

5 EASY WEEKEND GETAWAYS FROM MUMBAI

TAKE A BREAK FROM MUMBAI'S HUSTLE AND BUSTLE TO HIT THESE WEEKEND GETAWAYS. DISCOVER PLACES FOR HISTORY LOVERS, NATURE ENTHUSIASTS, WINE CONNOISSEURS AND BEACH BUMS, ONE WEEKEND AT A TIME.

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MAHABALESHWAR

Mahabaleshwar is the ultimate retreat if you want to get away from the crowds of Mumbai. Whether you're visiting as a solo traveller, couple or family, this quaint hill station won't disappoint you.

The Elephant's Head Point and Kate Point offer spectacular views of the mountain ranges. Families can spread out the picnic mat by the Venna Lake and enjoy boating at sunset; or go strawberry picking at local farms and buy jams and squashes from the popular Mapro Garden. It is believed that the British brought the strawberries to Mahabaleshwar (then the summer capital of the Bombay presidency) from Australia. Its sister town Panchgani throws a nice colonial vibe too and offers breathtaking views of the Sahyadris. Kids and adults alike can spend some time strolling through India's first book village in Bhilar, sandwiched

between Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani, and admire the community initiative of turning local houses into libraries. Pratapgad Fort, literally translating to 'Valour Fort', is a historically significant site of the Battle of Pratapgad and worth the drive 25 kilometres away.

Distance: 260 km from Mumbai



MURUD-JANJIRA

Western Maharashtra is blessed with a wonderful coastline stretching 720 km and dotted with beaches – both popular and pristine. Beach bums can capitalise on the weekend and go beach hopping along Maharashtra's coastline. Of all the beaches along the coastline, Murud Janjira is a must visit.

The Janjira Fort, ruled by the Siddis of Africa, is an imposing structure in the Arabian Sea. The marine fort has a distinction of being India's only undefeated fort on the western coast, in spite of several attacks from the British, Dutch and Shivaji Maharaj of the Maratha Empire. The fort remained unconquered until it became part of the Indian Territory after independence from the British in 1947. The nearby Padmadurg Fort, a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India, is equally stunning and can be admired from afar as tourists require special permissions to visit the structure. A morning walk on the Murud beach is pleasantly nice, while evenings bustle with horse rides and speed boats, bhel puri and corn cob stalls. On the way to Agardanda Jetty, drop by the Khokri village to marvel at the 18th century Khokri tombs, albeit in ruins, built by the Siddi dynasty. Finally, end the night by treating yourself to a scrumptious seafood thali.

Distance: 160 km from Mumbai

TRAVEL GETAWAYS



MATHERAN

Matheran needs little introduction. The smallest hill station in India is a popular getaway because of its close proximity from Mumbai and Pune. An eco-sensitive zone, Matheran looks straight out of the 1800s with limited urbanisation and a vehicular ban. At 2,000 feet above sea level, the temperatures are perpetually cool surrounded by dense forests, making it a great destination all-year round.

Spread across less than 8 km, Matheran boasts of over 30 points, one lake and three temples. Each of the points offer spectacular views of the Western Ghats but the Alexander Point, Louisa Point, One Tree Hill, Lord Point and Charlotte Lake should be on your list. Strolling through the shops at MG Road feels like a film set. The heritage toy train from Neral to Matheran rewards visitors with breathtaking views of the Sahyadri mountain range and cascading waterfalls. Coming by road? Visitors can park their cars at Dasturi Park, the last motorable stop, and hike along the railway tracks soaking in stunning vistas to reach there.

Distance: 60 km from Mumbai

PHALTAN

Not many would know but Phaltan situated in the Satara district was a Maratha princely state of British India. This little town is great for a rural getaway with windmill farms, green meadows and stunning waterfalls.

Stroll around the Rajwada and admire



the understated elegance of the royal home of the Nimbalkars, who ruled Phaltan from 1860 to 1916. The courtyard of the Rajwada has been a set for many a Hindi films like *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* and *Khatta Meetha*. Drive through the countryside to reach Pusegaon village and stand underneath giant windmills at the sunset. Farming is big this side of town. Phaltan is one of the largest producers of sugarcane and its pomegranates are of export quality. Stroll around the tomato, marigold and sugarcane fields, milk a cow or take a bullock cart ride at local farms that are welcoming of tourists. Nature lovers can drive down to the Thosegar Waterfalls and those with a penchant for history should visit the Ajinkyatara Fort in the heart of Satara city. Pro tip: Stay at Jakson Inns Phaltan, who is consistently working to bring Phaltan on the tourist map in Maharashtra; and opt for their curated tours around the place.

Distance: 250 km from Mumbai

NASHIK

Nashik is quite a versatile location – perfect for wine connoisseurs, a great spiritual retreat and a haven for food lovers. Nashik is the wine capital of India and you'll find vineyards here by the



dozen. While Sula Vineyards are considered the pioneers in Indian wine making, selling and distributing, others like York, Grover Zampa and Soma are not far behind. Wine enthusiasts can take a full-day tour of some of these vineyards in and around Nashik. Don't forget to go grape stomping during the seasonal months from January to March. The Sula fest is organised annually in the month of February and promises visitors a great atmosphere for art, music, dance, food, culture and more wine.

Trimbakeshwar temple is home to one of the twelve Jyotirlingas across India and attracts pilgrims from all over Maharashtra. For a taste of some authentic local cuisine, try the spicy Nashik Misal Pav at Sadhana Restaurant that is prepared on a chulha and served with a side of papad.

Distance: 165 km from Mumbai