



Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh

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Best Places to Eat

- » Raja's Café (p630)
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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

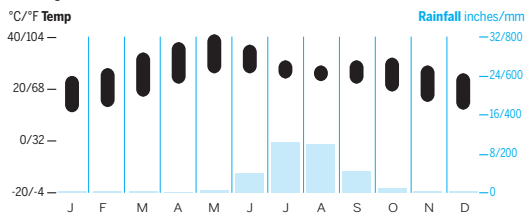
The vast but unassuming state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) doesn't roar for attention like its more celebrated neighbours. Instead it growls deeply from within, offering the promise of something big and beautiful for those prepared to prowling the plains.

Tiger parks are the star attraction, and your chances of spotting a wild tiger here are good, but lesser-known treasures abound: Khajuraho's temples display some of the finest temple art in the world and are the architectural highlight of a region scattered with ruined palaces, majestic hill-top forts, ancient Buddhist stupas and India's biggest and smallest mosques.

Laidback traveller havens like Orchha and Omkareshwar add some chill-out flavour to the region, but the more adventurous will love a foray into tribal Chhattisgarh, which split from Madhya Pradesh in 2000 and remains a world far removed from mainstream Indian culture.

When to Go

Bhopal



Nov–Feb Most pleasant time to visit central India, although hilltops will still be chilly.

Apr–Jun Best chance of spotting tigers; vegetation is thin and water sources are few.

Jul–Sep Monsoon time, but places like Chhattisgarh are at their most beautiful.

Food & Drink

The combined region of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is enormous so, naturally, food varies across the land. Bhopal produces some exquisite meat and fish dishes as well as some great biryanis and kebabs. In the dryer regions of the north and west, you'll find more wheat-based foods and less rice. There's wonderful fruit to be had, especially in the lush south and southeast regions – mangoes and custard apples are the highlights – and those brave enough to venture to the tribal markets of Chhattisgarh will see locals eating live ants. The favourite tippie, meanwhile, is a liquor made from the flowers of the *mahuwa* tree, which you'd be advised to drink with caution – it's potent.

DON'T MISS

Madhya Pradesh is bursting at the seams with fabulous places to visit, but two things you really shouldn't leave without seeing (or at least attempting to see) are the exquisite temples of **Khajuraho** and India's most magnificent creature – the **tiger**.

Top State Festivals

- » Festival of Dance (Feb/Mar, Khajuraho, p623) Week-long event with the cream of Indian classical dancers performing amid floodlit temples.
- » Shivaratri Mela (Feb/Mar, Pachmarhi, p643) Up to 100,000 Shaivite pilgrims, sadhus (spiritual men) and Adivasis (tribal people) attend celebrations at Mahadeo Temple. Participants bring symbolic tridents and hike up Chauragarh Hill to plant them by the Shiva shrine.
- » Magh Mela (Apr/May, Ujjain, p646) Huge annual religious fair held on the banks of the Shipra River at Ujjain; pilgrim numbers increase dramatically every 12th year for the massive Kumbh Mela (next held in Ujjain in 2016).
- » Ahilyabai Holkar's Birthday (Apr/May, Maheshwar, p653) The Holkar queen's birthday is celebrated with palanquin (enclosed seats carried on poles on four men's shoulders) processions through the town.
- » Navratri (Sep/Oct, Ujjain, p647) The Festival of Nine Nights, leading up to Dussehra, is celebrated with particular fervour in Ujjain. Lamps on the large pillars in Harsiddhi Mandir are lit.
- » Dussehra (Oct, Jagdalpur, p666) Dedicated to local goddess Danteshwari, this 75-day festival culminates in eight days of (immense) chariot-pulling around the streets.
- » Tansen Music Festival (Nov/Dec, Gwalior, p616) Four-day music festival attracting classical musicians and singers from all over India; free performances are usually staged at the tomb of Tansen, one of the most revered composer-musicians of Hindustani classical music.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

No international airports here, but the main cities – Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Raipur – plus big tourist spots such as Khajuraho are connected by rail and air to one or more of Delhi, Mumbai (Bombay) and Kolkata (Calcutta).

Fast Facts

- » Population: 72.6 million (Madhya Pradesh), 25.5 million (Chhattisgarh)
- » Area: 308,000 sq km (Madhya Pradesh), 135,000 sq km (Chhattisgarh)
- » Capital: Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Raipur (Chhattisgarh)
- » Main languages: Hindi, regional tribal languages
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹500, \$\$ ₹500 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500
- » Eating prices: \$ dishes below ₹50, \$\$ ₹50 to ₹100, \$\$\$ above ₹100

Top Tip

If you're serious about seeing a tiger, plan and budget for at least three days of jeep safaris, with two safaris each day.

Resources

- » Madhya Pradesh Tourist Board (www.mptourism.com)
- » Chhattisgarh Tourist Board (www.chhattisgarhtourism.net)
- » **Tiger protection** www.saveourtigers.com



Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Highlights

- 1 Venture deep into tiger territory at one of MP's three big **tiger parks** (p613)
- 2 Blush at the erotic carvings on the exquisite temples in **Khajuraho** (p623)
- 3 Choose to bed down in a former palace or a mud-hut homestay in laidback **Orchha** (p618)
- 4 Watch local legends eat live red ants at a tribal market around **Jagdalpur** in Chhattisgarh (p667)
- 5 Cool off under a waterfall in **Pachmarhi** (p643), MP's only hill station
- 6 Chill out on the Om-shaped holy island of **Omkareshwar** (p651)
- 7 Cycle around India's finest Afghan ruins at the hilltop getaway of **Mandu** (p654)
- 8 Soak up the spiritual vibe at the bathing ghats in historical **Maheshwar** (p653)

History

Virtually all phases of Indian history made their mark on the region historically known as Malwa, starting with the rock paintings at Bhimbetka (p639) and Pachmarhi (p643), which date back more than 10,000 years. They tell of a cultural succession through the late Stone Age to the start of recorded history in the 3rd century BC, when the Buddhist emperor Ashoka (see boxed text, p1087) controlled the Mauryan empire from Malwa and built Sanchi's Great Stupa (p640).

The Mauryas were followed by the Sungas and the Guptas (see p1085) – Chandragupta II (r AD 382–401) ruled from Ujjain and had the caves cut at Udaigiri (p642) – before the Huns rampaged across the state. Around 1000 years ago the Parmaras reigned in southwest Madhya Pradesh – notably Raja Bhoj, who ruled for over half a century across this region and who founded the now-ruined town of Bhojpur, the magnificent fort of Mandu and, according to some scholars, the city of Bhopal.

The Chandelas ruled over much of central India from the 9th to the 13th centuries. It was their nimble-fingered sculptors who enlivened with erotic scenes the facades of some 85 temples in Khajuraho (p623) before the dynasty eventually moved its capital from Khajuraho to Mahoba. Between the 12th and 16th centuries, the region experienced continuing struggles between Hindu and Muslim rulers (p1088), and Mandu was the scene of some decisive clashes. The Mughals were eventually superseded by the Marathas (p1091) after a 27-year-long war (1681–1707) – the longest in India's history. The Marathas went on to rule the region for more than a century before they fell to the British (1818) for whom the Scindia maharajas of Gwalior (p613) were powerful allies.

With the States Reorganisation Act of 1956, several former states were combined to form Madhya Pradesh. In 2000, Chhattisgarh became an independent state.

NORTHERN MADHYA PRADESH

Gwalior

☑0751 / POP 865,548

Famous for its medieval hilltop fort, Gwalior makes an interesting stop en route to some of the better-known destinations in this part of India. The city also houses the eccentric Jai Vilas Palace, home of the Scindia Museum and the historic seat of the Scindias, one of the country's most revered families.

The Tansen Music Festival (p611) – a four-day classical music event attracting performers from all over India – comes to town in November/December.

History

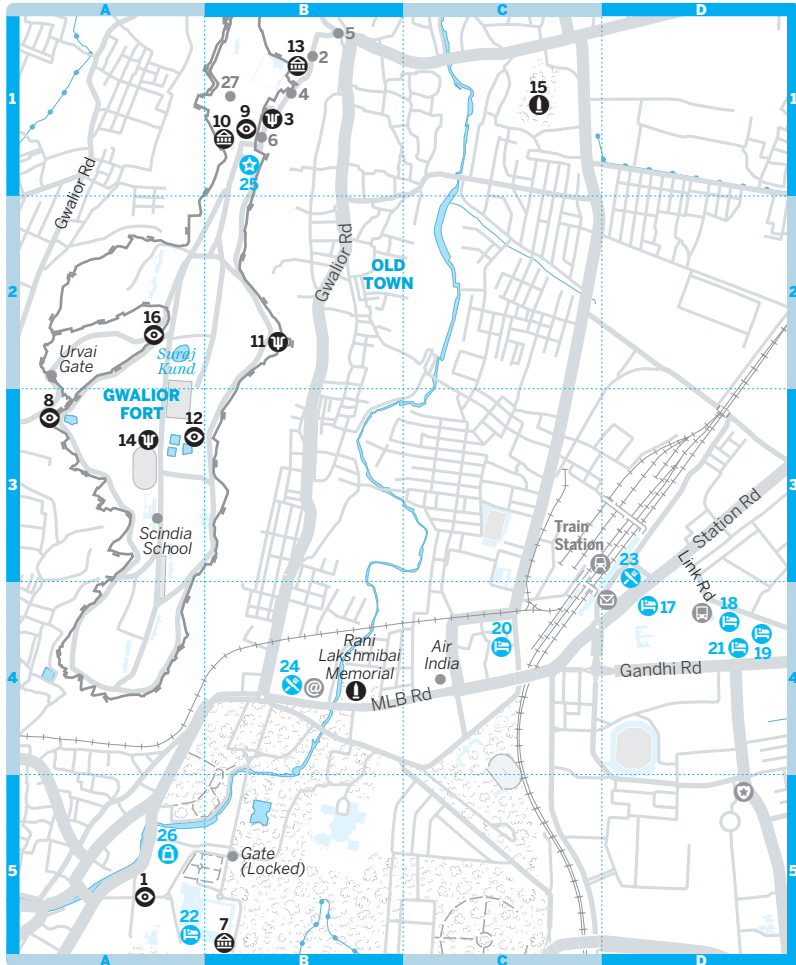
Gwalior's legendary beginning stems from the 8th century when a hermit known as Gwalipa is said to have cured the Rajput chieftain Suraj Sen of leprosy using water from Suraj Kund tank (which still remains in Gwalior fort). Renaming him Suhan Pal, he foretold that Suhan's descendants would remain in power as long as they retained the name Pal. Suhan's next 83 descendants did just that, but number 84 changed his name to Tej Karan and, naturally, lost his kingdom.

In 1398 the Tomar dynasty came to power. Gwalior Fort became the focus of continual clashes with neighbouring powers and

TOP TIGER PARKS

Madhya Pradesh is blessed with five tiger parks, but most tourists don't have the time or money to visit more than one. To help you decide where best to prowl, here's a quick guide to tiger territory in MP:

- » **Kanha** The biggest and most professionally run of the lot. Can venture deep into the forests. Chances of a tiger: very good.
- » **Bandhavgarh** Budget-travellers' favourite with highest density of tigers, but sightings can feel a bit 'rush and grab'. Chances: excellent.
- » **Pench** Quiet and more exclusive. Most people prebook here. Chances: good.
- » **Panna** Three relocated tigers are slowly rebuilding Panna's once-decimated tiger population. Boat safaris here can be fun. Chances: extremely slim.
- » **Satpura** Beautiful hilltop landscape, but come here for the waterfalls and the hiking rather than the tigers. Chances: slim.



reached its ascendancy under Raja Man Singh (r 1486–1516). Two centuries of Mughal possession followed, ending with the fort's capture by the Marathas in 1754.

Over the next 50 years the fort changed hands several times, including twice to the British before finally passing to the Scindias.


During the First War of Independence (Indian Uprising) in 1857, Maharaja Jayajirao remained loyal to the British but his troops rebelled, and in mid-1858 the fort was the scene of some of the uprising's final events. Near here the British defeated rebel leader Tantia Topi and it was in the

final assault on the fort that the rani (wife) of Jhansi was killed (see p382).

Sights

Gwalior Fort

FORT

 Perched majestically on top of a 3km-long plateau overlooking Gwalior, this hilltop **fort** is an imposing yet eye-catching sight, with the circular towers of the dominating Man Singh Palace ringed with turquoise tiles.

There are two approaches to the fort, both steep treks. Rickshaws can drive you up to Urvai, the western gate, so it's tempt-

Gwalior

📍 Sights

- 1 ArchwayA5
- 2 Badalgarh Gate..... B1
- 3 Chatarbhuj MandirB1
- 4 Ganesh GateB1
- Gujari Mahal (see 13)
- 5 Gwalior Gate (Alamgiri Gate)B1
- 6 Hathiya Paur Gate (Elephant Gate).....B1
- Hindu Temple (see 4)
- 7 Jai Vilas PalaceB5
- Kabutar Khana (see 4)
- 8 Lower Western Rock Sculptures.....A3
- 9 Man Singh PalaceB1
- 10 MuseumB1
- 11 Sasbahu Temples.....B2
- Scindia Museum(see 7)
- 12 Sikh GurdwaraA3
- 13 State Archaeological MuseumB1
- 14 Teli ka Mandir.....A3
- 15 Tomb of Tansen.....C1
- 16 Upper Western Rock Sculptures.....A2

🏠 Sleeping

- 17 Hotel Chandralok.....D4
- 18 Hotel DMD4
- 19 Hotel Gwalior Regency.....D4
- 20 Hotel MayurC4
- 21 Tansen ResidencyD4
- 22 Usha Kiran PalaceA5

🍴 Eating

- 23 Indian Coffee House.....D3
- Silver Saloon (see 22)
- 24 ZaykaB4

🍷 Drinking

- Bada Bar..... (see 22)

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- 25 Sound-and-Light ShowB1

🛍 Shopping

- 26 Arihant EmporiumA5

Information

- 27 Gwalior Fort Ticket CounterB1
- MP Tourism..... (see 21)

from the east well worth the climb. Don't, however, miss the **rock sculptures** part of the way down the western side. The upper set in particular are far more impressive than those on the eastern approach and make for a rewarding detour during your stroll around the fort.

A **ticket counter** (📞2480011; Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; 🌅dawn-dusk) near Man Singh Palace sells tickets for the monuments, and another ticket (₹5) for a small, adjacent museum.

A **sound-and-light show** (Indian/foreigner ₹50/250; 🕒English 8.30pm Mar-Oct, 7.30pm Nov-Feb, Hindi 7.30pm Mar-Oct, 6.30pm Nov-Feb) is held nightly in the open-air amphitheatre.

Much of the fort is now occupied by the prestigious private Scindia School, established by Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia in 1897 for the education of Indian nobility.

Man Singh Palace

PALACE

This imperial-style palace is one of the more unusually decorated monuments you'll see in India: the outer walls include a frieze of yellow ducks! These – and mosaic tiling of elephants, tigers and crocodiles in blue, yellow and green – give it its alternative identity of Chit Mandir (Painted Palace).

Built by Tomar ruler Man Singh between 1486 and 1516, this fine example of early Hindu architecture consists of two open courts surrounded by apartments on two levels. Below ground lie another two storeys constructed for hot weather, connected by 'speaking tubes' built into the walls, and used by the Mughals as prison cells.

Rock Sculptures

SCULPTURES

While there are sculptures carved into the rock at a few points on the plateau, including on the way up from Gwalior Gate, the most impressive is the upper set on the western approach, between Urvai Gate and the inner fort walls. Mostly cut into the cliff face in the mid-15th century, they represent nude figures of *tirthankars* (the 24 great Jain teachers). They were defaced by Babur's Muslim army in 1527 but have been more recently repaired.

There are more than 30 images, including a splendid 17m-high standing sculpture of the first *tirthankar*, Adinath.

Teli ka Mandir

TEMPLE

Used as a drinks factory and coffee shop by the British after the First War of Independence (Indian Uprising) of 1857, this 30m-high, 8th-century temple is the oldest monument in the compound.

ing to go that way because vehicles cannot drive up from the eastern entrance. But the western entrance is an anticlimax compared with the formidable view of the fort from the eastern approach, which makes entering

The modern, gold-topped **gurdwara** (Sikh Temple) nearby is dedicated to Sikh hero Guru Har Gobind, who was imprisoned in Man Singh Palace from 1617 to 1619.

Sasbahu Temples

TEMPLE

The Mayan-like Sasbahu, or Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law Temples, date from the 9th to 11th centuries. Mother-in-Law, dedicated to Vishnu, has four gigantic pillars supporting its heavy roof, layered with carvings. The smaller Daughter-in-Law, dedicated to Shiva, is also stacked with sculptures.

Eastern Entrance

FORT

From the east entrance a series of gates punctuates the worn steps of the path leading up to the fort. At the bottom, the first gate you pass through is **Gwalior Gate** (Alamgiri Gate), which dates from 1660. The second, **Bansur** (Archer's Gate), has disappeared, so the next is **Badalgarh**, named after Badal Singh, Man Singh's uncle.

Further up is **Ganesh Gate**, built in the 15th century. Nearby is **Kabutar Khana**, a small pigeon house, and a small four-pillared **Hindu temple** to the hermit Gwalipa, after whom fort and town are named.

You'll pass a 9th-century Vishnu shrine known as **Chatarbhuji Mandir** (Temple of the Four-Armed) before reaching the fifth gate, **Hathiya Paur** (Elephant Gate), now the entrance to the palace (as the sixth gate, **Hawa Gate**, no longer exists).

State Archaeological Museum

MUSEUM

This **museum** (Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹50/200; ☺10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is within Gujari Mahal, just through Gwalior Gate at the base of the fort. Built in the 15th century by Man Singh for his favourite rani (wife), the palace is now rather deteriorated. There's a large collection of Hindu and Jain sculptures, including the famed Salabhanjika (an exceptionally carved female figure) plus copies of Bagh Caves frescoes.

Jai Vilas Palace & Scindia Museum

PALACE

(Indian/foreigner ₹40/230, camera/video ₹50/100; ☺10am-5.30pm Thu-Tue) This museum occupies some 35 rooms of the Scindias' opulent Jai Vilas Palace, built by Maharaja Jayajirao in 1874 using prisoners from the fort. The convicts were rewarded with the 12-year job of weaving the hall carpet, one of the largest in Asia.

The gold paint around the durbar (royal court) hall weighs half a tonne. Supposedly, eight elephants were suspended from its ceiling to check it could cope with two 12.5m-high, 3.5-tonne chandeliers with 250 lightbulbs, said to be the largest pair in the world.

Bizarre items fill the rooms: Belgian-cut glass furniture, stuffed tigers and a ladies-only swimming pool with its own boat. The cavernous dining room displays the *pièce de résistance*, a model railway with a silver train that carried after-dinner brandy and cigars around the table.

Note: the gates to the north and south are locked so you have to enter the palace from the west.

Tomb of Tansen

HISTORIC BUILDING

Tucked away in the winding lanes of the Old Town, and in the same compound as the resplendent tomb of Mohammed Gaus, is the smaller, simpler tomb of Tansen, a singer much admired by Akbar and held to be the father of Hindustani classical music. Chewing the leaves from the tamarind tree here supposedly enriches your voice. Free performances are staged during the four-day Tansen Music Festival in November/December.

Tours

UP Tourism's cute little yellow bus, Gwalior Darshan, takes passengers on a full-day **city tour** (per person ₹75; ☺10.30am-6pm), taking in all the main sights, including Gwalior Fort and Jai Vilas Palace. Enquire at the tourist office at Tansen Residency.

Sleeping

Hotel Gwalior Regency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2340670; Link Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1975/2725; 📶📺🛏) None of the string of midrange hotels on Mandhav Rao Scindia Marg are as good value as this super-friendly place near the train station. Standard rooms are fine, albeit a little old fashioned (and musty before the AC kicks in), but if you pay an extra ₹1000 for 'grande deluxe' you'll find rooms with modern furnishings (wall-mounted wide-screen TV, glass-walled shower room, free wi-fi) and a luxurious feel.

Usha Kiran Palace

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2444000; www.tajhotels.com; Jayendraganj; r from ₹10,000; 📶📺🛏) Live like royalty in this 120-year-old building, which once accom-

SHIVPURI'S MARBLE CENOTAPHS

A possible day trip from Gwalior is to the old Scindia summer capital of Shivpuri. This rarely visited town is the site of the Scindia family's *chhatris* (cenotaphs), appropriately grand memorials to maharajas and maharanis gone by.

Two kilometres' walk from the bus stand (autorickshaw ₹15), and set in formal gardens, the **chhatris** (admission ₹40, camera/video ₹10/40; ☀8am-noon & 3-8pm) are magnificent walk-in marble structures with Mughal-style pavilions and *sikharas* (Hindu temple-spires) facing each other across a pool with a criss-cross of walkways. The *chhatri* to Madhorao Scindia, built between 1926 and 1932, is exquisitely inlaid with intricate *pietra dura* (marble inlay work).

Buses leave regularly from the Shivpuri bus stand for Gwalior (₹80, 2½ hours) and Jhansi (₹70, three hours), meaning you don't have to double-back on yourself to visit.

modated King George V. Every room has its own unique touches – one a mosaic-tiled bathtub, another a silk-cushioned lounging area – while the luxury villas come with their own private pool! The gorgeous main pool (with separate kids pool) can be used by nonguests (₹500) as can the excellent **Jiva Spa** (massage treatments from ₹1400; ☀8am-8pm), the Silver Saloon restaurant and Bada Bar. Online deals available for as little as ₹5600.

Hotel DM HOTEL \$
(☎2342083; Link Rd; s/d from ₹400/500) Rooms are small, but in much better condition than the other budget options around town. All have clean bathrooms and a TV locked securely inside a special cabinet (when was the last time you stole a hotel TV?). Some come with a cute little wooden bench outside.

Hotel Mayur HOTEL \$
(☎2325559; Padav; s/d from ₹280/450, with AC from ₹620; 🍷) Spacious, but slightly grubby rooms set around a courtyard, extending up three floors. Twenty-four-hour checkout.

Hotel Chandralok HOTEL \$
(☎2341425; s/d from ₹350/400) The only hotel on Station Rd that accepts foreigners. Rooms are shabby, but prices are agreeable.

Tansen Residency HOTEL \$\$
(☎4056789; r ₹1690) MP Tourism hotel with neat and tidy rooms, but little character. Has a bar and a restaurant.



Eating & Drinking

Indian Coffee House SOUTH INDIAN \$
(Station Rd; mains ₹40-110; ☀7.30am-11pm) Another popular offering from the fab Indian Coffee House, this branch does all the usual

breakfast favourites – real coffee, dosa (large savoury crepes), scrambled eggs – but also has a proper main-course menu, including an excellent thali (all-you-can-eat meal; ₹85), in a separate 1st-floor section.

Zayka MULTICUISINE \$
(MLB Rd; mains ₹40-110; ☀11am-11pm) This trendy, cafe-style restaurant with glass tabletops and brightly painted walls pulls in young local punters with its foreign menu – noodles, burgers, pizza – but the Indian veg dishes are still very good. Try the stuffed capsicum.

Silver Saloon INDIAN \$\$\$
(☎2444000; Usha Kiran Palace, Jayendraganj; mains ₹350-750; ☀7am-11am, 12.30-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm) Mouth-watering Indian, Nepali and Continental dishes are served either in the tangerine-and-magenta restaurant or the palm-shaded courtyard of this exquisite heritage hotel.

Bada Bar BAR
(☎2444000; Usha Kiran Palace, Jayendraganj; beer ₹250; ☀5-11pm) Take a peek inside Gwalior's most luxurious hotel, order a beer or a glass of French wine, then rack up for a frame or two on the 120-year-old snooker table.



Shopping

Arihant Emporium HANDICRAFTS
(Moti Mahal Rd; ☀10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Near Jai Vilas Palace, this place has all sorts of handicrafts but specialises in a Gwalior favourite – silver boxes (₹500) decorated with enamel images to imitate the tile work on Man Singh Palace.

HANDY TRAINS FROM GWALIOR

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Agra	12617 <i>Mangala Ldweep</i>	140/265/336	2	8.15am
Bhopal	12920 <i>Malwa Express</i>	198/502/674	6½	12.47am
Delhi	12625 <i>Kerala Express</i>	178/443/593	5	8.30am
Indore	12920 <i>Malwa Express</i>	282/737/999	12	12.47am
Jhansi*	12002/22002 <i>Bhopal-SHTABDI</i>	240/470	1	9.39am

Fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC; *chair/1AC only

i Information

Fun Stop Cyber Zone (MLB Rd; per hr ₹30; ☉9am-10pm) Internet access and webcams for Skype use.

MP Tourism Tansen Residency (☎2340370; 6A Gandhi Rd; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Train station (☎4040777; ☉9am-7.30pm) Organises daily Gwalior bus tour. Very helpful.

Post office (Station Rd; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat)

State Bank of India (☎2336291; Bada Chowk; ☉10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat) Cashes travellers cheques; also has an ATM in the train station foyer.

i Getting There & Away

Air

Air India (☎2376872; MLB Rd; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat) has flights to Delhi (from ₹4500, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday).

Bus

Services from the bus stand on Link Rd include:

AGRA ₹85, 3½ hours, frequent, 4.30am to 9pm

JAIPUR seat/sleeper ₹250/330, 10 hours, four daily, 6.30am, 7.15am, 6.30pm, 7.30pm

JHANSI ₹67, three hours, frequent, day and night.

KHAJURAHO ₹190, seven hours, one daily, 8.30am

SHIVPURI ₹80, 2½ hours, frequent, 5am to 10pm

Train

More than 20 daily trains go to Agra's Cantonment station and to Jhansi for Orchha or Khajuraho, while more than 10 go to Delhi and Bhopal. See the boxed text (p618) for details.

i Getting Around

Cycle-rickshaws (per trip ₹10 to ₹20) and autorickshaws (₹20 to ₹40) are plentiful. Brutish-looking tempos (large autorickshaws; ₹2 to ₹6) chug along fixed routes. An auto to the airport will cost ₹100 to ₹150.

Jhansi

This nondescript town, commonly used as a gateway to Orchha, Khajuraho and Gwalior, is in fact in Uttar Pradesh. See p382 for details.

Orchha

☎07680 / POP 8501

This historic village on the banks of the boulder-strewn Betwa River showcases some fabulous architecture similar to that of nearby Khajuraho, albeit without such high-quality artistry. The atmosphere in Orchha, though, is far more laid-back and hassle-free, which makes for a relaxing stay. There are great homestay options as well as opportunities to enjoy the surrounding countryside, with walking, cycling, swimming and rafting all on the agenda.

History

Orchha was the capital of the Bundela rajas from the 16th century to 1783, when they decamped to nearby Tikamgarh. Bir Singh Deo ruled from Orchha from 1605 to 1627 and built Jhansi fort. A favourite of Mughal prince Salim, Bir Singh feuded with Salim's father, Emperor Akbar, who all but ruined his kingdom.

In 1605 Prince Salim became Emperor Jehangir, making Bir Singh a powerful figure. The Jehangir Mahal was built for the emperor's state visit the following year.

Sights

The ticket for Orchha's **sites** (Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, camera/video ₹25/200) covers seven monuments – Jehangir Mahal, Raj Mahal, Raj Praveen Mahal, the camel stables, the *chhatris*, Chaturbhuj Temple and Lakshmi Narayan Temple – and is only for sale at the **ticket office** (☉8am–6pm). You can walk around the palace grounds for free.

Palaces

HISTORIC SITE

Crossing the granite bridge from the village centre over the often dry river channel brings you to a fortified complex dominated by two wonderfully imposing 17th-century palaces – Jehangir Mahal and Raj Mahal. Langur monkeys play by the ruins here, while vultures perch on the rooftops. If you look closely at the top of some buildings, you can still see some of the few remaining turquoise-coloured tiles that once decorated the palaces here.

Jehangir Mahal, an assault course of steep staircases and precipitous walkways, represents a zenith of medieval Islamic architecture. There's a small **archaeological museum** on the ground floor and behind the palace sturdy **camel stables** overlook a green landscape dotted with monuments.

In the nearby **Raj Mahal**, the caretaker will open the painted rooms where Rama, Krishna and Orchha royalty wrestle, hunt, fight and dance across the walls and ceilings.

Downhill from the palace compound are the smaller **Raj Praveen Mahal**, a pavilion and formal Mughal garden, and **Khana Hammam** (Turkish Bath), with some fine vaulted ceilings.

On the other side of the village, **Palki Mahal** was the palace of Dinman Hardol (the son of Bir Singh Deo), who committed suicide to 'prove his innocence' over an affair with his brother's wife. His memorial, two cloth-covered stone beds in a pavilion, is in the adjacent **Phool Bagh**, a traditional *charbagh* (formal Persian garden, divided into quarters). Prince Hardol is venerated as a hero in Bundelkhand culture. Women sing songs about him, tie threads onto the *jali* (carved marble lattice screen) of his memo-

rial and walk around it five times, clockwise, to make wishes they hope he'll grant.

Temples

HINDU TEMPLE

Orchha's impressive 16th-century temples still receive thousands of Hindu pilgrims. At the centre of a lively square is the pink- and gold-domed **Ram Raja Temple** (☉8am–noon & 8–10pm), the only temple where Rama is worshipped as a king. Built as a palace for Madhukar Shah's wife, it became a temple when an image of Rama, temporarily installed by the rani, proved impossible to move.

Ram Raja is overlooked by the spectacular towers of **Chaturbhuj Temple**, an immensely solid building on a cruciform plan. Buy a cheap torch from the bazaar and climb the internal stairs to the roof where, from among the mossy spires and domes, you get the best view in town. Vultures also perch on the rooftops here.

Lakshmi Narayan Temple, on the road out to Ganj village, has fine rooftop views and well-preserved murals on the ceilings of its domed towers.

Chhatris

HISTORIC SITE

Cenotaphs to Orchha's rulers, including Bir Singh Deo, the serene *chhatris* rise from the rubble and undergrowth about a kilometre south of the village. They're best seen at dusk, when the birds reel above the children splashing at the river ghats.

Saaket Museum

MUSEUM

(☉10am–5pm Tue–Sun) More of an art gallery than a museum, the Saaket Museum showcases some beautiful folk paintings from different states of India. The Madhubani paintings from Bihar are particularly striking.

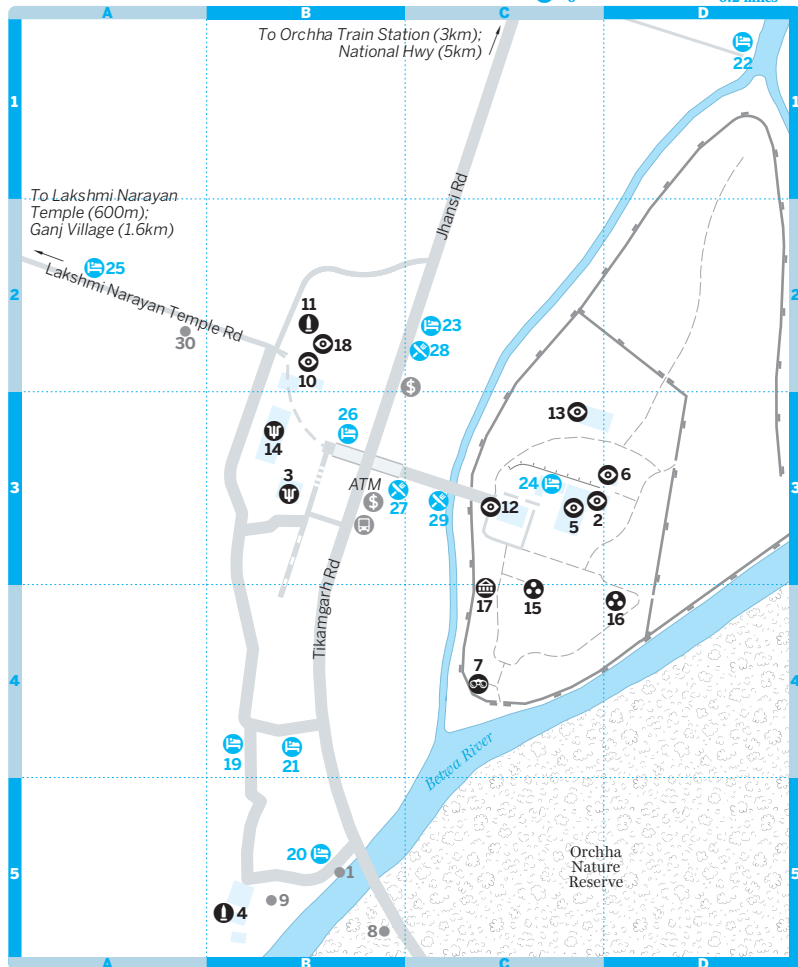


Activities

Nature Trails

WALKING

Some paths in the vast palace grounds lead down to the river through gates in the wall. Another option is the 12km-long **nature trail** in Orchha Nature Reserve, a 44-sq-km island surrounded by the Betwa and Janni Rivers. You need to buy a ticket (Indian/foreigner ₹20/150) from the ticket office (open 8am to 6pm) to enter the reserve, then you are free to explore, although guides (₹200) are available. The nature trail is well marked and the roads are signposted, making this



a nice place to cycle. Wildlife you're likely to see on the trail includes monkeys, deer, monitor lizards and peacocks. For a chance to spot one of four types of turtles found here, cycle to Ret Ghat, 14km south of the ticket office, on the Jamni River.

Massage & Yoga

Amar Mahal (p621) and **Orchha Resort** (☎252222; www.orchharesort.com) both offer good-quality ayurvedic massage treatments (from ₹500; 8.30am to 8.30pm) and hold yoga classes (₹500). Amar Mahal is the better but pricier of the two.

AYURVEDA

Rafting

River-rafting (per raft per 1½/3hr ₹1200/2500) trips start from the boat club, but tickets must be bought through MP Tourism at Hotel Sheesh Mahal or Betwa Retreat. Rafts take one to six people.

RAFTING

Swimming

Locals swim in the **Betwa River** every day. A popular spot is in front of the **boat club** by the bridge that leads into the Orchha Nature Reserve. Another option is the boulder-strewn section beside Bundelkhand Riverside hotel. Follow the track

SWIMMING

Orchha

Sights

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 Boat Club..... | B5 |
| 2 Camel Stables..... | C3 |
| 3 Chaturbhuj Temple..... | B3 |
| 4 Chhatris..... | B5 |
| 5 Jehangir Mahal..... | C3 |
| 6 Khana Hammam..... | D3 |
| 7 Lookout..... | C4 |
| 8 Orchha Nature Reserve Ticket
Office..... | B5 |
| 9 Orchha Resort..... | B5 |
| 10 Palki Mahal..... | B2 |
| 11 Phool Bagh..... | B2 |
| 12 Raj Mahal..... | C3 |
| 13 Raj Praveen Mahal..... | C3 |
| 14 Ram Raja Temple..... | B3 |
| 15 Ruins..... | C4 |
| 16 Ruins..... | D4 |
| 17 Saaket Museum..... | C4 |
| 18 Sawan Bhado Pillars..... | B2 |

Sleeping

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 19 Amar Mahal..... | B4 |
| 20 Betwa Retreat..... | B5 |
| 21 Bhandari Guesthouse..... | B4 |
| 22 Bundelkhand Riverside..... | D1 |
| 23 Fort View Guest House..... | C2 |
| 24 Hotel Sheesh Mahal..... | C3 |
| 25 Hotel Shri Mahant..... | A2 |
| 26 Shri Mahant Guest House..... | B3 |

Eating

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 27 Betwa Tarang..... | B3 |
| 28 Didi's Cafe..... | C2 |
| Hotel Sheesh Mahal..... | (see 24) |
| 29 Ram Raja..... | C3 |
| Turquoise Diner..... | (see 22) |

Information

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| MP Tourism..... | (see 20) |
| MP Tourism..... | (see 24) |
| Ticket Office..... | (see 12) |

Transport

- | | |
|--------------------|----|
| 30 Raju Bikes..... | A2 |
|--------------------|----|

from Jhansi Rd to the hotel but instead of turning left into the hotel itself, carry on down to the river.

Nonguests can use the **swimming pools** at the following hotels: Bundelkhand Riverside (₹150), Betwa Retreat (₹150), Amar Mahal (₹200) and Orchha Resort (₹300).

Sleeping



Hotel Sheesh Mahal

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎252624; smorchha@mptourism.com; Jehangir Mahal; r ₹1690, ste ₹3990-4990; 🍷) Literally palatial, this hotel is actually located in a wing of Jehangir Mahal. As you'd expect, the surrounding architecture is stunning – arches, columns, lattice windows, decorative wooden door frames – but the rooms themselves are gorgeous too, and each is unique, some with regal touches such as throne-like toilets. Even if you don't stay here, pretend you want to and have a look around.

Bundelkhand Riverside

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎252612; www.bundelkhandriverside.com; s/d from ₹3000/3600; 🍷🍷) The granddaddy of Orchha hotels is owned by the grandson of Orchha's last king, Vir Singh, who sold his palaces to the state after India's Independence. Some of the maharaja's personal art collection is displayed in the corridors. Exquisite rooms overlook either the river or the hotel's beautiful gardens, which contain some 16th-century monuments as well as a small swimming pool.

Shri Mahant Guest House

HOTEL \$

(☎252715; r from ₹200, with AC from ₹450; 🍷) Overlooking the souvenir market at the entrance to Ram Raja Temple and overlooked itself by the wonderful Chaturbhuj Temple, this excellent budget choice has a superb location, clean rooms – some with TV, others with balconies – and friendly staff. If rooms are full, you'll be directed to its sister property, **Hotel Shri Mahant** (☎252341; Lakshmi Narayan Temple Rd; r from ₹400; 🍷), a few hundred metres west of town.

Fort View Guest House

HOTEL \$

(☎252701; Jhansi Rd; r ₹250-550, with AC from ₹850; 🍷) Smart, simple rooms off a cute courtyard come with marble floors and clean bathrooms with 24-hour hot water. The three AC rooms have huge windows with palace views, while one has a marble bed! Not to be confused with nearby New Fort Guest House, which isn't such good value.

Betwa Retreat

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎252618; www.mptourism.com; tents ₹1290, cottages ₹1690, ste ₹4990; 🍷🍷) Set in peaceful shaded gardens with a small swimming pool this MP Tourism property, overlooking the river and with views of the *chhatris*, makes an excellent family choice. Rooms come in

MUD-HUT HOMESTAYS IN THE VILLAGE OF GANJ

Thanks to **Friends of Orchha** (☎9098353799; www.orchha.org; s/d ₹350/450, extra bed ₹100, breakfast/dinner ₹30/50), a nonprofit organisation run by Dutchman Louk Vreeswijk and his Indian wife, Asha D'Souza, travellers now have the opportunity to stay with local villagers as part of an excellent homestay program.

This is a wonderful chance to experience genuine Indian village life, so don't expect anything but the most basic of facilities. Friends of Orchha helped provide loans for some renovations, including installing ecofriendly dry toilets in the yards of each homestay house, but you will still be staying in mud huts and eating the simple veg dishes that your host family eats every day.

Staying for a single night is discouraged for logistical reasons. If you really want to stay one night only, you can, but room rates will be slightly higher. In any case, the slow pace of life in Ganj is something that should be savoured. At the time of research there were only five family homes set up to provide homestays (although more were being planned), so it would still be sensible to book ahead.

Friends of Orchha also runs an after-school youth club for village children. Volunteers and, of course, donations are always welcomed. The Friends of Orchha office is in Ganj Village itself, on the left-hand side of the main road as you are coming from Orchha.

Mughal-style cottages or Swiss tents and have nice touches such as iron bed frames. There's a restaurant, a bar and an outdoor terrace, and it's only a five-minute walk from the main drag.

Amar Mahal HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎252102; www.amarmahal.com; s ₹2400-3400, d ₹3400-4400, ste ₹6000; 🍷🍷) Grand rooms containing lovely wood-carved furniture, such as four-poster beds, are set around a courtyard with white pillars supporting a covered walkway. There's an excellent ayurvedic massage and yoga centre (see p620) beside the large, but slightly exposed pool. This doesn't have the history or character of Bundelkhand Riverside, but it's probably Orchha's most luxurious stay.

Bhandari Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎252745; off Tikamgarh Rd; r ₹400, without bathroom ₹250) Neat and tidy rooms, with large bathrooms, are set around a simple courtyard. The huge common bathroom is kept very clean. Rooms with a private bathroom also have a TV.

Eating & Drinking

TOP CHOICE **Didi's Cafe** CAFE \$\$
(Jhansi Rd; mains ₹80; ☀8am-5pm) Run by Denise and Loyal, a very cheerful Northern Irish-Indian couple, this friendly, laid-back cafe is perfect for breakfast or a lunchtime snack. The excellent menu includes fresh coffee, porridge, omelettes, pasta and salads.

If that all sounds too healthy for you, plump instead for their simply delicious homemade banoffi pie.

Betwa Tarang INDIAN \$
(Jehangir Mahal Rd; mains ₹45-130; ☀7.30am-10pm) This place does the best quality Indian food out of any of Orchha's budget restaurants – the thalis (₹70 to ₹130) are particularly good. It also has the attraction of a rooftop terrace where you can sit and overlook the market, with the old palace to your right and Chaturbhuj Temple to your left.

Turquoise Diner INDIAN \$\$\$
(☎252612; Bundelkhand Riverside; mains ₹160-300, ☀7-10am, 12.30-3.30pm & 7-10.30pm) Fabulous green- and blue-tiled AC restaurant inside the sumptuous grounds of this top-notch hotel knocks out arguably the best Indian food in Orchha. There's a smattering of Continental options too, but stick to the local dishes and you won't leave disappointed.

Ram Raja INDIAN \$
(Jehangir Mahal Rd; mains ₹30-60; ☀7.30am-11pm) A friendly, family-run streetside restaurant offering tasty vegetarian fare under the shade of a large tree.

Hotel Sheesh Mahal INDIAN \$\$
(Jehangir Mahal; mains ₹60-200; ☀7.30am-10.30pm) Indian tandoori, Chinese and Continental are all on the menu, but it's the historic surroundings that are the attraction here (plus the beer).

i Information

Internet cafes (₹20 to ₹30) are everywhere.

Canara Bank (☎252689; Jhansi Rd;

☀10.30am-2.30pm & 3-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques and cash. There's an ATM by the bus stand.

MP Tourism (☎252624; Hotel Sheesh Mahal or Betwa Retreat; ☀7am-10pm)

i Getting There & Around

Tempos (large shared autorickshaws; ₹10) go between Jhansi bus stand and Orchha all day. Private autorickshaws charge about ₹150. Coming from Khajuraho, you can ask the bus driver to drop you off at the Orchha turn-off on the National Hwy, where you should be able to wave down a vehicle to take you to Orchha.

Annoyingly, there are no buses between Orchha and Khajuraho. You need to go to Jhansi first then catch a bus (₹120, six hours, 6am to 2pm) from there as Jhansi-Khajuraho buses tend not to stop for you if you wait on the side of the highway. Taxis to Khajuraho cost at least ₹2000.

You can now also catch a slow passenger train to Khajuraho from Orchha's tiny train station, which is on the Jhansi Rd, about 3km from the village centre. The train leaves daily at 7.25am and takes five hours (if it's on time). It's 2nd-class seats only so you can't reserve tickets. Just turn up at the station and buy a 'general' ticket (₹30). The return train leaves Khajuraho at 12.30pm.

Raju Bikes (Lakshmi Narayan Temple Rd; ☀7am-6pm) hires out rickety bicycles at great rates (per hour/day ₹5/40).

Khajuraho

☎07686 / POP 19,286

The erotic carvings that swathe Khajuraho's three groups of World Heritage-listed temples are among the finest temple art in the world. The Western Group of temples, in particular, contains some stunning artwork. See our special colour illustration (p626) for all the details.

Many travellers complain about the tiring persistence of touts here, preferring the more laid-back charms of nearby Orchha instead. Their complaints are well founded, but be aware that missing out on Khajuraho means missing out on some of the most beautiful temples in India.

Come February/March, the Western Group of temples becomes the stage for the week-long Festival of Dance (see p611).

History

Legend has it that Khajuraho was founded by Chardravarman, the son of the moon god Chandra, who descended and saw a beautiful maiden as she bathed in a stream. Historians tell us that the Chandela dynasty built the temples, many of which originally rose from a lake. Most of the 85 temples – of which 25 now remain – were built during a century-long burst of creative genius from AD 950 to 1050 and remained active long after the Chandelas moved their capital to Mahoba.

Khajuraho's isolation may well have helped preserve it from the desecration Muslim invaders inflicted on 'idolotrous' temples elsewhere, but perhaps for the same reason the area was slowly abandoned and eventually fell into ruin, with the jungle taking over. The wider world remained largely ignorant until British officer TS Burt was apparently guided to the ruins by his palanquin bearers in 1838.

Dangers & Annoyances

Most of the hassle tourists experience comes in the form of seemingly endless demands for money, pens and photo fees, often from children. Also be wary of commission-driven operations such as guides offering to take you to a local school or charity.

Many yogis and massage therapists are not qualified. That doesn't mean they're not good, but it's something to be aware of.

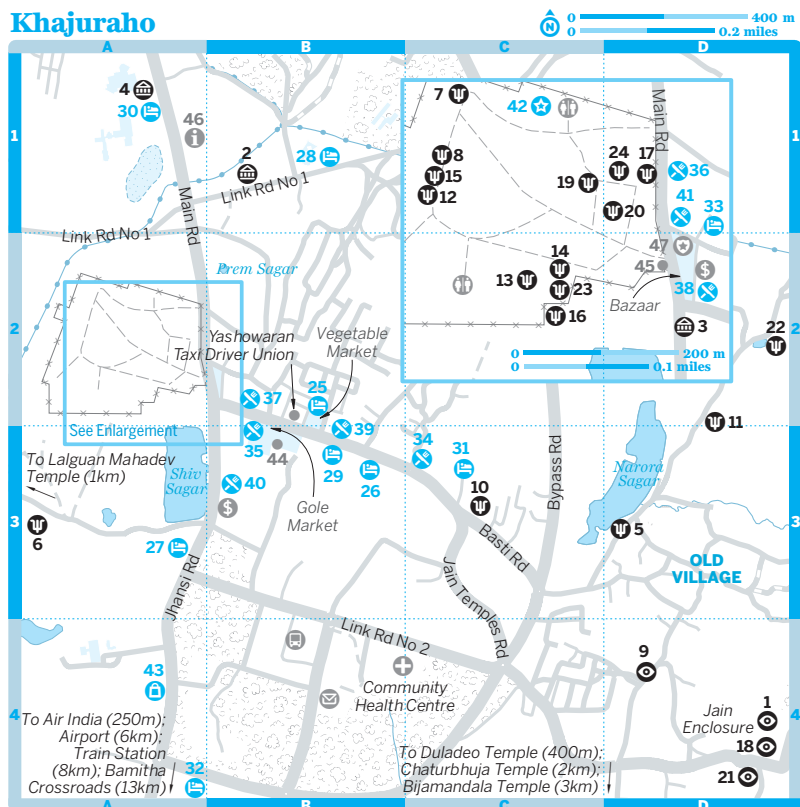
👁 Sights

Temples

HINDU/JAIN

The temples are superb examples of Indo-Aryan architecture, but it's their liberally embellished carvings that have made Khajuraho famous. Around the outsides of the temples are bands of exceedingly artistic stonework showing a storyboard of life a millennium ago – gods, goddesses, warriors, musicians and real and mythological animals.

Two elements appear repeatedly – women and sex. While the *mithuna* (pairs of men and women, usually depicted in erotic poses) are certainly eye-catching, the erotic content should not distract from the great skill underlying the sculptures. Sensuous, posturing *surasundaris* (heavenly nymphs), *apsaras* (dancing *surasundaris*) and *nayikas* (mortal *surasundaris*) have been carved with a half-twist and slight sideways lean that make the playful figures dance and swirl out from the flat stone. A classic example is the



washerwoman with a wet sari clinging to her body – an image imbued with as much eroticism as any of the couples, threesomes or foursomes.

Walk around the temples with your right shoulder facing the building – the right side is considered divine.

Western Group – inside the fenced enclosure

TEMPLE
Khajuraho's most striking and best-preserved temples are those within the fenced-off section of the **Western Group** (Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, video ₹25; ☀️dawn-dusk), and are the only temples here you have to pay to see. An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) guidebook to Khajuraho (₹99) and a 90-minute audio guide (₹50) are available at the ticket office.

Varaha, dedicated to Vishnu's boar incarnation, and the locked **Lakshmi** are two small shrines facing the large Lakshmana

Temple. Inside Varaha is a wonderful, 1.5m-high sandstone boar, dating from AD 900 and meticulously carved with a pantheon of gods.

The large **Lakshmana Temple** took 20 years to build and was completed in about AD 954 during the reign of Dhanga according to an inscribed slab in the *mandapa* (pillared pavilion in front of a temple). It's arguably the best preserved of all Khajuraho temples. You'll see carvings of battalions of soldiers here – the Chandelas were generally at war when they weren't inventing new sexual positions. On the south side is a highly gymnastic orgy, including one gentleman proving that a horse can be a man's best friend, while a shocked figure peeks out from behind her hands. More sensuous figures intertwine between the elephants in the frieze ringing the basement, while some superb carvings can be found around the *garbhagriha* (inner sanctum). Lakshmana

Khajuraho

👁 Sights

- 1 Adinath D4
- 2 Adivart Tribal & Folk Art Museum B1
- 3 Archaeological Museum (Existing Site) D2
- 4 Archaeological Museum (Future Site) A1
- 5 Brahma Temple D3
- 6 Chausath Yogini A3
- 7 Chitragupta C1
- 8 Devi Jagadamba C1
- 9 Ghantai Temple D4
- 10 Hanuman Temple C3
- 11 Javari Temple D2
- 12 Kandariya Mahadev C1
- 13 Lakshmana Temple C2
- 14 Lakshmi C2
- 15 Mahadeva C1
- 16 Matangesvara C2
- 17 Nandi Shrine D1
- 18 Parsvanath Temple D4
- 19 Parvati Temple C1
- 20 Pratapeswar D1
- 21 Shanti Nath D4
- 22 Vamana Temple D2
- 23 Varaha C2
- 24 Vishvanath Temple D1

🛏 Sleeping

- 25 Ayur Arogyam B2
- 26 Hotel Harmony B3

- 27 Hotel Narayana Palace A3
- 28 Hotel Payal B1
- 29 Hotel Surya B3
- 30 Lalit Temple View A1
- 31 Osaka Guesthouse C3
- 32 Radisson Jass Hotel A4
- 33 Yogi Lodge D1

🍴 Eating

- 34 Agrasen C3
- 35 Bella Italia B3
- 36 Blue Sky Restaurant D1
- 37 Lassi Corner B2
- 38 Madras Coffee House D2
- 39 Mediterraneo B3
- 40 Paradise Restaurant B3
- 41 Raja's Café D1

🎭 Entertainment

- Kandariya Art & Culture (see 43)
- 42 Sound-and-Light Show C1

🛍 Shopping

- 43 Kandariya Art & Culture A4

Information

- 44 Rajesh Medical Store B3
- 45 Ticket Office D2
- 46 Tourist Interpretation & Facilitation Centre A1
- 47 Tourist Police Booth D2

is dedicated to Vishnu, although it is similar in design to the Shiva temples Vishvanath and Kandariya-Mahadev.

The 30.5m-long **Kandariya-Mahadev**, built between 1025 and 1050, is the largest temple in town and represents the high-point of Chandelan architecture. It also has the most representations of female beauty and sexual aerobics, all crammed into three central bands. There are 872 acrobatic statues, most nearly 1m high – taller than those at the other temples. One frequently photographed sculpture illustrates the feasibility of the handstand position. The 31m-high *sikhara* here is, like *linga*, a phallic Shiva symbol, worshipped by Hindus hoping to seek deliverance from the cycle of reincarnation. It's decorated with 84 subsidiary spires, which make up a mountain-like rooftop scene reminiscent of the Himalayan abode of the gods.

Mahadeva, a small ruined temple on the same platform as Kandariya-Mahadev and Devi Jagadamba, is dedicated to Shiva, who is carved on the lintel of its doorway. It houses one of Khajuraho's finest sculptures – a *sardula* (mythical beast – part lion, part other animal – possibly human) caressing a 1m-high lion.

Devi Jagadamba was originally dedicated to Vishnu, but later to Parvati and then Kali. The carvings include *sardulas* accompanied by Vishnu, *surasundaris*, and *mithunas* frolicking in the third uppermost band. Its three-part design is simpler than Kandariya-Mahadev and Chitragupta. It has more in common with Chitragupta, but is less embellished with carvings so is thought to be a little older.

North of Devi Jagadamba, **Chitragupta** (1000–25) is unique in Khajuraho – and rare among North Indian temples – in being

Khajuraho Temples

WESTERN GROUP

The sheer volume of artwork at Khajuraho's best-preserved temples can be overwhelming. Initiate yourself with this introductory tour, which highlights some of those easy-to-miss details.

First, admire the sandstone boar **1** in the Varaha shrine before heading towards Lakshmana Temple **2** to study the south side of the temple's base, which has some of the raunchiest artwork in Khajuraho: first up, a nine-person orgy; further along, a guy getting very friendly with a horse. Up on the temple platform see a superb dancing Ganesh carved into a niche (south side), before walking to the west side for graceful *surasundaris* (nymphs): one removing a thorn from her foot; another draped in a wet sari; a third admiring herself in a mirror.

Next is Khajuraho's largest temple, Kandariya-Mahadev **3**. Carvings to look for here include the famous handstand position (south side), but the most impressive about this temple is the scale of it, particularly its soaring rooftops. Mahadeva **4** and Devi Jagadamba **5** share the same stone plinth as Kandariya-Mahadev, as do four beautifully carved *sardula* (part-lion, part-human mythical beasts), each caressing a stone lion – one is at the entrance to Mahadeva; the other three stand alone on the plinth.

Walk north from here to Chitragupta **6**, with beautiful carvings hidden on the west side, as well as elephant friezes around the temple's base (north side). The interior here is particularly impressive.

Continue east to Vishvanath Temple **7** for more fabulous carvings before admiring the impressive statue of Vishnu's bull in the Nandi shrine **8** opposite.

DANIEL MCCORMAN



Handstand Position

Perhaps Khajuraho's most famous carving, this flexible flirtation is above you as you stand on the south side of the awesome Kandariya-Mahadev.

Sikharas

Despite its many fine statues, perhaps the most impressive thing about Kandariya-Mahadev is its soaring *sikharas* (temple rooftops), said to represent the Himalayan abode of the gods.



Kandariya-Mahadev Temple

Devi Jagadamba Temple

5

Mahadeva Temple

4

3

NORTH →

Toilets

Sardula Statue

There are four lion-stroking *sardula* (part-lion, part-human mythical beasts) on this huge stone plinth, but this one, guarding the entrance to Mahadeva, is our favourite.

Kama Sutra Carvings

Although commonly referred to as Kama Sutra carvings, Khajuraho's erotic artwork does not properly illustrate Vatsyayana's famous sutra. Debate continues as to its significance: to appease evil spirits or imply rulers here were virile, thus powerful? Interestingly, the erotic carvings are never located close to the temple deity.

DANIEL MCCORMAN



Listen Up

The audio guide only covers two temples but it is very detailed, so is a really useful introduction.

DANIEL MCCROHAN



6 Chitragupta Temple



DANIEL MCCROHAN



Just the Ticket

For an extra-close look at Khajuraho artwork, use your ticket for same-day entrance to the small Archaeological Museum nearby.

Surasundaris

Beautifully graceful depictions of nymphs are found on a number of Khajuraho temples. And despite all the depictions of gymnastic orgies, the wonderfully seductive *surasundari* draped in a wet sari is arguably the most erotic of all.



DANIEL MCCROHAN

Vishnu's Boar

This 9th-century statue of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, is carved all over with figures of Bramanical gods and goddesses. Under Varaha's foot notice the serpent Seshanaga in a devotional posture, and the feet of a goddess, now missing.

DANIEL MCCROHAN



Nandi Statue

This massive 2.2m-long statue of Nandi, the bull-vehicle of Shiva, is enshrined in a pavilion facing Vishvanath Temple.

dedicated to the sun god Surya. While its condition is not as good as the other temples, it has some fine carvings of *apsaras* and *surasundaris*, elephant fights and hunting scenes, *mithuna* and a procession of stone-carriers. In the inner sanctum, Surya drives his seven-horse chariot, while in the central niche on the south facade is an 11-headed statue of Vishnu, representing the god and 10 of his 22 incarnations.

Continuing around the enclosure, the closed-up **Parvati Temple** is on your right, a small temple originally dedicated to Vishnu and now with an image of Gauri riding a *godha* (iguana).

Believed to have been built in 1002, the **Vishvanath Temple** and **Nandi Shrine** are reached by steps on the northern and southern side. Elephants flank the southern steps. Vishvanath anticipates Kandariya-Mahadev, with which it shares *saptamatrukas* (seven mothers) flanked by Ganesh and Virabhadra, and is another superlative example of Chandelan architecture. Its sculptures include sensuous *surasundari* writing letters, cuddling babies and playing music while languishing more provocatively than at other temples. At the other end of the platform, a 2.2m-long statue of Nandi, Shiva's bull vehicle, faces the temple. The basement of the 12-pillared shrine is decorated with an elephant frieze that recalls similar work on Lakshmana's facade.

The nearby white temple, **Pratapeswar**, is a much more recent bricks-and-mortar structure built around 200 years ago.

Western Group – outside the fenced enclosure

TEMPLE

Skirting the southern boundary of the fenced enclosure, **Matangesvara** is the only temple in the Western Group still in everyday use. It may be the plainest temple here (suggesting an early construction), but inside it sports a polished 2.5m-high lingam (phallic image of Shiva). From its platform you can peer into an open-air storage facility scattered with temple finds but not open to the public.

The ruins of **Chausath Yogini**, beyond Shiv Sagar, date to the late 9th century and are probably the oldest at Khajuraho. Constructed entirely of granite, it's the only temple not aligned east to west. The temple's name means 64 – it once had 64 cells for the *yoginis* (female attendants) of Kali, while the 65th sheltered the goddess herself. It is reputedly India's oldest *yogini* temple.

A further 600m west, down a track and across a couple of fields (just ask the locals), is the sandstone-and-granite **Lalguan Mahadev Temple** (900), a small ruined shrine to Shiva.

Eastern Group – Old Village Temples

The eastern group includes three Hindu temples scattered around the old village and four Jain temples further south, three of which are in a walled enclosure.

The **Hanuman Temple**, on Basti Rd, contains a 2.5m-tall statue of the Hindu monkey god. It's little more than a bright orange shrine, but the interest is in the pedestal inscription dating to AD 922, the oldest dateable inscription in Khajuraho.

The granite **Brahma Temple**, with its sandstone *sikhara* overlooking Narora Sagar, is one of the oldest in Khajuraho (about 900). The four-faced lingam in the sanctum led to it being incorrectly named, but the image of Vishnu above the sanctum doorway reveals its original dedication to Vishnu.

Resembling Chaturbhuj Temple in the southern group, **Javari Temple** (1075–1100) stands just north of the old village. It's dedicated to Vishnu and is a good example of small-scale Khajuraho architecture for its crocodile-covered entrance and slender *sikhara*.

Vamana Temple (1050–75), 200m further north, is dedicated to the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu. It has quirky touches such as elephants protruding from the walls, but its *sikhara* is devoid of subsidiary spires and there are few erotic scenes. Its roofed *mahamandapa* (main hall) is an anomaly in Khajuraho but typical among medieval west Indian temples.

Located between the old village and the Jain Enclosure, the small **Ghantai Temple**, also Jain, is named after the *ghanta* (chain and bell) decorations on its pillars. It was once similar to nearby Parsvanath, but only its pillared shell remains and it's normally locked.

Eastern Group – Jain Enclosure

TEMPLE

While not competing in size and erotica with the western-enclosure temples, **Parsvanath Temple**, the largest of the Jain temples in the walled enclosure, is notable for the exceptional skill and precision of its construction, and for its sculptural beauty. Some of the best-preserved of Khajuraho's most famous images can be seen here, in-

cluding the woman removing a thorn from her foot and another applying eye make-up, both on the south side. Although the temple was originally dedicated to Adinath, a jet-black image of Parsvanath was substituted about a century ago. Both an inscription on the *mahamandapa* doorway and its similarities with the slightly simpler Lakshmana Temple date it to 950–70.

The adjacent, smaller **Adinath** has been partially restored over the centuries. With fine carvings on its three bands of sculptures it's similar to Khajuraho's Hindu temples, particularly Vamana. Only the striking black image in the inner sanctum triggers a Jain reminder.

Shanti Nath, built about a century ago, houses components from older temples, including a 4.5m-high Adinath statue with a plastered-over inscription on the pedestal dating to about 1027.

Southern Group

TEMPLE

A dirt track runs to the isolated **Duladeo Temple**, about 1km south of the Jain enclosure. This is the youngest temple, dating to 1100–1150. Its relatively wooden, repetitious sculptures, such as those of Shiva, suggest that Khajuraho's temple builders had passed their artistic peak by this point, although they had certainly lost none of their zeal for eroticism.

Anticipating Duladeo and its flaws, the ruined **Chaturbhuj Temple** (c 1100) has a fine 2.7m-high, four-armed statue of Vishnu in the sanctum. It is Khajuraho's only developed temple without erotic sculptures.

Just before Chaturbhuj there's a signed track leading to **Bijamandala Temple**. This is the excavated mound of an 11th-century temple, dedicated to Shiva (judging by the white marble lingam at the apex of the mound). Although there are some exquisitely carved figures, unfinished carvings were also excavated, suggesting that what would have been Khajuraho's largest temple was abandoned as resources flagged.

Museums

MUSEUM, ART GALLERY

The **Archaeological Museum** (Main Rd; admission ₹10, free with same-day Western Group ticket; ☉8am–5pm), announced by a wonderful 11th-century statue of Ganesh (dancing sensuously for an elephant-headed deity), has a small but well-presented collection of sculptures from around Khajuraho. This is a good opportunity to get up close to some

very well-preserved carvings. At the time of research, there were plans to move this museum to a larger site north of the Western Group, but don't hold your breath; they've been telling us that since 2006.

The museum-cum-art gallery, **Adivart Tribal & Folk Art Museum** (Chandela Cultural Centre, Link Rd No 1; Indian/foreigner ₹10/50; ☉10am–5pm Tue–Sun), makes a colourful change from the temples. It gives a taste of the vibrant tribal culture of both Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh through pointillist Bhili paintings, terracotta Jhoomar sculptures, masks, statues and bamboo flutes. Original signed paintings are for sale from around ₹8000. Prints can be bought from around ₹200.

Old Village

AREA

If you can put up with the persistent requests from local children for pens and money, then a stroll or cycle around the dusty narrow streets of the old village can be very rewarding. Homes here are white-washed or painted in colourful pastels and the lanes are dotted with small shrines, old wells and water pumps.



Activities

Massage

AYURVEDA

Many budget hotels offer cheap ayurvedic massage treatments of varying levels of authenticity. Top-end hotels offer more luxurious versions. For the real deal, though, head to **Ayur Arogyam** (☎272572; treatment ₹1400–2100; ☉24hr). The lovely Kerala couple who run this small place from their home also have two simple doubles rooms to rent (₹100).

Barbers in Gole Market offer simple but rejuvenating head massages for ₹20.

Yoga

YOGA

Apart from the hotels offering yoga, the inspiring **Yogi Sudarshan Dwiveda** (☎9993284940; Vidhya Colony; fee by donation; ☉6am) runs sessions at his home. Accommodation can be arranged. There is no English sign. If you have trouble contacting him, go through **Rajesh Medical Store** (☉9am–9pm) in Gole Market.

Swimming

SWIMMING

Nonguests can use the pools at Hotel Payal (₹200) and Radisson Jass Hotel (₹300).

Sleeping

Hefty discounts (20% to 50%) are available out of season (April to September), although it's worth bargaining at any time of year.

Hotel Surya

HOTEL \$

(☎274144; www.hotelsuryakhajuraho.com; Jain Temples Rd; r from ₹300, with AC from ₹700; 🏠📺) There's a huge range of decent-value rooms in this sprawling, well-run hotel with white-washed corridors, marble staircases and a lovely courtyard garden out the back. Some rooms have TV. Some have balconies. There's yoga and massage, and the atmosphere is generally laid-back.

Hotel Harmony

HOTEL \$\$

(☎274135; Jain Temples Rd; r ₹500, with AC ₹1000; 🏠📺📺) Cozy, well-equipped rooms off marble corridors are tastefully decorated with green and brown furnishings and come with cable TV. Yoga and massage available. Wi-fi costs ₹40.

Osaka Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎272839; off Basti Rd; r ₹250-400, with AC ₹600; 🏠) Spacious rooms here are pretty basic, but have a homey feel to them and the owner is very welcoming. Osaka is set back off the main drag, down a dirt track, so is quieter than elsewhere, and has some nice temple views from its rooftop.

Hotel Narayana Palace

HOTEL \$\$

(☎272832; govindgautam@rediffmail.com; Jhansi Rd; s ₹450-1000, d ₹550-1100; 🏠) This kitschastic hotel with its orange-and-white facade will dazzle you with the pinks, purples, reds and greens of its interior paintwork, decor and ornaments. Rooms are large with shiny tiled floors and clean bathrooms.

Yogi Lodge

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎274158; yogi_sharm@yahoo.com; r ₹150-300) Rooms are basic – some with tap-and-bucket showers – but small courtyards, narrow corridors and the cute stone tables in the rooftop restaurant give this place character.

Radisson Jass Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎272777; www.radisson.com; Bypass Rd; s/d from ₹5600/6400; 🏠📺📺) A marble spiral staircase winds its way up from the fountain in the lobby to modern, stylish 1st-floor rooms that are very smart, if a little small. There's a comfortable bar area (with pool table), a restaurant, tennis and badminton courts, and

a fine swimming pool. Best of all, though, is the service, which we found to be exemplary. Wi-fi is free.

Lalit Temple View

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎272111; www.thelalit.com; Main Rd; s/d from ₹14,000/15,000; 🏠📺📺) Sweeps aside all other five-star pretenders with supreme luxury, impeccable service and astonishingly high prices. Rooms are immaculate with large plasma-screen TV, wood-carved furniture and tasteful artwork. Guests who don't have temple-view rooms can see the Western Group from the delightful lotus-shaped pool.

Hotel Payal

HOTEL \$\$

(☎274076; payal@mptourism.com; Link Rd No 1; r ₹890, with AC ₹1490; 🏠📺) This MP Tourism hotel has smart rooms with dark-wood furniture set around very nice gardens with an inviting swimming pool out the back. It also rents bikes (₹50 per day).

Ayur Arogyam

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎272572; r ₹100) There are two small basic rooms beside the treatment rooms at this simple ayurvedic massage lodge (see p629). Both have private bathrooms with squat toilets.



Eating



Raja's Café

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Main Rd; mains ₹60-200; ☺8am-10pm) Raja's has been on top of its game for more than 30 years, and recently added a coffee stall (coffee from ₹50) so that punters can now enjoy quality fresh coffee as well as superb food. The central location is great, as is the restaurant design, with a delightful wrought-iron spiral staircase linking a shaded courtyard with a temple-view terrace. But it's the food that steals the show. The Indian dishes are wonderful – the paneer *kofta* (unfermented cheese and vegetable balls) and chicken *kababi* (barbecued chicken pieces marinated in yoghurt), in particular, and there's good-quality Italian and Chinese too.

Mediterraneo

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(Jain Temples Rd; mains ₹100-300, pizza ₹240-345; ☺7.30am-10pm) High-quality food, served on a lovely terrace overlooking the street, includes chicken, salads and organic wholewheat pasta, but it's all about the pizza here, baked in the wood-fired oven and easily the best in town. Beer and wine is also available.

Madras Coffee House SOUTH INDIAN \$
(cnr Main & Jain Temples Rds; mains ₹30-60; ☺8am-9.30pm) Good, honest South Indian fare – dosa, *idli* (spongy round fermented rice cakes), *uttapam* (thick savoury rice pancakes), thali – as well as coffee and chai, served in a simple, slimline cafe-restaurant. Ideal for breakfast.

Paradise Restaurant MULTICUISINE \$\$
(Main Rd; mains ₹45-250; ☺8am-11pm; 📶📶) A recent facelift means this cafe-restaurant now has an open terrace overlooking the lake. The menu has been extended, too, to include Chinese, Continental and pizza as well as the good Indian food that was always on offer. There's a couple of computer terminals for internet use as well as wi-fi (per hour ₹30, Skype ₹60).

Blue Sky Restaurant MULTICUISINE \$\$
(Main Rd; mains ₹60-200; ☺7.30am-10pm) A rickety wooden platform, three storeys up, leads out to the most unusual place to eat in Khajuraho – a one-table tree house with an unrivalled view of the western temples. The view from the ordinary, terraced balcony is good too, while the menu is the usual Indian and Chinese, plus Western breakfasts. The grumpy service is perhaps understandable. Would you like to serve food to customers in a tree?

Lassi Corner INDIAN \$
(Jain Temples Rd; mains ₹30-40, lassis from ₹10; ☺10am-10pm) This tarpaulin-covered bamboo shack is a great place for a quick chai break or a lazy lassi. Also does pancakes as well as simple Indian fare such as *pakora*, *paratha*, *pulao* and *kofta*.

Agrasen MULTICUISINE \$\$
(Jain Temples Rd; mains ₹60-250; ☺7.30am-10.30pm) This smart place with gingham tablecloths and a 1st-floor terrace serves up safe-to-eat salads, pasta and pizza as well as a variety of Indian vegetable and meat dishes.

Bella Italia ITALIAN \$\$
(Jain Temples Rd; mains ₹45-215; ☺7am-10.30pm) A cheaper version of Mediterraneo, this pleasant rooftop restaurant overlooks Gole Market and sits beside a couple of huge trees, which host remarkable parrot-squawking contests every day from around 6pm.

★ Entertainment

Admittedly, the temples do look magical illuminated with technicolour floodlights,

but the one-hour **sound-and-light show** (Indian/foreigner ₹50/300; ☺English 7.10pm Nov-Feb, 6.30pm Mar-Oct, Hindi 8.20pm Nov-Feb, 7.40pm Mar-Oct) chronicling the history of Khajuraho is still about 45 minutes too long.

Folk dancing can be seen at the comfortable indoor theatre at **Kandariya Art & Culture** (📞274031; Jhansi Rd; admission ₹350; ☺7-8pm & 8.45-9.45pm).



Shopping

Kandariya Art & Culture HANDICRAFTS
(Jhansi Rd; ☺9am-9pm) Full-size replicas of some of Khajuraho's temple carvings can be bought – if you have a spare ₹100,000. Smaller, more affordable versions, along with textiles, wood carvings and marble inlay, can be found indoors.



Information

Internet cafes around town tend to charge ₹40 per hour, ₹50 for Skype.

Community health centre (📞272498; Link Rd No 2; ☺9am-1pm & 2-4pm) Limited English, but helpful staff.

Post office (📞274022; ☺10am-4pm Mon-Sat)

State Bank of India (📞272373; Main Rd; ☺10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat) Changes cash and travellers cheques. There are ATMs beside Raja's Cafe and Paradise Restaurant.

Tourist Interpretation & Facilitation Centre (📞274051; khajuraho@mptourism.com; Main Rd; ☺10am-9pm) Leaflets on state-wide tourist destinations. Also has a stand at the airport and train station.

Tourist police booth (📞272690; Main Rd; ☺6am-10pm)



Getting There & Away

Air

Jet Airways (📞274406; ☺10am-3.30pm), at the airport, has a daily 1.45pm flight to Delhi (from ₹4200, 3½ hours) via Varanasi (from ₹3800, 40 minutes). **Air India** (📞274035; Jhansi Rd; ☺10am-4.50pm Mon-Sat), closer to town, has 2pm flights to the same two cities, but only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Bus

If the bus stand **ticket office** (☺7am-noon & 1-3pm) is closed, the owner of the Madhur coffee stand, just opposite, is very helpful and trustworthy.

There are three daily buses to Jhansi (₹130, five hours, 5.30am, 7am and 9am), which will all drop you at the junction to Orchha from where

you can wave down a shared autorickshaw (₹10) to Orchha. Regular buses run to Madla (for Panna National Park; ₹25, one hour, 8am to 7pm), where you can change for Satna (₹65, three hours). There are two direct buses to Satna (₹110, four hours, 2pm and 3pm) from where you can catch trains to various destinations.

Much more frequent buses can be caught at the Bamitha crossroads, 11km away on Hwy 75, where buses between Gwalior, Jhansi and Satna shuttle through all day. Catch a shared jeep (₹10, 7am to 7pm) to Bamitha from the bus stand or as they drive down Jhansi Rd.

Taxi

Yashwaran Taxi Driver Union is opposite Gole Market. Fares include: airport (₹150), train station (₹250), Raneh Falls (₹500), Panna National Park (₹1500), Satna (₹2000), Orchha (₹2900), Chitrakut (₹2900), Bandhavgarh (₹4800), Varanasi (₹6800) and Agra (₹7000).

Train

Three useful trains leave from **KHAJURAHO TRAIN STATION**:

A daily passenger train leaves at noon for Jhansi, stopping at the tiny train station of Orchha (₹30, four hours). There are 2nd-class seats only, so you can't buy tickets in advance. Just turn up at the train station, buy a 'general' ticket and squeeze in.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays the 22447 *Khajuraho-Nizamuddin Express* leaves for Delhi (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹273/713/960, 6pm, 11½ hours) via Agra (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹210/527/699, 8½ hours).

On Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays the 21107 *Bundelkhand Link Express* leaves for Varanasi (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹198/522/694, 11pm, 12 hours) via Chitrakut (five hours) and Allahabad (eight hours).

Train tickets can be bought from the **train reservation office** (☎274416; ☀8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) at the bus stand. You must book tickets at least four hours before departure.

Coming to Khajuraho the 21108 *Bundelkhand Link Express* leaves Varanasi on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays at 5.10pm and passes Allahabad (10.25pm) and Chitrakut (1.03am) before arriving in Khajuraho (5.15am). The 22448 *Nizamuddin-Khajuraho Express* leaves Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin station on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 10.15pm and passes Agra (11.20pm) before arriving in Khajuraho (6.05am). The daily passenger train leaves Jhansi at 7.20am, passing Orchha (7.25am) before arriving in Khajuraho at around noon.

i Getting Around

Bicycle is a great way to get around. Several places along Jain Temples Rd rent them (per day ₹20 to ₹50).

Cycle-rickshaws should cost ₹10 to ₹20 wherever you go in Khajuraho, and around ₹100/200 for a half-/whole-day tour. Autorickshaws are about double the price.

Taxis to and from the airport/train station charge ₹150/250, autorickshaws ₹50/80, but if you don't have too much luggage it's easy enough to wave down a bus or a shared jeep (₹10) as they head along Jhansi Rd either into or out of town.

Around Khajuraho

RANEH FALLS

These 30m-high **waterfalls** (admission Indian/foreigner on foot or by bicycle ₹15/150, motorbike ₹40/200, autorickshaw ₹80/400, car ₹200/1000, compulsory guide ₹40; ☀6am-6pm), 18km from Khajuraho, at times tumble as a churning mass over rocks but are only really worth the trip just after rain. The ticket office is 3km before the falls so if you don't want to pay the high fees for vehicle entry be prepared for a bit of a walk. It's possible to view gharials – a critically endangered species of crocodile – at **Ken Gharial Sanctuary** (☀9am-5pm, closed during monsoon), 8km from the ticket office, beyond the falls. The road to Raneh Falls is signposted if you fancy cycling through the countryside from Khajuraho, or else its ₹300/500 return in an autorickshaw/taxi.

PANNA NATIONAL PARK

Sadly, in recent years tigers haven't done well in this **reserve** (☎07732252135; jeep safaris ₹3230 per 6-person jeep, optional 30min boat safari ₹600 per 6-person boat; ☀5.30-10am & 2.30-5.30pm Oct 16-Jun 30). They were wiped out completely a few years back, and although three adult tigers were later re-introduced here from Bandhavgarh, Pench and Kanha, and some cubs have been born, actually seeing any tigers here is extremely rare. Nevertheless, this is a good place to see crocodiles and, with the Ken River flowing through it, Panna is a peaceful, picturesque place to spend a day on your way to or from Khajuraho. In fact, it's easy enough to do an afternoon safari here as a day trip from Khajuraho, using public transport to get to and from Madla.

Even if you don't stay the night here, it's worth making **Jungle Camp** (☎07732275275; jcmadla@mptourism.com; ₹1990) your base. There's a restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹150), you can arrange **jeep safaris** and there's a nicely kept garden dotted with children's play areas in which the comfortable AC tents for guests are located.

Jungle Camp is on the edge of Madla village, 200m past the large Ken River bridge (if

you're coming from Khajuraho), and right by Madla Gate, the main entrance to the park.

Regular buses run between Madla and Khajuraho (₹25, one hour) and between Madla and Satna (₹65, three hours), although for Satna you sometimes have to change at the nearby town of Panna (₹10, 30 minutes).

Satna

📞07672 / POP 229,307

Satna is of no interest to tourists but is a transport link between Khajuraho and Madhya Pradesh's three big tiger parks – Bandhavgarh, Kanha and Pench.

The bus and train stations are 3km apart (cyclerickshaw/autorickshaw ₹10/25). There is an ATM opposite the bus stand and one at the train station, where you'll also find **MP Tourism** (📞225471), which is occasionally open.

If you get stuck here, **Hotel Chandra View** (📞410600; Rewa Rd; s/d from ₹750/975; 🌳) is 50m right of the bus stand and has decent rooms and a restaurant.

Three buses go to Khajuraho (₹75, four hours, 6.30am, 9.15am and 2.30pm). At other times you can go via Panna (last bus 6pm). There are also regular buses towards Chitrakut (₹60, three hours, 6am to 8pm), although you often have to change.

Six daily trains go to Varanasi (sleeper/3AC/2AC, ₹158/413/563, seven hours), frequent daily trains go to Jabalpur (₹120/297/400, three hours) and two to Umaria, for Bandhavgarh National Park (₹120/267/359, three hours and four hours, 7pm and 10.15pm).

CENTRAL MADHYA PRADESH

Bhopal

📞0755 / POP 1.46 MILLION

Split by a pair of central lakes, one of which is India's largest manmade lake, Bhopal offers two starkly contrasting cityscapes. In the north is the Muslim-dominated old city, a fascinating area of mosques and crowded bazaars. Bhopal's population is 40% Muslim – one of India's highest concentration of Muslims – and the women in black *niqabs* (veils) are reminders of the female Islamic rulers who built up Bhopal in the 19th cen-

tury. North of here is a reminder of a more recent, tragic history – the Union Carbide plant, site of the world's worst industrial disaster (see boxed text, p637).

South of the two lakes, Bhopal is more modern, with wide roads, shopping complexes and more upmarket hotels and restaurants nestled comfortably in the Aera and Shamlia Hills, which overlook the lakes and the old city beyond. The central district here is known as New Market.

The main train and bus stations are just off Hamidia Rd – the main budget hotel area – with the bustling *chowk* (marketplace) slightly further southeast. Hamidia Rd is accessed via the Platform 5 end of the train station. The Platform 1 end is where you'll find left luggage (you need your own padlock), MP Tourism, the post office and an ATM.

👁 Sights & Activities

Mosques

MOSQUE

Bhopal's third female ruler, Shah Jahan Begum, wanted to create the largest mosque in the world, so in 1877 set about building **Taj-ul-Masjid** (🕒closed to non-Muslims Fri). It was still incomplete at her death in 1901, after funds had been diverted to other projects, and construction did not resume until 1971. It is now one of the largest mosques in India, thanks to its huge courtyard. The main structure is enormous too; fortresslike terracotta walls surround three gleaming white onion domes and a pair of towering pink minarets with white domes. If you can make the dawn azan (Muslim call to prayer), you won't regret it. And while you're in the area, don't forget to pop over the road to see **Dhai Seedi Ki Masjid**, the city's oldest and teeniest mosque (see boxed text p636).

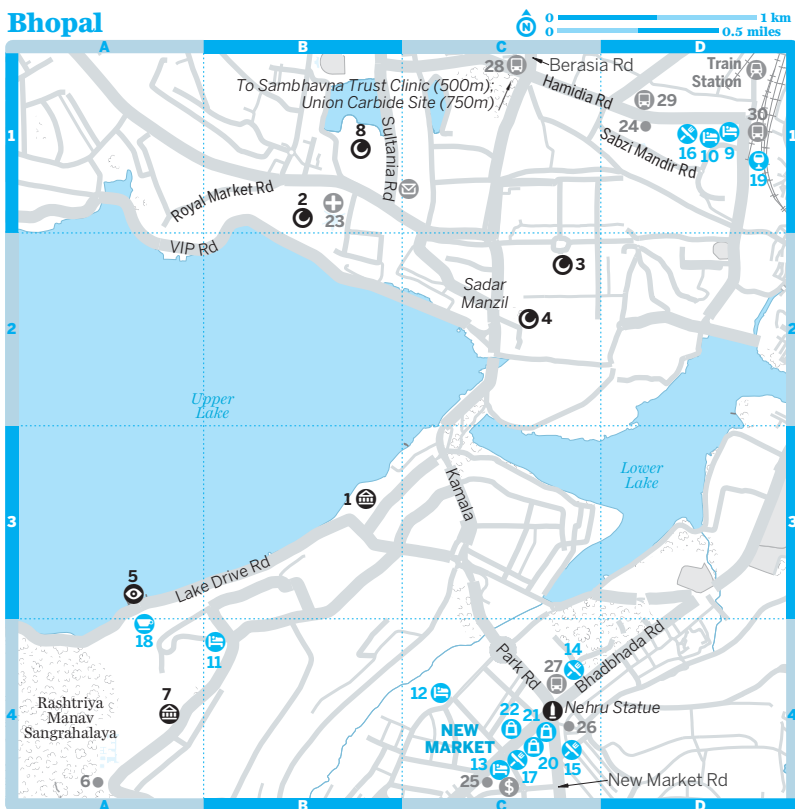
The gold spikes crowning the squat minarets of the **Jama Masjid**, built in 1837 by Bhopal's first female ruler, Qudsia Begum, glint serenely above the skull caps and veils swirling through the fascinating bazaar below.

The **Moti Masjid** near Sadar Manzil was built by Qudsia Begum's daughter and Bhopal's second female ruler, Sikander Jahan Begum, in 1860. Similar in style to the Jama Masjid in Delhi, this smaller marble-faced mosque has two dark-red minarets and gold-spiked cupolas. Inside, the kiblah has 11 white arches. The five most central are marble.

State Museum

MUSEUM

(📞2661856; Shamlia Hills; Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹50/200; 🕒10.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) This first-class archaeological museum



includes some wonderful temple sculptures as well as 87 Jain bronzes unearthed by a surprised farmer in western Madhya Pradesh. Keep an eye out for the tiny, but remarkably animated, metal carpet seller in the Royal Collections Gallery.

Bharat Bhavan

ART GALLERY

(☎2660239; admission galleries/performances ₹10/20, galleries free on Fri; 🕒2-8pm Tue-Sun Feb-Oct, 1-7pm Nov-Jan) This cultural centre is a serene place to take in modern Indian art, tribal carvings and paintings, a library and private contemporary art galleries. There is a cafe, and regular evening performances (7pm) of poetry, music and theatre. Some of the artwork here is of the highest quality.

Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya

PARK

(Museum of Man; ☎2661319; Shamla Hills; admission ₹10, vehicle ₹10, video ₹50; 🕒10am-5pm Tue-Sun Sep-Feb, 11am-6.30pm Mar-Aug) A kind of tribal safari park, only without the tribes, this

open-air hillside complex is possibly your best chance to get a taste of India's 450-plus tribes without actually visiting an Adivasi village. Authentic-looking dwellings – built and maintained by Adivasis (tribespeople) using traditional tools and materials – dot the hillside. There's a mythological trail and a more conventional museum on the hilltop.

Upper Lake

LAKE

The **MP Tourism Boat Club** (☎3295043; Lake Drive Rd; 🕒9am-6.30pm winter, 9am-7.30pm summer) offers motorboat rides (per person ₹50, five minutes, minimum three people), pedal boats (per boat ₹50, 30 minutes) and even jet skiing (per person ₹300). Children might enjoy feeding the more than 100 geese that make their home by the boat club.

👉 Tours

Bhopal-On-Wheels (☎3295040; 3½hr tour adult/child ₹60/30; 🕒11am) is a guided tour

Bhopal

Sights

- 1 Bharat Bhavan B3
- 2 Dhai Seedi Ki Masjid B1
- 3 Jama Masjid C2
- 4 Moti Masjid C2
- 5 MP Tourism Boat Club A3
- 6 Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya
Entrance Gate A4
- 7 State Museum A4
- 8 Taj-ul-Masjid B1

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bhopal-On-Wheels (see 12)

Sleeping

- 9 Hotel Rama International D1
- Hotel Ranjit (see 9)
- 10 Hotel Sonali D1
- 11 Jehan Numa Palace Hotel B4
- 12 Palash Residency C4
- 13 Park Hotel C4

Eating

- 14 Babu Ki Kutia C4
- 15 Indian Coffee House C4
- 16 Manohar D1
- 17 New Inn C4

Drinking

- 18 Café Coffee Day A4
- 19 Wine Shop D1

Shopping

- 20 Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan C4
- 21 Mrignayani C4
- 22 Variety Book House C4

Information

- 23 Hamidia Hospital B1
- MP Tourism Regional Office (see 12)
- 24 Raj Medical Store D1

Transport

- 25 Air India C4
- 26 Autorickshaw Stand C4
- 27 Buses to Hamidia Road C4
- 28 Buses to Islamnagar C1
- 29 Central Bus Stand D1
- 30 Minibuses to New Market D1

on a toy-train lookalike open bus, departing from Palash Residency (p636) and winding through the hills and the old city. Stops include Taj-ul-Masjid, MP Tourism Boat Club and Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya. Minimum five passengers.

Sleeping

All hotels here, including budget ones, add at least 10% tax to their listed rates.

HAMIDIA ROAD

Hotel Rama International HOTEL \$
(☎2740542; 2 Hamidia Rd; s/d ₹350/450, with AC ₹600/750; 🍷) Big, airy rooms in this old-school Indian hotel come with clean, tiled flooring and quality wooden furniture. Much better value than its foreign-friendly neighbours, but it's often full.

Hotel Ranjit HOTEL \$\$
(☎2740500; ranjeethotels@sancharnet.in; 3 Hamidia Rd; s/d from ₹400/600, with AC from ₹650/850; 🍷@) They look after you in Ranjit. Even in the cheapest rooms you get your own soap, towel, bottle of mineral water and a complimentary breakfast, plus there's one computer terminal in the lobby for brief (free) internet use. The restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹140) here is good and there's a bar (beer from ₹126).

Hotel Sonali HOTEL \$\$
(☎2740880; sonalinn@sancharnet.in; Radha Talkies Rd; s/d from ₹450/495, with AC incl breakfast from ₹1000/1200; 🍷@📺) Excellent service and shiny tiled floors in big rooms make this the best quality option near Hamidia Rd. Some non-AC rooms come with slightly shabby carpets, but all have TV and there's 24-hour internet and free wi-fi in the lobby. Also has a restaurant. From Hamidia Rd, turn left down the lane alongside Hotel Ranjit and follow it round to the right.

NEW MARKET

Jehan Numa Palace Hotel HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2661100; www.hoteljehanumapalace.com; 157 Shamla Hill; cottage s/d ₹3700/4700, s ₹4900-7300, d ₹5900-8300, ste from ₹14,000, incl breakfast; 🍷@📺) This former 19th-century palace lost none of its colonial-era charm through conversion into a top-class hotel. Arched walkways and immaculate lawns lead you to beautifully decorated rooms. There's a palm-lined pool, an excellent health spa and three restaurants, including one under the shade of an enormous mango tree.

Park Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(☎4057711; Rang Mahal Rd; s/d from ₹500/600, with AC from ₹700/900; 🍷) This neat place is a good-value option for New Market, with a great location close to all the restaurants, shops

THE WORLD'S SMALLEST MOSQUE?

There are more than 400 mosques in Bhopal, the most famous being the biggest of them all, the towering Taj-ul-Masjid. But what many visitors don't know is that this fascinating city is also home to what we believe to be the world's smallest mosque.

It's hard to confirm such sweeping claims, but we paced out the main prayer hall of **Dhai Seedi Ki Masjid** and found it to be roughly 16 sq metres in size. Internet searches since then have yet to dig up a smaller mosque, either in India or elsewhere.

Whether it really is the world's smallest mosque or not, Dhai Seedi Ki Masjid is well worth a visit. Intriguingly, it's hidden away inside the grounds of a hospital, which in turn were built inside the grounds of the now ruined 18th-century Fatehgarh Fort. The white-washed mosque is perched on top of an overgrown stone turret, which forms a corner of the old fortress wall, and was built as the very first mosque in Bhopal, so that soldiers deployed as guards could perform their daily prayers.

Roughly translated, the mosque's name means 'two-and-a-half-steps mosque', in reference to the steps leading up to its tiny prayer hall. A gatekeeper is usually on hand to let you in for a quick look round, although when we were here he could neither confirm nor deny Dhai Seedi Ki Masjid's potential record-holding status.

To get here, enter Hamidia Hospital from Royal Market Rd, then turn right into the campus of Gandhi Medical College. Follow the road around the main building and you'll eventually see the mosque on your right.

and market stalls, and has decent rooms with marble floors, TV and hot-water showers.

Palash Residency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2553066; palash@mptourism.com; TT Nagar; s/d from ₹2290/2490; 📍📞) Walking distance from New Market, this MP Tourism hotel has smart rooms with dark-wood furniture, wall-mounted flat-screen TV, kettle, complimentary toiletries and free wi-fi in the lobby. Has a bar and restaurant.



Eating & Drinking



Bapu Ki Kutia

INDIAN \$

(Sultania Rd; mains ₹42-110; ☎10am-11pm) Papa's Shack has been serving up delicious Indian veg dishes since the '60s and is so popular you often have to share a table. Does handy half portions if you just fancy a snack. There's an English menu, but no English sign. Look for the picture of a beach hut and palm tree above the door.

New Inn

INDIAN \$\$

(New Market; mains ₹40-160; ☎8am-10pm) Clean and colourful split-level restaurant with a well-priced menu delivered by staff in waist-coats and bow ties. There are good breakfast choices, including filter coffee (₹10), but it's the delicious main courses that hit the spot. If you like a bit of spice, don't leave this place without trying the *mattar paneer* (un-

fermented cheese and pea curry). Has good kebabs too.

Indian Coffee House

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(New Market; mains ₹30-130; ☎7am-11pm) As always, Indian Coffee House is a top spot for breakfast, with waiters in white suits and fan-tailed hats serving good-value coffee plus South Indian favourites such as dosa, *idli* and *vada* (doughnut-shaped deep-fried lentil savoury). There's a good choice of mains here too, ranging from biryani to Chinese.

Manohar

INDIAN \$

(6 Hamidia Rd; mains ₹30-90; ☎8am-11pm) This bright, clean, canteen-style restaurant is a decent place to come for South Indian breakfasts. After midday it also does thalis and 'mini-meals' as well as some Chinese dishes and pizza. Has an impressive range of cakes, cookies and sweets at a side counter.

Café Coffee Day

CAFE \$\$

(Lake Drive Rd; coffee from ₹35-93; ☎8.30am-10.30pm) Quality fresh coffee and over-priced snacks come with the best view in town.

Wine Shop

BAR \$

(Hamidia Rd; draft beer ₹30; ☎10am-10pm) There are a number of bottle shops on this stretch of Hamidia Rd, but this one has the added attraction of beer on tap. Has

a couple of benches inside, otherwise it's stand-on-the-side-of-the-street drinking.



Shopping

Bhopal's two main shopping areas are the small shops and stalls around New Market, which really come to life in the evenings, and the labyrinthine old-city alleys of *chowk* that weave their way towards the Jama Masjid. Both areas stock delicate gold and silver jewellery, fancifully woven saris, hand-embroidered appliqué skirts and *jari* (glittering embroidery, often including shards of mirror or glass) shoulder bags, a speciality of Bhopal.

Mrignayani

HANDICRAFTS

(23 New Market Shopping Centre; ☎11am-2.30pm & 3.30-8pm Tue-Sun) This state-owned place offers stress-free handicraft shopping, though the fixed prices are higher than in the market behind it.

Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan

CLOTHING

(Bhadbhada Rd; ☎11am-8pm Tue-Sun) Kurta, py-jama, head scarves and shirts made from the famous *khadi* cotton (see boxed text p1132), plus some quality *khadi* silk garments. Next-day tailoring service available.

Variety Book House

BOOKSTORE

(14-15 GTB Complex, Bhadbhada Rd; ☎10am-10pm) Stationery, maps and a fabulous selection of contemporary novels and Indian history books.



Information

There are **internet cafes** (per hr from ₹10) off Hamidia Rd and around New Market.

Hamidia Hospital (☎2540222; Royal Market Rd) Housed within the grounds of the now ruined Fatehgarh Fort.

Main post office (Sultania Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat) Also a counter at the train station.

MP Tourism airport (☎incoming flights); regional office (☎2550588; Palash Residency, TT Nagar; ☎10am-8pm Mon-Fri, ☎10am-5pm Sat & Sun); train station (☎2746827; ☎9.30am-5.30pm)

Raj Medical Store (Hamidia Rd; ☎9am-9.30pm)

State Bank of India (Rang Mahal Rd; ☎11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) 'International Division' on 1st floor changes travellers cheques and cash. Has ATM. There's also an ATM at the train station.

THE BHOPAL DISASTER – A CONTINUING TRAGEDY

At five minutes past midnight on 3 December 1984, 40 tonnes of deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked out over Bhopal from the US-owned Union Carbide chemical plant. Blown by the wind, rivers of the heavy gas coursed through the city. In the ensuing panic, people were trampled trying to escape while others were so disorientated that they ran into the gas.

There were 3828 initial fatalities according to official figures, but the continuing death toll stands at over 20,000. More than 120,000 people suffer from a catalogue of illnesses from hypertension and diabetes to premature menopause and skin disorders, while their children experience growth disorders, such as shrunken rib cages.

The leak at the plant resulted from a saga of untested technology, negligent maintenance and cost-cutting measures. Damages of US\$3 billion were demanded, and in 1989 Union Carbide paid the Indian government US\$470 million, but winning compensation for the victims has been a tortuous process slowed by the Indian government's wrangling over who was a victim and Dow Chemical's acquisition of Union Carbide in 2001. Both buyer and seller deny ongoing liability.

Union Carbide also financed the building of a multimillion dollar hospital, while charity **Sambhavna Trust Clinic** (☎2730914; www.bhopal.org; Bafna Colony, Berasia Rd; ☎8.30am-3pm) treats more than 200 people a day using yoga, Ayurvedic treatments, conventional Western treatments and remedies prepared using herbs from its medicinal garden. Volunteers can work in a range of areas from watertesting and medical research to gardening and internet communications; they are hugely appreciated and offered board and lodgings in the medical centre. Visitors and, of course, donations are also always welcome.

Bafna Colony is off Berasia Rd. If walking from Hamidia Rd, turn right after about 500m and keep asking for Sambhavna.

HANDY TRAINS FROM BHOPAL

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)*	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Agra	12627 Karnataka Express	244/631/852	7	11.35pm
Delhi	12621 Tamil Nadu Express	295/772/1048	10½	8.35pm
Gwalior	11077 Jhelum Express	178/472/644	6	9.15am
Indore	12920 Malwa Express	161/397/529	5	7.50am
Jabalpur	18233 Narmada Express	164/430/586	7	11.35pm
Mumbai (CST)	12138 Punjab Mail	325/857/1167	14½	5pm
Raipur	18238 Chhattisgarh Express	269/728/998	14½	6.55pm
Ujjain	12920 Malwa Express	140/322/424	3½	7.50am

*Fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC

i Getting There & Away

Air

Air India (✈2770480; Bhadbhada Rd; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat) flies daily to Delhi (from ₹3800, one hour, 9.05am) and Mumbai (from ₹3800, two hours, 7.30pm) via Indore (₹3400, 20 minutes).

Bus

Services from central bus stand off Hamidia Rd include:

BHIMBETKA ₹30, one hour, regular, 6am to 6pm

INDORE ₹130, five hours, three daily, 6am, 6.15am and 7.30am

JABALPUR ₹230, eight hours, regular, 5am to 11pm

PACHMARHI ₹140, six hours, six daily, 5.15am, 6.15am, 8.15am, 3pm, sleeper 1am and 2.30am

SANCHI ₹30, 1½ hours, regular, 5am to 9.30pm

Train

There are more than 20 daily trains to Gwalior and Agra and more than 10 to Ujjain and Delhi. See boxed text, p638.

i Getting Around

Minibuses and buses (both ₹5) shuttle between New Market and Hamidia Rd all day and all evening. Catch ones to New Market at the eastern end of Hamidia Rd. Returning from New Market, you can catch them from the Nehru Statue. Autorickshaws cost about ₹40 for the same journey. The autorickshaw fare from New Market to MP Tourism Boat Club is ₹40, and from Hamidia Rd to Taj-ul-Masjid it's ₹30.

The airport is 16km northwest of central Bhopal. Expect to pay at least ₹100/200 for an autorickshaw/taxi.

Around Bhopal

ISLAMNAGAR

This now-ruined fortified city 11km north of Bhopal was the first capital of Bhopal state, founded as Jagdishpur by the Rajputs before Dost Mohammed Khan occupied and renamed it in the early 18th century. The still-standing walls enclose two villages as well as the remains of two **palaces** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☀dawn-dusk), Chaman Mahal and Rani Mahal.

The 18th-century **Chaman Mahal** is a synthesis of traditional Indian and Islamic architecture with Bengali-influenced drooping eaves. The main attraction is the Mughal water garden. There's also a *hammam* (Turkish bath) with changing rooms and water troughs in the dark, cool interior.

Adjacent is the dusty 19th-century **Rani Mahal** with a colonnaded Diwan-i-Am (Hall of Public Audience). Outside stand eight massive iron treasure chests, presumably delivered by outsized porters from the nearby *hathi khana* (elephant stables).

Catch a tempo, bus or shared jeep (all ₹10) up Berasia Rd, though you may have to change, or take an autorickshaw (₹100).

BHOJPUR

Built by the founder of Bhopal, Raja Bhoj (1010-53), Bhojpur used to be home to a 400-sq-km manmade lake, which was destroyed in the 15th century by the dam-busting Mandu ruler Hoshang Shah. Thankfully, the magnificent **Bhojeshwar Temple** survived the attack.

Square in shape and simple in design, this 1000-year-old Hindu temple doesn't look much from the outside, but the interior of the sanctum, supported by four gargantuan pillars and housing the world's tallest Shiva lingam (22ft), is very powerful indeed. Beautifully carved figures now share space with beehive honeycombs on the partly restored ceiling.

Round the back, a large stony ramp illustrates how such huge pieces of rock would have been moved into position onto the temple's 5m-tall platform. To the side, fenced-off areas of rocky slopes show etchings of grander plans for a temple complex that was never finished.

Take the Bhimbetka bus to the turn-off for Bhojpur (₹10, 30 minutes), where tempos (₹10) ply the 11km-road to the temple.

BHIMBETKA

Secreted in a forest of teak and sal in craggy cliffs 46km south of Bhopal are more than 700 **rock shelters** (Indian/foreigner on foot ₹10/100, motorbike or car ₹50/200, autorickshaw ₹100/400; ☀dawn-dusk). Around 500 of them contain some of the world's oldest prehistoric paintings.

Thanks to their natural red and white pigments, the colours are remarkably well preserved and, in certain caves, paintings of

different eras adorn the same rock surface. A gamut of figures and scenes spill across the rocks: gaurs (Indian bison), rhinoceroses, bears and tigers share space with scenes of hunting, initiation ceremonies, childbirth, communal dancing, drinking, religious rites and burials.

The oldest paintings (Upper Palaeolithic) in red, often of huge animals, are thought to be 12,000 years old. Successive periods depict hunting tools, trade with the agricultural communities on the Malwa plains, and, still later, religious scenes involving tree gods. The latest are crude geometric figures probably dating from the medieval period, when much of the artistry was lost.

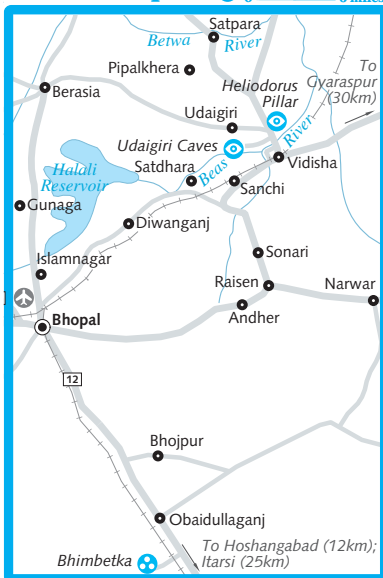
The rock shelters are easy to find. The 15 most accessible are numbered, signposted and linked by a concrete path. **Zoo Rock Shelter** (Shelter 4), famous for its variety of animal paintings, is one of the first you come to; **Shelter 15** features a magnificent red bison attacking a helpless stick figure. There are no facilities here, so bring water.

Highway Treat Bhimbetka (📍07480 281558; r ₹890; 🕒), with a pleasant restaurant-cafe (mains ₹60 to ₹110; ☀8am-10pm), a children's playground and five comfortable AC rooms, is by the Bhimbetka turning, 3km from the rock shelters. The ticket office is halfway up the road to the rocks from here.

Ask your bus driver to drop you at the turning for Bhimbetka, about 6.5km beyond Obaidullaganj. It's a 45-minute, 3km walk from here. Alternatively, take an autorickshaw from Obaidullaganj.

On the return journey, flag down anything that moves (buses often won't stop for you) and go as far as Obaidullaganj (₹5), where you'll find buses to Bhopal (₹25) via the Bhojpur turning (₹15).

Around Bhopal



Sanchi

(📍07482 / POP 6784)

Rising from the plains, 46km northeast of Bhopal, is a rounded hill topped with some of India's oldest Buddhist structures.

In 262 BC, repentant of the horrors he had inflicted on Kalinga in present-day Odisha, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (see boxed text, p1087) embraced Buddhism. As a penance he built the Great Stupa at Sanchi, near the birthplace of his wife. A domed edifice used to house religious relics, it was the first Buddhist monument in the region,

although many other religious structures followed.

As Hinduism gradually reabsorbed Buddhism, the site decayed and was forgotten, until purportedly being 'rediscovered' in 1818 by a British army officer.

Although Sanchi can be visited as a day trip from Bhopal, this crossroads village is a relaxing spot to spend the night, and a number of side trips can be taken from here.

Sights

The hilltop **stupas** (Indian/foreigner ₹10/250, car ₹10, museum ₹5; ☀️dawn-dusk) are reached via a path and stone steps at the end of Monuments Rd (which is a continuation of the road that leaves the train station), where the ticket office is located.

If you're going up to the stupas for sunrise, buy a ticket the day before. Remember, it is auspicious to walk clockwise around Buddhist monuments.

Stupa 1 (Great Stupa)

SACRED SITE

Beautifully proportioned, the Great Stupa is the main structure on the hill, directly in front of you as you enter the complex from the north. Originally constructed by Ashoka, it was later enlarged and the original brick stupa enclosed within a stone one. Presently it stands 16m high and 37m in diameter. Encircling the stupa is a wall with four entrances through magnificently carved *toranas* (gateways) that are the finest Buddhist works of art in Sanchi, if not India.

Toranas

The stupa's four gateways were erected around 35 BC but had all fallen down by the time the site was rediscovered. They have since been repositioned. Scenes carved onto the pillars and their triple architraves are mainly tales from the Jatakas, episodes from Buddha's various lives. At this stage in Buddhist art he was never represented directly – his presence was alluded to through symbols. The lotus stands for his birth, the bodhi tree his enlightenment, the wheel his teachings, and the footprint and throne his presence. The stupa itself also symbolises Buddha.

The **Northern Gateway**, topped by a broken wheel of law, is the best preserved of the *toranas*. Scenes include a monkey offering a bowl of honey to Buddha, who is represented by a bodhi tree. Another panel depicts the Miracle of Sravasti – one of several miracles represented here – in which Buddha, again in the form of a bodhi tree,

ascends a road into the air. Elephants support the architraves above the columns, while delicately carved *yakshis* (maidens) hang nonchalantly on each side.

The breathtakingly carved figure of a *yakshi*, hanging from an architrave on the **Eastern Gateway**, is one of Sanchi's best-known images. One of the pillars, supported by elephants, features scenes from Buddha's entry to nirvana. Another shows Buddha's mother Maya's dream of an elephant standing on the moon, which she had when he was conceived. Across the front of the middle architrave is the Great Departure, when Buddha (a riderless horse) renounced the sensual life and set out to find enlightenment.

The back-to-back lions supporting the **Southern Gateway**, the oldest gateway, form the state emblem of India, which can be seen on every banknote. The gateway narrates Ashoka's life as a Buddhist, with scenes of Buddha's birth and another representation of the Great Departure. Also featured is the Chhaddanta Jataka, a story in which Bodhisattva (Buddha before he had reached enlightenment) took on the form of an elephant king who had six tusks. The less favoured of the elephant king's two wives was so jealous of the other that she decided to starve herself to death, vowing to come back to life as the queen of Benares in order to have the power to avenge her husband's favouritism. Her wish came true and as queen she ordered hunters to track down and kill the elephant king. A hunter found the great elephant but before he could kill it, the elephant handed over his tusks, an act so noble it led to the queen dying of remorse.

Potbellied dwarfs support the architraves of the **Western Gateway**, which has some of the site's most interesting scenes. The top architrave shows Buddha in seven different incarnations, manifested three times as a stupa and four times as a tree. The rear of one pillar shows Buddha resisting the Temptation of Mara (the Buddhist personification of evil, often called the Buddhist devil), while demons flee and angels cheer.

Other Stupas

SACRED SITE

Stupa 2 is halfway down the hill to the west (turn right at Stupa 1). If you come up from the village by the main route you can walk back down via Stupa 2, although be prepared for some off-piste fence-hopping at the bottom. Instead of gateways, 'medallions' decorate the surrounding wall – naive

in design, but full of energy and imagination. Flowers, animals and people – some mythological – ring the stupa.

Stupa 3 is northeast of the Great Stupa (you pass it on your left as you approach the Great Stupa from the main entrance) and similar in design, though smaller, with a single, rather fine gateway. It once contained relics of two important disciples of Buddha, Sari Puttha and Maha Moggallana. They were moved to London in 1853 but returned in 1953 and are now kept in the modern *vihara* (resting place).

Only the base is left of the 2nd-century-BC **Stupa 4**, which stands behind Stupa 3. Between Stupas 1 and 3 is the small **Stupa 5**, unusual in that it once contained a statue of Buddha, now displayed in the museum.

Pillars

MONUMENT

Of the scattered remains of pillars, the most important is **Pillar 10**, erected by Ashoka but later broken. Two upper sections of this beautifully proportioned and executed shaft lie side by side behind Stupa 1; the capital (head of the pillar, usually sculpted) is in the museum. **Pillar 25** (to the left of Stupa 1) dating from the Sunga period (2nd century BC), and the 5th-century-AD **Pillar 35** (to the right of Stupa 1) are less impressive.

Temples

BUDDHIST TEMPLES

Temple 18 (behind Stupa 1) is a *chaitya* (prayer room or assembly hall) remarkably similar in style to classical Greek-columned buildings. It dates from around the 7th century AD, but traces of earlier wooden buildings have been discovered beneath it. To its left is the small, also Greek-like **Temple 17**. Beyond both of them, the large **Temple 40** dates back to the Ashokan period, in part.

The rectangular **Temple 31** (beside Stupa 5) was built in the 6th or 7th century but reconstructed during the 10th or 11th century. It contains a well-executed image of Buddha.

Monasteries

MONASTERY

The earliest monasteries were made of wood and are long gone. The usual plan was of a central courtyard surrounded by monastic cells. These days only the courtyards and stone foundations remain. **Monasteries 45** and **47**, standing on the eastern ridge to the left of Stupa 1, date from the transition from Buddhism to Hinduism, with strong Hindu elements in their design. The former has two sitting Buddhas. The one housed inside is exceptional.

Behind **Monastery 51**, partway down the hill towards Stupa 2, is the **Great Bowl**, carved from a boulder, into which food and offerings were placed for distribution to the monks.

Vihara

MUSEUM

The **vihara** (☺9am-5pm), literally ‘resting place’, was built to house the returned relics from Stupa 3. They can be viewed on the last Sunday of the month. It’s immediately on your left as you enter the complex.

Archaeological Museum

MUSEUM

(admission ₹5, free with Stupa ticket; ☺8am-5pm Sat-Thu) This fine museum has a small collection of sculptures from the site. The centrepiece is the 3rd-century BC lion capital from the Ashoka Pillar 10. Other highlights include a *yakshi* hanging from a mango tree, and beautifully serene Buddha figures in red sandstone – some of the earliest found anywhere. There are also some interesting photos showing the site, pre-restoration.

Sleeping & Eating

New Jaiswal Lodge

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎266508; Monuments Rd; r ₹350-550, with AC ₹750-850; ☹) This friendly place has cute, clean, colourful rooms and small private bathrooms with sit-down toilets. On your right as you exit the train station. Does food.

Gateway Retreat

HOTEL \$\$

(☎266723; www.mptourism.com; Bhopal-Vidisha Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1590/1690; ☹☹) This family-friendly MP Tourism hotel is the most comfortable place to stay in Sanchi. AC bungalows are set among well-kept gardens with a small children’s play area and a swimming pool with slide. There’s a restaurant (mains ₹45 to ₹125; open 7am to 11pm) and bar (beer from ₹150). Come out of the train station, turn right at the crossroads and it’s on your right.

Krishna Hotel

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎266610; Bhopal-Vidisha Rd; r ₹100-300) Simple rooftop rooms, some with sit-down flush toilets, are slightly more expensive than the darker, noisier rooms at the front. It’s above Jaiswal Medical Store. Come out of the train station, turn left at the crossroads and it’s on your right.

Gateway Cafeteria

INDIAN \$

(☎266743; Monuments Rd; mains ₹45-90; ☺7am-10.30pm) This clean MP Tourism place has a simple Indian menu plus

coffee. Come out of the train station and keep going. It's on your left, just before the ticket office for the stupas.

i Information

There's nowhere to change money in Sanchi and the nearest ATM is in Vidisha. A couple of places in the market by the bus stand have internet access (per hr ₹30 to ₹40)

i Getting There & Around

Bike

You can rent bicycles (per hour/day ₹5/30) at the market by the bus stand.

Bus

Frequent buses connect Sanchi with Bhopal (₹25, 1½ hours, 6am to 10pm) and Vidisha (₹8, 20 minutes, 6am to 11pm). It's better to wait at the village crossroads for buses rather than going into the bus stand, which is on your right as you exit the train station.

Train

Train is a decent option for getting to Sanchi from Bhopal. It takes less than an hour so there's no need to book a seat: just turn up with enough time to queue up for a 'general' ticket (₹7 to ₹21), and squeeze on. Six daily trains leave from Bhopal (8am, 10.20am, 3.15pm, 4.10pm, 6pm and 8.55pm). Only four run in the other direction (8am, 8.50am, 4.30pm and 7.10pm).

Around Sanchi

VIDISHA

📍07592 / POP 125,453

This small but thriving market town, 8km northeast of Sanchi, was a commercial centre in the 5th and 6th centuries BC. These days it's an interesting place for a wander or a chai break en route to the Udaigiri Caves.

Many of the attractive whitewashed or painted buildings still have old wooden balconies that overlook the market streets where horse-drawn carts share space with scooters and rickshaws. There are also a number of brightly coloured temples dotted around the old town, which is located to the left of the main road from Sanchi.

Past the town, and over the railway line, is the dusty **District Museum** (Sagar-Vidisha Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹5/50, camera ₹50; ☀️10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which houses some beautiful sculptures recovered from local sites, the most impressive of which is a 3m-high, 2nd-century-

BC stone statue of Kuber Yaksha, treasurer of the gods, on display as you enter.

It's a straightforward 30-minute cycle from Sanchi or else there are frequent buses (₹8, 20 minutes).

UDAIGIRI CAVES

Cut into a sandstone hill, about 5km northwest of Vidisha, are some 20 Gupta **cave shrines** (🌅dawn-dusk) dating from the reign of Chandragupta II (AD 382-401). Most are Hindu but two, near the top of the hill, are Jain (Caves 1 and 20) – unfortunately both are closed due to unsafe roofs.

In Cave 4 is a lingam bearing Shiva's face complete with a third eye. Cave 5 contains the finest carving – a superb image of Vishnu in his boar incarnation topped with a frieze of gods, who also flank the entrance to Cave 6. Lotus-ceilinged Cave 7 was cut out for the personal use of Chandragupta II. On the top of the hill are ruins of a 6th-century Gupta temple dedicated to the sun god.

To get here by bike from Sanchi, head towards Vidisha but about 1km before the town, turn left, following a sign for Udaigiri. Follow the road to the Betwa River; cross the river then take the first left and keep going until you reach the caves. Alternatively, take a bus to Vidisha then a rickshaw (₹100 return). A return rickshaw from Sanchi is about ₹250.

If you want to cycle back via Vidisha, cross instead over the river and keep going straight instead of bearing round to the right on the road you took from Sanchi.

HELIODORUS PILLAR

The Heliodorus Pillar (Khamb Baba), just beyond the Udaigiri Caves turning, was erected by a Greek ambassador, Heliodorus from Taxila (now in Pakistan), in about 140 BC, and dedicated to Vasudeva. The pillar is worshipped by local fishermen who chain themselves to the pillar on full-moon nights. It is said they then become possessed and are able to drive evil spirits from other locals. When someone has been exorcised, they drive a nail into the tamarind tree nearby, fixing to it a lime, a piece of coconut, a red thread and supposedly the spirit. The large tree is bristling with old nails.

The pillar is close to the Udaigiri Caves. Once you cross the Betwa River, carry straight on, rather than turning left for the caves, and you'll soon see a sign directing up a small lane on your right, which leads to the pillar.

Pachmarhi

☎07578 / POP 11.370 / ELEV 1067M

Madhya Pradesh's only hill station is surrounded by waterfalls, cave temples and the forested ranges of the Satpura Tiger Reserve and offers a perfect escape from steamy central India.

Even if you don't go on an organised trek or jeep safari, you can easily spend a couple of days here cycling or hiking to the numerous sights before taking a dip in one of the natural pools that dot the area.

Explorer Captain J Forsyth 'discovered' Pachmarhi as late as 1857 and set up India's first Forestry Department at Bison Lodge in 1862. Soon after, the British army set up regional headquarters here, starting an association with the military that remains today.

A number of colonial buildings from that era have been converted into delightful guesthouses, which can be found in the Jaistambha area, 2km southwest of the small town.

👁 Sights

Satpura National Park

NATURE RESERVE

(Indian/foreigner per day ₹20/200, entrance fee per jeep Indian/foreigner ₹250/1500; 🌅dawn-dusk) A ticket for Satpura National Park must be bought at the **ticket office** (🕒8am-noon & 4-8pm Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Nov-Mar) outside Bison Lodge. It includes entry to Bison Lodge, Bee Falls, Duchess Falls, Reechgarh, Astachal, Ramykund and Rajat Prapat (including Panchuli Kund and Apsara Vihar). Other sights are free.

Bison Lodge

MUSEUM

(🕒8am-noon & 4-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) Captain Forsyth named Bison Lodge after a herd of bison he spotted here. It's now an old-fashioned, dilapidated museum focusing on the history, flora and fauna of the Satpura region.

Caves

CAVES

The nearest sight to Pachmarhi village is **Jata Shankar**, a cave temple in a beautiful gorge about 2.5km along a good track that's signed just north of the town limits. The small Shiva shrine is hidden under a huge overhanging rock.

Just southeast of Jaistambha, you'll find **Pandav Caves**, which are believed to have been carved by Buddhists as early as the 4th century. The foundations of a brick Buddhist stupa have been excavated on top of them.

Pools & Waterfalls

WATERFALL

Just south of town, past Christchurch, the trailhead for **Bee Falls** is easily accessed by bike. There are chai and snack stalls along the way to the bottom of the trail.

Further along the main road, past the trailhead, you'll find the access roads for **Duchess Falls**, the two beauty points known as **Reechgarh** and **Astachal**, and a small, crystal-clear pool called **Ramykund**.

On the other side of Jaistambha, about 1km past Pandav Caves, is the trailhead for **Apsara Vihar** (Fairy Pool), a pool underneath a small waterfall, which is the best of Pachmarhi's natural pools for swimming. Upstream from here is **Panchuli Kund**, five descending rock pools which are great for a paddle. Steps up from the snack stall by Apsara Vihar lead to a point with magnificent views of the gorge and of **Rajat Prapat** (Big Fall), the tallest of Pachmarhi's waterfalls, which tumbles down a gully in a sheer cliff.

Chauragarh

VIEWPOINT

South of Jaistambha is the road that leads towards **Chauragarh** (1308m), Madhya Pradesh's third-highest peak. The Shiva shrine at the top attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims during Shivaratri Mela (see p611). On the way, stop at **Handi Khoh**, also known as Suicide Point, to gawk down the 100m canyon into the dense forest. You'll spy Chauragarh in the distance from here as well as **Priyadarshini** (Forsyth Point), further along the road.

About 3km beyond Priyadarshini the road ends at **Mahadeo Cave**, where a path 30m into the damp gloom reveals a lingam with attendant priest. This is the beginning of the 1365-step pilgrim trail to Chauragarh (five hours' return hike). A kilometre further on, another **Shiva shrine** is at the back of a terrifyingly narrow passage created by sticks holding open a fissure in the cliff.



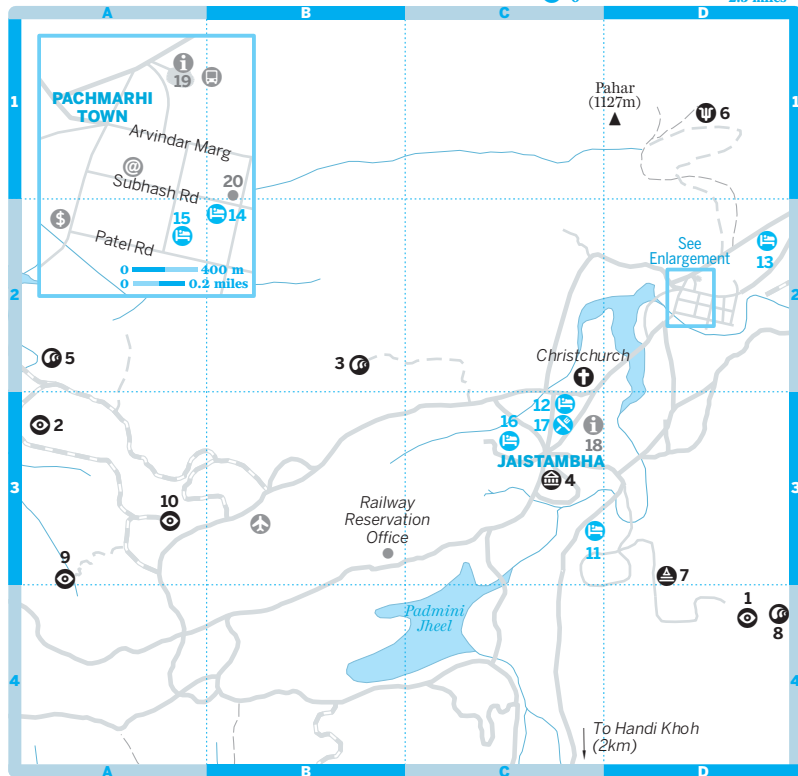
Activities

All the sights mentioned here can be cycled to, although bikes have to be left at the trailheads from where the hiking begins. **Baba Cycles** (Subhash Rd; per hr/day ₹5/50; 🕒9.15am-9pm) rents bikes.

Parasailing

PARASAILING

Parasailing (per person ₹350; 9am to noon and 2.30 to 6pm) can be done at the airstrip near Reechgarh.



Swimming

Locals paddle at the bottom of Bee Falls and Duchess Falls, and Ramkund is good for an invigorating plunge, but for a proper swim, try Apsara Vihar.

Trekking

Satpura Adventure Club, based at Hotel Saketh, can arrange guides (per day ₹300; Hindi-speaking only) to take you on treks around the area. Forestry commission guides (per day ₹315 to ₹510) can also be arranged at Bison Lodge ticket office; some speak English.

Wildlife Safaris

Satpura Tiger Reserve (entrance fee per jeep Indian/foreign ₹2000/3000; 16 Oct-30 Jun) has tigers and leopards, although you're unlikely to see either. What you will get, though, is virgin forests without another tourist jeep in sight, plus plenty of monkeys, deer and birds of all types. On top of

SWIMMING

TREKKING

JEEP SAFARIS

your group and jeep entrance fee, you will need to pay for a guide (₹315). Fees are per jeep, not per person. Unlike in other tiger parks, where safaris are split into morning and afternoon outings, here you get a full day in the reserve, and there are opportunities to overnight in the reserve at a **Forest Rest House** (d Indian/foreign ₹1000/2500). All food costs are extra. Safaris are best arranged at Bison Lodge.

Sleeping & Eating

High seasons are from April to July and December to January, when places fill up and room rates rocket. The same applies during national holidays and major festivals.

PACHMARHI TOWN

Hotel Saketh

(☎252165; hotelsaket2003@yahoo.com; r ₹200-500, with AC ₹1000; ☎) There is a wide range of rooms in this friendly hotel on a quiet side

HOTEL \$

Pachmarhi

📍 Sights

- 1 Apsara Vihar (Fairy Pool).....D4
- 2 Astachal.....A3
- 3 Bee Falls.....B2
- 4 Bison Lodge.....C3
- 5 Duchess Falls.....A2
- 6 Jata Shankar.....D1
Panchuli Kund.....(see 1)
- 7 Pandav Caves.....D3
- 8 Rajat Prapat.....D4
- 9 Ramykund.....A3
- 10 Reechgarh.....A3

🛏 Sleeping

- 11 Evelyn's Own.....C3
- 12 Glen View.....C3
- 13 Hotel Highlands.....D2
- 14 Hotel Prateek.....B2
- 15 Hotel Saketh.....A2
- 16 Rock-End Manor.....C3

🍴 Eating

- 17 Nandavan Restaurant.....C3
Raj Bhoj.....(see 15)

Information

- 18 MP Tourism.....C3
- 19 MP Tourism Kiosk.....A1

Transport

- 20 Baba Cycles.....B1

street off Patel Rd, from budget classics to midrange options. The attached restaurant **Raj Bhoj** (mains ₹30-90) does Gujarati, Bengali, Chinese and South Indian dishes, including delicious breakfast dosa.

Hotel Prateek

HOTEL \$\$

(☎252427; Subhash Rd; r ₹495-795, with AC ₹995; 🗺) Kitsch rooms decorated in pinks, browns and maroons come with neon lighting, flowery net curtains and corner beds with velvet covers. Bathrooms are large and clean.

Hotel Highlands

HOTEL \$\$

(☎252099; highland@mptourism.com; Pipariya Rd; r ₹890, with AC ₹1290; 🗺) This family-friendly MP Tourism property on the approach road into Pachmarhi has rooms with high ceilings, dressing rooms, modern bathrooms and verandas, which are dotted around well-tended gardens. There's a children's play area and a restaurant.

JAISTAMBHA AREA

TOP CHOICE Evelyn's Own

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎252056; evelynsown@gmail.com; r incl breakfast ₹1000-4000; 🗺🍷🍴) Simply gorgeous colonial-era cottage built by a reverend then bought and converted into a guesthouse by the wonderfully welcoming Colonel Balwant Rao and his wife Pramilla. The main cottage, where you can share meals (veg/meat ₹100/150) with the colonel and his wife, is full of family portraits and period furniture. Guest rooms – also beautifully decorated – are in buildings dotted around the fabulously lush gardens, which also contain a small swimming pool. Follow the signs to Satpura Retreat, which is down the same dirt track.

Rock-End Manor

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎252079; mptremph@sancharnet.in; s/d ₹5028/5628; 🗺) Another gorgeous colonial-era building, whitewashed Rock-End is perched above the parched fairways of the army golf course. Spacious rooms have wonderfully high ceilings, and furnishings are luxurious with quality upholstery and framed paintings. There are also great views to be had from seating areas around the covered walkway.

Glen View

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$

(☎252533; gvview@mptourism.com; s/d ₹2790/3290, heritage rooms ₹4190/4690; 🗺) Large, comfortable AC tents and cottages are dotted around the shaded gardens of a huge colonial-era cottage, which has also been converted to house the luxury 'heritage' rooms. Has restaurant and bar.

Nandavan Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(mains ₹30-90; ☎9.30am-11pm) An outdoor restaurant with an interesting take on the concept of a zoo, as monkeys sit outside watching humans eating in a cage. South Indian, Gujarati and thalis.

📍 Information

Internet Cafe (Subhash Rd; per hr ₹30; ☎7am-11pm)

MP Tourism (☎252100; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Fri) Near Jaistamba. Also has kiosk by bus station.

State Bank of India ATM (cnr main road & Patel Rd)

📍 Getting There & Away

Eight daily buses go to Bhopal (₹140, six hours, 7am–8pm). The two evening ones (7pm to 8pm) are sleepers and carry on to Indore (seat/bed ₹300/350, 12 hours). There are three buses – all nonsleeper – to Nagpur (₹190, eight hours, 8am, 10am and 9pm). The friendly guys at the bus-ticket counter are around from 7am to 9pm.

All Bhopal buses, plus some extra local ones, go via Pipariya (₹50, two hours), from where you can catch trains to onward destinations such as Jabalpur and Varanasi without having to go all the way to Bhopal. Train tickets can be bought at the **Railway Reservation Office** (☎8am-2pm) beside the forlorn Woodlands Adventure Camp. The bus station and train station in Pipariya are next to each other.

If you're coming from Pipariya, shared jeeps to Pachmarhi leave far more frequently than buses and cost the same.

i Getting Around

A place in a shared jeep costs about ₹150 for a day. Cycling or hiking will give you more freedom.

WESTERN MADHYA PRADESH

Ujjain

☎0734 / POP 431,162

Underwhelming at first, Ujjain grows on you the more you explore. The area around the train and bus stations is nothing special, but wander down towards the river ghats, via Ujjain's maze of alleyways, and you'll discover an older, more spiritual side to this small town which has been attracting traders and

pilgrims for hundreds of years. An undeniable energy pulses through the temples here – perhaps because this is one of Hinduism's seven sacred cities, or perhaps because the Tropic of Cancer runs through Ujjain.

The town is also one of four sites in India which hosts the incredible Kumbh Mela (p1103), during which millions bathe in the Shipra River. It takes place here every 12 years, normally during April and May. The next one is in 2016 (22 April to 21 May). Six years before and after each Kumbh Mela there is a slightly smaller Ardh (Half) Mela. On all other years a smaller festival called Magh Mela is held.

History

The Guptas, the Mandu sultans, Maharaja Jai Singh (of Jaipur fame), the Marathas and the Scindias have all had a controlling hand in Ujjain's long and chequered past, which stretches back to when the city, originally called Avantika, was an important trade stop. When the Scindias moved their capital to Gwalior in 1810, Ujjain's prominence declined rapidly.

i Sights

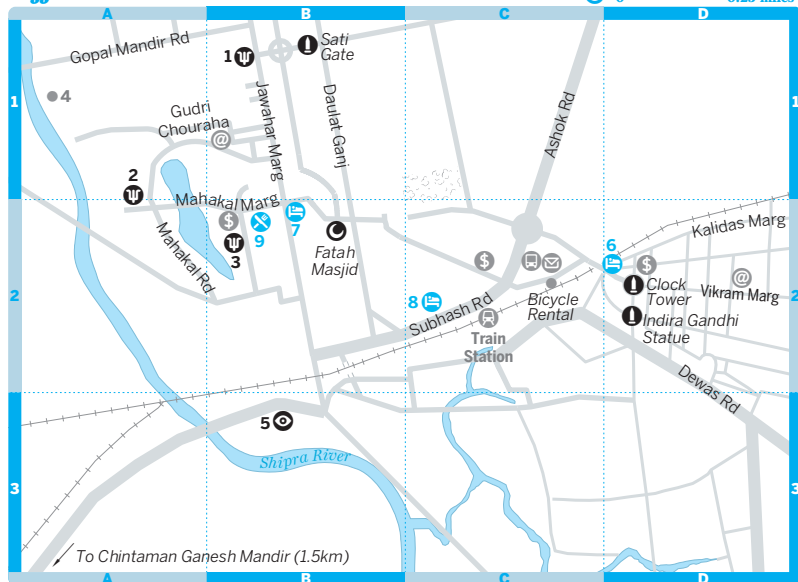
Temples

TEMPLES

Mahakaleshwar Mandir

While this is not the most stunning temple, tagging along behind a conga-line through

Ujjain



the underground chambers can be magical. At nonfestival times, the marble walkways are a peaceful preamble to the subterranean chamber containing one of India's 12 sacred Shiva shrines known as *jyoti linga* – naturally occurring lingam believed to derive currents of *shakti* (creative energies) from within themselves rather than being ritually invested with *mantra-shakti* by priests. The temple was destroyed by Altamish in 1235 and restored by the Scindias in the 19th century. You may be asked to give a donation, but it's not compulsory.

Gopal Mandir

The Scindias built this marble-spired temple, a magnificent example of Maratha architecture, in the 19th century. Muslim pillagers originally stole the sanctum's silver-plated doors from Somnath Temple in Gujarat (p698) and installed them in Ghazni, Afghanistan. Mohammed Shah Abdali later took them to Lahore (in present-day Pakistan), before Mahadji Scindia brought them back here. The **alleyways** north, east and west of here are wonderful places to get lost in.

Harsiddhi Mandir

Built during the Maratha period, this temple enshrines a famous image of goddess Annapurna. At the entrance, two tall blackened stone towers bristling with lamps are a special feature of Maratha art. They add to the spectacle of **Navratri** (Festival of Nine Nights; Hindu festival leading up to Dussehra) in September/October when filled with oil and ignited.

Ujjain

👁 Sights

- 1 Gopal Mandir..... B1
- 2 Harsiddhi Mandir..... A1
- 3 Mahakaleshwar Mandir..... B2
- 4 Ram Ghat A1
- 5 Vedh Shala (Observatory)..... B3

🛏 Sleeping

- 6 Hotel Grand Tower D2
- 7 Hotel Pleasure Landmark B2
- 8 Hotel Rama Krishna C2

🍴 Eating

- New Sudama..... (see 8)
- 9 Shivam Restaurant..... B2
 - Zharokha Restaurant (see 6)

Chintaman Ganesh Mandir

This temple is believed to be of considerable antiquity – the assembly hall's artistically carved pillars date to the Parmara period. Worshippers flock here to pray to the deity, whose name means 'assurer of freedom from worldly anxieties'. It's an easy cycle from the centre, mostly through farmland. Pass the observatory and keep to the left.

Ram Ghat

GHAT

The most central and most popular of Ujjain's river ghats is best visited at dawn or dusk when the devout chime cymbals and light candles at the water's edge. People bathe here at all times of the day, though. You can also rent **pedal boats** (₹10).

Vedh Shala (Observatory)

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Jantar Mantar; admission ₹5; ☀8am-5.30pm) Ujjain has been India's Greenwich since the 4th century BC and this simple but interesting observatory – now with a huge globe positioned beside its entrance – was built by Maharaja Jai Singh in about 1730. He also built observatories in Jaipur, Delhi, Varanasi and Mathura, but Ujjain's is the only one still in use. Among the instruments in the small garden are two marble-topped sundials – one a conventional sundial, the other made up of two large quadrants split by a tall staircase whose shadow tells the time.

🛏 Sleeping

Hotel Rama Krishna

HOTEL \$

(☎2553017; www.hotelramakrishna.co.in; Subhash Rd; s/d without bathroom ₹150/200, s ₹200-3400, d ₹300-400, d with AC from ₹700; 📞) This cleaner-than-average Subhash Rd hotel has rooms with white-tiled floors, TV and sit-down flush toilet.

Hotel Pleasure Landmark

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2557867; 98 Mahakal Marg; r ₹700-800, with AC ₹1200; 📞) Great location from which to launch yourself into the old town, rooms here are small but smart and clean and come with decent quality wooden furniture.

Hotel Grand Tower

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2553699; 1 Vikram Marg; s/d from ₹800/900, with AC from ₹1200/1400; 📞) Large, clean, well-kept rooms, excellent service and a very good restaurant.

🍴 Eating

Thali restaurants line Subhash Rd and are good value (from ₹20) but have no English menus and don't open before around 9.30am.



Shivam Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(mains ₹50-80; ☀️7am-11pm) This friendly and very popular veg restaurant in the basement below Hotel Satyam has a fabulous menu with detailed descriptions of every dish. Choose from tandoori kebabs, a selection of paneer dishes, koftas and a variety of stuffed vegetables, or just come for the south Indian breakfasts. Also does thalis (₹35 to ₹70).

Zharokha Restaurant

INDIAN \$\$

(mains ₹50-90; ☀️7am-3.30pm & 7-11.15pm) The vegetarian restaurant at Hotel Grand Tower serves excellent Kashmiri, Punjabi and Chinese food and has 1st-floor balcony seating. The service is friendly here too.

New Sudama

INDIAN \$

(mains ₹40-60; ☀️8.30am-11pm) The best of the many Subhash Rd offerings, this clean restaurant attached to Hotel Rama Krishna has comfy booth seating and decent quality Indian food.

i Information

There are ATMs all over Ujjain, including two next to Hotel Grand Tower, but the nearest place to change money is Indore.

Cyber Cafe (per hr ₹10; ☀️10am-10pm) Walk up Vikram Marg, turn left at the roundabout and it's on your right in a basement. You can you hook up your laptop.

DF.com (per hr ₹15; ☀️10.30am-10pm) Only internet cafe we could find in the old part of town.

i Getting There & Away

Bus

Services from the bus stand include the following. For Mandu or Maheshwar, change at Dhar.

BHOPAL ₹130, five hours, two daily, 6am and 7.30am

DHAR ₹80, four hours, four daily, 5.30am, 8.30am, 9am and 9.45am

INDORE ₹38, two hours, every 15 minutes, 5.30am to 11pm

OMKARESHWAR ₹91, four hours, four daily, 6am, 8am, 11am and 4pm

Train

The two direct trains to Gwalior and Agra arrive at stupid o'clock so you're better off going via Bhopal which, like Indore, is served by more than 10 daily trains. See the boxed text (p648) for details.

i Getting Around

A cycle rickshaw from the train station to Ram Ghat costs ₹20, while a tonga costs ₹30. You can also rent dirt-cheap **bicycles** (per hr/day ₹3/15; ☀️7am-11pm) from a place behind the bus stand.

Handy Bus No 9 (₹4) runs between Jawahar Marg in the old town and Chintaman Ganesh Mandir, via the train station and the clock tower.

Prices from the prepaid autorickshaw booth outside the train station include:

RAM GHAT ₹30

CHINTAMAN GANESH MANDIR ₹100 return

FOUR-HOUR TOUR AROUND UJJAIN ₹300

Indore

☎️0731 / POP 1.52 MILLION

The Holkar dynasty left behind some fine buildings here, and you'll find some cool cafes thanks to the city's ever-burgeoning coffee culture, but Indore – Madhya Pradesh's business powerhouse – is primarily used by tourists as the gateway to Omkareshwar (p651), Maheshwar (p653) or Mandu (p654).

HANDY TRAINS FROM UJJAIN

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)*	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Bhopal	19656 <i>All Bhopal Express</i>	120/292/394	3½	7.50am
Delhi	12919 <i>Malwa Express</i>	333/881/1199	15	2.07pm
Indore	18234 <i>Narmada Pas Express</i>	80/210/279	2	8.40am
Jaipur	12465 <i>Ranthambore Express</i>	135/247/502/638**	8½	8.05am
Mumbai (Central)	12962 <i>Avantika Express</i>	305/801/1087	13	5.35pm

*Fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC

**2nd class/sleeper/chair car/3AC

Sights

Lal Bagh Palace

MUSEUM

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☎10am-5pm Tue-Sun) Built between 1886 and 1921, Lal Bagh Palace is the finest building left by the Holkar dynasty. Replicas of the Buckingham Palace gates creak at the entrance to the 28-hectare garden, where, close to the palace, there is a statue of Queen Victoria. The palace is dominated by European styles, with baroque and rococo dining rooms, an English library with leather armchairs, a Renaissance sitting room with ripped sofas and a Palladian queen's bedroom. An autorickshaw from the town centre to here is about ₹40.

Central Museum

MUSEUM

(AB Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹50/200; ☎10am-5pm Tue-Sun) Housed in another fine Holkar building, this museum has one of Madhya Pradesh's best collections of medieval and premedieval Hindu sculptures, along with tools, weaponry and copper-engraved land titles. Skirmishes took place here during the First War of Independence (Indian Uprising) – the well in the garden was poisoned during the struggle.

Gandhi Hall

HISTORIC BUILDING

This Gothic town hall, built in 1904 and originally called King Edward's Hall, stands incongruously on MG Rd like a ghost of the Independence era.

Sleeping

Hotel Neelam

HOTEL \$

(☎2466001; 33/2 Patel Bridge Corner; s ₹300-350, d ₹400-475, s/d with AC ₹550/750; 🍷) One of the few budget places near the train and bus stations that accepts foreigners, friendly Neelam is very well run and has simple but clean rooms off a central courtyard.

Hotel Shreemaya

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2515555; shree@shreemaya.com; 12 RNT Marg; s/d from ₹1850/2500; 🍷@☎) This professionally run place is quality throughout. Modern rooms with wide-screen TV and coffee maker are in immaculate condition and there's free wi-fi in all of them. Rates include breakfast.

Hotel Chanakya

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2704497; RNT Marg, Chhawani Chowk; s/d from ₹500/600, with AC from ₹800/900; 🍷) Rooms here are functional rather than flash, but staff members are friendly and it's right in the heart of an interesting section of the old town. There's a restaurant upstairs and

a very popular sweet shop on the ground floor. Note, the cheapest rooms don't have windows.

Maasharda Hotel

HOTEL \$

(☎4006562; Sarvate bus stand 4 Nasia Rd; r ₹300, with AC ₹600; 🍷) Good-value, clean choice near the bus stand. This hotel is sometimes reluctant to take foreign guests, but smile sweetly when you arrive and you should be OK.

Eating & Drinking

Indian Coffee House

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(MG Rd; mains ₹30-80, thalis ₹60-75; ☎7.30am-10pm) Drink coffee (₹10) with Indore's judiciary at this branch of the excellent Indian Coffee House set inside the grounds of the commissioner's office and near the district court. As always, a top spot for breakfast, with dosa and particularly good *idli* sharing the menu with eggs and toast.

Shree Chotiwala

INDIAN \$

(Nath Mandir Rd; mains ₹40-75; ☎10.30am-11pm) This very popular restaurant has comfy booth seating and a family-friendly veg menu that includes Jain dishes and a children's thali. An excellent choice for an evening meal.

Shreemaya Celebration

BAKERY \$\$

(Tuko Ganj; mains ₹35-115; ☎7.30am-10.30pm) This clean and modern bakery next to Hotel Shreemaya sells pastries, sandwiches, cookies and cakes, as well as a handful of mains, including South Indian, Chinese and pizza. Also has juices, shakes and coffee, making this a good pick for breakfast if you can't be bothered to trek to Indian Coffee House.

Apna

INDIAN \$

(Sarvate bus stand; mains ₹40-70, beer from ₹105; ☎10am-11.30pm) This 50-year-old bar and restaurant right opposite the bus stand serves up delicious veg and meat dishes from an all-Indian menu as well as the usual selection of beers and cheap whiskeys.

Mr Beans

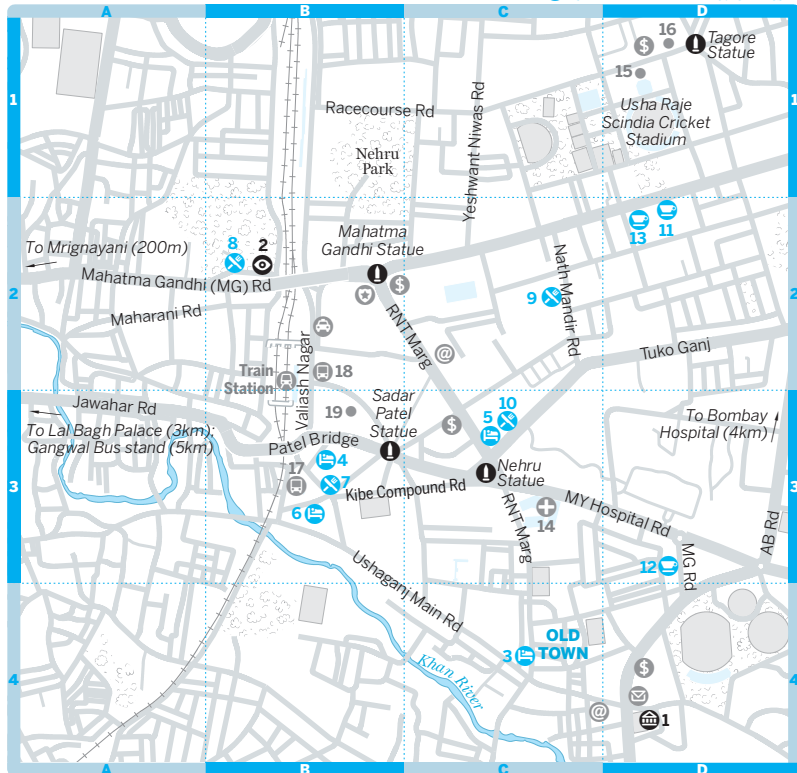
CAFE \$\$

(MG Rd; coffee from ₹27; ☎9am-11pm) Slick cafe housed in a charming 100-year-old colonial-era building. There are snacks, the coffee's excellent and you can even puff on a sheesha pipe (₹225) if that sort of thing takes your fancy.

Buddy's Cafe

CAFE \$

(MG Rd; mains ₹45-80, coffee ₹20; ☎2-11pm) Popular with young Indorians who come for the atmosphere rather than the quality



of the food and drinks, Buddy's has outdoor seating in a large roadside front garden and serves OK food as well as juices, shakes and instant coffee. Sheesha pipes (₹200) are also available.

Monkey Cafe

CAFE \$\$

(MG Rd; coffee from ₹34; ☺11am-midnight) Good-quality coffee, wi-fi (₹40) and DVDs shown on a giant screen. Music, though, is often deafeningly loud and sometimes of the karaoke variety. Oh, and yes, you guessed it; there are sheesha pipes here too (₹250).



Shopping

Mrignayani

HANDICRAFTS

(165 MG Rd; ☺11am-1.30pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat) Fixed-price government emporium with two floors crammed with handicrafts from across the state, including leather toy animals – an Indore speciality.

It's on the left, just before you reach the Sarasvati River.

Information

ATMs are all over town.

007 Cyber Gallery (Silver Mall; per hr ₹10; ☺9am-11pm) Internet cafe serving drinks and snacks.

Bombay Hospital (📍4077000; www.bombayhospitalindore.com; Indore Ring Rd) Indore's best general hospital.

Main post office (AB Rd; ☺8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

Royal Chemist (MY Hospital Rd; ☺9.15am-10pm)

State Bank of India (AB Rd; ☺10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-2.30pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques and cash, and has an ATM.

Wintech Cyber (1st fl; per hr ₹10; ☺11am-10pm) Internet cafe set back from Ushaganj Main Rd.

Indore

📍 Sights

- 1 Central MuseumD4
2 Gandhi Hall (Town Hall)B2

🛏 Sleeping

- 3 Hotel ChanakyaC4
4 Hotel NeelamB3
5 Hotel ShreemayaC3
6 Maasharda HotelB3

🍴 Eating

- 7 ApnaB3
8 Indian Coffee HouseB2
9 Shree ChotiwalwaC2
10 Shreemaya CelebrationC3

🍷 Drinking

- 11 Buddy's CafeD2
12 Monkey CafeD3
13 Mr BeansD2

Information

- 14 Royal ChemistC3

Transport

- 15 Air IndiaD1
16 Jet AirwaysD1
17 Sarwate Bus StandB3
18 Shared Minivans to Gangwal
Bus StandB2
19 Train Reservation OfficeB3

📍 Getting There & Away

Air

Air India (📞2431595/6; Racecourse Rd; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) flies daily to Mumbai and Delhi (both from around ₹3000).

Jet Airways (📞2544590; Racecourse Rd; 🕒9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) has daily flights to Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Raipur.

Bus

Bus services from Sarwate bus stand include those listed below. For Maheshwar, change at Dhamnod.

BHOPAL ₹125, five hours, every 30 minutes, 5am to midnight.

DHAMNOD ₹50, three hours, every 30 minutes, 7am to 5pm

GWALIOR seat/sleeper ₹200/250, 12 hours, three daily, 7pm, 8pm and 9pm

OMKARESHWAR ₹125, three hours, frequent, 7am to 4.30pm

PACHMARHI seat/sleeper ₹200/250, 12 hours, four daily, 5pm, 6pm, 7pm and 8pm

UJJAIN ₹40, two hours, frequent, 6am to 10pm
For Mandu, catch a bus from Gangwal bus stand to Dhar (₹45, three hours, 6am to 10.30pm) from where you can change for Mandu (₹20, one hour, last bus 7pm). Shared minivans (₹10) go between Gangwal bus stand and the centre. Private autorickshaws charge around ₹40.

Taxi

Private taxi firms on the service road parallel to Valiash Nagar charge around ₹1500 return to Mandu and the same price for a trip incorporating Omkareshwar and Maheshwar.

Train

There are six daily trains to Bhopal and more than 10 to Ujjain – see boxed text, p652. The **train reservation office** (🕒8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) is 200m east of the train station.

📍 Getting Around

The airport is 9km from the city. Allow 45 minutes. Autorickshaws charge around ₹100, taxis ₹150 to ₹200. Autorickshaw journeys around Indore cost ₹20 to ₹30.

Omkareshwar

📞07280 / POP 6616

One of a number of holy places with ghats referred to as a 'mini Varanasi', this Om-shaped island attracts pilgrims in large numbers and has become a popular chill-out destination on the backpacker trail.

The controversial dam (p1153) has changed the look of Omkareshwar considerably, but the island has retained its spiritual vibe and remains a pleasant place to stay.

Much activity takes place off the island, at a market square known as Getti Chowk (from where the old bridge crosses to the island), and on Mamaleshwar Rd, which links Getti Chowk to the bus stand. If you continue straight along Mamaleshwar Rd from the bus stand, without turning left to Getti Chowk, you'll find steps leading down to the ghats (where you can cross the river on boats for ₹5). Beyond is the new bridge and the dam.

The path leading from the old bridge to Shri Omkar Mandhata temple is the hub of the island.

📍 Sights & Activities

Shri Omkar Mandhata

HINDU TEMPLE

Tourists can rub shoulders with sadhus in the island's narrow lanes, browse the colourful stalls selling chillums and souvenir linga,

HANDY TRAINS FROM INDORE

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)*	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Bhopal	12919 Malwa Express	161/397/529	5	12.25pm
Mumbai	12962 Avantika Express	320/847/1151	15	3.50pm
Delhi	12919 Malwa Express	350/927/1262	16½	12.25pm
Ujjain	12919 Malwa Express	140/240/309	2	12.25pm

*Fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC

or join pilgrims attending the thrice daily *puja* (prayer) at **Shri Omkar Mandhata**. This cave-like temple, which houses the only shapeless *jyothi lingam* (12 important shrines dedicated to Shiva), is one of many Hindu and Jain monuments on the island.

Other Temples

HINDU TEMPLES

From the old bridge, instead of turning right to Shri Omkar Mandhata, you can also head left and walk up the 287 steps to the 11th-century **Gaudi Somnath Temple**, from where you can descend the hill to the northern tip of the island, where sadhus bathe in the confluence of the holy Narmada and Keveri Rivers. You can climb the narrow, inner staircase of the temple or just sit and watch the many langur monkeys that play round here. Nearby, is a 30m-tall **Shiva statue**, built by the Raj Rajeshwari Seva Sahsrhan Trust. The path passing in front of the statue can be followed back to the ghats (45 minutes), up and down hills and past a number of temple ruins. Don't miss the beautifully sculpted **Siddhanatha Temple** (left at the T-junction in the pathway) with marvellous elephant carvings around its base.



Sleeping & Eating



Manu Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎9826749004; r ₹200, without bathroom ₹100) Give it a couple of days and you'll feel like part of the family that runs this wonderfully welcoming guesthouse. Rooms are simple but very well looked after and bathrooms are shared only, but kept clean. There's no restaurant, but your hosts will whip up a delicious thali (₹50) if you ask in advance. The other great thing about this guesthouse is its location. This is pretty much the only place to stay on the island itself that isn't a *dharamsala* (pilgrim's rest house) and it's perched high above the old bridge meaning that it's lovely and quiet, but has great views

of all the activity going on below. It's hard to find, though. Cross the old bridge from Getti Chowk and turn right. After about 100m, you may spot a tiny sign for the guesthouse that leads you vaguely in the right direction, up a lot of steps. Keep asking the way as you climb.

Maharaja Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎271237; r ₹150-600, without bathroom ₹70) Like something out of an adventure book, this 600-year-old stone building, accessed via a small path off Getti Chowk, is slowly being swallowed up by the undergrowth on the cliffs overlooking the river. Its nine extremely basic rooms are all in various states of disrepair, and come with tap-and-bucket showers and squat toilets only, but each has its own unique character – a wooden doorway here, a carved alcove there. Room 1, with family portraits on the walls and two doorways that lead out to private cliff-top river views, is certainly worth asking for.

Ganesh Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎271370; r ₹150-200) Off the path leading down to the ghats from Mamaleshwar Rd, friendly Ganesh has neat and tidy budget rooms and a peaceful ambience. Its shaded garden restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹130) overlooking the ghats has a multicuisine menu including Western breakfasts.

Brahmin Bhojanalaya

INDIAN \$

(Mamaleshwar Rd; mains ₹30-70; ☎8am-10pm) There are a number of no-nonsense *dhabas* (snack bars) in Omkareshwar, both on the island and on the mainland, especially in Getti Chowk. None has an English sign, although this one does at least have an English menu. It's on your left as you walk up from the bus stand, 50m before the road bears left towards Getti Chowk. You may have to ask for help to locate it, but once you're inside you'll find a decent selection of tasty veg dishes.

Lassi & Juice Centre

(Getti Chowk; drinks ₹10-30; ☺7am-11pm) A great place to sit and while away time with some people-watching, this pocket-sized cafe on Getti Chowk does magnificent lassis and delicious fruit salads as well as breakfasts and snacks.

CAFE \$

Information

Some telephone stalls on Mamaleswar Rd and on the island have a computer and a stuttering **internet connection** (per hr ₹50). A State Bank of India **ATM** (Mamaleswar Rd) is near the bus stand. There's a **pharmacy** (☺9am-9pm) diagonally opposite.

Getting There & Away

Services from the bus stand include:

DHAMNOD (for Mandu, via Oonera) ₹55, 3½ hours, regular, 6am to 5pm

INDORE ₹60, two hours, regular, 6am to 6pm

MAHESHWAR ₹45, three hours, regular, 6am to 4.30pm

UJJAIN ₹100, four hours, four daily, 6am, 11.30am, 2.30pm and 6pm

Maheshwar

☎07283 / POP 19,649

The friendly, peaceful town of Maheshwar has long held spiritual significance – it's mentioned in the Mahabharata and Ramayana (p1108) under its old name, Mahishmati, and still draws sadhus and *yatris* (pilgrims) to its ancient ghats and temples on the holy Narmada River. The town enjoyed a golden age in the late 18th century under Holkar queen Ahilyabai, who built the palace in the towering fort and many other monuments. Away from the ghats and historic buildings, Maheshwar's colourful streets house old wooden doorways and overhanging balconies fronting brightly painted local homes.

The river, and the fort which overlooks it, is about 1.5km south of the bus stand. Leaving the bus stand, walk straight over the crossroads and continue past the internet cafe and ATM until you reach a floodlit roundabout. Take the left fork to get to the ghats via Hansa Heritage hotel, Labboo's Café and the fort. Take the right fork to head directly to the ghats.

Sights & Activities

Fort & Palace

HISTORIC SITE

Apart from the holy river itself, the most treasured part of the town is its 16th-century **fort**.

The huge, imposing ramparts were built by Emperor Akbar, while the **Maheshwar Palace** and several **temples** within its grounds were added during the reign of Holkar queen Ahilyabai (r 1767-95). The palace is part public courtyard, part posh hotel. Housed within the courtyard, among a collection of rusty matchlocks and dusty palanquins, is a glass-cased statue of Ahilyabai, treated with the reverence of a shrine. Nearby is a Shiva temple with a golden lingam – the starting point for palanquin processions on Ahilyabai's birthday (see p611) and Dussehra.

Temples

HINDU TEMPLES

From the ramparts of the fort you can see boats (return trip per person/boat ₹10/100) and incense smoke drifting across the water to **Baneshwar Temple**, located on a tiny island in the middle of the river. Descending to the dhobi-wallahs (clothes washers) at the **ghats**, you pass two impressive stone **temples**. The one on the right, guarded by stone Holkar sentries and a frieze of elephants, houses more images of Ahilyabai and two candle towers, lit during festivals.

Rehwa Society

HANDICRAFTS WORKSHOP

(☎273203; www.rehwasociety.org; ☺10am-6pm Wed-Mon, shop open daily) Between the palace and the two stone temples a small doorway announces the NGO Rehwa Society, a craft cooperative where profits are ploughed back into the education, housing and welfare of the weavers. A local school, run entirely by Rehwa, is behind the workshop. Maheshwar saris are famous for their unique weave and simple, geometric patterns, often using stripes. You can watch the weavers at work and buy shawls, saris, scarves and fabrics (from ₹450) made from silk, cotton and wool. Volunteers with some design background are always welcome, as are those interested in volunteer teaching at the school.

Sleeping & Eating

TOP CHOICE Labboo's Café

GUESTHOUSE, CAFE \$\$

(☎09229125267; r ₹1500) Not only a delightful cafe in a shaded courtyard (open 8am to 5pm), but also a place with six wonderful rooms to stay in. All are different but each is decorated with care and attention, and two of them actually form part of the fort's outer wall – the upper one coming with its own fort-wall veranda. The cafe menu is snacks only (₹10 to ₹40), but staff will whip up a delicious, unlimited thali (₹100) if you ask nicely. They also organise river trips (per hour per boat ₹200) here.

Hansa Heritage

(☎273296; r ₹1050; ☑) Despite the name, this place is almost brand new, but it's been built with style and quality throughout. Smart, modern rooms have a rustic feel with mud and woodchip interior walls, antique-looking wooden furniture and attractive coloured-glass window panes. Bathrooms are also very modern and spotlessly clean.

Ahilya Fort

(☎273329, Delhi 01141551575; www.ahilyafort.com; r Indian ₹7000-9000, foreigner ₹12,000-16,500; ☑@☑) This superior-quality heritage hotel is owned by Prince Shivaji Rao Holka, a direct descendent of Ahilyabai, and forms part of Maheshwar Palace. Rooms are indeed palatial and some come with fabulous river views, while lush gardens house exotic fruit trees, vegetable patches and a lovely swimming pool. Rates include all meals as well as boat trips on the river. Booking ahead is pretty much essential. Nonguests who fancy a splurge can eat lunch or dinner here. The sumptuous menu is set, as is the ₹1500 per person price. You'll need to book your place at a table a few hours in advance and pay a deposit.

Akash Deep

(Kila Rd; r ₹200-500) The best budget option in town, friendly Akash has clean, spacious rooms, some with TV. Checkout time is 10am. Next door to Hansa Heritage.

Information

Internet cafe (per hr ₹25; ☎10am-9pm)

Getting There & Away

There are regular buses to Omkareshwar (₹45, three hours, 9am to 5.30pm) and Dhamnod (₹10, 30 minutes, 7am to 11pm) where you can change for Indore (₹55, two hours, regular, last bus 9pm). For Mandu, first head to Dhamnod then take a Dhar-bound bus as far as a forked junction in the main road, known as Oonera (₹25, two hours). From there flag down a bus (₹10, 30 minutes) or hitch for the final 14km to Mandu.

Mandu

(☎07292 / POP 8550 / ELEV 634M

Perched on top of a pleasantly green, thinly forested 20-sq-km plateau, picturesque Mandu is home to some of India's finest examples of Afghan architecture. The area is littered with palaces, tombs, monuments and mosques, all within easy cycling distance of each other. Some cling to the edge

HOTEL \$\$\$

of ravines, others are beside lakes, while Rupmati's Pavilion, the most romantic of them all, sits majestically at the far end of the plateau, overlooking the vast plains below.

History

Raja Bhoj, of Bhopal fame, founded Mandu as a fortress retreat in the 10th century before it was conquered by the Muslim rulers of Delhi in 1304. When the Mughals captured Delhi in 1401, the Afghan Dilawar Khan, governor of Malwa, set up his own little kingdom and Mandu's golden age began.

Although Dilawar Khan established Mandu as an independent kingdom, it was his son, Hoshang Shah, who shifted the capital from Dhar to Mandu and raised it to its greatest splendour.

In 1526, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat conquered Mandu, only to be ousted in 1534 by the Mughal Humayun, who in turn lost the kingdom to Mallu Khan, an officer of the Khalji dynasty. Ten more years of feuds and invasions saw Baz Bahadur eventually emerge in the top spot, but in 1561 he fled Mandu to avoid facing Akbar's advancing troops.

After Akbar added Mandu to the Mughal empire, it kept a considerable degree of independence, until taken by the Marathas in 1732. The capital of Malwa was then shifted back to Dhar, and the slide in Mandu's fortunes that had begun with the absconding of Baz Bahadur became a plummet.

Sights & Activities

There are three main groups of ruins: the Royal Enclave, the Village Group and the Rewa Kund Group. Each requires its own separate ticket. All other sights are free.

Royal Enclave

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☎dawn-dusk Sat-Thu) These ruins are the only ones fenced off into one single complex. There's a **Publication Centre** (☎10am-6pm) selling guidebooks by the entrance and a shaded garden canteen selling tea, coffee and snacks by Hindola Mahal.

Jahaz Mahal

Also called the Ship Palace, this is the most famous building in Mandu. Built on a narrow strip of land between **Munja** and **Kapur Tanks**, with a small upper storey like a ship's bridge (use your imagination), it's far longer (120m) than it is wide (15m).

PALACE

Ghiyas-ud-din, who is said to have had a harem of 15,000 maidens, constructed its lookouts, scalloped arches, airy rooms and beautiful pleasure pools.

Taveli Mahal

MUSEUM

These former stables now house a small **Archaeological Museum** (☉8am-6pm), which features a handful of artefacts found here including 11th- and 12th-century sculptures as well as stone slabs with Quranic text dating back to the 15th century.

Hindola Mahal

PALACE

Just north of Ghiyas' stately pleasure dome is Hindola Mahal (Swing Palace), so-called because the slope of the walls is supposed to create the impression that they are swaying. While it doesn't give that impression, it is an eye-catching design nonetheless.

House & Shop of Gada Shah

HOUSE

The house is within the enclave but the shop is outside on the road to Delhi Gate. As the buildings' size and internal workmanship suggest, their owner was more than a shopkeeper. His name, which means 'beggar master', is thought to identify him as Rajput chief Medini Ray, a powerful minion of the sultans. The 'shop' was a warehouse for saffron and musk, imported and sold at a handsome profit when there were enough wealthy people to shop here.

Mosque of Dilawar Khan

MOSQUE

Built by Dilawar Khan in 1405, this mosque is Mandu's earliest Islamic building. There are many Hindu elements to the architecture, notably the pillars and ceilings inside, which was typical for this era.

Champa Baodi

HISTORIC SITE

So-called because its water supposedly smelt as sweet as the champak flower, Champa Baodi is a step-well surrounded by subterranean vaulted chambers, some of which you can explore.

Turkish Bath

BATH-HOUSE

Stars and octagons perforate the domed roofs of this tiny *hammam*, which had hot and cold water and a hypocaust (under-floor heated) sauna.

Village Group

HISTORIC SITE

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☉dawn-dusk) This group, located by the bus stand in the centre of the village, contains three monuments. One ticket, which you buy at the entrance to Jama Masjid, covers all three:

Jama Masjid

MOSQUE

Entered by a flight of steps leading to a 17m-high domed porch, this disused red-stone mosque dominates the village of Mandu. Hoshang Shah begun its construction around 1406, basing it on the great Omayyad Mosque in Damascus, Syria, and Mohammed Khalji completed it in 1454. Despite its plain design, it's reckoned to be the finest and largest example of Afghan architecture in India.

Hoshang's Tomb

TOMB

Reputed to be India's oldest marble building, this imposing tomb is crowned with a crescent thought to have been imported from Persia or Mesopotamia. Inside, light filters into the echoing dome through stone *jalīs* (carved lattice screens), intended to cast an appropriately subdued light on the tombs. An inscription records Shah Jahan sending his architects – including Ustad Hamid, who worked on the Taj Mahal – here in 1659 to pay their respects to the tomb's builders.

Ashrafi Mahal

TOMB

Mohammed Shah originally built his tomb as a madrasa (Islamic college), before converting and extending it. The overambitious design later collapsed – notably the seven-storey circular tower of victory. The building is an empty shell, but intricate Islamic pillarwork can be seen at the top of its great stairway.

Rewa Kund Group

HISTORIC SITE

A pleasant 4km cycle south of the village, past Sagar Talao, brings you to two more **palace ruins** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☉dawn-dusk). Tickets for both should be bought from outside Baz Bahadur's Palace.

Baz Bahadur's Palace

PALACE

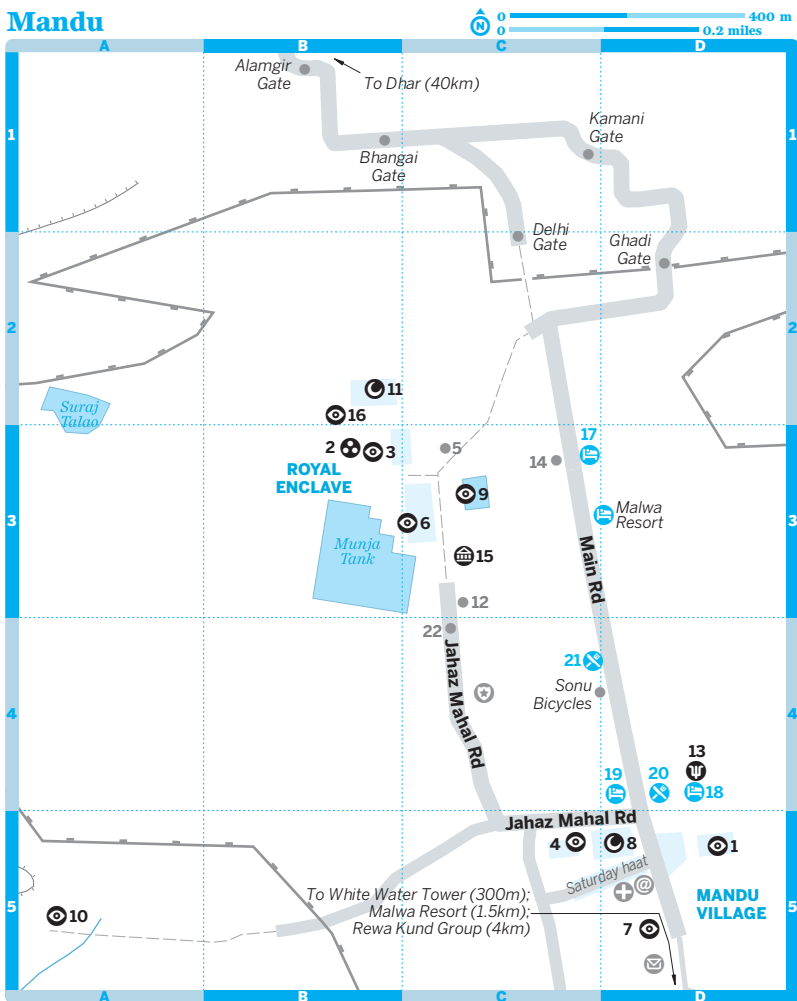
Baz Bahadur was the last independent ruler of Mandu. His palace, constructed around 1509, is beside the Rewa Kund Tank where a water lift at the northern end supplied water to the palace. A curious mix of Rajasthani and Mughal styles, it was actually built decades before Baz Bahadur came to power.

Rupmati's Pavilion

MONUMENT

Standing at the top of a cliff plunging 366m to the plains, Rupmati's Pavilion has a subtle beauty unmatched by the other monuments – and some of the dinkiest stone staircases you'll ever climb.

According to Malwa legends, the music-loving Baz Bahadur built it to persuade a beautiful Hindu singer, Rupmati, to move



here from her home on the plains. From its terrace and domed pavilions Rupmati could gaze down at the countryside, consider visiting this unusual former palace turned temple. It stands at the head of a ravine, on the site of an earlier Shiva shrine – its name means God with Blue Throat – and is now once again used as a place of worship. A stream built by one of Akbar's governors trickles through a delightful spiral channel and is usually filled with scented water, giving the palace a sweet aroma. To get here cycle south along Main Rd for less than 1km until you see a large white water tower. Turn right

In fact, the pavilion was built in two or three phases and the style of its arches and pillars suggest it was completed 100 years before Rupmati's time. Nonetheless, the love story is a subject of Malwa folk songs – not least because of its tragic ending. Lured by tales of Rupmati's beauty, Akbar marched on the fort and Baz Bahadur fled, leaving his lover to poison herself.

This place is simply gorgeous at sunset.

Nil Kanth Palace

HISTORIC SITE

If you're looking for a great reason to cycle out into the countryside, consider visiting this unusual former palace turned temple. It stands at the head of a ravine, on the site of an earlier Shiva shrine – its name means God with Blue Throat – and is now once again used as a place of worship. A stream built by one of Akbar's governors trickles through a delightful spiral channel and is usually filled with scented water, giving the palace a sweet aroma. To get here cycle south along Main Rd for less than 1km until you see a large white water tower. Turn right

Mandu

🕒 Sights

- Archaeological Museum (see 15)
- 1 Ashrafi Mahal D5
 - 2 Champa Baodi B3
 - 3 Hindola Mahal (Swing Palace) B3
 - 4 Hoshang's Tomb C5
 - 5 House of Gada Shah C3
 - 6 Jahaz Mahal (Ship Palace) C3
 - 7 Jain Temple D5
 - 8 Jama Masjid D5
 - 9 Kapur Tank C3
 - 10 Lohani Caves A5
 - 11 Mosque of Dilawar Khan B2
 - 12 Publication Centre C3
 - 13 Rama Temple D4
 - 14 Shop of Gada Shah C3
 - 15 Taveli Mahal C3
 - 16 Turkish Bath B2

🛏 Sleeping

- 17 Hotel Rupmati C3
- 18 Rama Guesthouse D4
- 19 Tourist Resthouse D4

🍴 Eating

- 20 Relax Point D4
- 21 Shivani Restaurant C4

Information

- 22 Royal Enclave Ticket Office C4
- Village Group Ticket Office (see 8)

here and follow the road as it twists and turns past villages all the way to Nil Kanth (about 2km). You can continue from here, past more remote villages, for about another kilometre to reach the still-standing gateway of the now ruined **Songarh Fort**, from where there are more great views.

Lohani Caves

CAVE

Local guides seem unsure as to just how old these sculpted caves are but some insist that a now-blocked tunnel leads from the caves to Dhar, 35km away. One thing is certain, they command a fabulous view of the ravine below, which you can hike down to from here.

Jain Temple

JAIN TEMPLE

Entered by a turquoise doorway, this complex is a splash of kitsch among the Islamic monuments. The richly decorated temples feature marble, silver and gold *tirthankars* with jade eyes, and behind them is a theme park-like museum with a walk-on replica of Shatrunjaya (p690), the hilltop temple com-

plex at Palitana in Gujarat. In the colourful murals, bears devour sinners' arms, crocodiles chew their heads, and demons saw one evil character in half, lengthways.

Saturday Haat

MARKET

(☉10am-dusk) This colourful weekly market, behind Jama Masjid, is similar to ones held all over the Bastar region, a tribal stronghold of Chhattisgarh (p667). Adivasis (tribes-people) walk kilometres to come here to buy and sell goods ranging from mountains of red chillies to dried *mahuwa*, a flower used to make a potent liquor of the same name.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Rama Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎263251; bus stand; ₹250) Made up of a row of simple rooms off a courtyard that leads to the small Rama Temple, accommodation here is slightly cleaner and more spacious than at nearby Tourist Resthouse. Some bathrooms have showers and sit-down loos, but this is still very basic stuff. There's no English sign. Just walk through an archway between two shops by the bus stand. Reception is beyond the rooms, inside the temple grounds.

Hotel Rupmati

HOTEL \$\$

(☎263270; Main Rd; r from ₹700, with AC ₹1400; 🍴) Clean, colourful cottages, with large bathrooms, are set around gardens on the edge of a cliff. Some come with exceptional views of the valley below. AC rooms can be had for ₹900 if you don't use the AC. Has a restaurant.

Malwa Resort

HOTEL \$\$

(☎263235; www.mptourism.com; Main Rd; r ₹1390, with AC ₹2090; 🍴🛏) This family-friendly MP Tourism property, 2km south of the village, has large gardens containing comfortable cottages, children's play areas, tree swings and a pool (which isn't always open). There are also pleasant views of the neighbouring lake Sagar Talao.

Tourist Resthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎263264; Jahaz Mahal Rd; r ₹150) This row of seven identical and extremely basic rooms with squat toilets and tap-and-bucket showers is the cheapest place in town. Rooms come with small, private verandas, but they're right on the roadside (albeit it's not a very busy road).

Shivani Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(Main Rd; mains ₹35-90; ☉8.30am-10pm) The most popular place to eat in town, this large,

no-nonsense diner with plastic tables and chairs has an excellent menu that includes a range of thalis (₹50 to ₹110) plus local specialities such as *Mandu kofta* (dumplings in a mild sauce). South Indian breakfasts are also available, as are lassis and coffee.

Relax Point

INDIAN \$

(Main Rd; snacks ₹6-40; ☎8.30am-9.30pm) A village shop, gathering point and restaurant-cafe rolled into one. The menu is limited to snacks such as samosas and parathas but this is an OK place for a lazy chai break.

Shopping

Roopayan

HANDICRAFTS

(Main Rd; ☎9am-7pm) Next to Malwa Resort, this small shop sells good-quality scarves (from ₹300), shawls (₹800) and bed spreads (₹900), as well as a selection of clothing, all made from material that has been dyed using a block-printing method that is a speciality of the nearby village of Bagh.

Information

The only **internet cafe** (Main Rd; per hr ₹50; ☎7am-10pm) has just one terminal. There's a small **pharmacy** (☎8am-9.30pm) next door, while the **post office** (☎263222; Main Rd; ☎9am-5pm) is further south. There's nowhere to change money. Malwa Retreat can help arrange local **guides** (₹200 to ₹500).

Getting There & Away

There are two direct buses to Indore (₹80, 3½ hours, 9am and 3.30pm), one to Ujjain (₹96, six hours, 6am) and regular services to Dhar (₹25, one hour, 6am to 6pm), where you can change for buses to Dhamnod (₹40, two hours), then, in turn,

for Maheshwar (₹10, 30 minutes, last bus 11pm) or Omkareshwar (₹55, 3½ hours, last bus 7pm). If doing this, it's quicker to get off 14km before Dhar at a junction called Oonera (₹10, 30 minutes) from where you can flag down Dhamnod-bound buses.

Getting Around

Cycling is best, as the terrain is flat, the air clear and the countryside beautiful. **Sonu Bicycles** (Main Rd; per hr/day ₹10/30; ☎6am-6pm) is one of a few places that rent bikes.

You can tour the monuments in half a day in an autorickshaw (from ₹200).

EASTERN MADHYA PRADESH

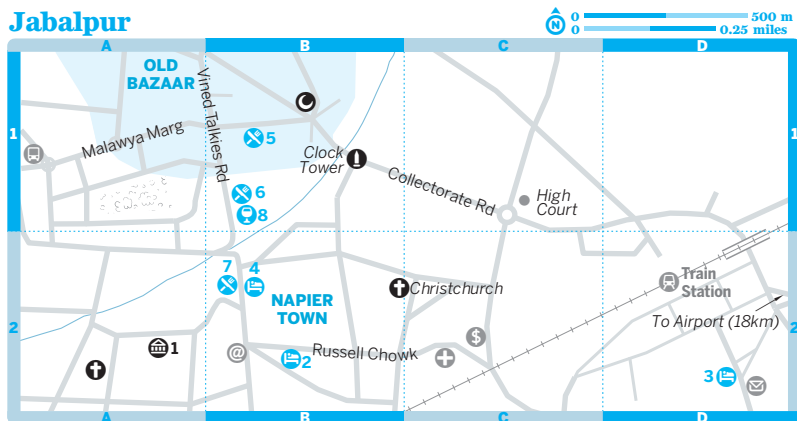
Jabalpur

☎0761 / POP 1.1 MILLION

Domestic tourists mostly come here to visit Marble Rocks, an attractive river gorge nearby, but for foreigners this industrial city of *chowks* and working men's taverns is used mainly as a launchpad for the big tiger parks – Kanha (p661), Bandhavgarh (p662) and Pench (p664).

Most of the action takes place north of the railway line, in the dusty lanes of the Old Bazaar, along Vined Talkies Rd and as far south as Russell Chowk, which is where most of the hotels are located. The Civil Lines district, south of the train station, is less interesting, but more peaceful.

Jabalpur



Sights & Activities

Rani Durgavati Museum MUSEUM
(Indian/foreigner ₹10/100, camera/video ₹40/200; ☀️10am-5pm Tue-Sun) Has a collection of 10th-century sculptures from local sites, while upstairs are letters and photographs relating to Mahatma Gandhi and an old-fashioned gallery exploring tribal culture.

Sleeping

Lodge Shivalaya HOTEL \$
(☎️2625188; Napier Town; s/d from ₹240/250, r with AC from ₹750) There are loads of hotels around Russell Chowk but this is the best-value of the lot. Rooms are simple with stone floors, but are clean enough and come with TV and small bathrooms. They also open onto shared balconies that overlook the bustling street below. Twenty-four-hour checkout.

Hotel Sidharth HOTEL \$\$
(☎️4007779; hotel_sidharth@hotmail.com; Russell Chowk; s/d ₹495/550, with AC ₹675-995; 🏠) An old-fashioned lift leads to comfortable, compact rooms in this modest, well-run midrange hotel. AC rooms are no smarter than non-AC. Has a restaurant and 24-hour checkout.

Kalchuri Residency HOTEL \$\$
(☎️2678491; kalchuri@mpmtourism.com; r incl breakfast ₹2090; 🏠) This MP Tourism property, located in the quieter Civil Lines area just south of the train station, has large, neat and tidy rooms with TV and kettle and clean, spacious bathrooms. Some rooms have private balconies. There's a restaurant and a bar.

Eating & Drinking

Indian Coffee House SOUTH INDIAN \$
(Hotel India; coffee from ₹10, mains ₹30-130; ☀️7am-10.30pm) As well as good-value coffee,

the guys in white suits and fan-tailed hats serve up delicious breakfasts, from dosa and *uttapam* to French toast and omelettes, and hearty Indian and Chinese mains.

Options INDIAN \$\$
(Vined Talkies Rd; mains ₹40-80; ☀️10am-11pm) Popular with families, courting couples and 20-somethings, this child-friendly veg restaurant with funky decor serves up good-quality Indian and Chinese cuisine to a backdrop of Indian pop music and Bollywood soundtracks.

Satyam Shivam Sundram INDIAN \$\$
(Napier Town; mains ₹40-80, thalis from ₹65; ☀️9am-11pm) Staff members here are very friendly, sometimes annoyingly so, but the veg menu is spot on and includes some generous thalis.

Jabalpur is thick with seedy but reasonably harmless drinking dens, many of which are attached to cheap hotels. **Yogi Bar** (Vined Talkies Rd; beer from ₹75; ☀️10am-10pm) is pretty representative.

Information

City Hospital (☎️2628154; North Civil Lines; ☀️24hr) Modern, private healthcare facility.

Cyber Cafe (Russell Chowk; per hr ₹10; ☀️10.30am-10.30pm) Has wi-fi.

MP Tourism (☎️2677690; ☀️7am-8pm) At train station (south entrance).

Post office (Residency Rd; ☀️10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) An unusual 1860s, English-made, red post box stands outside the entrance.

State Bank of India (☎️2677777; South Civil Lines; ☀️10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Changes American Express travellers cheques and cash, and has ATM; there's also an ATM at the train station and others around the city.

Getting There & Away

Air

Kingfisher Airlines (☎️2603467), at the airport, has a daily flight to Delhi (from ₹4000, 8.55am). Next door, **Air India** (☎️6459333) flies there on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Bus

Two daily buses go to Kanha National Park (₹120, 6 hours, 7am and 11am). For Pench Tiger Reserve, take any Nagpur-bound bus as far as Khawasa (₹130, five hours, 7am to 11pm), then take a shared jeep (₹10) for the final 12km. For Bandhavgarh National Park, it's best to take a direct train to Umaria, but you can also take a bus to Katni (₹62, three hours, every 30 minutes, 4am to 11pm), from where there are trains and buses to Umaria.

Jabalpur

Sights

- 1 Rani Durgavati Museum.....A2

Sleeping

- 2 Hotel Sidharth.....B2
3 Kalchuri Residency.....D2
4 Lodge Shivalaya.....B2

Eating

- 5 Indian Coffee House.....B1
6 Options.....B1
7 Satyam Shivam Sundram.....B2

Drinking

- 8 Yogi Bar.....B1

HANDY TRAINS FROM JABALPUR

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Agra	12189 Mahakaushal Express	310/817/1112	14	6.10pm
Bhopal	11472 Jbp–Bhopal Express	164/430/586	7	11pm
Delhi	12192 Jbp–NDLS Express	363/966/1316	18	5.45pm
Kolkata (Howrah)	12322 Kolkata Mail	387/1032/1409	22	1.30pm
Mumbai (CST)	12321 Howrah–Mumbai Mail	355/944/1286	17½	6.05pm
Raipur	12854 Amarkantak Express	247/638/862	9½	9.30pm
Satna	11705 Jabalpur–Rewa Pass	140/327/430	4	7.30am
Umaria	18233 Narmada Express	80/262/353	4	6.40am
Varanasi*	12945 Tapti–Ganga Express	249/645	11	11.58pm

Fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC; *except Tue & Sat, sleeper/3AC only

Train

More than 10 daily trains leave for Satna, but only one (a slow train that leaves at 7.30am) leaves early enough to meet direct bus connections to Khajuraho. If you're on a later train, though, you should be able to catch a bus from Satna to Panna and change again for Khajuraho. You'll probably have to change a third time at Bamitha Junction, from where shared jeeps (₹10) can take you the last 11km to Khajuraho. For Bandhavgarh National Park, take a train to Umaria. Also see boxed text, p660. There are three daily trains to Varanasi that they either leave or arrive at an unearthly hour. Other Varanasi trains run at better times, but not every day, so check when you book your ticket.

i Getting Around

A cycle rickshaw from the train station to Russel Chowk is about ₹20. Autorickshaws are usually double the price.

Around Jabalpur

MARBLE ROCKS

Known locally as Bhedaghat, the marble-like magnesium-limestone cliffs at this **gorge** on the holy Narmada River, 22km west of Jabalpur, change colours in different lights, from pink to black. They're particularly impressive by moonlight, and parts are floodlit at night.

The trip up the 2km-long gorge is made in a shared **motorboat** (per person 30/50min ₹21/31; ☀7am–7pm, full moon 8pm–midnight, closed 15 Jun–15 Oct due to monsoon) from the

jetty at Panchvati Ghat. Alternatively hire a boat (standard/large ₹200/320) to yourself. There's good **swimming** at the ghat too, but currents can be strong: take your lead from the locals. For a nice post-boating stroll, and a closer look at village life, carry on up the hill past the ghat entrance and turn right just before Motel Marble Rocks, where you'll find a tiny path leading past local homes and down towards the gorge.

Dhuandhar (Smoke Cascade) is a worthwhile 1.5km-walk uphill from the ghat. Along the way is the much-revered **Chausath Yogini**, a circular 10th-century temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Durga and accessed via a steep flight of steps on the right-hand side of the road. Once at the falls, you can take a short cable-car ride (₹60 return) to the other side of the gorge.

Just before Chausath Yogini, **Hotel River View** (☎6942004; Bhedaghat; r from ₹1000, with AC ₹1500; ☹) has clean, spacious rooms, some with wonderful views of the river, which you can also see from its back-garden restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹70).

Local buses leave regularly for Bhedaghat (₹15, 40 minutes, 6am to 8pm) from Jabalpur bus stand. They drop you at a crossroads from where shared autorickshaws wait to take you the final 5km to Panchvati Ghat (₹5) or 6.5km to Dhuandhar (₹10). Getting back is just a case of waiting at the crossroads for a passing bus. The impatient might like to try squeezing into a jam-packed, Jabalpur-bound shared autorickshaw (₹10 to ₹15). See if you can beat 14 passengers!

Kanha National Park

📍 07649 / TIGER POP 80

Madhya Pradesh is the king of the jungle when it comes to tiger parks, and **Kanha** (www.kanha-nationalpark.com; Indian/foreigner ₹1230/2230, jeep am/pm ₹1500/1000; 🕒 16 Oct-30 Jun) is the most famous. The forests are vast, and while your chances of seeing a tiger are probably slightly slimmer than at nearby Bandhavgarh, they're still very good. Add to that the fact that you can really go deep into the forest thanks to the park's huge core area surrounded by a large buffer zone, and you have a complete safari experience, rather than the rush-and-grab outings some complain of at Bandhavgarh.

The sal forests and vast meadows contain more than 200 tigers and leopards and support huge populations of deer and antelope, including the extremely rare *barasingha*. You'll see plenty of langur monkeys, the odd gaur (Indian bison) and maybe even a family or two of wild boar. The park is also home to more than 300 bird species.

There are a few gates into the park, but we focus here on Khatiya Gate, easily the most popular.

👁️ Sights & Activities

Jeep Safaris

JEEP SAFARIS

This is why everyone comes to Kanha and pretty much everyone who lives here can hook you up with a jeep for a safari. The key, if you haven't prebooked safaris through your hotel, is to find other independent travellers with whom you can share costs because all fees (admission and jeep) are per jeep load (maximum six adults), not per person. Budget guesthouses are the best place to enquire; try at Motel Chandan. Otherwise, just ask around. Note, a jeep containing Indian nationals *and* foreigners costs the foreign-tourist price. There are two safari slots each day: morning (roughly 6am to 11am) and afternoon (roughly 3pm to 6pm). The morning safaris are longer, but cost slightly more and include time spent at the visitor centre. Still, mornings tend to produce more tiger sight-



MORNING CHILL

No matter how hot a time of year it is, make sure you bring warm clothing with you for morning jeep safaris. It's fr-fr-freezing in the forests before the sun comes up properly.

AMERICAN/JUNGLE PLAN

Many of the more upmarket resorts at the tiger reserves have part- and all-inclusive packages rather than straight accommodation prices. The so-called American Plan includes accommodation and all meals, while the Jungle Plan includes accommodation and meals plus a morning and an afternoon jeep safari.

ings and come with the added attraction of a possible elephant safari (see boxed text p663).

Nature Trails

WALKING

A well-marked 7km trail leads from just inside Khatiya Gate and skirts along the edge of the park before looping back to the village. Mostly you'll see a lot of monkeys and birds, but tigers do venture into this area on occasions. Check with locals before you leave. Raheel, the manager at Pugmark Resort, is well informed.

🛏️ Sleeping & Eating

All hotels listed here have restaurants. There's a row of small *dhabas* just before Khatiya Gate serving cheap food and chai. If you're on a morning safari, you can grab breakfast (₹20), tea and coffee when you stop at the visitor centre inside the park.

Note, while lodgings in the buffer zone enjoy a wonderfully natural forest location, there are none of the facilities that tourists can enjoy in the village outside Khatiya Gate.

INSIDE THE BUFFER ZONE

Tourist Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(📍 277310; Kisli Gate; American Plan dm ₹690) This MP Tourism property, made up of a few huts, well-kept multibed dorms with clean shared bathrooms, is actually inside the buffer zone, right by Kisli Gate, which leads into the park's core zone. There are no facilities here outside the dorms, the nearby canteen and the adjacent Baghira Log Huts, but the attraction is that you're staying right in among the monkey-filled forest, and a stone's throw from meadows which attract deer and *gaur* throughout the day. You'll need to have a room booked in advance in order to get past security at Khatiya Gate, then you can hitch a ride to Kisli Gate on any passing vehicle, or on one of the buses which swing by both gates.

Baghira Log Huts

GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$

(📍 277227; Kisli Gate; American Plan s/d from ₹3590/3990; 🚻) Apart from the nearby Tourist

Hostel, this is the only place inside the buffer zone. Comfortable rather than luxurious log-cabin-lookalike rooms are set among the trees and overlook a beautiful meadow. There's a restaurant and a bar. As with Tourist Hostel, you'll need to have a room booked here in advance in order to get past security at Khatiya Gate.

IN THE VILLAGE BY KHATIYA GATE

Motel Chandan

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎277220; www.motel.chandan.com; r from ₹700; 🏠) Spotless modern rooms can be nabbed for great rates if you bargain hard. Staff members are friendly and are happy to help you find travellers to share safari costs with. On the left-hand side of the main road, 200m before Khatiya Gate.

Pugmark Resort

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎277291; www.pugmarkresort.com; s/d American Plan ₹1800/2400; 🏠) Large, clean cottages are bright and airy and set around a lovely, if slightly overgrown, garden. There's a gazebo-covered campfire and a bar, and Raheel, the manager, is very knowledgeable. It's 700m down a track to the right of Khatiya Gate.

Van Vihar

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎277241; vanvihar99@yahoo.com; r ₹300-500, with AC ₹800; 🏠) Uninspiring rooms are basic, but this is probably the best-value budget option. It's 300m left of Khatiya Gate.

Machan Complex

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎252457; dm ₹30, r ₹100-300) Like staying in a tiny Indian village, Machan has rooms in different types of buildings set around a huge old banyan tree. There are dorms, very basic rooms in a mud-and-brick hut (₹100), mud-hut doubles (₹200) and larger rooms with sit-down toilets in a still-basic brick building (₹300). The owner, Anil, is a naturalist and extremely welcoming. About 1km before Khatiya Gate, on the right.

Tuli Tiger Resort

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎277221; www.tulihotels.com; American Plan s/d cottages ₹4500/5500, luxury tents ₹16,000/18,000, Jungle Plan s/d cottages ₹14,500/15,500, tents ₹23,500/24,500; 🏠@) Fabulous five-star luxury set in peaceful bamboo grounds located 4km before Khatiya gate, just outside the village of Mocha. Buses to Khatiya all stop in Mocha.

i Information

The ticket office by Khatiya Gate has **internet** (per hr ₹50; ☎6am-8pm). There's nowhere to change money.

i Getting There & Away

There are five daily buses from Khatiya Gate to Mandla (₹45, 2½ hours, 6am, 8.30am, 9am, 12.30pm & 6pm). The 6am, 12.30pm and 6pm continue to Jabalpur (₹98, 5½ hours). All apart from the 6pm swing by Kisli Gate too.

Services from Mandla Bus Stand include:

JABALPUR (₹65, three hours, regular, 4am to 9pm)

KANHA (₹45, 2½ hours, five daily, 10am, 10.15am, 11.15am, 2.30pm and 4.15pm)

NAGPUR (buses go via Pench National Park turn-off; ₹180, eight hours, regular, 8am to 11pm)

RAIPUR (₹195, eight hours, four daily, 9am, noon, 4.20pm and 9pm)

Bandhavgarh National Park

☎07653 / TIGER POP 65

If your sole reason for visiting a national park in India is to see a tiger, look no further. A couple of days at **Bandhavgarh** (www.bandhavgarhnationalpark.com; Indian/foreigner ₹1280/2280, jeep Tala Gate/Maghdhi Gate ₹1000/1500; ☎16 Oct-30 Jun) almost guarantees you a tiger sighting in this relatively small park that boasts the highest density of tigers in India. As well as the star attraction, there are also more than 40 leopards (although they are rarely seen) and more commonly sighted animals such as deer, wild boar and langur.

Like Kanha, Bandhavgarh also has a lot of budget accommodation making this a good place for independent travellers to find other people to share safari costs with.

The park takes its name from an ancient fort perched on top of 800m-high cliffs. Its ramparts provide a home for vultures, blue rock thrushes and crag martins. You can visit it on special jeep trips during the day, but you'll have to pay all the usual park entry fees.

The park is entered at the small, laid-back village of Tala, 32km from Umaria, the nearest train station.

👁 Sights & Activities

Jeep Safaris

JEEP SAFARIS

Try Kum Kum or Hotel Bagh Vihar if you want to find others with whom to share safari costs. Note, that Tala Gate (a short walk from the village) is cheaper, and has better tiger opportunities, but is sometimes fully booked by the more expensive, all-inclusive resorts. Ask

your guide the day before to try to get you one of the few VIP tickets for Tala Gate that normally go unused. Otherwise, you'll have to settle for Maghdi Gate (7km from the village). Maghdi is the gate you must use if you want to do an elephant safari (see boxed text p663), although you need to book your ticket for that at Tala Gate the day before.

Interpretation Centre MUSEUM
(admission ₹5; ☀11am-2pm & 5.30-8pm) Interesting exhibits detailing the history and legends of Bandhavgarh, plus some superb tiger photos on the 1st floor. On your right just before the village.

Sleeping & Eating

All accommodation listed here is on the main strip (or within walking distance) and has a restaurant.

Kum Kum Home GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎265324; r ₹350-400) Best budget option – rooms are basic but comfortable and come with large bathrooms and a veranda.

Jungle Inn Resort GUESTHOUSE \$\$
(☎265348; r ₹1000, with AC ₹1500; ☎) New, yellow-painted, two-storey building in the centre of the village with simple but smart, clean rooms overlooking a huge back lawn.

Tiger's Den HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎265353; www.tigerden.com; r ₹3000-3500, American Plan ₹5000-5500; ☎☎) Very smart olive-green bungalows with quality furnishings set around a lush, palm-lined garden with a gorgeous pool.

Nature Heritage Resort HOTEL \$\$
(☎265351, 265327; shalinidev@eth.net; s/d ₹2000/2500, with AC ₹2500/3000, American Plan ₹3500/4000; ☎) It's all about bamboo here, with luxury, bamboo-trim cottages, containing bamboo furniture including bamboo bed frames, set around lush gardens shaded by...yep, bamboo. Has a very pleasant open-air restaurant. It's 1km down a track opposite Kum Kum.

Hotel Bagh Vihar HOTEL \$
(☎265302, 9406754888; s/d ₹400/600) Nothing fancy, but 1st-floor rooms above the only internet cafe in the village are neat and tidy.

Kolkata Restaurant (mains ₹25-150; ☀7.30-10pm), at the end of the village before the petrol pump, does good quality Indian veg and meat dishes plus some Chinese and breakfasts. The omelettes are popular. In the centre of the village, next to Jungle

ELEPHANT RIDES

Kanha and Pench National Parks both use elephants to track tigers in the morning. Tourists on jeep safaris are then radioed in, transferred to elephants (per person Indian/foreigner ₹200/600) and led out to where the tiger is. Elephant rides typically last about 15 minutes. You get your money back if the tiger has scarpered by the time you get there.

Bandhavgarh National Park has a different system: tourists here can pre-book (a day in advance) one- or two-hour elephant rides (₹1500/3000) as part of their next day's morning safari. The usual safari costs are paid on top.

Inn Resort, **Al-Mezbaan** (mains ₹30-150) has a similar menu, friendly staff and a roadside terrace with plastic tables and chairs. Near here is the **Wine Shop** (Kingfisher ₹100; ☀9am-11pm) for all your take-away alcohol needs.

Information

There's internet access at **Yadav Cyber Café** (per hr ₹60; ☀8am-11pm), but the nearest place to withdraw money is in Umaria. From the train station, walk to the end of the road, turn right and you'll find an ATM, along with some restaurants and hotels, on your left after a few hundred metres.

Getting There & Around

There's one early-morning bus from Umaria train station to Tala Village (₹25, one hour, 6.30am). After that you'll have to either take an autorickshaw (₹300) or taxi (₹500). Alternatively, take a cycle rickshaw to Umaria bus stand (₹10, 10 minutes), from where there are one or two buses an hour to Tala (₹30).

The last bus from Tala Village back to Umaria bus stand is 7.30pm.

Train

Trains from Umaria include the 18477 *Utkal Express* to Delhi (Nizamuddin); (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹316/866/1181, 17 hours, 8.50pm) via Gwalior (11 hours), Agra (14 hours) and Mathura (15 hours), and the 18234 *Narmada Express*, which goes to Jabalpur (₹80/261/352, 4½ hours, 4.20pm) before continuing to Bhopal (12 hours), Ujjain (16½ hours) and Indore (18½ hours).

There's one daily train to Varanasi, but it's at 4.30am (15160 *Sarnath Express*; ₹206/547/750,

12 hours). Trains to Satna (from where you can also catch buses to Khajuraho (p633), are equally inconvenient, the least sleep-depriving being the 51754 *Chirmiri-Rewa Passenger* (sleeper ₹80, 3½ hours, 1am).

For Chhattisgarh, there are two daily trains to Raipur, the best being the 15159 *Sarnath Express* (₹173/455/621, eight hours, 10.18pm)

An alternative to Umaria is Katni, a busier railway junction from where there are direct trains to places like Jabalpur, Satna and Varanasi. You can catch a direct bus to Katni (₹50, three hours, three daily, 6.30am, 8am and 2pm) from Tala Mall, 3km before Tala Village.

Pench Tiger Reserve

📍07695 / TIGER POP 33

The third of Madhya Pradesh's trio of well-known tiger parks, **Pench** (www.penchnationalpark.com; Indian/foreigner ₹1230/2230, jeep ₹1000-1500; 🕒16 Oct-30 Jun) is made up mostly of teak-tree forest rather than sal and so has a different flavour than nearby Kanha or Bandhavgarh. It also sees fewer tourists so, as you're driving around the park, you'll often feel like you have the whole forest to yourself. Tigers are fewer too, but are generally spotted every few days. For elephant rides, see the boxed text on p663.

👁️ Sights & Activities

Jeep Safaris

JEEP SAFARIS

A lack of budget accommodation means it's tough to find other independent travellers to share jeep costs with. Kipling's Court is your best bet. Otherwise, try hanging around the park gate and keep your fingers crossed that a jeep comes along with passengers who aren't on an all-inclusive package. As at the other tiger parks, there are morning (sunrise to 10am) and afternoon (3pm to sunset) safaris.

🛏️ Sleeping & Eating

All of these hotels have restaurants.

Mowgli's Den

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(📍232832; s/d ₹1600/2800, American Plan ₹2200/4000) A nice choice for families; the reception and restaurant are set around a lush lawn with children's playground, tyre swing, duck pond and rabbit hutch. Log cabin-lookalike concrete huts come with delightful wrought-iron furniture and huge circular bathrooms with Jacuzzi-sized sunken baths. There's no TV to spoil the natural sounds of the jungle, and when you turn off the lights to sleep, a fluorescent night sky magically appears on your bedroom ceiling. It's 1km past the village of Turia.

Kipling's Court

GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$

(📍232830; kpench@mptourism.com; dm/s/d American Plan ₹700/2290/2890, with AC s/d ₹3290/3890; 🍷) Considering prices include all meals, the large dorms here are good value. There are two, with five beds each. They're both in tip-top condition and share a large clean shower area. The private cottages aren't bad either and are dotted around well-kept gardens. Also has a bar. It's 2km past Turia, about 1km before the park gate.

Tuli Tiger Corridor

HOTEL \$\$\$

(📍232859, 09981994116, Nagpur office 07122534784; www.tulihotels.com; cottage/tent American Plan ₹10,000/18,000; 🍷🍷🍷) Extravagance by the bucketload in exquisite cottages with verandas and luxury tents with private lawns. There's also a gorgeous pool, a spa and massage centre, and a bar. It's 500m past Mowgli's Den.

📍 Information

Buses running between Nagpur and Jabalpur will drop you at Khawasa, which is about 12km east of the small crossroads village of Turia, beyond which you'll find the accommodation we list here. The main gate to the park is about 3km beyond Turia. The nearest airport and major train station is in Nagpur.

There's nowhere to change money and no reliable internet access.

📍 Getting There & Away

Regular buses, day and night, link Khawasa with Nagpur (₹50, two hours) and Jabalpur (₹130, five hours, 7am to 11pm). Shared jeeps (₹10) run between Khawasa and Turia when full.

You can go to Kanha National Park from Khawasa without going all the way to Jabalpur or Mandla. Flag down any north-bound bus to Seoni (₹30, one hour) then take a Mandla-bound bus to Chiraidongri (₹60, 2½ hours) where you can catch buses to Khatiya Gate (₹25, one hour, last bus 9pm).

CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh is remote, its public transport system is poor and its tourist infrastructure outside the main cities is almost nonexistent, but for the intrepid traveller, time spent here may well prove to be the highlight of your trip to this part of India. The country's most densely forested state is blessed with natural beauty – waterfalls and unspoilt nature reserves abound. More interestingly, though, it is home to 42 different tribes whose pointillist paintings and spindly sculptures are as

vivid as the colourful *haats* (markets) that take place across the region, particularly around Jagdalpur in Bastar.

Chhattisgarh is one of the eastern states associated with the Naxalite guerrillas (an ultra-leftist political movement that began in Naxal Village, West Bengal), but they rarely stray from their remote hideouts on Chhattisgarh's northern and southern borders.

Raipur

📍0771 / POP 700,113

Chhattisgarh's ugly capital is a centre for the state's steel industry and, apart from being a day trip away from Raipur, has little in the way of tourist attractions. The Chhattisgarh Tourism Board head office is worth visiting here, though.

🍴 Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Jyoti

HOTEL \$

📍2428777; Pandri; s/d from ₹400/500, with AC from ₹750/900; 🏠) A tranquil retreat after a long bus journey. Rooms are well looked after and the manager is helpful. Right opposite the bus stand.

Hotel Radhika

HOTEL \$\$

📍2233806; Jaistambh Chowk; r from ₹550, with AC from ₹1000; 🏠) A centrally located one-stop point for all your needs – a bank opposite, an ice-cream parlour below, a thali restaurant above and two bars next door. What more could you need? Rooms vary from basic budget jobs to decent AC midrangers. Book ahead – it's popular.

Girnar Restaurant

INDIAN \$\$

(Hotel Radhika, Jaistambh Chowk; mains ₹70-170; 🕒11am-10pm) This 40-year-old restaurant serves good-quality Indian food. It's right opposite Hotel Radhika reception. Upstairs, the separate **thali restaurant** (unlimited thali ₹85; 🕒11.30am-3.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm) is wonderful.

Supreet Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(Pandri; mains ₹30-70; 🕒9am-10.30pm) South Indian breakfasts and tasty veg mains at this cheap and cheerful place near the bus stand. Turn left out of the bus stand and it's 500m along on your left.

📍 Information

There are ATMs outside the bus and train stands.

Chhattisgarh Tourism Board head office
📍9425811615, 4066415; www.chhattisgarh

THE VENERABLE LAXMAN TEMPLE

A possible day trip from Raipur, **Sirpur** is home to dozens of ruined Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries, all dotted around the village and surrounding countryside. Many of the excavations are works in progress. All are free to see apart from the star of the show, the 7th-century **Laxman Temple** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; 🌅dawn-dusk), one of the oldest brick temples in India.

Buses from Raipur bus stand drop you at Sirpur Mudh (₹40, two hours), a junction 17km from Sirpur where you'll have to wait for a bus or shared jeep (₹10, 25 minutes) to the village. For Laxman Temple, turn right past the snack stalls and keep walking for 1km. It's on the left, past the petrol pump.

tourism.net; beside Sibbal Palace Hotel, GE Rd; 🕒10.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; train station 📍6456336; 🕒10am-5pm) Gives statewide advice and can help organise tribal visits, transport, accommodation and guides.

Internet cafe (per hr ₹10; 🕒9.30am-10pm) Turn right out of the bus stand and it's 500m along on your right.

State Bank of India 📍2535176; Jaistambh Chowk; 🕒10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat) Opposite Hotel Radhika. Changes travellers cheques and cash, and has an ATM.

📍 Getting There & Around

Air

Air India 📍4060942; Pandri; 🕒10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) flies daily to Mumbai (₹5500, 3½ hours) via Bhubaneswar (₹3000, 50 minutes), and to Delhi (₹5500, 2½ hours) via Nagpur (₹3000, 40 minutes). Turn left out of the bus stand and the office is 1km along on your left, just past the level crossing. **King-fisher** 📍2535322; Lal Ganga Shopping Mall; 🕒9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) flies daily to Delhi and Kolkata (₹5700). Lal Ganga Shopping Mall is 200m from Hotel Radhika.

An autorickshaw to the airport, 15km out of town, costs ₹100 to ₹150.

Bus

The government bus ticket office is invariably unmanned so it's far easier to use private bus companies, which all operate out of the bus stand area too. Mahendra Travels, with a ticket

desk directly opposite the bus stand, where the Jagdalpur buses leave from, is reliable.

Between government- and private-run buses you'll find frequent departures to Jagdalpur (seat/sleeper ₹210/270, seven hours, 10.45am to midnight), and a few early morning and late evening buses to both Jabalpur (₹280, 11 hours) and Nagpur (₹220, eight hours).

Rickshaws

A cycle-rickshaw or autorickshaw between the bus stand and train station costs ₹25/50. Shared autos (₹10) ply the same route as well as the main GE Rd between Jaistambh Chowk and Chhattisgarh Tourism's head office (₹10).

Train

Useful trains include the 18237 *Chhattisgarh Express* to Delhi's Nizamuddin station (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹398/1090/1502, 27½ hours, 4.20pm) via Nagpur (5½ hours), Bhopal (14½ hours), Jhansi (19½ hours), Gwalior (21½ hours) and Agra (24 hours), and the 12859 *Gitanjali Express* to Kolkata's Howrah station (₹323/852/1159, 13 hours, 11.35pm).

Jagdalpur

📍07782 / POP 103.123

The friendly capital of the Bastar region is an ideal base for exploring tribal Chhattisgarh (see boxed text, p668). The town itself hosts a *haat* every Sunday where you'll see Adivasis (tribespeople) buying, selling and bartering alongside town traders, but it's in the surrounding villages where Adivasi life can be fully appreciated. Some villages are extremely remote, and only really accessible with a guide. Others, though, are just a bus ride away

FANCY A BITE?

Red ants are more than just a painful nuisance to the Bastar tribes. Known as *chapura*, they also play an important role in food and medicine. They are often eaten live, served on a leaf with white ant eggs. Alternatively, villagers grind them into a paste and mix them with chilli to make chutney. The bodies of *chapura* contain formic acid believed to have useful medicinal qualities. If suffering from a fever, locals will sometimes put their hand into an ants nest, allowing it to be bitten hundreds of times so that the acid is administered into their bloodstream. Paracetamol for the hardcore.

and, particularly on market days (see boxed text, p667), can be explored independently. For eight particularly lively days in October, Jagdalpur's streets transform into race tracks as immense, home-made chariots are pitted against each other in an unusual climax to the 75-day festival of Dussehra (see p611).

Sanjay Market, which hosts the Sunday *haat*, is the heartbeat of Jagdalpur: Hotel Rainbow is opposite, while Main Rd, a lively shopping street, is 200m away (turn left out of the market, then first right). The bus stand and train station are 3km and 4km south respectively (₹15 and ₹20 in a cycle-rickshaw).

👁 Sights

Anthropological Museum

MUSEUM

(Chitrakote Rd; admission free; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Old-fashioned museum with fascinating collection of artefacts (tools, jewellery, musical instruments) collected from tribal villages in the 1970s and 80s. Cycle-rickshaw from the centre of town, cost ₹40 to ₹50. Shared autorickshaws from the Chitrakote Rd junction near Sanjay Market cost ₹10.

🏠 Sleeping & Eating

If the following are full, there are a couple of OK hotels opposite Shabari emporium.

Hotel Rainbow

HOTEL \$\$

(📍221684; hotelrainbow@indiatimes.com; s/d from ₹495/550, with AC from ₹700/825; 🕒) Even the cheap, non-AC rooms are huge and well furnished in this good-value hotel, while the restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹150; open 7am to 10.30pm) is one of the best in town. Opposite Sanjay Market. Twenty-four-hour checkout.

Hotel Chetak

HOTEL \$

(📍223503; s/d ₹325/425, with AC ₹625/725; 🕒) Handy for the bus stand, tidy rooms are smaller than Rainbow's but clean enough. Has a (very) low-lit bar-restaurant (mains ₹40 to ₹130, beer ₹110; open 10am to 10.30pm). Turn right out of the bus stand and walk 100m.

🛍 Shopping

Shabari

HANDICRAFTS

(Chandi Chowk; 🕒11am-8pm Mon-Sat) A fixed-price government emporium selling Adivasi handicrafts from small, spindly iron figures (₹20) to more expensive, heavy bell-metal statues. From the Sanjay Market end of Main

BASTAR HAATS – HOW TO FIND ADIVASI MARKETS

Most haats (markets) run from around noon to 5pm. There are many markets – these are just some of the more popular ones. Ask at the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board in Raipur (p665) for details. Shared jeeps normally hang around markets to take people back to Jagdalpur.

WHEN	WHERE	DISTANCE FROM JAGDALPUR	BUS FROM JAGDALPUR	WHY GO?
Mon	Tokapal	23km	₹13, 30min	To buy bell-metal craftwork from Ghadwa Adivasis
Tue	Pakhnar	70km	No direct bus	Beautiful forest setting
Wed	Darbha	40km	₹30, 1hr	Attended by Bhurwa Adivasis
Thu	Bastar	18km	₹25, 30min	Easy to reach from Jagdalpur
Fri	Nangur	35km	No direct bus	Attended by distant forest Adivasis
	Nagarnar	18km	No direct bus	Chance to see colourful Bhatra Adivasis
Sat	Kuknar	65km	₹45, 2hr	Bison-Horn Maria stronghold
Sun	Jagdalpur	-	-	Central city location, open late into the evening
	Chingitarai	52km	No direct bus	Open, meadow setting
	Pamela	12km	₹10, 20min	If you feel inclined to see animated crowds bet on cockfighting

Rd, take the third right and continue for 500m. Opposite the Bank of Baroda ATM.

i Information

Internet Garden (Main Rd; per hr ₹20; ☺8.30am-10.30pm) lets you hook up your laptop and is walking distance from Sanjay Market. Turn left, take the first right (Main Rd) and it's 500m on your left. There's nowhere to change money, but there's an ATM opposite Shabari emporium, and others around town.

Contact the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board in Raipur (p665) to arrange a guide to help with trips to tribal areas of the Bastar region, or arrange your own (p667).

i Getting There & Away

Bus

There are regular services to Raipur (seat/sleeper from ₹210/290, seven hours, 4.30am to midnight), via Kondagaon (₹55, 1½ hours).

Buses to Chitrakote Falls (₹30, 1½hrs) leave from Anumapa Takij, a local cinema about 2km (cycle-rickshaw ₹10) from the bus stand. From Hotel Rainbow, turn left then take the first right and buses, plus shared jeeps, will be on your left.

Train

There's only one train here, but it's a good'un. The 58502 *Kirandul-Visakhapatnam* heads over

the scenic Eastern Ghats on India's highest broad gauge line to Visakhapatnam (sleeper/1st class ₹102/384, 11 hours) on the Andhra Pradesh coast, via Koraput (₹80/199, three hours) for connections into Orissa. It leaves Jagdalpur daily at 9.50am. In the opposite direction, the 58501 arrives in Jagdalpur at 4.35pm. **Train reservations** (☺8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) can be made at the train station, a ₹10 cycle-rickshaw ride from the bus stand.

Around Jagdalpur

You can get to many local Adivasi villages by bus – this is certainly an option on market days – but some are pretty inaccessible, and if you want to actually meet tribespeople, rather than just look at them, a guide is essential as a translator if nothing else. They can also help you arrange homestays. **Awesh Ali** (☎9425244925; aweshali@gmail.com; per day ₹1000) comes highly recommended. Contact him directly, or go through the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (p665). A car and driver will cost ₹800 per day plus diesel (about ₹50 per 10km).

HAATS

These colourful **markets** are the lifeblood of tribal Chhattisgarh, and visiting them is

THE EIGHT TRIBES OF BASTAR

- » Bhatra – Women are distinguished by their particularly colourful saris and an abundance of jewellery, including their distinctive gold, conical nose studs.
- » Bhurwa – Men wear simple headscarves wrapped around their foreheads, often coloured red and white.
- » Bison-Horn Maria – Famed for their distinctive double-horned headdress worn during festivals.
- » Ghadwa – The bell-metal specialists of Bastar.
- » Dorla – The only tribe to make their homes from the branches and leaves of trees found in the remote forests of the far south of Chhattisgarh (instead of mud thatch).
- » Halba – Excellent farmers, taller in stature than other Adivasis. Men often only wear a loincloth.
- » Hill Maria or Abhuj Maria – Extremely remote tribe whose people very rarely venture out from their villages in the dense forests of the Bastar Hills.
- » Muria – Known for the huge amount of jewellery worn by both men and women.

an excellent way to get a taste of Bastar's vibrant Adivasi culture. Different tribes walk up to 20km to trade everything from their distinctive, almost fluorescent, saris to live red ants. Called *chapura* (see boxed text, p666) these ants are sold as food, eaten live (yes, still crawling and biting; ₹5 per leaf if you're interested) off a leaf. More appetising perhaps are *bobo* (rice and lentil cakes; ₹3) or *bhajiya* (fried lentil powder; ₹3), both eaten with a spicy relish.

The large piles of what look like squashed dates are in fact dried *mahuwa*, a type of flower, either eaten fresh, or dried then boiled to create steam which is fermented to produce a potent liquor, the favourite tippie of many Bastar Adivasis.

For more information on *haats*, see the boxed text (p667).

ADIVASI VILLAGES

There are more than 3500 villages in Bastar. **Earrakote**, 3.5km beyond Tokapal, is a mixed-tribe village, made up largely of Ghadwa, specialists in the art of bell-metal craftwork. The skill has been passed down through generations, in some instances for as long as 300 years. A number of family members are involved in the process, from the initial clay moulding and melting of scrap metal to the painstaking job of covering the moulds in wax thread, a part of the process which is unique to Bastar. Awesh Ali (p667) can put you in touch with families here who will put you

up for the night in exchange for scrap metal or wax, which you can buy for them in Jagdalpur.

CHITRAKOTE FALLS

India's broadest waterfall (300m), two-thirds the size of Niagara, is at its roaring best just after the rains, but beautiful all year round, particularly at sunset. When the water is low, it's possible to paddle in pools at the top of the drop. Take extreme care.

In the river below the falls you can swim or get a local fisherman to row you up to the spray (₹25). Take the steps that lead down from the garden of the government-only hotel.

Chitrakote Log Huts (☎07859200194, 9993854165; cabins ₹1600; 🏠), with comfortable AC cabins (some with fantastic views of the falls), is a peaceful place to stay. The eyesore of a restaurant does simple dishes (from ₹30) plus tea and coffee, and its veranda is a nice place to sit and admire the views.

The last bus back to Jagdalpur is at 4pm.

KONDAGAON

(☎07786 / POP 26,898

Some 76km north of Jagdalpur is a craft complex run by NGO **Saathi** (☎242852, 9425259152; saathibastar@yahoo.co.in; Kondagaon; training & daily board ₹500, weekly materials ₹500; ☀8am-6pm Mon-Sat), encouraging Adivasis in the production of terracotta, woodcarving and metalwork. You can visit crafts people at work, there's a shop and training can be given. All Raipur-Jagdalpur buses go through Kondagaon.

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