

A Rann to Remember

Watching the salty marshy land extending endlessly (over 10,000 sq km) under the moonlight is a scene straight out of a fairy tale. The moon's effulgence adds an eerie and almost mystical aura to the landscape, and it is not something you would have seen anywhere else in the world. The Rann of Kutch or the White Rann is all this and more. This is the world's largest salt desert and the winters is when you can stay at the Rann to experience its vivid sights and sounds. This is where wildlife, spirituality, art and culture, local traditions and more come together to ensure you make the most of your Gujarat sojourn while you experience the "wild west" of India.

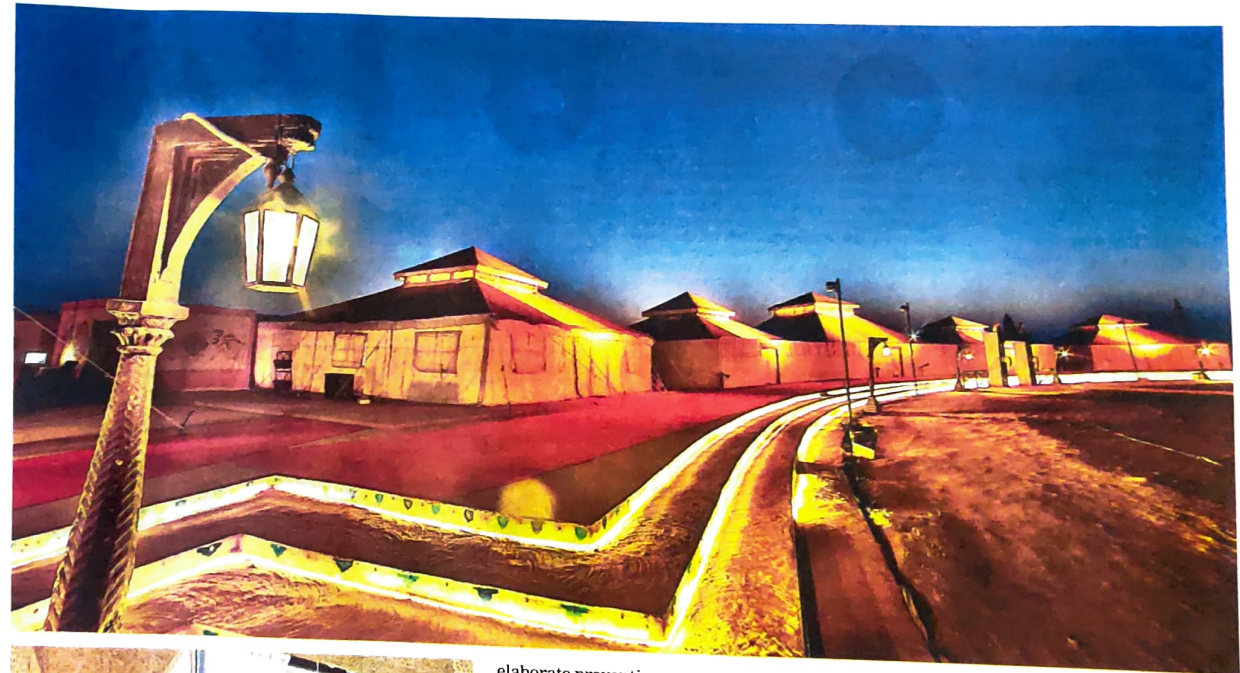
And to soak in the myriad

Exploring the ongoing annual Rann Utsav is your best way to come up close with Gujarat

By BINDU GOPAL RAO

THE KUTCH CHECKLIST

- Living and Learning Design Centre near Bhuj
- Hamirsar Lake, Bhuj
- Aina Mahal, Bhuj
- Vijay Vilas Palace, Mandvi
- Jain Temple, Koday
- Bhujodi, a weaver village near Bhuj
- Ajrakhpur, a village of block printers near Bhuj
- Nirona, for bell makers, rogan art and lacquer work artists
- Khavda village, for block printing and pottery
- Gandhi nu Gam village, Ludiya, for colourfully painted traditional mud huts
- Little Rann of Kutch and Wild Ass Sanctuary



shades of the Rann, check out the Tent City Kutch, a premier resort at Dhordo, just a few kilometres from the White Rann. You can experience the grandeur of sunrise/sunset in the salt desert and being near Kalo Dungar you can also visit other nearby historical monuments and places off the usual tourist trail. "The Tent City Kutch is spread over an area of 5 lakh sq mt

and has 350 tents. Both air conditioned and non-air conditioned, it offers guests several affordable packages. Guests also attend folk dance and music programmes, watch artisans at work, and buy unique handicrafts directly from them," says Bhavik Sheth, Finance and Operation Manager, Lallooji & Sons, which runs the Tent City. The team has put in place

elaborate preventive measures against the pandemic. The vehicles used to ferry guests are sanitised several times a day. The entire Tent City is regularly sanitised. "We have also implemented new cleaning and disinfection procedures, with an increased focus on common spaces," says Sheth. The staff have been well-trained in Covid-19 protocols. Use of face masks and other protective equipment is mandatory and measures to enforce social distancing are in place throughout the resort. "We have also taken care to ensure that guests are not inconvenienced by these measures. We have left no room for any error so that guests can enjoy their stay in a safe and protected environment," explains Sheth.

The Tent City also arranges transport and

guided sightseeing to the Rann. This is also the place to experience local Kutchi cuisine, enjoy folk music and dance performances, and witness local artisans in action. Adventure sports and other activities at the Tent City are also up for grabs. The Kalo Dungar or Black Hill, the highest point in Kutch, offers an unparalleled view of the White Rann and beyond. Several traditional art and handicraft forms continue to flourish in the Rann. There is unique biodiversity of flora and fauna, which contribute to making the

White Rann a perfect getaway amidst nature. It is also one of the darkest places and one of the best spots for stargazing. One can also experience a strange light phenomenon known as Chir Bhatti along with beautiful views of the night sky.

"We are promoting Dark Moon this year which would be truly an experience of its own. The catch line 'Kutch nahin dekha, to kuchh nahin dekha', perfectly describes the wonder that the salt desert is," concludes Sheth. It is certainly hard to dispute that.

GOOD TO KNOW

Rann Utsav

Till February 28, 2021

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