

EXPLORE!

Tribes and Wildlife of Gujarat
13 days

India - Trip code GAD



Tribes and Wildlife of Gujarat

Dotted with walled cities and small villages inhabited by warm and friendly people, India's north-western state of Gujarat is a corner of India well worth exploring. Search for wildlife in Gir National Park - the only place in the world where Asiatic lions can be seen in the wild, explore tribal villages and impressive salt pan desert scenery at the Rann of Kutch and visit Ghandi's ashram in Ahmedabad. Along the way we discover elaborate temples and important UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Trip highlights

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join Trip in Mumbai and start discovering this dynamic city

Traditionally known as Bombay, Mumbai is the capital of the Indian state of Maharashtra. An exciting place to start our journey, it is the most populated, richest and one of the most vibrant cities in India. Our first taste of the colour and chaos of the city will be a visit to the area where the film 'Slumdog Millionaire' was set; a thriving and industrious quarter called Dharavi which is home to more than a million people. We'll wander through the narrow lanes and alleys learning how the people live and the incredible ingenuity that sees them thrive.



Accommodation: The Sahil Hotel Mumbai (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Continue exploring Mumbai and take the afternoon train to Vadodara

After breakfast we continue our exploration of Mumbai. On Malabar Hill we drive past the Towers of Silence which were constructed by Parsis fleeing persecution in Persia during the 17th century. As Zoroastrians, their dead were deposited in these towers to allow nature to dispose of their bodies. We also visit the Mahatma Gandhi Museum where we'll learn a little about the great man's life and ideas through an impressive collection of books, photographs and letters. Finally we take a walk around the Colaba heritage area, visiting the honey-coloured Gateway of India which was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary and was the place where the last British troops left India. In the afternoon we board our train to Vadodara. The journey is around five hours and is a great opportunity to mix with the locals as we leave Mumbai behind and pass through countryside, towns and villages.



Accommodation: The Fern Residency Vadodara (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Explore the UNESCO site of Champaner - Pavagadh, drive to Ahmedabad

This morning we explore what was once the largest private residence in the world. The Laxmi Villas are a sprawling palace complex four times the size of Buckingham Palace and a stunning example of Indo-European architecture. Exploring the ornate palace and attractive gardens, we'll gain an insight in to the privileged lives of the Maharajas. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Champaner - Pavagadh is an hour's drive away and is our next port of call. Consisting of numerous temples, palaces and fortifications, the oldest parts date from the 8th century, while many of the most complete buildings are from the period that the site became the capital of the region in the 1500s. After a couple of hours at the site we drive to the largest city in Gujarat, Ahmedabad, a journey of around 3 hours.



Accommodation: Lemon Tree Hotel Ahmedabad (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Heritage walk of th Ahmedabad and visit to Gandhi's Ashram

The UNESCO World Heritage City of Ahmedabad is home to impressive Indian-Islamic monuments, exquisite Hindu and Jain temples, and old carved wooden houses that are unique to the city. Wandering through the streets before it gets too hot is a great way to see the all the sights while soaking up the atmosphere and starting to acquaint ourselves with Gujarat and its people. Highlights of the walk include the 19th century Swaminarayan Temple Kalupur, the famous Jama Masjid Mosque which dates from 1423, and a stop for a traditional Gujarati breakfast of Fafda - a type of cracker made of chickpea flour, Gathiya - a savoury snack made from spiced besan paste, and Jalebi - an Indian sweet made of coiled batter that is fried and steeped in syrup. In the afternoon we'll learn more about the 'Father of India' as we visit Gandhi's ashram. Although close to the centre of the city, the location on the banks of the Sabarmati River is surprisingly peaceful. We'll see the small room in which he slept, his famous spinning wheel and round glasses, and learn about his spiritual teachings and non-violent opposition movement which was largely orchestrated from here.



Accommodation: Lemon Tree Hotel Ahmedabad (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive to Bajana via the Sun temple at Modhera and the Queen's Stepwell at Rani Ki Vav

We have a five to six hour drive to Bajana today with a couple of very interesting stops along the way. The first is at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Rani Ki Vav, or the 'Queen's Step Well', which dates from the 11th century and is one of the largest and grandest step wells in India. The next stop will be at Modhera where we will visit the well-preserved Sun Temple. Built in 1026, it is dedicated to the Hindu sun god known as Surya. It has a huge, perfectly designed water tank, an ornate 'hall of gatherings' with carvings from the Hindu epics, and a main temple with more carvings depicting daily life.



Accommodation: Royal Safari Camp (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Explore the Little Rann of Kutch and continue to Bhuj

An early start this morning as we board jeeps to search for wild asses in the 'Little Rann of Kutch'. This large salt marsh is a protected area and the last refuge of the Indian wild ass, a majestic animal with a reddish-brown coat and white underbelly that is more reminiscent of horses than of other species of ass. We return to our hotel for breakfast before leaving for Bhuj, a drive of around five hours, stopping along the way for our first glimpse of the salt-pan landscape that the Great Rann of Kutch is famous for.



Accommodation: Regenta Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Discover the landscapes of the Great Rann of Kutch and meet the nearby tribal communities

Today we visit several villages to meet the tribal communities of the Kutch area. We'll start with a visit to the Lohar community of Nirona village, traditionally blacksmiths and are the only people in the world that still practice Rogan art where designs are painted on to cloth to create colourful saris. At Bhirandiyara village we'll enjoy tea and fresh Mawa (milk cheese) with the Meghwal people. The women of the tribe are renowned for their exuberantly detailed costumes and jewellery, and their circular homes are decorated with elaborate mud brick and mirror artwork known as Lippan Kaam. At the village of Ludiya we'll meet more Meghwal people and also the Samma tribe, Muslims that consider they to be descendants of the Rajputs that once dominated north and central India. Finally, a pretty hamlet called Dhordo is our entry point to the salt-pan desert. We'll spend a couple of hours here exploring the vast landscape, and enjoying the surreal scenery.



Accommodation: Regenta Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Drive to Jamnagar and visit the local market and bazaar

A five to six hour drive will take us to Jamnagar. There are a couple of interesting stops along the way including Ajrakhpur village, which is famous for block printed cloth, and the weaving village of Bhujodi. At Jamnagar we walk around the old town and visit the local market and bazaar where brass and textiles are sold. There are several temples to see including the Bala Hanuman Temple, dedicated to the Hindu god Rama and famous for its continuous chanting which has been going on since 1964. We can witness this incredible act of devotion and even join in if we like, which will make us part of a Guinness World Record!



Accommodation: Hotel Fortune Palace (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Explore Jamnagar Marine Park and drive to the holy city of Dwarka

Today we discover Jamnagar Marine Park which has coral reefs, mangroves and a network of creeks and mudflats that support an abundance of marine and bird life. If we are lucky we might spot some of the park's many inhabitants including octopus, puffer fish, sea turtles, crabs, dolphins, star fish, colourful corals and exotic marine flowering plants. The timing of the visit will be dependent on the tide and may be any time from early morning to mid-afternoon. We'll also visit Jamnagar market before we drive for approximately three hours to Dwarka, a coastal town that has the unique status of being one of the four principal holy pilgrimage places of Hinduism, as well as one of the seven ancient towns where the gods descended to the mortal world - Krishna in this case, an incarnation of Vishnu who is said to have made the city his capital in 3000 BC.



Accommodation: Dwarkadhish Lords Eco Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Drive to Gir National Park and begin our search for Asiatic Lions

This morning we'll make an early morning visit to the intricately carved seven-story Dwarkadhish temple which towers above the town and whose main shrine has been dated to 100 - 200 BC. The small lanes around the temple are dotted with tea stalls and seashell jewellery sellers and the nearby Ghats lead down to the Gomti river close to where it meets the sea. We will witness the Mangla Aarti ceremony here before a four to five hour drive to Gir National Park, the only place in the world where Asiatic lions can be seen in the wild. The park has varied terrain of rugged hills, high ridges, densely forested valleys and wide grassland plateaus. It is relatively small which gives us a good chance of spotting the lions and there is plenty of other wildlife to look out for as well, including several species of deer and antelope, leopards, langur monkeys, striped hyenas, honey badgers, ruddy mongoose and a huge variety of birds. We begin our exploration of the park with a late afternoon jeep safari accompanied by an expert park guide.



Accommodation: Hotel Lions Paw (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 11 - Early morning Safari in Gir National Park, drive to Bhavnagar

We'll head out early this morning for a dawn safari in the national park, returning to the camp for breakfast before driving to Bhavnagar, a journey of five to six hours. On arrival in Bhavnagar we take a drive through the town before checking in to our hotel. Time permitting there will be the option to visit the small Barton museum which houses archaeological remains from the region and has a floor dedicated to Gandhi.



Accommodation: Top 3 Lords Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Visit the spectacular Hill temples of Shatrunjaya

Leaving early, we drive for around an hour and a half to Shatrunjaya Hill. The name means 'place of victory against inner enemies' and is sacred to followers of the Jain religion, who consider it to be the location of the first sermon delivered by the 'teaching god' of the present period of time. There are almost 900 Jain temples clustered on top of the hill's two peaks, and many more on the hills nearby. The oldest dates from the fifth century but most are from the 19th century when the hill saw an intense period of temple building. There are over 3500 steps to the top and it generally takes around two hours to make the climb. We aim to be there before the heat of the day to make the walk to the top as comfortable as possible, and palanquins (a litter carried by porters) can be hired. For those that don't want to make the climb, there is a local market and some pleasant countryside to explore around the bottom of the hill. Leaving Shatrunjaya, we head for Ahmedabad via Lothal, a journey of around five hours. An incredibly old site, Lothal was a small village from 3700 BC and became one of the most important cities of the Harappan culture from 2300 BC. There is evidence that the people of the city worshipped a fire god and may have followed Vedic religious practices.



Accommodation: Lemon Tree Hotel Ahmedabad (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



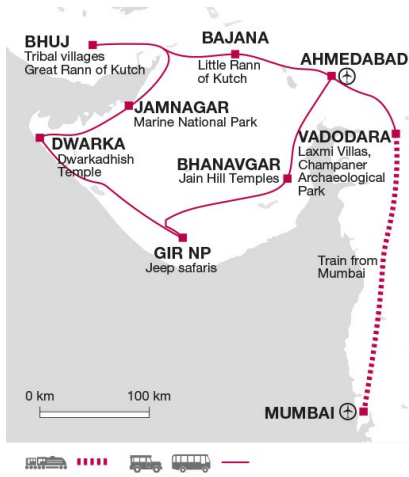
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Trip ends in Ahmedabad

Our trip ends after breakfast in Ahmedabad.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

The state of Gujarat is tucked away in the north-west corner of India and offers a lot of variety in a relatively small (by Indian standards) area. There is unique wildlife to be found with Asiatic lions in Gir National Park and Indian wild asses at the Little Rann of Kutch. There are colourful and friendly tribal communities that maintain age-old traditions and live the same way they have for generations, and there are great walled cities such as Ahmedabad, where the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi passed on his spiritual teachings and plotted his non-violent resistance to British rule. Finally, there is a salt pan desert landscape the like of which you'll find nowhere else in Asia.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus
4WD
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)
Safari Guide(s)



Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

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Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June-September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

Time difference to GMT

+5

Plugs

3 Pin Round

Religion

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

Language

Hindi and English.

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

Bear in mind that between November and March daytime temperatures are warm and comfortable, but evenings and nights in the desert can be extremely cold and hotels rarely have heating arrangements comparable with the UK. Lightweight clothing plus warmer garments are essential. Local people may be offended by western styles of dress. Brief shorts tight fitting clothing etc. should be avoided by both men and women.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals are recommended. For the walk in Jamnagar National Park you should have footwear with thick soles, and be aware that they may get wet.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack.

Equipment

Walking poles may be useful for navigating the steps at Shatrunjaya. Please note that if you are taking your camera some sites charge fees: Wild Ass Sanctuary 1250 Rs, Jamnagar National Park 1300Rs, Gir National Park 1200 Rs

Tipping

Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow an additional £35 for tips during your tour. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

Country Information

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Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£6

Dinner price

£8

Beer price

£1.4

Water price

£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been brought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

Where To Exchange

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

Travellers Cheques

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India. The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below - You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India. Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year. The visa costs \$75. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India. Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £25 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service. If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html. If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare

fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

Safari permit requirements Gir National Park is closely managed by the Indian Authorities. The number of vehicles permitted to enter the park at any one time is restricted and all game drives must now be booked and paid for well in advance. We recommend you book as early as possible in order to have the best chance of securing a space on a game drive. In order to secure a booking we must provide your passport copy and full payment for the safari at the time of booking. Once a game drive has been booked no changes are permitted and the payment is non-refundable. In order to proceed with bookings we require the following: A scanned copy of your passport - you must carry your passport during the game drive and if you renew your passport before travelling then you will need to take both passports with you. We book all of our game drives in shared jeeps, with a maximum of 6 passengers per jeep with a driver and naturalist guide. On occasion we will be sharing jeeps with non-Explore passengers. We will purchase seats for all passengers as soon as permits become available, usually 4 months prior, after this point it is not always possible to secure additional spaces. We cannot guarantee the operation of any game drives until the necessary permits have been purchased. We aim to purchase the permits as soon as they are put on sale, whilst this is usually at 120 days before the date of the game drive on going changes to the booking system means that we cannot guarantee this.

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider.
