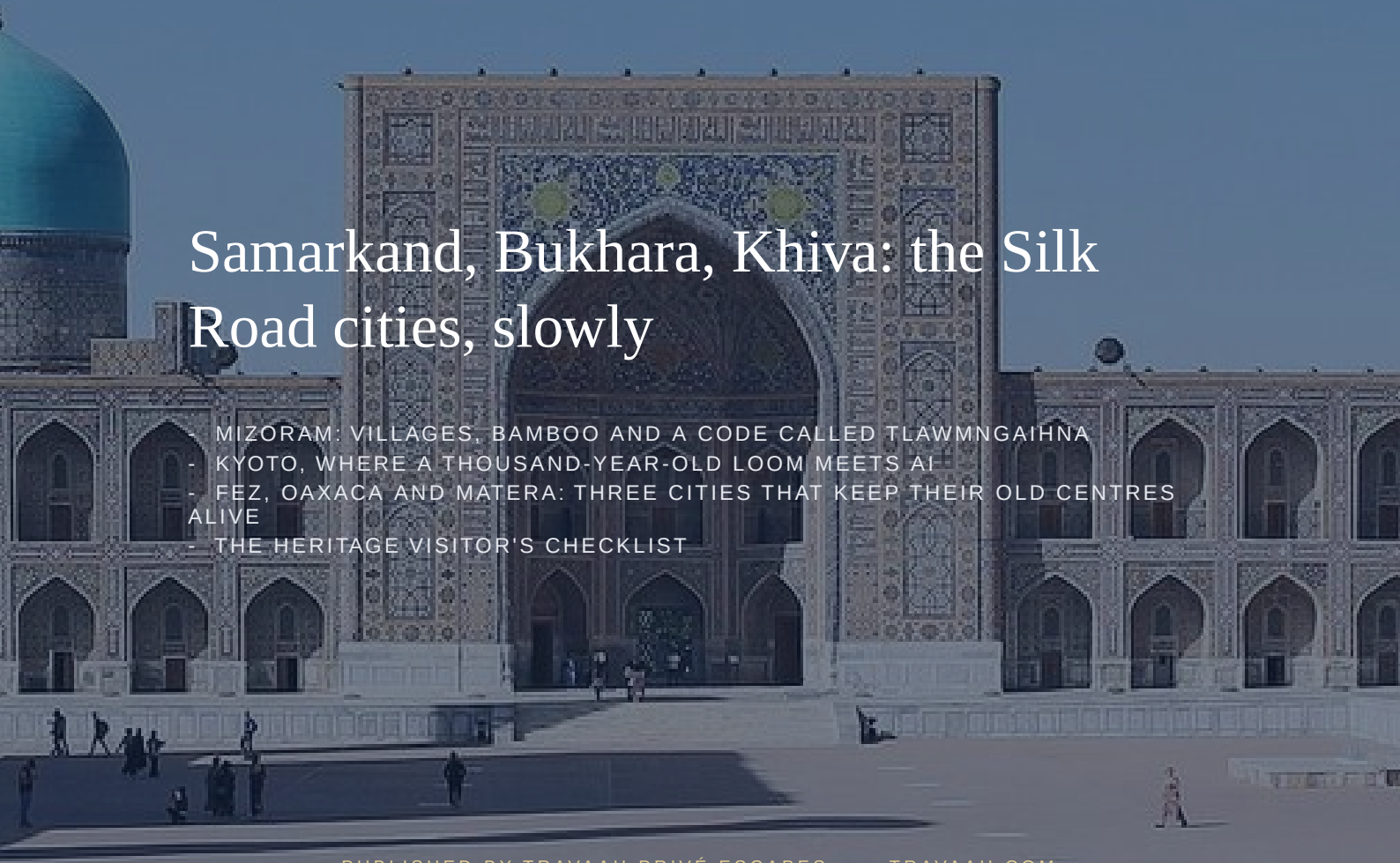
VOL. 1 · NO. 10 · OCTOBER 2026

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.



Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva: the Silk Road cities, slowly

- MIZORAM: VILLAGES, BAMBOO AND A CODE CALLED TLAWMNGAIHNA
- KYOTO, WHERE A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD LOOM MEETS AI
- FEZ, OAXACA AND MATERA: THREE CITIES THAT KEEP THEIR OLD CENTRES ALIVE
- THE HERITAGE VISITOR'S CHECKLIST

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EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Heritage, Culture and Discovery

From Gitanjali Gautam, Editor-in-Chief

Heritage is an easy word to put on a brochure and a hard one to live with. The old city of Fez is a World Heritage site, and it is also where people go to work, pray, study and buy bread on a Tuesday. We wanted an issue that keeps both facts in view.

So the places in these pages come with their makers. A boatman on the Ganga, a Zapotec weaver who went away and came home, a fourth-generation Kyoto weaver testing what an algorithm can and cannot add. Their stories come from published reporting, and we say so on each page; we have not interviewed them, and we say that too.

You will also find us being cautious. Visa rules for Uzbekistan, Mexico and Japan are changing or depend on your passport and your other visas, so we point you to the official authority rather than pretend to be one. Festival dates that the organiser has not confirmed are marked as provisional.

Take your time with this one. Look at who made the thing in front of you, and ask before you photograph them.

Look at who made the thing in front of you, and ask before you photograph them.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE

- Gitanjali Gautam

Masthead

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October is a good month to look at what people have made and kept: a tiled square in Samarkand, a stone chariot on the Odisha coast, a loom in Kyoto, a rug dyed with pomegranate in Oaxaca. This issue follows heritage as a living thing, carried by hands and households, and asks what a visitor owes to the people who carry it.

TRAVEL TIP

Reach popular temples such as Fushimi Inari or Kiyomizu-dera early in the morning, when the paths are quieter.

DID YOU KNOW

The Registan's Sher-Dor madrasa takes its name from the tigers on its entrance arch.

DID YOU KNOW

Konark's Sun Temple was designed as a chariot with 24 wheels pulled by seven horses.

DID YOU KNOW

UNESCO inscribed Matera's Sassi in 1993; in 2019 the city was a European Capital of Culture.

DID YOU KNOW

Mizoram's first railway link to the national network, the Bairabi–Sairang line, opened on 13 September 2025.

TRAVEL TIP

Ask before photographing a person, and buy crafts from the people who made them.

We don't believe AI can do everything.

JUN REKIMOTO, QUOTED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2025

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

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WAYFARER EDITORIAL

How to read Wayfarer

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

Check visa rules on the official government site; they change, and they depend on your passport.

Look at who made the thing in front of you, and ask before you photograph them.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE

DID YOU KNOW

Oaxaca is known as the land of the seven moles.

I hope my children find a different path.

SANTOSH SAHNI, BOATMAN, QUOTED BY AL JAZEERA, 2024



Photo: ProtoplasmaKid · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



COVER STORY

Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva: the Silk Road cities, slowly

Three UNESCO-listed old towns in Uzbekistan, a fast train between two of them, and a case for staying long enough to look at the tilework twice.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Bernard Gagnon · CC0

THE SILK ROAD WAS never one road, and it was never only about silk. It was a web of caravan routes across Central Asia along which cloth, paper, metal, ideas and religions travelled, and the oasis cities of present-day Uzbekistan were its great switching points. Three of them are the usual first choice for a visitor: Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Each has a historic core on UNESCO's World Heritage List, and each feels different enough that going to all three is worth the effort.

Start in Samarkand, whose historic core was inscribed in 2001. Its best-known square is the Registan, a name that classical Persian sources give as roughly “place of sand”. Three madrasas, or religious colleges, face one another across it. The Ulugh Beg madrasa was built between 1417 and 1420, the Sher-Dor between 1619 and 1636, and the Tilya-Kori between 1646 and 1660. The Sher-Dor takes its name from the tigers on its entrance arch, each with a sun rising on its back, an unusual image on an Islamic building. Plan to see the square more than once. In the middle of the day it is a crowd and a glare; at dawn or after dark, when the lights come on, you can read the patterns.

Bukhara, inscribed in 1993, is a different kind of city: more compact, more lived-in, and good to walk. Its historic centre holds about 140 monuments, according to a standard reference. The Kalyan minaret, an early-eleventh-century tower of around 45 metres, still anchors the skyline. The Samanid mausoleum, built in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, is admired for its brickwork, which turns plain baked brick into a woven-looking surface. Around the pool at Lyab-i Hauz, one of the few such ponds that survive, the old merchant city's habit of sitting down to talk is still easy to see. The Ark, the old rulers' citadel, was badly damaged in 1920; what you see is what remained.

Khiva, the far western stop, is the most compact of the three. Its walled inner town, Itchan Kala, was Uzbekistan's first World Heritage inscription, in 1990. The mud-brick walls rise eight to ten metres, and inside them the Juma mosque has a forest of 112 wooden columns, many of them taken from older buildings. Kalta Minor, a turquoise minaret that was never finished, is the most photographed object in town. Khiva is quiet in the early morning, before the tour groups arrive, and that is the hour to give it.

Getting around is easier than it was. An Afrosiyob high-speed train links Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara; published guides give roughly two hours from Tashkent to Samarkand and about an hour and a half from Samarkand to Bukhara, though timetables differ by train and season. Khiva sits further west and is usually reached by road or by an internal flight to Urgench. Allow at least two nights each in Samarkand and Bukhara, and one or two in Khiva.

A word on timing and entry. Spring and autumn are the commonly recommended seasons; the summers are very hot. Check before you book anything. 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: buy ceramics, silk and suzani embroidery from the people who make them, ask before photographing, and spend a morning in a craft workshop rather than another monument. The cities were built by traders and craftspeople, and they are best understood the same way.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Spring and autumn are commonly recommended; summers are very hot (general guidance, not an official statement)
GETTING THERE	Fly into Tashkent, Samarkand or Bukhara; the Afrosiyob high-speed train links Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. Khiva is reached via Urgench by air or by road.
VISA	Entry rules for Indian citizens can change — confirm on the official Uzbek e-visa portal before booking.
SAFE-TOURISM LINE	Uzbekistan's national tourist information centre lists a call centre on 1173.
CHECKED	10 November 2026. Train times, visa rules and opening hours must be re-confirmed before travel.

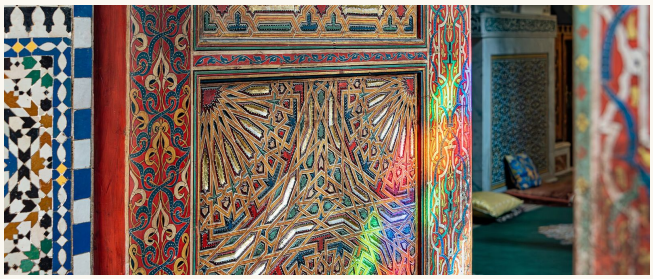


Photo: Jorge Franganillo · CC BY 2.0

HOW TO REACH

Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, Uzbekistan

AIRPORT	Tashkent International (TAS) is the main gateway; Samarkand (SKD) and Bukhara (BHK) have their own airports; Urgench (UGC) is the usual airport for Khiva, roughly 35 km away (approximate).
RAILWAY	Afrosiyob high-speed trains link Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara; Bukhara's main station lies outside the old city. Khiva has no high-speed link; most visitors use road or air via Urgench.
BY ROAD	Tashkent to Samarkand is a long day by road, so most visitors take the train. Bukhara to Khiva is a full day's drive across desert.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and ride-hailing apps in cities; walk the old towns.

Distances approximate; timetables and visa rules change, so confirm with official sources. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Uzbekistan Tourism (official information portal) (uzbekistan.travel); Uzbekistan e-visa portal (official) (e-visa.gov.uz); Registan (reference) (en.wikipedia.org); Historic Centre of Bukhara (reference) (en.wikipedia.org); Itchan Kala, Khiva (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)

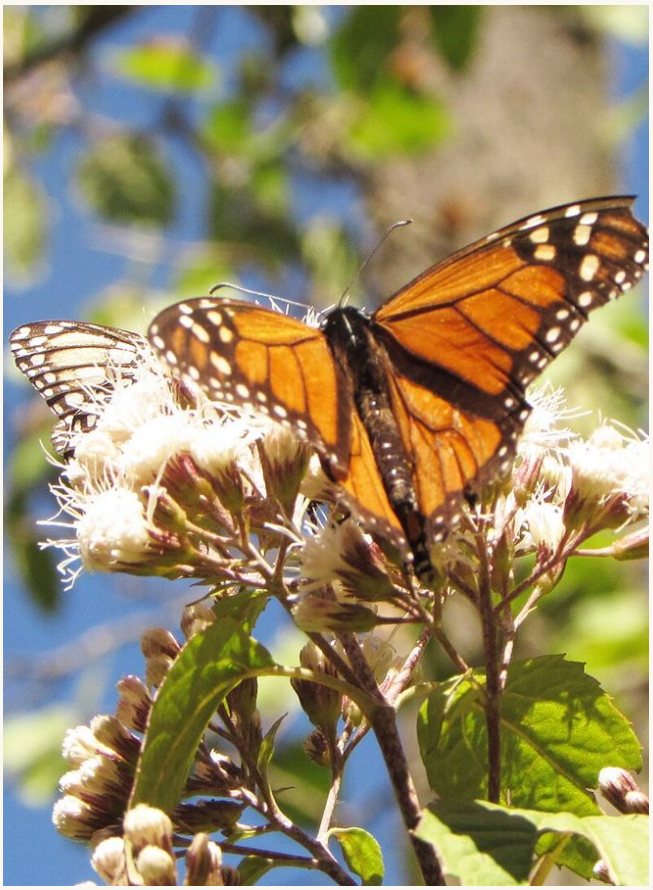


Photo: Oddysseuss · CC BY-SA 4.0



Photo: Bgag · CC0



NORTHEAST INDIA · MIZORAM

Mizoram: hill towns, heritage villages and a code called tlawmngaihna

A state whose capital joined the rail map only a year ago, a festival calendar still being built, and an ethic of generosity that visitors meet before they meet any monument.

RESEARCHED

Photo: BhuyanBhaskar · CC BY 4.0

MIZORAM IS ONE OF India's smallest states by population, with a little over a million people at the 2011 census, and one of the most thoroughly Christian: about 87 per cent of residents practise Christianity, mainly in Protestant denominations. Its capital, Aizawl, sits on a ridge at around 1,132 metres, with houses stacked down the slopes and church spires on almost every skyline. For a first visit, Aizawl is the place to adjust to the pace, which is unhurried, courteous and early to bed.

The word every visitor eventually hears is tlawmngaihna. It has no tidy English equivalent. Writers have glossed it as selflessness, as doing what the moment requires without regard to inconvenience, as putting others first. In practice it shows in hospitality: a guest may politely decline a meal several times, while a host is expected to give generously, and the community helps the host. It is not a sightseeing item, but it explains a good deal of what you will experience.

Heritage here is carried on the body and in the village. The puanchei, a woven women's garment, and the vakiria headdress appear at festivals; the cheraw bamboo dance, in which dancers step in and out between clapped bamboo staves, is perhaps the state's best-known performance. Chapchar Kut, a spring festival held in early March when the clearing of jhum fields pauses, brings these together, and the oral tradition that traces its origin to a chief's feast for a disappointed hunting party is worth hearing from a Mizo storyteller rather than a guidebook.

Outside Aizawl, Reiek Heritage Village on the slopes of Reiek mountain (about 1,548 metres) preserves traditional Mizo houses, including a chieftain's residence and a dormitory for unmarried men; the state is working to build a festival calendar around such places. In September 2026 it launched a first Pluck and Pay festival at two villages in Khawzawl district, where visitors harvest produce and pay farmers directly, and announced a Winter Festival, with an angling event, a bamboo exhibition, Christmas street decorations and a Christmas parade; its dates were not announced at the time of writing. The Anthurium Festival, which returned in 2026 after a break, is scheduled for 1 to 3 October at Ailawng and Reiek.

Getting there has changed. The Bairabi–Sairang railway, 51.38 kilometres long, was inaugurated on 13 September 2025, giving Mizoram its first connection to the national rail network; Sairang station is roughly 14 to 15 kilometres from Aizawl. Lengpui airport, about 30 kilometres from the city, remains the quickest route. Indian visitors from outside the state need an Inner Line Permit, applied for online, and foreign visitors have separate permit and registration rules. Both systems have been changing, so check the official pages before travelling.

How to go well: stay in a homestay where you can, accept food graciously, ask before you photograph a person, and dress modestly for church services, which are an important part of community life. Most of all, do not hurry. The ethic of the place rewards patience.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Cooler months, roughly October to March (general guidance); the festival season runs through the autumn and winter
GETTING THERE	Lengpui Airport (AJL) near Aizawl; Sairang railway station (new since September 2025) about 14–15 km from Aizawl
PERMITS	Indian visitors need an Inner Line Permit, applied for online at the state portal. Foreigners need a Protected Area Permit and online registration, per Mizoram Tourism; confirm current rules.
CHECKED	10 November 2026. Festival dates, permit rules and train timetables must be re-confirmed.

HOW TO REACH

Aizawl and Reiek, Mizoram

AIRPORT	Lengpui Airport (AJL), about 30 km from Aizawl; Silchar (IXS) in Assam is the nearest alternative.
RAILWAY	Sairang station on the Bairabi–Sairang line, roughly 14–15 km from Aizawl; Silchar railway station in Assam is the older gateway.
BY ROAD	Reiek is roughly an hour from Aizawl by road (about 29 km by one published account); the road from Silchar to Aizawl is long and slow, so allow most of a day.
GETTING AROUND	Shared taxis and hired cars; ask your host about timings.

Distances approximate. Permits and train services change; confirm with Mizoram authorities and Indian Railways. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Mizoram Tourism (official) (mizoramtourism.com); Mizoram Inner Line Permit portal (ilp.mizoram.gov.in); Incredible India: Reiek Tourist Resort (www.incredibleindia.gov.in); Winter Festival report (Akashvani, 1 Sept 2026) (newsonair.gov.in); Pluck and Pay festival report (Akashvani, 24 Sept 2026) (newsonair.gov.in); Tlawmngaihna (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)



Photo: Petar Miloevi · CC BY-SA 4.0

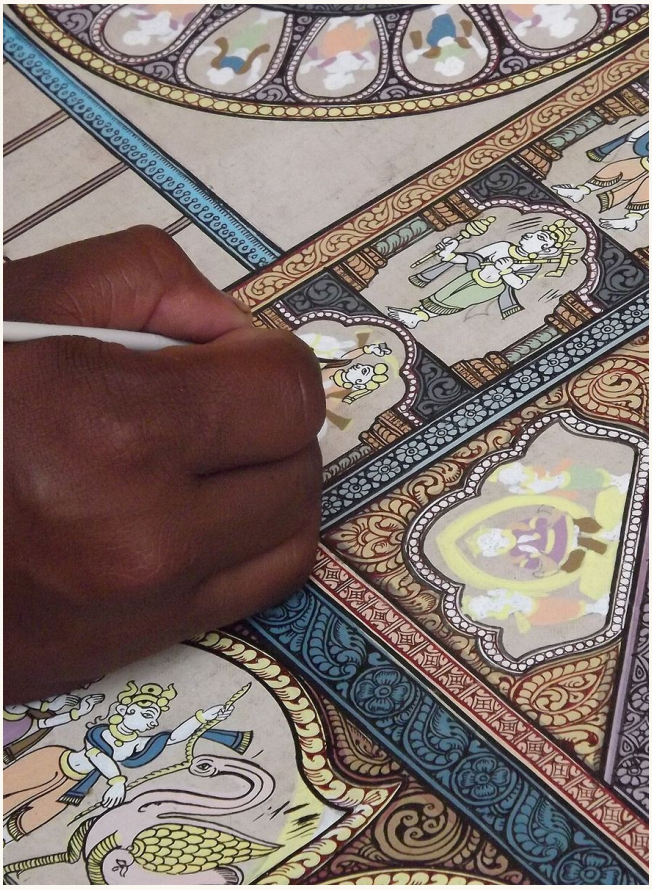


Photo: Sumit Surai · CC BY-SA 4.0



INDIA

Odisha's heritage triangle: Bhubaneswar, Konark and a village of painters

A stone chariot for the sun, a temple city, and a lane of painted houses where every household has a craft.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Joydeep · CC BY-SA 4.0

ODISHA'S COAST HOLDS A cluster of heritage places that is easy to cover in four or five days. Bhubaneswar, the state capital, is called the Temple City for the old shrines scattered among its modern streets. Puri is a pilgrimage town. Konark, on the Bay of Bengal coast, has the temple most visitors come to see.

The Konark Sun Temple was built around 1250 in the reign of the Eastern Ganga king Narasimhadeva I and dedicated to Surya, the sun god. It was conceived as a vast stone chariot with 24 wheels pulled by seven horses. The main sanctuary has fallen, and what stands today rises about 30 metres, but the carved wheels, which also work as sundials, and the surfaces of the dance hall are enough to keep a visitor for half a day. UNESCO inscribed the site in 1984, and the Archaeological Survey of India manages it. Konark is about 35 kilometres from Puri and 65 from Bhubaneswar.

The lesson of Konark is not only architectural. The craft that carved it did not vanish; it moved. Raghurajpur, about 14 kilometres from Puri, is a village of painters and dancers that INTACH selected in 2000, after a two-year research project, as Odisha's first heritage craft village. Its main street has more than 120 houses, many with painted walls, where artisans work on pattachitra, paintings on prepared cloth of deities and mythological scenes, and etch palm leaves. The village is also known for gotipua, a dance tradition in which boys perform in the manner of women and which is regarded as a precursor of Odissi. Visit when the artists are working, ask to see how a painting is made, and buy from the household that made it.

In Bhubaneswar, the Lingaraja temple stands in the old town among other medieval shrines, and the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves nearby hold the Hathigumpha inscription of the ruler Kharavela. Many temples admit only Hindus, so check access rules before you go and respect them where they apply.

The best time to go is the cool season. Konark hosts a dance festival at the temple's open-air auditorium from 1 to 5 December 2026, according to the Incredible India listing, which is worth planning around, with the usual caution that tickets and schedules must be checked with Odisha Tourism.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Cooler months, roughly October to March (general guidance)
KONARK FESTIVAL	Listed for 1–5 December 2026 at the Konark open-air auditorium; confirm with Odisha Tourism
GETTING THERE	Fly to Bhubaneswar (Biju Patnaik International). Konark is about 65 km from Bhubaneswar and 35 km from Puri.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Buy directly from artisans; ask before photographing; follow temple access rules.
CHECKED	10 November 2026. Opening hours, entry rules and tickets must be re-confirmed.

HOW TO REACH

Bhubaneswar, Konark, Puri and Raghurajpur, Odisha

AIRPORT	Biju Patnaik International Airport (BBI), Bhubaneswar.
RAILWAY	Bhubaneswar and Puri are major railheads; Konark has no railway of its own.
BY ROAD	Konark is about 65 km from Bhubaneswar and 35 km from Puri; Raghurajpur is about 14 km from Puri.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis, shared vehicles and buses; hire a car for the Puri–Konark circuit.

Distances approximate; confirm travel times locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Odisha Tourism (official) (odishatourism.gov.in); Konark Festival (Incredible India) (www.incredibleindia.gov.in); Konark Sun Temple (reference) (en.wikipedia.org); Raghurajpur (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)



Photo: Corpse Reviver · CC BY-SA 3.0



ASIA · JAPAN

Kyoto in October: a craft city before the leaves turn

The crowds come for the maples in late November. October offers the festivals, the workshops and the shorter queues.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Martin Falbisoner · CC BY-SA 4.0

KYOTO HAS THE HABIT of making its heritage look easy. Temples and shrines sit between apartment blocks, craft studios occupy townhouses, and the old imperial capital still works as a living city. The famous autumn colours arrive late. Japan Meteorological Corporation's first 2026 forecast, released on 2 September, put the red-leaf peak in Kyoto at 11 December, about six days later than the usual 5 December, with yellow leaves around 27 November. Individual temples and the hills above the city colour at different times, so treat any single date as a guide.

That makes October a good month for a slower trip. On 22 October the Jidai Matsuri, the Festival of the Ages, sends a procession of volunteers in costumes from different periods of Japanese history from the Imperial Palace to Heian Shrine. It is a young festival by Kyoto standards, but it tells the city's story through clothing, which is a useful way to arrive at the workshops.

Those workshops are the real subject. The Nishijin district is known for Nishijin-ori, a weaving tradition that reporting by the Associated Press says goes back more than a thousand years and is linked to the Heian court. Demand for kimono has fallen sharply, which is why the people profiled in our People pages are trying new things. A visit to a studio, a dyeing workshop or a small museum will teach more than another temple; booking ahead matters because many of these places are small.

For the big sights, go early. Guides generally advise reaching Kiyomizu-dera or Fushimi Inari before 8 am, when the paths are quieter, and dressing with shoulders and knees covered for temples. Fushimi Inari is free to enter and is described as open around the clock, but check each site's official page for hours and any night-viewing charges.

On entry rules: Japan introduced an e-visa for Indian applicants in April 2024, but eligibility depends on where you live and how you apply, and sources differ on details. Check the Embassy of Japan in India or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before planning.

At a glance

BEST TIME	October for festivals and thinner crowds; late November to early December for the leaves (forecast dates change)
JIDAI MATSURI	22 October 2026 (listed on Kyoto event calendars); confirm start time and route
ENTRY	Japan's e-visa for Indians has conditions; confirm with the Embassy of Japan in India or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Ask before photographing people, especially geiko and maiko; keep voices low in temples.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

HOW TO REACH

Kyoto, Japan

AIRPORT	Kansai International Airport (KIX) is the usual gateway, roughly 75 km from Kyoto; Osaka Itami (ITM) is another option.
RAILWAY	Kyoto Station is on the Tokaido Shinkansen and the JR network; limited express trains run from Kansai airport (journey about 75 minutes, approximate).
BY ROAD	Buses and expressways link Osaka and Kyoto; the city centre is not car-friendly.
GETTING AROUND	Buses, subway and taxis; bicycles are popular. Many sights are reachable by bus and short walks.

Times approximate; check operators for current schedules. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Kyoto City Official Travel Guide (kyoto.travel); Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (visas) (www.mofa.go.jp); Autumn foliage forecast 2026 (Nippon.com) (www.nippon.com); Nishijin-ori and AI (AP via News Tribune, 3 Aug 2025) (www.newstribune.com)



Photo: Major Anthony Gilchrist Mccall · CC0

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



AROUND THE WORLD

Fez: walking the world's largest car-free medina

A walled old city of lanes, craft quarters and a university, built to be crossed on foot.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Andrew Nash from Vienna, Austria · CC BY-SA 2.0

FEZ, IN NORTHERN MOROCCO, was founded in the late eighth century, and its old city, Fes el-Bali, has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1981. It is often described as one of the largest and oldest car-free urban zones anywhere. That means you will do the city on foot, or behind a donkey, and you will get lost. Getting lost is part of the plan.

The old city is organised by craft. In the Chouara tannery quarter, leather is processed in stone vats in a method often described as dating to the eleventh or twelfth century; the exact age varies by source. The Bou Inania madrasa, a fourteenth-century Marinid building, rewards a slow look at its carved cedar and plasterwork. Elsewhere you will find brass workers, potters, weavers and carpenters in working lanes.

At the centre of the story is al-Qarawiyyin, a mosque and learning centre whose buildings were completed in 859. Guinness World Records recognises it as the oldest degree-granting university in the world, though historians dispute the claim and some give the title to Bologna. Our Heritage page looks more closely at that history.

Practicalities: hire a licensed guide for the first day, agree a price in advance, and use the quieter morning hours for the tanneries and the lanes. Tanning is hard, smelly and sometimes hazardous work, so treat the viewing terraces as workplaces, not a stage. Fès–Saïs airport is about 15 kilometres south of the old city.

A note on entry: most sources say Indian passport holders need a visa for Morocco, usually obtained as an e-visa, but guides conflict. Check the official Moroccan foreign ministry or consulate before you book.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Spring and autumn are generally the most comfortable; summers are hot
GETTING THERE	Fès–Saïs Airport (FEZ) about 15 km from Fes el-Bali; trains link Fez with other Moroccan cities
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on passport; Indian citizens generally need one. Confirm with Morocco's official authorities.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Use licensed guides, agree prices in advance, and ask before photographing artisans.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

HOW TO REACH

Fes el-Bali, Fez, Morocco

AIRPORT	Fès–Saïs Airport (FEZ), about 15 km from the old city.
RAILWAY	Fez railway station, on Morocco's national rail network with services to other major cities; a short taxi ride from the medina gates.
BY ROAD	Petit taxis take visitors to the medina gates; cars cannot enter the old city.
GETTING AROUND	Walk, or hire a licensed guide; donkeys carry loads in the narrow lanes.

Distances approximate; confirm schedules locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Morocco (official tourism board) (www.visitmorocco.com); Fez (reference) (en.wikipedia.org); Chouara tannery feature (Le360) (en.le360.ma)



Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0

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



AROUND THE WORLD

Oaxaca: Day of the Dead, as a guest

A holiday that belongs to families, not to visitors, and how to be there without getting in the way.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Thayne Tuason · CC BY 4.0

DAY OF THE DEAD, traditionally celebrated on 1 and 2 November, with 31 October and 6 November added in some places, is a time when Mexican families remember the people they have lost. UNESCO placed the holiday on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008, as practised by Mexico's indigenous communities. Families build home altars, called ofrendas, with photographs and the favourite food and drink of the dead, decorated with orange marigolds, pan de muerto and sugar skulls. They also clean and decorate graves, and in some towns spend the night in the cemetery.

Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, is among the best-known places to see this, and also among the busiest. A tour operator's blog in the state warns that the holiday's growing fame has brought face-painting parties and little understanding of its indigenous roots. That is useful guidance rather than a prohibition. The point is to understand that you are a guest at a family's grief and remembrance, not an audience at a show.

How to be a good guest: if a family invites you to their altar or cemetery, accept with thanks and take a small gift, such as bread or flowers. Ask before taking photographs, especially at graves, and expect some families to say no. Stay out of the way of mourners, keep your voice low, and avoid costumes that imitate the holiday's imagery.

Outside the holiday, Oaxaca rewards a longer stay. Villages in the Central Valleys such as Teotitlán del Valle have kept weaving and natural-dye traditions alive, as one of our profiles shows. Plan accommodation months ahead for the holiday dates, as the city fills up.

On entry: reporting and consular guidance indicate that Indian passport holders generally need a visa for Mexico, and that rules for those holding other visas vary and are described differently in different sources. Check the Mexican foreign ministry (SRE) or your consulate before you travel.



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

At a glance

WHEN	Traditionally 1–2 November (some places include 31 October and 6 November)
GETTING THERE	Oaxaca's airport (OAX) has flights from Mexico City; there is no passenger railway to the city.
ENTRY	Indian passport holders generally need a visa; exceptions vary. Check the SRE or the Mexican consulate.
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Ask before photographing; follow the lead of the family or guide; avoid costume imitations.
CHECKED	10 November 2026. Plan accommodation early.

HOW TO REACH

Oaxaca and the Central Valleys, Mexico

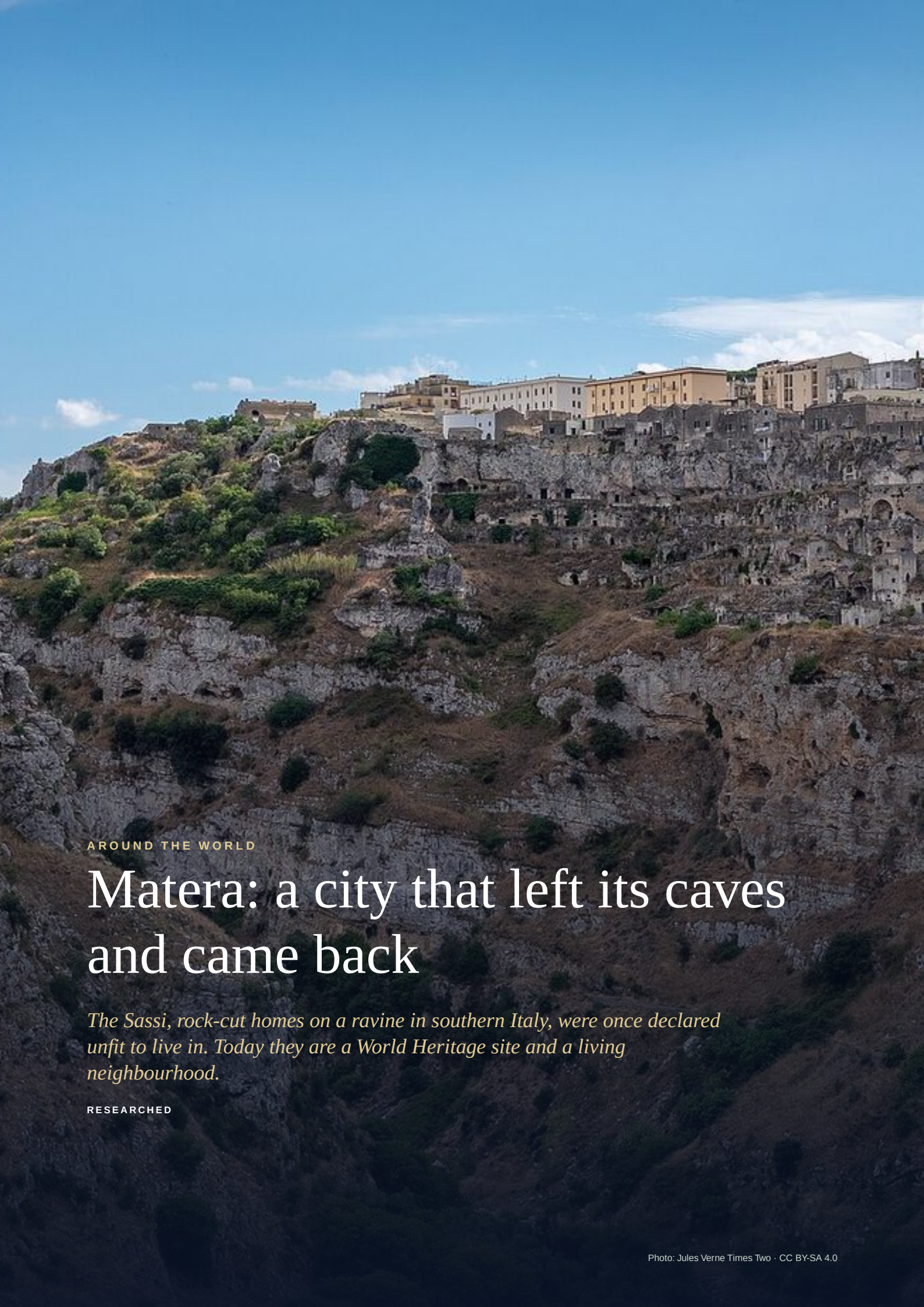
AIRPORT	Xoxocotlán International Airport (OAX), roughly 10 km south of the city (approximate).
RAILWAY	No passenger railway; reach Oaxaca by air or long-distance bus from Mexico City and Puebla.
BY ROAD	Long-distance buses (many hours from Mexico City, which is the usual route) and hired cars; Teotitlán del Valle is a short drive from the city.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and colectivos; consider guided village visits during the holiday.

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

Official sources: Visit Mexico (official tourism board) (www.visitmexico.com); Mexico foreign ministry (visa information) (www.gob.mx); Day of the Dead (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)



Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Matera: a city that left its caves and came back

The Sassi, rock-cut homes on a ravine in southern Italy, were once declared unfit to live in. Today they are a World Heritage site and a living neighbourhood.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Jules Verne Times Two · CC BY-SA 4.0

MATERA, IN THE BASILICATA region of southern Italy, is built on and into a ravine. The Sassi, its old districts, are dwellings and churches cut out of soft local rock, which UNESCO inscribed in December 1993 together with the park of the rupestrian, or rock-cut, churches around the city. People have lived in this area for a very long time; the Romans founded the town in 251 BC as Matheola.

In the twentieth century, the Sassi were judged unfit for habitation. Between 1952 and the 1970s the government moved residents to new housing on the plateau, and the old districts emptied. Restoration under a 1986 law began their return, and in 2019 Matera was a European Capital of Culture. For visitors the result is an unusual place to stay: some rooms and restaurants now occupy former cave houses.

Walk early, when the stone is pale and the lanes are quiet. The cathedral dates from the thirteenth century, and several rock-cut churches in and near the Sassi have preserved painted interiors. The local bread, Pane di Matera, carries an EU Protected Geographical Indication, and is worth buying from a local baker.

Matera is easy to reach but not quite on the main lines. The nearest airport is Bari, and the town is the terminus of the Bari–Matera narrow-gauge railway run by Ferrovie Appulo Lucane. Allow two to three days, and pair it with a day in the countryside or on the Apulian coast.

A note on respect: people live in the Sassi today. Keep to public lanes, ask before photographing doorways or interiors, and remember that a city restored for visitors still has residents.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Spring and autumn are generally pleasant; summers are hot
GETTING THERE	Fly to Bari; the narrow-gauge FAL train and buses link Bari and Matera.
ENTRY	Italy is in the Schengen area; Indian passport holders need a Schengen visa. Check the official Italian visa portal.
CHECKED	10 November 2026

HOW TO REACH

Matera, Basilicata, Italy

AIRPORT	Bari Karol Wojtya Airport (BRI), roughly 60 km from Matera (approximate).
RAILWAY	Matera is the terminus of the Bari–Matera narrow-gauge line run by Ferrovie Appulo Lucane; the town is not on the main national rail network.
BY ROAD	About one hour by road from Bari.
GETTING AROUND	The Sassi are walkable; steps are steep and uneven.

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

Official sources: Italia.it (official tourism portal) (www.italia.it); Italian visa portal (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (vistoperitalia.esteri.it); Matera (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Children of the Ganga: the boatmen of Varanasi

About 8,000 families row visitors along Varanasi's ghats, and many of them worry about who the riverfront is being redesigned for.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Vyacheslav Argenberg · CC BY 4.0

Varanasi's ghats, the stone stairways that run down to the Ganga, are among the most visited waterfronts in India. A long-form report by Al Jazeera English, published on 21 April 2024, spent time with the mallah community, the boatmen who have worked this river for generations. The report puts their number at about 8,000, and says they call themselves the sons of the Ganga.

The reporter describes an income that depends on seasons and on a changing riverfront. Between August and October the ghats flood and boating is banned, so families live on savings. The boatmen told the reporter that private cruise ships, first permitted in 2018, with more licences following, have cut into their earnings, and that they would have liked to be consulted on changes to the riverfront.

Many boatmen supplement their work by carrying firewood to the cremation ghats, a day's labour that the report says pays around 300 rupees for loads of up to 100 kilograms. A coin diver, known as a gotakhor, retrieves offerings from the river bed with a magnet or by diving, for a similar sum and at some risk. The report names boatmen including Vishwakarma Sahni, aged 29, and Santosh Sahni, aged 50, who says he hopes his children find a different path, and Pramod Majhi, who speaks for the community in its dealings with authorities. It also notes the community's long history of social disadvantage.

For a visitor, the practical lesson is simple. Hire a boatman directly, agree on the price before you board, and think about hiring from the community that has always worked this river rather than a faceless booking platform. Go early in the day, when the river is quiet, and if you photograph the ghats, ask before pointing a lens at the people who work on them.

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	Al Jazeera English, Uday Narayanan, 21 April 2024
PEOPLE NAMED	Vishwakarma Sahni (29), Santosh Sahni (50), Pramod Majhi, Shivnath Majhi (55), Bablu Sahni (23) and Deepak Sahni (28)
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. We have not spoken to the people named.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach through a local boatmen's association or a local operator; get written consent for names, quotes and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Varanasi ghats, Uttar Pradesh

AIRPORT	Lal Bahadur Shastri Airport (VNS), roughly 25 km from the ghats (approximate).
RAILWAY	Varanasi Junction (BSB) and Kashi station are the main railheads.
BY ROAD	The ghat area is reached by road and then on foot; many lanes are too narrow for vehicles.
GETTING AROUND	Auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws and boats; walk the ghats at dawn.

Boating is banned during the monsoon flood months, usually August to October; confirm locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (Al Jazeera) (www.aljazeera.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The weaver who came home: Porfirio Gutiérrez of Teotitlán del Valle

A Zapotec weaver who spent years in California returned to his village in Oaxaca to revive his family's natural dyes, and to teach others.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Unknown · CC BY-SA 3.0

Teotitlán del Valle, in Oaxaca's Central Valleys, is a village of weavers. A profile in American Indian magazine, published by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in spring 2019 and written by Justin Mugits, tells the story of Porfirio Gutiérrez, a Zapotec weaver who left home at 18, in 1997, to work in Ventura, California. He took restaurant and factory jobs, and visited home in 2006, when he began to see his family's weaving in a new light.

The magazine reports that in 2007 he and his family founded a studio that sells directly to customers and employs 21 relatives. His sister, Juana, makes the dyes. Colours come from plants such as pericón, a Mexican marigold, pomegranate and sapote, and from cochineal insects, which give reds and crimsons. Other reporting suggests that only about a dozen families in Teotitlán still use natural dyes, and that Gutiérrez has taught workshops for young weavers in the village.

In 2015 he joined the Smithsonian museum's Artist Leadership Program, and afterwards he and his sister ran a workshop in Teotitlán on natural dyeing and weaving. He divides his time between Oaxaca and California. The article quotes him saying that there is something much more important than money, a line that explains why a family might choose a slower, costlier dye.

If you visit the village, ask about the dyes, and expect a prices-and-process conversation. A rug dyed naturally and woven by hand takes weeks, and should cost accordingly. Buy from a workshop that can tell you who made it.

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	American Indian magazine (Smithsonian NMAI), Justin Mugits, Spring 2019; additional detail from other published profiles
PEOPLE NAMED	Porfirio Gutiérrez; his sister Juana Gutiérrez Contreras
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. Dates and numbers vary between sources.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the family studio directly; get written consent for names, quotes and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico

AIRPORT	Xoxocotlán International Airport (OAX), roughly 35–40 km away (approximate).
RAILWAY	No passenger railway; buses and taxis from Oaxaca city.
BY ROAD	About 45 minutes by road from Oaxaca city (approximate).
GETTING AROUND	Colectivos and taxis from Oaxaca city; a guided visit helps.

Studios may need appointments; confirm before you go. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (American Indian magazine) (www.americanindianmagazine.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

A loom, an algorithm and a leaf: Hironori Fukuoka of Kyoto

A fourth-generation weaver in Kyoto is testing whether artificial intelligence can suggest patterns, and what it should not be asked to do.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Flickr user: lesteph https://www.flickr.com/photos/lesteph/ · CC BY-SA 2.0

Nishijin-ori is the intricate weaving of Kyoto's Nishijin district, a tradition that the Associated Press, in a story published on 3 August 2025, says goes back more than a thousand years, to the Heian era of The Tale of Genji. Its survival is at risk because demand for kimono has dropped sharply as everyday life has modernised. Kimono can cost up to a million yen, and many Japanese now rent one for weddings or skip it altogether.

Hironori Fukuoka is the fourth-generation head of Fukuoka Weaving. He has been working with researchers from Sony Computer Science Laboratories, including Jun Rekimoto and Dr Lana Sinapayen, on an experiment. The AI was trained on existing Nishijin patterns and asked to generate designs of its own. It only suggests; people and a traditional loom do the making.

Fukuoka found some suggestions strange, but one used a leaf motif to soften the angular lines of a traditional pattern, an idea he said a human might not have had. The result is a soft green kimono that, according to the report, has not been priced or put into production. Researchers hope to teach the system from how the weaver corrects its designs, because digital tools cannot yet capture the colour gradations of the craft. Rekimoto said, “We don't believe AI can do everything.”

Fukuoka is also testing whether the weaving technique can produce very strong materials for uses such as fishing rods and aircraft parts. For a traveller, the point is that heritage crafts are not static. They survive by adapting, and visiting a workshop or small museum, and buying something, is one practical way of supporting them.

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	Associated Press, carried by the News Tribune, 3 August 2025
PEOPLE NAMED	Hironori Fukuoka; Jun Rekimoto; Dr Lana Sinapayen
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published reporting. The kimono described had not been priced or put into production at the time.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach Fukuoka Weaving and Sony CSL through official channels; obtain consent for names, quotes and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Nishijin district, Kyoto, Japan

AIRPORT	Kansai International Airport (KIX), roughly 75 km from Kyoto.
RAILWAY	Kyoto Station; Nishijin is reachable by city bus or subway and a walk.
BY ROAD	Buses and taxis from Kyoto Station.
GETTING AROUND	Buses, subway and walking; some workshops need booking.

Studios are small and may need advance appointments. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Source article (AP via News Tribune) (www.newstribune.com)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Reiek: a hilltop village that hosts its own heritage

A heritage village near Aizawl where traditional Mizo houses stand together, and where the state hosts its annual flower festival.

PLACE PROFILE · FROM OFFICIAL AND PUBLISHED SOURCES · NOT VISITED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Coolcolney · CC BY-SA 3.0

No named person was available from published reporting for this month's Mizoram profile, so this is a place profile built from official and institutional sources. Reiek Mountain, which rises to about 1,548 metres near Aizawl, is the setting for a heritage village of traditional huts representing different Mizo sub-tribes. According to the Incredible India listing, the site includes a chieftain's residence, a dormitory for unmarried men and a residence for a widow, kept in their original form, with modern Mizo homes nearby to show how everyday life has developed.

The place has been recognised in tourism circles: published accounts describe Reiek as a gold-category winner in the national Best Tourism Village awards for 2023, though we have not confirmed this on the awards body's own site and it should be checked before print. The village is typically visited on a day trip from Aizawl and is open from 8 am to 5 pm according to the national tourism listing.

Reiek is also a venue for events. The Anthurium Festival, organised by Mizoram Tourism with the horticulture department, is scheduled for 1 to 3 October 2026 at Ailawng and Reiek, with flower shows, treks, cave visits, indigenous games, cheraw performances and handloom exhibitions. Community-led tours around the Reiek hills, including bamboo weaving, were described in a July 2025 travel piece.

The visit raises a question this issue returns to: how does a village host visitors without turning daily life into a display? Ask the community what it wants you to see, pay for what you use, and treat the heritage village as a place where people have chosen to share their history. Local guides, homestays and craft sellers are the people to support.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts are taken from the cited sources and must be re-checked before print; the award claim comes from secondary reporting.
SOURCES	Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism portal); Mizoram Tourism festival information; travel reporting, July 2025
PEOPLE NAMED	None. Community members must be approached through the village council or Mizoram Tourism.
NOT VISITED BY US	This profile is built from official and published sources only.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the village council and Mizoram Tourism for consent to interview and photograph residents.

HOW TO REACH

Reiek, near Aizawl, Mizoram

AIRPORT	Lengpui Airport (AJL), roughly 30 km from Aizawl; Reiek is a further drive (approximate).
RAILWAY	Sairang station (new since September 2025), roughly 14–15 km from Aizawl; Silchar railway station is the older gateway.
BY ROAD	About an hour from Aizawl by road, around 29 km by one published account.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis and hired cars from Aizawl.

Hours and festival dates may change; confirm with Mizoram Tourism. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Incredible India: Reiek Tourist Resort (www.incredibleindia.gov.in); Incredible India: Anthurium Festival (www.incredibleindia.gov.in)

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “A craft I watched being made”

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 a time you stood in a workshop, studio or home and watched someone make something by hand: a rug, a pot, a painting, a loaf. Give us the place, the maker, the process, and one thing that surprised you.

What we need from you: a true story; photographs you took, with the maker's permission; the maker's name spelled as they would like it; and a short trip recap with dates, route, what you paid for the object (with currency and date) and one thing you wish you had known.

Rights: you keep your copyright; we ask permission to publish and archive with credit, and we will show you the edited text first. Please do not send invented or composite stories.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: the moles of Oaxaca

Seven sauces, one word, and a lot of ingredients.

RESEARCHED



Photo: ProtoplasmaKid · CC BY-SA 4.0

Mole, from a Nahuatl word for sauce, is a family of Mexican sauces built from chillies, nuts, seeds, spices and often chocolate or fruit. Oaxaca is known as the land of the seven moles, though writers disagree about the exact list: most name negro, coloradito, amarillo, verde, chichilo and manchamanteles, with the seventh given as either rojo or colorado depending on the source.

Mole negro is the best known, a dark sauce reported to contain 25 or more ingredients, including the local chilhuacle negro chilli, chocolate, sesame and almonds. Coloradito is usually milder and slightly sweeter in character. Verde is built on green ingredients such as pumpkin seeds, tomatillo and herbs. One source says chichilo is traditionally made for funerals, and manchamanteles, whose name means tablecloth-stainer, often includes fruit and sometimes chorizo.

Where to try them: a market comedor, a family restaurant that makes its own pastes, or a cooking class with a local cook. Ask which moles are on the day's menu, since not all are made daily. Vegetarian travellers should confirm what the sauce is made with and what it is served over; many moles are served with chicken or pork.

At a glance

SAY IT	“Mole” is pronounced MOH-lay.
ETIQUETTE	Ask about the day's moles; share a table at market stalls; try the paste to take home.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Sauces may use meat stock; ask the cook directly.

HOW TO REACH

Oaxaca, Mexico

AIRPORT	Xoxocotlán International Airport (OAX), roughly 10 km south of the city.
RAILWAY	No passenger railway; long-distance buses.
BY ROAD	Reached by road from Mexico City and Puebla by long-distance bus.
GETTING AROUND	Walkable historic centre; taxis for markets.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: al-Qarawiyyin, Fez

A mosque and learning centre completed in 859, and a library reopened to the public in 2016.

RESEARCHED

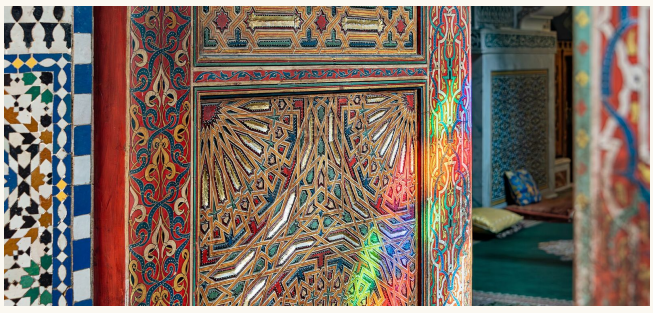


Photo: Jorge Franganillo · CC BY 2.0

The al-Qarawiyyin mosque and learning centre in Fez was completed in 859, according to published accounts, and has been a teaching place for much of its history. Guinness World Records recognises it as the oldest degree-granting university in the world, and UNESCO has described it as a university since its founding. Both claims are contested: historians note that it did not describe itself as a university until much later, and some give the title to the University of Bologna, established in 1088.

The founder's story has the same shape. Fatima al-Fihri is credited with founding the institution, but one source calls her role as founder of the university alongside the mosque mythologised rather than documented. What is clearer is that the mosque grew into a teaching institution that became the modern University of al-Qarawiyyin in 1963.

The library, restored under architect Aziza Chaouni, reopened in 2016, and reports say it holds thousands of ancient manuscripts. It is, by reports, the first time in its history that it opened to the public, though access remains limited. Check current access rules before you go: parts of the complex are open only to Muslims, and the library may require an appointment.

At a glance

ETIQUETTE	Dress modestly; follow signs on access; do not treat a working mosque as a backdrop.
CHECKED	10 November 2026. Access to the library and mosque must be confirmed locally.

HOW TO REACH

Fes el-Bali, Fez, Morocco

AIRPORT	Fès–Saïs Airport (FEZ), about 15 km from the old city.
RAILWAY	Fez railway station; a short taxi ride to the medina gates.
BY ROAD	Cars cannot enter the old city; walk from the nearest gate.
GETTING AROUND	Walk with a licensed guide.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Morocco World News: library opens to the public (2016) (www.moroccoworldnews.com); Fatima al-Fihri (reference) (en.wikipedia.org)

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: October and November

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

RESEARCHED



Photo: Oddysseuss · CC BY-SA 4.0

Monarch butterflies (central Mexico): the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Michoacán and the State of Mexico is a World Heritage site, inscribed in 2008. Visitors generally go between about November and March; one detailed report said the 2024–25 season opened on 15 November, and which sanctuaries open changes by year. *Predictable season, exact opening dates set each year.*

Autumn colour (Kyoto and Japan): Japan Meteorological Corporation's first 2026 forecast put Kyoto's yellow leaves around 27 November and red around 11 December. *A forecast, not a promise.*

Olive ridley turtles (Odisha): Odisha's annual fishing ban to protect turtles runs from 1 November to 31 May. Mass nesting at Gahirmatha and Rushikulya usually happens in February or March but varies from year to year, and in some years Gahirmatha has had none. *Uncertain: do not plan a trip around an arribada.*

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Responsible travel: buying crafts well

A few habits that help the maker, not the middleman.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Buy from the maker where you can. Cooperatives, studios and workshops that name the maker keep more money in the community. Ask who made the piece and how long it took.

Pay a fair price. If you bargain, do so lightly. A hand-dyed, hand-woven rug or a block-printed cloth takes days or weeks to make.

Ask what it is made of. Natural and chemical dyes, and different woods and leathers, mean different prices and different care.

Check the rules. Some objects, such as certain animal products, antiques and plants, cannot be exported or imported; check customs rules before you buy.

Ask before you photograph the maker. And credit them if you post the image.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The Heritage Visitor's Checklist

Ten habits for visiting places where people still live and worship.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **Read before you go:** learn who built the place, who uses it now, and what is being restored.

2. **Check access rules:** many temples, mosques and churches have times, dress codes and entry restrictions.

3. **Dress for the place:** cover shoulders and knees where asked; carry a scarf.

4. **Ask before photographing people,** and never photograph worshippers or mourners at close range without permission.

5. **Go early or late:** lower crowds and kinder light.

6. **Hire local guides:** licensed guides pay local taxes and know the rules.

7. **Buy from makers:** and ask who made what.

8. **Stay on paths:** fragile surfaces, tiles and carvings are easily damaged.

9. **Carry out what you carry in:** and avoid touching murals, carvings and tiles.

10. **Say thank you in the local language:** it costs nothing.



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Bukhara

One illustrative day in an old Silk Road town. Hours and your own pace will change it.

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY



Photo: Bgag · CC0

Early morning: walk to the Kalyan minaret and its neighbouring mosque and madrasa before the tour groups arrive.

Breakfast: tea and bread at a courtyard guesthouse.

Late morning: the Ark, the old rulers' citadel, with its museum rooms.

Lunch: a plov or noodle soup at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: the Samanid mausoleum, built between 892 and 943, and the nearby park; then a stroll through the covered bazaar areas where crafts are sold.

Evening: a pause by the Lyab-i Hauz pool as the light drops; dinner in a courtyard.

What to skip if short on time: extra madrasas; see the Kalyan complex, the Ark and the mausoleum.

Hours and costs are placeholders to be verified locally on production day.

HOW TO REACH

Bukhara, Uzbekistan

AIRPORT	Bukhara International Airport (BHK), a short drive from the old city.
RAILWAY	Bukhara's main station is outside the old town; Afrosiyob trains link it to Samarkand and Tashkent.
BY ROAD	Samarkand to Bukhara is a few hours by road; the Afrosiyob train takes about 1.5 hours by published guides.
GETTING AROUND	Taxis; the old town is walkable.

Timings approximate; check the train schedule. Distances approximate - verify.

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

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: tlawmngaihna

A Mizo word for generosity as duty.

LEXICON

Tlawmngaihna — an ethic of the Mizo people that has no one-word English equivalent. Writers describe it as selflessness, as doing what the moment calls for without counting the inconvenience, as putting others first. Hospitality is an easy example: a guest may politely decline several times, while the host is expected to give generously.

Like many such words, it is best treated as a window into one community rather than a summary of it. Some elders say it is fading; others say it is alive. Ask a Mizo friend.

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz — October

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

QUIZ

1. Which Uzbek city has the Registan, with its three madrasas?

2. Aizawl is the capital of which Indian state?

3. Which Odisha temple was designed as a chariot with 24 wheels?

4. In which Japanese city is the Nishijin weaving district?

5. Which Italian city is known for its rock-cut Sassi?

Answers (for the editor's copy — reveal next issue): Samarkand · Mizoram · Konark Sun Temple · Kyoto · Matera.

COMMUNITY

Your turn: a tradition you were invited into

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Tell us about a tradition you were invited to share: a meal, a ceremony, a workshop. 150 words and one photograph you took, with the host's permission. Say where, when, and one moment you would not swap. A selection will appear in a later Readers' Pages with your name and photo credit, only with your permission.

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf

Three books we would pack for a heritage journey.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Road to Oxiana by Robert Byron (1937): a travel classic of a journey through Persia and Afghanistan, famous for its voice.

In Xanadu by William Dalrymple (1989): a young writer's journey following Marco Polo's route to the site of Kublai Khan's summer capital.

The Silk Roads by Peter Frankopan (2015): a history of the world seen from the trade routes of Central Asia.



Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

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

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
Anthurium Festival	Ailawng and Reiek, Mizoram		
Durga Puja	Kolkata and across eastern India		
Diwali	India		
Pushkar Camel Fair	Pushkar, Rajasthan		
Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival	New Shillong Highland Grounds, Meghalaya		
Sangai Festival	Imphal, Manipur		
Hornbill Festival	Kisama Heritage Village, near Kohima, Nagaland		
Konark Festival	Konark, Odisha		
Mizoram Winter Festival	Mizoram		

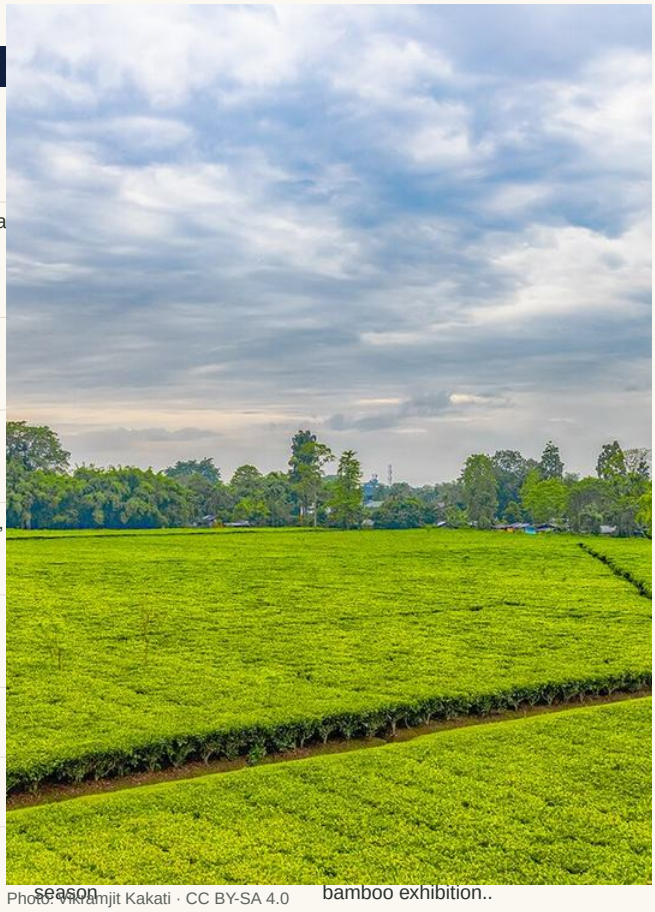


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

season

bamboo exhibition..

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Jidai Matsuri	Kyoto, Japan	22 October 2026	A procession of costumes from different periods of Japanese history, from the Imperial Palace to Heian Shrine..
Loy Krathong	Thailand (Bangkok, Sukhothai, Chiang Mai)	Full moon, most sources say 24 November 2026; local events run several days	Floating baskets and lanterns on rivers and lakes, with local programmes in many cities..

EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
International Alba White Truffle Fair	Alba, Piedmont, Italy	Most sources say 10 October to 6 December 2026, on weekends	A weekend market of white truffles, wines and regional food..

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Day of the Dead	Oaxaca and across Mexico	Traditionally 31 October to 2 November 2026	Families build altars and visit graves to remember those who have died..
Marrakech International Film Festival	Marrakech, Morocco	20–28 November 2026 (23rd edition)	A ten-day film festival with screenings and industry workshops..

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

OCEANIA & INTERNATIONAL

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Melbourne Cup	Flemington Racecourse, Melbourne, Australia	3 November 2026 (carnival 31 October to 7 November)	Australia's best-known horse race, a public holiday in Victoria..

THE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Format example

Dated developments from September 2026, each with its source. Dates and rules must be re-confirmed before you travel.

Mizoram: the state launched a first Pluck and Pay festival, 23–25 September 2026, in Tualte and Chawngtlai villages, Khawzawl district. Source: Akashvani News, 24 September 2026. newsonair.gov.in

Mizoram: a Winter Festival is planned, with a Christmas parade and a bamboo exhibition; dates were not announced. Source: Akashvani News, 1 September 2026. newsonair.gov.in

Mizoram: the Bairabi–Sairang railway line completed one year of operation, with more than 15 lakh passenger journeys reported. Source: Akashvani News, 13 September 2026. newsonair.gov.in

Meghalaya: the Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival, scheduled for 20–21 November 2026, announced a permanent venue in New Shillong. Source: Sentinel Assam, September 2026. www.sentinelassam.com

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

Japan: Japan Meteorological Corporation's first 2026 autumn-leaf forecast, issued 2 September, put Kyoto's red-leaf peak on 11 December. Source: Nippon.com. www.nippon.com



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