

MATHERAN HILL STATION



- A PROFILE

By Nitin Vishwanath Sawant, India

Revised by Dr. Frank Wingler, Germany

About Author and Reviser:



Mr. Nitin V.ishwanath Sawant, born in 1971 in Mumbai, but brought up at Matheran since 1975. He got his Matriculation from Vernacular Medium (Marathi School) in Matheran and his Post Graduation (Part I) in Mumbai. Since 1995, he worked as an Accountant in few companies and also gained valuable experience by working in Hospital & Educational Institutes for more than 15 years.

Presently he works in the Horseland Hotel, Matheran. He is active in social and partly in political fields as a resident of Matheran for the last four decades. Since the People of Matheran are entirely depending on Tourism as their only source of income, his basic intention is to contribute further development works for Matheran to the best possible manner and to promote Matheran globally as an easy to reach Hill-Station with its pleasant climate and with various unique as well different interesting features.



Dr. Frank Wingler, born 1937, is a German Author of articles, technical papers and of a book on Rail-Track Engineering and Technology as well on modern Methodologies in Safety, Risk and Human Error Management. He undertakes technical literature works for eminent Indian Railway Consultants and Book Authors on modern worldwide Trends and Developments in Railway Technology and in Safety, Human Error and Risk Management. Since more than 30 years he is a regular visitor of Matheran and is watching the wellbeing of Matheran's pride, the Toy- or Mini-Train.

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1. MAP OF MATHERAN:

Matheran माथेरान

Detailed Map of Matheran; Fig. 1

Hill Station



Fig. 1: Detailed Map of Matheran

2. INTRODUCTION:

Matheran माथेरान is a hill station and a municipal council in Karjat Tahsil in the Raigad District in the Indian State of Maharashtra. It is the smallest hill station in India and it is located on the Western Ghats range at an elevation of around 803 m (2,636 feet) above sea level. It is about 90 km from Mumbai and 120 km from Pune. Matheran's proximity to many metropolitan cities makes it a popular weekend getaway for urban residents.

Matheran, which means "**forest on the forehead**" (of the mountains), is an eco-sensitive region, declared by the [Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India](#). It is Asia's only motor-vehicle free hill station.

There are around 38 designated look-out "**Points**" (viewpoints) in Matheran, including the Panorama Point (**Pict. 18/41**), which provides a 360-degree view of the surrounding area and also of the [Neral](#) town. From this point, the view of sunset and sunrise is dramatic. The Louisa Point (**Pict. 9/39/40**) offers a crystal clear view of the Prabal Fort. The other points are the One Tree Hill Point (**Pict. 12/13**), Heart Point (**Pict. 38**), Monkey Point, Porcupine Point (**Pict. 38**), Rambag Point (**Pict. 15/16**) and more.

To stay in Matheran, there are plenty of hotels and resorts.

There are many Parsi bungalows. Beautiful old British-style architecture is preserved in Matheran. The roads are not tarred and are made of red laterite gravel and earth.

Matheran is very interesting for trekkers, hikers and nature lovers. The One-Tree-Hill Trek, Rambag Trek and Dhodhani Trek are interesting for their bio-diversity, also during monsoon season.

Special features of Matheran Hill Station are deliciousness of chikki and fudge productions (**Pict. 30/31**), collection of pure natural uncontaminated honey (**Pict. 29**), attractive and cheap availability of shoes, chaples and other leather products (**Pict. 32/33**) and as well restaurants offering homely and healthy vegetarian Gujarati food. The honesty and hardworkness habit of the local peoples help to attract tourist.

3. MATHERAN HISTORY:

Matheran Hill station was identified by Hugh Pointz Malet, the then district collector of Thane district on 21st May 1850. He came to Matheran through One Tree Hill Point and returned back to Thane by Rambagh Road. This road was previously also used by the great inspirational Maratha King Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj. So, he named this road as "Shivaji Ladder"; see **Pict. 15**.

Sir H.P. Malet felt in love with Matheran, and again he visited the third time in February 1851 and started to construct a bungalow, which was completed in 1854. This is the first bungalow in Matheran, which is named by him as "The **BYKE** – Bungalow", which was the name of his beloved horse, who was used

by Sir Malet as a “*MOTOR-BYKE*” to travel in Matheran. After that, during the period of 1851 to 1855, again other British officers have constructed different Bungalows, which are as below:

- 1) Sir H. P. Malet - The Byke Bungalow,
- 2) Captain Henry Barr - The Barr House,
- 3) Captain C. Walker - The Walker’s Cottage,
- 4) Sir E.G. Fawcett - The Hermitage Bungalow,
- 5) Sir Arthur Malet - The Stonehenge,
- 6) Lord Elphinstone - The Elphinston Bungalow.

The then Governor of Mumbai, Lord Elphinstone, laid down the initial foundations on the basis of township planning of the development as a future hill station after 1855-56. If Sir H.P Malet was known as the **FATHER of MATHERAN** then Lord Elphinstone was certainly known as **FATHER OF PROSPERITY** in Matheran.

During 1856-57, Captain Ponsonby and Sir Belasis have made the initial survey of the terrain, prepared a geographical map and lay-out for Matheran and submitted it to the Collector of the Thane District. As per this layout one Hospital is constructed in 1857, which is now running by the local Municipal Council in the name of “**B.J. Hospital & Maternity Home**”.

In 1857 also, one water reservoir was constructed. This place is known as “**CHARLOTTE LAKE**” (Pict. 7/8). It was named after Mrs. Charlotte Fuller, the wife of General Fuller R.E. The site of dam was suggested by General Fuller in 1856-57, and he spent for it Rs.5.330/- The dams are all of masonry work and are provided with sluice gates, which are removed at the beginning of the rains and re-fixed in the month of September, so that every monsoon the reservoirs are thoroughly flushed and the supply of fresh and pure water is guaranteed.

In 1858 a **Catholic Church** had been constructed and after that in next three to ten years different offices like: The Superintendent office, Post Office, Telegram Office, Sanatorium, Dharmshala etc., were constructed.

In 1876, **Simpson Tank** was constructed for want of water on the north side of Matheran. The reservoir had been constructed as suggested by Dr. Simpson the then Superintendent. The reservoir bears therefore his name. Work of begun in 1875 and had been completed in 1876 at a cost of Rs.16,260/- . The capacity of the reservoir, which was designed and built by Colonel Maunsell R.E., Executive Engineer, North Konkan, was 416,400 cubic feet. After 1907, its water was being used for the steam locomotives of the Neral- Matheran 21 km mini-train.

For the Muslim population the Mosque (Masjid) was established in 1882.

In 1891, **“The Olympia Race Course”** was initially constructed by the then Superintendent Sir Wilkinson. And subsequently in 1892-93, Major Barry has constructed a 700 diameter circle ground with the help of Rs.1,000/- donation received from Sir Dunjobhoy. The British officers enjoyed sports like: Cricket, horse riding & race, various sports on the ground and used the ground for physical exercises.

In 1905, **Matheran Municipal Council** was established.

Prince Wales of England had visited Matheran, and in his presence, the then Superintendent of Matheran, Captain Forbes, had inaugurated the **“Pandey Play Ground”** on 21st November 1921, which was constructed by Shri. Sorabaji Pandey.

Matheran is a birth place of the famous freedom fighter “Hutatma Veer Bhai Kotwal”, who was born on 01st December 1912. The state Government has built a monument in his memory.

4. MATHERAN MINI-TRAIN:

The Matheran Toy-Train, opened on 22nd March 1907, had been planned and constructed as a 2 ft Narrow-Gauge **TRAMWAY** by the Entrepreneur **ABDUL HUSSEIN**, the son of the business tycoon Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy. The construction of the line was authorized by the Public Works Department Bombay under notification No. 34, dated July 28, 1904. Abdul Hussein floated a company in the title **“MATHERAN STEAM LIGHT TRAMWAY COMPANY (MLR)”**, wholly owned by the Peerbhoy Family.

The line climbs 720 meters from the rail-link of the Bombay-Pune line at Neral with a maximum gradient being 1 in 29 over 21 km with 221 curves of tightness of up to 60 feet radius and with one short **“ONE KISS TUNNEL”** (Pict. 6).

Until 31.03.1948 the **MATHERAN STEAM LIGHT TRAMWAY** had been a private enterprise managed through an agency of the company, when on 01.04.1948 the Matheran Light Railway was taken over by the Indian State. The Toy Train is now managed and run by Central Railway.

The German Manufacturer Orenstein and Koppel engineered and delivered 1905/1907 in two batches 4 three-axle Steam Locomotives with articulated hollow axles managing to negotiate the tight curves. They served until 1955, when they have been replaced by articulated Diesel-hydraulic B+B Locomotives, tailor-build in Germany by **A. Jung**; see **Pict. 5** below.

After two derailments in 2016 the safety of the toy train, once build as a tramway, came under scrutiny. Under modern Safety and Risk Management

Standards the service between Neral and Matheran had to be temporarily closed down. Since then, a lot had been invested in safety related works, in retaining walls, crash, barriers and drains. New coaches with larger windows had been delivered; see **Pict. 6**. In 2018/19 the safety related rail-track works are still going.

Currently CR offers between Aman Lodge and Matheran Station a frequent Shuttle service and between Neral and Matheran daily one pair of train leaving Neral at 6 40 am und returning from Matheran at 15 40 pm.

A “carcass” of Steam Locomotive No. 741 is exposed on a pedestal at the Matheran Station; **Pict. 1**:



Pict. 1: Carcass of Steam Locomotive No. 741 exposed at Matheran Station

The remains of the Locomotive No. 739 found its way to the National Rail Museum in Delhi; **Pict. 2**. No. 740 had been gifted in working condition to the nostalgic Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway in Bedfordshire, England, where it is nowadays still running well restored, preserved, maintained and serviced; **Pict. 3**:



Pict. 2: Steam Locomotive No. 739 at Delhi National Rail Museum



Pict. 3: Steam Locomotive No. 740 at Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway in Bedfordshire, England

No. 738 had been 2013 restored at Parel Workshop of Central Railway. After few nostalgic test-runs on the hill section, it had been found as too difficult to

run this rehabilitated Steam Locomotive with skilled personnel. The forest department did not allow running any more a fired steam Locomotive. The locomotive is now resting exposed to the corrosive weather conditions on a pedestal at the Neral loco-shed; **Pict. 4:**



Pict. 4: Steam Locomotive No. 738 after Rehabilitation exposed to Corrosion on a Pedestal at Neral



Pict. 5: B+B Diesel-hydraulic articulated Locomotive NDM1, build 2013 in Central Railway Loco Workshop, Parel, based on the articulated Engineering of **ARNOLD JUNG LOKOMOTIV-FABRIK**, Germany

To learn more about the history of the Matheran Light Railway, read the book ***MATHERAN LIGHT RAILWAY*** (1904-2003) by R.R. Bhandari, published 2004 by National Rail Museum, New Delhi; <http://www.railmuseum.org>.

The train became an essential factor for the development of Matheran hill station.



Pict. 6: The "*Mini*" or "*Toy*" Train with new "*Vista Cars*" on its first ascent from Neral to Matheran

On the Neral to Matheran route, there are three railway stations, namely:

- 1) Jummapatti, situated 241.81 meters above sea level.
- 2) Waterpipe, situated 484.63 meters above sea level.
- 3) Aman Lodge, situated approx. 758.95 meters above sea level.

5. SOIL AND ROCKS:

Geographically, the rock-types are being solely composed of Deccan trap with inter trappeans of Cretaceous, Eocene and Laterite of still younger age. The parent element is Basalt, which has given rise to secondary rocks, known as laterite. The laterite predominates in the hills and almost cover the hill tops, therefore in the hill region the hard exposed surfaces of the laterite shows red gravelly earth. The soil has a vermicular or pisolitic structure and

contains much water. Over almost the whole hill-top there is little soil cover. The topmost layer of rock is a soft porous iron-clay, through which, by the beginning of the hot season, the whole rainfall has drained.

6. FOREST AND VEGETATION:

The forest type of Matheran is semi evergreen forests. The trees are evergreen, making the plateau forests very dense and even congested in places. The luxuriant growth represents the climatic climax of the forest. The laterite, porous soil along with very heavy rainfall mixed with dense fog for 4-5 has resulted in unique flora rich in diversity on the plateau. The forests show vegetation in top, middle and ground storey. The trees form a cover over large variety of shade loving herbs, climbers, ferns and mosses. The forests of Matheran have attracted many botanists, who have studied the flora of Matheran.

Matheran has a huge number of medicinal plants and herbs. Matheran was declared an **Eco- Sensitive Zone (ESZ)** by the Union Environment Ministry on 4th February 2003 and can be called a health sanatorium in itself. The declaration as ESZ has led to the stoppage of developmental activities and construction of hazardous industries. In the forest area of the Matheran region following are the major trees and plants species found; **Tab. 1.**

Tab. 1: Major Trees and Plants found at Matheran

Sr.	Name in Marathi	Botanical Name
1.	Anjan	Hardwickia Binata
2.	Amba (Mango)	Magifera Indica
3.	Hirda	Terminelia Chebala
4.	Karanj	Pongamia Pinnata
5.	Aain	Terminelia Alata
6.	Umbar	Ficus Racemosa
7.	Vad	Ficus Bengalensis
8.	Behada	Terminalia Bellerica
9.	Jambhul	Syzygium Cumini
10.	Aasana	Bridelia Retusa
11.	Fanas	Artocarpus Integrifolia
12.	Lokhandi	Ixora Nigricans
13.	Nandruk	Ficus Retusa
14.	Taadi Paatra	Borassus Flabellifer

7. CONSERVATIONS:

The vegetation of the area depends on the type and depth of the soil. Due to poor soil depth, the vegetation on the edges of the plateaus is poor. Due to heavy rainfall, dissected hilly terrain and excessive leaching of the soil, the

exposed areas become less fertile and become less moisture retentive, resulting in shallow rooted vegetation.

It is required to plant trees to protect the soil cover from losing its valuable humidity and fertility. The winds are very strong and blow from west or southwest during monsoon, and also dry winds blow during the three months from January to March. These winds tend to shear and bend the plant parts and absorb the moisture from the plants.

8. WILD-LIFE:

The town also has a large monkey population (**Pict. 34/35**). Inside the forest, animals like leopard, barking deer, malabar giant squirrel (**Pict. 36**), fox, wild boar, mongoose are found. As per the observation of the Forest Department following are the wild life found in the forest area of Matheran; **Table 2:**

Tab. 2: Animals found in the Forest Area of Matheran

Sr.	Marathi Name	English Name	Zoological Name
1.	Shekaru	Indian Giant Squirrel	Ratufaindica
2.	Bibata	Leopard / Panther	Pantherapardus
3.	Makad	Monkey	Macacamulatta
4.	Sasa	Rabbit	Oryctolaguscumicalus
5.	Khavlya Manjar	Pangolian	Scaly Anteater
6.	Udmanjar	Civet	Bassariscusastatus
7.	Ranmanjar	Wild Cat	Felissilvestris
8.	Moongoose	Moongoose	----
9.	Sayal	Indian Porcupine	Hystrixindica
10.	Tadas	Hyena	Hyaenabrumea
11.	Ajgar	Indian Python	Pythonmolusus.
12.	Naag	Indian Cobra	NajaNaja
13.	Dhaman	Phyas Mucosa	----
14.	Ghorpad	Agra Monitor Lizard	----
15.	Sarda	Camelion	----

Tab. 3: Birds found in the Forest Area of Matheran; see Pict. 37

Sr.	Marathi Name	English Name	Zoological Name
1.	Kokila	Koel	Eudynamisscolapaclus
2.	Sasana	Ferruginous Hawk	Buteoregalis
3.	Hariyal	Yellow footed green Pigeon	Treronphoenicopetora
4.	Dhanesh	Indian grey Hornbill	Ocyerosbirostris
5.	Khandya	White breasted kingfisher	Halcyon Smyrnesis
6.	Mor	Peacock	Paro Cristatus
7.	Maina	Common Maina	Acridothorestristis
8.	Ghubad	Great horned Owl	Bubo Virginianus
9.	Bulbul	Bulbul	Molpastescufer

9. DEMOGRAPHICS:

As of 2011 India census, Matheran has a total population of 4,393. Spoken Languages include Marathi, Hindi and English; **Tab. 4/5:**

Tab. 4: Population of Matheran

	Male	Female	Total
Census of 1991	2698	2010	4708
Census of 2001	2979	2160	5139
Census of 2011	2248	2145	4393

Tab. 5: Voters of Matheran

Male	Female	Total
1734	1763	3497

10. GEOGRAPHY

Matheran is located at **18.98°N 73.27°E**. It has an average elevation of 803 meters (2,636 feet). Matheran lies in an elevated region, enjoys a cooler and less humid climate, which makes it popular during the summer months. Temperatures range from **32°C (90°F)** to **16°C (61°F)**. Minimum temperature is observed in the month of December and January, which is **13°C**, and maximum temperature is observed in the month of May, which is **33°C**. During last decade, maximum rainfall had been observed during 2006 at around 6498 mm, and in year 2015, minimum rainfall recorded as 2797 mm. Average rainfall is 5000 mm to 5500 mm.

The total area of is 7.2 km². In this area, lands of Government of Maharashtra, Central Railway, Nagarpalika and Forest Department along with leased lands of private owners are situated. In Matheran there are two types of leased lands: Matheran Plots and Bazar Plots; **Tab. 5/6:**

Tab. 6: Plots of Matheran

Sr. No.	Particulars	Matheran Plots	Bazar Plots	Total
1	Total Plots	255	249	504
2	Government Plots	19	33	52
3	Transferred to Matheran Municipal Council	21	39	60
4	Plots allotted for Public Purpose	10	06	16

5	Plots given on lease	202	182	384
6	Lease expired plots	119	180	299

The total area of Matheran is 658.86 hect., among it 412.01 hect area is reserved forest and remaining 246.86 hect is deforested for 514 Matheran and bazaar plots, lake etc. There is no land available for increased population; due to it there are many encroachments for residential purpose on government land. Road length in Matheran is 56 km.

The electricity supply is 365 kW. The water supply and demand are listed in **Tab. 7:**

Tab. 7: Daily Water Supply/Demand

1	From Charlotte Lake (Pict. 7/8)	0.96 M.L.
2	From Ulhas River	0.8 to 10 M.L.
3	During Season Water Requirement	1.6 to 1.8 M.L.

11. INFRASTRUCTURE:

Available Government offices and infrastructures in Matheran Hill Station Council are as below:

1. The Superintendent Office.
2. The Municipal Council Office.
3. The Municipal Council Meeting Hall.
4. Hospital = 8 beds along with 2 ambulance services.
5. Eternity Hospital runs by Zilla Parishad.
6. Police Station.
7. Police wireless relay Center.
8. PWD Rest House.
9. MTDC Rest House.
10. Telephone Exchange Office.
11. Post Office.
12. Forest Office.
13. MSEDCL Office.
14. MJPW Office [Water Supply].
15. Railway Station.
16. Library.
17. Biogas Plant.
18. Sky Observatory with 3D Theatre.
19. Primary Municipal School [Marathi].
20. Pracharya Shantaram Y. Gavankar High School [Marathi].
21. St. Xavier English Medium School.

22. Gardens (Navroji Lord Garden, **Pict. 28**; Paymaster Park).
23. Play Grounds (Olympia Racecourse, Matheran Gymkhana, Pandey Play Ground).
24. Water Supply Scheme from Ulhas River, Charlotte Lake.
Daily requirement of water is 15 lakhs liters, which is fulfilled from the available sources.

12. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION:

Matheran Hill station is about 90 km from Mumbai and 120 km from Pune. Tourists can come to this Hill Station via Central Railway up to Neral Station and also by road (**Pict. 23**) with taxis, bus motor bikes or private cars up to Dasturi car parking.

Matheran's narrow-gauge Mini-Train is available from Neral railway station to reach Matheran hill station. Currently due to technical shortcomings and safety aspects only one pair of train is daily running between Neral and Matheran.

Matheran is the Only Hill Station, which is an “MOTOR-VEHICLE FREE HILL STATION” in Asia, Therefore, for the tourist the major mode of transport are horses, hand pulled rickshaws and a mini-train shuttle service. At Matheran Hill Station 460 horses are registered for this purpose, and 94 hand-pulled rickshaws are available.

Taking into consideration the fire incidence and health care of patients, ambulance and fire vehicle are available.

For telecommunication BSNL, VSNL and TATA towers are erected.

13. HOTELS AND LODGES:

At Matheran Hill station 49 hotels/resorts with 1500 room capacity and private lodgings with 2500 room capacity are available. At Dasturi, a MTDC Rest House is available. And the eating houses are around 105 nos. Matheran is famous for its restaurants offering home-style vegetarian Gujarati food. The tariff of hotels varies as per hotel-standards, demand and season. The harsh monsoon conditions, the transport constraints and the shortage of skilled crafts make it cost-intensive to keep and maintain hotels and resorts in good condition. The tariffs for boarding and lodging are therefore accordingly.

14. LIVELIHOOD:

The permanent residents of Matheran hill station have 'No Agriculture Land'. No industries are permissible in this area. Therefore, the main livelihood of the people of Matheran depends on Tourism. **Tourism is the only source of**

income for livelihood. So business is related with tourism, and is run by the local people are as below:

1. Hotels. 2. Shops. 3. Hawkers. 4. Horses (Pict. 24/25)
5. Hand pulled Rickshaws (**Pict. 25/26**). 6. Coolies/Labour.

15. CHALLENGES:

Following are some of the challenges in front of Matheran Hill Station:

1. Soil erosion.
2. Transportation.
3. Parking for vehicles and stands for horses.
4. Dedicated horse trails.
5. Telecommunication.
6. Landslides.
7. To maintain ecological balance and environment.
8. To maintain forest cover.
9. Health and education.
10. Waste Dumping.
11. Prevention of Littering by Tourists and Visitors

16. SOLUTIONS:

Considering the above challenges, following control and development measures are need to be taken care of with necessity to implement.

1. Major soil erosion control measures are to be done by the Forest Department. Prevention of Hill- and Mud-Slides through erecting of Catch-Drains and by a profound Surface-Water Management are needed.
2. Throughout the year well maintained access road from Neral to Dasturi (**Pict. 23**) and well aligned, drained, stable and smooth cart-road for easy cart and rickshaw transport from Dasturi to Market are essential.
3. Dedicated horse-trails.
4. Ban of horses in the Market area to reduce air-pollution by stirred-up Laterite cum horse-dung dust.
5. Provision of proper and well drained parking places for vehicles at Dasturi and of areas for stables for horses & horses loading.
6. A bimodal road-rail hub/interchange with a short and smooth pedestrian walking lane from taxi-stand, bus-stand and car-park to the rail shuttle service.
7. Telecommunications need to be upgraded.
8. Mud-, Hill- and Land-Slide prevention measures to be taken through MMRDA and Forest Department.

9. Increase of awareness of people and tourists not to litter the beauty of Matheran, to maintain ecology and environment and to protect flora and fauna of the forest area.
10. Establishment of nurseries, plantation and conservation of trees should be done by forest department to maintain forest cover with the help of local peoples.
11. Health and Education facilities need to be strengthened.
12. Global Promotion of Matheran with its unique and different features; see **ANNEXURE, page 40.**

17. SKILL DEVELOPMENTS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES:

Considering the requirements of tourist creation and job opportunities for the young generation in Matheran, following activities should be promoted:

1. Boarding schools.
2. School-excursions.
3. Organised trekking tours; see **Pict. 19/20.**
4. Youth, group and adventure camps.
5. Group workshops, seminars, training courses and conferences.
6. Preparation of handcrafts by self-help groups.

18. ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE:

Matheran had been declared as an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) by the Union Environment Ministry on 4th February 2003 and can be called a health sanatorium in itself. The declaration as ESZ has led to the stoppage of developmental activities and construction of hazardous industries.

19. PLACES OF INTEREST

There are altogether 38 points, two lakes, two parks, four major worship places and a race course to be visited in Matheran. It takes about 3 – 4 days by foot for a complete tour of all the points. Important points are Alexander Pt., Rambag Pt, Little Chowk Pt, Big Chowk Pt, One-Tree Hill Pt (**Pict. 12/13/42/43**), Belvedere Pt, Olympia Race Course, Lords Pt, Charlotte Lake (**Pict. 7/8**), Pisarnath Mahadev Mandir, Celia Pt (a water fall mouth), Echo Pt., Porcupine Pt (Sun-Set Pt) (**Pict. 43**), Panorama Pt (Sun-Rise Pt) (**Pict. 18**), Khandala Pt, Madhavji Garden & Pt, Matheran Railway Station, Louisa Point (**Pict. 9/39/40**), Mayra Point, Pisarnath Temple, Matheran Shiv Mandir. View points like Monkey Pt and Echo Pt are famous for steep cliffs and deep ravines. One day trekking to Vikatgad/Peb Fort (**Pict. 19/20**) is an adventurous experience along the cliffs and deep ravines.

Tab. 8: Important View Points

1	Charlotte Lake; Pict. 7/8	From Market around 1 and 1,5 km distance there is Charlotte Lake, which is a storage of water, and during monsoon it over flows. Beautiful scenery and calm atmosphere can be observed here.
2	Panorama Point; Pict. 18/41	Panorama Point is also an attraction of Matheran; it is on north side having wonderful valleys on east and west, where you can see the beautiful view of sun-rise and sun-set. It gives a close look on the Matheran Railway Hairpin-Curve and the opposite Vikatgad with Pep Fort.
3	Sunset or Porcupine Point; Pict.38	This is also an amazing point to get a view of sun-set in the valley plateau of Prabhal Gadh Jungle.
4	Louisa Point; Pict.9/39/40	This is also one of the important points, It is also known as Lion Head, where we can also get the view of sun-set lying behind the Prabhal Gadh.
5	Echo Point	Echo Point is in the heart of valley, where covered with rocks, which beats the sound, and thus it is called Echo Point. It has a triangular cliff wall from three sides, hence sound is re-bounding with Echo.
6	Chowk Point	This view point is lying on the south; it has a shape like larger rounded place (Chowk). And from this point we can see the small village "Chowk", and also therefore it is called Chowk Point.
7	One-Tree Hill Point; Pict. 12/13/42/43	Where only one tree is on a small hill. Along with it we can view the Morbe Dam Reservoir. If one looks at the isolated cliff from side angle, then it looks like the side face of Chatrapatti Shivaji Maharaj. Matheran was discovered in 1850 by Sir. H.P. Malet by climbing this valley from Chowk village.
8	Garbut Point; Pict. 16	On the way to this view point the entire road is covered with thick forest. The

		attraction of this view point is on one side the valley with a look on Neral and on the other side a look over Commanding Valley on Matheran.
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20. OUTLOOK: PREVAILING TRANSPORT NEEDS

(Comments by F. Wingler):

Despite immense investments since 2005 for infrastructure, safety related works and rolling stocks, the **“Joy and Pride of Maharashtra”**, the **“Toy”** or **“Mini”** Train, originally build in 1904-1907 as a Light Weight Tramway, is currently not in a position to carry Tourists and Visitors in larger numbers up and down between Neral and Matheran. This has technical and safety related underlying factors and reasons. With difficulties and in deficits Indian Railways (IR/CR) manages a frequent Shuttle Service between Aman Lodge near Dasturi and Matheran Railway Station and a rudimentary rail service between Neral and Matheran; see **Pict. 22**.

The shuttle service operates presently with two Diesel powered locomotives in push-pull mode, which is not only fuel wasting and air polluting by exhaustion, but also expensive to operate with the need of a crew of 8 to 10 railway-men. An economic and ecological mode will be definitely a **BATTERY OPERATED** service with modern **LIGHT WEIGHT RAIL CARS**. With modern Lithium type batteries and systems, to recuperate the electric energy on down-gradient runs, rail-car propulsion by battery stored electric energy has a new brake-trough in Europe; see **“Battery Trains ready to roll”** in Railway Gazette INTERNATIONAL, Nov. 2018, Sutton, UK, page 53-56. The cars could be additionally retarded on down-gradient run with a soft working and friction free electric Eddy-Current brake.

The **“Only-and-One”** road access is the tarred automobile Neral-Matheran Ghat road up to Dasturi. From there, goods-transport by horses, coolies & hand-carts, pedestrians and hand-pulled rickshaws have to share a rough & stony, badly managed and drained, unfortified and partially steep lane, which turns in rainy season to a mud-path and during dry season to a dust producing and air polluting connection. This two-step connection between Neral and Matheran via Dasturi is the **Lifeline of Matheran**. The wellbeing and economy are fully dependent on it.

Pedestrians, locals and as well outsiders, use the Aman Lodge-Matheran rail-track as a foot-path and short-cut, what is tolerated despite it is illegal in India to walk on rail tracks. The consequence is that the ballast-bed gets ruined, trampled down and fouled making it impossible to keep a proper alignment of

the rails; see **Pict. 14**. An alternative dedicated pedestrian shortcut route is urgently needed.

Since decades, there is an unfulfilled urgent need, to come with a leveraging action plan for a comprehensive quality drive-up of the automobile-road and of the automobile free cart-lane, the parking and loading areas and of a road-rail interchange hub with short and smooth pedestrian lane.

Horses should be provided with a separate and dedicated horse-trail to avoid air-pollution on the pedestrian routes and to prevent excessive strain and stress on the carpets of the transport lanes.

The historical trail via Rambag should be restored as an alternative route to reach Matheran for trekking groups and for those, who want to climb to Matheran by foot-walk; see **Pict. 31/32**.

Those plans are presently part of the political agenda.

Latest News: The Neral-Matheran Road is currently under reconstruction. The lower section up to Water Pipe is now in good condition. The upper section will be soon fully repaired to allow a smooth and safe drive for taxi, bus, car and motor-bike; **Pict. 6b**:



Pict. 6b: Down-Section of Neral-Matheran Road in healthy condition after Reengineering and Improvement

PICTURE GALLERY



Pict. **7**:
Charlotte Lake
Masonary
Dam's View

Pict. **8**:
Charlotte Lake
Eastside View
after Rainy
Season





Pict. **9**: View of Louisa Point from Landscape Point, near Echo Point



Pict. **10**: **Western Ghats Sahyadri Mountain Range View** from Siliya Point after Rain



Pict. **11**: View from Belverdere Point on Morbe **Dam Reservoir**, Irshal **Gadh** and One-Tree Hill



Pict. **12**: View on One-Tree Hill with Morbe **Dam Reservoir (build 1999)** and Irshal **Gadh** Peak



Pict. 13: Elder View on One-Tree Hill and Irshal Gadh Peak at End of Rainy Season before Morbe Dam Reservoir had been build; View from Bellveder Point



Pict. 14: Pedestrians using Rail-Track as a Short-Cut Trail



Pict. 15: Historical Rambag Trail waiting for Restauration



Pict. 16: View from Rambag Point on Alexander and Garbut Point



Pict. 17: Trekking Route to Peb Fort



Pict. 18: View from Trail to Panorama Point; right Side: Vikatgad with Peb Fort



Pict. 19: Guided Trek to Peb Fort



Pict. 20: Vikatdadh Monsoon Trek



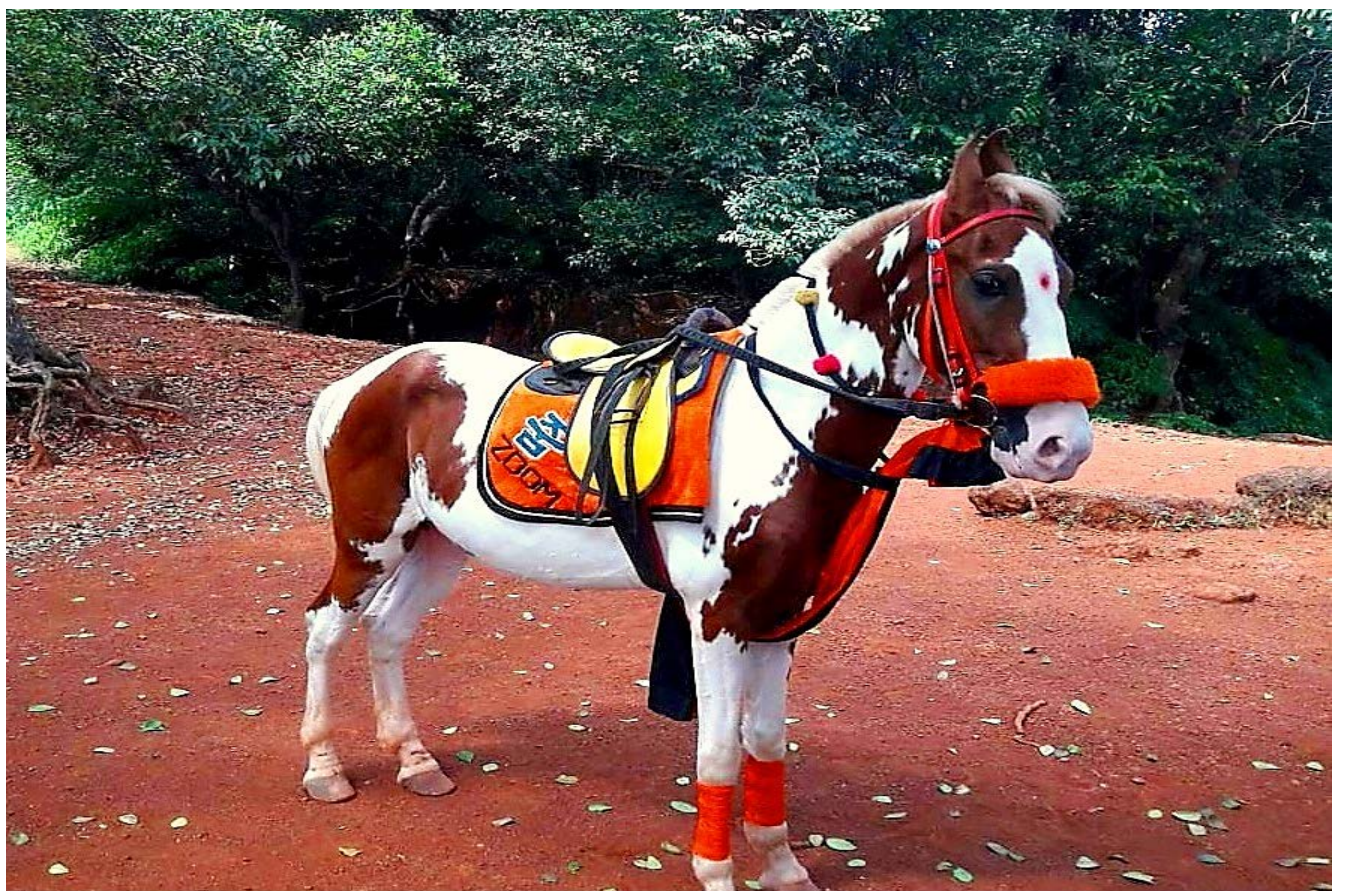
Pict. 22: Toy-Train chuggles from Jummapatti down to Neral with new Dual Pipe Compressed Air-Brake System without the Need of Brake Porters



Pict. 23: Upper Section of the “ONLY-ONE-ROAD” on the Ghat to Matheran under Improvement Works



Pict. **24**: Different Features of Matheran Horses used for Transportation



Pict. **25**: Horse waiting for Customers at Little Chock Point



Pict. **26**: Hand pulled Rickshaws waiting during Monsoon Season near Dasturi Car Park



Pict. **27**: Hand pulled Rickshaw with Children in Summer Season near Kapadia Market **in Motor-Vehicle free Zone**



Pict. **28:** Navroji Lord Garden Entrance; at End of Rainy Season



Pict. **29:** Pure Organic Honey, famous for Matheran



Pict. **30**: Matheran's famous Homemade Chikki Assorties



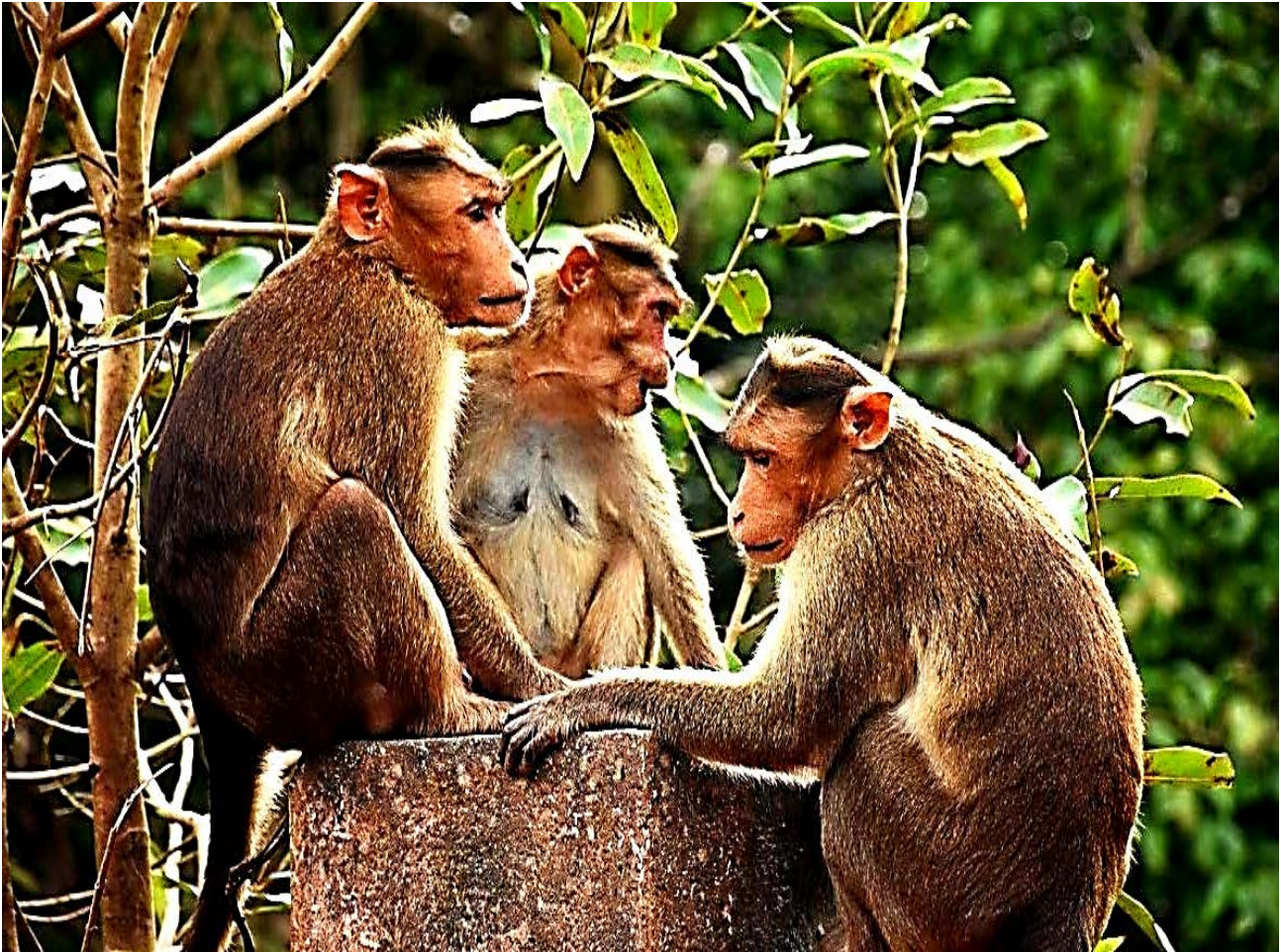
Pict. **31**: Matheran's famous Homemade Chickki



Pict. **32**: Shoes, **Sandals**, Caps and Bags Selling near Lord Navroji Park



Pict. **33**: Varieties of **Sandals**, available at many Shops



Pict. **34**: Monkey Group in waiting Position to catch Eatables



Pict. **35**: Resting Monkey Family Group



Pict. **36**: A Squirrel on a Tree busy with eating a Nut



Pict. **37**: **Blue Flycatcher**

Once Upon A Time



Pict. **38**: Heart and Porcupine Points; photographed in the 1870-ties from Trail **to Panorama Point**; **Photo** by Francis Frith (1822-1898)



Pict. **39**: Louisia Point; **Photo** by Francis Frith (1822-1898)



Pict. 40: Louisia Point; Photo by Francis Frith (1822-1898)



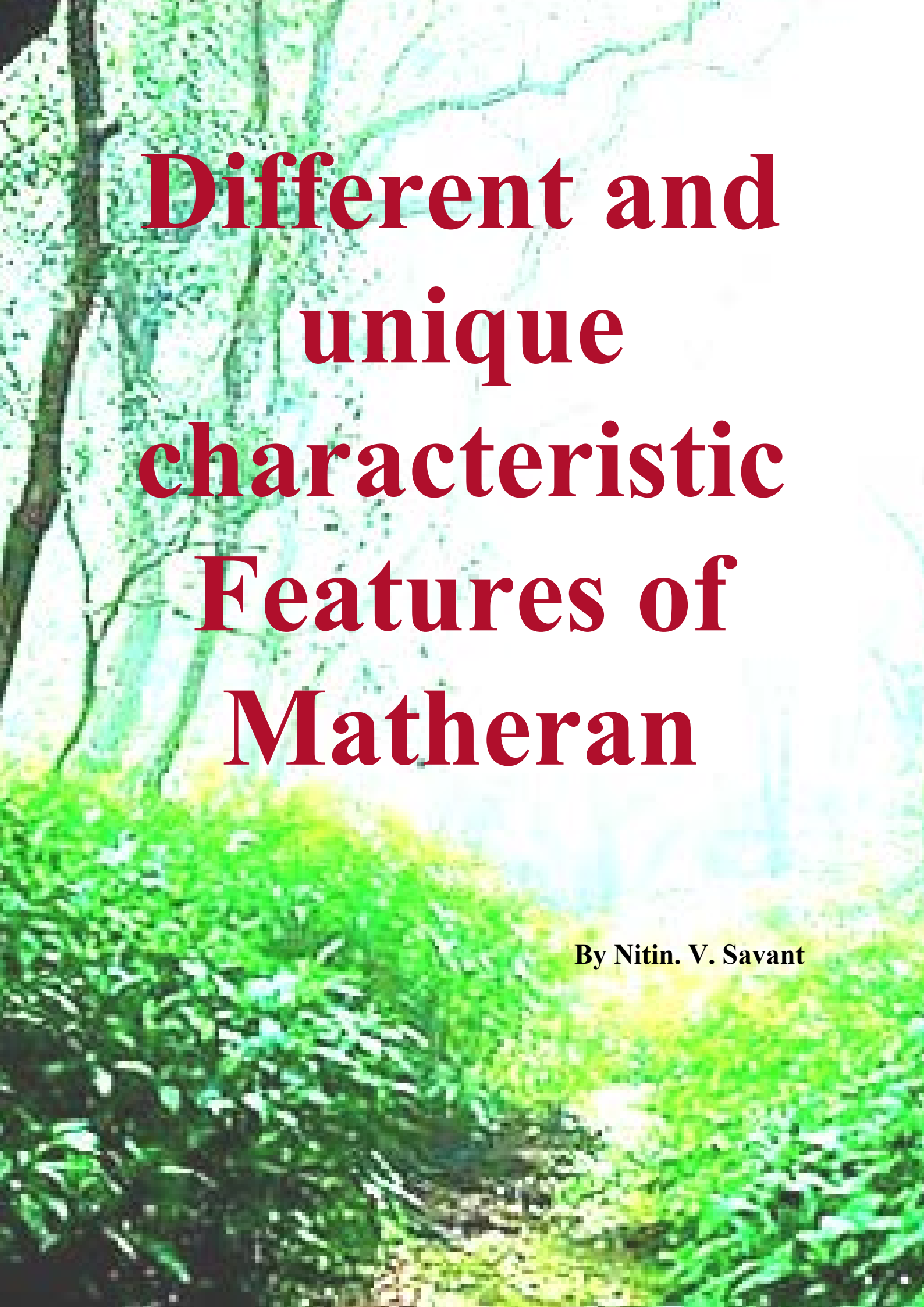
Pict. 41: View from Trail to Panorama Point with View on Bahu Mullin Hills; Photo by Francis Frith (1822-1898)



Pict. 42: View from Chok Point on One-Tree Hill; Photo by Francis Frith (1822-1898)



Pict. 43: Old Photograph of One-Tree Hill from Nigadi Pattichi



Different and unique characteristic Features of Matheran

By Nitin. V. Savant

Different and unique characteristic Features of Matheran in a Nutshell

by Nitin Vishwanath Sawant

- **Nature of Matheran:** Matheran is derived from the two Marathi words, 'MATHA', which means 'Head Top', and 'RAN' means 'Forest'. Hence, it literally means 'Forest cover on the Top of the Hill'. The hilltop of Matheran is covered with evergreen and semi-evergreen dense forest. Any visitor to Matheran, if he keeps his pair of eyes open, will come across several typical trees, little shrubs, wild vegetables and flowering plants. The most common trees are Jamun, Anjani and Kadu-Jambhul. In Matheran one can also find medical herbs.
- **Motor-Vehicle free and Pollution free Destination:** In Matheran cars, motor-bikes and any automobiles are not allowed, and they are banned to enter the village. All the vehicles have to park at Dasturi Naka, which is 3 km outside the main market of Matheran. This is the **uniqueness** of Matheran.
- **Deep evergreen Forest:** The forest eco-system at Matheran is unique and remarkable in many respects. It is of dense and lofty arboreal growth with peculiar blending of evergreen and moist deciduous species and of almost undisturbed natural climatic climax formations. You will find deep evergreen forest at Matheran.
- **Red soil Roads, cool and calm Climate:** In Matheran there is no tarred road. One has to walk on the red soil and laterite rock roads. At Matheran, you will feel relaxed, rested and rejuvenated. Really, this is the effect of the cool and calm atmosphere to be experienced.
- **Matheran is motor-vehicle free, pollution free, natural, Eco-friendly and calm. It is a cool Hill Station, which beats the summer heat to a great extent.**
- **Easy Access by Road or Central Railway Express/Trains near Metropolitan Cities of India:** Matheran is a crown placed in the Sahyandri Hill Ranges; exactly situated in between the Mumbai and Pune metropolitan cities of India, just at a distance of 90 to 100 km. It is seated at 2636 feet above sea level.
- **Birds and Jungle-Fruits of Matheran:**
 - Birds:** Whenever visiting a Point, especially in morning at Seven Points Circle (One-Tree Hill to Alexander] and at Panorama Point, sit in its thick shade and hear the notes of the Cuckoo and the Bulbul and of various other birds, which provide heavenly music to our ears. Matheran shows us numerous varieties of birds, exhibiting different hues, different sizes and different voices, some sweet and some shrill. There are many other birds also, which seem to carry on a conversation with each other, one bird calling and another answering in a different tune.

Fruits: Black-berries called *Jambhuls* in Marathi are abundant. They are deep black in colour, small in size and very sweet in taste. **Matheran's honey** has a reputation of its own. It is found in three or four different varieties. Besides these, mangoes also are obtainable during the season and also jack fruit and smaller black-berries-known as *Karvvand*.

- **Monkeys:** There are numerous monkeys. The female monkeys have a red coloured face. And also there are other species with black face, known as '**VAANAR**'. They are all a very common sight, leaping from tree to tree or climbing the housetops. It is a very funny spectacle to see their females clutching their little ones close under their bellies. Tourist may avoid walking with eatables in hand as there is a chance that a monkey may snatch it away.
- **Horses, Hand pulled Rickshaws are the unique Feature of Matheran:** As vehicles are banned and since everyone has to park their vehicle at Dasturi car parking area, hence, for transportation, apart from a walk, one can hire horses, rickshaw pullers or can travel by the Mini-Train shuttle-services from Aman Lodge Station to Matheran Railway Station (2.5 km). Horses are one of the major means of transport and are known as "**THE BYKE**" of Matheran. **Horse riding is an amazing experience.** You can also take a riding lesson at Olympia Racecourse conducted by horsemen of Matheran. During penultimate weekends of month May, horse races are conducted by the Matheran Youth Social Club (MYSC) for horse riders and tourists.
- **Matheran Toy-Train:** The Matheran Mini-Train or Toy-Train is a 2 ft. narrow gauge railway. The 21 km small railway-line was constructed in the year 1904-1907. This railway is known as *Matheran Toy Train* and also as *Phul Rani*. The travellers can view the full beauty of the Matheran hill region. The 'One Kiss Tunnel' gives an exciting experience for all tourists. Now, daily shuttle services are available between Aman-Lodge and Matheran Station. It is one of the major attractions for children, elders as well for local and foreign tourists.
- **A panoramic Hill Station with 38 Lookout Points:** There are 38 look-out points. About 20 main points are worth a visit. Some of the best peaks and points in Matheran, that offer the best and panoramic views of the hill station, are Panorama (Sunrise) Point, Garbut Point and Louisa Point. Similarly are on the **Twelve-Point-Circle** the points from Echo Point to Porcupine (Sunset) Point. The seven Point Circle starts from Rambag over One-Tree Hill to Charlotte Lake, a scenic water reservoir. The Navroji Lord Park and Paymaster Park along with the **SKY OBSERVATORY**, the first ever project on the Hill Station in India, are also great places to visit and watch along with children and family.
- **Apart from the usual Sightseeing, Matheran also offers Activities such as Hiking, Trekking, Climbing etc.** One-Tree-Hill Trek is gifted with nature's beautifulness and with scenic beauty of Morbe Dam Reservoir. It is comparatively

easy via Tadvadi at Karjat. Similar are the Rambag and Dhodhani Treks, which are also ecological interesting because of bio-diversity.

- **Famous Items for Shopping:** This charming hill station is also a popular shopping destination for tourists. Local Matheran hats, sandals and sweets like chikki and fudge are most popular. The honey available in Matheran is also considered to be very popular. The coloured grass, crystal stones, handmade items and paintings are also popular.
- **Eating Out:** The black coloured crabs (Chimborya), white small mushrooms (Alambi), which are easily available during early monsoon season, are very tasty. Fancy restaurants are not easily available. Try the stalls, the food vendors and the dhabas, who promise authentic Maharashtrian, Gujarati and Punjabi food.
- **Accommodations:** One of the Star Hotels is **Horseland Hotel & Mountain Spa** with luxury AC rooms. It is the one-and-only Hotel with a **waterfall swimming pool**, which offers reasonable packages including tasty veg. & non-veg. food and various daily entertainment activities for the guests. There are several other Budget Hotels, Star rated Hotels and Resorts available for booking at reasonable rates.



Bio-Diversity of Rambag Trail

Layout by Frank A. Wingler