

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

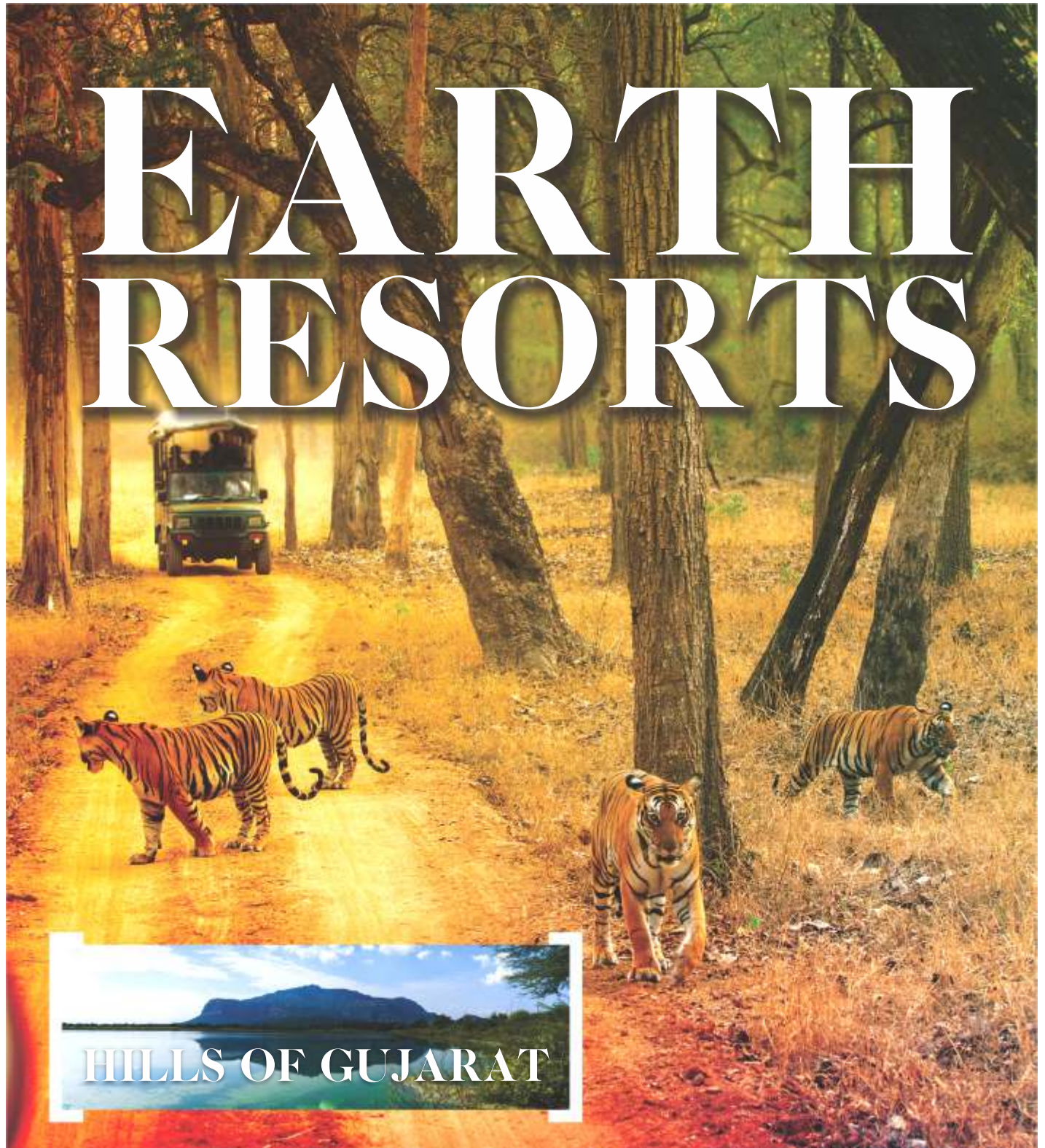
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A high-end monthly magazine

EARTH RESORTS



HILLS OF GUJARAT

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PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

May 2021

COME WHAT 'MAY'

We know this is not the best time to travel, but we have found a way to take you to the places. In this pandemic times when everything around is so off-putting, nature can give you the much-needed refreshing perspective on life.

No, we are not talking about destinations with natural surroundings only. There are destinations that can give you glimpses of nature's beauty along with offering you the option of exclusive accommodations that are created using local materials and handicrafts. Dreaming about your next vacation already?

If all you can think of is a hill station or water body to beat the summer heat, we take you to six such unique destinations. Visualize the stunning weather of Auli, feel the adrenaline rush at Mukhteshwar or walk through the India's very own Scotland - Shillong.

Read on!

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EARTH RESORTS

We look at some resorts that have used local materials and handicrafts in their construction, without compromising on luxury.



SPICE VILLAGE, THEKKADY, KERALA

CGH Earth's Spice Village opened in 1991 with cottages set among spice and organic vegetable gardens. Keeping with the location near Periyar Tiger Reserve and Mannan tribal villages, the cottages are thatched with elephant grass – locally grown tall grasses that are otherwise burnt by the forest

officials to prevent forest fire. The interiors are comfortable and luxurious in an understated manner, the furniture is made from wood recovered by recycling old wooden crates bought from the ports, the floor coverings are coir mats, and the notepads in the room are made from paper handmade from

kitchen waste, old fabrics and waste paper. The resort menu features local specialties made using ingredients sourced from within a 50-mile radius of the property. Solar power accounts for much of the energy needs of the resort. Walk around the property to see the various spices and other plants.







KABINI EVOLVE BACK, BEERAMBALLY, KARNATAKA

Swimming in the infinity edge pool of the Kabini Evolve Back Resort, you feel part of the landscape as riverside grasses roll from the pool's deck to the water's edge making the resort look contiguous with the Kabini.

As you approach the resort from Mysore, Kabini Orange County looks like a tribal village with its mud-plastered enclosing wall and traditional entrance, and thatched roofs of the low-rise

buildings inside. From the longhouse-like reception and facilities area, a stone paved pathway leads to the cottages, which are clustered together in an enclosure rather like a tribal hamlet. The cottages have been designed to look like tribal huts with mud-and-dung plaster, niches that house lanterns, cane doors framed by Eucalyptus poles and exposed thatched roofs, but the interiors are plush and well-facilitated.

You can choose from Pool Huts, which have large dining, drawing and bedroom areas, attached baths with an open courtyard, and a private pool, or the Jacuzzi Huts with a personal open-to-sky Jacuzzi. Head from here for the Honeycomb, a restaurant named for the honey gathering tribal people, which has fine views of the river and offers regional cuisine of Karnataka including some local dishes of the Kurumba tribe. The

resort uses sewage water and organic solid waste for gardening, foam flow faucets reduce water consumption, wind turbines generate a considerable share of the power requirements of the resort, and guests are encouraged to drink water pumped from a reverse osmosis plant to each room rather than bottled water to prevent plastic generation. Kadu Kuruba tribal dance performances are held regularly for guests at the resort.



VANA, DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

Vana is a wellness retreat with a Platinum rating LEED review. Set in sal forests near Dehradun, this property has used sustainable materials where possible, including bamboo flooring, FSC certified wood and certified organic linen.



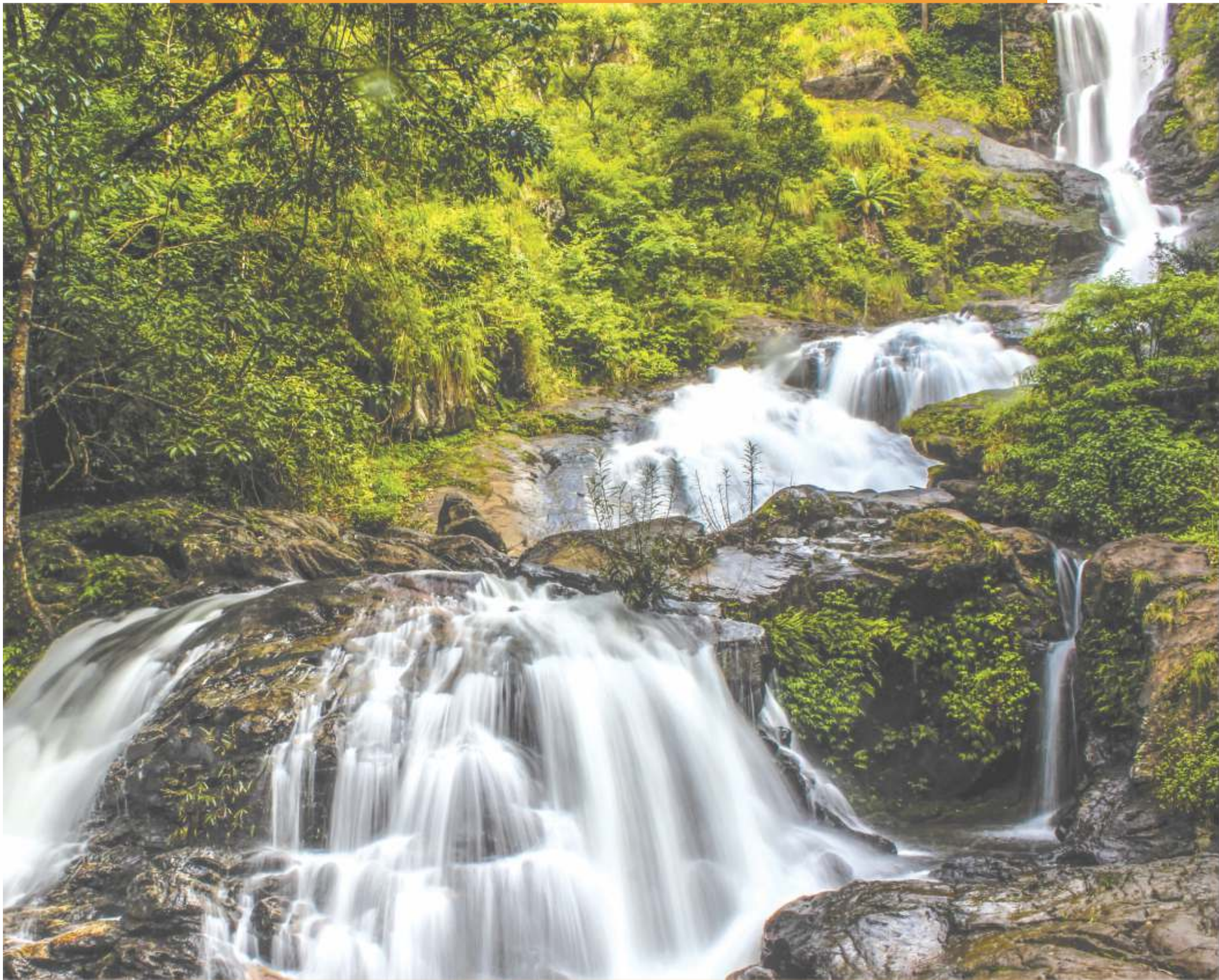


VIVANTA BY TAJ MADIKERI, KARNATAKA

Vivanta by Taj at Madikeri, Coorg has an eco-friendly minimalist design with a focus on sustainable materials. Though it is set in rainforests, all the 66 rooms and cottage-style villas, as well as roads, were constructed in tree-free areas using

compressed bricks made on-site from displaced soil. The cottages are painted with mud paints made on-site and decorated by native artisans. The roof tiles are handcrafted from recycled tiles from dismantled homes. All furniture was handcrafted on-site.

Old recycled wood was used extensively in Spa and other areas. Natural river stones are used throughout the property. Great care was taken to preserve 250 species of local flora, and the grounds are home to a strawberry farm.





TAJ MAHUA KOTHI, BANDHAVGARH NATIONAL PARK, MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh is justly known as the Tiger State of the World, and its tiger reserves like Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Panna and Pench rarely disappoint visitors looking for the magnificent big cat.

One of the finest places to stay here is Taj Mahua Kothi, located about 20 minutes from the entrance to Bandhavgarh National Park, which has one of the highest tiger densities. Spread across 40 acres, the resort gets its name from the mahua tree which abounds in the complex and the

restored traditional haveli-like house called a 'kothi', which has most of the common guest facility areas. The cottages are called 'kutiyas' after the huts of Madhya Pradesh and built in a tribal architectural style. The mud-walled huts belie the opulent furnished bedroom within, with en-suite bathrooms featuring twin hand basins, indoor shower, bath and state-of-the-art fixtures. The wooden shutters, roughly hewn wooden beams and terracotta roof tiles within do lend a rustic, tribal touch of the

interiors.

You can spend time in the 'kothi', which has high ceilinged rooms with terracotta floor tiles, fireplaces for the winter, traditional window-side seats, and an enormous veranda that runs the length of the building offering views of the grounds by day and the star-lit skies at night. At the entrance is an open kitchen where you can watch the cooking and food preparation. The swimming pool set among shady trees adds to the jungle ambience.





WHITE RANN RESORT, KUTCH

In the Dhordo village of Kutch district, White Rann Resort is a Gujarat Tourism property operated and managed during the Rann Utsav festival in the Resort. The standout feature of this property is that the famous 'bhungas' of Kutch. Bhungas, circular mud huts, are an excellent response to the climatic and geological conditions of Kutch. The round walls of the bhungas are better

suited to withstand the seismic activities of the Kutch region. The living spaces inside the bhungas are insulated by thick walls, with the thatch roofs having an overhang to shade the walls. The circular shape of the living space also ensures better airflow and the interior walls are covered with white clay and intricate mirror inlay work to reflect the light that comes in through small

windows. The clay floors rise to create storage spaces. The rammed earth or mud-and-dung packed brick structures of the bhungas are examples of the indigenous building styles that are a response to the environmental conditions of the region. Today, this form of architecture is rapidly disappearing and giving way to concrete houses.





WOODS AT SASAN, GIR, GUJARAT

Though this is one of the most luxurious resorts around the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary, Woods has been built using local materials like the stone walls plastered with lime and other materials that are used in the hot sunny areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan to regulate the temperatures of the interiors, stone floors and walls, indigenous techniques like natural lime plaster, reusable metal structures acquired near the region,



wood salvaged from the ship breaking yard at Alang recycled into furniture and interior finishes of hand-carved wood, and local handicrafts and antiques for decoration, minimizing the use of synthetic materials and concrete. The lightweight structures and floating ceilings of the different residential buildings, the Terracotta restaurant and the reception building are made with thermally and acoustically insulated



corrugated metal sheets, most of it recycled materials. As part of the biophilic design approach, a community development manager was hired to work with local people on training, employment, women's empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Only a small part of the land has been used for the resort, the rest being orchards or jungle. At the entrance of Woods at Sasan is their restaurant called Swadesh decorated with wall

pieces made using the nail-and-thread techniques and rope weaving by the artisans living in villages around Sasan, a delightful collection of traditional household utensils, and mud work embellishments that connect the property with Gujarat. In keeping with the name, food here is traditional.

At the entrance of Woods at Sasan is their restaurant called Swadesh decorated with wall pieces made using the nail-and-thread techniques and

rope weaving by the artisans living in villages around Sasan, a delightful collection of traditional household utensils, and mud work embellishments that connect the property with Gujarat. In keeping with the name, food here is traditional. The head of the kitchen at Swadesh is a lady whom we call kaki, aunty in Gujarati, an elderly lady from the nearby villages. Our chefs and other team members are also encouraged to explore the local cuisine and understand



the dishes", says Maulik. At Swadesh, we enjoyed the Kathiawadi thali with oodles of fresh white butter and ghee from the Maldhari buffalo graziers whose villages and settlements called 'ness' abound in six to eight kilometre radius of the resort. For coffee, we walked to Terracotta which is their multi-cuisine restaurant that has terracotta lamps, decorative objects, pottery, macrame canvases, cane and rope fabrics, and artifacts. ■

BEAT THE HEAT!

6 PLACES WHERE
YOU CAN SPEND YOUR
SUMMER 2021 AT!

Summer is here! And, before the mercury gets rising any more, let's choose one of the six wonderful places that India has to offer in terms of magnificent sights, pleasant weather, and adventure abound - in short, the perfect summer destination!



Auli, Where The Weather Never Ceases To Astound

Auli, a popular skiing destination for both winters and summers in India, welcomes travelers from all over the world. The beautiful sprawling green pastures you see in the summertime and the snow-capped peaks you get to see in the winters, they both make for spectacular backdrops for tourists. The lovely weather, all year long, adds yet another cherry to the cake!

When in Auli, you can take the ropeway to Joshimath and enjoy a glorious panoramic view, or go trekking to Kuari Pass, Gorson, and such other incredible places. 500 km away from Delhi, you can take a road trip here with friends. The nearest airport is the Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun, 280 km far from Auli, while the nearest railway station is located in Haridwar, which is 285 km away.



Let Your Spirit Of Adventure Take Over At Mukteshwar

If you are looking for a quaint hill station that has just as many adventurous trekking trails to offer as it has lush and serene woods, then Mukteshwar is the hill station you should be packing for. Easily one of the most wonderful summer vacation spots in India, the hill station boasts of the cool Himalayan chill, making it the perfect weekend retreat for those who love mountains.

Going hiking and trekking in Mukteshwar would be a good idea, as it stands amongst the many interesting trails that the place has to offer. If doing nothing, but laying underneath the starlit sky features on your to-do list, then yet again, Mukteshwar will stand up to your expectations, presenting many places you can go camping with loved ones. Paragliding and rock climbing are some of the other amazing things you could try here. Kathgodam has the nearest railways station from the hill station, and if you prefer to fly, you'll find Pantnagar airport just 100 km from here.





Lose Yourself In The Exquisiteness Of Gangtok, Away From The Crowds

Picturesque as this place is, Gangtok is still one of the not-so-frequented tourist destinations in the country. But, it might not be such a bad thing for you! It only means that when you pay the capital city of Sikkim a visit this summer, you might not find it as crowded by people as it is by profound valleys and lush vegetation.

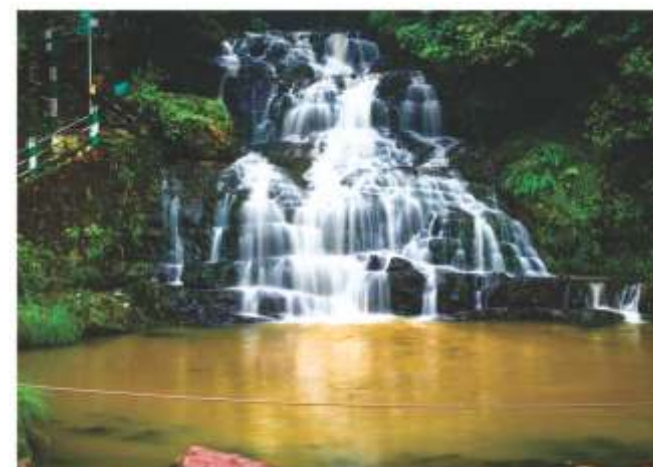
Whether it is visiting the Rumtek Monastery to get in touch with your spiritual side, or paying a visit to the magnificent wildlife species in the Gangtok Zoological Park, or be left spellbound by the alpine flora and fauna along the Indo-China Route, or trek to Lake Tsomgo - Gangtok will have you bewitched! The nearest railway station from the place is New Jalpaiguri in Siliguri, which is 148 km away. If you plan to reach Gangtok via airways then the nearest airport is 124 km away in Bagdogra, West Bengal.



India's Very Own Scotland - Shillong

Yet another gem from the magnificent north-east region of India is Shillong. Still retaining the charm and vibe from the colonial times, the panoramic landscape of Shillong vies for the most breathtaking of visions, right up there along with Switzerland. It's no surprise Shillong is also known as the Scotland of East.

Go skiing or boating or take a water scooter, when you visit Umiam Lake. Take a moment at the Elephant Falls and Nohkalikai Falls, to take in the exquisiteness of their glistening waterfalls. And, do not forget to visit the famous Living Root Bridges. If you're travelling by airways, then you can land right at Shillong Airport. For those travelling by train, Guwahati Railway Station is about 100 km away from the city. If you're planning a road trip, then Kolkata would be a good starting point, being 1100 km away.





Leave Your Car Behind As You Enter Matheran

Are you on the lookout for a much-needed break from the busy and noisy city life? Because if you are, then we have the perfect getaway for you! Matheran, famous for being the town that has banned entry for all motor vehicles, gives you a chance to glance at the astounding juxtaposition of green carpeted nature's bounty, and colonial architecture and heritage. Indian summers are truly well-spent surrounded by the refreshing landscape and the lovely weather of Matheran. Take a trek to the historical hill-fort, Raigad Fort. Also, do ride the Matheran Heritage Train. The nearest airport to Matheran is located 90 km away in Mumbai. Matheran Hill Railway is its very own narrow gauge station. A road trip from Mumbai with friends or family wouldn't be a bad idea at all!



The Magnificent Mountain Pass In The Western Ghats: Malshej Ghat



Rugged rains, mulberry orchards, and blooming grass fields spread all over; how scenic does Malshej Ghat sound! Home to quaint trekking trails, such as the one that takes to Shivneri Fort, make for a truly rejuvenating experience.

While Pimpalgaon Joga Dam is one of the best places to go bird-watching, going rock climbing at Ajoba Hill Fort or taking a trek to Harishchandragad Fort are just as interesting escapades. The nearest airport can be found at Pune, 115 km away, while Kalyan Railway Station at 85 km distance would best accommodate people travelling by train. Both Pune and Muimbai being 120 and 130 kms away from Malshej ghat, respectively, make them great cities to start a road trip from. 📍



HILLS OF GUJARAT

One of the most spectacular sights in Gujarat is the Jain complex containing more than 863 temples crowning the Shatrunjaya Hill, associated with the Jains' first tirthankara, Adinath, and said to be the site of the enlightenment of his main disciple.

JUNGLE TRAIL IN THE DANG



Saputara Hill Station



Tribal Musician, Saputara

Saputara in the Sahyadri Hills is Gujarat's only hill resort, set about 3200 ft above sea level, and has justifiably grown to become a popular weekend break for people from South Gujarat and North Maharashtra.

Getting here is most of the fun as the drive from the plains rises past the Vansda National Park and thick forested tracts of teak, semi-evergreen and evergreen flora, and a variety of bamboo. Streams flow through the rocks, cascading down steep slopes, and the lowland forests give way to bamboo, teak and flora of the higher hills. At places the ascending road passes rivers like the Ambika, where egrets and herons fish at water bodies. You could see langur monkeys frolicking on tree tops.

Approaching Saputara, the last stretch offers an incredible view down the slopes to picturesque tribal villages

on the floor of a valley. The hill resort itself is nothing very special but the surrounding forested countryside of the Dang district is simply beautiful with great views from hilly points. Like most hill resorts, Saputara too has a lake with boating facilities, popular with kids. There is also a tribal museum offering an insight into the culture of the Dang tribes. 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 centerpiece, and hills on all sides.

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 Konkani 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.

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 Varlis (also spelt Warli). Gamit believe 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. The Mahal Bardipada forests are good for bird and butterfly spotting, and abound in orchids during the monsoon. You can visit the Gira Falls for a superb view of the water cascading down about a 100 feet to a rocky pool.

3280 ft high Don hill, in Dang district located 42km east of Ahwa has religious importance besides superb scenery.

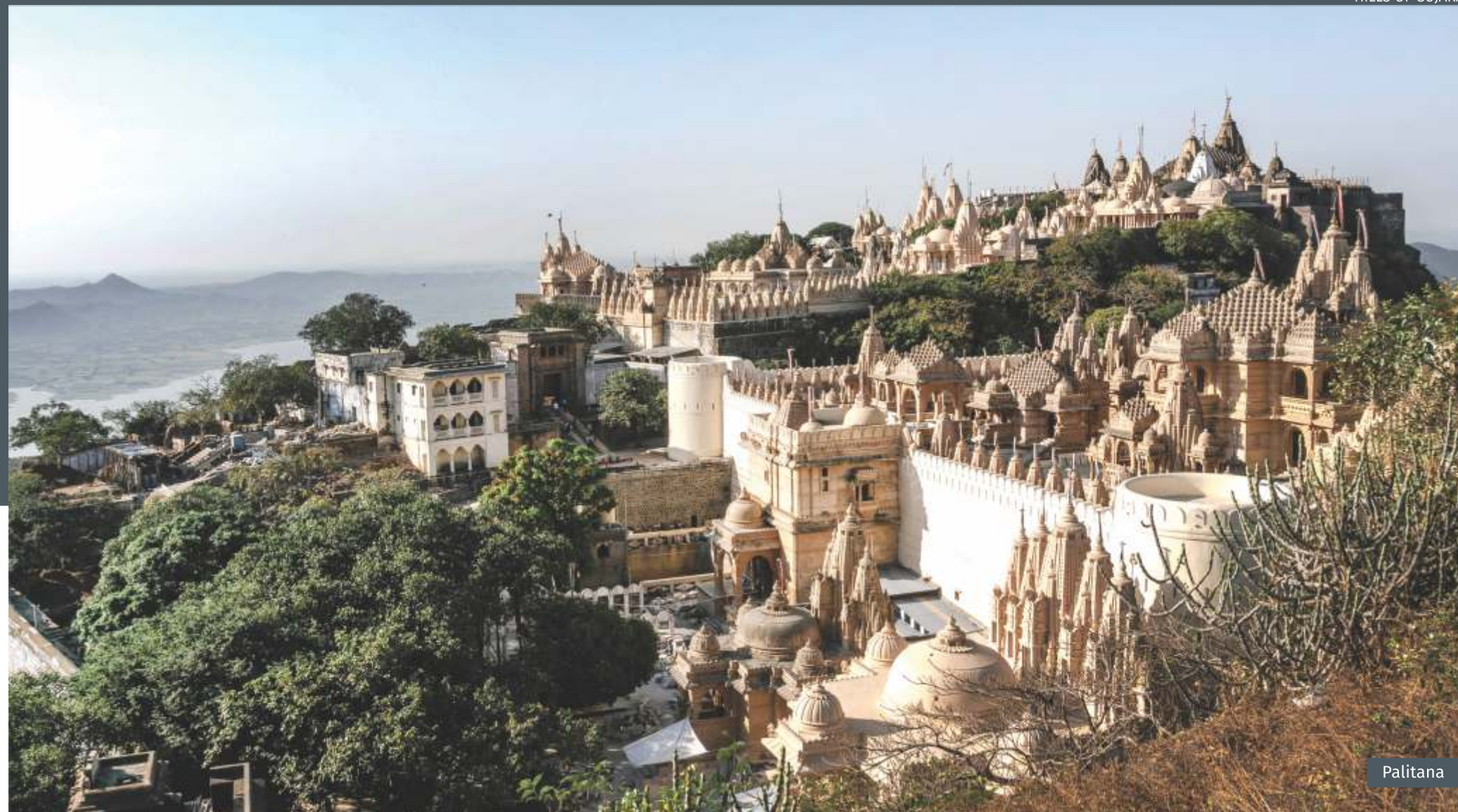
ACCOMMODATIONS

Toran Hill Resort, Saputara

SHATRUNJAYA HILL



Jain Temple, Palitana



Palitana

One of the most spectacular sights in Gujarat is the Jain complex containing more than 863 temples crowning the Shatrunjaya Hill, associated with the Jains' first tirthankara, Adinath, and said to be the site of the enlightenment of his main disciple. In consequence, the temple complex is among the most visited by Jain devotees and has an aura of devotion that matches its architectural splendour.

The complex is reached from the town of Palitana by a two hour ascent covering four km, with more than 3500 steps to be climbed, but as you get close to the summit you are rewarded by the sight of the massed silhouettes of hundreds of temple spires and domes rising against the sky. Once at the top, while you pause

for breath, you can look down upon superb views of the rolling hills and plains with the sea visible on a clear day. Though the complex dates from the 5th century, most of the remaining temples date from between the 16th and the 19th century as the earlier ones were damaged by Islamic assaults on the complex. To see even a fraction of the complex takes more than two hours but you can be selective. The temples are grouped into walled enclosures called tuks, named after the merchants who patronised them, with courtyards chequered in black-and-white marble and inner courts with temples, most of them built from marble.

The most splendid enclosure is the Khartaravasi Tuk, on a northern ridge offering a splendid view. Inside this

enclosure is the Adinath temple, built in the 1800s, whose walls are carved with devotional figures, birds, animals, apsaras, musicians and graceful dancers, and have ornate balconies with well-proportioned pavilions and walls. As you enter, look up at the hollowed interior of the conical ceilings with carvings in concentric circles emanating from a lotus blossom. The assembly hall leads to the sanctum that enshrines beautiful images. Also in this enclosure are 19th century temples like Vallabhi temple and Motisah temple, that are worth seeing. You must also visit the Vimalvasi Tuk on the southern ridge to see the Adishvasra temple, dated to the 16th century, which rises more than two storey and has a richly ornamented shikhara spire. Inside,

there is a towering mandapa inside and a sanctum that enshrines an image with crystal eyes, beautiful necklaces and a magnificent gold crown.

As the climb to the temples is best done at dawn, before it gets too hot to climb the hill, it is a good idea to arrive a day earlier and spend the night in Palitana. In the afternoon, you can visit the Jain Kala Stapitya and Vishal Jain Kala Sansthan, Jain museums in the town that exhibit miniature paintings, palm leaf manuscripts and book covers, ivory carvings, paintings on ivory, sculpture and devotional Jain figures.

ACCOMMODATION

Toran Hotel Sumeru

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MARVELS OF PAVAGADH

HILLS OF GUJARAT



Pavagadh Hill



Cable Cars, Pavagadh

Pavagadh Hill stands about 2600 feet above sea level. The hill offers spectacular views. The archaeological zone of Champaner –Pavagadh comprise a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site with an impressive variety of monuments including forts, temples, mosques, stepwells, palaces, pavilions, granaries and manmade water bodies.

From the Machi Plateau, the ropeway journey to the summit is spectacular looking out at woodlands and rock formations before reaching the station near the hilltop. Stalls serving tea and snacks are located near the station.

Devotees of the Jain and Hindu temples make the ascent on foot following a path up the hill.

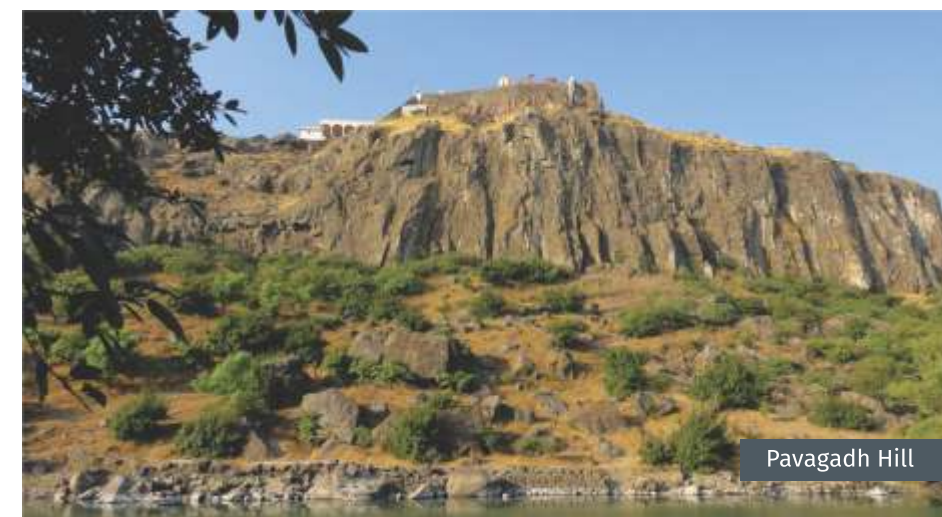
The architectural highlight of Pavagadh is the Laukalish temple amid a water body. Built in the 11th century, this temple is now largely ruined but the standing walls reflect its fine architecture and intricate carvings. From here,

you can join the pilgrims for the walks to the Kali Temple or the Jain Derasar complex. The massive Pavagadh fort has sandstone walls, bastions and jarokha balconies. There are several gates in the fortifications and the enclosed area within also have barracks and jails. Some of the other monuments are sat Manzil, Makai Kotha, the Palace of Patai Rawal with tanks, and Navlakha Kothar, There are three clusters of Jain temples - Bhavanaderi temples or Navalaka group, the second group with temples to the tirthankaras Suparshvanatha and Chandraprabha and the third group, situated on a cliff to the the south east of Pavagadh Hill near the Dudhia tank.

Champaner was the political capital of Gujarat for a few decades following its conquest by Sultan Mahmud Begada. The massive city walls with inscribed gateways still stand, encompassing the customs house, several houses,

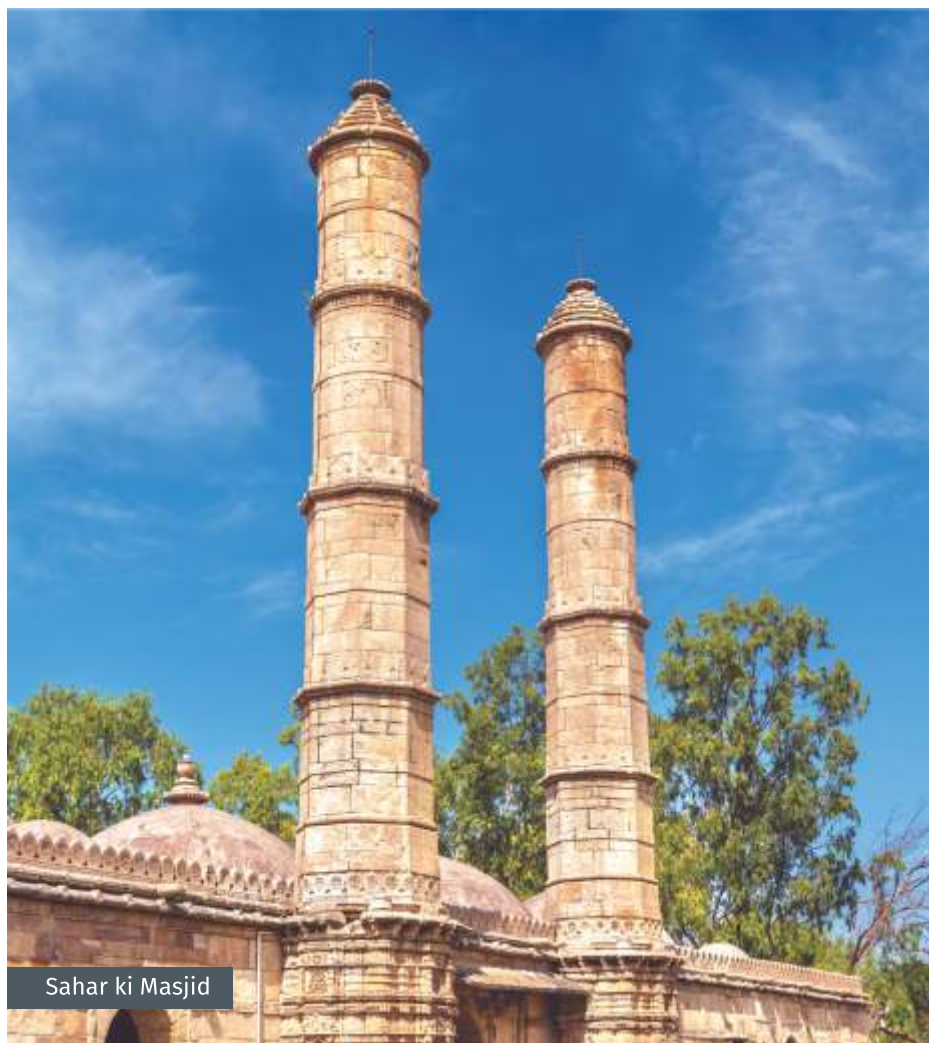
exquisite mosques and funerary monuments. The Shahr Masjid or Borah Masjid, a mosque with delicate minarets, stands within the walls. The city was superbly planned with well laid and paved streets which lead to the city centre. The relics of public parks and

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.



Pavagadh Hill

THE MOSQUES



Sahar ki Masjid



Mosque of Bahar-ud-Din-Bhar

Many mosques were built in Champaner during the time of Mahmud Begada, such as the Bawaman, Ek Minar, Jama, Khajuri, Nagina and Kevada. Some of them are architectural masterpieces in the Indo-Saracenic style of the Gujarat Sultanate. After James Burgess and Henry Cousens wrote descriptions of the Kevada, Jama, and Nagina Masjids, roads were built to reach them.

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.

About 30 minutes from Champaner, Jambughoda is a beautiful forested area

of hill tracts inhabited by leopard, antelope and flying squirrel. The forests offer good bird spotting opportunities and are good for trekking.

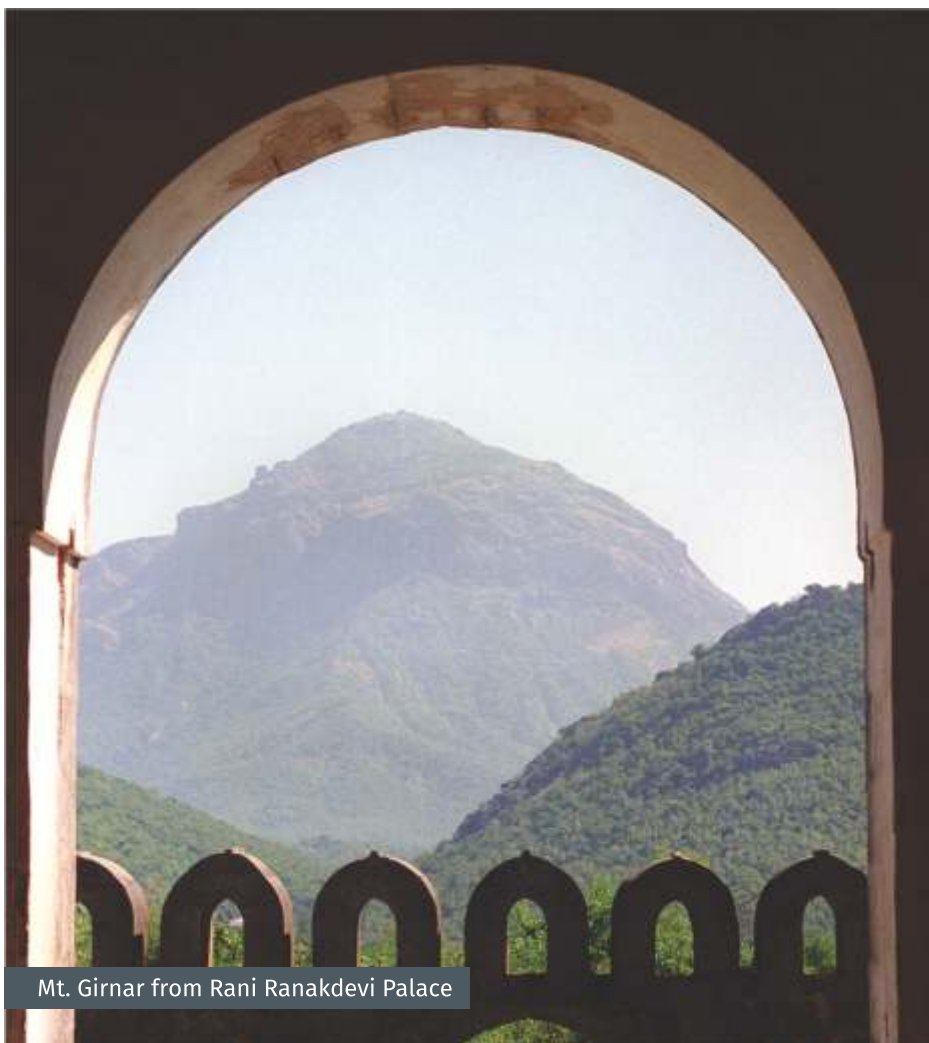
This is an interesting tribal area known for its Rathvas. The Rathva houses have ritualistic paintings called pithora. The Rathva women are very colourfully dressed and sport fine jewellery.

A part of the Jambughoda palace is now a heritage hotel called Home for Nature Lovers because of its forest views. 📍

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Toran Champaner Pavagadh

PILGRIM FOOTSTEPS AT GIRNAR



Mt. Girnar from Rani Ranakdevi Palace



The Walled Fortress of Uparkot

Rising up above Junagadh, Mount Girnar peak is Gujarat's highest standing more than 3300 ft high.

This peak has much religious importance with Jain and Hindu temples.

Girnar is among five sacred summits for Jain pilgrimage together with Palitana in Gujarat, Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, Mount Abu in Rajasthan, and Parasnath in Jharkhand. The Jain cluster here was created between 1128 and 1500. This hill owes its importance to its association with Neminath, the 22nd tirthankara.

The Neminath temple is the most notable with the tirthankar depicted as a black figure sitting in the lotus position holding a conch. Built in the 12th century, this is the largest and oldest. The Parshanath temple, built in about 1231AD, has two halls with domed ceilings on both sides of the mandapa. The platform enshrining the Mount Meru, the mythical mountain in the

cosmology of Hindus, Jains and Nuddhist, and the other sacred and mythical hills for Jains. Outside, the dual domes are decorated with mosaic. The 15th century Samprati Raja temple has fine lattice screens (jalis) with different

panels that reflect the dedicated craftsmanship of the period.

Continuing further you see other historical structures and temples. At the crest is the temple of Amba Mata, visited by couples who believe the

goddess will bless them with a child,

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Girnar, Junagadh



Jama Masjid



MUSEUM TRAIL IN GUJARAT

The Folk Art Museum is part of the cultural centre called Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan. This museum has a mock-village with the characteristic roundhouses of Kutch called bhungas showing their architectural features from the mud walls to the straw thatched roofs.



VINTAGE CAR MUSEUMS

Gujarat has some interesting collections of vintage and classic cars.

From Ahmedabad Airport it is a short drive to Auto World at Dastan, the estate of the late Pranlal Bhogilal which houses his collection of vintage and classic cars among mature trees and heritage houses. As you enter you can see the American classics pavilion with Chrysler

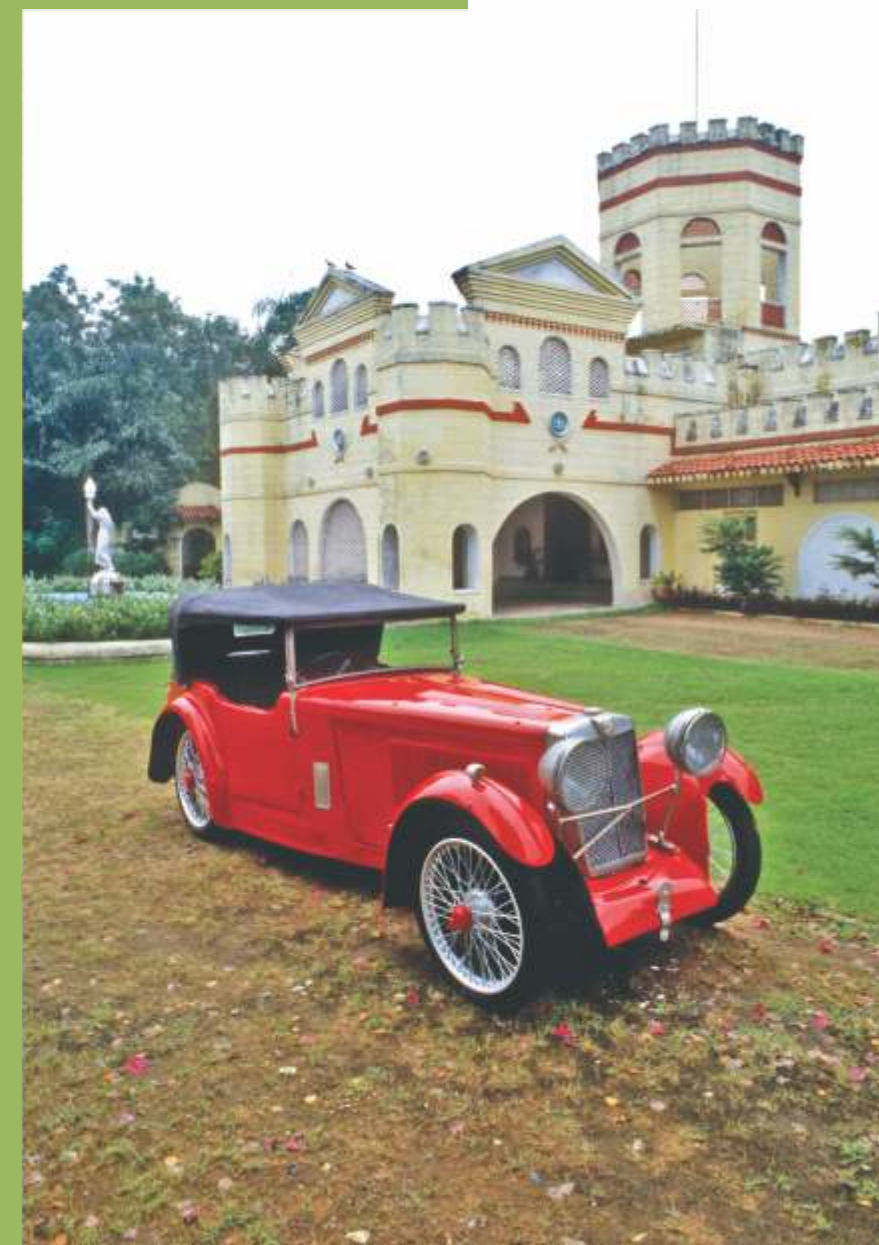
Airflow, Dodge, Plymouth, DeSotto, Ford, Buick and other cars. Further ahead, see older cars like the 1906 Mors Tourer, 1910 Ford T with original brass radiator and headlights, 1909 Fiat Tourer, 1914 Minerva Tourer which once belonged to the Maharaja of Jhabua, 1926 Lagonda 2-litre Tourer, 1906 Minerva Tourer and 1911 Daimler which once belonged to the Jam Sahib

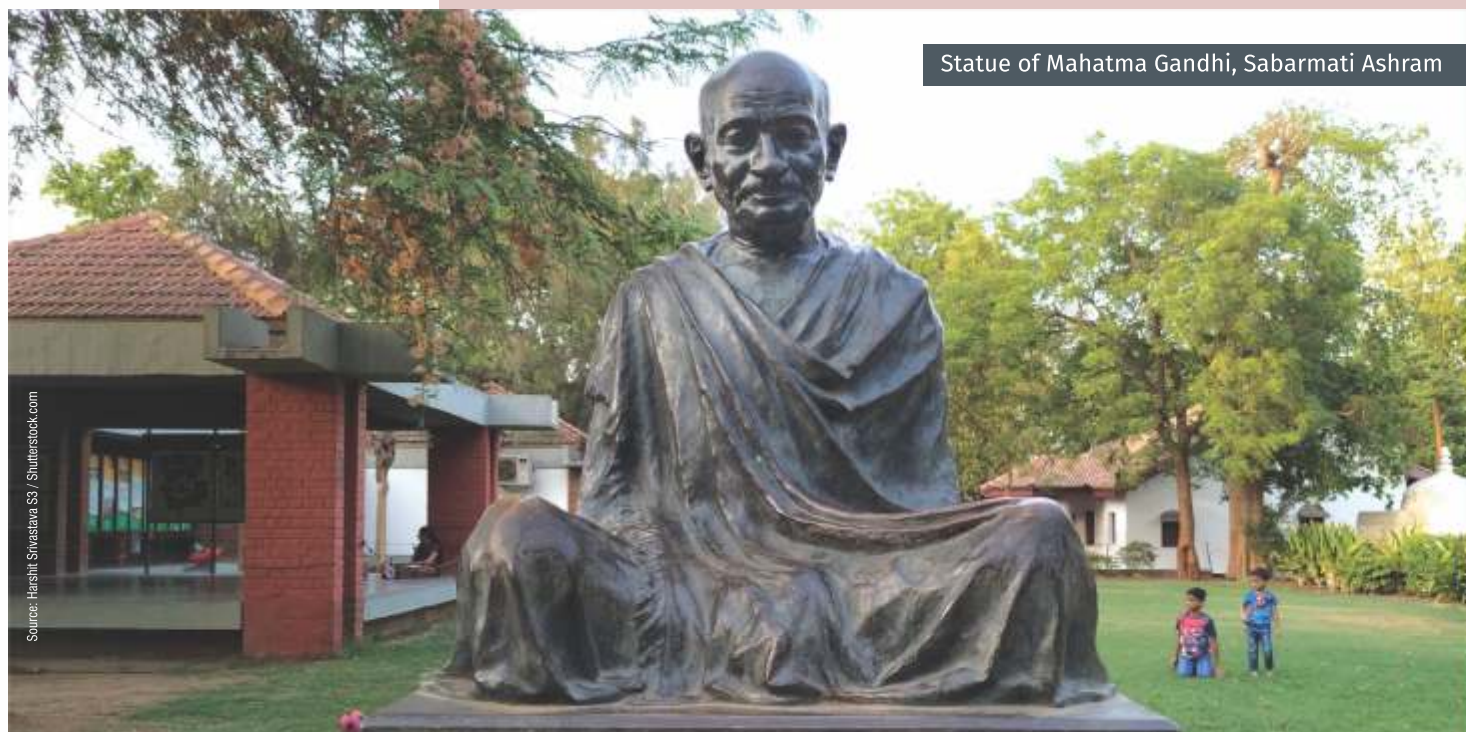
of Nawanagar (present day Jamnagar).

The jewels of the collection are the coach-built cars customised for princely states like the 1920s Hispano Suiza that was the hunting car of the Maharaja of Alwar and the Rolls Royce that was made for the Maharani's travelling in 'purdah'.

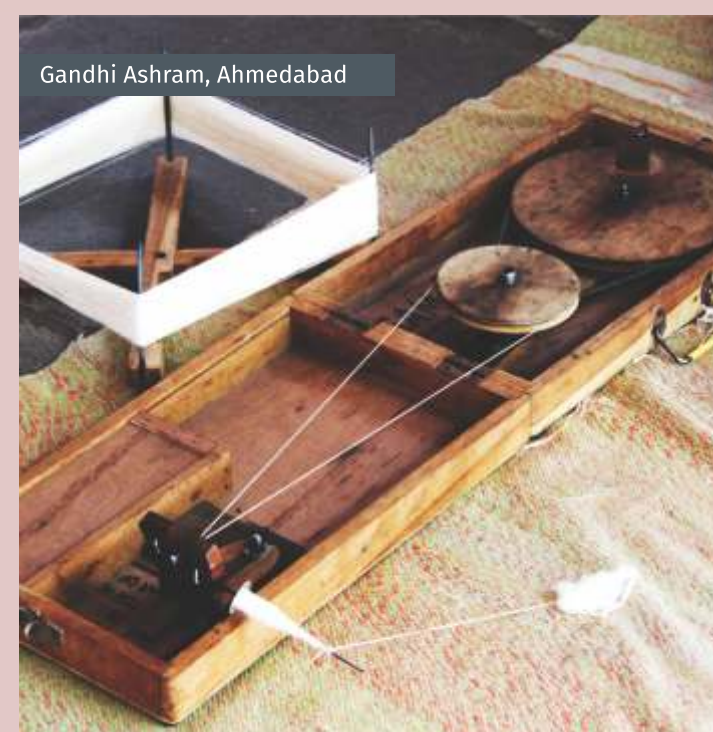
From here drive to Himmatnagar where the Dowlat Villas Palace – The Heritage has a private car collection.

The owner Maharaj Narendra Singh is usually around to proudly show you his cars. See the 1948 four door Pontiac Silver Streak Torpedo, 1941 Cadillac, 1947 Buick, 1953 Buick, 1957 Dodge Kingsway, 1954 DeSoto Diplomat Special Deluxe Coupe Convertible, 1943 Ford GPW Military Jeep, 1959 Morris Minor and a 1975 Mercedes-Benz 280 S. There are also some fine carriages.





Statue of Mahatma Gandhi, Sabarmati Ashram



Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad



Visitor Room, Sabarmati Ashram

AHMEDABAD'S MUSEUMS

cuttings. The memorial has lots of archival materials about the life of Mahatma Gandhi, including a huge library collection of books and other publications, letters to and from the Mahatma, photographs and documents.

From the memorial museum, you continue to explore the cluster of modest tiled houses that formed the Satyagraha Ashram, later renamed as Harijan Ashram by Gandhiji, including his residential cottage called Hriday Kunj which exhibits his spinning wheel, work table and personal belongings.

Another place associated with Mahatma Gandhi, the Gujarat Vidyapith was launched by him as a university. It has a tribal museum in the Tribal Research and Training Institute. After lunch at a Gujarati restaurant nearby, we headed onwards to Paldi where the Sanskar Kendra, designed by Le Corbusier, with a unique kite museum and a City Museum that covers the history, urban growth, development, demographics, art and architecture of the city.

Proceed to Ahmedabad University which has a number of art galleries like

the Kanoria Centre for Arts and the Hutheesing Visual Arts. The star attraction is Amdavad ni Gufa, a series of cave-like subterranean structures designed by master architect Balkrishna Doshi with a display of M.F. Hussain's

paintings and other art. It has an art gallery for temporary exhibitions. The Institute of Indology which has two museums - the Indology Museum has a superb collection of sculptures and Jain manuscripts, while the NC Mehta

Museum in the same building exhibits miniature paintings of various schools.

The lovely, lush green Shreyas campus has two interesting museums. For a glimpse of Gujarat's rich heritage of arts and crafts, visit the Lokayatan Folk Museum which exhibits utensils, embroidery, beadwork, woodcarving, metalwork and leather work, displayed with details of origin. Also in the campus is the Kalpana Mangaldas Museum of Toys and Crafts which exhibits a number of traditional toys of India. See the masks, puppets, costumes and folk theatre props in the collection.

Proceed to Vishalla Village which has the Veechar Utensils Museum, which exhibits the owner Surendra Patel's excellent collection of vessels used for cooking, religious rituals, storage, travel, milking cows and camels, dowry, gifts and other purposes, cutlery, tools and implements, unusual locking devices, and a standout collection of ornate nut crackers in various shapes and sizes. The galleries surround a pool where you could catch a glimpse of a peacock and other birds drinking water, and a catalogue is available at the bookstand.





MUSEUMS OF VADODARA

Vadodara's huge public park, Kamati Bagh or Sayaji Bagh, contains museums and a zoo. During the reign of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad, the city museum was built in the 1890s. The architecturally-interesting museum has departments dedicated to archaeology, geology, art, ethnology, natural history and other subjects. Among the key exhibits are narrative paintings and silver trays from Tamil Nadu, prayer flags and other Tibetan-Buddhist

exhibits, miniature paintings and manuscripts of the Mughal period, oil paintings from Europe, plaster images of classical works meant as role models for aspiring artists, an Egyptian mummy, tribal artifacts, and dinosaur fossils. The picture gallery has a fine collection of portraits. Among the thematic museums worth seeing are the Sayaji Baug Health

Drive from here to the Lukshmi

Vilas Palace. Designed by Major Mant in his characteristic eclectic style and completed by Robert Chisholm, the palace is a fusion of architectural styles incorporating Indian, Islamic and European elements in its long façade. Still the residence of the descendants of Baroda's erstwhile rulers, the palace allows visitors for a fee to see the Durbar Hall, which has a seven domed ceiling, carved cedar galleries, murals depicting the great Hindu epics, busts

of Maharajahs of Baroda and a sumptuous silver throne. The palace grounds also house the Maharajah Fatehsinh Museum, which exhibits marble statues, oil paintings by Raja Ravi Varma, Raphael, Titian, Murillo and Rembrandt, Chinese-Japanese art, Rococo exhibits, portraits and courtly scenes. The palace has a golf course and sports complex. It hosts art exhibitions and music concerts from time to time.



MUSEUMS OF BHUJ

The Kutch Museum is the oldest in Gujarat, founded by Rao Khengarji 3 in 1877 with the help of the British principal of the arts school. The museum was earlier named Fergusson Museum, after Sir James Fergusson who was the Governor of Bombay. This museum was shifted to a new building in 1884 where it was visited with permission from the royal family. Postindependence it was opened to general public. Unfortunately, the museum suffered much damage during the 2001 Kutch Earthquake and most of the present building is new. The museum offers an insight into life of Kutch through a series of dioramas of the different communities. There is an interesting exhibition of coins and currency, which include koris of Kutch –

the currency of the Kutch kingdom from 1617 to 1948 subdivided into 24 Dokda (singular Dokdo), each of 2 Trambiyo. Other copper coins in use were called Dhabbu and Dhinglo. The museum has very collections of sculptures, paintings, ethnological exhibits, textiles, bronzes, stone inscriptions, hero stones, minor arts and crafts, coins, natural history specimens, musical instruments, arms and wood carvings. There is also a shipping display.

The Folk Art Museum is part of the cultural centre called Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan. This museum has a mock-village with the characteristic roundhouses of Kutch called bhungas showing their architectural features from the mud walls to the straw thatched roofs. The museum

has some fine pieces of pottery, embroidery, games and wall hangings. A noteworthy feature of the museum is the collection of reproductions of the Ramrandh murals from the Tera Fort. Ramrandh was a traditional Ramlila type of folk performance from Kutch.

The top attraction of Bhuj, the Aina Mahal Museum is part of the grand palace of the Maharaos of Kutch. The museum has a stunning collection of artifacts linked to the remarkable life of Ramsinh Malam, who was hipwrecked off the East African coast as a 12-year-old and taken to the Netherlands, where he mastered Delft tile-making, glass-blowing, enamelling and clock-making. This palace has Venetian-style chandeliers, Delft blue tiles, enamelled silver objects and chiming clocks. The museum collection includes superb ivory-inlaid doors, jewelled shields and swords, artworks and a magnificently detailed scroll painting of a royal procession. The Hall of Mirrors is the most notable feature of the palace built in 1752 by Rao Lakha, the ruler of Kutch who was Ramsinh's principal patron. In the same walled complex, the

Prag Mahal, built in the 1860s by a British architect combines Moghul, British, Kutchi and Italian architectural styles. The highlight of the palace is the Durbarhall.

From the main palace, you can drive along the Hamirsar Tank to the garden palace called Sharad Bagh which exhibits

princely heirlooms. Built in 1867, the palace became a favoured retreat of Maharao Madansinhji Vijayaraji who was the last official ruler of Kutch Princely State till its merger in June 1948. You can see the fine furniture in the drawing room, a collection of mounted and stuffed

animals shot by the royal family, historical photographs and old clocks. The dining room is plush, and here you can see Maharao Madansinhji's coffin, shipped over from England after his death in 1991. There is also a collection of tennis memorabilia from the collection of the late Maharao Madansinh who was a tennis player active in the 1930s. He represented India at the Davis Cup in 1936. In 1937, in Wimbledon, he met the celebrated Croatian tennis player Franjo Kukuljevic, with whom he played doubles. They became lifelong friends.

For those interested in handicrafts, the The Living and Learning Design Centre (LLDC) at Ajrakhpur and the Kala Raksha Museum at Sumrasar are must visits. ■



WHERE TO STAY?

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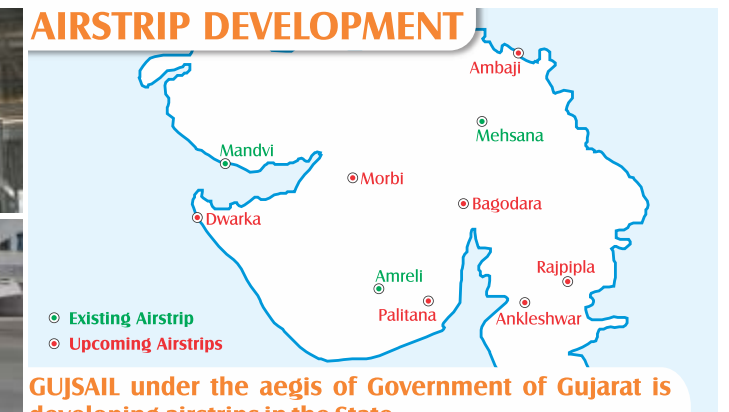
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MRO DEVELOPMENT



Development of MRO Facility at Ahmedabad Airport

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