

**Name of the Monument/ site: Pitalkhora Caves**

**LOCATION :-** Pitalkhora is an isolated monastic complex situated away from the Sahyadri clusters in the Satmala range, in the north-western part of Aurangabad district, about 70 km west of Ajanta and located at a distance of nearly 25 km west of Kannad, a tehsil headquarters in Aurangabad district and nearly 40 km west of Ellora caves. On the Aurangabad-Chalisgaon road, one has to take a diversion at Kalimath and travel nearly 4 km to reach the caves. This place was along an ancient trade route that connected the Deccan tableland with the port of Bharuch on the west coast and the ancient city of Ujjain to the north.

**Common Name Pitalkhora Caves**

**Longitude & Latitude Lat. 20°18'50.58"N Long. 74°59'33.09"E**

**Village Pitalkhora  
Police Station Pitalkhora  
Taluka Kannad  
District Aurangabad**

**Distance from District Headquarter**

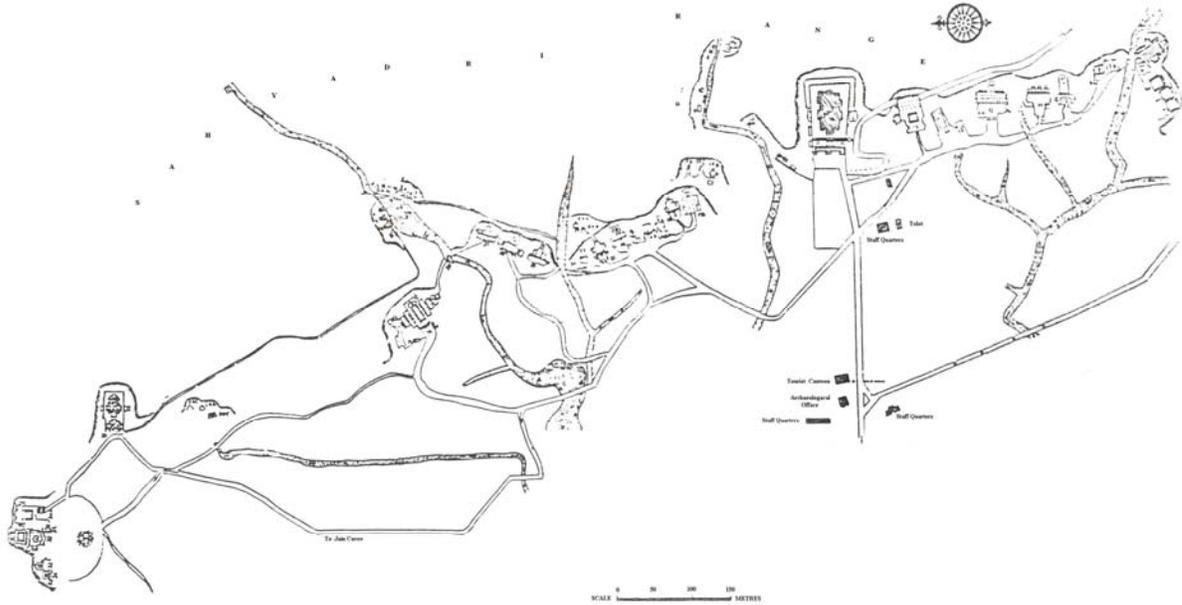


General view of the Pitalkhora Caves



**GOOGLE ROAD MAP**

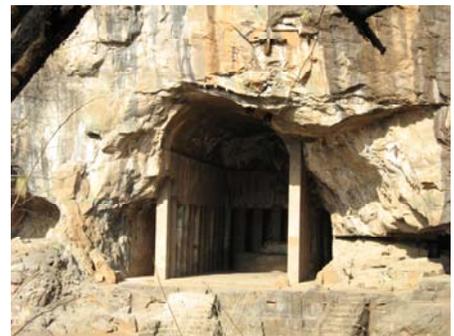
## CULTURAL INFORMATION :-



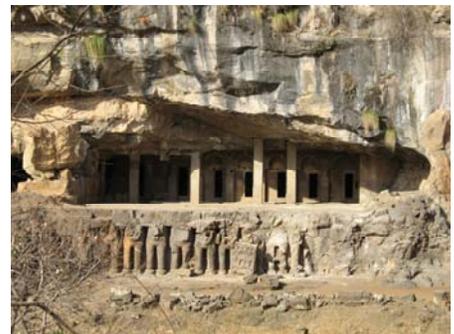
The Pitalkhora or “Brazen Glen” consisting of 14 Buddhist Caves forms one of the earliest centers of the rock-cut architecture. They are cut in a variety of basalt rock which weathers faster in contrast to other parts in Maharashtra. Out of Caves 14, 4 are chaityagrihas, one housing votive stupas, one apsidal and single cell (5A), and the rest are viharas. All the caves belong to the Hinayana period but the paintings executed in the caves are of Mahayana period.

On the basis of similarity of names, this site is identified with Petrigala of Ptolemy and Pitangalya mentioned in a Buddhist text Mahaimayuri as the seat of a Yaksha called Sankarin. The inscriptions found here date from c. 250 B.C. to 3rd – 4th century A.D. Two of the records mention ‘Pathitana’ (Pratishtana, the capital of Imperial Satavahanas, modern Paithan) and one mentions ‘Dhanyakataka’ modern Dharanikota in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

So far architectural developments are concerned; Pitalkhora appears to have played a progressive role as innovator. In fact comparative chronological positions of the various rock-cut chaitya halls in Western India indicate that it is probably at Pitalkhora that a first attempt to adorn the facade with sculptural decoration was made, though unfortunately, not much has remained there now. It is also here that the earliest attempt to introduce the bell and animal capital pillars is to be seen. The sculptural decoration seen on the basement of Cave 4 and also the wealth of loose sculptures found in the forecourt indicate the progressive achievements of this centre. It is probably due to this spirit of



**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 4, Pitalkhora Cave**

experiment and innovation that the chaityagharas 10, 11, 12 and 13 are to be ascribed. Each one of that forms a variety by itself. The way in which the economic resources have been utilized to achieve utmost advantage at this site is really remarkable. By hewing just 17 caves accommodation for more than 120 monks has been provided. Pitalkhora happens to be the only monastic unit with provision for such a huge number of monks.

The caves are located at the head of a ravine, cut on the vertical scarp on either side of the ravine. Due to the fast deterioration of the rock, most of the caves are in poor status of preservation. Pitalkhora is one of the earliest centers of rock-cut architecture in the western India. All the caves belong to the Hinayana phase and practically no architectural activity of the later period is recognizable, even though the caves were in use during Mahayana times as indicated by a few paintings of Buddha seen on the pillars in the chaitya hall at this place. The caves are in two groups one to the right of the ravine (Group I) and another to the left (Group II), opposite the above group.

### FIRST GROUP

Group I, to the right of the ravine, is reached by a flight of steps leading down from the upper plateau.

#### Cave 1 (1a, 1b, 1c)

This cave is located very near the head of the ravine and faces west. The cave is very much ruined, and now looks like a natural cavern. But remains of some cells, beds, ceilings and doorways are still extant to show that there were three separate excavations. These are numbered here for convenience as (1a, 1b and 1 c). The Cave 1a had a rectangular hall with at least three cells along the right wall and two at the back. The cells had a simple bench each. Remnants of rectangular doorways are seen in some cases. Two of the cells at least had a small niche in the back wall, meant probably for keeping the belongings of the monk residing in these. Adjacently to the left, is a small cave similar in plan and features. This consisted of six cells, three along the back and three along the right walls. They consist of, simple beds, niches and doorways as present in 1a. Cave 1c adjoining to this cave too has some remnants of cells and benches. The facades of these caves are completely broken.

#### Cave 2

About 12 m further to Cave 1, Cave 2 located. The entire wall which divided this from Cave 3 is completely broken, as well as many parts of the cells. From the existing remains, this can be reconstructed as a long narrow hall, with four cells along the right wall and three cells along the left. The cells had simple single benches along the back or



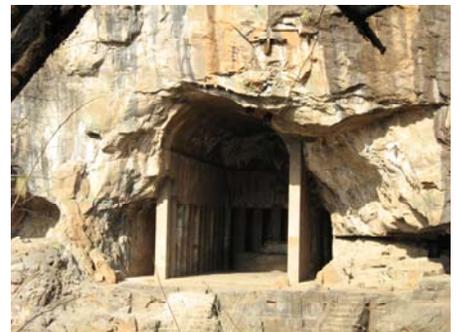
Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



View from south-west Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



side walls, except one in the right wall which has two. Many cells are provided with a niche in one of the walls. The front is completely broken and now open. A flight of eleven steps leads to this cave from the open court in front which stretches in front of Caves 1, 3 and 4 also.

### Cave 3

The Cave 3 is main chaityagriha at Pitalkhora. This has an apsidal, vault roofed prayer hall 9 m high 10.7 m wide and 26.2 m long and is divided into a nave and back and side aisles by a row of 37 pillars running parallel to the walls. A few of the original pillars remain complete. The pillars have simple octagonal shafts, about 0.75 m thick and 4.3 m high. All of them taper upwards and have a slight inward rake. The ceiling over the aisles is quadrennial and is cut with curved stone beams. The nave has barrel vault roof rising above the triforium. It had curved wooden rafters like those at Bhaja and Karle chaitya halls. None of them survives now.

The rock cut stupa was probably semi-circular placed at the end of the nave. But only remains of drum have survived now. It is 4.2 m in diameter and the extant part is about 1.4 m high. There are five oblong sockets, four on the back side and one on the left side, on this drum. These, which had been plugged by tight fitting stones originally, have yielded crystal reliquaries. The facade of the cave is plain and open. A flight of eleven steps leads down from the chaitya hall to the forecourt below. The upper stairway has enclosing side stones which slope downwards, and their inner faces are decorated with sculptures, of a winged horse and two caryatid dwarf ganas.

There are two inscriptions on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> pillars (from front) of the right row. One records that, that pillar was a gift of Mitadeva of the Gadhikla family. The other says that it was a gift of the sons of Satilghaka. All these donors hailed from Pratishthana. A set of painted records also exist in this Cave of the Mahhayan phase.

### Cave 4

It is situated next to Cave 3 and noted for its sculptural work and architectural design. This too is now in a highly ruined state, but at the time of its making this must have been a magnificent edifice in the whole of India.

There are some indications that 5 or 6 cells were also there along the right wall. At present, however, the row of cells in the back is intact and in front of that is a bay looking like a verandah with a line of pillars along its front line. The cells of this cave show the faithful copying of wooden-roofed houses in their barrel vaulted-roof in contrast to the simple plain roof normally seen in western Indian caves. Their roofs are not only decorated with the curved beams and crossing rafters, but their fronts too has the chaitya arches in the

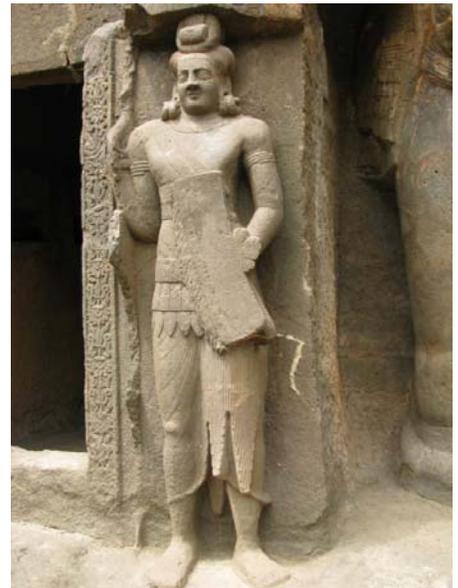
### Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



### Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



Painted pillars and an inscription, Pitalkhora Caves



Guardian Yaksha, Cave 4

same alignment as the barrel vault inside. These chaitya arches project in relief over the doorway and are further decorated with dentils marking the ends of beams and also the lattice work over half lotus in the semicircular portion within them. All these pilasters have bell shaped capitals, surmounted by the inverted stepped pyramidal member and crowned by animal figures. The animals include horses, lions, elephants and bulls. Except the bulls, all others are shown with curved wings rising from their forelegs.

This cave consists of a large hall with seven cells along the back wall. Three of the cells have two beds inside, one along a side wall and the other along the back wall. One cell has three benches, two along the two sides and one at the back, one has only one bench at the back and one has no bench at all. All the cells have grated windows of the simple vedika pattern in their front walls.

The facade of this cave had been highly ornamented. At present, a few relief chaitya arches in a row and the remnants of a Yakshi figure can still be seen on destroyed rock surface. In front of this cave at a low level is a wide court, which is also shared by Cave 3, a flight of eleven steps leads from this court to the cave proper. The doorway of this entrance has fine decorative work, the jambs carved with flower designs. Above the lintel was a figure of a Gajalakshmi flanked by an elephant on either side. There are also life size doorkeepers carved in relief one on either side of this doorway. The doorway is towards the left end of the plinth, and at the right end there is the sculpture of a horse with a man standing by its side, which probably depicted the story of the 'Great Departure of the Buddha.' In between, the plinth has a row of busts of elephants each shown with a 'mahout'. The cave when complete with its facade sculptures and forecourt must have been a magnificent architectural work, probably unique in the whole of contemporary India. This cave does not conform in plan and design to any known ones elsewhere in Deccan. There are five inscriptions carved on the walls of the cells in this cave and one on a pilaster on the left wall, but all appear to record the making of the gift of these by the royal physician Vachchiputa Magila, and his near relatives.

### Cave 5

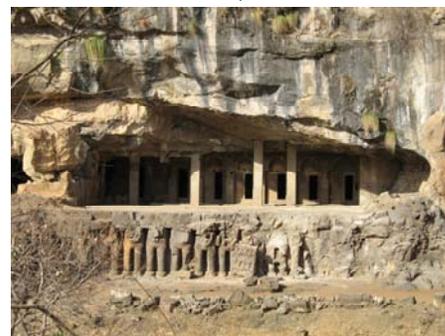
This cave looks almost like a natural cavern, however, show that there were five cells on either side of a rectangular hall, and four at the back. The central two cells of the back walls had an inner cell. All the cells have a simple-bench at the back. There was a small transverse open verandah in front which was approached by two steps.

### Cave 5 A

Adjacent to this on the left side is an apsidal room,



Vaulted roof of Cell, Cave 4



Cave 4, Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave

which was partly structural. This may have housed a structural stupa. In front of this is a bench to a side and two approach steps. The lower one of this is semicircular, looking like a chandrasila. A fragment of an inscription found on a loose rock in front of Cave 5 reads diiya athiseniyii.

### **Cave 6**

Next to 5a is Cave 6 which consisted of a hall surrounded by cells and a small verandah. Remnants of four cells in the back, six in the left and at least five in the right walls of the hall can be traced. Most of the cells have two simple benches, one at the back and another along the side walls. The benches in the cells at the back wall are decorated with relief panel work, on their front side, each panel being framed by a horizontal ledge at the rim and simple vertical studs below. The back wall of the back cells further have a projecting cornice supported by quadrantal brackets at either end. Over the cornice are rows of stepped merlons. A small oblong niche is seen in some of the walls of cells. Each cell is approached by a step from the hall.

### **Cave 6 A**

This appears to consist of four separate excavations (6A i, 6A ii, 6A iii, 6A iv). The partition walls of these caves as well as the cells are broken and the whole looks like a single excavation. Still, the differences in levels and alignments indicate that they were separate excavations. The first one, 6A i, is a simple cell with a small verandah. 6A ii and A iii have two cells each behind an open verandah. 6A iv has three cells behind the open verandah. All the cells in the group have a simple bench each along a side wall. Many of the cells have a niche in their back walls.

### **Cave 7**

This cave has a plain hall with cells around it and once had a verandah in front. There are fifteen cells distributed along the three inner walls, each with five cells. Each cell has a step in front. The cells have plain single benches. One cell in the back wall is specially decorated with a cornice supported by quadrant brackets and surmounted by a row of stepped merlons. The ceiling of this cell is vaulted, in which grooves for wooden ribs can also be seen.

### **Cave 7a**

Next to the Cave 7 is an unfinished water cistern.

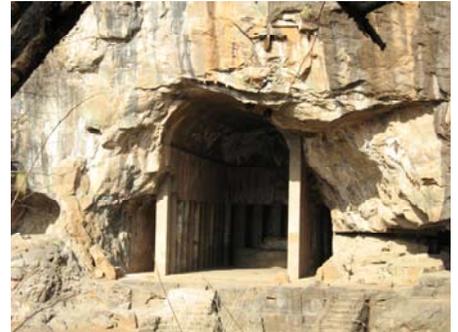
### **Cave 8 (8a, 8b, 8c)**

This consists of three separate cells in a row, each having a bench running along a side and the back wall.

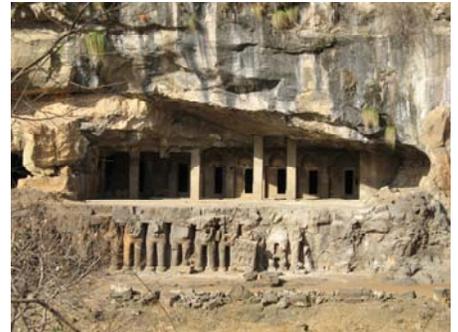
### **Cave 9**



**View from south-west Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 4, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**

This cave consists of a hall surrounded by cells on the three inner sides, and a verandah in front. There are fifteen cells, five on each side; all with a bench in them. The partition walls of the cells are broken. A notable feature of this cave is the run of a rail pattern all along the three inner walls of the hall, above the lintel level of the cells. The verandah was separated from the hall by a thin wall with a central doorway, but this is now completely broken. The verandah had a cell on either side.

#### Cave 9a

Adjacent to cave 9, to its left, is this cave. It consists of a deep corridor with a cell cut at the left corner in the back wall and three cells in the right wall towards front, all with a single bench each.

#### Cave 9b

This is to the left of Cave 9, and this too appears to be an annexe to that. In this three cells are seen placed in a row sharing a common verandah. The cells had a bench each.

### SECOND GROUP

The next group of four caves is cut in the scarp to the left of the ravine, about a hundred meter away from Cave 1. All the four caves in this group are chaityagrihas.

#### Cave 10

This is an unfinished apsidal chaityagriha devoid of aisles and pillars inside.. The apsidal hall is 5.4 m deep and 2.5 m wide and 3.8 m high. The side walls of the hall rake inwards slightly and the roof is barrel shaped. A stupa is placed at the apsidal end. Its harmika is broken. The drum is 1.7 m diameter at the base and 2.3 m high. The sides of the drum taper upwards prominently and at the brim all round is a band of vedika pattern. In front of the hall is a screen wall about 1.2 m thick pierced by a roughly hewn rectangular doorway (1.7 m X 80 cm) and a window admitting light into the hall. This window was set at the back of a large roughly hewn semi-circular arch 2.7 m wide at the base and 2.1 m high and 80 cm deep. This cave is dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

#### Cave 11

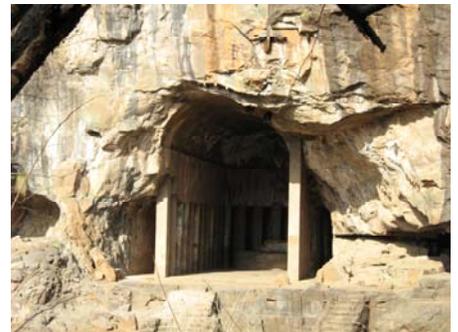
This consists of three flat roofed chambers, each with a stupa. The first stupa located opposite the front doorway is much dilapidated. It had a drum with slightly inclining sides and a dome above carrying the square harmika. The chamber to left (3 m l, 2.2 m d) has the stupa in the centre which too is much damaged. But the umbrella carved in the



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



View from south-west Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave



ceiling above this is extant. To the back of the first chamber is another chamber (2.4 m d, 3.6 m b). The stupa in the centre of this chamber is the best preserved of the group. It has a drum with slightly inclining sides adorned with a decorative rim of vedika design. The harmika rises in two stages, the lower one with the vedika pattern and the upper with four rectangular studs in corners. This carries the capital with five square plates of successively increasing dimensions. In the roof, a circular chhatra is carved, but its shaft is lost. Two holes are carved on the back of the dome, and these appear to have been meant to receive the relics.

The layout of the cave and the stupa forms indicate that these were made in different times, datable to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.

### Cave 12

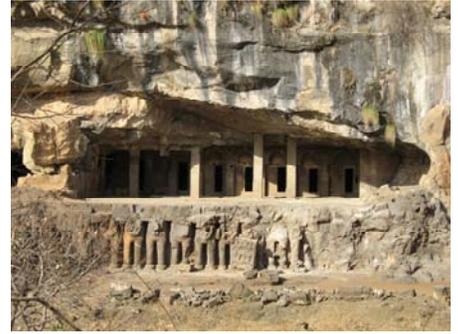
This is a chaitya hall situated a little away to the west from 11. This consists of an apsidal hall (6.6 m d, 2.3 m h, 4.6 m b) but has no pillars. The roof is barrel vaulted and is decorated with ribs crossed by rafters, all cut in stone. At the back, the roof is fashioned as a quarter sphere with the curved ribs meeting at a point at the top. Just below this on the floor stood a stupa which is now much dilapidated. On the head of the dome, is an oblong mortise which was meant to receive the harmika.

### Cave 13

Next to Cave 12 is this chaityagriha an apsidal hall and is 8.5 m deep, 4.5 m wide and 4.5 m high. Two rows of pillars in the hall meet in a semi-circular back dividing the hall into a central nave and side aisles. The back part is slightly enlarged and the cave appears like a circular cell provided with an oblong hall in front. This is dated to last part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. The vaulted roof over the nave has stone ribs and rafters as in 12, but the nave roof which is quadrangle does not have any feature like this. The stupa that stood at the apsidal end of the nave is almost ruined.

Thus Pitalkhora caves are important in the study of history of architecture, religious, social and political history, epigraphical and art studies as well economic history as they are located on important ancient caravan route from ancient Pratishtan (Paithan) to Avantika (Ujjain).

**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 4, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**



**Cave 3, Pitalkhora Cave**

### PROTECTION STATUS :-

Notification No **S.O. 2445 dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 1960**

New Classification **Category G**

Monument located in far flanged areas and free from any threat from construction activities

Status **Non Living**

## GOOGLE DEMARCATION :



**Google earth images demarcated with protected, prohibited and regulated areas**

Under section of 20 A and B of Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation ) Act 2010 areas up to 100 meters from the Protected limits and further beyond it up to 200 meters near or adjoining protected monuments to be prohibited and regulated areas respectively for purposes of both mining operation and construction whoever violate these provisions shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extends to two years or with fine up to Rs. 1,00,000 (Rupees One lakh ) or with both, under section 30 A and 30 B

## TOURIST INFORMATION :-

Opening and Closing Days and Timing	Everyday Sunrise to Sunset
Ticketes / Receipts Other charges	Non- Ticketed Monument

- Filming**
- Filming of protected monument is allowed only on payment of ₹ 5000/- per day per monument in the form of demand draft from a nationalized bank in favour of "Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle, Aurangabad "payable at Aurangabad. If you are interested in the proposal, you may intimate this office regarding the date of filming and submit ₹ 5000/-per day for each monument along with duly completed application in **Form IX**
  - For filming operation, an amount of ₹ 10,000/- towards "Security deposit " in the Post office saving account at GPO, Aurangabad after obtaining authorization letter from this office. The security deposit may also be submitted in the form of demand draft of nationalized bank in favor of "Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle "payable at Aurangabad. The security deposit will be released and returned if no damage is caused to the monument during filming operation. A no damage certificate from the local monument in charge and a VHS cassette of filming operation is required for release of security deposit.

## Tourist Facilities

Ticketed booking counters	Non- Ticketed Monument
Parking	Open space Available
Toilets	No
Portable drinking water facilities	No
Cafeteria and souvenir shops	No
Sales counters	No
Visitors movement plan	No
Dust bins	No
Clock rooms	No
Entrance plazas	No
Resting areas	No
Pathways	Available
Approach roads	Available
Signage's	No
Free literature (e.g. pamphlets )	No
Facilities for differently abled	No

**Tourist Flow & Revenue statements :** As the monument is not ticketed monument, the data pertaining to the tourist flow is not being maintained.

## Do & Don't

- The visitors are requested not to touch the surface of the monument or go very near to them.
- Smoking, spitting and throwing garbage within the monument and premises is strictly prohibited.
- Photography with stand and flash light is not allowed in the monument.
- Without the permission of Director General Video filming inside the monument is not allowed.

## References

1. **Fergussons James & Burgess James** , **The Cave temple of India**, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. ,Post Box 5715, 54 Rani Zhansi Road ,New Delhil 110055 ( **2000** , III<sup>rd</sup> Edition )  
**Page No.:** - 242-246
2. **Edited by Director General of Archaeology in India New Delhi., Ancient India. Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India Number 15 (1959).**  
The Director General of Archaeology in India, New Delhi (1986)  
**Page No.:** - 66-94
3. **Nagaraju S., Buddhist Architecture of Western India (C.250 B.C. – C.A.D. 300)** ., Agam Kala Prakashan, 34, Community Centre, Ashok Vihar, Phase I Delhi 110052, (1981)  
**Page No.:** - 12, 47-50, 283-293, 308 & 345-346 **Figure No 58**
4. **Edited by Government of Maharashtra,, Maharashtra State Gazetteers (Government of Maharashtra) – AURANGABAD District (Revised Edition )**, Bombay, Gazetteers Department Government of Maharashtra (1977)  
**Page No.:** - 1039-1041
5. **Mitra Debala** , **Buddhist Monument**, Shri Mahendra Nath Dutt , Shishu Sahitya Samsad Private Limited, 32A , Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road, Culcutta 9 (1971, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition)  
**Page No.:** - 171-174
6. **Burgess James.**, **Archaeological Survey of Western India Vol IV ., Report on the Buddhist Cave temples and their Inscriptions., (Supplementary to the Volume on “The Cave Temples of India” )** Varanasi , Shri Rameshwar Singh for Indological Book House, (1964)  
**Page No.:** - 11-12 & 83-84
7. **Brown Percy.** **Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)** ., D. B. Taraporevala Sons and CO. Pvt . Ltd. , Treasure House of Books, 210, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Bombay-1(1959)  
**Page No.:** - 18-26
8. **Edited By Margabandhu C., Sharma A.K., Bisht R.S., PURARATNA, Emerging Trends in Archaeology , Art, Anthropology, Conservation and History (In Honour of Shri Jagat Pati Joshi ) Volume III** ., Agam Kala Prakashan , Delhi (2002)  
**Page No :-** 696-701
9. **Edited by Khanduri B.M., Nautiyal Vinod ., HIM-KANTI Archaeology, Art , & History (Prof. K.P. Nautiyal Felicitation Volume )** Book India Publishing Co., Delhi (1997)  
**Page No :-** 113-120

**Site Manager**

**Sr. Conservation Assistant,  
Ellora Sub-Circle/ Range office**  
Archaeological Survey of India ,  
Ellora Caves, Ellora  
Taluka :- Khultabad  
District :- Aurangabad  
**Phone Number -02437-244440**  
Email : [asiellorasubc@gmail.com](mailto:asiellorasubc@gmail.com)

**Nodal officer**

**Superintending Archaeologist,**  
Archaeological Survey of India ,  
Aurangabad Circle,  
Bibi-Ka-Maqbara,  
Aurangabad – 431004  
**Phone Number:- 0240 – 2400620**  
Email : [circlear.asi@gmail.com](mailto:circlear.asi@gmail.com)