



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Ajantha and Ellora caves

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Why is in news? Maharashtra: 3-days Ellora-Ajantha international festival offers unique flavour of music & dance

The Ajanta Ellora International Festival 2023 was held from 25th February to 27th February in Aurangabad, Maharashtra.

The Ajanta Ellora International Festival 2023 festival is a celebration of the cultural heritage and diversity of the region and promises to be a feast for the senses.

The festival showcases the Ellora and Ajanta caves artwork and architecture, as well as performances by local and international artists.

Ajanta Caves:

Ajanta is a series of rock-cut caves located in the **Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats) on Waghora river near Aurangabad in Maharashtra.**

There are a total of 29 caves (**all buddhist**) of which 25 were used as Viharas or residential caves while 4 were used as Chaitya or prayer halls.

The caves were developed in the period **between 200 B.C. to 650 A.D.**

The Ajanta caves were **inscribed by the Buddhist monks**, under the patronage of the **Vakataka kings – Harishena** being a prominent one.

It was patronage by the **Satavahanas, Vakatakas and Chalukyas.**

Reference of the Ajanta caves can be found in the travel accounts of Chinese Buddhist travellers **Fa Hien** (during the reign of Chandragupta II; 380- 415 CE) and **Hieun Tsang** (during the reign of emperor Harshavardhana; 606 - 647 CE).

The figures in these caves were done **using fresco painting**. The outlines of the paintings were done in red colour. One of the striking features is the absence of blue colour in the paintings.

The paintings are generally themed around Buddhism – the **life of Buddha and Jataka stories**. The chronology of construction is 2nd-1st Century BC – **Hinayana Phase**, 5th – 6th Century AD – **Mahayana Phase**.

The caves were designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.**

Ellora Caves:

It is located nearly 100 Kms away from Ajanta caves in the **Sahyadri range of Maharashtra.**

It is a group of 34 caves – **17 Brahmanical, 12 Buddhist and 5 Jain**. The chronology of construction is 550 – 600 AD – **Hindu Phase**, 600 – 730 AD – **Buddhist Phase**, 730 – 950 AD – **Hindu and Jain Phase**.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

These set of caves were developed during the period between the **5th and 11th centuries A.D.** (newer as compared to Ajanta Caves) by various guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

That is why the caves reflect a natural diversity in terms of theme and architectural styles.

The caves was patronaged by **Rashtrakutas, Kalachuris, Chalukyas and the Yadavas.**

The Ellora complex was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.**

The most remarkable of the cave temples is **Kailasanatha Temple** named for the mountain in the Kailasa Range of the Himalayas where the Hindu god Shiva resides.