

## ROYAL FORTS, SACRED SHRINES & URBAN SPLENDOUR

**Maharashtra**, the dynamic jewel of western India, is a captivating blend of vibrant cities, majestic history, spiritual depth, and breathtaking natural landscapes. From the pulsating energy of Mumbai to the timeless serenity of ancient cave temples, the state offers an extraordinary spectrum of experiences. Home to multiple UNESCO World Heritage Sites, revered pilgrimage centers, grand Maratha forts, Mughal-era monuments, and picturesque hill stations, Maharashtra seamlessly weaves together heritage, devotion, and modern charm. Whether exploring rock-cut masterpieces, witnessing sacred rituals along holy rivers, or relaxing amid rolling vineyards and misty mountains, every moment here unfolds a new story.

A journey through Maharashtra is not just travel — it is an immersion into living history, diverse culture, and unforgettable landscapes that keep your curiosity alive at every turn.

### **Day 1: Mumbai – Colonial Grandeur & Coastal Glamour**

Arrive in **Mumbai**, India’s financial capital and the vibrant heart of Bollywood. After check-in and some relaxation, begin exploring this city of contrasts where colonial elegance meets contemporary dynamism. Visit the iconic **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic architecture blended with Indian influences. Its domes, turrets, and stained-glass windows reflect the grandeur of the British era. Stroll toward the majestic **Gateway of India**, overlooking the Arabian Sea — a historic archway that once welcomed kings and viceroys. Along the way, admire Mumbai’s striking Art Deco buildings, part of the city’s UNESCO-recognized architectural ensemble. As evening falls, drive along **Marine Drive**, famously called the “Queen’s Necklace,” where the curved boulevard glows with city lights against the Arabian Sea backdrop. Overnight stay in Mumbai.



### **Day 2: Mumbai – Rock-Cut Wonders & Local Flavours**

This morning, take a ferry from the Gateway of India to the UNESCO-listed **Elephanta Caves**. These ancient

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rock-cut caves, dating back to the 5th–8th centuries, house magnificent sculptures dedicated to Lord Shiva, including the awe-inspiring three-faced Maheshmurti. Return to the city and visit the grand **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya** (formerly Prince of Wales Museum), showcasing rare art, sculptures, and artifacts from across India. Later, experience the bustling energy of Crawford Market and savor local delicacies along Mohammed Ali Road, a paradise for street-food lovers. Overnight stay in Mumbai.

### Day 3: Mumbai – Pune – Maratha Legacy

Drive to **Pune** (approx. 3 hours) via the scenic Mumbai–Pune Expressway, passing through tunnels and lush Western Ghats. Visit the historic **Shaniwar Wada**, once the seat of the Peshwas of the Maratha Empire. Continue to the revered **Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Temple**, known for its grand idol of Lord Ganesha. Explore the elegant **Aga Khan Palace**, closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi during India’s freedom struggle. End the day strolling along MG Road and FC Road. Overnight stay in Pune.



### Day 4: Pune – Forts & Hidden Heritage

Visit the fascinating **Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum**, housing an eclectic collection of Indian artifacts. Explore the ancient **Pataleshwar Cave Temple**, an 8th-century rock-cut shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. Later, drive to **Sinhagad Fort**, perched atop a hill and once a strategic stronghold of the Maratha Empire under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Enjoy panoramic views of the Sahyadri ranges. Overnight stay in Pune.

### Day 5: Pune – Aurangabad – Mughal Echoes

The day begins with a 5 hour long drive to Aurangabad. Visit the historic Bibi ka Maqbara – a replica of Taj Mahal commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb’s son Azam shah in the memory of his Mother Dilras Banu Begum. Visit the historic Daulatabad Fort on the outskirts of Aurangabad which stands with a long history of different rulers. Overnight at Aurangabad.

### Day 6: Aurangabad – Ajanta & Ellora – Masterpieces in Stone

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Today after an early breakfast, set out to explore two of India's greatest artistic treasures — the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of **Ajanta Caves** and **Ellora Caves** — remarkable examples of ancient rock-cut architecture and devotion carved directly into stone cliffs. Begin with the breathtaking **Ajanta Caves**, nestled in a horseshoe-shaped gorge overlooking the Waghora River. Dating back to the 2nd century BCE and flourishing between the 5th–6th centuries CE, these Buddhist caves are renowned for their exquisite frescoes and murals depicting scenes from the Jataka tales — stories of Buddha's previous lives. Later, continue to **Ellora**, a monumental complex representing harmonious coexistence of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. The highlight is the awe-inspiring Kailasa Temple (Cave 16), a colossal monolithic structure carved from a single rock — considered one of the greatest architectural feats in the world. Return to Aurangabad in the evening and relax after a day immersed in India's ancient heritage. Overnight stay in Aurangabad.



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## Day 7: Shani Shingnapur & Shirdi – Faith, Devotion & Living Traditions

This morning, after breakfast, drive to **Shani Shingnapur Temple** (approx. 80 km / 1½ hours), one of the most unique pilgrimage sites in India dedicated to Lord Shani, the deity associated with justice and karma. The shrine is distinctive for its open-air sanctum, where the idol of Lord Shani stands without a roof above it, symbolizing unwavering faith. The village itself is remarkable — traditionally, homes and shops here were built without doors or locks, reflecting the deep belief that Lord Shani protects the community from theft and wrongdoing. After offering prayers, continue your journey to **Shirdi**, the sacred town associated with the revered saint Sai Baba. Upon arrival, visit the holy **Sai Baba Samadhi Temple**, where devotees from across the world gather daily to seek blessings. The serene temple complex, devotional chants, and spiritual atmosphere create a deeply moving experience. After an enriching day of devotion and reflection, check into your hotel. Overnight stay in Shirdi.

## Day 8: Shirdi – Nashik – Sacred Ghats & Timeless Legends

After breakfast, proceed towards **Nashik** (approx. 2 hours), a city where spirituality flows as gracefully as the sacred River Godavari and where ancient legends meet vineyard-covered hills. Begin your exploration with a visit to the revered **Trimbakeshwar Temple**, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. Nestled at the foothills of the Brahmagiri Hills, this ancient temple is known for its



unique three-faced lingam symbolizing Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The serene temple complex and surrounding landscape create a deeply devotional atmosphere. Continue to the sacred **Ram Kund**, a holy bathing ghat on the banks of the Godavari River. It is here that the grand Kumbh Mela is held every twelve years, drawing millions of pilgrims from across the country. The ghats bustle with rituals, prayers, and quiet reflection. Proceed to **Panchavati**, a site closely associated with the Ramayana. According to legend, Lord Ram, Goddess Sita, and Lakshman spent part of their exile here. Explore the temples and tranquil surroundings that echo ancient mythological tales. After a spiritually enriching day, check into your hotel in Nashik. The evening is at leisure — you may relax at the hotel or take a quiet walk along the riverside. Overnight stay in Nashik.

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### Day 9: Nashik – Vineyards & Refined Leisure

This morning after breakfast, set out to explore the scenic countryside surrounding **Nashik**, often referred to as the “Wine Capital of India.” Visit the renowned **Sula Vineyards**, one of the country’s most celebrated wineries, set against a picturesque backdrop of rolling hills and expansive grape plantations. Begin with a guided tour of the estate, where you will learn about the fascinating journey of winemaking — from harvesting and crushing the grapes to fermentation, aging, and bottling. Explore the wine cellars and gain insight into the craftsmanship and innovation that have positioned Nashik on the global wine map. You may opt for a curated tasting session, sampling a selection of wines while understanding the nuances of aroma, flavor profiles, and pairing techniques. Afterward, relax at the vineyard café overlooking the lush vines, soaking in the tranquil ambiance that contrasts beautifully with the region’s spiritual heritage explored earlier. Overnight stay in Nashik.

### Day 10: Nashik – Mumbai – Farewell Maharashtra

After breakfast, bid farewell to the serene vineyards and sacred ghats of **Nashik** as you proceed towards **Mumbai** (approx. 170 km / 3 hours). The drive takes you through rolling countryside and gradually back into the dynamic rhythm of India’s financial capital. Upon arrival in Mumbai, you will be transferred to the airport as per your onward schedule. As your journey concludes, carry with you unforgettable memories of Maharashtra — from ancient rock-cut caves and majestic forts to sacred shrines, Mughal elegance, vibrant cities, and tranquil vineyards. Tour ends with warm wishes and lasting impressions of India’s rich heritage.

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