

PRAVEG'S TOURISM ONE

Published by PRAVEG COMMUNICATIONS (INDIA) LIMITED | www.praveg.com

May 2022

Year : 7 | Issue : 9 (Continue Issue : 67) | Pages : 68 | ₹ 200

RNI Regd. No. GUJENG/2015/70098

A high-end monthly magazine



Beach Trails

**THE HERITAGE
OF STEPWELLS**

**THE WESTERN
GHATS**

HILL HOLIDAYS

HELLO SUMMER



It's hot!

Just when the temperature shoots above 35 degrees, we all get that feeling of moving to a cooler and relaxing location. Some want to take a dip in the sea to cool off and enjoy the breeze at a beach, while some crave a nip in the air, wallowing among the clouds at a hill station.

Kickstart the happy summers by exploring the marine and coastal attractions of Devbhumi Dwarka or taking a culinary trip from Mumbai to Malvan. With a sapphire-blue sea to the west and emerald-green hills to the east, a coastal drive in Karnataka will be a refreshing experience.

If you're into hills, take a weekend break to Saputara to relish streams flowing through the rocks, cascading down steep slopes, and the lowland forests giving way to bamboo, teak and flora of the higher hills. Or beat the heat by exploring the scenic views of Pavagadh, with a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site of Champaner-Pavagadh with an impressive variety of monuments including forts, temples, mosques, stepwells, palaces, pavilions, granaries and manmade water bodies as a bonus.

Read on!

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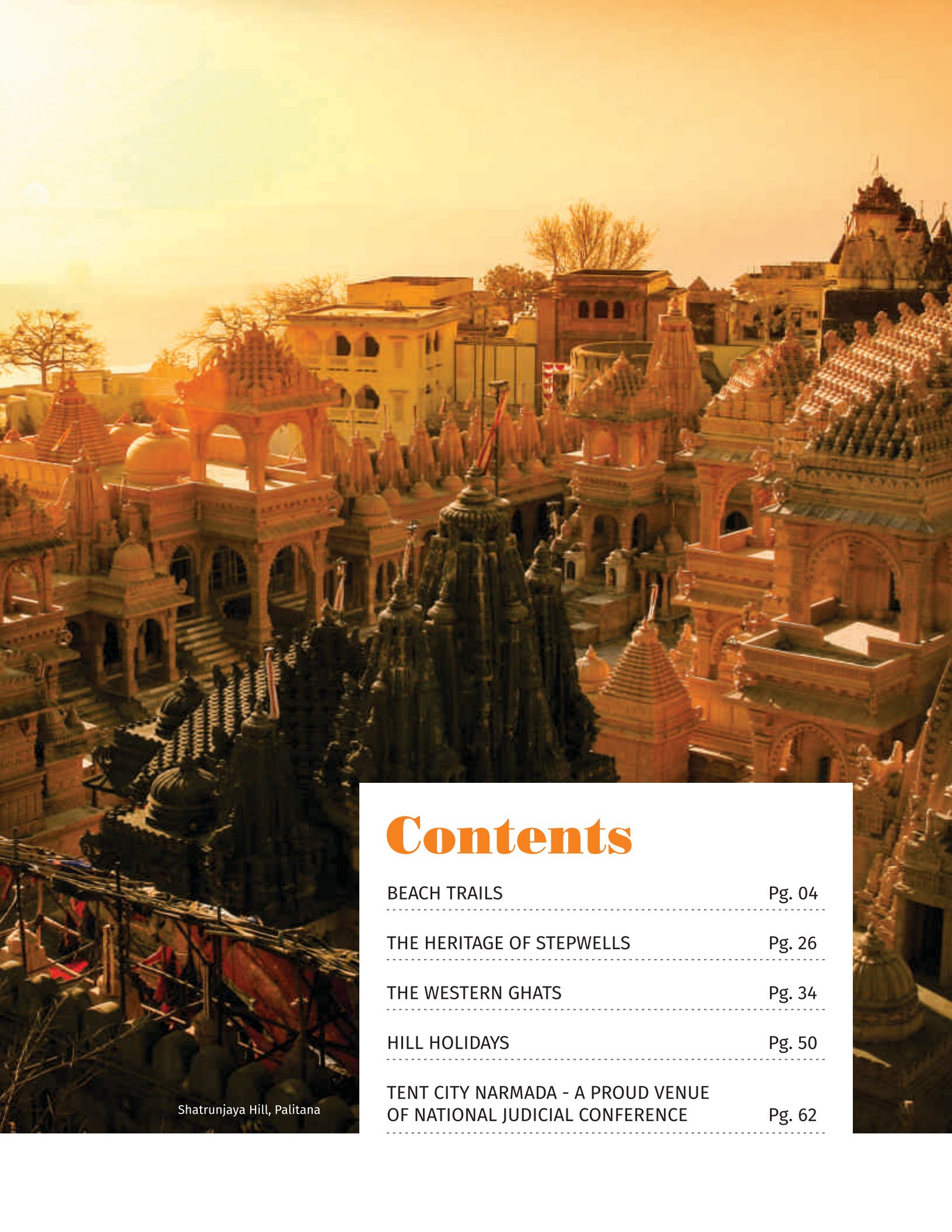
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Shatrunjaya Hill, Palitana

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Incredible India

Beach Trails

Catch the sea breeze at some of these beaches.



Radhanagar Beach, Havelock Island



Ghogla Beach

Source: Bhavin Hareesh Kumar Bhatt/Shutterstock

GETAWAY TO GHOGLA, AHMEDAPUR MANDVI AND SIMBOR BEACHES

Along with Ahmedpur Mandvi beach in Gujarat, Ghogla has a long stretch that is good for walking and wading. The sea is safe for paddling, wading, swimming and water sports in some months of the year. This beach has been awarded a blue flag. The Ghogla beach is one of the finest beaches of Diu, with lovely sands and a good view over the creek to the monuments of Diu Island. A park has been created behind the

beach and there are structures where you can sit and enjoy the view.

Drive from Ghoghla to Simbor, a small cove about 20km from the island. The drive to Simbor is attractive, passing mango orchards and other groves, villages, temples and ashrams. Simbor comes as a surprise – it is a tiny enclave of Diu surrounded by Gujarat. Historically, it was connected to the rest of the Portuguese enclave by sea.

Today, Simbor comprises two strips of land separated by Rio Vançoso creek. The beach here is lovely, and you can see reef heron (also called western reef egrets), kingfishers and terns catching fish in the shallow waters. The Fort St. Anthony of Simbor, also called Panikotha, was once part of Distrito de Diu and still falls in the Union Territory. Its main purpose was to protect the boats in the Simbor bay.

The Fort St. Anthony of Simbor





Diu Beach

Simbor Beach



Source: Memories Over Mocha/Shutterstock



Kachchigadh Lighthouse

EXPLORE THE MARINE AND COASTAL ATTRACTIONS OF DEVBHUMI DWARKA DISTRICT

Dwarka makes an excellent base to visit beaches like Okha Madhi. Travel north from Dwarka to the Rukmini Temple, a 12th century architectural gem with exquisitely carved walls located near the sea. From here continue to Shivrajpur, which has a beautiful beach with lovely sands and blue water. The water is shallow and suitable for swimming. Kachchigadh Lighthouse is one of the landmarks of the beach.

The beach has developed as a destination for scuba diving, snorkelling and water sports. The gentle gradient of the foreshore is safe for beginner divers

to start in shallow sea waters and then move to more open seas. Operators of diving lessons and water-based activities have their tented offices along the beach.

Continue from here to Mithapur, named for the saltworks ('mitha' is the Gujarati word for salt) with Tata's well-planned township. The town is located near a beach declared a no-plastics zone by the Tatas to protect marine ecology. Tata Chemicals runs Okhai, an organisation working for the benefit of local craftswomen. You can buy exquisite applique and embroidery of Bhopa Rabari and other communities at their shop.

Proceed to Okha, an old port that thrived in the days of the Baroda Princely State. From the jetty at Okha, you can get a ferry to Bet Dwarka, an island in the Arabian Sea much revered by pilgrims. This island also has a good beach, called Dunny Point, which is good for spotting marine life – walk along the rock pools where you could see octopus, sea hare, starfish and other marine invertebrates left behind by the tide. Dolphins and gulls are often seen on the crossing from Okha to Bet Dwarka, and there are also chances of seeing sea turtles. Return to Okha, and time permitting visit the beautiful beach at Positara fringed by superb coral reef.



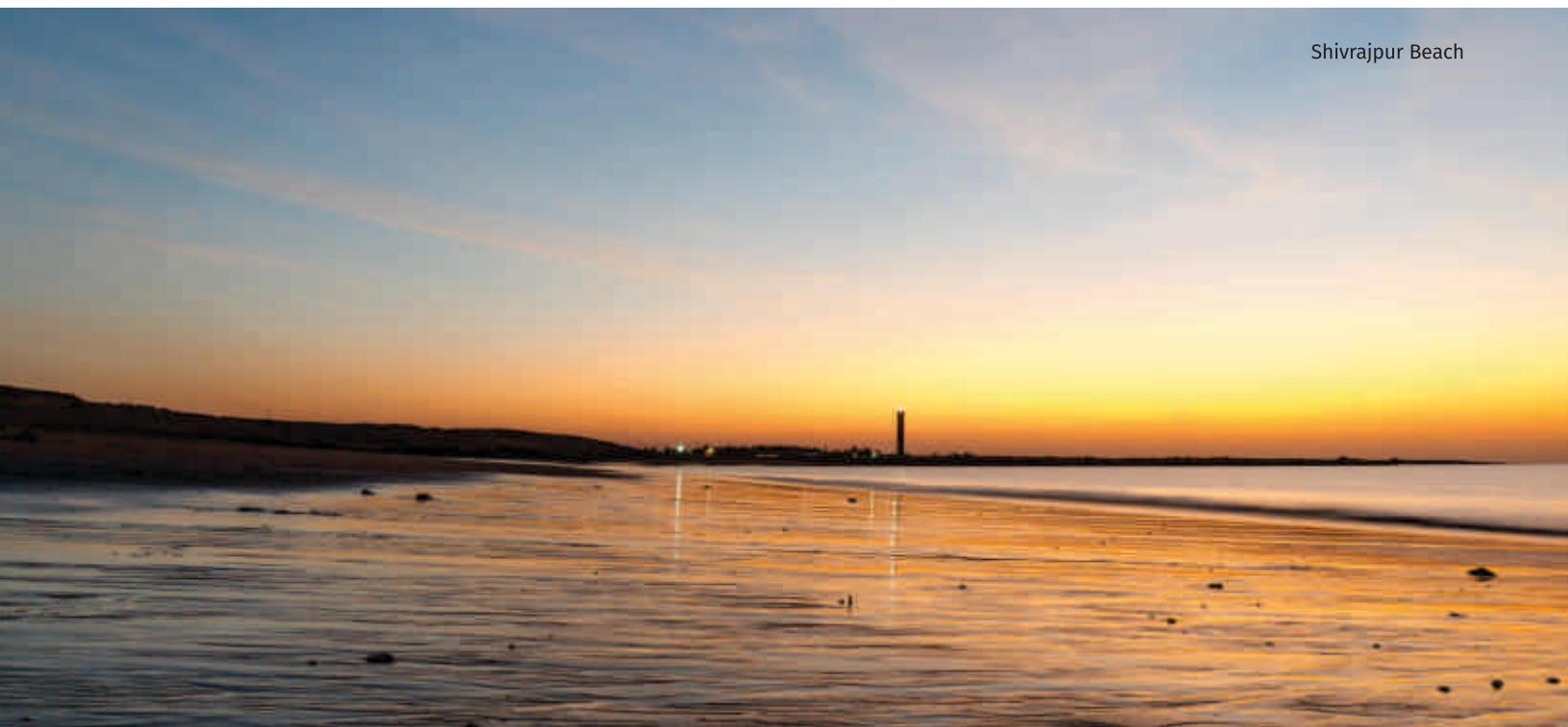
Shivrajpur Beach





BEACH TRAILS

Okhamadhi Beach



Shivrajpur Beach



Bet Dwarka

Source: Imagine Rural/Shutterstock



Tarkarli Beach

TAKE A CULINARY TRIP FROM MUMBAI TO MALVAN



Konkani Grilled Fish

The Maharashtra coast has rich tourism resources – beautiful beaches, birds and marine life, fertile fields, luxuriant orchards, coastal forts and other heritage sites, and a bounty of seafood and fruits. Koli, Konkani and Malwani cuisine offer delectable dishes for those who like fish, prawns, squid, crab and other seafood. Konkani products like cashews, kadve vaal, jackfruit chips, kokam sharbat, pickles, kulith peeth, amsul or ambat and amba poli are widely available.

You can visit historical Murud Janjira, the hills and beaches of Dapoli,

Ganputipule, which is popular both for pilgrims and beach holidays, and other sites. Some of the finest beaches are in the Sindhudurg district, part of the Konkan coastal region which lies between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Tourists visiting Sindhudurg enjoy Vade Sagoti (rice puris), ghavane which is like a dosa served with coconut milk, amboli – usal, shirvale (rice vermicelli/ noodles), Malwani fish curries, fish fry, jackfruit curry, etc, washed down with sol kadi. The famous alphonso mangoes of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts are a summertime attraction.

The town of Malvan makes a base to visit the Tarkarli beach, Mobar point, Chivla beach, Tondavali beach, and small creeks like Karli, Kolamb and Kalavali. It is possible for a tourist to spend three or four days Tarkarli, enjoying activities like dolphin-spotting, water sports and scuba diving. The beaches are beautiful and good coastal wildlife can be seen. This area is known for its Malvani curries.

You can also visit Sawantwadi to see the palace, the art of painting ganjifa cards, dolls and cashew farms, and other places inland.



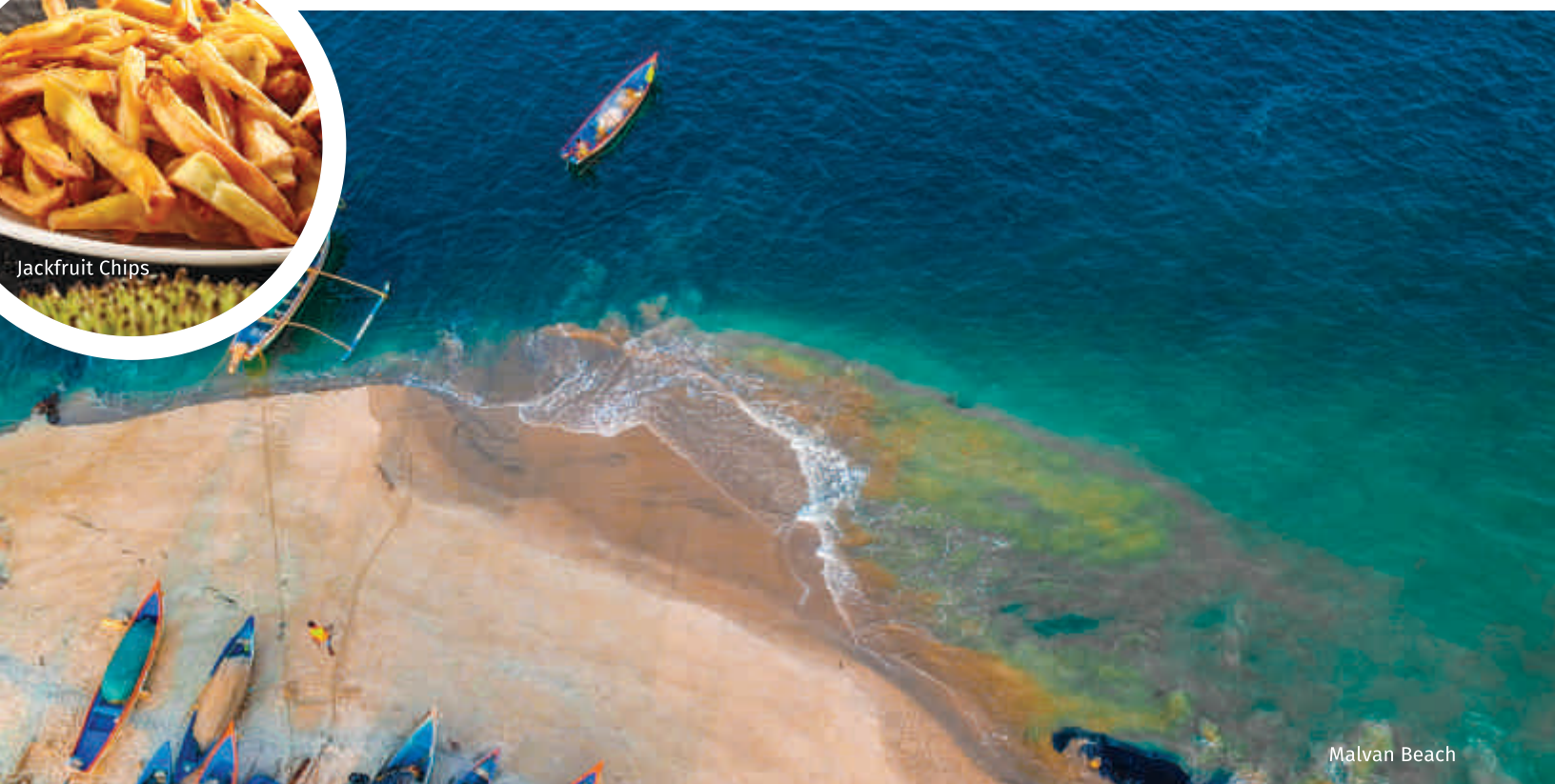
Murud Janjira Fort



Devbag Beach



Jackfruit Chips



Malvan Beach



Devbagh Beach



Doplai Beach



TAKE A COASTAL DRIVE IN KARNATAKA

With a sapphire-blue sea to the west and emerald-green hills to the east, the coastal road from Goa to Kerala runs along many stunningly beautiful beaches, some of which are not yet on the tourist map. This area called Karavalli also has holy places, architecturally-interesting heritage sites, and other cultural attractions. This is also an excellent area for water-based activities like surfing, scuba diving and water sports.

This coastal road also offers access to some exciting food destinations like Bhatkal known for its biryani and halwa, Udupi famous for its temple food, Mangalore famous for its food and a number of places from Karwar to Ullal that offer delicious seafood.

Just south of Goa, Karwar has a popular beachfront associated with Rabindranath Tagore who eulogised it in his writings. The Rabindranath Tagore Beach is the place where INS Chapal

(K94) which was a Chamak class missile boat of the Indian Navy stands as a Warship Museum. This can be an educational tourism destination as this museum ship offers an insight into the working of a naval ship. South of Karwar, Gokarna is a town that owes its religious importance to its association with a story about the Atmalingam given by Lord Shiva to Ravana who had performed penance and sang in honour of Shiva. Besides being a pilgrimage destination, Gokarna has also become a backpacker's paradise attracting budget foreign tourists and the hippie crowd reminiscent of the psychedelic era of travel. This has also become a place for wellness tourism with top quality yoga and ayurvedic centres and resorts.

Like Gokarna, Murdeshwar is a pilgrimage destination famous for the world's second tallest Shiva statue. It has an excellent beach and is a suitable site for water sports. It is the base to

visit Netrani Island which offers the easiest access to clear water diving in India for people living in cities like Mumbai, Mangalore and Bengaluru or those holidaying at the beaches of Goa, Karnataka and Kerala. The visibility is usually over 15 metres, water temperatures are in the 27 to 30 degree range and the marine life is rich in variety. The dives explore coral reefs, rock pinnacles and shipwrecks. PADI-certified courses are available. A short distance from Murdeshwar, Bhatkal has the Khetapai Narayana Temple, an excellent example of the 17th century west coast architectural style. The Chandra-natha Basti is a 17th century Jain temple in the town, and there are many other Jain bastis in the old parts of Bhatkal.

From Murdeshwar, the road continues to Udupi district which has many beautiful beaches like Malpe. Udupi itself is also an attraction for Vaishnavite tourism.



Malpe Beach



BEACH TRAILS



Murudeshwar Temple



Thotlakonda Beach

ENJOY THE SANDS OF RUSHIKONDA

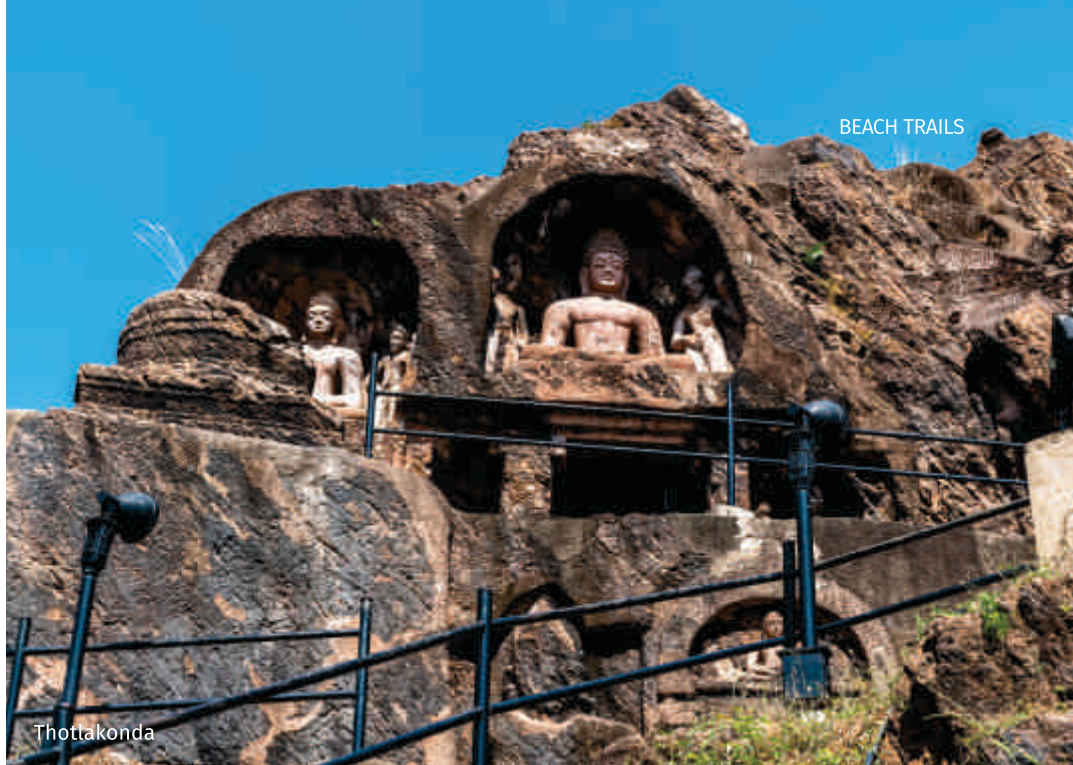
Rushikonda has a wild beauty about it, with sand dunes, rocks and views. The beach is not suitable for swimming but water sports are possible. This is a popular place for food, with places like Sea Inn (well-known as Raju Ghaari Dhaba) which is an iconic eatery for Andhra style seafood prepared by Lakshmi Devi Kakarlapudi using fresh Bay of Bengal catches and Guntur spices, and Hotel Vihar.

This beach is located on Visakhapatnam - Bheemunipatnam Road which is probably the longest beachside highway stretch in India – it runs almost continuously along beaches for more than 25km offering breathtaking views of dunes and the Bay of Bengal at places. Along this highway, a Buddha statue and a modern gate mark the entrance to Buddhist archaeological site of Thotlakonda, where a Hinayana Buddhist monastery flourished about 2000 years ago. The Thotlakonda hilltop site has the remains of stupas, chaitya grihas, pillared halls, viharas, storeroom,

refectory, a drainage system and the tank that once provided water to the site. Buddhism thrived around Visakhapatnam between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD, and an older site than Thotlakonda can be seen at Bhavani Honda further north. Presently, the highway brings you to Bheemunipatnam, which was a port and settlement of the Dutch East India Company along the Coromandel Coast between 1610 until the company's liquidation in 1798. Visit the Dutch cemetery with its obelisk shaped tombs, and see other European colonial remains like the ruined fort, colonnaded houses and British clock tower. A lighthouse at Bhimili Port which used to guide passenger vessels between Madras (Chennai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) in the 1800s can be seen from the beach. Another highlight on the Visakhapatnam - Bheemunipatnam Road is Erra Matti Dibbalu, a coastal red sand dune declared a Geo-Heritage Site by the Geological Survey of India.



Bhimili Beach





TAKE A LIFESTYLE BREAK IN PONDICHERRY

If you are looking for a place where you can relax in informal cafes and lively restaurants, Puducherry (Pondicherry) is your kind of destination. You can find streets with old world charm and others with a Bohemian vibe, chic cafes in the French Quarter and old coffee houses in the Tamil areas. Stroll along quiet, clean and neatly laid out streets lined with bougainvillea covered bungalows and French buildings, and dine at villa-style restaurants or snack

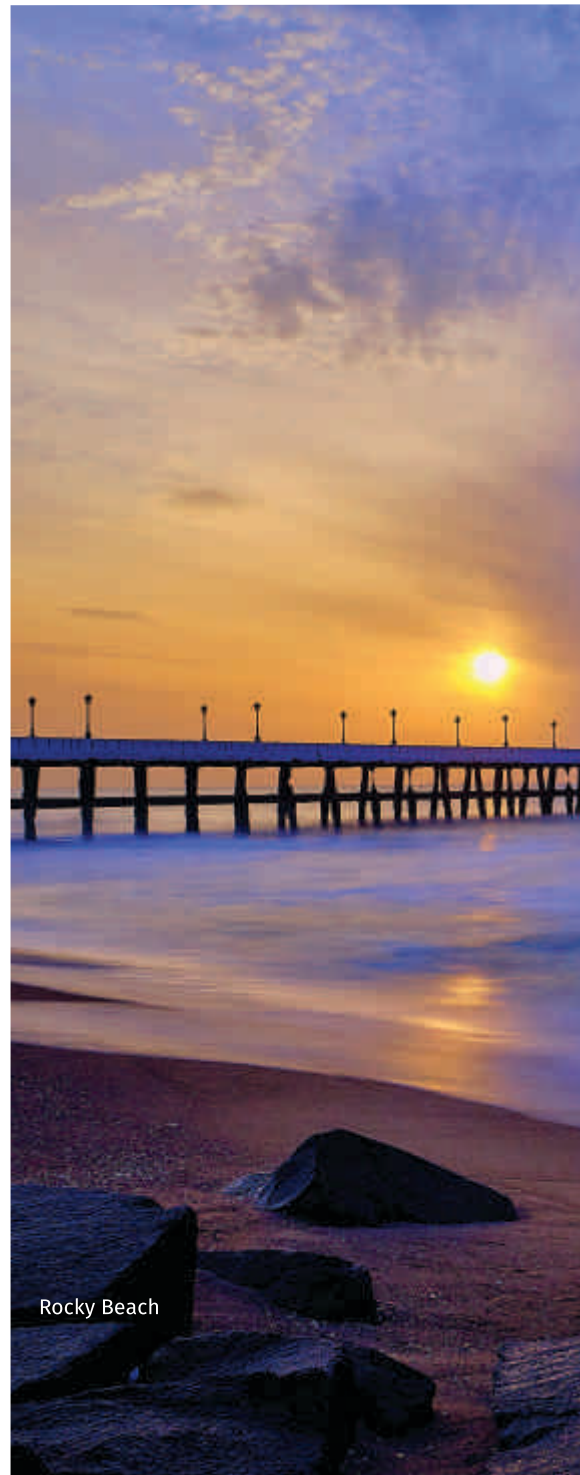
at cute little cafes. In the morning and evening, the boulevards along the sea are pleasant for walks.

For a spiritual escape you can visit French colonial churches, Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the Auroville commune.

Eden Beach here has a safe swimming zone, seating arrangements, clean drinking water, washroom, changing room, bathing room, toilets for tourists, including for persons with disabilities and parking facilities.



Streets of Pondicherry



Rocky Beach



Auroville Commune



French Colonial City of Pondicherry

Source: Jose J. HERNANDEZ, Communes and Initiatives, 2017



Eden Beach



Great Egret, Mangalajodi

EXPLORE CULTURE AND BIRDLIFE AROUND PURI

The Golden Beach at Puri stretches about 870 metres from Digabareni square to Mayfair Hotel offering some clean sands with palm shades to enjoy the view of the Bay of Bengal. A visit to this beach can combine with religious and heritage tourism. This seaside city is most famous as a centre for heritage and pilgrimage, and makes a base to visit the Konark Sun Temple which is one of India's most famous monuments.

44km from Puri's Blue Flag beach, Chilika is an easily accessible destination from the Bhubaneswar, Konark and Puri tourist triangle. Today, Chilika is the source of income for fishers of Ganjam, Puri and Khordha districts, and other residents of the area in occupations like paddy farming, tourism, hospitality, and boat operations. Illegal fisheries endanger the ecology and the future fishing potential of the lagoon. The growth of sustainable tourism in these areas can support the livelihood for many residents.

The Chilika Lake, covering 1100 sq km, is the largest coastal lagoon of India, with an extensive unspoiled stretch of empty beach across the sand bar which separates the lake from the sea. This is one of the top sites for bird watching and the wintering grounds for large flocks of migratory birds. Rafts of ducks, flocks of flamingos, majestic sea eagles, and the congregations of waders can be seen during boat rides and visitors are likely to glimpse the Irrawaddy dolphins surfacing for air. The Sea Mouth has a beach with a breathtaking view of the Bay of Bengal.

The Chilika lagoon is a large source of fish production and biodiversity, famous for the high-quality prawns and other crustaceans. This is a paradise for those who enjoy seafood.

Mangalajodi is a small place in Orissa situated at a distance of about 70 km from capital city Bhubaneswar. The village on the banks of Chilika Lake renders an eye-catching scenic beauty and attracts visitors for its vast wetlands with many migrating birds.





Golden Beach



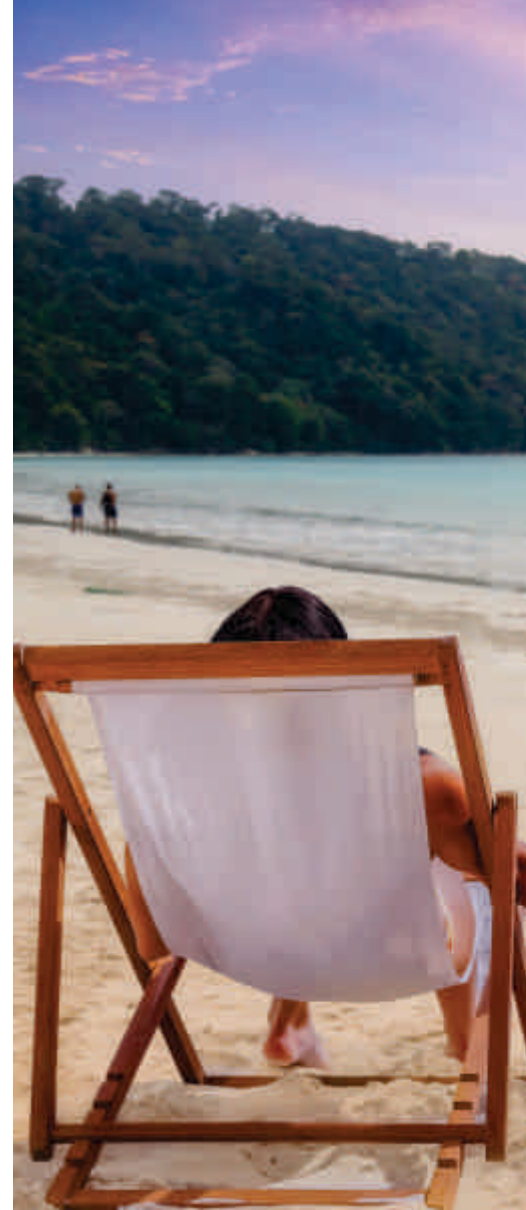
Chilika Lake

Source: Wirestock Creators/Shutterstock

ENJOY THE CLEAR WATERS OF HAVELOCK ISLAND

The passage of about three hours from Port Blair to Havelock is enjoyable as you pass unpopulated islets and islands of Ritchie's Archipelago, you could spot flying fish and playful dolphins sometimes come close to the boat. As Andaman is one of the world's well-known diving destinations, you will find scuba-diving hobbyists with their equipment among your fellow-

passengers. The island's main attraction is the shell strewn snow-white Radhanagar Beach with a curve of sugary sands, teal blue shallows, native forest and a view of jungle hills. Rated by international magazines and TV shows as the best beaches in Asia and among the best in the world, Radhanagar offers a glorious view of sunrise and sunset.





EXPLORE CHURCHES AT TRANQUEBAR

The Blue Flag Beaches of Chennai, Kovalam and Puducherry are known for their resorts, but further south the highway leads to beaches that are still virgin for development. One of these beaches is at the town of Tharangambadi, formerly Tranquebar. The beach is reputed to be an Ozone-rich coastal area. The Tranquebar Museum, the New Jerusalem Church built in 1718,

Fort Dansborg built in 1620 which is among the largest Danish forts in the world, and Zion Church which is one of the oldest Protestant churches in India. From here, you can visit the French monuments of Karaikal in the Indian Union Territory of Puducherry and one of India's most visited Roman Catholic Latin Rite shrines called the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health at Velankanni.



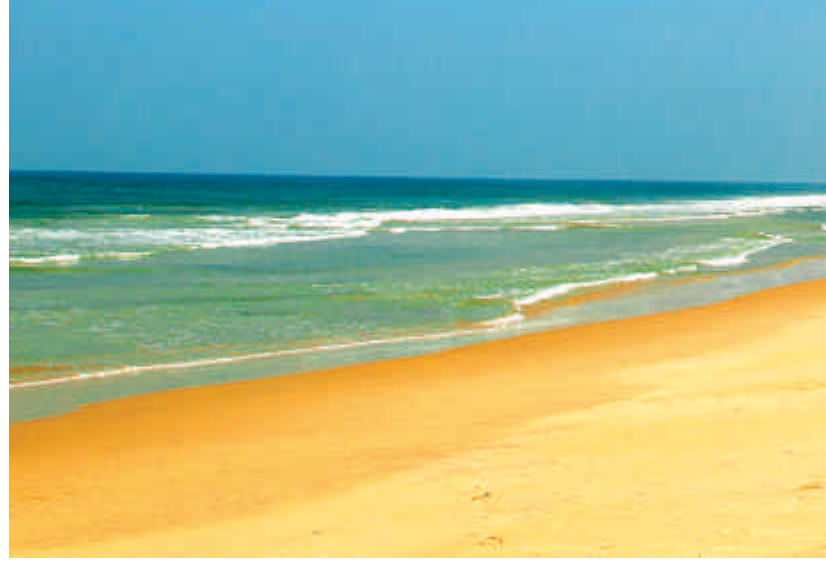
Danish Fort



Dansborg Fort



Zion Church



BEACH BREAK AT BEKAL

While the beaches of southern Kerala are crowded with hotels and resorts, Kerala's northernmost districts of Kannur and Kasaragod have some long white beaches that have only recently become popular. Bekal is one of the best of Kerala's northern beaches and has a couple of luxurious resorts where you can sit back and relax.

Bekal has beautiful stretches of fine gold-hued sand with calm water. Kappil Beach is relatively isolated and very pretty.

Start your tour of Bekal with a visit to the fort, which is among Kerala's most majestic. The keyhole shaped fort has circular walls rising impressively from the sea to about 130 feet. Inside you can

find a temple and the ruins of many monuments. The fort is said to have been built by the Nayaka kings who ruled a coastal stretch in southern Karnataka and northern Kerala. Bekal served as an important military station of Tipu Sultan when he led the great military expedition to capture Malabar. It fell to the British after the defeat of Tipu Sultan and became the headquarters of the newly organised Bekal Taluk of South Canara District under the East India Company. Just outside the fort is the Mukhyaprana Temple which draws Hanuman devotees and there is also a mediaeval mosque. The zigzag entrance and the trenches around the fort were an important strategy inherent in the fort. Walk

around the fort, covering about 40 acres, which has a water-tank with a flight of steps leading to it, the magazine for keeping ammunition, the Observation Tower which is noteworthy for its broad stairway, and the British rest house. Located on a rocky outcrop, the fort offers a breathtaking view of the sea.

Walking along the seafront you can enjoy a view of the fort. Pallikere Beach is very popular. Enjoy wonderful views of the sunset on the Arabian Sea from Kodi, a cliff at the end of the beach. Bekal is also a good base to explore the Kerala backwaters in the Kasaragod district where many rivers have their estuaries. Valiyaparamba is a small island about 30 km from Bekal from where backwaters boat trips are possible. ■



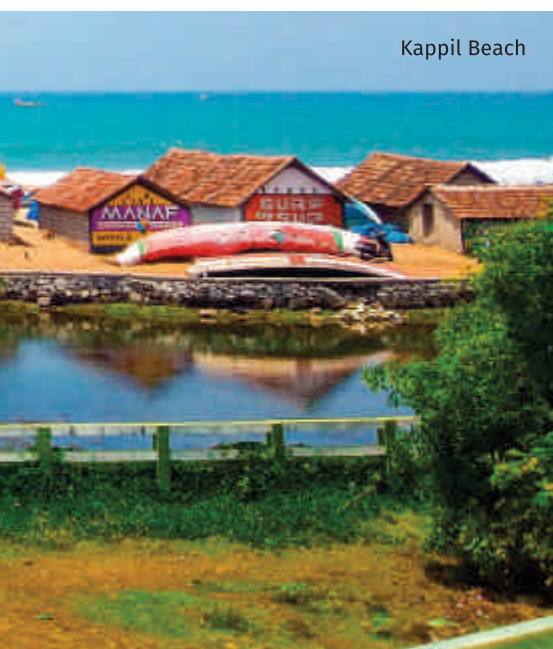


BEACH TRAILS



Source: Indiraj Rajesh/Shutterstock

Bekal Fort



Kappil Beach



Words by ANIL MULCHANDANI



THE HERITAGE OF STEPWELLS

Stepwells typically comprise the vertical well shaft and an adjacent trench, which is provided with subterranean passageways, chambers and steps that made it easier for people to reach the low water level. These were often covered to protect the water and its users from the outside elements. Covered pavilions that were suitable for those seeking shade became centres of social interaction in villages and resting places for travellers. The pavilions were accessed by ledges that were usable even when the water level rose to cover the steps.



RANI RUDA'S VAV

In 1499, the superb Stepwell at Adalaj was commissioned by Rani Ruda, wife of a Hindu feudal lord. As you enter the landscaped complex in which the Stepwell falls, there is little to be seen above ground but once at the entrance pavilion, you can be treated to the sight of carvings on the walls that are rich in quality and quantity. From the entrance, stairways from three sides meet on a wide landing with windows, doors, shrines and jharokhas (overhanging balcony jutting from the walls), each covered with carvings. From the landing, take the stairway down five storeys to the water level. The stairway passes walls, columns and niches bearing rich sculptures of dancing maidens, musicians, birds, animals, erotic figures, deities and motifs of plants, flowers, horses and ports. The columned pavilions receive diffused light which make them ideal resting places. The first well has a tank surrounded by steps and platforms probably used by ritual bathers. The main well, though disused, retains the ramp used for drawing water. The octagonal shafts are also richly ornamented with floral or geometric carvings, and figurines.







DADA HARIR VAV

Dada Harir Vav in Asarwa area of Ahmedabad is an example of the Stepwells built under the Gujarat Sultanate, which used the Solanki Rajput style and principles but with less of the sculptural ornamentation. During the reign of Mahmud Shah, Bai Harir Sultani of the royal harem commissioned the building of this Stepwell around the same period at Ruda's Vav at nearby Adalaj. The Sanskrit inscription on a gallery shows it was built in Posh Samvat 1556, probably 1499-1500. The cost is estimated at 3,29,000 Mahmudis (more than Rs1 lakh at that time). The Stepwell has spiral staircases, pieced into the sidewall of the well shaft, and descending to the different platform levels to reach the deep cylinder. From the domed entrance, steps lead down to covered galleries. From each landing, corridors lead to more galleries built along the wall. Intermittent columns also buttress the walls from the intense earth pressure. These columns produce a marvellous effect of light and shadow, flooding the well with diffused light. At the west end is the circular well with carved walls and cupolas. Bai Harir also built a lofty mosque near the well and you can also see her exquisite tomb with lattice walls.

An older Stepwell at Asarva, Mata Bhavani Vav is now used as a shrine. It is believed to date from the 11th century when this city was called Karnavati after Raja Karna of the Solanki dynasty.





RANI KI VAV

At Patan, you can see the 11th century Rani ki Vav Stepwell, which is a gem of the ruined city of Anhilwad Patan, once the capital of Gujarat. This Stepwell gets its name from Rani Udaymati who is said to have constructed it in the 11th century in memory of her husband, the Solanki ruler Bhimdeva. The enormous Stepwell has a series of pavilions spanning the 7-storey stairway. Along the stairway, the wall is replete with about 500 major sculptures and even smaller ones, including finely carved statues of gods. Some fine ones depict the Avatars of Lord Vishnu. The pillars that protect the well against the earth pressure are also well carved. At the base are niches carrying images of Lord Ganesh. Chambers near the water are believed to have been resting rooms for royals in the hot months. Nearby is Saharasralingam Talav, a tank with Shiva shrines



OTHER NOTEWORTHY STEPWELLS

Amritavarshini Vav, Ahmedabad

Located near the Panchkuva Gate, Amritavarshini Vav is notable for its L-shaped plan. It has three storeys and is more than 50 feet deep. The arches have different shapes at the two storeys and in the pavilion tower before the well shaft.

Jethabhai ni Vav, Ahmedabad

Located near the mediaeval Shahalam in Ahmedabad, this stepwell was built by a person named Jethabhai in the 1860s. It has four pavilions and the entrance pavilion is canopied.

Sevasi Vav, Vadodara

Built in 1495, this Stepwell has impressive pavilions at the top and a tree-way entrance that leads through a narrow passage but goes a long way to the water. Though not richly carved, the structure is imposing.

Navlakhi Vav, Vadodara

Located in the Lakshmi Vilas Palace complex, this Stepwell was first built during the Gurjar rule. A plaque on the Vav says it was built in Sultan Muzaffar Shah's time in the 15th century as he rebuilt it during his reign over Gujarat. The Stepwell was maintained by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad and still stands in the palace grounds.

Madha and Ganga Stepwells, Wadhwan

Surendranagar district abounds in stepwells, and two of the best are in Wadhwan. See the majestic gate of the 13th century Ganga Vav.

Purna Chandra Bhawan, Wankaner

One of the most modern stepwells lies in the 33-acre grounds of Purna Chandra Bhawan, the summer palace or Royal Oasis of Wankaner. This is unusual in being a vertical stepwell and shows multiple influences including European. The marble sculpture of Hindu deities is a highlight.

Vikia Vav, Ghumli

Ghumli is a remote site in the midst of green scrubby hills of the Barda Range, located near Porbandar. The 12th century Sun Temple called Navlakha Mandir is an intricately carved base of the shikhara, two storey mandapa and a fine stone platform. A short distance from here is the Vikia Vav, a 12th century stepwell about 60m long and 4.5m wide. The highlight of the stepwell is the magnificent entrance pavilions at three places. Ghumli also has the ruins of a Jain temple. ■



Sevasi Vav - Vadodara



WHERE TO STAY


For authentic local stay experience, there are homestay facilities available across Gujarat, approved by Gujarat Tourism.

For more information and booking, visit :
www.gujarattourism.com/accommodation/homestay.

Incredible India

THE WESTERN GHATS

**THE GREEN GOLD
OF BIODIVERSITY**



On World Biodiversity Day, we look at some sites in the Western Ghats which is one of the top Biodiversity Hotspots in the world.

Covering 60,000 square kilometres, the Western Ghats are one of the world's biodiversity hotspots with over 5,000 flowering plants, 139 mammals, 508 birds and 179 amphibian species. This mountain range includes some of the best representatives of non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests anywhere in the world, rich grasslands

and the unique shola ecosystem which consists of montane grasslands interspersed with evergreen forest patches. The Western Ghats are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species.

Declared one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, the Western Ghats have a number of places that are worth visiting in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and the southern districts of Gujarat.

GAZE AT THE FLORA OF THE KAAS PLATEAU





About 25 kilometres from Satara town, Kaas Plateau, locally called Kaas Pathar, is known for its astounding diversity of plants. Located about 1200 meters above sea level, the plateau covers around a thousand hectare and is said to get its name from the Kaasa tree which is abundant here. It is one of the sites in the Western Ghats that has been identified by UNESCO for the Biodiversity World Heritage Site status. It has been reported that over 850 species of plants, most of them flowering have been identified in this region, many of them on IUCN's list of endangered species including some endemics only found in the open plateaus and moist forested areas of Toseghar, Chalakewadi, Kaas and Bamnoli in Satara Tehsil, and nearby Koyna. The area is good for nature walks



in the cloudy weather, looking for orchids, yellow, pink and purple flowers, including Smithia, Sonki, Balsam and Karvi, and carnivorous plants. You could also see endemic geckos, brightly coloured frogs, larks, buntings and

myriad butterflies. South of the plateau, the Kaas Lake lies amid fine forests, while nearby are the Sajjangarh fort and the Kanher Dam. Don't miss a visit to the Thosegarh and Vajarai Falls, which are impressive in the monsoon.

GO BIRDWATCHING IN GOA



Salaulim River, Netravali

Source: Matje/Shutterstock



Entrance of Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary

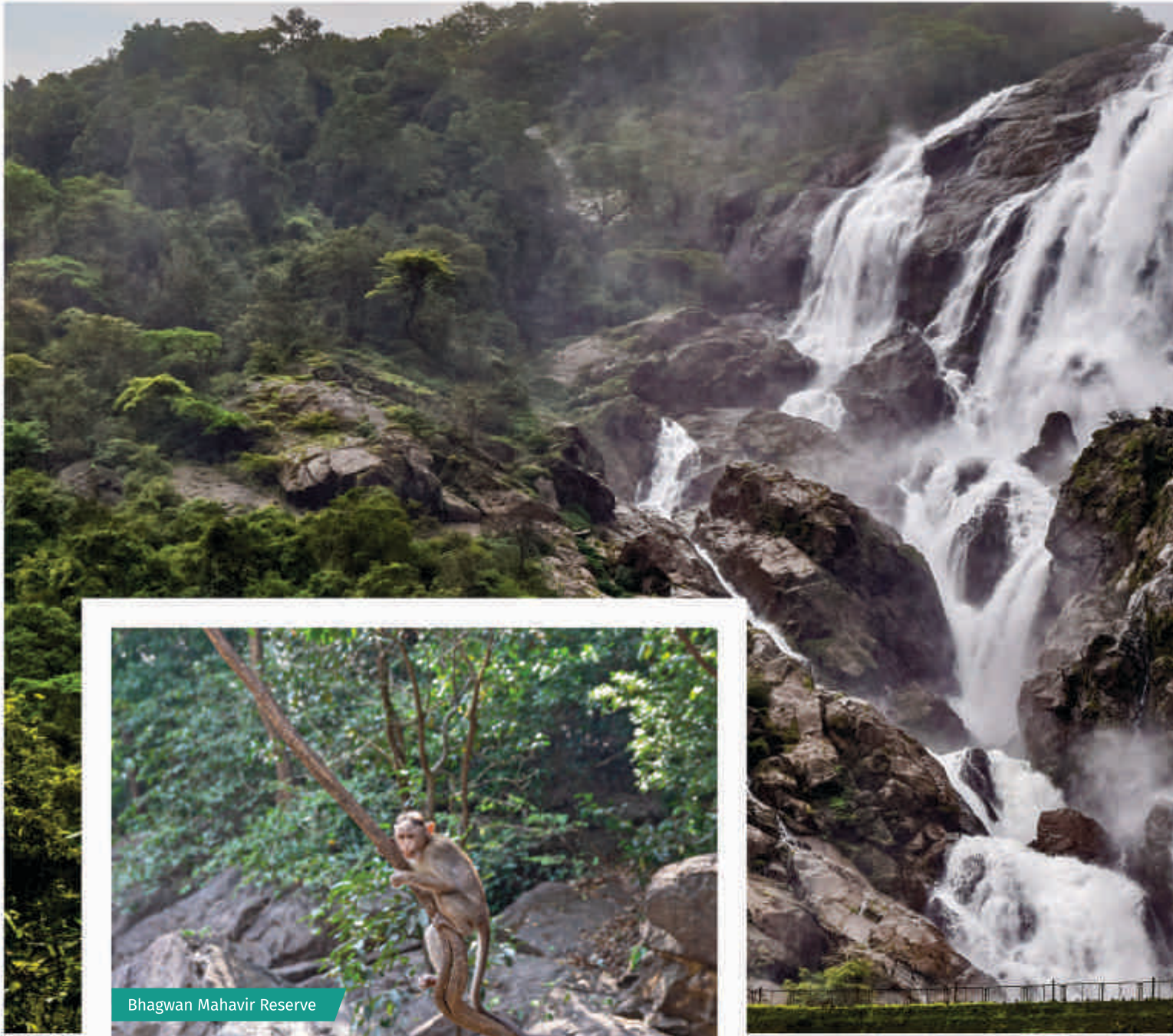
Goa is the only state in India which has protected the complete Western Ghats' section within a state. Goa's four wildlife sanctuaries are located on the eastern side of the state, covering an area of about 750 km of the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats of Goa have a large number of endemic and biome restricted bird species. More than 200 species of birds are present in the forests of Goa's Western Ghats.

When you enter Goa from the northeast, you come to the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary that run through the Western Ghats of north-eastern Goa and include part of the Mandovi River basin. It is also a fantastic area for butterfly spotting and reptiles like pit vipers, skinks, geckos and agamids. For birders, the site is important as it is a habitat for

Nilgiri Wood Pigeon and Ruby-throated Yellow Bulbul. The caves in this region are good for rare bats. The endemic Wroughton's Freetailed Bat is found in one of the Barapeda caves near Talewadi of Khanapur on the Goa-Karnataka border. Krishnapur caves are one of the three habitats worldwide of another rare bat *Taphozous theobaldi*. Another species of bat, *Megaderma spasma*, that inhabits the Talewadi caves, is localized in the Indian subcontinent.

Butterflies range from the Malabar Tree Nymph *Idea malabarica*, and Southern Birdwing, which is India's largest butterfly, to the Grass Jewel that is India's smallest. The Atlas Moth is also recorded here.

The forests are also home to leopards and there have been confirmed sightings of tiger.



Bhagwan Mahavir Reserve

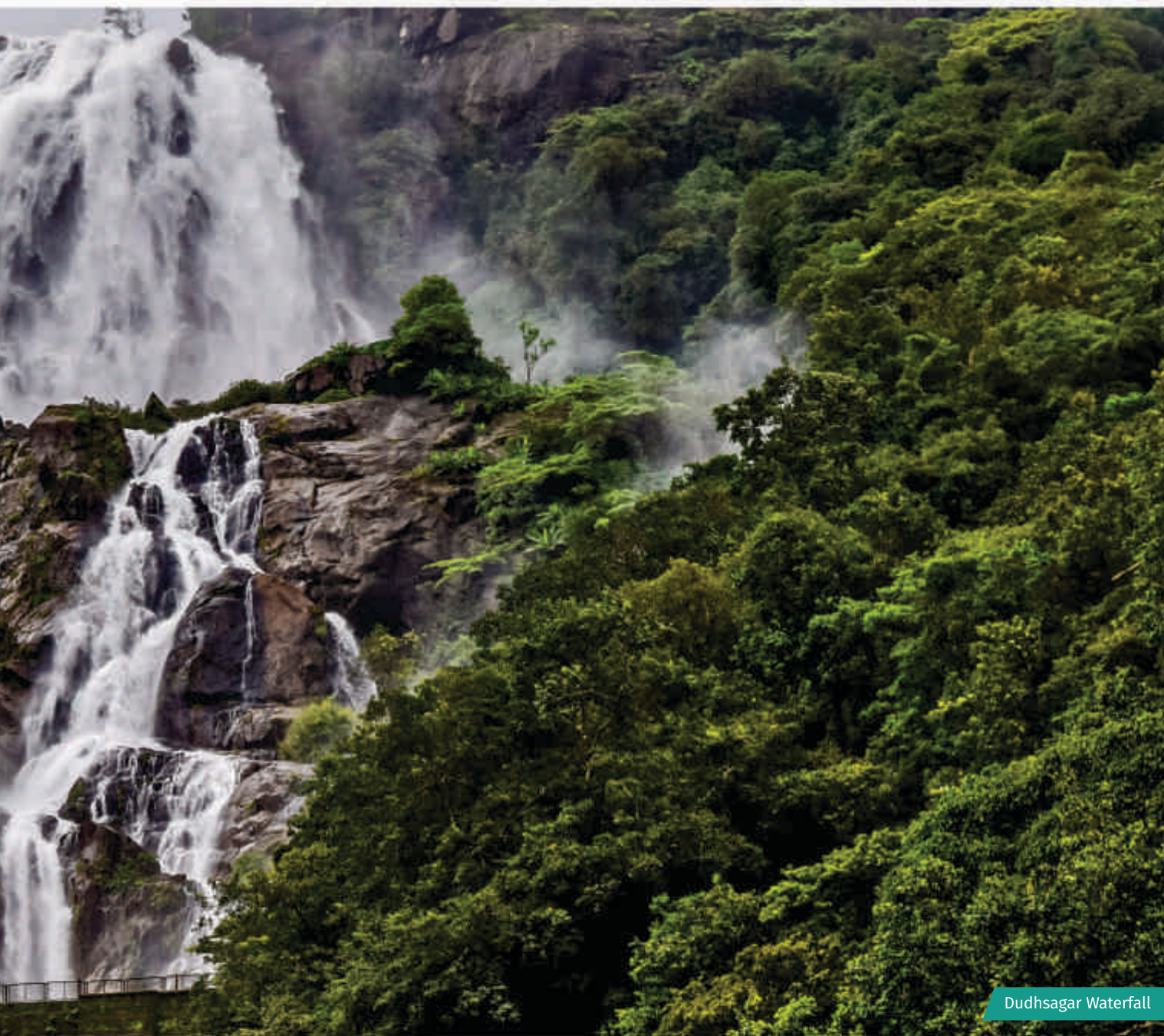
Travel from Valpoi, which is the sanctuary headquarters to Mollem which is located in the Sanguem taluka on the eastern border of Goa, along the Western Ghats. Mollem is the base to visit the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. A drive in the sanctuary can offer sightings of Indian bison or gaur, spotted deer and wild boar. Walk around the fig trees in the sanctuary to look for Malabar grey hornbill, the magnificent Malabar pied hornbill and barbets.

Woodpeckers abound in the sanctuary. Along the sanctuary, the Mahadev Temple of Tamdi Surla is the only beautifully preserved structure of the Kadamba dynasty in Goa. Four carved monolith carvings support the temple ceiling. In the centre of the ceiling are finely carved reliefs, with a lotus flower, and a carved screen separates the sabhamandapa from the antralaya. The shikara roof above the gharbagriha has relief carvings of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu

with their consorts, Saraswati, Uma and Kumarashakti. There are excellent carved motifs near the entrance hall.

The temple surroundings are delightful for birdwatching. You can expect to see Malabar trogon, Indian shama and many other birds. One of the key species to look for here is the Sri Lankan frogmouth.

From Mollem, you can take a trip to the Dudhsagar Waterfalls which are among the highest in India with a drop



Dudhsagar Waterfall

of more than 6040 meters on the eastern border of Goa with Karnataka. Literally 'the sea of milk', the falls are named for the foam created by the force of the cascading waters. The water falls in stages across boulders and down rock faces, dividing and reuniting, forming pools on the way. The falls are most impressive during and soon after the monsoons. The forests around the falls are excellent for watching eagles and Western Ghats specialties. Walk around

the forests to look for white-bellied woodpecker, Malabar parakeet, grey-headed bulbul, small sunbird and white-bellied treepie.

From Mollem, travel to the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary at the southern tip of Goa which has very good deciduous forests and some of the higher altitudes are clothed with evergreen trees. To get here, turnoff Panaji – Mangalore NH17 at Chaudi and continue 10km southeast to the Cotigao Sanctuary entrance gateway

where you pay the entry fees to enter the reserve. The sanctuary checklist includes leopard, sambar, barking and mouse deer, gaur or Indian bison, flying squirrel, civet, slender loris and scaly anteater but few visitors get to see any of these. The main reason for visiting is to see some of the key birds of the Western Ghats. The sanctuary is a top site for imperial eagles, pied hornbill, spangled drongo, Malabar trush, and other birds.

WATCH WILDLIFE OF THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Velliangiri Mountains



Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, Karnataka



Scenic Boating, Kabini, Karnataka



The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is the largest protected forest area in India, spreading across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. It includes the protected areas Mudumalai, Mukurthi, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Silent Valley National Park, and Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad, Karimpuzha and Sathyamangalam wildlife sanctuaries. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and adjacent areas host the largest Asian elephant population estimated at about 60000.

From Bengaluru, travel to the Kabini River which runs between Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks. The Kabini River is one of the major tributaries of the river Cauvery which originates near Kavalumpara in Kozhikode district of Kerala state by the confluence of the Panamaram River and the Mananthavady River. It flows eastward

through Wayanad district, entering Mysore district of Karnataka, to join the Kaveri River in Mysore district of Karnataka.

You can join a motorboat safari for sighting wildlife in the Nagarhole National Park. At times, the scene is reminiscent of the African Savannahs. The river is dotted with elephants, grazing on the aquatic grass, the petrified trees protruding over the river surface covered with birds, crocodiles bask by the water, deer are gathered on the river shore for their evening drink, and a wild boar with large tusks is wallowing in the marshes by the river. A crested serpent eagle swooped down from a nearby tree - it had probably sighted potential prey in the long grasses along the river. Kites and kingfishers hovered over the water. Wagtails strolled along the edge of the river.



Nagarahole Forest



Kabini Wildlife Sanctuary

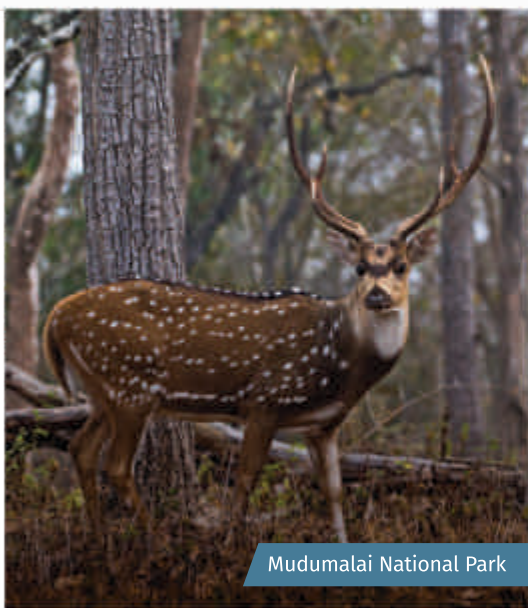


Kabini River

Source: PVR Murty/Shutterstock



Mudumalai National Park, Tamil Nadu



Mudumalai National Park

The boat gets close to where elephants in large numbers gather to browse the fresh grasses along the river. You can watch them pulling out the aquatic grass, cleaning each bunch, and then gulping it down. Crocodiles can be seen basking along the river.

Jeep safaris in Nagarhole National Park offer good viewing of barking deer, spotted deer and sambar deer, and rich birdlife. There are chances of seeing tiger, panther, sloth bear, wild dog and wild elephant too.

From Nagarhole, travel to Bandipur National Park, where drives can take you through a cross-section of wildlife habitats. Bandipur is a birdwatcher's paradise.

From Bandipur, the road to Mudumalai and Ooty is productive for wildlife viewing, Deer abound, and elephant, sloth bear or even leopard are possible. Mudumalai National Park, located in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, is mainly known for its larger mammals but also harbours a rich avian diversity. The Sanctuary forms 14% of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. During elephant rides and drives, you can hope to see Asian elephant, including large tuskers, gaur or Indian bison, spotted deer and other mammals. There are tiger in the park and leopard is most often seen in the Kargudi area. Dhole or wild dog is seen in Masinagudi and Theppakkadu Blocks. Over 266 bird species have been recorded.

LOOK FOR ENDANGERED MAMMALS IN THE ANAIMALAI HILLS





The Anaimalais are a range of mountains in the southern Western Ghats covering areas of western Tamil Nadu and central Kerala. The name anamala is derived from the Tamil word aanai, the Malayalam word aana, meaning elephant, or from tribal languages. Mala or Malai means 'hill', and thus 'Elephant hill'. The range has plenty of forests from the moist deciduous forests to the north of the range and montane rain forests, of the South Western Ghats. The Western Ghats and Anaimalai Sub-Cluster, including the Anaimalai Hills, are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Eravikulam National Park, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Idamalayar Reserve Forest, Mankulam Forest division Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, and Anaimalai Tiger Reserve located among these hills harbour wildlife, including

lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri marten, brown civet, grizzled giant squirrel, the Nilgiri langur, the dusky-striped squirrel and the Travancore flying squirrel which are endemic to the Ghats.

From Coimbatore, travel to the Anaimalai Wildlife Sanctuary, also called Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu and the Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary of Kerala. There are some good places to stay near the Parambikulam Sanctuary. This is an excellent area for birds, with almost all the Western Ghats endemic species found in the forests. Drive in the forests to see deer, gaur and other mammals.

From here, drive to Valparai located 3,474 feet (1,059 m) above sea level passing places where you may get to see the Nilgiri tahr. This is a tea-growing area with many plantations. Some of the tea estates offer accommodations for



Eravikulam National Park, Kerala

tourists. Valparai receives among the highest rainfall in the region during the monsoons and the town is surrounded by evergreen forests. Some of the best sightings are in the tea estates themselves where you can see elephant, gaur, leopard, lion-tailed macaque and Nilgiri langur. Walking in the estates can offer good opportunities to see hornbills, minivets and other birdlife.

The forests harbour brown civet while the higher ranges are habitat of Nilgiri marten.

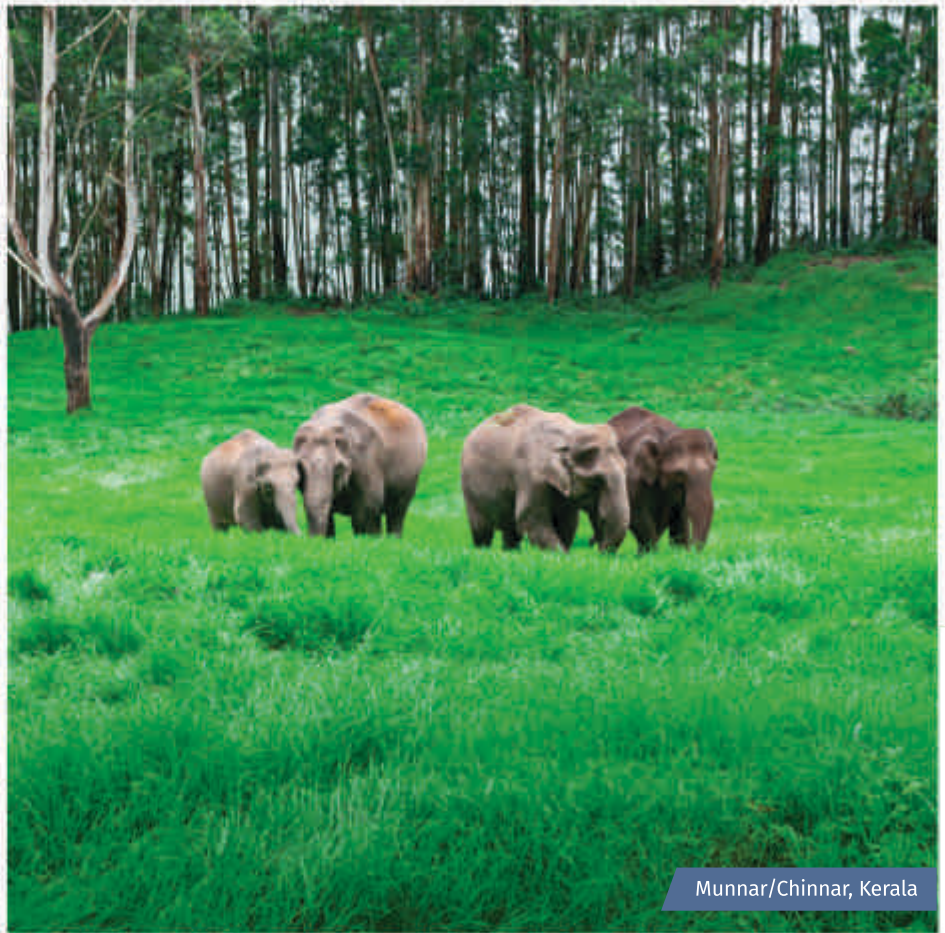
From Valparai, take the road to Munnar passing the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. This sanctuary lies in the rain shadow of the Western Ghats, and so it is drier than others in the region. The 16km road passing through the sanctuary can offer wildlife sanctuary.

The key species of the sanctuary is the grizzled giant squirrel. This is also an important habitat for star tortoise.

As you head towards Munnar, take a detour to the Eravikulam National Park. The Rajmalai range here is very good for watching Nilgiri tahr and birds like the Nilgiri pipit. From Munnar, visit the higher altitudes in search of civets and martens.



Source: M J Arnal/Shutterstock



Munnar/Chinnar, Kerala

OTHER EXCITING SITES IN THE WESTERN GHATS

Watch amphibians and reptiles at Amboli

Amboli in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra has an impressive list of over 35 species of mammals, more than 200 species of birds, about 150 species of butterflies, and an abundance of reptiles and amphibians, some endemic to Amboli. The water bodies also harbour fresh-water fish including some rare species.

The highlight of Amboli is the variety of frogs, toads and reptiles you can expect to see in the forests.

Look for big mammals in the Billigiri Rangaswami Sanctuary

The B R Hills are delightful places to watch wildlife. During drives you can look for elephant, tiger, leopard, sloth bear and wild dog.

Take a boat safari at Periyar

The Periyar Tiger Reserve is known for its large herds of elephant. During boat trips, you can hope to see otters, wild dogs, sambar, gaur and other wildlife. 🐾



Incredible India

Hill HOLIDAYS

*Come summer and tourists
look for destinations to
beat the heat.*

*Gujarat has many hill
stations that can offer
serene surroundings
along with the feeling of
summer-is-gone.*



Girnar



TAKE A HILL RETREAT TO SAPUTARA



Saputara Hill

Saputara in the Sahyadri Hills is Gujarat's only hill resort, set about 3200 ft above sea level, and has justifiably grown to become a popular weekend break for people from South Gujarat and North Maharashtra. Getting here is most of the fun as the drive from the plains rises past the Vansda National Park and thick forested tracts of teak, semi-evergreen and evergreen flora, and a variety of bamboo. Streams flow through the rocks, cascading down steep slopes, and the lowland forests give way to

bamboo, teak and flora of the higher hills. At places, the ascending road passes rivers like the Ambika, where egrets and herons fish at water bodies. You could see langur monkeys frolicking on tree tops. Approaching Saputara, the last stretch offers an incredible view down the slopes to picturesque tribal villages on the floor of a valley. The hill resort is surrounded by forested countryside of the Dang district, which is simply beautiful with great views from hilly points. Like most hill resorts, Saputara too has a lake

with boating facilities, popular with kids. There is also a tribal museum offering an insight into the culture of the Dang tribes.

During the monsoon, Saputara is really beautiful with the surrounding peaks shrouded in mist, the waterfalls at their most impressive, and orchids in full bloom. Do not miss visiting the Mahal Bardipada forests, good for bird and butterfly spotting during the monsoon, and the Gira Falls for a superb view of the water cascading down about a 100 ft to a rocky pool.



FAST FACTS

- Toran Hill Resort at Sapurata makes an excellent base to explore the many attractions of Dang district.
- The drive from Surat Airport to Saputara takes about three and a half hours.
- Being a much visited place, there is no lack of places for Gujarati, North Indian and South Indian food.
- The tribal villages of the Bhils, Kunbis, Kukmas, Gamits and Warlis are located in the hills around Saputara.
- You can buy bamboo handicrafts, pottery and Warli paintings.



TAKE THE ROPEWAY TO MOUNT GIRNAR

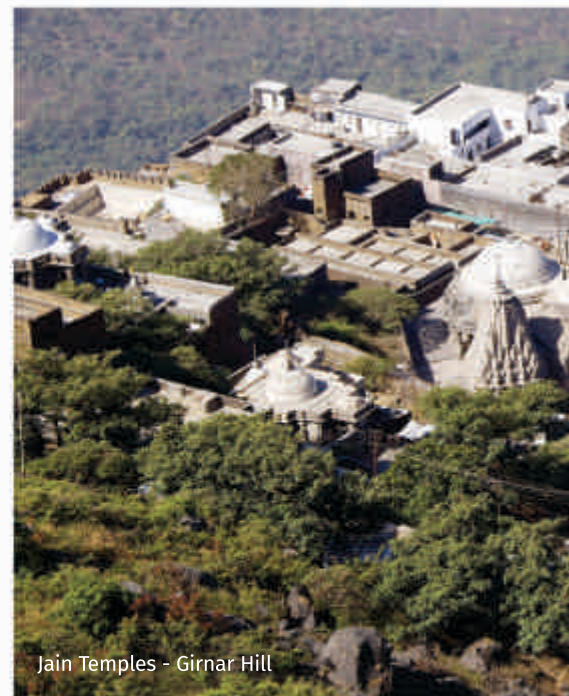


Rising up above Junagadh, Mount Girnar peak is Gujarat's highest standing, more than 3300 ft high. This peak has much religious importance with Jain and Hindu temples. The spectacular ropeway journey is enjoyable and convenient for those who want to visit the peak.

Girnar is among five sacred summits for Jain pilgrimage together with Palitana in Gujarat, Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, Mount Abu in Rajasthan, and Parasnath in Jharkhand. The Jain cluster here was created between 1128 and 1500. This hill owes its importance to its association with Neminath, the 22nd tirthankara. The Neminath temple is the most notable with the tirthankar depicted as a black figure sitting in the lotus position holding a conch.

Built in the 12th century, this is the largest and oldest. The Parshanath temple, built in about 1231 AD, has two halls with domed ceilings on both sides of the mandapa. The platform enshrines Mount Meru, the mythical mountain in the cosmology of Hinduism, Jains and Buddhist, and the other sacred and mythical hills for Jains. Outside, the dual domes are decorated with mosaic. The 15th century Samprati Raja temple has fine lattice screens (jalis) with different panels that reflect the dedicated craftsmanship of the period.

Continuing further, you see other historical structures and temples. At the crest is the temple of Amba Mata, visited by couples who believe the goddess will bless them with a child.



Jain Temples - Girnar Hill

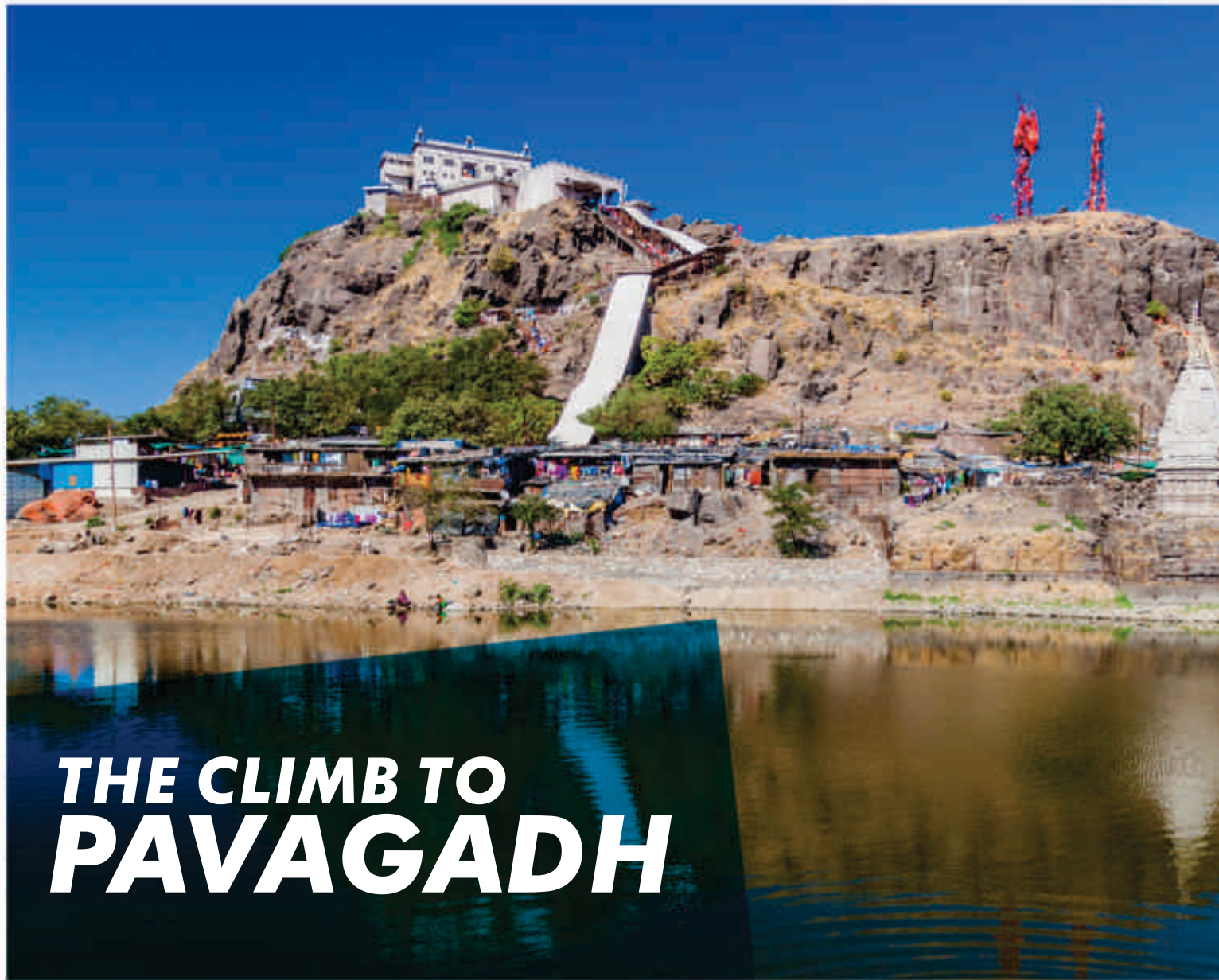


Girnar Hill



FAST FACTS

- *Hotel Girnar, Junagadh is a good place to stay with a view of Mount Girnar.*
- *Junagadh is accessible by train from major cities.*
- *You can visit various monuments in Junagadh.*



THE CLIMB TO PAVAGADH

Pavagadh Hill stands about 2600 feet above sea level. The hill offers spectacular views. The archaeological zone of Champaner-Pavagadh comprises a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site with an impressive variety of monuments including forts, temples, mosques, stepwells, palaces, pavilions, granaries and manmade water bodies.

From the Machi Plateau, the ropeway journey to the summit is spectacular looking out at woodlands and rock formations before reaching the station near the hilltop. Stalls serving

tea and snacks are located near the station.

Devotees of the Jain and Hindu temples make the ascent on foot following a path up the hill.

The architectural highlight of Pavagadh is the Laukalish temple amid a water body. Built in the 11th century, this temple is now largely ruined but the standing walls reflect its fine architecture and intricate carvings. From here, you can join the pilgrims for the walks to the Kali Temple or the Jain Derasar complex. The massive Pavagadh fort has sandstone walls, bastions

and jarokha balconies. There are several gates in the fortifications and the enclosed area also has barracks & jails. Some of the other monuments are sat Manzil, Makai Kotha, the Palace of Patai Rawal with tanks, and Navlakha Kothar.

There are three clusters of Jain temples - Bhavanaderi temples or Navalaka group, the second group with temples to the tirthankaras Suparshvanatha and Chandraprabha and the third group, situated on a cliff to the south east of Pavagadh Hill near the Dudhia tank.



Dudhia Talav



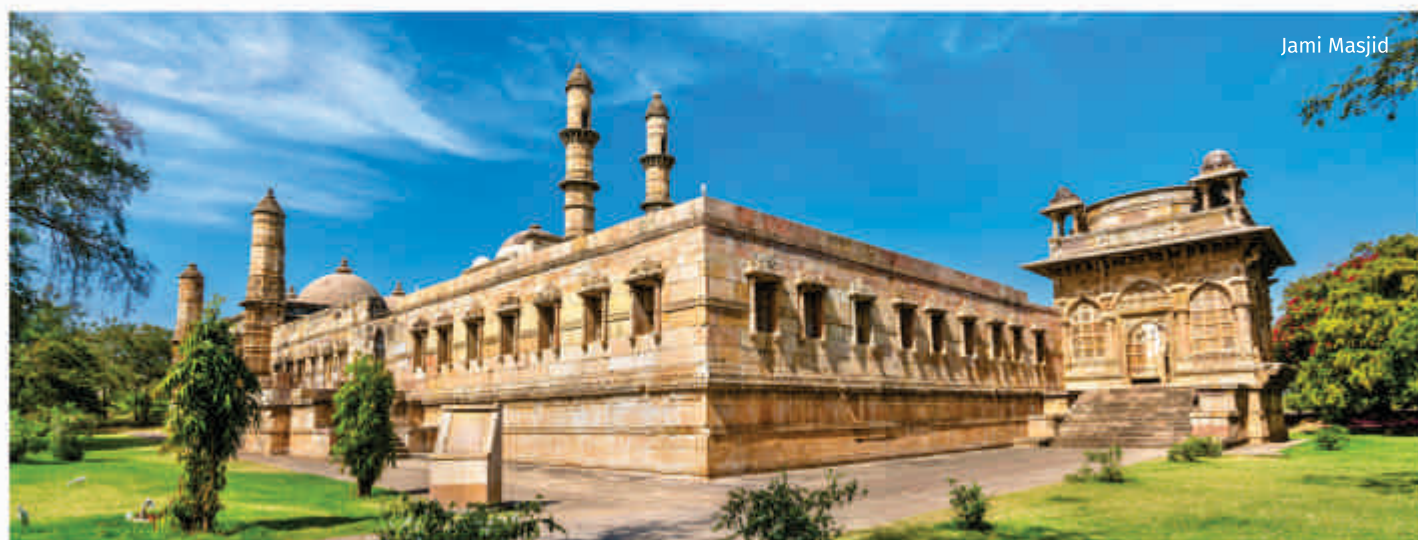
Jain Temple

Champaner was the political capital of Gujarat for a few decades following its conquest by Sultan Mahmud Begada. The massive city walls with inscribed gateways still stand, encompassing the customs house, several houses, exquisite mosques and funerary monuments. The Shahr Masjid of Borah Masjid, a mosque with delicate minarets, stands within the walls. The city was superbly planned with well laid and paved streets which lead to the city centre. The relics of public parks and pavilions surround the residential area - the houses of the rich and powerful had gardens and water

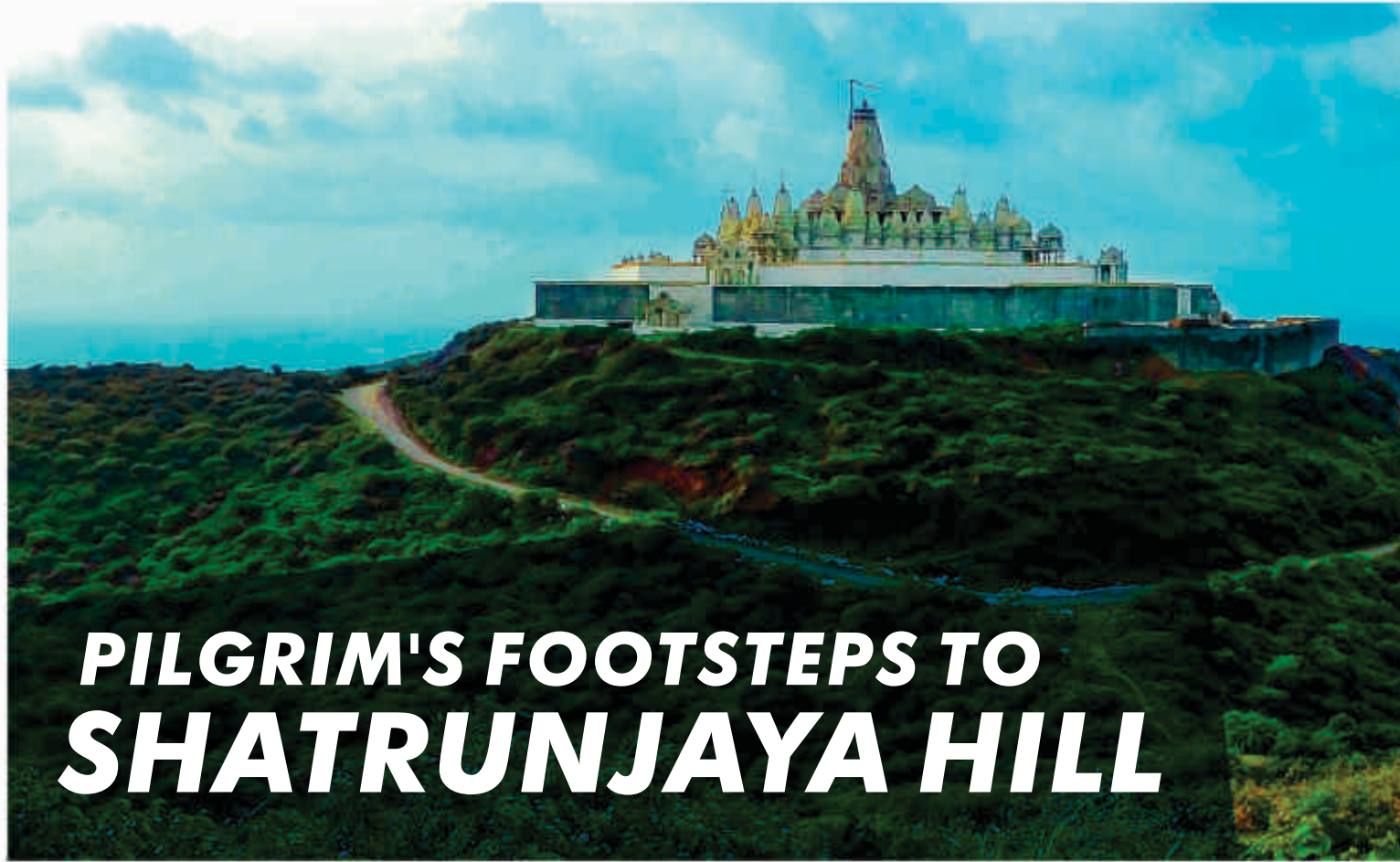
channels. The archaeological site has many structures built for harvesting rainwater – there were tanks and ponds in the Pavagadh hills and innumerable wells in the city.

FAST FACTS

- *The drive to Pavagadh from Vadodara Airport takes about one to one-and-a-half-hour.*
- *Stay at Toran Hotel Champaner.*
- *Visit the various heritage sites of Champaner.*



Jami Masjid



PILGRIM'S FOOTSTEPS TO SHATRUNJAYA HILL



One of the most spectacular sights in Gujarat is the Jain complex containing more than 863 temples crowning the Shatrunjaya Hill, associated with the Jains' first tirthankara, Adinath, and said to be the site of the enlightenment of his main disciple. In consequence, the temple complex is among the most visited by Jain devotees and has an aura of devotion that matches its architectural splendour.

The complex is reached from the town of Palitana by a 2-hour ascent covering four km, with more than 3500 steps to be climbed, but as you get close to the summit you are rewarded by the sight of the massed silhouettes of hundreds of temple spires and domes rising against the sky. Once at the top, while you pause for breath, you can look down upon superb views of the rolling hills and plains with the sea visible on a clear day. Though the complex dates

from the 5th century, most of the remaining temples date from between the 16th and the 19th century as the earlier ones were damaged by Islamic assaults on the complex. To see even a fraction of the complex takes more than two hours but you can be selective. The temples are grouped into walled enclosures called tuks, named after the merchants who patronised them, with courtyards chequered in black-and-white marble and inner courts with



Hastgiri Temple



Samosaran Mandir



Source: Tjipha/Shutterstock

temples, most of them built from marble.

The most splendid enclosure is the Khartaravasi Tuk, on a northern ridge offering a splendid view. Inside this enclosure is the Adinath temple, built in the 1800s, whose walls are carved with devotional figures, birds, animals, apsaras, musicians and graceful dancers, and have ornate balconies with well-proportioned pavilions and walls. As you enter, look up at the hollowed

interior of the conical ceilings with carvings in concentric circles emanating from a lotus blossom. The assembly hall leads to the sanctum that enshrines beautiful images. Also in this enclosure are 19th century temples like Vallabhi temple and Motisah temple that are worth seeing. You must also visit the Vimalvasi Tuk on the southern ridge to see the Adishvasra temple, dated to the 16th century, which is more than two storeys and has a richly ornamented

shikhara spire. Inside, there is a towering mandapa inside and a sanctum that enshrines an image with crystal eyes, beautiful necklaces and a magnificent gold crown.

FAST FACTS

- Palitana is about one hour drive from Bhavnagar Airport.
- Toran Hotel Sumeru is the best place to stay in Palitana town.



GETAWAY TO MOUNT ABU

Mt Abu in Rajasthan has for long been a favourite hill resort for the people of Gujarat. Rising from a 3900 ft high township, set on a plateau about 20-km in area, to the 5760-ft high pinnacle of Guru Shikhar, it offers a fine retreat from the cities especially at points away from its crowded heart. But, its charm also lies in its heritage of buildings from the ancient temples of Dilwara and Achalgarh to the palaces and colonial bungalows, relics of the days when this was a retreat of the Raj.


The drive to Mt Abu rises from Abu Road and as you enter the resort town, there are hotels and boards pointing to various resorts. All around the town are scrub jungle and deciduous forests that

are inhabited by a variety of birds and mammals. A popular place to see them is Trevor Tank in the Mt Abu Wildlife Sanctuary. The drive to the tank is on a trail through trees and dense undergrowth where you could see grey jungle fowl, red spur fowl, black-naped hare and jackal. Eagles are often seen hovering over the scrub jungle.

At the tank, you could see crocodiles basking and watch flycatchers, warblers, and other birds in the woodlands. There are bears, leopards, deer, antelope and wild boar here too but these are unlikely to be around in the daytime.

Many of Mt Abu's 'points' also fall in the sanctuary and the Bailey's Walk through bird and butterfly rich wood-

lands to the Sunset Point is simply beautiful.

Apart from its natural beauty, Mt Abu has much to offer by way of historic sites. The real jewel of these hills is Dilwara with its Jain temples with their really fine marble interiors – the 11th to 13th century sculptures are so intricate it is difficult to believe they are the work of human hands. The interior domes of the 11th century Adinath Temple, with superbly crafted cusp arches and a dome with eleven bands of splendid carvings superimposed with carved brackets depicting deities like Goddess Saraswati, and the 1231 AD Neminath Temple with exquisite lotus figures, are unimaginably exquisite. Also visit Achalgarh with its fort and temples. 



Nakki Lake



Delvada Temples

FAST FACTS

- Mt Abu is about 3 ½ hours by road or train from Ahmedabad.
- Toran Gujarat Bhavan is one of the best places to stay for a good view of the hills.
- Swami Vivekanand Institute of Mountaineering. "Sadhana Bhavan", is located near Gujarat Bhavan. You can ask about rock climbing, rappelling and mountaineering opportunities.
- Nakki Lake is the hub of recreational activity in Mt Abu with boat rides, pony riding point, eateries, photographers who will take pictures of you in traditional attires, and other facilities.

TENT CITY NARMADA A PROUD VENUE OF NATIONAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCE





Gujarat's preferred conference destination, Tent City Narmada near the Statue of Unity, Ekta Nagar has one more large-scale event to its name – a 2-day National Judicial Conference on Mediation and Information Technology.

The high-profile conference, organized by High Court of Gujarat, was inaugurated by Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind in the presence of Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat Shri Acharya Devvrat, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel, Hon'ble Union Law Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju, Hon'ble Chief Justice of India NV Ramana and other dignitaries. The conference was attended by Hon'ble the Chief Justices and Hon'ble senior-most Judges along with the Registrars-Information Technology of various High Courts.

The Resort, operated and managed by Praveg Communications India Limited for Gujarat Tourism, received wide scale appreciation from the organizer for its impeccable management, services and hospitality. Tent City Narmada possesses a track record of successfully organizing large-scale government events, attended by VVIP delegates like the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, state heads, country heads, among many others.

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Redefining the concept of 'Business with Leisure', Tent City Narmada is an ideal conference venue well-equipped with modern amenities and three sophisticated conference halls that can host 100-1000 guests. ■

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