

Nasik.....Holy, industries, and fast growing city....

Nasik is a city in western India in the state of Maharashtra. It is located in the banks of holy river Godavari which flows through old Nasik. Nasik is the highest producer of grapes in India along with onions. According to Ramayana Lord Rama made Nasik his home during his 14 years in exile. Several other references to the Ramayana can be found in Nasik. The famous Panchavati is located in Nasik city limit only. It is a pilgrimage site with kumbh mela taking place here once every 12 years in rotation with Haridwar, Allahabad and Ujjain. Next kumbh mela will be held from August 15 to September 13 in 2015. There are Hindustan Aeronautics Limited aircraft manufacturing plant, currency note press and Indian security press located in Nasik along with so many multinational companies, heavy industries. Nasik is also emerging as a business process, outsourcing destination and is on a list of the selected tier II cities for PPO/IT companies. It is very interesting to note that Nasik is known as the "Wine capital of India" as Nasik area has plenty of wineries.

Panchavati at Nashik: Panchavati is believed to be a shelter to Lord Ram, Lakshman, and Sita during their exile. River Godavari flows through Nashik and its Northern part is called as Panchavati. There are five (Pancham) Banyan trees (Vat Vriksha) and hence the area is called Pancha-vati. It is believed to be a part of the Dandakaranya Forest, Since this place acquire a prominent place in the epic, people frequent here to take a holy dip so that they will be cleansed from their sins. Attractions at Panchavati are Sita Gumpha, Kalaram Mandir, Ramkund, Ganga Ghat.

Sita Gufa: The Gumpha (i.e. Cave) is near the five Banyan trees in Panchavati. One can enter the cave with the help of a very narrow staircase. The cave has the idol of Shree Ram, Laxman and Sita. To the left, one can enter into the cave having the Shiva Linga. Devotees believe that Ravan kidnapped Sita from the same place.

Ramkund/Gandhi Memorial: It is so called because Lord Rama is believed to have taken bath there. Mortal remains (Asthi) immersed in this kunda, are immediately absorbed in the water. A dip in this sacred kunda is considered very pious. Situated nearby is Gandhi Lake (Talav) having a memorable monument made out of white marble, in memory of the Father of the Nation. The ashes were dropped in Ramkund after Gandhiji passed away on 30th January 1948. Mr. Nehru was also present on this occasion.

Kalaram mandir: This temple was built by Peshwas. There are great processions and utsav on Ramnavami, Dasara and Chaitra Padwa (Hindu new year day). The speciality of the temple is that it was built with black stones. The stones were brought from Ramshej 200 years ago. It took 23 lakhs of rupees and 2000 workers to build the temple in 12 years. The apex of the temple is made up of 32 tons of gold.

Naroshankar Temple: Situated in Panchavati area, on the bank of river Godavari - fondly called as anga by Nasikites – is Naroshankar Temple of Rameshwar built by Naroshankar Rajebahaddur in 1747. The architectural style of the temple is called "Maya" style. It is one of the most beautiful pieces of temple architecture of the 18th century. The main temple is on a platform. Rather

than inside of the temple, sculpture on the outer part is stunning. It has rows of striking designs. One layer is of decorative lacework.

Dudhasagar Waterfalls: Dudhsagar waterfall, situated at Someshwar is a favourite destination for youngsters where they come often to liven up their spirits. This is one of the best picturesque spots in Nashik. The waterfalls are 10m long and the water is milky white, so it is called Dudhsagar waterfall.

Bhandardara: Bhandardara is located at a distance of 70 km from Nashik. It is a small and peaceful area. This hill station is popular for fun loving and picnic lovers. Radha Falls, a deep valley, a clean and large Arthur Lake, a historical Ratangadh Fort, an ancient temple - Amritheshwar Temple, a peaceful Agasti Rishi Ashram, Wilson Dam also known as Bhandardara Dam, and Viewpoints are the important destinations at Bhandardara. The overflowing water makes the Umbrella Falls, which is a picturesque sight during the monsoon season.

Nandur Madhameshwar Bird Sanctuary: The sanctuary has 220 species of birds, 400 species of vegetation, 24 species of fish and several smaller mammals. The sanctuary spreads over the protected area of 10000 hectares, lies the core area of 1765 hectares. It is now counted as one of the important waterfowl habitats in the region by the International Union of Conservation of Nature.

Sula Wines: Winery offers tour and wine tasting

Gangapur Dam: lies 10 kilometres from Nasik city of Maharashtra. The dam is situated near the village of Gangawadi. This earthen dam was constructed in 1954. The total catchment area of Gangapur Dam is approximately 357.4 Square kilometres. The total dam length is about 3810 metres and maximum height of the dam is around 36.57metres.

Pandavleni (caves): The 2000-yr-old Pandavleni caves, built by the Jain kings, are located on a tableland atop the Trivashmi Hill. There are around 24 caves situated here that once formed abode to the Jain saints. The caves lodge idols of Buddha, Jain Teerthankara Vrishabhdeo, Veer Manibhadraji and Ambikadevi and the icons of Bodhisatva. There are attractive water tanks that are very skillfully chiseled into the rock. It is situated 8 km south of Nashik.

Coin Museum: The Coin Museum is positioned against the backdrop of the enthralling Ajneri Hill. The Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies was established in 1980 and is the only of its kind in Asia. The museum houses a fine collection of researched and well-documented history of Indian currency. Also included in the collections are photographs, articles, line drawings, replica, real coins and also a detailed analysis of the various currency systems that existed in the India from centuries together.

Gargoti Museum: Nashik boasts one of the world's famous museums for zeolites. A zeolite is an ethereal creation of breathtaking colour and fragile structure formed as the result of a process in which a group of silicate minerals expel water when heated. The most prized piece in Gargoti is a rock of apophyllite, stilbite and calcite measuring 2.2 x 2 feet and worth about \$100,000. This rare museum is a worth visiting place of the state.

Trimbakeshwar Temple in Nasik:

Shri Trimbakeshwar Temple is located at a distance of about 30-km from Nasik in Maharashtra near the mountain named Brahmagiri from which the river Godavari flows. Trimbakeshwar Temple is revered as one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva and as the source of the river Godavari. Just as Ganga is known as Bhagirathi and is one of the most important river in North India, in the same way, Godavari is also known as **Gautami Ganga** and is the most sacred river in South India.

SHIRDI: Shirdi Sai Baba Temple is at a distance of around 106 kms from Nashik.

Shri Sai Baba is revered as one of the greatest saints ever seen in India, endowed with unprecedented powers, and is worshipped as a God incarnate. (SAI meaning Sakshaat Ishwar) - GOD THE ABSOLUTE.

This mysterious Fakir first made his appearance in Shirdi as a youth and remained there throughout his long life. He transformed the lives of those who met him and continuously is doing so even after his Samadhi in 1918 for those whose hearts are touched by his love and who pray and call him at any emergency in life for his blessings. Baba stated that his mission is to "Give Blessings" without discrimination to all, and he proves it in myriad ways by healing the sick, saving lives, protecting the vulnerable, averting accidents, granting offspring, facilitating financial gain, bringing people into harmony within themselves and with each other and, above all, in effecting the spiritual evolution and transformation of those who came to him as the last resort.

Baba is, as one of his contemporary devotees put it, "The embodiment of the supreme spirit lighting the sadhakas (seekers') path by his every word and action". To his devotees, Baba is nothing less than a God. This has been a matter of experience and not imaginary.

"I look at all with an equal eye". An outstanding aspect of Sai Baba is that he is beyond distinctions of religion, caste or creed. He embodied all religions and preached the universal religion of love.

Devotees of all faiths find their meeting point in Sai and people from all communities and all walks of life are united by the great love and reverence Baba inspires in them. Baba had great regard for his Hindu devotees and their Gurus and he responded to their needs and permitted worship according to the Hindu and other religious rituals. At the same time his dwelling place was a Masjid (Mosque) and the name of Allah was ever on his lips. He described himself as in Service to GOD (ALLAH) and as a soul ever remembering ALLAH -(YAD - A - HAKKA)

People today flock Shirdi in ever-increasing numbers to pay homage to the divine and to experience the truth of Baba's promise that he would be active in answering devotee's prayers even from his tomb. Like ten commandments Baba has given eleven assurances to humanity for welfare.

Baba said that he was a slave in the service of those who loved him. He was ever living to help those who turn to him and that he has to take care of his children day and night. He then taught values of total surrender to the Almighty Master and experience his grace.

In coming to Baba's Shirdi his children experience the truth how Baba unfailingly fulfils his commitments to his devotees by coming to their rescue in times of crisis.