



RAJASTHAN

JAANE KYA DIKH JAAYE!



## MOUNT ABU - A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HILLS



The Verdant oasis lying amidst lush forested hills, Mount Abu, perched on the highest peaks of Aravalis, in the state of Rajasthan.

Considered to be one of the most popular hill retreats in India, this hill town has an interesting legend. According to it "Abu" stands for the son of Himalayas. It derives its name from "Arbuda", the powerful serpent who rescued "Nandi" (The sacred bull of Lord Shiva) from a chasm.

Besides being a picturesque summer resort, Mount Abu is a popular pilgrimage centre, dotted with temples and shrines of different religions. A visit to this holy hill resort makes one realize that Mount Abu is a "Set designed by God".

The God, it is believed, dug out the lake at Mount Abu using their nails, hence its name, Nakki Lake.

Dedicated to the Jain Saints or Tirthankars, the Dilwara Temples of Mount Abu are a religious sanctuary where the beauty of the carving manages to induce a feeling of tranquillity. The surfaces of the walls, and arches and brackets and pillars are carved to create a lace-like effect yet no two pillars are alike; such was the vision of the sculptors who worked on them.

In the year 1822, Col. Todd, while passing through Mount Abu visited Dilwara. In Col. Todd's words: "This sacred spot is a concentration of wonders. Dilwara is a contraction of Dewulwara - The place or region of temples - a term aptly applied to the site of this numerous groups, from which I select two of the most remarkable temples of Rishabdeva andParasnath.

The shrine sacred to Rishabdeva is the most superb of all the temples of India, and there is not an edifice besides the Taj that can approach it. The pen is incompetent to describe the exuberant beauties of this proud monument."

About a mile from Dilwara and more than half way up a lofty peak, upon the verge of a deep cleft in the rock, stands the temple of the tutelary Goddess of Abu - Arbudha Mata.

Achalgarh, the majestic fort, built by Rana Kumbha of Mewar in the 14th century houses some magnificent temples such as Achleshwar Mahadev (1412 A.D.) and Kantinath Jain Temple (1513 A.D.).

Many sages and seers had their retreat on Mount Abu, the most famous being sage Vashistha. He performed a "Yagna" or magic fire from which were born the Agnikula Clans of Chauhans, Solankis, Parmars and Pratihars. A natural spring that flows through a sculpted cow's head, gives the shrine the name of Gaumukh Temple (Vashistha's Ashram).

Situated near Nakki Lake, the temple of Raghunathji is dedicated to Lord Rama and has a beautiful image of deity that was placed here in 14th Century AD.

Known as the saint's pinnacle, Gurushikhar, is the highest peak of the Aravallis rising up to 1772 meters above sea level. A little distance down below, is a wooden frame, which has Gujarati inscription dating back to 1411 A.D. The presence of St. Lawrence Church, St. Xaviers Church and a Gurudwara in Mount Abu, makes it a perfect destination to feel the omnipresence of God in all forms of religions.

A visit to Mount Abu is undoubtedly a pilgrimage to the "Hills of God"