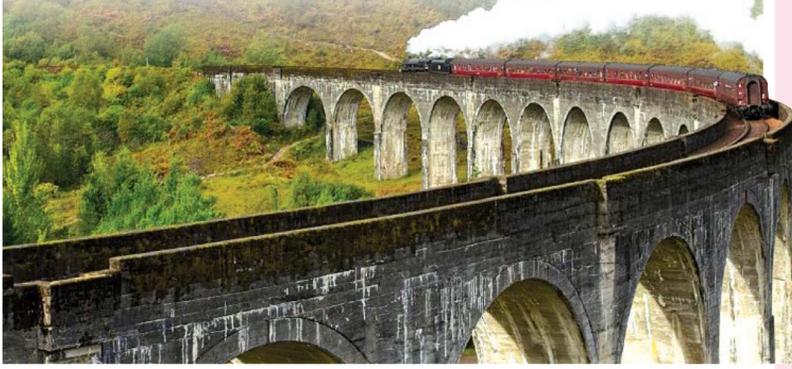


# Scenic rail routes across India



Aditi Malhotra

In a country as vast and culturally rich as India, train journeys are not merely a mode of transport—they're an adventure, a story, and sometimes, even a revelation. Beyond the usual suspects like the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Palace on Wheels, let's dive into some less-travelled but equally breathtaking routes that might just make you forget planes exist.

**KANGRA VALLEY RAILWAY THROUGH THE MISTY VALLEYS OF HIMACHAL**  
This little gem is a narrow-gauge marvel winding its way through Himachal Pradesh's lush Kangra Valley. Starting in Pathankot and meandering to Joginder Nagar, the train journey is a gentle ode to nature with pine forests cloaking the hills, fields of mustard swaying in the breeze, and the majestic Dhauladhar range peeking through the mist.

**ARAKU VALLEY EXPRESS A SYMPHONY OF TUNNELS AND VALLEYS**  
Nestled in Andhra Pradesh, the Araku Valley Express takes you on a cinematic ride through the lush Eastern Ghats. Starting in Visakhapatnam, this train twists and turns through thick forests, coffee plantations, and jaw-dropping bridges.

And then there are the tunnels—58 of them, to be

precise. Emerging from each tunnel feels like flipping to the next page of a vibrant nature novel, revealing new chapters of the valley's beauty. It's a ride as thrilling as it is peaceful, and the aroma of coffee wafting through the valley is the cherry on top.

**DIBRUGARH TO LEDO DISCOVERING ASSAM'S EMERALD LANDSCAPES**  
This route in Assam is a green lover's paradise. Tea estates stretch out like lush green carpets, dotted with charming little hamlets. The hills in the backdrop seem to hum with life, as if inviting you to step off the train and lose yourself in their serenity. This short yet stunning ride is proof that sometimes, less is indeed more.

**KONKAN RAILWAY MONSOONS, MANGROVES, AND MARVELS**  
If you haven't experienced the Konkan Railway during the monsoons, you're missing out on a spectacle. The route, which runs from Mumbai to Goa and beyond, is a love letter to coastal India. Waterfalls gush dramatically down the Western Ghats, rivers snake through mangrove forests, and quaint villages pop up like tiny postcards. The train's tunnels and bridges only add to the thrill, making you feel like you're part of a carefully crafted movie scene.

**AHMEDABAD TO BHUJ GATEWAY TO THE WHITE DESERT**  
This train route through Gujarat is a visual treat, especially if you time your visit with the Rann Utsav in the Great Rann of Kutch. As you approach Bhuj, the landscape shifts to a stark, otherworldly beauty. The endless white salt desert glows under the sun, creating a surreal, almost lunar experience.

**SHIMOGA TO TALGUPPA A WATERFALL WONDERLAND**  
Karnataka's hidden gem, this route takes you from Shimoga to Talguppa, the doorstep to Jog Falls, one of India's tallest waterfalls. As the train rolls through dense forests and quiet villages, you'll feel like you're traveling back in time. And when you finally hear the roar of Jog Falls in the distance, the anticipation builds to a crescendo.

**JAISALMER TO JODHPUR SAND DUNES AND STARLIT SKIES**  
The journey from Jaisalmer to Jodhpur in Rajasthan is a mesmerizing voyage through the Thar Desert. The landscape is a study in contrasts—golden sands stretch endlessly, interrupted by rugged hills and the occasional camel caravan. Travel during the evening, and you might catch the desert bathed in the soft hues of sunset. It's a scene that whispers of ancient stories and untold mysteries, making it one of the most poetic journeys in India.

These journeys show you India in a way no aerial view ever could. So, the next time you plan a trip, trade your boarding pass for a train ticket and let the magic of the rails take over.



# Exploring the world one country at a time

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For many, the idea of traveling to 100 countries seems like a distant dream. But for one avid traveler, Isabel Ferrao from Panjim, it's a goal almost within reach. By March, she plans to complete her journey of visiting 100 countries, all while still traveling on her Indian passport. She was recently awarded the Travel/Food Blogger of the Year - Middle East Excellence Awards 2024.

**A PASSION FOR TRAVEL**

Having lived in Dubai for over 16 years, Isabel Ferrao's journey began with a career in the hotel industry. Her love for travel was sparked by the diverse cultures and people she encountered in Dubai. "I just wanted to travel the world, learn about new cultures, and meet new people," she says. Dubai, with its international community, made it easy to mingle and make friends, which later played a role in her solo trips to some of the world's most offbeat locations.

Her travels have taken her to places where most tourists never venture, such as the Arctic regions of Greenland, Iceland, and Sweden, as well as the remote corners of Russia. She thrives on going to the "ends of the world," places that offer something beyond the typical tourist attractions. "Most of the places that I choose are the most remote destinations in the world. People will go to the touristy bits of the place, but I will go to the edge. There's nothing grand there, no fancy restaurants or monuments but nature is so much more beautiful that it just gives me the thrill. In Russia, I went to the most remote place where there are just reindeers, so that gives me excitement to see something extraordinary," says Isabel.



least two weeks in each country, focusing on not just the famous landmarks but the local culture, food, and people.

**SOLO TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION**

What stands out in her travels is her love for solo adventures. While she sometimes travels with friends or her husband, she enjoys the peace and freedom of exploring on her own. "Solo trips give me peace. I don't have to wait for anyone. I can go at my own pace, explore local spots, and immerse myself in the culture," she shares.

Safety is key when traveling solo. "I would do Europe alone but I would check the safety concerns in certain countries," informs Isabel, who loves collecting magnets, limited edition bottles, and shot glasses.

**THE FINAL PUSH TO 100**  
With only five countries left to reach her goal of 100, she has a special destination in mind for her final stop: Turkmenistan. There, she plans to camp near the Gate of Hell, a massive natural gas crater that has been burning for decades.

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND HER AWARD**

Though she enjoys sharing her travels on social media, she prefers to post authentically, focusing on quality over quantity. Her posts highlight her experiences at luxurious hotels, unique local restaurants, and breathtaking destinations. Despite her growing popularity on social media, she remains true to her values—she has turned down offers for free stays or sponsored content, choosing instead to keep her travel authentic and independent.

Visiting 95 countries on seven continents, Isabel recently was awarded the Travel/Food Blogger of the Year - Middle East Excellence Awards 2024. "It was for Middle East. They have this big celebration, it was a gala dinner and then that award was presented. I didn't want to be in the limelight until I completed 100 countries but I will continue to travel," says Isabel. In the future, she hopes to continue her travels, focusing less on the tourist spots and more on the lesser-known, off-the-beaten-path experiences that bring her the most joy.

PIC: SAGUN GAWADE

# GOAN ARTIST MAKES IT TO UK TV WITH LANDSCAPE PAINTING

London-based Marcio Fernandes is the first Goan artist to participate in the television show, Sky Arts' UK Landscape Artist of the Year, which will be aired today, January 29. He is one of the 48 artists who was selected out of 2,000 applicants to participate in the program, where they showcase their artistic abilities through landscape painting.

"It was a euphoric experience to be a part of this show. It was a great honour to be selected for the Sky Arts, Landscape Artist of the Year, series 10. The selection team informed me that my painting titled 'Red Houses in a Landscape' had been selected for the series. It was a moment of profound joy and disbelief that I could not fully comprehend," says Marcio, who was the only Goan artist whose painting was selected for 'Inside Job Staff Biennale' at the Tate Modern, London.



"I was painting on a hot day at Llanberis Lake, the base of Yr Wyddfa, Mount Snowdon. The breathtaking landscape before

me, with its verdant treacherous mountains surrounded by a blue lake, provided an ideal backdrop for my artistic expression. I was joined by seven other talented artists from the United Kingdom, and we were given four hours to capture the immense natural beauty on our chosen canvases. The judges, Tai Shan Schierenberg, Kathleen Soriano and Kate Bryan faced a challenging task in selecting from these masterfully captured works," says Marcio.

Marcio is proud to represent Goa particularly being the first Goan artist who was featured on the show as the Landscape Artist of the Year has concluded its nine-season run.

# Parikrama: A celebration of culture, ideas, and youth talent

For six consecutive years, Ponda has played host to Parikrama, a vibrant two-day youth festival that showcases the state's rich cultural heritage and provides a platform for young talents to shine. This year, Parikrama is moving to a new venue in Margao, in collaboration with Ravindra Bhavan.

Organized by Knowledge Terminus, Parikrama is divided into two phases: The Conclave and Zero Fest. The Conclave is an academic extravaganza that emphasizes excellence through competitions like research essays, storytelling, and documentary making. This phase of the festival provides a unique opportunity for students and young researchers to showcase their work and compete with their peers. Zero Fest, on the other hand, is a vibrant cultural festival that celebrates performing arts and creativity. By blending traditional Goan folk traditions with global influences, Zero Fest provides a unique platform for young musicians, dancers, and artists to showcase their talents.

Through its diverse projects, the organization has developed a robust ecosystem for creating a comprehensive Konkani repository. Over the past seven years, it has generated a wealth of content in various formats, including research essays, documentary films, blogs, playwright adaptation scripts, songs, stories, translations etc. The repository now boasts nearly 150 titles, the highest for any newly established organization.

**Venue: Ravindra Bhavan, Margao**  
**Date: February 1 and 2**



# Herald Gaming Console

**Dilbert**

I INVENTED AN ENERGY SOURCE THAT IS CHEAPER THAN FOSSIL FUELS!

DID YOU ALSO INVENT A WAY TO PREVENT THE OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES FROM TRYING TO KILL US FOR COMPETING WITH THEM?

NO. TOSS IT IN THE TRASH.

**Garfield**

DEAR SANTA, I HAVE BEEN EXTRA GOOD THIS YEAR.

WHEN YOU BRING PRESENTS ON CHRISTMAS EVE...

CAN YOU ALSO DELIVER A PIZZA?

I LIKE THE WAY THIS KID THINKS!

**Wizard of id**

WOW! FANCY NEW LAB EQUIPMENT! WHAT'S IT FOR?

INCREASING MY HOURLY RATE BY \$200

**crossword 4754**

ACROSS  
1- Decomposes; 5- Last letter of the Greek alphabet; 10- Performs; 14- Expel gas or odor; 15- Conical shelter; 16- Narrow opening; 17- I could \_\_\_ horse!; 18- Spoil; 19- Bubbly drink; 20- Foremost part; 22- Ponder; 24- Bluish white metallic element; 27- Sounds of pleasure; 28- Escape; 32- Aquatic mammal; 36- Michael Collins' actor; 37- Ice house; 39- Spooky; 40- Chip in; 42- Verdi work; 44- Cut calories; 45- Now you \_\_\_\_; 47- Bicker; 49- Spanish aunt; 50- Medicinal shrub; 51- Coil site; 53- Con game; 56- Baseball team; 57- Remainder; 61- Some Art Deco works; 65- Arrow poison; 66- Mountain nymph of Greek mythology; 69- Flying start?; 70- Broadway beginning; 71- Champagne buckets; 72- 1982 Disney film; 73- Intend; 74- Failed to; 75- Baseballer Slaughterer; Zellweger; 30- Devoured; 31- \_\_\_ is human; 33- Country singer Travis; 34- Refrain in a children's song; 35- Pave over; 38- Church instrument; 41- German physicist; 43- BMW competitor; 46- Snack in a shell; 48- Mozart's \_\_\_ kleine Nachtmusik; 52- Add fizz; 54- Shun; 55- Paris "thanks"; 57- Actor Neeson; 58- Suffix with exist; 59- Greek salad ingredient; 60- Saxophone part; 62- Gull's cousin; 63- Switch ending; 64- Juniors, perhaps; 67- Prince Valiant's son; 68- "Spring ahead" abbr;

**solution 4753**

BAAL TICE VANE  
ELLA ATLAS TIGER  
RATS STARE SCHE  
GRASSHOPPER EIS  
LITTT RATLL  
SNERER ETERE  
OLOO AHAT EEROW  
TINRE YARDS REAV  
LITRE REELS TET  
CHEESE RENTED  
BILL NUS  
NEO SECONDGUESS  
ONUS DANCE RATE  
ONNO SPEAR TITAT  
NEDS ORIA SAGS

**sudoku 4754**

4	3				5			
	3	6			8			
	7		4	1	3			
7								
	5			2				9
								1
		5	9	6		7		
	4			8	2			
8				4		3		

**Instructions for Sudoku**

9 x 9 letter: To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every number from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes

**solution 4753**

3	7	8	2	4	1	9	6	5
6	9	5	8	3	7	2	1	4
1	4	2	5	6	9	7	3	8
7	2	9	4	8	6	1	5	3
5	6	4	3	1	2	8	7	9
8	1	3	7	9	5	4	2	6
2	8	6	1	5	4	3	9	7
4	5	1	9	7	3	6	8	2
9	3	7	6	2	8	5	4	1