

Monsoon mode on !

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Fri 7/12/2024 3:31 PM

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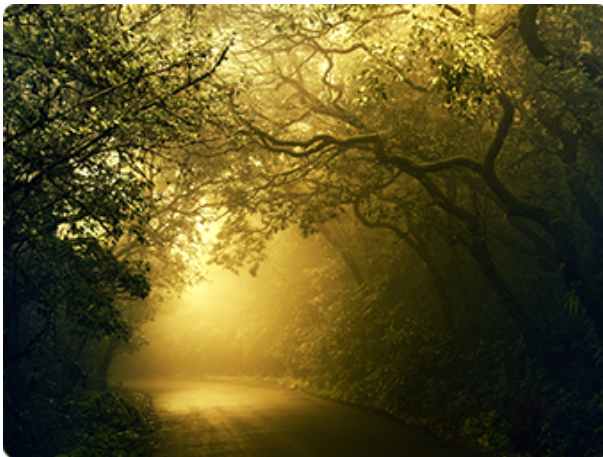
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Issue 17 • July 2024

City spotlight: Mahabaleshwar



MONSOON MAGIC IN A RAIN-SOAKED PARADISE

Visiting Mahabaleshwar in the state of Maharashtra during the monsoon season is an enchanting experience. Situated in the Western Ghats, this hill station transforms into a paradise as the rains breathe life into its surroundings. The hills and valleys are cloaked in lush green, with mist gently rolling over the peaks, creating an ethereal atmosphere. Waterfalls cascade down the hillsides, offering stunning views and perfect spots for nature lovers and photographers. The fresh, crisp air filled with the earthy scent of rain-soaked soil adds to the rejuvenating experience, making every moment in Mahabaleshwar feel like a walk through a fairy tale. In addition, the town is home to many ancient temples, such as the Mahabaleshwar and Panchganga temples, which add a spiritual dimension to your visit.

In addition to its natural beauty, Mahabaleshwar offers a variety of activities and attractions that are particularly delightful in the monsoon. The beautiful Venna Lake, surrounded by mist-covered hills, provides a perfect setting for a boat ride or a peaceful stroll or picnic along its banks. For adventure enthusiasts, trekking through the rain-soaked forests and exploring the historical Pratapgarh Fort during the monsoon showers adds a thrilling touch. The local markets come alive with fresh produce, including the famous Mahabaleshwar strawberries, and the cozy cafes offer warm beverages and delicious local cuisine. Indulge in local culinary delights such as piping hot corn on the cob, freshly made sweet chikki, an array of strawberry treats like jams, ice creams, and desserts.



TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN MAHABALESHWAR



Step into nature's canvas of flowers at Kaas Pathar

Kaas Pathar (Kaas Plateau), comes alive during the monsoon season, transforming into a carpet of wildflowers. This UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, lying at an altitude of 4500 ft, is often referred to as the 'Valley of Flowers of Maharashtra', offering a visual feast as over 850 species of flowers, including rare orchids and carnivorous plants, come alive in a riot of colours. The cool, misty air and the blossoming landscape create an otherworldly charm. Strolling through Kaas Pathar during the monsoons is like walking through a living painting, where every step reveals new hues and patterns, making it truly unforgettable.

Soar above Panchgani to admire its beautiful landscape

Don't forget to visit Panchgani, Mahabaleshwar's twin town just 20 kilometres away. The rolling hills and plateaus with floating clouds around the peaks and valleys, and the monsoon showers that revive the waterfalls on the cliffs, provide many spots for picnics and relaxation. You can take leisurely strolls along the scenic table land, Asia's second-highest volcanic plateau, or paraglide for amazing views. The town's charming colonial-era architecture and its freshness create a perfect setting. The local markets brim with seasonal fruits and handicrafts, making Panchgani a delightful retreat in the monsoons.



Serenity, spirituality, and monsoon magic at the Mahabaleshwar Temple

The name of Mahabaleshwar came from Lord Shiva (Mahabali). The Mahabaleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva was built in the 16th century, it has a blend of Hemadant and South Indian architectural styles. It houses the sacred lingam, attracting devotees from across the country. The monsoon season adds to its charm, as mist envelops the temple, standing in the midst of washed green surroundings. There are many temples in the vicinity; the Panchganga Temple is believed to be over 4500 years old, and stands near the five sacred rivers – the Krishna, Venna, Koyna, Savitri, and Gayatri.

Pratapgarh Fort, where historical valour meets nature's bounty

Standing majestically in the Sahyadri ranges, 20 km from Mahabaleshwar, Pratapgarh Fort, is a testament to valour and strategic brilliance. Built in the 17th Century by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, this historic fortress offers a journey through Maharashtra's rich past. The fort's towering walls and architecture provide a glimpse into its military significance, while its



panoramic views of beautiful valleys and lakes is magical. Steeped in tales of bravery and resistance against the Mughal forces, the sprawling complex of Pratapgarh Fort is fascinating to explore, including the famous Bhavani Temple and Afzal Khan's tomb.



MICE events in the scenic splendour of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani

Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani, with their glorious landscapes and calming ambiance, are perfect destinations for MICE events. These neighbouring scenic hill stations, known for their fertile green hills, unspoiled lakes, and refreshing climate, provide an inspiring environment that fosters creativity and collaboration. State-of-the-art conference facilities, luxurious accommodations, and a range of recreational activities such as trekking, boating, and strawberry picking ensure a blend of work and leisure. The pleasant weather, rich cultural heritage and culinary delights of the region, makes these towns ideal for corporate events.

[Read more on Mahabaleshwar](#)

India Celebrates

India's festivals offer fascinating culture and tradition. These events, marking religious, seasonal, and historical milestones, feature light displays, colourful street celebrations, dholak (drums) playing, and spirited dancing and singing. Each festival offers a feast of regional delicacies, ethnic attire, and religious rituals.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN JULY-AUGUST



Karsha Gustor

The Karsha Gustor Festival is held at the Karsha Monastery in the Zaskar Valley of Ladakh. This annual festival is renowned for its colourful mask dances, known as Cham dances, performed by the monks, accompanied by traditional music, that talks about Buddhist deities and teachings. Local people and visitors come together to partake in the rituals, seek blessings, and enjoy the cultural performances. The festival offers a unique glimpse into the rich traditions and spiritual life of Ladakh.

When and where to celebrate:

03-04 July 2024

The best place to experience the Karsha Gustor Festival is at the Karsha Monastery in Zaskar Valley of Ladakh. A visit during the festival provides a unique experience in the rich cultural and spiritual traditions of the region.

Dree

The Dree Festival, celebrated by the Apatani tribe in the Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, is held every year in early July. It involves elaborate rituals and prayers to the deities Tamu, Metii, Danyi, and Harniang, seeking protection for crops and prosperity for the community. The festivities are characterised by traditional dances, songs, and the sharing of local delicacies, creating an atmosphere of joy and unity.

When and where to celebrate:

07 July 2024

The best place to experience the Dree Festival is Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh. Celebrated with agricultural rituals, cultural performances, and traditional songs and dances, the valley comes alive with the spirit of the Apatani tribe.



Bonalu

Bonalu is a festival celebrated primarily in Telangana, particularly in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, dedicated to the goddess Mahakali. Devotees offer "Bonam," a traditional meal of rice, jaggery, and curd, in decorated pots to the goddess. The festival features special prayers, hymns, and the energetic Pothuraju dance, with women in their finest attire adding to the festive atmosphere. The origin of Bonalu dates back to a battalion of soldiers who prayed to Mahakali to save their village from a deadly plague; in gratitude, they built a temple upon their return.

When and where to celebrate:

21-22 July 2024

The best place to experience Bonalu celebrations and pooja is the Sri Ujjaini Mahakali Temple in Secunderabad. This temple is renowned for its festivities, elaborate rituals and dances.

Amarnath Yatra

The Amarnath Yatra is a sacred annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath Cave, located in Jammu and Kashmir. This pilgrimage takes devotees up to the cave at an altitude of about 13,000 feet, housing a naturally formed ice lingam, a symbol of Lord Shiva.

The yatra typically occurs during the months of June, July and August. It is a challenging journey, starting from the base camps in Pahalgam or Baltal. The trek is a test of physical endurance and a very profound spiritual experience. It is one of the most revered pilgrimages in Hinduism.

When and where to celebrate:

29 Jun – 19 Aug 2024

Amarnath Yatra starts in either Pahalgam or Baltal in Jammu and Kashmir. Pahalgam offers a longer, more gradual route with scenic beauty, while Baltal provides a shorter, steeper path for a more direct trek. Both routes offer really stunning Himalayan views.



Nag Panchami

Nag Panchami celebrates Lord Krishna's victory over the serpent Kalia, who, after being defeated, promised not to trouble Gokul's residents. It is also believed that pleasing the serpent god brings the blessings of Lord Shiva. The towns come alive with colourful lights, lively music, and offerings of milk and flowers to snake deities at temples. The rituals, folk dances, and spiritual music create an atmosphere of reverence and festivity.

When and where to celebrate:

09 August 2024

Nag Panchami is celebrated across India, but Varanasi and Ujjain are known for their elaborate rituals and temple celebrations. Nashik and Pune also stand out, with rituals at various temples dedicated to snake gods. Bengaluru's Naga Devata temples attract large crowds, while Kochi's Mannarasala Sree Nagaraja Temple draws many devotees.

Explore India in July-August

Rains breathe life into the hills, and waterfalls and rivers flow with renewed force. Mist often blankets the mountains, adding a mysterious charm to the scenery. Popular hill stations like Munnar, Coorg, and Mussoorie become even more enchanting, with their tea gardens, coffee plantations, and forested trails mostly shrouded in a gentle drizzle. The cool, refreshing climate is perfect for walks, and the flora and fauna thrive, creating a beautiful experience of colours and sounds.



Visit Mukteshwar for its calm beauty, fruit orchards, and adventure

Mukteshwar is a charming hill station with panoramic views of the Himalayan ranges. It lies at an altitude of 2,286 metres, and is known for its thick forests, some of the finest orchards, and its quiet surroundings. The Mukteshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, adds a spiritual touch to the region, while the British-era architecture reflects its colonial past. Adventure enthusiasts can enjoy trekking, rock climbing, and rappelling, while nature lovers can revel in the area's rich biodiversity. With cozy cafes and small restaurants offering delicious local cuisine, you can savour the flavours of Uttarakhand.

A cool Himalayan retreat in 'Dev Bhoomi' - the land of Gods

Palampur lies in the Kangra Valley, close to Dharamshala. It is known for its flourishing tea gardens, thick pine forests, and up-close views of the Dhauladhar mountain range.

Often referred to as the "Tea Capital of North India," Palampur offers visitors the opportunity to explore tea estates, visit historic temples and monasteries, and enjoy adventure activities like paragliding, trekking and rock climbing. The town's pleasant climate, its cafes and local eateries serving delicious Himachali cuisine, and the local markets offering a delightful shopping experience make it an ideal holiday destination.



There's plenty to enjoy for everyone in Kodaikanal

Kodaikanal, referred to as the 'Princess of Hill Stations', lying in the Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu is known for its cool, cloudy climate and stunning landscapes. Enjoy a boat ride on the Kodaikanal Lake, or take a stroll along the scenic Coaker's Walk. The town is home to the Pillar Rocks, the enchanting Silver Cascade Falls, and the botanical Bryant Park. Adventure enthusiasts can indulge in trekking, cycling, and rock climbing, while nature lovers can visit the unique Kurinji Andavar Temple, famed for the rare Kurinji flowers that bloom once every twelve years. It has colourful local markets, and delicious South Indian cuisine to relish.

Get lost in a journey through time and spirituality in Belur

Renowned for its exquisite Hoysala architecture, Belur holds a treasure of intricately carved temples that talk of devotion and craftsmanship. Wander through the corridors of the Chennakesava Temple, where every sculpture seems to come alive with stories from Hindu mythology. Stroll along the Yagachi River, where ancient stone bridges stand testament to the town's historical significance. Take in the colours of Belur's bustling markets, offering a glimpse into its local life and handicrafts. At dusk, witness the temples' evening rituals, where melodious chants and lively aartis create an enchanting ambiance of spirituality.



Rajgir, where history, beauty and spirituality come together

Known for its historical significance dating back to ancient times, Rajgir should be visited for its rich history, natural beauty and spiritual heritage. It is encircled by hills, a thick green cover, a tranquil ambiance and panoramic vistas. Explore the majestic ruins of the ancient Rajgir Fort, take a dip in the soothing waters of the hot springs, or embark on a spiritual journey at the renowned Vishwa Shanti Stupa. For those wanting adventure, Rajgir offers trekking trails that wind through beautiful valleys and ancient pilgrimage sites.

Beyond Incredible



WE LOVE OUR HILL TOWNS IN THE MONSOONS! COME JOIN US

Experiencing India's hill towns during the summer and monsoon seasons provides a refreshing escape from the heat. In summer, hill destinations in the Himalayas offer cool retreats with their pleasant climates, peaceful surroundings, numerous activities, and a chance to enjoy nature at its finest. The flourishing pine forests, wild mountain flowers, and clear skies create an ideal environment for leisurely walks, trekking, and exploring local markets. Accessibility remains good in India during this period, with well-maintained roads and frequent transport options, like rental cars, taxis, buses, trains and flights; making it easy for travellers to reach the higher regions. For those looking to avoid India's intense summer heat, these hill stations present a very appealing alternative.

Monsoon season brings a dramatic transformation to hill towns in southern and western India, as the tea gardens and coffee plantations come alive with the rains. Waterfalls flow with renewed energy, the air is filled with the earthy scent of petrichor, and cloudy mornings add a magical touch to the scenery. The monsoons attract those who enjoy natural beauty and want a respite from the heat of the lowlands. Visiting India during the monsoons also offers the opportunity to engage in local festivals that celebrate the rains, like Teej in Rajasthan and the Monsoon Festival in Kerala. These cultural experiences, and the fresh landscapes, create a rich and memorable journey. Monsoon travel in India often means fewer crowds and a more relaxed atmosphere. With thoughtful planning and preparation, a monsoon trip to India can be a joyful

adventure, with the country's varied landscapes, cultural experiences, and multifarious activities.

[Read more...](#)

#MonsoonModeOn

DISCOVER THE MONSOON MAGIC IN INDIA'S ENCHANTING HILL TOWNS & HISTORIC SITES



KASAULI **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Experience the charm of Kasauli in the clouds over green hills, twinkling lights of cities at a distance, and large colonial bungalows for homestays.



HAMPI **KARNATAKA**

Step into a history book at the ancient temples of Hampi, as they come alive amongst lovely surroundings with rivers and greenery all around.



BUNDI **RAJASTHAN**

Explore the historic forts and palaces of Bundi, accentuated by the refreshing monsoon rains, amidst hills, a river, and lots of peacocks.



MANDU **MADHYA PRADESH**

Discover architectural marvels enveloped in mist and a landscape that transforms into a lush paradise during the monsoons.

Truly Indian

The Indian government is increasingly focused on promoting tourism to smaller towns and villages, recognising their cultural richness and potential economic benefits. Initiatives like the Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD schemes aim to develop infrastructure, preserve heritage sites, and enhance visitor experiences in these lesser-explored destinations.

By showcasing local arts, crafts, and cuisines, these efforts support sustainable development and employment opportunities for local communities.

PERFECT FOR RELAXATION, SIGHTSEEING, LOCAL CUISINE AND ADVENTURE



Udhampur

In the picturesque landscapes of Jammu & Kashmir, Udhampur stands as a gateway to nature's beauty and cultural richness. Explore the ancient temples and shrines that dot the town, offering glimpses into its rich spiritual past. Take a scenic drive through lush green valleys and hillsides, where every turn reveals breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. For adventure enthusiasts, Udhampur offers thrilling treks and hikes, leading to panoramic viewpoints and numerous waterfalls. It promises an enriching experience, whether you are looking for tranquility in its temples, adventure in its rugged terrain, or simply wish to unwind amidst nature.

Surrounding Udhampur is a wealth of natural and cultural wonders. Journey to Patnitop, a nearby hill station famed for its alpine meadows and skiing slopes in winter, offering adventure and relaxation. Visit the historic Krimchi Temples, dating back to the 11th century, amidst apple orchards and terraced fields, offering insights into ancient architecture and local traditions. For a glimpse into local craftsmanship, visit Ramnagar Fort, built by Raja Suchet Singh, a protected monument that was taken over by the Indian Archeological Survey, showcasing artworks that reflect the region's ancient heritage. Closeby lies the very picturesque Mansar lake with pine forested hills surrounding it; very popular for boating. A peculiar feature of the lake is the presence of a large number of huge turtles.



Things to do:

► Hiking:

- a. Walk along the banks of the Devika River, a sacred waterway.
- b. Pay a visit to the Kalika Temple, dedicated to Goddess Kali.

► Trekking:

Enjoy trekking in the hills and forests, such as Patnitop and Kud.

► Shopping:

Explore local markets for traditional Kashmiri handicrafts and woolens.

► Sightseeing:

Visit Amar Mahal Palace, a historic palace-turned-museum to learn about the region's history.

► Places nearby:

1. **Patnitop:** Enjoy skiing in winter and paragliding in summer.
2. **Nathatop:** Revel in breathtaking views and adventures like trekking and pony rides.
3. **Sanasar:**
 - a. Engage in activities like paragliding, camping, and trekking.
 - b. Play golf amidst picturesque surroundings.
4. **Sudh Mahadev Temple:** Visit this scenic ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.
5. **Mansar Lake:** Go boating on Mansar Lake and visit the shrines around it.
6. **Krimchi Temples:** Walk around the ancient Krimchi Temples, known for their historical and architectural significance.
7. **Baba Dhansar:** Visit the shrine and natural cave at Baba Dhansar, known for its beautiful waterfall.
8. **Try Local Cuisine:** Indulge in authentic Kashmiri cuisine such as Rogan Josh, Dum Aloo, and Kashmiri Pulao, renowned for their rich flavours and use of local spices like saffron and dry fruits.

Incredible India!

Welcome to the Mahabaleshwar Quiz!

Mahabaleshwar, locted in the Sahyadri range of Maharashtra, is a picturesque hill station renowned for its greenery, pleasant weather, and scenic viewpoints. This quiz will test your knowledge about its attractions and interesting facts and give you a chance of winning a prize. Let's see how much you know about this charming destination. Enjoy the quiz!

Q1. Which historical fort near Mahabaleshwar is known for its strategic location and stunning views?

- a. Arthur's Seat
- b. Wilson Point
- c. Elephant's Head Point
- d. Pratapgarh Fort

Q2. Which lake near Mahabaleshwar is known for its boating and scenic beauty?

- a. Venna Lake
- b. Lingmala Lake
- c. Tapola Lake
- d. Panchgani Lake

Q3. What is the famous sweet delicacy that tourists often enjoy in Mahabaleshwar?

- a. Poha
- b. Misal Pav
- c. Chikki
- d. Vada Pav

Q4. What is the famous fruit that Mahabaleshwar is known for?

- a. Mango
- b. Strawberry
- c. Orange
- d. Apple

Mail your answers to us at incredible-india@gov.in with your Name, Age, Country for a chance to win prizes.

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