

## HARISHCHANDRAGAD

Harishchandragad trek is one of the most challenging treks in the western ghats of Maharashtra. A popular trek which offers a variety of adventures to all kinds of trekkers.

It is a hill fort in the Ahmednagar district situated in the Malshej Ghat. It climbs up to an altitude of 4,670 ft.

Harishchandragad is an ancient fort. Its origin is said to have been in the 6th century during the rule of the Kalchuri dynasty. But the caves which you see on the top are probably carved out in the 11th century.

The various constructions on the fort and those in the surrounding region indicate the existence of diverse cultures. Saptatheertha Pushkarni, Kedareshwar cave, Harishchandra temple and other caves are the examples for that.

Harishchandragad trek has multiple routes and each route offers a surprise to the trekkers. It is also a complete package of views once you reach the top.

### **1. An overhanging Konkan Kada(cliff) that offers a majestic view of Konkan region**

Konkan Kada overlooks the Konkan region hence the name. Kada means cliff in Marathi.

It is a standing tall natural wall that has a concave structure. Because of this structure, you can experience many natural phenomena such as vertical cloud bursts, circular rainbows also called a Brocken spectre.

The clouds nearing the cliff get sucked into the pitfall area below and thrown vertically into the sky. This creates the impression of the vertical cloud burst.

When there is a bit of mist in the valley and the sun is exactly behind the person facing the valley, a circular rainbow can be seen.

You can see one of the beautiful sunsets from the Konkan Kada. You must not miss the grand view of the valley during the sunset.

### **2. The historical spots on the top of the Harishchandragad trek**

Harishchandragad trek has many temples, Pushkarni and caves on the top. They all represent different cultures starting from the 6th century.

Harishchandreshwar temple is a glorious example of the fine art of carving sculptures out of stones that prevailed in ancient India. This temple has been carved out of a single huge rock.

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### **3. The four pillars of Kedareshwar cave temple.**

Kedareshwar cave is located on the right side of the Harishchandra temple. It has a big Shiva Linga surrounded by water. It is very difficult to reach the center, as the water inside will always be cold. The Kedareshwar temple is known for its four pillars. The four pillars represent the four yugas: Satya yuga, Treta yuga, Dvapara yuga, and Kali yuga. The three hanging pillars represent the endings of the respective yugas.

Saptateertha Pushkarni is a well-built lake located to the east of the Harishchandreshwar temple. There used to be idols of Lord Vishnu inside the temple-like structure that are on the bank of the lake. Now, they have been moved to the caves. There are many caves spread across the fort. Some of the caves are used for accommodation, and some are still well maintained.

#### **4. Panoramic view of the Naneghat region from Taramati peak**

Taramati Peak is the 4th highest peak in Maharashtra. This peak is also called Taramanchi. It is located atop of Harishchandragad plateau. From there you can see the Naneghat region and other forts near Murbad.

#### **Trail Information**

Harishchandragad trek has multiple routes. It can be approached from 3 different villages. They are from Khireswar, Pachnai and Walhivale/Belpada village.

The trails from Walhivale/Belpada village are very challenging. There are three separate trails from Belpada. They are via Nalichi Vaat, Makad Naal and Sadhle ghat. You can also do the combination of Sadhle ghat and Bhailghat. Attempt these routes only if you are an experienced trekker. You need to have climbing equipment like rope and carabiner.

If you are a beginner, take the trail that starts from Pachnai. It is the quickest and easiest trail to reach Harishchandragad fort.

The trail from Khireswar is for those who have some trekking experience. However, many trekkers prefer this route as it is a package of views and adventures.

The trail information for all the routes is given in this section.

#### **❖ Harishchandragad Trek Via Khireswar (Moderate Route)**

Khireswar trek trail has two routes, one is via Rajmarg and the other trail is via Tolar Khind.

The trail via Rajmarg has some dangerous sections. Hence it is not recommended if you do not have trekking experience.

The trail via Tolar Khind offers a beautiful view and has some challenging sections. To know the complete trail information for this route go through the explanation given below.

This trail can be divided into 3 sections.

1. Trek from Khireswar village to the forest section - 30 minutes

2. Forest section to the Tolar Khind - 1 hour 30 minutes
3. From Tolar Khind to Harishchandragad Top - 3 hours

### **Section I: [Khireswar Village](#) to the [Forest Section](#)**

**Trek distance:** 1.3 km

**Trek duration:** 30 minutes

**GPS coordinates of the starting point at Khireswar Village:** 19°22'17.00"n, 73°48'33.63"e

**GPS coordinates of the Forest Section:** 19°22'56.74"n, 73°48'24.23"e

Harishchandragad trek starts from Khireswar village. You have to walk from Khubi Phata along the Pimpalgaon dam for 5 km. It will take an hour and a half to reach the starting point from where you get down from the bus.

Just after you cross the Pimpalgaon dam, you can see a board on your left which is the starting point of the trek.

The trail from the village to the beginning of the forest section has a flat ground. You will be trekking next to the paddy field all the way to the forest.

The mighty mountains in front of you add up to your excitement. The trail from here is pretty straight forward. You can follow the same trail until you reach a junction where the forest section starts. It will take 35 minutes to reach the starting point of the forest.

### **Section II: [Forest section](#) to the [Tolar Khind](#)**

**Trek distance:** 1.8 km

**Trek duration:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**GPS coordinates of the Forest Section:** 19°22'56.74"n, 73°48'24.23"e

**GPS coordinates of the Tolar Khind:** 19°23'42.00"n, 73°48'11.02"e

From the Junction, take a right to enter the forest. You can experience a sudden change in the surroundings.

The initial section of the forest will have many small streams during the monsoon season. You can hear the gushing sound of streams, birds chirping and the rustling sound of leaves while trekking.

The trail becomes steeper as you trek in the forest. There are a few sections with loose rocks. Make sure you keep your foot carefully.

**Tip:** Wear proper trekking shoes. Carry a trekking pole as well if you have. These 2 trekking gears really help you while trekking.

Some parts of the forest trails are very narrow and can be slippery. Only one person can trek at a time. Be careful in those sections.

Continue to trek on the same trail until you see a small tea stall. It will take 1 hour 30 minutes to reach this point. This location is the starting point of the Tolar Khind.

Take a break for 10 minutes here. Drink water. If you are buying anything from the stall, make sure you do not litter the place. Carry your own tiff-in box and a mug and use them when you are buying anything from these stalls to avoid producing any waste on the trail.

### **Section III: From [Tolar Khind](#) to [Harishchandragad Top](#)**

**Trek distance:** 5 km

**Trek duration:** 3 hours

**GPS coordinates for the Harishchandragad:** 19°23'35.91"N, 73°47'42.45"E

**GPS coordinates of the Tolar Khind:** 19°23'42.00"N, 73°48'11.02"E

Once you start the trek from Tolar Khind you have to climb a big rock patch which is almost 65 to 70 degree.

There are poles and chains for support. You do not require a rope to climb. After 11 AM these poles and chains become hot which makes it difficult to hold. Make sure you cross this section as early as possible in the morning.

It will take an hour to complete this rock patch and reach a plateau. You can see the Pimpalgaon dam and Khireswar village from here.

There are 2 routes from here. The trail on the right goes to the temple through seven hills and the straight trail goes through a dense forest.

If you are trekking in a group, take the straight trail. Within an hour you will reach below the Balekilla.

If you are trekking alone, take the trail to the right. It will take around 2 to 3 hours to reach the temple. However, trail is pretty flat.

You can see a series of local stalls there. You can also see many tents pitched for camping. This is the top of the fort.

Explore the fort before you head to Konkan Kada. Saptateertha Pushkarni, Kedareshwar cave and the temple of Harishchandreshwar are some of the historical places you must visit on the fort.

Have lunch and rest for a while near the temple. You need to have full energy to enjoy the magnificent view waiting for you at the Konkan Kada.

Start the trek to Konkan Kada after having enough rest. It will take 30 minutes from the temple to Konkan Kada. You need to reach there well before sunset.

You can clearly recognise your destination as many of them would be just waiting with their camera on to capture the mesmerizing sunset.

The best view can be seen from the extreme right end of the cliff. The view of the Konkan from there is mindblowing. Observe the waterfalls that are on the extreme left side of the cliff. Immerse yourself in the beauty and enjoy the sunset. This is the perfect way to end the long day.

If you are camping on the fort, you can visit the Taramati peak the next day morning. Early morning view of the misty Konkan valley is out of the world. The descent is the same route as you came up.

Since the return trail becomes steep and slippery, you need to be very careful while descending. This is where trekking poles can be used.

### ❖ Harishchadragad Trek via Pachnai (Easy Route)

**Trek distance:** 3 km

**Trek duration:** 2 hours

**GPS coordinates of the Pachnai Village:** 19°24'35.50"n 73°46'48.18"e

The difficulty level of Harishchandragad from the Pachnai village is easy. There is a trail marked throughout the trek. You don't need any guide or an organization to trek from this route.

The trail starts from Pachnai village itself. At the entrance, you see a board that shows the direction to the Harishchandragad top. The trail has railings and metallic ladders built by the forest office. This makes the tough patches easier to climb. After an hour of trek, you reach a point where a huge rock wall will be standing. You need to walk beside the wall. It makes you look very tiny. Once you cross the big wall within 15 minutes of gradual trek, you reach a plateau. You reach the Harishchandra temple after 20 to 25 minutes trek from there.

Explore the fort after you take a break.

### ❖ Harishchandragad Trek via Nalichi Vaat (Difficult Route)

Nalichi Vaat (which translates to 'passage through a gorge') is a channel that lies to the extreme right of the mountain. It is the most difficult path to the top.

Popular among climbers and experienced trekkers, Nalichi Vaat involves a near 80-degree climb, involving steep rock patches.

The trail begins on a stream bed filled with large man-sized rocks and eventually leads to the foot of the gorge.

This trek can be done as a 2 days trek. You can follow below explained trail information for a better experience.

#### Day 1: [Belpada Village](#) to [Konkan Kada](#)

**Trek distance:** 6 km

**Trek duration:** 9 hours

**GPS coordinates of the Belpada village:** 19°22'44.1"n 73°44'38.3"e

**GPS coordinates of the Konkan Kada:** 19°23'28.63"n 73°46'15.96"e

The trek from the base village to the top of Harishchandragad takes nearly nine hours. Start as early as possible. It's advisable to camp the previous night at Belpada village, which is the base camp, after arriving from Kalyan.

In the morning, a five-minute walk will lead you to a nearby stream lying alongside the village. You can arrange breakfast here, maybe *poha* and black tea, from one of the local houses.

The main trail starts from behind the base village, leading to the base of the mountain. Take a narrow track that leads to the back of the village and extends into a wide grassy plain that forms the foot of the mountain.

Keep proceeding on the same path and 15 minutes later, the track narrows down beneath a sparse forest cover. A short walk of 10 more minutes will lead to the mainstream bed.

Take the rocky trail that winds through the stream bed, upstream, leading towards the mountain. The stream bed is full of large rocks and you have to be careful not to set foot on loose rocks and risk serious injury.

Walk along this trail for 30 minutes and you will reach the last visible water source of the trek. The stream bed here is in the form of cascaded rock platforms and forms a tiny waterfall. You can rest here for a few minutes before moving on.

The trail from here is uphill and continues to remain rocky. The gradient does not change, there are no landmarks and you will have to keep following the steep track uphill for the next 90 minutes.

Look out for a Nali (gorge) as you make your way. The Nali is basically a gorge that lies to the extreme right of the mountain. Once you reach the mouth of the gorge, you will be able to see a narrow channel that extends to the top of the mountain. A further 30-minute uphill hike will get you to the start of the gorge.

The route from Nali is a steep uphill climb involving multiple rock patches. Here, you will have to climb slippery and at times loose, rock faces. A 20-minute climb will bring you to a rock patch that extends up to 25 ft high. Experienced climbers can cover this and set up the climbing gear for the rest of the group. It takes nearly two hours to cover this difficult section. On successfully climbing and getting over the gorge, you will come across a vast grassy plain that forms the base of the final push to the top.

From here, you get your first glimpse of the magnificent Konkan Kada. One final 20 ft climb presents to you the vast plain that forms the Harishchandragad.

The trail winds through some thick knee-length vegetation and 15 minutes later, leads to the edge of the main mountain top (Konkan Kada).

Set up a camp in the grassy plains. Dinner can be arranged from a nearby settlement that runs an eatery. If you do not have proper camping gear, you can choose to rest the night in one of the caves situated all over the fort.

## **Day 2: Back to the Base village [Khireshwar](#)**

**Trek distance:** 8 km

**Trek duration:** 4 hours

**GPS coordinates of the Khireshwar village:** 19°22'17.00"n, 73°48'33.63"e

Start early today. For a magnificent view of the sunrise, you will have to get up at least two hours before and make your way to the top of Taramati peak that lies further along the mountain.

Visit other temples and caves on the way back to the base.

The path downhill starts from the Tolar Khind way to the Khireswar village. You can follow the route mentioned above to descend. It will take around 4 hours to reach Khireswar village.

From there you can hire a jeep or walk to the bus stop which is 5 km. Catch a bus to Kalyan or Pune from there.

#### ► **Best Season to do the Harishchandragad Trek**

The best time to do Harishchandragad trek is from August to February. During this period you can see the Harishchandragad covered with Lush green. This is the best time to get spectacular views from the trek.

Weather can be extremely hot during the summer. So trekking to the Harishchandragad top is not recommended.

The trail to the top has many rocky sections. They become slippery during the monsoon season. Hence, Harishchandragad trek is not advisable in the peak monsoon season.

#### ► **How Difficult is Harishchandragad Trek**

If you are trekking from Belpada/Walhivale, there are many difficult sections. To negotiate them, you need to carry trekking gears and safety equipment. Hence, go with a team of experienced trekkers or with an organisation who can take care of your safety.

There are no difficult sections on the Pachnai route. The trail is very short and easy.

On Khireswar trail, there are few sections that are considered as difficult or tricky. Those sections are:

1. The forest trail is a muddy route. It can be slushy and slippery if it is a monsoon season. There are many loose rocks on the trail which makes it more difficult to trek.
2. The rock patch in the Tolar Khind is almost 65 to 70 degrees. You need to have proper trekking shoes to cross this section safely.
3. Since it is a rock patch, it becomes slippery during the monsoon season. Though there are poles and chains for support, you can lose balance due to the steep ascent.

#### ► **How to reach Harishchandragad Trek**

Harishchandragad trek has multiple trails. All the trails start from 3 villages. They are

1. Khireswar
2. Pachnai
3. Belpada/Walhivale

All three of them can be accessible by public transportation as well as your own vehicle.

#### **Reaching the starting point by your own vehicle**

All the three villages mentioned above have wide roads enough to allow cars. Use the links given below to help set up navigation in google maps.

- **Reaching Khireswar:** It can be accessed from both Mumbai and Pune. You can use the link given based on the starting location. If you are travelling from Mumbai, use this [link](#) and from Pune, use this [link](#).
- **Reaching Pachnai:** From Mumbai and Pune, Pachnai is farthest compared to Khireswar. Since it is the easiest way to reach Harishchandragad most of the beginner trekkers choose to trek from here. Refer the links attached to reach the starting point from [Mumbai](#) and [Pune](#)
- **Reaching Belpada:** This village is now called as Walhivale. This is the nearest village compared to the other three from Mumbai and Pune. You can refer to the links to reach the starting point of the trek from [Mumbai](#) and [Pune](#).

Since Harishchandragad trek is very famous, all the three villages have facilities to park vehicles. There are many restaurants and hotels where you can park your vehicle and start the trek.

### Reaching the starting point by Public Transport System

#### From Mumbai

If you are travelling from Mumbai, reach Kalyan. From Mumbai CST you get the local train for every 15 minutes. You can refer to [this chart](#) for more route information. To know more about the timings download [M indicator app](#).

Once you reach Kalyan, Get into the bus that goes to *AlePhata via Malshej Ghat*. You can go to Khireswar or Belpada on the same bus. Take a ticket to *Khubi Phata* if you want to start the trek from Khireswar and take the ticket to *Belpada* or *Walhivale* to start the trek from Belpada.

If you want to start the trek from Pachnai then take a local train to *Kasara*. From Kasara you get many jeep/safari to *Rajur*. They charge you around *INR 100-150*. Once you reach Rajur, take a bus to *Pachnai* village. You can also try hitchhiking since many of the vehicles in that road will be going towards the same village.

#### From Pune

If you are travelling from Pune, get into a bus that goes towards AlePhata. From AlePhata catch a bus that goes to Kalyan.

Now, if you want to start the trek from Khireswar, get down at Khubi Phata and to start the trek from Belpada, get down at Sawarne village and trek towards the Belpada/Walhivale. It will take 4 hours 30 minutes to reach both of the starting points.

To start the trek from Pachnai, board a bus from Pune that goes to Mumbai or Nasik. Get a ticket to Ghoti village and from there another bus to Pachnai. It will take you almost 5 hours to reach the Pachnai village from Pune.

**Tip:** Inform conductor to let you know once you arrive at the destination at every point.

#### Return option



You can get the bus from where you got down at each village. After completing the trek you can come back to any of the villages and get a bus back to Mumbai or Pune.

### **Stay options**

There are many hotels in all the three villages mentioned above. You can book it in advance or after reaching there.

### **Nearest Railway Station**

[Kalyan Railway station](#)

### **Nearest International and Domestic Airport**

[Pune International Airport, Pune](#)

[Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Mumbai](#)

### **► Frequently Asked Questions about Harishchandragad Trek**

#### **1. Do we need permission to do Harishchandragad Trek?**

Harishchandragad trek does not require permission from the forest department. You can do this trek on your own without any permission.

#### **2. Is camping allowed on Harishchandragad Trek?**

There are no restrictions on camping on the Fort. You can camp near the temple or can stay inside the caves that are on the top of Harishchandragad. However, it will be very crowded on the fort as many of them prefer to camp there.

#### **3. Are there any food and water sources available on Harishchandragad Trek?**

Harishchandragad trek starts from the villages. And these villages have many restaurants where you get full meals. You can even find small shops on the way to the fort itself who sell tea, snacks. There are also many restaurants on the fort where you can get food. Food is not a concern on this trek.

If you are trekking during monsoon season, you get many small streams on the way to the fort where you can fill your water bottle. The restaurants on the fort also have a drinking water tank.

**Tip:** If you are not comfortable with having water from outside carry purification tablets or life straw bottles to purify the water.

#### **4. Who can do the Harishchandragad Trek?**

The best thing about the Harishchandragad trek is that anyone can do it.

1. If you are a beginner, start the trek from Pachnai village. It has the simplest route to the top.
2. If you have some trekking experience, start the trek from Khireswar. This route again offers two trails, and both of them are moderately difficult.

3. If you are a pro-trekker and want to have some adventures, start the trek from Belpada village. It has multiple routes, and all of them are challenging. It has one of the best trails for rock climbing.

### **5. What is the ideal time to start the Harishchandragad trek?**

The ideal time to do the Harishchandragad trek depends on whether you want to camp on top or complete it in a day and come back.

If you are planning to camp there on top, start the trek early in the morning. One of the best things about the Harishchandragad trek is the beautiful sunset. Make sure you reach the top and explore all other places before sunset.

If you are planning to complete the trek in one day, leave the house on the previous day late at night from Mumbai or Pune. Start the trek before sunset from the base and reach the top before lunch.

You can explore a bit on the top. After having a late lunch at the top, come back to the village again. You will be back at home by dinner.

### **6. Is Harishchandragad hard for beginners?**

Yes. Harishchandragad Trek has 3 trek routes. Out of them, the trail from Pachnai village is easy-going and suitable for beginners. The trek route is 3 km and the trail is well laid out. This route is easily doable with out the help of any guide or organization.

### **7. Where is Harishchandragad located?**

There are three different routes to the Harishchandragad trek. Each of them starts from a different base village - Pachnai, Khireswar, and Belpada/Walhivale. These villages are within 100–150 km of both Mumbai and Pune.

### **8. How long does it take to climb Harishchandragad?**

If you are trekking from Pachnai, it takes about 3 hours to reach the top of Harishchandragad. From Khireswar, it takes about 5 hours to reach the top. But if you are doing the trek from Belpada, you need 2 days to complete the entire trek.

### **9. When is the best time to visit Harishchandragad Trek?**

The post-monsoon months in October are the best time to visit Harishchandragad. During this time, you will see the flowers in full bloom. Hot summer months can be avoided for this trek.

### **10. How high is the Harishchandragad trek?**

Harishchandragad is 4671 feet above sea level.

### **Emergency Contact for Harishchandragad Trek**

**Hospital:** [Prathamika Arogya Kendra Madh](#) is the nearest hospital in the case of an emergency.

**Police Station:** [Junnar Police station](#) is the nearest police station to Karanjale village. It is 20 km away from the starting point of the trek.

**ERSS:** For any kind of emergency help, you can contact the Pan-India Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) at 112

### **ATMs and Network on the Harishchandragad Trek**

**ATMs:** If you are coming from Kalyan, then Murbad is the last place where you can find an ATM. Make sure you carry a minimum of Rs 1500 per person.

If you are coming from Pune, the [Bank of Maharashtra](#) is the last ATM you can find.

**Mobile Networks:** You get the signal only at the highway. Once you reach the village, only a few network providers catch the signal, but they are very unstable.

On top of the Harishchandragad and Taramati peaks, you get a good network. Almost all the network providers catch the signal there.

### **► Places to visit after the Harishchandragad Trek**

You can explore Harishchandragad itself for one day. It has so many things to offer. However, there are other forts and places to visit if you wish to. Some of them are:

**[Pimpalgaon Joga dam:](#)** This is a dam on the Pushpavati River that provides water to areas like Otur, Junnar, Narayangaon, and AlePhata.

After completing the trek, you can visit the dam and stay beside the lake. Carry your tent and camp there as well.

**[Reverse waterfall Naneghat:](#)** It is a mountain range where water flows in the reverse direction. This is because of the strong wind that comes in the opposite direction to the water flow. You can visit this place after finishing the Harishchandragad trek.

**[Amrutheshwara Temple:](#)** This is a Shiva temple built by King Jhanj. It is considered to be over 1200 years old. This temple has some of the beautiful rock carvings that are built with black and red stones. This place is also called Kashmir of Maharashtra. So one must visit this temple just to enjoy the beauty.

**Other Forts:** [Hadsar fort](#), [Jivdhan fort](#), [Ratangad fort](#), [Bhairavgad](#) and [Sindola fort](#).

### **► What To Pack For Harishchandragad Trek**

- Basic First Aid kit\*
- Identity Card
- Cap/ Scarf/ Bandana & Sunglasses
- Water (Minimum two litres)
- Lemon and salt OR Electrolyte Powder/Drink (Electral/Gatorade/Glucon D, etc.)
- High-calorie snacks (Nuts & dry fruits, home-baked cake, etc.)
- Safety Pins, Rubber bands & Whistle (Useful in emergencies.)

- Quick Dry T-shirts are preferable over cotton tees.
- Poncho, only during monsoons
- Plastic sheet to wrap electronic devices, only during monsoons
- Sunscreen (SPF 50+)
- Optional: Trekking poles

**\*First aid kit:**

- Scissor
- Band aids (Regular & Waterproof)
- Analgesic spray (Relispray, Volini, etc.)
- Antiseptic Liquid (Savlon, Dettol etc.)
- Antiseptic powder (Povidone-Iodine based powders like Cipladine, Savlon, etc.)
- Cotton roll & Bandage
- Crepe Bandage
- 1-inch wide medical tape (paper or cloth.)
- Micropore tape
- Tablet for motion sickness (Avomine), Acidity (Gelusil, Digene, etc.).
- Mild pain relief tablet (Crocin)

**| Note:** Always consult a doctor before taking any medicine.