

GUJARAT TEXTILES & HANDCRAFTS TOUR

24 January – 7 February 2026

retreat|recreate is delighted to offer this 15 day/14 night women's tour exploring Gujarat's rich heritage of superb textiles and handcrafts. **A textile feast awaits!**

Visit specialist textile museums, artisan villages and ateliers, colourful bazaars and fabulous tourist sites (forts, mosques, palaces, temples etc); **engage** with local artisans; **be inspired** by incredible craftsmanship, landscapes and architecture; and **experience** India's fascinating culture, delicious cuisine and wonderful hospitality.

Participate in SIX hands-on handcraft workshops: kalamkari fabric painting, **batik** (wax resist), **bandhani** (tie & dye), **embroidery and tassel-making**, **ajrakh block printing** and a **thread embellishment, embroidery and applique** workshop. There's also the opportunity to briefly try your hand (if you wish) at **cotton spinning, loom warping and weaving** and watch demonstrations of **block carving, silk brocade weaving, single and double ikat weaving, khadi denim weaving, mashru weaving** and more.

A nation of contrasts, India is at once raw and exotic, alluring and confronting, distinctly earthy and riotously colourful, delicate and brutal, decadent and survivalist, but **ALWAYS INCREDIBLE!**

Join us for this exciting trip of a lifetime!

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ITINERARY

as at 25 Nov 2025



Day 1

Saturday 24 January

AHMEDABAD

Mani Mansion

Welcome to Gujarat!

Upon arrival at Ahmedabad International airport, you'll be met and transferred to our boutique starting point hotel. An arrival transfer is included in your tour cost - refer to the Trip Notes for details.

We encourage you to arrive in India a day or two earlier to recover from flights between time zones and explore this fabulous city.

Additional nights at our Ahmedabad starting point hotel may be booked through us at an additional cost (subject to availability). You may also wish to book one or more optional, pre-tour, guided sightseeing tours through us (at additional cost). Details will be provided to successful applicants.

We'll gather for a **'welcome' briefing meeting at 6pm** at our hotel where you'll be introduced to your fellow travellers, retreat|recreate host and local tour leader. Afterwards, we'll enjoy a delicious **welcome dinner** together.

Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Sunday 25 January

AHMEDABAD

Mani Mansion

Gujarat's capital city has many attractions. We'll start by taking an early **walking tour of the old city** exploring temples, havelis (mansions), pols (small communities of houses historically enclosed by a gate) and some of the heritage streets.

Afterwards, we'll visit **Kasturbhai Lalbhai museum** which celebrates the history and artistry of **indigo**. The exhibition of textiles, paintings, sculpture and installations explore the role of indigo across the globe in both traditional craftsmanship and contemporary experimentation. The same museum also boasts an impressive exhibition of **historical textiles**.

In the late afternoon we'll visit one of the few families who continue to practice the 3000+ year old art of **Mata Ni Pachhedi**. This traditional style of painting on cloth depicts the different forms of goddesses and their stories. Using the intricate **kalamkari** technique, design outlines are drawn onto cloth with a kalam (pen-like instrument) and then coloured in with natural dyes. The practise of this art is itself considered an act of reverence and a form of devotion. We'll enjoy a **hands-on kalamkari workshop** with a master artist and his delightful family.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 3 Monday 26 January

AHMEDABAD Mani Mansion

This morning's excursion takes us to Gujarat's oldest community of **block carvers** where we'll watch wood block carvers and block printers at work.

We'll also visit a village famous for **Ashavali brocade silk weaving** where we'll observe a master weaver working their loom. Named after the city of Ahmedabad, (which was once known as Ashaval) the intricate motifs in Ashavali brocade cloth are so finely woven that they appear to have been embroidered. This labour-intensive, luxury textile was historically only available to the Mughals, local royalty, and the rich mercantile class. Today the brocade cloth continues to fetch high prices.

In the late afternoon, there's the option to enjoy a beginner Garba dance class. This traditional Gujarati folk dance is danced in a circle (reflecting the cyclical Hindu concept of time) and is an essential component of the Hindu Navrati festival and social events such as weddings and parties. Our class is bound to be lots of fun and is an opportunity to experience another aspect of Gujarat's rich cultural heritage.

Meals: Breakfast

Day 4 Tuesday 27 January

GONDAL Riverside Palace

Leaving the capital, we drive towards the city of Gondal, one of Gujarat's former princely states. Located on the banks of the Gondali River, the town is known for its numerous beautiful palaces and their detailed architecture.

We'll stop on the way to visit a weaver who specialises in creating **hand-woven single ikat cloth**. The intricate process of tying and dyeing the warp threads before weaving requires patience and time, but the ikat motifs and designs are well worth the sublime results!

Upon arrival in Gondal, we'll check into our heritage hotel, the 18th-century former residence of the Crown Prince.

In the late afternoon we'll visit **Navlakha Palace** which dates back to the 17th Century, making it one of the oldest palaces in Gujarat. We're privileged to have the opportunity to explore the ruling family's **private collection of textiles, beadwork, brassware, hand-painted toys and silverwork**.

Meals: Breakfast

Day 5 Wednesday 28 January

GONDAL Riverside Palace

Optional early morning yoga class – only fitting as India is the birthplace of yoga.

Today we visit one of Gujarat's major hand-loom weaving units which is recognized as the region's leading producer of **Khadi (hand spun, hand woven cotton cloth)**. The collective is dedicated to empowering artisans and supports over 2000 weaving families in sustainable textile production. We'll see demonstrations of **cotton spinning using an Amber Charkha** (a semi mechanised spinning wheel) and **weaving on traditional peddle looms**.

We'll also visit the workshops of skilled local artisans to witness the **dyeing of cotton yarn with indigo** and other **natural dyes**, followed by a demonstration of **Khadi denim** weaving - a sustainable alternative to regular denim material.

In the afternoon, we'll enjoy a hands-on **batik workshop**. There's the opportunity to explore a range of batik (wax resist) techniques, using metal blocks, wooden blocks and foam sponges depending on the intricacy of your chosen design. We'll each **create a batik scarf** to take home as a memento of our trip.

Meals: Breakfast

Day 6 Thursday 29 January

JAMNAGAR Fern Residency

Leaving Gondal, we continue our journey and travel to Jamnagar. In addition to the city's rich history as a princely state, Jamnagar was also once famous as a small pearl fishing town. It was and still is a famous centre for **bandhani, the traditional technique of tie and dye**. This city has maintained its reputation for mastery of the art of bandhani for the last 500 years.

During our **bandhani workshop** we'll learn about the detailed process and techniques for knotting, tying, dyeing, bleaching, boiling and washing the fabric under the guidance of a talented artisan.

This evening we'll get a glimpse into Jamnagar's local life and culture as we take a tour exploring bustling markets and bazaars filled with Gujarati spices, snacks, **handmade goods and textiles**. We'll enjoy late afternoon views of picturesque **Lakhota Lake** and experience the serene **evening aarti ceremony** at a Hindu temple.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 7 Friday 30 January

BHUJ Regenta Resort

This morning we drive towards Bhuj in the region of **Kutch** (sometimes spelled Kachchh), **one of India's richest areas for handicrafts**.

On the way, we'll visit the fabulous and highly acclaimed **Living & Learning Design Centre**, which aims to preserve, revitalise and promote the **glorious craft heritage of Kutch**. LLDC provides training, education and support enabling craftspeople to practice traditional crafts and earn a dignified and prosperous livelihood – values which align perfectly with ours at retreat|recreate.

We'll see an impressive and vast collection of many types of **beautiful and exquisitely worked embroidery**. You'll gain a sense of the diversity of the various tribes in the region as well as their traditions, culture and textile techniques, styles and motifs.

In the late afternoon, we'll settle into our resort. There's a large swimming pool here in case you're keen on a dip.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 8 Saturday 31 January

BHUJ Regenta Resort

For the next four days, we'll be accompanied by our passionate and highly knowledgeable local Kutchi guide (in addition to our main guide) who is deeply immersed in the local handcraft communities of this desert region.

We are privileged to **visit a delightful family of weavers** who design and create the most exquisite, fine cotton shawls. They'll demonstrate the various steps of **spinning cotton yarn, preparing the warp and weaving on a hand loom**. There's the option to **briefly try your hand** at these tasks before we enjoy a delicious **lunch with the family in their home**.

We'll also be joined by other artisans who are keen to share their work - one creates the beautiful **tassel-trim** finish at each end of the hand woven shawls and sarees; another is a talented **embroiderer**. **During a brief hands-on workshop, we'll each embellish a handkerchief with a small embroidered motif and tassel**.

Later in the afternoon, there's the option to **explore the historic walled city and market of Bhuj**. We're likely to see vendors selling flowers, spices, textiles, braid and haberdashery plus farming equipment and more.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 9 Sunday 1 February

BHUJ Regenta Resort

Our day begins with a visit to the workshop of artisans who produce **Ajrakh**, a double-sided, **block printed**, multi-purpose cloth traditionally worn by local herdsmen.

The cloth undergoes a lengthy preparation, resist and woodblock print process plus several stages of dyeing. The deep crimson and indigo background is interspersed with unprinted geometric and non-figurative white motifs which often reflect those appearing in Islamic-influenced Indian architecture. There are only a few families who continue to print Ajrakh cloth, so we're extremely fortunate to participate in a workshop and each **print and dye our own cotton scarf to take home**.

Rogan art is a unique method of creating designs on silk and cotton fabric using a mixture of hot castor oil and natural pigments. Only a few families continue to practice this art form. We'll visit a small workshop to learn more about the origin, materials and techniques of this rare art.

Afterwards, we'll return to our Bhuj accommodation for the evening.

Meals: Breakfast

Day 10 Monday 2 February

HODKA Mehefeel-e-Rann

We'll each pack a small overnight bag as we'll leave our main luggage at our Bhuj resort for one night.

Our program today includes visits to several **rural villages** where a variety of age-old crafts continues to be practiced. Some families practice **manual wood turning** and **lacquer-work**, some make **unique fabric dolls** and others make the **brass bells** you'll see around the necks of cattle, camels, sheep and goats. The tone of the bells can be tuned differently so that each herdsman can recognise and locate their own stock from the distinctive sound of the bells.

In the afternoon, we'll check in to our **community-operated resort** which provides training in hospitality and jobs for local villagers. Our hand-crafted mud huts are decorated with local handcrafts and are basic but comfortable. There'll be time for a rest before we head out to explore **the Great Rann of Kutch**, a vast expanse of dazzling white salt desert.

We'll return to our desert resort for dinner, an informal performance of folk music and a relaxed evening.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 11 Tuesday 3 February

BHUJ Regenta Resort

After breakfast we'll head to a small hamlet in the Banni grassland region of Kutch. Here the families live in traditional mud huts and the women are famous for their **embroidery and quilting**. We'll watch as they skilfully demonstrate some of their **needle and mirror-work (shisha) techniques** and proudly display some of their finished pieces.

Kharad is the Sindhi word for carpet. This afternoon, we'll visit a **kharad** artisan who **weaves rugs from sheep wool and camel hair on a portable loom**. While this handcraft tradition has been practiced by the artisan's family in for generations, there are now unfortunately only three families in Kutch who continue to practice kharad weaving. We feel it's important to support this **rare craft** and hope that this valued cultural tradition continues. We're privileged to enjoy a simple **home-cooked lunch at the home of the weaving family**.

In the late afternoon, we'll return to Bhuj for our last evening in Kutch.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 12 Wednesday 4 February

DASADA Rann Riders

As we leave Bhuj, we'll visit a wonderful family who have been dedicated to **collecting superb quality and antique textiles** for several generations. We'll view some of their vast and varied collection and learn more about India's amazing textiles.

If, at this point, you realise you have somehow neglected to purchase a very special textile memento of your time in Gujarat, then this is an excellent opportunity to remedy the situation. However, please be assured that there's absolutely no obligation or pressure to buy. You're welcome to simply view, appreciate and ask questions about the collection. Our previous groups have been known to utter many an 'ooh' and 'oh, wow' as each piece is presented.

We'll spend the rest of the day travelling to our destination - our eco-friendly resort accommodation for one night.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 13 Thursday 5 February

AHMEDABAD Bloom Suites

Making our way back to Ahmedabad we'll stop in Patan, famous for being one of only four places in the world where **Patola (double ikat)** is practiced.

We'll visit a **Weaving Museum** where several generations of one family continue to practice and preserve this extraordinary handcraft. Their collection includes exquisite samples of **single ikat weaving and rare double ikat**, collected from around the globe.

We'll also visit the impressive UNESCO World Heritage-listed **Rani ki Vav step-well** - one of the largest and most sumptuous structures of its type, with unique multi-storeyed pavilions. Serving as a long-lasting record, we'll see traditional Patola patterns carved into the stone panels.

Mashru cloth is woven from a mix of silk and cotton, such that only one side of the fabric is 'silky'. In Arabic, the word 'mashru' translates as 'permitted' and its Sanskrit variation 'misru' means mixed. We'll learn more about this interesting cloth when we visit one of the few remaining families of **Mashru hand weavers**.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 14 Friday 6 February

AHMEDABAD Bloom Suites

For our final workshop, we'll visit RAAS Leela, an all-women team known for their exquisite **hand-stitched, zero waste and guilt free clothing and products**. Care of the environment, process and maker are their top priorities, with fashion being a secondary consideration. We'll spend time with the delightful, talented artisans and **participate in a hands-on workshop to learn some of their thread embellishment, embroidery and applique techniques**.

This afternoon we'll visit the famous **Calico Museum**, considered to be India's **premier textile museum** and boasting one of the **finest collections of modern and antique textiles in the world**. During our guided tour, we'll view some very special and rare exhibits including block printed and painted fabrics, embroidery, weaving, tie dye (bandhani), antique costumes and carpets.

There'll be some free time in the late afternoon to relax or explore Ahmedabad at your leisure before we gather for our farewell dinner.

Our final group dinner together will be an opportunity to reflect on memories of the last two weeks before we say a fond farewell to Gujarat and each other.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 15 Saturday 7 February

AHMEDABAD

Our tour concludes after breakfast. There are no activities planned for today so you are welcome to depart at any time.

Our hotel's check out time is 11:00am.

Additional nights at our finishing point hotel may be booked through us at additional cost.

Airport transfers may also be booked through us at additional cost. Alternatively, you're welcome to make your own transport arrangements with reception at our tour hotel.

Meals: Breakfast

Inclusions:

- Arrival transfer from Ahmedabad airport to our tour hotel
- 15 days/14 nights
- Accommodation as per the itinerary – refer also to the Trip Notes
- Meals as per the itinerary (14 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners)
- Transport as per the itinerary
- Hands-on handcraft workshops (**marked in red**) and activities as per the itinerary
- Entrance fees to all museums, galleries, sights and excursion venues as per the itinerary
- Fully escorted by a local English-speaking tour guide and retreat|recreate host

Exclusions:

- Airfares
- Travel insurance (required)
- Passports and visas
- Early check in or late check out
- Pre and post-tour accommodation and sightseeing
- Departure transfers
- Personal spending (laundry, phone, porter charges, camera fees etc)
- Activities marked as optional in the itinerary (**marked in blue**)
- Meals and drinks not included in the itinerary
- Tips - we'll establish a tips kitty on Day 1 so our local guide can tip as needed, on behalf of the group. Approx. INR9000 per person (TBC). Refer to the Money section of the Trip Notes for more information.
- Additional expenses caused by disruption to the itinerary due to unforeseen circumstances such as weather conditions, sickness etc

Note:

- This itinerary should be read in conjunction with the Booking Conditions and Trip Notes. Please pay particular attention to the notes on Health, Fitness and Mobility to ensure this trip is right for you.
- Please make a point of re-reading the Trip Notes before you travel.
- The hands-on handcraft activities included in this itinerary are not necessarily formal classes with trained teachers. They're more about genuine person to person interactions, cultural exchange and learning directly from authentic, traditional artisans (sometimes masters) at their workplace, village or home, in their own style.