



**Dhordo Village, Gujarat, India**

**Best Tourism Village 2023 – UNWTO**

Conservation of Desert Ecosystem and Sustainable Seasonal Tourism

# Dhordo: A Model of Sustainable Tourism

From once being a salty marshland, Dhordo in the Rann of Kutch has now emerged as a symbol of Gujarat's sustainable tourism growth.

Dhordo, Rann of Kutch, Gujarat



# Kutch Region



- **Key Destinations:** Bhuj, Dhordo (Rann Utsav), Dholavira, Kalo Dungar, Lakhpat Fort, Kori Creek, Mata no Madh, Mandvi, Little Rann of Kachchh.
- **Desert Ecosystem:** Unique salt desert landscapes, habitat for migratory birds, saline wetlands and desert-adapted flora/fauna.
- **Sustainable Seasonal Tourism:** Rann Utsav promotes eco-cultural tourism during dry months, supporting local livelihoods and preserving the fragile ecosystem.



# The Rann of Kutch: A Unique Salt Marsh Ecosystem

The Rann of Kutch is one of the world's largest salt marsh ecosystems, supporting a diverse array of life uniquely adapted to its harsh conditions.

## Migratory Bird Habitat:

- Hosts over 200 bird species; major stopover site along the Central Asian Flyway.
- **Greater Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus roseus*): breeds in the Rann; population >50,000 annually.
- **Lesser Flamingo** (*Phoeniconaias minor*): near-threatened; nests in Flamingo City (protected zone).
- Other species: Demoiselle Cranes, Common Teals, Painted Storks, Eurasian Spoonbills.

## Protected Areas:

Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary (5,000+ sq km): last refuge of endangered Indian Wild Ass (*Equus hemionus khur*).



*Flamingo City*

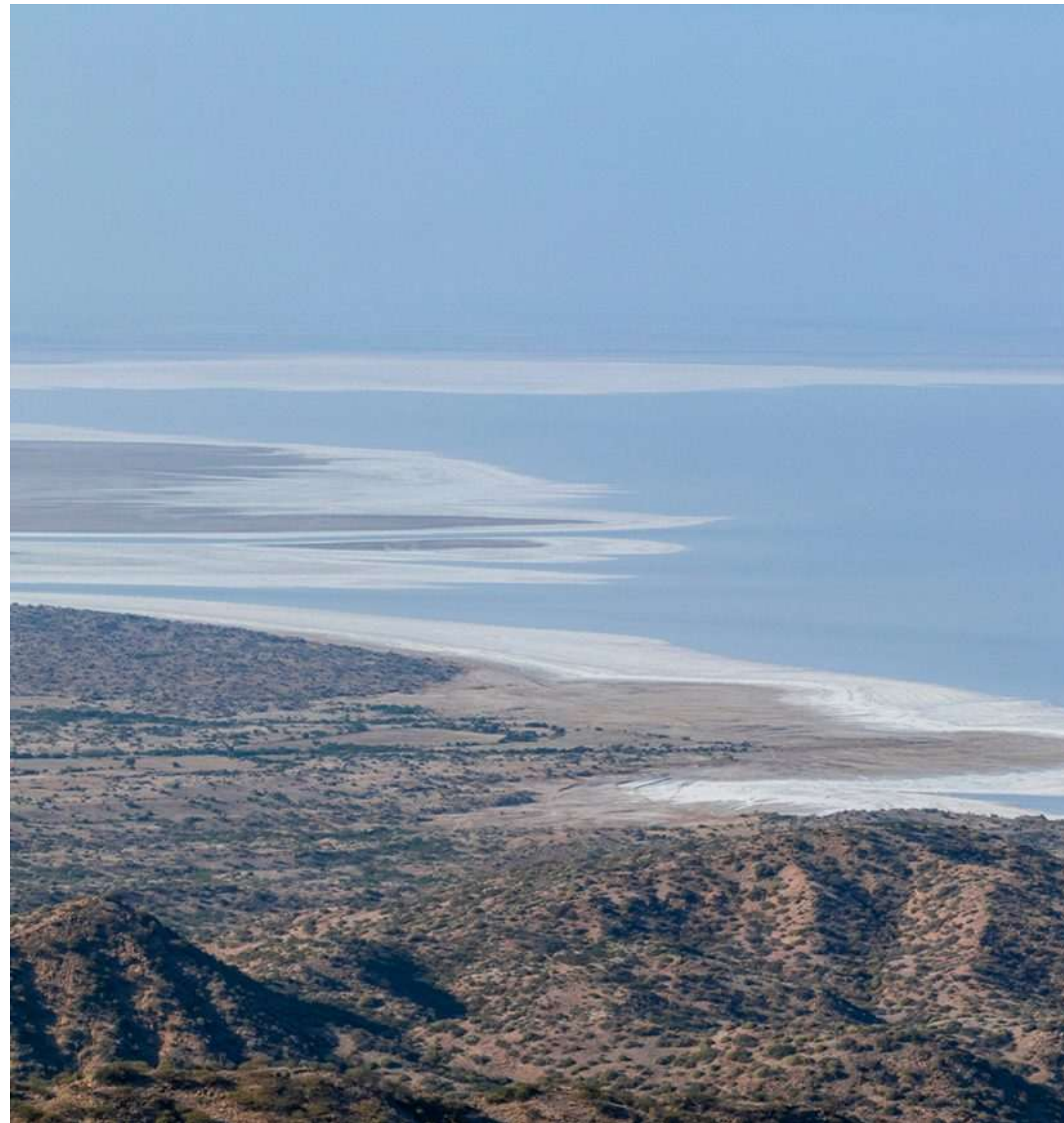
**Migratory Birds:** Flamingos, pelicans, and falcons flock to its wetlands.



**Desert Fauna:** Home to the Indian wild ass, desert fox, and various reptiles.

## Flora:

- **Salt-Tolerant Plants:** Species like Suaeda and Salvadora thrive in saline conditions.
- Highly salt-tolerant halophytes dominate.
- **Suaeda fruticosa:** vital for soil stabilization and fodder.





*Mamai Dev Kaliya Dhrow*



*Smritivan, Winner of Prix Versailles Award for Architecture*



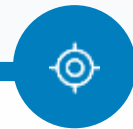
*Kalo Dungar*



*Tent city*

# Dhordo: A Model of Sustainable Tourism

Nestled in the heart of Gujarat's **Rann of Kutch**, Dhordo Village stands as a beacon of sustainable tourism. This unique destination, celebrated for its vast **White Salt Desert** and traditional **Bhunga architecture**, has garnered international acclaim as the **Best Tourism Village 2023** by the UNWTO.



## Location

Gateway to the White Rann, renowned for its striking landscape.



## Architecture

Showcases traditional Bhunga homes, adapted for eco-friendly tourism.



## Culture

Home of the vibrant Rann Utsav, a celebration of Kutchi heritage.



## Recognition

Awarded "Best Tourism Village 2023" for pioneering sustainable practices.

# Traditional Livelihoods & Conservation

Dhordo's community has long maintained a symbiotic relationship with its environment. Traditional practices, from resilient architecture to sustainable crafts, minimize ecological disruption and preserve invaluable local knowledge.



## Bhungas

Circular, climate-resilient homes, now charming guesthouses.



## Crafts

Hand embroidery and lacquerware using local, natural materials.



## Pastoralism

Sustainable grazing practices adapted to the salt-tolerant landscape.



## Storytelling

Folk traditions preserving deep ecological knowledge.

# Rann Utsav: A Celebration of Culture with Sustainability

The Rann Utsav transforms the desert into a vibrant cultural hub from November to February, strategically avoiding the monsoon and extreme summer heat. This festival has been instrumental in creating a circular rural economy.

**Footfall 1 Mn+**

## Visitors Annually

A dramatic increase from less than 5,000 in 2006.

Controlled visitor numbers and eco-guidelines issued to all tourists

**Temporary Infrastructure  
Nov-Feb**

## Tent City

Strategically located away from core habitat zones.

Temporary tent structures instead of permanent constructions

**Eco-Sensitive (March-Oct)**

## Seasonal Timing

Ensures minimal ecological impact and optimal visitor comfort.

Tourism is limited to November–February (non-breeding season for wildlife)

The Utsav showcases traditional dance, music, crafts, and delectable Kutchi cuisine, offering an authentic cultural immersion while boosting local livelihoods.

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# Culture-Driven Livelihoods: Keeping Heritage Alive

- **Local crafts:** embroidery, weaving, pottery, woodwork
- Daily **folk performances** & cultural demos
- Craft **workshops** promote engagement & sales
- **Traditional knowledge** integrated into tourism



# Seamless Integration of Tourism with Local Life

Dhordo's tourism model is deeply intertwined with its local setting, empowering the community and preserving cultural authenticity. Visitors become part of the village experience.



## Homestays in Bhungas

Community-led accommodation offers authentic cultural immersion.



## Craft Haats & Food Stalls

Support rural Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).



## Women-led SHGs

Self-Help Groups drive craft-based income, fostering economic independence.



## Community Guides

Local youth offer nature interpretation and camel safaris.



## No Plastic Zones

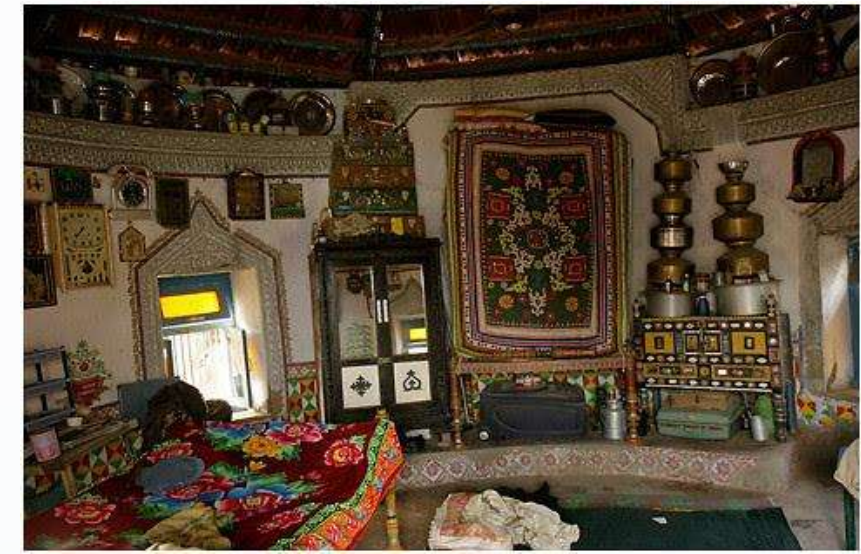
Strict enforcement at events ensures environmental responsibility.



# Seamless Integration of Tourism with Local Life

## Bhungas: Traditional Eco-Housing with a Purpose

- **Circular mud homes with conical roofs**
- Naturally **climate-responsive, earthquake-resistant**
- Decorated with Kutchi mirror work
- **Homestay** model supports local income

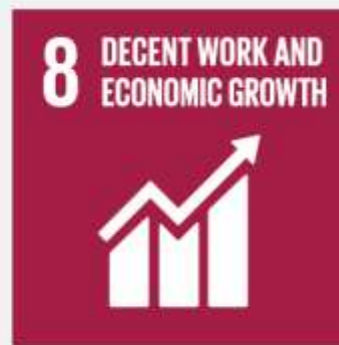




# Pioneering Environmental Management Practices

Dhordo employs innovative and robust environmental practices to protect its fragile desert ecosystem, setting a benchmark for sustainable tourism development.

- **Green Transport:** Promotion of battery and electric vehicles, reducing carbon footprint within the tourism zone.
- **Waste Management:** Comprehensive solid waste segregation and recycling initiatives, including plastic bottle crushers, reduce landfill burden.
- **Water Sustainability:** Advanced filtration, solar-powered pumping, and rainwater harvesting ensure responsible water usage.





# Pioneering Environmental Management Practices

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- **Seasonal Scheduling:** Tourism is limited to the dry season, ensuring vital rest periods for the ecosystem to regenerate.
- **Renewable Energy:** Extensive use of solar power for lighting and various operations, minimizing reliance on conventional energy sources.
- **Minimal Infrastructure:** Most structures are temporary or vernacular, limiting permanent impact on the landscape.



# Community-led Tourism Protocols: A Participatory Model

Dhordo's tourism success is rooted in its community-driven approach, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among locals. This ensures sustainable practices and a respectful visitor experience.

- **Local Governance:** Managed by the Gram Panchayat and various community collectives, ensuring decisions reflect local needs and values.
- **Trained Guides:** Local youth, equipped with eco-tourism training, guide visitors, offering authentic insights into the culture and environment.
- **Visitor Guidelines:** Clear signage and cultural sensitivity protocols ensure respectful interaction with the local community and environment.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Active involvement of women, youth, minorities, and differently-abled individuals in tourism activities, fostering equitable growth.



# Tourism Revenue: Fueling Community Development

The success of Dhordo's seasonal tourism, particularly the Rann Utsav, generates substantial revenue that is reinvested directly into community welfare and infrastructure, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

**Rann Utsav generates ₹100 crore+ annually**



**100%**

## Household Tap Water

Revenue supports eco-sanitation and ensures access to clean water.



**₹1000**

## Daily Earnings

Villagers now earn significantly more during peak season (up from ₹50/day pre-2006).



**Education**

## Enhanced Learning

Funds bolster education initiatives, including digital classrooms and girl child education.

Additional investments include health centers and solar street lighting, improving the overall quality of life for Dhordo residents.

# Navigating Challenges: Resilience and Adaptation

Dhordo's desert environment presents unique challenges, from extreme temperatures to monsoon flooding. The community has developed robust adaptive measures to ensure sustainable tourism and protect its people.

## Extreme Climate

High heat and water scarcity in summer, contrasted with monsoon flooding.

## Seasonal Tourism

Tourism is strictly limited to the dry, cooler season to protect the environment and visitors.

## Solar Energy

Widespread adoption of solar lighting and power reduces dependency on external grids.

## Disaster Preparedness

Comprehensive emergency evacuation and disaster readiness plans are in place for unforeseen events.

# Global and National Impact

Dhordo's pioneering model has garnered significant attention and influence, both nationally and internationally, contributing to broader sustainability goals.



## Global Convening

Dhordo proudly hosted the G20 Tourism Working Group in 2023, showcasing its sustainable model on an international stage.



## National Recognition

Dhordo is designated as a high-priority site within national tourism policy, highlighting its strategic importance.



## Replicable Models

Its successful approach has inspired and is being adapted for other fragile desert regions, fostering broader impact.



## SDG Alignment

The model directly aligns with and contributes to numerous UN Sustainable Development Goals, including 1, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 17.



# Thank You!

