

Kailasha and the Caves of Ellora

Duration: *3 Days, 2 Nights*

Departure from: *Pune*

Interests: *History & Context*

Type: *Small Group, Expert led*

Introduction

Sculptures from the magnificent rock-cut caves of Ellora weave the story of three major faiths of India, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. These caves speak of the mastery of those unknown craftsmen, the monks, the devotees, the villagers on the banks of the Waghura River and Verul village and the glory of the mighty Vakataka and Rashtrakuta kingdoms of the Deccan!

The caves of Ellora are carved in the black basaltic stone of the lush green Sahyadris. The organic colors from the frescoes of the caves compliment the scenery. Experience the beauty of these famous monuments with us! Aurangabad will serve as our base for this journey. Aurangabad was an important political and economic center of the Deccan. The strategic location and geography attracted many rulers. We will also visit some important monuments of Aurangabad like the Bibi Ka Maqbara and the mighty Devgiri fort.

This journey will be led by **Shefali Vaidya** - noted columnist, travel writer, satirist. Shefali's love of temples and textiles is very well known. Shefali has an in-depth understanding of the history, heritage and context of Kailasha temple and Ellora caves. We've designed the journey so as to understand the evolution of cave architecture in India, the religious functions and symbolism expressed through sculptures.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Aurangabad

We leave Pune early morning and drive to Aurangabad via Nagar. We will make a stop or two on the way for breakfast, restrooms, some coffee/tea and reach Aurangabad. We will check into our hotel and rest for some time. Post-lunch we will do a short tour of the local sights of Aurangabad.

We will visit Bibi Ka Maqbara, a mausoleum of Rabia-ul-Daurani alias Dilras Banu Begum, who was the chief wife of Emperor Aurangzeb, constructed by Prince Azam Shah in the memory of his mother. The mausoleum draws inspiration from the Taj at Agra. Time permitting, we will visit the Chatrapati Shivaji Museum and gain insight into the life of one of India's greatest kings.

Meals for the day – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 2 – Ellora

After an early breakfast, we will depart for Ellora. Ellora caves are divided into three groups based on their religious affiliations, i.e. Hindu, Bauddh, and Jain. We shall visit the best caves to explore the sculpture, paintings and architectural wonders of Ellora.

The magnificent three storeyed Kailasha Temple carved top-down from a single rock is the most famous monument of Ellora. Supposed to be modelled after the Kailasnathar Kovil of Kanchi, the Kailasha Temple is a wonderful example of Mature Dravida temple architecture. Kailasha Temple captivates you with its perfection.

Other caves like Rameshwar Cave, Dhumar Lena depicts some of the masterpieces of their times. Different moods of Shiva and the episodes of Ramayana can be best seen here. We spend the whole day exploring the caves of Ellora with breaks for lunch and tea.

We depart towards Aurangabad before the sunset and check in our hotel. Retire for the day after dinner.

Meals for the day – Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Day 3 – Devagiri

On our last day of the journey, we will visit the mighty Devagiri fort, the capital of the Yadava kings. The fort was later captured by the Tughlaqs and the Mughals and was known as Daulatabad during the Islamic period. The fort of Devagiri is significantly for its defense architecture. Legends say the fort could be only won by treachery. Let's walk through the sands of time to experience the might of this fort. The fortifications, Chand Minar, Canons, and the impregnable Citadel tells us the story of what the city would have looked like in the glory.

Post lunch we shall drive back towards Pune so that we can be back by late evening in Pune.

Meals for the day – Breakfast & Lunch

Tour Highlights

- The magnificent Kailasha Temple
 - The magnificent three storeyed Kailasha Temple carved top-down from a single rock
- Ellora Caves
 - With the experts from the field you will see and hear about the architecture & sculptures in their historical context to understand the polities and societies of the past in new light.
- Bibi ka Maqbara
 - A mausoleum of Rabia-ul-Daurani alias Dilras Banu Begum, who was the chief wife of Emperor Aurangzeb
- Chatrapati Shivaji Museum
 - A museum celebrating the life and times of one of India's greatest kings, Shivaji Maharaj.
- Devagiri Fort
 - Defense architecture of Devagiri fort aka Daulatabad from one of the experts on the topic.

Detailed Tour Logistics

Duration: 3 Days, 2 Nights

Departure from: Pune

Exact Departure location: Fergusson College Main Gate.

Departure time: 0600 hrs on date of departure

Drop location on return: Same as Departure location.

Drop time: Late evening. Expected to be between 2000 and 2200 hrs on the last day of the itinerary.

Terms

Inclusion

1. Transport from and to the departure point. Seat allocation will be at the discretion of the organizers.
2. Stay at a three-star hotel or resort on twin-sharing basis. Allocation of room partners will be at the discretion of the organizers. Attempt will be made to accommodate your wants towards this.
3. Vegetarian meals as indicated in the itinerary. Breakfast would typically be at the hotel of stay and lunch/dinner at a restaurant/hotel chosen by the tour management.
4. Temple and monument entry fees (for Indian nationals only; foreign nationals will need to pay separately at some monuments)

Exclusions

1. Photography and videography charges (need to be paid separately)
2. Additional refreshments like small eats, drinks
3. Any other aspect not mentioned in inclusions

Payment and cancellation policy

1. Full payment to be made upfront
2. Full refund will be made if the tour is cancelled by the organizers.
3. 50% refund will be made if the customer cancels the booking within 20 days of departure.

Things to note

1. The tour will involve enough walking outdoors in the day. Please ensure you carry your caps and sunglasses. Keep a bottle of water ready with you always to beat the heat.
2. Given the walking we will be doing, ensure you get a good pair of walking shoes that you're comfortable with, for the tour.
3. If you need things like medication, keep it handy and ensure you bring it along with yourselves. Do not depend on being able to buy such locally.
4. If you have any allergies, be sure to check explicitly on the food that will be served to you.
5. Please ensure you have enough cash for miscellaneous expenses you may incur. Do not depend on ATMs etc. locally to provide for this.

6. The tour will start early morning and we will return late in the evening the last day at the departure point. So, if you're not from the city where the tour departs from, it is best if you plan your arrival and departure one day on either side of the tour departure date at the least.