

# Contents

## MAN MADE

### Muted colours of peace and tranquillity

The Ajanta murals are the finest examples of early Indian art

### A Sufi shrine with a healing touch

Chishti's Dargah at Ajmer is revered the world over

### A stalagmite of staggering proportions

The cone of ice in Amarnath Cave waxes and wanes with the moon

### Ashoka the Great's engraved ideology

Rock edicts and pillars spread his message of peace

### An ode to the Bah'ai Faith

The Lotus Temple is a nine-sided expression of worship

### The baroque Basilica of Bom Jesus

In its chapel lie St. Francis Xavier's miraculously preserved remains

### Sacred Shaktipeeth of Goddess Kali

Bhimakali Temples are sanctuaries of the Bushahr rulers of Rampur

### Petroglyphs from the Mesolithic period

Bhimbetka's primaeval paintings

### Shrines of power and prestige

Bhubaneshwar's temples propitiate Shiva

### 'Rural Hub' in red clay

Bishnupur's terracotta temples resemble thatched huts of Bengal

### Buddha's seat of enlightenment

The Buddha meditated under the legendary Bodhi Tree at Bodhgaya

### Thanjavur's 'Big Temple'

The Brihadeshwara Temple's cupola had to be pushed up by an elephant

### Symbol of Rajput valour

Chittorgarh Fort stands tall in defeat

### Travelling on the 125-year-old 'toy train'

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway climbs 1,750 metres without a single tunnel

### Remains of 4,500-year-old cities

Dholavira and Lothal attained high sophistication in town planning

### The opulent Dilwara temples

Ornate ceilings have a cosmological import

### Krishna's refuge by the sea

Dwarka's mythological and historical origins remain underwater

### Shiva's dark home

Elephanta Caves are deep journeys into the spiritual world

### Grand grottoes of Ellora

The finale of rock-cut architecture

### Prose in red sandstone

Fatehpur Sikri is an expression of Akbar's eclecticism

### The fine heritage of a financial district

The ramparts of Mumbai's Fort area were replaced by elegant edifices

### Bijapur's Gol Gumbaz

The city of minarets has the largest uninterrupted floor space under a tomb

### Gilded in gold

The Golden Temple is the centre of Sikhism

### The guardian of Gwalior

The flamboyant fort controlled the routes to Central India

### Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebid

King Vishnuvardhana's architect produced two jewels fusing North and South Indian styles

### Glorious ruins amidst boulders 58

The city of Vijayanagara was once 'as large as Rome...'

### Emblems of Jaipur 60

Hawa Mahal and Amber Fort dominate the city's monumental wealth

### A perfectly symmetrical mausoleum 62

Humayun's Tomb was a precursor to the Taj Mahal

### The Imambaras of Lucknow 64

The dwelling place of the Holy Imam harks back to a rich culture

### Portals and pillars lead to the Lord of the Universe 66

Puri's Jagannatha Temple is one of four sacred *dham*s

### Citadel of moustached men and marvellous mansions 68

Golden battlements rise like a mirage over Jaisalmer

### Shahjahanabad evokes Mughal nostalgia 70

Old Delhi, Jama Masjid and brimming bazaars were the centre of an empire at its peak

### Lord Shiva's abode 72

Kedarnath Temple nestles in the Himalayas

### Sublime homage to earthly desires 74

The Khajuraho temples celebrate erotic love

### Sweeping greens around sleeping sultans 76

Lodhi Gardens are New Delhi's urban oasis

### City of gaiety 78

The sultans dotted Mandu with playful edifices

### Temple of splendid towers 80

The Meenakshi Temple reveres Parvati, yet reverberates with many other divinities

### The forbidding Fort 82

The Rathores of Jodhpur amassed a treasury of war spoils behind Mehrangarh's walls

### The gompas of Ladakh 84

Remote and spectacular, Buddhist monasteries are the repositories of Ladakhi culture

### The most lavishly ornamented royal home 86

Mysore's fairytale Palace was rebuilt after a fire

### Treasures of Nagarjunakonda 88

Second century Buddhist and Hindu artefacts are preserved on an island

### The ancient university of Nalanda 90

Its library contained nine million manuscripts

### Orchha's sophisticated Indo-Islamic skyline 92

Gift of dynamic Bundela kings

### The wooden Palace of Padmanabhapuram 94

Low in scale but high in grandeur

### Palace on Wheels 96

Travel on a luxury train like the maharajas of yore

### Museum of fine antiquities 98

Exhibits at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya span several millennia

### Delhi's towering identity 100

The stupendous Qutb Minar and Quwwatul Islam Mosque are synonymous with the establishment of Muslim rule in India

### The residence of the President 102

Rashtrapati Bhawan is the centrepiece of Lutyens' Delhi

### The blushing fort of opulence 104

The Red Fort was the seat of Mughal authority over India

### A mammoth art collection 106

Hyderabad's Salar Jung Museum showcases the passion of three generations

### Sanchi's crowning glory 108

The Great Stupa represents an upturned alms bowl of Buddhist monks



## Colours of tradition and change

The painted homes of Shekhawati were a measure of their owners' wealth

## Shrine on the shore

The granite temples of Mamallapuram marked the zenith of Pallava art

## Monolith of a Jain saint

The Gomateswara statue is carved out of a single granite slab

## The stepwells of Gujarat are more than just water reservoirs

Elaborate architecture and impeccable engineering made them perfect community areas

## The Cathedral of Kolkata

St. Paul's is renowned for its paintings, plaques and stained glass windows

## Chariot of the Sun God

The Konark Temple is 'driven' by seven horses

## The marvel in marble

The Taj Mahal embodies a Mughal emperor's love for his queen in dazzling perfection

## Size and sculpture surrounds the reclining Vishnu

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple lies within seven walled enclosures

## Pleasure retreat on a lake

The Lake Palace at Udaipur was a special abode of the Sisodia kings

## The holiest Hindu city

The ghats of Varanasi are the gateway to *nirvana*

## Indian Renaissance style at its flamboyant best

The former Viceregal Lodge was the British Government's summer seat of power

## The Taj Mahal of the British Raj

Kolkata's Victoria Memorial is one of the Empire's lasting symbols

## From shed to stupendous railway station

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus mirrors Mumbai's mayhem

# NATURAL

## Archipelago of tropical forests and prehistoric people 136

Andaman & Nicobar Islands were once infamous as penal settlements

## Tigers reign over Bandhavgarh's wilderness 138

Chances of spotting the beautiful cat are high at this National Park

## A tribal culture vigorously alive 140

Bastar's aboriginal people still have an indigenous lifestyle

## Where a million turtles nest 142

Bhitarkanika is the world's largest rookery for the Olive Ridley turtle

## Son of Brahma, the Creator 144

The Brahmaputra is India's only 'male' river

## Blue-green river amid labyrinthine ravines 146

The Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary was once the lair of dacoits

## A fertile junction of waters 148

Chilika is the largest inland lake on the subcontinent

## Jim Corbett's jungle 150

To many, Corbett National Park is the mecca of wildlife in India

## Home of the Nilgiri tahr 152

The goat-antelope is the mascot of Eravikulam National Park

## Where the Ganga is born 154

At Gangotri, near her glacial source, she is a raging torrent

## 110 Roar of the Asiatic lion 156

The 'pride' of Gir National Park

## 112 In Goa, all roads lead to the beach 158

The coastline of this former Portuguese colony is a feast of sand and local culture

## 114 The Meadows of Kashmir 160

They nestle deep in the lap of stunning mountain vistas

## Sentinel of the eastern Himalayas 162

Kanchenjunga remains one of the lesser-climbed 8,000-metre peaks

## 116 Foothold to stronghold of the one-horned rhino 164

The big beast thrives on the wet savannah grasslands of Kaziranga National Park

## 118 Bird watchers' pilgrimage 166

Keoladeo Ghana National Park resounds with the call of over 400 bird species

## 120 Backwaters of Kerala 168

A coastline cruise enhances the experience of enjoying the state's history and ecology

## 122 Kheechan's annual winged visitors 170

The small village attracts multitudes of demoiselle cranes

## 124 Gala of Gods 172

Two hundred deities descend on the pretty Kullu Valley on Dussehra

## 126 Coral reefs and a clear sea 174

Lakshadweep Islands are a scuba-diving paradise

## 128 Floating stage of dancing deer 176

Loktak Lake provides a precarious prop for the nearly extinct sangai

## 130 The high road from Manali to Leh 178

A mesmerising drive into trans-Himalayan deserts

## 132 Dark, impenetrable and unexplored 180

Namdapha is one of the last forest frontiers of the world

## 134 The sanctuary of lasting peace 182

Nanda Devi National Park touches the feet of the Goddess

## 136 Park of pachyderms 184

Elephants rule over Periyar's rich tract of rainforest

## 138 A preserved piece of France 186

Puducherry exudes Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy

## 140 A desert of many moods 188

Rann of Kutch is the salty marsh of Gujarat

## 142 The mysterious Rupkund Lake 190

Hundreds of human skeletons remain intact in its waters

## 144 A gleaming jewel of a lake 192

Chandratal's myriad hues overlook Buddhist Spiti

## 146 Vale of houseboats 194

Srinagar is laced with lakes, gardens, rivers and history

## 148 Delta of three rivers 196

The Sundarbans' saline waters are reputed to breed man-eating tigers

## 146 Plantations for the perfect brew 198

Assam's tea gardens produce strong and smooth teas

## 148 Settlements of the Todas 200

Were they a tribe from Israel or descendants of the Pandavas?

## 150 The Valley of Flowers 202

Hundreds of wildflower species bloom in this paradisaical glen

## 152 Thunder and spray 204

Dropping off heights from 20 to 250 metres, these South Indian waterfalls are a spectacle to behold

## 154 Canyon in the Land of White Copper 206

The Zaskar River forms an awesome valley on its way to the Indus