

## **6N/7D Package of Ahmedabad – Dwarka – Somnath – Diu – Gir**

### **Day 1: Ahmedabad**

Arrival in Ahmedabad – a World Heritage City. Check into the hotel and after freshen up, visit:

#### **Gandhi Ashram:**

Mahatma Gandhi, after coming back from South Africa had his first religious retreat built in Ahmedabad's Kochrab area in the year 1915 on 25th May. The ashram was later on shifted to one of the banks of the Sabarmati River on an open tract of land. Gandhiji named the retreat as 'Sabarmati Ashram' as it was located on the bank of the Sabarmati River that passes through Ahmedabad. The date of the shifting is recorded as 17th June 1917. He made this transfer because he had taken a resolve to lead life like a poor, rustic Indian who earned his livelihood through farming and farm-related activities. The ashram served as the nerve-centre for the nation's freedom struggle. It was from this ashram that Mahatma Gandhi launched the Satyagraha movement on 12th March in 1930 and journeyed all the way to Dandi Beach by foot covering a distance of more than 300kms that took about 24 days. Gandhi's office was located in 'Hridaya Kunj' which was actually a cottage that was eventually turned into a museum. Sabarmati Ashram is one of the most important monument in Indian Independence History and today it is the first thing for a tourist visiting Gujarat to visit.

#### **Adalaj Stepwell:**

Adalaj Stepwell near Ahmedabad is one of the most beautiful Step-well in India with a perfect mixture of the Hindu and the Islamic architecture. Originally, it was being constructed by Rana Veer Singh but was completed by Sultan Mahmud Begada of Ahmedabad as he had killed the former to expand his kingdom. The stepwell was completed as the Queen of Veer Singh demanded its completion from Mahmud Begada who had proposed to marry her after his husband's demise. This resulted in the fusion of Indo-Islamic architecture in the stepwell. This 5 storey stepwell is constructed in such a way that sunlight cannot penetrate directly inside the stepwell which results in difference of 5 degrees Celsius in temperature from the normal temperature. The intricate carving on the columns and the windows of the stepwell is a treat to watch for any architectural lover.

#### **Swaminarayan Akshardham:**

One of the two Akshardham of the Bochasanwasi Aksharpurushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), Akshardham in Gandhinagar was the first to be constructed and completed in 1991. Built in Pink Sandstone, this magnificent structure is a sight to behold. Thousands of people visit it every day for its beauty and also the exhibition halls and the first Spiritual Light and Sound Show in the world 'Sat-chit-anand'. This famous temple was attacked by the terrorists in 2002 where around 30 people lost their lives. The main deity of the temple is Lord Swaminarayan who is considered as an incarnation of Lord Krishna and have a ardent following in the state of Gujarat.

Overnight at Ahmedabad.

### **Day 2: Ahmedabad – Dwarka**

Today morning, check out and proceed towards Dwarka (450 kms/ 9 Hours). Reach Dwarka – one of the four Chardhams and the Saptarishis as per Hindu Religion. Visit:

#### **Dwarkadhish Temple:**

The famous Dwarkadhish Temple is located in the pilgrim district of Dwarka. The temple is dedicated to Hindu God Krishna and is also known as the Jagat Mandir. The Dwarkadhish Temple has two entrances on the north and south called the Moksha Dwar and SwargaDwar respectively. The various Aartis and Poojas that are done on a timely basis are very spiritual to watch. The temple structure is also a very important feature with its giant pillars and the 56 steps that leads to the Gomti River Banks on the face of the Arabian Sea. The Dwarkadhish Temple is a must visit tourist location in Gujarat worth a memorable trip. The temple receives great patrons of religious disciples and one can surely get allured by the grand reception around. It has a flag at the top which shows both the sun and the moon. The flag gets changed 5 times every day having the same symbol. The main temple is hugely built with 72 pillars supporting it.

Overnight at Dwarka.

### Day 3: Dwarka

Today morning, visit:

#### Bet Dwarka:

Bet Dwarka is famously associated with ancient Vedas dating back to the Mahabharata. The small island also signifies proof in the ancient Indus Valley civilization. The Sri Krishna Temple here is known to feed Brahmins as the old belief continues of Lord Krishna being fed with rice at this spot by his friend Sudama. The devotees here follow the same practice by offering rice to Brahmins present there. The Lord Krishna idol that is worshipped here is considered to be crafted by Rukmini. Hindu sage Sri Vallabhacharya is credited with the establishment of the temple near to 500 years ago. Beyt Dwarka has been featured in the Mahabharata as well as SkandaPurana. As per Umashankar Joshi, Antardvipa who has been referred to as SabhaParva in Mahabharata identified as Yadava of Dwarka who used to travel by boats. . Beyt Dwarka derives its name from Shankhodhar which is an island full of conch shells. The archeological remains that are found below the sea also suggest that there was a settlement that existed during the times of Late Harrappan era. The period can be dated to the times of Maurya Empire and a part of the Okha Mandal or Kishdwip. In the inscription by Simhaditya in the 574 AD, Dwarka has also been mentioned.

#### Nageshwar Temple:

The Nageshwar Jyotirling temple of Dwarka is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and a mentionable religious shrine that is marked in the Shiva Purana. The temple complex is compact and built to accommodate a fair share of pilgrims. The main idol of Shiva is worshipped with daily Aradhanas and Aartis and the idol and the idol is 25m in height. The self-existence of the Nageshwar Jyotirling goes back to the stories of how the temple got its name Darakavana from the deoghar trees. The followers believe that Lord Shiva appeared here from the ray of light giving it the name. Early religious sages believed that there are 64 Shiv Jyotirling among which the Nageshwar Jyoti is one. In the Hindu Purana of the Shiva the Nageshwar Jyotirlinga is one of the 12Jyoti religious shrines. The Nageshwar Jyotirlinga Temple also is believed to be about the evil sprite called Daruka. Daruka attacked a follower of Shiva named Supriya and trapped him under the sea in Darukavana, where snakes and many other demons resided. Many other humans were also taken captive in the underwater demon land. Legends say the imprisoned people led by Supriya started praying to Lord Shiva chanting his name and the Lord actually appeared to free him off their plight.

#### Rukmani Temple:

The **Rukmini Devi Temple** is a temple in Dwarka, 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) away from Dwarka, India. It is dedicated to Rukmini, Krishna's chief queen. The temple is said to be 2,500 years old but in its present form it is inferred to belong to the 12th century. It is a richly carved temple decorated with sculptures of gods and goddesses on the exterior with the sanctum housing the main image of Rukmini. Carved naratharas (human figures) and carved gajatharas (elephants) are depicted in panels at the base of the tower. An interesting legend is narrated to justify separate dwelling temples, far away from each other, for Rukmini and her husband Krishna. It is said that at the request of sage Durvasa (who was renowned for his short temper and bestowing curses) Krishna and Rukmini pulled a chariot taking sage Durvasa to their house for dinner. On the way, when Rukmini asked for water to quench her thirst, Krishna drew Ganges water, by prodding the ground with his toe, for her to drink. Rukmini quenched her thirst with the Ganges water. But Durvasa felt insulted as Rukmini did not have the courtesy to offer him water to drink. He, therefore, cursed her that she would live separately from her husband.

Overnight at Dwarka.

### Day 4: Dwarka – Porbandar – Somnath

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Today morning, check out and proceed towards Somnath (250 kms/5 Hours). Visit Porbandar on the way:

**Kirti Mandir – birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi:**

The three-storied haveli or mansion having a striking blue color in which Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October in the year 1869 was eventually turned into a shrine/memorial. This shrine which was named Kirti Mandir is actually a temple and symbolizes the harmonious integration of the world's six major religions namely Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism. The haveli housing the Kirti Mandir used to be a one-storeyed house that was bought about two centuries back by Shri Harjivan Raidas Gandhi, great grandfather of M.K. Gandhi. The upper floors or stories were constructed later on and it is in this mansion that Gandhiji's grandfather, father, and uncle resided while serving as 'dewans' or prime ministers under the Jethwa Rajput kings. Kirti Mandir was constructed up to a height of 79 feet to correspond with Gandhiji's lifespan. The 'garba griha' or the sanctum sanctorum of the temple houses the Mahatma's and his wife Kasturba Gandhi's full-scale oil-paintings. Gandhi practiced 'non-violence' and always spoke 'the truth' throughout his life and the words are etched in front of their feet. Two rooms on the shrine's right, serve as memorials of Mahadev Desai and Maganlal Gandhi while the room on the temple's left is a museum containing exhibits.

**Sudama Temple:**

A temple dedicated to Sudama, a close friend of Lord Krishna and is a significant religious edifice built during the early years of the 20th century. The present, magnificent structure is built at the site, where an old temple of Sudama existed in the past.

Reach Somnath and visit:

**Somnath Mahadev Temple:**

The historic Somnath Temple is an epitome of religious devotion of Lord Shiva in Veraval, Saurashtra. The temple is worshipped widely as it is considered as one of the first of the Shiva Jyotirlingas as mentioned in the Puranas. The Shiva temple here is considered very pious due to its rich religious history. Somnath refers to the name given to Lord Shiva or the Almighty of the Soma. The temple has been built and renovated many times from the time of its inception due to wars between Hindu and Muslim kings. The temple is known as the Shrine of the Eternal for the Shiva Jyotirlingas. Every day, three pujas are done in the temple which attracts major tourist in huge numbers. The temple is built in proper Hindu architecture with pillars and a flag on the roof of the highest point. The legends about the temple revolve around the Moon God Soma who was believed to have taken a bath at this point of the river confluence. The Moon God was losing his shine owing to a curse and redeemed it back after the dip according to the Hindu mythology. The pilgrim spot of the Somnath Temple is at the mouth of the three mythological rivers of Saraswati, Hiran and Kapilla. The first stone of the temple is said to be built centuries ago. The Seuna kings that time had built another establishment of it at the same spot during the period of 649CE. The temple has been attacked many times by the Arabs in the past but was erected every time by the following Hindu dynasties. The Somnath Temple is also believed to be first built from wooden structures but was raided soon after by foreign invaders. Solanki king Mularaja is said to have built the first temple at this changing the old outlook of it.

Feel the divinity in the evening arti and watch the Light and Sound Show to feel the grandeur of the Somnath Temple.

Overnight at Somnath.

**Day 5: Somnath – Diu**

Today morning, after breakfast and checkout and visit:

**BhalkaTirth:**

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The Bhalka Tirth is a historic religious place located in the town of Veraval in the city of Saurashtra. It is famous for the mythological stories of Lord Krishna, who was struck with an arrow in this spot by Jara, who was a hunter in the Hindu Puranas. Lord Krishna is worshipped widely among the Hindu followers and the Bhalka Tirth is a famous mark on the epitome of his greatness. It is a popular place that is quite close to Somnath. As per stories and tales it is believed that Shri Krishna was resting at this place when a huntsman by the name of Jara shot an arrow. This arrow went on to pierce Shri Krishna. This temple is also known as Mahaprabhuji's Bethak which has a popular Peepal tree that signifies the place where Lord had succumbed to the injuries. A statue of Lord Krishna which is made from blue marble is located under the tree.. It is also known as the Prabhaskshetra.

#### **Triveni Sangam:**

Triveni Sangam is the confluence of three rivers: Hiran, Kapila and Saraswati. It is situated very near to the Somnath Mahadev temple. It is believed that the sages named Hiran and Kapila had done a penance at this very place and so Goddess Saraswati came to this place. As per Hindu tradition, Triveni Sangam is very holy and many puja related to the forefathers are done on its confluence.

Proceed towards Diu (85 kms/2 Hours) – the erstwhile Portuguese Colony. Check in to Hotel and then explore the town of Diu on your own. This place is a perfect amalgamation of the sea, sun and land. It features some really mesmerizing tourist spots, which are rich in flora, fauna, heritage and culture. Diu has a long historic background as it was ruled by many rulers from different dynasties. Forts and seashore altogether give it spectacular scenic beauty and a quaint charm like nowhere else. It has emerged as a major tourist spot, comprising beautiful beaches, revered temples and colonial edifices.

Visit:

#### **Naida Caves:**

Naida caves are natural rock formation which are perfect for the Photographers. A legend says that when the Portuguese were building the fortified walls of their colony, they had quarried the rocks on the side of the walls and with the passage of time and natural factors, these rocks have turned into a natural cave like formation. A visit to these caves is a perfect way to see the beauty of the erstwhile Portuguese colony.

#### **Diu Fort:**

Diu Fort, which is a huge stone structure built in the year 1535 and renovated several times later. The fort commands a spectacular view of the adjoining sea, which surrounds it from three sides. Within the fort, there are three main churches, Venetian bungalows and stone mansions, which speak of various architectural advancements. Another major seaside citadel is the Fortress of Panikota, which lies right at the mouth of the creek. The lighthouse and chapel inside the fort are quite famous amongst travellers coming here for sightseeing.

#### **Diu Museum:**

If you want to know more about this town, this is the best place to visit. This museum was once a part of the beautiful old St. Thomas Church, which was built using the Gothic architectural style in 1598. This museum houses important antiquities related to the town, such as stone inscriptions, wood carvings and idols.

Overnight at Diu.

#### **Day 6: Diu – Gir**

Today morning, check out and proceed towards Gir (100Kms/2 Hours) – the only abode of the Asiatic Lions in the world. Go for Gir Lion Safari (as per availability).

#### **Gir National Park:**

The Gir National Park in Gujarat is the home to the Asiatic Lion with the King of the Jungle only found in Gir all around the Asian Continent. The Gir National Park was established in 1965 which covers a total area of 1,412 sq. Km. It is a completely protected area and said to be one of the most common travel destinations of India.

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At the time of Independence of India, there were only 11 Lions left in the Gir National Park but with the conservation efforts of the Last Nawab of Junagadh and thereby the Government of India, the number of the big cats has been increased to 523 as the latest census in 2014. The total forest covers around 22000 sq. Km where the Lions roam freely. Along with the Lions, the Gir National Park also has Leopards, Nilgai, Antelopes, Striped hyena and many other varieties of Flora and fauna. Other attractions in the Gir National Park includes the Kamleshwar Dam situated inside the forest and the Kankai Mataji temple in the forest. Lion is the State Animal of Gujarat and meeting the King of the Jungle will be a great treat for the wildlife lovers visiting the state.

Relax at the resort amidst the forest. Overnight at Gir.

### **Day 7: Drop**

Today morning, check out and proceed towards Ahmedabad (380 kms/7 Hours) and drop as per schedule.