

Holi Festival

Mar 6

We could all use a little more colour in our lives, and what better time and place to do so than at India's Festival of Colours? For one day each year, the entire country turns into a riot of rainbow as people run around the streets and throw paint powder and coloured water at one another. Regardless of whether you're rich or poor, young or old, male or female, friends or strangers, as long as you dare to step out into the street, you're fair game.

Also known as the Festival of Love, Holi is a time for forgiveness and repayment. Traditional snacks such as gujiya (a sweet dumpling filled with a dairy product called khoya) and mathri (a biscuit made with maida flour) are consumed, and people visit friends and family in the evenings. While it is celebrated across India – as well as many surrounding countries – the heart of the action takes place in the Braj region, particularly in the city of Mathura, which is believed to be the birthplace of Vishnu.

The Hindu festival originated from the legend of Prahlada, the son of the evil king Hiranyakashipu. He defied his father's orders and insisted on staying faithful to Lord Vishnu. When Hiranyakashipu's sister, Holika, tricks Prahlada into a pyre hoping to kill him, Vishnu appears and instead executes both his father and sister. Holi is named after Holika, who was burned to death, and the bonfire that's usually lit on the eve of the festival, called Holika Dahan, is a symbol of good triumphing over evil. So go forth and paint the town red – and whatever other colour – we say! **Gwen Pew**

Get there Malaysia Airlines flies to Delhi with one stopover from \$296. From there, it takes around two hours to get to Mathura by train.



Checking in

Wong Yoon Sann rounds up three hotels that have either recently opened or reopened following extensive refurbishment.

GRAND HYATT TAIPEI

In celebration of its 25th anniversary, Grand Hyatt Taipei – nestled in the commercial centre of the Xinyi district – launches its revamped lodging this month, with 853 new rooms that fuse Western and Chinese styles.

At the top of the line is the presidential suite, which occupies more than 221 square metres and looks out to views of the Taipei 101 Tower. A Grand Club has also been introduced; it offers members personalised service, a lounge and meeting rooms for business travellers.

2 SongShou Rd, Taipei, Taiwan (+886 2 2720 1234, www.hyatt.com). Rates start from \$405 per night.

THE ITC GRAND BHARAT

Surrounded by rolling hills, this resort with a wellbeing slant comprises 100 luxury suites and four villas within a wooded estate that includes a 27-hole golf course.

The resort's spa offers indigenous treatments

such as the Manipura vitality massage, which releases anxiety and boosts energy. And if that won't amp up your chakra, the hotel's restaurants serve up a range of cuisines that promote swasthya – the idea of eating food that is beneficial for the body.

Hasanpur, Tauru, District Mewat 122 105, Haryana, India (+91 1267 285500, www.itchotels.in/itcgrandbharat). Rates start from \$500 per night.

SANCTUM INLE RESORT

This off-the-beaten-track monastic boutique resort lies three hours from Yangon and boasts 95 rooms, from the basic cloister classic to abbey and hermitage suites that overlook Myanmar's famed Inle Lake.

Its sanctuary suite packs two king bedrooms plus a living room with sweeping vistas of the nearby mountains. But don't just stare – go ahead and visit them. The resort conducts eight full- or half-day tours, such as a cycling excursion to the Red Mountain Estate winery or a visit to the ancient temples of Kakku.

Maing Thauk Village, Inle Lake, Nyaung Shwe Township (+95 0 1 860 4945, www.sanctum-inle-resort.com). Rates start from \$648 per night.



Grand Bharat