



Carmic Circle

The Heritage Transport Museum, an interactive theatre with live shows and special rides, is all set to roll you back into history, writes **Florina Soren.**



BEAUTY PARADE: (left) Stunners line up for your eyes only; (top) railway saloon; (above) a close door horse carriage

From automobiles to a whole gamut of antique transportation treasures, the new venture of Tarun Thakral, Chief Operating Officer, Le Meridien hotel Delhi, also a vintage aficionado, is definitely a walk into India's glorious past. From bullock carts to palanquin and horse carriage, we can see the past unravelling right before our eyes.

Down Memory Lane

From a vintage car connoisseur and collector to a founder of India's latest transport museum, Thakral has come a long way. He started his career as an hotelier and was bitten by the antique bug during his studying days in Europe. The museums there fascinated him too. While he progressed in his hoteliering career and bringing Le Meridien hotel to greater heights, his passion for all that in antique grew with each passing day. For long he spent

his weekends and spare time among the vintage beauties that he collected from different corners of the country; some through auctions and others after sweeping the lanes and bylanes of nondescript country sides. The yearning to do something more and the thought that we must preserve our history ignited the new idea of starting a museum. "Old means of transport always ring a bell in our mind as we recall the days of our ancestors. There is always a link when we see an old Ambassador car or a Lambretta scooter. This is what will make this museum special," reveals Thakral.

The Heritage Transport Museum which is in its last leg is a treasure chest of everything that is antique and has been a part of Indian's rich transportation history, the oldest exhibit being a 1780 bullock cart. "The exhibits at the museum traces India's mode of transportation right from the Indus Valley Civilisation. There is everything from

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■ HAUTE WHEELS



WHEELS OF TIME: (above) A rare lithograph depicting primitive modes of mobility; (above) a restored 1946 Chevrolet Woodie

The museum also houses lithographs, stamps, first-day covers, toy vehicles, car models and anything that is related to India's transport history.



carts run on wooden wheels to vintage railway saloon and aircraft, all modes except marine," reveals Thakral.

Museum With A Difference

The Heritage Transport Museum is completely out-of-the box. With interactive sessions, live shows, programmes and mobile galleries, this is aimed at being a standalone destination for one and all. Located in Gurgaon, very close to the national capital the museum is set to be a favourite among corporate, school children as well as leisure visitors.

"The museum will also house lithographs, stamps, first-day covers, toy vehicles and anything that is related to India's transportation history," says Thakral proudly as he goes on to talk in detail about his much cherished dream. Elaborating about the unique features of this museum he says, "We have tried to create a total experience right from the moment you step into the museum complex. The short walk-way in front of the museum building will be dotted with old milestones (giving an old

world feeling), even the elevator gates are the old hand-pulled once, so that the visitor is taken back to that era of manual doors in the lifts. There are old vintage enamel signs put at various places."

Another special feature of the museum is the moving collection. Enthusiasts from all over the country will be housed to accommodate over 25 exhibits which will keep changing periodically. This way many other exhibitors from across the country will get a chance to showcase their collection and also help in adding freshness to the exhibitions. Features like bullock cart ride opens up a complete new experience for everyone. Even the walk-ways have been designed to resemble different period of history. The curator and his team is also working on the sound effects of the museum which will resemble the sounds of men walking, galloping horses and the sound of bullock carts passing by.

One Stop Destination

Apart from the over 100 historically significant modes of transport used in India, the museum has modern day facilities like conference hall and restaurants. "We are targeting the many automobile companies and other corporate houses in and around Gurgaon who can come here for their conferences and meetings," says Thakral. A fun place to visit, the museum is like a large parking bay with necessary traffic lines and pedestrian zebra crossings, interspersed with petrol pumps, seating spaces besides other visual display. The restaurants and special programmes that will be conducted in the museum will make it for an interesting day out for children and families. So next time you are in Delhi or Gurgaon on business, do spare a few hours to visit this museum on wheels. You will be amply rewarded. ▀

The Heritage Transport Museum

Ride back into history's highways and discover where it all began.

What To Look Out For

- Constantly changing smaller exhibits
- Donations of artifacts by fellow vintage enthusiasts
- Display of cars and motorcycles by fellow enthusiasts
- Weekend activities for children
- Seminars, workshops on restoration and preservation of old vehicles
- Memberships
- Special events as per various occasions

Interesting Memorabilia

- Old Children's Tricycles & Pedal Cars
- Old Lithographs/engravings on various modes of transportation used in India

- Old Original Photographs including rare Albumen prints
- Old Post Cards, stamps, first-day covers
- Old Rare Books on India's transport history
- Vintage Enamel Signs
- Vintage road/touring maps on India
- Vintage tin and die-cast toy vehicles
- Vintage vehicle advertisements from old Indian dailies & magazines
- Old Paper (Indian) - bills receipts, license copies, share certificates, etc
- Old Automobile spare parts in original boxes

Activities For Visitors

- Hot air balloon rides



- Ekka/ horse carriage rides
- Bullock cart and other animal transportation rides
- Painting cars
- How a Fossil Fuel Engine works
- Steam Engine and Motor Engine dissections
- Traffic School for children