

[Proof 1] This winter, experience the magic of India with its festive spirit!

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Fri 12/15/2023 2:06 PM

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Issue 10 • December 2023

City spotlight: Pune



A CHARMING, CHARISMATIC, COOL CITY

Renowned for its rich historical heritage, Pune offers both cultural experiences and architectural wonders. The Aga Khan Palace, a symbol of India's struggle for independence, stands as a testament to the city's history. The Shaniwar Wada, a majestic fort echoes the tales of the Maratha Empire, and Pune's diversity is reflected in its bustling markets, where traditional crafts can be discovered alongside modern boutiques, famous bakeries and cafes. Nature enthusiasts can escape to the nearby Western Ghats for trekking trails and scenic landscapes.

□ Pune, often referred to as the 'Oxford of the East', houses prestigious educational institutions, including the National Defence Academy, reverberating with the disciplined footsteps of future leaders. The city also hosts the Film and Television Institute of India, where many Bollywood stars have honed their craft, adding a touch of glamour to Pune's cultural scene. It has a burgeoning culinary scene, lively nightlife, and a thriving arts and music culture. Its appeal lies in its blend of history, tradition, modernity, □ and the allure of Bollywood dreams. Adding to its charm, are the nearby waterfalls, Thoseghar and Vajrai cascading down the Western Ghats. A short drive from Pune takes



you to the charming hill station of Lonavala, famous for its lush green landscapes and the iconic Bhushi Dam.

TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN PUNE



Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Temple

Built in the heart of Pune, in the late 19th century, dedicated to Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles and harbinger of abundance, built by the sweetmeat magnate Dagdusheth Halwai and his wife Lakshmi Bai. As one of Pune's oldest and most cherished temples, it has witnessed generations of worship since the struggle for independence. Beyond its religious prominence, the temple comes alive for the grand festivities of Ganesh Chaturthi. The temple is also a trust and a social institution for the welfare of society and cultural development, and runs an old age home as well.

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Explore the wonders of Bedsa & Bhaja Caves

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Located just a short drive from Pune, the Bedsa caves date back to the 2nd century BCE, showcasing ancient Buddhist craftsmanship, with intricately carved rock-cut chambers and stupas and delicate carvings on the cave walls, depicting scenes from the life of Buddha.

The prayer hall has 25-foot-tall engraved pillars supporting a ribbed roof. Meanwhile, the nearby Bhaja caves, also renowned for their elegance, boast chaitya (prayer) halls and residential caves with pillars and sculptures. These caves also hint at the history of the tabla with carvings from around 200 BCE showing a woman playing the tabla, while others show dance performances. □



Trek to the summit of Sinhagad Fort

Sinhagad Fort, situated on top the Sahyadri hills in Pune, is resplendent with Maratha history. Literally translating to "Lion's Fort," Sinhagad witnessed numerous battles and conquests. The fort, originally built in the 17th century, boasts sturdy ramparts, gates, and a collection of historic monuments, including the bust of Tanaji Malusare, who scaled the heights of this fort to reclaim it from the Mughals. It stands as a testament to the valiant tales of the Maratha warriors and their legendary ruler, Shivaji. You can drive to it or take an exhilarating trek, with spectacular vistas of the Western Ghats and the lush countryside below.

□

Behold the spirit of India at Aga Khan Palace

Behold the spirit of India at Aga Khan Palace

Aga Khan Palace in Pune, Maharashtra, was constructed in 1892 by Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III. It served as a refuge during the famine at that time, and then became an involuntary home to several prominent leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, his wife Kasturba Gandhi, his secretary Mahadev Desai, Miraben, Pyarelal Nair, Sarojini Naidu, and Dr. Sushila Nayar, who were interned here by the British during the Quit India Movement. Today, it is a museum with photographs and artifacts of that crucial period. A white marble memorial pays homage to Kasturba Gandhi, who passed away here. Khadi, that Gandhiji used to spin on his charkha is still made here. □





Meet in Pune

Pune, with its proximity to Mumbai, the financial capital of India, boasts state-of-the-art convention centres and luxury hotels like the Pune International Exhibition and Convention Centre, the Hyatt Regency, and many more. A short drive away lies Lavasa, a picturesque hill station with the Lavasa International Convention Centre, beautifully developed for MICE activities. This combination allows participants to engage in business discussions in Pune's urban landscape and then escape to Lavasa for team-building activities. The scenic journey connecting these two destinations is an experience in itself. Pune's cultural richness and Lavasa's culinary delights beautifully complement the overall MICE experience.

[Read more on Pune](#)

India Celebrates

Winter transforms India into a festive wonderland. As the new year approaches, Christmas and Pongal festivals illuminate cities like Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai. From the musical beats of the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland to the celebrations of Makar Sankranti in Gujarat, India promises an experience of traditions, customs and hospitality like no other.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN DECEMBER-JANUARY



The Hornbill Festival, Nagaland

The annual Hornbill Festival brings out the traditions, art, music, dance, and handicrafts of the Naga people. Named after the revered hornbill bird, it unfolds the spirit of unity in diversity. This festival is held at the heritage village of Kisama, with tribes from across the state coming together to display their unique customs. There are also competitive events, like indigenous games, archery, and the popular Naga chilli-eating contest, adding excitement to the festivities. Savour the local cuisine, from Naga delicacies to traditional brews. The heritage complex consists of a cluster of seventeen indigenously designed houses, each representing a different tribe.

When and where to celebrate:

01-10 December 2023

Kisama village, about 12 km from Kohima, with its Naga huts, lively marketplaces, and the beats of folk music, offers an atmosphere of Naga culture, and an opportunity to engage with the Naga tribes.

Chrysanthemum Show, Chandigarh

The Chrysanthemum Flower Show in Chandigarh is a floral festival set in the Terraced Garden, spread over 10 acres in 'The City Beautiful', as Chandigarh is popularly known. From intricate flower arrangements to the sheer diversity of chrysanthemum varieties, the show proves Chandigarh's commitment to horticultural excellence. Other than thousands of flower pots on display, there are animal figures, statues, rangolis, and flower exhibitions to be seen. An exciting quiz on flowers is conducted, with an emphasis on Chrysanthemums, followed by cultural programmes. Amidst all this, there is also delicious food to taste from the different states of India.



When and where to celebrate:

09- 11 December 2023

Enjoy a day in Chandigarh for its annual Chrysanthemum Show at the Terraced Gardens in Sector 33 that transforms into a breathtaking display of chrysanthemum varieties, and exhibits of many flowers.



Christmas in India

Local cultural influences play a large role in how Christmas is celebrated across India. The whole country comes together for the festivities in their own way. With diyas lit on rooftops in the South, to houses adorned with shining stars and nativity scenes around Mumbai. With a Portugese flavour in Daman and Diu, and a tribal touch in Dadar & Nagar Haveli. Park Street in Kolkata and CP in Delhi light up and celebrations continue through the night. Goa has the most exhilarating celebrations, while in Kerala children sing Christmas carols carrying candles. Pondicherry, the quiet town in southern India comes alive with decorations and celebrations, and there is pomp and show in northeastern Shillong. All churches and cathedrals organise midnight mass, and Christmas carols can be heard all around.

When and where to celebrate:

25 December 2023

Christmas in India rises above regional boundaries. Whether in the bustling metropolitan areas or the tranquil corners of the countryside, the warmth of Christmas celebrations spreads nationwide.

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Lohri & Makar Sankranti in Punjab, Haryana & Gujarat

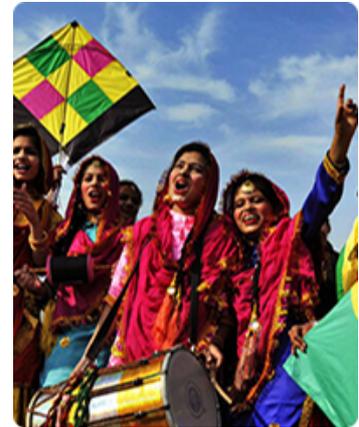
Lohri & Makar Sankranti in Punjab, Haryana & Gujarat

Experience the joyous festivals of Lohri in Punjab & Haryana and Makar Sankranti in Gujarat. Lohri celebrations mark the winter solstice with bonfires, traditional folk music, and the exuberant bhangra dance. It signifies the end of winter and symbolises the spirit of community and togetherness. Meanwhile, in Gujarat, Makar Sankranti is celebrated with the renowned kite festival, where the skies come alive with a riot of colours. It marks the sun's transition into the northern hemisphere and is a cultural extravaganza inviting visitors from around the world to Indulge in the lively atmosphere; making both these festivals grand occasions for everyone, dressed in their best and most colourful attire. □

When and where to celebrate:

13 & 15 January 2024

On Lohri Amritsar, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, Ambala and Karnal come alive with bonfires and traditional dances. On Makar Sankranti, Surat, Ahmedabad and Vadodara, host grand celebrations, along with the International Kite Festival.



Pongal in South India

The harvest celebration of Pongal pays homage to the agricultural abundance and blessings of nature. The four-day festivity kicks off with Bhogi Pongal, where homes are cleansed, and new things bought for the house. Elaborate kolams (rangoli) adorn the entrances of all homes. The iconic Pongal dish is prepared in decorated clay pots, symbolising prosperity and gratitude. Locals engage in the colourful Pongal Jallikattu, displaying the state's deep-rooted connection to rural traditions. With folk music, dances and lively bustling markets, Pongal invites everyone to actively participate in the cultural richness of southern India.

When and where to celebrate:

15-18 January 2024

Experience Pongal celebrations across southern India. Whether in Chennai's lively markets, Madurai's historic temples, or the cultural richness of Coimbatore, embrace the spirit of Pongal wherever you are.

Explore India in December-January

As the rest of the world dons a winter coat, the thriving green terrains of India invite you to explore its natural beauty. From the misty hills of Coorg and Wayanad in the Western Ghats to the tea gardens of Ooty and Munnar in the Nilgiri Hills, and Meghalaya's Cherrapunji and Mawsynram for green dense forests, and stunning waterfalls.



Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka

Chikkamagaluru is known for its sprawling coffee plantations that offer visitors scenic treks to Mullayanagiri, the highest peak in Karnataka, or explore the cascading beauty of the Hebbe Falls, or ride through Kudremukh National Park, rich in colourful flora, teeming with animals and birds, and beautiful waterfalls. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee in the air invites travellers to partake in the region's famed coffee culture. With its pleasant climate and a wealth of natural wonders, Chikkamagaluru promises an experience, where the charm of the Western Ghats unfolds in every corner, making it a very unique destination to visit, with treks to many peaks and waterfalls.

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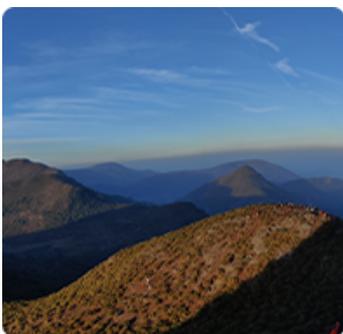
Vagamon, Kerala

Vagamon, a beautiful hill-station in the Idukki district of Kerala, 'God's own country', is a picture-perfect setting for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts amidst the Western Ghats, with its cool climate and outdoor activities like trekking, paragliding, mountaineering and rock climbing. Visit tribal villages and their traditional art forms in the prettiest most untouched quaint town with grassy hills and meadows, pine forests, tea plantations, and cascading waterfalls to walk or drive through. Travel across the three famous hills: Thangal, Murugan and Kurisumala. These are important to Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians, who live in peaceful communal harmony prevalent here.



Lambasingi, Andhra Pradesh

Lambasingi, known as the 'Kashmir of Andhra Pradesh', is a beautiful hill-station, situated in the forested Eastern Ghats. It is surrounded by tea and coffee plantations with some apple and strawberry farms in the enchanting Araku Valley. It is a perfect escape for nature enthusiasts, who can also discover the local culture by exploring nearby tribal villages, where traditional art and rituals add to its quaint charm. The nearby Lambasingi Wildlife Sanctuary provides a great getaway for wildlife enthusiasts also. This is the only place in South India that experiences snowfall as the temperatures drop significantly. It is now being developed by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation as an ecotourism destination.



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Kohima, Nagaland

Kohima, Nagaland

Kohima is synonymous with the famed Battle of Kohima in World War II. The War Cemetery stands as a reminder of those heroic moments, as does the Kohima State Museum with exhibits of this region's incredible history. The city gives a glimpse into its tribal life through colourful festivals and handicrafts, amidst the natural beauty of its valleys and peaks, which are ideal for trekking, camping and rock climbing. The annual Hornbill Festival in December is a spectacular celebration, featuring traditional dances, □ music, and handicrafts. A visit to the Dzukou Valley is a treat with its panoramic views and unique flora. Foodies can enjoy Kohima's culinary scene of Naga, Chinese and Indian dishes. □



Dawki, Meghalaya

Famous for its crystal-clear Umngot river, Dawki offers spellbinding boat rides where the riverbed is clearly visible. The town hosts the annual Dawki River Festival, celebrating local culture with traditional music, dance, and handicrafts. Dawki is also the place to see the legendary living root bridges of Cherrapunji and Mawsynram, proof of the Khasi tribe's extraordinary craftsmanship. The Dawki Bridge, connecting India and Bangladesh, is an engineering marvel and definitely worth a visit. Dawki is 95 km from the city of Shillong, located in the Jaintia Hills, sandwiched between the countries of India and Bangladesh and a major trading centre.

Beyond Incredible





A GLOBAL CELEBRATION OF INDIAN FESTIVALS

Travel to India this winter to join the colourful festivities of our country. Accept a heartfelt invitation to witness the many festivals that paint India luminescent during this time. Participating in these celebrations goes beyond ceremonies; year after year, it regenerates cherished traditions that knit together families and friendships. Beyond the traditional rituals, ornate decorations, and sumptuous feasts, these occasions foster a sense of unity and deepen bonds, creating a shared joy between loved ones. In India, celebrating festivals with friends and family is more than indulging in customs; it captures the very essence of togetherness, love, and enduring connections that bring people closer in shared tradition and celebration.

Incredible India has unveiled its enthralling digital spectacle, 'Colours of India', casting a beautiful glow on all the festivities. It extends a heartfelt invitation to everyone around the world, urging them to partake in the celebration of India's diverse festivals, to foster a friendly camaraderie. The campaign's microsite acts as a virtual portal, allowing individuals to extend personalised invitations to their cherished ones, calling them to join the jubilant revelry. Our aim is to spread the rich narratives surrounding the festivals of the season, to captivate the world's intrigue and spark curiosity in India's celebrations. Come and join the fun with #ColoursOfIndia.

Invite your friends now!

FESTIVE TRADITIONAL BELIEFS:



Diyas

Diya, or Deepam, lamps hold a profound place in Indian tradition. Representing purity and goodness, lighting these lamps is believed to banish negativity and bring good fortune.



PONGAL

Pongal, meaning 'to overflow', is a delightful dish of rice, dal and ghee cooked in clay pots on stone stoves, and an auspicious part of the Pongal festival, signifying abundance.



ARGHYA

Arghya is an offering to the Sun God. cane baskets called Dauri are laden with puja samagri like Thekua (special sweet), coconuts, and fruits that are then lovingly distributed.



MOUSTACHE

The longest moustache contest at the Pushkar Fair attracts large crowds and spotlights the grandeur of moustaches in Rajasthan, symbolising pride, dignity, and machismo.

Truly Indian

In a nation where a significant portion of the population resides in rural India, the potential of rural tourism is immense. Beyond its economic implications, it serves as a catalyst for social change, aligning with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the call for 'Vocal for Local'. It is a commitment to leverage India's villages, to preserve and promote local jobs and culture. It is a collective effort of the government, industry, NGOs and the local community.

KURAUNA VILLAGE IS A 2023 SILVER CATEGORY WINNER FOR RURAL TOURISM



Kurauna

Kurauna, or Kurauana, village in Uttar Pradesh, has embraced a multifaceted approach, weaving together cultural values and natural resources with tourism. With community participation in tourism activities, it fosters long-term economic and social sustainability, by conservation of both natural and cultural resources, not only showcasing the village but also contributing to its preservation. It promotes organic farming, inviting tourists to engage in agricultural activities. It is also at the forefront of waste reduction efforts, implementing segregation, composting, and recycling. These initiatives collectively underscore Kurauna's dedication to harmonising tourism with sustainability.



Kurauna village, 15 km from Varanasi, with a population of 2750, is a pilgrimage haven with seven accommodation units offering around 50 beds, including Dharmshalas and a Tourist Facilitation Centre developed under the 'PRASAAD' scheme. Kurauna village enchants travellers with tales of the past and mystical temples that infuse spirituality into the very fabric of the village, bringing together festive gatherings and spiritually charged temples - making it an ideal destination for those seeking pilgrimage steeped in cultural richness.



Things to do:

- ▶ **Explore:** Enjoy cultural tourism emphasising history, architecture, dance, music, festivals, handicrafts, folk traditions, and local cuisine.
- ▶ **Participate:** Take part in cultural activities such as Bhajan Sandhya, and experience daily rural life, agriculture and cattle farms.
- ▶ **Sightseeing:** Explore nearby attractions like Panchkoshi Marg, Varuna River, and historic temples and ashrams.
- ▶ **Spirituality:** Take the Panchkoshi Parikrama, one of the most sacred rituals. It is a 88 km walk around the city, believed to cleanse the mind and bring divine blessings.
- ▶ **Festival:** Witness the annual Lota-Bhanta Mela, celebrating the unique 'Bati Chokha' food offering to God.
- ▶ **History:** Experience the significance of the village, associated with Lord Rama, the Pancha Pandavas, and Draupadi during their exile.

Incredible India!

Quiz on Pune's heritage and attractions.

Welcome to the Pune City Quiz! Test your knowledge about this beautiful city in Maharashtra, known for its rich history, cultural heritage, and picturesque landscapes. Get ready to explore its attractions with the questions below.

Choose the correct options and win some grand prizes!

Q1. Which is the iconic historical fort located in Pune?

- a. Red Fort
- b. Shaniwar Wada
- c. Jaigarh Fort
- d. Golconda Fort

Q2. Which is the popular hill station near Pune, known for its lush greenery and pleasant climate?

- a. Shimla
- b. Lonavala
- c. Manali
- d. Darjeeling

Q3. Which breathtaking waterfall cascades through lush greenery near Pune?

- a. Athirapally Falls
- b. Dudhsagar Falls
- c. Jog Falls
- d. Thoseghar Falls

Q4. What is the name of the festival in Pune that celebrates its favourite deity for victory of good over evil?

- a. Diwali
- b. Ganesh Chaturthi
- c. Holi
- d. Gudi Padwa

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