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The Land of Legends

Our road trip with kids to Saurashtra in Gujarat India
 Tour Route - Ahmedabad - Dwaraka - Bet Dwaraka - Gir - Gandhinagar - Porbander - Jamnagar - Morbi - Udaipur - Delhi
 Total No of days - 7
 Dated - October 2011

Behind the wheel
 Vinod Kumar
 New Delhi

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Navratri time - which place would be more enjoyable than Gujarat! The kids got a whole week break and the unexplored state suddenly opened up into a paradise of the unseen and unheard.
 A bit of research proved that as a pilgrim, backpacker, photographer, trekker or just a historian the state had lots to offer.

Our Itinerary in a nutshell

- Day - 1 & 2 Delhi to Ahmedabad and sightseeing
- Day 3 - Ahmd - Jamnagar - Narara Marine wild life sanctuary - Dwarka
- Day - 4 Dwarka - Bet dwarka - Porbander - Gir
- Day - 5 - Somnath - Veraval - Around Gir
- Day - 6 - Gir - Jungadh - Rajkot - Wankaner - Morbi
- Day - 7 - Morbi - Randhanpur - Palanpur - Abu-road - Udaipur
- Day - 8 - Udaipur - Delhi

Pre-plan

Hotel Bookings were our next step. Club Mahindra Gir Huts and Udaipur confirmed bookings. Hence we adjusted our rest of the days to match the booking. Ahmedabad Ginger was booked for 2 days. In Dwaraka contacted Dhamji initially but it was sold out so got a confirmed booking in Hotel Sri Darshan. Narara Marine Wildlife Sanctuary requires permits and remains closed till 15th Oct. Pirotan Island has to be dropped as we were in short of time. A quick service of my vehicle, a few packs of food and water and we were ready for the exploration.

The trip begins.....

Day 1 - Delhi - Ahmedabad

As usual started early 4.30 am. First stop at McD for coffee & packed some burgers.
 Traffic was mild and diversion were less on the Delhi - Jaipur road compared to Jaipur - Delhi side.

- Shahjahanpur - 06.15 am
- Manorpha toll - 07:35 am
- Daulatpura Toll (bypass) 08.10
- GVK toll @ 08:45 am - 20 min break after the toll.
- Nasirabad - 10:15
- Bhilwara : 11:35

40 min Lunch break Sree Ram Restaurant @ 12:30 pm. Good food and their Churma laddoo was delicious.

- Udaipur - 2.30 pm. NH-76 to NH-8 connectivity roads are in a bad shape.
- Ratanpur : 4.15 pm
- Himmatnagar 05:20 pm
- Ahmedabad - Ringroad : 05:55 pm
- Hotel Ginger : 06.30 pm.

Total distance on our Day 1 : 955 kms

Time taken : 14 hrs.

Snippet - Road condition :

- Delhi - Jaipur - OK. 3 diversion after shahpura
- Jaipur bypass - Overall OK. Widening in progress. 2 diversions.
- Jaipur - Udaipur - Good.
- Udaipur - Ahmadabad - first 100 Kms good, next 150 kms rough road.

About Ginger in Ahmedabad : Fantastic location. Behind Himalaya Mall. Lots of eating options available in the mall, there is a McDonalds, Big Bazar and a Food Court. Covered parking facility. Rooms are OK as this is a business traveller hotel. Small for a family of 4 but manageable. Check-in process was smooth. Took a short rest.

Our Eve spent : Visit Law Garden Market & see Garba Nite. Had an early dinner at McD and visited the street market at Lawgarden and were at GMDC by 11 pm. We are astonished by the crowd there. The energy level and music was awesome. Was there till 1 am, tired - returned back to our room. Even then there were traffic jams in all redlights and the traffic police were on their heels managing them. The people all around were dressed in their traditional dresses and the total look was dazzling!

Day-2 Around Ahmedabad

Today we were to see :-

- Sabarmati ashram
- Laxmi Narayan temple
- Calico textile museum
- Dastan vintage fun world (Also Lunch break : Gujarati Thali)
- Adalaj step well
- Akshardham temple



Reached Sabarmati Ashram by 11 am. it was buzzing with News reporters. A group of Anna Hazare supporter were shouting shlogans. Another group didnt know who might be a local politician was near Gandhiji's statue. Reporters were covering him. The Ashram was founded by Gandhiji as a Satyagrah Ashram way back in 1915. It has a handicraft center, a handmade paper factory and spinning wheel factory. Road through started from here in 1929. It has a government library, museum, a museum for handicrafts and a spinning wheel museum.

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The Land of Legends (Gujarat)

Location - Gujarat in India

Ideal time to Visit - October to February

No of Days Reqd to see Gujarat - 7-10 days

Places to See - [click here](#)

Road Travel Information to Gujarat

- [Route map from Delhi & Mumbai](#)
- [Travel Journals/Travelogue](#)
- [Photologue](#)
- [Travel Advisor](#) [Hotel Info](#)

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TOP

a blessing in disguise as I got more time for the [Vintage Fun World](#). We reached Vintage fun world by 12.45 pm and spent good 2 hours there. It had huge collection of vintage cars. Some to remember are Lincoln, Chevorlet, Ford, Plymouth, Rolls Royce, Diamler, Bentley, Lagonda, Alvis, Armstrong Siddeley, Sunbeam talbot, Wolseley, Mercedes Benz, Austin, Triumph Mayflower, Fiat, Riley, Humber, Rover, Auburn, Lancia Dalambda, Hispano Suiza, Baybach, Packard, Buick Roadmaster, Hudson Terraplane, Hotchkiss, Cord, La salle, Minerva, Mors, Gemco, Dodge and Desoto.

[Adalaj Step Well](#) was under maintenance. First time seeing a step-well. Know as VAV in Gujarati. This is a five storied beautifully carved step-well and was used for resting. It was built by Rudra in A.D 1498. The oblong step well runs from north to south and has stairs on three sides and opens into a octagonal opening which is supported by 8 pillars. The shaft is 5 storeyed and are architecturally decorated. A panel showing the Navagrahas (9 planets) are seen and there are many sculptures like a woman churning buttermilk, femal dancers and musicians, etc.

It was already 5.30 pm when we reached [Akshardham temple](#). Being a holiday it was very crowded and so we decided to give it a skip. The valuable deposit counter itself had a long queue. Reached back our hotel at 6.30pm. Since by 10am we have be at Narara, planned an early dinner and sleep.

Other Attractions in around Ahmedabad

Kankaria Lake
Teen Darwaza
Hilla Minar
Dada Hari vav (Step-well)
Science city
Shahibag palace

Day-3 - Narara Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, Dwarakadish. Dwaraka city

Gotup early and checked out from Ginger Hotel by 4.45 am. Were already late by 45 min from our set time as we had to reach [Narara](#) by 9.30 as it is the low tide timing. Took NH 8C-8A till Rajkot. 4 laned and in good condition. Just before entering Rajkot at the roundabout(Chowkdi) right turn for Jamnagar Road. On this road 4 laning is in progress and had less traffic. Jamnagar bypass is also pretty simple and well marked and merges Jamnagar - Dwarka highway. I think its SH6. Again road widening is in progress. From here another 60 odd kms. Landmark for [Narara](#) is the Reliance Refinery and after 3 odd kms you will see Kandla port signboard. Turn right and Narara is another 18 kms from there.

- Ahmd : 04:45 am (Traffic was thin, only trucks. Progress was fast)
 - Toll at Bagodara Rs 20 - 64kms - 05:25
 - Toll at Bamnbore - Rs 20 - 185kms - 06:50 am (Right to flyover goes to Morbi)
 - Rajkot : At chowkdi Right to Jamnagar - 219 Kms - 07:15am
- (There are 2 or 3 railway crossings. Had to wait 15 min at one phatak.)
- Jamnagar - 306 kms - 08:30 Am.
 - Reliance Refinery - 361 kms - 09:25 am
 - Narara - 10:10 - 385 kms.



Mr Mustaq of Hotel President arranged the required permission and guide at [Narara Marine Wildlife Sanctuary](#). On the way we coordinated with Guide to complete the formalities with the Forest Officer posted. Our timing was correct, water was just receding. After completing all formalities at the forest office and registering the vehicle at CRPF check post, pay the charges was around Rs 300/- including camera. The ships at a distance are the oil tankers discharging their cargo at the Reliance and Essar oil refineries which are just around the corner. We saw octopus, brittle star, a few types of corals, sea cucumber, brittle star, sea anemone, sponges, crabs but if lucky you can also see jelly fish, sea horse, puffer fish, turtles and even ray fish.

Another important aspect, one should have water proof foot gears, sunglasses, hat/cap and sunscreens for coral walk, as the terrain is rocky and slippery. Lots of walking. Carry enough supply of water as one has to walk minimum of 4 to 5 kms. We devoted a good 2.5 to 3 hours. Might have walked more than 10 kms plus. We were the only tourist on that day. The mangroves and the view was simply awesome.

By 1 pm we all were tired and our drinking water too was finished, limped back to our SUV and drank litres of water. Thankfully we were carrying a 20L jar. Post 1200 hrs, its pretty hot. We left [Narara](#) by 1.30 pm. Also do keep in mind, there is no restaurants, shops around. Had a quick lunch at the first Dahaba we saw. Continued our journey to Dwarka. This 100kms drive was placid, the discussion was all about Narara and we didnt even know by 3.30-3.45 were were in the outskirts of Dwarka.

There is a good resort coming up 29 kms before Dwarka "Govardhan greens". Checked in at Hotel Sree Darshan by 4.15 pm. Dwarkadish temple is just 5 min walk from this hotel.

Narara - Dwarka = 122 kms. Time : 1.5 hrs drive.

Rested till 5.30 pm. Went to visit the temple. Camera, bags and all leather items has to deposited at the counter. Spent around 2 hrs in the temple. Being a Monday, it was very crowded. Later came to know that every Monday 5 trains reached [Dwarka](#). Now I could assume why Dhamji was sold out ! The flag changing ceremony is intresting, it changes 5 times a day. It is booked for the next 2 years. The temple is a beautiful one, we had the panditji's guiding us with each and every temple. River Gomti meets the sea here (sangam) and we sent floating diyas. The markets are flooded with diyas, Ladies items, clothes, varieties of food, achars and so on. We are back at the hotel by 9 pm after roaming around the city of [Dwarka](#). Lots and lots of temples around. Lots of eating options too (Street food). Our dinner menu was Vada-Pav. Relished it!

Day - 4 Bet Dwarka - Nageshwar - Jyotirling - Porbandar - Sasan Gir



We were ready by 06.45 am. [Bet dwarka](#) is 30 kms from [Dwarka city](#). Bet Dwarka was the residence of Sri Krishna and Dwarka being the kingdom. It is also know as Bheint Dwarka as this island was gifted by Big B Balram Ji (Dau). [Dwarka](#) is also one of the 4 dhams ie Dwarka, Puri, Badrinath, Rameshwaram.

Morning traffic was thin and reached [Bet Dwarka](#) by 07.30 am. Enroute we see Sree Dwarkadhesh Chemfood , Methapur (TATA Salt Factory). Here all our plan went for a toss as boats ferry only when there are atleast 150 people onboard or you have hire a personal boat which charges Rs 1500/-.

We had to wait till 8.50 am when a tourist bus came, we reached [Bet Dwarka island](#) by 8.55 am only. Tickets were Rs 10/- per person. Lost a good one hour. Hence it is better to reach Bet-Dwarka by 9.30-10 am. 9.30 to 10.30 is bhog at the main temple. Darshan will be available only around 10-45 am to 11.30 am. As the Srikrishna temple was closed for bhog, we hired a chakada and headed to Hanuman Tandi. This is the only temple were [Hanuman's son Magadwaj and Hanumanji](#) are the deity. Its a good 5 kms from the Srikrishna temple. From there we also went to [Yashpur Mata Mandir](#) which is another half a km from Hanuman temple.

By 10.30 am we were back to main Sri Krishna temple. Had darshan and left by 11.15 am. Luckily we didn't have to wait for a boat for return. Our next destination was [Rukmini Devi Mandir](#). The offering here is Jal daan. This was due to a curse by Rishi Durvasav, due to which the entire water in dwarka is salty. From there we headed to [Nageshwar Jyotirlinga](#) (One of the 12 jyotirlingas). One can also go from Bet-Dwarka to Nageshwar. The roads are bad. So we decided to go from Dwarka city which is 18 kms away as roads are very good.

Dwarka - Porbandar (Kirtimandir) - 110 kms, 2hours

Road to [Porbandar](#) - some stretches are good and when cruising at good speed, bad patches in the form of pot holes rather crates appear from no where. Some of them were big ones. Small dhabas are there but no good restaurant for the first 35 Odd kms on

Dwarka - Porbandar highway (NH 8E). Only after midway 55+ kms there is a good restaurant Hotel Krishna park & guest house. Good food and we had a refreshing break for 30 min.



By 4.10 pm we were at Babuji's birth place. It is called Kirti Mandir. Nobody knows it as Mahatma Gandhi Memorial. Spent 30-40 mins there, we were on the wheels for our last destination Sasan gir.

We had two option routes to OPT -

1) Porbandar - Veraval - Talala - Sasan Gir (Roads are bad, need 5+ hours)

As guided by local Taxi guys

2) Take Porbandar - Rajkot (88) for 40 odd kms (Before Upleta), after police check, Right turn on to SH 32, it connect to Junagadh.

Again 2 option - a) Via Junagadh - Mendarda - Sasangir

b) Via Sh 97 Mangalpur to Keshod (Narrow village road. Really Bad), You will hit NH 8D, just before Keshod, from Keshod - Mendarda - Sasangir)

We took the option 2 with B (Was a mistake). If one opts for this route, go via Junagadh. Roads are better and straight. Keshod - Mendarda (Village interior road, are completely isolated). The biggest problem with village roads are after sunset you will not find anybody to enquire about roads/route. Luckily we got the help of a biker who was going to Mendarda, showed the way and told us we took the wrong way, as this road is closed due to the road being washed away this season. He said that the road is drivable for Tractors and some locals take this route as a shortcut. We had to travel through a non-existent road filled with water for around 1.5 kms. It was just my gut feeling and the biker's confidence we drove ahead. There were 2/3 places where the vehicle swayed/skided. Never allowed the beast to loose its momentum. There were places where the water was really deep. The atmosphere was tense for that 20 min drive. After we crossed the water pass, every body heaved a sigh of relief and another 5 kms didn't know from where all we passed through to finally reach Mendarda. Thanked him and headed to Sasan which is another 28 kms. Roads were better considering what we were through for past 2 hours. We reached our resort by 8.50 pm.

Lesson learnt - If you don't know the route and if its getting dark, better stick to the main highways to reach the destination.

Total Distance Travelled : 366 kms.

Day - 5 Somnath - Veraval - Around Gir

Our trip was running late by half a day. We were scheduled to reach Gir by 2pm on Tuesday as [Devliya Interpretation zone](#) is closed on Wednesday. So we had to plan it on Thursday and then proceed to Junagadh. The accommodation was a luxurious hut, spacious and Cozy. After a good night sleep, we were ready to head to [Somnath & Veraval](#). Diu was cancelled as we spoke to a few guests who went there on Tuesday. Bad roads and nothing much to see apart from the beaches and a church. By 10.00 we started.

It was a 1 hour 15 mins drive from the resort (45kms) via Haripur Village, Talala and [Somnath](#). Roads are bad with lots of potholes. Reached Somnath by 11.30 am. Spent an hour there. Here too Camera, Bags, Leather items not allowed. Safe deposit facility is available. IMO it is better to be here either early morning or evening. If you want to pray in peace without rush then noon is the ideal time.

Our next destination was [Veraval](#). Heard about Bakhla Tirth, where Lord Krishna was said to have been struck by the stray arrow of a tribal. By 4 we were back at our Resort.



5 Pm was our scheduled time for a [trek](#) of 10 kms and kids were excited about it. It was to a near by temple via a small mountain. The guide took us through a mountainous route where spotting of lions are at times possible. On our trek we could see turtles, spotted deer, some birds perched on trees, the nests of baya birds and so on. The mountain height was good and we could see around the entire village. By dark we reached the Shiv temple. There we even heard the roar of lions (Could be of Lions in Devliya), which sent a shiver down the spine in our group members. Our route back was through the village. It was a good trek and we enjoyed it. Back in out hotel there was a garba dance organised by the cultural dept. Had dinner and slipped to bed.

Day - 6 Devliya - Junagadh - Rajkot - Wankaner - Morbi

Morning we were ready early as we have a long day ahead. Checked out by 7.45 am and headed to [Devliya Interpretation zone](#) which was 10 kms from the resort. It opens by 8 am. Wednesday is closed. We were there by 8.15. The bus takes you around the park which is spread in around 40 sq kms. Tickets costed Rs 460 (if i remember correct) for 4 persons. Seat nos are also allocated. We got the Front seats. Had to wait 45 min as the bus leaves when full. By 9.20 we started. It as a 45 min ride. The driver already knew the place where lions were spotted as updated by the tracking team.

Left Devliya by 10.20. Our next destination was [Junagadh](#). Which is 60 kms from Gir. First town we hit was Mendarda, brief stop over for buying nicknacks.

Places we identified to see at Junagadh

- Ashoka Edicts
- Uperkot fort which is a drive in fort. One can see rock-cut Buddhist caves, Step well, City view.
- Other places in Junagadh which we skipped dut
- Girnar hills - Ambaji temple
- Zoo
- Darbar hall museum
- Wellington Dam

Left [Junagadh](#) by 1.30 pm and distance to Rajkot was 100 kms. Good road and the progress was fast. We reached Rajkot by 2.15 pm. Did some shopping and Quick lunch. We had planned to visit the Watson museum here. Again skipped as we were already late so moved on to our next destination

Our next destination was Wankaner Palace, its around 70 kms. Road taken NH 8b, then after 35 kms from Rajkot left to NH8A which goes all the way to Samakhiali and hits NH15. Now our plan was if we can stay at the palace, then take a break there and next day straight to [Udaipur](#).

Reached Wankaner palace by 4 pm. The palace was closed for renovation. So stay at the palace not possible. Security told us being a Dusherra Day, all the staff were gone to attend Dusherra Celebration. Took some snaps and spent 30 minutes around there, moved to our night halt destination at Morbi.

Morbi was another 35 kms. After 5 kms from Wankaner on both side tile factories can be seen. Never knew Morbi is known as the "Tile capital of India". Almost all brand hordings could be seen on either side of the road. By 5.30 we were at Morbi and checked in to Hotel Shiv Ajanta on the main highway itself. Decent 3 star hotel with all basic facility. We picked up a suite room. Rooms were available from 2k onwards.

Morbi also has a Hanging bridge and Mani mandir to see. But once kids saw the huge bathtub they simply refused to move out. So we called it a day. Next day we have to cover around 550 kms and reach by noon as the city palace entry tickets closes by 4 pm.

Total Distance Travelled : 290 kms.

Day - 7 Morbi - Udaipur (Via Radhanpur - Palanpur - Aburoad NH-15-NH14) - 7 oct 11 Friday

Started by 05.15 as our target was to reach [Udaipur](#) by noon. Roads were good and traffic was thin. Progress was fast. After crossing Samakhiali we took a 20 min tea break at around 7.30 am.

Distance covered 180 kms in 02.15 hrs.

After another non stop fast drive of 150 kms till Palanpur we took our breakfast stop at around 09.45 am. After a break of 30 min we off to Udaipur. Reached Hotel flora, Udaipur by 12.30 pm. On target time as planned. 533 kms in 7.5 hrs with 45 min stoppage.

The roads were very good with occasional pot holes. Total toll paid Rs 375. I think 8 or 9 tolls. Abu road to Udaipur is a bliss to drive. Rested for an hour and after lunch we headed to City palace.

City palace was around 8 kms from our hotel. Reached quickly. Tickets were expensive. Entry tickets is 50 per person. Dont remember the parking charges. Light and Sound show in the evening cost 400 per person. Entry tickets crystal gallery cost Rs 500 per person. Camera charges was Rs 200/- per camera. Restaurants are too very expensive. Spent time till sun set then drove around the city, finally went to the newly opened Celebration Mall had dinner and reached back our hotel by 9 pm.

Day 8 - Udaipur - Delhi.

Started little late for a change by 8 am. Drive till Jaipur was quick and uneventful. Post Jaipur it was horrible. Diversion after every 2 kms and high traffic density. After Dharuhera it was crawling all the way till GRG Expressway. Reached home by 8 pm. Also that brings an end to our travelogue.