

# TOURIOSITY®

T R V E L M A G

*Asia*  
Touriosity

*A continent  
so diverse*

*Snapshot of attractions in Asia  
Diversity of Asian cultures  
The best of 50 Asian countries  
Asian cities in watercolour*



Beaches



Religions



Nature



Wonders



Wildlife



Architecture



Culture



Adventure



■ Artist's Impression of Halong Bay

■ A unique travel horoscope





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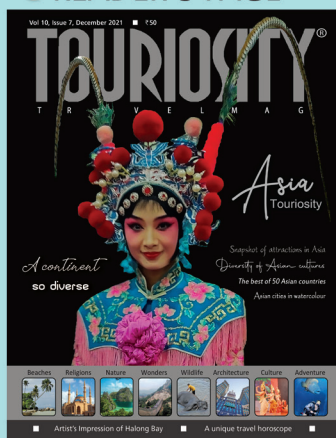


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## Touriosity Travelmag December 2021 Issue

Dear Reader,

If you would like to share your memorable experiences with us, please feel free to contact us with your write ups, articles, anecdotes, photos and others. Good pictures will be acknowledged and published in the Reader's Click section. For the Travel Humour section, you can send us any travel related funny photos or sketches.

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A Chinese woman in ethnic attire.

Photo By: Rupanjana De

*The views and opinions expressed in the articles are solely those of the writers and contributors. Touriosity Travelmag is not responsible for any personal views expressed by the authors or contributors.*



Asia, the largest continent in the world, stretching from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to that of the Pacific Ocean and home to about 60% of the world's population, also has the second highest number of countries, after Africa. But no continent in the world can beat the diversity of Asia. This issue themed on 'Asia' (first in a series of two back to back issues) focuses on this diversity of the continent in terms of its people, culture, religions, geography, architecture, natural beauty and more. The issue provides necessary information about all the 53 countries and special administrative regions in the continent and lists their main attractions.







## AN APPEAL TO TOURISTS

Asia is a very diverse continent with languages, religions, lifestyle, attire, looks and food habits differing greatly between places. It is important for visitors to show respect to the locals, and not judge or discriminate anyone unfairly. LET'S BE RESPONSIBLE TOURISTS.

Asia is the largest continent by both size and population. It is a diverse, multicultural continent that is a melting pot of hundreds of thousands of cultures. It is home to some of the oldest civilizations on this planet including the Mesopotamian, the Indus Valley, the Chinese and the Persian civilisations. Asia is also the birth place of the oldest religions of the world including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. 60% of the world's population, consisting of people from hundreds of thousands of different tribes, communities, languages, religions and cultures, live in this continent giving it the character of extreme diversity and beauty, unmatched by any other continent.

Asia is home to the tallest mountain range, the highest mountain peak. It has vast expanses of 18 different deserts including the Arabian, Gobi, Thar, Karakum, Kyzylkum, Lop, Cholistan, Registan and Taklamakan deserts, a sizeable percentage of the world's forest cover (the Southeast Asia alone is home to 15% of the world's tropical forest cover), some of the most pristine beaches and serene islands, beautiful rice terraces, many idyllic lakes, some of the deadliest active volcanoes, many unusual customs and unique tribes. Asia also has three out of the Seven Wonders of the World as well as some of the most technologically developed cities.

The list of what all is there to see and do in Asia can run into thousands of pages, thus making it impossible for us to do justice to the task of compiling the information. But then it is also impossible for any person to complete seeing them all in a single lifetime. Regardless of what kind of a traveller a person is and what is his or her special interest, the versatile continent of Asia has one or more places to satisfy that desire. One just has to know where to go. So to help our readers know more about the continent and plan the trip of a lifetime, in this issue we have provided a complete list of all countries and regions in Asia, including

*autonomous and unrecognised ones. I am quite certain that reading through it should be fun.*

*There is an article in this issue that provides a snapshot of all the 53 countries (including autonomous regions) in Asia. In addition there are articles on an Artist's Impression of various Asian destinations. Readers may note that travel to every region in Asia is not safe as there are some countries that have ongoing wars, civil unrest, conflicts, terrorism and other political and geo-political problems. Chances of kidnapping, injury and even death are there in these places. The listing is only for information purpose and Touriosity does not encourage its readers to travel to these disturbed places.*

*I am lucky to have travelled to 17 out of the 53 countries (including autonomous regions) in Asia. Just when the pandemic began I was about to travel to Cambodia and Malaysia. So unfortunately, I had to cancel my trips, and ever since I have been waiting for the world to get better to step out and explore the world again. Travel is supposed to be for relaxation and in my opinion plans should ideally never be made in a hurry. Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be finally over, we could have happily stepped out. But now we have threats of a world war looming large in our minds. We can only pray that things get better in Ukraine and crimes against humanity and actions that threaten the existence of peace and safety in this world are put to an end at the earliest. So said, we also stand in solidarity with people in every country that are affected by the war.*

*Due to unforeseen events, a few of our issues have been delayed this time and we apologize to readers for the same. We will endeavour to maintain the schedule in future. I hope our readers will find this issue extremely interesting and useful. We look forward to receiving your feedback and suggestions at [ttnag.english@gmail.com](mailto:ttnag.english@gmail.com).*

*Rupanjana De*

Rupanjana De



# GUIDE TO THE MAG

To make your reading through TOURIOSITY TRAVELMAG better, here's presenting a quick glance at the various sections and features in the magazine.



## DESTINATION

It introduces the readers to various destinations in India with an emphasis on at least one destination from each region. It provides an in-depth information on the locations. In addition, there is also handy tour information to help our readers plan ahead of trips.



## AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

A travelling artist makes it to faraway lands and brings memories in the form of impressive water colour paintings. This section is a visual treat and interesting to read at the same time.



## FEATURE

Here we bring to our readers an article based on the theme of the issue not necessarily focusing on travelling or travel information.



## MEMOIRS OF A BACKPACKER

A new adventure every time in an entirely new place across the globe by a solo female backpacker. We follow the locals she meets, the unusual things she comes across, the surprises she gets and the problems she faces in her journeys with a backpack across the world.



## TRAVELOGUE

In this section we bring travel experiences of one of our readers from popular places around the world.



## GLOBETROTTER'S DIARY

This section explores the world of a globetrotter, whose passion is to travel, travel and travel more. It brings to readers unique facts and information from remote corners of the world.



## COUNTRYSCAPE / CITYSCAPE

Here we introduce a new country / city each time. We bring to our readers facts and photos of people, culture, locales, tourist places, food and traditions of a country / city. Our aim is to take our readers on a magical journey of an unseen land.



## PHOTO TRAVELOGUE

Here we bring to our readers a travelogue in photos.



## PHOTO FEATURE

In photo feature, we cover the theme of a particular issue in photographs from one of our readers.



## SNAPSHOT

This section is an ideal one for quick browsing. It provides interesting information from across the globe with a focus on the theme of the issue.



## AT A GLANCE

A quick look at a destination. Here, we bring to our readers locations from the lesser beaten paths in otherwise popular touristy regions.



## POINT OF VIEW

Here we bring to our readers useful articles with offbeat content. The idea is to give you the stimulus for thinking. It covers important issues that are in some way connected to travel and tourism.



## ADVENTURE

We present here stories of unique adventures undertaken by our readers in some part of the world with a focus on the issue theme.



## MOUNTAINEERING / TREKKING

This section focuses solely on trekking and mountaineering adventures across the world.

# CONTENTS



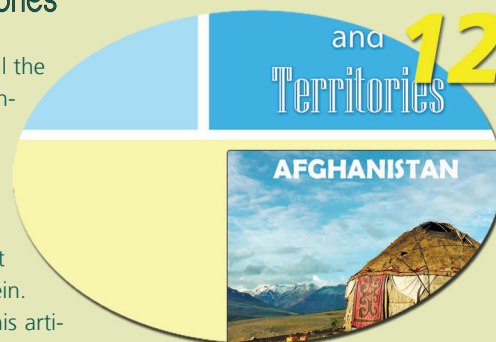
## A guide to the Map of Asia

In this article we have tried to introduce our readers to the complete map of Asia, which includes countries that lie in the Eurasian region. In this map the various special administrative regions and unrecognised countries in Asia have also been marked to the extent possible. In addition the article lists the countries enjoying the various superlatives in the continent.

## 53 Asian countries & territories

This master article brings together all the 53 countries (both recognised and unrecognised) and special administrative regions in Asia. Handicapped by the paucity of space, we have tried to bring out the major highlights of each country or territory and to list the most important attractions therein.

All regions have been included in this article only for the purpose of giving completion to the issue. Some countries and regions are not safe for travel due to political problems, terrorism, civil wars and other menaces and the same have been specifically mentioned in the article also.



## Asian Destinations

In this article we have brought to our readers glimpses from some of the most famous destinations in Asia. The article provides an overall glimpse of Asian destinations based on various travel interests of visitors so as to help our readers in planning their future travels. The images are in the form of detailed illustrations done by master watercolour artist Joaquin Gonzalez Dorao during his travels across various parts of the continent.



## Artist's Impression of Halong Bay, Vietnam

Known for its rocky limestone islands towering out of the emerald waters, Halong Bay is one of the most iconic places to visit in Vietnam. In this article, watercolour artist Joaquin Gonzalez Dorao brings alive the beauty of this UNESCO World Heritage Site through his vibrant brushstrokes and through sheer mastery and finesse.



## Other articles

Touroscope, travel horoscope .....

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TRAVELMAG

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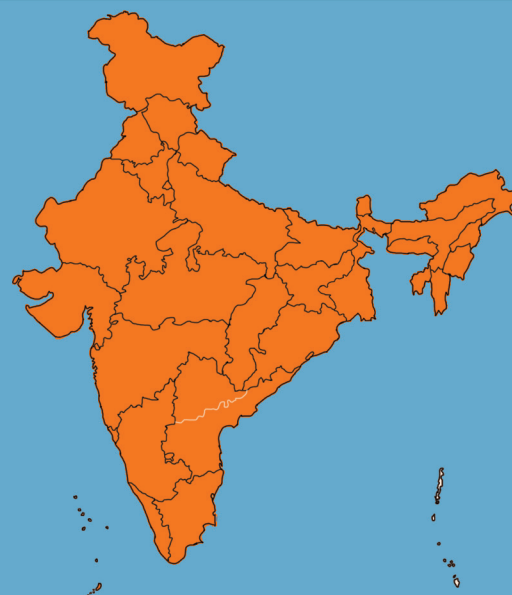
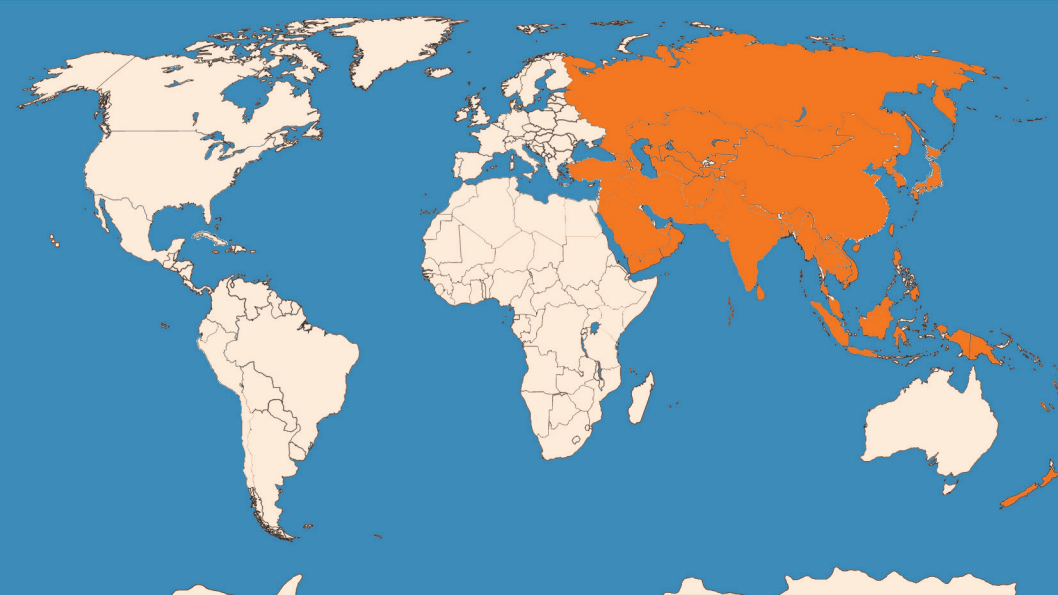
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## DESTINATIONS IN THIS ISSUE







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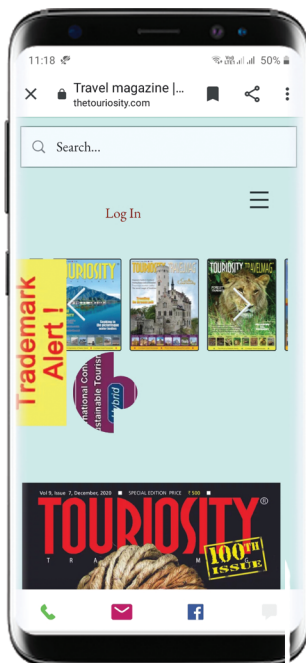
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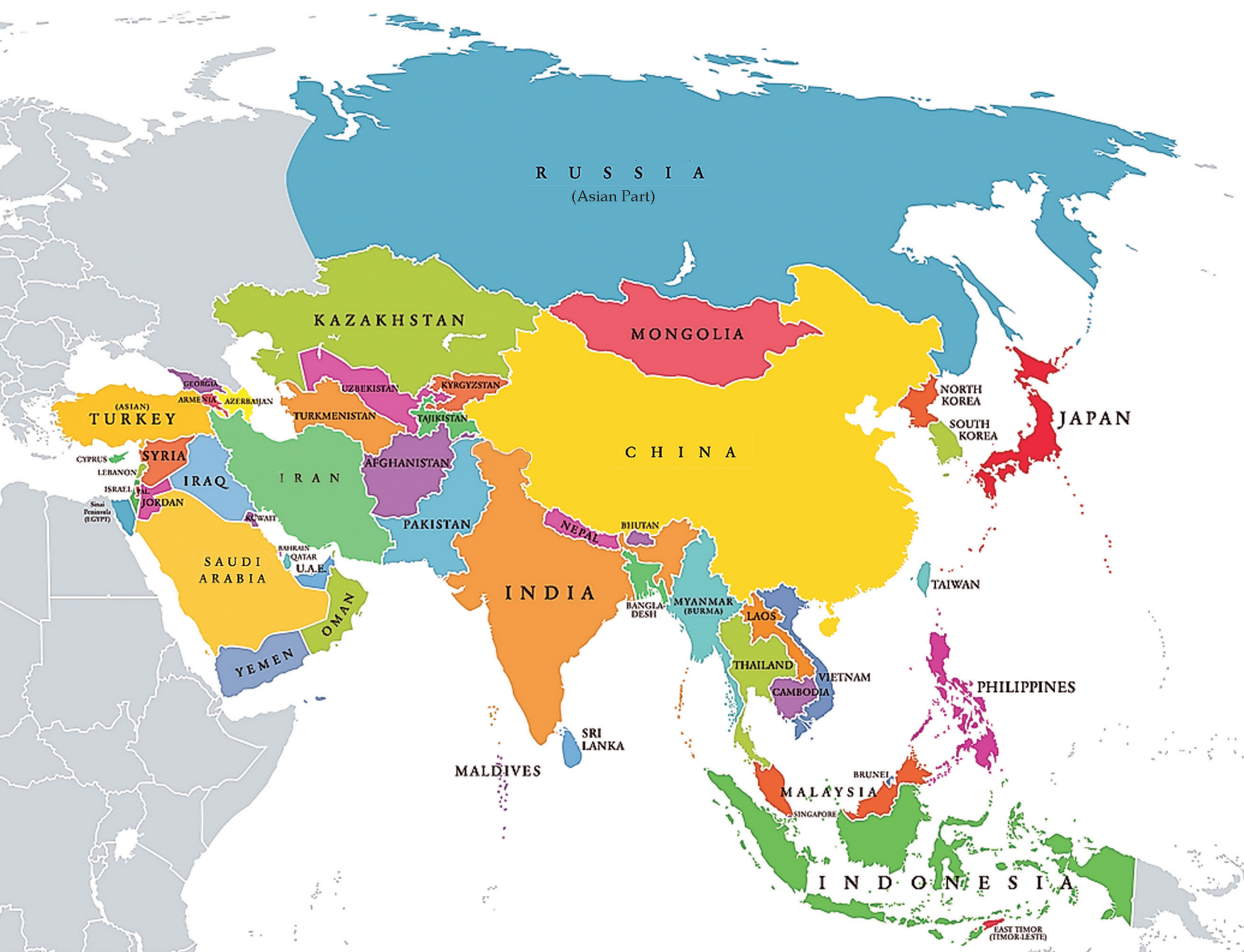
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# Alphabetical list of Asian countries



The following is an alphabetical list of all Asian countries and special administrative regions:

## A

Afghanistan  
Armenia  
Azerbaijan

## B

Bahrain  
Bangladesh  
Bhutan  
Brunei

## C

Cambodia

China

Cyprus

## G

Georgia

## H

Hong Kong

## I

India  
Indonesia  
Iran  
Iraq  
Israel

# Alphabetical list of Asian countries

## J

Japan  
Jordan

## K

Kazakhstan  
Kuwait  
Kyrgyzstan

## L

Laos  
Lebanon

## M

Macau  
Malaysia  
Maldives  
Mongolia  
Myanmar

## N

Nepal  
North Korea

## O

Oman

## P

Pakistan  
Palestine  
Philippines

## Q

Qatar

## S

Saudi Arabia  
Siberia (Asian part of Russia)  
Singapore  
South Korea  
Srilanka  
Syria

## T

Taiwan

Tajikistan  
Thailand  
Tibet  
Timor-Leste  
Turkey  
Turkmenistan

## U

UAE  
Uzbekistan

## V

Vietnam

## Y

Yemen

### SUPERLATIVES

The following is a list of interesting and important superlatives for all Asian countries:

#### Largest Region

Siberia, which is the Asian part of Russia, is the largest region of any country in Asia.

#### Largest country

China is the largest Asian country followed by India.

#### Smallest

The Maldives is the smallest Asian country both by land area as well as by population, followed closely by Singapore in the second spot.

#### Oldest

Iran, home to the Mesopotamian civilisation, is the oldest country of Asia dating back to 3200 BC, followed by Egypt

(3100 BC) and Vietnam (2879 BC). [A very small part of Egypt is in Asia]

#### Newest

Timor-Leste, also called East Timor, is the newest country in Asia. It gained independence from Indonesia in 2002

#### Youngest population

Laos has the youngest population in Asia. Only 6% of the country's population is above 60 years. India has the second youngest population.

#### Oldest population

Japan has the oldest population in Asia with almost 30% people above the age of 60. Following closely in the second spot is South Korea.

#### Most Visited

Singapore is the most visited Asian country followed by Thailand in the second spot.

#### Least Visited

Bhutan is the least visited Asian country followed by Brunei.

#### Coldest

Siberia in Russia is the coldest inhabited region not only in Asia, but in the whole world. The coldest place in Siberia is Oymyakon which is known to have recorded a minimum temperature lower than -70°.

#### Hottest

Tirat Zvi in Israel has the highest recorded temperature (54°C) in Asia.

#### Highest

Nepal has the highest mountain peak in the world [Mt. Everest, elevation - 29,032 ft]. However, in general Tibet is regarded as the highest region of the world [average elevation of 14,000 ft]. With many peaks with elevation over 7000m, Bhutan is one of the highest in the world.

*Note: Readers may note that due to Covid-19 and various other reasons, borders of many countries are still not open to visitors. Businesses may be temporarily closed due to other safety issues also. So it is important to check on the latest status before making any plan for visit.*





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Asia is the largest continent in the world; it stretches from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, covering a major part of the globe. It alone abodes about 60% of the world's population. People of hundreds of thousands of different tribes, communities, linguistic and cultural groups constitute this population adding to its sheer diversity. Its diverse terrain makes it a truly interesting continent. From the tallest mountain range, vast expanses of the Arabian and Gobi deserts, mysterious jungles and the most pristine beaches to the most unusual cultures and the most delicious cuisines, from enigmatic volcanoes and paradisaical islands to ancient architectural wonders and three out of the modern day Seven Wonders of the World, from skyscrapers to a wide variety of theme parks, from exotic street food to Michelin star-rated restaurants, the manifoldness of Asia is truly incredible. With so much to see and do in every country of Asia, it is difficult to narrow down the attractions to a small list. For a single person to unravel all these probably a single lifetime is not enough.

Here's a list of the important attractions in all the countries (and other regions including the autonomous ones) that constitute the continent.

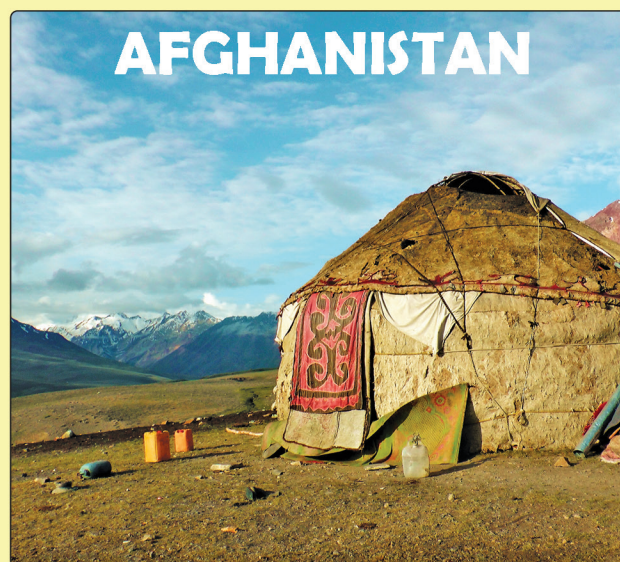
# 53 Asian NATIONS and Territories

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan lies at the crossroads of Central and South Asia. It is bordered on its east and south by Pakistan; to its west is Iran, to the north is Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and to its northeast is Tajikistan and China.

It is one of the oldest in the world with a history of more than 6000 years; there are many historical sights, more than 2000 years old Buddha Statues, the tomb of Hazrate Ali (son-in-law of Prophet Mohammed and the fourth caliph of Islam), some beautiful cities like Kabul and Balkh, beautiful lakes and mountains. Unfortunately, most non-Islamic historical sites have been destroyed by the Taliban and the cities rendered unsafe.

Situation in Afghanistan was completely different up until the 1970s. Tourism was at its peak then with people from all over the world visiting the country.

Needless to mention, today Afghanistan is not at all safe to travel to. Due to the political situation, civil unrest, armed conflict, crime, terrorism, kidnapping, injury or death and other unpredictable crimes, visitors should refrain from making any plan or any attempts at visiting the country. This entry is provided only for information purposes.



## AFGHANISTAN



## ARMENIA

A former Soviet Republic, Armenia lies on the Caucasus Mountains on the Asia-Europe border. It is one of the oldest existing nations of the world. It was the first country to officially adopt Christianity as its national religion.

The capital city Yerevan has a recorded existence since 782 BC making it one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It is famous for its architecture that includes Armenian-style churches, Soviet-era buildings, an impressive Opera House, the 18th century Blue Mosque, cascades and fountains.

Geghard monastery is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Lake Sevan is the largest water body in the Caucasian region and one of the largest freshwater high altitude lakes in Eurasia. Sevanavank monastery overlooks it. In Garni village is the only Greco-Roman colonnaded building. This classical temple perched on a hilltop dates back from the 1st century AD and overlooks a gorge. Another village, Khndzoresk, is known for medieval Goris Cave Dwellings that were dug into the steep slopes of Khor Dzor and connected to an underground tunnel. To escape attacks the locals had dug these out. Khor Virap monastery near the closed Armenia-Turkey border is another attraction. From here one can see the Ararat Mountains on the Turkish side. Tatev Monastery built atop a hill around 9th century AD has the longest cable car in the world.

Azerbaijan, a former Soviet Republic, is a Eurasian nation on the Caucasus Mountains. It is bordered on the south by Iran, on the west by Armenia, on the northwest by Georgia, on the north by Russia and on the east by the Caspian Sea. The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan is an enclave of the country that lies detached from the main part of the country and is bordered on the north and east by Armenia, on the south and west by Iran and on the northwest by Turkey. The capital of Azerbaijan is Baku and that of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic is Nakhchivan.

Being located on the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, Azerbaijan is a land of contrasts. Baku is often compared with Dubai for its outlandish architecture and appetite for gold. It presents both timeless buildings and modern-day architecture. It is a curious mix of oil-led development and traditional Asian cultures. Baku is also similar to Venice in that it has manmade waterways on which you can take a gondola ride. Neft Daşları is an entire city on stilts on the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan is also known for its mud volcanoes; it has more than 400 of them.

Azerbaijan is the dwelling place of the ancient man. Archaeologists have discovered 1.5 to 2 million years-old tools and pre-historic remains of humans.



Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago of 50 natural islands and 33 artificial ones located on the Persian Gulf. The central island is the Bahrain Island which constitutes more than 80% of the country's total landmass.

The country has evolved round pearl diving and hence it's an important thing to experience here especially in the pearl museum. History lovers can see temples and burial mounds dating back thousands of years. For nature lovers there is the Al Areen Wildlife Park & Reserve that abodes animals and birds including endangered ones like the Arabian Leopard, Arabian Gazelle, Oryx, flamingos and ostriches. The Shajarat-al-Hayat, or the Tree of Life, has miraculously survived for centuries by squeezing moisture from the sands in the desert.

Other important attractions are the Bahrain Fort (a 16th century Portuguese fort), the Riffa Fort (Sheikh Salman bin Ahmed fort built under the Persian Safavid Empire in 1812) and the Arad Fort (an Islamic building dating from the 15th century). One can also have a glimpse of life in Bahrain a century back by visiting the restored houses of Muharraq. The Bahrain National Museum showcases Bahrain's rich history. One can also enjoy water sports at the Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park, the largest and most advanced water park in the Middle East.

Located on the east of India, Bangladesh is the land of the Royal Bengal Tiger. Its biggest claim to fame is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Sundarbans. It is the largest delta in the world and boasts the largest mangrove forest of the world. 60% of the Sundarbans area is in Bangladesh, while the remaining 40% is located in West Bengal in India.

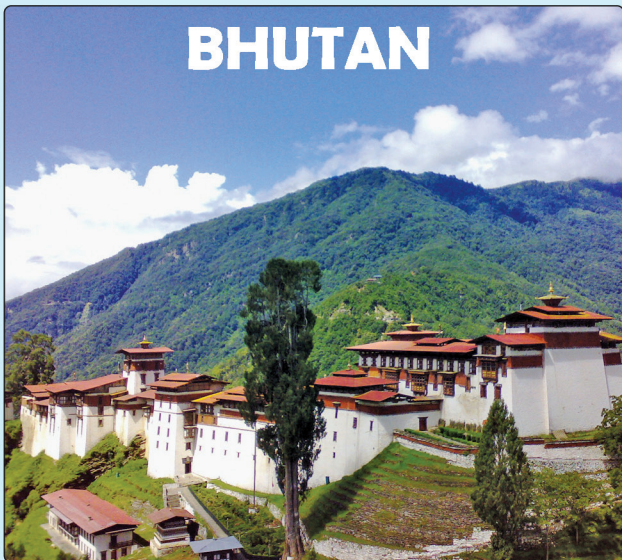
Dhaka, the capital city, dates back to the 17th century and was the Mughal capital of Bengal. Lalbagh Fort and Ahsan Manzil are two important historical buildings in Dhaka. The Cox's Bazar Beach in Chittagong is the longest natural beach in the world (120 km). The Kantaji Temple is a famous terracotta Hindu temple worth visiting. The 8th century Buddhist monastery of Somapura Mahavihara in a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site in Paharpur, Naogaon. The sixty-domed mosque in Bagerhat is historically as well as architecturally significant. There are also many rajbaris or palaces of old zamindars worth checking out.

Apart from historical monuments, the country also has many beaches, resorts, rivers, forests, variety of wildlife therein, islands and so on. Visitors can engage in a variety of activities including angling, fishing, water skiing, river cruising, hiking, rowing and yachting.





# BHUTAN



The Kingdom of Bhutan, a landlocked country surrounded by the Himalayas, Tibet and north-eastern part of India is also called the 'Roof of the World'. Snow peaked mountains, sprawling green valleys, colourful monastic architecture, swift rivers, delectable cuisine and extremely welcoming people are the highlights of Bhutan. 72% of the country is under forest cover making it the World's only Carbon negative country.

Bhutan is famously known as the 'Happiest country in the world' and it values Gross National Happiness more than Gross Domestic Product.

Bhutan's most famous attraction is the Tiger's Nest Monastery built on the wall of steep cliffs at an altitude of 3,000 meters. The monastery can only be reached after a long and tedious hike. One of its least known yet amazing attractions is the 7,570-meter-tall Kangkar Pünzum, the world's highest unclimbed mountain.

Thimphu is the capital city and other important places are Paro, Punakha and Trongsa. Trekking, hiking, kayaking and mountain biking are some of the interesting adventure sports options to indulge in.

Oil-rich Brunei is the only country in the Borneo islands. It is bordered by Sarawak Province of Malaysia on all sides except its northwest part which lies on the coast of the South China Sea. Brunei is one of the smallest countries of the world.

Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital city, is home to some of the most beautiful mosques and other modern architecture that exist side by side with Kampong Ayer, world's largest water village which is characterised by stilt houses, water transport. The country also has a lush mangrove forest as well as a heavy rain-forest cover. The former is home to the Proboscis monkeys that are endemic to the Borneo region. In short, the country is an ideal destination for nature lovers.

The two biggest mosques in Bandar Seri Begawan are the Omar Saifuddin Mosque and the Jame'Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque. The other important attractions of Brunei are Ulu Temburong National Park, Muara Beach, and the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan which is replete with attractions like mosques, museums, the Gadong Night Market and the water village. Boat rides are available to the mangroves and the rainforests as well as for tours around the water village.

# BRUNEI



# CAMBODIA

Cambodia is bordered on the north by Laos, on the east and south by Vietnam and on the northwest by Thailand. Talk of the country and what flashes in front of your eyes are the splendid historical ruins, temples and archaeological sites.

The most famous attraction of Cambodia is without a doubt, Angkor Wat. During the rule of the Khmer Empire, which spanned from the 9th to the 15th century, huge number of temples, monuments and palaces were built. These are mostly in ruins now and those at Angkor Wat and Bayon are a sheer delight to behold. Angkor Wat is the largest religious complex in the world with a total area of over 160 hectares.

Other important places are the capital city of Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, the capital of the Khmer Dynasty and Banteay Srei. All these places are replete with architectural delights. Sihanoukville is Cambodia's most popular beach destination.

Temple hopping, watching a traditional Apsara dance performance, quad biking, snorkeling and other water sport adventures are some of the activities to indulge in.



The largest country of Asia, China occupies a dominating position in the continent. It shares its land borders with Russia, North Korea, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

For travellers, China has a lot to offer. By far the biggest tourist attraction here is the Great Wall of China. Other important ones are the Forbidden City palace complex in Beijing and the Terracotta Army in Xi-an. Technological developments in the country also attract visitors. Natural beauty of the country lies in its high mountains, endless rice terraces and the Gobi Desert. The age-old traditions and customs of various tribes, the vast and varied natural landscapes, the modern metropolis, historical monuments, architectural wonders and UNESCO World Heritage Sites would take any traveller a lifetime to explore.

The capital city of Beijing is the most popular with tourists. It offers a plethora of attractions from the Great Wall to the traditional hutongs, from historic palace complexes and temples to skyscrapers and from hundreds of museums to lip-smacking street food. Other popular cities are Shanghai, Tianjin, Shilin, Kunming etc.



Cyprus is an island country located south of Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. It is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea after Sicily and Sardinia. The country is a member of the European Union and politically and culturally very much European, however, geographically it is in Asia.

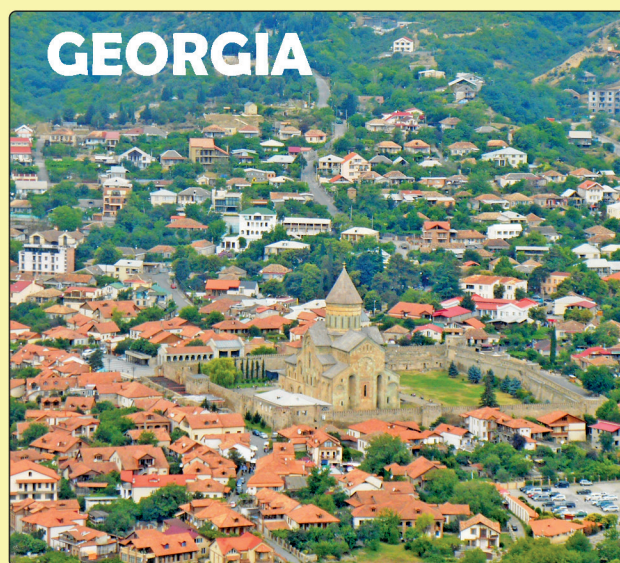
Historically a Greek island, Cyprus was conquered by Alexander the Great in 333 BC and later also came under the control of the Venetian and Ottoman Empires and then the British gaining independence from them only in 1960. The population of the country is sharply divided into two groups – the Greek Cypriots who form the majority and the Turkish Cypriots forming the minority. The two communities have the support from the governments of Greece and Turkey respectively. Due to ethnic clashes the country has been unofficially divided into two, the northern and eastern part of the country constituting 37% of the total area has come to be known as Northern Cyprus. It is regarded as a de facto republic and heavily backed by Turkey.

Cyprus has beautiful sandy beaches with clean waters making it a perfect summer destination. It has many historical sites and attractions. Nicosia is the capital city which is divided into two parts, each forming capital of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus respectively. Other important cities are Larnaca, Limasol and Paphos.

A former Soviet Republic, Georgia is a small country on the Caucasus Mountain and lies at the intersection of Europe and Asia. Located on the crossroads of continents, cultures, lifestyles, history and languages, Georgia is a perfect blend of Europe and Asia. It is known for its Black Sea beaches, Medieval villages with Tower houses, monasteries, forts, vineyards, cuisine and attractions that remind visitors of its Soviet past.

The capital city of Tbilisi is the pulsating heart of Georgia. It is known for beautiful architecture and maze-like cobble-stone alleys lit in shimmering yellow colour by old streetlights, Turkish baths, a citadel and more. The city, being a hub in the old Silk Route, has historically been a melting pot of different cultures, traditions and religions. It has also been under different rulers, from the Romans to the Arabs, Turks, Persians and Russians. Different rulers have left impressions of their culture, architecture and food, making the city look like a perfect mosaic.

Apart from Tbilisi there are other interesting places to visit in Georgia. Vardzia is a vast cave monastery dating back to the 12th century, the Svaneti region is famous for houses with defensive rock towers, Kakheti region is known for wine-production, Batumi is an ancient Roman port city.





# HONG KONG



Hong Kong is located in southeastern China on the eastern Pearl River Delta. Although not a country, Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of China and to visit here one does not need a Chinese Visa. It enjoys high degree of autonomy as well as executive, legislative and judicial powers.

Hong Kong is characterised by glassy sky-rises and is a great place to travel both on work and holidays.

The Victoria Harbour of Hong Kong, with close to 8 million people of various nationalities, is the third most densely populated place in the world. Hong Kong boasts the largest number of skyscrapers in the world (517). With 342 skyscrapers, Shenzhen comes second and with 299 skyscrapers, New York is third in the list. Many of these skyscrapers are located in the Victoria Harbour making it one of the most stunning coastal skylines in Asia.

Side by side with the skyscrapers are many historic buildings, amusement parks and rides, temples, a 34-meter-tall Tian Tan Buddha statue, Madame Tussauds Gallery and so on. Hiking, walking, shopping, taking part in festivals and carnivals, gastronomic tours etc. are the other things to indulge in while at Hong Kong. Both Macau and Mainland China are about 1 hour from Hong Kong.

India is the second largest country in Asia and by far the one with the greatest diversity. Because of the sheer diversity in everything, the country is often regarded as a sub-continent in itself. It is often believed that to complete seeing the whole country is not possible in a single lifetime.

It cradle of the world's richest and oldest civilizations. But unfortunately most foreigners' image of India starts and ends with Jaipur, Agra and Rajasthan. Delhi and Mumbai, being the main points of entry, do get a little attention too.

Even in terms of tourist attractions, there's hardly a country in the world as diverse as India. It is a melting pot of cultures, languages, ethnicity, religions, customs, cuisines, art, music, dances and lifestyles. It is home to some incredible examples of architecture, be it religious buildings, colonial-era structures, palaces and other historic buildings, towers, stepwells, caves, gardens and so on. From the tallest mountains to the world's largest delta, from arid Thar Desert in the west to the cold desert of Hunder in the north, from thick jungles to pristine beaches, from hill stations and gorgeous plantations to sprawling picturesque valleys, from the -50 degrees of Siachen to +50 in Rajasthan, India has it all. The country is also the undisputed best choice for wildlife experience in Asia.



# INDIA



# INDONESIA

This country is composed of more than 18,300 islands and a host of them are quite sought after destination for world tourists including family holidayers, adventure seekers, honeymooners, adventure lovers as well as solo travelers. The islands span some 4,700 kilometers in Southeast Asia and Melanesia stretching from the Indian Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west, thus making Indonesia cover a huge area on the globe. This results in great diversity in the country.

And in case you thought that Indonesia is all about islands, beaches lined with swaying palm trees and bluish green waters, let us clarify in the very beginning that the country is also known for its temples, volcanoes, scenic jungles with diverse wildlife, waterfalls, adventure activities, cuisine and cultural attractions.

Java is the world's most populous island. Located in it is Jakarta, the capital and the largest city of Indonesia (also the largest in Southeast Asia). Jakarta's Old Town is replete with Dutch colonial buildings.

Snorkelling, scuba diving, hiking, visit the terraced rice paddies along Bali's countryside and shopping in the city markets are some of the activities one can indulge in while in Indonesia.



The Islamic Republic of Iran, formerly known as Persia, is a West Asian country bordered on the west by Iraq, on the northwest by Turkey, on the north by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Caspian Sea and on the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan. On its south are the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

Iran is one of the oldest inhabited regions in the world with archaeological evidence claiming this to be dating back 1,00,000 years. The Neanderthals are believed to have had seasonal settlements here starting from the Paleolithic through the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Ages. The Aryans migrated here in the early 3rd millennium BC and in course of time the region came to be known as Ariana (and hence Iran) – the land of the Aryans. Persia has been ruled by a series of dynasties from the 7th century BC to the 7th century AD. These include the Median Empire (678-550 BC), the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC) which was conquered by Alexander the Great and replaced by the Seleucid Empire (312-63 BC), Parthian Empire (247 BC - 224 AD), and the Sassanian Empire (224 - 651 AD).

The capital and largest city of Iran is Tehran. For ruins of the Persian civilisation the best place to visit is Persepolis. One can also engage in activities like hiking and skiing in the Alborz and Zagros mountains.



**IRAN**



**IRAQ**

The Republic of Iraq is a West Asian country bordered on the north by Turkey, on the east by Iran, on the south by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, on the west by Jordan and on the northwest by Syria.

The capital and largest city of Iraq is Baghdad. It is the second largest city in the Arab world and the fourth largest in Middle East. But it is not safe to visit. Basrah, Najaf and Karbala are some major cities which have lesser tension. Most parts of the autonomous region of Kurdistan are rather safe and is generally regarded as the safest region to travel to in Iraq.

The country boasts six UNESCO World Heritage Sites and eleven additional sites on the tentative list of UNESCO. The World Heritage Sites include Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat), Erbil Citadel, Hatra, and Samarra Archaeological City, while the tentative list includes Ur, Nimrud, ancient city of Nineveh, Fortress of Al-Ukhaidar, Wasit, Babylon, marshlands of Mesopotamia, Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf, historical features of the Tigris River in Baghdad Rusafa and so on.

Readers may note that Iraq is not safe to travel. Being an issue dedicated to the continent of Asia, this entry is only for information purposes and Touriosity does not, in any way, intend to encourage travellers to visit any place in Iraq.

Israel, located on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, is a Middle Eastern country. It is bordered on the north by Lebanon, on the northeast by Syria, on the east and southeast by Jordan and on the southeast by Egypt.

Israel is regarded as a Holy place by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. From religious perspective, it holds the top position for the Jews and Christians. For the Muslims, it is the third most important place after Mecca and Medina.

The most iconic place in Israel is the Old City of Jerusalem. It is also the capital city of Israel. Jerusalem has some historic and religious attractions. Tel Aviv is the business hub of the country and also known for its beautiful architecture and beaches.

Another big attraction of Israel is the Dead Sea. In reality a lake and not sea, it is the lowest point on Earth with an elevation of 430 meters below the sea level. The dark blue water of Dead Sea has more than 30% concentration of salt making it 10 times saltier than the average ocean water. This makes the water very heavy and hence possible for tourists to naturally stay afloat on the water. This has resulted in making the Dead Sea region a sought after spa and resort destination.



**ISRAEL**



# JAPAN



Japan is the easternmost country of Asia. It is called 'the land of the rising sun' because it is here that sun rises first. It is comprised of four main islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku) and about 7000 smaller ones. The four main islands are home to the majority of the attractions.

Japan is a futuristic country yet it retains its unique cultures and tradition. On one hand the skyline of the modern metropolises of Tokyo, Osaka and Yokohama are dominated by skyscrapers, on the other hand in the other bigger cities like Kyoto and Nara are awash with ancient religious sights, temples and traditional palaces. Kyoto used to be Japan's capital during the imperial times.

Tokyo is a city of contrasts. While it is a modern city full of skyscrapers, most age-old practices and rituals are also still alive here. Its technology is unparalleled, and so is its ethnic food. There are hundreds of parks and gardens that provide the much needed dose of greenery. The Tokyo Tower, the National Museum, the Edo Open-Air museum, the happening Roppongi Hills area are some of the attractions in Tokyo. The stunning symmetrical cone-shaped snow-capped Mount Fuji, an active strato-volcano, is one of the greatest highlights of Japan. Mount Fuji is popular with trekkers and hikers. Along the hiking trails are a number of shrines, historical monuments and teahouses.

Jordan is a country in the Middle East bordered by countries like Israel on the west, Syria on the north, Iraq on the east and Saudi Arabia on the east and south. However, despite all the disturbances in the neighbouring countries, Jordan is an oasis of peace. It is quite strategically located between the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe.

Jordan is rich in history, tradition and religion; with influences from the Nabateans, the Ottoman Empire and the Roman Empire, the country has much to offer. Moses is said to have died here before he could enter the Holy Land, Jesus was baptized here. One of the best known facts about Jordan is that you can float in the Dead Sea here; well you also can swim in the Red Sea. Jordan is home to the UNESCO Heritage site of Petra. This ancient Nabatean city is unlike anything else in the world; located in the desert landscape, the structures here are carved out of rock. The ancient Roman amphitheater is a 'must see'. Another attraction to marvel at is the desert castle of Quseir Amra.

Another important attraction is the desert around Wadi Rum where one can experience lifestyle in the Bedouin way. A jeep tour on the Wadi Rum is a popular activity. For adventure lovers, Jordan provides options of scuba diving. One can hike to Petra via the back route, float on the Dead Sea,



# JORDAN

# KAZAKHSTAN



Kazakhstan, a former Soviet Republic, is the 9th largest country by area and the largest landlocked country in the world. The country perfectly blends the influences of both Europe and Asia in its architecture, lifestyle, food and culture. Almaty is the largest city and Nur-Sultan is the capital city of Kazakhstan.

Natural beauty of Kazakhstan is unparalleled. From steppes and mountains to rivers and lakes, it has a plethora of natural sights to soak in. There are health resorts around the Caspian Sea. Visitors can indulge in boating, sailing and rafting in the mountain rivers. The wild horses of Kazakhstan are famous. Skiing, trekking the mountains, swimming in the lakes, are the main activities.

All across Kazakhstan there are many museums and ethno villages that showcase the traditional lifestyle of the Kazakh people and offer them to experience the lifestyle, traditions, rituals, art, culture and cuisine. In southern Kazakhstan one can see cities and historical monuments located on the ancient Silk Route.

The diverse terrain has resulted in rich flora and fauna. The country abodes hundreds of animal, bird and fish and thousands of plant species. For their preservation there are many national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas. One can do bird-watching and go for animal safaris in these places.



One of the smallest countries in the Middle East, oil-rich Kuwait is located at the top of the Persian Gulf with Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia as its neighbouring countries. Kuwait City, the capital of the country, is famous for its ultra-modern architecture and skyscrapers. The three iconic Kuwait Towers overlook the pristine Persian Gulf. The modern architecture maintains a perfect balance with ancient ones.

With idyllic blue water and an expansive coastline, Kuwait is a travellers' delight. Its biggest attractions are the Grand Mosque of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre, Al-Muzaini Mosque, Al Shaheed Park, Kuwait National Museum, Souk Al-Mubarakiya and so on. There are also many natural attractions in Kuwait like botanical gardens, lakes and not to forget the Arabian Desert. The Aqua Park on the Arab Gulf Street is the first water park in the Gulf and has a total area of more than 60,000 sq.m.

Kobar Island located 30 km from the southern tip of Kuwait, in the Persian Gulf. Often called the Ibiza of Kuwait, the tiny island surrounded by crystal clear waters and sandy beaches is top destination for parties. For great shopping experiences one can visit Salmiya (the shopping district of Kuwait), Farwaniya (a residential area with great shopping options) or the iconic Souk Al-Mubarakiya.



## KUWAIT



## KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet Republic, is a mountainous landlocked country in Central Asia, with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China as its neighbours. Kyrgyzstan is one of the world's least-populous countries. 70% of the country is under mountain cover and there are more than 85 different mountain ranges that make up its territory.

One of the defining characteristics of Kyrgyz people is that traditionally they have been fierce. A little known fact is that it was to prevent the Kyrgyz people from raiding the borders of China in the 3rd and 4th centuries BC that the Great Wall of China was constructed.

Kyrgyzstan has 3 UNESCO World Heritage sites. The capital and largest city is Bishkek. Some points on the ancient Silk Route were Tash Rabat, Burana Tower and Osh bazaar. Originally a monastery, Tash Rabat was converted into an inn for travellers on the Silk Route. Burana Tower formed part of the ancient city of Balasagun and the Osh Bazaar is a 3000-years-old bazaar that gives an idea about how life might have been during the days of trading along the ancient Silk Route. The trading route connected China with Europe and Middle East and was established during the Han Dynasty in 130 BC. The Ottoman Empire closed down the route in 1453 AD, but it left lasting impacts that can still be felt.

Laos is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia. The capital of Laos is Vientiane. The city is on the banks of the iconic Mekong River. Its important attractions are the Patuxay Victory Monument, the gold stupa of Pha That Luang, the Buddha Park, Wat Si Saket, the Hophakaew Museum and Wat Si Muang, a Buddhist temple dating to 1563 AD. One may also try the delicious street food in the Vientiane Night Market and take a cycle tour around the city.

Luang Prabang and 33 surrounding villages are UNESCO World Heritage Site. One can experience incredible mix of cultural and architectural heritage here. Located at the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers, Luang Prabang was the ancient royal capital. Mount Phousi temple, Wat Xieng Thong, Tad Sae waterfall, Phra Bang, Royal temple museum and Pad Tad Ke botanical gardens are some of its biggest attractions. Hogging at the night street market is a great activity to indulge in. Luang Prabang is best explored on foot or on a bicycle.

Another important town in northern Laos is Vang Vieng, known for limestone karst formations. Rock climbing, spelunking, ziplining and tubing down the river are the activities to indulge in here. Si Phan Don in southern Laos is another incredible place to visit. Its waterfalls, paddy fields, temples and natural beauty are unparalleled. Dolphin watching and kayaking are activities to indulge in.



## LAOS



## LEBANON



Lebanon is bordered by Syria on the north and east, Israel on the south. It shares coastal border with Cyprus. One of the smallest countries in the world, it has the oldest civilization going back almost 7000 years. In 64 BC it came under the Romans leading to the spread of Christianity. From ancient Roman ruins, to well-preserved crusader castles, from spectacular Churches and Mosques to limestone caves, from beautiful beaches to mountainous ski resorts, from Ottoman hammams to modern day discotheques, it has everything.

Beirut is the capital and Tripoli is the second largest city. Tripoli is an ancient city dating back to the 14th century BC. It has beautiful Arabesque designs ornamented with hexagonal cornices, elegant facades, molded door and window frames. Its old town is home to many historical sites including citadels, mosques, hammams, madrasas and caravanserais located inside the Souk.

The 17th century Mseilha Fort in Hamat village, the 12th century Citadel of Raymond de Saint-Gilles in Tipoli, the 12th century Byblos Castle in Byblos, the 13th century Sidon Sea Castle, the Moussa Castle between Deir el Qamar and Beit ed-Dine, Roman ruins at Tyre, Crusader castle in Rachaya, Beaufort Castle in Nabatieh Governorate, sleepy coastal towns, etc. are some important tourist attractions. Unfortunately years of turmoil in Lebanon has led to deterioration.

Macau is an autonomous region of China. Popular as a gambling destination, Macau is also known as the 'Monte Carlo of the Orient' and the 'Las Vegas of the East'. Gambling is legal here and casinos located here have the distinction of earning the greatest revenue from gambling anywhere in the world.

There are many activities other than gambling for tourists to engage in. Macau has many museums, libraries, theatres and cultural centres. It is also home to the highest Commercial Bungy Jump in the world [233m or 764 ft]. One also finds here the Giant Panda Pavilion. There are also a number of historical sites worth visiting which includes temples, churches, old mansions, fortresses and squares. The Ruins of St. Paul's in Central Macau Peninsula belong to an early-17th-century Jesuit church that was designed by an Italian Jesuit and completed in 1602 by early Japanese Christian and Chinese craftspeople. The A-Ma Temple in Macau Peninsula dates back to the time before the Portuguese arrived here in the 16th century. Apart from the Macau Peninsula, there are also many attractions in Taipa and Coloane Islands which form part of Macau.

The culture of Macau is a blend of Portuguese and Chinese cultures. The cuisine of Macau also has a great variety and includes Portuguese and Chinese cuisines as well as Macanese cuisine which is a blend of the former two.

## MACAU



## MALAYSIA



Malaysia is truly multicultural and diverse. It has three main ethnic groups living in harmony, the Chinese and Indians, apart from the Malays. It is equally diverse in attractions; the tallest skyscrapers coexist with important historical and cultural heritages. Kuala Lumpur is the capital city of Malaysia. The other popular destinations are Kota Kinabalu, George Town, Johor Bahru, Ipoh etc. Lankawi is the most popular island in Malaysia.

The country consists of 878 islands and two main parts, Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, the two being 640 km apart. The latter is located in the island of Borneo and is divided into two of its biggest states Sabah and Sarawak.

From dreamy islands and pristine beaches, to some of the world's oldest rainforests that boast unique wildlife, from extraordinary theme parks and gardens to delectable cuisine, from jaw-dropping architecture including colonial architecture from the period of rules of the British, the Portuguese and the Dutch to captivating culture and delectable cuisine, Malaysia has everything on offer. It is also a great place for adventure aficionados as well as shopaholic visitors. Malaysia provides good hiking and diving opportunities. The best place for hiking is Mount Kinabalu in Sabah and Sipadan Island is popular as a diving destination.



The Maldives is an archipelago of 1,192 coral islands out of which only 200 islands are inhabited. The country is situated in the Indian Ocean south of Sri Lanka. It is known worldwide for its luxurious water villas, white sand beaches, adventure options and as an ideal honeymoon or leisure destination. Malé, the capital city is full of high rises as well as historical buildings and monuments, some even dating from the 17th century.

The Maldivian islands present lush tropical landscapes, beautiful white sand beaches, crystal-clear ocean waters and colourful coral reefs that beckon tourists from the world over. The country has some of the most breathtakingly beautiful beaches in the world. With unparalleled underwater riches, the underwater world of the archipelagic country is equally stunning. Maldives' azure waters are home to diverse marine life and corals of different colours. No wonder therefore, it is a place for activities like snorkelling and scuba diving.

The islands are grouped into natural atolls. An atoll is a ring-shaped coral reef, island or chain of islands that encircles a lagoon. In Maldives there are about 26 such atolls. For visitors to have the best experience there are over-water bungalows with glass flooring. Watching manta rays and reef sharks swimming underneath your feet can be an otherworldly experience.

## MALDIVES



## MONGOLIA



Mongolia is the least-densely populated country in the world with a population of only less than 3.3 million (33 lakhs) [it is almost half the size of India]. The immense emptiness of the countryside mesmerizes adventurous travellers who have the courage to step back in time and explore a country that does not seem to have changed much since the hey-days of its celebrated conqueror Ghenghis Khan. In the 12th and 13th centuries, he united nomadic tribes of the Eur-Asian steppe and established the largest contiguous empire in history. In Mongolia people mostly still live semi-nomadic lives, living in traditional gers and herding sheep, goats, yaks, horses and camels across the endless dry steppes.

Ulaanbaatar is the capital city. It is an incredibly busy and overwhelming city with skyscrapers, vehicles and development everywhere and a population of 1.5 million, almost half of the country's total population. One also finds here Chinese pagodas, Soviet-era buildings and traditional nomadic gers adding to the diversity of the city's landscape.

Bayan-Ulgii province in Mongolia houses some of the oldest mountains in the world. Bordering Russia, China and Kazakhstan, it is the most remote area of the country. Up north, closer to the Siberian border, there are some forests and the south contains the immense Gobi Desert.

Myanmar has a host of interesting places to visit and on top of the list are Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake. The new capital of Myanmar is Naypydaw. Yangon is the largest city and the former capital [earlier known as Rangoon]. It has some famous attractions including the Sule Pagoda, Shwedagon Pagoda, Kandawgyi Lake and palace, Inya Lake and so on.

From the 9th to the 13th centuries Bagan was the capital of the Bagan Kingdom that unified the various regions that later constituted Myanmar. Today the ancient temple city of Bagan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its landscape with thousands of temples (almost 3500 temples and Buddhist Pagodas tucked away amid dense forests) is one of the most iconic images of Myanmar. It is possible to view Bagan by flying over it in a hot-air balloon.

A famous freshwater lake in Myanmar is the Inle Lake. This second largest lake of Myanmar is located down in the south. The Intha people inhabiting the area around the lake live in small villages or floating houses on the lake itself. Their main sources of livelihood are fishing, and selling fruits and vegetables. A boat trip on the lake is memorable. One may also visit the Kayan villages where the tribes are known for their long necks. Nearby attractions include the Shwe Inthein Pagoda, Hpaung Daw U Pagoda and Nga Phe Kyaung Monastery.

## MYANMAR





## NEPAL



Nepal, being home to the highest mountain peak in the world, the Mount Everest, is the top destination for mountain lovers. But there are many other attractions to see here. The country also has beautiful lakes, stupas, temples, monasteries, palaces, public squares and forests. The culture and heritage of Nepal is equally captivating.

Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal. Other important tourist destinations are Bhaktapur, Patan, Pokhara, Nagarkot and Chitwan National Park. Lumbini and Janakpur are also popular for religious tourism. Nepal has 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites; the Sagarmatha National Park (home to the Mount Everest), the Kathmandu Valley (home to medieval squares and sacred monuments), the Chitwan National Park (aboding a great faunal variety) and Lumbini (birthplace of the Buddha). The Sagarmatha National Park which abodes the Mount Everest also has many other high peaks as well as sweeping valleys, glaciers, deep gorges and varied wildlife, that includes snow leopards and red pandas. But this national park is for those without ailment and high physical fitness.

Nepal is great for adventure tourism. Mountaineering, trekking, camping and paragliding are the main activities. Climbing the mountains, trekking to the Everest Base camp and hovering above the peaks on helicopter are very popular.

North Korea is bordered on the north by China and Russia, on the south by South Korea, on the west by the Yellow Sea and on the east by the Sea of Japan. The capital and the largest city is Pyongyang. Most tourists visit only Pyongyang in North Korea. Its prominent attractions are the A 170-metre tall Juche Tower, Korean War Museum, Arch of Triumph (the largest victory arch in the world at 60m-high and 50m-wide), the 105-story Ryugyong Hotel, the Mausoleum, Kim Il Sung Square, a series of statues and so on. At over 110 metres-deep, the Pyongyang Metro is the deepest metro system in the world.

In North Korea the government mandates complete obedience. There cannot be any dissent and travellers either agree to abide by this law or forget about travelling there. Every movement of travellers is monitored and controlled, and any action outside of what has been expressly permitted may land travellers even in jail. Travel is possible only as a part of a guided tour with government registered guides, drivers etc. Backpacking, adventure travel, solo trip, family holidays etc. are some words alien to tourism industry here. South Koreans are banned from entering North Korea and the US has banned usage of its passport to enter North Korea. People of Israel, UK and Japan have also reported to have faced difficulties in entering. Often on entry border officials confiscate visitors' cell phones, the guide takes the passport and return the same only during return.



## NORTH KOREA

## OMAN



Oman is a country in the Middle East on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and on the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is bordered on land by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Yemen and on the coast by Pakistan and Iran. Oman has diverse flora and fauna, protected by nature reserves and sanctuaries. Majlis Al Jinn is one of the largest cave chambers in the world. The country is also a great destination for snorkelling due to the presence of colourful coral reefs.

In sharp contrast with other Middle Eastern countries, cities of Oman are not filled with skyscrapers. The country that has been historically into seafaring, trading and exploration has maintained its culture, traditions and heritage and glimpses of the same are visible everywhere. Muscat, the capital city and other desert oasis towns still retain old architecture in most places. Age-old traditions blend seamlessly with modern-day living in Oman, and one is amazed at the beautiful co-existence of the old with the new.

Oman is known for beautiful mosques, wadis, dhows or the traditional sailing ships, Al Buraimi semi-desert plains, terraced orchards in Jabel Al Akhdar Mountain, ornate ancient adobe fortresses like Fort Nahl, Fort Nizwa, Fort Sur, Fort Bahla, and so on. The 5000-years-old ancient Aflaj Irrigation System can still be seen in places like Dakhiliyah, Sharqiyah and Batinah.

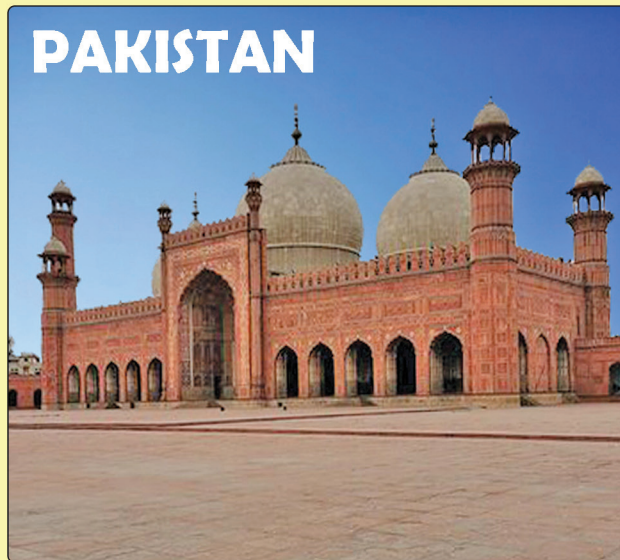


In Pakistan one finds natural beauty as well as historical monuments. Cities in southern Pakistan have attractions similar to that in the ancient cities of north India. Its northern part is rather rugged with scattered ruins and arid deserts. It is home to Karakoram, the world's second highest mountain. There are Buddhist monasteries, millennia-old petroglyphs and desert fortresses. A big attraction is the archaeological site of Mohenjo Daro from the Indus Valley Civilisation. What has been excavated so far represents only a third of the ancient city.

Lahore is the cultural, intellectual and artistic capital. Its top attraction is the Lahore Fort built by Emperor Akbar when he made Lahore his capital in 1566. The colossal Alamgiri Gate, Diwan-i-Aam and Diwan-i-Khas, Khawabgarh-i-Jehangir, Moti Masjid, Shish Mahal, Naulakha pavilion etc. are some attractions inside the fort. There are museums inside that display items including an ivory miniature model of India's Taj Mahal. Another big attraction is the 17th century Badshahi Mosque built during Aurangzeb's reign. Also in the city is Jehangir's Tomb built in 1637 by Shah Jahan, a 180-room Caravanserai and Asif Khan's Tomb.

Islamabad, the capital city, also has its share of monuments. Shah Faisal Mosque was a gift from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia; with a capacity of 3,00,000 people, is the sixth largest mosque in the world.

## PAKISTAN



## PALESTINE



Palestine has been granted a non-member observer state status by the United Nations in 2012. It is also a member of Arab League, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the UNESCO. It is officially recognised as a state by 138 UN member states, the Holy See and Sahrawi ADR. The remaining UN member states, including Israel, do not recognize it. The capital of Palestine is Ramallah and population is about 50 lakhs.

After a UN-brokered ceasefire at the Six-Day War of 1967 in which Israel went to a bloody battle against Arab states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, Israel gained control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and other Palestinian territories, but never formally annexed them. The State of Palestine considers itself to be the legitimate government of the West Bank, a large part which is under occupation by Israel. The latter regards the area claimed by Palestine as a 'disputed' territory. In turn, Israel, which was founded in 1948, is not recognised by 31 UN members, mostly the Islamic countries of Middle East and North Africa.

The birthplace of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, site of his crucifixion, some burial sites, monasteries, temples, desert, palaces and caves are some of the historic places that one will come across in Palestine. A trip to Palestine is also popular with pilgrims.

The Philippines is an archipelago of over 7,640 islands, making it the most ideal beach holiday destination. There are tropical rainforest covers on many islands, others are known for beautiful lagoons and pristine beaches. The culture of the Philippines is a mix of the Spanish, American and native Filipino influences.

Manila, the capital city, is densely populated. It has a curious mix of Spanish colonial architecture and modern day skyscrapers. Another important city is the port city of Cebu which is comprised of 150 islands. Bohol Province is known for its unusual geological formations called the Chocolate Hills. There are more than 1500 hills of more or less same size and shape spread over an area of 50 sq km. The hills are under thick cover of vegetation which turns brown during summer or dry season making the vista look like a bar of chocolate.

The idyllic island of Boracay is known for its serene white beaches, beautiful resorts, adventure sports and active nightlife. Palawan Island is also a great place to relax and unwind. One can see the ruins of Japanese ships from World War I and limestone karst cliffs. Scuba diving is a popular activity here. El Nido in Palawan is known for its beautiful white beaches and activities like snorkelling. The Philippines is a great place for activities like surfing, scuba diving, snorkelling, other water sports activities and trekking.

## PHILIPPINES





## QATAR



Qatar is a country in the Middle East which shares its southern border with Saudi Arabia and maritime borders with UAE, Bahrain and Iran. It is one of the richest countries in the world with the highest GDP per capita. Doha is the capital city. It is a sprawling modern metropolis that exhibits co-existence of multicultural and a perfect harmony between the old and the new. For the shopaholic, it is a true paradise with hundreds of shopping malls with thousands of brands, the Corniche area mesmerises visitors with dazzling views of the harbour as architecturally impressive high-rises compliment the shoreline. In sharp contrast, the traditional Souqs and the Old Town impresses visitors with its old world charm and laid back lifestyle.

There are a number of attractions in Doha. Museum of Islamic Art showcasing Islamic art from 3 continents over 1,400 years, the Msheireb Enrichment Centre located on a floating barge docked at the Corniche near the Sheraton Hotel showcasing Qatar's glorious past and ambitions for the future, the Weaponry Museum displaying weapons and artifacts dating back to the 16th century, the long seaside promenade of Al Corniche that curves around the Doha Bay and the old Arabic market quarter of Souq Waqif. Architectural attractions worth visiting here are the Al Koot Fort (1880), the Clock Tower, the Grand Mosque and the Doha Heritage Village that showcases the traditional Qatari lifestyle.

Russia, the largest country in the world covering one-eighth of Earth's inhabitable landmass, spans across Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. Its Asian part shares land borders with Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China and maritime border with Japan and the United States along the Bering Strait.

The origin of Russia as a nation was in Europe when the first Slavic state, called Kievan Rus, was established in the 9th century AD near the present day Ukrainian capital, Kiev. Only in the 16th century Russia began expanding into Asia and gradually it conquered the region of Siberia. Today 75% of the Russian territory is located in Asia, however almost 75% of its population lives in the European part, making the large Asian part sparsely populated. The Ural Mountains and the Ural River mark Europe's eastern continental border with Asia while the northern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains and the Turkish Straits mark the southern continental border with Asia.

The main cities in Asian part of Russia are Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Omsk, Samara and Yakutsk. The Kamchatka region located in eastern Siberia is surrounded by Okhotsk Sea, Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea. A flight from Moscow to its capital city Petropavlovsk takes more than 8 hours making it the longest domestic flight on earth.

## RUSSIA



Oil rich Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. It lies at the farthestmost end of southwestern Asia and shares its land borders with UAE, Qatar, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Iran and Jordan. On its eastern coast is the Arabian Sea and on the western coast is the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. The country is known for its vast arid landscape and many nomadic tribes that inhabit it. The world's largest sand area, the Rub'al-Khali (meaning Empty Quarter), which forms part of the Arabian Desert, covers majority of the southern part of Saudi Arabia. Apart from these, one also finds in Saudi Arabia the Al-Dahnā Desert, the Al-Nafūd and the Red Sand Desert.

In western Saudi Arabia, lies the cradle of Islam. Its two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, are located here making religious tourism extremely popular in Saudi Arabia. Riyadh, a former oasis town, is the capital city and administrative hub, Jeddah is the commercial centre and Mecca and Medina are religious sites. Other important places are Jeddah, Mecca and Medina.

Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage site, contains remains of an ancient city inhabited until the 1st century AD by the Nabataeans. Scattered across the country one also finds mud dwellings that reflect the history of the country. Some of these have been converted into heritage hotels.



Singapore is a melting pot of some prominent Asian cultures. It is small, yet packed with limitless attractions of all types, be it cultural, architectural, historical, religious, natural or manmade. It has preserved the old and integrated it perfectly into its futuristic urban landscape. Its theme parks have brought to life attractions like rain forests, waterfalls, beaches and other natural attractions that are otherwise absent in the country due to its sheer small size. However there are a few natural white sand beaches and lagoons with clean blue waters.

The biggest attractions are Universal Studios, Sentosa Island, Jurong Bird Park, Merlion Park, Marina Bay, the infinity pool of Marina Bay Sands resort, Clarke Quay, the Zoo, the Flyer, Gardens by the Bay, Chinatown, Woodlands, night safaris, Madame Tussauds Wax Museum, Little India, Sri Mariamman Hindu temple, Sultan Mosque and so on. Singapore is also a paradise for foodies.

Changi Airport of Singapore is themed on nature and even those who just have a stopover here, are amazed at the experience they have at the airport. It has butterfly parks, fish ponds, flower gardens, the world's tallest indoor waterfall and a 23-meters-high indoor suspension bridge. Apart from these and the regular attractions that all international airports normally have there are also food streets, four slides and a movie theatre.



Located in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, South Korea has an incredible 15 sites listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites. It has a good mountain cover, many national parks, beautiful islands and pristine beaches.

Seoul is the capital of South Korea. It is a perfect blending of the ancient with the modern. Tucked between glass buildings and skyscrapers are ancient palaces, pagodas and shrines. Some important sites in Seoul include the National Museum, the 15th-century Changdeokgung Palace Complex in Waryong-dong, Jongno-gu, the 14th century Gyeongbokgung Palace, the 8th century Bonggeunsa Temple, almost 500-metres-tall N Seoul Tower, the Bukchong Hanok Traditional village, world's 5th tallest building the Lotte World Tower and so on.

Another important city in South Korea is Busan. It is a port city famous for its beaches, mountains, hot springs, nature reserves and temples. Jeju Island is the most popular island destination in South Korea. The Gwangjang Market in Seoul is a great place for Korean street food. The Jagalchi Market in Busan is famous for seafood. Another important place to visit is the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Here one can have an idea about the conflict between North Korea and South Korea. There is an Observation Deck from where one can also have a peek at North Korea.

Sri Lanka is an island nation in the Indian Ocean separated from India by Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait. Its tropical climate and delicious seafood are to die for. Colombo is the executive, judicial and commercial capital and the largest city; Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, a suburb of Colombo, is the legislative capital. Colombo is a cosmopolitan and vibrant city on the western coast of the country. It has a rich colonial heritage and boasts many tourist attractions including the Gangaramaya Vihara temple, Kelaniya Raja Maha, Independence Square, Dutch Hospital complex, Mount Lavinia and a number of other temples and churches.

With a history dating back almost 2500 years, Sri Lanka has many archaeological sites and historic attractions. There are ancient caves, temples, churches, colonial-era fortifications, lighthouses and bungalows. Being an island, it is also dotted with pristine beaches. It is also known for its wildlife and conservation centres thereof. The most popular destinations are Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Galle and Kandy. Popular beach destinations are Unawatuna, Hikkaduwa, Bentota, Tangalle, Tricunmalee, Mirissa, Matara, Dalawella, Goyambokka, Hiriketiya, Koggala, Ventura, Weligama, Negombo and Uppuveli. Mirissa, at the southernmost tip of the island, is a great whale-watching destination. Popular national parks and wildlife conservation centres are Yala, Sinharaja, Udawalawe, Wilpattu, Minneriya, Pinnawala, Bundala, Kaudulla and so on.







Syria, a Western Asian country, shares its land borders with Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon and maritime border with Cyprus. Damascus, the capital city, is the oldest capital in the world and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world. It has historically been one of the world's biggest centers for art and culture, especially in the Arab world. It was under the Roman and the Ottomans. It is the fourth holiest city in Islam. Naturally Damascus has many historical sites from various periods in history. Unfortunately, the extremely crowded city filled with structures is difficult to excavate, hence all the ruins, some of which lie up to 8 feet below the ground level could not be revealed. The main attractions include the Citadel, old city walls and seven existing city gates, old Christian quarter of Bab Tuma, Umayyad Mosque, other Islamic sites, ancient district of Amara, Jewish Quarter, a number of churches and Saladin mausoleum. Another important destination in Syria is Palmyra, an ancient Semitic city with archaeological finding dating back to the Neolithic period. It was a point in the ancient Silk Route and was quite well developed. One can see the ruins of the Great Colonnade, Temple of Bel, tower tombs etc.

Syria is not at all safe to travel to due to the utterly dangerous security situation, bombings, armed conflict, crime, terrorism, kidnappings, possibilities of injury or death. This entry is provided only for information purposes.

Officially called the Republic of China, Taiwan is a de-facto sovereign country, with no interference from China. To put it simply, there are two claimants of the government of China, People's Republic of China (China) and Republic of China (Taiwan). Each one considers itself to be the sole legitimate government of China and therefore claims exclusive sovereignty over all territory (mainland China plus Taiwan). The PRC, proclaimed in 1949, is more widely recognised of the two. The ROC, constitutionally formed in 1912, and located primarily in Taiwan area since 1949, enjoyed recognition as the sole government of China until the late 1960s, when a majority of UN member states started to gradually shift recognition to PRC. Both PRC and ROC have its own One-China Policy and do not recognize each other. So no country can recognize both of them at the same time. As of today, 21 UN member states recognize ROC as the legitimate government of China and the remaining recognize the PRC.

Taiwan has its own currency, flags, passport and government. Taipei, a bustling cosmopolitan city, is the capital. It is home to the iconic Taipei 101 Tower, once the tallest building in the world. Other attractions include National Palace Museum (with many artefacts from Beijing's Forbidden City) and Shilin Night Market serving tasty Taiwanese street food. There are many national parks, lakes and other natural beauty to explore in Taiwan.



Tajikistan is a small landlocked nation in Central Asia bordered by Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is a former Soviet Republic and gained independence in 1991. 90% of the territory of Tajikistan is covered by rugged mountains. Some of the highest peaks ranging above 7k metres belong to the Pamir Mountains. Another mountain that dominates Tajikistan's landscape is the Alay Mountains. The country is popular for mountaineering, hiking and climbing. It also boasts a wide array of awe-inspiring natural landscapes including majestic snow-clad mountain peaks, incredibly beautiful crystal clear lakes and pristine alpine meadows.

Capital city Dushanbe's major attractions are the National Museum, Museum of Antiquities, Ismoil Somoni Monument, Rudaki Park, Noor Art Gallery, Opera Ballet, Museum of Ethnography and Gurminj Musical Instrument Museum.

The snow-capped peaks of the Fann Mountains rise over 5,000m. The Iskanderkulsky Nature Refuge bird habitat and the glacier-fed turquoise Iskanderkul Lake are also located nearby. The 13th century Fort Hisor has a madrasa and small museums showcasing ancient Tajik culture. It is only 15 minute drive from Dushanbe. Tajikistan was on the ancient Silk Road. So in addition to modern cities, Tajikistan also has notable ancient ruins.



South Thailand is home to pristine beaches and dreamy islands, while the north of the country presents a mountainous landscape and heritage towns. The main attractions of Thailand are its beaches, islands, temples, markets, food, etc. Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Pattaya are the most famous cities to explore. Bangkok is dotted with temples, of which Wat Arun and Wat Pho feature at the top. Its street food and active nightlife are also big attractions.

Located in mountainous north, Chiang Mai is one of the most popular tourist destinations. Temples like Wat Chedi Luang and Wat Phra Sing Woramahawihan, Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, the Old City walls and the Tha Phae Gate are some of the main attractions of Chiang Mai.

For beach goers, Thailand's biggest island Phuket, with its stunning beaches and cerulean waters, is a popular destination beautiful and shores. One may also visit the Old Town and Thai Hua Museum. Enjoying water sports activities and relishing local food activities to indulge in here. The Phi Phi Islands are known for picturesque beaches and activities like beach hopping, snorkelling, scuba diving and kayaking. Ko Samui is a great place to enjoy nightlife. The Railay Beach is known for its glistening white sands and limestone rock formations protruding out from the sea.

## THAILAND



## TIBET



Tibet is an autonomous region that is still considered a part of China internationally. It is located on the high Tibetan Plateau on the northern side of the Himalayas. With an average elevation of 5,000m, Tibet is the highest region in Earth. It has numerous towering peaks, the highest of them being the Mount Everest (a part of the Mount Everest lies within its geographical boundary). No wonder, it has earned the name 'Roof of the World'.

After the invasion of Tibet by China, the 14th Dalai Lama fled for fear of his life and took refuge in India. Today he is the de-facto head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Darjeeling-born Indian-American-Tibetan politician Lobsang Sangay is the Prime Minister of CTA. It is also called the Tibetan government-in-exile, and operates from Dharmasala in Himachal Pradesh, India.

The most important attractions in Tibet are the 6,718-metres-tall Mount Kailash (important pilgrimage of the Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists), the glaciers-fed sacred Mansarovar Lake (one of the highest fresh-water lakes in the world), the Dolma La Pass, the 13-floor-high UNESCO World Heritage Site of Potala Palace in Lhasa (built in the 17th century on the remains of an earlier fortress dating from the 7th century). Tourists visiting any place in Tibet need a Chinese Visa.

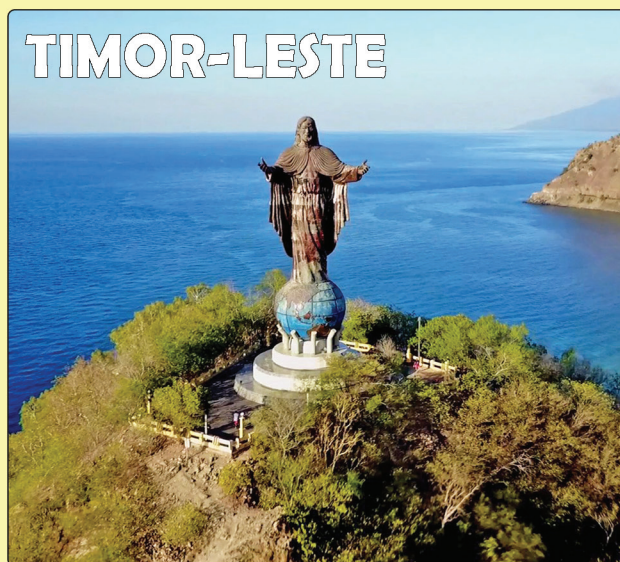
Many readers may find this a surprising entry; the reason is that most of us haven't ever heard of this country at all. Also called East Timor, Timor-Leste is a Southeast Asian country, one of the least visited countries in the world.

Timor-Leste gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 making it the newest sovereign state in Asia. Prior to that East Timor was under the rule of the Portuguese till 1975. Interestingly Timor-Leste is the country with the shortest people in the world. It is also one of the poorest countries. So there are actually a wide range of superlatives that one can use for this country.

Dili is the capital city of East Timor. It has interesting colonial architecture and is blessed with beautiful beaches. The most iconic image for travellers willing to visit this country is the 27metres-tall Cristo Rei de Dili statue that is built on a hilltop and looks over the surrounding bay. Baucau is the second largest city and also boasts colonial architecture. Com is another picturesque beach town. Important islands to visit are Atauro Island and Jaco Island.

The country is known for pristine beaches, lush greenery and wide variety of adventure activities including whale watching, diving, and other water sports. It is a true paradise for divers and nature lovers.

## TIMOR-LESTE





## TURKEY



Turkey is a Eurasian country located at the crossroads of the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Turkey is larger than any country in continental Europe. However, geographically it has majority of its area on Anatolian region in Western Asia and a small part on the Balkan region in Southeast Europe. It has Black Sea on the north, Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea on the southwest and west. It shares land borders with Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Greece and Bulgaria.

The most famous destinations (and main attractions) in Turkey are: Istanbul (historical monuments, colourful mosques, cosmopolitan culture and ancient architecture), Ankara (capital city with many museums), Cappadocia (Fairy chimney caves), Antalya (beaches and Roman ruins), Bodrum (twin bays and a medieval castle), Pamukkale (otherworldly thermal spa terraces), Izmir (castle and Roman ruins), Fethiye (beautiful offshore island and tomb), Göreme (fairy chimneys and open air museum), Bursa (first Ottoman capital and Great Mosque) and Alanya (historic beach and castle). Istanbul, the largest and most famous city sprawls across both continents. It is known for Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, Süleymaniye Mosque, Basilica Cistern, Bosphorus Bridge, Golden Horn, Galata Tower and the Grand Bazaar. Its variety of delicious food, crockeries, carpets, Turkish baths and whirling dervish dance are also famous.

Turkmenistan, a former Soviet Republic shares land borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran and maritime border with Caspian Sea. A majority of its area is covered by the Karakum Desert.

A massive earthquake in the capital city Ashgabat in 1948 in which 90% of the city's population died. Later, it was rebuilt more or less in Soviet style. After its independence, the Turkish government gifted it its first mosque, the Ertuğrul Gazi, built in the style of Istanbul's Blue Mosque. The almost 1-km-long Halk Hakydasy Memorial Complex in Ashgabat consists of three memorials: Ruhı Tagzym (dedicated to the victims of 1948 earthquake), Baky Şöhrat (dedicated to those who died in the Great Patriotic War between 1941 and 1945) and Milletın Ogullary (commemorating the dead in other battles).

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Merv was the largest city in the world in the 12th century. With a history going back almost 5000 years, it was an important city on the ancient Silk Road and is home to many iconic monuments. The 7th century Greater Kyz Kala Fortress or the Maiden Castle, the Lesser Kyz Kala Fortress, the Gäwürgala Town Walls and the Tomb of Hodja Yusuf Hamadani are important attractions of Merv. Another important site is the Darwaza Crater, known as the 'Door to Hell', in the Karakum Desert.

## TURKMENISTAN



## UAE



Where in the world can you find a ski slope in a desert? The answer is Dubai. In addition to some of the world's tallest and most iconic buildings, a huge manmade island and staggering superlatives of everything – highest, tallest, largest and biggest, Dubai also has an artificial ski slope.

UAE is a country in the Middle East bordering Oman and Saudi Arabia. It is located at the eastern end of the Arabian Peninsula. The capital of UAE is Abu Dhabi and Dubai is its biggest and most happening city, so much so that the entire country is often confused with Dubai.

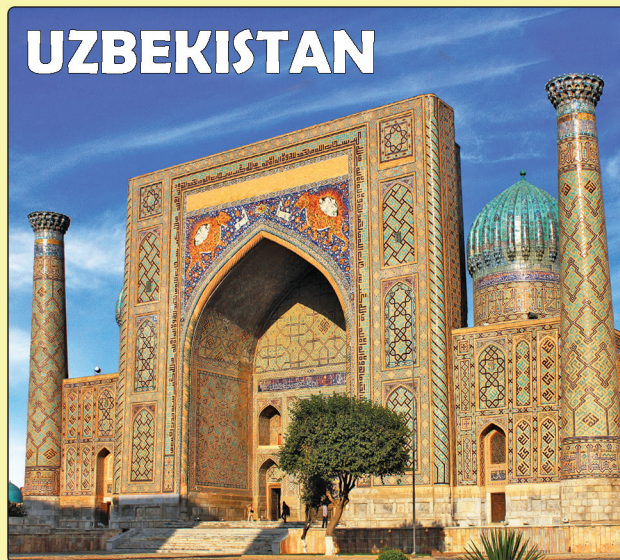
Dubai is a great place to visit with family and an ideal shopping destination. Some of its greatest attractions are Burj Khalifa, Burj Al Arab, Miracle Garden and Butterfly Park, Glow Garden, Ski Dubai (the world's largest indoor ski inside the mall of Emirates), Legoland, Dinosaur Park, Wild Wadi Water Park, Dolphin Bay at Atlantis, Underwater Zoo, Dolphinarium and Bird Show At The Creek, the world's largest choreographed fountain system set on the manmade lake near Burj Khalifa and a number of souqs (old Arabian markets). Bar Dubai area is a great place to see the blending of the old and the new. It also houses an old adobe castle and an Arabian dhow. Tour agencies provide desert safaris that come with unparalleled Bedouin food, music, dances and hospitality.



Uzbekistan, a former Soviet Republic, is known for its intricate and colourful art, grandiose architectures, ornate buildings, delectable cuisine, laid back life and warm hospitality of the people. The Samyush Gorge is the largest rock picture gallery in the world. It is famous for petroglyphs from the Stone and Bronze Ages. Tashkent, the capital city, is mainly known for its mix of modern and Soviet-era architecture. Dzuma Mosque, Kukeldash Madrasah, Tashkent Metro, Amir Timur Square and Hazrat Imam complex are some places to visit here.

Bukhara was a point in the ancient Silk Route and has many historical buildings like the 5th century Ark Fortress, Samanid Mausoleum, Abdul Aziz Khan Madrasa, Ulugbek Madrasa, Mir-i Arab Madrasa, Chor Minor Madrasa, 16th century Talipach Gate, 18th century Bolo Hauz Mosque, 16th century Kalan Minaret and Lyabi Hauz. Another city that featured on the ancient Silk Route is Samarkand. It is known for mosques and mausoleums. Its important attractions are the Registan Square with 3 ornate madrasas, 14th century Guri Amir Temur Mausoleum, 15th century Bibi Khaym Mosque, Shah-i-Zinda mausoleums, Ulugbek Observatory and Sherdor Madrasa. 80 km from Samarkand is another ancient city called Shakhrisabz which has many attractions. The gigantic 14th century Ak-Saray Palace, mausoleums of Dor-us Saodat, Dor-ut Tilavat and Kok Gumbaz and the historic city centre are some places to check out.

## UZBEKISTAN



## VIETNAM



The most popular tourist destinations in Vietnam are Ho Chi Minh City (also called HCMC, and formerly called Saigon), Hanoi, Halong Bay, Da Nang and Hoi An. At HCMC one gets to see the impressions left behind by the French colonists. The War Museum in HCMC is a must visit for all those who wish to know about the Vietnam War.

Hanoi is the capital city and is known for its age-old architecture and ancient temples. The ancient Temple of Literature in Hanoi dates back to the 11th century. Hanoi has Southeast Asian, Chinese and French influences in its culture and architecture. Halong Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular attraction for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. Da Nang is a coastal city that comes with number of idyllic beaches and Buddhist caves. Hoi An is an ancient city that was once one of Asia's oldest trading ports. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its historical centre boasts French colonial buildings, Chinese tiled roofs, timber houses, religious buildings, courtyards and so on. Every full moon cycle, the people of Hoi An celebrate the Lantern Festival to honour their ancestors.

Vietnam is also famous for its sheer variety delicious food. The country is also the largest producer of coffee in the world and takes pride in its unique coffee.

Yemen lies at the southernmost tip of Arabia. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia on the north and by Oman on the northeast. It shares maritime borders with African nations of Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Somaliland.

The capital of Yemen and its largest city is Sana'a. Located near the Sarawat Mountains, it is one of the highest capital cities in the world. Its Old city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Bab al-Yaman gate, Ghumdan Palace and Al Bakiriya Mosque are some of its attractions. Dar Alhajar, a fortress built on stone, is located about 15 km from Sana'a.

Tarim, a historic town in Wadi Hadhramaut, is known for its 365 mosques, one for each day of the year. Its skyline is dotted with minarets. It is located on a beautiful valley, flanked by vast rock cliffs on one side and surrounded by palm groves on the other. There are many 19th century palaces built by Javanese immigrants, some with interesting museums inside, that are open to visitors.

Scattered all across Yemen are palaces abandoned two centuries back. These go to show that the country was abode of affluent people couple of centuries back. Not anymore. Camels are a common sight throughout Yemen and are used for transport as well as food.



## YEMEN





# Women Travel Network

ADVERTORIAL

Women have many roles to play in various arenas. Her place in society is punctuated with many tasks. While accomplishing such tasks she compromises with her love to explore the unknown. Kayaking through seas, relishing exquisite delicacies of various countries, experiencing deep water snorkelling or just seeing the world can be any woman's dream waiting to be fulfilled. Making such dreams come true for many women are the new era all-women travel services.

## Why Women Travel Network?

Many a times, when your skin thirsts for a touch of mist or dew drops and your heart yearns for an escape far from the daily life routine or the load of work in your respective jobs, you start seeking for people eager to accompany you. You try convincing your husband or children to take some time out of their busy schedules, but many times in vain. At those difficult times, the Women Travel Network (WTN) gives you the grand idea to set out alone to evaluate the passion of you. Personal safety is of these of you great concerns, so maybe fearing to set sail for your

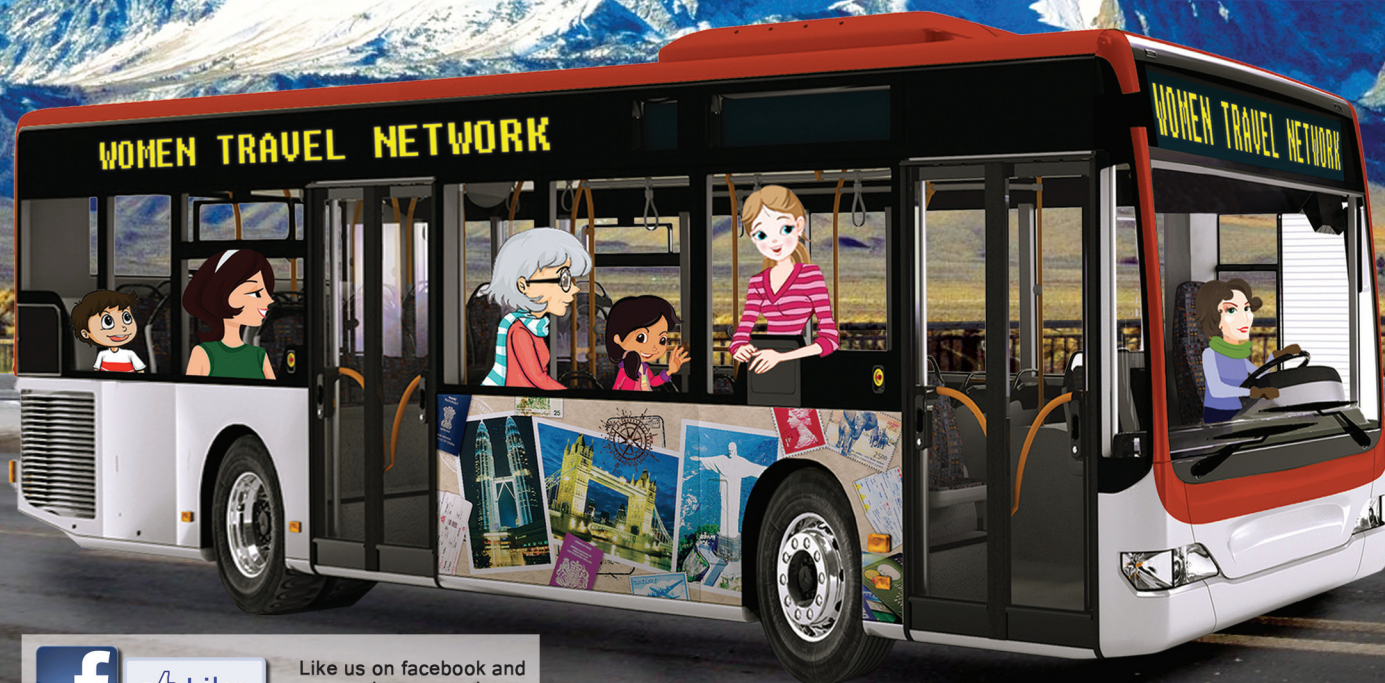
maiden venture all by yourselves. WTN takes this into account and enables you to indulge in thrilling vacations with a group of spirited women tourists of all ages all geared with the same vigour. Things can be made easy and trouble-free yet well organised by WTN as it reduces the prime inconveniences like buying tickets, booking for lodging and drawing up itinerary.

## What exactly WTN does?

With WTN you have the option of getting the best possible accommodation that would not harm your budget and the discretion of staying alone in rooms or sharing with someone. WTN also ensures that a suitable poise is maintained between seeing around and resting not making someone too fatigued with consistent tours. This network looks after all the formalities giving you a chance to pack your belongings without any hesitation. The organised travel plans will help gather fruitful travelling experiences in the company of like-minded women. WTN gives you the scope of bonding, and at the same time helps you make new friends. So if you are looking for a getaway, an escapade and your husband's/son's/father's /boyfriend's/friend's dates are bothering, Woman Travel







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WTN offers to make those unfulfilled travel wishes come true for many women. With a number of national and international tour packages of WTN you can travel the world, alone, with your son (below 8 years) or your daughter (no age bar) and make unforgettable journeys. Whether you travel alone, or with a kid, friends, neighbours or relations, Women Travel Network can give you memorable trips. Absolutely hassle-free and comfortable, yet adventurous and safe fun trips are what this Network has in bag for you. A real boon for a woman!

If you have your own group of women

It is also possible to make your own preferred groups and Women Travel Network will take care of all the formalities of booking, ticketing and managing the tour. You just need to enjoy your trip and forget about everything else. So get geared up ladies and make your dream come true.

How to go about it?

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Call: +91-8420108693







**Aries**

(21 March – 19 April)

You are exploring and searching now, making connections, and paying attention to your immediate environment. You love conversation and want to be around other people. It can be easier to find a close relationship, and for partnered Aries, a partner has their best interests at heart and is especially supportive.

Places to visit: The Tomb of Hafez in Shiraz in Iran - The best place to experience Iranian's emotional attitude to poetry.

The Ajanta Caves mainly consist of rock cut monuments dedicated to the ancient Buddhist traditions, while Ellora Caves contain Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monuments built during the Rashtrakuta Empire.

Favorable Dates: Jan 2, 7, 11, 16, 20, 25

Favorable Colors: White & Green

You have an analytical approach to everything, and you're great with details. You're more charming and likely to want to attract things to you through charm and playfulness. Anything new or different may be a little trying on you now, and you find less enjoyment in it.

Places to visit: Located in the Baltic Sea, Rugen Island is the largest island in Germany having Charming villas, romantic seaside resorts and beautiful beaches.

The forests of Palakkad are now preserved as the Silent Valley National Park in the state of Kerala and are famous for its vast collection of flora and fauna.

Favorable Dates: Jan 5, 8, 14, 17, 23, 26

Favorable Colors: White & Grey



**Taurus**

(20 April – 20 May)



**Gemini**

(21 May – 20 June)

You're feeling eager and enthusiastic about picking up useful information, boosting your knowledge, and sharpening your skills this month. You are more inclined to want more things around you. You're motivated to improve home life and set the record straight with family, if necessary. Home-related projects can be satisfying.

Places to visit: Times Square, the most bustling square of New York, is known for its many Broadway theatres, cinemas and super signs.

Located near the foot hills of the Aravalli Range, The Sariska Tiger Reserve is famous for its population of the Bengal Tiger and other wildlife species.

Favorable Dates: Jan 3, 6, 12, 15, 21, 24

Favorable Colors: Blue & Yellow

You can finish a project that helps further you along your career path, achieve a goal, or give up on a goal. Financial security and enjoyment of the good things in life are important to you. The ability to relate well with others might enhance your own personal finances.

Places to visit: Niagara Falls situated between the state of New York and the province of Ontario, Niagara Falls is one of the most spectacular natural wonders on the North American continent.

Lake Palace in Udaipur: The palace derives its name from its remarkable location, right in the middle of the enchanting Lake Pichola.

Favorable Dates: Jan 1, 2, 10, 11, 19, 20

Favorable Colors: White & Green



**Cancer**

(21 June – 22 July)



**Leo**

(23 July – 22 August)

You have opportunities to increase your income through education, travel, or by expanding your reach/audience in business. Your mind is especially inquisitive, when learning, short trips, and making connections, appeal strongly. You're up for rousing debates about philosophical ideas, and can defend what you believe in passionately.

Places to visit: Romantic Rhine in Germany - The region's most famous natural attraction is the Lorelei, the deepest and most narrow section of the Rhine Gorge.

Kaziranga National Park is one of the last few strongholds of the one-horned rhinoceros. and is known for its varied terrain and vegetation.

Favorable Dates: Jan 1, 6, 10, 15, 19, 24

Favorable Colors: Yellow & Green

You have a more practical outlook, and can focus well. You need to be nurtured and encouraged, and you'll do the same for those you're close to. You are more protective of the way you earn or spend money.

Places to visit: Heidelberg in Germany - With historic treasures like the medieval Old Bridge, the Heidelberg Castle, the Church of the Holy Spirit and the Knight St. George House.

The Khajuraho Group of Temples - It is a remarkable example of the Hindu Nagara style architecture and is also famous for its sculptures depicting various deities, animals, mythical creatures and erotica.

Favorable Dates: Jan 7, 8, 16, 17, 25, 26

Favorable Colors: White & Blue



**Virgo**

(23 August – 22 Sept)

**Manish Kumar Arora** is a renowned KP Astrologer, Numerologist, Tarot Reader and Vastu Consultant. He will be with Touriosity Travelmag to bring to our readers monthly predictions based on zodiac signs with special emphasis on travel predictions. Our readers can plan their tours accordingly. He can be reached at [manish@manishastrologer.com](mailto:manish@manishastrologer.com)



The coming weeks can be important for getting in better touch with your need to express yourself through creative or romantic channels. This is a time for coming to terms with the dependency.

Places to visit: Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Esfahan – Favourite of many Iranian families who come there to spend their weekends gossiping, sipping tea and playing with their children in front of the impressive Shah Mosque, Ali Qapu Palace and smaller but splendid Sheikh Lotf Allah Mosque.

Ranthambore National Park - Known for its teeming population of highly camera friendly Tigers, the Ranthambore National Park is situated in the Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan.

Favorable Dates: Jan 7, 9, 16, 18, 25, 27

Favorable Colors: Green & Blue

You may have more communications at work or about work, and talk more with coworkers. You might decide to turn a hobby into something little more practical, or a fantasy into something concrete and meaningful.

Places to visit: Golden Gate Bridge - Considered the most beautiful, the most photographed, bridge in the world. The Golden Gate Bridge is a suspension bridge spanning the Golden Gate, the strait between San Francisco and Marin County to the north.

Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Lingaraja Temple is one of the largest Hindu temples in Bhubaneswar and is also one of the few remaining specimens of the Kalinga style architecture.

Favorable Dates: Jan 4, 9, 13, 18, 22, 27

Favorable Colors: Red & Blue



There can be sensitivity when it comes to reputation or career matters or you could be confused about where you stand. The need to make adjustments and changes in work-life balance can be obvious now, but should be made when you're more confident.

Places to visit: The sun-splashed favourite of local Bulgarians, Varna appeals to history buffs and culture vultures as well as sun seekers.

Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health, Velankanni - The Roman Catholic Basilica is located in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu. Several reports of supposed miracles have been attributed to this place.

Favorable Dates: Jan 1, 2, 10, 11, 19, 20

Favorable Colors: White & Green

You feel most like yourself when you're using your mind and engaging with others. If in a relationship, you connect more intellectually with your partner. This is also a good time to start a new healthy lifestyle and improve your health.

Places to visit: Romania - Warm climate, miles of sand beaches, ancient monuments, vineyards and modern resorts invite travelers to seriously consider Romania's Black Sea Coast as their destination.

Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram – It is an ancient port city that houses several monuments and buildings from the Pallava Era. and contains various temples, rock-cut sculptures, megaliths and cave temples.

Favorable Dates: Jan 8, 9, 17, 18, 26, 27

Favorable Colors: Red & Blue



Your intuition is highly stimulated and increased compassion can motivate you to help someone out or to provide a service. This is a stable period for love matters and close relationships. You value those who make you feel comfortable, and familiarity is more important to you than someone new during this cycle.

Places to visit: Darangee Village in South Korea is a small well-preserved village in the southernmost area of west Namhae-gun and features an extraordinary sight of countless tiny fields (over 100 levels) on a steep mountain slope against the open sea.

Visakhapatnam has various beaches, hilltops and a wildlife sanctuary attract a major tourist crowd.

Favorable Dates: Jan 2, 5, 11, 14, 20, 23

Favorable Colors: Red & White

You're open to ideas that are unique or unconventional, and want to explore the future in your mind. You look at the world from a higher perch, and can look far into the future, dreaming and hoping.

Places to visit: The Grand Canyon in Arizona has with its intricate and colorful landscape offers visitor spectacular vistas that are unmatched throughout the world. It is considered one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

Located in the Northern Goa district of Goa, Old Goa refers to the historic town that served as the seat of the Portuguese in India till the 18th century. It has its unique Baroque style architecture and various churches.

Favorable Dates: Jan 5, 8, 14, 26, 23, 26

Favorable Colors: Red & Blue







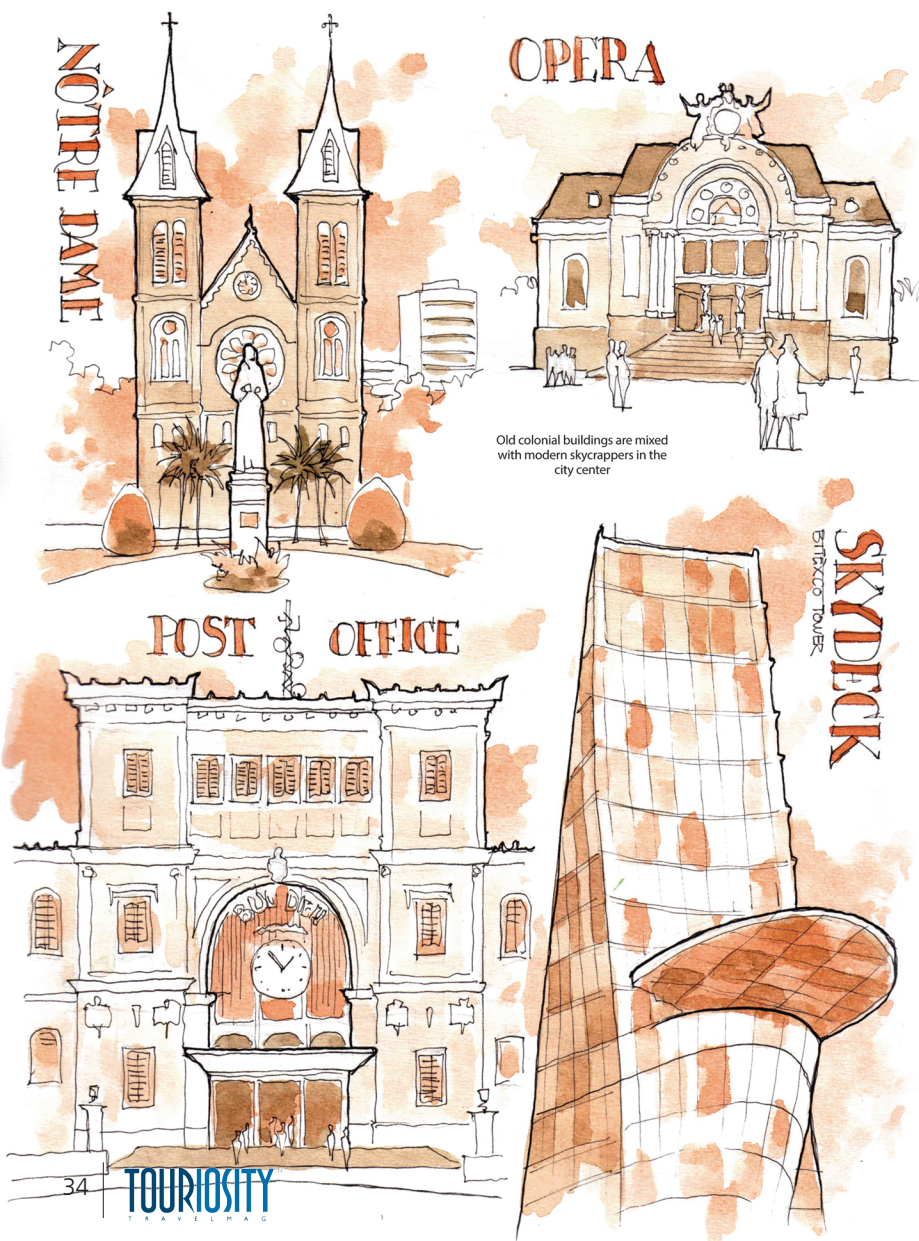
# AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

of various

## Asian Destinations

Illustrations by

Joaquin Gonzalez Dorao



Asia has a very dynamic history, diverse culture, multiple ethnic groups, beautiful and diverse architecture and a plethora of delectable cuisines in its various regions. The most popular individual landmarks in the continent are the Taj Mahal in India, the Great Wall of China, Petra in Jordan and the ruins of Angora Wat in Cambodia. These feature in the bucket list of almost all travel enthusiasts around the world. Other important landmarks are the Burj Khalifa of Dubai, UAE, the Marina Bay and Universal Studios of Singapore, Halong Bay of Vietnam, Mount Fuji of Japan, the temples of Bagan in Myanmar and a host of beaches and pristine islands of Southeast Asia.

From the crowded streets of Bangkok to quaint ancient temples in Myanmar, from the bustling sky-scraper-filled cities like Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo and Taipei to the deserted landscape of Mongolia and Turkmenistan, from some of the richest and most technologically advanced nations in the world to Timor-Lest, the poorest, from touristy cities known for their active night-life to regions with closed and extremely conservative societies, from some of the hottest arid deserts to the world's coldest inhabited region in Siberia, Asia's diversity is incomparable.

Among the most popular destinations in Asia are: Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai and





a host of beach destinations and islands in Thailand, the Golden Triangle consisting of the cities of Jaipur, Agra and Delhi in India, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Bali, Ubud and Jakarta in Indonesia, Hanoi, Halong Bay, Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, Kyoto, Tokyo and Osaka in Japan, Beijing, Shanghai and Kunming in China, Istanbul, Ankara and Cappadocia in Turkey, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Langkawi, and Borneo in Malaysia, Luang Prabang in Laos, Taipei in Taiwan, Dubai in UAE, Bukhara in Uzbekistan, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in Israel, Seoul and Busan in South Korea, Manila in The Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore and the Maldives. The last four are among the smallest and least populated regions of Asia, yet they top the list in terms of footfalls of global tourists.



*Previous page*

*Glimpses of various attractions in Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam*

*Current page*

*Top:*

*Central patio of a caravanserai in Diyarbakir, Turkey*

*Below:*

*Pond of the Black Dragon in Lijiang, China with the snowy mountain Yulong in the background.*







Great Wall of China  
Jongun Garzaler Doras

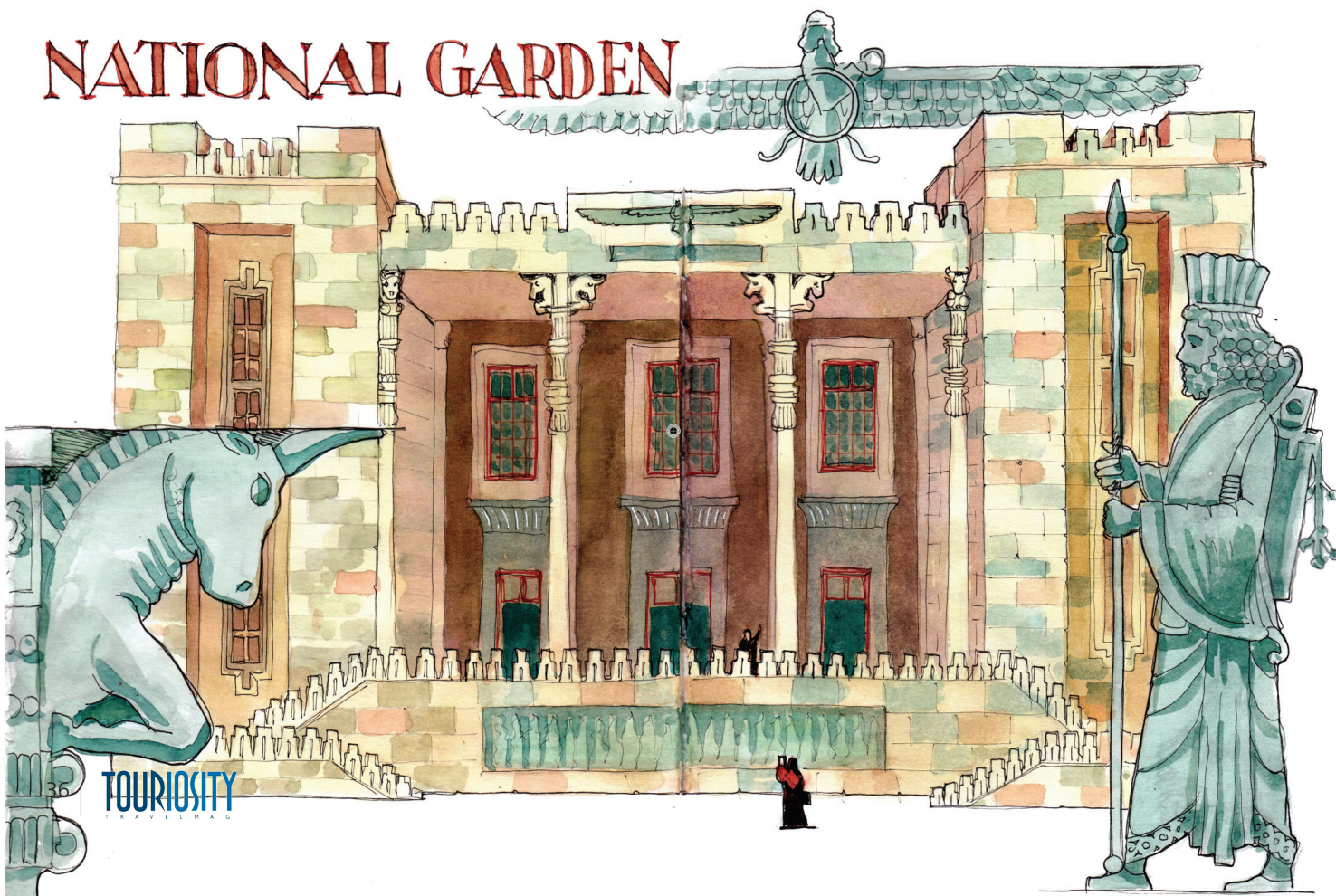
### Regions of Asia

Beaches, islands, coral reefs, dense forests, temples, palaces, ancient monasteries, floating markets, nightlife, street food, vibrant local cultures and festivals are some of the common attractions in the countries of **Southeast Asia**. Adventure activities like hiking, trekking, water sports and bicycle rides are the most common adventure sports in this part of Asia. Southeast Asia is one of the best destinations for backpackers and first time travellers. Also

the countries of this part of Asia are the most visited one in the continent.

As for the **Middle East**, the oil-rich countries of the region are known for their sheer opulence that reflects in their mosques and other architecture. The blending of the old and the new is worth admiring in these countries. Desert safaris, dune bashing, hot air balloon rides and shopping are some of the popular tourist activities here. One may also experience bedouin lifestyle here.

## NATIONAL GARDEN







## AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

*Previous page*

*Top:*

*The Great Wall of China*

*Below:*

*National Garden, Tehran, Iran*

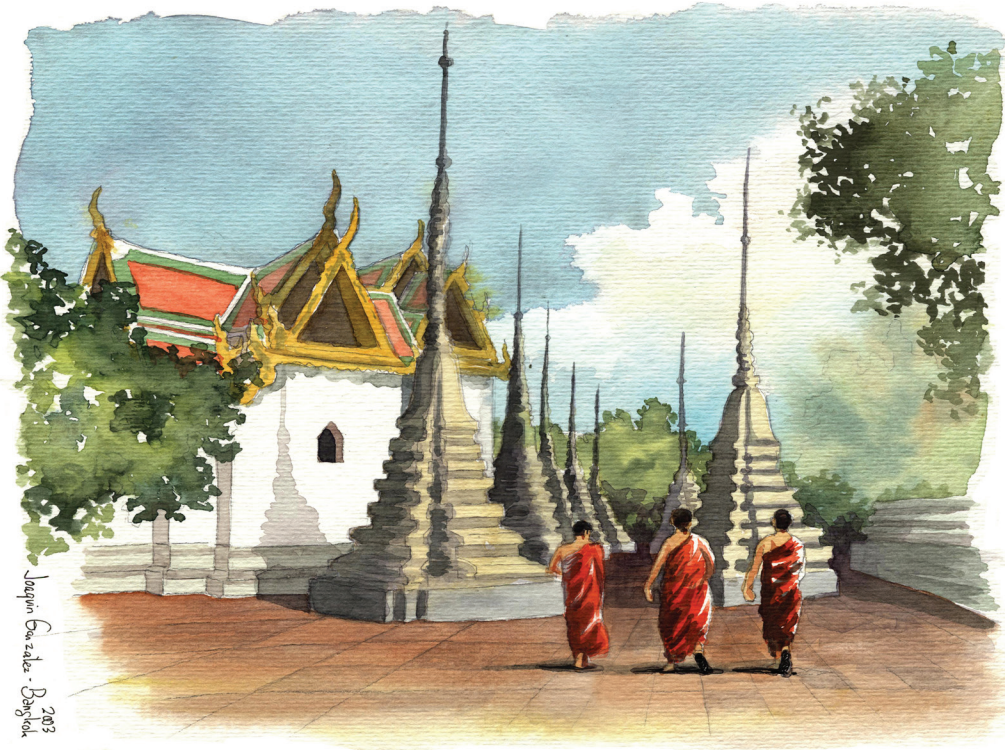
*Current page*

*Top:*

*Buddhist Monks on their way to a monastery*

*Below:*

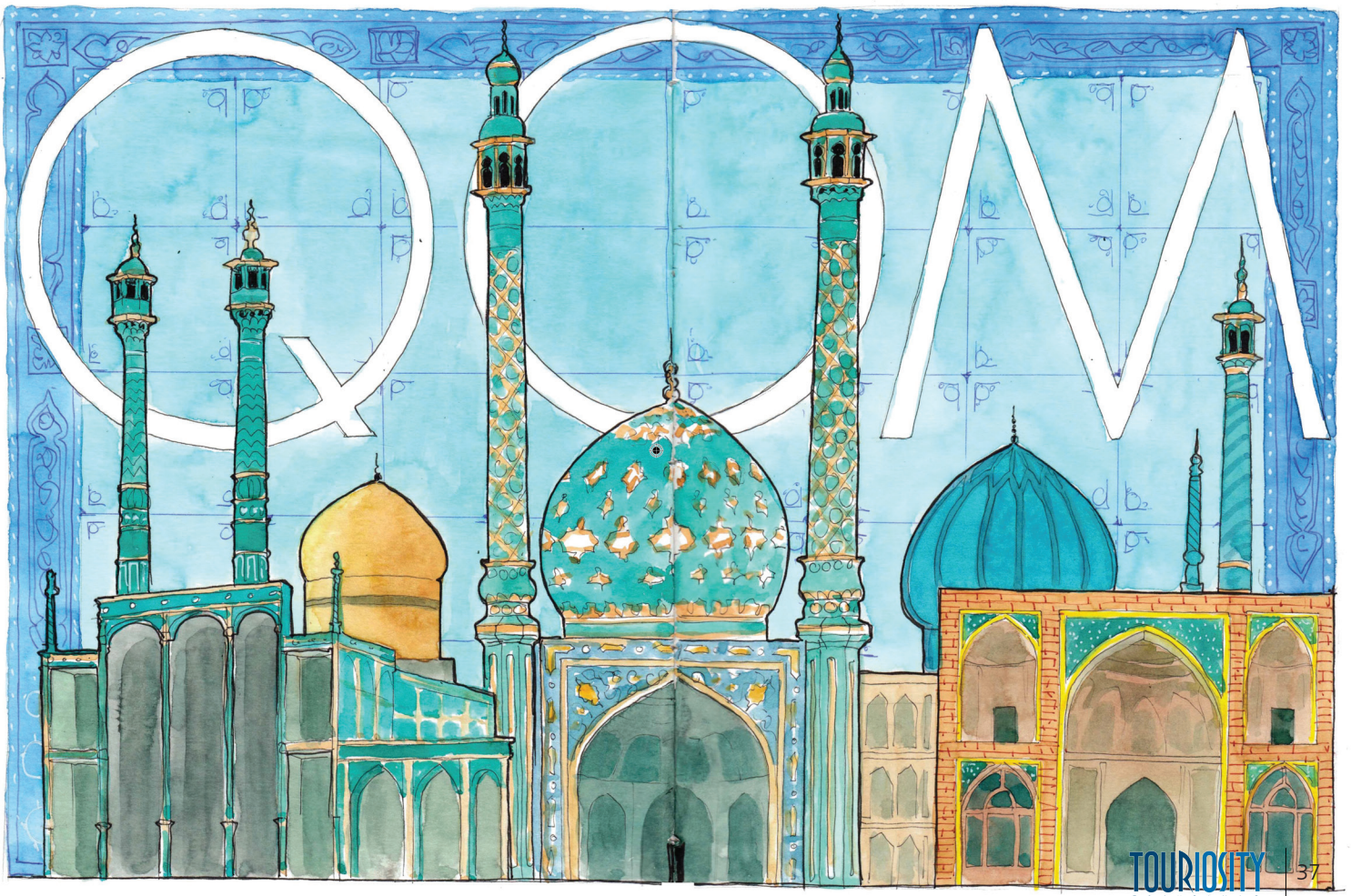
*A glimpse of Qom, Iran*



**Western Asian** countries feature a blend of Asian and European cultures while **Central Asia** mainly consists of the five of the former Soviet Republics, commonly referred to as the 'stans'. **Eastern Asia** consists of countries like China, Mongolia, Japan, North and South Korea and Taiwan. **Northern**

**Asia** is entirely covered by Siberia in Russia.

In the following paragraphs readers may find information about specific destinations in Asia to choose for their travels based on their travel interest.





## AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



CRAWFORD MARKET - Mumbai, India  
Joaquin Gonzalez Dorado

### Desert

For exploring vast expanses of deserts the best places are Saudi Arabia, UAE, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China and India.

### Beaches

If serene and idyllic beaches, water sports and laid back holidays are what you are looking for then the best places to visit are Maldives, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand,

Top:

The heritage building of Crawford Market in Mumbai, India dating from 1869

Below:

An everyday life scene from rural Vietnam



Joaquin Gonzalez - Vietnam - 2008



# ANGKOR WAT

AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



Indonesia, Vietnam, East Timor, Israel, Bangladesh, Georgia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey and India. The whole of Southeast Asia is a 'must visit' destination for beach lovers.

## Forests

For those who want to explore the continent's forests and its wildlife variety, the best areas to have on the bucket list are the rainforests of Brunei, Malaysia and the whole of Borneo Island, the jungles of Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and most definitely the national parks and sanctuaries of India.

*Illustrations of Angkor Wat in Cambodia*



Joan Gonzalez Duro. To Thine Artwork. Cambodia. 2005



## Architecture

If you want to see ancient architectural wonders, the places to visit are Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Ajanta and Ellora caves, Hampi, Nalanda and Mahabalipuram in India, Bagan in Myanmar, Sigiriya in Sri Lanka, Borobudur in Indonesia and so on.

## Ancient Civilisations

For those interested in ancient civilisations, some of the best places to see the ruins are Harappa and Mohenjo Daro in Pakistan, Bhirrana, Rakhigarhi, Lothal and Dholavira in India, Ur and Babylon in Iraq, Persepolis in Iraq and Petra in Jordan.

## Mountains

For those who love mountains the 'must visit' countries are Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, China, Mongolia, Japan and Thailand. Some of these destinations are also good for trekking and mountaineering.

## Urban Landscape

Those who want to see cities known for their skyscrapers must head to Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Dubai, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Singapore and so on.

## Food

The best Asian destinations for foodies are Thailand, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, China, Hong Kong and Cambodia.

## Festivals

The various festivals in Asia that attract maximum number of visitors are the Harbin Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival and Dragon Boat Festival in China, Holi, Diwali, Kumbh Mela and Hornbill Festival in India, Lantern Festival of Taiwan, Hina Matsuri and Cherry Blossom of Japan, Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival of Myanmar, Bo Sang Umbrella Festival of Chiang Mai, Thailand and the Chinese New Year in Singapore.

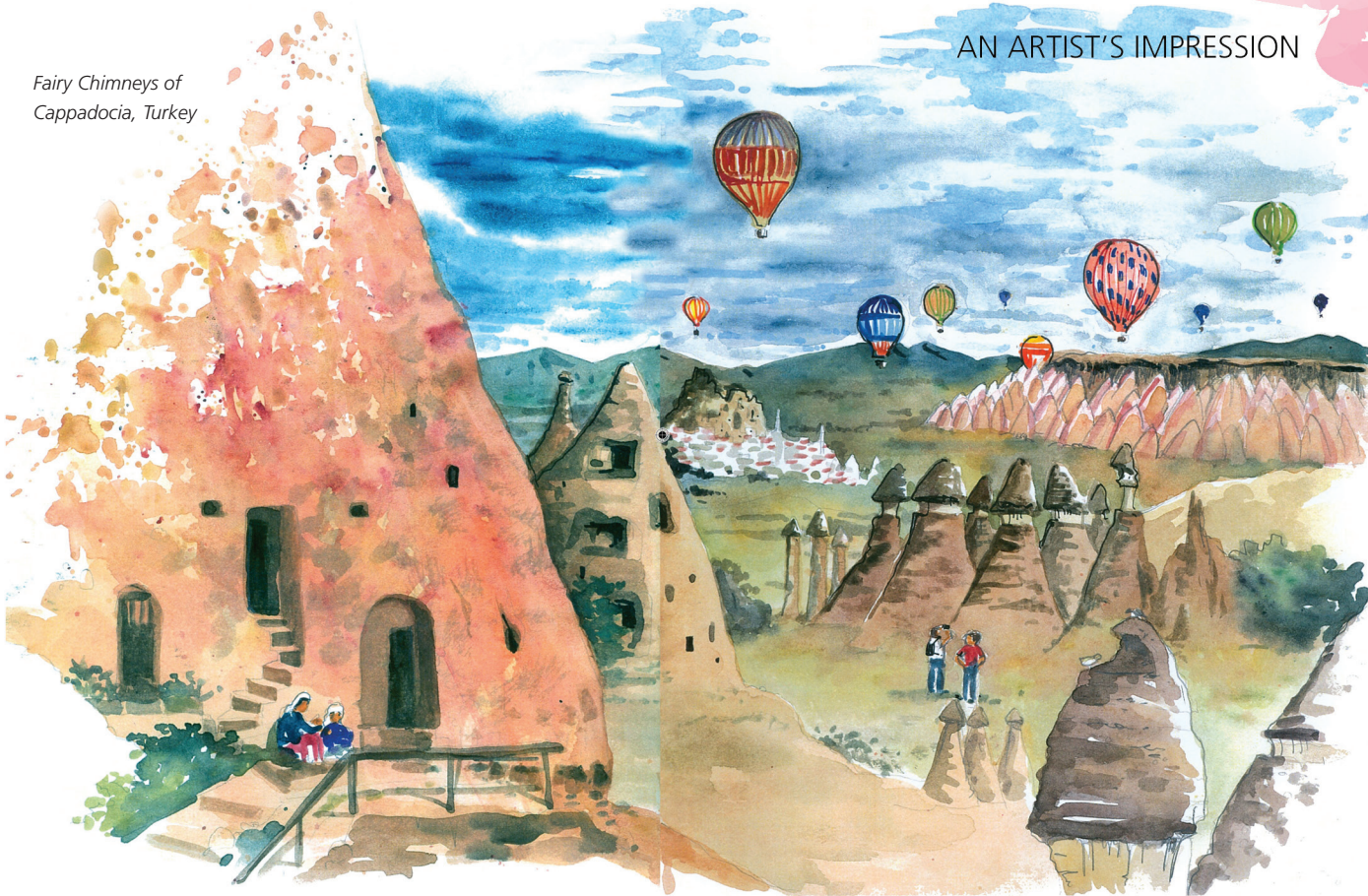
The Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand





Fairy Chimneys of  
Cappadocia, Turkey

AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



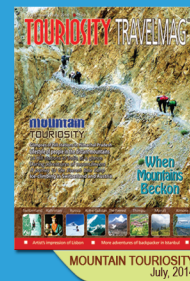
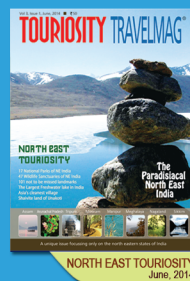
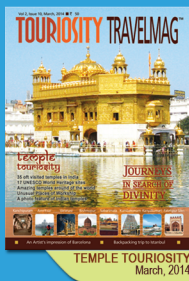
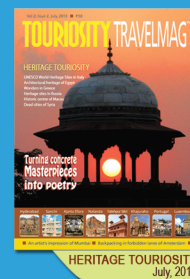
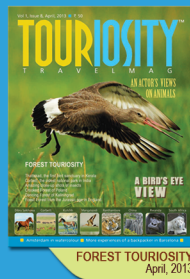
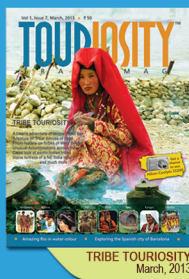
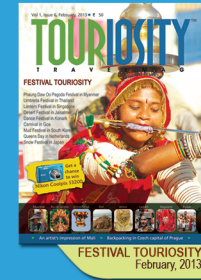
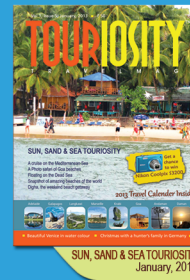
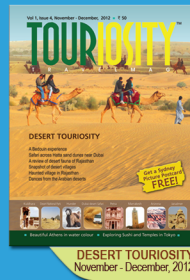
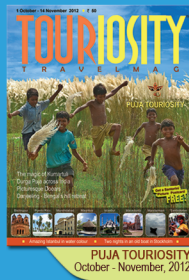
Kettuvallam (houseboat) in the backwaters of Kerala, India





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## Order Back Issues

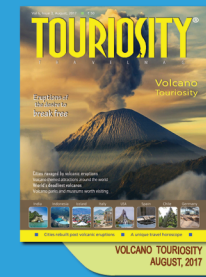
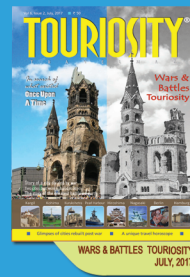
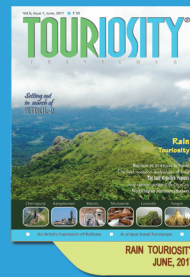
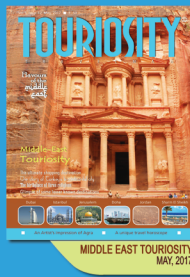
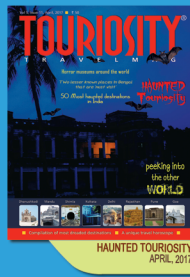
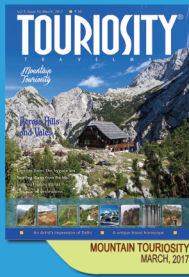
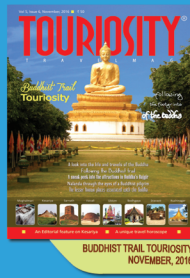
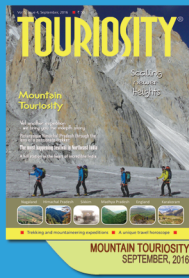
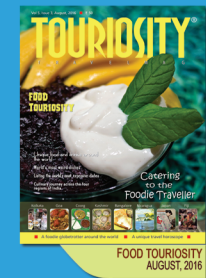
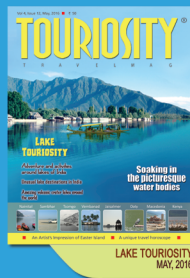
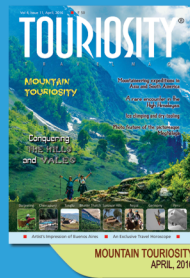
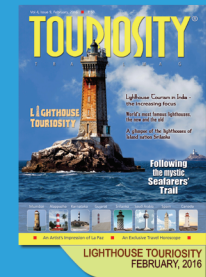
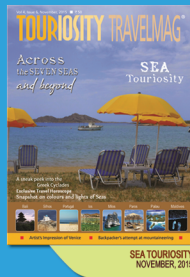
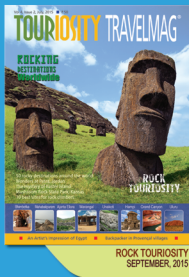
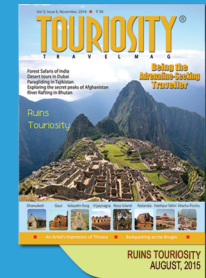
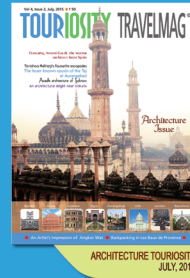
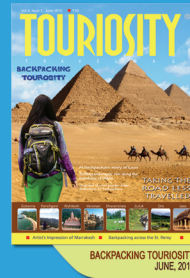
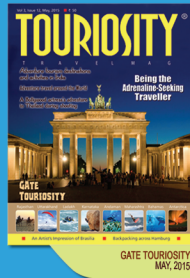




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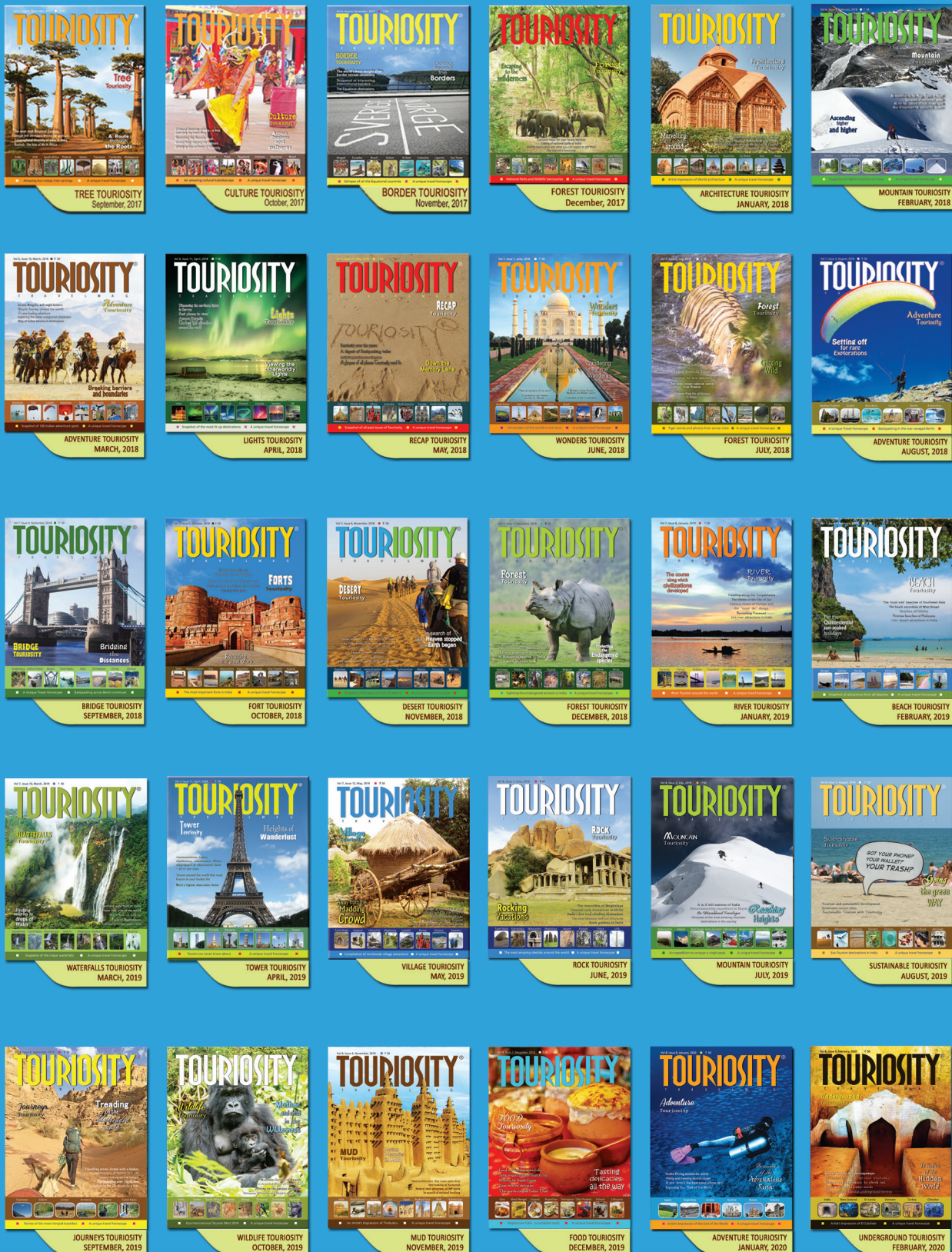
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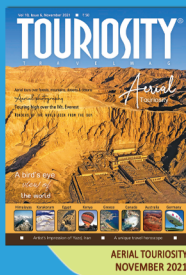
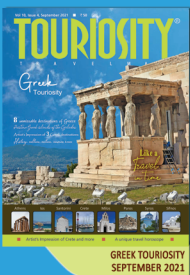
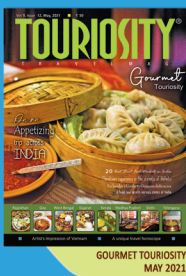
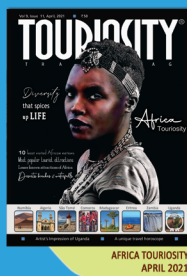
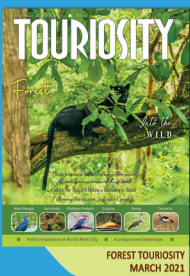
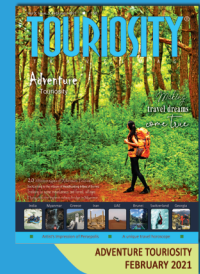
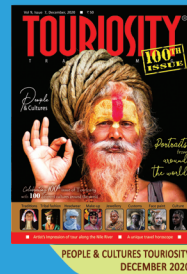
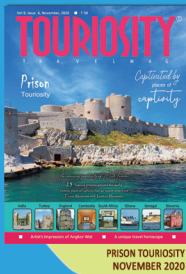
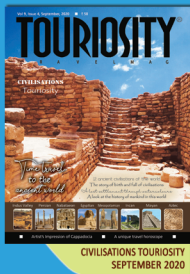
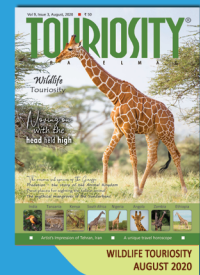
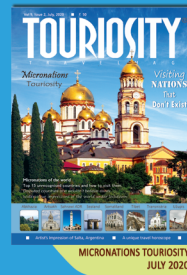


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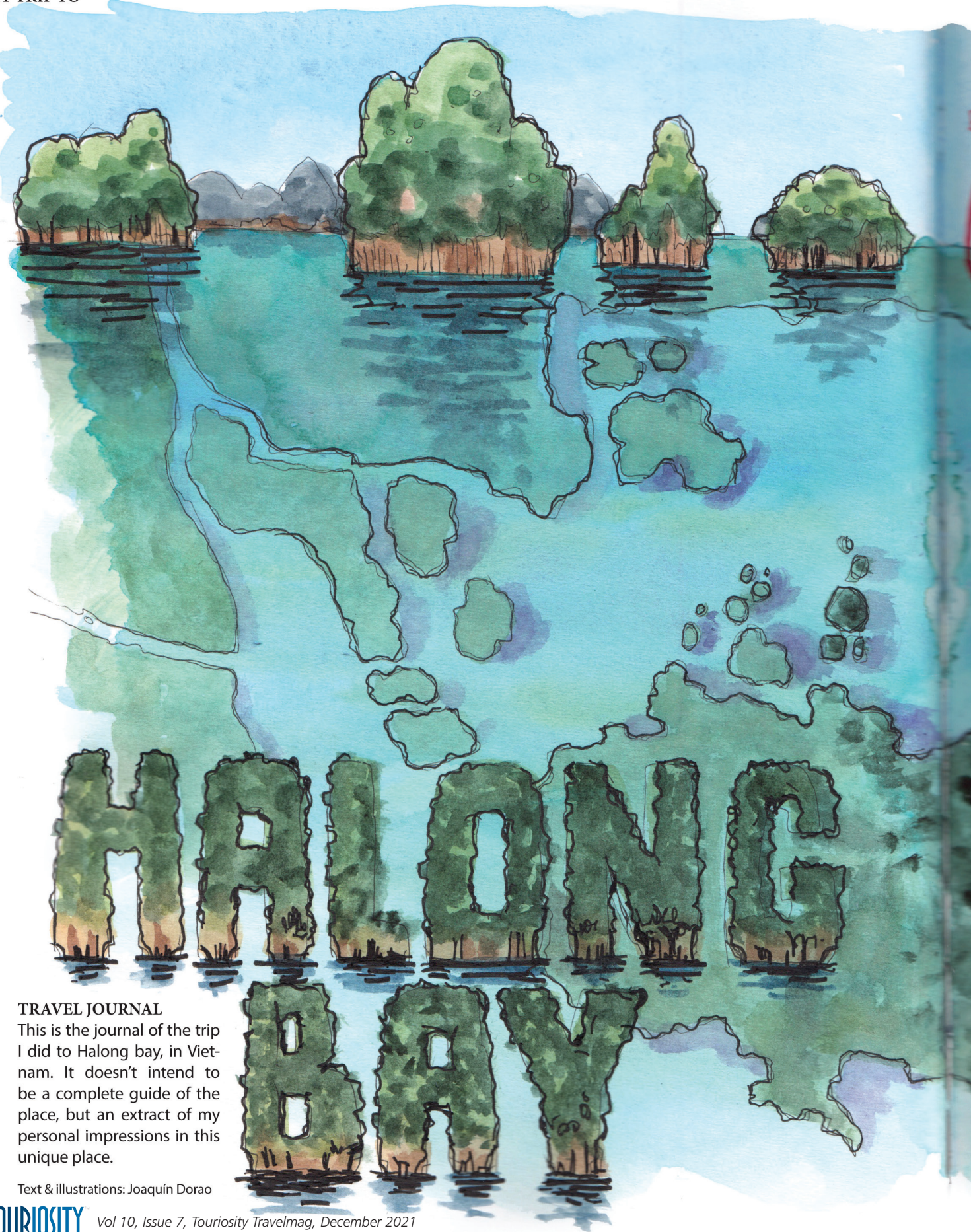
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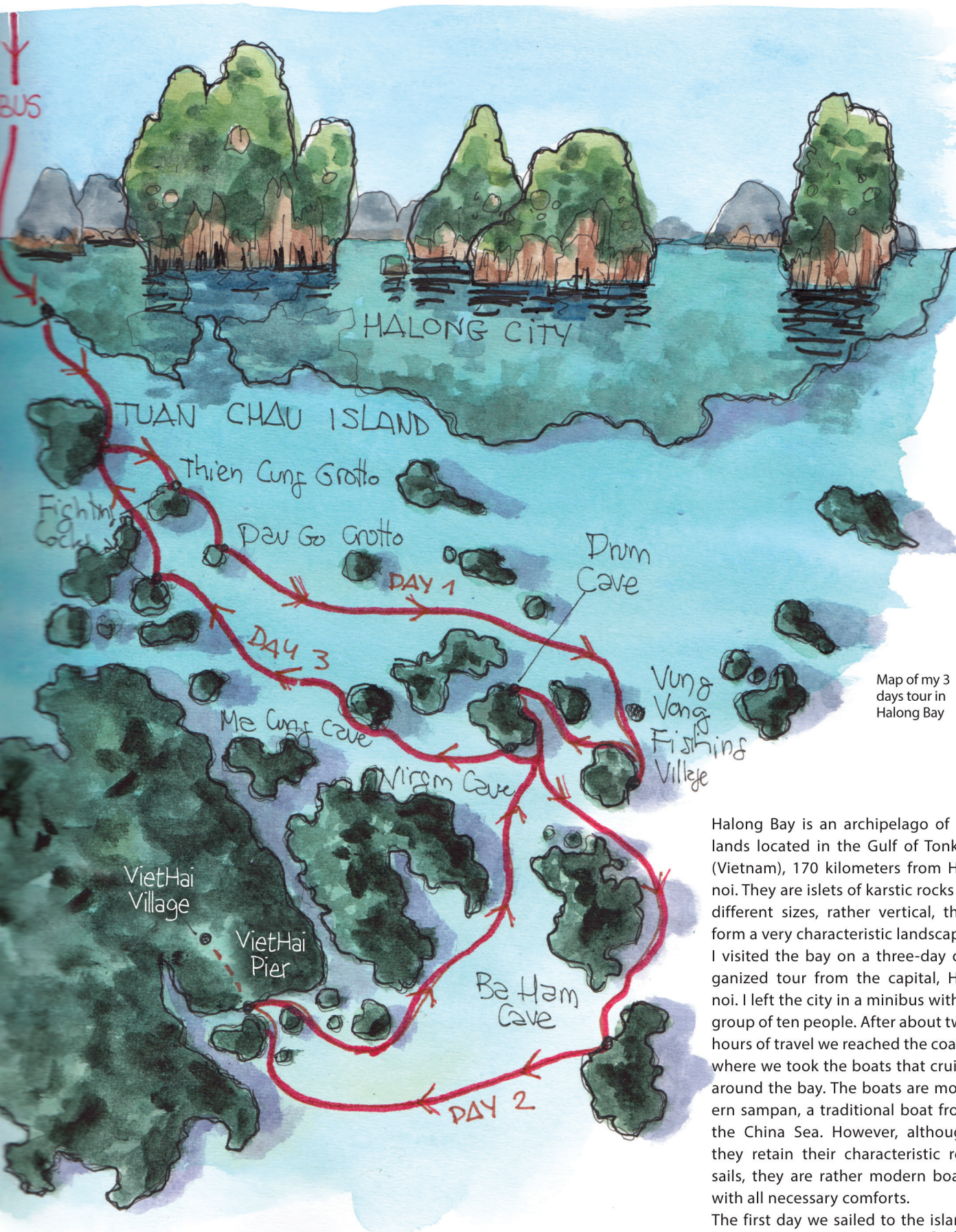


TRAVEL JOURNAL

This is the journal of the trip I did to Halong bay, in Vietnam. It doesn't intend to be a complete guide of the place, but an extract of my personal impressions in this unique place.

Text & illustrations: Joaquín Dorao





Map of my 3 days tour in Halong Bay

Halong Bay is an archipelago of islands located in the Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnam), 170 kilometers from Hanoi. They are islets of karstic rocks of different sizes, rather vertical, that form a very characteristic landscape. I visited the bay on a three-day organized tour from the capital, Hanoi. I left the city in a minibus with a group of ten people. After about two hours of travel we reached the coast, where we took the boats that cruise around the bay. The boats are modern sampan, a traditional boat from the China Sea. However, although they retain their characteristic red sails, they are rather modern boats with all necessary comforts.

The first day we sailed to the island

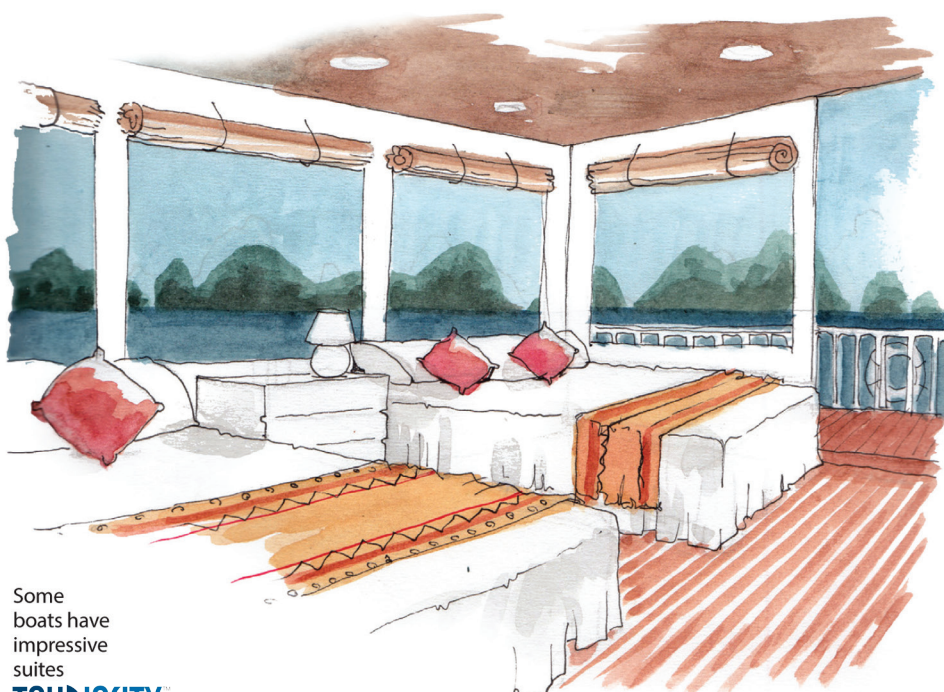


## AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

Kayak in  
Halong  
caves



of Vung Vang, at the eastern end of the archipelago. In the morning we were able to settle into the cabins and explore the ship a bit. Ours had a wide deck to sit on and contemplate the landscape. We had lunch on board and in the afternoon we stopped in a small bay to take a bath, jumping into the wa-



Some  
boats have  
impressive  
suites

ter right from the boat. Arriving in the Vung Vang area, we anchored close to the coast and went to see the little fishing village. There you could rent canoes. We rented one and went to visit some coastal caves that were inhabited by many bats. We slept on board the canoe anchored in the bay.

The second day we sailed to the main island and disembarked at the port of Viet Hai. From there we took a walk to a viewpoint from where we had an impressive view of the entire area, with its islands and fishing boats. We had lunch on the island and in the afternoon we returned to the boat. We resumed navigation and anchored again in a quiet bay. The sky at night was spectacular there, with millions of stars twinkling above our heads. The third day was already that of our return. We stopped at a cou-



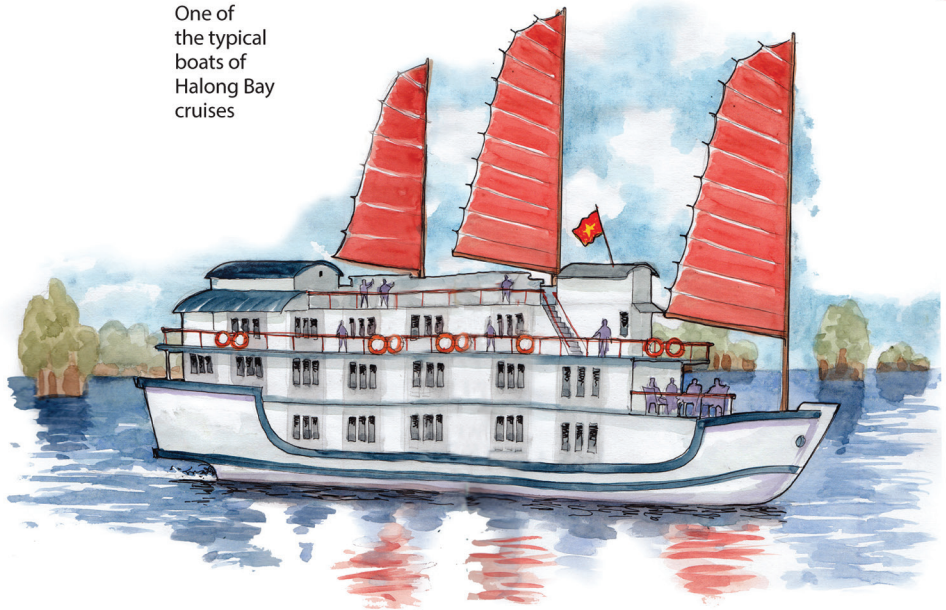


ple of small fishing villages in the archipelago while navigating between the islands. We stopped again in the morning to take a bath. During the entire trip, all meals, except for that the day before, we had on the boat, in a buffet.

In the afternoon we relaxed on the deck of the ship, enjoying the spectacle of the sunset over the bay, with very calm waters that reflected the entire landscape of silhouettes of the islands.

We reached the coast in the late afternoon and from there we returned to Hanoi in the minibus, with the wonderful memory of a unique landscape in our memory.

One of the typical boats of Halong Bay cruises



Sunset in Halong Bay



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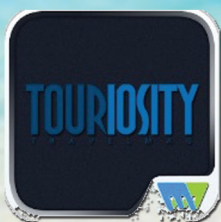
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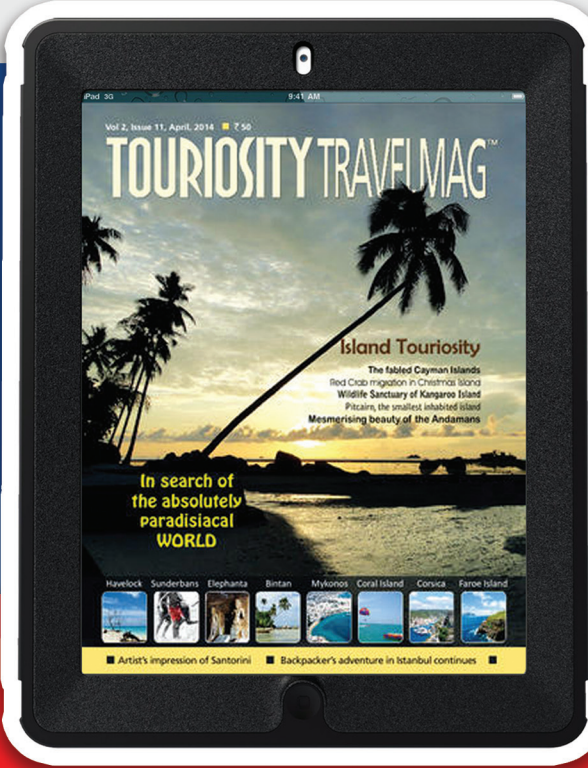
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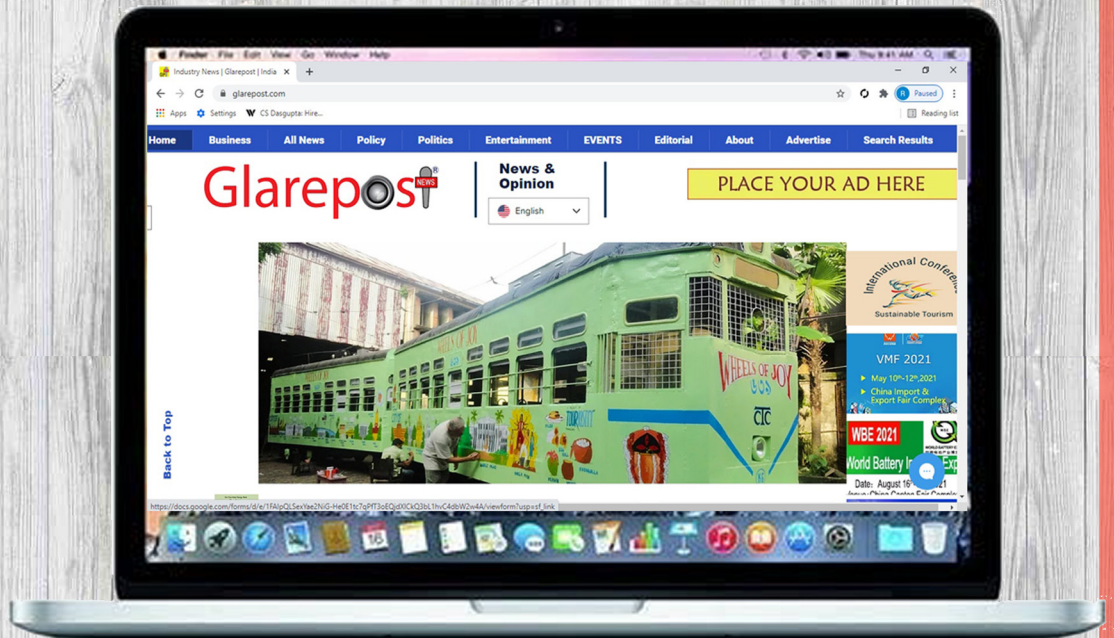
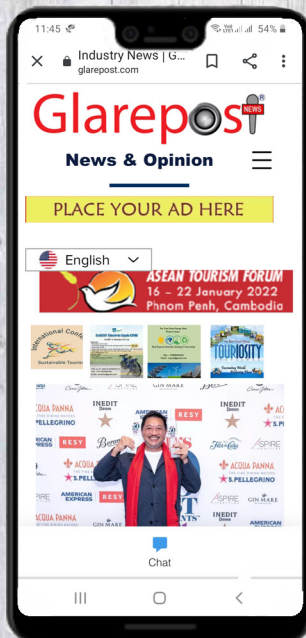


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