

MAHARASHTRA TOURISM

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation,
Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra

Journeys through the Living Heritage of

Palghar and Nashik

Journeys through the Living Heritage of

Palghar and Nashik

The book has been developed as part of Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC)'s project "Developing Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)-based experiential tourism in Palghar and Nashik".

All rights reserved

Research and Content: Contact Base
Book Design: Contact Base

Printed at: Sushama Printers, 62 Bentinck Street, Kolkata 700069

First published in September 2026

Contents

Preface 05

Chapter 01
Discover the Region 07

Chapter 02
People of the Landscape 15

Chapter 03
The Living Heritages 19

Chapter 04
Flavours of the Land 31

Chapter 05
Abodes of Living Tradition 35

Chapter 06
Cultural Trails 45

Glossary 62

Acknowledgements 66





Preface

Tourism is most meaningful when it creates a deeper connection between people and place. As travellers increasingly seek experiences beyond conventional destinations, Maharashtra has an opportunity to open its lesser-known cultural landscapes through the traditions, knowledge, creativity and ways of life that continue to shape them.

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) is committed to fostering experiential tourism that places communities and their living heritage at its heart. Its initiative on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)-based experiential tourism in Palghar and Nashik seeks to create meaningful opportunities for communities to share their traditions, knowledge and creative practices, while enabling travellers to experience destinations through the people and cultures that give them their distinctive character.

The journey moves from the coastal regions of Dahanu into the hills and cultural abodes of Jawhar and onward to the forested landscapes of Surgana. Along the way, artists, craftspeople, performers and tradition-bearers offer a closer understanding of the traditions they sustain. Their stories also reveal the connections between culture and the natural world: forests provide materials and knowledge, agriculture shapes food and celebration, water and seasons influence ways of life and livelihoods remain intertwined with local cultural practices.

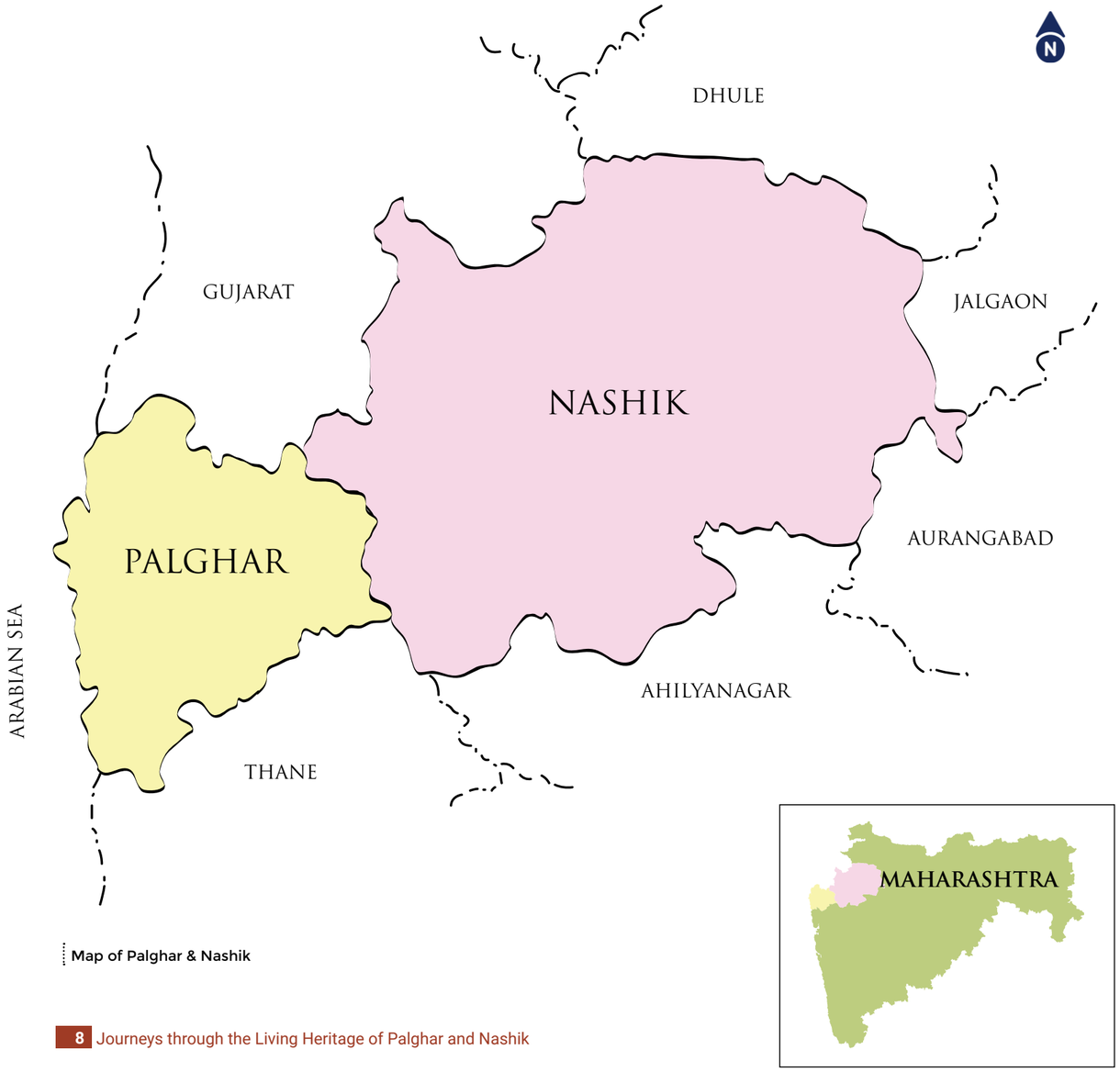
The journeys presented here were shaped through engagement with local communities, tradition-bearers and practitioners. Together, they mapped cultural assets, identified meaningful visitor experiences and helped plan itineraries rooted in local knowledge. This community-led approach reflects a larger purpose. When developed responsibly, tourism can contribute to safeguarding living heritage by strengthening recognition and livelihoods, while encouraging younger generations to value, practice and transmit their cultural traditions. The later part of the book translates these encounters into possibilities for travel. Cultural trails connect villages, practitioners, heritage sites and natural landscapes, offering ways to understand the region beyond conventional sightseeing.

The publication is intended for travellers and tourism practitioners as well as educators, researchers, cultural organisations and communities interested in understanding and engaging with living heritage. It is both a window into the region and an invitation to experience it with curiosity and respect. In doing so, it seeks to encourage thoughtful, community-centred tourism and a deeper appreciation of heritage that remains alive because communities continue to practice, adapt and transmit it.



Discover the Region

Where the Arabian Sea meets the Sahyadris, Palghar and Nashik hold one of Maharashtra's lesser-known cultural landscapes. Within easy reach of Mumbai and Nashik city, the region moves from coastal fishing settlements and *chikoo* orchards to forested hills, waterfalls and centuries-old forts. Its deeper distinction, however, lies in the living heritage carried forward by its communities: in the hands of craftspeople, in fields and forests, and in songs, dances, foodways, rituals, stories and knowledge systems passed from one generation to the next. Together, these traditions offer a way into the landscapes, histories and communities explored in the pages ahead.



Map of Palghar & Nashik

Introduction

Maharashtra in western India is a land where history and living culture unfold across a remarkably varied landscape. From the rock-cut caves of Ajanta and Ellora and the historic landscapes of the Marathas to the Western Ghats and the vibrant cultural traditions of its towns and villages, the state's heritage spans monuments, landscapes and living practices. On the western flank of Maharashtra, Palghar and Nashik are home to diverse tribal communities whose cultural traditions have evolved in close relationship with the region's distinctive landscapes.

Palghar stretches from the Arabian Sea, with its coastal settlements, fishing communities and chikoo orchards, towards the forested hills of the Western Ghats. Further inland, Nashik's Surgana region unfolds across the Sahyadris, marked by dense forests, waterfalls, farms, villages and historic forts. Across these landscapes, communities continue to practice and transmit vibrant living heritages—from Geographical Indication (GI)-registered Warli painting, Bohada mask-making and bamboo craft to music, dance, food traditions and ecological knowledge rooted in the landscape. Here, culture remains closely intertwined with the land, livelihoods and rhythms of community life, inviting travellers to encounter heritage not as a relic of the past, but as something practiced and experienced in the present. This publication explores the region through its coasts and orchards, hills and forests, forts and stories, cultural traditions and the communities who keep them alive.

Where the Land Meets the Sea

Around 150 kilometres from Mumbai, Palghar is well connected by both road and rail. Yet its proximity to the metropolis belies the remarkable diversity of landscapes and cultures that unfold across the district. Stretching between the Arabian Sea and the Sahyadris, Palghar moves from coastal settlements and fishing villages to forests, farms and hamlets. This diversity is particularly evident in Dahanu *taluka*, at the heart of Palghar's northern coastal belt.

Dahanu's fertile land, access to freshwater and the sea and favourable coastal environment supported its growth as a thriving settlement. The coast unfolds through serene beaches, including Dahanu, Bordi and Chinchani, with long stretches of shoreline and relatively unhurried village life. Mangroves and coastal vegetation add to the ecological character of the landscape. Beyond the beaches lie the region's celebrated chikoo orchards, with Gholwad and Bordi particularly renowned for



Dahanu Beach



A traditional Parsi house

their orchards. Coconut and other fruit trees, vegetable cultivation and paddy fields further shape the agricultural landscape.

The landscape also carries traces of a layered history and living spiritual traditions. Tarapur Fort, with its walls, bastions, wells and remnants of historic structures, recalls the region's Portuguese and Maratha past. The Mahalaxmi Temple adds another dimension, drawing visitors to its serene setting. The coastal Dahanu belt also carries a distinctive Parsi heritage, rooted in the settlement of Parsi families here some eight centuries ago; its fire temple and historic sanatorium remain visible reminders of this long association.

Forests, coastal wetlands and villages create a setting where history, ecology and rural life continue to intersect. Food offers yet another way into this landscape: millets, rice, chikoo, seasonal produce, garlic, coconut and freshly caught seafood reflect its agricultural and coastal geography. To travel through Dahanu is therefore to experience a landscape where sea, orchards, forests, farms and villages meet.

Into the Hills & Forests



Village deity shrine in the forest

Palghar's landscape gradually rises inland from the Arabian Sea towards the Sahyadri ranges of the Western Ghats, transforming the coastal landscape of beaches and orchards into a world of hills, forests, valleys and waterfalls. At the heart of this transition is Jawhar, a picturesque hill town in Palghar district, situated at about 518 metres above sea level. Jawhar combines the cool, green character of a hill retreat with a distinctive living cultural landscape. The wider Western Ghats are recognised by UNESCO for their exceptional biodiversity and high levels of endemism, making this mountain landscape as ecologically significant as it is scenic. Its historic architectures, particularly the Old Palace and the Jai Vilas Palace, showcase fine stone detailing and expansive views over the surrounding valleys. The terrain is punctuated by waterfalls and viewpoints, including the spectacular Dabhosa Waterfall, among Maharashtra's prominent waterfalls, cascades through the forested Sahyadri landscape. Suryamal, one of the region's prominent high points, offers panoramic views across the surrounding hills, while the Keshav Srushti Oxygen Park at Ramnagar offers an immersive bamboo forest experience, its trails and viewpoints showcasing several giant bamboo species.

Further inland, the hills continue into Surgana taluka of Nashik district. Nashik is widely known for its twin identities of "wine and divine"—its vineyards and the sacred pilgrimage centre of Trimbakeshwar—but its northern and western landscapes reveal another side of the district: forests, villages, waterfalls, farms and mountain trails. Its forested hills and fertile valleys offer opportunities for hiking, village walks and exploring seasonal waterfalls and streams. Agriculture remains central to the landscape, with millets, pulses, rice and seasonal produce forming part of local foodways. Waterfalls and natural springs recur across the landscape, adding to its appeal.

At the heart of this landscape stands Hatgad Fort, dramatically positioned amidst the Sahyadris. Local tradition associates its name with the idea of a fort built by hand—*hath* meaning 'hand' and *gad* meaning 'fort'. According to local belief, the fort was built by the foot soldiers of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who are said to have completed it by hand in a single day. Whether tracing its historic pathways or taking in the valleys from its heights, the fort offers a striking meeting point of history and landscape.

Together, Jawhar and Surgana offer a journey through hills, forests, waterfalls and forts—revealing the Western Ghats not merely as a scenic destination, but as a landscape shaped by history, ecology and culture.



Sahyadri mountain range



People of the Landscape

This landscape is shaped not only by its geography but by the people who have lived with, interpreted and cared for it across generations. Its character emerges through a continuing exchange between community, place and memory—where knowledge is carried through practice, passed from one generation to the next, and adapted to changing times. From settlements and festivals to craft, food, music and belief, culture here is not separate from everyday life; it is embedded within it. Together, these living traditions offer a deeper understanding of the region—not simply as a destination to visit but as a place to encounter through its people and their enduring relationship with the land.

Living with the Land

Palghar is home to around 3 million people, with Scheduled Tribes making up about 37% of the population—among them the Warli, Kokna, Mahadev Koli, Malhar Koli, Katkari, Dhodi and Dubla, whose knowledge, livelihoods and creative traditions have shaped the district's cultural landscape. Along the coast, fishing and cultivation sustain distinctive ways of life, while inland communities draw upon forests, farms and locally available natural resources. Across these landscapes, knowledge of seasons, crops, plants, materials and the natural environment continues to be transmitted through everyday practice. In Dahanu, the Warli communities have long inhabited its villages and agricultural landscapes. Along the coast, Koli communities carry generations of knowledge associated with the sea, fishing, boats and nets. Farming, orchard cultivation, fishing, craft and other forms of local enterprise continue to shape everyday life. Cultural practices—expressed through painting, music, dance, ritual and celebration—are embedded within these relationships rather than existing apart from them.

Inland, Jawhar's hills hold the memory of the Mukne dynasty, which made the town its capital in the fourteenth century—a legacy still felt in its villages. Community celebrations, craftsmanship, music and performance continue alongside changing livelihoods, carrying inherited knowledge into contemporary life.

Further inland, Surgana taluka of Nashik district is another important cultural landscape. Nashik district recorded a population of 6.11 million in the 2011 Census, with Scheduled Tribes accounting for about 25.6%, including the Kokna, Mahadev Koli, Bhil and Warli communities. In Surgana's villages, agriculture, forest knowledge, craft, food, music, dance and ritual remain interconnected with everyday life. The forest is not simply the setting in which people live; it forms part of their material, cultural and spiritual world.



Cultivating the land, carrying generations of knowledge forward



Women carrying *Sevanti* as part of festive & ritual traditions

Across the region, relationships with nature are also expressed through belief and worship. Trees, animals, forests and other elements of the natural world enter community narratives, rituals and sacred practices.

Waghoba, the tiger deity, is worshipped by the Warli and other communities as guardian of the forest and its people. Simple shrines—often little more than a stone beneath a tree—are found across villages and forest edges, reflecting a bond with the wild that is as spiritual as it is practical.



The Living Heritages

This chapter traces the living heritages of Palghar and Nashik—traditions still made, performed and passed down. Warli painting turns everyday life into a distinctive geometric visual language, while bamboo craft transforms a renewable forest resource into objects of both utility and artistry. Bohada brings mythology, devotion and ritual theatre together as handcrafted masks transform performers into deities, demons and other characters moving through village spaces in ritual and performance. Songs and dances accompany the agricultural calendar and life's milestones, from harvest to marriage to mourning, while folk instruments—fashioned from locally available materials like gourd, bamboo and hide—carry these rhythms. Together, they reveal culture as inseparable from community, landscape and livelihood.



Waghoba (The Tiger God) by Rupesh Gorkhana

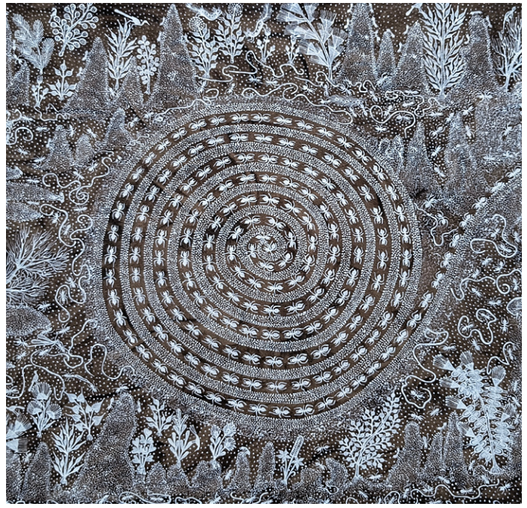
Warli Painting

Warli painting is a distinctive visual art tradition of Maharashtra, closely associated with the Warli and other communities of Palghar and neighbouring regions. Registered as a Geographical Indication (GI) in 2014, it is rooted in the everyday life, rituals and worldview of the community. Traditionally, paintings were created on the mud walls of homes, especially during weddings and other significant occasions. Using a simple white pigment made from rice paste and applied with a bamboo twig, artists create compositions from circles, triangles, squares and lines. These geometric forms constitute a distinctive visual vocabulary through which the community expresses its understanding of life and the world. While traditionally associated with walls, Warli painting is now also practiced on paper, canvas, textiles and contemporary objects, allowing it to reach new audiences while retaining its characteristic aesthetic.

The imagery encompasses the interconnected worlds of people, nature and the spiritual realm. Farming, fishing, hunting, animals, trees, village life and community celebrations appear alongside rituals, myths and sacred figures. The familiar representation of the Tarpa dance, with figures holding hands in a circular movement, evokes collective celebration and the rhythms of community life. Nature is central to this visual world, with cultivation, rain, forests and animals reflecting both dependence upon and reverence for the environment. Important life-cycle rituals also find expression in Warli. Marriage is particularly significant: during a traditional wedding, women create a sacred wall painting called the Chawk within the nuptial space, depicting deities invoked to bless the bride and groom and ensure fertility, prosperity and continuity. Figures such as Palghat Devi, associated with fertility, and Waghoba, regarded as a protective deity, further connect Warli imagery with the community's spiritual beliefs. In this context, painting is not merely representational; it participates in ritual, preserves collective memory and transmits knowledge and values across generations.



Palghat Devi by Anil Vangad



Life in the cosmos by Kishor Mhase



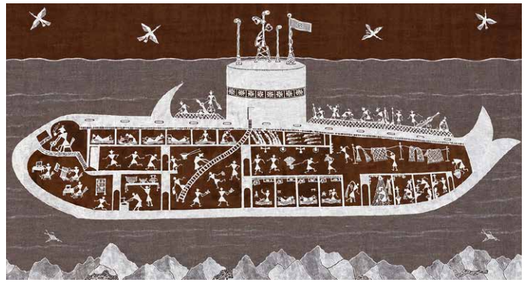
Lord Krishna by Reena Valvi



The Master Storyteller of Warli

The journey of Warli painting from village walls to national and international audiences is closely associated with the late Padma Shri Jivya Soma Mashe of Ganjad, Dahanu. From the 1970s, Mashe began translating the tradition onto paper and canvas, bringing its distinctive visual language to a wider world. His contribution demonstrated how Warli painting could evolve beyond its traditional context without losing its cultural grounding and played a significant role in establishing it as a recognised contemporary art form.

Warli has continued to evolve with changing times. Contemporary artists have introduced themes of urbanisation, environmental change, technology, dams, machines and even space exploration, using the traditional visual vocabulary to reflect new realities and experiences. This ability to embrace contemporary subjects while retaining its distinctive forms is central to the vitality of the tradition.



Submarine by Shantaram Gorkhana



Modern life by Anil Vangad

Natural Fibre & Green Aesthetics

Natural fibre craft is deeply rooted in Palghar's rural cultural landscape. Bamboo craft, practiced across villages in Palghar and Nashik, transforms this fast-growing, renewable resource into baskets, storage containers, household implements and other utility products shaped by close familiarity with the forest and community life. Date palm craft is also practiced in Palghar district, where dried palm leaves are twisted and plaited into decorative objects, extending Palghar's tradition of working with local, renewable materials.

Craftsmanship with natural fibres rests on careful, hands-on processes. Selected bamboo is cut, seasoned and split into slender strips, then trimmed, shaped and woven or joined with precision, artisans relying on inherited knowledge to judge the strength, flexibility and form each object needs. Date palm leaves are dried and softened before being twisted into strands and worked into decorative forms. What appears simple in both crafts often involves considerable patience, dexterity and attention to detail.

As low-waste, renewable materials, bamboo and date palm offer possibilities for a greener rural economy while supporting traditional livelihoods. Artisans are also adapting their skills to create contemporary products alongside traditional ones. In Palghar, these natural fibre crafts represent more than a livelihood: a living practice where ecological knowledge, craftsmanship and sustainable resource use come together.



Bamboo artisan demonstrating the craft



Decorative items made of date palm leaf

Bohada Ritual Theatre

Bohada is a vibrant form of ritual theatre among indigenous communities in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, where masks, performance and storytelling form part of a sacred community tradition. Found particularly in Jawhar and surrounding areas of Palghar and in Surgana, Nashik, it is associated with communities including the Mahadev Koli, Bhil, Warli and Kokna. More than theatre, Bohada is a ritual offering to the village goddess, Ma Jagdamba, seeking collective wellbeing, good health, prosperity and harmony.

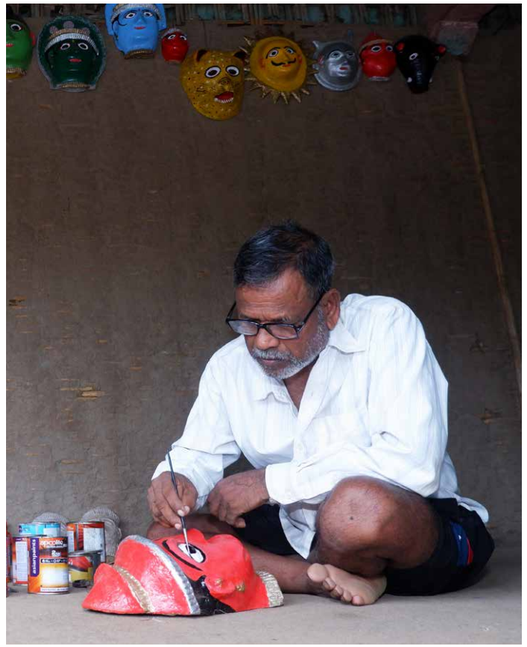
The tradition comes alive during the three-day Bohada festival, generally celebrated between March and May. A procession of masked characters transforms village spaces into places of ritual and theatre as deities, demons, animals and mythical beings emerge through handcrafted masks, movement and music. On the concluding day, the community gathers to worship Ma Jagdamba and share a village feast, reaffirming collective bonds.

The repertoire encompasses a striking range of masks. Brahmadev represents the creator god, while Ganesha, recognisable by his elephant head, embodies wisdom, prosperity and the removal of obstacles. Agnidev personifies the transformative and life-sustaining force of fire. Alongside divine figures are formidable characters from mythology and local folklore. The imposing Chandrasur represents a powerful demon king, while the ten-headed Ravana evokes the legendary ruler of Lanka and principal antagonist of the Ramayana. Animal masks—tiger, monkey, deer and buffalo—reflect the biodiversity and symbolic world of the Western Ghats, while legendary figures such as Pundalik, celebrated for his devotion to his parents, also find a place in the repertoire. Tathis, or ritual composite panels, bring several masks and figures together in a single dramatic display.

Each mask is itself a work of craftsmanship. Traditionally made from materials such as wood, papier-mâché, clay and mud, masks require careful shaping, modelling, painting and finishing. The knowledge of making them is passed through generations, often informally within families and villages, making the mask-maker an important custodian of the tradition. Villages such as Pimpalsond and Barhe in Nashik and settlements around Jawhar and Mokhada in Palghar continue to nurture this living heritage.



Bohada masks & the makers



Bohada artist crafting the mask



Bohada - inspired souvenirs

Songs and Dances

Across the villages of Palghar and Nashik, music and dance are woven into the seasonal, agricultural, ritual and social life of communities.

Performed in village courtyards, fields and forest landscapes, they mark moments of celebration, devotion, transition and collective gathering, creating a vibrant cultural expression shaped by the land and its rhythms.

Many traditions follow the agricultural cycle. Tarpa Nritya, performed by the Warli, Malhar Koli and Kokna communities, brings dancers together in a circle around the *Tarpa* during harvest and Diwali celebrations. The



Tarpa Dance



Hodi Dance

movement echoes the circular imagery of Warli painting, while its melodies express gratitude for nature. Gavari Nritya, performed from the monsoon season to Diwali, celebrates the rice harvest and honours the goddess Gavari. Thakar Nritya welcomes the first monsoon rains and the beginning of sowing, while Tipri dance is performed on Akshaya Tritiya in honour of the harvest god, with women dancing in a circle around a basket of newly sprouted paddy and millet.

Other dances draw directly upon the community's relationship with the natural and spiritual world. Kambade Nritya is performed as an offering to Lord Narayan, particularly when delayed rains cause anxiety for farming communities. Dongri Dev Nritya invokes Dongar Mauli, the protector of the hills, through intense movement and music. Bagh Pawri Nritya transforms the forest into a stage, with dancers mimicking a tiger or lion and exploring the intimate relationship between forest communities and wildlife.

The performing traditions also accompany important moments of social life. Sambal Nritya accompanies weddings and funerals, shifting from vibrant celebration to solemn remembrance. Hodi Nritya uses a symbolic boat to enact a journey through the sea and back to shore, evoking resilience and the challenges of life. Dhol Nritya, performed during festivals and weddings, brings communities together through powerful rhythms and energetic movement.



Bagh Pawri Dance



Thakar Dance

In traditions such as Pawri, Dangi and Madal Nritya, synchronised movement, colourful attire, drums and wind instruments create striking village spectacles. Alongside dance, intimate singing traditions preserve stories and memories. Dhak Badya Geet uses verses drawn from daily life and shared experience, while women perform Dera Geet during marriage and harvest rituals, accompanied by the haunting resonance of an earthen pot. Together, these traditions create a rich soundscape in which the monsoon, harvest, forest, river, deity, family and community all find a voice.

Folk Instruments

The musical traditions of Palghar and Nashik are inseparable from their distinctive folk instruments, many of which are fashioned from materials found in the surrounding landscape. Bamboo, gourds, wood, metal, natural fibres and even everyday objects are transformed through inherited craftsmanship into instruments that accompany ritual, dance and community gatherings. The haunting sound of the Tarpa, made from dried gourd, bamboo and beeswax, leads the circular Tarpa dance of Palghar.

The Pawri, similarly crafted from materials including dried bottle gourd, bamboo and beeswax, produces an earthy wind sound that accompanies dances across Nashik. Percussion instruments such as the Sambal, Dhol, Dhumsa and Madal provide the driving rhythms for celebrations and performances.



Thali Badya



The Tarpa Maestro

The Tarpa is the signature instrument of Palghar's living cultural landscape. Among its foremost custodians is Bhiklya Ladakya Dhinda, a fourth-generation tarpa maker and player from Walvanda, Jawhar. Having learnt the tradition from his family, Dhinda has carried it for over seven decades—not only performing and making the instrument but also passing his knowledge to younger generations. In recognition of his contribution to folk and tribal music, he was conferred the Padma Shri in 2026.



Ghangli

Some instruments are remarkable for their ingenuity. The Ghangli uses gourds as resonating chambers attached to a bamboo shaft and carries two strings, producing soft, resonant tones. The Kircha, made from grooved bamboo, creates its distinctive rhythm through friction and is associated with Dongri Dev Nritya. Even ordinary objects can become instruments: in Thali Badya, a metal plate and wooden stick are transformed into a subtle musical accompaniment. These instruments are more than carriers of sound. Their making embodies local material knowledge and craftsmanship, while their music connects people to ritual, landscape and collective memory.



Kircha



Flavours of the Land

From the coastal belt to the forested hinterland and the hilly villages, food here follows the map of the landscape—shaped by season, soil, forest and water, and passed down through generations of community knowledge about what to grow, gather and prepare.



A Dangi platter

Everyday Bread

Millets and grains form the everyday base. Naagli Bhakar, patted by hand and cooked on a hot *tawa*, is a staple bread, paired with urad dal and a fiery garlic-chilli chutney. At Diwali, kitchens turn to Pan Mouri, rice bread steamed inside fragrant Palash leaves.

Gathered from the Green

The forest itself supplies much of what ends up on the plate. Kurul Ki Bhaji lifts tender greens with garlic and chilli, carrying a gentle bitterness typical of forest foraging. Monsoon brings Sewra Bhaji, in which sour Bondara leaves are added not for taste but to keep the dish from itching the tongue. Khakre Ki Patoware appears once the Khakre leaf unfurls after the first rains, steamed over twigs into a fragrant snack, while Raan Bhaji, in its Tera and Kauli forms, brings together whatever greens the forest offers that week.



Millet breads



Dried fish

From Tide to Torrent

From the Arabian Sea to inland waters, fish takes many forms on the local table. Along the shore, Kolmbi Bhaat folds small prawns into spiced rice, and Ambadi Kolmbi meets sour ambadi leaves with dried shrimp in a tangy curry. Moura Bhaji simmers Bangda in tamarind until sharp and tender, while Bombil Cha Rasha does the same for Bombay Duck in a coconut-tamarind gravy. Inland, Machhli Ka Patori wraps fish in leaves and cooks it over an open fire with the leaf and fish flavouring each other; Palwa Machhli Ki Bhaji is a soupy Pangas curry with coconut and garlic; and Kekra Ka Amti turns crab into a light, sour broth brightened with Ambari leaves and Mahua oil, traditionally considered nourishing for the unwell.



Pulses

Feasts Worth Gathering for

Meat and fowl mark occasions worth gathering for. Umbadu sees vegetables and fowl cooked slowly in an earthen pot until purple yam and sweet potato turn smoky and tender—a dish meant to be shared. Gauthi Komra with Suran, made from *desi* (country) chicken and elephant foot yam cooked patiently in a mud oven, welcomes guests properly, while Wasta chicken pairs chicken with preserved bamboo shoots for a faintly fermented depth. In the hills, Bokre Chi Bhaji, a rich, spicy mutton curry, is cooked in quantity for the Haldi ceremony before a wedding; Ranti Komra, made from desi chicken, marks special occasions alongside Naagli roti and rice; and Lauri Ki Bhaji, also called Ganji Ki Bhaji, uses wild fowl cooked over a kiln with onion, garlic and spice—reflecting an older food system shaped by close knowledge of forests, seasons and locally available resources. On Holi, Kuday Rice Ladoo, made from rice flour, jaggery and coconut steamed into small parcels, forms part of community celebration.



Abodes of Living Tradition

Across the coastal villages and forested hills of Palghar and Nashik, culture is not confined to stages or museums. It lives in homes, courtyards, fields and forests—in the hands of artists, in songs carried across generations and in rituals that bring communities together. These rural abodes celebrate living heritage as part of everyday life, shaped and sustained by the local people and places.

Gholwad

On Palghar's coastal belt, Gholwad is celebrated as the Chikoo Bowl of Maharashtra, its landscape shaped by orchards, fishing and village life. The village is also a significant centre of traditional bamboo craft, practiced mainly by women. Once closely associated with everyday utility and livelihood, the craft continues to evolve as artisans bring inherited skills into contemporary design.

Gholwad is home to the MTDC Palghar Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya, a community museum that brings together the region's living heritage and cultural memories, reflecting the traditions of Palghar and the communities that sustain them. Honey production adds another dimension to the village's local livelihoods and its relationship with the natural environment.



MTDC Palghar Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya



Yamuna Surti: Reimagining Bamboo

In Gholwad, Yamuna Surti represents the evolving story of bamboo craftsmanship. Drawing on traditional basketry skills, she has expanded her practice from everyday utility objects to contemporary decorative products. Her work has reached exhibitions in cities such as Pune and Delhi, while her enterprise, Yamuna Bamboo Art, reflects how inherited knowledge can adapt to new markets and opportunities while remaining rooted in the community.



Artist at work

Ganjad

In Palghar's Dahanu taluka, Ganjad is closely associated with the Warli painting tradition and the legacy of the late Padma Shri Jivya Soma Mashe. Warli artists continue to sustain and reinterpret this distinctive visual tradition across generations.

Ganjad's cultural landscape also encompasses performing traditions such as Tarpa, Gavari and Kambade dances, accompanied by traditional instruments. Together with nearby Saiwan and Dharampur, Ganjad forms part of a wider cultural landscape shaped by Warli art, music and performance.



Living Legacy of Warli Painting

Ganjad's Warli legacy continues across generations. The family of Padma Shri Jivya Soma Mashe carries the tradition into its fourth generation, including his sons Sadashiv and Balu, and grandchildren Kishor, Vijay, Sunita, Vaishnavi, Anita, Pravin, and Chandana. Artists such as Anil Vangad, Dev Rama Dhodhre, Rajesh Vangad, and Shantaram Gorkhana further enrich the village's artistic tradition. Works by Ganjad's eminent Warli artists are held in museums and collections in India and abroad. Art residencies in the village create opportunities for deeper engagement with Warli artists, their stories and evolving creative practices.

Bapugaon

In the Dahanu region, Bapugaon reflects the close relationship between Warli art, performance, nature and everyday life. Painting and bamboo craft coexist with music and dance traditions that remain integral to community life.

The village is associated with the making of the Tarpa instrument. Bapugaon also sustains traditions such as Hodi Nritya, in which a symbolic boat forms the centre of a performance evoking a journey across the sea and back to shore.



Tarpa dance in a community celebration



Ramesh Hengadi: Warli Proponent

From Bapugaon, eminent Warli painter Ramesh Hengadi carries the tradition to new generations and audiences. A committed teacher, he trains young artists and hosts art residencies for students from India and abroad. His work has taken him across India and overseas, where he has presented Warli art and shared its stories and visual language, extending the reach of community knowledge while nurturing its continuity across generations.



Tarpa instrument



Dancing amidst nature

Sakharshet

Set amid the hills of Jawhar taluka, Sakharshet reflects the close relationship between landscape and community life. Folk songs and dances remain part of festivals, rituals and social gatherings, sustaining traditions through collective participation. The surrounding hills are integral to this cultural setting, where music, movement and community practices continue to be learnt, performed and passed across generations.



Percussion instruments



Rajendra Mahale: Keeper of the Dance

From Sakharshet, dancer and troupe leader Rajendra Mahale plays an important role in sustaining the region's performance traditions. He performs Tarpa, Gavari and other traditional dances with his troupe across Maharashtra. Alongside performance, he encourages young people to learn and participate, supporting the transmission of these traditions to a new generation of practitioners.



Morga Dance

Vanvasi

Surrounded by the verdant hills of Jawhar, Vanvasi reflects the close relationship between landscape and cultural life. Women play an important role in sustaining songs, dances and everyday practices passed through generations. Seasonal cycles, community gatherings and the surrounding landscape provide the setting for traditions that continue to connect people with place and with one another.



Sita Ganpat Gavanda & the Living Rhythms of Vanvasi

From Vanvasi, Sita Ganpat Gavanda sustains community traditions through Mogra Geet and Tipri Dance, performed in devotion to the village deity. As a leader of women performers, she supports the continued practice and transmission of these traditions to younger generations. Her troupe also performs across Maharashtra, bringing Vanvasi's devotional songs and dances to wider audiences.

Ramnagar

In Ramnagar village in the hills of Jawhar, bamboo is closely woven into craftsmanship, community knowledge and the surrounding landscape. Women artisans continue to practice bamboo craft, traditionally associated with objects for everyday life, while adapting inherited skills to contemporary products and changing markets.

The region's rich bamboo diversity is also reflected in the nearby Oxygen Park, where different varieties highlight the connections between natural resources, conservation and local craft traditions.



Oxygen Park



Women Crafting a Green Tomorrow

In Ramnagar and neighbouring villages, Savita Kakra and a growing group of women are reimagining bamboo through new products and designs. Building on traditional skills, they are turning craft into enterprise—creating livelihoods, exploring new markets and envisioning a more secure future through bamboo.



The Bohada village

Pimpalsond

In the hills of Surgana, Pimpalsond is an important centre of Bohada, the region's distinctive masked ritual theatre. Hereditary mask-makers continue to shape, paint and finish the expressive masks representing gods, demons, animals and mythical characters that appear during the Bohada festival. More than objects of performance, the masks are integral to a ritual tradition through which stories, beliefs and collective memory are sustained across generations.

The Bohada Information Centre in Pimpalsond, curated in close consultation with the tradition bearers, documents this tradition and brings together a diverse collection of masks. The village forms part of a wider cultural landscape in Surgana, where nearby Dolhare and Wangan sustain performance traditions such as Pawri Dance, alongside the natural landscape of the Bhadra River, Sakhalchond Waterfall and Tatapani Hot Spring.



Shivaram Ganga Chaudhari: Master of Bohada

In Pimpalsond, Shivaram Ganga Chaudhari is a master craftsman sustaining the tradition of Bohada mask-making. After serving in the army, he returned to the craft full-time, drawing on his knowledge of the mythology and stories associated with each character. His home houses an extensive collection of masks, reflecting years of practice and experimentation. Alongside teaching younger practitioners, he explores new forms and products, contributing to the continuity and evolution of Bohada mask-making.



Dhol Pawri Dance

Shribhuvan Chinchpada

In the foothills of the Sahyadris in Surgana, Shribhuvan Chinchpada is a village where music and dance are integral to community life. Thakar Nritya, Dhol Pawri Nritya, Madal Nritya, Dangi Nritya and the sacred Dongri Dev Nritya bring communities together through movement, rhythm and ritual.

The Ambika River, mango orchards, cultivated fields and surrounding hills form a landscape in which agricultural life and cultural expression remain closely connected. During community gatherings and harvest-related occasions, Dera Geet, traditionally sung by local women, further reflects the relationship between performance, everyday life and the rhythms of the seasons.



Bhaurau Bangal: Dancing with Context

Bhaurau Bangal sustains the Thakar and Madal Nritya traditions of his community through dance, rhythm and storytelling. For him, dance is integral to community life, with different occasions associated with their own forms and expressions. As a troupe leader, he passes on not only the movements and songs but also the stories, meanings and contexts that connect each performance to community life.

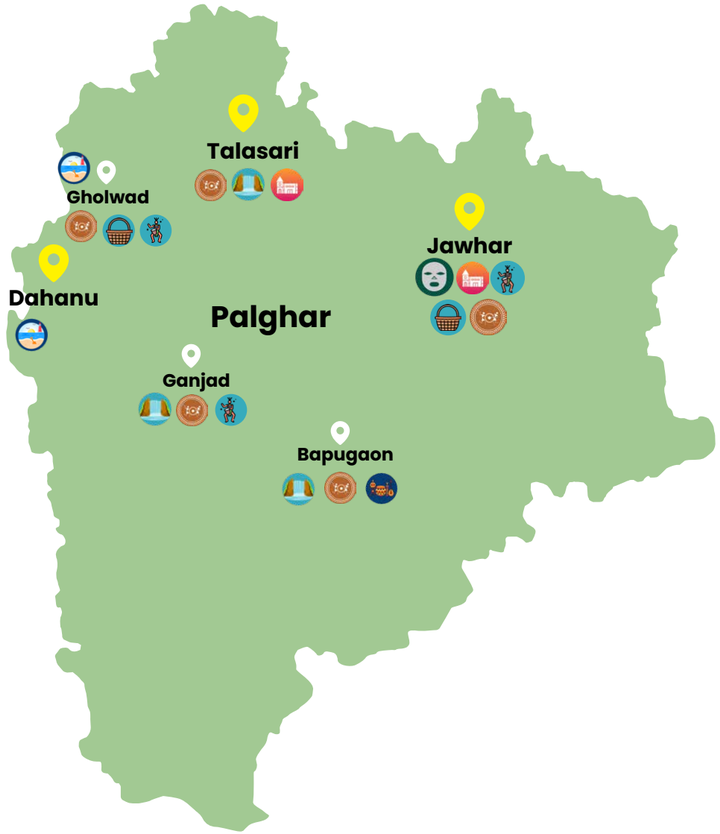


Cultural Trails

The richness of Palghar and Nashik lies in landscapes where culture remains part of everyday life. The cultural trails in this chapter connect villages, practitioners, heritage sites and natural settings, offering experiences that move beyond conventional sightseeing. Through participation and interaction with the people who sustain local traditions, the journeys reveal the close relationship between culture, community and landscape.

Reaching the Cultural Destinations of Palghar & Nashik

Palghar is easily accessible from Mumbai by road or rail, while Surgana can be reached via Nashik city. Across seasons, the region reveals itself gradually—through a festival, a village trail or a craft experience—each offering a window into a living landscape shaped by the communities who call it home.





- Folk Song & Dance
- Warli Painting
- Basketry
- Folk Instruments
- Seaside
- Western Ghats
- Bohada Mask
- Dam
- Fort
- Waterfalls
- Hot Spring

Coastal Heritage & Chikoo Trail

Community Heritage at Gholwad
The MTDC Palghar Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya is a community museum that brings together memories, traditions and stories of the region's diverse communities. Rather than approaching heritage as something preserved only in monuments, the museum offers visitors a way to understand the people and histories that have shaped this coastal landscape.

Bamboo Craft and Community Livelihoods
In Gholwad village, bamboo artisans continue to transform this versatile natural material into functional and decorative objects. Opportunities to observe the process and participate in weaving with local artisans offer a closer understanding of the skill, knowledge and patience embedded in the craft, as well as its continuing role in local livelihoods.

The Chikoo Landscape
Gholwad's celebrated chikoo orchards are an integral part of its rural landscape and economy. Orchard visits offer insights into cultivation practices and the close association that has developed between the fruit and the region, while seasonal harvests provide opportunities to experience local produce at its source.



MTDC Palghar Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya at Gholwad



Chikoo farm at Bordi

The Coastal Landscape
The beaches of Dahanu, Bordi and Chinchani connect Gholwad's agricultural landscape with the Arabian Sea. Along these stretches of coast, settlements also carry traces of the region's distinctive Parsi presence. Heritage bungalows, quiet lanes and elements of colonial-era architecture offer glimpses into the layered social and cultural history of the coastal belt.

History, Faith and Landscape
The trail extends to Tarapur Fort, approximately 30 km from Gholwad, where historic walls and fortifications overlook the Arabian Sea. The Mahalaxmi Temple, approximately 40 km away, adds another dimension to the journey, bringing together spirituality, landscape and local belief.

Access and Connections
Gholwad is accessible from Mumbai by rail via Dahanu Road, followed by an approximately 30-minute drive. Accommodation is available along the Dahanu–Bordi coast for those exploring the wider cultural landscape.

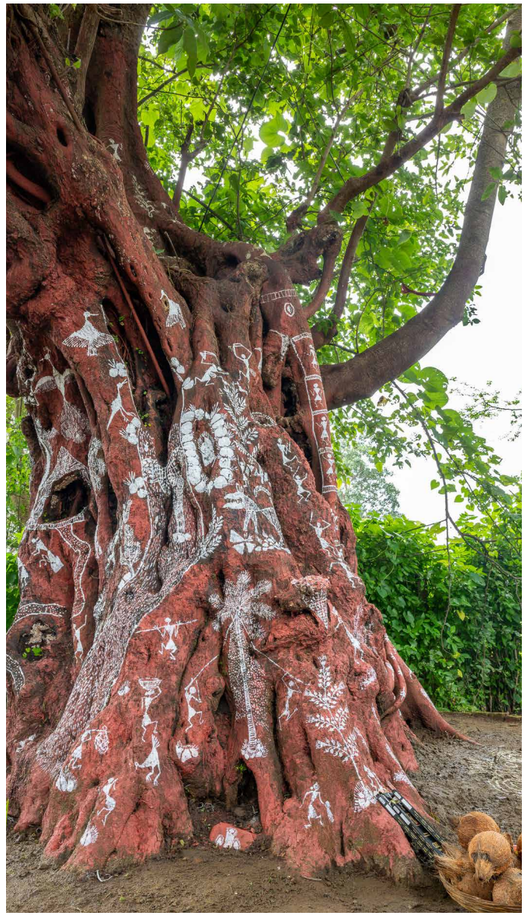


Tarapur Fort



Gholwad sea beach

Warli Living Art Trail



A Warli painted tree at Bapugaon

Warli Art at Ganjad
Ganjad, approximately 15 km from Dahanu, is an important centre of Warli art, where the artistic tradition continues within the landscape and community life from which it has evolved. Artists working from their homes and studios offer insights into its distinctive visual language—figures, animals, plants, rituals and scenes of everyday life—and the meanings and stories they carry. These encounters reveal Warli painting not simply as an artistic form but as a living language of community, memory and experience.

The Legacy of a Master
Ganjad is closely associated with Padma Shri Jivya Soma Mashe, whose work brought Warli painting from village walls to wider national and international audiences. His home and artistic legacy offer insights into the philosophy, symbolism and storytelling embedded in Warli painting, and the transformation of the tradition across generations.

Bapugaon: Art, Music and Movement
Approximately 30 km from Ganjad, Bapugaon adds another dimension to the Warli cultural landscape.



A Warli artist making colour out of rice paste



A Warli artist of Ganjad explaining the content & context of a painting

Alongside Warli painters, the village is associated with the making of the Tarpa, the traditional wind instrument integral to Warli celebrations. Songs and dances further reveal the connections between painting, music, movement and collective celebration.

A Wider Cultural Landscape
Warli painting is also practiced in the Talasari and Vikramgad regions. The Warli villages form part of a wider landscape that also encompasses the historical and spiritual heritage of the Dahanu region. Tarapur Fort and Mahalaxmi Temple offer different perspectives on this layered landscape, connecting community traditions with histories, places of faith and the natural environment.

Access and Connections
Ganjad lies approximately 15 km from Dahanu and can be reached by road from Dahanu Road railway station. The villages can be explored in relation to Charoti and the wider Dahanu region, allowing the cultural landscape to be experienced across its villages, heritage sites and natural settings.



Mahalaxmi Temple at the hilltop



Jai Vilas

Jawhar Hills Living Culture Trail



Oxygen Park

Into the Hills
Jawhar can be reached by road, approximately 65 km from Dahanu Road and around 80 km from Nashik. As the road rises into the hills, the coastal landscape gives way to forests, valleys and cooler mountain air. Jawhar's cultural life is inseparable from its dramatic natural setting. During the monsoon, Dabhosa Waterfall cascades through the verdant landscape, while Suryamal Peak, Hanuman Point and Sunset Point offer different perspectives across the surrounding hills, forests and valleys. Around Jawhar town, Warli painting, Bohada mask-making, bamboo craft and a vibrant repertoire of folk songs and dances continue to thrive as part of the region's living cultural traditions.

Jawhar's Royal Heritage
The Old Palace and Jai Vilas Palace are reminders of Jawhar's princely history and the rule of the Mukne dynasty. These architectural landmarks provide a historical perspective on the town, while the surrounding villages reveal landscapes where cultural traditions continue to be practiced.

The Bamboo Landscape
At the Bamboo Oxygen Park, bamboo is presented not merely as a plant but as a resource connected to ecological knowledge, creativity and sustainable livelihoods. With more than 6,000 bamboo plants, the park provides an introduction to the possibilities of bamboo within the region.

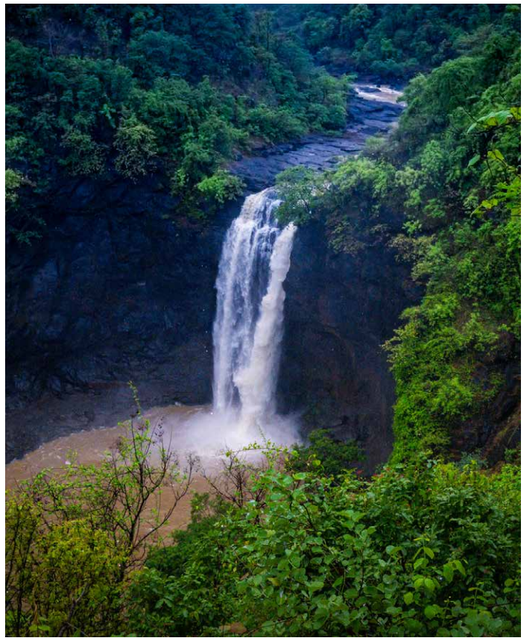
Bamboo Craft at Ramnagar
In Ramnagar, bamboo artisans transform locally available material into functional and creative objects. Visitors can explore their collections, understand the processes involved and participate in a hands-on bamboo craft experience.

Living Traditions of Sakharshet and Vanvasi
Sakharshet and Vanvasi are known for their tribal songs and dances. Interactions with performers offer insights into traditions that are part of community life rather than staged attractions.

Access and Connections
Jawhar can be reached by train to either Palghar or Dahanu Road, followed by a road journey of approximately 2.5 hours by car. Alternatively, visitors can travel from Nashik by road, with Jawhar located around 80 km away. Accommodation is available in and around Jawhar town, making it a convenient base for exploring the surrounding villages and cultural landscapes.



Jawhar Old Palace



Dabhosa Waterfall

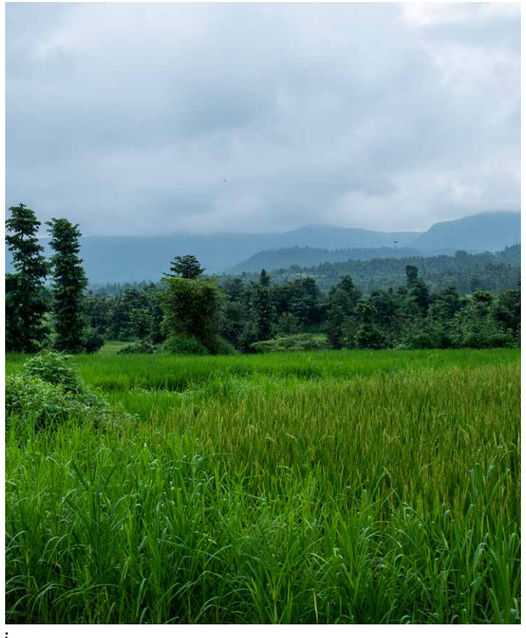
Songs of the Hills: Music & Dance Trail



Saptashrungi Temple

Across the Sahyadri Landscape

Saptashrungi Temple, one of Maharashtra's revered Shakti Peethas, is dedicated to Goddess Saptashrungi Devi. Set amid the Sahyadri hills, the temple draws pilgrims for its sanctity as well as its sweeping views, offering a contemplative dimension to the region's living traditions. Hatgad Fort and Saputara extend this experience into the wider Sahyadri landscape, with expansive views across forested hills, valleys and mountain terrain.



The serene landscape of Shribhuvan Chinchpada



A dance performance at Shribhuvan Chinchpada

Villages of Song and Dance

At Shribhuvan Chinchpada and Barda villages, Thakar, Dangi and other song-and-dance traditions come alive in community gatherings and celebrations. Interactions with local performers—through listening, participation and learning simple rhythms or movements—offer insights into the occasions, meanings and social contexts of different songs and dances.

Access and Connections

Surgana serves as the gateway to the trail. It is approximately 90–95 km by road from Nashik. Nashik International Airport also provides an access point, with the journey to Surgana taking roughly two hours by road. Shribhuvan Chinchpada is located approximately 40 minutes from Surgana town by car. Accommodation is available in the Saputara and Hatgad areas, making them convenient bases for exploring the trail and its surrounding landscapes.



Bohada festival

Masks in Motion: Bohada Cultural Trail



Hatgad Fort

The Village of Masks
Around 40 minutes from Hatgad, Pimpalsond is closely associated with the making of Bohada masks. Encounters with local mask-makers reveal the skill and imagination involved in shaping the characters of this ritual theatre, and how a performance begins long before the masks appear in procession. Observing the making process offers insights into the relationship between material, form, character and ritual, as a crafted object becomes a living presence through performance.

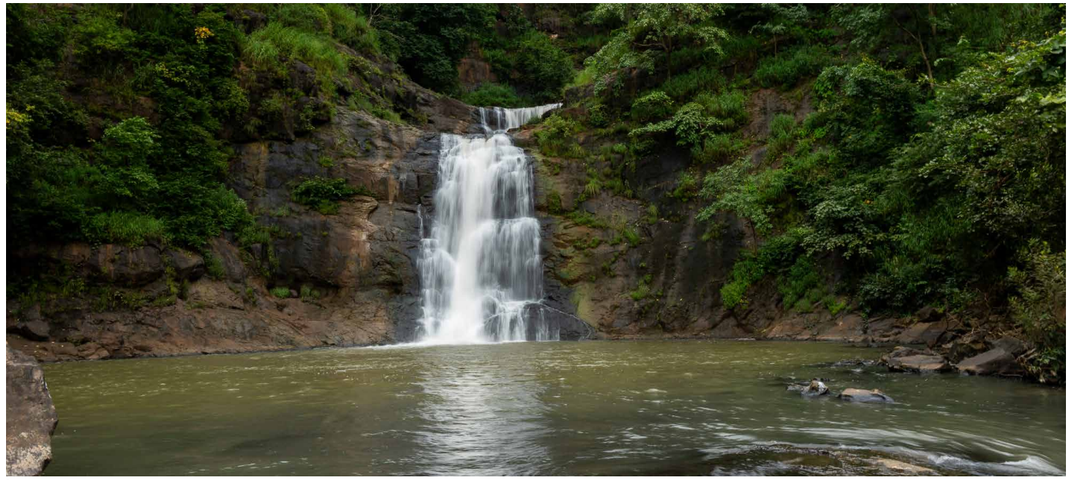
From Mask to Performance
In the neighbouring villages of Dolhare and Wangan, traditions such as Bagh Pawri Nritya bring music and movement into community spaces. Participation and interaction with performers and musicians reveal the connections between craft, performance and collective celebration. Together, the villages offer an understanding of Bohada and related traditions as part of a wider cultural world sustained by makers, performers, musicians and communities.

Waterscapes of Surgana
Sakhalchond Waterfall and Tatapani Hot Spring, located near Pimpalsond, add another dimension to the cultural landscape. The movement between village, workshop, performance and natural settings reveals how living heritage exists within a wider environment shaped by forests, hills and water.

Access and Connections
Surgana provides an access point to the trail and is connected by road to Nashik. Pimpalsond is around 40 km away and can be explored in relation to Dolhare, Wangan, Sakhalchond Waterfall and Tatapani Hot Spring.



Tatapani Hot Spring



Sakhalchond Waterfall

A Landscape through Seasons

Palghar and Nashik reveal themselves differently through the seasons. The changing rhythms of rain, cultivation, flowering, harvest, festivals and ritual shape not only the landscape but also the cultural life of the communities who live here.

From June to September, the monsoon transforms the Sahyadris. Waterfalls such as Dabhosa and Sakhalchond swell with the rains, forests deepen in colour, and streams and mist reshape the hills of Jawhar and Surgana. It is also a season when wild greens, mushrooms and other forest produce become available, reflecting generations of knowledge about the landscape and its seasonal resources. As the rains recede through September and October, wildflowers appear across parts of the Western Ghats before the landscape moves towards the drier winter months.

From November to February, cooler weather brings another rhythm. Orchards, villages and the coast become settings for gatherings and celebrations. The Dahanu, Bordi and Kasa festivals showcase local food, craft and performance traditions, while the Chikoo Festival in Gholwad celebrates a fruit that has become closely associated with the region's landscape, livelihoods and identity.





Seasonal landscape



Bohada festival dedicated to Ma Jagdamba

Spring and summer bring some of the region's most significant cultural moments. Holi is celebrated by the communities through song, dance and community gathering. Between March and May, Bohada unfolds in villages across Jawhar and Surgana, with masked characters, music, ritual and procession transforming familiar village spaces. Along the coast, Narali Purnima, observed during Shravan, reflects the enduring relationship between fishing communities and the sea. The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on 9 August provides another moment for recognising indigenous cultures, knowledge and identity.

Across the year, these changing seasons reveal that the living heritage of Palghar and Nashik cannot be separated from its environment. Forests provide materials and knowledge; agriculture shapes food and celebration; the sea sustains livelihoods and beliefs; and festivals give collective expression to memory, faith and community.

Living Heritage, Continuing Journeys

The landscapes of Palghar and Nashik are shaped by the communities who live within them. Masks acquire meaning through ritual and performance, paintings carry stories and memories, and songs, dances, crafts and knowledge are renewed through practice and transmission.

The journeys in this book offer ways of experiencing these relationships—through a painting, the sound of a Tarpa, a shared meal, a village celebration or a walk through an orchard or forest. Approached with curiosity and respect, tourism can create recognition, strengthen local livelihoods and contribute to safeguarding living heritage.

Living heritage remains, above all, the heritage of its communities. Its future rests with those who continue to make, perform, adapt and pass it on. To journey through Palghar and Nashik is therefore to encounter a living cultural landscape whose story continues to be written.



Glossary

Agnidev – The fire deity; one of the divine figures represented in Bohada mask theatre, personifying fire's transformative, life-sustaining power.

Akshaya Tritiya – An auspicious Hindu festival day marking new beginnings and prosperity; occasion for the Tipri Dance in honour of the harvest god.

Ambadi – Sour, tangy-leafed plant (roselle/gongura) used in curries such as Ambadi Kolmbi.

Ambadi Kolmbi – A tangy curry of dried shrimp cooked with sour ambadi leaves.

Ambari – Leaves used to brighten and lend sourness to dishes such as Kekra Ka Amti.

Amti – A light, thin, often sour broth or curry (as in Kekra Ka Amti).

Bagh Pawri Nritya – A dance in which performers mimic a tiger (*bagh*) or lion, dramatising the relationship between forest communities and wildlife.

Bangda – Indian Mackerel, the fish used in Moura Bhaji.

Bhaji – A cooked vegetable or greens preparation, used broadly across dish names (e.g., Kurul Ki Bhaji, Raan Bhaji).

Bhakar – A hand-patted, unleavened flatbread, typically made from millet and rice, cooked on a tawa.

Bhil – A Scheduled Tribe community of the Sahyadri region, present in Surgana taluka of Nashik district.

Bokre Chi Bhaji – A rich, spicy mutton curry cooked for the Haldi ceremony before a wedding.

Bohada – A ritual mask theatre tradition of the Western Ghats, performed as an offering to the village goddess Ma Jagdamba; also refers to the annual festival itself.

Bombil – Bombay Duck, a fish used in Bombil Cha Rasha.

Bombil Cha Rasha – Bombay Duck cooked in a coconut-tamarind gravy.

Bondara – A sour forest leaf added to Sewra Bhaji, not for flavour but to prevent the dish from causing an itching sensation on the tongue.

Chandrasur – A powerful demon king represented among Bohada's mythological mask characters.

Chawk – A sacred wall painting made by Warli women within the nuptial space during weddings, invoking deities for fertility and prosperity.

Chi/Ka/Ki – Marathi/Hindi possessive markers meaning "of" (e.g., Gauthi Komra with Suran, Machhli Ka Patori, Kurul Ki Bhaji).

Chikoo – The sapota or sapodilla fruit, closely associated with Dahanu and Gholwad's orchard economy.

Dangi – Associated with the Dang, the forested hill region encompassing Surgana and adjoining areas in Maharashtra and Gujarat, and used to describe cultural and food traditions rooted in this landscape.

Dangi Nritya – A dance tradition marked by synchronised movement and colourful attire.

Dera Geet – Traditional songs sung by women during marriage and harvest rituals, accompanied by the resonance of an earthen pot.

Dhak Badya Geet – A singing tradition drawing its verses from everyday life and shared experience.

Dhodi – A Scheduled Tribe community of Palghar district.

Dhol – A large percussion drum used in festival and wedding performances.

Dhol Nritya – A dance performed to the rhythms of the dhol during festivals and weddings.

Dhumsa – A traditional percussion instrument providing rhythm for celebrations.

Dongar Mahuli – The deity invoked as protector of the hills in Dongri Dev Nritya.

Dongri Dev Nritya – A dance invoking Dongar Mahuli through intense, ritual movement and music.

Dubla – A Scheduled Tribe community residing in the Palghar district.

Gad – A term meaning fort as in Hatgad.

Ganesha – The elephant-headed deity of wisdom and prosperity.

Ganji Ki Bhaji – Alternative name for Lauri Ki Bhaji, a dish of wild fowl.

Gauthi Komra – A dish of country chicken.

Gauthi Komra with Suran – Desi chicken cooked with elephant foot yam in a mud oven.

Gavari Nritya – A dance performed from the monsoon season through Diwali, celebrating the rice harvest and honouring the goddess Gavari.

Geet – A term meaning 'song', used as a suffix (e.g., Dera Geet, Mogra Geet).

Ghangli – A stringed instrument using gourds as resonating chambers attached to a bamboo shaft.

Haldi – The turmeric ceremony held before a wedding, an occasion for dishes like Bokre Chi Bhaji.

Hath – Hand

Hodi Nritya – A dance using a symbolic boat to enact a sea journey and return to shore (hodi = boat).

Kambade Nritya – A dance performed as an offering to Lord Narayan, especially during delayed monsoon rains.

Katkari – A Scheduled Tribe community residing in Palghar district.

Kekra – Crab, the main ingredient of Kekra Ka Amti.
Kekra Ka Amti – A light, sour crab broth brightened with ambari leaves and Mahua oil.

Khakre – A forest leaf that unfurls after the first monsoon rains, used in Khakre Ki Patoware.

Khakre Ki Patoware – A fragrant snack of Khakre leaves steamed over twigs.

Kircha – A friction instrument made from grooved bamboo, associated with Dongri Dev Nritya.

Kokna – A Scheduled Tribe community found across both Palghar and Nashik districts.

Kolmbi – Prawns, used in Kolmbi Bhaat and Ambadi Kolmbi.
Kolmbi Bhaat – Spiced rice folded with small prawns.

Komra – Chicken, used in dish names such as Gauthi Komra and Ranti Komra.
Kuday Rice Ladoo – A sweet parcel of rice flour, jaggery and coconut, steamed for Holi celebrations.

Kurul Ki Bhaji – Tender forest greens cooked with garlic and chilli.

Ladoo – A round, sweet steamed or fried confection (as in Kuday Rice Ladoo).

Lauri Ki Bhaji – A preparation of wild fowl cooked over a kiln with onion, garlic and spice; also called Ganji Ki Bhaji.

Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya – "People's History Museum"; the community museum in Gholwad village curating the region's living heritage.

Ma – Honorific meaning "mother," used before goddess names (as in Ma Jagdamba).

Ma Jagdamba – The village goddess to whom the Bohada festival is offered.

Machhli – Fish, used in dish names such as Machhli Ka Patori and Palwa Machhli Ki Bhaji.

Machhli Ka Patori – Fish wrapped in leaves and cooked directly over fire.

Madal – A percussion instrument; also the name of a dance tradition (Madal Nritya).

Mahadev Koli – A Scheduled Tribe community present across Palghar and Nashik.

Mahua – An oil derived from the Mahua seeds, used to flavour dishes such as Kekra Ka Amti.

Malhar Koli – A Scheduled Tribe community residing in Palghar district.

Moura Bhaji – Mackerel (Bangda) simmered in tamarind.
Naagli – Finger millet (ragi), the grain used in Naagli Bhakar.

Naagli Bhakar – A hand-patted finger-millet flatbread, an everyday staple bread.

Narali Purnima – A coastal festival on the full moon of Shravan, when fishing communities perform rituals invoking the sea (naral = coconut).

Narayan – A name of Vishnu, one of the principal deities in Hindu tradition, associated with the preservation and protection of the universe.

Nritya – A term meaning 'dance', used as a suffix across many traditional dance names (e.g., Tarpa Nritya).

Palash – A flowering forest tree whose leaves are used to steam Pan Mouri.

Palghat Devi – A deity associated with fertility in Warli belief and imagery.

Palwa – Pangas fish, used in Palwa Machhli Ki Bhaji.

Palwa Machhli Ki Bhaji – A soupy Pangas fish curry made with coconut and garlic.

Pan Mouri – Rice bread steamed inside fragrant Palash leaves, prepared for Diwali.

Pangas – A freshwater fish species used in Palwa Machhli Ki Bhaji.

Patori/Patoware – A leaf-wrapped or leaf-steamed cooking style (as in Machhli Ka Patori and Khakre Ki Patoware).

Pawri – Both a wind instrument (crafted from gourd, bamboo, beeswax) and the dance it accompanies.

Purnima – The full-moon day in the Hindu lunar calendar.

Raan Bhaji – A foraged forest-greens dish, prepared in Tera and Kauli forms.

Ramayana – An ancient Indian epic narrating the story of Rama, Sita and their journey through exile, conflict and return.

Ranti Komra – Country chicken cooked for special occasions, eaten with Naagli roti and rice.

Rasha – A gravy or curry preparation (as in Bombil Cha Rasha).

Roti – Flatbread, as in Nagli roti served with Ranti Komra.

Sahyadris – The mountain range forming part of the Western Ghats, running through Palghar and Nashik.

Sambal – A percussion instrument; also the name of a dance (Sambal Nritya) performed at weddings and funerals.

Sevanti – Traditional decorative headgear worn by women during rituals and festivities, adorned with beads and embellishments.

Sewra Bhaji – A monsoon dish of foraged forest leaves, including sour Bondara leaves.

Shravan – A month in the Hindu lunar calendar, typically falling in July–August.

Suran – Elephant foot yam, used in Gauthi Komra with Suran.

Taluka – An administrative sub-division of a district (e.g., Dahanu taluka, Jawhar taluka, Surgana taluka).

Tarpa – A wind instrument made from dried gourd, bamboo and beeswax; also the circular dance it leads (Tarpa Nritya/Tarpa dance).

Tathis – Ritual composite panels bringing several Bohada masks and figures together in a single display.
Tawa – A flat griddle used to cook bhakar and other breads.

Tera – A foraged form/variety of Raan Bhaji.

Thakar Nritya – A dance welcoming the first monsoon rains and the start of the sowing season.

Thali Badya – An improvised percussion tradition using a metal plate and wooden stick.

Tipri Dance – A harvest dance performed on Akshaya Tritiya around a basket of newly sprouted paddy and millet.

Umbadu – Vegetables and chicken slow-cooked in an earthen pot with purple yam and sweet potato.

Urad dal – Black gram lentils, served alongside Naagli Bhakar.

Waghoba – The tiger god, worshipped by the Warli and other communities as guardian of the forest; wagh means tiger.

Warli – A Scheduled Tribe community residing in Palghar.

Wasta Chicken – Chicken cooked with preserved bamboo shoots for a fermented depth of flavour.

Acknowledgements

This publication has been shaped by the knowledge, generosity and participation of many individuals, communities and institutions, and we gratefully acknowledge each of them for being part of this journey.

At its heart are the members of the Warli, Kokna, Mahadev Koli, Malhar Koli, Katkari and Bhil communities of Dahanu and Jawhar in Palghar, and Surgana in Nashik. Their knowledge, lived experiences, participation and collective efforts have been central to documenting and presenting the region's living cultural heritage.

We gratefully acknowledge the support and cooperation extended by the District Administration, Palghar; the Integrated Tribal Development Programme offices of Nashik and Palghar; and the local administrations of the regions covered by this project. A special mention is due to Ravindra Bujad, Sarpanch of Gholwad village, for making available panchayat land on which the Gholwad Community Museum was curated.

We are also grateful for the engagement of tourism stakeholders like Prabhakar Save, Suryahas Chaudhari and Hemant Chhabra, whose insights, local knowledge and support enriched the project. Our appreciation extends to Pravin Shah, IATO Chairman for the Maharashtra and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman chapter, for his immense support in strengthening tourism linkages and opening pathways for greater engagement with these destinations. Our sincere appreciation goes to local organisations, NGOs, community leaders and well-wishers, including Devidas Kamadi, Manoj Kamadi, Pramila Kokad, Keshav Srushti, Jawhar, and Ratan Shivaram Chaudhari.

The participation of the region's hospitality sector was equally important. We acknowledge the 15 hotels and tourism properties across Palghar and Nashik that supported the project by installing ICH Corners within their premises. These spaces offer visitors an opportunity to encounter the region's living heritage and learn about the communities, traditions and destinations from which it emerges. They include Jungle Farm, Save Farm Tarpa, Panache Water Park and Food Joint, Treat Beach Resort and Spa, Red Stone Cottages and Hill Zill Resort in Dahanu; Prakriti Agro Farm Resort, Shanti Sarover Resort and Vishal Dhaba and Family Garden Resort in Jawhar; Hide Out – Organic Farm Stay in Vikramgad; and Hotel Shreephal, Hotel Kesar and Hotel Radisson in Surgana, along with MTDC Grape Park Resort and MTDC Boat Club Resort in Nashik.

We also acknowledge the newspapers and media groups whose support helped bring greater visibility to the initiative and its objectives. The immersive Photo Tour, organised as part of the project brought another dimension to this collective effort. Our appreciation goes to Ajaya Kumar Behera, Amlan Biswas, Sanhita Bhaumik, Shantanu Das, Ronak Gajjar and Gaurav Shrivastav, whose photographs and visual documentation have enriched these pages and offered new ways of seeing the landscapes, people and traditions featured in this publication.

As the implementing partner of MTDC's ICH-based Tourism Development Project in Palghar and Nashik, Contact Base team led the research, content development and design of this publication. It is a collective endeavour, shaped by the knowledge, creativity, generosity and participation of local communities and collaborators who helped document and bring to life the region's rich living heritage.

MAHARASHTRA TOURISM

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation,
Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra

This book invites readers into the living cultural landscapes of Palghar and Nashik, where the coast meets orchards, forests and hills, and where stories, rituals, flavours and ways of life have been shaped across generations. Home to diverse communities, the region holds a rich inheritance of visual traditions, crafts, music, dance, foodways and ritual practices, deeply rooted in the land and its rhythms. More than a journey through places, it celebrates living heritage as a source of knowledge, identity and livelihood—an invitation to travel with curiosity, listen to the people who carry these traditions, and discover the cultural worlds that make these landscapes meaningful.

Designed & Compiled by

banglanatak.com
CONTACT BASE