

Ajanta:



In contrast to the Hinayana excavations at Ajanta, which are virtually devoid of carvings, are the ornate sculptures of the Mahayana period. These carvings are remarkable for their classic qualities and display a graceful elegance, restraint and serenity. The sculptural themes, mostly related to the life of the Buddha and the Buddhist divinities, are adorned with decorative columns and medallions. In the shrines are huge figures of the Buddha in the meditation and teaching pose. Their benign expression and grace of form evoke a sense of awe and reverence.

The paintings in the caves enthrall the spectator with their rich beauty, expressiveness, radiant color schemes, balanced composition and fine shading which highlight the delicate artistry and idealized physical features. The color scale of the paintings is extremely simple, there being only red, blue, yellow ochre and lamp black.

Ellora:



The ancient village of Ellora, known for centuries to the world as verul, featured prominently in the travelogues of Arab and European travelers, as it lay at the crossroads of ancient trade routes. Tucked away in the lap of a crescent-shaped hill, the caves of Ellora have been carved, in a north-south line, looking across the vast Deccan plain. The Ellora caves comprise the Buddhist caves: Nos. 1-12. from the 5th century to the 7th century AD; the Hindu caves : Nos. 13-29, from the 8th to 9th century AD ; and, the Jain caves: Nos. 30-34 from the 9th century to the 11th century AD.

Pilgrimage Sites:

Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, Nanded.



Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib is the principal shrine at Nanded. It marks the site where Guru Gobind Singh ji had his camp in 1708 A.D. after the departure of emperor Bahadur Shah. Guru Gobind Singh ji held his court and congregation here. It is the site of his own tent where he was convalescing after he was stabbed by two pathans. It is the place from where the Guru rose to heaven along with his horse Dilbag.

Shirdi



Shirdi , an important place of the pilgrimage for the followers of Shri Sai Baba, is of West of Aurangabad and South of Kopergoan. While little is known about his early life, Shri Sai Baba is believed to be the incarnation of Guru Dattatreya. He attained Samadhi on Vijayadasmi (Dussehra) October 15, 1918.



Grishneshwar Temple

Half a kilometer from the Ellora Caves, 30 kms. from Aurangabad lies this 18th century temple with its beautiful architecture and carving, one of the five 'Jyotirlingas' in Maharashtra where Lord Shiva is worshipped. While you are here, another place worth visiting is the Holkar Temple nearby.

Anwa Temple



In the village of Anwa, 20 Kms. away from Ajanta, is the elaborately carved 12th century temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. It consists of a sanctum, a Mandapa with decorated columns and an open hall. The niches have exquisitely sculpted images of Vishnu, Ganesha and other divinities.

Bhadra Maruti Deo Sthan

This temple was built by Rajarshi Bhadrana. According to the legend Saturday is said to be an auspicious day to worship the Lord and whoever goes to this temple eleven times all his wishes will be fulfilled. Every year in the month of March, Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated and for a whole week a number of rituals, ceremonies, vacations are organized.

Khuldabad



Khuldabad is a hallowed village, where all the pious holy saints lie in deep slumber. It is also known as the Abode of Eternity. A 22 Km run from Aurangabad, Khuldabad to most tourist is famous as last abode of Aurangzeb. It is famous as the pilgrimage center as the venerated saints lie here. Two Dargahs in Khuldabad are situated on lofty platforms lying exactly opposite to each other. The Moo-e-Mubarak

(Moustache) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lies in the shrine of Hazrat Burhanuddin Garib which is located to the left after entering the main gate to the village, while the Pairahan-e-Mubarak (Foot Prints) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lies in the maqbara of Hazrat Zainuddin Shirazi who was the last Khalifa or more popularly know as the "Bawees Khwaja" (Twenty Second Khwaja), whose edifice houses the tomb of the Great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Both the Dargha's consist of many rooms, dormitories for pilgrims, large open spaces and tanks of clear water for ablution. At the main entrance is the Kakkarkhana where the Naubat is played during the auspicious occasion of "Urs" held annually at Khuldabad. There is another group of tombs to the Northwest. That of Malik Ambar, his wife, son and daughter-in-law. These are square stone structures topped with large domes but embellished with jalis or screens.

Geological Site:

Lonar Crater



170 Km from Aurangabad, is the village of Lonar. Over 30,000 years ago, a falling meteorite struck the area creating the world's largest impact crater in basaltic rock. Botanists have recently discovered vegetation life forms, not found anywhere else on this planet, in the lake of crater. There are small temples along the lake shore.

Excursions: Daulatabad Fort:



Daulatabad

Rising dramatically over 600 ft. above the Deccan plain is Daulatabad. Once known as Devgiri, this fort served as the headquarters of the powerful Yadava rulers. In the 13th century, Mohammed bin Tughlak, the sultan of Delhi, made it his capital and renamed it Daulatabad, meaning the city of fortune. Its defense systems comprised fortifications of double and even triple rows of massive walls. Additional protection was provided by ingenious mazes with complicated entryways and by deep, rock-cut trenches and moats, which could only be crossed over the drawbridge. The most notable structures at Daulatabad are the Chand Minar, Jami Masjid and the royal palaces. The tapering, 30 meter high tower of the Chand Minar is divided into four storeys, and was faced with glazed tiles and carved motifs. The Minar probably served as a prayer hall or a victory monument in its time. The Jami Masjid was a mosque built in 1318 by Qutubuddin Mubarak, the Khilji ruler of Delhi. The places consist of spacious halls, pavilions and courtyards embellished with stucco decorations, medallions and geometric motifs.

Mhaismal:



It is a popular tourist location in the Khuldabad Taluka. Its surrounding area is endowed with a beautiful water body. Due to the Jaikwadi backwaters, the water is captured in this area. Added significance of Mhaismal is due to its spiritual importance. The famous Siddeshwar Temple lying near it has a historical origin. There is a rest house for those who want to spend their nights.

Pithalkhora Caves:



Thirteen Buddhist excavations, dating from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD, lie about 40kms. north-west of Ellora, cut into the sides of a secluded ravine. comprising mainly Viharas, they form the largest group of Hinayana Buddhist structures. Two of the more interesting excavations are the Chaitya hall of caves 3, built on a large scale. The focal stupa has a monolithic base. Fragments of painting adorn the hall. The adjoining caves, a monastery, with monolithic outer walls, has a basement adorned with elephants and attendant figures. The entrance is flanked by foreign emissaries holding shields and spears. A covered flight of steps ascends from the doorway up to the monastery.

Gautala:



Gautala, 72 km from Aurangabad is a bowl shaped hilly terrain with sprawling deciduous forests. There is a sanctuary spread over 269 sq. km. in Kannad & Chalisgaon tehsils of Aurangabad and Jalgaon district. Located on the Satmala hills, the sanctuary presents a picturesque panoramic view. The interiors of the jungle are impenetrable. Gautala's reputation as one of the most enchanting picnic spots that has grown over the past few years. Gautala's rapid waterfalls are a special attraction. The Gautala sanctuary also encompasses ancient Buddhist cave temples popularly known as Pithalkhora. Antur Fort another important monument is also embraced within the sanctuary.

Paithan:



51 Km south of Aurangabad, the looms of Paithan still weave the beautiful Paithani saris that are prized by women. The town is also

famous for the Dnyaneshwar Udyan, which is the largest garden in Maharashtra, and a museum which treasures a fascinating collection of art. The Jaikwadi Dam nearby is a bird watcher's delight. The garden is on the lines of Vrindavan Garden of Mysore with channels of flowing water, musical fountain, varied trees, plants, shrubs, and flowers. It is one of the best maintained garden. The lighting arrangement is also very charming. The entire garden creates the most picturesque and enchanting environment.

Sight seeing within Aurangabad :
Bibi-ka-Maqbara:



Built by Azam Shah in 1678, the Bibi ka Maqbara is a Son's Loving tribute to the memory of his mother, Begum Rabia Durrani, the queen of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Standing spectacularly on the lawns of a landscaped garden with-marbled monuments rises majestically in an intentional bid to rival the world famous Taj Mahal of Agra. The central tomb, distinguished by elaborate surface ornamentation and intricately perforated marbles screens, is framed by four towering minarets.

Panchakki:



In a substantially arid region of the State, this mill has a water source in the hills about six kilometers away. The source provides water to the mill almost all year round and is used to drive the grinding wheels which produced flour for the residents of the *Madrasa* meaning *seminary or religious university* where the mill is located. The Madarasa was built by a Sufi saint **Baba Shah Muzzafar** in 1624. The saint was the spiritual guardian of Emperor Aurangzeb. His grave lies within the compound. The gardens are well maintained and the tea shops provide a mean sweet creamy tea locally known as **special chai!**

Aurangabad Caves:

Situated 3 Km. from Aurangabad city, these caves were excavated between the 1st and 6th century AD. Though predominantly Buddhist in dedication, they reflect tantric influences in their iconography. These nine caves, comprises mainly Viharas. The sculptures and paintings inside the caves consist of Buddha Images, the Jataka tales and various Buddhist divinities.