

#PET-STORIES

From Labrador Retriever to Dachshund: Tracing the Pawprints of 10 Dog Breeds

Behind those puppy eyes lie stories of hunting grounds, royal courts, fishing boats, and even badger burrows. Here's a look at how 10 popular dog breeds came to be.



Dogs may be our best friends now, but their ancestors were bred with purpose—hunting, herding, guarding, or warming aristocrat-

Labrador Retriever - The Fisherman's Assistant

Don't be fooled by their modern-day love for tennis balls, Labradors were originally bred in Newfoundland, Canada, to retrieve fishing nets and escapes from icy

German Shepherd - The Guardian of the Flock

Developed in the late 19th century by Max von Stephanitz, German Shepherds were designed to be the ultimate working dogs. Agile, strong, and fiercely

Beagle - Nose First, Always

The Beagle's roots go deep back to ancient Greece and then refined in England. Bred for hunting hares, these small hounds relied heavily

Siberian Husky - Born to Run in the Snow

The Siberian Husky was bred by the Chukchi people of Northeast Asia as a sled dog capable of traveling long distances in harsh climates. Their

Pug - From Chinese Palaces to Royal Laps

Pugs have been making humans laugh since 400 BCE, when they were bred as lapdogs for Chinese emperors. With their wrinkled faces and

Border Collie - The Genius of the Fields

This Scottish-English herder is considered the most intelligent dog breed. Bred to herd sheep with precision and eye contact (called 'the eye'),

Golden Retriever - The Scottish Game Companion

In the 19th century, Scottish aristocrat Dudley Marjoribanks (yes, that was his real name) wanted a perfect retriever for the moors. He bred a yel-

Doberman Pinscher - The Tax Collector's Bodyguard

In 1890s Germany, tax collector Louis Dobermann wanted a protection dog that was also obedient and elegant. His breeding experi-

Dalmatian - From Firehouses to Fashion Shows

This striking spotted breed has a murky origin, but historical records point to Dalmatia (in present-day Croatia). Dalmatians were once car-

Dachshund - The Badger Slayer

That adorable long body and tiny legs were no accident. Bred in Germany, the Dachshund's name literally means 'badger dog.' These brave little diggers

The Legacy of Breeding

While dogs today are mostly companions, their ancestry shapes their instincts. Retrievers still love water, hounds still follow scents, and herders still try to manage crowds (including children). Understanding their origins helps us meet their needs,

● Avishek

When I was planning a vacation in Rajasthan during starting end of March, people thought I was out of my mind. One colleague from Rajasthan warned me that in April, even car

I relied on Wikipedia and advices of few like-minded well-wishers (2 of them from Rajasthan, whom I met accidentally at an official training). Rajasthan is not entirely desert. In fact, the state can be distinctly divided into desert area and semi-arid area. My research showed that the maximum temperature during my visit hovers in the range of 35-35°C, which is acceptable compared to Kolkata standard. Also, I had some personal constraints regard-

ing ic feet. From icy waters to European palaces, every breed carries a fascinating origin story. Let's sniff out the histories of 10 beloved breeds, from the loyal Labrador to the fearless Dachshund. My intention was to cover maximum places during the trip. Given the rail heads from Kolkata, Rajasthan can be entered from two major cities. Either through Jaipur (via Agra Fort or Old Delhi) or Bikaner (via Old Delhi). One can also enter from Mount Abu (via Ahmedabad), but that is a longer route and falls in between the usual routes. Major cities to be covered in the state are Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Mount Abu, Ajmer, Bharatpur and Chittorgarh. I like to plan and arrange for my trip myself. Various packages offered by online travel providers and local operators give me an idea of the route and places. I avoided flight, as in my opinion, travelling with kid is best enjoyed by train. They get time to be accustomed and enjoy the journey. I initially planned my trip as:

Howrah - Bikaner - Jaisalmer - Jodhpur - Mt. Abu - Udaipur -

Ajmer (via Chittorgarh and Pushkar) - Jaipur - Howrah. Since I was travelling with my 2.5 year old son, there were certain constraints. So, I had to tweak my plan a bit. So, now it was- Howrah - New Delhi - Jodhpur - Jaisalmer - Bikaner - Mt. Abu - Udaipur - Ajmer (via Chittorgarh and Pushkar) - Jaipur - New Delhi - Seodah

This ambitious plan was covering almost entire of Rajasthan in a single trip! I will cover the entire trip in multiple posts. First one being from Kolkata till New Delhi. For the first leg of our journey, I booked ourselves in Howrah Rajdhani till New Delhi. After a brief hitch (which made us almost miss the train), we boarded the 2AC coach, one March evening. We, including my son, enjoyed the journey to the most. Food was good, and so were the co-passengers. Our connecting train to Jodhpur was at same night from Old Delhi Jn. I had booked a retiring room and got ourselves transferred to Old Delhi on reaching New Delhi. Retiring rooms can now be booked online from the IRCTC website- accommodation link or directly from http://www.rr.irctctourism.com. The room at Old Delhi Jn. was old but spacious. We made the most of the time available to us, and after a quick nap went to the Red Fort in the evening. It is close from Old Delhi Jn. and rickshaws are available from outside the station. I have been there before, but entered the complex for the first time. We relished the Mughal construction and my son enjoyed the lush green lawns. Then, we did some quick shopping in the famous Chandni Chowk, known for zarf, embroidered cloths and street food. After a quick dinner, we waited impatiently for our first connecting train to Jodhpur and began our journey into the Land of Maharajas, Rajasthan.

tain has a long connection with spirituality, as it is said sage Vashishtha retired here and performed yajna. There are several Archaeological Sites in the hills. The hill station was cooler than I had expected after spending a summer week in Rajasthan. There was a pleasant chill in the air even in that April afternoon. Mount Abu is a small town, with most of it extending between the bus stand and Nakki Lake. The road connecting the town to the lake is dotted with stores, hotels and restaurants. One has several sightseeing options. RSRTC buses connect sightseeing at nominal rates, self-driven two wheelers are available on hire, jeeps, and cars are also available. Since we reached after noon, the first evening we spent at the Nakki Lake and surrounding market. It is a large lake surrounded by hills and the central attraction of Mount Abu town. There is rock shaped like a toad, called Toad Rock, on a hill behind the lake. The rock is a popular lookout point. There is option to enjoy the lake from the shore, on paddle boats or from inside of giant balloons! Photographers flock the area for snaps in traditional Rajasthani attire. The place is very lively and colourful in the evening. Due to its proximity to Gujarat, during weekend, lot of tourists can be seen from Gujarat. The restaurants and food joints here serve food to suit taste buds of both the states.



Bagore ki Haveli



#TRAVELOGUE

Day 1 in Udaipur, the City of Lakes

Our Day 3 at Mount Abu started lazily with no hurry as buses ply to Udaipur every hour. Things hastened a bit when we realized we are late for the 12 pm bus. Eventually, we were on foot waiting when we saw we may miss the 1:30 pm bus as well! Roadways in Rajasthan is excellent. Vehicles ply at high speed without any hitch. With limited rail connectivity, roadways are preferred medium of transportation for many. Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) meets the expectation wonderfully with on-time and pocket-friendly service. The distance of 27 kms to Abu Road and then 150 kms to Udaipur was covered in 3.5 hrs. Terrains in Rajasthan varies between desert, forest and hilly offering some wonderful sights.

It is advisable to make at least one trip between cities on road to experience this diversity. Udaipur, popularly known as the City of Lakes, is one of the major cities of Rajasthan. It is served by both Ola and Uber. It was the historic capital of the kingdom of Mewar, founded in 1559 by Maharana Uda Singh II when he shifted his capital from Chittorgarh after defeat to Akbar. Udaipur enjoys a distinct pleasant weather, unseen in rest of Rajasthan. This is due to its proximity to Gujarat border and being surrounded by Aravalli Range, which separates it from Thar Desert. The erstwhile capital was protected by a wall and 7 gates (known as 'Pole' here). The area within is currently called the Old City while the modern city thrives outside the walls. The Old City has narrow lanes and old buildings, but are very close to the main historically important monuments and ghats (on Lake Pichola).

The lake system of Udaipur

are interconnected and are the main source of water for the city. In Udaipur, as in Jodhpur, we put up in the old city. To me, the Old City has a hypnotic charm. Since it was already evening by the time we reached our hotel on Day 1 in Udaipur, we decided to have walking tour of the Old City. Our hotel, being on bank of Lake Pichola, the beautiful Gangaur Ghat was right beside our hotel. Bagore ki Haveli is also beside the ghat, but assuming it will take time to explore, we postponed it till Day 2. Lake Pichola (open 24 hrs, no ticket) is an artificial fresh water lake named after the nearby Picholi village. The lake has four islands which all holds palaces, some of which have been converted into hotels. The City Palace of Udaipur has been built on the bank of this lake. Gangaur Ghat is a major bathing ghat of Lake Pichola. The view from the ghat is beautiful with open lake on one side and the arched Chandpole Bridge (public bridge, no ticket) on the other.

Moreover, the procession of local Gangaur festival culminates in this ghat with the immersion of the idols of Gan (or Shiva) and Gaur (or Gauri). From that, we went to the City Palace of Udaipur, but it was closed. So, we came back to Jagadish Temple (open 5 am - 10 pm, no ticket), which is one of the major monuments and temples of Udaipur. The Hindu temple was built by Maharana Jagat Singh I in 1651 and is in continuous worship since then.

The temple is dedicated to Lord Jagannath, affectionately called Jagadish by locals.

The evening aarti is very elaborate with locals participating in large numbers. After the evening aarti, we called it a day and retired in our hotel.

2 Days in Jaisalmer, the City of the Golden Fort



Our train, Jodhpur-Jaisalmer Exp., left Jodhpur at 11:30 pm. There are many foreigners visiting Rajasthan all the time. I had interaction with a couple from Europe occupying the berths opposite to us. The guy had more knowledge on India's link with Yoga than I do! After a comfortable night's sleep, we reached Jaisalmer before 6 am the next day. Jaisalmer hotel agents and desert safari operators have their men in Jodhpur as well. They track tourists and will mark the train berth from Jodhpur. One guy handed me his card-cum-brochure at Jodhpur station. When the train enters Jaisalmer, their men will come and try to lure you to their hotel and safari. Almost all hotels have tie-up with safari operators and hence they offer a package, which includes 2 days hotel rent, transfer to Sand Dunes around evening, cultural program, night at tent, morning transfer to hotel. In my opinion, it is always better to search the net, speak to the people and book a package before reaching Jaisalmer.

Being a die-hard fan of Feluda (the fictional Bengali sleuth made immortal by the immortal filmmaker-writer,

Satyajit Ray), Sonar Kella (the Golden Fort) always occupied a special place in the heart. It was a dream-cum-true moment for me when I found myself in front of the fort (though now it looks nothing like depicted in the film 'Sonar Kella'). Jaisalmer is a very small town, and mostly spread around the fort. So, the fort is visible from the terrace or balcony of most hotels. Interestingly, the fort is still inhabited by descendants of the original inhabitants. It is the only Living Fort of India. Jaisalmer Fort (open 24 hrs as it is living fort, entry free) was built around 1156 by King Jaisal (again after whom the town is named) and named as Trikoot Garh (after the hill on which it was built). Being constructed of sandstone, the fort changes colour with the position of sun, bright golden at dawn and dusk and rich brownish yellow during the day. The main attractions inside the fort are: Raj Mahal (Royal palace), Havelis of prosperous traders, Jain temples and the Laxminath temple. There are guides available outside the fort who will take you through the Royal Palace (it is the largest building after entrance, with great views from top), one Haveli (here one can take photographs with antique items in traditional Rajasthani attire), and finally, a

gift shop. Patwon ki Haveli are a group of havelis across the main market outside the fort. They were constructed by affluent traders, and now form a heritage tourist attraction. In the market in front of the fort, on way to Patwon ki Haveli, there are some local sweet shops selling delicious Kachoris (a local delicacy). One interesting item available here in abundance is cups made from real fossils rock! One can see and feel the compressed black fibrous material forming the surface. Locals claim that milk left overnight will turn into curd (my sister bought one during her visit, experimented and confirmed the fact) and drinking water kept in it overnight can cure diabetes.

Real sand dunes can be seen at either Sam Desert or Khuri Desert. Sam Desert is more commercialized with resorts for night stay, jeep and camel safari. Most, if not all, operators will want to take you there. Khuri, on the other hand, is rustic desert village, with few households now serving as guest house and camel safari operators (search for Badal Singh or Arjun Singh). They welcome you with home-made food, have their own camels for safari and can accommodate for night stays. Resorts are also present, so one can choose where to stay. I

chose Khuri and arranged for a camel safari through Badal Singh Guest house at Khuri. I did not opt for a package and negotiated a much cheaper deal with a travel operator for to and fro journey to Khuri. But unfortunately my son had a bad cold and I had to drop my dessert safari plan. If travelling with kids, you have to be flexible.

Day 2 at Jaisalmer was mostly spent indoors. By evening, my son felt better and we went off to Ghadisar Lake (entry free). It is a rainwater lake supplying water to the town. There are several temples on the shore. Empty tombs (or cenotaphs) around the lake and one in the middle give it a royal touch. Boating can be done on the lake. There are huge number of fishes in the lake (catfish as per Wikipedia), which can be fed with bread-crumbs sold on shores.

Being a small town, streets of Jaisalmer becomes dark and empty after sundown. There is no, or little nightlife. The place has barracks of military and BSF, and is continuously patrolled by them. Our train to Bikaner was on night of Day 2 in Jaisalmer. So, we wrapped up and prepared ourselves for the journey to another desert town of Rajasthan.

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Gangaur Ghat

#CREATIVITY

Tiny Stitches, Big Smiles

Every Stitch Tells a Story: Celebrating International Amigurumi Day



In a world buzzing with screens and speed, there's a quiet, colourful rebellion taking place, one loop at a time. April 25 marks International Amigurumi Day, a joyful celebration of the Japanese art of creating small, stuffed yarn creatures. From tiny turtles and sleepy cats to smiling donuts and space-bound aliens, amigurumi isn't just a craft, it's a global movement stitched with creativity, calm, and community.

What is Amigurumi?

Amigurumi blends the Japanese words ami (to knit or crochet) and nuigurumi (stuffed doll). These hand-crafted plushies, often no bigger than your cup of coffee, are loved for their cuteness and character. Unlike generic toys, amigurumi creations have personality, sometimes cheeky, sometimes serene, and each one tells a story, lovingly brought to life by its maker.

A Therapeutic Thread

Beyond the cuteness, amigurumi offers calm in chaos. Many crafters say the act of crocheting or knitting helps them focus, reduce anxiety, and express themselves. It's a slow, mindful practice in a fast-paced world. During lockdowns, the amigurumi community grew rapidly online as people sought comfort and connection through crafting.

A Global Yarn Party

International Amigurumi Day is now celebrated with vibrant flair across the world. Social media feeds fill up with plush pets and fantasy creatures, workshops pop up in libraries and cafes, and creators share free patterns, tutorials, and heartfelt stories behind their stitched friends. Some even engage in 'yarn bombing,' decorating parks or streets with soft sculptures to surprise and delight passersby.

Crafting With a Cause

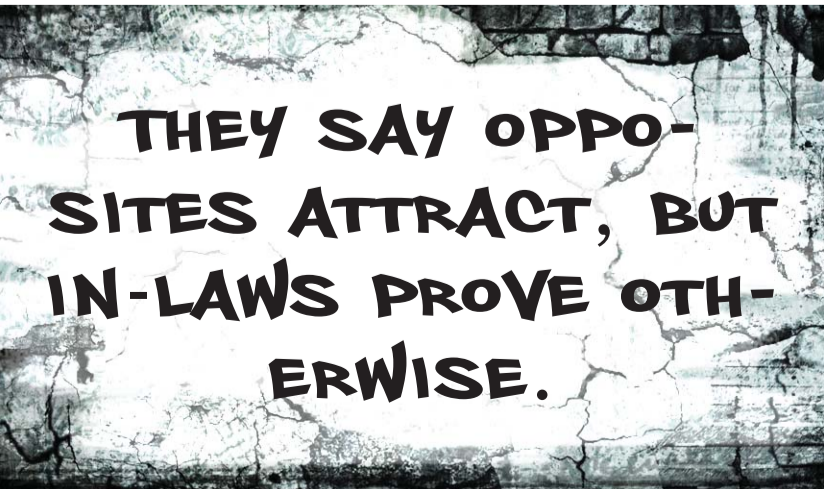
More than just playthings, amigurumi dolls have become powerful messengers. Artists create endangered animals to raise awareness, or design diverse, inclusive characters to reflect a wider spectrum of identities. From eco-conscious collections to mental health mascots, each tiny doll can carry a big message, and it's all wrapped in yarn.

Start Small, Dream Big

You don't need fancy tools to join in, just some yarn, a hook, and a bit of patience. Whether you're crafting for a loved one, donating to a charity, or simply unwinding with a new hobby, amigurumi invites you to slow down, smile more, and celebrate the joy of making. So, this April 25, take a break from the digital buzz. Grab a hook, pick your favourite color, and stitch up something magical. In the soft, quirky world of amigurumi, every loop is a step closer to joy.



THE WALL



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BABY BLUES



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ZITS



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