



AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

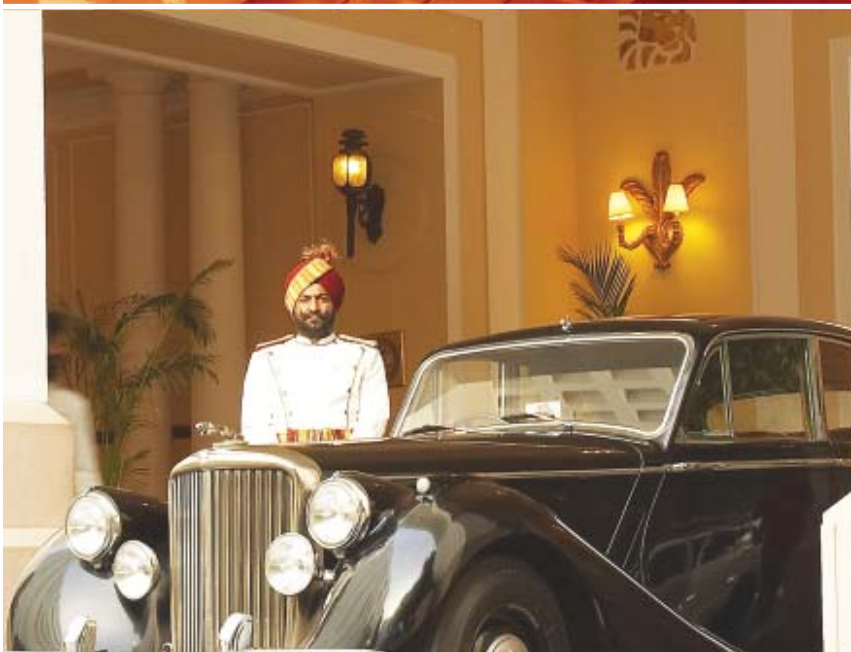
As a traveller, let this be your credo: Thou shalt never cease to explore and discover... many faces, spaces and places in life...

SUNDEEP MURTHY

Figure this: We are living in a world where the unexpected is expected and the impossible is possible. It is a world where opulence is no more an extravagant need, but a necessity. Cut to the chase: Present-day society is a place where luxury is the new catchphrase and today's traveller is no more the average ticket-rider, but someone who is seeking more and exploring new travel ideas, which are literally 'out of

the brochure'...

So, what's next to explore? If that's the eternal question on your mind, then here are some travel options for you to discover and splurge on: How about a game of tennis at the helipad of Burj al Arab in Dubai; speed-thrills at 200 mph at Mojibe Desert, USA; backwater fun in Kerala, India; surfing in Hawaii... but, if your travel dossier says, "been there, done that", then, it's time you embark on a journey to chase a



colonial dream and relive the romantic charm.

So, enjoy some of the best colonial hotels across the world, where the old-age charm, the rickety chairs and the mosquito-net around the bed, is a must. Enter a world where luxury and service have no short-cuts and where old is gold and detailing is the king. Thus, pack your bags and get ready to criss-cross through countries, cultures and cuisines, to explore the colonial magic and allure.

INDIA

The Windamere Hotel, Darjeeling

Situated on the historic Observatory Hill in Darjeeling, The Windamere Hotel was established in the 19th century as a cosy boarding house for bachelor English and Scottish tea planters, and the place was



converted into a hotel just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Since then, the hotel is a well-known place and is known the world over for its unique ambience and old-world charm. The Windamere hotel has two main living areas for its guests—the Windamere Wing and the Little

Windamere Wing. The Windamere Wing is for those who like a secluded and peaceful retreat. The Little Windamere Wing, on the other hand, appeals to those who need to remain in touch with old-world charm, with the modern necessary inputs and outlook. Along with its excellent accommodation and warm service, the hotel is also known for its Christmas celebrations, which run from 18th December to 1st January every year. The hotel has been celebrating Christmas in the same traditional way, without interruption, since 1939. (www.windamerehotel.com)

Don't miss:

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (The DHR), also known as the "The Toy Train", which is the world's most famous, two-foot gauge railway.

The Green Hotel, Mysore

Located in Mysore, around three hours' drive from Bangalore, the Green Hotel was originally Chittaranjan Palace, built for the Mysore princesses. The palace was later restored as a small hotel. With extensive gardens, formal lawns and majestic trees, the hotel is a fitting place in which to relax and to rejuvenate. The hotel has been renovated and furnished, using traditional Indian crafts. It offers comfortable surroundings, friendly staff, and a restful, creative atmosphere. Mysore, the charming

town immortalised by RK Narayan in his *Malgudi Days*, provides an excellent base from which to tour South India. The Western Ghats, the coffee plantations of Coorg, the game reserves of the Nilgiris and the Ooty hill station—are all within a few hours' drive. The hotel was once selected as one of the "World's Best Ideas" by the Institute of Social Inventions, London. The hotel is also one of the best green hotels in the world. Besides this, the Green Hotel has been set up as a model of sustainable tourism to preserve a historic building and to incorporate, wherever possible, energy saving and environmentally aware practices. All profits are distributed to charitable and environmental projects in India. (www.greenhotelindia.com)

Don't miss:

The Lalitha Mahal, the Maharajah's summer palace; and the Mysore market, which is a popular attraction among the guests and a perfect place to spend those lazy afternoons. In short, the Mysore market is not just a visual treat, but also a treat for the senses.

The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi

Opened in 1931, the Imperial Hotel is known for its marvelous mélange of Victorian, Colonial and Art Deco styles. The Imperial Hotel is a unique blend of old and new, it has successfully preserved its past aura, not forgetting the comfort of modern amenities, to provide its guests with lifetime memories. The spacious, high ceilinged guest rooms, massive crystal chandeliers, sparkling marble floors, the huge glossy mahogany tables, hotel personnel dressed in regal Indian garb, not to mention the vast original 18th and 19th century art collection that adorns the corridors of the hotel, are all a constant reminder of the elegance of the Colonial era. Situated on the famous Queensway, now known as Janpath, The Imperial Hotel is centrally located close to a famous shopping district and all major tourist attractions, and is only 30 minutes away from the airport. In spite of its location, the hotel is known to be a true oasis for those who want to escape the hectic Delhi life. (www.theimperial.com)

Don't miss:

Connaught Place, which is a busy shopping centre right in the heart of the city, is just minutes away from the hotel and a must-see.

Taj Mahal Palace & Tower, Mumbai

Since it opened in 1903, The Taj Mahal Palace & Tower, Mumbai, has created its own unique history. From Maharajas and Princes to Presidents, CEOs and entertainers, the Taj has played the perfect host, supportive of their every need. Built in 1903, the hotel is an architectural marvel and brings together Moorish,





Oriental and Florentine styles. Offering panoramic views of the Arabian Sea and the Gateway of India, the hotel is a gracious landmark of the city of Mumbai, showcasing contemporary Indian influences, along with beautiful vaulted alabaster ceilings, onyx columns, graceful archways, hand-woven silk carpets, crystal chandeliers, a magnificent art collection, an eclectic collection of furniture, and a dramatic cantilever stairway. With 565 rooms, including 46 suites and various restaurants, the Taj is the place to stay to enjoy the sights and sounds of Mumbai. (Details: www.tajhotels.com)

Did you know:

The Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay was born out of Jamsetji N Tata's dream. Tata believed that Bombay (now Mumbai), the commercial capital of India, required a grand hotel, one that would enhance the cities reputation

SINGAPORE
The Raffles Hotel

Declared a National Monument in 1987, the hotel has grown from strength to strength. With its restoration and reopening in 1991, Raffles Hotel today stands as a jewel in the crown of Singapore's hospitality industry, renowned and loved for its inimitable style and unsurpassed excellence in service and facilities.

Raffles Hotel opened in 1887 in a rather sombre-looking old bungalow, known as the Beach House. It was named after Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore. Tropical suites and sola topis were as much a part of Raffles Hotel's early style as bentwood tables and rattan chairs. Over the years, the hotel has evolved into one of the world's most beloved grand hotels, which has welcomed innumerable celebrities, writers and the royalty. Somerset Maugham once

called it the legendary symbol for "all the fables of the Exotic East". Few hotels can look back on more than a century of legendary service to so many distinguished guests, and fewer still have preserved their past with a more loving attention to detail.

Today, Raffles Hotel is more legend than hotel, and is one of the most memorable experiences that travel can offer in today's world. Raffles Hotel is delighted to be heralded amongst the world's best for a second time on Robb Report's famed list of "Luxury Hotels: The World's Ultimate City Escapes", a special annual publication that showcases a collection of premier luxury accommodations in the world. The list of 100 luxury addresses, that spans over 42 countries on six continents, aims to bring discerning travellers the best of the best worldwide, where only one property in a given city is selected.



Don't miss:

Enjoy shopping at Orchard Road, which is synonymous with shopping in Singapore, and is the venue for some of Singapore's signature annual leisure events such as The Great Singapore Sale, the Singapore Fashion Festival, Christmas in the Tropics light-up and Chingay Parade of Dreams. (www.raffles.com)

EGYPT

Old Cataract Hotel

Perched atop a granite hill at the Nile River's edge in Aswan, Egypt, the Old Cataract Hotel is known for its sights and location, the Old Cataract Hotel is a great place to stay. Staying at the Cataract has been described as walking into a painting, or looking through a period picture postcard. With its high ceilings, long halls and Moorish decor, the Old Cataract Hotel spells Egypt's Victorian charm. Located at the edge of the Nile

River, this place offers all the best views. Besides enjoying the colonial hospitality charm and the excellent service, one can also indulge in exploring the various sights of the mysterious and the magical world of the Pharaohs.

The Cataract's guest list includes Czar Nicolas II, Howard Carter, Sir Winston Churchill, Agatha Christie, the Duke of Connaught, the 3rd son of Queen Victoria, the Aga Khan III, King Farouk of Egypt, the Shah of Iran, Nahas Pacha, Khedive Abbas Helmi Sovereign of Egypt, Mohamed V King of Morocco, Margaret Thatcher, Jimmy Carter, Helmut Kohl, Queen Noura of Jordan, Lady Diana and the Princess Caroline of Monaco.

Did you know:

This place is also the location where Agatha Christie's Death on the Nile was filmed. (www.sofitel.com)

SOUTH AFRICA

Mount Nelson Hotel

The Mount Nelson Hotel is the most iconic luxury hotel in Cape Town. It is situated within a sprawling lush garden estate in the heart of the city's vibrant cultural centre and close to the bustling V&A Waterfront and some of Cape Town's best beaches.

The hotel is an urban sanctuary with a romantic heritage, a unique sense of style, and a commitment to unparalleled service excellence. Whether travelling on business or leisure in Cape Town, a family holiday, a honeymoon or a solo adventure, the Mount Nelson Hotel is an elegant oasis in a world where privacy is the new luxury and pleasure is all about peace and serenity.

Mount Nelson Hotel was opened on 6 March 1899. The hotel was designed to emulate the finest luxury and services available in London to the South African

country capital. An elegant heritage, excellent service, state-of-the-art facilities and a secluded setting in the heart of Cape Town's cultural centre has seen Mount Nelson Hotel playing host to some of the world's biggest music and movie stars, sporting legends, authors, high-profile politicians and statesmen, even royalty.

Did you know:

Actors, directors and musicians like Michael Buble, Joe Cocker, Robbie Williams, Kate Moss, M Night Shayamalan,

**Hong Kong
The Peninsula Hotel**

The Peninsula Hotel, has held court over the southern tip of Kowloon ever since opening its doors in 1928. The service is immaculate, the rooms supremely tasteful, with European elegance and Chinese flourishes. The hotel is on its sixth fleet of Peninsula-green Rolls-Royces, employed to glide guests on airport transfers, and is one of the few colonial classics to have added an extension that actually works. The 28-

a kilometre-long stretch of lawn called the Galle Face Green, the hotel borrowed its name from this charming promenade way back in 1864. Built by four British entrepreneurs who were looking to start a business in the city, Galle Face Hotel is the only heritage city hotel overlooking the Indian Ocean.

The hotel follows a simple philosophy of offering guests the romance of old-world charm, complete with modern-day luxuries that enhance the experience. A masterpiece boasting



Sam Neil, Charlize Theron, Ethan Hawke, Oprah Winfrey, Donald Sutherland and Colin Farrell and many more have stayed here.

Royalty like HRH Prince Michael of Kent, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Margaret of Denmark etc and various politicians and statesmen like Nelson Mandela, Winnie Madikazela Mandela, George Bush (Senior) and Margaret Thatcher have also stayed here. (www.mountnelson.co.za)

floor tower brings the Peninsula bang up to date too, with the Starck-designed Felix restaurant: famous for fabulous harbour views. (www.peninsula.com)

**SRI LANKA
The Galle Face Hotel**

In the heart of Colombo, the commercial capital of Sri Lanka, stands the Galle Face Hotel, a premier legendary hotel and one of the best places to stay in Asia. With an impressive arched façade that overlooks

graceful Victorian architecture, the Galle Face Hotel continues to attract royalty, world leaders and celebrities to this sanctuary of perfect serenity in a bustling city. The Galle Face Hotel is situated in the heart of the commercial capital of Sri Lanka. An oasis of tranquillity amidst the hustle and bustle of the city by the side of the Indian Ocean—a feature that's unique among the hotels in Colombo. (www.gallefacehotel.com)