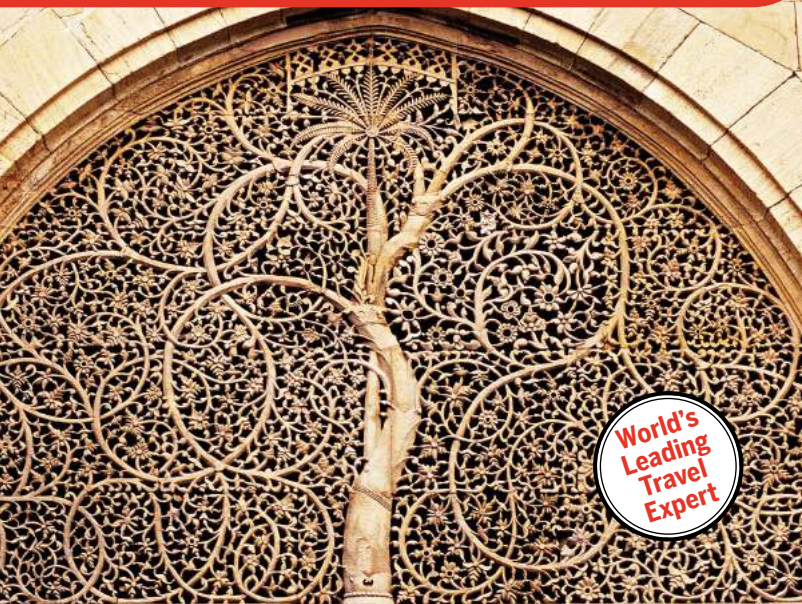




Pocket

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GOVERNMENT OF GUJARAT



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 **Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat**

Inauguration by
Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit A bridge to million opportunities



Conceived to reignite the pace of investments in the state of Gujarat, the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit was established to be a leading international business event that focuses on inclusive growth and business ideas in the country. As part of its journey towards sustainable long-term growth and inclusive development, Government of Gujarat embarks on the 8th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit from the 10th to 13th of January 2017 at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar. The central focus of the summit is 'Sustainable Economic and Social Development' that is geared to bring together heads of states and governments, ministers, leaders from the corporate world, senior policy makers, heads of international institutions and academia from around the world to further the cause of development and to promote cooperation.

The biennial summit is a unique forum for exploring investment opportunities, sharing knowledge and networking, in the backdrop of current challenges faced by the country. The summit is growth focussed and brings together problem solving minds from across the world to share a platform that stands for inclusive growth and new opportunities.

SHARE Experience ideas and learn from experts
SHOWCASE Exhibit your brand to a large and relevant market
SHINE Make your mark on the world stage

PROGRAMME



9th JANUARY 2017

1700 to 1730	INAUGURATION OF GLOBAL TRADE SHOW 2017 (Exhibition Centre)
1830 to 1900	INAUGURATION OF NOBEL PRIZE SERIES EXHIBITION (Science City)

10th JANUARY 2017

Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

0900 to 1300	NOBEL PRIZE SERIES SYMPOSIUM
1530 to 1800	INAUGURATION
1900 to 2030	GLOBAL CEO ROUND TABLE

11th JANUARY 2017

Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

0930 to 1300	GST: The Game changer For Indian Economy
0930 to 1300	Smart and Livable Cities: Opportunities and Challenges
1000 to 1300	Make in Gujarat Series: Biotechnology
1000 to 1300	Smart Village
1000 to 1330	Make in Gujarat Series: Food Processing
1430 to 1730	Ease of Doing Business - Regulators as Facilitators
1430 to 1730	Health for Inclusive Development
1430 to 1730	Business Potential of IFSC in India
1430 to 1730	Make in Gujarat Series: Engineering, Heavy Engineering & Automotive
COUNTRY SEMINARS ACTION SEMINARS	
B2B AND B2G MEETINGS	

12th JANUARY 2017

Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

1000 to 1300	MSME CONVENTION: Stand Up Gujarat
1000 to 1300	Skilling and Human Capital
1000 to 1300	Make in Gujarat Series: Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices
1000 to 1300	Make in Gujarat Series: Textiles
1000 to 1300	Make in Gujarat Series: Chemicals & Petrochemicals
1400 to 1630	Infrastructure and Logistics
1400 to 1630	Make in Gujarat Series: Plastics
1400 to 1630	Make in Gujarat Series: Aerospace & Defence
COUNTRY SEMINARS ACTION SEMINARS	
B2B MEETINGS	

13th JANUARY 2017

Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

B2B AND B2G MEETINGS

VIBRANT GUJARAT GLOBAL TRADE SHOW 2017



Inauguration by
Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13
January 2017

Venue:
Helipad Exhibition Ground,
Gandhinagar Gujarat

125,000 Sq m
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A Business Platform showcasing

Over 2000 Companies
No. of Participants

Over 2 Million
Expected No. of Visitors

Over 2500
Expected International Delegates

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International Representations

For more details, visit www.vibrantgujarat.com/tradeshow

Exhibition Partner

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+91-79-4027-9900 / 10, +91-79-4027-9999 | pankaj.tibak@cii.in, nilay.shah@cii.in, ashwani.singh@cii.in
Detailed Layout & Information available on www.vgts-2017.com

Where Great Minds Converge, Great Ideas Emerge.

Inauguration by
Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
09th January 2017



**Nobel
Prize
Series**
India 2017



Science Impacts Lives

Open for Public
10th January - 12th February 2017

Venue:
Science City, Ahmedabad

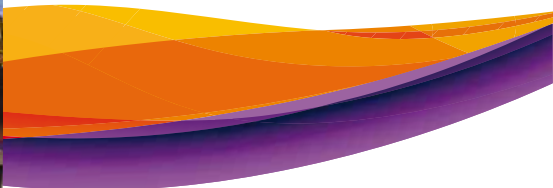


Venue for Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit - 2017

Mahatma Mandir draws inspiration from the life and philosophy of the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Planned on the central vista in the capital city of Gujarat, it is truly the gateway to Gandhinagar.

Spread in about 34 acres, this iconic structure has spacious and low energy consuming Convention and Exhibition Center, well equipped state of the art facilities, amazing landscaping & water bodies to hold multifarious event of national and international stature.

Please visit www.mahatmamandirgujarat.com for more details



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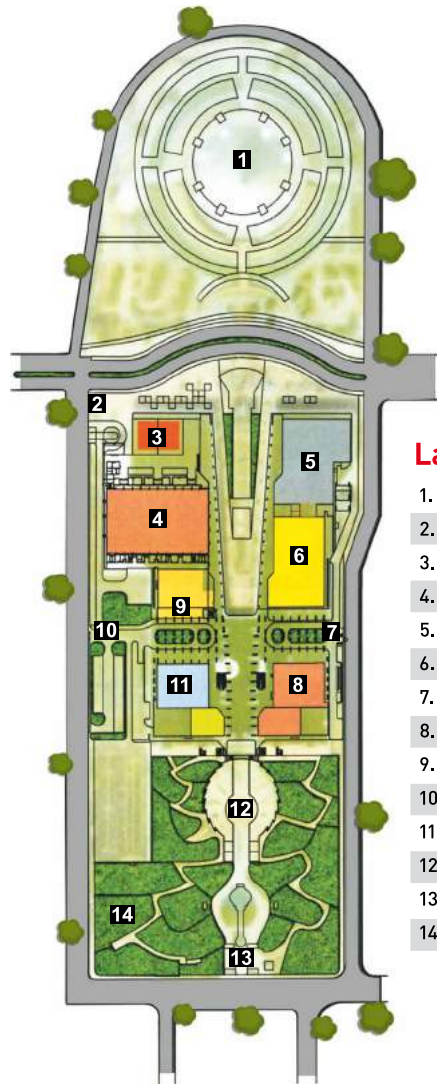
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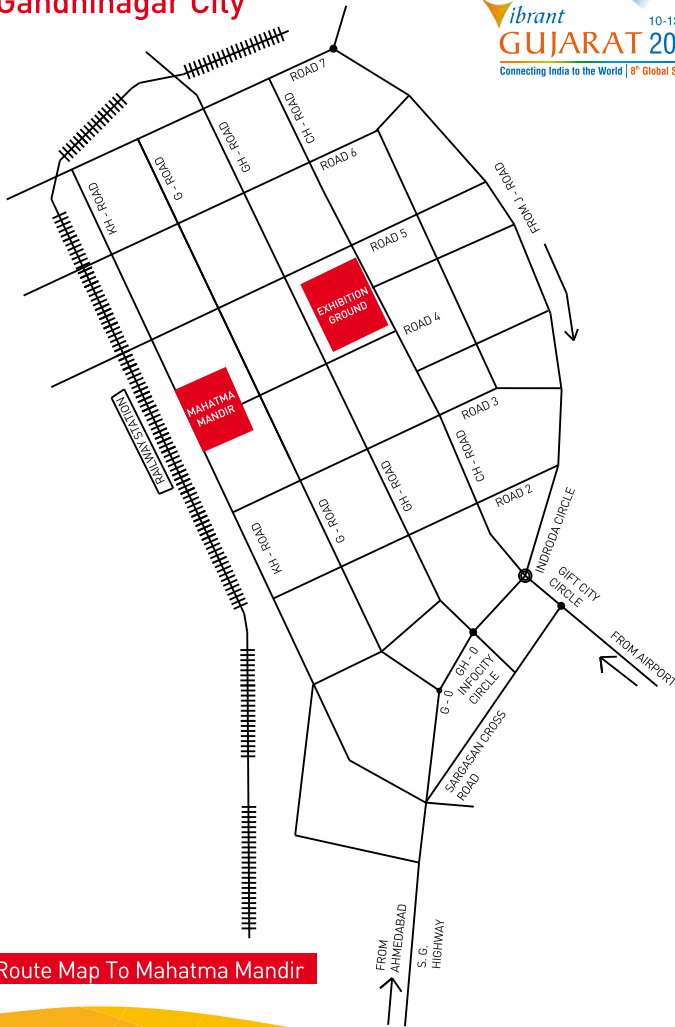
www.vibrantgujarat.com



Layout & Amenities

1. Salt Mound (Gandhi Museum)
2. Gate - 1
3. Seminar Hall
4. Main Convention Hall
5. Exhibition Hall - 1
6. Exhibition Hall - 2
7. Gate - 6
8. Food Court (GF & FF)
9. Exhibition Hall - 3
10. Gate - 3
11. VVIP Lounge
12. Amphitheater
13. Gate - 5
14. Gandhi Garden

Gandhinagar City



The content has been supplied courtesy of Vibrant Gujarat and has not been verified by Lonely Planet

Pocket **AHMEDABAD & GANDHINAGAR**

TOP SIGHTS • FOOD • SHOPPING

This guide is researched and written by
Supriya Sehgal

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Need to Know



Reels for sale at a night market during the Uttarayan Kite Festival

WHEN TO GO

Oct–Feb, high season: Autumn and winter offer a welcoming time to travel. This is the best period to visit the cities, when a dip in the temperature allows you to roam the old markets and monuments for a longer time. The sun can beat down harshly during the day even in the winter months. That's when you hop in and out of museums for some relief.

Mar–Sep, low season: The summer months with their skyrocketing temperatures are not the best bet to wear out those travel shoes. Expect lower tariffs in hotels and uncluttered tourist spots during the summer months. Choose the monsoon period for a respite from the stifling heat.

FIRST TIME IN AHMEDABAD & GANDHINAGAR

Ahmedabad has all the trappings of a big city; but the heart of old Amdavad gives the city its rich multicultural character. So unexpected is the charm of the old walled city and the many mosques, step-wells, pols and medieval monuments, that this area strikes one as an exceptionally interesting place to visit.

The S-shaped Sabarmati River splits the city metaphorically into two parts – old and new. It winds its way through the rampant modern construction, offering some natural relief to the eye. Don't complain of modern soulless city building; Ahmedabad is set apart by some sterling 20th-century architecture. The big names including Le Corbusier, BV Doshi, Louis Kahn and Charles Correa, have lent their genius to the city casting a magical touch to the many buildings here. Top educational institutions and the industrious nature of its citizens are the pride of Ahmedabad.

For the traveller, Ahmedabad offers a rich cultural experience from architecture, textiles to lip smacking food. The 15th-century city whose foundations were built by Sultan Ahmed Shah, gained its 20th-century status with its famous icon, Mahatma Gandhi.

i Quick Facts

• **Languages:** Gujarati, Hindi and English information on sightseeing or hotels.

• **Money:** ATMs of nationalised and private banks are available in both Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

• **Phone Connectivity:** All major networks work efficiently in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.

• **Internet Access:** Wi-fi is available at most hotels in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, but one cannot be too sure of the signal strength. In some cases, wi-fi may be available only in the lobby area or if paid for.

• **Tourist Information:** The head office of the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited lies in Gandhinagar (TCGL; 79 23222522; www.gujarattourism.com; Udyog Bhavan, Block No 16, 4th Floor, Sector-11, Gandhinagar). If you're taking a flight into either city, a large information centre near the airport exit is a worthy stop to pick up brochures and get

PRICE RANGES

Throughout this book, reviews use the following price ranges. Rates quoted do not include seasonal pricing or taxes, unless otherwise specified.

KEY TO RATES

Accommodation & Eating

₹₹₹	Over ₹5000
₹₹	₹2000–5000
₹	below ₹2000

₹₹₹	over ₹500
₹₹	₹200–500
₹	below ₹200

Abbreviations

s	single rooms
d	double rooms
ste	suites

The satellite city of Gandhinagar, the state capital, offers a glowing example of what a well-planned town should look like. With its smooth silvery wide streets, ample parks and infrastructure for business, the city leads the way for the state's already celebrated infrastructure. It is also a fascinating window into Gujarat's steady steps towards development.

Advance Planning: Book air and train tickets in advance to avail of better prices. Draw up a rough itinerary according to your travel interests, be it museums, food or heritage tourism. Booking accommodation beforehand is sensible in peak season.

WHAT TO PACK

Expect hot and dry summers and equally intense winters in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, so plan clothing accordingly. Essentials should include sunscreen, hats, caps and walking shoes that will withstand long walks through monuments and can be easily ditched before entering a temple. Medical assistance is available in both cities, but you should carry your own specific medicines if needed. Sterling (☎79 40011111) and Apollo (☎79 66305800) Hospitals are the biggest in the city.

TRAVELLING ALONE

Solo travellers, especially women, will find the cities safe and friendly. Ahmedabad is used to travellers from all parts of the world, and the locals are warm and hospitable. It is safe to travel even relatively late in the evening, though there isn't much reason to be out later than 11pm – the cities do not offer much by way of nightlife, barring the food stalls of Manek Chowk that are alive and kicking until midnight.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air: The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport serves Ahmedabad (11km) and Gandhinagar (18km) and is located conveniently between the two cities, offering easy access between them. Multiple carriers like Jet Airways, Air India, IndiGo, Go Air and Vistara operate here and connect the region with major metros and other important cities of the country.

Rail: Rail connectivity to Ahmedabad is excellent. With its 12 platforms, the Ahmedabad Junction Railway station has trains from Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Trivandrum, Ajmer, Dhanbad, Daltonganj, Jaipur, Indore and many other cities of India plying at convenient times. With the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail corridor underway, India's first high-speed railway line will considerably

reduce the travel time between the two cities although the project is due to launch in about six years. Gandhinagar's railway station is located in Sector 14, and has only five trains at the moment – three of these connect to Delhi, Jaipur and Indore. Ahmedabad offers many more options.

Road: Road travel to Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar from adjoining states is easy if you're looking to hire a cab. The road conditions are great. The Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation offers a number of buses for efficient intra-state and inter-state connectivity.

Ahmedabad is full of local shopping delights



This is Ahmedabad & Gandhinagar

Ahmedabad is Gujarat's major city and a buzzing metropolis. It has a rich history, an atmospheric old quarter, remarkable buildings, excellent museums, fine restaurants and fabulous night markets.

In striking contrast, the state capital Gandhinagar is characterised by quiet open spaces and abundant greenery with the spectacular Akshardham Temple as its prize attraction.

HISTORY

Ahmedabad was founded in 1411 by Gujarat's sultan Ahmed Shah at the spot where, legend has it, he saw a hare chasing a dog and was impressed by its bravery. He stamped the city with his name – Ahmed – and suffixed it with 'abad', which means prosperity.

The Adalaj step-well is a fine example of Indo-Islamic architecture

The city quickly spread beyond his citadel on the east bank of the Sabarmati River. By the 17th century, it was a prospering trade nexus adorned with an array of fine Indo-Islamic architecture.

Since then, Ahmedabad continued its march as a progressive city, riding on the success of its textiles and crafts. When the British arrived in 1817, they revived trade and Ahmedabad once again rose to prominence as a flourishing textile hub.

By the late 19th century, Gujarat witnessed the Freedom Movement under the leadership of its own son of the soil, Mahatma Gandhi. At the Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhi's ideals of non-violence, truth and freedom were born.

Today, Ahmedabad is booming as a centre for info tech, education and chemical production besides its traditional textiles and commerce, and has been officially dubbed a 'megacity'.

Gandhinagar was developed much later as a planned city, with its foundation stone laid in 1965. Planned by well-known architects HK Mewada and Prakash M Apte, the city with its modern organised infrastructure and numbered cross-streets are in marked contrast with the haphazard development of most major Indian cities. Bearing the name of the Father of the Nation, it was declared the state capital in 1970.





CUISINE

Ahmedabad's true treasures are found in its kitchens. The city is rightly famous for its food, especially savoury snacks. With its love for street food and food-based frenzied night markets and a burgeoning interest in fine dining, Ahmedabad has established itself as the capital of Gujarati cuisine.

Vegetarians are in for a treat here, as the quintessential Gujarati meal is the all-veg thali that includes rice, puri, roti, dal, kadhi, shaak (vegetables), farsan (fried savoury snacks) and milky desserts. Pickles, salads (a papaya-based one is especially popular) and buttermilk are flavourful accompaniments. Expect aamras puri during summer and liiva ni kachori during winter. You are likely to find this fare in both high-end hotels and no-frills restaurants.

The food-themed night markets like the one at Manek Chowk in Ahmedabad dish out traditional snacks – khakhra, thepla, dhokla, kand na dabada, pandoli and more – as well as innovative recipes like chocolate sandwiches and pizzas.

Gujarati food is dependent on the seasons and availability of vegetables and other ingredients; in a way the people are loyal to their traditional eating habits even as global cuisine comes calling in.

Heritage walks in Ahmedabad's markets in the old city

ARCHITECTURE

Ahmedabad's pride is its traditional and modern architecture and public art spaces. Carrying on Ahmed Shah's legacy of glorious architecture, a host of illustrious 20th century architects like Le Corbusier, Charles Correa, BV Doshi, Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright and many others, have designed important civic structures, educational institutions, and private residences in Ahmedabad.

The modern and historic architectural influences are apparent in the cityscape – stone latticework windows (or jalis) and the rear arches of mosques on one side and the newer institutional architecture on the other.

Some modern structures of note include the IIM-A Campus, Calico Mills and Calico Dome, the Sanskar Kendra, the Mill Owner's Association Building, Amdavad ni Gufa, the School of Architecture and the Gandhi Ashram.

Gandhinagar is neatly sectioned into the city centre, and commercial and residential districts. The compact residential houses are grouped to foster the culture of 'communities'. The Akshardham Temple is noteworthy for its pink sandstone construction, ornate carvings and manicured gardens.

10 Top Experiences



1 DANDI KUTIR, GANDHINAGAR

Based on the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi, the new age museum is a decidedly premier history trove of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. It is spread over three floors with well-designed displays on Gandhi's life. The top floor has exhibits of his boyhood; the middle floor recalls his life in South Africa and early political engagement; and the lowest floor records his involvement in the Indian Freedom Movement. Don't miss the 41-metre high salt-mound, which stands as a symbol of Gandhi's famous Dandi march against the salt tax provisions imposed by the British regime in March 1930. The museum is located at the very spot where the march started.

2 AKSHARDHAM, GANDHINAGAR

Feast your eyes on spectacular exhibits at the Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar. The 'Abode of God' is run by the Swaminarayan sect. The elaborately carved main temple, built by nearly 1000 artisans and opened in 1992, is constructed of 6000 tonnes of pink sandstone set among well-



tended gardens. Three underground exhibition halls have hi-tech multimedia presentations on the Swaminarayan sect, Hindu epics and other religions. At sunset, a 45-minute water show presents the story of the *Upanishads* through fountains, music, fire and laser beams. The super-efficient security and vigilance at the temple is a bit daunting, but the severity is natural as this cultural complex was attacked in 2002, and more than 30 people lost their lives.



3 SABARMATI ASHRAM, AHMEDABAD

The Sabarmati Ashram must receive millions of tourists each year, but everyone who walks in displays hushed reverence and a state of meditation, despite the crowds on this unique pilgrimage. Mahatma Gandhi's presence pervades the rooms and galleries, making this a powerful experience. The ashram is a close representation of how Gandhi spent a simple life. His spinning wheel, writing floor desk, bedroom and kitchen are preserved just as they were along the banks of the Sabarmati River. The large complex comprises his house as well as a gallery displaying large paintings, sketches, blow-ups of his illegible scribbles and photographs.

4 CALICO MUSEUM OF TEXTILES, AHMEDABAD

The Calico Museum of Textiles is a window into one of the world's finest collections of antique and modern Indian textiles, all handmade and nearly 500 years old. There are some exquisite displays of opulent textiles and embroidery. You'll see Kashmiri shawls that took three years to make, and double-ikat cloths whose 100,000 threads were each individually dyed



before weaving. The afternoon tour (maximum 10 people) is devoted to the Sarabhai Foundation's private collection of religious art, which explores depictions of Indian deities and textile galleries, and is worth your while for the exclusivity of it. The museum has limited entry and timings and does not allow kids inside or photography.

5 THE HOUSE OF MG, AHMEDABAD

This 1920s baroque building opposite Siddi Sayid's Mosque was once the home of textile magnate Sheth Mangaldas Girdhardas. It was converted into a beautiful heritage hotel in the 1990s by his great-grandson. All the rooms are vast, verandah-edged and masterfully decorated, with a homey yet luxurious ambience. The iconic building is hugely

popular. Service is first-rate, there are two excellent restaurants, and the indoor swimming pool and gym are top grade. The rooftop terrace of the city's finest restaurant, Agashiye, features a daily-changing, all-veg menu and the traditional thali, with diverse dishes delivered to your plate. The menu is topped off by hand-churned ice cream.



6 SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL NATIONAL MUSEUM, AHMEDABAD

The glitzy museum bears the historic address of the erstwhile Moti Shahi Mahal. Reserve at least a few hours to walk around its sprawl of cosy rooms and galleries, with exhibits on the life and times of the 'Iron Man of India', far from the make-believe world of Marvel. The museum is well maintained, brightly lit and features informative exhibits. The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Museum is yet another example of Ahmedabad's interest in technology-aided display of public infotainment.



7 MANEK CHOWK, AHMEDABAD

Wind your way through the swarming crowd inside the heart of the old city in the Manek Chowk area. The frenetic atmosphere is built from a whirl of activities – shoppers, butchers, traders, mosques and temples – one that you can never get bored of. There is much to browse in the market. The labyrinth of narrow alleyways at the back is marked by vintage havelis with intricate woodwork. At night, visit the glittery stalls that serve typical Gujarati snacks and inventive items like the chocolate sandwich. One can't really complain about Ahmedabad's lack of nightlife as this all-vegetarian and non-alcoholic fast food hotspot winds down only at midnight.





8 JAMA MASJID, AHMEDABAD

The Jama Masjid is an oasis for the weary traveller after trudging along the hot, dusty streets of the old city – a calm respite from the surrounding mayhem. A flight of steps lead to a massive courtyard with a water tank in the middle and the mihrab and the prayer hall on one side. Built by Ahmed Shah in 1423, the mosque ranks as one of India's most beautiful, enhanced by an enormous courtyard and a calming vibe. The mosque displays multicultural architectural aesthetics. Note the lotus-like carving of some domes, which are supported by the prayer hall's 260 columns. There were once two 'shaking' minarets, but they lost half their height in the great earthquake of 1819; their lower portions still flank the prayer hall's central portico.



9 NEW LUCKY RESTAURANT, AHMEDABAD

Dining with the dead is not something you would expect in a regular itinerary, but it offers the delicious experience of doing something unique. Have the famous bun-maska and a cup of tea in the midst of old tombstones, which are sometimes right beside your table. The fact that no one

really knows anything about the identity of the deceased, takes away the sombreness and leaves behind a lighthearted curiosity about this bizarre address. Regulars turn a blind eye to a newbie moving around the entire restaurant with a camera. Nothing distracts them from their deep devotion to the newspaper.

10 LAW GARDEN NIGHT MARKET, AHMEDABAD

This evening market packed with stalls selling glittering wares from Kutch and Saurashtra is chock-a-block with fantastically decorated cholis (sari blouses), chaniyas (long, wide traditional skirts), embroidered wall hangings, costume jewellery and more. The kilometre-long line of shops makes it impossible to tear yourself away midway, even though the wares are repetitive. Prepare to leg the entire stretch, entranced by the bright, colourful textiles and the ridiculously low prices as compared to the showrooms.





AHMEDABAD & GANDHINAGAR

Why Go?

Ahmedabad offers a heady brew of history, craft, local cuisine and the buzz of a developing town. Monuments, galleries and museums that testify to a majestic past are juxtaposed against loud, vibrant streets. Ahmedabad is a bona fide foodie paradise, showcasing Gujarati cuisine. The memory of Mahatma Gandhi pervades Ahmedabad and Gujarat's capital Gandhinagar. The two cities check all the boxes for a stimulating trip.

i Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

The twin cities of Ahmedabad (11km) and Gandhinagar (18km) lie equidistant from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, and about 26km from each other. Hail an autorickshaw, though cabs are faster and more efficient. Travelling for 8 hours or 80km can cost you ₹1800, with an additional ₹100 per extra hour and ₹10 per

extra km. App-based taxi services like Uber and Ola are also available on hire.

WHEN TO GO

Winter (Oct–Feb)

GREAT FOR



A vibrant garba during Navratri in Ahmedabad

Sights


AHMEDABAD

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Museum

Creating history at the already hallowed address of an erstwhile palace (Moti Shahi Mahal), this is one of the most underrated experiences of Ahmedabad. The museum is a rich repository of Patel's life as a political leader and thinker, while giving considerable space to other luminaries who crossed his path – namely Rabindranath Tagore, who stayed here at the age of 17. What trumps everything is the nifty use of

The Sardar Patel museum has modern interactive exhibits

technology for the interactive exhibits and clear, concise and well-researched audio-visual displays. Stay back and catch the 3D sound and light show, a breakthrough for museums in India.


 79 22868217; Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial Society, opp Circuit House, Shahibaug; entry museum child/adult ₹10/20 and 3D show child/adult ₹10/30; 9.30am–5pm, 3D show 7–7.45pm (Mon closed)

Sanskar Kendra

The industrial aesthetic of bricks and bare walls of Sanskar Kendra is immediately recognisable as the signature style of Le Corbusier. The modernist architect spent many years of his life here, shaping several public and private establishments. This is one of the most celebrated ones. On the ground floor is



the permanent exhibit, the Kite Museum. This small museum shares information about the past history and current passion for kite flying, a sport loved by the Gujaratis. The video clip that plays on an old television is only five minutes long and highly recommended. Upstairs, the dark and gloomy gallery has exhibits of Ahmedabad's history and other collections.


 79 26578369; near Sardar Patel Bridge, behind NID, Paldi; entry free; 10.30am–6pm (Mon closed)

Veechar Cultural & Heritage Museum For Utensils

The personal collection of the founder of the Vishalla Restaurant, the museum was set up in 1981 as a catalogue of utensils used across the country. A long U-shaped path runs along a rustic but tastefully

A heritage kitchenware display in the Veechar Museum for Utensils

decorated hall that is lined with urns, jugs, spittoons, pots and locks. Little anecdotes are doled out by a guide-cum-keeper of the museum; for example, he urges one to try and open a cryptic lock and then dazzles the wide-eyed audience by smoothly unravelling the mystery.

 79 26607974; www.vishalla.com; opp APMC Market, Vasna, Vishala; entry child/adult/photography ₹40/20/100; 1–3pm & 5–10.30pm (Mon closed)

Top Tip: Photography rules

Most museums in the twin cities do not allow photography and are closed on Mondays. Plan accordingly.





Colourful handcrafted exhibits at the Tribal Museum

Lokayatan Folk Museum

This museum, 3km west of the river in Bhudarpura, displays an impressive range of Gujarati folk arts, including woodcarvings, metalwork, embroidered textiles and unusual tie-dyed quilts. Included in the ticket is the Kalpana Mangaldas Museum, with festival masks and dolls from around India and even an elephant skeleton. It's all set in the peaceful, peacock-dotted grounds of the Shreyas Foundation. Photos are not allowed. Wear slip-ons to get out of your shoes easily as one has to enter barefoot.

☎ 79 26601338; www.shreyasfoundation.com; Shreyas Hill, near Shreyas over bridge, Ambawadi; entry Indian/foreigner ₹100; 3.00–5.30pm Tue–Sat & 10.30 am–1.30 pm, 3.00–5.30pm Sun (Mon closed)

Lalbai Dalpatbhai Museum

Part of the LD Institute of Indology, this museum houses a fine collection of ancient and medieval Indian art treasures, including stone, marble, bronze and wood carvings and 75,000 Jain manuscripts. A 6th-century AD sandstone carving from Madhya Pradesh is the oldest known carved image of the god Rama.

☎ 79 26306883; www.ldmuseum.co.in; LD Institute of Indology Campus, near Gujarat University, Navarangpura; entry free; 10.30am–5pm (Mon closed)

NC Mehta Gallery

In the same building as the LD Museum, this gallery has an important collection of jewel-like illustrated manuscripts and miniature paintings. Best known is *Chaurapanchasika* (Fifty Love Lyrics of a Thief), written by Vilhana, an 11th-century Kashmiri poet

Snapshot: Bridges over the Sabarmati

Eleven bridges built over the Sabarmati River connect the old and new parts of the city. Of these, the Ellis Bridge is the oldest – built in 1873. It was a wooden structure that was destroyed by a flood but reconstructed for use. In 1973, when it could not take the weight of the rapid increase in population, it had to be given a refurbishing. Other bridges include the Gandhi Bridge, Nehru Bridge, Subhash Bridge, Vadaj–Dudheshwar Bridge, Sardar Bridge, Chandrabhaga Bridge, Ambedkar Bridge (Vasna Pirana Bridge), Lal Bahadur Shastri Bridge, Fernandes Bridge and the Dandi Bridge.

sentenced to be hanged for loving the king's daughter. Before his execution, he was granted one final wish – he chose to recite these 50 poems, which so impressed the king that he gave Vilhana his daughter's hand in marriage.

☎ 79 26306883; www.ldmuseum.co.in; LD Institute of Indology Campus, near Gujarat University, Navarangpura; entry free; Jul–Apr 10.30am–5pm and May–Jun 8.30am–12.30pm (Mon closed)

Tribal Museum

A venture of the Tribal Research and Training Institute of the city, this is a blind spot on the itinerary. But if you are even remotely interested in the vibrant tribal life of the state, this will give you a quick orientation. The well-maintained museum is made in the form of tribal homes, where their features, dress and occupation are the main areas of focus.

☎ 79 27545165; www.trti.gujarat.gov.in; Gujarat Vidhyapith; entry free; 11am–5.30pm Mon–Fri & 11am–4.30pm Sat

Auto World Vintage Car Museum

One of the most impressive personal collections of vintage cars, bikes, buggies and utility vehicles, Auto World is a delight for those who love wheels. Amongst the 300-plus menu of mechanical extravaganzas, some noted ones stand out; the car that was used in the movie *Gandhi* and the first Maybach ever made. You can also take a ride for 2km in one of the cars for ₹500.

☎ 79 22820699; www.vccci.com; Dastan Estate, Sardar Patel Ring Rd, Kathwada; entry ₹100; 10am–9pm (Mon closed)

Calico Museum of Textiles

The Calico Museum of Textiles has one of the most exquisite collections of handmade Indian textiles, some modern and some nearly 500 years old. These showcase opulent textiles and embroidery – from intricate Kashmiri shawls painstakingly made over three years to double-ikat cloth woven with 100,000 individually-dyed threads. The museum offers



Vintage car lovers must drop in at Auto World

an exclusive afternoon tour for a maximum of 10 people, taking you through the Sarabhai Foundation's private collection of religious art, which explores depictions of Indian deities and other textile galleries. The museum has limited entry and timings and does not allow kids inside or photography.

☎79 22868172; www.calicomuseum.com; Sarabhai Foundation; tours 10.30am & 3pm Thu–Tue

Ravivari (Sunday Market)

Clothes, utensils, books, stationery, antiques, dumbbells, bikes, wigs, vegetables, fruits, luggage and possibly everything on earth is available in the Ravivari or Gujarati (Sunday Market) that sprawls along the Sabarmati for the entire day. This 12-hour affair is propped against the old walled city but faces the modern side of Ahmedabad. A heady mayhem of kitsch is a dream for those who like to stretch the buck. The tradition of this weekly

flea market has been kept alive since the 15th century. A walk through will make you want to buy things that you never would have imagined you'd need. Keep those purse strings tight.

Below Ellis Bridge, next to Lokmanya Tilak Garden, Lal Darwaja; 6am–6pm

Sabarmati Riverfront

A revamp of the cityscape and river bank in 2005 led to the making of the Sabarmati Riverfront, a 22km planned promenade of which only a part is now complete. Boating stations and pop-up exhibition spaces are built along the river, but it is the fitness enthusiasts who do due justice to the path on their daily walks and jogs.

☎79 27550403; www.sabarmatiriverfront.com.

Morarji Desai Memorial

A blind spot on Ashram Road, a small plaque on a brick wall makes a weak attempt to make the Morarji

Desai Memorial look worthy of your time. Enter the gate and walk down a cobblestone path to reach a large garden with a memorial wedged in the middle and a museum dedicated to the late prime minister and freedom fighter.

Ashram Rd

Siddi Sayid Mosque

Built in 1573, the year the Mughals conquered Gujarat, by an Abyssinian in the Gujarati army, this is one of Ahmedabad's most stunning monuments. It is famed for its exquisite jali windows, spiderweb-fine, depicting the intricate intertwining branches of the 'tree of life' that is best seen from the road that runs along the back of the mosque. Siddi Sayid was a saint of African descent, from a community that is still present in parts of Gujarat and is distinct.

Lal Darwaja; dusk–dawn

The Ravivari Sunday Market has been held since the 15th century

Snapshot: Secular harmony

The secular nature of the city can be seen under the Teen Darwaja in the old city. Under the arch of a large gate is a small alcove where an oil lamp for goddess Lakshmi burns and has not been extinguished for the last 600 years. The keeper of this tradition in modern times was a Muslim man, Jabbar Bhai, who is no more. His son, Yunus, and wife, Zainab Bibi, continue the tradition. Everyone, regardless of their religious identity bows down to the small lamp when passing through the gate.



Snapshot: Step-wells

The significance of water in the drought-prone districts of Gujarat and Rajasthan is set in stone in the step-well – vav, vav, kuva or baoli (baori in Rajasthan). These elaborate constructions, like the Adalaj Vav (p33), are unique to northwestern India. With the Indian inclination to turn the functional into works of art, sophisticated water-storage structures were developed, first by the Hindus and then the Mughals. Although the nobility considered it a religious obligation to construct these, the wells were evidently symbols – their grandeur and artistry reflected the power and social status of their patrons. Often attached to temples, they were also meeting places, with landings at intervals along the steps where people could take refuge from the summer heat, and stopping places on caravan routes. Reliant on rainfall and (dropping) levels of ground water, many of the wells are now dry and neglected.

Sarkhej Roza

Located 8km southwest of the old centre in Makarba, Sarkhej Roza is a mosque, tomb and palace complex dedicated to the memory of Ahmed Shah I's spiritual advisor, Ahmed Khattu Ganj Baksh. The dilapidated

The 15th-century-Adalaj Vav is an impressive step-well in the region



yet elegant buildings cluster around a great tank, constructed by Sultan Mahmud Begada (Shah's grandson) in the mid-15th century. It's an atmospheric place that was used as a retreat by several of Ahmedabad's rulers. The mausoleums of Mahmud Begada (by the entrance, with geometric jalis casting dappled patterns of light on the floor) and Ganj Baksh (the largest in Gujarat) are both here. The place has a cheerful communal feel with locals picnicking in its large courtyard. Thursdays are the busiest when khichda (a meat dish) is served for free.

Makarba; dawn–dusk

Bhadra Fort

Don't compromise on climbing up the Bhadra Fort and getting a bird's-eye view of the old city. Built immediately after the founding of Ahmedabad in 1411, Bhadra Fort

now houses government offices and a Kali temple. Its gate formed the eastern entrance of the Ahmedabad citadel, which stretched west to the river. From the roof you can check out the formidable structure and views of the surrounding streets. Between the fort and the Teen Darwaja (Triple Gateway) to its east was the Maidan Shahi (Royal Square), where royal processions and polo games took place. Today, it is a bustling market area.

8am–6pm

Jama (Jumma) Masjid

Built by Ahmed Shah in 1423, the Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque) ranks as one of India's most beautiful mosques, enhanced by an enormous, peaceful courtyard. The prayer hall's 260 columns support 15 principal domes at different elevations. There were once two 'shaking' minarets, but they lost half their height in the great earthquake

of 1819, though their lower portions still remain, flanking the prayer hall's central portico.

Mahatma Gandhi (MG) Rd; dawn–dusk

Ahmed Shah's Mosque

Southwest of Bhadra Fort, Ahmed Shah's Mosque was built in 1414 for the sultan and nobles within Ahmedabad's original citadel. The prayer hall is a forest of beautifully carved stone pillars and jali screens, and its elaborately carved ceiling has a circular symmetry reminiscent of Hindu and Jain temples.

Dawn–dusk

Sidi Bashir Mosque

The Sidi Bashir Mosque, built in 1452, is famed for its twin 21.3m-high shaking minarets (jhulta minara), built to shake in order to protect against earthquake damage.

Sarkhej Roza is dedicated to spiritual guru Ahmed Khattu Ganj Baksh





The Kankaria Lake and complex offer easy recreation

This certainly worked in 2001 but has been stopped recently to preserve the structure. The rather humble entry to the mosque belies its exquisite construction. The twin minarets peep over some buildings and trees, and can be spotted from the main road – only if you can avert your eyes from the suicidal traffic that crowds it.

Near the railway station; dawn–dusk

Badshah-na-Hazira

The mausoleum of Ahmed Shah, outside the Jama Masjid's east gate, may have been constructed by Ahmed Shah himself before his death in 1442. His cenotaph is the central one under the main dome. The 11pm drumming session in the mausoleum's eastern gateway signals the closing of the city gates every night. Through an arch a

little further east is Ahmed Shah's queen's tomb, the Rani-na-Hazira, on a raised platform now engulfed by market stalls, and in poor shape, though the jali (carved lattice) screens are pretty.

Dawn–dusk

Dada Harir ni Vav

This step-well, built in 1499 by the supervisor of Sultan Begada's harem, has steps going down five levels of carved stone columns to two small wells, now often bone dry. The depths are cool, even on the hottest day, and it is a fascinating and eerie place. Overflow channels at the top are a reminder of times when water tables were much higher than today. Behind the step-well, the 16th-century Dai Halima Mosque, with intricate jali screens, contains the mausoleum of a royal midwife named Halima.

Near Hanumansingh Rd; dawn–dusk

Kankaria Lake

Built in 1451 as Hauz-e-Qutub, and recently dandified as a recreation space for the city, this large lake is a welcome respite from the hectic streets. Attractions include a tethered hot-air balloon (10min ride ₹100; 10am–10pm), a mini-train and a zoo. One Tree Hill Garden on the west side (entry from outside) contains some grand colonial Dutch tombs. There are the additional trappings of a public entertainment space that can keep kids hooked for hours on end.

Kankaria Complex; entry ₹10; 9am–11pm

Swaminarayan Temple

The glorious, multicoloured, wood-carved temple in the old city was built in 1822 as the first temple of the Hindu sect named after its founder, Swaminarayan (1781–1830). The start of the daily Heritage Walk here at 8am usually coincides with the morning rituals and worship

at the temple with devotees joining in with pious fervour. The splash of bright colours at first seems jarring, but one soon gets used to the psychedelic extravaganza on the walls.

Kalupur; 5am–noon, 3–8pm

Hutheesingh Temple

Outside Delhi Gate, north of the old city, is the Jain Hutheesingh Temple. It is constructed of delicately carved white marble. Built in 1848, it is dedicated to Dharamanath, the 15th-Jain tirthankar (great teacher). Each part of the temple is so intricately carved that you will find it difficult to strip away your gaze from it.

A long-term restoration plan is in process which was to take place over six years; only two and a half years have since passed. Repairs are being carried out by skilled craftsmen.

Balvantrai Mehta Rd; dawn–dusk

The Swaminarayan Temple was built in the 19th century



♥ If You Like: Gandhian experiences



The dome at Dandi Kutir Museum is a symbol of the salt satyagraha

GANDHINAGAR

DANDI KUTIR MUSEUM

A tall, tan-coloured dome towers over a sprawling complex and is set apart by its unique design. It represents a mound of salt to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's salt satyagraha. Entry to the three-tiered museum can be made only in batches of 15. Both audio guides and ushers help you in every section. The museum compares with the best of international museums with its excellent audio-visual exhibits.

☎ 79 23250492; Sector 13C, Gandhinagar; entry/baggage free/₹10; photography not allowed; 10.30am–1pm & 2–4.30pm (Mon closed)

MAHATMA MANDIR

The newly constructed Mahatma Mandir is a conference facility and

not really a site of tourist interest. However, hop across the road from Dandi Kutir to visit the Gandhi-themed galleries. Spread over 34 acres, it is the largest convention centre in the country and a modern tribute to the Father of the Nation.

☎ 79 23256009; www.mahatmamandirgujarat.com; Sector 13C, Salt Mound Rd

AHMEDABAD

SABARMATI ASHRAM (GANDHI SMARAK SANGRAHALAYA)

There couldn't be a more fitting shrine to commemorate the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. It was inaugurated by his then contemporary, Jawaharlal Nehru. On the banks of the River Sabarmati, Gandhi's erstwhile cottage has been converted to a simple but engaging museum. The ashram is divided into two sections: the area he then lived in and the modern section designed by architect Charles Correa. The ashram exudes a peaceful aura, partially due to the reverence that visitors show and possibly due to a unique energy that the place actually has. This is the place where Gandhi started the Satyagraha Movement. People meditate, walk around in silence or are transfixed by the gallery that showcases Gandhi's infamous illegible writing and many photographs. Pick a spinning wheel memento from the curio shop.

☎ 79 27557277; www.gandhiashramsabarmati.org; Gandhi Smarak

Sangrahalaya, Hridaya Kunj, Old Wadaj; entry free; 8am–7pm

IMAM MANZIL

Few travellers will turn their eye to this run-down home with a shed in the front yard, right opposite the Gandhi Ashram entrance. Enter through the creaking gate to find photographs of Ram Ji Bhai Badhia, who walked along with his idol, Gandhi, during the Dandi March. His grandson keeps the legacy alive with a display of photographs and two mechanised looms.

Ashram Rd; 9am–5pm

KALAMKHUSH HANDMADE PAPER CENTRE

Located a short distance from the Gandhi Ashram, this large, dowdy workshop is where the Gandhi-themed souvenirs are created – charkhas and handmade paper dominate the products. The in-charge is happy to have visitors

walk in to see the making of the handmade paper. The workers are used to the distraction and hardly look up from their daily target of making about 3000 sheets from recycled fabric.

☎ 79 27559831; Off Gandhi Ashram, Hridaya Kunj, Old Wadaj; entry free; 8am–6pm (Sun closed)

GUJARAT VIDYAPITH

Founded in 1920 by Mahatma Gandhi, the multi-disciplinary university has students dressed in khadi and walls with graffiti with inspirational messages by the Mahatma. Walk through the tree-flanked roads inside the university to step into an educational institute that is vastly different from those of the current times.

☎ 79 27541148; www.gujaratvidyapith.org; near Income Tax Office, Ashram Rd

Sabarmati Ashram's modern wing was designed by Charles Correa



GANDHINAGAR

Mahavir Jain Aradhana Kendra, Koba

Intricately carved pillars and marble steps offer a grand prelude to the stunning but Spartan Mahavir temple inside the three-decades-old ashram and dharamshala. It is not a popular tourist sight, but makes a veritable stop for the spiritually inclined. Since it lies en route to Gandhinagar from Ahmedabad, one doesn't have to take too much of a detour.

☎79 23276204; www.kobatirth.org; Ahmedabad Highway, near Koba Circle, Koba; entry free; 5.45am–8.30pm

Indroda Dinosaur & Fossil Park

Run under the able supervision of the Gujarat Ecological Education and

Research (GEER) Foundation, the Indroda Nature Park is a welcome respite on a hot day. Let yourself be wooed by the sounds of peacocks as you walk down shaded forested pathways in a Pied Piperesque fashion through the different sections. A zoo, botanical garden, fossil park heralded by a massive dinosaur statue, a veterinary section and many well-manicured green stretches offer a much-needed break from the concrete jungle outside.

☎79 23977300; www.geerfoundation.gujarat.gov.in/parks; Geer Foundation, Deer Park, Indroda Village, J Rd, Gandhinagar; entry adults/children/disabled ₹10/20/free; two/four wheelers ₹10/20; 8am–6pm (Mon closed)

The Akshardham Temple is built in pink sandstone

Akshardham

The spectacular Akshardham of the prosperous Hindu Swaminarayan sect draws devotees and visitors alike. The elaborately carved main temple, built by nearly 1000 artisans and inaugurated in 1992, is constructed of 6000 tonnes of pink sandstone and surrounded by manicured gardens. Three underground exhibition areas have hi-tech multimedia presentations on the Swaminarayan sect, the Hindu epics and other religions. At sunset (every day except Monday) a 45-minute Water Show (adult/child ₹75/50) presents the story of the *Upanishads* through fountains, music, fire and lasers and promises to reveal the secret of life after death.

www.akshardham.com; J Rd, Sector 20; entry free; 9.30am–7.30pm (Mon closed)

Adalaj Trimandir

This is a pink and white marble-sandstone extravaganza. Two dramatic staircases run on either side of the temple building to take you to the first floor, where a large spartan hall is shared by Jain, Shaivite and Vaishnavite deities.

☎9924344460; www.trimandir.org; Liliya Rd Bypass Chokdi, Kharavadi Amreli; entry free; 5am–10pm

Adalaj Vav

The flamboyant step-well, built by Mahmud Begada in 1411, has lost only a little of its grandeur over the last centuries. The intricate carvings



The Fossil Park's green surrounds offer a slice of nature in the big city

on the pillars that support the five stories are mostly intact, the beams work as pit stops for pigeons flying in and out of the step-well, and the structure still leaves jaws dropped. Built to commemorate Queen Rudabai, wife of Veersinh, the Vaghela chieftain, the step-well represents the Indo-Islamic fusion architecture that percolated through many step-wells of the period. Visit this selfie haven early in the morning to take 'clean photographs'; sans strangers photobombing your frame. Adalaj; 8am–6pm



✓ Top Tip: Festivals of Ahmedabad & Gandhinagar

UTTARAYAN

Gujaratis celebrate the Uttarayan festival on 14 January every year, to mark the winter solstice. The festival is dedicated to flying kites on rooftops where people engage in spirited battles of trying to cut each other's kite strings. 24-hour kite markets in Dariapur, Kalupur and Sarangpur swing into action days ahead as people rush to buy colourful, and sometimes uniquely designed kites. Undhiyu, jalebi, chiki-tal papdi combo, khichdo, sherdi, bor, shingoda and jamfal are some of the sweet and savoury snacks that are essential to the Uttarayan menu.

SAPTAK MUSIC FESTIVAL

The annual Saptak Annual Festival of Music is a 13-day Indian classical music jamboree, organised by the

Saptak School of Music from the 1st to 13th January every year. Aficionados eagerly await concerts where legendary Indian artists as well as promising newcomers showcase their talent.

SANSKRUTI KUNJ

A melting pot of performing arts by folk artists from across the country, the Sanskruti Kunj Festival is celebrated over 10 days on the banks of the River Sabarmati. Usually held in late February, the festival hosts a variety of performances from different states of India.

VASANT UTSAV, NIKOL

In spring (March/April), buses to

Up and away, a 17-metre kite flies high at the Uttarayan Kite Festival



Nikol are crammed with people going to the Vasant Utsav. Situated on the outskirts of Ahmedabad the town is the hotspot for Raas performances, parades of men dressed as gypsies, gods and demons and general revelry. The festival commemorates the Banjara tribe, said to be the architects of a reservoir that was built almost 200 years ago to address the paucity of water in the region.

RATH YATRA

Swarms of people congregate at the Jamalpur Darwaza area in July/August to pull a mammoth chariot, on which idols of the divine siblings, Krishna, Balram and Subhadra, are seated. The procession emulates the larger festival held in Puri, and is themed after the legend of Krishna leaving Mathura for Dwarka. Caparisoned elephants and folk artists lead the procession, until it reaches the Sabarmati River, where the idols are immersed.

NAVRATRI

Nine nights of dancing seem to be the main agenda in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar during Navratri. These commemorate the Mother goddess, who slayed Mahishasura, an evil demon. Legends and mythology apart, in the modern context, Navratri is synonymous with endless feasts and organised dance sessions of garba and raas in fairgrounds. Head to Gheekanta



Navratri is a colourful and vibrant festival of dance and music

Road, Swaminarayan Temple, Nagori Sharda and Madhupura Market to see the festival in full gusto.

AHMEDABAD HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Guided walks, films, workshops, live music and lectures fill the week of 19–25 November to celebrate the city's rich heritage.

SHAH ALAM URS FESTIVAL

Miracle healer and saint, Shah Alam is remembered on his death anniversary with devotees cleaning his tomb with sandalwood paste and lighting oil lamps to seek his blessings. Visit Shah Alam Roza to listen to soulful qawwalis on this day which occurs during the Islamic month of Jamadi-ul-Akhar.

♥ If You Like: TT-GG Project

In order to promote the idea of using cycles, the Gandhinagar Urban Development Authority (GUDA) kicked off the 'Trin, trin, go green' project. It has about 10 kiosks in different locations of the city with 10 cycles each. Hire a cycle for an hour for only ₹5. The small parking sheds are open from 10am–10pm.

🏠 Accommodation

AHMEDABAD

The Ummed HOTEL ₹₹₹

📍 79 66661234; www.ummedhotels.com; International Airport Circle, Hansol; d superior garden view/deluxe pool view/executive suite/deluxe suite/presidential suite ₹8000/8500/15,000/20,000/25,000 Earlier a Taj Hotels property, The Ummed has an impressive brand image. Opt for the pool view rooms, amongst the lower cost categories. The hotel is close to the airport but is a relatively longer drive away from the centre of the city.

Le Meridien Ahmedabad HOTEL ₹₹₹

📍 79 25505505; www.lemeridien.com; Khanpur Rd; s/d from ₹6500/7500, ste ₹20,000 (incl breakfast) This luxurious option towers over the fragile shacks scattered along the riverbank. All the rooms are super-comfortable and the suites are palatial. Breakfast is excellent and as huge as you like, and there is a neat indoor swimming pool, spa and sauna. Ask for the best available

rate, which can be a little more than half the rack rate.

The Fern, Eco Hotel HOTEL ₹₹₹

📍 79 30230000; www.fernhotels.com; near Sola Overbridge, SG Highway; d ₹7000–9000, ste ₹15,000 The Fern is one of Ahmedabad's most glamorous addresses. It has a contemporary vibe and international interiors. If only the hotel was closer to the centre of the city, it would get more takers.

House of MG HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

📍 79 25506946; www.houseofmg.com; Lal Darwaja; s/d from ₹4990/5990, ste from ₹8990/10,900 (incl breakfast) This 1920s building (with two excellent restaurants) opposite Siddi Sayid's Mosque was once the home of textile magnate Sheth Mangaldas Girdhardas – it was converted into a beautiful heritage hotel in the 1990s by his great-grandson. All the rooms are vast, verandah-edged and tastefully decorated, with great attention to detail. It's hugely popular with locals and foreigners alike. Service is first-rate, and the indoor swimming pool and gym are divine. If you know your dates,

📍 Detour: Pethapur Village

No veering off into a rural set-up is required to see the fascinating and ancient art of making teak wooden blocks for creating prints on fabric. Feeding the textile industry, this small settlement has a few families only that are nourishing the craft with their skill and knowledge. The craft began about almost three centuries ago when women dipped broken bangles in colours to make designs on fabric. This sparked an interest in the masons of the region to use wooden casts instead, giving birth to block printing as we know it now. The community also struck great business by offering their services to make Saudagiri fabrics, which were a rage in Siam (present Thailand). It is impossible to find robust businesses that spill onto the streets, so call Mr Dayabhai Prajapati to seek an invitation into his home, to see this ancient craft at close quarters.

📍 9904035369; behind Gram Panchayat, near bus stand; meet by appointment only 9am–noon & 3–5pm

The teak wooden blocks are used as casts for block printing on textiles



✓ Top Tip: Lungs of Gandhinagar

The well-planned city of Gandhinagar, where broad grey avenues make a parallel grid through the town, is dotted with several green patches. Parks like Sarita Udhyan, Swarnim Park and Punit Van are the most popular for regular joggers and morning walkers. While everyone waxes and wanes over the architectural glory or concrete overdose, these lungs of the city add a positive dimension to Gandhinagar.

book a couple of months in advance online to receive up to a 30 per cent discount.

The Grand Bhagwati HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎ 79 26841000; www.tgbhotels.com; SG Rd; d deluxe/suite ₹6000/10,500 The fact that there are only 37 rooms in the deceptively large hotel is a pleasant surprise for those who like a boutique option. The rooms are large and well-padded with amenities and facilities like wi-fi, an LCD TV, en suite bathroom and chic decor.

Royal Orchid Central HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎ 79 30912345; www.royalorchidhotels.com; Ellis Bridge; s ₹7000–8000, d ₹8000–9000, ste ₹12,000 (incl breakfast) Located opposite Gujarat College, this is a new high-end business hotel where the rooms are tasteful and comfortable and have state-of-the-art gadgets like universal electrical sockets and iPod docks. There's an excellent 24-hour restaurant-cum-coffee-shop. The hotel offers free airport transfers too.

El Dorado HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 26425517; www.eldorado-hotel.com; opp Shree Krishna Centre, Mithakali Six Rd, Navrangpura; d gold/rhodium/platinum/titanium ₹4200/4800/5400/6500

The hotel might have a Spanish sounding name, but it looks like it's plucked out of Dubai's glitz and glamour, despite the corny decor with verbiage pillows. The odd over-the-top decor and furnishings aside, it is comfy with its gym, sauna, complimentary wi-fi, polite staff and central location.

Bait Inn BOUTIQUE HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 26589066; www.hotelbaitinn.com; near The Times of India, opp Bhavani Chambers; d deluxe/executive ₹2500/3000 A brand new address with ultimate comfort and classy decor of soothing greys, Bait Inn is the ideal option for those who like a low-key place with few rooms and personalised hospitality.

Cambay Grand HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 30915600; www.thecambay.com; near Sola Overbridge, behind PERD Centre; d deluxe/premium/Cambay



The House of MG offers modern facilities in heritage surroundings

club ₹4400/5300/8100 Loaded with facilities and amenities, Cambay lives up to the name that it has created for itself in the state. The well-oiled functioning is evident with the responsive staff and clean, well-furnished rooms.

Ritz Inn HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 22123842; www.hotelritzinn.com; Station Rd; s ₹2400–2600, d ₹3000–4500 Located near the railway station, this smart hotel has unusual class and is excellent value for money. The art-deco lobby, comfortable rooms with superb beds, and slick and amiable service make it an outstanding option. There's a good veg

restaurant, check out is a civilised 24 hours, discounts are often available and free airport and station transfers are offered.

Comfort Inn President HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 26467575; www.comfortinnpresident.com; off CG Rd, Navrangpura; s/d (incl breakfast) from ₹3125/4000 This is a calm, well-run hotel on a quiet street close to the Chimanlal Girdharilal (CG) Road shops in middle-class Navrangpura. The rooms aren't huge but are comfortable and well equipped, and there's an in-house wine shop as well as a multi-cuisine restaurant. Good discounts are available; airport transfers are free.

Toran Hotel

HOTEL ₹

☎ 79 27559342; www.gujaratourism.com; opp Gandhi Ashram, Ashram Rd; d deluxe/suite ₹2500/3500 Centrally located opposite the Sabarmati Ashram, Toran Hotel makes perfect sense to book if you're looking to stay in the heart of the city. A state-run venture of Gujarat Tourism, the prices and facilities are reasonable.

Hotel Royal Highness

HOTEL ₹

☎ 79 25507450; www.hotelroyalhighness.com; Lal Darwaja; s/d (incl breakfast) from ₹2750/3300 This grand edifice is in a convenient location and the lobby is impressive. The rooms have all been renovated and are spacious and clean. Deluxe rooms feature zebra-print furnishings and sparkling bathrooms with big glassed-in showers. There is a 24-hour restaurant and a free airport shuttle service.

Mehta House

HOMESTAY ₹

☎ 79 22166747; 1871 Moto Suthar Wado, Khatia; d ₹2500 (incl tea & breakfast) The 150-year-old refurbished haveli was given a new lease of life and purpose in 2004. It is one of the top options for international travellers who want a local Gujarati household vibe. Local music, old practices like rainwater harvesting systems and authentic Gujarati food are some of the things that lure the traveller. Another big hook is the kite festival, which is best enjoyed from terraces of homes such as this one. The Bollywood film, *Kai Po Che*, used the home as

a backdrop to tell the story of three youngsters in the midst of political upheaval in the city.

Hotel Ambassador

HOTEL ₹

☎ 79 25502490; www.ambassadorahmedabad.com; Khanpur Rd; s/d from ₹2100/2500

Newly renovated inside and out, with a bright white exterior, the Ambassador greets you with a cool lobby and friendly desk and follows up with rooms that are quite stylish in browns and creams. With discounts often available, it's not bad value.

Neelkanth Sahara

HOTEL ₹

☎ 79 66615145; sahara@neelkanthhotels.com; 2nd fl, Iskon Sq Pritamraj Rd, Paldi; s/d ₹750/850, with AC from ₹900/1100 With helpful staff, bright, tasteful decor, and decent-sized rooms, this is quite good value and close to many private bus offices. There's a fruit-and-vegetable market on the ground floor of the building, and a good thali restaurant, Dadi Dining Hall (thali ₹140; lunch & dinner), on the first floor.

GANDHINAGAR**Fortune Inn Haveli**

HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 39884422; www.fortunehotels.in; Plot No 235, Sector 11, Gandhinagar; d standard/fortune club/suites ₹8000/9000/10,000 Unambiguously one of the better places to stay in Gandhinagar, the hotel is well furnished, comfortable

and has a liquor license counter in the basement.

Cambay Sapphire

HOTEL ₹₹

☎ 79 23289000; www.cambayhotels.com; Plot No 22, 23 & 24, GIDC, Sector 25, Gandhinagar; d superior/executive/villa/presidential villa ₹5000/6000/7000/11,000

It is a pleasant surprise to see a hotel that does not suffer from a Goliathian complex of towering over with its staid mirror and concrete aesthetic. Instead, Cambay is constructed with atmospheric red bricks and is located in a peaceful residential area. Since the hotel is slightly old, the rooms look worn out but are squeaky clean and comfy. It doesn't hurt to have an in-house swimming pool, spa and wi-fi either.

Hotel German Palace

HOTEL ₹

☎ 8141701111; www.hotelgermanpalace.com; opp Apollo Hospital, Airport Rd, Bhat, Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar Highway; d

deluxe/premium/suite ₹4200/4700/7000 The is the poshest pad between Gandhinagar town and the airport. Hotel German Palace is awash with subtle greys, tasteful art and a pervasive cheer. The next-door Spice Affair restaurant is part of the same hotel and serves decidedly the best fare in town.

7 Wonders

HOTEL ₹

☎ 79 23600177; www.7wondershotel.com; 7th Floor, Ugti Cooperate Park, opposite HDFC Bank, Kudasan, Airport Gandhinagar Highway; d deluxe/premium ₹2500/3200 A four-star facility located in one of the business complexes of Gandhinagar, 7 Wonders offers reasonably clean and elegant rooms. Its biggest draw is the 24 x 7 rooftop restaurant, Palacio. Easy access to the city centre as well as the airport

Mehta House offers a Gujarati setting to modern accommodation



makes it a popular choice. Since there are only 19 rooms and suites, you're likely to get ample attention.

The Grand Midway Hotel

HOTEL ₹₹

📍 79 23222282; www.thegrandmidwayhotel.com; 10th Floor, Suman City, above Cinemax Theatre, Sector 11; super deluxe executive master/super deluxe/executive suite ₹2500/3000/3500/3500 Standing in the busy complex in which the hotel is located, one would never be able to guess what an oasis this hotel can be. The rooftop location offers a far away feeling along with the wide courtyard and large brightly-lit rooms.

Narayani Heights

HOTEL ₹₹

📍 79 61701800; www.narayaniheights.com; Ahmedabad Airport–Gandhinagar Rd, adjacent Apollo Hospital, Bhat; d/superior room/executive suite room ₹3499/3499/3799/9999 The only claim to fame for the hotel is great access to the city of Gandhinagar and the airport. Familiar trappings of in-room services and amenities appease the traveller. The swimming pool is a plus for those who want to swim away the travel fatigue.

Eating

AHMEDABAD

Ashray

MULTI CUISINE ₹₹₹

📍 79 27561433; www.ashrayinnhotels.com; near Gandhi Ashram; mains ₹500–1000; 11am–11pm If you need a break from

Gujarati cuisine, head to Ashray for a good fix of classic Punjabi dishes and Indian-Chinese favourites.

Cafe Natrani

CAFE ₹₹₹₹

📍 79 27551389; www.darpana.com; Darpana Academy, near Usmanpura Cross Road, Ashram Rd; mains ₹500–1000; 10am–10pm Located inside the legendary Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, the cafe dishes out excellent whole wheat bread sandwiches and pizzas with fresh dough. Amongst the menu of teas, the classic lemon and ginger is delicious. Aside from the food, it is the history of the institution that keeps one hooked here. The academy was set up by the late Mrinalini Sarabhai and scientist Vikram Sarabhai in 1949 and has been helmed by their daughter Mallika Sarabhai (dancer and activist) for the last three decades.

Project Cafe

CAFE ₹₹₹₹

📍 79 60506060; www.theprojectcafe.in; Yellow House No 7 Polytechnic Rd, Ambawadi; mains ₹500–1000; 10am–11pm The old world charm of a bungalow and a Continental menu that has been crafted to perfection, make this an ideal lunch venue.

Neelkanth

MULTI

Patang Restaurant

CUISINE ₹₹₹₹

📍 9909001043; www.neelkanthpatang.com; Chinubhai Tower, Nehru Bridge Corner, Ashram Rd; mains ₹500–1000; noon–1.30pm, 1.45–3pm & 9–11pm The fairly tasty dishes of the veg-only buffet are hardly the draw for a slow

meal here – it is the stunning view of the entire city, especially when you come to the Sabarmati riverside and see its S-shape wind around the concrete labyrinth, with 10 bridges connecting the old part of the city to the new (you can see five from here). The experience of both night and day is unique, so grab a spot whenever you can. Bookings are taken at least two days in advance.

Cafe Uppercrust

MULTI CUISINE ₹₹₹₹

📍 79 30641914; www.cafeuppercrust.com; Ground and First Floor, Aarohi Complex, Vijay Cross Rd, Navrangpura; mains ₹500–1000; 11am–10.45pm Even though a number of new restaurants have opened doors, old timers still swear by the soups, pizzas and Thai food of Uppercrust Cafe. It was the love for baking that got the wheels turning for this home-grown brand, but it

soon expanded the menu to a multi cuisine one.

Gordhan Thal

GUJARATI ₹₹

📍 79 26871222; Ground Floor, Sapath Complex, opp Rajpath Club, Sarkhej–Gandhinagar Highway, Bodakdev; mains ₹500–1000; 11am–3pm & 7–10.30pm Ditch the pricey thalis of high-end hotels and walk into the deafening buzz of Gordhan's lunch goers. It is so popular for its 'bang for your buck' thalis that you might have to share a table with strangers. It's hardly a thing to care about as nothing will distract you from the scoops of servings rained on you by waiters.

Gordhan Thal's Gujarati thalis are popular with lunch goers



Agashiye

GUJARATI ₹

📍 79 25506946; House of MG, Lal Darwaja; lunch or dinner regular/deluxe ₹395/495; noon–3.30pm & 7–10.45pm This is Ahmedabad's best dining experience. On the rooftop of one of the city's finest mansions, the lovely tiled terrace is an oasis of calm and space, candle-lit at night and a world away from the congested streets. The all-veg menu, which changes daily, begins with a welcoming drink and is a cultural journey around the traditional thali – a multitude of ravishingly tasty vegetable dishes – and finishes with hand-churned ice cream. You even get a handy leaflet on the etiquette of eating a thali. For dinner, it is best to book ahead.

Vishalla offers a rural outdoor vibe for Gujarati food options

Vishalla

GUJARATI ₹

📍 79 26602422; www.vishalla.com; opp Vasna Tol Naka; lunch child/adult ₹305/521 and dinner child/adult ₹395/683; lunch 11am–3pm, dinner 7.30–11pm The highlight of this rural-themed restaurant is the Gujarati thali and mini versions of it. The place is wildly popular with international tourists, who swarm here to dine with local music and dance as a backdrop. The 'Indian' experience can be heightened with the expansive and educational Veechar Utensil Museum (p21) at the back of the restaurant in the same complex.

Sasuji

GUJARATI ₹

📍 79 26405066; Singaporean Avenue, opp Lal Bungalow, CG Rd; mains ₹250–500; 11am–3pm & 7–10pm Another excellent option for a typical Gujarati thali,

Sasujii is low on atmosphere but ranks high on taste and authentic flavours.

Swati Snacks

MULTI CUISINE ₹

📍 79 26405900; www.swatisnacks.com; Law Garden; mains ₹250–500; noon–10.45pm The simple decor coupled with astounding flavours and inventive ice creams have wooed foodies since 2003. The minimalist aesthetics are a relief after the kitsch overdose of Law Garden Night Market (it is located at the corner of the market). Order the lemongrass ice cream to top up a meal of Gujarati and Marwari snacks like panki chutney and dal bati.

Toran

MULTI CUISINE ₹

📍 79 27559342; www.gujarattourism.com; opp Gandhi Ashram, Ashram Rd; mains ₹250–500; 7am–9.30pm Toran's short menu bolsters easy decision-making when ordering food. Settle for the Gujarati thali for lunch. If you're here for breakfast, add a glass of Bournvita for childhood nostalgia.

Varie Tea

CAFE ₹

📍 9099912565; A 2, Aashna Building, Kameshwar School Rd, behind Shell Petrol Pump, Prahlad Nagar; mains ₹250–500; 11am–11pm A youthful vibe making it one of the most popular places to hang out, this cafe offers some relief from the traditional cuisine. Switch to bagels and sandwiches for a while. The cafe has multiple outlets.

Green House

GUJARATI ₹

📍 79 25506946; House of MG, Lal Darwaja; mains ₹100–175; noon–3pm & 7–11pm The Green House is the casual restaurant at the House of MG. Choose the fan-blasted outdoor courtyard or the AC room with a 15 per cent surcharge. The selection of veggie Gujarati dishes is superb. Do try the house special sharbat (sherbet); and the delicate and delicious panaki, a thin crêpe cooked between banana leaves; or the divine malpuva, a sweet, deep-fried pancake in saffron syrup, topped with rose petals. And don't leave without trying the hand-churned ice cream. The breakfasts (₹175–250) are pretty good too.

Chandravilas Restaurant

GUJARATI ₹

📍 9898097397; near Ratan Pol, Gandhi Rd, Tankshal, Khadia; mains less than ₹100; 8am–7.30pm There was a time when the dream of a meal in the poshest restaurant in town for ₹1 could come true – provided you were dreaming of Chandravilas, where even Sardar Patel came and snacked. Naturally, with its popularity, all visiting dignitaries and Bollywood stars yearn for the fafda-jalebi combo. Today, the crumbling walls cannot be fixed until the heritage department gives it a go-ahead. Until then, the proprietor, Mr Joshi, has to manage the crowds with his polite manner. The queue for fafda-jalebi during Dussehra goes on for almost a kilometre. No better testimony is needed for coming here.



Zen Cafe

CAFE ₹

www.zencafe.info; Radhakrishnan Rd; mains below ₹100; 4–9pm (Mon closed) This peaceful spot in a tree-fringed garden is popular with students from Gujarat University and other colleges nearby. It's right next to Amdavad ni Gufa (Amdavad Cave), an underground art gallery that looks like a heap of octopuses with sawn-off tentacles. Offerings include paninis, chocolate walnut brownies, organic coffee and capriosch mocktails.

New Lucky Restaurant

CAFE ₹

Lal Darwaja; mains less than ₹100; 5am–12.30pm A combination of bun maska (buttered bun and jam) with a hot cup of tea goes down particularly well when you're seated next to several tombstones. A solid example of the mindless commercial advancement that led to it being built on a former graveyard, the restaurant also has an original MF Husain painting hanging over the humble decor. The world famous artist used to visit the cafe often.

Seva Cafe

CAFE ₹

☎79 32954140; www.sevacafe.org; Shoppers' Plaza, 4th Floor, opp Municipal Market, CG Rd; mains less than ₹250; 7–10pm (Thu–Sun) Volunteers come in for full shifts to create magic in the Seva kitchen – only half of it has to do with the recipe. The rest is about love and compassion. Go here for home-cooked meals and an outdoor ambience. You're likely to bump into interesting people here from artists to authors or college students.

Law Garden Food Street

STREET FOOD ₹

NCC Rd; mains below ₹250; 4pm–12.30am The road perpendicular to the Law Garden Night Market takes advantage of the already arriving footfall to steer hungry shoppers for post shopping snacks. What started as a few stalls is a full-blown bustling street with pop-up shops, carts and some permanent addresses with neck-stretching menus hanging high up near the signboards.

Manek Chowk**♥ If You Like: Navtad samosas**

Originally a Persian snack, the samosa has always been a savoury that India lays claim to. Here's another interesting twist to this adopted snack. Walk down the lanes of Navtad ni pol and the smell of freshly fried samosas will lead you to the Darbar Samosa Centre. The brainchild of Master Umedram Mojulal Darbar who needed to resurrect a dying acting career, the samosa centre kitchen started dishing out the vegetarian fataka samosas of Surat. They were rechristened according to the address and the rest is history.

✔ Top Tip: Drinking alcohol

As a dry state Gujarat is regimented about liquor sales. Out-of-towners can get a license from authorised counters (often in the same complex as hotels) for about ₹100. But this comes with a stringent cap on the amount of times you can buy. Keep your valid photo id, ticket and hotel booking handy. The permit allows you two units over the month and that equates to 20 bottles of standard beer, which you must drink in private. Permit is available online too (www.eps.gpeonline.co.in). Cheers!

Night Market

STREET FOOD ₹

Manek Chowk; dusk–midnight The Amdavadis' version of nightlife is packing in a heavy dose of sweets and fried savoury snacks, that too after dinner. Every day, stalls start popping up in the old city Manek Chowk with chairs and tables arranged for nocturnal foodies. The rite of passage to call yourself a foodie includes Bastiram's rabri kulfi with no artificial sweeteners or colourings and Imtiaz Sheikh's bizarrely tasty chocolate and pineapple pizza. You'll have to part with less than ₹200 for a full stomach (☎9825165103). Reserve some space for Kamlash Patel's Paan – a family recipe since 1967 which has won him many regulars.

Bhatiyar Gali

STREET FOOD ₹

Teen Darwaja, Old City When the veg-heavy vibe of the cuisine in Ahmedabad gets tiresome for hardcore non vegetarians, head to Bhatiyar Gali; prawns, mutton, fish and chicken are sold raw and cooked. The market comes alive only at night. Drop your hygiene

standards by a whopping margin to enjoy the food here.

Farki

SWEETS ₹

Multiple outlets; www.farki.in; mains less than ₹100; 7am–11pm The thick and rich Rajwadi lassi and the doodh halwa are signature dishes of one of the most popular sweet shops of the city. The lassi is a meal in itself.

Havmor

ICE CREAM ₹

Multiple outlets; scoops ₹15–40; 11am–11pm Ahmedabad is famous for its ice cream and locals aver that the Havmor brand, found only in Gujarat, is one of the best. Havmor has branches all over the city including at Lal Darwaja, Khanpur Road, Navrangpura and the Cinemasala building on Ashram Road.

Girish Cold Drinks

COLD DRINKS ₹

Manek Chowk, near Stock Exchange Building, drinks less than ₹100; 11am–11pm Expect your pocket to be lighter and weight to be heavier when you leave Girish at Manek Chowk. Coma-inducing delicious drinks in this legendary establishment include



EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

A Gujarati sampler

Nandita Amin is an architect, educationist, intrepid traveller, a landscape architect, bon viveur and foodie and runs a street animal shelter in Gujarat.

KHAMAN

Gujarat is famous for its farsan (snacks) and the Amdavadi's love for snacks is legendary. Khaman, a soft, fluffy sweet-sour savoury cake is sold from street carts as well as in special farsan shops. It is made from besan (chickpea flour) and served with fried green chillies and often with a tangy tamarind and jaggery or date chutney. The khaman has many variants including the nylon khaman with nylon sev. While here, the sev khamani should be tried too. This no-frills joint has one of the best servings of khaman and khandvi, another savoury snack made of gram flour, yoghurt and spices, tightly rolled into bite-sized pieces.

Das Surti Khaman, Mani Nagar

KHICHU

This typical Gujarati rice flour dough is cooked on a charcoal stove. The khichu simmers throughout the day giving it a smooth delectable texture. The main ingredients are rice flour, green chillies, cumin seeds and salt which are cooked in a pot of simmering water. The khichu is served mixed with groundnut oil

and topped with pickle masala.

This humble but delicious dish is a must-have at Gujarat's garba venues during the Navratri festival.

Puribaas' inconspicuous stall in Mithakhali Gam

KULFI

The city loves its ice cream and there is no dearth of branded and non-branded varieties to choose from. Ashrafi's tagline 'King of Kool Kulfi' rings true as many residents head to one of Ashrafi Ni Kulfi's outlets post dinner on summer evenings to indulge in the rich, creamy delicacy. You are sure to want a sampler of the extensive choice of fruit-based as well as nut-based selection including malai kulfi, custard apple, mango, badam-pista-kesar or rajbhog, chocolate, strawberry and more.

Ashrafi, Ambavadi

KHAREK

Basically a street food, kharek is a dried date coated with various kinds of churan (digestive powders). The popular digestive variety is 'hajama-hajam' with a coating of special spice masala. Kharek's sweet-salty-spicy

taste, a favourite of the Gujarati's taste buds, takes care of it all.

Street carts at Manek Chowk, Law Garden

MUTTON KEEMA SAMOSA

No trip to the city is complete without trying Bera's keema samosas. With eight branches all over the city, Bera has a variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian mutton keema samosas encased in a paper-thin pastry and spiced just right.

Bera, Bhadra, Khamasa, Mirzapur and elsewhere

MAHARAJ SAMOSA

The mini samosa here comes in three varieties; stuffed with vatana (dried green peas), potato or moong

dal served with a special sauce and fried green chillies. They will pack them for you to take back, ready to eat or half-fried which keep well in the freezer for months.

Maharaj, Stadium Rd

RAIPUR BHAJIYA HOUSE

Bhajiya (pakora) is a favourite Gujarati snack often served on a piece of newspaper with a few fried green chillies, from roadside carts. The oldest and trademark shop is at Raipur gate. Their spicy assortment of potato, chilli and onion bhajiya is the most popular.

Raipur Darwaja

Bera's keema and veggie samosas are delicious



♥ If You Like: Farsan

You are likely to come across the term many times in Ahmedabad. Here's a quick guide to sound like a true foodie. Farsan refers to assorted vegetarian snacks like fafda-jalebi, khaman, dhokla, patra, bhajiya, dalwada and more. All of these are fried fillers in between meals (p48).

seasonal fruit falsa, saffron sprinkled thandai, lassi, milkshakes and the unforgettable shrikhand.

GANDHINAGAR

Palacio MULTI CUISINE ₹₹₹

☎9687957777; www.7wondershotel.com; 7th Floor, Ugti Cooperate Park,

The dhokla is a staple snack of Gujarat

opp HDFC Bank, Kudasan, Airport Gandhinagar Highway; mains ₹500–750 Gandhinagar's only 24 x 7 dining option plays another trump card by being on the rooftop. Gaze at the lit-up city at night while you dig into Continental, Indian or Chinese fare, including the unexpected Jordanian Mansaf. It is recommended to stick to Indian cuisine.

Spice Affair MULTI CUISINE ₹₹₹

☎79 32201111; www.hotelgermanpalace.com; opp Apollo Hospital, Airport Rd,

Bhat, Ahmedabad–Gandhinagar Highway; mains ₹500–1000; 9am–11.30pm The combination of delicious food and contemporary decor makes Spice Affair a sound pick over any other restaurant along the Airport Gandhinagar Highway. The Continental fare stakes its claim just as strongly as the Indian dishes. Our heart still lies with the classic paneer masala.



Shreeji Dairy SWEETS ₹₹

☎9377366116; www.shreejidairy.com;

mains ₹250–500; 8am–9pm The legacy of Shreeji goes back only three decades, but the taste of the sweets is legendary. The modak, matho and basudi are clear winners amongst platters of different inventive sweet and savoury snacks. You will find multiple outlets of Shreeji in both cities.

Chai Wai CAFE ₹₹

☎9913731162; 38, 39, Pramukh Arcade, opp NID, Gandhinagar, near Farki Ice Cream; mains less than ₹250; 7am–11pm Those addicted to chai will appreciate the ingenious touch of chocolate chai to the menu without losing the option of sticking to good ol' adrak or ginger. Served in kulhads (earthen cups), a hot cup of your favourite flavour can be had with

The cheerful Chai Wai offers interesting tea combos

classic snack items like poha, dhokla or thepla. The Chai Wai chains are present all over Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. The one close to NIFT in Gandhinagar exudes a young, cheerful vibe.

🏠 Shopping

AHMEDABAD

Law Garden Night Market TEXTILES

Law Garden; dusk–11pm This evening market comes alive with a dazzling array of goods from Kutch and Saurashtra. This is the ideal place to buy decorated cholis (sari blouses) and chaniyas (long, wide traditional





skirts). You also get embroidered wall hangings, costume jewellery and the quintessential Gujarati souvenir, a toran (cloth decoration to hang over a door).

Calico Craft Centre

HANDICRAFTS,
GARMENTS

☎9428414560; www.calicocraft.com; L4, Dr Kasturbhai Chamber, opp Reserve Bank Quarter, opp Gandhi Ashram Lane, Subhash Bridge; 10am–8pm One stop here will be ample to pick up a variety of souvenirs like torans, stoles, curios, block-printed fabric and goodies from the craft rich areas in the region like Kutch and Saurashtra.

HANDICRAFTS,
GARMENTS

Garvi Gurjari
Ashram Rd; 10am–7.30pm Mon–Sat
This state government-run outlet

The Calico Craft Centre is a good stop for souvenirs

has three floors of Gujarati crafts including silk and handloomed cotton saris, painted metal jewellery boxes and clothing in folksy designs. There are some good finds if you rummage around.

Hansiba

HANDICRAFTS, GARMENTS

8 Chandan Complex, CG Rd; 11am–9pm Mon–Sat, 11.30am–7.30pm Sun The retail outlet of SEWA (p55), Hansiba sells colourfully woven and embroidered shawls, saris, other clothes and wall hangings.

Art Book Center

BOOKSTORE

www.artbookcenter.net; off Mangaldas Rd; 10am–6pm This specialist treasure trove is upstairs in a brightly painted

building near Ellis Bridge. Indian architecture, miniature painting and textile design are the main topics they stock.

Khadi Gram Udyog

GARMENTS

Multiple outlets; 11am–7pm (Sun closed) Handspun and hand-woven cotton clothing was the preferred choice of Mahatma Gandhi. The ideology of supporting locally produced fabric grew in Ahmedabad. The Khadi Gram Udyog has since been the forerunner of the idea of sustainability. It expanded its skill from clothing to other products as well. Buy kurtas, bedsheets, footwear, incense and more from here.

Bandhej

CLOTHING

☎79 26422181; www.bandhej.com; Shop 1, Basement, Shree Krishna Centre, Netaji

Rd, Mithakhali, Navrangpura; 10am–6pm A handloom-based homegrown brand that was started in 1985 by Archana Shah, the name Bandhej resonates with those who like clothes with a deep Indian essence. The brand's ethos of collaborative designs with indigenous artisans has stayed until date, though all the clothes are not designed by Shah anymore. Part of the line is sourced from across the nation. Bandhej's bandhani is particularly famous.

Gamthiwala

TEXTILES

☎9824616313; A Block, ground floor, shop nos 22–25, Sakar 7, Nehru Bridge corner, Ashram Rd; 10am–8pm (Sun closed) Gamthiwala, by the entrance to the mausoleum of Ahmed Shah in the old city, sells quality block-printed

Bandhej offers handloom textiles and garments





A traditional folk Naubat performance on a heritage night walk

textiles, that are typical of the state. The crammed streets of the old city make it difficult to visit; you can also buy the same fabric from branches in the new part.

Activities

Heritage Walk

[9327021686; www.gujarattourism.com](http://www.gujarattourism.com); Swaminarayan Mandir, Kalupur; entry Indian/student/foreigner ₹50/30/100; 8–10.30am If Nirav Panchal is the guide for the state-run heritage walk in the mornings, you are in the hands of the most passionate spokesperson for Ahmedabad. The legions of dynastic complexities are

made easy with anecdotal stories and local nuances made noticeable to ensure that you go back wiser and more aware of the city. Highly recommended. The tours, through narrow, confusing streets and past dilapidated, carved wooden houses, are an excellent way to get a feel of old Ahmedabad with its 600 pols – neighbourhoods of narrow streets with common courtyards, wells and chabutaras (bird-feeding towers). The tours are in English and there's a brief slide show beforehand. Wear slip-on footwear, as you'll be visiting plenty of temples.

Night Walk

[79 25506946; www.houseofmg.com](http://www.houseofmg.com); Bhadra Rd, opp Siddi Sayid, Lal Darwaja; entry ₹298; 10–11pm Organised by the

Snapshot: SEWA

The Ahmedabad-based Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is one of India's largest trade unions and a rarity for two reasons: its members are women and they work in the informal sector (made up of a large majority of Indian workers who do not receive the benefits of formal employment, such as hawkers, vendors and many home-based workers, labourers and domestic workers). Established in 1972 by women working on the fringes of the Ahmedabad textile industry, SEWA now has some 1.2 million members. It's based on the notion that poor women need organisation, not aid. SEWA assists self-employed workers to organise into unions and cooperatives, so that they can control the fruits of their labour. Its approach focuses on health and childcare, literacy, appropriate housing and self-sufficiency, and the SEWA Academy conducts leadership courses for its members. SEWA also runs a bank, provides access to legal aid and is active in the campaign for a needs-based minimum wage.

The SEWA Reception Centre ([79 25506444](tel:7925506444); www.sewa.org; 10am–6pm Mon–Sat) is at the eastern end of Ellis Bridge. It has a range of literature and visitors are welcome. SEWA's fixed-price handicrafts are sold at Hansiba.

House of MG, the night walk of the old city commences at one of the ancient havelis of the same family and winds down narrow alleyways that are a rich repository of architecture and traditional features. Look out for the old bird feeders in the middle of the pols. Hundreds of bird feeders still exist; in fact they have also inspired the logo of the Heritage Department of the city. The tour ends in a small first floor room, propped above the entrance gate of Badshah ni Hajiro. A 15-minute concert of the ninth generation naubat (orchestra of shehnai and nagara) musicians ends the walk on a high. You can linger on in the area and try some midnight snacks at the night market of Manek Chowk.

Sunset Drive-In

[79 27454600; www.sunsetdriveincinema.com](tel:7927454600); Drive-in Rd; 7pm–am for two shows

An unexpected slice of entertainment exists in the traditional city of Ahmedabad. The open-air theatre boasts of being the largest cinema screen in Asia. Cinemagoers have loved this slice of western heritage since 1973, even though the movies played are largely Bollywood. More than 600 cars and 6000 people can be accommodated here. If you're too lazy to pack some snacks, the in-house food court will not disappoint.



BEST OF GUJARAT

Why Go?

In Gujarat, you can see some of India's finest textiles produced in villages by local embroiderers, weavers, printers and dyers. Gujarat's textile traditions are legion. Visit to see Asia's only wild lions or join Hindu and Jain pilgrims on treks up stunning, temple-topped peaks or marvel at the Indo-Islamic architecture. The state never ceases to impress with its varied landscape, culture and cuisine.

Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air: Ahmedabad's international airport has direct flights connecting with several Indian cities and international destinations, including Doha (Qatar), Dubai (UAE), Kuwait City (Kuwait), Muscat (Oman), Sharjah (UAE) and Singapore.

Train: Ahmedabad Junction Railway station has trains from Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam,

Trivandrum, Ajmer, Dhanbad, Daltonganj, Jaipur, Indore and many other cities of India plying at convenient times. Gandhinagar's railway station is located in Sector 14, and has only five trains at the moment – three of these connect to Delhi, Jaipur and Indore.

GREAT FOR



Kutchi women make intricate embroidery and crafts

Sights

Great & Little Rann of Kachchh (Kutch)

Home to marshy salt flats and desert scrub, the Greater and Little Ranns of the Kutch region, skirted by the Gulf of Kutch and the Arabian Sea, are decidedly India's Wild West. The flat, tortoise-shaped region (kachbo is tortoise in Gujarati) is a seasonal island. The Ranns are vast expanses of hard, dried mud; flooded by seawater, and then fresh river water in the monsoon. The salt in the soil makes the low-lying marsh area almost completely barren. The Little Rann is home to India's largest wildlife sanctuary dedicated to wild asses. The villages across Kutch are home to tribal groups who produce India's finest handicrafts and textiles, which

Rann of Kutch is a vast expanse brilliant to behold



glitter with exquisite embroidery and mirror work. Bhuj, the capital of Kutch is a city resurrected from the 2001 earthquake. Its beguiling bazaars sell amazing Kutchi handicrafts, and historic monuments like Aina Mahal and Prag Mahal possess an eerie beauty.

Modhera

The beautiful Sun Temple, built in 1026 and 1027 by King Bhimdev I, is one of the greatest monuments of the Solanki dynasty, whose rulers were believed to be descended from the sun. The Modhera temple was designed so that at dawn, the sun's rays shone on the image of Surya, the sun god, during the equinox. The temple is fronted by the Surya Kund, an extraordinary rectangular step-well that contains over 100 shrines, resembling a sunken art gallery.

Patan

Patan was Gujarat's capital for six centuries before Ahmedabad was founded in 1411. The only real sign of its former glory is the Rani ki Vav, a beautifully grand step-well. Built in 1063 by Rani Udayamati to commemorate her husband, Bhimdev I, the step-well is the oldest and finest in Gujarat and is remarkably well preserved. Patan also has more than 100 Jain temples, the largest of which is Panchasara Parshvanath, and is famed for its beautiful patola silk weaves produced by the laborious double-ikat method.

Top Tip: Sasan Gir Wildlife Sanctuary

The last refuge of the Asiatic lion is this forested, hilly, 1412sq km sanctuary about halfway between Veraval and Junagadh. Declared a national park in 1975, the sanctuary's 37 other mammal species include the dainty chital (spotted deer), sambar (large deer), nilgai or bluebull (large antelope), chousingha (four-horned antelope), chinkara (gazelle), crocodiles and rarely seen leopards. Sasan Gir is a great destination for birders too, home to over 300 species, most of them resident.

Somnath

Somnath's famous, phoenix-like temple stands in neat gardens above the beach, 6km southeast of Veraval. The sea below gives it a wistful charm. Somnath celebrates Kartik Purnima (Nov/Dec), marking Shiva's killing of the demon Tripurasura, with a large colourful fair.

Champaner & Pavagadh

This Unesco World Heritage Site combines a sacred, 762m volcanic hill (Pavagadh), with a ruined Gujarati capital (Champaner). Pavagadh became the capital of the Chauhan Rajputs around 1300 and was taken by the Gujarat sultan Mahmud Begada, after a 20-month siege, in 1484. The heart of Champaner is the citadel, surrounded by high stone walls and now partly occupied by a village. Champaner features monumental mosques with a beautiful blend of Islamic and Hindu decoration.

Lothal

Lothal, an important archaeological site discovered in 1954, was one of the most important cities of the

Indus Valley civilisation. The site has a set of scattered, low structures. Excavations have revealed a tidal dockyard (the world's oldest known artificial dock) that was connected to an old course of the Sabarmati River and thus, to the Gulf of Cambay. Seals discovered here suggest that trade may have been conducted with the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia.

Mandvi

Mandvi, located an hour from Bhuj features an amazing shipbuilding yard. There are also some sweeping beaches, including the glorious, long, clean private beach near Vijay Vilas Palace, and Kashi Vishvanath Beach, 2km from the centre just east of the Rukmavati River.

Dwarka

Dwarka, at the western tip of the Kathiawar Peninsula, is one of the four holiest Hindu pilgrimage sites in India – Krishna is said to have set up his capital here after fleeing from Mathura. Its Dwarkadhish Temple was founded over 2500 years ago and has a carved 78-m high spire.

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THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN RESEARCHED AND AUTHORED BY:



Supriya Sehgal has been at the helm of several travel companies and projects. She is happiest on the road

for long durations, writing for various national and international publications. She has contributed to over 30 Lonely Planet Guidebooks. Ahmedabad was the first city where she considered switching to becoming a foodie – well, almost. Thank you to Nirav Panchal and Bhai Lal ji for helping to unravel the mysteries of Ahmedabad's monuments and unearthing some of the lesser known surprises of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. This edition includes extracts from Lonely Planet India (2016).

LONELY PLANET INDIA TEAM

Senior Commissioning Editor

Sudha G Tilak

Copy Editor Gitanjali Lal

Design Manager Kavita Saha

Layout Designer Arun Aggarwal

Picture Research Manager Shweta Andrews

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