

MOUNT ABU

Abu's Mythology:-

In the beginning it was just a plain but then, the snake king Takashaka stole the earring of king Uttanka and disappeared into a subterranean pit. Lord Indra created an unfathomable chasm with his thunderbolt to help Uttanka locate the snake. Into this chasm fell Nandini, the sacred cow of sage Vashistha. Goddess Saraswati filled the chasm with water to help Nandini Swim out. It was Himalaya who sent his brother Nandivardhan to fill up subsequently. Arbuda, the snake carried Nandivardhan and for his virtuous deed the place was named after him - Arbuda or Abu - ("The hill of Wisdom").

Flora:-

The slopes and base of the mountain are clothed with fairly dense forests of various trees common to the plains and neighbouring Aravali range, interspersed with great stretches of bamboo forest.

(a) **Trees and Shrubs:** - On the higher parts of hill, many rare, threatened and endemic species of plants occur. Two species of wild roses (*Rosa involucrata* and *Rosa Moschata*) occur. These white and pink roses are a beautiful sight and make whole valley fragrant when in full bloom. *Rosa involucrata* is endemic to Mount Abu and is found no where else in the wild through out the world. *Ambatari* (*Aerides Affine*) a pretty little orchid, *Jamun* (*Syzizium Cuminii*) a common tree with abundance of green foliage, *Am* (*Mangifera indica*), *Phaludra* or coral tree *Dhok*, *Dhaura* and *Indrok*, *Aretha*, *Amaltas*, *Aonla*, *Bans*, *Champa*, *Silver Oak*, *Eucalyptus*, *Kachnar*, *Kara Malkangni* (a shrub) and *Karaunda* and *C. Stylosa*, are creeping shrubs. Many more varieties of tree are found in Abu. Many varieties of flowering scrofula, boraginous and labiate plants are found which bloom in damp season. There are many more types of trees, shrubs and herbs which add materially to the great natural beauty of Abu.

(b) **Grasses:** Among grasses *Baru* (*Sorghum halepense*), *Chhenki* (*Paspalam Kara*) *Dob* (*Cynodon Dactylon*), *Kush*, *Khas*, *Karar*, *Lamp*, *Seran* which could be of interest to a trekker.

(c) **Ferns:** Mount Abu is one of the richest area in country regarding presence of variety of rare fems e.g. *Blechnum oriental*, *Davallia Pulchera*, *Pteris quadriaurita*, *Asplenium Trapeziforme*, *Phymatodes lepidotum* etc.

(d) **Flowers and Creepers:** *Datura Stramonium* grows wild on Abu. Many varieties of flowering scrofula, boraginous and labiate plants, most of which blossom in damp season. There are two varieties of wild dog - rose indigenous in the hills. *Rosa involucrata* a rare and threatened species found in Abu hills through out world. There are two varieties of *Jamines* and *Oleander*, both wild on Abu hills. The geraminous, *dhak*, *dudeli*, *Kelma*, *Cassia*, *Coral* and *Cotton* trees blossom with great profusion. The *strobilan khas* (*Kara*) blossom once in 7 or 8 years.

(e) Medicinal Plants: Many saints and sages have experimented in these Abu hills on the use of these plants. Initial surveys have identified 81 species of trees, 28 species of climbers, 89 species of shrubs & herbs, 17 species of tuberous plants, 20 fruit species and 16 types of flowers as medicinally important. Some of important tree species are Paras, Pepal, Arjun, Tinsa, Amaltas Kampilak Aonla, Bahera, Bad, Jamun, Kachnar, Akol, Haldu etc. Among Climbers, Giloy, Juhi, Jal, Jamani, Mal Kangni, Vajravalli, Kakaranji etc., Among Shrubs and herbs are Bhringraj, Shatavar, Ashwaganda, Kara, Chitrak, Akalkara etc. Among tubers are Salam Misri Kand, Sharikand, Safed Musli, Khaluda etc. are edible. Among poisonous tubers Jangli Haldi, Sarakand, Jangli Pyaj, Telia Kand etc. are found.

Fauna :-

Mount Abu has a varied fauna, some of which are highly rare, threatened and endangered. Among large animals Panther, Sloth bear, Sambhar are found. There is a large variety of birds found here and is a paradise for bird watchers. Area is also rich in diversity of butterflies, reptiles and insects.

In past the area contained lions. The last record of lion shot is in 1982 when a grown up female was shot near Anadra by a Bhil Shikari. Five tigers were spotted during 1967 which became extinct in 1970 from the area. Panthers are often enter the town. Sloth bears are also common. The presence of vegetational composition and availability of water highly suits bear and it is one of the best sloth bear areas in the world. Sambhar population has gone down considerably due to poaching and shrinkage of habitat in past. Nilgai are common on lower slopes and periphery of Abu hills.

Among the birds grey jungle fowl, red spur fowl, peea fowl, varieties of quails, two kinds of sand grouses, paradise fly catchers, owls, doves, ducks, geese etc. in all about 120 species are found.

Accordingly to 2007 wildlife census, the animals found are :—

Panthers - 16, Sloth bear - 80, Sambhar - 28, Hyaena - 45, Jackal - 135, Wild boar - 40, Blue bull - 205, Grey Jungle fowl - 930 and Crocodile - 2.

PRIME SITES

Gaumukh Temple: A natural spring flowing through a sculpted cow's head gives the shrine its name. The famous 'Yagya' of Sage Vashishtha was performed here. A beautifully sculpted hill temple of Arbuda - the mighty serpent, stands against the beautiful backdrop. Nearby is the magnificent marble image of Nandi, the celestial bull rescued by Arbuda.

Nakki Lake: A tiny lake picturesquely set amid hills. The lake is dotted with several islets approachable by a boat of particular interest are strange rock formations around the lake. Especially notable is the Toad Rock which looks like a real toad about to jump into the lake. Others are Nun Rock and Nandi Rock etc. Set in the heart of the town, the lake gets its name from the legend that it was scooped out by the gods with their finger nails or 'Nakh'. It is the only artificial lake in India that is 1200 Mts. Above sea level.



Delwara Jain Temples: These beautifully carved temples built between 11th and 13th century A.D. are sheer elegance in marble, dedicated to the Jain Tirthankaras. The Vimal Vasahi



temple is the oldest of these dedicated to the first Tirthankara. Built in 1031 A.D. (by Vimal Shah – a merchant and representative of the then Gujarat



ruler), it is superb example of temple architecture. The central shrine has an image of Rishabhdev and large courtyard with 52 small shrines, each housing a beautiful statue of Thirthankaras with 48 elegantly carved pillars from the entrance to the courtyard. The Lun Vasahi Temple, dedicated to the 22nd Tirthabnkara – Neminath, was built in 1231 A.D. by two brothers – Vastupal and Tejpal, Ministers of Raja Vir Dhawal, a ruler of Gujarat – belonging to the Porwal Jain community. With door casings, pillars, architraves, and sculptures on porticos, the temple is a fine specimen of craftsmanship.

Adhar Devi Temple: The temple is chiselled out of a huge rock reached by a height of 360 stairs. A favourite tourist spot.

Sunset Point: Spectacular sight of the setting sun when the hills are covered in the golden glow can be viewed from here.



Honeymoon Point: Also known as Anadra Point, offers an enchanting view of the verdant plains and valleys. The place looks most beautiful during the dusk hours.

Shri Raghunathji Temple: Situated near the ‘Nakki Lake’ is the temple dedicated to Shri Raghunathji with a beautiful image of the deity that was placed here in 14th century A.D. by Sri Ramanand – the famous Hindu preacher.

Gardens and Parks: Beautifully laid parks and guardens are interspersed throughout the hilly paradise. Ashok Vatika, Gandhi Park, Municipal Park, Shaitan Singh Park and Terrace Garden are some of the noteworthy gardens.

Museum and Art Gallery: Located in the Raj Bhawan premises it has a collection of archaeological excavations dating back to 8th – 12th century A.D. It also has jain bronze carvings, brass works etc., for viewing.

EXCURSIONS:-

Trevor’s Tank (5 Km): Named after the British engineer who constructed it, Trevor’s Tank is a delight for birdwatchers with densely wooded hills that are a haven to pigeons, peacocks and partridges.



Achalgarh (8 Km): An impressive fort with some beautiful Jain temples enclosed within. Among the noteworthy temples are Achaleswar Mahadev Temple (1412 A.D) and Kantinath Jain Temple (1513 A.D). The latter has a gold plated image. Mandakini Kund and a sculpture of Parmar Dharavarsh are situated close to the Achaleswar Mahadev Temple. The Fort was built in the 14th century A.D. by Rana Kumbha and is approachable by a motorable road.

Guru Seikhar (15 Km): The highest peak on the mount (1722 mts above the sea level) allows a bird’s eye view of the sylvan



surroundings of Mount Abu. A small Shaivite shrine and a temple of Dattatreya standing on the shikhar are worth a visit.

FESTIVE FUN:-

Summer Festival (1st – 3rd June): The summer season is the time for exuberant festivities in this sylvan retreat of Rajasthan. The hill town, covered with mango groves, beautiful bauhinia trees and thickets of wild berries, stirs with life in the first week of June every year. Tribal festivities, folk and classical music performances amidst the lush surroundings and lovely lakes, make it a joyous event.
