

Love in india's heartland

Pachmarhi is the perfect romantic retreat—its natural beauty is almost sacred and elevates mind, body and soul

The great Rabindranath Tagore once spoke about trees as being the 'Earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven.' If there's one place on earth where you can experience this emotion, it is in Pachmarhi, the incredibly verdant hill-station in the heart of India, Madhya Pradesh.

Nature's bounty manifests itself in all corners of this little hill town. The rich stillness permeates your soul; the sounds are largely nature's own—from the cascading waterfalls, to the gentle murmur of brooks and the bark of a deer as it forewarns its kind of a lurking predator. In Pachmarhi, dense, green mantles of sal, jamun and wild bamboo grace the mountain tops, which turn scarlet at the break of dawn.

Romance weaves its way down bridle paths that open into quiet

forest glades and bamboo groves. It exists in the riot of colour—the red sandstone—that envelops the valleys and gorges, and the sudden flash of azure as you come upon a hidden pool in the maze of gorges.

For wildlife watchers, Pachmarhi affords a fascinating glimpse into the animal and bird kingdoms. The forests and parks of Pachmarhi, Satpura and Bori, which are part of a unique Central Indian Highland ecosystem, are home to the bison, tiger, leopard, bear, sambar, chital, gaur, wild boar, four-horned deer, chinkara, blue-bull and a rich variety of birds. The Satpura National Park, set up in 1981, is a sprawling 524-square kilometre sanctuary that spreads through dense forest of evergreen sal, teak and bamboo.

Discovered accidentally by a captain of the British Army, James Forsyth, in 1857, this saucer-shaped valley soon became a favourite haunt of the British Raj officers. Fortunately, the architecture in this

green town complements its beauty. The churches, cemeteries, and the many thatched roofs of colonial homes blend well with the peaks and troughs of the valley.

HOLD THESE MEMORIES

Here are some of the fascinating places to see and treasure:

The Pandav Caves are five ancient dwellings excavated in the sandstone rock in a low hill. Pachmarhi derives its name from these caves which, as the legend goes, once provided sanctuary to the five Pandav brothers. These caves are now protected monuments.

Pachmarhi is an archaeological treasure-house, with cave shelters in the Mahadeo Hills exhibiting an astonishing richness in rock paintings. Most of these have been dated to 500-800 AD, but the earliest paintings are an estimated 10,000 years old.

Dhuandhar, approached from the footpath to Apsara Vihar, has paintings mostly in white and includes a group of archers with the typical Gond bun and hooped earrings. Bharat Neer has animal paintings, pottery shards and microliths. Asthachal has four shelters with paintings, while in the north of Jambu Dwip valley there are about six shelters with many paintings of animals and human figures, including a detailed battle scene. Harper's Cave and the Chieftain's Cave have incredible

paintings showing fine details.

Priyadarshini, or Forsyth Point, is the place from where Pachmarhi was discovered by Captain Forsyth in 1857. Jamuna Prapat (Bee Fall) is a spectacular fall in the stream which provides drinking water to Pachmarhi. The bathing pools here are very popular. Handi Khoh is an impressive ravine with a 300-foot high precipice and dramatically steep sides. Dhoopgarh is the highest point in the Satpura range, with a magnificent view of the surrounding ranges. Rajat Prapat is a huge waterfall, which may be accessed by a steep, ten-minute walk over rocks and boulders, to the top of the Big Fall.

For the spiritually inclined, Mahadeo Hill has a shrine with an idol of Lord Shiva and an impressive Shivlinga; the east side has an excellent cave shelter with beautiful paintings. Chauragarh, four kilometres away, is crowned with emblems of Mahadeo worship.

Both the Catholic Church as well as Christ Church are European architecture at its best, with incredible stained-glass windows. The nave of Christ Church has no pillar for support; the baptismal font is a rare brass piece. The bell is as old as the church (1857), and its chimes can be heard from afar.

Pachmarhi's idyllic beauty draws visitors in droves and to cater to their comfort are a slew of elegant and comfortable hotels.

LL BUREAU



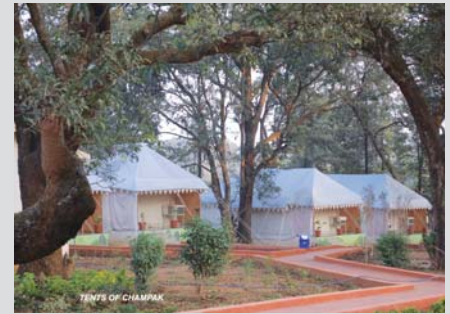
AC Deluxe room at Satpura Retreat

ROMANTIC STAYS

Stay at any one of these for a memorable experience:

Champak Bungalow

The first thing you notice about this property is the sprawling, well-laid out garden, with tall champak trees. The charming and stately bungalow, with its four heritage rooms, is a throwback to the old colonial buildings. The other guest rooms are housed in cottages. The tent cottages are ideal for families. They are spacious, with attached dressing rooms and bath rooms. The staff are extremely courteous and helpful in arranging local sightseeing tours. There is a small lake adjacent to the property, where one can go boat riding.



Glen View

This is a heritage resort with an attractive ambience. Set amidst lush landscaping, the 25 well-appointed rooms, including 15 Standard Rooms, 6 Deluxe Rooms and 4 Tents, have spectacular views. In addition to fine dining, which includes a multi-cuisine restaurant and a well-stocked bar, the resort houses a well-maintained conference room.



Glen View at Pachmarhi

Satpura Retreat

This hotel offers luxury and relaxation in all its spacious rooms. All modern amenities are provided, but most importantly, what singles this place out is the warm hospitality offered by the hotel staff, which makes it a home away from home.



Satpura Retreat at Pachmarhi