

ROLE OF UNESCO

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The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are a global entity functioning under the auspices of the United Nations. Its mission is to foster peace by promoting international collaboration in education, science, and culture. India, known for its extensive natural and cultural wealth, boasts numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites that necessitate careful conservation. This article explores UNESCO's involvement in safeguarding India's natural heritage, emphasizing the organization's efforts to protect and maintain these designated World Heritage Sites.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

India is a country that boasts a rich natural heritage, with a plethora of flora and fauna spread across diverse landscapes. This natural wealth has earned India a prominent place on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As of 2023, there are 42 World Heritage Sites in India. Some of the prominent natural UNESCO heritage sites in India include:

- Kaziranga National Park, Assam
- Sundarbans National Park, West Bengal
- Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan
- Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam
- Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Uttarakhand
- Western Ghats, across multiple states
- Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Himachal Pradesh
- Santiniketan
- Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala

UNESCO's Role in Preserving Natural Heritage in India

UNESCO plays a vital role in preserving the natural heritage in India through various initiatives and programmes. Some of these efforts include:

1. **Identification and Recognition:** UNESCO identifies and recognises the natural heritage sites in India that hold outstanding universal value. This identification process is crucial, as it brings these sites under the purview of international protection, thereby ensuring their preservation.
2. **Monitoring and Reporting:** UNESCO carries out periodic monitoring and reporting of the conservation status of the natural World Heritage Sites in India. These reports help in understanding the current state of conservation, identifying threats, and recommending appropriate measures to mitigate them.
3. **Technical and Financial Assistance:** UNESCO provides technical and financial assistance to the Indian government and the local authorities responsible for the management and conservation of the natural World Heritage Sites. This assistance is often crucial in carrying out various conservation initiatives and activities.
4. **Capacity Building:** UNESCO conducts various capacity-building programmes, workshops, and training sessions for the stakeholders involved in managing the natural heritage sites in India. These programmes aim to equip the stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills required for effective site management and conservation.
5. **Awareness and Education:** UNESCO plays a significant role in promoting awareness and education about the importance of preserving natural heritage sites in India. Through various programmes, publications, and campaigns, UNESCO fosters a sense of pride and responsibility among the people of India towards their natural heritage.

Challenges Faced by UNESCO in Preserving Natural Heritage in India

While UNESCO's efforts have contributed significantly to the preservation of the natural heritage sites in India, several challenges persist:

1. **Rapid Urbanisation and Industrialisation:** The rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in India have led to increased pressure on the natural heritage sites. Encroachments, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources are some of the adverse impacts of these processes.
2. **Inadequate Funding:** Although UNESCO provides financial assistance to the Indian government for the conservation of natural heritage sites, the available funds are often insufficient to meet the increasing conservation needs.
3. **Lack of Awareness:** The lack of awareness among the people of India about the significance of natural heritage sites and the need for their preservation poses a significant challenge. This lack of awareness often leads to the local communities engaging in activities that harm the natural heritage sites, such as deforestation, illegal hunting, and unsustainable resource extraction.

4. **Climate Change:** Climate change poses a significant threat to the natural heritage sites in India. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events have the potential to negatively impact the flora and fauna that inhabit these sites, thereby affecting their conservation status.
5. **Insufficient Management Capacity:** The management of natural heritage sites in India often faces challenges due to insufficient capacity, lack of trained personnel, and inadequate infrastructure. This hampers the effective implementation of conservation and management plans.
6. **Conflicting Interests:** The natural heritage sites in India are often subjected to competing interests, such as tourism, resource extraction, and infrastructure development. Balancing these interests while ensuring the conservation and preservation of the sites remains a significant challenge.

Recommendations for Strengthening UNESCO's Role in Preserving Natural Heritage in India

To overcome the challenges faced in preserving the natural heritage in India, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. **Enhance Funding and Resource Allocation:** UNESCO and the Indian government should work together to enhance the funding and resource allocation for the conservation of natural heritage sites. This could involve exploring innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, to mobilise additional funds.
2. **Strengthen Management Capacity:** UNESCO should continue to provide capacity-building programmes for the stakeholders involved in managing the natural heritage sites in India. This would help improve their ability to implement effective conservation and management plans.
3. **Foster Community Participation:** UNESCO and the Indian government should work towards fostering community participation in the conservation of natural heritage sites. This could involve developing community-based conservation initiatives that provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the local communities while ensuring the preservation of the sites.
4. **Promote Sustainable Tourism:** UNESCO should work closely with the Indian government to promote sustainable tourism practices at the natural heritage sites. This would involve developing guidelines and best practices for sustainable tourism, as well as implementing measures to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on the sites.
5. **Strengthen Awareness and Education:** UNESCO should continue to promote awareness and education about the importance of preserving natural heritage sites in India. This could involve developing targeted campaigns and educational programmes that engage various stakeholders, including local communities, tourists, and the general public.

6. **Enhance Collaboration and Partnerships:** UNESCO should foster enhanced collaboration and partnerships with various national and international organisations working towards the conservation of natural heritage sites in India. This would help pool resources, expertise, and knowledge, thereby increasing the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

TYPES OF TOURISM

Tourism can be defined as the activity of traveling to and staying in places outside one's usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes. It encompasses a broad range of experiences and services that cater to travelers' needs and interests. Here's a detailed breakdown of tourism:

Definition and Meaning

1. **Basic Definition:**
 - **Tourism** is the act of traveling for pleasure or business purposes, involving a temporary stay away from one's usual place of residence.
2. **Components of Tourism:**
 - **Travel:** The movement from one location to another.
 - **Stay:** The period spent in a destination other than one's usual place of residence.
 - **Activities:** Engagement in various activities during the stay, such as sightseeing, attending events, or participating in local cultural practices.
3. **Purpose:**
 - **Leisure:** Traveling for enjoyment, relaxation, and recreation.
 - **Business:** Traveling for professional reasons such as meetings, conferences, or work assignments.
 - **Medical:** Traveling for medical treatment or health care services.
 - **Educational:** Traveling to learn about new cultures, histories, or to attend academic programs.
4. **Tourism Industry:**
 - Includes a variety of sectors such as travel agencies, tour operators, accommodation providers (hotels, resorts), transportation services (airlines, car rentals), and attractions (museums, landmarks).
5. **Economic Impact:**
 - Tourism contributes significantly to the economy by generating revenue, creating jobs, and fostering economic development in various regions. It can impact local businesses, infrastructure, and cultural preservation.
6. **Cultural and Social Impact:**
 - Promotes cultural exchange and understanding between people from different regions. It can also lead to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions.

Scholars have defined tourism in various ways, reflecting its complexity and the multiple dimensions it encompasses. Here are some notable definitions from scholars and organizations:

1. **Cohen (1979):**

- **Ernest Cohen** defines tourism as "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." This definition highlights the temporary nature of tourism and its focus on activities and facilities.

2. **Mill and Morrison (1985):**

- **David Mill and Alastair Morrison** describe tourism as "the sum of the processes, activities, and experiences that take place when people travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes." This definition emphasizes tourism as a process involving various activities and experiences.

3. **Page (2003):**

- **John Page** defines tourism as "the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, and other purposes." This definition encompasses both leisure and business travel.

Tourism has two types and many forms based on the purpose of visit and alternative forms of tourism. Tourism can be categorized as international and domestic tourism.

Tourism has two types and various forms. Based on the movement of people, tourism is categorized into two kinds. These are the following:

International Tourism

International tourism occurs when individuals travel to foreign countries. To undertake such travel, one must have a valid passport, visa, health documents, and foreign currency. This form of tourism is categorized into two types: Inbound Tourism and Outbound Tourism.

Inbound Tourism involves tourists from other countries visiting a particular destination. For instance, if an Indian tourist visits Japan, this is considered inbound tourism for Japan, as it involves foreign visitors coming into Japan.

Outbound Tourism, on the other hand, refers to residents of a country traveling to other countries. For example, when an Indian tourist travels to Japan, it is classified as outbound

tourism for India because it involves leaving India to visit a foreign location. In this scenario, Japan experiences inbound tourism from the perspective of the Indian tourist.

Domestic Tourism

The tourism activity of the people within their own country is known as domestic tourism. Traveling within the same country is easier because it does not require formal travel documents and tedious formalities like compulsory health checks and foreign exchange. A traveller generally does not face many language problems or currency exchange issues in domestic tourism.

Factors of Tourism

A) Environmental factors

Environmental Factors Influencing Tourism Growth:

1. **Good Climate:** Favorable weather conditions are crucial for attracting tourists. Pleasant, warm climates with ample sunshine appeal to visitors from colder regions. For instance, many seaside resorts in the USA and UK are situated in warmer southeastern areas. Conversely, tourists from hot climates often seek cooler destinations for relief, such as Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar, and Kashmir in India, or Switzerland and Sweden for their cooler environments.
2. **Beautiful Scenery:** Scenic attractions significantly boost tourism. Locations with striking natural beauty, such as sunrise and sunset viewpoints, extensive beaches, freshwater lakes, and waterfalls, draw large numbers of visitors.

Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Tourism Development:

1. **Accessibility:** Ease of access is vital for tourism. Tourist spots must be reachable by various transportation methods—roads, railways, air, and water. For example, road and rail travel are ideal for scenic views, while air travel is best for quick trips. Waterways are less common unless for luxury cruises or visiting remote areas.
2. **Accommodation:** Effective tourism requires adequate lodging and dining options. Accommodations should match tourists' budgets, preferences, and standards, ranging from budget motels to luxury hotels. Tourism thrives where there are good and affordable places to stay.
3. **Amenities:** The quality of amenities, such as facilities for activities like skiing or surfing, and emergency services, impacts tourism growth. Well-maintained sites with diverse recreational options enhance visitor experiences.
4. **Ancillary Services:** Additional services like banking, internet connectivity, healthcare, and insurance improve a destination's appeal. These services contribute to a more comfortable stay and support the local economy.

B) Historical and Cultural Factors:

Tourists are drawn to destinations rich in history and culture. Places with significant historical landmarks, ancient monuments, and cultural heritage, such as the Taj Mahal in India, Machu Picchu in Peru, and the Great Wall of China, attract those interested in exploring historical and cultural sites.

C) Religious Factors:

Religious tourism thrives at sacred sites where people visit for spiritual reasons, seeking peace, blessings, or salvation. Notable religious destinations include Jerusalem, Mecca, and Varanasi, where faith and devotion drive tourist visits.

Nature tourism

Nature tourism involves responsible travel to natural areas, focusing on conserving the environment and benefiting local communities. This type of tourism highlights natural attractions such as birdwatching, photography, stargazing, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and visiting parks. Tourists in this sector seek authentic experiences and immersion in natural, cultural, or historical environments. From a conservation perspective, nature tourism encourages local communities and landowners to protect wildlife habitats by increasing the value placed on these areas. This, in turn, incentivizes the preservation of natural environments as tourism becomes a more significant part of the local economy. In Texas, efforts continue to support habitat conservation by aiding private landowners and communities in integrating nature tourism into their local economies, aiming for sustainable development and wildlife conservation.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism focuses on exploring a region's arts, traditions, and cultural practices. It encompasses visits to urban areas with historical sites and cultural institutions like museums and theaters, as well as rural regions showcasing indigenous traditions and lifestyles. Cultural tourists typically spend more compared to other tourists, seeking experiences that allow them to learn about and engage with the local culture.

Aspects of Cultural Tourism:

1. **Indigenous People:** Tourism often highlights the distinct cultural practices of indigenous populations. For example, in Assam, the diverse communities such as the Tribals, Non-Tribals, and Scheduled Castes each have unique cultural expressions seen in festivals, traditional attire, and crafts.
2. **Fairs and Festivals:** Local fairs and festivals provide immersive cultural experiences. For instance, Assam hosts numerous festivals like Bihu and Ambubachi Mela, which celebrate agricultural traditions and local rituals, attracting tourists interested in cultural heritage.
3. **Folk Dances and Music:** Regional folk arts, including dances and music, enhance cultural tourism. Assam's vibrant folk dances, such as Bihu and Satriya, and traditional music performances, draw visitors interested in authentic cultural experiences.

4. **Indigenous Art and Craft:** Indigenous arts and crafts are significant attractions. Assam's handicrafts, including cane and bamboo products, brass items, and handloom textiles, are highly valued by tourists, reflecting the region's cultural richness.
5. **Archaeological Remains and Monuments:** Historical monuments and archaeological sites offer insights into a region's past. Assam's ancient temples and ruins from various periods, such as the Gupta era, attract those interested in historical and cultural heritage.

In summary, both nature and cultural tourism offer rich, immersive experiences while supporting conservation and local economies.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Despite its significant potential, the region has struggled to develop cultural tourism due to several key issues:

1. **Poor Publicity:** Although the region is rich in cultural resources, it has not effectively promoted these assets on national or international stages, limiting tourist interest to only a few destinations.
2. **Lack of Renovation:** Few archaeological sites and monuments have been restored, reducing their appeal to visitors interested in historical and cultural heritage.
3. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** The region suffers from insufficient infrastructure for tourism, including poor transportation and limited accommodation options.
4. **Unimaginative Organization:** There is a lack of creative programming for showcasing traditional arts, culture, and local festivals, which could attract tourists.
5. **Hospitality Issues:** The quality of hospitality in the region is subpar, negatively impacting the overall tourist experience and deterring potential visitors.
6. **Socio-Political Unrest:** Ongoing socio-political unrest, including strikes and insurgencies, disrupts tourism development and deters visitors.
7. **Neglect of Indigenous Crafts:** The state has not effectively promoted or sold its indigenous crafts and cultural heritage through tourism, missing out on potential revenue and cultural exchange opportunities.

Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is rapidly expanding worldwide, fundamentally altering traditional tourism. Affluent individuals from wealthy nations are increasingly seeking medical care in developing countries like India, Thailand, and Malaysia. The high cost and long waiting times for treatments in their home countries drive them to explore more affordable and timely medical options abroad.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines medical tourism as travel to health resorts or destinations with the main aim of improving physical well-being through a combination of exercise, therapy, dietary control, and medical services. Goodrich and Goodrich describe it as efforts by tourist destinations to attract visitors by promoting their healthcare facilities alongside regular tourist amenities.

Medical tourism is particularly popular among patients from industrialized countries such as the UK, USA, Japan, and Canada, where healthcare costs are high and waiting periods are long. These individuals travel to countries like Thailand, Singapore, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Brazil, Belgium, Hungary, and Jordan, which offer lower-cost treatments and are also attractive tourist destinations.

Medical Tourism in India

“India is emerging as a major player in medical tourism, potentially becoming as successful as the Information Technology sector. Recent growth has been notable, with the market projected to expand from ₹4,500 crore in 2011 to ₹10,500 crore (US\$2 billion) by 2015. The influx of medical tourists has surged from 300,000 in 2009 to 850,000 in 2011, with expectations to reach 3.2 million by 2015.”

Medical tourists primarily come from the Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Turkey, Europe, and the USA. Leading medical facilities in India catering to these tourists include Apollo Hospitals, Escorts Hospital, Fortis Hospitals, Breach Candy, Hinduja, Asian Heart Institute, Arvind Eye Hospitals, and Shankara Nethralaya, among others. While public sector hospitals are less prominent in this sector, the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) excels, receiving patients from 16 countries for complex surgeries. AIIMS features an International Healthcare Service team dedicated to assisting patients from arrival to departure. Major medical tourism hubs in India include Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, and New Delhi.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism, characterized by travel to remote and often challenging destinations, is growing rapidly as tourists seek unique and unconventional experiences. This niche includes activities such as mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, scuba diving, sky diving, and river rafting.

In India, adventure tourism is thriving due to its diverse landscapes and natural resources. Popular activities include:

- **Camel Safari:** Exploring the Thar Desert on a camel is a renowned adventure activity in Asia, offering treks across sand dunes in Jaisalmer.
- **Mountaineering:** The Himalayan ranges provide excellent opportunities for mountaineering, rappelling, and rock climbing. Other high-altitude activities like Jeep safaris and biking are also popular.
- **Scuba Diving:** India's extensive coastline offers prime locations for scuba diving, particularly in Goa, Lakshadweep, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Elephant Safari:** In tiger reserves and national parks, such as those near Jaipur, tourists can enjoy elephant safaris, offering unique wildlife viewing from a high vantage point.

- **River Rafting:** Rivers like the Brahmaputra, Ganges, Yamuna, and Kali offer thrilling rafting experiences. The National Institute of Water Sports in Goa is enhancing facilities for water sports training.
- **Skiing:** The snowy peaks of Gulmarg and Alchi provide skiing opportunities. The Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering in Gulmarg offers modern equipment and training facilities.

Government Initiatives to Promote Adventure Tourism

The Indian government is actively supporting the growth of adventure tourism. Initiatives include:

- **Development of Infrastructure:** Central Financial Assistance is provided to state governments for improving tourism infrastructure, including facilities for trekking, rock climbing, and water sports.
- **Guidelines and Safety Standards:** The Ministry of Tourism has issued guidelines for adventure tour operators and safety norms covering various activities, including mountaineering and paragliding.
- **Institutional Support:** The Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering in Gulmarg and the National Institute of Water Sports in Goa are receiving upgrades to support adventure sports training.
- **Collaboration and Promotion:** The Ministry of Tourism is working with the Indian Mountaineering Federation and Adventure Tour Operators Association of India to enhance India's reputation as an adventure destination. The government has also approved the opening of 104 additional peaks in Jammu and Kashmir to boost adventure tourism in the Himalayas.

Scope of Adventure Tourism in India:

India offers a diverse range of adventure tourism opportunities due to its varied landscapes, from mountains and deserts to rivers and seas. Here are some of the key adventure activities and destinations in India:

1. **Trekking:** India's diverse terrain provides excellent trekking opportunities. Popular trekking destinations include the Himalayas in regions like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim. The treks vary in difficulty, from the easy trails in the Western Ghats to the challenging high-altitude treks in the Himalayas.
2. **Camel Safari:** The Thar Desert in Rajasthan is famous for its camel safaris. This activity provides a unique way to explore the desert landscape, including sand dunes and traditional villages, especially around Jaisalmer.
3. **White Water Rafting:** India's rivers offer thrilling white water rafting experiences. Key locations include the Ganges River in Rishikesh, the Zaskar River in Ladakh, and the Brahmaputra River in Assam.
4. **Wildlife Safari:** India's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries offer opportunities for jeep safaris and wildlife viewing. Notable parks include Ranthambore National Park, Jim Corbett National Park, and Kaziranga National Park.

5. **Skiing:** The Himalayan region offers excellent skiing opportunities. Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir and Auli in Uttarakhand are popular skiing destinations, with the Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering in Gulmarg providing modern facilities and training.
6. **Mountaineering:** The Himalayan range provides numerous opportunities for mountaineering. Peaks like Kangchenjunga, Nanda Devi, and Everest attract climbers from around the world.
7. **Scuba Diving:** The extensive coastline of India offers fantastic scuba diving experiences. Key locations include the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, and Lakshadweep.
8. **Mountain Biking:** The rugged terrains of Leh and Ladakh are ideal for mountain biking, providing thrilling rides through high-altitude landscapes.

Agrotourism in India

Agrotourism, or agricultural tourism, blends tourism with agriculture by attracting visitors to farms and ranches. Here are some aspects of agrotourism in India:

1. **Economic Development:** Agrotourism supports rural economies by promoting agricultural areas as tourist destinations. It helps farmers diversify their income by offering direct marketing opportunities and generating additional revenue from tourism.
2. **Social Inclusion and Job Creation:** Agrotourism bridges the gap between urban and rural areas, raising awareness about farming and generating employment opportunities in rural areas. Visitors purchasing local produce contribute to the rural economy.
3. **Environmental Conservation:** Many agrotourism centers focus on sustainable practices, such as composting, recycling, and water conservation. These practices help preserve the local ecosystem and prevent the destruction of agricultural lands.
4. **Cultural Preservation:** Agrotourism helps preserve traditional farming practices and rural culture. Visitors experience local customs, crafts, and traditions, which fosters cultural appreciation and helps maintain India's diverse cultural heritage.

Pilgrimage Tourism in India

Pilgrimage tourism, a significant aspect of cultural and spiritual tourism, involves visiting sacred places for religious and spiritual purposes. Key points include:

1. **Historical and Spiritual Significance:** Pilgrimage tourism has ancient roots and remains a powerful form of spiritual and cultural travel. Pilgrims visit sacred sites to achieve spiritual fulfillment and engage in religious practices.
2. **Cultural Exchange:** Pilgrimages provide opportunities for cultural exchange, where pilgrims from different regions and backgrounds share ideas about spirituality and culture.
3. **Popular Pilgrimage Destinations:** India hosts numerous significant pilgrimage sites, including Varanasi (for Hindu pilgrims), the Golden Temple in Amritsar (for Sikhs), and the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa (for Christians).
4. **Economic Impact:** Pilgrimage tourism generates significant revenue for local economies and supports infrastructure development in and around pilgrimage sites.

Overall, India's diverse offerings in adventure, agrotourism, and pilgrimage tourism cater to a wide range of interests and contribute to the country's rich cultural and economic landscape.

Some Prominent sites of Rajasthan

Main Features of Heritage sites of Rajasthan, Some Prominent sites of Rajasthan- Pushkar, Dargah at Ajmer, Viratnagar, Abaneri, Osian, JantarMantar at Jaipur, Amber, Chittorgarh fort, Gagron Fort, Kumbhalgarh & Mehrangarh Fort. Delwara & Ranakpur temples

- Pushkar is a temple town located near Ajmer City, serving as the headquarters of Pushkar tehsil in the Ajmer district of Rajasthan, India. Positioned approximately 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) northwest of Ajmer and around 150 kilometers (93 miles) southwest of Jaipur, Pushkar is a significant pilgrimage destination for Hindus and Sikhs. The town is known for its numerous temples, many of which were constructed in the 18th century and later, as earlier structures were destroyed during Muslim invasions and subsequently rebuilt. The most renowned temple in Pushkar is the Brahma Temple, notable for its red spires. Pushkar is considered a sacred place in Shaktism, with strict prohibitions on meat, eggs, alcohol, and drugs. The town is situated by Pushkar Lake, which features many ghats where pilgrims bathe. It also holds importance for Sikhs, with Gurdwaras dedicated to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, including Gobind Ghat, built in memory of Guru Gobind Singh.
- Pushkar is particularly well-known for its annual Pushkar Camel Fair, a seven-day event in the autumn during Kartika Purnima (October or November) of the Hindu calendar. This fair, which features the trading of cattle, horses, and camels, draws approximately 200,000 visitors. In 1998, the town welcomed about 1 million domestic and international tourists throughout the year.
- The town is famous for Pushkar Lake, surrounded by 52 ghats and about 400 blue-colored temples, which enhance the spiritual ambiance of the area with enchanting temple chants
- **Man Mahal:** Raja Ram Singh constructed the grand mansion, which serves as the guest house and is one of the most visited spots in Pushkar. It is famous for its Rajasthani architectural style which represents the royal period.
- Pushkar fair continues for five days and these five days are a period of relaxation and merry-making for the villagers. This fair time is the busiest time for them, as this is one of the largest cattle fairs in the country. Animals, including over 50,000 camels, are brought from distant places around to be traded and sold. All the camels are washed and adorned, some are shorn to form artistic patterns. Some camels, horses, and cows are colorfully decorated. In addition to

the animal trading market, Pushkar in parallel holds a festival of folk music and dances, ferris wheels, magic shows, horse and camel races and various other traditional sports and team entertainment competitions. While the Pushkar fair is held around the Kartik Purnima that typically overlaps between late October and early November, other seasons feature other sports and festivals for pilgrims who visit the sacred lake.

- Pushkar is traditionally believed to be the site where Brahma, the Hindu creator god, undertook a long period of penance. It is one of the few places that hosts a temple dedicated to Brahma. According to the Padma Purana, Brahma descended to Earth and arrived in the area now known as Pushkar. He entered a lush, flower-filled forest teeming with birds and animals. Pleased with the surroundings, Brahma spent a thousand years there before casting a lotus flower to the ground, which caused the Earth and heavens to tremble.
- The gods, puzzled by the disturbance and unable to locate Brahma, sought explanations from Vishnu, who guided them to Pushkar. Despite their efforts, they couldn't see Brahma until Vayu and Brihaspati advised them to meditate following Vedic rituals. After much meditation, Brahma finally appeared and inquired about their distress. The gods explained the tremors caused by the lotus and sought the reason behind them. Brahma revealed that a demon named Vajranabha, who was intent on killing the gods, was waiting in the area. By dropping the lotus, Brahma had defeated the demon. Henceforth, the place where the lotus fell was named Pushkara, signifying a sacred and purifying site that confers spiritual merit.
- **Pushkar Lake**
The centerpiece of Pushkar is Pushkar Lake, a revered site for Hindu pilgrims, comparable in sacredness to Tibet's Mansarovar Lake. According to legend, the lake was created when a lotus flower dropped from Brahma's hand and formed a lake in that spot. The lake is surrounded by 52 ghats, which are important for religious rituals and bathing.
- **Notable Ghats Around Pushkar Lake**
Among the 52 ghats, several are particularly prominent:
 - **Gwalior Ghat**
 - **Yag Ghat**
 - **Varaha Ghat**
 - **Gau Ghat**
 - **Jaipur Ghat**
 - **Karni Ghat**
 - **Dadhich Ghat**
 - **Saptarishi Ghat**

- **Kota Ghat**

These ghats are recognized as “monuments of national importance” due to their historical and cultural significance.

- **Brahma Temple (Jagatpita Brahma Mandir)**

The most significant temple in Pushkar is dedicated to Brahma, one of the trinity of Hindu gods. This temple houses a life-size idol of Brahma and is a central place of worship in the town.

- **Fairs and Festivals**

Pushkar hosts several notable fairs:

- **Nagaur Fair**

- **Tejaji Fair**

Ajmer Sharif Dargah

- Ajmer Sharif Dargah (also known as Ajmer Dargah Shareef, Ajmer Sharif, or Dargah Sharif) is the tomb of the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. It is situated in Ajmer Sharif, Rajasthan, India. Moinuddin Chishti was a Sufi saint and philosopher from the 13th century. He was born in Sanjar, now part of modern-day Iran, or in Sijistan. He arrived in Delhi during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish, who died in 1236, and soon moved to Ajmer. In Ajmer, Moinuddin was influenced by the works of the renowned Sunni Hanbali scholar and mystic ‘Abdallāh Anṣārī, particularly his notable work *Ṭabāqāt al-ṣūfiyya* on early Islamic saints. Moinuddin Chishti gained a reputation as a charismatic and compassionate spiritual leader during his time in Ajmer. Accounts of his life, written after his death, describe him as having performed many spiritual wonders, including miraculous travel, clairvoyance, and angelic visions

Architecture

- The white marble dome of the shrine dedicated to Chishti, completed in 1532, is a notable example of Indo-Islamic architecture. This date is inscribed in gold on the northern wall of the dargah. The dome, adorned with a lotus and a gold crown donated by Rampur's Nawab Haider Ali Khan, is located within the Ihaata Noorani (Quarter of Light) of the complex. It is constructed from marble, brick, and sandstone. The dargah also features a royal darbar, known as Mehfil Khana, built in 1888, characterized by its square shape and patterned ceiling. Jahanara Begum contributed to the dargah by donating the left facet (Begumi Dalaan), installing the railing around the dargah, and constructing a small platform known as Begumi Chabutra. The sanctum of the dargah is accessed through two doors, and the canopy, made of mother-of-pearl and silver, was commissioned by Jahangir and is supported by four silver posts. The ceiling is decorated with gold, and the walls were gilded in 1888.

- The complex includes multiple structures and eight entrance gates, though only three are currently in use. The Nizam Gate, a yellow gate with floral designs donated by the 7th Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan in 1911, serves as the main entrance. The Shahjahani Gate, donated by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, marked the expansion of the shrine complex beyond the Buland Darwaza, which was constructed by Sultan Mahmud Khalji. Other gates include the Madar Gate and the Delhi Gate. The Jannati Darwaza, a silver door used on rare occasions, is also known as the Bihisti Darwaza.
- The complex houses eight additional tombs of Chishti's family members, including his daughter Bibi Hafiza Jamal and Nizam Sikka, a water-carrier who once saved Humayun's life. A significant chandelier, Sahn Chirag, was commissioned by Akbar. The Ahaat-e-Noor is a large courtyard where religious functions and qawwalis are held. Near the Nizam Gate is the Naqqar Khana (drum house), once used to play music to welcome visitors. The Golden Temple donated a large silver chandelier, and the Akbari Mosque, constructed of red sandstone, was likely commissioned by Akbar. Shah Jahan commissioned a more elegant mosque, the Jami Masjid, in 1637, made of white marble. Aurangzeb built the Sandali Masjid. The complex also features a Langar Khana and a Mahfil Khana (assembly hall for qawwals, used only during the urs). Pilgrims use the Jhalara, a natural water tank, while other tanks were donated by Shah Jahan and Queen Mary of Teck in 1911.
- The Jami Masjid is located west of the dargah, with a large marble courtyard to the east. The Arhat-i-Noor, a women-only enclosure on the southern side, contains the tombs of Chishti's daughter and granddaughter. Over 40 graves are located behind the Jami Masjid.
- In 1568, Akbar donated a massive deeg (cauldron) to the dargah following his victory in the battle of Chittorgarh. Made from an alloy of seven metals, including one from Colombo, Sri Lanka, the deeg measures 20 feet in diameter. It was designed so that its rim never heats up while the bottom is used for cooking. The deeg was transported on elephants in three parts and reassembled at the dargah. This is considered the largest deeg in the world. Akbar himself prepared the first dish in it, which he shared with other fakirs at the dargah. Jahangir also donated a smaller deeg as part of the family tradition.

Urs Sharif festival

- The death anniversary of Moinuddin Chishti, known as the urs, is a time of celebration rather than mourning, as it marks the day the saint is believed to be reunited with Allah. The festivities start at the end of the Islamic month of Jumada al-Thani and continue through to the sixth day of Rajab, spanning a total of six days. Approximately five lakh people, the population of Ajmer, attend the urs, with around 2,700 buses bringing pilgrims into the city. To accommodate the influx, Indian Railways operates special trains, known as Garib Nawaz trains, to facilitate travel for pilgrims from across the country. During this period, Vishram Sthali in the Kayad locality of

Ajmer serves as a major accommodation hub for the vast number of visitors, although all types of lodging are typically fully occupied due to the high volume of pilgrims.

Abhaneri

- Abhaneri, also known as Abaneri, is a village in the Dausa district of Rajasthan, India. It is renowned for the ruins of the ancient city of Abhangari and is notable for attractions such as the Chand Baori stepwell and the Harshat Mata Temple. Located along the Jaipur-Agra Highway, the site was first documented by B.L. Dhama in 1903, who included it in his List of Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the States of Rajputana. In addition to the stepwell and temple, Abhaneri features numerous sculptures from the early Pratihara period (circa 8th-9th century CE). Many of these sculptures are now displayed or held in reserve at various museums, including the Government Museum in Amber, the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur, the Hawa Mahal City Palace, and the Archaeological Survey of India. In 2017, the Indian Government issued a postal stamp featuring the Chand Baori.
- The village, originally called Abha Nagari ("City of Brightness"), gradually evolved into its current name over time. It was initially governed by the Chahamanas of Shakambhari, but was later overtaken by Muslim invasions led by Mahmud of Ghazni and subsequently came under Mughal rule. Later, the Marathas conquered the region, and it became part of Jaipur State until India's independence. Despite its small size, Abhaneri draws visitors from around the world and has garnered scholarly interest. In 1955, Pupul Jayakar and R.C. Agrawal published two articles about the site in *Marg*, followed by a comprehensive catalogue by Yadav in 2006.
- The analysis of the site reveals a new school of sculpture that blends the religious beliefs of the Gurjara-Pratihara rulers with Classical Gupta art. The carvings prominently feature symbols of worship such as the sun as a source of energy, Durga as Mahishasuramardini, and Shiva as both destroyer and creator. Additionally, secular themes like music, hairstyles, and nature are abundantly depicted in the artwork.
- The site is famous for two important monuments - Chand Baori and Harshatmata Mandir. Both are splendid examples of ancient Indian architecture. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has inscribed an ancient mound in the area in 1951 with excavated red and grey slipware. The mound has also yielded objects of archaeological interest. There is considerable presence of Jain artefacts also at Abhaneri. Jain patavalis mention many Jain temples with high shikharas in the region attributing them to the charitable work of a rich merchant named Deshal and his son. Jain sculpture corroborate the statement that Jainism flourished at Abhaneri between 8th-10th century CE. A Jain tirthankara statue is found at the entrance of the temple itself. A peddital part of a Tirthankara image forms part of the loose sculptures collection of Chand Baori.
- The Chand Baori is one of the oldest, deepest and largest *baoris* (stepwells) in Rajasthan. The oldest parts of the structure date back to the 8th century, and significant additions were made in the 18th century. The stepwell consists of three flight of stairs descending into the earth with a

subterranean palace on one side. The flight of stairs and the palace are arranged in a square pattern with the well lying at the bottom. The flight of steps descends thirteen stories.

- The Harshat Mata Temple is located near the Chand Baori. It was a ritual to wash hands and feet at Chand Baori before visiting the temple. It is dedicated to Harshat Mata, the goddess of joy and happiness. It was constructed in the 8th century. Substantially destroyed by Islamic invaders in the 10th century, the remains of the temple still boast architectural and sculptural styles of 10th-century India. The temple is on a raised platform from where unrestricted views of nearby fertile regions can be seen. A small village nearby houses many artisans.

विराटनगर, राजस्थान

- विराटनगर (बैराठ) राजस्थान में उत्तर में स्थित है। यह नगरी प्राचीन मत्स्य राज की राजधानी रही है। चारों ओर सुरम्य पर्वतों से घिरे प्राचीन मत्स्य देश की राजधानी रहे विराटनगर में पुरातात्विक अवशेषों की सम्पदा बिखरी पड़ी है या भूगर्भ में समायी हुई है। विराटनगर अरावली की पहाड़ियों के मध्य में बसा है। राजस्थान के जयपुर जिले में शाहपुरा के अलवर-जयपुर रोड के उत्तर-पूर्व की तरफ 25 किलोमीटर दूर विराट नगर कस्बा अपनी पौराणिक ऐतिहासिक विरासत को आज भी समेटे हुए हैं।
- यह प्राचीन महत्व का एक प्रमुख दर्शनीय स्थल है। विराटनगर नामक एक कस्बा नेपाल की सीमा में भी है। किन्तु नेपाल का विराट नगर, महाभारत कालीन विराटनगर नहीं है। महाभारतकालीन गौरव में आराध्यदेव भगवान श्री केशवराय का मंदिर, जिसमें 3 ही कृष्ण एवम् 3 ही विष्णु की प्रतिमाये स्थित है। 64 खम्बे व 108 टोड़ी है। ये केशवराय मंदिर विश्व दर्शन के लिए महत्वपूर्ण तीर्थस्थल है। इस सम्बन्ध विराटनगर पौराणिक, प्रगैतिहासिक, महाभारतकालीन तथा गुप्तकालीन ही नहीं मुगलकालीन महत्वपूर्ण घटनाओं को भी अपने में समेटे हुए, राजस्थान के जयपुर और अलवर जिले की सीमा पर स्थित है विराटनगर में पौराणिक शक्तिपीठ, गुहा चित्रों के अवशेष, बौद्ध मार्थों के भग्नावशेष, अशोक का शिला लेख और मुगलकालीन भवन विद्यमान है। अनेक जलाशय और कुंड इस क्षेत्र की शोभा बढ़ा रहे हैं। प्राकृतिक शोभा से प्रान्त परिपूर्ण है। विराटनगर के निकट सरिस्का राष्ट्रीय व्याघ्र अभ्यारण, भर्तृहरि का तपोवन, पाण्डुपोल नाल्देश्वर और सिलिसेढ़ जैसे रमणीय तथा दर्शनीय स्थल लाखों श्रद्धालुओं और पर्यटकों को आकर्षित करते हैं। यहाँ के दर्शय दर्शनीय स्थलों में प्रसिद्ध श्रीकेशवराय मंदिर नगर के मध्य आकर्षक का केंद्र है। जिसमें भगवान केशव एवम् विष्णु के साथ कोई देवी (शक्ति) नहीं है। भगवान केशव का जो रूप महाभारत में था। उसी स्वरूप में भगवान श्रीकृष्ण का मंदिर दर्शनीय है। जो विराटनगर पर्यटन नगरी में सुविख्यात है।
- मान्यता है कि विराटनगर में महाभारत काल में पाण्डवों तथा द्रौपदी ने अपना अज्ञातवास व्यतीत किया था। यहाँ पर पंचखंड पर्वत पर भीम तालाब और इसके ही निकट जैन मंदिर और अकबर की छतरी है जहाँ अकबर शिकार के समय विश्राम करता था।
- यह स्थल राजा विराट के मत्स्य प्रदेश की राजधानी के रूप में विख्यात था। यही पर पाण्डवों ने अपने अज्ञातवास का समय व्यतीत किया था। महाभारत कालीन स्मृतियों के भौतिक अवशेष तो अब यहां नहीं रहे किंतु यहां ऐसे अनेक चिन्ह हैं जिनसे पता चलता है कि यहां पर कभी बौद्ध एवं जैन सम्प्रदाय के अनुयायियों का विशेष प्रभाव था। विराट नगर, जिसे पूर्व में बैराठ के नाम से भी जाना जाता था, के दक्षिण की ओर बीजक पहाड़ी है। इस के ऊपर दो समतल मैदान हैं यहां पर व्यवस्थित तरीके से रास्ता बनाया गया है। इस मैदान के

मध्य में एक गोलाकार परिक्रमा युक्त ईंटों का मन्दिर था जो आयताकार चार दीवारी से घिरा हुआ था। इस मन्दिर के गोलाकार भीतरी द्वार पर 27 लकड़ी के खम्भे लगे हुए थे। ये अवशेष एक बौद्ध स्तूप के हैं जिसे सांची व सारनाथ के बौद्ध स्तूपों की तरह गुम्बदाकार बनाया गया था।

- यह बौद्ध मंदिर गोलाकार ईंटों की दीवार से बना हुआ था, जिसके चारों तरफ 7 फीट चौड़ी गैलरी है। इस गोलाकार मंदिर का प्रवेश द्वार पूर्व की तरफ खुलता हुआ 6 फीट चौड़ा है। बाहर की दीवार 1 फीट चौड़ी ईंटों की बनी हुई है। इसी प्लेटफार्म पर बौद्ध भिक्षु एवं भिक्षुणियों आदि के चिंतन-मनन करने हेतु श्रावक गृह बने हुए थे।
- यहां बनी 12 कोठरियों के अलावा अन्य कई कोठरियों के अवशेष भी चारों तरफ देखे जा सकते हैं। ये कोठरियां साधारणतया वर्गाकार रूप में बनाई जाती थीं। इन पर किए गए निर्माण कार्यों पर सुंदर आकर्षक प्लास्टर किया जाता था। इस प्लेटफार्म के बीच में पश्चिम की तरफ शिला खण्डों को काटकर गुहा-गृह बनाया गया था जो दो तरफ से खुलता था। इसमें भी भिक्षुओं एवं भिक्षुणियों के निवास का प्रबंध किया गया था। इस गुहा गृह के नीचे एक चट्टान काटकर कुण्ड अर्थात् टंकी भी बनाई गई है जिसमें पूजा व पीने के लिए पानी इकट्ठा किया जाता था।
- विराट नगर की बुद्ध-धाम बीजक पहाड़ी पर स्थित इस मंदिर के प्रवेश द्वार पर एक चट्टान है जिस पर भाबरू बैराठ शिलालेख उत्कीर्ण है। इसे बौद्ध भिक्षु एवं भिक्षुणियों के अलावा आम लोग भी पढ़ सकते थे। इस शिलालेख को भाबरू शिलालेख के नाम से भी जाना जाता था। यह शिलालेख पाली व ब्राह्मी लिपि में लिखा हुआ था।
- इसे सम्राट अशोक ने स्वयं उत्कीर्ण करवाया था ताकि जनसाधारण उसे पढ़कर तदनुसार आचरण कर सके। इस शिला लेख को कालान्तर में 1840 में ब्रिटिश सेनाधिकारी कैप्टन बर्ट द्वारा कटवा कर कलकत्ता के संग्रहालय में रखवा दिया गया। आज भी विराटनगर का यह शिलालेख वहां सुरक्षित रखा हुआ है। इसी प्रकार एक और शिला लेख भीमसेन झूंगरी के पास आज भी स्थित है। यह उस समय मुख्य राजमार्ग था। बीजक की पहाड़ी पर बने गोलाकार मन्दिर के प्लेटफार्म के समतल मैदान से कुछ मीटर ऊंचाई पर पश्चिम की तरफ एक चबूतरा है जिसके सामने भिक्षु बैठकर मनन व चिन्तन करते थे। यहीं पर एक स्वर्ण मंजूषा थी जिसमें भगवान बुद्ध के दो दांत एवं उनकी अस्थियां रखी हुई थीं। अशोक महान बैराठ में स्वयं आए थे। यहां आने के पहले वे 255 स्थानों पर बौद्ध धर्म का प्रचार-प्रसार कर चुके थे। बैराठ वर्षों तक बुद्धम् शरणम् गच्छामी, धम्मम् शरणम् गच्छामी से गुंजायमान रहा है।
- यह स्थल बौद्ध धर्म के प्रचार प्रसार का केंद्र रहा है। कालान्तर में जाकर जैन समाज के विमल सूरी नामक संत ने यहीं पर रहकर वर्षों तपस्या की। ऐसी मान्यता है कि उन्हीं के प्रभाव में आकर अकबर ने सम्पूर्ण मुगल राज्य में वर्ष में एक सौ छः दिन के लिए जीव हत्या बंद करवाई। विराट नगर के उत्तर में नसिया में जैन समाज का संगमरमर का भव्य मंदिर है। इस मन्दिर की भव्यता देखते ही बनती है। पहाड़ की तलहटी में स्थित यह मन्दिर अपनी धवल आभा के कारण प्रत्येक आगन्तुक को अपनी ओर आकर्षित करता है।
- नसिया के पास ही मुगल गेट भी बना हुआ है। इस इमारत को अकबर ने बनवाया था। वह यहां पर शिकार के लिए आया करता था। यहीं पर अकबर ने राज्य के लिए सोने चांदी एवं तांबे की टकसाल स्थापित की थी जो औरंगजेब के समय तक चलती रही।

- महाभारतकालीन गौरव में आराध्यदेव भगवान श्री केशवराय का मंदिर, जिसमें 3 ही कृष्ण एवम् 3 ही विष्णु की प्रतिमाये स्थित है। 64 खम्बे व 108 टोड़ी है। ये केशवराय मंदिर विश्व दर्शन के लिए महत्वपूर्ण तीर्थस्थल है। इस सम्बन्ध विराटनगर पौराणिक, प्रगैतिहासिक, महाभारतकालीन तथा गुप्तकालीन ही नहीं मुगलकालीन महत्वपूर्ण घटनाओं को भी अपने में समेटे हुए, राजस्थान के जयपुर और अलवर जिले की सीमा पर स्थित है विराटनगर में पौराणिक शक्तिपीठ, गुहा चित्रों के अवशेष, बौद्ध मार्थों के भग्नावशेष, अशोक का शिला लेख और मुगलकालीन भवन विद्यमान है। अनेक जलाशय और कुंड इस क्षेत्र की शोभा बढ़ा रहे हैं। प्राकृतिक शोभा से प्रान्त परिपूर्ण है। विराटनगर के निकट सरिस्का राष्ट्रीय व्याघ्र अभ्यारण, भर्तृहरि का तपोवन, पाण्डुपोल नाल्देश्वर और सिलिसेढ़ जैसे रमणीय तथा दर्शनीय स्थल लाखों श्रद्धालुओं और पर्यटकों को आकर्षित करते हैं। यहाँ के दर्शय दर्शनीय स्थलों में प्रसिद्ध श्रीकेशवराय मंदिर नगर के मध्य आकर्षक का केंद्र है। जिसमें भगवान केशव एवम् विष्णु के साथ कोई देवी (शक्ति) नहीं है। भगवान केशव का जो रूप महाभारत में था। उसी स्वरूप में भगवन श्रीकृष्ण का मंदिर दर्शनीय है। जो विराटनगर पर्यटन नगरी में सुविख्यात है। चमत्कारिक भैरू बाबा का मन्दिर विराट नगर के पूर्व में स्थित है मान्यता के अनुसार ये मन्दिर महाभारत कालीन है भैरू बाबा के दारू का भोग लगाने से हर मन्त्रत पूरी होती है दूर दूर से लोग भैरू बाबा के दर्शन के लिये आते हैं 1950 में मे एक आदमी ने बाबा की मूर्ती को अपने घर लेजाने की कोशिश की लेकिन गांव की सीमा पर जाकर ये मूर्ती नीचे गिर गई ओर वहाँ से टस से मस भी नहीं हुई ओर वह आदमी उसी वक्त पागल हो गया तब सभी गाँववासियो ने पूजा अर्चना की तब जाकर मूर्ती वापस मन्दिर में स्थापित हो सकी।
- Osian, also spelled Osiyan, is an ancient town located in the Jodhpur District of Rajasthan, India, and serves as an oasis in the Thar Desert. It is a panchayat village and the administrative center for the Osian tehsil. Situated 69 km (43 miles) north of Jodhpur, the town is accessible via a detour off the main Jodhpur–Bikaner Highway. The under-construction Amritsar-Jamnagar Expressway will also pass through Osian.
- Osian is renowned for its cluster of Hindu and Jain temples, which range in date from 457 BCE to the 12th century AD. During the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty, the town was a significant religious hub within the Marwar kingdom. Notable temples in the area include the Surya Temple, Sachiya Mata Temple, Katan Bawari, and a Jain temple dedicated to Mahavira, all celebrated for their architectural beauty.
- The town was a prominent trading center as early as the Gupta period and remained a major center of Hinduism and Jainism for many centuries. However, its significance declined sharply following an attack by the forces of Muhammad of Ghor in 1195. Today, Osian is a popular tourist destination.
- Osian is believed to be an ancient settlement with a rich history, known by early names such as Uvasisala, Ukesa, and Upkesapur-pattana. Initially, it was a center for Brahmanism and a significant stop for camel caravans during the Gupta period. The town gained prominence under the Pratihara dynasty and was later revitalized by Utpaladeva (c. 900-950), who converted to Jainism and established the village as a center for the religion. Although Jainism was present in

Osian before Utpaladeva's influence, the town thrived under his leadership, boasting over three hundred Jain temples at its zenith.

- The prosperity of Osian was abruptly disrupted in 1195 when Muhammad of Ghor and his Turkish and Muslim armies attacked the town. During this invasion, the residents fled, and much of the town, including many of its temples, was destroyed. Following this attack, the town was never repopulated and fell into desolation.
- Historical evidence suggests that the people of Osian converted to Jainism due to the influence of Acharya Ratnaprabhasuri, who was renowned for his supernatural abilities. According to Jain traditions, Acharya Ratnaprabhasuri performed a miracle around 457 BCE by restoring the life of a prominent Brahmin's son, which led the local villagers to embrace Jainism. This event is also associated with the origins of the Oswal community. Impressed by Ratnaprabhasuri's powers, the goddess Chamunda was said to have adopted Jainism as a vegetarian deity and became the guardian of the Mahavira Temple, protecting worshippers of Mahavira. Ratnaprabhasuri named her Sachiya Mata, as she faithfully advised him to remain in Osian during Chaturmas.
- Osian is a significant Jain pilgrimage site, especially for the Maheshwari and Oswal Jain communities. The Mahavira Temple, constructed in 457 BCE, remains a key tirtha for Jains. The Sachiya Mata Temple, located on a hill northeast of the Mahavira Temple, is equally ancient and offers insights into the social history of the period. This temple, built by Utpaldev (brother of Raja Punj, the son of King Bheemsain of Bhinmal), features many traditional Jain architectural elements. Jains revere Sachiya Mata as a goddess of righteousness and a protector of their community and the Mahavira Temple.
- Various Jain clans, including the Shingavi, Baid, Bafna, Lunawat, Tated, Parekh, and Karnavat, hold their 'Mundan-Sanskar' ceremonies at the Sachiya Mata Temple.

Jantar Mantar, Jaipur

- The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur, is an astronomical observation site built in the early 18th century. It includes a set of some twenty main fixed instruments. They are monumental examples in masonry of known instruments but which in many cases have specific characteristics of their own. The Jantar Mantar is an expression of the astronomical skills and cosmological concepts of the court of a scholarly prince at the end of the Mughal period.
- The Jantar Mantar observatory in Jaipur constitutes the most significant and best preserved set of fixed monumental instruments built in India in the first half of the 18th century; some of them are the largest ever built in their categories. Designed for the observation of astronomical positions with the naked eye, they embody several architectural and instrumental innovations. The observatory forms part of a tradition of Ptolemaic positional astronomy which was shared by many civilizations. It contributed by this type of observation to the completion of the astronomical tables of Zij. It is a late and ultimate monumental culmination of this tradition.

- Through the impetus of its creator, the prince Jai Singh II, the observatory was a meeting point for different scientific cultures, and gave rise to widespread social practices linked to cosmology. It was also a symbol of royal authority, through its urban dimensions, its control of time, and its rational and astrological forecasting capacities. The observatory is the monumental embodiment of the coming together of needs which were at the same time political, scientific, and religious.
- The Jantar Mantar is an observatory comprising of 19 instruments to measure the position and distances of celestial bodies. These 19 instruments are structures carved out of stone, depicting interesting geometric shapes.

Popular structures inside the monument-

Vrihat Smarat Yantra

Vrihat Smarat Yantra is a huge sun dial at the centre of Jantar Mantar observatory. This 27m long structure is the tallest sundial in the world. 'Samrat Yantra' meaning 'supreme instrument' is an equinoctial sundial and calculates time up to the accuracy of two seconds.

Laghu Smarat Yantra

Popularly known as the small Smarat Yantra, this instrument is smaller in size, and measures the local time up to the accuracy of twenty seconds. The ramp of this sundial points towards the North Pole, so the local time in Jaipur can be easily calculated by measuring the position of ramp's shadow on the divisions of the carved scale.

Architecture of Jantar Mantar

- The monument is an imposing collection of nineteen astronomical instruments, constructed out of local stone and marble, and spread over about 18,700 square metres. Each of these astronomical instruments carries an astronomical scale, generally marked on the marble inner lining. Bronze tablets, bricks and mortar, were also used in the construction of these instruments. This stone observatory includes complex instruments whose settings and shapes are scientifically designed, illustrating the glorious past of Medieval Indian astronomy. Jantar Mantar features the world's largest stone sundial - Vrihat Smarat Yantra
- **Ram Yantra**
Ram Yantra measures the elevation and azimuth of Sun and planets, and consists of a pair of tube-shaped structures, open to the sky. Each tube-shaped structure has a pole of equal height at the centre. Scales indicating angles of altitude and azimuth of the celestial bodies are inscribed inside the walls of these structures. Ram Yantra is only found in Jantar Mantar of Jaipur and New Delhi.
- **Jaya Prakash Yantra**
This yantra includes two hemispherical bowls like sundials with graded marble slabs. The elevation, azimuth, hour angles and exact position of heavenly bodies are detected using the inverted image of the sky, and the movement of the inverted shadows on the slabs.

- **Chakra Yantra**

The chakra yantra as the name suggests is a ring instrument that measures the co-ordinates and the hour angle of Sun.

- **Digamsa**

Digamsa is a pillar-like structure in the middle of two concentric outer circles, which is used to predict the sunrise and sunset timings in a day.

- **Nadivalaya**

Consisting of a pair of circular plates, facing north and south, Nadivalaya symbolizes the two hemispheres of Earth.

- **Karnti Vritya**

Karnti Vritya is a special instrument used to measure the solar sign of the Sun in daytime.

- Amber, also known as Amer, is a city located near Jaipur in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan, India. It is now incorporated into the Jaipur Municipal Corporation.

- Nestled at the entrance of a rocky mountain gorge with a serene lake, Amber's picturesque setting has captivated many travelers, including Victor Jacquemont and Reginald Heber. The city is renowned for its exceptional blend of Rajput and Mughal architectural styles. The Amber Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as the primary tourist attraction in the Jaipur region.

Main Attractions

- Amber Fort
- Maota Lake
- Jagat shiromani Temple
- Jaigarh Fort
- Nahargarh Biological Park
- Panna Meena ka Kund stepwell
- Shila Devi Temple
- Shri Manasa Devi Temple
- Water Gateways
- Amer, also known as Amber or Dhundhar, was once part of the Matsya Kingdom and was ruled by the Meenas, one of the 16 ancient Mahājanapadas. Initially governed by five different Meena tribes under the suzerainty of the Bargurjar Rajput Raja of Deoti, Amer's control shifted when the Kachhwaha prince Dulha Rai overthrew the Meenas and defeated the Bargurjars of Deoli, bringing Dhundhar fully under Kachwaha rule.

- After Dulha Rai's son, Kakil Deo, defeated the Meenas at Amer, the Kachhwaha capital was moved from Khoh to Amber. This status remained until the Kachhwaha capital was relocated to Jaipur, a new city constructed by Sawai Jai Singh II.
- Amber Fort, originally built by the Parmar Rajputs and later enhanced under Raja Man Singh I during the Mughal period (1590-1614 AD), showcases a blend of Rajput and Mughal architectural styles. Notable features include the Diwan-i-Khas and the intricately painted Ganesh Pole, created by Mirza Raja Jai Singh I, Man Singh I's grandson. The earlier fortifications, known today as Jaigarh Fort, served as the primary defensive structure and are connected to Amber Fort through a series of fortifications.
- Amber remained the Kachhwaha capital until 1727, when Sawai Jai Singh II established Jaipur, situated about nine kilometers south. Following this shift, the royal palace and residences of prominent figures were moved to Jaipur. However, the priests of the Shila Devi temple, who were Bengali Brahmins, continued to reside in Amber Fort, and Jaigarh Fort remained heavily garrisoned. Today, Jaipur serves as the capital of Rajasthan.

Chittorgarh Fort

- The Chittor Fort is seated on a 180-metre hill, covers an expanse of 700 acres (2.8 km²). It was constructed by the Mauryans in the 7th century CE. There is also a belief that it was constructed by Bhima of the Pancha Pandavas. This fort was the citadel of many great rajput warriors such as Gora, Badal, Rana Kumbha, Maharana Pratap, Jaimal, Patta, etc.

History

- Originally named Chitrakuta, Chittor Fort is believed to have been constructed by Chitranga, a Mori Rajput king. The Guhila (Gahlot) ruler Bappa Rawal is said to have seized the fort around 728 CE or 734 CE, though some historians question this account, suggesting the Guhilas did not control Chittor until the later reign of Allata.
- During the period when the fort was known as "Chit-Ror," Balban launched several military campaigns against it between 1251 and 1258. Later, under Alauddin Khilji, Ulugh Khan besieged Chittor along with Ranthambore and Bundi forts.
- An ASI board at Chittorgarh Fort claims the Moris as a branch of the Mauryan dynasty. In 1303, the Delhi Sultanate ruler Alauddin Khilji captured the fort from the Guhila king Ratnasimha. It was subsequently reclaimed by Hammir Singh of the Sisodia branch of the Guhilas, and Chittor gained prominence under his successors, including Rana Kumbha and Rana Sanga.
- In 1535, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat besieged and took control of Chittor, but he could not maintain his hold, and the Sisodias retook the fort shortly after. The Mughal emperor Akbar captured Chittor in 1567-68. In 1615, a peace treaty between Akbar's successor Jahangir and Maharana Amar Singh I of Mewar resulted in Mewar accepting Mughal suzerainty, with Chittor

and its surrounding areas being ceded to Mewar. However, due to strategic concerns, the fort was neither fortified nor repaired.

- Under British rule, Chittor Fort was occupied and refurbished in 1905.

- **Kalika Mata Temple**

Kalika Mata Temple was originally built in the 8th century for Sun God and was later converted to a temple for mother Goddess, Kali in the 14th century. During the festival days of Navaratri, fairs are organised and pilgrims from different places come here to pay obeisance at the temple.

- **Kirti Stambh**

Jain temple at Kirtistambha Jain Kirti Stambha Kirti Stambh (Tower of Fame) is a 22-metre-high (72 ft) tower built in the 12th century CE. Kirti Stambh is built inside Chittorgarh fort. It is dedicated to Rishabha, the first Tirthankara of Jainism. It was built by a merchant and is decorated with figures from the Jain pantheon. It is a seven storied pillar which was built by Biherwal Mahajan Sanaya of Digambar Jain sect. On its four corners are engraved idols of Shri Adinathji in Digambar style which each are five feet (about 1.5 meters) high and elsewhere are engraved several small idols consecrated to Jain lineage of deities.

- **Vijay Stambha**

Vijay Stambha, is a huge nine storey tower which was built by Maharana Kumbha to commemorate his victory over the rulers of Malwa and Gujarat in 1440. The tower is 122 ft (37 m) high and stands on a 10 ft (3.0 m) high base. There are sculptures and carvings on the exterior walls of the tower. The tower is visible from any section of the town below. To reach the top of the tower top one has to climb 157 steps, it offers great view of the surroundings from the top. The inside walls of the tower are carved with images of Gods, weapons, etc.

- **Rana Kumbha's Palace**

Rana Kumbha's Palace is near the Vijay Stambh. This is the birthplace of Maharana Udai Singh, the founder of Udaipur. His life was saved by the heroic act of the maid Panna Dhay, who replaced her son in place of the prince, with the result that her son was killed by Banbir. She carried the prince away to safety in a fruit basket. Rani Meera Bai also lived in this palace. This is the place where Rani Padmini committed *jauhar* with the other ladies in one of the underground cellars.

- **Rani Padmini's Palace**

Rani Padmini's palace According to legend, Rani Padmini's Palace is from which the Delhi Sultanate ruler Alauddin Khalji was allowed to watch a reflection of the Rani by replacing the mirror at such an angle that even if he turned back he could not see the room. Khalji had been warned by the Rani's husband Rawal Ratan Singh that if he turned back they would cut his neck.

Gagron Fort

- Gagron Fort, located in the Jhalawar district of Rajasthan, India, is a notable example of a hill and water fort. Built in the 12th century by the Rajput king Bijaldev Singh Dod, the fort later came under the control of notable figures such as Sher Shah and Akbar. Situated at the confluence of the Ahu and Kali Sindh rivers, the fort is surrounded by water on three sides and features a moat on the fourth side, earning it the title of Jaladurg, which means "Water Fort" in Hindi/Rajasthani. In 2013, Gagron Fort was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the Hill Forts of Rajasthan.
- Gagron Fort, built in the 12th century by King Bijaldev, was ruled by the Khinchi kingdom for around 300 years. The exact date of its construction remains uncertain, with estimates ranging from the 7th to the 14th centuries.
- The fort's last ruler was King Achal Das Khinchi. During the medieval period, Gagron Fort was attacked by Muslim rulers of Malwa. In 1423, Sultan Hoshang Shah besieged the fort with a formidable force, including 30,000 horsemen and 84 elephants. Faced with overwhelming odds and superior weaponry, Achal Das Khinchi chose to fight to the death rather than surrender, adhering to Rajput tradition. Many women committed jauhar (self-immolation) to avoid capture by the Sultan's forces. The fort is said to have witnessed 14 battles and two instances of jauhar.
- Gagron Fort was later captured by Sher Shah and Akbar. Akbar made it a strategic headquarters before granting it to Prathviraj of Bikaner as part of his estate.
- Gagron Fort, uniquely surrounded by water on three sides and a moat on the fourth, is strategically positioned at the confluence of the Ahu and Kali Sindh rivers. This natural fortification is enhanced by its construction atop a mountain, which serves as its foundation. The fort features three ramparts, a distinctive design compared to the traditional two, and its towers blend seamlessly with the Mukundara Hills of the Vindhya Range. There are two main entrances to the fort: one leading towards the river and the other towards a hilly road.
- Key sites within the fort include:
- **Ganesh Pol:** The entrance gate adorned with carvings of Ganesh.
- **Nakkarkhana:** The area where drums and trumpets were played to announce royal events.
- **Bhairavi Pol:** Another significant entrance gate.
- **Kishan Pole:** A prominent gate or structure.
- **Selekhana:** An important architectural feature.
- **Dewan-i-Aam:** The hall for public audiences.
- **Diwan-e-Khas:** The hall for private audiences.
- **Janaana Mahal:** The palace for the royal women.

- **Madhusudan Mandir:** A temple dedicated to Lord Krishna.
- **Rang Mahal:** The palace known for its vibrant decor.
- Gagron Fort is noted as the only fort in North India surrounded by water, earning it the designation of Jaladurga, or "Water Fort." Additionally, a mausoleum dedicated to Sufi Saint Mitthe Shah, located just outside the fort, hosts an annual colorful fair during Muharram. There is also a monastery of Saint Pipaji situated across the confluence.

Kumbhalgarh

- Kumbhalgarh, often referred to as the "Great Wall of India," is a fortress located in the Aravalli Hills of the Rajsamand district in Rajasthan, India. Positioned about 84 km (52 miles) from Udaipur, the fort was constructed in the 15th century by Rana Kumbha. The fort's wall is notable for being one of the longest continuous walls in the world, stretching 38 kilometers.
- Kumbhalgarh is also historically significant as the birthplace of Maharana Pratap, a renowned king and military leader of Mewar.
- In 2013, Kumbhalgarh Fort, together with five other forts in Rajasthan, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site during the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This designation recognized the fort as part of the Hill Forts of Rajasthan.
- The early history of Kumbhalgarh Fort is somewhat obscure due to limited historical evidence. Before the construction of the current fort by Rana Kumbha, there was a smaller fort in the area, believed to have been built by King Samprati of the Maurya dynasty, known as Matsyendra Durg. In the late 14th century, Rana Lakha of the Sisodia Rajput clan conquered the region and the plains of Godwar from the Chauhan Rajputs of Nadol.
- The Kumbhalgarh Fort, as it stands today, was constructed by Rana Kumbha, the ruler of Mewar from the Sisodia Rajput clan. Rana Kumbha enlisted the help of the renowned architect Mandan to build the fort. His kingdom, Mewar, extended from Ranthambore to Gwalior, covering large parts of present-day Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Among the 84 forts he built, Kumbhalgarh is the largest and most elaborate.
- Kumbhalgarh served as a significant defensive structure, separating Mewar from Marwar and providing a refuge for Mewar's rulers during times of danger. Notably, in 1535, when Chittor was under siege, the infant king of Mewar, Prince Udai, was hidden in Kumbhalgarh. He later succeeded to the throne of Mewar. The fort remained largely impregnable to direct attacks.
- Ahmad Shah II of Gujarat attempted to capture the fort in 1457 but was unsuccessful. Local belief held that the Banmata deity protected the fort, prompting Ahmad Shah II to destroy the temple. Mahmud Khalji made further attempts in 1458-59 and 1467, but these also failed. Akbar's general, Shahbaz Khan, laid siege to Kumbhalgarh in October 1577 and managed to

capture it in April 1578 after a six-month siege. However, it was recaptured by Maharana Pratap in 1583.

- In 1818, the fort was briefly garrisoned by an armed band of sanyasis, but it was subsequently taken over by the British after negotiations led by James Tod and later returned to the Udaipur State. While the British made some changes, the core structure built by Maharana Kumbha remains intact, with its residential buildings and temples well-preserved. Kumbhalgarh is also noted as the birthplace of Maharana Pratap.
- The chief architect responsible for the design and construction of Kumbhalgarh Fort was Mandan, who detailed his architectural style in his work, *Rajvallabh*. Perched on a hilltop 1,100 meters (3,600 feet) above sea level in the Aravalli range, Kumbhalgarh Fort is renowned for its extensive perimeter walls, which stretch 36 kilometers (22 miles) and are among the longest continuous walls in the world. The fort's outer walls are 4.5 meters (15 feet) thick.
- Kumbhalgarh is equipped with seven fortified gateways and houses over 360 temples, representing both Jain and Hindu traditions. From the top of the palace, visitors can enjoy panoramic views stretching for kilometers across the Aravalli Range.
- Kumbhalgarh Fort features several notable gateways and structures:
- **Aaret Pol**: This is the first entry gate of the fort.
- **Halla Pol**: Located on the downward slope from Aaret Pol, this gate is followed by the **Badshahi Bavdi**, a stepped tank constructed in 1578 after the invasion by Shahbaz Khan, a general of Mughal Emperor Akbar. The tank was built to supply water to the troops.
- **Hanuman Pol**: Positioned about half a kilometer from Halla Pol, Hanuman Pol is a double-storeyed gate with octagonal bastions. It is named after a stone image of Hanuman placed in front of the gate, which was brought by Maharana Kumbha.
- **Ram Pol**: This is the main entrance of the fort. There is also another entrance towards the east known as **Vijay Pol**.
- Between Ram Pol and Badal Mahal, the palace situated at the highest point of the fort, there are five additional gates:
- **Bhairon Pol**
- **Nimboo Pol**
- **Chaugan Pol**
- **Pagda Pol**
- **Ganesh Pol**

- Most of the fort's buildings are visible from the Ram Pol entrance.

Hindu Temple

- Kumbhalgarh Fort is home to a variety of temples, each with its unique architectural features and historical significance:
- **Ganesha Temple:** Located to the left of Ram Pol, this temple was built by Maharana Kumbha. The sanctum houses an image of Ganesha and is elevated on a high platform accessed by a flight of steps from the south. The sanctum features a decorated curvilinear brick shikhara, while the mandapa and mukhamandapa have domical ceilings.
- **Charbhuj Temple:** Situated on the hill slope to the right of the Ganesha Temple, this temple is dedicated to the four-armed goddess. It is raised on a high platform and enclosed by a wall with an entrance from the east.
- **Neel Kanth Mahadeva Temple:** Located on the eastern side of the fort and built around 1458 CE, this temple is dedicated to Shiva. It features a central shrine approached through a rectangular enclosure and a structure supported by 24 massive pillars. The black stone idol of Shiva has 12 hands. Inscriptions suggest that the temple was renovated by Rana Sanga.
- **Mataji Temple:** Also known as Kheda Devi Temple, it is situated on the southern side of the Neel Kanth Temple.
- **Golera Group of Temples:** This group includes five Hindu temples, each notable for its architectural style and religious significance.
- **Mamadeo Temple:** Near this temple is the cenotaph of Kunwar Prithviraj, the elder brother of Rana Sanga.
- **Surya Mandir (Sun Temple):** A temple dedicated to the Sun God.
- **Vedi Temple:** A Jain temple constructed by Rana Kumbha in 1457 AD.
- These temples reflect the fort's rich religious and cultural heritage, showcasing a blend of Hindu and Jain architectural styles.
- Kumbhalgarh Fort houses several notable Jain temples, showcasing the rich Jain heritage of the region:
- **Parsva Natha Temple:** Built in 1513, this temple is located on the eastern side of the fort and is dedicated to Parsva Natha, one of the 24 Tirthankaras in Jainism.
- **Bawan Jain Temples:** This refers to a group of 52 Jain temples, located within the fort, reflecting the significant Jain presence and their architectural contributions to the fort complex.

- **Golera Group of Temples:** This group includes four Jain temples, known for their architectural style and religious importance.
- **Temples near Vijay Pol:** There are two Jain temples situated near Vijay Pol, adding to the fort's diverse collection of sacred sites.
- **Juna Bhilwara Temple:** Another significant Jain temple within the fort complex.
- **Pital Shah Jain Temple:** This temple is also part of the fort's Jain religious sites.
- These Jain temples contribute to the fort's historical and cultural landscape, highlighting its role as a center of Jain worship and architecture

Mehrangarh

- Mehrangarh Fort is a historic fortress located in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India. Perched on a hilltop approximately 122 meters (400 feet) above the surrounding plains, the fort complex spans 1,200 acres (486 hectares). Initially constructed around 1459 by Rao Jodha of the Rathore clan, much of the current structure was developed in the 17th century by his successors.
- The fort features seven gates, including:
- **Jai Pol:** The main entrance, built by Maharaja Man Singh to celebrate his victories over the Jaipur and Bikaner armies in 1806.
- **Fattehpol:** Also known as the 'Victory Gate,' erected to commemorate Maharaja Ajit Singh's triumph over the Mughals.
- Within the fort, visitors can explore several palaces renowned for their elaborate carvings and spacious courtyards, the Chamunda Mataji Temple, and a museum displaying various artifacts. A winding road connects the fort to the city below. Evidence of cannonball impacts from past sieges by the Jaipur army can still be seen on the second gate. To the north-east of the fort lies the chhatri of Kirat Singh Sodha, a soldier who died defending Mehrangarh.
- The fort hosts notable festivals such as the World Sacred Spirit Festival and the Rajasthan International Folk Festival.
- Mehrangarh Fort, founded by Rao Jodha in 1459, is a remarkable example of Rajput military architecture and a major historical landmark in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The fort is perched atop a rocky hill known as Bhakurcheeria, and it is surrounded by a series of seven impressive gates, each commemorating significant historical events.

Architectural Features

- **Walls and Gates:** The fort's walls rise up to 36 meters (118 feet) high and 21 meters (69 feet) wide. The entrance is through a series of seven gates:

- **Jai Pol:** Built by Maharaja Man Singh in 1806 to commemorate victories over Jaipur and Bikaner.
- **Fateh Pol:** Erected to celebrate a victory over the Mughals in 1707.
- **Gopal Pol:** The second gate after Fateh Pol.
- **Dedh Kangra Pol:** Notable for scars from cannonball bombardment.
- **Amruti Pol:** Located between Dedh Kangra Pol and Loha Pol.
- **Loha Pol:** The final gate into the main fort complex, with handprints (sati marks) of the queens who committed sati.
- **Suraj Pol:** The innermost gate leading to the palace complex.
- **Palaces and Temples:** Inside the fort, you'll find several elaborately decorated palaces:
 - **Moti Mahal:** Known as the Pearl Palace.
 - **Phool Mahal:** The Flower Palace.
 - **Sheesha Mahal:** The Mirror Palace.
 - **Sileh Khana:** A museum displaying royal artifacts including palanquins, howdahs, musical instruments, and furniture.
 - **Daulat Khana:** Another significant palace area.
- **Additional Features**
- **Jaswant Thada:** A memorial built in honor of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II, located in front of the fort.
- **Viewpoints:** The fort's ramparts offer panoramic views of the city of Jodhpur and the surrounding landscape.
- **Cannon:** The fort houses several preserved old cannons, including the famous Kilila.
- Mehrangarh Fort not only serves as a historical monument but also hosts cultural events like the World Sacred Spirit Festival and the Rajasthan International Folk Festival. Its intricate design and storied past make it a key attraction in Rajasthan, symbolizing the grandeur and strategic acumen of Rajput architecture.

Dilwara Temples

- The Dilwara Temples, located about 2.5 kilometers from Mount Abu in Sirohi District, Rajasthan, are renowned for their exquisite architecture and intricate marble carvings. They represent

some of the finest examples of Māru-Gurjara architecture and are considered among the most impressive Jain temples in Rajasthan. **Construction Period:** The temples were built between the 11th and 16th centuries. The earliest of the temples were constructed under the patronage of Bhima I, with significant contributions from Vastupala, a Jain minister from Dholka. **Architecture:** The temples are celebrated for their use of pure white marble, which is meticulously carved with detailed and intricate designs. This marble is renowned for its quality and the skill involved in the carvings.

Key Temples and Features

- **Vimal Vasahi Temple:**
 - **Built By:** Vimal Shah, a minister of the Solanki dynasty.
 - **Date:** 1031 CE.
 - **Features:** Known for its elaborate carvings and the central deity, Adinatha (Rishabhanatha), the first Tirthankara of Jainism. The temple is noted for its beautifully decorated ceilings and detailed marble work.
- **Luna Vasahi Temple:**
 - **Built By:** The brothers of Luna, the minister of the Vaghela dynasty.
 - **Date:** 1230 CE.
 - **Features:** This temple is dedicated to the 8th Tirthankara, Chandraprabha. It is renowned for its artistic carvings, especially the intricately sculpted ceilings and pillars.
- **Pittalhar Temple:**
 - **Features:** This temple is dedicated to the 23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha. It is famous for its metal idol of Parshvanatha and its unique architectural style.
- **Mahavir Swami Temple:**
 - **Features:** Dedicated to Mahavir Swami, the 24th Tirthankara, this temple showcases the Jain architectural style with elaborate marble work.
- **Architectural Significance**
- **Marble Carvings:** The temples are renowned for their detailed and delicate marble carvings, which include floral designs, intricate patterns, and fine artwork that reflect the skill of the artisans of that era.

- **Māru-Gurjara Architecture:** This architectural style blends elements of Rajasthan's regional styles with intricate Jain temple design, characterized by ornate carvings and elaborate structures.
- **Temple Layout:** The temples are designed with a central shrine surrounded by smaller halls and courtyards, allowing for elaborate rituals and congregation.
- The Ranakpur Jain Temple, also known as **Chaturmukha Dharana Vihara**, is a prominent Śvētāmbara Jain temple located in Ranakpur, near Sadri town in the Pali district of Rajasthan. This temple is dedicated to **Tirthankara Rishabhanatha** (also known as Adinatha), who is revered as the first Tirthankara of the current half-cycle of Jain cosmology. **Construction:** The temple was commissioned by **Darna Shah**, a local Jain merchant, in the 15th century. According to legend, Darna Shah was inspired to build the temple after a divine vision. **Design and Structure:** The Ranakpur Temple is renowned for its grand architecture, featuring intricate marble carvings and a distinctive design. It is one of the largest and most significant Jain temples in India.

Key Features

- **Chaumukha Temple:**
- **Layout:** The main temple is known as the Chaumukha Temple, which means "four-faced" temple. It is designed with four faces and dedicated to Tirthankara Adinatha.
- **Architectural Details:** The temple boasts 1,444 intricately carved marble pillars, each with unique designs. The complex is renowned for its elaborate marble craftsmanship, with detailed carvings on every surface.
- **Surya Temple:**
- **Features:** Dedicated to the Sun God, this temple is part of the Ranakpur complex and adds to the overall spiritual significance of the site.
- **Suparshvanatha Temple:**
- **Dedicated To:** This temple is dedicated to Suparshvanatha, the 7th Tirthankara. It is another important part of the Ranakpur complex.
- **Amba Temple:**
- **Features:** This temple is dedicated to the goddess Amba, another key deity within the Jain tradition.

Cultural and Religious Significance

- **Jain Cosmology:** The temple honors Tirthankara Adinatha (Rishabhanatha), who is considered the first Tirthankara of the present half-cycle (avasarpinī) in Jain cosmology. This makes the

Ranakpur Temple a significant pilgrimage site for Jains. **Gorwad Panch Tirth:** Ranakpur is part of the "Gorwad Panch Tirth" pilgrimage circuit, which includes other important Jain sites such as Muchhal Mahavir, Narlai, Nadol, and Varkana. These sites collectively form a significant spiritual journey for devotees.

Architectural Highlights

- **Marble Carvings:** The Ranakpur Temple is famous for its intricate marble carvings. The temple's ceilings, pillars, and walls are adorned with detailed and ornate designs, reflecting the exceptional craftsmanship of the period.
- **Design:** The temple's architecture is a blend of traditional Jain temple design with a focus on symmetry and intricate decoration. The use of marble adds to the temple's grandeur and purity.