



Ajanta and Ellora Caves

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Why in News

Two tourist visitor centres set up at Ajanta and Ellora caves by the Maharashtra government have been shut due to their pending water and electricity dues worth ₹5 crore.



Ajanta Caves

- **Location:** Ajanta is a series of rock-cut caves in the **Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats)** on Waghora river near Aurangabad in **Maharashtra**.
- **Number of Caves:** There are a total of **29 caves** (all buddhist) of which 25 were used as Viharas or residential caves while 4 were used as Chaitya or prayer halls.
- **Time of Development**
 - The caves were developed in the period between **200 B.C. to 650 A.D.**
 - The Ajanta caves were inscribed by the Buddhist monks, under the patronage of the **Vakataka kings** – Harishena being a prominent one.
 - Reference of the Ajanta caves can be found in the travel accounts of **Chinese Buddhist travellers Fa Hien** (during the reign of Chandragupta II; 380- 415 CE) and **Hieun Tsang** (during the reign of emperor Harshavardhana; 606 - 647 CE).

- **Painting**
 - The figures in these caves were done using **fresco painting**.
 - The outlines of the paintings were done in red colour. One of the striking features is the **absence of blue colour** in the paintings.
 - The paintings are generally **themed around Buddhism** – the life of Buddha and Jataka stories.
- **UNESCO Site:** The caves were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in **1983**.

Ellora Caves



- **Location:** It is located nearly 100 Kms away from Ajanta caves in the **Sahyadri range of Maharashtra**.
- **Number of Caves:** It is a group of **34 caves** – 17 **Brahmanical**, 12 **Buddhist** and 5 **Jain**.
- **Time of Development**
 - These set of caves were developed during the period between the **5th and 11th centuries A.D.** (newer as compared to Ajanta Caves) by various guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
 - That is why the caves reflect a natural diversity in terms of theme and architectural styles.
- **UNESCO Site:** The Ellora complex was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.
- The most remarkable of the cave temples is Kailasa (**Kailasanatha; cave 16**), named for the mountain in the Kailasa Range of the Himalayas where the Hindu god Shiva resides.

Sahyadri Range

- Western Ghats are locally known by different names such as **Sahyadri in Maharashtra, Nilgiri hills in Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu** and **Anaimalai hills and Cardamom hills in Kerala**.
- The Western Ghats are a north-south chain of mountains or hills that mark the western edge of the Deccan plateau region.

- Western Ghats are comparatively higher in elevation and more continuous than the Eastern Ghats. Their average elevation is about 1,500 m with the height increasing from north to south.
- **Anaimudi (2,695 m)**, the highest peak of Peninsular plateau is located on the Anaimalai hills of the Western Ghats followed by Dodabetta (2,637 m) on the Nilgiri hills.
- Most of the Peninsular rivers such as **Krishna and Cauvery** have their origin in the Western Ghats.

Source: TH