

Incredible India
Calling



Kolkata

Issue 08 • October 2023

City spotlight: Kolkata



UNVEILING CULTURE & CUISINE IN THE CITY OF JOY

Kolkata lies along the banks of the Hooghly River in eastern India, offering a unique blend of history, culture, and the bustle of a very vivacious city. Its rich colonial past is evident in its imposing architecture, exemplified by the glowing white Victoria Memorial and the mighty Howrah Bridge. Here, historic trams, Asia's oldest, traverse the streets and the city's residents gather at antique tea and coffee houses for spirited 'adda' discussions on diverse subjects ranging from politics to poetry. The city's fervent love for art and literature has birthed numerous Nobel laureates and renowned poets, making it a veritable haven for intellectuals and creative artistes alike.

Kolkata's cuisine is unique, with many loved delectable dishes offering a delightful culinary adventure. Park Street promises a gastronomic journey like no other. As the sun sets, the street comes alive with bars, restaurants and clubs offering live music and dancing, making it the go-to destination, also to stroll its storied lanes. In the vicinity lie football clubs, College Street lined with bookstores, and old markets with alleyways, where artisans craft exquisite idols. Throughout the year, Kolkata pulses with life and celebration, from the opulent Durga Puja pandals to the sweet Christmas festivities at Bow Barracks and the festive Chinese New Year celebrations in Chinatown, epitomising the phrase 'City of Joy', as it is fondly known.



TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN KOLKATA



Victoria Memorial

Surrounded by lush gardens and pathways, the Victoria Memorial's white marble façade, intricately embellished with classical elements, gleams in the sunlight and against the dark sky. Dedicated to Queen Victoria, it was built between 1906 – 1921. As one steps inside, the legends of art and history unfold, with the exquisite collection of paintings, sculptures, and artifacts that vividly narrate the story of India's colonial past. The Victoria Memorial is not merely a monument; it's a glimpse into a time when Kolkata was the jewel in the British crown, a place where history, culture, and beauty converge. Step back in time with a horse-drawn carriage ride in front of the grand memorial.

Jorasanko Thakur Bari

Jorasanko Thakur Bari, built in 1784, is a hallowed sanctuary for Indians, especially the people of Kolkata. This beautiful mansion was not merely the ancestral home of the illustrious Tagore family but a place where creativity, art, and intellect shaped the course of Bengal's heritage. Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet, was born here, and his visionary ideas took flight within these walls. Today, as one steps into his exquisite home, now a museum, it is divided into three galleries that house many books, manuscripts, antiques and over 700 paintings. It transports visitors back to the indomitable spirit of Bengal's artistic and intellectual renaissance.



Belur Math & Dakshineswar Temple

Belur Math, a sacred institution, founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897, is the global headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Its Hindu, Islamic, and Christian architecture, reflects the universal message of harmony and unity that Swami Vivekananda espoused. Just a short distance away lies the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, where Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who profoundly influenced Swami Vivekananda, once worshipped. These twin sanctuaries together form a sacred corridor, where people from diverse backgrounds come to seek inner peace and knowledge into the spirit of oneness and brotherhood envisioned by their founders.

Sunderbans Mangrove Forest

The Sundarbans, about 100 km from Kolkata, one of the largest mangrove forests in the world, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, lie on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal. The forests, mudflats, and winding waterways, covering about 10,000 sq. km, are teeming with wildlife; home to the royal Bengal tiger, 260 species of birds and other threatened species like the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python. It serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between human existence and the preservation of one of our planet's most precious ecosystems, being amongst the largest active delta regions in the world.





Where MICE blends business & pleasure

With its many luxury hotels, historic venues, and modern conference facilities, like the Science City and the upcoming International Convention Centre amongst many others, Kolkata creates an ideal environment for business gatherings. Whether you're hosting a corporate meeting, organising a conference, or planning an incentive trip to explore the city's cultural treasures, Kolkata has it all. Attendees can enjoy delectable Bengali and international cuisines, witness the city's artistic legacy, and experience the warm hospitality that Kolkata is known for, making MICE events in the city an enriching experience for all.

[Read more on Kolkata](#)

India Celebrates

India's festivals are a riot of colours, sounds, and traditions that offer a riveting experience into the country's culture and unique spirit. Whether it's the beauty of Diwali, the exuberance of Durga Puja, or the spirituality of Dussehra, each festival is a robust celebration.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN OCTOBER-NOVEMBER



Navratri

From the dandiya and garba dances in Gujarat to the centuries-old rituals of worshiping Goddess Durga in West Bengal, Navratri is celebrated in many ways throughout the country. In the mountainous regions of Himachal Pradesh, it's a time for spiritual reflection, while in Tamil Nadu, the festival takes the form of Golu, a display of dolls and figurines. In every region, Navratri unites communities in worship and fasting, followed by sumptuous feasts. It's a time when the nation's faiths and traditions converge in the celebration for nine days.

Where to celebrate:

15- 24 October 2023

Navratri is celebrated across India, but Ahmedabad is known for the grandest celebrations in the country. During this 9-night festivities, the city comes alive with colour, music, and dance.

Durga Puja

Durga Puja is a festival dedicated to Goddess Durga. Towering idols of the divine mother are crafted with impeccable detail, and the air reverberates with the rhythms of dhak drums, the fragrance of flowers and incense, and bedecked pandals become veritable works of art. Families and friends gather, clad in their finest attire, to offer prayers, enjoy sumptuous feasts, visit all the pandals in the neighbourhood, and revel in traditional dance and music.

Where to celebrate:

20- 24 October 2023

Kolkata's streets come alive with cultural performances, traditional music, dance, theatre, delectable Bengali cuisine, and the city's warm hospitality, making it the ultimate destination to experience Durga Puja in India.



Dussehra or Vijayadashami

Dussehra or Vijayadashami is the 10th and the last day of Navratri and Durga Puja. All over India Hindus celebrate this auspicious day in different ways. In the East, it's the day Goddess Durga killed the demon Mahishasur, and the festival culminates with the immersion of the idol of Durga. In the West, North and South, Dussehra is the day Lord Rama, killed Ravana, the 10-headed demon. Huge effigies of Ravana are burned and with it burns all evil!

Where to celebrate:

24 October 2023

While Kolkata's Durga Puja celebrations are a visual feast, Delhi, Varanasi, Kullu, and Ahmedabad, each offer theatrical displays of the Ramayana. The Mysore Palace is illuminated and a resplendent royal elephant takes center-stage.

Karva Chauth

Observed primarily by married women, it involves an entire day of fasting from sunrise to moonrise, to pray for the well-being and longevity of their husbands. As the day progresses, women adorn themselves in exquisite bridal attire and jewellery, intricate henna, their hearts filled with prayer. In the evening the sight of these women, sharing stories and laughter waiting for their first sight of the moon to seek its blessings for their husbands, paints a poignant picture of love's enduring strength.

Where to celebrate:

01 November 2023

It is celebrated mostly across northern and central India, in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi NCR.





Diwali

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, casts a spell across all of India to celebrate the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after defeating the demon king, Ravana. It is celebrated with great jubilation, illuminating the entire country with the warm glow of thousands of oil lamps, fireworks, and beautifully decorated homes, shops and streets. The air is filled with a festive spirit, the aroma of sweets is everywhere, shared with affection and laughter. Families come together and exchange gifts, offer prayers together to Goddess Lakshmi for prosperity, and partake in firework displays that light up the night sky.

Where to celebrate:

12 November 2023

It is celebrated across India. While customs and traditions may vary from region to region, the essence of Diwali remains the same. The entire nation is aglow with oil lamps and decorative lights, celebrating light over darkness.

Explore India in October-November

As the weather cools down, it's time to spice things up with some island adventures that offer a mix of experiences, from thrilling water activities and jungle treks to cultural discoveries and spiritual retreats. And let's not forget the simple pleasure of lounging on sunny beaches. So, island hopping anyone?



Neil Island, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

With powdery white sands and azure waters of the Bay of Bengal, Neil Island (now known as Shaheed Dweep) is a postcard-perfect tropical paradise. As you explore the island, you'll find both forests and coral reefs, and an unspoiled coastline to unwind and reconnect with life. Neil Island's gentle pace, warm-hearted local people, and gorgeous sunsets offer exquisite natural beauty and peace, making it a destination where time seems to blissfully stand still. For the active, there are jet-ski rides, scuba diving, coral viewing in glass-bottom boats, and guided fishing tours.

Lakshadweep Islands

Lakshadweep Islands, which lie off the Kerala coast, are rich in both ecology and culture. What sets Lakshadweep apart is its remarkable coral reef system, brimming with marine biodiversity, spread across 36 islands. The underwater phenomenon in Lakshadweep is nothing less than spectacular. Adventure enthusiasts revel in water sports like swimming, wind-surfing, diving, snorkelling, and kayaking. It has white coral sands set against crystal-clear waters teeming with marine life, protected by a massive, tranquil lagoon on one side and a barrier reef constructed of live coral boulders on the other. Accessible by modern transportation, Lakshadweep ensures tourists enjoy their visit and stay in this paradise.



Diu Island, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu

Diu Island, on India's western coast along the Arabian Sea, brings together history, culture, and natural beauty. Whether you're exploring the island's Portuguese colonial past in its winding streets, festivals, and historical sites like the Naida Caves, located outside the Diu fort - a thrilling experience awaits you that should not be missed, or simply enjoy one of the prettiest beaches in the country. The clean waters of Nagao Beach provide the perfect setting, safe for swimming and various water sport activities.

Ponnumthuruthu Island, Kerala

This enchanting island, with a five-acre radius, often referred to as the 'Golden Island,' is surrounded by the back waters of the Vembanad Lake and thick mangrove forests. Ponnumthuruthu is renowned for its beautiful sunny beaches, rich coconut groves, the 100-year-old Shiva-Parvathi Temple, and as a home for migratory birds. The festival of Mahashivratri is celebrated with great grandeur here. Accessible only by boat, this island offers the best in natural beauty and a unique cultural experience along the Kerala coast.



Elephanta Island, Maharashtra

Less than an hour's boat ride from Mumbai's Gateway of India lies the Elephanta island, stretching across 10-15 sq. km with a dense foliage of mango, tamarind and palm trees. It is home to the Elephanta Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These rock-cut caves are the most amazing achievement in the history of rock-architecture in western India, consisting of a main Shiva Cave and several smaller ones, comprising exquisite sculptures and intricate reliefs, adorned with massive depictions of Lord Shiva in various forms, including the 20-foot-tall Trimurti. These solid basalt rock masterpieces, offer a glimpse into the artistic competence and religious propensity of ancient India.

Beyond Incredible



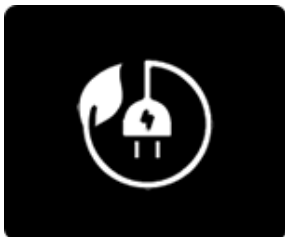
MAKE A LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY

Have you ever thought about making your journeys not just memorable but also meaningful? Say hello to Travel for LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment)! a visionary initiative by the Ministry of Tourism that champions sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

By embracing this movement, you become a champion of preserving India's cultural and natural treasures. It's more than just a trip; it's an opportunity to create a positive impact. By promoting environmentally conscious travel and fostering a sense of responsibility, Travel for LiFE embodies the spirit of 'One Earth - One Family - One Future,' aligning with the G20 Roadmap for Tourism and Mission LiFE, a global movement led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

So, take the Travel for LiFE pledge and be a part of something bigger. Explore the wonders of India while leaving behind a positive footprint, one that supports conservation and a greener, healthier future for our nation and the world. Travel smart, travel responsibly, and make your journey unforgettable in every sense!

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:



SAVE ENERGY

It's all about you and your planet. Take small steps. Be energy efficient. Find energy-efficient accommodation. Unplug chargers.



SAVE WATER

Make eco-conscious choices, every drop of water counts, turn off taps, shorter showers, reuse towels, drink water from an RO plant.



CONSERVE NATURE

Ride a bicycle, carry sustainable bags, visit green heritage sites, visit stepwells and cascading terraces that prove sustainability runs deep in our culture.



TAKE THE PLEDGE

Sign up and take the Travel for LiFE pledge that's all about you and your planet. Tag at least 3 other travellers.

Truly Indian

Rural tourism in India is a government of India initiative that leverages the rustic charm and culture of its countryside to offer travellers an experience of India's rich heritage and warm-hearted people. It not only helps relieve the burden on urban tourism but also empowers rural communities for sustainable livelihoods.

A CONSERVED FOREST & THE SOURCE OF SPRING WATER IN NAGALAND



Jotsoma

Jotsoma lies in the heart of Nagaland. Its conserved forest area plays a vital role in preserving the region's biodiversity while providing essential environmental and ecological services for the people living downstream. It serves as the primary source of spring water supply to the capital city of Kohima, ensuring the wellbeing of its residents. As you journey through its forests, you'll discover trekking paths that wind through the woods and Rhododendron groves with their flaming blooms.

The allure of Jotsoma goes beyond its ecological significance. The region is home to a variety of places of interest, each offering a unique experience. For nature enthusiasts, the Alwan Snow Trout, known for its large head and steel grey body, is a fascinating find in the rivers of Dzuna, Dzülakie, Chokla, Tepuiki, Tesuru, Tizu, and Zungki. It also has two new species of frogs, Rana Nagalandsis and Megophrys Dzünarü. For birdwatchers, it is home to swallows, offering ample opportunities to witness these graceful birds.

A unique and magical feature of Jotsoma is the "Invisible underground water sounds," a place where you can listen to the gentle and soothing sounds of water flowing beneath the rock cave, creating a truly mystical experience.



Things to do:

- ▶ **Explore:** Take leisurely strolls through the conserved forest area enjoying the tranquility, fresh air, and spot various species of birds, butterflies, and small mammals.
- ▶ **Trekking:** Jotsoma is crisscrossed with trekking paths that wind through the flora and fauna of the forest. Enjoy the stunning sight of Rhododendron groves in the blooming season.
- ▶ **Birdwatching:** The Swallow's Home is a sanctuary for numerous birds, providing opportunities to observe and capture them on your lens.
- ▶ **Unique Sound Experience:** The "Invisible underground water sound" is a sensory experience like no other. Listen to the gentle sounds of water flowing beneath a rock cave.
- ▶ **Culture:** Interact with the local communities and learn about their unique traditions and way of life in Nagaland.

- **Photography:** The natural beauty, including its landscapes, wildlife and flora offer excellent opportunities for photography.

Incredible India!

Quiz on Delhi's Heritage & Attractions.

Welcome to the Kolkata Quiz! Test your knowledge about the city of Kolkata, the beautiful capital of British India in the days gone by. Read about its rich history, omnipresent architecture, and captivating shopping streets.

Are you ready? Let's begin!

Complete the fun Incredible India Quiz and take home some amazing prizes.

- Q1.** Which white marble structure in Kolkata, dedicated to a British monarch of the 19th century, stands as a symbol of the city's colonial history with a museum showcasing historical artefacts and artwork?
- a. Howrah Bridge, a symbol of connectivity
 - b. Indian Museum, showcasing history and art
 - c. Marble palace, a historical mansion
 - d. Victoria Memorial, a monument dedicated to Queen Victoria, representing colonial heritage
- Q2.** Which major festival celebrated in Kolkata involves grand processions, beautifully decorated pandals with artistic idols, and enthusiastic drumming and dancing in the streets?
- a. Diwali, the festival of lights
 - b. Eid al-Fitr, the festival marking the end of Ramadan
 - c. Holi, the festival of colours
 - d. Durga Puja, honouring Goddess Durga
- Q3.** Which popular area in Kolkata is famous for its bustling markets, street food, and galvanising atmosphere, making it a popular destination for both locals and tourists?
- a. Park Street, a centre for shopping, food, and nightlife
 - b. Eco Park, a lush green urban space
 - c. New Town, a modern business district
 - d. College Street, a hub of books and academia

Mail your answers to us at incredible-india@gov.in with your Name, Age, Country for a chance to win prizes.

You are receiving this message because you have been in contact with MINISTRY OF TOURISM or an affiliate. To no longer receive messages from MINISTRY OF TOURISM [click here](#).

