



A walk on the wild side: Trekkers re-discover the fun during the monsoons

# A guide to weekend hotspots

## ■ S Valsan, *Borivili*

TO the nature lover in Mumbai, monsoons mean greenery landscapes, cooler, wetter weather, gushing rapids, blossoming flora... in other words, lots of trekking. Some enthusiasts would go as far as to say that it is the only good time to trek, because it presents a perfect balance of scenic beauty and great weather. While that is debatable, it is definitely a great time to be outdoors, especially since

many getaways are just two to three hours away by road or local train. If the Sanjay Gandhi National Park seems a little too done, head for the hills; you can't go wrong. Try these out for a start:

## MONSOON GETAWAYS

● **Treks around Karjat**  
Matheran (closest station – Karjat/Neral/Vangani, depending on which route you take); Bhimashankar (from Khandas village, MTDC accommodation available on

top); Peth (ST buses ply between base village Ambilvili and Karjat Station)

● **Treks around Panvel and Pen**  
Panvel-Matheran (ending at Porcupine point, Matheran);

Karnala Bird Sanctuary (on the Goa Highway, trek ends at the Karnala Fort Pinnacle); Sankshi (starting point- Badruddin Dargah, Chunabhatti village, near Pen); Sagargad (near Alibag) Also worth checking out is the Tandulwadi Fort. The

closest railway station on the Western Railway route is Safale, beyond Virar. Malsej Ghat, on the Kalyan-Murbad road, is a great choice for those sick of overpopulated hill stations. Bhandardara, a lesser-known hill station near Igatpuri, is also a good alternative, especially if you're taking your car. Like most hill stations, this one too he place has dams, waterfalls and scenic points, and it hasn't really been spoilt by excessive tourism.