is a passion. We love showing the world the amazing sights & sounds that make this region truly incredible.

Ours is a story of passion, of love. Our story is about integrity and values. Our story is about living upto the ideals and learnings given to us by our parents.

*Some things are just never to be compromised.*

We look forward someday to the opportunity of someday welcoming you to our world, a Creative World.

- Rajeev Kohli & Rohit Kohli



Right: Deepak Kohli, Chairperson with Joint Managing Directors Rajeev (left) and Rohit (right)

# ON BEING CREATIVE

Committed to be different

What makes Creative different? What makes us a preferred partner for some of the finest travel brands in the world?

We have deep first hand experiences of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Tibet and the Maldives. We have multi-faceted skills matched by few and prefer to work with travel companies and professionals. We do not pursue travellers directly.

We position ourselves as travel consultants and advisors. Our role is to match our knowledge with your needs and create the right products for you to sell. Our dedicated specialists design custom-crafted journeys with your specifications in mind to guarantee experiences of a lifetime. We are flexible to the needs of our partners.

Our mission statement was written collectively by the team members of Creative Travel and we stand by every word with pride: "The foundation of our companies are based on being creative, innovative and dependable in all we do for our partners across the world. We are proud of our historical, cultural and social

heritage and we work to showcase these in the most engaging and honest way we can. We aim to continuously exceed our guests' expectations and ensure they return home as ambassadors of our region."

Our greatest skill lies in our desire to present South Asia through experiences that showcase the heartbeat of a living and vibrant culture. Our trips feature unique experiences not offered by others -- whether it's for a wellness holiday, a spiritual sojourn, a culinary exploration or a wildlife adventure. This is fundamental to every program we design.

We are committed to ensuring that whatever we deliver is filled with our love and pride we feel for the countries we cover. We take pride in our diverse team of more than 150, the backbone of our system. From our operations team members to our drivers and guides, each and every one is motivated by a desire to do their best. Our job is to make your job as a travel professional as easy as possible. We excel at quick response times on proposals, detailing in content, accuracy in terms and competitiveness in pricing.



"Creatively Yours, the team at Creative Travel" Location: The imperial New Delhi

All our guides go through a rigorous vetting process. Every driver we use specialises in handling international travellers. All our frontline representatives have extensive guest handling experience. After all, we realise the most important element on any tour are the people that face the guest on the ground.

We recognise that we need to be flexible in pricing, for every traveller has a different budget. We are committed to our partners to never drop a price only to get business, but to ensure we offer

a balance between quality and value. Helping ensure that you retain your client for their next trip is our contribution to our relationship.

We believe that business is about building relationships. We are known for our integrity and loyalty. We promise to stand by you, our partner, and believe that supporting our partners must come at any cost.

This is some of what makes us different.

# THINGS THAT MAKE US PROUD

## Our awards and recognitions

Our team has worked hard to grow from strength to strength. We won our first national award in 1979 and today have emerged to be recognised by the likes of the World Travel Awards as Asia's Leading Destination Management Company, India's Leading Destination Management Company as well as India's Leading Luxury Agency. Our specialist incentives team handling incentives has won the most SITE Crystal Awards in Asia. The National Tourism Awards is

something we were bestowed with over 16 times. All of these are an indication of the passion each one of our team members has in everything we do.

Creative Travel is today South Asia's most awarded and recognised Incentives & Meetings team. We have over 72 rewards & recognitions that have been a result of the passion of the people who work for us. Some of our other Honours & Felicitations include :



9 Time Winner  
India's Leading Destination Management Company



4 Time Winner  
India's Leading Experiential Holiday Company (For JungleSutra)



5 Time Winner  
India's Leading Luxury Travel Agency



4 Time Winner  
Asia's Leading Destination Management Company



5 Time Winner  
of South Asian Travel Awards



5 Time Winner



7 Time Winner



17 Time Winner  
National Tourism Award



India's Most Preferred



Best Inbound Tour Operator  
The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry Award

# OUR WORLD

India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka,  
Tibet & Maldives



Written by  
**Rohit Kohli**  
Creative Travel

The Indian subcontinent is more than ancient culture and monuments. This region is a living, breathing mix of cultural diversity, influenced by a fascinating history, and changing and adapting every single day. Showcasing this fascinating region in unique, engaging and memorable ways is what we do best. From ancient art and architecture to modern day phenomenon. From timeless myths and traditions to today's stories of success. From mountains and jungles to lakes and beaches. Home to four major religions, hundreds of languages, this land is one that allows us an enormous degree of artistic license in its presentation.





## INDIA

Like many before me, I fell in love with the colours and chaos of India. Steeped in mystery and mythology, swept by time and conquest and bedecked with pageantry and ritual, there is nowhere like India. But what I found most of all is that India is an experience, more than a destination. And though it can be overwhelming at times, there is no point in trying to solve, understand or fix India. It's a country of more than one billion people, and it has a momentum entirely its own. The moment you think you understand India is precisely the moment you've missed the point. I surrendered to India's magic and found truth in these words by author Rumer Godden, "Once you have felt the Indian dust you will never be free of it." Neither words nor pictures can evoke the complexity of the culture, the diversity of the terrain, or the intensity of the traditions. To feel her magic, be touched by her spirituality, or join in her celebrations, I can tell you from experience -- you simply have to be in India.



## NEPAL

I arrived in Kathmandu during the monsoon. My first glimpse of Nepal was of the hills of the Kathmandu Valley, bright green and lush. I didn't know what to expect from this country, so known for some of the best trekking and mountaineering in the world. A third of the Himalayan range rises up to meet the sky in this landlocked nation, including 10 of the greatest peaks in the world. But I wasn't there for trekking or mountaineering. I wanted to wander among the markets, and get to know the culture. Turns out, I went to the right place. Nepal easily offers travellers authentic cultural experiences. It's the birthplace of the Buddha and once the world's only Hindu Kingdom. The people are laid-back and warm, the bazaars are as colourful as I wanted them to be, and the temples as beautiful. To my delight, I discovered that Nepal is the kind of place you don't want to leave.





## SRI LANKA

Travel in Sri Lanka is a gentle, tropical wave. From the moment I landed, I felt enveloped by the warm hospitality, sultry ocean breezes and flavour-rich food. Though the country has many shared historical and mythological connections with India, it is smaller, more tranquil and completely unique. I loved the lushness of the country, the beautiful beaches and the vital culture. Though small, I found an endless array of enticing things to do from visiting sacred sites and age-old monasteries to enjoying fine dining in chic Galle to exploring the diverse flora and fauna of the national parks. Sri Lanka was formerly called Ceylon, but before that, it was Serendip. And I did indeed find wonderful moments of serendipity there, such as chancing upon a herd of wild elephants while on jeep safari and meeting a group of Buddhist monks at the top of Sigirya, Lion's Rock.



## BHUTAN

On the flight to Bhutan from Kathmandu, we flew over several of the highest mountains in the world, including Everest, which I saw out the window of the plane. It was a thrilling moment, and made me feel I was travelling to the mythical Himalayan utopia of Shangri-la. I never lost that feeling. The Kingdom of Bhutan is hidden in the heart of the Himalayas between India and Tibet, surrounded by snow-clad peaks and crossed by lush valleys. While there, I felt I was a world apart from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Bhutan offers travellers a rare opportunity to discover the richness of nature and the simplicity of life, among warm-hearted and friendly people. And it's not by accident, but by design. Bhutan works hard to preserve the country's pristine ecology, incredible wealth of wildlife and unique culture. It's the last surviving Mahayana Buddhist state, and a feeling of reverence fills the air.



## TIBET

I felt like one of the last explorers, a rugged adventurer lost in time. I was in Tibet, a land shrouded in myth and legend. From time immemorial, Tibet has intrigued explorers, travellers and dreamers. Called the Roof of the World, Tibet was once closed to all foreign visitors and it still carries that feeling of being remote and unknowable. I was struck by the stark beauty of the barren, windswept mountains and plateaus. And seeing the venerable city of Lhasa, former home of the Dalai Lama, was like being in dream. I wanted to get way off the well-travelled path and find adventure among the Himalayas. For the adventurous traveller, there is no equal to Tibet. It's also a base for trekking to Everest Base Camp and the revered Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarova circuit.



## MALDIVES

Picture a calm blue sea lapping a white sand beach under a warm tropical sky. You look for something to see on the horizon, something to attract your attention, but there isn't anything. So, you settle back and do what Maldives beckons you to do ... relax. The Maldives is a chain of sea-level islands, off the southern coast of India, known for sunny skies, tranquil waters and luxurious resorts. Sure, you could get up and go sailing, swimming, snorkeling, or scuba diving. The waters are rich with marine life, including manta rays, turtles, sharks and even the world's largest fish, the whale shark. You could be dazzled by the colour and variety. Or, you could just do more relaxing.



# LANDS SO ANCIENT

On culture and heritage



Written by  
Diana Alvarez  
Spain

I was beguiled by India from the start. Though the start is very hard to place as I recall longing to go to India from a young age. Images of marigold-wreathed pop stars, the enchanting sounds of the sitar, the stimulating flavours of the cuisine.

All of the sights, sounds and flavours of India cast a spell on me that eventually lured me to her shores. And I was not disappointed, it was everything I thought it would be and so much more.

The size of the country, the antiquity of the culture, the magnificence of the architecture, the diversity of the landscape, the exuberance of the festivals, the piety of the people: Everything about India must be described with superlatives, including the experience of travel.

Every traveller will have their own reasons for visiting India. Some seek adventure, others culture and history. Foodies go to taste the culinary riches, luxury lovers enjoy some of the world's finest hotels and shoppers find a paradise. I was enticed by all of these attractions and more: I went to explore





the spiritual dimensions and perhaps, above all, to experience myself in India.

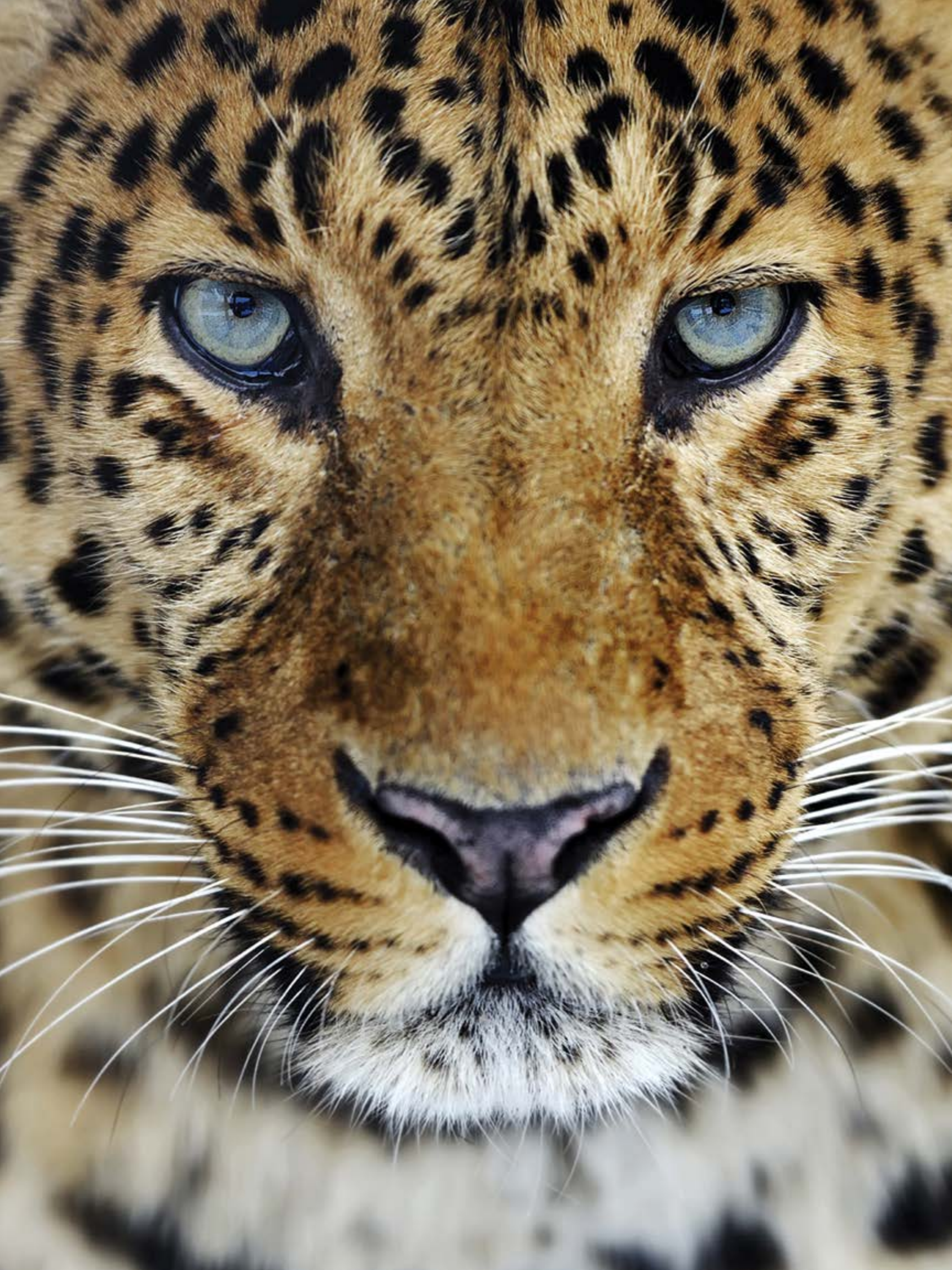
For the spiritually oriented, India is the ultimate destination. Seekers have been drawn to India since time immemorial to pray, meditate, learn and celebrate life. In centres such as Rishikesh and Varanasi, travellers and pilgrims congregate to seek guidance, redemption, enlightenment. Meditating by the Ganges River in uplifting Rishikesh and taking a sunrise boat cruise along the same river in mystery-shrouded Varanasi were some of the most precious moments.

For the pure experience of travel, there is no better place to simply BE than India. Just to wander the narrow lanes of ancient bazaars, breathe in air filled with spices and marvel at the dazzling displays of merchandise. To imbibe the heady atmosphere of evening aartis on the mighty Ganges River and the sight of the sun rising over the Himalayas. To take time to soak up the ambience and notice the lights and the colours. The world flows around you in a swirl of exuberance and there is nothing to do but flow with it and enjoy the pulse of life, the eternal cycles, the cosmic rhythms underlying daily life in India.

“India always changes people and I am no exception,” author and screenwriter Ruth Praver- Jhabvala wrote. And maybe, in the end, that is what fascinates people the most about India, India’s power to transform.

There is nowhere like India and few travel destinations as life changing. It’s the phrase you hear again and again from those adventurous spirits who make the journey, and who open themselves up to the magic and mystery of the subcontinent and allow themselves to be changed.

In the end, this is the secret to travel in India. If you let India ebb and flow around you, without judgement or preconceived ideas; if you open your eyes and your heart; and if you allow yourself to fully feel and experience the journey ... you may find yourself forever changed. And, like me, wanting to return again and again.



# JUNGLESUTRA

Undiscovered stories of the wild awaiting to be told



Interview with  
**Varun Mathur**  
Head of the Jungle  
*JungleSutra Wildlife Journeys*

An Interview with Varun Mathur, Head of the Jungle, JungleSutra Wildlife Journeys

**Q** How did you get interested in wildlife?

**A** I grew up in a family passionate about protecting and preserving our environment. As a child I would accompany my grandfather on safaris and to meetings that promoted environmental education and activism. These early years ingrained in me the love for our natural surroundings and the need to protect them.

**Q** Which is your favourite park? And why?

**A** There are two. The first is Corbett Tiger Reserve. It has approximately 50% of the bird species found in India, an exceptional history and offers the opportunity to stay inside the park in forest rest houses, which transports you back in time. The other park that should be on everyone's checklist is Satpura Tiger Reserve. It sets an example in offering a complete wilderness which no other park can from canoeing in the

forest, exploring the jungles on elephant backs, on foot and even cycling through designated areas in the core forest.

**Q** How do you think the Indian Safari experience compares with the African safari?

**A** Few people realise just how diverse India's wildlife is. The tiger, leopard and lion are just three of the 15 cat species to be found in India. We also have wild elephant, rhino, wild water buffalo and Gaur, the Indian Wild dog, Jackal, Striped Hyena and Wolves, four species of Bear, Sloth, Himalayan Black Bear, Brown Bear and Sun Bear, 270 species of snakes including the King Cobra - the largest venomous snake in the world - and about 1250 species of birds.

We don't have the vast expanses of land that Africa has, but we do have more concentrated areas showcasing phenomenal diversity. As an additional bonus, Indian safaris are far less expensive.

Q Why JungleSutra?

A JungleSutra has been specifically developed to provide guests with a high-quality, well-designed wildlife product that showcases the complete diversity of India's natural heritage.

JungleSutra, with a similar philosophy to mine, will enable me to share my knowledge and beliefs to a wider audience. We will work with lodges with a strong eco-tourism focus that are run by people who are passionate about wildlife. And we will thoroughly consider both the eco systems we impact as well as the experience provided to our guests.

Q In a business that thrives largely on our environment, how does JungleSutra as an organization contribute to conservation?

A We work with hotels that have a strong conservation focus. We work closely with WWF India, actively promoting their "Give Back to Nature" initiative. Information leaflets are part of every guest's welcome kit. JungleSutra has partnered with Tour Operators for Tigers (TOFT) to showcase and promote ethical wilderness practices. We also work closely with organizations such as Wildlife SOS that specializes in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in order to help further their cause.

JungleSutra Wildlife Journeys was established to fill what we feel is a void in the Indian travel industry. Many are offering trips to wildlife reserves, but very few companies are offering complete wildlife experiences. Very few people know that Indian wildlife boasts of higher diversity as compared to other parts of the world. The Indian offering of wildlife sanctuaries hold some of the world's finest wildlife stock. JungleSutra is a team who will approach wildlife with a very different set of eyes. We will develop experiences and journeys that go beyond basic park visits. The objective is to also showcase the flora and fauna that is not yet explored by the traveller to India. A JungleSutra tour is aimed at the discerning traveller who is looking at exploring the exotic world of animals in luxury and style. JungleSutra will also have a very strong social initiative and will be engaging local communities and forest officials in activities that give back to the areas we visit. The Junglesutra team is being manned by experienced wildlife and operations professionals and has linkages across the Indian sub-continent providing a seamless network. Read more at [www.junglesutra.com](http://www.junglesutra.com)





# CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE

Fairs, Festivals and Amazement



Written by  
**Mariellen Ward**  
Acclaimed Canadian Travel Blogger

"No, you don't have the right pass, you can't go up" said the guard, as the crowds of the Kumbh Mela swirled around us.

I was at a Hindu religious festival in North India proclaimed to be "the largest gathering of humanity on earth." About 10 million people were streaming into the small town of Haridwar to take a dip in the sacred Ganga (Ganges) River that day and celebrate faith. And I made one of the biggest blunders of my life.

Earlier, I had assembled with a group of people from my ashram to walk 14 kilometres into Haridwar for the Kumbh Mela. By the time we reached, it was 6:30 am and already hot. A dip in the fast flowing waters of the Ganga was as refreshing as it was holy. We all joined in, fully clothed, and hung on to chains to prevent us from being carried downstream.

When it was time to leave, to walk back to the ashram, I took a big breath and a leap: I decided to stay back. My plan was to join some colleagues on the media platform to see one of the highlights of the festival, the march of the Naga Sadhus and I was armed with a media pass.



I was only a bit nervous until the guard wouldn't let me up on the media platform. Then, I got scared. I could feel the heat of the rising sun, I didn't know the way back to the ashram, the city was closed, and guards were clearing the area. Worried that I wouldn't be able to handle the situation, I had to reach deep down inside for strength I didn't know I had, and to find faith that I didn't know was possible.

Somehow, I made my way back to the ashram. As I joined the others, I was struck by a realization. While the world around me seemed normal and familiar, there was something terribly different. It was me. I was changed. I knew that by facing my worst fears that day and overcoming them through inner strength and outer faith, I would never be the same again.

And that's when I realized the true meaning of pilgrimage and the celebration of God, Indian style.

Every festival in India (and the region) - and there are many - is unique. They each celebrate some aspect of culture and life, from a God to a season to an activity. It sometimes seems there's a celebration every day. It's this profusion of exuberant, multicolour gratitude that gives India its own character, and that visitors love.

Two of India's most popular festivals for visitors are Holi and Diwali. Holi takes place in the spring and celebrates abundance. It's called the Festival of Colour. People throw colour at each other in unbridled enthusiasm and the parties are legendary.

Diwali is in the fall and is called the Festival of Lights. It's the biggest festival in India and is celebrated with gusto in North India especially. People light diyas, small oil lamps and throw fireworks in the air to welcome back Lord Rama from exile and celebrate the triumph of good over evil, of light over dark.

Onam in Kochi, Durga Pooja in Kolkatta, Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, Paro Tshechu in Bhutan, Kandy Perahera in Sri Lanka - the list goes on and on. To write about all of the festivals across the sub-continent would take hundreds of pages and many lifetimes to experience them all.

This part of the world has many reasons to celebrate all year around giving travellers many opportunities to share in those moments of happiness. If you throw yourself into it, you will have a wonderful time. And you may find its changed you.





# DIFFERENT PATHS

Something for special interests



Written by  
**Lee Ballard**  
UK

*"You can't eat a mango politely, not if you really want to savour it."*

This was one of my first lessons in Indian cuisine from my host when I arrived in India during mango season. I always knew the country being a culinary destination had a fascination with the fruit, but not to this extent. Mangos were everywhere. Every hotel boasted mango ice-cream, sorbets, deserts, fresh mango for breakfast, mango pickle, you name it, if it included a mango it was there. But it wasn't until I was in the home of my hosts that I experienced a mango like the locals did, in a way that brought back for them, their childhood memories. That was just the start of a tour which made me appreciate Indian cuisine in a way that no one outside of India could imagine. Which got me thinking. If you could view India as a culinary destination, why not for other specialist areas?

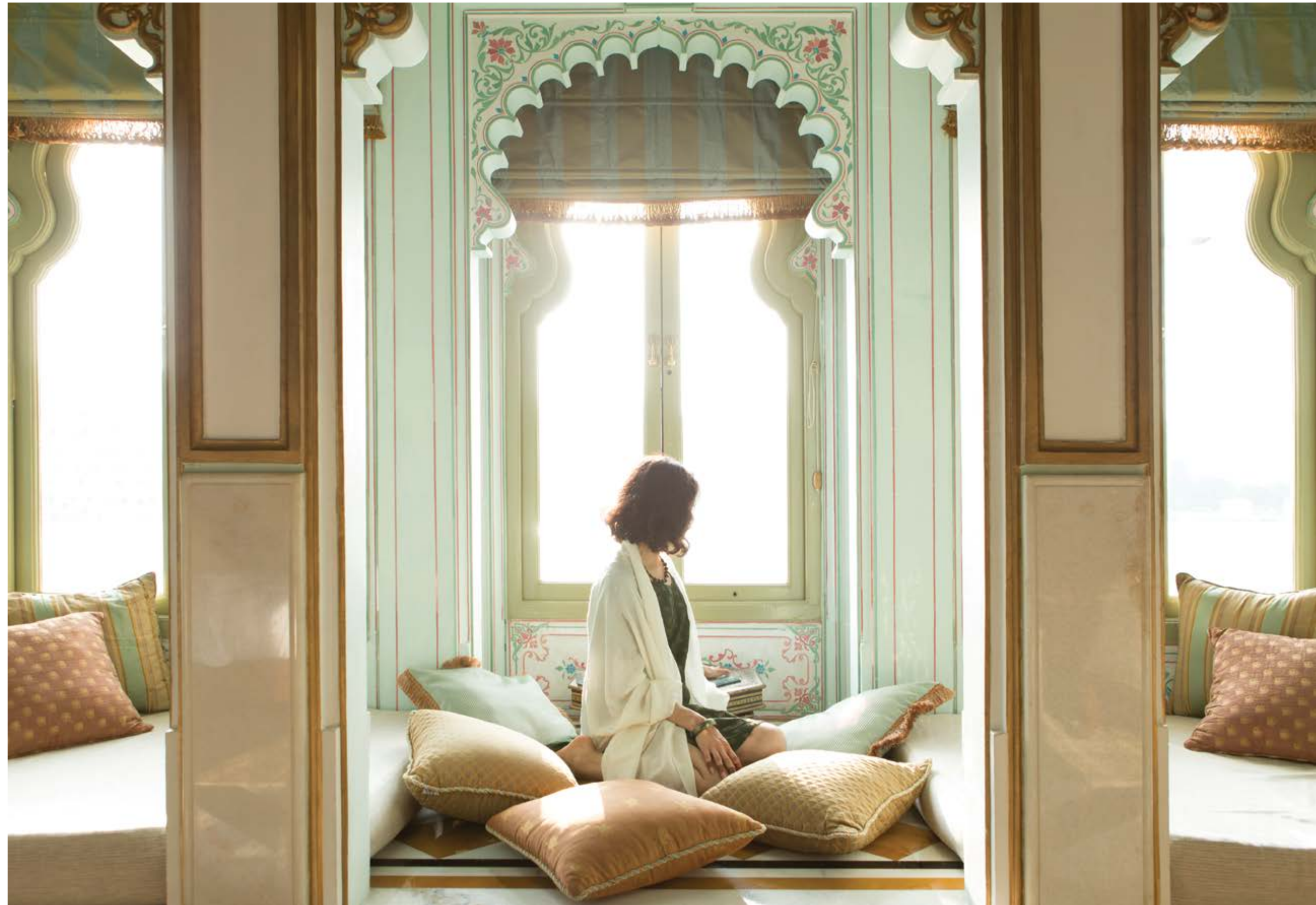
Many in my country are captivated by old cars. India has an abundance of classic cars, one of the reasons the country entices so many car aficionados. So many stories exist about the fascination the Maharajas of the yesteryears had with the luxury autos from Europe. There is even a story of how the



Maharaja of Alwar was snubbed by a discriminating Rolls Royce salesperson in London and in spite, ordered 6 cars and used them to collect garbage in his town. There are so many twists and turns in Indian history that one is never bored. You can visit the vintage collections of Maharaja's, drive WW2 Willy's Jeeps across the desert, sample driving that classic Indian car, the Ambassador. My next question, "So how about trains?" Well as it happens, India has the largest rail network in the world, it also has steam trains left over from the British Era, toy trains which crawl at snail's pace, winding laboriously up to the Old Colonial Hill stations but for those looking for a touch more comfort there are luxury trains, The Maharaja's Express and the Palace on Wheels which transport one back to the Golden Era of travel and take you on a journey of India's splendours in a style befitting a Maharajah.

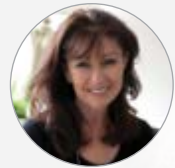
Speaking of Maharajahs, they built palace and forts, many of which are now exquisite hotels, isn't it be every girl's dream to wake up in a fairy-tale palace on her honeymoon? Or spend the night cruising the beautiful backwaters, waking up to an extraordinary sunset reflecting off the ripples on the water's surface?

The possibilities which our destinations present when one starts thinking differently are endless; jewellery tours, 80% of the worlds precious and semi-precious stones visit Jaipur at some point in their lives, meet the jewellery designers of the maharajas and Bollywood film sets and designers of International renown. Textiles; from block printing on cotton in Jaipur, to the famous, priceless, silk hand woven saris of Varanasi to the intricate mirrored and embroidery designs on the textiles of Gujarat. Tea! The world's most popular drink, visit the tea gardens of India and Sri Lanka, and witness the whole procedure to produce a 'brew' from plucking to processing to tasting. Speaking of gardens, horticultural tours of Sri Lanka, visiting private and botanical examples; the intricate temple architecture of Nepal, the Art Deco architecture of Mumbai which is home to the second largest Art Deco collection of buildings in the world. Literature festivals are now taking the country by storm, art galleries are awash with local talent. Endless, timeless possibilities are there, the only detrimental factor, is knowing when to stop.



# MIND AND BODY AT PEACE

Experiences in Wellness



Written by  
**Anne Marie Rowley**  
Yoga Expert, Australia

Every time I experience a glimpse of India, whether it is through film, photography, or music, my spine tingles. I just want to step right back into it as I have done every year for the past 10 years.

India is a kaleidoscope of colour, vibrancy, charm, style and deep reverence to gods, customs and rituals and it soothes my soul.

India is a land of extreme contrasts. Sometimes chaotic, sometimes calm. Excruciatingly loud at times and silent at others. Hilarious and tragic. Absurd and sane. A perpetual groundswell of laughter and adventure.

As a yoga teacher and tour leader, I have visited what I consider to be the cream of wellness resorts, from the foothills of the Himalaya to the seashores of Karnataka. I shall never forget the experience of 'shoes in, shoes out,' at one centre, which typified the extraordinary level of service and attention to detail that the staff provided. Never before have I been somewhere where my shoes are turned around whilst I am in class, ready for a simple exit from the yoga room.



And the finishing touches. The scent of Loban being waved through the yoga shala, orange oils burning perpetually, kurta pyjamas for comfort, organic home-grown Sattvic cuisine served at long, candlelit, community tables to connect each and every guest.

No matter that you may be doing yoga next to Oprah (as I have done), the allure of these spas and spiritual centres is that they honour each individual, treating them on a completely equal basis and are entirely respectful of anonymity and personal space.

I liken my stays to being a guest living in someone's comfortable home: no fuss, no pretension. Just loving hospitality, and sincere care and attention, combined with authentic treatments and classes. Yoga classes that are simple and gentle for the beginner and strong enough for the advanced. Meditation sessions that are held high on a cliff as the sun salutes the day, overlooking a pod of dolphins playing. Teachers who are trained in the

classical styles and with extraordinary insight and attentiveness.

India is also the home of Ayurveda, India's natural medical system for healing, rejuvenation and relaxation. Treatments are as vast as the selection of cuisine.

But wellness tours are not just about yoga, Ayurveda and treatments. Clients also get to explore and experience India's wide boulevards, twisting lanes, crowded bazaars, rickshaw rides, sacred rivers, glorious palaces, ancient tombs, holy cities, vast deserts, bangles and bling and travel by train, elephant and camel.

A wellness tour to India gives you the chance to destress. Never before have we been so busy and so disconnected from ourselves. As someone once said, we have now become a 'human doing' rather than a 'human being.' We must stop and rest. A wellness tour is the perfect way to do it. Go to India!



# ALL ABOUT FAMILIES

## Family travel in India and beyond



Written by  
**Rajeev Kohli**  
Creative Travel

"It was seven o'clock on a very warm evening in the Seeonee hills when Father Wolf woke up from his day's rest, scratched himself, yawned, and spread out his paws one after the other to get rid of the sleepy feeling in their tips."

The opening lines of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* set the scene for a tale of wonder as the boy Mowgli explores the wilds of central India. Like Mowgli, children of all ages will find India an enchanting place.

Our passion to showcase our region to young travellers runs much deeper than doing business. I grew up in the travel industry and I was fortunate to explore many different cultures when I was young. I firmly believe that the best gift you can give your children is the gift of travel. No book, no movie, no museum can spark one's imagination as much as being there can. My own boys have already travelled to 20 diverse countries over 4 continents by the time they were 17. My joy was watching their faces light up in amazement as we travelled the world.

I think that people underestimate the ability of India and the region to deliver a stimulating, safe and memorable experience for children. Being a passionate parent, I would never suggest a destination if I didn't think it was right for a child of any age. India works, no matter if you are 4, 15 or 50. Our ability to amaze is universal.

South Asia is a very child friendly region, especially since we are culturally extremely family oriented. Our trips for families are carefully planned with a special pace in mind. These trips are not only full of experiences, sightseeing and special dining

experiences, but can also include many different kinds of adventure, and by many different means of transportation, from trains to cars, from camels to bicycles.

From jungles thick with tigers and elephants to fairy tale forts rising from the desert, there's much to delight and entertain young travellers. As seen through a child's eyes, India is a warm embrace, a non-stop adventure, a carnival of tastes, sensations and sights.

Your children will learn a great deal and you will have fun watching them grow and become inspired. Best of all, it all comes wrapped-up and delivered in a swirl of kaleidoscopic colour and a wide and welcoming grin.

Here are some ideas to explore.

### 1 Discover towering forts and fairy tale palaces

The desert state of Rajasthan abounds with forts and palaces, plus stories of battles and tales of romance. A perfect place for children's imaginations to run riot. Here, they will believe they're "king of the castle." Whether you're in one of the major cities of Jaipur, Jodhpur or Udaipur, or in a smaller off-beat fort or palace, a journey through Rajasthan will leave children mesmerised. This is also an amazing immersive learning environment that will give them stories to share with their friends.



### 2 Enjoy beach time

India's South, Sri Lanka and the Maldives all offer great options for being by the sea. Kerala also offers visits to spice plantations, ancient markets and unique backwaters. Sri Lanka showcases ancient Buddhist heritage. And the Maldives is probably the closest you will come to paradise. There's a wide choice of accommodation from five star resorts with fabulous pools to fully staffed private villas.

### 3 Go on a wildlife safari

Entice your kids with the thrill of seeing an elephant, leopard or even tiger in the wild! There are numerous national parks, tiger reserves and bird and animal sanctuaries across the sub-continent. Did you know that the word 'jungle' is not English? It comes from the Indian language Hindi and to bring your children to explore the national parks of the region will be a unique experience. Children will

enjoy spotting birds as well as wild boar, a variety of deer, sloth bears, langur monkeys and many other species.

### 4 Ride the rails

Indian Railways is one of the largest rail networks in the world. Indian trains offer the opportunity for adventure and getting to know the locals. There are also the famed "toy trains" of India. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Kalka Simla Railway and Nilgiri Mountain Railway all designated as UNESCO World Heritage organization. They still run on steam power and slowly make their way up to the cooler hill stations. The whole family will enjoy a train journey, whether you ride the rails for a couple of hours or overnight.

We have a very simple goal when we plan trips for young travellers, we want them to go back changed; to go back with stories to share; go back with the desire to explore more of the world.

# FOR THE ACTIVE TRAVELLER

Experiencing the great outdoors



Written by  
**Lalit Bhatt**  
Creative Travel

It has been twenty-six years since I joined the travel industry. As a fledgling professional I was dragged around every monument and hotel that there was to see.

I clicked a picture, ticked a list and moved on to the next. That was my first few years' experience with my country. It was all about itineraries full of monuments. Then one day, several years later, in a remote hotel in Rajasthan, someone mentioned horse riding, on a Marwari horse, a breed indigenous to India. Growing up in the hills, I was a horse lover and so I jumped at the opportunity. I was immediately hooked, not just by this unique breed of horses, but by the different perspective this gave me on a country which I thought I knew. The reactions of the villagers as we

rode through them was extraordinary, horses are revered throughout Rajasthan and people came out of their houses to watch us go by, children on their

way to school became incredibly excited, jumping up and down and waving, women peered shyly from behind veiled faces. A chai-wala called us over and insisted on giving us chai which he refused to let us pay for.

This experience changed my perspective on India forever. As an outdoors person, it made me realise that there were options for getting out of the car, the way most people sightsee in this country and having a more active type of holiday, either in part or in total. By getting out of the car, onto other modes of transport, one could delve further into more remote areas and meet the grass routes people of this country, after all, as Gandhi said, "The future of India lies in its villages" and I believe this is where the future of tourism lies.

Since then I have explored remote tribal villages whilst off-roading in 4x4 jeeps, rafted down raging rivers with like-minded adrenalin junkies, gained

a birds eye view by zip wiring over forts, trekked both in the Himalayan Ranges, staying with locals in village houses and taken day treks exploring the countryside beyond the forts of Rajasthan where I have discovered crumbling palaces and ancient temples and tracked pugmarks 'til they disappeared into the forest. I have cycled back roads to arrive at picturesque lakes where I enjoyed a picnic lunch, and coastal roads to reach remote villages where I have been invited to join a family wedding celebration; I have kayaked in the small canals on the backwaters of Kerala and attempted to learn to surf on the coastal waves of Karnataka.

People tend not to think of India as an adventure destination yet she has mountains, deserts, beaches, jungles, rivers and oceans. To travel on, through and over these is to witness a side to India few people get to see. The possibilities are endless, to journey to India is to journey to a land of never ending adventure, excitement & discovery.





# LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Honeymoons, Renewals and other moments of love



Written by  
**Ofelia Barrios**  
Mexico

*A honeymoon is about creating new experiences together*

I got married not too long ago. I spent my honeymoon in Riviera Maya, on the beach as most people from my country do. It is normal for couples in my country to take vacations together when they are dating. My husband even proposed to me on a vacation at the beach. So, going to a beach for our honeymoon just felt normal. I joined the Creative team the year I got married and I soon had the opportunity to visit India to experience this incredible country. This is when I finally understood what they have been saying for a long time. There can be no more unique, intimate and special destination to have a honeymoon in than India.

A honeymoon is the start of a new journey together. It is time to make special shared memories for the first time. To create new memories to share for the rest of their lives. To bring home stories of amazement. That is why a trip to a country like India would make any new couple excited. Starting a new life together with an adventure to an exotic land is a fairy-tale dream.

There can be no country more unique, more sensual and more romantic to have a honeymoon in than India. Everywhere you go, you will feel the essence of love. From the most important monument of love, the Taj Mahal, to the peacefulness of the temples. From the sights & sounds of its markets to the excitement of its tiger parks. Every monument has an ancient love story etched into its stones. I cried when I heard the love story of the Taj, a story of one man's devotion to his wife. It was so special.

Here you can do some very special things. Have a special blessing ceremony at a local Hindu temple. It is simple, intimate yet so powerful. At the regions many palace hotels, there are wonderful spa treatments for couples. I love the way the team at Creative has auto rickshaws specially decorated for a ride through busy Delhi. You can even get a Bollywood poster made with the couples faces on it. The shopping was also amazing and the dining experiences special. The hotels we use are rated amongst the best on the world. My most favourite experience though was doing an elephant safari in a forest, holding a glass of champagne. There is so much to do and experience.

Many people also come to India to get married the traditional Indian way. In Agra, there is this beautiful unique venue where one can propose with the Taj Mahal as the backdrop. Travellers even come to renew their vows at a special location or on a special anniversary.

When I got back home, I told my husband that I want to return to this region for our fifth wedding anniversary. I want to spend a night on a traditional houseboat on the backwaters of Kerala. I want us to be blessed in a monastery in Bhutan. I want to see why the Maldives is so much talked about. There is love in every corner of this part of the world. I came to India as a tourist and took away some very special moments in my heart. The experiences I had and the feelings that went through me. India is where love is in the air. As my friends at Creative always say, a journey through India is a journey of the senses. I left India promising to come back for more.

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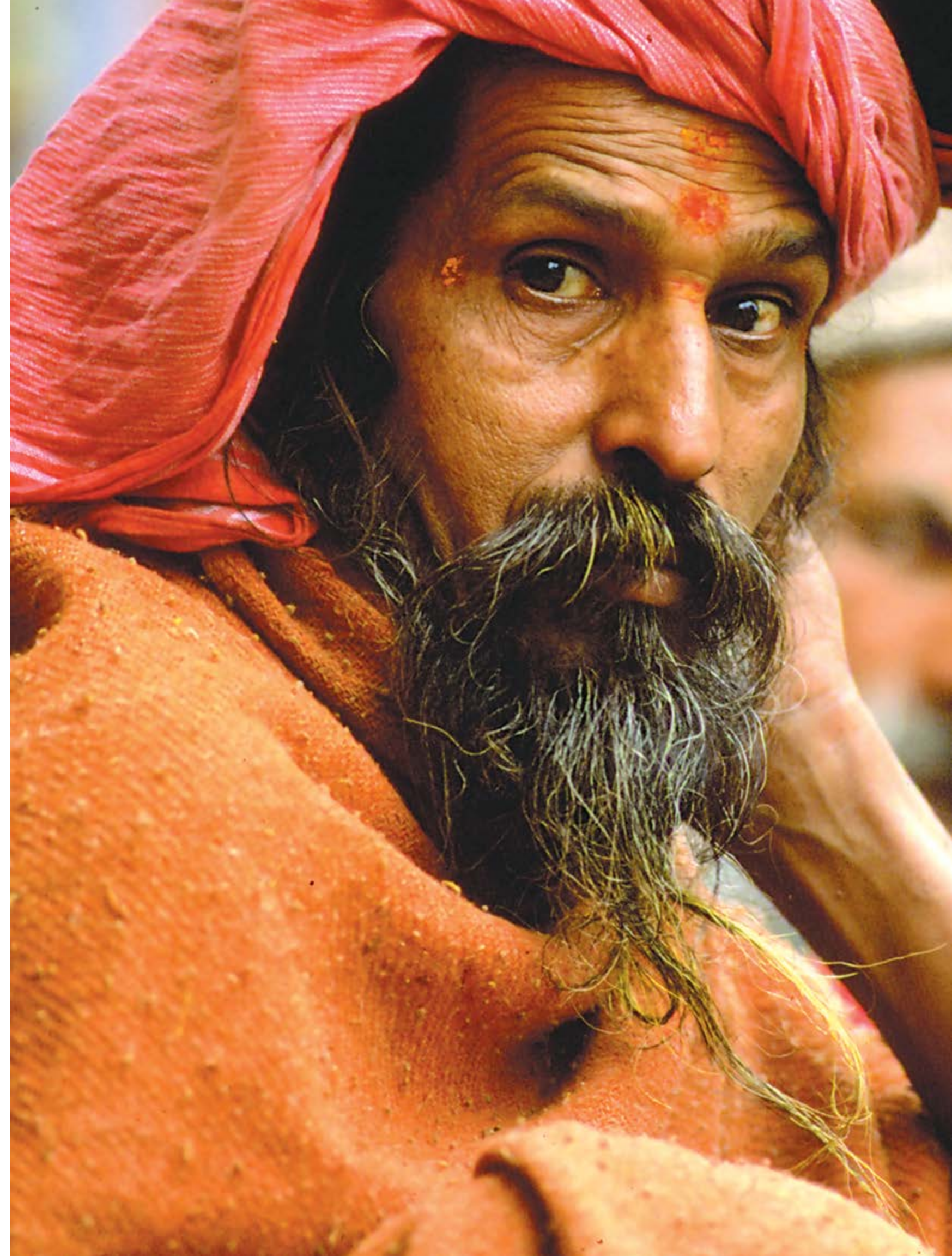
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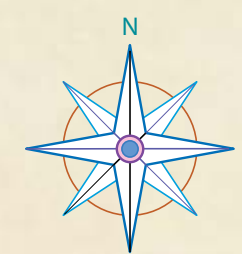
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Map not to scale



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