

COUNTDOWN TO NEW YEAR 2018

Still undecided about where to ring in the New Year? Allow us to suggest some excellent options.

By Neeharika Satyavada







Kasol is located on the banks of the Parvati, in Kullu



KASOL

This charming little village on the banks of the Parvati River, in Kullu, is quickly gaining popularity as the party capital of Himachal Pradesh. So if you are bored of Manali already, then Kasol is just right for you. Situated along the Kheerganga Trek route, in the pretty-as-a-picture Parvathi Valley, Kasol isn't just a birder's paradise or a nature-lover's retreat any more. It is growing big on the Trance Music circuit, and with the Kasol Music Festival set to take place on the 30th and 31st of December, what better way to ring in the New Year than while camping on the river side at an open air music festival! Or you could simply soak in the beauty of nature, as you walk in the coniferous forests of the Himalayas. One can even visit the Gurdwara Manikaran Sahib and Tosh, a village known for its quaint wooden houses.

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Kasol is about 160 km from Chandigarh airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Chandigarh from Mumbai and Delhi, with convenient connections from Goa, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kochi, and it operates direct flights to Delhi from Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Patna, among others, with convenient connections from other cities. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in



Gokarna is great for beach treks and parties



GOKARNA

Om Beach to Namaste Café, everything here spells temple town. With a twist, of course. Even the festival of Maha Shivratri is celebrated on the beach here. About a hundred kilometres from Goa, Gokarna is its lesser known sister town along the Karnataka coast. Once the hub for off-the-grid beach parties and water sports like parasailing, banana boat rides and jet skiing, Gokarna is opening up more of its isolated beaches to beach treks, as they are called. Most of the beaches here are surrounded by rocky outcrops and cliffs, so you can take a jungle trail that leads to a vantage point on the beach for dolphin spotting, or trek through a boulder-strewn trail to reach the Rock of Peace. Whatever it is that catches your fancy, you will be spoilt for choice when it comes to choosing your New Year adventure in this hippie town with character.

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Gokarna is about 160 km from Goa airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Goa from Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai, with easy connections from Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Patna, among others. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in



ABOVE AND RIGHT: The Rann of Kutch is the largest salt marsh in the world; colourful Kutchi handicrafts and clothes



RANN OF KUTCH

"Kutch nahi dekha to kuch nahi dekha", says the legendary actor Amitabh Bachan in Gujarat's tourism campaign and every year just as the hottest place in India cools down, the Rann Utsav is held by the Gujarat government between the months of November and February. And it is true, the sight of the White Rann is so spectacular that if you haven't seen Kutch, you haven't seen anything. Located at the very edge of Gujarat in the Thar Desert, the Rann of Kutch is probably the largest salt marsh in the world. So if you are looking for dramatic nights in an endless white desert where the moon shines in all its majesty, look no further. The full moon New Year package to the Rann Utsav in the Tent City of Dhordo is for you. There is never a dull moment here with all that is lined up. One can shop for traditional Kutchi handicrafts, drop by at any of the series of cultural events during the day, or even indulge in some adventure with hot-air ballooning and para motoring.



Rann of Kutch is about 400 km from Ahmedabad airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Ahmedabad from Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, Bengaluru, Jaipur, Hyderabad and Kochi with convenient connections from Lucknow and Chennai. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in



ABOVE: Triund, near McLeodganj, and prayer flags flutter in the breeze at a Buddhist temple



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McLeod Ganj is about 260 km from Chandigarh airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Chandigarh from Mumbai and Delhi, with convenient connections from Goa, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kochi, and it operates direct flights to Delhi from Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Patna, among others, with convenient connections from other cities. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in

MCLEOD GANJ

Famous for a lot of things, Dharamsala is many things to many people. Trekkers want to go here for the Triund Trek, artists want to go here to chill and create, while the everyday traveller wants to go here in the hope that he might meet the Dalai Lama. McLeod Ganj, three kilometres from Dharamsala, is where all the action is. McLeod Ganj has already achieved cult status for all those with itchy feet for its beautiful temples and monasteries, hip cafes and scenic trek routes through the Dhauladhar Mountains. Go for the vibe of the place and bring back a bit of 'little Lhasa' this New Year. But if it is an event you are looking for with the quintessential DJ and bonfire, then head to the McLeod Ganj Hills Festival slated to happen on the 30th and 31st of December.



ABOVE: Umiak Lake, in Shillong



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Shillong is about 150 km from Guwahati. GoAir operates direct flights to Guwahati from Delhi, Kolkata and Bagdogra, with easy connections from Mumbai and Bengaluru. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in

SHILLONG

Couldn't make it to the capital of Meghalaya for the much talked about second edition of the Cherry Blossom festival? Fret no more, head to Shillong Peak on New Year's Eve for the Moon Night Festival. The peak offers breathtaking views of not just the city but even the numerous waterfalls dotting the Himalayan landscape till as far as the plains of Bangladesh. It is said that U Lei Shyllong, the God of Shillong resides here at Shillong Peak and protects the city from all evils.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Rishikesh affords both peace and excitement



RISHIKESH

Rishikesh is no longer just a gateway to the Ganga but has evolved to be the one-stop shop for all your trekking in the Himalayas. Not up to an arduous trek in the mountains? Well, it doesn't get better than here in the valley which showcases Indian spirituality on a global platform every day. Sit down at any of the cafes and watch the electric mix of sadhus and hippies go by. Begin the day with a trip to the Beatles Ashram, indulge in some white-water rafting and as the turbulent and powerful Ganga quiets down for the evening, take in the Aarti at the ghats to complete your day. Or, simply book a New Year package from among the many being offered by rafting and camping tour operators.

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Rishikesh is 250 km from Delhi airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Delhi from Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, Patna, Ranchi, Jammu among others. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in



Pondy is cool, classy and has great sunsets.



GoAir
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Puducherry is approximately 180 km from Chennai airport. GoAir operates direct flights to Chennai from Mumbai, Port Blair, Kochi and Pune, with convenient connections from Delhi, Lucknow, Chandigarh and Ahmedabad. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in

PUDUCHERRY

Want to do things differently? Then, Puducherry is where you need to be. India's coolest Union Territory is having its very own Island Party for New Year's Eve this year-end at Paradise Beach, and you can get to the island by taking a boat from the Chunambar Boat House in town. They say if you can't afford a ticket to Europe, travel to Pondicherry instead. Stroll through the French part of the town and be transported back in time. Or just wander the streets to absorb the distinctive Franco-Tamil culture of the place and spend a day or two in this city of explorers to begin your 2018 with a dose of culture.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Bengaluru club culture: Vidhana Soudha



BENGALURU

Finally when it comes to celebrating New Year's Eve the classic way in a city, nothing compares to Bengaluru. India's very own Silicon Valley is home to a number of clubs and lounges that bring in the crowds every weekend, so little surprise then that some of the biggest New Year parties happen here. The city's vibe is an eclectic mix of the old school laid-back cool of the original Garden City and the modern-day Hard Rock Cafe-cool, which makes it one of the best loved cities in the country today. Its iconic MG Road comes alive at night, and let's not forget, there are numerous brew pubs in the city to ring in the New Year. When you wake up the next day, we recommend you have a solid south Indian breakfast at Vidyarthi Bhavan, and follow that up with lunch at Shivaji Military Hotel.



GoAir operates direct flights to Bengaluru from Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Goa, Port Blair, Pune and Ranchi, with convenient connections from Ahmedabad and Jaipur. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in