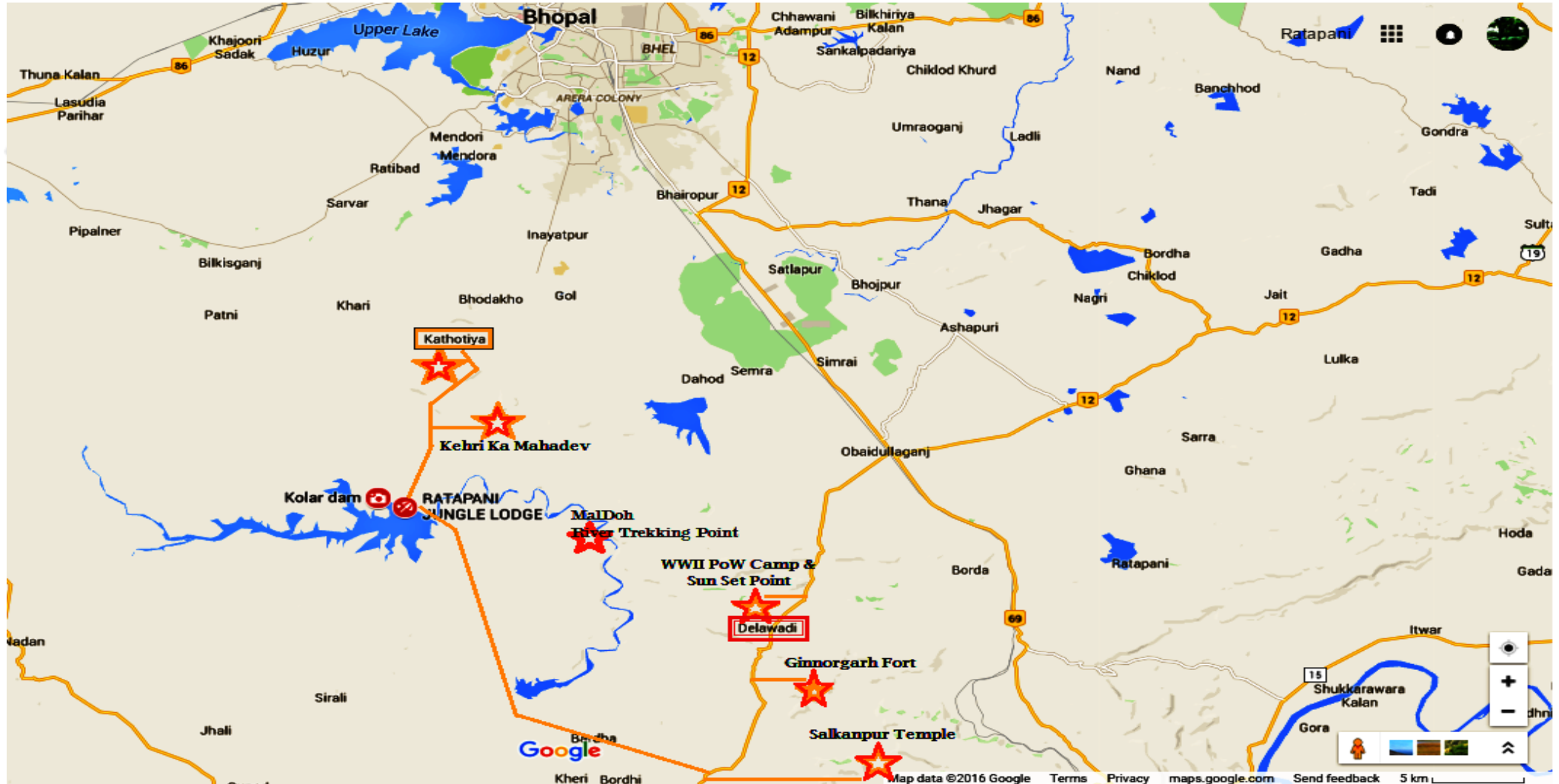


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Kathotiya Rock Shelters



Home to the Bhil and Bhilala tribes of central India, Kathotiya village lies secluded in the middle of a green valley surrounded by steep hills (Vindhyaachal Ranges). Kathotia is a small forest village nestled among hills, with ancient cave paintings, reportedly over 17000 years old, abundant in wildlife and Birds, offering excellent opportunities for adventure sports such as rock climbing, rappelling, trekking etc. Kathotiya rock shelters are basically spread over two hills, facing each other and have over a 100 marked, documented and researched, Shelters and Caves containing a variety of Rock Art, depicting what is believed to be a timeline period from 17000 to 500-700 years back.



Therefore at some places one finds different paintings of different era, quite literally overlapping each other. The paintings are primarily in the regular Red Coloured Natural Dye but also use the White and what we saw for the first time in the area, Green Dye, to create a myriad of Rock Art, depicting the life and times of the era. Kathotiya, till date remains quite unexplored and a noted architect from Bhopal, still continues the research and documentation in the area. One can only imagine the surprises which lie in store, waiting to still be discovered. The trek begins from Kathotiya Village and after about half a Km of flat land, starts ascending on to the Hills, with altitude varying between 1500 to 2000 feet (MSL) and has a steady ascent. Once the primary ascent is completed, the hill is more like a table-top, with a very gradual ascent. The Shelters and the Caves are beautifully perched on the face of the hill itself. The trek, about 7 Kms in all, would take about 4 hours, depending on how much time one spends in the Shelters and Caves, how many one visits and what the halts and stoppages and eventually culminates at the pinnacle of Firangi Pahad, drawing its name from the 'Colour' of the Local Tribals of the Area, who are believed by the locals, "as described" by Madan and Vijay, to be the descendants of Westerners.

Kehri Ka Mahadev



About 14 Kms from the Lodge, inside the Sanctuary, is a beautiful place called Kehri Ka Mahadev. It's an old Shiva Temple, tucked away, deep inside the Ratapani Jungles, almost as if reclaimed by the jungle and lost in time, amidst the

enchanting Vindhyaachal Ranges. The drive to Kehri Ka Mahadev, winds its way through the table top mountains, offering a spectacular view of the valleys below, almost throughout the drive. Deep in the valley below, the Kolar River winds its way ahead and as you stand atop any of the numerous viewpoints all along the way, you can hear the gentle murmur of the river meandering its way forward. The drive, a total of about 30 kms (to-n-fro), winds its way through the lower Vindhyaachal ranges, slowly ascending on to a plateau, whereafter the drive is mostly along the edge of the hill, on one side and the beautiful Ratapani jungles on the other. Kehri Ka Mahadev is a perennial waterfall emanating from a sandstone hill, about 500-700 feet in height and as the water oozes out and trickles down from the hill face and rock contours, it traces its fall through the hundreds of roots of many old Banyan Trees growing on the hill face.



As you reach Kehri Ka Mahadev, you have to walk down a stairway, to the quaint temple, perched halfway on the precipice. The entire hill remains filled with moss, ferns and grass, through the year. The water flows down in the valley below forming a small rivulet, creating a beautiful

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oasis, attracting a myriad animal, birds and butterflies. Even during summers, the area remains cool and pleasant. What would really make you happy was that there are still such wonderfully mystical places left. The soft and gentle sound of water trickling down from the roots of the overhanging banyan trees, engulfing virtually the entire hill face, is truly soothing and hypnotic indeed. A place worth visiting, if one is traversing a road to 'self-discovery'.....

Salkanpur



Salkanpur Temple is situated on an 800 ft high hillock, over 2100 feet above the sea level, in the heart of the Vindhyaachal Ranges. The approach to the beautiful and mystical temple can either be by a road, winding its way up the hill or by stairs, with more than a 1000 steps. Those, however, who don't wish to drive up or take the stairs can **use the ropeway service**, an easier and a more exciting way to reach the temple. Through the ropeway, one will reach the rear entrance of the temple.

The ropeway goes over a pond and over a dense forest area right up to the hill top, all along offering scintillating panoramic views of the beautiful valley below. Salkanpur Temple is located in near Rehti village Dist. Sehore Madhya Pradesh, a mere 30 kms from the Ratapani Jungle Lodge, Devoted to one of the incarnations of goddess Durga, the presiding deity in Salkanpur Temple is of Ma Durga Beejasan. It is also linked to the legend of the Shaktipeeth in Hindu mythology. With this mythology this place has gained its own religious value and its been now a pilgrimage for millions across India. The seekers, visionaries and religionists, rich and poor, noblemen through ages, sought and found solace in Salankanpur. It is a place of unmatched natural beauty and tranquility, where calm and repose are all-pervading.. Reaching the top of the hill at the entrance of the temple itself, we can feel the nip in the air, on account of the altitude we had gained. The view all around was scintillating to say the least. We took a few pictures and walked briskly towards the temple, eager to reach the premises. As the temple emerged, situated at the very edge of the hill, we were amazed to see its sheer beauty, grandeur and magnificence. And when we say this, it's

not the temple alone, but the entire ambience that surrounds it, the aura and the sheer power, that you feel. It is a marvellously beautiful feeling. As you walk along, all around the temple, you can only admire the gaspingly beautiful view of the valley below, all around you, enchanting, breath-taking.... You stand humbled at the grandness of it all. The entire premise was clean and well maintained by the Temple Trust, with ample space to sit and meditate. These are places where one finds it easy to do so, to connect with the divine and with oneself.

Ginnorgarh Fort



Ginnorgarh Fort, a Land Lost in Time..... Coordinates: 22°50'40"N 77°32'15"E. The Fort is situated about **35 Kms from RJL** (61 Km far from Bhopal), The approach from RJL is via Malibayan, or a drive straight through the Sanctuary, via Mathar. Surrounded by a lovely teak forest, in the enchanting Vindhyaachal Ranges, the area around the fort is abounding with breathtakingly beautiful natural beauty. A pristine mountain trail for trekking, camping and bird watching, the fort in itself, reclaimed by forest and forgotten by time itself, is teeming with wildlife, unseen, hidden and tucked away from civilization, as if holding a million secrets and stories untold, just waiting to be discovered. The fort is perched on a hill with an elevation of about 670 Meters (about 2345 Feet from MSL) upon a plateau of about 1,127 metres Length (3944.5 Feet) and a width of about 266

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metres (931 Feet). One can only wonder and imagine how the Gond kings would have built this fort, at this altitude, with such a treacherous climb. The fort was once a stronghold of Gonds, but later, fell to Dost Mohammad Khan, the first Nawab of the Bhopal State. The fort is practically carved out of a hill itself, with only the two of the seven 'reported' floors visible above the ground level. One of the architectural splendors of the fort is its water management. The fort has an amazing array of Bawadis (water tanks) virtually woven all over the hills, at various places, at different levels. As per our guide, Jeetendra Jaat, there are 52 recorded Bavadi's, which were taking care of the water requirements of the fort, at the time. The fort has two fabulously designed and built palaces, the first being the palace of the queen and the other and slightly grander being the palace of the king. As per our guide, the story goes that the palace of the queen was connected with an underground tunnel, to Bhopal, to the Queen's other palace, the 'Rani Kamlapati Palace', Kamla Park, Bhopal. The top of the fort offers scintillating views of the valleys below, forests all around, as far as the eye can see. A few miles away, visible from the top of the Kings Palace, is the hill on which the Stables, at the time were. The structures housing the personal guards and the staff etc, are built below the main hillock. The Hill housing the famous Salkanpur Devi Temple, is also visible at some distance.. The Trek to Ginnoregarh Fort is about 4.5 Kms, one way and a total of about 9 Kms in all and goes through a dense forest, within the Core Area of the Ratapani Sanctuary. This is the heart of Tiger Country, with the area boasting 10 tigers, showing regular movements, over 27 leopards and scores of Sloth Bears and numerous Herbivores, all this within the realm of the hills on which the Fort and its allied structures are built. As such, the trek up to the fort requires permission from the local Forest Office, with an entry fee and an accompanying guide. There are two options for the trekkers, a simple gradual uphill climb, or a steeper climb, which is a relatively difficult one, however offers spectacular and scintillating

views, all along the way, full of excitement and adventure, every step of the way. There are lots of waterholes all around and therefore there remains a good chance of spotting wildlife, if one's lucky. As one climbs up to the pinnacle of the hill, almost 670 meters, 2345 Feet above the MSL, one literally doesn't see the Fort till almost the last few steps at the very top, the fort being so well hidden in the dense forest cover, with the fort virtually emerging and appearing out of the forest at the very last moment, a lovely surprise as one gets to the top of the hill, almost like saving the best of the trek, for the last.

Delawadi PoW Camp

Delawadi is a picturesque picnic spot, situated **30 Kms from RJJL**, in Raisen district, lush in scenic splendor and natural beauty. Madhya Pradesh Eco Tourism Development Board has developed Delawadi Forest Camp as a peerless eco-tourism destination. Surrounded by beautiful dense forest, The Madhya Pradesh Eco Tourism Development Board offers trekking and bird watching facilities in the forest. *Very few people are aware of the fact that a 2nd World War PoW Camp, housing Italian (AXIS) Prisoners of War, was established and operated by the British, during the early 1940's. This was done deep in the middle of the forest, as at the time, it was completely inaccessible. Now, however, the same is well connected by a forest road, at the remains of the entire PoW Camp still remain as a desolated fortifications and barracks of an entire town, in the middle of the jungle.*

Jhiri (Point of Origination of River Betwa)

The Betwa or Betravati is a river in Northern India, and a tributary of the Yamuna. Also known as the Vetravati, the Betwa rises in the Vindhya Range just north of Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh and flows north-east through Madhya Pradesh and Orchha to Uttar Pradesh. Nearly half of its course, which is not navigable, runs over the Malwa Plateau. The confluence of

the Betwa and the Yamuna Rivers is Hamirpur town in Uttar Pradesh, in the vicinity of Orchha. In Sanskrit "Betwa" is Vetravati. This river is mentioned in the epic Mahabharata along with the Charmanwati river. Both are tributaries of Yamuna. Vetravati was also known as Shuktimati. The capital of Chedi Kingdom was on the banks of this river.

Bheem Baithika



Bhimbetka alias Bhim Baithika Caves are the rock shelters situated at the southern edge of the Vindhya hills. The place derived its name Bhimbetka from the word Bhim ka bethika which means the place where Bhim sat and meditated. In the rocky terrain of dense forest and craggy cliffs, over 1000 rock shelters belonging to the Neolithic age were discovered in 1957, by VS Wakanker of the Vikram University, Ujjain. Bhim Bhetka as declared a UNESCO World heritage site in July 2003, thus becoming the 22nd site in India to receive the status. The **Bhimbetka rock shelters** are an archaeological site of the [Paleolithic](#), exhibiting the earliest traces of human life on the [Indian Subcontinent](#), and thus the beginning of the [Indian Stone Age](#). At least some of the shelters were inhabited by [Homo erectus](#) over 100,000 years ago.^{[1][2]} Some of the Stone Age [rock paintings](#) found among the Bhimbetka rock shelters are some 30,000 years old. The caves also deliver

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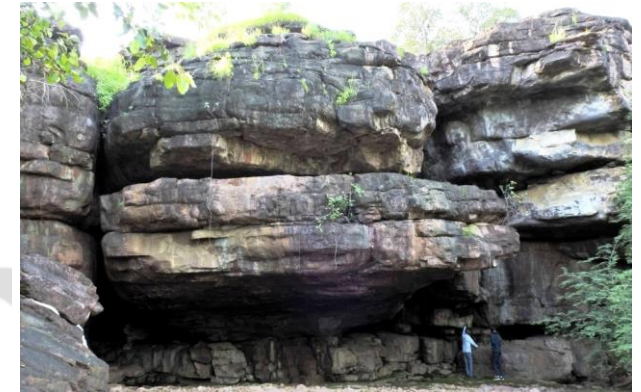
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Saru Maru Caves and Stupas

early evidence of [dance](#). They were declared a [World Heritage Site](#) in 2003. As reported in the [UNESCO](#) citation declaring the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka a World Heritage Site, Bhimbetka was first mentioned in Indian archaeological records in 1888 as a [Buddhist](#) site, based on information gathered from local [adivasis](#). Later [V. S. Wakankar](#), while travelling by train to [Bhopal](#), saw some rock formations similar to those he had seen in Spain and France. He visited the area with a team of archaeologists and discovered several prehistoric rock shelters in 1957. Since then more than 750 such shelters have been identified, of which 243 are in the Bhimbetka group and 178 in the Lakha Juar group. Archaeological studies revealed a continuous sequence of [Stone Age](#) cultures (from the late [Acheulian](#) to the late [Mesolithic](#)), as well as the world's oldest stone walls and floors. [Barkheda](#) has been identified as the source of the raw materials used in some of the monoliths discovered at Bhimbetka.

Tapkeshwar Mahadev Temple



Barely 30 kms from RJL, a mere 40 mins drive, through the mesmerizingly beautiful, Vindhyaal Ranges, a route crisscrossing the enchanting forests of the Ratapani Sanctuary, one can reach the Saru-Marua Caves. Located in the Sehore District, on the Rehti Road, near Malibayan Village, this is a site, dating back to the 3rd century BC, making it over 2300 years old and is now of National Archaeological importance and is still being researched. The site was Notified by the ASI as a National Monument, as long back as 1982, in the Gazette of India extraordinary, 1983, however, it remained in a state of despair and neglect, till a short while back. This historic place is said to have been visited by Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Dynasty, his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra. The rock edicts and stupas found here are still subjects of research for archaeologists and research students. Enshrined in the 21 Stupas of Upnik Vihar are the remains of Sariputta and Maha Mogliana, the two famous disciples of Gautam Budh. This fact has lent reverence to the place. The Yashti is also seen lying near the damaged Hermika. Inscribed on this beautiful and still intact pillar is a script in Brahmi language that bears names of three devotees Pusa, Dhramrshika and Arha. Ashoka the Great built the Saru Maru Caves for the Buddhist monks to meditate there. Ashoka also visited these caves. Ashoka visited Upnik Vihar two years, five months and six days after his coronation at Ujjain. He also instructed Kumar Shava, the then Raja of Malwa, to maintain the place well. According to Dr Saxena, out of 21 Stupas built near the Saru Maru Caves, only nine, discovered in 1976, exist now. Source: M. Haider, PTI, as reported in the HT.

It is believed that the Empror Ashoka practised meditation in these Caves for extended periods. We had been hearing of the Caves for sometime now, from the various researchers, who were arriving from various parts of the country and were making RJL their base, visiting the Cave Systems during the day time. Each evening when they returned, we would get to hear stories of what they saw and what they inferred therefrom. As very little has yet been documented, about the area, therefore researches are still being carried out. The site perhaps was chosen by Empror Ashoka, due to its sheer natural beauty and its vicinity to the river Narmada, which would have supported the monastery, round the year. What was sad and quite shocking for us to hear was that a lot of the artefacts have been stolen over the years and most of the important ones have been moved to by the ASI to the museum in Sanchi, for protection. The site, spread over hundreds of acres have different cluster of Stupas, grouped together in three, four and five Stupas. Built on the entire hill face at different levels, using the Caves and the Rock Shelters, perhaps as meditation areas, this is an entire complex. There are stairways and well defined pathways, which would take you to the various levels of the hill, where the Stupas have been built. When you're at the site and as you ascend up the hills, housing the complex of Stupas, you realize why the site was chosen. Even those who find it difficult to meditate can do so with ease, just sitting on the many rocks, overlooking the stunningly beautiful views, everywhere our gaze may fall upon. Easily accessible, with an easy trek, this is a "must see" site visit, which we would be happy to offer our guests, do feel free to ask us about the place, when you visit us.