

# Ajanta Ellora Caves

Ajanta and Ellora caves are among the oldest Buddhist architectural sites in the world. The artwork in the Ajanta and Ellora caves were listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1983. They are renowned Buddhist sacred art masterpieces and have profoundly influenced India's artistic development.

The Ajanta Ellora caves are located near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. Ajanta Caves lies amid the Sahyadri ranges on the Waghora River. They were constructed between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D. Ellora Caves are located some 100km away from Ajanta Caves in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. The Ellora Caves are newer than the Ajanta Caves and were built between 5th and 11th centuries A.D. by numerous guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

## Ajanta Caves

The Ajanta Caves are a complex of rock-cut caverns located near Aurangabad, Maharashtra, in the Sahyadri hills (Western Ghats). The caves were built between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D and were inscribed by the Buddhist monks, under the patronage of the Vakataka kings. The Ajanta Caves houses twenty-nine Buddhist caves, twenty-five of which were utilised as Viharas or residential caves, and four utilised as Chaitya or prayer halls.

- Fresco painting technique was employed to create the figures in these caves. The artworks' outlines were painted in red colour. The scarcity of blue in the paintings is one of the most remarkable elements.
- Mostly, the paintings depict Buddhism, including Buddha's life and Jataka stories.
- Travel reports of Chinese Buddhist travellers Fa Hien (reign of Chandragupta II; 380-415 CE) and Hieun Tsang (period of emperor Harshavardhana; 606-647 CE) mention the Ajanta caves.
- In 1983, the caves were listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## Ellora Caves

The Ellora Caves are one of the world's largest Hindu temple cave complexes. They are situated nearly 100 kilometres from the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra's Sahyadri range. The monasteries and temples in the caves were dug beside each other in the wall of a steep basalt cliff and span more than two kilometres. The structures were carved out of the Charanandri hills' vertical face.

- The Ellora caves are a collection of hundred caves, thirty-four of which are available to the public. Out of the 34 caverns, 17 are dedicated to Hinduism, 12 to Buddhism, and 5 to the Jain faith.
- The Ellora Caves were built by numerous guilds from Karnataka, Vidarbha, and Tamil Nadu between the 5th and 11th centuries A.D.
- The Ellora caves are more recent than the Ajanta caves. The structures were built in three phases: from 550 AD to 600 AD by Hindus, from 600 AD to 730 AD by Buddhists, and from 730 AD to 950 AD by Hindus and Jains.
- Kailasa Temple (Kailasanatha; cave 16) is the most impressive amongst the Ellora cave temples. It contains the world's biggest single monolith rock excavation. It is named after the Hindu god Shiva, who resides on a mountain in the Himalayan Kailasa Range.

The Ellora monuments were patronised by the Rashtrakutas, Kalachuris, Chalukyas, and Yadavas. Parts of the Hindu and Buddhist caves of Ellora were built by the Rashtrakuta and Kalachuri dynasties, while the Jain caves were built by the Yadava dynasty. They were

constructed in close proximity to one another to depict the religious concord that prevailed in ancient India.

## Ajanta Paintings

One of the best surviving examples of ancient Indian art is the Ajanta Paintings. According to UNESCO, these are the pinnacles of Buddhist religious art that had an impact on Indian art. Rather than being frescoes, Ajanta's artworks are murals. High qualities are displayed in the Buddha and other Ajanta cave paintings, such as the Buddha's serene, regal visage. Among the most significant are the Naga figures, Hariti and Panchika figures, Buddha's Mahaparinirvana, the temptation scene, and so on. The three-dimensional appearance of a painting reveals the perfection and acute observation of the artist.

## Ellora Caves Paintings

Five caves at Ellora include mural paintings. The paintings were created in two series, the first during the time that the caverns were being carved, and the second series several centuries afterwards. Sharp features and pointy noses characterise the sinewy forms. Ellora is where the later Gujarathi style's characteristic projecting eye first appears. The core composition of the following series is a parade of Saiva holy men. The apsaras that fly are graceful.

