

Rajgad

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Type : Hill Fort Fort Range : Pune

District : Pune

Height above sea level : 4600 ft. (1400 m)

Difficulty rating : Medium

Base village : Vajeghar / Pali

Appx. time to reach the top : 3 hrs from the base village

Visit duration (min.) : 2 days

Water availability : Opposite Padmavati Temple, there are cisterns which are a source of drinking water all year round.

Food : You need to arrange on your own.

Shelter:

1. About 20 to 25 persons can be easily accommodated within Padmavati Mandir.
 2. Tourist Guest houses are available on Padmavati Machi.
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How to reach :

There are many ways to reach Rajgad.

~~Via Secret doorway (Gupt Darwaja)~~

From Pune, board a State Transport Bus to Rajgad and alight at Vajeghar village. Thereafter from Babuda zapa we proceed towards Railing in approx an hour. From there it takes minimum time to reach Rajgad. Using this route, one can reach Rajgad in 3 hours.

~~Rajgad via Pali Darwaja :~~

From Pune, board a State Transport Bus to Velhe and there after from Pabe village after crossing Kanad river we can directly reach Pali darwaja. This staircase walkway is quite easy and one can reach Rajgad in 3 hours.

~~Suvela Machi via Gupt Darwaja :~~

From Gunjavane village, a way through the forest leads to Gupta Darwaja from which one can reach Suvela Machi.

~~Rajgad via Alu Darwaja :~~

We can reach Alu darwaja either via Bhutonde or even through 'Shivtharghal'.

Rajgad via Gunjavane Darwaja :

On Pune-Velhe State Transport Bus route, alight at Margasani village. Thereafter one can reach Gunjavane village via Sakhar village. From Gunjavane village, one can reach Rajgad in 2 1/2 hrs. Since the route is quite difficult and confusing, it is advisable to travel through this way with adequate help.

Best time to visit : Any time, except April-May.

About :

RAJGAD FORT – CAPITAL FORT OF "HINDAVI SWARAJYA". Rajgad fort was recognized as first political base of "Hindavi Swarajya". It still can be witnessed as an unchallengeable, indisputable and unconquerable fort in 'Hindavi Swarajya'.

A 'Murumbadev' mountain stands adjacent to the vally formed due to Nire, Velvandi, Kanandi and Gunjavani rivers. The same is 48 Kms. From Pune towards South-West direction and 24 Kms. Nort-West of Bhor. To expand boundaries of Hindavi Swarajya within Maval region, two forts viz. Rajgad and Torna were considered to be at a prime position then. Although, both the forts were equally unchallengeable, Rajgad fort scored an edge over Torna fort primarily because of its huge size. Also the approach to Rajgad made it more unique as one has to either cross a mountain or a river to reach Rajgad fort. In view of the above factors, Shivaji Maharaj selected Rajgad as a capital fort and political base of 'Hindavi Swarajya'. Rajgad has three Machis` and one Citadel. This Citadel is highest of all as it stands 1394 meters above Mean Sea Level (M.S.L.).

One can find a very dignified evidence of Rajgad Fort in History.

1. James Dougals in his 'Book of Bombay' writes, Rajgad and Torna occupy an unchallengeable position and are unconquerable thus facilitating Hindu King Shivaji Maharaj to have a wide scope to expand boundries of his kingdom.

2. Saki Mustaodakhan in his novel called 'Masire Alamgire' narrates about Rajgad as :

A very tall fort which justifies its position and excellence amongst all. Its huge size covers a diameter of almost 24 miles at its base. One cannot imagine its hugeness and strength. It is believed that only wind can roam around and water can pass through the thick forest surrounding the fort. Else, it is very difficult for anybody to pass through the thick jungles.3. Mohammad Hashim Khalikhan writes in his novel called 'Muntakhabullubab-E- Mohammed Shahi' as it is very difficult to explain/put in words the greatness of Rajgad fort. Its height and size is so great that it makes our heart repress. The down underneath the earth who carries the portion of this fort must be finding it equally painful. The thick forest surrounding the fort has poisonous snakes and terrifying fauna in abundance. Hence, in view of the above, it is very difficult for anyone even to lay a siege.

The history of this fort however dates back to approximately 2000 years wherein one can find evidence of this mountain range in existence. History also has evidence that saint Brahmarsi lived on this mountain range and also subsequent establishment of 'Shri. Brahmarsi Devasthan' which confirms its vintage existence.

Rajgad was initially known as 'Murumbdev' during the Bahamani regime. However, during the year 1490, the founder of Nizamshahi of Ahmednagar, Ahmed Bahiri had conquered many forts in western Maharashtra which included Valeghat and many others in South Konkan, and thus established a supremacy over the region.

It was during the same period that Ahmed Bahiri established control over Murumbdev fort. His task was simplified by the In-charge of the fort, who extended unconditional surrender to Ahmed Bahiri. Thus, Nizamshahi was established on the fort and later for about 125 long years there was no attack on the fort.

Subsequently, the reins of the fort were transferred from Nizamshahi to Adilshahi. During Nizamshahi, Baji Haibatrao Shilimkar and his father Rudraji Naik controlled the operations of the fort however, as per instructions of Malik Amber, the operations were handed over to Sardar Haibatkhama of Adilshahi dynasty. Later during 1630 the fort was again under the control of Nizamshahi. Shahaji Raje`s officer Sonaji started looking into the affairs of this fort. Later, the fort was attacked by Adilshah of Vijapur during which Sonaji was injured. Hence, Balaji Naik Shilimkar ventured ahead to protect Murumbdev fort along with a division of troops. He too was injured during the clashes. However, he was duly honored by Shahaji Raje for the performance in the task.

It's hard to find clear evidence as to when Shivaji Maharaj established control over Murumbdev fort. However, inferences can be drawn against the following two notations as under:

1. In the 10th chapter of the literature of 'Shivcharitra', says – Shivaji Maharaj established control over 'Shahamrug' mountain range and later constructed a building over it.

2. In an historical novel (commonly referred to as 'Bakhar') written by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad says that, there was a mountain called Murabad over which settlement took place and was later renamed as Rajgad. The fort has four 'machis'. It seems that Sabhasad has counted even the Citadel as a machi. However, somewhere during the period from 1646 to 1647, Shivaji Maharaj conquered this fort along with Torna. He undertook major reconstruction work of the fort. It included construction of curtain wall for the three machis and later named them as Suvela, Sanjivani and Padmavati; construction of a building on the main fort and later renaming it as Rajgad; huge plantations of Mango trees in a village called Khedbare near Shirval were taken up and a market place was setup. Later the village name was changed to Shivapur. Year 1660 marked the beginning of wars and battles for this fort. Under instructions of Mughal King Aurangzeb, Shahistekhan attacked Shivaji Maharaj's kingdom. Through available sources it is understood that when Shahistekhan summoned his forces to conquer Rajgad, troops destroyed few villages near the fort but did not attempt to attack the fort. In due course, on 6th April 1663, Shivaji Maharaj raided Shahistekhan's regime and returned back to Rajgad.

In the year 1665, Maratha kingdom was attacked again by Mughal Sardar Mirzaraje Jaisingh. Daudkhan and Raisingh were nominated to capture forts. Vide their assigned task; on 30th April 1665 Mughal troops attacked Rajgad. There was strong opposition from Marathas which ultimately proved too strong for Mughals. Hence, Mughals had to move back.

Rajgad was one among those were retained by Shivaji Maharaj's, after surrender of 23 forts to Mughals as per the conditions in 'Treaty of Purandar' with Mughal representative Jaisingh.

After the escape from Agra, on 12th Sept 1666, Maharaj arrived safely on Rajgad.

On 24th Feb 1670 Rajaram was born on Rajgad Fort.

In the year 1670, Shivaji Maharaj summoned Tanaji Malusare to capture Sinhagad fort from this very Rajgad. During 1671-72, Shivaji Maharaj confirmed Raigad as the capital base of Hindavi Swarajya and shifted all operations from Rajgad fort to Raigad.

After the sad demise of Shivaji Maharaj on 3rd April 1680, marked a downfall of Swarajya. On 11th March 1689, Sambhaji Maharaj (Son of Shivaji Maharaj) was nabbed and killed by Mughals. Later, Mughals marched triumph and captured many forts. Rajgad was one among them which fell in hands of Kishoresingh Hada (a Mughal Sardar). It was in June 1689; Aurangzeb nominated Abdulkhairkhan to look after the operations of the fort. However, the news of death of Sambhaji Maharaj had not reached Marathas hence their morale was high. Marathas later gathered near foothills of the fort and managed to capture the fort on their own vigor.

In January 1694, secretary of Hindavi Swarajya, Shankarji Narayan advised/instructed Deshmukhs of Kanad valley to continue looking after the affairs of the region comprising this fort by virtue of their performance in defence of this fort against Mughals.

On 11th Nov 1703, Aurangzeb personally ventured to the task of capturing this fort along with his army. He started his journey from Pune however; it proved to be tough for him. The approach to Rajgad was very tough / difficult as about 8 miles of stretch was through ghats. Aurangzeb summoned thousands of masons and equipments to reconstruct the road. However, he was not successful in doing so hence equipment & raw material were left deserted. Ultimately on 2nd December 1703 Aurangzeb reached near Rajgad. He arranged his troops and artillery to attack the fort. He constructed an equally high scaffolding adjacent to it and placed cannons over it. He started attacking the fort while Tarbitkhan and Hamibuddinkhan continued to attack from Padmawati Machi end. The battle continued for 2 long months and later on 4th Feb 1703 Aurangzeb managed to capture it. He appointed Iradatkhan to look after the operations of the fort and renamed the fort as 'Nabishahagad'.

On 27th May 1707, Gunaji Sawant and Pantaji Shivdev jointly attacked Rajgad and by capturing it, the same got registered on the roll book of Marathas.

Later Shahu Maharaj took control over the fort and funded Rs.300/- for Suvela Machi and Rs.100/- for Sanjivani Machi to take up re-construction activity.

During Peshwe regime, the operations of the fort were being looked after by their secretaries. Due to unstable economic conditions which frequently prevailed during Peshwe regime, also led to a delay to the salaries of their staff. There is also an evidence regarding non payment of salaries for almost an year on Rajgad fort during such an economic crisis.

Later the fort was passed on to the hands of 'Bhor Trust'. The Trust appointed six officers to look after the fort;

Sarnobat Shilimkar to look after Suvela Machi, Sarnobat Pawar to look after Padmawati Machi, Sarnobat Khopade to look after Sanjivani Machi. They were being assisted by many junior officers.

Sightseeing :

PADMAVATI LAKE :

As you approach Padmavati Machi through Gupta-darwaja, we get to see a beautifully constructed lake right in front. The walls of the lake are intact even today. An arch has been constructed from the continuation of the same wall to mark an entry to the lake. However, lot of mire has been collected inside this lake.

RAMESHWAR TEMPLE :

Right in front of Padmavati devi Temple there is a Rameshwar Temple. The Shivalinga is believed to be in existence from the era of Shivaji Maharaj. The temple is facing east. Inside the temple is also an idol of Lord Hanuman which is facing South.

RAJWADA :

As you climb up the Staircase in front of Rameshwar Temple on the right side we get to see remains of few castles (Rajwada). Further ahead, we come across Amberkhana and a flat land portion thereafter. One can also get to see artillery storage yard ahead of this portion of land. One lake is also there in the castle.

PALI DARWAJA :

As the name justifies, the approach to this door is from Pali village. The approach is a very huge one with staircase being made. The door of this pali darwaja is quite huge as even an elephant can enter through along with its seat specially designed for mahut and passengers and placed above him, very comfortably. After crossing the 200m distance from this door, we come across yet another equally huge door. This door is well protected by fortified places. The special feature of this door is the construction of a protective wall with circular openings. These openings are used to fire cannon balls on the approaching enemies. After entering through the door we get to see gate houses on either side of the door. We reach Padmavati machi as we enter the fort through this door.

GUNJAVANE DOOR :

Gunjavane door is actually a series of three doors. The first door is very simple one however; it has strong fortified places on either side. The second door has a beautifully carved arch. At the last door, below Ganesh plate we find carvings of two trunks of the elephants holding pots upside down. It seems that this door is constructed much before Shivaji Maharaj's period.

PADMAVATI MACHI :

In all, Rajgad has three machis. Out of three, the most graceful machi is the Padmavati machi. Padmavati machi was not only a military base but also a residential zone. One get to see a glimpses of many devastated structures on this machi, like temple of goddess Padmavati, tomb of Saibai, castel of constables, Padmavati Lake, secret doorway, Pali doorway, Gunjavane darwaja, storage yard of arms and ammunition which are still a witness to the glory of those days.

PADMAVATI TEMPLE :

During the period when Shivaji Maharaj renamed Murumbdev as Rajgad, he constructed this Padmavati Temple. There is also the evidence to the above. There are three idols inside the temple. The one right in front is established by Pant secretary of Bhor and the one to its right is established by Shivaji Maharaj himself. The temple is quite big enough so that 20 to 30 persons can stay there. The drinking water is available nearby. Right in front of the temple, is the tomb of Saibai. In 2002, the temple has been reconstructed.

SANJIVANI MACHI :

After the construction of Suvela machi, Shivaji Maharaj started the construction of this machi. The machi extends approx. 2 ~ kms long and has been constructed in three phases. For every stage of construction of this machi, an armoured fortified place is being provided. As you climb down the first stage of machi then upon

traveling backwards towards North, we get to see a trio of fortified places being constructed. It is believed that there could be huge cannons in existence during those glorious days.

One gets to see many cisterns on this machi. Also remains of castles can be noticed. Sanjivani machi has in all 19 fortified places. It also has an under ground escape route. It leads directly to outermost fortification.

One can also reach this machi via Alu darwaja. From Alu darwaja, a bilateral fortification begins, which is armored. The distance at the base is to the order of about 1/2 to 1 m and a depth of about 6 to 7 meters.

There are series of steps to enter the gap. There are huge fortified places at the end, which prove as good watch towers. One can also get to see the provision made to answer nature's call.

ALU DARWAJA :

It is one of the entrances to Rajgad. If one needs to approach Rajgad from Torna, then the only way is through Alu darwaja. In its present state of condition, Alu darwaja is reasonably devastated. There appears a carving on the darwaja which shows a deer being killed by a tiger.

SUVELA MACHI:

After the capture of this Murumbdev fort, Shivaji Maharaj constructed a strong and sturdy machi on the eastern part of this fort and named it as Suvela machi. Although, the length of this machi is not as long as Sanjivani machi however, like Sanjivani machi, Suvela machi too is constructed in three stages. The machi narrows down along its length. At the start of the machi, there is a hill which is called as 'Duba'. As you take a left from this 'Duba', and proceed ahead, we get to see military camps of those days. To the left of it we notice an idol of Lord Hanuman which is facing south, and a cistern near it. The verandas near to it were owned by Yesaji Kank, Tanaji Malusare and Shlimbkar, who were Maratha sardars. The way straight ahead from this place leads to the 2nd stage of machi whereas a leftward route leads to Kaleshwar fortified place. A little ahead from this fortified place is a courtyard on right hand side. From here the actual fortification starts. The fortification is bifurcated into two stages and at the end of each stage of it, is a fortified place, which is armored one. There is also a provision of underground escape way. As you proceed towards 2nd stage, we get to see a rock having a hole of approximately 3.0m in diameter. This rock is known as 'Nedh' or 'Hatti Prastar'. At the base of this rock, there is an idol of Lord Ganesha and through it; you reach the Gupta Darwaja or the secret doorway. This door is also known as 'Madhe' darwaja. There exists yet another secret doorway ahead of this 'Hatti Prastar'.

KALESHWAR FORTIFIED PLACE AND SURROUNDING :

As you proceed towards the 2nd phase of Suvela Machi, if we follow the route on the right hand side, we come across remains of Rameshwar temple. Inside the temple is a 'Shivalinga', devastated Nandi of Lord Shiva and an idol of 'demigod'. Going further ahead, we come across Kaleshwar fortified place. At its base, we even find a secret doorway.

CITADEL :

Citadel of Rajgad is actually the place of highest elevation. The approach leading to the Citadel is quite difficult and narrow too. At the end of climb, we come across a doorway also known as 'Maha Darwaja'. The condition of this doorway is reasonably good even today. It stands 6.0M in height and has carving of a lotus and 'Swastika' on it. The Citadel has 1.5M high fortification all around and also has fortified places at prominent locations. As you enter the doorway, we come across Janani Temple with a lake little ahead of it. At the front of this lake is the Northern Bastion. The entire Padmavati Machi and its surrounding can be seen. Adjacent to this fortified place is the temple of saint. Brahmarshi. Apart from the above, one can also find devastated remains of some castles, verandah's and structures.