

# A guide to heritage trips in Madhya Pradesh



HERITAGE MADHYA PRADESH

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TOP SIGHTS • FOOD • SHOPPING

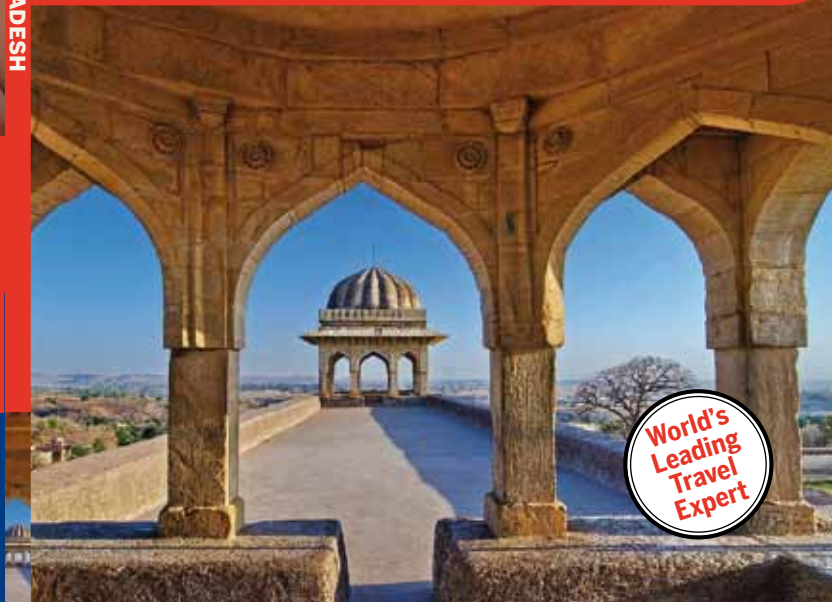
## All you need to know about Madhya Pradesh

- Top historic destinations of Madhya Pradesh
- Options for staying, eating and shopping
- Everything you need to know while planning a trip
- Tips on music, art, cuisine and festivals of the state

### WHY YOU CAN TRUST US...

Our job is to make amazing travel experiences happen. We visit the places we write about each and every edition. We never take freebies for positive coverage, so you can always rely on us to tell it like it is.

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# HERITAGE MADHYA PRADESH

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**TOP SIGHTS • FOOD • SHOPPING**

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# Need to Know



Winter and the festive months offer the best time to visit MP

## WHEN TO GO

**Oct–Feb** The plains of Madhya Pradesh are best to travel during the winter.

**Mar–Jun** The four major national parks are best seen in the hotter months of March–May. Wildlife enthusiasts often extend their visits until June end to explore the ‘tiger hotspots’.

## FIRST TIME IN MADHYA PRADESH

**Advance Planning:** Book air and train tickets in advance to avail of better prices. Draw up a rough itinerary according to your travel interests, be it safaris, pilgrimages or heritage tourism. Booking accommodation during peak season beforehand is sensible. Avail of good discounts during the non-peak period.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

**Hospitals:** Carry your own specific medication if needed. Bhopal and Indore have good medical facilities, but the smaller towns may not be able to handle complicated medical issues. In Bhopal there is the Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre (☎755 2742212 – 16; Raisen Bypass Road, Bhanpur). Bombay Hospital (☎731 2558866; www.bombayhospitalindore.com; Indore Ring Road) is Indore’s best general hospital.

## Quick Facts

### LANGUAGES

Hindi, English

### MONEY

ATMs of both nationalised and private banks are available in all major tourist towns.

### PHONE CONNECTIVITY

BSNL numbers do work in remote areas where connectivity can drop. Get a pre-paid SIM if you must stay connected.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Wi-fi is mostly available at hotels in Bhopal, Indore, Khajuraho and other major tourist cities. In some cases, wi-fi may be available only in the lobby area or if paid for.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

The head office of the Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd (MPSTDC) is in Bhopal (Paryatan Bhawan, Bhadbhada Road; 9am–5pm; closed on Sundays, 2nd and 3rd Saturday and state holidays). Their website [www.mptourism.com](http://www.mptourism.com)

has ample information. Brochures of all popular sightseeing places are available at MP Tourism counters at the airport and all private and MPSTDC-run properties throughout the state.

### PRICE RANGES

Throughout this book, reviews use the price ranges given below. Rates quoted don’t include seasonal pricing, taxes, unless otherwise specified.

### KEY TO RATES

#### ACCOMMODATION & EATING

₹₹₹	Above 5000
₹₹	2000–5000
₹	below 2000

₹₹₹	over 500
₹₹	200–500
₹	below 500

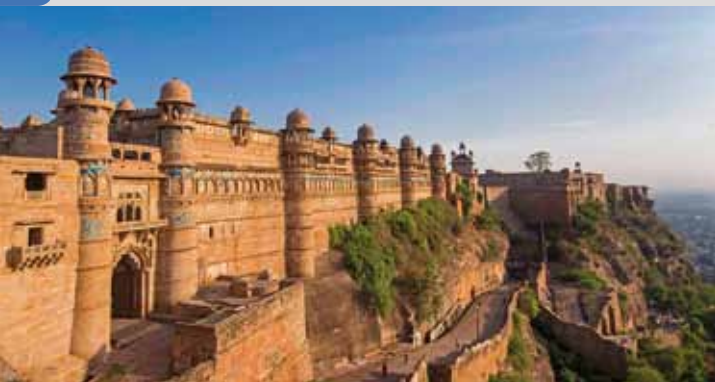
### ABBREVIATIONS

s	single rooms
d	double rooms
ste	suites

**Travelling Alone:** Madhya Pradesh is safe to travel alone, but, as a precaution, arrive at your accommodation by 8pm (later for Bhopal and Indore). The areas bordering Uttar Pradesh should be traversed before sunset.

## WHAT TO PACK

Expect hot and dry summers (40–42°C) and intense winters (touching a low of 10–15°C), so plan clothing accordingly. Essentials should include sunscreen, hats, caps and walking shoes that will withstand long treks through forts, a tryst with the jungles and quick trips to temples.



## GWALIOR

### Why Go?

*Famous for its medieval hilltop fort described by Mughal emperor Babur as 'the pearl amongst fortresses in India', Gwalior makes an interesting stop in Madhya Pradesh. The city also houses Jai Vilas Palace, the historic seat of the Scindias, one of the famous royal families of the region.*

### Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Road:** Road travel to Gwalior from the northern cities is convenient. The Taj Express Highway up to Agra has greatly reduced time for travellers from Delhi.

Within the city, cabs (₹9–11 per km,

minimum 250km, plus ₹200 per day driver allowance) and auto rickshaws are available for hire. Ola cabs can be hired by downloading the app for commuting around the city.

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Oct–Feb

*Top* The 8th-century fort is Gwalior's prime landmark

### Sights

#### Gwalior Fort

This majestic 8th-century hilltop fort overlooks Gwalior. Much of the fort is now occupied by the Scindia School, established by Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia in 1897. A sound and light show is held nightly in the amphitheatre. From the east, a series of gates lead up to the fort. At the bottom, the first gate is the 17th-century Gwalior Gate (Alamgiri Gate) that leads to the State Archaeological Museum. The next is Badalgarh, named after Badal Singh, Man Singh's uncle. Further up is the 15th-century Ganesh Gate. Nearby is Kabutar Khana, a small pigeon house, and a small Hindu temple to the hermit Gwalipa, after whom both the fort and town are named. Chaturbhuj Mandir, a 9th-century Vishnu shrine comes before the next gate Hathiya Paur (Elephant Gate) that is now the entrance to the palace grounds.

📞 751 2234557 Sound and light show English, Indian/foreigner, children ₹130/300/60; English 7.30pm, Hindi 6.30pm winter timings are an hour later

#### Jain Rock Sculptures

An impressive set of sculptures (mid-15th century) are carved into the rock between Urvai Gate and the inner fort walls. They represent the Tirthankaras (the 24 great Jain teachers). There are more than 30 images, including a splendid 17m-high standing sculpture of the

first Tirthankara, Adinath. Enter via the fort

#### Man Singh Palace

This palace inside the fort has unusually decorated monuments: the outer walls include a frieze of yellow ducks, mosaic tiling of elephants, tigers and crocodiles in blue, yellow and green. Built by Tomar ruler Man Singh between 1486 and 1516, this is a fine example of early Hindu architecture. The counter has tickets for the ruins of Shah Jahan Palace, Karan Palace, and palaces northwest of the fort. Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; dawn–dusk

#### Jai Vilas Palace & Museum

The museum occupies some 35 rooms of the Scindias' opulent Jai Vilas Palace, built by Maharaja Jayajirao in 1874 with the help of prisoners from the fort. The convicts were rewarded with the 12-year job of weaving the hall carpet, one of the largest in Asia. The Durbar Hall ceiling has two 12.5m-high, 3.5-tonne chandeliers, each with 250 light bulbs. The rooms are filled

### Top Tip: City tour

**Gwalior Darshan:** MP Tourism's little yellow bus, Gwalior Darshan, takes passengers on a full-day city tour taking in all the main sights.

📞 751 2340370; MP Tourism, Tansen Residency; adult/child ₹155/80

with cut-glass furniture, stuffed tigers and a ladies-only swimming pool with its own boat.

Note: You have to enter the palace from the west.

Indian/foreigner ₹75/450, camera/video ₹70/50; 10am–5.30pm Tue–Sun

### State Archaeological Museum

This museum is within Gujar Mahal, just through Gwalior Gate. Built in the 15th century by Man Singh for his favourite rani, there's a large collection of Hindu and Jain sculptures, including the famed Salabhanjika (an exceptionally carved female figure), plus copies of the Bagh caves frescoes.

Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹50/200; 10am–5pm

### Sahastrabahu (Sas-Bahu) Temples

The Mayan-like Sas-Bahu (a corruption of Sahastrabahu or thousand-armed one) Temples, date from the 9th to 11th centuries. The bigger temple is dedicated to Vishnu, and the smaller one is dedicated to Shiva.

Entry free; dawn–dusk

### Teli ka Mandir

Used as a drinks factory and coffee shop by the British after the First War of Independence in 1857, this 30m-high, 8th-century temple is the oldest monument in the compound and makes for an interesting stop.

Entry free; dawn–dusk

The villages near Morena are full of temples and architectural marvels

### ✓ Top Tip: Mitawali-Padawali-Bateshwar temples

Use the village of Morena as the base to see the exquisite temples of Mitawali-Padawali-Bateshwar. The Bateshwar Temples are a group of 200 temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu, possibly built between the 8th and 10th centuries. Spread over 25 acres, the complex is a jigsaw of spires and sanctums. While many of the temples have stood the test of time, it is not difficult to spot ones that are ruined and fallen. It is no wonder that the site was once used by dacoits as a hideout as well.

Drive a few kilometres ahead to see the towering bastions of the Padawali fortress, at the base of which stand a pair of lion sculptures as guards. A steep flight of steps takes you to the entrance of a Lord Shiva temple. Turn your attention to the intricate carvings themed after the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* – the details are stunning.

Mitawali, 40km from Gwalior, is home to the Chausath Yogini Temple and an inscription pegs it back to the 8th century AD. The moment you set eyes on it, the image of Delhi's circular Sansad Bhawan (Parliament House) comes to mind. Climb 100 steps to reach the temple, built in a circular style with 64 (chausath) chambers and the main shrine dedicated to Shiva.

Dawn–dusk

### Tomb of Tansen

In the same compound as the tomb of Mohammed Gaus, is the smaller, simpler tomb of Tansen, the father of Hindustani classical music and the Gwalior gharana. The place comes alive with music at the Tansen Samaroh (festival) held in December every year (p27). It is held where the 16th-century legend Tansen lies buried. Old town; entry free; 8am–6pm

of Independence.

Phool Bagh; entry free; dawn–dusk

### Sarod Ghar Museum

The ancestral residence of the Bangash family of sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan is now a museum for tracing the history of classical music in Gwalior.

Haifz Ali Khan Rd, Jiwaji Ganj

### Old City

Stroll by the old city of Gwalior for period structures, including tombs of Sufi saints, temples and historic lanes that showcase the past. The Bada, a marketplace, can be fun especially during Diwali.

Kila Gate



## Accommodation

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

#### Usha Kiran Palace

📍751 2444000; www.tajhotels.com; Jayendraganj; d from ₹6500 This grand, 130-year-old, building was built as a guesthouse for the Prince of Wales (later King George V). Every room features heritage luxury. There's a gorgeous main pool, the soothing Jiva Spa (massage treatments from ₹1900), the excellent Silver Saloon restaurant and the spiffing Bada Bar.

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

#### Deo Bagh

📍751 2820357; www.deo-bagh.neemranahotels.com; Jadhav Kothi, opposite Janaktal, d ₹4283–6187 (incl breakfast) Deo Bagh takes you back to the 17th century, complete with two temples within the property itself. The hotel's exemplary hospitality makes the experience better.

### MPSTDC ₹₹

#### Tansen Residency

📍751 4056789; www.mptourism.com; 6A Gandhi Rd; from d ₹2990–4290 (incl breakfast & bed tea) A mid-range hotel run by MP Tourism, the rooms are modern, with updated bathrooms. There's a bar and restaurant and the location is central. Don't miss the North Indian dishes at Malhar, the hotel's multi-cuisine restaurant.

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

#### Hotel Gwalior Regency

📍751 2340670; www.hotelregencygroup.com; Link Rd; d ₹5600–7400 (incl breakfast)

The standard rooms are perfectly decent, though the central air-con struggles to make an impact. You can pay an extra ₹700 to ₹1000 for 'grande deluxe' rooms with modern furnishings. There's a bar too.

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

#### Hotel Landmark

📍751 4011271; www.hotellandmarkgwalior.com; Manik Vilas Colony, close to the railway station; d ₹3650–9999, (incl breakfast) Ideal for business travellers, the hotel offers swift service, a travel desk, reasonably comfortable rooms and an enviable location close to the business centre.

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹

#### Hotel DM

📍751 2342083; Link Rd; d from ₹600, with AC from ₹1500 The rooms are a bit cramped but they are slightly better than the other budget options around town and the wi-fi certainly helps. All have clean bathrooms.

### HERITAGE HOTEL ₹

#### Hotel India

📍751 2341983; Station Rd; d ₹1360, with AC ₹2000 Basic rooms and facilities are on offer at this 2nd-floor hotel (across from the train station), with room service from Indian Coffee House on the floor below.

## Eating

### INDIAN ₹₹₹

#### Silver Saloon

Usha Kiran Palace, Jayendraganj; mains ₹500–1100; 7am–11pm Mouth-watering Indian and Continental dishes, as well as some Thai, Nepali and

## If You Like: Morena gajak

The famous Morena gajak (made of sesame, sugar and ghee) is from the family of Daulatram Gupta, though the proprietor admits that it was from his wife's home in Morena that he imported this recipe. The 40-year-old no-fuss shop can arrange for a trip to the factory if one is interested.

📍751 2327190; Shri Anturam Shivhare Chowk, Naya Sadak, Lakshar; 10am–9pm

Marathi specialities, are served in the AC restaurant or the palm-shaded verandah of this exquisite heritage hotel.

### NORTH INDIAN ₹₹

#### Moti Mahal Delux

Link Rd next to the bus stand; mains ₹170–440; noon–11pm This stylish non-veg Delhi transplant works magic with Northwest frontier cuisine.

### MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

#### Kwality Restaurant

Captain Upmanyu Singh Marg; mains ₹250–500; 11am–11pm A favourite address for the locals of Gwalior for generic Indian or Chinese food. The vegetarians tend to veer towards hara bharaa kebab and the non-veg towards murg musallam.

### MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

#### Volga

Jayendraganj, Shinde ki Chhawani; mains ₹250–500; 11am–11pm Enter here for a quick meal. Multi-cuisine options are available

### BAR ₹₹

#### HQ

Hotel Gwalior Regency, Link Rd; minimum spend ₹500; 2pm–midnight This small but trendy bar inside the Gwalior Regency does good cocktails (₹250–380) set to choice tunes led by a DJ.

### SOUTH INDIAN ₹

#### Indian Coffee House

Station Rd; mains ₹45–250; 7.30am–10.30pm This popular branch does all the breakfast favourites – coffee, dosas, scrambled eggs – and has a main course menu, including excellent thalis (₹120–220), in a separate first-floor family section.

## Shopping

### HANDICRAFTS

#### Mrignayanee

Shekh ki Bagiya; www.mphandicrafts.com; 11am–8pm The state-run emporium is an easy shopping destination for elegant Chanderi and Maheshwari saris and textiles, artefacts, Gond art, jewellery, souvenirs and handicrafts. It has a no-bargaining policy.



## ORCHHA

### Why Go?

*Standing on the banks of the Betwa River, Orchha offers an arresting combination of 16th-century temples like the Ram Raja Temple, grand palaces, cenotaphs, Mughal architecture and the beautiful Orchha Sanctuary. Cycling, long walks and rafting bring you up close to this pastoral landscape.*

### **i** Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Train:** Orchha can be reached by train via Jhansi.

**Road:** Cabs from Datia or Khajuraho are approx ₹4000–4500 return or ₹9–11/km, minimum 250km/day and driver allowance of ₹200 daily.

Within the city, autorickshaws are available, but most people walk or cycle (₹50/day) to get around.

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Oct–Feb; just after the monsoon for rafting.

### **📍** Sights

#### Palaces

Crossing the granite bridge from the village centre brings you to a fortified complex dominated by two imposing 17th-century palaces – **Jehangir Mahal** and **Raja Mahal**.

**Jehangir Mahal** (dawn–dusk), of steep staircases and precipitous walkways, represents a zenith of medieval Islamic architecture with Hindu sculptural elements. Behind the palace, sturdy camel stables (dawn–dusk) overlook a green landscape dotted with monuments. The palace also serves as a wedding destination. In the nearby **Raja Mahal**, the caretaker will open the painted rooms where Rama, Krishna and Orchha royalty wrestle, hunt, fight and dance across the walls and ceilings.

Downhill from the palace compound are the smaller **Rai Praveen Mahal** (9am–5pm), a pavilion and formal Mughal garden and Khana Hammam (dawn–dusk), with some fine vaulted ceilings. On the other side of the village, **Palki Mahal** (9am–6pm) was the palace of Dinman Hardol (the son of Bir Singh Deo), who committed suicide as he was accused of having an affair with his



Stunning architecture marks Orchha's 17th-century palaces

brother's wife. His memorial is in the adjacent **Phool Bagh** (9am–6pm), a traditional charbagh (formal Persian garden, divided into quarters). Prince Hardol is venerated as a folk hero here.

Sound and light show (Raja Mahal; Indian/foreigner ₹130/300; in English 7.30pm, in Hindi 6.30pm)

#### Chhatris

Cenotaphs to Orchha's rulers, including Bir Singh Deo (9am–5.30pm), the immense and serene chhatris rise beside the river about a kilometre south of the village. They're best seen at dusk, when

### **✓** Top Tip: Combined ticket

The combined ticket (Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, camera/video ₹25/100) covers Jehangir Mahal, Raja Mahal, Rai Praveen Mahal, the camel stables, the chhatris, Chaturbhuj Temple and Lakshmi Narayan Temple and is sold only at the ticket office (8am–5pm) at Raja Mahal.



cinematic sunsets drop across the Betwa River and offer photo ops.

### Ram Raja Temple

At the centre of a lively square is the pink-and-gold-domed Ram Raja Temple, where Rama is worshipped as a king. Built as a palace for Madhukar Shah's wife, legend has it that a temple was built when an idol of Rama, temporarily installed by the rani, proved impossible to move. Don't miss the evening aarti at 8pm sharp and the change of guard ceremony.

9am–1pm & 7–11pm Oct–Mar, 8am–1pm & 8–11pm Apr–Sep

### Chaturbhuj Temple

Ram Raja is overlooked by the spectacular towers of Chaturbhuj Temple, an immensely solid building. Buy a cheap torch from the bazaar and climb the internal stairs to the roof where, from among the mossy

spires and domes, you get the best view in town.

9am–5pm

### Lakshmi Narayan Temple

Lakshmi Narayan Temple, on the road out to Ganj village, has fine rooftop views and well-preserved murals on the ceilings of its domed towers.

9am–5pm

## Accommodation

### Amar Mahal HOTEL ₹₹₹

📍7680 252102; www.amarmahal.com; s/d from ₹4600–5600, ste ₹9,900 (incl breakfast) Kick your feet up like a maharaja in rooms featuring lovely wood-carved four-poster beds set around a gorgeous courtyard with white pillar verandahs or the large pool. There's an Ayurvedic massage and yoga centre beside the pool

## ♥ If You Like: Tikamgarhi metal craft

Similar to the Dhokra of Bastar, Tikamgarh has been the home to bell metal craft for hundreds of years. A few households are still engaged in the making of curios like canons and war weapons (earlier used by royalty) and bullock carts, cattle bells and temple decorations as symbols of daily life. You can buy this in the shops that line the main temple street of Orchha.

(which non-guests can use for ₹300).

### Hotel Sheesh Mahal MPSTDC ₹₹

📍7680 252624; www.mptourism.com; Jehangir Mahal; s/d ₹1790/2590, ste ₹3990 onwards (incl breakfast) This palatial hotel is located in a wing of the 16th-century Jehangir Mahal. The surrounding architecture is stunning – arches, columns, lattice windows – and the rooms themselves are gorgeous too, with regal touches such as throne-like toilets.

### The Orchha Resort LUXURY HOTEL ₹₹

📍9927188882; www.orchhareort.com; Ganchanaghat 1; tent s/d ₹2250/2750, room s/d ₹3650/4250, (incl breakfast) In tune with the heritage vibe of the town, this resort offers large ornate rooms and Swiss tents, right by the river. Notch up the luxury by using the in-house spa and swimming pool.

### Bundelkhand Riverside HOTEL ₹₹

📍7680 252612; www.bundelkhandriverside.com; s/d ₹2990/3990 Owned by the grandson of Orchha's last king,

Vir Singh, this hotel has antique-style furniture and some of the maharaja's personal art collection displayed in the corridors. Exquisite rooms overlook either the river or the graceful gardens, which contain some 16th-century monuments as well as a small swimming pool (non-guests ₹250). Cheaper cabins overlook the river but lack air-con. One of Orchha's best restaurants, Turquoise Diner, is here as well.

### Betwa Retreat MPSTDC ₹₹

📍7680 252618; www.mptourism.com; tents/cottages ₹2590/2590, ste ₹3990 (incl breakfast) This MPSTDC property, overlooking the river and offering views of the chhatris, makes an excellent family choice. The rooms are equipped with TVs and minibars. See if you can spring for the heritage suite, built within a 17th-century changing room surrounded by a beautifully manicured lawn.

### Hotel Laxmi Temple View HOTEL ₹

Lakshmi Narayan Temple Rd; s/d ₹600/800, with AC ₹1200/1400 If you don't mind being a little on the outskirts of the action, this 10-room guesthouse on

## 📍 Detour: Datia



Located 49km north of Orchha, Datia is a small town that represents the architectural genius of the Bundelas. The Peetambra Peeth (one of the shaktipeeths of the country), Beer Singh Deo Mahal, Rajgarh Palace and the Datia Chhatris (tombstones of the royal family) are worth your while. This can be covered in a day's time.

Majestic 17th-century monuments built by the Bundelas await the visitor at Datia

the road to Laxmi Narayan Temple offers the best budget rooms in town that have spacious, freshly tiled bathrooms and flat-screen TVs. True to its name, the rooftop affords memorable views of the temple.

### Monarch Rama HOTEL ₹

📍7680 252015; Jhansi Rd; s/d ₹400/500, with AC ₹900/1250 Rave traveller reviews about value here are not unfounded. The basic rooms on offer are cleaner and more affordable than the competition and the staff is friendly and accommodating.

### Eating & Drinking

### Jharokha Restaurant INDIAN ₹

Hotel Sheesh Mahal; mains ₹110–380; 7am–10pm Good food, cold beer and friendly waiters at this government-run hotel offer Indian, Chinese and Continental dishes. The Indian dishes (especially tandoori items) are recommended.

### Betwa Tarang INDIAN ₹

Jehangir Mahal Rd; mains ₹80–180; 8am–10pm This budget place does

excellent pure-veg food— the thalis (₹130–200) are particularly good. It also has the attraction of a rooftop terrace, where you can sit and enjoy stupendous views of Jehangir Mahal.

### Ram Raja Restaurant INDIAN ₹

Jehangir Mahal Rd; mains ₹60–320; 7am–11.30pm No hygiene awards here, but the family-run street side restaurant offers eggy breakfasts, vegetarian fare and a decent espresso under the shade of a large tree.

### Bhola Restaurant INDIAN ₹

Jehangir Mahal & Tikamgarh Rd; mains ₹50–100; 7.30am–10pm A great spot for people-watching and fresh juices.

### Shopping

### TARAGram

📍7680 252866; www.devalt.org; Tigela More, Gram Bavedi Jungle; 10am–5pm NGO TARAGram, works with various villages in the state. In Orchha, a handmade paper recycling unit works with 40 Sahraiya tribal women. The TARA paper and products are popular in India as well as global markets.

### ♥ If You Like: Seondha Fort

Ditch the usual and stay for a couple of nights in the 400-year-old historic Seondha Fort (67km north of Orchha). Enroute, halt at the Ratangarh Mata temple and the chhatri that Ahilya Bai built for her father-in-law. The lady of the palace, Mrs Uma Kumari, is great company and will ensure that nothing disturbs you from a relaxed time.

📍8146653511; Seondha; d ₹3000 full board

### 📍 Detour: Chanderi

Cocooned within pale brown hills, green shrubs tower over the well-preserved monuments of the Bundela Rajputs from as far back as the 11th century – Chanderi is quiet and not overrun by tourists.

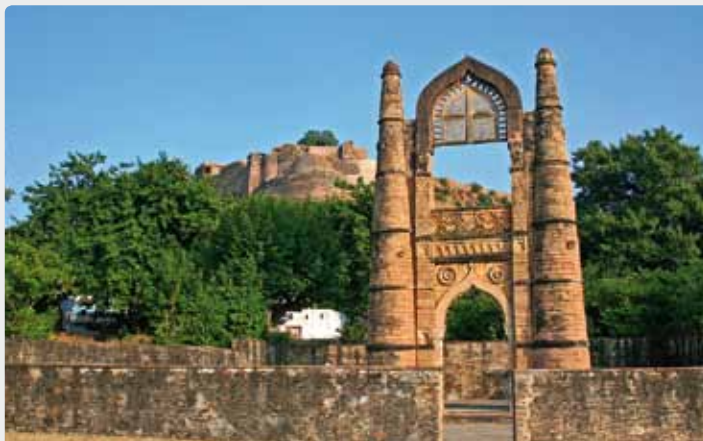
A day trip is enough for a quick dash through the major monuments including the handsome Chanderi Fort, Khuni Darwaza, Jama Masjid, Shehzadi Ka Rauza, Koshak Mahal, Kati Ghati Gate, Singpur Mahal and others that dot the town. The Badal Mahal Gate is an impressive stone arch that serves as a welcome to the fort. The bone white Lakshman temple gleams white in the sun by the glimmering pond.

The only diversion from the history here is the constant clack of weaving looms that produce exquisite designs of the namesake fabric. Chanderi's weaving heritage is over 400 years old. Visit the local Sadar Bazaar in the middle of the town to shop for textiles, saris, jewellery and handicrafts. Walk down the old part of town, where most weavers' homes are drowned in the magical chorus of the looms. Many are happy to have visitors come in for a view of their craft.

Alternatively, visit Pranpur on the outskirts where a large part of the village is occupied in creating Chanderi fabrics – weaving, dyeing and designing.

Chanderi lies about 133km from Orchha via NH44. Cabs charge ₹8–10 per km (one way ₹2500–3000); minimum 250km per day and driver allowance of ₹200

The Badal Mahal gate leads to the Chanderi Fort





## KHAJURAHO

### Why Go?

The erotic carvings that swathe Khajuraho's three groups of UNESCO World Heritage Site-listed temples are among the finest temple art in the world. The Western Group of temples, in particular, contain some stunning sculptures. Legend has it that Khajuraho was founded by Chardravarman, son of the moon god Chandra, who descended and saw a beautiful maiden as she bathed in a stream.

### i Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Jet Airways/Air India ply flights from Delhi. The Khajuraho railway station is well-connected from Delhi and Indore. Move around in autorickshaws in Khajuraho. Cabs

cost ₹9–11 per km, min 250 km per day, plus driver allowance (₹200).

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Oct–Feb

Top Khajuraho's temples are proof of the sculptural genius of the Chandelas

### 📍 Sights

#### Temples

The temples and their liberally embellished carvings have made Khajuraho world famous. The exceedingly artistic stoneworks show a storyboard of life a millennium ago – gods, goddesses, warriors, musicians, and real and mythological animals. Sensuous posturing surasundaris (heavenly nymphs), apsaras (dancing nymphs) and nayikas (heroines) have been carved as playful figures dance and swirl out from the temple. The mithuna (erotic poses) display the great skill of the sculptors.

#### WESTERN GROUP

Khajuraho's most striking, best-preserved temples are those within the fenced-off section of the Western Group and are the only temples you need to pay to see. An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) guidebook to Khajuraho (₹60) and a 1½-hour audio guide (₹100) are available at the ticket office. If you'd like a guide, official government prices are ₹900 for a half day and ₹1140 for a full day for up to five

people plus a ₹360 to ₹480 language allowance. This is also the spot for the annual spring Khajuraho dance festival.

A nightly sound and light show sees techni colour floodlights sweep across the temples of the Western Group as Indian classical music soundtracks a history of Khajuraho. Photography is prohibited.

Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, video ₹25; dawn–dusk; sound and light show Indian/foreigner/child ₹250/700/120; English 7.40pm, Hindi 6.30pm

#### Lakshmana Temple

The large Lakshmana Temple took 20 years to build and was completed in about 954 AD. You'll see carvings of battalions of soldiers here – the Chandelas were generally at war when they weren't inventing new sexual positions. More sensuous figures intertwine between the elephants in the frieze ringing the basement, while some superb carvings adorn the inner sanctum. Lakshmana is dedicated to Vishnu. Varaha, dedicated to Vishnu's boar incarnation, and Lakshmi are two small shrines facing the temple. Inside Varaha is a wonderful,

### 📷 Snapshot: History

Legends of the moon god aside, Khajuraho remained lost to the world for long. Historians tell us that most of the 85 original temples (of which 25 remain) were built from 950 to 1050 AD during the Chandela dynasty. The wider world remained largely ignorant of their existence until British officer TS Burt was apparently guided to the ruins by his palanquin bearers in 1838.

1.5m-high sandstone boar, meticulously carved with a pantheon of gods.

### **Kandariya Mahadev Temple**

The 30.5m-long Kandariya Mahadev (1025–1050 AD), is the largest temple and represents the high point of Chandela architecture. It also has the most representations of female beauty and sexual acrobatics. There are 872 statues, most nearly 1m high – taller than those at the other temples. The 31m-high shikhara here is like a lingam. It's decorated with 84 subsidiary spires, which make

An erotic sculpture on the temple walls in Khajuraho



up a mountain-like rooftop scene reminiscent of the Himalayan abode of the gods.

### **Mahadeva Temple**

Mahadeva, a small ruined temple on the same platform as Kandariya Mahadev and Devi Jagadamba, is dedicated to Shiva, who is carved on the lintel of its doorway. It houses one of Khajuraho's finest sculptures – a sardula (mythical beast – part lion, part other animal – possibly human) caressing a woman.

### **Devi Jagadamba Temple**

Devi Jagadamba was originally dedicated to Vishnu, but later to Parvati and then Kali. The carvings include sardulas accompanied by Vishnu, surasundaris and mithunas frolicking in the third uppermost band.

### **Chitragupta Temple**

North of Devi Jagadamba, the Chitragupta shrine (1000–25 AD) is unique in Khajuraho – it is dedicated to the sun god Surya. It has some fine carvings of apsaras and surasundaris, elephant fights and hunting scenes, mithuna and a procession of stone-carriers. In the inner sanctum, Surya drives his seven-horse chariot, while in the central niche on the south facade is an 11-headed statue of Vishnu and his 10 incarnations.



The Vishvanath Temple is marked by its distinct architecture

### **Parvati Temple**

Around the enclosure from Chitragupta, the Parvati Temple is on your right, a small temple originally dedicated to Vishnu and now with an image of Gauri riding a godha (iguana).

### **Vishvanath Temple**

Believed to have been built in 1002 AD, the Vishvanath Temple is reached by steps on the northern and southern sides. Elephants flank the southern steps. The temple is another superlative

example of Chandela architecture. Its sculptures include sensuous surasundaris writing letters, cuddling babies and playing music. At the other end of the platform, a 2.2m-long statue of Nandi faces the temple. The basement of the 12-pillared shrine is decorated with an elephant frieze.

### **Matangesvara Temple**

Matangesvara is the only temple in the Western Group still in everyday use. It may be the plainest temple here, but inside it sports a polished 2.5m-high lingam.



### **If You Like: Tribal & Folk Art Museum**

The Tribal & Folk Art Museum is a lively place that gives a taste of Madhya Pradesh's vibrant tribal culture through exhibits of paintings, terracotta sculptures, masks and statues and more.

Chandela Cultural Complex; noon–8pm, open all days, except Monday and government holidays



### Chausath Yogini Temple

The ruins of Chausath Yogini, beyond Shiv Sagar, date to the late 9th century and are probably the oldest at Khajuraho. Constructed entirely of granite, the temple's name means 64 – it once had 64 cells for the yoginis (female attendants) of Kali, while the 65th sheltered the goddess herself. It's reputedly India's oldest yogini temple.

### EASTERN GROUP – JAIN ENCLOSURE

#### Parsvanath Temple

Parsvanath Temple (950–970 AD), the largest of the Jain temples in the walled enclosure, is notable for

Women circumambulate a tree for blessings in Khajuraho

its sculptural beauty. Some of the best preserved of Khajuraho's most famous images can be seen here, including the woman removing a thorn from her foot and another applying eye make-up, both on the southern side. Although the temple was originally dedicated to Adinath, a jet-black image of Parsvanath was substituted about a century ago.

#### Adinath Temple

Adjacent to Parsvanath Temple, the smaller Adinath has fine carvings on its three bands of sculptures. Only the striking black image in the inner sanctum triggers a Jain reminder.

#### Shanti Nath Temple

Shanti Nath, built about a century ago, houses components from older temples, including a 4.5m-high Adinath statue with a plastered-over inscription on the pedestal dating to about 1027 AD.

### SOUTHERN GROUP

#### Duladeo Temple

A dirt track runs to the isolated Duladeo Temple, about 1km south of the Jain enclosure. This is the youngest temple, dating to 1100–1150 AD.

#### Chaturbhuj Temple

The ruined Chaturbhuj Temple has a fine 2.7m-high, four-armed statue of Vishnu in the sanctum. It is Khajuraho's only developed temple without erotic sculptures.

#### Bijamandala Temple

Just before Chaturbhuj there's a signed track leading to Bijamandala Temple. This is the excavated mound of an 11th-century temple, dedicated to Shiva. Although there are some exquisitely carved figures, unfinished carvings were also excavated, suggesting that what would have been Khajuraho's largest temple was abandoned as resources flagged.

#### Raneh Falls

The 30m-high Raneh Falls is worth visiting, especially in the rainy season on a nature excursion, 18km from Khajuraho.

### ♥ If You Like: Old village temples

The Eastern Group includes Hindu and Jain temples scattered around the old village and further south.

#### HANUMAN TEMPLE

The temple is a little more than a bright orange shrine, but the interest is in the pedestal inscription dating to 922 AD, the oldest dateable inscription in Khajuraho.

#### BRAHMA TEMPLE

The granite Brahma Temple (900 AD), with its sandstone shikhara overlooking Narora Sagar, is one of the oldest in Khajuraho. The four-faced lingam in the sanctum led to it being incorrectly named, but the image of Vishnu above the sanctum doorway reveals its original dedication to Vishnu.

#### JAVARI TEMPLE

The Javari Temple (1075–1100 AD) stands just north of the old village. It's dedicated to Vishnu and is a good example of small-scale Khajuraho architecture for its crocodile-covered entrance and slender sikhara.

#### VAMANA TEMPLE

The Vamana Temple (1050–75 AD), 200m further north of the Javari Temple has quirky touches such as elephants protruding from the walls, and there are a few erotic scenes.



## Archaeological Museum

The Archaeological Museum, announced by a wonderful 11th-century statue of Ganesha has a small but well-presented collection of sculptures.

Main Rd; entry free with same-day Western Group ticket; 9am–5pm Sat–Thu



## Accommodation

Check for off-season discounts. The hotel staff also help to organise tours and travel.

### Lalit Temple View HOTEL ₹₹₹

📞7686 272111; www.thelalit.com; Main Rd; rates from ₹8570, with temple view ₹14,080 Supreme luxury, impeccable service

Khajuraho's temples and sculptures present many photo opportunities

and high prices await here. Rooms are immaculate with large-screen TVs, wood-carved furniture and tasteful artwork. It has a block of 'budget' rooms hidden away from the main grounds – with all the same amenities as the others for half the price.

### Hotel Isabel Palace HOTEL ₹₹

📞7686 274770; www.hotelisabelpalace.com; Temple Rd; r from ₹1500, with AC ₹2250–2800 (incl breakfast) Clean and spacious rooms, all with sizeable bathrooms and comfortable furnishings (₹1500 for non-ACs).

The stylish restaurant offers sunset views, as does the extraordinary rooftop terrace, the best by far in town and candlelit for romantic dinners.

### Hotel Harmony HOTEL ₹

📞7686 274135; www.hotelharmonyonline.com; Jain Temples Rd; s/d ₹800/1000, with AC ₹1200/1500 Cosy, well-equipped rooms off marble corridors are tastefully decorated and come with mostly effective mosquito screens and cable TV. Great food is available at Zorba the Buddha restaurant and you can eat under the stars on the rooftop. Wi-fi is chargeable.

### Hotel Surya HOTEL ₹

📞7686 274144; www.hotelsuryakhajuraho.com; Jain Temples Rd; ₹400–1000, with AC ₹800–1600 There's quite a range of rooms in this sprawling, well-run hotel with whitewashed corridors, marble staircases and a lovely courtyard garden out in the back. Some rooms have TVs, others have balconies. Yoga, massage, cycling tours and cooking classes are available. Wi-fi is chargeable.

### Osaka Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE ₹

📞7686 272839; off Basti Rd; ₹500–600, with AC ₹1000–1200 Spacious rooms here are pretty basic but have a homey feel to them. The owner and family are very welcoming, and there are some nice temple views from the rooftop. It's quieter than elsewhere.

## Eating

The pleasant main temple area is a compact dirt-track road lined with rooftop restaurants.

### Madras Coffee House SOUTH INDIAN ₹

Main & Jain Temples Rds; mains ₹50–200; 8.30am–9.30pm Three generations of great South Indian fare—dosa, idli, uttapam, thalis—as well as coffee (Madras style with chicory) and chai are served in a narrow cafe. Ideal for breakfast. The unique house speciality is the tasty egg, cheese and veg dosa (₹200).

### Lassi Corner INDIAN ₹

Jain Temples Rd; meals ₹15–60, lassi ₹15–45; 9am–9.30pm This tarpaulin-covered bamboo shack is the right place for a

## ♥ If You Like: MPSTDC hotels

MPSTDC offers comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation options in Khajuraho.

### • Hotel Jhankar

📞7686 274063; www.mpstdc.com; Dist Chattarpur; r from ₹2290

### • Hotel Payal

📞7686 274064; www.mpstdc.com; Dist Chattarpur; r from ₹1990, with AC ₹2590

### • Tourist Village

📞7686 274062; www.mpstdc.com; 43 Tulsi Vihar Bag Sevania; r from ₹2290

quick chai break, lassi, breakfast and simple Indian fare.

### Raja's Cafe MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

[www.rajacafe.com](http://www.rajacafe.com); Main Rd; mains ₹140–380; 8am–10pm Raja's has been on top of its game for more than 35 years, with espresso coffee, English breakfasts, wood-fired pizzas, superb Indian, Italian and Chinese dishes, and an eclectic menu full of things you might miss, depending on your passport (rosti, fish and chips, lasagna). The location, with a temple-view terrace, is great, as is the restaurant design, with a delightful courtyard shaded by a 170-year-old neem tree. But it's the food that steals the show. Wi-fi is downstairs only.

### Agrasen MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

Jain Temples Rd; thalis ₹130–380; 7am–10.30pm The thalis at this otherwise unthrilling restaurant are extremely good. They do serve perhaps the best dal fry. A first-floor terrace is lit up nicely after dark.

### Mediterraneo ITALIAN ₹₹

Jain Temples Rd; mains ₹200–440, pizza ₹350–460; 7.30am–10pm Far removed from its Italian roots, Mediterraneo manages acceptable Italian fare served on a lovely terrace overlooking the street. Dishes include chicken, salads, organic whole wheat pasta and surprisingly good wood-fired pizzas. Beer and wine are also available.

### Blue Sky Restaurant MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

Main Rd; mains ₹80–260, tree house per person ₹50; 7am–10.30pm An ordinary restaurant with an extraordinary seating arrangement: a rickety wooden platform, three storeys up, leading out to the most unusual place to eat in Khajuraho – a one-table tree house with an unrivalled view of the western temples.

## Shopping

### Kandariya Art & Culture HANDICRAFTS

📍 7686 274031; Jhansi Rd; 9am–9pm In this huge emporium, full-size replicas of some of Khajuraho's temple carvings can be bought – from thousands to lakhs of rupees. Textiles, wood carvings and marble inlay can be found indoors. Nightly one-hour folk-dancing performances (₹550) can be seen at the comfortable indoor theatre here, starting at 8pm and 9.45pm.

### Mrignayanee HANDICRAFTS

📍 7686 274233; opp Lalit Hotel, Temple Road (Western temples) The state-run emporium is an easy shopping destination for elegant Chanderi and Maheshwari saris and textiles, artefacts, Gond art, jewellery, souvenirs and handicrafts. It has a non-bargaining policy. The shop is located at the Madhya Pradesh Tourism office.



## EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

### MP's cultural festivals

Musician and singer **Vidya Shah** worked in Madhya Pradesh at the grassroots level. Here she lists some of the prominent music and dance festivals of the state.

### GWALIOR

The Tansen Samaroh (or Festival) held through the day and night in December every year, with artists from across the country is an absolute pilgrimage for the music lover, especially for classical Indian music. Organised where the 16th-century legend Tansen lies buried, the music here is really a homage that every artist and listener pays to Tansen and their love for music.

### MAIHAR

A festival is held every year in this quaint town in the name of one of the maestros of India, Baba Alauddin Khan who taught the likes of Pt. Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. If in luck you might also get to hear the legendary Maihar Band that was originally set up for the common man way back in 1918. The festival may not be at its peak but the place has a lot of historical sanctity.

### KHAJURAHO

For dance Khajuraho is a magical experience. The stunning sandstone carved temples, which are the backdrop against which

the festival takes place usually in February, come alive with various traditional dance forms from across India.

For more details check <http://www.mptourism.com/>

The Khajuraho dance festival is a big cultural draw





## BHOPAL

### Why Go?

Against the backdrop of its stunning lakes, Bhopal offers two starkly contrasting cityscapes. In the north is the old city of mosques and crowded bazaars. The south has modern shopping complexes and upmarket hotels and restaurants nestled comfortably in the Arera and Shamlia Hills.

### **i** Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Flights and trains from Delhi and Mumbai are plenty. Opt for Ola cabs (get the app) in the city. Else, try the cab service MP Tour and Travels, [www.mptourandtravels.com](http://www.mptourandtravels.com) ☎9584003002; day trips from

₹1800 onwards, longer trips ₹9–11 per km plus ₹200 driver allowance per day; My Cab (☎0755-6666666; [www.mycabindia.com](http://www.mycabindia.com)) operates metered taxis and day trips

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Oct–Feb

Top Bhopal's Jama Masjid was built in the 19th century

### **🗨** Sights

#### Tribal Museum

Step into this well-done museum dedicated to the tribes and sub tribes of Madhya Pradesh. Opened in 2013, the artistic space was built by 1500 tribals using local materials from their villages. The stunning results are divided into five galleries featuring hyper-examples of tribal life. There's also a very interesting museum shop to visit.

Shamlia Hills; Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera ₹50; noon–8pm; closed on Mon

#### Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya

Do drop in to this place, a kind of tribal safari park spread out over an open-air hillside complex.

Museum of Man; [www.igrms.com](http://www.igrms.com); Shamlia Hills; Indian/foreigner ₹10/500, video ₹50; 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Feb, 11am–6pm Mar–Sep

#### State Museum

The archaeological museum spread over 17 galleries includes wonderful temple sculptures as well as 87 Jain bronzes.

Shamlia Hills; Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹50/200; 10.30am–5.30pm Tue–Sun

#### Taj-ul-Masajid

Bhopal's third female ruler, Shah Jahan Begum set about building Taj-ul-Masajid in 1877. It was still incomplete after funds had been

diverted to other projects, and construction did not resume until 1971. Fortress-like terracotta walls surround three gleaming white domes and a pair of towering pink minarets with white domes.

Closed to non-Muslims; noon–3pm; Fri

#### Jama Masjid

The gold spikes crowning the squat minarets of the Jama Masjid, built in 1837 by Qudsia Begum, glint serenely above the skull caps and veils swirling through the bazaar below.

#### MP Tourism Boat Club

The club offers motorboat rides (₹210, five minutes, minimum three people), pedal boats (₹60 per boat, 30 minutes), jet skiing (₹400 per person) and even parasailing (₹500). An autorickshaw here from New Market costs ₹80.

☎775 3295043; Lake Drive Rd; 10.30am–6.30pm

### **✓** Top Tip: Bhopal-on-wheels

A guided tour on an open bus departs from Palash Residency and winds through the hills and the old city. Stops include the Lakshmi Narayan Temple, MP Tourism Boat Club and Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya.

☎755 3295040; 3½hr tour ₹100; 11am–5pm Tue–Sun



## Qadimi Hammam

Built in the early 1700, the Qadimi Hammam is a Turkish bath. Separate sections for men and women are well-maintained. Naseem, the lady of the house, doubles as a masseuse.

☎9303090998; Lane no 2, Kamla Park; massages start from ₹400; Nov–Mar, 9am–3 pm (for women), 6pm–11pm (for men)

## Bharat Bhawan

With its distinctive architecture by Charles Correa and featuring a Museum of Fine Arts, Centre of Indian Poetry, cinema classics and a library of classical and folk music, Bharat Bhawan is worth a halt.

☎755 2660239; www.bharatbhawan.org; Shamla Hills; 10am–6pm (on all days, unless otherwise specified).

## Accommodation

### Jehan Numa

#### Retreat HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎755 660 6600 www.http://www.jehannuma.com; Near Van Vihar, Dr. Salim Ali Road, Premapura; cottages ₹14,000

(incl breakfast) The sprawling resort doesn't hold back on the plushness, complete with a spa, luxurious surrounds and birding for outdoorsy activities among others.

### Jehan Numa

#### Palace Hotel HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎755 2661100; www.hoteljehanumapalace.com; 157 Shamla Hill; patio s/d ₹5480/6700, s/d from ₹7920/9140, ste from ₹19,500 (incl breakfast) A former 19th-century palace has been converted into a top-class hotel. There are beautifully decorated rooms, a palm-lined pool, a health spa, three restaurants, two bars and a coffee shop.

### Noor-U-Sabah

#### Palace HERITAGE HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎755 4223333; www.noorussabahpalace.com; VIP Rd; s/d ₹6500/7500, ste from ₹16,500 (incl breakfast) Perched on a hilltop overlooking the lake, this hotel heaps the luxury quotient. The 1920s building is dotted with remnants of its royal past – black and white photographs, artefacts and more.

## Detour: Bhimbetka & Islamnagar

The rock shelters at Bhimbetka, 45km from Bhopal, are a world heritage site and still exhibit traces of life on earth from as long as 10,000 years ago. These contain thousands of ancient rock paintings that depict hunting scenes and life as it was in the Stone Age to medieval times. Fifteen of the best shelters are linked by a walking trail.

Entry Indian/foreigner ₹50/100; 7am–7pm

Islamnagar is about 11km on the Bhopa-Berasia Road and 20km on the Bypass Road. It was the palace of Bhopal's Afghan rulers and its impressive architecture makes it worthy of a halt.

## Hotel Lake View

MPSTDC ₹₹₹

☎755 2660090; www.mptourism.com; 157 Shamla Hill; s/d ₹5299/5700, ste from ₹8799 (incl breakfast) Ask for a room overlooking the lake. One can't go wrong with clean and spacious rooms at this MPSTDC property. You'll find it hard to tear yourself away from the balcony.

## Hotel Amer Palace

HOTEL ₹₹

☎755 4292770; www.hotelamerpalace.com; MP Nagar; s/d from ₹3640/4540 (incl breakfast) Conveniently located, Amer Palace offers more than just spacious and clean rooms; in-house dining, the famous Amer Bakery Hut and a health club are ample reasons to book this hotel.

## Palash Residency

MPSTDC ₹₹

☎755 2553066; TT Nagar; s/d from ₹3860/4220 This mid-range MP Tourism hotel is walking distance from New Market. Breezy corridors lead to smart rooms with heavy wood furniture, wall-mounted flat-screen TVs, kettles and complimentary toiletries. There's free wi-fi in the lobby, a spa, bar, three restaurants and a new pool. An MP Tourism office is based here.

## Hotel Sonali Regency

HOTEL ₹

☎755 2740880; www.hotelsonaliregency.com; Radha Talkies Rd; s/d from ₹650/750, with AC from ₹1350/1550 (incl breakfast) Excellent service awaits here. Renovated AC rooms have new floors, funky-shaped beds and working hot showers. Skip the



An exhibit of a metal carpet seller at the Royal Art Gallery

lowest category; executive non-AC rooms (from ₹900) are every bit as comfortable as those with air-con.

## Eating

### Under the Mango Tree

INDIAN ₹₹₹

Jehan Numa Palace Hotel, 157 Shamla Hill; mains ₹380–750, 7.30–11pm Jehan Numa Palace's best restaurant specialises in barbecue kebabs and tandoori items. The pankhi chicken kebab is melt-off-the-bone tasty, and try the sampler platter (from ₹830). Good food, wine, draught beer (Woodpecker, a local swill) all combine under a romantic white pavilion.

### Bapu ki Kutiya

INDIAN VEG ₹₹₹

☎755 4220849; MP Nagar; mains ₹500–750; 10.30am–11pm Get simple North Indian food at this popular vegetarian restaurant. It is usually

## ♥ If You Like: Street food in the Old City

For a quick spin of the Old City, autorickshaw driver cum guide Syed Masood Ali is your best bet. Contact him at 9179479885

- **Mamaji Jalebi Wale & Kalyan Singh Swad Bhandar** Serves the best poha-sev and jalebi breakfast 9039313139; Lakherapura; mains less than ₹100; 8am–11pm; 755 2731495; Itwara Rd; mains less than ₹100; 8am–8pm
- **Zam Zam** Arrive at this fast-food hotspot for some of Bhopal's best biryani. The finger-lickin' chicken tikka dipped in green-chilli yoghurt sauce, is the true showstopper. Hamidia Rd; mains ₹50–100; 11.30am–midnight
- **Delhi Zayaka** Do try the chicken Afghan, it beats everything else on

The Old City's street food options include mutton and chicken biryanis



the menu. 9644653948; Sultania Rd; mains ₹200–400; 11am–midnight

- **Jai Jinendra** Swift, no-nonsense service over the last 23 years has customers happy here. Must try the dahi vada and papri chaat. 9893040392; Jain Mandir Rd; mains less than ₹100; 8am–10pm
- **Sulaimani Chai** All along the Itwara Chowk, dusty shanties dish out the best Sulaimani chai. Itwara Rd; mains less than ₹100 (chai for ₹5); 6am–12.30am
- **Haji Lassi** The best lassi in town swirls in pink and green tinted tall glasses. No surprise then that politicians, Bollywood stars and top hats stop by for a swig. 9826064603; Itwara Chowk; mains less than ₹100 (falooda for ₹65, lassi ₹45 per glass); 10am–12am
- **Jameel** Stalwarts at dishing out the best nihari, biryani, mutton stew and moong halwa. Ibrahimpura; mains less than ₹100; 10am–12pm
- **Hotel Gazala** The nali-nihari combo at this busy shop is a winner. Chatori Gali; mains less than ₹100; 8am–8pm
- **Salim Bhai Kebab Bun** For a quick snack of kebab bun, head to Chatori Gali. The shop is the first one to your right. Chatori Gali; mains less than ₹100; 8am–8pm
- **Famous Biryani** The mutton biryani is incomparable to anything that you might have eaten before. 9893841745; Itwara Chowk; mains less than ₹100; 8am–8pm

packed with locals – a little waiting time is expected.

### Bhopal Express INDIAN ₹₹₹

755 2660802; opp Doodardarshan premises, Lake View, Shamla Hills; mains ₹500–750; 11am–11pm Themed and designed after the exact coaches of an Indian train, the MP Tourism hotel offers railway cutlets, a classic on the menu.

### Wind n Waves MULTI-CUISINE ₹₹

755 2661523; Van Vihar Rd, Shamla Hills; mains ₹175–450; 9am–11pm The Madhya Pradesh Tourism's cheerful restaurant offers Continental, Indian and Chinese fare and can mix a mean cocktail for sundowners.

### Indian Coffee House SOUTH INDIAN ₹₹

New Market Rd, mains ₹50–260; 7am–11pm This is a top spot for breakfast. Waiters in fan-tailed hats dish out filtered coffee plus other South Indian favourites.

### Manohar INDIAN ₹₹

6 Hamidia Rd; mains ₹30–150, thali ₹130–160; 8am–11pm This bright, clean, canteen-style restaurant does brisk business in South Indian breakfasts, thalis, snacks, shakes and a load of presumably more hygienic versions of many Indian street-food favourites. In truth, it's a bit of a madhouse and rightfully so. They have an impressive range of cakes, cookies and sweets on a side counter too.

## 🛍 Shopping

### Mrignayanee

755 2554162; www.mphandicrafts.com; Shopping Centre, TT Nagar; 10am–6pm The state-run emporium is an easy shopping destination for elegant Chanderi and Maheshwari saris, textiles, artefacts, jewellery, souvenirs and handicrafts.

### Tribes India

755 2579644; Inner Court GTB Complex; 10am–8pm Shop here for a variety of souvenirs, textiles, jewellery and local handicrafts.

## 🚶 Activities

### Heritage Walk

9899962790; info@indiacitywalks.com; ₹500 per person and more for groups Contact the National Award winning India City Walks as this is a great way to get close to the interesting parts of Bhopal. Walks follow thematic experiences that include heritage as well.

### Kerwa Dam ZIP LINING

Drive about 15km from Bhopal's New Market area to reach Kerwa Dam, a picnic spot. Trekking and zip lining activities make for a day's fun. The MPSTDC's Kerwa serves easy meals and snacks.



## SANCHI

### Why Go?

*Sanchi, 48km northeast of Bhopal, is a rounded hill topped with some of India's oldest Buddhist structures. Today, the remarkably preserved Great Stupa is the centrepiece of Sanchi's Buddhist monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's from here that Emperor Ashoka spread his message of peace and it is one of the best maintained Buddhist monuments in the country. Plan a day trip from Bhopal.*

### **i** Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Trains from Bhopal are best. Catch them at the village crossroads. Cabs are available at ₹9–11 per km, minimum 250km per day, plus ₹200

for driver allowance for a round trip to Sanchi.

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Nov–Mar

*Top* The Great Stupa, Sanchi's main structure, was built by Emperor Ashoka

### **o** Sights

#### Buddhist Monuments

In 262 BC, repentant of the horrors he had inflicted on Kalinga, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism and built the Great Stupa at Sanchi, near the birthplace of his wife. The hilltop Buddhist monuments are reached via a path and stone steps at the end of Monuments Rd where the ticket office (dawn–dusk) is located. If you don't want to walk up the hill, autorickshaws will deposit you at the top for ₹30. Official central government guides mill about and charge ₹1035/1310 for half/full day. If you're going up to the stupas for the sunrise, buy a ticket the day before.

Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, video ₹25; dawn–dusk

#### Stupas

Stupa 1 (Great Stupa) is the main structure on the hill constructed by Ashoka and later enlarged. Presently it stands 16m high and 37m in diameter. Encircling the stupa is a wall with four entrances through magnificently carved toranas (gateways) that are the finest Buddhist works of art in Sanchi. Turn right at Stupa 1 to halt at Stupa 2 on which flowers, animals and people – some mythological – ring the stupa. Stupa 3 is northeast of the Great Stupa and similar in design, though smaller.

#### Toranas

The Great Stupa's four toranas (gateways) were erected around

Sanchi is home to India's oldest Buddhist monuments and stupas



35 BC. Scenes carved onto the pillars and their triple architraves are mainly tales from the Jatakas, episodes from the Buddha's various lives. The Buddha is represented through symbols. The lotus stands for his birth, the bodhi tree for his enlightenment, the wheel for his teachings, and the footprint and throne for his presence. The stupa itself symbolises the Buddha. Remember, it's auspicious to walk clockwise around Buddhist monuments.

### Gateways

The Northern Gateway includes panels depicting a monkey offering a bowl of honey to the Buddha, who is represented by a bodhi tree. Another panel depicts the Miracle of Sravasti in which the Buddha is in the form of a bodhi tree.

The breathtaking carved figure of a yakshi, hanging from an architrave (main beam across the top of columns) on the Eastern Gateway, is one of Sanchi's best-known images. The pillars feature scenes of the Buddha's nirvana, his mother Maya's dream of an elephant standing on the moon and the Great Departure,

when the Buddha set out to find enlightenment.

The back-to-back lions supporting the Southern Gateway, the oldest gateway, form the state emblem of India, which can be seen on every banknote. The gateway narrates Ashoka's life as a Buddhist, with scenes of the Buddha's birth and another representation of the Great Departure.

The Western Gateway's top architrave shows Lord Buddha in seven different incarnations, manifested as a stupa and as a tree. The rear of one pillar shows him resisting the Temptation of Mara, the Buddhist devil.

### Temples

Temple 18, behind Stupa 1, is a 7th century AD chaitya (prayer room or assembly hall). To its left is the small Temple 17. Beyond both of them, the large Temple 40 dates back to the Ashokan period, in part. The rectangular Temple 31, beside Stupa 5 contains the Buddha's image.

### Monasteries

The earliest monasteries were made of wood and are long gone. These

days only the courtyards and stone foundations remain. Monasteries 45 and 47, standing on the eastern ridge to the left of Stupa 1, have strong Hindu elements in their design. The former has two sitting Buddhas. Behind Monastery 51, partway down the hill towards Stupa 2, is the Great Bowl, carved from a boulder, into which food and offerings were placed for distribution to the monks.

### Archaeological Museum

This fine museum has a small collection of sculptures from the site. The centrepiece is the 3rd-century BC lion capital from the Ashoka Pillar 10. Other highlights include a yakshi hanging from a mango tree and beautifully serene Buddha figures in red sandstone.

Admission incl stupa ticket; 9am–5pm  
Tue–Sun

### Accommodation & Eating

#### Gateway Retreat MPSTDC ₹

☎7482 266723; www.mptourism.com; Bhopal–Vidisha Rd; s/d ₹990/1170, with AC from ₹2140/2690 (incl breakfast) This family-friendly MP Tourism hotel is the most comfortable place to stay in Sanchi. AC bungalows are set among well-kept gardens, with a small children's play area and a rather small kiddie pool. Non-AC rooms are located nearby at



The Gateway Retreat offers an Indian menu

Gateway Cafeteria. The restaurant (mains ₹110 to ₹290) is Sanchi's best and there's a bar.

#### Krishna Hotel GUESTHOUSE ₹

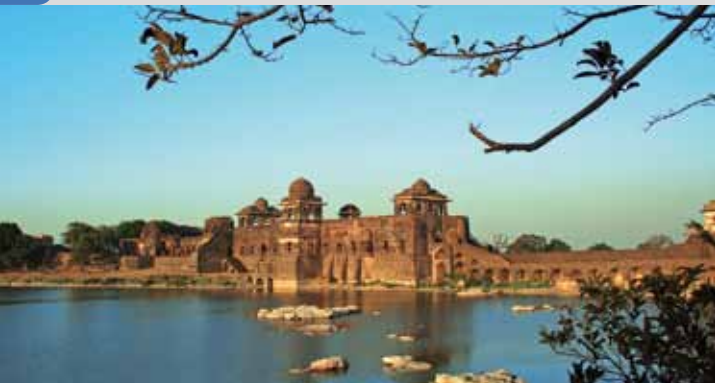
☎7482 266610; Bhopal–Vidisha Rd; s/d from ₹200/450 Simple rooftop rooms, some with sit-down flush toilets, are slightly more expensive than the darker, noisier rooms at the front. It's above Sai Chemist Shop. Pancakes and a few traveller favourites are available from the kitchen.

#### Gateway Cafeteria INDIAN ₹

Monuments Rd; mains ₹70–100; 8am–10am, noon–3pm & 7–10.30pm This simple MP Tourism place has a very basic Indian menu and coffee in addition to housing the non-AC rooms of Gateway Retreat.

### Snapshot: The excavations man

Britain born, Sir John Marshall, was the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928. During this period he led excavations not only at the Harappa and Mohenjo Daro sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation, but also the Buddhist centres of Sanchi and Sarnath. His house is still preserved in Sanchi, though it is a blind spot for many travellers.



## MANDU

### Why Go?

*Perched on top of a forested 20sq km plateau, picturesque Mandu is home to some of India's finest examples of Sultanate architecture and baobab trees, originally from Africa. It is dotted with palaces, tombs, monuments and mosques.*

### **i** Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Indore is the closest nodal junction to Mandu (95km) and is well-connected by trains, flights and road. From Indore, hire a cab. Cabs ₹9–11 per km, minimum of 250km per day (driver allowance of ₹200).

Cycles (₹100 per day) and autorickshaws are available, but fix the price before setting out.

#### WHEN TO GO

Jul–Mar

*Top* Jahaz Mahal was built in the 15th century by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din

### **🕒** Sights

Visit the three main groups of ruins in Mandu: the Royal Enclave, the Village Group and the Rewa Kund Group. Each requires its own separate ticket.

#### Royal Enclave

The Royal Enclave ruins are the only ones fenced off into one single complex. There's a Publication Sale Counter (9am–5pm) selling guidebooks, and a canteen. Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; dawn–dusk

#### Jahaz Mahal

Dating from the 15th century, this is the most famous building in Mandu. Built on a narrow strip of land between the Munja and Kapur tanks, with a small upper storey like a ship's bridge, it's far longer (120m) than it is wide (15m) and is a testament to the evolved water harvesting systems of the time. Ghiyas-ud-din, who is said to have had a harem of 15,000 maidens, constructed its lookouts, scalloped arches, airy rooms and beautiful pleasure pools.

Jahaz Mahal Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; 6am–7pm

#### Taveli Mahal

These former stables now house a small Archaeological Museum. Find a handful of artefacts including 11th- and 12th-century sculptures and stone slabs with 15th-century Quranic text.

9am–5pm

#### Hindola Mahal

Halt by the eye-catching Hindola Mahal, so-called because the slope of the walls is supposed to create the impression that they are swaying. Swing Palace

#### Palace & Shop of Gada Shah

The house is within the enclave, but the shop is outside on the road to Delhi Gate. The owner is identified as Rajput chief Medini Ray, a powerful minion of the sultans. The 'shop' was a warehouse for saffron and musk.

#### Mosque of Dilawar Khan

Built by Dilawar Khan in 1405, this mosque is Mandu's earliest Islamic building.

#### Champa Baoli

So called because its water supposedly smelled as sweet

The Hindola Mahal or 'Swing' Palace is a marvel in stone



as the champak flower, Champa Baoli is a step-well surrounded by subterranean vaulted chambers.

### Turkish Bath

Stars and octagons perforate the domed roofs of this tiny hammam (Turkish bath), which had hot and cold water and a hypocaust (underfloor heated) sauna.

### Village Group

The Village Group is located by the bus stand in the centre of the village. It contains three monuments. The ticket office for all three sights is at the entrance to Jama Masjid.

Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; dawn–dusk

### Jama Masjid

The red-stone domed mosque is 17m-high. Hoshang Shah began its construction around 1406, basing it on the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in Syria, and Mohammed Khilji completed it in 1454. It's reckoned to be the largest example of Sultanate architecture in India.

### Hoshang's Tomb

Reputed to be India's oldest marble building, this imposing tomb is crowned with a crescent. Inside, light filters into the echoing dome through stone jaalis (carved lattice screens). An inscription records Shah Jahan sending his architects – including Ustad Hamid, who worked on the Taj Mahal – here in 1659 to pay their respects to the builders.

### Ashrafi Mahal

Mohammed Shah originally built his tomb as a madrasa (Islamic college), before converting and extending it. The building is an empty shell, but intricate Islamic pillar work can be seen.

### Rewa Kund Group

A pleasant 4km-cycle south of the village Mandu, past Sagar Talao, brings you to two more ruins. Tickets for both should be bought from outside Baz Bahadur's Palace.

Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; dawn–dusk

### Baz Bahadur's Palace

Baz Bahadur was the last independent ruler of Mandu. His 16th-century palace is a curious mix of Rajasthani and Mughal architectural styles and is beside the Rewa Kund tank.

### Rupmati's Pavilion

Standing at the top of a cliff plunging 366m to the plains, Rupmati's Pavilion has a beauty unmatched by the other monuments. According to Malwa legends, the music-loving Baz Bahadur built it for the beautiful Hindu singer, Rupmati. From its terrace and domed pavilions, Rupmati could gaze down at the distant glint of the Narmada. The love story is a subject of Malwa folk songs where Baz Bahadur fled and Rupmati poisoned herself to save herself from the Sultan's wrath.

## Snapshot: Historical legacy

Raja Bhoja, of Bhopal fame, founded Mandu in the 10th century. When the Mughals captured Delhi in 1401, the Afghan Dilawar Khan, governor of Malwa, set up his own kingdom here and Mandu's golden age began. Dilawar Khan's son, Hoshang Shah, shifted the capital from Dhar to Mandu. In 1526, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat conquered Mandu. Years of feuds and invasions saw Baz Bahadur eventually emerge at the top spot, but in 1561 he fled Mandu to avoid facing Akbar's advancing troops.

Akbar added Mandu to the Mughal Empire until it was taken by the Marathas in 1732. The capital of Malwa was then shifted back to Dhar, and the slide in Mandu's fortunes began.

## Accommodation

### Hotel Rupmati HOTEL ₹₹

📍 729 2263270; Main Rd; ₹1750, with AC ₹2100 A clean, colourful row of rooms with large bathrooms are perched on the edge of a cliff with great views of the valley below. There's a restaurant and delightful outdoor eating lawn with views.

### Malwa Retreat MPSTDC ₹₹

📍 729 2263221; www.mptourism.com; Main Rd; r/tents ₹2050/3650, with AC ₹3230 This MP Tourism option has cool rooms and well-appointed tents with valley views. There is the Malwa Retreat Cafeteria and the reception doubles as the Tourist Interpretation Centre, where you can arrange local guides (half-day ₹375).

### Malwa Resort MPSTDC ₹₹

📍 729 2263235; www.mptourism.com; Main Rd; r with AC from ₹4070 This family-friendly MP Tourism property, 2km

south of the village, offers morning chai in the lakeside gazebo, watching local fishermen cast their nets over Sagar Talao lake. There are large gardens, comfortable cottages, children's play areas, and a pool, restaurant and bar.

## Eating

### Shivani Restaurant INDIAN ₹₹

Main Rd; mains ₹60–180, thali ₹80–180; 9am–10pm This no-nonsense diner offers tasty and cheap food. The menu includes thalis plus local specialities such as Mandu kofta, South Indian breakfasts, lassi and coffee.

### Yatrika INDIAN ₹₹

Main Rd; mains ₹90–280; 8–10am, noon–3pm & 7–10pm This small cafe at Malwa Retreat dishes out veg and non-veg Indian meals. If you want a cold beer you'll need to head to the sister property, the Malwa Resort.

## Detour: Omkareshwar & Maheshwar

### OMKARESHWAR

Browse the colourful stalls or join pilgrims at Shri Omkar Mandhata Temple in this pilgrim town. This cave-like temple, which houses a jyotirlingam is one of the many Hindu monuments on the island. From the old bridge, head left to the 11th-century Gaudi Somnath Temple, from where you can descend the hill to the northern tip of the island, where sadhus bathe in the confluence of the holy Narmada

A weaver working her loom in Maheshwar, famous for its gossamer saris



and Kaveri rivers. Don't miss the beautifully sculpted Siddhanatha Temple with marvellous elephant carvings around its base.

79km from Indore/103km from Mandu (₹9–11 per km, min 250 km per day, plus ₹200 driver allowance)

### MAHESHWAR

The peaceful, riverside town once called Mahishmati, still draws pilgrims to its ancient ghats and temples on the holy Narmada River. The town is dominated by a 16th-century fort built by Emperor Akbar, while the Maheshwar Palace and the temples were added during the reign of 18th-century Holkar queen Ahilyabai. The palace is part public courtyard, part posh hotel.


From the ramparts of the fort you can see boats (return trip per person/boat ₹50/500) and incense smoke drifting across the water to Baneshwar Temple, located on a tiny island in the middle of the river. Near the palace a small doorway announces the NGO Rehwa Society ([www.rehwasociety.org](http://www.rehwasociety.org); 10am–6pm Wed–Mon, shop open daily), a craft cooperative for the welfare of the weavers. Maheshwari saris are famous for their unique weave and simple, geometric patterns. You can buy shawls, saris, scarves and fabrics.

Mandu–Maheshwar 63km; cabs charge ₹8–10 per km, for 250km per day plus driver allowance.


## Accommodation & Eating

### OMKARESHWAR


#### Narmada Resort MPT RESORT ₹

 7280 250554; Near NVD rest house, Khandwa; d ₹2990 This MPT property is a smart option to stay. The in-house restaurant offers simple homely North Indian (read Punjabi) fare with dal, subji and dahi.

#### Manu Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE ₹

 9826749004; [omkar\\_bagh@yahoo.co.in](mailto:omkar_bagh@yahoo.co.in); r with shared bathroom ₹350 Rooms are simple and bathrooms are shared but kept clean. If you ask in advance, your hosts can whip up a delicious thali (₹100). This is pretty much the only place to stay on the island itself that isn't a dharamsala.

#### Ganesh Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE ₹

 7280 271370; [sumitbhoi1137@gmail.com](mailto:sumitbhoi1137@gmail.com); ₹250 Budget rooms with thin mattresses await you here. Upstairs rooms are brighter and have air-coolers, while a shaded garden restaurant overlooking the ghats has a multi-cuisine menu including Western breakfasts.


### MAHESHWAR

#### Ahilya Fort HERITAGE HOTEL ₹

 7771004811, reservations 9810306178; [www.ahilyafort.com](http://www.ahilyafort.com); r Indian/foreigner incl all meals from ₹11,750/₹18,050 Demi

Moore, Mick Jagger and Sting have all indulged in this heritage hotel owned by Prince Shivaji Rao Holkar, a 14th-generation Indian-American direct descendent of Ahilyabai. Part of Maheshwar Palace, the best rooms come with fabulous river views. Rates include all meals as well as boat trips on the river. Booking ahead is essential. Non-guests who fancy a night to remember should not miss dining here.


#### Narmada Retreat MPT RESORT ₹

 83499 94784; Narmada Retreat Rd, Khargone; d ₹5220, tents/suite ₹6500 The MPT resort by the waterfront is a good option with its gardens, pool and free parking. There's a multi-cuisine restaurant too.

#### Laboo'z Cafe GUESTHOUSE ₹

 7771004818; [santosh.ahilyafort@gmail.com](mailto:santosh.ahilyafort@gmail.com); s/d incl breakfast ₹900/1210, with AC from ₹1430/₹1650; cafe 6.30am–8pm Not only a delightful cafe in a glorious tree-shaded courtyard, but also a place with six wonderful rooms to stay in. Each room is decorated with care and attention.

#### Hansa Heritage HOTEL ₹

 9827857097; Kila Rd; ₹700, with AC ₹1050, ste ₹1450 Smart, modern rooms have a rustic feel with wooden furniture and coloured-glass windowpanes. Bathrooms are modern and spotlessly clean. Indian breakfasts and thalis are available.



## BURHANPUR

### Why Go?

*The former capital of the Mughal Kingdom, Burhanpur's palaces, mosques and mansions keep alive the architectural glory of Emperor Shah Jahan before he left for Agra in the 17th century. It was called the 'Gateway to South India'. Take a trip back in time here, especially to know more about the unique love between Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal.*

### **i** Quick Facts

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Air:** The closest airport to Burhanpur lies in Indore (4 hours by road from airport).

**Train:** Burhanpur is connected to major cities and metros of India.

**Road:** The state highway SH27 from Indore offers decent connectivity. A cab from Indore (about 185km) charge ₹ 8–10 per km.

#### WHEN TO VISIT

Nov–Mar

*Top* The Dargah-e-Haikimi is a pilgrim spot and the resting place of a Bohra saint

### **o** Sights

#### Asirgarh Fort

Standing on the craggy rock face of the Satpura Hills, it's easy to imagine why the Asirgarh Fort held such importance. Built by a nobleman called Asa Ahir in the 15th century, the walls of the fort seem impregnable. The fort is perched on a vantage spot on a pass that overlooks the valleys of the Narmada and Tapti Rivers. The Mughals took charge of the fort in 1601, when Akbar laid siege to the rest of the region and later influenced changes in its architecture. Later additions incorporated Islamic, Hindu, Persian and Turkish styles. Inside the fort is a Gupteshwar Mahadev Mandir for Lord Shiva, and ruined minarets of an erstwhile mosque known as Asir Masjid.

20km from Burhanpur city centre;  
dawn–dusk

#### Jama Masjid

While the construction of the Jama Masjid was initiated by the Farukhi leader, Adil Shah, it was Akbar who gave it the finishing touches in the early 17th century. It is one of the significant structures of the city that tells the story of the two dynasties that ruled over it; the Farukhis who established it at the edge of the River Tapti in 1400 and the Mughals who held sway from 1601 onwards. Look out for both Urdu and Sanskrit scripts inside the mosque.

Dawn–dusk

#### Shahi Qila

The Shahi Qila is on the east side of the Tapti River. It was constructed under the Farukhi Dynasty and was later the stronghold of Shah Jahan for several years. A new architectural feature was added to the fort – a terrace garden – that had never been seen prior to this. Crane your neck towards the ceiling, to spot a painting that is reminiscent of the Taj Mahal, possibly an inspiration for the world-famous mausoleum. Part of the Shahi Qila, the Zenana Hammam or the Royal Bath has a rather poignant story associated with it. It was the royal bath of the Mughal Queen and wife of Shah Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal. It is said that she died in this very bath, giving birth to their 14th child.

Dawn–dusk

The Shahi Qila hammam was the royal bath of Empress Mumtaz





## Snapshot: From Burhanpur, with love

It is believed that Burhanpur was the first location choice for building the grand mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal. However, Shah Jahan changed his mind and moved the plan to Agra, due to the copious supply of white marble there. Mumtaz lay buried here until the Taj Mahal was completed in Agra. A simple symbol of Shah Jahan's love lies in the middle of the Tapti River. The Rock of Love is the name given to this elephant-shaped perch, where Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are believed to have sat on moonlit nights.

### Dargah-e-Haikimi

The resting place of the Dawoodi Bohra Saint, Saiyedi Abdul Qadir Hakimuddin, this is an important pilgrimage for Muslims around the world. The tomb lies 3km from

A 16th-century painting of Emperor Shah Jahan hunting in Burhanpur



the city and houses pristine white mosques, lush gardens, and world-class accommodation for visitors. Dawn–dusk

### Burhanpur Gurudwara

The 400-year-old Gurudwara is held in great reverence by the Sikh community as the founder, Guru Nanakdev and their last guru, Guru Govind Singh both are said to have visited here. Dawn–dusk

## Accommodation & Eating

### Tapti Retreat HOTEL

☎ 755 242244; Burhan–Jalgaon Jamod Rd; d from ₹1690 onwards The MPSTDC-run Tapti Retreat offers basic but clean rooms. Close access to all the monuments and reasonable facilities like in-house dining make it a veritable option in the city.



## EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

### Gond Art

**Uma Tewari**, works with traditional craft techniques. She is the founder of Then & Now, a sustainable project.

Gond is derived from Kond which means “green mountain” in the Dravidian idiom. The Gonds, settled in the Gondwana region of Central India (9th–13th centuries) are perhaps the largest tribal group in the world. Four Gond kingdoms are mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. These were later destroyed by the Marathas and their survival threatened.

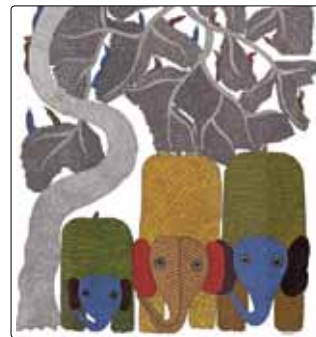
### NATURE & ART

The Gonds are divided into different clans, one of them, the Pradhans are hereditary bards. Today they are also known for transforming Gond myths into imagery. However, the predominant theme is veneration of nature – birds, beasts and trees are painted vividly. Besides, their paintings now depict their views on contemporary surroundings. Lines and dots in their paintings impart a sense of movement. Walls of huts were earlier painted using fingers and bamboo sticks with natural colours. These days they use acrylic paints, brushes and pens.

### GOND PAINTING TRADITION

Gond paintings got exposure when they were discovered by eminent artist, J Swaminathan. Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam was the first to put his art on paper and from there was born the modern Gond painting tradition. Many of today's well-known Gond painters are from the same lineage. Gond wall art can be seen at Bharat Bhawan, Indira Gandhi Manav Sangrahalaya, the tribal museum and Raj Sangrahalaya in Bhopal.

Detailed artwork with natural pigments by Gond artist Mangru Uikey



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This book marks Supriya Sehgal's 37th contribution to Lonely Planet and other India-based travel books. It's been a thrilling decade of being on the road for long stretches – an addiction which throws up withdrawal symptoms if she doesn't get on a bus or a train for a month. Madhya Pradesh had remained elusive for a long time until this book gave her an opportunity to explore it. Wild encounters aside, it was Chanderi's raw historical backdrop and Bhopal's stirring food scene that left her smitten – coming from a non foodie, that's all the testimony one needs.

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