

Lonar Lake: One of a Kind

Only a few people have heard of Lonar, possibly one of Maharashtra's best-kept secrets, where scientific mystery meets centuries-old religion and folklore



The Place

Lonar, a small village 3 hours east of Aurangabad boasts the world's only known basaltic impact crater lake, surrounded by **mysteries**: How does it support micro-organisms rarely found elsewhere? Compasses stop working in certain areas of the lake...

Lonar is also home to **ancient temples**, most now abandoned. Most notable, the Daitya Sudhan temple, with Khajuraho-type sculptures.

A haven for bird-watchers, Lonar has many forms of **wildlife**, including cinkara, peafowl, and gazelles



Getting there

Lonar is a 3-hour drive from Aurangabad, which can be reached by rail, road, or air from Mumbai and other cities.

Travel facts: **Nearest airport:** Aurangabad, 122 kms. **Nearest railway Station:** Jalna, 90 kms

Road distances: Mumbai-Aurangabad-Jalna-Lonar: 600 Km; Buldhana-Lonar: 95 Km; Mehakar-Lonar: 23 Km; Aurangabad-Lonar: 145 Km.

The **MTDC guest house**, about a kilometer from the town center is the best accommodation option, but there are low budget hotels available in the town. Keep in mind that Lonar is a small town, and amenities may be limited.

Some people find it best to stay in Aurangabad, and go to Lonar on a day trip. The **Manmandir Executive** and the **Hotel Windsor Castle** are worth checking out.



Where to stay



Things to do

- **Trek** to the Crater Lake
- **Bird-watching** can be rewarding with many species of local and migratory birds to be seen
- **Ancient abandoned temples** offer many hours of absorbing sightseeing



Khajjiar, Himachal: Queen of the Mountains



The Place

This hill station in Himachal Pradesh, 2000 m above sea level, is on a small plateau with a small lake in the middle. It is surrounded by meadows and forests. It was dubbed

the “mini-Switzerland of India” by Willy T. Blazer, Head of Chancery of Switzerland in India.



Getting there

By Air: Gaggal airport, 122 kms away, is connected to De-

lhi, Chandigarh and Kulu. **By Rail:** Pathankot is the nearest railhead, 118 kms away. **By Road:** Khajjiar is well-connected by road to all major towns in Himachal Pradesh. There are



Where to stay

many budget hotels on the Chamba-Khajjiar road. **Himachal Pradesh tourism** runs a hotel and a few cottages available to visitors. **The Forest Department and the PWD** also have rest houses. Some private hotels such as **The Deodhar, a deluxe hotel** are also available. Investigations demonstrate lectures



Things to do

- **Khajjiar lake** is the most popular spot in Khajjiar
- Activities like **paragliding and zorbing**
- **Wildlife sanctuary** is worth a visit

Gokarna, Karnataka:

Beaches and temples



The Place

Gokarna is famous for its temples and the **Om Beach**. Not far away, the Western Ghats form a backdrop to the pristine, sparsely populated beaches. Apart from its temples, Gokarna offers many different activities: snorkelling, parasailing, etc.



Getting there

- **By rail:** Ankola (20 kms) is the nearest major railway station. The Konkan Railway has a station (Gokarna Road) about 8 kms away.

- **By Road:** Gokarna is 10 km from the NH17 highway connecting Mumbai and Kochi.

- **By air:** The nearest airport in Dabolim, in Goa, 140 kms away



Where to stay

Gokarna was very popular at one time with the backpacking European budget traveler. In those days, the accommodation was mainly basic beach shacks.

Now however, the class of visitor has changed, and it has become popular with wealthy young Indians from Bengaluru and Mumbai. The accommodation is no longer the basic beach hut. Most have upgraded to concrete buildings and several 4-star establishments have come up.

The season (October to February) can be quite crowded so booking in advance is a good idea.



Things to do

- **Banana boat-rides:** tugged along behind another boat
- **Snorkeling:** underwater swimming
- **Parasailing** on Om beach



Kalimpong, West Bengal

Himalayan Vistas



and 50 km, respectively



The Place

Close to both Darjeeling and Siliguri, Kalimpong is an attractive place for tourists because of its pleasant climate. It is famous for its flower market, especially the wide variety of orchids. There are a number of Buddhist monasteries to be seen as well, as well as adventure sports such as white-water rafting.



Getting there

By air: The closest airport is at, Bagdogra 44 km;

By rail: New Jalpaiguri station is the nearest station at a distance of 77 kms. New Jalpaiguri is connected with kolkata and all major points in the Indian rail network

By Road: Kalimpong is accessible from Gangtok as well as from Darjeeling 75km



Where to stay

There is a range of options from **homestays** to budget, mid-range and luxury **hotels**.

To enjoy Kalimpong, one must stay at least two nights; it can also be used as a base from which to visit Darjeeling and Gangtok.

• Choices include the **Himalayan Hotel**, **The Garden Reach**, and others.



Things to do

- **White-water rafting**
- **Trekking**
- **Mountain Biking**
- **Bird-watching**

