CULTURAL TRAVEL: Exploring India's lesser-known heritage sites

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When we think of cultural travel in India, the grand monuments of the Taj Mahal, Jaipur's palaces, or Varanasi's ghats often come to mind. But beyond these well-trodden tourist spots, lies a treasure trove of lesser-known heritage sites that are equally, if not more, fascinating. These places tell the stories of India's forgotten dynasties, ancient traditions, and architectural brilliance that have withstood the test of time.

For travellers seeking to move beyond the usual, exploring India's hidden cultural gems offers a unique opportunity to step into the past, immerse in local traditions, and experience the richness of India's diverse heritage in a more intimate and less commercialized setting.

MAJULI, ASSAM: The River Island of Spiritual and Cultural Legacy

Far away from India's bustling cities lies Majuli, the world's largest river island, floating serenely on the Brahmaputra River in Assam. Majuli is not just a scenic retreat; it is a vibrant cultural hub where the traditions of the Vaishnavite sect have been preserved for centuries.

The island is home to several satras, or monastic institutions, where monks engage in devotional music, dance, and storytelling. The Kamalabari Satra and Auniati Satra offer visitors a glimpse into the spiritual and artistic traditions unique to this region. If you happen to visit during Raas Mahotsav, a festival celebrating Lord Krishna's life, you'll witness breathtaking performances of Sattriya dance, a classical dance form native to Assam.

Majuli is also known for its sustainable way of life, with locals crafting beautiful masks, pottery, and textiles using eco-friendly materials. The island faces the constant threat of erosion, making it all the more important to visit and appreciate its rich heritage before it changes forever.

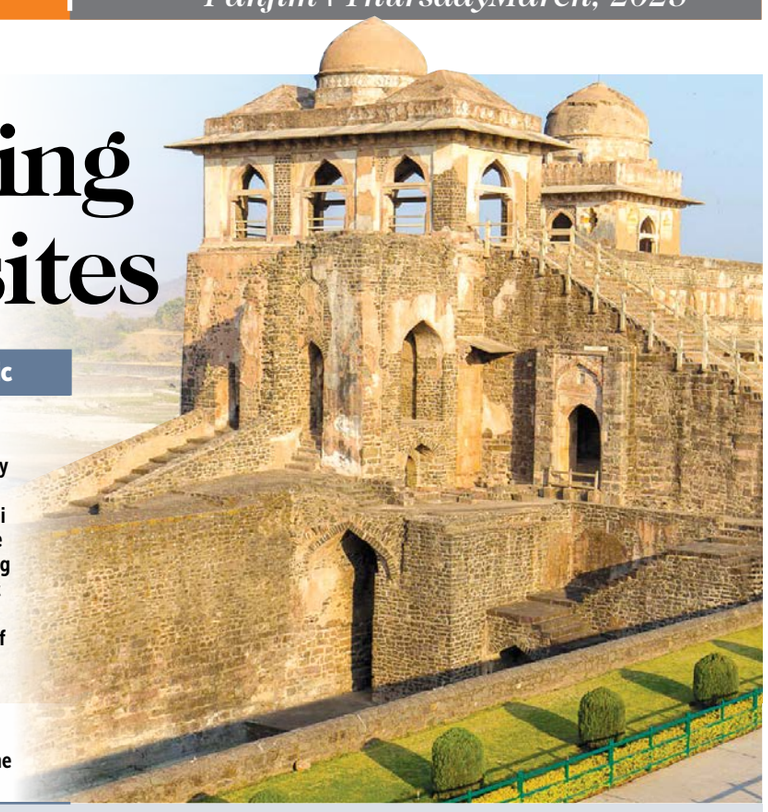
MANDU, MADHYA PRADESH: The Forgotten City of Love and Music

Mandu, often overshadowed by the more famous Khajuraho and Orchha, is a hauntingly beautiful fortress city in Madhya Pradesh. Perched atop a plateau, Mandu is a relic of the medieval Malwa Sultanate, with palaces, mosques, and tombs scattered across the lush landscape.

The most enchanting structure here is the Jahaz Mahal, or Ship Palace, which appears to float on the surrounding water tanks. Built by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji, it was designed as a pleasure palace for his royal harem and is said to have been filled with music, poetry, and extravagant festivities.

Equally mesmerizing is Baz Bahadur's Palace, with its acoustically perfect architecture that once echoed with the soulful music of Rani Roopmati, a Hindu queen whose love story with the Muslim king is still sung in local folklore. The blend of Islamic and Hindu architectural styles in Mandu makes it a fascinating study of India's syncretic culture.

Wandering through Mandu feels like stepping into an abandoned kingdom, where every ruin holds echoes of romance, war, and a bygone era of artistic splendor.



LEPAKSHI, ANDHRA PRADESH: The Forgotten Vijayanagar Marvel

Tucked away in the heart of Andhra Pradesh, Lepakshi is a stunning example of Vijayanagar-era architecture that remains surprisingly under the radar. This small town is home to the Veerabhadra Temple, built in the 16th century, a marvel of intricate carvings, giant monolithic sculptures, and a fascinating mix of Hindu mythology and artistic grandeur.

One of the most mesmerising features of this temple is the hanging pillar, a column that barely touches the ground. Local guides often slip thin pieces of paper underneath to demonstrate the gravity-defying mystery of this architectural wonder. Adding to its charm is the colossal Nandi (bull) statue, one of the largest monolithic Nandi sculptures in India, sitting majestically at the entrance of the temple complex.

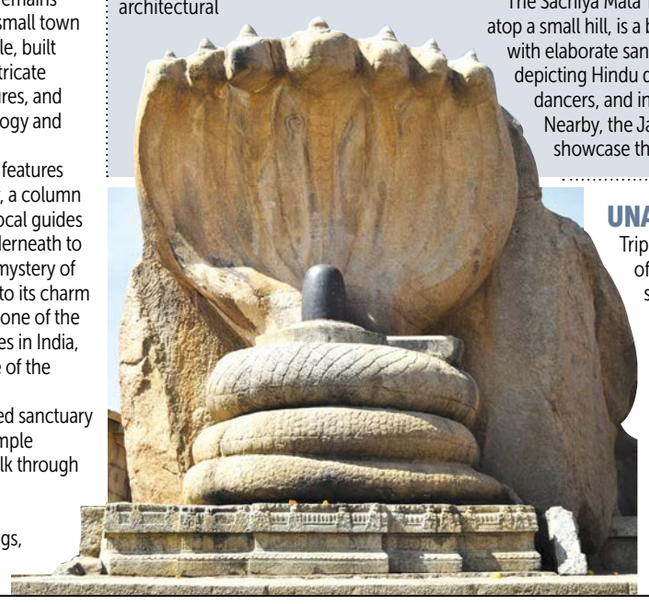
Lepakshi remains an uncrowded sanctuary for those looking to appreciate temple architecture in solitude. As you walk through its pillared corridors and frescoed ceilings, it feels as though history whispers through the stone carvings, telling tales of a glorious past.

OSIAN, RAJASTHAN: The Desert's Hidden Temple Town

The small town of Osian, located on the fringes of the Thar Desert, is a hidden architectural gem. Known as the "Khajuraho of Rajasthan," Osian boasts an exquisite collection of intricately carved temples dating back to the 8th century.

The Sachiya Mata Temple, perched atop a small hill, is a breathtaking sight, with elaborate sandstone carvings depicting Hindu deities, celestial dancers, and intricate floral motifs. Nearby, the Jain temples of Osian showcase the fusion of Jain and Rajput architecture, each structure adorned with mesmerizing sculptures that have stood the test of time.

Osian is also the perfect place to experience a different side of Rajasthan—camel safaris through the dunes, stays in desert camps under star-lit skies, and interactions with the local Bishnoi communities, who are known for their deep-rooted environmental conservation traditions.



UNAKOTI, TRIPURA: The Land of a Million Shiva Carvings

Tripura, often overlooked in India's cultural landscape, is home to one of the most mysterious heritage sites—Unakoti, an ancient rock-cut site dating back over a thousand years.

Unakoti, which translates to "one less than a crore" (10 million), is named after the countless rock carvings of Lord Shiva, mythologically believed to have been created by celestial beings. The site features colossal bas-relief sculptures, including a massive 30-foot-tall Shiva head, alongside intricate carvings of other deities and mythological figures.

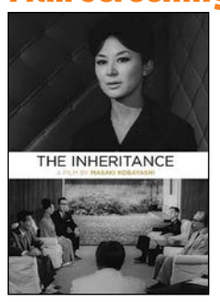
Unlike conventional temples, Unakoti is an open-air site where nature and spirituality merge seamlessly. Covered in moss, surrounded by dense forests, and often shrouded in mist, Unakoti offers a surreal experience—one that feels sacred, untouched, and deeply mystical.

Finding God in creation during Lent

The eco-retreat, 'Finding God in Creation during Lent' will focus on God's creation of the universe and will continue the journey of Eco Consciousness that began in 2024 powered by Church teachings and ideals of Ignatian Spirituality. The Xavier Retreat Centre started eco consciousness retreats with on the hands training and time with nature. The retreats attracted youth and young professionals who did not hesitate to roll their sleeves and get mud on their hands while spending reflective time with nature. The retreat will consist talks, planting techniques, DIY time, green ideas, discussions, time with nature and outdoor activities for deeper spiritual and environmental connect. The retreat will focus on 'Virtue of Hope' (Jubilee Year).

Venue: The Xavier Retreat Centre, Baga
Date: March 22 – 23

Film screening



Cinephile Film Club will host the screening of the 1962 Japanese film, 'The Inheritance', directed by the legendary Masaki Kobayashi, known for films like 'The Human Condition' and 'Samurai Rebellion'.

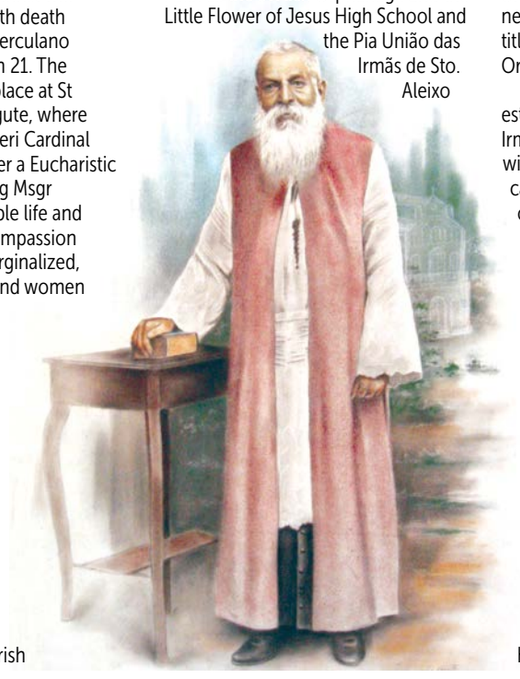
This film is a stylish Japanese noir with a fantastic jazz music score and revolves around human greed and desire. With little time to live, a wealthy businessman decides to track down his three illegitimate children to distribute his wealth. That gets his employees and his wife going to see how best they can benefit from the situation, which leads to unexpected twists and turns.

Venue: Audi 1, Maquinez Palace, Panjim
Date: March 20
Time: 6.30 pm

Celebrating the Legacy of Msgr Herculano Gonsalves

In a heartfelt tribute to a revered figure in Goa's history, the Handmaids of Christ will commemorate the 75th death anniversary of Msgr Herculano D Gonsalves on March 21. The celebration will take place at St Alex Church in Calangute, where His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão will preside over a Eucharistic Celebration honouring Msgr Herculano's' remarkable life and enduring legacy of compassion and service to the marginalized, particularly children and women in distress.

Msgr Herculano D Gonsalves, born on February 11, 1868, in Cana-Benaulim, dedicated his life to serving the marginalized, particularly children and women in distress. Ordained as a priest in 1892, he became a beacon of hope in the early 1930s, as Parish Priest at St. Alex Church in Calangute establishing significant institutions such as the St Alex Orphanage and the Little Flower of Jesus High School and the Pia União das Irmãs de Sto. Aleixo in 1934. His commitment to the poor was profound; he often sacrificed his own comfort to provide for those in need, earning him the affectionate title of 'Pai' among his Sisters and the Orphans he cared for.



The congregation was canonically established as the Congregação das Irmãs de Santo Aleixo in 1949. Later with Post Vatican II, the Congregation came to be known as Congregation of the Handmaids of Christ. He was appointed Vicar General of the Ghats and later became a Papal Chamberlain in 1947. Msgr. Gonsalves passed away on March 21, 1950, leaving behind a legacy of compassionate love and service.

In recognition of his remarkable contributions and enduring influence, the celebration on March 21, marks 75 years since his completion of earthly journey. This event will not only honour Msgr Herculano's life but also celebrate the on-going mission of the Handmaids of Christ, who continue to embody his spirit of service.

St Lawrence Chapel Youth Group organises The Way of the Cross

The St Lawrence Chapel youth group presented a poignant live re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross in Arossim. Under Fr Myron Jeson Barreto's guidance, the youths depicted Jesus' sufferings with devotion.

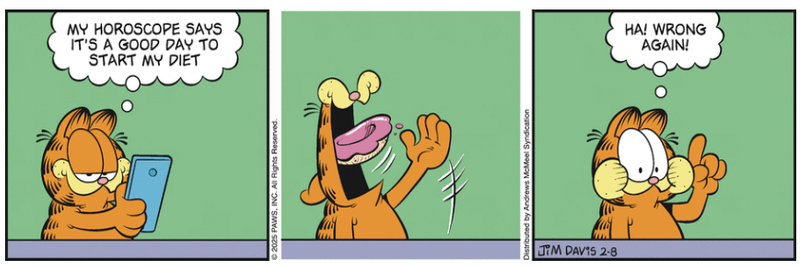
The live Way of the Cross re-enacted Jesus' journey to His crucifixion, with re-enactors in period costumes. The performance included scenes of Jesus being sentenced, carrying the Cross, and encountering the Virgin Mary. The procession symbolized Jesus' path to Mount Calvary, allowing the faithful to contemplate the Passion of Christ. The event included reflection, hymns, and a focus on 'The importance of crosses in our day to day life.'

Fr Myron Jeson Barreto, the Chaplain of St Lawrence Chapel, Arossim, said, "May Jesus' sacrifice inspire us to live a life of love, compassion, and service. May we carry His Cross with courage and faith." The event was a profound evening of sacrifice, prayer, and worship.

Herald Gaming Console

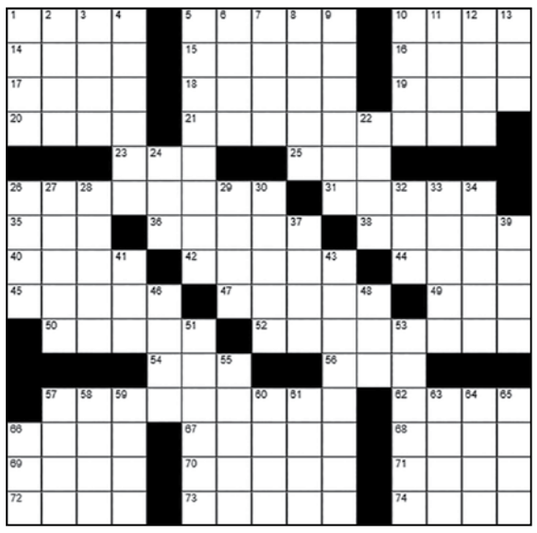
Dilbert

Garfield



Wizard of id

crossword 4797



ACROSS
1- Hawaiian native dance; 5- Declare; 10- Checkup; 14- Jack of "Rio Lobo"; 15- Circus employee; 16- French friend; 17- Part of AD; 18- We ___ please; 19- Preservative; 20- Prego competitor; 21- Without plasma?; 23- Arrest; 25- Maiden name indicator; 26- On an upper floor; 31- Entrap; 35- Bring civil action against; 36- Look of disdain; 38- Give it ___!; 40- Concludes; 42- Flying pests; 44- Defense grp. since 1949; 45- Hound's trail; 47- New York city; 49- Went first; 50- ___ Perot; 52- Highly regarded; 54- Downed; 56- Actress Hagen; 57- Yield; 62- ___ Like It Hot; 66- Not ___ many words; 67- ___ Gay; 68- Ski lift; 69- Internet writing system that popularized "pwn3d" and "n00b"; 70- Down-filled quilt; 71- Ages; 72- Sun. speeches; 73- Strainer; 74- Stop introducing evidence;

DOWN
1-Get wind of; 2- Forearm bone; 3- Singer k.d.; 4- Quantity; 5- Piercing; 6- Follow; 7- Shot, briefly; 8- Grand ___ National Park; 9- Wears away; 10- Make simpler; 11- Dec. holiday; 12- Suffers; 13- Got together; 22- Musical Horne; 24- Small batteries; 26- Applies; 27- Blow with the fist; 28- Exodus commemoration; 29- City in Western Nevada; 30- Bobby of the Black Panthers; 32- Prince Valiant's son; 33- Domain; 34- Lauder of cosmetics; 37- Hwys.; 39- Sweeney ___; 41- ___-Cat; 43- Soak; 46- Boris Godunov, for one; 48- Safety device; 51- Spirited horses; 53- Christian festival; 55- Affectation of sophisticates; 57- Dagger; 58- ___-friendly; 59- Decomposes; 60- Bird of peace; 61- Hgt.; 63- Thin woodwind instrument; 64- ___ best friend; 65- Formerly, once; 66- French pronoun;

solution 4796

sudoku 4797

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

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 4796

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