

Ellora Caves

Ellora Caves is one of the world's largest rock-hewn monastic-temple complexes. There are 34 caves, which were excavated from the hills' vertical face. It is almost 100 kilometres from the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra's Sahyadri range.

The short form of the old name Elloorpuram is Ellora, sometimes known as Verul or Elura. [12] The older form of the word has been discovered in historical references such as the Baroda inscription of 812 CE, which acknowledges "the greatness of this edifice" and that "this great edifice was built on a hill by Krishnaraja at Elapura," with the edifice in question being the Kailasa temple.

These caverns were built by numerous guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu between the 5th and 11th centuries A.D. (they are older than the Ajanta Caves).

The caverns have a natural variety of themes and architectural styles. In 1983, the Ellora caves were declared UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Kailasa (Kailasanatha; cave 16) is the most impressive of the cave temples, named after the Hindu god Shiva's residence on a mountain in the Kailasa Range of the Himalayas.

CAVE ARCHITECTURE –

There are 12 Mahayana Buddhist caves (caves 1–12), 17 Hindu caves (caves 13–29), and 5 Jain caves among these (caves 30–34). The Ellora Caves are not only a one-of-a-kind artistic marvel, but they also embody the spirit of tolerance that characterised ancient India, with sanctuaries dedicated to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.



BUDDHIST MONUMENTS [CAVE 1- 12]

Only one of the 12 caverns is a prayer hall (chaitya griha), with the rest being monasteries.

Cave 5 is unusual in that it is built like a hall with two parallel refectory benches in the centre and a Buddha statue in the back. Only two Buddhist caves in India are Cave 5 of Ellora and Cave 11 of the Kanheri caves.

[Vishvakarma Cave – Seated Buddha in preaching position \(vyakhyana mudra\)](#)

In Ellora, this is the lone chaitya-griya.

Carpenter's Cave gets its name from the artistic polish that gives the rock the appearance of wooden beams.

It was built in the same manner as Caves 19 and 26.

THE HINDU MONUMENTS: CAVES 13–29

The Hindu caves were built in two phases during the Kalachuris period, from the mid-sixth to the end of the eighth centuries. Early in the sixth century, nine cave temples were discovered, followed by four more caves (caves 17–29). Caves 28, 27, and 19 were dug first, followed by Caves 29 and 21, which were excavated concurrently with Caves 20 and 26. The caves 17 and 28 were the latest to be begun.

The subsequent caves, 14, 15, and 16, were built during the Rashtrakuta period, with some dating from the eighth to tenth century. Caves 14 and 15 were the first to be built, with Cave 16, the world's largest monolith, being the last to be completed. With the help of King Krishna I, these caverns were built in the eighth century.

[Dhumar Lena, Cave 29](#)

Cave 29, also known as Dhumar Lena, is one of Ellora's earliest and greatest excavations. The "Vale Ganga" a natural waterfall that was integrated into the monument, was the focal point of early Hindu temple construction in the cave.

The waterfall may be seen from a rock carved balcony to the south, and is said to be "falling over great Shiva's brow" during monsoon season. The carvings in this cave are greater than life size, however they are "corpulent, stumpy with disproportionate limbs" according to author Dhavalikar, as compared to those seen in other Ellora caves.

These early caves were generally devoted to the Hindu god Shiva. A rock-cut linga-yoni within the shrine's centre are a common element of these cave temples.

[The Dashavatara: Cave 15](#)

Another notable excavation, the Dashavatara temple, or Cave 15, was finished sometime after Cave 14. (Ravan ki Khai, Hindu). Cave 15 comprises cells and a layout plan that are comparable to Buddhist Caves 11 and 12, implying that it was intended to be a Buddhist cave; yet, non-Buddhist features such as a Nrtya Mandapa (an Indian classical dance pavilion) near its entrance suggested differently.

Hindu imagery have been discovered in Buddhist Cave 11 and many Hindu deities have been introduced into Buddhist caves around the region, according to James Harle. This similarity in Buddhist and Hindu cave designs could be owing to the sites being worked on by the same architects and artisans, or it could be because a planned Buddhist cave was transformed into a Hindu monument.

[Rameshwar temple, Cave 21](#)

Cave 21, also known as Rameshwar Lena, is another early excavation that the Kalachuri dynasty is credited with building. The cave was finished before the Rashtrakuta dynasty ascended to power, which went on to construct the caves at Ellora.

Although the cave has works that are comparable to those found in other Ellora caves, it also contains some unique pieces, such as those representing goddess Parvati's pursuit of Shiva. Other caves feature

carvings representing Parvati and Shiva at leisure, Parvati's wedding to Shiva, Shiva dancing, and Kartikeya (Skanda). The Sapta Matrika, the seven mother goddesses of Hinduism's Shakti tradition, are also prominently shown in the cave, flanked on either side by Ganesha and Shiva.

Other goddesses significant to Shakti tradition, such as the Durga, can be found inside the temple. Large sculptures of the goddesses Ganga and Yamuna flank the entrance to Cave 21, representing the two major Himalayan rivers and their significance to Indian culture.

Kailashnath Temple [CAVE 16] –

This temple was built in the middle of the eighth century AD and is attributed to Krishna I, a Rashtrakuta ruler. This temple is known around the world for being the world's largest single monolithic excavation.

Pallava and Chalukya styles may be seen in the temple building. This fusion is the result of the impact of Pattadakal's Virupaksha temple (Chalukyan temple) and Kanchi's Kailasa temple (Pallave temple). Though it is important to note, Kailash temple is not an exact replica of these structures.

Although there are sculptures from Vaishnavism, the temple is primarily a Shaivite temple.

The main shrine, the entrance gateway, an intermediate shrine for Nandi, and the mandapa that surrounds the courtyard are the four sections of the temple.

JAIN MONUMENTS [CAVE 30- 34]-

The Digambara sect owns these caverns. The representation of twenty-four Jinas is the focal point of the Jain caves (spiritual conquerors who have gained liberation from the endless cycle of rebirths). Yakshas, yakshis, and human worshippers are represented alongside them.

The Chhota Kailash (cave 30), the Indra Sabha (cave 32), and the Jagannath Sabha are the most notable Jain shrines (cave 33).

The Jain Ellora caves have some of the earliest Samavasarana images among their devotional carvings. Jains are particularly interested in Samavasarana because it is a hall where the Tirthankara lectures after acquiring Kevala Jnana (liberating omniscience).



ELLORA CAVE PAINTINGS

Between the eighth and tenth centuries A.D., a number of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples were excavated from the living rock at Ellora.

It is a complex of 34 caves located about 100 kilometres from Ajanta caves in Maharashtra's Sahyadri hills — 17 Brahmanical, 12 Buddhist, and 5 Jain caves.

Various guilds from Vidarbha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu created these series of caverns between the fifth and eleventh centuries CE.

The Kailashnath Temple is the most magnificent of all, as it is a free-standing monolith with various fragments of painting on the ceilings of different areas of the temple. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was built under the patronage of Rashtrakuta monarch Krishna I.

Vishwakarma Cave, or carpenter's cave, is a Buddhist Chaitya cave where Buddha is seated in Vyakhyana Mudra and a Bodhi tree is engraved at his back.

The theme of Cave No. 14 is "Raavankikhai."

Dashavatara Temple is in Cave No. 15.

Indra Sabha (Cave 32) and Jagannath Sabha are two well-known Jain caves (Cave 33).