



# Maharashtra

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Malaka Spice (p804)
- ➔ New Sea Rock Restaurant (p795)
- ➔ Khyber (p778)
- ➔ Grapevine (p807)
- ➔ Dario's (p804)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Verandah in the Forest (p797)
- ➔ Hotel Sunderban (p803)
- ➔ Lemon Tree (p783)
- ➔ Beyond (p779)
- ➔ Hotel Plaza (p791)

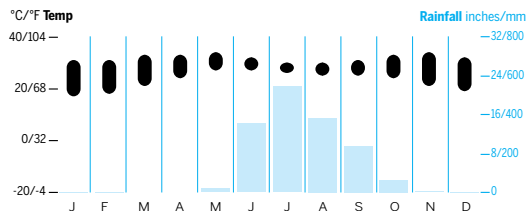
## Why Go?

India's third-largest and second-most populous state, Maharashtra is an expansive canvas showcasing many of India's iconic attractions. There are lazy, palm-fringed beaches; lofty, cool-green mountains; World Heritage historical sights; and bustling cosmopolitan cities.

A short excursion north of Mumbai brings you to Nasik, a curious blend of spirituality, meditation and India's premier wine region. Further inland are the extraordinary cave temples of Ellora and Ajanta, carved from 'living rock' that celebrate the rich cultural heritage of empires past. If you are looking for a cool change, head to Matheron, Maharashtra's only hill station, where a toy train chugs through verdant forests. Pilgrims and inquisitive souls should head south to cosmopolitan Pune, a city famous for its 'sex guru' and alternative spiritualism. Steer westward and you will be rewarded with a string of golden sands and crumbling forts along the romantic Konkan Coast of the Arabian Sea.

## When to Go

### Nasik



**Jan** It's party time in Nasik's wineries, marked by grape harvesting and crushing galas.

**Sep** The frenzied and energetic Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations reach fever pitch.

**Dec** Winter's a lovely time for the secluded beaches of Murud, Ganpatipule and Tarkarli.

## MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Mumbai has an international and a domestic airport. Other domestic airports include Aurangabad, Pune and Nagpur. Jalgaon is an important rail hub between Delhi and Mumbai and is convenient to Ajanta and Ellora.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population:** 112.4 million
- ➔ **Area:** 307,690 sq km
- ➔ **Capital:** Mumbai
- ➔ **Main languages:** Marathi, Hindi, English
- ➔ **Sleeping prices:** \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹4000, \$\$\$ above ₹4000

## Money Matters

Maharashtra is among the most economically well-off states in India. Its per-capita income is 60% higher than the national average.

## Resources

- ➔ **Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation** ([www.maharashtratourism.gov.in](http://www.maharashtratourism.gov.in))
- ➔ **Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation** ([www.msrtc.gov.in](http://www.msrtc.gov.in))

## Top Yoga & Meditation Centres

The Vipassana International Academy (p780) in Igatpuri has long been a destination for those wishing to put mind over matter through an austere form of Buddhist meditation. The boundaries of yoga, on the other hand, are constantly pushed at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (p802) in Pune and the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Hospital (p798) in Lonavla. For a more lavish and indulgent form of spiritual engagement, there's the superluxurious Osho International Meditation Resort (p802) in Pune, where one can meditate in style, while flexing a few muscles in the unique game of 'zennis' (Zen tennis).

## DON'T MISS

The ancient stone temples of **Ellora** and **Ajanta** are among India's top architectural and artistic wonders. Rock carving, sculpture and painting reach sublime levels of beauty and perfection at these World Heritage Sites.

In terms of medieval forts and citadels, Maharashtra comes second perhaps only to Rajasthan. The best of the lot is **Daulatabad**, a bastion that once played a cameo as India's capital. Equally intriguing is **Janjira**, a 12th-century island fortress that was once an outpost for the seafaring African traders. Others include the many forts associated with Chhatrapati Shivaji, including the **Raigad**, and **Shivneri**, where the Maratha leader was born.

## Top State Festivals

- ➔ **Naag Panchami** (☺ Jul/Aug, Pune, p799; Kolhapur, p808) A traditional snake-worshipping festival.
- ➔ **Ganesh Chaturthi** (☺ Sep, Pune, p799) Celebrated with fervour all across Maharashtra; Pune goes particularly hysteric in honour of the elephant-headed deity.
- ➔ **Dussehra** (☺ Sep & Oct) A Hindu festival, but it also marks the Buddhist celebration of the anniversary of the famous humanist and Dalit leader BR Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism.
- ➔ **Ellora Ajanta Aurangabad Festival** (☺ Nov, Aurangabad, p780) A cultural festival bringing together the best classical and folk performers from across the region, while promoting a number of artistic traditions and handicrafts on the side.
- ➔ **Kalidas Festival** (☺ Nov, Nagpur, p792) Commemorates the literary genius of legendary poet Kalidas through spirited music, dance and theatre.
- ➔ **Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Mahotsav** (☺ Dec, Pune, p799) An extravaganza where you can see unforgettable performances by some of the heftiest names in Indian classical music.