WAYFARER

1 FEBRUARY 2026 · VOL. 1 · NO. 2 · NEWSLETTER

EDITOR'S DISPATCH

February's theme is journeys for two, and we have taken it in the widest sense. It can mean a couple, or two friends, or a parent and a grown-up child. What matters is that someone is beside you to say, look at that.

We have gathered stories where a shared pace is part of the pleasure: three narrow-gauge railways that were built to climb hills one patient curve at a time, a gondolier's oar, a loco pilot's long career. None of these stories is ours; each comes from published reporting, and we say so on the page, with the names and dates.

- Gitanjali Gautam

LEAD STORY



Slow trains, high hills: India's mountain railways

Three narrow-gauge lines, three UNESCO listings and one good reason to book the window seats.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Tawang in Losar season: monasteries, passes and permits

A high Buddhist valley in the week of the Tibetan New Year, and how to arrive with the right paperwork.

Hampi: a ruined capital among the boulders

A vast World Heritage site on the Tungabhadra, best seen on foot, by bicycle and in early light.

Japan's snow festivals and the etiquette of the hot spring

Sapporo's giant sculptures run from 4 to 11 February. Pair them with the quieter pleasures of Hokkaido in winter.

Venice at Carnival: a mask, a canal and a plan

The 2026 Carnival runs from 31 January to 17 February. How to see it without drowning in the crowd.

The visa and document checklist

A one-page list to run through before you pay for anything non-refundable.

COMING UP (DATES APPROXIMATE - VERIFY)

Losar (Tibetan New Year)
Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim · 18 February 2026 (Year of the Fire Horse)

Goa Carnival
Panaji, Margao, Vasco and Mapusa, Goa · 13–17 February 2026; main Panaji parade 14 February

Khajuraho Dance Festival (52nd edition)
Western Group of Temples, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh · 20–26 February 2026

Holi (Holika Dahan and Rangwali Holi)
Mathura–Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh, and across India · Holika Dahan 3 March; Holi 4 March 2026

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

ONE PRACTICAL TIP

For any hill railway, book the window side early and carry a warm layer, because heritage coaches are small and mornings are cold.

YOUR TURN

What is the best meal you shared with someone on the road? Reply and tell us; we may feature your answer.

Read the full issue: travaah.com/magazine/2026-02/

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