

# The valley of lakes and mountains



**Far left:** Arthur lake;  
**Left:** The reservoir on the Pravara river;  
**Bottom left:** The lake at Ratangard

*Take a break and head to Bhandardara this weekend*

**M**OUNTAIN TOPS that almost seem to be touching the sky, roaring waterfalls and greenery all around. That's Bhandardara for you. A beautiful holiday resort nestled among the Sahyadri hills.

According to an ancient legend, God came down to Earth, pleased with Agasti Rishi's devotion and blessed him with a stream of the Ganga river, now known as the Pravara river. Worth taking a dekho is the dam constructed across the Pravara River, at a height of 2,400 feet from mean sea level. Another must visit is the Arthur Lake, a tranquil blue mirror amidst the greenery of Bhandardara; the lake is fed by waters from the Pravara river.

The adventurous ones can take a trek to

## Fact file

- **Best time to visit:** June to March
- **Distance:** 185 km from Mumbai.
- **Getting there:** Nearest airport, Mumbai airport 177 km away. Igatpuri (45 kms away) on Central Railway is the nearest railhead. By road, Mumbai-Bhandardara is 180 km (via Ghoti). Pune-Bhandardara, 191km
- **Location:** Via Mumbai-Panvel-Mangaon-Goregaon Phata on the Mumbai-Goa Highway. If you're driving from Mumbai, turn right at Ghoti after Igatpuri.
- **Must carry:** A good pair of walking shoes and a windcheater
- **Accommodation:** MTDC guest house, which overlooks the lake

Kalsubai, the highest peak in Maharashtra. The climb takes about three hours and is worth the effort. Else walk up to the Ratangad Fort, one of Shivaji's favourites. Very popular with nature lovers and trekkers, it offers a spectacular view from its ramparts.

At the foot of the Ratangad hills is situated an ancient Shiva temple. Do visit this nearly 30 to 32 feet high structure with some beautiful carvings on it.

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