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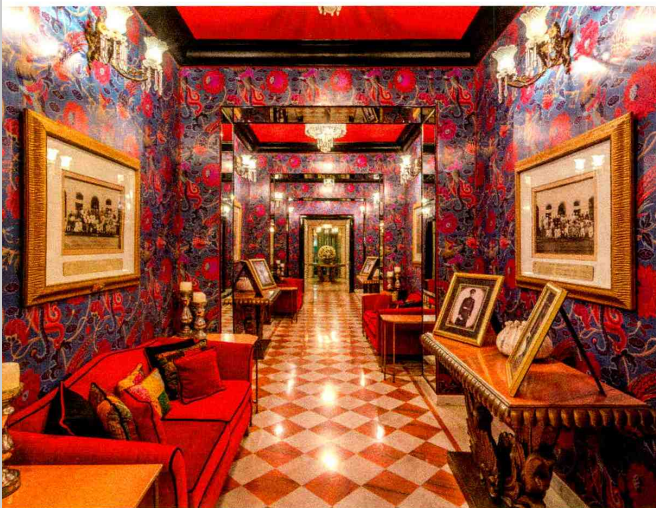
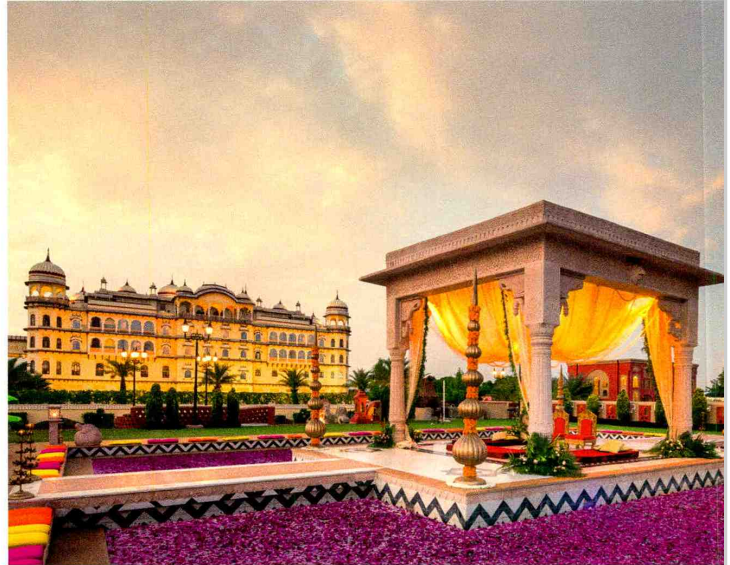
BOUTIQUE VENUES

INTIMATE AFFAIRS

As smaller, intimate wedding parties take preference over large bashes, charming, designer venues offered by boutique hotels provide the perfect ambience to make your celebrations a success. Choose from these top 10 boutique properties around the country for an unforgettable destination wedding experience. **BY ANANYA BAHL**

Hazuri Bagh Karnal

SET WITHIN THE OPULENT Noor Mahal complex is the equally grandiose Hazuri Bagh, Karnal (hazuribagh.com). With a sprawling outdoor space that features two acres of elegant, green lawns, it is the ideal spot to celebrate your great Indian wedding, while taking care of any social-distancing requirements. Palm and date trees, as well as a pretty lotus pond courtyard create a dreamy vibe. Flexibility is the USP of this boutique property as wedding planners help you design a bespoke nuptial ceremony: small or large, traditional or modern. The picturesque Mandap at Dera, which serves as the setting for the *phas*, is spectacularly designed and is an Instagrammer's delight. Also within the complex are the Fateh Mahal restaurant and amphitheatre—perfect for hosting mehendi and sangeet ceremonies. Dining under the royal shamiana with its glistening chandeliers is recommended for those seeking a touch of old-school royalty. Hazuri Bagh is peppered with a lovely collection of art and antique furniture that add to its charm. Guests can stay at the adjacent Noor Mahal hotel. Smart rooms, smart controls, mobile check-ins, and the best of hi-tech solutions have been employed to ensure that COVID-19 doesn't dampen the festivities.



Rajmahal Palace Raas Jaipur

THERE IS NO DOUBT that Jaipur is the quintessential getaway for wedding festivities. The culture, colours, and Rajputana charm lend a gorgeous blend of flavours to any celebration. And encapsulating all this is the Rajmahal Palace Raas, Jaipur (raashotels.com). The former residence of Maharani Gayatri Devi, this tasteful property reflects the finesse and personality of the graceful queen. Draped in pastel shades, the Art Deco paradise houses 13 suites, including the Queen Elizabeth and Maharaja Suites, both of which can be used as individual apartments by the bridal couple. While the palace is ideally suited

for cosy, intimate stays for a limited number of guests from the wedding party, their in-house team will assist in booking accommodation at a nearby hotel of your choice for the rest of your guests. The property is also home to beautiful, expansive gardens that can host large parties, accommodating 200 to 2,500 guests for a variety of functions. The poolside is ideal for sundowners, while the in-house restaurant, 51 Shades of Pink, is perfect for elegant events. And depending on your desire for the day, the hotel's chefs can whip up cuisines and menus of your choice, including vegan, keto, and gluten-free.

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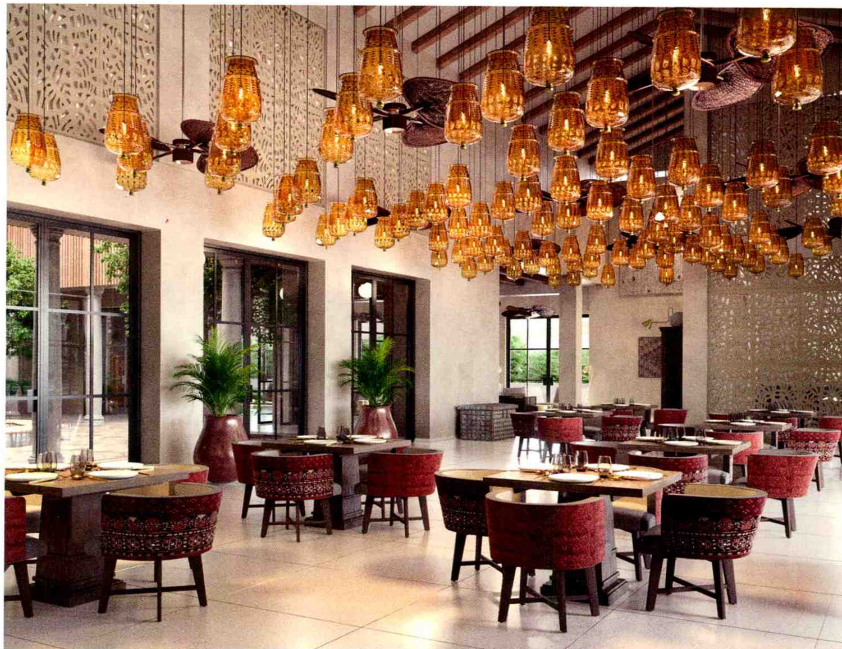


Ri Kynjai–Serenity by the Lake Shillong

ONE OF THE MOST picturesque properties in India's northeast, Ri Kynjai (rikynjai.com) is ideal for couples seeking a destination that is off-the-beaten track. Overlooking Umiam Lake, about 18 kilometres from Shillong, its name literally translates to the 'Land of Serene Environs'. Featuring eco-friendly architecture and traditional hospitality intrinsic to the indigenous *Khasi* people's way of life, this hotel is an ode to its idyllic surroundings. Couples opting to tie the knot here are sure to experience the warmth



inherent to Meghalaya and an eye for detail that is particular to the staff. For weddings, the hotel recommends you book all 17 accommodation options (a mix of cottages and rooms). They also offer recommendations for the best banqueting food and beverage menus, décor, wedding planners, and a one-night complimentary stay for the couple as part of their wedding package. Ri Kynjai follows strict COVID-19 safety protocol that ensures highest standards of hygiene for all their guests.



Aramness Gir

LOVERS OF WILDLIFE and the great outdoors should head to the newly launched Aramness (aramness.com), a chic safari lodge located on the fringe of the Sasan Gir National Park in Gujarat, and the only luxury boutique hotel in the state. The property is home to 18 village-style *kothis*; each with a private pool and lovely forest views. Equipped to house 42 guests, this is the ultimate venue for an intimate wedding setup, far from the bustle of city life. Enhanced hygiene and exclusivity are guaranteed here. Guests can take a break in between functions to explore the forested area on game drives and jungle walks. The wedding fare includes farm-to-table menus by Kamini Patel, founder of Kitchen Therapy, and delicacies by Executive Chef Chetan Singh Rana. The spa offers an array of soothing massages for the couple to unwind. The lodge's name is an amalgamation of *aram*, which means 'rest' and *ness*, a word for the local villages of the area—and a deep sense of both is inherent throughout all experiences here.

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Chittoor Kottaram Ernakulam

CGH EARTH'S Chittoor Kottaram (cghearth.com), home of the erstwhile Rajah of Kochi, exudes understated luxury and a vivid history, palpable even today. Tranquil solitude is the hallmark of this single-key mansion, and the serene setting is apt for those looking for an intimate marriage ceremony in the company of close family and friends. You arrive at the property by boat, which instantly makes you feel like royalty. The hotel's 'Wedded by Earth' programme is curated to reflect the close bond between nature and community, and the spectacular views of the lagoon and water lilies dancing on the backwater form the backdrop for your nuptials here. The staff at the hotel is totally devoted to your celebrations. Customised multi-cuisine menus are also on offer at this verdant oasis, ensuring a memorable experience.



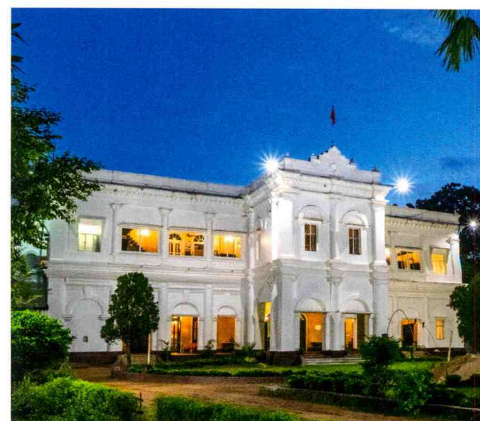
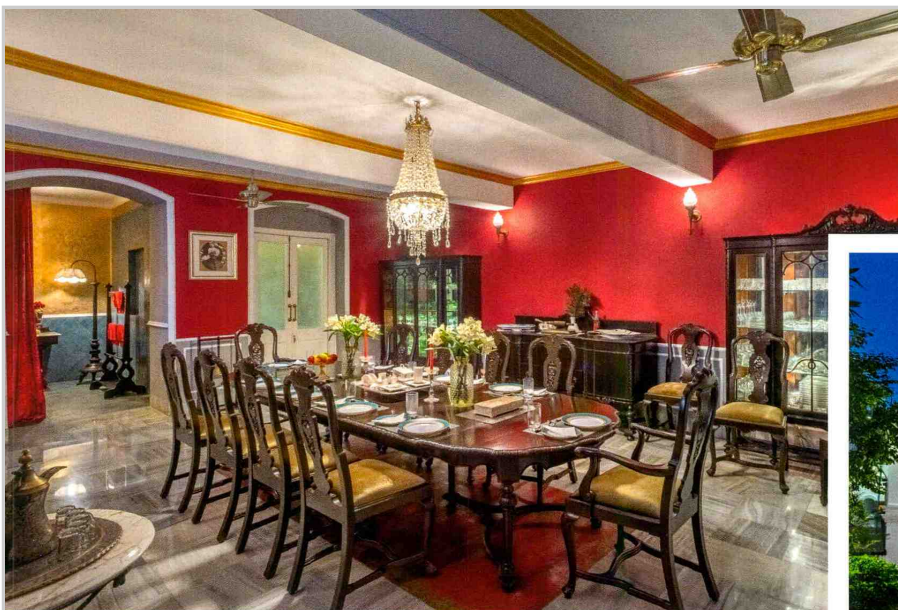
Nadis Srinagar

SAY "I DO" IN Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir and one of the most romantic cities in India. And when you do, choose Nadis (nadis-hotel.com), a delightful boutique hotel, located opposite the pristine Harwan Garden. The tranquil ambience of the verdant garden permeates the hotel and its environs, and you are instantly

transported to a soothing world of romance. Best described as a modern take on a Kashmiri home, the property is inspired by alpine landscape and local hospitality. The hotel houses 18 airy, sunlit rooms, all beautifully appointed with elegant accessories. Be prepared to be bowled over by the exquisite Kashmiri cuisine, as the

fragrance of spices like cinnamon, cardamom, clove, and saffron wafts through the air. Other cuisines can also be prepared on request. Nadis follows all COVID-19 safety protocols and procedures assigned by the Union Territory. For those who wish to explore the city and its many delights, the owner, Yaser Shaw is just a call away.

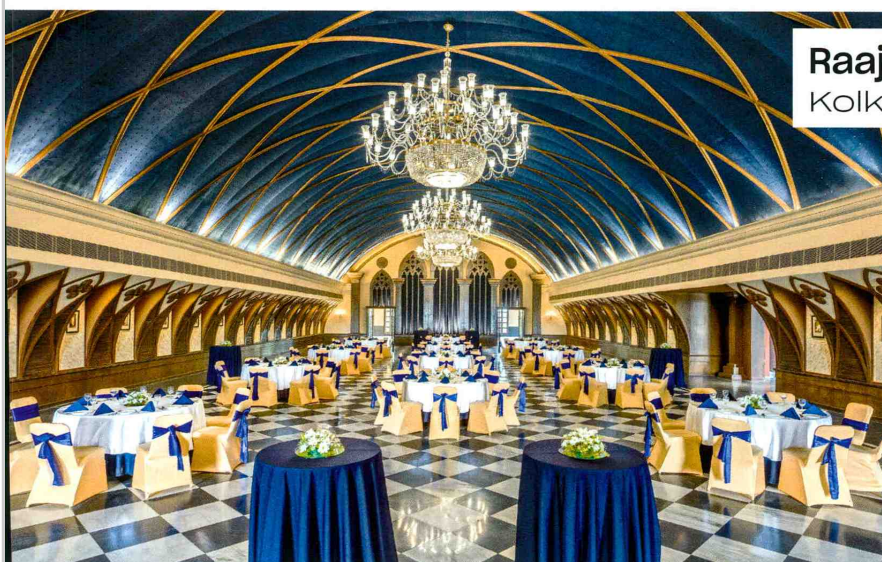
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The Belgadia Palace Mayurbhanj

CHOOSE TO DO THINGS the royal way while contributing to a sustainable way of living at The Belgadia Palace (thebelgadiapalace.com). Built in the 18th century, this property is home to the erstwhile royal family of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. With purposeful travel at the heart of its existence, the hotel partners, along with the local tribal community, offer a peek into their traditional way of life. Built along Victorian lines, the

property allows couples to bask in the luxury of a bygone era as they await their special day. Nine heritage bedrooms—each tastefully decorated and fitted with modern amenities—are available, making the venue perfect for a cosy wedding with a small guestlist. And the offbeat location will add a magical touch to your ceremonies. Traditional fare, as well as customised menus can be prepared as per your choice.

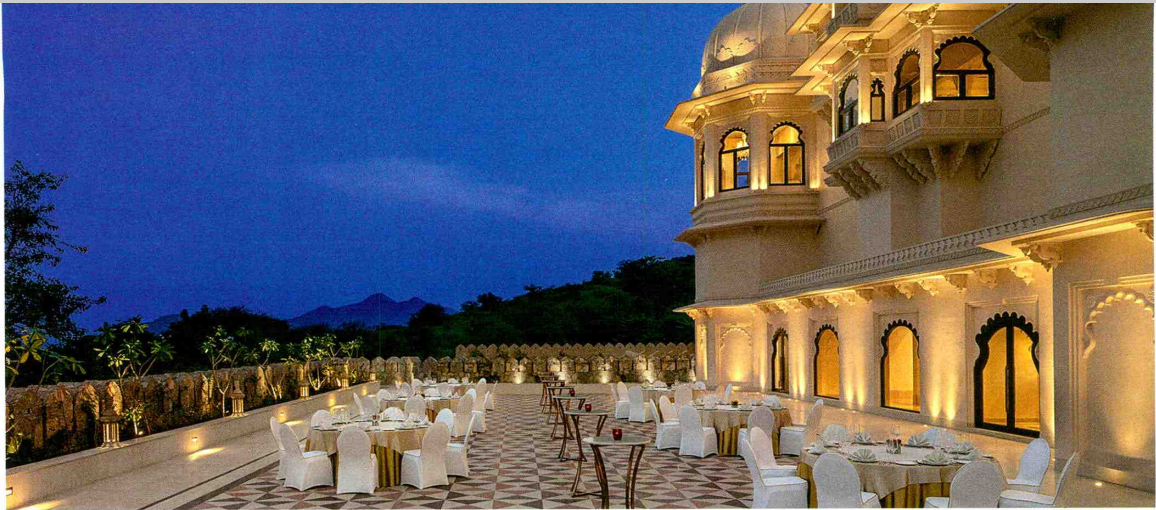


Raajkutir-Swabhumi Kolkata

RELIVE THE DAYS of zamindars at Raajkutir-Swabhumi (raajkutir.com), a gorgeous boutique property in Kolkata. Designed as a time capsule and a metaphor for a bygone era, this property is an ode to the Bengal Renaissance. For couples seeking to infuse tradition and history into their wedding celebration, the hotel provides a background like no other. Its versatility is evidenced in the 33 luxuriously appointed rooms, and the three large banquet halls (indoor and outdoor) housed within the property. The hotel offers in-house wedding planners who specialise in helping the couple choose the right theme, décor, and scale of their ceremony, whether its a mehendi, sangeet, or an evening cocktail affair. The hotel also follows all COVID-19 protocols so you and your guests can have a stress-free time. raajkutir.com

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Aurika Udaipur

UDAIPUR IS ONE OF the most popular choices for destination weddings. And still, the city of lakes always manages to surprise with an undiscovered gem. Located on a hilltop and spread across five acres, Aurika (aurikahotels.com) is a member of the Luxury Escapes collection and is one of the most majestic and expansive boutique hotels in Udaipur. Their banqueting and dining spaces can accommodate large wedding parties, as well as private, sit-down dinner celebrations under the stars. The hotel is home

to 139 modern and aesthetically appointed rooms, while the sweeping hilltop views are a treat for the eyes. Ekaara, the 510-square-metre, pillarless ballroom is perfect for socially distanced wedding functions. Comprehensive wedding packages, a dedicated staff, special décor services, and in-house wedding planners are at hand to help the bridal couple ensure no stone is left unturned. Also, the hotel is situated close to the city's main points of interests, including Fateh Sagar Lake and Pichola Lake.



The Malabar House Fort Kochi

A RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX member, the Malabar House (malabarhouse.com) effortlessly blends the old and new in the culturally rich harbour city of Kochi. Located in the artsy Fort Kochi, its 17 rooms and suites are an amalgamation of colours and objets d'art, perfect for an intimate guest list. The Malabar Suite is the quintessential abode for the bridal couple once the festivities are complete. The hotel is known for its Carnatic music performances, which make for a wonderful addition to the traditional nuptial ceremony. Continental fare and the coastal cuisine of Kerala, along with Mediterranean treats are specialties at this hotel; it is also home to a charming wine lounge. The property follows the Bureau Veritas global safety protocol in association with Relais & Châteaux. ✦