



Travel does the traveller a world of good. Be it just a change of place a few kilometres away or a change of surrounding in a different continent altogether, traveling invigorates the mind and soul. Some even travel to faraway lands for spiritual

enlightenment. This issue of the magazine takes you to one such country – India. Read about the fascinating Five Most Popular Pilgrimage Destinations in India.

Every city around the world has a signature style. For many, the architecture screams the cities' uniqueness. Bringing to you in our city section of the magazine, five such cities which are must visits for their architectural marvels.

Connectivity has made the world a lot smaller for today's traveller. Sharing pictures, reaching out to friends on

social media and cloud access have all contributed to an insatiable appetite for internet usage for today's traveller. Find smart ways to appease your data needs in our feature article on Travelling with Internet.

Don't forget to check out the regular sections of the e-zine!

Happy reading!

Manashree Prakash Editor-in-Chief

## World Luxury Travel Magazine

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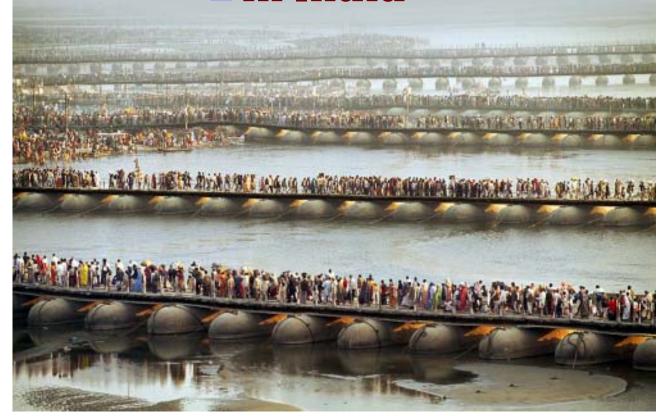
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# Five Most Popular Pilgrimage Destinations in India



India is renowned world over as a destination for spirituality. Nowhere can one find such diversity of faiths or places of worship. While it is common to find a shrine at almost every street in the country, there are some religious destinations in India which have been objects of veneration for ages. Let us discover what they are.



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Kumbh Mela – The largest human gathering on the planet

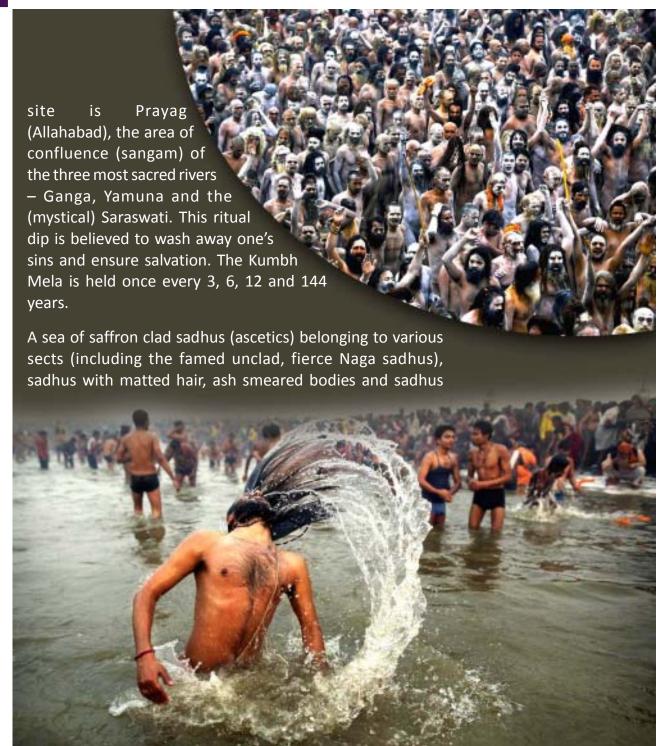
Places: Allahabad, Nasik, Haridwar, Ujjain

The Kumbh Mela is one of the most incredible spectacles of mass faith on this

planet. Aeons back there was a tussle between the gods and demons for a jar of nectar believed to confer immortality. During the fight, drops of nectar spilled to the earth at four places- Allahabad, Hardwar, Ujjain and Nasik. A dip in the holy rivers at these places is the focal point of the pilgrimage. The rivers are - The Ganges at Hardwar, Sangam at Prayag, Godavari at Nasik and Shipra at Ujjain. The most sacred



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performing incredible feats of endurance can be seen at this festival. The whole area is dotted with camps housing the pilgrims.

## Why is it such a big deal?

The answer is a stunner! It is believed that the planetary configuration, at the prescribed time of the ritual bathing

invokes the highest cosmic energy. This charges the holy waters and the energy is absorbed by the pilgrims who bathe in it. The powerful energies cleanse the spiritual consciousness of the pilgrims and erase their karma! Thus the pilgrimage is a tremendous cathartic cleansing of the mind and spirit.

**Did you know:** 120 million people visited the Maha Kumbh at Allahabad in 2013!





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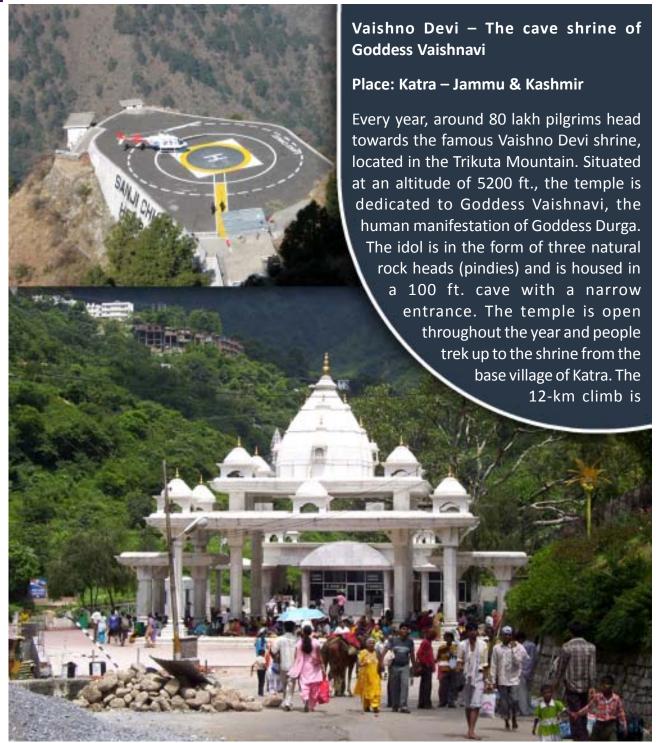
on the condition that the Lord would not return to his celestial abode until the loan was repaid. The temple commemorates the divine union, and to this day, devotees offer gold, silver and money at the temple to pay off the Lord's debt. The temple is famous for its delicious laddoos (Indian ball-shaped sweet) which are offered to the Lord and devotees.

# What makes this the most visited temple in the country?

The deity at the temple being 'svayambhu' (self-manifested, not made by a sculptor or installed by human hands), it is highly revered. Lord Balaji is reputed to have performed innumerable miracles as testified by millions of devotees.

**Did you know:** The gold plated towerdome housing the main deity, is called 'ananda nilayam' or abode of happiness!



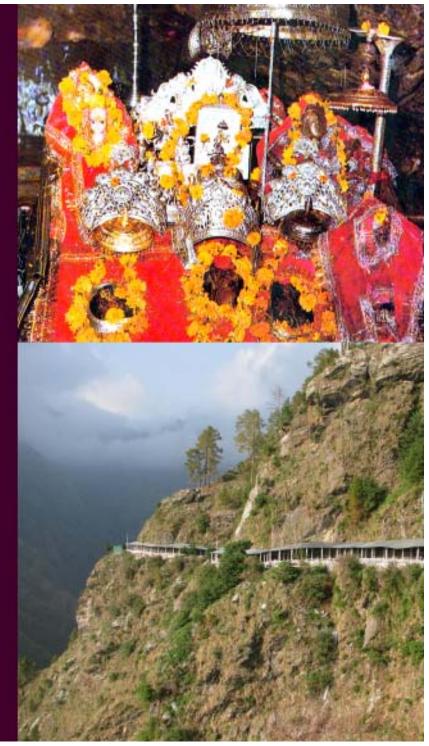


challenging, especially in winter when there is snowfall blocking the route. The pilgrimage can be done on foot, horseback and helicopter.

## What makes it so special?

The Goddess here is the manifestation of the combined spiritual powers of her three attributes -Goddess Kali, Lakshmi and Saraswati (representing her creative, nourishing and destructive powers). The shrine is believed to be miraculous and wish fulfilling. It is believed that the Goddess is actually present here in the spiritual form and one can make this pilgrimage only when they receive a 'call' from the goddess.

**Did you know:** Goddess Vaishnavi was created out of the combined splendour of all the gods, for vanquishing Demon Mahisasura.



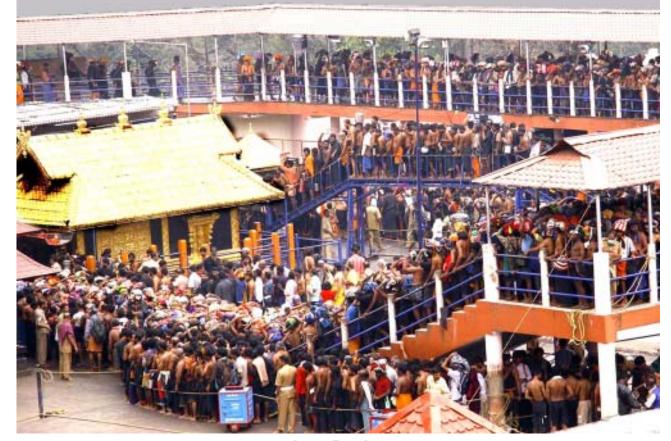
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## Sree Ayyappa Temple- Largest annual pilgrimage in the world

Place: Sabarimala, Kerala

This unique pilgrimage is dedicated to Lord Ayyappa. The temple is atop a hill (468m) in the Sahyadri Mountains in Sabarimala, Kerala. Annually 50 million pilgrims wind their way through dense forests and mountains to climb the famed 18 temple steps to the sanctum sanctorum for a glimpse of Lord Ayyappa. The pilgrims undergo a preparatory 41-day purificatory

penance. At this time they abstain from alcohol, non-vegetarian food, haircuts, remain celibate, wear only black, do not wear footwear and maintain a spiritual lifestyle. During the pilgrimage they carry 'irumudikettu' (a bundle containing worship materials) all the way to the top. The pilgrimage season is from November to January, to people of all faiths and to both the sexes (barring women in their fertile period of life).



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## What draws so many millions here?

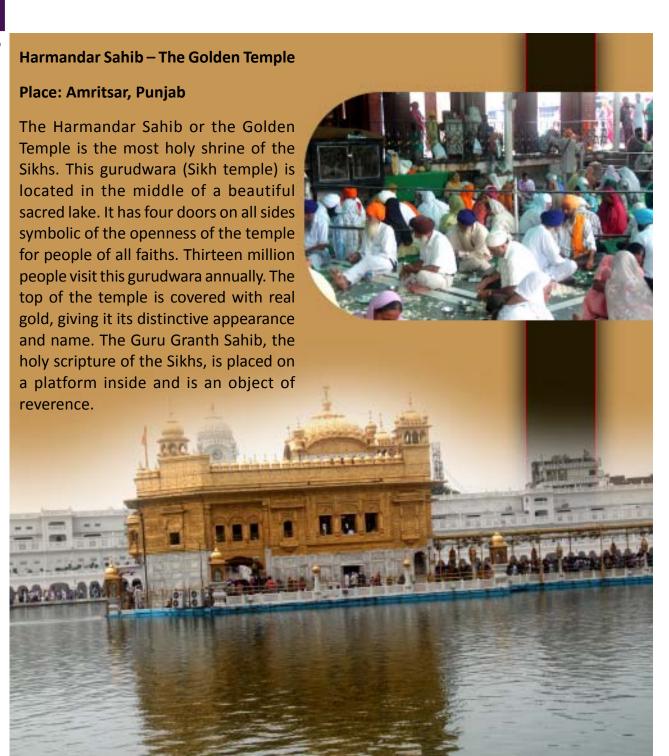
Makar Sankranti festival is the highlight event here (mid-January). On that day, when the Lord's ornaments are being taken to the temple, an eagle mysteriously appears, hovering till the ornaments are taken inside, before it vanishes. A special and lone star is also sighted at this time. Once the idol is decked with ornaments, the peak moment arrives for which all pilgrims wait. A divine



light appears on the hills opposite, flickers for a few seconds and vanishes. The air is charged with devotion and the chants of 'Ayyappa' reach a crescendo at this time. It is impossible not to be moved by a sense of divine presence and the throbbing air of devotion at this time. People report wish fulfilment and miracles but perhaps it is the sense of bliss and exaltation one experiences that draws millions to undertake this arduous journey.

**Did you know:** Lord Ayyappa was the divine offspring of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu created to slay Demoness Mahishi!





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## Why is it considered the holiest gurudwara?

The first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, is said to have meditated at this site, giving the temple its sanctity. The Guru Granth Sahib housed within contains the teachings of several prominent saints. The beauty of the temple and the serenity it bestows on the worshippers make it a popular place of pilgrimage.

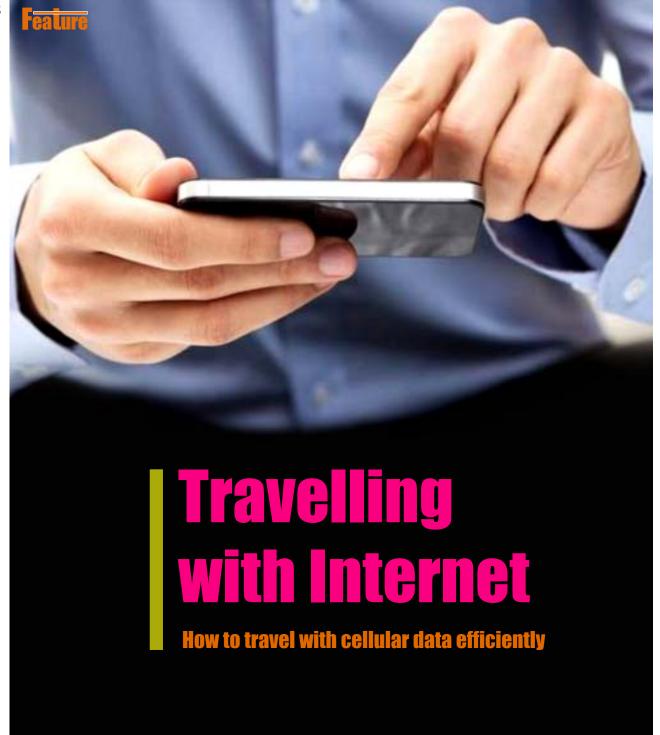
**Did you know:** Around 10,000 people are fed at the langar (free community dining) in the temple daily!

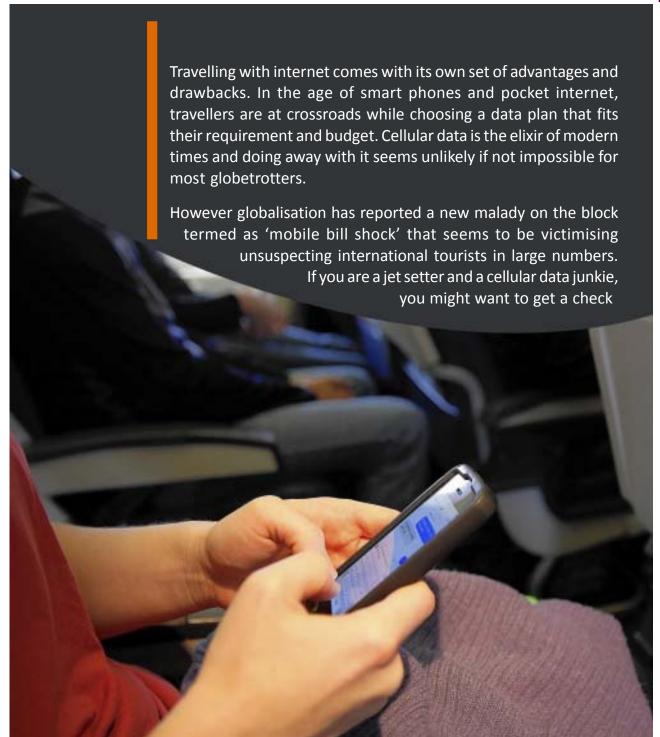
## In search of inner peace

Whether it is for the fulfilment of mundane desires or a deeper spiritual

quest, people have been heading to these religious sites for years. The list does not end here by any means. India has a treasure house of spiritual sites of various religions and they offer solace to the troubled and guidance for those in search of inner peace.





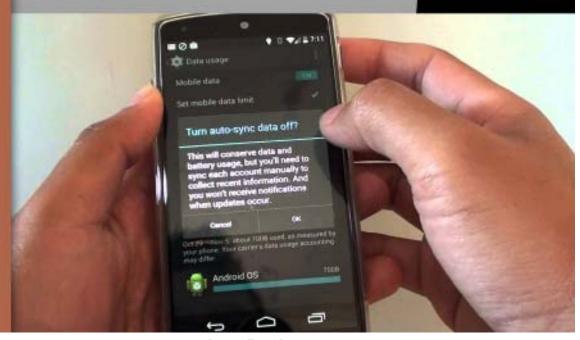


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list before you embark on your next holiday. Smart usage and an efficient mobile data plan often go a long way to reduce the heartburn later. Here is a comprehensive guide to help you travel with internet without drilling a hole in your pocket.

## Smart tips for using internet overseas:

Disable auto sync, updates and notifications – The basic and the most important thumb rule is to switch off location services, auto sync, push notifications for apps and automatic updates when you are travelling. This will prevent the apps, news, weather, sports tickers etc. from eating into your mobile data. Changing your email settings from "push" to "fetch" is another great option. That way



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you can choose when to fetch or download your messages rather than messages being continuously "pushed" to your device. **Unlock your handset** – Get your phone unlocked from your operator or buy an already unlocked handset. This will allow you to use a local SIM cards that you can buy at the airport after landing at your destination. Internet charges as well as call costs are dramatically cheaper when you subscribe to local rates. Airports usually have plenty of SIM cards outlets where you can buy and set up your mobile phone immediately after arriving. Keep your Passport handy for identification. Buy a cheap phone – You can rely on your smart phone to use a local SIM exclusively to surf data at local rates. Buy another cheap phone to use your original SIM card

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if you do not want to miss out on important calls. However if you can give up on internet and do not mind switching off your number then only swapping your SIM card can solve the issue.

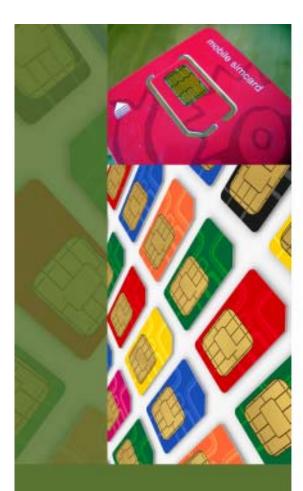


**Turn off data roaming** – Turn off data roaming when travelling abroad. Simply switching your phone off will not do the trick unless you disable data roaming. Mobile operators use local networks to give you access and in turn charge a higher sum. If you are using a smart phone, consider enabling the "airplane mode". You cannot make or receive calls and texts when in this mode but can connect to Wi-Fi networks to transfer data.

**Buy prepaid data** – A prepaid data roaming pack often costs less than international data roaming though it will still be more expensive than what you pay domestically any day. Some carriers offer monthly packs with pre-set data limit.



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Buy a data inclusive SIM card – Pre paid SIM cards with built in internet plans cost lower and prevent a spiralling bill. You may need to put a stop to video streaming or browsing YouTube since that alone accounts for high internet consumption. The downside is if you have left over data at the end of the month, it usually does not get carried over.

Switch to Wi-Fi – Nowadays tourists swear by Wi-Fi hotspots to use unlimited data without the pocket Most of the hotels, pinch. restaurants, cafes, parks, buildings, malls, public spaces, railway stations and airports provide free Wi-Fi. You can download or update your favourite apps, stream videos, surf endlessly, shares photos and files, browse YouTube, make or receive calls, use Skype, WhatsApp and much more during your trip. You need not worry about voice and data charges anymore. Some places might charge a fee and others may offer unlimited monthly usage everywhere for a small sum. However most of the hotspots are readily available, free of cost for the public.



Set data limit – Whether you use a global or local network, an international pack or data roaming, you can always track your data usage to keep your bill in check. Find out how much data you consume on a regular basis from your network operator and set your limit accordingly. You can also revise permissions and decide which apps can use data when you are overseas.

Use an optimum browser — Browsers like Opera Max beta or Opera Mini compress data and can reduce data traffic immensely including video. The 'saved pages' option preloads web pages and enables offline reading.

Use offline apps — Many of your favourite apps can be used offline, which also help to cut down on data consumption. Smart features can make your important documents and files accessible offline. Useful travel apps that work offline such as Wi-Fi finder help you find hotspots nearby. Others let you to search for directions, travel partners, restaurants, local attractions, hotels, flights, holiday packages and so on.





Leave your phone at home — Last but not the least, you may just leave your phone at home. This option is a bit harsh but not impossible to do. Though this is not an ideal solution for business honchos, it works well with youngsters who cannot avoid the temptation. You can depend on cyber cafes and hotel facilities for your internet usage and carry a modest phone around to make or receive calls and texts.

Once you figure out whether your phone will work internationally and opt for the most cost saving plan for voice and data with your operator, you are ready to go mobile. Click and share photos on your favourite social network, connect with friends and family, document your travel adventures and surf all you want without being plagued by a sky high bill waiting to welcome you back home.



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## **City** Guide

# **Five Must-visit Cities**

for

# **Architectural Marvels**

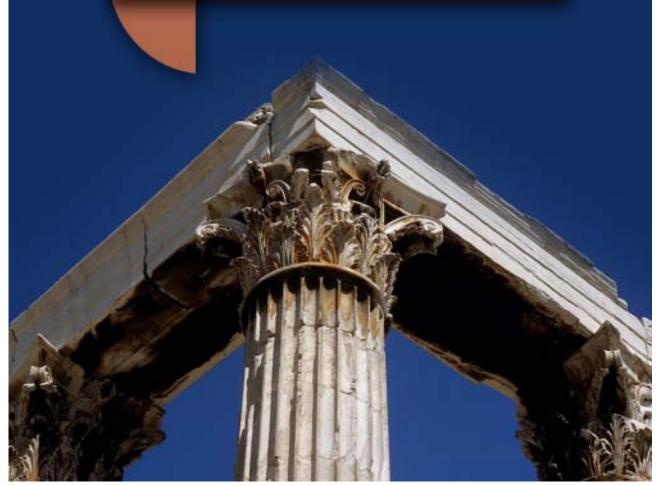


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Just like our roots define and distinguish us from the rest of the world, the architecture of a city gives it a character of its own.

You do not necessarily have to be a scholar of architecture enthusiast to admire the various masterpieces liberally sprinkled in different parts of the globe. These works of art reflect the craftsmanship and sheer genius of gifted engineers.

Here is a rundown of some of the most splendid cities of the world that are known for their architectural brilliance:



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## Athens, Greece

Greek civilisation is believed to be one of the oldest in the world. The Ancient Greeks were political, religious and had great aesthetic sense. They were builders and architects in their own right. The elaborate monuments they created and the stunning structures they erected often symbolised their victories in wars or offered as odes to the various deities they worshipped. The temples, theatres, stadiums, domes, statues and public buildings stand to test the tide of time. Innovative, superior, refined and timeless, Greek architecture has enthralled the entire world for ages.





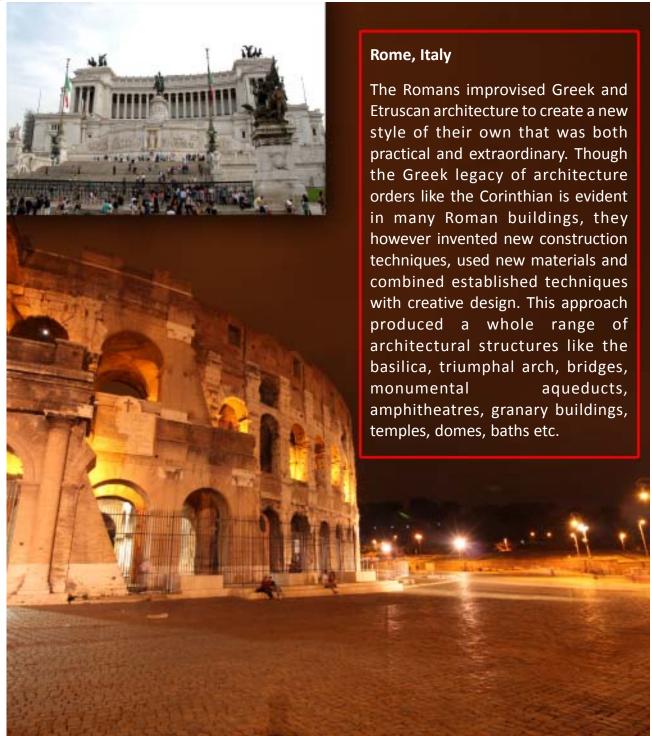
Athens beckons travellers who love to uncover cultures, lifestyle and heritage through architectural explorations. Greek architecture is synonymous with temples and columns. The Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders designed by Ancient Greek architects can be found in most of the buildings scattered all over the city. The

Acropolis, Parthenon, and Temple of Poseidon, Parthenon Temple of Athena and the world famous ruins draw plenty of tourists every year.

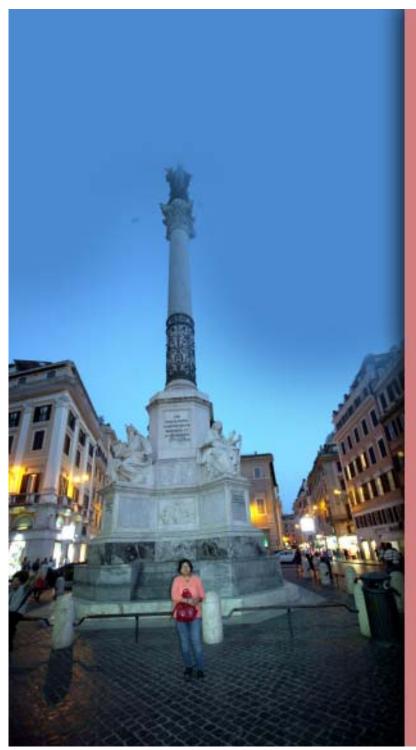
**Crowning Gems:** Parthenon, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Greek Parliament, and Temple of Hephaestus.



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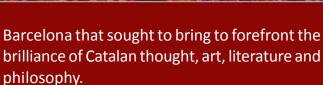


Durability, utility and beauty were the dominant characteristics Roman architecture. In fact architectural structures served two important purposes of ancient Romans – to display their wealth, power and grandeur and to improve the quality of life of the citizens. Therefore they mastered the art of creating the dome, vault as well as the use of concrete. When compared to the Greeks, the Roman Doric, Ionic and Corinthian Orders were more slender and decorative. Bridges, aqueducts, public baths and superior quality roads were typical to Romans. They established certain basic engineering prototypes .Their influence can be seen in architecture, monumental Byzantine and medieval Russian architecture as well as in Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical architecture around the world.

**Crowning Gems:** Roman Colosseum, Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Piazza Navona, Arch of Titus, St. Peter's Basilica, and the Roman Forum.

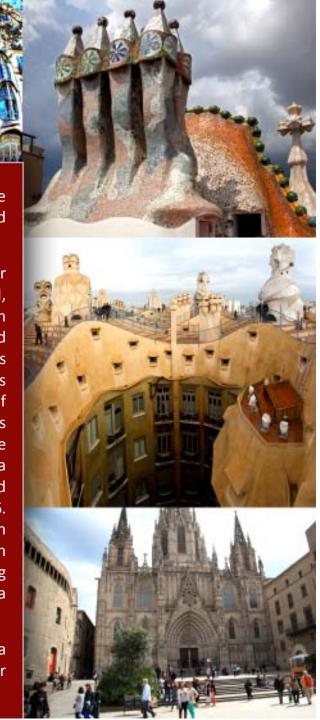


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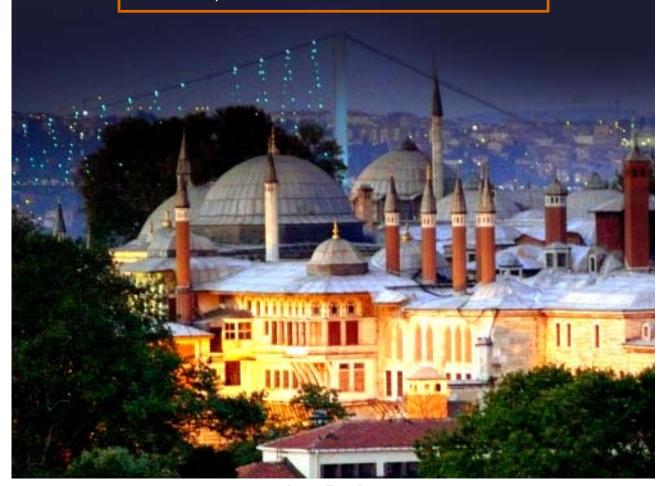
Bright colours, predominance of curves over straight lines, heavy decoration and detail, shapes and asymmetry, experimentation with materials like iron, stained glass, stone, tiled mosaic patterns and nature-inspired forms distinguished Gaudi's architecture from his contemporaries. His largest concentration of ceramic and stained-glass mosaics as well as his undulating stonework and ironwork can be found in Barcelona. His masterpiece La Sagrada Familia remained unfinished when he passed away but is expected to be completed by 2026. Other architects who have left their mark in the city include Mies van der Rohe, Jean Nouvel, Lluís Domènech i Montaner, Josep Puig i Cadafalch etc. the Barcelona Design Fest is a hugely popular event in the city.

**Crowning Gems:** Park Güell, Casa Batlló, La Pedrera, Casa Vicens, Santa Maria del Mar Church, Torre Agbar.

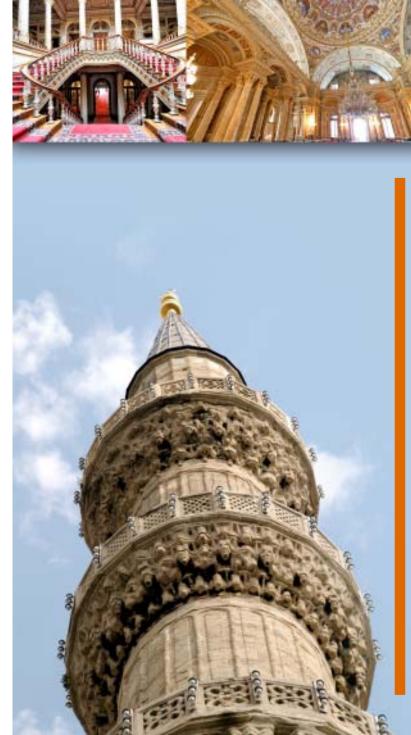


## Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul pays tribute to its Byzantine and Ottoman heritage through its mesmerising architecture. The renowned Hagia Sophia mosque is a beautiful example of a unique architectural confluence - the Byzantine dome and coloured mosaics merge effortlessly with the Ottoman minarets and Islamic calligraphy. The Turkish hamams or public baths also deserve mention owing to their distinct features, utility and sheer beauty.



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Strategically located on both the continents of Europe and Asia, Istanbul has a diverse population of Islamic, Christian and Jewish citizens. As a melting pot of culture, history and religion, it has a quintessential appeal that is reflected in its captivating architecture. It is home to more than 2,000 mosques, 100 churches and 20 synagogues, a number of palaces, hamams, European Baroque style and Art Nouveau mansions and castles, each of which is a wonder in itself. The strong influence of Roman, Byzantine, Latin and Ottoman Empires can be easily witnessed.

Crowning Gems: Sultan Ahmet Mosque (Blue Mosque), Topkapi Palace, Dolmabahce Palace, Cemberlitas Hamam, Basilica Cistern, Cagaloglu Hamam.



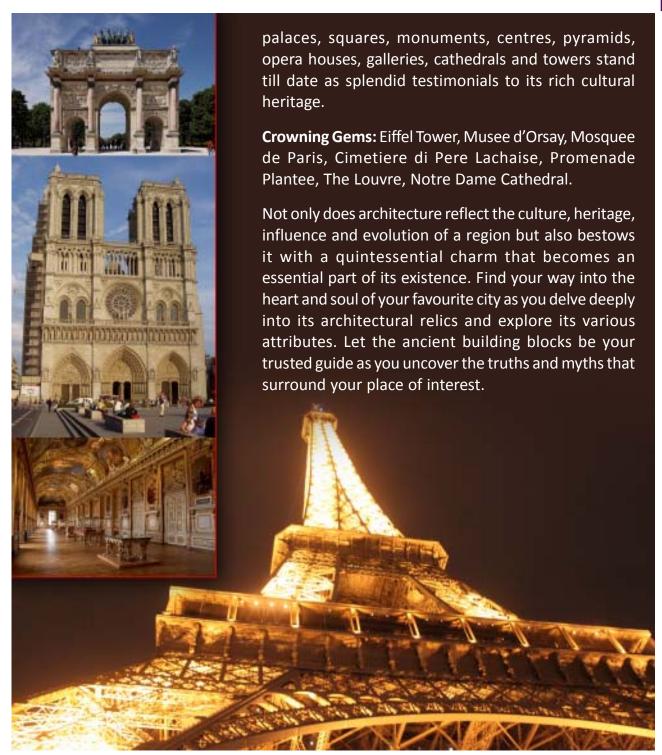
## Paris, France

Art and architecture go hand in hand in Paris. It is the city of inspiration, variation and also that of transition. Some places go through periods of punctuated equilibrium but not Paris. It has always revolved around the theme of gradualism that is evident in the evolution of its architecture. It is the convergence of Roman, medieval, renaissance, baroque, classical, neo-classical, empire, art nouveau, art deco, modern, post-modern and contemporary architecture. However its architectural history can be broadly divided into four time periods namely Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, and Classical.

A walk around the city will make you feel as if you are exploring a giant, never ending museum. Many of its



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## Happenings

# April Festivals around the Globe



#### Easter

Place: Worldwide

Dates: April 5, 2015

Just like spring, Easter is celebrated for rebirth and revival. The crucifixion of Christ was followed by his resurrection three days later. This glorious return is celebrated by his followers worldwide as Easter. The festival marks the end of the 40-day abstinence period of Lent. Easter also has its roots in the pagan festival of 'Eostre' dedicated to the goddess of spring and fertility. In fact, the most popular symbol of Easter the hare and the egg, were



symbols of the Goddess Eastre! Other popular symbols include hot cross buns and white lilies. Easter Sunday service sees high rates of attendance world over. This is a time for celebration, Easter parties and games, exchanging gifts, putting up colourful lanterns.

**Trivia:** The Holy Week leading up to Easter begins with Palm Sunday and onto Maundy, Thursday, Good Friday and finally Easter!



### **Baisakhi**

**Place:** April 14, 2015

Dates: Punjab, India

The colourful, lively festival of Baisakhi is a harvest festival and is celebrated as the New Year Day in Punjab. It marks the readiness of the winter crop for harvesting and is a joyous occasion. It has a religious significance too, being the founding day of the Khalsa Panth by the tenth Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh. This laid the foundation for the Sikh community. A visit to the gurudwara, participating in religious songs, discourses, processions and eating

'karah prasad' at the langar (free community kitchen) is an integral part of the celebrations. The exuberant spirit of Punjab spills over in the lively, foot tapping Giddah and Bhangra dances. Dressed in riotous colours, the dancers mesmerise with their joyous, rhythmic performances.

**Trivia**: New Year festival is celebrated under different names in the various states of India around this time!



## World Ski & Snowboard Festival

Place: Whistler, Canada

**Dates:** April 10 – 19, 2015

Put together a multi-faceted show of dance, music, winter sports and much more against the background of snow and you have the Ski & Snowboard Festival of Whistler. This 10-day event and fun-filled festival features a whole lot of shows - winter sports, outdoor concert shows, film and fashion shows, photography and dance events and a variety of family activities. For winter thrills, catch up with skiing, snowboarding as a participant or spectator. Musical events to watch out for include the free outdoor concerts, Silent Disco and The End. If the arts entice you, catch the State of the Art, The Filmmaker Showdown and Filmmaker



Screenings, Best of the Fest or the Pro Photographer Showdown. The not to be missed sports events include the Shred Show, the Demo Park and the World Skiing Invitational featuring some thrilling stopping action in the Big Air, Slopestyle and the Halfpipe and Superhit.

**Trivia:** The friendly village of Whistler is a great place for après-ski with great restaurants, nightlife and shopping!



Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival

Place:

California, USA

**Dates:** April 10 – 12 and 17 – 19, 2015

The hot desert air of Indio does not deter art and music lovers from gathering in the Coachella Valley every April to enjoy the Music & Arts Festival held here. The three-day festival, organised by Goldenvoice and held in the Empire Polo Club, is spread over two weekends. Rock, hip hop, indie, electronic dance music, the entire gamut is covered in this prestigious music festival. The stages across the grounds resound with live bands and concerts. The arts part of the festival is dedicated to installation

art and sculpture. The sculptures and interactive art pieces are scattered across the grounds and provide a visual feast for the visitors. Camping on the festival site is also extremely popular. Legendary names have featured in the past shows and this year's line-up too includes names like AC/DC, Drake and Jack White.

**Trivia:** The general admission tickets for the festival this year were sold out within twenty minutes!



#### **Hana Matsuri**

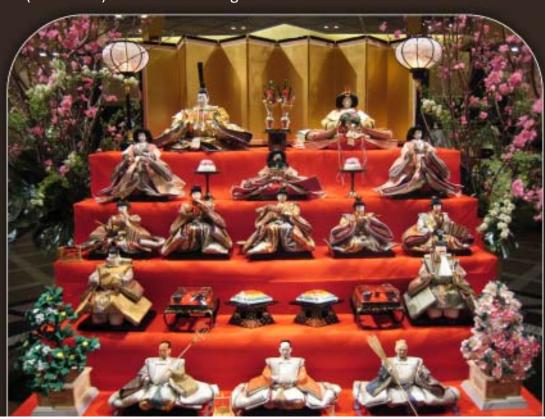
Place: Japan

**Dates:** April 8, 2015

This beautiful floral festival celebrates the birthday of Lord Buddha. When Buddha was born in the Lumbini Gardens, it is believed that nature burst into celebration with blooming of flowers and singing of birds and rain fell from the heavens. The event is symbolically captured in the nativity celebrations. Beautiful floral shrines (hanamido) are built denoting the

Lumbini gardens and images of baby Buddha are kept in it. The statue is ritually bathed in amacha (sweet tea), and sakura (cherry flowers) are offered. Lovely processions of children carrying flowers, featuring small portable shrines and traditional dance and music also form part of the festival.

**Trivia:** Buddha's mother dreamt of a white elephant entering her womb before his birth, indicating that a divine child would be born to her!



#### **Fiesta San Antonio**

Place: Texas, USA

**Dates:** April 16 – 26, 2015

in catching the eye. People wear fiesta In 1891, a parade took place in honour of medals, break confetti filled eggshells over the war heroes of the Alamo and San Jacinto each other's heads and contribute to the battles. Women decorated carriages and merriment. The main events to catch are prams with flowers, and threw flowers at The Battle of the Flowers Parade, the Fiesta each other. Today that event is one of the Flambeau Parade and the Oyster Bake. greatest festivals in the US. It is an eleven day festival now with over a hundred events **Trivia:** The Battle of Flowers Parade is showcasing San Antonio's culture and produced entirely by women, all heritage and attracting around 3.5 million volunteers! visitors. Colourful parades, dance, music, fashion, food and every aspect of culture is on display here. The festival is vivid and colourful with the costumes and flowers competing

#### **Texas SandFest**

Place: Texas, USA

**Dates:** April 24 – 26,

2015

Held in the lovely Port Aransas Beach, this is a sand sculpture contest event. Splendid works of sand sculpture are on display here with sculptors, master amateurs and even children, all forming part of the event. Incredible works of sand art ranging from small to life size enthral the visitors. There are lot of family activities, live music, games and sand sculpting lessons to enjoy as well.

**Trivia:** This is a non-profit event with proceeds going to local charities and scholarships!



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