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Living
The PARK Magazine



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LOCAL LOVE ♥

LIVING is a barometer of 21st Century thinking. It celebrates new, unfettered ideas and explores global shifts in lifestyle, culture, design, cuisine and more - all from the unique perspective of The Park Hotels.

In this issue, LIVING delves into the up-close connections being made around the world with the local. Meaningful interactions with communities that bring alternate lifestyles and contexts, enriching the stream of human experience.

LOVE

CONTENTS

Future Thought	2
Local Luxury	12
The Park Explorer	19
The Night Life of Trees	24
5 Reasons I Love The Park	28
A Slice of The Park	30
Thought for Food	33
The Park Scoop	35
The Park Spotlight	40



Agni the bar at The Park, New Delhi. Small touches of local love show in the vibrant flowers set in locally made pots on the counter.

LOCAL LOVE ❤️

It's a small world out there. The lifestyles of most urban, tech savvy globizens are now interchangeable, whether they live in Sydney, Mumbai or Stockholm. Facebook and Twitter have made us all uniformly interesting, with online profiles that speak to each other in a language that might sound like gobbledegook to a 'Generation Me'er from 10 years ago. These are great ways to stay networked, feel a part of a larger universe. But in the process, are we losing something of the immediate and intimate? Is our super connectedness making us somewhat homogeneous? A surge of deep interest in and curiosity about our own cultural context, as well as that of far-flung communities and individuals might indicate so. Essentially, it is a deeper connection with the human element and its diversity that we seek: whether through travel, or other areas like design, art or branding, technology or education. Mirroring the collective longing of a global community to touch the local, the here, the now.

This move towards the local is responsible:

Towards capacity building and sustaining of local traditions, livelihoods and products, once ravaged by commercial exploitation and imperialistic practices. Towards making communities stronger: 'cultural capital' is now acknowledged to be as powerful as economic prowess. Towards giving indigenous people a reason to pass along their expertise, and encouraging young people to start learning skills that now suddenly have the potential to become sources of income.



The Park Hotels believe that contemporary design links with local ideas and resources. Often the design of the hotel and its spaces is inspired by the vernacular.

Aish the Indian Restaurant at The Park, Hyderabad, designed by Tarun Tahiliani incorporating distinct influences from regional crafts and cuisine. At Aish, authentic Hyderabadi food is served up with creative cocktails that incorporate sherbets and other traditional drinks.

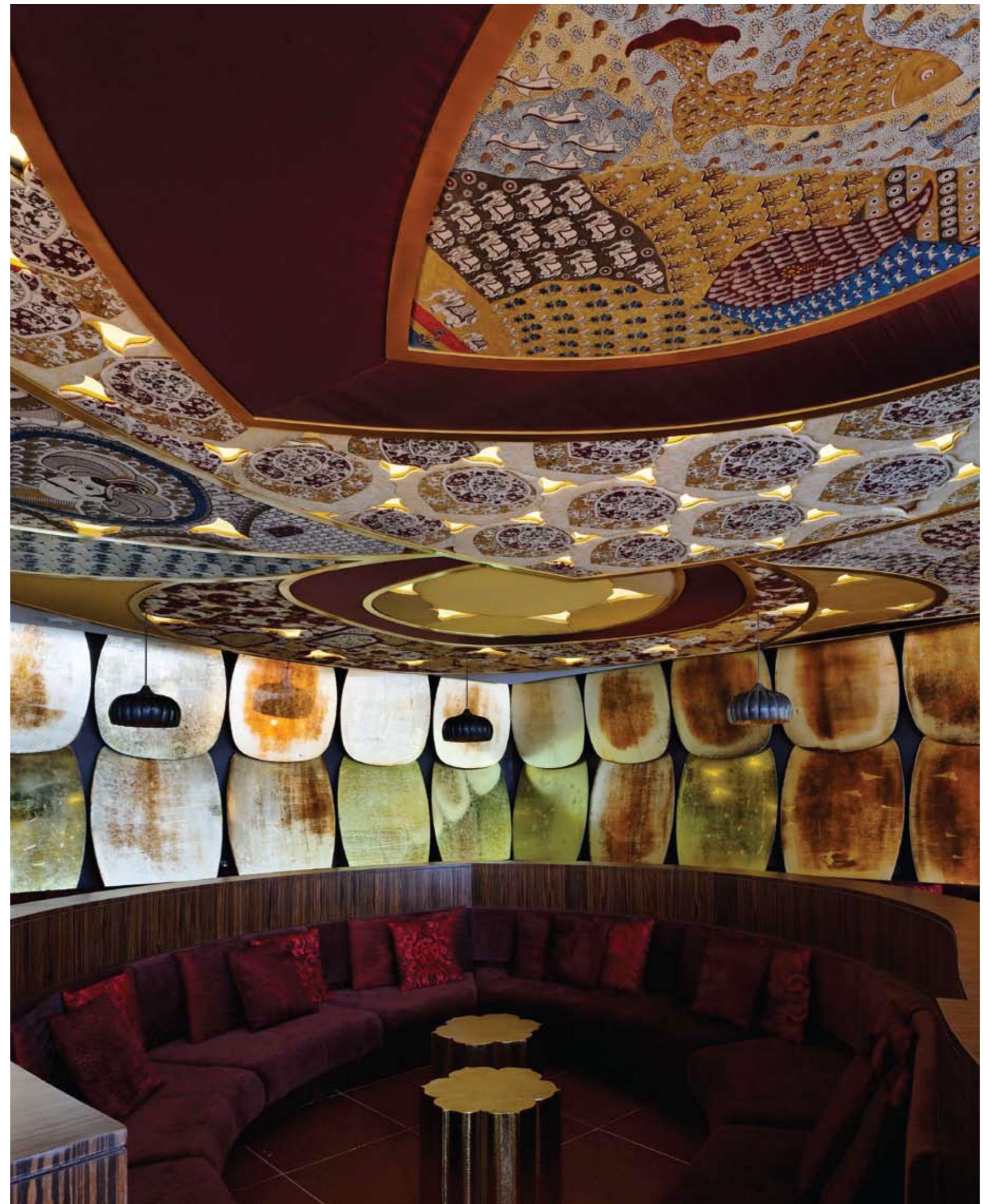
We transform our spaces into art galleries and cultural nodes so visitors can submerge themselves in the creative outpourings of the place they are travelling to.

A large chunk of travellers now define their wanderlust by the search for this real, intensely personal context across continents and cultures. Not just as intrusive voyeurs, but as 'weekend locals'. On holiday, they choose to work with families ploughing fields, making local wines or jewellery, attending religious ceremonies, participating in their eating, music and dancing. Some might call it tokenism, but this deeper search is far more equitable than the patronizing attitude of tourism past, where local people were hardly more than serving staff or the evening's pre-drinks entertainment.

The Park Hotels have understood this urge for immediacy, and so there is decided emphasis on engagement with the local in diverse ways. In the Kolkata Hotel, exclusive artworks by renowned Bengali painters like Bikash Bhattacharya and Shuvaprasanna are suspended on walls in guest rooms and common spaces. The Residence Lounge in the Delhi Hotel is the venue for a book club called "The Room with a View" overlooking, as it does, the legendary Jantar Mantar (which is in turn preserved by the Hotel).

The Hotels act as true insider guides so guests unearth authentic experiences only locals know about, so easily missed by the casual tourist. At The Park, New Delhi, an eclectic itinerary is created for visitors by local guides who take them into the bylanes of the bustling city with its grandeur and modernity, commandeer sampling of local cuisine, bargain and designer shopping, and volubly recite the history of ancient monuments. For those interested, the Hyderabad Hotel organizes a special cooking class by Begum Mumtaz Khan, a connoisseur of the delectable traditional Hyderabadi cuisine, in her home.

Ruby Lounge Textile designer Preksha Baid worked with master craftsman Neeranajan in Kalamkari to create the stunning Kalamkari ceiling of the Ruby Lounge.





The Park Hotels commission special products from designers and artisans of the region, working with them to evolve objects that reflect contemporary desires.

The trend forecasting agency Future Laboratory's report on hospitality and leisure for 2009 coined a new term, 'Voluntourism', which accurately describes a subset of today's travellers who want to connect with more than the culture of the places they visit – they want to make a difference. Websites like www.grassroutesjourneys.com and www.gophilanthropic.com create special packages to accommodate this desire, connecting visitors with non-profit or government programmes, from children's education, to clean water microfinance. At The Park Hotels in Vishakhapatnam and Chennai, guests are invited to participate in the beach cleaning and sapling planting efforts of the Hotels' green teams.

In many western countries, the tables have turned on high street, impersonal brands and the multinational corporations that own them. Consumers want to shop in smaller, mom and pop outfits for local produce and merchandise, which is cheaper and friendlier to the environment. The same multinationals have altered their CSR programmes to include celebrations of art, culture and film from within the community. The Park Hotels' philosophy is an environmentally sound one – they support local green causes as well as undertake a multitude of sustainable practices in the working of the Hotels. (see LIVING 03:Future Thought)

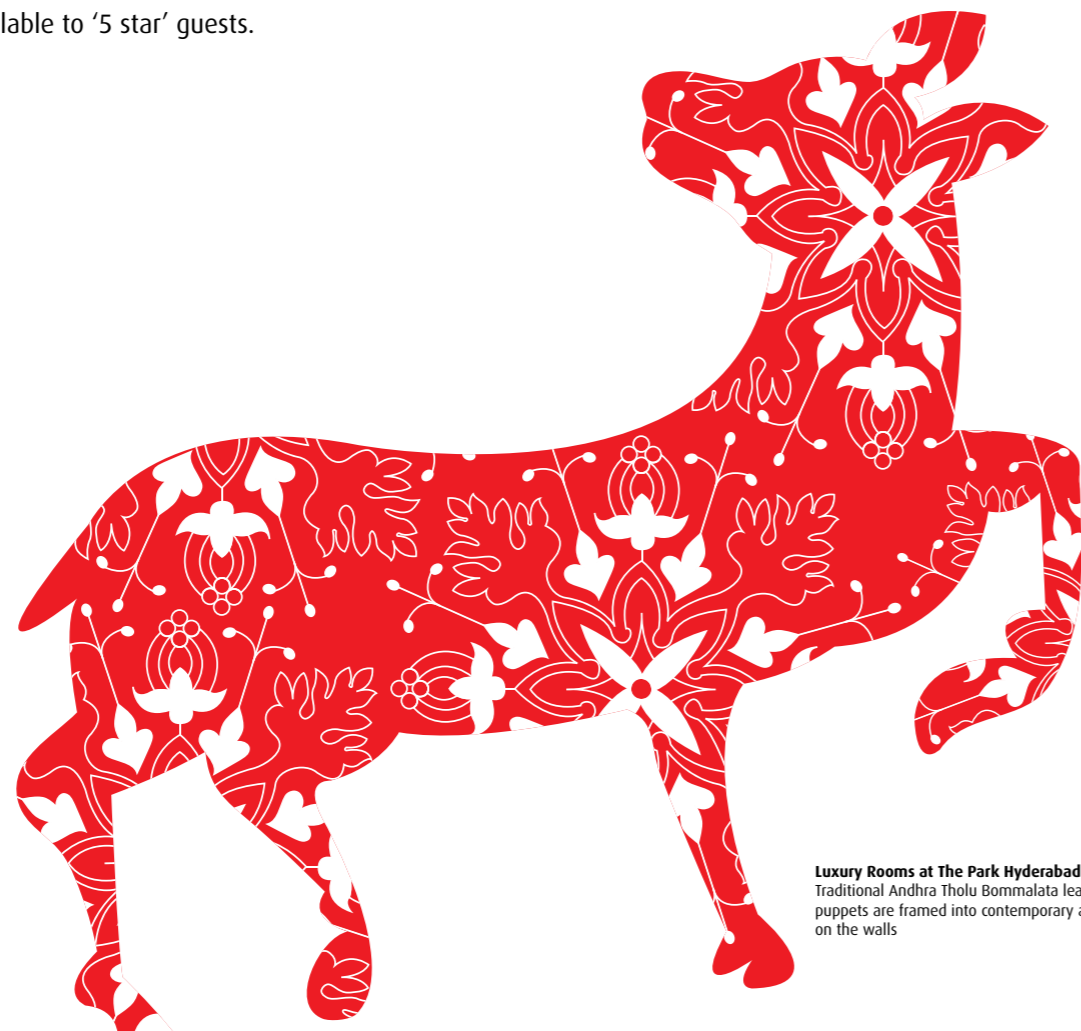
Products made by craftspeople of the area are sourced and used throughout The Park Hotels – lacquer table accessories in 601 and the flower baskets outside every room in the Chennai Hotel are examples of this. Educational toys made from non-toxic materials, and interpretations of traditional Indian games are sold at The Box, the store at The Park Hotels, preserving

Craftsmen for Viya Home
working to create sculptures
(seen overleaf) for The Pod,
Chennai

Re-interpreting traditional mythological motifs and blending them with a new scale of production, collaborative projects at The Park Hotels preserve and introduce local, heritage art forms to guests.

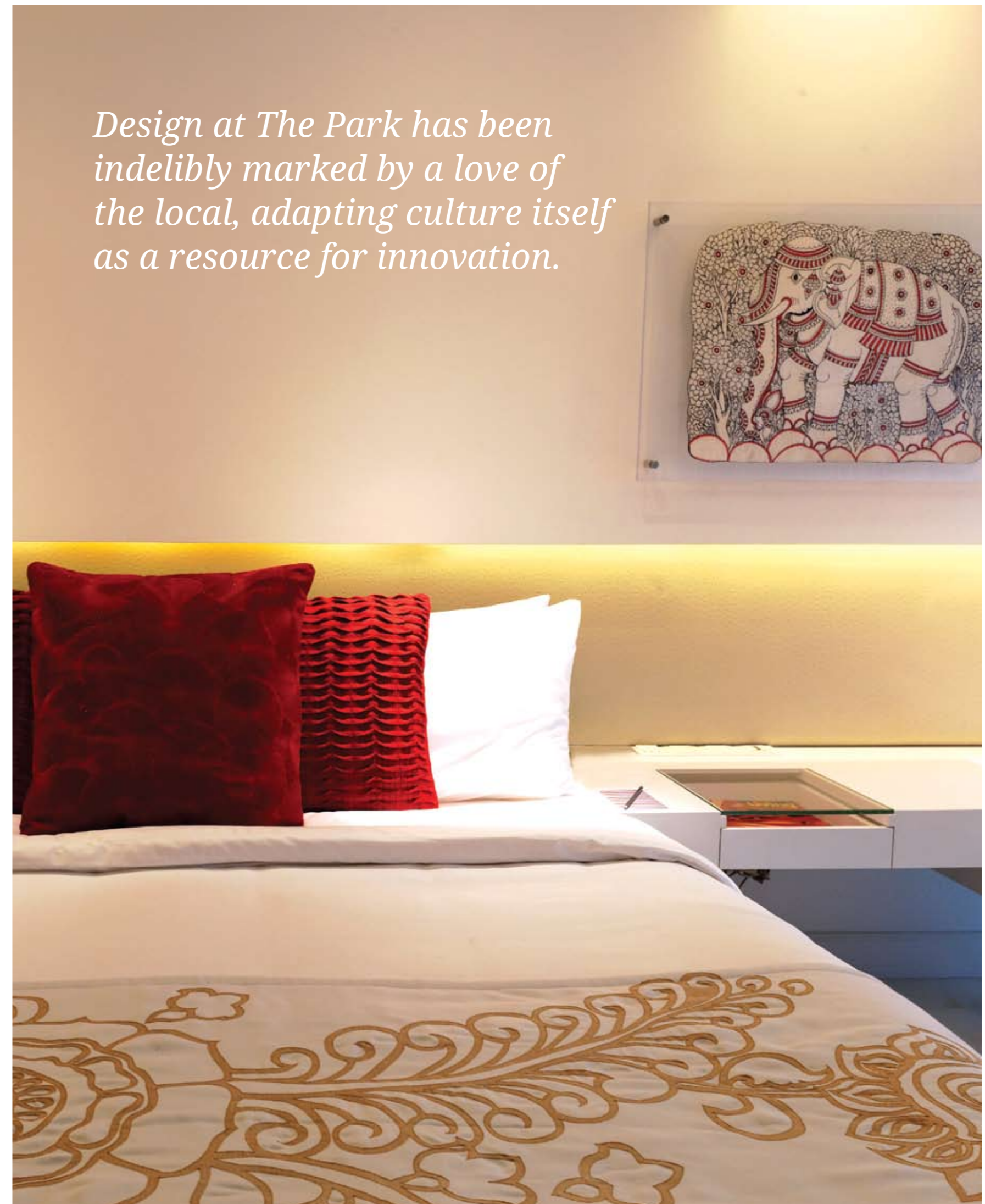
The new breed of visitors wants to actively share the cultural lives of locals, the ways in which they express or entertain themselves. To keep in tune with this, the best hotels and travel companies across the world are moving away from the old idea of standardized resorts and itineraries. Being true facilitators of culture, The Park Hotels are steeped in the cultural vibe of the city they are located in, supporting dance, music and performance festivals in cities, opening doors for guests to enjoy superlative levels of visual arts, music, or performance birthed in that region.

The Hotels are actively involved in The Delhi International Arts Festival, and the prestigious Sangamam festival that promotes the indigenous arts, street theatre, folk performance and regional cuisine in Chennai. They have also initiated their own event, The Park's New Festival, showcasing the best of Indian performance culture spreading across Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Kolkata. Besides this, book readings, theatre and art shows are regular occurrences at the different properties, allowing guests a deep experience of contemporary intellectual and creative pursuits particular to that region. Similarly, The Park's Hotels' sister brands like the Oxford Bookstore in Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata, as well as the iconic Flury's in Kolkata offer guests a chance to explore a more local type of cultural connect with the city, not often available to '5 star' guests.



Luxury Rooms at The Park Hyderabad
Traditional Andhra Tholu Bommalata leather puppets are framed into contemporary art on the walls

Design at The Park has been indelibly marked by a love of the local, adapting culture itself as a resource for innovation.





Design at The Park has been indelibly marked by a love of the local, adapting culture itself as a resource for innovation. The Park at the Vembanad uses thatch and other local materials in its construction. The Aura Spa Tent in Kerala and other Park properties references ancient Ayurvedic massage and treatment options to standard Swedish deep tissue work. In the Delhi Hotel, the glass doors of the banquet room, Yantra are inspired by Mughal architecture and patterns. The Park Hotels also design a large part of their repertoire of food around local cuisine. All aspects of the guests' experience are tinged with a flavour redolent of regional culture.

The Park Hotels are a locus for those in love with the local. They are plugged into the community they are situated in, intermingling the unique characteristics of that community with their design, food and art. Serving up a delightful mix of experiences that give guests a profound connect with culture and exchanges with diverse people and ideas, all at very close quarters. Creating a true destination that reflects and treasures the local (and inculcates sustainability) all parlayed with The Park Hotel hallmarks: style and luxury.

Apsara - Heaven on Water This luxury cruiser is a floating boutique Hotel from The Park on the Vembanad Lake, Kerala.

Aura, Spa at The Park, Kolkata Traditional Kerala condiments that are the basis of its unique cuisine

A view of the serene backwaters of Kerala, God's Own Country



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The Balasubramaniyan Temple in Allepey
a spiritual and aesthetic experience accessible
to guests at The Park on Vemabanad Lake.

Teapot

It's much more than a spot of tea that you'll get in this Teapot. Check this charming tearoom out for its engaging décor sprinkled with curious kettles, coasters, tea-cosies et al. The cozy atmosphere, tasty snacks and, of course, its variety of refreshing gourmet teas brewed to perfection may have you lingering here for hours on a sultry Kochi day. **Peter Celli Street, 8 am to 9.30 pm**

Kashi Art Café and Gallery

The favourite haunt of travellers who love art and artists who love travel, Kashi Art Café is abuzz with ideas, stories and intellectual chatter – over a cup of aromatic French press coffee and delectable homemade cakes. The adjoining gallery allows tourists and aficionados to sample works from some of India's most contemporary art collections. For the serious artist, Kashi also has a residency program. **Burgher Street, 8.30 am to 7.30 pm**

Idiom

Before you jump on a houseboat floating down the backwaters, drop by Idiom for a book to keep you company. This bookworms' favourite has a great mix of Western and Indian fiction as well as books on the history, cooking, and culture of Kerala and beyond. Frequent travellers to Kochi swear by this homey store and its friendly staff. **1/348 Bastion St., near Princess St., +91 484 2217075, 9 am to 9 pm**

Streetfood

Kochi has a delicious and spicy streetfood scene. While push carts with parotas, egg, beef and other Malayali meat curries can be found all over the city, Panampilly Nagar attracts the locals because of its north Indian offerings like chaat and rolls.

Holy Lama Shoppe

Get body-beautiful with earthy herbal soaps, scrubs and oils from the Holy Lama Shoppe. Made in a little factory in Kochi by an all-women force, every product is splendidly natural including the ingenious leaf packaging. **Gujarath Street, Mattanchery +91 484 2224196 / 226903**

Kasavu Kada

If you're looking for a selection of the traditional white and gold Kerala sarees, or the mundu for men so typical to the area, Kasavu Kada is your best bet for handlooms. You can also buy gorgeous handwoven silk and cotton fabric by the meter. **Church Landing Road, Behind Fine Arts Hall, +91 484 2372395 / 2353993**

Shopping at Fort Kochi

Heritage architecture-strewn Fort Kochi is also a shopper's delight with lifestyle boutiques dotting its streets. While Eco Tree is right up the environmentally trendy shopper's alley with earthy jholas, sandals and clothes, the Neemrana Shop in the Tower House Hotel is the perfect place to pick up stylish gifts. For the best in Indian couture, kitsch accessories and home decor with a dash of spunk, head to Cinammon. **Eco Tree; Neemrana Shop; Cinammon +91 484 2218124**

The Aura Spa at The Park Vembanad

Rejuvenate mind, body and soul with signature treatments at this heavenly spa. Ancient Ayurvedic techniques and ingredients, as well as Swedish and oriental massages detox you of all urban cares in a traditional Kerala ambience overlooking the green backwaters. **(contact?)**

Around Kochi and Vembanad Lake

The Backwaters

A must on your itinerary is a cruise on the quaint rice boats or kettuvellams that glide along the backwaters criss-crossing coastal Kerala and its villages, and the placid Vembanad lake. Wake up to breathtaking views and a menu of delicious local cuisine. Many tour operators also offer water sports on the lake.

Pathiramanal Island

An ideal place for a break in the journey while on a backwater cruise is this lush, green isle, famous for rare species of migratory birds from all around the world. The 10 acre island is surrounded by the Vembanad Lake, stretching from Alappuzha to Kochi, and accessible only by boat. Don't forget your binoculars!

Snake Boat Races

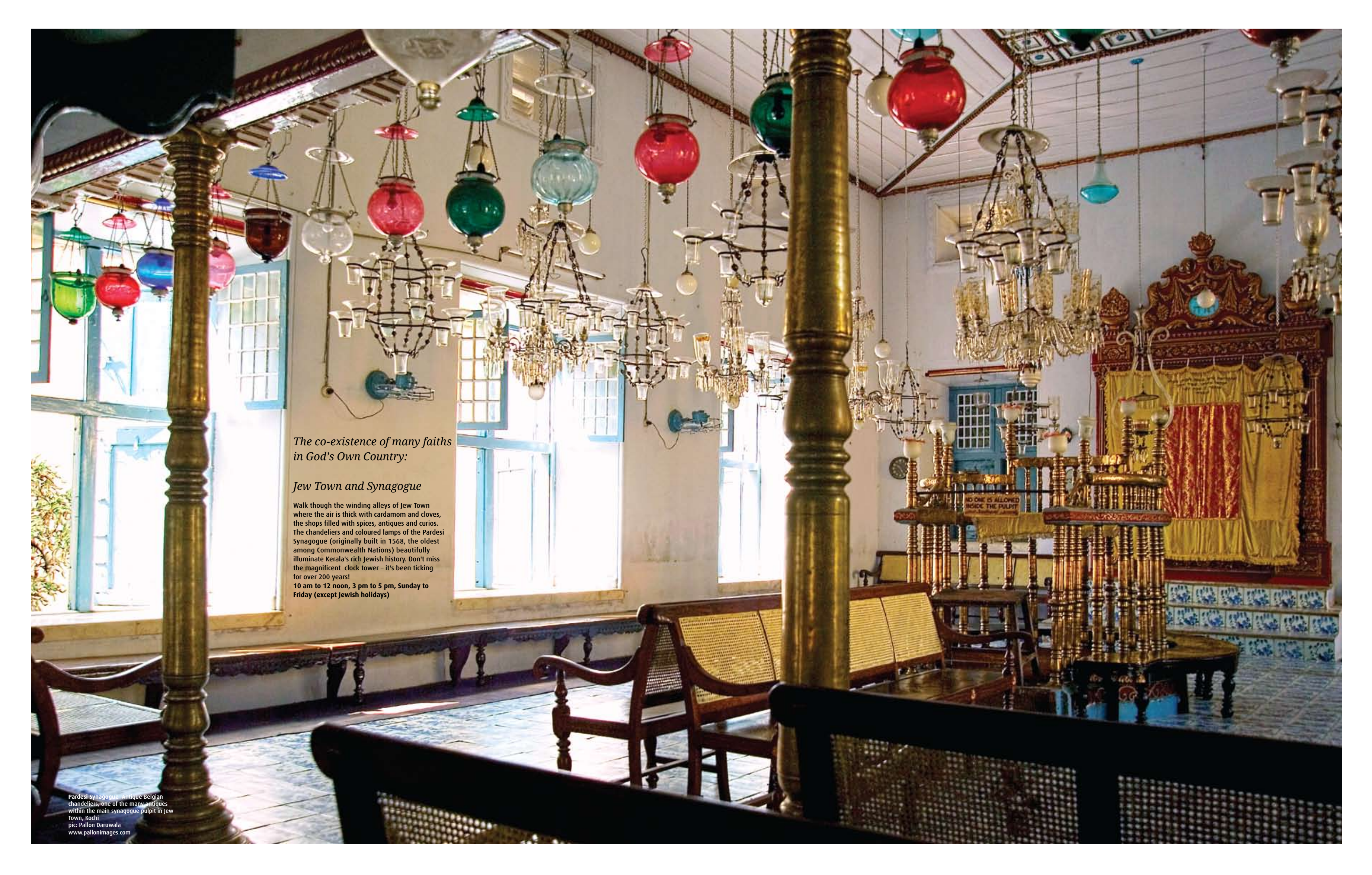
Every few months, the peaceful backwaters of Kerala burst into a frenzy of song, dance and oars. The Snake Boat races are an exhilarating feast for the senses, whether you know the competing teams or not. The 30 meter long 100-man Chundavallam or snake boat is the undisputed star of the show! The Nehru Trophy Boat Race in Allepey is the biggest, while the Kumarakom race is better for tourists in the high season.

THE PARK EXPLORER



Kochi

For more information or bookings for any of the above please contact The Box at The Park, New Delhi +91 11 23743737



*The co-existence of many faiths
in God's Own Country:*

Jew Town and Synagogue

Walk through the winding alleys of Jew Town where the air is thick with cardamom and cloves, the shops filled with spices, antiques and curios. The chandeliers and coloured lamps of the Pardesi Synagogue (originally built in 1568, the oldest among Commonwealth Nations) beautifully illuminate Kerala's rich Jewish history. Don't miss the magnificent clock tower - it's been ticking for over 200 years!
10 am to 12 noon, 3 pm to 5 pm, Sunday to Friday (except Jewish holidays)

INCREDIBLE INDIA

Incredible India was conceptualized in 2002 by V Sunil (while he was Creative Director, O&M Delhi), and Amitabh Kant, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. Seeking to create a 'brand India' showcasing its unique, vibrant and inclusive identity, the campaign constantly references local flavour rather than the ubiquitous generic labels previous tourism efforts proffered. These include customs and festivals, specific geographies, regional and community idiosyncracies as well as curious personalities. Juxtaposing these particularly Indian aspects with a universal sense of humour and globally recognized icons, it became instantly comprehensible to an international audience. The campaign was spectacularly successful – presenting India to the world as an intriguing sum of its diverse parts.

To be truly powerful, a brand must express itself not just in terms of product benefit, but in terms of greater socio-economic truth. Apple told a brave new world to reject Big Blue IBM and 'Think Different'. Nike told flabby, procrastinating city-dwellers everywhere to stop making excuses and 'Just DO It', followed up with the brilliant 'swoosh' icon, a graphic device that expressed energy, and inspired sport without speaking a word.

The Incredible India campaign belongs to this generation of branding. Visually, it uses the '!' symbol to convey the mind-boggling depth and intensity of the Indian experience. Every aspect of India – be it the ever-accelerating GDP, extreme geography, kaleidoscopic culture, deep-rooted spirituality or photogenic chaos – is summed up by the simple yet profound exclamation mark.

The campaign is also noteworthy in terms of tone. Headlines such as 'Not all Indians are polite, hospitable and vegetarian' are more than just witty advertising copy – they are symptomatic of a much bigger social phenomenon i.e., an optimistic and extroverted new India, eager to make its presence felt in the global community. This India is a far cry from the meek, tentative, 'offshore' destination of the last decade.

It is this sub-text that transforms Incredible India from a mere branding exercise into a pop culture milestone, denoting a turning point in the evolution of one of mankind's greatest civilisations.

When we started to work on the campaign, things were pretty bad for the tourism industry. Many travel companies were on the verge of shutting down. Hotels were operating only a few floors. 9/11 had just happened. Travel advisories were issued by most of the western countries. Perfect timing!!!

I was lucky to have Amitabh Kant from the Tourism Ministry as my partner. Both of us were very clear about one thing: no more snake charmers and sadhus. The phrase 'Incredible India' was pre-decided by Mr Kant and his colleagues from Kerala Tourism, while he was the Secretary of Tourism in the Kerala Government.

The primary objective of the branding exercise was to create a distinctive identity for the country. This resulted in the iconic 'Incredible India' logo, where the exclamation mark that formed the "I" of India was used to great effect across all communications. We launched the campaign with an upside down reflection of the Taj Mahal, forming the '!'. The campaign successfully established India as a high-end tourist destination, generating a 16% increase in tourist traffic in the first year.

The next year, we focused on the spiritual side of India, resulting in 28.8% increase in tourist traffic and a no.1 ranking in the Travel+Leisure readers survey. Also in 2003, Conde Nast Traveller selected India as one of the top ten preferred destinations for the discerning traveller. In 2004 India was ranked among the top five favourite international destinations in a global survey by Lonely Planet. This campaign went on to win many international and national awards.

The 2006/07 campaign was a real turning point, where the print and outdoor executions combined spectacular images with a wry, assured tone – a far cry from the bowing and scraping of the past campaigns. This campaign won the PATA grand award "Best of Show".

Every year we work on a new theme for the campaign varying from colours, cultures or even city-based themes like 'Oxford Circus' with Rajasthani autorikshaws in London, the film-based theme for the LA campaign, and cultural shows in New York and Berlin. What we can do with a subject like India is limitless. Because it is a subject that is truly Incredible.



Just how do you paint a canvas
that's ten feet high, weighs over four tons
and does not stand still.



With hundreds of religious and cultural festivals round the year, the first thing that strikes you about India is the abundance of art. Visit the biggest gallery on Earth. Your pickup service is waiting.

Incredible!ndia
www.incredibleindia.org



HIGHWAY ON MY PLATE

Mayur Sharma, along with his friend and co-foodie Rocky Singh, anchors the food and travel show, Highway on My Plate on NDTV Good Times.

"Never eat more than you can lift." ~Miss Piggy



With Miss Piggy's wisdom firmly in mind, Rocky and I set off on our journey to explore the highways of India, the food, the drink, the life less ordinary. I had returned to live in my country after almost 10 years away spent travelling all over the world for work and for pleasure using planes, trains, buses, and automobiles. This show was the best way to get in touch with India, its people, customs, oddities, and quirks. True to form India never fails to catch you by surprise.

At the outset, our take on this whole adventure was that it was a chance to travel the highways and byways of India with a friend, doing what we love best, i.e. eating! Acting, performing, chatting with people and handing out information apart, we hope what comes through in any episode you watch is our sheer, unadulterated joy as we dive into each new meal with gusto and abandon, and the fun we always manage to have when together. Some clown once said that "if you eat alone you choke alone", so we ate together and choked with laughter.

Did you ever stop to wonder what route the fresh vegetables and fruits on your plate take to get there? What about the poultry, the meat, the 'freshly baked' bread and the creamy milk that comes gushing out when you stick a token into the machine at the local Mother Dairy outlet? Did you stop? Or wonder? Well, let's put the suspense to bed; it all comes via the highway. This explains the long line of trucks you will find at most state borders, waiting for the streets to quieten so they can deliver your future meals while you sleep in your bed digesting the last one. In the same way that the blood vessels in your body carry vital nutrients through your blood, the highways and the trucks carry your food from 'field to fridge'.

What of their meals though? Do the driver and his khalasi (trainee driver-cum-general factotum) stop by the wayside and clamber into the back of the truck to feast on whatever supplies they may be carrying? Does it bring to your mind an image of a truck carrying bread waiting on another one with dairy products so that the drivers can all sit down together in a nearby field and enjoy a few butter and cheese sandwiches? Not likely, I hear you say with a smile. And this is what we set off to explore...the places by the highway, the erstwhile dhabas that offer food, drink, rest and a whole plethora of services to sustain life along the arteries of our country, and the people that travel by them.



We met two gentlemen at Puran Singh Ka Dhaba in Ambala who for the past 30 years have made the 240km round trip from Ludhiana once a month to feast on the famous mutton curry.

You may remember scenes in the show from the Bajwa Dhaba on the road to Jaipur, where truck drivers were able to eat, lounge with friends, bathe, have their clothes washed and ironed and even have their beards trimmed and ears cleaned. At the Jammu Punjab Chowdhary Dhaba in addition to the above services the dhaba provided a message-holding and even money lending service to regulars. Last time we checked there was no 5-Star hotel that provided all the above along with that plate of fresh oysters. Hooray for 'Indian service'!

Without exception, everywhere we go, cameras or no cameras, we find people warm, welcoming, and always ready to chat about food, television, and life. People invite us into their restaurants, their lives, even their homes, mere minutes after meeting us. We meet philosophers like Mr. Sharma at the Sharma Dhaba who gave a new spin to the '2 hands are better than 1' perspective, and shared with us that it was better to bring both hands together in salutation instead of using 1 hand to fight. There are traditionalists like the 4 brothers who run the the Ayodhya Restaurant in Mangalore and offer a wide range of traditional Mangalorean snacks and foods to keep alive the rapidly disappearing dishes and recipes from 'grandmother's cooking.' They offer dishes like mude, pathrode, and sanjeera rotis, many of which are no longer available in homes. Yet they are not afraid to experiment with local ingredients – so don't be afraid to try a Breadfruit Manchurian dish here.

If you think smoked meat is a cool thing to have when you dine at an Italian eatery or a charcuterie, then here is some news for you. In Arunachal Pradesh, for centuries, the home has been one giant smokehouse. Most homes are single room affairs with the kitchen taking pride of place. Yaks are slaughtered for meat and every edible part of the animal (including the internal organs) is put on overhead racks running the length of the home. Smoke from the cooking fires dries and cures the meat over time and gives it a wonderful flavour.

When talking of the food and the places that serve it, can one ever forget what I call 'everyman?' The Indian who revels in the pleasures of eating and is so passionate about his food that he can argue about the best butter chicken in town until the cows come home. We met two gentlemen at Puran Singh Ka Dhaba in Ambala who for the past 30 years have made the 240km round trip from Ludhiana once a month to feast on the famous mutton curry. We chatted with a gentleman who makes a one-hour round trip to



Ahuja Lassiwaala in Amritsar for his daily glass of milky goodness. The kachoras at Chawanilal Sweet shop in Nasirabad are so famous that everyone – and we mean everyone – in a 20km radius that we asked for directions to the shop knew of this landmark where the kachoras run out by noon. Many of you will know of the famous Kayani Bakery in Pune and its delicious butter cookies but did you know that in a previous avatar the building was an Italian Dance Hall?

We can wax lyrical for hours about the landscape and scenery we have enjoyed...the endless miles of paddy fields; the dense forests around Nasik, the beautiful tree lined highways of the South with their bordering teak plantations; the lush, green countryside with scattered lakes; the bridges across the big rivers with buffaloes bathing under them; and the sunsets, oh the sunsets! that turned our world orange as the miles sped by on the expressway.

We could share all this and more till your head spins at the images we are attempting to paint in your mind. What we will do instead is to encourage you to get out there and try it out for yourself. When in Jaipur do visit the Amer Fort but also take time to wander down to the bus station and find a little shop that serves traditional daal-bhati-churma. In Amritsar, after you have feasted on the basic yet delicious daal, subzi, roti and chaach (buttermilk) at the langar in the Golden Temple, go wash it down with a sublime lassi at Ahuja's which comes topped with a golden dollop of homemade butter.

Progress looms, and with it we are in danger of losing a lot that makes our country special. No longer can you easily find that delicious, smoky flavour in Ladakhi food cooked on a multi-burner, wood and cow dung fired mud-brick thap (stove). The famous gur gur chai, named after the noise made when tea, salt and yak butter are mixed, is no longer served in every Ladakhi home either. National Expressway-1 and its 8 lanes may get you from Ahmedabad to Daman in double quick time but on the expressway you can't stop and lean over a bridge to watch the little boys jumping around in the shallows. You will miss the amazing food at Umiya Kathyawadi in Anand (the town of Amul butter fame). This place serves delectable, spicy dishes such as karela (bitter gourd) subzi, besan gatta, baingan masala along with large bajra (pearl millet) rotlas, all of which are so different from the mildly spiced, even sweet tastes normally associated with Gujarat. This eatery lies along the original route of National Highway-8 and is now in danger of closing as fewer people travel along NH-8. You will especially miss the wonderful opportunities to talk with your fellow countrymen and learn a little about life beyond the metros.

So once in a while take the long way home, stop somewhere, eat local food with local people, and chat about the local news. In the immortal words of someone who is no longer alive, "Eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside."

See you on the highway and don't forget to bring your plate!



A SLICE OF THE PARK

From The Park's Hotels Creators of Cuisine

“The secret behind the divine Chettinad cuisine,” says Chef Rajesh, Executive Chef, The Park, Chennai, “lies in the inventive use of roasted spices and other ingredients, some of which are, surprisingly, very nutritious.” We share with you a list of some specialty ingredients that Chettinad housewives guard jealously.



In the deep south of Tamil Nadu, east of Madurai and south of Tiruchi, begins a parched land, the Chettinad – the land of Chettiars. Businessmen and traders, and creators of one of the finest, most complex cuisines of India, with delicious recipes carried down from mother to daughter for generations. The Park, Chennai, has sourced these traditional dishes, giving guests a chance to sample authentic Chettinad food in the Hotel. (see box)

Contrary to popular perception, Chettinad food is not ‘chilli hot’. Its spicing is subtle and intriguing. Cooks roast meats like lamb, chicken, fish, prawns, crab, lobster and even turkey in freshly ground masala (made from the usual cumin, coriander, fenugreek as well as some unusual ingredients). The vegetarian part of the meal includes sundried and salted vegetables that are prepared by Aachis – the Chettiar women. Aachis make use of every seed, fruit or legume that grows in their countryside, developing techniques for preserving the vegetables so they can be used even off-season.

Signature Chettinad dishes available at The Park, Chennai

Kozhi Melagu Masala Uses a freshly ground paste of kalpasi, Marathi moggu and black peppercorns

Meen Kozhambu Fish cooked in a curry made from fenugreek, chillies, & garlic pearls

Sundakkai Vathal Kozhambu Uses sundried sundakkai for the curry

Biriyani/ Samba Saadam Prepared with seeraga samba rice

Kavanarisi Payasam Black rice kheer (a milk-based sweet)

Kavanarisi Puttu Black rice dessert

Chettinad Rasam Combines several spices and flavours like ginger, garlic, coriander, cumin, fenugreek etc

Murungakkai Sambar Drumstick curry flavoured with asafoetida and coriander, seasoned with curry leaves and mustard

Kalpasi

Also known as the black stone flower, kalpasi has no real taste of its own, but adds a distinct magic to any masala it’s added to. It grows in the gentle hills of Ooty and Kodaikanal.

Peppercorns – Milago

The finest peppercorns come from India’s Kerala coast, where hot sun, drenching rains and loamy, red soil laden with minerals produce vines with pungently flavored fruit. Before red chillies came to India from South America in the 1600’s, pepper was the only really hot ingredient used by us!

Seeraga Samba Rice

Of TAMILIAN origin, this aromatic variety of rice looks a little like cumin, (called seeragam in Tamil), and hence its name. It is used for biryani, whether vegetarian or meat-based, and it’s highly nutritious nature balances the spicy condiments beautifully.

Marathi Moggu

Despite their name, these clove-like, dried buds and fruits from the kapok or silk cotton tree are originally from Karnataka, and an essential ingredient in curry powders.

Javatri

Known as nutmeg in English, this is not one spice, but two: mace also comes from it. Nutmeg is the kernel of the apricot-like fruit, while mace is the thin tissue between the stone and the pulp. The nutmeg we get in India originates in Banda, the largest of the Molucca spice islands of Indonesia, and is rumoured to have hallucinogenic qualities if taken in certain amounts.

Karupatti

An interesting combination of jaggery with a few sprinkles of black pepper and ginger, this ingredient makes drinks like panakam, served on special occasions. It is also used in karupatti coffee and the milk-based dessert payasam. Karupatti is believed to be a good home-remedy for coughs, colds and throat ailments.

Annasi Poo – Star Anise

Also known as star anise, this is the dried fruit of an evergreen tree native to China and Vietnam. It is, as the name suggests, star shaped, radiating between five and ten pointed boat-shaped sections, each one a seedpod. A strong spice, so judicious use is wise! Like anise, star anise has stimulant and diuretic properties.

Sundaikkai Vathal

Mainly used to make the famous curries of Chettinad cuisine called kozhambu, sundakkai vathal (or dried turkey berry) is a vegetable: it is soaked in sour yoghurt, sundried, and then fried. It’s a regular panacea: a rich source of dietary fiber and vitamins, improving digestion, the skin and the heart.

Kavanarisi

A version of rice, black in colour, and very similar to Thai black sticky rice. Now grown in Tamil Nadu, it is said to have been brought back by the Chettiar traders from their visits to Burma and Thailand.



Reasons I Love THE PARK

*What keeps people coming
back to The Park Hotels*

Tarun Tahiliani's sophisticated design combines with exquisite handwork by traditional Indian artisans, creating opulent contemporary chic. The first Indian designer to be invited to show at the Milan Fashion Week in 2003, his couture and pret lines are beloved of celebrities from Aishwarya Rai to Naomi Campbell. His first store, Ensemble which opened in Mumbai in 1987, changed the face of fashion retail in India. Tarun Tahiliani lines feature on stylish boulevards from Moscow to New York, besides flagship stores in New Delhi and Mumbai.

*The Park Hotels have always been at the vanguard of hip
and contemporary design. Playful use of colour, materials,
and a sense of India meets Twin Peaks make them unique.*

*Fantastic F&B and fun presentation. Never had better
Parma ham and Camembert pizzas in my life.*

Very energetic nightclubs with a strong vibe for music.

Great bars!

*The dynamic, experimental owners and staff who make
all this happen, so we always feel at home.*





THE PARK SCOOP

What's New at The Park Hotels

Chennai

Fabulous Offers for Students at The Pod

Italia's the coolest place to chill in Chennai. Great food and drinks, plus free wifi. And to top it off, a special discount card for students for the coming year. Come and get your card today.

Aircel Chennai Open 2011

Its time once again for the acclaimed ACO 2011, which we're thrilled to host every year. The campaign will extend to our Hotels in Delhi, Navi Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Vizag and Chennai. So wherever you are, enter the contest and win a free trip and stay at The Park, Chennai, and watch the finals on Sunday, January 9.

New Delhi

India Art Summit

The Park Hotels is hospitality partner for this remarkable show that offers an unparalleled opportunity for collectors and art enthusiasts to view the largest and most diverse showcase of modern and contemporary art in India. The 3rd edition of India Art Summit presents 84 exhibiting galleries from 20 countries. Alongside the art fair, there will be a Sculpture Park, Video Lounge, Curated Art Projects, Live Performances, an elaborate Speakers' Forum, an Art Store and a range of exciting Collateral Events around the city of Delhi. Pragati Maidan, January 20-23.

Artiger

The Park Hotels has acquired a fibre-glass sculpture of a tiger which will be displayed at The Park, New Delhi for 2 months. Part of Artiger, a charity public art project, the proceeds will go to the Ranthambore Foundation, working towards the conservation of India's national animal. 58 life-size fiberglass tigers have been created by various artists like Paresh Maity, Manu Parekh, Sujata Bajaj, Anjum Singh, Seema Kohli, Suhasini Kejriwal, first displayed at Rashtrapati Bhavan and then public locations across Delhi.

Kolkata

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Fest

A 4 day long literary festival hosted by The Park Kolkata. Art exhibits and reading workshops literary figures from around the world as well as publishers. January 13-16

Saffron

The dramatic new look and eclectic menu at Saffron make it the most exciting new restaurant in the city. Warm colours that re-interpret the spice mingle perfectly with original dishes that delicately combine flavours from east and west. We've kept some of the old favourites, and have created a new signature menu with traditional meat recipes as well as creative concoctions like ravioli with truffled makhani and sautéed English vegetables with gnocchi. A Taster's Menu, (the first of its kind in Kolkata) gives you a chance to sample eleven dishes and 4 wines from vegetarian and non-vegetarian set menus. Here's a peek at some of this delicious repertoire: Kolkata chaat platter, arvi on sticks, chutney flavoured chenna paturi, wok tossed asparagus, broccoli, corn and baby spinach with potato gnocchi, murg raan, sutli gosht, anda timater, mishthi doi cheese cake with aam papad chutney, semolina fritters with watermelon rabri and chandan ice cream with gold leaf sprinkle.





THE PARK SPOTLIGHT

A birds-eye view of the monarchs of style

Julie Kagti

Telling stories of time and skill, Julie Kagti's collection of Indo-western clothing and accessories fuses textile and tradition into contemporary fashion that is as stunning on the ramps of Lakme India Fashion Week as it is comfortable to wear. Kagti's affair with fabric began at the feet of her grandmother in Assam who taught her to weave on her loom. In turn, she has trained countless underprivileged women in embroidery, tie&die and related skills, most of whom then become a part of her talented workforce. In her hands, local weaves do cartwheels with traditional techniques forming sophisticated urban narratives. Kagti's collaborative experiment in weaving handmade paper won the Elle Decor International Award for the best wall covering. Kagti's clients are thinking, individualistic women of all ages and types, including Shabana Azmi and Sonia Gandhi.
+91 80 41327515
www.knotsoncloth.com



The Anu Project

There's a unique handle on these bags. Besides being fabulously funky to look at, they help clean up the environment, empower underprivileged women and uplift a slum – this is no ordinary bag! When you discard juice cartons or chocolate wrappers, the folks at The Anu Project pick them up and transform them into vibrant and functional carry-alls that you'd never want to throw away. Products include handbags and laptop bags, belts and more. A joint venture between Centre for Social Action (the funding agency) and The Arthouse (which spearheads design, promotion, branding and execution of products), Anu not only trains women of Bangalore's slums in handskills but also gives them a stake in the modest business. The project has tied up with other NGOs in the field of health, sanitation, literacy and finance, touching every aspect of the participants' lives.
devika@studiosattva.in

Banglanatak.com

When watching them resplendent in their traditional costumes and swaying gracefully, it's difficult to imagine the poverty that folk dancers and singers live in. Banglanatak, started by Amitava Bhattacharya, works towards promoting tribal performance artistes, getting them to perform in festivals, train under masters to fine tune skills, and also provide financial aid to buy materials and costumes. In this way, it has helped revive lost and nearly extinct dance/theatre forms like Jhumur, Baul-fakiri, Parachitra and more for artistes from 21 Indian states. Making art and performance a sustainable source of income, (in some places increasing the artistes' income threefold) the NGO has helped improve the life of the people it works with, all the while preserving indigenous culture.
www.banglanatak.com



Canelab

A chance encounter with local cane artisans in Tamil Nadu started globe-trotting photographer Jean Marc Joullie on a new adventure. Along with Dominique Heil (former world marketing manager of Lacoste), he founded Canelab – a furniture company that creates a dialogue between contemporary design and traditional handcraft through the natural medium of rattan. Infusing a chic European design aesthetic into the exquisite Indian handskills that have been passed down through generations, Cane Lab creates unique, beautifully finished furniture that wouldn't be out of place in any contemporary furniture store in the world. Every piece is handmade in their workshop in Pondicherry. What's amazing is that most of the artisans at Canelab are hearing and speech impaired. In a world that's increasingly mechanized, this tribute to hand skills is an inspiring one.
+91 413 - 4200847
www.cane-lab.com

Blaft

Once upon a time there was a mathematician from Berkeley who felt sorry that the world was missing out on some fantastic Tamil pulp fiction – blame the language and class barrier! So Rakesh Kumar Khanna, started on a personal project to translate the books of the masses for the classes. He was joined by wife Ruth Devdasan and Kaveri Lalchand. Together, they formed Blaft, an indie publishing house in Chennai. The Blaft Anthology of Tamil Fiction shot them to instant fame (volume 2 is currently in production) bringing the best of this genre together in an English collection. The cover of the book, and those of all their subsequent titles, stylishly reflects local culture and art, juicing together the vernacular and the contemporary. Blaft has now published many English translations of regional pulp as well as graphic novels, children's books, encyclopedias and art books.
+91 98840 06145 +91 98405 30269
www.blaft.com





Inspired by the itinerant lives of shadow puppeteers in South India, R.V. Ramani, Chennai-based filmmaker and cinematographer created a document on digital video of the lives of these pre-modern artists of the moving image. In their struggle to survive and preserve astonishing forms of storytelling and entertainment, the filmmaker sees a reflection of his own conflicts regarding serious cinema. On this page is a still from his feature-length film *Nee Engey* (Where Are You).

The Park Hotels celebrate the practitioners, their tradition and the community they are part of by displaying the shadow puppets as art in the rooms in The Park, Hyderabad.

ART AT THE PARK

History + Geography + Art + Craft + Culture + People