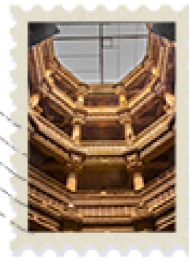


Incredible India
Calling



Ahmedabad

Issue 09 • November 2023

City spotlight: Ahmedabad



ALIVE WITH ART, HISTORY, STYLE, FOOD & FESTIVITIES

Declared as India's first UNESCO World Heritage City, Ahmedabad lies on the banks of the Sabarmati River in the state of Gujarat. It is a city steeped in history, including the Sabarmati Ashram, Mahatma Gandhi's home during the Indian independence movement, which holds immense significance. The city has a thriving arts and culture scene, with world-class museums such as the Calico Museum of Textiles and the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial, with a collection of historical artefacts and exhibits. It is dotted with lakes like the Kankaria Lake that offers paddle boating, a mini zoo and a laser light show.

The city is renowned for its exuberant celebrations of the Navratri and Uttarayan festivals. It transforms into a city of dancing and devotion as it hosts one of the most spirited and colourful Garba and Dandiya Raas celebrations, and the annual kite-flying festival of Uttarayan, when the skies come alive with a display of colourful kites. The Bhadra Fort in the heart of the city celebrates national festivals within its walls. Not to forget the Narendra Modi Stadium, the largest venue of the Cricket World Cup matches. Its bazaars offer an unforgettable experience with markets like Manek Chowk and Law Garden brimming with mouthwatering street food, treats, the loved dhoklas, spicy street snacks, or shopping for colourful textiles.



TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN AHMEDABAD

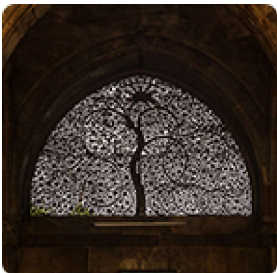
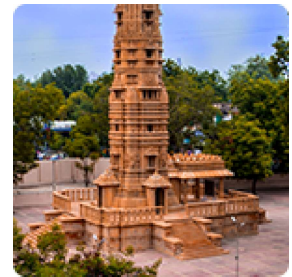


Go back in time in Lothal

Lothal, 75 km from Ahmedabad, stands as a testament to the ancient Harappan civilisation. This excavated site offers insights into the architectural and societal intricacies of the Indus Valley civilisation, hinting at its connection to the Vedas. A museum on the premises displays 4,500 years of history. Also known as the 'Mound of the Dead', Lothal began as a pottery village circa 2450 BCE. It evolved into a thriving colony with artisans and traders arriving by sea, transforming it into an industrial centre and a key port. Despite being ravaged by floods in 2350 BCE, Lothal was rebuilt with fortified walls, an artificial dock and warehouses. Subsequent floods led to the city's transition around the 16th century from a thriving civilisation to an archaeological site.

The beauty of Hutheesing Jain Temple

Located outside the Delhi Gate in Ahmedabad, Hutheesing Jain Temple offers a glimpse into the rich history of Jain culture. Spread over a sprawling courtyard, the temple features a grand mandapa surmounted by a large ridged dome, which is supported by 12 ornate pillars. The Garbhagriha (main shrine) on the east end reaches up into three carved spires. The complex is further adorned by 52 small shrines dedicated to the various Tirthankars, making it a unique spiritual destination for Jain pilgrims and a captivating one for visitors looking for a deeper connection with India's traditions.

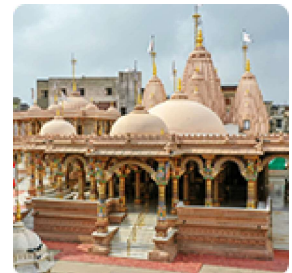


Marvel at the Sidi Saiyyed Mosque

This mosque, constructed in 1573, is renowned for its stone lattice windows, popularly known as the 'Sidi Saiyyed Ni Jali'. These intricately carved windows depict delicate intertwining branches, tree of life, symbolising life's interconnectedness. The grandeur of the mosque lies not only in its architectural finesse but also in the spiritual aura that envelops the premises. It is documented as the last major mosque built in Ahmedabad under the Mughal rule. The mosque was constructed during the last year of the rule of the Gujarat Sultanate.

The blessed Shree Swaminarayan Mandir

The Swaminarayan Temple, which stands in the heart of Kalupur, Ahmedabad was blessed in 1822 by Shree Swaminarayan Bhagwan himself. It is a masterpiece of traditional Gujarati design, with intricate carvings and artwork, evident in the temple's sculpted pillars and ornate domes. The most awe-inspiring feature lies in the exquisite wooden carvings adorning the temple, a testament to the craftsmanship of local artisans of that time. Each panel narrates stories from Hindu mythology, captivating the imagination. The temple complex encompasses a large courtyard, where devotees congregate for festivals and daily rituals.





Meet in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad is fast emerging as a prime destination for MICE tourism, making it an ideal choice for business and incentive groups. The city has state-of-the-art convention centres, luxurious hotels with cutting-edge conference facilities, and has excellent connectivity. The thriving business environment of the city is complemented by its rich heritage and culinary delights, making it a great destination for corporate events. Some of the best conference and exhibition venues are offered by the Gujarat University Convention and Exhibition Centre (GUCEC), YMCA International Centre, Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, amongst many others.

[Read more on Ahmedabad](#)

India Celebrates

In India, festivals offer a precious opportunity to step away from fast-paced life and let you reconnect with your roots. Beyond the celebrations and rituals, these occasions play a crucial role in promoting understanding and tolerance with shared experiences. On Diwali this year, Lord Ram's kingdom, Ayodhya glowed with 2.2 million diyas lit by people on the ghats along the Saryu river.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER



Govardhan Puja

Diwali is a 5-day celebration and Govardhan Puja falls on the 4th day. The initial days of Diwali are spent invoking divine blessings for wealth and abundance, the day of Govardhan puja allows an offering of gratitude. It celebrates Lord Krishna's lifting of the Govardhan Hill to protect the residents of Vrindavan from torrential rain. Mathura and Vrindavan, with their ancient temples, become the centre of festivities, with elaborate decorations and traditional rituals to give thanks for the protection of the Lord.

Where to celebrate:

13 November 2023

Mathura and Vrindavan, the birthplace of Lord Krishna and where he grew up, become the heart of Govardhan Puja celebrations. The revered Govardhan Hill, 20 km from both towns, stands here as a symbol of divinity.

India International Cherry Blossom Festival

The India International Cherry Blossom Festival unfolds an enchanting against the backdrop of the majestic Khasi Hills. The landscape comes alive in hues of pink and white, celebrating the delicate beauty of these blossoms and showcasing Shillong's cultural diversity through a myriad of activities, from traditional dances to live music performances and choir singing contests, from graffiti to art competitions, from adventure sports to the choicest local cuisines, offering a platform for cultural exchange and festivities.

Where to celebrate:

17- 19 November 2023

Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya, plays host every year to the India International Cherry Blossom Festival, promoting music, art, and culture while celebrating the ethereal splendour of the blossoms.



Pushkar Festival

The annual Pushkar Mela is a journey into Indian folklore, tradition and festivities. This centuries-old camel fair in Rajasthan transforms the arid landscape into a carnival of colours, sounds, and aromas. Against the backdrop of the sacred Pushkar Lake (said to be created by the falling of a petal from Lord Brahma's lotus) and the serene Aravalli Range, it includes traditional music, the bright swirl of Rajasthani attire, and the lively bargaining at one of the largest camel markets in the world. Activities like hot-air ballooning, horse and camel rides, sunset safari trips and quad biking add to the festivities.

Where to celebrate:

20 -28 November 2023

The Pushkar Mela takes place on Kartik Purnima (full moon), typically in November. Take a scenic road journey from Jaipur (140 km). As the event attracts a large influx it is advisable to plan ahead.

Dev Deepawali

The belief behind Dev Deepawali is that the gods themselves descend to celebrate Diwali on the banks of the Ganges, the most sacred river in India.

The festival's also celebrates the victory of Lord Shiva over demon Tripurasur, symbolising the conquest of light over darkness, and goodness over evil. Varanasi is bathed in lights at dusk with thousands of Diyas (earthen lamps) illuminating every temple, house, and ghat along the river. Boats lit with candles and people throng the riverbanks. Dramas, musical concerts and folk dances are also performed. Beyond Varanasi, other cities along the Ganges also embrace the spirit of Dev Deepawali.

Where to celebrate:

26 November 2023

Varanasi and Ayodhya are the cities to visit for Dev Deepawali, offering the best spiritual and visual experience. Navigating the city's alleys, aglow with millions of diyas, is a celebration in itself.





Guru Nanak Jayanti or Gurburab

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, casts a spell across all of India to celebrate the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after defeating the demon king, Ravana. It is celebrated with great jubilation, illuminating the entire country with the warm glow of thousands of oil lamps, fireworks, and beautifully decorated homes, shops and streets. The air is filled with a festive spirit, the aroma of sweets is everywhere, shared with affection and laughter. Families come together and exchange gifts, offer prayers together to Goddess Lakshmi for prosperity, and partake in firework displays that light up the night sky.

Where to celebrate:

12 November 2023

It is celebrated across India. While customs and traditions may vary from region to region, the essence of Diwali remains the same. The entire nation is aglow with oil lamps and decorative lights, celebrating light over darkness.

Explore India in November-December

Discover Gold in India! From the glistening deserts to the golden beaches on our shores, and even the arid forests, home to animals like the golden Asiatic lions, majestic tigers, graceful deer, beloved elephants, and colourful migratory birds. As the temperatures cool, enjoy the warmth of the land and its people, experience beautiful landscapes that make India truly golden.



Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

Jaisalmer lies in the heart of the Thar Desert and is known as the 'Golden City'. The city's golden sandstone architecture, intricately carved havelis, and the imposing Jaisalmer Fort, one of the few forts still inhabited, create a spellbinding skyline. Explore the narrow winding lanes of the fort with little shops displaying gems of Rajasthani artistry. Ride the camel safaris into the rolling dunes and become a part of the vast desert landscape. The local markets add to the experience, and the desert festivals alive with the colours and crafts of Rajasthan bring the city to life with folk music, dance, and camel races.

Orchha, Madhya Pradesh

Winter is the perfect season to visit Orchha, which lies on the banks of the Betwa River. It boasts architectural wonders like the Orchha Fort, a stunning amalgamation of Mughal and Rajput styles, and the Jahangir Mahal, an ode to the artisans of the 17th century. The Chhatris (cenotaphs) along the riverbank, stand as nostalgic reminders of Orchha's royal past. The Ram Raja Temple is unique as a palace turned into a sacred site. A quiet boat ride on the river is like a history lesson. It also offers river rafting, and nearby adventure camps provide adrenaline-fueled activities. The busy bazaars are delightful, showcasing local crafts and cuisine.



Khimsar, Rajasthan

Khimsar in Rajasthan lies in the golden deserts of Rajasthan, a city with a blend of history, culture, and natural wonder. The imposing Khimsar Fort, turned into a heritage hotel, dates back to the region's regal legacy. Exhilarating camel safaris, traverse the undulating Thar Desert, and the Jain Temples and Sachiya Mata Temple, among many others add a spiritual touch to the town. The Nagaur Festival is a celebration every winter of folk music, dance, and traditional sports, providing a great Rajasthani experience. Nature enthusiasts can explore the Dhawa Doli Wildlife Sanctuary, less than 150 km away, home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Gir National Park, Gujarat

The Gir National Park safari adventure in the heart of Gujarat is perfect for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers. Renowned as the last abode of the Asiatic lions, Gir presents a rare opportunity to witness these beautiful creatures. The park's diverse ecosystem of deciduous forests and sprawling grasslands create a rich biodiversity, making it a golden haven also for birdwatchers and wildlife photographers. Beyond the thrill of sighting lions, Gir offers an escape into nature to explore its scenic trails, and engage with local communities. With its unique blend of wildlife conservation and natural beauty, Gir offers a glimpse into the untamed wonders of Indian wilderness.



Mandwa and Alibaug, Maharashtra

This is the perfect time to enjoy a trip to Mandwa. A short ferry ride from Mumbai offers a perfect escape to the sandy shores to relax on the beaches against the backdrop of swaying palms or indulge in activities like jet skiing and banana boat rides, or visit the well known fish market. The historic Karmarkar Museum provides a glimpse into the region's cultural heritage with beautiful sculptures and artefacts. Additionally, enjoy a visit to nearby Alibaug, with its historic Kolaba Fort and vibrant markets. Explore the fort's maritime history, indulge in local crafts and culinary delights, and unwind in luxurious beachfront resorts. As the sun sets, both Mandwa and Alibaug offer beachfront shacks providing delectable seafood.

Beyond Incredible



A GLOBAL CELEBRATION OF INDIAN FESTIVALS

Participating in festivals in India goes beyond mere cultural ceremonies; it symbolises cherished traditions that knit together families and friendships. Beyond the traditional rituals, ornate decorations, and sumptuous feasts, these occasions foster a sense of unity and deepen bonds, creating a shared joy between loved ones and generations. In India, celebrating festivals with friends and family is more than indulging in customs, it captures the very essence of togetherness, love, and the enduring connections that bring people closer in the shared embrace of tradition and celebration.

Incredible India has unveiled its digital campaign, Colours of India, set to illuminate all upcoming festivities. This imaginative initiative extends a warm invitation to people worldwide, encouraging them to join in the celebration of India's many festivals, fostering a sense of global togetherness. The campaign microsite serves as a virtual gateway for people to send personalised invitations to their friends, families, and loved ones, inviting them to become a part of the joyous revelry. Through this journey, we will strive to promote the rich narratives enveloping each key festival of the season, aiming to capture the world's interest and curiosity. Come and join the fun with #ColoursOfIndia

FESTIVE TRADITIONAL BELIEFS:



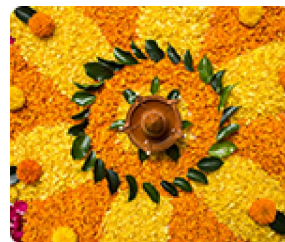
BANDHANWAR OR TORAN

It is a door hanging to attract Goddess Lakshmi, usually made with marigold flowers and mango leaves for festive occasions and weddings.



SHANKHA

This is a conch shell used as an embouchure, like a trumpet. It is blown as a Hindu ritual to initiate ceremonies. In the past it was also used as a war trumpet.



RANGOLI

An Indian art form considered auspicious on festivals and special occasions, made on the floor outside homes with finely ground rice powder, colours, and flower petals.



MAULI

Mauli threads, tied on the wrist as a blessing after prayers are believed to protect us and keep us safe from negative energy and diseases.

[Click here and invite your loved ones](#)

Truly Indian

It is the Government of India's vision to leverage India's rural heritage in creating an inviting and responsible tourism segment by engaging rural experiences, thereby promoting indigenous jobs and preserving local culture and heritage, with the support of the industry, NGOs, and the community for development and promotion of rural tourism in the country.

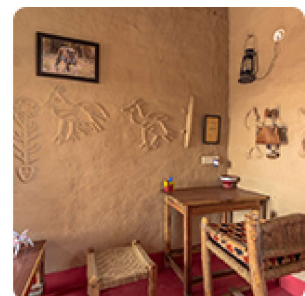
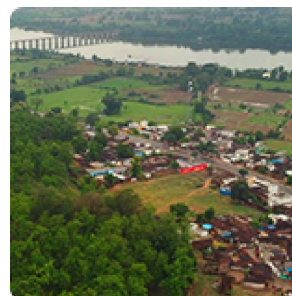
MADLA VILLAGE IS A 2023 GOLD CATEGORY WINNER FOR RURAL TOURISM



Madla

Madla village in Madhya Pradesh has the beautiful combination of the cleanest river, mountains, and dense forests within its vicinity. River Karnawati (Ken) meanders through its heart, creating a gorgeous backdrop. Madla's commitment to preserving its natural resources is truly commendable, contributing to the village's distinction of a gold category winner. Situated just 10 km from the enchanting Pandava Falls and Caves, very close to Panna National Park, and a mere 19 kilometers from the UNESCO world heritage site of Khajuraho, Madla offers a gateway to both natural and cultural wonders.

Beyond its scenic allure, Madla presents captivating folk music and dance at local festivals, along with the delectable cuisine of Bundelkhand. The traditional architecture of the houses retains the essence of village life, adorned with paintings that depict local culture and artistry. It offers an authentic experience of traditional games played in homestays, providing a glimpse into the rich communal life of the village. The local emphasis on stitching and crafting unique souvenirs adds to the cultural experience. Visitors are greeted by an extraordinary experience that fosters and encourages sustainable growth, ultimately setting a gold standard for rural development.



Things to do:

- ▶ **Explore:** The village offers activities such as farming, trekking, nature walks, 'Pardhi' walks with people of the local tribe, and farm-to-plate initiatives amongst others.
- ▶ **Safari:** Take a safari to the Panna Tiger Reserve just 1 km away.

- ▶ **Trekking:** Trek to the beautiful Pandav and Raneh Falls only 7-9 km away.
- ▶ **Sightseeing:** Visit the Panna temples at a distance of 20 km and 26 km to the Majhghwa diamond mines. And if you haven't already visited Khajuraho, it is only 28 km away.
- ▶ **Souvenir shopping:** It has a Responsible Souvenir Centre enhancing earning opportunities for women trained here.

Incredible India!

Quiz on Ahmedabad's Heritage & Attractions.

Let the quiz unveil Ahmedabad's history, architecture, and local delights. Join the quiz for an exciting journey through the heart of Gujarat's culture and history.

Complete the Incredible India Quiz and take home some amazing prizes.

Feel free to answer when you're ready!

Q1. Which museum in Ahmedabad is renowned for a remarkable collection of rare textiles, including historical costumes, fabrics, and artefacts?

- a. Sanskar Kendra
- b. Vechaar Museum
- c. Calico Museum
- d. Auto World Vintage Car Museum

Q2. Founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1917, which historical site in Ahmedabad served as the epicentre of India's struggle for independence?

- a. Adalaj Stepwell
- b. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial
- c. Jhulta Minara
- d. Sabarmati Ashram

Q3. What is the name of the river that flows through Ahmedabad?

- a. Tapti
- b. Sabarmati
- c. Yamuna
- d. Ganges

Q4. Which iconic mosque in Ahmedabad is known for its intricate stone lattice windows depicting the tree of life?

- a. Sidi Saiyyed Mosque
- b. Bhadra Fort
- c. Ahmed Shah's Mosque
- d. Manek Chowk

Mail your answers to us at incredible-india@gov.in with your Name, Age, Country for a chance to win prizes.

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