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spice route

The inflight magazine of SpiceJet



BEAUTY IN RUINS
BELGAUM

YOUR GUIDE TO
*CHRISTMAS
BAKING*

NEW DESTINATION
*MALE IN
MALDIVES*



SUCCESS STORY

SPICEJET MAKES IT HAPPEN

Green getaways



A far cry from holiday in a five-star luxury resort, getting up and close with nature is the new trend. Head to these less travelled green destinations.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS | BINDU GOPAL RAO

There is a new trend that is slowly but surely catching the attention of the well heeled traveller on the lookout for something different. With increasing focus on environment, there is a need for being eco-sensitive in whatever you do. So, even a holiday cannot be far behind. Surprised? Don't

be, it's time to give urban chaos a miss and check on some exciting green destinations in the country.

VIBRANT SAKLESHPUR

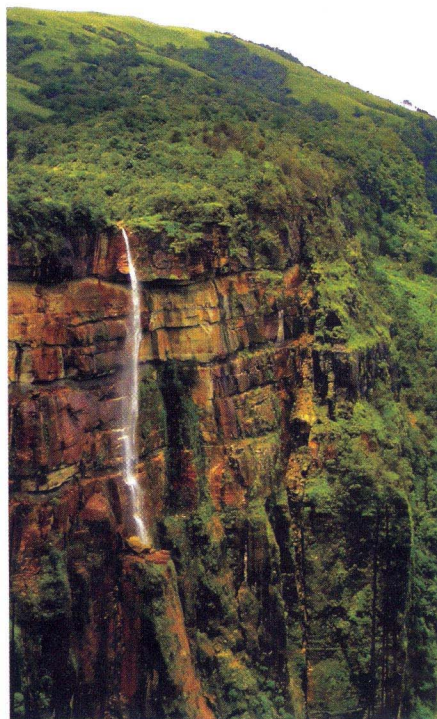
Located in the Western Ghats and listed as one of the 18 most diverse spots in the world



Take a holiday in a tree house or walk inside the Mawsmmai cave for some adventure

Above: Samsing river in Chalsa district of north Bengal Left: Cherrapunji has waterfalls that surround its valley

in terms of flora and fauna, Sakleshpur is an ideal destination for camping, trekking, off-road driving, river rafting, boating and also bird-watching. Being on the periphery of the Bisle reserve and Kempuhole reserve forests, the place is also perfect for a quite and relaxing holiday. Resorts and homestays dotting this destination are predominantly owned and managed by the local population. Even while consciously promoting tourism they are keen that tourists have a responsibility towards nature. Says Vikram, a wild life enthusiast; coffee planter and eco conservationist, "Sakleshpur is a virgin destination attracting attention from a cross section of travellers. While the region is a paradise for trekkers, it should be noted that the destination has the potential to become a cradle for ecologists, wildlife photographers and ornithologists in pursuing their passion." Dotted with homestays and eco-friendly getaways, Sakleshpur offers you to explore the Western Ghats in its own unique way. The rich biodiversity makes it popular with trekkers and the varied ecology is a sight to behold.



MESMERIZING DOOARS

A less travelled and unexplored land, Dooars in West Bengal is the doorway to Bhutan and Sikkim and many hill stations such as in North Bengal. The sprawling Dooars valley in the foothills of the Himalayas through which runs the mighty Teesta, Torsa and Jaldhaka is also the home to several forests famous for their biodiversity like Gorumara National Park and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary.

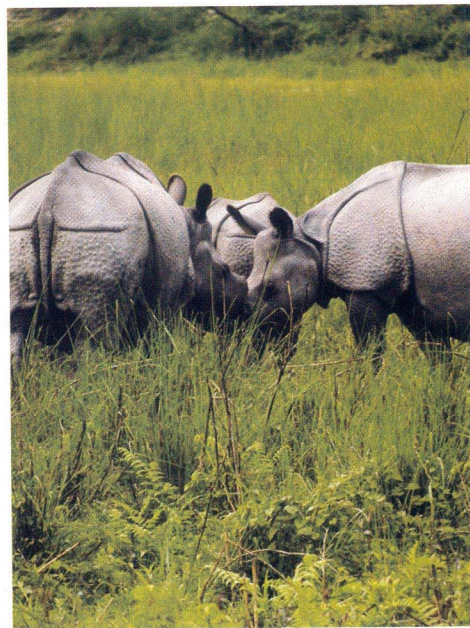
Dooars is a treasure trove of both flora and fauna and therefore, a natural destination for curious botanists and biologists from all over the world. Seeing the wildlife of Dooars, including one-horned rhinos and Asiatic elephant is a stunning experience for tourists. One can also enjoy an elephant ride through the grasslands of Gorumara and Jaldapara, which is quite exciting in itself. "Moreover, citing of animals, including tigers and leopards in the wild always remains a possibility. Thick tea bushes trimmed to an identical height running miles on end are a captivating sight. Dooars is a zero pollution area, ideal for visit



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Clockwise from left: Lush landscape of Cherrapunji; One-horned rhinos in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary; A bison in Amba



One can also enjoy an elephant ride through the grasslands of Gorumara and Jaldapara

anytime of the year," says Navin Suchanti, CEO and MD, Sinclairs Hotels Ltd.

CAPTIVATING CHERRAPUNJI

"Sometimes you feel that you are experiencing the Kuranda rain forests or Cairns in Australia with the multiple gorges in Cherrapunji. It's a pleasant mix of Kashmir, Australia and Scotland. One gets rejuvenated seeing the natural beauty and fresh smell of rain, time

and again," is how Sumit Sawhney, who recently visited the place explains. The wettest place on Earth, till not too long ago, Cherrapunji (now the 2nd wettest place) has its fair share of sunshine and tourist attractions. One must visit the many living bridges that are alive and growing. These bridges take 15 years to become functional and are amazingly strong. Take a holiday in a tree house, or walk inside the Mawmai cave

for some adventure. Cherrapunji also has huge waterfalls and has the distinction of having the cleanest village of Asia, Mawlynnong. Sightseeing at the green and stunning valleys of Khasi Hills and trekking in the woods are some other must dos while you are here. Blooming orchids, dense woods, rocky cliffs and cascading waterfalls make this a nature's paradise like non other.

AMBA

At 3,000 feet above sea level, Amba is located exactly between Kolhapur and Ratnagiri and has recently been awarded the World Heritage status. The location is steeped in history, especially from the time of Chhatrapati Shivaji and also houses the only tea gardens in Maharashtra. Large expanse of mountains, numerous waterfalls and salubrious weather make sure you enjoy the tea plantation, emu farm, echo point and sunset point, any time of the year. This is also a reserved forest bordering Dajipur Bison Sanctuary, Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary and the newly commissioned Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. Rajan Eklahare, who owns the Jungle Resort Amba, opines that this is one of the last pocket of genuine jungle left in Maharashtra. Avian diversity like Malabar pied hornbills, paradise fly catcher, brahmini kites and bee eaters are present in these jungles. Leopards, civet cats, pangolins, an indigenous species of Mongoose found only in Amba and the mighty Bison is spotted frequently in the jungle safari.

Well then, it's time to turn over a green leaf and enjoy a holiday with a difference. ♦♦