

In January 2015 I joined 3 good friends to travel to Kutch with [Breakaway Tours](#) making all the plans and arrangements. One of our party was Indian and both her husband and I have long lived and traveled in India. Please see his write up on the section of the trip they traveled. Only one of us had never been to India and he and I had never been to the Kutch. To say the trip was outstanding would not be an over statement from my point of view. The first week was largely focused on the rich handicraft culture around Bhuj and the Greater Rann and all 4 of us participated. The final 6 days only myself and the new-to-India member traveled on to Dholavira and the Little Rann and Ahmedabad.

First and foremost, our guide for the handicraft part of the tour, Salim Wazir, was just superb and we now consider him a good friend. He was very knowledgeable, well spoken, kind and incredibly helpful. The crafts people were outstanding and clearly Breakaway owner, Shilpa Sharma's, long experience in the Kutch opened door after door. We saw in detail how each amazing craft was made and then without pressure were allowed to purchase. My main regret was I already had too many handicrafts in my US home to take full advantage of these works of art.

The Nature tour sites in the Greater and Little Rann were excellent. The facility and the food at Dasad in the Little Rann and in the excellent MG House in Ahmedabad, were the best of the trip. But the CEDO owner, Juggal Tiwari, provided the best and most passionate guiding of nature and particularly birds as I have had anywhere. The work he is doing to save and support the unique environment of the Kutch really is inspirational.

Perhaps the most adventuresome part of the tour was our side trip to the Harappa site, Dholavira. The tourist physical facility there was pretty awful but the site was fabulous and the facility staff nice. Our local guide had limited English, but we managed well and were overwhelmed by this 4,000 year old evidence of a complex and organized culture. The Museum although small was excellent. The site itself was a remarkable example of good archaeology and, to the novice's eye, excellent maintenance of which the Department of Archaeology should be most proud. I had much earlier been to Mohenjo Daro in Pakistan and felt Dholavira to be as wonderful as this better known Harappa Mohenjo Daro site. Dholavira, the Sun Temple and the Step Well in Patan were also remarkable in that they were not full of rubbish as we saw while traveling. For all of Mr. Modi's clean up campaign, this part of Gujarat was stunningly remiss.

Special note should be made of the MG Hotel, Ahmedabad. This heritage property in downtown Ahmedabad was an oasis of peace and fine living. The room was lovely and the staff were attentive and most helpful. The trip into the old city early one morning was very good as were the cloth painters.

The driver for the entire tour has to be amongst the best in India. His English was not strong but he patiently worked with my rough Hindi and even when we had no guide, he was really all we needed. His car was extremely comfortable. Most importantly, he drove with utmost care and initiative, locating very hard to find sites by incorporating local expertise. He was a most personable and helpful young man.

Except for the hyena feeding temple, all sights were well worth visiting. I would travel most

enthusiastically with this tour agency again.

Wilda Campbell Kutch trip Jan 2015