



Craft, Culture and Cosmic Connections *of Kumbakonam*



Imagine yourself standing in the ancestral house of Rajmohan in Kumbakonam, surrounded by the enchanting scent of natural dyes made from flowers, barks, roots, and seeds. Here, the ancient art of Kalamkari flourishes, thanks to Rajmohan and his dedicated team. Rajmohan, with a warm smile and a sparkle in his eyes, explains the intricate process behind Kalamkari. They use brushes and pens made with great care from coconut shells and bamboo trees to create stunning artwork on cotton fabric. Each stroke on the canvas brings the artwork to life. The pieces are then washed and dried on the riverbanks, with the gentle touch of the river adding a unique texture. It's a harmonious collaboration that breathes life into every creation.



Technique of 'Lost Wax'

In the narrow lanes of Kumbakonam, skilled craftsmen transform mere threads into exquisite silk saris using the timeless technique of 'Pattu' silk weaving. As you step into their workshop, you're greeted by the rhythmic clatter of wooden machines that have been passed down through the generations. Watching the weavers weave intricate designs into silk saris with fine gold threads is a mesmerizing experience. Their hands move swiftly and skillfully, creating a symphony of skill and precision. Each sari they produce is a masterpiece, a testament to their artistry and the rich heritage of Kumbakonam.

In the ancient town of Swami Malai, a group of artisans known as "Sthapathis" found solace while constructing the majestic 'Periya Kovil' temple during the time of RajaRaja Chola. These talented craftsmen are renowned for their timeless sculptures that adorn the temple and have garnered admiration from around the world. Intrigued by their art, you visit their workshop to witness their craftsmanship firsthand. Inside the workshop, the Sthapathis embrace the age-old technique of 'Lost Wax.' They meticulously combine wax and soft clay from the riverbed to create molds for intricate bronze sculptures. Each stroke and detail is carefully crafted, reflecting the artisans' dedication and attention to detail. It's a celebration of beauty and spirituality, showcasing the profound connection between art and devotion.

But Kumbakonam offers more than just art and craftsmanship. It holds a unique attraction for those interested in the mysteries of ancient Indian astrology-the Navagraha Circuit. This region is a sacred heaven where the positions of nine celestial planets shape the principles of astrology. Only in Kumbakonam can you find shrines dedicated to each of these planets in close proximity, creating a mystical and powerful energy. According to Hindu cosmology, during pralaya, the great dissolution, it is believed that Brahma's divine kumbha, carrying the essence of all living beings, came to rest in Kumbakonam.

Intrigued by this cosmic connection, you find yourself sitting in the small room of the Naadi Shastra center in Vaitheeswaran Koil. Naadi Shastra is an ancient form of astrology and divination based on the belief that the destinies of individuals are recorded on ancient palm leaves by sages thousands of years ago. These palm leaves, known as "naadis," contain detailed information about a person's past, present, and future. The thumbprint is your unique key to access the information. It unlocks the records of your life, gateway to discovering your taalpatra that holds the secrets of your destiny. Skilled Naadi readers, known as Naadi astrologers, interpret the writings on the palm leaf and provide insights into various aspects of the seeker's life including career, relationships, health and spiritual path. They go through a sheaf of palm leaves, each bearing the ancient Tamil writings of sage Agastya and ask rapid-fire questions, gradually narrowing down which palm leaf belongs to the seeker. Naadi Shastra is considered a powerful tool for self-discovery and guidance, providing individuals with a deeper understanding of their life's purpose and offering remedies for any challenges or obstacles they may encounter.



Palm leaves (Naadis)

As you step into Mantra Koodam, the melodious sound of the bell welcomes you. Walking along the picturesque streets resembling traditional Tamil homes, you marvel at the exquisite houses called 'illams' on either side.



Mantra Koodam



These cottages feature spacious verandahs, Athangudi-tiled floors, intricately crafted Burmese teak doors, and open-to-air bathrooms. Mantra Koodam has something special for everyone. Chef at Matra Koodam has culinary expertise in preparing a remarkable navagraha thali, with each dish carefully crafted using grains associated with a specific planet.

[Take me there](#)

New Hotel Openings



Where? Kumbhalgarh, Rajasamand District, Rajasthan

What is Unique? Nestled in Rajasthan's hills, Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh is a gem that invites travellers to uncover its secrets. Discover the best of Kumbhalgarh's rich history, culture and natural beauty through guided treks and trails that lead you to undiscovered sites. Each day here begins with enchanting melodies during the Flute Recital and end with Sandhya Aarti, a centuries-old ritual by the century-old Banyan Tree at Roots- all day dining creating a truly magical ambience. Property offers a range of unique and immersive experiences that highlight the artistry and cultural heritage of Rajasthan. Unleash your creativity in hands on pottery workshop led by the esteemed artisan, Manna Lal Kumhar. Immerse yourself in the world of Rajasthani Puppetry, as the city's tale unfolds through mesmerizing shows. Enjoy a motor boat ride on Lakhela Lake with refreshments. Witness beautiful sunsets from Badal guest house during a tea session. Encounter camels and learn about camel herding, while indulging in camel milk and campfire-brewed tea. Explore specially crafted cycling tracks on e-bikes around the property. Whether you are indulging in exhilarating activities like hiking or immersing yourself in the exploration of historical artifacts, the resort offers a plethora of options to escape the monotony of daily life.



Radisson Blu Resort Kumbhalgarh



Why? In Radisson Blu Resort, Kumbhalgarh a royal & true Rajasthani style welcome awaits, with an embroidered umbrella providing shade and an Aarti Teeka ceremony. From the play of sound and light that guides your day to the breath-taking views of the majestic hills to the well-appointed rooms, every moment is filled with tranquillity. Lose yourself in the lush gardens, savour the flavours of local culinary delights and embark on safaris to witness the wildlife thriving in the surrounding dense forests. This oasis of calm, protected by sustainable practices, unveils unreal and unwritten stories waiting to be told. The resort boasts state-of-the-art facilities, including a pool for relaxation, a spa for rejuvenation, a fitness center for workouts and a dedicated kids play area. Indulge in culinary delights at the three distinct dining options, including an open-air pizzeria, an all-day dining restaurant nestled around a century-old banyan tree and a garden lounge offering the best single malts. The property offers versatile meeting venues, including a spacious ballroom and a picturesque terrace, providing the backdrop for productive gatherings and memorable events. Whether you are planning a conference, seminar, wedding or social function, the resort's state-of-the-art facilities and stunning surroundings ensure a seamless and impressive experience for everyone. When clubbed with the unique curated experiences, the events are bound to etch core memories, creating an unforgettable blend of business and pleasure.

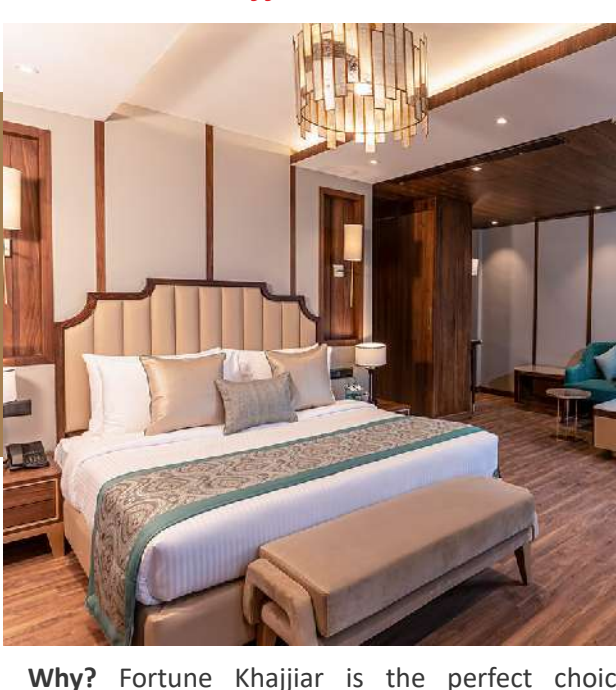


Where? Khajjiar, Himachal Pradesh

What is Unique? Nestled in the heart of the enchanting 'Mini Switzerland' of India, Fortune Khajjiar beckons you to a mesmerizing retreat that seamlessly blends warm hospitality with mystical charm. As you venture into this hillside sanctuary, prepare to be captivated by the awe-inspiring beauty that surrounds you. Embraced by snow-clad mountains, verdant meadows, and towering pine trees, this idyllic heaven offers a sense of serenity. The hotel's idyllic location, near the town of Chamba with a small stream-fed lake in the middle, creates a serene atmosphere. Fortune Khajjiar goes beyond expectations by offering versatile banquet facilities including the breath-taking Aroha, where panoramic mountain vistas serve as a stunning backdrop for your special events. Whether you seek a dream wedding, a corporate retreat, or a memorable celebration, their dedicated team will ensure every detail is flawlessly executed, creating an ambience that is nothing short of magical.



Fortune Khajjiar



Why? Fortune Khajjiar is the perfect choice for travellers seeking an extraordinary experience in Himachal Pradesh. Located a mere hour's drive from Dalhousie, this remarkable hotel grants you easy access to popular tourist attractions, while providing a serene retreat far from the madding crowd. With 35 plush rooms and suites offering picturesque views of the pristine valley, Fortune Khajjiar invites guests to immerse themselves in nature's splendour and experience tranquillity unlike any other. The meticulously designed rooms and suites offer comfort complemented by a host of amenities that cater to your every need. Take a refreshing dip in the sparkling swimming pool, rejuvenate your body and mind in the well-equipped gymnasium or surrender to pure bliss at the tranquil spa. With its unwavering commitment to exceptional service, Fortune Khajjiar promises an unforgettable stay in the lap of nature. Indulge in a culinary extravaganza at Zodiac, the hotel's all-day diner, where a symphony of flavours awaits your discerning palate. Unwind and savour moments of relaxation at Neptune, the chic bar that exudes sophistication and charm. From the breathtaking landscapes to the warm hospitality, every aspect of your experience at Fortune Khajjiar is designed to create cherished memories that will forever hold a special place in your heart.



Where? Bambordem, Moira, North Goa

What is Unique? Discover the essence of the susegad life at Storii by ITC Hotels, Moira Riviera, Goa, where every aspect of your stay is thoughtfully curated to create unforgettable experiences. Embrace the captivating concept of more space, time, and leisure, beautifully symbolized by the serene sight of upturned boats. Immerse yourself in the soul of Goa through a range of carefully crafted activities that will unveil hidden gems and scenic vistas. The sacred Rastroli Temple prayers beckon you on a spiritual journey, where you can witness the devotion and rituals that have shaped the local culture for centuries. Embark on an exploration of Moira on foot, allowing the village to reveal its secrets as you stroll through its charming streets and scenic vistas. Row along the gentle currents of the river, letting the tranquility of the surroundings wash over you. Engage in a fascinating wood artisan tour, where you can witness the skilled craftsmanship firsthand and appreciate the beauty of their creations. At Storii by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera, these unique experiences elevate your stay, leaving you with unforgettable memories of a truly immersive Goan adventure. Beyond its captivating experiences, this hotel offers an architectural fusion that celebrates the convergence of Goa and the Mediterranean

Why? Storii by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera beckons you with its irresistible blend of luxurious amenities and impeccable hospitality. Find solace and relaxation in the plush Storii Lounge, adorned with mesmerizing views of swaying palms and the enchanting backwaters. The finest Mediterranean cuisine and refreshing drinks along with the mood lighting sets the perfect ambience for a lazy afternoon or a romantic evening.

Storii By ITC Hotels Moira Riviera, Goa



The vibrant vibes of Goan culture at Storii Bistro, where global and local flavors intertwine, tantalize your taste buds in a relaxed al-fresco setting. Retreat to your elegantly appointed room, adorned with hand-painted walls, stylishly designed bathrooms, and state-of-the-art amenities, enveloping you in a cocoon of refined luxury. Select categories offer the exclusive privilege of a private pool, adding an extra touch of luxury to your stay. Unwind and rejuvenate at their signature spa, K by Kaya Kalp, where your body and senses are pampered with exceptional care and attention. Refresh poolside overlooking the picturesque Moira riviera backwaters and the captivating Moira forest as you bask in the golden hues that sweep across the horizon or take a cool dip to invigorate your senses. Listen to the untold Storii of wilderness as the melodies of birdsong serenade your senses. Storii by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera awaits your arrival, ready to unveil a world where the susegad life takes center stage and every moment is a tale worth cherishing.



Where? Badrinath Road, Rudraprayag

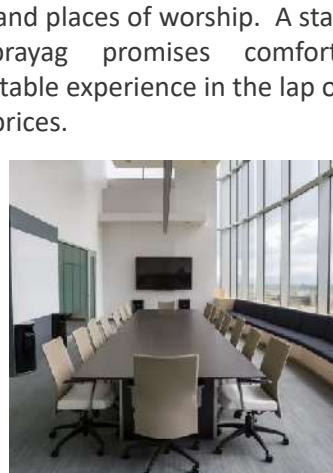
What is Unique? A cool majestic river flowing by, slippery large rocks around and a bridge over a narrow valley, dim sunlight from the setting sun beyond the mountains, birds chirping and going away to their nest leaving behind an ubiquitous silence. Nestled in the heart of the picturesque town of Rudraprayag, Pride Resort Rudraprayag offers luxury and comfort at pocket-friendly prices. With breath-taking views of the majestic mountains, you will be immersed in a serene and tranquil atmosphere. The resort boasts a magnificent Imperial Hall, making it an ideal venue for grand events. Additionally, a well-equipped meeting room provides the perfect setting for corporate meetings and intimate gatherings. The dedicated team at Pride Resort Rudraprayag ensures that every detail is meticulously taken care of, allowing guests to create cherished memories. Whether seeking a spiritual experience or a relaxing retreat, guests can enjoy the sacred confluence of the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers near the resort, adding a touch of spirituality to the ambience.

Why? Rudraprayag is one of the Panch Prayag of Alaknanda River, the point of confluence of rivers Alaknanda and Mandakini. Kedarnath, which is gaining much popularity among the tourists lately, is just 86 km from Rudraprayag. With 62 well-appointed rooms, Pride Resort Rudraprayag caters to both leisure and business

Pride Rudraprayag

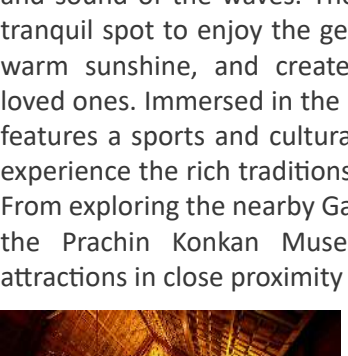


travelers, offering maximum comfort and luxury without breaking the bank. The multi-cuisine restaurant, Cafe Pride, delights guests with delectable culinary delights ranging from local specialties to international dishes. For those seeking a delightful cup of coffee and sweet treats, the coffee house, Mr. Confectioner, awaits. Whether you are staying at the resort or just passing through Rudraprayag, be sure to check out these amazing dining options at Pride Resort. The prime location within walking distance from the Rudraprayag bus stand, provides easy access to nearby attractions and places of worship. A stay at Pride Resort Rudraprayag promises comfort, convenience and an unforgettable experience in the lap of luxury, all at pocket-friendly prices.



Where? Malgund, Ganpatipule, Ratnagiri, Maharashtra

What is Unique? Blue Ocean The Fern Resort & Spa, Ganpatipule provides the ultimate choice for travellers seeking a remarkable getaway just few hours' drive from Mumbai. It's distinctive ambience reflects the charm of Portuguese-style cottages. Adventure lovers can indulge in thrilling activities such as paragliding and trekking. The mini water park is a delight for kids, providing them with endless fun and entertainment. The resort also offers a candle light date night by the beach setting for couples to spend quality time together, surrounded by starry skies and sound of the waves. The beachside gazebos offer a tranquil spot to enjoy the gentle sea breeze, bask in the warm sunshine, and create cherished moments with loved ones. Immersed in the local culture, the resort also features a sports and cultural village, allowing guests to experience the rich traditions and heritage of the region. From exploring the nearby Ganpatipule Temple to visiting the Prachin Konkan Museum, there are plenty of attractions in close proximity to the resort.



Blue Ocean The Fern Resort & Spa, Ganpatipule



Why? The well-appointed rooms and villas offer magnificent sea views and are adorned with modern comforts. The resort provides direct access to a private beach. Relax by the Riviera-style infinity pool and soak in the ocean views. Unwind at the pool side area that offers a perfect setting for leisurely walks and moments of relaxation. For those seeking rejuvenation, the on-site spa provides a range of treatments, including Thai massages and detox therapies. The restaurant provides wide variety of Indian and international dishes with beautiful views of the garden. For those seeking a more casual setting, the lively bar offers refreshing beverages and light snacks. Blue Ocean The Fern Resort & Spa boasts multiple venues that are ideal for hosting surreal beach weddings. Imagine exchanging your vows against the backdrop of the sparkling ocean and golden sands, with the gentle waves providing a soothing soundtrack to your special day. Whether you envision an intimate ceremony or a grand celebration, the resort offers versatile spaces that can be tailored to your preferences. With its blend of luxury, relaxation and natural beauty, this resort stands out as a top choice for a memorable and enjoyable stay in Ratnagiri.

Leader Speak

Not by Design but by Default

A fascinating transformation tale by Shilendran M. - Vice President Sales at CGH Earth Experience Hotels



The story of the growth of CGH Experience Hotels from a modest Casino Hotel located on Willingdon Island is quite serendipitous.

On a rainy day in Kochi, Mr. Jose Dominic, the eldest of the Dominic brothers, sat in his office at the Casino Hotel, flipping through the newspaper. His attention was caught by a tender call from the Government of India to run a hotel on Bangaram Island in Lakshadweep.

The then PM of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, had just returned from a holiday to this beautiful island and decided that this island needed to be developed for tourism but he had also realised that running hotels was best left to professionals rather than the government.

JD (a preferred moniker for Jose Dominic) thought for a while and then reached the conclusion that he would bid for the project. Despite lacking the financial means to bid for such a grand endeavour, he sensed an unexplored path before him. All the family owned at that point, was the Casino Hotel in Cochin, a hotel in Kottayam city and a restaurant in Cochin. Little did he anticipate that this bid would shape the future of his business. Without any pressure, expectations, or money, JD submitted the necessary paperwork to Delhi, fearing that without a paperweight to secure them, his tender papers might fly out of the non-air-conditioned office windows. The monsoon season passed and Kerala became even greener, with its rivers and lakes brimming. It was a festive time in the state and JD had forgotten about the papers he sent to Delhi.

On a regular Monday afternoon, JD, having treated himself to a delicious Onam lunch, was enjoying a lazy afternoon when a trunk call from New Delhi interrupted his tranquility. The person on the other end of the line didn't say much, or perhaps JD didn't understand his Hindi well, but he managed to gather that he needed to report to New Delhi in two days to discuss the tender proposal. JD knew he had little chance against the renowned names bidding alongside him—established players in the hospitality industry. However, what set him apart was his vision for preserving the natural beauty of the island while inviting tourists to enjoy it. He believed in allowing guests to experience the pure essence of nature rather than constructing extravagant structures that challenged its authenticity. His philosophy was "less is more." Some wise minds in New Delhi recognized the value in JD's approach and he returned with the rights to the Bangaram Island Resort—his mind, heart and arms full of dreams. The rest, as they say, is history.



Kalari Kovilakom



Kalari Rasayana

This was the first encounter of "Not by Design but by Default" for JD and our team. Our growth from the Casino Hotel expanded rapidly with ventures like Spice Village in Thekkady, Coconut Lagoon in Kumarakom and continues till date with the recently opened Tilar Siro in the Andamans and Lockhart Bungalows in Munnar.

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