

INDO ASIA  
DIARIES

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*INDO ASIA TOURS*

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Unaware of what he is about to experience, Eric just picked up his camera and decided to take a walk around the colossal salt desert of Rann of Kutch from his camp at Dhordo. He had made up his mind to capture the best sunset of his life. But instead he was obliged to follow this enchanting sound of music that led him to one of the most incredible experiences of his life. With a mesmerising sunset in the backdrop and dramatic folk music by locals, Eric wishes if he could just put words and music to this capture.

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# SYMPHONY OF SUNSET AND SOUND



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# CROSSING CULTURES

## INDIA: THE LAND OF MYSTICAL TRIBES

India beckons you to have a phenomenal experience by unravelling its cultures, traditions and myths through its unique tribes that will enlighten you with aesthetic heritage. It is fascinating how the tribes of India define the country's cultural roots. Take a plunge into this offbeat affair of discovering the many faces of the country through its simple yet curious tribes with vivid costumes, uncanny customs, beguiling jewellery and a beautiful way of life. Here are some of the most intriguing tribes of India that should be explored to catch an essence of the country.

### Meghwals – Artists of Gujarat

Meghwal tribe was honoured when Mahatma Gandhi gave them the title of “Harijan” which literally translates to "people of God". In the Banni area of Kutch, a tribe that distinguishes itself by its artistic lifestyle, the Meghwals are famous for their sense of traditional art. The beautiful Banni *mud huts* built by Meghwal tribe will leave you amazed by their elegant wall decorations embedded with inlay mirrors, that depict a story of the tribe's vibrant and vivid lifestyle. Exotic and jazzy costumes with colourful threads and exquisite patterns, paired with jewellery and detailed intricate embroidery are not just used for commercial purpose, but are also part of the daily attire of Meghwali womenfolk.

### Bishnois of Rajasthan – The Tree Huggers

Often known as the Tree Huggers, the nature conservationist Bishnoi tribe of Rajasthan is also spread across parts of Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. As one of the world's oldest surviving ecologist communities, the Bishnoi tribe believes that nature is their only religion. This ideology was propounded by sage Jambeshwar who founded the Bishnoi sect in 1485 after a drought that devastated the Marwar region of Rajasthan. They maintain uniformity in colour of clothes with men wearing white and women wearing red, arising from their belief that it keeps humans from jealousy.

### Apatani of Ziro – Worshiper of Sun and Moon

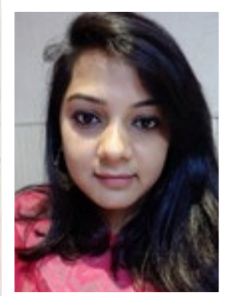
Amidst the blue rolling foothills of the Eastern Himalayas lies an alluring and offbeat village, Ziro, home to the unique Apatani tribe discernible by their striking cane nose plugs as jewellery and indigenous cultivation practices. When asked about the peculiar name of their village, the tribesmen and locals had zero knowledge about the origin of the name Ziro, and they said: “Perhaps that’s why it is called so”.

### Siddi of Gujarat – Straight out of Africa

In the villages of Sirvan and Jambur in Talala taluka, adjoining the Sasan Gir Forest, there is a nook in Gujarat that will be Africa forever! The ebony skinned and woolly-haired Siddi tribe speak and dress like the people of Gujarat but keep their roots alive with lavish African customs. They are believed to be descendents of the Bantu people of the East African region but have been residing in Gujarat since as far back as the 7th century. The Siddi tribe is bound to welcome you with their vividly painted faces and feet pounding on the ground on lively beats of drums, creating a rhythmic and mystical tribal dance.

### Drokpa – Free Birds of Ladakh

Known to be the last surviving tribe of the original Aryan race, Drokpas are settled in the baked-mountains of Ladakh, beyond the popular spots of Pangong Lake, Magnetic Hill, Shanti Stupa and other alluring monasteries. Believed to be the oldest tribe in India, Drokpa people have a distinctive style – woollen dresses accessorised with hand-made silver jewellery, beads, feathers, goatskin cape and unique headdresses decorated with flowers, seashells and coins. They are often called the “free birds” for their unrestrained lifestyle. It is the ultimate experience to take a peek into their fascinating lives amidst picture-perfect Ladakh.



KANIKA CHOPRA

# Footloose in Gujarat

The Keeper of India's Treasure Trove

Gujarat, an offbeat destination of India, holds within some magical surprises bound to captivate the quintessential traveller in you. The state enthral you with its profound sense of cultural heritage, marvellous architecture, alluring beaches and elusive wildlife. The scenic countryside holds most of the state's treasures which entice you the moment you step into the state. Visiting Gujarat will be like taking a walk into India's colonial past; it is the place where Mahatma Gandhi inspired many freedom movements which are an integral part of the country's history. To soak in the authentic and wondrous charm of the state, choose to take the outlandish trails. Travel through the incredible countryside that truly showcases vibrancy with colourful festivals, breathtaking panoramas and exotic locations. From a plethora of enchanting experiences and diverse attractions, we have handpicked the best ones for you to explore.

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## Architectural Gems of Gujarat

An ocean of heritage, Gujarat is filled with stunning historical sites. Before you plan to explore this beguiling place, let's get you acquainted to some of its gems. Exquisitely carved and magnificently sculpted, the **Sun Temple of Modhera** is a sandstone temple dating back to the 11th century. One of the only three Sun Temples in India, it was built in 1026 CE by King Bhimdev of the Chaulukya dynasty.

A flawless fusion of Gothic and Indo-Islamic architecture, the **Mahabat Maqbara** is the jewel of Junagadh. It will mesmerise you with gorgeous winding staircases surrounding the four minarets, fine stone carvings and onion-shaped domes



Also known as the "City of Temples", **Palitana** on Shatrunjaya Hills is one of the holiest Svetambara Jain shrines. The 863 marble-carved temples clustered on the hill are a sight to behold. To get a sensational experience, climb up almost 3,000 steps to reach the main complex, Adishwar Temple of Adinath, noteworthy for the ornate motifs. Spectacular views of the temple will be etched to your memory forever!

A flamboyant step-well in Patan, **Rani Ki Vav** was built by queen Udaymati in 1063 AD and is one of the most iconic monuments of the state. It is known for its unique architectural style and a fascinating display of the artistry of Gujarat.

## Elusive Wildlife & Nature



With rare fauna, the state is home to some of the most exceptional national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Renowned for being the only remaining natural adobe of Asiatic lions, **Sasan Gir National Park** is the top national park to explore in Gujarat. It's a sight to behold when you spot the magnificent beasts from up close while taking a safari through dry teak woodlands and tawny grasslands.

Well known for its population of wild asses, **Little Rann of Kutch** is almost surreal to explore through the enormous salt marshes. **Blackbuck National Park**, **Marine National Park** and **Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary**, (known for flamingo colonies) are some of the other unique wildlife sanctuaries to explore in Gujarat.

## Mahatma Gandhi's Home

Gujarat is well-known for blessing the country with its greatest patriots, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel. It is where India's freedom struggle was reinvented. Once home to the "Father of the Nation", the **Sabarmati Ashram**, also known as Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, lies on the banks of Sabarmati River. There can't be a more fitting place to honour India's freedom struggle. Enclosing a peaceful aura with a unique vibe, the ashram now houses a museum that has a collection of Gandhi's personal belongings. This significant place where Gandhi started the Satyagraha Movement should be on your list when in Ahmedabad. Cities like **Rajkot**, **Porbandar** (birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi) and **Dandi** (where the well-known Salt March ended) will lead you to the paths where Gandhi had walked and changed history forever!

## The White Canvas

A world so white that it makes you feel like it's mythical! A shimmering white desert of India's largest salt marsh, **Rann of Kutch** is at its best during the Rann Utsav Festival in winters. The Great White Rann displays the magic of Gujarat with its spellbinding landscapes and extravaganza of cultures. Traditional music and folk dance with surreal white canvas as the backdrop will simply leave you in awe. One of the best artists in Gujarat, the Kutchi people of **Banni Village** in Bhuj will mesmerise you with colourful handicrafts. The traditions of Gujarat are bound to astonish you with its rich amalgam of art and culture. One of the most outstanding examples is the **Patola weaving of Patan**. Considered a laborious form of weaving, Patola is exclusive to Gujarat. It is said that there are only a handful of families left in Patan who carry out this delicate work of art.



## Kargil to have full-fledged airport for commercial flights



The Jammu & Kashmir government has said that the Kargil Airport will be developed into a full-fledged airport for commercial flight

operations. According to an official spokesperson, BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary, Jammu & Kashmir government held a meeting in New Delhi with Union Secretary, Civil Aviation and other Airport Authority of India (AAI) officials including Member Planning, AAI for development of existing Kargil Airport for full operation of commercial flights including Boeing, Airbus, etc. The MoU with AAI is expected to be signed by July, 15. The foundation stone for the extension of the runway is expected to be laid by the end of August, which will kick start commencement of other works. Governor's Administration is keen to develop Kargil Airport into a full-fledged Commercial Airport for transforming Kargil into a tourist hub on the analogy of Leh, thereby, expanding opportunities for gainful employment of the youth of Ladakh region. It will also ensure assured air connectivity to the region during the winter months when passes to Ladakh region remain cut off from the rest of the State/country due to heavy snowfall and inclement weather.

## IndiGo Launches Flights on The Buddhist Circuit



IndiGo ventures on the Buddhist circuit with the launch of daily non-stop ATR flights between Kolkata, Gaya and Varanasi. Effective

August 08, 2019, IndiGo will initiate flight operations on Kolkata - Gaya, Kolkata – Patna, Kolkata – Varanasi and Gaya - Varanasi routes along with additional frequency on Kolkata - Varanasi route. The new flights are designed to cater to business as well as leisure travellers who would like to experience Buddhist history and spirituality. The flights will provide new and affordable flying options on these routes. William Boulter, Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo said, “As a part of our endeavour to enhance domestic connectivity, our ATR fleet helps us serve regional operations efficiently. We are delighted to have launched these flights on the Buddhist circuit, which not only provide more travel options to customers, but also enable people to come closer to Indian history and spirituality. These flights will also help attract new tourist arrivals from around South East Asia, where IndiGo is adding a number of new routes into Kolkata over the next few months, including services from Vietnam, Hong Kong and China.”

## Cochin International Airport to suspend daytime flight operations from November to March

As per an official announcement, daytime flight operations at Cochin International Airport will remain suspended, starting from November 20, 2019. This is on account of a major re-carpeting work that will



Airport Limited (CIAL), to reschedule their daytime services as there will be no flight operations between 10am and 6pm during the phase. Instead, the daytime flights will be shifted to night.

## Beware! Wandering for more than 3 hours at Taj Mahal may invite penalty



Explore this splendid monument but keep a close check on your watch as well because you will need to pay a fine for spending more than three hours at the Taj Mahal. According to a recent ANI report, visitors will now be charged an additional fee for spending more than three hours at the monument, as a circular implementing the three-hour limit has come into force. In order to prevent unauthorised entry at the Taj Mahal, turnstile gates have been introduced at the entry and exit points. Basant Kumar, Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was quoted saying in the report that as many as seven turnstile gates have been installed at both the east as well as west entry points and five gates are for the exit. For the entry of foreign tourists, separate gates have been set up. He stated that the entry is only through tokens which are valid for three hours, exceeding which, visitors are required to recharge it at the counter, present at the exit gates.

## Jaipur now a UNESCO World Heritage city

Jaipur is the latest Indian city to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage list, announced at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Baku. However, UNESCO claims that while tourism and economic



benefits come with the recognition, the most important thing is that with the UNESCO World Heritage tag, Jaipur will now be protected under

international law. “The first significant and important thing that comes with this recognition is that Jaipur is now protected at an international level. Hence, this is the first and foremost pride of the city of Jaipur and the citizens of the city and India at large. Of course, the boom in tourism comes naturally because many people would be interested in visiting Jaipur, as they are curious to see why the city has got the UNESCO World Heritage tag. If it is not controlled or managed adequately, it can have a very harmful effect, and hence Jaipur, Government of Rajasthan and Government of India have an obligation to protect Jaipur, as they have to reinforce the management of tourists and control the development pressure also,” said Junhi Han, Chief, Culture Sector and Programme Specialist for Culture, UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

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## MEET US AT



Indo Asia Tours will be participating in the below mentioned upcoming Travel events. You can schedule an appointment at [marketing@indoasiatours.com](mailto:marketing@indoasiatours.com) to meet us in person at the show:

- **UPTM: 09 - 11 Aug, 2019**, Lucknow, India
- **KITE: 25 - 27 Aug, 2019**, Bengaluru, India
- **TTM: 19 - 22 Sep, 2019**, Chennai, India
- **India Tourism Mart: 23- 25 Sept, 2019**, New Delhi, India
- **MPTM: 11-13 Oct, 2019**, Bhopal, India

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Gujarat, “the Land of Legends” and I absolutely agree. India has vast heritage and history that takes you to a different world altogether and Gujarat, holds a significant spot in the country. Renowned for its beaches, wildlife, temples, historic towns, automotive and textiles industries, Gujarat is on its way to being one of the top-most destinations in India. The varied landscapes of the state are one of the top reasons for its popularity. There are a plethora of places which you may have heard about in the state, but there are many that are still unexplored and promise a wonderful experience.

With a great importance in the mythological history of India, Dwarka is regarded as the sacred city of Gujarat. It was a mythical city where Lord Krishna once lived. It was a delight for me to explore the city’s religious and legendary saga. While walking on the mythical trails of Gujarat, I discovered many temples and

cities and one that is etched to my memory is the Temple of Somnath. Its imposing architecture perfectly blends with the breathtaking views of the azure Arabian Sea.

Excavated by Archaeological Survey, the cities of Lothal and Dholavira are the perfect examples of Harappan Civilization (Indus Valley Civilization). It is considered to be one of the world’s greatest civilizations. Amongst the other known attractions in Gujarat, I would like to recommend some of my personal favorites; The Sun Temple at Modhera, the UNESCO world heritage site of Champaner, the magnificent step-well of Rani Ki Vav and Adalaj, the delicately carved mosque of Sidi Saiyyed and the incredible Mahabat Maqbara of Junagadh (a fine example of Rococo art in India). I was particularly impressed with the architectural styles of Gujarat that are the perfect combinations of Rajput, Islamic and European. History lovers are bound to fall in love with the enchanting town of Palitana. It is a significant pilgrimage for Jains dotted with more than 800 fine-carved temples on Shatrunjaya Hills. You’ll be particularly fascinated with Gujarat’s exquisite textile industries. A strenuous form of art, Patola weaving of Patan is well-known in India.

Gir National Park is known for being the only home to the elusive Asiatic lions. I particularly remember that morning, when I woke up at 4 AM to catch a glimpse of Flamingo colonies at Nal Sarovar. I vividly remember how the water turned bright pink not because of the sunrise, but because of the reflection of the majestic Flamingos. Not to miss the wild asses and the avian species of Little Rann of Kutch.

Today, Gujarat has become one of the most industrialized states in India. However, it still manages to maintain that old charm and positivity to it. Why not take the Fam Trip with us and explore the magical land of vast Rann of Kutch, the devotional Garba dance during the Navaratri, the gigantic shipyards of Alang and stay in the best of heritage properties that will remind you of the vibrant culture of Gujarat.

Hoping that you have been finding the Indo Asia Diaries helpful in planning your trips and keeping up to date with the news from the subcontinent. Do let us know if you would want to travel with us on this exciting Fam Trip.

Sunirmol Ghosh

## EMPLOYEE of THE MONTH!



**Jitender Singh** | Head - IT & Ecommerce

Jitender’s journey with Indo Asia started 22 years ago. An adventurer at heart, Jitender’s passion for the IT world resonates perfectly with his profession. He is the driving force behind the company’s IT management, online marketing and back office applications. He is most passionate about one thing though and that’s Sufi Music. His love for his two daughters takes precedence over everything else. His many qualities make Jitender an important asset for us. Kudos to him for his achievements.