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天堂之外 Heaven & Earth

印度南部有很多富丽堂皇的皇宫，也有不少一贫如洗的贫民窟。在悬殊的差距下，你可以深爱它，也可以掩面而逃。但印度仍是印度，作为文明古国，其深厚的文化和历史积淀，始终让人流连。

TEXT 林方伟 / LIM FONG WEI PHOTO THE LEELA PALACE HOTELS AND GETTY IMAGES



(1) Built on 400 acres of land, the Bangalore Palace was used by the Mysore Maharaja as his family summer palace. Inspired by the Windsor castle, this palace, was completed in 1944 after 82 years, incorporated Tudor and Gothic elements beautifully rendered in the windows, foiled windows, courtyard and arches. 1944年建成的班加罗尔皇宫是迈索尔帝王的夏季行宫，建筑灵感取自英国温莎城堡，其窗口、庭院和拱门等优美地展现都铎和歌德建筑风格。

(2) The courtyard of the Bangalore Palace is doused in vibrant and eye-catching coloured tiles. 班加罗尔皇宫殿院色彩斑斓，叫访客驻足观赏。(Photo: 林方伟)

(3) A blue-turbaned guardian god perches gracefully on his staff. The gopurams, or monumental towers decorated by sculptures of deities, at Kapaleeswara Temple, are a sight to behold. 卡帕里斯瓦拉庙是印度真奈市中心最大的印度湿婆神庙。庙宇高37米的众神高塔门饰上有一位缠着蓝头巾，状似守护使者的男神靠在神仗上，手托着腮堕入冥想，神情柔和又尊贵。

印度最顶级，最奢华的酒店就叫皇宫。在印度，要深入体验何谓奢华，就得入住皇宫。我的南印度之旅从印度里拉 (Leela) 酒店集团旗下、位于真奈 (Chennai) 和班加罗尔 (Bangalore) 的两家皇宫展开。南印度不少上流活动都聚集在这两座皇宫——前者是凭《贫民富翁》夺下两座奥斯卡的真奈作曲家A.R.拉曼举办私人派对和盛宴的首选；后者是国际名流前法国总统萨科齐和夫人布鲁尼、旅美印度心灵导师乔布拉 (Deepak Chopra) 和汤姆克鲁斯 (Tom Cruise) 拜访印度时的住处。里拉皇宫作为世界数一数二的顶级酒店，是国际Preferred酒店集团皇冠上的宝石。

未曾体验印度帝皇气派的酒店，还真不知何谓奢华。印度人比任何人都懂得奢华，他们的富丽堂皇有种深入精髓的纯正和真实感，不会让人觉得浮夸虚假。这也难怪，他们的血液里流着几个世纪的王朝，贵气难自弃。直到1947年独立时，印度仍有600多个诸土邦，由世代王公和帝王割据管辖。印度显赫王朝可追溯到16世纪，身体流着中亚波斯和蒙古血统。成吉思汗后裔蒙兀儿侵略印度，成为印度大君 (Maharaja)，其帝国王朝从1570年兴盛至1857年近三个世纪。这些王朝的极尽奢华至今仍如魂萦旧梦，在顶级酒店里风华再现。

里拉皇宫酒店并非由旧皇宫改造而成，而是遵照印度各地皇宫的建筑和装潢特色而建。里拉真奈皇宫 (Leela Palace Chennai) 建在该地王公贵族的私人土地上，从花园能遥望贵族的私家城堡。

若你是个喜爱精致装潢的人，那你会像我一样在偌大的酒店里流连忘返。其实精致已不足以形容他们的装潢，正确的是：每一个细节都是最高艺术和工艺的展现。里拉真奈皇宫从真奈切蒂纳德 (Chettinad) 豪邸建筑文化吸取精华，展现印度切蒂亚尔族 (Chettiar, 也称柴提亚族) 的贵族风范。切蒂亚尔族属于印度世袭四个阶级中的商贷精英阶级，在印度拥有崇高的地位，是主宰和影响南印度丰富传统文化的灵魂族群。他们早年驱船携带印度丰富物产到海外交易，把世界各地的豪华奢侈品带回家，为此他们的豪邸以极尽奢华著名。切蒂亚尔的家宛如私人万国艺廊，在里头你能看到来自意大利的巨大水晶吊灯、整面墙的比利时镜饰、缅甸的上等柚木。切蒂亚尔屋内外的走廊皆由各色镶花大理石装饰，大门框是细致精雕的花纹，美轮美奂。

这些元素都淋漓尽致地体现在里拉真奈皇宫里。酒店入口的露天院子是一面巨大的水池，映照墙面上巨大的“生命之树”雕塑，“树”上镶嵌蓝宝石，大堂里圆浑巨榫形的柚木柱便是切蒂纳德豪宅的特色。宴会厅内外由“提克里”镜片装饰，这是南印度悠久的传统手艺，需要工匠亲手一小片一小片地镶嵌成一整片墙般大小的版图。厅内高挂11英尺的水晶吊灯，走廊上毫不手

软地挂着古董布画，让住客贴近贵族真迹。酒店招牌南印度餐馆Jamavar的私人包厢天花板采用18K纯金箔和银箔雕绘饰花，传统工匠得花超过一星期时间耐心地一层一层绘上，制造立体的浮雕效果。

印度是个贵贱、贫富同体的国度，天堂和凡间、皇宫和贫民窟就在身畔。里拉真奈皇宫面向真奈市内13公里长的滨海沙滩，套房窗口面向宁静的孟加拉湾，视线从右稍移到左，贫民渔村映入眼帘。然而在这皇宫外，乱糟糟的尘世才是印度丰盛悠久的历史，那才是印度人精神的财富。到真奈岂能足不出皇宫？

真卡帕里斯瓦拉庙是真奈市中心最大的印度湿婆神(Lord Shiva)庙宇。卡帕里斯瓦拉庙至今已有350年历史，庙宇以达罗毗荼(Draavidian)建筑和雕塑建成，碑铭可追溯至公元13世纪。两座37米高塔门饰布满不计其数的精致雕刻，描绘印度教神话故事，展现南印度寺庙建筑精湛的神采。我赤足站立神塔前，眼睛忙碌地欣赏一尊尊栩栩如生的神明，终于让我找到一尊我最喜爱的：一位缠着头巾，状似守护者的男神靠在神仗上，手托着腮堕入冥想，神情柔和又尊贵。

印度神庙在印度土地上天经地义，但让我惊讶的是耶稣的门徒圣多默(Saint Thomas)竟也在真奈留下深深的足迹。这位质疑耶稣复活神迹而出名的门徒传说在公元52年从以色列来到印度喀拉拉传道，不少当地人因他而信教，也洗了礼。他不幸在公元72年死于箭下，在真奈的圣多默山殉道。他的遗骸最后被带离印度，但真奈人在他的坟墓上建造了圣多默圣殿(San Thome Basilica)纪念这位印度的守护圣徒。英国人在1893年重建这座教堂。这座被当地人称为白教堂的罗马天主教堂现今仍非常兴旺。就是在这里，我观赏了一场印度天主教婚礼。

印度纱丽之美享誉全球。到真奈不可错过到有85年历史的丝绸纱丽百货店“奈丽”(Nalli)一游。踏入这里宛如走进一个五彩缤纷，由金线、珠片、珠儿和最顶级的丝绸打造出来的花花世界。店员取下一捆捆的高级纱丽布料展示给待嫁娘。其中一捆海棠色丝绸纱丽开满由金线绘绘的花朵，金光闪闪叫我睁不开眼睛。这纱丽重达4



公斤，售价1500美金，用买一个名牌包包的价格居然能买到这华美的艺术品，物超所值。

下一站我来到班加罗尔。这里称为印度的硅谷，没什么旅游景点，最富盛名的迈索尔皇宫(Mysore Palace)是泰姬陵之后，参观人次第二多的印度皇宫，可惜从班加罗尔要驱车3小时才能抵达。或许如此，里拉班加罗尔皇宫(Leela Palace Bangalore)干脆把迈索尔皇宫“搬到”市中心。酒店参照迈索尔皇宫的回教、兴都教、拉吉普特和歌德风格而建，入口庭院美得令人窒息，透过雕琢华美的拱门欣赏绿意盎然的庭院花园，凉风阵阵，心旷神怡。

皇宫酒店外还有一座皇宫——1944年建成的班加罗尔皇宫市内难得一见，其都铎建筑风格使它常被误认为英国温莎城堡的“赝品”。它实为迈索尔帝王的夏季行宫，目前虽让公众买票参观，但仍属于他后代所有。皇宫保养不善，但内部精美的瓷砖和家具得以让人一窥当年王室的生活形态。幽暗的楼梯挂满了裸女油画，与另两面挂满王室家族相片的墙，相映成趣。

走出皇宫，我参加了一个行脚半日游团，导游亚润派专带来此城市出差的总裁级人物走入百姓区，让他们体验奢华酒店以外，印度的另一面。班加罗尔市中心有个贫富的分界——新建成的君悦五星奢华酒店后，区区数步之遥便是贫民区。午后时分，贫民区十分安静，站在交叉路中央，我右侧是一排排蔬果摊，后方是拴在屋前或木棚内的乳牛，眼神清澈，驯良可爱。我经过一排排的石灰屋，空气里弥漫着蔬果的鲜香，同时也闻到家家户户烹煮咖喱的香味，夹杂着垃圾和牛粪的臭味。悬殊的差距和平共处，哪个高尚哪个低劣，谁好谁坏，已分不清。几个没上课的小孩尾随我们，让我们拍照后开心地跑回家。我特别喜欢一个瘦瘦的小男孩。他腼腆安静地跟着我们，看到我们按下快门一脸的心满意足。我凑上前给他看我镜头中的他，他满足地笑了。那纯真的笑容像小区泥泞里埋着的宝石。我把它收好，带回家。⑨



In India, they take the words “royal treatment” seriously. When its finest hotels are called “palaces”, you expect to be surrounded by opulence fit for a king – and seldom come away disappointed. For many luxury travelers, the discovery of the country’s regal heritage begins at one of these fairy-tale abodes.

Mine certainly did. I started my discovery of South India with the Leela Palace Chennai and the Leela Palace Bangalore. The former is the “palace” of choice for A. R. Rahman, the Oscar-winning music composer for Slumdog Millionaire, a Chennai resident who has thrown lavish private parties at its opulent event hall; the latter has served as entry points for the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni, as well as celebrities such as Deepak Chopra and Tom Cruise. There are four Leela Palaces in India and two more are in the pipeline, all crown jewels of the Preferred Hotel Group, to which other respected members such as Singapore’s Fullerton Hotel and Fullerton Bay Hotel belong.

Authenticity was the first word that came to my mind when describing Indian luxury. More so than anywhere else, the delivery of luxury is so much a part of the Indians’ cultural DNA. As recent as up to

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its independence in 1947, India was ruled by rajas and maharajas, the Sanskrit titles for great kings. It consisted of more than 600 princely states, some of whose legacy could be traced back to the 16th century, when the Mughal Maharaja of Persian and Mongolian descent (with an ancestry tracing back to Genghis Khan) invaded the Indian subcontinent and heralded the Mughal empire which lasted from 1570 to 1857.

Today, while the maharajas' royal descendants have lost their ruling powers, their wealth and lands have been a springboard to their ascent as business tycoons, and the legacy of their royal lifestyle can still be felt in the conduct of India's five- and even six-star luxury hotels.

Luxury From Around The World

The Leela Palaces are not historically palaces, but they may as well be, since they are often built on the architectural principles unique to the palaces in their regions. The Leela Palace Chennai is even built on palatial grounds. From the back of the hotel, you can peek into the private palace of the former royal family which still owns the land.

You can spend hours wandering in the guest areas of the palatial hotel, marveling at the intricacies of its interior and fittings. The hotel's architecture and interior is richly inspired by the palatial elements from the Chettinad dynasty. The Chettiars are traditionally the elite mercantile and banking castes in South India often referred to as the spout from whence the rich south Indian culture springs. The Chettiars were well known for their mansions eclectically decorated by chandeliers from Italy, wall-to-wall mirrors from Belgium, European crystals, teak from Burma, and other precious goods obtained through trade.

A Chettinad courtyard house often showcased intricate inlaid parquet marble floors within the inner and outer verandas, as well as elaborate Burmese teak carvings around entrances. The hotel magnificently pays homage to these Chettinad traditions: its courtyard wall features a Tree of Life sculpture encrusted in blue gemstones overlooking a huge reflecting pool. The lobby's beautiful vase-like teak pillars are unmistakably Chettinad. Its event halls and corridors are adorned with Thikrie mirror tiles, painstakingly hand-laid into

traditional patterns by craftsmen. Antique tapestries are framed and placed in hallways and hotel guests can admire them in close proximity; 3m-tall chandeliers hang from the ceilings of event halls and in a private dining room within Jamavar, the hotel's signature South Indian restaurant, the ceiling where these chandeliers hang from are adorned with a 18K gold and silver painting, which took a week to create. The plates that hold your bar of soap in the bathroom have mother-of-pearl generously embedded in them.

Far richer than these luxuries is the legacy of South India's culture and history.

I visited Kapaleeswara Temple, Chennai's famous Shiva temple rebuilt 350 years ago in the Dravidian style, an epicentre around which Mylapore is built. It remains today a living place of worship. Typical to southern Indian temples, Kapaleeswara's entrance and inner courtyard have two awe-inspiring gopurams, or monumental towers, that rise as high as 37m, each decorated by uncountable sculptures of deities. I could gaze at these beautifully life-like figures for hours and, like most visitors, enjoyed a little game of spotting my favourites. I particularly liked a blue-turbaned guardian god who perches himself on his staff. There is such gentle grace and regality even as he is taking a break from his task.

What I did not expect to find was an ancient basilica with a direct lineage to Jesus Christ. Today, it is a thriving Catholic cathedral. I witnessed a wedding mass at the San Thome Basilica built on top of the tomb of Saint Thomas (yes, the doubting one), one of Jesus' apostles who was believed to have come to India in 52 AD and baptised several people who are ancestors to today's Saint Thomas Christians or Nasranis. The evangelist died by the spears near Madras and was made a martyr in 72 AD. His relics had been moved out of India but he is known by Indian Christians as the patron saint of India. Hence, the basilica may appear relatively new as the British had





rebuilt it in 1893, but its soul is as old as Christianity.

I made a stop at Nalli, one of Chennai's oldest silk saris boutique. The 85-year-old six-level sari emporium near the Mambalam Railway Station is the purveyor of the finest and most ornate saris, hand-woven and made from fine gold threads, sequins and beadings. The staff unfurled a fuchsia sari before me and I was nearly blinded by the gold in the threads used to create its floral design. The sari weighs about 4kg and costs US\$1,500 (S\$1,900).

A large part of India's richness lies in the length and breadth of its complex dichotomy. Back at the Leela Palace Chennai, which is built facing Chennai's 13km Marina Beach, the suites offer magnificent urban ocean views. But turn your gaze just slightly and a fishermen's slum comes into view. Outside the cosseted comfort of the hotel lies the chaos and poverty of Chennai. Such is the stark reality and spectrum of India, where one can go from palace to slum, heaven to earth in an instant.

Blown Back To The Past

Bangalore, my next stop, offers me respite from Chennai's chaos and humidity. Though the cosmopolitan city immersed in an IT boom boasts of cool temperate weather, the Silicon Valley of India is not well known as a tourist hub. The real deal is Mysore Palace, that does not quite sit in Bangalore's vicinity. The second most-visited site in India next to the Taj Mahal, it is more than a three-hour ride away from the city.

Intriguingly, the many foreign dignitaries and CEOs who visit Bangalore for business are still greeted by the striking likeness of the famous palace. The Leela Palace Bangalore is a literal representation of the Mysore Palace, which is a blend of Muslim, Hindu, Rajput and western Gothic styles. The hotel walkways and interiors are decorated by breathtaking and ornate archways and massive gothic pillars. The hotel courtyard incorporates ancient architectural wisdom which creates a natural wind tunnel. On most mornings, guests can stand near the ornate courtyard and feel transported by the breezes to the country's ancient past. Its iconic Islamic domes are lit up by countless bulbs at night, just like the Mysore Palace.

Bangalore Palace, the palatial site that lies closest to the southern Indian city, is really a 1944 Tudor-style mansion often mistaken to be a replica of the Windsor Castle in England. Built as a summer palace and currently owned by the scion of the Mysore royal family, the quaint palace still appears regal despite the wear on its edges. As we navigate through the palace, which the prince still inhabits in wings closed off to the public, some stairwells are lined with oil paintings of erotic nudes, while others are filled with images of past rajyas and the royal family.

To scratch beneath the surface of Bangalore, I joined a walking tour conducted by Arun Pai, an engaging storyteller who specialises in offering foreign CEOs a snapshot of India's cultures and history outside the walls of their hotels. You do not come to Bangalore to see a building, you come to experience 1,000 years of history all within four miles of the Leela, says Arun. "We live across different centuries all at the same time," he adds like a time-travelling sage.

Beyond the new Hyatt hotel, which serves as a watershed point between the haves and the have-nots, our guide prepared us mentally for the change in scenery ahead in what turned out to be my favourite experience of Bangalore.

Fresh vegetable and fruit stands lined the streets, while cows grazed in sheds or in front of homes, as the smell of home cooking lifted by the fragrance of ghee filled the air, interspersed with the stench of rotting rubbish and cow dung. Curious kids tailed us, happy to just have their photos taken, maybe because it brings them closest to the tech toys that are otherwise elusive to them.

During that walk, a barefoot child followed our group shyly, content to have his photos taken and made no demands. I stooped down to show him the photo I had taken of him, of what he looked like through my eyes. His genuine sweet smile upon seeing his images is a priceless memory for me. Through his eyes, I thought I had caught a glimpse of a little prince that roams this royal land.

1 Leela Palace Chennai
Adyar Seaface, M.R.C Nagar,
Raja Annamalai Puram, Chennai 60002

2 Leela Palace Bangalore
23, Old Airport Road, Kodihalli,
Bangalore, Karnataka 560008

3 Nalli Silks Sarees
AA-13, II Avenue, Annanagar, Chennai 600040

4 San Thome Basilica
19/38, Santhome High Road,
Mylapore, Chennai 600004

5 Bangalore Palace
Vasant Nagar, Bangalore, Karnataka 560052

(4) Young women praying at Kapaleeswara Temple in Chennai. The famous Shiva temple, which was rebuilt 350 years ago, remains today a thriving place of worships for Southern Indians. 卡帕里斯瓦拉庙已有350年历史，仍香火兴旺，年轻的女信徒虔诚跪拜。

(5) San Thome Basilica, boasting direct lineage to Jesus Christ, stands as a living testament to Chennai's religious and cultural richness. It is built on top of the tomb of Saint Thomas, Jesus' famous doubting apostle, who was believed to have traveled to India in 52 AD, baptised several people and was killed by spears in 72 AD. 耶稣的门徒圣多默传说在公元52年从以色列来到印度喀拉拉传道。公元72年他死于箭下，真奈人在他的坟墓上建造了圣多默圣殿纪念这位印度的守护圣徒。英国人在1893年重建这座教堂。

(6) The impressive Leela Palace Bangalore's courtyard is a sight to behold. The hotel's architecture and interior is inspired by the Mysore Palace. 里拉真奈皇宫参照迈索尔皇宫而建。入口庭院雕琢华美的拱门框住绿意盎然的花园，美如天堂。

(7) Leela Palace Chennai's interior is richly inspired by the palatial elements from the Chettinad dynasty. The Chettiars are traditionally the elite mercantile and banking castes in South India were well known for their eclectic decorated mansions. 里拉真奈皇宫从真奈切蒂纳德豪邸建筑文化吸取精华。切蒂亚尔族属于印度世袭中的商贾精英贵族。他们早年驱船到海外交易，把世界各地的豪华奢侈品带回家，为此他们的豪邸以极尽奢华著名。

Journal

TEXT 林方伟

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这幢位于希腊Out of the Blue Capsis Elite度假村的独栋私人别墅称作“黑珍珠”当之无愧，因为它正如黑珍珠一样珍奇罕有。度假村位于希腊克里特 (Crete) 岛上约16万7000平方米的私密半岛，拥有5个不同主题与风格的酒店。其中**黑珍珠私人别墅** (The Black Pearl Residence) 是全希腊绝无仅有的豪华独栋度假屋，也是 Preferred Hotel 集团下顶级奢华的别墅之一。

“黑珍珠”单是面积就有510平方米。它高度私密，户内外有两个私人泳池，设施包括私人影院、饭厅、客厅、厨房、私人健身房、土耳其蒸汽浴室等，连管家都有自己的房间。主人房采用金色主题，选用雅致的意大利Boffi家具，拥有自己的按摩浴池，同时也连接私人泳池，浴池的木台上还能遥望希腊千



黑珍珠私人别墅的看台建在爱琴海上，坐拥无敌海景。

年古迹。“黑珍珠”真正的魅力在于它的私人双层木看台，直接搭建在充满神话传说的爱琴海上。巨大的看台能容纳80人，分成户外饭厅、日光浴床等三个部分，让人享受爱琴海就在你脚下的天人合一之境界。

在海角天涯与爱人面对着蓝天与海洋，步向红地毯的另一端是许多人心目中的完美婚礼。峇厘岛上的五星级度假村**日航酒店** (Nikko Bali Resort & Spa) 在40米高的悬崖上搭建婚礼设施，其中全玻璃打造的小教堂让新人面对着一片无垠的壮观印度海洋证婚，成为不少待嫁娘婚嫁地点的首选。和许多峇厘岛上的度假村不同的是，Nikko高踞悬崖40米，坐拥壮观海景，在岛上非常稀有。Nikko今年还投入数百万资金添设新设施，最新推出的是19幢独栋海景与花园景观度假屋及别墅——包括7栋一房式海景泳池别墅、10栋一房式泳池别墅、1栋两房式皇家别墅，以及1栋三房式塞姆泰拉别墅。悬崖上也加建了面海的多用途宴会厅。浪漫、悠闲、瑰丽，加上现有的Mandara水疗中心、骑骆驼探险、森林扎营等活动，更让它成为新婚夫妇的梦想度假乐园。

以往想起温泉之旅就想起日本和台湾，其实中国也有泡汤放松身心的好地点。悦榕集团 (Banyan Tree) 在重庆开设旗下第一家温泉酒店，位于重庆北碚，坐落自然保护区内，依偎缙云山山脚下，温泉水引自重庆北温泉区，周恩来、邓小平等都曾到此下榻小憩。重庆北温泉景区有超过千年历史，前身是温泉寺，建于423年的南朝刘宋景平元年，中国企业家卢作孚更于1927年在此创办嘉陵江温泉公园。**重庆北碚悦榕庄** 有107间套房及别墅，每间房都有私人温泉泡池，泉水引自这里的天然温泉，赋予住客温润且私密的泡汤体验。除此之外，酒店内的悦榕Spa也设有9个室内及室外温泉泡池，给予住客多元化的泡汤愉悦。酒店距重庆江北国际机场与重庆市区40分钟与50分钟车程。住客除了泡汤还能寻幽探密，攀登缙云山，参观千年古刹，泛舟嘉陵江上，品尝在地美食。



日航酒店建在悬崖上，玻璃小亭让一对新人面对海洋浪漫证婚。



在重庆北碚悦榕庄，每间客房都有私人温泉泡池。