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Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel, Mysuru, India





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Conquer a star-shaped bastion shrouded by mist. Soak in the sweeping vistas of lush greenery, plains and craggy peaks. Get ready to script your own adventure.

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*Pocket*

# BENGALURU

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**TOP SIGHTS • FOOD • SHOPPING**

This guide is researched and written by  
Supriya Sehgal





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## Plan Your Trip

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A horse and carriage wait outside Bangalore Palace



# This is Bengaluru

*The capital city of Karnataka has multiple personalities, and it dons them all with zest. World-class art galleries, landscaped gardens, and Victorian-era architecture rub shoulders with a buzzing tech scene, happening clubs, and cutting-edge restaurants. Whether you enjoy heritage walks, pub crawls, wellness retreats, or adventure getaways, Bengaluru and its satellite destinations will be happy to oblige.*

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Literally meaning 'Town of Boiled Beans', Bengaluru supposedly derived its name from an ancient incident involving an old village woman who served cooked pulses to a lost and hungry Hoysala king. Kempegowda, a feudal lord, was the first person to demarcate the area of Bengaluru by building a mud fort in 1537, and watchtowers that pinpointed the city's boundaries. Remnants of the watchtowers still exist in Lal Bagh Botanical Garden,

An aerial view of the distinctive red Attara Kacheri (High Court) building and Vidhana Soudha

Kempambudhi Tank, the edge of Ulsoor Lake, and Mekhri Circle. The town remained obscure until 1759, when it was gifted to Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan. The British arrived in 1809 and made the settlement their regional administrative base in 1831, naming it Bangalore. During the Raj era, the city played host to many a British officer, including Winston Churchill, who enjoyed life here during his greener years and famously left a debt (still on the books) of ₹13 at the Bangalore Club.

## BOOMING BUSINESS

Home to countless software, electronics, and business-outsourcing firms today, Bengaluru's knack for technology developed early. In 1905 it was the first Indian city to have electric street lighting. Since the 1940s it has been home to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), India's largest aerospace company. The trend continues and now Bengaluru has the third highest number of tech start-ups in the world and a booming IT industry that has earned it the monicker of India's Silicon Valley. However, while the city has seen rapid urbanisation over the past decade, with many glitzy housing developments and tech parks cropping up in the suburbs, the central district (dating back to the British Raj years) remains little changed. You will also see impressive examples of neo-Dravidian architecture, such as the majestic





granite Vidhana Soudha, which was completed in 1956 and is the largest legislative building in India.

### **CAPITAL OF COOL**

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Bengaluru's cosmopolitan vibe and almost always pleasant weather wins over most people visiting the city. While the city's name was changed from Bangalore to Bengaluru in November 2006, the old name continues to be in usage. This is possibly because it exudes a sense of nostalgia and familiarity, even to those who come here for a short while. Bengaluru today is cosmopolitan and youthful, striking a perfect balance between high-energy economic activity and a love of the good life. But it is not just about the restaurants, microbreweries, and artisanal coffee shops. Bengaluru has many wonderful art galleries, a vibrant theatre scene, and an affinity for literature as its many bookstores attest. Another striking characteristic is the burgeoning sense of collective conscience in the community. It's not

Nandi Hills, a short drive from Bengaluru, is famous for its breathtaking sunset and sunrise views

unusual to see pro-social initiatives in action, whether it's groups like the Ugly Indian organising spot cleaning on the streets, or a recycling-reuse drive through households.

### **GETAWAYS GALORE**

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Bengaluru is conveniently located to a number of holiday destinations, making it the perfect launching point for a getaway. Scattered around the city are rolling hills rife with plantations, wildlife reserves, medieval temples, and grand ruins, not to speak of hiking trails, rafting trips, yoga retreats, and luxurious resorts. Unsurprisingly, the culture of driving out for short trips thrives amongst residents, even if it's just for a picnic at verdant Nandi Hills, a spot of birdwatching at Galibore Nature Camp, or an overnight stay for personal rejuvenation at Ayurvedagram on the outskirts of town.



# Need to Know



The Victorian-era glasshouse at Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens

## WHEN TO GO

Bengaluru offers pleasant, travel-friendly weather all year round, although April and May can get hot.

- **October—March (high season):** The coolest months are the best to explore Bengaluru, with moderate temperatures in the range of 20°C—28°C. You may need a light jacket as nights can get chilly.
- **April—May (low season):** These are the warmest months with temperatures ranging from 22°C—36°C.
- **June—September (mid season):** The monsoon months are not a deterrent to travel as Bengaluru's tree-lined streets emerge refreshed after showers. The temperatures remain between 22 °C—36 °C, with slightly

chilly evenings. Expect traffic to slow down significantly on rainy days. Alternatively, you can also time your visit to coincide with events in Bengaluru's events and cultural calendar (p27).

## **i** Quick Facts

### LANGUAGES

The main language spoken in Bengaluru is Kannada but travellers can get around easily with Hindi and English.

### MONEY

ATMs of major private and state owned banks are aplenty in Bengaluru. Most hotels allow card payment, but it's best to book ahead to get better deals. Keep cash handy for small payments, such as for auto-rickshaws.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Mid to high-end hotels offer free Wi-Fi with varying degree of speed and efficacy. This may be chargeable in some cases or available only in common areas.

### MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

Providers such as Airtel, Vodafone and Jio make 3G and 4G services available through the state, except in remote locations where the signal may be sporadic. You'll find great connectivity in the capital city.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

Registered tourism offices are all over the state, with the main ones in Bengaluru: Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka and Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation. Visit [www.karnatakaturism.org](http://www.karnatakaturism.org) and [www.kstdc.co](http://www.kstdc.co) for more details.

### ACCOMMODATION

Bengaluru offers a variety of boutique and branded chain hotels for all budgets, as well as hostels. The rates in the book are for AC double rooms (d) and suites (ste) and do not include taxes or breakfast unless specified.

₹ Below ₹2000

₹₹ from ₹2000—5000

₹₹₹ Above ₹5000

### EATING

Bengaluru has a vibrant dining and drinking scene. Eateries in this book have been assigned the following rate categories, based on the price of main dishes for two.

₹₹₹ over ₹500

₹₹ between ₹200—500

₹ under ₹200

## ✓ Top Tip: Cab safety

Privately run cabs at Bengaluru's airport try to entice travellers with offers of better rates. However, these independent operators have little accountability and do not provide legitimate receipts. We recommend skipping over to the queue for state-run and well-known cab services.

### PLAN AHEAD

- **Two to three months before:** If you plan to visit Bengaluru in peak season, booking hotels, flights, or trains in advance is crucial. Since last-minute tickets can be expensive, it's ideal to book ahead to bag deals. Check on major holidays and events at this stage—Dussehra, Ugadi, Diwali, Christmas, Bangalore Lit Fest and Bangalore International Film Festival are good occasions around which to time your trip.
- **One month before:** Chalk out a detailed itinerary, pegging down major sightseeing areas and their timings. Accommodate specific holidays while planning your trip.
- **One week before:** Check on timings of sightseeing spots and reconfirm your hotel and cab bookings. Sign up for the latest events, whether it's a gig, an interesting workshop, or a heritage walk.

### WHAT TO PACK

- **Prescribed medication:** Even though there are plenty of hospitals and pharmacies, carry enough prescribed medication for your entire trip.
- **Comfortable shoes:** Chances are that you will have plenty of walking to do in the city, and even hiking if you're exploring one of the many getaways outside of Bengaluru.
- **Seasonal clothing:** Pack light cotton outfits for the day and a jacket for the night (in winter). Full-length cotton pants are recommended in the monsoon to avoid mosquitoes.
- **Sunscreen, hat/cap and sunglasses:** Protection from the sun is required both in winter and summer.
- **Original photo identity card:** All hotels need you to provide a valid photo ID card for check-in.

### GETTING THERE

- **Air:** Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru is the main air node of Karnataka, connecting major cities in India and abroad. It lies approximately 35km/1 hour from the heart of the city. Feeder bus services and a steady supply of call taxis connect the city to the airport.
- **Bus:** Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has a large fleet of air-conditioned and regular buses that connect Bengaluru with other destinations, big and small, in the region.
- **Train:** City Railway Station (SBC) is the best connected in the Karnataka capital. Others, with limited platforms and connectivity, include Yesvantpur Junction (YPR), Bangalore East (BNCE), Banaswadi (BAND) and Kengeri (KGI).

For information on getting around in Bengaluru and its environs, see p20.



Bengaluru is well-connected to other cities and states with highways such as NH44

## Dos and Don'ts

### Do

- Try the local food; dishes from all over the state are available in Bengaluru.
- Wear modest clothing inside religious places.
- Carry a hand sanitiser for public or restaurant toilets.
- Remove footwear in homes, if the hosts do.
- Sample the local food on heritage walks run by locals.

- Discuss per day/per km rates for guides, cab and auto drivers beforehand.

### Don't

- Expect clean loos with toilet paper in small restaurants.
- Use cameras inside temple sanctums.
- Shop for handicrafts in major tourist spots. Instead, opt for NGOs, government-run shops or homegrown Bengaluru brands.



# 10 Top Experiences

## 1 BENGALURU ON FOOT

A good wander through its streets will warm you up to Bengaluru faster than anything else. And it's even better when you get insider anecdotes, valuable travel tips, and fascinating history every step of the way. Bengaluru is home to a number of homegrown heritage and urban walks, where experts help in unveiling the different facets of the city. See different neighbourhoods through the filter you enjoy best, whether it's culture, cuisine, or history. We love the food focus of **Oota Walks**, the historical rigour of **Unhurried Tours**, the cultural insights offered by **INTACH Parichay** walks, and the themed tours of **Bangalore Walks** (see p37 for more on walking tours).



## 2 BANGALORE PALACE

Believed to be modelled on England's Windsor Castle, the ivy-clad **Bangalore Palace** (p34) is a legacy of Mysuru's royal family from the late 19th century. The Tudor revival style dominates the architecture while the interiors are decorated with elegant floral motifs, paintings and woodcarvings. An extensive audio tour of the palace takes you through the ballroom on the ground floor and the elaborate Durbar Hall on the



first, packed with paintings, artefacts, mounted animal heads, and more. The manual lift here was imported from England. Try the royal-style horse carriage ride around the sprawling palace grounds.

## 3 NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

Bangaloreans head to this century-old colonial mansion for a tryst with soothing heritage, excellent art, and lush greenery. The **NGMA** (p34) opened its doors a decade ago as one of India's three national modern art galleries. More than 500 pieces of modern Indian art, photography, sculpture and prints are displayed in the gallery, including Indian miniatures, colonial-era paintings, and works by the Bengal School and post-independence artists. There are regular documentary screenings, gallery walks, and workshops here as well.





#### 4 AMAZING BREWS

Beer beckons and coffee calls in Bengaluru. Given the city's proximity to coffee stalwarts like Chikkamagaluru and Kodagu, it is no wonder that it has a heady cafe culture. Coffee aficionados can have their pick of roasts and blends in the many delightful **cafes** (p55) that have mushroomed in the city. If you like your brews stronger, Bengaluru is also the undisputed microbrewery capital of India. Scores of **microbreweries** (p54 &

57) lie a stroll away from each other, offering a tempting array of beer and ale flavours (honey lavender, anyone?).

#### 5 NIMHANS BRAIN MUSEUM

Medical instruments, skeletons, prosthetics, pickled parts in formalin, and anatomical drawings abound in this one-of-a-kind museum. The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), one of India's finest medical institutions, is also home to the **Brain Museum** (p38), where the morbidly curious can see hundreds of brain specimens, and observe how the organ looks when it is affected



by everything from aneurysms to bacterial infections to trauma. The carefully preserved specimens are fodder for endless fascination, especially if neuropathologist Dr Shankar is available to walk you around.

#### 6 VERDANT PARKS

Bengaluru has a reputation as a 'city of gardens', with scenic lungs of the city providing a welcome respite from the traffic-clogged streets. While the green-scape has dwindled in recent years, two major parks have retained much of their glory. The 240-acre **Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens** (p37) is known for its large collection of rare botanical specimens and its famous flower show in January, while the 300 acres of **Cubbon Park** (p35) encompass statues of Queen Victoria and King Edward, gazebos to rest weary legs, thickets of bamboo, generous grassy stretches, a tennis academy, a children's park, and rocky outcrops.







## 7 MAVALLI TIFFIN ROOMS

The century-old **Mavalli Tiffin Rooms** (p49), MTR for short, still holds sway as a Bengaluru culinary institution even though hundreds of other eating options have cropped up in the city. Built in 1920 by three brothers, MTR has remained one of the most economical and delicious options for puffy idlis, dosas and host of other 'tiffin' options. The original Lal Bagh

Road branch is close to the gorgeous namesake gardens, where you can walk off all that you have gorged on.

## 8 CLIMBING ADVENTURES

Karnataka is home to some of the best-loved rock-climbing destinations in India, and Bengaluru and its environs are a great way to get a taste of this adrenaline-igniting activity. Within the city, you can pay a visit to **Equilibrium** (p59), India's first indoor climbing centre or drive 50km out of the city to **Ramanagara** (p71), where the film *Sholay* was shot. Here you can follow Gabbar Singh's footsteps and marvel at some of the world's oldest granite outcrops—or even better, climb them.



## 9 OPERA HOUSE

The iconic Opera House of Bengaluru got a fresh lease of life in 2018, when the crumbling building was restored to its former glory. The building was bought in 1959 as a cinema hall by Mr. KR Kanakarathnam but was originally designed by a Thomas Charles William Skipp whose name features on several other old Bengaluru buildings. Rechristened as the **Samsung Opera House** (p58), it is now branded as the company's largest 'experience centre' in the world. The state-of-the-art virtual reality and home theatre experiences might draw a different crowd to the once opera- and movie-loving audiences, but locals count the revival of the aging building as a win.

## 10 WELLNESS RETREATS

Bengaluru may be fast-paced but it also knows how to relax. Just a short drive will take you to some excellent **wellness retreats** (p45) that offer a combination of creature comforts and traditional mind-body healing. Choices include Soukya, where you can de-stress with Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, Ayurvedagram where you can detox and yet indulge yourself, and Shreyas Yoga Retreat, where world-class luxury and wellness meet.



# Getting Around

*You have a choice of metro, bus, taxi, and auto to make your way around Bengaluru. The city is also located extremely conveniently to a wide range of holiday destinations, aided by efficient bus services and smooth highways. For information on getting to Bengaluru, see p13.*

## BUS

Bengaluru has a comprehensive local bus network, operated by the **Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation** (BMTc; [www.mybmtc.com](http://www.mybmtc.com)), with a useful website for timetables and fares. Red AC Vajra buses criss-cross the city, while green Big10 deluxe buses connect the suburbs.

## METRO

Bengaluru's relatively new AC metro service, Namma Metro, is still a work in progress, but it does have two colour-coded lines up and running. The most relevant route to tourists is the Purple Line: useful stops include MG Road (for shopping and bars) and Indiranagar (for restaurants and nightlife).

Namma Metro trains are usually clean and well-maintained



Trains run about every 15 minutes, 6am to 10pm. For updates on the service, visit [www.bmrc.co.in](http://www.bmrc.co.in).

## TAXI & AUTO

At Bengaluru airport, the three 'official' taxi service providers are **Karnataka Taxi** (☎080 44664466; [www.karnatakaholidays.net](http://www.karnatakaholidays.net)), **MegaCabs** (☎4747 4747; [www.megacabs.com](http://www.megacabs.com)), and **Meru Cabs** (☎4422 4422; [www.merucabs.com](http://www.merucabs.com)). In the city, there are many app-based taxis. For a full-day cab hire for sightseeing, expect to pay ₹1200 for 8 hrs/80km. Auto rickshaws charge a minimum fare of ₹25; expect to haggle a bit and determine rates beforehand. Very few auto drivers use meters.

## ORGANISED TRIPS

A great way to quickly cover all the major sightseeing spots of a city or circuit is to sign up for KSTDC's **City Holidays** (☎080 43344334; [www.kstdc.co](http://www.kstdc.co); cost per head approx ₹495). These day-long tours cover all the landmark monuments and temples and give you a speedy yet comprehensive orientation. Options include Bengaluru, Mysuru, Nandi Hills, and Mysuru-Shravanabelagola-Beluru and Halebidu. Another alternative is to sign up for **customised package tours by KSTDC** (☎080 43344334; [www.kstdc.co](http://www.kstdc.co); [info@kstdc.co](mailto:info@kstdc.co); call, write or connect via website form), based on your preferences.

## EXPLORING THE REGION

**Car & taxi:** For trips out of Bengaluru, cabs and self-driven cars (such as by Zoom; [www.zoomcar.com](http://www.zoomcar.com)) offer most flexibility. Taxi charges vary from ₹10–12 per km, and the minimum number of km in a day is 250. If you hire a car just for the day (or long distance), you need to pay the driver a separate daily allowance (₹200–300 per day); this is called 'bata'. Toll expenses are generally borne by the traveller. Reliable private operators include **NR Enterprises** Ola and Uber are options to choose from for your cab rides in the city.

**Bus:** AC Volvos with pushback seats are suitable for overnight trips. Book with **Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation** ([www.ksrctc.in](http://www.ksrctc.in)) or on the aggregator website **Redbus** ([www.redbus.in](http://www.redbus.in)). There are five major terminals in the city: Majestic, KR Market, Shivajinagar, Shantinagar, and Banashankari.

## ✓ Top Tip: Rush hour

Given that Bengaluru graduated from a mid-sized town to a bustling metro city within the span of a decade or so, there are sometimes issues of traffic congestion. If you are driving out, be sure to leave the city before 6am to beat peak traffic.



# Eating in Bengaluru

*Bengaluru is a dining powerhouse. On its platter are cleverly curated cafes, food trucks, vintage restaurants, and a packed menu of authentic regional dishes and all types of world cuisines.*

## CLASSIC HAUNTS

Bengaluru is dotted with decades-old restaurants with humble origins but excellent local fare, including the legendary **MTR** (p49) and the 1943-established **Vidyarthi Bhavan** (p52). In such places, benne dosa, idli-vade-poori-sagu, kharabath, kesari bhath, and filter coffee rule the menus. You might have to share a table with a stranger, given the steady stream of devoted patrons.

Benne dosa gets its name from the generous use of butter

## ECCLECTIC FLAVOURS

Bengaluru's dining scene is ever-evolving, with new restaurants popping up frequently, particularly in entertainment hub Indiranagar and the recently revived MG Road. World cuisines (think French, Korean, Lebanese, beyond the usual Thai and Italian) are juxtaposed with well-worn Indian classics. Bangaloreans are also becoming more mindful of what's on their plate and vegan cafes (p46) have found a great foothold.

## REGIONAL DELIGHTS

The traditional fare of south India continues to stand the test of time. And we're not just talking about standard dosas, idlis, and the like. **Oota Bangalore** (p45) pays homage to regional Karnataka cuisines that have not yet hit the mainstream, especially from the hilly Malenadu region. **Halli Mane** (p52) does veg cuisine you don't often find in restaurants, including akki roti and



## TOP CHOICE Must-try regional dishes

With each district offering distinct flavours, Kannadiga cuisine is extremely diverse. Here are some dishes that any food-loving traveller must try, along with suggestions on where to have them.

**Dosa variations** Breakfast on Mysuru masala dosa (which features a spread of fiery red chillies, onion, and garlic chutney on the inside) at **MTR** (p49). Or try the sinfully buttery benne dosa at **CTR** (aka Shri Sagar, p55). **Ragi mudde** These nutritious finger millet balls, usually dipped in rasam or a lentils-and-greens soup called soppina saaru, are easier found in homes than kitchens, but you can have your fill at **Mudde Madappa Mess** (☎98440 08380; 3/4, Sagar Complex, 5th Main Rd, Gandhi Nagar; 8-10am, 12:30- 3:30pm, 7:30- 9:30pm). **Korri gassi with neer dosa** Coastal Karnataka dishes up one of the best country chicken dishes (korri gassi), which is eaten with a floppy white, soft dosa.

**Bengaluru Oota Company** (p52) does an authentic version. **Holige** A sweet flatbread made of lentils and jaggery, also called 'obbattu' in the state. Grab some at **Mans Holige** (☎98865 84789; Opp Ganesh Temple Circle, 4th Block, Jayanagar; 9am-10pm). **Maddur vada** Maddur town is a popular highway stop for anyone going to Mysuru for its distinct namesake vada made with flour, semolina and spices. **Vidyarthi Bhavan** (p52) does a mean one. **Pandi curry** This Kodagu (Coorg) classic is a vinegary pork curry best soaked up with rice balls. Find some at **The Restaurant-Coorg** (p52). **Balekayi hashi** A salad from the hilly Malnad region of banana, yoghurt, and chilli that somehow works a treat. Sample it at **Oota Bangalore** (p45). **Kesari bhath** Is it a dessert? Is it a breakfast dish? This yummy concoction of semolina, ghee, and sugar is a bit of both. Try it at **Brahmin's Cafe** (p52).

Mangaluru buns. **Mangalore Pearl** (p49) is a go-to for coastal seafood, including crab ghee roast. The **Coorg Food Co** (☎97312 21120; 2nd Fl, Masand Esquire, Hennur Main Rd, Kalyan Nagar; noon-10:30pm) offers a range of pork dishes from the Kodagu region along with soul-satisfying rice cakes.

## COFFEE CULTURE

Bengaluru's coffee scene is hinged as much on a 'cup of Joe' in a hip cafe, as the frothy 'metre (filter) coffee' poured expertly from tumbler to bowl in a humble stall. Here you can try roasts from Chikkamagaluru or Kodagu, as well as those from across the seas. Even today, though, old-timers like **Indian Coffee House** (p55) give new arrivals a run for their money.

# Shopping Guide

*If you want it, you will probably get it in Bengaluru. Bargain hunters will find much enticement in the slim lanes of Commercial Street, boho-chic shoppers will have no shortage of oh-so-cool independent boutiques, mall-crawlers will never be too far from a fix, and traditionalists will be spoiled for choice with classy silks and antiques.*

## SOUTH SILKS

Karnataka is the country's largest silk-producing state. Unsurprisingly, Bengaluru is brimming with shops selling quality silks from the region. To get your hands on luxurious silks from Mysuru and beyond, take a peep at **Mysore Saree Udyog** (p60), **Rukmini Hall** (p60), **Angadi Galleria** (p61), and scores of other shops in the Chickpet area. If you're planning to head out of the city on Mysore Road, keep your eyes peeled for villages doing silkworm cultivation—more than a million people earn their livelihood by making silk here.

## KITSCH FIX

With its growing pool of hip young citizens, Bengaluru is fast becoming the capital of kitsch, where open-air flea markets and cosy shops are crammed with retro treasures and arty one-offs. You'll find practically a warehouse-load of unique apparel, kitschy knick-knacks, silver jewellery and flip-flops in designer boutiques. A large part of the kitsch vibe is contributed by trendy flea markets such as **Sunday Soul Santhe** ([www.sundaysoulsante.com](http://www.sundaysoulsante.com)) and the art-focused **Chitra Santhe**. The half-canopied/half open-air flea markets cram in creative wares from local designers, furniture makers,

Colourful silk saris on display at a shop in Bengaluru



artists, and photographers. Apart from bargains and designer pieces, there are also food stalls and pop-up concerts to keep the mood upbeat.

## ANTIQUES & CURIOS

For many travellers to the city, Bengaluru is a veritable hunting ground for antiques and curios from the handicrafts' cache of the state. Stacks of battered tableware, weathered frames, gramophones, and metal statues and utensils can be found in the back-alley bazaars of **Chickpet & Avenue Road** (p60). Arts and crafts emporia—all offering an array of curios from all over the state—are great for a last-minute souvenir dash.



Quirky knick-knacks at a vintage shop

## BOOKS

Bookworms should not miss the loose bookshop trail on MG Road, Brigade Road, and Church Street. Several prominent stores and many makeshift pavement displays of reprints make for an interesting walk and also give an insight into what really stirs the intellect of Bangaloreans. While shops like **Higginbothams** and **Gangarams Book Bureau** on Church Street helped shape the reading culture of the town, **Book Worm**, **Select**, and **Blossoms** are recommended for second-hand books at reasonable prices.

## CONTEMPORARY SHOPPING HUBS

A slew of malls, branded chain stores, and designer boutiques have colonised Bengaluru. Walking into any of them will show you how the city has kept up with sophisticated brands and stylish fashions from across the world. **UB City** (p60) is one of the best destinations in town for fashion.

### Top Tip: Local handicrafts

Karnataka is well known for a variety of handicrafts. Look in particular for inlay work, Mysore paintings, wooden toys from Channapatna, stone carved curios from Halebidu and Belur, bidri ware (metallic crafts) from Bidar, filigree and silverware, rugs, theatre crafts (Yakshagana masks), *gombe* (traditional) dolls, and metalware from Udupi and Nagamangala. All of the above pack the emporiums of Bengaluru.



# Activities & Entertainment

*Bangaloreans have a huge and eclectic appetite for live gigs, outdoor fun, movies and theatre, heritage walks, and workshops of various hues, making the city suitable for travellers with all kinds of interests.*

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

There is no excuse to stay indoors for long in Bengaluru. You can spend action-packed mornings with cycling tours, or dirt biking/hiking at the Turahalli Forest. You can even try microlight flying at **Jakkur airfield** (p59).

## INDOOR THRILLS

The incredible outdoors are matched by indoor delights aplenty. Live music is a fixture at pubs and venues such as **The Humming Tree** (p56). New on the map is the **Samsung Opera House** (p58), which doubles up as a venue for concerts, screenings, and workshops. There are also 7D simulator theatres, such as **7D Voyage** (Bangalore Central Mall, Outer Ring Rd, Bellandur), that take you on virtual adventures.

## FOR THE KIDS

Reserve a day for **Wonder La** (p58), a theme park with water slides and exciting rides. Other hits include **Snow City** (☎080 23550000; www.snowcityblr.com), and **Innovative Film City** (☎080 22099999; www.innovativefilmcity.in) with its large larger-than-life sets. **Bannerghatta Biological Park & Wildlife Safari** (p41) offers a tryst with wildlife, while **Bistro Claytopia** (p59) and the **Indian Music Experience** (p41) engage kids in creative ways.



## Adventure operators

Looking for a day trip for climbing or a sunrise trek? Let an expert handle everything for you. Here are some of the top outfits in Bengaluru.

**Unventured** Curated adventure trips in Bengaluru and outside.

☎94837 47703; www.unventured.com

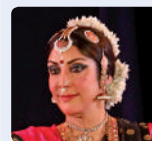
**Art of Bicycle Trips** Best for leisure or high-octane trips in and outside the city. ☎81299 45707; www.artofbicyclertrips.com

**Plan The Unplanned** Ideal for weekend adventures around the city.

☎94820 70194; www.plantheunplanned.com

**F5 Escapes** Women-focused travel events and curated trips.

☎080 39510700; www.f5escapes.com



## EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

### Bengaluru's cultural calendar

**Vani Ganapathy** is a Bharatanatyam performer and cultural exponent. She is based in Bengaluru.

**Namma Bengaluru Habba** The youthful week-long fest brings a medley of performing arts at venues across the city. Everything is free.

**Chitra Santhe** (www.karnatakachitrakalaparisath.com): The Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath hosts an annual one-day art and sculpture festival in late January.

**Ramanavami Music Festival A**

classical music fest held at Fort School grounds over a month, beginning April. For the connoisseur.

**Ranga Shankara Theatre Festival** (www.rangashankarathreatfestival.com): Good drama is guaranteed at this excellent festival in October—November, hosted by theatre gurus Arundhati Nag and Girish Karnad (until his death in 2019).

## MAJOR EVENTS

Film and theatre lovers flock to the **Bangalore International Film Festival** (www.biffes.in, Feb) and the **Ranga Shankara Theatre Festival**. The **Bangalore Literature Festival** (www.bangaloreliteraturefestival.org) attracts the best literary minds, while music festivals draw fans of all genres: there's **Bangalore**

**Open Air** (www.bangaloreopenair.com) for heavy metal, **Ruhaniyat** (www.ruhaniyat.com) for Sufi music, **Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival** (www.lgmf.org), and the shiny new **Beantown Backyard Festival** (www.beantownbackyardfest.com).

Other top events include **Aero India** (www.aeroindia.gov.in), a biennial air show, the two-day **Kadlekai Parishe** (groundnut festival) at Dodda Ganesha Temple, and the **Karaga Festival** held at the Dharmaraya Swamy Temple, dedicated to Queen Draupadi. A bright spot is the more than 200 years old **Lal Bagh Flower Show** (late Jan).

A classical dance performance in Bengaluru



# Bengaluru in 4 days

*Even if you're pressed for time, you can discover fascinating historical buildings, local delicacies, immersive art and entertainment hubs, and the vibrant drinking and dining scene in this exciting city and its immediate environs. The only thing you'll need to master is the art of dodging traffic and making the most of your four days.*

## DAY 1: KNOW THE CITY

Orient yourself to Bengaluru with a heritage walk that will help place the city in a historical and cultural context. We recommend **Bangalore Walks'** (p37) classic offering around MG Road for a guided few hours of trawling past historical buildings, as you listen to ample anecdotes that include monkeys, Winston Churchill, and Tipu Sultan. You'll have time enough to take a look at the **Government Museum** (p36), **Vidhana Soudha** (p36), and the **National Gallery of Modern Art** (NGMA, p34) as well. Later in the day, grab lunch at one of the oldest restaurants in town, **Koshy's** (p49). Walk off the carbs at **Cubbon Park** (p35) amidst bright green foliage in the evening and stick around the same MG Road area, the nightlife hub of the city.

The Golden Chariot Train is luxury in motion



## ♥ If You Like: Luxury trains

Karnataka's **Golden Chariot Train** is an ode to the stone chariot structure in Hampi and a luxurious offering with flawless hospitality and grand coaches. You can book an eight-day/seven-night journey on the luxury train to experience key sightseeing and wildlife spots of the state. The Karnataka leg of the route includes Bengaluru, Kabini, Srirangapatnam, Mysuru, Shravanbelagola, Belur, Halebidu, Hampi, Badami, Pattadakal, and Goa. Book on [www.kstcd.co](http://www.kstcd.co) or [www.goldenchariot.org](http://www.goldenchariot.org).

## DAY 2: A DAY OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Use this day (preferably a Saturday) to explore the outskirts of the city for adventure activities (p69). You can sign up for a day of climbing at **Ramanagara Hills** (p71), cycling in the nature trails of Turahalli Forest, camping near Anantagere or Manchinbele waterbodies for a day of kayaking or hiking through the craggy hillsides of Savandurga. You can also spend a day enjoying nature and coracle rides at **Galibore Nature Camp** (p66). In the evening, you'll be just about in time to hit the pubs of Indiranagar, the epicentre of nightlife in the city. Most pubs are a stroll away from each other, and there's eclectic food to match the variety of beers. You can also time your trip with a popular indie band playing at **The Humming Tree** (p56).

## DAY 3: SAMPLE THE FOOD SCENE

Start the day with a hot filter *kaapi* and authentic south Indian breakfast at **MTR** (p49). To keep the soul fed as much as the stomach, visit **Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath** (p35) or **aPaulogy** (p61), for contemporary, ethnic and Bengaluru focused art. Take a break to sample the city's vegan food at **Carrots** (p46). For dinner, head to **Oota Bangalore** (p45), where you can find finely curated meals from different parts of the state. Before that, grab a drink at **Windmills Craftworks** (p54) in the same building. On a budget? Try **Thindi Beedi** (p51), a four-hour street food strip of 500 metres that keeps buzzing till midnight.

## DAY 4: GET HIGH

Weather dependent, you can sign up for a microlight flying session at **Jakkur Flying Club** (p59). It will be a great way to see Bengaluru from an alternative perspective. You'll still have time to make it for a daylong **winery tour** (p65) just outside the city. Karnataka is India's second largest producer of grapes, and offers several opportunities on the outskirts of Bengaluru to observe the wine-production process and also taste the output.





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Best of the Rest..... 74

Gleaming high-rises in Bengaluru's central business district



# BENGALURU

## Why Go?

*Bengaluru is rightly famous for its youthful energy, but it is also rewarding to explore its Hindu, Mughal, and colonial heritage. Here you can eat, drink and make merry, but there are also options for meditation, adventure, and cultural immersion. The city is also a perfect springboard for travelling to other destinations in the Deccan.*

## **i** Quick Facts

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Bengaluru has air connections to major cities in India and beyond, and a robust rail and road network too. There is also plenty of infrastructure for getting around the city and travelling out (see p20).

### GREAT FOR



### TOP PICKS

**Bangalore Palace (p34):** The city's answer to Windsor Castle.

**Guided walks (p37):** An excellent way to get familiar with the city's rich heritage, modern delights, and culinary secrets.

**Detoxing at a wellness retreat (p45):** Rejuvenate your body and mind at one of the many resorts near Bengaluru.

**Taste regional Kannada cuisines:** There's a large variety at Oota Bangalore (p45) and modern takes in The Permit Room (p54).

**Cauvery Arts & Craft Emporium (p60):** Stunning Karnataka handicrafts at every price point.

The 19th-century Cubbon Park was officially renamed as Sri Chamarajendra Park



## Sights


### Bangalore Palace

Surrounded by landscaped gardens, the late 19th-century Bangalore Palace at first glance looks as if it has been imported from England, with its Tudor-style turrets and towers. Go inside, though, and you will be taken into the world of Mysuru's royal Wodeyar family. Navigate it with the help of the well-organised audio tour, which will take you through the grand ballroom on the ground floor and the elaborate Durbar Hall on the first, packed with paintings, artefacts, mounted animal heads, and more. The adjoining palace grounds have been the venue for many international concerts for the music-loving city. Iconic performers from

The ornate interiors of Bangalore Palace




the Rolling Stones to David Guetta to Elton John have performed here. There's also an amusement park on the premises called **Fun World** ([www.funworldblr.com](http://www.funworldblr.com)).

 080 23360818; 1 Palace Rd, Vasanthanagar; Indians/foreigners/camera ₹230/465/695; 10am–5.30pm

### National Gallery of Modern Art


Housed in a century-old restored mansion—once the vacation home of the Raja of Mysuru—this world-class art museum showcases an impressive permanent collection as well as changing exhibitions. The Old Wing exhibits works from pre-Independence, including paintings by Raja Ravi Varma and Abanindranath Tagore (founder of the avant garde Bengal School art movement). Interconnected by a walk bridge, the sleek New Wing focuses on contemporary post-Independence works by artists such as Sudhir Patwardhan and Vivan Sundaram. Outside are gigantic shady trees, fountains and well-maintained gardens. The gallery also hosts workshops, film screenings, talks and events around music, theatre and dance. Consider booking yourself for the free instructed walks, 'Introduction to the language of visual art' (Wed, 3pm) and 'Introduction to Modern Indian Art' (Sat, 10.30am).

 080 22342338; [www.ngmaindia.gov.in](http://www.ngmaindia.gov.in); 49 Palace Rd, Vasanthanagar; adults/children/foreigners ₹10/1/150; 10am–5pm (closed Mon & national holidays)

### Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath

Established in 1960, the art complex includes museums, galleries and large collections of art curated from across India. There are permanent displays of Mysuru-style paintings and folk and tribal art from across Asia. A section is devoted to the works of Russian master Nicholas Roerich, known for his vivid paintings of the Himalayas.

It is also an active art college and popular venue for pop-up handloom and crafts markets. Keep an eye out for weekly music and dance events.

 080 22261816; [www.karnatakachitrakalaparishath.com](http://www.karnatakachitrakalaparishath.com); No. 1, Art Complex, Kumarakrupa Rd, Kumara Park East, Seshadripuram; 10am–5pm

### Cubbon Park

In the heart of Bengaluru's business district is Cubbon Park, a well-maintained 300-acre urban paradise where Bengaluru's residents converge to steal a moment from the rat race that rages outside. The vast expanse of the park encompasses three major monuments: the



Colourful paintings at a street art bazaar

Seshadri Iyer Memorial Library, the 1876-built State Archaeological Museum and the Attara Kacheri (court). Unfortunately, Cubbon Park

## If You Like: Art & culture

**Rangoli Metro Art Centre** The restoration of MG Road was heralded on 6 May, 2013, and the green boulevard was finally liberated from the dishevelment brought about by metro construction. Today, there's a two-tiered pathway with a gallery, shops, children's play area and artisans' hub, and even a friendship-band tying corner all along the 500m stretch below the metro. Go earlier in the day to absorb the curated galleries and artwork, as evenings get extremely busy. (Boulevard MG Rd; 10am–7pm)



The Government Museum building was constructed in 1877

is not completely closed to traffic, except on Sundays when there are concerts, fun runs, yoga and even a small farmer's market. There's no traffic between 5–8am for the benefit of walkers.

[www.horticulture.kar.nic.in/cubbon.htm](http://www.horticulture.kar.nic.in/cubbon.htm);  
Kasturba Rd; 5am–8pm

### Vidhana Soudha & Attara Kacheri

Near Cubbon Park is Bengaluru's most important address, the Vidhana Soudha (the seat of the state legislature). Though it is out of bounds for the public, the grand Indo-Saracenic and Dravidian style of architecture makes for a magnificent backdrop for photos. On the opposite of the road stands the bright red Attara Kacheri, the High Court, a Gothic building constructed under the reign of Tipu Sultan.

### Government Museum & Venkatappa Art Gallery

An assortment of artefacts, weapons, musical instruments and paintings are spread over the double-storeyed halls of the Government Museum, which was established in 1865 and which shifted to the current building in 1877. Exhibits range from 10th-century Hampi to relics associated with 18<sup>th</sup>-century king Tipu Sultan. Avoid going on a Sunday as it can get rather crowded. The attached Venkatappa Gallery showcases well-displayed sculptures dating back to 2nd century AD. You can also see works and personal memorabilia of K Venkatappa (1887–1962), court painter to the Wodeyar rulers.

☎080-22864483; Kasturba Rd; adults/children ₹10/5; 10am–5pm (Closed Mon & Sat)

### TOP CHOICE Walking tours

A walking tour is an excellent way to get acquainted with the vast history and multifarious cultural influences of Bengaluru. Here are some outfits. **Bangalore Walks** These well-constructed and 'easy on the legs' walking tours take on a variety of themes, including the Victorian era, parks, and military heritage. The Victorian Bangalore Walk is particularly popular and takes you down the small stretch from Trinity Church, covering East Parade Church, landmark buildings and monuments like Mayo Hall, Utility Building and Kittel's statue on MG Road, ending in breakfast at the Barton Centre. ☎98455 23660; [www.bangalorewalks.com](http://www.bangalorewalks.com); ₹500, incl breakfast; weekend mornings, check time for individual walks)

**INTACH Parichay walks** The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) organises trawls that give an in-depth look at the culture and heritage of particular localities. They also do special interest tours, such as for vintage cars or food (including a Ramzan special). Publicly announced walks are usually on the last weekend of the month, but they also do custom walks for groups.

☎080 4206 4839; [www.intachblr.org](http://www.intachblr.org); 166, Kathriguppe Water Tank Rd, 4th Cross, Banashankari 3rd Stage; ₹500)

**Unhurried** From neighbourhood explorations to day-long city tours, Unhurried helps look at the city with a cultural lens. Choose from festivals, markets, food, nature and heritage trails.

☎98805 65446; [www.unhurried.in](http://www.unhurried.in); mail or call to book ahead; ₹500)

### St. Marks Cathedral

This landmark built in the Baroque colonial past, and was consecrated in 1816 by the Bishop of Calcutta (it was rebuilt several times since then due to a series of mishaps, most recently in 1927).

Highlights in the interiors include intricate woodwork, stained glass, and Roman arches. Do try to visit on a Sunday, as the gates are often closed on weekdays. ☎080 22214021; Anil Kumble Circle; 7am–7pm

### Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens

Spread over 240 acres, Lal Bagh was commissioned by Hyder Ali and later completed under the rule of his son Tipu Sultan in 1760. Along with centuries-old trees, it claims to have the world's most diverse species of plants. Highlights of the park include a glasshouse, one of the four towers of Kempegowda, and a hillock made up of 3000 million-year-old gneissic rock. The annual flower show in January draws thousands here. Lal Bagh, Mavalli; adults/children/parking cars ₹10/free/₹10; 6am–7pm



## ♥ If You Like: Green spaces

By way of green respite, Bengaluru's offerings are not limited to Cubbon and Lal Bagh parks. Other notable gardens include:

**Cariappa Memorial Park** A 22-acre homage to Field Marshal M Cariappa, the first Indian commander of the army, this park is best known for its waterfall and the bandstand where military bands perform every fortnight. (Cubbon Rd, Shivaji Nagar; 5.30am–8pm Mon–Fri, 1–7pm Sat, 9am–7pm Sun)

**Freedom Park** Spread over more than 20 acres, this park was once the site of the Central Jail, where many freedom fighters were housed during British rule. The Jail Museum here is interesting and there is a play area for kids, but what it is best known for today is its role as the epicentre of civil protests in Bengaluru. (Seshadri Rd, Gandhi Nagar; 5am–8pm)

### NIMHANS Brain Museum

Located on the campus of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), this museum will literally blow your mind, especially when you are given the opportunity to actually touch a preserved human brain, under guidance of course.

An attempt by NIMHANS to promote awareness about the brain, the museum offers an educative talk and, with the help of hundreds of specimens, a peek into how the brain grows, develops, and also sickens for various reasons. ☎080 26563357; www.nimhans.ac.in/neuropathology/brain-museum; NIMHANS, Hosur Rd; guided tours on Wed 2.30–4.30pm and Sat 10.30am–1pm, 2.30pm–4.30pm, except for second Sat and public holidays

### St. Mary's Basilica

The white steeple of St. Mary's Basilica can be spotted from a

distance when approaching the thickly populated Shivaji Nagar area. The basilica has watched over the area since the 17th century and deserves a quick stop while exploring the Commercial Street–Shivaji Nagar area. Close by, the 1864-built, red building of **St. Andrews Church** (also called Martyr's Church), peeks out of a thick copse on Cubbon Road.

☎080 22865434; www.stmarybasilica.in; Shivaji Nagar; 5am–10pm

### Dodda Basavana Gudi (Bull Temple)

Built in 1537, this temple is dedicated to Shiva's *vahana* (vehicle), Nandi. A large rocky outcrop, known as Bugle Rock, straddles the temple compound as you walk towards the right from the adjacent **Ganesha Temple**. The towering 15ft Nandi statue is one of the biggest in India. Basavanagudi; 7.30am–8.30pm



Tipu Sultan's 18th-century summer palace

### Tipu Sultan Palace

Enter through a well-manicured garden to find yourself in the summer palace of Tipu Sultan (1781), which sits oasis-like amidst modern buildings. The characteristic Indo-Islamic architectural features, wooden pillars and the unexpectedly cool flooring (even on a hot day) on the ground floor are highlights.

☎080 26706836; Albert Victor Rd,

Chamrajpet; Indians/foreigners/video ₹5/100/25; 8.30am–5.30pm

### Bangalore Fort

The burly granite walls of the Bangalore Fort contain a peaceful haven from the crowded KR Market outside. This is the only remaining part of the original fort built by Kempegowda in 1537 AD, which later changed hands to Hyder Ali and then Lord Cornwallis. In fact, a tablet in the wall is testimony

## 📷 Snapshot: The four watchtowers

To mark the city boundaries, its founder Kempegowda—a chieftain of the Vijayanagara empire—built four cardinal towers in the year 1537. History lovers can give it a whirl by visiting all four. One of the towers lies atop a hillock in Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens, the second at the edge of Ulsoor Lake, another near Kempambudhi Lake, close to the Bandi Mahakali Temple at Hanumanthanagar, and the final one near the Mekhri circle underpass in the well-maintained Ramana Maharishi Park.

to the fact that this is where Lord Cornwallis took possession of the fort in 1791. The fort now houses a Ganesha temple, three gateways, and a dungeon, which is closed for visitors.

KR Market; 9am–5.30pm

### Temple Street, Malleshwaram

Four magnificent temples preside benevolently over the neighbourhood of Malleshwaram. The grandest of the four is the **Kadu Malleshwara Temple**. True to its name ('kadu' means forest in Kannada), the Shiva temple lies in a thicket of greens that provide a serene backdrop for yoga and meditation. On the opposite side of the road, **Nandeeshwara Temple** boasts a 7000-year-old legacy; it was excavated much later from beneath layers of soil. It also has a *kalyani* (temple tank) inside. **Gangamma Devi Temple** (dedicated to a female deity who is revered locally) and **Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Temple**

An artful display at Indian Music Experience

(dedicated to an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) lie adjacent to Kadu Malleshwara, and are usually bursting with early morning worshippers. Gangamma Devi Temple also sees an annual three-day fair to celebrate the goddess. Basavanagudi; 7.30am–noon, 5–8.30pm

### ISKCON Temple

Inaugurated in 1997, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Temple is a massive complex that is lavishly decorated in a mix of ultra-contemporary and traditional styles. There are 10 temples here and even a pretty good eatery (7.30am–2pm, 4.30–9pm). Strains of 'Hare Rama, Hare Krishna' are a constant backdrop to your visit, and the place also serves as a venue for talks and musical performances.

☎080 23471956; www.iskonbangalore.org; West Chord Rd, Hare Krishna Hall, 1st Block Rajaji Nagar; 4.15–5am, 7.15am–12.50pm, 4–8.20pm

## Detour: Bannerghatta Biological Park

The closest you can get to enjoy a day in the wild is Bannerghatta Biological Park, 22 km off Bengaluru. An exciting vehicle safari takes you through a section of the sprawling park, allowing for sightings of tigers (white ones too), lions, bears, and various herbivores. There's also a **zoo** and **butterfly park**, making it a surefire hit for kids. Bannerghatta is highly recommended for parents wanting to give their children a quick and easy wildlife experience. However, dedicated wildlife lovers may find that there is a slightly packaged tour feel to the trip. Avoid weekends if you can, as the place gets pretty crowded.

☎080 22352828; Bannerghatta National Park; entry adult/child ₹80/40, safari + zoo ₹260/130, butterfly park ₹30/20, camera/video ₹25/110; 9am–5pm, Grand safari 11am–4pm, Tue closed)

### Indian Music Experience

A floor-to-ceiling display of more than 100 indigenous instruments from all over the country make up this interactive museum. There are sections for not just classical and folk music but also for Indian rock greats such as Pentagram and Indian Ocean. www.indianmusicexperience.org; Brigade Millennium Ave, opp Wood Rose Club, JP Nagar 7th phase; 10am–6pm, Tue–Sun; adults/children/foreigners ₹250/150/500

### HAL Aerospace Museum & Heritage Centre

For a peek into India's aeronautical history, visit this wonderful museum past the old airport, where you can see some of the aircraft models designed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Interesting exhibits include a MIG-21, home-grown models such as the Marut and Kiran, and a vintage Canberra bomber. You can also climb to the Heritage

Centre ATC to view the runway of the old airport.

☎080 25228341; www.hal-india.com; Old Airport Rd; entry/camera ₹30/50; 9am–5pm

### Devanahalli Fort

Located 35km from the city, this fort tells the story of change in rule of the region between 16th to late 18th century. The fort was a mud construction built in 1501 by Malla Baire Gowda, a refugee descendant settled in the area. The fort changed hands between Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan and was finally overtaken by Lord Cornwallis after the Anglo-Mysore War. Since this is a living fort (there are houses inside), the only significant structures left are the main gate and the stone ramparts. This is best to explore with an INTACH Parichay walk (p37). Dawn–dusk






## Accommodation

### Taj West End HERITAGE ₹₹₹

 080 66605660; www.tajhotels.com; 25, Race Course Rd, High Grounds; d incl breakfast from ₹13,999 Bathed in colonial-era elegance, Taj West End sits in one of the greenest pockets of the city and is centrally located for key sightseeing spots. The service is impeccable, the lawns are a sight for sore eyes, and the food is excellent in the restaurants Blue Ginger and Masala Klub.

### Taj Vivanta HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 66604444; www.vivantabytaj.com; 41/3 MG Rd; d incl breakfast from ₹10,000 At the end of Bengaluru's arterial MG Road, the Taj Vivanta offers nearly five-star luxury, complete with swimming pool, spa, gym, an award-winning European restaurant,


An opulent room at The Lalit Ashok

and contemporary decor that claims to reflect the ethos of the city.

### ITC Windsor HERITAGE ₹₹₹

 1800 1022333; www.itchotels.in; 25, Golf Course Rd; d incl breakfast from ₹9000 If you appreciate Raj era aesthetics (but with modern comforts, of course), then this iconic hotel is the perfect fit. There is nothing run of the mill about the 240-roomed property, with its verandahs, wood-panelled bar, and clutch of restaurants, including the glasshouse-like Raj Pavilion.

### Grand Mercure HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 45121212; www.grandmercurebangalore.com; 12th Main, 3rd Block, Koramangala; d incl breakfast from ₹8550 Though black-and-white photos of Karnataka's heritage pride, Hampi, adorn the rooms and corridors, the mood here is still contemporary and chic. A

## Top Tip: Budget digs


A clutch of hostels in Indiranagar and Koramangala—both neighbourhoods that have an active nightlife and dining scene—cater to youngsters on a shoestring budget. Choose from **Zostel** ( 022 48962270; www.zostel.com), **Hibernest** ( 080 41126755; www.hibernest.com), the eco-conscious **Cuckoo Hostel & Commune** ( 72041 56880; www.cuckoohostels.com) and **Tribe Theory** (www.tribetheory.com) that pitches itself as a go-to for entrepreneurs on the move.

poolside cafe, gym, spa, deli, wi-fi facilities, and cycles to hire make it a convenient option in Koramangala.


### The Lalit Ashok HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 30527777; www.thelalit.com; Kumara Krupa High Grounds; d incl breakfast from ₹5475 Overlooking the world's fifth oldest golf course, Bangalore Golf Club, Lalit Ashok's pleasingly green ambience makes you forget the city's traffic woes. The restaurants offer everything from north Indian to pan-Asian fare, the spa is award-winning, and a stay includes access to the golf course.

### The Chancery Pavilion HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 41414141; www.chanceryhotels.com; 135 Residency Rd; d incl breakfast from ₹4750 (flexi rates) All the comforts of a high-end hotel (including a pool and multi-cuisine restaurants) at a reasonable price, and right at the centre of the city. They also offer good deals.

### Jüsta BOUTIQUE ₹₹

 080 41135555; www.justahotels.com; No. 21/14, Craig Park Layout, MG Rd; d

incl breakfast from ₹3820 Right from the soothing art from Tagore's Shantiniketan in the lobby to the 18 tastefully decorated rooms, this three-star hotel provides worthy competition to its five-star neighbours. At a central yet secluded location, it offers a travel desk, pick-up service (from the airport or station), free wi-fi, and prompt and pleasant service.

The stately facade of ITC Windsor





The dining area at Casa Cottage

### Jayamahal Hotel HERITAGE ₹₹

☎080 40580444; www.jayamahalpalace.in; # 1, Jayamahal Rd; d incl breakfast from ₹3795 This 19-acre property of the Raja of Gondal has received a new lease of life as a heritage hotel. Expect wooden floors beneath plush carpets, high ceilings and sprawling rooms. These heritage delights are offset by mod-cons such as a pool, wi-fi zone, bar and restaurants. For those on a budget, the standard rooms in the non-heritage wing of the hotel are pretty comfy too.

### Casa Cottage HERITAGE ₹₹

☎080 22990337; www.casacottage.com; 2, Clapham Rd, Richmond Town (Behind Richmond Town Post Office); d incl breakfast from ₹3375 A peaceful retreat in yellow, tucked away in the narrow green streets of centrally located Richmond Town, Casa Cottage's

legacy of over 95 years is still intact in its vintage look, period furniture and soothing ambience. Choose one of the more spacious rooms on the first floor, which have a private sit-out that overlooks the grassy patch lined with wooden benches. The cafe by the garden serves only breakfast.

### Kumarakrupa Hotel HOTEL ₹₹

☎080 22259404; www.kstdc.co; d (AC deluxe) ₹2250, incl breakfast This KSTDC hotel is located in the heart of the city. The green setting offers a relaxing ambience, as do the plush interiors. A restaurant serving authentic Kannada food (try the thali), a gym and sprawling gardens complete the experience. The hotel is a stroll away from Karnataka Chittrakala Parishath.

### X by Bloom HOTEL ₹₹

☎080 41711370; www.staybloom.com; 797, 9th A Main, Indiranagar, HAL 1st stage; d starting from ₹3200 The bright

## ♥ If You Like: Wellness retreats

If you've worked or partied a little too hard in Bengaluru, you don't have to look very far for a detox break for the mind, body, and soul.

**Shreyas Yoga Retreat** Plush living tempered with meditation, organic veg food, and the feel of life on a farm. The immaculate facilities and tranquil ambience soothe you even before you embark on one of the available (and customisable) programmes of naturopathy, yoga, Ayurveda, panchakarma, and rejuvenation treatments. Feel your worries drain away in the poolside Jacuzzi as birds chirp nearby.

Distance: 35km (☎99161 10422; www.shreyasretreat.com; Santoshima Farm, Gollahalli Gate, Nelamangala-Doddaballapur Rd; d with basic package starting at approx ₹26,000)

**Jindal Naturecure Institute** Jindal has a pretty serious focus on healing through naturopathy and yoga. The sprawling campus was established for prevention and cure of chronic diseases via drug-free lifestyle modifications. The accommodations vary from basic to deluxe.

Distance: 18km (☎98114 84728; www.jindalnaturecure.in; Jindal Nagar, Tumkur Rd; starting ₹800 per person, not incl treatments)

**Ayurvedagram Heritage Wellness Centre** A tasteful celebration of simplicity and nature, this Kerala-style wellness centre offers a range of Ayurvedic treatments, yoga, and massages. Long-term healing programmes are created by a doctor to suit you—whether you're looking to lose weight or de-stress. The pure veg 'sattvic' cuisine is light yet appetising.

Distance: 26km, (☎98450 71990; www.ayurvedagram.com; Hemandanahalli, Samethanahalli Post, Whitefield; d starting ₹17,000 per day)

A Kerala-style treatment at Ayurvedagram Heritage Wellness Centre

### Soukya Holistic Health Centre

Spread over 30 acres, this upmarket and internationally renowned retreat transports you to a harmonious state of mind the moment you arrive. The focus here is on wellness of the mind and body through complementary treatments like Ayurveda for serious illnesses as well as for basic rejuvenation.

Distance: 24km, (☎080 28017000; www.soukya.com; Soukya Rd, Samethanahalli, Whitefield; 7-day treatments, incl stay starting ₹10,500 per day/per head)







A bowl of Irish stew at Salvadores

yellow interiors, warm staff and the rooftop dining area overlooking a leafy lane of Indiranagar make the hotel an excellent choice. The place


is so cheerful that the motivational sayings in large lettering on the walls in the rooms are easy to overlook. The 23 rooms and residential area location make the property sufficiently intimate. There is a larger hotel by the same name located on 100 Feet Road close by, if you want to be in the middle of all the nightlife.


## Eating


### **Salvadores's** ANGLO-INDIAN ₹₹₹


 080 4965 3492; www.salvadores.co.in; Central Mall, 5th fl, MG Rd; mains above ₹2000; 11am–11pm (weekend breakfasts at 9am) Run by the family that once owned the iconic Victoria Hotel, Salvadores's is all about paying homage to the past with a contemporary twist. The restaurant serves French and Mediterranean dishes, yes, but it is nostalgic colonial-style delicacies such as dak bungalow chicken curry and Irish stew that truly beckon.

## On-trend vegan cuisine

**Sante Spa** A creative menu with the likes of quinoa upma and avocado soup. ( 080 45128828; 151, 2nd Cross, Domlur 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; 11am–11pm)





**Paradigm Shift** Vegan Thai food and multi-grain bakes. ( 96329 03999; 8, Terrace, Above GKB Opticals, 80 Feet Rd, Koramangala 4th Block; 11am–11pm)

**Carrots** Organic, gluten-free, sugar-free items, all of which are vegan. The aubergine-mushroom platter and jaggery muffins are yum. ( 080 41172812; www.carrots-india.com; No. 607, 1st fl, 80 Feet Rd, Koramangala 6th Block; 7–10.30pm weekdays & 11.30am–11pm weekends)

**Vaathsalya Millet Café** Try the wholesome millet thali, which is packed with sprouts, millet rotis, salads, and more. ( 94490 64494; 277, 15th Cross, 21 Main, Outer Ring Rd, 5th Phase, JP Nagar; 10am–noon, 4–8pm, closed Tue & Fri)

## Snapshot: A taste of Korea and Japan

Given that Bengaluru is home away from home for many Korean and Japanese expats, there is a thriving food scene from these countries.

**Soora Sang** ( 080 4130 3435, Indiranagar) and **Hae Kum Gang** ( 98802 16262; Castle St) are exactly where you need to go for a Korean kimchi or barbecue craving. For authentic Japanese fare, visit **Harima** ( 080 4132 5757; Residency Rd) or **Edo** ( 080 2211 9898; ITC Gardenia) if you're in the mood for something indulgent.

Rooftop breakfasts on weekends are packed for the view and the flavours.


### **Sly Granny** EUROPEAN ₹₹₹

 080 48536712; www.slystorys.in; 3rd & 4th fl, 618, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains above ₹2000; noon–11.30pm Done up like the imagined lair of an eccentric granny with glimpses of her erstwhile colourful pursuits, the restaurant and bar feature fabulous pop-art, a gilded door, and all manner of quirky knick-knacks. The menu has influences from all over Europe—think everything from tapas to rigatoni to duck. The upper floor morphs into a dance area at night.

### **Bombay Brasserie** INDIAN ₹₹₹

 080 41471004; 2989/B, 12th Main Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹1000–2000; noon–11pm (Mon–Thu), noon–midnight (Fri, Sat, Sun) Modern Indian cuisine meets a Mediterranean vibe, especially if you choose to sit in the open-air section. The food consists of old faves with twists—think gunpowder potatoes and Naga ghost pepper wings.

### **Oota Bangalore** REGIONAL ₹₹₹

 88802 33322; Above Windmills Craftworks; 5B Rd EPIP Zone, Basavanna Nagar, Whitefield; mains above ₹1500; noon–3.30pm, 7–11.30pm An ode to the culinary heritage of Karnataka, Oota Bangalore has curated a spectacular menu of authentic cuisine from

Neapolitan pizza is a fast-seller at The Pizza Bakery



different parts of the state. How would a novice know what to order? Easy. Take a look at the tablet menu, which points to the region on a map and explains what ingredients have gone into the dish.

### Forage EUROPEAN ₹₹₹

☎88840 02112; 318, 6th Main Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹750–1000; 12:30pm–3:30pm, 7:30–10:30pm Ideal for an afternoon salad or a touch of tapas. Forage has a relatively healthy menu that is aptly served up amid plenty of greenery.

### Bricklane Grill RESTO BAR ₹₹₹

☎080 42415505; www.escapehotels.in; #770, 100 Ft Rd, Indiranagar; mains ₹750–1000; 7am–11.30pm Dig into an elaborate Parsi menu (peppered with other Indian and continental cuisines) at this dreamily white, partially open 5th floor haven. Sit

Sol kadi, a coastal Karnataka drink

in a private room or overlooking the pool as the aroma from the live counter fills the air.

### The Pizza Bakery ITALIAN ₹₹

☎080 25202225; www.thepizzabakery.in; 2985, 12th Main Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; 12:30–3:30pm, 7–11pm This delightful pizzeria is frequented by start-up stars like Flipkart founder Binny Bansal. The woodfire sourdough pizzas are delicious. Keep an eye out for owner Abhijit Gupta—he is a well known singer locally and even appeared on the TV show *The Stage*.

### Dindigul Thalappakatti BIRYANI ₹₹

☎080 42297250; www.thalappakatti.com; 100 Feet Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; noon–4pm, 6.30–11pm You get all sorts of south Indian fare here, but it is biryani that it's justifiably famous for. The authentic Dindigul version is a must-try.

### Nagarjuna ANDHRA ₹₹

☎080 4280 0900; www.nagarjunarestaurants.com; #195, Indiranagar Double Rd, Near HDFC Bank, Stage 2, Hoysala Nagar, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; noon–4pm, 7–11pm This place attracts loads of repeat customers for its scrumptious *thali* and biryani, with heaped portions that will send you into a food coma if you don't watch yourself.

### Koshy's MULTICUISINE ₹₹

☎080 22213793; No. 39, St Mark's Rd; mains ₹500–750; 9am–11pm This old-timer has hosted illustrious guests such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Queen Elizabeth. Today it is frequented by authors, artists, actors, and disoriented foreign travellers trying to make sense of the elaborate menu. Uniformed waiters flit around with steel trays containing mutton cutlets, baked beans, pots of tea, and caramel custard. Bengaluru in black and white photographs and an old aquarium are the only aesthetic infusions.

### Mangalore Pearl COASTAL KARNATAKA ₹₹

☎080 25578855; www.mangalorepearl.com; #3 Coles Rd, Above K.C Das Sweets, Frazer Town; mains ₹500–750; noon–2.45pm & 7.30–10.30pm Seafood aficionados will love diving into the coastal Karnataka delicacies served here. As you partake of succulent prawn preparations and sol kadi (a pink spiced concoction of kokum and curd), do cast a glance at the Karnataka-themed graffiti on all walls by cartoonist Prakash Shetty.

### The Hole in the Wall BREAKFAST ₹₹

☎080 40949490; No.4, 8th Main, Koramangala 4th Block; mains ₹250–500; Tue–Fri 8am–3pm, 5.30–8.30pm & Sat/Sun 8am–3pm, Mon closed After a night on the town, this place offers the best hangover remedies in the form of juicy sausages, perfectly cooked eggs, and fresh juices. It's one breakfast place you don't want to miss.

### Empire MULTICUISINE ₹

☎080 40414041; www.hotelempire.in; No. 36 Church St Rd; mains ₹250–500; 10.30am–12.30am Post-partying hunger pangs bring hordes of people to the 14 Empire restaurants in and around the city (the flagship one being on Church Street). Pounce on the first seat that you get and tear into hunger killers such as coin parotta and chicken kebab.

### Sri Krishna Cafe SOUTH INDIAN ₹

☎080 41104345; 143, KHB Colony, 1st Floor, 60 Feet Rd, 5th Block, Koramangala; mains ₹250–500; 7:30am–11am, noon–3.30pm, 5.30–10.30pm For a stomach-busting Tamil-style lunch, there is nothing better. You'll forget all about the lack of decor once you get started on the idlis, vadas, uthappams, and idiyappams.

### Mavalli Tiffin Rooms SOUTH INDIAN ₹

☎080 22220022; www.mavallitiffinrooms.com; #14, Lal Bagh Main Rd, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar; mains less than ₹200; 6.30–11am, 12.30–9.30pm, Mon closed A legendary name in south Indian





## EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

### A taste of Karnataka

**Amrita Bose** is a leading lifestyle journalist in Bengaluru. When she is not writing about food, culture and design, she can be found honing her ramen-making skills.

You can sample cuisines from across Karnataka in Bengaluru if you know where to look. Here are my go-tos.

**Kamat Lokaruchi** A perfect lunch pitstop on the highway, this place specialises in unlimited north Karnataka and Karavali special thalis, with local women helping the making of sweet ghee-soaked *holige* and other millet breads. Other great regional snacks here are *modde idli* (idlis steamed in screw pine leaves), button idlis dunked in sambhar, and masala *avalakki* (beaten rice) with sev. (📍90085 55933; Bangalore-Mysore Rd; ₹500 for two; 6am–11pm)

#### The Green Path—Forgotten Food

The vegetarian lunch buffet here showcases Karnataka's culinary diversity. Start with seasonal salads (there's one made with lentils and baby fenugreek leaves) and then head to the live counters for fresh dosas, akki roti, *holige*, and steamed *kadabu* to be eaten with vegetable *palya*, sambhar, rasam, and an assortment of chutneys. (📍080 23569777; www.thegreenpath.in; Opp Mantri Metro station, Sampige Rd, Rajiv Gandhi Circle, Malleshwaram; ₹1200 for two; noon–3pm, 7–10.30pm)

**Kanua** Perhaps one of Bengaluru's best-kept secrets, Kanua offers an extensive seafood menu with fresh fish in rava, tava and rice batter fries, and also a big vegetarian Konkani section (try the *vaali ambat*, a raw papaya and spinach curry).

(📍080 65374471; 6/2, Near Wipro Headquarters, Kaikondrahalli, Sarjapur Rd; ₹1500 for two; 11am–3pm, 7–11pm)

**Military hotels** These unique establishments—which specialise in hearty, meaty fare—are part of Bengaluru's culinary history. It is believed they first popped up to serve Maratha soldiers when the city was conquered in 1638.

My favourites include **Ranganna**

**Military Hotel** (Opp Indian Oil Petroleum, Krishna Rajendra Rd, 7th Block, Jayanagar) known for its mutton *biryani* (although it is more of a *pulao*); **SGS Donne Biryani** (2nd Cross, 21, KV Temple Street Cross, Sowrastrapet, Near Balepet Circle) for *biryanis* served in a leaf bowl; and the iconic **Shivaji Military Hotel** (No. 718, 1st C Main, 45th Cross, 8th Block, Jayanagar) for its succulent chicken dry fry and *donne biryanis* served in leaf cups.

comfort food, this super-popular eatery (particularly the Lal Bagh branch) has had Bengaluru eating out of its hands since 1924. Head to the dining room, queue up for a table, and then admire the images of southern beauties etched on smoky glass as waiters bring you delicious idlis and dosas, accompanied by frothing filter coffee served in silverware.

#### Konark VEG MULTICUISINE ₹

(📍080 41248812; 50, Field Marshall Cariappa Rd, Residency Rd; mains ₹250–500; 8am–10.30pm A delight for vegetarians, Konark's central location, splendid quality of food, family-friendly ambience, and prompt service has helped keep it a long-standing go-to for residents.

#### Airlines BREAKFAST ₹

(📍080 22273783; No. 4 Madras Bank Rd, Off Lavelle Rd; less than ₹200; 7am–10pm Early morning joggers, students



A typical 'tiffin' with coffee

bunking college, and other breakfast-seekers congregate under the shade of two large banyan trees for delicious 'tiffin' items such as *shivage bath*, idlis and dosas, all to be washed down with brilliant coffee.

### ✓ Top Tip: Pocket-friendly dining

Bengaluru is a haven for quick-service authentic south Indian fare, including at chain restaurants like **Adigas**, **Sukh Sagar**, **Kamath**, **Shanthi Sagar**, and **New Shanthi Sagar** (often collectively referred to as *darshinis*) with their 'stand and eat' sections with metallic tables where you can gulp down your *vadas* and filter *kaapi*. For budget non-veg cuisine, there are **military hotels** (see p50) peppered across town.

If street food floats your boat, then don't miss **Thindi Beedi** or **Eat Street** (Old Market Rd, VV Puram, 6.30–11.30pm), which stirs to life at dusk with people hollering for their *chaat* orders, juice, paper dosas, and sweets. Make sure to try local Kannadiga favourites such as milk-dipping *chiroti* (a yummy layered syrup-soaked pastry).



## ♥ If You Like: Home-style cuisine

**Bengaluru Oota Company** Pre-book three or five course meals, customised to your taste but steeped in Gowda and Mangalorean roots. Not only do you get to deep dive into the fantastic regional flavours but it feels like home, what with the owners themselves hosting you. The bright yellow interiors and red door is enticing enough, but wait till you taste the mamsa saaru (a traditional mutton curry), *bassarau* (greens and lentil curry), and delicious *ammani jamuns* for dessert.

(☎94483 02628; www.bengaluruootacompany.com; No. 5, Cambridge Cross Rd, Cambridge Layout; ₹2000 and above for two; noon–3.30pm, 7–11pm)

**The Restaurant—Coorg** A 'weekend only' special of homemade Coorgi food prepared using traditional techniques and fresher than fresh spices by Priya and KC Aiyappa. The roof-top buffet lunch gets booked fast. (☎98454 93688; 477 Krishna Temple Rd, 1st Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; Fri 8–11pm and Sat/ Sun noon–3.30pm and 8–11pm)

### Vidyarthi Bhavan SOUTH INDIAN ₹

(☎080 26677588; #32, Gandhi Bazaar Main Rd, Basavanagudi; mains below ₹200; Mon–Thurs 6.30–11.30am, 2–8pm & Sat/Sun/public holidays 6.30am–noon, 2.30–8pm, Fri closed Dishing out tiffin items

Vadas are an indulgent breakfast staple



and meals since 1943, this place's allure lies in its old-world ambience and crispy dosas.

### Brahmin's Cafe SOUTH INDIAN ₹

No.3, Ranga Rao Rd, Shankarapuram; mains below ₹200; 6am–noon, 3–7pm, Sun closed The popularity of this small no-frills cafe hinges on a Spartan menu of just six items since 1945: idli, vada, khara bhath, kesari bhath, coffee, and badam milk. A must-stop in old Bengaluru.

### Halli Mane SOUTH INDIAN ₹

(☎080 65611222; www.hallimane.com; 3rd Cross, Sampige Rd, Malleshwaram; mains ₹250–500; 12pm–3.30pm, 7–11.30pm The mud-plastered walls, hand-painted traditional designs, Carnatic music, and traditionally dressed waiters are in sync with the typical south Indian rural fare (think ragi

mudde, kundapura pathrode and akki rotti) on the menu. A ₹150 coupon gets you an elaborate lunch, although you aren't allowed to share.

### Taaza Thindi SOUTH INDIAN ₹

(☎76762 08899; 26th Main, 4th Block, Jayanagar; mains less than ₹200; 7am–noon, 4.30–9.30pm Optimally priced and delicious south Indian dishes served in immaculate environs make this place a breakfast classic.

### Corner House DESSERTS ₹

(☎080 25583262; www.cornerhouse.in; 45/3 Gopalkrishna Complex Near Mayo Hall, Residency Rd; mains ₹250–500; 11am–11.30pm This landmark dessert joint has been dishing out tempting ice-cream combos for over quarter of a century. The popularity of treats like 'Death by Chocolate' and seasonal fruit and ice-cream combos has led to the sprouting of 15 outlets in Bengaluru and another in Mysuru.

### Lake View DESSERTS ₹

(☎080 25582161; www.lakeviewmilkbar.com; 89 Kanan Building, MG Rd; mains below ₹200; 8.30am–midnight Started in 1930, this veteran serves all manner of sundaes, waffles,



Filter coffee in a traditional tumbler-dabara set

cakes, and even a long list of savoury items. Make a quick stop for the legendary black forest cake.

## 🍷 Drinking

### Toit BREW PUB

(☎080 25201460; www.toit.in; 298, 100 Ft Rd, Metro Pillar 62, Indiranagar; 11am–11pm This quirky wood-floored brewery has been 'sending it' (a Bengaluru term for downing drinks) since 2010. It is credited with reviving the city's waning pub culture a decade or so ago, and it still has plenty of

## ✓ Top Tip: Mall dining

A sprawling dining and shopping complex off MG Road, **UB City** (Vittal Mallya Rd, Lavelle Rd) offers plenty of choice in a single location, with several cuisines represented, including Mexican at Sanchez, Mediterranean at Fava, Southeast Asian at Sriracha, and Italian at Toscano.

full nights—quite a feat when you consider that it can fit more than 360 happy beer drinkers at a point of time. Try the crisp Toit Weiss white beer and team it up with some flaky grilled fish. Pets are allowed in one section.

### Arbor Brewing Company

BREW PUB

☎080 50144477; www.arborbrewing.in; Magrath Rd; noon–11.30pm Seven special brews and more to come are the highlight of this spacious American-style brewery. The menu suggests the best pub fare that goes with the different ales.

Draught beer trumps bottled in Bengaluru



### Windmills Craftworks

BREW PUB

☎080 25692012; www.windmillscraftworks.com; #331, Rd 5B, EPIP Zone, Whitefield; noon–11.30pm Sun & Mon, noon–1am Tue–Sat The book-lined walls, a small stage for live gigs, and open-air wooden deck (perfect to take in the Bengaluru breeze from the 5th floor perch) provide a welcoming ambience to try the six in-house brews and largely American cuisine.

### The Permit Room

PUB

☎90191 13388; www.thepermitroom.in; 16/3, Ram Kunj, Opp Garuda Mall, Magrath Rd; mains above ₹1000; noon–11.30pm Mon–Thur; noon–1am Fri & Sat, 10am–11.30pm Sun This colourful place draws out the coolness factor in south Indian culture, right from the decor to the whimsical menu. The creative cocktails include a whisky-laced rasam, Guntur chilli and mango juice with vodka, and a hot toddy of brandy, jaggery and spices. This place has also eschewed the usual fries for nouvelle south Indian cuisine—think filter kaapi mousse, a side of haleem pate, and yam mash with mozzarella.

### Toast & Tonic

PUB

☎080 41116879; www.toastandtonic.com; 14/1, Wood St, Ashok Nagar; noon–3pm; 7pm–11.30, 9am–3pm; 7pm–10.30 (Sun) This place is good for romance, with its flattering yellow lighting, a chic barn-style ambience, and the smoothest gin 'n' tonic-based cocktails. Try the 'British Raj', which is infused with cinnamon and



## Cafes & teashops

**Indian Coffee House** Perfect for coffee served with a splash of nostalgia. Turbaned waiters hastily thrust the spartan menu at you, rushing you through the meal with frosty hospitality. Take in the crumbling walls, old coffee posters, and constant chatter with some rose milk and cutlets. ☎080 25587088; 19, ground fl, Church St, Brigade Gardens

**Hatti Kaapi** A perfect blend of classic Karnataka coffee packaged in modern coffee shops. There are outlets all over town. (www.hattikaapi.com)

**Third Wave Roasters** The best place for responsibly sourced coffee from the estates of Chikkamagaluru. Outlets are located in Koramangala and Indiranagar. (www.thirdwavacoffee.in)

**CTR (Shri Sagar)** The coffee in this famous old joint is made personally by owner Sandesh Poojari. Actress Deepika Padukone is a regular, but the star according to the owner, is the fresh coffee. ☎080 2331 7531; 7th Cross, Margosa Rd, Malleshwaram; 7.30am–12.30pm, 4–9.15pm

**Infinitea** This smart yet homely place has an impressive selection of orthodox teas from the best estates as well as a few fancy varieties. Their food (soups, salads, smoked chicken wings) also scores highly. (www.infinitea.in; 2 Shah Sultan Complex, Cunningham Rd; 11am–11pm)

pomegranate, topped with a rose petal cucumber ice. Nibble on gin-marinated duck buns as you make goo-goo eyes at each other.

### Bob's Bar

PUB

☎78990 25176; 777/1, 100 Feet Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Doopannahalli, Indiranagar; 11.30am–1pm Both the décor and the name are a throwback to the city's 'cantonment' days, when bar-goers would call strangers at the next table 'Bob' to initiate a chat. Bengaluru-themed graffiti, old-style rattan chairs, and prices that hark back to a more affordable past ensure that this place is always packed. The kheema-dosa with gun powder is a much-ordered item.

### Sotally Tober

PUB

☎91084 60486; www.sotallytober.com; 769, 80 Feet Rd, Koramangala 4th Block, Koramangala; noon–midnight, Sun–Thur; noon–1am Fri & Sat Youthful partygoers are drawn to the spray-painted walls, on-trend music, and lighting made from teapots and mason jars. What keeps them here are delights such as the whiskey-and-tea cocktail called Sour Chai. There is another outlet off MG Road.

### Watson's

PUB

☎72999 38711; 4th fl, Skywalk Building, Assaye Rd, Pulikeshi Nagar; 11am–1am This place sees tons of repeat customers thanks to the view of a leafy canopy of trees below,

## ✓ Top Tip: Dancing and live gigs

Bengaluru knows how to have fun. Some of the best venues for live gigs and dancing include **The Humming Tree** (☎98866 18386, Indiranagar), which gets a number of homegrown bands and international artists; **Foxtro** (☎91081 36001, Koramangala) that appeals to the young crowd looking for an affordable place; and **Skyye** (☎080 4909 0000, UB City), a more plush rooftop dance and dine venue. **Kitty Ko** (☎080 30527777; Lalti Ashok) has jettisoned its way on the scene in the last few years.

affordable beer, signature cocktails like the self-explanatory Mirchi Margarita, and tasty snacks of the 'pepper fry' variety. The retro 90s music makes the Gen-Xers jive. Other outlets are on 100 Feet Road and JP Nagar.

### Church Street Social PUB

☎91520 17971; www.socialoffline.in; 46/1, Cobalt Building, Church St; 9am–1am

Weekend revelry at a club

A co-working space by day and a buzzing pub by night, this warehouse-style place checks all the boxes for an evening out with friends: a lively atmosphere, inventive cocktails, enjoyable eats (try the gunpowder calamari), and affordable prices.

### Noon Wines (Scottish Pub) PUB

☎080 22215002; Vasavi Complex, No. 17/21, St Mark's Rd; noon–5pm

This hole-in-the-wall pub is refreshingly nonchalant, with a tiny menu of cheap wine and beer and unambitious masala peanuts-type snacks. It's open for five hours—only afternoon tippers need apply.

## ★ Entertainment

### Theatre & the arts

The top spot for theatre lovers is **Ranga Shankara** (☎08026592777; www.rangashankara.org), an affordable, yet world-class theatre space.

**Jagriti Theatre** (☎080 26592777; www.jagrititheatre.com) and **Chowdiah Memorial Hall** also

## ♥ If You Like: Microbreweries



A sampler tray of beers and ales

If Toit, Arbor, and Windmills haven't slaked your thirst, then wend your way to one of these other top spots.

**Byg Brewsky** Spread over more than 6000 sq m, this is supposedly Asia's largest microbrewery and serves brews inspired from Germany and Belgium.

(www.bygbrewsky.com; ☎080 4680

9796; Byrathi Village Southern Asia Bible College, 22, Hennur Bagalur Rd; 12.30pm–2am)

**Prost** An eclectic industrial decor, a rooftop with quality craft beers on tap, and a tempting food menu. Weekend evenings mean DJs and dancing. (www.prost.in; 811 5th Cross Rd, Koramangala; noon–11.30pm Sun–Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat)

**Brewsky** A very cool spot, with city views from its fine roof terrace, and a funky restaurant with vintage decor. It brews six beers on-site including a golden ale, wheat beer and stout. (www.brewsky.in; 4th & 5th fl Goenka Chambers, 19th Main Rd, JP Nagar; noon–12.30am)

**Biere Club** South India's first microbrewery, with several craft beers on tap (some of which are brewed on-site). Good sharing platters. (www.thebiereclub.com; 20/2 Vittal Mallya Rd; 11am–11pm Sun–Thur, to midnight Fri & Sat)

**Barleyz** An attractive rooftop beer garden with potted plants, artificial grass, and tables with built-in BBQ grills. Offers free tastings of its six beers, as well as rotating seasonal brews. Try the excellent wood-fired pizza. (www.barleyz.com; 100 Feet Rd, Koramangala; 11am–11.30pm Sun–Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat)

stage regional and international plays regularly. **Kalari Gurukulam** (www.kalariipyattu.org; ☎99451 55995)

offers regular performances of Kerala's ancient martial arts.

**Bangalore International Centre** (www.bangaloreinternationalcentre.org; ☎98865 99675) doubles up as

theatre for plays, music, lectures, films and more, and **Attakkalari**

**Dance Company** (www.attakkalari.org; ☎080 41467690) is a great venue for

contemporary performances. Check out what's on online.

### Samsung Opera House

☎95138 99866; www.samsung.com; No.57, Opera House, Brigade Rd Junction, Residency Rd; 11am–10pm The 1900s-built Opera House was given a new lease of life in 2018, and is now Samsung's largest experience store. Many original features of the 3000 sq m building have been retained.





A martial arts show at Kalari Gurukulam (p57)

making it a meeting place for old and new Bengaluru.

### Escape Rooms

Channel your inner Hercule Poirot to solve murder mysteries and complex puzzles at Bengaluru's escape rooms. **Breakout Escape Rooms** (📞95353 05656; breakout.in; ₹1098 for two) and **Mystery Rooms** (📞988990 09240; mysteryrooms.in; ₹1800 per team) are centrally located.

### 📌 Top Tip: Plan ahead

The following frequently updated sites cover the latest restaurant openings, events, nightlife, and shopping. **Little Black Book** (www.lbb.in/bangalore) is packed with news and reviews, while **Book My Show** (in.bookmyshow.com/bengaluru/events) are go-tos for tickets.

### Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium

📞080 22379725; www.taralaya.org; Sri T. Chowdaiah Rd, High Grounds; adults/children ₹35/20; show timings (in English) 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm, Mon & second Tue closed A great option if you are travelling with kids. There are regular 45-minute shows most days.

### Wonder La

📞080 22010333; www.wonderla.com; Mysore Rd; weekday adult/child ₹808/645, weekend & public holidays adult/child ₹1039/830; weekdays 11am–6pm, Sat/Sun 11am–7pm With over 60 thrilling land and water rides, Wonder La has been a popular haunt for almost a decade. Do carry extra clothes and towels.

### 🚦 Activities

#### Cycle tours

Cycling tours of the city and around are organised by operators such as **Unventured** (📞94837 47703; www.unventured.com) and **Art of Bicycle Trips** (📞78294 86953; www.artofbicycletrips.com).

#### Bus tours

www.karnatakaholidays.net; half day ₹255, full day ₹485, without AC ₹230/385 The tourism department runs tours that cover many places in a short time. Half-day city tours run twice daily at 7.30am and 2pm, while the full-day tour departs at 7.15am (Wed to Sun). Day trips around Bengaluru are also offered,

### 🎨 If You Like: Making art

**Nandi Kalagrama** An artists' retreat and workshop, which offers residential programmes as well as courses on everything from photography to organic gardening to Bharatanatyam make-up.

(📞88617 50735; www.nandikalagram.org; 140 Woodrich Encl, Anigatta Village, Devanahalli; 9am–6pm Fri–Sun)

**Bistro Claytopia** Perfect for engaging kids, who can paint on pre-made vases, plates and other clay objects, while you relax in the adjoining cafe.

(📞080 43759392; 11, 80 Feet Rd, Near Wipro Park, Koramangala; 11am–11pm)

including to Srirangapatna and Mysuru.

#### Nandi Walks

📞98809 32380; www.facebook.com/nandivalleywalks; ₹500 per head This illuminating walking tour takes you to the base of Nandi hills to showcase the impressive history of the ancient Bhoga Nandeeshwara Temple, the Nandi Halt railway station, Muddenahalli, the birthplace of Sir M Visvesvaraya (former Dewan of Mysore), and more.

#### Equilibrium Climbing

📞88616 84444; www.equilibriumclimbing.com; 3rd fl, 546 CMH Rd, Indiranagar; from ₹150; 6am–11pm India's first climbing centre is great for indoor bouldering. They also arrange climbing excursions on weekends.

#### Microlight flying

**Myflying** (myflying.in) offers 10-minute microlight rides for ₹3300 per person at **Jakkur Flying Club** Other sky activities include paramotoring and parasailing.

### 🏠 Shopping

#### Commercial Street

Whet your bargaining skills at this shopping hot-spot, where you can get clothes, jewellery, furnishings, silver, shoes, and more. We recommend **The Silver Shop** (📞98451 28759) for its extensive

Cycling tours are picking up speed in Bengaluru





Silk saris are must-buys in the city

jewellery collection. **Asiatic Arts & Crafts** (☎080 4151791) for antiques, and Mysore Saree Udyog (see review below) for saris. Down a few streets, Shivaji Nagar hosts chaotic **Russell Market** (6.30am–9pm), which abounds in fruits and flowers.

### **Mysore Saree Udyog**

www.mysoresareeudyog.com; 1st fl, 316 Kamaraj Rd; 10.30am–8.30pm A great choice for top quality silk saris, blouses, fabrics and men's shirts, this fine store has been in business for over 70 years and has something to suit all budgets. Most garments are made with Mysuru silk.

### **Chickpet & Avenue Road**

You can get pretty much anything in this 400-year-old market, right

from false hair to vegetables! Our picks include **Balaji Antiques** (www.balajiantiques.com; 11am–7.30pm, Sun closed) which is bursting with weathered treasures. To get lost in metres of embellished silks and cottons, step into **Rukmini Hall** (☎080 22254938; 11am–7.30pm) or **Shankari Mahalakshmi Hall** (☎080 41242926; 10.30am–8.30pm).

### **UB City & around**

HIGH-END APPAREL

Visit UB City complex on Lavelle Road for high-end fashion. It also has multiple restaurants and bars. Just round the complex are boutiques like **Nicobar** (clothing, home), **Good Earth** (home furnishings) and the stunning **Raw Mango** (saris) set in an old white bungalow.

### **Rain Tree**

☎080 32723251; No. 4 Sankey Rd, High Grounds, Opp ITC Windsor Sheraton; 10am–7pm An old colonial-style house with an inviting collection of chic jewellery, designer clothing, and artefacts.

### **Cauvery Arts & Craft Emporium**

☎080 25581118; www.cauverycrafts.com; 49 MG Rd; 10am–8.30pm You will not leave Cauvery without buying something. The store is famous for its expansive collection of quality sandalwood and rosewood products as well as handmade weavings, silks, and bidriware (metallic handicrafts).

### **aPaology Curious Illustration**

☎81054 36700; www.paulfernandes.in; 15 Clarke Rd, Opp Au Bon Pain, Richards Park Entrance, Richards Park; 11am–7pm Mon–Sat, noon–7pm Sun; call before arriving Explore the life and times of the city with cartoonist Paul Fernandes's depictions of the city. Pick up original prints (₹1300–2500) or bookmarks.

### **The Entertainment Store**

☎080 41511492; Eureka, No 14/A, New No 47, Church St, Civil Station Division 61; 11am–9pm This is where Tintin meets Dexter: comics, wobble-head dolls, DVDs, posters, clothing, and more from the world of entertainment and pop culture. There is another branch in Indiranagar.

### **Psybaba's**

☎98865 27782; 29/1 Magrath Rd, Beside Garuda Mall; 11am–9pm Get your boho-chic on with tribal Aztec patterns and bold colours on handcrafted clothes and accessories. There are also eco-friendly artefacts made from found seashells, bones, horns, feathers, wood, and the like.

### **Art by Aarohi**

www.artbyaarohi.com; Diamond District; e-mail beforehand from the site for an appointment; 10am–5pm Aarohi Singh's eye-popping kettles, cushions, trunks, bags, plates, and paintings have earned her enthusiastic followers from all over the world. Visits to the art studio-cum-store must be booked in advance.



A busy mall in the city

### **Angadi Galleria**

☎080 2356 6185; www.angadigalleria.com; Sankey Tank; 11am–8pm A homegrown handloom house offering everything from bandhini to chikankari, to Banarasi fabric and saris. Angadi also happens to be the place where Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone got her famous red-and-gold Konkani-style wedding sari designed.



## SHORT TRIPS FROM BENGALURU

### Why Go?

*Bengaluru is the perfect anchor city for those who love to wander. Within a few short hours (or less), you can, depending on your whims, find yourself exploring a winery, angling at a nature retreat, climbing a rocky outcrop, or marvelling at gorgeous architecture.*

### Quick Facts

#### GETTING AROUND

Efficient bus services (see p20) and reliable highways make short breaks from Bengaluru a breeze. There are plenty of eateries and toilets along the major highways exiting the city:

**NH 4:** Pune–Bengaluru (Tumkur Rd); **NH 7:** Hyderabad–Bengaluru (Hosur Rd); **NH 48:** Hassan–Bengaluru; **NH 209:** Kanakapura–Bengaluru; **SH 17:** Mysuru–Bengaluru (Mysore Rd).

#### GREAT FOR



#### TOP PICKS

**Road to Mysuru (p71):** Temples, toys, and adventure activities.

**Galibore Nature Camp (p68):** Kayaking, nature walks, and biking amid wilderness.

**Srirangapatna (p71):** Go on a Tipu Sultan trail.

**Taking a winery tour (p65):** Winey weekend fun.

**Mysuru Palace (p70):** Glimpse a glittering royal past.

The glittering interiors of Mysuru Palace



## 📍 Nandi Hills & Around

Discover the remnants of Tipu's empire and monuments of earlier eras at Nandi Hills, once home to the Tiger of Mysuru's impregnable fort. Sprawling gardens stretch across the hill and offer unparalleled views of the surrounding countryside, making this a great spot for a picnic or even an overnight stay.

### Nandi Hills

Just 56km from Bengaluru, Nandi Hills sits safe within the ramparts of the Nandidurg Fortress, overlooking vast tracts of chequered farmland. Once known as 'Ananda Giri' or 'Hill of Happiness', it's a highly popular day trip destination: teeming with a variety of flowering shrubs, cooled by hilly breezes even in summer, and scattered with monuments and shrines in the most unexpected of places. Spots that need extra attention include **Tipu's Summer Palace**, a weathered red building that still resonates with the state's history, and **Tipu's Drop**, an erstwhile execution spot for prisoners. The ghastly history behind, it now offers panoramic views of the countryside below. entry/car ₹10/150; 6am–6pm

### Bhoga Nandeeshwara Temple

At the base of Nandi Hills is the 9th-century Dravidian-style Nandi temple, an architectural landmark. What's most interesting is the *kalyani* or tank at the back of the temple and the fact that it is a functioning shrine,

used actively for weddings. The village around the temple is occupied by many potters skilfully creating their ware. Dawn–dusk

## 🏠 Accommodation & 🍴 Eating

### Mayura Pine Top (KSTDC) HOTEL ₹

📍 8618799918; Nandi Hills, Chikballapur, Kolar; d from ₹2499 This hotel offers fantastic views of the landscape and comfortable rooms, including a suite featuring a canopied bed. The on-site restaurant is a fine spot to enjoy the view along with a beer and some nibbles. Interestingly, Mahatma Gandhi stayed twice in the heritage building here (Gandhi Nilaya).

### Discovery Village RESORT ₹

📍 080 46809084; www.discoveryvillage.in; next to Kanive Nandishwara Temple, Nandi Foothills; d full board from ₹5000 Located at the edge of Nandi Hills, Discovery Village offers multiple wildlife and adventure activities, ranging from trekking to birdwatching. It's ideal for family holidays and corporate retreats.

### Shathayu Ayurveda Yoga Retreat WELLNESS RESORT ₹

📍 88841 33300; www.shathayuretreat.com; S.No. 261, Avathi, Devanahalli; d from ₹18000 for a 2-day package, incl full board, yoga, meditation and 2 therapies A holistic wellness retreat offering tailor-made healing packages, satvik food, and yoga. You're bound to feel revitalised after a stay.

## ❤️ If You Like: Wine & whisky

Nandi Hills encompasses one of India's premier wine-growing regions, and is fast gaining an international reputation with some 18 wineries. Also near Bengaluru is India's first single-malt whisky distillery. **Grover Wineries** At an altitude of 920m this winery produces quality white and red varietals. Tours include tastings of five wines in the cellar rooms, accompanied by cheese and crackers. This is followed by lunch. From February to May you'll also see grape crushing and can visit its vineyards. It's located on the approach to Nandi Hills, around 40km north of Bengaluru.

📍 080 27622826; www.groverzampa.in; 1.5 hr tour Mon–Fri ₹850, Sat & Sun ₹1000

**Bengaluru Soma Vineyards** Located in the shadow of the Makalidurga Hills (Maakli) the lakeside winery offers a lush sprawl of grape plantations, along with fruit trees including coconut palm, custard apple, and mango. A guided walk, wine-making, and an evening of barbecue make for great weekend revelry.

📍 9845428071; Raju Estate, Gundamgere Village, Sonnenahalli; ₹2500 per person, incl tour, lunch & BBQ

**Heritage Grape Winery** If you're short on time, stop here on the way to Mysuru. Get a 45-minute tour of the vineyards and bottling plant; an in-house restaurant offers continental and north Indian fare.

📍 080 26602667; 115/86, Gangedoddi Village, Chekkere Post, Channapatana; ₹150 per person

**Amrut** Established in 1948, Amrut, India's first producer of single malt whisky, offers free distillery tours run by knowledgeable guides. You get taken through the entire process before tasting world-class single malts and blends. It's 20km outside Bengaluru on the road to Mysuru; pre-bookings are essential.

📍 080 23100402; www.amrutdistilleries.com; Mysuru Rd



## **🎯 Bheemeshwari & Galibore Nature Camp**

A comfortable drive of 100km from Bengaluru, Bheemeshwari and the adventure-packed Galibore Nature Camp nearby (14km) allow you to immerse yourself in the serenity of nature beside the majestic Kaveri River. Trek through the lush forests of the Basavana Betta, go on a coracle (a basket-like boat) ride, or watch birds and play 'spot the difference' between rocks and crocs.

### **Trekking**

Bheemeshwari has treks of varying durations. These are categorised as easy, moderate and tough, depending on the distance (from as little as 4km, up to 30km). Snaking

A view of the River Kaveri from Bheemeshwari Adventure & Nature Camp



### **✔️ Top Tip: Day of action**

If you're pressed for time, Bheemeshwari Adventure and Nature Camp offers a great day package that include adventure activities (such as Burma loops, parallel walk, coracle ride) as well as lunch and tea/coffee. (Jungle Camps & Trails Plan; [www.junglelodges.com](http://www.junglelodges.com); ₹2950 per person, check website for deals)

trails along the Kaveri, including one from Basavana Betta that winds along Chellure Hill almost parallel to the river, present a panoramic view of the valley below. You can also



A pied-crested cuckoo, one of the many avian species gracing the area

camp under the stars, surrounded by the craggy terrain of the Kaveri Wildlife Sanctuary.

### **Coracles & kayaking**

Instructor-led kayaking and coracle rides are possible in the calmer parts of the water. Single and double kayaks are available. All year round except Jun-Sep

### **Birds & wildlife**

Wildlife lovers will get their fix at both destinations. This area is home to over 200 species of birds, including the commonly sighted grey-headed fish eagle, tawny eagle, and the pied-crested cuckoo. Among the mammals one can spot here are sambar, spotted deer, jackals and

elephants, as well as the endangered grizzled giant squirrel. Keep an eye out for crocodiles as well.

### **Mountain biking**

Mountain bikes are available to hire and explore the nearby forest topography. One is allowed only in the accepted tourist limit inside the forest.

All year round

### **Mekedatu & Sangam**

Located within 10km of Galibore, these are popular picnic spots along the Kaveri River—Mekedatu is a narrow gorge, and Sangam is where the Kaveri and Arkavati rivers merge. For safety reasons, it is best avoided by the elderly and kids.

## Accommodation & Eating

### **Bheemeshwari Nature & Adventure Camp**

₹₹₹

☎94495 97885; Bheemeshwari, Byadarahalli Post Halguri Hobli, Malavalli Taluk, Mandya; tented cottage/bamboo hut/cottage/log hut from ₹5079/6614/6117/4476 per person, incl full board, coracle ride, nature walk and select adventure activities. Another Jungle Lodges and Resorts property, the camp, looking out over the Kaveri River, embraces the enterprise's well-known eco-tourism philosophy. Equipped with eight log huts, two bamboo huts, and 10 tented cottages that blend with the wooded environs, it is the perfect spot for those looking to connect with nature. Spend your time hiking in the nature trails, birdwatching, taking coracle rides, rafting and kayaking, mountain

The interior of a tent at Galibore Nature Camp



biking and rope walking. Buffet meals are served in an open gazebo, and tea makes an appearance at pre-decided times at the crack of dawn and in the evening.

### **Galibore Nature Camp**

₹₹₹

☎080 29784504; www.jungleloges.com; Uyamballi Post, Kanakapura Taluk, Sangam; executive tented cottage incl full board, coracle ride, and guided trekking from ₹4345 per person. Stay in lovely thatched roofed tented cottages, furnished comfortably with a double bed, clothes rack, table fan and a dresser. The curtains and olive-green tents, as they are made to blend with the foliage around the property. The bathrooms are attached to the tent but with a separate entrance. If you have a choice, pick tent No 1 or 12 for maximum privacy. Delicious veg and non-veg meals are served in the common gazebo at designated timings. Do keep a watchful eye out for errant simians.



## **EXPERT RECOMMENDATION** Outdoor adventures in Karnataka

**Gurudeep Ramakrishna** is the co-founder and director of Unventured ([www.unventured.com](http://www.unventured.com)). He is passionate about offering travellers experiences that allow them to immerse themselves in the natural wealth, cultural diversity, and natural history of India.

Bengaluru and its vicinity have some incredible backdrops and thrilling adventure possibilities from whitewater rafting and bouldering, to more sedate activities like city cycling tours. Here are my top picks in and near the city.

### **Whitewater rafting & kayaking**

While Barapole (in Kodagu/Coorg), Kali (at Dandeli) and Bhadra (at Chikkamagaluru) rivers are the most popular hotspots for rafting and kayaking in Karnataka, there are also opportunities closer to Bengaluru at the frothy Kaveri rapids at Bheemeshwari and Galibore (p66).

**Cycling** Cycling enthusiasts can test their mettle on the slopes of Nandi Hills, or even at Turahalli Forest, a wonderful wooded patch in the city. Excursions are offered by companies like **Bumsonthesaddle** ([www.bumsonthesaddle.com](http://www.bumsonthesaddle.com)), **Unventured** ([unventured.com](http://unventured.com)), and **Pedal in Tandem** ([pedalintandem.com](http://pedalintandem.com)).

### **Climbing and bouldering**

Closest to the city, the boulders of Ramanagara (p71) form the

best playground for seasoned and beginner-level climbers. Other locations nearby include Savandurga, Ananthagere, Kabbala Durga, Madhugiri and Turahalli.

**Hikes** The Sunrise Trek to Uttari Betta and day treks to Nandi Durga and Channarayanaadurga offer a rejuvenating experience. Try **Plan the Unplanned** ([www.plantheunplanned.com](http://www.plantheunplanned.com)).

Camping at Nandi Durga








## Mysuru & Around

Located in the shadow of Chamundi Hill, Mysuru is the cultural heart of Karnataka. The city is also famous for its 10-day Dasara festival held in September or October. At this time Mysuru Palace is dramatically lit up every evening, while the town becomes a gigantic fairground, with concerts, dance performances, and cultural events.

### **Mysuru Palace**

Among the grandest of India's royal buildings, this was the seat of the Wodeyar maharajas. The lavish interiors are a kaleidoscope of stained glass, mirrors, and brilliant colours, further embellished by carved wooden doors, mosaic floors and a series of paintings depicting life here during the Raj era. The armoury boasts 700-plus weapons. Every Sunday and national holiday, from 7–7.30pm, the palace is


Pomp and theatre define Mysuru's Dasara

illuminated by nearly 100,000 light bulbs that accent its majestic profile.  0821 2421051; 10am–5.30pm; adults/children/foreigners ₹40/20/200, light & sound show ₹40/25/200

### **Jaganmohan Palace**

Built in 1861 as the royal auditorium, this imposing building now houses the a huge art gallery. 8.30am–5pm; adults/child/foreigner ₹75/20/175

### **Government Silk Factory**

See the entire process of silk spinning, soaking, weaving, and dyeing. Opt for a guided tour.  0821 2481803; Mananthody Rd, Ashokapuram; 10am–6.30pm

### **Chamundeshwari Temple**

This hilltop temple is dedicated to the family goddess of the Mysuru royals, Chamundeshwari. It also features a 1.8m statue of Maharaja



## The road to Mysuru

While Mysuru is only 144km from Bengaluru and can be reached in three hours, it might take longer since there are so many interesting stops.

**Ramanagara** Immortalised by Bollywood as the boulder-strewn den of Gabbar in the 1975 hit, *Sholay*, Ramanagara (47km) is a major rock climbing destination. Add to that great birding opportunities with the endangered yellow-throated bulbul and the long-billed vulture population.

**Channapatna** The Persian art form of making wooden toys and lacquerware thrives in this small town (61km). The colourful toys are made from the soft wood of the local 'aale mara' tree. About 21km from here, **Kokkare Belur** village is famous for its painted storks and spot-billed pelicans.

**Somnathapura** The grand soapstone Keshava Temple here dates to 1268 AD and was built under the Hoysala regime. The 5000 intricate statues were created by 500 artisans over a period of 58 years.

**Srirangapatna** On an island straddling the River Kaveri, this town is 16km from Mysuru. The seat of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's power, it was once the capital of Mysuru; see its glorious history come alive at the **sound and light show** (7–8pm) held every day at the fort. Another great option is a heritage walk, such as the 12-hour Tipu tour conducted by **Wander Trails** ([www.wandertrails.com](http://www.wandertrails.com), ₹4000 per head). One of the most impressive monuments is **Daria Daulat Bagh**, Tipu's intricately decorated summer palace. The Persian-style **Gumbaz** (the resting place of Tipu and his father) and the Indo-Islamic **Jamia Masjid** are other highlights. The town is also famous for the AD 894 **Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple**, a legacy of the Ganga rulers. The best place to stay (or stop for snacks) is the aptly named **Mayura River View**, a river-front KSTDC property.

Distinctive wooden toys at Channapatna





Veeragaase festival at Chamundi Hills

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III.  
7.30am–9pm

### Brindavan Gardens & KRS Dam

The century-old KRS Dam is a picnic hotspot, with lush gardens featuring rows of musical fountains. 10.30am–9.30pm; Musical Fountain Mon–Fri 6.55–7.55 pm; Sat–Sun 6.55–8.55 pm. adult/child ₹15/10

### TOP CHOICE Ashtanga yoga

Mysuru is a world-famous centre for Ashtanga yoga, developed by Sri Krishna Pattabhi Jois. There are many well-regarded schools offering courses and certification. Among the best-known are:

**IndeaYoga** (☎0821 2416779; www.indeayoga.com): Offering hatha and ashtanga yoga with guru Bharath Shetty (who practised under the late BKS Iyengar) and his wife Archana. Drop-in classes and student accommodation are also offered.

**Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute** (www.kpjayi.org): Founded by the renowned K Pattabhi Jois, who taught Madonna her yoga moves. He has since passed away and the reins have been handed over to his grandson.

**Mystic School** (www.mysoreyoga.in): Well-established school with a diverse program covering hatha and ashtanga, meditation and lectures.

### Devaraja Market

Dating from Tipu Sultan's reign, this lively bazaar bursts with flowers, fruits, spices, and conical piles of kumkum. It's perfect for photo-ops. Dawn–dusk

### Mysore Zoo

This 157-acre expanse will be a hit with children. Highlights include white tigers, gorillas, and rhinos. ☎0821 2520302; 8.30am–5.30pm, closed Tue; adults/children ₹50/20 (Mon–Fri), ₹60/30 (Sat–Sun)

### Accommodation

#### The Windflower RESORT & SPA ₹₹₹

☎990146666; www.thewindflower.com; Maharanapratap Rd, Nazarbad; d from ₹7638, incl all meals, taxes additional The plush interiors and lush surrounds are a balm for weary souls. Unwind at the swimming pool, bar and in-house restaurant and spa.

#### Silent Shores RESORT & SPA ₹₹₹

☎0821 2402930; www.silentshoresresort.com; BEML Rd, Plot No. 85-87, Hootagalli; d from ₹5000, incl breakfast, excl taxes! The garden- and lake-view rooms lie amid acres of greenery, but it's still central for sightseeing.

#### Royal Orchid Metropole HERITAGE ₹₹₹

☎0821 4255566; www.royalorchidhotels.com; No. 5, Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai Rd, Devaraja Mohalla, CFTRI Campus, Lakshmiapuram; d from ₹4250, incl breakfast, taxes additional This five-star heritage property personifies the spirit of the city, with its abiding vintage charm co-existing harmoniously with contemporary flair. The stylish amenities include multiple restaurants, swimming pool, spa, and even a gaming zone.

#### Lalitha Mahal HERITAGE ₹₹₹

☎821 2470444; www.lalithamahalpalace.co.in; d from ₹4000, incl breakfast A lovely heritage hotel in a palace commissioned by the Maharaja in 1927 for the use of the Viceroy.

#### The Green Hotel HOTEL ₹₹

☎0821 4255000; www.greenhotelinidia.com; d from ₹3000, incl breakfast A palace built for Mysuru princesses, has been restored as a charming hotel with a vintage vibe.

#### Mayura Hoysala HOTEL ₹₹

☎0821-2426160; www.kstddc.co; Jhansi Rani Lakshmi Bai Rd, Devaraja Mohalla, Shivarampet; d starting from ₹1500 A

### ♥ If You Like: Ayurveda

The award-winning **Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre** is a clinic and spa that offers traditional therapeutic and wellness treatments, created by experienced doctors and therapists. It's located at the foot of Chamundi Hills in a relaxing green neighbourhood. ☎80952 94444; www.ayurindus.com; Talavane Farm, Lalitadripura Rd, Chamundi Hill, Mysuru; costs dependent on packages

premium offering of KSTDC. Mayura is centrally located for sightseeing hotspots, and equipped with every comfort: spacious air conditioned rooms with a TV, in-house dining, room service, and wi-fi facilities

### ✂ Eating

#### Cafe Aramane CAFE ₹₹

☎88848 54249; 194/2, Motikana Building, Sayyaji Rao Rd, Devaraja Mohalla, Near SBI, Chamrajpura; mains ₹250–500; 7.30am–10.30pm An old-school café with classic south Indian fare and large Mysuru-themed photographs.

#### Malgudi Cafe CAFE ₹₹

☎0821 425 5000; The Green Hotel, 2270 Vinoba Rd; mains ₹250–500; 10am–7pm Loosely styled to match the look and feel of RK Narayan's *Malgudi Days*, it's an atmospheric place.

## Best of the Rest

Almost every highway that diverges from Bengaluru wends its way to an iconic heritage, nature or adventure destination. We've chosen destinations that make for a great day trip and are located within 200km from Bengaluru.

### Shravanabelagola

The massive statue of Bahubali in Shravanabelagola is a spiritual hook for Jain pilgrims who arrive here to climb the temple hills of Chandragiri and Vindhyagiri. This is also the site of a festival called Mahamastakabhisheka, which is celebrated once every 12 years (the last date was in 2018). 158km; Dawn–dusk

### Belur & Halebidu

The 11-13th-century Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebidu are South India's answer to Khajuraho and Konark. The intricate carvings on the Chennakesava Temple (Belur) and

The Hoysala temple at Halebidu



Hoysaleswara Temple (Halebidu) are hallmarks of the most prosperous period of Hindu culture in Karnataka. Keep an eye out for exquisite sculptural details ranging from meticulously carved monkey teeth to bangles that still rotate around the wrists. 185km; Dawn–dusk

### Nrityagram, Hessarghatta

Built by the late Odissi exponent Protima Bedi, who set out to revive the gurukul system of dance education, Nrityagram (32km) was started in 1990. Visit and you may see a graceful practice session in progress amid scenic surroundings and nature-inspired architecture by Gerard De Cunha. Call ahead. 32km; ☎ 80 28466312; www.nrityagram.org; entry ₹100 (free for kids and seniors); 10am–2pm, Tue–Sat (dance classes 10.30am–1pm)

### Chitradurga

Chitradurga Fort rises from a boulder-strewn hill and according to lore dates back to the time of the Mahabharata, when the demon brother-sister duo, Hidimba and Hidimbi, lived here. Legend goes that Bhima married Hidimbi and had a son with her. The fort eventually belonged to Timmana Nayaka, a military serviceman of the Vijayanagar Empire in the 16th century, before it fell in the hands of Hyder Ali about 100 years later. The Chandravalli Caves close by are worth a visit too. 203km; Adult/foreigner ₹5/100; 6am–6pm



The 17m statue at Shravanabelagola

### Shivasamudra Waterfalls

A post-monsoon must-visit, the frothy Shivanasamudra Waterfalls (139km) are an excellent addition to Bengaluru. Originating from the Kaveri River, tiny rivulets from across the Deccan plateau converge here and plummet down a height of almost 100m. The falls have coverage of 305m across, making for a massive curtain of water.

### Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

The ideal time to visit the sanctuary (130km) is from December to February, when over 40,000 birds (including migratory ones) congregate here. The feathered friends here include the painted stork, Asian openbill stork, common spoonbill, woolly-necked stork, black-headed ibis, lesser

whistling duck, and the great stone plover. 130km from Bengaluru; 19km from Mysuru; 9am–6pm; Indians/foreigners ₹50/200

### Talakkad

The arid-looking terrain on the edge of the Kaveri River is home to a clutch of 30 ancient temples. While some of these are buried under sand, some excellent architecture remains. Legend goes that twin brothers, Tala and Kadu, once saw wild elephants worshipping a tree that contained an image of Shiva. The brothers started cutting the tree, only to discover that the elephants were sages. As soon as they cut the tree, it was miraculously restored. Two stone images in front of the Veerbhadraswamy Temple, are said to represent the brothers. Much later, this was one of the pit stops for Rama on his way to Lanka. 130km



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## THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN RESEARCHED AND AUTHORED BY:



A bonafide vagabond, **Supriya Sehgal** has traversed the length and breadth of the country for over 15 years.

Karantaka is especially close to her heart as she kicked off her solo wanderings discovering different corners of the state and wrote her first travel book about weekend getaways from the capital. Even a decade later, she finds it one of the most inspiring destinations in India.

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## LONELY PLANET INDIA TEAM

**Commissioning Editor** Asavari Singh

**Design Manager** Kavita Saha  
**Picture Research Manager**

Shweta Andrews

**Layout Designer** Ankur Guha

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