

The Natural Wonders of India, Being a Food Detective, Part 2

In the weeks leading up to World Vegan Day, travel writer, author, and consultant chronicles his journey across different cities of India in part 2 of a travelogue ridden with herbivorous cuisine and picturesque scenery.



Guest
Contributor

Published: 18th October 2021 12:32 pm

IST



By Murli Menon

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING
BELOW

Being a food detective, it was interesting to know the ingredients that went into Indian street food, which is a Rs. 10,000 crore industry. I spoke to hawkers, cooks, waiters separately on different days just to reconfirm the ingredients that went into street food. Most of the hawkers were honest

and were not aware of my objective in asking the questions, so they replied truthfully. Being a trained ZeNLP master I could analyse their body language, eye movement and breathing patterns to reject the few outrageous liars. The proof of the banana is in its eating and as I am allergic to even micrograms or even picograms or nanograms of animal products in any food, I could make out the culprits from the aroma of the food.

ADVERTISEMENT

A DIVISION OF MS EDUCATION ACADEMY

MS JUNIOR COLLEGE

Perfect Career Launchpad

ADMISSIONS OPEN

Malakpet (IOE) : 66754422	Charminar (B) : 24572882
Malakpet (B) : 24556122	Tolichowki (G) : 23568422
Shalibanda (G) : 24578681	Mehdipatnam (G) : 66184422
Mehdipatnam (IOE) : 66904422	Suncity (G) : 9059910622
Masabtank (B) : 66778622	Aramgarh (B&G) : 9059887422
Midhani (G) : 24347728	
Malakpet (G) : 24411220	

CLICK HERE

www.mseducationacademy.in

BELOW

One of the greatest advantages of being a pure vegan is to be gifted with an extremely sensitive olfactory sense. I can smell a minute gas leak in any apartment of my multi-story building with amazing accuracy. Also, there is an activation of the latent DNA in every cell of the body which makes digestion efficient and increases the blood flow to the palate and activating the taste buds, to make eating a divine experience. Every morsel of food tastes heavenly, be it whole wheat puris (fried in oil) with alu-sabji (cooked in oil) I had in Benaras, hot steaming idlis and coconut chutney I had at Srisailam, steamed vegetable momos, I had at Rishikesh or the mint coriander chatni I had at Jasidih.

My taste-buds have taken a life of their own since I turned a strict vegan in 1995.



The wide array of street food being sold at the Kumbh was mind-boggling. However, as I was looking for 100 per cent pure vegan food, I could ignore the vast majority of foods which contained animal products. But there were some small pockets which made lip-smacking vegan food, cooked the traditional way. An example of these hidden wonders is seen in the photograph alongside. Fruits and vegetables were aplenty. Be it the numerous stalls selling fresh sweet-lime juice, nimbu-pani (lime juice) vendors or shops selling almonds, walnuts and raisins. I had the vegan street food only as a part of my research on vegan food. Most of my travels, I opted for fresh fruits, walnuts and raisins, This diet is known as a raw vegan diet in ZeNLP. Staying in a tent on the banks of the Holy Ganges was an experience in itself. Waking up at midnight to the soothing, gurgling sounds of flowing water, watching the starlit skies bathed in moonlight in biting cold will be etched on my psyche forever! Meditating on the tiny pebbles that carpeted the banks of the river made one connect to the primordial elements!

ADVERTISEMENT

Taking a dip in the Holy Ganges on the day of the eclipse was a soothing experience. One could feel the cosmic energy pervading the air as one walked along the river banks to watch the crimson sunset. One could also see the play of the elements as fire, water and earth played their parts to perfection. The fog, mist and frost in the morning representing the earth element, the flowing waters at noon, in the absence of the sun, representing the water element and the crimson sunset was a fitting finale for the fire element. The calmness, serenity, peace and quietness experienced while meditating on a bed of stones while watching the river rapids connects one to the macrocosm is unparalleled. It reminded me of my trek to Kailash Mansarovar along the banks of the Kali River, where I had meditated on giant slabs of stone which were strewn along the river banks.



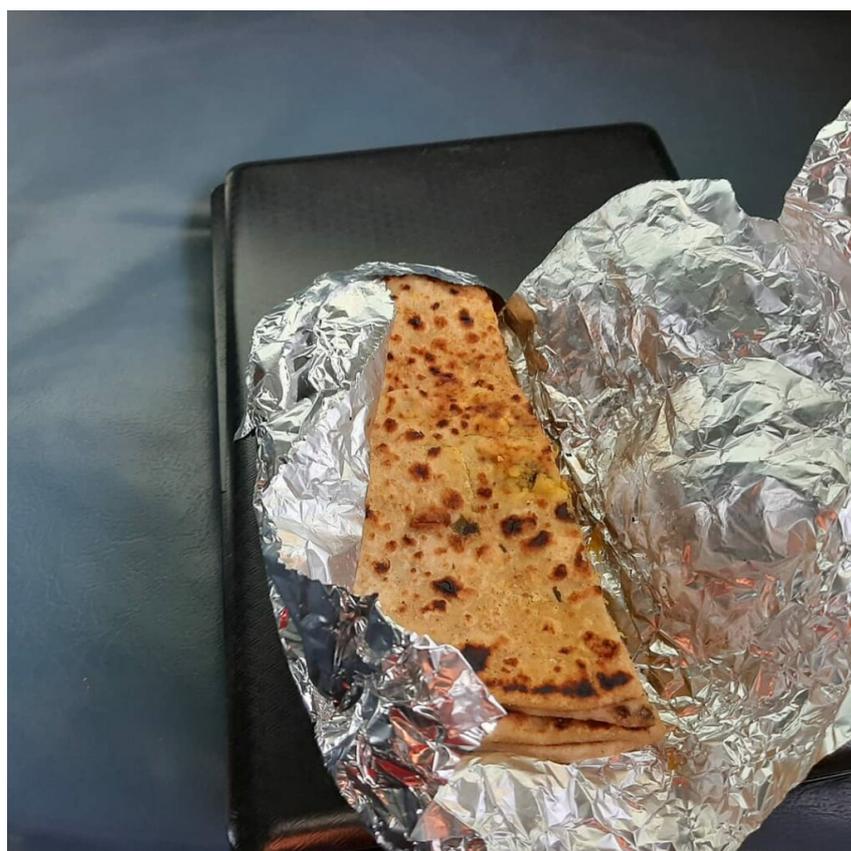
Impromptu showers were my constant companion during my trek through Rishikesh to Haridwar. After spending a week, exploring the vegan food here, I boarded the Haridwar-Allahabad Express for a foggy journey through the Gangetic plain. Along the way, the only choice for vegans was fresh or dried fruits. As a thumb rule, I never eat food catered by Indian Railways unless I can see it being cooked in front of me. I prefer the fresh fruits sold by the vendors who frequent the train at the smaller stations on the way. This does mean going without food for many hours or sometimes even days. But being used to water-fasting for three days at a stretch, I do not feel unduly perturbed during long train journeys.

The journey from Haridwar to Allahabad was made pleasant by the warmth of my co-passengers, who made me feel comfortable. I also learnt a great deal about potential places to visit in order to complete my research for my book on authentic Indian vegan street food! I planned to visit Benares from Allahabad for a week. After taking a dip in the Ganges on three of the most auspicious days including Makar Sankranti, Surya Grahan and Mouni Amavasya days, I reached

Allahabad at early morning on Saraswati Puja Day. A dip at the “Triveni Sangam” (confluence point of the Ganga, Saraswati and Yamuna) when the waters were shrouded with dense fog was a close encounter with mother nature. Also, the boat trip through the rivers had hundreds of migrating Wild Geese surrounding our tiny paddle boat. The banks of Triveni Sangam were not as crowded as the ghats at Haridwar and Rishikesh. However, the vegan street food at Allahabad was no less delicious than the plethora of vegan food I had eaten at the Kumbh Mela. After spending a few days at Allahabad, I took the UPSRTC bus to Benaras. I kept my eyes open and my camera ready for vegan street food throughout my journey!

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING
BELOW



The soothing sound of the oar moving through the waters broke the silence at dawn and the chirping of the wild geese, as we gently paddled through the placid waters of this translucent ocean, still rings in my ears. The power to deeply relax is within you and in a few minutes one can be in a deep state of relaxation by mentally visualising this serene experience. The boat trip to the Triveni Sangam on a cold and foggy January morning has become one such tranquil experience, hidden deeply within!

Boating on the Holy Ganges at Benares is different from river rafting from Rishikesh to Kaudiyala or paddling at Triveni Sangam. There are numerous river islands on the opposite side of the river at Benaras. Spending a day at one of these uninhabited islands, meditating to the tune of nature was one of the highlights of my 5,000 KM journey across India. The Benarasi Alu Dum was perfectly vegan, as the boiled baby potatoes tempered with Indian spices were cooked in mustard oil. One could get a variety of sprouts which were served with a dash of lime juice, mildly spiced and flavoured with either wild mint leaves or freshly chopped coriander. Fresh fruits and vegetables were available in plenty at Rishikesh, Haridwar, Allahabad and Benares. The walnuts, raisins, rajma and almonds bought at Rishikesh stood out for their excellent quality and taste! Roasted sweet potatoes were another street-side snack which I relished throughout my trip! Lime juice vendors made my day during the long bus journeys. I do not drink any prepackaged water and filled up my water bottle with fresh water (taken from natural sources) at all destinations, be it the mountain streams at Kaudiyala, river rapids at Rishikesh or the flowing waters at Haridwar, Allahabad, Benares and Jasidih.

Benares retains a charm of its own and brings back memories of a long bygone era. One takes long walks at dawn and dusk, while enjoying the cold weather. Ice cold baths in the early hours of the morning and at sunset energise the body with much needed cosmic energy. However, one must be prepared to wait for the fog and mist to clear before taking a leisurely cruise on the river, in the afternoon. A day trip to the river islands with a hamper of fresh fruits and vegetables is an ideal way to relax while staying at Benares. Roasting vegetables in a fire kindled by igniting dried neem leaves imparts a herbal flavour to the roasted sweet potatoes.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING
BELOW



There are large uninhabited islands on the other bank of the Ganges at Benares. These islands are completely submerged during the monsoons and are unsuitable for permanent habitation. However, it is an ideal haven for large waterbirds who find a sanctuary in the wilderness. One can cross the river on a long-tailed boat in about two hours. The wide expanse of the river almost resembles a large lake or ocean. Meditating on these secluded islands was a divine experience. From Benares, I planned to travel to Jasidih in Jharkhand, via Allahabad. Jasidih is famous for the Chitrakoot mountains. I planned to trek up those hills to discover caves hidden along the way.

A lot of footwork was required to discover small eateries in the bylanes of old Benares, selling colourful and nutritious vegan food. A surprising thing noted at Benares, were the idli sellers in the morning, which made idlis as soft as cotton and served it with fresh coconut chutney flavoured with sautéed mustard seeds. This perfectly vegan breakfast charged me with enough energy for the rest of the day.

Murli Menon, is a travel writer, stress management consultant and author-based at Ahmedabad, India. He is the author of “ZeNLP-Learning through stories” published by The Written Word Publications, “ZeNLP-the power to succeed” published by Sage publications and “ZeNLP-the power to relax” by New Dawn Press. He can be reached at zenlp@rediffmail.com

CONTINUE READING
BELOW

- Tags
- Benares
- Haridwar
- travelogue
- vegan food



Subscribe us on Google News

Get the news updates on [WhatsApp](#) & [Telegram](#) by subscribing to our channels. For all the latest [Featured News](#) updates, download our app [Android](#) and [iOS](#).

TRENDING NEWS



Tejasswi Prakash, Karan Kundrra's 'wedding photo' goes viral



Hyderabad traffic police issues advisory ahead of flyover opening



6 Bollywood movies shot in Hyderabad that you didn't know about



Hyderabad: Police complaint filed to ban Rana Daggubati's Virata Parvam



Hyderabad siblings create 'Dovely', bike taxies exclusive for women



Direct Telangana govt to arrest Nupur Sharma: Lawyer writes to CJI



Here's how much Shah Rukh Khan charges to perform at a wedding



Shoaib Ibrahim announces sister Saba's wedding, details inside



Shoaib Malik, Sania Mirza feel proud as their son graduates

CONTRIBUTE

To contribute an article to Siasat Daily or enquire about syndication,

please write to newsdesk@siasat.com

We Have **70K+**
Profiles 
Registered
WorldWide

Register your profile at:
www.siasatmatri.com


سیاست
Siasat Matri

[About Us](#) [Editorial Standards](#) [Contact Us](#) [Advertise With Us](#) [Support](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Sitemap](#)

Copyright © Siasat Daily, 2022. All Rights Reserved