

## COVER STORY

### DESTINATIONS

The Matri Mandir at Auroville, Pondicherry



### PONDICHERRY

The union territory of Pondicherry offers a unique experience with its mix of modern heritage and spiritual culture. With a predominantly historical background, Pondicherry takes one centuries back in time. Away from the

hustle and bustle of big cities, it is a quiet little town with a striking French connection. You will marvel at its tree-lined boulevards, quaint colonial heritage buildings, spiritual sceneries, endless stretches of beaches and backwaters and a wide choice of restaurants.

Among the touristy attractions here are colonial buildings, some going back to the 18th century; and the sprawling premises of the famous Sri Aurobindo Ashram; and Auroville, the international City of Unity. Pondicherry has a wide choice of hotels to choose from: beach resorts for tourists and families, heritage hotels for those who want to experience something out of the ordinary, high class commercial hotels for the corporate visitors and the neat ashram guest houses for the spiritual seekers.

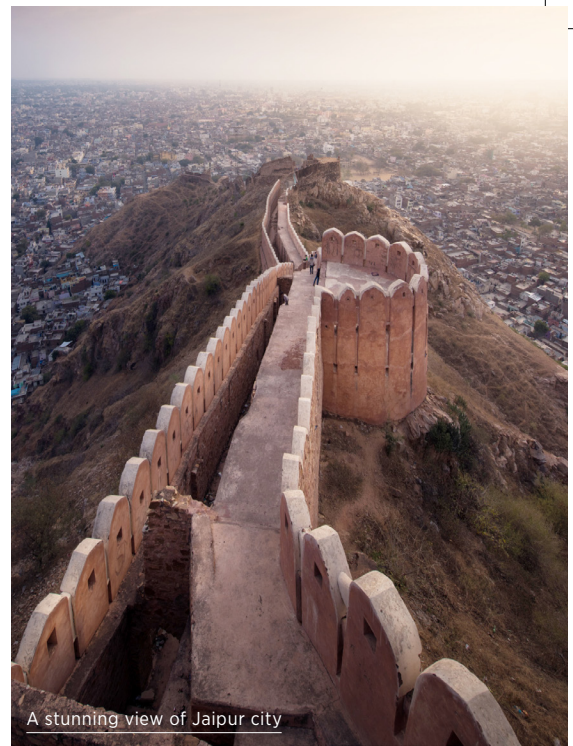
The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in south Mumbai



### MUMBAI

With numerous sobriquets like the city that never sleeps, the city where dreams are made of or the financial capital of India, Mumbai has it all. Arguably a city that is as vibrant as it is historical Mumbai has several aces up its very able sleeve. Start exploring the city at the Gateway of India a historic monument that signifies the place from where the last British troops left the country for good. The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus an

iconic landmark is also the most famous railway station in the country and a striking example of Victorian Gothic and Indian architecture is an absolute must see to understand the pulse of the city. For more architecture lessons stop by at the iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel that was built in 1903 on the banks of the Arabian Sea. For some quiet time, head to the shrine of Haji Ali Dargah that dates back to 1431 built in the memory of Sayyed Peer Jaji Ali Shah Bukhari.



A stunning view of Jaipur city

### JAIPUR

India's first planned city is famous all over the world for its coloured gems. It was established in 1727 by Jai Singh II, the Raja of Amber. He shifted his capital from Amber to the new city because of the rapidly-growing population and an increasing water scarcity. Rajasthan's capital city is a unique blend of heritage and a modern metropolis, forming one of the three corners of the golden Delhi-Agra-Jaipur triangle. Since 1876, most of the buildings here have been painted in pink, symbolic of hospitality. Do take time out to visit the Amber Palace, 11 km away from Jaipur and a beautiful melange of Hindu and Mughal architectural styles. It was built in 1592 as a strong, safe haven against attacking enemies. Made from red stone and white marble, it stands out for its carvings, precious stones and mirrors. Jantar Mantar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the largest of five astronomical observatories built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the founder of Jaipur. It houses 16 geometric devices, designed to measure time and track celestial bodies. Another favourite with tourists is Albert Hall Museum (Central Museum), designed in Indo-Sarcenic architectural style.