



Pottery session at Andretta during the art trip



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Indian Brands Promoting Experiential Travel

Travel is no longer about ticking off a checklist of places to see and things to do. With practically anyone and everyone on the move, people are becoming more and more discerning in their tastes and preferences when it comes to travel. We did some research and came up with a list of players in the travel space who are using their creativity and technology to curate customized travel experiences with unique activities and itineraries.

By NEHA KIRPAL

TripMyWay: Launched in 2016, TripMyWay is the first heritage experience platform. The platform is built in collaboration with artists, architects, historians, naturalists and journalists to combine storytelling and technology. An iterative approach to building an experience using a variety of multimedia formats like images, text, audio and interactive maps, storytelling by artists and experts is augmented by technology. Users use the TripMyWay app when they reach a heritage site. The mobile app supports a variety of features including offline mode and a nearby feature for visitors to discover sites around them.

TravelTroovel: TravelTroovel aims to reconnect people with their hobbies by offering them 'hobbycations'. Each trip has a theme enthused by an interest such as art, music, theatre, dance and so on. So, travellers get a chance to explore their long-sought interests with a touch of freshness through several hobby-based activities and sessions. All of these are done while exploring a place under the guidance of a hobby mentor. As a result, people get to spend quality time with things they enjoy doing.

Soul Connect Experiences: Soul Connect Experiences creates bespoke cultural experiences that in-



Photo credit: Breakaway

volve music, food, art, textiles and offbeat travel centred around India's rich folk and classical traditions. Based in Jaipur, its forte lies in the varied tapestry of Rajasthan's traditional lifestyle. Soul Connect Experiences organizes a monthly temple music revival series in Jaipur. Through this, morning ragas are recreated as a contemporary cultural phenomenon, tracing authentic Indian performing art and artists. Hour-long music sessions are also



organized at forgotten historical temples in the city, one Sunday morning a month.

Augtraveler: Augtraveler is an immersive Augmented Reality based travel app through which travellers can explore the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India through various multimedia tours. The essence is to exploit new-age technology and offer a scaled up platform for visitors of all age groups to experience history like never before using location-based Augmented Reality and Analytics. Future plans for the app include building world-class experiential tours for all 832 UNESCO World Heritage Cultural sites globally.

Unhotel: A new-age story-led experiences company that provides handpicked accommodation, offbeat tailor-made trips and treks, and authentic local experiences in all parts of India. Refraining from cookie-cutter travel solutions, their experiences-all curated by domain experts and special interest groups-range from wellness and yoga retreats, adventure trips, wildlife safaris, mountain treks, food trails, cultural and music events. All of its 50-odd Unhotels have been referred by friends or experts in the travel trade. Unhotel (unlike-a-hotel), thus, is a warm, friendly accommo-



Photo credit: Breakaway

dation with lots of character and creativity.

Breakaway: Breakaway offers immersive short and long breakaways for those wanting a break from the done-and-dusted mainstream holidays. Its deep, authentic and profound experiences have a scholarly approach, wherein a travel companion takes one through a destination - helping them "look rather than see and listen rather than hear". Their trips span across the country and go "beyond the brochure", including trails focusing on textiles, food, festivals and nature. The focus is art and craft, with a number of itineraries being those of handiwork, weaving, fabric, dyeing, painting and threadwork destinations.

Grassroutes Journeys: A community-based rural tourism initiative, Grassroutes offers responsible experiential holidays. The mission of this award-winning social enterprise is to create sustainable community-centered experiential platforms in order to understand rural living. Currently, their offbeat holidays cover the realms of nature

(forest walks, nature trails, biodiversity tours and birding), sustainable farming, authentic village experiences, rural games and curated workshops in the villages of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

Matsya Crafts: Matsya Crafts runs conscious and customized craft tours that document heritage, culture, architecture and history. The primary aim of the tour is to connect the global traveller with India's artisans and craft communities. The tours involve going into the interiors of rural India and giving travellers a first-hand experience of how the country's traditional crafts are practiced. Thus, travellers are exposed to the unique opportunity of interacting with artisans and watching the creative process of crafts being created live. Each tour is customized according to the traveller's interests, tastes and budget with logistics like transport, accommodation and meals catered for. Currently, their tours cover villages across Gujarat's Kutch region, and will soon extend to Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.