

# Gujarat-Kutch-Rajasthan Textiles and Stepwells

January 2022

*"There are some parts of the world that, once visited, get into your heart and won't let go. India is such a place....I had been seeing the world in black & white and, when brought face-to-face with India, experienced everything re-rendered in brilliant technicolour."* - Keith Bellows, National Geographic Society



Photo: © Victoria Lautmann,  
*Vanishing Stepwells*

## One tour, two spectacular hits

### Textiles

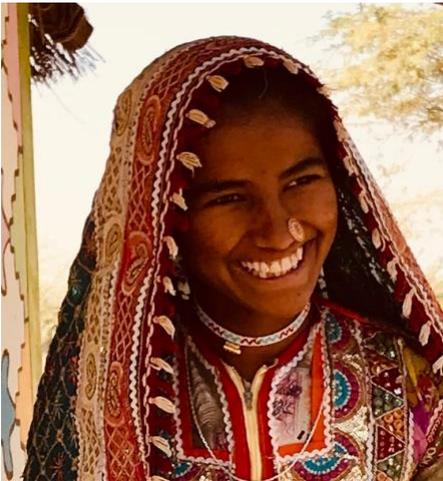
Handmade textiles are the warp and weft of India's historical, social, economic, and cultural fabric.

Immerse yourself in the 5000-year-old textile crucible of rural Gujarat and Kutch. On this sensitively conceived tour, explore artisanal villages, meet award-winning artisans, and engage in the world's most celebrated weaving, embroidery, dyeing, and printing techniques that have bound India over millennia. Visit renowned textile museums with curators. Traverse a hidden India from desert to buzzing cities. Optional: cap it off in off-the-beaten-path Rajasthan.

### Stepwells

Fascinating, yet largely unknown, subterranean stepwells once supplied communities with water, and served as refuges, gathering places, and sacred sites. Strung along ancient Silk Road stops, stepwells were at the confluence of fresh ideas, trends, and trade. As magnificent as any of India's palaces – except underground up to nine storeys deep and lovingly ornamented with sculptures and carvings. Many feature patterns seen today on handwoven textiles. We will trace the history and architecture of stepwells, beginning with the oldest 6<sup>th</sup> CE and culminating in the grandest 11<sup>th</sup> CE UNESCO designated Rani ki Vav.

Eyhotours.com



Meghwal tribeswoman



Madha Vav. Photo: © Victoria Lautmann, *Vanishing Stepwells*



Learning the lexicon of embroidery stitches

## Why go? Why with us?



- Relatively unexplored part of India
- Stunning diversity of artisanal skills
- Stepwells are only just registering on tourist radars. Go before the crowds do
- Rural communities living as they have done for centuries
- Led by textile and stepwell experts
- Hosted by E.Y.H.O. founder Shila Desai, Canadian-based Gujarati, steeped in the lore of her ancestors
- Deep knowledge and passion for this region. . . we will decipher inside stories and societal context as only people who have grown up in this culture can!



### Past Travellers speak

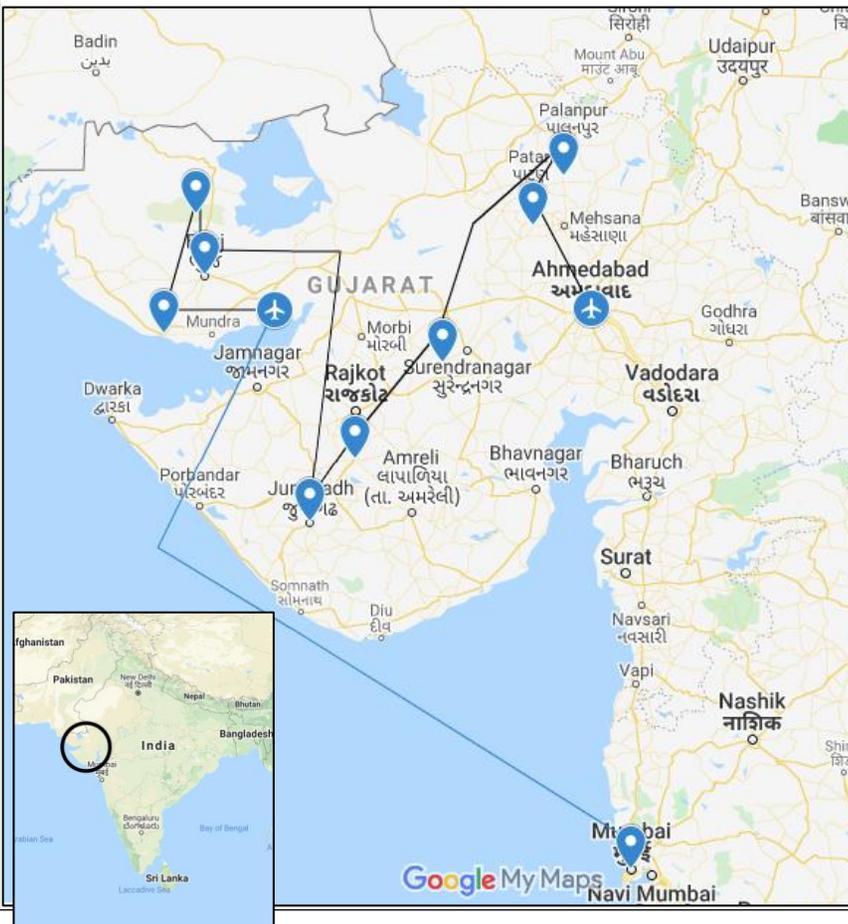
*Very well organized with a good balance of non-textile visits, which gave a fascinating insight to an amazing country plus the extra add-ons like the film in Jaipur, brilliant! **There are so many fabulous memories it would take too long to list but just want to say thank you for an amazing introduction to India*** – Anne Alldread, Derbyshire, U.K.

*One of the **top events of my life**, exceeding my fondest expectations* — Marylou S. Washington D.C.

*This was **a trip of a lifetime** and I am moved beyond words that I got to experience all we did through your eyes. To so clearly see and have you share your love for India.* – Susan Oher, New York City

*The sights I have seen, the experiences I was honoured to have undertaken will **stay with me forever*** – Jodie Watkins, Western Australia





## At a glance 15 Days (14 nights) + Optional 7 nights Rajasthan

- 3 nights Ahmedabad – Gandhi Ashram, Calico Museum, UNESCO Old City; 2 stepwells
- 1 night Patan – UNESCO stepwell, double-ikat weaving
- 1 night Bajana – UNESCO Modhera Sun Temple
- 2 nights Muli – Tangalia weaving, Dhangadra stepwells
- 2 nights Gondal – Oldest stepwells of Dhank
- 2 nights Bhuj – bandhni tie-dye, Shrujan, Bhujodi weaving
- 1 night Hodko, Salt Desert – Banni villages & embroidery
- 2 nights Mandavi – Arabian Sea, Gharchoda tie-dye, batik
- Optional: 7 nights – off-beaten-track Rajasthan: Mt Abu, Udaipur, Bundi, Kota, Jaipur. Please enquire

While we make every effort to stay within the itinerary, occasionally we may substitute according to local conditions and desires of the group

### Cost USD per person

#### Main Tour: Gujarat-Kutch 15 days

\$ 3980 double occupancy / 1330 single supplement

#### Optional: Off-Beaten-Track Rajasthan 8 days

\$ 1925 double occupancy/650 single supplement

Minimum group size: 8 pax/ Maximum 14 pax.

Tour dependent on minimum numbers being met

### “What I love about this itinerary

Combines the seminal features of this unique land: textiles and stepwells. To explore Thar Desert textiles is to probe the very warp and weft of India’s existence. Since cotton was domesticated here 5000 years ago, and the first loom tied, an incredibly rich culture has sprung up around the region’s exquisite textiles. Descending underground in search of water is to plumb unimagined depths of the subcontinent. While interest in stepwells is increasing, they are vanishing before our very eyes. This tour affords unparalleled opportunities to partake in a fast-disappearing India.

~ Shila Desai, conceptualizer



## Days 1-3 **Ahmedabad**

Arrival and transfer to beautiful heritage hotel near UNESCO heritage site of Old City, Ahmedabad. Gandhi Ashram. Calico Museum. Adalaj Stepwell. Plein air dinner in recreation of typical Gujarati village.



## Day 4 **Patan via Siddhpur**

Historic town of Siddhpur with colourful if decaying mansions filled with early 20<sup>th</sup> C Europe architectural detail and treasure. Patan, with its famous double ikat weaving and the incomparable UNESCO Rani ki Vav (Queen's Stepwell)



## Day 5 **Modhera Sun Temple**

When the sun's rays angle just right, an explosion of gold is seen in this skillfully constructed 11<sup>th</sup> CE temple to the sun god, Surya. Adjoining stepped reservoir is a sight to behold in symmetry and engineering.



## Day 6-7 **Muli**

Erstwhile bastion of the Parmar royal family, also boasts exquisite and rare Tangalia weaving as well as single ikat and elaborate bead work. Close by are three delightful stepwells to explore.



## Day 7-8 **Jungadh**

History dating from 300 BCE when Chandragupta Maurya constructed the still-standing fort. Markets and mosques abound, and the song-dance culture is evident everywhere. We go in search of the oldest engineered stepwell at Dhank.



## Day 9 **Gondal**

A stay in a heritage palace for some pampering and down time. Local markets, delectable cuisine, including the drying fields of the famous Gondal red chillies.



## Day 10-11 **Bhuj**

Gateway to much-loved Kutch! Charming Bhuj is home to intricate bandhni, Ajrakh blockprinting, and natural dyeing vats, as well as a stunningly beautiful stepwell. Curator visit at LLDC Museum of Kutch heritage.



## Day 12 **Hodko**

The furthest point before Kutch is swallowed by the world's largest salt marsh. Surreal landscape punctuated with colourful villages, held together by an unsullied lifestyle. Visit Banni villages for embroidery and crafts.



## Day 13-14 **Mandvi**

Private beach on the Arabian Sea – with a difference. Stunning sunsets, camels, and access to one of the world's oldest wooden ship building yards. Visit *gharchoda* tie-dye and batik workshops. Farewell to those not joining us in Rajasthan!



## Day 15 **Departure**

Transfer to Kandla for connecting flight to Mumbai and international destination. Or to Ahmedabad for optional 7 nights in off-beaten-track Rajasthan . . . little-known forts, palaces, stepwells, more block printing, and outstanding shopping!

### ***Is this the right tour for you?*** If you:

- love piecing together how ancient societies lived
- are curious about how their past has shaped the present
- like to see how material cultures shape societies
- enjoy exploring off-beaten track destinations
- zig when the crowds zag

you'll enjoy this tour. In fact, we wager you'll fall in love with this relatively undiscovered corner of India and plan to return before you head back home.

This tour may not be the best fit if you:

- get overwhelmed by significantly different cultural norms than in the west
- insist on five-star luxury and comfort when you travel (\*please see below for accommodations and transportation)

We'd be happy to customize a private tour to your exact liking. Please [write us!](#)

### ***How strenuous is this tour?***

If you can walk on level ground for 30 minutes, you'll be fine. Navigating some stepwells requires climbing down flights of stairs – but you needn't go all the way down. Often stepwells are best appreciated from ground level, looking down. On the other hand, a fitness-minded traveller will relish the daily exercise. Whatever your choice, you are never under duress to participate. At all times you will be accompanied to ensure your safety and well-being.

### ***Stepwells. Where can I find out more about them?***

<https://www.britannica.com/technology/stepwell>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/review-vanishing-stepwells-india-180962637/>

<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/see/story/68975/a-tale-of-the-forgotten-and-soon-to-disappear-stepwells-of-india>

<https://www.archdaily.com/395363/india-s-forgotten-stepwells>

## Cancellation provisions during a pandemic?

We understand your predicament. You want to travel, but don't want to risk losing your money or being stuck in quarantine, or—worse—contracting COVID-19. While it's anyone's guess what travel will look like in January 2022, we are committed to safeguarding your position by:

- Generous, “better-than-industry-norm” cancellation terms. Full refund up to 60 days prior to tour start date
- Cancel 59-30 days prior and lose only internal flight costs (around USD 250) and a nominal admin fee (USD 100)
- Between 60-30 days: Rebook any E.Y.H.O. tour up to and including 2022 with no penalty.
- Cancellation between 29 days prior tour start: We would love to refund your cost. However, during this period, suppliers will have been paid and a change in group numbers will affect others. We cannot offer refunds for cancellations made during this time frame.

Please note, you are responsible for personal travel health and cancellation insurance. Under the laws of Ontario and T.I.C.O., E.Y.H.O. is mandated to carry liability insurance. We reserve the right to cancel the tour up to 30 days prior in the event of minimum numbers not being met, in the event of force majeure, and a perceived inability to deliver the tour safely.

More FAQ's [here](#)

*“I was so fortunate to have selected E.Y.H.O. Tours” — Tina Crabtree, Healdsburg, CA.*

**A sampling of accommodations:**  
heritage boutique/ community-run where possible.

Hodko [Sham E Sharhad](#)



Muli [Ambika Niwas Palace](#)



Ahmedabad [House of MG](#)





Tour starts in Ahmedabad (AMD) and ends in Mumbai (BOM)

We are happy to arrange your internal flights. Transfers, and overnight stays prior to joining the tour. Please enquire.

Questions about best flights, routes, timings? Don't hesitate to contact us!

[shila@eyhotours.com](mailto:shila@eyhotours.com)

### Enquiries

[shila@eyhotours.com](mailto:shila@eyhotours.com)

Visit [www.eyhotours.com](http://www.eyhotours.com)

TICO (Travel Industry of Ontario) accredited

### Terms and Conditions

Contracted through Tourism Board of India Member, accredited since 2005.

Register with deposit of USD 800

### INCLUDES

- # Led by textile expert of native Gujarati descent, fluent in English and Gujarati
- # Superb English speaking textile guides
- # All group transfers, tours and excursions in private air-conditioned transportation
- # Accommodation on twin sharing basis or single as applicable
- # All breakfasts
- # Lunch or dinner daily
- # Hands on workshops in tie-dye bandhni, blockprinting, and embroidery including materials and instruction. Many demos
- # All monument entrance fees
- # Internal flight Kandla-Mumbai
- # Dinner at Vishalla, Ahmedabad
- # Gratuities for porters and hotel staff

### EXCLUDES

- # Travel insurance
- # International flights
- # Gratuities - a USD120 pp tipping kitty for guides and drivers