



# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED | [www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)  
(Formerly known as PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS PVT. LTD.)

February 2020

Vol. : 5 | Issue : 6 | Pages : 52 | ₹ 200 RNI Regd. No. GUJENG/2015/70098

A high-end monthly magazine

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE | February 2020



Picture Perfect Gujarat

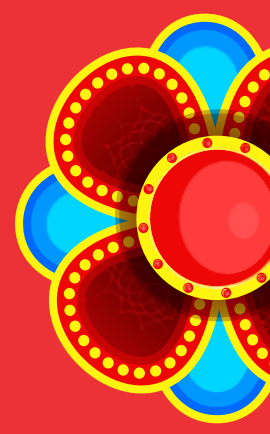
A New Look at Gujarat Tourism

Delectable Gujarati Cuisine



# Gujarat

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## *An ode to the State of Vibrant Colors*

Gujarat is home to several architectural marvels and is famous for its vibrant culture and rich heritage, apart from the scenic landscapes and mouth-watering cuisine. Offering a broad range of the most spectacular attractions, Gujarat, also known as 'The Land of Legends', presents a perfect blend of art, history, music and culture.

Being the sole home of the pure Asiatic Lions, Gujarat also offers splendid views of the scenic beauty ranging from the Great Rann of Kutch to the hills of Satpura. Apart from the picturesque landscapes and the more than 1600 kilometres long coastline, Gujarat also offers its tourists with some magnificent ancient cave paintings, historic murals, holy temples, historic capitals, wildlife sanctuaries, beaches, hill resorts and fascinating handicrafts.

Let's discover the glorious state of Gujarat!



# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

February 2020



## **Praveg Communications Limited**

(Formerly known as PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS PVT. LTD.)

102, Shanti Arcade, 132ft Ring Road,  
Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380013.

Tel.: +91-79-27496737, 99251 71538

e: [tourismone@praveg.com](mailto:tourismone@praveg.com)

[www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)

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[www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)

### **Editorial Team**

Prolina Barada

Priyanka Desai

### **Design Team**

Mahesh Patel

Yagnesh Bhavsar

Vipul Gadhavi

Himanshu Nayak

---

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### **FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES, CONTACT:**

[tourismone@praveg.com](mailto:tourismone@praveg.com)

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# GUJARAT THE LEGEND AT A GLANCE

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  -  BUDDHIST SITES
  -  FAIRS & FESTIVALS
  -  MODERN WONDERS
-  NATIONAL HIGHWAY  
 STATE HIGHWAY





# THE NEW LOOK OF TOURISM IN GUJARAT

A long coastline along with beaches, shore temples and sacred summits, palaces and forts, some of India's finest wildlife reserves and birdwatching sites, the unique white desert landscape of Kutch, colourful handicrafts, tribal villages and thriving cities, Gujarat is indeed a tourist paradise. Today, number of initiatives are bringing many destinations and tourism products into global spotlight.



# GIR ROARS

Gir, the last abode of the Asiatic lion, is one of the destinations that has recorded exponential growth of tourist flow in the last few years. Taj Group's The Gateway Hotel Gir Forest, rising up beside the Hiran River, does not look very different from other riverside resort hotels in India. But for the stakeholders in Gujarat's Tourism Industry, this hotel, opened in October 2011 by reviving a closed Taj hotel, is a landmark that reflects the growth in tourism that the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary has experienced in the last couple of years. Built by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation, this hotel was run as the Lion Safari Lodge by Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd in the 1980s and '90s before being taken over by the Taj Group and renamed as Gir Lodge. When Taj closed operations of this property in 2005-06, many felt this marked the end of tourism in Gir. "Today, we have re-opened this property under The Gateway brand

because we believe that Gir is a big destination in Gujarat and with our experience in the leisure segment, we feel we can explore its full potential", says P K Mohankumar, COO of The Gateway Hotels, "Since we have hotels in three cities of Gujarat, Gir is a logical extension of the state's experience". The property has been given a makeover with improved interiors, modern conveniences and a pleasantly located river-facing swimming pool. One of the highpoints of the property is the lounge upstairs looking out to a panoramic view of the river and forested hills.

Located in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, Gir Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park together encompass an area of over 1312 sq km, comprising deciduous and scrub forests, grasslands and water bodies. This wildlife reserve is the only protected habitat of the Asiatic lion, which numbers 411

according to the 2010 lion census, and most visitors do get to see one over a two or three stay at one of the properties in or around Sasan, the headquarters of the Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. It is also one of the likely places to see a leopard, with the census yielding a substantial figure of over 300 in the reserve. The permissible driving routes in the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary go through a cross-section of habitats, populated by spotted deer, sambar and other species. This sanctuary is known for its crocodile population and rich birdlife.

"Considering all this, I was surprised during my visit to Gir in 2003-04 to find very few places to stay compared to many of the Tiger Reserves in India," says Mohit Aggarwal who owns Asian Adventures. "My company specializes in birdwatching and natural history group, Gir was like a missing link in the wildlife circuit of Gujarat, which has resorts near other important bird sites like the Little Rann of Kutch. Yet, this is the wildlife reserve, where I have really enjoyed going for wildlife viewing drives – there is a



lot of drama because of the large population of both prey and predators, and you keep tracking pugmarks of lion or leopard, listening to alarm calls of deer or langur that rent the air. It is good for watching eagles, vultures and other birds". Looking at the potential, Aggarwal says he met Naveen Modha who owns a mango orchard in an enviable location along the sanctuary boundary. They collaborated to start Gir Birding Lodge in 2004-05. "The fruit trees in the complex bring in birds from the sanctuary's forests and balconies of the farmhouse look out to the wildlife in the sanctuary. So we decided to specialize largely in offering facilities for natural history enthusiasts, like birdwatching guides, safari arrangements and field guides to birds", says Aggarwal.

Like Aggarwal, Ranjit Singh Parmar of Palaces of India realized that Gir was a gap in the Gujarat itinerary because of paucity of quality accommodations. Parmar shares, "If Africa is known for its Big Five, India is the land of three big cats – Tiger, Lion and Leopard. Gir is the only site for the lion in Asia and a top site for the leopard in India. Gujarat's neighbouring states of MP and Rajasthan have India's most productive tiger sighting areas, therefore a good tour is possible to see wildlife in Gujarat and its neighbouring states. This was not being exploited". As Parmar specialized in palace hotel bookings, he decided to start a company called Camps of India, with properties in Gir and other wildlife reserves targeting upmarket travellers. Designed and developed like an African safari camp, this property on the river shores started in November 2004 has luxe tents among shady trees. "This move has paid off as Gir has become a big destination", says Parmar, adding, "The increased facilities of niche resorts has helped bring international tourists to Gir".

While Gir was earlier largely visited by foreign tourists and wildlife enthusiasts, it is now becoming a destination attracting weekenders from Gujarat and holiday tourists from other states, believes Mahesh Dhudakiya of Shakti Travels. This is the reason why Shakti Travels has started the Vanvaso Resort on the river-shores near the sanctuary. "When we started work on building Vanvaso a few years ago, with



Vanvaso Resort, Gir

recreational facilities for families like swimming pool, children's amusements, coffee shop, etc, many felt we were making a mistake in investing in Gir. However, since we have a lot of tour group movement of our own in this part of Gujarat, we believed there was a need for such a property. We are now happy with our decision", says Dudakiya. He believes that the publicity received by the park has helped – the news reports of good census records with rising lion and leopard populations, and the visits of important dignitaries including former President Pratibha Patil and the then-Chief Minister and present Prime Minister Narendra Modi, being cases in point. "Another huge impact has been the Khushboo Gujarat Ki advertisement campaign on Television, which shows Amitabh Bachchan watching lions in Gir. This has caught the imagination of many families all over India specially because Gir is close to the holy temple town of Somnath, the Island of Diu, the magnificent Jain temples of Girnar and historic Junagadh

making a complete holiday experience of wildlife, culture, heritage, beach and pilgrimage". Sanjeev Chajjer, Vice President of Cox and Kings, agrees, "Gir has become a hot destination for families in Ahmedabad, and many are now opting for weekends in this and other wildlife reserves, because there are good resorts and the places have received publicity".

The Fern resort in Gir has even incorporated a spa, a swimming pool, recreational areas, conference and banquet facilities, party lawns, performance areas, in the resort keeping this market in mind.

"From a few places to stay in Gir five years ago, we now have about 40 accommodation options, including hotels, resorts, lodges, camps and guesthouses, enough to satisfy various tourist categories from school groups to honeymooning couples", says Mukesh Mehta, owner of the Gir Jungle Lodge.



Gir Jungle Lodge



The Fern Resort, Gir



## THE WHITE DESERTS & GOLDEN BEACHES OF KUTCH

One of the greatest success stories of Gujarat is the phoenix like growth of Kutch after the 2001 earthquake that destroyed thousands of houses and buildings. Today, Kutch is known for its ports, industrial parks and fast growth of tourism.

One of the major events in Kutch promoted by Gujarat Tourism, Rann Utsav promises the unique experience of visiting the vast open desert, travelling across open desert plains in a camel cart during the sunset, and watching a full moonlit folk concert on the shimmering white desert landscape. This annual event offers the opportunity to visit a stretch of the Great Rann of Kutch, the expanse of salt-encrusted white desert that lies along the India-Pakistan border. The festival also spotlights the rich culture of Kutch, a district of Gujarat that is shot through by the brilliant colours of the embroidery, tie-dye and block-printed fabrics that are produced by craftspeople of the villages that fall between the desert wilderness of the Rann of Kutch and the beautiful sea beaches lining the Gulf of Kutch.

The district capital, Bhuj, offers an introduction to Kutch in its monuments,

museums, markets and craft parks. Bhuj's 18th century Aina Mahal and 19th century Pragmahal palaces have richly painted and decorated interiors that offer an insight into the craftsmanship of Kutch. It also has fascinating collections of art, archaeological finds, musical instruments, historic artifacts and shipping displays at the Kutch Museum and folk art exhibitions at the *Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan*.

A short distance from Bhuj, the village of Bhujodi is a centre for *pitloom* weaving, embroidery and woodcarving. Further down the same road are Ajrakhpur and Dhamadka, known for their vegetable dye block-printing and exquisite *Ajrakh* craft. Dhaneti is the place, where *Ahir* women do fine embroidery. Place like Padhhar is known for its embroidery work. While Ningal is famous for its single ikat silk weaving. The Crafts Resource Centre at Kukma and the town of Anjar are the centres for *bandhani* tie-dye and metalcrafts.

North of Bhuj, the grasslands of *Banni* are scattered with villages of pastoral groups. As the women of these groups do embroidery for their personal use and a second income, this is one of the highest

concentration areas of craftswomen in the world. In Banni, the *Sodha Rajputs* practice the *Sindhi* styles of *suf*, *khaarek*, and *paako*, while Islamic pastoral groups like the Jaths and Mutwas have their own ethnic styles of embroidery. The Hindu pastoral groups like the Rabaris also have their distinct embroidery style. It is possible to tour a number of villages, like Hodka, Dhorodo, Gorewali, Ludia and Bhirendiara, in the Banni region by staying at Hodka or Dhordo.

Travelling west from Bhuj, the road leads to Nirona, which is the centre for the rare art of rogan, now practiced only by the family of Khatri Abdulgafoor Daud, who has won a national awards for this art. *Rogan* is the art of painting fabrics using castor oil-based colours. Much work goes into creating the castor-oil based paint, which is then rubbed between palms to create a stringy goeey paste from which the colour can come off on an iron rod or wooden stick like threads. He and his nephews create rogan masterpieces for wall hangings and decorations, sarees, tablecloths, skirts, etc in silk and cotton clothes. At Nirona and nearby villages like Zura, it is possible to see '*Vada-kaam*', the work of carpenters who



White Rann Resort, Rann Utsav, Kutch



create wooden products, which they lacquer in various colours, and the making of melodic bells, cast in iron and covered with copper.

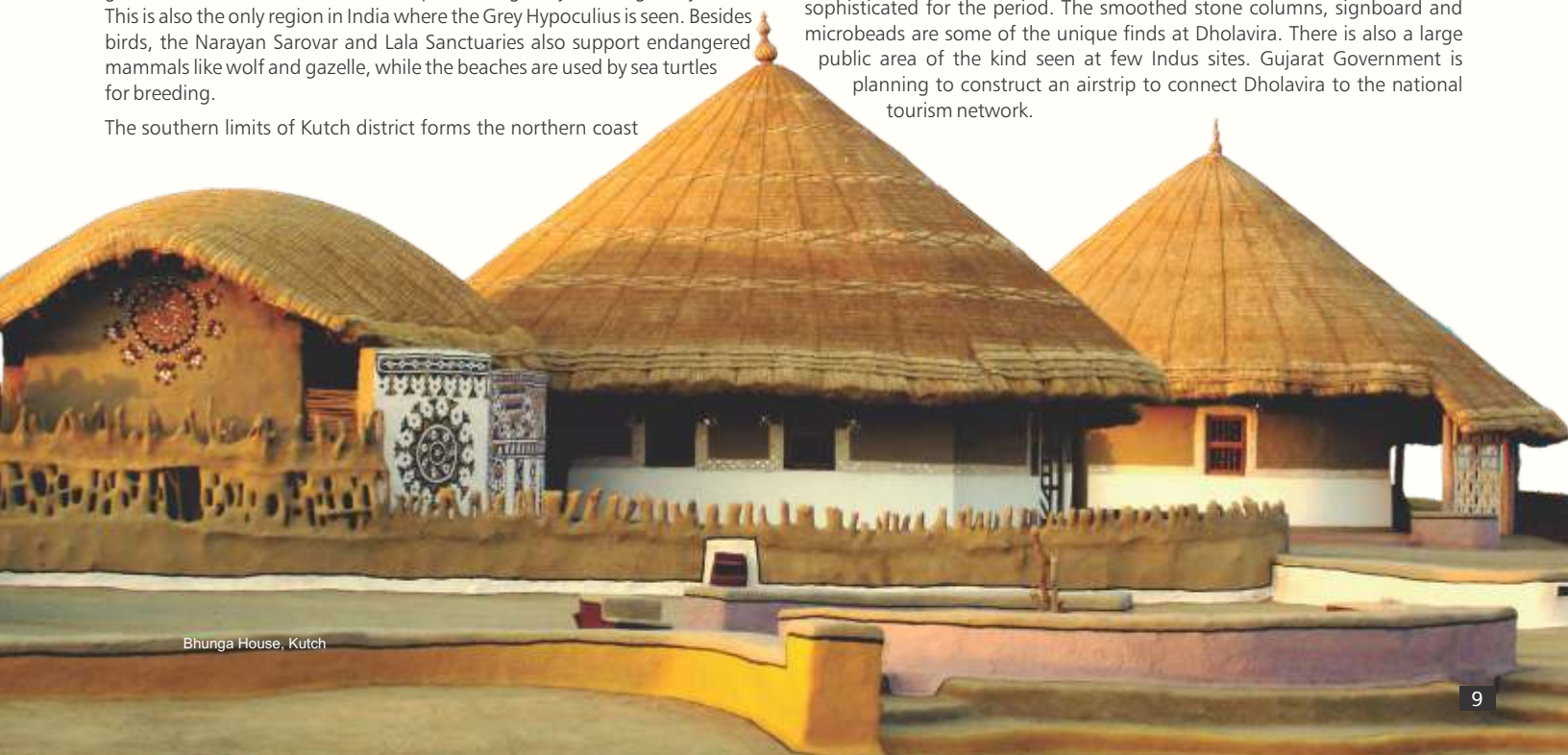
Continuing from here, the road leads to the ancient Buddhist site of Siyot - the fortified town of Lakhpat best known for its historic Gurudvara. Places like the sacred lake of Narayansarovar, divine temples, heritage village of Tera, historic fort, holy mosques, and an interesting water-harvesting system lure the attention of any visitor.

The western talukas of Kutch like Nakhatrana and Abdasa are among the best birdwatching areas in India. The Lala Sanctuary and the grasslands and scrub that surround it, support endangered birds like the Great Indian Bustard, Black-naped Tit, Stolikza's bushchat, White-backed and Long-billed Vultures, and the Lesser Florican, while the Chhari Lake and its surrounding grasslands form one of the most important highways for migratory birds. This is also the only region in India where the Grey Hypoculius is seen. Besides birds, the Narayan Sarovar and Lala Sanctuaries also support endangered mammals like wolf and gazelle, while the beaches are used by sea turtles for breeding.

The southern limits of Kutch district forms the northern coast

of the Gulf of Kachch. This coast has fine stretches of beach, fruit and palm grove, and bird-rich creeks. The key destination is Mandvi, about 50km from Bhuj airport, which has the majestic Vijay Vilas Palace and beautiful beaches. Once a major port, Mandvi still supports a thriving dhow-building industry at its creeks. It is a market for the handicrafts produced in nearby villages. There is a deluxe tented beach resort in the palace estate. Toward Ashapura beach and Pingleshwar, which has a good beach, coastal birdlife and sea turtle nesting areas.

The main focal point of Eastern Kutch is Dholavira, the excavations that provide an insight into the Indus Valley or Harappan Civilisation, which was specially mature about 2500-1900BC. This site shows the town planning of the period, specially the sanitary drainage systems and the water-harvesting structures, like reservoirs, wells and canals, that were surprisingly sophisticated for the period. The smoothed stone columns, signboard and microbeads are some of the unique finds at Dholavira. There is also a large public area of the kind seen at few Indus sites. Gujarat Government is planning to construct an airstrip to connect Dholavira to the national tourism network.



Bhunga House, Kutch



## **STATUE OF UNITY**

At 182m, it is the world's tallest statue - a good 29 meters higher than the Buddha statue in China, the second highest in the world. The exhibition centre at its base showcasing the life and achievements of Sardar Patel is worth a dekho. Apart from its sheer height, the statue is an architectural wonder - a tour de force accomplishment.

### **1. CHILDREN NUTRITION PARK**

- ⊗ An enthralling and enjoyable experience combined with learning about the nutrition, food processing and horticulture in a fun way
- ⊗ A train ride, travelling through various stations equipped with interactive games and activities, including a virtual reality playing arena and much more

### **2. EKTA MALL**

- ⊗ An enthralling and enjoyable experience combined with learning about the nutrition, food processing and horticulture in a fun way
- ⊗ A train ride, travelling through various stations equipped with interactive games and activities, including a virtual reality playing arena and much more

### **3. AROGYA VAN**

- ⊗ Spread over an area of about 15 acres
- ⊗ Exhibits a wide range of medicinal plants

### **4. RIVER RAFTING, KHALVANI**

- ⊗ excellent opportunity to experience this

### **5. BOATING**

- ⊗ Beautiful boating arrangement in the

### **6. SARDAR SAROVAR DAM**

- ⊗ The world's second largest dam in terms of size and volume. It is worth a visit here just to see its sheer size.
- ⊗ It supplies drinking water to 30 million

### **7. DAM VIEW POINT**

- ⊗ Location specially dedicated to enjoy the

### **8. DINO TRAIL**

- ⊗ A replica of extinct dinosaur with its distinctive horn is exhibited
- ⊗ The model is scaled up to over three times the estimated original size of the dinosaur, with an approximate length of 75 feet from head to tail and a height of 25 feet.

### **9. VALLEY OF FLOWERS**

- ⊗ This stretch of 17 km of different varieties of flowers is situated near the statue.
- ⊗ There are more than 100 types of flowers planted in the first phase of development covering 250 hectares.

### **10. JUNGLE SAFARI**

- ⊗ Covers 558,240 sq.m.
- ⊗ Home to more than 170 species of fauna, covering various biomes of Africa, Australia, Asia and America
- ⊗ Opportunity to spot India's endangered species, which includes the magnificent big cats such as Asiatic lion, Royal Bengal

### **11. TENT CITY NARMADA**

- ⊗ The luxurious nature resort with AC and Non-AC tents
- ⊗ Equipped with all the modern facilities
- ⊗ Provide all-in-one nature experience

### **12. VISHWA VAN**

- ⊗ A celebration of forests for their role in existence of all life forms on earth
- ⊗ A diverse assemblage of Flora representing every continent of the world signifying the underlying theme of 'Unity in

### **13. FOOD COURT**

- ⊗ Built at par with international standards

### **14. CACTUS GARDEN**

- ⊗ A unique botanical garden exhibiting a huge variety of Cacti, the true miracles of

### **15. BUTTERFLY GARDEN**

- ⊗ Fascinating world of colourful butterflies

# RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Gujarat's major destinations are its pilgrimage destinations. Along the northwest tip of Saurashtra, Dwarka is one of the holiest temple towns for all Hindus and part of the *Char Dham Yatra*. The coastal road from Dwarka leads to Somnath, one of the 12 *Jyotirlingams*. Recent promotions have led to rising tourism in both these temple towns, resulting in growing facilities like hotels and restaurants.

While both Dwarka and Somnath are situated on the coast of Saurashtra, the hilltop temple sites of Shatrunjaya over Palitana and Mount Girnar outside Junagadh are among the most important religious destinations for Jains. Ambaji in the Aravalli hills is one of the 51 *Shaktipiths* revered by all Hindus. Gujarat also has the most sacred *Parsee* fire temple in India at Udvada.



Ambaji Temple



Girnar



Dwarka Temple



Palitana Jain Temples



Somnath Temple



Ranchhodrai Temple, Dakor

Glorious Gujarat



If you want to visit the architectural gems where Salman Khan romanced Aishwarya Rai in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* or the grand bungalow of Ahmedabad featured in Shahrukh Khan-starrer *Raees*, we guide you to some of Gujarat's most prestigious Bollywood locations.

PICTURE PERFECT

# GUJARAT

**W**ith its many palaces, forts and havelis, picturesque monuments and unique landscapes like the Great Rann of Kutch, Gujarat is fast becoming a popular destination for film shooting. From Bhojpuri films, Bollywood blockbusters, Television series to Advertisement films, Gujarat's locations are more frequently seen on the small or big screen. As a committee member of the Heritage Tourism Association explains, "Rajasthan is saturated and with so many tourists, it is difficult to take a palace on full charter for a series of shoots. Gujarat has equally impressive palaces, with less flow of tourists and limited exposure. This has also helped us to get business from the television and film industry".

## GONDAL

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, Rajshri Production's *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*, *Carry on Kesar* (Gujarati feature film), Prabhu Deva's *R... Rajkumar*, *Saraswatichandra* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali's soap opera and romantic drama), *Hawaizaada*, *Sanskaar* (a 2013-soap opera that was broadcasted on Colors TV) and a number of TV series and advertisement films have been shot at various locations in Gondal town of Rajkot district.



Riverside Palace



### ◆ REEL LIFE

In one of the defining moments of *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, Vanraj (Ajay Devgan) drags Nandini (Aishwarya Rai) down the staircase of his house - this scene was shot at the Orchard Palace in Gondal. A song sequence of *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo* is filmed at the Riverside Palace on Prem Dilwale (Salman Khan) and Rajkumari Maithili Devi (Sonam Kapoor) playing football in the ground, while the fuming Rajkumari Chandrika and Rajkumari Radhika watch on from their palatial property.

### ● REAL LIFE

The capital of the one of the first class princely states of Saurashtra, Gondal is rich in architectural gems. From 1888 to his death in 1944, Maharaja Sir Bhagwatsimhji Sagramsimhji proved to be a progressive ruler. During his reign, Gondal was planned with good roads, street lights, underground electricity and sanitary drainage.

The oldest palace of Gondal, the Darbargadh encompasses the Navlakha Palace and a number of other residential and administrative structures. The

palace has marvelous stone carvings with exquisite balconies, brackets, columns and facades. The complex now houses museum collections of silverware, textiles, utensils, crockery, turbans, dolls, toys, horse carriages and other princely memorabilia. Continue from the

Darbargadh to the Orchard Palace, which is now a heritage hotel with large high-ceiling rooms appointed with antiques and European colonial architecture. The palace ground has one of the royal rail saloons of the Maharaja and excellent collection of vintage and classic cars. An alternative place to stay is the Riverside Palace, which was once the Yuvraj Bungalow where the prince stayed, with massive rooms and plenty of antiques. Around this property, you can see other historical buildings like the Sagramji High School and Swaminarayan Temple.

### ✈ GETTING THERE

Gondal is 5-hour drive from Ahmedabad Airport and 1-hour drive from Rajkot Airport.

### 📍 ACCOMMODATIONS

The Riverside Palace and Orchard Palace offer heritage accommodations in Gondal.





## MANDVI

Scenes from *Lagaan*, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* and *Commando - A One Man Army* were shot on locations at the Vijay Vilas Palace of Mandvi.



### REEL LIFE

Nandini (Aishwarya Rai Bachchan) is the daughter of Pandit Darbar (Vikram Gokhale), a renowned proponent of Indian classical music, who lives in a palatial property. Sameer (Salman Khan) comes to seek the guidance of Pandit Darbar and lives in this grand palace. This part of *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* was shot at the Vijay Vilas Palace of Mandvi. This palace was the British palatial home in the film *Lagaan*. The song *Saawan Bairi* of *Commando - A One Man Army* was filmed at this palace.

### REAL LIFE

Located where the Rukmavati River meets the Arabian Sea, Mandvi was once a major port of Kutch and summer retreat for the Maharao. The old city was enclosed in the fort wall and remains of the fort wall can still be seen. The dhow-building yards around the river are remnants of a 400-year old shipping industry of Mandvi. Today, the place is one of the top beach holiday destinations of Gujarat.

The main sightseeing attraction of Mandvi, the Vijay Vilas Palace has a few rooms opened for visitors to get an insight into the days when the Maharao of Kutch spent his summer months in this coastal town. The palace estate fronts a beautiful beach.

### GETTING THERE

Mandvi is about two hours drive from Bhuj Airport.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Serena, Vijay Vilas Heritage Resort and Beach at Mandvi Palace are top three places to stay near the beaches of Mandvi.



# THE RANN OF KUTCH

Many films have been shot at locations like the Little Rann of Kutch and the Great Rann of Kutch. Kareena Kapoor and Abhishek Bachchan's debut film *Refugee*, Nikhil Advani's thriller *D-Day*, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela*, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Imran Khan starrer *Gori Tere Pyar Mein* and *Rambo Rajkumar*, are among the many Bollywood films shot at Bhuj, the Rann of Kutch and the forts of the district. Successful Telugu films like *Dookudu* and *Magadheera* were also filmed in the Rann of Kutch. *The Good Road*, selected as the Indian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 86th Academy Awards and the award winner for Best Gujarati Film at the National Film Awards, was filmed in Kutch.



Lakhpat Fort

## ◆ REEL LIFE

Those who follow South Indian cinema will remember the song sequence on Mahesh and Samantha, which was shot at the Little Rann of Kutch and the chariot race sequence that was shot in the Dholavira area of the Great Rann of Kutch. The film *Refugee* has scenes shot at various locations of Kutch such as the Great Rann of Kutch, Banni villages, BSF posts, the heritage village of Tera, Lakhpat fort, Khera fortified village and temples of Kutch.

## ● REAL LIFE

The Rann of Kutch is a large area of salt covered flat desert and marshes located mostly in Gujarat, which is divided into the Great Rann of Kutch and the Little Rann of Kutch.

Start your tour with the Little Rann of Kutch, a vast expanse of short grasslands, salt covered desert plains and lakes. This part of the Rann is home to various forms of wildlife that have adapted to the often harsh conditions of this vast area. Driving across the Little Rann of Kutch, you can see herds of the Asiatic wild ass and a variety of birds like the Macqueen's

bustard, sandgrouse, larks, bush chats and desert wheatear. The Indian gazelle, desert and Indian foxes and other wildlife can be seen here.

Travel from here to Khadir Bet, set in the heart of the Great Rann of Kutch. The highlight of this area is the archaeological site of Dholavira with substantial remains of the Indus Valley Civilization. The prehistoric fossil site nearby is also worth a visit. From here, you can travel to Bhuj, which is known for its palaces. From Bhuj, the road goes through the Banni grasslands with its craft villages to the Great Rann of Kutch, site for the Rann Utsav.



Wild Ass



## ✈ GETTING THERE

From Ahmedabad Airport, it is a drive of about two hours to the Little Rann of Kutch. Bhuj Airport is ideal for touring the Great Rann of Kutch.

## 📍 ACCOMMODATIONS

Rann Riders, Royal Safari Camp, Desert Outpost and Camp Zainabad are some of the good places to stay near the Little Rann of Kutch. Gujarat Tourism offers accommodation at Dholavira. White Rann Resort is a good place to experience the Rann Utsav.

# AHMEDABAD

Many key places in the city of Ahmedabad have featured in films like *D-Day*, *Raees*, *OK Jaanu*, *Kai Po Che!*, *2 States* and many more.



Adalaj Stepwell

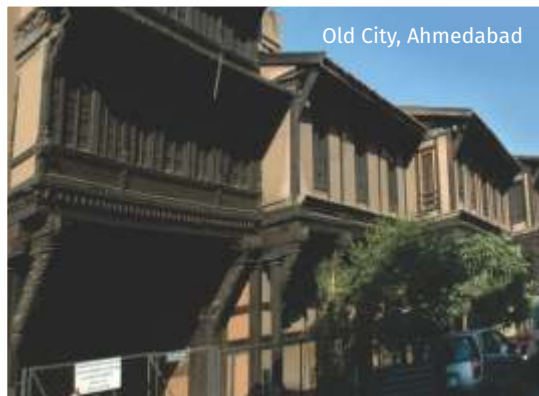
## REAL LIFE

Ahmedabad is the first city in India to be notified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The walled city, founded 600 years ago by Sultan Ahmed Shah, has medieval monuments, including majestic mosques and the Bhadra Fort. Within the walled city are old neighbourhoods called 'pols', which are lined with intricately carved wooden facades of havelis, colourful Jain and Hindu temples and historical institutions. The markets here are fascinating for shopping – look for textiles, jewellery and handicrafts. This area is also famous for its street food – you will find the bhajiya houses of east Ahmedabad in Arjun Kapoor and Alia Bhatt-starrer *2 States* and the street food at Manek Chowk in *OK Jaanu*.

Cross the river to the western side of Ahmedabad, which has some good museums, art galleries and premium institutes. Continue to Sarkhej with its magnificent mausoleum. On the road to Gandhinagar from Ahmedabad, you can see the Adalaj Stepwell, an architectural gem.

## REEL LIFE

Shraddha Kapoor and Aditya Roy Kapoor in Karan Johar's *Ok Jaanu* are seen visiting CEPT University. Shraddha's tour of Ahmedabad takes her to the Jama Mosque and Sabarmati Ashram. In the film *Raees*, much of Ahmedabad's heritage is shown from the Divan's Bungalow (which is a heritage hotel) and monuments like the Sarkhej Roza and Adalaj Stepwell. Likewise, the pols of Ahmedabad featured in *Kai Po Che!*, together with other historical places of Gujarat like Vadnagar and Porbandar and also neighbouring Diu.



Old City, Ahmedabad



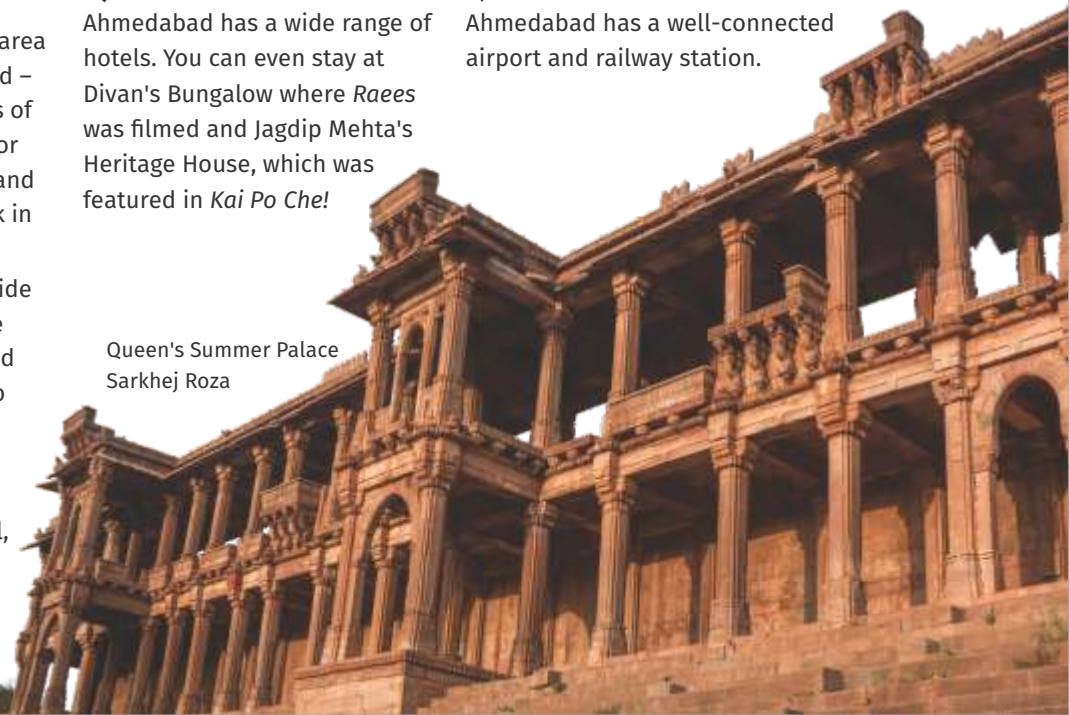
## ACCOMMODATIONS

Ahmedabad has a wide range of hotels. You can even stay at Divan's Bungalow where *Raees* was filmed and Jagdip Mehta's Heritage House, which was featured in *Kai Po Che!*

## GETTING THERE

Ahmedabad has a well-connected airport and railway station.

Queen's Summer Palace  
Sarkhej Roza



# Other Key Shoots in Gujarat

## WANKANER

If you were fascinated by the scenes showing palaces in *Matru Ki Bijlee Ka Mandola*, head for Wankaner, which has one of Saurashtra's grandest palaces. You can stay at the Royal Oasis.



## SURENDRANAGAR

*Dariba Diaries*, a mystery series produced by the Hindi EPIC Channel, was set in Delhi but the shoots happened in Surendranagar district of Gujarat. You can stay at Ambika Niwas Palace of Muli and Bell Guest House of Sayla, both of which were featured in television series.



## DEVGADH BARIA

Though *Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster* and *Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster Returns* are stories of Uttar Pradesh, they were largely filmed on location at the palaces of Devgadhi Baria in Eastern Gujarat.

## JUNAGADH

Remember *Rootha Kyun*, the song from *1920 London*? It was shot at the mausoleums and fort of Junagadh.

## BALARAM

Balaram Palace Resort, Chitrasani Village, near Palanpur was where the Amitabh-starrer *Sooryavansham* was largely shot. Television series were also shot at this palace resort. 📺

## VADODARA & CHAMPANER

The magnificent palaces of Vadodara are often seen in advertisement films and have also featured in Bollywood films. Parts of *Grand Masti* was shot at the Laxmi Vilas Palace. *Sweetie Weds NRI* is a story revolving around Vadodara and shows monuments of Champaner-Pavagadh. The title song of *Rabba Main Kya Karoon* was also shot at Champaner.





Glorious Gujarat

## Enliven Your Taste-Buds with **DELECTABLE GUJARATI CUISINE**

*From the desert plains of Kutch in the northwest to the moist forests of the Dangs in the southwest, Gujarat's geographical diversity is reflected in the cuisines of the state.*

Winter is the best time to enjoy Gujarati food. This is the time of the year when many green vegetables are in season. A signature dish of the January to March period - undhiyu is closely associated with Uttarayana or Makar Sankranti. This is a mix of vegetables, muthiyas (a snack named for the way it is made by gripping the chickpea flour in the muthia or wrist) and papdi beans, roasted or fried together.

Gujarat is also famous for farsans (steamed or fried snacks served as breakfast items, tea-time snacks, starters or accompaniments). Some of the popular farsans are - Khandvi or chickpea pasta, dhokla (a savoury cake usually made from a batter blending ground rice and dal) served with chutney or poured over with a rasa (sauce), dal dhokli (wheat dumplings in dal), pandoli (a green gram idli), muthias or chickpea kebabs made with methi (fenugreek) or doodhi (bottle gourd), amiri khamani (split yellow dal cakes), paatra patervelia (colocassia leaf stuffed with a paste comprising chickpea flour, jaggery and chopped coriander), handvo (a spicy baked chickpea and lentils cake with grated pumpkin or bottle gourd), vadas made from bajri and other flours. Fried snacks include - chorafali, farsi puri, ganthia, gujarati chewda, chakri, sev, sakkarpara. Gujaratis also make khichdis from corn or sago as snack items.

A unique aspect of Gujarati food is the variety of 'travel foods' that are made to stay for long, like khakra, dhebra and thepla. Some of the famous sweet and farsan shops have come up with 'export packs' of ganthia and other snacks that stay for very long.

Ahmedabad has a number of restaurants serving Gujarati Thalís. This refers to meals served in thalis (metal trays) with katoris (metal bowls)



Khandvi



Khakhra

placed on them. Typically, a thali meal has one or two steamed or fried farsans, a tuber or a gourd shaak (shaaks are vegetable curries), a couple of shaaks made from seasonal vegetables, a kathol (braised pulses like beans, chickpea or dry peas), a couple of yogurt dishes like dahi, kadhi (yogurt and pulses soup), raita, rice or khichdi, dal usually toor dal, and sweets like halwas, basundi or shrikhand. Accompaniments include sweet, sour and spicy chutneys, pickles, ghee and a salad of chopped vegetables served raw or may be steamed in spices. If you ask for a Jain thali, the entire food would be free of onions, garlic and potatoes. Gud (jaggery/molasses) or sugar is a common ingredient in Gujarati cooking. According to some Gujarati cooks, the sweet flavour is an adaptation to neutralise the slightly salty taste of the water in some parts of Gujarat, and most of the farsans and shaaks are made with vaghaar,

which is a mixture of spices sterilised in hot oil said to have digestive benefits.

What makes a thali especially exciting is the incredible diversity of its content. The sheer variety of colours, tastes, textures and nutrients make a Gujarati meal platter an amazing culinary experience. The yellow of turmeric, the redness of tomatoes, the green of leafy vegetables and herbs, the whiteness of yogurt, the brown pulses and various fruits, vegetables, spices, relishes and pickles adorn a platter with vivid colours. Food textures like coarse, grainy, granular, smooth, uniform, dry and watery are included in a platter, all eaten together – for example 'nylon' khaman, which as the name suggests has a



Thepla

smooth mouth-feel, is served with coarse chutney. And each dish varies in its sweetness, bitterness, sourness, spiciness and heat with some of them having a blend of sweet and sour tastes. The breads in a thali include thick and coarse bajra rotla, thin unleavened wheat rotlis, thick and crisp whole wheat flour rotis called bakhris, parathas, savoury griddle bread called the thepla, deep-fried puris, among others. There are many variations like methi thepla or masala puri within these breads.

While Gujaratis do not follow courses-with everything from the farsan snacks (that would normally be starters) to the sweets (usually be desserts), served in one thali. The rice dishes are usually eaten last with



**Khichadi**

either dal or kadhi. Khichdis, made by soaking and cooking the rice with dal or beans and adding a variety of spices tempered in ghee or oil, and kadhi is a classic combination, while steamed rice is usually eaten with toor dal. Ghee is sometimes added on top of khichdi or rice before eating. These traditions are still followed in many Gujarati homes. Though these days, melamine and crockery are becoming more common than thalis, and wedding repasts are turning to buffet rather than being served in thalis, which probably require a large serving team to keep refilling the kathoris. The thalis are usually made of steel but also of different metal alloys as copper and brass are said to have their own health benefits. Silver thalis signify the status of the host and often also the importance of the occasion or special guest at a dinner. At Vishalla, the iconic village-themed restaurant of Ahmedabad, meals are served on leaf platters. Rajwadu and Vintage Village are other must-visits for tourists wanting to have a Gujarati culinary experience. Agashiye is a restaurant at Ahmedabad's famous heritage hotel, House of Mangaldas Girdhardas, which offers Gujarati thalis with a contemporary tweak. The oldest surviving restaurant in Ahmedabad, Chandra Vilas near Manek Chowk is about 100 years old and is known for Gujarati food.

Manek Chowk is the centre for many renowned places for Gujarati sweets and

snacks. At night turns into a street food market, where you can get innovative dishes from cheese dosa to pineapple sandwich. In the 'pols' near Manek Chowk, there are many places selling Jain snacks made without onions, garlic or potatoes like the Kelawada, which has banana replacing potatoes.

The Muslim-dominated Khas Bazaar nearby is known for its non-vegetarian street food. Along the street called Bhatiyar Galli, kebabs, curries and tava-fried meats are cooked on 'bhattis'. Kalupur, Jamalpur, Gomtipur and Mirzapur also have many vendors frying meats on griddle pan. In recent years, places serving Arabian fast foods like shawarma and grilled chicken have emerged at Astodia and Juhapura.

Sindhi Market and Revdi Bazaar in this part of Ahmedabad offer Sindhi snacks and meals – pakwan dal and pakoras are favourites. North of these markets, you come to Wadaj, Sardarnagar and Kubernagar, where an extensive variety of Sindhi snacks and dishes are available. Shahibag has many places for Marwari snacks like kachoris.

Maninagar is an area known for its farsan shops. Maninagar- Khokhra Road has a sizable Tamil origin population – one of the first Tamil language schools in northwestern India came up here. As there are many South Indian snack vendors in the area, it is called Idli Char Rasta.

In western Ahmedabad, Law Garden is a very popular zone for street food, kulfis, ice-creams and other eateries. Since this is a very cosmopolitan part of Ahmedabad, restaurants serving multiple cuisines and specialties thrive on CG Road, SG Road, Vastrapur Road, Sindhu Bhawan Road, Prahladnagar Road and other areas of western Ahmedabad.

As you head north from Ahmedabad towards Rajasthan, you will find dhabas serving dal bati and other Rajasthani cuisines.

Guajrati Muslim communities like the Ismaili, Khoja, Dawoodi Bohra, Surti,



**Vishalla**

Memon, Sunni Vohra, Ghanchi and Chhipa are known for their meat dishes. At the Bohravad of Sidhpur, there are families who make Dawoodi Bohra food on prior order. The thal would include kebabs, palidas, kaliya manda, meat pulao and malai na khajla (cream-filled pastry) or muzzafar (saffronised rice). Sagla bagla is a baklava like sweet made in Surat. According to Khoja

Khana, a famous cookbook of the community by Fateema Hooda, Khoja vegetarian food has Gujarati influences but most members of the community have non-vegetarian food daily, which is cooked on dum and coal that lend a smoky flavour. The book also talks about the signature hara masala of the Khojas.



**Khaman**



Southeast from Ahmedabad, Vadodara or Baroda was once a Maratha-ruled princely state and has a significant Marathi-speaking population. Sev Usal is one of the popular snack foods of Vadodara. 'Jay Mahakali' near Polo Ground is one of the places to get this hot curry. Jainhind is another famous snacking place in Vadodara renowned for its Sabudana Vada, Sabudana Khichdi, Chakli and Sing Ladoo. Bhakarwadi and Chevdo are fried snacks of Vadodara.

Travel further south from Vadodara to Surat, justly famous for its food. Since Surat and South Gujarat are greener than many other parts of Gujarat, the food here is made with lots of greens, yams like rattalu and herbs. Green garlic is profusely used in Surti cooking. In winter, Surat is famous for its Matla Undhiyu made in an earthen pot. Ponk is another winter specialty of Surat. Farsans are Surat's forte – khaman, locho, coconut patties, kachori and patra are well-known. Rich sweets like ghari are also popular buys from Surat.

A unique culinary heritage of Surat is its Parsee-owned bakeries, some of them over 150 years old. These bakeries date back to the days when the Dutch and British had factories in Surat. After they left, the Parsees started bakeries by modifying the old bakery recipes - thus Farnasu Surti Batasa or Butter Biscuits, Nankhatai and Khari have become must-buys in Surat. Surti families, whether Parsee, Hindu, Jain or Muslim, have these biscuits, often dipped in 'malai' with their afternoon cuppa. On Sundays, an interesting market develops at Rander, where Burmese origin foods are available. Zampa Bazaar is famous for its non-vegetarian food, while the Chowk is a vegetarian street food paradise. You will soon understand why Gujaratis say "Surat nu Jaman ane Kashi nu Maran", eating in Surat is as sure a way of getting to heaven as a funeral in sacred Varanasi.

South of Surat, Navsari, Udvada and Sanjan are important places of Parsee pilgrimage. At Udvada, the dharamshala serves traditional Parsee food. Chicken farcha, patra ni machhi, sali murgi, shrimp



Undhiyu

kolmi no patio, saas ni macchi, jaraloo sali boti, tomato ni russ chaval with mutton cutlets and egg dishes are commonly served. Mullet or boi is one of the popular



Dhansak

fishes. Dhansak is the mandatory Sunday lunch for Parsee homes. At Navsari or Udvada, you can shop for dhansak masala, biryani masala, vinegar and other ingredients for Parsee food. The coastal areas of South Gujarat are known for their sugarcane fields and mango orchards. In the hills, the tribal population makes interesting dishes using bamboo shoots, local mushrooms and finger millet called raagi or nagli.

In Saurashtra or the Kathiawad peninsula, which grows high quality chillies and spices but is generally arid with few green vegetables, the food can be fiery and strong on garlic compared to the relatively mild, sweetish flavoured food of mainland Gujarat. In Kutch, which has vast tracts of desert and grassland, as also in Kathiawad, where livestock is plentiful but agriculture marginal, milk products like chaas, lassi, curd, kadhi, shrikhand or basundi, mawa sweets are frequently served as part of a thali.

The signature feature of Kutchi and Kathiawadi food is the bajra rotla eaten with lasan chutney (a green garlic paste usually fiery with chillies), lasaniya bataka (potatoes cooked in a garlic flavoured curry), sev tamatar (tomato curry with slivers of fried dough), seasonal veggies, onions and green chillies. As Kathiawad is a major groundnut producing zone, food is usually cooked in groundnut oil. You can find these dishes and also thalis at many dhabas on the highways as well as in restaurants.

Across Gujarat, families take pride in their hospitality. It would be rude not to eat well, when invited for a meal as the women of the house would take it as an affront to their cooking skills. Families talk knowledgeably about food for different weather conditions, whether it is light-on-the-stomach dishes, cooling foods and increased use of lime, salt, sugar and tomatoes during the summer months, when dehydration can occur in the hot and arid weather or ingredients that keep you warm during the winter months. ■



Glorious Gujarat

# Wild & Wonderful

Photo story by Pranay Patel

*Wildlife tours to Gujarat are every naturalist's dream. One can experience the thrill of best reserves of India in Gujarat as it provides an opportunity to see vivid colours of wildlife and nature.*



*Indian Leopard, Gir National Park*





Flamingos, Nal Sarovar

Blackbuck, Velavadar National Park



Flamingos, Thol Bird Sanctuary

# EXPLORE AHMEDABAD

**India's first  
UNESCO World Heritage City**

For more than 600 years, Ahmedabad has been an epitome of peace and unity. It is the city where Mahatma Gandhi began freedom struggle of India. India's only UNESCO World Heritage City has some of the finest monuments and exquisite architectural tradition.

The living heritage of the city is reflected in its 600 odd *pol*s, which are serving as residence for many centuries. The carved wooden houses of Walled City are yet another architectural tradition.

The lanes and bylanes of Ahmedabad Walled City offer a sense of living heritage, culture and architecture through the *Ahmedabad Heritage Walk* organized by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.



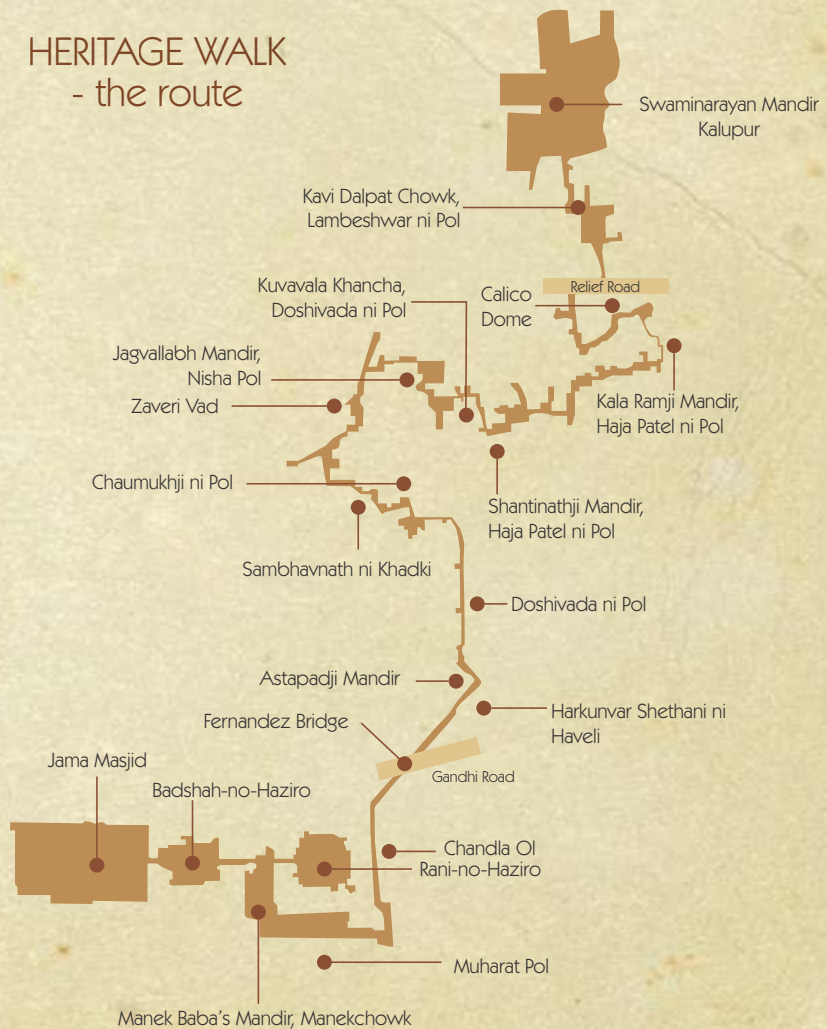
The Ahmedabad Heritage Walk was started on 19th November, 1997 as a joint initiative of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and NGOs. The walking tour was conceptualized by Debashish Nayak, an architect and heritage activist who believed that such an activity would create pride among residents of the *pol*s in heritage. Says Chandrashekhar Solanki, who was among the first volunteers of the Ahmedabad Heritage Walk, "The most noteworthy feature of the Ahmedabad Heritage Walk is that it has a guaranteed departure – there is hardly a day when this walking tour has been cancelled because of absence of a voluntary guide or lack of participants". "This was the first of its kind, because most of the heritage walks in other cities occurred only during specific heritage, tourism or art festivals," says Debashish Nayak.

The walk begins at the Swaminarayan Temple, the first built by Sahajanand Swamy or Lord Swaminarayan who was



Swaminarayan Temple ↗

### HERITAGE WALK - the route



Gate of Swaminarayan Temple ↗



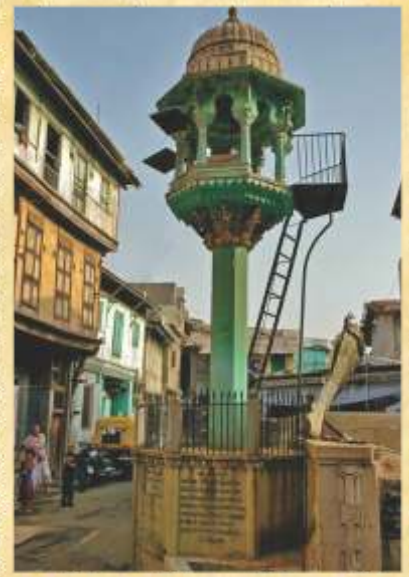
Kavi Dalpatram Chowk

born in Uttar Pradesh in 1792 and undertook a spiritual journey of India before making Gujarat his home. This temple was constructed in 1822 on the land gifted by the British Imperial Government. It has fine carvings and murals that tell many historical and mythological stories.

From here, the participants are guided to Kavi Dalpatram

Chowk, named after a well-known Gujarati poet. The platform is used for performances on special occasions and for poetry recitals.

After this, the walk leads through the *Haja Patel Ni Pol*. The *pols* of Ahmedabad have narrow lanes lined with two and three storey houses, each featuring overhanging balconies. The *havelis*, which had courtyards and ventilation outlets to allow a good airflow through the residential areas, were clustered together to keep



Chabutra or Bird Feeders

their interiors free of extreme heat and direct sunlight. Water was harvested in wells and sealed tanks, called *tankas*. Hollow niches have been provided in walls for squirrels and birds who find little shelter in these largely treeless neighbourhoods. *Chabutras* or bird feeding structures is yet another fascinating feature of a *pol*.

The walk includes a number of temples – the *Kala Ramji Mandir*, which has Lord Ram with Sita, Hanuman and Lakshman, and Jain temples that have beautiful vegetable dyed walls, wood or stone carvings and corbelled hollow domes or spires featuring woodcarvings in concentric circles rising to a pendant in the centre of the dome.

In a lane called *Kuvavala Khancha*, you can see elements of Persian, Mughal, Maratha and European architecture reflecting the respective periods in which each façade was built and had emblems of the earlier owners

“ We are sure that the heritage walking tours inspired by the Ahmedabad Heritage Walk in other cities of India will similarly renew the interest of citizens in their heritage sites. ”



Jain Temple



Wood Carvings ↗

above the doors. Some of the motifs on walls show important social changes - for example, there is a carving of a woman reading a book to denote the importance of girl child education and another shows a boy and girl studying together to show co-education.

The walk goes past many magnificent houses, including *Harkuwarba Shethani Ni Haveli*, which is about 92-year-old and still partially occupied, with fine stonework and an American water pump. Islamic architecture includes the mausoleum of Sultan Ahmed Shah, a fine example of 15th century architecture and *Rani No Haziro*, the tombs of the Sultan's harem, which now houses a market.

The walk continues through markets for handicrafts, fabrics, prayer objects, jewellery, stationary and metalwork, and you could catch the morning activity in the bullion market of Manek Chowk.



Exquisitely carved wooden havelis abound in Ahmedabad ↗

It ends at the Jama Masjid, built in 1423-24. This impressive mosque has a spacious marble paved courtyard with galleries on three sides and the superbly proportioned façade of the prayer hall rising on the fourth. The prayer hall has 260 columns and is covered with domes. The mosque also has a *zanana*, a latticework gallery set aside for women, rising on beams.

Says Girish Gupta, a heritage activist, "This walking tour has created much pride and interest among the local people and

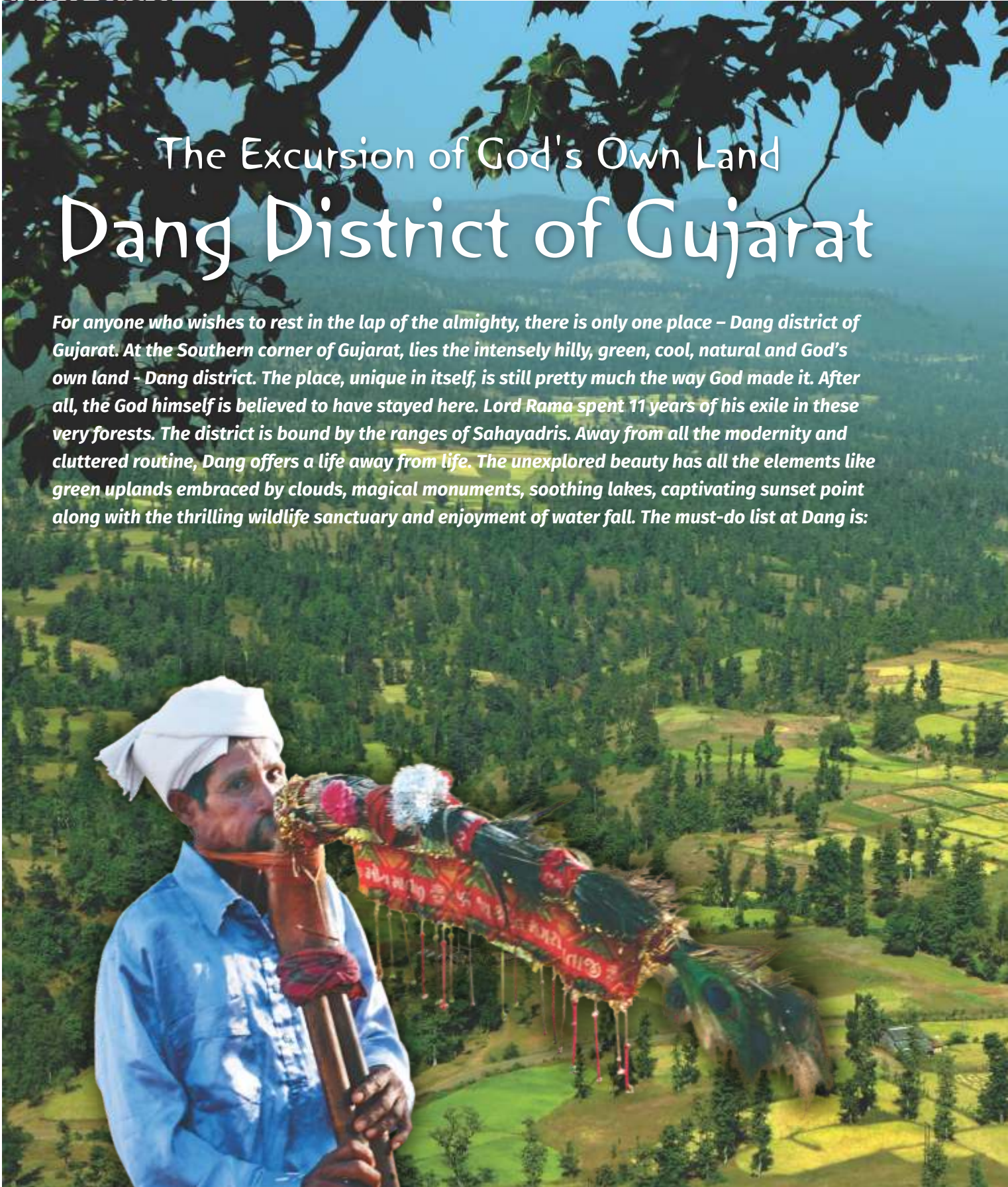
visitors alike in Ahmedabad's rich heritage. Following this, House of Mangaldas has promoted an audio walking tour from their heritage hotel to *haveli café* passing through a variety of heritage sites and a night walk in the walled city to see living traditions. Other walks like the Gandhi Trail and Freedom Fighter's Trail have also been designed for special occasion heritage tours. The heritage initiatives have got many people interested in preserving Ahmedabad's heritage sites. <sup>10</sup>



Jama Masjid at end of walk ↗

# The Excursion of God's Own Land Dang District of Gujarat

*For anyone who wishes to rest in the lap of the almighty, there is only one place – Dang district of Gujarat. At the Southern corner of Gujarat, lies the intensely hilly, green, cool, natural and God's own land - Dang district. The place, unique in itself, is still pretty much the way God made it. After all, the God himself is believed to have stayed here. Lord Rama spent 11 years of his exile in these very forests. The district is bound by the ranges of Sahayadris. Away from all the modernity and cluttered routine, Dang offers a life away from life. The unexplored beauty has all the elements like green uplands embraced by clouds, magical monuments, soothing lakes, captivating sunset point along with the thrilling wildlife sanctuary and enjoyment of water fall. The must-do list at Dang is:*





## The Sahyadris: Trek Away

Trekking is an exciting way to explore forests, waterfalls, dams, forts and caves that flourish the region. The ranges of Sahyadris offer tremendous zones to trekkers of all levels with its sloping hills and profound valleys. Situated at the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, Sahyadris unfolds the rich cultural heritage, mythological background and the tales of heroism of both of the states. So go on and enjoy the proximity to Mother Nature...

### **Saputara**

Positioned 1000m above sea level, the magnificent hill station of Dang district is one of the popular destinations of Gujarat. Saputara, literally means 'abode of serpents', is a heaven on earth with its magical mist, thrilling touch of clouds and refreshing breeze. The season of monsoon offers a unique adventurous ambiance to the visitors with the enchanting sight of the rain droplets fall over the thick forest cover. Natural beauty such as this is unique in Gujarat.



## Saputara Monsoon Festival



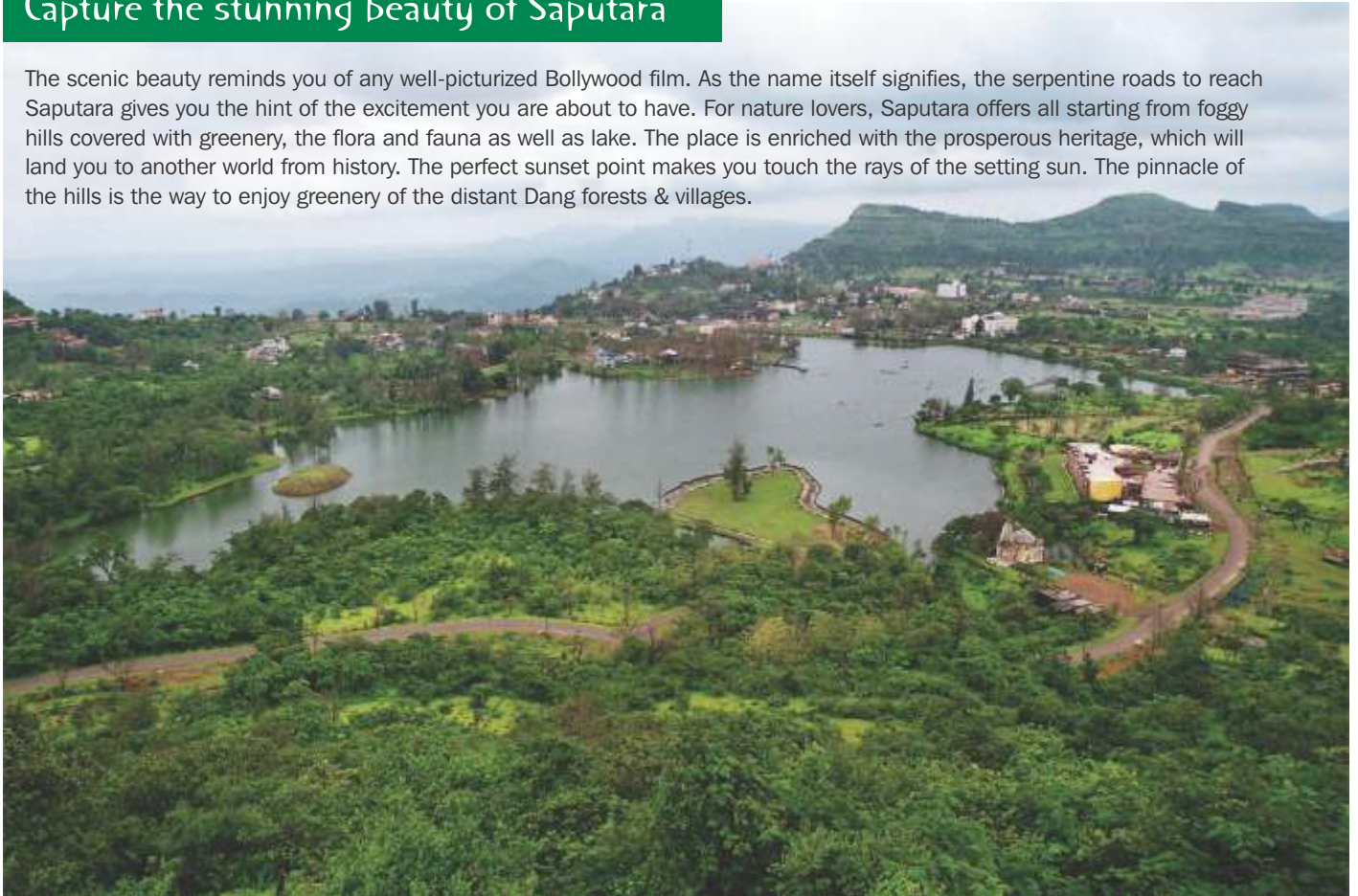
Saputara Monsoon Festival is organized by Gujarat Tourism to promote Saputara as a hill resort destination. The month-long event, hosting variety of activities/attractions for the tourists, presents monsoon delight to the nature-admirers and adventure-seekers. Water sports, laser show, photography exhibition, heritage walk, cultural evenings, food festival, contests are some of the activities organized during the event.





## Capture the stunning beauty of Saputara

The scenic beauty reminds you of any well-picturized Bollywood film. As the name itself signifies, the serpentine roads to reach Saputara gives you the hint of the excitement you are about to have. For nature lovers, Saputara offers all starting from foggy hills covered with greenery, the flora and fauna as well as lake. The place is enriched with the prosperous heritage, which will land you to another world from history. The perfect sunset point makes you touch the rays of the setting sun. The pinnacle of the hills is the way to enjoy greenery of the distant Dang forests & villages.



## Boating at Saputara Lake

The craggy Saputara's popular attraction is the Saputara Lake, which is located right in the middle of the valley amidst lush greenery. To enjoy the tranquil lake, boating is a popular leisure activity at Saputara for tourists and getaway seekers. The boating is a lot more fun when your eyesight has a visual of beautiful blend of hills and water at the horizons. Besides boating, long walks along the beautiful lake are some of the treats.



## Pandava Caves

As the name reveals, Pandavas are believed to have spend their time in these caves during their hideout days in forest and offered prayers to God Shiva. Hence, it is the best place for fans of the great mystical Mahabharat story. The road to the caves gives an amazing chance to touch the lives of local tribes of Dang.



## Gira Waterfall



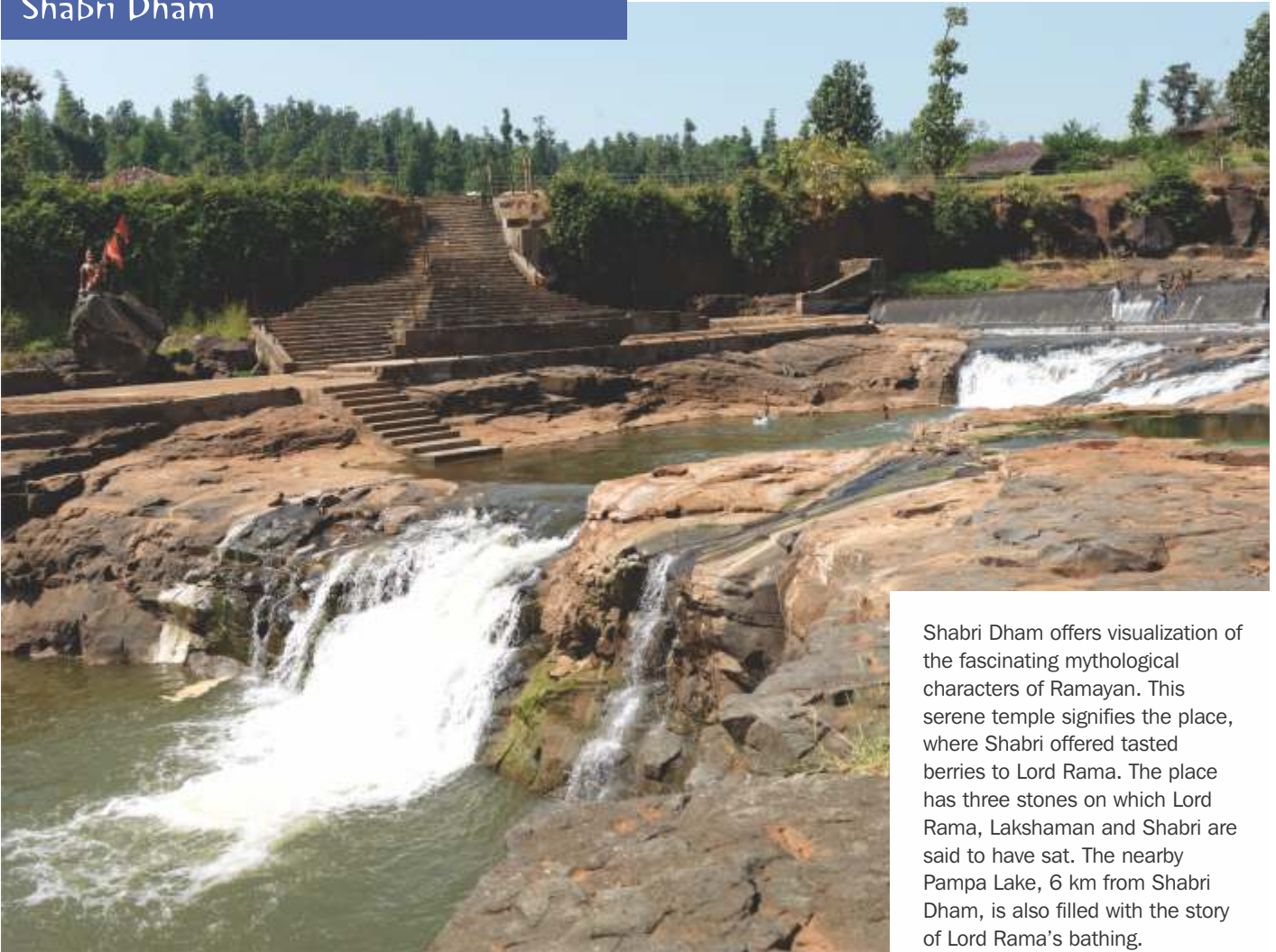
The Gira Waterfall emerges from the Kapri Tributary and merging into the Ambika River. Capturing the beauty of Gira Falls in its true form never gets better. The speed of the water plunging into the river creates a foggy look giving it a charming touch. The best season to visit Gira Waterfall is during or after monsoon.

## Purna Wildlife Sanctuary

Purna is the thickest forest cover in the state situated at the Northern part of the Dang district. The sanctuary is a part of forests. On the banks of Purna River, Purna and Vansda together are the only protected forest areas in South Gujarat. For an eco-tourist wanting to enjoy the flora and fauna of forest, this is the place to visit.



## Shabri Dham



Shabri Dham offers visualization of the fascinating mythological characters of Ramayan. This serene temple signifies the place, where Shabri offered tasted berries to Lord Rama. The place has three stones on which Lord Rama, Lakshaman and Shabri are said to have sat. The nearby Pampa Lake, 6 km from Shabri Dham, is also filled with the story of Lord Rama's bathing.

## Dang Darbar Fair

Dang Darbar Fair, also called as Jamabandi Darbar, is a three-day cultural extravaganza organized in Ahwa every year before Holi. The festivity evidences large number of tribal inhabitants and visitors, including merchants from the nearby cities visiting the fair from all over the district to enjoy the live colors, sound of *shehnai* and the beating of drums. Embellished with the excitement of thousands of people attired in riots of color, the cultural celebration hosts folk dances, dramas, and songs. Dang Darbar Fair is the perfect cultural exhibition to experience lifestyle and traditions of the native tribal people. **A perfect tourist destination with blend of colors, fun, adventure, culture, tradition, nature, spirituality and what not is inviting you to explore the yet-to-be-discovered feeling of yours.**



## Glorious Gujarat

One of the largest districts in India, Kutch offers a variety of attractions. The archaeological site at Dholavira offers an insight into the 5000-year old Indus Valley Civilisation, the palaces of Bhuj house incredible art treasures, and scores of fortified villages are worth-visiting for their heritage. The northern and eastern areas of Kutch comprise a vast white salt encrusted desert wilderness called the Great Rann of Kutch, while the southwest is fringed by lovely beaches like Mandvi with soft sands and calm waters. Birds abound at the salt marshes, lakes and grasslands, while endangered mammals like the wild ass, caracal, wolf and chinkara gazelle can be seen in the Rann and the Banni grassland.

Most of all, Kutch is famous for its rich living heritage of handicrafts – embroideries, bandhani tie-dye, block printings, metal crafts, woodwork, pottery and some rare arts thrive in the district.

### CENTRAL KUTCH

The district capital, Bhuj, offers an introduction to Kutch in its monuments, museums, markets and craft parks. The Bhujia Fort rises up from a hill overlooking

Bhuj, while the Hamirsar Lake to the west and Desalsar to the east flank the town attracting birds when they contain enough water.

The Darbargadh or walled palace complex is an imposing sight, rising up beside the lake. Inside this complex, you can see ornate balconies and carvings on the wall. Among the old buildings in this complex, the Aina Mahal was the old palace built during the reign of the flamboyant 18th century Jadeja Rajput ruler, Rao Lakha. The palace exhibits the craftsmanship of Ram Singh, who was rescued from a shipwreck and spent many years in the Netherlands learning arts like tile making, enameling, clock making, stone carving, glass blowing and metal casting. When he returned to Gujarat, he found a willing patron in Rao Lakha who commissioned him to build palaces at Bhuj and Mandvi. The palace has ivory inlaid doors, Delft blue tiles, chandeliers, enameled silver utensils and objects, chiming clocks and marble walls covered with mirrors and gilt. It also exhibits high quality crafts of Kutch like embroidery, scroll painting and jeweled

weaponry. The Fuvara Mahal, where the Maharao listened to music is a showpiece of the palace. Unfortunately, many areas of this palace are not accessible, due to earthquake damage, at the time of writing.

The Pragmahal Palace, which is currently undergoing a major renovation, is an impressive building across the courtyard. Built in 1865 during the reign of Maharao Pragmalji, this elaborate palace was designed by Colonel Wilkins. The highlight of the palace is the



PRAG MAHAL



AINA MAHAL



# KUTCH

FROM WHITE DESERT TO GOLDEN BEACHES

opulent Durbar Hall, which is decorated with Shakespearan figures, Minton tiles, carving, gilding and statues. The veranda, the zanana for women and corner towers are equally elaborately decorated.

To the southwest of Hamirsar Lake, the Sharad Bagh Palace was built in the 19th century. It was a favoured garden retreat of the Maharao and its appealing features include its garden. The small porticoed buildings are delicately proportioned. It has a beautifully appointed drawing room and collections of the Maharao's heirlooms including stuffed animals and tennis trophies. Just south of Hamirsar, a path leads to the 250-year old Ramkund tank, decorated with skilfully crafted religious images. You can see the niches in the walls where oil lamps would glitter in the dusk during the evening puja.

From here, you can continue east to the

Kutch Museum, which is known for its outstanding collection of Saka inscriptions, a coin collection including Kutch koris, an excellent section dedicated to musical instruments, a shipping display, sculptures and handicrafts. The Chhatardi complex includes the cenotaphs of successive Maharao or rulers of Kutch. Though badly earthquake-damaged, they still reflect the high quality of sandstone sculpture that existed in Kutch.

Take the Mandvi Road to visit Bharatiya Sanskruti Darshan, the folk museum of Kutch designed by a scholar named Ramsinhji K Rathod. This museum showcases the architecture of the bhungas (the earthen roundhouses of Kutch), the rich handicraft heritage of the region and literature of Kutch.

From Bhuj, a drive of about 15 minutes will bring you to Bhujodi, known for its award winning weavers. Called Vankars, the weaver families produce colourful shawls, traditional blankets like the Dhabda, dhablas and floor coverings like woolen durries. The shawls and other

products are distinguished by their intricate woven patterns, tight weaving and embellishments with tie-dye or embroidery. Many of the weavers of this village have won prestigious national awards for their work. The weavers work on a throw shuttle or a fly shuttle pit loom, or occasionally frame looms. The colourful shawls and durries of Bhujodi are usually woven with motifs, which have been passed down through generations of artisan communities. While wool was sourced from the pastoral communities like the Rabaris, the weavers today also use cottons, Merino wools, acrylics and silks. The shawls may be embellished further with tie-dye, mirror work embroidery and other handwork.

Bhujodi is also known for Rabari and Marwada embroidery. You will also find Marwadis working on carving wood in Bhujodi. In the village, you may find Dhebaria Rabari women and girls doing their distinctive embroidery.

From Bhujodi, it is a short drive to the villages of Dhaneti and Paddhar, which have substantial Ahir populations. Ahirs are traditionally a pastoral group that identifies itself with the Gope Culture of Lord Krishna but today many of the Ahir men are in businesses like truck transportation.

Several Ahir women in villages of Kutch, like Dhaneti, Paddhar, Tappar, Lodai, Ratnal, etc, continue to do embroidery for their own use and for a second source of household income. Ahir embroidery is known to be largely in a flowing style, with peacock, floral and other motifs, and circular patterns. They use ladder chain stitch, herringbone stitch and round mirrors. Paddhar is also home to the Dhebaria Rabari, a pastoral group that also lives in villages like Makhiyan, Bhardoi, Mamuara, Nadapa, Raydhanpar,

Varnora and Dudhai. The Dhebaria Rabari embroidery is known for its highly-skilled work and accent stitches, but many of them no longer do embroidery because of a ban imposed by elders in the community. You may still be able to get some fine work with detailing in these villages. Some of their border motifs derive from Sindh and the princely courts of Kutch.

A short distance from these villages, Dhamadka and Ajrakhpur are well-known centres of Ajrakh, richly-printed fabrics. Predominantly blue with red and white accents, the Ajrakh is said to be well-suited to the extremes of the desert – the combination of colours makes them cooling in summer and warming in winter. The rich prints on the surface of the Ajrakh fabric is achieved through a highly-evolved process, which includes different stages of mordant-dyeing and resist-printing. This elaborate process can take weeks to complete and uses a large number of engraved printed blocks for selective dyeing. Indigo, madder and other mineral & earth colours are used for Ajrakh painting.



BHUNGA HOUSE

Near these villages, the Khamir Craft Resource Centre on Kukma Road is working on interventions to upgrade handloom weaving, ajrakh block printing, leather craft, lac turned wood, metal bell, pottery, and silver jewelry craft sectors in Kutch. They are also promoting declining skills like namada or felt-making in Kutch.

From Kukma, you can travel onward to Anjar, which is known for its bandhani and metal crafts. Anjar's markets are excellent places to look for ornamented knives, nutcrackers and other metal handicrafts.

**NORTH TO THE DESERT**

Traveling north on the Bhuj-Khavda highway, you pass grasslands dotted with villages of Muslim pastoral groups who graze their livestock here, and also villages of Sodha Rajputs and Meghwals who are mostly migrants from Sindh. The women of each of the different communities, whether they are Hindu pastoralists like the Rabaris, Muslim pastoralists like the Jats and the Mutwas, or artisans like the Meghwals, specialise in a distinctive style of embroidery. Sumrasar Shaikh is an important centre for the Soof embroidery of the Sodha Rajputs, as are villages like Kuran, Loriya, Bibbar, etc on this route. The Meghwal Harijan is an artisanal group

Jadeja Rajput women of villages like Bibbar also do applique work. Dhorodo and Gorewali are excellent places for the minutely detailed embroidery of the Mutwas. Hodka, Dhorodo and other villages produce embroidered leather products. As the women of these groups do embroidery for their personal use and a second income, this is one of the highest concentration areas of craftswomen in the world. Khavda and Kuran are villages known for weaving, pottery and other handicrafts.



GURUDVARA



ROGAN ART

spread across a number of villages like Bhirandiara, Sadai, Dumado, Dhrobana, Kuran, Tuga, Andhau, Gorewali, Dhorodo, etc, and practices embroidery styles like Soof, Paako, Kharek, Kambira and Kudi, which vary with the village. Garasia Jath women, in villages like Sumrasar Jathwali, stitch an array of geometric patterns in counted work based on cross stitch studded with minute mirrors. They are known for their superbly embroidered yokes. Dhaneta and Fakiriani Jaths embroider tiny bars of tight satin stitch with radiating circles of a couched stitch. The villages of Bhirandiara, Hodka, Gorewali, Dhorodo and Dumado are known for their applique or patchwork. The

Continuing from Khavda towards the border, you find traditional weavers of goat hair and camel hair products.

From Khavda, drive to the Dattatreya Temple atop Kala Dungar, which is called the Black Hill of Kutch. The Kala Dungar and Goro Dungar hills are covered with grassland, scrubland,

rocks and ponds that support faunal populations. These hills can be good to see some typical birds of the scrubby and barren habitats. The Dattatray Temple on Kala Dungar is the site for a unique daily event – when the priests of this temple offer food and call Lo-aang, jackals and other animals come to feed!

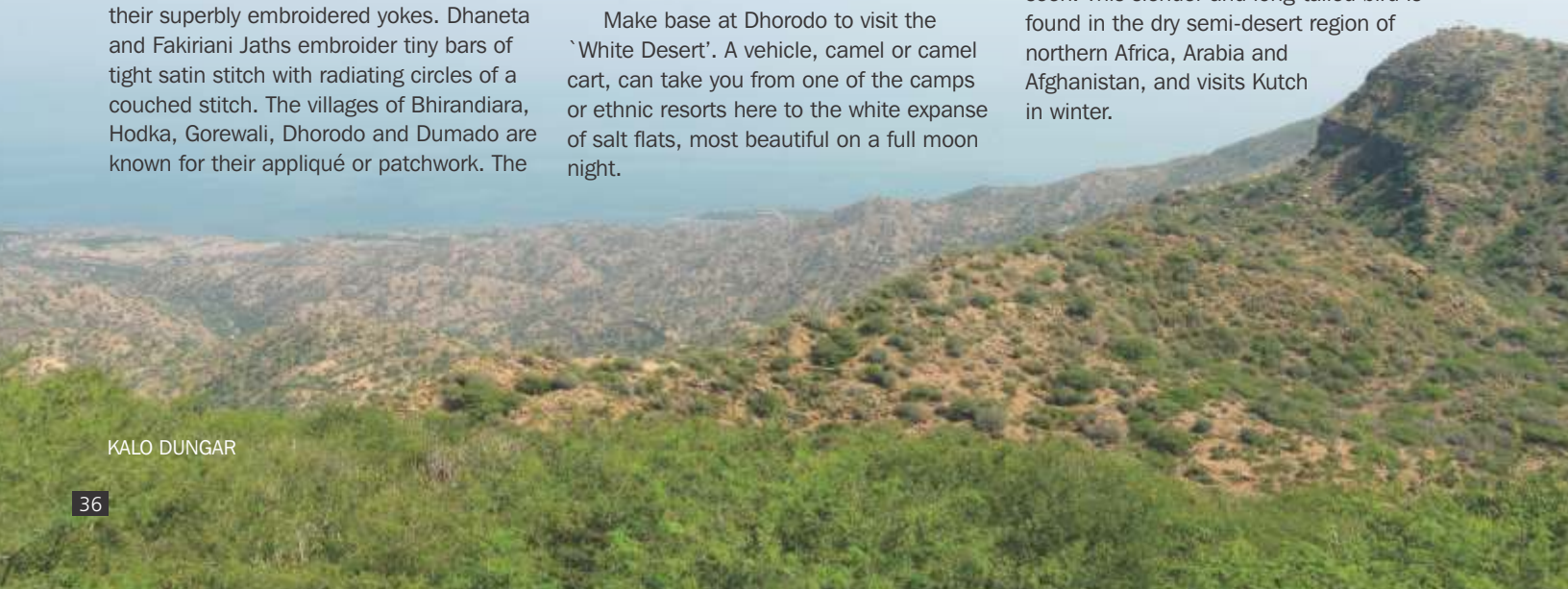
From the hill, you can get a panoramic view of the salt-encrusted Rann of Kutch.

Make base at Dhorodo to visit the 'White Desert'. A vehicle, camel or camel cart, can take you from one of the camps or ethnic resorts here to the white expanse of salt flats, most beautiful on a full moon night.

**WEST KUTCH**

West from Dhorodo, you come to the village of Nirona, which is the centre for the rare art of Rogan, now practiced only by the family of Khatri Abdulgafoor Daud, who has won national awards for this art. Rogan is the art of painting fabrics using castor oil-based colours. Much work goes into creating the castor-oil based paint, which is then rubbed between palms to create a stringy gooeey paste from which the colour can come off on an iron rod or wooden stick like threads. He and his nephews create rogan masterpieces for wall hangings and decorations, sarees, tablecloths, wall hangings, skirts, etc in silk and cotton cloths. At Nirona and nearby villages like Zura, it is possible to see 'Vada-kaam', the work of carpenters who create wooden products which they lacquer in various colours, and the making of melodic bells, cast in iron and covered with copper.

At the edge of the Banni grasslands, a patch of 'salvadora persica' trees near Fulay village is extremely interesting for specialty birdwatchers. This patch is one of the few sites in India where the grey hypocolius is seen. This slender and long-tailed bird is found in the dry semi-desert region of northern Africa, Arabia and Afghanistan, and visits Kutch in winter.



KALO DUNGAR

From Fulay, you can drive to the Charri Dhand, a depression that is a prominent feature of the extensive grasslands of Banni. When this depression fills with water in a year of good rainfall, it becomes a paradise for birdwatchers, attracting countless birds. A winter tour of the Banni grasslands, covering Chhari Dhand and other wetlands, is extremely rewarding for viewing birds. Vast flocks of common cranes can be seen and the lakes are full of ducks and waders. A viewing tower offers a panoramic view of the Chhari Dhand. The grasslands are important areas for watching raptors including Greater Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Bonneli's Eagle, Laggar Falcon and Red Headed Falcon. Chinkara or Indian Gazelle, Wolf, Striped Hyena and

other mammals are seen here as well as some interesting reptiles. From the grasslands, you can see Dinodar Hill.

Nearby, Mohan Singh Sodha has created a private fossil museum with a standout collection of fossils found in Kutch and a camp. Continuing from here, the road leads to the ancient Buddhist site of Siyot and the fortified town of Lakhpat best known for its historic Gurdvara, associated with Guru Nanak. The Lakhpat Gurdvara has won a UNESCO conservation award.

### COASTAL KUTCH

From Lakhpat, you can travel down to the holy lake of Narayansarovar and the shore temple at Koteshvar. Further south, the heritage village of Tera has exquisitely carved havelis, a historic fort, temples and



mosques, and an interesting water-harvesting system. Tera Fort has fascinating Ramayana folk murals. Naliya near Tera has a popular Jain temple. Near Naliya is the Lala Sanctuary, home to endangered birds like the Great Indian Bustard, Black-naped Tit, Stolikza's bushchat, White-backed and Long-billed Vultures, and the Lesser Florican. The Narayan Sarovar and Lala Sanctuaries also support endangered mammals like Wolf and Gazelle, while the beaches are used by Sea Turtles for breeding.

From here, you can continue along the coast to some fine stretches of beach, fruit



MANDAVI BEACH



DHOLAVIRA

and palm grove, and bird-rich creeks. The key destination is Mandvi, about 50km from Bhuj airport, which has the majestic Vijay Vilas Palace, and beautiful beaches. Once a major port, Mandvi still supports a thriving dhow-building industry at its creeks. It is a market for the handicrafts produced in nearby villages like bandhani and the rare mashru. There is a deluxe tented beach resort in the palace estate.

East from Mandvi are the modern developments of Kutch like the Mundra Port, Kandla Port, the planned city of Gandhidham and industrial estates.

### EASTERN KUTCH

The main focal point of Eastern Kutch is Dholavira, the excavations that provide an insight into the Indus Valley or Harappan Civilisation, which was specially mature about 2500-1900BC. This site shows the town planning of the period, specially the sanitary drainage systems and the water-harvesting structures, like reservoirs, wells and canals, that were surprisingly sophisticated for the period. The smoothed stone columns, signboard and microbeads are some of the unique finds at Dholavira. There is also a large public area of the kind seen at few Indus sites. A trip to Dholavira can be combined with visiting the Vaghadia Rabari villages nearby to see their embroidery. ■



## SUGGESTED ITINERARY

### DAY-1

Bhuj - Visit the Aina Mahal and Pragmahal Palaces, the Kutch Museum, the Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan (folk museums), markets and craft centres. Visit the villages around Bhuj. Each of these villages specializes in a distinct craft - Bhujodi for weaving, Dhaneti for Ahir embroidery, Dhamadka and Ajrakhpur for Ajrakh block printing, to name but a few. Stay at a hotel in Bhuj or at Pranav Farm.

### DAY-2

Travel north from Bhuj to Hodka - Make base at Shaam-e-Sarhad, an endogenous resort, to visit a number of villages known for embroidery, leather crafts, pottery and other handiwork. Enjoy a view of the white desert from the Kala Dungar hills.

### DAY-3

Travel towards Nakhatrana - In this area, you can visit craft villages like Nirona and Badhli, see historic forts, watch birds at Chhari Lake and explore the Banni grasslands. The Infinity Rann of Kutch, CEDO Camp, Darbargadh Devpur Homestay and other properties in this area offer arrangements to tour the area.

### DAY-4

Continue west to the holy places of *Ashapura Mata no Madh*, Narayan Sarovar and Koteswar Temple - Travel along the coast to Lakhat with its fort, Gurdwara and other monuments. The Buddhist caves of Siyot can be visited on this route. For those interested in wildlife, the Lala Sanctuary near Naliya is the habitat of Great Indian Bustard, Indian Wolf, Chinkara, Nilgai, Spiny-tailed Lizard and other wildlife species. The heritage village of Tera contains a variety of architectural sights including a fort, a stepwell, temples, mosque and havelis. There are limited accommodations in Northwestern Kutch. You can retrace to Bhuj or one of the accommodation facilities near Nakhatrana.

### DAY-5

Continue to Mandvi - This town's rich maritime past can be experienced at the old harbor, where ocean-worthy vessels like dhows are hand-built. Mandvi is the premier beach destination of Kutch. The Vijay Vilas Palace of Mandvi occupies a huge estate with an unspoiled beach at one end. Stay at The Beach at Mandvi Palace.

### DAY-6

Travel from Mandvi to Gandhidham where you can stay in a star-rated hotel or resort. Visit the historic town of Badhreshwar, known for its Islamic architecture and Jain temples, near Gandhidham.

### DAY-7

From Gandhidham, travel to Dholavira for an insight into the Indus Valley Civilisation.



## Uttrayan/International Kite Festival

Uttrayan is celebrated across Gujarat on 14th January every year, with major centers of kite-flying in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Nadiad, among others. The International Kite Festival is held at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad.

# Trip on Culture



## Rann Utsav

Amidst the breathtaking and divergent landscape, during the full moon night of the winters, the three-month long festive event - Rann Utsav brims with dynamism, hospitality, vigor and traditional flavor of the splendid Kutch.



## Navratri

A lively celebration that exhibits the colorful culture of Gujarat through acoustic music and traditional dance called 'Garba'. Celebrated in September or October every year, this nine-day dance fest honours Goddess Shakti's triumph over evil after a battle of 9 days.



## Diwali

For Gujaratis, Diwali marks the end of the year. So the next day is celebrated as Bestu Varas or New Year's Day. The festival is celebrated with rangolis, diyas, and by worshipping Goddess Lakshmi.





# GUJARAT

## The Land of Rich Parsi Heritage

Following the persecution in Persia, a Zoroastrian group called Parsees fled to Gujarat more than a 1000 years ago. The sea and land routes to Hind or India were well-known to the Zoroastrians because of trade between the Persian-speaking lands and the Indian coast. According to the medieval text called Kisse-i-Sanjan, the Zoroastrians landed and settled first in Diu Island and then set sail for Sanjan, which they are believed to have reached in the eighth century. During a storm en route, the Zoroastrian group promised to build an Atash Behram, a Parsee temple with the highest grade of ritual fire.

**T**he Parsees approached the ruler named Jadi Rana to settle at Sanjan. According to the story, the Rana was reluctant to give permission and sent a bowl of milk to indicate that his kingdom had no place for new settlers. The Parsee priests added sugar to the milk and returned it with a message that they would not interfere with the culture of the area, but instead enrich it like sugar, which does not increase the quantity of milk but sweetens it. The Atash Behram was consecrated

using 16 fires, including Asfan – a fire by lightning.

While Parsees prospered at Sanjan and nearby towns along the Gujarat coast, the Islamic invasion of Sanjan led to their fleeing with the fire to the caves of Bahrot. After this, the fire was housed in Navsari for centuries, and for a short while in Surat, before it was moved to Udvada in 1742. The sacred fire was first housed in the residence of Mr. Bhatela and then was moved to a small house of Seth Minocher Bahman from Nargol.

Another important Zoroastrian group is called Iranis who mostly came to India during the Mughal and British periods. Like the Parsees, the Iranis are predominantly found on the west-coast of India, in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Zoroastrians played a notable role in Indian industry, the arts, theatre, cinema, entertainment, sports, the freedom struggle, and the post independence governance of India. Many of them



distinguished themselves in the Indian armed forces.

The Parsees became prominent citizens of Gujarat with their mansions and institutions coming up in many cities from Bhuj, Bhavnagar to Bharuch. The Parsee heritage village of Udvada is the most sacred place of Zoroastrian pilgrimage in India. The temple here is called sacred Iranshah Atashbehram and houses the highest grade of ritual fire holy to Parsees. There is an Atashbehram at Navsari, two Atashbehram in Surat, two in Mumbai and one in Iran.

As you enter Udvada, you see striking façade of the recently restored Seth Sohrabji Jamshedji Sodawaterwalla Dharamshala, an 80-year old building, which went through repairs, restoration and renovation before being re-opened in September 2011 as a guest house for Parsee religious tourists. This Dharamshala gets its name from Bai Aimai Sorabji Sodawaterwala, who handed over her residence to a trust when she passed away in 1945. This was

given over to the Udwada Samast Anjuman in 1949. However, as there were few visitors then, this structure was sold to open a school and the sale proceeds were utilised to buy this present structure earlier known as 'Rezashah Hotel' at Udvada. Sohrabji Jamshedji Sodawaterwalla Dharamshala was inaugurated by the Udwada Samast Anjuman on 17th April 1956. Thanks to the interest taken by the priests and heritage architects Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla and Pankaj Joshi, this structure was restored with the financial support of philanthropists from the Parsee community. Besides restoring the structure, from August 2010, the rooms have also been upgraded with new facilities and the old furniture now gleams with fresh polishing. Interestingly, the high-ceilinged reception hall has a plan of Udvada showing key buildings, historical information about the village, and a 'Did You Know about Zoroastrianism and Parsees?'. Caricatures of Parsis by Mario Miranda decorate the lobby. The plan shows that the village of Udvada lies

on a north-west axis between Jhanda Chowk and the Iranshah Temple at its core, with the Merivadi Street and Sea View Street running parallel to the main spine. Most of the heritage buildings and Parsee residences are in the core area.

Just outside the dharamshala, Jhanda Chowk is a road junction at the beginning of Udvada's heritage precinct. The Mirza memorial hall, Unwalla Library and other historic buildings can be seen on the way to the fire temple. The Sacred Iranshah Atashbehram Fire Temple has figures of winged bulls with human heads, considered auspicious for all Parsees. The temple was first constructed in the 18th century by Seth Edulji of Surat and expanded in 1812 by Seth Jamdhedji Guzder. In 1830, Seth Dadabhai and Mancherji Wadia built a new structure.

The present day Udvada fire temple was constructed by Lady Motlibhai Wadia in 1894, replacing the older buildings. The architect and builder of the temple was Dinshaw Dorabjee Mistry from Mumbai. The temple structure is spacious and well-



- 1 A fire temple at Surat
- 2 The Atashbehrām, a holy place for Parsees at Navsari
- 3 The Jeejeebhoy museum at Navsari
- 4 Old weaving equipment at the Jeejeebhoy museum at Navsari





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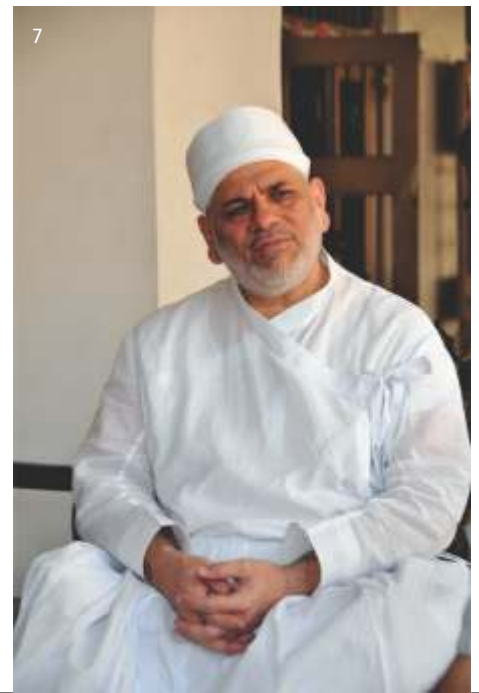
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5-6 The Sacred Iranshah Atashbehram at Udvada

7 The high priest of Udvada

8 The Zoroastrian Information Centre at Udvada

9-10 The museum at Udvada



7



decorated. The façade of the temple is in the typical eclectic style of Parsee buildings with Iranian, European and Indian features.

On festive days like Behram Roj or the annual Navroz celebrations, you can see a flow of Parsees, some of them dressed in traditional clothing, coming and going through the entrance. The anniversary, known as sālgi, corresponding to the date of establishing the Atash Behram in Udvada, is celebrated every year according to the Shenshai Zoroastrian calendar on the day called Ādur of the month (also called Ādur - the ninth Zoroastrian month and the ninth day of the month). Pilgrims visit the place throughout the Ādur month. Shops and vendors sell sandalwood, ritual objects, religious artifacts, Parsee food products, handmade ice-creams and souvenirs on weekends, festive days and auspicious days, when there is enough flow of pilgrims.

Around the temple are other historic buildings like the Dastur Baugh and the Petit Dar-e-Maher built by first Baronet Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit in 1891. Some of the old hotels near the fire temple like Globe and Ashishvang also retain their old facades.

Since Udvada was a religious place, it was mainly the priestly families that lived here. The non-priestly families include those that have established hotels and shops to cater to Parsee pilgrims visiting

Udvada. The typical Parsee homes here have high ceilings, ornamental skirted sloping roofs and double otlas (twin porticoes). Some of them, over a century old, are now under threat from the real estate boom in this part of Gujarat. Eminent Parsees, Udvada's Parsee residents and conservation organizations are now working to improve the infrastructure, restore and renovate heritage buildings and protect the environment of Udvada.

As the fire temple is not open for non-Zoroastrian, the Zoroastrian Information Centre nearby offers information about the Parsee rituals. This centre was conceptualized by Foundation for Development of Udvada with inputs from trustees like Homai Modi and Dr Homi Dhallā. The architects Pankaj Joshi and Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla restored a colonial-style building that was in a dilapidated condition for this centre. This is a museum set in grounds with a shop at one end selling Gara embroidery and Parsee objects. The centre has five rooms that offer an insight into various aspects of the Parsee legacy. Here you can see visuals depicting the intricate Navjote



Ceremony after which the child is viewed as a member of the Zoroastrian community, models and informative panels that show rituals in the sanctum, and a display of costumes like the Jabhla that is like a silk kurta and the Gara (embroidered saris).

In one of the rooms, there are panels depicting the history of ancient Persian dynasties. Another set of panels explain the contribution of Parsees like JRD Tata, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Homi Baba, Madam Cama, etc. to the development of India.

From Udvada, drive to Navsari, which has the Bhagarsath Desai Atash Behram built in 1765 AD surrounded by palms.



According to Parsees, their ancestors found the city's atmosphere similar to that of Sari region of Iran, and so the NAO SARI or New Sari came into being. Many prosperous Parsee families of today trace their origin to Navsari and Valsad. You can see the heritage house of the Tata family in Navsari, the birthplace of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata. Nearby is a house that has been converted into a museum dedicated to Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet, merchant and philanthropist of the late-18th and early-20th century who made a huge fortune in the opium trade between India and China. He endowed hospitals, schools and charitable shelters in Mumbai, Navsari, Surat, Pune and other cities of India. First Dastoor Meherjirana Library in Navsari has a huge resource of information on the Parsees.

- 11 Garas in Ahmedabad's Medora family's heirloom collection
- 12 Gara Embroidery
- 13 Exquisite gara in the Medora collection

About an hour from Navsari, Surat has a number of schools, hospitals and other institutions built by Parsees. The fires of the Modi (Shenshai) Atash Behram and the Vakil Atash Behram in Surat were both consecrated in 1823. Surat was a prominent Parsee stronghold during the Mughal period. After the Mughal Emperors allowed the British and Dutch to establish their factories in Surat, Parsees were employed in the European trading bases. While in Surat, you can shop for bakery products from popular Parsee-owned bakeries.

North of Surat, Bharuch, Ankleshwar and Vadodara have many old Parsee heritage relics.

Many Parsees made their mark on Ahmedabad's industry after the growth of the textile industry in the city. The city's oldest



surviving star-rated hotel - Cama Hotel was built by the Parsee Cama family in 1960. Nearby is the Zoroastrian Ladies Industrial Cooperative Society. The Agiary is in Khamasa. Many Parsees have scripted success stories in textiles, chemicals, aviation, tourism, restaurants, insurance and other enterprises in Ahmedabad over the last 100 or so years.

### The Parsee Influence on Gujarat's Handicrafts

The Gara embroidery dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries when Parsees became successful ship-builders and traders who traversed the Silk Route taking Indian commodities to China and bringing back silk for Surat's textile industry. The Parsee traders brought back porcelain and artifacts from China - that can still be seen in many Parsee homes, and embroidered textiles & robes from China, which inspired them to formulate two craft techniques that are essential to the Indian textile heritage - the Tanchoi weave and the Gara embroidery. Essentially inspired by the Chinese embroidery traditions, the Parsees also drew from various sources introducing Persian motifs, the mochi or aari embroidery popular in Gujarat and neighbouring Sindh, the zardosi that they learnt from other parts of India where they settled, and the European influences especially of the British, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch in the chintz and curtains made in Gujarat for the British, Dutch and Portuguese markets.

Thus, evolved the Parsee embroidery tradition drawing from many stylistic influences to become the sought-after textiles of the Parsees. With the intricate work done by artisans on rich silk fabrics, the Gara saris are much sought after, and are heirlooms passed on from mothers to their daughters or daughters-in-law. A key feature of the Parsee Gara is the depiction of nature, including the animals using fine stitches that give the birds, butterflies and flowers a sense of fluidity and movement.

China Chini Garas are those with scenes from China like pagodas, shrines,

boatmen on the river, landscapes, soldiers and cranes. Kanda-Papeta Gara is with large pink and yellow polka dots or circular motifs, which is called by this funny name because the onion or kanda in Gujarat is pink and the papeta is a Gujarati name for potatoes represented by yellow. The karolia or spider design is actually a floral pattern and the chakla-chakli is a design of sparrows or other birds. The Zoroastrian reverence for nature has been celebrated in the motifs of their embroidery since time immemorial.

created to carry forward the work initiated by the world body and the Craft Documentation programme. The programme is researching into the origin, history, development and technique of Gara or Parsi embroidery, documented through various field trips and exhibitions across the nation. As a Director of NIFT, Mirza guided NID student Priya Mani who took field trips for her research project on the Parsi textile traditions. During the field trip, she met Parsi ladies who are among the few left with the skills and intricacy of the embroidery techniques. The Ministry

#### Themes of traditional Garas are based on Chinese symbols

Symbol	Stands for
• Eight immortals of taoism	Longevity
• Divine fungus	Immortality and protection
• Pomegranate	Fertility and a desire for a child
• Bamboo	Strength and the resilient spirit
• Peach	Immortality
• Flowers	Four seasons i.e. Plum or a rose stands for winter
• Peony and orchids	Spring and good fortune
• Chrysanthemum	Autumn and longevity
• Crane	Immortality
• Horse	Speed and intelligence
• Butterflies	Summer and joy
• Peacock	Nobility
• Ribbons fluttering from the beaks of birds	Marital bliss

The embroidery techniques are usually satin stitch and a Chinese version of the French knot in which the preferred colours are red, black or purple. The embroidery was generally done with white or cream silk threads that stand out on the dark background, sometimes with coloured highlighting stitches, while the Kores or borders are often multicoloured. The fabric is usually Gajji, Ghat and Hojerum silk. At Khordad Creations in Ahmedabad, Chinoy sells saris, salvar kameez sets and duppatas with Gara embroidery. Viloo Mirza, Project Director of Ahmedabad-based Sewa Trade Facilitation Centre (STFC) has been involved for many years with the UNESCO Parzor Project, set up in 1999 by UNESCO for the preservation and promotion efforts of Zoroastrian culture and heritage. The Parzor foundation was

of Textiles, Government of India has recognised the heritage value of Parsi embroidery and supported the projects for its revival.

Saadeli is a form of Marquetry practiced by a few artisans in Surat. Surat's Sadeli bears much resemblance to Khatam, Persian marquetry that developed in Iran during the reign of Safavid dynasty from 1501 to 1722. The Zoroastrians or Parsees who came to Gujarat from Iran, brought the marquetry techniques to Surat about 150 years ago. After making the wooden object, which is to be ornamented, the artisans obtain the slices from composite sections of wood and then apply these slices to create a patchwork on the surface. 250 pieces could be applied in one square inch or cubic cm of a wooden surface. ■

# Gujarat Homestays

*When in Gujarat, be a Gujarati*



- Comfortable, world-class homestay facilities to the tourists
- Selection of homes based on thorough scrutiny and inspection
- Issue of certificate upon registration by Gujarat Tourism
- Categorization of the establishment as Silver or Gold category
- Additional income and enjoyable business activity for home owners
- Payment by tourists towards boarding and lodging services
- Timely and need-based inspection to ensure comfort, hygiene and safety





# TORAN HOTELS



## Toran Gandhi Ashram - Ahmedabad



### Key Attractions

Comfortable Stay Options | Warm Hospitality  
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