

ONCE UPON A TIME IN PHALTAN

With windmills, waterfalls and canopied lunches, **Jakson Inns** at Phaltan is an ideal getaway if you are looking for an offbeat holiday. **Kheyna Pandit** checks in and discovers a few surprises over the weekend

"But, where in the world is Phaltan?" If this was your first thought, don't blame your poor knowledge of geography, because I was in the same boat a while ago. Situated just off the highway, Jakson Inns, India's first Leed Green Platinum rated hotel, is a good six-hour drive away from Mumbai. And, while you may be wondering why they chose to set up the quaint space in such a faraway village, there's a good explanation for that as well. We set off on a long, exhausting journey on a Friday morning to unearth the beauty that Phaltan seems to have carefully hidden away from the world.

Get set, go
After a smooth and seamless (but very long) drive, Phaltan is still two hours away from the main Pune exit. You will know you're close when vivacious marigold flowers begin to dot the side of the road, enveloping the green lawns in a glorious shade of saffron. The exhausting journey ended with a view of the hotel, which suddenly popped up to our right without warning. The Jakson Inns hotel building may appear tiny, but it is an extensive six-acre property that is surrounded by pomegranate plantations. Apart from that, it boasts of 69 deluxe rooms, 4 suites, a full service gym, a treatment room and specially tailored rooms for solo women travellers and the physically challenged. As soon as we entered, we were overjoyed to be greeted with a traditional Maharashtra welcome—tikka and fresh sugarcane juice.

In and around
and fresh sugarcane juice.

In and around
Pull apart the drapes in your room to see acres of farmland and lawns in the distance. My room also had a gorgeous view of the pomegranate trees. Every room is equipped with basic amenities boxed up neatly on a tray in the bath area. An English newspaper and the 'medium-soft' pillows that I mentioned in my preference sheet during my reservation were delivered to my room when arrived—I was ecstatic to see homemade chocolates lined up when I



You can ask the Jakson Inns staff to set up a beautiful canopied lunch for you

entered. Before I could get on with the day that was planned for me, I snuck in a quick nap and a short TV session.

Up we go
After an elaborate continental lunch at Green Bean, we weren't quite ready for an excursion. But since we had a tight itinerary, we made our way to the windmill farm, with a two-hour drive to Pusegaon. The spiralling roads reminded us of the climb at Tiger Hill in Lonavala, and the lush valley was a sight for sore eyes. An hour into the drive, we saw a hint of the windmills lined up on the hill. Unfortunately for us, the sun began to set when we were driving up, obscuring the view, but as the car pulled in near the 90-foot windmill, there was a jaw-dropping moment. From the edge of the windmill, you could see the sun set into the valley.

DAY 2
see the sun set into the valley.

DAY 2
Living the experience
Jakson Inns is all about experiences. And, that's exactly what we got, starting with a dreamy al fresco breakfast in the garden. The old-world charm and birds chirping in the distance was a fantastic start to the day. After a 60km drive to the city, we found ourselves standing before a pale blue, royal entrance and a heavy wooden door. Constructed in 1824, Rajwada Palace in the

city of Satara also served as a court to the Maratha King Shahu Maharaj. With 11 blocks, the palace boasted of 21 wall portraits and had four court halls and a bar-room. If requested well in advance, Jakson Inns can set up a royal breakfast for you here!

Amidst the valley of flowers
Imagine standing on a plateau, surrounded by a lush carpet of flowers. No, you don't have to be in Kashmir! Our next destination brought us to Kas Pathar. As we trekked up the plateau, our eyes feasted on a sheet of flowers in a riot of yellows, pinks, blues and purples. Kas Pathar, which literally translates to 'Plateau of a million flowers', is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to many endemic life forms. We enjoyed a compact picnic lunch next to a pretty pond amidst the serenity here. After sandwiches, fresh bakes and homemade chocolate, we loitered by the vast plateau for a bit. We ended our day with a continental dinner and drinks at Fulltoon—a resto-bar designed for the youth.

DAY 3
A rural taste
Day 3 began with Jakson Inns whisking us off for an early, unplanned farm visit. Located half an hour away from the hotel,

BE PREPARED TO SPEND

- FOR A SINGLE NIGHT**
- Single ₹3,200 (Continental Plan + breakfast)
 - Double ₹3,600 (Continental Plan + breakfast)
 - Suite ₹8,000 (Continental Plan + breakfast)
- PACKAGE FOR TWO**
- Weekend Holiday Package ₹4,999, with breakfast, lunch and dinner (1 night)
 - Jakson Escapade ₹11,999, with breakfast and lunch or dinner (2 nights)
 - Countryside & Vineyard Package ₹13,333, with breakfast and lunch or dinner (2 nights)

* All prices are exclusive of taxes



the farm was a vast orchard of pomegranate plantations, but it was off-season, so we could only imagine them in full bloom. Before heading back, we were led into a clearing by the river, where we had a charming breakfast, with a live dosa and an omelette counter.

Sweet goodbyes
Our weekend came to an end after the farm visit, and we started off for Mumbai around noon. They can pack a meal or you can stay for lunch, but if you ask me, the heavy breakfast was enough to last through the journey back home. Despite the travelling, I managed to enjoy every bit of my stay. A piece of advice though: if you're looking for a comfortable relaxed stay, plan a longer trip. The mix of nature and luxury makes it a good place to experience the best of everything this season.

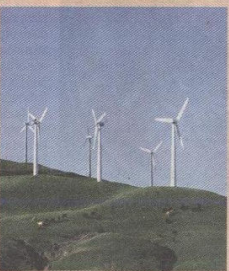
GETTING THERE
The road to Phaltan is smooth after the Mumbai-Pune expressway. Go straight through Shriwal and Lonand and you'll get there from Pune in two hours. Driving is the best way to get there.

- **Where** Jakson Inns, Phaltan, Plot No. 398/6,399,400, Near Cummins Mega Site, Lonand Road, Phaltan
- **Contact** salesmumbai@jaksonhotels.com/salespune@jaksonhotels.com/7774090289/7410021606

PLACES TO VISIT FROM PHALTAN

Jakson Inns organises tours from the hotel itself. If you're looking for a twist to your usual holiday,

- **Rajwada Palace** Located 60km from Phaltan, visit the historic site and marvel at the vintage architecture.
- **Pusegaon Windmills** Another 60km drive from Phaltan, visit the vast stretches of the Pusegaon Windmill Farm and watch the sun set.
- **Thosgar Falls** Drive another 20km further from Pusegaon and you will reach a sanctuary of hidden waterfalls at Thosgar. However, even though the falls are in force all season, visit during the monsoon for the best experience.



>> The stoic windmills on the plains of Pusegaon will leave you mesmerised

- **Sajjanwad** Located 80km from Phaltan, this fort boasts of exceptionally breathtaking views and is also a religious site and the final resting place of Sant Ramdas of the 17th century.
- **Ajinkyatara Fort** Visit the beautiful Ajinkyatara Fort on one of the seven mountains surrounding the city of Satara. This 16th century fort is home to the television tower for the city of Satara.
- **Kas Pathar** Deemed a UNESCO World Heritage site, visit Kas Pathar, 80km from Phaltan, to witness a valley of flowers in different colours. However, make sure you visit in season for the wonderful bloom and the gorgeous views!