

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Inside a 1000-year-old temple in Gujarat where sunlight only enters twice a year

This Sun Temple in Gujarat is meticulously positioned on the Tropic of Cancer and has a 'Garbhagriha' where sunlight enters only twice a year.

By Pooja Khanna Tyagi

5 January 2024



Woven into the rich tapestry of Indian heritage, the ancient Sun Temple in Gujarat (Modhera), is a Hindu temple that is older than the Konark Sun Temple in Orissa and stands as a testament to astronomical science and artistic mastery. Dedicated to the solar deity Surya, the temple functions as an ancient observatory, strategically capturing the Sun's rays twice a year during the solar equinoxes and, on the summer solstice day, embodying cosmic knowledge and wisdom. As per the Vedas, India's ancient sacred texts, the sun is seen as the soul of the universe and the source of energy sustaining all life on Earth. Constructed during the rule of Bhima I of the Chaulukya dynasty, it was built between 1026-27 CE on the banks of the river Pushpavati. The 1000-year-old temple encapsulates ancient India's harmonious coexistence of intricate sculptures, exquisite artisanship, astronomical science, celestial alignment, and deep-rooted spirituality.



Noughts & Crosses

The Hindu temple represents the Sun God's chariot with twelve pairs of wheels drawn by seven horses, portraying its celestial journey. A remarkable gem of the Maru-gurjara architectural style in India, the temple consists of the Gudha Mandapa for worship, the Sabha Mandapa as the assembly hall, and the Kunda as a stepped water tank reservoir. Across the Surya Kunda is a structure with pyramidal stairways leading to 108 shrines. The Sun Temple's Sabha Mandap, standing on 52 pillars, symbolises the weeks in a year, while the temple's outer wall showcases intricately carved depictions of the twelve postures of the Sun or Aditya, representing its position in each of the twelve months.

Also read: *[8 impeccably restored heritage spaces across India](#)*



Noughts & Crosses

Adorned with intricate sculptures and carvings depicting Indian cultural facets, the rock-carved figures on the walls feature stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the cycle of human life, and tantric postures of the Kamasutra with the Surya temple on a plinth resembling an inverted lotus. Sandstone is used as the primary building material and the mystical beauty of the Suryadeva temple is heightened by its reflected image in the water, complemented by the flowing Pushpavati River and its mystic surroundings.

The temple's alignment with the sun during the equinoxes demonstrates the profound astronomical knowledge held by its architects. Note that the temple was designed so that the first ray of the sun passes through the main entrance, illuminating the sanctum sanctorum without shadows.

During the summer solstice, sunlight directly touches the sanctum where the gold idol of the Sun God was astutely placed. Positioned on the Tropic of Cancer, the temple captures the Sun's rays during the equinoxes, creating a celestial alignment that results in equal day and night durations, fostering cosmic harmony and attracting tourists globally.

Also read: *Through the classic British Barrack architecture of The Scindia School in Gwalior*



Noughts & Crosses

Delhi-based Innovative Design Group-ILDL has skillfully illuminated Gujarat's protected Modhera Sun Temple, blending traditional architecture with cutting-edge lighting. As the sun descends, the Kund becomes vibrant with a captivating interplay of light and shadow, creating

an ethereal atmosphere. Luminaires with a CCT of 2200K mimic the warmth of the rising sun on the temple's façade, while linear grazers on the boundary wall create an artful grazing effect on the Sabhamanḍapa and shrine hall, transforming the ancient monument into a captivating nighttime spectacle.

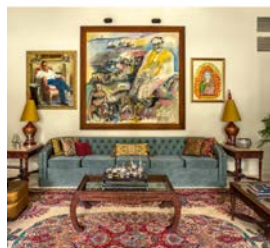
This temple in Gujarat, though not used for worship, has faced destruction, including the loss of the lord's statue and the top 'shikar.' However, the architectural jewel persists as a lasting symbol of India's culture and heritage, having been included in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the year 2022.

Also read: [India to Brazil: 13 of the world's most impressive museums](#)

Topics **gujarat** heritage

Architecture

READ MORE



DECORATING

India's

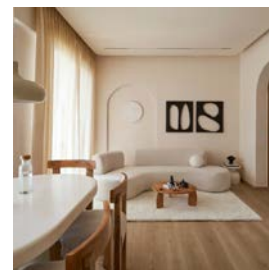


CULTURE

Lorry

SPONSORED

Breath



DECORATING

AD Small