

ASIA'S NEW CONCIERGES

Six service pros from leading hotels across Asia offer their top tips, from buzz-worthy hot spots to off-the-beaten-track experiences. By Samai Singh and Lara Day



VALENCIA ALBUQUERQUE

CONCIERGE SUPERVISOR, **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MUMBAI**

MUMBAI

■ CULTURE ENCLAVES

The **Kala Ghoda Art Festival** (kalghodaassociation.com; February) brings out the best art in the city. However, when it comes to experiencing culture, **Utsav at Ravindra Natya Mandir** (*P.L. Deshpande Maharashtra Kala Academy, Prabhadevi*; 91-22/2431-2956; October to March) showcases the festivals of the state through song and dance. They also have a morphed traditional Maharashtrian wedding.

■ QUICK BITES

The best place to try a range of street food is **Elco Market** (*Hill Rd., Bandra*; 91-22/2645-7677). Try the *ragda pattice*, pani puri and *dahi puri*. Sample dosai, uttapams, and filter coffee at **Café Madras** (*King's Circle, Matunga*; 91-22/2401-4419). You'll have to wait to get a table though.

■ FINE DINING

Indigo (*4 Mandlik Rd., Apollo Bandar*; 91-22/6636-8999; foodindigo.com) specializes in international and fusion cuisine. The all-time favourite here is the lobster and shallot risotto.

■ SCENIC CITY

Marine Drive has always had the best views of the city especially at sunset. Or visit rooftop bar **Dome** (*Intercontinental Marine Drive Mumbai,*

135 Marine Drive; 91-22/3987-9999; ichotelsgroup.com) and see the city light up while you sip your glass of wine.

■ INDI STYLE

Priya Kishore's **Bombay Electric** (*1 Reay House, Best Marg, Colaba*; 91-22/2287-6276; bombayelectric.in) is the place to hit if you're looking for ensembles by Manish Arora and Rajesh Pratap Singh. The collections are hand-picked to ensure you'll find unique pieces and the staff is extremely helpful.

■ NIGHTLIFE

Aer (*Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai, 114, Dr. E Moses Rd., Worli*; 91-22/2481-8000) is a great addition to Mumbai's legendary nightlife. Great views and music make it the best place to party in the city.

■ ONLY IN MUMBAI

To glimpse a different side of this thrilling metropolis, travel in a **local train**. I recommend you travel in non-peak hours (*Mahalaxmi to Churchgate*; 11 a.m.-2 p.m.).

■ PERSONAL FAVOURITE

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum (*Byculla*; 91-22/2375-7943; bdlmuseum.org) is the oldest museum in the city and houses the old maps of Mumbai showing the seven islands. For any traveller who wants to know Mumbai, this is the place to start.

TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MUMBAI

JAGDEEP NAMBIER

FRONT OFFICE MANAGER, **THE LEELA PALACE, KEMPINSKI BANGALORE**

BANGALORE

■ CULTURE HOT SPOTS

Venkatappa Art Galley (*Kasturba Rd.*; 91-80/2286-4483) showcases works by M.F. Husain and Yusuf Arakkal. The rustic, garden setting of the **Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath** (*Kumara Krupa*; 91-80/2226-1816) is the perfect place to soak in culture. It is also the venue for exhibitions and the Dastakar Nature Bazaar.

■ REGIONAL CUISINE

Mysore masala dosa, *bisi belle bath* (hot lentil and rice dish), and *ragi mudde* (finger millet flour steamed balls) at **MTR** (*14 Lalbagh Rd.*; 91-80/2222-0022; mavallitiffnrooms.com) are worth trying, and should be followed with piping hot filter coffee.

■ FINE EATS

Specialty restaurant **Jamawar** (*The Leela Palace, Kempinski Bangalore, 23 Airport Rd.*; 91-80/2521-1234; theleela.com) is popular for biryanis and

kebabs. The modern Spanish cuisine at **Caperberry** (*48/1, The Estate, 121, Dickenson Rd.*; 91-80/2559-4567; caperberry.in) is a huge draw.

■ LOCAL CHIC

For ensembles made from hand-picked fabrics swing by **Soch** (*1st Floor, Forum Mall, Hosur, Main Rd.*; 91-80/2206-7660). **Cinnamon** (*11 Walton Rd.*; 91-80/2222-9794) is a one-stop shop for designerwear, artefacts, crockery and candles.

■ PUB CRAWL

The capacious **Fuga** (*1 Nagarjuna Bldg., Castle St.*; 91-80/4147-8624; fuga.co.in) is popular with the youngsters. While **Hard Rock Café Bengaluru** (*40 St. Marks Rd.*; 91-80/4124-2222; hardrock.com) has the perfect rock 'n' roll atmosphere. The Japanese-inspired **Shiro's** (*UB City Mall, Vittal Mallya Rd.*; 91-80/4173-8864) offers a refined environment to spend an evening.



Bangalore's Vignettes
Clockwise from left: Jagdeep Nambier; inside the swish Cinnamon; Venkatappa Art Gallery.



LEO HIDALGO

CONCIERGE, **PENINSULA MANILA**

MANILA

■ ONE-STOP SHOP

If all you have is a couple of hours, head straight to **2680 F. B. Harrison St.** in Pasay City. It's a 1940's compound, and at the back you'll find five houses occupied by three friends. Albert Avellana shows contemporary Philippine artists at **Avellana Art Gallery** (*House A-19*; 63-2/833-8357), Eric Paras has fabulous interior pieces at **A-11 Design** (*House A-11*; 63-2/832-9972) and **Jesus "Jojie" Lloren** designs couture (*House B-20*; 63-2/401-1194).

■ BEST-VALUE BLING

At **Greenhills Shopping Center** (*Ortigas Avenue, San Juan*; greenhills.com.ph; 63-2/721-0572), go to the *tianng*, a scrubbed-up flea market of sorts, where freshwater pearls go for a song compared to pricier South Sea pearls. Its most famous customer is Queen Sofia of Spain.

■ HALO-HALO HAVENS

The quintessential Pinoy dessert is *halo-halo*, made with candied fruit, beans and pulses, coconut meat, purple yam, *leche flan* (egg custard) and finely shaved ice, doused with evaporated milk. Try it at **Razon's** (*22 Jupiter St., Makati*; 63-2/899-7841; *halo-halos for two USD 4*).

■ WEEKEND MARKETS

On Saturdays, **Salcedo Market** (*Jaime C. Velasquez Park, L. P. Leviste, corner of Tordesillas St., Salcedo Village, Makati*; 63-2/899-6509; open 7 a.m.-2 p.m.) has artisanal food products, home-made pâtés and spreads, organic coffee and coco sugar, and Filipino drinking chocolate. On Sundays, **Legazpi Market** (*Rufino St. (formerly Herrera), corner of Legazpi St., Legazpi Village, Makati*; 63-2/899-6509; open 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.) does great food and eco-friendly product lines.



Leo Hidalgo at work. Above: Pick of the pearls. Below: The busy Salcedo Market.



TOP, FROM RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE LEELA PALACE, KEMPINSKI BANGALORE; PALLON DARUWALA. BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF THE PENINSULA MANILA; © DIANE555/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; LARA DAY

Mumbai's Mantras

Clockwise from top left: Valencia Albuquerque; the entrance to Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum; Marine Drive; Aer, the rooftop bar at the Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai.





Delhi Revealed
Clockwise from left:
At Yellow Brick
Road; inside the
National Gallery of
Modern Art;
Ghantewala's
popular halwa;
Jama Masjid;
Lakshay Nirula.

LAKSHAY NIRULA

CHEF CONCIERGE, **TAJ MAHAL HOTEL, NEW DELHI**

DELHI

■ ART HAVENS

The **National Gallery of Modern Art** (*India Gate*; 91-11/2338-4560; ngmaindia.gov.in) houses the best collection of modern art in the country, while in Gurgaon, Lekha and Anupam Poddar's **Devi Art Foundation** (*Sirpur House, Sector 44*; 91-124/488-8111; deviartfoundation.org) is an absolute must-visit.

■ STREET EATS

Chandni Chowk is known for its mouthwatering eats. Dig into delicious parathas at **Jai Hind Paratha Bhavan** (*36 Gali Parathe Wali*; 91-11/65927055); sample halwa at the 200-year-old **Ghantewala** (*1862-A*; 91-11/2328-0490; ghantewala.com); and *dahi bhallas* at **Natraj Dahi Bhalle Wala** (*1396 Main Rd.*; 91-11/6536-4631).

■ CASUAL AFFAIR

If you're craving authentic Italian cuisine, head to **Baci** (*23 Sunder Nagar*; 91-11/4150-7445). For a lazy Sunday champagne brunch, stop by **Tonino's** (*M.G. Rd.*; 91-11/2680-1588), a cosy Italian bistro.

The popular café **Yellow Brick Road** (*Sujan Singh Park, Cornwallis Rd.*; 91-11/2463-2252) serves up delightful fare like the YBR Chicken, mango lassi and their signature dessert Bull's Eye. Spend an evening sipping on delicious cocktails at **Blue Bar** (*Taj Palace Hotel Sardar Patel Marg, Chanakyaपुरi*; 91-11/2611-0202; tajhotels.com).

■ SHOPPING SPOTS

For antiques, furniture, and curios stop by **Sunder Nagar Market**.

Santushti Shopping Complex

(*Chanakyaपुरi*) is full of boutiques and was one of the first designer havens in the city. Of course, if you're looking for high-end international labels look no further than **DLF Emporio** (*Vasant Kunj*; 91-11/4611-6666; dlfemporio.com). Interior buffs should swing by **Moonriver** (*D-16 Defence Colony*; 91-11/4161-7103; moonriverstore.com) where you'll find pieces from design stars like Philippe Starck and Timothy Richards. Jude Yep of **John Bros** (*F-16/2, Connaught Place*; 91-11/2331-6158; johnbrothers.co.in) has been fashioning bespoke shoes for men and women for years. Stop by to get a pair created just for you.

■ ONLY IN DELHI

Don't miss the **Sound and Light Show** (delhitourisonline.com). The 62-minute son et lumière show at the Purana Qila delves into the history of Delhi and will leave you mesmerized. To get a true taste of Delhi, stroll through **Connaught Place** and indulge in some old-school style shopping. Do explore the narrow lanes of the old city and Jama Masjid in an auto or cycle rickshaw and end with a cup of tea at **Aap Ki Pasand** (*Sterling House, Daryaganj*; 91-11/2326-0373).

■ EXQUISITE EATS

Varq (*The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, 1 Mansingh Rd.*; 91-11/2302-6162; tajhotels.com) is an elegant restaurant that serves up exotic ingredients in a traditional Indian style. Sample *kadi patte ke* scallops, *ganderi* kebabs, and tamarind or sugarcane sorbets.

MAHIPAL SINGH SHEKHAWAT

CONCIERGE, **THE OBEROI UDAIVILAS, UDAIPUR**

UDAIPUR

■ LOCAL FLAVOUR

To sample a traditional Rajasthani thali dine at **Natraj Restaurant** (*New Bapu Bazaar*; 91-294/242-1249). **Ambrai Restaurant** (*Amet Ki Haveli*; 91-294/243-1085) near Lake Pichola serves up pan-Indian cuisine and specializes in Rajasthani fare.

Sunset Terrace (*Fateh Prakash Palace*; 91-294/252-8016) is great for light refreshments in an alfresco setting.

■ UNUSUAL DINING

The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur (*Hardasji Ki Magri*; 91-294/243-3300; oberoihotels.com) can arrange for some stunning meals. **The Floating Pavilion**, a private floating island in the middle of Lake Pichola, lit by candles with low seating and live music makes the perfect setting for a romantic dinner. Or, you can enjoy a meal at **The Bada Mahal**, an old

hunting lodge where live kebabs and curries make up the menu.

■ LAKE VIEWS

The city of lakes is surrounded by the Aravalis. **Sajjangarh** or Monsoon Palace, is located on top of a hill overlooking Lake Pichola and offers a breathtaking view of the city. A **sunset cruise** on the lake in a traditional shikara sails past the City Palace, Jagmandir and Jagniwas and offers completely different vistas.

■ CULTURE QUEST

Bhartiya Lok Kala Mandal is a local folk art institute where you can watch puppet shows and tribal dances including the *bhavai* where the dancer balances nine pots on her head. **Bagore Ki Haveli** located on the banks of Lake Pichola, and including the Gangaur Ghat, is a 300-year-old haveli that houses folk art, and the contemporary art gallery Dharohar.

Udaipur Uncovered

Clockwise from right: Mahipal Singh Shekhawat; Sajjangarh; a view of Lake Pichola.



CAROLINE NG

CHEF CONCIERGE, **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL HONG KONG**

HONG KONG

■ ISLAND HOP

Take a junk trip to some of **Hong Kong's islands** (standardboat.hk; 852/2570-1792; *junk rentals from USD 322*). Stop for lunch on Po Toi at **Ming Kee Seafood Restaurant** (*852/2849-7038*; *lunch for two USD 51*)—don't miss the deep-fried chilli squid—then go for a dip in the ocean. Afterwards, on Lamma Island, watch the sun set at **The Bay** (*7 Beach Front, Mo Tat Wan*; thebayhk.com; 852/2982-8186; *drinks for two USD 15*). The food is so-so, but the Bloody Marys are excellent.

■ HOTTEST BRUNCH

Sunday brunch at **Zuma** (*Levels 5&6, 15 Queen's Road, Central*; zumarestaurant.com.hk; 852/3657-6388; *brunch for two USD 141*) has free-flowing champagne, a fantastic sushi buffet and *robata*-grill items to order. Young families tend to go at 11:30 a.m.; so book the second seating at 1 p.m. as it tends to get very busy.

■ MUST-SEE ART

For top local artists, head to **Grotto Fine Art** (*31C-D Wyndham St., Central*; grottofineart.com; 852/2121-2270). For Chinese and Korean pop art, **Moon Gallery** (*111 Queen's Rd. West, Sheung Wan*; moongallery.org; 852/2858-1771), is a destination in itself.

■ EYE-POPPING VIEWS

When in need of something laid-back, sit outside at **Sugar** (*21 Taikoo Shing Rd., Quarry Bay*; east-hongkong.com; 852/3968-3968), a rooftop bar. But by far the best views are still to be seen from the Kowloon side on the **Star Ferry** (starferry.com.hk) looking back at Hong Kong.

■ **UNDERSTATED CHIC** My favourite designers make their clothes special through their cuts, not just their patterns. **Blanc de Chine** (*201-203A Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central*; blancdechine.com; 852/2524-7875) updates Chinese designs with muted colours and sleek tailoring. +

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE OBEROI UDAIVILAS, UDAIPUR; COURTESY OF SUGAR; COURTESY OF ZUMA; COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HONG KONG

TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF TAJ MAHAL HOTEL; NEW DELHI. BOTTOM: YASHAS CHANDRA