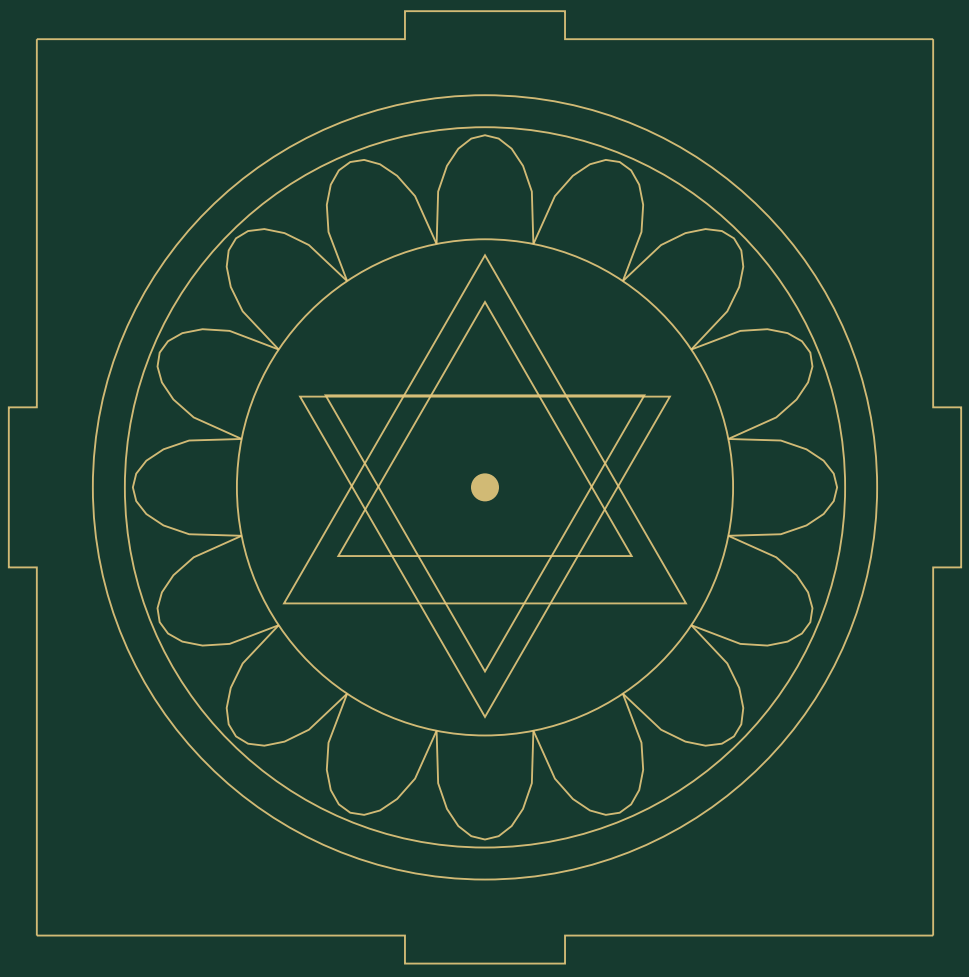
TRAVEL

Maharashtra: The Yogi's Guide

Igatpuri and the 10-day Vipassana course, Nashik and the 2027 Kumbh, Lonavala, Pune and Alandi, checked and dated



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Free sample

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Before you begin

Maharashtra is rarely the first Indian state a yoga traveller names. Rishikesh has the Ganga, Mysore has the Ashtanga shalas, Kerala has ayurveda. Yet within a few hours of Mumbai's airport lie four places that matter deeply to anyone who practises: **Igatpuri**, where S.N. Goenka opened Dhamma Giri in 1976 and where tens of thousands of people have sat their first ten-day Vipassana course; **Lonavala**, home since 1924 of Kaivalyadhama, one of the oldest yoga research institutes in the world; **Pune**, the city of B.K.S. Iyengar and his institute; and **Nashik and Trimbakeshwar**, on the Godavari, which host one of the four Kumbh Melas, due to open on 31 October 2026 and to reach its great bathing days in August and September 2027. Close to Pune, the small town of **Alandi** keeps the shrine of Sant Dnyaneshwar, the thirteenth-century yogi-poet who wrote the great Marathi commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā.

This guide is for the person who wants to go to Maharashtra to sit, to study or to bathe: to understand what a Vipassana course asks of you before you apply, how the institutions of the state actually admit students, what the Kumbh will be like, and how to move between these places with respect for the people who hold them sacred.

It is not a list of schools or retreats. You will find no ranking, no review and no recommendation of any centre, teacher or hotel, and that is deliberate. It is built on three promises.

First, practical facts are checked and dated. Course schedules, application windows, opening hours, festival dates and travel advice change. Every practical fact here was checked online on **21 October 2026** against the most official source we could find, listed in the last chapter. Where we found only unofficial information, we say so and tell you where to confirm. Where we could not verify something, we left it out.

Second, no invented experiences. No testimonials, no "when I sat at Dhamma Giri" stories, no reviews. A legend is called a legend; a historical date comes with its source.

Third, the sacred is treated as sacred. Dhamma Giri is a place of work in silence, Trimbakeshwar is a living jyotirliṅga, Alandi is the goal of a pilgrimage that has walked for centuries. This guide explains the customs so that you can be present without causing offence, and writes Sanskrit, Pali and Marathi words in Devanagari with IAST.

> **This guide informs; it does not replace official advice.**
>
> Read your own government's travel advice for India, check the official Indian e-Visa site and the official course pages yourself, and see a travel health professional. The UK FCDO lists **112** as India's national emergency number and **100** for the police (updated 7 October 2026). A Vipassana course is not a substitute for medical or psychiatric treatment: the organisers themselves say so.

How to read the words in this book

Three languages meet here. **Marathi**, written in Devanagari, is the language of the state, of its saints and of its street signs. **Pali** is the language of the Buddhist texts used in Vipassana courses: vipassanā, ānāpāna, sīla. **Sanskrit** is the language of the temples and of yoga's classical texts: vipaśyanā, dhyāna, jyotirliṅga. Words are given in Devanagari with IAST:

IAST	Sounds roughly like	Example
ā, ī, ū	long a, ee, oo	ānāpāna
ṛ	a short "ri"	Kṛṣṇa
ś, ṣ	"sh" (two kinds)	Śiva, vipaśyanā
c	"ch" as in church	citta
ṭ, ḍ, ṇ	tongue curled back	Pāṇḍava
ñ	"ny"	jñāna

Marathi names on maps follow English habits: Dnyaneshwar for Jñāneśvar, Trimbak for Tryambak.

How to use this book

If you are thinking of a Vipassana course, start with Chapters 2 and 3, then Chapter 10 for the weather. If your dates fall in 2027, read Chapter 5 on the Kumbh before booking anything. If you are an Iyengar student or want yoga postures with your trip, Chapters 6 and 7 cover Lonavala and Pune. Chapters 11 to 14 are the practical heart; Chapters 17 and 18 give the checklists and the Marathi phrases.

Chapter 1. Maharashtra's sacred geography

The Sahyadri and the Deccan

The spine of western Maharashtra is the **Sahyadri**, the range that geographers call the Western Ghats. On the west, it falls steeply to the narrow Konkan coast and Mumbai; on the east, it slopes gently into the Deccan plateau. Igatpuri, at about 600 m, and Lonavala, at about 620 m, both sit on the crest of this escarpment, on the two main railway lines out of Mumbai: Igatpuri at the head of the Thal Ghat towards Nashik, Lonavala on the line to Pune (Wikipedia, Igatpuri railway station; Lonavala). That position explains much about them: hill towns where the monsoon clouds break first, cool compared with the coast, and reachable from Mumbai by train in a few hours.

The Godavari

The **Godavari**, the longest river of peninsular India, rises at Trimbakeshwar, below the Brahmagiri hill, in Nashik district. The Shri Trimbakeshwar Devasthan Trust describes the town as an ancient pilgrim centre at the source of the Godavari and the abode of one of the twelve jyotirliṅgas (official site, read 21 October 2026). Flowing east past Nashik, the river carries much of the region's sacred memory: Panchavati, where the Rāmāyaṇa places Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa during their exile, and the bathing tank of Ramkund, where the Kumbh's processions reach the water.

Saints and yogis of the Marathi country

Maharashtra's own devotional tradition is that of the **Vārkarī** saints, devotees of Viṭṭhala of Pandharpur, and of the **Nātha** yogis who preceded and inspired them. Its most loved figure is **Sant Dnyaneshwar** (Jñāneśvar), born, by the more accepted tradition, in 1275, who entered sañjīvana samādhi at Alandi in 1296. The date of his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, the Dnyaneshwari, 1290 CE, is undisputed (Wikipedia, Dnyaneshwar). He and his siblings were initiated into the Nātha tradition of yogis. Chapter 7 returns to him.

Buddhist Maharashtra

Long before the saints, the Western Ghats were lined with **Buddhist cave monasteries**, cut into the basalt along the trade routes between the coast and the plateau: Karla and Bhaja near Lonavala, the Trirashmi (Pandavleni) caves near Nashik, Ajanta and Ellora further east. Their halls, carved two thousand years ago, are the physical memory of a time when monks sat in meditation on these same hills. Dhamma Giri, which teaches a meditation the Buddha is said to have taught, stands in that long line.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 34 pages.

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