



Valley of Flowers in Kas Pathar

# A Peaceful Sojourn

Breakfast by the river, sundowner at the windmills and farm visit on a bullock cart, **Sharmila Chand** has some unique and unusual experiences during her recent visit to Phaltan, near Pune.

I had never ever heard of Phaltan. So, when I got an invite to visit this place, a few clicks on Google made me convinced that it's going to be a memorable trip with so much to see. I was right because even one visit is not enough for this interesting city full of surprises.

Looking for an offbeat getaway from Pune? Phaltan, situated almost 50 km away from Satara city, fits the bill perfectly. It is a small municipal council in Satara district which enjoys a pleasant weather throughout the year and is a great getaway since it is blessed with acres of farmlands and picturesque landscapes.

Here are the highlights of my visit which should not be missed:

## Kas Pathar

Kas Pathar or Kas Plateau is about 80 km from Phaltan city. Known for its

Valley of Flowers, the plateau is in full bloom from the end of August throughout September. I was lucky to be able to see so many varieties blooming. Nearly 300 different kinds of species of flowering plants, orchids (more than 150 types), shrubs and grasses can be spotted here. Interestingly, many of the flowering plants are insect-eaters. The flowering plants also bring in different types of birds and one of them is Bulbul.



A surprise sundowner picnic right under the windmills is truly amazing.

Kas Pathar has been declared as a Biodiversity World Heritage Site by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

## Thoseghar Waterfalls

I was quite taken by surprise by the beauty of Thoseghar Waterfalls. It is a scenic spot located near the small village of Thoseghar. There are a series of waterfalls, some of them 15 to 20 metres and one of 500 metres in height. The area is calm and quiet, with a clean lake and dark woods in a hilly area. We had a small picnic while enjoying the view of the waterfall.

## The Windmills

I had never seen windmills from a close distance. The team organised a surprise sundowner picnic for me right under the windmills. The sight was truly amazing, more so with my goodies.

### Phaltan Rajwada

I got to know that the great warrior-king, Shivaji, was the son-in-law of Phaltan. The Phaltan Rajwada (royal residence of the Maratha king) is an architectural marvel. Its construction commenced in 1861 and was completed on May 6, 1875. A new portion was added to the Phaltan Rajwada, whose construction was completed in 1911. This was named Mudhoji Manmohan Palace, which was once the maternal home of Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of the founder of the Maratha empire, who succeeded the realm after his father's death.

The Phaltan Rajwada compound consists of the main residential building, the ancient Ram Mandir, spacious courtyards and several halls. Intricate, hand-carved, wood work seen in the columns and arches to the rich colour palette in the paintings and tapestries are remarkable.

The Phaltan Rajwada is not open to the general public since it is a private residence. However, Jakson Inns organised the entry for me. Many Bollywood movies have been shot here, including Akshay Kumar's Khatta Meetha.

### Ram Mandir

There are several ancient Hindu and Jain temples in Phaltan, and the most outstanding among them is the Ram Mandir. Situated in Ravivar Peth, it is an old temple, about 300 years old, with statues of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in black stone. Ram is said to be the Gram Daivat of the city. Ram Janmotsav (birthday celebration) is celebrated every year, where thousands of people gather for the occasion. The temple has beautifully colored chandeliers along a large public corridor which are quite unique to a temple.

Datta Guru usually has three faces, but at the Ram Mandir, there is only an Ek-Mukhi Datta (single-faced Datta), which is again very unique to the Ram Mandir of Phaltan. The idol of Lord Vitthoba has been placed at the Ram Mandir by one of the ruling



Thoseghar Waterfalls includes a series of waterfalls of 15 to 20 metres and one of them is 500 metres in height.



The Phaltan Rajwada is an architectural marvel.

### Good To Know

**When to go:** Phaltan is most welcoming in the monsoon and winter months. Visit during October and November to see the sugarcane harvest.

**Wow factor:** A picnic organised by the hotel team at the windmills plateau was amazing. Reach there at sunset, and have sundowners, a trip to cherish all your life!

**Where to stay:** Jakson Inn is an ideal choice which offers world-class standards, a fully-fitted gym and a spa. Green Bean multi-cuisine restaurant serves local as well as Continental food.

queens as she was saved from an air accident. She had vowed to Lord Vitthoba that she would place his statue if he saved her from the valley of death. After visiting the Ram Mandir, I enjoyed my walk around the streets to see the old jail and a few other ancient buildings.

### Ajinkya Tara Fort

Located on the Ajinkya Tara Mountain, the 3,300-foot-high Ajinkya Tara Fort is worth visiting to get a fabulous view of Satara city. Jakson Inns organises hiking, trekking and mountaineering for its guests on request. The hotel also offers a guide to the Ajinkya Tara Fort who will show the temples of Devi Mangalai, Lord Shankar and Lord Hanuman on the north-eastern side of the fort.

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