

Aurangabad Caves

These caves are located 3 kms north of Aurangabad city. There are ten caves which were excavated between 3rd and 11th century. These caves are divided into two groups, the western group and the eastern group. The cave 4 is the oldest one that dates back to 1st century AD. It is a fine Chaitya Griha with a monolithic stupa. Outside the cave there is a superb image of Lord Buddha, seated on a lion throne. In the eastern group the most splendid of the caves is the Cave 7. The inside sanctum consists of sculptures of Tara and Avalikitesvara.

Daulatabad Fort



Daulatabad is only 13 kms from Aurangabad which is famous for its majestic fortress built in the 12th century on the top of a hill. This is one among the best preserved forts of the world that emerges over 600 ft above the Deccan plain. The name of the city Daulatabad was given by the then Sultan of Delhi-Mohammed bin Tughluq. It was also called as the "City of Fortune".

The fort has some outstanding architectural structures like the Chand Minar, Jama Masjid and Royal palaces. The Chand Minar is a 30 metre high tower divided into four storeys having carved decorations in it. It was used as a prayer hall during that period.

The Jama Masjid inside the fort is a mosque built by Qutub-ud-din Mubarak in 1318. It is a well preserved monument comprising of 106 pillars. In later period the masjid has been converted into the Bharatmata Temple.

Bibi ka Maqbara

This is located outside the walled city of Aurangabad and one of the most important monuments of the state. The structure is an imitation of the Taj Mahal built in 1678 by Azam Shah (son of Aurangzeb) in memory of his mother. It has four large minarets at the ends of its raised platform. This stunning monument is made up of white marble and is standing in the middle of a large Mughal garden.

Ajanta Caves



The significance of this site is that, it is a world heritage site declared by the UNESCO. It holds the masterpieces of Buddhist religious art and also the man made caves having the paintings relating to the life of Buddha before his enlightenment. These caves are only at a distance of 110 kms from Aurangabad.

The Ajanta caves depict the stories of Buddhism spanning from the period from 200 B.C. and 650 A.D. These caves were discovered in the 19th century by some British Officers who had been on a tiger hunt.

These 29 caves were built by Buddhist monks using simple tools like hammer & chisel. These caves were the retreats of Buddhist monks who taught and performed rituals in the Chaityas and Viharas, the ancient seats of learning. The elaborate and exquisite sculptures and paintings depict stories from Jataka tales. The caves also house images of nymphs and princesses.

The Ajanta caves and the treasures they house are a landmark in the overall development of Buddhism as such. The beautiful paintings inside the caves have survived by the passage of time, making the atmosphere vibrant.

Ellora Caves



Ellora- a UNESCO world heritage site is about 30 km from Aurangabad. There are 34 caves cut out of the sloping side of the low hill. Another 28 caves have been discovered later by the archeological Survey of India. The masterwork of Ellora is the Kailashnath Temple. It is the world's largest monolithic sculpture, sculpted out of a huge rock by 7000 labourers over a 150 years period. The main features of the Kailashnath Temple are: the Roof, Lakshmi with Elephants and Ravana shaking Mount Kailash. The shrines are not exclusively Buddhist, but of Hindu and Jain faiths as well. These sculptural panels were meant to depict Mount Kailash, the second abode of Lord Shiva.

Paithan

Paithan, formerly known as Pratishtana was the capital of Satavahana Empire. This small town is located at a distance of 50 kms from Aurangabad. The town is famous for its sarees called Paithani. You can see the tomb of great Marathi saint Eknath which is known for its spiritual ambience. Every year in the month of March, a big fair called Paithani Yatra is held which continues for 10 days. A major dam is also located near the town.

Museums

History Museum of Marathwada University

This museum has excavated materials of Sathavahana dynasty and sculptures from Marathwada region. The collections also include Miniature paintings of Maratha, Rajput, Mughal and company paintings of East India Company periods. The decorative objects of Chinese and Japanese origin, several manuscripts are also kept in the museum for display. The museum opens at 10.30 am and closes at 5.30 pm. It is closed on Sundays.

State Archaeological Museum, Sonehri Mahal

This museum displays the sculptures and broken panels from archaeological sites in Paithan. The visiting time is same as that of History Museum.

Parks and Gardens

Bund Gardens

Constructed by Sir Jamshedji Jeejabhoy, the garden, also known as the Mahatma Gandhi Udyan is situated on the banks of the Mula Mutha River, a few kilometers away from the Pune Railway Station. The garden is a popular place for visitors to take a leisurely stroll or enjoy a boat ride.

Empress Garden

The botanical garden is spread over a large area in the heart of the Pune Cantonment, very close to the Pune Race Course. The center-stage of the garden holds a lotus pond, which has the statue of Queen Victoria. The Empress Garden has pretty lawns and well laid out benches and is a hot picnic spot. The garden has a small restaurant, which serves snacks and cold drinks.

Snake Park

On the outskirts of Pune city, 20 km away from the railway station, is the Pune Snake Park, set up in the year 1986 by Mr. Neelim Kumar Khaire, a renowned naturalist, and later incorporated in the Rajeev Gandhi Udyan in 1999. The Pune Snake Park is one of the reputed zoos in India comprising about 300-350 snakes of 40 different species. The park is an artificial habitat for various other wild animals like the leopard, the deer and other reptiles as well. Mr. Neelim Kumar Khaire, the director of the Snake Park, has provided shelter for various other wild lives like the Civet Cats, the Sparrow Hawk and the Sinerus Vulture (sparingly seen in India)