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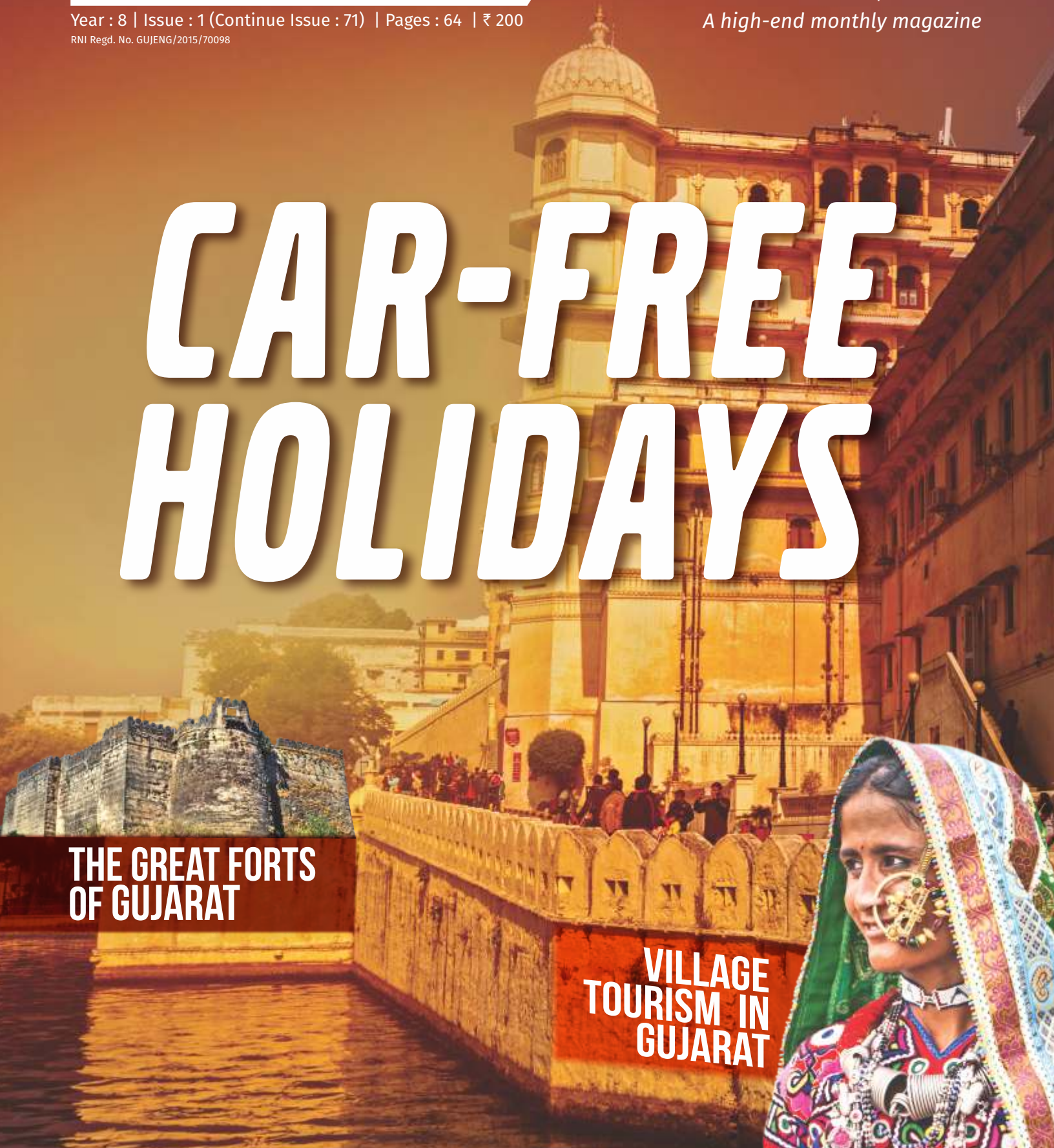
A high-end monthly magazine

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CAR-FREE HOLIDAYS

**THE GREAT FORTS
OF GUJARAT**

**VILLAGE
TOURISM IN
GUJARAT**





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Chalte Chalte

Hours lost in a row and looking for parking, anxiety to get lost and exorbitant fuel cost and highway: these are just memories when traveling without a car. Choosing to live a car-free holiday means not only respecting the environment, but also gaining time and living a more authentic and meaningful experience.

By walking around or using public transportation, you can experience the cities and places just as locals do and discover unexpected views and corners, approaching the true essence of traveling.

For your next car-free holidays, we bring you a list of destinations to choose from. Explore the Latin quarters like Fontainhas and Sao Tome Sao Tome in the capital city of Goa – Panaji or discover the historical town to the east of Diu to appreciate the heritage buildings.

Read on!

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September 2022



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Incredible India

CAR-FREE



HOLIDAYS



On World Car Free Day, visit some destinations, where it is easy to walk around or use motor-free transport options.

PANAJI



Church of St. Francis of Assisi

The capital of Goa State, Panaji or Panjim is a city, where much can be explored on foot. The highlight of Panaji is the Latin Quarters like Fontainhas and Sao Tome with many historical houses and buildings.

The Church Square is one of Panaji's great landmarks. The square is overlooked by the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Built in 1541,

this church served the ship crews making landfall in the Mandovi River Estuary as a landmark and as a place to offer thanks to the lord for a safe landing. It was rebuilt in 1619 after becoming a Parish church in 1600. Situated in a beautiful square of Panaji, which was also decorated for X'mas, a distinctive feature of the church is the impressive zigzag four-tiered staircase built in the 18th century when land was

reclaimed in front of the building. Its arches were strengthened to bear the weight of the huge golden bell moved here in 1871 from St Augustine Church. Inside, the church has an altar to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, flanked by two ornate and heavily gilded altars to Jesus the Crucified and to Our Lady of Rosary with marble statues of St Paul and St Peter on either side.



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Source: Grigja Bruev / Shutterstock.com

Immaculate Conception Church



Panaji City, Goa

Walk along Emidio Gracia Road or Corte de Oiterio, a road built in the 1870s and '80s, to a two-storey 19th century house, and then turn on 31st January Road, which is lined with blocks of ochre, blue, light yellow and green Portuguese colonial-period houses set along Altinho Hill. This part of Panaji is said to have been developed from flooded fields and marsh into palm groves by Antonio Joao Siqueira who was called Mossmikar because he amassed a fortune in Mozambique. Laterite steps

Chapel of St. Sebastian





lead to the High Court of Mumbai, a complex of buildings that once comprised the Lyceum school campus. The court building is one of the best preserved mid-19th century historical landmarks of Goa with a high-pitched tiled roof, elegant windows, arched entrances and mature palm trees.

Descend to the St Sebastian Chapel. Near the chapel are workshops, where tiles are made and hand-painted (These tiles called Azules can be best seen at the library of Panaji). The St Sebastian Chapel has the huge crucifix brought

here from the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa. It is a lifelike depiction of Jesus with head held up and eyes open - it is said to have been designed to inspire fear and remorse in those being interrogated.

Near the chapel is a 19th century mansion that houses the office of the delegation of the Fundacao Oriente, a Portuguese foundation for cultural, educational, artistic, scientific, philanthropic and social projects. The building houses a small exhibition gallery, library and accommodations for

Fundacao Oriente scholars.

From here, a lane leads through more decorated houses in yellow, ochre, green or indigo with white trim, the Old Portuguese colour code still followed in Fontainhas. You can see art galleries and old buildings. There are many famous cafes and restaurants in the area known for Goan food. Fontainhas gets its name from Fonte Phoenix or Fonte Fenix, a stepped reservoir with a fountain that is said to have spouted a phoenix giving it the name.

Archbishop's Palace

From here, the road called Rua de Natale snakes up Altinho Hill offering a view of the old Latin quarters. En route is the Maruti Temple, which has a colourful façade and good views from its veranda. You can see the Bishop's Palace, built in the 1880s and '90s as the residence of the Archbishop of Goa and Daman. This huge and imposing white mansion has a silver-painted Jesus. You pass many grand mansions as you descend to Querem Creek.



Maruti Temple

Source: Zhukov Oleg/Shutterstock.com

Source: Zhukov Oleg/Shutterstock.com

For the rest of the day, you can explore the Mandovi riverfront.

There are many places to stay like the Welcomheritage Panjim Inn, a heritage hotel, restaurants, cafes, bookstores and markets that make it worth staying for a couple of days at Panaji.



Source: Lloyd Vas/Shutterstock.com



Mandovi Riverfront

DIU

The island of Diu has the historical town to the east with many reminders of the Portuguese rule over Diu and Daman. It is easy to get around on foot to see the many heritage buildings.

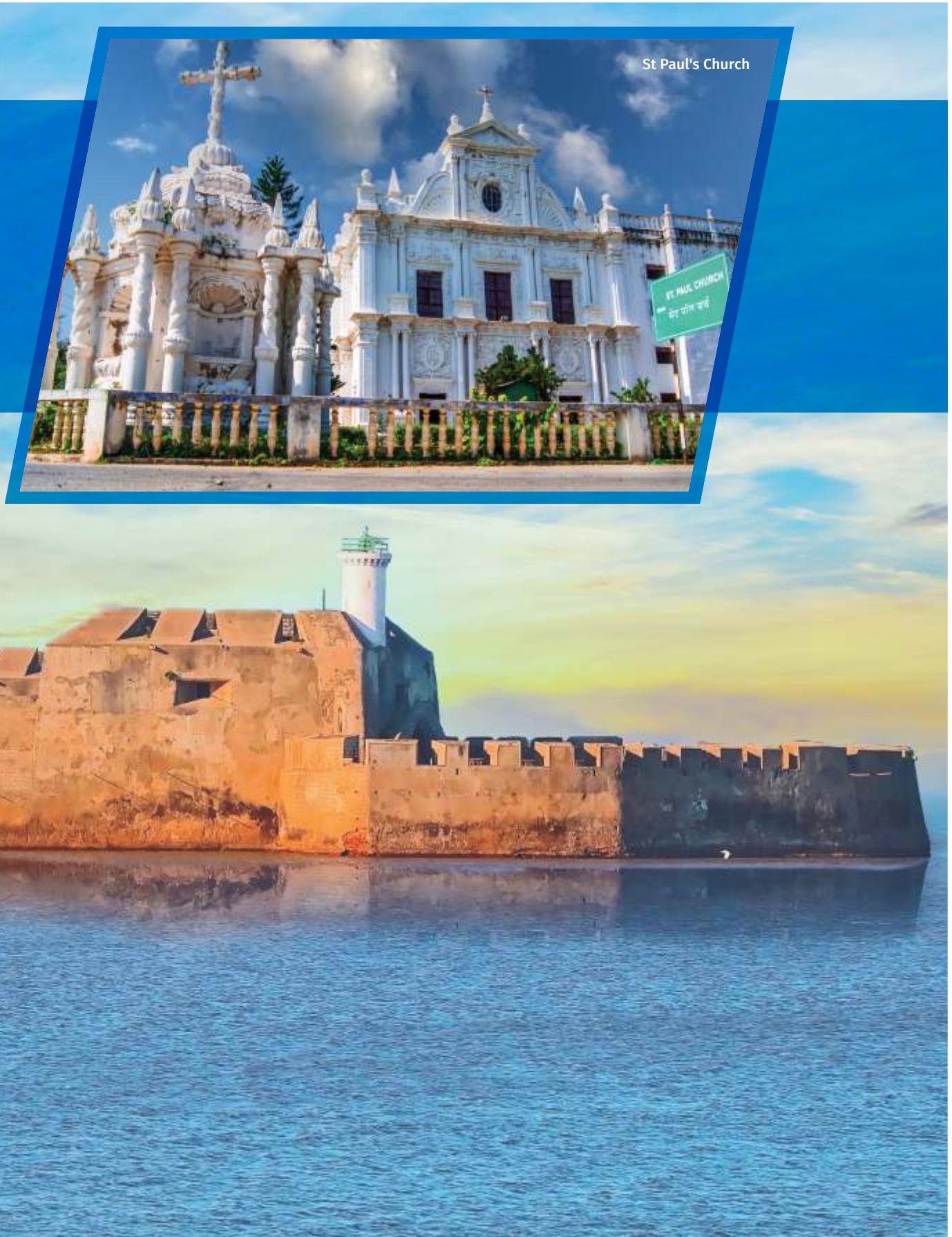
Start with the 16th century Portuguese fort that overlooks the sea to the east. Spanning over 5 ½ sq. km., the fortress is one of the largest on the Indian coast with imposing gateways, high walls, bastions named for Christian saints and dual moats, one of them tidal. Wander around in the fort to see the remains of the governor's palace, cathedral, chapel, barracks, prisons and canon-guarded ramps opening towards the Panikota Fort on

a little island nearby.

From here, walk to the St Paul's Church, built in 1610 AD and one of the most impressive cathedrals in India. The elaborate and imposing white façade fussy with motifs is surmounted by a cross. An attractive, carved arched doorway leads to the vaulted interiors finished with wood-panelling, beautiful wood carving, blue and white walls, with an impressive teakwood altar as one of its highlights.



Diu Fort



Another church of the 17th century, Sao Tome or St Thomas Church is now the Diu museum, with a fabulous collection of statues of Christ, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Immaculate conception, Our Lady of Mercy and St Thomas in wood, the disciples in gilt, a 16th century Tombstone, a 400 year old silver table, clocks, and finds from Hindu and Jain excavations.

From the museum, walk through winding lanes past a maze of streets and alleys past Portuguese-built administrative buildings, mansions with painted facades, superb baroque facades, truss timber and rafter roofed pastel shaded bungalows, mansions with trellised terraces, Gothic arches and Portuguese statues. The most impressive is the Nagarsheth Haveli, which is one of the prettiest of the many buildings, with stone lions and carved balconies, a mix of Gujarati ornamentation and Mediterranean European architecture.

There are many hotels near the fort where you can stay and eat.



Diu Museum



AMRITSAR



Though it is the largest city in Punjab, Amritsar's main attractions can be easily explored on foot.

Amritsar's primary attraction, the Golden Temple is part of the

large Harmandir complex. The spiritual heart of the complex is the Amritsarovar, 'the lake of the nectar of life', with the Golden Temple rising up beside it. Pilgrims walk on the marble path for the parikrama, the circuit along the lake

before reaching the entrance to the main shrine. Devotees visit shrines along the marble pathway, worshipping a tree shrine called Dukh Bhanjani Ber and bathing nearby is said to be a potent ritual for healing disorders while the Athsath Tirath is a platform that represents 68 holy shrines of India. Because of the number of Kar Sevaks doing voluntary duty, the environs in the temple complex are spotlessly clean and litter-free. Pilgrims also bow and touch their head on the steps of booths along



the Parikrama where priests called Granthis intone spiritual verses from the Guru Granth Sahib, largely the work of fifth Guru Arjan Das and established as the Adi Granth or final edition by Guru Gobind Singh.

The temple's gilded facade is impressive with amazing pietra dura inlay work of semi-precious stones on the marble walls and floral gilt surrounding doors and windows. The dome shaped like an inverted lotus is covered with gold donated by Ranjit

Singh who rebuilt most of the temple originally built by Guru Ramdas and his successor but badly damaged by Aurangzeb. The Guru Granth Sahib lies in the Darbar Sahib, court of the Lord, covered by a jewelled canopy and fanned by attendants. This is the sacred centre for devotees.

For lunch, join the crowds in the communal dining hall called the Guru-ka-Langar, which continues the langar or communal eating facility tradition established by Amar Das to encourage

followers of the Sikh order to eat together without prejudice of caste, creed, colour, gender or income, and create goodwill among strangers. The langar here was established by the fourth Guru Ramdas who founded Amritsar in 1577 and feeds 10,000 people daily, sometimes 3000 at a sitting. There are now machines that make it possible to serve lunches and dinners to the thousands that sit on mats.



Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Wall



The langar hall has mats spread in rows at regular intervals, mats on which the sangat (pilgrims) can sit in a pangat (line). Usually the pilgrims pick up a plate and a spoon from near the entry gate, where they are kept stacked before entering the hall. One has to ensure their heads are covered even while eating. Volunteers come

around the rows serving chapattis (parsshadaji), vegetables, lentils (dal), rice & kheer; serving the devotees and other visitors with due respect. The diners have to ensure that they don't waste food as it is considered as Prasad, a religious offering. After finishing the meal, they carry their plates out of the exit gate. Most of them prefer washing

their plates themselves.

The soiled vessels go through three or four stages of washing in soap liquid. Before entering the Gurudwara premises for sewa, volunteers have to ensure they walk in with clean hands and covered heads.

Near the Golden Temple is Jalianwala Bagh, site of a horrendous



Jallianwala Bagh Memorial

massacre on the 13th April 1919. Today, the rose garden retains poignant memories of this defining day in Indian history including bullet holes and the well in which people dove to get away from the bullets. Nearby, the Partition Museum tells the stories of the partition as told by various people. The museum uses multimedia with audio-visual

stations set across the 14 galleries, where interviews and historical speeches are played.

From here, continue to explore the Hall Bazaar to look for phulkari embroideries, footwear called juttis and other handiwork. Katra Jaimal Singh Bazaar is where you will find sarees, shawls, footwear, woodwork, jewellery,

Phulkari embroidery pieces, wedding attire for men and women, and accessories.

Try lassi at Ahuja's or Gian-di-Hatti. At Jalebiwala Chowk, you can have the sinfully sweet jabelis at Gurdas Ram. Amritsar's famous dhabas are all located near the Golden Temple. You can choose from many hotels in the area.

UDAIPUR

Lake Pichola and Taj Lake Palace

Udaipur is known for its palaces and lakes. It is easy to spend a couple of days in Udaipur exploring its many attractions on foot and by boat.

The highlight of Udaipur is the City Palace. Built over a period of centuries, it was founded by Rana Udai Singh in the 16th century and the last additions were made by Fateh Singhji in the early-20th century with the majority of buildings in the complex dating to the 18th century, yet the architecture is well-harmonised to make the entire façade look like one. Visit the City Palace Museum to see the Maharanas' memorabilia, courtyard with peacock mosaics, miniature paintings and other sights.

Stroll to the Fatehprakash Palace to see the Crystal Gallery, an awe-inspiring exhibition of 19th century crystal furniture and artefacts custom-made for the Maharanas of Udaipur.

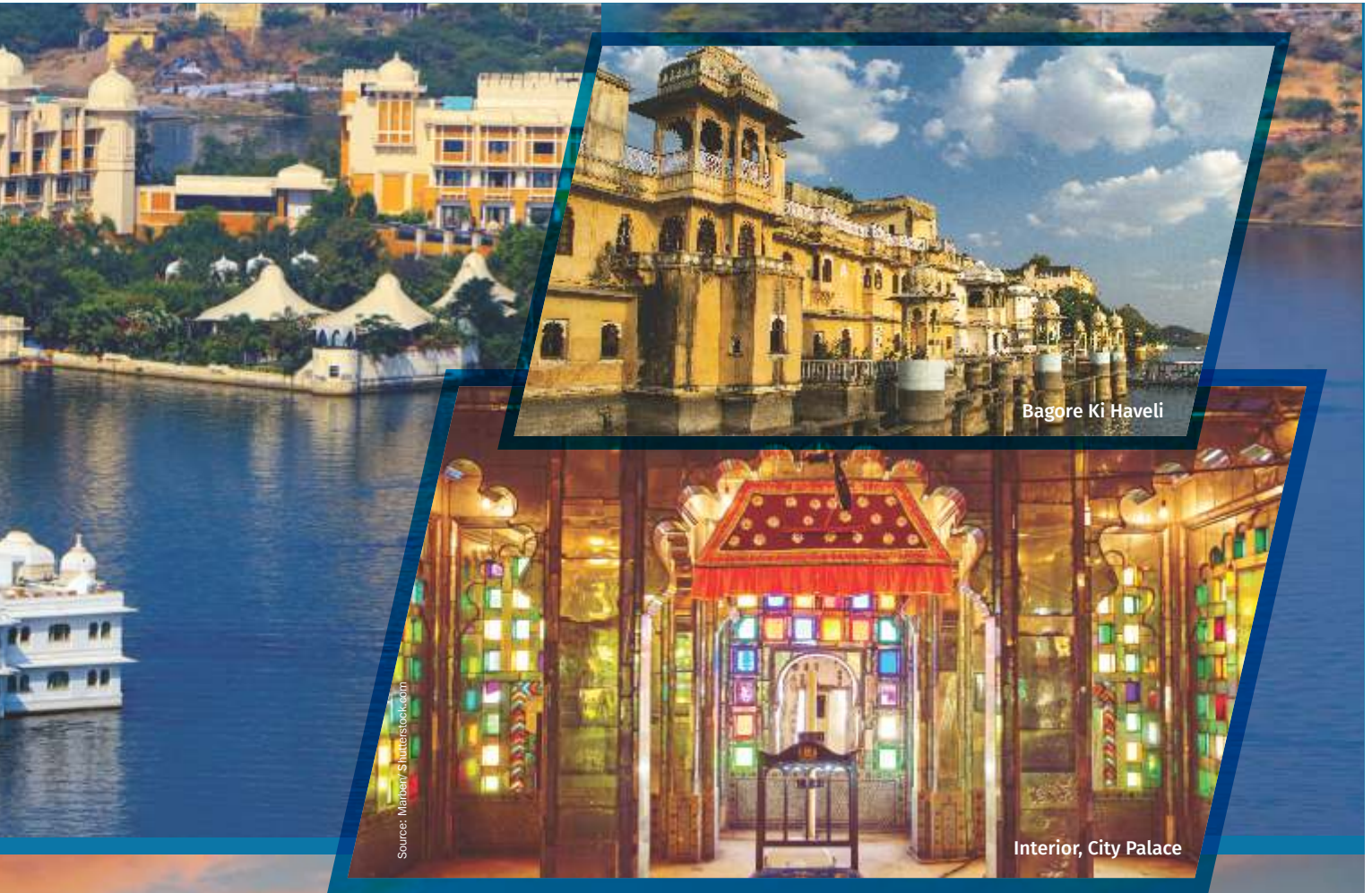
For car-buffs, a must is the Vintage and Classic Car Collection in a garden near the City Palace, which includes coach-built Rolls Royce cars from the 1920s and '30s, a couple of Cadillac and other cars from the present owner's collection.

Just 150 metres walk from the Badi Pol Gate of City Palace, the 17th century Jagdish Temple has beautiful carvings, a black stone image of Jagannath and a brass Garuda. Walk from here to the Bagore ki Haveli at Gangaur Ghat. The haveli is now a cultural centre showcasing one of the world's biggest turbans, wardrobes and folklore. You can ask about the performances that happen here.

Stroll down to Chandpol. There are some nice haveli hotels to stay and eat here.

You can take a boat ride from the ghats to see the island palaces and enjoy the sunset.







With its public transport system of buses and local trains, Mumbai is an easy city to get around in without a car.

Most of Mumbai's best architecture can be explored when walking at Kala Ghoda, which stretches from the southern end of Mahatma Gandhi Road towards Colaba. You can see majestic Victorian buildings, Art Deco buildings and old institutions.

Start walking from the Oval Maidan, which lies in an Art Deco architectural district of 1930s and '40s buildings.

Cross the Maidan to the 1857 Mumbai University complex with Victorian-Gothic buildings designed by Gilbert Scott who is responsible for the Gothic architecture of St Pancras Station in London (its convocation hall is decorated like 15th century Italian and French buildings). Next to it is the Rajabai Clock Tower, one of Mumbai's top landmarks standing about 256 ft high adorned with sculptures representing different Indian castes and communities, the fort-like High Court, which is one of the two or three largest

civil buildings of Mumbai with a high central tower flanked by lower octagonal towers featuring figures of Justice and Mercy (if you can walk inside, you can see the grand staircase, attractive court rooms and huge library), Venetian-Gothic 1869-72 Public Works Office, the Telegraph Office which was built as the city's GPO in the 1860s and 70s and the Old Secretariat.

Forming a crescent in the corner is the Edwardian-style National Gallery of Modern Art, with impressive exhibition spaces. Cross the road from here to the

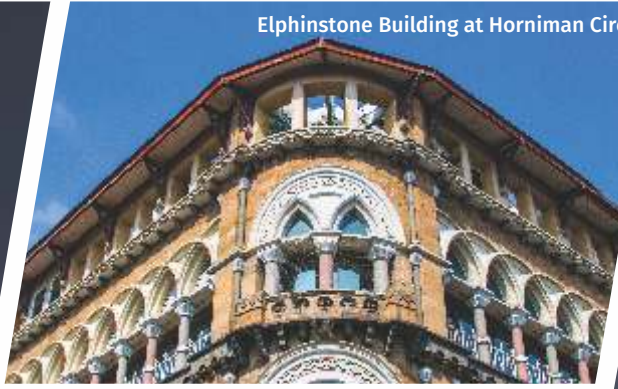


Prince of Wales Museum (renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya), housed in a building with an architectural style blending Victorian Gothic and Indo-Islamic features, which was designed to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1905. Allow time to explore this excellent museum. Near this museum is the Jehangir Art Gallery, named for Cowasji Jehangir who donated for its foundation in the 1950s. This is an art gallery, where you will usually find some interesting exhibitions.



Rajabai Clock Tower

Elphinstone Building at Horniman Circle



Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus

Head to the Kneset Eliyahoo Synagogue. This synagogue built by the Sasoon family in the 1880s has ornate balconies. The interiors are beautifully decorated with well-preserved decorations and attractive stained glass windows.

Walking on from the museum come to Apollo Street and turn left to walk to Horniman Circle, formerly Elphinstone Circle conceived in 1860 as a centerpiece of the new developments of Mumbai. Around the circle are

historic buildings like the neoclassical Town Hall and the Doric Mint of the 1820s, Venetian Gothic Elphinstone buildings of the 1870s, and the Cathedral Church of St Thomas on Tamarind Street. Considered to be the oldest British building in Mumbai, this is a simple but charming church in Classical and Gothic styles. Construction began on the church in 1672 but it remained unfinished after the death of Governor Gerald Aungier till 1718 when it was finally opened to

visitors. Recently restored, the church has white-washed interiors with polished wooden furniture and brass, and ornately-carved gravestones of British parishioners.

From the west end of Horniman Circle, take Perin Nariman Street that will bring you to Nagar Chowk beyond, which is the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus that the people of Mumbai still call Victoria Terminus or VT Station. This remarkable and elaborate example of Indo-Gothic architecture in



Ticketing Hall of CST



Mumbai was opened in 1887 to celebrate the golden jubilee year of Queen Victoria, more than three decades after the first train ran from this terminus to Thane. The building designed by SW Stevens has a huge central dome surmounted by a statue. Progress by Thomas Earp that was executed by Bombay School of Art, Corinthian columns, spires and minarets. The ticketing hall inspired by London's St Pancras Station has stained glass, glazed tiles and arches.



St. Thomas Cathedral Church

Source: Sanish Parashar/Shutterstock

Bhadra Fort

AHMEDABAD



Khana Peena Bazaar, Manek Chowk



Teen Darwaja

The streets around Manek Chowk, in Ahmedabad's walled city are a maze of crowded bazaars, residential clusters on narrow lanes called pols lined by exquisitely carved facades of havelis, temples, mosques and mausoleum complexes. The open square called Manek Chowk is a lively place with the bullion market, one of India's largest jewellery and vegetable

markets. Most popularly perhaps it is known for the Khana Peena Bazaar, the street food market that emerges after sunset and continues late into the night.

You can stay at heritage properties like House of MG or French Haveli, and explore the mediaeval monuments on foot.

Start your tour at the Bhadra Fort and walk southeast along Gandhi Road

to Teen Darwaja, the triple gateway that is surrounded by shops selling utensils, food products and a variety of bric-a-brac. Along this road, you can enter the Jama Masjid, which has a vast marble paved courtyard surrounded by an enclosed corridor. Built in 1424, this mosque has a superbly proportioned sandstone façade with a three arched 'iwan'. Inside is a prayer hall with 260

pillars that support a 15-domed roof. The interior of each dome has intricate stonework. The hall is illuminated by natural light filtered through latticework screens. This mosque is distinctive in having an intricately carved zanana for women.

Outside the east gate of the Jama Masjid is the Tomb of Sultan Ahmed Shah, with elegant columned open

verandas where the founder of Ahmedabad is entombed. This mausoleum is situated near the Manek Chowk. In the heart of the market, Rani-no-Hajiro is the mausoleum complex for the harem of the Sultans, which is now best known for its cotton textile and jewellery shops. To the south east of the Manek Chowk, you can see the Rani Sipri's Masjid, which

is a gem of a mosque with elegant proportions, delicate stonework and minarets. Northwest of Chowk is Rani Rupmati's Mosque that has a latticed stone screen.

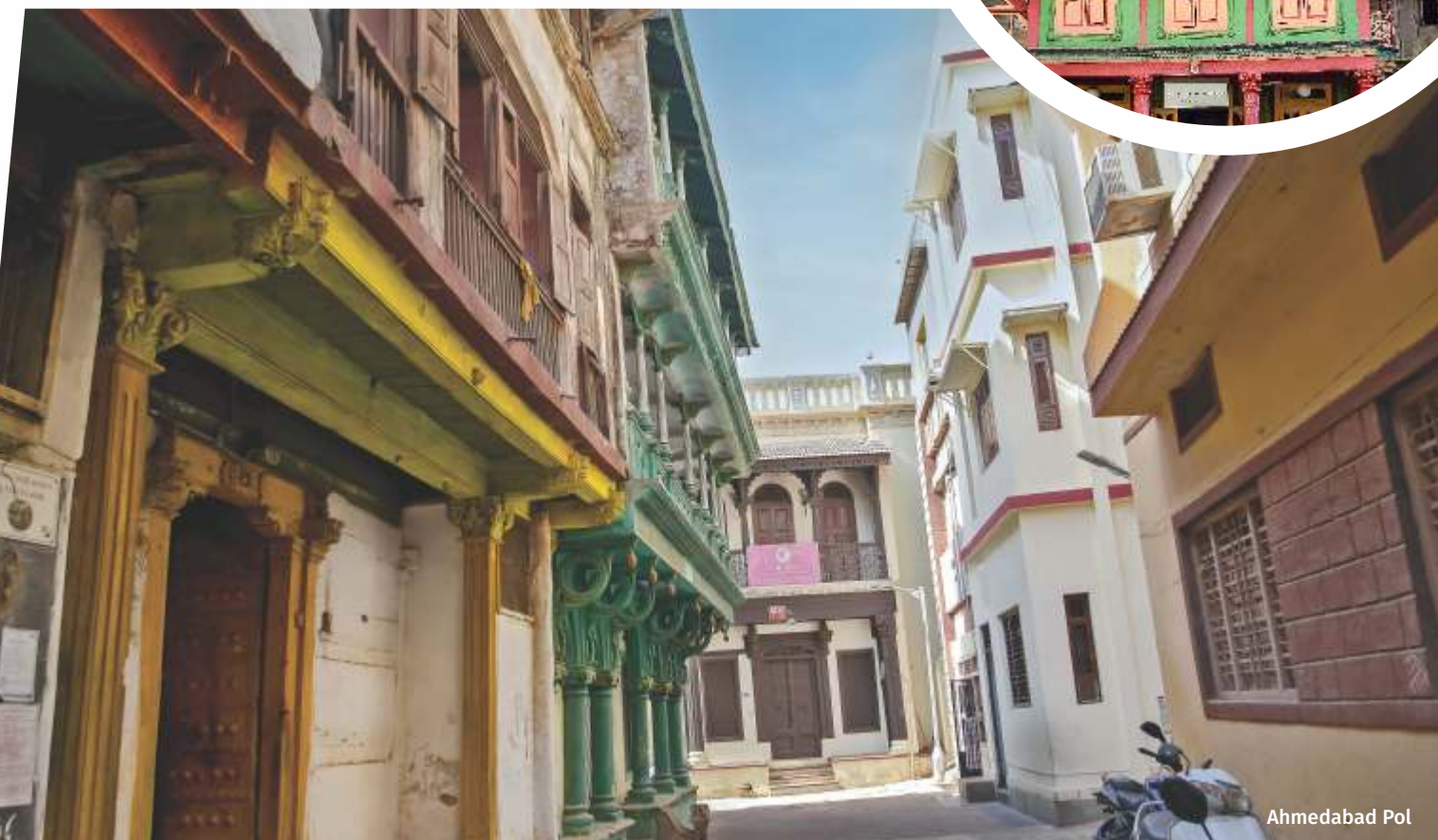
From Manek Chowk, you can head into the old residential quarters called Pols to see the facades of Ahmedabad's famous havelis.



Jama Masjid



Mangaldas ni Haveli



Ahmedabad Pol

HAMPI

The magnificent monuments of Hampi spread across a spectacular landscape of boulders, plains, orchards, rice fields and rivers. For women who love architecture, nature and trekking, this is

the place to spend a few days rambling among ruins, gazing at majestic buildings and climbing rocks.

A good walk begins in the Hampi Bazaar with the towering Virupaksha Temple, which is a much visited holy place. At the other end of the bazaar is the Nandi statue. A short walk from the bazaar will bring you to the attractive Lakshmi Narasimha monolithic statue. Nearby is the 16th century Krishna temple with the Vishnu Avatars carved

on the façade. Continue through the deserted structures of the Sule Bazaar to Hampi's most impressive monument, the Vittala Temple. Built in the 16th century, the temple has a richly ornate stone statue of a chariot that is Hampi's showpiece. Representing Lord Vishnu's chariot, it has detailed wheels and a Garuda statue. From here, climb Hemakuta Hill to see a cluster of ruins and monolithic sculptures.

Virupaksha Temple



Vittala Temple



Another must visit is the Royal Centre which comprises the Lotus Mahal, Queen's Bath, Hazarama Temple and other monuments. The Archaeological Museum here is also worth a visit.

The adventurous can enjoy bouldering in Hampi, climbing craggy granite cliffs and rocks. A 2km trek can bring you to the Hampi Waterfalls.

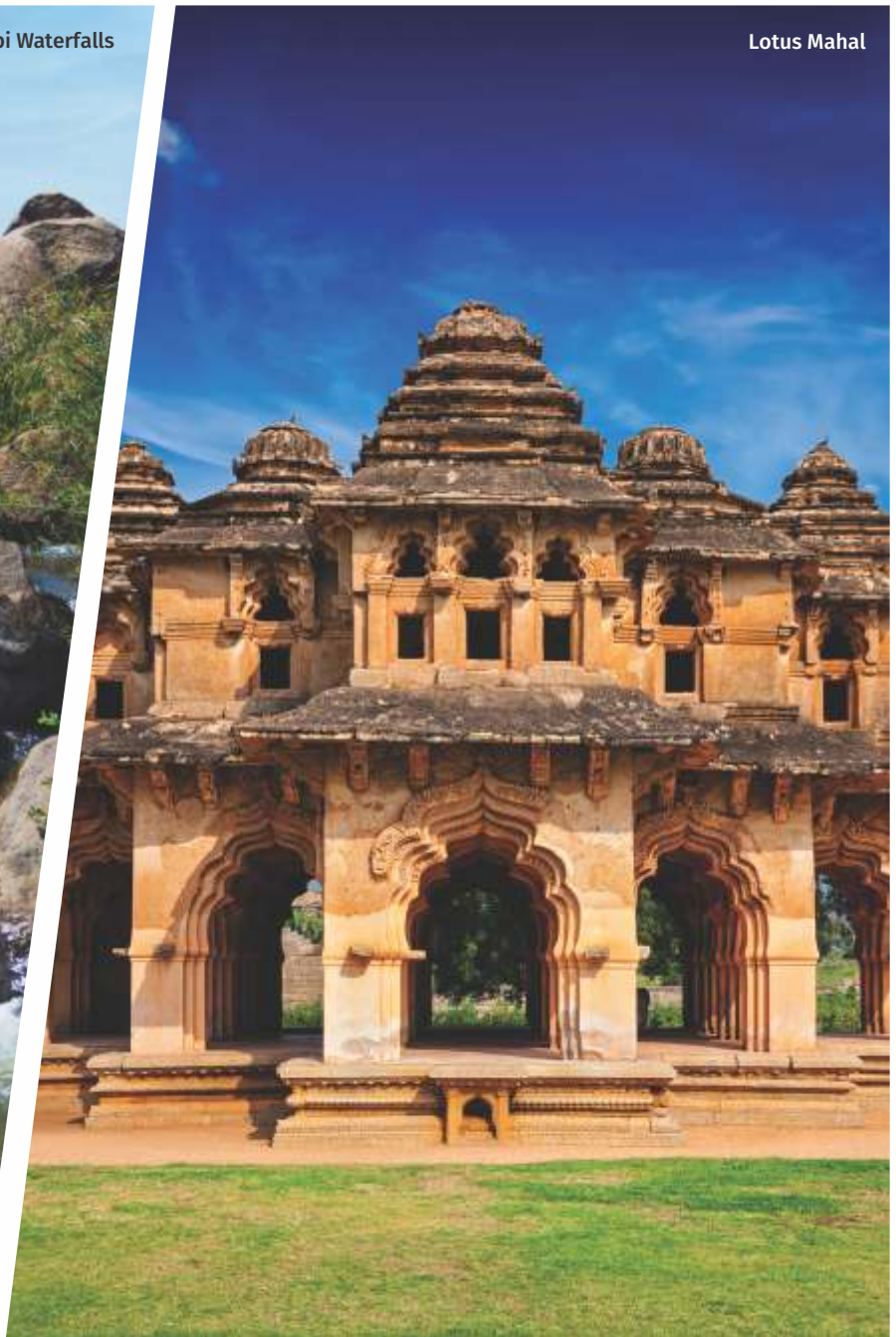
For food, you can get many interesting options in the Hampi Bazaar or at Virupapur Gaddi across the river.



Hampi Waterfalls



Lotus Mahal



PONDICHERRY

Pondicherry or Puducherry's old French colonial town can be explored on foot. Stroll down Beach Road, also called Goubert Salai Avenue and still retaining a distinctly

Gallic ambience. The rotund Douane or customhouse, French Institute and French Consulate are on this road. See the Church of Our Lady of the Angels with a striking façade. This 1860s

church is noted for its oil painting of Our Lady of the Assumption, a gift from Napoleon-3. Turning right at the Town Hall on Rue Mahe Labourdonnais and the Barati Park, the lanes travel past French-style villas and other European houses of Dumas, Romain Rolland and Suffren Streets.

There are many places to stay, eat and shop in this part of the town. ■



French Colonial Town



Source: Jose Hernandez Camera 11 Shutterstock



Streets of Pondicherry's Old Buildings



Church of Our Lady

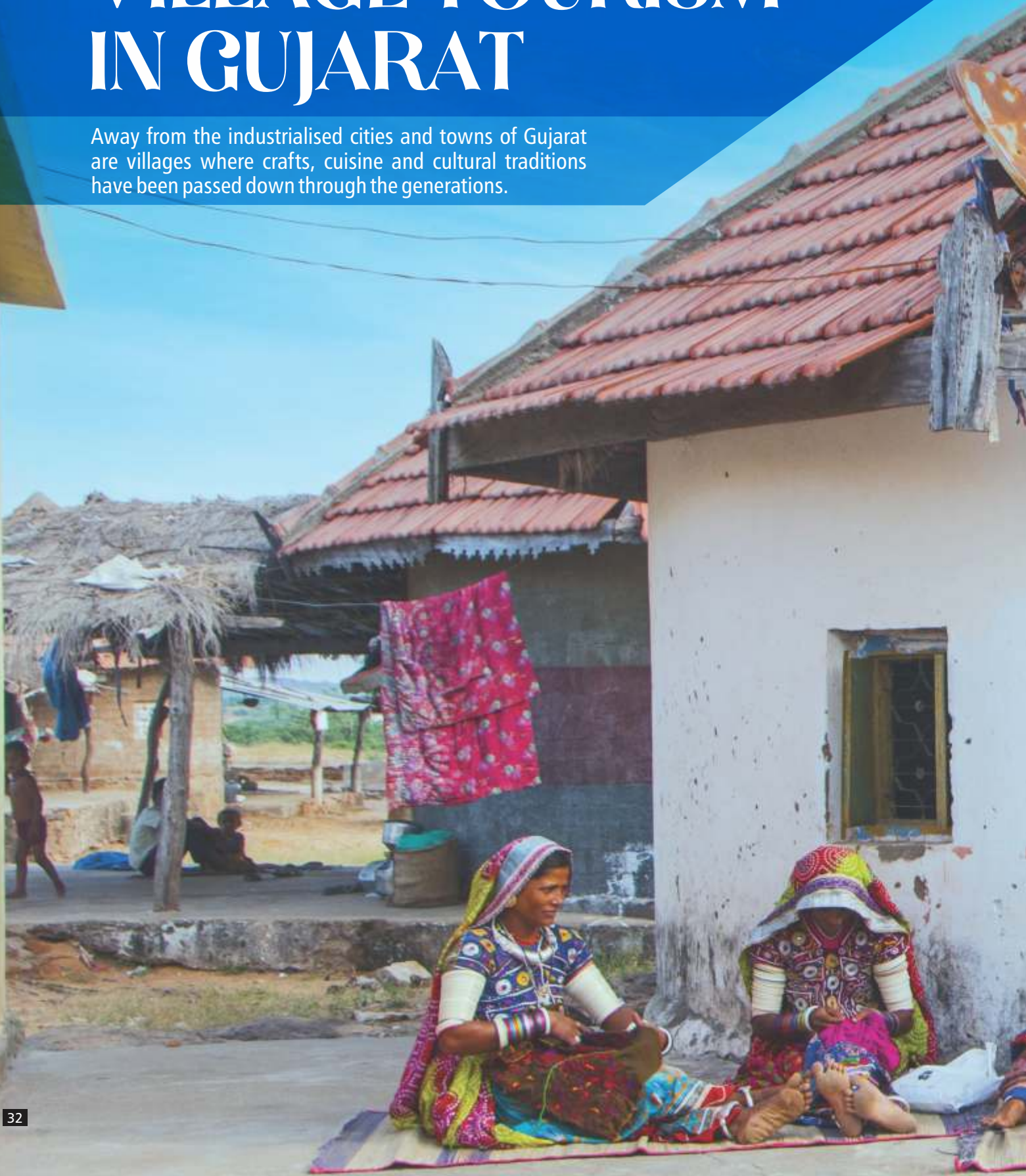


French Bakery Items

Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI

VILLAGE TOURISM IN GUJARAT

Away from the industrialised cities and towns of Gujarat are villages where crafts, cuisine and cultural traditions have been passed down through the generations.





CRAFT VILLAGES AROUND BHUJ

The Banni region of Kutch has become popular for handicraft tourism because of its rich concentration of embroidery artisans. However, the villages around Bhuj and Anjar are also worth visiting for a diversity of handicrafts.

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 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 a Marwada working on carving wood in Bhujodi. In the village, you may find Dhebaria Rabari women and girls doing their distinctive embroidery. Some of the handicraft dealers in Bhujodi have old pieces of very intricate embroidery or patches for sale.

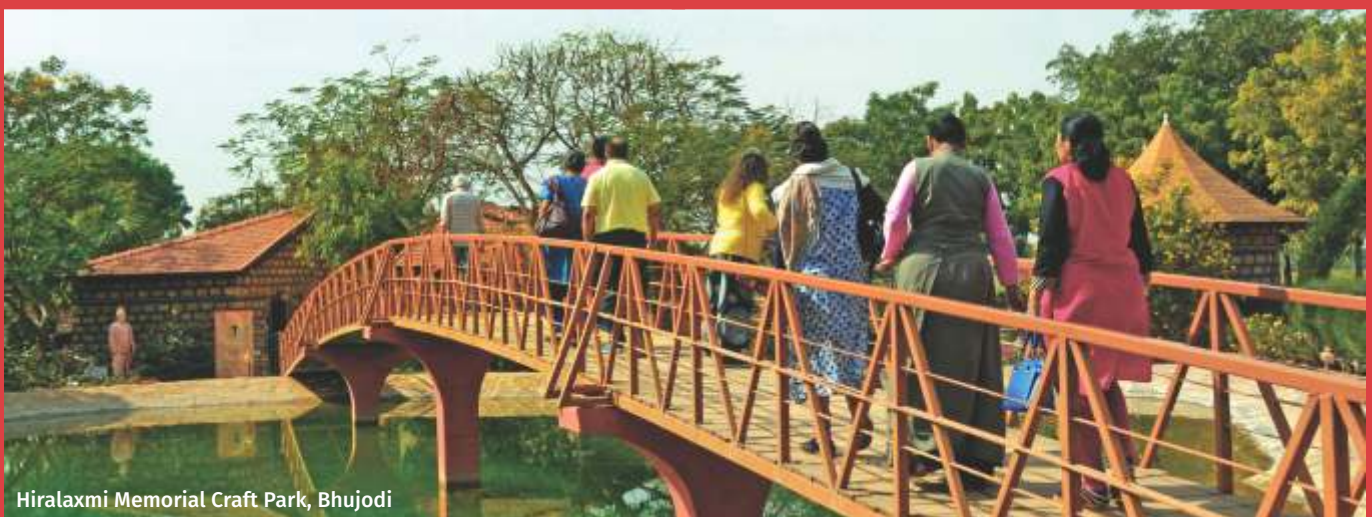
The Hiralaxmi Memorial Craft Park at Bhujodi is managed by the Ashapura



Vankars families produce colourful Embroidery



Source: Sharad Rana/Shutterstock



Hiralaxmi Memorial Craft Park, Bhujodi

Group, a mining company, and gets its name from the late mother of the group's promoter. This craft park has cottage-like cabins where artisans demonstrate their skills or sell their wares.

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 and earth colours are used for Ajrakh painting.

The Living and Learning Design Centre at Ajrakhpur is a delightful museum showcasing the crafts of Kutch.



Ahir Women making Embroidery



Ajrakhpur



Wooden Blocks, Ajrak Printing

A TRIBAL TOUR IN THE DANG

The Dang and its neighbouring districts are home to the villages of tribes who still practice historical traditions, rituals and customs. Most of these tribal villages are easily accessible from Saputara and Ahwa, which have many homestay facilities. One of the most exciting cultural trails runs from Saputara through hilly areas of Navsari and Valsad district to the Dadra & Nagar Haveli Union Territory.

In this region of thick deciduous forests full of teak wood and bamboo, you find the tribal groups who blend Gujarati and Mahara-

shtrian culture mixed harmoniously with aboriginal lifestyles and rituals. Music and dance are integral to the culture and society of most of the tribal groups of this region like Bhil, Warli, Dodiya, Dubla or Halpati, Kunbi and Kokna. The Kolis and Kotwaliyas are among the other groups found in this region. The Tarpa or Pavri is a popular wind instrument of the region made from a gourd with a bamboo pipe, while Ghanghri is a string instrument made using gourds played as an accompaniment during singing and storytelling performance, mainly by the Warlis. Percussion instruments include the tur, which are a drum made out of

clay and leather, the dhol and the metal plates called thali with a striker. The dance called Dangi Nritya in the Dang district, and Tarpa or Pavri Nritya in other districts, begins with dancers standing with arms around each other's waist or holding hands, forming a chain or circle. One person leads the movements, which are usually quick, sharp and smooth, though the pace may vary depending on the music, and the dancers are so swift that choreographic patterns can change in seconds. Dance expert Parul Shah writes that there are 27 varieties of chalas, the range of steps and movements in a Dangi dance. The tribal people create a human pyramid



during these dances. The Tarpa is typically performed at night after dinner, and is especially significant in the Autumnal harvest season from September to November. The Tarpa and the Ganghri often feature in Warli drawings as they have religious association with Naran Dev.

Start your tour at Saputara where a tribal museum offers an insight into life among the tribal people – there are about 420 exhibits covering tribal musical instruments, tribal costumes, tribal ornaments and tools. This hill station of Gujarat, about 3000 ft above sea level, has a lake as its centrepiece, and hills on all sides. In the villages near the hill station you can meet the Dangri tribal groups like the Bhils.

From Saputara, as you drive towards Ahwa, the district capital of the Dang, you can see totems or palia of Wagh Dev,

the tiger deity - some of them are decorated with vermilion paint and can be accompanied with other religious symbols like sun, moon or snake. Travelling along this road, you can see villages of the Kunbis and the Koknas. Koknas may derive their names from the Konkan coast, and this is reflected in their dialect which has Konkani, Marathi and Gujarati influences. Kokna women wear colourful saris - some of them cut the sari into two parts, the upper part is called fadki and the lower part is wrapped around their waist. Traditionally tattooing was common among the Koknas. You can see these tribal groups working in the fields or cutting grass for their thatched roofs.

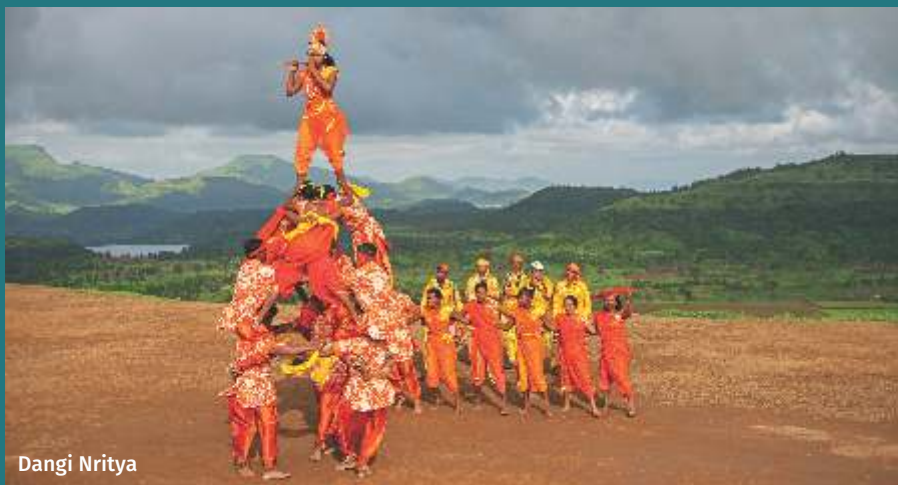
At Ahwa, there are a few homestays. In the morning drive into the Mahal Bardipada forests and visit the Gira Falls. Near the forests you can see the

traditional homes of the Gamits and the Warlis (also spelt Varli). Gamit believes that they belong to The Sun dynasty Rajput community and the word Gamit comes from their settling in villages. It is believed that they came from Sindh through Marwar to Gujarat, and this is reflected in their songs during the Holi festival. They are also known as Vasava (those who settled). Women wear long sarees but only till their knees and a choli or blouse, and sport ornaments – traditionally silver armlets, rings and necklaces with antique coins are worn, but now for economic reasons they wear brass jewellery.

From Ahwa, take the road to Vansda National Park and the nearby parks that are botanically interesting.



Pavri - Popular Wind Instrument



Dangi Nritya



Gira Falls



Saputara Tribal Museum

THE RATHWA TRIBAL VILLAGES OF PANCHMAHAL

The Panchmahal district is a home to a variety of tribal groups. As you head from Halol to Jambughoda, you can see Rathwa villages on the slopes of hills among palm trees and woodlands. The women wear brightly coloured cholis (blouses) and sarongs, carry odhnis (veils) over their heads, and sport chains with silver coins on their necks, silver earrings with floral patterns, silver bangles, silver and painted shell armlets, nose hooks,

and hairpins. The men sport turbans and bracelets. A unique aspect of Rathwa culture is pithoro painting. The pithoro is not art simply for the sake of beautification but tied to their ritualistic lifestyle and beliefs with the execution of wall paintings done to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to the families, to freeze houses of any illnesses or grievances that may have befallen the family. When a person makes a wish, five dots called 'tipna' are marked on the wall and if the problem is

solved to satisfaction, the pithoro painting ritual begins.

The pithoro painting is executed by the Lakahara, a group revered as witch doctors and trained by the community as pithoro artists with only the male members allowed to learn the art (we are told that when not painting the pithoro, the lakaharas go out to work in the fields with the other members of the tribe), with the Badva officiating as the head priest for the rituals. The presence of Pithora Baba is considered as a



Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary

solution to all the problems and the legends and events related to this revered tribal lord dominate the pithoro. One of the women showed us the interiors of her house with the central wall between the living area and the kitchen densely painted, and a few large paintings on the side walls. The process begins with treating the walls with cow dung and white chalk powder, usually brought by unmarried girls. Powders, earth and vegetable colours are mixed with milk and mahuda flower liquor to prepare the dye for the pithoro in colours like yellow, indigo, orange, green, vermillion, red and silver. The brushes are prepared from bamboo, neem and other twigs that are frayed by chewing, beating and other methods.

The painting begins after the offerings are made to the lord. The painting, the Rathwa lady tells us, begins from the left and fills the wall. The badvo chanting the prayers and tales goes into a trance while the pithoros are being painted. The pithoro painting ceremony, which could follow any problem - drought, crop failure, illness of children, loss of cattle – and invokes the blessings of god Pithora, we are told is an expensive one for the tribal groups. The preparations can start a fortnight ahead with invitations. The painting can take 24 hours followed by the ceremonies which could include carving sculptures in honour of the deities. Song, dance, drinking and feasting are part of the ritual. 📸



Rathwa Tribe Woman



Pithoro Painting Art on Wall



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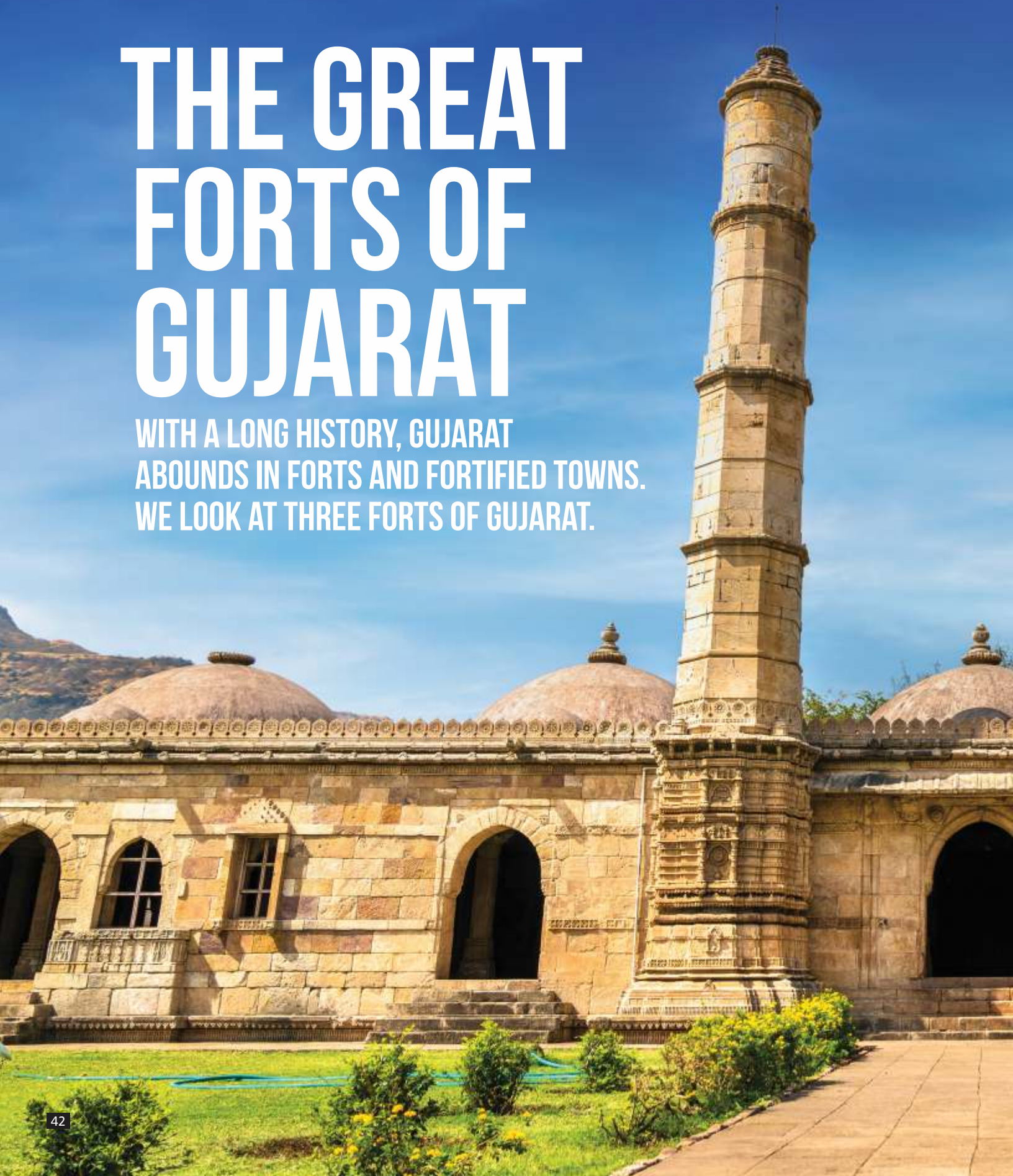


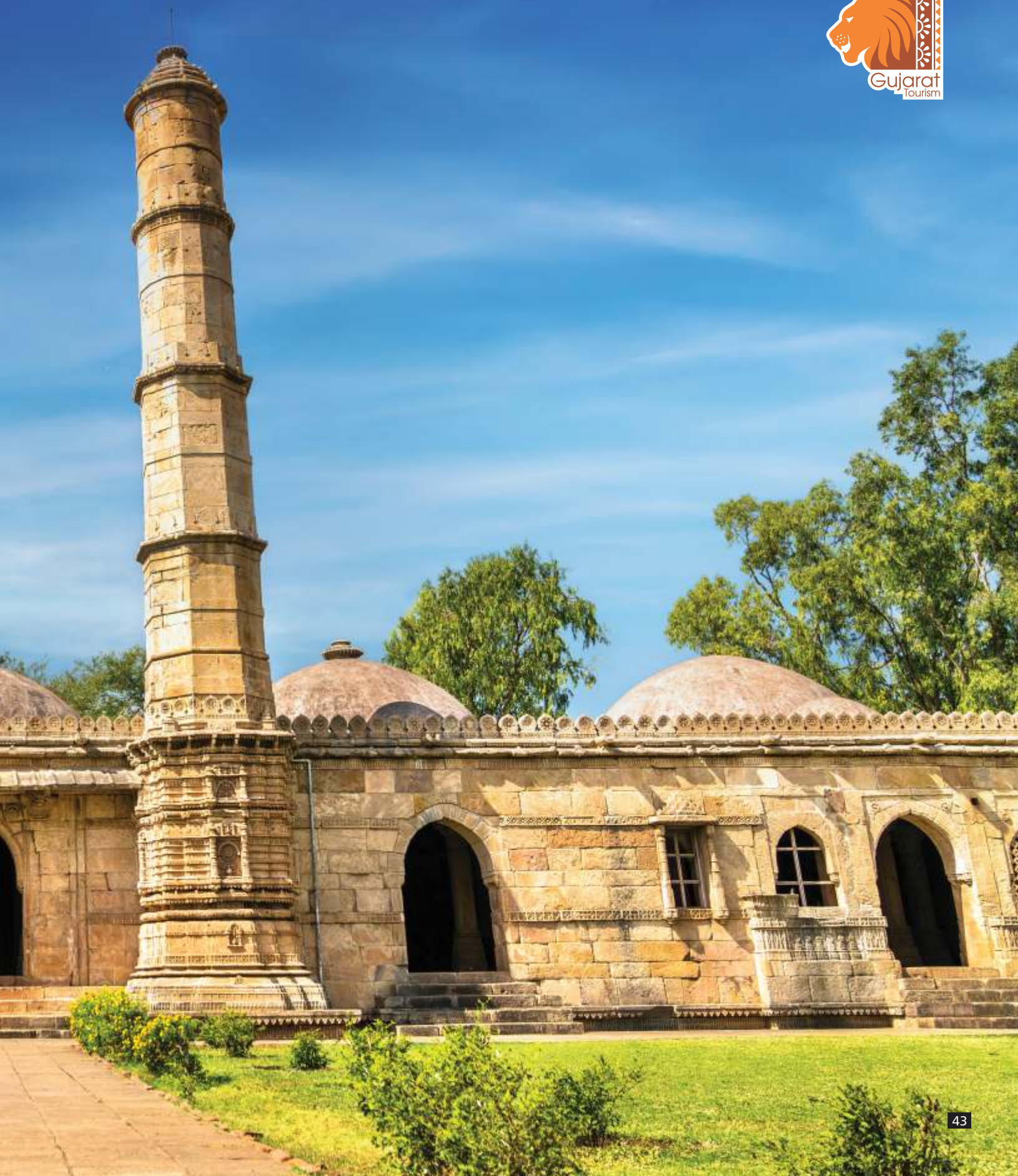
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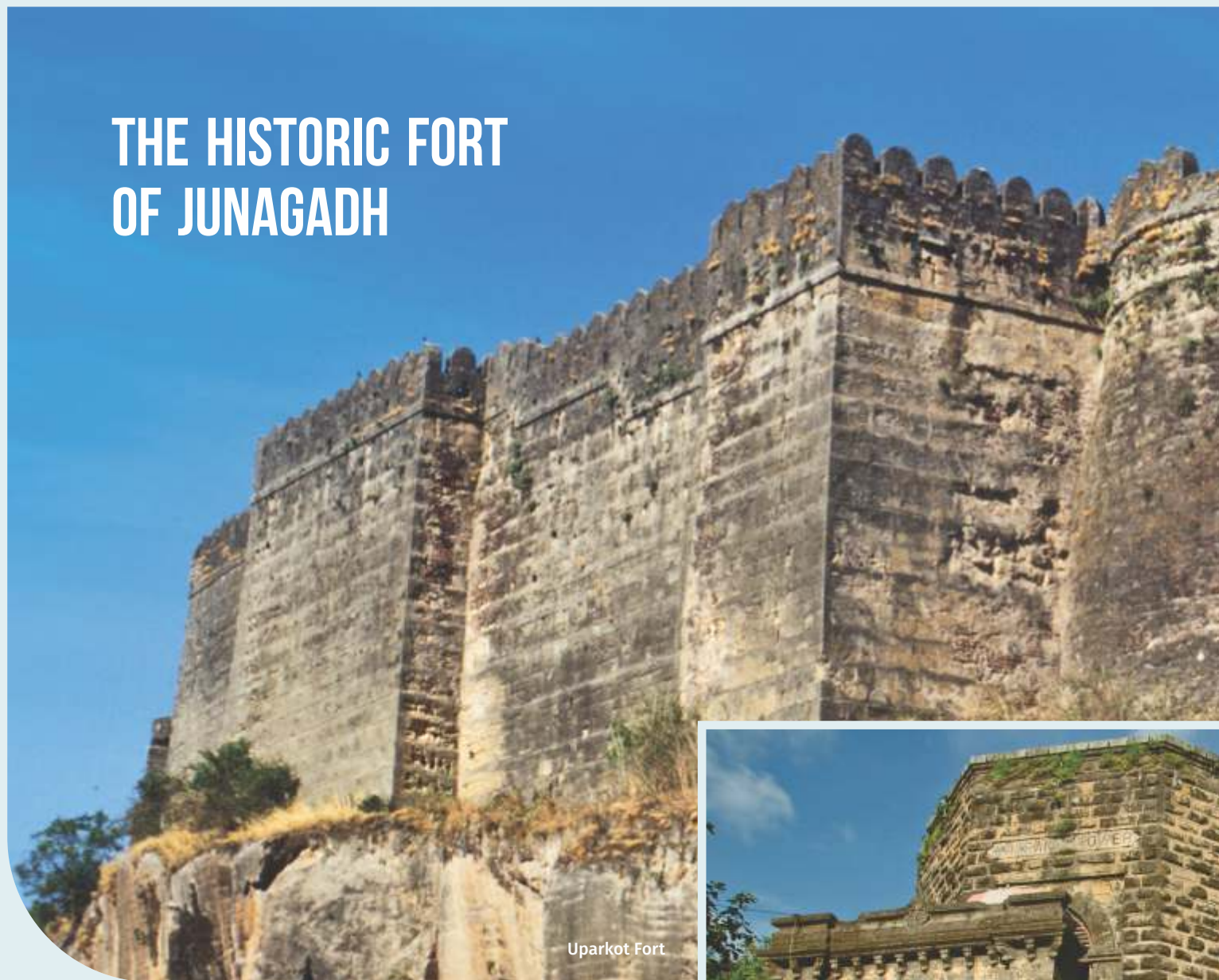
THE GREAT FORTS OF GUJARAT

WITH A LONG HISTORY, GUJARAT
ABOUNDS IN FORTS AND FORTIFIED TOWNS.
WE LOOK AT THREE FORTS OF GUJARAT.





THE HISTORIC FORT OF JUNAGADH



Uparkot Fort



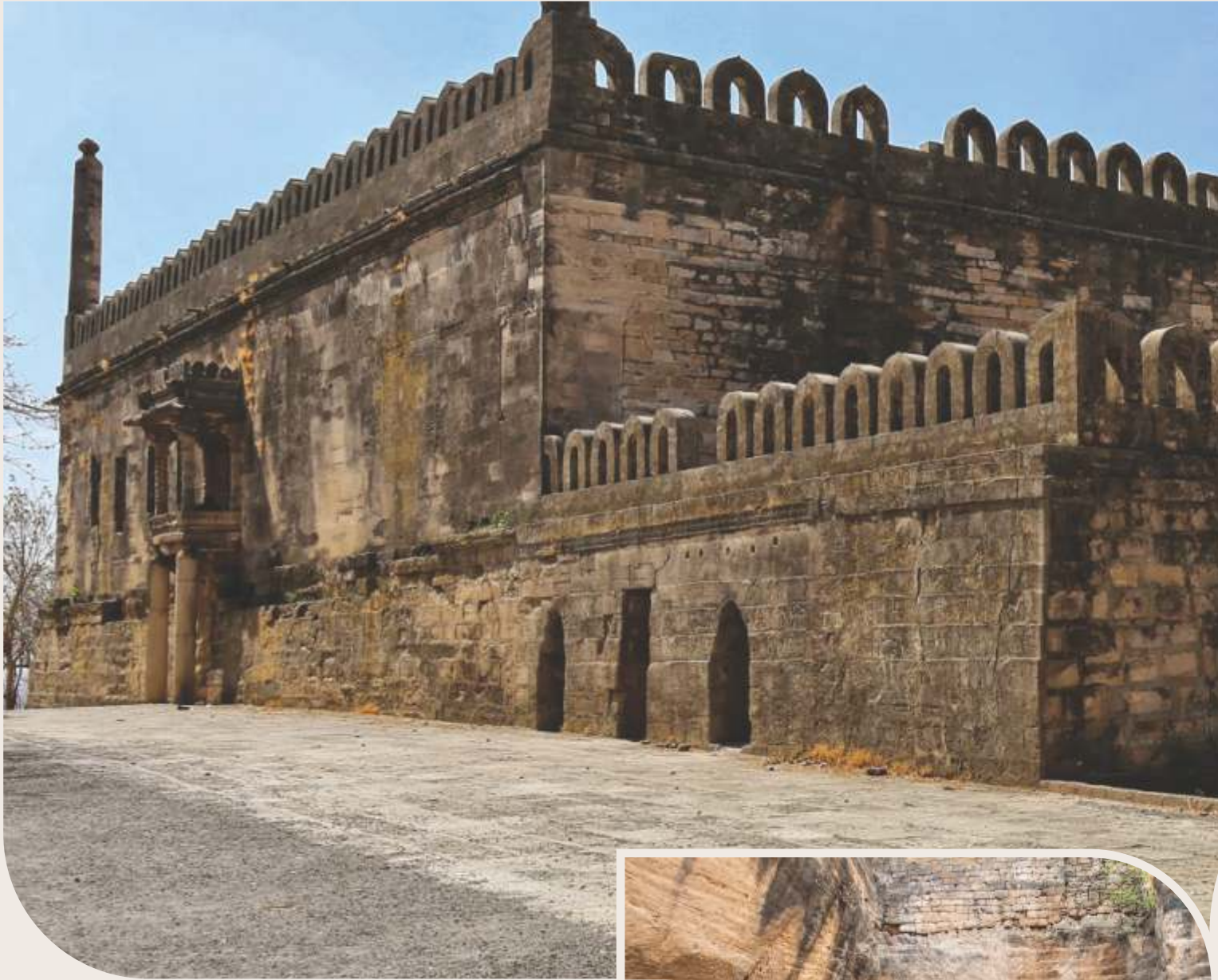
Uparkot Fort Entrance





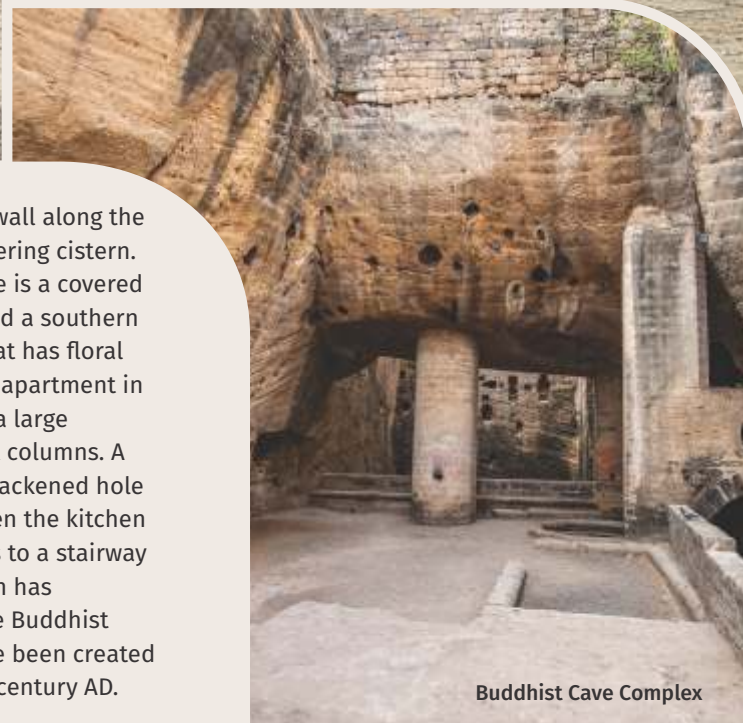
The Uparkot Fort is set on a hill where Pre-Harappan relics have been found. Historians believe this fort was built by Chandragupta Maurya in 319 BC and strengthened in the 2nd-4th century BC under the Kshatrpa dynasty. The fort was abandoned around the 6th century when the Maitraka dynasty was the major power in Gujarat ruling from Vallabhipur near present day Bhavnagar, after which it was rediscovered by the Chudasama Rajputs in the 10th century and rebuilt as their capital by Navghan-2 in the 11th century.

The perimeter walls were probably constructed during their rule. Junagadh fell to Sultan Mahmud Beghada of Ahmedabad in the 15th century following his victory over the princes of the Kathiawad peninsula. It was later conquered by the Mughal rulers who appointed Subhas to manage Saurashtra from this walled mound. We entered the fort through a grand sequence of three high gateways cut into solid rock, and came to the cobbled walkway that winds upwards past a small water body and kund (small pool) and some relatively modern Hindu temples to the summit of the fort.



The Jami Masjid has a high roof supported by pillars, some of which once stood in the Chudasama palace. From here, walk to the Buddhist Cave complex, where you can step down to a complex of small cells arranged around courtyards cut down into the rock, all of them set around a rain water tank. The caves reflect the advanced system of drainage and water utilisation prevailing in the period, and the cells are well-ventilated to get light and cool air. The steps lead down to the tank with a seat believed to have been for bathers to keep their clothing. The water is channelled

through a pipe down the wall along the seat before entering a filtering cistern. The bath is open but there is a covered veranda on three sides and a southern corridor with a column that has floral ornamented capitals. The apartment in the northeast corner has a large chamber supported by six columns. A small cell with a smoke blackened hole in the roof could have been the kitchen and beside it a door leads to a stairway descending to a hall which has delectable carvings. These Buddhist caves are believed to have been created between the 2nd and 4th century AD.



Buddhist Cave Complex



Jama Masjid, Uparkot Fort



Inside View of Jama Masjid

Source: baljishrivastava/Shutterstock



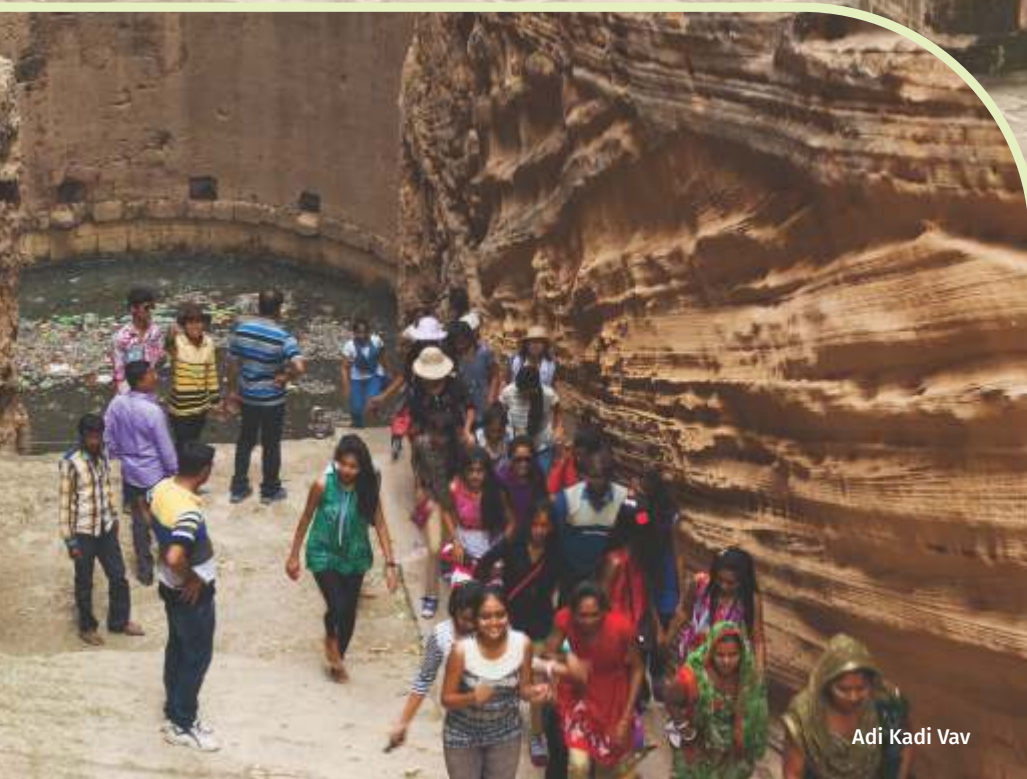
From the caves, walk to the Adi Kadi Vav, a stepwell built by the Chudasama Rajputs with more than a hundred steps descending to the water level. Stepwells were an ingenious method of conserving water in the arid regions of Gujarat. This well is said to be named for two slave girls who fetched water from it. The Navghan kuvo is a spectacular water harvesting tank, dated from 1060 AD, with a superb staircase spiralling down 52m to the

water source through a 10 ft wide passage.

In the fort, you can see a pair of monumental canons, The Nilam canon whose bronze inscriptions in Arabic state that "the canon was cast in 1531 AD to fight the Portuguese who are infidel enemies of state and religion" and the smaller Ottoman canon, were brought here after the sultans and the Ottoman allies failed to protect Diu from Portuguese conquests.



Nilam Canon



Adi Kadi Vav

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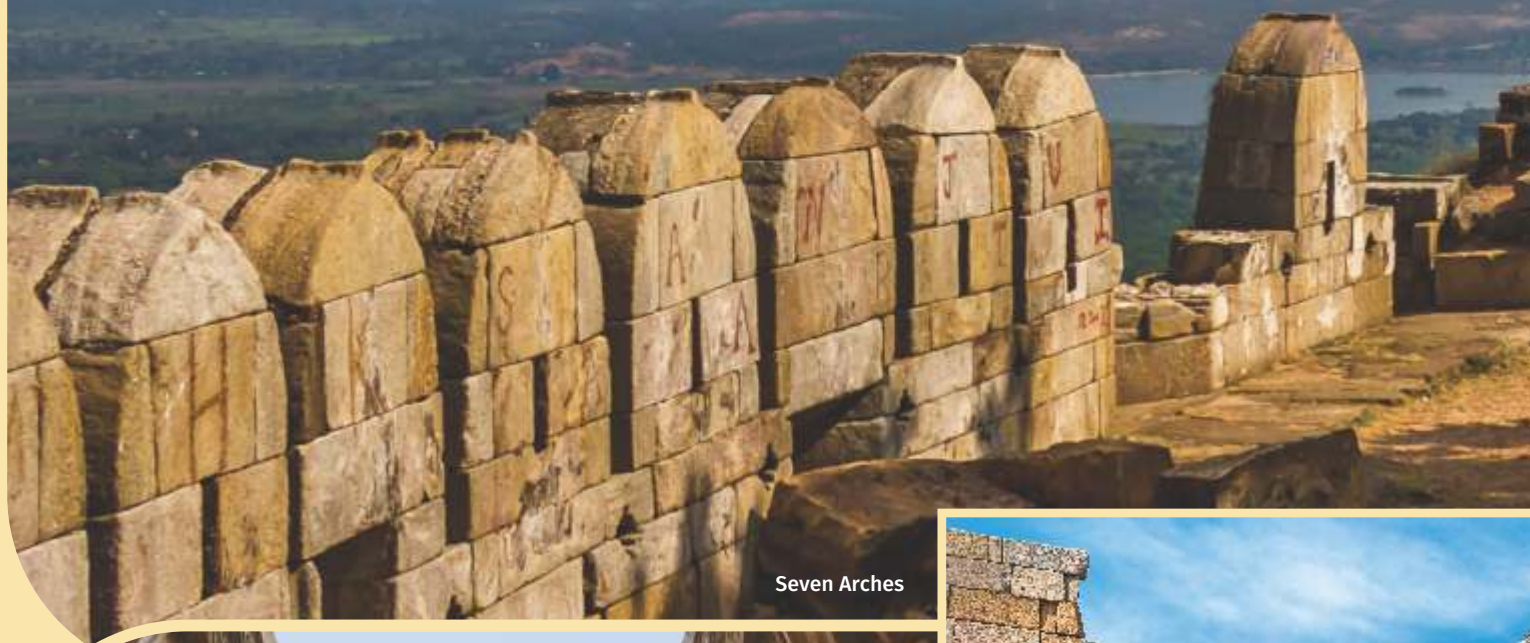
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THE CITADELS OF CHAMPANER

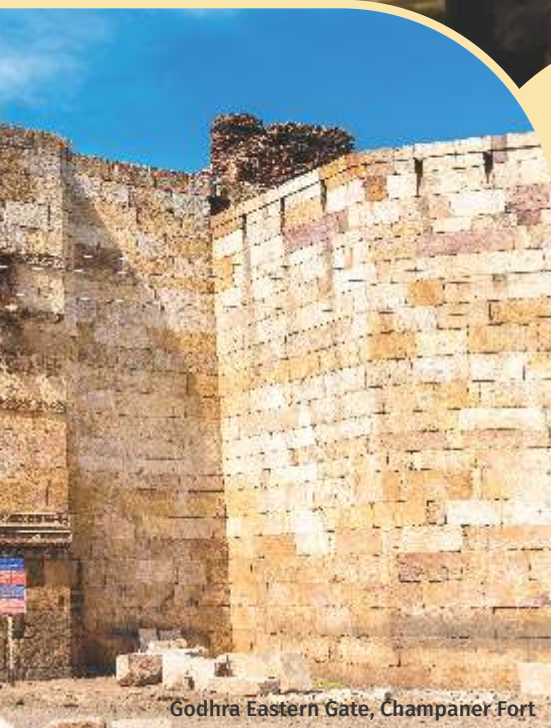


Seven Arches



Inner view of a large dome, Jami Masjid





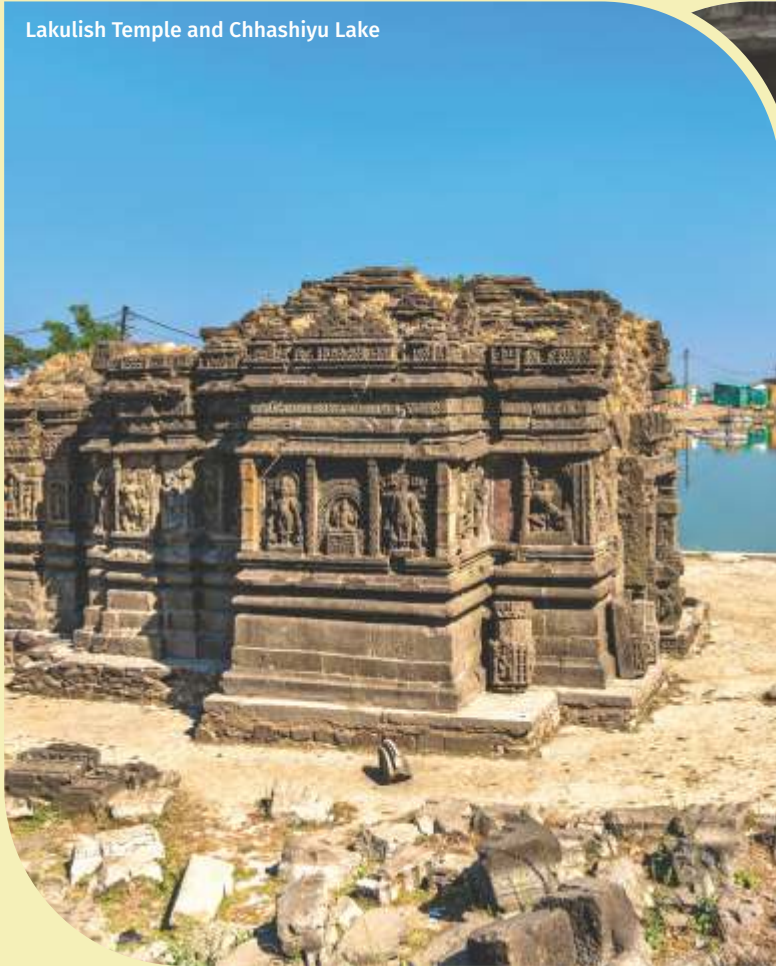
Godhra Eastern Gate, Champaner Fort

The Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park includes the remains of the Hindu fort of Pavagadh atop a hill more than 800 metre high and the Sultan's capital in Champaner founded in the 15th century. The area has extensive ruins of forts, palaces, religious buildings, residential areas, and water structures like wells and tanks.

This area was conquered in the 13th century by the Khichi Chauhan Rajputs, who built their first settlement on top of Pavagadh Hill and fortification walls along the plateau below the hill. The Gujarat Sultans conquered the fort in 1484 and became an important citadel when Sultan Mehmud Begda decided to make

Champaner his capital. The citadel of Champaner was abandoned in 1536 after the death of Sultan Bahadur Shah. The massive city walls with inscribed gateways contain the customs house, several houses, exquisite mosques and funerary monuments. The Shahr Masjid of Borah Masjid is a mosque with delicate minarets. The city was superbly planned with well laid and paved streets which lead to the city centre. The relics of public parks and pavilions surround the residential area - the houses of the rich and powerful had gardens and water channels. The archaeological site has many structures built for harvesting rainwater - there were tanks and ponds in the Pavagadh hills and innumerable wells in the city.

Lakulish Temple and Chhashiyu Lake



A short distance from the walled town, the 16th century Jumma Masjid is considered the high watermark of Indo-Saracenic architecture. A magnificent pavilion with delicate screens marks the entrance to the massive courtyard enclosed by cloistered galleries. The main building has a huge three-storey dome, with large and small domes built at different levels around it, and two tall minarets rising from its third floor. The hall is dissected by rows of pillars and contains fine stonework.

The Nagina masjid is a large mosque built on a high-rise plinth with a large open courtyard in front. Minarets with intricate carvings stand at the entrance. Three large domes rise over the main prayer hall, above decorated columns and windows. The architecture also features a series of beautifully designed projecting corbels and a

cornice, and the main prayer hall is two storeys high with a balcony. An elegant domed mausoleum stands in front of the mosque.

Lila Gumbaz Ki Masjid is another mosque, among about 114 monuments that are part of the Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park. The mosque has minarets and three domes; the central dome has a fluted design and colourful exteriors.

Kevada Masjid has minarets and globular domes, and intricate mihrabs inside. There are two minarets, which are also decorated with intricate carvings. It is most notable for its mausoleum.

From Machi Plateau, a ropeway takes visitors to Pavagadh. The architectural highlight of Pavagadh is the Lakulish temple which has fine carvings. Devotees gather at the Kali temple or the Jain temples.





Kevada Masjid



Nagina Masjid

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Sellor Vav, Tera



Tera Village Fort



Kutch has a number of villages that were protected by forts or fortified walls. Roha, Gadhsisa, Kothara and Tera were some of the well-known village forts of Kutch. Tera was once a prosperous village thriving on its location between Bhuj, the headquarters of the Kutch princely state and the ports of Jakhau and Lakhpat. Tera is uniquely representative of the architectural heritage of Gujarat – it has a 'darbargadh' or fortified residence of the ruling family, a 'vav' or multi-storeyed stepwell, 'chhatardis' or memorials to warriors, rulers and eminent people, 'chabutras' or bird-feeding structures,

'havelis' or courtyard houses with ornate wood carvings and stonework characteristic of Kutch, and manmade lakes to harvest precious rain water in this arid region.

From the village square, the lane leads through a bazaar, which besides servicing local population thrives on pilgrims who visit the mosque, Jain derasar and Hindu temples of Tera. The bazaar has tea shops where villagers gather for conversations. At the end of the bazaar is the Jumma Masjid, a mosque with onion-shaped domes probably influenced by trade with Arabic and Persian lands from Jakhau

and Lakhpat (a major port for Haj to Mecca during Mughal reign), and splendidly carved entrances. The dargahs of Kalapir and Saiyed Mahmudhsha Pir attract many devotees to this complex.

The village road continues to the derasar (Jain temple complex), which has a 285-year old temple with glass paintings and murals, and a 148-year old temple with multiple shikaras. This temple complex is part of a five-point Jain yatra in Kutch, attracting about 40,000 pilgrims every year, according to Girishbhai Soni, one of the prominent Jain residents of Tera.

Tera Jain Derasar



After the derasar, the village lanes pass many beautiful havelis of the Jains, Bhatiyas and other residents of Tera. A notable feature of Tera's havelis is the gateway – carved wooden doors framed by ornate stonework featuring Indian and western motifs. Corinthian pilasters with floral capitals are a common architectural element in Tera's havelis. Once inside, the courtyard is surrounded by the residential wings of extended families that have ornate facades and carved balconies. Many havelis are locked as the owners do not reside in them, while some are tenanted or occupied by relatives of the owners. The village also has temples to Ashapura, Modeshwari Mata, Hinglaj Mata, Shitla Mata, Hanuman and Rama. The Vaishnav haveli temple is especially attractive.

After meandering through the lanes,

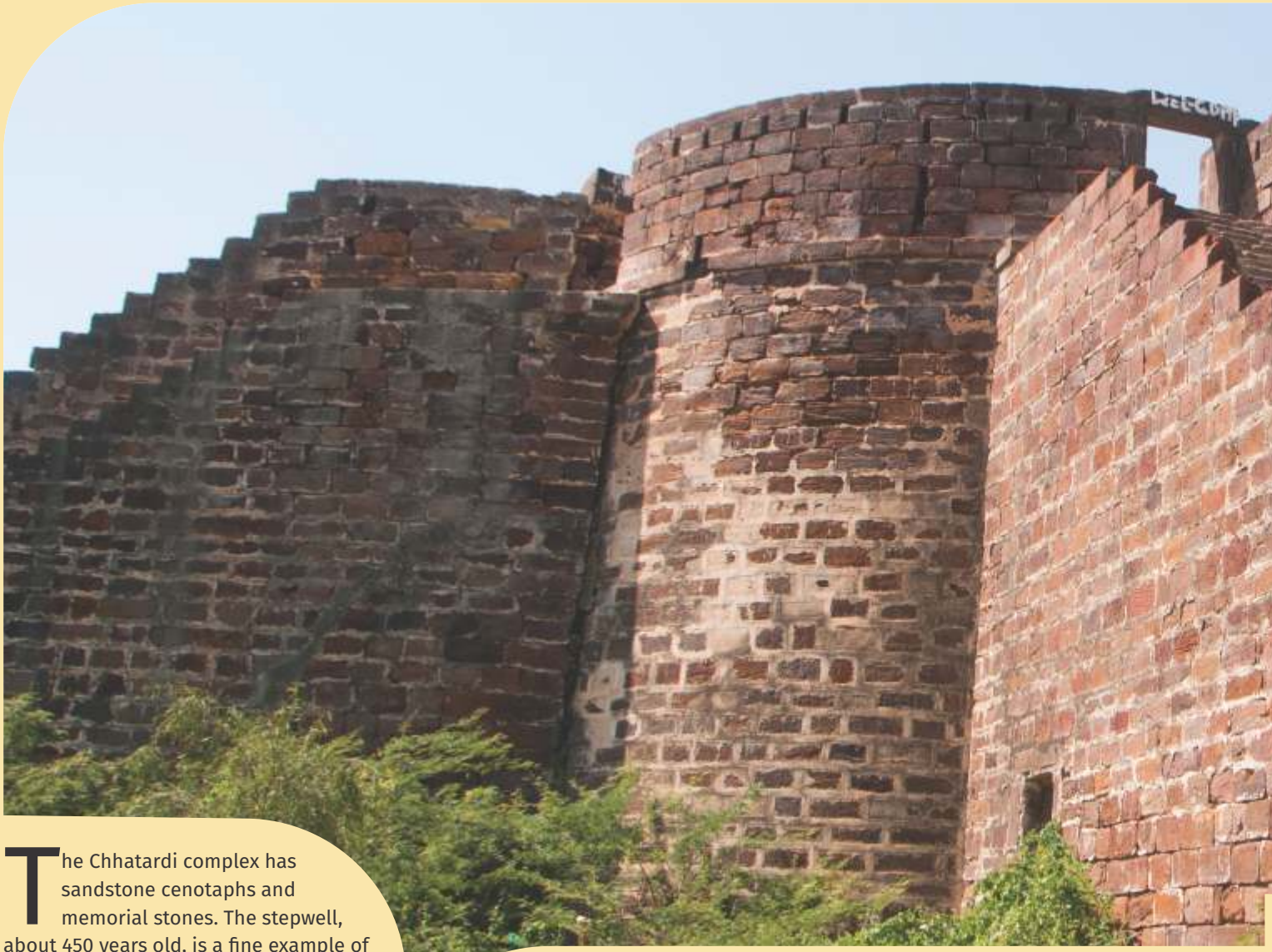
a visitor arrives at the three lakes which formed part of Tera's sophisticated rainwater management system. The fort rises on the shores of the lakes and receives water through a channel to withstand a long siege. The fort, believed to have been built 400 years ago, is called Alampanah in memory of the people who contributed to its building. The village is specially known for the Ramayana frescoes in the fort chambers. Representing the Rama Randh tradition of Ramayana theatre that once thrived in Kutch, the Ramayana frescoes are done in the folk style of painting of Kutch. The paintings at Darbargadh Tera have been painted directly on the walls, plastered with lime and calcined gypsum. The outlining is in light red and the figures are filled with vegetable and mineral colours.

Depiction of the Ramarand episode

called Lanka Kand shows Rama and Laxman on the sea shore with their monkey army, the founding of the Shiva shrine called Rameshwaram Sethu Bandh with its Shivalingam covered by the hood of a cobra, the attempts of Angad and Vibhishana to effect a reconciliation with Ravana, and finally Nandodari the wife of Ravana appeals to her husband for surrender. The proud Ravana is shown in the golden house with door guardians called dwarfalo, with a donkey's head symbolising his stubbornness. The battlefield in Lanka with Rama in the chariot given to him by Indra fights with Ravana who has the donkey head symbolising his stubbornness. Thakore Shri Rayadhanji Humirji Sahib of Tera, called Gaghuba, would awaken to see the auspicious scene of Rama's birth and then follow the Ramayana in chronological order.

Darbargadh





The Chhatardi complex has sandstone cenotaphs and memorial stones. The stepwell, about 450 years old, is a fine example of the water-retaining architecture of Gujarat. Tera also has the Samadhi of mystic poetess Ratanbai. The Selor stepwell is believed to be about 450 year old.

North of Tera, Lakhpat is a fortified town by the sea, near the northwestern tip of Gujarat. It has become famous for its gurudwara associated with the Udasi sect, believed to be the oldest Sikh order. Devotees believe that Guru Nanak Dev, founder of Sikh religion, stayed in this house in the sixteenth century en route to Mecca. It houses relics such as a decoratively carved wooden cradle, wooden sandals that are believed to have belonged to Guru Nanak, manuscripts and markings of two of the important heads of the Udasi sect. ■





Lakhpatri Fort



Forged Wall of Lakhpatri Fort

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