

# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

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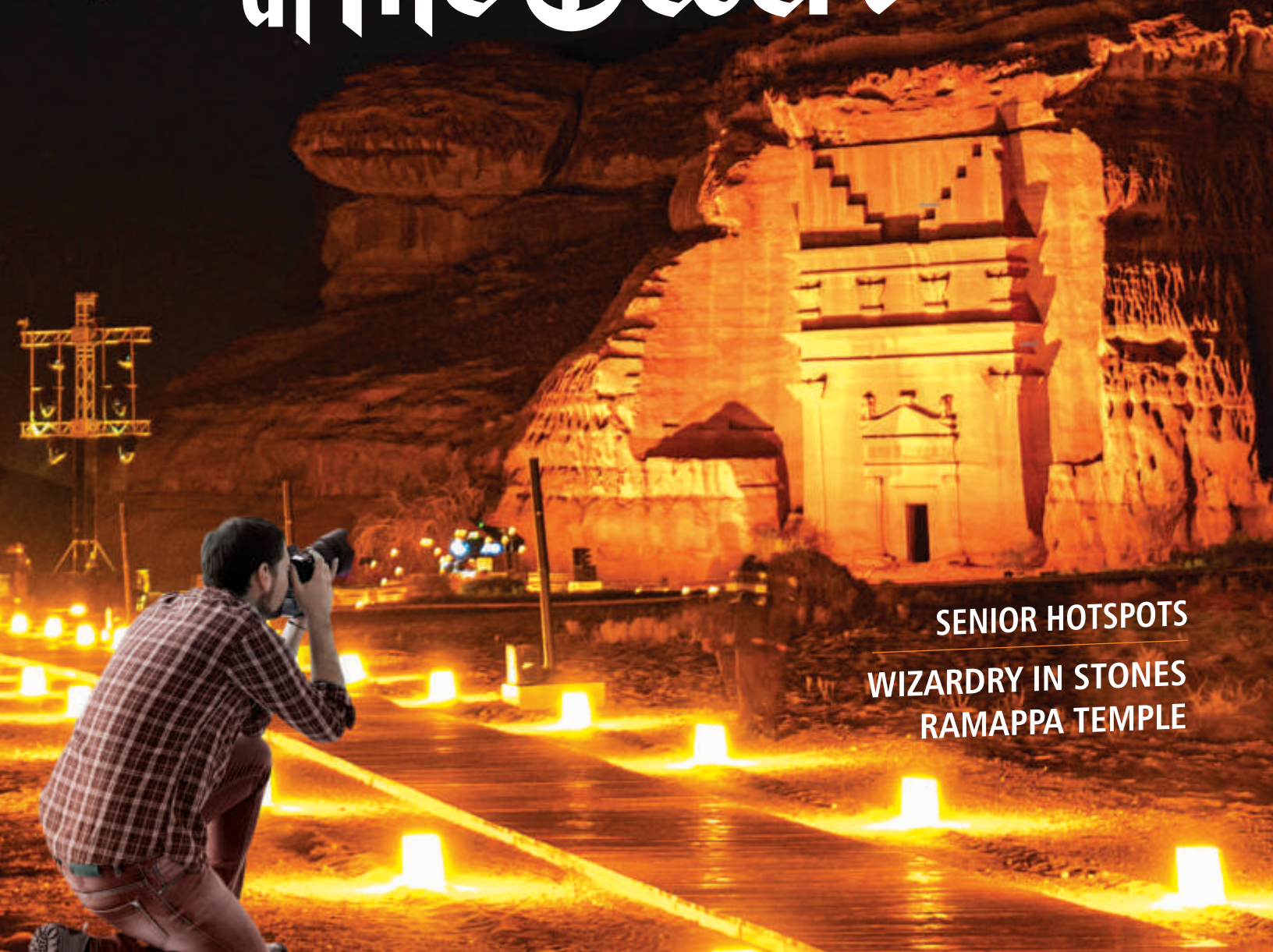
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*A high-end monthly magazine*

## An Empire in The Desert



SENIOR HOTSPOTS

WIZARDRY IN STONES  
RAMAPPA TEMPLE



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
TRAVEL  
ON**



## TRAVEL FOR ALL

**T**here is no dearth of destinations for youngsters. All you need to do is choose a place, make bookings and get going. However, the case is not the same for the senior citizens. They have to consider so many other factors like transportation system, weather, hotel and food choices, walking distance to attractions, medical support, etc. before zeroing down on the destination.

So if you're the one who likes to follow your passion of travelling the world in the 60s, we are here for you. We bring you a curated list of Indian destinations that are easily accessible and equally scenic. Explore cultural sites of Bhopal, the city with two lakes and beautiful backdrop of hills or relax on the waterside of Kochi, the place that's also friendly for those suffering from visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairment.

The festive season is all the more exciting when it is clubbed with the right destination for celebration. Sure, we have thousands of destinations with us to choose from. But if it is on us to take you to the much-suited place, we have a rightful destination for the occasion.

Read on!





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October 2022



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Incredible India

# SENIOR HOTSPOTS



**S**enior citizens love to explore the world. Minimum family responsibilities, fat purse, and discounted rail fares allow them to travel at affordable prices in India. However, planning a holiday for senior citizens can be challenging as they may need medical support, optimum sightseeing with low-level of strenuous physical activity and possibly even wheelchair access. Destinations listed here can be a good choice for seniors.







## EXPLORE CULTURAL SITES OF BHOPAL

**P**icturesquely located with two lakes and a backdrop of hills, Bhopal is a city that is easy to get around in. You can relax by one of the lakes and even take a boat ride.

To enjoy a view of the lake and the old city with its minarets, head

for the Lakshminarayan Temple or Birla Mandir. Here, you can see some illustrations depicting religious and historical themes, and the museum next to it has sculptures with informative panels. Most of the pieces belong to 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century statues sectioned into Vishnu, Devi and Shiva.



Lakshminarayan Temple / Birla Mandir





The cultural heart of Madhya Pradesh is the Charles Correa-designed campus of Bharat Bhavan, where the foyer has announcements of the many programs to be held here and elsewhere in the city.

The complex has concrete domes and dour brickwork buildings housing workshops, theatres, art galleries for temporary exhibitions, craft galleries, studios, libraries, and a permanent exhibition of modern Indian painting and sculpture. One of the most notable features of Bharat Bhavan is a gallery devoted exclusively to Adivasi art, with pieces collected from tribal areas of Central India. The talent scouts at the centre take pride in having found the remarkable Gond painter Jangarh Singh Shyam, who has been featured in many books including Mark Tully's. The collection has masks, terracottas, woodcarvings, ritual objects, utensils, but the centre

has given little background information on the tribal groups as it is mainly focused on the pieces as works of art rather than as folk arts.

One of the best tribal museums is the Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, with a collection of tribal artefacts. If you are fit enough for walking, the Museum of Man is an open air museum of recreated village houses with a winding path taking you past many installations and collections.

Near the tribal museum is the State Museum, also set in the Shamala Hills, with a superb collection of Hindu sculptures, Jain bronzes, prehistoric artefacts and fossils, archaeological finds, epigraphs, manuscripts, paintings, princely memorabilia of Maharajas and Nawabs, textiles and costumes, stamps, coinage, miniature paintings, arms and armoury, and relics of the Indian independence movement.



Bharat Bhavan



Source: anun sambhu mishra/Shutterstock

Source: anun sambhu mishra/Shutterstock





Source: Paulise M/Shutterstock



Traditional Indian  
Storey House  
made by Mud

Source: India\_Travelgram/Shutterstock



State Museum

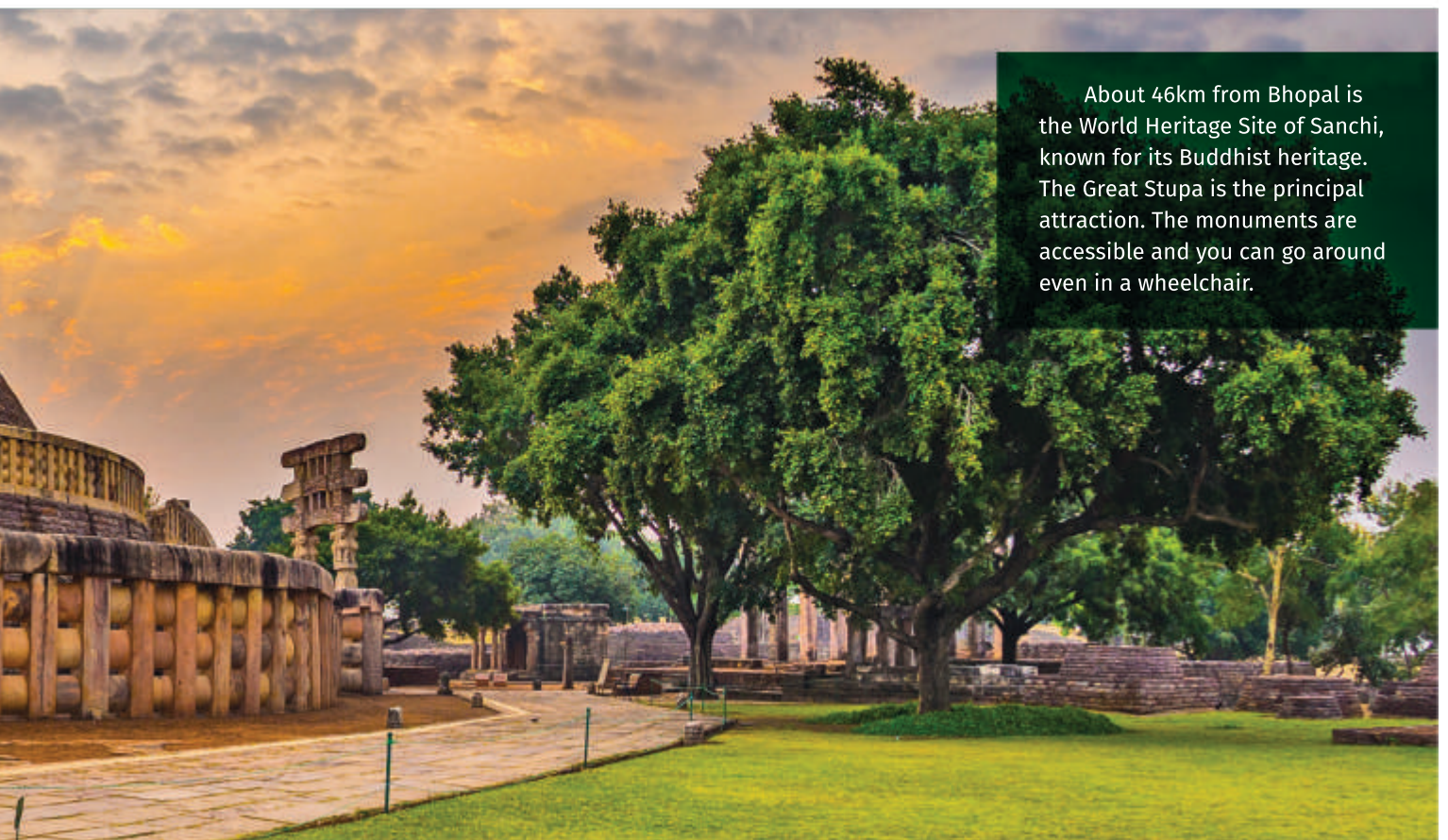


You can head to one of the lakes for a view of the sunset and an evening boat ride. Bhopal has palace hotels where you can dine and even stay.

Visit the Chowk, the market of Bhopal in the morning before the rush begins. The most impressive monument of Bhopal, the Darul Uloom Tajul Masjid, is one of the biggest mosques in India. It is a striking pinkish red sandstone building with a trio of white bulbous domes over a long facade flanked by colossal marble domed minarets on both sides.







About 46km from Bhopal is the World Heritage Site of Sanchi, known for its Buddhist heritage. The Great Stupa is the principal attraction. The monuments are accessible and you can go around even in a wheelchair.



# ENJOY THE TEMPLES AND BEACHES OF PURI

**H**ome to Lord Jagannath and his siblings, Puri is one of the most important pilgrimage places for Hindus.

The temple is impressive with pyramidal roofs over halls or mandapas. Outside the main

building, at the left end of the walled compound surrounding the temple, are the kitchens. The food prepared here, known as mahaprasad, is blessed by Lord Jagannath himself before being eaten.



Source: Jeremy Richards / Shutterstock.com

Jagannatha Temple



Patta chitra Paintings, Puri



From here, you can explore the many craft centres of Puri to watch artisans at work on weaving or stone sculpting. Raghurajpur village near Puri is best known for its Pattachitra, folk paintings typically done in a scroll form. The houses of this artists' village are adorned with murals.







Another reason for visiting Puri is the Sun Temple at Konark - a UNESCO World Heritage site. The beautiful temple has intricate carvings. Nearby is Chandrabhaga Beach.









Wake up early for a stroll at the Golden Beach of Puri. The beach won the 'Blue Flag' tag on October 11, 2020 by the Foundation for Environment Education (FEE), Denmark. The beach is easy to walk on, wheelchair-accessible and with a glorious sunrise view of the Bay of Bengal.



Golden Beach, Puri



# TAKE A PEACEFUL BREAK AT PUSHKAR

Pushkar is a small town charmingly set with sand dunes and rocky hills around it. The town is studded with temples. The holy hub of the town is the sacred lake with its 52 bathing ghats. The other religious highlight is the Brahma Temple, the most auspicious of its kind in

India. The main street goes through Sardar Bazaar, where you can shop for handicrafts and try a variety of food. From the traditional halwais and Rajasthani eateries to cafes catering to the tourists who visit Pushkar, there is a superb variety of food that can be enjoyed in Pushkar.

When you have had enough of strolling around the town and the sand dunes, visit Ajmer which has the shrine of Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti, one of India's most important dargahs. Akbar's Palace has an archaeological museum inside, while the red Nasiyan Jain Temple has golden models.



Lake Pushkar







# RELAX ON THE WATERSIDE OF KOCHI

Cochin is a city where the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews have all made their mark on the cultural history. Today, Fort Kochi and nearby areas offer an opportunity to see one of India's oldest churches and also the oldest surviving Jew Synagogue in India. Kochi's attractions are also friendly for those suffering from visual, hearing, mobile or

cognitive impairment.

Start at the St Francis Church, which is one of India's first European monuments. Originally built in 1503 by Portuguese friars, the wooden structure of this church was rebuilt in the same century. The oldest inscriptions found in the church are dated to 1562. Vasco da Gama was buried here when he died in 1524 and 14 years later his remains were shipped to Lisbon. See the beautifully

engraved tombstones and the rope-operated punkah (fan). From the church, you can stroll to the Santa Cruz Basilica. This Roman Catholic Church at Fort Kochi was built in the 16th century but had to be rebuilt in the 1800s and 1900s. Notable features of the church are the wood carvings and murals depicting Biblical scenes. Pope John Paul raised it to the status of a Basilica in 1984.



Catholic Church



From the Basilica, a long walk will bring you to the Mattancherry Palace, which incorporates Dutch influences into the traditional Kerala plan. Gaze at the marvellous murals depicting the entire Ramayana and scenes from the Mahabharata, the life of Lord Krishna, Kumarasambava and Puranic legends.

From the palace, it's a short walk to the Cochin Synagogue, called the Mattancherry Paradesi Synagogue. This

was founded in 1568 and rebuilt by the Dutch in 1664, two years after the Portuguese destroyed the building. A wealthy Jew merchant, Ezekial Rahabi, donated the clock tower in the 18th century. Notable features of the synagogue are the Cantonese willow-pattern tiles, Belgian chandeliers, interlocking pews, a ladies' gallery supported by gilt columns, ornate brass pulpit and a slab from the 14th century

Kochangadi Synagogue that is now in ruins. Step out to explore the Jew Town Market with shops selling curios, antiques and their reproductions, old coins, spices, handicrafts and souvenirs. Some of these shops are still owned by Jews.

From Cochin, you can travel to Kottayam or Alappuzha for a boat ride on the backwaters.



A Houseboat in Alappuzha Backwaters

The Jew Town, Mattancherry



# ENJOY HILL VIEWS FROM KALIMPONG

**K**alimpong is a hill station with a difference. Unlike most hill stations discovered in India by the British as climatic refuges from the cities of the plains, Kalimpong has existed from centuries as a market town on the mule caravan trading routes connecting the kingdoms of Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and

the Indian hills with one another, with mediaeval Tibetan and Bhutanese monasteries, Scottish monuments, and old residences of Bengalis, Tibetans, Lepchas and Gorkhas enhancing its old world charm.

Kalimpong is at a more moderate altitude of 4,100 ft than many popular hill stations like Darjeeling or Shimla. It is therefore a

pleasant place for seniors to enjoy the Himalayan views with a relatively less cold weather. If you like plants and flowers, visit the nurseries of Kalimpong to see orchids and cacti. In the town, you can see monasteries and markets. On a clear day, you can get a superb view of the Kanchenjunga from Kalimpong. ■





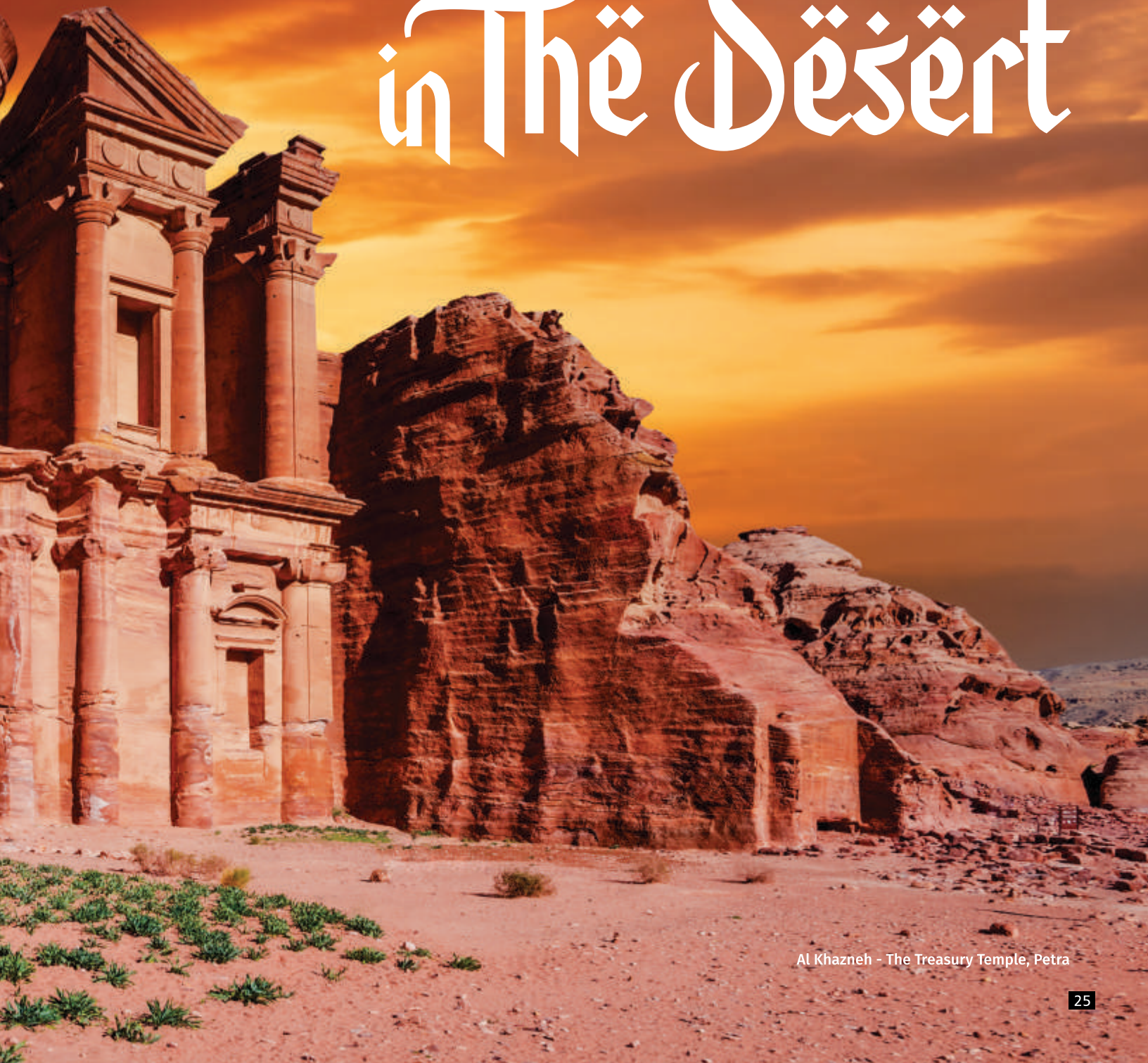








# An Empire in The Dësërt



Al Khazneh - The Treasury Temple, Petra





Wadi Musa, city of Petra, Jordan





**H**egra also has well-preserved monumental tombs with decorated facades dating from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD. The site also displays 50 inscriptions of the pre-Nabataean period and some cave drawings, all well preserved in the dry Arabian environment.

The area was originally occupied by the Lihyanites, a powerful and highly organised ancient Arab tribe. The Lihyanites ruled over a large domain from Yathrib, i.e., present-day Medina to the Levant i.e. a stretch of land covering Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine,

and Turkey. The Lihyanites were later displaced by the Nabataeans, around 65 BC.

The Nabataeans were quite influential during their time. They were desert-dwelling nomads, who later settled down to become merchants. The city of Hegra lay on the route controlling the incense and spice trade routes, from Arabia and Jordan to vast swathes of land that now comprise the middle east. The commodities were Frankincense, myrrh, peppercorn, sugar, and cotton. The gradual accrual of wealth turned the nomads into city dwellers.







Source: Hysch/Shutterstock

Elephant Rock, Al Ula





Al Ula

**T**heir suzerainty extended from modern-day Yemen to Damascus, and from western Iraq into the Sinai Desert. They prospered from the 4th century B.C. until the 1st century A.D., when the mighty Romans blitzed through their city, in their quest to expand their empire. Imperceptibly, the identity of the Nabataeans was lost in the desert sands of Arabia.

Not much is known about the inhabitants of the place, even though they had their own alphabets, and many of the tombs have inscriptions. One of the tombs has a terse warning to people who come with malafide intentions, it says, "May the lord of the world curse upon anyone who disturbs this tomb or

opens it," Hegra was once a metropolis, that subsequently devolved into a necropolis.

It is indeed an awe-inspiring sight. These structures have come up in a craggy desolate area where temperatures frequently rise to a searing 55 °C in the summer. Located on the hard, barren desert floor, strewn with pebbles and giant-sized boulders, these structures stand in silent testimony to the passage of time. Civilizations rose and fell. Empires expanded to their zenith, only to decline. Each had a story to relate to. The tombs and the monuments in Hegra are beginning to reveal their own story - the story of the nomads who built an empire in the desert. ■



Ruined City of Hegra



# DIWALI DESTINATIONS IN GUJARAT

## THE JAMNAGAR COASTAL TRAIL

**T**he city of Jamnagar has many attractions from the Lakhota Lake or Ranmal lake in the city centre to the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary and India's first Marine National Park nearby.

The centerpiece of Jamnagar, Lakhota Lake or Ranmal Lake was excavated in the 1850s to provide employment and water to the people of Jamnagar, with a palace in the heart. In front of the island palace is an equestrian statue of Jam Rawal, the Jadeja Rajput who founded Nawanagar (renamed Jamnagar or the city of the Jam rulers) in the 1540s. At the

northwest of the lake, we saw the Bala Hanuman temple famous for the round-the-clock non-stop chanting ("Shree Ram, Jay Ram, Jay Jay Ram") since 1964, for which feat it is cited in the Guinness Book of Records. Started on 1 August 1964, the chant continues for 24 hours a day, in shifts, and is still continuing. Jamnagar is called Chhota Kashi because of the temples in the city, such as Badri Kedar Nath, Nilkanth Mahadev Temple and Bhid Bhanjan Mahadev Temple near the Town Hall and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple on the K.V. Road. Jamnagar is also famous for its Jain Temples.





During the Diwali holidays, there is much buzz around the lake where people come for recreational activities, walks and family outings. You can catch a glimpse of fireworks around the lakefront which has a fairground like holiday atmosphere. Cross the causeway to the palace which has murals, weapons, archaeological finds and memorabilia inside. The lake is also good for birds – watch pelicans, ducks, gulls and wading birds at the lake, and in the evening the spectacular gathering of rose-fronted starlings.

The markets of Jamnagar are famous for their bandhani. Bandhani is an ancient technique of tie-dyeing that is intricate and time consuming. The

fabric is pinched together in selected places, according to the pattern lightly drawn or block-printed on the surface in fugitive colours that fade away, and tied round with thread or twine before coating with material that resist the dye before immersion in a dye-bath. After the threads or twines are removed to reveal a pattern in the original colour, the process is often repeated to create a variously-coloured bandhani pattern. It can take six months to a year for most saris to be completely dyed, and even the simplest patterns can take more than a month before the sari is ready for the market. Entire families work at homes or at workshops in their residential areas on bandhani, and often

family members develop their own specialised expertise in tying, dyeing red and other dark colours, working with pastel shades, etc.

In the evening, visit the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary to see large flocks of migratory birds.

From Jamnagar, take an excursion to Narara Bet which is one of the 42 islands offshore from the southern coast of the Gulf of Kutch. There is a marine museum here and with permits you can walk in the inter-tidal zone to get close views of coral reefs and marine life. Octopus, brittle star, sea cucumber and other marine fauna is often seen in the rock pools left behind by the tide. You can also see large flocks of shore birds like the crab-plover.



# A HERITAGE HOLIDAY IN BHUJ



**R**amrandh was a traditional folk theatre of Kutch rather like the Ram Lila. The performers depicted the various characters of the Ramayana. This art form has died but murals depicting the Ramayana in the style of the folk drama decorate the interiors of Tera Fort in Kutch. The replica of these murals can be seen at the Folk Art Museum, which is part of the cultural centre called Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan. This ethnology 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. The most noteworthy exhibit is the set of reproductions of the Ramrandh murals from the Tera Fort. Ramsinhji K. Rathod, a folk art scholar, envisioned this museum showcasing the folk arts and crafts of Kutch.

From this museum, travel to the Kutch Museum, 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 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 shipwrecked 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





Prag Mahal, Bhuj

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.

Proceed to Tera, a village full of heritage sites. This fortified complex with the residences of the Thakore Sahib, hereditary chief of the Tera jagir, has walls that are 17 metre high and four metre thick at places. The lakes provided water supply back then to the palatial buildings within. Darbargadh saw extensive renovations when Sumarji and his wife, Baisaheb, headed the jagir of Tera around 1845.

The rulers of Kutch were great believers of Lord Rama and commissioned the Ramlila frescoes on the four walls of the bed chamber depicting scenes from the life of Rama in the Kutchi folk painting and drama style. Gaguba or Hamirji, the youngest son of Maharao Desalji II (respected as one of the best Kutch rulers of the 1800s), it is said, would awaken to see the auspicious scene of Rama's birth and then follow the Ramayana in chronological order.

Walk around the village of Tera to see the havelis, Jain and Hindu temples, mosque, stepwell and other heritage structures.

## DISCOVER RAMA'S EXILE SITES IN DANG



Shabari Dham Temple, Saputara

**T**he Dang district in Gujarat and Nashik district in Maharashtra are said to comprise the area where Lord Rama spent many years in exile. The most important religious site in the Dang is Shabari Dham. According to the scriptural account, even though hundreds were waiting to receive Rama in their ashrams, Rama went only to Shabari's ashram because of her sincere devotion. Shabari would collect berries in the hope that Rama would visit her. Rama's decision to visit her showed that God does not care about fame, riches or caste but visits the worthy ones. As Rama tasted the berries, his brother Lakshmana raised the concern that Shabari had already tasted them and they were, therefore, unworthy of eating but Rama dispels his view saying that

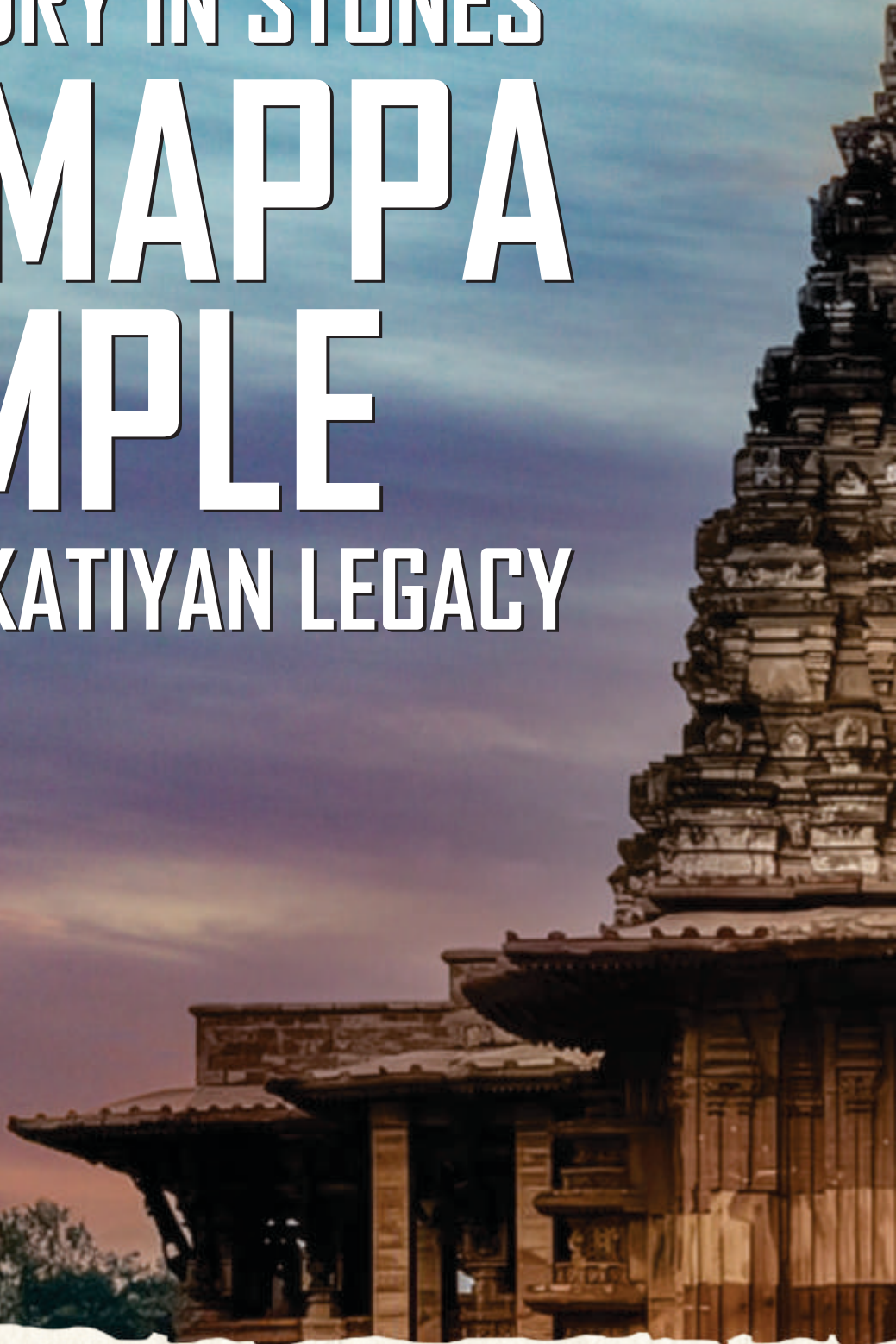
anything served with love and devotion is precious. Rama notices the donas, or bowls, of handmade leaves in which she had offered the fruits and is impressed by the hard work Shabari has gone through to make them and, hence, blesses the tree so that the leaves naturally grow in the shape of a bowl.

From the Shabari Dham, travel to Saputara which is Gujarat's main hill station. Visit the tribal museum, the lake and various viewpoints.

Make base at Saputara to visit Nashik's Ram Kund, a tank in the city. This tank is a focal point of pilgrimage - Rama and Sita are said to have bathed here during their exile period. The kund is the site for immersion of ashes. There are many Maratha-era temples nearby. ■



# WIZARDRY IN STONES RAMAPPA TEMPLE THE KAKATIYAN LEGACY











The temple is located about 210 km from Hyderabad in a remote nondescript village called Palampet, an agricultural field. The uninspiring attributes of the temple end right there. The temple's high-quality artistry and other attributes give it a unique status to qualify in the formidable list of UNESCO World Heritage. Marco Polo reportedly called it 'the brightest star in the galaxy of temples'.

This ancient Shiva temple was built in the early thirteenth century when Genghis Khan was reigning supreme in Central Asia. In one part of the world, there was pillage and destruction and,

in another part, far away in India, a structure was being built, that for generations people would look at it with awestruck wonder.

The temple was built during the reign of Kakatiya dynasty by King Ganapati Deva, the most famous among all Kakatiya rulers. The Kakatiya dynasty was founded in the year 1136 AD. Their glorious dynasty came to an end in 1323 AD when Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq from the Delhi Sultanate, captured the capital city Warangal. Ganapati Deva's reign lasted from 1199 to 1262 AD. During his reign, his kingdom significantly expanded. He was able to bring the delta low land areas of the Godavari and Krishna rivers

under his control.

The temple was commissioned by King Ganapati Deva. His Commander-in-Chief Recharla Rudra was also associated with the construction of the temple. It is believed by the locals that the temple was built in honour of the commander's astute combat skills on the battlefield. The commander in no small way contributed to the consolidation of the kingdom. The temple however is also known as Ramappa Temple. He was the sculptor who built it. In acknowledgment of his magnificent skills and creativity, the temple came to be better known by his name.



Ramappa Temple Complex







Vimana

The foundation of the temple was built with what is today known as Sandbox Technology. This technology is used to make the superstructure impervious to earthquakes. The method used by the Kakatiyans was to dig a 3-metre-deep pit and fill it with a mixture of sand, lime, jaggery and other materials, very much like a sand pit or a sandbox. The foundation of the building is then constructed over it. During an earthquake, the sandbox in the foundation acts as a cushion. The break in the uniformity of the medium in the earth's composition immediately below the temple, acts to dissipate the destructive vibrations caused by the

deep tectonic movements. Very little vibrations are transmitted to the superstructure.

Different materials have been used in the construction of the temple, thereby indicating knowledge of material selection. The magnificent carvings are on black basalt rocks, which are one of the hardest rocks to work on, and are the most common rock on Earth's surface. The dark plains on the Moon are also made up of basalt. The black basalt pillars still retain the polish even after the passage of 800 years. One can still see one's reflection in them. The lingam in the sanctum sanctorum, as in most temples, is kept in a dark place. But

despite the dim interiors, the lingam visibly stands out due to its burnished surface.

The pyramidal-shaped Vimana, the tower, is made of lightweight porous bricks. These bricks are made up of clay mixed with chaff from different trees, which gives a sponge-like appearance. The bricks are porous. Due to the porosity of the material these rocks, though hard, can float on water, hence the epithet 'floating bricks'. A cubic centimetre of water weighs more than a similar volume of the floating brick, which explains the material's buoyancy. The ingenious usage of these rocks significantly reduced the weight of the roof structure.



The Black Basalt Pillars





**M**any centuries later, the use of porous material and the application of sandbox technology saved the temple from a major earthquake during the 17th century. When there was utter destruction all around, the temple suffered only minor damages. The floor of the temple had buckled. The roof and the superstructure had developed cracks. But otherwise, the temple had remained largely intact. The question remains, how did the people in the

distant past of the 13th know that building a sand pit below the temple would protect it from quakes?

The architects used granite and sandstone in the main structure. Most sandstone is very resistant minerals to weathering processes, which is why they were extensively used in ancient structures. The black granites are used for pillars and decoration. The Rocks are known for their hardness and strength.

The Ramappa temple stands on a 6 feet high platform. At the entrance of

the temple, is the Nandi mandapam, a pavilion for public rituals. An imposing statue of Shiva's vahana, Nandi the bull, is housed inside it. Shiva can be found in all corners of the subcontinent. The origin of Shiva can be traced to pre-Aryan times. The most visible image of Shiva is the Lingam or the Phallus stone. The worship of the phallus stone too comes from the distant past of pre-Aryan times. The Bull (Nandi) of Śiva represents virility or libido. Nandi in Sanskrit means 'delight'.





Nandi Mandapam





The temple is in the centre of the lawn, which was once a royal garden. Elaborate carvings line the walls of the temple and cover the pillars and ceilings of the temple. The figurines have slim curvaceous bodies. One can see figures with heeled footwear. Though the figures are sculpted in stone, they still convey lissomness, youth, and grace in their dancing forms. If one were to minutely examine these figures, one can see the intricacy of the carvings, the painstaking details, and the minute spaces between their body parts. The sculptors have indulged in a little bit of levity, by creating optical illusions in their carvings. The temple sculptures are an exhibition of high artistic quality depicting the dances of that period as

well as the Kakatiyan culture.

Some of the stone carvings have a special sonic effect when struck. The number of carvings in the temple is mind-boggling. One is aghast at the sheer quantum of figures sculpted all over the temple.

Travel to any distant part of India, chances are that there exists an ancient temple, tomb, or monument with truly unique architectural characteristics. Not only is the high level of artistry stunning, but the level of technology involved in carving out three-dimensional figures truly defies a rational explanation. They also had knowledge of esoteric engineering skills. What is most amazing is the sculptor's ability to bring out dynamism in stones. The Kakatiyans were a gifted lot. ■





Figures on The Ceiling



Carved Dancing & Singing Figures



Ancient Dancer wearing  
High Heels Sculpture

Words by VIJAY KURUP





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# A STREET FOOD TRAIL IN **KUTCH**







Dal Pakwan

**G**andhidham was created in the early-1950s to provide home to Sindhi Hindus who moved from Sindh in the aftermath of the partition of India. The foundation stone of the town was laid with the blessings of Gandhi in 1947 on land that was given to the Sindhu Resettlement Corporation Ltd (SRC) by the Maharao of Kutch with the idea that they would help build Kandla Port. The leader of the movement to build Gandhidham, Bhai Pratap gave an incentive of 25 paise to kill scorpions and 50 paise to kill snakes in this semi-desert area. With his leadership, Gandhidham grew to become a prosperous township with the Kandla Port and the Free Trade Zone. Today, Gandhidham is the Economic Capital of Kutch district.

With the growing immigration of people starting with Sindhis, and then followed by business families from Rajasthan, various parts of Gujarat and

other regions who settled here to make the most of the port-side location of Gandhidham, this town has a bustling street food scene in the main market.

The main hub of street food in Gandhidham is Janda Chowk, Station Road, near the main market. Jodhpuri Nasta House opens early for breakfast. The brothers who own it take great pride in their Dal Pakwan. You will even find patrons who eat here multiple times a month. The Pakwan is famous for being less greasy than the one you get at many other places. The chana dal is spiced with green chillies, cumin seeds and spice powders, and soured with tamarind. Pakwan is a deep-fried flat bread, rather like a crisp puri. If you don't want to eat sitting out on the street, there are places offering more comfortable inside seating to enjoy dal pakwan. Continue to Bin Harif, the shop that opened in 1980 and has often claimed to have been responsible for

the popularity of dabeli as a street food. The dabeli makers use boiled potatoes as the filling for the sandwich. The potato filling is mixed with dry-paste which typically comprises of dried chillies, pepper power and various spices called Dabeli Masala, and at Bin Harif they also add dried coconut shavings. This filling is then stuffed into a sliced ladi pav or bun to make the Dabeli. Chopped peanuts and pomegranate seeds are popular for garnishing. The Dabeli is served alongside a piquant chutney made using tamarind, date, garlic, red chilies and other ingredients.

As you walk around the main market you will find Khavda Sweets, a 50-year old enterprise. Now making a huge variety of sweets and savouries, Khavda remains famous for its Gulab Pak. For Sindhi sweets like Singan ji Mithai (Sev barfi) and halwa, you can visit Shikarpuri where you can also get Dal Pakwan and other Sindhi street food.





Gulab Pak

From Gandhidham, proceed to Adipur's Maitri Road where you will find a number of hawkers and small street food shops. Kapta Nasta House is a legendary place here for their Sanna Pakora, Sindhi fritters that have a crispy coating of chickpea flour. The pakoras are usually double-fried to give the desired crunch. Jhumdamal Nasta House is another legendary place in Adipur. Started as a cart selling Dal-Chhole-Dhabal (dhabal or double is pav bread in Sindhi), this kiosk-like place

now serves samosa, chaats and other items.

Continue from the market to Radheshyam Gola Ghar and Ice Cream Parlour. Once a street food place for golas (crushed ice served in sharbat), this is now an a/c eatery that serves masala and flavoured sodas, golas, ice-creams and shakes. Adipur is famous for the Institute of Sindology. You can visit the museum here to see a variety of arts, crafts and ritual objects associated with Sindhi heritage.



Ice Gola



From Gandhidham, travel to Bhuj where the Station Road and ST Station area is lined with eateries. Here you will find Bhaji Cone, a pav bhaji like mixed vegetable that is filled into a pastry cone, garnished with sev and chutney. Kutchi Kadak is the local version of Bhel that is garnished with spiced peanuts and chutneys. Dabeli is called Double Roti in Bhuj, and there are many vendors. Mandvi Dabeli and Bin Harif are among the well-known ones but there are others too. If you prefer Vada Pav to Dabeli, Shankar near Middle School is a legend. This little eatery makes Vada Pav with the potato fritter filling as also Mirchi Vada with a batter-fried whole chilly.

In the markets of Bhuj, you will also find places for omlets and meat dishes.

The omlet places are popular with foreign backpackers staying in hotels that don't serve eggs for breakfast.

Travel north from Bhuj towards the craft villages of Banni. Near the village of Bhirendiara, you will find shops selling fresh doodh halwa or mawa made from the rich buffalo milk of Banni.

From Bhuj, travel to Mandvi Beach which is among Gujarat's finest. Here you will find many places making street snacks for visitors. Head into town where the vegetable market has some small eating places. The most iconic is Gaaba's Dabeli. The Dabeli here with its mix of sweet and spicy flavours has people lining up even before Gaaba opens his shop. Many pack them to take home. 🍽️



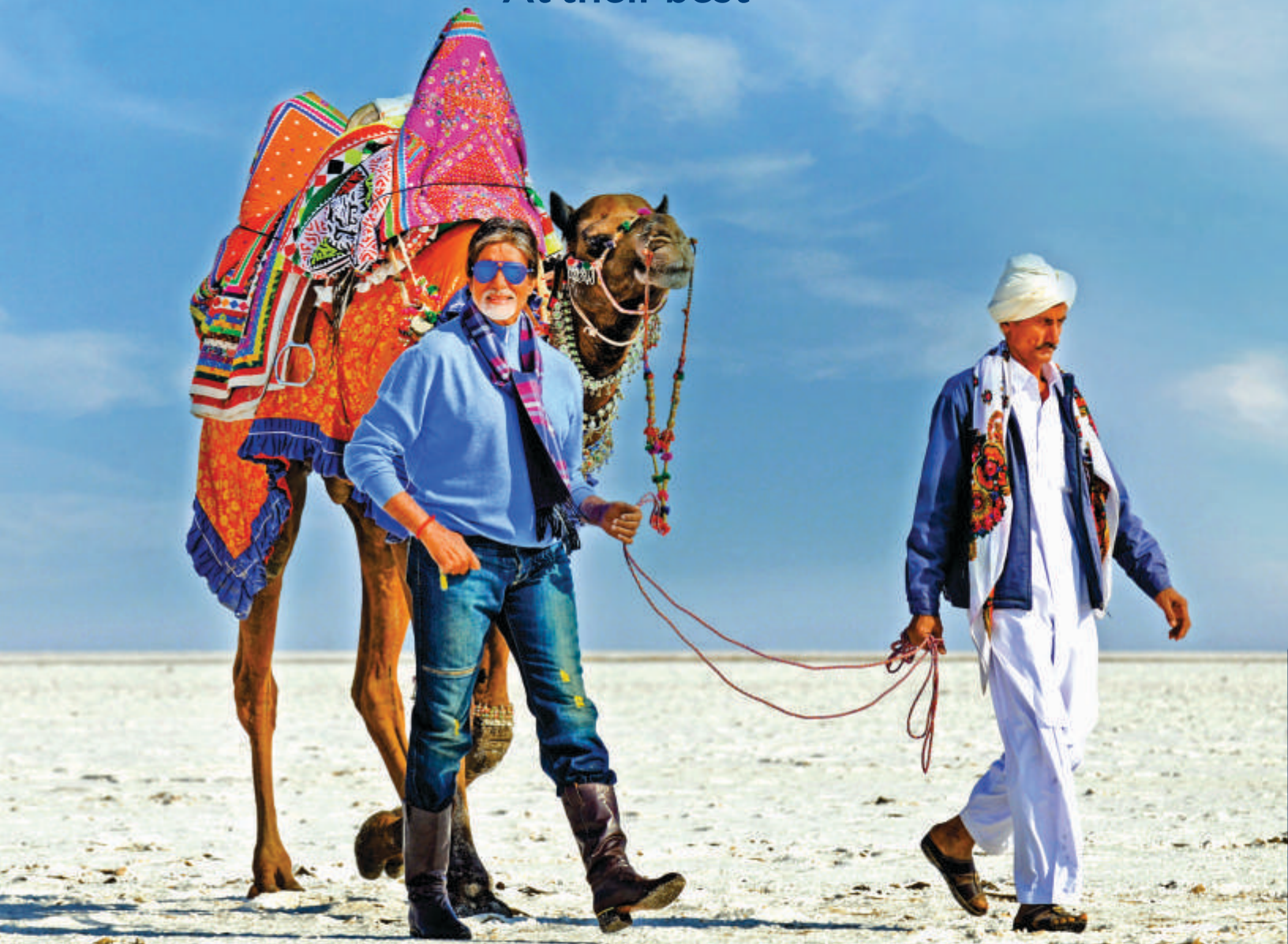
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Omlet Plate



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