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COFFEE TRAILS in **KARNATAKA**

COORG • CHIKKAMAGALURU • SAKLESHPUR

This guide is researched and written by
Supriya Sehgal



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FOREWORD

An Ode to Karnataka's Coffee

**SUNALINI MENON**

Karnataka is the largest producer of coffee grown in India, and the beans from Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu and around are famous in the world market. This has given rise to coffee trails, travel itineraries where lovers of this brew and others find pleasure in the beautiful coffee-growing regions of the state.

India's tryst with coffee began in the 17th century when Baba Budan, a Sufi saint returned from Mecca to Karnataka. Budan did not come back empty handed. He smuggled a clutch of seven green coffee seeds from Yemen, as it was illegal to export coffee beans from Arab lands at that time. Budan was bewitched by the aroma of the brew and slipped in the beans and planted them in the Chandragiri Hills, a verdant spot along the Western Ghats. Today that hill is called Baba Budan Hill after him. The coffee plants in the Baba Budan range thrived unattended and continued to grow wild, even as the East India Company began looking at cultivating pepper and coffee as plantation crops in India.

Today, both species of *coffea arabica* and *coffea robusta* grow in Karnataka. India is a significant player in the global coffee trade, being the sixth largest producer of coffee in the world. Karnataka accounts for almost 70 percent of the coffee crop grown in India. And the coffee from Chikkamagaluru and Coorg is well known in the world market. Sakleshpur, though a smaller location, is also a significant contributor and a lesser-known region for travellers to visit.

Indian coffee is truly sustainable – environmentally, economically and socially. A diversified pattern of cultivation with pepper, cloves, cardamom, oranges, bananas, vanilla and medicinal herbs is the hallmark of Indian coffee cultivation. Branded coffees of arabica and robusta from these regions are now finding their way into coffee cups around the world, stimulating coffee consumers with their flavours and aroma. Our robustas are considered amongst the best in the world. In addition, a new sub-culture of artisanal coffees is making a definitive inroad in India, with

aficionados paying special attention to rediscovering regional flavours. You will find a host of homegrown brands creating a splash in the market for premium coffees.

The coffee industry in the state of Karnataka alone is worth over ₹3000 crore in terms of foreign exchange and employs more than 6,60,000 workers, with 2 million carrying out the trade and helping in the processing of coffee on the farms.

For travellers, a visit to the coffee-clad hills of the state is a journey into the culture, heritage, food and traditions of a people around the region where the bean grows. Majestic bungalows, estate homes and plush resorts nestle in the coffee hills, inviting and hosting travellers into a unique experience. The plantations are indeed home to colourful birds of every description, not to forget the majestic elephants and the stately bison that also frequent them.

The best time to chart out a travel plan for a coffee trail is from October to March when the pleasant weather allows for treks along winding paths, hearty meals and the invigorating company of a good cup of coffee.

The author is CEO of Bangalore-based Coffeelabs and Asia's first female coffee taster.

Coffee was introduced to India in the 17th century in Karnataka's Chandragiri Hills



Karnataka's Coffee Trails

Karnataka's coffee growing regions are an excellent choice of holiday. It's a real treat to listen to bird calls, luxuriate in plantation homes, view the coffee bushes and gorge on the local cuisine. It's a picture-perfect holiday and is incomplete without the inevitable hot cuppa.

Seventy percent of the coffee produced in India comes from Karnataka, mainly from Chikkamagaluru (p28), Kodagu (p16) and Sakleshpur (p40). There are many options for travellers to go on weekend getaways from Bengaluru. The calming environs of coffee plantations make them an ideal place to sit back and take in the heady aroma of a fresh cup of coffee.

CHIKKAMAGALURU

Chikkamagaluru is the coffee heartland of Karnataka. For travellers, the incredible scenery from villas and plantation homes makes it easy to sink into a chair and grab a book. If you want something to do, tasting and brewing sessions are also available. Chikkamagaluru is dotted with heritage sites, wildlife and adventure locales. Trekking to the three peaks of Baba Budan Giri, Seethalayanagiri and Mullayanagiri, rafting down the River Bhadra, sporting at the Golfing Club and savouring hearty heritage cuisine

Scenic Coorg offers a close up of the coffee plantation lifestyle

are on the cards. To all this, add a visit to the Coffee Yatra Museum (p32) and rambling walks through the plantations.

COORG (KODAGU)

Fragrant coffee estates cover the Kodagu (Coorg) region. Some make the trip only for the fantastic Kodava cuisine. Use charming estate homes or plush resorts as the starting point for treks, birding and nature walks. Choose from high-octane activities like white-water rafting, rappelling, quad biking, kayaking and camping. Madikeri, the centre of tourism in the region, has monuments and temples like the Raja's Seat (p19), Madikeri Fort (p18), Omkareshwar Temple (p18) and Abbey Falls (p19).

SAKLESHPUR

A holiday at a coffee estate offers the bounty of the Western Ghats with waterfalls, treks and hikes up the emerald-hued slopes, elusive orchids and distinct species of flora and fauna and birdwatching. Visit local villages for immersive experiences and to taste freshly brewed coffee.

MYSURU & BENGALURU

The aroma of coffee is never very far away in Karnataka. The coffee-drinking ritual of 'by two' or to share a cup between two people, usually marks the Mysuru (p58) filter kaapi or coffee in Kannada. Bengaluru (p52), is home to a variety of coffee, from humble coffee stalls to new age experimental coffee bars. From the traditional filter kaapi at India Coffee House (p56) or MTR (p54) to frothy lattes at chi-chi outlets, you are never really far away from a good cup of coffee in Karnataka.



Need to Know



The best months for a coffee trail are from autumn to spring

WHEN TO GO

- **October – March (high season):** This is the best time to explore the coffee destinations with pleasant, moderate temperatures (11°–28°C).
- **April – May (low season):** The coffee estates are pleasant to visit in this warm weather, and it's the coffee blossom season too.
- **June – September (mid season):** The monsoons may curtail sightseeing, but you can enjoy the view of the hills from the comfort of an estate stay.

WHAT TO PACK

- **Comfortable shoes:** Comfortable, covered footwear is recommended, especially if you're visiting in the monsoons, and for trekking and walking around the plantations.
- **Seasonal clothing:** Pack light, cotton wear for the day and a jacket for the night (in winter). Full-length cotton pants are best in the monsoons to avoid leeches in the hills.

i Quick Facts

LANGUAGES

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

MONEY

In the coffee-specific areas of Coorg, Chikkamagaluru and Sakleshpur, it is recommended to carry cash as ATMs may be available in a few hubs only. Most hotels allow card payment, but it's best to book ahead.

INTERNET ACCESS

Mid to high-end hotels offer free wi-fi with varying degrees of speed. In remote locations, the hotels may not provide Internet access.

MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

Airtel, Vodafone and Jio offer 3G and 4G services throughout the state, except in remote locations where the signal may be sporadic.

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 and www.kstddc.co for more details.

- **Sunscreen, headgear and sunglasses:** Protection from the sun is required both in the winter and summer.
- **Original Photo Identity Card:** All hotels need a valid photo ID card for check-in. It is imperative that you carry this.
- **Prescribed medication:** Carry ample prescribed medication for your entire trip. Coffee estates are sometimes in remote locations and do not have easy access to medical care. You will have to travel to the nearest big city in this case.

SAFETY

Karnataka is fairly safe to travel around. Solo travelling on overnight state-run buses is common in the state.

RATES

Staying: ₹₹₹ over ₹5000 ₹₹ between ₹2000–5000 ₹ under ₹2000

Eating: ₹₹₹ over ₹500 ₹₹ between ₹200–500 ₹ under ₹200

10 Top Experiences

1 BEAN-TO-CUP EXPERIENCE IN COFFEE ESTATES

Apart from taking in the scenery of lush coffee estates in Coorg, Chikkamagaluru and Sakleshpur, another experience lures travellers to the coffee-growing regions of Karnataka. Many high-end hotels and estates offer the opportunity to make your own coffee from freshly harvested beans. The Serai in Chikkamagaluru (p36) takes visitors through the entire process of picking beans, drying, roasting, grinding and making your own cuppa with the help of experts. Alternatively, join Gully Tours to understand the coffee eco-system on a two-hour immersive walk. Travellers find the bean-to-cup trails a fantastic addition to a holiday.



2 LIVING THE PLANTATION LIFE

Acres of coffee plantations surround atmospheric estate homes in Coorg (p16), Chikkamagaluru and Sakleshpur (p40). Even a weekend here is enough time to get the flavour of life on a plantation. Join estate owners in navigating the hairpin dirt trails on the plantations in a 4-wheel jeep drive in



the mornings, inspecting the drying process and looking out for local wildlife and birds. Come back to relax in easy chairs on breezy verandahs and sample local homemade food. Polished terracotta floors, high-ceilinged rooms and whirling overhead fans create the perfect mood for respite and retreat.

3 BENGALURU'S ICONIC COFFEE SHOPS

Get a fix of vintage Bengaluru and its iconic independent coffee houses, full of classic charm. Indian Coffee House, Brahmin's Coffee Bar, Mavalli Tiffin Rooms (MTR), CTR, Konark, Airlines Hotel and Vidyarthi Bhawan have decades of experience in whipping up the local filter coffee (kaapi for locals), served in the steel tumbler-dabara set. An interesting sight for travellers is the metre coffee, a traditional act of mixing the coffee by pouring it and pulling the beverage from one tumbler to the other, stretching as far as one or two metres.





4 HIPPEST COFFEE JOINTS OF BENGALURU

Coffee is an integral part of Bengaluru's social culture. The pleasant weather all around the year is perfect to be with a good cup of coffee. The tradition has only become stronger over the decades and you're likely to find loyal patrons at the hippest coffee spots in town. Third Wave Coffee Roasters, DYU Art Cafe, The Flying Squirrel, Benki Coffee Inc. and Matteo are some of the best contemporary cafes in the city. And the homegrown chain, Cafe Coffee Day still dominates in some areas of the city.



5 COFFEE HISTORY

Chikkamagaluru's significance as one of the key coffee destinations of India has nothing to do with the presence of coffee conglomerates and large-scale production in recent years. For travellers, it has an incredible historical hook as this is the place where coffee first arrived in India. Follow the mountainous trail of Baba Budan Giri, Sheethalagiri and Mullayangiri

hills, where a 17th-century saint (Baba Budan) smuggled seven coffee beans. Enjoy the astounding views of the coffee-laden cloudy valley below from here.

6 BRAHMAGIRI TREK, KODAGU

The wavy ridge of the Brahmagiri range is easily seen running through most of Kodagu (Coorg), covering at least 181km. The mountains provide an opportunity for trekkers to explore its highly rich bio-diversity and test their own climbing ability on its undulating slopes. The trekking trail passes through rich deciduous forests, shola copses and grasslands. The highest trekking point is 1608 metres and borders Kerala and Karnataka.



7 KUDREMU KH TREK, CHIKKAMAGALURU

Trekking to the horse-faced mountain (Kudremukh in Kannada) is fun but a challenging experience. It is not recommended for kids or elderly travellers as the trail has several stream crossings and steep patches. The topography changes from lush shola forests teeming with wildlife to sun-baked grasslands before you summit. You are likely to spot deer, wild boars, sambars and if you are lucky, even a pack of bison. The trek is about 9.5km long (one way) and takes a good 8–9 hours to complete. There is one main route, which is supported by local guides and travel infrastructure.



8 TADIANDAMOL TREK, COORG

Got a sturdy pair of lungs and legs, and an abiding love for slopes? Then the Tadiandamol trek in Coorg will not disappoint. The peak is the third highest in the state and offers a spectacular landscape of grasslands and dense shola forests of the Nilgiris biosphere. While the altitude may not be more than 10,000 feet, one is rewarded with glorious views of mountains cradling lush valleys between them.



9 OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

While hiking amidst coffee plantations is the easiest option for active travellers, there are also more challenging options in Coorg, Chikkamagaluru and Sakleshpur. White-water rafting in the Barapole River in Coorg tops the list. This is usually clubbed with rappelling and river-crossing rope activities for a full day of adventure. Thanks to the wet and tropical composition of plantation areas, a variety of reptiles, birds and amphibians can be seen here. Its luxuriant and evergreen vegetation makes a safe home for animals like the lion-tail macaques, the Indian gaur, leopards, tigers and sambar.

10 COFFEE WORKSHOP

Keep a look out for coffee appreciation workshops by Bengaluru-based coffee brand Flying Squirrel. Learn about the basics of identifying robusta and arabica varieties, processing and how it affects the cup and tasting identification. The workshop includes coffee tasting of arabica, honey sun-dried robusta and French roast.





COORG (KODAGU)

Why Go?

Coorg has earned itself the rightful title of the 'coffee capital of Karnataka.' Located on the eastern edge of the Western Ghats, it is blessed with diverse topography of misty mountains, dense coffee plantations, thick forests patches, waterfalls and rivers – a suitable backdrop for both relaxed and high-octane holidays.

i Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

Coorg's main regions are Kutta in the south, Kakkabbe near the west, Kushalnagar by the east and Madikeri in the centre. From **Kutta**, you can climb the Brahmagiri peak (p21) and go rafting in the Upper Barapole River. This is also the closest to Bengaluru. If you are staying in **Kakkabbe**, the highest peak of Coorg, Tadiandamol is very close. If you are coming to Coorg via Bylakuppe, **Kushalnagar** is a good base and is closest to the Dubare Elephant Camp. **Madikeri** is most

popular as it has the largest number of sightseeing options.

Even though there are local buses to get around, travellers will be able to explore the region most conveniently in a cab. Distances in Coorg are far so plan ahead to optimise time. Rent a cab for approximately ₹10 per km, minimum ₹250–300km per day and a driver allowance of ₹250–300 per day.

GREAT FOR



Enjoy an immersive experience on a coffee trail in Coorg

Sights

Coffee Experiences

For a 360-degree coffee experience, sign up for the Tata Plantation trails offered at seven different destinations. You can live the plantation life and learn all about coffee – from picking, drying, roasting and even making your own brew. Jeep safaris, nature walks and birding mornings are additional things to do during your stay, the best time for which is from December to March. amaplantationtrails.com

Madikeri Fort

There are good views from this hilltop fort built by Tipu Sultan in the 16th century, though today it's the less glamorous site of the municipal headquarters. Within the fort's walls

The Omkareshwar Temple in Madikeri



TOP
CHOICE

Activities

- Stay at a coffee plantation
- Trek at Tadiandamol
- Sample Madikeri's local food
- Kid around at Dubare Elephant Camp for kids

are the hexagonal palace and a colonial-era church, which houses a small, quirky museum. 10am–5.30pm; Sun–Fri; free

Omkareshwar Temple

King Lingarajendra II commissioned this Shiva temple to be built in 1820 and it has since stood as one of the most revered sights of Madikeri. The Gothic and Islamic influences on the architecture are indicative of the

If You Like: Waterfalls

Coorg offers marvellous waterfalls slung over large craggy mountainsides. **Abbey Falls** (8km from Madikeri) is a popular location. The falls plummet from a 70-foot-high escarpment, creating a curtain of white. **Iruppu Falls** (48km from Virajpet) in the Brahmagiri mountains are a favourite with tourists. Public holidays tend to get busy and crowded, and so choose off-season periods to experience this blissfully alone. Dawn–dusk

secular tenor of the region. There is a sprawling temple pond in front of the main shrine. Dawn–dusk

Raja's Seat

A very popular spot set inside a garden to enjoy the sunset, as the raja once did, King's Seat offers fantastic views of rolling hills and the endless valleys. Musical fountains are switched on in the evenings. MG Rd; ₹5; 5.30am–7pm

Raja's Tombs

Located 7km from Madikeri town, these domed tombs, locally known as Gaddige, are built in an Indo-Saracenic style and serve as the resting place for Kodava royalty. The weathered yellow walls also exude a secular charm with turrets borrowed from Islamic architecture and figures of the Nandi bull carved on the entrance. There are three tombs here, one dedicated to the Kodava king Doddaveerarajendra and his wife Mahadeviamma, and the other two are dedicated to Lingarajendra and Rudrappa and

were built in the 1800s. Dawn–dusk

Talacauvery

Feted both for its religious significance and natural beauty, Talacauvery lies 44km from Madikeri. This is the source of the River Cauvery and has a temple and a holy pond to take a dip. Tula Sankaramana is an auspicious day in October when thousands of devotees congregate here to offer prayers. Steps along the main temple area are the starting point of the Brahmagiri trek. Dawn–dusk

Mandalpatti

Home to a popular sunrise viewpoint, the rolling Mandalpatti Hills are approximately 25km from Madikeri. You can drive up to the forest checkpoint and then either take a jeep to the top or embark on a trek amid impossibly green surroundings. Make sure you carry plenty of water and a few light snacks. This spot is best avoided during the monsoon. Entry ₹10, jeep ride ₹1500; 6am–6pm



Bylakuppe is India's largest Tibetan settlement

Dubare Elephant Camp

The Karnataka Forest Department runs a training camp for elephants at the edge of the Cauvery River and the Dubare Reserve Forest. The Elephant Interaction Programme allows a 2–3 hour engagement with the pachyderm residents, including bathing and feeding them. Children love it here and weekends can mean long queues to give a good scrub to the elephants. A resort by Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR) located here offers a day-long package. You

can club a coracle ride on the river, a guided walk through the forest and lunch plus coffee. You can add another adventure by **rafting at Nisargadhama**. An island formed by the River Cauvery, Nisargadhama is accessible by a rope bridge. Most people visit for the rafting, which is also organised by JLR between Dubare and here.

☎080 40554055; www.junglelodges.com; Dubare Elephant Camp; 8am–3pm; Elephant activities/day trip/accommodation ₹885/1499/starting ₹4974 (twin sharing); entry fee Nisargadhama adults/kids ₹10/5; 9am–5pm

Bylakuppe

Bylakuppe is the largest Tibetan settlement in India. Stupas, prayer flags and monasteries greet you in this small township. The Namdroling Monastery (Golden

Snapshot: Hockey

The family hockey festival held in April–May is a regular feature on the calendar of the local Kodava community even if they come only to cheer and not play.

♥ If You Like: Top treks in the region

Brahmagiri

The Brahmagiri trek is popular among outdoor enthusiasts for its level of difficulty and also the chance to see the biodiversity of the region. The trekking trail passes through rich deciduous forests, shola copses and grasslands. The highest trekking point is 1608m and borders Kerala and Karnataka. Enjoy the picturesque walk and look out for an assortment of flora and fauna that abound here.

Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

Best Season: October to February

Altitude: 1608mt

Base Village: Iruppu Falls

Ascent Time: 8–9hr

Camping Option: Allowed only in the government-run Narimale Guest House with prior permission

Fee: ₹200 per head; additional charges for the guard.

Permission: ☎08274 246331; Office of the Range Forest Officer, Srimangala; 10.30am–5.30pm

Tadiandamol

'Tadiandamol' in Malayalam translates as 'a broad base'. It is in the south-eastern region of Coorg and is best approached by Kakkabe. From there, head 1km to Kaikamba village to the Nalknad Palace (2km; 8.30am–7pm). Start the trek from here or hire a jeep, which can drop you right at the end of the tar road. From this point, Tadiandamol is 5km. The third highest peak of Karnataka overlooks deep valleys of shola forests and misty mountains. Besides trekking, you can observe Kodagu culture and enjoy plantation stays nearby.

Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

Best Season: December to May

Altitude: 5724ft

Base Village: Nalknad Palace (3km from Kaikamba) or Tar End Road (5km from Kaikamba)

Ascent Time: 2–4hr

Camping Option: Not allowed

Fee: free



Temple) and the Kagyu Monastery are dotted with travellers and the ambience of chanting monks and manicured gardens is very soothing. You can spend time shopping for Tibetan goods and eating in local restaurants.

Accommodation

Evolve Back RESORT ₹₹₹

 080 4618 4444; www.evolveback.com; Karadigodu Post, Siddapur, Coorg; d starting 39,000, full board, incl taxes Formerly known as Orange County, the resort lies in the embrace of the 300-acre Chikkana Halli spice and coffee plantation. Private pools are attached to each of the 43 villas, seven dining options and an extensive Ayurveda spa are the cornerstones of the plush property. For a coffee lover, plantation visits and nature walks are adventures

The heritage poolside villa at Evolve Back



enough, especially if you follow the workers' trail with a guide.


The Tamara RESORT ₹₹₹

 082 72238000; www.thetamara.com; Kabbinakad Estate, Yevakapadi, Napoklu Nad; starting ₹16,000, incl breakfast (upto 4 adults) Nestled between acres of coffee-clad hills, the 56 cottages of this luxury resort are built in a way that they seamlessly merge with the verdant surroundings. The stilted cottages overlook vast views of green, offering an oxygen filled holiday. The in-house cafe where you can brew your own coffee, nature activities, spa and luxury dining options are extras.

Taj Madikeri Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

 082722 65900; www.tajhotels.com; 1st Monnangeri, Galibeedu, Post; r incl breakfast for 4, ₹12,500 onwards Nestled amongst 18 acres of rainforest, the Taj hotel is perfect for the eyes and creature comforts. Stunning views, guided hikes in the wilderness, cooking lessons, spa time and more ensure that this is the best antidote to the bustle of the city.

The Ibbii Eco Luxury Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

 88849 90000; www.ibbii.com; 123 Ibbivalavadi Village, Boikeri; d starting from ₹10,000, incl breakfast One of the finest luxury resorts in Coorg, Ibbii is located in the middle of 125 acres of opaque green coffee plantations. Ideal for a romantic getaway or a rejuvenating wellness time, the resort has redefined elegance for travellers.




Misty Woods offers cottages at Kakkabbe

The Windflower Resort & Spa RESORT ₹₹₹

 99014 46666; www.thewindflower.com; Survey No. 201/P1, Kedakal Village, Santikoppa Hobli, Somwarpet Taluk; d starting ₹9450, incl breakfast Having lush coffee plantations around your cottages is therapeutic. Add to that, an afternoon in the spa, a walk in the woodlands and you tick all the boxes for a luxurious holiday. Four categories of rooms, in-house dining and a swimming pool offer elegant comfort.

Club Mahindra RESORT ₹₹₹


 082722 21114; www.clubmahindra.com; Galibeedu, Madikeri; d incl of breakfast ₹8488 onwards Club Mahindra offers the classic experience of staying in a coffee plantation, surrounded by

hills and mountains for its patrons. It offers three restaurants, a luxurious spa and two outdoor pools.

Misty Woods HOTEL ₹₹₹

 08272 238561; www.coorgmisty.com; Near Nalknad Palace, Kakkabbe; d starting from ₹7000, incl breakfast Suitable for a family stay, Misty Woods offers comfortable cottages (27) with manicured lawns, play areas, a small waterfall at the approach and a friendly dog. For trekkers, this is a perfect spot to start as it's just behind the Nalknad Palace.

Ama Plantation PLANTATION ₹₹₹

 9900212119; www.amaplantationtrails.com; various locations in Coorg; d starting from ₹6800, incl breakfast + activities As part of Tata's coffee plantation trails, visitors can book any of the



Bath time at Dubare camp

8 properties in Coorg to take in the entire coffee process. These are estate homes ensconced in the middle of coffee and spice plantations. Most of them are heritage bungalows, with a vintage charm and centuries of history.

Victorian Verandaz PLANTATION STAY ₹₹₹

☎09448059850; www.victorianverandaz.com; Modur Estate, Kadagadal Post; starting ₹6000, incl breakfast for 2 couples Perfect for a family, the two rooms and a dining area are personal and neatly kept. The view of the valley below, jeep drives through the thick coffee plantation and the homely delicious food are the highlights of Victorian Verandaz. The homestay is just off Madikeri and is centrally located for reaching other parts of Coorg for adventure activities.

Dubare Elephant Camp CAMP ₹₹

☎080 4055 4055; www.junglelodges.com; r starting ₹4974 per person on weekends Comfortable river view and garden cottages in verdant surrounds and easy access to the elephant facility are the reasons to pick this accommodation. The atmosphere is serene after the day tourists have left, and one can relax in the company of nature. You can also opt for guided birdwatching, wildlife safari and nature-walks apart from the elephant camp activities in the day.

Bel Home PLANTATION STAY ₹₹

☎08762061135; www.bellhome.co.in; Bellarimotte Estate, Madapura Post; starting ₹4200, incl breakfast Spend time in the verandah of cottages built in 1928. Third generation planters, Vijay and his wife Ramola are great company, ensuring that you get a taste of real 'bean to cup' coffee experience, local food, birdwatching and places to see. Bel Home is good for families who are looking for easy adventure activities like the hike to Kotta Betta or picnics by Madapura stream close to the house.

Mayura Valley View KSTDC ₹₹

☎08272 228387; www.kstdc.co; d AC Deluxe starting from ₹3999 on weekends Located close to Raja's Seat in Madikeri, Mayura Valley View has a welcoming vibe for a relaxing stay. The central location makes this a good choice for a trip that includes coffee, history and food.

Kings Cottage HOMESTAY ₹₹

☎08272 238464; Kakkabbe, Palace Estate, Near Nalknad Palace; d starting ₹3000, incl breakfast Budget travellers can opt for the quiet homestay with a spectacular view of the valley below. Kings Cottage's USP lies in its proximity to the Nalknad Palace.

Chingaara PLANTATION STAY ₹₹

☎08272204488; www.chingaara.com; Yavakapady Village Post, Kabinakkad; d starting ₹1518, incl breakfast This nature resort sits on a 12-acre plantation. The approach to Chingaara is the same as Honey Valley. Be awed by the view of a massive private waterfall as you climb up to the house. One is bound to love the sound of the jungle from the nine cheerful rooms with valley views. Enjoy the company of a number of dogs and Lily the donkey here.

Honey Valley PLANTATION STAY ₹₹

☎08272 238339; www.honeyvalleyindia.in; P.O Yavakapady; d starting ₹1400, incl breakfast Add to your adventure experience by staying at the remote Honey Valley Resort; it's tucked away like a secret on a 30-acre coffee plantation and can be reached only via a 4-wheel vehicle. Ask for a pick-up from Kabinakkad junction. Accommodation varies from basic (non-attached bathroom) rooms to slightly more elaborate set-ups. The main reason why one should opt for this is the access it offers to the trek to Tadiandamol. Book ahead



Honey Valley Resort is set in a coffee plantation

and discuss your stay with Mr. Chengappa before arriving.

Eating

If you're staying in a plantation, hotel or homestay, most of your meals are likely to be at the place of stay but Madikeri has some interesting options for local food.

Tiger Tiger COORGI ₹₹₹

☎9900492800; Raja Seat Rd; 12.20-9pm (Wed closed); mains ₹500-750 Close to Tiger's Seat, this family-friendly restaurant is known for pandi curry and mango curry.



Coorgi pandi curry is a popular regional dish

Raintree Restaurants

MULTI CUISINE ₹₹₹

☎08272220301; 13/41, Pension Lane, Behind Town Hall; 10.30am–3pm, 7–10pm (Sat/Sun 11.30am–10pm); mains ₹500–750 This is an upscale dining option set in a bungalow in Madikeri with local Coorg and generic Indian cuisine.

Taste of Coorg

COORGI ₹

☎9449255969; 23–39, CMC Building, Madikeri–Virajpet Rd, Stuart Hill; 10am–8pm; mains less than ₹500 Unfussy interiors but excellent Coorgi food makes this one of the popular joints amongst locals and visitors.

East End Hotel

COORGI ₹

☎082722 29996; Behind East End Petrol Pump, General Thimaya Rd, State Highway 88; 7.30–10.30am; 12.45–3.30pm, 4.30–10pm; mains less than ₹500 One of the oldest haunts in town, this is a meat eater's paradise with mutton balls, biryani and Coorg-style chicken fry being popular dishes.

Mayura Valley View Restaurant

KSTDC ₹

☎08272 228387; www.kstddc.co; mains less than ₹500; 12pm–10.30pm Head here for a casual dining experience with veg options as well. The in-house restaurant of the namesake hotel is centrally located to sightseeing spots and is easy to access if you want to pause for a meal.

♥ If You Like: Pandi curry options

Abeo's Kitchen (Main Rd, opp. Private Bus Stand)

Coorg Cuisine (opp. Head Post Office, Main Rd)

Folsy Food (1st floor, R.T. Complex, Temple Rd, Chickpet; Sunday holiday)

Coorg Foodlands (Nethravathi Complex, opp. Private Bus Stand)

Capitol Bar (opp. Private Bus Stand, Main Rd)

New Churchside (General Thimmaiah Circle, Tollgate)

Surabhi (opp. Capitol Bar, Main Rd)



EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

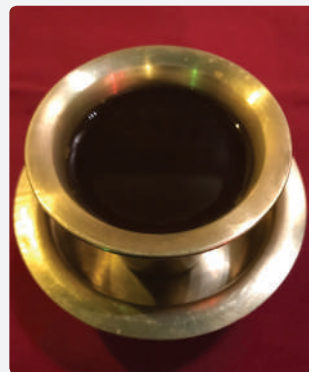
Coffee sutra

The highlight of a coffee trail is naturally the opportunity to taste good coffee. A third-generation coffee grower from Chikkamagaluru at Woodway Estates and Homestay, **Shreedev Hulikere** is a connoisseur who gives a lowdown on the region's best coffees.

PLANTATION HARVEST

If you harvest a kilo from a coffee plant, you will end up with seven types of coffee. These include Peaberry, Browns, Blacks and bits, Elephantine beans, A, B, C grades and so on. Coffee harvested from one slope on Plantation A will taste different from another slope. Weather, aspect and accent of slope, type and age of plant, shade cover and type of soil all affect the final taste of that coffee bean.

Traditional south Indian black coffee



POPULAR BLENDS

Arabica & Robusta: In traditional homes in Karnataka you will get a tumbler of coffee that's arabica with a dash of robusta. Arabica is mild and aromatic and robusta is a wake up shot of caffeine. Arabica is gaining popularity for use in aeropress coffee makers, and robustas are chosen for espressos.

Peaberry & Chicory: India is the only country that allows 49 percent of chicory to be added to your coffee. Peaberry is used as an export reject. Both are not for coffee connoisseurs but are cheap for mass consumption.

TYPES OF COFFEE

Espresso: Dark roast, fine-grind it for a strong shot of coffee.

Latte: Light roast, coarse-grind it for a cup of coffee with milk.

Cappuccino: Medium, for a frothy, milky cup of coffee.

South Indian filter kaapi: Coffee with milk from a south Indian filter; our ancestors preferred it black with jaggery.



CHIKKAMAGALURU

Why Go?

A historic destination for coffee cultivation in India, Chikkamagaluru is where it all began in the 17th century, after a Sufi pilgrim smuggled in a few coffee beans from Mecca. The lineage continues with abundant production till this date. This perfect activity-centric scenic getaway is dotted with heritage spots and adventure options in close vicinity of wildlife and nature. Home to the highest mountain range in Karnataka, Mullayangiri, Chikkamagaluru is also a popular trekking option from capital Bengaluru.

i Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

By road, Chikkamagaluru is 245km (5hr) from Bengaluru on the NH75. Most travellers stay on the outskirts for proximity to coffee plantations. Keep a car in Chikkamagaluru as the distances between sightseeing spots are far. Expect to pay ₹10–12 per km (minimum 250–300km per day

plus ₹250–300 driver allowance per day). A host of private and KSRTC buses run between Bengaluru and Chikkamagaluru at regular intervals. An overnight bus (₹345 onwards) helps optimise time.

GREAT FOR



Chikkamagaluru offers coffee trails and trekking holidays

Sights

The Big Mountain Loop

The mountain loop is a good way to cover some of the most popular spots in Chikkamagaluru. Go past the city traffic towards Kaimara to start at the foothills and head straight towards Sheethalagiri, a 1000-year old Mallikarjunaswamy temple. The temple itself is not very grand but is worth your while for its history and the prasadam (ritual offerings) which is a fistful of water from a natural pool inside. Next on the circuit is the Baba Budan Giri Hill, also known as the Dattagiri Hill Range (Inam Dattatreya Peetha) after the famous saint. A small shrine is perched at 1895m and the view of the valley from here is breathtaking. The shrine is visited both by Hindus and Muslims. At this

Kurinji flowers at Mullayangiri, the highest peak in Karnataka



Activities

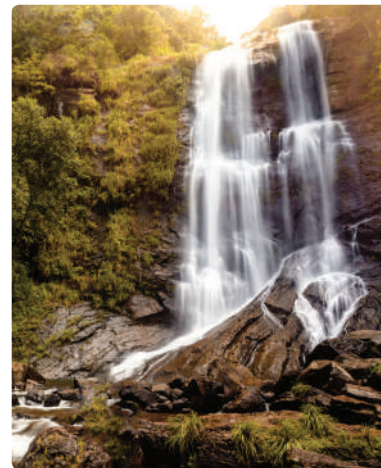
- Go on a coffee yatra.
- Experience diverse heritage trails of Hoysala temples in Horanadu.
- Try the popular trekking options like Kudremukh & Mullayangiri.
- Go rafting down River Bhadra.

altitude, one is often in the middle of clouds and will have a largely misty view if one happens to visit just before the monsoons. The next stop is **Mullayangiri**, the highest peak (1930m) in the state. Predictably windy and cold, it's suitable to stay for a short time to enjoy the view. The peak is covered in kurinji flowers when it blooms every 12 years.

Hebbe Falls

From Kemmanagundi, Hebbe Falls is an adventurous off-road drive of 13km, which can only be done by an expert in a 4-wheel vehicle. Rickety Commander jeeps are available on hire (₹300 per person in a shared vehicle) for a round trip. The actual falls need to be reached after a short walk. Be prepared to have the agility of a mountain goat as you have to hop across a shallow rocky stream at two points. The effort is absolutely worth your while as you watch the 55 feet drop from below the gushing water.

Near Kemmanagundi; parking ₹50/entry ₹10; 8am–4pm, all days



Chikkamagaluru is dotted with beautiful falls

Kalhatti Falls

From Kemmanagundi, the drive to Kalhatti is only 10km. These are smaller falls than Hebbe. Make your trip worth more with a stop at the Lord Veerabhadra Temple.

Horanadu

Horanadu is an important pilgrimage centre in Chikkamagaluru and is known for the deity of

Top Tip: Trekking

Mullayangiri India Hikes organises treks and adventure trips here. Join them for the Mullayangiri trek, the highest peak here for a hassle-free time (www.indiahikes.com; Brundavana, 1st floor, Plot No 36, 1st Main Rd, Dena Bank Colony, Ganga Nagar, Bengaluru).

Kemmanagundi After trekking to Mullayangiri and Baba Budangiri, trip past Kemmanagundi as it's an access point to Hebbe Falls and surrounding areas.

Ballalarayana Fort Trek A trek to the 12th-century Ballalarayana Fort on the high reaches of Bettabalige at 1509ft offers breathtaking views of the rolling hills below and is a great one-day trek for nature enthusiasts. If you go to the Bandajje Arabi Falls along with this hike, it can take up to 4-6 hours from Gowdara Mane (www.indiahikes.com).



Halt at a wayside coffee or tea canteen for a genuine bella kaapi

Annapurneshwari, which was installed by Adi Shankaracharya. The simple but tasteful food served as prasadam everyday will be hard to miss. Thousands sit in neat rows on the floor while Malnad-style food

is served by priests in a hurried but orderly manner. An elaborate menu of various offerings can be obtained from the information counter. Horanadu Temple, Chikkamagaluru; lunch noon–2.30pm, dinner 8–9.45pm, all days

✓ Top Tip: Coffee yatra

A Coffee Board of India initiative, the Coffee Yatra is a well-thought-out thematic display of coffee history, processes and types at a museum. There is also a lab where one can see the demonstration for grinding and other paraphernalia used in coffee processing. Unfortunately, a tasting experience is missing and the centre is closed on weekends. Coffee Centre, Behind ZP Office, Kadur Rd, Chikkamagaluru; adults/children ₹20; 10am–1pm and 2–5.30pm; all days except Sat, Sun and general holidays

♥ If You Like: White-water rafting

Add adventure to your Chikkamagaluru trip and go to the frothy and bubbling Bhadra River that runs for 10km in the Kudremukh National Park for adventure holidays. The 3–4km circuit covering 3 rapids can be covered in an hour.

www.acepaddlers.com; Near Nadar Pump house, Kalasa Balehonnur Rd, Balehole; ₹1200 per person; all year round

Belavadi

A pleasant break from the overly touristy places in Chikkamagaluru or the Hoysala sector, the Belavadi temple is for those who like peace and quiet. Part of the Hoysala lineage, Belavadi is 29km from Chikkamagaluru. More than 100 soap stone pillars greet you in the

main hall, before your eyes can go to the three shrines of Lord Vishnu–Narayana, Venugopala and Yoganarasimha. The temple is also mentioned in the Mahabharata as the location where the demon, Bakasura, was slain. Belavadi Temple, Chikkamagaluru; dawn–dusk, all days

The Belavadi Temple is a showcase for Hoysala architecture



Detour: Belur, Halebidu, Kudremukh and around

BELUR (25km)

The typical Hoysala star-shaped temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu is known as the Chennakesava Temple. It took 103 years to finish its exquisite 4000 carvings in slate stone. Apart from the awe-inspiring sculptures, a monolithic 50-foot lamp tower which stands without support is also fascinating. Armed with threads to showcase the fine workmanship government-approved guides are available in plenty. Carvings as minute as

Stone carved wall panels at Halebidu Temple



the teeth of a monkey, rotating bangles and see-through printed cloth are pointed out by the guides alone, so invest in one (Temple Rd; shoes/light inside ₹2/20; 7:30am–1pm, 3pm–7:30pm all days). The ancient **Kalabhairaveshwara Temple** is 30km from Chikkamagaluru in a lush copse in the village of Devaramane. The small two-tiered shrine is a wonder to behold.

HALEBIDU (39km)

Once you have dodged the hoard of postcard sellers at the gate, you can really appreciate the manicured

lawns of Halebidu Temple. Having seen the Belur Temple, it's now easier to compare the differences or spot similarities. It is advisable to hire a guide to take you through this Shiva temple, which is aesthetically similar to the one at Belur but also has a number of distinct features. The depiction of the mythological 'seven in one animal', Makara, and tales from Ramayana and Mahabharata are more explicit here. Spare at least an hour for a rehearsed but informational guided tour. (Temple Rd, Halebidu; shoes ₹2; better to visit between 8am–5pm, all days).

SRINGERI (86km)

Sringeri is a hallowed site for pilgrims. Devotees throng the sacred mutt founded by Adi Shankaracharya and the Sharadamba and Vidyashankara temples among other shrines in Sringeri (86km from Chikkamagaluru; dawn–dusk). Neighbouring Horanadu, is noted for a temple to Goddess Annapurushwari. The Hoysala 12th-century **Amruteshwara Temple** with fine architecture and sculptural beauty is located in the village of Amruthapura, 67km north of Chikkamagaluru town.

KUDREMUKH TREK (96km)

Kudremukh shadows the southwest corner of Chikkamagaluru. One has to put real muscle into this trek and it is not recommended for kids or elderly travellers. The



The climb up Kudremukh offers a vigorous and rewarding trek

topography ranges from lush shola forests, teeming with wildlife, to sun-bleached grasslands before you hit the summit. Expect to spot deer, wild boars, sambars and if you are lucky, even a pack of bison. The trek is about 9.5km (one way) and takes a good 8–9 hours to complete. There is one main popular route, which is supported by local guides and travel infrastructure.

The Kudremukh trekking trail is inside the Kudremukh National Park; secure permission from the Range Forest Officer (☎9480807653, 10.30am–5.30pm, trek/forest entry/guide ₹75/200/500).

Accommodation

Trivik Hotels & Resorts

LUXURY ₹₹₹

☎9880552711, 9148971583 www.trivikhotels.com, Channagondanahalli, Elunoor Khan Rd, Mullayangiri, full board ₹24,000 onwards Trivik is a luxury resort spread over 38 acres of coffee plantations on the highest peak in Karnataka – Mullayangiri. Trivik has 41 suites with Jacuzzis, an infinity pool, spa, games zone with beautiful views of the Western Ghats. The restaurant, coffee shop and the bar offer local cuisine, a multi cuisine buffet and a la carte too.

The Serai

RESORT ₹₹₹

☎9483524903; www.theserai.in; KM Rd, Mugthihalli Post; r incl full board ₹19,000 onwards At the Serai, you are at the hot seat for coffee, with well-organised

The Serai is a luxury stay with plantation visits

visits to the plantations, learning about processes and also coffee tasting (only for checked-in guests). Luxury stays were first introduced by the Serai (a holding of Coffee Day) with the Oma Spa and a personal pool or Jacuzzi with every villa.

Flameback Lodges

BOUTIQUE RESORT ₹₹₹

☎08263 215170; www.flameback.in; Near Devalankere, Sakleshpur; d incl full board from ₹12,000 Private villas, suites and cottages with wide sunning decks, personal Jacuzzis and a pool are a pleasant surprise at this elusive boutique resort in Chikkamagaluru. A break from the coffee topography alone, the lodge also has views of a lake, waterfall and paddy fields. The fact that there are only 8 rooms available ensures a private holiday.



The River Tern Lodge

Choose from the option of cottages and log cabins. For small families, the extra diwan in the log cabin can double up as a bed. The fact that all 24 accommodation units look over the serene water of the Bhadra, makes the lodging inviting. No-TVs-in the rooms ensures a nature inclined holiday. The sunset view from each verandah is spectacular enough for one to not miss any gadgets. All rooms have tea and coffee makers. ☎8261 215425; www.junglodge.com; Behind Ranganathaswamy Temple, Bhadra Project, Lakkavalli; d incl full board and activities from ₹14,750



Taj Gateway

HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎1800111825; www.tajhotels.com; Jyoti Nagar Post; d incl of breakfast ₹8500 onwards; additional for plantation tours Nested in the lush Sahyadri slopes of Chikkamagalur, the Taj experience is true to its legacy. Plush rooms, indoor and outdoor games, a swimming pool and Ayurvedic massage along with in-house dining are ideal for a relaxing holiday. The Ama Trails is an experiential offering for coffee plantation tours, which can be clubbed with upscale accommodation.

Woodways

HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

☎9663071775; www.woodwayhomestay.com; Jakkanhalli Post, Chikkamagaluru;

d incl full board from ₹8000 The pioneers of homestays in the region, Sushmita and Shreedev have run Woodways for over ten years. You can look forward to some great company, knowledgeable plantation walks with Shreedev, and delicious food. The highlight for most guests is the walk into the coffee plantation led by the family dogs, Ceaser and Brutus. Conversations flow easy with this couple who are passionate about their hometown and are deeply involved in conservation activities. The home is tastefully furnished and extremely comfortable. Ask for a room with the fireplace for a snug night in case it gets chilly.



Balur Estate PLANTER'S HOUSE ₹₹₹

📞9590050001; www.linger-at-balur.in; Balur Estate; 2 room ste for 4 guests, ₹8825, full board and activities How about 400 acres of coffee plantation and a ludicrous amount of green for company? That and more are promised at the very earthy Balur Estate, a refurbished planter's house from the 1800s. Immerse yourself in the fascinating history of Indian coffee, while you hear the sound of River Hemavathy in the vicinity – the river originates just above the estate. Urging you to 'do nothing', this place reiterates the need to indulge in a lazy holiday.

Ama Plantations PLANTER'S HOUSE ₹₹₹

📞800111825; www.amaplantationtrails.com; d starting from ₹6800, incl of breakfast and activities An initiative of Tata Coffee, Ama Plantations takes

Ama Plantations is near the Budangiri Hills



a traveller through the process of coffee making, right from staying at a plantation, picking beans with estate workers, seeing the process and brewing. In Chikkamagaluru, stay at the 1914-built Arabidacool Bungalow at the foot of the Baba Budangiri Hills.

Thotadahalli HOMESTAY ₹₹₹


📞8262320655; www.thotadahalli.com; Thotadahalli Estate, Kaimara Post; d incl full board from ₹6500 Proximity to the Mullyangiri circuit, authentic Malnad food and charming rooms make Thotadahalli a great choice for families. If travelling with kids, choose the mezzanine floor room that has an easy flight of steps.

Coffee Village Retreat HERITAGE & LUXURY HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

📞9448182987; www.coffeevillageretreat.com; Kimmene Plantation, Billur Post, Mudiger; d incl full board from ₹5000 Choose between a 150-old colonial plantation bungalow or a modern luxury unit when visiting Coffee Village Retreat. A unique setup in between a 300-acre coffee estate provides insight into the estate's functioning. You can also choose from activities like indoor games, cycling, birdwatching, trekking, boating, fishing, or just relaxing by the bonfire.

Mayura Velapuri KSTDC ₹₹₹

📞0817 7222209; www.kstcdc.co; Temple Road, Belur; d starting ₹1700 on weekends Comfortable rooms and in-house dining facility are available at Mayura. Belur has a handful of

 **Snapshot: Cafe Coffee Day**

It is inevitable that you will find the familiar red signage of the Karnataka-born coffee shop brand in the state. Café Coffee Day, a division of India's largest coffee conglomerate Coffee Day Global Limited, comes from a rich coffee-growing heritage of over 140 years. Café Coffee Day grows the coffee it serves in its cafes in its own coffee estates spread across Chikkamagaluru.

accommodations, of which, this is the cleanest and most well-equipped.

Mayura Shanthala KSTDC ₹₹₹

📞081772 73224; www.kstcdc.co; Opp Hoysaleswara Temple; d starting from ₹1300 Located just walking distance from the Halebidu Temple, Mayura is a convenient option. Clean and comfortable rooms, and an in-house restaurant are reasons to pick this if you want to base yourself in the historic town.

 **Eating**

It is recommended to eat at the homestay, plantation or the resort that you're staying at, as Chikkamagaluru is a massive region with no one particular dining hub to land up at for your meals.

 **Shopping****Hunkal Heights**

📞08262 230472; KM Rd, Chikkamagaluru; 10am–5.30pm Visit Hunkal Heights to see the different processes of coffee making, including the grinding process, and

pick up a pack of fresh, authentic coffee from Hunkal Woods.

Panduranga Coffee Works

📞08262 235345; PB No 150, MG Rd, Chikkamagaluru; 9am–9.30pm Though coffee is best consumed fresh, if you must carry a souvenir back, try the well-known Panduranga shop on M.G Road. It is one of the oldest shops for locally branded coffee.

The famous chain Cafe Coffee Day was founded in Chikkamagaluru





SAKLESHPUR

Why Go?

A pleasant change from touristy coffee destinations, Sakleshpur offers a more understated experience. Come here to enjoy the ever-pleasant weather and the thick, coffee bush topography, punctuated with bright pepper vines on silver oak trees with cardamom. Plantation walks, luxury estate stays and a vantage base camp for the famous temple towns, Belur and Halebidu, are the heritage highlights.

i Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

From Bengaluru, drive or take a cab to Sakleshpur on the Bengaluru–Mangalore highway (225km/4.5hr) as the roads are good with minimal traffic. Else, hop on to a KSRTC bus starting from Kempegowda bus stand. Get down at the Sakleshpur bus stop. An overnight bus would be perfect to optimise time but ensure that you can co-ordinate a pick-up at Sakleshpur as the bus drops you at an unearthly hour. The Kannur Express (16157) train is the most

convenient at an 8.30pm departure from Bengaluru and 2.45am arrival at Sakleshpur. Travellers will be able to explore the region most conveniently in a cab. Distances in Sakleshpur are long, so plan ahead to optimise time. Rent a cab for approximately ₹10–12 per km, minimum 250–300km per day and a daily driver allowance of ₹250–300.

GREAT FOR



Unwind and relax at Sakleshpur's coffee plantations

Sights

Manjarabad Fort

Trek up the gravelly stairway to the weathered fort built by Tipu Sultan as a strategic defense location. The steep hill is worth the climb only to get a bird's-eye view of the entire region. Dense green forests and olive coffee plantations spread as far as your eyes can see. Sunsets here are magical. Bengaluru–Mangalore Highway, about 7km beyond Sakleshpur town; dawn–dusk

Betta Byreshwara

Over 600 years old, the temple is located at a short distance from Sakleshpur. Not much can be gauged about the historic and heritage

The Manjarabad Fort offers panoramic views



Activities

- Unwind at the scattered home-stays and hotels.
- Great monsoon destination for some 'do-nothing' time.
- Visit architectural marvels, Halebidu and Belur.
- Go birdwatching in this avian paradise.

value of this temple at first sight, but it definitely provides a great view from atop the hill. Some people also choose to climb up the steep steps in lieu of a trek in the area. Dawn–dusk



Bisle Reserve Forest

The reserve forest area off the Bisle village offers an eyeful for nature lovers. On a clear day, one can see the mountain tops of three adjoining regions; Coorg, Hassan and south Karnataka. You can choose to visit the rainforest, replete with birds and other wildlife, if you are accompanied by local guides. Dawn–dusk

Magajahalli Waterfalls

Post the monsoon is the perfect time to hike to the Magajahalli Waterfall, 21km from Sakleshpur. Also known as Hanbal or Abbi Gundi Falls, the 20-foot-high waterfall is slung over a rockscape, making the perfect height for picnickers to enjoy the soft haze of water that surrounds the falls. The breathtaking and untouched Pushpagiri mountain range surrounds the area. Dawn–dusk

A sunbird in the plantations

Jenkal Gudda

Also known as the 'honey stone mountain', one can see this high peak from many spots in the region. An erstwhile favourite with trekkers and camping enthusiasts, permissions to climb this are now sporadic. A medium-level hike to this windy mountain is recommended only if you are accompanied by locals and are in good shape.

Bird Watching

Sakleshpur is a birdwatcher's paradise with flycatchers, drongos, sunbirds, greater goldenbacks, Indian tits, lesser flamebacks, parakeets and scores of more winged wonders living in the high canopies of forested patches and coffee plantations. Carry binoculars and hiking boots to walk these nature trails.

Detour: Around Sakleshpur

PLANTATION VISITS

Most of the homestays and hotels here are flanked by lush coffee plantations. A walk through these is an easy hike with birding opportunities adding to the experience. The coffee-picking season in December is particularly fun as there is a lot of activity around that time. Coffee beans are picked and spread in almost all courtyards to dry and offer an immersive experience to see how the coffee bean travels through many processes to end up as a steaming mug of coffee on your table.

SHETTIIHALLI CHURCH

Located an hour's drive from Sakleshpur, the remains of the Shettihalli Church look almost fairy tale-like in the backdrop of the Gorur Dam catchment area. Though marred by graffiti, the crumbling structure stands grandly at the banks while fishermen row their coracles to the middle of the waterbody. It is said to have been submerged in the backwaters of the Egachi–Hemavathi Dam at one point of time. Come monsoon, the church gets flooded again earning it the moniker, 'the floating church'.

44km from Sakleshpur

GORUR DAM

Though not particularly exotic, the Gorur Dam makes for a good drive from Sakleshpur. The dam gates are opened after the monsoons, which is a better time to visit.

61km from Sakleshpur; 10am–5pm all days

MOSALE

About 52km from Sakleshpur, the Mosale village houses two temples dedicated to Nageshwara and Chennakesava. One has to pass through a village of brightly painted doors to reach these temples. The temples too belong to the Hoysala period but are less intricate. If they are locked, you can invariably ask someone to find the custodian of the keys to open it. She lives in the village.

Mosale Village; 8am–5pm all days

TEMPLE TRAIL

A trip to the temples in Halebidu can be a treat for heritage lovers. Pilgrims can visit the Kukke Subrahmanya Temple from Sakleshpur. Beluru (37km), Halebidu (50km) and Kukke Subrahmanya Temple (60km)



Shettihalli Church is called the 'floating church' after the monsoon floods its surrounding areas



If You Like: Outdoor adventures

Sakleshpur is a great base for both high-octane adventures and to simply enjoy the outdoors, just 4.5 hours from Bengaluru. Family-friendly, easy-to-medium level hikes and river rafting on the Magundi River can be organised with trained instructors. Add camping in the wilderness, ATV rides, archery, paintball, bonfire nights and plantation visits to this spot for a weekend trip amidst nature.

www.triphippie.com; contact for specific packages

Enjoy camping and bonfires near River Magundi



Accommodation

The Planters Bungalow

PLANTATION
HOMESTAY ₹₹₹₹

☎9481925930; www.plantersbungalow.com; Kadamane Checkpost, Hassan District; d incl full board from ₹7700 A change of ownership from the Earl of Warwick to tea conglomerate Brooke Bond forms the history of the 7500-acre Kadamane Tea Estate. The century-old bungalow here is an old English styled house with typical high ceilings, a sprawling verandah and a marvellous view of tea-scapes. Great food, frequent elephant visits to the property, nature trails, a hike to a secret natural pool, a swimming pool, a cooking course, and tea tasting are the highlights.

Jenukallu Valley Retreat

RESORT ₹₹₹₹

☎9241611610; www.jenukallu.com; Athibeedu, Devaladakere Post, Sakleshpur Taluk, Hassan District; d incl full board from ₹7500 The wide expanse of a bare hill dotted with cottages is a pleasant relief for the eyes after the thick coffee copses. Opt for the cottage right at the edge of the hill for a better view of the valley below. The common deck area with lounge chairs is a great spot if you don't have a larger group sharing the space.

Mugilu

HOMESTAY ₹₹₹₹

☎9845008875; www.mugilu.com; Bugadahalli Village, Kyanahalli Post,

The Planters Bungalow is a sprawling property





Sambar vada and filter coffee is a tiffin staple

Sakleshpur; d incl full board from ₹5400 An exquisite, misty view of the coffee plantation from your wide balcony is reason enough to opt for an uninterrupted personalised holiday at Mugilu. It's a great place to kick off the boots and catch up on a good book or just walk in the coffee estate. You will love the coffee wood chairs in the common area.

Stay Simple Hills Resort

RESORT ₹

☑7846011011; www.thehills.in; Kuntahalli village, Devaladakere Post, Sakleshpur Taluk, Hassan District; d incl full board from ₹4500 A luxury option in the area, combining Indonesian-style wooden cottages and luxury tents which are extremely plush. A swimming

pool, indoor and outdoor activities, plantation walks and day trips to nearby temples and forests makes this an irresistible choice for a weekend getaway.

Jenkal Homestay (Sai Homestay)

HERITAGE
HOMESTAY ₹

☑08762161719; www.jenkal.in; Near Devalankere; d incl full board from ₹4000 Thick wooden pillars and an intricately carved door keep you rivetted for a while as you enter this century-old house. Now restored to provide all modern facilities, the Jenkal homestay still retains old elements like the narrow lockable columns which stored weapons right next to the door. Great food and personal space will make you want to come back again.

Eating

There are no specific restaurants apart from small roadside shanties in Sakleshpur, so it's best to eat at the estate, homestay or hotel where you are staying.

Surabhi's Nx

NORTH & SOUTH
INDIAN ₹

☑081732 49113; BM Rd, Sakleshpur; mains ₹250–500; 6am–10pm all days A branch of the famous Surabhi restaurant in town, this version has more seating and ample parking space. Ask to be seated on the first floor to enjoy the view of the lush region below.

Shopping

Salish Tea

☑08173 319353; BM Rd, Kollahally, Sakleshpur; 9.30am–10pm, all days The shop stocks locally procured tea, coffee, pepper and honey. Though many small shops dot the main Bangalore–Mangalore road, this is a good choice with parking space and polite staff.

The Bee Keepers Co-operative Society Limited

☑08173 344075; Near bus stand, Sakleshpur; 10am–5.30pm, all days Sakleshpur is famous for its fresh honey. Though many shops have similar brands, the one at the Bee Keepers Co-operative is guaranteed to be good.

Soundarya Handicrafts

☑9480249845; BM Rd, Donigal, Sakleshpur; 10am–5pm all days Driftwood products are available in five or six shops just off the main road to the Manjarabad Fort. One can get some unusual pieces from Soundarya and also see craftsmen making these in front of you.

Entertainment

The town has an abiding planter's club culture. There are three clubs in Sakleshpur which offer good sports facilities; the Planter's Club, the Cosmopolitan Sports Club and the Munzerabad Club. Unfortunately, only affiliated clubs from Bengaluru and members can have access. If you are staying at a homestay, there is a chance that the owners can help you get in.

Fresh honey at the Bee Keepers Cooperative in Sakleshpur





BENGALURU & MYSURU

Why Go?

Bengaluru knows how to celebrate both the new and old. An important IT hub, it has an artistic, easygoing pace. It both enjoys and rises above its humble claims of local cuisine and has a vibrant gastronomic scene. Crazy about its coffee, hip new coffee shops, vintage joints and new age roasters coexist and all have devoted patrons. Located 145km from the city, the cultural capital Mysuru, offers the special 'by-two' coffee at atmospheric vintage cafes.

i Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

Bengaluru is connected to major cities in India and abroad via flights and has a robust rail and road connectivity. The bus service may not offer flexibility to explore the city, so it's best to choose cabs or auto rickshaws. Cabs cost ₹1200 for 8hr/80km, typically for a full sightseeing. Autorickshaws charge a minimum fare of ₹25 (1.5 times the metre between 10pm–5am). Fix rates beforehand. The Bengaluru

Metro (Namma Metro) runs through east-west (purple line) and north-south (green line) and covers more than 40 stations.

Mysuru A number of flights connect major cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, Kochi, Goa and more to its local airport. Regular KSRTC buses and train options making commuting extremely convenient.

GREAT FOR



Traditional and hipster coffee cafes coexist in Bengaluru

Sights

BENGALURU

Bangalore Palace

The ivy-clad Bangalore Palace was built in 1878 and is an impressive building. Take the well-organised audio tour of the ballroom and the elaborate Durbar Hall, packed with paintings, artefacts and more.

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

National Gallery of Modern Art

The NGMA is housed in a 100-year-old heritage building. The gallery hosts the works of eminent artists and holds workshops, film screenings, talks and events.

☑ 080 22342338; www.ngmaindia.gov.in; 49 Palace Rd, Vasanthanagar; entry adults/

Bengaluru's green lungs are its pretty parks



TOP CHOICE Activities

- Go on a vintage coffee trail.
- Visit trendy coffee shops.
- Sample new artisanal coffee.
- Drink up Mysuru's popular 'by-two' coffee.

children/foreigners ₹10/1/150; 10am–5pm (closed on Mon and national holidays)

Vidhana Soudha and Attara Kacheri

The grand Indo-Saracenic and Dravidian style of architecture of the Vidhana Soudha makes for a magnificent backdrop for photographers. On the opposite of the road stands the Attara Kacheri, the high court, a Gothic building constructed in the reign of Tipu Sultan.

Parks of Bengaluru

Two major parks add to the greenscape of the city: Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens and Cubbon Park. Spread over 240 acres, Lal Bagh has rare botanical gems and a hillock of 3000 million-year-old peninsular gneissic rock. An annual flower show in January is popular. Gazebos to rest in, thickets of bamboo, grassy stretches, a tennis academy, a children's park and rocky outcrops are encompassed inside the 300 acres of Cubbon Park.

Lal Bagh, Mavalli; entry adults/children/parking cars ₹10/free/10; 6am–7pm; Cubbon Park, Kasturba Rd; 6am–7pm

MYSURU

Mysore Palace

The late 19th-century Mysuru Palace is an exquisite structure with sprawling gardens. Known as Amba Vilas, this is the official residence of the Mysuru royals. Sunday nights, public holidays and the Dasera period are worth your while as the palace is lit up in glowing lights. 10am–5.30pm; entry adults/children/foreigners/sound and light show adults/children/foreigners ₹40/20/200/40/25/200

Jagmohan Palace

This former royal auditorium lies west of the Mysore Palace and houses the Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery that has works by noted artist Raja Ravi Varma and traditional Japanese art. Weapons and rare musical instruments are displayed here. entry adults/children/foreigners ₹75/20/175; 8.30am–5pm

Chamundeshwari Temple

This hilltop temple is dedicated to Chamundeshwari, the family goddess of the Mysuru royals. There is a 6-foot statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III along with framed paintings of goddess Durga. 7.30am–9pm

Brindavan Gardens

The century-old KRS dam is located 12km northwest of the city and its gardens are known for their expanse of greenery and musical fountains.



A royal Bengal tiger at the Mysore zoo

entry adults/children ₹15/10; 10.30am–9.30pm; musical fountain Mon–Fri 6.55–7.55pm; Sat–Sun 6.55–8.55pm

♥ If You Like: For kids

Mysore Zoo ☑ 0821 252 0302; www.mysorezoo.info; Main Rd, Indira Nagar; 8.30am–5.30pm (Tue closed); entry adults/children ₹50/20 (weekdays) ₹60/30 (weekends)

Known as the Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens, the Mysore Zoo is one of the oldest and popular zoos in India and is spread over 157 acres.

GRS Fantasy Park ☑ 95900 80808; www.grsfantasypark.com; KRS Rd, Metagalli; 10.30am–6pm (Sun and Thurs 10.30am–7pm); entry adults/children ₹749/649

A great option for kids, this theme park offers many options with slides, rides, multiple playgrounds and an old-fashioned carousel.



EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

Coffee trail in Bengaluru

Bengaluru-based coffee fanatic, food enthusiast and blogger, **Nithya Anantham** chronicles her travels and food through the Instagram handle Kaapilicious. Here are her top choices for good coffee experiences in Bengaluru.

Hatti Kaapi truly lives up to its tag line 'brewing a metre kaapi'. Try its signature blend – Mysuru Kaapi or Bella Kaapi (coffee sweetened with jaggery) for that much-needed dose of caffeine as soon as you land in the city.

Kempegowda International Airport, Arrivals Gate, Devanahalli

Mavalli Tiffin Rooms (MTR) Taste pure filter coffee served in a silver tumbler, made with freshly roasted and ground coffee beans every single day, with no chicory added. 14, Lal Bagh Main Rd, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar

Airlines Hotel Enjoy sipping frothy strong filter coffee from a glass tumbler at this iconic place replete with the old-world charm of Bangalore under a huge banyan tree which is 100 years old. 4, Madras Bank Rd, Off Lavelle Rd

Coffee Mechanics Try the single estate slow coffees with a bit of drama – Chemex, Siphon, house-special Spiced French Press and

their signature Mazagran. They also hold coffee brewing classes. 254, 3rd Main Rd, 1st Stage, 5th Block, HBR Layout

Third Wave Coffee Roasters These single-origin speciality coffees from Chikkamagaluru are sure bound to take your taste buds on an exciting ride. Try their Baarbara Estate on French press, MS Estate Organic on pour over, or their fancy seasonal fruity cold brews, flat white, lavender & rosemary sea salt mocha, la vie en rose and the pretty cafe is Instagram worthy. 984, 80 Feet Main Rd, Koramangala 4th Block

Alchemy Coffee Roasters Sip artisanal coffees in style at this beautiful cafe nestled in busy Jayanagar. Try the popcorn latte, affogato, latte de mandorla (latte made with almond milk). 51 Ground Floor, 5th Main Rd, 36th Cross Rd, 5th Block, Jayanagar

Choose from a range of artisanal coffees at Third Wave Coffee Roasters in Bengaluru





Tiffin rooms offer classic south Indian coffee

☕ Drinking

BENGALURU

Dyu Art Cafe

CAFE ₹

☎09895674244; www.dyuartcafe.yolasite.com; No 23, KHB MIG Colony, Old 5th Block, Koramangala 8th Block; mains ₹250–500; 10am–10.30pm (Mon 12–10.30pm) A cafe and art gallery with a wide leafy courtyard, Dyu is ideal to enjoy the signature good weather in the city with a delicious cup of filter coffee in hand.

Hatti Kaapi

COFFEE SHOP ₹

www.hattikaapi.com; mains below ₹250 Haati Kaapi has hit the perfect blend with classic Karnataka coffee packaged in modern coffee shops. Find outlets all over town and even at the airport.

Maiyas

RESTAURANT ₹

☎080 43414400; www.maiyas.in; 459, 30, 30th Cross Rd, IV Block, Jayanagar; mains ₹200–500; 7–11am, 12–2.30pm, 3.30–10.30pm (Mon closed) Maiyas authentic home-style food and classic coffee lures more than 50,000 people each day to the original outlet in Jayanagar. They also have addresses in Malleshwaram, Indiranagar and Yeshwantpur.

Mavalli Tiffin Room

RESTAURANT ₹

☎080 2222 0022; www.mavallitiffinrooms.com; #14, Lal Bagh Main Rd, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar; mains less than ₹200; 6.30–11am, 12.30–9.30pm (Mon closed) Established in 1924, MTR prides itself on its atmosphere and authentic south Indian fare. The buzz of regulars is ample testimony to the popularity of the joint. Wash down the classic semolina idlis with a tumbler of filter coffee.

☕ If You Like: Artisanal coffee

Responsibly sourced coffee from Chikkamagaluru-based estates by artisanal coffee makers in the city are causing quite the stir. Choose from a number of blends, and have aeropress, French press, chemex and pour-overs. Coffee shops and makers like **Third Wave Roasters** (www.thirdwavacoffee.in) in Koramangala (www.thirdwavecoffee.in), **Coffee Mechanics** (www.coffeemechanics.co.in) in HBR Layout, **The Roastery** (☎9663105660) in Kalyan Nagar to **Karma Kaapi** in Jayanagar, are focused on serving speciality coffee.

India Coffee House

RESTAURANT ₹

☎080 25587088; Coffee House, 19, Ground Floor, Church Street, Brigade Gardens; mains less than ₹200; 8am–8.30pm India Coffee House on Church Street is more about the atmosphere than the taste. Laid-back service by red-turbaned waiters, faded walls speckled with portraits of freedom fighters and unfussy wooden seating still hold the charm at this once-hotspot of writers, artists and freedom fighters.

Vidyarthi Bhawan

RESTAURANT ₹

☎080 26677588; #32, Gandhi Bazaar Main Rd, Basavanagudi; mains below ₹200; Mon–Thur 6.30–11.30am, 2–8pm, Sat/Sun/govt. holidays 6.30am–12pm, 2.30–8pm (closed on Fri) Founded in 1943, the eatery was, and still remains, a staple address for coffee and snacks with luminaries such as Bharatratna Dr CNR Rao, Padma Vibhushan Chief Justice (Retd.) Sri MN Venkatachaliah,

Padma Shri Dr KS Nissar Ahmed, and Padma Shri Sudha Murthy.

Milk being pulled at MTR for a frothy tumbler of coffee



Veena Stores COFFEE SHOP ₹

☎080 23344838; 183, Margosa Rd, Malleshwaram; mains ₹100–200 6.30am–12pm, 3.30–9pm (Sun 6.30am–12pm) The delicious snacks and filter coffee make up for the humble interiors of Veena Stores. Regulars line up early for the 'stand only' dining experience and their morning fix of coffee.

Brahmin's Coffee Bar COFFEE BAR ₹

No.3, Ranga Rao Rd, Shankarapuram; mains below ₹200; 6am–12pm, 3–7pm (closed on Sun) Almost six decades old, the iconic coffee bar is the perfect place to rediscover

Vintage south Indian filter coffee drip maker at Brahmin's Coffee Bar



Bengaluru's soul – easygoing, kind and adjusting (expect to share tables with total strangers). Watch how the coffee maker pulls the milk back and forth into the tumbler to understand how the moniker of 'metre coffee' came about.

CTR (Shri Sagar) COFFEE SHOP ₹

☎080 2331 7531; 7th Cross, Margosa Rd, Malleshwaram; mains below ₹250; 7.30am–12.30pm, 4–9.15pm Another lazy Sunday favourite, CTR's coffee is made personally by owner Sandesh Poojari. He's been doing this for the last 25 years, ensuring only one more person stands alongside when he mixes the magic potion. Actress Deepika Padukone is a regular, but the real star, according to the owner, is the fresh coffee!

Taaza Thindi RESTAURANT ₹

☎07676208899; 26th Main, 4th Block, Jayanagar; mains less than ₹200; 7am–noon, 4.30–9.30pm Immaculately clean, optimally priced and delicious food make Taaza Thindi swarm with breakfasters in Jayanagar's 4th Block. The restaurant believes in keeping it simple and swift but delivering excellent food, and even better filter coffee.

MYSURU**Cafe Aramane** CAFE ₹

☎88848 54249; 194/2, Motikana Building, Sayyaji Rao Rd, Devaraja Mohalla, Near SBI, Chamrajnagar; mains less than ₹250–500; 7.30am–10.30pm Rest your travel weary legs at this old school cafe

with classic south Indian fare and large Mysuru-themed photographs for company.

Malgudi Cafe CAFE ₹

☎0821 425 5000; The Green Hotel, 2270 Vinoba Rd; mains ₹250–500; 10am–7pm The most atmospheric address to put the breaks on sightseeing and grab a steaming cup of coffee with snacks, Malgudi is loosely styled on the look and feel of the classic TV drama *Malgudi Days*, written by RK Narayan. The city is also home to the author's house now turned into a museum. Profits from the cafe assist disadvantaged communities, and most of the staff members are women.

Dasaprakash Paradise VEGETARIAN ₹

☎0821 4008400; 104, Vivekananda Rd, Brindavan Extension 2nd Stage, Brindavan Extension, Yadavagiri; mains less than ₹250–500; open 24 hours Fancy a coffee at 3am? Waltz into Dasaprakash Paradise for an early morning coffee fix and vegetarian food.

Hotel Original Vinayaka Mylari VEGETARIAN ₹

☎94486 08710; Shop No. 79, Near Police Station, Nazarbad Main Rd, Doora; mains ₹200; 6am–1.30pm, 3–8.30pm Simple interiors but fabulous south Indian food including the filter coffee are hallmarks of this basic joint.

Indra Cafe Paras VEGETARIAN ₹

☎0821 2420236; 1740, Sayyaji Rao Rd, Devaraja Mohalla, Mandi Mohalla;



The Mysore masala dosa and coffee combo is hard to beat

7.30am–10pm; mains less than ₹500 Visit the iconic restaurant for excellent south Indian preparations. Try the kesari bhath, dosa and top it with a tumbler of the filter coffee.

✓ **Top Tip:**
By-two coffee

Happy to have small shots of filter coffee rather than a whole tumbler, the Mysoreans have popularised the concept of 'by-two' coffee – essentially half a glass instead of one. Seems perfect for those who need a quick rush of caffeine versus a large indulgent mug.

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

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