

The massive plinth which is nearly 8 m is heavily molded with a central frieze occupied by boldly carved elephants and lions. Episodes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana are also sculpted on the walls of the plinth giving a running account of the great epics. The principal shrine proper rises to a height of nearly 23 m over the plinth with four subsidiary shrines all fashioned out of the rock making the temple a kind of panchayatana on plan. The interior of the shrine consists of pillared mandapa, an antarala and a garbhagriha. Remnants of paintings are also seen on the ceiling of the portico. The original paintings have survived at very few places. The entire structure was given externally a lime plaster with wash and painted with ochre colored paintings during the period of Ahilyabai Holkar (18th century A.D.). In general the Kailas temple follows the Dravidian style of architecture. The Baroda copper plate of Karka Suvarnavarsha, of the Gujarat branch of the Rashtrakutas, dated in the Saka year 734 (812-13 AD.) was eloquent while eulogizing the idyllic charm of this wonder monuments as having seen the wonderful temple hewn in the hills at Elapura,

the immortals, travelling in their celestial

carts, were wonderstruck this abode of Siva is divine and not artificially made. Nemaditya the composer adds that the architect, who built it, was also overcome with astonishment saying 'Oh! Did I do it? Another important excavation is the Dumarlena (cave 29), which consists of an isolated shrine located within a hall arranged on a cruciform plan. Similar example can be seen at Elephanta caves near Mumbai.



Ravananugraha, Cave 19

Jain group :

The Jain group of caves is from cave 30 to 34, which probably started around 800 A.D. and continued till 11th century A.D. Out of five excavations; only three are of particular interest. The cave temple known as Chhota Kailas (cave 30) is a miniature version of the great Kailas (cave 16). The other two important ones are the Indra Sabha (cave 32) and the Jagannath Sabha (cave 33). An interesting factor seen between cave nos. 32 and 33 is an interconnecting passage on the first floor provided by the artisans which helps one to enter the cave from one end to the other. Besides cave no. 16, cave no. 31 and 33 also retained some of the finest mural paintings of the later period in Maharashtra and perhaps the last vestiges of the pre Islamic period. Cave 32 houses a life size monolith elephant in the court yard opposite to a 9.4 meters high Manas Stambha.



Cave 31, Indrasabha, Jain group

Give Ellora's spectacular architectural and sculptural exuberance and its religious harmony it is also listed as World Heritage Monument by the UNESCO in 1983.

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ELLORA CAVES



प्रल्कीर्तिमपावृणु

Archaeological Survey of India
Aurangabad Circle, Bibi-ka- Makbara, Aurangabad

Cave Opening Hours: Sunrise to Sunset
Entry Fees:

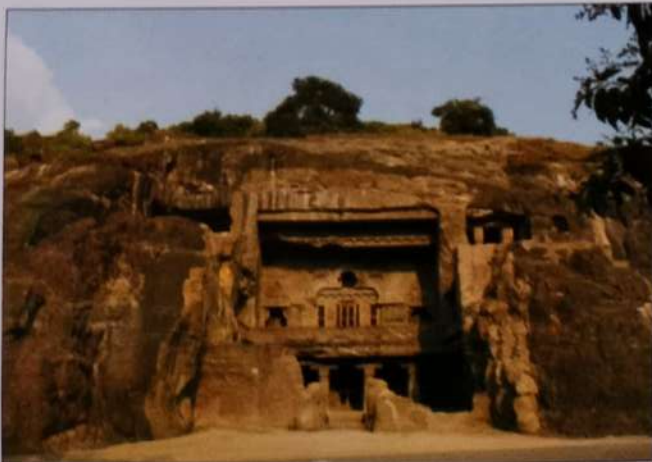
For Citizen of India & SAARC & BIMSTEC countries Citizens (Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, Thailand, Myanmar)Rs. 10/- per person
For Foreign Citizen of other countries.....Rs. 250/- per person
Children of the age of fifteen years or below are admitted free.
Approach: Nearest Airport- Aurangabad 37 km
Railway Station- 32 km

Ellora caves

Ellora caves, more popularly known as Verul Leni in the local dialect was more or less known to the world throughout its existence. Ellora or Elapura as known from the Rashtrakuta inscriptions is said to have been their capital for a brief period. The earliest reference to the caves dates back to 10th century A.D. by an Arab geographer, Al-Mas'udi. In A.D. 1352 Sultan Hasan Gangu, a Bahamani ruler visited the caves, for whom, the approach roads were repaired. The Marathi literary works such as Lilacharitra of Mahimbat and Amrutanubhav of saint Dnyaneshwar also mention about these caves.

There are more than 1000 rock-cut caves in Maharashtra, which came into being over a time span of 3rd century B.C. to 12th century A.D. The Ellora group of caves represents the finest of the examples of contemporary catholic character of ancient India art. It represents the three major faiths of the period viz. Buddhism, Brahminism and Jainism. The followers of these different faiths co-existed at a single place and period of time which exhibits the religious tolerance and the concept of coexistence during the contemporary period.

The caves are hewn out of the basaltic rock of the Deccan trap. The caves are datable from circa 6th century A.D. to 11th century A.D. In total, there are more than 100 caves in the Ellora hill range out of which 34 caves are mostly visited by the tourists. Out of the 34 caves, cave 1 to 12 are Buddhist, caves 13 to 29 are Brahminical and caves 30 to 34 are Jain.



Cave 10, Ellora Caves

Buddhist group:

The Buddhist were the first to have undertaken the excavation work at Ellora. The period corresponds to the final phase of Ajanta and contemporary to Aurangabad caves. Their period of occupation noticed here is between A.D. 450 to 650. During this period 12 caves can be subdivided into two groups based on the architectural development of these caves. Caves 10 to 5 are earlier among the twelve and caves 6 to 12 from the separate group which are later in date. These two groups consist of a single Chaityagriha or the prayer hall and monasteries. In the earlier group there is a unique excavation which is caves 5 also known as Maharwada. This cave is the largest and noteworthy among the early group of caves at Ellora. Among the second group (cave 6 to 12), the Teen Taal is the biggest and elaborate and cave 10 which is Chaityagriha also known as Vishwakarma Cave or Sutarachi zopadi (carpenter's hut) are most important and noteworthy. This Chaityagriha is the latest among its kind in Maharashtra. It houses a huge seated Buddha image in dharmachakrapravartan mudra carved over facing of the stupa.



Brahminical group:

There are 17 excavations belonging to the Brahminical faith at Ellora, excavated out of the west face of the hill for nearly a km in length and datable from about A.D. 650 to 800. The main example of this group are cave 13, Ravan ki khai or the abode of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka; cave 15 Dashavatara cave or the cave of ten incarnations of Vishnu; cave 16, the far famed great Kailas; cave 21, Rameshwar; caves 29, Dumarlena. These excavations immediately follow the

Buddhist examples existed here and hence the earliest Hindu excavations are very much similar to the Buddhist ones on plans. A gradual evolution of rock-cut architecture under the Rashtrakutas could be seen here. Out of these 17 only cave 15 bears inscription of 14 lines praising the great king Dantidurga (Saka Era 675-around 753 A.D.) and records genealogy of the Rashtrakuta family.



Cave 16, General View

The evolution of temple from a simple cell with a mandapa(hall) into cells with pradakshinapath and an elaborate mandapa could be seen here. The culmination of this development is undoubtedly the magnificent Kailas (Cave 16) which is the largest cave excavation in the world. This marks the departure from all earlier conventions in which a huge mass of rock was separated from the parent rock formation first and then it was sculpted and carved into a huge temple from top to bottom. The influence of other temple styles cannot be neglected, for, this resembles closely with the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, an early Chalukyan temple. Kailas was excavated under Krishna 1st (A.D. 756-775) the Rashtrakuta monarch, who after subduing the western Chalukyas in the eighth century was at the height of power symbolizing in the form of magnificent Kailas edifice. The Kailas may be broadly classified into four parts, namely, the entrance gateway, an intermediate Nandi shrine, the body of the temple, and the cloisters surrounding the courtyard. The main body of the temple is a huge parallelogram with the principle shrine excavated at the first floor level. The level corresponding to the lower story consists of a series of moldings executed one above the other.