

## Trek to Sandhan Valley & Karoli Ghat: My Experience

Sandhan valley – “The Valley of Shadow” is natural wonder that would be only find in Western Ghats . It's a located around 160 KM from Mumbai near Bhandardara Dam (Wislon Dam). The narrow valley is actually water carved route running between 3 mountain ranges with narrowest width around 5 feet while widest is around 14 feet's. The height varies from 60 feet to around 220 feet's.

Same the name suggest the place is also referred as valley of shadow as this placed barely gets direct sunlight for not more than few minutes . Due to lack of sunlight – you will hardly find any vegetation in this narrow valley. It's filled with water for almost half of the year.

The ideal time to visit is starting Nov month to May while if I would have to say – the best time of around Dec end to Jan/Feb end where in you could experience the beauty of nature in addition to serene surrounding marked by mighty peaks like Kalsubai (highest peak in Maharashtra) , Alang , Madan & Kulang along with mountain with hallow window as it's called - Ratangad and the Ajoba peak on the western side.

The place is fantastic with deep narrow rock floored ravine between the two high walls of mountain range, dense forest around the area with beautiful Dams around .

The recommended route would be via Shendi (Bhandardara Dam – Gathghar Dam) reaching the base village of Samrad – a tiny hamlet of around 400-500 people. This is last motorable point when you come either from Mumbai/Nasik . If you happen to come from Pune side then you could take route via Rajur-Akole to reach this place.

The Sandhan valley if around 2.5 KM in length with 3 water pools / ponds . Min water level would be around 3 feet to max of 5 feet if you happen to visit in Dec/Jan. If you wish to trek the full length of the valley then you would be sure to be across these water ponds and carry some dry clothes in water proof plastic bag to 'change' as its quite cold out there if you continue with wet clothes.

At the end of valley you get magnificent view of high cliffs & deep valleys. You will find Ajoba peak on your left and Karoli Ghat decent route on your right. To reach up to this point you don't need any trekking equipment but to continue the trek and decent via mountain path to reach lower foot hill near Ajoba peak (Dhene village) you will require rope and trekking/mountaineering gear. If you are not experienced its advised that you follow the instructions & listen to trek guide and expert at the all times.

Most the people cross the Valley and come back from there they started for the night halt. We carried the tent with us and stayed under the bright & glittering sky in the semi dense jungle ~ 500 mts from starting point of Sandhan valley.

**Travel arrangements** : its advisable to go with professional trekker / guide to this place and good to reach this base village by 11:30 am . After a good supper could around start the valley trek from the village base point and come back before the night falls to put stay in the tent that can be fixed near the area around the mouth of the valley. Have a night stay and then after having good breakfast 'decent' / return journey via Karoli ghat to reach Asangaon railway station if you have come from Mumbai.

Sharing few pic from my trek to Sandhan Valley & decent via Karoli ghat on 26-27<sup>th</sup> Dec 2014.



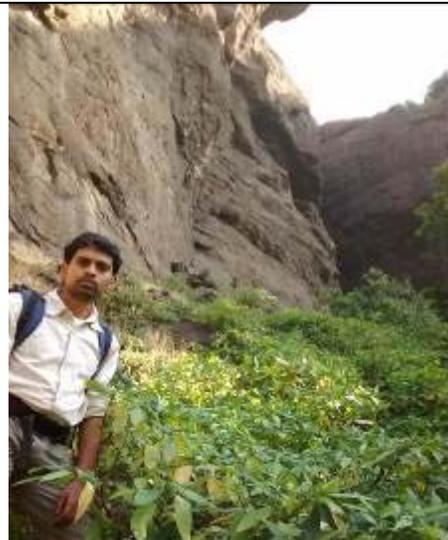
Sandhan Valley (Dec end 2014)



Sandhan Valley (Dec end 2014)



At the entrance of Sandhan Valley



At the last point / "end" of Sandhan valley



View of famous peaks Alang , Madan & Kulang around the base village – Samrad



The view of 'The pinnacle' (on left) and 'Ratangad' (right) from my tent



Our 'tent' of night stay



Me enjoying how to use 'Environment friendly mode of Transport' to carry material used by local tribal population



Me with our trek guide "**Birdy**" in our tent

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Natural beauty around while on route as we decent via Karoli ghat in our return journey to Mumbai

The decent via Karoli ghat would be very good experience to you all as its dense green forest , at times you could get good view of few wild wife & birds with water flowing in the streams at places. This mountainous ~ 9-10 Km path leads to back side of Sandhan valley and then to Dhene village – to town of Dolkhamb from where you will get public transport / vehicles to reach Asangaon railway station via Shahapur town. The route is covered with dense forest & hence its always recommended to me atleast

4-5 + in group if you wish to try this. I being a trekker for more than 8-9 years would say – this is idle way to reach back Mumbai where in would enjoy nature at its best and also this is only trek that I have seen where you don't have to climb at any time- its only decent and really memorable.

Story by Pankaj Gandhi. Mumbai.

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