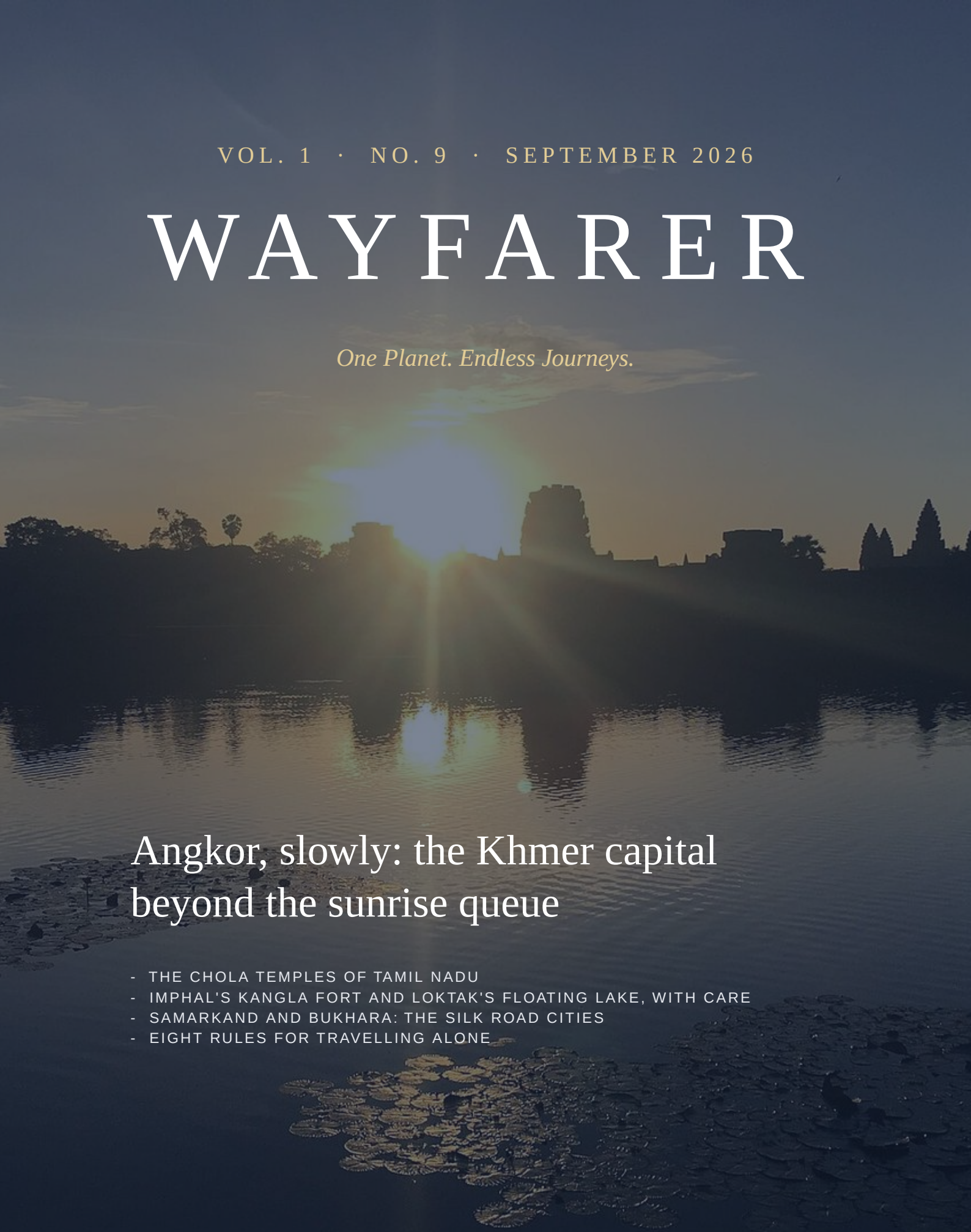
VOL. 1 · NO. 9 · SEPTEMBER 2026

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.



Angkor, slowly: the Khmer capital beyond the sunrise queue

- THE CHOLA TEMPLES OF TAMIL NADU
- IMPHAL'S KANGLA FORT AND LOKTAK'S FLOATING LAKE, WITH CARE
- SAMARKAND AND BUKHARA: THE SILK ROAD CITIES
- EIGHT RULES FOR TRAVELLING ALONE

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EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Ancient Civilisations

From Gitanjali Gautam, Editor-in-Chief

Ancient places make us feel small, which is part of their appeal. They also make us over-confident. A guide points at a carving and tells you exactly what it meant, and for a moment you forget that someone, somewhere, spent a career arguing about it.

This month we have tried to keep both feelings. We have written about places with dates that are not in dispute, the Chola temples, for example, and about others where the dates and the stories are still being argued over. Where sources disagree, we say so. Where we could not check something, we say that too.

One of the places in this issue, Manipur, deserves a particular note. It is a land of extraordinary heritage and it has also lived through serious violence since 2023. We have written about its sites with care and with a plain warning: check current advisories before you plan anything, and go only if the people who live there say you are welcome.

Read slowly. Check the date. Ask who is telling you the story.

Read slowly. Check the date. Ask who is telling you the story.

GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

- Gitanjali Gautam

Masthead

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September is a good month for old stones. The monsoon is easing in India, crowds are thinning at many northern sites, and the great ruins of Asia are green and quiet. This issue visits temples built by Chola kings, the Khmer capital at Angkor, the Silk Road cities of Uzbekistan, a Zapotec hilltop above Oaxaca, and a royal citadel in Imphal, and it asks the question every good guide asks: how do we know what we think we know?

DID YOU KNOW

Angkor Wat was built between 1113 and 1150 by King Suryavarman II, according to a standard reference summary.

DID YOU KNOW

The vimana of the Brihadisvara Temple in Thanjavur is 63.4 metres high, topped by a single granite block of about 80 tonnes.

DID YOU KNOW

Keibul Lamjao National Park at Loktak Lake is described as the only floating national park in the world.

DID YOU KNOW

Samarkand became Timur's capital in 1370 and joined the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2001.

DID YOU KNOW

The Grand Egyptian Museum holds more than 100,000 artefacts, with around 24,000 on display.

DID YOU KNOW

Only four of the six surviving Meteora monasteries are still active.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

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RESEARCHED	Compiled from public sources; field verification pending.
PROPOSED	A commission, brief or concept - not a published story.
ILLUSTRATIVE	An example itinerary; check times and costs locally.
TEMPLATE	A format showing how offers appear; no real prices.

TRAVEL TIP

Dress rules apply at active temples: cover shoulders and knees and carry a light scarf.

TRAVEL TIP

Share your itinerary with someone at home when travelling alone, and check in at agreed times.

TRAVEL TIP

Buy crafts from the makers; ask about their dyes, clay and methods.

Read slowly. Check the date. Ask who is telling you the story.

GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

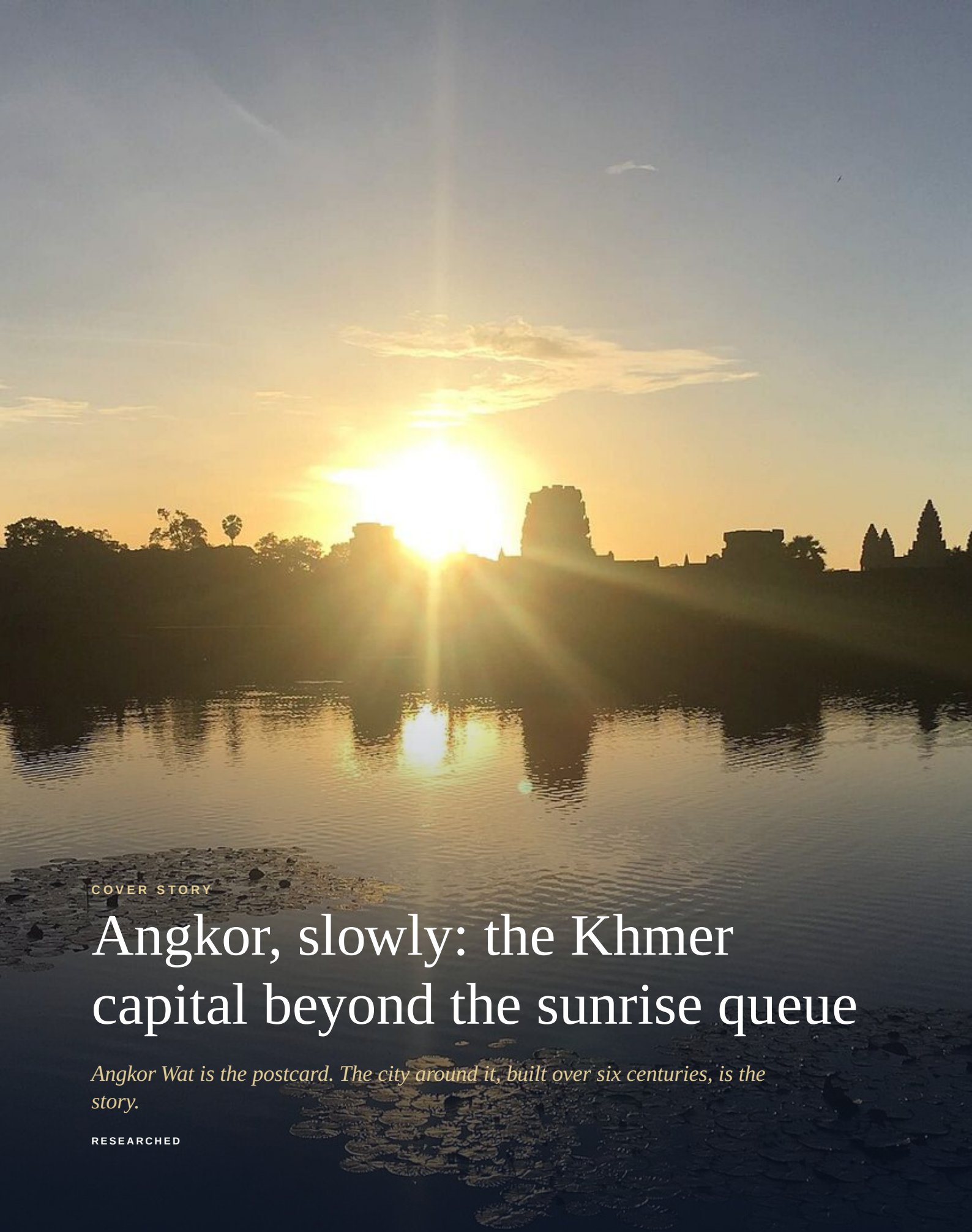
You are always, in some sense, someone else's guest.

FROM THE LEXICON: XENIA

The carvings did not change; the reading did.

FROM THE HERITAGE WITHOUT BORDERS PAGE

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



COVER STORY

Angkor, slowly: the Khmer capital beyond the sunrise queue

Angkor Wat is the postcard. The city around it, built over six centuries, is the story.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Christophe95 · CC BY-SA 4.0

ANGKOR IS NOT ONE temple but a landscape of them, spread over a large area north of Siem Reap in Cambodia. The Khmer Empire, which built it, flourished from about the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. The Angkorian period is usually dated from 802 CE, when Jayavarman II began his reign, and the city was sacked by the kingdom of Ayutthaya around 1431, though sources differ on the end, and some give earlier dates for the start of Ayutthayan influence.

Angkor Wat itself was built between 1113 and 1150 by King Suryavarman II as a temple and personal mausoleum, in the early twelfth century. A little later, Jayavarman VII, whose reign began in 1181, built the walled city of Angkor Thom over the ruins of an earlier capital, Yasodharapura, with the Bayon at its centre. He also built Ta Prohm and Preah Khan and dedicated them to his parents. These dates are scholars' estimates, drawn from inscriptions and architecture, and are worth holding lightly.

The area was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1992, and was on the List of World Heritage in Danger until 2004. Cambodia manages it through the APSARA Authority, created in 1995; since 1993, international conservation work has been coordinated with India, Germany, Japan and UNESCO among others. Estimates put visitors at around two million a year by 2014, so crowds are the main challenge.

A slower way to see Angkor starts with the calendar and the clock. September falls in the rainy season, when the site is greener and quieter, though showers can be heavy; carry a rain layer and expect some muddy paths. The sunrise at Angkor Wat draws the biggest crowds; instead, try the first hour after opening at a lesser temple such as Preah Khan or Banteay Kdei, and visit Angkor Wat itself in the afternoon.

Plan at least three days, with long breaks. Tickets are sold through the official Angkor Enterprise website and app, which also sells boat trips on Chong Kneas; we could not confirm current prices, so check the site. Dress rules apply at active temples, with shoulders and knees covered; carry a light scarf.

Beyond the temples, Siem Reap has a number of social enterprises that train young Cambodians in crafts and the arts; one is profiled in this issue's People pages.

Choose guides licensed by the authority, and be wary of anyone who offers to take you through restricted areas.

Entry: Cambodia issues an electronic visa through its government portal; fees and rules depend on your nationality, so check the official site. Land borders with neighbouring countries can close at short notice, so confirm the status of any overland crossing before you rely on it.

At a glance

BEST TIME	November to February is the dry, cool season; September is rainy and quiet (verify)
GETTING THERE	Fly to Siem Reap (SAI) or Phnom Penh (PNH); Angkor is a short drive from Siem Reap
TICKETS	Sold through the Angkor Enterprise site and app; check current prices
ENTRY	E-visa through the Cambodian government portal; rules depend on nationality
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — dates are scholars' estimates; fees, hours and border rules change

HOW TO REACH

Angkor Archaeological Park, near Siem Reap, Cambodia

AIRPORT	Siem Reap Airport (SAI) serves the area; Phnom Penh (PNH) is the national gateway, with connecting flights.
RAILWAY	Cambodia's passenger rail is limited and does not reach Siem Reap in a useful form; most travellers fly or take a bus.
BY ROAD	Angkor is a short drive north of Siem Reap, roughly 20-30 minutes depending on the temple; Phnom Penh to Siem Reap is roughly six hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Tuk-tuks and bicycles; many visitors hire a tuk-tuk driver for the day. Licensed guides are available.

Distances and times approximate; check with your hotel. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Angkor Enterprise (official tickets) (www.angkorenterprise.gov.kh); Cambodia e-Visa (official) (www.evisa.gov.kh); UNESCO World Heritage: Angkor (whc.unesco.org)

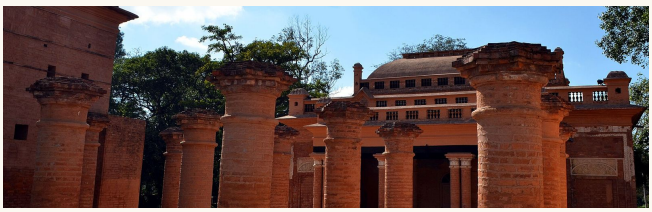


Photo: Meghroddur · CC BY-SA 4.0



NORTHEAST INDIA · MANIPUR

Imphal and Loktak: a royal citadel and a floating lake, with care

Manipur's heritage is some of the richest in the Northeast. Its present is complicated. Read this before you plan.

RESEARCHED · TRAVEL ADVISORY APPLIES

Photo: ch_15march · CC BY 2.0

A NOTE FIRST. MANIPUR has been marked by serious ethnic violence since 3 May 2023. Published figures from Manipur Police, as of 15 September 2023, recorded 175 deaths and about 60,000 people displaced. We could not verify current security conditions, curfew status or any permit rules for this issue. Before you plan any visit, check the advisories from the Government of India and the state government, ask local contacts, and travel only if you are sure you will be welcome and safe. If in doubt, wait.

With that said, the state's heritage deserves attention. Kangla Fort in Imphal was the traditional seat of the Meitei rulers of the Ningthouja dynasty, and the capital of pre-modern Manipur. Only the western half of what was once a fort on both sides of the river survives. The site is sacred to the Meitei people, and includes the Pakhangba Temple, dedicated to the deity Pakhangba, along with museums, a royal boatyard with traditional racing boats and the Kangla Sanathong gate. It is managed by the Kangla Fort Board for the Government of Manipur and is a proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site, not an inscribed one.

Loktak Lake lies south of Imphal. Its surface area varies from roughly 250 to 500 square kilometres in the rainy season, and it is known for phumdis, floating masses of vegetation and soil. The largest, about 40 square kilometres, carries Keibul Lamjao National Park, described as the only floating national park in the world and the last natural refuge of the sangai, the Manipur brow-antlered deer, an endangered subspecies of Eld's deer. The lake was designated a Ramsar wetland on 23 March 1990. Fishers live on the lake and on small floating huts called phumshangs, so a boat trip is a visit to a working community, not just a view.

Manipur's state government, as listed in one reference page, is headed by Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh. The annual Sangai Festival is organised by Manipur Tourism every year from 21 to 30 November at venues including Hapta Kangjeibung and the Bhagyachandra Open Air Theatre in Imphal. The 2026 dates and arrangements should be confirmed with the Manipur government, given the situation.

How to go well, if you go: travel with a local guide, stay with local hosts, ask before photographing people or religious sites, and follow any advice from local authorities. Do not treat the state as a backdrop for adventure; people live here.

At a glance

ADVISORY	Check Government of India and state advisories before any travel. Violence has occurred since 3 May 2023; we could not verify current conditions.
BEST TIME	Cooler months, October to March (verify)
GETTING THERE	Imphal Airport (IMF) is the main gateway
PERMITS	Rules for Indian and foreign visitors have varied; confirm with the Government of Manipur
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — conditions change quickly; this page is not a safety assessment

HOW TO REACH

Imphal, Kangla Fort and Loktak Lake, Manipur

AIRPORT	Imphal International Airport (IMF), about 8 km from the city centre.
RAILWAY	Manipur has no passenger railway to Imphal; Jiribam is the nearest railhead on the Assam line, a long road journey away.
BY ROAD	Loktak Lake and Moirang are roughly 45 km south of Imphal by road, about an hour or more.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and local drivers; boats on Loktak Lake with local operators.

Distances approximate. Check current security and access conditions. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Manipur Tourism (official) (manipurtourism.gov.in); Ministry of Home Affairs (www.mha.gov.in)



Photo: ch_15march · CC BY 2.0



INDIA · TAMIL NADU

The Great Living Chola Temples: three towers, three kings

Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram: a short temple trail that explains an empire.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Original: Rainer Halama Derivative work: UnpetitproleX · CC BY-SA 4.0

IN THE KAVERI DELTA of Tamil Nadu stand three temples that UNESCO treats as one World Heritage Site: the Great Living Chola Temples. The word living matters, because these are working places of worship, not ruins.

The oldest is the Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur, dedicated to Shiva and built by Rajaraja I between 1003 and 1010 CE. It is about 340 km southwest of Chennai. Its tower, or vimana, is 63.4 metres high, and a single granite block weighing around 80 tonnes sits at the top. It is an Archaeological Survey of India-protected monument. Beneath later paintings on the sanctum walls are Chola frescoes, discovered in 1931 and restored in the 2000s; one source says about 112 square metres had been uncovered by 2010 from a total area of about 670. The temple's great Nandi bull faces the entrance hall, and sources disagree on its dimensions.

The second, Brihadisvara at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, was completed in 1035 CE by Rajendra Chola I as part of his new capital. It lies about 70 km northeast of Thanjavur. The third, the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram near Kumbakonam, was completed in the twelfth century, with sources giving about 1150 to 1166 CE, and lies about 40 km northeast of Thanjavur. The first temple was inscribed by UNESCO in 1987 (one source gives 1986), and the other two were added in 2004.

A sensible trail is Thanjavur on the first day, with the temple at dawn or in late afternoon; Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram on the second, based in Kumbakonam; and the craft town of Swamimalai, nearby, for the bronze casters whose lineage goes back to Chola sculptors. Their story is in this issue's People pages.

How to go well: remove shoes and dress modestly at the temples, ask before photographing inside sanctums, and hire a local guide who can read the inscriptions. Check opening hours, which we could not confirm from the sources we read.



Photo: Bgag · CC0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Cooler months, October to March; September can still be warm and wet (verify)
GETTING THERE	Nearest airport: Tiruchirappalli (TRZ), about 55 km from Thanjavur; trains serve Thanjavur and Kumbakonam
UNESCO	Thanjavur inscribed 1987 (one source 1986); Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram added in 2004
ETIQUETTE	Remove shoes; dress modestly; ask before photographing inside sanctums
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — opening hours and fees to be confirmed with the ASI and temple authorities

HOW TO REACH

Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram, Tamil Nadu

AIRPORT	Tiruchirappalli International Airport (TRZ), about 55 km from Thanjavur; Chennai (MAA) is about 340 km away.
RAILWAY	Thanjavur Junction and Kumbakonam railway stations, both on main lines from Chennai and Tiruchirappalli.
BY ROAD	Thanjavur to Darasuram is about 40 km; Thanjavur to Gangaikonda Cholapuram about 70 km.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and auto-rickshaws; hire a driver for the two-day circuit.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Great Living Chola Temples (whc.unesco.org); Archaeological Survey of India (asi.nic.in); Tamil Nadu Tourism (official) (www.tamilnadutourism.tn.gov.in)



Photo: Photo Dharma from Penang, Malaysia · CC BY 2.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



ASIA · UZBEKISTAN

Samarkand and Bukhara: the Silk Road cities

Two UNESCO-listed cities on the old trade routes of Central Asia, and a visa change for Indian travellers.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Bernard Gagnon · CC0

THE CITIES OF UZBEKISTAN grew rich as stops on the trade routes that linked China, India, Persia and the Mediterranean. Samarkand and Bukhara are the best-known. Both are on the UNESCO World Heritage list: Bukhara's historic centre since 1993, with about 140 architectural monuments, and Samarkand since 2001 as Crossroads of Cultures.

Samarkand became the capital of Timur's empire in 1370, and he rebuilt much of the city over the next 35 years. The Registan, its most famous square, was begun when Ulugh Beg built the first madrasa of the ensemble between 1417 and 1420; the other two madrasas date from the seventeenth century according to one account that needs a citation, so we do not give exact dates. The Shah-i-Zinda memorial complex was founded by Qarakhanid rulers in the eleventh century, with buildings from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The ruins of the older city, Afrasiab, were destroyed by Genghis Khan.

Bukhara was a prosperous Silk Road city that became the Samanid capital by 850 and was destroyed by Genghis Khan in 1220. Its main landmarks include the Ark fortress, the Kalyan Minaret and Po-i-Kalyan complex, the Mir-i-Arab Madrasah, the Lyab-i Hauz ensemble and the Ismail Samani Mausoleum. Samarkand is about 215 km east of Bukhara, and the country's cities are linked by an international airport network and rail.

A short word on the table. Plov, called osh or palov in Uzbek, is the national dish of Uzbekistan: rice simmered in a rich meat-and-vegetable base called zirvak, usually in a large cauldron over a fire. Samarkand-style versions use a particular blend of seed oils, and a master cook can prepare it for up to a thousand people from one pot. UNESCO recognised the dish's cultural traditions in 2016.

Entry rules are changing. We could not verify this against an official Uzbek source, so confirm the rule with the Uzbek embassy or the government's visa site before you book. Entry rules for Indian passport holders can change at short notice: check the official Uzbek e-visa portal and with your airline before you book.

How to go well: dress modestly at religious sites, ask before photographing people, and buy crafts from workshops where you can see them made.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Spring and autumn are generally the most comfortable; summers are very hot (verify)
GETTING THERE	Fly to Tashkent (TAS), Samarkand (SKD) or Bukhara (BHK); trains link the main cities
ENTRY	Entry rules for Indian citizens can change — confirm on the official Uzbek e-visa portal before booking.
UNESCO	Bukhara 1993; Samarkand 2001
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — visa rules are in flux; confirm with the Uzbek authorities

HOW TO REACH

Samarkand and Bukhara, Uzbekistan

AIRPORT	Samarkand International Airport (SKD) and Bukhara International Airport (BHK) both take international and domestic flights; Tashkent (TAS) is the national hub.
RAILWAY	Samarkand and Bukhara are on Uzbekistan's main rail network, with high-speed services between Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.
BY ROAD	Samarkand to Bukhara is about 215 km, a few hours by road or about two hours by fast train.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and ride-hailing apps; most sights in each old town are walkable.

Distances approximate; check train timetables. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Uzbekistan e-visa portal (official) (e-visa.gov.uz); UNESCO: Samarkand, Crossroad of Cultures (whc.unesco.org); UNESCO: Historic Centre of Bukhara (whc.unesco.org)



Photo: Phototraveller1 · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Egypt: the Grand Egyptian Museum, a year after opening

A museum beside the pyramids that finally shows Tutankhamun's treasures together.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Amr F.Nagy · Public domain

THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM stands in Giza, about 2 km northwest of the Giza pyramid complex. Its official opening took place on 1 November 2025, after a trial opening in October 2024. It closed briefly from 15 October to 3 November 2025 and resumed visitors on 4 November.

The site covers about 500,000 square metres. It holds more than 100,000 artefacts, of which around 24,000 are on display across 12 galleries. The complete Tutankhamun collection, 5,398 pieces, occupies two halls, one of its main attractions.

For visitors, the museum changes the logic of an Egypt trip. Instead of seeing Tutankhamun's treasures in the old Egyptian Museum in central Cairo, and pyramids separately, you can plan a day in Giza that combines both. Book timed tickets through the museum's official channels, and avoid resellers; we could not confirm the ticket system from the sources we read.

How to go well: allow a full half day, visit early, and pair it with a quiet morning at the pyramids rather than the busiest hours. Check the official Egyptian tourism and museum sites for opening hours and entry rules, which change.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Cooler months, October to April (verify)
GETTING THERE	Fly to Cairo (CAI); the museum is in Giza, near the pyramids
OPENING	Official opening 1 November 2025
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check Egypt's official e-visa portal
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — hours and ticketing must be confirmed on official sites



Photo: Ekrem Canli · CC BY-SA 3.0

HOW TO REACH

Grand Egyptian Museum, Giza, Egypt

AIRPORT	Cairo International Airport (CAI), roughly 40 km away; a newer airport near Giza, Sphinx International, serves some flights (verify).
RAILWAY	Cairo's Ramses Station is the rail hub; the museum is reached by road.
BY ROAD	Giza is on Cairo's western edge; allow 45 to 90 minutes from central Cairo depending on traffic.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and ride-hailing apps; organised tours from Cairo hotels.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Grand Egyptian Museum (official) (www.visit-gem.com); Egypt e-Visa (official) (visa2egypt.gov.eg)



Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Greece beyond the islands: Delphi and Meteora

An oracle on a mountain slope and monasteries on rock pillars: two UNESCO sites on the mainland.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Bernard Gagnon · CC BY-SA 4.0

MOST VISITORS TO GREECE in September head for the islands. A mainland route offers a different sense of the ancient world. Delphi, on the slope of Mount Parnassus, was the seat of the oracle of Apollo, where the priestess, the Pythia, delivered prophecies from a tripod in the inner sanctum. The visible ruins of the Temple of Apollo date from the fourth century BCE. A processional route, the Sacred Way, climbs past treasuries to the temple, and the circular Tholos at the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia was built between 380 and 360 BCE. Delphi was inscribed by UNESCO in 1987, and its museum houses the Charioteer of Delphi.

Meteora, in Thessaly, is something else. Six monasteries survive on sandstone pillars between the town of Kalabaka and the village of Kastraki, though only four are still active: Great Meteoron, Varlaam, Holy Trinity and St Stephen, which became a convent in 1961. Most were founded in the second half of the fourteenth century, and the Great Meteoron dates to 1356. UNESCO listed the complex in 1988.

Plan for the monasteries to be closed on particular days and to require modest dress; check each monastery's current hours, which we could not confirm. Travel in September is easier than in July and August, when heat and crowds peak. Greece is in the Schengen area, so the European Entry/Exit System applies to many non-EU visitors, and ETIAS is planned for the last quarter of 2026.

How to go well: take your time, wear sturdy shoes, and treat Meteora as living religious communities, not a viewpoint.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Spring and autumn for walking; September is warm
GETTING THERE	Fly to Athens (ATH); Delphi and Meteora are several hours by road or bus
ENTRY	Schengen rules apply; EES fully operational since 10 April 2026; ETIAS scheduled for the last quarter of 2026
UNESCO	Delphi 1987; Meteora 1988
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — opening hours and dress rules must be confirmed locally

HOW TO REACH

Delphi and Meteora, mainland Greece

AIRPORT	Athens International Airport (ATH) for Delphi; Thessaloniki (SKG) or Athens for Meteora.
RAILWAY	Kalabaka station serves Meteora via Trikala, with trains from Athens and Thessaloniki (timetables vary).
BY ROAD	Athens to Delphi is roughly 2.5 to 3 hours by road; Athens to Meteora is roughly 4 to 5 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Buses, hire cars and taxis; walking paths link the Meteora monasteries.

Distances approximate; check bus and train schedules. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Greece (official) (www.visitgreece.gr); Hellenic Ministry of Culture: archaeological sites (www.culture.gov.gr)



Photo: Prof. Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Mexico: Monte Albán, above Oaxaca

A Zapotec capital on a levelled ridge, and a lesson in how interpretations change.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Dacuauhtli · CC BY-SA 4.0

MONTE ALBÁN STANDS ON an artificially levelled ridge in the central valley of Oaxaca, about 400 metres above the valley floor and at around 1,940 metres elevation. It was a Zapotec capital, founded around 500 BCE, and was largely abandoned around 900 to 1000 CE; some tombs were later reused by Mixtec people. It lies about 9 km from Oaxaca City and was inscribed by UNESCO in 1987 as part of the Historic Centre of Oaxaca and Archaeological Site of Monte Albán.

Among its best-known features are the Danzantes, carved stone figures of contorted, naked men. They were long called dancers, but are now interpreted as sacrificed war prisoners; more than 300 have been recorded. It is a good example of how scholarly readings change, and a reminder to hold guides' certainties lightly.

Pair it with the weavers' village of Teotitlán del Valle, about 31 km from Oaxaca City, whose community is profiled in this issue. Oaxaca's July festival, the Guelaguetza, is past, but September is a quieter time to visit. Entry rules depend on nationality; check Mexico's official immigration site.

How to go well: go early to avoid heat and crowds, carry water and a hat, stay on marked paths, and hire a licensed local guide.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Dry season, roughly November to April; September is rainy (verify)
GETTING THERE	Fly to Oaxaca (OAX); Monte Albán is a short drive from the city
UNESCO	Inscribed 1987 with the Historic Centre of Oaxaca
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the official Mexican immigration site
CHECKED	10 November 2026 — hours and fees must be confirmed locally



Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

Monte Albán, Oaxaca, Mexico

AIRPORT	Xoxocotlán International Airport, Oaxaca (OAX), roughly 10 km from the city.
RAILWAY	There is no passenger rail to Oaxaca; most visitors fly or take a bus from Mexico City.
BY ROAD	About 9 km west of Oaxaca City, a drive of 20 to 30 minutes uphill.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, tour minibuses and shuttle services from the city centre.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Mexico National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) (www.inah.gob.mx); Visit Mexico (official tourism) (www.visitmexico.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The art school that grew out of a refugee camp

In Battambang, Cambodia, a school for young artists has been training children and young adults since 1994.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'i Akrom · CC BY-SA 4.0

Phare Ponleu Selpak has operated in Battambang, in north-western Cambodia, since 1994. It was founded, according to a reference summary of its history, by Cambodians who had learned in refugee camps that art can be a way to forget trauma.

Its purpose is to use art to help young people cope with the effects of war, and to support children, young adults and their families through art schools, education and social services. It offers multidisciplinary training in theatre, acrobatics and music, with an on-campus school that teaches English, mathematics and computer programming. Students are generally from low-income households.

The organisation has performed abroad, including in Bangladesh, Thailand and, in 2012, in Germany and Denmark with its circus. It holds an annual international

circus festival, Tini Tinou, and received a Prince Claus Award in 2012.

For travellers, the connection is the circus it supports in Siem Reap. We could not verify details of that venue, its ticketing or its financial model from the sources we read, so check the organisation's own website. As with any social enterprise, ask how revenue is used, and book directly.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Reference summary (Wikipedia) of Phare Ponleu Selpak; no dated news article was read
PEOPLE NAMED	None; this is an institutional profile. A director, Khuon Det, is named in a 2012 photo caption.
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases a reference summary; we have not spoken to the organisation.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact Phare Ponleu Selpak for an interview, current figures and photographs, with consent from the people featured.

HOW TO REACH

Battambang and Siem Reap, Cambodia

AIRPORT	Siem Reap Airport (SAI) is the nearest to Angkor; Battambang has a small airport with limited services.
RAILWAY	Cambodia's rail is limited; most travellers go by road or air.
BY ROAD	Battambang to Siem Reap is roughly three to four hours by road.
GETTING AROUND	Tuk-tuks and taxis; book performances directly.

Distances approximate; confirm venue details. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Phare Ponleu Selpak (organisation) (phareps.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Weaving the Zapotec valley, one dye at a time

In Teotitlán del Valle, near Oaxaca, wool rugs are woven on hand looms with natural dyes: cochineal, indigo and marigold.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Thelmadatter · CC BY-SA 3.0

Teotitlán del Valle sits in the foothills of the Sierra Juárez, about 31 km from Oaxaca City. It is known for wool rugs woven on hand-operated looms, combining historical Zapotec designs with contemporary ones. The local name for the weavings is laadi, and a reference summary says weaving here goes back at least to around 500 BCE.

Wool is dyed mainly with local natural dyes, including cochineal, indigo, Brazilwood and Mexican marigold, though some workshops use chemical dyes. A reference summary names a number of weavers and workshops: Arnulfo Mendoza, associated with Casa Serra Sagrada; Artesanía Casa Santiago, a workshop on the main street since 1966; and Aida Vásquez Gutiérrez and her husband Manuel.

The town had about 4,400 people in its centre in 2005. Many workshops let visitors watch the weaving process, and a community museum and archaeological zone are nearby.

For travellers: ask workshops about their dyes and techniques, buy directly from the weavers, and expect to pay a fair price. Rugs made with natural dyes take longer and cost more; a very low price is a sign that something has been cut.



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Reference summary (Wikipedia) of Teotitlán del Valle; no dated news article was read
PEOPLE NAMED	Arnulfo Mendoza; Aida Vásquez Gutiérrez and Manuel; Isaac Vásquez García (as named in the reference summary)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases a reference summary; we have not spoken to the people named.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach through the community museum or a local tour service; obtain written consent before using names, quotes or photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico

AIRPORT	Oaxaca Xoxocotlán International Airport (OAX), roughly 40 km away.
RAILWAY	There is no passenger rail to Oaxaca.
BY ROAD	About 31 km from Oaxaca City, roughly 40 minutes by road.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, colectivos and tour operators from Oaxaca City.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Mexico (official tourism) (www.visitmexico.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The bronze-casters of Swamimalai

Near Kumbakonam, a craft town makes bronze icons in a tradition linked to Chola sculptors.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Rainer Halama · CC BY-SA 4.0

Swamimalai is a town on the banks of the Kaveri in Thanjavur district, near Kumbakonam, and the fourth of the six abodes of the god Murugan. It is also known for its bronze idols and statues. The Government of India granted the craft a Geographical Indication in 2008–09.

A reference summary links the craft to the Chola period: Rajaraja I commissioned sculptors for the Brihadeeswarar Temple at Thanjavur, and these sculptors later helped with the Airavatesvara Temple and eventually settled in Swamimalai. We could not verify this lineage against a primary source, and the same summary does not name individual artisans or describe the casting method.

For travellers, a visit to a workshop is a good way to see how sculpture and temple tradition are connected. Ask to see the process, buy directly from the maker, and ask about the GI mark. Do not be pressed into a purchase.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Reference summary (Wikipedia) of Swamimalai; no dated news article was read
PEOPLE NAMED	None; this is a community and craft profile.
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases a reference summary; we have not spoken to the artisans.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Swamimalai artisans' cooperative or Tamil Nadu handicrafts board; obtain consent before naming or photographing individual craftspeople.

HOW TO REACH

Swamimalai, near Kumbakonam, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu

AIRPORT	Tiruchirappalli International Airport (TRZ), roughly 90 km away.
RAILWAY	Kumbakonam railway station, a short drive away.
BY ROAD	Swamimalai is a short drive from Kumbakonam, which is about 40 km from Thanjavur.
GETTING AROUND	Auto-rickshaws and taxis from Kumbakonam.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Tamil Nadu Tourism (official) (www.tamilnadutourism.tn.gov.in)



Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Rishton: the blue-glazed pottery of the Fergana Valley

A town in eastern Uzbekistan known for ceramics for centuries, and for a mosque built by craftsmen in 1905.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Man77 · CC BY-SA 3.0

Rishton, in Uzbekistan's Fergana region, between Kokand and Fergana, is described as one of the oldest centres of ceramics in the country. A reddish-yellow clay lies under most of the area and can be used without refining or mixing, according to a reference summary.

The blue glaze called ishkor is made from natural mineral pigments and the ash of mountain plants. A mosque in the town, Khoja Ilgor, was built in 1905 by two craftsmen, Eshonkhon and Noribai, still functions as a mosque, and is on Uzbekistan's list of nationally significant heritage sites.

We could not verify names of living master potters or details of visiting workshops from the sources we read. For travellers: arrange visits through a local guide, ask to see the glazing and firing, and buy directly from the workshop.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Reference summary (Wikipedia) of Rishton; no dated news article was read
PEOPLE NAMED	Eshonkhon and Noribai (craftsmen who built the Khoja Ilgor Mosque in 1905)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases a reference summary.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Contact the Uzbekistan tourism committee or a local operator for introductions to workshops; seek written consent.

HOW TO REACH

Rishton, Fergana region, Uzbekistan

AIRPORT	Fergana Airport (FEG) is the nearest, with flights from Tashkent.
RAILWAY	Fergana and Kokand have rail connections to Tashkent.
BY ROAD	Rishton is between Kokand and Fergana, a short drive from the latter.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and hired drivers from Fergana.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Uzbekistan tourism (official) (uzbekistan.travel)

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “A ruin that moved me”

A brief for a real reader or contributor. Not a published story.

PROPOSED COMMISSION · NOT A REAL STORY

What we want: a first-person account (800–1,200 words) of an ancient site, large or small, that moved you, and what you learnt about how we know what we know about it.

What we need: a true story; photographs you took, with permission to publish; a short trip recap (site, dates, how you got there, cost with currency and date, one thing you wish you had known).

Rights: you keep your copyright; we ask for permission to publish and archive with credit. Please do not send invented or composite stories.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: plov, Uzbekistan's national dish

Rice, carrot, meat and a large cauldron.

RESEARCHED

Plov, called osh or palov in Uzbek, is a rice dish cooked in a rich meat-and-vegetable base called zirvak until the liquid is absorbed. It is usually made in a kazon, a large cauldron, over an open fire. Lamb or beef is browned in fat or oil, then stewed with onions, garlic and carrots, with salt, pepper and cumin.

Samarkand-style plov uses a blend of seed oils, and sweet versions with dried apricots and raisins are made for special occasions. A master cook, the oshpaz, may prepare plov for gatherings of up to a thousand people from one pot. It is the

national dish of Uzbekistan and has been recognised by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage.

Where to try it: local plov centres and family kitchens in Samarkand and Bukhara. Ask when the pot is ready, since it is often served at midday. Tell your host in advance if you do not eat meat.

At a glance

SAY IT	Ask for plov or osh and when it will be served.
ETIQUETTE	Share from the communal dish if invited, and accept tea.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Difficult; traditional plov is made with meat. Confirm in advance.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: how do we know?

Three places where the story changed, and what that teaches a traveller.

RESEARCHED

Monte Albán's Danzantes. The carved figures at the Zapotec capital were once called dancers; they are now widely interpreted as sacrificed war prisoners. The carvings did not change; the reading did.

The end of Angkor. The Khmer capital is generally said to have fallen around 1431, when Ayutthaya sacked it, but reference works note that the end of the Angkorian period is dated in different ways, and some of the citations they use are weak.

Who built what, and when. In Tripura (see our July issue), sources give different dates for Neermahal's construction. In Samarkand, one account of the Registan's later madrasas is flagged as needing a citation.

The lesson is not that nobody knows anything, but that dates and stories are the work of scholars, and they change. A good guide will tell you what is established, what is likely and what is argued over.

At a glance

CHECKED	10 November 2026

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: September

What to look for, where, and how sure we are.

RESEARCHED

Southward turn of the seasons: the September equinox falls around 22 to 23 September, when day and night are close to equal length everywhere. *Date certain.*

Mara crossings and bears: the Mara River crossings are tapering by late September or October, and Katmai's brown bears return to Brooks Falls to fatten for winter; Fat Bear Week is run each autumn, with dates announced annually. *Predictable season; dates vary.*

The monsoon withdraws from India: rains ease through September in much of north India, and parks such as Kaziranga and Madhya Pradesh's tiger reserves reopen from about October; confirm dates each year. *Predictable pattern; exact dates vary.*

Rainy season in Cambodia: Angkor is green and quiet in September; showers can be heavy. *Predictable season.*

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Responsible Travel: visiting a site that is older than your country

Five habits that help a ruin last.

RESEARCHED

Do not climb or touch. Carvings, frescoes and walls are fragile; hands and bodies wear them away. Follow the signs and the guards.

Respect the living faith. Many ancient sites are working temples, mosques or monasteries. Cover shoulders and knees, remove shoes where asked and ask before photographing worshippers.

Use licensed guides. They know the site's rules, and the fees support local livelihoods.

Buy from makers. The weavers, potters and bronze-casters in this issue depend on visitors who ask, listen and pay fairly.

Avoid the crowded hour. Dawn at Angkor Wat draws the biggest crowds; the first hour after opening at a smaller temple is calmer and gentler on the site.

These are Wayfarer's own editorial guidelines, drawn from the reporting in this issue.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The Solo Travel Safety Checklist

Ten sensible habits for travelling alone.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **Share your plan:** leave your itinerary and bookings with someone at home, and check in at agreed times.

2. **Documents:** keep copies of your passport and visas, stored separately from the originals.

3. **First night:** book your first night's stay before you arrive, and choose a place that is easy to reach in daylight.

4. **Insurance:** check it covers medical care, theft and cancellation.

5. **Local knowledge:** ask your host or guide about areas to avoid and the safest ways to get around at night.

6. **Transport:** use licensed taxis or ride-hailing apps, and check the vehicle before you get in.

7. **Money:** carry a mix of cash and cards, in different places.

8. **Trust your judgment:** it is always acceptable to decline an invitation or leave a situation.

9. **Connectivity:** carry a power bank, and download maps for offline use.

10. **Know the number:** learn the local emergency number and the address of your embassy.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Siem Reap

One illustrative day. Hours, rain and your own pace will change it.

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY

Morning: the first hour after opening at a smaller temple such as Preah Khan or Banteay Kdei, then a break before the heat.

Lunch: a local Khmer restaurant; ask what the dish is.

Afternoon: Angkor Wat itself, when many visitors have left; carry a rain layer in September.

Evening: a performance by a social enterprise, such as a circus or arts school, booked directly.

Dinner: a local meal in town.

What to skip if short on time: extra temples; see one quiet temple and Angkor Wat.

Costs and timings are illustrative and must be verified on production day.

HOW TO REACH

Siem Reap, Cambodia

AIRPORT	Siem Reap Airport (SAI), a short drive from the centre.
RAILWAY	No useful passenger rail; most visitors arrive by air or road.
BY ROAD	Angkor is a short drive north of town.
GETTING AROUND	Tuk-tuks, bicycles and taxis.

Timings approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: xenia

A Greek word for the duty of hospitality.

LEXICON

Xenia — pronounced roughly “ksen-EE-ah” — is a Greek term for hospitality, the bond between host and guest. In ancient Greece it carried religious weight and obligations on both sides: the host should welcome and feed the stranger, and the guest should not abuse the welcome.

It is a useful idea for a traveller: you are always, in some sense, someone else's guest.

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz — September

Five questions. Answers appear in next month's issue.

QUIZ

1. In which country is Angkor Wat?

2. Which Chola king built the Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur?

3. What is the name of the floating national park at Loktak Lake?

4. Which city did Timur make the capital of his empire in 1370?

5. Which Mexican city lies below the Zapotec site of Monte Albán?

Answers (for the editor's copy): Cambodia · Rajaraja I · Keibul Lamjao National Park · Samarkand · Oaxaca.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

COMMUNITY

Your turn: a ruin that moved you

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Tell us about an ancient site, grand or humble, that stayed with you. 150 words and one photograph you took. A selection will appear in a future Readers' Pages with your name and photo credit — only with your permission.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf

Three books for the ancient world.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Histories by Herodotus (fifth century BCE) — the first great work of history and travel writing, full of digressions. Read it for the stories and the curiosity.

The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru (1946) — a long reflection on India's past, written in prison. Read it for the voice.

The Golden Road by William Dalrymple (2024) — on how Indian ideas travelled across Asia. Read it for the connections to Angkor and beyond.

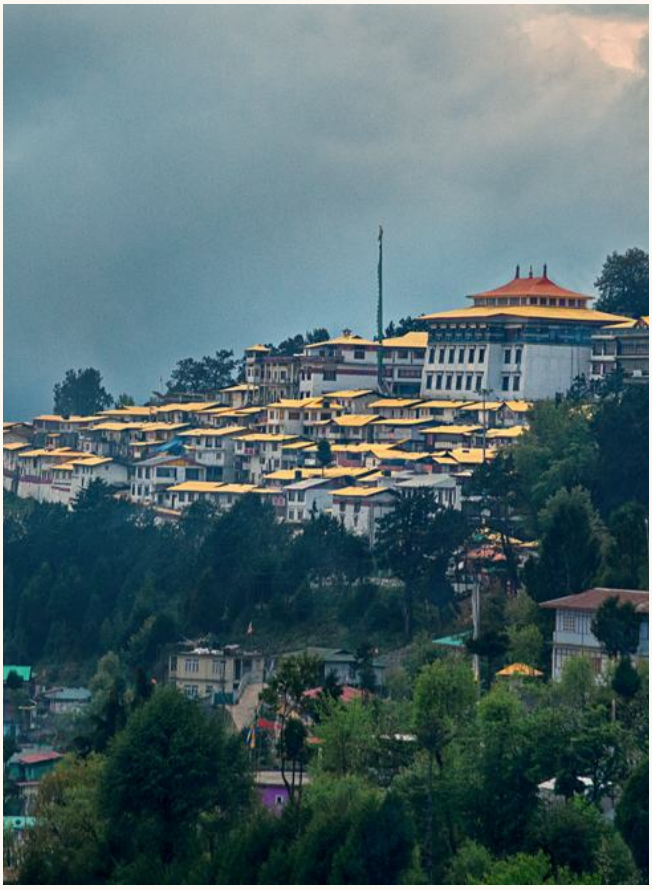


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THE WORLD CELEBRATES

Festivals & events radar

Dates come from our festival guide and are approximate. Confirm with the official organiser before booking; lunar-calendar and annually announced events are provisional until confirmed.

NORTHEAST INDIA & INDIA

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Janmashtami	Across India	4 September 2026	Celebrates Krishna's birth with fasting, midnight prayers and curd-pot festivals..
Ganesh Chaturthi	Mumbai, Pune and across India	14 September 2026 (about ten days)	A ten-day festival of clay Ganesha idols ending with immersion processions..
Ziro Festival of Music	Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh	24–27 September 2026	An outdoor indie music festival in a highland valley, with camping and a stress on eco-friendly practice..
Mysuru Dasara	Mysuru, Karnataka	11–21 October 2026	An eleven-day festival with a grand elephant procession on the final day..
Durga Puja	Kolkata, West Bengal	17–21 October 2026 (Shashthi to Dashami)	Kolkata's neighbourhood pandals compete in art and craft for five days..
Diwali	Across India	8 November 2026 (main day; Dhanteras 6 November)	The festival of lights, marked with lamps, sweets and fireworks, with regional variations..
Sangai Festival	Imphal, Manipur	21–30 November (the festival's usual dates; 2026 arrangements to be confirmed)	Manipur's tourism festival, named for the state animal, with dance, craft and music; check current conditions in the state before any plans..

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Mid-Autumn Festival	China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam	25 September 2026	A moon-viewing and mooncake festival, with lantern displays in many cities..
Bon Om Touk (Water Festival)	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Late October or early November 2026, set by the full moon	Three days of royal boat races and lantern releases marking the end of the monsoon and the change in the Tonlé Sap's flow..

EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Oktoberfest	Munich, Germany	19 September–4 October 2026	The world's largest beer festival, held on the Theresienwiese..

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos)	Oaxaca and across Mexico	1–2 November 2026	Families build altars and visit cemeteries to remember the dead; Oaxaca's celebrations are among the best known..
Abu Simbel sun festival	Abu Simbel, Egypt	22 October 2026 (traditionally 22 October and 22 February)	The sun is said to light the inner sanctuary of the temple on two days a year; confirm the date locally..

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

Format example

Real developments up to 31 August 2026, each with a source. The Uzbekistan item is unverified against an official source.

Entry rules for Indian citizens can change — confirm on the official Uzbek e-visa portal before booking.

Egypt: the Grand Egyptian Museum officially opened on 1 November 2025, with the complete Tutankhamun collection of 5,398 pieces displayed across two halls (www.visit-gem.com).

Europe: the Entry/Exit System has been fully operational since 10 April 2026; ETIAS is scheduled for the last quarter of 2026, with the date to be announced (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu).

Tell us where you are going next

WRITE	helpdesk@travaah.com
CALL	+91 70022 09781
PLAN	travaah.com/planner
CONTRIBUTE	Send a story or photograph via the contact page



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WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.

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