

# PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS (INDIA) LIMITED | [www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)

December 2022

Year : 8 | Issue : 4 (Continue Issue : 74) | Pages : 60 | ₹ 200

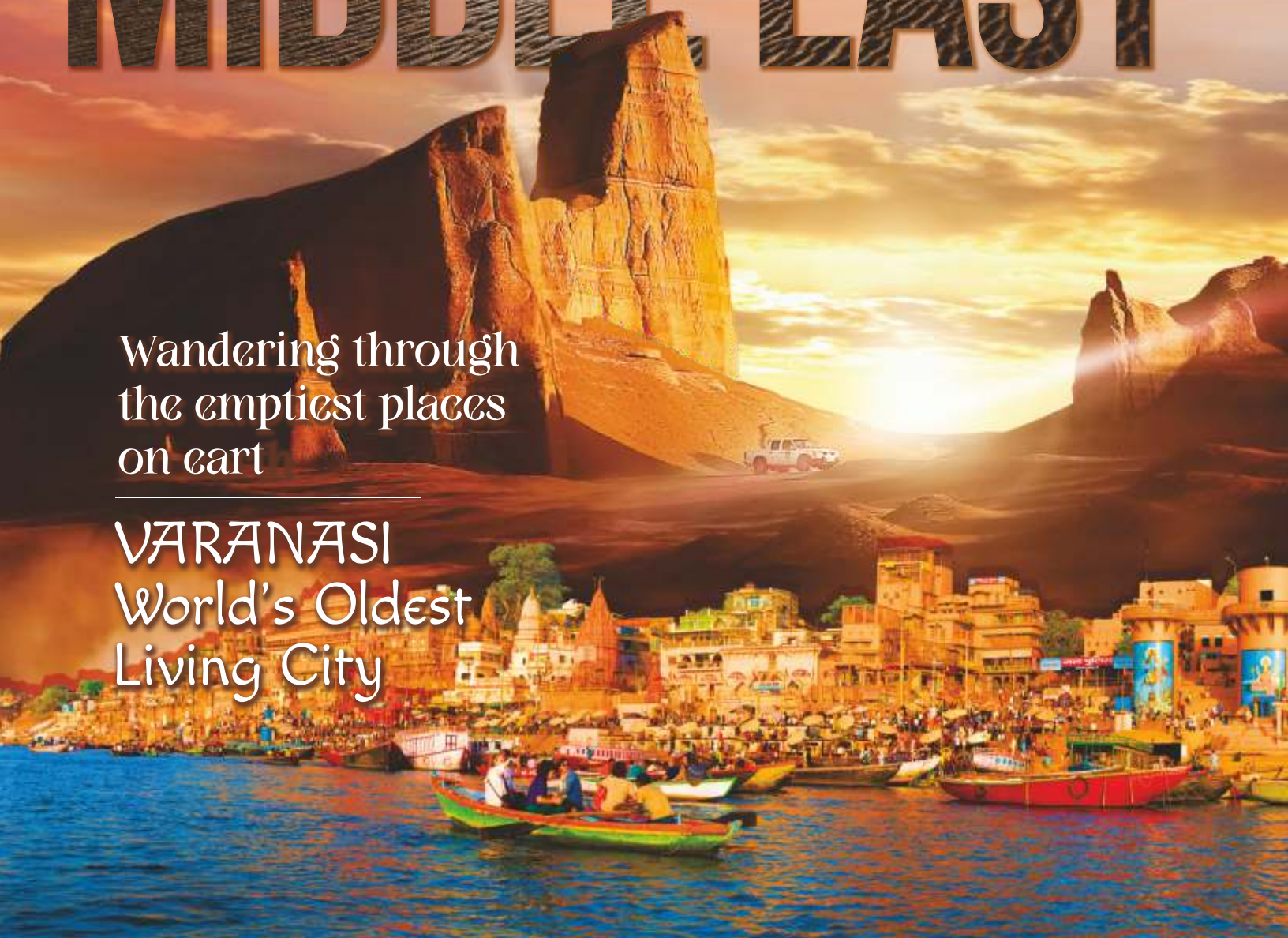
*A high-end monthly magazine*

RNI Regd. No. GUJENG/2015/70098

# A GEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Wandering through  
the emptiest places  
on earth

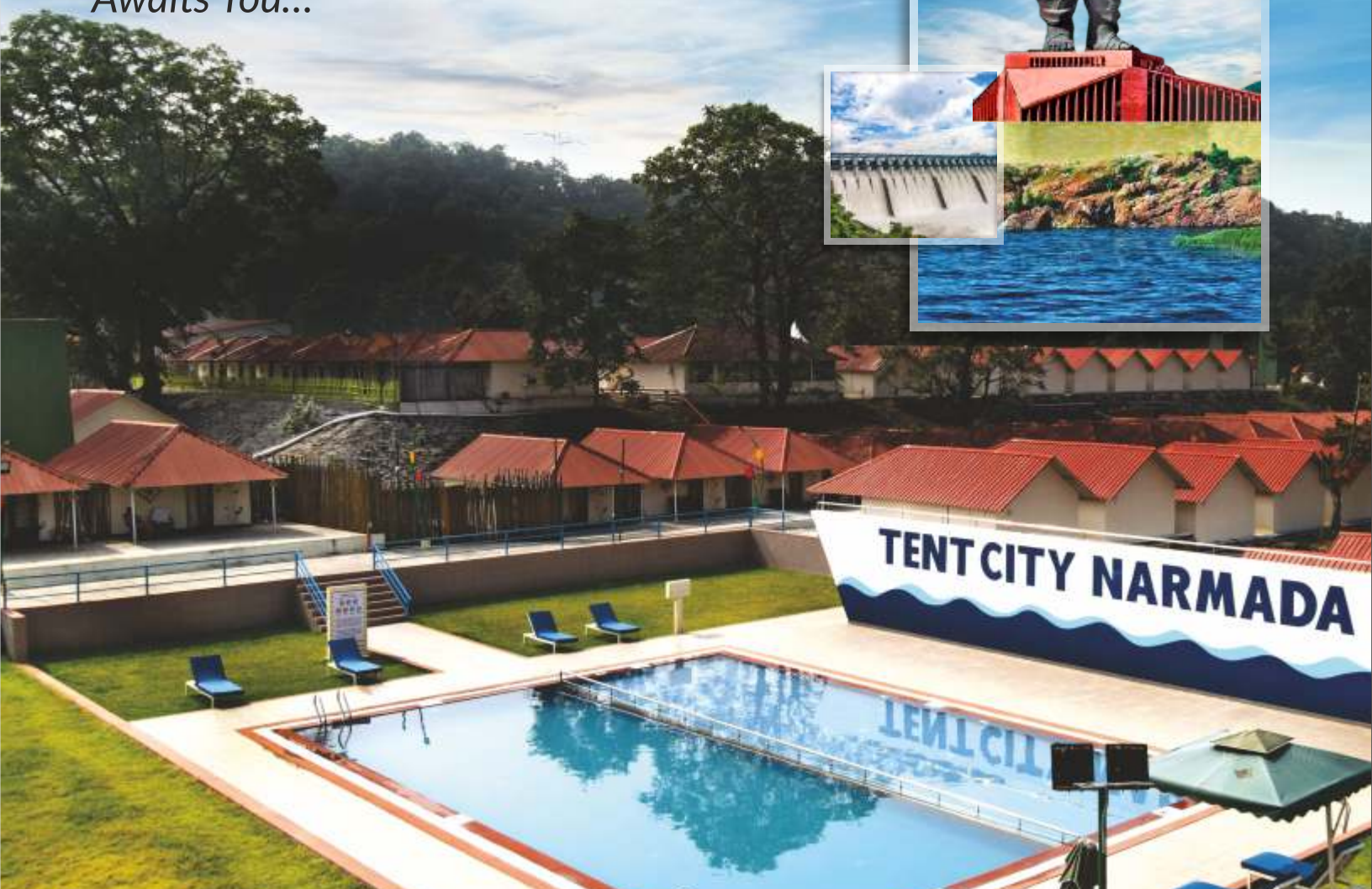
VARANASI  
World's Oldest  
Living City





# AN IDEAL VENUE LUXURIOUS STAY CONFERENCE DESTINATION WEDDING

*Safe and Blissful Journey  
Awaits You...*



**200 LUXURIOUS TENTS | ALL MEALS | PACKAGES STARTING FROM ₹ 3,000 P.P.**

With enhanced hospitality and hygiene standards as per Government Norms

THE LUXURIOUS NATURE RESORT  
**TENT CITY  
NARMADA**  
By **PRAVEG**

For Booking:  
**72 40 40 40 40**  
[www.tentcitynarmada.com](http://www.tentcitynarmada.com)

For Trade Enquiry:  
**97 12 90 11 41**  
[info@tentcitynarmada.com](mailto:info@tentcitynarmada.com)

OPERATED BY  
  
**PRAVEG**  
Accelerating ideas

RESORT: Dyke 3, Sardar Sarovar Dam Site, Ekta Nagar - 393151, Dist. Narmada, Gujarat, India

## PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

December 2022

# Something to December

There are certain bragging rights that come with being the first of your friends to visit a remote destination. We know it can be hard to find truly off-the-radar spots these days. But what are we here for? We have rounded up some of the emptiest and remotest places around the world to explore unheard stories associated with them.

But if mystery is what you crave for, we are walking you through the ghats and gullies of the world's oldest living city. Kashi or Varanasi is known for many things; its food, its confluence of cultures, its temples and its festivities. The city's spiritual beliefs also have a lot of hidden mysteries.

Steeped in history, culture and nature, Iran is a gem in the Middle-east to be explored for its wealth of attractions. Every city, every monument, and every group of people has many untold stories and a meaningful background. So here we bring you a pocket list of the best places to see in Iran. Of course, this array is just a small part of this immense country.

Read on!



Glaciers of Greenland





**Praveg Communications (India) Limited**  
214 Athena Avenue, Sarkhej - Gandhinagar Highway,  
Behind Jaguar Showroom, Gota, Ahmedabad 382481  
Contact No.: 97129 84895  
e: tourismone@praveg.com  
www.praveg.com

Download an e-copy of Tourism One from  
[www.praveg.com](http://www.praveg.com)

**Editorial Team**  
Priyanka Desai

**Design Team**  
Mahesh Patel  
Yagnesh Bhavsar  
Rakesh Bhavsar

DISCLAIMER: All information in Praveg’s TOURISM ONE is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. All images are copyrighted by their respective owners unless otherwise stated. Opinions/views expressed by third parties are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced, whether in part(s) or in whole, without prior permission.

**Be a part of Praveg’s Tourism One:**  
Share with us some enthusiastic inputs like photographs, essays or anything related to tourism.  
**Have some suggestions for us?**  
Go ahead and send us your ideas, valuable opinions or topics you would like to see more coverage on.  
**FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES, CONTACT:**  
[tourismone@praveg.com](mailto:tourismone@praveg.com)

# Contents

A GEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST	Pg. 04
VARANASI WORLD'S OLDEST LIVING CITY	Pg. 14
WANDERING THROUGH THE EMPTIEST PLACES ON EARTH	Pg. 24
ON THE ROAD IN GUJARAT	Pg. 30
A SCULPTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA IN STONE	Pg. 38
THE ENIGMA OF THE KAILASA TEMPLE	Pg. 42
A HERITAGE TRAIL IN EASTERN GUJARAT	Pg. 46





Lut Desert, Iran

# A GEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST





Lut Desert



Lut Desert

**I**ranians are not Arabs, is a phrase that the Iranians vehemently reiterate and emphasize, to anyone who thought otherwise. The proximity of this Muslim majority nation to the Middle Eastern countries and perhaps the resemblance of the language to Arabic, has led to this widely held misconception. Who are the Iranians? How do they differ from the Arabs and what does their country behold?

Persian history largely begins with King Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid empire, that centred in Persia, the land that stretched from the Aegean Sea to the Indus River. The Achaemenid Dynasty lasted almost three centuries from 559 to 330 BCE.

Persia, a historic region of Southwestern Asia, is associated with the area that is now modern Iran. The term Persia was initially for the region in southern Iran that was formerly known as Persis. Over time, the name was extended to apply to the whole Iranian plateau. The people of the region called their country Iran, "Land of the Aryans." The name Iran was officially adopted in 1935.

Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Persia, dating from to the 2nd millennium BCE. Its influence started declining with the Arab-Muslim conquest of Persia towards the beginning of the 7th century. Zoroastrianism today is a minority religion in Iran.

Persian is an Indo-European language whereas Arabic is of Semitic origin i.e. relating to a family of languages that includes Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. Further, Iran follows the Shia branch, whereas majority Middle East nations follow the Sunni branch of Islam.

Except for various minority ethnic groups in Iran, Arabs being one of them, Iranians are Persian. Even after conversion to a full-fledged Islamic country, Iran has retained its language, identity, and traditions, thereby distinguishing it from neighbouring Arab countries.

With the identity of the Iranians firmly established, its geographical

composition also does not match with Middle Eastern countries. It has mountains, dormant volcanoes, plains and valleys, deserts, forests and hot springs. Iran has a varied geographical contour.

A popular tourist spot in Iran is the Lut Desert. It holds the dubious distinction of being the hottest recorded place on earth where temperatures have soared to a searing 70.7°C. It has extensive stony deserts and dunes. The Death Valley in Arizona had a maximum temperature of 63°C. The desert has specific areas that are unique in structure. It is considered as one of the top areas in the world for finding meteorites.





## THE KALUTS OF SHAHDAD

The Kaluts, in the local language, are irregular ridges of sand carved out by wind and river. They stand out from the desert floors like ghostly alien structures. It is a stark raw land sculpted by winds for eons.

The Hamada desert is covered with small and big rocks that appear to be carefully arranged by man. It has been formed by natural phenomena through

wind and water erosion and dramatic changes in temperature. This area is also known as the pavement of the desert.

The Tarantulas Gorge is the largest gorge in Lut Desert. As the name suggests, this gorge is a home to one of the deadliest scorpions in the world. Gandom Beryan spanning 450 sq km is the place where the hottest temperatures

have been recorded.

This desert may have extreme weather attributes, but it still has a river flowing through it, the Kal Shoor River. It is the main river that flows through this desert in winter. Its notoriety stems from the fact that it is salty and acidic, making it unsafe.

Moving away from the harsh and barren lands to the beautiful city of

Isfahan, the city has numerous nuggets that are outstanding. Many of the sights are mosques and other religious places of exceptional aesthetic value. Armenians have lived for millennia in the areas around modern-day Iran. Armenians can be found in almost every major city of Iran. Armenia is a landlocked country on the north east border of Iran. Many of the oldest

Armenian churches, monasteries, and chapels are located here.

The Vank Cathedral is one of Iran's largest and most famous churches. It began as a small monastery in the early 17th century. Subsequently over the years, a bell tower (1702), a library (1884), and a museum (1905) were added. The design of the church is a mixture of Islamic and Armenian

architecture. The interior decorations are spellbinding and make it a unique piece of art.

The other places in Isfahan are Naqsh-e Jahan Square, which in Farsi means 'the image of the world'. Built in the early 17th century, it covers an area of 89,600 square metres. The square encompasses several buildings. The Shah (Imam) Mosque represents the



Persepolis



power of the clergy, the Imperial Bazaar represents the power of merchants and Ali Qapu Palace represents the power of the Shah. In the daytime, the square is a place for traders who set up tents to sell their wares. In the evenings, the square is turned into an entertainment site with jugglers, acrobats and dervishes. It is a place immensely popular with tourists.

Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque is another masterpiece of architecture and tile work of the 16th century. It took 18 years to be completed. It has one of the most beautiful domes among the mosques in Iran. Intricately designed with mosaics, the tiles of the dome undergo change of colour, depending on the light conditions.

Shiraz is in Southwestern Iran.

Founded in the early Islamic period, the city has a moderate climate and has been a regional trade centre for over a thousand years. Persepolis in Shiraz was once the capital of the first Persian Empire and birthplace of Persian civilization. It was the capital of the Persian Achaemenid Empire from the reign of Darius I (522-486 BCE). The name comes from the Greek

Perses-polis, meaning Persian City. It is said that the Persepolis was built by Darius the Great, embellished by his son Xerxes, and destroyed by that man, Alexander, Alexander being Alexander the great. He razed Persepolis to the ground following a night of drunken excess at the goading of a Greek courtesan, in an apparent retaliation for the burning of

the Acropolis by the Persian ruler Xerxes.

Just northwest of Persepolis is Naqsh-e Rostam, a necropolis of four massive tombs for the Achaemenid kings, including Darius the Great, carved into the cliffside. The Cube of Zoroaster, thought to have been a fire temple, sits in front of this tomb. Zoroaster is regarded as the spiritual founder of

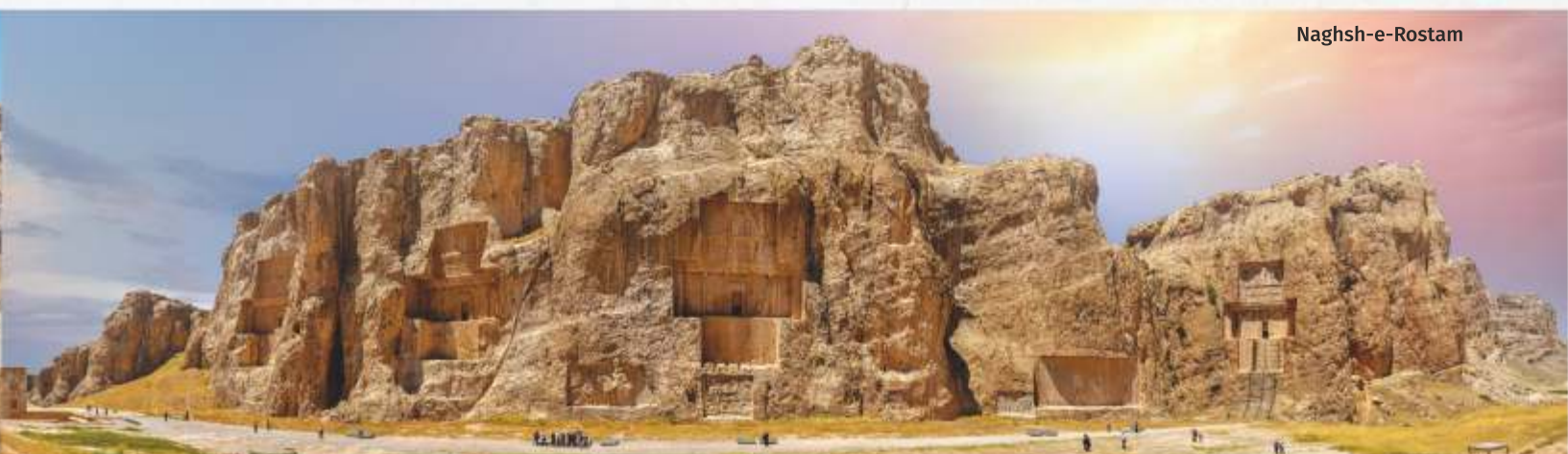
Zoroastrianism. He is said to have been an Iranian prophet who founded the religious movement that challenged the existing traditions of ancient Iranian religion.

Nasir ol-Molk Mosque, nicknamed the Pink Mosque, has stained glass on its windows. As sunlight slant through the windows a fantasy of lights is created on the floor of the mosque.

Ancient Persian Carving in Persepolis



Naghsh-e-Rostam







Choghalzanbil Temple, Khuzestan



Choghalzanbil Temple, Khuzestan



Ghormeh Sabzi

ChoghāZanbīl is a ruined palace and temple complex of the ancient Elamite city of Dur Untashi in Southwestern Iran. The complex consists of a magnificent ziggurat temple, and three palaces. A ziggurat is a temple of Sumerian origin in the form of a pyramidal tower, consisting of several stories. It is the largest structure of its kind in Iran. The site is more than three-thousand years old, and is in remarkably good condition. It is also one of the only ziggurats built outside of Mesopotamia.

There are many mosques and palaces in Iran dating from the 12th centuries. Many of which have been very well preserved, architecturally complex and of high aesthetic quality.

A word about Iranian habits and customs. Like people elsewhere, the Iranians also have their own quirks and customs. They are a superstitious lot. They will burn esfand (a herb), wild rue

seeds, and wave the smoke over the heads, to dispel bad tidings.

Like in India, sweets or soor are distributed on every happy occasion. It is liberally given and also demanded from the person who has suddenly enjoyed a good fortune. Birthdays are celebrated one day prior to the date. Iranians, if they can help it, never sit with their back to you. A person riding shotgun will apologise to the passengers in the back seat. It is all about the complexities of taarof, the quintessence of Iranian social behaviour. When offered something, you are supposed to politely decline at least three times before accepting. To do so right away would be considered brazen.

The Iranian cuisine has been deeply influenced by bordering countries and regions. A gourmet may detect Caucasian, Central Asian, Greek, Russian and Turkish cuisines. So traditional

Iranian dishes consist of staples such as rice with meat, vegetables and nuts. Popular fruits in Iranian cooking include plums, pomegranates, quince, prunes, apricots and raisins. A popular dish is the Ghormeh Sabzi. It is the national dish of Iran. It is a herb stew prepared using different herbs, kidney beans and lamb. Dizi is another traditional Iranian stew prepared using lamb and chickpeas with a tomato base.

Iranian cuisine has depth and history behind it. The Ancient Persian philosophers and physicians have influenced the preparation of Iranian foods. Rules have been specified for strengthening and weakening the characteristics of foods

That is Iran, an eclectic cauldron of religion, ancient cultures, customs, and manners. The people are friendly and in the words of a tourist, stunningly beautiful, both men and women. ■



# VARANASI

## World's Oldest Living City

*Are there not many holy places on this earth?  
Yet which of them would equal in the balance one speck of Kashi's dust?  
Are there not many rivers running to the sea?  
Yet which of them is like the River of Heaven in Kashi?  
Are there not many fields of liberation on earth?  
Yet not one equals the smallest part of the city never forsaken by Shiva.  
The Ganges, Shiva, and Kashi: Where this Trinity is watchful, no wonder  
here is found the grace that leads one on to perfect bliss.*

*Kashi Khand 35: 7 – 10*



Varanasi or Kashi or Banaras, by whatever name one calls it, the city is one of the few destinations, where Hindus attain peace of mind and spiritual bliss. One of the oldest living cities in the world, Varanasi finds its mention in ancient scriptures like Rigved and Jataka tales. The considerable antiquity and mythologies attached to the city make it more beguiling for tourists across the world. But, apart from its spiritual significance and ancient culture, Varanasi boasts myriad other things which people like to see upon visiting this blessed city.

## Ghats

The city is known worldwide for its more than 80 ghats; these ghats are famous for holy bathing and puja ceremonies. Manikarnika and Harishchandra ghats are used as cremation sites. Among other famous ghats are: Assi Ghat, Dashashwamedh Ghat, Raj Ghat, Scindia Ghat, Tulsi Ghat and Munshi Ghat.

Pilgrims visiting Varanasi enjoy the breathtaking view of Ganga Aarti, which is performed at Dashashwamedh Ghat in the evening. Almost all ghats are associated with some stories of yore. Sitting on one, you can travel back to the ancient era. Some of the ghats were rebuilt under the patronage of Marathas, Holkars, Scindias, Bhonsles and Peshwas during and after 18th century.





## Kashi Vishwanath Temple

Kashi Vishwanath is one of the twelve Jyotirlings in India. The jyotirling (Ling of Light) is a symbol of the supreme formless (nirgun), which is reality at the core of creation. Shiv is the form (sagun) appeared from the formless. The temple was known as Adi Vishveshwara Temple.



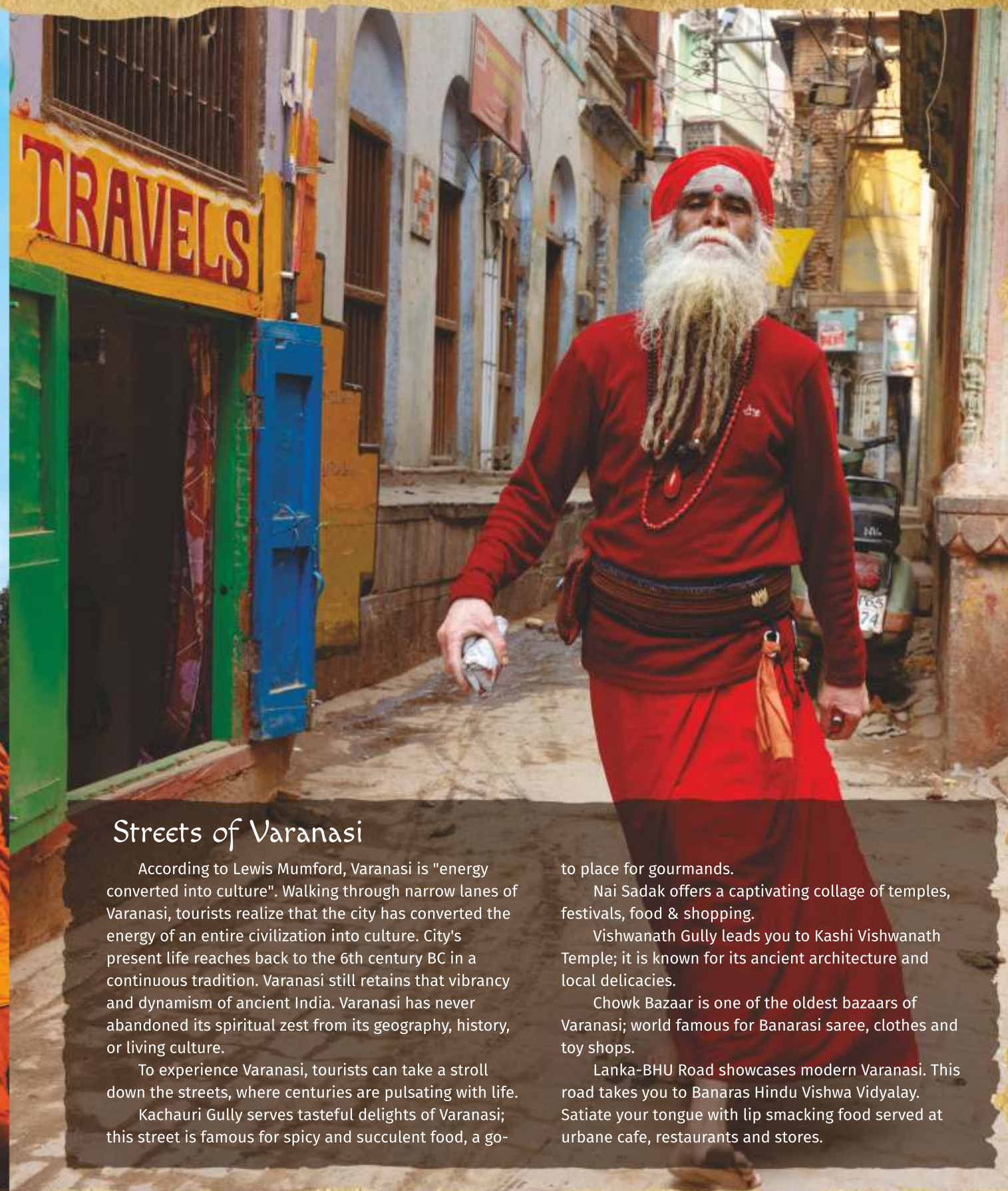
## Ganga

Indians attach motherly instinct to all the rivers. But Ganga, apart from being a mother, enjoys the status of a goddess who descended from heaven at the behest of king Bhagirath. This holy river is considered a heavenly body that flows by the city with a purpose. And the purpose is to liberate sinners from the cycle of birth and rebirth.



## Dhamek Stup, Sarnath

Dhamek Stup was built in 5th century AD; the mound replaced the earlier structure commissioned by Mauryan emperor Ashok in 249 BC. The stup bears exquisite carvings of Gupta dynasty and provides the finest example of intaglio. Built of bricks and stones, the stup is located at Sarnath, 13 kilometers away from Varanasi. The inscriptions on the stup are in Brahmi script. Apart from its antiquity, Dhamek stup is known for its connection with Gautam Buddha who delivered his first sermon here.



## Streets of Varanasi

According to Lewis Mumford, Varanasi is "energy converted into culture". Walking through narrow lanes of Varanasi, tourists realize that the city has converted the energy of an entire civilization into culture. City's present life reaches back to the 6th century BC in a continuous tradition. Varanasi still retains that vibrancy and dynamism of ancient India. Varanasi has never abandoned its spiritual zest from its geography, history, or living culture.

To experience Varanasi, tourists can take a stroll down the streets, where centuries are pulsating with life.

Kachauri Gully serves tasteful delights of Varanasi; this street is famous for spicy and succulent food, a go-

to place for gourmands.

Nai Sadak offers a captivating collage of temples, festivals, food & shopping.

Vishwanath Gully leads you to Kashi Vishwanath Temple; it is known for its ancient architecture and local delicacies.

Chowk Bazaar is one of the oldest bazaars of Varanasi; world famous for Banarasi saree, clothes and toy shops.

Lanka-BHU Road showcases modern Varanasi. This road takes you to Banaras Hindu Vishwa Vidyalay. Satisfy your tongue with lip smacking food served at urbane cafe, restaurants and stores.



## Tent City Varanasi

### Experience the Spiritual Luxury

**T**ent City Varanasi, an upcoming luxurious tented resort on the banks of holy Ganga River, will be an ideal accommodation option for those interested in catching the panoramic views of the serene ghats, temples and historic palaces with steps. The river-facing resort will be an abode to capture the true essence of Varanasi.

Among many attractive features like Spa & Gym, Art & Craft Bazaar, Watch Tower, Floating Ganga Kund, Conference Hall, Yoga by the Ganga, Tent City Varanasi will

let you experience the riverside life with its magnificent river-facing villas with a plunge pool and a private beach.

An initiative of Varanasi Development Authority, Tent City Varanasi is being developed by Praveg Communications India Limited in a 90,000 sq.m. area opposite Assi Ghat. The Resort will have 150+ Luxurious Tents, top-notch amenities and generous hospitality and will offer a wide range of exciting packages suiting requirements of all types of travelers. 🏡





# Wandering through the emptiest places on earth

Source: Gambarni Gianandrea/Shutterstock.com

Sossusvlei, Namibia

Namibia is one of the emptiest places on earth. Consider these facts: A Country almost equivalent to Namibia in terms of area is Pakistan. The population density of Pakistan is 270 people per sq. km, whereas Namibia has a population density of 3 people per sq. km. This country in the southwestern part of the African continent lures both intrepid adventurers as well as photographic enthusiasts. The Namibian landscape is colourful and mercurial as a kaleidoscope. It has a unique charm of its own.

Walvis Bay is a major port on the Namibian Coast. Due to its clean coastal waters, it is known for its high-quality fish, oysters and rock lobsters. A trip to “Dune 7”, takes you to the highest sand dunes in the world that rise to 383 metres. Qutub Minar is 73 metres tall. You can enjoy a spectacular view atop this dune. Snowboarding is a common sport here on the sand dunes. Other popular dunes that soar vertiginously are Big Daddy and Dune 45. It is perhaps the only place in the world where the ocean waves crash into the sand dunes.

Thirty kilometres away is the town

of Swakopmund. It is a laid-back coastal town that takes you back to the colonial era. Namibia was colonised by the Germans. It is replete with colonial architecture and oceanfront promenades with upmarket restaurants. You can partake in traditional German food and beer.

The eerie Skeleton Coast National Park is a strip of desolate coastal desert that abuts the Atlantic Ocean. The sand dunes in this stretch of desert are some of the highest in the world. The barchan dunes i.e. the crescent-shaped shifting dunes are unstable and mobile.

The place is strewn with huge bones of whales bleached by the harsh unforgiving sun. The place is also littered with shipwrecks. The cold winds from the Atlantic sweep in, creating thick curtains of fog that had led to several shipwrecks in the past. The most famous shipwreck that can be explored intriguingly lies on the sands of the desert. The ship Eduard Bohlen ran aground on September 5th, 1909. The 310-foot-long cargo ship now lies partially buried because the shifting desert sands have been reclaiming the sea ever since.

Close to the Skeleton Coast is a place called the Cape Cross, where the first European explorer set foot on the coast of Namibia in the year 1486. A cross was erected in honour of the king of Portugal, by the explorer. The land abounds with seal colonies. It has the highest population of seals in the world, upwards of 200,000. A cacophony of sounds greets you here with seals bleating and barking, as they fight and play while rolling in the sun. An interesting fact is that a male seal can have a harem of up to 60 females. While the seals laze around, the desert lions are on the prowl nearby, while killer

sharks move around with menacing stealth, just beyond the shores. The desert lions here are the only lions known to target marine life.

Desert Safaris take you to the hauntingly beautiful landscape of the Skeleton Coast. Here you can spot the endangered black rhino and elephants that have adapted to desert conditions.

Another place worth visiting is the coastal town of Luderitz. Here too the Teutonic influence is evident. You could easily mistake the neat row of colourful houses for a remote town in Germany, like Heidelberg.





Ghost Town, Kolmanskop

Kolmanskop, a town close to Luderitz, was once one of the richest and a thriving town in Africa. In 1910, a diamond boom in this location led to mass migration of people. Almost overnight, the desert was transformed into a prosperous town which continued for two decades. It had all the appurtenances of a prosperous town. However, with the passage of time, the quantity of Diamond mined, started decreasing. Other places were discovered which stimulated mass exodus from Kolmanskop, turning it into a ghost town. The town which rose from

the desert sands sank into it. Today, many houses have been recovered and restored for tourist purposes.

On a lighter side, Luderitz was the first town in Southern Africa to have an X-Ray machine. The installation had absolutely nothing to do with medical exigencies. It was installed to apprehend workers, who might have swallowed the diamonds!

Namib-Naukluft National Park is the largest game park in Africa. Its terrain is vastly different in places. It varies from a lunar landscape to stunning spectacles of towering sand dunes which loom

more than 300 metres. Sossusvlei ranks as Namibia's most spectacular and best-known attraction. It is a salt and clay pan surrounded by high red dunes, located in the National Park. The pan is an endorheic drainage basin i.e., a basin into which the river flows and does not proceed any further because of the dunes. The water from the Tsauchab River, whenever it is in spate, ends up in this cul de sac like basin. The place is transformed into a spectacular shimmering stretch of water body, attracting birds and photographers from world over.

The Namib Desert is in the heart of the national park. Stepping into it would be stepping into a desert that formed 55 million years ago. It is the oldest living desert in the world.

Located in the southern region, Twyfelfontein has one of the most vivid collections of rock art in Africa. There are about 2500 rock carvings and paintings on 212 slabs of rock, spread over a wide area. These have been engraved on free standing boulders in completely exposed conditions. The oldest of these is estimated to be around 6000 years old. The impressions include rhino, elephant,

giraffe, oryx, ostrich, flamingo, zebra, lions, footprints, and human figures. These rocks are believed to be a place of worship and a site to conduct shamanist rituals.

Going across the northern hemisphere to a dramatically different environment is Greenland, an autonomous nation within the Kingdom of Denmark with a population density of only 0.03 people per square km. Its sparse population is attributed to the fact that 80 percent of the island is covered in ice. Despite the frigid environment, Greenland is still a

fascinating place to visit.

Erik the Red, the Norwegian Viking explorer, is believed to have first settled in Greenland circa 985. For a misdemeanour, he was exiled from Iceland around 980, when he decided to explore the land to the west, which happened to be Greenland. He eventually settled there and named it Greenland, in the hope that a good name would attract settlers. And it did. Many more settlers came in to set up a home and hearth in this island.

The ruins of Eric the Red's thousand-year-old Norse colonies are





Greenland Fjord

still visible today, including a church known as Hvalsey Fjord Church. The Church was built in the 14th century. It was built on the craggy shores close to the slope of the grassy but otherwise barren mountains. The walls of the now ruined church are still neatly lined with stones, with perfect sharp corners. The last recorded event was a wedding that took place on 16th September, 1408.

At the peak, Eric the Red's thousand-year-old Norse colonies had about 5,000 people living in Greenland. The settlements eventually died out. The reason remains a mystery.

One of the most fascinating sights here are the icebergs and glaciers. Look from the window of your room, chances are that you would be able to see a gigantic iceberg, the size of a big bungalow, floating by. Located on the west coast of Greenland, is the Ilulissat Icefjord. A fjord is a long, deep, narrow body of water that reaches far inland. The fjord is covered with massive pieces of ice. It is situated where the SermeqKujalleq glacier calves ice into the sea. "Calve " happens when icebergs break off from the glaciers and float out into the coastal waters. It is an awe-

inspiring sight. The immense glacier SermeqKujalleq, a gigantic mass of ice, more than five kilometres wide and one kilometre thick, slides into the bay and flows at a rate of about 25 metres a day.

Whale watching is one of the top-rated activities here. May is the best time for whale watching, when most of the fjords would have melted. With patience one can spot a whole range of whales. Humpback, blue whales, killer whales, narwhals, beluga whales, sperm whales etc., can be sighted.

Then of course there is the biggest light show on earth, the northern lights, or

the aurora borealis. It is visible in winter.

In an incongruous twist of nature, hot springs are found throughout Greenland. In the uninhabited island of Uunartoq, the springs are at a perfect temperature for bathing. The heated spring waters collect into a small pool, where you can immerse yourself for a long comfortable dip, all the while being surrounded by a harsh landscape and floating icebergs. There could not have been more divergent surroundings. Uunartoq is a short boat ride from the town of Ilulissat. There are thousands of springs in Greenland.

Transport in Greenland is a different kettle of fish. There are practically no roads available for transport between towns. The most common modes of transport are by boat, aeroplane, sled, or snowmobile. If you are of the adventurous type, you could indulge in dogsledding, snowmobiling, or just walking on the ice.

Dog sledding is one of the popular ways of exploring the country. Popular places to explore are Disko Bay, Tasiusaq fjord, Qaanaaq, and Thule. Kangerlussuaq is a small town that serves as a starting point for the 200-kilometre hike into the

Arctic Circle. Also, you can approach the Greenland ice sheet, which is a limitless mass of glacial ice, more than 50,000 square kilometres in area. In this barren frigid landscape, the buildings in the town are colourfully constructed, giving the landscape a cheerful outlook. They make up for the lack of trees and vegetation.

There are of course many more places with very low population density. But despite the sparse population the land has remained in its pristine form. It gives us a glimpse into the distant past when the stirrings of life began here on earth. ■



# ON THE ROAD IN GUJARAT



Narayan Sarovar



Lakhpat Gurudwara

## Coastal Gems of Kutch

The 204 km coastal drive from Lakhpat to Kandla offers access to a number of natural and cultural attractions including Hindu and Jain temples, wildlife reserves, bird watching sites, fishing harbours, craft centres, picturesque villages, fine beaches and historic places. This entire stretch gives a beguilingly attractive view of Kutch, which has extensive mangrove forests and lush green agricultural lands, specially known for its fruit orchards. In summer, the 'kesar' mango of Kutch is much sought after.

At the northwestern tip of India, Lakhpat is an amazing sea fort situated in the mouth of Kori Creek. An attraction is the Lakhpat Gurudwara Sahib, which is a religious place for the Sikhs mainly the Udasi sect. It is believed that Guru Nanak on his way to Mecca enjoyed the hospitality of the owners of a mansion, which was subsequently converted into a Gurdwara or Gurdvara. Guru Nanakji's footwear and the palkhi here are the

centre of devotion. This holy place is protected by the Archeological Department and has won the UNESCO award for restoration.

From Lakhpat, it is a drive of about 56 km to Narayan Sarovar, a sacred centre for Hindu pilgrimage that is one of the five holy water bodies for all Hindus, together with Mansarovar in Tibet, Pushkar in Rajasthan, Pampa Sarovar in Karnataka and Bindu Sarovar at Bhubaneshwar. Considered one of the centres for Vaishnavite worship as per the Shrimad Bhagvat, Narayan Sarovar has a number of temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu, his consort Goddess Lakshmi, and his avatars. The Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary is one of the best places to see the chinkara or Indian gazelle.

A short distance from Narayan Sarovar, Koteswar is a temple site facing the sea.

From Narayan Sarovar, take the road to Naliya, which has a Jain temple. The

Lala Bustard Sanctuary here comprises one of the most important habitats of the great Indian bustard. Other globally-threatened species like critically endangered vultures, endangered lesser florican and vulnerable birds like Stolizka's bushchat and white-naped tit inhabit this area. This is also an important area for wolves.

From Naliya, it is a drive of about 20 minutes to the fishing port of Jakhau. You can see the fishing fleets unload their catch at Jakhau.

Travelling south from Jakhau and Naliya, you come to the turn-off point for Pingleshwar. Pingleshwar and nearby Ashapura are good beaches off-the-beaten trail of travellers. Pingleshwar is also a good site for watching coastal birds. It is a nesting site for sea turtles. There is a Shiv temple at Pingleshwar.

From Pingleshwar, drive to Mandvi, which has some of the best beaches in Gujarat. Visit the majestic Vijay Vilas Palace and its private beach.





Shatrunjaya Hill, Palitana

## Shore Temples of Saurashtra

The coastal highway from Dwarka to Bhavnagar offers access to some of the most revered Hindu and Jain sites, from the beachside temples of Dwarka and Somnath to the temple covered summit of Shatrunjaya hill over Palitana.

Dwarka is among the seven holiest Hindu temple towns, dominated by the multi-storey shikhara tower of the Dwarkadhish Temple looming over the townscape. The Dwarkadhish Temple, located at the estuary of the Gomti near a fine beach, forms part of the Vaishnavite Chardham Yatra, which includes Badrinath, Puri and Rameshwaram. This temple is a fine work of architecture with carvings along its walls, an impressive shikhara tower and ornate balconies. Besides the sacred sanctum, this is also the site for the maths (monastic order) of the eighth century reformer Adi Sankracharya.

For those interested in architecture, the 12th century Rukmini Temple has an impressive shikhara and delectable carvings. The lingam of Nageshwar near Dwarka is much visited by Lord Shiva's devotees. Marine explorations have

excavated a submerged city of great antiquity offshore from Dwarka. A popular excursion from Dwarka is to Bet Dwarka, an island reached by ferry from the historic Okha Jetty. Bet Dwarka has many temples and pretty beaches.

From Dwarka to Porbandar, the road runs past many important temple sites like the Harshad Mata Mandir. You can also visit the beautiful Okha Madhi Beach and its sea turtle hatchery. The marshes on this road are a paradise for bird photography. The coastal city of Porbandar is well-known as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi. He was born in a blue-toned courtyard house which is now open for viewing. Adjacent to this house is the Kirti Mandir, a monument built in memory of Mahatma Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba.

Porbandar is also believed to be Sudamapuri. A temple to Sudama, the friend of Krishna, attracts many devotees.

As you travel south from Porbandar, you come to Madhavpur Ghed, which is associated with Lord Krishna and Rukmani. A fair of the Mer community

takes place near the seashore of Madhavpur Ghed. It is a beautiful site. Nearby, Chorwad has a scenic rocky coast with the remains of the Nawab of Junagadh's palace.

Proceed to Somnath, the site for one of the 12 Jyotirlingas, a shrine where Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a pillar of light. Considered by many devotees as the prime abode of Lord Shiva and the holiest of all the Jyotirlingas, Somnath's temple was destroyed and rebuilt six times, and the current structure was built in 1950. Designed like a Chalukyan temple, it has a beautiful location, looming up by a beach. The other sights of Somnath are the Prabhas Patan Museum near the temple, which houses mediaeval architectural fragments, the Somnath Museum offering an insight into the maritime history of the region, the Triveni Tirth, the mediaeval Sun Temple and Ahilya Holkar's temple at Somnath. A short distance from the main Somnath temple, Balkha Tirth is where Lord Krishna is said to have disappeared.



Dwarka



Somnath Temple





Sun Temple, Modhera

## Architectural Masterpieces of North Gujarat

The road from Ahmedabad to Mount Abu through the plains of North Gujarat offers an opportunity to explore many architectural masterpieces built during the reign of the Solanki Rajputs.

From Ahmedabad, drive to the Sun Temple at Modhera, which was built in 1026AD by Raja Bhimdev Solanki. The temple is superbly proportioned with an impressive stepped tank dominating the forecourt. The tank has 108 small shrines along the steps. Behind the tank is the 52-pillared portico with friezes depicting scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The exterior and interior walls are covered with extraordinarily detailed carvings of

deities, mythical beings and erotic scenes. Typical of sun temples, twelve adityas set into niches in the wall portray the transformations of the sun in each month of the year.

From Modhera, drive to Patan. The old walled town of Anhilwad Patan was the capital of Gujarat during the reign of the Solanki Rajputs. Near the walls is Rani Ki Vav which is one of India's greatest stepwells. Built by Solanki queen Udaimati in 1050, the well presents an impressive spectacle with the seven storey stairway running down from the top to the water level with covered platforms at different levels. The walls along the flights of steps going

down have simply superbly crafted stone sculptures of the Vishnu Avatars and Goddess Durga, while solar discs are carved on the columns of the platform. Though Rani-ki-Vav is extravagantly carved throughout, some of its finest carving lines the well shaft, dominated by sculptures of Vishnu and his various avatars, or incarnations. The chambers around the shaft were probably used by the queens to enjoy the cool air wafting off the water on the warm days of Gujarat.

Near the step well is Sahasralinga Talao, an artificial lake surrounded by carved Shiva shrines but now only a few pillars of the Shiva temples that surrounded it still stand. Patan is also known for its superbly carved Jain temples like the beautiful Pancheshwar Parshwanath Temple.

From Patan, proceed to Sidhpur, which was another important Solanki town. Here, Raja Siddhraj built the

impressive Rudra Mahalaya Temple, which was once a three storey complex with a forest of pillars and subsidiary shrines. Today, only the tall gates and ruins remain to tell of its glory.

Sidhpur continues to be an important pilgrimage. Since Sidhpur is where Lord Parshuram is said to have performed matru shraddha, the rites paying homage to his mother, at this site the Bindu Sarovar by tradition has remained the place for such rituals.

The architectural highlight of Sidhpur is its Bohravads, which is full of exquisitely carved mansions. In mediaeval times, around the 13th to 15th century, the Dawoodi Bohras migrated from Yemen where they were facing religious persecution to Gujarat. Sidhpur's Hasanpura is one of the oldest Bohra settlements in India. The Dawoodi Bohras fanned out to different lands in the 19th century. They have attractive houses with extravagant



Rudra Mahalaya Temple, Sidhpur

brackets and capitals, graceful balconies and delicate wooden grills along the edges of the tin roofs. Some of the houses show strong influences of the European Renaissance period with three-part facades, each part with a tall door or window, ornate pilasters and gabled roofs that are like European pediments. The facades have intricate wooden columns and beams, with subtly concealed joineries. The highlight of most houses is the beautiful covered balcony called 'jharokha', with a window seat to look out at comings and goings on the streets. The Bohravads or Mohallas show superb alignment of the facades, so that no projections are out of place and the height of neighbouring buildings are identical. Inside are teakwood furniture, painted ceilings, floral motifs in plaster, fine woodwork, a profusion of glass and mirrors, delicate trellises and partition screens, rich carpets and rugs and patterned tiles.

From Sidhpur, travel to Palanpur after which you can start enjoying views of the hills. Cross the Rajasthan border to Abu Road, from where the road ascends to Mount Abu. The Dilwara Jain Temples at Mount Abu are among the most exquisite marble monuments in India. This group has five temples built in succession between the 11th and the 15th centuries. The highlight of the temples is the 11-tiered domed ceiling in the main hall. The ceilings are carved in concentric tiers to symbolise the Jain view of the universe as a series of cosmic cycles. The sculptures on the ceiling are so exquisite they will leave you breathless in amazement. 16 figures of the goddess of wisdom are sculpted on the Ranga Mandap ceiling superimposed on the concentric circles set around a pendant. Marble carvers were paid in gold according to the weight of the marble shavings they presented at the end of each day's work.





Saputara



Vansda National Park



National Salt Satyagraha Memorial, Dandi



Source: Roop\_Dey/Shutterstock.com

## The Hill Holiday in Saputara

The drive from Surat to Saputara offers the opportunity to see some places of natural beauty.

Start your journey by visiting the heritage sites of Navsari like the Parsee Fire Temple, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Memorial Museum and the library. Nearby, Dandi has a nice beach and the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial commemorating the Salt March that broke the back of the British Raj.

From here, continue to Chikhli after which the plains give way to the hills. The town of Vansda or Bansda was once the headquarters of a princely state. It has a grand palace. Nearby you can see luxuriant moist deciduous forest with

lofty teak trees at the Vansda National Park, which was declared as a protected area in April 1979. The park has several flowering plants including orchids. The park is home to many mammals though sightings in this dense forest are difficult – leopard, palm civet, small Indian civet, Indian porcupine, four-horned antelope, barking deer, striped hyena and jungle cat. A variety of birds typical of the Western Ghats can be seen like the Indian great black Woodpecker, yellow back sunbird, pompadour pigeon, malabar trogon, shama, rock thrush, grey hornbill and jungle babbler. The endangered spotted owlet is present in these forests. Back on the highway, you

can visit the botanical gardens of Vaghai.

From here, proceed to Saputara passing 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.

Presently, you reach Saputara from where you can enjoy a view of the valley with its tribal hamlets. ■



# A sculptural extravaganza in stone



Chennakeshava Temple, Karnataka

In 1117, after his victory against the Cholas, King Vishnuvardhana commissioned the Chennakeshava temple in the Hassan district of Karnataka state. The construction of the temple took 103 years, and spanned three generations. The temple is dedicated to Vishnu and has been in operation ever since. But why did it take so long to complete? What is so special about this temple?

Vishnuvardhana came to power in 1110 CE, after the death of his brother. He sought an independent existence, to

be free from the yokes of other kings. In a series of battles against the Chalukyas and the Cholas, he established his kingdom in the south. The dynastic rule continued through 1346 CE.

It was a period of peace, when he expanded his suzerainty in the south. It was a period of prosperity and contentment. They built around 1,500 temples in 958 centres. The temple artwork in Chennakeshava temple depicts scenes of secular life in the 12th century. There are numerous friezes

depicting stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. There are more than 80 Madanika or Apsara-Devangana Sculptures in the temple in various dance forms and poses.

Apsara-Devangana or Madanika are sculptural forms of women in various poses. It was common for artists of that period to decorate the outer walls of the temples with figurines of females in various seductive postures. The female figures have minute details of jewellery, costumes and have different facial

expressions. Apsaras are a group of demigods that finds mention in many ancient Indian scriptures. They were attendants to the Gods. They were singers and dancers. They also worked as entertainers.

Soap stones were used in the construction of the temple. These stones are suitable for intricate carvings. They are lighter than granite, making it easier to carve. The stones have a soapy feel to it. These stones are mined in the Tamil Nadu districts of Tiruvannamalai and Salem.

There are 50 intricately carved pillars in this temple. Of these, two pillars are outstanding due to their level of intricacy. They are the Narasimha pillar and the Mohini pillar. As the name suggests, the pillar has the image of Narasimha, an avatar of Vishnu, carved on it. The other pillar has the image of Mohini, which is the female avatar of Vishnu. The Narasimha pillar is intricately carved with minute figures all round from the top to the bottom. A tiny bull the size of a seed has been carved on

this pillar. The pillar has depictions of mythological episodes of Ravana shaking Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiva. The pillar stands 30 ft tall.

Chennakeshava temple is one among a few temples, where the female form of Vishnu has been depicted. Though the pillar is called the Mohini Pillar, it has other avatars of Vishnu. The Goddess Mohini is artistically carved in all her glory. The body is slim and curvaceous. She is adorned with waist band anklets and armbands.





A figure carved on the walls of the temple shows a female figure holding a parrot. Presumably the bird is being used as a messenger to send a letter. Another statue shows a female figure holding the letter. As you scan the various incidents from Mahabharata and Ramanaya carved on the walls of the temple, the story of the epics unfolds before you.

The Chennakeshava temple is unique when it comes to the sophistication of the various carvings inside the temple. The temple has at least 10,000 carvings and several thousands of stone blocks. But not even a trace of binding material has been used to connect any two blocks. The pillars of the temple are so intricately carved that one is forced to think that these were made with some advanced technology. They are made with such precision that it resembles a turbine of a jet engine. Even though these pillars were carved out from soap stones, the level of precision achieved is astounding. The facade of the temple is so intricately carved that it looks as if it is made from a material other than stone.

Praveen Mohan, a YouTuber who examined these pillars in detail, states that there are four rings like structures on top of the pillars inside the temple.

The ring on the first pillar has eight sides. The ring on the second pillar has 16 sides, the ring on the third pillar has 32 sides, and the ring on the fourth pillar has 64 sides. The resemblance of these structures to modern gears are stark. One of the figures in this temple, Mohan pointed out, is that of a woman holding a chain that bears close resemblance to a cycle chain that connects the gears of the cycle together. Was the gear and chain technology known to these people from the ancient world? The mystery, however, deepens further. There are other figures in the temple holding strange devices that are more commonly used in the modern times. Other devices are also seen that look anything but ancient. There are holes in the pillars, so minute that they pass from one side to the other, unhindered. It required very fine tools to achieve this level of workmanship. How did the ancient workmen do it? What tools did they use?

There are mysteries galore, which would perhaps remain unexplained. Without doubt, it is a rich legacy that has come to us from the distant past. If the temple architecture had mesmerised the people, then, it certainly does so even today. It is a sculptural extravaganza in stone. ■



# THE ENIGMA OF THE KAILASA TEMPLE

In Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, on the vertical basalt cliffs of the Sahyadri Hills, is a structure that had held people spellbound from the time it was created. When the architect builder of the structure saw it, he was said to have exclaimed, "Oh, how was it that I built it!" The structure that he was seeing with bewilderment was the Kailasa Temple in Ellora. It is the world's largest monolithic structure carved from a single rock. But its remarkable attributes do not end there.

Named after Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiva, this temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It was meant to be a

replica of Mount Kailash. According to the Archaeological Survey of India, the hills in which the caves are hewn, forms part of the Sahyadri ranges of the Deccan and dates to the Cretaceous era of the Geological time scale, about 65 million years ago.

References in inscriptions of the Rashtrakuta dynasty attribute the construction of Kailasa temple to their monarch, Krishna I (757–72 A.D.). The temple was originally known as Krishneshvara after the Rashtrakuta King.

Unlike other ancient rock structures, this temple complex was

built from top to bottom rather than bottom to top. It was an unprecedented operation, which meant that the architects and the workers had to visualise the creation of the structure top down. It involved systematically gouging out rocks with a simple chisel and hammer to create the structure. This temple was not constructed by adding stone blocks. No external rocks were used.

The temple structure has provisions for rainwater harvesting and drainage. There are underground passages and stairways that connect to multiple levels. All these complex structures must



Kailasa Temple



be planned even before they start carving out the mountain, which requires extraordinary foresight.

To build this 1300-year-old structure, 400,000 tons equivalent to one and a half to two million cu ft of rock were removed. But what happened to the vast quantity of rocks that were gouged out? No trace of the debris has ever been found till date. How was it disposed of? Its location continues to remain a mystery.

The main temple may have been completed in 18 years, but the entire temple would have taken over a hundred years to complete, spanning

multiple generations of succeeding kings. It would have meant synchronising the construction of the entire temple across the time span, to dovetail with the original plan of the architect. It was no mean task.

The Kailasa temple is 30.5 metres high that is equivalent to the height of a modern five storey building. The dimensions of the courtyard of the temple are 82 metres by 46 metres at the base, and 30 metres high. The dimensions of a standard railway wagon are 8.0 m x 2.45 m x 2.95 metres. A simple calculation will show that 1985 wagons can be fitted into this courtyard.

If these wagons were to be placed end to end, it would stretch to a length of 16 km.

The Kailasa bears distinct similarities to the Virupaksha temple in Pattadakal. It is generally assumed that the same artisans were involved in the construction of both the temples. The Kailasa temple, however, is about twice the size of Pattadakal.

A two-storey Gopuram is located at the entrance. Each courtyard in the north and the south has a huge, single rock with a life-size elephant carved into it. The Rashtrakuta kings were known to have won several battles with their

elephant brigade, making them one of their favourite animals. The exterior walls of the temple have scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. There are more than 100 caves in this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Only 34 are open to the public. Out of 34, 12 caves are Buddhist shrines, 13 to 29 caves are Hindu shrines, 30 to 34 are Jain caves.

Finally, why was this location chosen to build the temple? The Deccan Trap is an area of black dirt on the Peninsular Plateau. The rocks are igneous i.e. rocks liquefied by intense heat and pressure cools to a solid-state. Black dirt, which has iron content, has

been produced as a result of the erosion of these rocks over time. The ancient builders at Ellora, like in other places, particularly chose the fine grained formations of the Deccan trap, being ideal for sculpting and rock hewing.

In addition to this, the ancient builders looked for the horizontal and vertical joints in the rock formation, to minimise the labour and time during excavation and rock splitting. These rocks are also ideal for rock hewing, as they are soft during the initial excavation, but hardens on exposure to the environment. The knowledge was widely understood and used in ancient times.

It is an incredible piece of engineering and craftsmanship. The inscription tells us that when this great edifice was built on a hill by Krishnaraja at Elapura (Ellora) and even the celestial beings moving in the sky were struck by its magnificence, as though it was already in existence from time immemorial and not created by mortals. When Sadguru visited the Kailasha Temple, looking at the complexity of the structure and the gargantuan task it engendered to create it he said, "I am proud to be a human being." His simple statement concisely expressed the wonder of the Kailasa Temple. ■





# A HERITAGE TRAIL IN EASTERN GUJARAT

“ THE EASTERN DISTRICTS OF GUJARAT HAD  
REMAINED LARGELY OFF THE BEATEN  
TRACK OF MOST TRAVELLERS UNTIL  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATUE OF UNITY. ”





Rajwant Palace

The headquarters of Narmada district, Rajpipla was the capital of a First Class Princely State falling under the Rewakantha Agency.

Today, Rajpipla has many grand buildings and palatial residences that stand testimony to its princely heritage. On the shores of the Karjan River, Vijay Mahal is an Italian inspired palace with a marble fountain surrounded by palms in the forecourt, a classical colonnaded semi-circular portico as the entrance, Corinthian pillars, Gothic arches, European domes and views of the river Karjan and the Satpura hills at the rear. This palace houses the Rajwant Palace Resort, a museum of princely memorabilia and a tribal and folklore museum. Another princely property near

the river, the Natwar Niwas houses a school. The highlight of Natwar Niwas is the murals from Krishna Leela tales in the hall, and those of Maharana Pratap and Shivaji in the rooms. It is said that an Italian artist named Vali painted the murals. The grandest palace of Rajpipla, the Indrajeet Padmini Mahal, better known as Vadia Palace (as the entire village of Vadia was demolished and re-located to build this palace in the 1940s), was designed by Burjor Sohrab Aga, and executed in a predominantly Indo-Saracenic style, with a few western features Shapoorjee N. Chandabhoy & Company with the building contractor being Navroji Shethna. Inside, however, the palace retains much of the European character one would expect from a

palace erected during the 1930s and 1940s. The palace was set in a 151 acre estate, with well laid out formal gardens and mango-and-lime orchards, and the building itself covered almost 4320 sq yards. It is said to have cost over Rs 40 lakhs, financed largely by the winnings of Maharajah Vijay Sinhji's horses at the races. Located on the eastern outskirts of Nandod (the historical name of Rajpipla), he named it Indrajit Park after his then eight-year-old son Prince Indrajitsinh. It was later known as Indrajit-Padmini Mahal and popularly called the Vadia Palace.

The palace was shaped in a manner that the two private porticos on either side are not visible as one approaches the Palace, subtly guarding the privacy

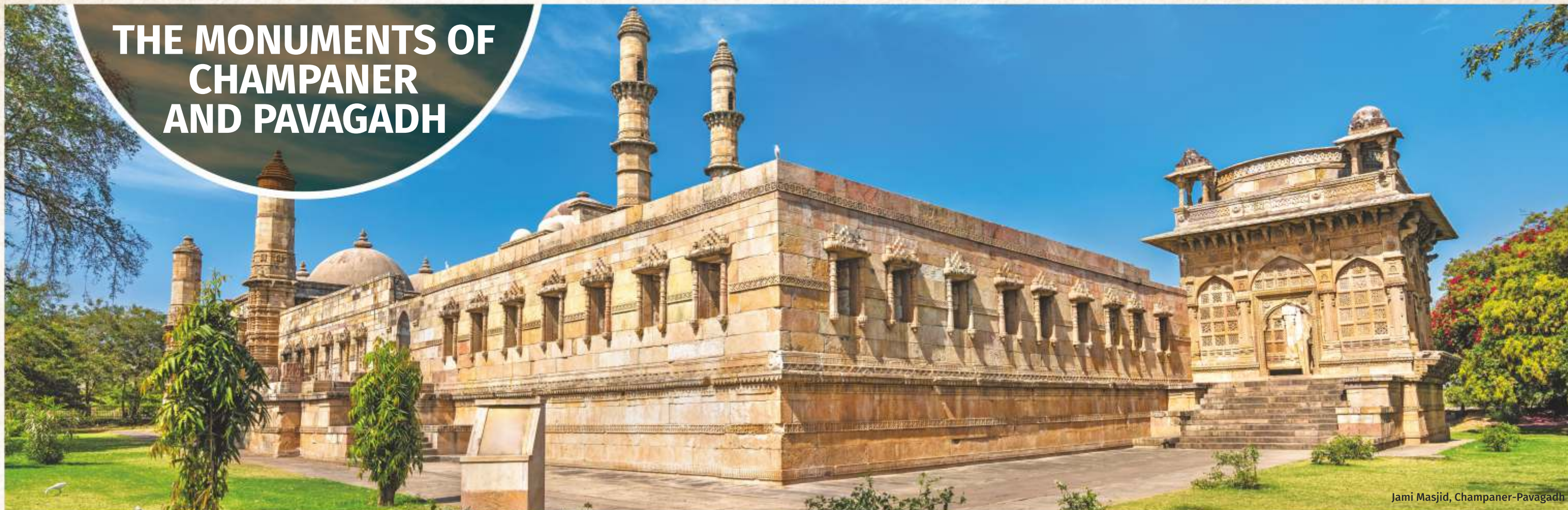
of the family occupying it. The main portico in front was meant for guests and other visitors. Much of the flooring is in Italian marble of different colors arranged in various geometric patterns, such that no two rooms or galleries are floored alike. At the rear is a marble fountain with intricate patterns. The palace has a number of wooden doors and windows of the Palace made from Burma teak. The Palace was centrally air-conditioned, with ducts still visible on the walls. According to the former owners, the palace had 11 bedrooms, a subterranean chamber and a suite facing the terrace, all with baths attached. Raghubir Sinhji, former Maharaja of Rajpipla says the ballroom

had a Burma teak flooring, the sitting room was done up in wall paintings of dancing girls, the bar room had murals of drunk monkeys. The drawing room has beautiful paintings of events from Lord Krishna's lifetime, the prayer room has a series of wall and ceiling frescoes of Hindu deities, the reception behind the portico is painted with floral and faunal subjects. As at the Natvar Niwas, the painting was done by a European artist, yet the quality of Indian devotional paintings and other local themes is flawless. Raghubir Sinhji also recalls that the drawing room was illuminated with lights concealed in marble globes, which were filled also with exotic perfumes. A water circulation system

revolved the marble globes such that the perfumes diffuse and spread in the hall. An elevator took the royal family and their guests up to the first floor and on the terrace. The kitchen was an out-house, partially submerged so that it did not spoil the view from the galleries or disturb the view of the intricate rear facade of the Palace. A 30-yard long insulated passage, took food in trolleys to the pantry in the main building. The Government of Gujarat purchased this palace in the 1960s. The building, its outhouses and the grounds house the Gujarat Forest Rangers College which has trained many forest rangers since 1979, government offices and the Ayurvedic Department.



# THE MONUMENTS OF CHAMPANER AND PAVAGADH



Jami Masjid, Champaner-Pavagadh

The archaeological zone of Champaner and Pavagadh comprises Gujarat's first UNESCO-listed World Heritage site. Here, you can see an impressive variety of monuments including forts, temples, mosques, stepwells, palaces, pavilions, granaries and manmade water bodies.

The forts of Champaner and Pavagadh are said to have been founded by Vanraj Chavda, the most prominent king of the Chavda Dynasty in the 8th century. He named it after the name of his friend and general Champa, also known later as Champaraj. Later this was the headquarters of the Khichi Chauhan Rajputs. In the 15th century, this formidable fort situated between Gujarat and Malwa was coveted by Sultan Mahmud Begada. He began his approach in 1482. After taking over Champaner, Sultan Mahmud laid siege on the hill-fort of Pavagadh, where the

king Jayasimha had taken refuge. After a siege of 20 months, the fort fell to the Sultanate of Gujarat. He is responsible for building many of the majestic Islamic and Indo-Saracenic buildings in Champaner, which he made his capital. In 1535, Humayun led 300 Mughals to scale the fort on spikes driven into rock and stonework in a remote and unguarded part of the citadel built over a precipitous hillside on Pavagadh Hill. He put Bahadur Shah to flight, and though the latter managed to escape to Diu with many of his possessions that way booty is said to have been enormous amounts of gold, silver and coins. The Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2004.

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 Navalakha group, the second group with temples to the tirthankaras Suparshvanatha and Chandraprabha and the third group, situated on a cliff to the southeast 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 of 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.

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 stands 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.





## THE FORT OF DABHOI

Dabhoi, originally called Darbhavati, was established in the early 6th century AD. The highlight of this mediaeval town is the fort ascribed to the Chaulukya king of Gujarat, Jayasimha Siddharaja, who made this his frontier fortress in the 12th century. The fort's highlight is the massive Hira Gate adorned with rich bas-reliefs of warriors on horseback and in chariots, lions, and elephants. It was also an important Jain centre with some fine temples.

Dabhoi is also of interest to railway buffs as the world's oldest narrow gauge line connects it to Vadodara. The railway station at Dabhoi has much to interest for those who like trains. 





# rann utsav

24<sup>th</sup> OCT. 2022 TO 28<sup>th</sup> FEB. 2023 **DHORDO**

**NATURE, HOSPITALITY and HYGIENE**  
at their best than ever

## Key Attractions

- Accommodation in lockable Premium AC Tent / Rajwadi AC Bhunga
- Thrilling Adventure Zone with outdoor ATV Rides, Cycling, Para Motoring & Parasailing
- Engaging Indoor Activities - Table Tennis, Pool Table, Board Games & more
- Visit to picturesque White Rann & Kalo Dungar
- Shopping delight at Craft Village with Kutch's colorful handloom & handicrafts
- Soul-stirring Folk Music and Cultural Activities of Kutch/Gujarat
- Lip-smacking Gujarati & Kutchi Cuisines
- Covid 19 precautionary measures



FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Call 74 40 40 40 40 / 97 12 93 62 33**

[www.WhiteRannResort.com](http://www.WhiteRannResort.com)

Official Operator for Rann Utsav

**White Rann Resort**

Recognized as 'The Deluxe Category Tents' by Ministry of Tourism

Dhordo, Kutch-370 510. Ph. +91 94269 53050



An Initiative of



Operated by





# TORAN HOTELS

AHMEDABAD | Mt. ABU | SAPUTARA | DWARKA | NARAYAN SAROVAR



## TORAN HILL RESORT - SAPUTARA



### KEY ATTRACTIONS

- Comfortable Stay Options
- Warm Hospitality
- Authentic Gujarati Food
- Reasonable Rates

### YOU'RE SAFE WITH US!

- Cleaning & Sanitization
- Temperature & Wellbeing Check
- Hand Hygiene & Social Distancing
- Masks & Gloves
- Food Safety Protocols



#### Contact for Booking:

Phone: +91 2631 237226 Mobile: +91 97277 23947

E-Mail : [toranhotelsaputara@gujarattourism.com](mailto:toranhotelsaputara@gujarattourism.com)

[booking.gujarattourism.com](http://booking.gujarattourism.com) 1800 200 5080

Hospitality with enhanced cleanliness  
and wellbeing measures



## Gujarat Homestays

Home Away from Home



- First-hand experience of Gujarat's culture and traditions
- A wide range of homestays at all tourist destinations across Gujarat
- Curated hygiene & hospitality practices
- Timely scrutiny and inspection to ensure comfort, hygiene and safety

1800 200 5080

[info@gujarattourism.com](mailto:info@gujarattourism.com)

[www.gujarattourism.com](http://www.gujarattourism.com)





# The Spiritual Luxury

- Beautifully located on the bank of River Ganga
- 150+ Luxurious Tents
- Conference Amenities

For Trade Enquiry:

**+91 81500 81500**

[www.TentCityVaranasi.com](http://www.TentCityVaranasi.com)

[booking@tentcityvaranasi.com](mailto:booking@tentcityvaranasi.com)