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Star Trek fans, this one's for you. Entries for the 13th Miss Klingon Empire Beauty Pageant are open till March end. The annual pageant held at the Star Trek Convention at Dragon\*Con in Atlanta, aims to discover beauties who are 'out of this world' with the best that the Klingon Empire has to offer. [www.oddee.com](http://www.oddee.com)



IRONING OUT THE EXTREMES

You shall know them by the crease in their trousers: hanging from rocks, strapped to moving vehicles, and even under water, these competitors iron clothes in unimaginable situations. The Extreme Ironing World Championship has been around since 1997 when a British man named Phil Shaw combined his love of rock climbing with his job as a clothing factory worker. [www.keepingcore.blogs.time.com](http://www.keepingcore.blogs.time.com)

QAMAR SIBTAIN



Wildlife filmmaker Jonathan Scott was at Taipan in The Oberoi.

Wild tales from the diary of Big Cat Couple

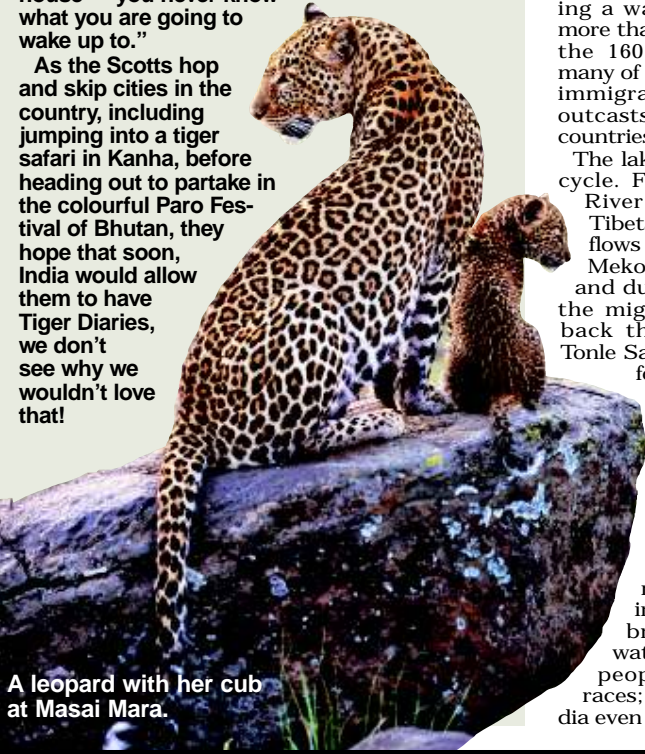
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When in India, where his wife Angela gets misty-eyed every time she sees the Taj Mahal, Jonathan prefers visiting Ranthambore over Bandhavgarh. "People will tell you that chances of sighting a tiger in Bandhavgarh are very good, but Ranthambore gives you a sense of history which you can't ignore." The Big Cat man continues to be fascinated by the Okavango Delta in Botswana, often known as the Jewel of the Kalahari. During the months of June and August, when this place swells to about thrice its size, it is bound to attract the wildlife the Scotts are so fond of. If you want to add a seventh to the list, Jonathan suggests the Yala National Park in Sri Lanka.

Jonathan, just back from Jaipur's Diggi Palace, is getting ready to pen down what tourists should expect from the Pink City, more particularly, how it is to study in the schools there. As he goes back to his favourite topic—wildlife, he stresses on regulated tourism and smiles as he recalls how, once a cheetah literally heard the 'call of the wild,' as it stood on his jeep—the roof hatch was open, the rest is history. "People come up to me and ask, are you the bloke the cheetah pooped on? And I say yes."

What does he do at home when there aren't wild dogs, wildebeests or, big cats around? "I have three dogs and a cat"—and, the cat, wait for it, is called 'Little Cat.' But before you take decide to look down on the 'smaller' creature, Jonathan tells you, "Once, as part of the many surprises that we get, the cat had dragged in a snake into the house — you never know what you are going to wake up to."

As the Scotts hop and skip cities in the country, including jumping into a tiger safari in Kanha, before heading out to partake in the colourful Paro Festival of Bhutan, they hope that soon, India would allow them to have Tiger Diaries, we don't see why we wouldn't love that!



A leopard with her cub at Masai Mara.

In Cambodia's Tonle Sap, Asia's largest freshwater lake

Where life moves on stilts & silt



By Kalpana Sunder

THE pale blue waters stretch out to the horizon as the sun shines down, creating glistening diamonds on the waves. The motor boat whizzes past fishermen tossing nets in the water, as curious children wave out from the shores.

It's a typical hot, muggy Cambodian morning and we have trampled across the lost city of Angkor Wat in the last few days — we have had our fill of exquisite temples, statues of Hindu gods, bizarre faces etched in stone, and mind boggling art and architecture. Then our guide decides to show us a different side of Cambodia.

Imagine a life completely dictated by the seasons, the ebb and wane of the tides where you can uproot yourself and transplant your home to a different place. The Tonle Sap( a Khmer word which means Great Lake) is the largest freshwater lake in Asia; it looks more like a virtual inland sea with its vast expanse of water. For many years, this lake was a conflict zone with the Khmer Rouge and the US forces waging a war. Today there are more than 5000 people across the 160 floating villages—many of them refugees, illegal immigrants and displaced outcasts from neighbouring countries like Vietnam.

The lake has a unique flood cycle. Fed by the Mekong River which starts in the Tibetan Plateau, the water flows from the lake into the Mekong in the dry season and during the monsoons, the mighty Mekong forces back the water down the Tonle Sap. The lake expands four-fold and its depth can vary from one metre to nine metres! The people living a nomadic existence here then move inland exchanging their boats for bikes, when the water recedes the people move back. The turning of the tides is celebrated by the Khmer water festival where the people compete in boat races; the King of Cambodia even cuts a ribbon to celebrate the event. This unique eco system was declared a UNESCO biosphere reserve because of its teeming marine life and birds. The silt in the river makes it fertile for agriculture - Tonle Sap is the richest source of protein here. Lulled by the humidity and the gentle chug of the boat we catnap, as we are steered



The locals lead a nomadic life as they are forced to move to the inland during the monsoons, when the lake expands.

towards the Chong Khneas floating village where brightly painted blue and orange makeshift homes greet us, as the flowered curtains sway in the wind. Men sleep in their hyacinth rope hammocks and women wash babies in the murky waters as children paddle around nonchalantly in aluminium and plastic tubs,

Don't be surprised to find chicken replaced by crocodiles on the menus of the floating restaurants at Tonle Sap

it seems as if these young ones learnt how to swim before they learnt how to walk.

This is a world where life is played out on a watery highway. A gaudy blue Catholic church and a barber shop, a vegetable market, a gas station, and health dispensary stand on stilts, just as the fruit and vegetable gardens. We peak into the faded tarpaulins on the small boats to see the women tending steaming pots of noodles and sea food as meticulously arranged shelves strut their stuff. Television antennas powered by car batteries catch your eye till you spot the perfect tourist trap—in the middle of the lake lies a restaurant with a bamboo pen of lazy crocodiles! If you watch the fisher folk, you'll see them trying their best for the Tiny Riel used to make fish paste while crocodiles, in this part of the world, replace chicken on many menus.

From the majestic temples of Angkor Wat, to the killing fields; a day on the Tonle Sap offers a peek into the quiet, aquatic lives in the land of stories that Cambodia is.





## BALANCING ACT THAT'S GOING RIGHT IN ENGLAND



Teetering on the edge of a nature preserve on the Suffolk Coast of England, the Balancing Barn was designed by a Dutch architecture firm called MVRDV. A good half of the place which can house eight guests is suspended in free space, with a glass floor providing views of the land below.

[www.rookzone.com](http://www.rookzone.com)



## CURSED STONES

Ko Hingham, a small island in Thailand, is said to have 'precious' stones which can't be taken off the island. The god Turatao is said to curse any visitor who dares to take even a pebble from here. Each year the National Park office which manages the island, receives dozens of stones returned via mail, sent back by people who want to lift the curse.

[www.thailander.eu](http://www.thailander.eu)

is played out on a watery high



(Above) Riding a boat on Tonle Sap's dirty water mass offers beautiful sights of villages on the banks. (Below) A church in the floating village.



Delhi Duty Free at T3 doesn't only stock cosmetics. It also has one of Asia's best single malt offerings, which it is now promoting in a big way in association with a leading Scotch company.

## Good time to feel malt-ish on your way back home

By Nikita Puri

FOR those of you who enjoy a fruity feel or enjoy cinnamon undertones to your spirits pouring out of European or American oak casks, the next time you come home from the airport, you may have more than just bags strewn over your trolley. If you pick up a Balvenie 30-year-old or Glendfiddich 30-year-old from the capital's duty free shops in April, you could treat 10 of your friends, in the intimacy and comfort of your own walls, to a single malt appreciation session and sink into the warmth that these golden and amber beauties promise.

India's largest duty free retail space at Terminal-3 of the Delhi IGI Airport has tied up with William Grant & Sons India Pvt. Ltd in a move that recognises that the Capital's denizens have moved on from regular whisky and are eagerly stepping into the world of single malts.

Abhijit Das, Head of Marketing, Delhi Duty Free Services (DDFS), said, "There is a dramatic difference between what people are picking up today - the ongoing trend shows that single malts make up for the fastest growing category." The response to this trend is unique as the organisers plan to customise the sessions to suit not just your palate, experts from DDFS and William Grants will even come home if you so desire, with both history and tasting notes. So if you have

wondered about drinking etiquettes, or how to 'nose' your drink right enough to get the flavour of the drink without numbing your olfactory senses, this is your chance. And if you know the so-called 'rules,' this is the time to delve deeper into the intricacies of taste and flavour - you don't have to be a Malt Master, but it doesn't hurt to know more.

"Consumer up-gradation has been a significant trend at DDFS leading to premiumisation of business for both DDFS and William Grants. We have witnessed a significant contribution from Glenfiddich and Balvenie when compared to their higher aged variants. As consumers upgrade, they are getting more evolved and we feel educating consumers through appreciation sessions is the right step", said Neeraj Sharma, Business Development Manager - Indian sub continent, William Grant & Sons India.

This independent family-owned distiller, founded by William Grant in 1886, happens to be in the hands of the fifth generation of his family.

Das, as he commented on the ongoing single malt trend in DDFS, said that Glenfiddich, Glenlivet, Glenmorangie and Talisker were currently topping the charts. "It is very common to see someone talking on the phone and asking 'What do you want me to get,' something that wasn't seen a few years ago." So if you have had a taste of a 12, 15 or an 18 year old whisky, it's time to try the 30-year-old which comes with perks as bright as your drink!

Pick up a Balvenie 30-year-old or a Glendfiddich that's as old and treat 10 friends in the comfort of your home

## CHECKLIST

ADILA MATRA checks out the best holiday deals and must-visit destinations

### The Leela Goa all dolled up



THE Leela Goa has completed its refurbishment and announced a summer package starting from ₹ 8,500 for a lagoon terrace room for a couple. The new lagoon suites can accommodate two adults and two children below the age of 12. The resort's new dining destination, The Restaurant, will have live kitchens serving Indian, Asian and Western cuisines. The summer packages include airport transfers, one buffet breakfast per person, and complimentary use of the steam bath/sauna and swimming pool.

☐ **SOTC has announced customised North/South American holidays for this summer to enable travellers to plan their own routes and structure their vacations, the way they want it. One can opt for one of these packages: three nights in Buenos Aires (starting price: \$445, or ₹ 22,775, per person on twin-sharing basis); three nights in Honolulu (\$695, or ₹ 35,665); two nights in Las Vegas (\$345, or ₹ 17,691); two nights in Niagara (\$335, or ₹ 17,173); three nights in St Lucia (\$835, or ₹ 42,811); and six nights in Alaska (\$2,226, or ₹ 11,587). It includes accommodation with breakfast, arrival airport transfer, and all must-do sightseeing as per itinerary. To book, call 1800-209-3344 or visit [www.sotc.in](http://www.sotc.in)**

### Irish visa waiver extended

IRELAND has announced the extension of the short-stay visa waiver programme for a further four years. The waiver, which was originally due to continue until the end of October 2012, lets you enter Ireland without a visa if you have a valid UK visa and have first lawfully entered the UK, including Northern Ireland.

### Heritage break in Sandur



WELCOMHERITAGE has announced the opening of a new hotel, Shivavilas Palace at Sandur in Karnataka. The destination is five hours away from Bangalore. The palace has two floors with 12 rooms, including two grand suites and a regular suite. The other amenities are regional and multi-cuisine dining and the 'Jungle Bar', which serves drinks that were popular in the early 1900s. The sightseeing options include Daroji bear sanctuary, Tungabhadra Dam and Kumaraswami Temple. For details, visit [www.welcomheritagehotels.com](http://www.welcomheritagehotels.com)

### Amari's Songkran package

EXPERIENCE the Thai New Year, the 'festival of water' (or Songkran), at Amari Boulevard Bangkok, Amari Watgate Bangkok, Amari Palm Reef Koh Samui and Amari Orchid Pattaya. Amari Boulevard Bangkok has a package for two nights in a superior room, starting from Baht 6,699 (₹ 10,907), available from April 9 to 22. You can participate in the Songkran activity at the lobby during April 13-15, shop around the city with a one-day BTS Sky travel pass, and have a Thai set dinner at the Season Thai restaurant. For details, visit [www.amari.com](http://www.amari.com)

☐ **EZEEO1.com has a five-night, six-day Russia package priced at ₹ 86,562 per person on a twin-sharing basis. It includes accommodation for two nights at Hotel Holiday Inn Lesnava in Moscow with breakfast and three nights in St Petersburg at Hotel Crowne Plaza Ligovsky, plus two Indian lunches in Moscow and St Petersburg, all sightseeing tours in Moscow and St Petersburg, and a day train from Moscow to St Petersburg. For more, visit [www.ezeego1.co.in](http://www.ezeego1.co.in)**