1. Elora & Ajanta Caves –

ELLORA AND AJANTA CAVES are located outside of Aurangabad, in Maharashtra. It’s an eight-hour train ride from Mumbai, heading towards the geographical centre of India. The centre of India is actually quite a remote area and many tourists give it a pass, in favour of the more well-known places like Goa, Rajasthan, Kerala and Agra / the Taj Mahal.

The Ajanta Caves have five chaityas, which are basically prayer halls .Other caves are known as Viharas, which are monasteries with residents .Caves 8,9,10,12, 13, and some bits of 15 are early Buddhist caves .The caves were first discovered in 1819, when Jon Smith, a British official accidentally stumbled upon the horse-shoe shaped rock while hunting a tiger. 20 caves were built during the Vakataka dynasty, during the reign of Harisena, and at the end of his reign, these caves were abandoned. Inside the caves, you can see paintings depicting the life of Gautam Buddha, and also stories from Jataka Tales.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Ellora Caves are one of the largest rock-cut monastery cave complexes in the world. The Kailasa Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is the largest monolithic rock-cut temple in the world. It is located in cave 16.The Ellora Caves are a combination of 34 caves.The Ellora complex has 12 Buddhist caves, 17 Hindu caves, and 5 Jain caves. The Jain caves at Ellora belong to the ninth and tenth centuries and can be traced to the Digambara sect.Cave 15, which is known as Dashavatara is popular for depicting the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu.

1. Baga Beach –

Baga beach Goa is located at a westward distance of about 8 km from Mapusa. Goa Baga beach is actually an extension of Calangute beach North of Panaji. This beach along the Arabian Sea lies between Calangute and Anjuna beaches. Baga beach about 15 km from Panaji is named after Baga River which flows through this area.

Kamali is the nearest railway station near Baga beach. Regular bus service from Panaji to Mapusa is availed regularly be tourists. Baga also is approachable by cabs, cars and two wheelers from Panaji, Dabolim (airport in Goa) and Mapusa.

Baga beach in Goa is the perfect place for spending a tranquil vacation. The serenity of this wooded headland coupled with its scenic beauty in itself an attraction of Baga beach. Candlelight dinners or beach parties are attractions of this place. Tourists can enjoy traditional Goan cuisine at beachside shacks, roof top restaurants, or coffee cafes.

Baga Retreat House or Casa de Retiros dedicated to St. Francis Xavier is situated on Baga hilltop which offers a splendid view of the surrounding areas.

Water sports, fishing, and dolphin watching are the main activities for tourists traveling to Baga beach for a Indian holiday.

3.India Gate –

When Thursday 26th of January 2012 comes, India will rise and celebrate its 63rd [Republic Day](http://travelerrohan.blogspot.com/search/label/Republic%20Day) and display the world its strength at arms and diversity in culture. An integral part of the Republic Day Parade is the India Gate where the Amar Jawan Jyoti (Flame of the Immortal Soldier) is located. Every year the prime minister along with the Heads of the Armed Forces place a wreath over the tomb. After which they proceed to the [Rajpath](http://travelerrohan.blogspot.com/search/label/Rajpath) and the parade commences. The Parade starts from [Rashtrapati Bhavan](http://travelerrohan.blogspot.com/search/label/Rashtrapati%20Bhawan) and passes through India Gate to the reach the Red Fort. The India Gate is a national monument of India. Situated in the center of [New Delhi](http://travelerrohan.blogspot.com/search/label/Delhi%20Durbar), the India Gate was designed by [Sir Edwin Lutyens](http://travelerrohan.blogspot.com/search/label/Delhi%20Durbar) and was inspired by the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. It was built in 1931. Originally known as the All India War Memorial, it is an important landmark in Delhi and commemorates the 90,000 soldiers of the Indian Army who lost their lives while fighting for the British Indian Empire in World War I and the Third Anglo-Afghan War. The imposing structure has been built with red and pale sandstone and granite.

Burning in a shrine under the arch of India Gate since 1971 is the Amar Jawan Jyoti (the flame of the immortal soldier) which marks the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The shrine itself is a black marble cenotaph surmounted by a rifle standing on its barrel and crested by a soldier's helmet. Each face of the cenotaph is inscribed in gold with the words "Amar Jawan" (Immortal Warrior).  
  
This cenotaph is placed on a pedestal with four continuously burning torches on its corners. It was unveiled in 1971. After the India-Pakistan war of 1971, the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi paid homage on behalf of the whole nation on the eve of 23rd republic day (26 January 1972).

4.Dal Lake –

On the tourist trail in Kashmir, Srinagar is synonymous to Dal lake.

Which is not surprising at all. A quick glance at a map of Srinagar revealed the enormity of the Dal lake. The impact the Dal lake has on the tourists as well as the locals of Srinagar is easy to gauge. We stayed in the Lal Chowk area of Srinagar. Lal Chowk is often referred to as *Ghanta Ghar* (House of the Bell). It is a tower with a clock and a bell. With hotel lined streets and a bustling market, it is always full of action.

Once we managed to look beyond the barrage of tourists and vendors, Srinagar beyond a major tourist hub emerged before us. A beautiful sit out in the middle of the road, the Lal Chowk is ideal for some social mingling. From reading the morning newspaper to a congregation of seniors in the evening, it served its purpose well. Resting on one of its sheltered benches on a sunny day, made us feel “just like the locals”! To avoid the crowds, we left for Dal lake early in the morning. At sunrise, around Ghanta Ghar, we met two youngsters. “Welcome to Kashmir” was their ice breaker. “Please feel safe to roam around in our city. People will be happy to help you.”They advised us to use the public transport. It was day 1 for us in Kashmir and the first bit of advice we received. We took it to heart and used it happily for the rest of our couple of months in Kashmir.The walk to Dal Lake was little less than half an hour. We passed through the beautiful wide stretches of the Chinar lined Residency Road. In a park next to the Jhelum, people were going about their daily exercise routine. It was good to see women out as well. Shikara is a characteristic boat from Kashmir used to transport people and goods across the lakes in Kashmir. In Dal lake, they vie for the tourist’s attention with bright colours and bold multi coloured tapestry. It can seat 4 people. The boatman rows from the upper bow.A shikara ride in the Dal lake, though clichéd, is a must do activity in Srinagar.

5.Rann Of Kutch –

I took a few steps away from the crowds and started walking – towards “nothing”, I soon realised. There were no mountains or lakes, not even flickering lights dotting the horizon. Just a blanket of white merging into another blanket of white.

The further I walked, the further nowhere I was reaching. All I heard now was the sound of the wind and a crackle under my feet – of my shoes rubbing against salt, hard crystalline salt. This salt stretched for miles and endless miles all around. My mind now started pulling out past instances where I’ve felt this vastness before. On a boat surrounded by water and only water all around. Next are scenes from a long haul flight – when clouds are all that you see.

On the water or in the sky, this feeling of an unending landscape had made sense. But right then, my feet were firmly rooted to the ground. Yet, if I stood up it looked like I was surrounded by water. If I bent low everything looked like clouds. What exactly was happening here?

Delusions at the White Rann of Kutch start at its formation -The delusions didn’t end with our visit to White Rann of Kutch. The story of the formation of this desert of salt was even more fascinating. Post-summer as the monsoon arrives, the waters of the Gulf of Kutch flood into this desert, making the White Rann look like a massive sea. On windless days, perfect mirror reflections of the sky are seen on these “desert waters”. From around July till late October-November, this part of the desert of the Great Rann of Kutch essentially resembles a sea!

What wasn’t familiar was going through several BSF (Border Security Force) barriers to reach the salt flats. The White Rann of Kutch isn’t a place you can just walk up to. You need to acquire permission from the BSF. The timings of the visit to the White Rann is also decided by the BSF. Sunrise and sunset is the only time civilians get to enter the White Rann of Kutch. On a couple of nights before and after the full moon are also permitted by the BSF.All these permissions and restrictions sure added to the excitement. That, and the sense of ownership we felt when we were told that somewhere close beyond this sea of salt was the “border”!This closeness to the international border suddenly made the White Rann of Kutch “our salt flats”!

6.Mount Abu –

What comes to your mind when you hear about [Rajasthan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajasthan)? Sand and desert? Right? Believe me, there’s more than that. It’s just the North West part of the state that has some part in the desert, otherwise rest of state has a significant number of lakes, rivers, mountains, flora, and fauna etc.

Also to your interest, there is a hill station as well. [Mount Abu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Abu) – Located in the[Aravalli Range](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aravalli_Range) in Sirohi district is the only hill station of the state and is sometimes referred as “An oasis in the desert”. It is one of the most popular weekend gateways for the people of Rajasthan, Gujarat and other parts of the country. The weather is pleasant throughout the year except for few months of the summer season (May- July). I would suggest you go in monsoon season and months just after monsoon as the valley is lush green with some breathtaking views. Any place can be best explored by walking!! Most of the must see places in Mount Abu are at a walkable distance. Guru Shikhar and Achalgadh are few kms from the town center and can be visited by asking lift from tour buses going the same way. In my case, a traffic policeman helped me by stopping a bus and asking the driver to take me there.

Nakki Lake is one of the most important tourist attraction in Mount Abu. There is a bit of history behind the lake. It is believed that the lake was dug out overnight from Nails (Nakh) by Rasia Balam in order to complete King’s challenge, so he can marry king’s daughter. View of the sun setting over the lake is mesmerizing. Arbuda Devi is situated 3 kms from the town center and can be reached by crawling through a small opening into the cave. It is dedicated to the Goddess Durga. The temple has many beautiful statues and is worth an effort climbing about 300 steps to reach the same.

Just what I didn’t like about Mount Abu is that it was heavily crowded. May be the long weekend was the reason for the same. But let me tell you that it has nothing to do with the overall beauty of this place. The town is an amazing gift by nature. I would definitely visit the hill station again, maybe on a weekday, in hope that it would be less crowded, so I can enrich myself with the true essence of the place.

7. Marina Beach -

A lot of drastic changes have happened in past few years’ courtesy to all the technological advancement but by the grace of God some things haven’t changed and one of them is the urge to travel and explore. When it comes to beaches the urge has only increased! Going for a dive, or just lazily relaxing, soaking in the for Vitamin D, enjoying a swim or surfing, this is what comes to mind when we think of a beach and this is exactly what **Marina Beach** (Chennai) offers. **Marina Beach of Chennai** is probably the most famous beach in the country, more famous than the beaches of Goa. If anyone thinks of Chennai one creates an image of Marina Beach in their mind. The beach is pride of Chennai (formerly known as the city of Madras). What makes it famous is the fact it’s the longest beach in the country and second longest beach in the world. The turquoise crystal clear waters, the golden sand and a lot of fun activity on the beach make Marina Beach the prime tourist destination of Chennai. Marina beach is different from the rest of beaches as we rarely encounter a beach with statues of Tamil actors. The beach has become a sort of tomb for leaders like Anna and MGR.

The beach is pleasantly cool during the evenings and the smooth breeze from the ocean makes a walk very nice. During the day in the South Indian summer, it’s scorching hot and humid. Chennai has never very cool but it can get pleasant in winters and breeze on the beach a little cooler. A lot of people come to the beach for an early morning or evening walk. It is thought that around 15000 people go to the beach every day.

Marina Beach starts from Fort St George and ends at Besant Nagar and covers a length of 13 kilometres. The beach has wide foreshores with width around 300 metres. Over the last few years it has become a bit dirty with plastic bottles being littered all over the place but nonetheless it’s the most popular picnic spot in Chennai.

8. Darjeeling Hill Station –

THE HILL STATIONS OF India are famous for their romantic allure and offering respite from the heat of the plains, and among them, Darjeeling, Queen of Hill Stations, is one of the most charming. With emerald green tea gardens spreading out in every direction, Raj-era architecture and traditional hotels, one of the last remaining toy trains wending its way up to the town, and mist-swirling ambience, Darjeeling has a lot to offer visitors who are looking for something special.

I had long wanted to visit Darjeeling and when I was researching and planning my trip, I set my heart on staying at the Windamere Hotel and getting up at 4 am to drive from Darjeeling to Tiger Hill to watch the sun rise light up Kanchendzonga (also known as Kanchenjunga) and the great Himalayan range on my 50th birthday. Unfortunately, my guide Paras told me that the previous two weeks were cloudy and misty every day, and there was almost no visibility from Tiger Hill. He even suggested cancelling or postponing. But it was my birthday, and I was determined to at least try. I hardly slept due to a minor case of mountain or altitude sickness, and really didn’t want to get up at 4 am — especially since I was prepared to be disappointed. But I made the effort, and Paras was waiting for me in a jeep.

We drove one hour to Tiger Hill in the dark, and joined dozens of other people waiting on the hill, in a parking lot or on a viewing platform. Paras made sure I got a good spot, out of the wind for it was really chilly. I had a thermos of tea, the weather looked good so … I waited … and sure enough after waiting in the cold half-light for 30 or 60 minutes, the sun suddenly burst into view in the east. Everyone clapped and shouted and the white Himalayan mountains in the west — especially the massive five-peaked Kanchendzonga — started turning various glorious shades of gold and rose as the sun cleared the horizon and climbed into the sky. It is indeed one of nature’s greatest shows on earth and I felt a good way to mark a milestone birthday. I felt truly elated watching this spectacle, it was a dream come true.

9. Ooty Hills –

Perched at a height of 8,650 feet above mean sea level which is approx. 383 meter higher than Ooty is the Dodabetta peak which has a mesmerizing view. **Aside from the Doddabetta Peak being the apex of the Plateau of the Nilgiris, it likewise includes a thick forest region that covers the whole area.** The Doddabetta Peak envelops a collection of Sholas [Patches of little wet evergreen subtropical and tropical broadleaf forest] that spreads over the hollow sections of the Doddabetta slopes. **Visitors can get a panoramic view of the landscape, beautiful valleys, plains of Coimbatore and the flat highlands of Mysore from the peak.**

Visiting Botanical Garden is one of the best things to do in Ooty.**Be ready to spend about an hour as the walk is pretty mesmerizing. Having the striking view of the Dodabetta Peak as its backdrop, Marquis of Tweedale established this horticulture park in 1897.** The Botanical garden of Ooty includes a variety of fern plants, bonsai, medicinal plants and so forth.

The Bandipur Tiger Reserve is situated on the Mysore – Ooty roadways. **This keeps the recreation center on the course that is secured by various travellers and tourists, consistently.** This reserve is one of the best things to see in Ooty and ha as significant numbers of tigers and elephants. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu control this park together. The Tamil Nadu side of the recreation center is called as Mudhumalai hold. **Bandipur national park is prescribed for the acknowledgment as a legacy site which is a must visit and every Ooty travels.**

**As per the rules of being a good tourist, it is adhered by law that you cannot return from a trip to Ooty before getting a few boxes of their homemade chocolates.**The mecca for Ooty’s handmade chocolate is King Star which was built in 1942. The chocolate confectionery has more than forty delicious flavours of chocolate and also provide their customers with free samples. The chocolates are reasonably priced and quite unlike any other, you may have tried.