



Machan in Lonavla has unique tree houses that are 30 to 45 ft above the forest. The place has no cellular network, or internet connection, which makes the stay a true 'getaway' from the humdrum. Run strictly on sustainable resources, in Machan one can go for forest treks, birdwatching and star gazing.

Sanjay Wadhvani

Summers are here, and so is the upcoming long weekend. Make the most of it and head out before it gets too sunny for comfort. Ashish Phadnis and Navjyoti Dalal give a list of places that you can explore. Our picks have a destination for everyone – from adventure junkies, to family-time-lovers, to lovers. So head out and soak in the splendour

RAJMACHI FORT, LONAVLA

It is one of the most sought-after monsoon destinations for trekkers for its scenic beauty, dense green forests and plenty of waterfalls. However, even in the summer, several adventure enthusiasts visit it to enjoy the rugged mountains. The trek begins from Tungarli dam in Lonavla. A broad path leads one to the fort after a 16-km walk. The path runs around a deep valley through the woods. The route is a paradise for bird-watchers – golden oriole, scarlet minivet, malbar grey hornbill and crested serpent eagle are seen here. Many adventure enthusiasts prefer this route for mountain biking. It takes about four hours on foot and about 2.5 hours of cycling. Udhewadi, a small village situated at the fort's footstep, provides good accommodation and food facilities. On your way back, you can choose steep descending route towards Karjat via Kondivade village and visit the Kondhana caves, famous for their beautiful carvings and sculptures.

HOW TO GET THERE: One can follow the Pune-Lonavla-Tungarli Dam-Udhewadi route, which is about 78 km.

KARNALA FORT, PANVEL

It is known for its famous bird sanctuary and is a great place for nature lovers and amateur trekkers. With a large number of bird species, thick jungles, picturesque surroundings, the fort makes the visit a truly memorable one. The forest is spread over 4.48 sq km and is home to several kinds of trees including kulu, teak, koshimb, mango, asana and kalam. Apart from the remnants, the main attraction here is the pinnacle, 'Thumb of Karnala' (Lingoba in local language). Several trekkers visit Karnala for rock-climbing and rappelling activities. Reaching the pinnacle is an experience of a life-time.

HOW TO GET THERE: Take the Pune-Panvel route; the fort is 12 km away from Panvel (Shirdhon route).

SINDHUDURG, KONKAN

The beaches here have been identified as an ideal site for snorkeling. Underwater, one can explore the Sargassum forest, hard corals, and colourful fishes like the red snapper, zebras, damselfishes, blue line and groupers (yes, they're all fishes), along with amazing underwater rockscapes. Even a non-swimmer can enjoy the thrill with the help of trained guides, who are easily available here. However, scuba diving requires a little training and can be done after a short training course. When not under the water, you can explore the Sind-



SANDHAN VALLEY, SAHYADRI RANGE

hudurg fort, Devbag, Tarkarli and Vengurla rocks. Other attractions include the dolphin safari, night fishing with local fishermen with gill nets, water sports at Tarkarli, and houseboat stay at Devbag. Nivati and Bhogve beaches offer white sand and beautiful blue water lagoon making it an ideal spot for swimming, sunbathing and enjoying a picnic.

HOW TO GET THERE: There are different routes one can take to reach Malvan from Pune, however, the tourists are recommended to take the Kolhapur-Gaganbawada-Vaibhavwadi-Talere (NH 17)-Kankavali-Kasal to Malvan route.

KUNDALIKA RIVER, KOLAD

It is an ideal place for a day's rafting trips and short overnight trips. Kundalika rafting is the only white water rafting in the state and the river is considered as one of the fastest flowing rivers in Western India. A one-and-a-half-hour run down a 14-km river stretch of exciting rapids is a wild ride. The river originates at a small town called Bhira, and is fed by the excess water from the Mulshi dam project. Adventure lovers have found a unique way of enjoying the release of the dam water. Rafting of grade II and III can be experienced when water is released from the dam. Rafting operations base, at Sutarwadi, is 100 km from Pune. One can also try waterfall rappelling and kayaking.

HOW TO GET THERE: Take the road to Mulshi dam and then take Sajey village route.

The valley is located in a remote part of Bhandardara (near Samrad village). This water carved valley is 50 to 150 ft deep and about 2 to 3 km long. Experience the heart-throbbing crossing of deep water (4 to 6 ft) pools on the way. Some adventure groups conduct rappelling activities which include descending rock patches to reach the valley's base. It is also called the valley of shadow as it hardly allows sunrays to reach its base. If history excites you, then visit the ancient Amruteswar temple (at Ratanwadi), Ratangad fort. One can also enjoy sight seeing at Bhandardara dam, Khuta pinnacle and Kalsubai (the highest peak in Maharashtra).

HOW TO GET THERE: Take the Pune-



MACHAN, LONAVLA

Machan's highlights are the unique tree houses that are 30 to 45 ft above the forest. The place has no cellular network, or internet connection, which makes the stay a true 'getaway' from the humdrum. Run strictly on sustainable resources, Machan is slightly steep on the price front. One can soak himself in nature, go for forest treks, birdwatching (this is the most active time for birds by the way), and star gazing (you will be surprised to spot many constellations). During the day, you can explore some historical forts and caves that dot the vicinity like Koraigad fort, Lohagad fort, and Karla and Bhaja caves (dating back to 2nd and 1st century BC).

HOW TO GET THERE: Located at Jambulne, near Lonavla, Machan is a 1.5-hour drive from Pune. Take the Mumbai-Pune Expressway and then the Khandala exit, follow the Aamby Valley Road and turn left after Cloud 9 resort and then towards Essar Agrotech, the road will lead you to Machan. You can contact reservations@themachan.com or 07303158658, 09594053113.

DESTINATION FUN

Clockwise: The Sandhan Valley near Samrad village is also called the valley of shadow as it hardly allows sunrays to reach its base; paragliding can be enjoyed at Della Adventure Park in Lonavla and Kamshet; children can explore the animal kingdom like the Yorkshire pig at Japaloupe Equestrian Centre, Talegaon; mountain biking is a popular choice among adventure enthusiasts

DELLA ADVENTURE PARK, LONAVLA

Touted to be the largest adventure park in India, this is an adrenaline junkie's dream. The place offers 86 adventure activities from the conventional rappelling, and dirt bike racing, to the unconventional zorbing (four types), paintball, mountain cycling, paragliding, and trying the rocket launcher (which shoots you in the air for many metres in the sky. Don't worry you're harnessed to the ground so you're not going to get lost in the space). What's unique though is the blend of adventure with scenic beauty. Della also has enough sight-seeing opportunities. The adventure park has a resort inside, with comfortable and luxurious rooms, where one can relax after a good day's play.

HOW TO GET THERE: Located off the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, the adventure park is about 65 km from Pune. One can also take a bus ride from the city and get off at Khandala exit on the expressway, or the Lonavla market stand (if you're taking the old highway). Della is about 15 to 20 min from there. Call on 8605018362 or 020-41208856.

KAMSHET

Most of us have, at least once in our lives, wanted to fly like a bird. And this is where Kamshet comes into the picture. Barely known before the paragliding boom struck it, Kamshet is now one of the premier locations for this adventure sport. Various paragliding schools operate here, but go for a certified one. Most schools first train you in paragliding with 3 to 7 day course. We recommend Fly Nirvana and Temple Pilots. Both the schools are located in Kamshet, and offer various courses in paragliding. They also have guesthouses by the lake, so one can enjoy nature before (and after) having a bird's eye view of it while gliding.

HOW TO GET THERE: Kamshet is just 45 km from Pune and is just an hour's drive away. Contact Temple Pilots on 9970053359, and Fly Nirvana on 022-26053724, 0211-4 286287/ 286007

Letters to the editor

Speed breakers or back breakers

There is a lot of noise about hazardous speed breakers in the city, resulting even in death of commuters. The civic authorities are not alone in showing total apathy and disregard to established norms. It is shocking to see that even the Command Hospital authorities have turned a blind eye to a just about a month-old, oversized speed breaker right outside their gate on Wanvadi Road! One can already see numerous scratch marks on the speed breaker caused by the under-side of vehicles passing over it. Accidents are waiting to happen here. If a

premier, government institution is so lethargic, what can anyone expect of the blind-folded civilians?
—JAC Vincent, Pune
Don't elect criminals

This is with reference to the step aside column by Sushil Ku T 'Maligning robbers, murderers' in edition dated DNA, March 5. Social activist Arvind Kejriwal never said that parliament is full of murderers, rapists and robbers. He merely pointed out that 163 MPs have criminal records. We talk big but cannot stop criminals from being elected as people's representatives. I think the columnist is turning a blind eye towards politicians' property which is

disproportionate to their sources of income. The legislators should be paid minimum salaries with restricted privileges. They should act as servants of people and should adopt austere lifestyle. I feel pity that Sushil is not aware that the awakening of the masses was carried out by Kejriwal's mentor Anna Hazare.
—VN Wike, Pune

Controversies galore

It may be recalled that in 1999, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat was dismissed by NDA government on disciplinary grounds. The then defence minister was late George Fernandes. Now,



though the present defence minister AK Antony is averse to sacking General VK Singh or sending him on long leave prior to his retirement, the dark clouds of dismissal are gathering and surrounding General Singh as every day, more controversies are being raised against him. However, all depends on the results of the investigation of leakage of the letter to media?
—Vijay D Patil, Pune

This has reference to 'Antony was aware of Tatra scam since 2009' (DNA, March 30). It is a startling revelation that Tatra trucks were procured by BEML, the nodal agency appointed by the government to procure trucks for the Indian Army from a UK agent, and not from the Original Equipment Manufacturer in violation of defence procurement guidelines. What makes it more startling is that a written complaint about this was personally handed over by Dr D Hanumanthappa to the UPA chairperson and Congress president Sonia Gandhi in August 2009 who assured him of necessary action. The report also tells

that in a communication the defence ministry's department of defence production stated in October 2009 that the Tatra trucks deal was under investigation and this might take some time. However, nothing happened after that in spite of several letters from Dr Hanumanthappa to the leaders. It shows involvement of vested interest in the Tatra trucks deal and makes General VK Singh's disclosure about corruption in arms purchases and shortcomings in defence preparedness of the country more credible. It also adds a new dimension to the government's decision taken in Singh's date of birth (DoB) issue. The government

spokespersons are trying to say that Singh's disclosures are meant to embarrass the government after adverse decision in his DoB case, but the government is unable to deny the facts brought out by the general. He is repudiated for his integrity. The MoD meddled with his DoB issue and did not recognise the documents which are universally accepted as authenticated DoB proof, i.e., birth certificate and high school certificate by which Singh would have continued as the army chief for one more year. One cannot be faulted for smelling a strong arm dealers' lobby considering the government's stubbornness in the DoB issue.
—MC Joshi, Lucknow

The editor welcomes your feedback and views to:

SMS
DNA +91989995007
575758

WRITE
pune@dnaindia.com