



The Gujarat Special

27th October – 10th November 2012

Highlights: Village stays, visits to local communities, 3 days of Jeep safaris (in search of lions and donkeys), 2 days at the beach, exposure to the best arts and crafts ever, and much more.

Itinerary

Day 1 (Saturday 27.10.2012): Mumbai – Bhavnagar

Arrival in Mumbai. You will be met at the international airport upon arrival by our local representative and transferred to the domestic airport for a flight to Bhavnagar, an industrial town known for its cotton, diamonds, plastics and ship parts. Those arriving the night before will be accommodated in a hotel at the airport. Lunch will be served at the hotel (Nilambag Palace, www.nilambagpalace.com) upon arrival in Bhavnagar. Afternoon is free to relax or walk around town to get a first glimpse of “bamboozling” (term used by Lonely Planet to describe the country). Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 2 (Sunday 28.10.2012): Bhavnagar – Palitana

After breakfast today we travel to Palitana where we will visit Shatrunjaya, Jainism’s holiest pilgrimage site. A visit to the Temple complex involves a 500m climb up, over 3300 steps, and is an extraordinary experience once you make it up after 1-2 hours. Just the views in all directions are worth the climb. There are several temples at the top worth visiting for their detailed carvings. Lunch will be served on the way and dinner at the Hotel. Overnight at Nilambag Palace Hotel.

Day 3 (Monday 29.10.2012): Bhavnagar - Dui

Today we travel along the coast to Dui after breakfast. After checking into the hotel, Radhika Beach Resort (www.radhikaresort.com), and lunch, there will be some time to swim and relax before we begin our sight seeing tour of Dui and visit some historical monuments, churches, fort and temples. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Dui is a tiny ex-Portuguese island with white-washed churches and colourful Portuguese-influenced streets. Between 14th and 16th centuries Dui was an important trading post and a navel base. The Ottomans controlled the northern shipping routes from here. In 1535 the Portuguese took control of the island until 1961, when India took the reins. The island’s main industries are alcohol, salt, fishing and tourism.

Day 4 (Tuesday 30.10.2012): Diu – Sasan Gir Wildlife Sanctuary

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we head towards Sasan Gir National Park, home to the last remaining Asian lions. You will be treated to 2 Jeep safaris today. All meals will be served at the Safari Lion Lodge where we will also be spending the night

(<http://www.campsofindia.com/destination/gujarat/gir-national-park/lion-safari-camp.html>).

Sasan Gir Wildlife Sanctuary is the last refuge of the Asian lion, which centuries ago were supposed to have roamed from Syria to India but were hunted down mainly for fun. This large forested hilly sanctuary is bliss after the noise and chaos of Indian cities and roads. The sanctuary was set up in 1965 and 250 sq.km. of it became a national park in 1975. The number of lions has increased over the years and so have other animals (deer, sambar, antelope, gazelle, crocodiles, leopards) and over 300 species of birds in the park.

Day 5 (Wednesday 31.10.2012): Sasan Gir - Junagahd – Gondal

Those not tired can wake up early today for a morning safari (best time to see animals) and return to the hotel for breakfast, after which we depart for Junagahd (a fortified city with 2300 years of history) and Gondol. In Junagahd we will visit the Fort (believed to have been built in 319 BC) and a Buddhist cave (carved out of a rock about 2000 years ago), amongst other sites, before lunch. We then continue on to Gondol where we will visit the Naulakha Museum housed in a 260-year old royal palace), an Ayurvedic Pharmacy and a handicraft shop if time permits. We will overnight here in a royal palace Riverside Orchard Palace (www.gondalpalaces.com).

Day 6 (Thursday 01.11.2012): Gondol – Zainabad

After breakfast we depart for the Desert Coursers Resort (www.desertcoursers.net) in Zainabad (a 4 hour journey) to arrive in time for lunch. After a few hours of relaxation, we get on a Jeep with a naturalist for an afternoon safari through the Little Rann of Kachchh. Overnight and dinner at the Resort.

Little Rann of Kachchh is barren “white” land (nearly 5000 sq-km), home to the last remaining Indian wild ass (between 2000 to 3000), as well as other animals and birds such as, Jackals, Foxes, Wolves, Desert and Jungle Cats, Flamingos, Cranes, Ducks, Geese, Larks, Bustards, Sykes Nightjar, Sand Grouse and Harriers, Owls, etc. This area is also known for its salt farms (run by the poor eking out a living by pumping up groundwater and extracting the salt)

Day 07 (Friday 02.11.2012): Zainabad – Modhera - Patan

We wake up early today to visit the Sun Temple in Modhera and the Jain Temple and step wells in Patan. We will have lunch on the way somewhere and return to the Resort for an evening entertainment program.

Modhera: *The beautiful Sun Temple in Modhera was built around 1026 is one of the greatest monuments of the Solanki dynasty whose rulers were believed to be descendents from the sun. The temple is built in such a way that at equinox, the dawn sun shines on the image of Lord Shiva. The place was ransacked by the Muslim rulers around 1300 but still remains impressive with intricately carved demons and deities on the outside. Its 52 sculpted pillars depict scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. At the front of the temple is a step-well that contains over 100 shrines.*

Patan was Gujarat's capital city until Ahmedabad became one in 1411. It is now a dusty town with narrow streets lined with wooden houses – elaborately decorated – but has one of the oldest and finest step wells in Gujarat. The Rani-ki-Vav was built in 1063 by Queen Udayamati to commemorate her husband, Bhimdev. Steps lead down to several levels with lines of carved pillars and several hundred carved pillars.

Day 8 (Saturday 03.11.2012): Zainabad – Mandvi (5 - 6 hours drive)

Today after breakfast we head to Mandvi, which lies in the Gulf of Kachchh. After checking into the Mandvi Palace (www.mandvibeach.com) and lunch, one can either spend the day at the beach or visit a shipbuilding yard, on the banks of the Rukmavati River, where one can see how local craftsmen meticulously assemble ships out of wood for local or international clients. Overnight and dinner at the Palace hotel.

Kachchh is known as India's Wild West. This flat land edged by the Gulf of Kachchh and the Ranns (Little and Great) changes seasonally: during dry periods the land is covered with hard, dried. Mud, and during rainy seasons first by seawater and then by fresh water. These changes plus the salt in the soil makes it impossible for any vegetation to grow here. This arid landscape is home to many tribes who produce some of India's finest handicrafts (embroidery, weaving, tie-dye, block printing, wood-carving, and pottery). Many NGOs are working in this area to help people produce high quality goods which can be marketed and also help people preserve their heritage. This area was hit by a major earthquake in 2001 which killed over 30,000 people and wiped out many villages. Bhuj, the capital of Kachchh, has been largely restored.

Day 9 (Sunday 04.11.2012): Mandvi

Today you have the freedom to sleep late, lie on the beach all day or walk around Mandvi town. Overnight and meals at the Palace hotel.

Day 10 (Monday 05.11.2012): Mandvi – Bhuj

After breakfast we head to Bhuj and visit Darbargadh (the walled complex from which Kachchh was once ruled), Rani Mahal (17th century royal residence), Aina Mahel (built in 1750s with all things European), Prag Mahel, Kachchh Museum (Gujarat's oldest) and Sharad Baug Palace (Italianate palace built in 1867). Many of these buildings were destroyed in the earthquake and are not fully restored but nevertheless worth visiting. If time permits we will visit the Bhuj market

later. All meals and overnight at Hotel Prince (www.hotelprinceonline.com) or Hotel Ilark (www.hotelilark.com).

Day 11 (Tuesday 06.11.2012): Bhuj - Bhujodi

We drive to Bhujodi today to begin our tour of the Kachchh arts and crafts. Nestled away in Bhujodi is a community of master artisans versed in traditional handloom weaving. You can see live demonstrations of weaving in village homes and spend your money on hand-woven products such as woollen and cotton stoles, shawls, blankets, carpets, bed and table linens, etc. directly from the weavers (which include some national award winners). We will also visit the Hiralaxmi Crafts Park, a non-profit venture which gives artisans across Kachchh an open platform to display their skills and sell their products. After lunch at artisan's home, we will visit Shrujan, another NGO, established in 1968 after a serious drought. It works to supplement the income of rural women through their embroidery skills and by marketing their products. In addition to a store, Shrujan also houses a design center, manufacturing unit and a fine collection of embroidery. Walk around the campus which is built with traditional and environmentally-conscious methods. We will also visit Ajrakhpur, a new village established by the traditional Muslim Khatri hand block printers after the earthquake in 2001. This is a craft village where you will find artisans practicing traditional hand block printing technique on cotton/silk fabrics using the age old Ajrakh prints as well as new design motifs. Dinner and overnight at hotel Prince or Ilark.

Day 12 (Wednesday 07.11.2012): Hodka

Today we drive to north to Hodka village, in northern Kutchchh, where we have to first register with the police before proceeding to Shaam E Sarhad Village Resort (www.hodka.in) for our village stay. This successful endogenous tourism project is run by local people. After an early lunch, we walk to the Hodka village to see the embroidery and leather crafts of the Meghwar community. In the evening we will stop over at the White Rann near Dhordo village to enjoy the sunset. A Kachchhi dinner will be served at the Resort followed by some traditional folk music of the region. Overnight at the Resort.

Day 13 (Thursday 08.11.2012): Hodka – Zura Village – Nirona Village - Dhordo Village

Most of today will be spent visiting different villages and the unique arts and crafts of the region. First we visit the Zura village to meet master craftsmen and learn about the skill-intensive process of tuning the famous copper bells of Zura and then head to Niorna village to see lacquer craft. We return to the Resort for a traditional lunch. You have a choice in the afternoon to relax or go see more arts and crafts. Overnight at the Resort.



Day 14 (Friday 09.11.2012): Hodka Village – Khavda - Black Hills – Ludia Village

Today is another day of arts and crafts but also one where we see how local NGOs are playing a role in rural development. After breakfast at the resort we drive to the Ludia village which is divided into several hamlets. Gandhi nun Gam, inhabited by the Meghwar community, flaunts beautifully painted circular huts organized around the temple. Between the vibrant “kanjari” blouses of the women and the men hunched over in various corners carving wood, the village is an aesthetic delight. In wake of the 2001 earthquake, Ahmedabad-based non-profit, Namnav Sadhna, worked with the local community to rebuild their homes and lives using indigenous knowledge and community participation. In the effort to curb the aggressive selling techniques the community has adapted over time and to experiment with a collaborative marketplace, the hamlet has set up an “otlo” (a roofed platform) next to the temple, where each household brings its embroidered goods for selling. The remaining hamlets belong to the Samma community, who are primarily herdsman and slightly more conservative towards tourists. Late afternoon, drive to the Black Hills (Kala Dungar) to enjoy a view of the Rann of Kachchh from the top of the hills and see the sun set in the horizon. Return to the Resort for dinner. Overnight at the Resort.

Day 15 (Saturday 10.11.2012): Hodka – Mumbai

After a relaxing breakfast drive to Bhuj airport for a flight to Mumbai International Airport for flights home. End of tour.

A Google Map of the trip can be seen at the following link:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF&msa=0&msid=202387541084442274745.0004b006e4f5994d19f05>

Cost

The price for the tour, from / to Mumbai, will be approx. €2,300 (depending on whether a single room is required or double). The price includes:

- Hotels (3 – 4*)
- All local transport (by car / minibus, travel by train, and an internal flight)
- 3 meals a day
- All non-alcoholic drinks at meal times
- Tips, service charges, etc.
- Fees of local tour guides (language will be German, English or Japanese depending on the nationalities of group), etc.
- Entrance fees to all attractions
- Contribution to social projects visited

The price does not include:



ETOSE - PEOPLE AND PLACES

- **International flights**
- Travel / Health insurance
- Visa fees
- Other private expenses, such as telephone, laundry, alcohol, massages, etc.

Please note ETOSE is not responsible for:

- Any changes which may have to be made to the program due to strikes, flight delays, weather conditions, natural disasters, etc.
- Any damage to luggage, suitcases, etc.

Deadline to register for this trip is July 1st. 2012