

# Cave Tourism in the Heart of India: A Study of Madhya Pradesh

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## Abstract

Because of its intrinsic natural characteristics, caves have the potential to lure different type of tourists. They can primarily be developed around the world as a resource for income generation and developing local communities. Tourists visit caves for various purposes like education / research, socialization, adventure, science. Caves can be important for tourism if properly harnessed as it will boost the local community's social and economic well-being and also the protection of biodiversity and the environment. This paper explores the cave tourism resources of Madhya Pradesh. The study uses secondary data, and descriptively analyses them. Marketing caves as a source of nature tourism can help the government to generate the revenue from tourism as well as help to increase awareness about environmental education, specifically those associated with caves.

**Keywords:** Cave, tourism, development, local community

## 1. Introduction:

Cave tourism is becoming popular nowadays, and can be used to develop tourism. Tourists are attracted to visit cave because of its intrinsic features of the natural environment. According to Rindam (2014) caves are an important part of ecotourism or nature that can draw visitors from various parts of the world and can be a great opportunity for the development of tourism and in return increase the economic growth of its host residents. Natural sceneries like caves are considered to be valuable and fascinating for visitors. Caves are essential elements of a karst network that intervenes in the surface and subsurface of the physical environment and harbouring wildlife by transformation processes (Moretti and Lobo, 2009). Tourist visit caves for various purposes like education, leisure and often adventure, and individuals who enter caves sometimes wear headlamps of battery power and often torch lights. We have so many caves in Madhya Pradesh that have rich tourism growth potential but still lie dormant or untapped. For example, caves of Bhimbetka, caves of Adamgarh, caves of Pandav, caves of Saru Maru, etc. Caves can be important resource to the tourism industry if properly harnessed and developed, as the cultural, social and environmental benefits for the host community would increase rapidly.

Tourism as a commercial activity will bring about improvements to tourism destination in cultural, social and environmental terms.

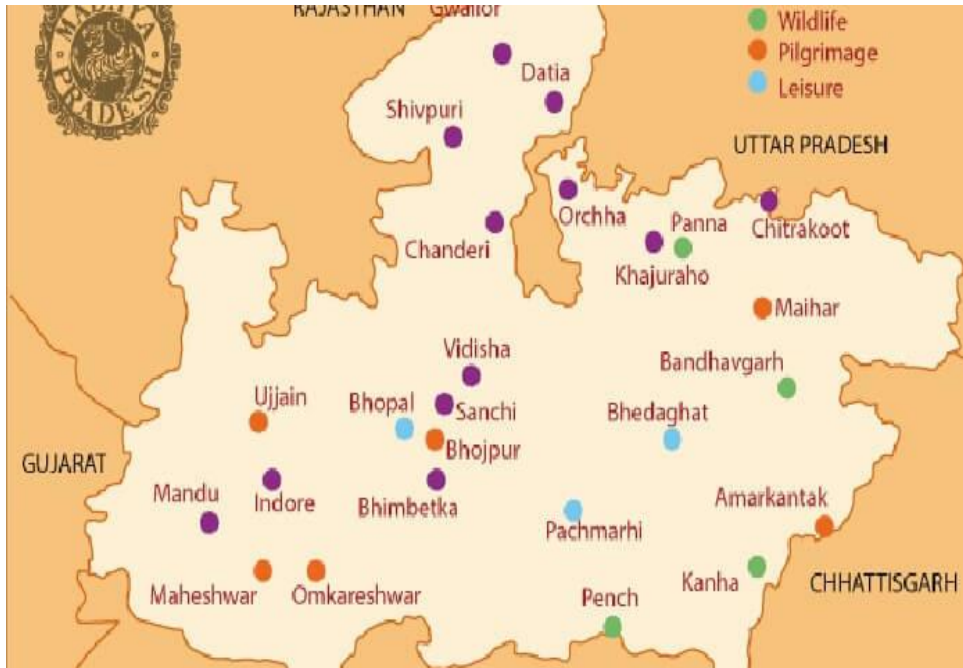
## Objectives:

- 1.To explore cave tourism resources of Madhya Pradesh.
- 2.To discuss the potential of cave tourism in the state.

## 2. Research Method

Data collection instruments used throughout the course of the research are secondary data collection sources. The secondary information sources include textbooks, articles, online documents, conference papers, and unpublished documents. The information collected was used to examine our observations and interpret them.

## 3. The Study Area



**Image Source: Madhya Pradesh Tourism**

Madhya Pradesh, rightly referred to as the 'heart of India,' offers a magnetic mixture of rich heritage, history and culture along with unparalleled natural bounties that grace its domain. Splendid with boundless reserves of wildlife and trees, nature's loving touches have an intoxicating effect over all those who come here, finding rest and serenity. There are countless ancient rock shelters and caves in Madhya Pradesh to spark your imagination in addition to the widely known temples and monuments belonging to the bygone ages. The state's geography is so diverse that in every nook and cranny there are beautiful surprises hidden away, waiting to be discovered. Cave discovery in Madhya Pradesh is a surreal experience, leaving you speechless and satiating your hunger for history as well. Inside the wrought walls, a stunning collection of cave paintings and carvings can be seen, along with countless objects, relics and sculptures reciting fascinating tales of the ages to which they belong. Within the cave walls can be heard the traces of existing cultural standards and practices of prehistoric times. They spin the wheels of time and teleport you to times in which history books have only ever dreamed about or read about. Although not many are seeking the experience of caving in Madhya Pradesh, it carries promises to disclose secrets of which a lucky few are private. They catch the spirit of the ages as ancient as the Stone Age perfectly, and bring them to life vividly.

**4. An Overview of Caves of Madhya Pradesh:****Table 1:**

S.No.	Name of the Caves	Location	Facts
1.	Bhimbetka Caves, Raisen	Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, Bhojpur Raisen, Madhya Pradesh.	It's estimated that some of these spectacular caves date back about 30,000 years! Those monumental caves were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
2.	Adamgarh Caves, Hoshangabad	Adamgarh Hills, Hoshangabad, Hoshangabad District, Madhya Pradesh.	Artefacts dating from the Stone Age, Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods were recovered from the site.
3.	Saru Maru Caves, Sehore	Saru Maru, Pangoraria village, Budhani tehsil, Sehore, Madhya Pradesh.	The site bears two large Ashoka inscriptions, believed to have been carved in by him as a prince during his visit.
4.	Pandav Caves, Pachmarhi	Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.	Pandava brothers and their wife Draupadi had reportedly explored the caves during their exile. They are traceable back as far as the 6th century! The evidence of which can be taken from the adorning inscriptions borne by the interiors. A variety of Buddhist monks have also used them for various purposes, such as meditation.

5.	Bagh Caves, Dhar	Bagh Cave Road, Naingaon, Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.	Of the nine magnificent caves only seven have been preserved. The paintings bear a close resemblance to those of caves in Ajanta.
6.	Udayagiri Caves, Vidisha	Udayagiri Caves, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh.	The caves bear mind-blowing images of the civilizations of Hindu and Jain and intricate carvings reciting various enlightening tales.
7.	Bhartrihari Caves, Ujjain	Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.	Within the caves are statues and sculptures of various Indian deities. A number of religion enthusiasts and devotees, named after the King Bhartrihari, pay homage to these caves.
8.	Bandhavgarh Ancient Caves, Bandhavgarh	Bandhavgarh, Madhya Pradesh.	These are among Madhya Pradesh's oldest natural caves, and can be traced back to the 1st century AD! Badi Gufa is Bandhavgarh's largest cave, and a beautiful place to behold.
9.	Chota Mahadev Cave, Chhindwara	Tamia village, Chhindwara - Pachmarhi Road, Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh	The sweet waters that grace these caves are believed to be medicinal in nature, bordering on miracles.

10.	Lohani Caves & Temple, Mandu	Mandu, Madhya Pradesh.	The caves date from the 11th and 12th centuries AD, and hold Indian deity statues and idols. Many of these caves have deserted, and the historical contents have been transferred to preservation museums
11.	Bharat Neer Cave, Pachmarhi	Hoshangabad District, Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.	Such caves, first excavated in 1930, sprouted many ancient artifacts and microliths catching the attention of archaeologists.
12.	Kajal Rani Cave, Omkareshwar	Omkareshwar, Madhya Pradesh	It is an excellent spot for picnics and weekend getaways, but lovers of history have to brace themselves for some disappointment, as there are not many paintings or carvings available here.
13.	Asthachal Cave Shelters, Pachmarhi	Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh.	You can see the impact of time in the cave's fading paintings, but the aura of historical beauty is as powerful as ever. Remember to employ a guide on the way, as the trails are very tricky.
14.	Chieftain's Cave, Pachmarhi	Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.	Although some of the paintings may

			have faded, their message is expressed beautifully to those who wander here. Built throughout the Stone Age, the echoes of the cave can fascinate tales of past ages.
15.	Sat Kothari Cave, Mandu	Sat Kothari Caves, Dhar, Mandu, Madhya Pradesh.	The caves bear beautiful representation of the oldest architectural forms to be found in India. They were believed to have been used by ascetics as military posts, and after their discovery, as chambers of mediation.
16.	Harper's Cave, Pachmarhi	Hoshangabad district, Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.	The cave shelters exquisite old paintings from several decades ago. The most important is the one where a man is beautifully depicted playing the harp.
17.	Jatashankar Caves, Pachmarhi	Hoshangabad district, Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.	The water that graces the Shiva lingam comes from the Jambu Dwip Stream that merges with the holy Ganga River! This source is also called 'Gupt Ganga.'

#### 4.1 Bhimbetka Caves, Raisen

Bhimbetka Caves is a popular tourist haunt in Bhopal, spanning prehistoric ages. It is home to numerous cave paintings that transmit heavy ancient reverberations. It fosters over 240 rock shelters along with some of the finest cave paintings of prehistoric origin. The greenery of the lush woods encloses the majestic

shapes of rock, doubling the charm of the cellars. Good for lovers of faith and culture, the caves promise to take you back in time to the ancient ages symbolized by the caves.

#### **4.2 Adamgarh Caves, Hoshangabad**

Lodged on the south of Narmada, the Adamgarh Rock Shelters in Hoshangabad foster exquisite rock paintings in red and white, dating back to the Prehistoric ages. The site has also been excavated to unveil artifacts from the Stone Age, along with relics of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. You can also find traces of the past ages in some of the paintings. The rock shelters, situated on Adamgarh Hills, are enveloped by thick forests, enhancing the site's allure. One of Madhya Pradesh's most interesting caves, Adamgarh is the perfect destination for those looking for discovery and history.

#### **4.3 Saru Maru Caves, Sehore**

One of Madhya Pradesh's most thrilling ancient sites, Saru Maru caves mirror ancient cultures of the monastic and Buddhist period. Seated about 100 km from Sanchi, Saru Maru is home to many stupas and caves decorated with striking graffiti, coupled with a couple of Ashoka inscriptions. The great emperor Ashoka and his family are believed to have visited these caves and the inscriptions found here are evidence enough. The site of course commands the attention of numerous archaeologists and researchers from across the world.

#### **4.4 Pandav Caves, Pachmarhi**

Rooted deep in mythology and culture, Pandav Caves is one of Madhya Pradesh's most enticing tourist destinations. It is believed the caves were graced from the Mahabharata epic by the famous Pandava brothers and their wife Draupadi. A family of 5 sandstone caves, each one contains substantial fine carvings. The caves' beautifully preserved beauty is enhanced by its verdant surroundings, luring in patrons of history, along with yearly nature lovers. In Madhya Pradesh witness caving like never before.

#### **4.5 Bagh Caves, Dhar**

A cluster of nine rock-sculpted temples, the Bagh Caves sit in Madhya Pradesh, on the south of Vindhya ranges. Initially these caves served as monasteries for monks, and housed many beautiful paintings and carvings that, while quite worn out by the sands of time, speak fluently of bygone ages. The caves are also thought to have been home to many monks, praised for their beautiful mural paintings. Inside the caves, the vivid, lively paintings beckon many travellers into their boundaries. Lined with many beautiful pillars, it is thought that in the 5th century the caves were sculpted.

#### **4.6 Udayagiri Caves, Vidisha**

The history of Udayagiri Caves, a bunch of more than 20 rock-cut caves, can be traced back to the 5th century. It stands as a witness to the ancient Hindu and Jainistic cultures that flourished in the 5th and 6th centuries. Between Madhya Pradesh's most interesting caves, they house a colossal Narasimha statue, and a lovely Lord Vishnu sculpture with Adishesha. Such caves are very remote, and are often shaded by huge crowds. An excursion into the Udayagiri Caves is bound to rekindle your curiosity and excitement.

#### **4.7 Bhartrihari Caves, Ujjain**

The Bhartrihari Caves, named after the stepbrother of King Vikramaditya, are nestled by the river Shipra whose gurgling waters intensify the appeal. It was assumed that Bhartrihari had severed the troubled relationships with his wife which led him to live a life as a recluse. It was here that he wrote brilliant works such as Shatak Shringar, Nitishatakam, and Shatak Vairagya. Renouncing his lavish lifestyle, he found spirituality within these caves and spent 12 long years meditating there. Sitting about 5 km away from Ujjain, these caves speak through fine sculptures and inscriptions of ancient tales and legends.

#### **4.8 Bandhavgarh Ancient Caves, Bandhavgarh**

You will see several ancient caves and rock shelters nestled within the interiors of Bandhavgarh National Park. In the form of fine inscriptions carved in Brahmi script, they bear embellishments along with

carvings of elephants, horses, and humans. Physically the Badi Gufa, holding nine rooms and several distinctly carved pillars, is the most powerful of all caves. Currently, the cave's regular occupants are wild park animals. Some of the caves may not even be accessible but are beautiful embodiments of Madhya Pradesh's history.

#### **4.9 Chota Mahadev Cave, Chhindwara**

Lodged inside the rustic Tamia village in Chhindwara, Chota Mahadev offers a mystical cave travel experience in Madhya Pradesh. One of the most special experiences to have, is a must a short trek to the Chota Mahadev Caves.

#### **4.10 Lohani Caves & Temple, Mandu**

Resting near Mandu's ruined ruins, Lohani Caves are a group of rock-cut temples and residential dwellings dating back to the 11th century. Excavations include statues of Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati and several other deities uncovered. These artefacts point to the prevalence of Hinduism during the aforementioned periods, primarily Shaivism. Lohani Caves, otherwise devoid of inscriptions and carvings, make Madhya Pradesh a quintessential caving experience.

#### **4.11 Bharat Neer Cave, Pachmarhi**

The Bharat Neer Caver near Pachmarhi is perched at 1000 meters, deep in the heart of Satpura Ranges, among the most beautiful caves in Madhya Pradesh. Those caves were excavated in 1930 as alternatively known as Dorothy Deep, and many pottery pieces and objects from the Microlithic Period were unveiled. In the style of vibrant cave paintings, the walls bear exquisite embellishments. Standing about 1,000 meters above sea level, the caves open to vast, boundless views of the natural bounties surrounding them.

#### **4.12 Kajal Rani Cave, Omkareshwar**

Promising an unforgettable cave experience in Madhya Pradesh, Kajal Rani Cave opens up to unrivalled panoramic views of the boundless greenery and rugged landscape that seems to stretch into infinity. Sitting about 8 km away from the famous Omkareshwar Temple, the Kajal Rani Cave provides the perfect contrast to the opulence of the elegant temples that line the Omkareshwar countryside.

#### **4.13 Asthachal Cave Shelters, Pachmarhi**

The Asthachal Cave Shelters, also called Monte Rosa Caves, are a family of 4 caves housing many paintings that draw a vivid image of the lives and stories they've experienced. The caves, sheltered about 3 km from Reechgarh, lure many enthusiasts of history into its limits to show their fading cave paintings. It's advisable to hire a guide bound by rich greenery and woods to show you the way to the Asthachal Cave Shelters to avoid getting lost.

#### **4.14 Chieftain's Cave, Pachmarhi**

Bedded with beautiful colourful cave paintings keeping alive prehistoric cultures and norms, Chieftain's Cave is one of Madhya Pradesh's more isolated, shaded caves. It lies deep within the heart of the Satpura Ranges, and is hidden in the midst of greenery. The cave's origin dates back to the Stone Age, and it is assumed that hunters used it as shelter. Most of these paintings depict hunting and battle scenes tales in which people can be seen holding swords and armour. Here, the main attraction is the magnificent painting that depicts a battle between two great chieftains.

#### **4.15 Sat Kothari Cave, Mandu**

Sitting on the slopes right outside the Mandu Fort, the Sat Kothari caves are a formation of about seven ancient caves that houses a great linga and yoni. In addition to this, the caves are completely stripped of all other important sculptures and carvings. Although there are not many inscriptions or sculptures to be found here, one of the oldest and rarest in India is the architectural style of the caves. Indeed, the view offered by the caves is breath taking, layered with lush greenery and streams that flow through it.



#### 4.16 Harper's Cave, Pachmarhi

Harper's Cave, a small cave sitting near the Jatashankar caves in Pachmarhi, owes its name to the painting of a man playing the Harp. The caves are home to many other paintings. Lodged in the drapery of verdant hills and trees, curious minds and fanatics of religion or history flock here every year in Madhya Pradesh to undergo cave exploration.

#### 4.17 Jatashankar Caves, Pachmarhi

Among Madhya Pradesh's most sacred caves, the Jatashankar Caves are concealed underneath a gigantic rock whose form resembles the mythological creature Sheshnag. A lovely painting of Lord Shiva marks the mouth of the caves, courtesy of the local villagers. There's nothing but serene silence as the path enters the caves, interrupted rhythmically by the melodious temple bells and the chirping of birds. The cave has a stunning natural lingam, and the roof has many snake carvings over it that ooze mud.

### 5. Employing cave resources of Madhya Pradesh for tourism development

According to the National Geography Society 2002, Cave Tourism preserves or enhances its climate, history, aesthetics, culture and the well-being of its people, the geographical character of a city. This means cave tourism is a multifaceted type of tourism that ranges from a place's historical features, natural reserves, archaeological sites, scenic landscapes, traditional architecture, local cuisine, arts, music, and dance. Around the same time, it is a tourism that preserves the climate and enriches a place's economy. Caves in Madhya Pradesh have excellent geo tourism features with unusual landforms that can draw visitors yet at the same time preserving the residents' climate, cultural heritage and well-being if properly harnessed for the growth of tourism. Local residents can be educated to manage the site and will be told about the cave's potential when it is sold as a tourist product to the public. This can also increase their concern about the area's economy and social growth which can be seen as an opportunity to develop the cave for tourism purposes.

### 6. SWOT analysis of cave tourism in Madhya Pradesh

<p><b>Strength:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Significant number of caves are present in the state which can be used as a tool to boost tourism.</li> <li>2. Most of the caves boast rock paintings, sculptures and inscriptions from ancient era, which can lure cultural and heritage tourists as well.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Weakness:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cave tourism is not paid attention in comparison to other forms of tourism. Bhimbetka caves are included in one of the unexplored destinations of India.</li> <li>2. Proper awareness and lack of information to the tourist about these caves.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cave tourism can be introduced as a new form of tourism in state which can attract tourists to the state.</li> <li>2. New job opportunities for local community.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competition with other forms of tourism and other states which provide Cave tourism as major tourism product.</li> <li>2. Cave ecosystems can be harmed.</li> </ol>

With the continuous increasing and changing demand of tourists it is very important that every state should come up with alternate forms of tourism which can satiate these demands. With numerous caves in the state most of which are prehistoric age with various rock cut sculptures, paintings, inscriptions, temples these caves can attract heritage tourists as well along with adventure tourists. Proper advertisement and marketing should be done to make people aware about these new and fascinating tourist attractions. They should be given a chance to see if they can attract tourist and change the scenario along with other forms of tourism. It can be introduced as a new form of tourism which in turn can create job opportunities for local communities. The main cause of concern in cave tourism is that it should be maintained and channelled properly otherwise it can harm cave ecosystems. More tourists can destroy the site so there should be proper do's and don't signs at the sight. Both tourists and locals should be educated to take care of tourism activity at the site. The state can have quite problem in promoting cave tourism as other states like Maharashtra and Meghalaya are famous for cave tourism. A well-planned strategy can help to overcome the same.

## 7. Conclusion

The development of Madhya Pradesh cave tourism would alter the community's economic structure and will be a major source of capital and income for local people, if the tourism is properly planned, developed and managed. The advancement of cave tourism will generate job opportunities, earn foreign exchange, yield returns on investment for developing economies, bring infrastructural growth and boost the local people's living standards. The main aim of this paper is to disseminate information about the uniqueness of Madhya Pradesh caves to the local community as well as to foreign tourists. The special qualities or uniqueness of caves can become the foundation of their ability as a natural asset to be elevated to the state as a major tourism product. It is hoped that with this paper, it will increase public awareness about how important it is to preserve environmental heritage, especially the caves so that they can persist as an abundant resource for the future generations of Considering the competition faced by tourism destinations that ever increase within the economy, both locally and globally, the various cave's potential as a natural tourism asset in Madhya Pradesh must be seen and promoted from an angle of its uniqueness.

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