

For the backpacker

Pack off to: Bhandardara in Ahmednagar District

How to get there: Since it is just 177 kms away, car or a bus is the best option. You could also take the Panchwati Express to Igatpuri, and then hire a taxi to Bhandardara.

It's your best bet if: You have the company of friends who get excited at the thought of trekking. The Ratangad Fort, one of Shivaji's favourites, is an interesting climb.

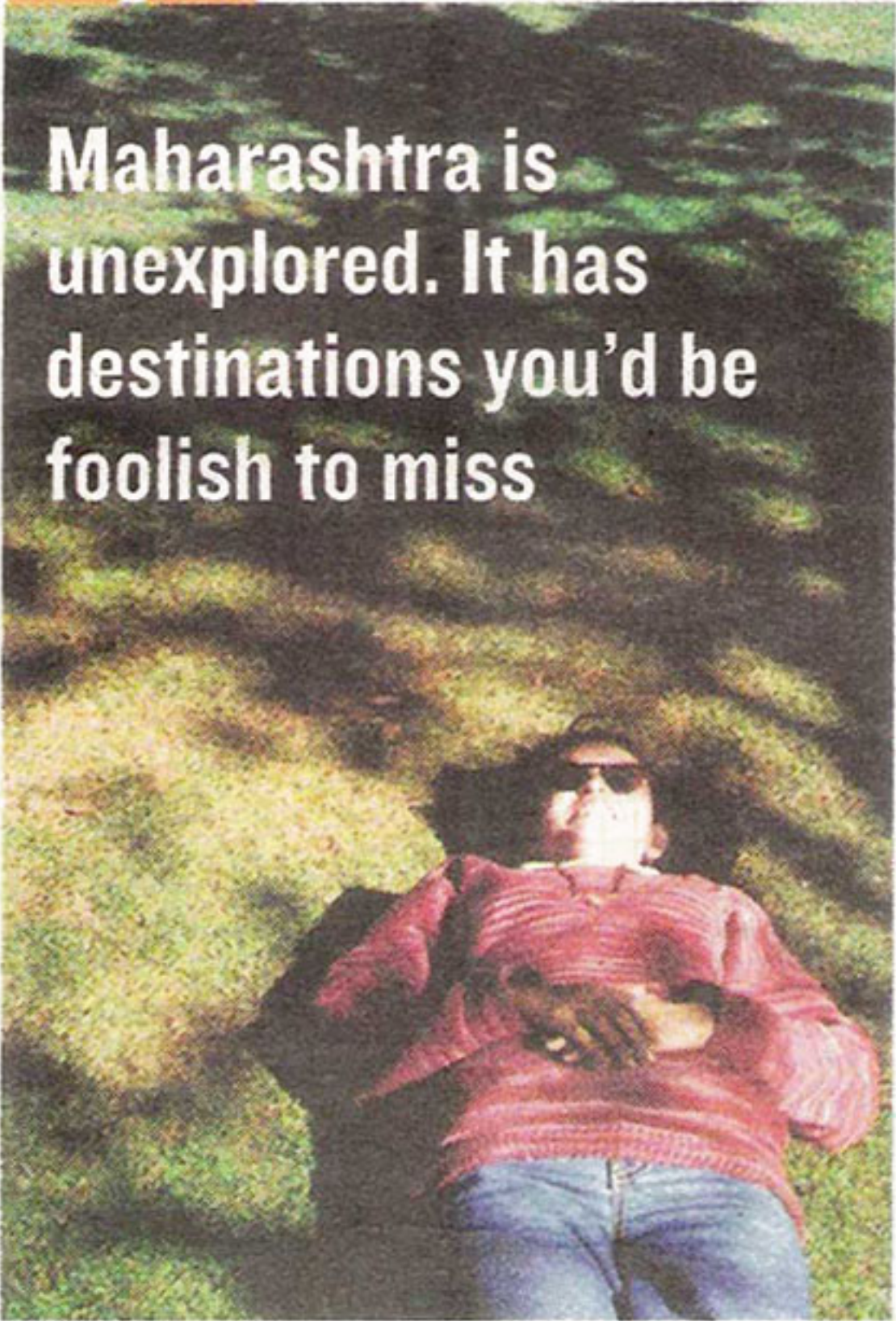
What's special: It is like stepping into a dream. Where else will you find sky-high mountains, unending greenery and so many waterfalls that you can name one after yourself. Bhandardara is also home to Mount Kalsubai, the highest peak in Maharashtra. Though it is green throughout the year, the best time to visit it is during the monsoons. Arthur Lake and Wilson Dam are your typical touristy attractions. Stay clear if you want to avoid crowds.

Pack up at: Anandvan provides air conditioned cottages with a garden view, and will cost you Rs 4,500 per night (including taxes and breakfast). MTDC offers deluxe rooms (3 beds) for 2 nights for Rs 800 and lakeside cottages, standard and special rooms too.

What the Internet won't tell you:

Visit Agasti Rishi's Ashram for that elusive slice of peace and a peek into history. It will give you an insight into its age-old link to the Ramayana.

Don't leave without: Paithani saris from Yeole, an hour's drive from Bhandardara.



Maharashtra is unexplored. It has destinations you'd be foolish to miss

Shilpa Borkar may be a certified Tourism Department of India guide for Western India, but her Konkani roots to Guhagar add extra passion to her knowledge

