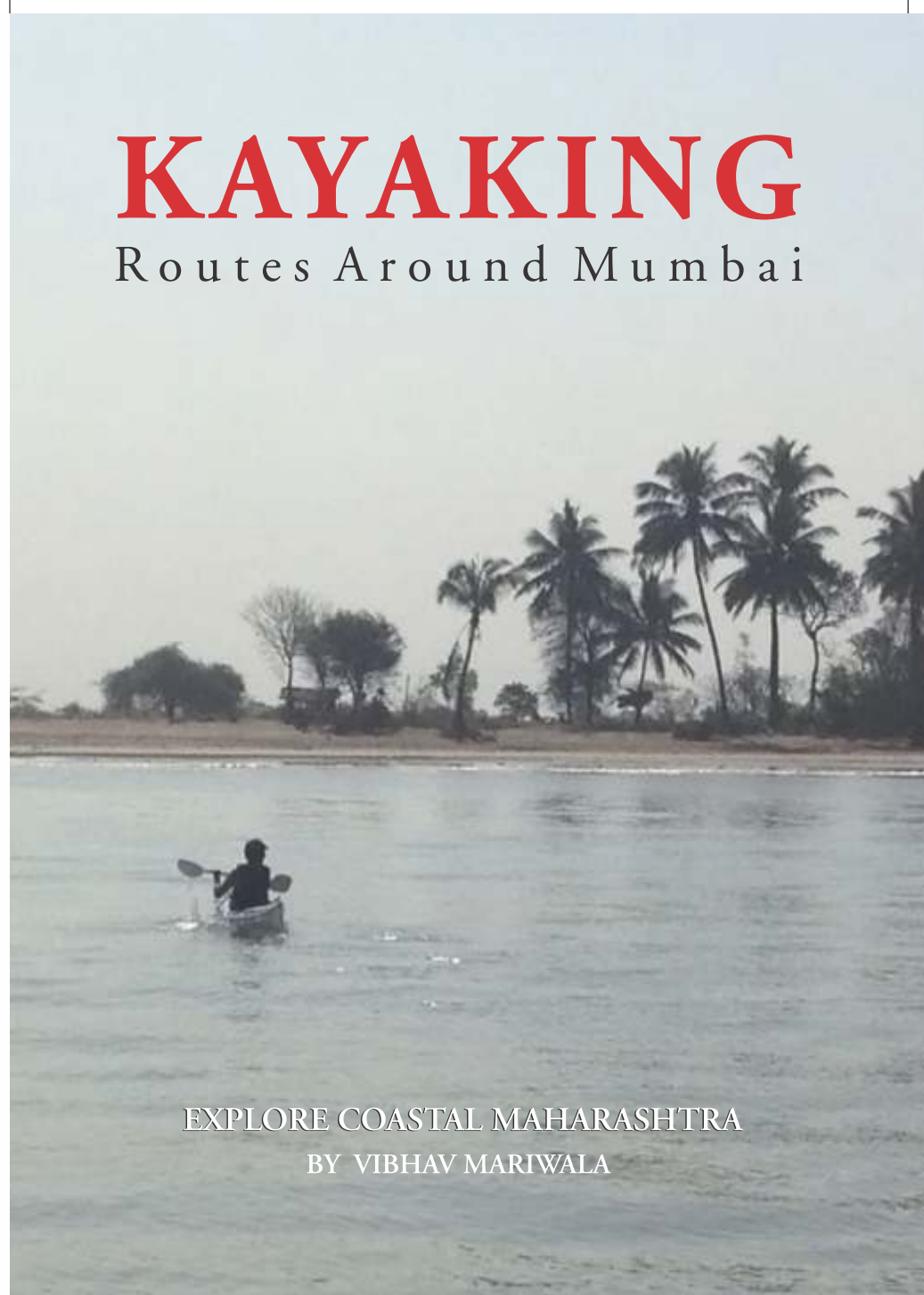


# KAYAKING

Routes Around Mumbai



EXPLORE COASTAL MAHARASHTRA

BY VIBHAV MARIWALA

# KAYAKING

Routes Around Mumbai



If in doubt, paddle out

By Vibhav Mariwala



Kayaking Routes Around Mumbai  
By Vibhav Mariwala

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Dedicated to  
"the ocean, it's beauty  
and to all other kayakers out there"

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## Acknowledgements

This booklet would not have been possible had it not been for my father for teaching and encouraging me to pursue kayaking, and my grandfather for exposing me to the wonders of the ocean,

My mother for helping me design this book,

My brother for supporting me and helping me overcome my fears of the water,

My friends and family for continuously encouraging me to follow my dreams,

Harish Kapadia for writing the foreword of this booklet and for inspiring me to enjoy the outdoors.

Finally, the sea, for helping me discover a side to myself that I would not have otherwise been able to.



## 'A Word From The Hills'

### Foreword By Harish Kapadia

I have lived all my life in Mumbai, along India's west coast, by the Arabian Sea. Paradoxically, like most citizens of this mega city, I am far removed from the waves and deep water. And yet, no one even glancing at the sea through a window or from a balcony can remain unaffected by its beauty, power and vastness.

Sailing in a small yacht in vast sea is a different cup of tea. Decades ago Ravi Mariwala invited me to sail with him. This was much before his son Vibhav, author of this book, was born. As we sailed from Mandava heading towards the Gateway of India, Ravi manoeuvred the small yacht delicately between the giant ships anchored in the harbour. It was a sight to see those huge ships so close from our tiny yacht. Until then, it all seemed good.

Halfway through our trip, Ravi guided the yacht with gusto, and twisted and turned the craft; it was all too scary for me. He was concentrating on the lady sitting across in the boat, his girl friend Paula, later his wife and Vibhav's mother. In that loving attention he forgot that I was in the boat too and all those turns were taken to impress the lady! That was the end of any wishes of sea exploration for me. As we landed on shore, I murmured to myself 'no more'.

As I went for many explorations in the mountains a question always remained in my mind: what it is that a seafarer is attracted to? Sailing in a giant ship for weeks can be troublesome if weather gets rough. In a small yacht or boat that would be a life threatening experience. Why do people do it?, For an adrenalin rush? Fame? But there is no spectator out there to applaud. Speed is immaterial unless one is into racing. I compared yachting to my mountain experiences, which were almost the same. We all wanted to see new lands, see sunsets, experience the vastness of Nature and live a life less ordinary. The spirit to accept challenges from Nature was same in any field of adventure. Be it on the mountains or upon the sea; the real exploration is of self and to discover who we are. The chosen medium is to bring out that spirit.

Many past mountaineers, later in their lives, took to sailing. Bill Tilman, one of the finest mountain explorers, took up sailing in small boat. He sailed from the shores of England to South America. After anchoring the boat those mountaineer-sailors would climb mountains. They thus enjoyed both the mediums. Sir Chris Bonington, the legendary mountaineer, teamed up with Sir Robin Knox-Johnson to sail to Greenland to climb unknown mountains. If Sir Robin, guided the sailing boat, Sir Chris took over command when the mountains of Greenland were climbed. The spirits of sea and mountains were both enjoyed to the fullest- a sense of true

exploration.

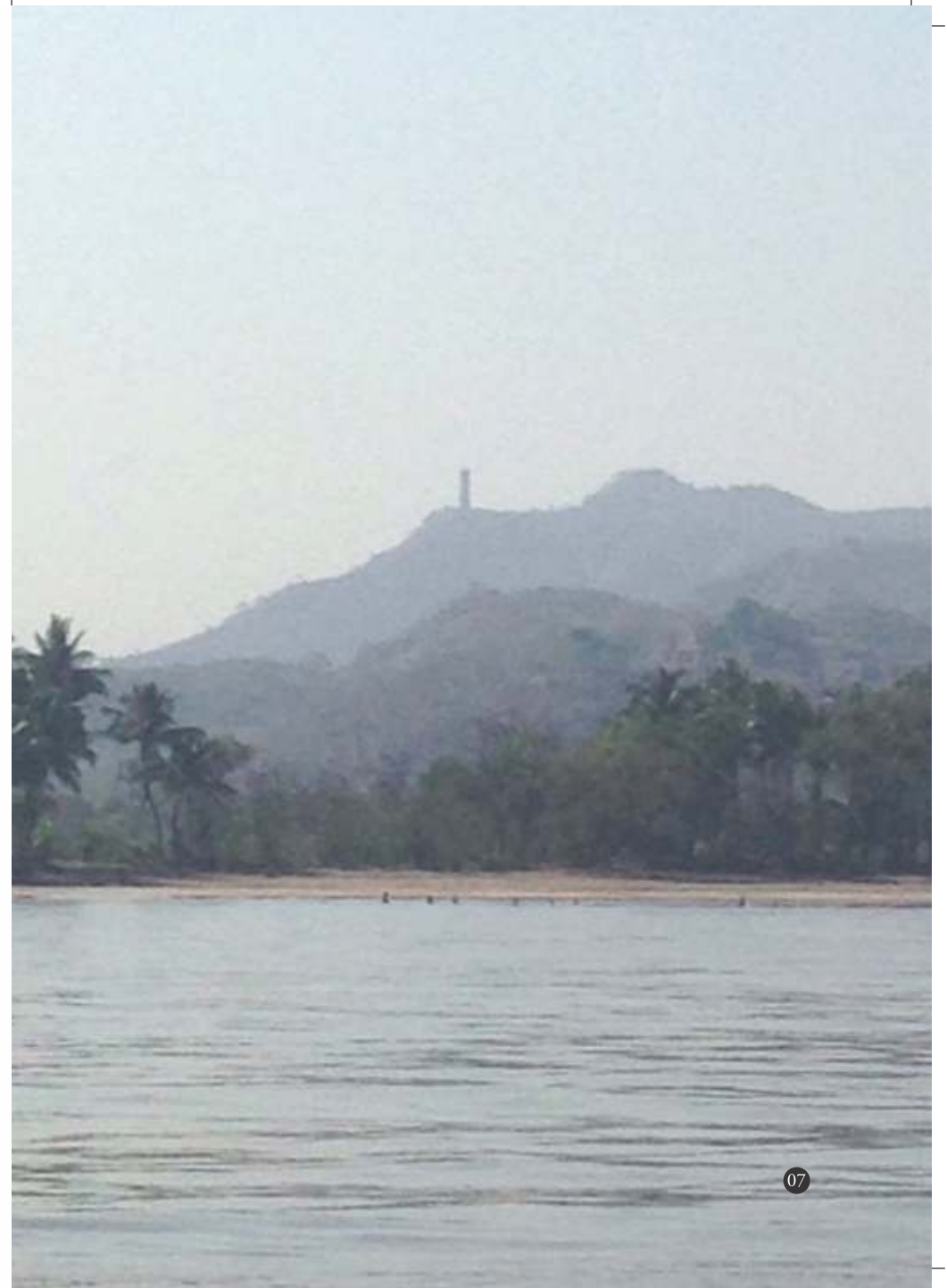
Some may be heard complaining that sailing is a rich person's game; spending on boats, hiring crew and maintenance does not come cheap. But the riches may allow a person to undertake a sport such as this, but the spirit of exploration is his own. When you are in a tiny sail boat, with the vast sea in front of you, a strong sun beating down on you, no water to drink and the proverbial wind is taken off the sail; tell me how does your banker help? It is the spirit of adventure within that will guide and steady a person, be it in mountains or sea.

### About Harish Kapadia

Harish Kapadia is a distinguished Indian mountaineer, explorer and author, who has been trekking for nearly fifty years. His exploration of the Himalayas has opened new routes that were never mapped before. He has been part of many joint international expeditions with some of the most famous mountaineers, like Christian Bonington. Some of his most famous ascents include Devtoli (6788 metres) and Rimo (7385 metres). Recently, he has begun exploring the Siachen Glacier and has worked to introduce a peace park there and draw attention to the environmental problems faced there.

Harish Kapadia's insights and knowledge of Indian Oropolitics has prompted him to publish fifteen books on trekking in the Sahyadris and the Himayalas. He is also the only Indian in the past century to have been presented with the Patron's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographic Society by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth of the United Kingdom.

For further information, please visit his website:  
<http://www.harishkapadia.com/>



## Why do I Kayak?

This booklet is one way that I am trying to promote kayaking, an activity that I am incredibly passionate about.

Kayaking isn't only a sport, but it is a life-long journey. Kayaking has taught me so much and has played a huge part in my life. I've been exposed to the marine and historic beauty of the Konkan Coastline and I've learnt about the region's maritime history. Kayaking allows me to reflect and calms me down.

I've decided to document some of the routes that I have explored around Bombay, because they have had a profound impact on my understanding of local history and environment.

I hope this booklet inspires you to kayak and to have the same experiences that I have had on the water.

Paddle on,

Vibhav Mariwala

## About Kayaking

Kayaking is a sport that involves the use of a kayak to travel across water. A kayak is a low-to-the-water boat that relies on paddles to move. Although most professional kayaks hold one person, there are a few that allow two people to paddle together.

There are two major forms of kayaking: sea kayaking and white-water kayaking. Sea kayaking involves paddling in the ocean, while white-water kayaking involves paddling in rivers and lakes. The two require very different techniques but are equally popular across the world.

Kayaking has existed from the time of the Inuits or Eskimos of Northern Canada, Alaska and Russia. Even today, they rely on kayaks, which in their language translates to “a hunter's boat” to hunt for food, like seals. In 1936, kayaking was introduced as an Olympic sport.

Kayaks are very useful for observing marine life because they



make no sound, apart from the paddles splashing in the sea. In fact, while kayaking around Murud-Janjira Fort, I was paddling with a porpoise for at least ten minutes before it realised I was

in its vicinity!

There are two major kayak designs, a sit-on-top, and a closed kayak. A sit-on-top is mainly used for recreation and for beginners, and is easier to handle.

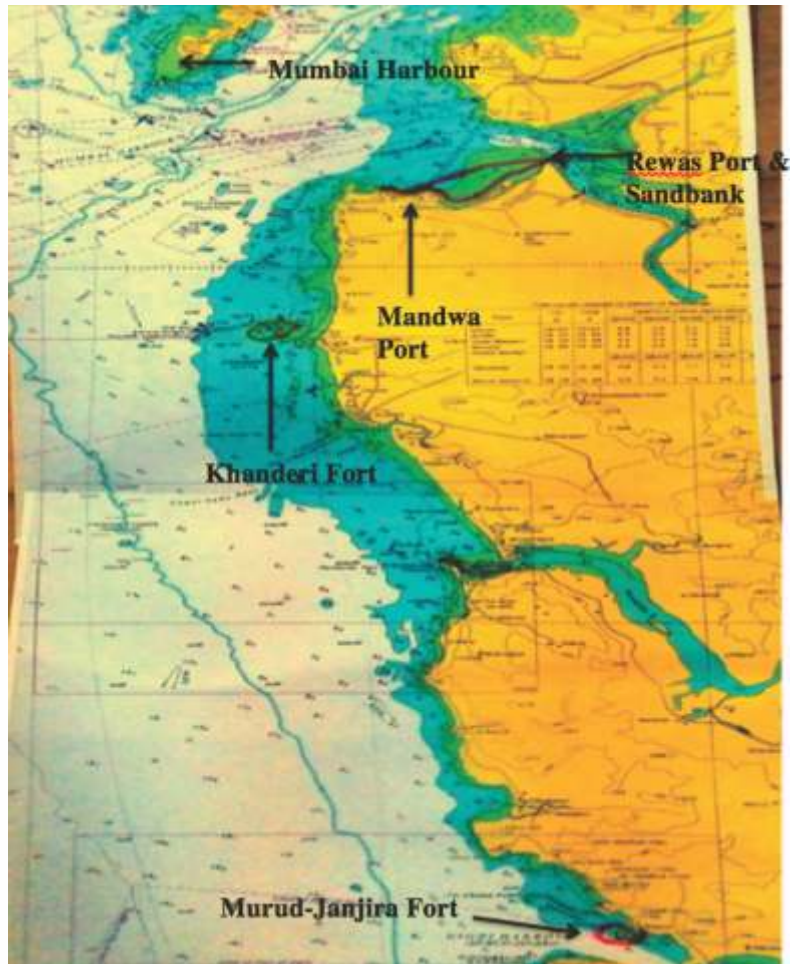
A closed kayak is used for long-distance/long-duration trips and in choppy seas. Closed kayakers also have a 'skeg', which aids in balance and streamlining the kayak to make it move faster. Some have a rudder, which helps turn the kayak faster. Closed kayakers also allow their users to do eskimo rolls, when one flips over and comes out of the water without leaving the kayak. Kayakers are made of fibreglass and polyethylene, depending on the type and quality of kayak that's needed. Faster kayakers are usually made from fibreglass.



Kayaking is a great way to relax, to exercise and to be part of nature because it is such a peaceful, yet intense sport.



## Explored Kayaking Routes



## Coastal Maharashtra and General Guidelines to Kayaking

The Konkan Coast of India has some of the most unique marine life in the country. From flying-fish, to porpoises, to jellyfish, to tiger sharks, to prawns, the sea has a lot to offer.

The Konkan Coast of India has some of the most unique marine life in the country. From flying-fish, to porpoises, to jellyfish, to tiger sharks, to prawns, the sea has a lot to offer.

Temperatures are reasonable through the year, with the coldest temperatures coming to around 22 degrees celsius between December and February and going up to 35 degrees celsius in May. Hence, there's no need to wear a wetsuit.

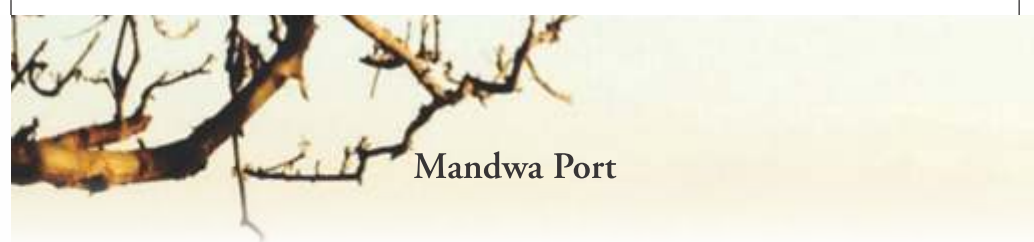
Do not go kayaking during the Monsoon (June-September) because of the choppy sea and because jellyfish are very active in this season.

The winds aren't too strong except for end May, early September and end December. The West coast of India has a fairly regular wind pattern. During the day the morning breeze is typically easterly to north easterly. It can gust up to 10-14 knots. During afternoon, the winds shift to North Westerly and in summer

months to West North Westerly. They can go as high as 25 knots. Month wise the wind patterns are quite predictable. After Monsoons and the festival of Dussera, the winds stabilize. In October and November they are quite light at 6-8 knots. The winds build up in December and January and then again subside a bit in February. At the time of Holi Festival, typically in March the winds pick up and remain strong. Towards the month of May the winds can be very strong at 22-25 knots and shift SW.

Tides are very strong, especially if there's a full or no moon night. Be sure to plan a kayaking expedition based on tidal and wind conditions to ensure that you are able to paddle without much difficulty.

One must wear a life jacket, sunscreen, swimming trunks and sunglasses at all times while paddling, as the sun is fairly harsh in this area. Gloves are recommended but not necessary for the conditions in the Konkan Region. Carry water because kayaking is tiring and dehydrating. If you are going on a long expedition, be sure to stock up your kayak with food and electrolytes.



**Mandwa Port**

Light shining behind you, and boats galore, this is Mandwa Port. I've been kayaking here for nearly 8 years now and been a kayaking instructor for the past five years here as well. I can safely say that this is the ideal place for beginners to learn kayaking. The currents aren't very strong unless there's an exceptionally large Spring Tide, which is only present during mid-late May, New Years' and Holi. Moreover, the swell is minisule, rarely going past 2 feet unless the pre-Monsoon winds set in in May, or the exceptionally stormy conditions in the last week of December.

I've loved capsizing and exploring this area, mainly because there doesn't seem to be a lot to explore. The rocks near the Mandwa village or the mini-currents near the jetty prove to be fascinating places. Navigating through the innumerable speedboats, sailboats and fishing boats has also aided in practising my turning, breaking and reversing.



The pontoon proves to be an ideal place for relaxing. It's kayak friendly so if you have rope, you can tie your boat and jump on, or pull the kayak onto it! It's perfect to go swim and escape the heat. It also helps in practicing self and assisted rescues on kayaks because one cannot get dragged past it. I would however note that there are rocks in the area, so you must be careful while kayaking in the area as well. The rocks have actually helped me in identifying potentially submerged obstacles.

Mandwa port has been the starting place for my interest in kayaking. I've been able to overcome my fears of the sea and enjoy it, to the extent that I now spend my weekends to be on the beach. Hope to see more kayakers there soon!



Starting Point	Mandwa Beach
End Point	Mandwa Beach
Type	Loop
Route Length	2 km/1.1 NM
Estimated Duration	1 hr
Hazards	Anchored boats, Sand Bank, Reef
Winds	Light to Fair (8 - 15 knots)
Swell	2 - 4 feet
Tide Strength	1 - 2 knots
Grade	Beginner
Distance	4 KM
Time	1-2hr
Best Time	Morning or Evening
Special Instructions	Carry water, snacks, hat is a must. If you plan to get down on the beach, carry mosquito repellent
Sightings	Various kinds of fish, crabs.
Comments	This route is a nice route for beginners. It can be challenging route during windy conditions.

## Mandwa-Rewas-Mandwa

Kayaking to the Rewas Sandbank from Mandwa beach has proven to be a difficult, yet fantastic trip for any intermediate kayaker. Be prepared to carry food and water and a lifeboat, for this trip is long, tiring but amazing fun.

The Rewas Sandbank is approximately 7 kilometres due East of Mandwa beach. This route is ideal for intermediate kayakers who wish to explore parts of the Mandwa coastline. The total trip takes approximately 3.5 hours, depending on the tide and wind. One has to time his/her departure. Ideally, one should leave for the bank when the tide is flooding to ensure one goes with the tide, rather than against it.

The trip there is really fascinating because of the amount of marine life that can be seen. I remember seeing two porpoises and various types of fish. For example, I saw a few flying fish bang into my kayak and a fish that was at least 2 metres long circling my boat! At one point in time, the porpoise was following my kayak for at least 10 minutes! The sea is also less polluted here than it is in Mandwa.



The sandbank itself is stunning. There are two to three houses on the beach and a few fishing boats. The sand is white, and not claylike at all. The beach is not rocky either but has strong currents.

I would recommend kayaking up the sandbank towards the mouth of Dharamtar Creek in order to get choppier and more challenging conditions. The swell can go upto nearly four feet and on a rough day even more! The currents around the mouth are incredibly difficult to control but are worth experiencing, especially if you are a seasoned kayaker. Do also keep note of the breakwater near Dharamtar’s mouth. The strong swell can potentially push the kayak towards it. While kayaking near these currents, either paddle against them or with them, do not remain parallel to the waves because they will capsize the boat.

This route is a necessity for an avid kayaker, or even a sailor. It’s convenient and involves minimal planning as well.

Map Of Route



Starting Point	Mandwa Beach
End Point	Mandwa Beach
Type	Loop
Route Length	20km
Estimated Duration	4hr
Hazards	Anchored boats, Sand Bank, Reef
Winds	Light to Fair (8 - 15 knots)
Swell	2 - 4 feet
Tide Strength	1 - 2 knots
Distance	18KM
Time	4hr
Best Time	Neap Tides, Early in the morning
Special Instructions	Carry ample water food, hat is a must. If you plan to get down on the beach, carry mosquito repellent
Sightings	Various kinds of fish, dolphins, shore crustaceous creatures like crabs, sometimes sea snakes.

## Around Janjira Fort

Murud-Janjira is a 900-year old marine fort, based off the town of Murud, about 2 hours from Mandwa Jetty by car. The fort was a stronghold for the Siddi and Maratha Empires until the British took control of India. Kayaking here is far different than that of Mandwa, simply because this part of the sea is more exposed and choppy than Mandwa.

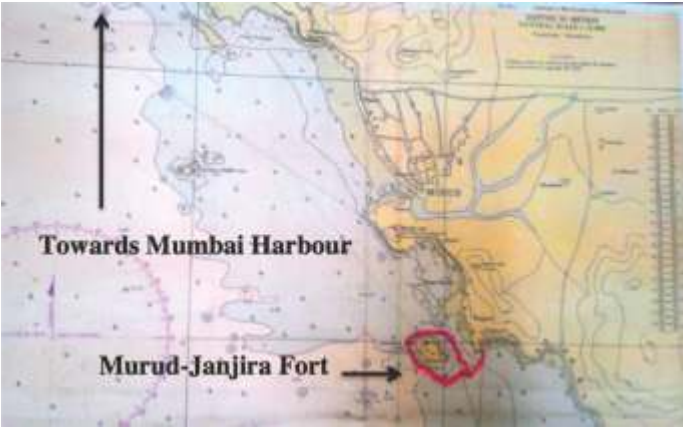
12-knot winds and a mild swell are perennially present in the Murud-Janjira Port. Kayaking here is tough. Additionally, there's also a strong current as a result of the narrow passage between the fort and the mainland. Some points become so shallow that there is a high chance of getting stuck. One should ideally be a minimum of 3 metres away from the fort as a precautionary measure because it is very shallow and rocky next to the fort.

The sea here is very clean and the visibility is a lot better here than it is in Mandwa. One can see a lot more marine life. While kayaking on the more exposed side of the fort, I came across two porpoises, who followed me around as I kayaked. There was a local fish

called ‘Ghol’ that would jump out of the water and do a little dance before going back in.

Another ‘challenge’ that one can face is the large number of boat traffic. In order for tourists to get to the fort, they have to take ‘Feluccas’, local sailboats. As a kayaker, one has to navigate through them to prevent an accident. It’s a lot of fun but tiring as well.

Kayaking here is incredibly fun, tiring and eye-opening. The insights one gets about Konkan History, the amazing wildlife and the beauty of the sea are unmatched by any other route that I have been on in Maharashtra. If you have a few days off, I would recommend either sailing or driving down to Murud Janjira and kayaking here! It’s not possible to replicate this experience anywhere else in India!



Starting Point	Anchorage at Rajapuri Beach
End Point	Anchorage at Rajapuri
Type	Loop
Route Length	20 km/1.1 NM/td>
Estimated Duration	2hr
Hazards	Anchored boats, Swell on West Side, Reef
Winds	Light to Fair (8 - 15 knots)
Swell	2 - 4 feet
Tide Strength	1 - 2 knots
Grade	Intermediate
Distance	4KM
Time	2hr + 1 hr to explore the Fort
Best Time	8-11 am in the morning, 4-6 pm in the evening
Special Instructions	Carry water and snacks, hat is a must. If you plan to get down to explore the fort, carry rope to tie the Kayaks, carry mosquito repellent
Sightings	Various kinds of fish, dolphins, crabs, sometimes sea snakes.

## About Vibhav Mariwala

Vibhav Mariwala is an 18-year-old sailor, musician, writer, reader and debater who lives in Bombay.

Kayaking and the outdoors has been an integral part of his life from a very young age. In fact, his first trip was on a sailboat when he was three months old!

He is also a kayaking instructor at Aquasail India and has taken several advanced sailing and kayaking courses in Bombay, Half-Moon Bay (California) and Canada.

He has written about some of his experiences on the water for the India Yachting Magazine in an article titled 'A Necessary Experience'

He hopes to see more people kayaking in India over the next few years.

Vibhav can be reached at: [vibhavmariwala@yahoo.co.in](mailto:vibhavmariwala@yahoo.co.in).