

# GUJARAT

The rich handicrafts and textiles make Ahmedabad and Bhuj fabulous destinations for the shopoholics. **BY ANIL MULCHANDANI**

## Day 1

Begin your day at the historic square called Manek Chowk. From here, you can traipse the market lanes of Ratanpol, Rani-no-Haziro, Sindhi Market, Revdi Bazaar, the cloth market of Sarangpur and Ramakda market in search of attractive *chaniya choli*, *salwar kameez*, *sarees*, block-printed fabrics, embroideries, *bandhani* tie-dye fabrics, traditional jewellery and utensils. You could even pick up painted pots and *dandiya* sticks for Navratri. While wandering through these markets, you can catch glimpses of Ahmedabad's historic architecture—the superbly carved wooden façade of a haveli, the domes and minarets of 600-year-old mosques, decorous Jain and Hindu temples, and medieval fort gates.

In the afternoon, cross the Sabarmati River to Ashram Road and CG Road, which are Ahmedabad's famous shopping streets for jewellery, *sarees*, *shervanis*, *kurtas*, garments and designer wear. For those looking to get an outfit for Navratri, Jagruti Exports & Jainam Handicrafts near Suvidha Shopping Center in Paldi specialises in *chaniya-choli* sets and related accessories. For khadi and handicrafts, explore Kamdhenu Complex at Panjarapol Cross Roads. If malls are more your style, Alpha One near Vastrapur Lake is one that has a section for Gujarati and Rajasthani handicrafts besides the ubiquitous national and international brands.

In the evening head out for the night market around Law Garden, where pavement-side vendors sell embroidered fabrics and handmade products. Bargain hard.



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## Day 2

Travel to Bhuj, the base to visit villages that specialise in specific crafts like Ajrakh block printing, mirrorwork embroidery of Hindu pastoral groups like Rabari and Ahir, woodcarving, wool weaving, *bandhani* and metalwork. The HM Craft Park at Bhujodi, the Craft Resource Centre at Kukma and outlets of NGOs like Shrujan, Kala Raksha and Qasab Craft are worth visiting. Explore the markets of Bhuj where you can get jewellery and hand-embellished fabrics.

## Day 3

From Bhuj, travel north to craft villages in the Banni grasslands—here, the Meghwals, the Sodha Rajputs, Islamic pastoral groups like the Jaths and the Mutvas, and other communities have their own distinctive embroidery styles. In the villages here, you can get exquisite embroidered fabrics and leather goods.

## Day 4

From Bhuj, take the National Highway to Sayla in Surendranagar district, one of the state's largest handloom producing districts. Visit villages like Wadhwan, Muli, Sayla, Somasar, Sejakpur, Dasada and Ambala. Tangaliya shawls, *ikat* silk *sarees*, *khadi*, hand-woven linen, *bandhani*, Rabari embroidery, decorative beadwork objects of the Kathi durbars, brass utensils, jewellery and stonecraft are good buys from this district. Continue from here to Ahmedabad or take the train back from Surendranagar.



ANEESH BHASIN