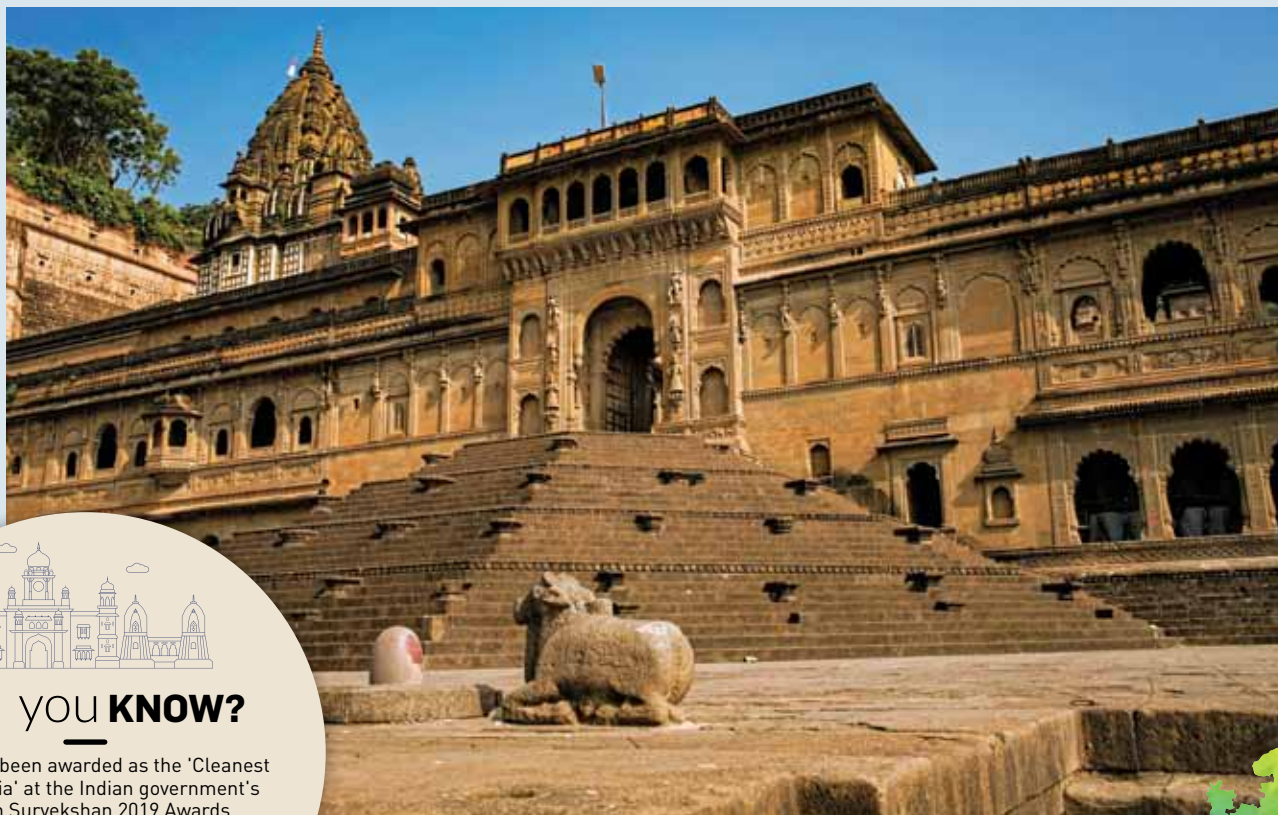


A Tryst with History

Indore's Heritage Triangle

The crux of power of the Malwa Kingdom and the gem of the Holkar Dynasty, Indore and places around it, have always shown what true royal life in India meant. Take a walk through the trio of Mandu, Maheshwar and Omkareshwar, that will give a taste of Madhya Pradesh's bygone era and heritage.

words // Edwina D'souza



Did you **KNOW?**

Indore has been awarded as the 'Cleanest City in India' at the Indian government's Swachh Survekshan 2019 Awards. Conversion of wet waste into compost at home and plastic waste treatment facilities to convert plastic waste into diesel are some methods deployed that made this city the cleanest in the country.



Madhya Pradesh

Map not to scale

A commercial centre, an education hub and a foodies' paradise – Indore has it all.

Madhya Pradesh's largest city has embraced development to become an up and coming cosmopolitan, while holding on to its history. Indore enjoyed a respectable position as the capital of the Malwa Kingdom before the focus shifted to Maheshwar, a quick drive away from the city. Discover more such stories from the bygone era on an interesting heritage trail from Indore that is a treat for lovers of architecture and history, and those seeking a spiritual getaway.

ARCHITECTURAL DELIGHTS OF MANDU

Drive into the countryside, 100

kilometres from Indore, to explore the architectural wonders of Mandu. This 6th century township in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh has been ruled by the Paramaras, the Khilji dynasty, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, Mughals and later the Marathas. The architecture, hence, is an amalgamation of several styles, right from Pashtun to Afghan, Islamic and Hindu.

Rani Roopmati's Pavilion inside Mandu's heritage complex stands witness to the eternal love of Baz Bahadur for his beloved queen. Baz Bahadur, the last sultan of Malwa, built the Pavilion at the behest of his beloved, who's only condition to marry him was that she should be able to see the

Narmada River and offer prayers every day. The pavilion was thus constructed at the highest point in the heritage complex from where Rani Roopmati could comfortably view the sacred river. Below the pavilion, Baz Bahadur built a reservoir called Rewa Kund that supplied water to the structure. The 16th century Baaz Bahadur Palace is equally stunning with its large courtyards where the Sultan enjoyed songs and dance performances.

Further down, the Hindola Mahal was the audience chamber for the Royals and is prominent for its peculiar style of sloping walls that give the illusion of them swinging. The Hoshanga Tomb was India's first marble





**HOW TO
GET THERE**

Vistara flies twice daily between Delhi and Indore with morning and evening departures from both cities, along with convenient connections from other cities.

mausoleum and a prototype to build the Taj Mahal. In fact, Shah Jehan sent his architects to Mandu to study this structure, and there's an inscription outside the Tomb to support this claim. Another structure, Jami Mosque, is built on the lines of the Umayyed Mosque of Damascus in Syria.

But perhaps, Mandu's star attraction is the Jahaz Mahal. This 15th century architectural marvel, built by Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji, stands beautifully on a strip of land between two lakes, Munj Talao and Kapur Talao, giving the illusion of floating like a ship in the sea.

**LESSON IN HISTORY IN
MAHESHWAR**

From Mandu, head west towards the historic town of Maheshwar, erstwhile capital of the Malwa kingdom. While the region saw

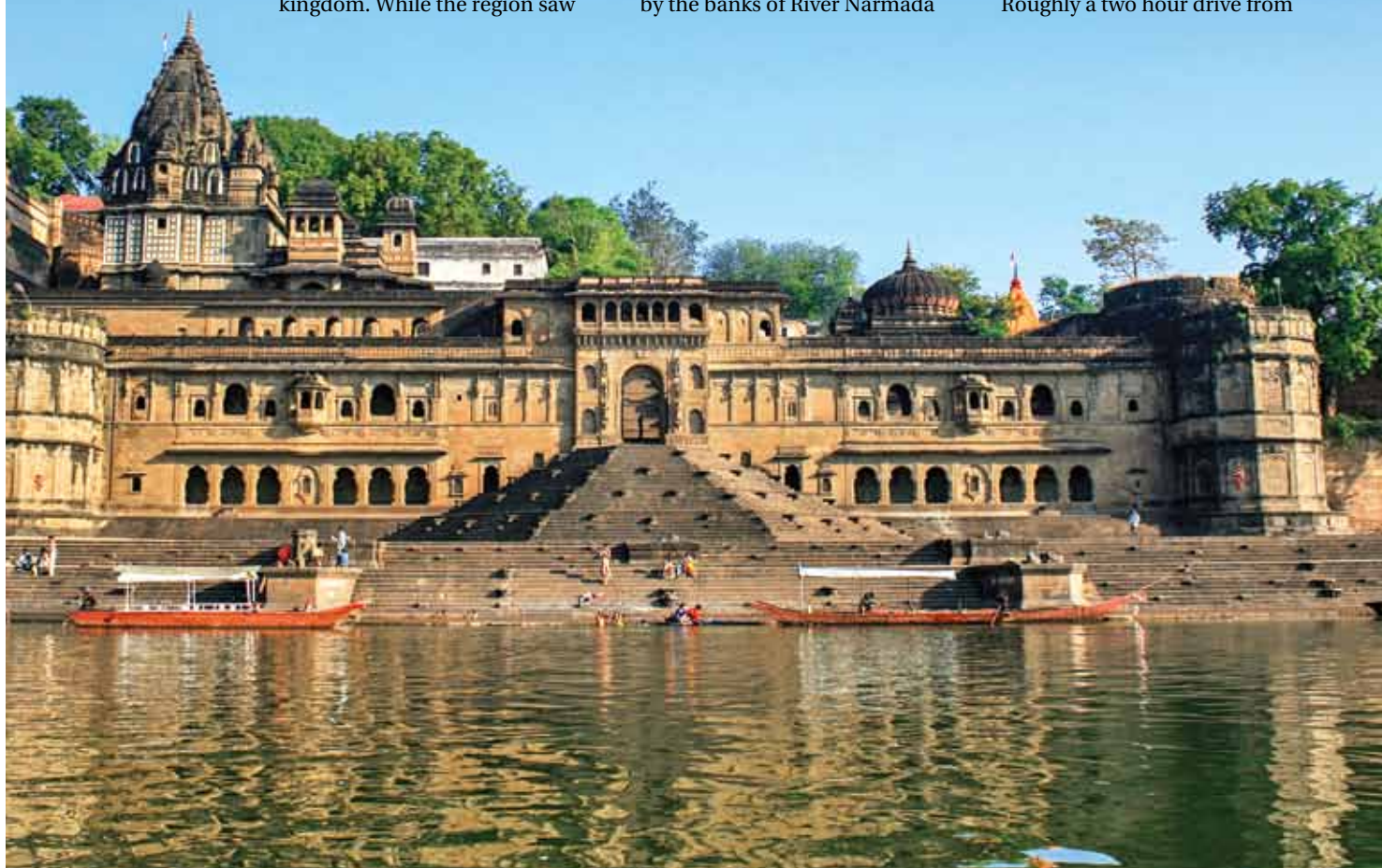
several kings, the township flourished the most under the rule of a queen – Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar. At the height of her rule, Devi Ahilya controlled half of Madhya Pradesh. She moved the capital from Indore to Maheshwar and built the stunning Ahilya Fort on the banks of the Narmada River. Her tenure as the ruler is considered the most prosperous period for the Malwa kingdom where she built several schools and colleges and donated generously to construct temples, *dharamshalas* and *baoris* (wells) across India.

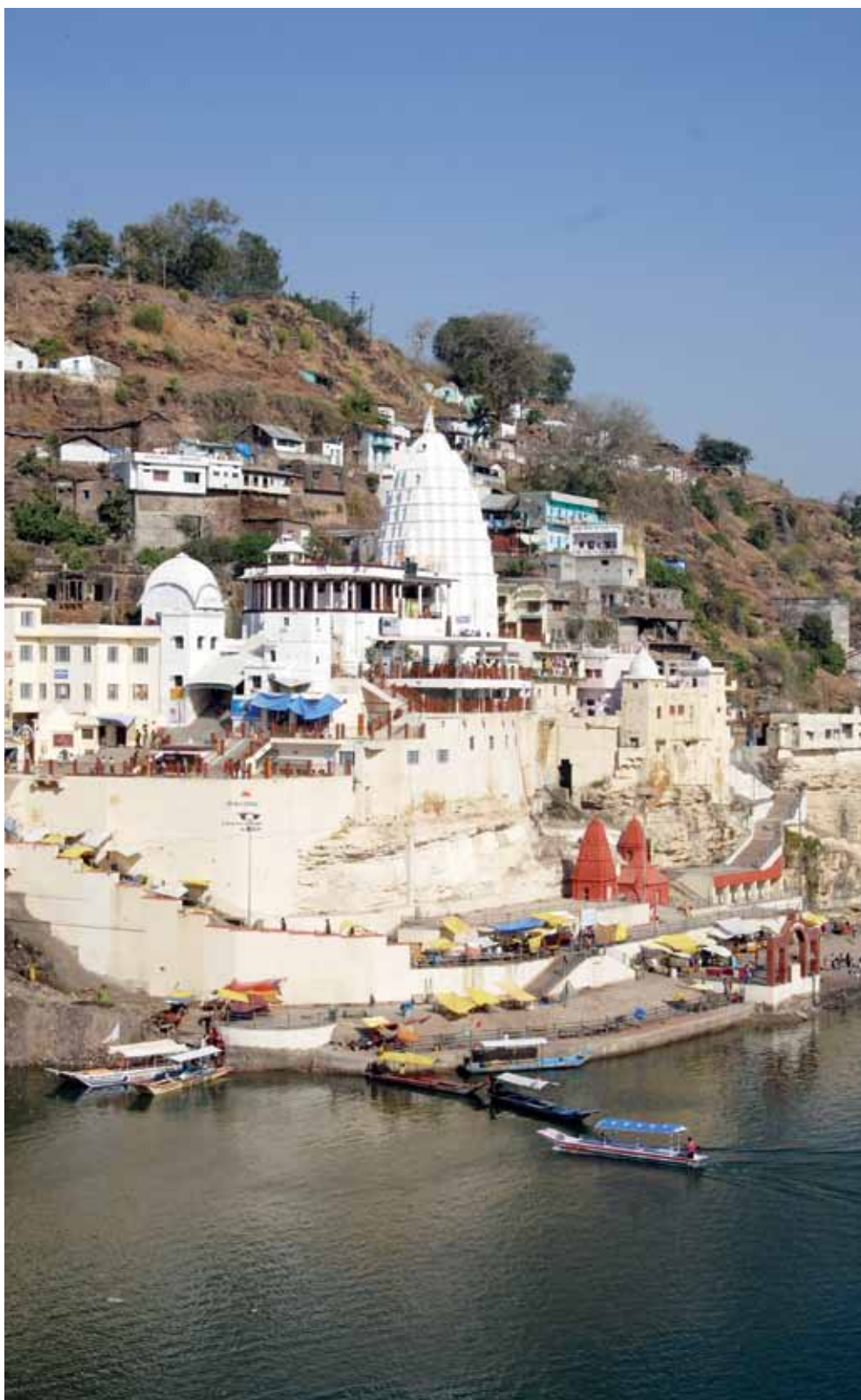
A section of Devi Ahilya Bai's Rajwada or residence has been opened to tourists, mainly the *darbar* hall where the queen conducted meetings with the administration. Walk towards the stairway leading to the Ahilya fort by the banks of River Narmada

where one is greeted to intricately carved *chhatris* of the Holkar rulers. Evenings at the *ghat* are calm and peaceful. Devotees come here to take a dip in the river; others sit along the stairway to watch the sunset. There are small temples and shrines dotting the entire stretch of the *ghat*. Boatmen offer to take tourists for a leisurely ride in the Narmada and promise beautiful views of the Ahilya Fort from the other side. The Maheshwar Ghats are a favourite with many filmmakers including the 2018 Hindi feature film *Padman* that was shot here.

**SPIRITUAL RETREAT TO
OMKARESHWAR**

Much like Varanasi, Omkareshwar ticks all the boxes – a temple town, spiritual vibe, sacred river, *ghats* and colourful streets and by-lanes. Roughly a two hour drive from





Make time to see the evening *arti* at Omkareshwar that is a pleasantly serene experience.

Indore, Omkareshwar is a great getaway for those seeing a spiritual break. This temple town finds its mention in the *Puranas* and Holy Scriptures. Historically, the region has been ruled by the kingdom of Malwa, Chauhans and the Marathas.

Omkareshwar is a site for one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India and hence an important place of worship for the Hindus. The river island is shaped like an 'Om' on the banks of the Narmada River. Streets here are abuzz with shops selling religious photos, stone idols and offerings like flowers and coconuts, while devotional songs jar in the background.

Pilgrims cross the river on foot using the suspension bridge or rent a boat for a leisurely ride. The Maleshwar temple on the south side of main sanctum sanctorum is said to house the other half of the *Jyotirlinga*, and hence pilgrims consider it auspicious to pay their visits there. Make time to see the evening *arti* at Omkareshwar that is a pleasantly serene experience.

For the ardent devout, 6 kilometres *parikrama* of the island leads you to discover many 11th century temple ruins and archways built by the kings from the bygone era. Do visit the Mandhata Palace of the Holkars that sits atop a hill enjoying an aerial view of Omkareshwar town. ✨

EXPLORE THE CITY

The bustling cultural hub has many facets for travellers to explore



The 18th century Rajwada, built by the Holkars, is perhaps Indore's most popular structure. Head here for a glimpse into the personal collection of artefacts owned by the royals.

VISIT

The Lalbagh Palace, built by Tukoji Rao Holkar, had one of the largest rose gardens in the country at one point. The Palace, which is considered as the grandest monument of the Holkar Dynasty, has now been converted into a museum.

Choral Dam beckons nature lovers and water sports enthusiasts. The dam makes an excellent spot for picnics, while those looking for a kick of adrenalin, can enjoy a ride in speed or paddle boats.

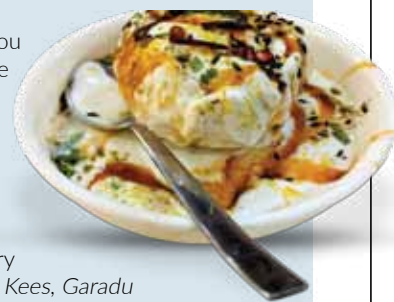
At Chhappan Dukaan (called so because of a lane with 56 eateries), try the *Shikanji* at Madhuram, Egg and Mutton Benjo at Johny Hotdog and *chhole tikki* at Young Tarang.



EAT

No trip is complete if you haven't checked out the food scene in Indore.

Begin the morning like the locals do with a staple breakfast of *Poha Jalebi*. Head to the Sarafa Bazaar night street food market to try originals like *Bhutte Ka Kees*, *Garadu* (fried Yam), *Raj Kachori*, Coconut Pattice, *Joshi's Dahi Bada*, *Jaleba*, *Mawa Bati* and *Indori Gundi Paan*.



SHOP

Traditional markets in Indore are abuzz with textiles. The famous Maheshwari sarees, popularised by Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar, are worth the price; and so are the Chanderi sarees.

For a food souvenir, take the *khatta - meetha namkeen* and onion and garlic flavoured *namkeen* from Om Namkeen.