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The Little Known Beaches of Konkan

Bhandarpule, Aare Ware and Malgund

Ashutosh Bapat | Photographs © Suhas Asnikar and Dhanashree Bapat

The author is an avid trekker and history enthusiast and can be reached at ashutosh.treks@gmail.com

While tourists are well aware of places like Ganpatipule, Alibaug, Ratnagiri and others in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, there are some tucked-away beaches which have remained comparatively unknown and unspoiled. Here are a few of them which, along with the amazing vista of the sea and the relaxing experience of lolling on the soft white sands, offer something that each one of us craves for – complete solitude.
The beauty of the coastal areas of Maharashtra lies in its amazing sandy beaches, waves gently touching the shores, hillocks that trespass into the sea and the Suru trees lined up along the coastline. This entire region is known as Konkan and is a favourite with tourists because of the quaint culture that continues to exist here, offering complete peace of mind and tranquility. Though some of them have now turned into crowded hotspots with commercialization making swift inroads, you will still find a few which are virginal. These are along the new highway which runs parallel to the coastline of the Konkan. The curvy road that at times takes you through hillocks via small ghats is also a pleasure to drive on while the frequent views of the sea and the sound of the waves helps add to the beautiful experience.

**Bhandarpule**

One of such beaches is Bhandarpule, which is actually a ‘wadi’ of Ganapatipule. A small hillock separates these two. The word ‘pule’ means beach and Ganapatipule is so named because of the temple dedicated to Lord Ganesh while Bhandarpule derives its name from the Bhandari community that has stayed here for ages. Engaged in the business of fishing, their village fascinates outsiders with its cottages of red-tiled roofs, fishing boats on the shore, nets stretching out far and wide, and so on. Just 2 kilometers from Ganapatipule, Bhandarpule offers complete solitude and a wonderful ‘beach’ holiday even though there is a stretch here in the sea that is very rocky and not advisable for swimming.
Aare-Ware

When we proceed from Bhandarpule towards Ratnagiri, we come across two beautiful beaches known as Aare-Ware. The two villages located on the shoreline are separated by a small river that originates somewhere in the hills of the mighty Sahyadri mountain range and merges with the sea at Aare-Ware. Still not over-exploited by the crowds, there are very limited facilities for tourists except for a few activities like water sports. The water scooter ride is a primary attraction here, which takes you on a circular round, starting from the creek and venturing into the sea. As is the case with Bhandarpule, a tiny pathway leads to the beach that offers a panoramic view of the great Arabian Sea.
The beaches of Aare-Ware make for a 3-kilometer walk on the soft sands with a thick dense curtain of Suru trees on one side and the marvellous roaring waves on the other. One of the things not to be missed here is the sunset with the fiery red sun gently sliding down into the horizon beyond the sea. And of course there is the quintessential Konkani culture and cuisine that enhances the feeling of having finally got away from the pressures of urban chaos, even if it is just for a weekend.

**Malgund**

The Ratnagiri district of Konkan is blessed with a lot of natural wealth, most of which is still protected and preserved. And apart from the attractions they offer to the tourists, some of these villages and towns are also famous for being the birthplaces of renowned authors, poets, journalists, theatre artistes, politicians and freedom fighters. One such place is Malgund which is where Marathi literature’s acclaimed poet Krushnaji Keshav Damle came from. Known by his pen name Keshavsut, he was born in Malgund on March 15, 1866. He obtained his higher education at Vadodara, Wardha and Pune and then turned to writing poetry. With about 132 poems to his credit, Keshavsut’s works were religious in nature, and through them, he touched upon issues of

**What to Eat:**

A wide variety is available when it comes to Konkani cuisine. If you are a vegetarian, you must try out the famous ‘ukadiche modak’, available almost everywhere in this region. For fish lovers, this region is pure heaven with a wonderful choice of curries or dry items made out of fresh fish and coconut.
Distance from Mumbai: 350 kms

How to reach:
By Air: The closest airports are at Mumbai and Pune at 350 kilometres and 325 kilometres away respectively.
By Rail: The nearest railway station is at Ratnagiri.
By Road: Bhandarpule, Aare-Ware, and Malgund are well connected by road from Ratnagiri and Ganapatipule. Many state transport buses ply from Ratnagiri to Ganapatipule.

A great option is to drive from Pune or Mumbai, along the new coastal highway and enjoy the breathtaking view of the sea while halting occasionally at any pretty spot that takes your fancy.

Where to stay:
The beaches described above are hardly at a distance of 15 kilometers from Ratnagiri and just about 5 kilometers from Ganapatipule. So staying at either of the places is very convenient. The nearest MTDC resort is at Ganapatipule, and provides accommodation in both rooms and dormitories. Home stay options are available too and Malgund also has some small, budget hotels.

of romance, love for one’s family, nature, nationalism etc.

Keshavsut did not live for long though and succumbed to a plague epidemic in 1905 when he was just 39 years old. His birthplace is now converted into a museum and his poetry continues to resonate in the form of stone inscriptions and well-maintained galleries that provide rich nuggets of information about his life and work. Very close to the memorial of Keshavsut is a heritage property. The 275-year-old Limaye Wada stands as testimony to the sprawling houses made out of wood back then. The Limaye family also rents out rooms to tourists and one can enjoy typical Konkani cuisine here.
Carved Temples: Jain Caves at Ankai-Tankai

Viraj Shah | Photographs © Saili Palande Datar

The author is an archaeologist, specialized in Jaina Caves of Maharashtra. Currently, she is working as Associate Professor in Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME), Pune.

The Jain caves found at Ankai-Tankai in the Yeola taluka of Nashik district offer an enchanting insight into how caves and hill forts co-existed in harmony and also offer a window to the religious leanings and social milieu of those times.
As the passenger train on the Daund-Manmad section of Central Railways enters the quaint little station of Ankai, one can immediately see the fortifications on the hills of Ankai-Tankai nearby, the tiny hamlet of Ankai at the base, and the distinct thumb-shaped peak on the horizon. Ankai-Tankai, located in the Yeola taluka of Nashik district, are strategically located twin hills on ancient trade and military routes that were endowed with a group of 10 Jain caves dating back to the 12th century CE. You will also find one of the strongest hill forts of the Maratha period here, giving the place a distinct character.

The Caves

The caves have been excavated on the ascent to the connecting ridge of the Ankai-Tankai hills on the way to the fort at a height of around 30 to 40 meters above the plain. Architecturally, these caves are very fine excavations with well-laid out ground plans, decorative doorways and pillars; elaborate ceilings; ornate facades; and plinths with well-defined mouldings. All the caves, except Cave VII and Cave X, are clearly of Jain origins as attested by the figure of a seated ‘jina’ on the lintel of their doorways.

Cave X though is quite plain and there is no indication of its sectarian affiliation, while Cave VII has a figure of Ganesha on the lintel. Caves I and II are grand, double-storied excavations while Cave III is the most ornate. Compared to the first three caves, the other caves are less ornate except for the doorways in some cases. Cave I is a magnificent double-storied structure in which the lower storey comprises a verandah, hall and shrine whereas the upper storey has only a verandah and shrine. The only sculptures carved in situ are the ‘dvarapalas’ on the base of the verandah pillars in the lower storey. Cave II is double-storied too with its lower storey having a verandah, hall, antechamber and shrine. The upper storey is unfinished with a verandah, a roughly blocked out hall and a shrine. It is the grandest of the caves because the verandahs of both the stories are enclosed with perforated screens with two large lions outside the verandah of the upper storey, easily visible from quite a distance.
Originally, there were large elephant figures outside the verandah of the lower storey, just below the lion figures. But these figures are no longer visible due to weathered rock, except for the faint outline of an elephant. There are icons of the ‘yaksha-yakshi’, Sarvanubhuti-Ambika, on each end of the verandah in the lower storey. Of these, the icon of Ambika is carved in situ, while the icon of Sarvanubhuti is a loose sculpture, inserted at a later date. In recent times Ambika has been worshipped as the Hindu goddess Kalika by the local people. The idol is wrapped in a sari and covered with vermillion.

Cave III is a single-storied cave with a verandah, hall, antechamber, and shrine. Like Cave II, the verandah is enclosed with perforated screens, decorated with motifs of flowers; bull and elephant. The hall is quite extravagant in design with elaborate pillars and a very ornate lotus carved with musicians, couples and deities on its ceiling. Like Cave II, there are icons of Sarvanubhuti-Ambika at the verandah ends, while the back wall of the hall is carved with huge panels depicting the scene of attack on the 23rd ‘tirthankara’ Parshvanatha and the meditating figure of the 16th tirthankara, Shantinatha. The cave is now kept locked by the Department of Archaeology as the hall houses a number of loose icons that have been found in the vicinity.

Cave IV has a verandah, hall and shrine. There are no icons carved in situ but a bench running along the back wall of the hall indicates the use of loose icons. There is an eight-line Devanagari inscription on one of the pillars in the verandah, but is too unclear to decipher. Cave V is a roughly laid out three-storied excavation with the upper two stories open in the front. There is a carved ‘kalasa’ above the third story, giving it the appear-
ance of a temple sikhara. However, unlike the previous caves, this one is architecturally crude and rough with the exception of a few icons carved in situ. There are no icons in the upper stories, but the lower storey carries a few images of jinas, Bahubali and Rsabhana-tha.

Cave VI has a verandah, hall and shrine. The cave is quite plain with the exception of a very elaborate hall and shrine doorways. Cave VII and Cave VIII are rough excavations with similar architectural structures. Cave IX has a verandah, hall and shrine but the structure has deteriorated over time. In front of the cave is a tank-like excavation. Cave X is just a room with a throne in the centre. It is quite possible that this cave was sort of a mandapa with a chaumukha installed on the throne.

**Hill Temples**

These caves resemble the structural temples built in Maharashtra during 11th to 13th centuries CE. The ground plans with well-demarcated verandah, hall, antechamber and shrine; half-enclosed verandahs with dwarf pillars and benches; plinths with decorative mouldings; doorways with varied sakhas and figures of doorkeepers, females and deities on the bases; pillars with distinct motifs such as the hood of a snake and kichaka on the brackets; and the elaborate use of decorative motifs such as lozenges and kirtimukhas are a few of the characteristic features shared by these caves with almost all the structural temples of the region.

The caves mostly imitate structural temples and are not rock-cut. In fact, the shrine doorway of Cave VI is entirely structural. It is difficult to conjecture why a structural doorway was provided, but a tendency to make the
cave appear like a temple is noticeable. Another feature which can be noticed at the site is the lack of quite as many icons carved in situ. All the shrines are empty whereas there are a few icons carved in caves II, III and V. The discovery of a large number of loose icons in the vicinity indicates this practice. This could have been due to the bad quality of the rock or the interests of its patrons. One of the possible reasons for the loose icons, which would have been easy to remove and hide, must have been the fear of iconoclasts. The few in situ icons are quite ornate with elaborate thrones, lanchhana, yaksha-yakshi pair, lustrating elephants, and a number of attendants.

Cultural Milieu

Apart from these caves, there are three more Brahmanical caves on the hill. These are of earlier origin than the Jain caves at the site and have been dated to 10th - 11th century CE. A number of loose icons are scattered in the village, most of which are associated with Jainism and must have been installed in the caves. Some though are Brahmanical such as the figures of Varaha in zoomorphic form, Ganesha, Balaram, Vishnu and Nandi. The most important monuments are the forts on the hills. The Ankai fort is the strongest fort of the district with bastions and a line of fortification walls. On the southwestern face of the Ankai hill is a crudely cut cave above
which is carved an icon, said to be of Matsyendranath. At present it is a celebrated place of jatra, held in honour of Matsyendranath and Goraksnatha.

Interestingly, there are some literary references to the site. The fort of Ankai Tankai is referred to in the 47th verse of the 17th century text ‘Meghduta Samsya Lekh’ by Meghvijaya, who mentions that the place acquired sanctity because it was believed to have been visited by the 23rd tirthankara, Parshvanatha. The Ankai Tankai forts are also mentioned in the ‘Badshah Nama’ of Abdul-l Hamid Lahori, who died in 1654 CE, in the context of the exploits of Khan Khanan, who captured them in 1635 CE.

Thus, it is clear that from the 10th century CE through the Maratha period, the site was an important and active centre where monuments were raised for varied sects of Brahmanism as well as Jainism. It probably was most active during the Yadava period, as indicated by the architectural remains. The importance of this site can primarily be attributed to its strategic location, commanding one of the major trade routes from Sopara to Bahal. With almost negligible local Jain population in the Ankai village and the absence of icons in the shrines, the caves remain protected monuments and not a living sacred space for the Jain community. The religious significance of the caves is confined to the icon of Ambika turned Kalika in Cave II, implying that the affiliation has shifted from Jainism to Hinduism.

Distance from Mumbai: 263 kms

How to reach:

By Air: The nearest airport is at Ozar, in Nashik. However since the passenger terminal is very new, there are very limited flights. Pune and Mumbai airports nearby also have good connectivity.

By Rail: Ankai has a small railway station. Manmad is the nearest major junction.

By Road: From Mumbai, take NH 3 i.e. the Mumbai-Nashik expressway towards Manmad. At Manmad, turn off for Ankai.

Excursions:

Nashik has rolling hills and green fields. Wine lovers can explore the many vineyards that offer tours and do a wine tasting outside of Nashik. The Trimbakeshwar Temple, which marks the source of the Godavari river is a site of pilgrimage.

The twin peaks of Mangi Tungi can be climbed up to via 4500 steps, a must-climb for history buffs.

Where to stay:

Nashik has several options for accommodation to suit a variety of budgets.
Restoring a Grand Legacy

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad
Mumbai City Museum

Text and Photographs © Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum

Originally built to display arts and crafts sent to the ‘Great Exhibition’ at London’s Crystal Palace in 1851, the Victoria and Albert Museum of Mumbai carries forward a grand legacy today. Renamed Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum in honour of one of its most stalwart founder-supporters, the museum today presents a rare view of the life of Mumbaikars from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.
About Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum was the first museum established in the city in 1872, as the erstwhile Victoria & Albert Museum, Bombay. It is Mumbai’s oldest museum and the third oldest in the country. The Museum showcases the city’s art, culture and history. It has a small but rare collection of the fine and decorative arts of the 19th century, which highlights early modern art practice as well as the finest craftsmanship of various communities of the then Bombay Presidency. The collection includes miniature models, dioramas, maps, lithographs, photographs and rare books that document the life of the people of the city in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

Museum History

The idea of setting up a museum in Mumbai was mooted in 1850 when preparations were being made for the first ‘Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations’ to be held in London’s Crystal Palace in 1851. Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria, wanted to present to the world the industrial arts and crafts of Britain’s colonies and thereby stimulate trade for these products. Duplicates of India’s beautiful arts and crafts that were sent to the Great Exhibition from the Bombay Presidency formed the nucleus of the new museum’s collection. It was opened to the public in 1857 to much interest and curiosity. In 1975 the Museum was renamed the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in honour of the man whose vision and dedication ensured its establishment.
In 1997, very few people had heard of the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum. A serendipitous search for a location to establish a conservation laboratory occasioned a visit by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) to the Museum. The dismal state of repair in such an extraordinary building begged a response. For the first time in India, a public-private partnership was established for the management of a cultural institution. In February 2003, a tripartite agreement was signed between the Municipal Corporation Greater Mumbai (MCGM), the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation and INTACH and the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum Trust was established at the same time to look after the revitalisation and management of the Museum.

The building and objects required comprehensive restoration. The original colours and details had been effaced. The delicate stucco and stencil work was badly damaged. The
Iron pillars had separated from the walls and many of the etched glass panes were broken. Electrical cables were conspicuous all over the building. Poor lighting created a dull and gloomy atmosphere. There was no narrative or any labels to explain the artefacts and the history of the collection. All this and more has been addressed in the Museum’s restoration. In 2005, the Museum won UNESCO’s highest international Award of Excellence in the field of cultural conservation, for its 5 year comprehensive restoration.

**Engaging with the contemporary**

The Museum re-opened in 2008 with an extensive exhibitions programme which includes a strong focus on contemporary art. A series of curated exhibitions titled ‘Engaging Traditions’, invites artists to respond to the Museum’s collection, history and archives, addressing issues that speak directly to the traditions and issues that underlie the founding of the Museum, yet evoke the present by challenging orthodoxies and questioning assumptions. Several distinguished contemporary artists including Jitish Kallat and Sudarshan Shetty have participated in this programme.

**International Collaborations**

The Museum has successfully collaborated with international museums and institutions to showcase contemporary artists and exhibitions which relate to the Museum’s permanent collection. It has hosted exhibitions on contemporary photography and the Olympic posters from the V&A Museum, London. German artist Eberhard Havekost’s works were presented in collaboration with the Dresden State Art Collections and the exhibition “Social Fabric” was showcased with INIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts) London, and the Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan, Mumbai. The Museum collaborated with the Guggenheim Museum, New York, to present the BMW Guggenheim Lab in Mumbai and the Ermenegildo Zegna group on the project ZegnArt Public in 2013. Most recently for the exhibition The Florentine Renaissance: The City as the Crucible of Culture, the Museum collaborated with the Guild of the Dome Association, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institute, and the Museum of the Opera del Duomo.

**Museum Expansion**

In December 2012, the Museum opened a unique new cultural hub called the Museum Plaza which offers people a much needed green and programme rich public recreation space. The Museum has restored and adapted old spaces to accommodate new exhibition galleries called SPS 1 and 2, a large open area for the performing arts as well as public sculpture, a Museum Café, a Museum Shop, an Experimental Gallery, and an Audio Visual cum Education Centre.

A dilapidated cottage that served as a storage room has been painstakingly restored to function as the Museum’s Education Centre. The building has been completely transformed internally into an intimate, contemporary space. An exclusive education programme has been planned including film screenings, lectures, seminars, audio-visual interactions and special events.
Since its inception in 2009, the Museum’s successful education and outreach programme has been significantly expanded. A current priority is to build and diversify the Museum’s audiences, encouraging repeat visits and engaged participation with the Museum – its permanent collections, contemporary exhibitions and activities – from a variety of age and interest groups. To this end, the Museum education and outreach effort is focused on providing stimulating, participatory experiences that respond to different age, interest and language groups, and recognize a diversity of backgrounds. These experiences are aimed at encouraging critical engagement with Mumbai’s history, and artistic and cultural developments.

**Opening hours:** 10 am to 6 pm (5.30 pm last ticket issued)
Closed on Wednesdays and certain public holidays.

**Travel:** Nearest local railway stations on the Central Line: Byculla; on the Harbour Line: Reay Road; on the Western Line: Mahalaxmi.

**By Bus:** Reachable via most buses passing Rani Baug/ Jijamata Udyvan

---

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Dr. Bhau Daji Lad

Doctor, Researcher, Philologist, Philanthropist

Text & Photographs © Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum

From a very early age, the young Dr. Bhau Daji Lad showed signs of great intelligence. Seeing his potential, his father brought him to Bombay in 1828 for further education where he was enrolled in the old Marathi Central School. There he trained under the guidance of Narayan Shastri Puranik, who came to be his first Guru.

Later he joined the Elphinstone Institution where he stood out for his academic achievements. He won a prize for an essay on infanticide, held scholarships, won medals and distinguished himself in subjects as varied as history, geography and chemistry. Upon completion of his studies, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy. But alongside his teaching post at the Elphinstone Institution, he also privately studied Sanskrit – a reflection of his wide interests.

On 1st November 1845, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad resigned from the Elphinstone Institution and sought admission to Grant Medical College. After completing his medical education in 1851 he set up as a medical practitioner in Bombay and quickly made his reputation and fortune. As a physician Bhau Daji Lad dedicated his career to supporting those in need, often rendering free service to the poor. In his research he attempted to discover a synthesis of indigenous and European medicines and was famed to have identified a cure for leprosy from the seeds of the ‘Kosto’ plant (in Marathi khastha).

Though a doctor by profession, Bhau Daji Lad maintained a strong affinity for ancient art and history. He attained scholarship in the Sanskrit language, contributed numerous papers to the journal of the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and also translated into English works by German and French scholars on Orientalism. He travelled extensively in India to examine and copy many historically significant inscriptions on stones, rocks and copperplate – notably the inscriptions at Ajanta and Ellora – and slowly made his name as an antiquarian researcher.

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad was also committed to improving the state of the city of Bombay and the welfare of its citizens. He played a lead role in the establishment of many libraries in the city, was a great patron of local theatre and was twice appointed the Sheriff of Bombay – one of the first native residents to be given the position. He took the initiative to establish the Economic Museum and Zoological Gardens and was the Joint Secretary of the Victoria Museums & Gardens Committee. Together with Dr. George Birdwood, another towering figure in the world of arts and sciences, he helped select the site of a planned public institution that would include a museum with a natural history and botanical garden attached to it.

The foundation stone of the present museum building was laid on 19th November, 1862. The construction of the building took ten years and was bedevilled by a lack of funds. Dr. Bhau Daji Lad, in his capacity as Joint Secretary, exhorted the public to donate generously and raised Rs 1,16,141. On May 2nd, 1872, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay was opened to public. A little more than hunDr.ed years later, on November 1st, 1975, the Museum was renamed the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in honour of the man whose vision and dedication lead to its establishment.

Dr. Bhai Daji Lad died of an illness on 31st May, 1874 in Bombay, the city to which he had dedicated much of his life.
Though a bustling city that has a strong link-age with Indian my-thology, Jalna never-theless offers a lot for tourists to explore and enjoy. This includes an amazing variety of wildlife as well as an abundance of plants and species. The city is also often visited by devotees for its many temples, mosques and the ‘dargahs’ of Sufi saints.

The Rich Wilderness of Marathwada

Jalna

Text and Photographs © Sameer Raut

The author is a retired Indian Army Officer & a keen hobby wild life photographer. Besides photography he is an active sportsman. He has had the privilege of serving twice in the Kargil sector. Keeps himself busy with social activities especially giving guidance to youngsters who wish to choose defence services as their career.
Formerly a part of Nizam State as a tehsil of Aurangabad district, the district of Jalna was formed on May 1, 1982 by carving out Jalna, Bhokardan, Jafarabad and Ambad tehsils of Aurangabad district and Partur tehsil of Parbhani district. The boundaries of Jalna are adjacent to Parbhani and Buldhana to the east, Aurangabad to the west, Jalgaon to the north and Beed to the south. It is the premier commercial centre of the Marathwada region. But what is interesting is the legend associated with this commercially active and vibrant city. It is believed that the foundation of Jalna can be dated as far back as the time of Rama, the hero of ‘Ramayana’, whose consort Sita is supposed to have resided here. The locals still point out the place where Rama’s palace stood. At the desire of a wealthy Muslim merchant, who is said to have been a great benefactor of the place, it was named Jalna, from his occupation of ‘julaha’ or weaver.

During Emperor Akbar’s time, Jalna was held as ‘jagir’ by one of his generals, and Abul Fazl had made it his residence for a short period. Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah also favoured the town as being healthier than others. Jalna has witnessed frequent changes of

Blue Peafowl
Regarded as one of the most beautiful birds in the world, it is also the national bird of India. The male is referred to as a peacock and the female a peahen. The most distinctive feature of the blue peacock is its beautiful train consisting of tail feathers which are 1.4 to 1.6 metres long, measuring upto 60 per cent of its total body length. The train has in between a 100 and 150 upper tail coverts.

Peafowl are omnivorous and feed on grains, insects, small reptiles, small mammals, berries, wild figs etc. According to Hindu mythology, the peacock is regarded as the vehicle of the god Kartikeya and is a favourite of the goddess Saraswati. It is protected under the Indian Wild Life Protection Act of 1972.

Little Green Bee Eater
masters. After being held by Indian rulers, including the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Rashtrakutas, Aurangzeb, Akbar, Malik Amber, Nizam-ul-Asif Jah, Nizam-ul-Asaf Jah II and others, it was taken possession of by Colonel Stevenson’s troops in 1803 in the famous Battle of Assaye. Assaye was a village in Jafrabad tehsil on the river Juah located around 10 kilometers east of Bhokardan. Later, it reverted to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Abundance of Flora and Fauna
A wide variety of wild animals can be spotted in the region’s forest area. These include wolves, jackals, blue bulls (neelgai),

Grey Francolin
It is also known as the Grey Partridge or ‘Teetar’ based on the sound of its bird call. It is found all over the Indian sub-continent and is usually spotted in grasslands and scrublands but can also occasionally be seen in and around fields and villages. It feeds on grains, seeds, drupes, shoots, termites, and insects. This species has also been introduced to the Andaman islands. Sadly, its numbers appear to be diminishing because of large scale hunting and trapping. As a result, the Indian government has imposed a ban on hunting the Grey Francolin.

Indian Black buck
Also called the Kala Hiran or Krishna Jinka, this antelope has a life span of about 12 years and breeds twice a year. It is mainly hunted by dogs and wolves. Female blackbucks may or may not have horns, and are smaller than the males, and have lighter coats that range from beige to light brown in colour. Males have an elegant pair of spiral horns and their coats are a lot darker. Blackbucks are found on open grasslands and dry, thorny, scrublands. Their keen eyesight coupled with their tremendous speed forms their key defence against predators. Unfortunately, poaching and the destruction of their habitat are contributing to a rapid decline in the number of blackbucks found in the wild. Today, hunting a blackbuck is a punishable offence under Indian law to protect this magnificent species.
blackbucks, wild boars, sloth bears, hyenas as well as barking deer and leopards. Jaina is also home to a variety of bird species like the peafowl (peacocks), Hoopoe, Bee Eater, Indian Roller, Greater Coucal, Rose-Ringed Parakeet, Coppersmith Barbet, Large Grey Babbler, Painted Francolin, Grey Partridge, Shrike, Red-Vented Bulbul, Black-Winged Kite, Black and Ashy Drongo, Red Wattled Lapwing, Little Brown Dove, Grey-Fronted Green Pigeon and Baya Weaver.

Indian Wolf
Wolves and humans have a long adversarial history. Though they rarely attacked humans, they are considered one of the animal world’s most fearsome natural villains since they attack domestic animals. They prey on antelope, rodents, hare as well as cattle.

The Indian wolf is smaller in comparison to the European wolf, being roughly 3 feet long and 2 feet tall, with a tail of 16 to 18 inches. Packs consist of 6 to 8 wolves, though pairs are more common.

Highly territorial animals, wolves usually hunt in packs and roam large distances of over 20 kilometres in a single day. On a more romantic note, once a wolf has found a mate, they usually stay together for life. The Indian Wolf is now protected by law as an endangered species.

Indian Fox
The smallest member of the dog family, the Indian fox is an extremely timid mammal. The male fox stands about 1.4 feet tall and is about 2 feet long, with a foot-long tail. It weighs around 5-6 kgs. The female fox is about 2 feet long, with an equally long tail and weighs around 4 to 5 kgs.

Foxes are carnivorous and feed on rodents, grass-hoppers, worms, insects, fish and other small animals. Their average lifespan in the wild is 3-4 years but they can live for up to 10 years in captivity.

Little Brown Dove
There are also a large number of wild plants, as for example, Anjan (Hardwickia binata), Apta (Bauhina racemosa), Bartondi (Morinda tinctoria), Babul (Acacia nilotica), Dhavada (Anogeissus latifolia), Moha, Palas, Tendu, Peepal, Neem, Salai, Karanj, etc. Exotic trees like Australian Babul, Mayflower and Peltoforum are also found in this region. Bamboo trees, shrubs, herbs and climbers are aplenty too.
A very stout-looking yet agile venomous snake, it is found in a variety of habitats like dry plains, rocky hills, rainforests and desserts. It is the fastest attacking species in the world when provoked. Generally it is little over a foot long but it can grow to up to 2 and a half feet in length. It feeds on rodents, lizards, insects, frogs, and scorpions. It has a pointed tail and its hiss resembles a sawing-like sound when it wants to alarm its enemies.
Indian Blue Bull (Nilgai)
The Blue Bull is also referred to as ‘Nilgai’ in India. During the era of Aurangzeb, i.e. the Mughal era, they were known as ‘Nilghor’ (Nil = blue, ghor = horse). However, it is neither a bull nor a horse, but belongs to the antelope family, and is the largest asiatic antelope. Standing at close to 5 feet at the shoulder, the male blue bull is a majestic sight. The male has two short horns and is bluish in colour while the female are lighter fawn in colour. Each hoof has a small white patch. Nilgai are diurnal and tend to form single sex herds outside of the breeding season. Female herds typically contain 3-6 adults with their calves whereas bulls form herds of anywhere between 2 to 18 males. Their life expectancy is fairly long, and they live for between 20 to 30 years. Found all across India, they avoid dense forests and prefer plains, grasslands, woodlands and low, scrubby hills. Herbivorous, they eat a variety of plants and grasses and are known to survive for long periods without water.

Indian Golden Oriole
Found in the Indian sub continent & Central Asia. It is a partial migrant bird. Other than India it breeds in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan & Nepal. It inhibits a range of habitats which include open deciduous forest, semi evergreen forests, woodlands, mangroves, gardens, parks, orchards & plantations. Golden Oriole feeds on fruits, nectar, seeds and insects.

Indian Roller bird
Also known as the ‘Blue Jay’ or ‘Nil Kantha’ for its mythological association with the Hindu deity Lord Shiva, it is found in many parts of the world. Several states in India have declared it as the symbol of their state including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha. The name ‘Roller Bird’ stems from its striking display of aerial acrobatics made during courtship rituals. They feed on insects, reptiles, moths and frogs. This bird feeds on insects, reptiles, moths and sometimes even frogs. Indian Roller Bird is considered to be a sacred bird in Hindu mythology associated with the deity Lord Shiva.

Common Hoopoe
The national bird of Israel, the hoopoe was also revered in ancient Egypt and was a symbol of virtue in Persia. Its plumage is distinctive and attractive. Roughly 10 to 12 inches long, hoopoes are also superbly camouflaged for their feeding grounds in dry habitats. They feed on insects, reptiles, small mammals and seeds which they forage for on the ground. Their calls are low and resonate with a “pooo-pooo-poop” or “ooop ooop” call from which sound their name is derived. Interestingly, hoopoes are monogamous birds.

Sykes’s Crested Lark
( Galerida deva ) In the name of God and an homage to Col. Sykes !!! Col. W H Sykes an Indian Army Officer has listed 256 species of birds he found in Deccan. This bird is found in dry open country, in Central & South India.
**Handy tips for Wildlife Photography**

- Handling your camera should become second nature & usage of its controls should be instinctive.
- Practice & test shoot as many pictures as possible with the camera you intend to take with you.
- Carry minimum required camera gear on outdoor shoot.
- Think of your subject & its habitat while going through your camera bag & discard whatever is not essential.
- Anticipate weather conditions & prepare for it.
- Carry binoculars, maps, GPS system, first aid kit and signalling device if you intend to go deep into a forest.
- Be patient and avoid unnecessary body movements.
- React quickly when shooting most mammals and birds in the wild, so shoot fast and often.
- Having an animal make eye-contact with your lens makes your picture more impressive.
- Control camera vibrations by making use of a sturdy tripod.
- Try to shoot wide frames to include the background, so that the picture speaks for itself.
- Concentrate fully and remain focused on what you are looking to capture without distractions.

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**Distance from Mumbai: 427 kms**

**How to reach:**

*By Air:* Aurangabad is the nearest airport, Aurangabad to Jalna is 55 kms by road.

*By Rail:* Via Aurangabad to Jalna

*By Road:* Via Aurangabad, it takes approximately 8 hours.

**Where to Stay:**

Luxury Hotels as well as budget hotels are available with comfortable stay at Jalna

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**Adventures Tourism**

The Jalna district has good potential for adventure tourism and sporting activities like rappelling, valley crossing and rock climbing are conducted regularly. Forest land in Ambad taluka has been identified for the development of an eco-tourism centre with adventure sports. The adjoining Aurangabad district too has ample sites for eco-tourism. The forest division has, as per the State Eco-Tourism Policy of 2008, roped in a professional adventure group, KB Holidays, to conduct such activities. The Adventure Park at Mahismal has already been approved for development in 2014-15 and should be ready by the next monsoon season.

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**Woolly Necked Stork**

It is a wide spread resident in India. This is a large stocky stork with a ‘woolly’ white neck & a blackish cap like patch on its head with redish long legs. Its size varies from 80 to 90 cms. It avoids forests & generally prefers rice paddy fields, grasslands, marshes & swamps. Predominantly carnivorous bird, feeds on fish, frogs, toads, snakes, lizards and large insects. Its population is on decline.

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**Dragonfly**

A large insect with an elongated body and two Colourful transparent wings, a dragonfly is a sight to behold. Its multifaceted eyes contain upto 30,000 individual lenses, a staggering number compared to the human eye which only contains one lens!

Its wingspan ranges from 20 mm to 16 cm and it can reach a top flight speed of 100 km an hour. Like a helicopter, a dragonfly can move in any direction and also hover.

This fascinating insect however only lives for a few brief months. There are over 2500 species of dragonflies and the oldest fossilized evidence of a dragonfly dates from over 300 million years ago from the Carboniferous period.

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Thanks to Mr. A D Bhosle, Dy. Conservator of Forest, Aurangabad Division for inputs on forest land of Jalna.
A quick three hour drive from the hustle bustle of Mumbai, takes one to a world of infinite charm in the lap of nature- Lonavla and Khandala! A welcome getaway for the Mumbaikars and Puneites all round the year, these twin hill stations are magical in the monsoons. The usually stark and barren Western Ghats go green and waterfalls spring up in every nook and cranny of the hills.
Maharashtra may be the only state in India where travel enthusiasts look forward to the monsoons. The sweet smell of the first downpour when nature rejuvenates itself is also the best time to travel across Maharashtra’s daunting hills that come alive with carefree waterfalls, cool mist and intermittent rainfall making it a paradise for travellers and trekkers alike.

Lonavala is about 64 kilometers away from Pune and 96 kilometers from Mumbai. Well known for its ‘chikki’ and fudge, it is also an important rail head on the Pune-Mumbai railway line and easily connected by road too with the Mumbai-Pune expressway running through it.

Whatever means you choose to reach this place, the pleasant mist and drizzle will cheer you up.

A Feast for the Eyes
Like other hill stations in Maharashtra, here too you will find ‘points’ that offer breathtaking sights of the valley and the hills with tiny villages tucked in the folds. One of the best points, about 6.5 kilometers from Lonavala, is Rajmachi Point which commands a view of Chhatrapati Shivaji’s famous fort, Rajmachi, and the surrounding valley.

If you don’t plan to only relax in the hotel, there are plenty of places to see in Lonavala, either by driving around or through trekking. Breathtaking views of the mountains and valley can be seen from Duke’s Nose, Ryewood Park, Rajmachi Point and Tiger’s Leap. At the cost of a few rupees, you can gaze away at waterfalls across the valley thanks to the telescopes rented out by local guides. You could sit on the steps of the Bhushi dam nestled inside the forest and enjoy the magic of flowing water under your feet. If fishing is your calling, then the numerous lakes and dams in this area would definitely be your ideal retreat. The misty Khandala Ghat is also a favourite spot for photographers.

For picnics, Ryewood Park is the best place
in Lonavala. This is an extensive garden that covers a lot of ground and is full of tall trees. There is an old temple dedicated to Shiva in the park. Another hotspot with tourists is the Valvan Dam which has a garden at its foot. The dam supplies water to the Khopoli power station at the foothills of the Sahyadris for generating electricity. You can also visit Duke's Nose which is about 12 kilometers from Lonavala. This is popular with hikers and the cliff owes its name to the Duke of Wellington, whose well pointed nose it resembles.

Tiger's Leap, also known as Tiger's Point, is a cliff-top with a sheer drop of over 650 meters, giving an extensive view. Buses are available up to INS Shivaji and the remaining distance of about 1.6 kilometers has to be covered on foot. Just around Tiger's Leap is a small waterfall that flows only during the monsoon. Splashing around near this waterfall is more fun than in Bhushi dam as the force of the water is higher.

The latest addition to attractions at Lonavala is Sunil Kundaloor's wax museum. You could get yourself clicked with your favorite Indian and international celebrities.

**Take a Trip Down History**

If you would like to see the magnificence of
Boating at Pavana lake in Lonavala

Panoramic View of the Western Ghats from Hanuman Point, Lonavala

Bhushi Dam in Lonavala
Indian art and history, you must make it a point to visit the caves of Bhaje, Bedse and Karla, located about 15 kilometers from Lonavala. The more popular Karla Caves date back to 1st century BCE. After a trek uphill through the winding roads, the impressive rock-cut structure includes the *stupa*, a representation of the Buddha, and an aisle made up of 37 pillars and carved elephant heads, which once had real ivory tusks. Just outside Karla Caves lies the Ekvira Temple, the chief shrine of the Koli (fishing community) and is visited by thousands of devotees every year. Exactly opposite the Karla ridge lie the Bhaja Caves dating to 2nd century BCE.

From Kamshet one can also visit the Bedse caves. They are also dated to 1st century CE.

For the history lovers the forts Visapur and Lohagad are quite close to the Bhaja caves.
Sculptures in the veranda, Chaitya Hall, Karla

Buddha

Temple of Goddess Ekvira, Karla

Chaitya Hall, Karla
For the religious minded there are two Ashtavinayaka places nearby namely, Pali and Mahad.

Lonavala and Khandala have so much to offer to tourists in the rain that no wonder Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan rightly said in his famous song Aati Kya Khandala – ‘Khandala mein chikki khayenge, waterfall ko jayenge; Barsaat ke season mein hi toh maza hai meri maina! (We will have Chikkki in Khandala and visit the waterfalls in the rains as it’s the best time to be drenched in fun and frolic at Khandala!”)
Distance from Mumbai: 96 km.

How to reach:

**By Air:** Pune has the nearest domestic airport, and Mumbai the closest full-fledged international airport.

**By Rail:** Mumbai-Pune trains stop at Lonavala Railway station. Local trains run from Pune to Lonavala almost every hour.

**By Road:** Mumbai-Pune Expressway to Lonavala via Mumbai or Pune on the Expressway or the old highway.

Where to Stay

There is a wide range of hotels and resorts to choose from in Lonavala and Khandala. The nearest MTDC resort is at Karla.

What to Eat

Lonavala is great for those with a sweet tooth! Indulge in sticky chikkis and melt in the mouth chocolate fudge. Maganlal’s chikki is famous in Lonavala.
Near the present day Vidhan Sabha in Nagpur, there is a statue consisting of four horses and a pillar, marking the former centre of the India – the Zero Mile Stone. Contrary to popular belief, it is not the centre of India, but was used as a benchmark to measure distances to other places in India. The four horses are a modern day addition to the Zero Mile pillar. The British used to measure distances from Nagpur across India, and not surprisingly, Nagpur was the headquarters of the erstwhile Central Provinces.
At the Heart of India
Nagpur
Dr. Chandrashekhar Gupta
Photographs © Rajesh Joshi
The author is Retd. Prof. & Head - AIHC & Archaeology Dept., RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur

White Gold – Cotton Fields
About Nagpur

Nagpur District forms the north-eastern part of the present state of Maharashtra. It is situated in the central part of the country bound by Baitul, Chhindwada, Balaghat, Seoni and Nimad districts of Madhya Pradesh to the north, Bhandara, and Chandrapur districts to the east and Amravati and Wardha districts to the west and south. The district is roughly triangular in shape.

The city gets its name from the river Nag, which flows through the city, originating at a small village called Lavha. The water of this river is stopped and collected in a big water reservoir called Ambajhari, built by the Bhonsale kings, to supply drinking water to the city. There are also other small rivulets, which flow through the city to join the river Nag.

The district is rich in geological and mineral wealth. Along with minerals, fossils of flora and fauna both have been reported from this area in large numbers. It is interesting to note the veins of semi precious stones, agate, and rock crystal forms were used to make beads in the Prehistoric & Historical times.

History

Nagpur is situated in the area of Vidarbha Janapada which in turn was part of the great forest traditionally known as the Dandakaranya in the Ramayana and other classical Sanskrit sources.

The foundation of Nagpur was believed to be just three hundred years old until recently. A tercentenary was celebrated in 2002 by the government of Maharashtra. However the easy availability of natural resources and climate might have attracted human settlement from the pre-historic era. A good number of
settlements, domesticate animals, and practice agriculture. This in turn gave way to the iron and copper age when humans gained a new grasp of technology and began to extract metals, which in turn could be used to fabricate tools like sickles, axes, ploughs, scrapers etc. as well as weapons like swords, spears, lances, daggers, arrowheads etc. A number of excavations have been carried out in the region at places like Bhagimaheri, Raipur etc. lithic tools left behind lend credibility to this theory.

The Stone Age remains have been found during the course of archaeological excavations at Mahurjhari, Mandhal, Adam, Tharsa (near Ramtek) and Naikund etc. The most important of these are of the Megalithic Age i.e. from the 12th century BCE to the 7th century BCE. During this period man began to live in
Hundreds of Megalithic burials of various types have been documented and important remains have also been unearthed. An iron-smelting furnace belonging to the megalithic period was found at Naikund providing important clues to understand the material culture of the megalithic period.

The region was subsequently under the Mauryan, Shunga and Satavahana dynasties from 4th century BCE to around the 2nd and 3rd century CE. The excavated sites like Adam are testimony to this. The city of Nagpur was probably established in the Vakataka period as is suggested by the finds of the pottery sherds and a terracotta figurine of Bhairava found in the city. Present day Nagpur was most probably known as Yashapura during this period. This is mentioned in a Patna museum copper plate inscription of a Vakataka king. A locality now merged in the expansion of city proper named Jasapur is also mentioned in the district record (Dist Gazetteer) may be derived from this ancient name. ‘Gond killa’ is a habitation mound showing evidence right from the Neolithic phase. Rashtrakuta copper plates found at Deoli(Wardha district)
Arts and Crafts
The tradition of painting in Nagpur was patronized by the royal house of the Bhonsales as well as common people. Illustrated manuscripts of the Bhagavat, Jnaneshwari, Shakuntala, Geeta etc and the folk patachitra related to some festivals are available besides murals. The community of artists was called chitaris (painters), and this community has today turned to sculpting.

Textile was once an important industry in Nagpur. Good quality cotton was produced in abundant quantities thanks to a suitable soil and climate. With the introduction of the railways, cotton sales and goods transport flourished. Besides cotton textiles, silk and wool weaving was also practiced in the district. Silk sarees and Pagota, Patka, Dhoti, borders etc were woven with the silk thread.

Cuisine
The traditional cuisine of Nagpur is referred to as Saoji Khana. The community of weavers (Koshtis) are also known as Saoji. They are famous for both their vegetarian and meat dishes. Saoji cuisine is characterized by the use of strong spices, particularly khuskhus (poppy seeds) and dried coconut. Saoji mutton curries are a delicacy typical to Nagpur.

Nagpur is also famous for its oranges, which have some typical qualities have recently begun to attract international attention. Nu-

Distance from Mumbai: 841 kms
How to reach:
By Air: The Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport is one of the busiest airports in India, being well-connected to most Indian cities. It has recently begun international services to the Gulf countries.

By Rail: Nagpur Junction is equally well-connected with most major long-distance trains passing through it.

By Road: The NH 6 running north-south from Varanasi to Kanyakumari and NH 7 going east-west from Surat to Kolkata both pass through Nagpur. It’s central location means most cities within overnight distance are connected by bus services.

Excursions:
When in Nagpur, make time to visit some of India’s most splendid forests. A wildlife enthusiast has a wealth of sanctuaries and national parks to choose from like Tadoba-Andhari and Pench.

The temples at Ramtek are an important site of pilgrimage.

Where to Stay:
Nagpur has a variety of hotels to choose from to suit a range of budgets.

The closest MTDC resort is at the Tadoba National Park in Chandrapur district, 137 km from Nagpur.

What to Eat:
When in Nagpur, feast on the spicy Saoji dishes, and gorge on the Orange Burfi.
Excursions:

Kamthi – Mansar- Ramtek- Khindsi – Nagardhan-Hamalapuri

Following the Nagpur-Jabalpur road, one can reach Kamthi where a majestic Buddhist stupa and the Dragon palace can be seen. These monuments were created as a sign of Indo-Japanese friendship. Mansar is about 40 km further from where a right turn leads to Ramtek. Locally known as Hidimba Tekdi, on the banks of a beautiful lake built during the Vakataka rule 3rd-6th centuries CE, it houses a towering Shiva temple built in stone and brick masonry. Excavations carried out in the mound revealed remains of a huge palace, many temples, steps, rooms and a few sculptures. Among the stone and stucco sculptures, the most noteworthy is a more than life size statue of a human being, suggesting a symbolic Purusha Medha or human sacrifice. The excavation site is still maintained and people are now allowed to take a look at it.

Ramtek is a hill to the east of Mansar and at about 7 km from Mansar. It was called ‘Ramagiri’ during the Vakataka period. There are some early temples constructed there with inscriptions of the Vakataka period and images of Nrisinha, Varaha etc of the Vakataka age and of the Medieval period too. The most famous temple here is that of Lord Ram. There are many Jain temples constructed at Ramtek, making it ‘Atishaya Kshetra’ an important pilgrim place for the Jains too. The excavation site is maintained and people are now allowed to take a look at it.

Khindsi is a large water reservoir situated within the Satpura hill ranges. It was originally built during the Vakataka period and was known as Sudarshana Tadaga. A contemporary Vakataka inscription found on the wall of the Kevala Narasinha temple at Ramtek suggests this. Today it is a very popular spot for water sports and attracts a good number of tourists.

Nagardhan, the ancient Nandivardhana, the capital of the Vakatakas, and its extension Hamalpuri, ancient Yamalapuri meaning ‘the twin city’, are situated 34 km north-east of Nagpur. The current land fort at Nagardhan was probably built by the Gond rulers. A number of sculptures, bronzes and copper plates have been found from these two places.

Totaladoh – Pench National Park and Tiger Reserve

The Totaladoh dam stands on the river Pench and houses a hydroelectricity project, jointly installed by the Governments of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Nagpur is situated in the heart of the tiger belt with parks like Bandhavghad, Kanha Kesali, Pench National Park, Tadoba –Andhari, Navegaon, Melghat, Bor etc. nearby. The region has four stunning National Parks and thirteen beautiful wild life sanctuaries. Ancient ruins, teeming wildlife and savoury food together make Nagpur a charming holiday destination for tourists.
Experience a royal journey through magnificent Maharashtra aboard the luxurious Deccan Odyssey train.

Spend the finest moments with family in splendid fashion on a moving palace with state-of-the-art amenities, impeccable hospitality and tastefully crafted itinerary.

Rush and reserve your place on the Deccan Odyssey package tour.
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, earlier known as Victoria Terminus, is not just an ordinary railway terminus serving as an arrival and destination point for millions of commuters. It is, as Shraddha Bhatawdekar, describes, a quintessential element of the tapestry of the city. Now given the status of a World Heritage Site, the terminus has a rich history of craftsmanship behind it and one needs to spend a few minutes there to be able to really appreciate what makes it so unique.
As the train slowly approaches the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, one is amazed by the dense network of overhead cables and multitude of trains arriving and leaving simultaneously. Low built sheds and covered platforms give way suddenly to a soaring grand dome topped by a statue. The dome disappears from sight as the train enters the station and one is overwhelmed anew as the teeming crowds of the platform swarm ahead. It is a short but crowded walk out of the station onto the Dadabhai Naoroji Road and once again the dome imposes its presence, this time in its full glory atop a grand building.

This is the first glimpse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, formerly known as Victoria Terminus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As one observes the ornate building, the detailed work on it becomes clearer. One becomes aware that its mute presence for the past 127 years has witnessed the narrative of the city unfolding before it. Standing at the northern edge of the historic Fort area of the city, the station and the railways have defined the urban layout of this part of Mumbai.

**A Monumental Task**

The grand saga of the Terminus began on April 16, 1853, making it the first railway not just in India but in Asia. Hauled by steam engines, the trains were welcomed amidst feelings of awe and wonder, fear and appreciation by the Indians. The first train ran from Boribunder to Thane covering a distance of 21 miles. The economic fortunes of the city and perhaps the country were to change with the arrival of the...
railways. The Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR), a company formed in England, took the lead in laying the railways in Bombay and the adjoining region. As the railways progressed, the GIPR felt the need for proper space for its offices. After much deliberation, the present site was chosen for the construction of the headquarters building and the station proper, which was to replace the station shed of Boribunder.

The construction of the Terminus building started in 1878 with Frederick William Stevens as the architect. It took ten years for its completion. Stevens was assisted in the task by Raosaheb Sitaram Khanderao Vaidya as an overseer and Mahadev Janardan as a supervisor. The Terminus was inaugurated on June 20, 1887 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee Day of Queen Empress Victoria and was named after her as Victoria Terminus (later renamed in 1996 as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus). A huge sum of money was expended on the construction of the Terminus, with over Rs 16 lakh on the administrative building and another Rs 10 lakh on the station proper. T.W. Pearson, District Engineer, supervised the construction of the concourse and platforms and the station was opened for traffic on January 1, 1882.

**An Architectural Splendour**
The Terminus is an excellent expres-
The building offers an excellent design response to local climate and culture seen in its arrangement of spaces, planning of corridors, and incorporation of local art and designs.

No effort was spared by Stevens to make this building a grand manifestation of the imperial British prowess. His incredible attention to detailing is evident in spaces like the atrium with its impressive cantilevered staircase; the current ticket booking office with its ceiling painted with stars (thus earning the name the Star Chamber); dining room, etc. Stevens also planned many sculptures to embellish the edifice. A lion and lioness (some perceive it as a pair of tigers) guard the front doors; griffins holding shields and weather-wings adorn the gables; and protruding grotesques in the form of gargoyles seem to protect the structure from evil spirits, also draining off water from roofs and terraces.
The crowning point of the building is the marvellous statue of ‘Progress’ made in Bath stone by Thomas Earp. The lady holding a wheel low in her left hand and a flaming torch in her right hand symbolises the integral association of the railways with progress and development. There is also a series of statuary representing commerce, engineering and agriculture atop the gabled wings, which echoes the spirit of the railways in incorporating and supporting various activities and businesses.

Extensive and intricate carvings adorn the interiors as well as exteriors. These range from a variety of local flora and fauna, shields, monograms, etc. A closer look at the façade reveals the portrait roundels of ten founding directors of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, including Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy and Jagannath Shankarshett as well as busts representing the communities of western India. There is also a lone portrait of James J. Berkeley on the southern facade, who master-minded the railways across the Thull.

Representation of local flora and fauna in the embellishments

Stately interiors of the Headquarters Building
and Bhore ghats. The master sculptor Gomez and students of J.J. School of Arts designed and provided the models of foliated sculpture under the supervision of their principal, John Griffiths.

The building offers a veritable exhibition of different materials such as blue and buff-coloured basalt, sandstone, limestone, granite, imported Italian marble, teakwood, imported stained glass, which adds to its elegance. An eclectic mix of different architectural forms, symbols, imagery has created an aesthetic appeal, making Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus the second most photographed building in India, next to the Taj Mahal.

**Status Well-Deserved**

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus is one of the oldest and busiest terminus stations in the world. The epitome of railway architecture is evident in the Terminus, perhaps as the only station building in the world to be accorded the UNESCO World Heritage Site status among the 981 sites currently on the UNESCO List. The uniqueness of the Terminus lies in its continued use and the way it has grown to accommodate the changing needs of time, which sets it apart from any other monument in the country. It is effectively serving Mumbai even today in its role as a lifeline for millions of Mumbaikars who board a train from here daily.

The grand Terminus envisaged by F.W. Stevens long ago still stands in all its grandeur and rises amidst all the chaos, providing a majestic backdrop for a crucial city node - enduring not as a feeble relic but a vital institution that reaffirms people’s faith in Mumbai as the ‘City of Dreams’.
Staying indoors is no fun during the monsoon. And if you are the type who would like to weave in some adventure, the type that enjoys the amazing turnaround of nature from brown to deep green after the first few rainfalls, choose to go to Tamhini Ghat. It is here that you will realise what the true beauty is all about. And the bonus is that you can also explore the backwaters of Mulshi Dam and spice up your vacation with a bit of river rafting.
Come the monsoon and Tamhini Ghat is transformed as though a sorcerer had enchanted it. Gone are the barren brown shrubs and instead a lush green carpet beckons. Little rivulets and thundering waterfalls will all live just briefly during the monsoons only to run dry forlornly for the rest of the year.

One such rainy Sunday, I headed out to explore this area about which I had heard so much. But of course, not without the mandatory online search which led me to stunning photos of an emerald land rich with waterfalls. My online hunt and social media sifting only left me wanting more!

Tamhini Ghat can be accessed from Mumbai via the Mumbai-Goa Highway. Reach Kolad and after crossing the bridge over river Kundalika, take the left turn that leads to Pune via the Mulshi Dam backwaters. Tamhini Ghat is the stretch between Kolad and these backwaters. As I crossed the river in Kolad and headed further, I took a diversion to my left, towards Pune. This led to a railway crossing and from here the drama began to unfold. The gradual climb opened the doors to a different world of green velvety carpets, gushing streams, dark grey clouds stooping low, and the occasional waterfalls. The first waterfall I encountered was indeed grand and...
after spending some quality time soaking in the cold weather and getting thoroughly drenched in the delightful cascade, I headed further only to be greeted by another huge wall of water.

The rain, meanwhile, kept me company on and off. And as I scanned the area, the sight that hit me was that of waterfalls, big and small, almost everywhere as far as the eye could see. The rains had turned the parched land into a carpet of green with plants and flowers in bloom. The hills stretched towards the skies like giant walls, partly covered by mist. And all along was this mysterious and enchanting play of light and shadows with the overcast clouds and the rain creating an effect quite like a flickering lantern. Tamhini Ghat is simply ethereal with its sweeping views and is definitely less crowded than its cousin, Malshej Ghat.

**Nature Personified**

At one point of time I was held captured by the vista that unfolded before me. I was standing at a vantage point which offered a 180-degree view of the hills. The valley was filled with clouds and the sky was the darkest shade of grey while the rain gods were displaying their might — all together creating a drama that was so very engrossing. Further ahead, I came across a temple devoted to Goddess Vanjai that lies almost hidden amongst dense vegetation. The path reminded me of a fairytale forest I had seen on TV as a kid. The temple is modest in its architecture but is a place where one truly feels at peace.

The area is a favourite with cyclists who come to Tamhini Ghat for the pleasure of biking amid these stunning vistas across its curving roads and gentle slopes. In fact, this is quite a fad among both youngsters and adults and is becoming a lifestyle trend in itself. In this region, don’t be taken aback if every turn reveals yet another waterfall. That was the case as I suddenly came across a large hill that looked lovely with its thundering waterfall. However, I discovered that this was not actually public property but a private estate.
provides by road, it’s a much better option to explore not just Tamhini Ghat but also the Mulshi backwaters and Kolad. Kolad is, in fact, turning out to be a tourist attraction in its own right because of the white-water rafting it provides on the Kundalika. The currents are strong and it is the only river in Maharashtra owned by the Tata’s power plant which is not accessible to the public.

The Mulshi Dam backwaters were in sight now and I took the road that leads to the huge waterfall of Palse. With the kind of reputation it has among tourists, it was no small wonder that there was a jostling crowd of people actually waiting to get drenched under its power-packed sheet of water tumbling down the hill. With no let-down in the flow of visitors to this spot, I decided to experience the fall some other day. There were also hunger pangs to take care of and I didn’t want to risk getting stuck in a traffic jam.

Beyond the Ghat
As I got closer to the Mulshi backwaters, many resorts began to pop into sight. Some of these are the latest hotspots for monsoon picnics, particularly for overnight stays. Resorts like Malhar Machi and Jalsrushti come at a higher budget, whereas places like Nisarg Farms and Girivan are among the more affordable options. With the kind of easy connectivity that this entire region provides by road, it’s a much better option to explore not just Tamhini Ghat but also the Mulshi backwaters and Kolad. Kolad is, in fact, turning out to be a tourist attraction in its own right because of the white-water rafting it provides on the Kundalika. The currents are strong and it is the only river in Maharashtra where you can experience white water rafting. Kolad now has several cottages and resorts where you can book a room. In short, your monsoon can only get better with a visit to Tamhini Ghat!
Distance from Mumbai: 140 kms

How to reach:

By Air: The closest airport is at Pune.

By Rail: Tamhini is not close to any railway station. Pune is the nearest major junction, smaller stations that are closer-by include Lonavala station and Kasarwadi.

By Road: Tamhini is 93 km from Pune via Paud. From Mumbai, take the Expressway towards Pune, exit at Lonavala. From Lonavala, you have a scenic drive via Aamby Valley to Tamhini.

Where to Stay
Malhar Machi and Jalsrushti are beautiful but more expensive resorts. Nisarg Farms and Girivan are more reasonably priced budget options.
No description of Pune city can be complete without a mention of the Parvati Temple atop a hillock that provides a commanding and spectacular view of the sprawling city while maintaining an extremely important religious significance. And for those who believe in being physically fit, a quick climb up the broad steps is the only way to begin a fresh day.
As early as 5 am you would not normally expect a continuous stream of people going up and down a hill. But this is a common enough sight at Pune's Parvati Hill. For more than 500 such visitors, climbing the 103 steps to reach the temple atop the hillock means starting the day with the right amount of physical exercise as also doing the 'darshan' of the gods. The hilllock rises up to 2,100 feet above sea level and is the highest point in Pune from where you can get a fascinating view of the city below it — a city that has rapidly undergone a metamorphosis from a 'green' town of 'wadas' and bungalows to high-rises with just a few pockets of trees. “No doubt the urban jungle is now not a pleasant sight but still there is nothing to beat coming here every morning and taking a look anyway,” says Shrikant Malegaonkar (37), a civil engineer who has made this his routine for the past 18 years.

**History**
Completing 265 years on May 4, 2014, the Parvati Temple on this hill is the oldest heritage structure in Pune and was built during the rule of the third dynasty of the Peshwas by Shrimant Nanasaheb Peshwa in 1749 CE. According to Shri Devdeveshwar Sansthan, a trust that looks after the management and upkeep of the temple, the history of the temple can be
sourced to Kashibai, the mother of the third Peshwa, who was suffering from a severe ailment in her right foot. It is believed that she was advised to pray to the goddess atop this hill for a miraculous recovery. When Kashibai’s ailment disappeared, she asked her son to build a temple here.

Another legend is associated to the love and respect Nanasaheb Peshwa had for Chhatrapati Shri Shahu Maharaj, the ruling king of the Maratha Empire and the grandson of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It is said that the death of Shahu Maharaj was like a personal loss to Nanasaheb because he had been looked upon like a son by the pious and fair-minded king and therefore as a mark of respect Nanasaheb brought the wooden footwear of the late king and also an icon of Shivalinga with him from Satara to Pune and placed them underneath the Shivalinga of the main temple of Parvati. Nanasaheb called the Shiva of Parvati Hill by the name ‘Devdeveshwara’ i.e. ‘lord of the lords’. Also, when Nanasaheb fell seriously ill, he opted to stay near his favourite deity rather than his home.

Religious Significance

The Panchayatan Temple, as it is known, houses five gods viz. Shiva, Parvati, Ganapati, Surya and Vishnu. There is an idol each of Parvati and Vishnu and Surya and two idols of Ganapati. The idol of the Sun God, Surya, in this temple is one of the only two completely 3 dimensional sculptures of the god portrayed as seated on a horse-chariot while being pulled by his ‘saarthi’, Arun. The main temple, Devdeveshwara, is made of black stone and the other temples in the vicinity are dedicated to Vitthal and Rukmini, Vishnu, and Kartikeya.

The Kartikeya Swami Temple, the only one in Pune, was built by Shrimant Raghobadada, the elder brother of Nanasaheb Peshwa. Kartikeya is believed to be a bachelor god, whom ladies are not supposed to worship. It is another matter that serpentine queues of women waiting for a ‘darshan’ of the god are a common sight on the day of Kartik Purnima. Also called Murugan, he is the Hindu god of war, victory, wisdom and love. The 4.5 feet high Vishnu idol, considered the most beautiful in Maharashtra, has been carved

Broad steps lead up to the temple atop the Parvati Hill
The first view of the temple as you take the last bend

Entrance to the main temple
The main temple dedicated to goddess Parvati
out of black stone, said to be the Shaligram Shila from the river Gandki.

**Around the Temple**

Other than the temples, there is the Peshwa Museum. The ‘samadhi’ of Nanasaheb Peshwa lies here who died due to the intense grief experienced by him when his son Vishwasrao and elder brother Bhausaheb lost their lives in the battle of Panipat. The Peshwa Museum, which has an entrance ticket, has been built using part of the Peshwa’s mansion, using many old carved wooden pieces. It displays a fascinating collection of items belonging to the Peshwa era along with paintings of all the Peshwas, Maratha ‘sardars’, and their family members. There is an interesting collection of the weaponry, household articles and coins which were in use during those times.

**Then and Now**

According to historians, the entire place at the base of Parvati Hill was then full of fields, trees and small dwellings. The vast plains at the foothill were often used by feudal lords and dignitaries to pitch their camps when they visited the city with their armies. There are numerous references to the Angre family - the controllers of the coastal area of the Maratha Empire, the Scindias and other sardars camping luxuriously at the base of the hill. When Sir Charles Mallet, the British envoy in the court of the last of the Peshwas, came to present his credentials to the Marathas, he camped at the base of Parvati Hill for more than a week.

However, after the massive breach in the wall of the Panshet Dam on July 12, 1961 that caused huge devastation of parts of the city near the banks of the rivers Mula and Mutha, the entire base area of Parvati was taken by the Government of Maharashtra and used for building houses. It resulted in the complete wiping out of the green fields and subsequently gave rise to the growth of slums which now dot not only the base but also parts of the hill. The good thing, however, is that the Sansthan has managed to keep the temple precincts absolutely clean and tranquil. The timings for visiting the temple are from 5 am to 8 pm.
Distance from Mumbai: 150 kms.

How to reach:

By Air: Pune airport has several flights daily to major Indian cities. It is also connected to Bangkok and Dubai for international flights.

By Rail: Pune Railway station is a large junction connected to most large Indian towns and cities.

By Road: From Mumbai, the zip along the Mumbai-Pune expressway for a beautiful monsoon drive.

Excursions

When in the city, drop in to the Raja Dinkar Kelkar museum. You can also explore more of the city’s history with the sound and light show at the Shaniwar Wada.

Pune is surrounded by hill forts that make for spectacular treks in the monsoon - Sinhagad being the closest.

Where to Stay

There is a wide range of hotels to suit all budgets.

What to Eat

Misal Pav is a city favourite For a traditional meal, try a thali at Shreyas.

The more adventurous should take advantage of the monsoons and eat zhunka-bhakri on the Sinhagad fort.
The monorail network now operational in Mumbai has not only come as much-needed relief to commuters on the Chembur-Wadala route but also offers an enchanting experience of gliding over a portion of the city with no worries about choking traffic, pollution or delays. Anand and Madhura Katti decide to take a ride on the monorail to provide a first-hand account and also write about this system’s functional and aesthetic aspects.
On February 2, 2014, Mumbai became the proud operator of a monorail and joined the elite club of modern cities in the world that have adopted this safe and swanky public transport. But before we get into the nitty-gritty of a monorail ride, what exactly is a monorail? It’s a mode of transportation that runs on narrow tracks, laid six meters above the ground level and in such a way that it faces no obstacles during its journey from one station to another. While a monorail in itself stands out for its own aesthetic appeal, the additional benefit that it provides is a top angle view of the city in such a way that even the most mundane scenarios turn interesting. The first phase of the Mumbai monorail connects Chembur and Wadala on an 8.93-kilometer guideway with brief (20 seconds) halts at six stations in-between. And as you take your first ride, the one fact that strikes you immediately is that Mumbai does continue to have its little pockets of green despite having become a monstrous concrete jungle otherwise.
Getting a monorail to Mumbai had become a necessity. India’s mega financial city’s population is in perpetual demand for better travel options and the suburban rail system and road network are being utilised to their optimum capacity. The monorail, with the expansion of its network across the city, will now emerge as yet another convenient option. According to UPS Madan, Metropolitan Commissioner, Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (MMRDA), “These projects would reduce travel time by more than half and more importantly, they would reduce stress levels caused due to traffic jams.” The MMRDA has designed a master plan for the monorail system and a consortium of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Scomi Engineering of Malaysia have taken on the responsibility for its operations and maintenance.

The Functional Aspects
A monorail train runs on a narrow guideway beam with wheels gripping laterally on either side of the beam. Wheels with rubber tyres hold the train along the sides of the beam and the otherwise smooth ride even lends itself to some exciting moments when it tilts to take sharp turns. The guideway or track has two beams laid out on a single column structure; one each for a train travelling either way.

Passengers get unique smart tokens as tickets for the ride. A token has to be flashed at the computer-controlled automatic gates that retract the flap to let each passenger enter the platform area. The token is valid for two hours from the time of issue. A smart card of Rs 150 is available for regular travellers. In terms of design and styling, the MMRDA in association with the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, has given a colourful touch to the monorail cars. The coaches are sleek and shiny, painted in refreshing green, attractive pink and sky blue - a pleasant change from the city’s red buses and earth-coloured trains.

The interiors are mostly in pastel shades with uncluttered seating arrangements and large windows offering multi-dimensional views. There are only a few seats, mostly reserved for senior citizens and physically challenged passengers, making the flow of passengers in and out of the coaches easy. Handrails and hand-
grips are provided within easy reach of all the standing passengers.

The monorail station at Chembur is close to its railway station and accessible via the walkway. Arriving or departing from Wadala offers an interesting sight of the new monorail car depot that is also the hub of its operations. Two captains drive each monorail and the Monorail Operations Control Center (OCC) at Wadala depot controls the speed, signals, brakes, communication and safety through computerised controls via optical fiber-based transmission media. A training center, a power station, a receiving traction substation and a full-fledged administrative facility have also been built at the depot. The monorail cars were built in Malaysia by Scomi Engineering and shipped to India. There are six trains currently in operation with another ten to be added to the fleet soon.

Gliding across the City

As against the snail-paced traffic of the Mumbai roads, the monorail glides over some of the narrowest lanes of the congested eastern suburbs and crosses railway lines, bridges, creeks and mangrove forests. Different birds-eye views are available along the route as the monorail passes through Bhakti Park, Mysore Colony, Bharat Petroleum, Fertiliser Township, VPN and RC Marg Junction stations. Hundreds of trucks are visible at the Wadala truck depot. Huge oil storage tanks, a green jungle, a view of the new freeway and the hills at Chembur are some of the interesting sights visible from inside the monorail.

The stations are situated at a minimum height of around 5.5 meters and can be accessed by staircases. Each station has a total of four staircases - two from the ground level to the concourse and two more from the concourse to the platform. The escalator service is reserved for the physically challenged and elderly passengers. “The monorail is environment-friendly, air-conditioned, safe and economical,” as Mr Madan, the Metropolitan Commissioner of the MMRDA points out. The four-car coach can carry 568 passengers at a time and gets from Wadala to Chembur in less than 20 minutes. There is a driving cab at both ends of the train.
Assuring Total Safety
Modern monorail technology makes derailment virtually impossible. Every day hundreds of thousands of passengers are carried on monorails. A transit monorail system has been in use in Tokyo since 1963, in Kuala Lumpur for the last 10 years, and in China since eight years. Monorails are, in fact, common modes of transport in countries like Australia, Europe, Russia and the United States. Several more are either under construction or in advanced stages of planning. Since a monorail is elevated, accidents with surface traffic or pedestrians are impossible. Further, the doors of the coaches don’t open when the train is in motion.

To prevent any mishaps taking place due to external factors, CCTVs have been installed at the stations and in the rakes. Every station on the line is equipped with door frame metal detectors (DFMDs) and X-ray baggage scanners. Around 500 armed personnel and private guards are deployed at the seven stations. Officers in plainclothes travel on the trains. A bomb detection and disposal squad along with a dog squad is deployed at all the stations.

A Green Project
A monorail runs on electric power and doesn’t use any fossil fuel. Metros and monorails use a regenerative braking system during operations which enables 25 per cent saving in power consumption. A monorail produces lesser noise than even a bus and hence is easily acceptable even in dense residential localities. Monorails also do not obstruct light since they are narrower than normal rail tracks or flyovers.

More in Store
The second phase of Mumbai’s monorail system is scheduled for completion next year and will run between Wadala and Jacob Circle near Mahalakshmi in South Mumbai, close to the city’s financial centre. The 11.2-kilometer route will cover 11 stations viz. Chinchpokli, Chembur Naka, Wadala Bridge, Mint Colony, Acharya Atre Nagar, Antop Hill, Wadala, GTB Nagar, etc.

The grand plan is to connect the whole city with monorail over the next 20 years with a network of 135 kilometers.
If you plan on using the monorail frequently, buy a smart card for greater convenience.

Quick Facts
- Mumbai is the first city in India to implement a monorail system.
- The first route that is now open to the public is 8.93 kilometers long and connects Chembur and Wadala.
- Monorail services are available from 6 am to 8 pm with a train leaving each way every 15 minutes. A total of 112 services are provided over 14 hours each day.
- There is a provision to increase the frequency to run this service every four minutes.
- Tickets have been priced from Rs 5 to Rs 11.
- All the coaches are fully air-conditioned.
- The average speed is 65 kilometers per hour.
- Each four-car train can accommodate 568 commuters.
- 18 passengers can sit and 124 can stand in each coach.
- When ready next year, the Chembur-Wadala-Jacob Circle monorail corridor of 20 kilometers will be the world’s second-longest after Japan’s Osaka monorail corridor of 23.8 kilometers.

Monorail History
- The first passenger-carrying monorail opened on June 25, 1825. The Ches-hunt Railway was actually built to carry bricks, but made monorail history by carrying passengers at its opening. It was a 1 HP engine patented by Henry Robinson Palmer, a British Civil Engineer.
- The Wuppertal Schwebebahn (suspension railway) built by civil engineer Eugen Langen of Cologne, Germany in 1901 continues to be in operation till date.
- The Mumbai monorail is based on the ALWEG Monorail System, the first full-scale monorail unveiled in 1957. Today the ALWEG-based system is the one most popular across the world.
- Walt Disney was the first one to install an ALWEG monorail at Disneyland in 1959. Its improvised dual rail version continues to ferry visitors through six stations on the 14 miles of beamways within the Walt Disney World at Orlando, Florida. Over 1,00,000 passenger trips are recorded each day. Disneyland in Tokyo also has a monorail.
- The Haneda monorail in Tokyo was the first modern transit monorail with ALWEG design. It used switches for direction reversal when built in 1964. It is a superb example of a profitable monorail system used for public transport.
- Monorail Malaysia developed its own trains in 2001 and used them in Kuala Lumpur in 2003. The company was later acquired by Sconi Engineering in 2007. Sconi, in partnership with Larsen and Toubro, was contracted for a 20-kilometer system for the Mumbai monorail in 2008. This is Sconi’s first project to open outside Malaysia.
The konkan reign of the Marathas has left us with a rich legacy of forts on hills and the long coastline of Maharashtra. One of these forts that occupied a significant place in the victories of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the rulers who followed him is Vijaydurg in the Konkan region. Ashutosh Bapat visits the fort and the village nearby to give an account of the amazing landscape that surrounds the fort, the tranquillity of the place, the typical Konkani cuisine of fresh fish and rice, and a sunset that will forever remain in the mind.
Though the beauty of Konkan lies in its scenic coastline, sandy beaches and calm and clean villages, it also beholds the great heritage of sea forts. Vijaydurg occupies a prime position among all these sea forts. It was strategically the most important and was always in the limelight in the course of the Maratha naval history. Also known as ‘Gheria’, it is believed that this fort was constructed in 12th century C.E. by the Shilahar rulers. The earlier name Gheria could possibly have been derived from the nearby village Girye, or maybe because this fort is surrounded by the Arabian Sea from three sides.

Vijaydurg is situated in the Devgad taluka of Sindhudurg district, a taluka famous for its Alphonso mangoes. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj conquered this fort from Adil Shah of Bijapur in 1653 and renamed it Vijaydurg. On this occasion he constructed a temple of Hanuman in the fort and also constructed a three-layer fortification around it. Even after the death of Chhatrapati Shivaji this area remained under the control of the mighty ad-
miral of the Maratha Empire, Kanhoji Angre. He ruled all over the coastline of Maharashtra and spread terror in the minds of enemies such as the British, Portuguese and Siddis, with the fort proving to be a strong bastion during the many battles pitched here.

Defences to Reckon With
Vijaydurg in fact became a strong military base for the Maratha Empire and came to be recognised as the ‘Gibraltar of the East’ since it was almost impregnable. The fort occupies a unique geographical position. It is besides the creek of Kharepatan, whose shallow waters make it impossible for large ships to come close to the fort. It is spread on an area of six hectares and consists of 27 bastions out of which three are three-storied. These are named Ghanachi, Sadashiv, Govind, Manranjan, Gagan, Shivaji, Sariya, Vyankat, Shaha, Sinde, Sikhar, Tutka, Darya, Hanmant, Ram, Ganesh, etc. The main entrance of the fort faces the north. The entrance is a gomukhi structure, which means it cannot be seen directly from outside. But if an enemy tries to enter, he gets captured in the doorway with hot boiling oil and an attack of stones pelting from the top of the fortification. Out of the original imposing structures, some of those which remain include the storage area for food grains, the prison, a huge water tank, and cannon.

The fort has two interesting underground routes and a spot called ‘Sahebache Katte’, implying a platform for the lord. It is from here that on August 18, 1868, Sir J. Norman Lankier, a British scientist, was observing a solar eclipse from this fort when he noticed helium gas around the sun in the form of yellow flames. The fort thus came into world-
wide prominence and the locals celebrate the occasion each year as Helium Day. A recent oceanographic survey has recorded the existence of an underwater wall located at a depth of 8 to 10 meters under the sea. Made of laterite, the wall is 122 meters long. It is believed that it was built so that enemy ships approaching the fort would collide with this wall and sink.

**Additional Excursions**

About 70 nautical miles from Vijaydurg there are the remains of a naval dock carved out from rock. In geological terms it is called as a ‘continental shelf’. During the Kanhoji Angre period Maratha warships were built and repaired at this place. It is also from this spot that the Maratha naval forces attacked enemy ships entering into their waters. It is therefore called Angria Bank.

The village Girye is just 3 kilometers from Vijaydurg, visited by pilgrims for its beautiful temple dedicated to Lord Rameshwar. Going up the rock-cut steps is an experience in itself.

There are faint indications now of how the walls had earlier been decorated with paintings. What is also interesting is a huge bell at the doorway of the temple which was donated by Admiral Anandrao Dhulap, who had got it from a Portuguese ship captured in 1792-93. Girye was also once famous for being the dockyard of Maratha warships. With its berthing place of 109 meters in length and 70 meters in width, ships up to 250 tonnes could easily enter this secure channel for repairs. The palatial house of Dhulap constructed in a typical Maratha style is situated in the village and you can see some marvellous wall paintings here.
Tuck your soul away, in this nature's velvet coat, indulge in the blissful sanctity of peace. Or simply pamper your eye sight to the charming landscapes. With reasons unlimited, it's only fair to say one trip is just not enough.
Far from the maddening crowd

Mamacha Gaon

Text: Madhulika Dash, Way2Hotels
Photographs © Varun Inamdar, Way2Hotels

The author is a freelance writer.

Old world tranquility mingles with a warm welcome and progressive attitudes.
Theme-based resorts are nothing new in India. In fact, they existed even in times of the Mughals – Shalimar Garden, anyone? But those are not what we are talking about here. This is about the thoughtfully-put-together, in-your-budget, simple yet beautiful resort that you may not mind taking a quick break in. Mamacha Gaon, a quite refuge nestled in the green expanse of Boisar, is one such beautiful example. It’s simple, blends with nature and its no-frill stay brings back the old world charm alive when a good, home-made meal served with love made up for a brilliant vacation; and where entertainment is in the lap of nature, literally.

By this, we do not mean it is a bare-bone place with no AC, mud huts and a field masquerading as the washroom. Not at all. Mamacha Gaon is shaped as a homely hamlet, with brick and mortar playing just a supporting role for the urban comforts to seep in the right amount – enough to make a stay pleasurable yet little to steal the sense of rural, virgin serenity that envelops this place. So yes, there is a board that mentions the meal timings – but unlike hotels these are neither limiting nor stringent. Perfect for a lazy person on a vacation. There are two ways to make hot water here. Through a high power electric geyser, or the traditional metal ware that uses eco-friendly gas and a string of brass pipes to supply hot water on request. For fun, there is a swimming pool, a rain dance area, a mountain to scale and of course the tribal village that plays host to you for fresh palm juice (tadi) if you desire. In keeping with the modern-day family, the resort has also recently introduced line walk and rope climbing – but the real fun of living in this resort is the home like feel.
Unlike its peers, Mamacha Goan lives in an enclosed space of 12.5 acres with a welcome gate that almost belies the kind of fun one might have once inside. The reception area looks like a village headmaster’s office – open, welcoming and with the rustic charm of a village that is about to modernize.

A deliberate attempt? Undoubtedly. You see, the origin of Mamacha Goan, about a decade ago, was to serve as a holiday home for those looking for sheer old Indian style pampering. Mamacha Goan, which translates into Uncle’s home – was designed much like an uncle’s home where kids and married women went for vacation. So there is ample green-
ery, flower beds, chicken and ducks moving around, mini fruit orchards, a tribal museum that often doubles up as a potter’s room, slides and an open dining hall with a roof made of climbers and a walk-in kitchen. The rooms follow the same pattern of having everything of necessity yet sparsely accessorized – so as to dissuade you to spend time in the room. Let me tell you the ploy works. More so because of the Machan (tree house), which on a balmy morning serves as the dinning and party area – and can accommodate up to 10 people, just in case you would like to relive your childhood.

If simply moving around and clicking pictures of flowers and parrots isn’t your cup of tea, the place houses a beautiful library of vernacular books, a manager who is like a walking encyclopedia of the Railways pantry houses and huge rooms filled with childhood games including a big carom board. For outdoor junkies, there are enough places to trek to – the best being that to the miraculous sweet water spring cave and the Asawa fort. But climbing it is no mean a feat, unless trekking has been a hobby. If not, we still implore you to go as reaching even the spring is liberating.

One of the few resorts that do not sell or encourage alcohol drinking in the premises, a preferred way of spending time here is enjoying the delicacies here. Right from the
popular *poha* and *gavthi* chicken masala, this place is perfect to try out the tribal food, especially the fish dishes. It will be one of the highlights to go back to, if others fail to appease you.
As is usually observed in India, there have been communities which have specialized in specific professions and crafts, ranging from making shoes to weaving sarees to designing jewellery, and so on. The Tambats make for one such community with their mastery over creating an amazing variety of articles out of copper, from cannon balls to showpieces and household utensils to coins.

Kishore Karde of INTACH Pune traces the journey of the Tambats from the days of the Peshwas to how they have managed to retain and even promote their artisanship.
The Tale of the Tambats
Copper Craftmen

Kishore Karde | Photographs: Swarup Dutta, INTACH, Pune

Kishore Karde comes from a traditional tambat family and is involved in social activities of the Twashta Kasar Samaj Sanstha of the community and in INTACH’s tambat craft revival project.

The Vedas state that Vishwakarma created the universe. He was ably assisted in this mammoth task by his sons Manu, May, Shilpi, Twashta and Devadnya. All of these were skilled artisans. And Twashta was not only a skilled artisan but knowledgeable too. He was acquainted with the Vedas, creation of armour, agriculture, and the making of household tools and instruments. He was also the priest of the gods. Such texts as Skanda Puran, Guru Charitra and the Vedas have mentions of Twashta executing priestly rites during several major sacrifices and rituals.
The discovery of ‘tamba’ i.e. copper was a result of the efforts of Twashta. Since all his artistry was with this metal, Twashta later came to be known as Tambat and those who practiced this art, the Tambats. Several metallic alloys such as brass and bronze are made out of copper. All these alloys were discovered by the Tambats. Gradually Tambat artisans acquired mastery in making canons, cannon balls, sword handles, coins, copper graffiti sheets, bows, various instruments and vessels required for the many rituals as well as household items shaped out of copper. Since the Tambats created a variety of things from copper, they were in a very good financial state; owned lands; and some were ‘vatandars’ too. When Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj established ‘Swarajya’ he got several things needed for war and administration made from the Tambats. The names of these artisans are however unknown.

**Popular with the Peshwas**

The Tambats experienced a golden period during the reign of the Marathas and the time of the Peshwas. The spires of all the temples constructed by the Peshwas were casted by the Lombar family of Tambats and they were gifted land for this artistry. Sadashivrao and Manikrao from the community were given huge tracts of property in Pune for preparing canons and cannon balls and exempted from all taxes. The Peshwa Darbar had a great painter of international repute, Gangaram Tambat, who painted a picture of this royal setting. Ganpat Tambat was the chief of the Peshwa’s minting unit. Wonderful paintings of Gangaram Tambat have been preserved till date. The Tambats had their armour factories in Konkan at Nagothane, Roha, Pali, Alibag, Kalyan and there were coin making units at some of these places. The Hajare family in the community is known for great artistry too. The famous idol of Sai Baba at Shirdi is made by a skilled Tambat artisan from Mumbai, Balasaheb Talim.

**The Fall and Rise**

After the decline of the Maratha and Peshwa rule, the British government laid several restrictions on the Tambat community. Copper became scarce due to World War II. The community hence faced a great setback. Artisans had to leave their houses and farms and move to the cities in search of livelihood. Several families were ruined. Due to lack of education, it was difficult to procure jobs. However, the community endured the situation because it was organised, possessed natural skills, and the people were ready to toil. They took up every job that came their way and willingly moved from place to place to make and repair vessels. As a result, many factories for making vessels were started in Mumbai and Pune as most of the people stayed unit-
ed in these cities. Pune, in fact, came to be known as a ‘vessel town’.

At that time there were 200-250 vessel-making factories in Pune. However, over a period of time, steel, aluminum and plastic became popular as these were cheaper and easier to maintain along with being lightweight. As such, the community faced lean times once again. The existence of the community was at stake now. During this period, several artisans came together, formed an association, and produced artistic showpieces of copper which found a good demand among art connoisseurs. This encouraged many of the artisans to invest huge amounts and set up their own ventures. Many of them also became big-time dealers of copperware.

A Leading Community

The Tambat community takes pride in having several of its members achieve great recognition. These include fiction writer Baba Padamji, Bhaskarrao Arte who was the first to receive a scholarship for Sanskrit, Babasaheb Talim who has cast several famous statues in Mumbai and other cities, Harish Talim, Chandrakant Wadke and Shashikant Wadke who were brilliant sculptors, Ajit Wadekar who made his mark in cricket, and others. The Tambats played a leading role in...
The Tambat community was fond of social work too. Late Rajaram Lombar, an associate of Lokmanya Tilak, donated much of his land and provided a fillip to the Ganeshotsav celebrations 120 years ago. A century ago, Vasantrao Dandekar opened a school and a library for the betterment of the community. That the community was progressive is borne out of the fact that it allowed for widow remarriages. It also put curbs on undue wastage of money during marriages. Several members of the community participated in the freedom struggle too, including Kamla-kar Dandekar and Bhaskar Tambat. After independence, Amrut Kasar (Dandekar) from the Tambat community became a member of parliament. Suresh Gambhir became an MLA three times. Bhai Kadu and Rambhau Wadke became mayors of Pune. Kaka Wadke became the president of the Pune Town Committee. Vasanthbhai Nijampurkar was a well-known opposition leader. The community also had representatives in the Zilla Parishad committees.

INTACH’S Intervention

Fearing that the art of working with copper to design such a wide variety of items would gradually fade away, the Pune chapter of INTACH (The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) took up a revival project for this heritage art. Along with this was started the documentation of the community’s socio-economic journey. A series of traditional and contemporary Tambat craft products was developed with help from Pune’s leading designers and at workshops held under the aegis of DC Handicrafts, Government of India. The craft lanes where the artisans continue to work with copper are located in oldest part of historic Pune, and have now been included as a part of the INTACH heritage tours, thus helping in spreading awareness about the craft. Seed funds to buy the expensive raw material, contemporary designs for the traditional craft, and marketing inputs have helped revive the art. All this has led to the establishment of COPPRE, a social enterprise initiative that works with the artisans in the areas of developing contemporary designs and marketing of the products.
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As is always the case, the victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking and their children are the most neglected people in society, forced to either fend for themselves or become prey to the inhuman and tortuous machinations of those who literally snuff out their lives. In such a situation of tragic reality, Snehalaya in Ahmednagar functions not only as a beacon of hope but works round the clock to rescue the oppressed and provide for them the beginnings of a new and empowered life.

“They alone live, who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.”

- Swami Vivekanand

Children from Snehalaya’s E-School celebrating Republic Day
The story of Snehalaya finds its roots in a rather unfortunate incident that took place in 1989. A group of friends was out for a walk and ended up ambling through a slum in Ahmednagar. The slum was notorious for being a pocket where flesh trade and human trafficking were rampant. Suddenly, the horrendous screams of a child rent through the air, and the friends rushed towards the source of this sound to find a 4-year-old girl child in agony, tortured as she was by a brothel-keeper. Finding the local authorities either reluctant or downright unwilling to intervene, they decided to save her themselves from a gruesome fate. Dr. Girish Kulkarni, one of those group members, was thus left with no choice but to take her home and look after her himself. It was this nightmarish reality that sparked in him the realisation that there was a dire need to aid children in distress and danger. Dr. Kulkarni and a group of like-minded friends thus set up Snehalaya.

With the strong belief that action is always better than mere pontification, Snehalaya got into gear. And their ceaseless efforts over the past 25 years have now started showing amazing results. Born out of that one evening’s quick decision, Snehalaya has changed not just the lives of Dr. Kulkarni and his friends, but also of thousands of women and children it has helped over the years. Initially, Snehalaya decided to concentrate its efforts on women in the sex trade and their children as they formed the most vulnerable group. Within that, their activities focused mainly on the children of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, as girls were faced with the threat of being forced into brothels and the boys into a cycle of exploitation.

The nearly constructed E-School building which will provide free education to underprivileged children.

No threat of HIV or death, happy faces of kids in Snehalaya.

The President of India, Dr. Pranab Mukherjee recognising Snehalaya’s work with the Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh National Award, in November 2013.
Snehalaya began small – with a one-room shelter just outside the city where children could be accommodated, fed, taught, and informed. Today, it has grown into a large organisation with projects covering a gamut of social issues. Along with day and night shelters, it also runs a medical facility, clinic, vocational training centre and an adoption unit. After first reaching out to children, the institution began to involve their mothers too by offering vocational training courses such as sewing, etc. And their activities have continued to expand ever since.

Projects for Children
Roughly 1,200 children make their way to six different ‘Bal Bhavan’ centres run by Snehalaya in various parts of Ahmednagar of criminality unless provided with alternatives.

Every single day. Located in slums, which are pockets rife with problems like unemployment, addiction and substance abuse, these centres are easily accessible to children, most of whom were often truants or had dropped out of school. Thanks to Snehalaya’s support, they now have a safe and supportive place to study during the day, and also at night. The Bal Bhavans run health checks and camps too while each child attending a Bal Bhavan is also provided a nutritious meal, including fruit, rice and milk to combat malnutrition.

With the firm philosophy that education is the key to discouraging child labour, Snehalaya has continually pushed for a higher level of school enrolments. This effort led it to set up its own pre-schools (balwadis) for children below the age of six. Emphasis is also laid on trying to get older children enrolled in government schools through a variety of
schemes run by the State such as the Mahatma Phule Shikshan HamiYojana or The Bal Kamgar School (special schools for child labourers under the National Child Labour Project). However, convincing parents is often an obstacle to keeping children in school so that regular awareness drives stressing the importance of education, among other things, makes for a big chunk of Snehalaya’s regular activities.

Bal Bhavans go beyond just working with children. They also reach out to the adults in the vicinity. Their social workers and doctors hold health camps, work towards family planning awareness, and distribute condoms to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. De-addiction counselling and psychological support is offered in weekly counselling sessions. For adults, the Bal Bhavans additionally run vocational training courses and support the local women’s self-help groups.

The Snehankur Adoption Centre is another project for children undertaken by Snehalaya. Launched in 2005, it is a licensed, professionally managed adoption centre. It began as a small centre in 2003 to support and rehabilitate unwed mothers who had nowhere else to go. Two years later, they expanded their activities by establishing a completely separate facility to look after the children in their care until they are adopted. The Snehankur team takes pride in the loving care that the children receive, and of the fact that till date they have a zero per cent mortality rate for both mothers and infants in their care. As Dr. Girish Kulkarni puts it, “Every child must have a family and an opportunity to find its potential. Every mother who is unable to bring up the child should be rehabili-
tated into society with dignity.”

Running the local chapter of Childline is yet another important contribution by Snehalaya to child welfare in Ahmednagar. Childline (1098) is a 24-hour free emergency national helpline that any child in distress can call to receive aid or counselling. Snehalaya took the initiative of starting a helpline before the national line existed, and ran it independently from 1996 until 2003, following which it was integrated into the national network. Should a call to the line require emergency intervention, a team is always kept on stand-by to take immediate action. The ‘Muktawahini’ team consists of 10 volunteers in uniform, equipped with a vehicle to answer any emergency calls, and works mainly to prevent the trafficking of women and children. Beyond the emergency calls, they intervene with the police and the judiciary to ensure that the action doesn’t stop with immediate response and victims can be helped through the often slow and cumbersome judicial processes.

Tackling HIV

The spread of HIV, particularly among commercial sex workers, has been a major cause for concern. Rather than treat it as simply a medical problem, Snehalaya uses a holistic approach called ‘Mukta’, meaning freedom. The spread of HIV needs to be combated using awareness, education, access to condoms, counselling and self-empowerment, and for those already infected, anti-retroviral treatment and support groups. Their wing called Snehajyoth Mukta reaches out to commercial sex workers and helps them through a variety of activities such as medical treatment, providing good quality condoms free of cost, access to clean water and toilets in red light areas, as well as counselling and awareness drives.

One of their major achievements till date has been the establishment of community care centres to address the needs of people living with HIV. Since 2010, more than 12,000 people living in and around Ahmednagar have received some form of help from these centres. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 people living with HIV or AIDS in Ahmednagar district and as the disease involves the weakening of the immune system, HIV patients often suffer from several other ailments as well. These centres were initially meant to bridge the gap between home care and hospitalisation. However, it was soon realised that patients often needed more sustained care and thus a 30-bed medical hospice was also set up.
Sheltering Those in Need

The traditional Indian social structure can be very harsh on the more vulnerable sections of society. Unwed mothers often have nowhere to turn to; many widows are abandoned by their families; HIV-positive women are treated like outcasts; and the victims of commercial sex trafficking receive no respect from society or any help. And of course, the most deprived and destitute women and children in society are left to fend for themselves. Taking this into account, the Snehalaya’s Rehabilitation Centre gives more than 350 women and children in distress a place to stay where they are safe and free from exploitation. Typically, the girls are between 10 and 18 years of age. The centre looks after them, providing them not just with shelter but also the means to be independent through education and training.

Spread the Word

Make the effort to learn about the problems of children and women in society today. Contact or visit a Snehalaya centre to learn more. Invite friends and family members to join you. Help increase awareness and sensitize the public about these issues. Write blogs and articles about the rights of children to help raise awareness about Childline’s number 1098. Consider and encourage adoption for building your families. If any of your friends are looking to adopt a child, introduce them to Snehalaya.

Volunteer

Your time and skills can be very helpful to make a difference to these children’s lives. Visit Snehalaya and spend time with the children, playing and learning with them. Teach the children something about the world that you know. Help them find opportunities in education. Give them advice for career building. Attend Snehalaya’s youth programs and Bal Bhavans.

Make a Financial Contribution

Monetary support from patrons is the only way to help Snehalaya function. All donations to Snehalaya are exempt from income tax under Section 80G and the institution provides receipts and maintains accounts for every rupee received and spent.

Distance from Mumbai: 280 kms

How to reach:

By Air: Pune 120 Kms. Aurangabad 120 Kms.

By Road: Route - Mumbai-Talegaon-Chakan-Shikrapur-Ahmednagar

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Keeping the Zoroastrian Faith Burning
Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher

Text and Photographs © Khursheed Dinshaw

The author is freelance and lifestyle journalist and can be reached at khursheeddinshaw@gmail.com

For the Zoroastrians of Pune, the Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher make for an important and highly sacred place of worship while the hall adjacent to the fire temple is where many celebrations such as weddings take place. Khursheed Dinshaw takes a look at the history of this ‘agiary’ and the rituals that have been followed here for so many years, keeping the small and zestful community strongly bonded.

The agiary and Pudumjee Hall premises
Just as fire is worshipped by many a community and tribe across the world, so is it important to the Zoroastrians. As such, a ‘fire temple’ that has a sacred fire burning all the time is what marks as a place of religious importance for the community. Such a fire temple is also known as an ‘agiary’ or ‘Dar-e-Meher’, the former in Gujarati meaning ‘house of fire’. The Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher located in Pune Camp is one such important fire temple where the Zoroastrians congregate. It was founded by a philanthropist, Sardar Khan Bahadur Pudumjee Pestonji, who had donated a parcel of land called ‘Khorsheed Wadi’. He did this in loving memory of his beloved wife, Khorsheed Bai. This was added to by Seth Pestonji Cawasji Merchant who donated his bungalow, Villeby House, in the pious memory of his father, A. Cawasji Behramji, for religious purposes and for meeting the recurring expenses of the Dar-e-Meher.

The work of this Dar-e-Meher from inception until its completion was carried out with the assistance and generosity of its trustees, managing committee and members. The trustees were Khan Bahadur Seth Dorabji Pudumjee, Seth Nuserwanji Behramji who was the secretary of the Parsi Panchayat, and Seth Pestonji Cawasji Merchant. It was built under the supervision of Seth Dorabji Hormuzji Kanga, an engineer. The managing committee comprised Seth Pestonji Cawasji Merchant who was the chairman, Seth Ratanji Dinshawji Bharucha Ghadyali who was the joint secretary, Seth Dorabji Hormuzji Kanga who was also the joint secretary, and Seth Hormuzd Aspandiar Irani who was the treasurer. The members included Seth Burjorji Manekji (Lohrasp) Modi, Seth Pestonji Edulji Mukadam, Seth Khodadad Rustam Irani, and Seth Hormuzd Sheriar Irani.

The foundation stone of this place of religious worship was laid on August 22, 1892 and the Dar-e-Meher was built with generous donations from Kadmi and Shahenshai Zoroastrians. It was inaugurated on October 18, 1893 which was a Wednesday. A pious ceremony was performed to install the fire at the agiary, the only one of its kind in Pune which facilitates Kadmi prayers for the Zoroastrian Irans. Though both Parsis and Irans are Zoroastrians, the Parsis left their homeland Persia and migrated to India 1,000 years ago while Irans have come to India around 300 years ago. The Zoroastrians are divided into three sects - the Faslis, Kadmis and the Shahenshahis.

The managing committee appointed Ervad Kh. D. Bhappu as the ‘panthaki’ (head priest). To this sprawling premise an addition was made in 1931 in the form of a hall called Pudumjee Hall for weddings, ‘Navjotes’, meetings, feasts, youth activities and agiary anniversary celebrations. This hall, which is adjacent to the agiary, is used for conducting prayers, performing religious ceremonies and discourses on certain occasions. Only Irans and Parsis are allowed entry inside the agiary. Chalk rangolis adorn the entrance of any agiary, including the Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher.
The Legend

To know the reason why the practice of drawing rangolis is followed, let’s travel back in time to when the Parsis first landed in India at the shores of Gujarat. The ruling King Jadhow Rana was sent word that a group of foreigners had arrived and were seeking refuge. Rana, who was a wise king, decided to let the Parsis know that they were not welcome by sending a cup full of milk to the brim. This was a diplomatic symbol of saying that there was no room for the newly arrived foreigners in the kingdom. The leader of the Parsis, not to be outdone, put some sugar in the milk and sent it back. It was his way of informing Rana that the Parsis would spread sweetness and harmony among the locals and not cause any kind of discord.

Rana agreed to allow them to reside provided they followed five conditions: 1) They would not convert, 2) Parsi marriages would be held in the evening so as not to disturb the daily functioning of the locals, 3) They would surrender their weapons, 4) They would adopt the local outfit and customs which is why Parsis wear sarees, and 5) They would speak the local language i.e. Gujarati.

The leader agreed to these conditions and as part of following local customs and traditions, the rangoli came to be done outside agiaries and Parsi homes. The ones depicting fish or horseshoe are for good luck while common patterns like flowers are also created. It is believed that looking at rangoli patterns helps soothe the mind as they create vibrations in the mind to calm it down. Even the vibrant colours of the rangoli have a positive effect on a person’s emotions before he enters the agiary.

The Rituals

The main purpose of a fire temple is to house the sacred fire. On entering the faithful wash their hands and perform ‘kusti’. This is a sacred thread made of lamb’s wool and tied around the waist on the white muslin garment known as ‘sadra’. The outside corridor leads to a hall where religious ceremonies are performed. The fire-altar is located in the innermost sanctum. When Zoroastrians visit the agiary, they normally light a ‘divo’ which is a wick-lit container filled with oil. Many times, while lighting the divo, wishes are asked for.

Another practice includes offering ‘sukhad’ which is sandalwood to the sacred fire. It is a way of connecting with the fire. It is believed that pure light and energy is where god resides. A fire is seen as an extension of the world of god. A number of prayer ceremonies are performed at the Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher and one of these are the Kadmi and Shahenshai Mukta prayer. These are conducted after the death of a Zoroastrian and their purpose is to help the souls of those who have expired to progress in the afterlife.

A religious ceremony that Zoroastrians look forward to is the ‘Jashan’. Sponsored either by the community or on occasion by an individual it is conducted to seek blessings for an auspicious event. At times it is also done for celebration or for gratitude for what has
been given. The premises of the Kadmi and Shahenshai Anjuman Dar-e-Meher also have a well as ‘Ab’, implying that water is worshipped by Zoroastrians. Its entrance is decorated with garlands of roses and tube roses on auspicious occasions like its anniversary, ‘Navroz’, weddings and navjote ceremonies when more Zoroastrians visit the temple.

Only priests attached to a fire temple may enter the innermost sanctum itself, which is closed on at least one side and has a double-domed roof. The double dome has vents to allow the smoke to escape, but the vents of the outer dome are offset from those of the inner, thus preventing debris or rain from entering the inner sanctum. The sanctum is separated from the anteroom by dividers (or walls with very large openings) and is slightly raised with respect to the space around it. The wall(s) of the inner sanctum are almost always tiled or of marble, but are otherwise undecorated. There are no lights - other than that of the fire itself - in the inner sanctum. In Indian-Zoroastrian tradition the temples are often designed such that direct sunlight does not enter the sanctuary.

Distance from Mumbai: 152 kms
How to reach:
By Air: Pune airport has several flights daily to major Indian cities. It is also connected to Bangkok and Dubai for international flights.
By Rail: Pune Railway station is a large junction connected to most large Indian towns and cities.
By Road: From Mumbai, zip along the Mumbai-Pune expressway for a beautiful monsoon drive.

Where to Stay
There is a wide range of hotels to suit all budgets.
One of the very unique religious traditions in Maharashtra is that of praying to a statue of Khandoba which also involves staying awake the whole night in what is known as the ‘jaagran’. During this time, the Waaghya-Murali take on the responsibility of becoming a bridge between the devotee and the deity through an interesting form of worship that involves song, dance and storytelling – all this with the sole objective of requesting the Lord to forgive the sins of those who believe in him and grant them their wishes.

Kinship, and the bonds that accompany this social construct are very important to Hindu culture, and hence these ties are always venerated in society. The head of the clan Shri Khandera is worshipped in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. This usually takes the form of a “jaagaran” or ‘staying awake’, of which as important a component as is the “gondhal”. The “jaagaran” involves staying awake through the night and performing veneration to the Goddess in order to awaken Her and seek blessings. A ceremonial display of sugarcane or jowar plants serves as a base upon which a statue of Khandoba is kept for the ritual veneration. It is the Waaghya-Murali’s responsibility to offer prayers in the mixed form of song, storytelling, and dance. They become the conduit between the deity of the clan and the average devotee. The Waaghya-Murali pray to the

The People’s Priests

Waaghya and Murali

Text and Photographs © Sachin Upadhye
Translated by Sunil Ganu

The author is a priest at Jejuri
deity to forgive the mistakes and sins of the populace and to look benignly upon the flock thus:

I come to Thee with folded hands, do not be angry,

I urge you to discard your slumber, O God Almighty!

Khandoba is a deity that grants boons, and is said to listen to and respond positively to any special requests for boons made by devotees. These boons are communicated to the deity through the Waaghya – Murali. This pair has variously been called ‘ Peoples’ Spokespersons’ or ‘ Peoples’ Cultural Representatives’ or ‘ Popular Priests’. Those who pray to Khandoba for a child usually give up their first-born child to the deity – the child becomes a Waaghya if it is a male child, a Murali if female.

The Hounds of Khandoba

There are two categories of the Waaghyaa: “Ghar-waaghya” (“the household waaghya”) and the “daar-waaghya” (“the external waaghya”). The ghar-waaghya is one who has begged for a boon and he lives at home except on Sundays, when he goes from door to door begging for alms in the name of Lord Malhar. The daar-waaghya spends his life in the service of Shri Khandoba, always singing his praises through keertans from door to door and village to village, eking his living from the alms he receives.

In the book published around 1922, The Tribes and Castes of Bombay Presidency, Vol. 3, the British author R. E. Anthoneyen has described the complete process involved in becoming a waaghya. In the month of Chaitra, the parents intimate the village priests of their intention to give up their son to become a waaghya. A ritual veneration of the deity is organised, the child’s forehead is anointed with turmeric paste, a leather bag is put around his neck, the statue of the deity is liberally bathed in the turmeric paste, and then the priest intones that the child has been accepted by the deity as a “waaghya.” The typical costume worn by the waaghya consists of a turmeric paste smeared across the forehead, a red-ochre powder on top of the turmeric in a vertical line, a cloth shirt, a rough blanket worn over the shoulder, a dhoti, a distinctive headgear or a cap, and a small drum held in the hand.

In Karnataka, the waaghya wears a tunic of rough cloth and headgear on his head. He has a drum, too. The waaghya commonly bears the turmeric paste, kotamba, a trident, a spear, a yellow flag or standard, a ghol, a rough blanket, a drum, a langar. He does not always carry all these items with him. In Karnata, the waaghya is called “waaghyaa” or “aageyaa”. According to social scientists, the word waaghya derives from the Kannada language, “aageyaa” comes from the the root “ubbu”. Ubbu means “to babble meaningless, to bark like a dog.” The waaghyas consider themselves the hounds of Khandoba. In the old days, these waaghyaas would imitate dogs during the night-long religious programmes in villages: thus are they described in saint literature. The saint-poet Tukaram’s song “Waagha” testifies to this fact. In this song, the waaghya’s behaviour is described:

“When this deity surges through the body, a wave of love surges
And the devotee starts babbling, and look, even barking!”

The researcher R C Dhere opines that just as the Gondhali is the human manifestation of the ghostly spirit of the Bhoot-mata family, so also, the Waaghyaa is the human manifestation of the dogs in the Khandoba family. There is, however, an anomaly in the waaghya’s behaviour: although he bears a tiger-skin around his neck, he exhibits the behaviour of a dog! He thus bears the name of a tiger-like creature but barks like a dog! Dr Dhere has shown references to a tale of transformation from a tiger to a dog in the Jayadri Mahatmya, a religious treatise. A celebrated folktale speaks of such a transformation from tiger to dog. According to this tale, when tigers attacked the flock of Ajamal, the shepherd, Martand Bhairav sent dogs to rescue the flock. He also transformed all the attacking tigers into dogs at the time. These dogs then begged forgiveness at the deity’s feet. Smearing them with the turmeric paste, the deity forgave them and turned the dogs into human beings, goes the tale. And this is why the waaghyaas bear the name of Malhari Martand and continue to serve Him well. They become gharwaaghyaa by tradition even today. Mairaal waaghyaas are traditionally those who carry out the duties of the night-long ceremonies, they are also called “Veer-dangat.” If the waaghya is the devdaas (servitor of God), the murali is His female servant.

Murali or Khandoba’s Bride

“I have attained Muralihood, I am off to His house
With the turmeric paste of devotion on my neck, and kotumba of emotions”
In his *bharood*, the saint-poet Eknath has thus described the Murali who, with emotions and devotion, comes to serve Lord Mahari. She is the *devadaasi* (servant of God) who dedicates her entire life to serve the deity Khandoba, and is known as Murali, the female counterpart of the *waaghya*. If, after asking for a boon of offspring, the first-born child is a girl-child, she is given up by the parents to the deity in gratitude. She is nurtured at her parents’ house until she reaches puberty. Upon the girl-child reaching physical maturity, she is taken to the temple where she is formally married to Lord Khandoba. From then on, she is known as ‘the wife of God’ and must stay in the temple, earning her keep by begging for alms. On her forehead is the turmeric paste covered with a rather large red dot of vermilion powder, a necklace of cowries around her neck, a six- or a nine-yard sari draped around her lower body, the end of which covers her head, a *ghati* in her hand … such is typically her costume.

In the Maharashtra Dictionary, the etymology of the word “murali” is described in two ways:

The first, as “the wife of Mailaar : Mailaari : Murali”

The second, as “Marali (a Kannada language word) : Murali”

The senior research scholar Pandurang Desai believes that the word “marali” refers to a person “who is brainless or who says brainless things.” Hence, this character seems to be the perfect partner for the *waaghya*, who barks like a dog. There are several folktales about the provenance of the concept of *murali*. Of these, one story is frequently retold by the *waaghya-murali* duo during the night-long celebrations in temples, and it goes thus:

“When Shri Krishna visited the residence of Banasur to visit Banaayi, and when he was taking leave of the company, Shri Krishna gave his flute to Banaayi. This flute later started speaking with a human voice. The flute recounted it’s entire tale – Tilottamma, a Rambha in Heaven, was cursed by Devendra because she was vain. The curse said she would descend to the lower world of humans and dance there. She would also come in contact with Banasur’s daughter. The antidote to this curse was that she could take the form of Martand Bhairav and return to Heaven. Thus, true to the curse, Murali Martand danced in the grounds of Martand Bhairav’s palace. This flute given by Shri Krishna became the “murali” of Khandoba!”

Social Opposition to Muralis

There are references to the wrath of the Bengali saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who, on a visit to Jejuri in Maharashtra, was angry at the Murali tradition. He preached against
this system, and his opinions have been recorded by Govinddaas, a companion of Mahaprabhu. Other saints, like Eknath Maharaj, Shaikh Mohammad baba, Gondekar Sant, Tukaraam, and others have spoken against the sexual abuse and physical abuse of the young girls who have been “given up” to the deity as *devadaasis*. During the night-long celebrations in temples, and during their performances, the public at large treats the *murali* with respect; and yet, following the performance, the *muralis* are often the objects of lust. The “wife” of Khandoba, the *devadaasi*, is she an object of veneration or one of lust: such is the question that their social status leads one to ask! Eknath Maharaj reminds us: “Don’t ogle the murali, lest you fall at Hell’s door!”

Eknath Maharaj, with this reminder of the fate that awaits he who lusts after the *murali*, has in a sense attacked the system.

Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde, in 1907, started a society in Mumbai that aimed at the eradication of this practice that often led to the exploitation of the *murali*. On 15 October, 1934, the government passed a law banning girls from being turned into *muralis*. Hence, in our times, we do not find any *muralis* who have been ‘officially’ married to Khandoba. Their place has been usurped by commercial dancers. They live with the *waaghyas* who are heads of households, and they travel from village to village, performing at the night-long celebrations in various temples. Since the *muralis* are already “married” to Khandoba, they cannot marry men any more. This social anomaly causes problems. At an convention of *waaghyas-muralis* in Sangli in 1978, Dr Anil Awchat suggested they get legally register their marriages. This suggestion was welcomed by all, and has thus solved one of the social problems.

**Waaghyas and Muralis today**

Today, the children of *waaghyas-muralis* couples have gained higher education, some have found jobs, while others have chosen to enter their family profession. Education helps them to combine economic considerations with their traditional heritage.

There is no inclusion of the murali at the night of celebrations for Khandoba in Davdi-Nimgaon in Pune district. And this has started a trend, now there are many celebrations without *muralis* playing any part. Dr Prakash Khandage, of the University of Mumbai, has compiled extensive documentation of this tradition to serve as a record of this ancient heritage. The German researcher Dr Gunther Sontheimer has recorded the songs sung at the *jaagarans* by *waaghyas-muralis*. Today, the nature of these nightly celebrations is changing. Faith and religiosity have given way to entertainment, Hence, the *waaghyas-muralis* are also obliged to change their performances to cater to popular demand.

**The Tale of Queen Marali**

In his scholarly work titled *Students of Popular Culture*, Dr. R C Dhere has specified a folktale from Southern India. “In the thick forests of the Kopum region in Tamil Nadu, a devotee found an infant girl. He named the child Prabhavati. He nurtured his foundling, and she grew up to be godly indeed. At that time, the Kopam region was ruled over by a degenerate Queen Marali, who was not religious but was adept at song and dance. The population of the region looked to Prabhavati for help – they were quite fed up with their Queen. Prabhavati advised the Queen to mend her ways, to become god-fearing and proactive to the needs of the people. But the vain Queen unleashed wild tigers upon the young Prabhavati. But instead of harming Prabhavati, the tigers rolled like cats at her feet. They then turned upon the evil Queen Marali!

Prabhavati calmed the tigers down and liberated Queen Marali from the beasts. Queen Marali, humbled by this experience, gave up all her wealth and dedicated her life to serving God. As she sang and danced in temples, she passed on.” This tale justifies the establishment of the *devadaasi* system. The Murali found in the state of Maharashtra is also a manifestation of the *devadaasi* system and is also a devotee of Khandoba.
There surely is something magical about the rains. No, it’s not just the fact that it dissipates the long and dry heat of the summer and makes the earth go green once again. Rather, it’s the way in which it makes us want to dig into some special food items – wada pav, misal pav or kanda bhaji, for instance. There’s nothing so satisfying and pleasing than to take shelter from the downpour and devour such spicy snacks. So read on to know how to make them yourself.

The Perfect Rainy Day Snacks
Bhaji, Vada Pav and Misal

Radhika Ghaté
Photographs © Rasika Inamdar

The author is a catering and hospitality consultant.
Seasons play a large role in influencing Indian cuisine, not just in terms of what is available at a particular time but also in terms of palates and cravings. Summer is ripe with mangoes and all its glorious by-products like kairi panha and aamras, kokum sarbat and other cooling drinks. Fried foods are out of the question.

With the onset of the monsoons, the landscape of Maharashtra is transformed, the dusty brown slopes and fields are suddenly lush green, in a span of two weeks. With this change in the weather and nature, Maharashtrian cuisine too shifts into monsoon gear. Warming teas infused with spices, crispy deep fried bhajis and hot stews like misal are served across the state in homes and also in little pop-up shacks (tapris). No monsoon outing to a hillside is complete without getting soaked in a waterfall and then drying off in a tapri with a piping hot plate of bhaji or a vada pav and a steaming cup of masala chai.

This monsoon treat yourself to some of these Maharashtrian monsoon delicacies!
Khekda Bhaji:
Bhaji is a snack similar to fritters. ‘Khekda’ means crab. Although the name suggests that these fritters are made with crab, they are actually made with onions. They are called ‘khekda bhaji’ because of their crab-like shape. Bhajis are called ‘pakoras’ in other parts of India. Bhajis can be made from assorted vegetables like capsicum, green chillies, potatoes, cauliflower, fenugreek leaves, spinach leaves and even pulses like moong dal (green gram).

Served as appetizers, the Khekda Bhaji is unique because it is made with dry gram flour instead of a wet batter, thus giving the onions their distinct crab shape. Easy to make at home, and or as a roadside snack, bhajis are the ultimate monsoon treat in Maharashtra.

Recipe
Ingredients:
Onions 2-3
Red Chilli powder: 1 teaspoon (to taste)
Turmeric: ¼ teaspoon
Finely chopped coriander: 1 tablespoon
Ajwain (owa): a pinch (optional)
Salt to taste
Besan (Bengal Gram flour): 1 ½ cups approximately
Baking soda: a pinch (optional)
oil for frying

Method:
Peel and cut the onions into halves. Finely slice the onion halves vertically and separate the flakes. Sprinkle red chili powder, turmeric, coriander, ajwain, salt, baking soda and one tablespoon of hot oil over the onions. Mix and evenly sprinkle Bengal gram flour over this mixture and set aside for some time. Heat the oil in a kadhai for frying. Before frying, mix in the sprinkled flour with the onion slices bit by bit and fry small portions in hot oil till golden brown. Remove, drain and serve hot with fried green chillies.

Note:
A little rice flour can also be added along with gram flour to make the bhajis crisper.

Do not add water, the water released from the onion mixture is sufficient to mix in the flour. In case it is too dry, apply a little water on your hands while mixing the flour.
Vada-Pav:
Vada is a potato patty dipped in batter and deep fried and served sandwiched in a sliced pav. Pav is a bun shaped Indian bread baked in local bakeries. Vada-pav is served with spicy red chutney (made of garlic and dry coconut) and fried green chillies. One of the most popular Maharashtrian street foods, this tummy filler is very easy on the pocket too. Vada-pav is definitely a favourite Maharashtrian monsoon snack and is popular during travels or movie intervals. There are established chains and eateries serving vada-pav in cities and on highways, and it is gaining global recognition as the ‘Indian Burger’.

Recipe

Ingredients:
- Pav: 12 readymade pav buns
- For Vada filling:
  - Boiled Potato (Mashed or Grated): 2 cups (5-6 medium sized potatoes)
  - Finely chopped coriander: 1 tablespoon
  - Garlic paste: ½ teaspoon
  - Ginger paste: 1 teaspoon
  - Green chilli paste: ½ teaspoon or to taste
  - Turmeric powder: ¼ teaspoon
  - Asafoetida (Hing): ¼ teaspoon
  - Chopped curry leaves: 4-5 leaves
  - Urad dal (split white gram): ¼ teaspoon
  - Lemon juice: 1 teaspoon (optional)
  - Sugar: ½ teaspoon (optional)
  - Salt to taste

For the vada batter:
- Besan (Bengal Gram flour): 1 ½ cup approximately
- Red chilli powder: ¼ teaspoon
- Baking soda: a pinch
- Salt to taste
- Water
- Oil for frying

Method:
Boil the potatoes and grate or mash them. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a pan and add the urad dal. When it turns light pink, add the ginger, garlic and green chilli pastes, asafoetida and turmeric and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add it to the mashed potatoes. Add the salt, sugar, curry leaves, and lemon juice. Mix it well and divide the mixture into 10-12 equal portions. Roll and flatten each ball into a patty. Make a semi thin batter using the gram flour, water, salt, red chilli powder and baking soda. Heat enough oil to deep fry with in a kadhai. Dip each patty in the batter so that it is evenly coated and deep fry on medium heat till golden brown on all sides. Remove and drain the excess oil. Slit the pav in the centre, sandwich the hot vada in the pav and serve with fried green chillies and red chutney.

Note:
Batata vada can also be served by itself with tomato sauce or any chutney of choice without the pav.

Small round baby potato vadas can also be served as finger food.

Other popular batata vada dishes:
- Vada sambar: Potato Vada served with sambar and coconut chutney.
- Kat vada: Potato vada served with kat (same curry as for misal) over it.
**Misal-Pav:**
A Maharashtrian speciality, ‘misal’ literally means mixture. Misal is a mixture of pharsan (dry snacks mix made with gram flour, peanuts etc), potatoes, and onion, served with a spicy moth bean curry called Kat and pav or sliced bread. Though categorized as a snack, it is pretty much a meal in itself. Misal Pav has plenty of regional variations within Maharashtra like Kolhapuri misal, Solapur misal, Puneri misal, Nagpuri misal. The essence of the variation lies in the secret of the fresh and dry masala used to make the ‘Kat’. Also the level of spice and oil varies in different places. Every city has its own regional misal specialty. A simple preparation, misal can be eaten at any time of the day although it is mostly a breakfast preference.

**Recipe**

**Ingredients:**

**For Serving:**
- Pharsan mixture: 3 cups
- Boiled Potato: 1 big (Peeled and cut in small cubes)
- Finely chopped onion: 2
- Finely chopped coriander
- Lemon wedges
- Bread Slices/ Pav

**For the Kat/ Curry:**
- Sprouted matki (Moth beans): 1 ½ cups
- Oil ½ cup
- Salt to taste
- Water
- Onion-garlic masala (Kanda Lasoon masala): 4-5 teaspoons

**Fresh masala:**
- Desiccated fresh coconut: 250 gms
- Desiccated dry coconut: 250 gms
- Finely chopped coriander: ½ cup
- Garlic: 10-12 pods
- Ginger: 3/4 inch
- Coriander seeds: 1 ½ tablespoon
- Cumin seeds: ½ tablespoon
- Sesame seeds: 2 teaspoons
- Clove: 2-3
- Peppercorns: 5-6
- Masala Cardamom: 1
- Star anise: 1/2

**Method:**

**To make the fresh masala paste:**
Lightly roast the desiccated dry coconut and set aside. Heat little oil and lightly roast the other dry spices and set aside. Using water grind the fresh coconut, ginger, garlic, coriander, roasted dry coconut and all the roasted spices to a fine paste.

**Kat / Curry:** Heat little oil and roast the sprouted beans with salt. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Boil about 1 ½ litres of water. In a thick bottom vessel, heat a quarter cup of oil. Add the fresh paste and sauté on medium heat till the oil starts to release from the paste. Add the _kanda lasoon masala_ and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add sprouted beans, salt, hot water and boil for 10 minutes. This Kat is of a thin consistency and is served boiling hot.

**To serve:**
In a bowl place 1 spoon of boiled potato cubes, add ¼ cup pharsan mixture, garnish with onion and coriander. Serve the hot kat/ curry over this mixture or serve in a separate bowl. Squeeze some lime. This mixture is called misal and is eaten with bread slices or pav. Curd is also served as an accompaniment.

**Note:**
Pharsan is easily available in any grocery store or a sweet mart.

Kanda-lasoon masala made of onion and garlic is readily available in grocery stores.

The quantity of _kanda-lasoon masala_ can be adjusted depending on the level of spice required.

The lime will tone down the spiciness.

---

**Masala Chai:**
This is tea flavoured with elaichi (cardamom) and ginger. The spices give the tea added warmth and flavour, perfect for a rainy day.
It’s the monsoon, and Maharashtra is calling. Refresh your senses in the company of your loved ones as you soak up the endless greenery, and enjoy special moments in pure, natural environs. Get drenched in new experiences, come and be showered with magical memories that will stay forever fresh in your heart.

<table>
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<th>Chipuling</th>
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*Distances mentioned are approximate.
MTDC conducts its AGM of Resort Operations at Mahabaleshwar

MTDC, Mahabaleshwar from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Jt Md. Mr. Satish Soni. Amongst the other MTDC officials present were General Manager Ms. Kishori Gadre, Deputy General Manager Mr. Chandrashekhar Jaiswal, Cheif Accounts Officer Mr. Tulsidas Solanke, Executive Engineers Mr. Shailendra Borse and Mr. Rahul Vasaikar. Mr. Satish Jayaram who is known as the father of the hospitality and education, was the chief guest who delivered a mesmerizing speech on New Age Skills for the resort managers and how MTDC can cope with tourism in the 21st century. There were four presentations during the meeting; the first presentation was presented by Mr. Satish Jayaram with the quote of "If you have to survive you have to change". The next presentation was presented by the CAO MTDC. The presentation focused on the occupancy based target to the resort managers of the MTDC. DGM MTDC Mr. Chandrasekhar Jaiswal’s presentation majorly concentrated on generating profits for the MTDC resorts. In the presentation it was also mentioned that expenses should be reduced to 40% to 50% and the profits should be raised by 50% to 60%. M/s Vandana Mulay in charge of CSR from Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon also gave an informative presentation about the CSR activities conducted on their property.

In his concluding speech Hon. Jt. MD Mr. Satish Soni that the comfort, safety and security of the tourist should be the top most priority of our resorts and the guest should feel at home away from home. It was also discussed in the meeting that a walk through of all the MTDC resorts will be arranged by an agency which will capture the best pictures and display it online. The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks to the chair and all the members present in the meeting.
MTDC Events

Wakayama Agreement

Dr. Jagdish Patil MD, MTDC signed the agreement on behalf of Government of Maharashtra with Governor of Wakayama Prefecture Japan for Mutual Cooperation & promotion in tourism sector between Wakayama World Heritage Center in Wakayama Prefecture Japan And Ajanta Visitor Center in the State of Maharashtra of India on Promotion of Partnership & Exchange.
A special event was held at the Amanora Town Centre, Pune on the 22nd of June to create awareness about this traditional pilgrimage.

Partners: MTDC, Janwani’s ‘Virasat Pune’, Amanora Town Centre

For the past 800 years, Warkaris (Devotees) have faithfully participated in this procession by walking for more than two hundred kilometres for 21 days in devotion to “Lord Vitthal”. The MTDC and Janwani’s ‘Virasat Pune’ gave a glimpse of this spiritual journey which included dance, music and games played by Warkaris by supporting it. The MTDC also set up a stall at the venue which displayed some souvenirs specially designed for the Wari Festival i.e. (T-shirts, caps, idols). The event received a thumping response from the large crowd that had gathered to watch the show.
Borne out of the Bhakti movement supported by various saint-poets like Jnaaneshwar, Tukaram and Eknath, the warkaris make their way to Pandharpur carrying palanquins ‘palkhis’ containing relics of these saint-poets. All the way, they sing devotional songs and play traditional games to honour these saints. There is no distinction made on the basis of caste or creed during this procession, all that is required is humility and devotion. Thus the ‘Wari’ procession is one of the best representations of the cultural and traditional heritage of Maharashtra, epitomising the “Warkari Sampradaya” or ethos.

Unfortunately there are many Indians, who are unaware of such a great procession, and the MTDC hopes to promote it in India first and then also internationally so that people from across the country and the world can witness this amazing spiritual journey. The MTDC takes great joy in promoting Wari as as the “pride of Maharashtra”, along with Virasat Pune which is an initiative of Janwani dedicated to promote the heritage and culture of Pune.
Mumbai (Maharashtra) has bagged the Best shopping Destination Award at the Lonely Planet Magazine India Travel Awards 2014.

MTDC General Manager, Kishori Gadre said Lonely Planet recommendations were the most sought after by travelers and to be chosen by their readers made the award even more prestigious.

“It feels great to be honoured with this recognition. We have always promoted Mumbai (Maharashtra) as a destination that has something for everyone, especially families, who love shopping & take a wholesome experience to cater to the likes of every member of the family. The Lonely Planet award is a significant achievement for Mumbai.” She said after receiving the award at a function held in Mumbai, Maharashtra recently.

CNBC AWAAZ Travel Award 2014

The Deccan Odyssey has won the CNBC AWAAZ Travel Award 2014 as the Best Luxury Train. Mr. Dalvi, Manager Operations, Deccan Odyssey has collected the Award on 20th June, 2014 presented by Madhya Pradesh Tourism at Brilliant Convention Centre, Indore, Madhya Pradesh.
Maharashtra fever to grip New York’s Times Square

A more vibrant Times Square Fest this September from the MTDC

MUMBAI: That tourism is a major growth engine, transforming economies, has been demonstrated by many countries and states across the globe. The importance of reaching out to the global community was realised when Maharashtra showcased its rich culture and heritage on the world stage when it hosted events leading to Diwali celebrations at the Times Square in New York in 2013. Maharashtra also helped India become the first Asian country to hold such an event for an international audience.

Buoyed by the success of its Times Square event in promoting Maharashtra as a year round tourism destination, and with the realisation that a sustained campaign to project Maharashtra on the global map is necessary, the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has decided to re-visit the Times Square in New York with a bigger, better and more informative event on September 20, 2014.

Shri Chhagan Bhujbal, Honorable Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, said, “I am glad to inform that Maharashtra Tourism has taken tremendous strides in opening itself up to the overseas market. Initiatives like the Mega Event organised at Times Square in New York have made a definite impact on the number of overseas tourists visiting our state. And we look forward to boost Maharashtra’s distinctive feature of being a 365-day tourist destination for both regular and business travellers as we visit Times Square once again this September.”

Be it summer, monsoon or winter, Maharashtra with its diverse topography, climate and tourist attractions is a destination that is visited all year round. There are forts with a rich cultural history. It has a 720 kilometres long coastline offering fantastic beaches and facilities which are state-of-the-art, and can offer unmatched splendour to a tourist if he or she were to visit its wildlife, agriculture, wine or heritage tourism destinations.

The event is of considerable importance because it is estimated that close to 350,000 pedestrians visit Times Square on a daily basis, and more than 100,000 Asians will be participating in the event. Maharashtra Mandals from across USA, Canada and Mexico and eminent Indian professionals from medical and legal fraternities will participate in a big number. The event has been scheduled in September to ensure that foreign tourists are made aware Maharashtra’s splendour, and accordingly can plan their visit in October which would ensure that they soak in the festivities of Diwali.

The event which has been planned to transform the alleys of Times Square will be publicized on digital, TV, radio and print media in USA. The concert will also display an orchestrated laser light show and fireworks on big screens. The cultural festival includes Indian food, dance, diyas, rangoli painting, Indian arts and crafts, a fashion show, photo booths with ethnic outfits, celebrity autographs and photo booths, Dahi Handi, Mallkhamb and a lot more.

The grand event will also see the excitement of a concert showcasing performances by some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry. A film made by the MTDC with the destinations of Maharashtra will be showcased on the jumbo screens around Times Square. Sari draping lessons, Henna (Mehendi) designs, placing of Gudis will be additional attractions at the event.

Maharashtra, today, stands as one of the key states that promotes, and plans to become the ‘game-changer’ for the country’s economy through tourism.
FAME 2014

Beating the heat this summer, 15,000 music lovers, art aficionados, as well as food and wine connoisseurs and summer enthusiasts made their way to Lavasa City, India’s first planned hill city, to attend F.A.M.E (Food-Art-Music and Entertainment) 2014 Festival. The three day festival held from May 30 to June 1, 2014 saw audiences being treated to an eclectic mix of art, music, theatre, global cuisine, shopping and art workshops at Lavasa City.

The festival got off to a rousing start on Day 1 with an exciting line up of performances by Shibani Kashyap & Mame Khan, the Classical Quintet, Sharon Prabhakar, Niladri Kumar and DJ Ankytrixx. Grape crushing, flea markets, wine and beer tasting, Salsa and Zorba dancing, art exhibitions, street dancing, theatre performances and karaoke filled up the calendar for the three-day event.

On the subsequent days, Rakesh Chaurasia, Ravi Chary, Fazal Qureshi, Agnee, Joe Alvarez and Louis Banks took over the stages to keep the audience pepped up with their signature genres ranging from Indian Classical, Jazz and Rock while Italian opera singer Gioconda Vessichelli introduced the nuances of classical opera. Theatre performances by Sharon Prabhakar, Tara Sutaria and Bharat Dabholkar added to the diverse repertoire of the festival.

FAME 2014 was inaugurated by Mr. Satish Soni, Jt. MD of Maharashtra Tourism & Ms Kishori Gadre, General Manager, MTDC. MTDC was also the tourism partner for the event.

Commenting on the success of FAME 2014, Mr. Nathan Andrews, President and CEO, Lavasa Corporation stated, “We are extremely happy with the overwhelming response to FAME 2014. This response reiterates our continuous endeavor to make Lavasa City a preferred tourist destination that offers a unique experience to its residents and visitors. Going forward, we plan to make FAME an annual feature in Lavasa’s calendar and we will be introducing several more engaging programmes that offer a fresh and unique experience at every visit”.

Music aside, famed artists displayed their art works at the promenade at Lavasa and at the same time gave the revelers an opportunity to appreciate and learn creative art and painting under their and other art teachers’ guidance.

Besides this, the stage at this fiesta was also set for some scrumptious cheese tasting, street food layouts, live grills and cooking counters, and multi-course meals and a lavish spread from all across the world prepared by leading chefs. To add to this, visitors got a taste of the best domestic and international beverages as well as drinks brewed by local breweries.
MTDC Events
Smooth Sailing with MTDC's first Floatel ‘AB Celestial’

WB International Consultant in partnership with the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation and Maharashtra Maritime Board is thrilled to announce the launch of the first of its kind Floatel 'AB Celestial' in Mumbai, at the Bandra jetty. Launched on the 21st of May, the Floatel is the newest jewel in Mumbai’s crown.

Made in, and imported from the USA, the Floatel will be docked at the Maharashtra Maritime Board’s jetty at Bandra, under the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, with a stunning 360 degree view of Mumbai and the Sea Link. The Floatel 'AB Celestial' is a state of the art luxury dining yacht, with a sky deck and 2 galleys. The Floatel will have 2 multi-cuisine restaurants and a club lounge equipped with a 24-hour coffee shop. The yacht will be able to accommodate 660 guests distributed across 4 tiers.

Conceived and spearheaded by the Maharashtra State government, the Floatel involves several government bodies along with WB International Consultants, with AB Hospitality headed by Smt. Manju Bhende and Aishwarya C Bhende being responsible for its operation.

Following the launch of the iconic Floatel 'AB Celestial', the MTDC is looking to create strategic alliances and partnerships with professionals from the hospitality industry and advertising fraternity for the launch of sailing and yachting facilities. The MTDC plans to launch more water sports facilities and yet another luxury private yacht accommodating 84 guests for sunset and dinner cruises along the coast of Mumbai and Maharashtra.
MTDC Resorts in Maharashtra
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Mumbai  108 kms
Pune  126 kms
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Dist. Thane
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Getting there
Mumbai  154 kms
Pune  134 kms
Nearest Railway station  Kalyan
Nearest Airport  Mumbai

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Dist. Pune
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Getting there
Pune  40 kms
Mumbai  180 kms
Nearest Railway Station  Pune
Nearest Airport  Pune

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Convention Complex, Dist. Amravati
Tel.: (07220) 230234, 230263
Mobile: 8879222057
Getting there
Nagpur  220 kms
Amravati  98 kms
Akola  50 kms
Nearest Railway Station  Amravati
Nearest Airport  Nagpur

Harahareshwar
Dist. Raigad
Tel.: Fax: (02147) 226O36
Mobile: 8879222040
Getting there
Malvan  7 kms
Kolhapur  160 kms
Nearest railway station  Kudal
Nearest Airport  Mumbai

Tarkarli
Dist. Sindhudurg
Tele. Fax: (02365) 252390
Mobile: 8879222042
Getting there
Malvan  7 kms
Kolhapur  160 kms
Nearest railway station  Kudal
Nearest Airport  Mumbai

Bhandardara
Tourist Reception Centre
Dist. Nagpur
Tel.: (0712) 2533325
Fax. 2560680
Getting there
Mumbai  841 kms
Nearest Railway Station  Nagpur
Nearest Airport  Nagpur

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