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Gold Tales

Some places are famous for its vigor, always lively, shiny and brimming with people, and there are others that are known for their eerie vibes. If you're one of those who relish the stony silence and enigmatic mysteries of ruined cities and deserted towns, we have got a list of ghost towns in India that you would like to explore.

Another way to chase the stories of a bygone era is by admiring the architectural heritage of a place. Holding the glorious past and interesting folklore, these masterpieces make for an insightful trip. On World Heritage Day on 18th April, 2021, we take you to some heritage sites of Gujarat that are still lesser-known to the tourists.

If you're missing the faraway lands majorly amidst the travel restrictions, we are here to walk with you on the streets of Amsterdam with our Dutch Tales.

Read on!



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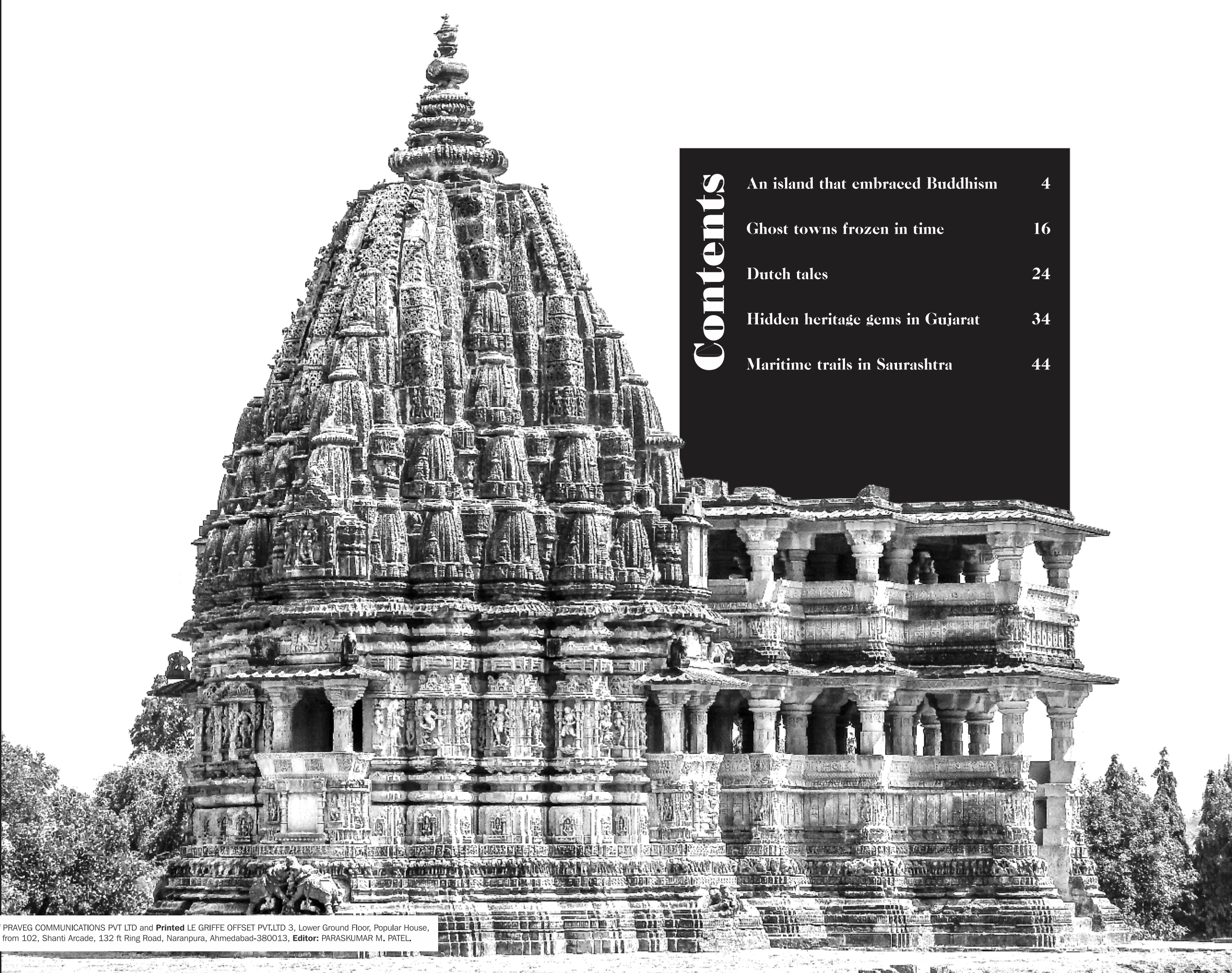
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AN ISLAND THAT EMBRACED BUDDHISM

In 250 BCE, a mission from India sparked the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Mahendra, son of Emperor Ashoka, headed the mission. When his mission landed there, he was met by Sinhalese King Devanampiya Tissa. Mahendra delivered a sermon on Buddhism to the king who was impressed by the message. Thus began the spread of Buddhism in this tiny island nation.



Buddha Statue, Temple of the Tooth

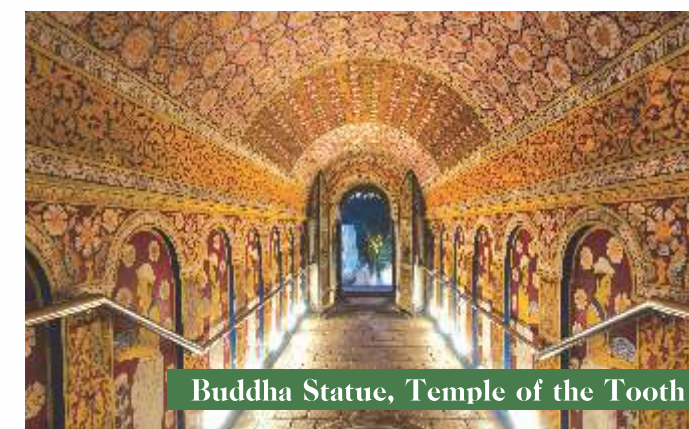
TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH



Temple of the Tooth



Kandy lake near the Temple of the Tooth



Buddha Statue, Temple of the Tooth

Sri Dalada Maligawa or The Temple of the Tooth is located deep in the heart of Sri Lanka in a place called Kandy. It is where the tooth of Buddha is permanently kept in a special shrine within the precincts of the former royal palace. This temple is located just next to the Kandy Lake and surrounded by hills in a protective embrace. The temple has a number of paintings and murals depicting the relocation of the sacred tooth over the centuries.

The sacred tooth has had a chequ-

ered passage before it was finally installed in its current location. When Buddha died, his tooth was found at the cremation site. It was kept in Kalinga, India. Later a Sinhalese princess smuggled it to this island in the 4th century. It was initially kept in the ancient city of Anuradhapura.

The safekeeping of the sacred tooth was the responsibility of the king and its possession came to symbolize the right to rule. It became their palladium, due to which the tooth has had a peripatetic

existence. As the capital of the kingdom changed over the centuries, the sacred tooth was also moved. It was always kept in a special shrine within the royal precincts.

The tooth relic is on display for the public once in every four years. However, during the Esala Perahera procession, one of the Sinhalese festivals, the sacred tooth, covered in a glass chamber, is paraded atop an elephant through the streets of Kandy. It is a 10-day festival.



Holy Bodhi Tree

ANURADHAPURA

Two hundred and six kms from Colombo, is the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura. It was here in the 3rd century B.C that Sanghamitta, daughter of King Ashoka, brought a sapling of the Pipal tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment. The Sri Maha Bodhi, as the holy tree is called, is considered to be the world's oldest historically documented tree. The branches of the tree are propped up with supports. The leaves that fall from

it are carefully collected and stored.

The city has palaces, monasteries and monuments. Anuradhapura served as the capital until it was moved to Polonnaruwa. The three giant stupas, the Mahaviharaya, Jetavana and Abhayagiri are architectural wonders of the ancient world for its unique engineering construction.

The Muhundu Maha Vihara Stupa dates back to the 3rd century BCE. King Devanampiya Tissa built it, when he

converted to Buddhism post his meeting with Mahendra.

Till about the 10th century, Anuradhapura was a great cultural and religious center. It was an important center for Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Theravāda is the most commonly accepted name of Buddhism's oldest existing school. The monks of the Mahavihara welded considerable influence, which often extended into temporal matters.



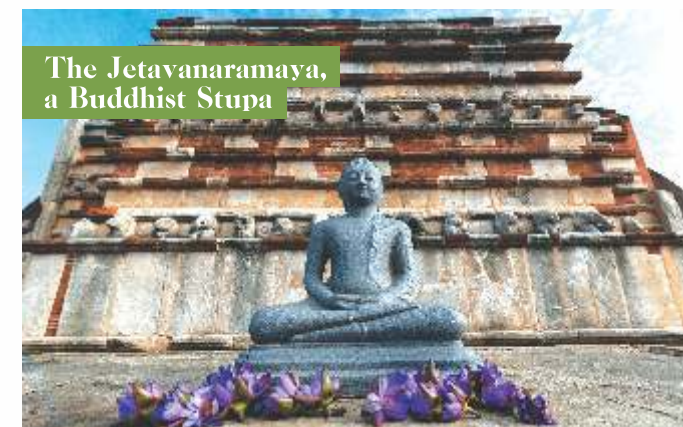
Mihintale



Mihintale

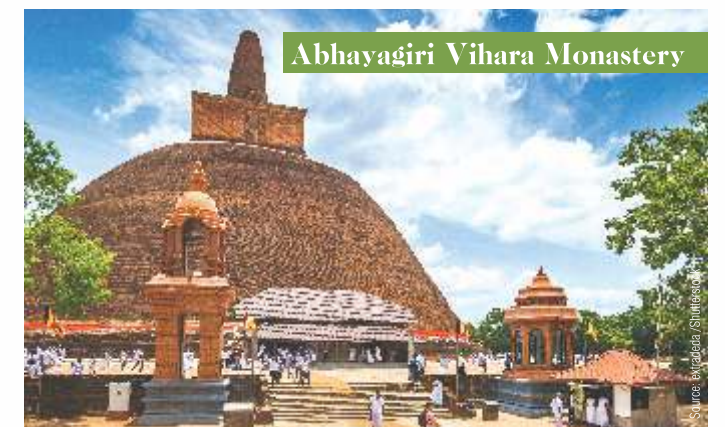


Jetavanaramaya



The Jetavanaramaya, a Buddhist Stupa

Source: extraneta/Shutterstock



Abhayagiri Vihara Monastery

Source: extraneta/Shutterstock

Abhayagiri Vihāra (Vihara is a temple or a monastery) was also a major monastery site, built sometime between 29 and 17 BC. It was a great monastic center and is the largest of its five major Viharas. The stupa is 240 feet in height and spans 325 feet in diameter. It is believed that the stupa has been built over a footprint of the Buddha.

The Jetavanaramaya is a stupa built sometime in the 4th century. It is a

Buddhist reliquary monument. A part of a belt used by the Buddha is believed to be enshrined in the stupa. It is located in the ruins of Jetavana monastery. When built, it stood at 400 ft making it the world's tallest stupa. However, when the Anuradhapura kingdom was abandoned sometime in the 11th century, the stupa fell into disrepair. It was rebuilt in the 12th century to its current height, of 233 ft.

Primary Buddhist attractions in Anuradhapura are the Atamasthana or the 8 main places of worship one of which is the Sri Maha Bodhi.

The hill, where the King Devanampiya Tissa was converted by Mahinda to follow the path of Buddha, took place about 12 km from the city of Anuradhapura, and is known as Mihintale, or the Mountain of Mahinda.

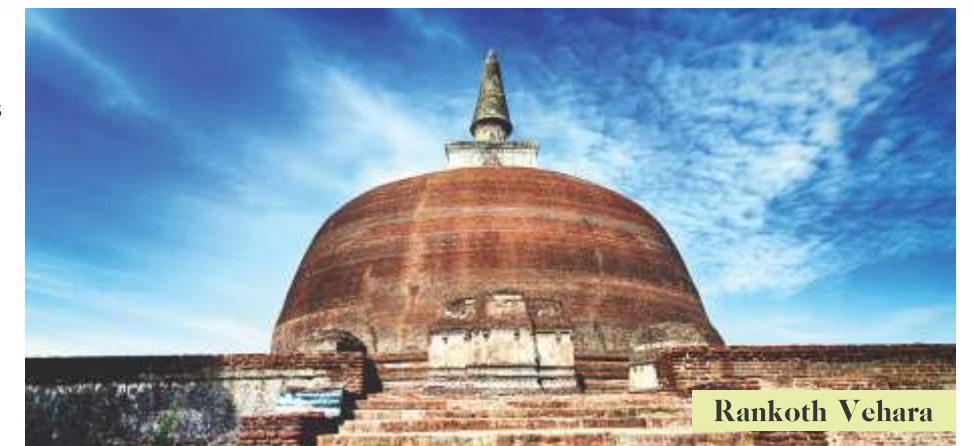


Rankot Vihara in Ancient Polonnaruwa

POLONNARUWA

Polonnaruwa was the second ancient kingdom of Sri Lanka. It is situated 216 km from the capital city Colombo. This ancient city dates back to the 11th century. It was the capital of Sri Lanka from 11th to the 13th century.

There are many monasteries and temples here. The Gal Vihara, meaning rock monastery, is a Buddhist rock-cut temple and contains sculptures of the Buddha. These statues rank as one of the most sacred monuments in Sri Lanka. One



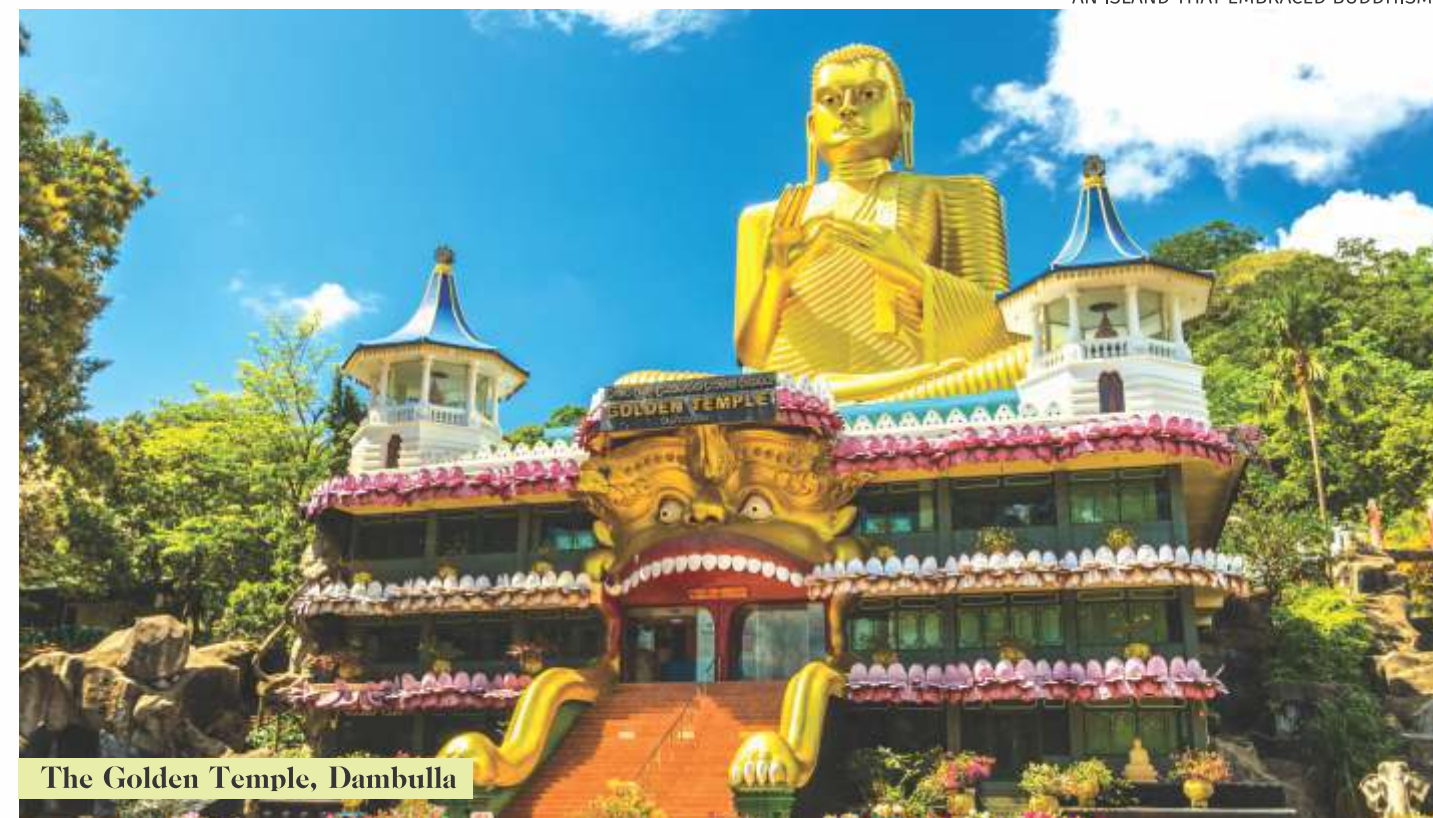
Rankoth Vihara



Polonnaruwa Temple



Buddha Statue, Polonnaruwa Temple



The Golden Temple, Dambulla



Buddhist Cave Temple, Dambulla

of the statues and perhaps the most revered is that of the Buddha lying on his right side with his right hand under his right chin. It is believed that he had reposed in this position when he died.

The Rankoth Vihara in Polonnaruwa is the 4th largest stupa in Sri Lanka. It was built sometime in the 12th century. It was constructed along the lines of the Anuradhapura Maha Vihar Stupas.

Included in the Buddhist circuit is Dambulla. Located 148 kms from

Colombo, it is one of the most sacred religious sites in Sri Lanka. The monastery was established in the 3rd century BC. Built under a giant rock, is a cave monastery with five sanctuaries. It is the largest and well preserved cave-temple complex. The caves have Buddhist mural paintings and a large number of statues. It is astonishing to see the extent of these well-preserved pre biblical creations. That's the beauty of this tiny island.

Veer off from the road, you will see a narrow flight of steps going up the mountain that would most likely lead you to a small Buddhist temple. There are caves in the mountains around Kandy, where you will find monks leading an ascetic life. The word serendipity is derived from Serendip, a word astutely coined by the Arabs for this tear drop shaped island in the Indian Ocean. 📍



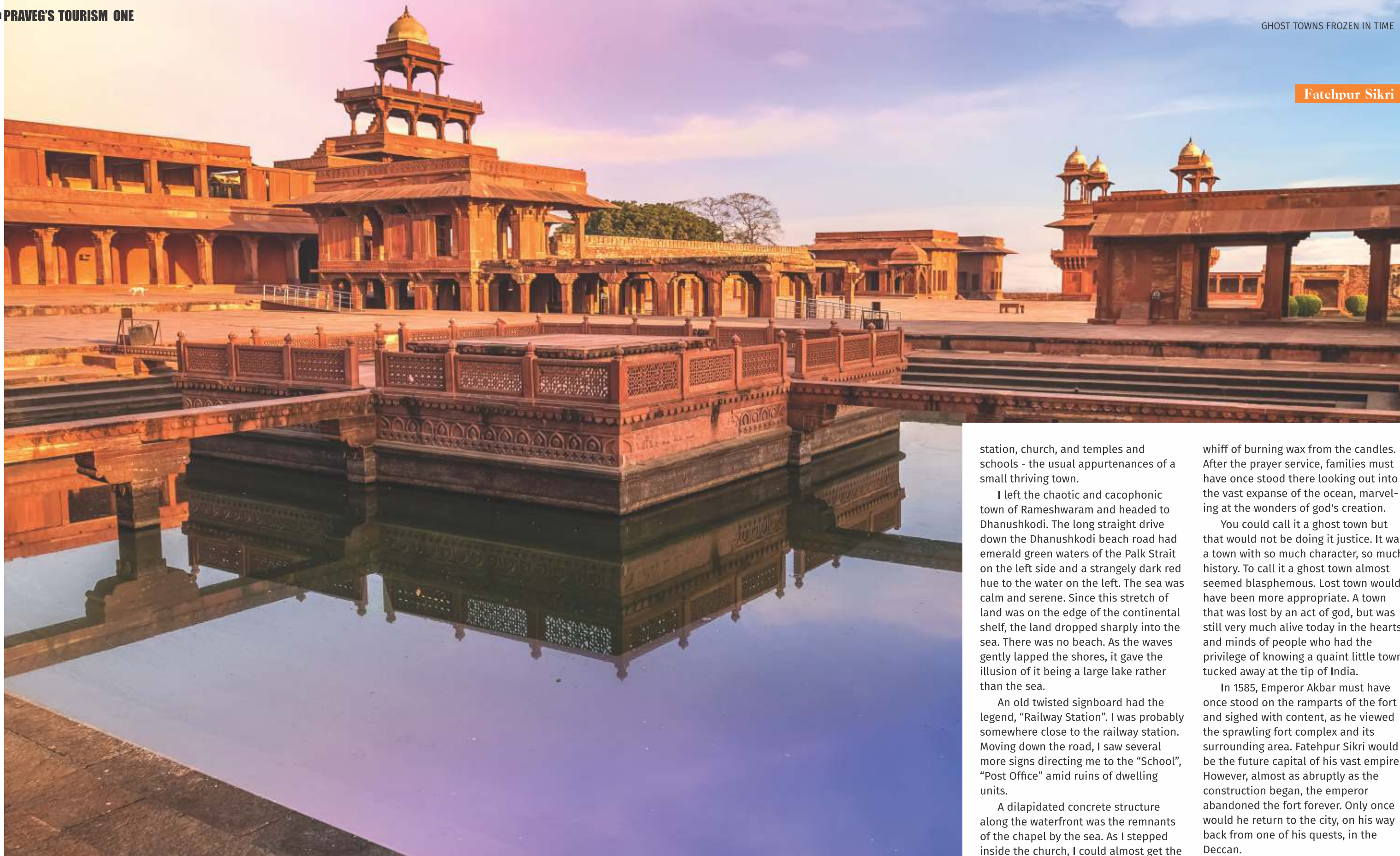
GHOST TOWNS FROZEN IN TIME

It was December 15, 1964. In the office of the Indian Meteorological Department, a number of messages indicated a development of a deep depression over the southern Andaman Sea. The signs were ominous. Over the next few days, the gathering storm intensified into a hurricane and then barreled in the north easterly direction, towards the Pamban

Island in the southeast coast of Tamil Nadu. The picturesque town of Dhanushkodi was directly in its destructive path. By the time the storm would be spent, several hours later, the destruction would be so catastrophic, that the once bustling town of Dhanushkodi would be reduced to a deserted, windswept ghost town.

Dhanushkodi was once a transit point for Indian tourists to go to Sri Lanka via Talaimannar. Once a serene fishing village, with a large expanse of placid sea all around, it was like any other town along the Indian coast. The mainstay of the people was fishing and agriculture. The people had led a peaceful life. There was a railway

Fatehpur Sikri



station, church, and temples and schools - the usual appurtenances of a small thriving town.

I left the chaotic and cacophonous town of Rameshwaram and headed to Dhanushkodi. The long straight drive down the Dhanushkodi beach road had emerald green waters of the Palk Strait on the left side and a strangely dark red hue to the water on the left. The sea was calm and serene. Since this stretch of land was on the edge of the continental shelf, the land dropped sharply into the sea. There was no beach. As the waves gently lapped the shores, it gave the illusion of it being a large lake rather than the sea.

An old twisted signboard had the legend, "Railway Station". I was probably somewhere close to the railway station. Moving down the road, I saw several more signs directing me to the "School", "Post Office" amid ruins of dwelling units.

A dilapidated concrete structure along the waterfront was the remnants of the chapel by the sea. As I stepped inside the church, I could almost get the

whiff of burning wax from the candles. After the prayer service, families must have once stood there looking out into the vast expanse of the ocean, marveling at the wonders of god's creation.

You could call it a ghost town but that would not be doing it justice. It was a town with so much character, so much history. To call it a ghost town almost seemed blasphemous. Lost town would have been more appropriate. A town that was lost by an act of god, but was still very much alive today in the hearts and minds of people who had the privilege of knowing a quaint little town tucked away at the tip of India.

In 1585, Emperor Akbar must have once stood on the ramparts of the fort and sighed with content, as he viewed the sprawling fort complex and its surrounding area. Fatehpur Sikri would be the future capital of his vast empire. However, almost as abruptly as the construction began, the emperor abandoned the fort forever. Only once would he return to the city, on his way back from one of his quests, in the Deccan.



The construction began in 1571 under the supervision of Akbar himself. By 1585 most of the construction of the fort was complete, when Akbar abruptly pulled back. When William Finch, an English merchant, in the service of the East India Company, visited the place in 1608, it was already a ghost city. He wrote in his book "it was very dangerous to pass through in the night, the building lying waste without inhabitants..."

During the Mughal times, the strength of the population of the city depended upon the Emperor's residence. These cities would serve as cantonments. When the king moved, the majority of the populace moved along with him. Thus when Akbar relinquished the fort, he left behind a veritable ghost town frozen in time.

Emotion, rather than any strategic military consideration, was Akbar's

desire to choose Fatehpur Sikri as his future capital. Sheikh Salim Chisti, on whose blessings Akbar believed, he sired his three sons, was a resident of Fatehpur Sikri. Akbar felt that Fatehpur Sikri would be lucky for him.

Reason for abandonment was attributed to lack of basic necessity for

sustaining life - water. As I stand on the top floor of Panch Mahal surveying the surroundings, I cannot help but feel a tinge of sadness at the abandonment of such a beautiful fort. The grandeur of its spatial construction was the quintessence of Mughal architecture. The Fatehpur Sikri town does not have the



Kuldhara



Kuldhara

hustle and bustle of its neighboring city Agra. It has an air of remoteness and abandonment that pervades even today.

Eighteen kms southwest of the Jaisalmer city, in the hot desert plains, is the village of Kuldhara, abandoned since the end of the 19th century. What led to its abandonment? There are a host of intriguing hypotheses - a cruel minister, paucity of water and natural calamity.

The Paliwal Brahmins first inhabited Kuldhara sometime in the 13th century. Habitations here took place plausibly due to proximity of the river nearby, but now dry. It appeared to be a fairly well established village.

As I walk around in the eerie silence of the village, I can see that it was once well populated. Long rows of houses built in close proximity still stand today. The pathways are reasonably wide and long. The temple at the center of the town was the cynosure of the inhabitants of the village as it was everywhere. There were wells, step wells and several cenotaphs. A cremation ground on the outskirts of the village served as a reminder of the people's transient

Bhangarh Fort



sojourn on earth.

What really happened there? The notes of the British officers indicated that there was no sudden exodus of people from the village, but was a gradual decline in the population. One or more events could have led to the gradual abandonment of the village. The scarcity of water, the drying of the riverbeds and wells would have made agricultural activity a burdensome task. Another version was the imposition of punitive tax by a minister from Jaisalmer state. A cataclysmic earthquake could have shaken the faith of the people in that region.

Whatever may be the reason, a thriving village that it once was, today stood at the mercy of the desert elements? Would new occupants come and revive the village or would it sink into the desert sands with the passage of time?

Popularly ranked as the most haunted place in India, it has the most intriguing tales, apocryphal or otherwise, for the reasons that led to its abandonment. Built in the 17th-century, the Bhangarh Fort in Rajasthan holds this dubious distinction.

A sadhu, living on one of the hills, had commanded that no house should

be built nearby so that its shadow falls on his house. The kings of the fort had acceded to his condition until one of them added columns that cast a shadow on his property. The angry sadhu's venomous curse led to the ruin of the fort and the surrounding villages so goes one of the tales.

Standing majestically amidst the green Aravali hills is Bhangarh complex, complete with fort, palace, temples and dwelling units. Sometime in 1631, Madho Singh, ensnared by the beauty of the place, established his residence there. He was the younger brother of Man Singh, who was one of the most successful Generals of Emperor Akbar.

Atop the hill, overlooking the plains below is the palace. Despite the passage of time, the palace still commanded an imperial hauteur. Down in the plains along the road are buildings, which probably served as the marketplace. Spring water gushes out from one of the temples there, in all seasons of the year.

Despite the charming surroundings, Bhangarh lost its capacity to sustain human habitation. What went wrong? Was it famine, pestilence or internecine strife? Even today, Bhangarh gives more than a glimpse of its majestic beauty that it once possessed. 📸



Bhangarh Fort

DUTCH TALES



Cityscape, Amsterdam



Hindeloopen



Amsterdam Skyline



Amsterdam Street

The Dutch say it with justifiable pride, "God made the world, but man made Holland!" As it stands today, about 17% of the land area has been reclaimed from the sea or lakes. To indulge in a little bit of statistics: 26% of its area is located below sea level; 21% of its population lives in areas below sea level and almost 50% of its area is more

than 1 meter above sea level. That is what makes the country excitingly unique and exhilaratingly beautiful.

Holland or The Netherlands, as it is also called, is located in Northwestern Europe. It is a land of dykes, dunes, lakes and water canals. The Netherlands is curiously as flat as a pancake. About 6,500 sq.km. of land has been reclaimed

from the sea, a process that began from the 13th century. The lowest point below sea level can be found in Nieuwekerk aan den IJssel and is about 7 meters below sea level. The highest point is at the border area of the Netherlands with Belgium and Germany and is 323 meters above sea level. The waterways here are over 6,000 km long. For comparison, the

total waterways length in Kerala is about 3,000 km.

Bridges of all kinds, many of which are breathtakingly beautiful, interconnect all the rivers, lakes and canals. Some of the most peculiar bridges are seen in Holland. The sheer variety is ascribed to the unique situation of having extensive waterways close to the

ocean and the inverse features of the sea vis a vis the land. There are the old Roman type bridges completely built from stones, wooden bridges and

modern cable stay bridges with long spans. There are single and double-hinged bridges, which lift off from the ground to allow ships to pass through.

Canal Boating, Giethoorn



Source: Giancarlo Ligabue/Shutterstock

Vibrant Pink Tulips with Dutch Windmills



When in Holland, the best way to travel is on a bicycle. The country, as people claim, has more bicycles than people. While walking on the streets, one need not fear being knocked by speeding cars, but being bowled over by a cyclist can be a veritable threat. The Dutch men and women are serious bikers. The types of cycles traversing the

city are bewildering in their range. Here's for variety: There are the normal gent's and women's cycle, the folding cycles, e-bikes, tricycle, hand cycle, wheel cycle, side by side cycle, cargo bike, trailer bike, recumbent bikes, velomobiles etc. etc.

An 85-minutes drive by car from Amsterdam brings you to a place

variously known as Dutch Venice of the Netherlands, Venice of the North, or Dutch village without roads. The place is Giethoorn. It is easily one of the most beautiful places in Holland. The canals wind through its 18th and 19th century houses with long sloping thatched roofs enclosed in meticulously manicured gardens. Giethoorn is connected to the

mainland by 176 bridges. Cars are not allowed in Giethoorn. The only way you can move around is by boat or cycle or you can just walk. There are a number of al fresco restaurants on the fringes of the canal. A lunch at one of these enchanting restaurants can be a delightful experience. The place has all the settings of a village from the

Grimm's Fairy Tale book.

In 2015, the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA), named it as the most beautiful place in Europe. The accolade went to the beautiful village of

Hindeloopen, 130 km from Amsterdam.

With its unhurried pace of life, stepping into this old maritime village is akin to stepping back in time. Its rich heritage is a unique blend of West

Hindeloopen, Fishing Village in Friesland



Source: INTREGUE Photography/Shutterstock

Alexander Tolstykh - Vincent Van Gogh Museum - Interior view



Frisian, English, Danish and Norwegian culture. Its old and narrow alleyways, canals and wooden bridges are a delight for the wanderlust. Rooftop restaurants located on the waterfront, offer a choice of haute cuisine - from traditional Dutch to international dishes.

A fairly common sight in the rural part of Holland is the windmill. A 12th

century creation, today there are over 1000s of them. The Windmills have different functions. Some of them grind grains or saw wood. You can also spend a night in one of these windmills, which are furnished to provide bed and breakfast. Many windmills continuously drain water from polders (tract of low land, reclaimed from the sea and

protected by dikes). As the local Dutchman says, "we have to continuously pump out water in order to keep our feet dry!" The water is pumped out from the lowlands back into the rivers so that the land could be used for farming.

Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, is a vibrant cosmopolitan city. It is where all the action is centered.

It is famous for its canals, neat and prim houses, beer joints and much more.

In one of the back streets of Amsterdam, there is an old popular Gin tasting joint. Gin was invented in the Netherlands and is known as Jenever in Dutch. A wide variety of Gins can be had here; the alcohol content is as high as 20%. To spill Gin is considered a sin. So

be heedful of how you handle this intoxicant!

The Red Light area is also popular among the tourists, but not with the locals. There is also a new museum for prostitution. Almost every second shop

is a pub here. The predominant color at night is red. There is an ambience of pseudo gaiety about this place. The stores sell hardcore videos, magazines and sex toys.

Amsterdam also boasts of having the

Traditional Dutch Old Houses and Bridges, Amsterdam



Amsterdam



smallest house in Europe. It is a three-storied building with a façade length of 2 meters and depth 6 meters. As you walk along the streets of Amsterdam, the narrow facade of the houses would strike you as monotonous. Almost all houses facing the canal are similar in structure and quite narrow in length of its facade. This is because back in the 16th century,

one of the criteria for levying taxes on citizens was based on the width of their houses. Narrower the house, the less tax you pay to the government. There is a remarkable semblance in the people's aversion to pay taxes the world over, regardless of era!

A museum that perennially resounds with a large number of footfalls is the

Van Gogh museum. Vincent Willem van Gogh was one of the most famous post-impressionist painters from the Netherlands. Sadly, his fame came only posthumously. The best time to visit this place is on a Friday evening, when there are live DJs, art shows and alcohol to imbibe.

Then of course there is the house of

Anne Frank, now a biographical museum in the heart of Amsterdam. Highly popular, the tickets are sold 2 months in advance. The red-checked diary of Anne Frank is on display.

It is difficult to pinpoint any particular place in the Netherland that takes precedence in beauty, color or

vibrancy. Whether you are having lunch on a floating platform moored to a canal or watching the distant silhouette of a windmill across an expanse of lake, in the magical hours before the sunset, is

an experience that is simply unforgettable. These are vignettes to be tucked away in the deep recesses of your mind to be enjoyed vicariously on a cold winter day! ☺



HIDDEN HERITAGE GEMS IN GUJARAT

On world heritage day 18th April, 2021,
we look at some heritage sites that
are still lesser-known to tourists.

Roda

Roda is an example of architectural gems at an isolated site, rarely visited by tourists. The complex has seven temples but only five are extant and one is completely demolished but for the plinth. These temples were built in the seventh to ninth century period, making them among the oldest in northern Gujarat. As you enter the complex, you can see the shikharas,

pyramid-like temple towers, which are typical of the medieval temples in Western India, over square sanctums. Two Shiva temples are situated along Ladhushah Kund, a tank with small shrines at its corners. The Navagraha Temple is dedicated to the nine planets, symbolically represented along the sanctuary's door. The temple walls are decorated with images of apsaras, deities and mythical beings. The Pakshi Mandir or Bird Temple is among the unusual architectural sights at Roda.

Travel information: From Ahmedabad, drive to Himmatnagar from where you turn on the Hathrol Road which leads to Roda.

HOMESTAY OPTIONS

Dowlat Villas Palace

Dowlat Villas Palace Road,
Mahavirnagar, Himmatnagar

Contact: +91 9825500306/(02772)-233463

Dowlat Villas Palace - The Heritage

Dowlat Villas Palace, Himmatnagar

Contact: +91-9824301049/(02772)-234969



Shiv Temple



Shiv Temple



Navlakha Temple

Gems in The Barda Hills



Navlakha Temple

Ghumli is a remote site in the midst of green scrubby hills. The 12th century Sun Temple called Naulakha

Mandir is an intricately carved base of the shikhara, two storey mandapa and a fine stone platform. A short distance



Navlakha Temple

from here is the Vikia Vav, a 12th century stepwell about 60m long and 4.5m wide. The highlight of the stepwell is the magnificent entrance pavilions at three places. Ghumli also has the ruins of a Jain temple.

Continue from Ghumli to Gop, which is an example of the early free-standing architecture of Gujarat dated from around the sixth century. As much of it is in ruins, the remaining central structure looks like a tower with the wedge-shaped roof called phamsana consisting of two sloping rectilinear structures which is probably the first known example in India of this roofing design. The temple has horse-shore shaped arches called chaityas or gavaksas. Bileshwar is another site on the same trail with a seventh century Maitreya Temple which is still an active shrine.

Travel information: From Dwarka, Porbandar or Jamnagar, you can drive to these sites.

HOMESTAY OPTIONS

Mr. Kirtikumar Chandrakant Dave

2nd Street, Chitrakoot Siddhavatika Society, Siddhanath Mahadev Road, Dwarka-361335.

Contact: 9427225810

Mr. Chhaganbhai Velajibhai Chudasma

Aashirvad Bhavan, Opp. Shri Raam Temple Shri Raam Bazar, Purv Darwaja Bahar, Dwarka-361335.

Contact: 9427207646

Mr. Nitin Gordhandas Dhanak

Survey No.713 to 720, Gurukrupa Kharva Sheri, Javahar Road, Opp. Sridarshan Hotel, Dwarka.

Contact: 9879743326

Mrs. Kiranben Rameshbhai Mandora

Roodra Bhavan, Jiva Sutharni Gali, Opp. Modi Building, Dwarka-361335. Contact: 9904221772

Mrs. Jayotiben Vinodbhai Chauhan

Shankrachary Nagar Upavan, Siddhavatika Society, Sahjanand Bunglow, Dwarka. Contact: 9824254684

Gop Temple



Tera Fort



The Fortified Village of Tera

Near the northwest tip 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. The importance of this village is ratified by the mighty fort and walls





Mosque at Tera

built to protect it from invaders.

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 Mahmudh Shah Pir attract many devotees to this complex.

The village road continues to the Jain derasar, 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.

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. Rainwater was channelised to Chhatrasar lake, with solid manmade embankments to harness the water without being impacted by erosion. The overflow was filtered through a weir to Surarasar lake and from there any excess water would reach the third lake and finally Tera River. Each of the three lakes was allotted different uses – bathing, drinking and watering livestock.

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. It has tall and thick walls, and inside are residential buildings including one which has Ramalila

frescoes on four walls of the bed-chamber depicting scenes from the life of Rama in the Kutchi folk painting and drama style. Gaguba or Hamirji, it is said, would awaken to see the auspicious scene of Rama's birth and then follow the Ramayana in chronological order with his eyes. At the lake end of the fort is the Raja-Rani Seat, a baradari or pavilion. A viewing spot has been built for visitors to see the lakes and the fort.

Continuing along Chattrasarlake, visitors can enter Ratanbai's Samadhi. Ratanbai from a prominent Khoja family of Bhadli, a nearby village, renounced worldly life after losing her son and became a mystic poetess. Her verse, “as a jogan, I left to marry jagida, the almighty, and received the hills and the sea as mahr”, have led to people comparing her kafis with the bhajans of Mirabai. The ashram she set up on invitation from Gaguba also has the Samadhi of her guru, Bhakarsha.

From the Samadhi, the path continues to the chhatardi, where there are sandstone cenotaphs and memorial



Tera Temple

stones, one of them has a millennia old inscription, a few of which have been restored, before reaching the Selorstepwell, believed to be about 450

year old.
Travel information: From Bhuj, it is a drive of about two-and-a-half hours to Tera village.

HOMESTAY OPTIONS

Mr. Gulabi Ismailbhai Pathan
Desert King, At Vadali-Hodka,
Po. Dumado Ta. Bhuj,
Kutch-370510.
Contact: 9408528545

Mr. Vikramsingh Mohansingh Sodha
Village Godhiyar, Po. Bhimsar Than,
Ta. Nakhatrana, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9725339185

Mr. Kanaji Devrajibhai Marvada
Rann Bhoomi, Po. Hodka,
(Bunny) Ta. Bhuj, Dist.
Kutch- 370510
Contact: 9426969495

Mr. Jehan Pestonji Bhujwala
The Bhuj House,
Opp. Camp Police Chowki,
Camp Area, Po. Bhuj, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 7567283710

Mr.Narendra Veljibhai Dabhi
Plot No. C-161, "Akshar Brahma",
PramukhSwami Nagar,
Opp. Sheri No.-6, Mundra Relocation
Site, Bhuj, Kutch-370001.
Contact: 9374343178

Mr.Bharatbhai Ajitbhai Kapadi
Epicenter Homestay,
Po. Lodai, Ta. Bhuj, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9824503309, 9925313696

Miss. Gayatri Ramkumar Jat
Jat House, 11 Sanskar Nagar,
Bhuj, Kutch.
Contact: 9428294008

Mr. Sau Ismailbhai Pathan
House No.68, Po. Vadali-Hodka,
Ta. Bhuj, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9427224914

Mr. Ramabhai Alabhai Marvada
House No.217, Po. Gorewali, Ta. Bhuj,
Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9427567942

Mr. Suresh Dadubhai Yadav
Morden House, Opp. Old KutchMitra
press, Camp Area, Bhuj, Kutch-370001.
Contact: 9408725005

Mr. Dipakbhai Prabhulal Soni
301-2, Kalyan Complex,
Jain Dharmshala Road,
Dhawal Nagar-2, Po. Mandvi, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9879188904

Mrs. Vimalaben Vrujalal Furiya
67/A, Vruj Villa, Bhanushali Nagar,
Nr. Karmabhumi Apt.,
Mundra Road, Po. Bhuj, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: 9820066210, 9757440222

Mr. Govindbhai Bhikhabhai Vaniya
Dhawal Farm, Survey No.751/1,
Po.Maay, Ta. Bhachau, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: +91 98255 12122

Mr. Amratbhai Rugnathbhai Patel
Plan No.13/A, Sahjanand Nagar,
Po. Kukama, Ta. Bhuj,
Dist. Kutch-370105.
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Mrs. Nishaben Dipakbhai Soni
Dhawal Nagar-2, Plot No.15,
Sundarvan, S. T. Road, Po.
Mandvi, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: +91 98791 88904

Mr. Jugalkishor Tulsiramabhai Tiwari
CEDO-Homestay,
Survey No.235 P,
13 Umiya Nagar, Po. Moti Virani,
Ta. Nakhatrana, Dist. Kutch.
Contact: +91 98252 48135



Munsar Tank

Tucked away near the walled town of Viramgam, the Munsar Tank is another of the architectural gems that few bother to visit. The Munsar Tank or Manasarovar Talao is believed to have been constructed by Minal Devi, Solanki Rajput queen, in the 11th century. The importance of water is highlighted by the religious sculpture at each stepwell (vav), kund (pond) and talao (lake) built during the Solanki Rajput periods. On the margins of this lake too, miniature temples were built with shikaras or towers in the early Solanki or Chalukyan style profusely decorated with figural and foliate motifs. About 360 survived out of the total number, which was around 520. Most of them are Shiva shrines but there are also Vaishnava shrines. Images of Shiva's manifestation can be seen on the temples. There are two larger twin temples in the middle of the southern bank of the lake.

Travel information: From Ahmedabad, you can drive to the tank or take a train to Viramgam.

HOMESTAY OPTIONS

Mr. Jagadip Arvindkumar Mehta

Heritage House in Ahmedabad,
1870/1871 Moto Sutharvado,
Nr. Vanita Vishram School,
Khadiya, Ahmedabad-01
Contact: 9825310315

Mrs. Mitaben Dipeshkumar Garg

73, Palak Apartment, Ishwar Bhuvan
Road, Opp. Memnagar Fire Station,
Navrangpura, Ahmedabad - 380009
Contact: 9913620593, 8866500666

Mr. Ashokbhai Ratilal Jani

Rejoice, E-503, Krishna Residency,
Nr. Krishna Hospital,
Ghuma, Ta. Daskroi.

Contact: 9824406089, 9824934483

Mr. Sanjaybhai Jayantilal Shah

Aalishan 1, Mona Park Society,
Vastrapur Railway Station Road,
Vejalpur, Ahmedabad -380051.

Contact: 9909920700,
9925065079

Mr. KamleshkumarJayantilal Desai

Sneh World, B-13, Sentossa Greenland,
Nr. Science city Cross Roads,
S. P. Ring Road, Bhadaj-382721

Contact: 9904014440, 9904004441/7,
9227194448

Mr. Manharsinhji Mulrajsinhji Chudasama

Vagad Retreat, Darbargadh, Po.Vagad,
Ta.Dhandhuka, Dist.Ahmedabad-382245

Contact: 9712900197, 9879544888,
9727744456, 02713-229180



Carving at Bavka Temple

The Shiva Temple at Bavka

Built during the rule of Bhimadev, the last of the Chalukyan Solanki dynastic rulers of Gujarat, this temple is an example of Māru-Gurjara architecture. Though largely ruined, it stands out for its fine sandstone architecture. The outer walls and the door of sanctum are filled with carvings of deities and apsaras (celestial maidens). The intricately carved erotic sculpture has given it the title, Khajuraho of Gujarat. 📌

HOMESTAY OPTIONS

Mrs. Urvashidevi Jaydipsinh Maharaul /

Ms. Ambika Kumari

Raj Mahal,
Po. Devgadhi Bariya,
Dist. Dahod.
Contact: +91 98795 09113



Carving at Bavka Temple



MARITIME TRAILS IN SAURASHTRA

Located on the west coast of India with a long coastline open to the sea, Saurashtra or Kathiawad has a maritime heritage spanning more than 4000 years. Marine archaeological excavations at Lothal and other sites have brought to light much information about Gujarat's maritime past dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization. We look at some of the places of special importance for a maritime heritage enthusiast in Saurashtra.



Chowpatty Porbandar

VISIT THE ANCIENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PORT OF LOTHAL



Lothal

Lothal Museum



From 2600-1900BC, the Indus Valley Civilization, which is also called the Harappan Civilization, was at the zenith of its maturity as a sophisticated and technologically advanced urban culture. One of the most advanced ports was Lothal.

Start your exploration of Lothal at the Archaeological Museum, which exhibits antiquities suggesting trade links with Egypt, Mesopotamia, Bahrain

and other distant lands. The plans and visual representations at the museum offer an insight into the town planning of this urban centre and port. You can see some fine pieces of ceramics, metalwork and beads made at the site. Here you can see objects made from bronze, copper, stone, chert, shell and bone. The museum showcases the uniformity of weights and measures used by the Harappans - bricks were in a

perfect ratio, while weights were based on units of .05, 0.1, 1.2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500, with each unit weighing approximately 28 gms, similar to the English ounce or Greek uncia, and smaller objects were weighed in similar ratios with the units of 0.871. According to the Archaeological Survey of India, Lothal had another series of weights conforming to the Heavy Assyrian standard for international trade.

DISPLAYS AT LOTHAL MUSEUM



Terracotta Seals



Hunting Arrows



Terracotta Bead garland



Ancient objects



Terracotta Toys



Lothal (Artist Impression)

The museum also displays seals and toys that reflect trade with the Persian Gulf and African ports. Principal exports were beads, ivory and shells. Key exhibits at the museum include a gold necklace, a copper figure, micro-beads, steatite and terracotta seals with motifs and inscriptions, metal fish hooks, ornaments like bangles, a superb perforated jar, a jar painted with a story of the crow and the fox, a terracotta bull, horse, the model of a boat, objects used for games and a shell used as a compass for navigation. Two styles of pottery have been discovered in Lothal-the stud handled convex bowl and the small flaring rimmed jar. There is an artist's impression here of Lothal as it must have looked at the peak of its trade and also a model of the excavated site.

The development of Lothal as a trade centre probably stemmed from its sheltered harbor by the Bhugavo River and the Gulf of Khambhat, the suitability

of the soil of this region called Bhal for growing grains and cotton, and the bead-making industry that was already thriving in the Khambatt coastal region. As you enter the excavated area, you can see the tank, which several archaeologists have opined was the world's first dry dockyard. Plagued by floods in Sindh and realizing the dangers of the large tides in the Gulf of Cambay, the Harappans are said to have built this dock inland with a canal connecting to the estuary of river Sabarmati, which has since changed course marginally. Spanning an area, 37 meters from east to west and nearly 22 meters from north to south, the dock was perhaps the greatest work of maritime architecture of its time. This showed a thorough study of tides, hydraulics and the effect of sea water on bricks. According to the impression in the museum, ships could sluice into the northern end of the dock by an inlet channel connected to the

estuary of the River Sabarmati during high tide, and the lock gates were closed so the water level would rise sufficiently for them to float. An inlet channel allowed excess water to escape, while other inlets prevented siltation of the tank and erosion of the banks. After the ships had loaded or unloaded its cargo, the gates were opened, for them to return to the sea. The dimensions of the tank show that it could be a dock that could handle 60 ships of 30 tons each or vice versa.

WHERE TO STAY

Lothal is 78km from Ahmedabad. You can stay at Toran Gandhi Ashram, Opp, Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad - 380027
Contact details: Phone : +91 79-27559342, +91 79-27559342
Email: hoteltorangh@gujarattourism.com
Website: <http://booking.gujarattourism.com/>

EXPLORE THE CREEK OF PORBANDAR



Port, Porbandar



Ship Building

Porbandar has a long history as a trading centre on the west coast of the Kathiawar peninsula. It has more than 1000 years of history as a port. The princely state ruled by the Jethwas prospered because of the wealth of the ports of the Porbandar coast. This was also the city of Narottam Morarjee, who was born on 2 April 1877 at Porbandar. He joined hands with Walchand Hirachand and Kilachand Devchand to finance and establish The Scindia Steam

Navigation Company Ltd., which was founded on 27 March 1919. Narottam Morarjee is considered the father of Indian shipping industry as his steamer unfurled the Indian flag in the shipping industry when it travelled to the United Kingdom in 1919.

Porbandar was strategically situated south of the ports of Nawanagar and Kutch state, and north of Veraval in Junagadh state, and historically has traded with Arabian Gulf and African

countries. The creamy coloured stone of Porbandar had been a major export in days gone by and has been used in many of the Victorian period buildings of Bombay and Karachi. The skilled artisans of Porbandar were experts at making dhows by hand, and gave birth to an industry of building ocean going vessels. Today, Porbandar is well known for its fishing, cement, refinery and other industries, and an all-weather port, with direct berthing facilities up to



Ship Building



Huzoor Palace

50,000 DWT ships.

Drive around the creek to watch artisans at work on building dhows and boats. You will also be rewarded by the sight of flamingos and other birds. Four ancient jetties locally known as Juna Dhakka have been found along the creeks.

Along Porbandar's Chowpatty, a coastal boulevard you can see many limestone buildings like palaces, old Parsee mansions and civic structures. The Daria Rajmahal of Porbandar was largely built during the reign of Maharana Bhav Sinhji, around 1900AD.

This impressive sea facing palace is now a college for aspiring teachers. The palace is entered through a Gothic style arched door. It is crowned by a tall tower that looks out to the Arabian Sea. The wings of the palace surround an open paved courtyard with fountains and a garden. Around the courtyard the arches bear Arabesque, European and Indian decorations. The upper stories have slender columns with ornate Corinthian capitals. Old descriptions of the palace talk about the Durbar Hall, which once had chandeliers and crystal balls that

gave the hall a dazzling effect, but now the once opulent halls and rooms have become classrooms, offices, library and assembly rooms. The Huzoor Palace is set along the beach near Chowpatty.

WHERE TO STAY

Toran Tourist Bungalow,
Chowpatty, Porbandar 360575
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Email : toranhotelporbandar@gujarattourism.com
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DISCOVER INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF OKHAMANDAL



Bet Dwarka island from Okha Port



Tata Chemicals Ltd - Mithapur Plant

Okha is a historical port and finds many references in history when there was much trade with the Middle-East. Today, the port is a hub for activities for the Indian Navy, Indian Coastguard, Indian Customs and Gujarat marine police.

This port has provided an impetus for many industries. Lignite from Indonesia for the thermal power stations of Gujarat and for the soda ash plant of Tata Chemicals lands at Okha,

and this was a centre for an automobile-assembly plant. Fishing and salt gathering provide much livelihood here. Tourism also thrives as ferries to Bet Dwarka begin from Okha's jetties.

Okha was an important port of the Baroda Princely State. The Okha Salt Works faced many problems because foreign imports were allowed. J.R.D. Tata took over the salt works from the Maharaja who felt that Tata could successfully establish the inorganic

chemical complex envisioned by Kapilram looking into their success in the steel industry. Thus, Tata Chemicals Limited (TCL) was incorporated on January 23 1939. A bromine plant was established in 1942 at the site, which was called Mithapur or City of Salt. Setting up a Soda Ash plant was not easy as there was virtually no infrastructure at Mithapur and World War-2 compounded the problem.

In 1943, Tata Chemicals Ltd.



Okha Port



Okha Ferry Boat



Museum, Mithapur Plant



Tata Salt

commenced production of Caustic Soda, Liquid Chlorine, Bleaching Powder, Hydrochloric Acid and Zinc Chloride, and a year later the Soda Ash plant started production. The lease agreement between the Baroda State and the company signed on March 16, 1944, gave the latter rights to manufacture salt and marine minerals, using limestone and other raw materials of those areas in the Kathiawad peninsula that fell in the purview of the Maharaja of Baroda. As there was no infrastructure in this region, Tata established its auxiliary

power plant in 1943 and built medical facilities at Mithapur in 1946. Tata added Sodium Bicarbonate to its manufacturing portfolio in 1949 and doubled its Soda Ash capacity to 100 tons per day in 1952-3. Since then the company has expanded its manufacturing facilities at Mithapur considerably and diversified into the agricultural chemicals sector with a strong presence in crop nutrients like urea and phosphatic fertilizers, and crop protection products. It became a pioneer in branded consumer salt production in India.

The Mithapur plant has a museum with historical photographs. Also, visit the Okhai centre where Bhopa Rabari women and other artisans of the area work on embroidery, appliqué and other handwork. ¹⁰

WHERE TO STAY

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Near Government Circuit House,
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