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## Ashtavinayak Temples in Maharashtra

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- Morgaon ■
- Siddhatek ■
- Pali ■
- Mahad ■
- Theur ■
- Lenyadri ■
- Ozar ■
- Ranjangaon ■



# Morgaon

## Photo Courtesy

Chinchwad Devasthan Trust, Chinchwad

## How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 240 km**

### By air

The nearest airport is at Pune

### By rail

The nearest railway station is Pune which is a big junction on Central Railway.

### By road

Being a prominent place in the Ganesha circuit frequent state transport buses ply from Pune, Mumbai and all other cities in the state. From Swargate bus station at Pune, there are buses to Baramati every 10 minutes, which stop at Morgaon.

## Excursions

### Loni Bhapkar

Just 20 kilometers from Morgaon is a village called Loni Bhapkar which is known for a temple dating back to the period of the Yadavas. It has beautiful Vaishnavite sculptures on it. A beautiful water tank i.e. Pushakarani is alongside the temple and a rare image known as the Yadnyavaraha can also be seen here.

### Pandeshwar

Another ancient temple called Pandeshwar is located in the vicinity of Morgaon. It has huge images of 'dwarapalas' and the temple's apsidal type of plan consists of a 4 feet high 'shivling' in the sanctum. The small rooms in the courtyard of the temple are decorated with paintings which now are in a ruined condition.

### Jejuri

Famous for the temple dedicated to Khandoba, the state deity of Maharashtra, Jejuri is just 20 kilometers away from Morgaon. The temple, which is on a hillock, sees a regular flow of devotees. There are many old traditions that continue to be observed at this temple.



One of the most popular and revered gods in the Hindu pantheon is undoubtedly Lord Ganesha. And while there are temples dedicated to him in almost every city and village of Maharashtra, and even other states, the Ashtavinayakas (Eight Ganeshas) hold special importance for the devout. One of these is at Morgaon. The temple here is known as the Mayureshwar Ganesha Mandir and is the foremost centre of worship of the Ganapatya sect. It is also a place associated with Morya Gosavi, the saint of this sect.

Located on the banks of the river Karha in the Baramati taluka of Pune district, this holy place has many legends associated with it. As per Hindu mythology, a demon called Sindhu was killed by Lord Ganesha at Morgaon. There is a strong belief in the minds of the faithful that the ashtavinayaka pilgrimage remains incomplete without a visit to Morgaon at the end of the circuit. Morgaon is the foremost centre of the Ganapatya sect which believes Lord Ganesha to be the supreme god. There are references to Morgaon in different 'puranas' and according to Ganesha Purana, Morgaon is one of the three important places of Ganesha and the only one on this earth. The other two are at Kailasa in heaven and the palace of Adi-Shesha in the 'patala' (the underworld). The Mudgal Purana has 22 chapters dedicated to praising Morgaon.

According to the Ganesha Purana, Ganesha was born to the divine couple Shiva and Parvati in Treta Yuga. The purpose of his birth was to kill the demon Sindhu, the son of Chakrapani, the king of Mithila, and his wife Ugra. Ugra was said to have conceived due to solar power and was unable to bear the heat radiating from the foetus. Ugra abandoned it in the ocean where a son was born from that foetus. The ocean returned it to Chakrapani, who named him Sindhu. The Sun God offered Sindhu a bowl of 'amrit' (nectar) which Sindhu swallowed. And that is how he got the power to terrorize the people of all three worlds. On an appeal from the helpless people to save them from Sindhu, Ganesha cut him into pieces and removed the bowl of amrit from his body. Moreover, since Ganesha rode on a peacock he was named Mayuresha or Moreshwar.

The exact date of the construction of the temple is unknown. However, it is said that Morgaon had the patronage of the Peshwas, the administrators of the Maratha Empire. It is also famous for its association with Moraya Gosavi, the saint of the Ganapatya sect. The entrance of the temple faces north. It is situated on a small mound and hence one has to climb 11 steps to reach the Nagarkhana. The courtyard consists of two 'deepmalas'. A mouse - the mount of Ganesha - sits in front of the temple and is 6 feet in height. The image of Ganesha has four hands carrying 'pasha' and 'ankush' in two hands. One hand rests on his knee and the other carries a 'modak'. The festivals celebrated here on a lavish scale are on Bhadrapad Chaturthi and Magh Chaturthi i.e. Ganesha Jayanti.

# Siddhatek

## Photo Courtesy

Chinchwad Devasthan Trust, Chinchwad

## How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 250 km**

**By air:** The nearest airport is at Pune

**By rail:** The nearest railway station is at Daund on the central railway which is 16 kms away from here. Trains plying from Pune to Delhi and to the south stop at Daund.

**By road:** Lot of state transport buses ply from Pune, Daund, Patas, Rashin, Shrigonda to this holy place Siddhatek. From Pune buses are available from Shivajinagar bus station.

## Excursions

### Deepmalas of Rashin

A beautiful temple of Goddess Yamai at Rashin is just 22 kilometers from Siddhatek. There are two big 'deepmalas' erected on the temple premises. A wooden handle is fixed on the top of one of the deepmalas and when operated, the deepmalas start leaning on both the sides - an architectural wonder! There are two rock inscriptions written in the Devnagari script. Rashin is the native place of the famous Peshwa personality, Antaji Manakeshwar, reference to whom can be found in one of the five inscriptions carved here.

### Duryodhan temple at Durgav

Duryodhan is the chief villain in the epic Mahabharata. He is probably one of the most disliked characters in popular Indian mythology. Yet, despite this, he is worshipped by certain communities. The best known Duryodhan temple is at Kalsi Lakhmandal in Uttarakhnad, where the local community believes they are the descendants of the legendary figure himself. There is another Duryodhan temple in Kerala, and one in the Karjat taluka of Ahmednagar district, close to Siddhatek. The image of Duryodhan is placed in a niche of the tower of what is actually a Shiva temple.

According to a legend, a rain cloud full of water once laughed at Duryodhan after he was defeated by the Pandava brother Bhima. In anger, Duryodhan cursed the cloud so that it could no longer rain down its waters. Thus, every monsoon, the Duryodhan image is locked away for fear that Duryodhan's wrath and curse might prevent the clouds from bringing their rain to the village.



One of the 'ashtavinayaka' (Eight Ganeshas) temples in Maharashtra, the Siddhi Vinayak Mandir of Siddhatek is the only one in the Ahmednagar district. Located on the northern bank of the river Bhima in the Karjat taluka, it is close to the railway station of Daund and is accessible from the small village of Shirapur in Pune district, on the southern bank of the river, from where it can be reached by boat or a newly constructed bridge. The temple stands on a hillock, surrounded by thick foliage of babul trees, which also makes it a tourist destination.

According to legend, Lord Brahma was inflated with pride, considered himself as the supreme God and started creating the earth. A number of obstacles blocked his creation. He then invoked Lord Ganesha, worshipped him at Siddhatek and received blessings from him. Then onwards his work went on smoothly.

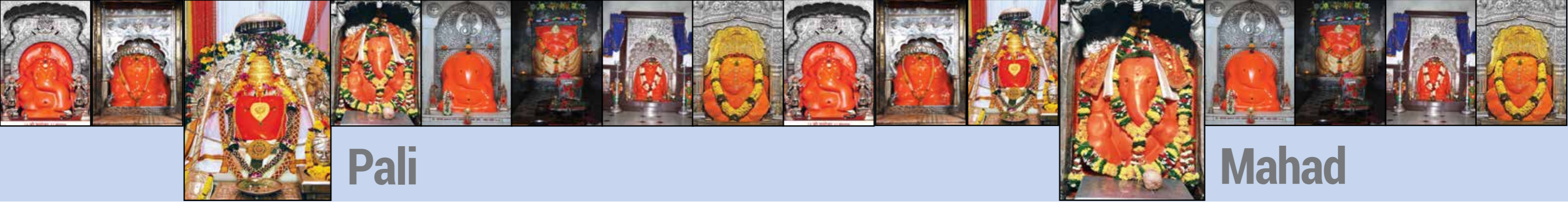
According to the Mudgal Purana, at the beginning of the creation of the universe, the creator, Brahma, emerged from a lotus while Vishnu slept in his 'yoganidra'. When Brahma started creating the universe, two demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, rose from the dirt in Vishnu's ear. The demons disturbed Brahma's process of creation, thereby compelling Vishnu to wake up from his deep slumber. Vishnu therefore pitched a battle against the demons but could not defeat them since he had not invoked Ganesha (the god of beginnings and the remover of obstacles) before the fight. Therefore Vishnu performed penance at Siddhatek, invoking Ganesha with his mantra "Om Sri Ganeshaya Namah". Pleased, Ganesha bestowed his blessings and various 'siddhis' (powers) on Vishnu, who returned to fight the demons and eventually slew them. The place where Vishnu acquired 'siddhis' was thereafter known as Siddhatek.

The sanctum of the temple was built by Ahilyabai Holkar, the queen of Indore and Sardar Haripant Phadke, an official with the Peshwa rulers, built the Nagarkhana i.e. a chamber which stored 'nagaras' (kettle drums) and a paved pathway to the main door of the temple, as well as the main sanctum of the temple. The idol of Ganesha is seated on a throne and is 3 ft high. The outer hall (previously built by Mairal, a landlord from Baroda) was broken in 1939 and rebuilt in 1970.

The place is also famous as Shri Moraya Gosavi performed severe penance here and is supposed to have been given the order by Ganesha to go to Morgaon. Narayan Maharaj of Kedgaon also achieved siddhi here because of strong penance. The Sardar of the Peshwas, Shri Haripant Phadke performed worship for 21 days and wrote some 21 chants in praise of Ganesha which are sung regularly in this temple. He prayed to be reinstated in his lost position as a general for the Peshwas. Phalke built himself a residence next to the temple and ultimately breathed his last at Siddhatek. He also had the stone pathway from the Nagarkhana to the temple shrine constructed. A place near the temple is also believed to be the sacrificial altar of Maharshi Vyas.

A unique feature of the deity here is that Ganesha's trunk is turned to the right. Usually, the trunk of Ganesha is depicted turned to his left. It is believed that the right-trunked Ganesha is very powerful, but difficult to please. The temple is thus considered as a 'jagrut kshetra' where the deity is said to be highly powerful. The temple, constructed in black stone, faces north. The 'garbhagriha' (sanctum) is 15 feet high and 10 feet wide. It has the 'Jaya-Vijaya' the gatekeepers of Vishnu's abode - brass sculptures flanking the central icon of Siddhi Vinayaka.

The festivals on Bhadrapad and Magh chaturthi are celebrated on a large scale at Siddhatek. A festival and fair is also held on Vijayadashami and Somavati Amavasya, a no-moon day that falls on a Monday.



# Pali

# Mahad

### Photo Courtesy

Shri Pali Devasthan, Pali

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 98 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Mumbai.

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is Pen on Konkan railway.

#### By road

A lot of state transport buses ply regularly to Pali from Pune, Mumbai, Alibaug, Pen and even from Khopoli.

### Excursions

#### Hot Water Springs

A village called Unhere, just 4 kilometers from Pali, is known for its hot water ponds. It is believed that a dip into the water cures many skin diseases. However, precaution must be taken since the water has an unusually high amount of sulfur. Those entering on an empty stomach have often complained of sudden giddiness.

#### Trekkers' Paradise

Just behind the village Pali is a hill fort called Sarasgad which is a favourite with trekkers because of its huge rock face. There are 96 rock-cut steps to ascend this wall and the panoramic views from the top of this fort make the attempt worthwhile. There are two other forts, Sudhagad and Surgad, in the vicinity. You can also travel along an ancient trade route that passes through Jambhulpada and reaches Lonavala by ascending a difficult pass in the Sahyadri ranges.

#### Buddhist connection

In the vicinity of Sudhagad are the Dhondase and Thanale Buddhist caves carved out from rock. It is advisable to get a local guide to accompany you.

#### Potholes

A large number of potholes can be seen at the village Nagshet. The depth of these holes is almost 25 to 30 feet. A small temple of goddess Kondai is situated at one side. A tar road approaches this site. The location is very calm, cool and picturesque.



Located in the Sudhagad taluka of Raigad district, Pali is one of the 'ashtavinayakas' (Eight Ganeshas), visited in huge numbers by the devotees of Lord Ganesha. Here, Ganesha is known by the name of his devotee, Ballaleshwar. Pali's temple is indeed beautiful with the rays of the rising sun enveloping the deity in a golden hue each morning.

According to a legend, in the age of 'krutayuga' a businessman called Kalyansheth and his wife, residents of Konkan's Pali region, were blessed with a son who became a devotee of Ganesha at a very young age. Named Ballal, he would often go into the jungle with his friends to worship a large stone that he believed was Ganesha himself. So engrossed would they all be with prayers that they often forgot to even eat or drink. The parents of other children complained to Kalyansheth about his son's extreme devotion and in a fit of rage Kalyansheth took a stick and went in search of the children. He saw them worshipping the stone in a state of complete meditation.

Kalyansheth then threw away the stone whereupon the other children fled, leaving Ballal alone. However, so deeply immersed was Ballal in his prayers that he did not react to anything, not even when his father beat him with the stick and blood began to drench his clothes. Enraged all the more, Kalyansheth tied his son to a tree and destroyed all the material used for the worship. He further taunted Ballal about whether his god would come and free him. Ballal slipped into an unconscious state but began chanting Ganesha's name as soon as he regained his senses. Pleased with this utmost devotion of Ballal, Ganesha untied the knots and healed his wounds. Thereupon, Ballal requested Ganesha to stay in Pali forever. Ganesha agreed to do so and in fact took on the name of his disciple. And so the deity here is known as Ballaleshwar.

The temple of Ballaleshwar faces east and has been constructed out of stone. It has two sanctums with the inner sanctum being 15 feet high. The outer one, which is 12 feet high, has a stone mouse, the vehicle of Lord Ganesha. The main hall of the temple has eight pillars with a huge 'nagarkhana' in front. The temple contains a bell brought here by Chimaji Appa after his victory over the Portuguese in Vasai. The 3 foot high attractive image of Ballaleshwar is located in the sanctum and has diamonds for its eyes and a diamond is studded in the navel of the idol. Ganesha resides on a throne carved out of stone with a silver backrest. There is a temple of Dhundi Vinayaka just behind the main temple and the deity here is believed to be the same that was thrown away by Kalyansheth.

This, in fact, was the original temple built out of wood. The new temple was constructed by Shrimant Morobadada Phadanavis. The reverence for Ganesha at Pali reaches its peak during the festivals hosted in the Hindu months of Bhadrapad and Magh. Some of the traditional rituals observed here include 'mahanaivedya', 'dahikala' and 'annantarpan' and a procession is carried out through the village during the festivals. There is a strong belief among the devotees that Ganesha himself attends the 'mahaprasad' at midnight on Bhadrapad Chaturthi which draws large crowds.

### Photo Courtesy

Shree Varad Vinayak Temple, Mahad

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 83 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Mumbai.

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is at Karjat.

#### By road

Since Mahad is just 6 km away from Khopoli, off the Mumbai-Pune highway, there are several buses and autorickshaws available between Khopoli and Mahad.

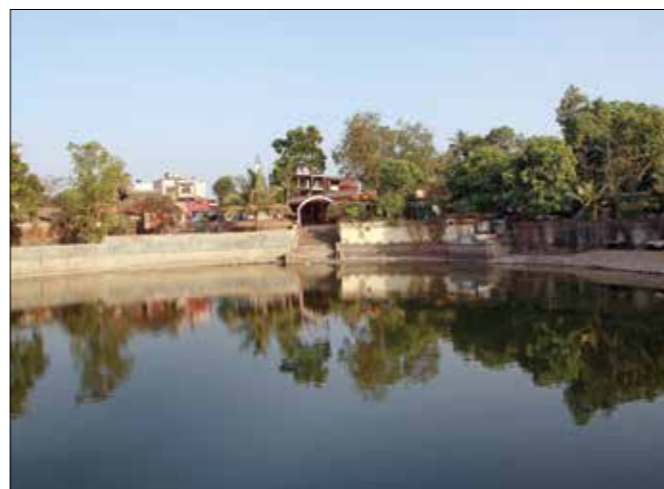
### Excursions

#### Lonavala-Khandala

The famous hill stations of Lonavla and Khandala, with their picturesque view of the hills and valleys and bracing weather, are just 20 kilometers from Mahad. The journey through the Khandala Ghat offers breathtaking sights and the trip can be made all the more memorable during the monsoon when waterfalls dot the landscape. Trekkers use Lonavala as a base to go up to Fort Rajmachi. And don't forget to buy the famous Lonavala 'chikki'.

#### Trekking Routes

The Karjat and the Panvel regions near Mumbai are enriched with a number of hill forts that provide splendid trekking routes for those inclined toward adventure. Some of the most favourite routes include Prabalgaad, Mankigad, Karnala and Chanderi. The Ballaleshwar of Pali which is another Ashtavinayak destination is just 40 kms away from this place.



One of the ashtavinayakas (Eight Ganeshas) in Maharashtra, the name of this temple is Varad Vinayak, meaning the one who blesses all the wishes. The temple is situated in a scenic place and behind the temple is a small shrine among bamboo trees that is dedicated to Shri Dattatreya.

Located 83 kilometers from Mumbai, this holy place of Varad Vinayak is in the Khalapur taluka of Raigad district and just as every legend of Ganesha is linked with the Puranas, this one is no different. In ancient times, the king of Kuntinya, Bheem, was very brave and noble but sad for not having a son. According to the narration, during his wanderings in the jungle with his wife, he came upon Vishvamitra who suggested that he should perform penance to Lord Ganesha to grant him his wish for a child. Bheem is said to have undertaken severe penance at the end of which Ganesha blessed the royal couple with a son. He was named Rukmangad. When the child grew up, the king delegated all his powers to his son and followed the path of 'vanprasthashrama'.

Rukmangad grew up to be a very handsome young man. Once when Rukmangad was on a hunting trip, he happened to reach the ashram of Rishi Vachaknavi. The sage was then bathing in the river and his wife Mukunda fell in love with the handsome prince and asked him to fulfil her desire. Rukmangad refused to do so and the angry Mukunda cursed him. So lovesick did she become that Lord Indra finally took the form of Rukmangad and fulfilled her physical desire. She delivered a son who was named Grutsamada. When Grutsamada came to know the story of his birth he felt ashamed of it and started praying to Ganesha for reprieve. Ganesha eventually offered him a boon stating that he would bear a son who would not be defeated by anyone other than Lord Shiva. Grutsamada asked Ganesha to bless the forest and make it his permanent home. He then built a temple here and installed an idol of Ganesha.

The temple at Mahad faces east. There are two huge images of elephants carved out in rock. A lake at the west is known as 'Devache Tale' or 'God's lake'. The temple consists of a hall and the height of the 'shikhara' is 24 feet. An oil lamp is kept burning at all times inside the temple. There are rock-cut idols of 'Riddhi-Siddhi' in the 'garbhagruha' or sanctum sanctorum. The main image of Ganesha is east-facing, seated on a rock-cut throne with his trunk turned toward the left. It is said that this idol was found in a nearby pond by a devotee called Dhondu Pudkar in 1690 CE. The temple was constructed in 1725 CE by Subhedar Ramji Mahadev Bivalkar. There is a grand festival celebrated here every Sankashti Chaturthi.



## Theur

## Lenyadri

### Photo Courtesy

Chinchwad Devasthan Trust, Chinchwad

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 185 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Pune

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is at Pune which is 25 kms away from here.

#### By road

Theur is adjacent to the Pune-Solapur highway and hence is very much approachable. The Pune municipal transport buses ply from Mahatma Gandhi bus stand (Pool gate) regularly to Theur.

### Excursions

#### Carvings at Bhuleshwar

A Yadava period Shiva temple is situated on a hill at Bhuleshwar. One can see here intricate carvings in stone. The icons of 'sursundaris', different deities and a huge Nandi create the spiritual ambience of the place. A unique feature of this temple is that the Ganesha icon is in the form of a lady seen on the corridor wall of the temple. In the medieval period the temple was secured by fortification and was known as Daulatmangal Fort.

#### Pune

Known as the cultural capital of Maharashtra as also for its industry and academics, Pune is where you should ideally stay for a visit to Jejuri. The city has a lot to offer by way of entertainment, cuisine and a curious mix of the old and new styles of architecture. Some of the places of tourist interest include the Aga Khan Palace, Dagdusheth Ganapati, Sarasbaug, Empress Garden, National Defence Academy, Sinhadag, Shaniwarwada, Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum, etc.



One of the 'ashtavinayaka' (Eight Ganeshas) temples of Maharashtra, the Chintamani Mandir of Theur is located 25 kilometers from Pune and is one of the larger and more famous of the eight revered shrines of Ganesha. Surrounded by the Mula river on three sides, it is adjacent to the Pune-Solapur national highway.

The legend attached to this place says that in ancient times there was a king named Abhijit who was ruling this region along with his wife Gunavati. They both were worried because they did not have a child. After carrying out a rigid penance in the jungle they got a boon in the form of a son whose name was Gana. He was strong but arrogant. Once he went to the ashram of Kapilmuni where he saw the jewel named Chintamani. He asked for that jewel but was refused and hence he forcefully took it from Kapilmuni. The Rishi prayed to Durga Devi, and as per her order he prayed to Vinayak, who assured the Rishi that he would get the stolen jewel back. Vinayak fought Gana and retrieved the jewel Chintamani from him and returned it to the Rishi. But the Rishi was unhappy and asked Vinayak to settle there. Vinayak agreed and settled there in the name of Chintamani under the kadamb tree where all these incidences occurred. The habitation around the kadamb tree was known as 'Kadambpur' which is now called as Theur. There are many more legends related to Indra, Brahma, king Nal which are attached to this place.

This temple was constructed by Shri Dharanidhar Dev, son of Shri Moraya Gosavi. Shrimant Madhavrao Peshwa built the sabha mandapa after about 100 years. Then onwards Haripant Phadke and some Ganesha devotees made some alterations to the temple. Chimaji Appa the younger brother of Bajirao Peshwa offered a big bell which he got from Vasai as a memento of his victory. Shri Moraya Gosavi performed penance at Theur and it is said that Ganesha met him in the form of a tiger.

The temple's main gate located to the north is relatively smaller compared to the scale of the temple. The central icon of Chintamani-Ganesha faces east. The hall also has a black stone water fountain. Besides the central shrine dedicated to Ganesha, there are a number of smaller shrines in the temple complex, including the Mahadeva Mandir, Vishnu-Lakshmi Mandir, Hanuman Mandir, etc. Behind the temple is the Peshwa Wada. It was once the residence of Madhavrao. Like other ashtavinayaka icons, the central icon of Ganesha is considered self-manifested and therefore there are hardly any features except for the head studded with jewel eyes and trunk.

Ganesha utsav is performed at Theur in the month of Bhadrapad and in Magh. A fair is arranged on this occasion. One more important festival celebrated at Theur is on kartik vadya as per Hindu calendar which is the death anniversary of Shrimant Madhavrao Peshwa and his wife Ramabai Saheb.

### Photo Courtesy

Atul Kajale  
Shree Lenyadri Ganapati Devasthan Trust, Lenyadri

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 161 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Pune

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is Pune.

#### By road

There are ample buses available for Junnar from Pune and Mumbai. Lenyadri is just 8 kms. from Junnar and the state transport buses as well as private vehicles are available in ample numbers.

### Excursions

#### Fort Shivneri

This is the birthplace of the Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and is just 8 kilometers from Lenyadri. You will find here an impressive statue of child Shivaji with his mother Jijabai. The temple of Shivai Devi, the goddess of the fort, can be seen en route. While climbing the fort one has to cross seven doorways. There is also another route called the 'Sakhalichi Vaat'. You will also come across some ancient rock-cut caves while climbing up the fort.

#### Nane Ghat

This is a part of an ancient trade route that begins from Paithan to Shurparaka in Nalasopara. It has a huge rock cut cave, believed to have been carved out by the Satvahana queen Naganika. There is an inscription in the Brahmi script on the three walls of this cave which enumerates the different 'yadnyas' performed by the queen and the list of donations given at that time. Nane Ghat is a trekker's paradise and also worth a visit are the forts of Jeevdhan, Chavand and Hadsar in its vicinity. A village called Poor, 15 kilometers from Nane Ghat, has a temple called Kukadeshvar which is known for its sculptures carved out in stone.

#### Khodad

The place is known for having the world's largest giant meter wave radio telescope (GMRT). Located about 20 kilometers from Lenyadri, the telescope has 30 antennas, each with a diameter of 45 meters.

Ozar, another Ganesha from the Ashtavinayaka is just 10 kms away from Lenyadri. Also in the vicinity is the picturesque Malshej Ghat and the fort of Narayangad.



Among the 'ashtavinayakas' (Eight Ganeshas) of Maharashtra, references of Lenyadri can be found in the 'Ganesha Purana' as Jeernapur or Lekhanparvat. These are Buddhist caves carved out in the hills near Junnar. In one of these caves is figure of 'Girijatmaj Ganesha', which is unique among all the ashtavinayakas since it has been carved out of the cave wall and can be seen from the rear only.

According to a legend from the Puranas, Parvati, daughter of Himavana, desired Vinayaka to be her son. To fulfill this wish she rendered penance in the cave of Lenyadri for 12 years. During this time she created an image of Ganesha from clay and started worshipping it. Lord Ganesha was pleased and stood in front of Parvati in the form of a small child. The child had six hands, three eyes and a beautiful body. Further, this child, called Girijatmaj Ganesha, performed penance for a furthermore 12 years and it is said that in his childhood he defeated many demons and protected the 'rishis' from trouble. He also tamed Shesh, Yama and Indra at Lenyadri and stayed here for another 15 years before vanishing from the cave.

To visit Lenyadri, located about 8 kilometers from Junnar, you have to climb 283 steps carved out of stone. The shrine here is nothing but a rock-cut cave at the entrance of which are eight pillars with carvings of elephants and lions. Next to these pillars is a big hall. In the south-facing cave there are 18 niches carved on the right side of the sanctum. Here, there is no separate image of Ganesha but a rock-cut image on one wall which is adorned with 'sindoor'. Devotees can only see the back of Ganesha. Assuming that the face can be seen from the other side of the hill, there are some who have tried to traverse the hill. However, this is dangerous, especially because of the many honeycombs on the hill. Nana Phadnavis, the renowned personality in the era of Peshwas also tried to do so, but he had to give up his efforts due to the threat of the bees.

There are two small water cisterns near the temple cave. Descending a few steps on the western side will bring you to a 'stupa', known as the mace of Bhima, the hero from the legend of 'Mahabharata'. On the top of this hill is a small and tiny shrine of Shiva, called Hatakeshwar, which is also a favourite with trekkers.





# Ozar



# Ranjangaon

### Photo Courtesy

Shree Vighnahr Ganapati Devasthan Trust, Ozar

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 191 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Pune

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is at Pune

#### By road

It is very near to Junnar and Narayangaon, the state transport buses are available in ample numbers from Pune and Mumbai. From Narayangaon lot of private vehicles are available upto Ozar.

### Excursions

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The place is known for having the world's largest giant meter wave radio telescope (GMRT). Located about 20 kilometers from Lenyadri, the telescope has 30 antennas, each with a diameter of 45 meters.

**Lenyadri**, another Ganesha from the Ashtavinayaka is just 10 kms away from Ozar. Also in the vicinity is the picturesque Malshej Ghat and the fort of Narayangad.



Most places have interesting legends associated with them. One such is Ozar, located on the banks of river Kukadi in Junnar taluka of Pune district. An 'ashtavinayaka' (Eight Ganeshas), it is said that Lord Ganesha had made Ozar his permanent abode after defeating a demon called Vighnasur. When the demon asked to be forgiven for his deeds, Ganesha became pleased and stayed at Ozar, taking on the name of the demon.

About 190 kilometers from Mumbai and just 9 kilometers from the town of Narayangaon on the Pune Nashik highway, Ozar's importance has been highlighted through the narratives of the Mudgal and Skanda 'puranas' which tell the story of a ruler called Abhinandan. It is said that the king performed a sacrifice but did not invite Indra as was the custom. Feeling slighted, Indra created the demon Kaal, also known as Vighnasur, and provided him with all his power along with granting him the boon of immortality. Kaal was sent to destroy the 'yadnyas' of Abhinandan. The strong demon then not only destroyed the yadnyas but also all the 'vaidik' rituals as were practised at that time.

Scared, the people of the land prayed to Lord Ganesha to save them from the cruelty of the demon. Thus, Ganesha took the form of the son of Parashar Rishi and pitched a battle against the demon, who he eventually defeated. Surrendering to the power of Ganesha, Vighnasur assured the god that he would never disrupt any sacred ceremony and also requested that Ganesha associate his name with that of the demon. And that is how Ganesha stayed at Ozar with the name Vighnasur or Vighnahr.

The temple at Ozar is huge with a spacious courtyard around it made out of stone. There is a fortification wall and a pathway. Besides the entrance are two large-sized 'dwarapalas' in stone and inside are galleries and two 'deepmalas' in the courtyard. The huge central hall has entrances from north and south. There is an image of Dhundiraj Ganesha inside the hall alongside which is another hall with a ceiling height of 10 feet. A mouse sculpted out of stone is at the entrance of the hall. What is also interesting is the spire with intricate carvings, said to have been constructed by Chimaji Appa. In the main sanctum is the seated image of Ganesha with his trunk to the left. Precious stones adorn the image with rubies for the eyes and a diamond on the forehead. Ozar celebrates Bhadrapad and Magh Chaturthi in a big way and songs written by Shri Moraya Gosavi are especially rendered on such occasions, including the Tripuri Pournima.



### Photo Courtesy

Shree Kshetra Ranjangaon Ganapati Devasthan Trust, Ranjangaon

### How to Reach

**Distance from Mumbai: 212 km**

#### By air

The nearest airport is at Pune

#### By rail

The nearest railway station is at Pune

#### By road

This place is en route Pune Aurangabad highway hence all the buses of state transport stops at the Ranjangaon. Plenty of buses are available from the Shivajinagar bus station of Pune.

### Excursions

#### Pune

You can't possibly visit Ranjangaon without first experiencing the delights of a vibrant city like Pune. It was the first capital of the Maratha Empire under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and in the 18th century the city became a political centre of the Indian sub-continent as the seat of the Peshwas who were the prime ministers of the Maratha Empire. The city is a cultural, industrial and educational hub and there are plenty of places of tourist interest, including the Shaniwar Wada which was the palace of the rulers under the Peshwa dynasty; the Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Temple which was founded in 1893 by a sweetmeat seller who became a wealthy businessman; the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum that displays a variety of artifacts; the Saras Baug which is an imposing and well laid out garden; Parvati Hill that serves as an important religious destination; and Vishrambaug Wada which has a museum showing how Pune was in the old days.

#### Yadava Period Temple

Just 4 kilometers from Ranjangaon is a Yadava period temple in the village of Pimpri Dumala. The temple is known for its intricate carvings. It also has a pond with steps leading to the water. With its ancient Banyan trees and tranquil atmosphere, the place is a favourite with those seeking respite from urban chaos.

#### Potholes at Nighoj

A natural wonder, the potholes at Nighoj are just 30 kilometers from Ranjangaon. These were created by immense water force and stones on the river bed over a long period of time.



Earlier known as Manipur, Ranjangaon near Pune is believed to have been created by none other than Lord Shiva. This was after Shiva prayed to Ganesha to make him victorious in a battle with the demon Tripurasur. It is said that this incident took place on the day of Tripuri Pournima, following which Shiva set up Ganesha's idol in the form of 'Mahaganapati'. The temple here is now known by that name. It is one of the 'ashtavinayakas' (Eight Ganeshas) of Maharashtra.

There are several references to Ranjangaon in the Puranas and according to one of the legends Rishi Grutsamada was an ardent devotee of Ganesha. A boy was born out of his sneeze. This red-skinned boy, named Tripurasur, was highly ambitious and cruel too. Grutsamada asked him to worship Lord Ganesha who, pleased with the boy's devotion, gifted him three cities of gold, silver and iron. Inflated with pride at the grant of this gift, Tripurasur then conquered heaven, hell and earth in his quest for absolute power. The people residing there prayed to Lord Shiva and requested him to relieve them from the demonic ways of Tripurasur. Shiva pitched a fierce battle but could not wield control over the demon because of having forgotten to ask for Ganesha's blessings before the commencement of the battle. He then prayed to Ganesha to grant him victory. Thus blessed, he destroyed the three cities of the demon with a single arrow.

Located on the Pune-Ahmednagar highway, 51 kilometers from Pune, the majestic temple is the fourth in the 'ashtavinayaka' circuit. It faces east and has a huge entrance with two large-sized 'dwarapalas' on either side. The temple is designed in such a way that during 'dakshinayan' and 'uttarayan' (movement of the sun to the south and north) the rays of the sun fall directly on the deity. The sanctum of this temple was constructed by Madhavrao Peshwa and the hall by Sardar Kibe of Indore. Pawar and Shinde, the generals of the Peshwas constructed the galleries to the temple. This temple received donations from Mahadji Shinde, Yeshvantrao Chandrachud, and the Maharajas of the Bhor state. Rajarshi Shahu and Madhavrao Peshwa also granted the donations and sanctioned revenue from some villages for the expenses of this temple. During the same period, it is said that one devotee Namdevbuva Teli got the boon from Ganesha at this place. The tomb of Namdevbuva can be found near the temple.

The image of Mahaganapati is seated, faces east and has his trunk to the left. The forehead of the deity is exceptionally broad. One can see a hero-stone and sati-stone in the vicinity of the temple.

Here, Bhadrapad Chaturthi is celebrated in a big way. There is a strong belief in the minds of the devotees that thin Ganesha fulfills all the wishes expressed in front of him. Hence there is always a big crowd gathered at this temple.

Ranjangaon is also an industrial hub and home to many manufacturing set-ups.

