

Maharashtra



The second you step into Mumbai, the spirit of the bustling megapolis envelops you. A mini-India of sorts, it is here you witness the most divergent scenarios – a blend of the old and new, traditional and contemporary, affluent and impoverished. This once sultry tropical archipelago of seven islands, and the brightest jewel in Raj's crown, Mumbai formed the dowry of Portuguese Princess Infanta Catherine de Braganza when she married Charles II of England in 1661. And what a long way it has come! A teeming metropolis, its skyline dotted with eclectic skyscrapers, its fame rests as much on Bollywood as it does on the historical perspective it holds in its majestic lap. Deriving its name from the local deity Mumba Devi, whose temple still exists, it was the Portuguese who chose to call it 'Bom Bain', meaning the good bay. Mumbai represents the true saga of an old civilization seeking its place in the New World Order.

City Lights

History peeps through the various landmarks and monuments that are scattered through the city. You could call **Gateway of India**, the magnificent structure in yellow basalt stone as brand Mumbai's logo. Built in 1911 to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to India, it is the starting point for most



Gateway of India

tourists out to explore the city. Four turrets and intricate latticework are the outstanding features of this Indo-saracenic architectural feat. **Elephanta Caves**, home to a collection of shrines, courtyards, inner cells, grand halls and porticos, houses some of India's most revered gods and goddesses. The cave complex is a



Elephanta Caves

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shining example of India's ancient rock cut architecture. Situated on Gharapuri Island in Mumbai's harbour, it is about an hour's boatride from the Gateway of India. **Flora Fountain** is located in the heart of Mumbai, surrounded by stately colonial buildings. **Hanging Gardens**, also known as Ferozeshah



Flora Fountain

Mehta Gardens, are known for spectacular sunset views over the Arabian Sea. Don't miss the climb over the famed 'shoe' in concrete! **Rajabai Tower** is a striking feature on Mumbai's cityscape. Adjacent to the High Court, this 260-foot-tall structure is adorned with oriental figurines. Today it has limited its repertoire to mere chimes of the clock on the quarter hour from a veritable choice of 16 symphonies. **Victoria Terminus**, the railway station is now known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus but is



Victoria Terminus

Mumbai's architectural masterpiece. **Marine Drive**, shimmering like a majestic strand of diamonds, hence called 'Queen's Necklace', covers the concrete jungles of Mumbai's Manhattan, the Nariman Point. Marine Drive by the night is sure to leave an indelible mark on your memories of Mumbai. **Kanheri Caves** are a must-see as these Buddhist caves provide a perfect contrast to the architectural extravagance you might have experienced at Elephanta Caves. The caves consist of more than a hundred tiny cells, cut into the flank of a hill and the monasteries date back to the first century AD. Any visitor to Mumbai must visit the beaches of the city. **Chowpatty Beach** is Mumbai's most famous and popular 'family' beach. A carnival-like air grips this stretch of sun and sand every evening, what with joyrides, merry-go-rounds, multi-coloured fast-food vendors, astrologers and magicians and performers of all kinds dotting its landscape. **Juhu Beach**, unlike Chowpatty, is more upscale. A bourgeois paradise, you will still find frolicking kids, courting couples and sundry folks. But here you can always retreat to the many five-star hotels in the vicinity, and yet enjoy a panoramic view of the coast, along with a



Juhu Beach

steaming cup of coffee! **Bombay Natural History Museum** houses interesting exhibits and specimens preserved since 1883 when the Bombay Natural History Society was founded.

City Culture

Beaches, heritage districts, film studios and art galleries abound here. Mumbai is the tinsel town of India where most of India's glamorous stars stay. The film industry of India is synonymous with Mumbai. **Prince of Wales Museum**, built in a mix of Gothic and Moorish architecture and crowned with a sparkling white dome, houses a fantastic collection of artefacts of the Indus Valley Civilization, dating back to 2000 BC. Definitely worth viewing here is the collection of over 2,000 miniature paintings that are a legacy of India's various art schools. There is **Taraporewala Aquarium** on Marine Drive housing exotic marine life,



Taraporewala Aquarium

Esselworld and Water Kingdom (phone 28699957), **Fantasy Land** (28365683), **Strike 10** (26324533/34), **Acres Club** (25226052), **Game Zone** at Crossroads (24945890) and **Hakone** (25797000) are some of the known

amusement parks for the family to spend time at together.

Art Gallery: Prithvi Gallery (26149546), **National Centre for the Performing Arts** (22833737), **Jehangir Art Gallery** (22048212) and **Art Walk** (22325757) at the Oberoi Shopping Arcade.

Cinema: Apart from the only domed IMAX theatre in the country, there are cinema halls you can drop by to catch a movie if you have the time. These could be **Gaiety Galaxy Complex** at Bandra (26552972), **Regal** at Colaba (22021017), **Metro** at Dhobi Talao (22030303), **Globus** (26432254), **INOX cinema** (56595959) and **Fame Adlabs** at Andheri (26991212).

Museums: **Nehru Planetarium** (24920510), **Nehru Centre** (24964676) and **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastusangrahalaya** (22844519). All closed on Mondays.

It is believed that a new restaurant opens in Mumbai every week. The city thrives on novelty, and can satisfy the gourmet in anyone. Mumbai's kitchens run 24x7 days, and apart from glitzy five star coffee shops, there are street vendors selling *kebabs*, tea, coffee, eggs, chapattis and the *vada pao* of course round the clock. If looking for five-star dining experience, you can begin with the good-old **Taj President**, with famed restaurants like **Trattoria**, **Konkan Café**, **Thai Pavilion** while closer to the airport, **The Great Wall** at the **Leela**, **Pan Asian** and **Peshawari** at **ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton** promise fabulous Far East cuisine and hearty Tandoori fare. **Glasshouse** at Hyatt Regency is another landmark

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24-hours eatery. **Mezzo Mezzo** at **JW Marriott** too is making waves. At the same time, standalone restaurants like **Olive** and pubs like **Athena**, **Indigo**, **Lings Pavilion**, **Nosh**, **Copper Chimney**, **Bellissima** have acquired great fame, and are certainly worth a try.

Some recommendations: Goa Portuguesa, Mahim: 24440202, Flavours, The Ambassador: 22041131, Bayview, Marine Plaza: 22851212, The Palms, The Oberoi Towers: 22324343, Shamiana, Taj Mahal, Sidewalk Café: 56934444, Ambrosia, Mercure Hotel Guestline: 26705555.

Chinese: Pan Asian, ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton: 28303030, China Garden at Crossroads: 24955588, Golden Dragon, Taj Mahal Hotel: 22023366, Just Chinese: 26429975, Sampan, Holiday Inn: 26934444.

Continental: Starters & More: 22814124, Not Just Jazz by the Bay: 22851876, Zodiac Grill, Hotel Taj Mahal: 22023366.

Italian: The Rotisserie & Sea Grill, The Oberoi: 22325757, Trattoria, Hotel President: 22150808, Fiorella, The Leela 56911234, Siciliana 26368899.

Multicuisine: Peshwa Pavilion, ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton: 28303030, Tian Resto-Bar: 26914425, Fusion, The Residence Hotel: 28578686, The Vindhyas, The Orchid: 26164040, Casa Mexicana, The Oberoi: 22325757, Under the Over: 23861393.

Night Out

The culture in Mumbai is, work hard and play hard and the pulsating nightlife of Mumbai has choices

unlimited.

Bars: Dublin at ITC Hotel Grand Maratha Sheraton: 28303030, Champs: 22325757, Geoffreys: 22851212, Sports Bar: 26499844, Library Bar: 22150808, Starboard: 22023366, Smooth: 23631311, Churchill's Bar: 26551234, The Bonaparte Bar: 26911333.

Discos: Fire & Ice: 24980444, Cyclone: 26911234, J-49: 26184546, HQ: 22883982, Razzberry Rhinoceros: 26184014.

Pubs: Not Just Jazz by the Bay: 22851876, Copa Cabana: 23680274, The Western Café: 26415221, The Ghetto: 24921537, The Tavern & Beyond: 22042911.

Shopper's Paradise

From world class designer wear, street chic, leather bags and goods, home wares, antiques, curios – name anything and Mumbai has a mindboggling array. The best of mega malls and pavement markets can be found here, and you can safely shop till you drop at Flora Fountain, Cross Roads, Linking Road, Kemp's Corner and several other spots.

Bargain Shopping: Fashion Street, Chor Bazaar, Kalbadevi, Crawford Market and Linking Road.

Antique Shopping: Mughal Art Co.: 22023643, Mahendra Doshi: 23630526, Essajee & Son: 22021071, The Raj: 24941971, Collector's Paradise: 22824675, Almari: 24973427.

Shopping Malls: Westside: 23841730, Tulips: 23695306, Amarsons Collections: 23635551, Premsons Bazaar: 23636600, Shopper's Stop: 26240451, Bombay

Stores: 22885048.

Designer Wear: Ensemble: 22843227, Krishna Mehta: 23674531, Araiya: 23678293, Melange: 23854492, Ritu: 22846995.

Entertainment

Mumbai's social calendar is choc-a-bloc with events like fashion shows, charity shows, wine and cheese tasting, art exhibitions and cultural dos. They open windows to a new world, a vibrant crowd of Bollywood, theatre and creativity and the kind of diversities you can only find in Mumbai.

Facts at a Glance

Access: Mumbai enjoys excellent aerial, rail and road connectivity with nearly all the important cities of India. Internationally too, it remains one of the best-connected cities with airlines running direct flights to their hubs.

Getting Around: Mumbai is the first metropolis in India to have a reliable rail network that connects its various suburbs with city centers. Termed 'locals', however, visitors to the city are advised not to venture out on their own, during peak office hours when the crowd can become too much. At the same time, Mumbai's taxi service is highly recommended, and so is the BEST bus service, but familiarity with the routes network is essential before embarking on a bus. **Best time to visit:** September to April. November and February are ideal as the evenings become rather pleasant. Summers (March to May) can get fairly warm and June to September is the monsoon time when a rain-drenched Mumbai

extends a wet welcome.

City Code: 022

Airport: Domestic Airport, Santacruz, Terminal 1/A: 2615 6600; Terminal 1/B: 26156920

Sahara International Airport: 28325331

Railway Station: General enquiry: 131, 23077575, 23075252, Mumbai Central: 23085555, Chhatrapati Shivaji: 22659512, Kurla: 25224812.

Taxis: Airconditioned Cool Cab taxis are mobile dispatched from 28246216, 28227006, 28016622.

Banks: Federal Bank: 23453202/3/4, 23453315, Global Trust Bank: 22825033/5027, Vijaya Bank: 22835623, 22044595

Hospitals: Breach Candy: 23685406/23633651/4872, Hinduja: 24449199, JJ: 23735555/9031, Jaslok: 24933333 Nanavati: 26182262/2255, Raheja: 24467569, Tata Memorial: 24146750

Chemists: Day & Night Medical and General Stores: 28820353, Bombay Hospital: 22067676 Extn.: 252, 355 Ganesh Medical Store: 24073467

Government of India Tourist Office: 123, M Karve Road, Opp. Churchgate: Tel.: 22033144, 22036854

Maharashtra Tourism

Development Corporation: Opposite LIC Building, Madame Cama Road, Tel.: 22024627

International Travel House: A/41, Vinmar House, Road No. 2 MIDC, Andheri (East) Mumbai 400 093 Tel.: 28200862/64/65/68

International Travel House: 2nd Floor, Royal Insurance Building 14, Jamshedji Tata Road, Churchgate, Mumbai 400020 Tel.: 22850159, 22830529

Forex: Thomas Cook, Fort:

Maharashtra

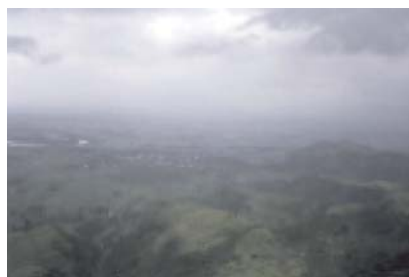
22048556, 22048557
American Express Travel Services,
Colaba: 22048291, Bank of America,
Nariman Point: 22852882

Home Away From Home

ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton & Towers: 28303030, J.W. Marriott: 56933000, Renaissance Mumbai Hotel & Convention Centre: 56928888, Taj Mahal: 22023366, The Oberoi: 56325757, The Orchid: 26164040, The Shalimar Hotel: 54641000, Rodas: 56936969.

MATHERAN

An undulating hilltop, covered with shady trees, Matheran languidly beckons holidaymakers from an altitude of 800 m. The cliffs, with steep drops, proffer stunning views. So head for **The Heart Point** for a memorable view of Mumbai at night! Actually Matheran has many quixotically named points that are popular for picnics during the day and fireside revelry in the nights! **Charlotte Lake**, **Panther's Caves** and **Paymaster Park** are other highpoints, though it is the old world charm of British and



Matheran

Parsi homes that is an irresistible draw.

Shopping

Cane and leather articles are a

speciality of Matheran. You could safely buy hats and footwear, not to forget the sweetmeat called 'Chikki', made of jaggery, peanuts and sesame seeds.

Facts at a Glance

Access: **By Air:** Mumbai, 100 kms away, is the nearest airport. **By Road:** Mumbai is 108 kms away, and you go via Karjat and Neral. Pune is 120 kms away. State Transport buses regularly ply from Mumbai and Pune, though one can hire a taxi from Neral to reach Matheran. There is a restriction on the kind of vehicles that can enter this serene town. **By Rail:** The charm of going to Matheran lies in the two-hour ascent in a toy train, or a tough trek of 11 kms through shady forests. **Getting Around:** Horses and hand-pulled rickshaws are the only means of transport available in Matheran. Horses can be hired for around Rs.100 per hour for enjoying the splendid sights from many of its viewpoints. However, walking is highly recommended for nearer location. **Best time to visit:** November to February while April to June and Diwali and Christmas are the peak holiday seasons for Mumbaiites. During the monsoon (mid-June to early-October) the village is virtually closed and the roads become very muddy. **Temperatures:** 16°C in winter to 32°C in summer. **Annual rainfall:** 524 cms.

City Code: 02148

MTDC: 230277

Home Away From Home

Regal Hotel, Royal Hotel, Brightlands

Resort, MTDC Holiday Camp.
MURUD JANJIRA



Janjira Fort

rock face. The caves with viharas (monasteries) are among the best preserved and boast interiors with lion pillars, elephant forms, carved representations of Gautam Buddha and dancing couples. The **Bhaja Caves** are smaller and also built in the

Chaitya style. Their speciality is that the rays of the setting sun light up the interiors and one can see carved figures of gods and goddesses. The **Bedsa Caves** are close to the Mumbai-Pune Road, between the towns of Kadde and Bedsa. Huge pillars, lions and humans forms and a large Chaitya hall with resting rooms is a speciality of these caves. A vaulted roof supported by 2,000-year-old woodwork and a big skylight provides lighting for the entire cave.

Lakes: The main lakes are **Pavna, Lonavala, Tungarli, Valvan Lake** on the Valvan Dam and **Bushi Lake**. The prettiest falls are the **Kune Falls** where the water descends down 100 m into a pool below. The majestic cascade is visible from the **Khandala Ghat** and is particularly magnificent during the monsoons. **Tiger's Leap** resembles the sight of a tiger leaping



Khandala

into the valley.

Gourmet's Delights

Hotel Rama Krishna's Gujarati *thalis* are wholesome while **The Mehfil Bar and Restaurant** has an Indian and Chinese menu to choose from. **The Pavilion** (in Khandala) at the new Taj can be tried for Chinese, Indian or Continental fare.

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Must Buy

'Chikki', the Indian equivalent of peanut brittle are highly popular here. **National Chikki Mart** or **Rupam** are two good stores to buy from.



Karla Caves

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport is Pune (67 km) and Mumbai (80 km).
By Rail: Every train or car going towards South India from Bombay via



Bhaja Caves

Pune has to pass through Lonavala and Khandala. **By Road:** The Mumbai-Bangalore National Highway connecting southern and western India passes through Khandala-Lonavala. They can also be reached via the new Mumbai-Pune highway, some 104 km from Mumbai. **Getting Around:** Taxis, autos and rickshaws are the basic mode of transport.

Temperatures: Usually range between 21°C and 32°C in summer, and 16°C and 21°C in winter. **Best time to visit:** October to May.

City Code: 02114

Banks: Syndicate Bank: 273762-Lonavala, 273768.

Hospitals/Chemists: Adequate facilities except for highly specialised treatments. Both towns are popular as



Purna Lake

health resorts and have many sanatoria.

Venna Lake: The 10 square km Venna Lake is a must on every visitor's itinerary. It offers boating and fishing facilities. Mahabaleshwar's famous strawberries can be sampled here. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the **Mahabaleshwar Temple** here houses one of the 12 important Shiva *gyotirlingas*.

Gourmet's Delights

This is berry country – strawberries, mulberries, gooseberries are available everywhere. The corn patties are a speciality of Mahabaleshwar. Also try the *chikki*, honey and gouda cheese. Some of the popular restaurants are **Sayali** (260635), **Aaram** (261744), **Aman** (261087), **Elsie's Bakery** (260274), **Sher-e-Punjab** (260291) and **Angarre/Pavilion/Olive Garden** (260700).

Excursions

Panchgani: At an altitude of 1,334 metres, Panchgani is another popular hill station of Maharashtra. It derives its name from the five hills surrounding it. Some 19 km from Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani is a drop of 38 metres in altitude. An interesting deviation would be, visits to Parsi and British bungalows. Tableland, a plateau, is a popular tourist place occupying over 6 sq km of red earth. It is famous for watching the sunrise and sunset. Taxis can be hired from Mahabaleshwar.

Tapola: About 25 km from Mahabaleshwar, Tapola popularly known as 'mini Kashmir', has a big lake with small islands. The ideal way to spend a day here is to hire a boat and travel down to one of the many islands.

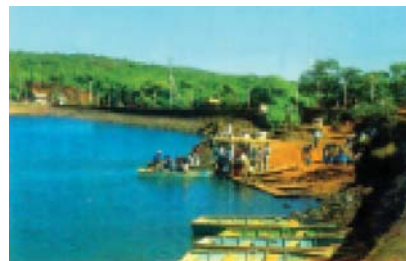
Pratapgarrh Fort: Pratapgarrh Fort, 24 km away, is where Shivaji, the great Maratha warrior and ruler, defeated General Afzal Khan. The fort stretches along the entire length of a high ridge. Tourists can see Afzal Khan's tomb



Lingamala Waterfalls

amid fabulous views of the place.

Satara: Some of the finest relics of the Maratha era can be seen in this historical town of Satara. The



Venna Lake

magnificent Shivaji Maharaj Museum, the Wasota Fort, in the south of the town, are worth a visit.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport from Mahabaleshwar is Pune (120 km).

By Rail: Pune is the most convenient railhead, but the nearest station is Wathar, 62 km away, on the Pune-Miraj section of the South Central Railway. **By Road:** It is well connected with all the important places in

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Maharashtra. Mumbai is 247 km away while Pune only 120 km. **Getting Around:** Metered as well as unmetered taxis are available. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 19°C, Max 25°C; Winter: Min 10°C, Max 18°C **Best time to visit:** October to June.

City Code: 02168

MTDC: 2026713

Banks: Bank of Maharashtra: 260290, SBI: 260297, Union Bank of India: 260413

Hospitals/Chemists: Mahabaleshwar has a government hospital and several private doctors and chemists, all located in the main bazaar.

Home Away From Home

Valley View Resort: 260066, Dreamland: 260228, Fountain:

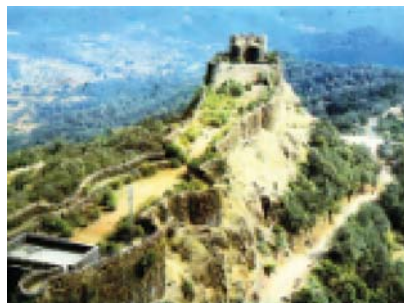


Panchgani

260227, Regal Hotel: 260001, Brightland Holiday Village: 260700, Panorama: 260404, 260604.

PUNE

Once a small village called Punnyapattam, meaning city of auspicious deeds, Pune is often referred to as the 'Queen of the Deccan'. The buzz of big sister-city of Mumbai has obviously touched Pune, and this picturesque town in Sahyadri



Pratapgarh Fort

hills has emerged as an enviable hub and industrial town. The construction of the Bombay-Pune Expressway, the first eight-lane highway conforming to global standards, promises to reach you to Pune in three hours flat, provided you start early enough to avoid the morning rush. Pune has a great historical perspective too, since Shivaji was brought up here. Poona was the headquarters of the hereditary fief of his forefathers.

City Lights

Osho Ashram: Set up by controversial godman Acharya Rajneesh, this 'spiritual health club' is cocooned in lush greenery with state-of-the-art amenities. A five-hectare Zen garden (open for general public twice a day) and Bistro are the perfect places within the commune to be in. The institute has a slew of programmes in meditation.

City Culture

Raja Kelkar Museum: Peshwa miniatures, carved doors and windows, quaint musical instruments, ornate betelnut crackers this museum boasts over 17,000 artworks and curios belonging to the Late Sri Dinkar Gangadhar. **Tribal Cultural**

Museum: This museum has a detailed documentation of the life and culture of the tribals of Maharashtra, particularly from the Sahayadri and Gondawana regions. **The Film and Television Institute of India:** Member of CILCET (International Liaison Centre of Schools of Cinema and Television), this premier institute offers various programmes covering all aspects of film-making, TV production and film appreciation. **St Mary's Church,** built in 1825 and inspired by the famous Martin-in-the-Field, situated in London's Trafalgar Square, is the first of its kind in Pune.

David Synagogue: Colloquially known as 'Lal Deval', this red brick structure built by David Sassoon, is frequented by Armenian Jews. A 90-ft spiralled clocktower, the stained glass windows are among its noteworthy features. **Shaniwar Wada:** The opulent fort-palace of the Peshwa rulers was built in 1736 and destroyed in 1828. The burnt out remains, a small gallery and a deserted two-hectare garden surrounded by massive walls are all that are left. **Pataleshvara**

Cave Temple: Similar to the famed Ellora temples in style, this eighth century rock-cut temple has massive pillars. The Nandi Mandapan is a circular pavilion opposite the temple which unfortunately was never completed. A shrine dedicated to Junglee Maharaj a Hindu ascetic who died in 1818 is located next door. **Aga Khan Palace Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial:** The grand palace of Imamsultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan was built in 1892 in 6.5 hectares of lush gardens. After the demise of the Aga Khan IV, it was donated to India. This historical

landmark achieved further prominence after Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned here during the Quit India Movement of 1942. His wife Kasturba Gandhi and his secretary Mahadeobhai Desai died during term, and their ashes are kept in memorials in the gardens. **War Memorial:** The Express-Nagarik Wadgaon Vijaystambh Pratisthan built this memorial at Morwada Gardens to commemorate India's victory over English invaders in 1779. It bears inscriptions of 1,080 martyrs who laid down their lives in the service of the nation after Independence.

Gourmet's Delights

Pune's fine restaurants closely follow Mumbai's trendy eateries. To begin with, **La Pizzeria,** at Bund Garden Road, offers mouth-watering Italian and Mexican fare while **Jazz Garden** at Koregaon Park serves Mexican, Continental and Indian food to the accompaniment of live bands. Pune offers the widest variety of sizzlers you have **The Place: Touch the Sizzler** and **Zamu's** are certainly worth a visit. **Dorabjee & Sons,** on Dasturmehar Road, has the best *biryani* and delectable Parsi cuisine.



Shaniwar Wada

Blue Nile is best for Iranian food. **Appa's Canteen,** on Bhandarkar

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Road, serves a potpourri of Indian and South Indian snacks and mini meals. **Pasteur Dairy** and **Marz-o-Rim** on MG Road are best for snack meals, **German Bakery**, in Koregaon Park, offers delicious sandwiches, fluffy omelettes, crunchy cookies and soft cakes along with a selection of pastries and ice creams.

Night Out

Crystal Ball (26114650), **Club Scooba Doo**, 10 Downing Street (26128343), **Pegasus** (26114277) and **Scream** at the Le Meridien are some of the pulsating nightclubs and discotheques that lend Pune the



Aga Khan Palace

sobriquet of 'party city'.

Shopper's Paradise

Maharashtrian sarees with their unique borders, glass bangles, silver jewellery, leather ware and red pottery are the interesting buys. The city is famous for slippers and sandals in Kolhapuri style. Another item you should not return without, are the butter-cookies from Kayani Bakery

and *chevda* (puffed rice).

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: Pune's airport is about 10 km from the railway station and is connected with Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Mumbai by all domestic carriers. **By Rail:** Pune is linked with Mumbai (170 kms), Nasik (208 kms), Chennai (1,090 kms) and other major cities of India. **By Road:** Convenient motorable distances from Mumbai, Nasik and Aurangabad (230 km). **Getting Around:** Autorickshaws are a convenient and affordable means of transport. Private taxis, can be hired for exploring the city and nearby attractions. A unique way would be to hire a bicycle and visit all the hotspots of the city. These can be hired at major shopping areas and from the booth outside the National Hotel. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 26°C, Max 40°C; Winter: Min 19°C, Max 29°C. **Best time to visit:** Pune enjoys a moderate climate throughout the year.

City Code: 020

Airlines: Indian Airlines: 141, Airport 142, Jet Airways: 26127181, Air Sahara: 26059003.

Railways: 131/ 26126575

MTDC: 26128169

Travel House: for Air/Rail/Car Bookings: 26113084

Hospitals: B J Medical College & Sassoon Hospital: 26128000,

Poona Hospital: 24331706,

Lokmanya Hospital: 27456496

Chemists: K. M. Medical: 26133176, Kemps: 26137704

Home Away From Home

Le Meridien: 26050505, Sun-N-Sand:

26137777, Taj Blue Diamond:
26125555, Sagar Park Plaza:
26122622, Woodland: 26126161, The



Maharashtrian Sarees

Central Park: 26054000, Best Western
–The Pride: 25534567.

NASIK

Nasik is where mythology's best known hero, Lord Rama, along with his wife Sita and younger brother Lakshman, spent most of their 14-year exile. And it was from here that Sita was abducted by Ravana, before being taken to his kingdom in Lanka. Noted poets like Valmiki, Kalidas and Bhavabhooti have reverentially mentioned ancient Nasik in their literary works. Besides, Nasik also enjoys being popularly called the fruit basket of western India, with strawberries, grapes and raisins growing here like wild berries!

City Lights

Tourists can trek up to the **Trimbak Hill** (30 km), or climb the 690 steps, to catch a glimpse of the source of the Godavari river. The **Trimbakeswar**

Temple here has one of the 12 *vyotirlingas* of Lord Shiva. **Sunder Narayan Temple**, located across the Godavari, houses Lakshmi and Vishnu idols. The temple was first built in 1756. **Naro Sankara Mandir**, built by the Marathas in early 18th century, is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and houses and large church bell acquired during the battle of Vasai with Portuguese in 1739. At **Kala Rama Mandir** jet black deities of Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are placed in the holy temple that was built in 1782 and has an 83-ft high imposing tower.

Pandulena Caves, some 8 kms drive from Nasik, are Hinayana Buddhist rock-cut caves built by the Jain kings in the 1st century AD. Similar to the ones at Ajanta, there are 24 of these. **Sita Gufa** is the site from where Ravana abducted Sita. One has to crawl into the cave to view the deities of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana.

Tapovan was where Rama is said to have lived down during his exile. Also, it was here that Lakshman had chopped off the nose of Ravana's sister Surpanakha. Down the years, many saints have meditated here. **Ramkund** is the central attraction here – it is believed that Sita and Rama used to bathe here – bones dropped into Ramkund are said to dissolve. The remains of eminent personalities like Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have been immersed here. This site is also known as the *Asthi Vilaya Tirtha*, or the Bone Immersion Tank.

Muktidham Temple depicts over 18 chapters from the mythological epic *Bhagavad Gita*. The **Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies**,

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established in 1980, is a renowned resource centre on the various currency systems that existed in India. It also has an exhaustive archive of photographs of Indian coins!

City Culture

The **Kumbhmela**, one of the biggest religious congregations, is celebrated once every 12 years on the banks of the holy river Godavari. **Ganesh Chaturthi** is celebrated with great fanfare all over Maharashtra. Crackers are burst and colourful processions carrying huge images of Lord Ganesha



Kala Rama Mandir

are the highlights.

Gourmet's Delights

Though somewhat limited in their offerings, one can still check out some of our recommendations for clean and hygienic food. **Dhaba**, at Panchvati Hotel, has Indian *thalis*; **Woodlands** at Nasik Club is known for decent South Indian fare while **Shilpa Garden** on MG Road is a multicuisine eatery. For Gujarati *thalis*, go to **Samrat Restaurant** at Hotel Samrat, on Old Agra Road.

Shopping: Fruit lovers rejoice: this is the place for great buys in grapes,

raisins or strawberries.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport is in Mumbai, some 185 km away.

By Rail: The nearest railhead, Nasik (10 km from Nasik city), is well connected to most metros and smaller cities. **By Road:** Nasik has quick connectivity with Mumbai, which is barely 185 km away and Pune, which is 112 km away. It takes four and three hours from both the cities respectively.

Getting Around: Unmetered taxis are available all over, but they are more suitable for travelling long distances. Ayodhya Travels (2504394) or Bawa Travels (2508627) offer such services.

Autorickshaws are an alternative but they too demand that you fix the fares

beforehand. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 22°C, Max 43°C; Winter: Min 6°C, Max 28°C. Evenings are pleasant throughout the year. **Best time to visit:** Between October and February.

City Code: 0253

MTDC: 2570 059

Banks: DFC: 2318165/66, Central



Kumbhmela

Bank of India: 2506666, Centurion

Bank: 2319146/8

building where Sai Baba used to spend alternate nights. The **Guru Sthan** is the shrine where the spiritual leader gave up his body. The *neem* tree under which the Baba first sat when he came to Shirdi is said to have miraculous powers. The **Lendi Gardens** where Sai Baba went for a walk and sat in meditation is a spot where devotees come to pray. The **Khandoba Temple** is the oldest temple of Shirdi.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: Mumbai is the nearest airport (250 km). **By Rail:** Shirdi is on the Central Railway line; the nearest stations are Manmad (65 km) or Kopergaon (18 km). **By Road:** On the Ahmednagar-Manmad Highway, Shirdi is 250 km from Mumbai and 75 km from Nasik. MTDC runs buses from all major destinations for Shirdi. **Temperatures:** 40°C in May and lowest 7°C in January. **Best time to visit:** Shirdi has dry climate but June to August is pleasant, with scanty rains.

City Code: 02453

Home Away From Home

Sun-N-Sand: 255728-30, Hotel Sai Leela: 255288-89, 255139.

GANAPATIPHULE

The name derives its essence from the army of the Ganas of Lord Ganesha who made its sands (pule) their home. A veritable treasure of Ganapatiphule is *Hapus*, the king of mangoes. Alphonso that grows here in abundance! The entire belt is fertile with popular fruits like kokum and phanas known to grow here in various varieties. Fruity fame apart, a 6-km-

long beach is another high point of Ganapatiphule, which offers fantastic water sports and swimming opportunities here. An MTDC beachfront resort could be a delightful base to start your journey into the Ratnagiri district and discover the landscape, art, culture and history of Maharashtra. The birthplace of Lokmanya Tilak, Ratnagiri has a plethora of palaces and museums: **Keshavsoot** is dedicated to the giants of Marathi literature, **Thebaw Palace** housed the exiled King and Queen of Burma in the earlier 20th century, **Pawas** is the abode of spiritual leader Swami Swaroopanand – all within a radius of 100 kms. Small detours from the coast can take you to the legendary sea-forts of **Bassein, Murud-Janjira, Jaigadh, Vijaydurg** and **Sindhudurg** – the soldiers of history who staunchly defended the maritime might of Maharashtra.



Samadhi Mandir

City Lights

Shramata Smarak: Ratnagiri is the last of industrial outposts before Ganapatiphule and it takes about an hour to cover the 50-km drive from Ratnagiri. But Ratnagiri's charms begin right from the station where an

elegant black granite tower welcomes visitors. This was built in the memory of those who lost their lives during the construction of the Konkan Railway.

Swayambhu Ganapati Temple:

Facing the sea, this rather modern temple structure with gardens and a large fibreglass mouse (the lord's vehicle) houses the idol bursting from a rock. From 2-8 every February and November, the setting sun casts its rays directly on the idol within the temple – a sight thousands of believers come to witness!

Tilak Smarak: Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who coined the famous declaration, 'Freedom is my birthright' was born here and his house is one of the most famous landmarks. His 'scholarly' possessions can still be found as he had left them!

Patit Pavan

Mandir: This is the first temple built for non-Brahmins by Swatantra Veer

Savarkar, who lived here from 1924 to 1937 under house arrest. Savarkar had

the single mission to erase untouchability from the country's landscape, and the temple is a living testimony to the great leader's dedication in uplifting the



Ganapatiphule

dispossessed with knowledge of the Vedas. **Thebaw Palace:** The palace was home to the exiled king and queen of Burma in the earlier 20th century.

Once a grand building, the place is now in ruins, which the state tourism corporation plans to restore and run as a heritage hotel.

Jaigad Fort & The Lighthouse:

Overlooking the confluence of the Sangameshwar river and the Arabian Sea are the bastions of this 17th century fort. The beach is a great spot for swimming. The lighthouse, built in 1832 by John Oswald, is known to have run on kerosene oil till 1995 – the light is now provided through special prisms.

Derwan: About 85 km from Ganapatiphule, the place hosts Shiv Shristi, an exhibition on Chhatrapati Shivaji. The famous **Parshuram Temple** is located 112 km from Ganapatiphule.

Vijaydurg and Sindhudurg: The grand bastions of

Maratha maritime supremacy, **Vijaydurg**, or the Fort of Victory, was strengthened in the 17th century by Shivaji, who added a triple row of walls and towers as well as inner buildings. **Sindhudurg** in Malvan port is a historic monument housing the only Shivaji shrine within its bastions.

Must Do

Check into the MTDC resort here. Bang on the beach, on 49 well-landscaped acres, it overlooks the 6 km of the dune-covered beach besides having the temple in proximity. A stay at a Konkani hut or a Sagar Darshan deluxe room/suite is

highly recommended. The watersports center here has kayaks, water scooters and boats, which can be hired from October to May. Tel: 35248.



Swayambhu Ganapati Temple

The area is known for fresh fruits and should be bought, space permitting.

Facts at a Glance

Access: **By Air:** Pune and Mumbai are the nearest airports. The Ratnagiri airport has only private charter services. **By Rail:** The closest railhead is **Ratnagiri**, some 50 kms from Ganapatiphule. Four trains along the Konkan Railway offer connectivity. **By Road:** From Mumbai, it takes about 10 hours to reach Ganapatiphule. **Distances:** Mumbai (375 km), Pune (325 km) and Kolhapur (160 km). Though medical facilities are available at Chintamani Hospital, it is Ratnagiri where you have to head to for money and other transactions. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 26°C, Max 35°C; Winter: Min 15°C, Max 25°C. **Rainfall:** 900 mm during monsoon. **May** is a good time for Alphonso-lovers! **Best time to visit:** November to February.

City Code: 02357

AURANGABAD

Named after the last of the Great Mughals Emperor Aurangzeb, who as viceroy of the Deccan, had made it his capital and later built a mausoleum for his wife here. Aurangabad owes its fame to the **Ajanta & Ellora Caves**; in fact Aurangabad is the *raison de etre* for visitors to the state. Now World Heritage Sites, the hidden niches of Ajanta and Ellora are resplendent with carvings and vivid frescoes, representing the very essence of India. The world famous caves apart, Aurangabad holds out on its own too, thanks to an old-world charm touched by contemporary activities. Helping it gain further stature are the spate of important industries that have mushroomed here..

City Lights

Bibi ka Maqbara was built in 1679 AD by Aurangzeb in memory of his wife Rabia-ud-Daurani and though it typifies the Mughal style of architecture in all its elegance, comparisons with Taj Mahal, tend to somewhat belittle its beauty. **Panchakki** is a water wheel, which used to pull water through earthen pipes to a mill located six km away. The mill is now abandoned, but in its time it was used to grind flour to feed thousands of pilgrims. Aurangzeb's spiritual advisor, Sufi saint Baba Shah Muzaffar is also buried within its walls, while enormous *kohl* fish fill the various tanks here. A **Himroo Factory**, hidden in the bylanes of the old town, manufactures the renowned Himroo weave, in shawls and spreads. The shawls are masterpieces in gold and silk thread that along with cotton threads replicate the wondrous frescoes of the Ajanta and Caves, thereby providing a cheaper option to

Maharashtra

the more expensive *Kamkhabs* (brocade and real gold/ silver shawls), patronized by royalty in the 14th century. **Purwar Museum** is a small yet compact museum, displaying the personal collection of a retired doctor. Don't be misled by its ambiguous location (behind an antique shop on Sarafa Road), because here you will find rare items like a 500-year-old chain-mail suit, Aurangzeb's handwritten personal Koran and an 800-year-old Paithani saree!

Shopper's Paradise

There is a veritable treasure house of the soft and elegant Himroo shawls and unique Paithani sarees, which use real gold thread in borders embellished with bird and flower motifs. These sarees have been revived almost from extinction to take their place among other sought-after varieties. Bidriware, created through inlay of silver in a special alloy of gunmetal is famous here. Semi-precious Agate is easily available and can be set in jewellery or gifted as souvenirs. Shops in the Walled City or the State Emporium are the best places for these.

Gourmet's Delights

You could try **Bhoj** for South Indian cuisine; **Food Lovers** for North Indian and **Master Cook** for Chinese food while **Foodwalla** is known for Tandoori food. **Ranjit Restaurant** serves Indian cuisine even as **Ashoka's Fast Food Centre** is renowned for, as the name suggests, fast food..

Excursions

Ajanta Caves: It was a British hunting team that chanced upon what is today considered the most important site of Buddhist art. Lying deep in the



Bibi ka Maqbara

Sahyadri hills and cut into the curve of the mountainside, the **Ajanta Caves** are located about 100 kms far from Aurangabad. They depict the story of Buddhism spanning from 200 BC to 650 AD. The 30 rock-hewn caves, spread out like a horseshoe, were built for Buddhist monks who taught and performed rituals in the 'chaityas' and 'viharas', the nerve center of Buddhist cultural movement. The best example of a style of painting that moved on to other areas in the Far East, can be viewed in the frescoes within the caves. Natural light affords the visitor an unparalleled view of the brilliant cave paintings each telling a story of its own. The shadows of sunrays on the intricately carved pillars leave an imprint on the mind that one never forgets.

Ellora Caves: About 30 km from Aurangabad, in a different direction from Ajanta is Ellora, showcasing 34 caves carved into the sides of a basaltic hill. The finest samples of cave architecture, they house exquisite façades and adorned interiors. And the best part is the confluence of three faiths – Buddhism, Jainism and

Hinduism. These three coexist harmoniously to provide a stunning display of art and culture. The 12 caves to the south are to the Buddhist, the 17 in the center are dedicated to the Hindus and 5 in the north are for Jains.

The Kailasa Cave in the 16th houses an architectural wonder with the central temple and figures, carved from an enormous rock. The inner sanctum has a *lingam* of the temple-deity, Shiva. It is believed that the rock temples were constructed under the aegis of the Rashtrakutan King Krishna I.

Facts at a Glance

Access: **By Air:** Aurangabad has hopping flights from Delhi via Mumbai by Indian Airlines and Jet Airways too offers daily connectivity from Mumbai. **By Train:** On Manmad-Kachiguda section of the South Central Railways, it is well connected with Mumbai as well as neighbouring states. **By Road:** Aurangabad can be reached from Mumbai (388 km), Pune (299 km), Nasik (221 km) and Manmad by road conveniently. **Getting Around:** Autorickshaws are available everywhere and are willing to negotiate prices. It is advisable to fix a rate for a longer tour as it works out more economical. If feeling adventurous, hop into a Tempo, though taxis from outside the hotels are a safer bet. Private cars can be hired from the hotel travel desks and from local travel agents with or without the services of a driver. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 26°C, Max 36°C; Winter: Min 20°C, Max 28°C. **Best time to visit:** October to March.

City Code: 0240

Airport: 2484269

Railway Station: 131, 132, 233 4376



Ajanta Caves

Car Rentals: Classic: 2337788

Banks: SBI, Central Bank of India, State Bank of Hyderabad, Bank of Maharashtra.

India Tourism: 2331217

MTDC: 2331513

Hospitals: Dhanwantari: 2334760, Kalyani: 337380

Taj Residency' Aurangabad: 238 1106

Welcom Hotel Rama International:

2485441-4, Ajanta Ambassador:

2485211-4, President Park: 2486201



Entrance of Kailash Temple at Ellora



The small Kailash Temple at Ellora