

An appointment with peace

Lush green hills, vineyards, and royal palaces — Phaltan is a place to have a relaxed time



Ram Mandir next to the Rajwada

JULI EKLAHARE

features@sakaalimes.com
@julieklahare

Just a two-hour drive from Pune took us to Phaltan, once a princely Maratha state in Satara district. We had started in the morning and we thoroughly enjoyed the pleasant journey as we left behind the crowded cityscape and found ourselves in the midst of serene green surrounding, filled with fields, birds and flowers.

We arrived at our hotel, and after lunch and rest, headed for an outing in the evening. After about an hour's journey from the hotel, crossing several villages, we stopped, right below a gigantic windmill. Many such windmills are nestled in the lush green hills dotting Phaltan. The one we made a stopover at must have been hundreds of feet above us, and we felt like midgets under it.

Eating yummy goodies and snacks from our picnic basket in peace with the cool breeze blowing, we watched the sunset there. It was a feeling beyond words. It was only when the weather started getting colder that we decided to head back to the hotel.

GRAPEVINE HAS IT...

The following day, we woke up to a bright day. Around 11 am, we set out to explore some grape farms. Spread across 12 acres of farm were a variety of green and purple grape vines. We learnt that these grapes go to the wine industry, however, the sugar content needs to be measured. It is measured in drips, and grapes with 14 drips of sugar content are approved. We also gathered that Phaltan is a city with scarce rainfall, so drip irrigation is used to water the grapevines, while sugarcane waste is used to cover the soil, which acts as organic manure and also protects the water from getting evaporated.

After having our fill with the juicy grapes, we headed back to the hotel.

ROYAL TOUCH

The following morning was our last in Phaltan. We spent it visiting the Rajwada Palace, the maternal home of Sai Bai, the first wife of Shivaji Maharaj. Many Bollywood movies have been shot there. The Rajwada is gigantic and striking. Entering the palace, we get to see a huge courtyard, which opens to rooms on the top — from dining rooms to lounges, all of them incredibly big. What's more, each and every room still has the royal touch and antique feel. Grand chandeliers, furniture with intricate wooden work, golden-framed portraits have been preserved in the palace. The descendants of the royal family do not live there but visit once in a while.

Phaltan is one of those places that gave us a rustic experience. It's a perfect place to go and spend some relaxing time with your-



Windmills at Phaltan