

# Silkwinds

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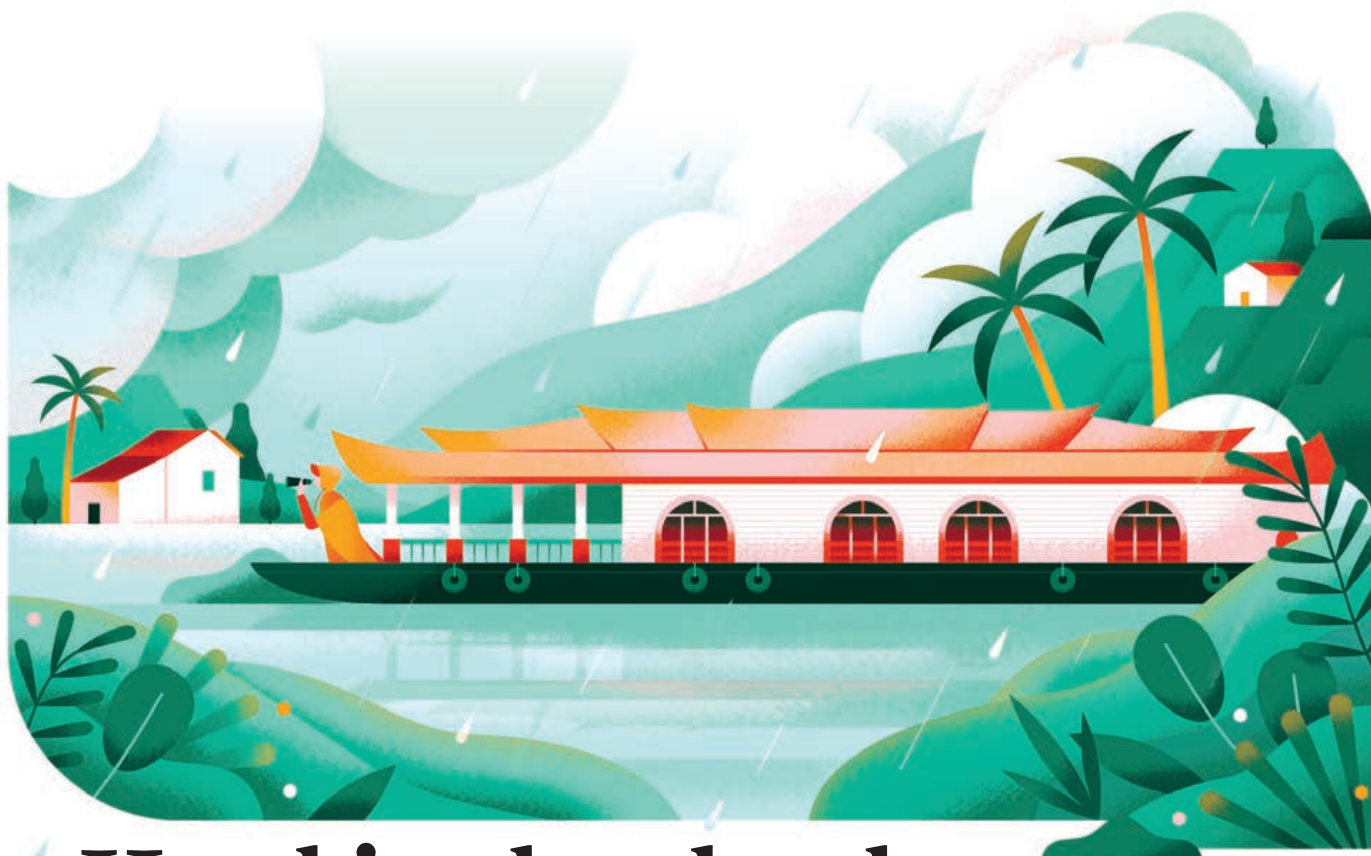
A JOY TO FLY WITH SILKAIR



Meet the hawkers preserving a taste of Singapore culture

## OFF THE GRID

Lose your mobile signal and reconnect with yourself in Darwin's Litchfield Park



# Head in the clouds

Writer Chaitali Patel celebrates the joys of monsoon-season travel

If there's one season that must be experienced in southern Asia, it's the monsoons. Though travellers from all over the world come to the tropics for sun, sand and sea, the period of daily rains is equally unmissable.

"Monsoon season is perhaps the best time to visit tropical destinations in Southeast Asia. The jostling crowds thankfully scatter as the first raindrops hit. It infuses a new life into these destinations, leaving them refreshed and renewed," says Jon Stonham, CEO of Elite Havens Group, a villa rental company. He adds, "The low-season rates are an added blessing!"

But great deals and thinner crowds are only the practical advantages of

embracing the rains. For seekers of beauty, the occasional delay or washed-out day is a small price for the chance to see oft-visited places in a new light.

For example, the arrival of the monsoon is a chance to enjoy the cooling power of the rains from the comfort of a luxury houseboat in Kerala or explore the thundering, replenished waterfalls in Coorg, a beautiful, five-hour drive from Bangalore. Outside Siem Reap, a few weeks of rain transforms the temples of Angkor Wat. The ancient structures gleam and glisten, the landscape turns an iridescent green, the moats fill with water and lotuses bloom in the hundreds. And in northern Thailand,

the terraced rice fields shimmer in the brief periods of sunshine that punctuate the rains, an idyllic experience to explore by bike.

Furthermore, being willing to get soaked can yield some once-in-a-lifetime encounters. On a rainy trek in the hills between Mumbai and Pune in 2008, I braved the slippery slopes and was treated to a rare sight of the bluish-purple karvi flower, which only blooms once in eight years.

Seeing it carpet the hillside was a sight I'd have missed had I stayed dry at home.

## Things to note about rainy-day travel



### Rain gear

A light rain jacket is fine for a constant drizzle. For outdoor activities, waterproof shoes are a must.



### Mosquitoes

More rain means more mosquitoes proliferate. Apply repellent to prevent bites and take necessary vaccines.



### Food:

Avoid eating raw produce during the monsoon as there is an added risk of water-borne diseases.