

7 Days in 28 Dog Photos: a few memories from India Ki Khoj 2019

1. Stairs to Mess



This dog resides on the stairs to the mess hall, and it looks like the ones roaming around the IIT Gandhinagar campus where we spent much of our time.



The mess hall is where we ate most of our meals; “mess” was where everyone joined together, often after a long lecture or a lengthy trip to a historical site. I never got tired of walking up the steps to a meal that consisted of usually 7-8 items including various stews and curries... my

favorite was the chewy-on-the-inside, flaky-on-the-outside *bhature* (a fried flatbread).

| JAISWA CANTEN | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| MESS MENU | | | |
| BREAKFAST | LUNCH | SNACKS | DINNER |
| * BATAKA POHA | * CHANA DAL | * FRIED IDLI | * KADHI |
| * ONION-TAMATAR | * PALAK PANEER | * KETCHUP | * ALOO CABBAGE - MASALA |
| * SEV-LEMON | * GREEN MATAR MASALA | * HOT MILK | * PLAIN KHICHDI |
| * MILK-TEA-COFFEE | * PLAIN RICE | * COFFEE | * CHAPATI |
| * CORNFLAKES | * SPROUT SALAD | * TEA | * KACHUMBAR SALAD |
| * BREAD | * BUTTER MILK | * CRUSH | * SUJKA HALWA |
| * BOURNIZTA | * CHAPATI | | * MIRCHI |
| * BOILED EGG | * RICE PAPAD | | * LEMON |
| * WATERMELON | * MIRCHI | | |

An unexpected food discovery is the “Manchurian”, i.e. Chinese, food in India. This ranged from Szechuan-style dosas (South Indian street food) at the night market to chow mein with carrot-“meat”balls (almost everything in Gujarat is vegetarian) at mess. I loved the genre, which seemed to manifest as the combination of either Indian food with Chinese spices or Panda Express with Indian spices. They also graciously provided us with American accommodations of fresh fruit, steamed vegetables, and utensils at each meal. We still managed to complain about the lack of dessert...on the last day, we got cakes from a local bakery, and Rahul also brought carrot halwa (Gajjar ka halwa) to mess!

2-7. Early Morning Walk













These are various dogs that we occurred upon during the heritage walk, which was a tour

through the old city part of Ahmedabad. It was an incredible experience to walk among the *po/s* and communities that are so imbued with history yet also relevant and modern as homes and neighborhoods for the people that live there. Every turn brought a new experience. I could walk around there for hours, appreciating the different colors and details of the architecture. I wonder how different this area would be if I returned there in ten years. It gives off such a serene impression that I feel like nothing much would have changed. We were able to take off our shoes and visit various Hindu and Jain temples as well as a mosque, all within close vicinity, and admire them as cornerstones of their various communities. Their closeness to one another is reflective of the way that these religions all coexist and have strong influences throughout the history of the city, which I found fascinating in light of the political unrest and rise of Hindu nationalism in the country. We were very lucky to hear from people who were participating in the local protests (and were detained in jail for doing so while we were there), including members of a stand-up comedy troupe and the founder of Queerabad. Their conviction and passion for fighting for these social issues impressed me—for whatever reason, I had thought of these things as distinctly American. But it was clear that in the face of the globalization of polarization, people are standing up against these issues all over the world, from the US and Hong Kong—which is what I had heard about from my typical news sources—all the way to Gujarat.









8. On the Streets



These dogs were on the streets, where we did some brief shopping. Everything was affordable

due to the conversation rate between rupees and dollars, so I found myself buying earrings and snacks and gifts without thinking twice. The streets were exactly how I expected them to be from my previous experiences in China and Ethiopia—dusty, noisy, crowded, and with traffic rules that I couldn't wrap my head around. I got a lot of comments and stares from strangers thanks to my hair and my ethnicity, but it was always either a compliment or out of sheer curiosity; I never felt ill-will. Crossing the road was a whole adrenaline rush involving countless honks, bright lights from cars and mopeds that were forced to stop for us.





We didn't walk too much on the streets, usually taking the IITGN bus, public transport, or auto-rickshaws to get to where we needed to go. The latter always felt like an adventure with the wind rushing into our faces and legs, way too many people crammed into the backseat, and open sides which meant a clear view of all the chaos on the road and no barrier from the smog.

9-10. Lothal





This dog carried itself regally—tail straight up—which is perhaps appropriate for the location of this photo. This picture was taken at Lothal, which is an archeological site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, a society whose systems and infrastructure impressed me. It took a two-hour bus ride to there, so I was glad to see so much open space and walk around at the remains.



11. Ancient Dogs



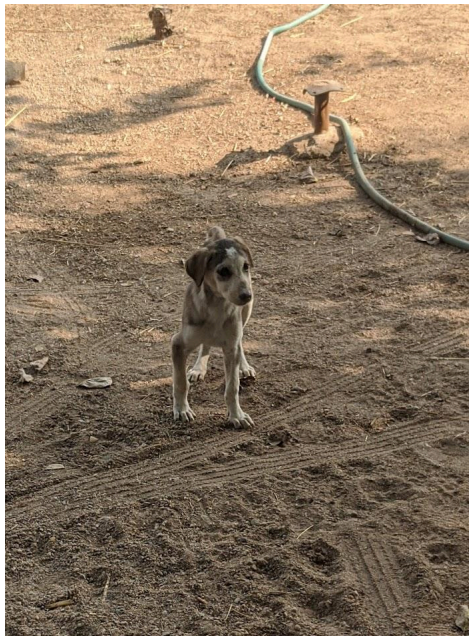
I loved looking at all the relics unearthed from the Indus Valley Civilization in the museum! Archaeologists must have such a deep understanding of the field to be able to discern or even hypothesize about the purposes and functions of the things that they discover. I felt like an elementary school kid again, in the best possible way of going on a thrilling field trip, and taking a tiny peek into how an entire civilization lived and the commonalities between their society and ours, from their sanitation and irrigation systems to necklaces and pots and sculptures.



Almost all reproduced them are handmade vessels appear to have flat shoulders. They are from Phase rim. One specimen in black over wavy lines example of vase on which The trough bowl, spoon the pan of red wash None of the tip impressions are just common Nasr, and character, vessels were toys by children been used

12-16. In the Village









There were quite a few puppies outside of the stitching workshop hosted by NEEV. It was part of an outreach program in which NEEV hosts classes for the women in the village to learn essential skills. These puppies were adorable, but I felt bad for how skinny they looked. To be completely honest, this is how I felt about the entire village visit. It was cute to get to see the kids learning in class and be so excited about seeing foreigners, but it felt like we were treating the village like a tourist site or petting zoo, barging in for a few hours to take pictures with the women and kids and then leaving afterward without a second thought. It was nice that we were able to visit in the context of NEEV's outreach, but the power dynamic still felt deeply exploitative. I don't know what would be a better way to do the visit, and I don't think it would be good to eliminate it from the itinerary—but at least not label it under the facade of "outreach" on

the program? The schedule changes from year to year, and we got to give feedback to the organizers at IITGN on the last day, so I'm hopeful that the program continues to improve.

These are a few of the memories I had associated with some haphazard dog photos. Many of the best experiences, from bus ride conversations to traditional meals to modern hair salons, were dogless. I learned and experienced so many new things each day, and I am grateful to have spent a week in Gujarat with such wonderful company. Thank you Caltech Y and IITGN for making this experience possible :)



Bonus crows from the Gandhi Ashram, which is where Gandhi lived. It was incredibly interesting to hear the perspectives of Gandhi's grandson, who was one of our speakers, and contrast it to the viewpoints of some of the IITGN students who told me about much of the controversy surrounding Gandhi.