

# Gujarat: tribal embroidery, stepwells and more....

18 Nov—4 Dec, 2017

## Lead by Fiona Wright and Praveen Nayak.

Our passion is fuelled by the creative side of life and Gujarat has a lot to make us excited, and so many things we would like to share with you.

The nomadic people of the far west have a rich history of fine embroidery and we will meet some of the people and organizations keeping it alive and thriving in the present day.

The history of textiles in this region can be traced back more than 5000 years to Lothal, later the manufacturing and trade in textiles lead to fabulous wealth, which paved the way for some amazing architecture.

We will be seeing many examples of present day textile practice, participating in workshops to enhance our skills and wandering bazaars looking for a good find.

Gujarat has more than just textiles to inspire though, magical spaces like step wells, medieval ghost towns and fantastical palaces stir the imagination. Add to this the contrast of bustling cities, peaceful countryside, The White Desert and an Indian seaside experience and there is a vast range of experiences awaiting you.

Indian cuisine is much more than you meet in an Indian takeaway and Gujarat is often seen as the pinnacle of her vegetarian cuisine, subtle, balanced and deliciously healthy, there will be many memorable meals to enjoy and the opportunity to pick up some tips from the cook at 15th Century Fort we will call home for a few nights.

## Creative Arts Safaris tours are – art and culture based with a hands-on, get out and about type attitude.

- all inclusive utilising good quality mid-range up to flash accommodation and excellent dining experiences – *we look for atmospheric places to stay [off the beaten tourists trails where possible] always good, clean bathrooms, friendly service and comfortable rooms.*
- groups of 8-14 participants

*These trips are not traditional package tours, rather it is hoped we can travel as a group of friends; Creative Arts Safaris have done the research, our tutor handles the artistic side and a host makes sure it runs smoothly; we all share our observations and knowledge along the way. [any info you pick up in preparation is easy to share with the group via the internet and helps you 'meet' the others too]*

**Day 1-Sat 18 Nov, 2017** Home/Ahmedabad  
Arrivals and airport pickups at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport  
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India airport.

**Day 2-Sun 19 Nov, 2017** Ahmedabad  
We hope to visit the Calico Museum this morning.... unfortunately, paperwork is crazy at this venue and

they will not confirm our visit until 3 months before. We have put our name on the list– keep your fingers crossed. This afternoon we will take a spin through the Old City in tuk-tuks, then wander some of the narrow laneways before returning to our heritage hotel, an oasis in this bustling city.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 3- Mon 20 Nov, 2017** Ahmedabad

We will start our day in a family workshop that specialises in Mata ki Pichardi, painting. Hand painted with vegetable dyes cloth panels celebrating the Goddess. Beautiful work.

Inspiration with lunch at Gandhi Ashram and an afternoon visiting the wonderful work of Gramshree in the nearby slums. A Women's Centre, a children's learning centre and an inspiring women's recycling project that is enhancing street sweepers income and social status. Can't say inspiring enough with this visit, an uplifting experience

Dinner out at a traditional village styled restaurant- a lot of fun.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 4- Tues 21 Nov, 2017** Ahmedabad/Jambughoda

After an early start, we will visit the ghost town of Champaner, an atmospheric World Heritage site full of beautiful buildings, temples and mosques and then onto a peaceful country retreat for the night. The surrounding area is home to the Rathwas and Bhilalas who are famous for Pithora is a highly ritualistic painting done on the walls of their houses.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 5- Wed 22 Nov, 2017** Jambughoda/Vadodara

Heading to Vadodara today and a studio workshop visit. Our design workshop hosts train local women and produce beautiful garments through sustainable methods.

In the afternoon we will visit the fantastical Laxmi Vilas Palace. It is reputed to have been the largest private dwelling built till date and four times the size of Buckingham Palace

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 6- Thurs 23 Nov, 2017** Vadodara/Sayla

Heading to the handloom hub of Sayla we will stretch our legs at Lothal along the way. Lothal is one of the most prominent cities of the ancient Indus valley civilisation, dating from 3700 BCE. There is evidence weaving and blockprint were alive and well way back then and still going in the area today.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 7- Fri 24 Nov, 2017** Sayla

A day visiting weavers, the area is a hub for khadi, hand spun, hand woven cloth. In India, Khadi is not just a cloth, it is a whole movement started by Gandhi. The Khadi movement promoted a socio-cultural aesthetic, an idea that Indians could be self-reliant on cotton and be free from foreign cloth and clothing.

Locally there is also single ikat weaving and a unique Tangaliya weave that incorporates knots into the weft. We will also look for beadwork by the Kathis community. Lunch will be in a village farm house.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

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## Cost – US\$3990 -twin share

Single US\$1290

Deposit US\$ 1600 o book today

Booking Deadline 19 August, 2017

Full payment due 19 August, 2017

Email [fiona@creative-arts-safaris.com](mailto:fiona@creative-arts-safaris.com)

or phone +91 998 203 2755

## Day 8- Sat 25 Nov, 2017

Sayla/Bhuj

Off to Bhuj today in the far west of the State, along the way we will stop into Khamir an impressive organization fostering organic kala cotton, weaving using recycled products and many other rural craft based projects they will show us. Spoiler alert- love visiting their shop- the kala cotton weaves are divine. Next a local wool shawl weaver and onto our hotel. Our hotel will be home base for a few days while we explore this exciting area.

[inc- breakfast, lunch]

## Day 9- Sun 26 Nov, 2017

Bhuj

Staying local today- we will head out to Ajrakhpur to an indigo workshop, first an explanation of the complicated traditional processes and then a little place with cloth, printing and indigo. Bring an apron.

Lunch and then a fabulous new museum at Shrujan.... Well documented and displays of the mind boggling array of local stitch styles belonging to the various groups.

Evening visit to a local vintage textile collector...much to see and some he will part with.

### Notes

**Weather** – At this time of year is warm in the daytime but perhaps evenings and mornings can be cool; a cardigan and socks appreciated

**Clothing** – light weight layers of clothing is good. To respect local customs it is best for skirts or trousers to be mid-calf length at least, tops not too revealing. Light, loose layers work well with the climate. Generally I find 3 or 4 outfits sufficient, there is always the opportunity to pick up things along the way. Pack a pair of socks and cardigan for the cool of the morning.

**Shoes** – sensible walking shoes such as sneakers or strapped on sandals are the best options. Surfaces are often rough and you really want your footing stable so you can focus on all the wonderful things everywhere to look at! Pair of rubber thongs or flip-flops are good – often bathrooms are marble and can be slippery when wet.

**Money** – ATMs are everywhere so you can use a travel card, visa debit or credit advance easily. If you plan to use a card overseas DO warn your bank to expect overseas activity – some will freeze the card wondering what is happening.

Money changes can be found to change travellers cheques or currency.

**Camera** – we have a laptop so can download your pictures onto a memory stick [don't forget your connection leads].

**Power** – 240 volts, European adaptor plugs are the most useful.

**Begging?** – is generally not to be encouraged. Giving gifts of pens and lollies to children is encouraging them to learn a begging mentality [if you like to give a gift to children we can hand it onto a school]. There is no pension in India – a few rupees to a very old person or a handicapped person is very kind.

**Tippling?** – it is the local custom so have a pocket full of small change to be ready If you receive a personal service – e.g. bags into or out of hotel, cup of tea through room service, laundry delivery, it is customary to give a tip [10-50 rp]. If you enjoy the commentary of a guide, a performance, take a photo of some one posing in the street etc it is customary to give them a 20-50 Rp tip. Set something aside for our driver – he will take us safely and comfortably through the adventure of many Indian roads.

**Step lightly** on our environment, be frugal in water use, turn off power switches, take rubbish with you where possible.

**Say NO to Plastic!** Please bring a cloth carry bag.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

## Day 10- Mon 27 Nov, 2017

Bhuj

Qasab- a training group that has worked with rural development for many years and built up an impressive team of embroidery women will be our hosts today. First a presentation on how they work and why, and then see their finishing unit and then sit with some of their women and see if we can learn what it takes to join their team through an embroidery workshop.

In the afternoon a stroll through the market to the Aina Mahal, the old palace, damaged by the 2002 earthquake and yet still full of charm and onto the Atelier of Lisa Hall, an Australian born resident of Bhuj. Textiles called her here and lets see what she does with them, very desirable.

[inc- breakfast, lunch]

### Creative Arts Safaris tours include:

- pickups from the airport for arrivals on Day 1
- departures last day of tour

*[we are happy to organise pick-ups if you arrive earlier or depart later at an extra fee, we are also happy to help with accommodation etc if you wish to stay longer]*

- accommodation from the evening of Day 1 up to and including the night of our Farewell Dinner

*Our accommodation is generally mid-range. We use heritage hotels where we can. All places are clean, friendly and have western bathrooms! It is the ambiance and friendliness we are looking for. This is the range where we may meet locals as well – top end is far removed from this and just full of foreigners!*

- all transportation, road taxes and fuel costs for the tour
- all breakfasts and many other meals

*Food is a reflection of the culture and we are pleased to say we will sample a range of good dining experiences.*

- sightseeing entrance fees [which covers the use of a still camera]

- all tuition fees

### You need to cover:

- some meals
- all drinks
- laundry
- the one expense that we can't guestimate' for you is shopping! *[this is not a shopping expedition but you will see some amazing things and you will probably want to indulge!]*

- **airfares**

- **travel insurance**

- **visa** [necessary]

We support Fair Trade and Self-Help organisations where we can and so the only 'shops' listed on our itinerary come under this category [more info in the notes to follow] Don't worry there are also lots of other markets and bazaars we can visit too!

In India we look after our drivers and support staff and only use hotels where our drivers also receive good quality accommodation [some hotels look after their guests and treat their driver miserably]. We have decided to use heritage hotels where we can. They are wonderful, atmospheric places and we believe it helps to keep them maintained rather than leave them deteriorating...

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**Day 11- Tues 28 Nov, 2017** Bhuj

Out and about today, the White Desert salt flats- a memorable landscape- it will be brilliant white salt as far as the eye can see, returning via some local tribal villages and Kala Raksha. Heading into Bhuj there is a charming stepwell and the old memorials of past Maharajas to wander around.

[inc- breakfast, lunch]

**Day 12- Wed 29 Nov, 2017** Bhuj

Indian beach day, heading out to Mandvi [our favourite pre-monsoon get away] where great wooden ships are still being handmade, we will sit on the beach and see how it all happens Indian style- vendors offering drinks and snacks, horses and camels to ride and some even go in the water! Hopefully the flamingos will be in the river mouth.

Lunch and then Vijay Villas Palace sitting amongst the scrub to explore.

Returning to Bhuj we will detour via Mundra and visit a batik workshop, perhaps help them print for a bit.

[inc- breakfast, lunch]

**Day 13- Thurs 30 Nov, 2017** Bhuj

Time to move on, back across the flats of The Little Rann of Kutch to a peaceful eco-resort. An afternoon bullock cart ride through the local villages and a quite garden to relax. [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 14- Fri 1 Dec, 2017** Bhuj/Dasada

Heading across country, it will slowly turn more green and productive, we will visit another impressive stepwell at Modhera Sun Temple on our way to the Salvi family masters of double ikat weaving. Both the warp and weft are coloured with natural dyes to make intricate woven saris. Just around the corner is the Rani ki Vav [Queen's stepwell] and then onto our home away from home 15<sup>th</sup> century fort.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 15- Sat 2 Dec, 2017** Dasada/Poshina

Another day in the Zenana [women's quarters of this old fort] Much to do here- lots of relaxing, stitching, journals in the courtyard, jeeps to visit local villages, wander through the market to see the arrow makers [and yes, they are still used out there in the hills], potters and an ancient temple defaced by the last Mughal Aurangzeb hundreds of years ago. Feel like a king or queen and do nothing.... Drinks of the terrace in the evening a must [inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 16- Sun 3 Dec, 2017** Poshina/ Ahmedabad

A slow morning at our fort, always hard to leave, then back to Ahmedabad, time for a little last minute shopping and then a farewell dinner.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 17- Mon 4 Dec, 2017** Ahmedabad/Home  
Departures from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India [inc- breakfast,]  
We'll drop you to the airport.

**A little preparation will really add to your experience, here are a few suggestions- see what your local library has to offer....**

Movies-Have a look at a Bollywood movie or two- lots of hype and glam but you will also get some idea of the intricacy of family relationships

- Gandhi- his presence is still very much an influence to life here
- The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel...charming, almost India certainly quite true in the way things happen

A good read

**Michael Woods- A History of India. Excellent book or DVD very approachable and concise history of India- Great introduction to this ancient and continuous culture.**

William Dalrymple- a British writer who lives in India, anything he writes is worth a read.

-*City of the Djinn, White Mughals- The Age of Kali*  
Madhyr Jaffrey- *Climbing the Mango Tree*- autobiography of a well known food writer, excellent read  
And yum recipes

#### Fair Trade

We support Fair Trade and Self-Help organizations where we can and so the only 'shops' listed on our itinerary come under this category.

By Fair Trade we mean those places where the products are produced with the workers being paid a 'liveable' wage. Some of these projects also support healthcare and education for the families of their workers.

The Indian Government actively supports the founding of Craft Peoples' Co-operatives, with education and marketing support, tax breaks and help with visa card access. The combined bargaining power of a Co-operatives means better prices for the workers, a combined buying power for better priced materials and being able to collectively meet the demands of the marketplace.

A Co-operative takes the power of determination into the people's own hands rather than terms being dictated to them if they work at piece work. When working at piece-work materials are delivered to them, work must be completed by a certain date and the payment is determined by the middleman.

Co-operatives lead to people empowerment and a better standard of living for the craftspeople whilst continuing ancient traditional skills.

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Become.

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