

Explore the wonders of India and its secrets to revitalise the mind, body and soul

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City spotlight: Puducherry



A BLEND OF FRENCH ELEGANCE AND INDIAN WARMTH

Puducherry, formerly known as Pondicherry, along the picturesque Coromandel Coast, is a captivating destination that blends French charm with the Indian spirit. The town is home to the renowned Mother's Ashram and the Matrimandir (Mother's Temple) founded by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Situated in Auroville, 10 km north of Puducherry, where people come from all over the world to live in unity and harmony, leaving behind differences and distinctions. Visitors come here looking for meditation, yoga, and inner peace. The French Quarter, with its cobblestone streets and pastel-coloured buildings, blooms with colourful bougainvillea, reflecting the town's aesthetic beauty.

□

The Bharathi Government Park, with well-maintained gardens and the iconic Aayi Mandapam fountain, and the Promenade Beach make it perfect for an evening stroll, meditation, or to sit and watch the mesmerising sunset. The nearby Pichavaram Mangrove Forest with its intertwined waterways and thick mangrove is great for boat rides and bird watching. Puducherry is also a haven for gastronomic enthusiasts. The town boasts a thriving culinary scene, with a fusion of French and South Indian cuisines. Charming cafes and bistros line the streets, offering delectable pastries, aromatic coffee, and a variety of seafood delicacies. □



TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN PUDUCHERRY



Holistic wellbeing at the Centre for Yoga Education and Research

Puducherry is renowned for the International Centre for Yoga Education and Research. This centre attracts yoga enthusiasts from around the globe for a rejuvenating experience. Surrounded by lush greenery, it has qualified instructors teaching diverse programs, catering to all levels, offering a blend of traditional yoga teachings and modern wellness practices. Students and visitors can partake in immersive sessions aimed at promoting physical fitness, mental well-being, and spiritual balance. The centre's commitment to holistic health benefits and its calm and peaceful environment make it an ideal place for those seeking a transformative journey to enhance their vitality and inner peace.

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Find inner peace at the Matrimandir or The Temple of The Mother

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Located in Auroville, just 20 minutes from Puducherry, The Matrimandir has been divided into 12 parks called Bliss, Light, Life, Existence, Consciousness, Power, Wealth, Perfection, Harmony, Youth, Progress, and Utility. Each with their own variety of flowers and trees. It has a brilliant golden dome structure founded by The Mother, who envisioned a space that transcends ordinary experiences and fosters inner reflection. Within the meditation chamber, visitors can contemplate around the crystal globe at the centre. □ It is a harmonious blend of spirituality and aesthetics. Here, spiritual practices align with the vision of The Mother. □



A charming blend of Tamil and French culture in the French Quarter

History and charm blend seamlessly as you stroll through the French Quarter in Puducherry, with its cobbled streets lined with multi-coloured bouganvillea, busy markets, and the aroma of freshly baked baguettes from local bakeries, transporting you to a bygone era of French influence. This quaint neighbourhood reflects the town's past, with distinctive French architecture of pastel hues, ornate wrought-iron balconies, and a waterfront promenade that offers breathtaking views of sunsets over the Bay of Bengal. Whether you're sipping coffee in a charming café, discovering unique shops, or exploring art galleries, the French Quarter promises a delightful journey.



Discover the power of spirituality at Sri Aurobindo Ashram

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Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a peaceful retreat in the heart of Puducherry connected to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother Mirra. Founded in 1926 on Rue de la Marine, it has become a haven for those seeking spiritual wisdom. Sri Aurobindo, finding solace from British persecution, embraced yoga's transformative power here. Today, the ashram, maintained by volunteers, has grown to almost 2,000 members. With its simple beauty and exquisite flowers, the ashram houses the Samadhi, a peaceful white marble shrine where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother rest, fostering an atmosphere of quiet reflection. All are welcomed here to meditate and browse through the literature on Sri Aurobindo and Auroville. □



MICE in Puducherry

Puducherry is rapidly gaining prominence as a top destination for MICE tourism, offering quality facilities at competitive prices. The town boasts numerous hotels providing versatile venues like conference halls, boardrooms, lawns, and banquet halls, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Clubs also offer spaces for round-table discussions and conferences, while banquet halls cater to special parties, complete with sound and light equipment, catering services, decorators, and diverse performers for both corporate and social events. Puducherry's rich culinary scene contributes to memorable experiences. The town offers opportunities for heritage walks, shopping, and adventure sports for pre- and post-conference tours.

[Read more on Puducherry](#)

India Celebrates

February and March, with cool sunny weather, bring a lively atmosphere in India. People are out to enjoy cultural traditions and additionally, an intellectual flavour. The National Science Day is celebrated every year in February to mark India's advancement in science and technology. Whether it's an appreciation of our development, traditional music, or local rituals, this season provides a fantastic opportunity for locals and tourists alike to witness the spirit of celebration in India.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN FEBRUARY-MARCH



Taj Mahotsav

The Taj Mahotsav is an annual event held in Agra since 1992, against the stunning backdrop of the Taj Mahal. This celebration showcases India's rich heritage through traditional folk performances, classical dances and music in this archeologically rich city. The event also serves as a platform for local artisans to display their exquisite handicrafts, ranging from intricate textiles to finely detailed sculptures. Amidst the grandeur of the event, tourists can also indulge in authentic Indian and regional cuisine.

When and where to celebrate:

17 – 27 February 2024

It is held in Agra at Shilpgram, near the eastern gate of the Taj Mahal. For 10 days, one can experience performances of various renowned folk and classical artistes from across the country.

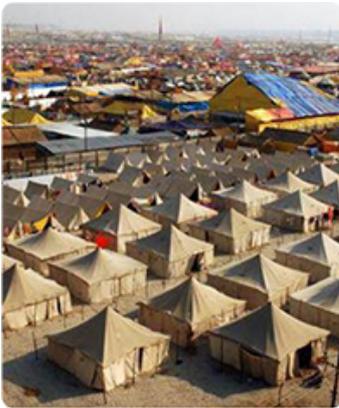
Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti

Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti is not just a historical event, it is an invitation to celebrate Maharashtra's past, to revel in the grandeur and valour that defines this extraordinary chapter of Indian history, amidst the majestic forts, palaces, and landscapes that once bore witness to the valiant tales of this great Maratha warrior king. Explore the formidable forts of Raigad, Pratapgad, and Shivneri, each narrating a saga of courage and strategic brilliance. Partake in local celebrations, where cultural events and traditional music fill the air for a visionary leader who forged an enduring legacy, shaping the destiny of the Maratha Empire. □

When and where to celebrate:

19 February 2024

The best place to be for these celebrations is Mumbai, from where you can also travel towards the beautiful nearby towns of Mahabaleshwar and Pune to visit the forts and experience the venerated indomitable spirit of Shivaji Maharaj.



Medharam Jathara Festival

Visit the Medaram Jathara Festival in Telangana, India – a massive cultural event and tribal gathering that pulls in thousands. Held in the village of Medaram, it is one of the world's largest tribal festivals. Packed with traditional music, dance, and rituals, the festival offers a real look into the local culture. With its rich colours, tribal drumming, and devoted crowd, Medaram Jathara is a lively experience that brings to life the rich heritage of the region.

When and where to celebrate:

24 - 27 February 2024

The best place to attend the festival is Medaram village in Telangana, close to the accessible urban centre of Warangal. As the festival's epicenter, Medaram provides a cultural experience to witness tribal traditions and festivities.

National Science Day National Science Day

National Science Day in India commemorates the landmark discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir C.V. Raman in 1928, a breakthrough that earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics. It will be celebrated this year under the theme 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat', □ underscoring the importance of homegrown solutions for societal challenges to foster overall well-being. Through workshops, exhibitions, and educational initiatives, National Science Day encourages the spirit of scientific inquiry, celebrating the invaluable contributions of researchers while nurturing a scientific mindset among the youth. □

When and where to celebrate:

28 February 2024

National Science Day is celebrated across India every year at various educational institutions, research centres, and science museums nationwide, where workshops, exhibitions showcase India's scientific achievements and inspire a passion for innovation.





Mahashivaratri

Mahashivaratri, a sacred Hindu festival, unfolds as a night of deep reverence in honour of Lord Shiva, the revered deity of destruction and renewal. Celebrated annually, devotees engage in fasting, prayers, sacred chants, and vigil at temples throughout the night. Pilgrims converge at prominent Shiva shrines to offer traditional rituals and seek divine blessings, believing that worshipping Lord Shiva on this night grants absolution from sins.

When and where to celebrate:

08 March 2024

Visit Varanasi along the Ganges, the coastal Murudeshwar Temple in Karnataka, Rishikesh and Haridwar along the Ganges, and the Amarnath Cave in Jammu & Kashmir for the best experience to absorb the spiritual essence of this auspicious festival.

Explore India in February-March

In the evolving landscape of travel, journeys are now viewed as investments in personal well-being. Whether embarking on self-improvement ventures, soul-stirring adventures, or escapes for rest and rejuvenation, travellers are seeking experiences that linger. The concept of wellness travel has gained unprecedented popularity, surpassing conventional definitions and embracing holistic healing. India, with its rich heritage of spiritual practices, emerges as a sanctuary for those wanting to reconnect with themselves and discover inner peace and renewal of their spirits amidst the chaos of modern life.



Wellness travel with yoga, ayurveda and meditation

Explore diverse options of wellness in three enchanting towns. Rishikesh, situated along the Ganges River and embraced by the Himalayan foothills, is celebrated as the 'Yoga Capital of the World'. Its numerous ashrams and yoga centres offer spiritual retreats, where visitors can immerse themselves in ancient yogic practices. Kerala, with its lush landscapes, introduces a fusion of Ayurveda and yoga. Renowned for Ayurvedic healing traditions, this South Indian state invites travellers to rejuvenate in wellness retreats. Dharamshala, which lies in the Dhauladhar range, is a haven for yoga and meditation enthusiasts. With its Tibetan influence and breathtaking mountain views, Dharamshala provides a peaceful retreat, offering self-reflection and mindfulness.



Enjoy the bliss of wellness with relaxation and sleep

Enjoy the bliss of wellness with relaxation and sleep

For those wanting a break from their hectic lives, we recommend you visit restful and serene sleep destinations that promise tranquility and rejuvenation. Munnar, nestled in lush hills, unfolds as a haven for rest-seekers with its pristine landscapes and soothing nature. The aroma of coffee and green rolling landscapes define Coorg, offering a unique relaxation and sleep experience amidst tranquil coffee plantations. In Rishikesh, the gentle lullaby of riverside camps and nature retreats create an ideal setting for a peaceful break, with the soothing sound of flowing water and the tranquility of the Himalayan surroundings. Each destination invites travellers to unwind, offering a restful escape amidst nature's embrace. □



Embrace the therapeutic power of sound for wellness

Embark on a soul-soothing journey of sound healing in different destinations across India. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with scuba diving and snorkeling, provide an underwater world to explore and a rejuvenating soundscape beneath the waves. In Auroville, plunge into the realm of sound healing through transformative workshops and therapies with sound vibrations that promote holistic well-being. Gokarna beaches offer sound healing retreats that combine therapeutic vibrations with beachside relaxation, creating an escape for the mind and body. Rishikesh provides an experience with sound healing sessions, where the mountain breeze and gentle flow of the river complement the healing tones.



Soul Food odyssey spread across India

Embark on a gastronomic journey, tasting India's varied culinary options. In Kerala, savour the essence of coastal living with seafood delicacies and traditional cuisine that has an array of flavours influenced by regional home-grown spices and its rich culture. □ Rajasthan offers a feast of regal proportions, blending desert flavours into its culinary repertoire, inviting travellers to indulge in a majestic gastronomic experience. Venture into the Northeast, where tribal cuisine featuring bamboo shoots and unique flavours awaits, providing a culinary adventure like no other. In Himachal, the farm-to-table dining experiences add freshness of local produce to every bite. Each destination offers a feast for the soul that goes beyond mere sustenance. □



Unveiling India's 'Slow Travel' charm

Indulge in the art of slow travel in India, where the journey becomes as enriching as the destination. Each destination unfolds at its own unhurried pace, offering a deeper connection with the surroundings. Navigate the tranquil backwaters of Kerala on unhurried houseboat cruises, allowing time to connect with village life. In Munnar, amidst the rolling hills, take in the unhurried charm of tea plantations that stretch as far as the eye can see. Traverse unhurried hiking trails in Himachal Pradesh, absorbing the majestic mountain vistas and unwinding in secluded mountain retreats. Treasure the unhurried charm of Sikkim by strolling through lush tea gardens and partaking in monastery stays, where time seems to slow down to blend with the spiritual energy of the region.



Beyond Incredible



SWAGATAM INDIA WELCOMES YOU WITH FOLDED HANDS

In the cultural richness that is India, the word 'Swagatam' rises above linguistic boundaries to symbolise a warm sentiment of hospitality. Derived from Sanskrit, the word goes beyond being a mere salutation; it is a medley of connection and warmth that resonates with the spirit of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' – the belief that a guest is akin to God. In India, Swagatam is not just a word; it is a heartfelt embrace extended to our guests, who become cherished members of our family. As you step into this incredible land of diverse discoveries, your perspective on history will alter, and its spirituality will deepen your faith in the sublime and the universe. In 2024, embark on a journey of enchanting experiences that will excite all your senses, ensuring that you never feel like a stranger but unmistakably at home in India.

Amidst India's diversity, our hospitality extends to the aromatic realm of sweet-smelling, hot and spicy, rich and delicious soul-satisfying foods. Each state boasts its own culinary heritage, taking you on a gastronomic odyssey. Beyond culinary delights, we also welcome couples seeking to exchange vows in India's surroundings, where their dreams are changed into reality with cheerful celebrations and colorful festivities. We say swagatam to honeymooners, presenting a palette of romantic, adventurous, regal, and relaxing destinations, allowing you to choose the perfect backdrop for the start of your journey together. Whether it's the grandeur of our mountains, the enchanting sea, a picturesque farmland, a tranquil tea garden, the sacred Ganges, or the mystical backwaters, India offers an array of options. We extend our warm welcome not only to leisure travellers but also to MICE and business groups, ensuring the best hotels with state-of-the-art facilities and professionals capable of orchestrating exceptional events. Come to India in 2024 for an unforgettable experience.

#IndiasaysSwagatam

THIS 2024, INDIA SAYS SWAGATAM WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS IN INDIA



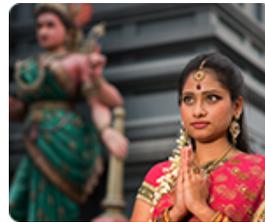
TO A LAND OF DIVINE FLAVOURS

Sample culinary masterpieces with diverse spices and textures in every region of India



TO THE FINEST EXPERIENCE

Discover the enchantment, splendour and richness that makes India truly incredible



TO A LAND OF HUMAN WARMTH

Where every visitor is a cherished guest and every encounter an exchange of souls



TO A LAND OF CELEBRATIONS

Visit India to be a part of joyous celebrations, magical festivities and ancient traditions

Truly Indian

Experience rural tourism, a journey that unveils the soul of the country. In the heart of rural landscapes, visitors can engage in activities, from participating in traditional agricultural practices to trying their hand at local craftsmanship. Exploring villages provides a window into the rich customs of India, where you witness folk performances, partake in regional cooking sessions, and join community celebrations. Rustic homestays and eco-friendly cottages provide comfortable accommodation, allowing travellers to connect intimately with the local way of life.

FROM TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS TO LIVELY CELEBRATIONS, A RURAL HAVEN OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL SPLENDOUR



— Khokhara

Khokhara, a village in Madhya Pradesh, is situated in thick green forests, surrounded by mountains and lies in the buffer zone of Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve; in fact the village derives its name, 'Khokara', which means surrounded by deep caves. The caves, a nearby dam, and the mountains in the background contribute to its breathtaking beauty. The village invites visitors to participate in various hands-on activities. Accommodation in Khokhara mirrors the simplicity and warmth of village life, offering an authentic stay in mud cottages or traditional huts adorned with local artwork. The emphasis is on eco-friendly practices, with sustainable amenities

eco-friendly practices, with sustainable amenities that underlines the village's commitment to preserving its natural beauty. Wake up to the sounds of nature, breathe in the crisp village air, and relish home-cooked meals prepared with locally sourced ingredients.

□

Adding to the charm of the village are its indigenous Gond and Baiga tribes, experts in identification and usage of medicinal plants. These communities actively engage with people, sharing their deep knowledge of traditional healing practices. The village is home to the centuries-old Khokhara Mahadev Temple. Its intricate architecture and quiet space provide the tranquility to reflect and connect with the spiritual roots of the community. The nearby Khokhara Lake is a peaceful scenic spot, and the Panchmahal range provides



panoramic views of the beautiful landscape that stretches beyond the village. The historical ruins of Chittorgarh Fort, about an hour away, add a touch of grandeur, offering a glimpse into the region's storied past. Two rivers flowing nearby create a harmonious balance between human habitation and nature's bounty.

Things to do:

- ▶ **Explore:** Stroll through lush fields with local farmers, and not only witness but actively participate in the daily life of the village, fostering a deep connection with the roots of rural India.
- ▶ **Sightseeing:** The nearby Panchmahal range presents an excellent opportunity for trekking
- ▶ **Adventure:** Partake in natural and adventurous activities organised by the community, including fishing and boating.
- ▶ **Participate:** Engage in the age-old art of pottery-making.
- ▶ **Local Participate:** Join in the folk dance performances that narrate tales of the village's rich heritage.
- ▶ **Picnic:** Enjoy a picnic at the nearby waterfalls or take a boat ride to enjoy the tranquility of the Khokhara lake's surroundings.
- ▶ **Souvenirs:** The village also boasts vibrant local markets where artisans sell their traditional crafts, providing an opportunity for tourists to buy unique souvenirs skillfully crafted by local artists, like caps made from peacock feathers and bamboo.
- ▶ **Gastronomy:** Eat with the locals, delicious food made from fresh farm-grown products with so much affection and warmth.

Incredible India!

Quiz on Puducherry's heritage and attractions.

Explore the enchanting facets of Puducherry with this quiz, unraveling its spiritual sanctuaries, iconic landmarks, vibrant beaches, and colonial charm.

Let's solve the wonders of Puducherry quiz and stand a chance to win prizes!

Q1. Which significant spiritual centre in Puducherry was established by Sri Aurobindo?

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Bayfront Yoga Haven | b. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Retreat |
| c. Sri Aurobindo Ashram | d. Auroville Yoga Synthesis Center |

Q2. What is the name of the golden meditation structure in Auroville representing the spiritual significance of unity?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Auroville's Gilded Oasis | b. Shiny Sphere of Oneness |
| c. Matrimandir | d. Unity Dome in Auroville |

Q3. Which part of Puducherry boasts French colonial heritage?

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Colonial Quarter | b. European-Influenced District |
| c. The French Quarter | d. Heritage French District |

Q4. Which park in Puducherry has well-maintained gardens and the Aayi Mandapam fountain?

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Promenade Beach | b. Auroville Botanical Gardens |
| c. Botanical Garden | d. Bharathi Government Park |

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