

The prickle of sweat erupting behind the neck.

The light-headedness of accomplishment.

THE
The toe-curling anticipation of unfettered daredevilry.

RUSH!

There's something about adrenaline pumping action that makes you defy gravity and throw caution to the wind. These are the most amazing experiences for the adventure hungry.

Words & Photography PRATHAP NAIR



DUNE BASHING

Sure, our Scorpios or Fortuners might not be a match for Dubai's rampaging Land Rovers but they are 4x4s just the same. Dune bashing is increasingly becoming a winter sport attraction (as ironic as it might sound) in Rajasthan with tours ranging from full-day ones to hourly packages. The added advantage while dune bashing in Rajasthan, of course, is the possibility of spotting wildlife (chinkara crossings are common) and interacting with the Bishnois who are known to be guardians of the environment. Choose between self-driven or chauffeur-driven vehicles and bash them dunes.

Facts All-inclusive, 3N/4D dune bashing packages are offered by MHE starting at ₹27,920 per person in the Thar desert, near Jodhpur. **For reservations, call** 09811080221; **web** mheadventures.com

Chalo Picnic also offers sunrise/sunset dune bashing in Jaisalmer. **For reservations, call** 022 2518 6779; **web** chalopicnic.com

Navigator Jodhpur is well-connected with all metros by air, rail and road. Delhi is 600 km away.

WATER SPORTS

Rishikesh is synonymous with water sports and it has long since earned the sobriquet of 'white water capital of India.' Though the mighty Ganga and her rapids provide excitement in Rishikesh for rafters, river rafting is also possible down south—in places like Dandeli and Bheemeshwari, perfect for beginners and non-swimmers.

Facts MHE's rafting packages in Shivpuri, Rishikesh, start from ₹3,200 per person (1N/1D) with stay in tents by the Ganga. **For reservations, call** 011 2334 6209; **web** himalayanadventure.com

Ace Paddlers offers rafting packages on the Cauvery river in Bheemeshwari, inside the Cauvery wildlife sanctuary. Packages start at ₹1,250 per person. **For reservations, call** 09972990909; **web** acepaddlers.com

Navigator The nearest airport is Jolly Grant in Dehradun, 27 km from Shivpuri. Rishikesh is 250 km from Delhi. Trains and buses ply regularly.



SURFING

Surfing is a fast emerging sport along India's vast coastline, thanks to its many secluded beaches. Favourable wave conditions in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala make surfing possible throughout the year, except during the monsoon. Karnataka's coastline, Manapad in Tamil Nadu and Kerala's Varkala beach are slowly being explored by surfing enthusiasts. Beginners must be swimmers.

Facts Ashram Surf Retreat is in Mulki near Mangalore and surf lessons start at ₹2,200 per person per day with gear. The *ashram* also provides surfboard rentals and accommodation.

For reservations, call 09880659130;

web surfingindia.net

Manapad is a secluded surfing destination in Tamil Nadu. **For reservations, call** 04639 226 353; **email** enquiry@manapad.in; **web** manapad.in

Navigator Mulki is a coastal village 30 km north of Mangalore that has daily flights from major cities. It is also well-connected by road and rail.



SCUBA DIVING

The implosive silence of the deep blue sea and its depths stores millions of beautiful creatures. If exploring the depths of the ocean and coming face to face with gorgeous coral reefs and marine life, including great barracudas, stingrays, stonefish, black and white tip sharks and Napoleon wrasse interests you, India offers plenty of opportunities. Though the Andamans and their Havelock Island have long carved a niche in scuba diving, Goa, Karnataka's Netrani Island and Pondicherry are joining the list.

Facts Barefoot Scuba Dive Resort's discover scuba diving package costs ₹4,500 per dive for first divers. **For reservations, call** 09566088560; **web** diveandamans.com BMC's scuba diving trip to Netrani Island costs ₹5,000 per person. **For reservations, call** 09611102222; **web** bmcindia.org

Navigator There are daily flights from Chennai to the Andamans. Take a ferry to Havelock Island. Barefoot Scuba Dive Resort is at Beach No. 3.



MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURES

If the wind in your hair makes you wax lyrical and taking to the tarmac on a motorcycle is your thing, motorcycle adventures in India will give you the time of your life. Barring the poor roads in cities, the national highways are largely in perfect shape. Add to it the lure of stunning vistas, with beguiling and diverse landscapes from flat to mountainous, and getting lost never felt so good. The Himalaya have always ranked high on the bucket list of motorcyclists, especially for the popular Manali-Leh ride in the summer.

Facts IndusRider's Himalayan Escape 2014 (Bring Your Own Bike), 10-day rides for the Leh circuit, starting at ₹80,500 ex-Delhi.

For reservations, call 09922463339; **web** indusrider.com

Enfield Riders organises six-day Mumbai to Goa bike trips, starting from ₹20,000.

For reservations, call 09821688770; **web** enfieldriders.com



DUNE BASHING PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MERCURY HIMALAYAN EXPLORATIONS
SURFING PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ASHRAAF SURF RETREAT

ROCK CLIMBING

India's varied topography is blessed with boulders and rock faces and allows plenty of opportunities for bouldering, free rock climbing, solo climbing, aid climbing, and alpine climbing. Karnataka's boulder-rich landscape is conducive for rock climbing and so are many climbing sites in the Western Ghats. Begin your rock climbing with aid climbing and rappelling with the help of a trained guide (like Diwan Singh in my case at Camp Paradise) in the Western Ghats. If you want a dose of ultimate adventure, you should perhaps look at climbing in the famed Spiti valley in Himachal Pradesh.

Facts Camp Paradise is located in Hankon, 15 km from Karwar town in Karnataka. Day packages start at ₹1,500 with breakfast and lunch included. **For reservations, call** 09845726790; **web** campparadise.info Bangalore Mountaineering Club also offers interesting packages. **For reservations, web** bmcindia.org

Navigator Karwar is 525 km from Bengaluru with overnight trains and buses plying regularly. The nearest town in Goa is Madgaon (72 km). The nearest airport in Goa, Dabolim, is 95 km away.



LONG-DISTANCE CYCLING

When I finished my first cycling trip, that lasted two days and covered a total distance of around 200 km, I felt that my knees had turned into liquid. I walked weirdly for a week afterwards and my right thumb was jammed in one position, rendering my palm effectively useless. All these factors did not stop me from enrolling in the next cycling expedition. I have done a couple more after having learned the tricks to avoid jammed thumbs and liquid knees by taking it easy. Cycling can be demanding but it is also rewarding.

Facts Cycling and More's 11-day Himalayan Expedition Ride (Manali-Leh-Khardung La) starts from ₹33,000. **For reservations, call** 09845999774; **web** cyclingandmore.com Check out the two-day Ramnagar cycling adventure tour offered by Triplr starting at ₹4,500. **For reservations, call** 08147732725; **web** triplr.com



PARAGLIDING

Buckled in a harness, floating in the air while drinking in the sight of the landscape several metres below, brushing shoulders with birds of prey, paragliding is an incredible flying experience. Hundreds of adventure sport enthusiasts are being trained every year by paragliding schools across the country. Sunny climes and moderate winds in areas like Yelagiri (Tamil Nadu), Nandi Hills (Karnataka) and Kamshet (Maharashtra) have made them popular destinations.

Facts 3-day Introductory Course (P1) by Temple Pilots, Kamshet, Pune, costs ₹9,800 on weekends and ₹9,500 on weekdays. Package includes two nights' stay, all meals and site transport. Starts at ₹12,500.

For reservations, call 09970053359;
web templepilots.com

Fly Nirvana's 2-day courses start at ₹8,000, including food, stay and site transport. **For reservations, call** 09323708809; **web** flynirvana.com

Navigator The nearest airport, Pune, is a two-hour drive. Kamshet is 100 km (3-hour drive) from Mumbai. Trains and buses are available regularly from Pune/Mumbai to Kamshet.



SKYDIVING

No longer do you have to fly out of India for skydiving. Mysore is becoming a skydivers' haunt in India. Tandem Jumps, Static Jumps and Accelerated Freefall are offered with expert supervision and safety measures by trained professionals. If you are a healthy adult with no fear of heights, nothing should stop you from trying skydiving and your share of experiencing swimming in the clouds.

Facts Static Jumps offered by Skyriders start at ₹16,500. Add ₹500 if you want a video.

For reservations, call 09015118342;
web skydivinginindia.com

BMC's skydiving packages start at ₹16,500.

For reservations, call 09611102222;
web bmcindia.org

Navigator Mysore is well-connected by air, rail and road to all major cities.



TREKKING AND MOUNTAINEERING

From delightful easy treks in the Western Ghats in the South to the Valley of Flowers trek in the north to hardcore mountaineering expeditions in Ladakh, trekking and mountaineering offer inclusivity for both the novice adventurer and the accomplished mountaineer. Ranging from weekend treks to month-long expeditions, trekking companies offer more than a handful of options.

Facts Banjaracamps' 9N/10D Bhabha Pass Trek starts from Kinnaur and ends at Spiti.

Packages start at ₹54,500 per person ex-Chandigarh. **For reservations, call** 09910345220; **web** banjaracamps.com

Greener Pastures' 22-day Pemako Trek, starts at ₹92,000 per person for a group of five. **For reservations, call** 09435747471; **web** thegreenerpastures.com