

## Pune Tourism.



**The Aga Khan Palace** is a historically important place in Pune. It is famed for its connect with the Indian Independence movement. British held many important freedom fighters under arrest in this Palace. It is in this palace where Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturba Gandhi were imprisoned along with Mahadeobhai Desai during the Quit India Movement in 1942.

There are memorials of Mahadeobhai Desai and Kasturba Gandhi, which are made out of marble. It is indeed a place which is worth a visit to pay tribute to India's great war heroes



**Shaniwar Wada** was the palace of the great rulers Peshwa Dynasty in Pune. The structure was built by the King Baji Rao in 1730. The Palace was destroyed in a big fire in 1827; the mammoth structure of the walls survived the fire.

Shaniwar Wada stands testimony to the Maratha culture and its architectural design shows influences of Mughal style and features of Maratha artistic styles too. The 21 feet tall massive door of the palace known as Delhi Darwaza is one of the remains of the grand old Palace.



**Shinde's Chhatri** is located at a place called Wanowri, pretty close to Pune city. This is a building constructed as a memorial of the Maratha noble character Shri Mahadju Shinde. The architectural style of the building is appreciable with its beautiful carvings and intricate craftsanship following the Vaasthu Hara rules. This is an excellent architectural marvel worth visiting.



**Saras Baug or Saras Garden** - constructed by Nansasheb Peshwa is located against the scenic background of Parvati Hills. The imposing garden is a popular relaxation spot and is exquisite with elegant fountains and lush green lawns.

The garden houses a renowned temple constructed in 1774 by Madhav Rao Peshwa. The temple is dedicated to Lord Ganesh and there is a Ganesh Murthi Museum, enclosing large number of Ganesh statues.

Saras Garden has been used by citizens of Pune as a walking and jogging track and it also serves as a beautiful hangout for the populace during the weekends and evenings.



**Katraj Snake Park** is a rare location to get the close view of variety of reptile species. This Park, established in 1986, is situated close to Pune on Pune–Satara Highway at Katraj. The Park houses birds and turtles apart from the reptiles.

The park houses a rare species of Brown Palm Civet and this is a major draw here. As per the wildlife records this is the only specimen of this kind in captivity. The King Cobra of length nine feet, which is brought from Sunderbans, is another attraction to the wildlife enthusiasts. A zoo and a garden located nearby are also worth visiting.



**Parvati hill** is a picturesque spot perched atop Pune city. Parvati Hill Temple, believed to be built during the 17th century, is an important Hindu religious destination here. It enshrines the idols of Goddess Parvati, Lord Ganesha, Lord Vishu, Devateshwar and Lord Karthikeya. This temple was solely used for the prayers by the Peshwa rulers in bygone era & was only later opened to the public.

Steps with artistic stone work of the Maratha's lead to this hill temple. The Parvati Hill is an ideal location for trekkers. Nearby attractions include Parvati Museum enclosing old manuscripts, rare coins, weapons, the Sati Monument and Vetel Chabutra.



The legendary Eight Ganesh Idols formed through forces of Nature are still a marvel as thousands flock every year to see the nature. Vinayaka, another name for Lord Ganesha, eight effigies have been found, and these form the Ashta Vinayaka, an octet of eight temples formed around these idols. All these are within 120 km from Pune.



**Morgaon:** The foremost temple of the Ashtavinayaka is Mayureshwar, the one in Morgaon about 65 km from Pune on Pune-Baramati Road. Morya Gosavi built this in the 14th century

**Ranjangaon:** About 70 km from Pune on Pune-Nagar Road, Lord Ganesha is known as Mahaganapati because of its huge size as it has ten trunks and twenty arms.

**Siddhatek:** Situated near Daund, this place is about 99 km from Pune off Pune-Solapur Road.

**Theur:** 25 km off Pune-Solapur Road, situated near Uruli Knchan.

**Pali:** 110 km from Khopoli.

**Mahad:** 87 km near Khopoli, off Pune-Mumbai Road.

**Ozar:** Lord Ganesha here is worshipped in his incarnation as 'Vigneshwara' or the remover of obstacles. Around 85 km near Narayangaon, off Pune-Nashik Road, this place is famous for its garland of lights or deep mala.

**Lenyadri:** This temple around 97 km, near Ozar is situated on the banks of river Kukdi. It's said that Parvati spent time here in penance and gave birth to Ganesha



Situated 48 kms away, Jejuri is known for its Khandoba deity and is considered a religious place by the Hindus. Large congregations attend the annual fair held here. There are eight Ganesh temples or `ashtavinayakas' in Maharashtra where the idol is Swayambhoo or self formed.



Five of these are in and around Pune Sri Moreshwar, Sri Chintamani , Sri Mahaganapati , Sri Wighnagar and Sri Girijatmak.

Khandoba, the deity at Jejuri is the fighter God of the Marathas. He is shown astride a horse and has a angry warlike look. This was reason enough for the Muslims to repeatedly destroy the temple. Even Aurangzeb attempted to destroy the temple a second time in 1690. He however was thwarted in this attempt when the Mughal soldiers while trying to attack the temple disturbed a nest of hornets. The hornets so harassed the besieging Mughal soldiers that Aurangzeb was forced to lift the siege and spare the temple.



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## Alandi

A small village on the banks of the river Indrayani, it is also popularly called Devachi Alandi. Two fairs are held annually here: one on Ashadhi Ekadashi and the other on Kartik Ekadashi.



One can find the samadhi of the famous saint and poet Dnyaneshwar, the author of 'Dyaneshwari' the Marathi commentary on the Gita.

Also situated on the banks of the river Indrayani, 31 kms away, is Dehu, the birthplace of Tukaram, the great 17th century poet-saint of Maharashtra. Hindu pilgrims mostly frequent it. Transport is easy with a number of State Transport buses from Pune. One can also find 'Dharmashalas' for a comfortable stay, but prior booking is necessary.

## Bedra Caves

10 miles South of Karle close to the Kamshet Railway Station is this interior village called Bedsa next to which the New Pune Bombay Express highway is being constructed with the cave located on a stiff hill. Though smaller in size the shrine is very attractive. With breath taking scenery one cannot help but appreciate the spot chosen by Buddhist monks.



With a huge chaitya and one big vihara, there are also numerous small resting chambers or cells for monks that were chiseled out here.

The ornamentation on the façade is made up of miniature rails and repetition of window fronts or facades with a number of water cisterns in front of the Chaitya with one of the inscriptions belonging to Mandavi princess Samadinaka who got this facility made for monks and Buddhist devotees.

The Vihara has 9 cells and couple of side cells. In one of the larger cells is a non-Buddhist deity Yamai that is worshipped by the Kolis. Below in the village under a tree is the Tandula stone of Bedsai. A palki (palanquin) from this village every year goes up to Yamai's shrine and then to Vaghoba (deity of the pass) up the hill.





## Karla Caves

About 40 km from Pune, these Buddhist caves dating back to 160 BC, have a Chaitya (chapel), the largest in the country and some viharas (dwelling caves).



Karla is the site of some of the best-preserved Buddhist caves and the chaitya cave is perhaps the best-preserved cave of its kind in the subcontinent. Unlike the Ajanta and Ellora caves, the most refreshing feature of Karla is the absence of tourist hordes, since Karla is quite off the tourist beaten track.

However, to avoid holidaying locals, don't visit the caves on the weekends. The Karla caves exist amidst a range of hills not far from Lonavala. Apart from the chaitya hall there are many vihara caves too.



However, it is the awesome chaitya hall that makes this journey worth it. The architecture and the carvings of this hall are something else! A must see!



## Dehu

Situated on the river Indrayani, this place is famous for the poet Sant Tukaram who was born and brought up here. A number of stories of the famed poet and the place are still popular. There are a number of interesting historical sights a short distance out of Pune that can be seen over a few days, if you plan your time right.

The charm of this quaint city of Pune is around it in the forts, the caves and the other adventurous treks around the little mountains and hillocks! Some of these sights have great relevance in the history of the Marathas.

Visits to the Buddhist caves at Bhaja and at Karla make rather interesting side trips too. And Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar, located in the Sahyadris, are quaint, pretty places for a relaxing few days. Take your pick.



The temple here is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas in the country. Around 20,000 pilgrims annually attend the fair during the festival of Mahashivaratri. This place is about 22 kms from Pune.



A special Hindu pilgrimage site and quite free of tourist stampedes, this Shiva temple was built by a Peshwa ruler and really comes alive during Shivratri.

The temple is rather impressive and beautifully carved and houses one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Hindustan. Located 122 kilometers away from Pune by road in the northeast direction, this temple is close to Shivneri Fort.



One of the highest forts in Maharashtra, this fort was Shivaji's first major conquest. He rebuilt it by repairs and made it his base. Shivaji had apparently abandoned this fort for Raigadh after finding it to be vulnerable due to its open summit. This fort offers a lot for trekkers, as it has one of the most exciting treks.



A two-hour bus ride from Swargate will take you to Velha village, where the imposing fort rises out of the outskirts of this village!

Not a fort for everyone, this trek needs to be attempted only for true-blue trekkers, as the fort does not offer any shelter or food! Though what it does make good for is the fantastic viewing of the surrounding forts! A true blue biker's diary reads, "Sunset is beautiful. The view from the top towards [Raigadh](#) is awesome. Climb is dangerous. Almost vertical at times. Biking was great, lots of climbs and down hills."



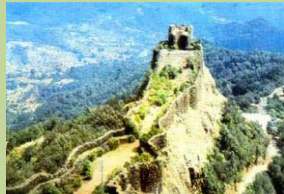
About 40 km from Pune, this place was the capital of Maharashtra under Shivaji for some time. This fort now holds the academy of the National Cadet Corps (NCC). There are a number of interesting historical sights a short distance out of Pune that can be seen over a few days, if you plan your time right.

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At a distance of 25 kms from [Mahabaleshwar](#) stands the majestic Pratapgadh housing the tomb of Afzalkhan at the toe of the fort. This fort is famous for the encounter between Shivaji and Afzalkhan, the ruler of Ahmednagar.



In spite of being attacked by tiger claws, Shivaji killed Afzalkhan. There is a temple of Bhavani Mata, the idol of worship of King Shivajiraje Bhosle. There is a statue of Shivaji Maharaj inside the fort called Bale Killa.

Currently accessible by a motorable road to the top, all the amenities of a hill-station are available at MTDC's resort a few kms. away at Mahabaleshwar

## RAJGADH

About 85 kms from Pune, this fort has great historical relevance, as it was Shivaji's favourite fort. Practically speaking, a two hour bus drive to Wazheghar, Bhutonda or Pali. Any of these options will take you right to the foothills of this legendary fort. Accomplished in a matter of four years, 80 kms from the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, the remains of this fort give a glimpse of the majesty of Shivaji's first mountain capital. For those with the adventurous streak, take the trek through the chor darwaza, otherwise the easier route through Pali which while being a cake walk is a longer one.

The temple atop the Padmavati machi offers a good place to stay! Rajgad, with its treacherous approaches, zig zag narrow paths and the deceptive double-walled armour of its ramparts, and also the massive pali gate, nedhe or elephant's eye still exists. But Shivaji had to give this up because of its narrow summit to move onto Raigadh!

The view from the top offers a magnificent view of the Sahyadri range.

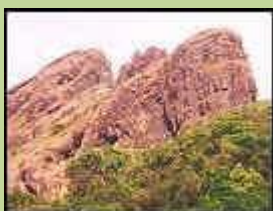
## Lohagad & Visapur

A ridge separates the twin forts of Lohegadh and Visapur at 1350m with a km between them. Lohagadh was Shivaji's stronghold during his reign.

A local from Pune takes you there; you have to get down at Malavli, the nearest rail head (10 kms away) which takes roughly an hour or so. A waterfall in the trek to Lohagad is the highlight of the trek. A number of mischievous monkeys can create trouble so watch out.



Though not much remains of the fort, the trek to the top is still worth it. While Visapur might be right next to it, there is not much to see! Dating back to the 1700s, visiting these forts (one kilometer apart), which were taken and lost by Shivaji, makes for a strenuous hike.



The **Bhaja caves** , situated in Bhaja village, are nearby and it is a 4 kilometer walk from Lohagad to these caves and so also from Lohagad to the main road. The nearest railhead is Malvali, 10 kilometers away.

## Panchgani

Around 100 km from Pune, Panchgani at a height of 1000 m, gets its name from the five hills on which it is built. Panchgani is another one of India's dreamy, quiet hill stations. It is located in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, on Parasni ghat, just 20 odd kilometers from the very resort-ish Mahabaleshwar and set in an even more pretty location. Probably the best option would be to stay at Panchgani Club, which offers temporary membership.



The club authorities can be a bit sticky if you don't have the recommendation of a member; but it is worth a try. Regular buses connect Panchgani with [Mahabaleshwar](#), Pune and Bombay including the MTDC luxury coaches.

This town is crammed with all kinds of lookout spots and lanes of silver oak to pursue nature rambles. The town -which was 'established' in the 1850s by John Chesson -is surrounded by the five hills from which it gets its name. It is at a lower elevation than Mahabaleshwar by just a few feet. The drive between the two towns is breathtaking. Famous for its flowers like Buttercups, pimpernel etc., during the months of August-September, sights on the hill slopes of this place are spell bounding. During the monsoon Panchgani is deluged with some six meters of rain.

So fierce are the downpours that even buildings don special raincoats of kulum grass and the hill station all but closes down. Famous is this hill station for the best variety of boarding schools in the country.. Be it St.Peter's where the who's who of the film industry from Sanjay Dutt have studied or St. Joseph's where Kajol and Zeenat Aman have their Alma Mater. Even Sanjeevni is a great school started by Dr. Neelkanth Kalyani, which offers CBSE and SSC residential boards

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